

Pocket Guide to South Africa 2016/17  
South Africa's People



## People

For 2017, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimates the mid-year population at 56,52 million. Approximately 51% (approximately 28,9 million) of the population is female.

Gauteng comprises the largest share of the South African population. Approximately 14,3 million people (25,3%) live in this province. KwaZulu-Natal is the province with the second largest population, with 11,1 million people (19,6%) living in this province. With a population of approximately 1,21 million people (2,1%), Northern Cape remains the province with the smallest share of the South African population.

About 29,6% of the population is aged younger than 15 years and approximately 8,1% (4,60 million) is 60 years or older. Similar proportions of those younger than 15 years live in Gauteng (21,1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (21,1%). Of the elderly aged 60 years and older, the highest percentage 24,0% (1,10 million) reside in Gauteng. The proportion of elderly persons aged 60 and older is increasing over time.

Migration is an important demographic process in shaping the age structure and distribution of the provincial population. For the period 2016–2021, Gauteng and Western Cape are estimated to experience the largest inflow of migrants of approximately, 1 595 106 and 485 560 respectively.

Life expectancy at birth for 2017 is estimated at 61,2 years for males and 66,7 years for females. The infant mortality rate for 2017 is estimated at 32,8 per 1 000 live births.

The estimated overall HIV prevalence rate is approximately 12,6% among the South African population. The total number of people living with HIV is estimated at approximately 7,06 million in 2017. For adults aged 15–49 years, an estimated 18,0% of the population is HIV positive.

## Languages

South Africa is a multicultural society that is characterised by its rich linguistic diversity. Language is an indispensable tool that can be used to deepen democracy and also contribute to the social, cultural, intellectual, economic and political life of the South African society.

The country is multilingual with 11 official languages, each of which is guaranteed equal status. Most South Africans are multilingual and able to speak at least two or more of the official languages.

According to Stats SA's Community Survey 2016, isiZulu is the most common home language spoken by 24,6% of the

population, followed by isiXhosa (17%), Afrikaans (12,1%), Sepedi (9,5%), Setswana (8,8%), and English (8,3%), Sesotho (8%), Xitsonga (4,2%), Siswati (2,6%), Tshivenda (2,4%) and isiNdebele (1,6%).

Government passed the Use of Official Languages Act in 2012, as part of promoting social cohesion and nation-building.

Among other things, the legislation requires every government department, public entity and enterprise to establish a language unit and adopt a language policy.

It also encourages national government departments and public entities to use the official languages to enhance communication with the public in order to improve the quality of their lives.

## Religious beliefs

According to Stats SA's Community Survey 2016, the distribution of religious beliefs in South Africa is as follows:

**Christianity** – 43 423 717

**Islam** – 892 685

**Traditional African religion** – 2 454 887

**Hinduism** – 561 268

**Buddhism** – 24 808

**Bahaism** – 6 881

**Judaism** – 49 470

**Atheism** – 52 598

**Agnosticism** – 32 944

**No religious affiliation/belief** – 5 964 892

**Other** – 1 482 210

**Do not know** – 704 358.

