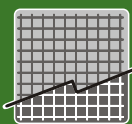


THE
YOUTH
OF
SOUTH AFRICA

Selected findings from Census '96



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**Statistics South Africa
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**Mr PL Lehohla
Statistician-General**

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Introduction and executive summary

"Youth are a valued possession of the nation. Without them there is no future. Their needs are immense and urgent." — former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela

After the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa emerged as a society with a variety of inherent problems. The legacy of racial, gender and urban/rural inequality inherited from the policies of the previous government had a negative impact on the living conditions of certain sectors of the population. These policies affected the provision of basic services such as water and electricity, the provision of housing, and access to education, health care and employment.

Since 1994 the government has been addressing these imbalances. Particular attention has been paid to improving the living conditions of rural communities, women and the youth.

Using data from Census '96, this report presents a comprehensive picture of the youth of South Africa. Areas highlighted include the demographic profile, marital status and childbearing patterns, access to education and participation in the labour market.

The statistics presented in the study provide a baseline measurement to facilitate planning, implementation and monitoring of policies for developing youth as an important sector of the population.

According to the National Youth Act of 1996, youth in South Africa are defined as persons in the age group 14 to 35 years. This age bracket is used in most instances to define youth in this report. However, in some sections of the report this age bracket differs somewhat. For example, as 15 is the age at which children are permitted formally to enter the labour market, this age is used as the lowest age in the chapters on employment and unemployment. Breakdowns by five-year age groups exclude 14 year olds and 35 year olds. Another deviation from the defined age category is in the case of childbearing, where 12 years is used as the lowest age in the age bracket. This was prompted by the fact that a small percentage of girls have a first child at age 12 or 13.

Demographic profile

- Of the 40,6 million people living in the country in October 1996, just over 16,1 million or 40% were youth, i.e. people in the age bracket 14 to 35. South Africa's population is thus relatively youthful, a feature of the population of many developing countries.
- Nearly four in every five of the youth in the country were African, somewhat less than one tenth coloured, one tenth white and the remaining 3% Indian.
- The proportion of African youth (79%) is higher than the proportion of Africans in the entire population (77%) while the proportion of white youth (10%) is smaller than the proportion of whites in the population as a whole (11%).
- About 21% of all youth in South Africa live in KwaZulu-Natal, followed by Gauteng (20%) and Eastern Cape (14%). Only 2% of the country's youth live in Northern Cape.

- Proportionately, more youth are living in urban areas (57%) than the rest of the population (54%).
- Indian youth are the most urbanised (97%), followed by whites (91%), while African youth are the least urbanised (48%).

Marital status

- Women in South Africa tend to marry earlier than men. In the 20-24 years age category, 7% of women were married according to traditional African custom and a further 8% according to civil/religious rites. In the same age bracket, 2% of men were married according to traditional African custom and 3% according to civil/religious rites.
- Proportionately more women than men indicated that they were divorced or separated from their spouses. For example, 4% of women in the 30-35 years age category were either divorced or separated from their spouses compared with 2% of men in the same age category.

Childbearing

- Of all women aged between 12 and 35 years who had given birth to at least one child, 0,7% had given birth to their first child at the age of 12 and 1% at the age of 13 years.
- The highest proportion (11%) gave birth to their first child at the age of 19 or 20 years.
- African women tended to give birth to a first child at a younger age than women in other population groups. About 1% of African women gave birth to their first child at 12 years of age, compared to a small fraction of a percentage of women in the other population groups.

Education

- Of the different age categories of youth, the largest proportions of those studying were the 14 year olds (94%) and the 15 year olds (93%).
- Of the 14-year-old youth who were studying, 2% did not have any formal education, increasing to 4% among those aged 35 years.
- From 30 years onwards, the proportion of youth studying with no education increases.
- Two per cent of youth aged 20 had qualifications in higher education. This rose to 8% among those aged 35 years.
- Twelve per cent of all youth who were not studying in 1996 did not have any formal education. In the 14-year-old group this percentage was higher (52%) than in the age group 35 years (16%).
- The largest proportion of youth aged 15-35 years had 'some secondary' education.

The labour market

- There were 15,0 million youth in South Africa in the age group 15 to 35 years. Of these, 7,3 million were not economically active, 4,5 million were employed while 3,1 million were unemployed (expanded definition).

The employed

- Regarding industry, the community, social and personal services sectors provided the highest proportion of jobs (19,6%) to youth. This was followed by trade (15,3%) and manufacturing (14,2%).
- Of employed female youth, the largest proportion worked in community, social and personal services (25,3%) followed by private households (20,9).
- Of employed male youth, the largest proportion worked in community services (15,7%) followed by manufacturing (15,3%).
- Regarding occupation, the largest proportion of employed young females had elementary jobs (36%) while the largest proportion of employed young males were craftsmen (23%).
- Four per cent of employed male youth compared with 2,8% of employed female youth worked in management positions.
- More than two in every five employed male African youth (45%) worked as artisans and operators, while about half (49,7%) of employed female African youth held elementary jobs.
- Fifty-five per cent of employed male African youth and 70,6% of employed female African youth earned R1 000 and less per month in 1996.

Unemployment

- The overall unemployment rate (expanded definition) for youth in South Africa according to Census '96 was 40,9%.
- Eastern Cape had the highest youth unemployment rate (55,7%), followed by Northern Province (53,4%) while Gauteng (35,2%) and Western Cape (22,3%) had the lowest rates.
- The unemployment rate for economically active youth was higher for females (49,6%) than for males (33,0%).
- The problem of lack of jobs is more intense in non-urban areas where the unemployment rate was at 51,3% compared to 35,7% in urban areas.
- African youth (50,2%) had the highest unemployment rates of all the population groups.
- The unemployment rates for male youth and female youth without any formal education was 33,8% and 52,3% respectively.