

## CHAPTER 2

# AGEING IN SOUTH AFRICA



Older Persons at a community meeting (Imbizo)

### 2.1 Demographic Profile

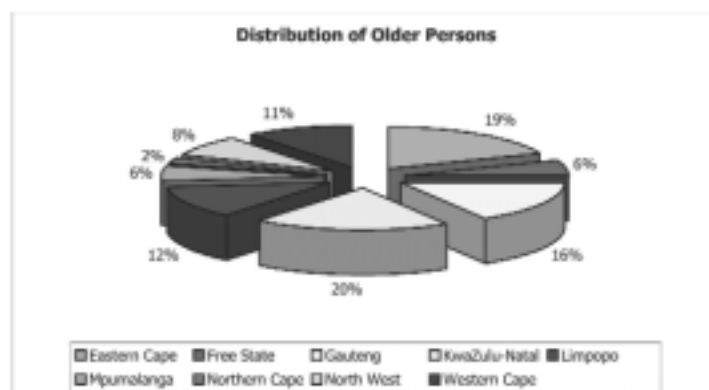
In demographic terms, South Africa has a youthful population. According to the 1996 Census:

- The total South African population is 40 583 573.
- 2 825 200 people are aged 60 years and older, constituting 7 percent of the total population.
- 58 percent of the population are people between the age of 15 years and 59 years.
- 44 percent of the population are people under the age of 20 years.
- 34 percent of the population are children between the age of 0 years to 14 years.

The proportion of persons 60 years and older in South Africa is substantially lower than in developed countries where the equivalent proportion is 19 percent; it is marginally higher than the equivalent proportion for Africa (5 percent) and marginally lower than the equivalent proportion for developing regions (8 percent).

The proportion of older persons in South Africa varies considerably across the nine provinces, as is shown in Figure 1. The highest concentrations of older persons are in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Further analysis of the Census data indicates that older persons are concentrated in non-urban areas in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West Province.

**Figure 1**



**Table 1: Age Group by Population Group**

Age (Years)	African		Coloured		Indian		White	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
60-64	601685	67.6	79859	9.0	26670	3.0	175332	19.7
65-69	525056	69.2	55016	7.2	18093	2.4	155236	20.5
70-74	312205	64.8	33919	7.0	10975	2.3	121357	25.2
75-79	261326	69.2	20608	5.5	6103	1.6	86624	23.0
80-84	108410	60.6	11097	6.2	2644	1.5	55248	30.9
85+	89475	65.2	8348	6.1	1618	1.2	36531	26.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1898157</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>208847</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>66103</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>630328</b>	<b>22.3</b>

Source: Census 1996 (note: Cases where the population group are not known have not been included in the table. These cases account for 0.8 percent of older persons)

African people 60 years and older account for the majority of older persons (67.2 percent). The proportion of older African people is lower than the overall proportion of African people in the total population. By contrast, the proportion of older White people is twice the proportion of White people in the total population. This is a reflection of the different life expectancies of the two population groups.

**Table 2: Age Group by Gender**

Age (Years)	Women		Men		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
60-64	538483	60.4	352053	39.6	890536
65-69	454874	59.9	304013	40.1	758887
70-74	287044	59.5	195119	40.5	482163
75-79	235583	62.4	141844	37.6	377428
80-84	116831	65.3	62072	34.7	178902
85+	94054	68.5	43230	31.5	137284
<b>Total</b>	<b>1898157</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>1898157</b>	<b>38.9</b>	<b>2825200</b>

Women constitute 61 percent of persons aged 60 years and over. The older the age group, the higher the proportion of women, as shown in Table 2. Census data also show that older women are more likely than older men to head households in the three poorest provinces, namely, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. The gender bias in the ageing of the South African population has significant implications for policies and programmes with respect to older persons.

## 2.2 Legal Framework

The *Constitution of South Africa* (1996) contains a Bill of Rights, which is the cornerstone of democracy in the country. Some of the provisions in the Bill of Rights, which are of particular relevance to older persons, include:

- Equality before the law
- Prohibition against the state against unfair discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sex, age, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language
- Right to have their dignity respected and protected
- Freedom from all forms of violence
- Right to bodily and psychological integrity
- Protection against arbitrary deprivation of property
- Right to have access to adequate housing
- Right to have access to food, water and social security

The significance of the Constitution is that it provides the foundation for a rights-based approach to older persons.

The Constitution also established state institutions supporting constitutional democracy.

- (a) The Human Rights Commission is responsible for promoting respect for human rights; promoting the protection, development and attainment of human rights; and monitoring observance of human rights. Each year, all government departments are required to report on progress made in achieving the social and economic rights to the Human Rights Commission. The Commission is empowered to investigate complaints or breaches of human rights.
- (b) The Commission for Gender Equality is responsible for promoting respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality. The Commission is empowered to monitor, investigate, educate and report on issues concerning gender equality.

The *Aged Persons Act of 1967* provides for the protection and welfare of certain older and debilitated persons, for the care of their interests, for the establishment and registration of certain institutions and for the accommodation and care of such persons in such institutions. The Act was amended a number of times before April 1994. Further amendments were made in November 1994 in order to, amongst others, repeal certain discriminatory provisions and in November 1998 in order to provide for the

establishment of representative management committees for homes for the aged, to require reporting on the abuse of aged persons and to regulate the prevention of the abuse of aged persons. The Department is currently drafting a Bill on the status of older persons.

The *Social Assistance Act of 1992*, makes provision for the payment of social grants (social security) to South African citizens with limited means. This is a non-contributory scheme, and therefore, is fully funded by the state. In the case of older persons, women 60 years and older are eligible for an old age pension and men become eligible at the age of 65 years. A disability grant is payable to disabled adults, but older persons are not entitled to both grants.

The *Rental Housing Act of 1999* protects older persons from discrimination and unfair practices in the leasing of property. Violations of the Act are to be reported to the Rental Housing Tribunal.

The *Domestic Violence Act of 1998* requires the South African Police Service or relevant authority to intervene in cases of suspected abuse. The Act provides for the issuing of protective orders on behalf of the abused person. The abuser may be arrested or removed from the household.

### **2.3 Institutional Arrangements**

A number of government departments, national and provincial, are responsible for the provision of services to older persons.

The Department of Social Development and its provincial counterparts are responsible for the provision of social grants and the provision of social welfare services. The Non-Governmental Sector in South Africa has extensive involvement in the delivery of a range of social welfare services to older persons. The respective Social Development departments provide funding to Non-Governmental Organisations, including subsidies to residential homes for older persons. The Department of Social Development as the custodian of the Aged Persons Act, is responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of older persons.

The National Department of Health and its provincial counterparts are responsible for promoting the health of older persons. The National Department of Health established the Directorate for Chronic Diseases, Disabilities and Geriatrics, with a specific mandate to address diseases and health conditions of older persons. The National Department

is primarily responsible for policy development, setting norms and standards in the health sector and for managing conditional grants allocated to Provincial Departments of Health. Health services are delivered in the provinces through primary health care clinics, Community Health Centres, and hospitals.

The National Department of Housing is responsible for policy development, the funding of public housing and regulating of the housing sector. The delivery of public housing is done through Provincial Housing Development Boards, which are managed by Provincial Departments of Housing and Local Government.

The Department of Provincial and Local Government is responsible for ensuring that local authorities provide basic services, within agreed frameworks, and is also responsible for the management of infrastructure grant allocations to local authorities.

In addition to its responsibility for Early Childhood Development, General Education and Tertiary Education, the National Department of Education is responsible for policies in the area of Adult Basic Education and Literacy.

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is responsible for managing the government water supply programme and for the co-ordination of the sanitation programme with the Department of Health and Local Authorities.

Many government programmes require inter-departmental co-ordination for effective delivery. Cabinet has therefore organised itself into clusters of ministries, which are mirrored by clusters of Directors-General. The Social Sector Cluster is responsible for issues relating to older persons. It is necessary for the Social Sector Cluster to liaise with the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster on matters relating to crimes and the abuse of older persons.