

The Social Profile of Older Persons, 2017- 2021



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Risenga Maluleke

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FOREWORD

The Mid-year Population Estimates show that the total population of persons aged 60 years and older has been increasing over time. In 2022, the older population was estimated to be approximately 5,6 million, accounting for a 9,2 percentage share of the overall South African population. This was further confirmed by the increase in the ageing index, which measures the proportion of persons aged 60 years and older to the population of children under the age of 15 years. The ageing index increased from 30 in 2017 to 33 in 2022, showing that the population is progressively ageing. The number of older persons generally increased across all provinces, with Gauteng (1,4 million) and KwaZulu-Natal (940 thousand) having the highest number of the older population in 2022. However, the analysis of these numbers over time showed that Eastern Cape persistently surpassed the share of older persons in other provinces. The rise in the number of older persons has implications for planning and policy formulation, especially regarding social safety nets provided for them.

The demographic profile of the older persons suggests pronounced differences along racial and gender lines. For example, the black African population is relatively young, with a lower share of older persons (62,1%) than the general population (81,0%). At the same time, the share of white older persons among the total population is significantly higher (23,0%) than their representation in the population (7,7%). The ageing index for different population groups amongst older persons marginally increased for black Africans from 22 in 2017 to 24 in 2022. During the same period, the index for white persons increased from 155 to 181.

Evidence on the living arrangements of older persons suggests that there are marked provincial variations in terms of those living alone, with some provinces experiencing significant declines while the opposite is true for others. About 53% of the older persons still live in extended households, where they would receive at least some psycho-social and economic support. Households headed by older persons are more prone to live with their grandchildren as the skip generation households still account for at least 13,9% of the households where the older persons live.

Functional literacy among older persons has significantly improved nationally. Almost 30% of the older persons were more likely to have matric and post-school qualifications. Approximately half of the older persons live in households without any employed household members, and 73,0% of the older persons are beneficiaries of an old-age grant. The older persons-headed households from non-metro areas relied more on social grants than those in metro areas.

The three health conditions most common among older persons were high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma. High blood pressure and asthma were more common among males than females, whilst diabetes was more common among females. Huge disparities along racial lines were noted when medical aid coverage was considered. Medical aid coverage was the highest for white older persons (75,7%) and lowest for black African older persons (5,4%).

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Statistician-General

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The convening of the World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982 was an acknowledgement that ageing could no longer be viewed as a phenomenon of the Western world. For the first time, the Assembly provided a forum where both developed and developing countries could exchange ideas and information on their experience of the ageing process (Sen, 1994).¹ Economic security, health, disability, and living conditions in old age are policy concerns throughout the world, but the nature of problems differs considerably from continent to continent and between and within countries (Barney Cohen, Jane Menken).²

For the purposes of this report, older persons are classified as persons who are 60 years and older, as indicative of the South African retirement age. In 2022, they constituted approximately 9,2% (5,6 million) of the South African population, where they are classified as a marginalised group. With ageing, functional ability declines to some degree in every person. Older persons also tend to have more disorders and disabilities than younger persons. Changes that accompany ageing are more than just changes in health – social issues (such as living arrangements or type of work) also influence an older person's risk and experience of illness (Merck Manual).³

Older persons are an integral part of our society and should enjoy the same rights enjoyed by all other South Africans as enshrined in our Constitution. Post-1994, particular attention has been paid to the need to fight the abuse of older persons. The Constitution states clearly that everyone has the right to the full and equal enjoyment of all basic human rights and freedom.

South Africa has one of the most developed social security frameworks that address the rights of older persons. The country recognises that the past discriminatory practices largely excluded the majority of previously disadvantaged persons from old-age pension and social security entitlements through the provision of formal employment (Oloka-Onyango, 2015).⁴ The domains of the social security framework include the alleviation and prevention of poverty, social compensation and income distribution.

The purpose of this report is to profile socioeconomic circumstances and the living circumstances of older persons in South Africa over the period 2017 to 2021. The living circumstances will focus on the structure of older person households, including the composition of households, intergenerational living arrangements and headship. The socioeconomic dynamics of older persons will examine their educational attainment, employment status, living arrangements, access to basic services like clean water, refuse removal, and sanitation, their ability to access healthcare facilities and clinics, and their experiences with crime and victimisation.

¹ Sen, K. (1994). Ageing: Debates on Demographic Transition and Social Policy. London: Zed Books Ltd.

² Barney Cohen, Jane Menken. (2006). Aging in Sub-Saharan Africa.

³ <http://www.merckmanuals.com>

⁴ Oloka-Onyango, J. (2015). Battling over Human Rights: "Twenty Essays on Law, Politics and Governance", pp256.

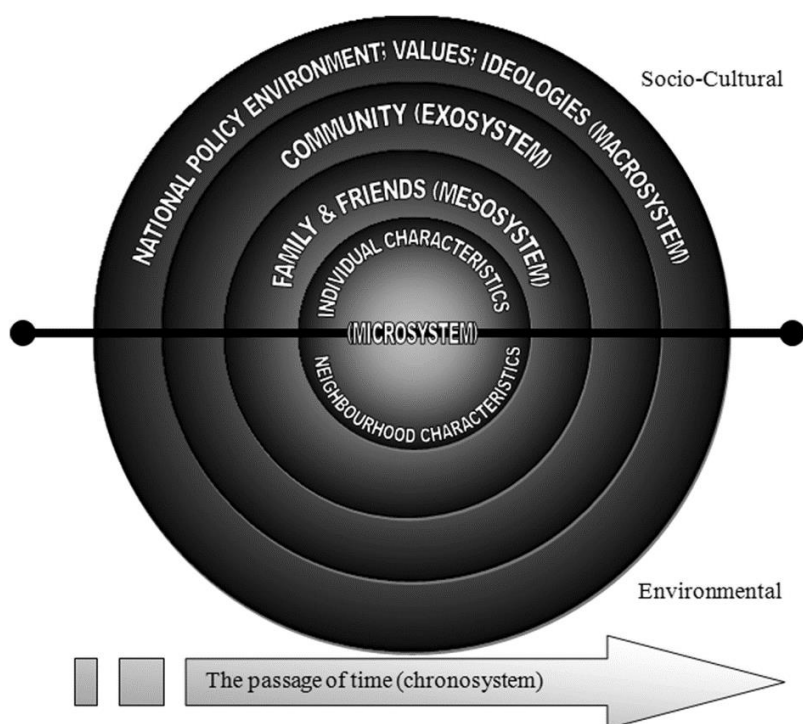
1.2 Objective of the report and the conceptual framework

This report aims to provide insight into socioeconomic and demographic variables and to profile the dynamics of the living circumstances of older persons in South Africa using secondary data from Stats SA. The report analyses the extent to which improvements in the socioeconomic circumstances and the livelihoods of older persons have occurred over the period 2017–2021.

This report is aligned with the conceptual model of social relations for older persons. In this model, the social profile of older persons is influenced by the national policy environment, neighbourhood and community characteristics and family circumstances, which influence their outcomes such as individual well-being (e.g. quality of life, life satisfaction, loneliness and belonging), health and functioning, social opportunities and social cohesion.⁵

The themes of the report are grouped as per the following:

National policy environment:	Policies guiding the rights of older persons.
Individual characteristics:	Demographic factors, education and technology, life expectancy, health status, household income, generation and employment of older persons.
Neighbourhood characteristics:	Basic services.
Family and friends:	Household characteristics.
Community:	Public safety.



Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1986)

⁵ Burholt, V., Winter, B., Aartsen, M., Constantinou, C., Dahlberg, L., Feliciano, V., ... & Waldegrave, C. (2020). A critical review and development of a conceptual model of exclusion from social relations for older people. *European journal of ageing*, 17(1), 3-19.

1.3 Legislation and policy framework

1.3.1 International context

As populations age, governments and diverse stakeholders from various sectors need to develop legislative policies and interventions to protect older persons. Implications for population ageing include:

- Increased demand for adequate housing for the older population;
- Increased need for financial support (old-age grants, etc.) for a growing older population;
- An increased demand for long-term and chronic healthcare for the growing older population; and
- A need for more support from economically active persons (15–64 years old) to upkeep the increasing number of older persons.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) recognises that concerns relating to an ageing population are no longer limited to developed countries only, but are becoming increasingly relevant in developing countries, including South Africa. It is a resource for policymaking – suggesting ways for government, non-governmental organisations, and other actors to re-orient how their societies perceive, interact with and care for their older populations.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states, “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. The SDGs make a broader commitment that “all indicators should be disaggregated by age” to improve the quality, consistency and data use. This will enable government and development agencies to understand better the issues older persons face in claiming their rights to healthcare, social protection, employment and education. Furthermore, the SDGs include a commitment to ensuring the implementation of national social protection systems that also benefit the poor and the vulnerable, which could provide greater access to income security for older persons.

With older age groups constituting the fastest growing segments of the global population, the phenomenon of population ageing is becoming increasingly recognised in global development, and many national statistical offices (NSOs) around the world have begun to recognise the need to improve the availability, accessibility, and comparability of statistical data to support ageing-related policymaking. The Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age-disaggregated Data (TCGA) was formally established in March 2018 with the United Nations Statistical Commission's (UNSC) approval to develop norms and standards for increasing the availability of age-disaggregated data and ageing-related statistics.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (UNCROP)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (UNCROP) seeks to remedy the fragmented human rights instruments or practices for older persons and focus on reaffirming critical human rights which are of concern specifically to older persons. This convention was therefore necessitated by the following factors as adapted from a UN Convention resource on the rights of older persons:⁶

- ✓ **Ageism and age discrimination are unacceptable:** As the world experiences rapid population ageing, the pressures that result from age discrimination are likely to intensify; so does the imperative to address such discrimination.

⁶ Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention (A resource for promoting dialogue on creating a new UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons).

- ✓ **Human rights change persons' lives:** Protecting older persons' rights helps older persons lead dignified, secure lives as equal members of society. Exercising these rights enables older persons to be treated with respect on an equal basis to younger persons.
- ✓ **Existing international and regional human rights laws do not sufficiently protect older persons' rights:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international rights conventions apply to all persons regardless of age. However, age is not listed explicitly.

Human rights and development go hand-in-hand: Respecting persons' rights results in better development where respect, dignity and having a say are recognised alongside material security as important to persons' well-being. Increased protection of the rights of older men and women creates the conditions that enable them to participate in and contribute to their development and those around them. In so doing, respecting and protecting all persons' rights results in more inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies.

1.3.2 Regional agenda

African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), also known as the Banjul Charter, is an international human rights instrument that is intended to promote and protect human rights and basic freedom on the African continent. Article 18(4) of the ACHPR states that: "The aged and the disabled shall also have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical or moral needs."

The view, as contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR), recognises that older persons have been one of the most vulnerable groups that suffer, especially in cases of forced removal or eviction. In terms of healthcare, the ICESR has also stated essential elements of this right include the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of such healthcare. Member-states, including South Africa, are thus expected to ensure availability and accessibility of health facilities to all, including older persons.

African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing

The African Union (AU) Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing, drafted in 2002 with Help Age International, guides member states on designing and implementing policies on older persons (African Union, 2003). The policies emphasise economic and social difficulties older persons face and the need for healthcare.

1.3.3 Local context

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: the country commits to protecting the rights of older persons by recognising some of the following rights:

- **Right to equality:** the right that prohibits discrimination based on age. No person should be denied access to social services, employment, or any benefit based solely on his or her age.
- **Right to dignity:** This right is the basic foundation of all other rights. It intends to cover safety, to combat abuse and to access opportunities that promote the social, physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of older persons.
- **Right to access social security:** Under section 27 of the Constitution, South Africa recognises social security as a basic right. Older persons, and among others, persons with disabilities, are vulnerable and bear the brunt of poverty and inequality. Social security provides a supplementary benefit when there is insufficient income to achieve a minimum standard of living.

National Development Plan (NDP): One of the NDP goals is to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality by ensuring that old-age-related poverty is eliminated by 2030. It also advocates for inclusive health and social protection systems that address all areas of vulnerability and are responsive to the needs, realities, conditions and livelihoods of those who are most at risk.

The South African Policy for Older Persons and the Plan of Action on Ageing

In 2002, the South African Policy for Older Persons and the accompanying South African Plan of Action was developed. This action plan puts older persons high on the country's agenda and emphasises the protection, care, support and development of older persons as a joint responsibility between government, civil society and the corporate sector. The plan of action for ageing has four key priority areas as informed by the Madrid Plan of Action on ageing, namely:

- Older persons and development;
- Advancing health and well-being into old age;
- Ensuring an enabling and supportive environment; and
- Preventing ill-treatment and neglect of older persons.

Older Persons Act, 2006:

The South African Plan of Action on Ageing was incorporated into the Older Persons Act (Act No. 13 of 2006). The Act deals effectively with the plight of older persons by establishing a framework aimed at the empowerment and protection of older persons and the promotion and maintenance of their status, rights, well-being, safety and security.

1.4 Data sources

The General Household Survey (GHS) was used as the primary data source, focusing on comparing the years 2017 and 2021. The GHS is an annual household survey that has been conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) since 2002. It is used as a tool aimed at measuring development progress, including service delivery in the country. The survey visits between 28 000 and 30 000 sampled dwelling units in all nine provinces annually. The other main source of data used is the mid-year population estimates, which estimate the population as of mid-year (01 July in a given year). This provides useful estimates of the population based on certain demographic variables. The estimation process takes into account the latest available data on fertility, mortality and migration to estimate the size of the population of South Africa.

Additional data sources from Statistics South Africa, such as the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) and Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJS), were also used where applicable.

1.5 Report layout

Chapter 1 covers the introduction, outlines the rationale for producing the report, and describes the data sources used.

Chapter 2 looks at the demographic profile of persons 60 years and older and the changes that have occurred over the period 2015 to 2020.

Chapter 3 provides information about household characteristics, which include households headed by older persons, household composition as well as generational household types.

Chapter 4 focuses on the education and technology of older persons.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of the employment profiles and income security of persons aged 60 years and older.

Chapter 6 looks at the health assessments, types of illnesses, access to medical aid, and access to healthcare facilities by the older persons.

Chapter 7 looks at the perceptions of crime by the households headed by the older persons.

Chapter 8 provides a general description of the living conditions amongst the older persons in terms of housing and access to basic household services.

Chapter 9 summarises the main highlights from the report and contains the conclusion and recommendations, based on the contents of the report.

1.6 Definitions

Adults:	persons aged 35–64 years.
Child:	a person under the age of 18 years.
Educational attainment:	refers to the highest level of education an individual has completed.
Employed persons:	those aged 15–64 years who, during the reference week, did any work for at least an hour, or had a job or business but were not at work (temporarily absent).
Grant:	is financial assistance provided by the government.
Labour force:	comprises all persons who are employed plus all persons who are unemployed.
Marital status:	refers to the personal status of each individual in relation to the marriage laws or customs of a country.
Old-age grant:	refers to financial assistance provided by the government to older persons who comply with the means test.
Older person:	persons aged 60 years and older
Poverty line:	is a monetary cut-off point below which a person is deemed to be poor. A person falling below the poverty line is said to be living in poverty.
Unemployment rate:	is the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed.
Youth:	individuals aged 15–34 years.

1.7 Abbreviations

ACHPR:	African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights
AU:	African Union
EC:	Eastern Cape
FS:	Free State
GHS:	General Household Survey
GP:	Gauteng
GPSJS:	Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey
ICESR:	International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
KZN:	KwaZulu-Natal
LP:	Limpopo
MTSF:	Medium Term Strategic Framework
MIPAA:	The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MP:	Mpumalanga
MYPE:	Mid-Year Population Estimates
NC:	Northern Cape
NDP:	National Development Plan
NSOs:	National Statistical Offices
NW:	North West
QLFS:	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
Stats SA:	Statistics South Africa
TCGA:	The Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age-disaggregated Data
VOCS:	Victims of Crime Survey
UNCROP:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons
UNSC:	United Nations Statistical Commission
WC:	Western Cape

CHAPTER 2: DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

2.1 Introduction

One of the most significant social changes of the twenty-first century is population ageing, which refers to an increase in the proportion of older persons in the population. Population ageing is a global phenomenon which is experienced by almost every country in the world.⁷

It will have an impact on almost all facets of society, including labour and financial markets, the demand for goods and services like housing, transportation, and social protection, as well as family structures and ties between generations (United Nations, World Population Ageing). This is true, especially for South Africa, which recently had a surge in the number of young persons, eventually giving way to an older population and leaving the nation with more older persons to care for.

In this report, persons over the age of 60 years and older are generally referred to as older persons. This chapter will focus on the demographic factors of older persons between 2017 and 2022.

2.2 Basic demographics of older persons

The ageing phenomenon is described with significant implications for the nation's health, social, and economic institutions. It is necessary to understand the past demographic and socioeconomic trends to better estimate the future size and characteristics of the older population.⁸ This will enable the prediction of their demand for services and the extent to which those demands can be met.

Table 2.1: Distribution of persons aged 60 years and older in relation to the total population, 2017–2022

Province	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	RSA ('000)	60+ ('000)	RSA ('000)	60+ ('000)	RSA ('000)	60+ ('000)	RSA ('000)	60+ ('000)	RSA ('000)	60+ ('000)	RSA ('000)	60+ ('000)
WC	6 605	640	6 735	668	6 869	696	7 000	728	7 103	748	7 212	775
EC	6 662	723	6 675	737	6 691	752	6 698	763	6 685	766	6 677	771
NC	1 242	121	1 257	124	1 272	126	1 287	130	1 298	130	1 309	132
FS	2 865	269	2 880	274	2 896	279	2 911	284	2 914	284	2 922	287
KZN	11 008	882	11 127	897	11 252	913	11 366	926	11 447	930	11 538	940
NW	3 893	332	3 957	343	4 023	353	4 087	365	4 135	370	4 187	379
GP	14 426	1 149	14 785	1 201	15 149	1 253	15 509	1 311	15 808	1 345	16 099	1 391
MP	4 420	341	4 485	351	4 554	362	4 619	373	4 668	380	4 720	389
LP	5 719	493	5 772	503	5 827	514	5 875	523	5 907	528	5 941	536
RSA	56 840	4 951	57 673	5 098	58 533	5 249	59 353	5 402	59 965	5 482	60 605	5 599

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Table 2.1 shows the distribution of persons aged 60 years and older to the total population. It shows that since 2017, both the overall population and the older persons have been growing consistently. Over 5,5 million of the South African population was reported to be older population in 2022 and accounted for 9,2% of the overall population. Between 2017 and 2022, the older population largely grew in Gauteng (242 thousand) and Western Cape (135 thousand) provinces. Although the older population grew across all provinces during this period, Northern Cape and Free State recorded the least growth, estimated at around 11 thousand and 18 thousand,

⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf>

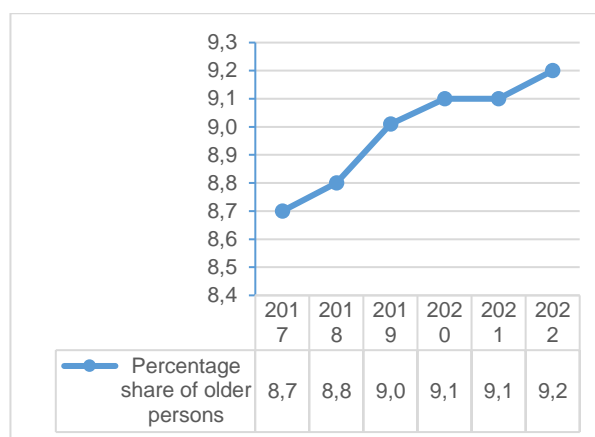
⁸ National Research Council (US) Panel on Statistics for an Aging Population; Gilford DM, editor. The Aging Population in the Twenty-First Century: Statistics for Health Policy. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 1988. 2, Social, Economic, and Demographic Changes among the Older. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK217734/>

respectively. Even though Northern Cape has the least growth and is less populated, it has a big land density, while Gauteng is a populous province but small in density. Although KwaZulu-Natal was the second most populous province (940 thousand) with older persons, it recorded the least growth of older persons compared to the other populous provinces. Nationally, the linear growth has been observed for a period of reference and reaffirmed by the provincial variations. In terms of absolute numbers, the analysis revealed a slight change in the number of older persons over the years.

Table 2.2: Percentage share of the older persons to the total population, 2017–2022

Province	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
WC	9,7	9,9	10,1	10,4	10,5	10,4
EC	10,9	11,0	11,2	11,4	11,5	11,5
NC	9,7	9,9	9,9	10,1	10,0	9,9
FS	9,4	9,5	9,6	9,8	9,8	9,7
KZN	8,0	8,1	8,1	8,1	8,1	8,1
NW	8,5	8,7	8,8	8,9	9,0	8,8
GP	8,0	8,1	8,3	8,5	8,5	8,4
MP	7,7	7,8	8,0	8,1	8,1	8,0
LP	8,6	8,7	8,8	8,9	8,9	8,9
RSA	8,7	8,8	9,0	9,1	9,1	9,2

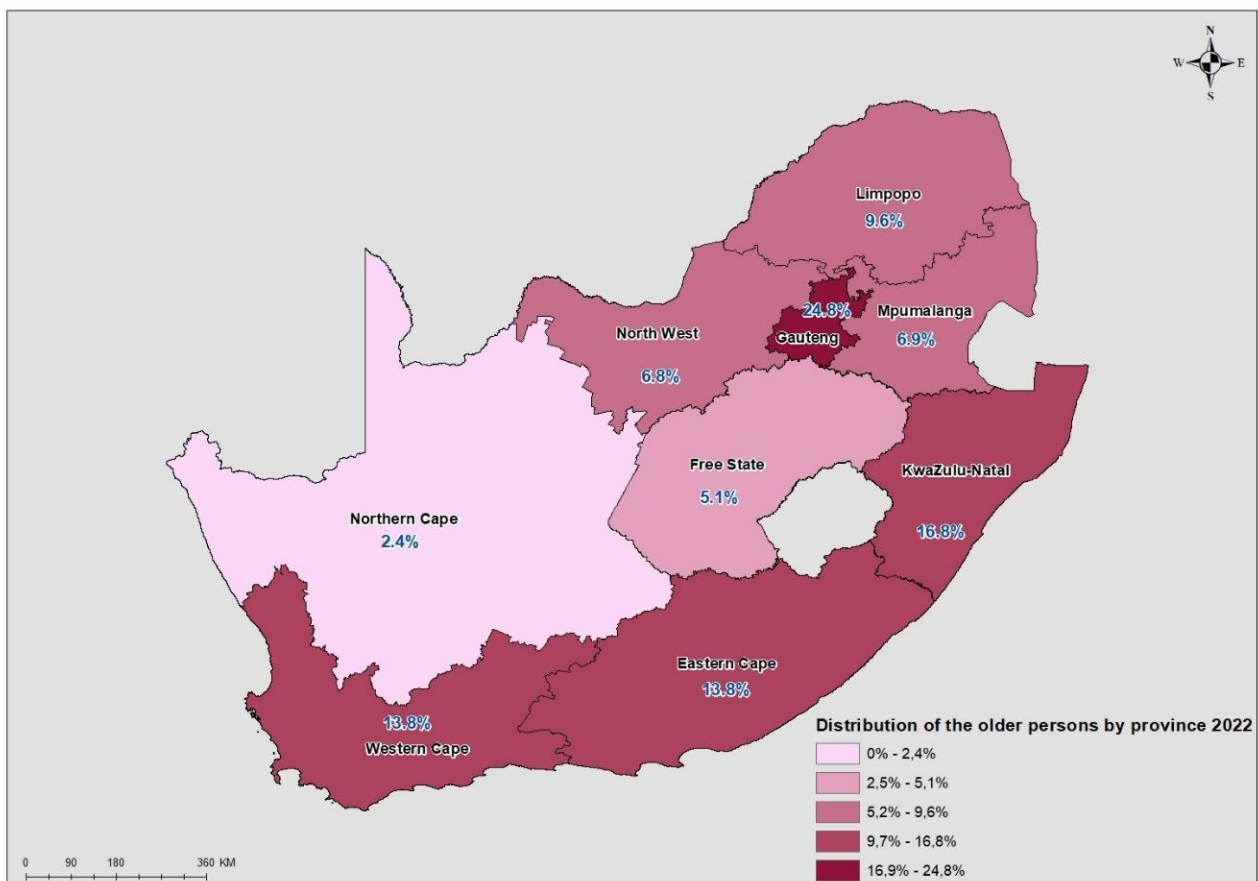
Figure 2.1: Trend analysis of the older population



Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

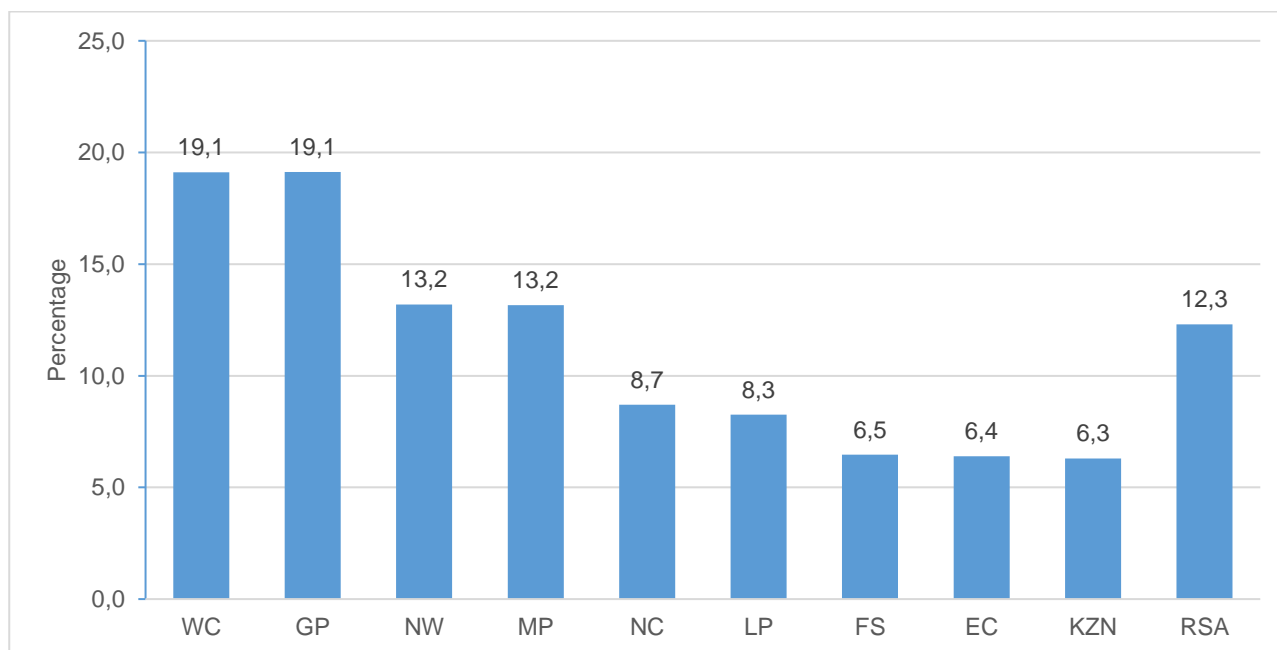
Table 2.2 and Figure 2.1 depict the percentage share of older persons in the total population. According to Table 2.2, between 2017 and 2022 the percentage share of the older population to the total population increased in all provinces. However, between 2021 and 2022 there was a decrease in six of the provinces while three remained constant. These provincial variations contributed to a slight increase of 0,1% at the national level. Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces have the highest share of older persons compared to other provinces. This indicates the accelerated ageing phenomenon in these two provinces, which has the potential to exert pressure on the service provision pertaining to older persons.

Figure 2.1 above also shows that the older population has been experiencing linear growth over the four-year period and remained constant between 2020 and 2021 and further increased. This shows that the population of persons aged 60 years has been growing at more or less absolute equal increments per year, as shown in Table 2.1.

Figure 2.2: Percentage distribution of older persons by province, 2022

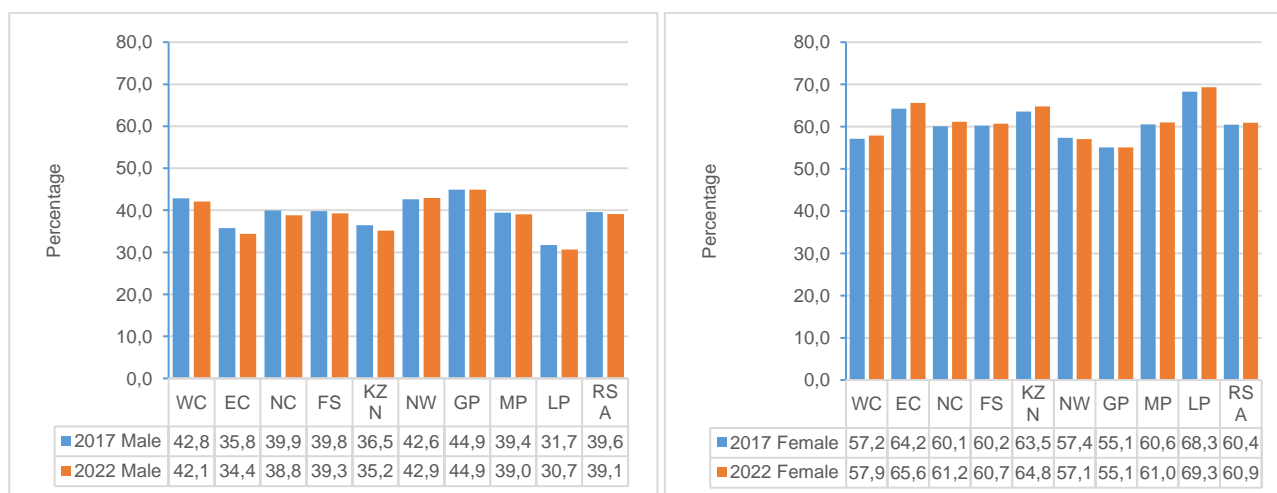
Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.2 depicts the percentage distribution of the older population in different provinces in 2022. According to this map, Gauteng (24,8%) has the highest percentage of older persons compared to other provinces. Northern Cape had a lower percentage of older persons (2,4%).

Figure 2.3: Percentage growth of older persons by province, 2017 and 2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.3 shows the average growth in the older population between 2017 and 2022. Nationally, the older population increased by 12,3%. All provinces recorded increases in the percentage of older persons during the reference period. Gauteng (19,1%) and Western Cape (19,1%) provinces recorded the largest and same increases, followed by North West and Mpumalanga, which recorded the same percentages (13,2%). The lowest increase was recorded in KwaZulu-Natal at 6,3%.

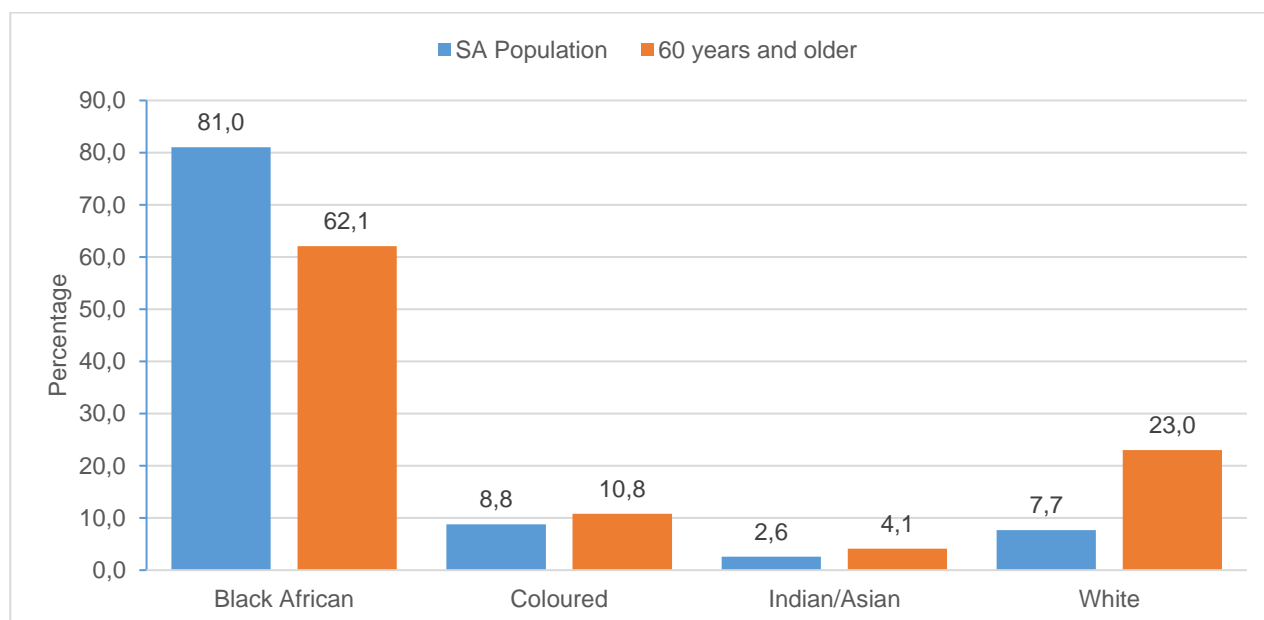
Figure 2.4: Percentage distribution of older persons by province and sex, 2017 and 2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.4 illustrates the distribution of older persons by sex within each province in 2017 and 2022. The analysis of the percentage distribution of the older population within each province reveals the extent to which individual provinces are ageing over time.

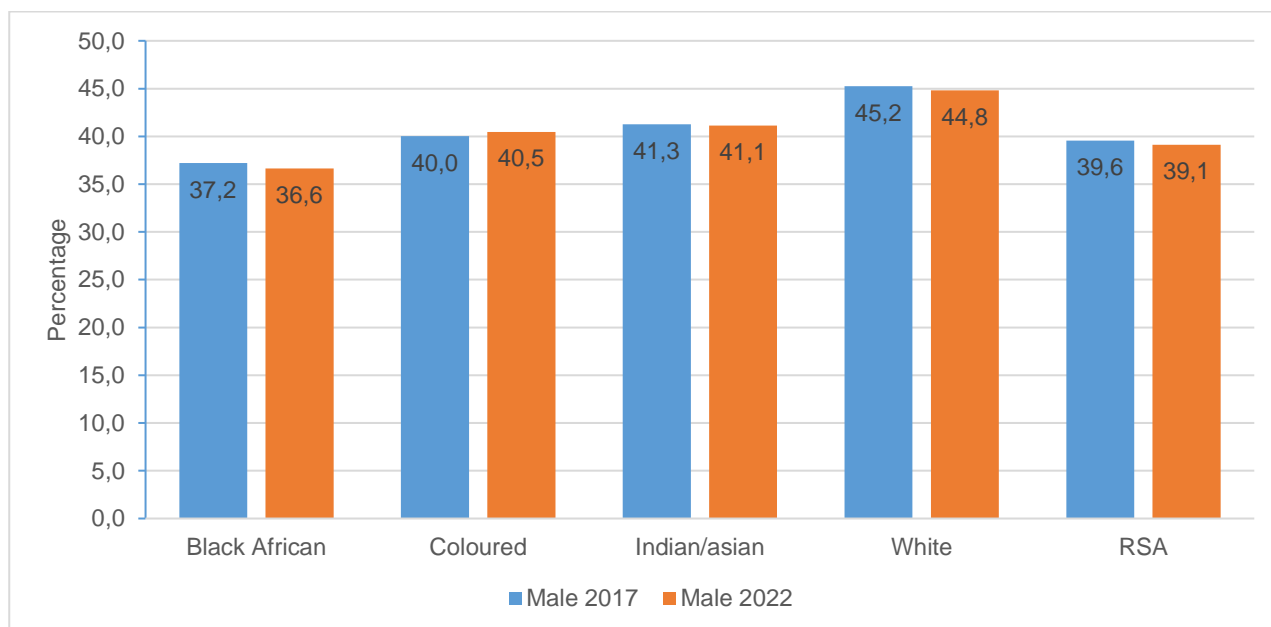
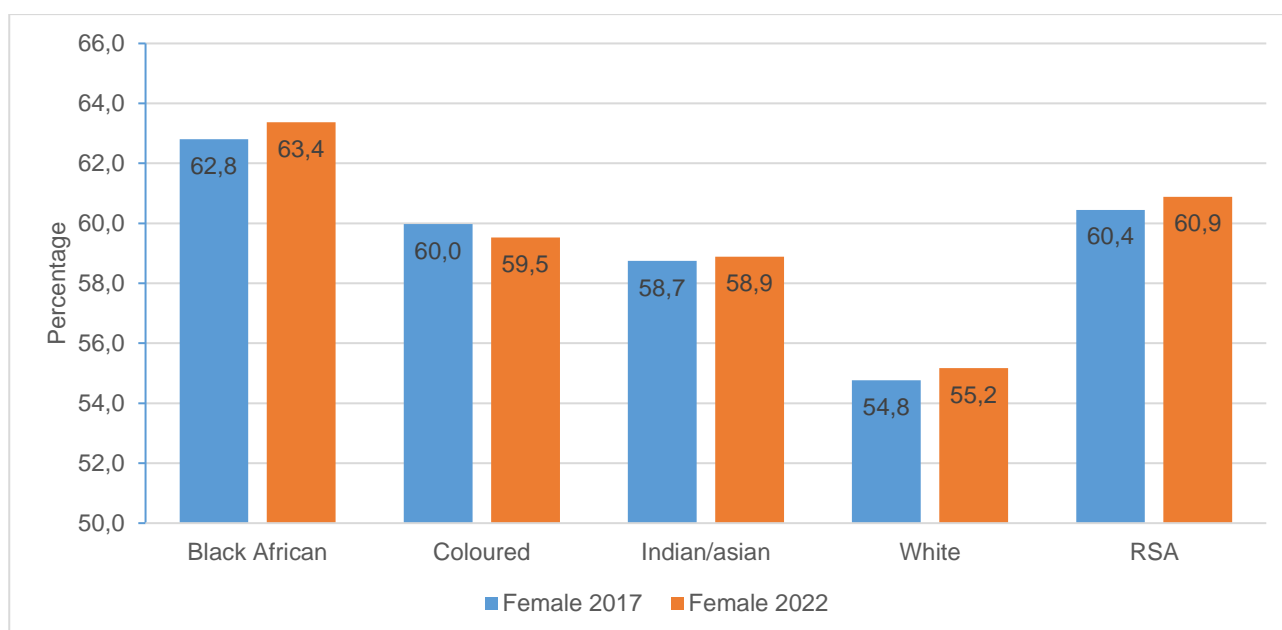
Nationally, between 2017 and 2022, the proportion of older females increased from 60,4% to 60,9%, while the opposite was true for older males. This increase was primarily driven by the increases observed amongst the female share of the older population in provinces such as Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces. Similarly, the older male population decreased due to decreases observed in the same provinces concerning the share of males.

Figure 2.5: Percentage distribution of older persons to the total population by population group, 2022



Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.5 above depicts that the distribution of older persons is substantially different compared to the distribution of the general population across the four population groups. The percentage of older persons amongst coloured, Indian/Asian, and white population groups was higher than that observed for the general population, while black Africans showed a different picture. Black Africans present the characteristics of a youthful population as the older population is 18,9 percentage points lower than the general population in this group. The gap between the SA population and the older persons shows the ageing phenomenon within the other three population groups.

Figure 2.6a: Percentage distribution of older males by population group, 2017 and 2022**Figure 2.6b: Percentage distribution of older females by population group, 2017 and 2022**

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figures 2.6a and 2.6b show the percentage distribution of older persons across different population groups by sex for 2017 and 2022. Between 2017 and 2022, the percentages of females were noticeably higher across all population groups. Generally, this pattern shows the predominance of females, which tends to increase in older age groups. Although more males are born than females, women tend to have higher survival rates than men, and thus, the older population are usually disproportionately female.⁹

⁹ John Knodel and Napaporn Chayovan: Population Ageing and the Well-being of Older Persons in Thailand, Report 08-659, October 2008.

2.3 Age-sex structure of older persons

The age-sex structure of a population is the cumulative result of previous trends in fertility, mortality, and migration. The information on this composition is essential for the description and analysis of many other types of demographic data.¹⁰ The age structure of a population refers to the proportionate numbers of persons in different age categories in a given population at a certain time.

Table 2.3: Distribution of persons aged 60 years and older by age group and sex, 2017 and 2022

Age group	Male		Female		Total	
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
	2017					
60–64	703	42,2	963	57,8	1 666	100,0
65–69	524	40,8	761	59,2	1 285	100,0
70–74	346	38,7	547	61,3	893	100,0
75–79	219	37,5	366	62,6	585	100,1
80 +	166	31,8	357	68,3	523	100,1
Total	1 958	39,5	2 993	60,5	4 951	100,0
Age group	2022					
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
	2022					
60–64	778	42,1	1 068	57,9	1 846	100,0
65–69	579	40,3	858	59,7	1 437	100,0
70–74	400	38,3	644	61,7	1 044	100,0
75–79	236	35,6	426	64,4	662	100,0
80 +	197	32,3	412	67,7	609	100,0
Total	2 190	39,1	3 409	60,9	5 599	100,0

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Table 2.3 shows the number and percentage distribution of older persons by age group and sex. Between 2017 and 2022, the age group 60–64 years had the highest number of older persons for both males and females, whilst the age group 80 and older comprised the least of the older population.

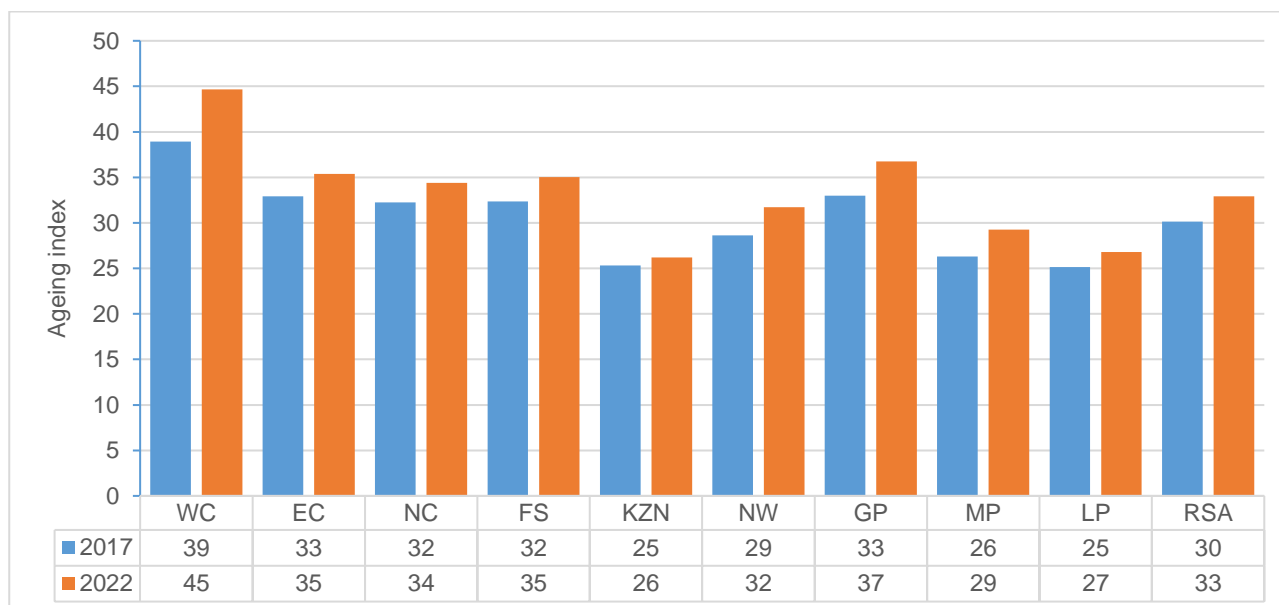
Gender analysis showed that the number of older males decreased as they aged, while the opposite is observed for their female counterparts in both years. The distribution of older persons in absolute terms shows that females dominate the older population, and this is the case across all age groups in both years. These results further confirm the ageing phenomenon in South Africa.

2.4 Ageing index

The ageing index is a common measure of the age structure and is intended to highlight the changes in the proportionate share of the population accounted for by age groups 0–14 and 60 years and older. It is defined as the number of older persons (aged 60+ in this report) per hundred persons under age 15.¹¹ If the number of persons aged 60 and older exactly equals the number of persons under age 15 in the population, the ageing index equals 100. The values under 100 denote that the number of older persons is less than the number of young persons, while the opposite is true for values greater than 100.

¹⁰ Resource Library, Glossary of Demographic Terms <https://www.prb.org/resources/glossary/>

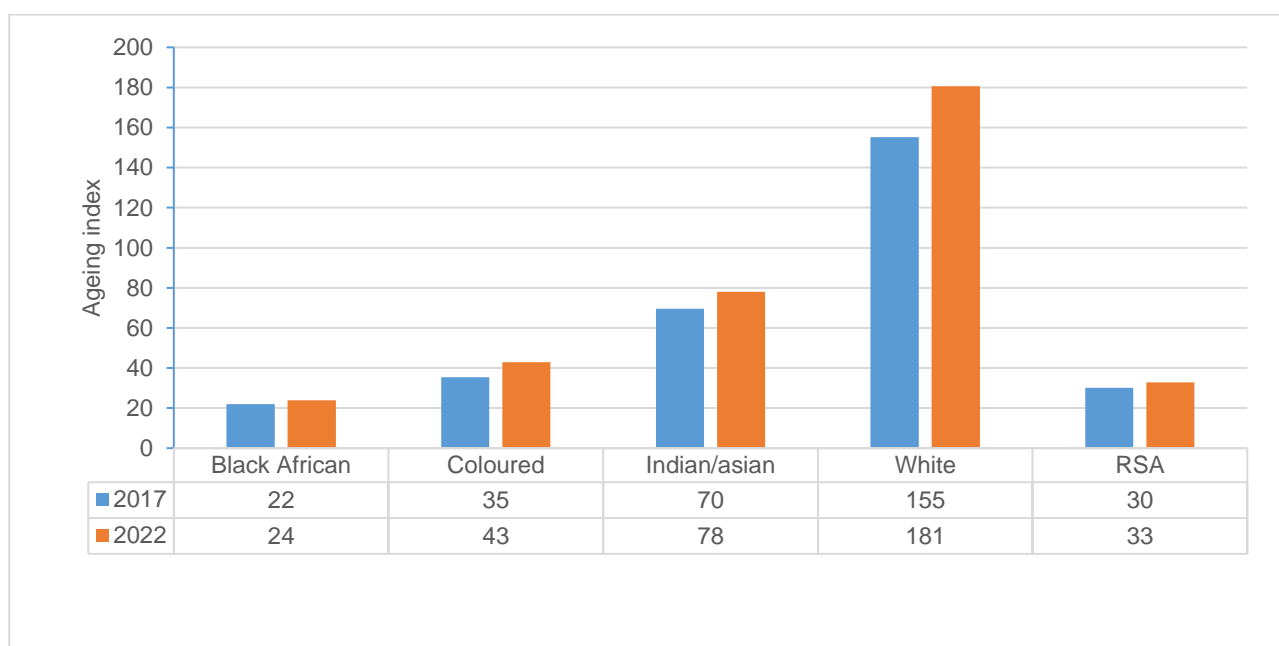
¹¹ John Knodel and Napaporn Chayovan: Population Ageing and the Well-being of Older Persons in Thailand, Report 08- 659, October 2008.

Figure 2.7: Ageing index by province, 2017 and 2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.7 shows the ageing index by province. Nationally, the ageing index increased from 30 to 33. It is clear that the population of children in the age group 0–14 outnumbers that of the older population, though the index grew by at least three over this period showing that the population is progressively ageing.

The provincial variations show that the ageing index varied across all provinces for the year of reference. The provinces that recorded the highest ageing index in 2017 recorded the same in 2022. These provinces include Western Cape (39 and 45 respectively), Gauteng (33 and 37 respectively), Eastern Cape (33 and 35 respectively), Northern Cape (32 and 34 respectively) and Free State (32 and 35 respectively). The highest ageing indexes in these provinces are indicative of the higher proportions of older persons living in them. KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga recorded lower ageing indexes for both years.

Figure 2.8: Ageing index by population group, 2017 and 2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.8 illustrates the ageing index by population group. Generally, the ageing index increased across all population groups during the reporting period, though black Africans recorded a slight increase compared to other population groups.

Between 2017 and 2022, the ageing index amongst the white population group increased from 155 to 181, which indicates that this population group is ageing rapidly. A significantly higher percentage of older persons relative to children suggests an increased future burden of care and a decline in future family support.¹²

Black Africans had the lowest ageing index relative to all other population groups (lower proportions of older persons to children) and re-confirms the youthfulness of the black African population in the country.

2.5 Marital status

Table 2.4: Marital status of older persons by sex, 2017 and 2021

Marital status	Male		Female		Both sexes	
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
	2017					
Legally married	1 263	68,5	870	31,6	2 134	46,4
Living together	103	5,6	74	2,7	177	3,8
Divorced or separated	82	4,5	171	6,2	253	5,5
Widowed	260	14,1	1 301	47,3	1 562	34,0
Never married	136	7,4	335	12,2	471	10,2
Total	1 845	100,0	2 751	100,0	4 596	100,0
Marital status	2021					
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
	2021					
Legally married	1 323	63,2	888	28,6	2 211	42,5
Living together	89	4,2	39	1,3	128	2,5
Divorced or separated	109	5,2	161	5,2	270	5,2
Widowed	406	19,4	1 578	50,8	1 983	38,1
Never married	167	8,0	442	14,2	609	11,7
Total	2 094	100,0	3 108	100,0	5 202	100,0

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

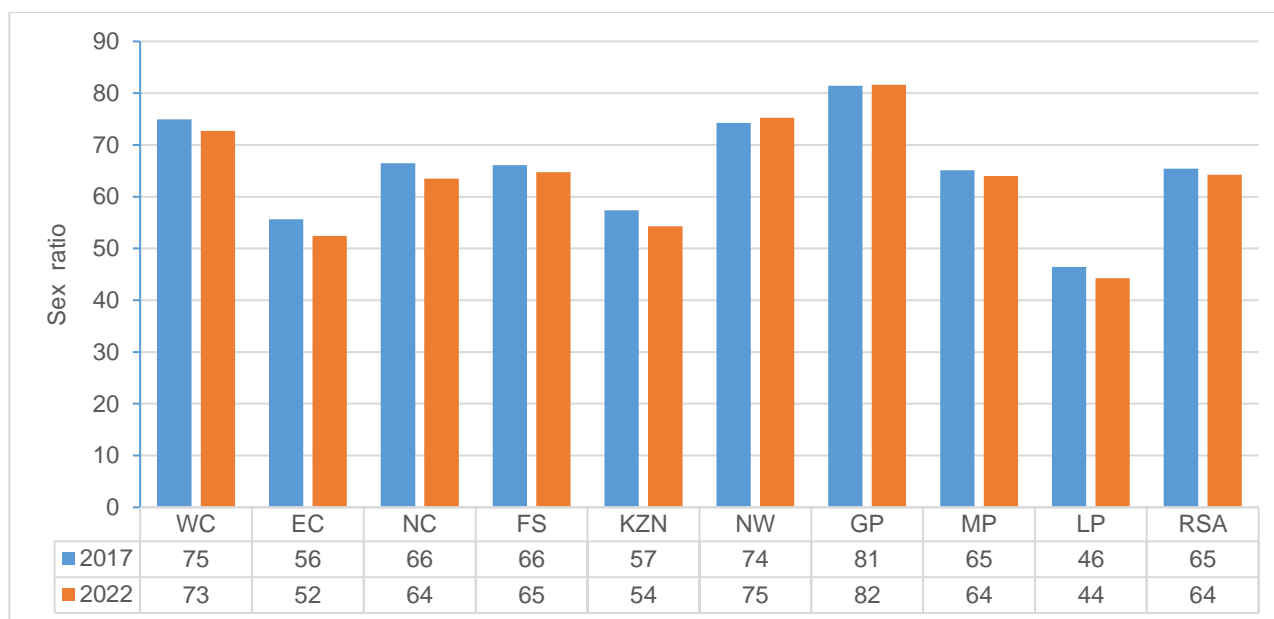
Table 2.4 shows the marital status of older persons between 2017 and 2021. Nationally, the largest percentage of older persons are legally married, followed by those widowed. Between 2017 and 2021, the percentage of older persons that were legally married dropped by 3,9 percentage points while those who were widowed increased by 4,1 percentage points. Looking at gender variations, older males were more likely to be married than older females. The majority of males were legally married for both years, while their female counterparts were widowed. These results assert the change in sex composition of the older population owed to higher survival rates among females; hence a higher percentage of them are widowed. Generally, the number of males legally married and living together in absolute terms surpassed that of their female counterparts for both years. Marriage provides more social and material support.

¹² John Knodel and Napaporn Chayovan: Population Ageing and the Well-being of Older Persons in Thailand, Report 08-659, October 2008.

2.6 Sex ratios among older persons

The sex ratio is the main measure of sex composition used in demography. The sex ratio is usually defined as the number of males per 100 females. One hundred is the point of balance of the sexes according to this measure. A sex ratio above 100 denotes an excess of males, and a sex ratio below 100 denotes an excess of females. In other words, the greater the excess of males, the higher the sex ratio, and the greater the excess of females, the lower the sex ratio.

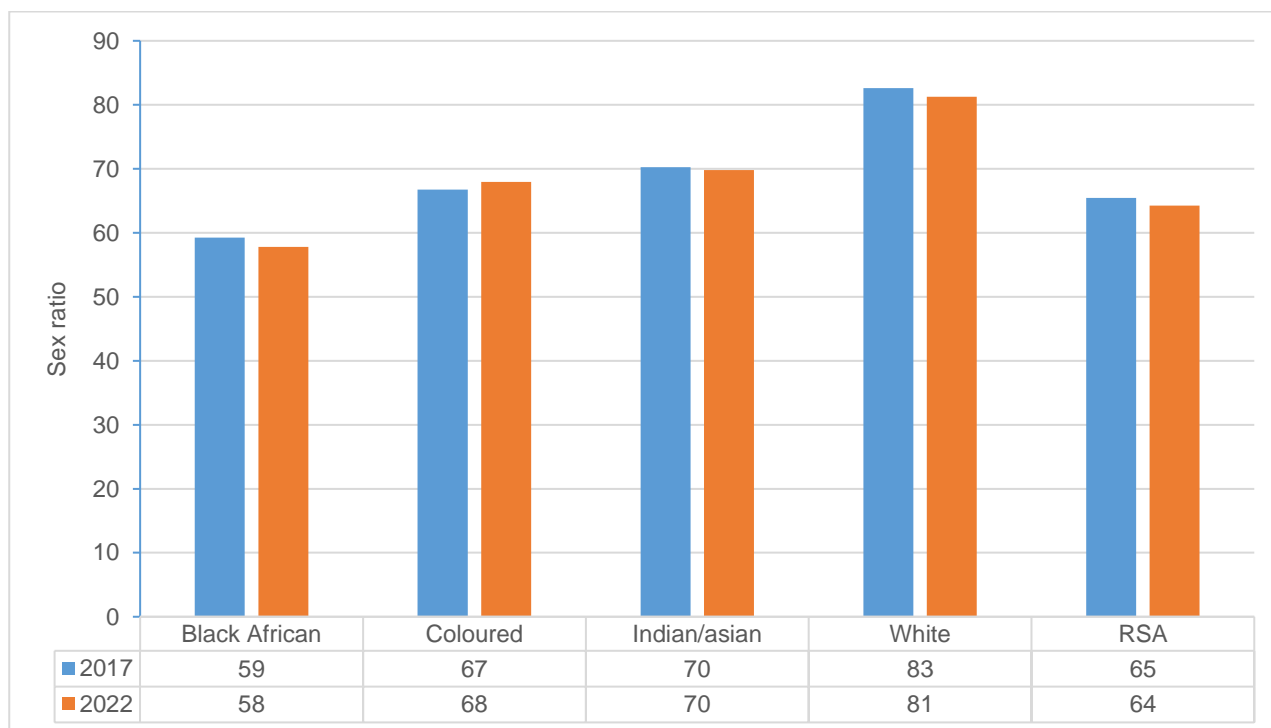
Figure 2.9: Sex ratio by province, 2017 and 2022



Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

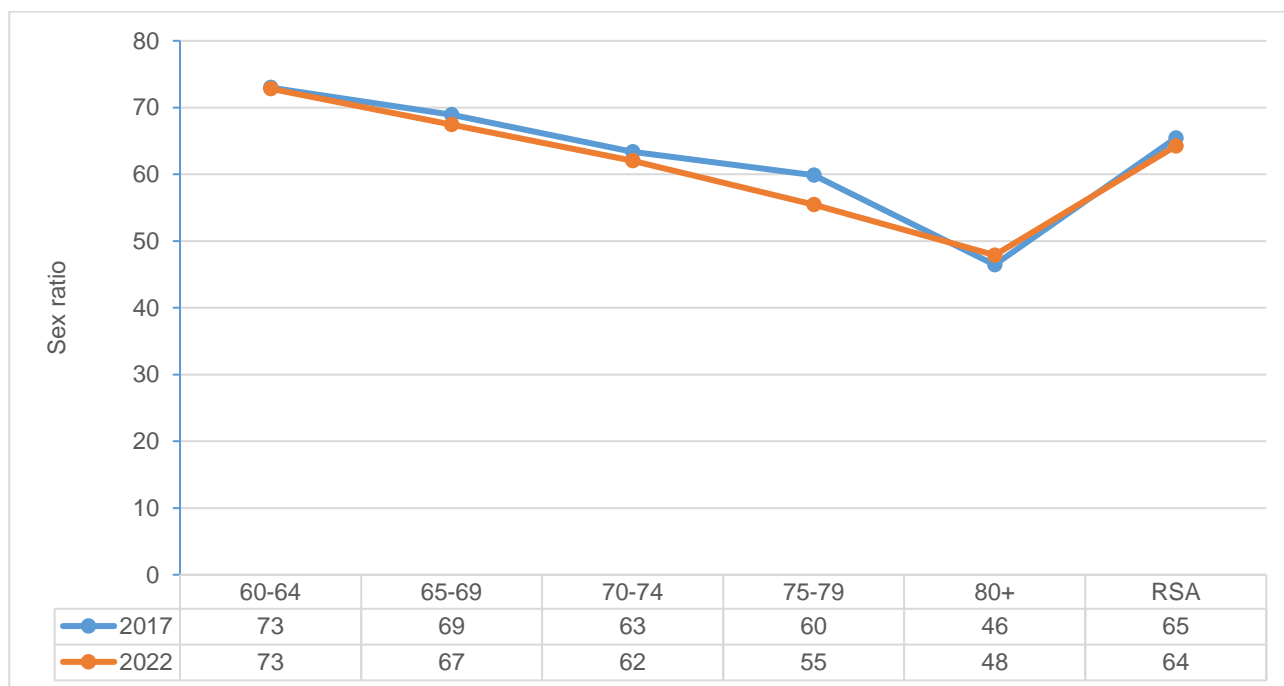
Figure 2.9 shows the sex ratio by province. Nationally, between 2017 and 2022, the sex ratio slightly declined by one point (from 65 men per 100 women in 2017 to 64 men per 100 women in 2022), which indicates that the proportion of women in the older population increased over time.

Between 2017 and 2022, all the provinces had more females than males, but gaps between males and females were less in Gauteng, Western Cape and North West. Gauteng, Western Cape and North West had the highest sex ratios among older persons relative to other provinces. Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal showed a wider gap between older males and females as the older population in these provinces was predominantly female.

Figure 2.10: Sex ratio by population group, 2017 and 2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.10 illustrates the sex ratios of older persons by population group. The results show that among the black African population, there were more older females than older males (59 men per 100 women in 2017 and 58 men per 100 women in 2022) relative to other population groups that recorded sex ratios above the national average (65 men per 100 women in 2017 and 64 men per 100 women in 2022). The white population group had the highest sex ratios (83 men per 100 women in 2017 and 81 men per 100 women in 2022).

Figure 2.11: Sex ratio by age group, 2017 and 2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 2.11 illustrates the sex ratios among the older persons by age group. The majority of older persons are women, and their predominance tends to increase with age. This fact is reflected in Figure 2.12, where sex ratios are lower in the older age groups, illustrating the predominance of females at older ages. Between 2017 and 2022, the sex ratio declined among those aged 65–69, 70–74, and 75–79, while those aged 60–64 years remained constant. The sex ratio for older persons aged 80+ increased between 2017 and 2022.

2.7 Conclusion

The older population has been growing during the past six years. The South African population structure is characterised by declining birth rates and improved overall quality of life. This improvement contributes to longer life expectancy. Even though birth rates are declining, it does not relate to birth declining as shown by pyramid. This is further affirmed by increased ageing indexes across all population groups, with the white older population recording the highest indexes compared to other population groups. The older population is disproportionately female; older persons in all provinces are more likely to be female. The sex ratios are consequently skewed towards females. As such, the majority of older females are widowed, while the males are married.

CHAPTER 3: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information about the number of households headed by older persons, the characteristics of the household head, the household's composition as well as inter-generational household types. The living arrangements and household characteristics are fundamental determinants of the health and well-being of older persons. This information will inform strategies and policies that will assist in responding to the needs of older persons.¹³

Table 3.1: Distribution of households headed by older persons in South Africa, 2017 and 2021

	SA households (excluding older persons-headed households)		Older persons-headed households					
			Male		Female		Both sexes	
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
2017								
Western Cape	1 473	80,8	208	59,3	143	40,7	350	19,2
Eastern Cape	1 194	71,6	209	44,2	264	55,8	474	28,4
Northern Cape	254	76,3	32	40,6	47	59,4	79	23,7
Free State	701	79,5	76	42,3	104	57,7	181	20,5
KwaZulu-Natal	2 236	79,1	264	44,7	327	55,3	591	20,9
North West	934	79,7	112	47,1	126	52,9	238	20,3
Gauteng	4 010	85,2	353	50,4	347	49,6	699	14,8
Mpumalanga	1 020	81,7	111	48,7	117	51,3	228	18,3
Limpopo	1 224	79,6	117	37,2	197	62,8	313	20,4
RSA	13 046	80,5	1 482	47,0	1 671	53,0	3 153	19,5
2021								
Western Cape	1 604	79,4	203	48,7	214	51,3	417	20,6
Eastern Cape	1 203	69,7	203	38,9	319	61,1	522	30,3
Northern Cape	274	75,4	45	50,8	44	49,2	89	24,6
Free State	743	78,0	86	40,9	124	59,1	209	22,0
KwaZulu-Natal	2 436	78,3	285	42,2	390	57,8	675	21,7
North West	1 037	79,3	135	49,9	136	50,1	271	20,7
Gauteng	4 560	84,7	427	51,8	397	48,2	824	15,3
Mpumalanga	1 128	80,7	97	36,0	173	64,0	270	19,3
Limpopo	1 322	78,5	167	46,1	195	53,9	362	21,5
RSA	14 308	79,7	1 648	45,3	1 990	54,7	3 638	20,3

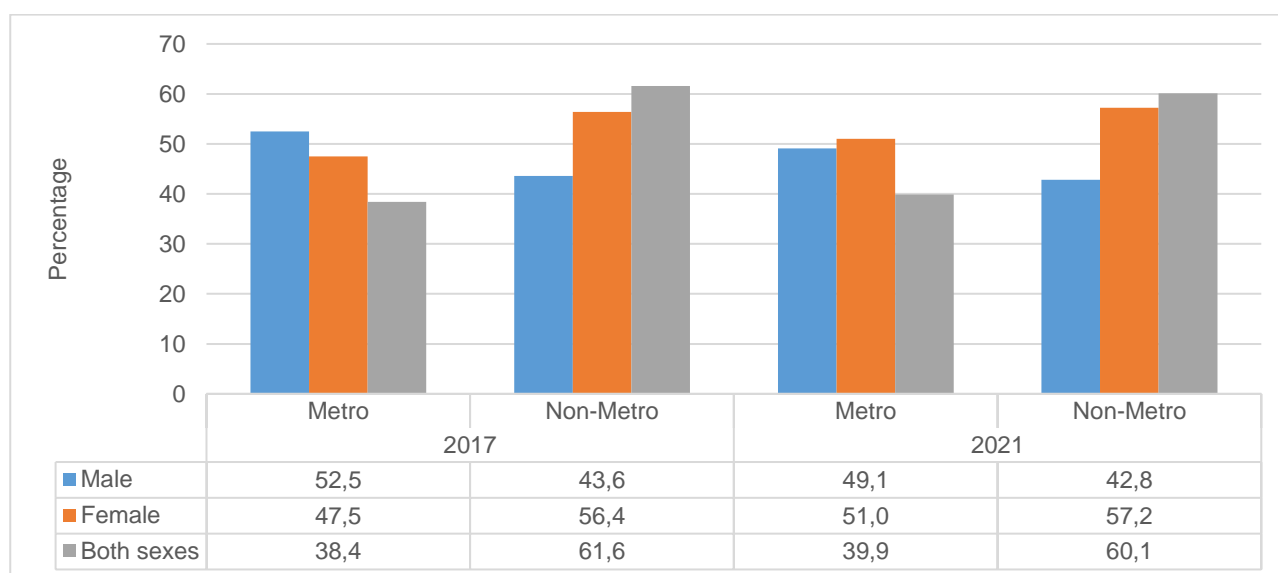
Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Table 3.1 measures the prevalence of households headed by older persons between 2017 and 2021 in relation to all households in South Africa (excluding older persons). At the national level, for both years under review, about 20% of the households were headed by older persons. There was an increase across all provinces in older households, with Eastern Cape and Free State recording the highest of 1,9 percentage points and 1,5 percentage points, respectively.

¹³ Biritwum, R.B., Mensah, G., Minicuci, N., Yawson, A.E., Naidoo, N., Chatterji, S. & Kowal, P. (2013). Household characteristics for older adults and study background from SAGE Ghana Wave 1. Global Health Action, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v6i0.20096>

Between 2017 and 2021, the percentage of households headed by older persons for both sexes increased by 0,8 of a percentage point. Households headed by older males declined from 47,0% to 45,3%, and an accompanying increase in female-headed households within the age group of older-headed households was observed. A decline in households headed by older males was recorded in most provinces, except for North West, Gauteng, and Limpopo where there was an increase of 2,8, 1,4 and 8,9 percentage points, respectively, in older male-headed households.

Figure 3.1: Percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by sex and geographical location, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 3.1 shows the percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by sex and geographical location over the period 2017 to 2021. Nationally, households headed by older persons were more likely to be found in non-metro compared to metro areas. Between 2017 and 2021 there was a slight decrease of 1,5 percentage points in households headed by older persons in non-metros (from 61,6% in 2017 to 60,1% in 2021), while households headed by older persons in metros increased with the same percentage (from 38,4% in 2017 to 39,9% in 2021).

In 2017, households headed by older females were higher in non-metros (56,4%) compared to their male counterparts (43,6%), while households headed by older males recorded the highest percentage (52,5%) in metros compared to their female counterparts (47,5%). In 2021, there was a decline in households headed by older males for both metros and non-metros (3,4 and 0,8 percentage points, respectively).

3.2 Living arrangements

Living arrangements of older persons are determined by cultural norms regarding co-residence, intergenerational ties, and familial support. Living arrangements are also fundamentally affected by demographic change and, in particular, by population ageing. In an aged population, older persons have relatively fewer children and grandchildren than in youthful populations. Partly because of this, older persons in more aged populations are less likely to live in multi-generational households and are more likely to live independently, either alone or only with a spouse. The longer life spans associated with ageing populations open opportunities for more complex intergenerational living arrangements, such as three or more generation households (United Nations, 2005).¹⁴

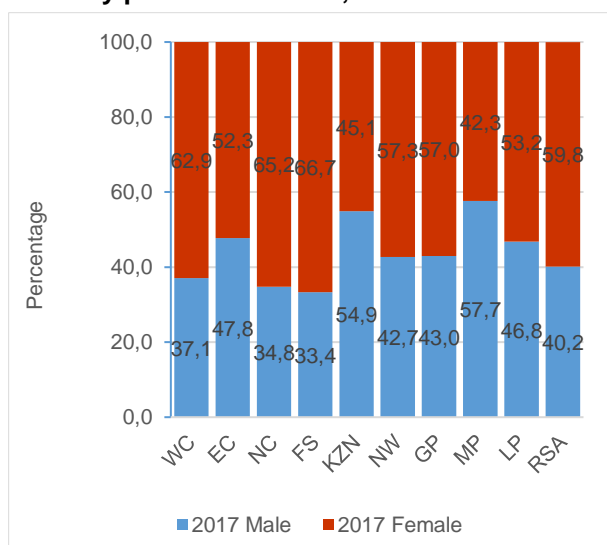
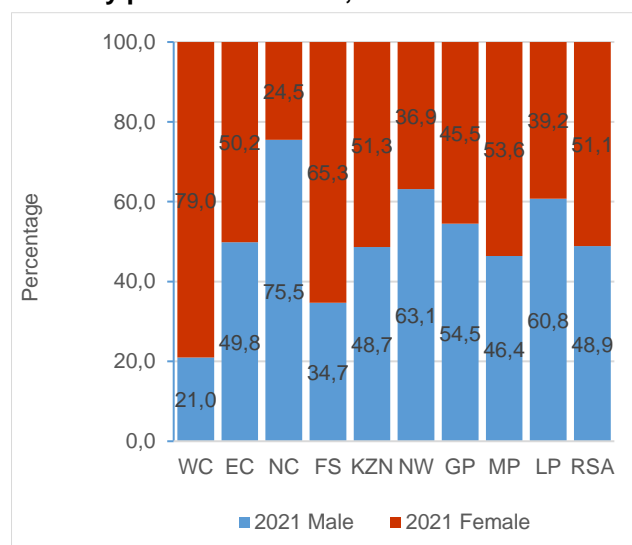
¹⁴ United Nations, 2005.

Table 3.2: Distribution of older persons living alone in South Africa, 2017 and 2021

Province	2017			2021		
	Living alone		Older persons	Living alone		Older persons
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)
Western Cape	50	7,9	626	55	7,6	723
Eastern Cape	87	13,3	655	97	13,6	711
Northern Cape	14	12,3	116	14	10,0	142
Free State	29	11,7	249	41	15,6	263
KwaZulu-Natal	77	9,2	829	96	10,5	915
North West	48	14,2	336	44	12,7	351
Gauteng	120	11,3	1 064	123	9,6	1 273
Mpumalanga	32	10,6	300	50	14,1	353
Limpopo	38	9,1	421	41	8,8	472
South Africa	495	10,8	4 596	561	10,8	5 202

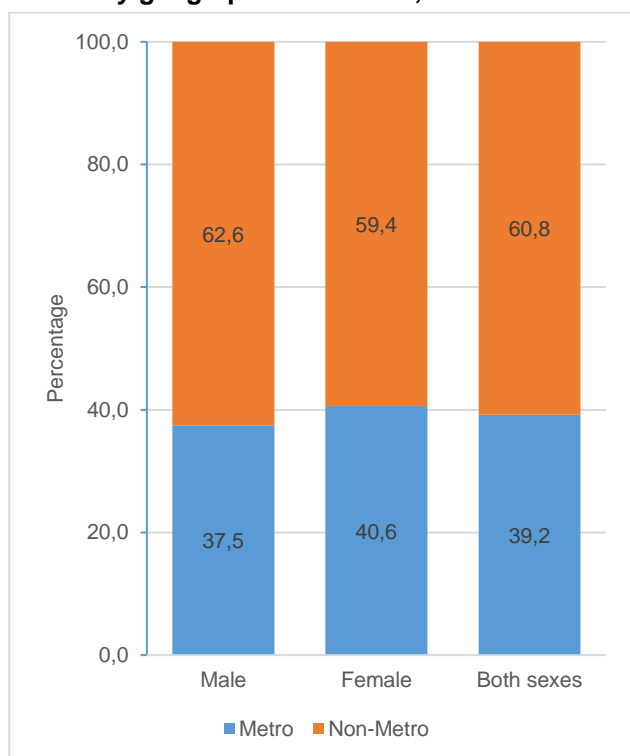
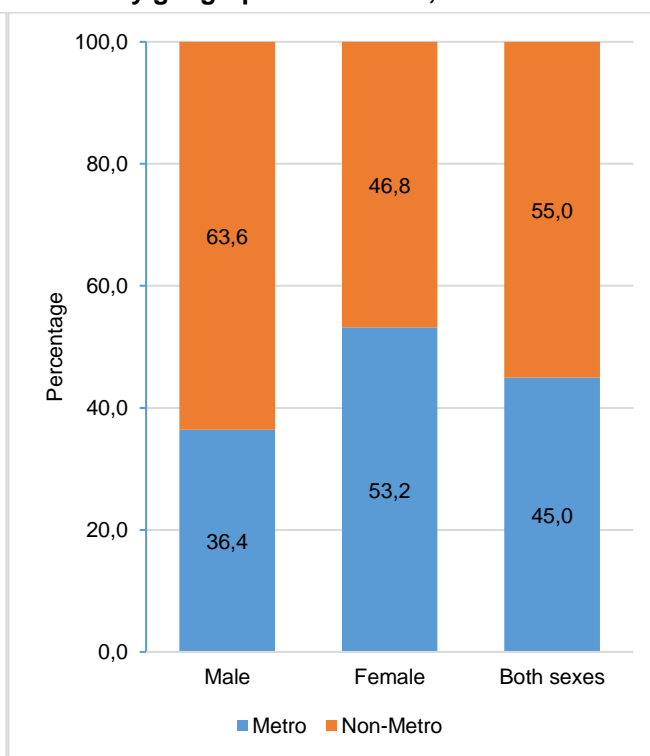
Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Table 3.2 displays the percentage of older persons living alone in relation to the total older population. Between 2017 and 2021, the proportion of older persons living alone remained the same. The largest increase was observed in Free State and Mpumalanga with 4,1 and 3,5 percentage points respectively, while Northern Cape recorded a drop of 2,3 percentage points (from 12,3% to 10,0%).

Figure 3.2a: Percentage of older persons living alone by province and sex, 2017**Figure 3.2b: Percentage of older persons living alone by province and sex, 2021**

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figures 3.2a and 3.2b demonstrate the percentage distribution of persons aged 60 years and older living alone by province and sex. Females were more likely than males to be living independently or alone in at least seven of the nine provinces in 2017, and in five of the nine provinces in 2021. In 2017, Free State had the highest proportion (66,7%) of females who were living alone, while in 2021 Western Cape surpassed that at 79,0%. The largest drop of older females living alone was recorded in Northern Cape at 40,7 percentage points (from 65,2% to 24,5%). Generally, there were significantly larger gender imbalances in terms of those who were living alone, with older females more likely to be in this position, even though a slight shift was observed in 2021.

Figure 3.3a: Percentage of older persons living alone by geographical location, 2017**Figure 3.3b: Percentage of older persons living alone by geographical location, 2021**

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

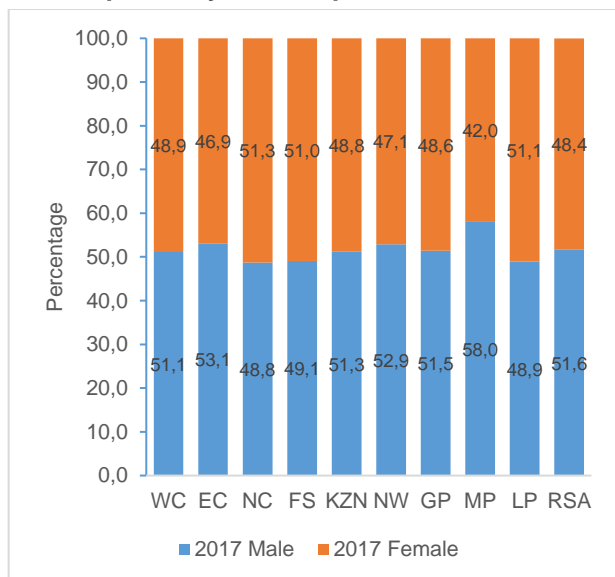
Figures 3.3a and 3.3b illustrate the percentage of persons aged 60 years and older living alone by geographical location. The data revealed differences in terms of the preferred geographical location of older persons who lived alone. The majority of older males living alone resided in non-metros (62,6% in 2017 and 63,6% in 2021), whilst the percentage of older males who resided in metro areas was 37,5% in 2017 and 36,4% in 2021. In 2017, the majority of older females living alone resided in non-metros, whilst the opposite was observed in 2021. Between 2017 and 2021, there was a 1,1% decrease in the percentage of males living alone. In the same reference period, a 12,6 percentage points increase was observed among older females living alone in metros (from 40,6% in 2017 to 53,2% in 2022).

Table 3.3: Distribution of older persons living with a spouse by province, 2017 and 2021

Province	2017			2021		
	Living with a spouse		Older persons	Living with a spouse		Older persons
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)
Western Cape	309	49,3	626	297	41,1	723
Eastern Cape	131	20,1	655	129	18,1	711
Northern Cape	27	23,0	116	29	20,4	142
Free State	69	27,7	249	69	26,3	263
KwaZulu-Natal	195	23,5	829	198	21,7	915
North West	92	27,3	336	118	33,5	351
Gauteng	417	39,2	1 064	535	42,1	1 273
Mpumalanga	69	22,9	300	79	22,4	353
Limpopo	62	14,8	421	112	23,8	472
South Africa	1 370	29,8	4 596	1 566	30,1	5 202

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Table 3.3 demonstrates the percentage of older persons living with their spouses compared to the total older population. Between 2017 and 2021, the number of older persons living with their spouses increased by 196 thousand. However, the increase in numbers was not significant, as the proportions of the total older population increased slightly from 29,8% to 30,1% in 2021. Provinces had larger variations with regard to older persons living with their spouses, Western Cape, and Gauteng recorded higher proportions for both years at 49,3% to 41,1% and 39,2% to 42,1%, respectively.

Figure 3.4a: Percentage of older persons living with a spouse by sex and province, 2017**Figure 3.4b: Percentage of older persons living with a spouse by sex and province, 2021**

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figures 3.4a and 3.4b display the percentage of older persons living with their spouses. Spouses can be a primary source of material, social, and emotional support as well as providers of personal care during time of illness or weakness. Thus, living with a spouse typically has advantages for older persons.¹⁵ The results showed that females were more likely to live alone than with a spouse, while the contrary was true for males. In 2017, Northern Cape, Limpopo and Free State had higher percentages of females who were living with their spouses (51,3%, 51,1% and 51,0%, respectively) when compared to other provinces. However, this changed in 2021, with incidences recorded for Mpumalanga at 60,8%, Northern Cape at 55,3% and Eastern Cape at 53,8%.

Figure 3.5a: Percentage distribution of older persons living with a spouse by geographical location, 2017

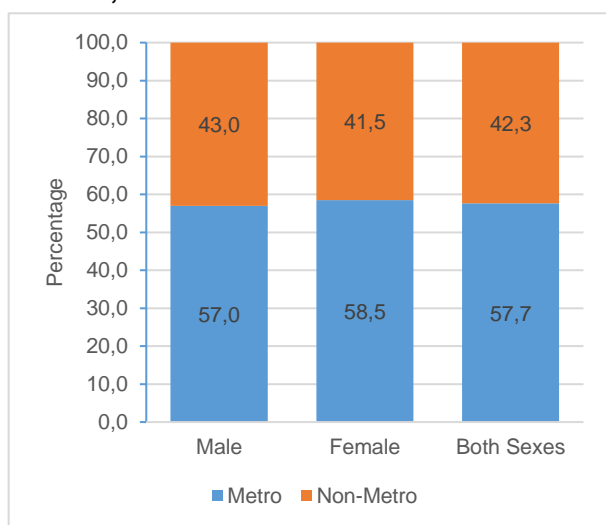
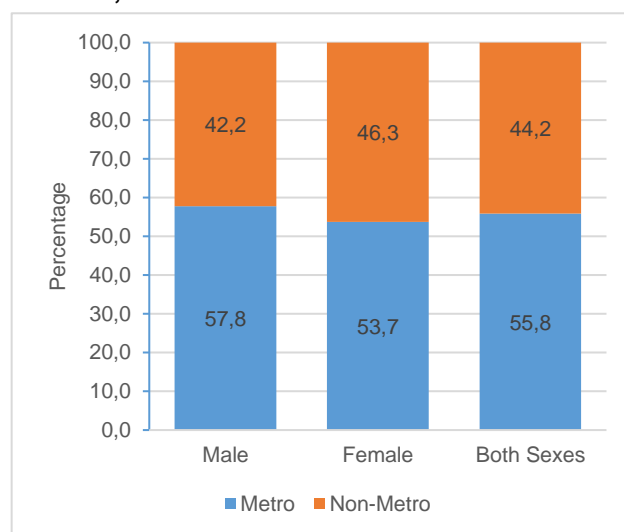


Figure 3.5b: Percentage distribution of older persons living with a spouse by geographical location, 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

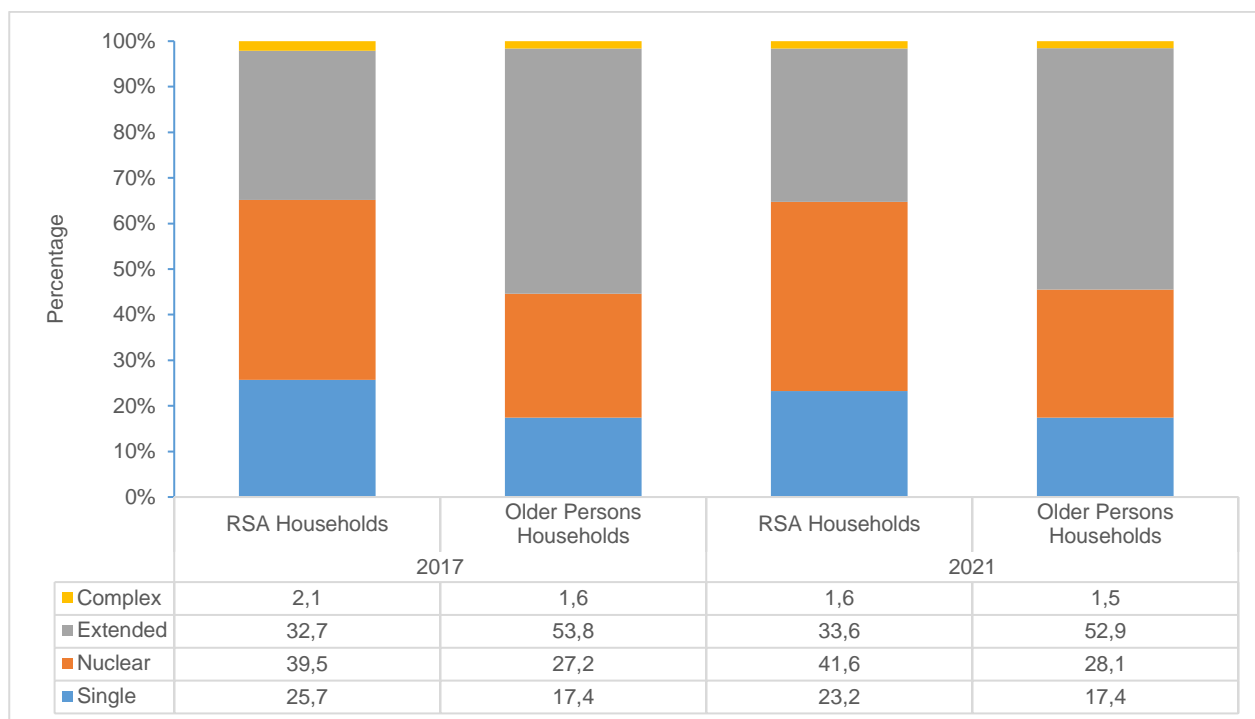
Figures 3.5a and 3.5b illustrate the percentage of older persons living with spouses by geographical location. Generally, the results indicate that there were higher percentages of older persons of both sexes who were residing in metros with their spouses.

3.3 Household composition

Household composition is derived from information about the relationship of each household member to the household head. Households have been categorised into four broad household types: single, nuclear, extended and complex. A single household is a one-person household. Nuclear households are defined as 'households consisting of household heads, their spouses and offspring', while the extended household would include other relatives in addition to the nucleus. Complex households are households with members who are not related to the household head.

¹⁵ John Knodel and Napaporn Chayovan: Population Ageing and the Well-being of Older Persons in Thailand, Report 08-659, October 2008.

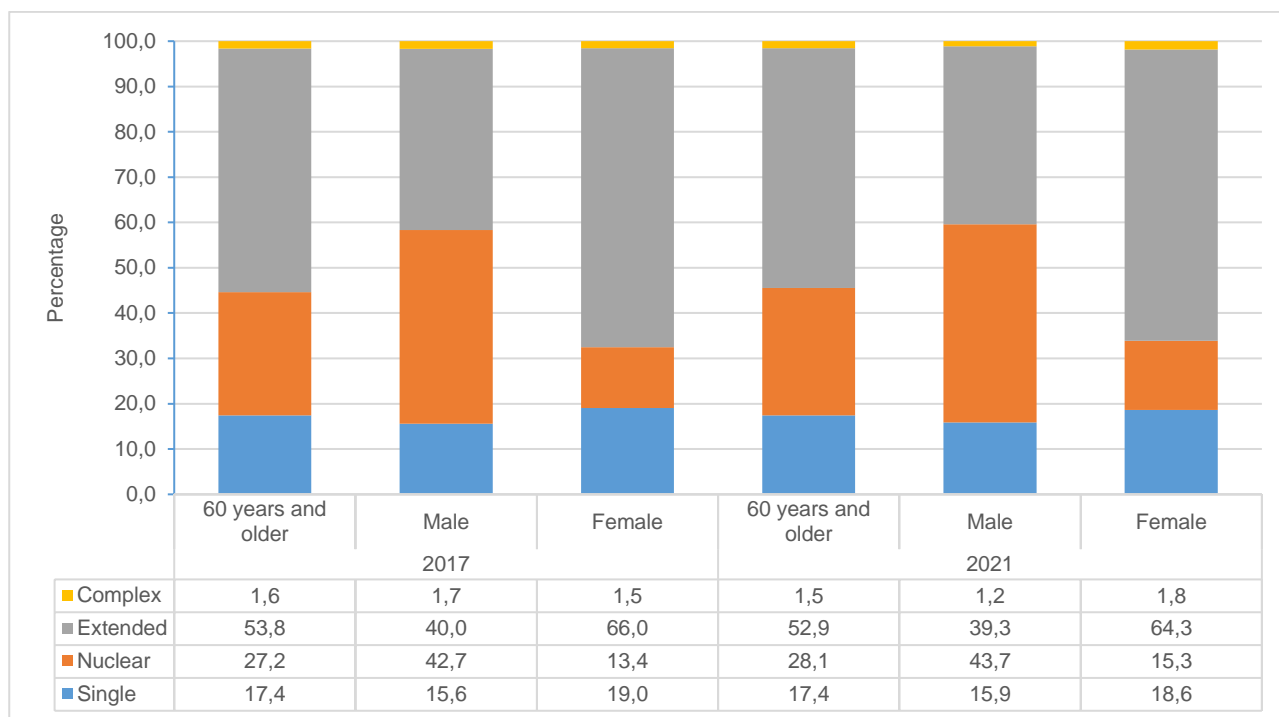
Figure 3.6: Percentage distribution of RSA households and households headed by older persons by household composition, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 3.6 demonstrates the living arrangements of older persons relative to the general patterns of South African households between 2017 and 2021. Extended households were more prevalent (above 50%) amongst older persons than for South African households; however, households headed by older persons declined by 0,9 percentage points. Nuclear households, which were the second most common among the households headed by older persons, increased in proportion for both older persons and general South African households. In contrast, nuclear households were more prevalent in South African households. The analysis shows no changes in the proportion of older persons residing in single-person households, whilst complex households were least likely to exist for both years of reporting.

Figure 3.7: Percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and sex, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 3.7 depicts the distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and sex. Extended households were the most common among older persons when compared to other types of households. Complex households were the least common for both sexes.

The findings show that single-person households were more prevalent amongst older females than older males, and the proportion of both sexes living in single-person households was unchanged over the reporting period.

Furthermore, higher proportions of older females were likely to live in extended households, although a decline of 1,7 percentage points was observed among this group between 2017 and 2021. Older males were more likely to live in nuclear households in both reported years.

Figure 3.8a: Percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and population group, 2017

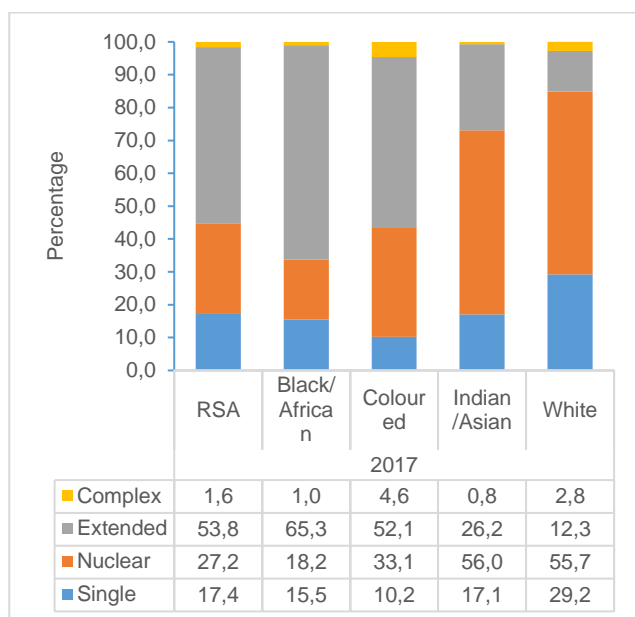
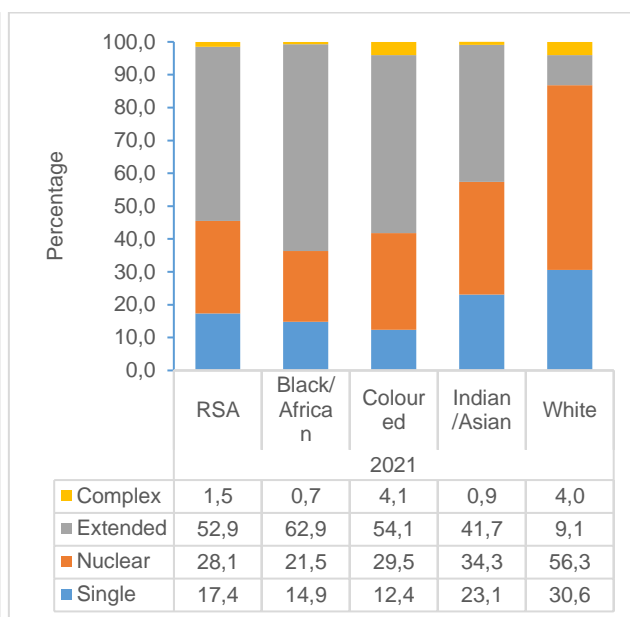


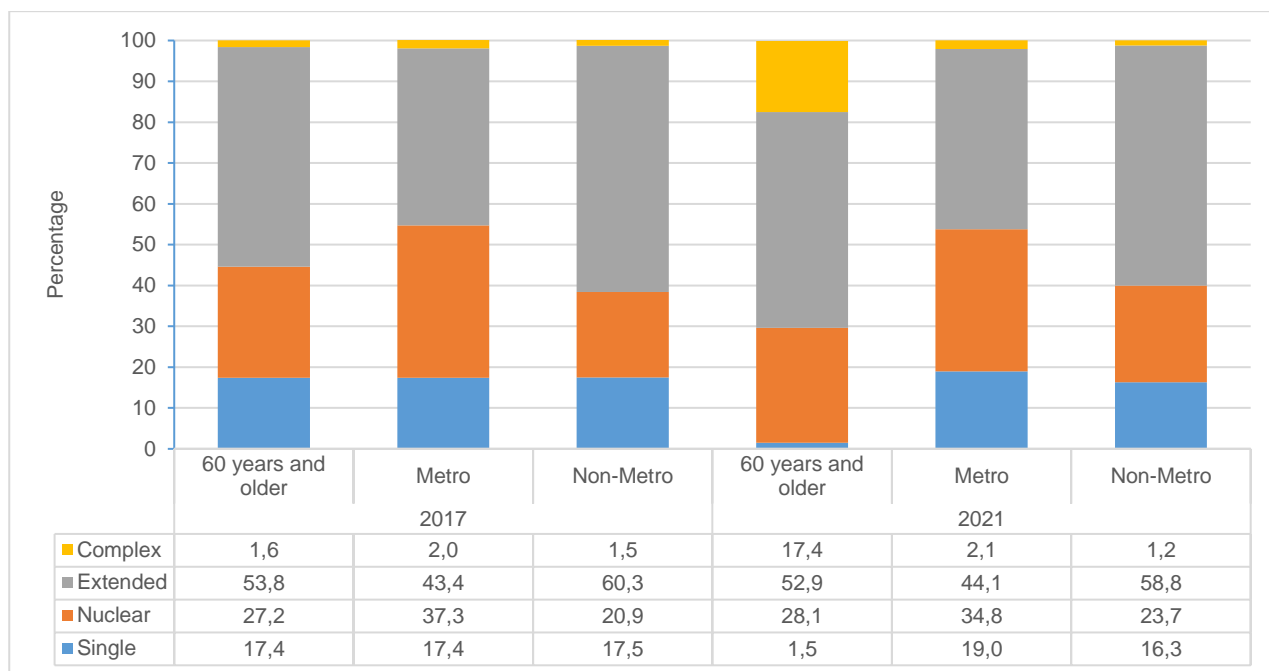
Figure 3.8b: Percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and population group, 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figures 3.8a and 3.8b depict the distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and population group. In both 2017 and 2021, older persons in the black African and coloured populations were most likely to live in extended households. Whites were the least likely to live in extended households, with just 9,1% of their households headed by older persons classified as extended in 2021. During the period under review, white and Indian/Asian older persons were most likely to live in nuclear households, although the Indian/Asian older persons living in this type of household declined by 21,7 percentage points in 2021. Single-person households were primarily found amongst white older persons (29,2% in 2017 and 30,6% in 2021).

Figure 3.9: Percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and geographical location, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 3.9 represents the percentage distribution of households headed by older persons by household composition and geographical location. The analysis reveals large differences in terms of the geographical placement of different types of households among households headed by older persons.

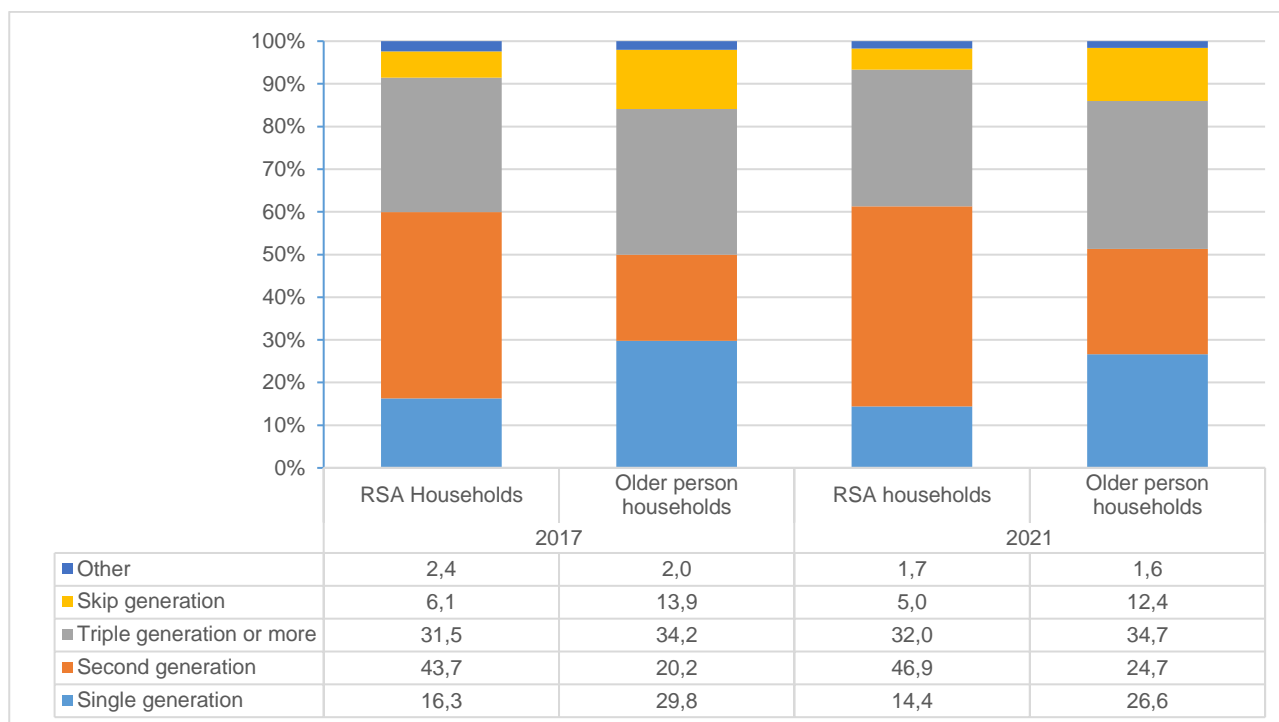
The households headed by older persons were dominant in extended households in both metros and non-metros for both years. Extended households headed by older persons in non-metros were predominant (60,3% in 2017 and 58,8% in 2021). Nuclear households were mostly found in metros rather than in non-metros. In 2021, 34,8% of households headed by older persons in metros were nuclear, and 19,0% were single-person households.

3.4 Intergenerational household type

The prevalence of intergenerational households differs amongst population groups, as household income may impact how the households are structured. Population groups with high incomes tend to have lower proportions of intergenerational households when compared to low- and middle-income groups.

Intergenerational households in this report are classified into four main groups, namely: one (single) generation; two generations; two or more generations; and skip-generations. A one (or single) generation household consists of persons of the same age group: a married or cohabiting couple, a single person, siblings, or roommates. A two-generation household includes a parent or parents and their child or children under the age of 25. In households consisting of more than three generations, the ages in the household can range from infancy to extreme old age. Lastly, when a generation is skipped or not present in a household, this is defined as a skipped-generation household. For example, a skipped-generation household is formed when grandparents care for their grandchildren whose parents may be deceased or unable to care for them.

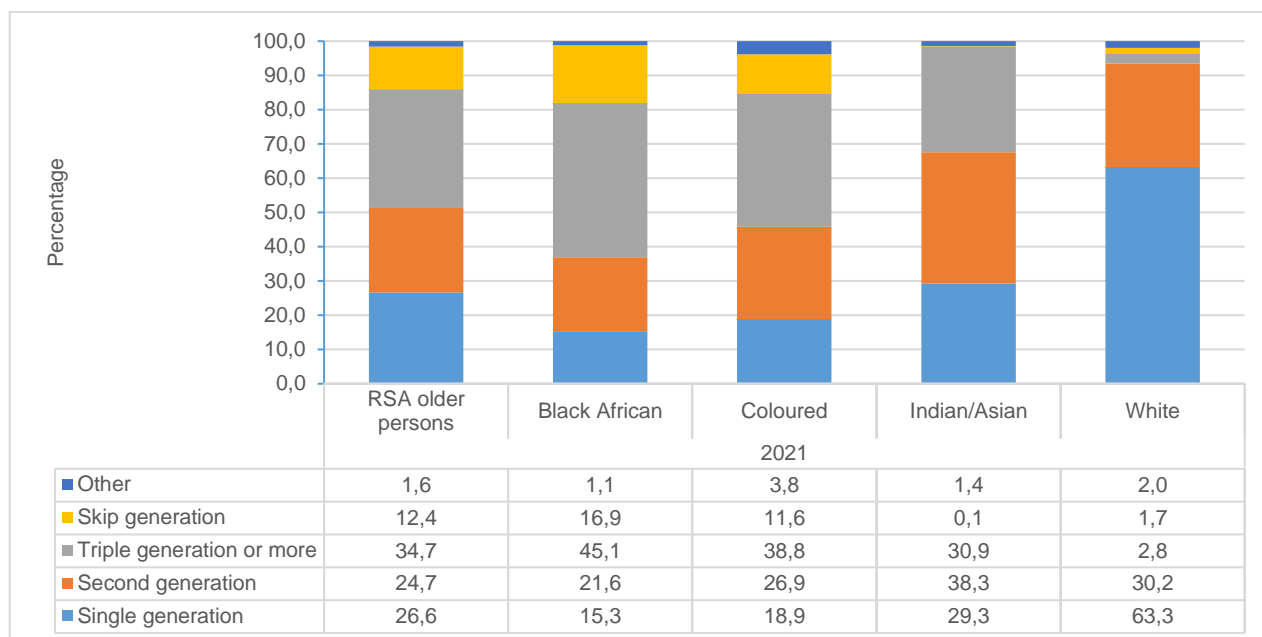
Figure 3.10: Percentage distribution of older persons and RSA population by household intergeneration type, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

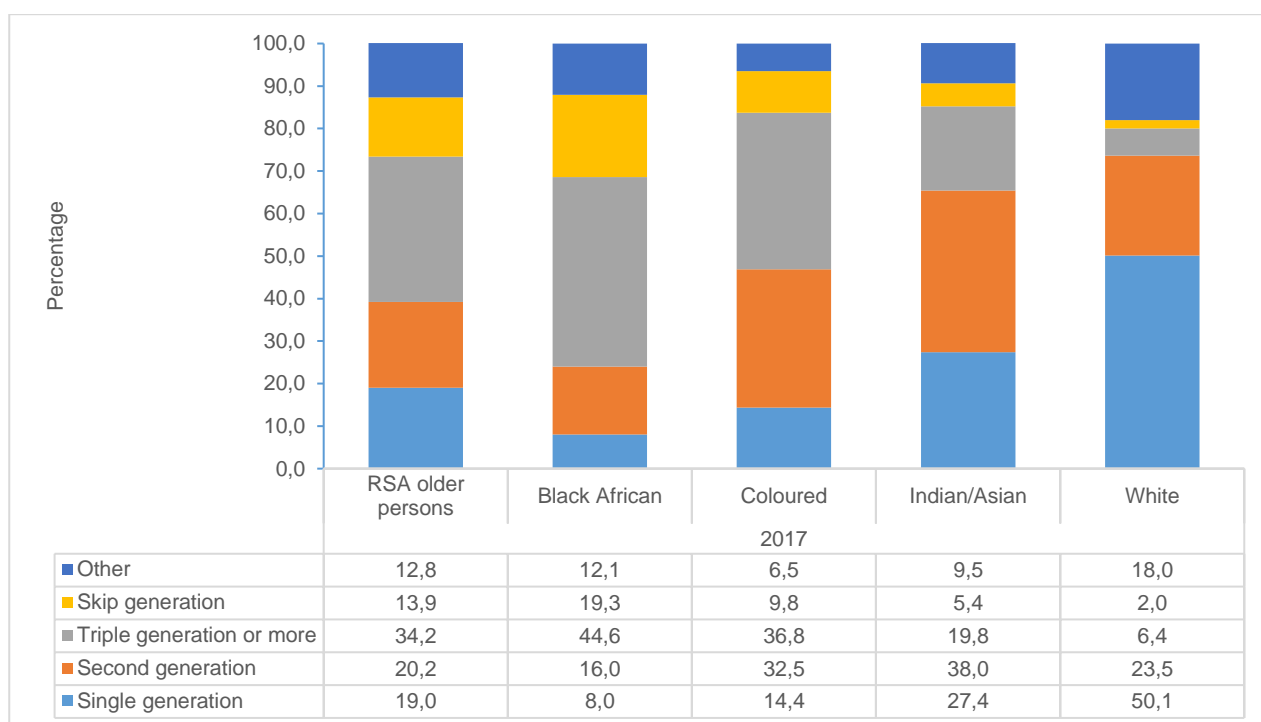
Figure 3.10 illustrates the percentage distribution of older persons across intergenerational households. Data shows that between 2017 and 2021, there were fairly large differences between the South African population and older persons with regard to intergenerational household spread. Triple-generation or more households were more common amongst older persons relative to other types of intergenerational households, representing 34,2% in 2017 and 34,7% in 2021. Second-generation households were the second most common households for older persons, followed by single-generation households. Households headed by older persons were least likely to be skip generation; however, skipped-generation households were noticeably more prevalent (above 10%) amongst households headed by older persons than for South African households in general.

Figure 3.11a: Percentage distribution of older persons by household intergeneration type and population group, 2017



Source: GHS 2017.

Figure 3.11b: Percentage distribution of older persons by household intergeneration type and population group, 2021

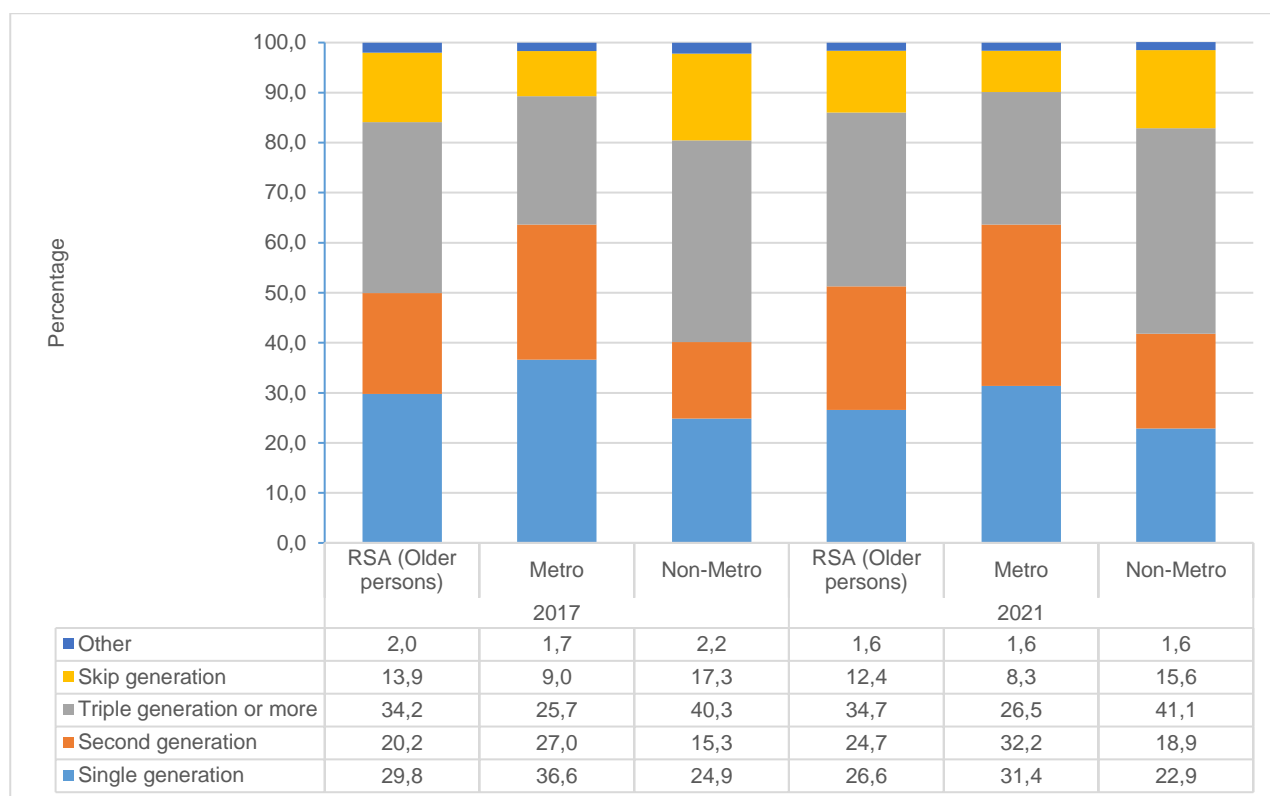


Source: GHS 2021.

Figures 3.11a and 3.11b illustrate the percentage distribution of older persons across intergenerational household types by population group. The analysis shows that between 2017 and 2021, there were fairly large variations between population groups with regard to intergenerational households. Older persons from the white population group were most likely to live in single-generation households, while older persons from the Indian/Asian population group were mostly likely to live in second-generation households.

Compared to older persons from other population groups, triple or more generation households were most common amongst the black African and coloured population groups. In 2021, 45,1% of black African and 38,8% of coloured older persons lived in triple or more generation households. A noticeably higher percentage of older persons amongst black Africans (16,9%) were living in skipped-generation households relative to other population groups. This showed that a larger percentage of older persons in the black African population lived with their grandchildren compared to other population groups.

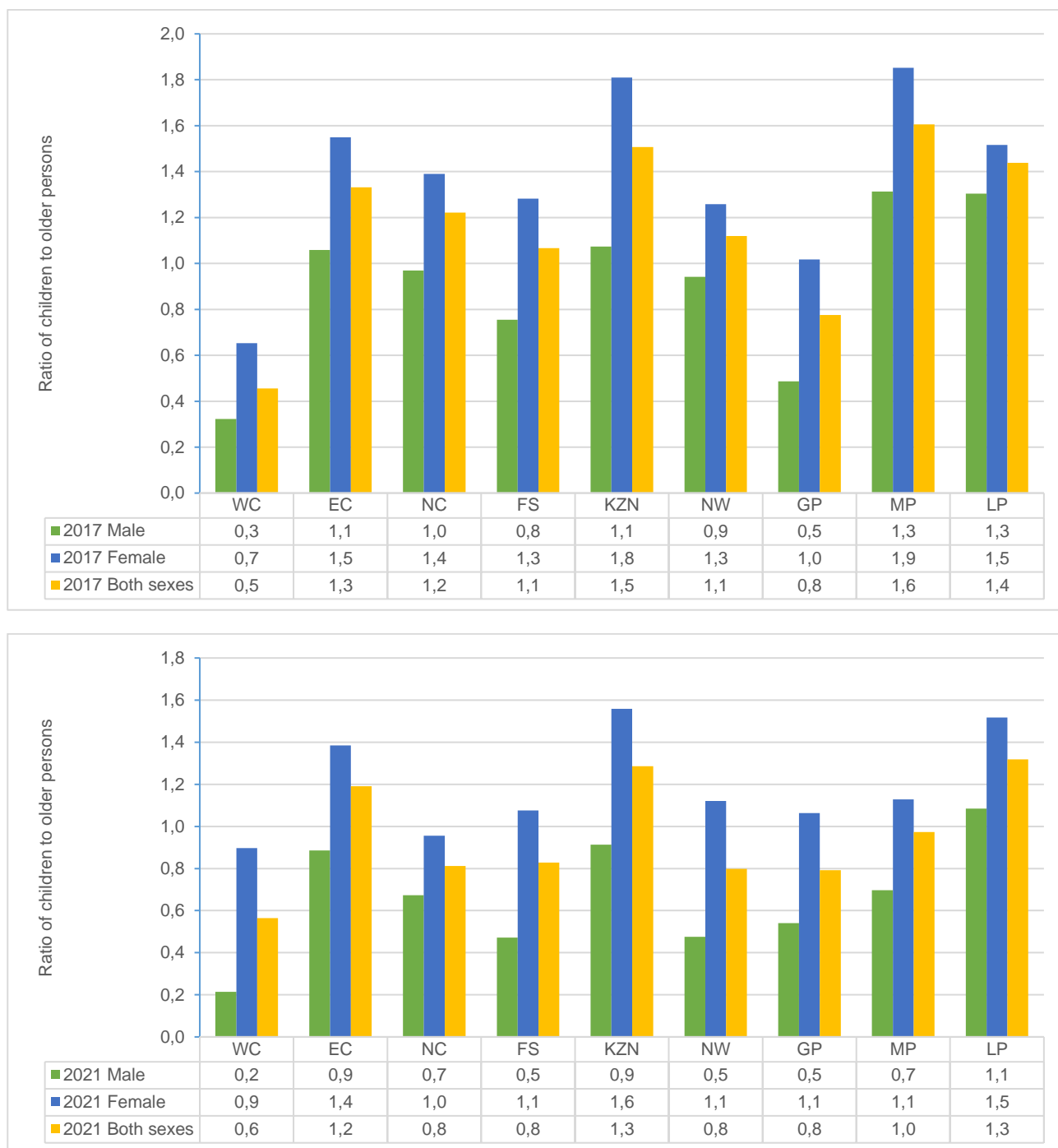
Figure 3.12: Percentage distribution of older persons by household intergeneration type and geographical location, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 3.12 summarises the percentage distribution of older persons across intergenerational households by geographical location. Between 2017 and 2021, there was a fairly uniform spread of older persons who lived in single, second- and triple-generation households in metros. In contrast, a higher percentage of older persons from triple or more generation households were residing in non-metros (40,3% in 2017 and 41,1% in 2021) compared to other types of households. Skip-generation households were also more common in non-metros than metros, with a 1,7 percentage points decrease in 2021.

Figure 3.13: Ratio of children to older persons in households headed by older persons by sex and province, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 3.13 depicts the ratio of children to older persons in households headed by older persons. The measure expresses the ratio of children under the age of 18 years to persons aged 60 years and older. The provincial variations found in 2017 indicate that the highest ratios of children to older persons can be found amongst households headed by older females living in Mpumalanga (1,9), KwaZulu-Natal (1,8), Eastern Cape and Limpopo (1,5), while in 2021 KwaZulu-Natal (1,6) had the highest ratios followed by Limpopo (1,5) and Eastern Cape (1,4). During this period, Western Cape had the lowest ratios of children to older persons for both sexes. However, within the province, the ratios for households headed by older males were still lower than those for households headed by older females.

3.5 Conclusion

Between 2017 and 2021, the percentage of households headed by older persons remained relatively the same, from 19,5% to 20,3%. The percentage of households headed by older males decreased across all provinces except for North West and Limpopo, where there was an increase of 2,8 and 8,9 percentage points, respectively. Metro areas recorded an increase in the percentage of households headed by older persons among both sexes.

Older females were mostly living alone, whilst older males were more likely to live with a spouse. Over 50% of older persons were living in extended households, which was higher than the percentage for South African households in general (33,6%) in 2021. Older females were more likely to live in extended households, whereas older males were more likely to live in nuclear households. Again, older persons were mostly living in triple generation or more households, and these were mostly found in non-metro areas. A higher percentage of households headed by older women were caring for children than those headed by older men, as was indicated by the higher ratio of children to older persons amongst households headed by women.

CHAPTER 4: EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

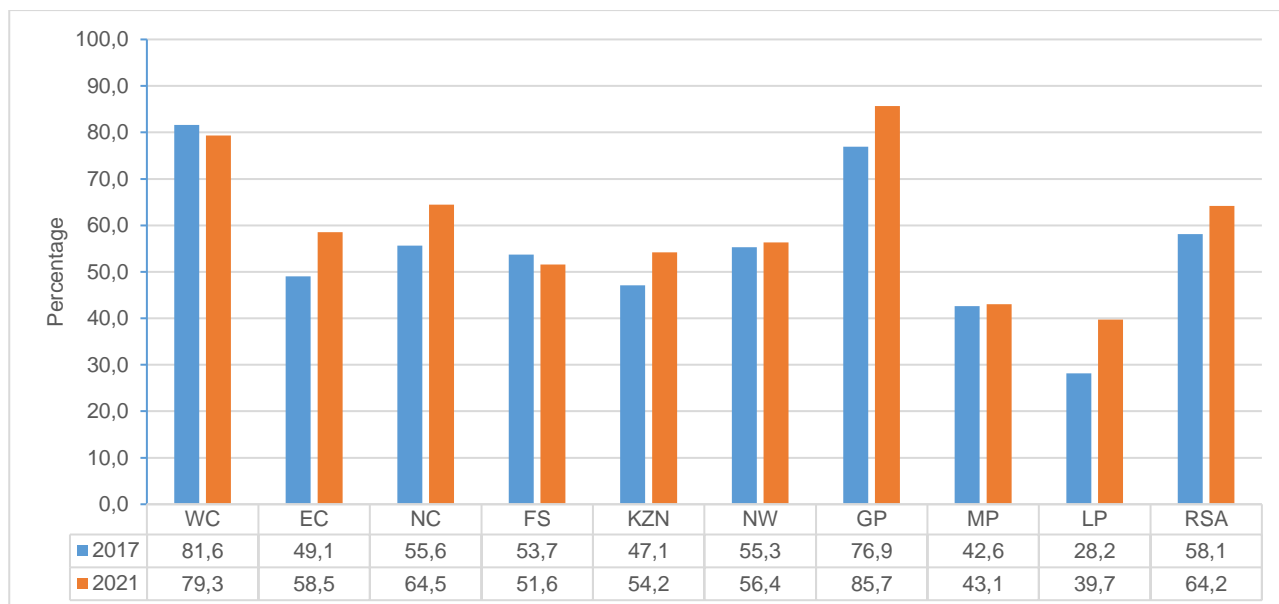
Literacy is an important social attribute that contributes to the well-being of persons and their involvement in society. It prevents social exclusion, especially when social interaction is made possible via various forms of communication. Older persons who are literate benefit from various media platforms to keep abreast with current affairs and are also able to engage in social matters.

Technology is increasingly critical for social inclusion, enabling ageing persons to maintain close contact with family and friends and overcome social isolation and loneliness. Fortunately, we are ageing in a digital world. We have tools to help us live longer, maintain active and healthier lives, and make socioeconomic contributions to society that can enable us to live our lives to the fullest. Information and communications technologies (ICTs), can provide valuable access to public and private online services for purchasing goods online instead of going to stores, paying taxes, completing financial transactions safely from home, and learning new skills via e-learning platforms. This chapter looks into education levels and investigates access to technological resources by older persons.

4.2 Functional literacy

Functional literacy refers to the capacity of a person to engage in all activities that require effective functioning. Functional literacy, known as practical literacy, is all about enhancing the skills our society needs to function.

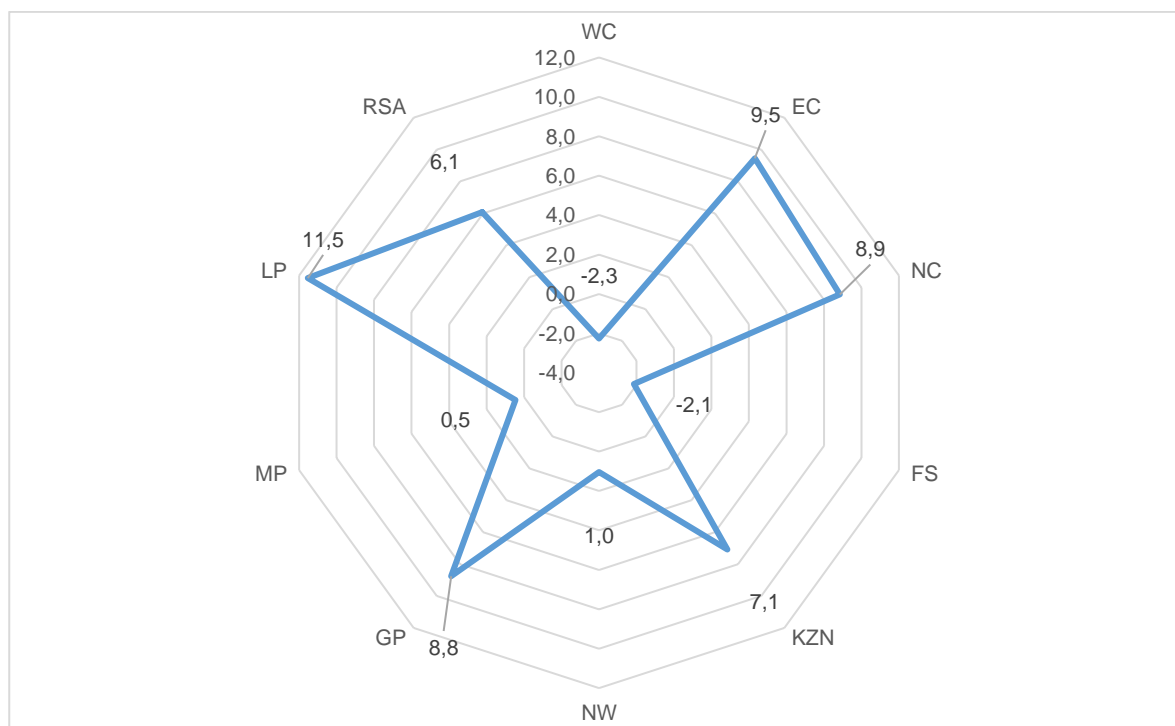
Figure 4.1: Percentage distribution of older persons who are functionally literate by province and sex, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

According to Figure 4.1, there has been an increase in functional literacy nationally attributable to an increase recorded in seven out of the nine provinces. Western Cape and Free State were the only provinces that recorded decreased functional literacy of older persons. Gauteng and Western Cape were consistently the provinces with the highest levels of functional literacy among older persons.

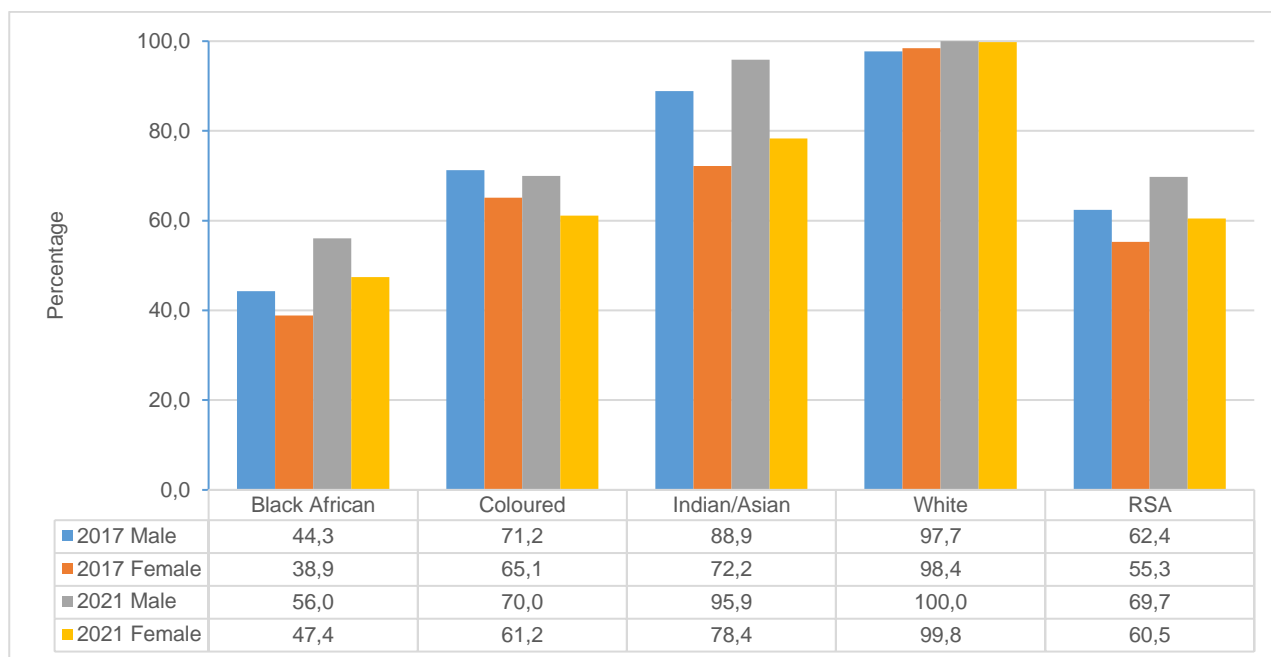
Figure 4.2: Percentage point difference in functional literacy rates by province between 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 4.2 shows that between 2017 and 2021, the most significant progress with regard to increasing literacy rates amongst older persons was recorded in Limpopo (11,5 percentage points), followed by Eastern Cape and Northern Cape (9,5 and 8,9 percentage points, respectively). These changes were higher than the national percentage point increase (6,1 percentage points). Western Cape and Free State regressed, recording a negative 2,3 and 2,1 percentage point difference, respectively.

Figure 4.3: Percentage distribution of older persons who are functionally literate by population group and sex, 2017 and 2021

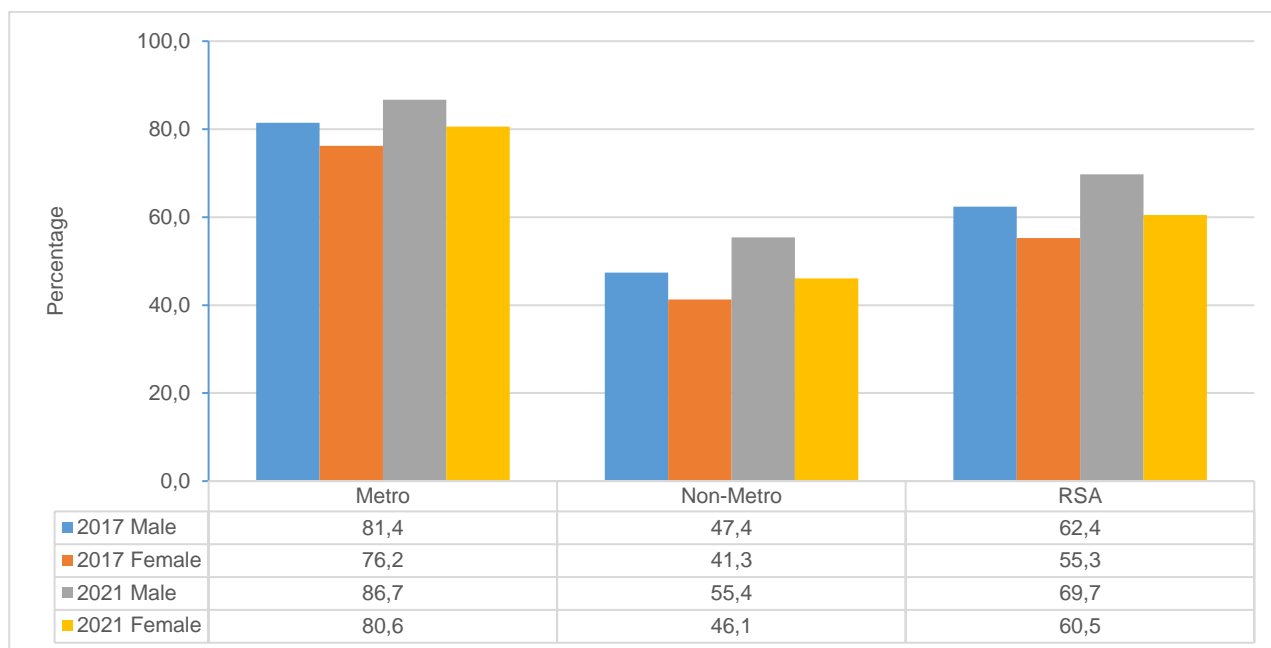


Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 4.3 depicts the percentage distribution of persons aged 60 and older who are functionally literate by population group and sex. The literacy rates of South African older males increased from 62,4% in 2017 to 69,7% in 2021, whilst older female literacy rates increased from 55,3% in 2017 to 60,5% in 2021. In both years, older males were more likely than older females to be functionally literate.

The results show disparities in literacy rates amongst various population groups. The black African population group lagged behind all the other population groups with regard to functional literacy. On the other hand, older males and females in the white population group were universally functionally literate.

Figure 4.4: Percentage distribution of older persons who are functionally literate by geographical location and sex, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 4.4 displays the percentage distribution of persons aged 60 and older who are functionally literate by geographic location and sex. The results show that older persons' literacy rates were higher in metro areas than in non-metro areas throughout the review period.

Although the literacy rates for non-metro areas were lower than that of metro areas, literacy rates for both older males and females increased between 2017 and 2021. Older females' literacy rates in non-metro areas increased from 41,3% to 46,1%, whilst older males' literacy rates increased from 47,4% to 55,4%.

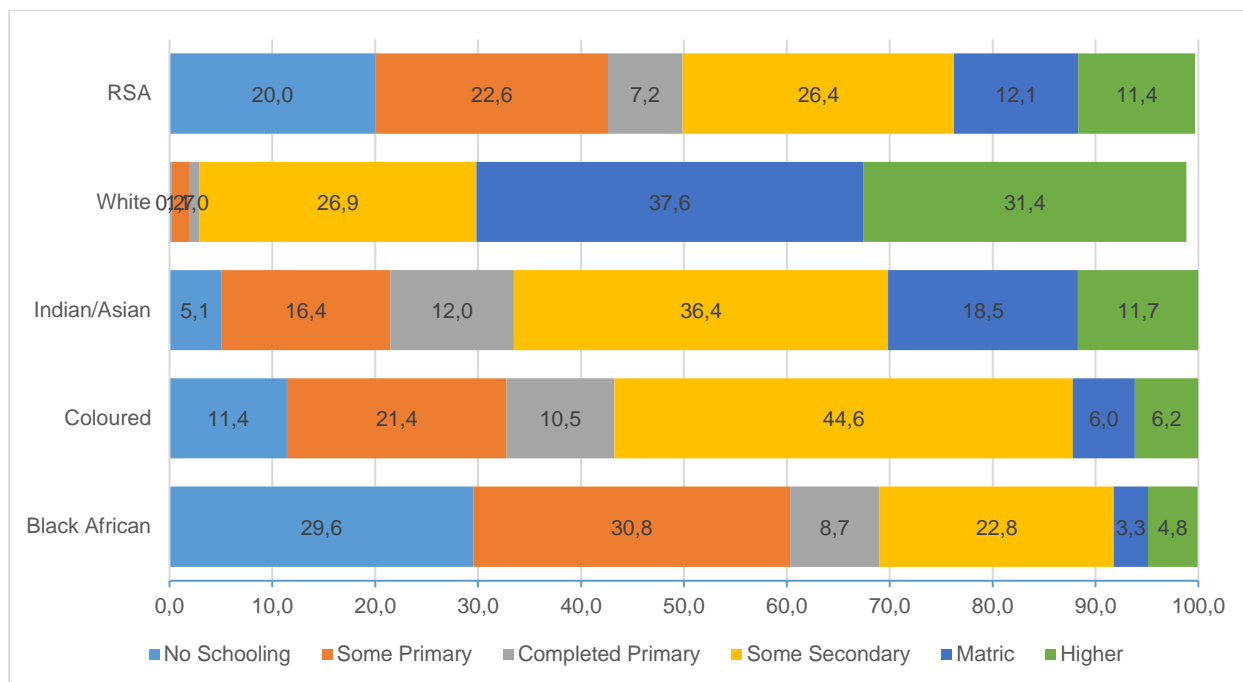
4.3 Educational attainment

Table 4.1: Highest educational attainment of older persons by province, 2021

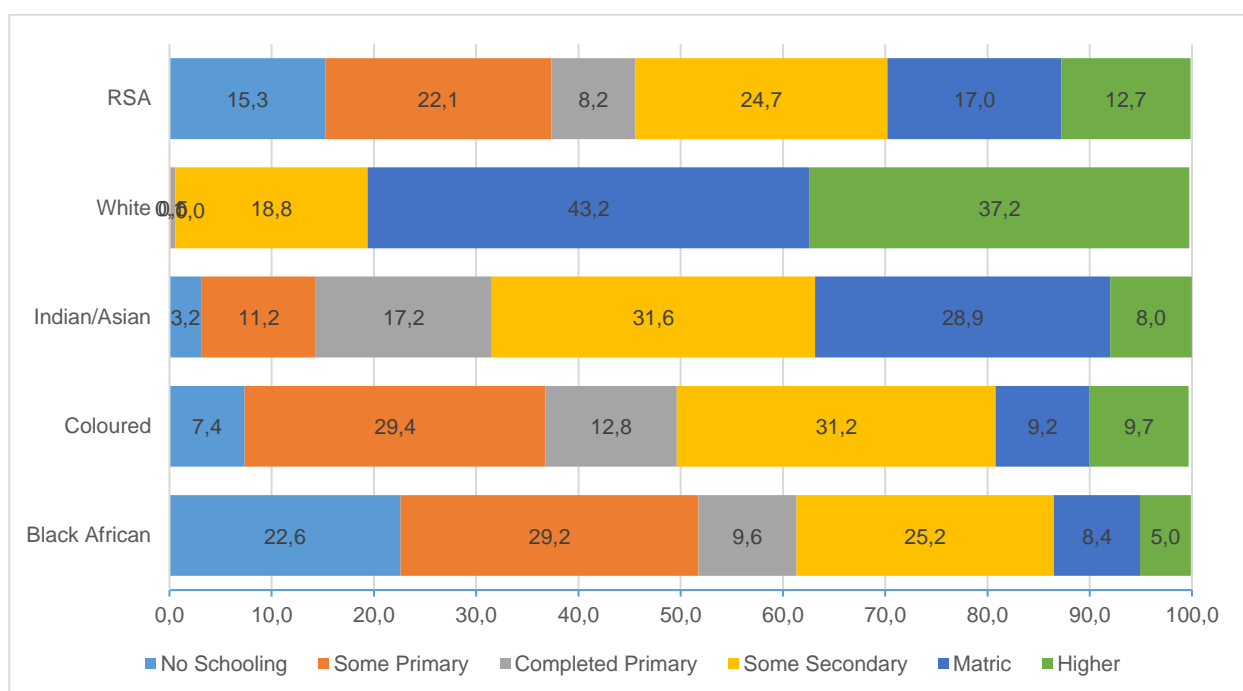
Province		2021							Total
		No Schooling	Some Primary	Completed Primary	Some Secondary	Matric	Higher	Other	
Western Cape	Number	24	126	65	169	144	168	4	701
	Per cent	3,4	17,9	9,3	24,2	20,6	24,0	0,6	100,0
Eastern Cape	Number	132	163	76	179	63	87	0	700
	Per cent	18,8	23,3	10,9	25,6	9,0	12,4	0,0	100,0
Northern Cape	Number	14	36	11	48	14	10	0	134
	Per cent	10,7	27,1	8,5	35,5	10,7	7,5	0,0	100,0
Free State	Number	36	91	9	55	42	19	0	251
	Per cent	14,5	36,2	3,6	21,7	16,7	7,4	0,0	100,0
KwaZulu-Natal	Number	157	262	92	183	145	50	0	888
	Per cent	17,7	29,5	10,3	20,6	16,3	5,7	0,0	100,0
North West	Number	44	109	14	71	64	28	0	330
	Per cent	13,3	33,1	4,2	21,5	19,5	8,4	0,0	100,0
Gauteng	Number	55	128	77	370	312	235	3	1 179
	Per cent	4,6	10,8	6,5	31,4	26,5	19,9	0,3	100,0
Mpumalanga	Number	119	82	26	70	38	14	0	350
	Per cent	34,0	23,5	7,4	20,1	11,0	4,0	0,0	100,0
Limpopo	Number	180	104	39	84	23	20	0	450
	Per cent	40,1	23,1	8,7	18,7	5,1	4,4	0,0	100,0
RSA	Number	761	1 101	409	1 229	846	631	7	4 984
	Per cent	15,3	22,1	8,2	24,7	17,0	12,7	0,1	100,0

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Table 4.1 summarises the highest level of educational attainment for older persons by province. Nationally in 2021, 37,4% of older persons had no schooling and some primary as the highest educational levels. Approximately 17,0% of older persons had Grade 12, and 12,7% had a tertiary qualification. The older persons in Western Cape and Gauteng generally had higher education levels than elsewhere. Older persons in Limpopo (9,5%) and Mpumalanga (15,0%) were the least likely to have a Grade 12 or higher qualification.

Figure 4.5: Highest educational attainment of older persons by population group, 2017 and 2021

Source: GHS 2017.



Source: GHS 2021.

Figure 4.5 summarises the highest level of educational attainment for older persons by population group, and shows that black Africans are more likely to have no education and some primary as their highest educational attainment. Between 2017 and 2021, older black Africans who had no schooling as their highest level of education declined from 29,6% to 22,6% (7,0 percentage point change). Despite these positive changes, this population group continues to have the lowest percentage of older persons (13,4% in 2021) with Grade 12 or higher.

Older persons from the white population group were significantly more likely than any other population group to have Grade 12 or higher in 2017 (69,0%) as well as 2021 (80,4%). They were followed by the Indian/Asian (30,2% vs 36,9%) and coloured population (12,2% vs 18,9%). The older persons from the white population realised significant increases in this category, with 11,4 percentage points over the review period.

Table 4.2: Highest level of education of older persons by sex, 2017 and 2021

Educational attainment	2017			2021		
	Male	Female	RSA	Male	Female	RSA
No Schooling	16,7	22,3	20,0	12,1	17,5	15,3
Some Primary	21,7	23,2	22,6	19,4	23,9	22,1
Completed Primary	6,1	8,0	7,2	8,2	8,2	8,2
Some Secondary	27,0	26,0	26,4	23,4	25,5	24,7
Matric	14,3	10,6	12,1	19,8	15,1	17,0
Higher	13,9	9,7	11,4	16,8	9,8	12,7
Other	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,0	0,1
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Table 4.2 shows the highest level of education of older persons by sex. The findings show that most older males and females had some secondary as the highest level of education in both years. In South Africa, older males' educational attainment amongst older persons tends to be higher than that of older females, especially for matric and higher education levels. The educational attainment amongst older females tends to be higher at lower levels of education, "no schooling" and primary levels in both years. In 2021, 29,8% of older persons had matric or higher. Older males (36,9%) were more likely than older females (24,9%) to have matric or higher in 2021.

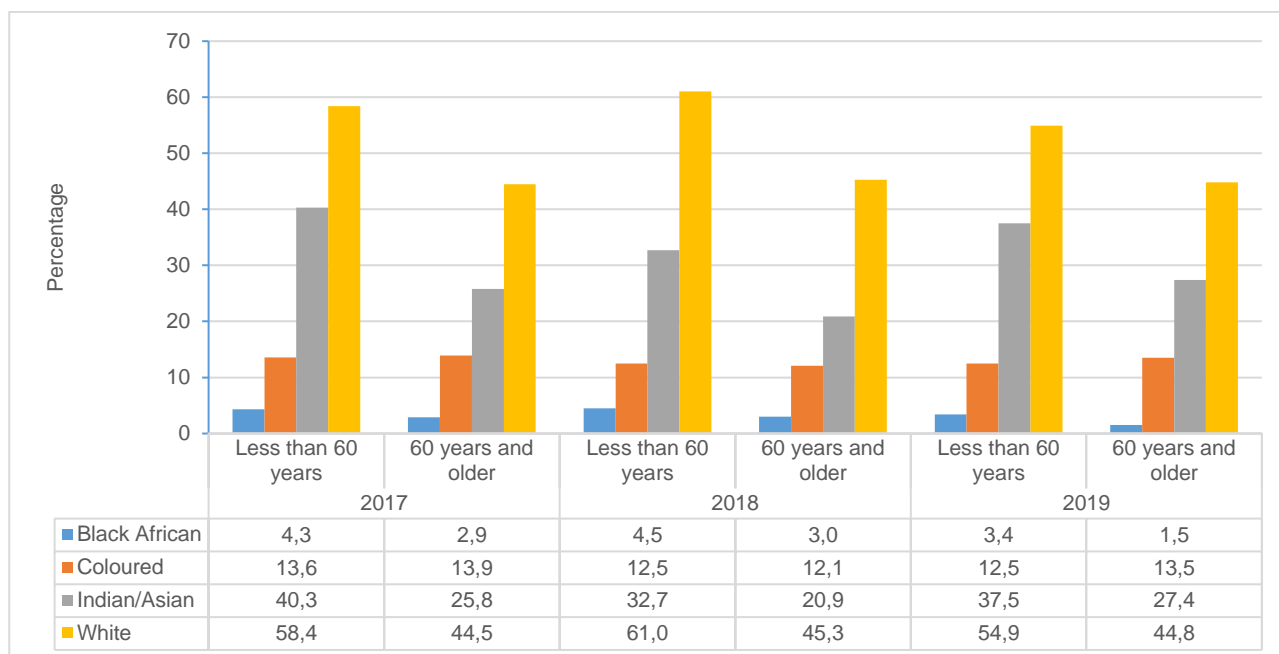
4.4 Access to technology

Technological developments such as communication and changing gender norms influence the lives of older persons directly or indirectly.¹⁶ New developments in technology have made life more convenient since they assist in learning new skills, facilitate social interactions, foster independent and autonomous living, and improve the management and delivery of health and social care services for older populations.

For this chapter, access to technology will focus on access to an internet connection, computers and cellphones.

¹⁶ WHO, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>

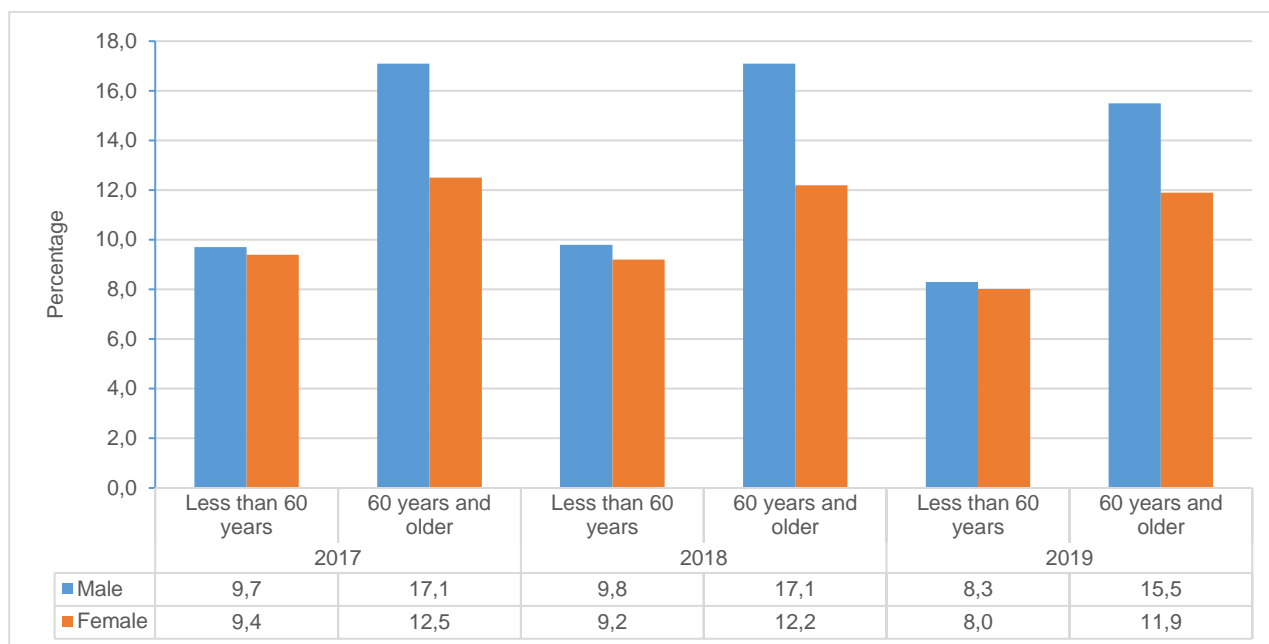
Figure 4.6: Distribution of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to internet connection by population group, 2017 to 2019



Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to an internet connection by population group. Between 2017 and 2019, the distribution of internet connections among the population groups followed a consistent pattern. Both older persons and older whites recorded a higher percentage of persons with access to the internet, while black Africans recorded a lower percentage. In 2019, 44,8% of white older persons had internet access compared to 1,5% of black African older persons. In addition, during this period a lower percentage of older persons had access to the internet than those younger than 60 years across all population groups, except for the coloured population group.

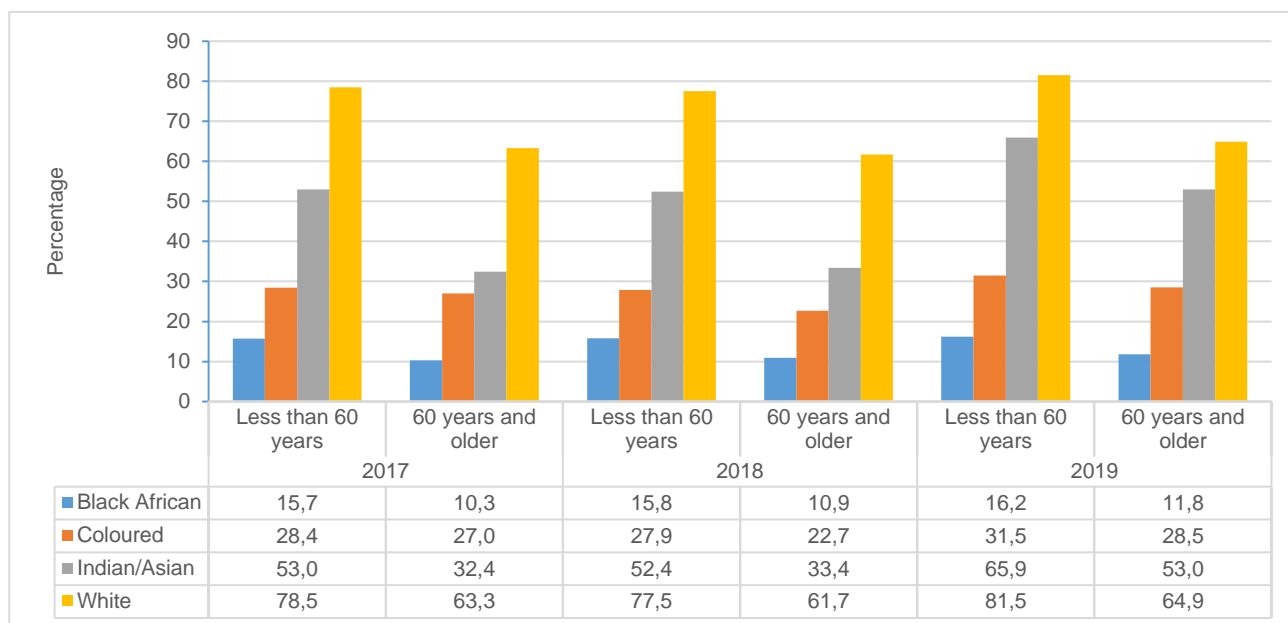
Figure 4.7: Distribution of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to internet connection by sex, 2017–2019



Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to an internet connection by sex. Males were more likely than females to have access to an internet connection for both those younger than 60 years and older persons. The gaps between males and females among older persons were higher compared to those under 60 years, with 4,6% in 2017, 4,9% in 2018 and 3,6% percentage points difference in 2019. The gender gap was higher among older persons than among the population.

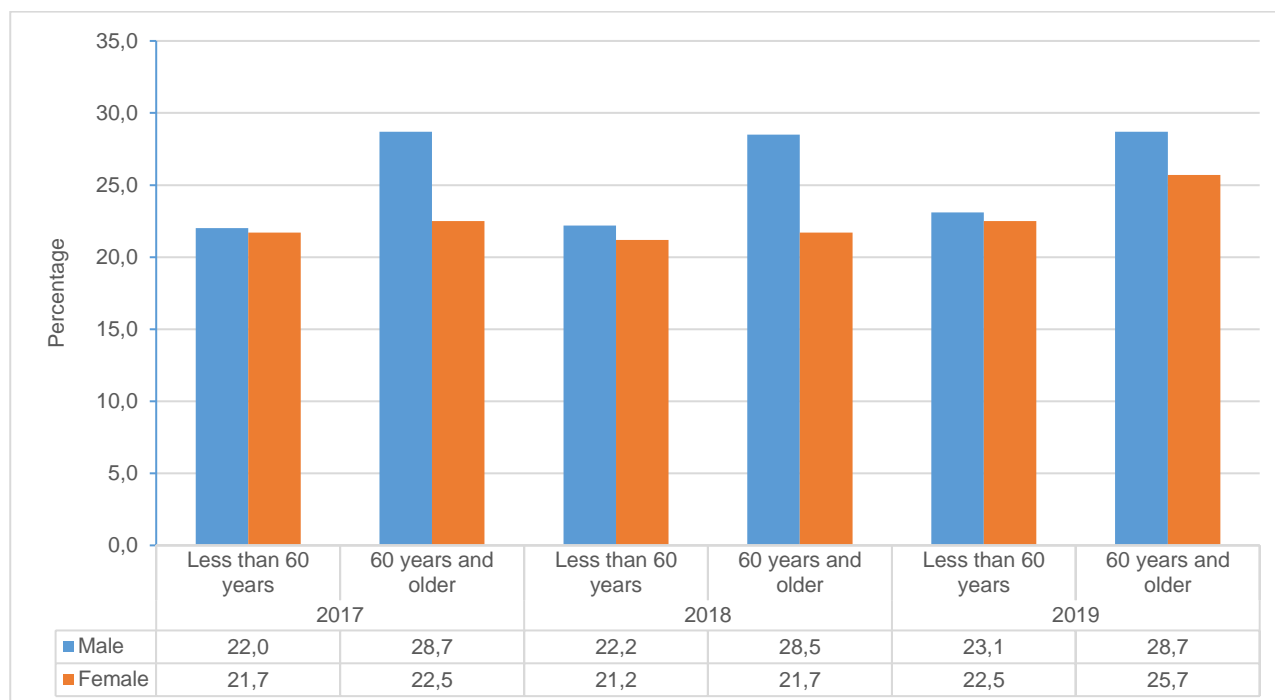
Figure 4.8: Distribution of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to a computer by population group, 2017–2019



Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.8 shows the percentage of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to a computer by population group. Although the percentage of older persons who had access to computers increased between 2017 and 2019, the percentage of access to a computer was higher for those younger than 60 years than for older persons. Disparities by population group showed that access to computers was higher among whites, followed by Indians/Asians and coloureds. In 2019, almost 65,0% of older persons from the white population had access to a computer compared to almost 12,0% of older persons from the black African population group.

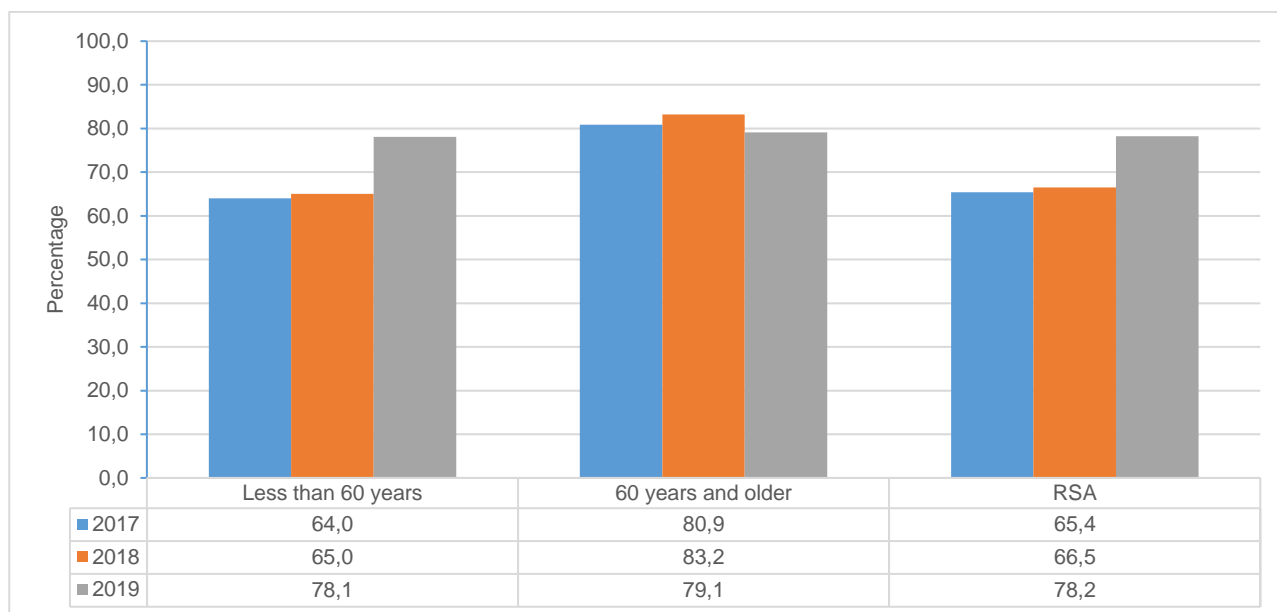
Figure 4.9: Distribution of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to a computer by sex, 2017–2019



Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.9 shows the distribution of the overall population and older persons with access to a computer by sex. Access to computers was slightly higher for older persons than for those under 60 years. Inequalities between men and women were noticeable among older persons, as older men had greater access to computers.

Figure 4.10: Percentage of older persons and those younger than 60 years with access to cellphones, 2017–2019

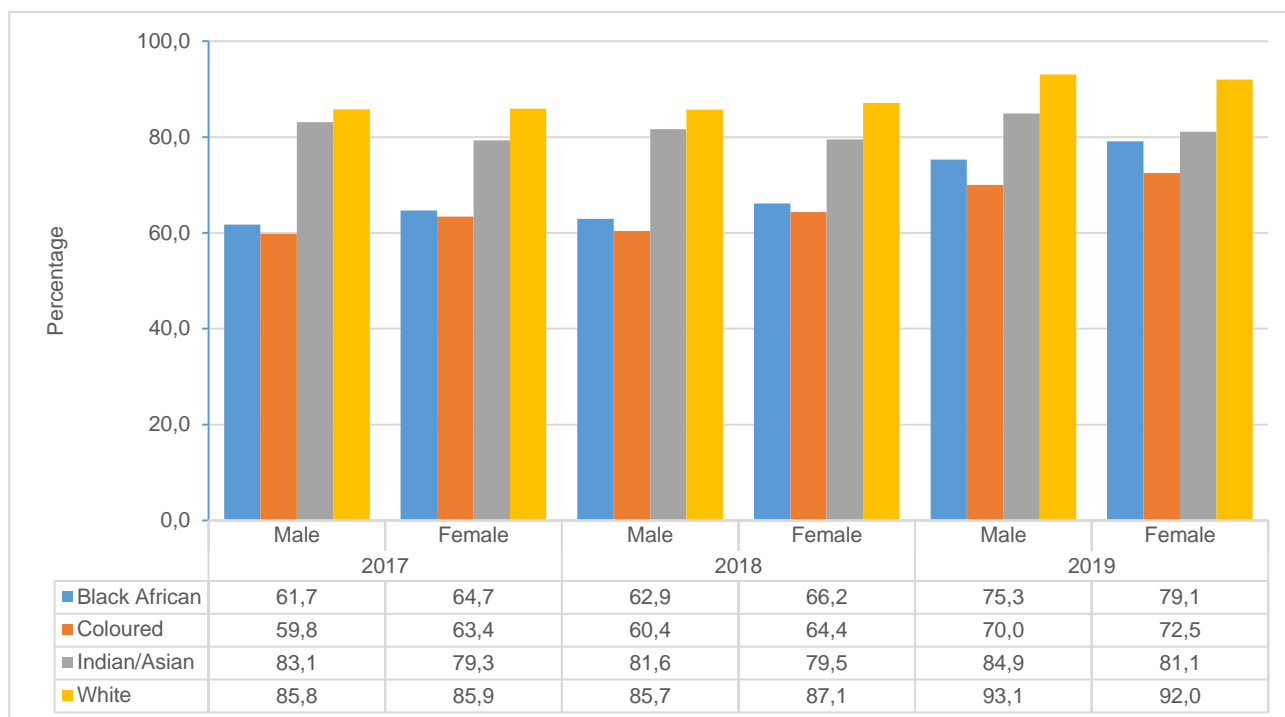


Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.10 shows the distribution of those younger than 60 years and older persons with access to cellphones between 2017 and 2019. There was an increase in the percentage of persons younger than 60 years with access to cellphones for a reference period, while older persons showed a decline of 4,1 percentage points (from 83,2% in 2018 to 79,1% in 2019).

Nationally, an increase of 12,8 percentage points in access to cellphones was realised among the overall population (from 65,4% in 2017 to 78,2% in 2019). This increase was mainly driven by an increase of 14,1 percentage points in access to cellphones by persons younger than 60 years (from 64,0% in 2017 to 78,1% in 2019). Disparities between those aged younger than 60 years and those aged 60 years and older show that older persons were more likely to have access to cellphones compared to those aged younger than 60 years, but the gap narrowed over this period.

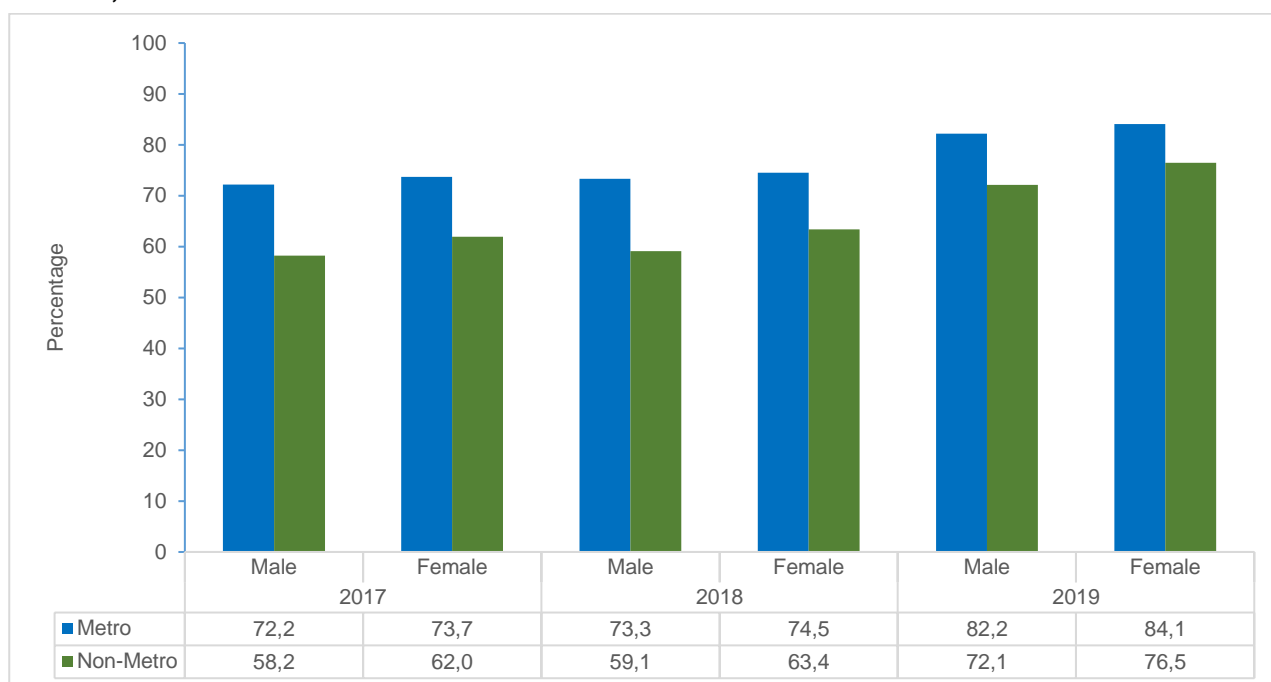
Figure 4.11: Percentage of older persons with access to a cellphone by sex and population group, 2017–2019



Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.11 shows the distribution of persons aged 60 years and older with access to cellphones by population group and sex. Between 2017 and 2018 ownership of cellphones remained stable and slightly increased in 2019 across all population groups. In 2019, more than 70,0% of older persons among both males and females had access to cellphones across all population groups.

Having access to cellphones was more prevalent among white older persons, followed by Indian/Asian and black African older persons for both males and females. Looking at the gender disparity, older females among the black African and coloured population groups were more likely to own a cellphone than their male counterparts, while the opposite was observed for the Indian/Asian and white population.

Figure 4.12: Percentage of older persons with access to a cellphone by sex and geographical location, 2017–2019

Source: GHS 2017 – GHS 2019.

Figure 4.12 shows the distribution of persons aged 60 years and older with access to cellphones by sex and metro. Generally, older persons in metro areas were more likely to have access to cellphones than those in non-metro areas, irrespective of sex. The number of older persons who had access to cellphones increased in both metro and non-metro areas for the reference period. Older females who had access to cellphones in metro areas increased by 10,4 percentage points (from 73,7% in 2017 to 84,1% in 2019), whilst their male counterparts increased by 10,0 percentage points (from 72,22% in 2017 to 82,2% in 2019).

4.5 Conclusion

Functional literacy levels increased in seven of the nine provinces between 2017 and 2019. The most notable advances in improving literacy levels amongst older persons took place in Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Limpopo. Disparities in functional literacy amongst various population groups revealed that the black African population group lagged behind while both the older males and females among the white population group were universally functionally literate.

Nationally, 37,4% of older persons have no schooling and some primary as the highest educational levels in 2021. Again in 2021, approximately 17,0% of older persons had Grade 12, and 12,7% had a tertiary qualification as their highest level of education. The older persons in Western Cape and Gauteng generally had higher education levels than elsewhere.

Results indicate that there has been an uptake of technology through improved access to computers, cellphones and internet connection by older persons between 2017 and 2019. The disparities in access to technology showed that white older males are more likely to have access than other populations, while older males are also more likely to access technology than their female counterparts. Older persons in metro areas were more likely to have access to cellphones than those in non-metro areas.

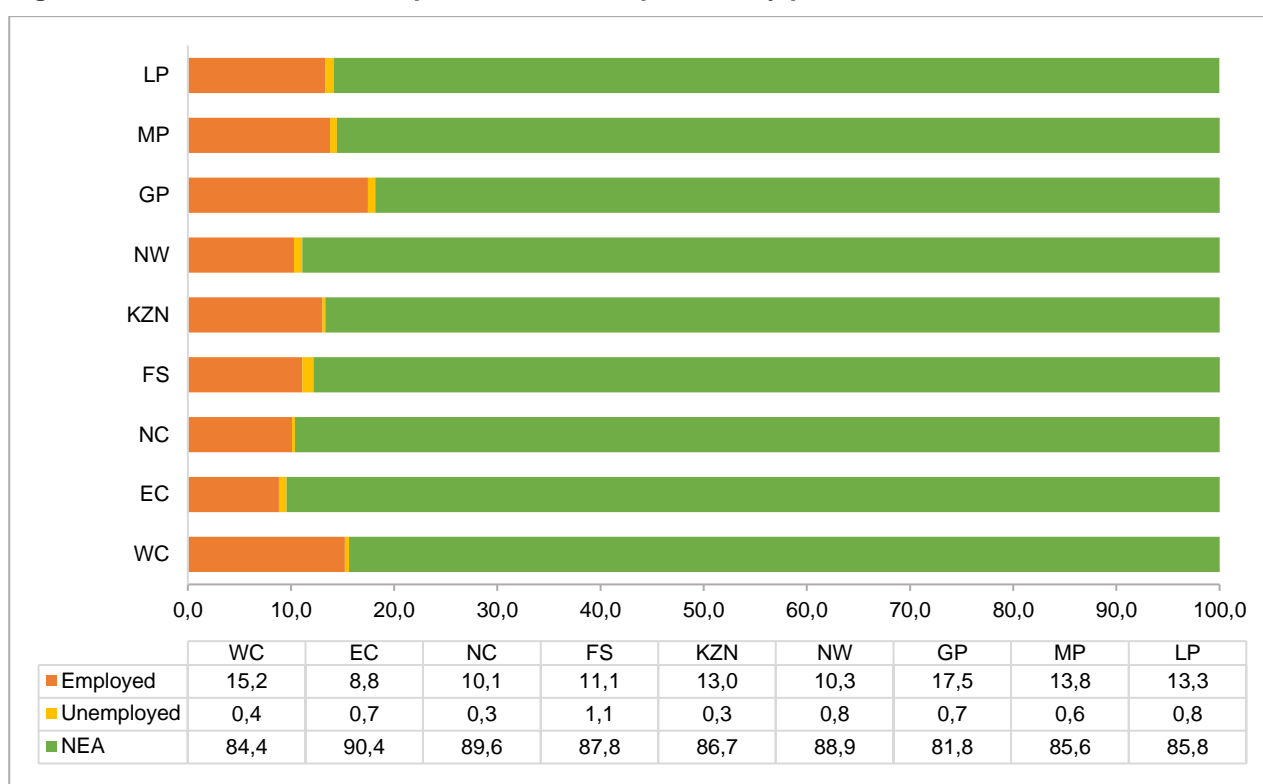
CHAPTER 5: INCOME GENERATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF OLDER PERSONS

5.1 Introduction

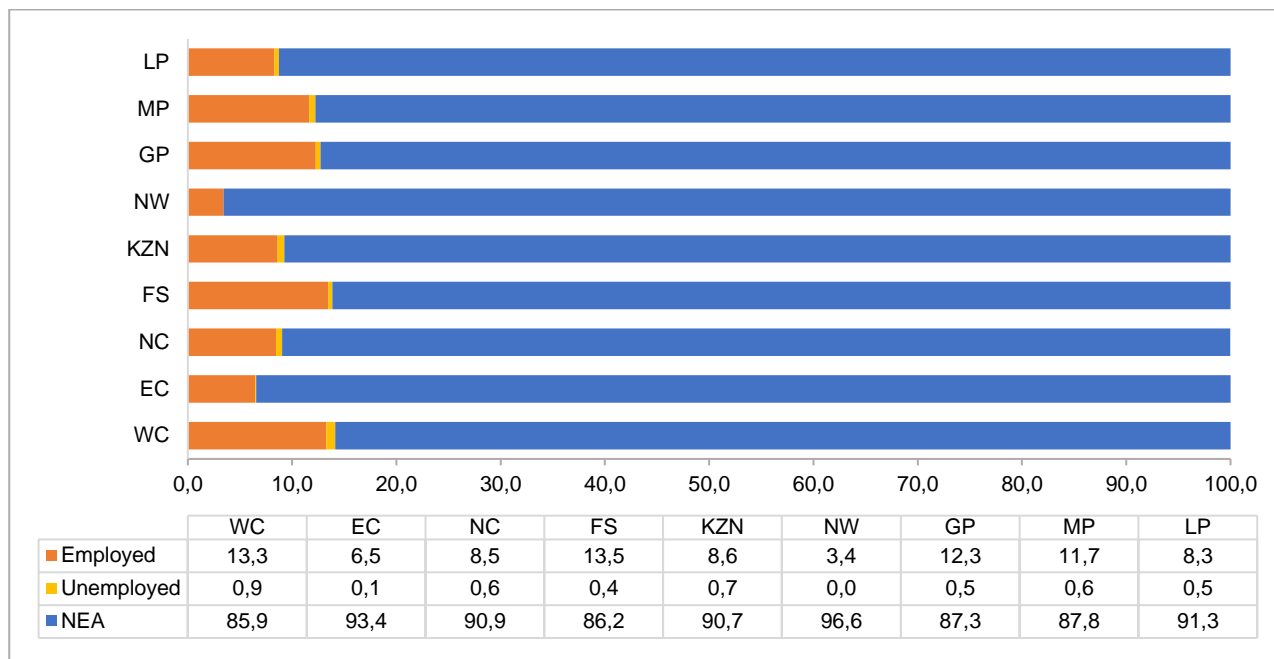
This chapter presents an analysis of the employment profile, income security and economic development of persons aged 60 years and older. Furthermore, the chapter will examine the distribution of and access to old-age grants for older persons in the country. An important part of maintaining active participation and development of older persons in society is through their continued involvement in the paid labour force. The inherent social and economic benefits of an ageing workforce should be recognised, and efforts should be made to eliminate age barriers in the formal labour market by promoting the recruitment of older persons.

5.2 Basic economic activity of older persons

Figure 5.1a: Labour market components for older persons by province, 2017



Source: QLFS 2017: Q3, QLFS 2022: Q3.

Figure 5.2b: Labour market components for older persons by province, 2022

Source: QLFS 2017: Q3, QLFS 2022: Q3.

The two figures above illustrate the labour market composition for older persons. The labour force comprises the employed and unemployed population, whereas the not economically active (NEA) are those who are neither employed nor unemployed. For both years in all provinces, the NEA group was the most dominant. In the third quarter of 2017 and 2022, over 80,0% of older persons were not economically active. The labour force accounted for less than 15% of the market share of older persons in both terms of reference.

In examining provincial variations, in 2017 Gauteng (18,2%) and Western Cape (15,6%) recorded the highest labour force share of older persons who were either employed or actively seeking employment. In 2022, provinces that had the highest proportions of older persons in the labour force were Western Cape (14,2%) and Free State (13,9%).

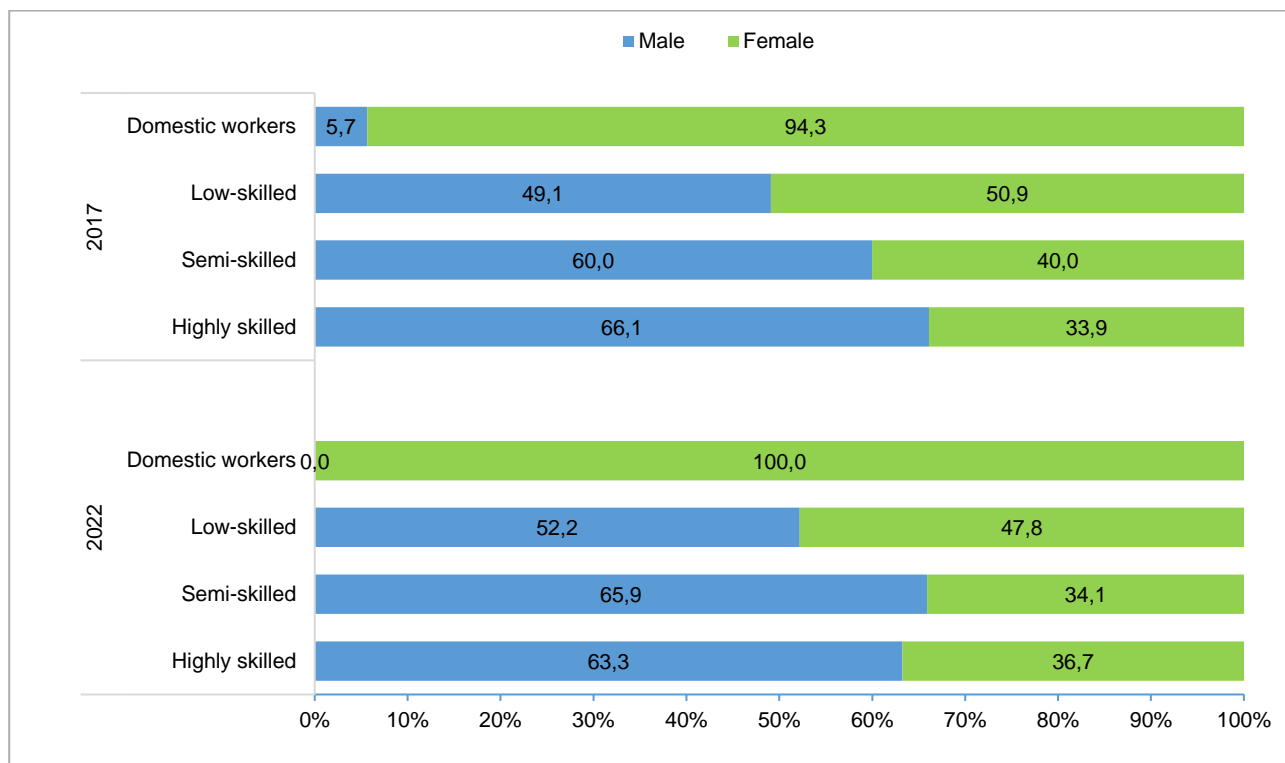
Table 5.1: Distribution of older persons who are economically active by province, 2017 and 2022

Province	2017					2022				
	Employed		Unemployed		Labour force	Employed		Unemployed		Labour force
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)
Western Cape	95	97,5	2	2,5	98	106	93,9	7	6,1	113
Eastern Cape	53	92,3	4	7,8	57	42	98,5	1	1,5	43
Northern Cape	12	97,3	0	2,7	12	11	93,4	1	6,7	12
Free State	28	91,1	3	8,9	31	39	97,1	1	2,9	40
KwaZulu-Natal	114	97,9	2	2,1	116	90	93,0	7	7,0	97
North West	34	92,8	3	7,2	37	13	100,0	0	0,0	13
Gauteng	212	96,0	9	4,0	221	191	96,3	7	3,7	198
Mpumalanga	45	95,7	2	4,4	47	44	95,2	2	4,8	47
Limpopo	62	94,3	4	5,8	66	45	94,8	2	5,2	48
South Africa	655	95,7	30	4,3	685	582	95,4	28	4,6	610

Source: QLFS 2017: Q3, QLFS 2022: Q3.

Table 5.1 shows an analysis of the employment status of persons aged 60 years and older. Between 2017 and 2022, the country experienced a decrease of 73 thousand of older persons who were employed. Seven out of the nine provinces were the main drivers behind this decrease with the exception of Western Cape and Free State, which each gained 11 000 jobs during the period.

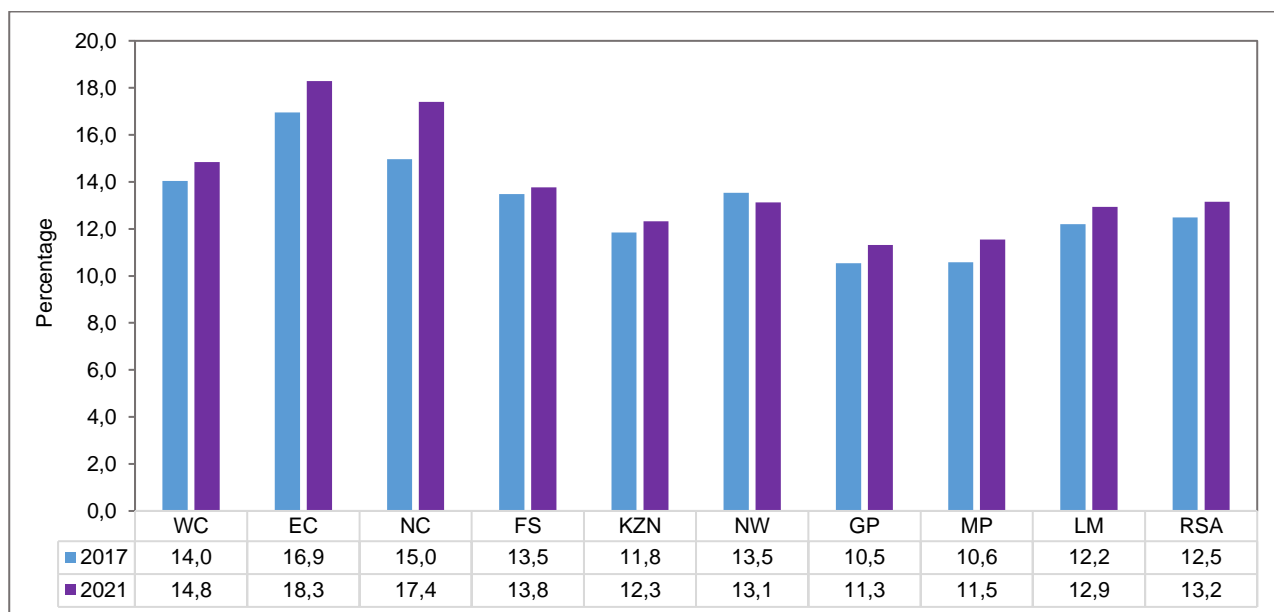
Figure 5.3: Percentage distribution of occupation groups for older persons who are employed by sex, 2017 and 2022



Source: QLFS 2017: Q3, QLFS 2022: Q3.

Figure 5.3 illustrates the percentage distribution of occupation groups for older persons between males and females during 2017 and 2022. The proportions show that the likelihood of older females being employed as domestic workers was higher than their male counterparts at 94,3% in 2017, and increased to 100,0% in 2022 (accounting for all who were considered in this category during the period of reporting).

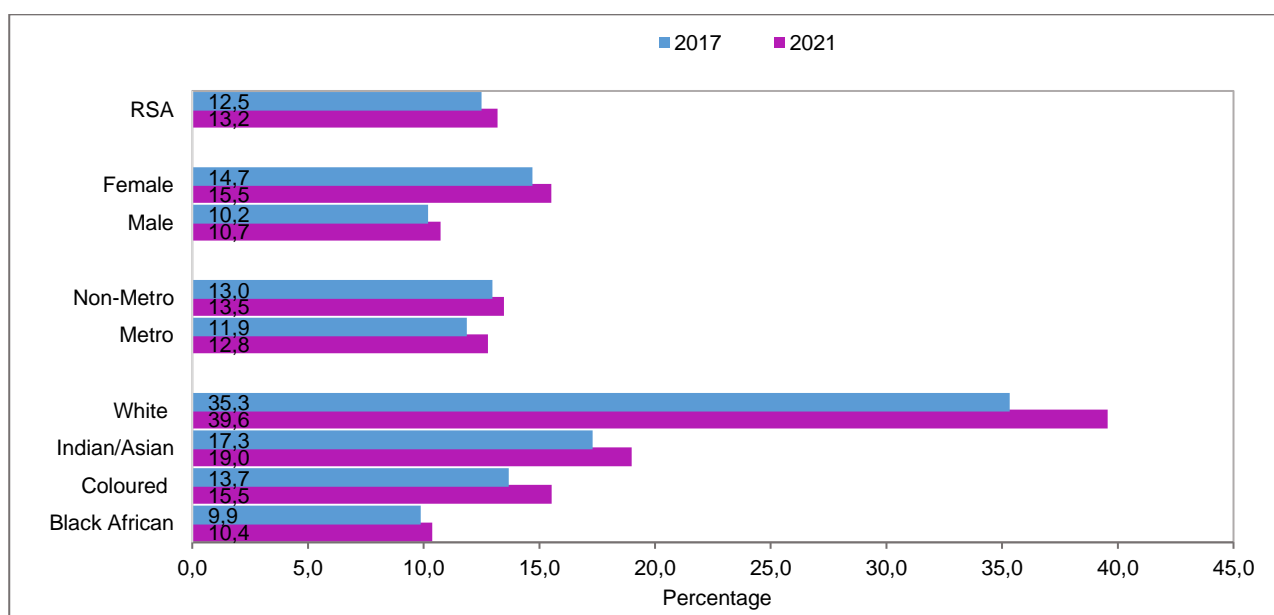
For both years, the figure shows that older males were more likely to be employed in all the skilled occupations than older females. On the other hand, females in highly skilled occupations experienced an increase of 2,8 percentage points whilst those in low-skilled occupations decreased by 3,1 percentage points.

Figure 5.4: Old-age dependency ratios by provinces, 2017 and 2021

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

The dependency ratio compares the number of available workers with the number of those considered to be dependent on the state.¹⁷ From 2017 to 2021, the country's old-age dependency ratio increased from 12,5% to 13,2%. An increase in this ratio is an indication of the burden on the productive population.

Provincial variations revealed that the old-age dependency ratios increased in eight of the nine provinces. These increases were more pronounced in Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape. During 2021, Northern Cape had approximately 17 older persons requiring support for every 100 working-age population, an increase of almost 2 older persons from 2017.

Figure 5.5: Old-age dependency ratios by sex, geographical location and population group, 2017 and 2021

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

¹⁷ <https://www.economics.com>, 2011

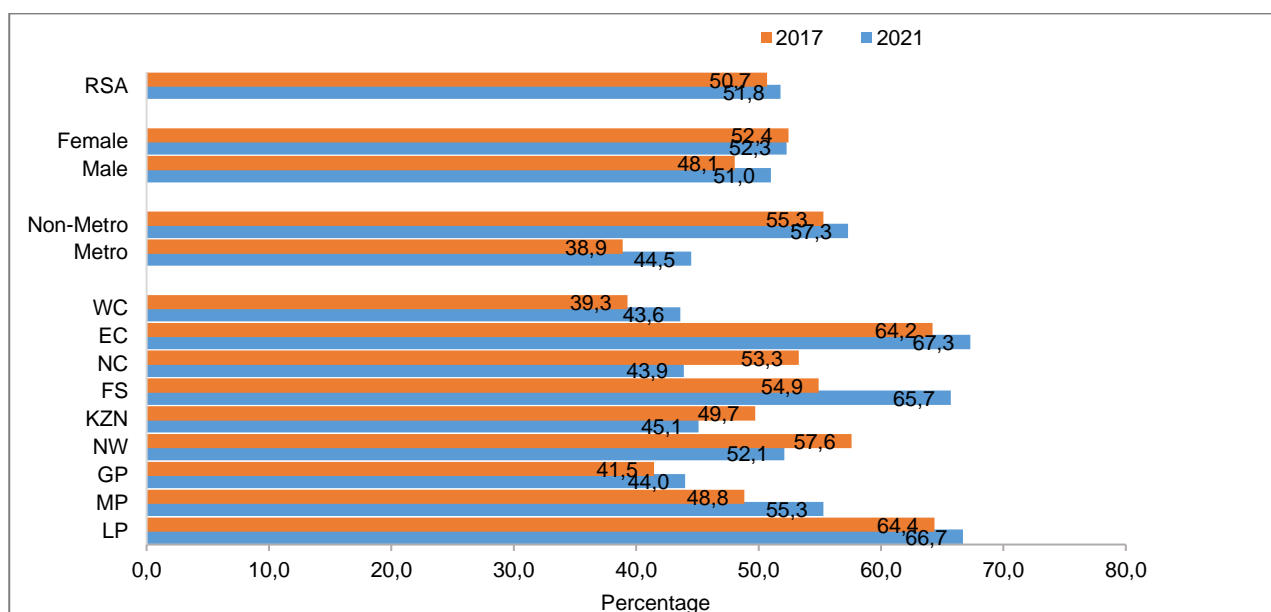
The old-age dependency ratio was higher among females than males for both years of reporting. The higher old-age dependency ratios (14,7% in 2017 and 15,5% in 2021) among females compared to those among males (10,2% in 2017 and 10,7% in 2021) can be attributed to females having a longer life expectancy than males.

During 2021, the old-age dependency ratio in non-metro areas (13,0% in 2017 and 13,5% in 2021) was more than in metro areas (11,9% in 2017 and 12,8% in 2021). The old-age dependency ratio across different population groups showed that approximately 39 white older persons require support for every 100 working-age population in 2021. This was an increase of almost 4 persons per 100 working-age population from 2017. This further substantiates the findings in chapter 2 (Figure 2.5), where the white older population was 15,3% more than that of the general white population, signifying the extent of ageing occurrence among the white population.

The old-age dependency ratio among Indian/Asian and coloured older populations also showed the extent of ageing, while the black African population is a youthful population. As such, this population group had a lesser number of older persons requiring support for every 100 working population relative to other population groups. The number remained constant at approximately 10 persons for every 100 working population over the period of reporting.

5.3 Household income sources

Figure 5.6: Percentage of households with older persons without any employed household members by sex, geographical location and province, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 5.6 illustrates the share of households with persons aged 60 years and older without an employed household member between 2017 and 2021. Nationally, the percentage of households without any employed members living with an older person increased from 50,7% to 51,8%. Households with older persons without an employed household member were more likely to be found in non-metro than in metro areas for both years of reporting (55,3% in 2017 and 57,3% in 2021).

The largest share of households without employed members living with an older person was recorded in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Free State, respectively. Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal were the only provinces that recorded a reduction of 9,4 and 4,6 percentage points difference of households with older persons that had no employed household members, respectively, during this period.

Table 5.2: Sources of income for households headed by older persons by sex and geographical location, 2017 and 2021

Sources of income	Metro						Non-Metro					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	N ('000)	Percent	N ('000)	Percent	N ('000)	Percent	N ('000)	Percent	N ('000)	Percent	N ('000)	Percent
	2017											
Salaries/wages/commission	228	38,9	214	40,6	443	39,7	156	19,1	160	14,9	315	16,7
Income from business	55	9,3	24	4,5	78	7,0	39	4,8	18	1,7	57	3,0
Remittances	12	2,0	16	3,0	28	2,5	14	1,8	41	3,8	56	2,9
Pensions	100	17,0	42	8,0	142	12,8	89	10,9	65	6,0	153	8,1
Grants	173	29,5	217	41,0	390	34,9	503	61,9	779	72,7	1 282	68,0
Sales of farming products and services	0	0,0	1	0,3	1	0,1	2	0,3	2	0,2	4	0,2
Other income sources, e.g. rental income, interest	20	3,3	13	2,5	33	2,9	10	1,2	7	0,7	17	0,9
Total	587	100,0	528	100,0	1 115	100,0	813	100,0	1 072	100,0	1 885	100,0
Sources of income	2021											
Salaries/wages/commission	239	33,8	217	29,6	456	31,6	161	17,3	207	16,6	368	16,9
Income from a business	71	10,0	32	4,4	103	7,2	53	5,8	13	1,1	67	3,1
Remittances	7	1,0	37	5,0	44	3,0	12	1,3	35	2,8	47	2,1
Pensions	133	18,8	91	12,5	225	15,6	137	14,7	71	5,7	208	9,5
Grants	229	32,3	333	45,4	562	39,0	556	59,7	909	72,9	1 464	67,3
Sales of farming products and services	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	6	0,7	9	0,7	15	0,7
Other income sources, e.g. rental income, interest	29	4,1	22	3,1	52	3,6	6	0,6	2	0,2	8	0,4
Total	708	100,0	733	100,0	1 442	100,0	930	100,0	1 246	100,0	2 177	100,0

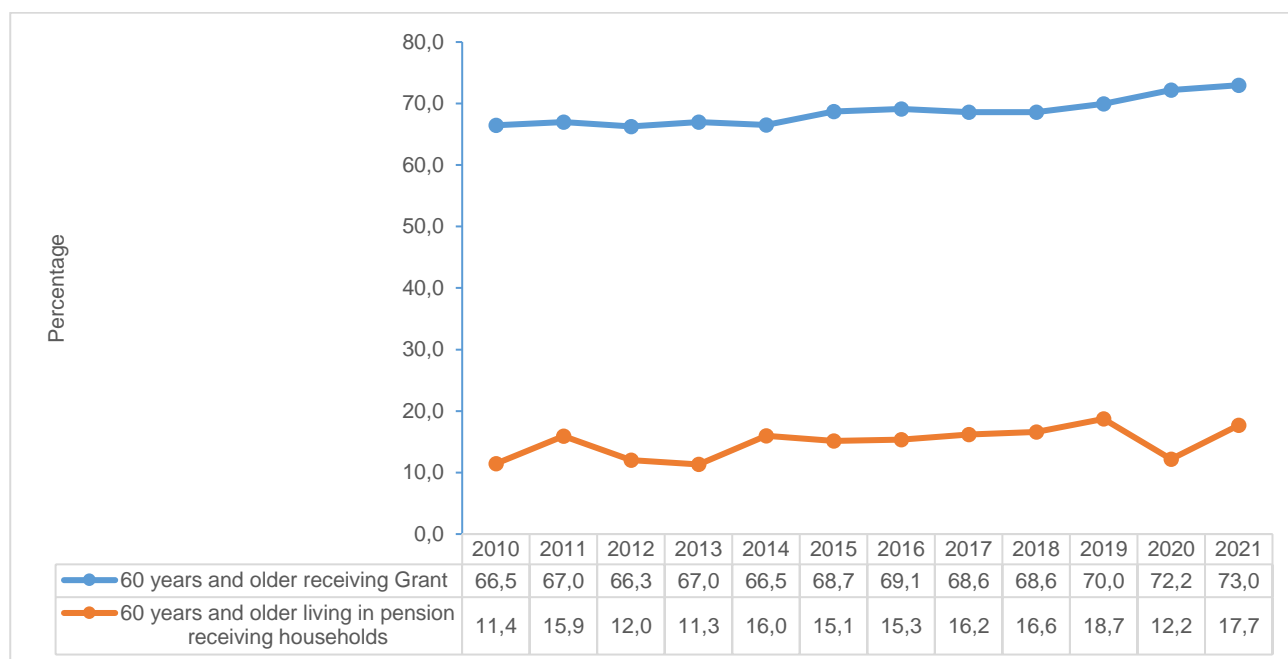
Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

***No income category was not included in 2019.

Table 5.2 illustrates the main sources of income for households headed by older persons for the years 2017 and 2021. Grants and salaries/wages/commissions were the main sources of income for households headed by older persons, accounting for over half of the distribution share in 2021. Notable is the significant difference in the distribution of sources of income by geographical location for both older male- and older female-headed households. More than two-thirds of households headed by older persons in non-metros were more likely to depend on grants (68,2% and 67,3%) as the main source of income than salaries/wages/commission (16,7% and 16,9%) in both 2017 and 2021 respectively.

In metro areas, the difference in the percentage of male-headed households who depend on grants and those who depend on salaries/wages/commission is fairly marginal. However, the contrary applies to female-headed households, with the majority depending on grants as their main source of income. Overall, households headed by older females were more likely to depend on grants than their male counterparts. For both 2017 and 2021, male-headed households residing in metro areas were more likely to report pensions as their main source of income than female-headed households. Table 5.1 illustrates the main sources of income for households headed by older persons for the years 2017 and 2021. Grants and salaries/wages/commissions were the main sources of income for households headed by older persons, accounting for over half of the distribution share. Notable is the significant difference in the distribution of sources of income by geography type for both male- and female-headed households.

Figure 5.7: Distribution of old-age grant and private pension coverage over time for persons 60 years and older, 2010–2021



Source: GHS 2010–2021.

Analysis of the entire South African social security system has led to increasing attention being directed towards the role of different grants in assisting poverty reduction.¹⁸ Social grants, which include old-age pensions, are one of the government's interventions to combat poverty. Figure 5.7 illustrates the trend in the proportions of beneficiaries of old-age grants and pensions in South Africa for the period 2010–2021. The trend analysis reveals that recipients of the old-age grant have been fluctuating between 66,5% and 73,0% during the reporting period, whilst those receiving private pensions have been consistently below 20,0%.

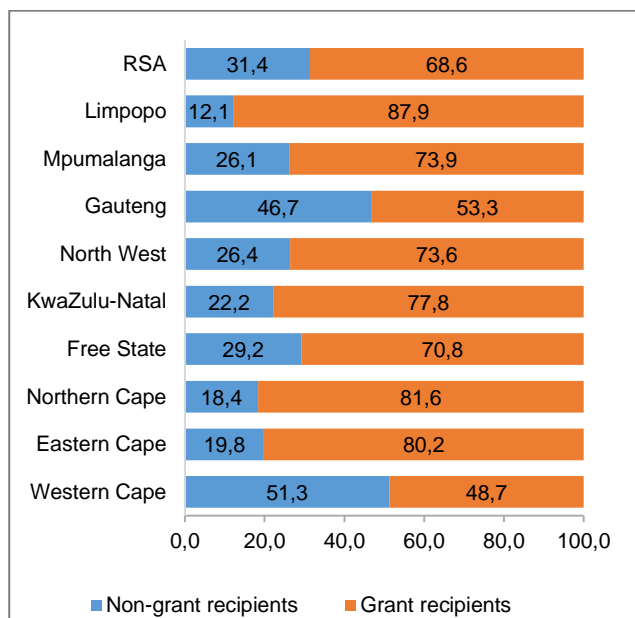
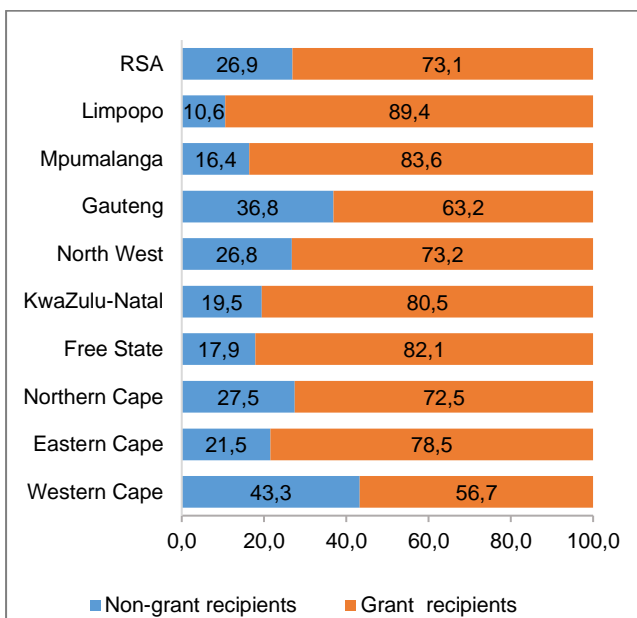
¹⁸ May, Julian. (2003). Chronic Poverty and Older People in South Africa. SSRN Electronic Journal.10.2139/ssrn.1754421.

Table 5.3: Number of older persons who are accessing social grants by province, 2017 and 2021

Province	2017			2021		
	Non-grant recipients	Grant recipients	Total	Non-grant recipients	Grant recipients	Total
N ('000)						
Western Cape	321	305	626	313	410	723
Eastern Cape	130	526	655	153	558	711
Northern Cape	21	95	116	39	103	142
Free State	73	176	249	47	216	263
KwaZulu-Natal	184	645	829	178	737	915
North West	89	247	336	94	257	351
Gauteng	497	567	1 064	469	804	1 273
Mpumalanga	78	222	300	58	295	353
Limpopo	51	371	421	50	422	472
RSA	1 443	3 153	4 596	1 400	3 802	5 202

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

A social grant is a means-tested social relief, crucial in cushioning beneficiaries against poverty and inequalities. In South Africa, over 3,8 million persons aged 60 years and older received a social grant in 2021 compared to over 3,1 million in 2017, as shown in Table 5.3. Most grant recipients were found in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Limpopo. Older persons living in Northern Cape were the least likely to receive grants.

Figure 5.8a: Percentage of older persons who are accessing social grants by province, 2017**Figure 5.8b: Percentage of older persons who are accessing social grants by province, 2021**

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

A social grant is a monthly income that is administered by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), a government agency. The grant is only paid out to persons who meet the qualifying requirements, and it offers relief to the vulnerable older population as a source of income for certain households.

Figures 5.8a and 5.8b show the distribution of social grants between 2017 and 2021. Over two-thirds of the older persons in South Africa were recipients of social grants in both years. The highest percentage of grant recipients in the country were found in Limpopo in both years (87,9% in 2017 and 89,4% in 2021). In 2021, though there was a marginal change in the percentage of grant recipients at a national level, six out of the nine provinces recorded increases in the percentage of grant recipients compared to 2017. Provinces that recorded decreases in the percentage of grant recipients in 2021 included Northern Cape (9,1 percentage points), Eastern Cape (1,7 percentage points) and North West (0,4 percentage points). Western Cape had the lowest number of grant recipients in South Africa for both years (48,7% in 2017 and 56,7% in 2021).

5.4 Conclusion

Nationally, the percentage of households without any employed members living with an older person increased from 50,7% to 51,8%. Households with older persons, but that have no employed household members, were more likely to be found in non-metro than in metro areas for both years of reporting (55,3% in 2017 and 57,3% in 2021).

Over two-thirds of the older persons in South Africa were recipients of social grants in both years. The highest percentage of grant recipients in the country were found in Limpopo in both years (87,9% in 2017 and 89,4% in 2021). Western Cape had the lowest number of grant recipients in South Africa for both years (48,7% in 2017 and 56,7% in 2021).

In terms of occupations, older males were more likely to occupy highly skilled and semi-skilled occupations, whilst older women were mostly in vulnerable employment, such as domestic work.

Generally, the old-age dependency ratios have increased between 2017 and 2021, indicating a burden on the working population. The old-age dependency ratio was higher among females compared to males, which shows that females tend to outlive males. Population group disparities showed that approximately 39 white older persons require support for every 100 working-age population in 2021, far more when compared to their counterparts.

CHAPTER 6: LIFE EXPECTANCY AND HEALTH STATUS

6.1 Introduction

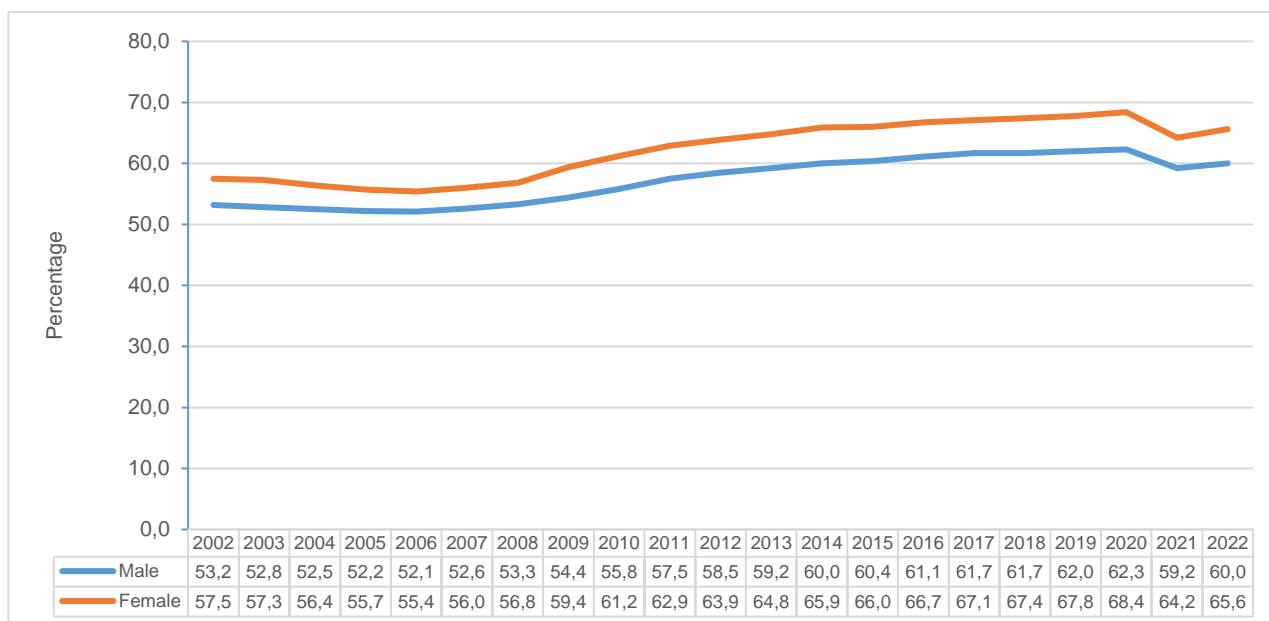
The health status of older persons has a significant impact on both their life expectancy and quality of life. The health status of older persons has a significant impact on both their life expectancy and quality of life. Because of greater public health, better healthcare, and most lately, the use of technology breakthroughs population ageing and increasing life expectancy are inevitable. This chapter will focus on the older persons' access to healthcare services, general health state and access to medical aid coverage.

6.2 Life expectancy

Life expectancy at birth is defined as how long, on average, a newborn can expect to live if current death rates do not change. However, the actual age-specific death rate of any particular birth cohort cannot be known in advance. If rates are falling, actual life spans will be higher than life expectancy calculated using current death rates.

Life expectancy at birth is one of the most frequently used health status indicators. Gains in life expectancy at birth can be attributed to a number of factors, including rising living standards, improved lifestyle and better education, as well as greater access to quality health services.¹⁹

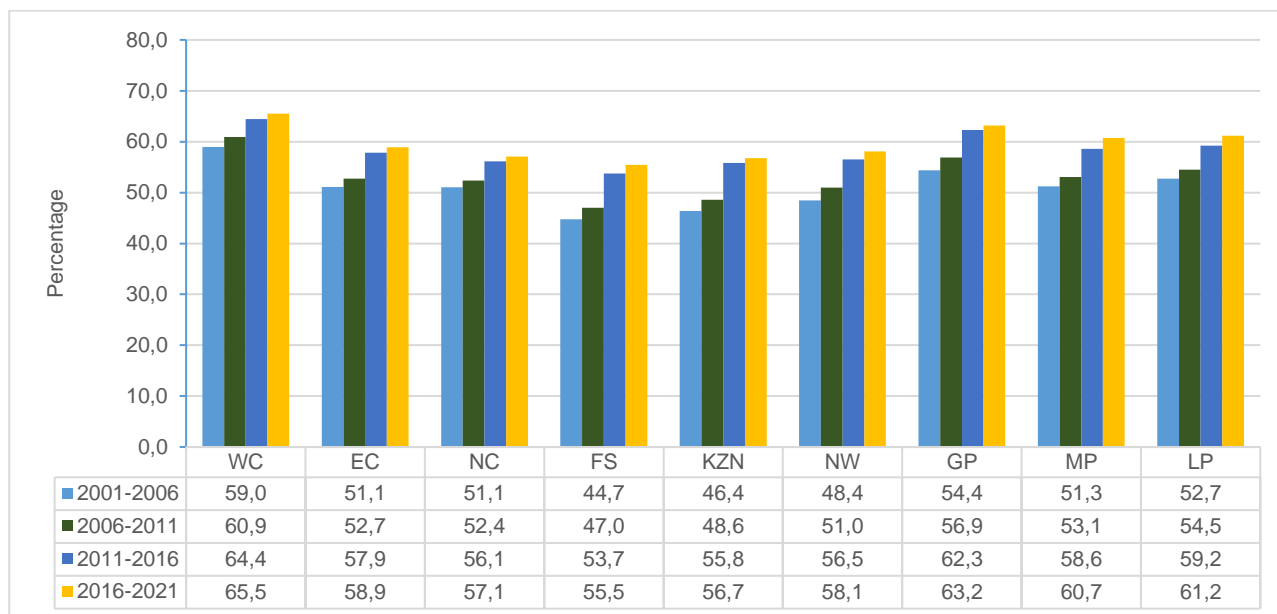
Figure 6.1: Life expectancy at birth of males and females, 2002–2022



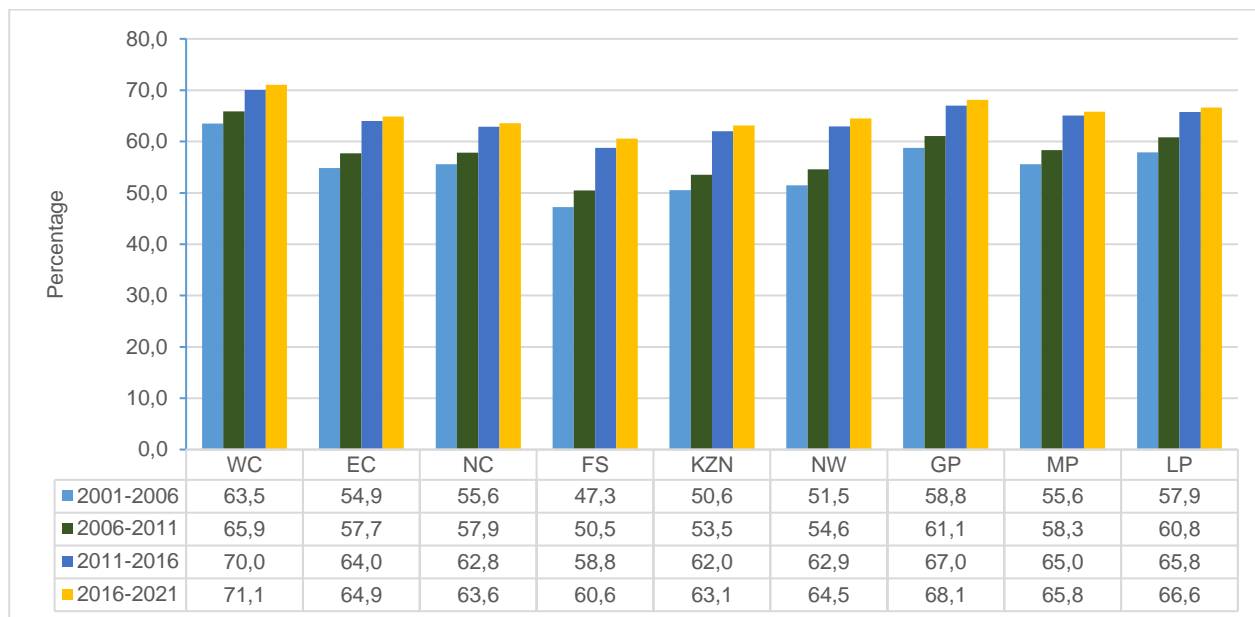
Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 6.1 shows that between 2002 and 2022, there has been a rise in life expectancy estimated at 60,0 years for males and 65,6 years for females. Between 2002 and 2022, the life expectancy of males increased by 6,8 years (from 53,2 years to 60,0 years), and for females by 8,1 years (from 57,5 to 65,6 years). Although this is for the general population, it does indicate that the general conditions that contribute towards a longer life are improving, underpinning the general trend that South Africa has and will continue to have a growing older population.

¹⁹ OECD (2023), Life expectancy at birth (indicator). doi: 10.1787/27e0fc9d-en (Accessed on 27 February 2023).

Figure 6.2a: Life expectancy of males at birth per province, 2002–2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

Figure 6.2b: Life expectancy of females at birth per province, 2002–2022

Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, 2022 series.

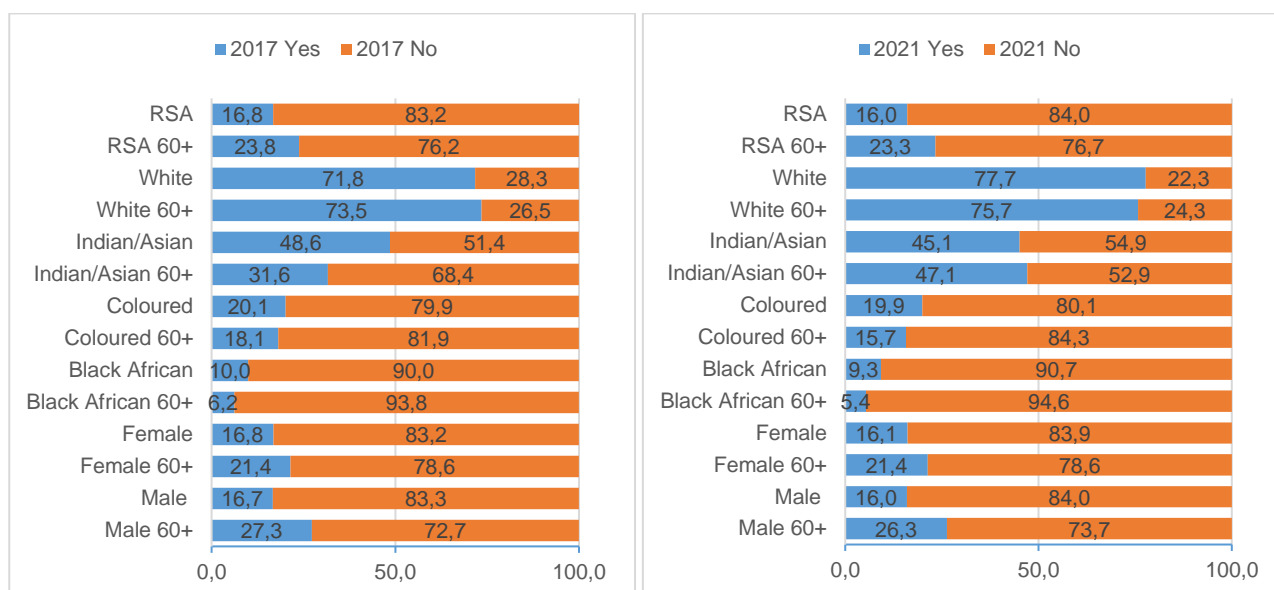
Figures 6.2a and 6.2b highlight the life expectancy between different provinces between 2001 and 2021. In all the years, Western Cape and Gauteng recorded the highest life expectancy compared to other provinces.

In 2021, life expectancy was highest in Western Cape (66,5 years for males and 71,1 years for females) and Gauteng (64,3 years for males and 68,1 years for females).

The shortest life expectancies at birth were found in Free State (56,6 years for males and 62,2 years for females) and KwaZulu-Natal (57,8 years for males and 63,2 years for females).

6.3 General health status and health-seeking behaviour

Figure 6.3: Percentage of older persons who are covered by a medical aid or medical benefit scheme or other private health insurance by sex and population group, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

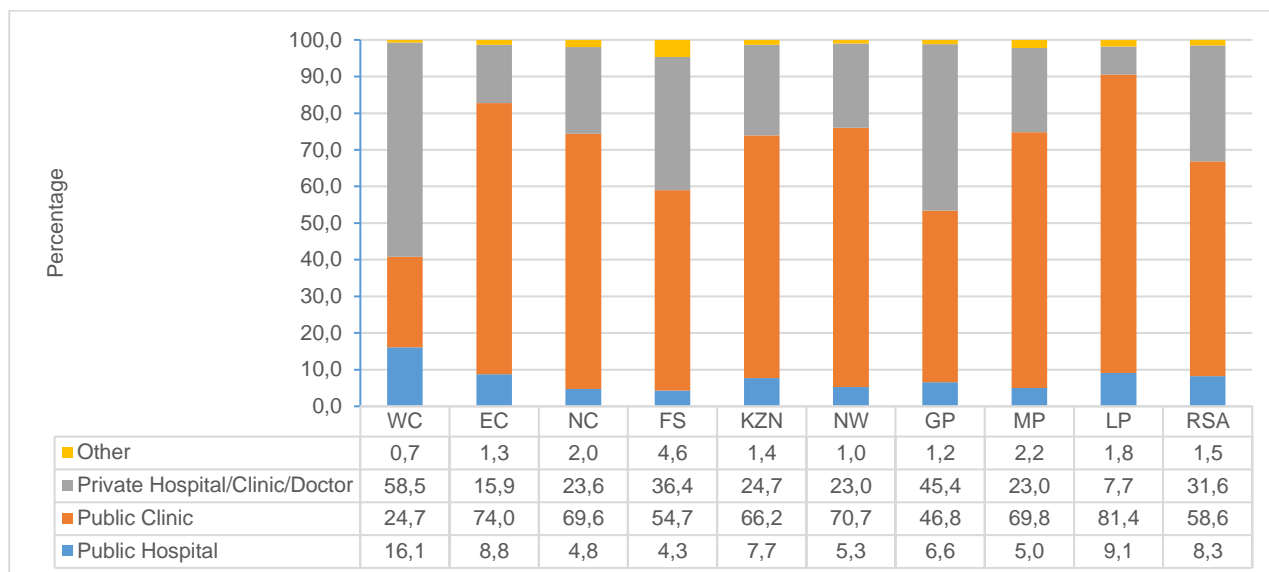
*Do not know excluded.

Figure 6.3 illustrates the percentage of persons 60 years and older who were covered by a medical aid or medical benefit scheme or other private health insurance in relation to the total population by sex and population group during 2017 and 2021. The findings revealed the inequalities in access to medical aid, whether by sex or population group among older persons. Access to medical aid by older persons dropped by 0,5 percentage points within the reference period.

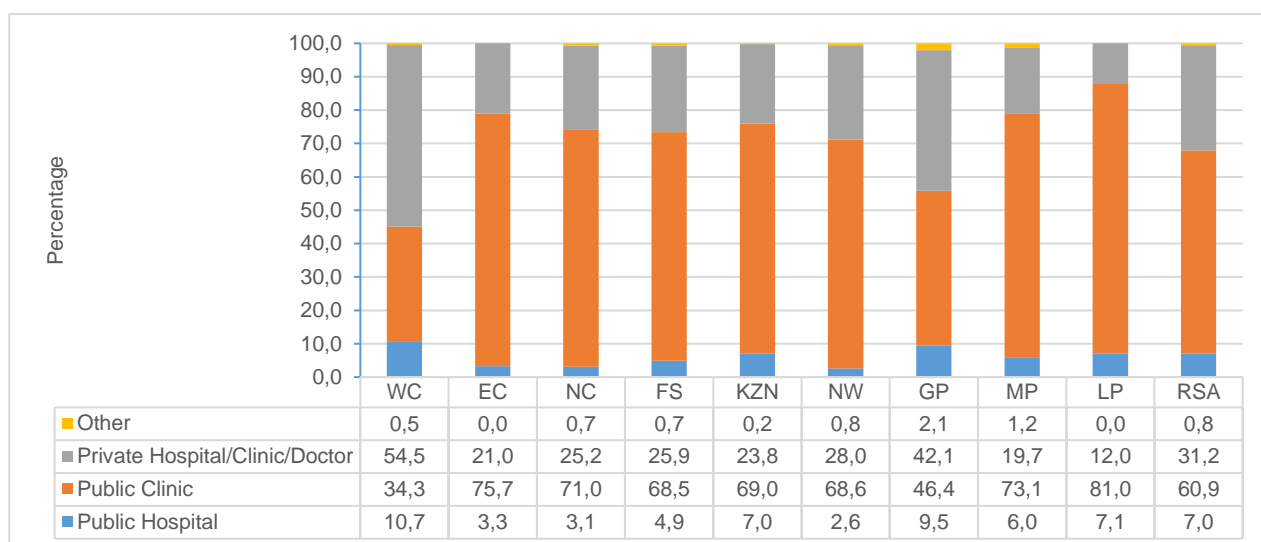
Less than a quarter (23,8% in 2017 and 23,3% in 2021) of the older persons in South Africa were members of medical aid schemes or private health insurance. This was higher than the membership rates for the general population (16,8% in 2017 and 16,0% in 2021).

The percentage of persons 60 years and older who were covered by a medical aid or medical benefit scheme or other private health insurance was highest amongst white (73,5% in 2017 and 75,7% in 2021) and Indian/Asian (31,6% in 2017 and 47,1% in 2021) older persons during this period. This largely reflects the disproportional representation of white older persons amongst individuals aged 60 years and older.

The black Africans and coloureds, had the lowest percentage of older persons covered by medical aid, medical benefit scheme, or other private health insurance for the reference period. Between 2017 and 2021, black African and coloured older persons had a drop in medical aid coverage, while the opposite was observed for other population groups. In 2017, 6,2% of older persons from the black African population group and 18,1% of coloured older persons were members of medical aid schemes, and this dropped by 0,8 of a percentage point and 2,4 percentage points in 2021, respectively. When looking at gender disparities among the total population, the coverage was slightly higher amongst older females than older males in both years. Between 2017 and 2021, although older males had higher coverage than older females, they recorded a decrease in medical coverage while the percentage for older females remained the same.

Figure 6.4: Types of health facilities normally used by older persons by province, 2017 and 2021

Source: GHS 2017.



Source: GHS 2021.

Figure 6.4 depicts the types of health facilities normally used by persons aged 60 years and older. Between 2017 and 2021, over 50% of older persons used public clinics for their healthcare needs, followed by those who used private hospital/clinic/doctor for both years.

During this period, the majority of older persons in eight out of the nine provinces made use of public clinics for their healthcare needs. Western Cape was the only province where older persons were more likely to utilise private hospital/clinic/doctor than any other type of healthcare facility for both years. Between 2017 and 2021, the percentage of older persons who used public clinics slightly increased by 2,3 percentage points, while the usage of other health facilities dropped. In 2021, the percentage of older persons using public clinics in Limpopo, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape was at least 70%. The use of public hospitals was most common in Western Cape and Gauteng at 10,7% and 9,5%, respectively.

Table 6.1: Percentage of older persons diagnosed with selected conditions by a doctor/nurse/healthcare worker and whether they are taking medication or not, 2017 and 2021

Chronic condition	2017					
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
	Male		Female		Both sexes	
Asthma	65	6,1	126	6,3	191	6,2
Diabetes	273	25,6	423	21,2	696	22,7
High blood pressure	686	64,3	1 388	69,6	2 074	67,7
Stroke	31	2,9	44	2,2	75	2,4
Tuberculosis	13	1,2	14	0,7	27	0,9
Total	1 067	100,0	1 995	100,0	3 062	100,0
Chronic condition	2021					
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent
	Male		Female		Both sexes	
Asthma	62	5,3	133	5,1	196	5,2
Diabetes	272	23,3	666	25,4	938	24,8
High blood pressure	788	67,7	1 766	67,3	2 554	67,4
Stroke	23	2,0	48	1,8	71	1,9
Tuberculosis	20	1,7	9	0,3	29	0,8
Total	1 165	100,0	2 623	100,0	3 788	100,0

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 20210

*Chronic conditions categories reduced from 17 to 5 in 2021.

According to Table 6.1, the three health conditions most common among older persons were high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma. Between 2017 and 2021, older persons who suffered from high blood pressure and asthma decreased by 0,3 percentage points and 1,0 percentage points, respectively, while those who suffered from diabetes increased by 2,1 percentage points. Looking at absolute numbers, in 2017 older females were more likely to have all five listed chronic conditions compared to their male counterparts. In 2021, older females were most likely to suffer from diabetes (25,4%) than their male counterparts (23,3%).

6.4 Conclusion

Life expectancy of women increased from 57,5 to 65,6 years during the past 20 years (between 2002 and 2022), whilst life expectancy for men was 60 years. Gauteng and Western Cape have higher life expectancy for both males and females. There were inequalities in access to medical aid, whether by sex or population group among older persons. Access to medical aid by older persons dropped by 0,5 percentage points within the reference period. The same pattern was observed among the total population.

In 2021, nearly a quarter (23,3%) of the older persons in the country were members of medical aid schemes, which was higher than the membership rate of the country's population (16,0%). However, medical aid coverage among older persons was disproportionately high for whites (75,7%), which accounted for over three-quarters of the coverage share. Black Africans had a minor coverage share of 5,4%. Gender imbalances in medical aid coverage amongst older persons revealed that males had higher coverage (27,3% in 2017 to 26,3% in 2021) than females (21,4% in both 2017 and 2019). During that period, the majority of older persons made use of public facilities for their healthcare needs. The three health conditions most common among older persons were high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma.

CHAPTER 7: EXPERIENCES OF CRIME AND FEELINGS OF SAFETY

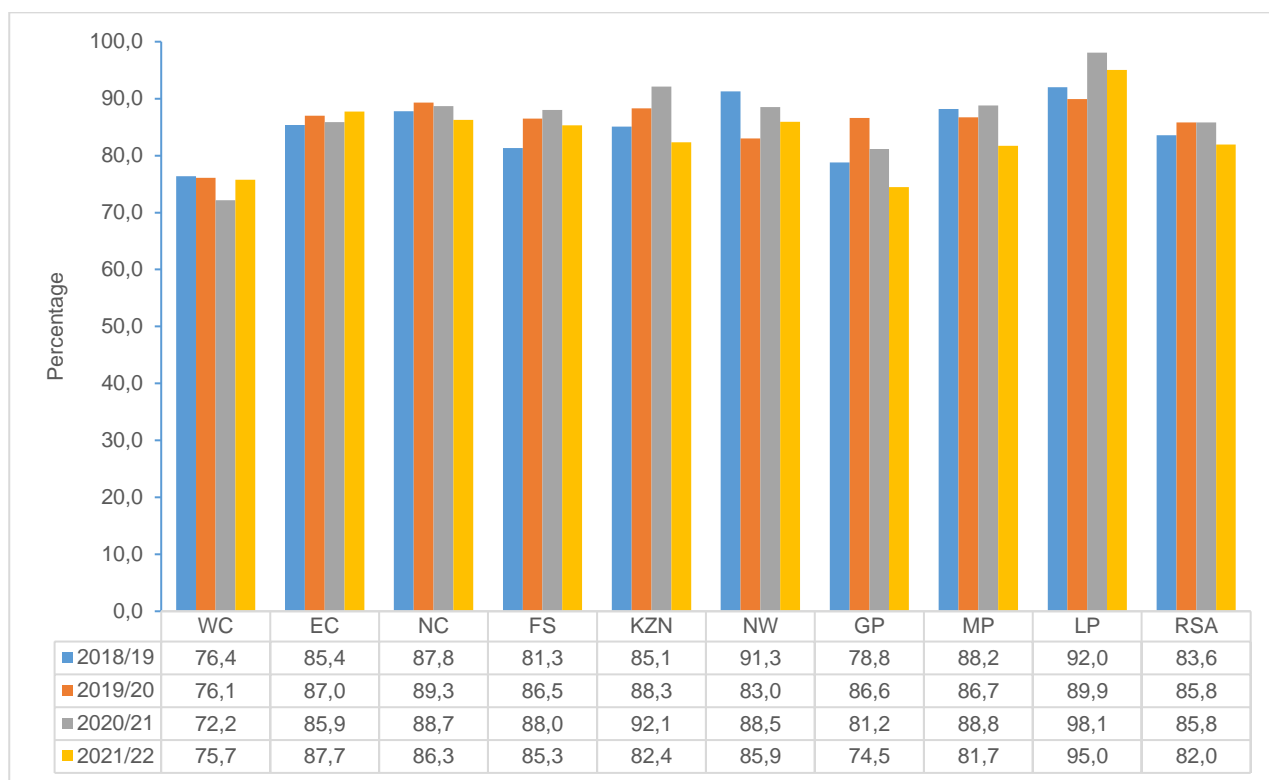
7.1 Introduction

Chapter 12 of the National Development Plan lists crime reduction as a strategic priority, and envisions that people living in South Africa should have no fear of crime. In line with this, priority 6 of the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) (2019–2024) advocates for: “Social cohesion and safer communities.” One of the broad strategic outcomes of this priority is: “Increased feelings of safety in communities.”

Within this context, this chapter examines the extent to which households and individuals feel that they are safe and whether they have been subjected to victimisation. The primary data sources for this chapter will mainly be the Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS) and the Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (GPSJS).

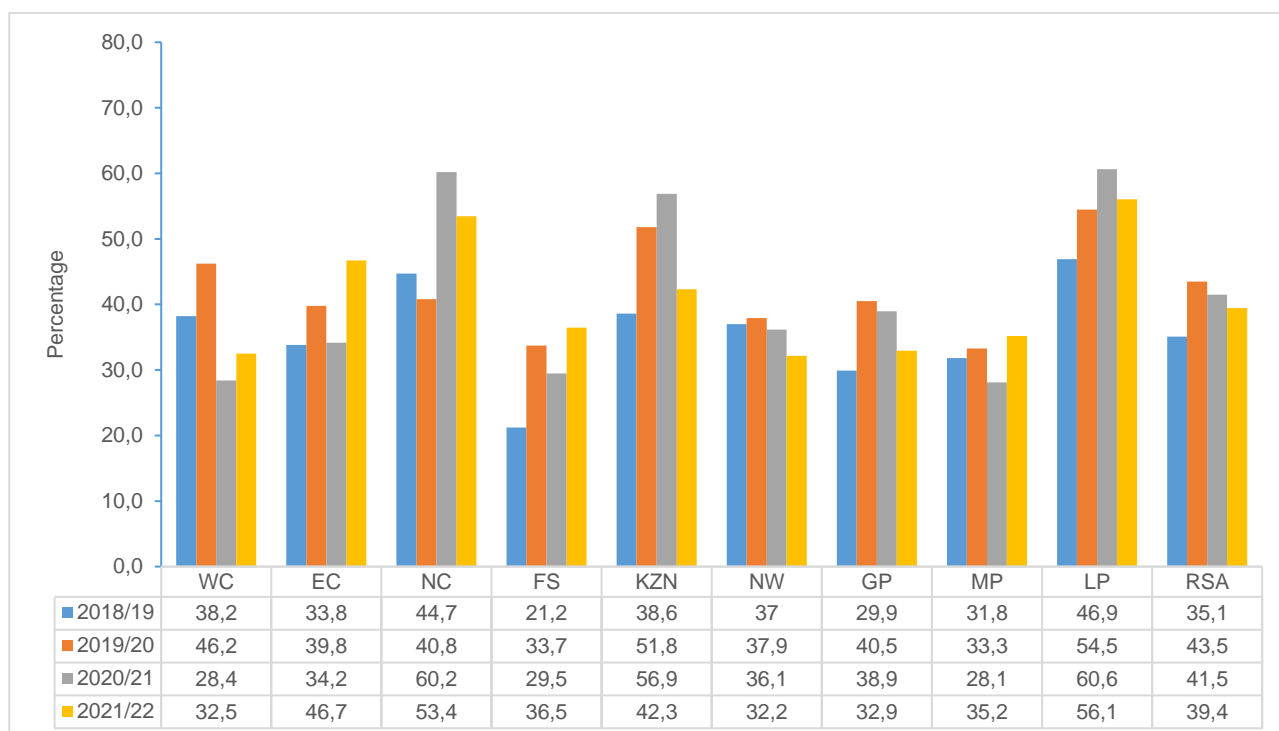
7.2 Feelings of safety

Figure 7.1a: Percentage distribution of older persons who feel safe walking in the area where they live during the day, 2018/19–2021/2022



Source: GPSJS 2018/19 to GPSJS 2021/2022.

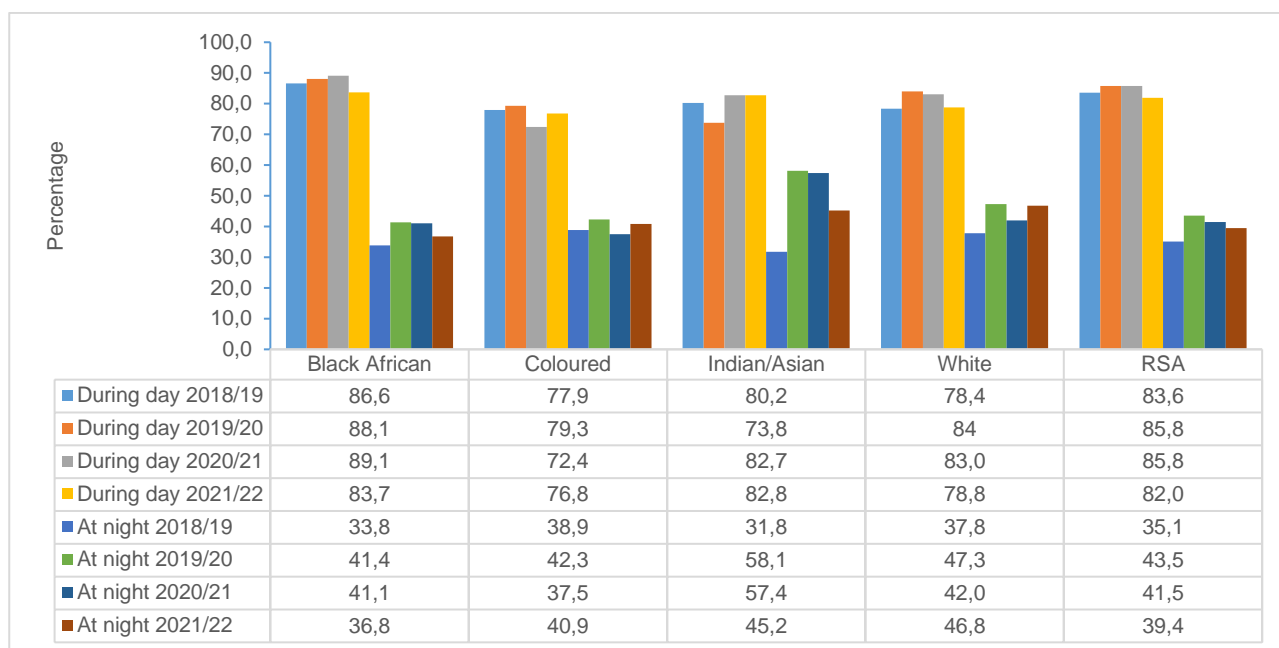
Figure 7.1b: Percentage distribution of older persons who feel safe walking in the area where they live at night, 2018/19–2021/2022



Source: GPSJS 2018/19 to GPSJS 2021/2022.

Figure 7.1a and Figure 7.1b show the percentage of older persons who feel safe walking alone in the area where they live during the day and at night. The results indicate that older persons felt safer in 2019/20 and 2020/21 when walking around their areas at night or during the day than in 2018/19 and 2021/22. Nationally, the percentage of older persons who felt safe at night increased by 4,3 percentage points, and during the day decreased by 1,6 percentage points between 2018/19 and 2021/22. Free State, Limpopo, and Eastern Cape are the only provinces that showed an increase in percentages (4,0, 3,0 and 2,3 percentage points respectively) in older persons who felt safer walking alone during the day from 2018/19 to 2021/22, whereas at night, Free State, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo showed the highest increase in percentages (15,3, 12,9 and 9,2 percentage points) compared to other provinces.

Figure 7.2: Percentage distribution of older persons who feel safe walking during the day and at night in the area where they live by population group, 2018/19–2021/22



Source: GPSJS 2018/19 and GPSJS 2021/22.

Figure 7.2 shows that during the past four years, feelings of safety during the day have declined for black Africans (2,9%) and coloureds (1,1%) between 2018/19 and 2021/22, whilst Indians/Asians and whites showed an increase. However, older persons across all population groups felt safer walking alone during the night between 2018/19 to 2021/22, with Indian/Asian and white populations recording the highest increase of 13,4 and 9,0 percentage points, respectively, during this period. On average, nationally, older persons feel more safe walking alone in their areas during the day compared to at night.

Table 7.1: Percentage distribution of older persons who feel safe walking during the day and at night in the area where they live by sex, 2020/21–2021/22

Time period	Year	Feelings of safety	Male	Female	RSA
During the day	2020/21	Safe	86,0	85,6	85,8
		Unsafe	14,0	14,4	14,2
	2021/22	Safe	83,0	81,3	82,0
		Unsafe	17,0	18,7	18,0
At night	2020/21	Safe	43,6	39,9	41,5
		Unsafe	56,4	60,1	58,5
	2021/22	Safe	38,9	39,8	39,4
		Unsafe	61,1	60,2	60,6

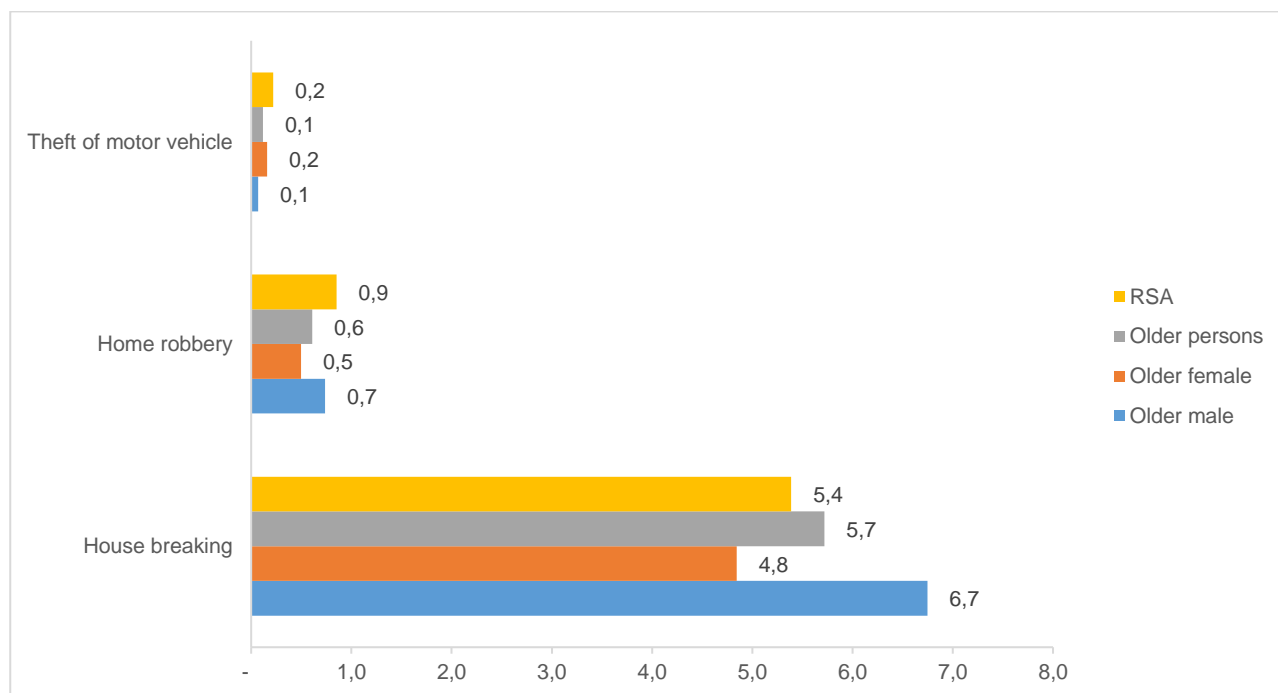
Source: GPSJS 2020/21 and GPSJS 2021/22.

Table 7.1 shows that older males were a bit more likely to feel safe when walking alone in their area during the day than older females in 2020/21. Between 2020/21 and 2021/22, the percentage of both males and females who felt safe when walking alone during the day declined by 3,0 and 4,3% respectively.

Both older men and women reported a decline in their feelings of safety at night. Older women (39,8%) were more likely than older males to feel safe (38,9%) at night in 2021/22. During this period, the percentage of older males who feel safe walking alone at night declined from 43,6% in 2020/21 to 38,9% in 2021/22, whereas for older females it declined from 39,9% in 2020/21 to 39,8% in 2021/22.

7.3 Household crimes experienced by older persons

Figure 7.3: Percentage distribution of households affected by the most common household crimes in the year prior to the survey by sex, 2021/22



Source: GPSJS 2021/22.

Figure 7.3 shows the likelihood of older male-headed households being victims of the most common household crimes was higher than that of households headed by older females, except for theft of motor vehicle. In 2021/22, 6,7% of older male-headed households were affected by housebreaking compared to 5,4% of the general South African households. Households headed by older females were more likely than older male-headed households to fall victim to the theft of a motor vehicle.

Table 7.2: Households headed by older persons affected by crimes in the year prior to the survey by sex, 2016/17 and 2021/22

Type of crime	N (000)					
	2016/17			2021/22		
	Male	Female	RSA	Male	Female	RSA
Total	1 478	1 753	3 230	1 724	2 053	3 777
Theft of motor vehicle	7	6	13	*	*	*
Housebreaking/burglary	54	46	100	121	104	225
Home robbery	16	15	31	14	10	24
Murder	*	*	*	*	*	*
Deliberate damage to property	6	11	17	**	**	**
Sexual offence	1	4	6	*	*	*
Assault	10	10	20	14	10	24
Percent						
Theft of motor vehicle	0,5	0,3	0,4	*	*	*
Housebreaking/burglary	3,7	2,6	3,1	7	5	5,9
Home robbery	1,1	0,9	1	0,8	0,5	0,6
Murder	*	*	*	*	*	*
Deliberate damage to property	0,4	0,6	0,5	**	**	**
Sexual offence	0,1	0,3	0,2	*	*	*
Assault	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,8	0,5	0,6

Source: VOCS 2016/17 and GPSJS 2021/22.

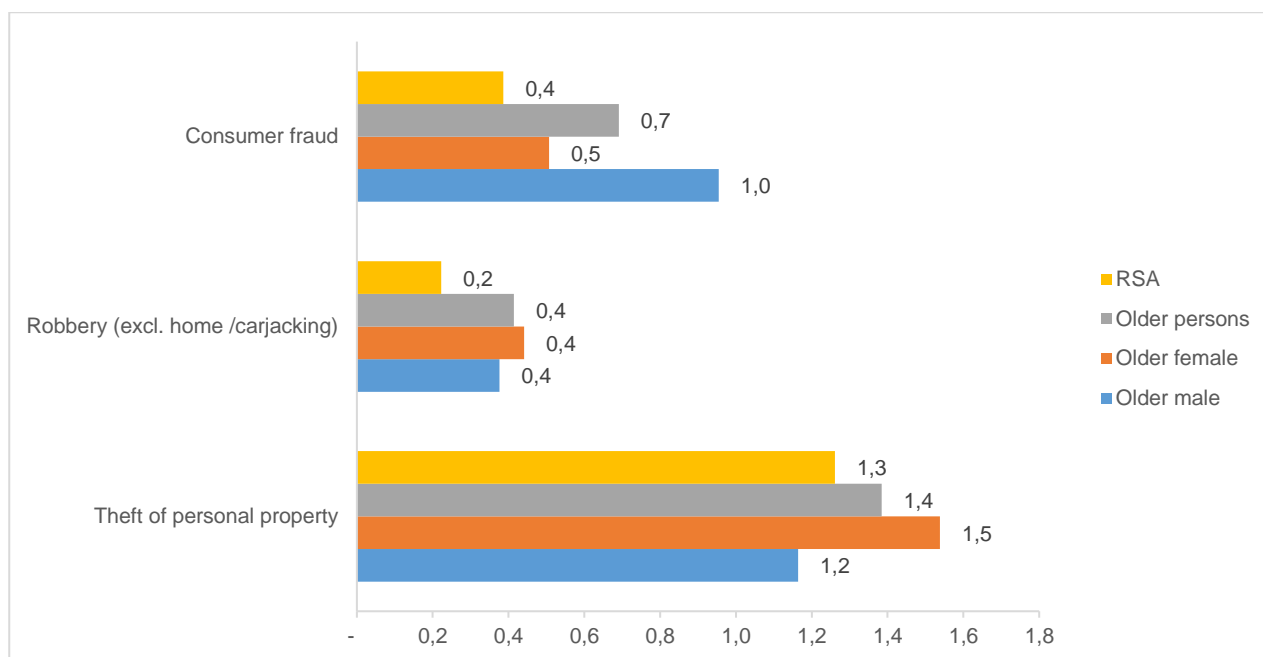
*Sample is too small to make any inferences.

**Not collected in this period.

Table 7.2 demonstrates that crimes affecting households headed by older persons increased between 2016/17 and 2021/22, with the exception of home robbery. The absolute number of home robberies decreased from 31 thousand in 2016/17 to 24 thousand in 2021/22 (a decrease of 7 thousand). The decrease is mostly due to the significant decrease in the number of households headed by older females who reported to be affected by this type of crime (from 15 thousand in 2016/17 to 10 thousand in 2021/22). However, housebreaking/burglary reflected a huge increase in households headed by older males (from 54 thousand in 2016/17 to 121 thousand in 2021/22) and households headed by older females (from 46 thousand in 2016/17 to 104 thousand in 2021/22). In 2021/22, deliberate damage to property was more prevalent among households headed by older females than their male counterparts in 2016/17.

7.4 Individual crimes experienced by older persons

Figure 7.4: Percentage distribution of individuals affected by crime in the year prior to the survey by sex, 2021/22



Source: GPSJS 2021/22.

Figure 7.4 summarises the crimes that affected older persons and compares these with the prevalence among the population in general. Generally, older persons were more likely to be affected by these crimes than the overall population, except for older males who experienced theft of personal property which recorded slightly lower than the population in general.

When it comes to gender differences amongst older persons, older females were more likely than their male counterparts to fall victim to the theft of personal property. On the other hand, older males were more vulnerable to becoming victims of consumer fraud.

Table 7.3: Older persons affected by crimes in the year prior to the survey by sex, 2016/17 and 2021/22

Type of crime	N(000)			N(000)		
	2016/17			2021/22		
	Male	Female	RSA	Male	Female	RSA
Total	1 856	2 683	4 539	2 724	3 896	6 260
Theft/ of personal property	14	15	28	32	60	92
Hijacking	3	5	7	4	7	10
Robbery	7	1	8	10	17	27
Sexual offence	1	5	6	**	**	**
Assault	1	9	10	**	**	**
Consumer fraud	6	6	12	26	20	46
Percent						
Theft of personal property	0,7	0,5	0,6	1,2	1,5	1,4
Hijacking	0,1	0,2	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,2
Robbery	0,4	0,0	0,2	0,4	0,4	0,4
Sexual offence	0	0,2	0,1	**	**	**
Assault	0	0,3	0,2	**	**	**
Consumer fraud	0,3	0,2	0,3	1,0	0,5	0,7

Source: VOCS 2016/17 and GPSJS 2021/22.

*Sample is too small to make any inferences.

**Not collected in this period.

Table 7.3 shows the analysis of older persons affected by crimes in the year prior to the survey by sex. The probability of an older person becoming a victim of theft of personal property, consumer fraud, hijacking, and robbery increased between 2016/17 and 2021/22. However, older males showed an increase in consumer fraud from 0,3% in 2016/17 to 1,0% in 2021/22. On the other hand, older females recorded an increase in theft of personal property.

7.5 Conclusion

Households headed by older persons felt safer in 2020/21 when walking alone in their areas at night or during the day than in 2021/22. However, households headed by older persons who felt safe walking alone during the day in their areas declined by 1,6 percentage points from 2018/19 to 2021/22. Indians/Asians showed an exception of older persons who felt safer walking alone in their areas during the day, with an increase of 9,0 percentage points. In 2021/22, older females felt less safe walking alone in their areas during the day.

Incidences of theft of motor vehicles were more prevalent amongst older males than older females. For individual crimes, older females were more likely to be affected by the theft of personal property, whilst older males were more prone to consumer fraud.

CHAPTER 8: HOUSEHOLD BASIC SERVICES

8.1 Introduction

The South African National Development Plan (NDP) calls for all persons in the country to have access to adequate housing, affordable and fiscally sustainable access to basic services such as water, sanitation, refuse removal and electricity, as well as access to social services and economic opportunities within a reasonable distance. The focus of this chapter will be information from households headed by older persons about their access to a range of basic services and general living conditions.

8.2 Housing

Table 8.1: Distribution of older persons by type of main dwelling and province, 2017 and 2021

Province	Formal		Traditional		Informal		Other		Total
	2017								
	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)	Per cent	N ('000)
Western Cape	613	97,9	1	0,2	8	1,3	4	0,7	626
Eastern Cape	446	68,1	184	28,1	19	2,9	6	0,9	655
Northern Cape	112	96,2	1	0,7	4	3,2	0	0,0	116
Free State	231	92,8	5	2,2	12	4,7	1	0,2	249
KwaZulu-Natal	677	81,8	144	17,4	7	0,9	0	0,0	829
North West	310	92,5	1	0,4	24	7,1	0	0,0	336
Gauteng	1 019	95,8	0	0,0	41	3,8	4	0,4	1 064
Mpumalanga	278	92,7	11	3,8	10	3,5	0	0,0	300
Limpopo	403	95,7	9	2,1	9	2,2	0	0,0	421
RSA	4 090	89,0	357	7,8	134	2,9	14	0,3	4 596
	2021								
Western Cape	697	96,4	0	0,0	24	3,3	2	0,2	723
Eastern Cape	524	73,8	167	23,4	8	1,2	12	1,7	711
Northern Cape	135	94,6	0	0,2	7	5,3	0	0,0	142
Free State	233	88,7	8	3,0	22	8,3	0	0,0	263
KwaZulu-Natal	814	89,0	95	10,4	5	0,6	0	0,0	915
North West	321	91,6	4	1,0	26	7,4	0	0,0	351
Gauteng	1 221	96,0	0	0,0	47	3,7	4	0,3	1 273
Mpumalanga	344	97,5	6	1,6	3	0,9	0	0,0	353
Limpopo	468	99,3	3	0,7	0	0,0	0	0,0	472
RSA	4 759	92,0	283	5,4	143	3,0	18	0,0	5 202

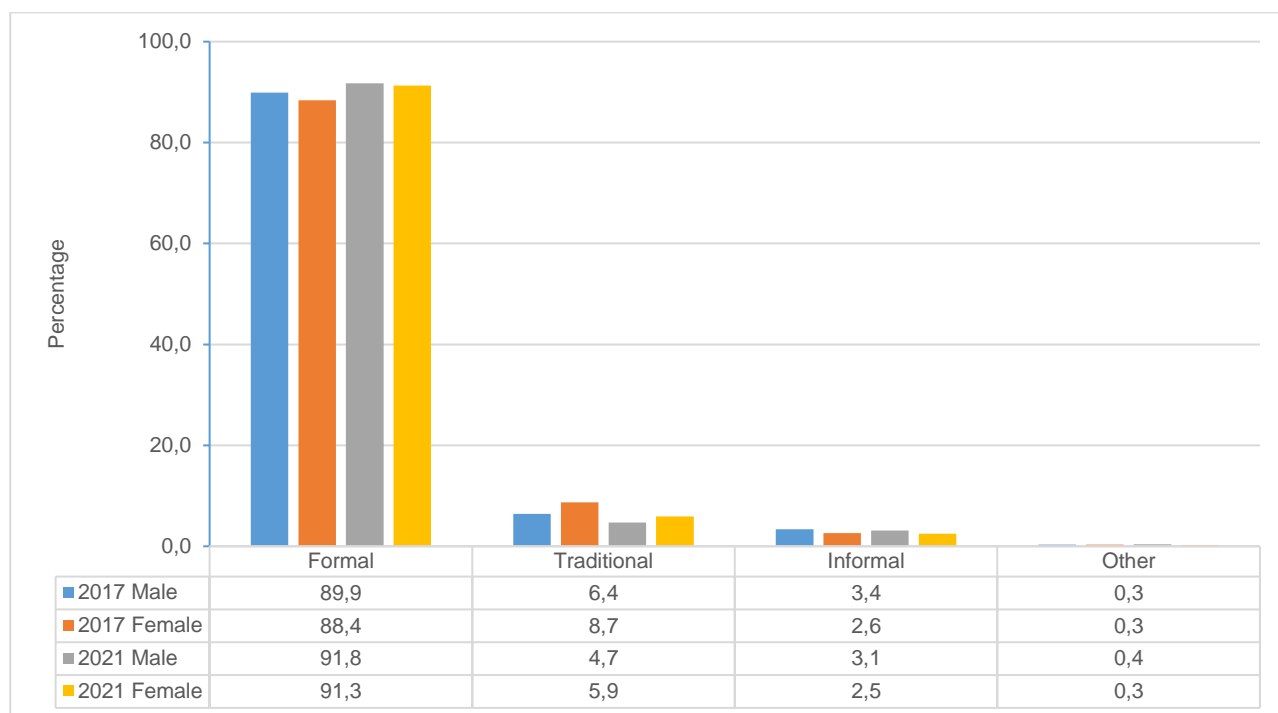
Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Housing in South Africa is a basic human right, and the Constitution stipulates that the state is obligated to ensure everyone has access to adequate housing and must take reasonable legislative and other measures to achieve the realisation of this right. Table 8.1 shows the percentage distribution of older persons by type of main dwelling and province. Nationally, the percentage of older persons living in formal dwellings increased by 3,0 percentage points between 2017 and 2021. KwaZulu-Natal accounted for the majority of the increase with a 7,2 percentage points increase, followed by the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga with increases of 5,7 and 4,8 percentage points, respectively.

Along with the rise in the number of persons living in formal dwellings, there was a noticeable decline in the proportion of older persons living in traditional dwellings, with KwaZulu-Natal recording the largest decline of 7,0 percentage points, from 17,4% to 10,4%.

The percentage of older persons living in informal dwellings remained stable nationally, representing 3,0% in 2021. However, the percentage of older persons living in informal dwellings in the Free State increased by 3,6 percentage points, and those in the Northern Cape and Western Cape increased by 2,1 percentage points.

Figure 8.1: Distribution of older persons by type of main dwelling and sex, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 8.1 shows the percentage distribution of older persons by type of main dwelling and sex. There were no significant differences between older males and females who lived in formal dwellings and informal dwellings, although older males were more likely to dominate than older females. On the other hand, older females were more likely to live in traditional dwellings in both years. However, between 2017 and 2021, the gap between older females and males in traditional dwellings narrowed.

8.3 Access to basic services

Table 8.2: Distribution of older persons who have access to basic services by population group, 2017 and 2021

Access to service indicator		2017				
		Black/African	Coloureds	Indians/Asian	Whites	Total
Access to piped water	Per cent	61,3	97,7	98,5	92,8	73,5
	N ('000)	1 787	442	174	977	3 379
	Total population ('000)	2 914	452	176	1 053	4 596
Improved sanitation	Per cent	80,1	97,8	99,0	99,7	87,1
	N ('000)	2 335	442	174	1 051	4 002
	Total population ('000)	2 914	452	176	1 053	4 596
Refuse/ Waste disposal	Per cent	44,2	94,0	85,8	90,7	61,3
	N ('000)	1 288	425	151	955	2 820
	Total population ('000)	2 914	452	176	1 053	4 596
Electricity	Per cent	93,7	97,7	100,0	98,2	95,3
	N ('000)	2 726	442	176	1 034	4 378
	Total population ('000)	2 911	452	176	1 053	4 593
2021						
Access to piped water	Per cent	65,7	97,4	98,1	93,9	76,4
	N ('000)	2 193	521	200	1 058	3 972
	Total population ('000)	3 336	535	204	1 127	5 202
Improved sanitation	Per cent	81,1	96,5	98,8	100,0	87,5
	N ('000)	2 704	517	201	1 127	4 549
	Total population ('000)	3 336	535	204	1 127	5 202
Refuse/ Waste disposal	Per cent	45,5	90,8	98,1	91,4	62,2
	N ('000)	1 519	486	200	1 030	3 234
	Total population ('000)	3 336	535	204	1 127	5 202
Electricity	Per cent	96,0	99,4	98,8	100,0	97,3
	N ('000)	3 187	532	201	1 127	5 047
	Total population ('000)	3 321	535	204	1 127	5 188

Source: GHS 2017 and GHS 2021

Table 8.2 illustrates the percentage distribution of persons aged 60 years and older by access to basic services and population group. In general, between 2017 and 2021, there was a national increase in the percentage of older persons with access to basic services. The increases were mainly driven by increases in the percentage of older persons for the black African population, which experienced increases of 4,4 percentage points for access to piped water, 1,0 percentage points for improved sanitation, 1,3 percentage points for refuse/waste removal and 2,3 percentage points for access to electricity.

The analysis also reveals that the percentage of older persons for black Africans lagged with services compared to other population groups during the reporting years. In 2021, 65,7% of persons aged 60 years and older among black Africans had access to piped water compared to over 90% of persons aged 60 years and older for other population groups. Similarly, in 2021, 81,1% of persons aged 60 years and older among black Africans had access to improved sanitation compared to nearly universal access for the older population of other population groups.

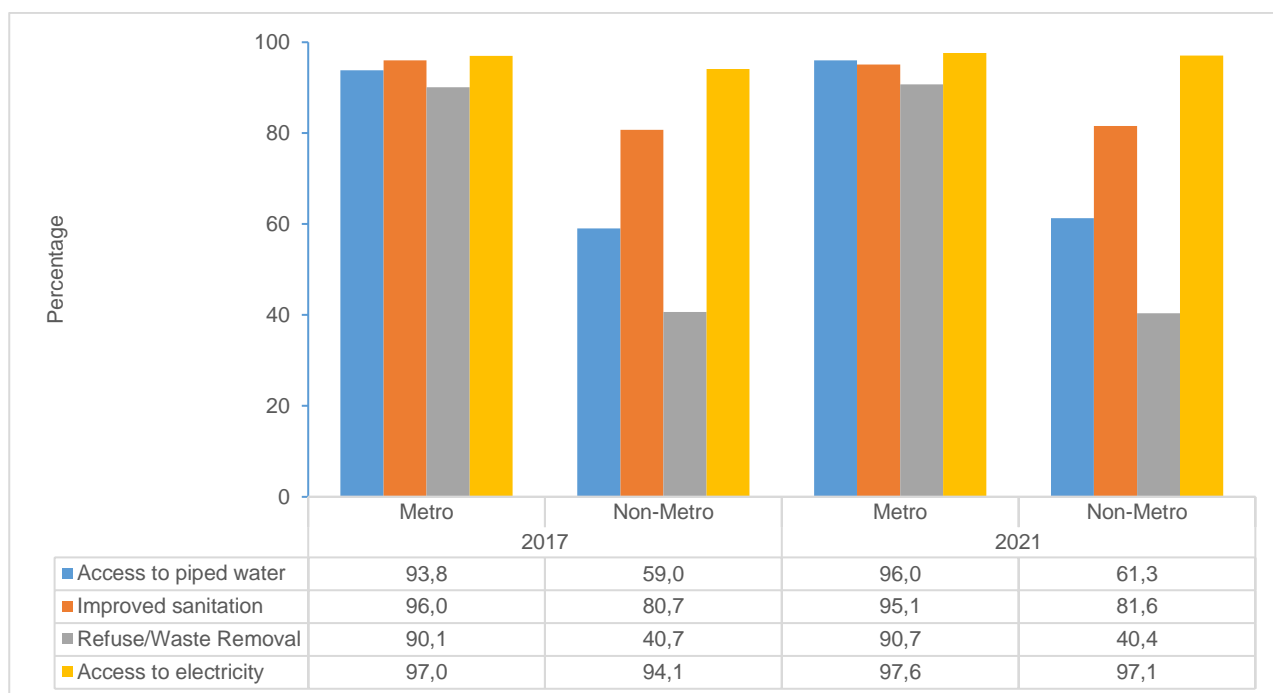
Table 8.3: Access to basic services of older persons by sex, 2017 and 2021

Access to service indicator		2017		
		Male	Female	Both
Access to piped water	Per cent	75,0	72,6	73,5
	N ('000)	1 383	1 996	3 379
	Total population ('000)	1 845	2 751	4 596
Improved sanitation	Per cent	88,3	86,3	87,1
	N ('000)	1 629	2 373	4 002
	Total population ('000)	1 845	2 751	4 596
Refuse/Waste disposal	Per cent	63,5	59,9	61,3
	N ('000)	1 172	1 648	2 820
	Total population ('000)	1 845	2 751	4 596
Electricity	Per cent	95,1	95,5	95,3
	N ('000)	1 752	2 626	4 378
	Total population ('000)	1 844	2 749	4 593
		2021		
Access to piped water	Per cent	77,4	75,6	76,4
	N ('000)	1 622	2 350	3 972
	Total population ('000)	2 094	3 108	5 202
Improved sanitation	Per cent	88,5	86,8	87,5
	N ('000)	1 853	2 696	4 549
	Total population ('000)	2 094	3 108	5 202
Refuse/Waste removal	Per cent	64,7	60,5	62,2
	N ('000)	1 354	1 880	3 234
	Total Population ('000)	2 094	3 108	5 202
Electricity	Per cent	96,5	97,9	97,3
	N ('000)	2 016	3 031	5 047
	Total Population ('000)	2 091	3 097	5 188

Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Table 8.3 shows the distribution of persons aged 60 years and older by access to basic services by sex. Between 2017 and 2021, access to basic services improved for both males and females, with an increase of 2,9 percentage points in access to piped water; 0,4 percentage points in improved sanitation; 0,9 percentage point in refuse/waste removal; and 2,0 percentage points in electricity. The gender disparities show that older males were more likely to have access to piped water, improved sanitation and refuse removal than their female counterparts.

Figure 8.2: Percentage distribution of older persons by access to basic services and geographical location, 2017 and 2021



Source: GHS 2017, GHS 2021.

Figure 8.2 depicts the percentage distribution of households headed by persons aged 60 years and older by access to basic services. The findings show disparities between non-metros and metros, with access to basic services in non-metros lower than those in metros over the period of reporting. The biggest disparities were observed with regard to access to refuse/waste disposal, followed by access to piped water and improved sanitation.

Over the reporting period, there was an increase in the percentage of older persons with access to basic services in non-metro areas, except for refuse/waste removal, where a decrease was recorded. The percentage of older persons with access to refuse/waste removal slightly decreased by 0,3 percentage points in non-metro areas while those in metro areas increased by 0,6 percentage points. Access to piped water increased by 2,3 and 2,2 percentage points in non-metro and metro areas, respectively. However, improved sanitation decreased by 0,9 percentage points in metro areas while non-metro areas increased by the same percentage points. Access to electricity increased among older persons who reside in both metro and non-metro areas by 0,6 and 3,0 percentage points, respectively.

8.4 Conclusion

The analysis showed that nationally, access to housing and basic services by the older population improved between 2017 and 2021. The percentage of older persons occupying formal dwellings increased, whilst the percentage of older persons occupying traditional and informal dwellings decreased.

Gender differences emerged in terms of access to basic services, with households headed by older males having better access to basic services compared to females, except for access to electricity. Again, disparities by population groups revealed that older black Africans lagged with services compared to the older persons of other population groups, whilst older persons who reside in metro areas tend to have better access to basic services than those who reside in non-metro areas.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the report is to provide insight into the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and living arrangements of older persons living in South Africa. The analysis measures the extent to which improvements in the socioeconomic circumstances and livelihoods of older persons have occurred over the period 2017–2021.

In 2022, the older population constituted over 5,5 million individuals. They have not only increased in absolute numbers but also in their percentage contribution towards the total population. In 2017, 8,7% of the population consisted of older persons. Their share increased to 9,2% in 2022, with black Africans dominant at 62,1%. Most older persons were generally women, which partly reflects their higher life expectancy than men. A further indicator of an ageing population is the increase of the national ageing index from 30 to 33 between 2017 and 2022.

Concerning household characteristics, the analysis showed that between 2017 and 2022, the percentage of households headed by older persons for both sexes decreased slightly from 19,5% to 20,3%. However, there was a slight increase of 1,5 percentage points in the older persons-headed households in metros. Female-headed households accounted for more than half of non-metro and metro areas except for metro areas in 2017, where female-headed households accounted for 47,5% of the older households.

The living arrangements of older persons can greatly affect their social, economic and health status and overall well-being. During the period under review, the proportion of older persons living alone remained stable, accounting for 10,8%. The analysis of the older household composition showed that most of the older persons lived in extended households compared to the general South African households, which were more likely to be nuclear households.

Large variations between population groups with regard to intergenerational households were observed. Black African older persons were more likely than older persons of other population groups to live in triple-generation households at 44,6% and 45,1% in 2017 and 2021, respectively. The older persons from the white population group were most likely to live in single-generation households, whilst second-generation households were more common for the Indian/Asian population group. The highest ratios of children to older persons were found amongst female-headed households living in Mpumalanga (1,9), KwaZulu-Natal (1,8), Eastern Cape (1,5) and Limpopo (1,5) in 2017; in 2021 KwaZulu-Natal (1,6) had the highest ratios, followed by Limpopo (1,5).

Chapter 4 focused on educational attainment, functional literacy and access to technology for older persons. In general, older persons in South Africa have low levels of education. Thirty-seven per cent of older persons had no schooling and some primary as their highest educational attainment, 17% attained Grade 12, and 13% achieved a tertiary education. However, between 2017 and 2021 functional literacy – the ability to read or write in at least one language – increased by 6,2 percentage points from 58,9% to 65,1%. The increase in literacy was observed in seven of the nine provinces except for Western Cape and Free State, which recorded a decrease of 2,6 and 1,1 percentage points respectively. Older persons in Gauteng and Western Cape had the highest literacy rates compared to other provinces, whilst those in Limpopo and Mpumalanga had the lowest levels of functional literacy.

Chapter 5 of the report gives more insight into the economic profile of older persons who were economically active. The majority of the older persons (85,8%) were not economically active. Nearly all (95,4%) of the economically active older persons were in employment. Data showed that the likelihood of older females being employed as domestic workers was higher than that of their male counterparts at 94,3% in 2017, which increased to 100,0% in 2022. Older males were more likely to work in highly skilled and semi-skilled occupations than older females. Nationally, the old-age dependency ratio increased from 12,5% to 13,2%, indicating an increased burden on the productive population. Seven out of ten older persons were dependent on social grants, and half of them live in households where there are no employed household members.

Increasing life expectancy and better health care in old age can be major contributors towards improving the quality of life of older persons. Chapter 6 showed that in 2021, only 23,3% of the older persons in the country were members of medical aid schemes. The report confirms that medical aid coverage is gendered and racially skewed, accounting for 75,7% coverage amongst white older persons and only 5,4% coverage amongst black African older persons.

Data showed that there were three health conditions most common amongst older persons: high blood pressure (67,4%); diabetes (24,8%); and asthma (5,2%). High blood pressure and asthma were more common among males than females, whilst diabetes was more common among females.

Chapter 7 focused on the public safety of older persons between 2018 and 2021 using GPSJS data. Safety and peace of mind are important to help boost confidence and encourage independence in any individual, especially older persons. South African households headed by older persons felt safer in 2019/20 and 2020/21 when walking around their areas at night or during the day than in 2018/19 and 2021/22.

The likelihood of older male-headed households being victims of the most common household crimes was higher than that of households headed by older females, except for the theft of motor vehicles. Households headed by older females were more likely than older-male-headed households to fall victim to the theft of motor vehicles.

Chapter 8 looked at service delivery for older persons between 2017 and 2021. Nationally, the percentage of older persons living in formal dwellings increased from 89,0% to 92,0%, and the main contributors were the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga. During the same period, the percentage of older persons occupying traditional dwellings decreased from 7,8% to 5,4%. Significant disparities in the delivery of services between non-metro and metro settlements still exist, with evident lower levels of access in non-metro areas. Disparities in access to service delivery by population groups revealed that black African older persons had lower access to basic services.

