

Census 2022: Most South Africans have access to water and electricity

By Lyse Comins



South Africa's population is one of the youngest in the world

South Africa has made a “phenomenal achievement” in doubling the number of people with secondary education and a “great deal of progress” in electrifying homes and providing piped water as the population grew to 62 million in 2022.

This was the reaction of [President Cyril Ramaphosa](#) to the release of Census 2022 by [Statistics South Africa's](#) statistician general Risenga Maluleke, who gave an overview of the latest census before handing over the official report to the president at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on Tuesday.

Census 2022, the fourth census to be conducted since 1996, involved 100 000 field workers conducting face-to-face and telephonic interviews, as well as the web-assisted completion of census forms, across the country. The last census was conducted in 2011.

According to Census 2022, South Africa's population increased from 40 583 573 in 1996 to 62 027 503 in 2022, representing a growth rate of 4,1%.

The biggest growth rate occurred between 2011 and 2022 at 1,8%, while the growth rate between 2001 and 2011 was 1,4%.

"Black Africans are sitting at 55 million (accounting for 81,4 %); the coloured population is 5,1 mill (8,1%) and the white population is 4,5 million (7,3%), the Indian/Asian population is 1,7 mill (2,7%) and those who did not specify were at 200 000. But of interest is the white population which was sitting at 9% in 2011 and has now declined to 7,3%," Maluleka said.

The female population was 31 948 745, while the male population was 30 078 757 in 2022.

Gauteng is the most populous province (15 099 422) followed by KwaZulu-Natal (12 423 907), while Northern Cape (1 355 946) and Free State (2 964 412) reported the lowest population sizes.

There are now 16,4 million children aged 0 to 14 years living in the country (26,4%); 21,6 million youths aged between 15 and 34 years (34,8%); while there are 8 million adults aged 35 to 59 (29%) and 6,1 million people over the age of 60 (9,8%).

Black Africans account for 81,4% of the population, coloureds for 8,1%, whites for 7,3%, Indian/Asian for 2,7% and 200 000 did not specify race.

"Of interest is the white population, they were sitting at 9% in 2011 and have now declined to 7,3%," Maluleka said.

Zulu remained the most spoken language in the country, constituting almost a quarter (24,4%), followed by Xhosa (16,3%) and Afrikaans (10,6%).

The findings showed a downward trend in people who speak Afrikaans (from 14,5% in 1996 to 10,6% in 2022), followed by Xhosa speakers. The proportion of people who speak English, Xitsonga and Tshivenda, remained relatively stable. The results showed that less than 1% of the population communicated using the country's 12th official language, sign language, in both Censuses 2011 and 2022.

Turning to migration, the province attracting the most migrants was Gauteng (400 000) followed by the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape, while the other six provinces experienced negative net migration. The top five countries where migrants came from were Zimbabwe (45,5%); Mozambique (18,7%); Lesotho (10,2%), Malawi (8,9%) and the UK (2,8%).

"We can see in Gauteng the [migrant] population growth is driven by people who come from outside of South Africa, about 50% of people choose Gauteng as their destination, and internally the population of Gauteng's biggest contributor comes from Limpopo followed by KwaZulu-Natal, North West and the Eastern Cape," Maluleka said.

Regarding development indicators, six out of 10 children aged 0 to four years old have access to some form of early childhood development centre, such as a creche or a preschool. However, the Northern Cape and North West provinces bucked this trend — more than 50% of children there do not have access to early childhood education.

“The percentage of persons aged 20 years and older who completed secondary education almost doubled from 16,3% in 2011 to 37, 6% in 2022. We are seeing more people who have completed secondary school by way of grade 12 and those with post-school education qualifications moved from 7,1% in 2011 to 12,2% in 2022,” he said.

The number of people living with disabilities declined from 7,4% in 2011 to 6% in 2022.

The number of households grew from 9,1 million in 1996 to 14,4 million in 2011 and to 18,8 million in 2022.

Households that reside in formal dwellings increased sharply from 2011, having been at 65,1% in 2011, to 88,5% in 2022.

“Service delivery in the form of access to lighting in South Africa ... is sitting between 80% and 100% and only one municipality, Emadlangeni, fell below 80%,” he said.

Maluleke said access to piped water had also improved, with the exception of Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, which had largely gone backwards since 2011, because people do not have access to water inside their dwellings or in their yards.

“In 2022, over 82,4% of households in the country had access to piped [water](#) either inside their dwelling (59,7%) or inside their yard,” he said.

Reacting to the statistics, the president said the data contained in the census would inform the planning, budgeting and policy-making work of the government at the most fundamental level.

“We have long said that one of our priorities in building a capable, ethical, developmental state is to ensure that policy-making is evidence-driven. Policy-making that is not informed by accurate data can result in inefficiency in the allocation of resources, under-estimation of the needs of citizens, poorly planned programmes and poor financial management,” he said.

“Census 2022 gives us the information we need to implement the government’s programme of action in a targeted, evidence-driven manner.”

Ramaphosa said the education, [electricity](#), [housing](#) and water access data revealed that the country had made significant progress.

“We are encouraged by the progress presented in the report by the statistician general. We note for example that the number of people who are older than 20 years with no education has significantly decreased. And this is one of the most important measures about the education proficiency of a country. For a country to develop and charge ahead you need a large cohort of well-educated people,” he said.

“We have made tremendous progress because it shows the number of people who have grade 12 are more than we had in 1996, in fact they have doubled and this is the real revolution, the real key change in our country, especially as we remember what apartheid did to a key and central life-determining aspect, which is education,” he said.

This was a “phenomenal achievement” but there was still work to do to improve access to early childhood development centres.

Ramaphosa added that the fact that the number of people living in informal and traditional dwellings was “coming down in leaps and bounds” is a “clear demonstration of development ... and of showing we are charging ahead as a nation and we are modernising a number of life-determining aspects of the well-being of our population”.

He said access to electricity had improved vastly “despite the present challenges of load-shedding, which we are urgently trying to address”.

“We should be encouraged by the almost universal access to electricity supply,” he said.

“The results represented here today underscore the urgency towards which we must work towards meeting the aspirations of the [National Development Plan](#) and the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). All this shows a great deal of progress and Census 2022 bears evidence to us because it tells us where we have made programmes and it has also laid bare the challenges that remain,” he said.