

The demographic picture of youth in South Africa

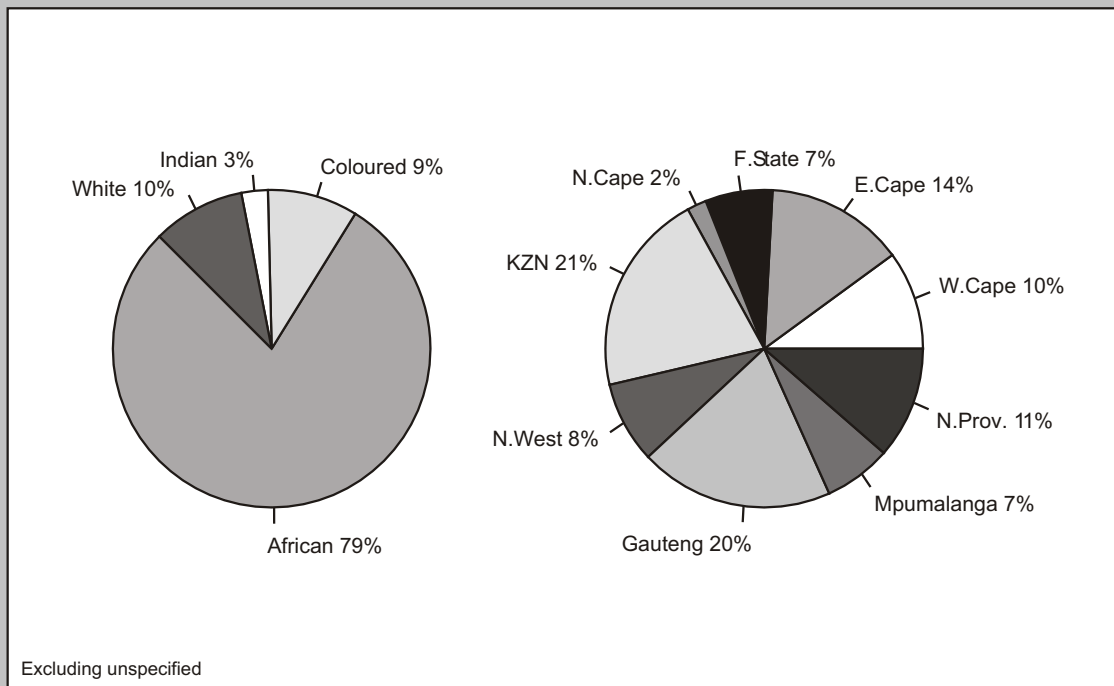
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Who are the youth and where are they in the country?

The National Youth Act of 1996 defines youth as persons aged from 14 to 35 years.

In 1996 there were 16,2 million youth in South Africa, constituting approximately 40% of the 40,6 million people countrywide. Of these, African youth accounted for 79%, coloured youth 9%, Indian youth 3% and whites 10%.

Figure 2.1: The youth of South Africa by population group and province



The proportion of African youth (79%) is increasing, compared to the proportion of Africans in the entire population (77%), while the proportion of white youth is decreasing (10%) compared with the proportion of whites in the country as a whole (11%).

As shown in Figure 2.1, 21% of youth lived in KwaZulu-Natal at the time of Census '96, while 20% lived in Gauteng, 14% in Eastern Cape, 11% in Northern Province and 10% in Western Cape. In South Africa as a whole, there is a slightly different profile: for example, 18% of the people in the country were in Gauteng, and 12% in Northern Province. Thus there seems to be a movement of younger people from predominantly rural provinces such as Northern Province and Eastern Cape into mainly urban provinces such as Gauteng.

A further breakdown of the youth of South Africa in each of the nine provinces by population group is shown in Table 2.1. The table shows that Africans form the largest proportion of the youth in seven of the nine provinces. At least 97% of the youth in Northern Province are African, followed by 92% in North West and 90% in Mpumalanga. This reflects the distribution of people by population group in the country as a whole.

Table 2.1: The youth of South Africa by population group and province

	African		Coloured		Indian		White		Unspecified		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
WC	399 370	25	874 558	54	16 074	1	274 947	17	45 682	3	1 610 631	10
EC	1 981 985	86	188 214	8	7 570	0	107 997	5	11 721	1	2 297 487	14
NC	113 989	35	167 554	52	830	0	35 981	11	4 358	1	322 712	2
FS	931 333	86	33 084	3	1 214	0	109 089	10	3 960	0	1 078 680	7
KZN	2 786 490	83	48 418	1	317 641	9	175 898	5	24 640	1	3 353 087	21
NW	1 246 054	92	19 242	1	3 734	0	79 131	6	6 050	0	1 354 211	8
GP	2 359 623	74	121 956	4	66 275	2	614 263	19	21 309	1	3 183 426	20
MP	1 015 639	90	8 616	1	5 071	0	92 320	8	5 659	1	1 127 305	7
NP	1 781 961	97	3 103	0	1 975	0	38 891	2	10 594	1	1 836 524	11
SA	12 616 444	78	1 464 745	9	420 384	3	1 528 517	9	133 973	1	16 164 063	100

Figure 2.2: Percentage of youth living in urban areas by province

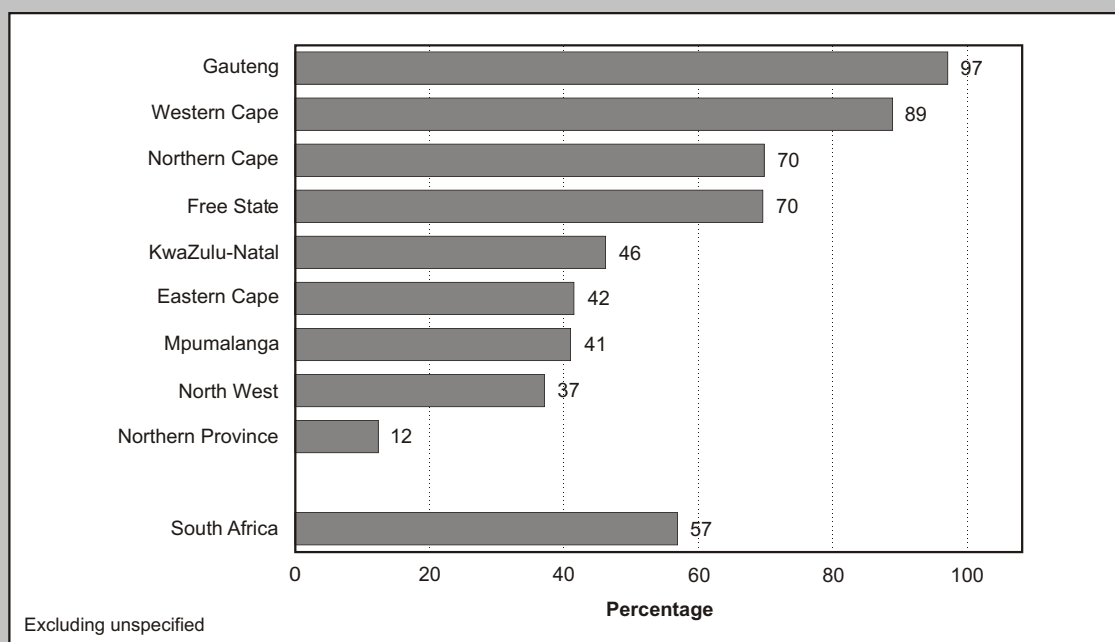
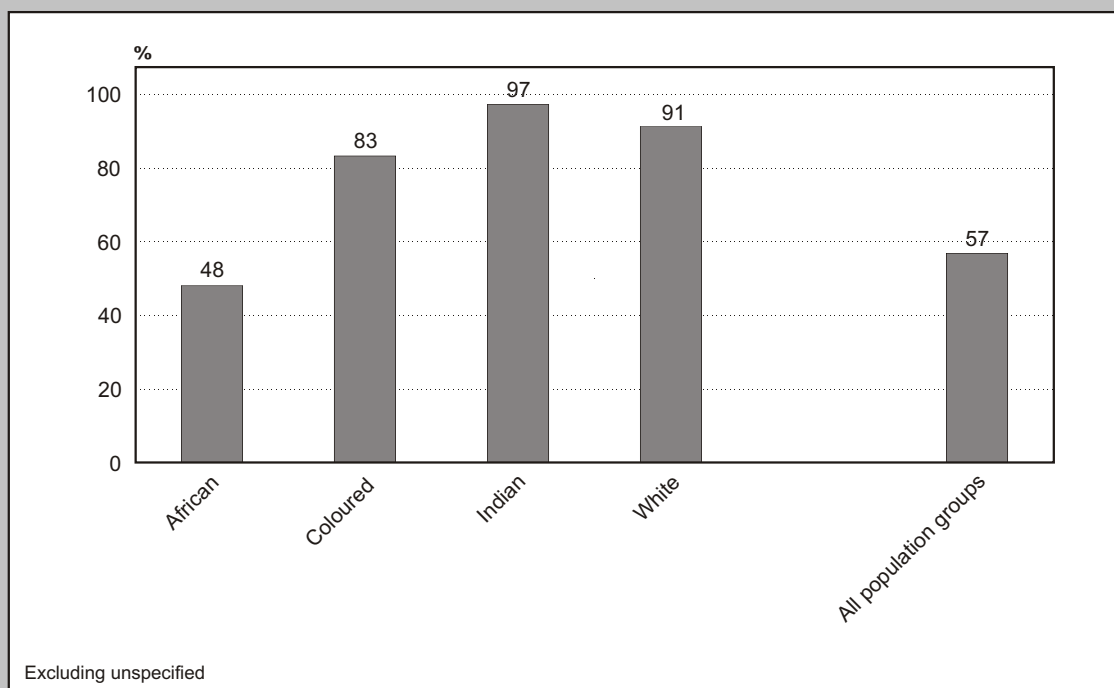


Figure 2.2 shows that 57% of the youth lived in urban areas, as against 54% of all South Africans (not shown here). This confirms the view that youth are moving into urban areas.

However, as regards the nine provinces, vast differences can be observed in the urban/non-urban distribution of the youth in each of them. Gauteng has the largest proportion (97%) of youth who live in urban areas, followed by Western Cape (89%), and Northern Cape and Free State (70%). On the other hand, Mpumalanga (41%), North West (37%) and Northern Province (12%) have the least urbanised youth in the country.

Differences in terms of urbanisation of youth are also observable among the population groups. Figure 2.3 indicates that there are proportionately more Indian youth in urban areas (97%), followed by white (91%) and coloured youth (83%) and then African (48%).

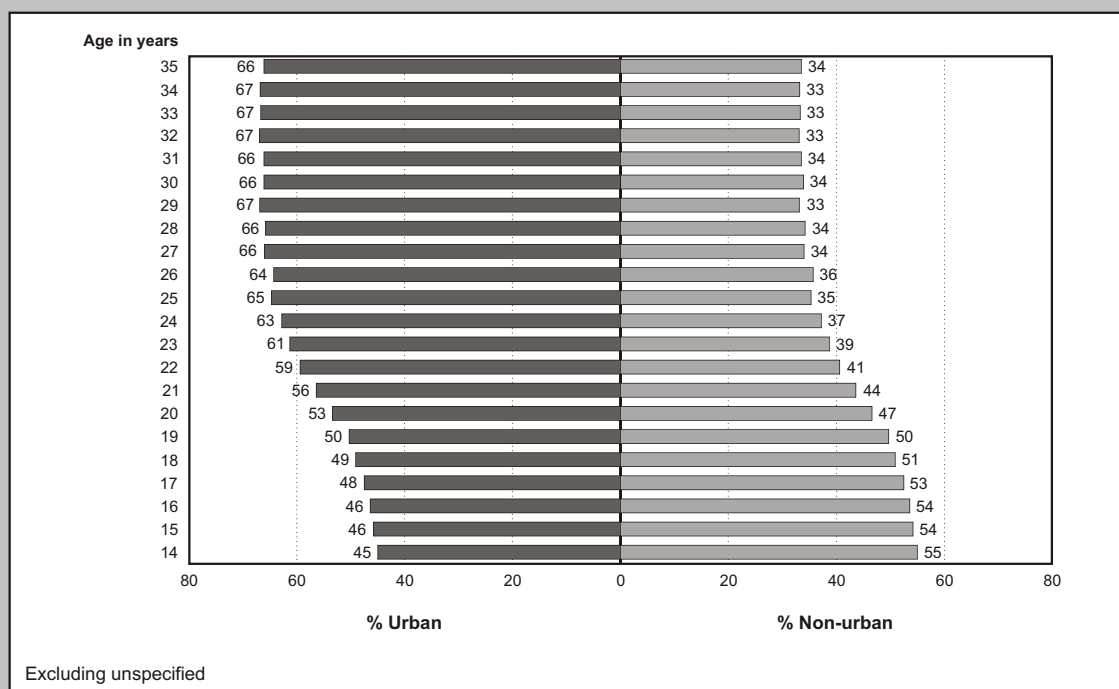
Figure 2.3: Percentage of youth living in urban areas by population group



Internal migration of youth in South Africa

We have seen from the above that there appears to be a tendency for youth to migrate from non-urban to urban areas. This applies in particular to African males. Figure 2.4 shows that whereas more males aged 14-18 lived in non-urban than urban areas, this pattern reverses from the age of 15 upwards, and the proportion of young males in non-urban areas decreases steadily with increasing age.

Figure 2.4: Migratory pattern of male youth between urban and non-urban areas by age in years



By age 27 upwards, two-thirds of all young males were living in urban areas.

Although not shown here, a similar but less pronounced pattern is found among females, particularly African females.

To complete the picture for South Africa generally, there is a return to the non-urban areas as people retire or lose their jobs. Both older and younger people cluster in non-urban areas while those of working age cluster in urban areas.