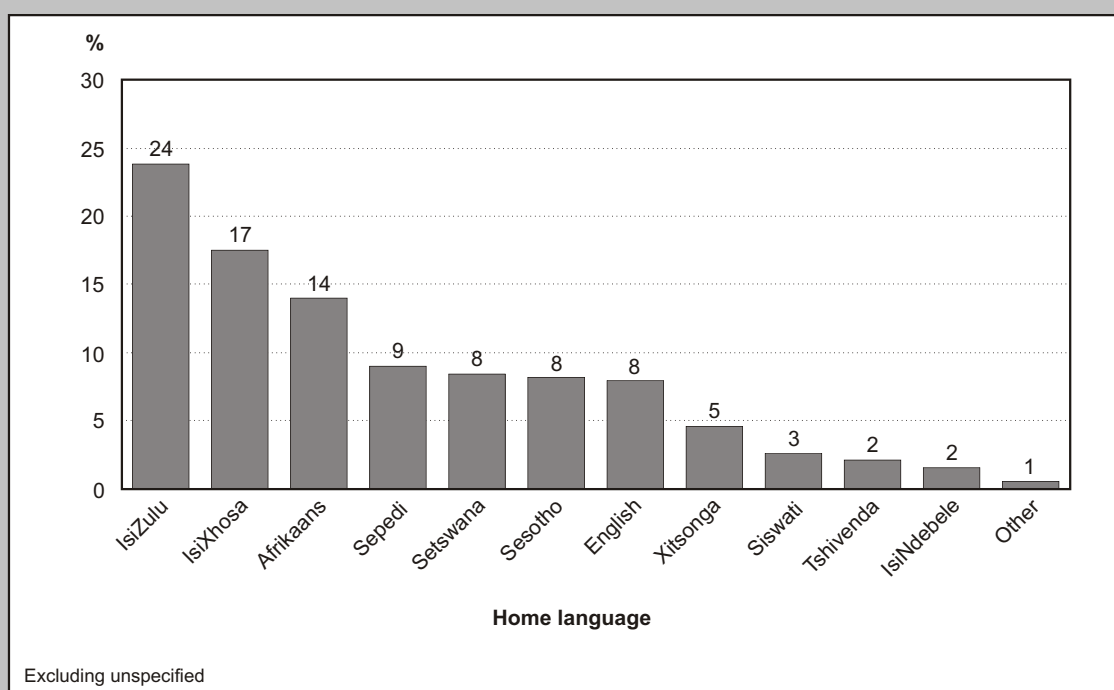


## Languages of South Africa spoken by the youth

Eleven official languages are spoken in South Africa. Figure 2.5 below shows that among the youth, isiZulu is the most widely spoken home language (24%), followed by isiXhosa (18%).

Figure 2.5: Percentage of youth in each language category



In the country as a whole, 23% of people speak isiZulu as their home language. The proportion of isiZulu speakers in the country is therefore increasing.

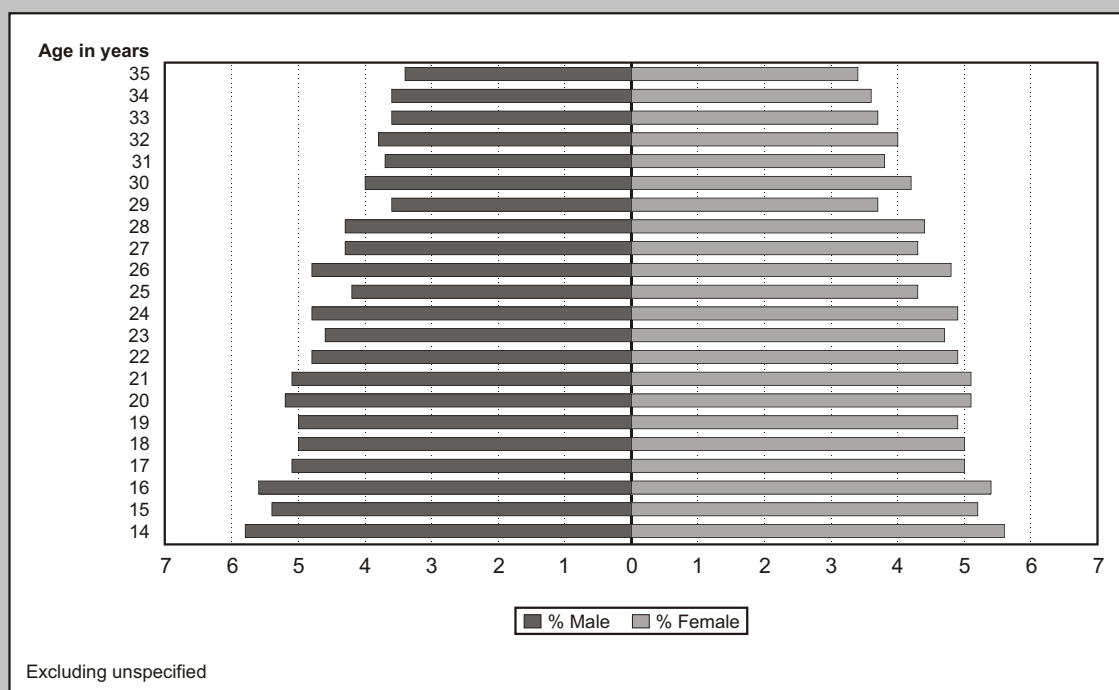
## The age-sex distribution of the youth

The age distribution of the population in South Africa characteristically resembles that of other developing countries, with a large proportion of young people. Youth aged from 14 years to 35 years account for 40% of the entire population in the country.

Figure 2.6 shows the age–sex structure of the youth aged from 14 years to 35 years on census night in October 1996.

Characteristically, the structure in Figure 2.6 is broader at the bottom indicating the higher concentration of youth in the younger age groups. Thereafter, it narrows towards the top with increasing age.

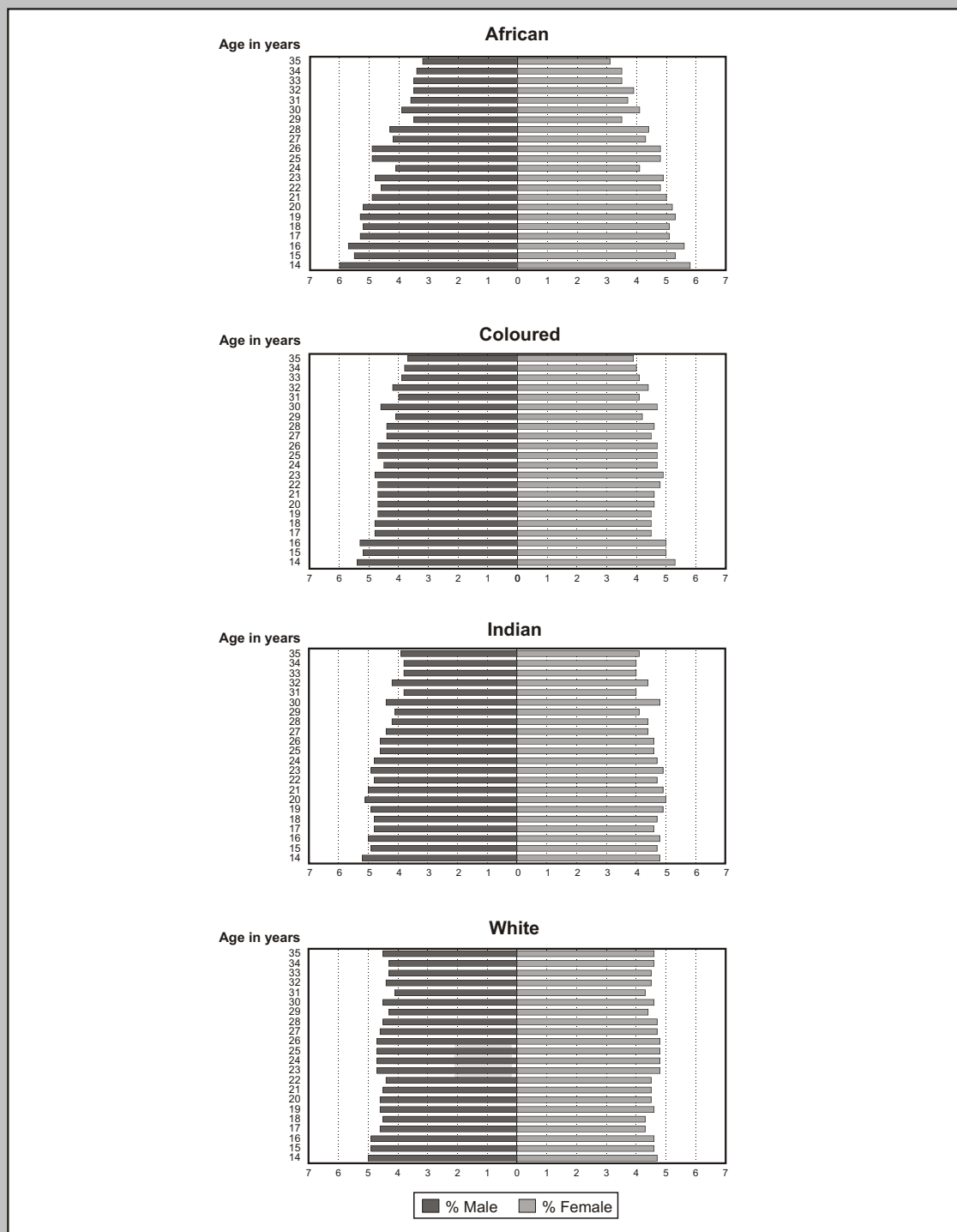
Figure 2.6: The youth of South Africa in single year age categories by sex



However, the overall age–sex distribution structure masks some notable differences between the four population groups, shown in Figure 2.7. The national distribution is largely influenced by that of the African youth, who are in the majority. The age–sex distribution structures for both coloured and Indian youth have a narrower base and taper less rapidly towards the apex with increasing age.

The age–sex distribution for white youth displays an almost cylindrical, barrel-shaped structure commonly found in developed nations. The white population has often been referred to as an ‘ageing population’ because of the relative consistency in the proportion of those in the younger and older age categories.

Figure 2.7: The youth of South Africa in single year age categories by sex and population group



## Implications

The proportion of the African population, particularly African youth, is increasing in proportion to the population of the country as a whole.

The white population is ageing, with a proportionately smaller percentage of youth (10%) compared to the proportion of whites in the population as a whole (11%).

Young Africans, particularly males, show a tendency to move from non-urban into urban areas, probably in search of higher education or work opportunities. Nevertheless, large proportions remain in non-urban areas. Both rural development and urban renewal are important for the youth of our country, particularly for those from formerly disadvantaged communities.