stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

District Population Estimates - Free State Report

MYPE 2025 series

Embargoed until:
29th January 2026
13:00

Statistics South Africa

Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

Report No. 03-02-48

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASFR	Age Specific Fertility Rate
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CBR	Crude birth rate
CDR	Crude death rate
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHIS	District Health Information System
EA	Enumeration Area
FS	Free State
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MACOD	Mortality and causes of death
MDB	Municipal Demarcation Board
MYPE	Mid-year population estimates
NDoH	National Department of Health
NPR	National Population Register
SDDS	Special Data Dissemination Standards
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TFR	Total fertility rate
VRS	Vital Registration System

Definition of Concepts

Crude birth rate (CBR) – The number of live births per 1 000 population in a given year.

Crude death rate (CDR) – The number of deaths per 1 000 population in a given year.

Dependency ratio – A measure of the number of dependents aged 0-14 and 65 years and older, compared to the total population aged 15–64 years.

Growth rate (GR) – The exponential rate at which the population is increasing or decreasing in a given year due to natural increase and net migration, expressed as a percentage of the base population.

Rate of national increase (RNI) – The rate at which the population is increasing or decreasing in a given year due to the surplus or deficit of births over deaths, expressed as a percentage of the base population.

Sex ratio – A measure of the number of males per 100 females in a population.

Summary

- The cohort-component methodology is used to estimate the district population.
- The estimates cover all the residents of South Africa at the 2025 mid-year point and are based on the latest available information. Estimates may change as new data becomes available. The updated estimates are accompanied by an entire series of revised estimates for the period 2002–2025. On this basis, comparisons between this model and previous series should not be made.
- For 2025, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) estimates the mid-year population at 3 039 834 people in Eastern Cape province. The female population accounts for 53,1% (approximately 1,6 million) of the population.
- The most populous district in the province is Mangaung metropolitan municipality (accounting for 28,2% of the population), whilst the least populated district is Xhariep district municipality (4,5%).
- The highest crude birth rate (CBR) for the period 2021–2026 can be found in both Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyane district municipalities with 19,6 births per 1000 persons, whilst the lowest CBR is located in Fezile Dabi district municipality with 17,4 births per 1000 persons.
- The highest crude death rate (CDR) can be found in Thabo Mofutsanyane district municipality with 13,3 deaths per 1000 persons, whilst the lowest CDR is located in Mangaung metropolitan municipality with 10,8 deaths per 1000 persons for the period 2021–2026.
- The highest proportion of the elderly (65+) can be found in Fezile Dabi district municipality, whilst the highest proportion of school-age persons can be found in Thabo Mofutsanyane district municipality.

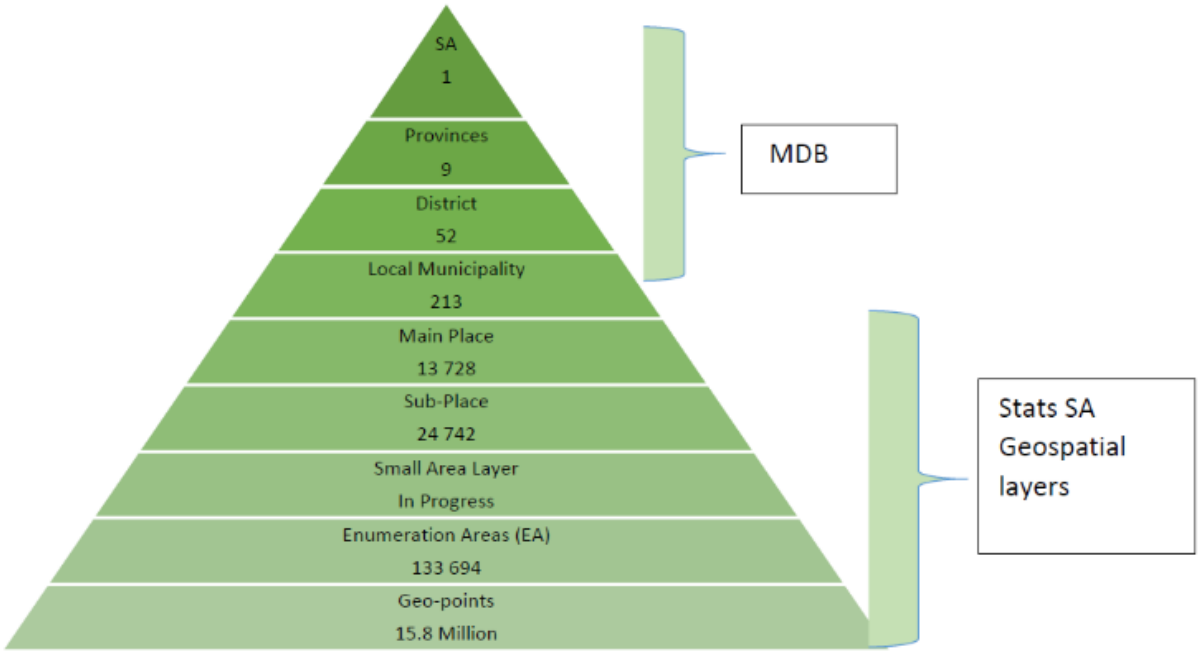
Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

1. Overview

Internationally, the mid-year population estimates (MYPE) are designed to provide population and demographic information between censuses and are done annually to compare population trends over time. Population estimates are typically based on a variety of administrative records such as births, deaths, school enrolment, housing etc., to determine population changes since the most recent decennial census (Bryan, 2004). In an effort to plan, budget, and cater for the needs of the population, a spectrum of government agencies ranging from transport to education and health, require population estimates (Smith and Cody, 2013). International institutions as well as those within the private sector of the country will also require population estimates to monitor, plan, budget and allocate resources (Lomahoza, Brockerhoff and Frye, 2013). Estimates are also used as a uniform denominator for surveys as well as reporting on population-based indicators (Lymer and Brown, 2012).

In planning, it is important to understand the spatial demarcation that exists. South Africa's geographic hierarchy is such that the country is divided into nine provinces (Figure 1). Each province is divided into metropolitan municipalities or district municipalities (52 districts in total). There are currently eight metropolitan municipalities spread out across five of the provinces. Each district in turn is divided into local municipalities. Inclusive of the metro municipalities, there are 213 local municipalities in South Africa. Below the local municipality, the geographical hierarchy is broken down into main place, sub-place, wards and a small area layer respectively. Given the dependency of small area estimates on the demarcation of South Africa, changes in demarcation over time will affect processes in producing not only small area estimates but also estimates at other aggregate levels (Rayer, 2015).

Figure 1– Stats SA nested geographical hierarchy



Source: Stats SA (2023) How the count was done.

2. Methodology

2.1 District Estimation

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) publishes national, provincial, district and local municipal population estimates annually.

We distinguish between four levels of geography in our projections. These are:

(a) National population estimates and projections by using the cohort–component method, enabled by the SPECTRUM software.

(b) Provincial projection by applying a UN sub-national method of cohort-component projections (United Nations, 1992).

(c) District projection by applying a UN sub-national method of cohort-component projections (United Nations, 1992).

(d) Local Municipal Population projection by applying a geographical ratio method.

The detailed methodology at national and provincial levels can be found in the MYPE report published by Stats SA (https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0302). Stats SA develops district estimates and projections that are updated annually. It is therefore important to note that population and other demographic data in each release form a new set of time series. **Users should therefore compare the time series data in each statistical release and not data across statistical releases. This publication refers to the MYPE 2025 series.**

When developing the district population estimates and projections, Stats SA uses a cohort-component method. In the projection with base-year 2001 (census based on 2021 boundaries), fertility, mortality and both internal as well as international migration for the projection period are required. The base from which a population projection is done is very important, as it has a big effect on the outcome of a projection. Census information regarding the population structure over time was used as an input in determining the base.

Census generally provides fairly accurate data at fine geographical detail; however, it is rather costly and not frequently updated (conducted decennially in South Africa). Statistics South Africa conducts a Community Survey (CS) in order to supply information at lower levels of geography between censuses, the latest being the CS 2016. However, the Community Survey 2016 is also a sample survey that was weighted and thereafter calibrated using the mid-year population estimates (2015 series), and thus we are unable to use the survey as an independent point. Many countries, including South Africa, are opting for the utilisation of estimation techniques using various data sources to produce estimates at lower levels over a series of time (Smith and Morrison, 2005). The projections are unique for each year due to the assumptions made and the data inputs thereof, i.e. fertility, mortality and migration patterns.

2.2 District Municipality Estimation

For district projections, data on fertility, mortality and migration are prepared over 5-year periods i.e., 2001–2006, 2006–2011, 2011–2016, 2016–2021, 2021–2026, etc. A cohort–component method is used to develop the projection for each 5-year period. There are several principles that must be considered when implementing the cohort-component method. To preserve the integrity of the age cohorts as they progress through time, it is helpful to follow basic principles: i.e., the number of years in the projection should be equal to the number of years in the age groups. Also, projections by sex are essential in that the projection for females in determining the projection of births is done separately.

2.3 Age-sex Structures of the Base Population

The base age/sex structures of the district municipalities were determined through an iterative process, using the following datasets:

- The projected 2001 provincial populations by sex and five-year age groups (2021 boundaries),
- The district municipalities and metro populations for Census 2001 by age and sex (2021 boundaries).

The 2025 MYPE series incorporates the 2022 Census district and metro populations' age and sex structure, bearing in mind also the administrative data available.

2.4 Migration Trends Between District Municipalities

When projections for all the regions of a country are desired, and the appropriate data are available, a multi-regional approach should be considered, as this is the only way to guarantee that the total migration flows between regions will sum to zero, or to the assumed level of international migration (United Nations, 1992).

Developed by Willekens and Rogers (1978), multi-regional methods require the estimation of separate age and sex specific migration rates between every region of the country and every other region, and such detailed data are rarely available. For example, in South Africa, 2448 (9x8x17x2) migration streams are derived if the multi-regional model is applied in calculating migration streams by age group (17 in total) and sex for each province. This becomes even higher (90 168) and more complex at a district level, where there are 52 districts and metropolitan municipalities.

The census is the primary source of collecting migration stream data. Migration rates from Censuses 2011 and 2022 are applied to the different projection periods with modifications where inconsistencies are found. While initiatives by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) are underway to improve the availability of information on movement across borders, census data will continue to remain the primary source of international and internal migration data in the country. Due to the wide-ranging number of streams for each district, migration patterns at district level are not discussed in this report. Narratives on the provincial migration streams can be found in the MYPE 2025 series report (https://www.statssa.gov.za). Migration at district is based on census data and updated using the residual method based on current data on age/ sex structure to determine migration estimates.

2.5 Fertility Estimation of District Municipalities

The following steps were used to obtain a set of age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) for each district municipality and each metro to be used in these cohort-component projections:

(a) Analyses of recorded live births datasets (1998 to 2023) were done to adjust for late registration and completeness. The number of births for women in the age groups 15 to 49 was obtained. This was done for each district municipality and metro (Stats SA, 2024).

(b) The total number of births generated from the district municipalities was then compared with the total number of births in each respective province. Proportional adjustments were made if necessary and TFRs were calculated by applying the births to the specific district municipality or metro population's 15–49 female population.

(c) Using these adjusted TFRs and ASFRs as well as survival ratios, the number of births and the 0–4 year projected population were obtained. The projected 0–4 year and 5–9 year populations were checked for consistency. Provision was made to adjust the TFR if inconsistencies were found.

(d) The process above was repeated if inconsistencies were found in (c).

2.6 Mortality Estimation of District Councils and Metros

The following steps were used to obtain a set of survival ratios for each district municipality and metro, and were used in the cohort-component projections:

(a) Only data up to 2021 (1997–2021) were available at this level to do analyses of the Mortality and Causes of Death (MACOD) datasets to adjust for late registration and completeness (Stats SA, 2025).

(b) The numbers of male and female deaths calculated for each district municipality were then compared with the total number of male and female deaths in each respective province. Proportional adjustments were made if necessary.

(c) Age-specific mortality rates (m(x)) were then calculated.

(d) Using the m(x) rates, separate Life Tables for males and females and for each district municipality were calculated.

(e) Life expectancies at birth, as well as survival ratios by age, can be read from the obtained life tables.

2.7 Data Confrontation at the District Level

The age-sex pattern of mortality is informed by the MACOD data from the Vital Registration System (VRS), District Health Information System (DHIS) as well as that of censuses. The number of registered deaths processed by Stats SA and those recorded on the National Population Register (NPR) is maintained by the DHA for the period 1997–2021 (Stats SA, 2025). In general, estimated deaths reported in the MYPE are always expected to be higher than those in the VRS, as MYPE reports on all deaths occurring and not just those registered. Deaths data from the DHA are collected regardless of citizenship status and birth registration while the NPR maintained by DHA only includes deaths of South African citizens and permanent residents whose particulars were already on the NPR. Other sources of data used to determine the plausibility of the MYPE age and sex structure include the Independent Electoral Commission Data (IEC) and Department of Basic Education data (DBE).

In October 2010, Stats SA for the first time made available estimates on the District Council level on its website. This was seen as a Beta version and has since been published annually for over a decade. Stats SA has engaged with stakeholders on these projections. Data will be updated when necessary and on the basis of empirical data.

3. Provincial Demographics

This section of the report looks at MYPE indicators for the year 2025 within Free State (FS) districts/metropolitan municipalities. According to the MYPE, FS is the second least populous province in the country with an estimated population of 3 039 834 persons, with four districts and a metro. It covers an area of 129 825 km². Free State is uniquely located in the central part of the country, bordered by six provinces. Free State shares borders with North West to the northwest, Gauteng to the north, Mpumalanga to the northeast, KwaZulu-Natal to the east, Eastern Cape to the southeast, Western Cape to the south, and Northern Cape to the west. In the southeast, the Free State borders some districts of Lesotho.

3.1. Population in Free State District Municipalities

Figure 2 below depicts the distribution of the population in FS by district and metropolitan municipalities. Mangaung metropolitan has the largest population share (28,2%) in FS, followed by Thabo Mofutsanyane and Lejweleputswa district municipalities with 26,6% and 23,0%, respectively. Xhariep District is the least populous district municipality in the province, contributing only 4,5% to FS, followed by Fezile Dabi District with 17,7% of the population. In terms of the national share, FS contributes approximately 4,8% to the country's population. For the total population of each district, refer to Appendix F.

Figure 2 – Distribution of Population in Free State by district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

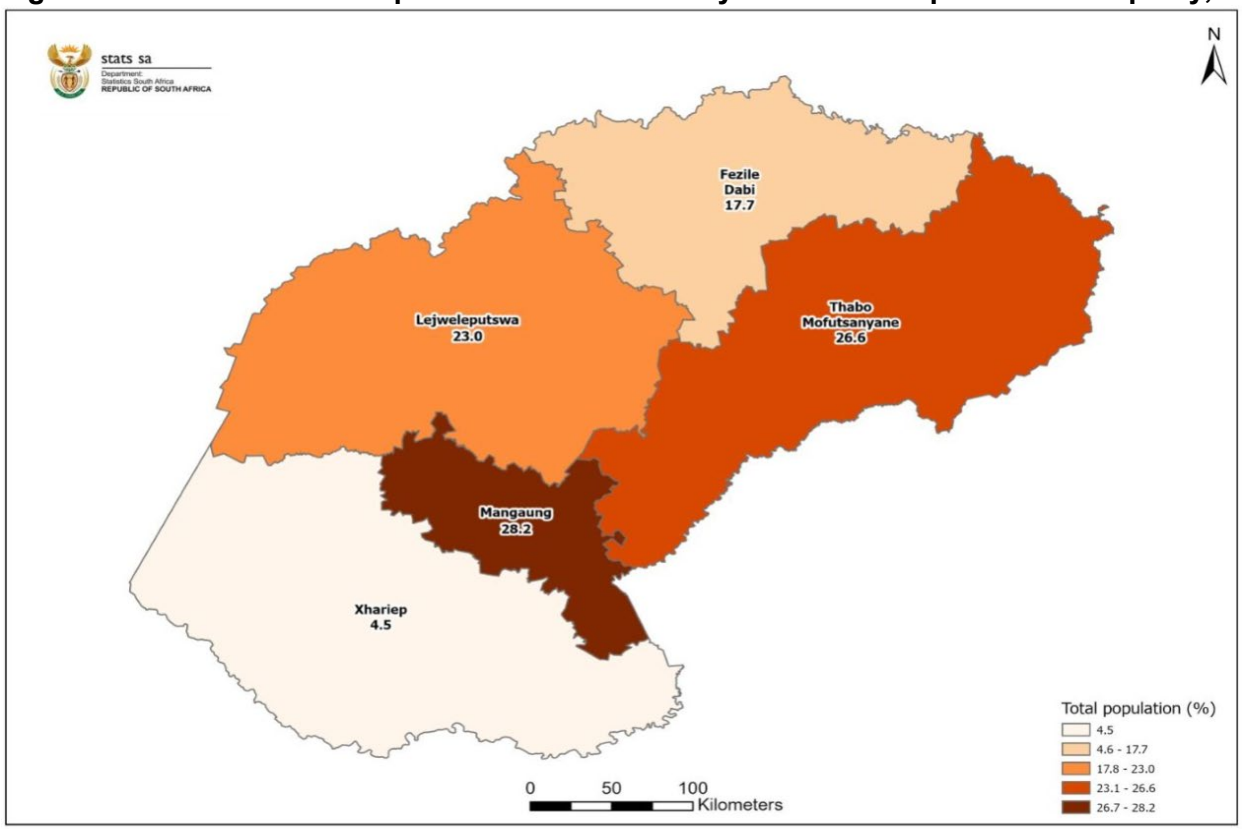


Table 1 below presents the population, age structure as well as other indicators. These indicators include the district share to the national and provincial population, as well as sex ratios and annual growth rates of the metros and district municipalities in FS. Xhariep and Fezile Dabi Districts, combined, contribute less than 1% to the national share. Mangaung Metro contributes 1,4% to the national share and almost a third (28,2%) of the FS. The city of Bloemfontein is located in the Mangaung Metro.

The sex ratios are indicative of the population structure by sex and are influenced significantly by migration as well as mortality. Notably, sex ratios in all districts in this province are all below 100, indicating a higher proportion of females. Free State has a significant agricultural and mining sector, which historically has attracted a predominantly male workforce. Often, men might migrate to these areas for employment opportunities, which can contribute to a high proportion of males. The sex ratio for Mangaung Metro Municipality (83 males per 100 females) is the lowest in the province, followed by Thabo Mofutsanyane (85 males per 100 females). Xhariep district has the highest sex ratio in the province with 96 males per 100 females, followed by Fezile Dabi with 95 males per 100 females. It is important to note that sex ratios may differ by age (see Appendix B). The percentage of males and females merely reiterates distributions identified by the sex ratios.

Table 1 – District/metropolitan municipality indicators in Free State, 2025

District municipality	Population		Age structure			Percentage to FS	Percentage to national	Sex ratio	Annual growth rate % (2024-2025)
	Male %	Female%	0-14	15-64	65+				
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	49,0	51,0	28,5	64,6	6,8	4,5	0,2	96	0,8
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	45,4	54,6	26,0	65,7	8,3	28,2	1,4	83	0,7
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	48,2	51,8	25,1	67,1	7,8	23,0	1,1	93	0,6
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	45,9	54,1	28,4	65,5	6,1	26,6	1,3	85	0,5
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	48,8	51,2	25,3	66,3	8,4	17,7	0,9	95	0,5

The demographic pillars of fertility, mortality and migration cumulatively impact the growth seen at a district level. From table 1, it is clear that amongst the FS districts/metro, all districts show annual population growth, ranging from 0,5% to 0,8%. This indicates slow population expansion and possible out-migration or low fertility in some districts. Xhariep District Municipality had the highest growth from 2024 to 2025 (0,8%), followed by Mangaung Metro with 0,7%. Fezile Dabi and Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipalities experienced an annual growth rate of 0,5% each. A lower population growth rate helps ease pressure on resources such as education and health care.

The population structures of all the districts indicate relatively larger percentages of adults aged 15–64 years. Lejweleputswa District has the highest percentage of adults (67,1%), followed closely by Mangaung (65,7%). The proportion of the elderly 65 years and older population ranges between 6,1% and 8,4% for all the districts in FS. Fezile Dabi district municipality has the highest percentage of elderly (8,4%) when compared to other districts, followed by Mangaung (8,3%). The share of children 0-14 years range from 20,0% in Mangaung to 28,5% in Xhariep. Rural Districts (Xhariep, Thabo Mofutsanyane) have higher proportions of children compared to the metro. These results suggest that Mangaung and Fezile Dabi have more ageing populations, while Thabo Mofutsanyane has a comparatively younger age structure.

3.2. District Population Over Time

Figure 3 below shows the percentage distribution of the working-age population (15–64 years) within each district/metropolitan municipality, while Table 2 presents the same distribution for the four districts and the metro in the Free State, disaggregated by sex (male and female). The working-age population (15–64 years) is consistently high across all districts in the Free State, with only slight variations between district municipalities and between males and females. Lejweleputswa District (67,1%) has the highest overall proportion of working-age individuals, driven by both strong male (67,5%) and female (66,8%) representation. This is followed closely by Fezile Dabi (66,3%), where males (67,4%) slightly outnumber females (65,2%) within this age group.

Sasolburg is a significant industrial and urban centre within the Fezile Dabi District Municipality. The town was established to house employees of the energy and chemical company, Sasol, and is known for having one of the world's few viable coal-derived oil refineries. The industry is a contributory factor to employment and migration in the district. The Mangaung Metro and Thabo Mofutsanyane have similar proportions of working-age population at 65,7% and 65,5%, respectively. Xhariep District, although still relatively high, shows the lowest proportion at 64,6%; however, the proportion of adult females is the lowest in this district (63,5%). FS districts maintain a significant working-age population, which is favourable for labour supply and economic productivity.

Figure 3 – Percentage distribution of working-age population (15–64) within each district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

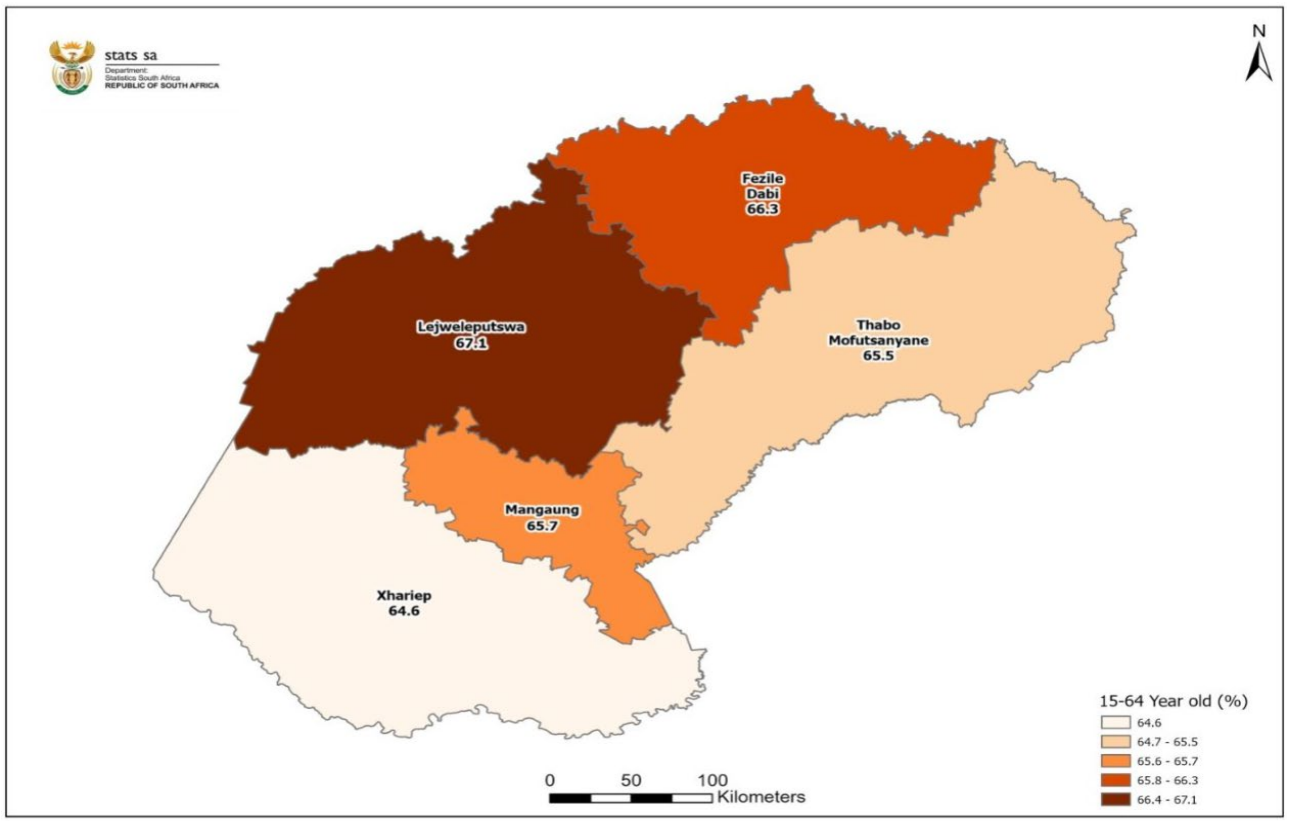


Table 2 – Percentage distribution of working-age population (15–64) within each district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

District municipality	Male (%)	Female (%)
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	65,8	63,5
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	65,5	65,8
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	67,5	66,8
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	65,5	65,6
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	67,4	65,2

Figure 4 – Total dependency ratio by district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

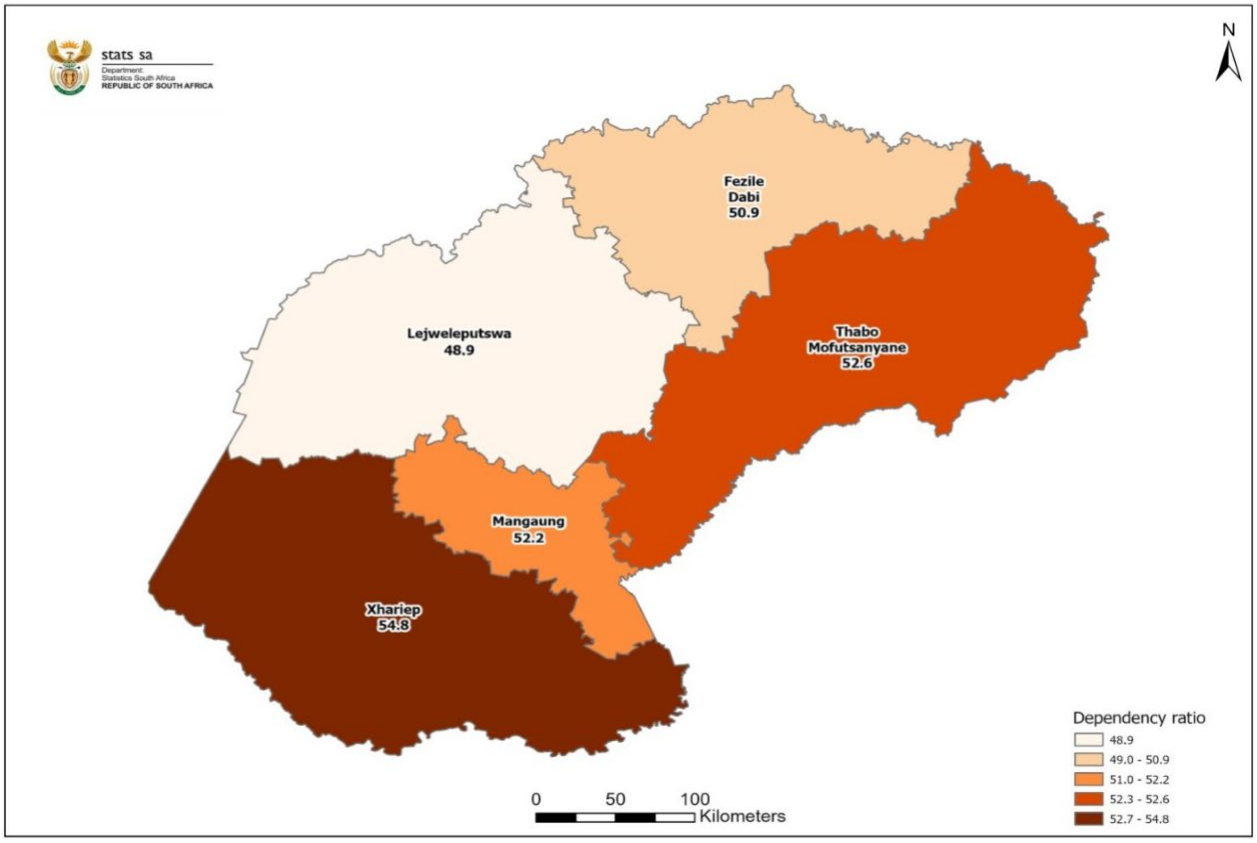


Figure 4 above shows the total dependency ratio by district/metropolitan municipality. The total dependency ratio is the proportion of children and the elderly relative to working-age persons. It should be noted that there are elderly persons who are engaged in work beyond the age of 64; similarly, a significant proportion of those in the working-age of 15–64 is, in fact, unemployed and dependent on those who are working. The dependency ratio is a crude reflection of the burden defined by age. A moderate dependency ratio is generally between 50% and 65%, which is common in many developed countries and signifies a balance between the number of working-age people and the number of dependents (under 15 and over 64). The dependency ratios across the Free State district municipalities reflect a moderate demographic burden on the working-age population. Xhariep District Municipality records the highest dependency ratio at 54,8, indicating a relatively larger share of children and older persons who rely on working adults.

Mangaung and Thabo Mofutsanyane follow closely with ratios just above 52, suggesting similar levels of demographic pressure. Fezile Dabi presents a slightly more favourable structure at 50,9, while Lejweleputswa has the lowest ratio at 48,9, implying a comparatively larger working-age population. The province ranks 5th in dependency, which does influence social service needs and economic planning across municipalities.

Figure 5 – Percentage distribution of school-age population (4–17 years) within each district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

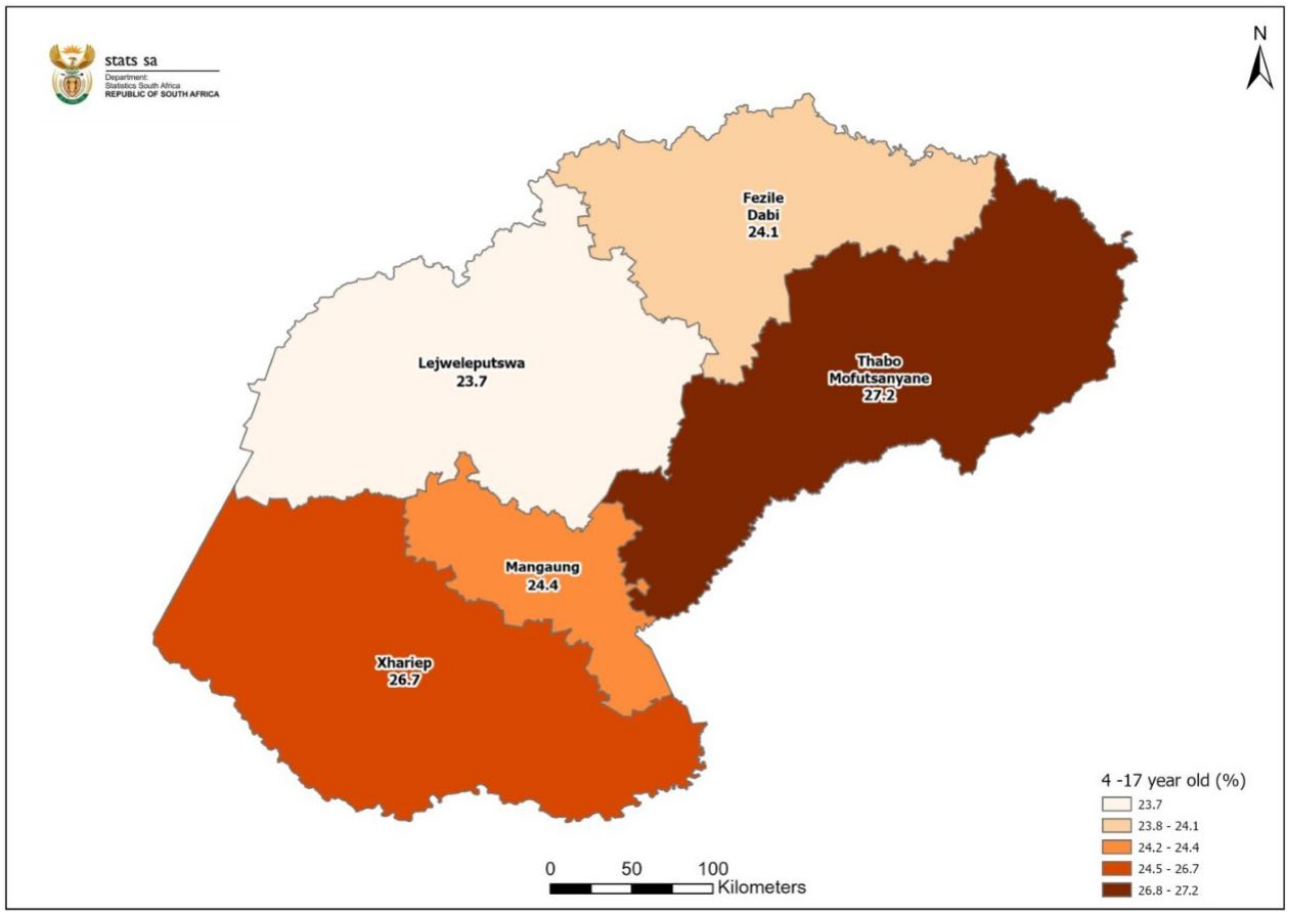


Figure 5 above depicts the percentage of the school-age population by district in FS for the year 2025. The school-age population across the Free State district municipalities shows moderate variation, highlighting differing levels of educational demand in the province. Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality has the highest proportion of school-age residents at 27,2%, suggesting a greater need for schooling infrastructure and youth services. Xhariep follows with 26,7%, also reflecting a relatively youthful population. Mangaung (24,4%) and Fezile Dabi (24,1%) fall in the middle range, while Lejweleputswa has the lowest share at 23,7%. Although the differences are not extreme, the data indicates that certain districts—particularly Thabo Mofutsanyane and Xhariep may require proportionally higher investment in education facilities and programmes to accommodate their younger populations. Over the years, the school-age populations across all districts have remained fairly constant (Appendix C).

Figure 6 – Percentage distribution of voting age population (18 years and older) within each district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

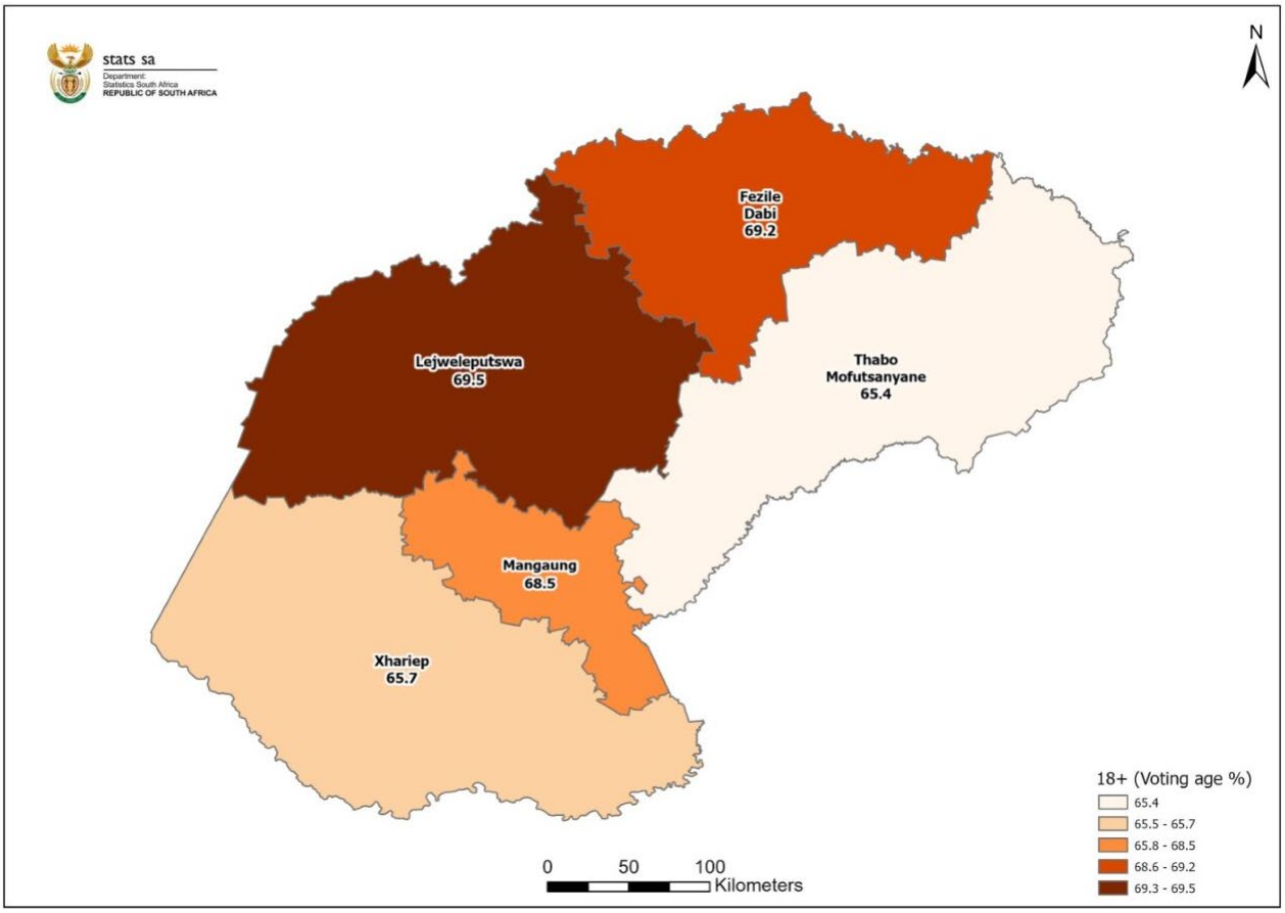


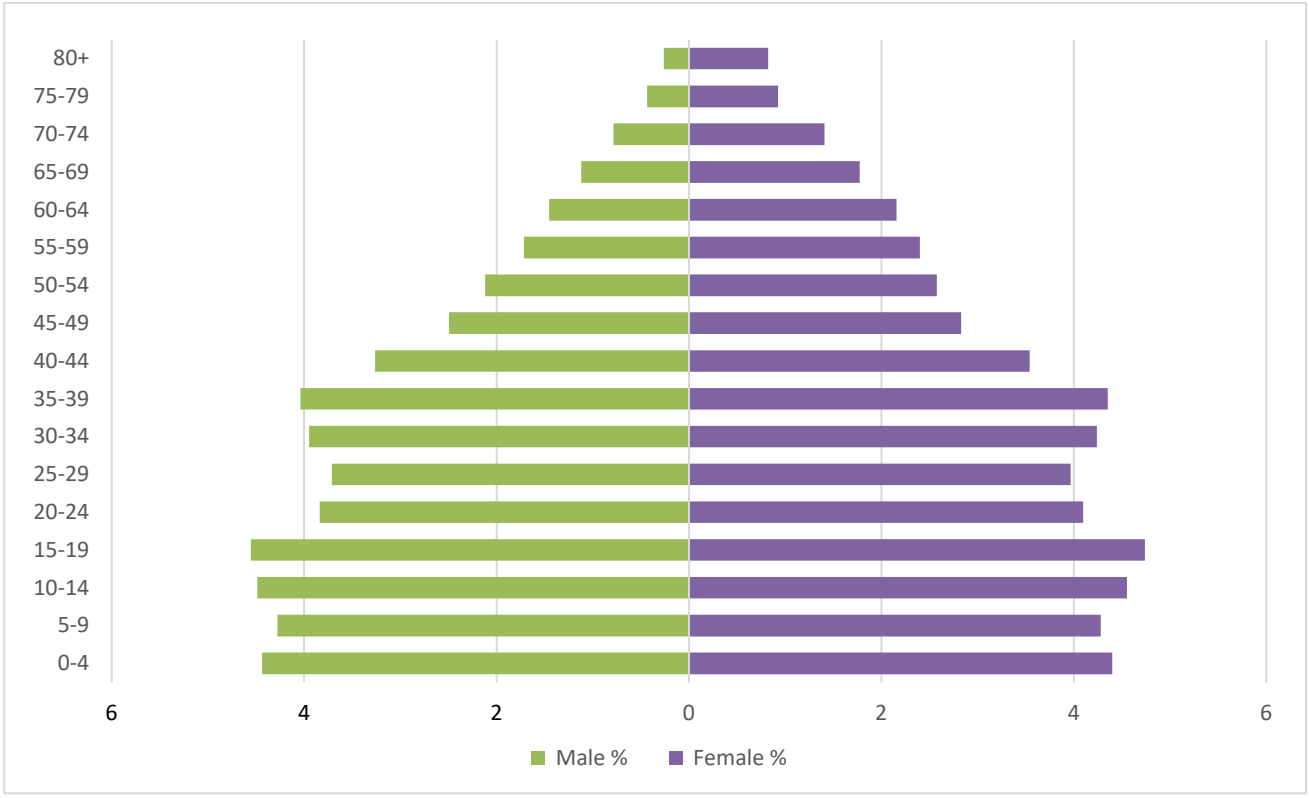
Figure 6 above shows the percentage of voting age population per district/metro in the province. According to the MYPE, the proportion of residents 18 and older is relatively high across all FS district municipalities. Lejweleputswa District Municipality records the highest voting age share at 69,5%, closely followed by Fezile Dabi at 69,2% and Mangaung at 68,5%. These districts, therefore, have the largest pool of potential voters and a comparatively mature age structure. Xhariep (65,7%) and Thabo Mofutsanyane (65,4%) have slightly lower proportions, though still above 65%, reflecting only modest differences in demographic composition. The province shows a consistently high representation of persons 18 and older within its population, which has implications for electoral participation, service planning, and economic activity across the province. Data over time (2011–2025) indicates that while some districts have seen a constant voting age population over the past decade, a few have seen a marginal increase (see Appendix C). Note, the voting age population and school-going age merely refer to persons who qualify to attend school or vote due to age (regardless of citizenship or school attendance).

3.3. Population Pyramids

The age and sex structure of the population defines the ultimate shape of the pyramid. As a result, this shape communicates information about that specific population, not only currently, but is also reflective of past trends in fertility, mortality and migration. For example, adults now aged 40–45 were 25–29 during the peak of the AIDS deaths occurring in 2006. Their current size and composition of the population will reflect that experience. A broad-based pyramid indicates that young people make up a large proportion of the population, while a narrow top indicates that older people make up a relatively small proportion of the population. The pyramid may also tell us if at older ages, women are more in the population. A bulge or indentation in the pyramid may also indicate changes in the population as a result of fertility, mortality and/ or changes resulting from migration (Siegel & Swanson, 2004).

The population pyramid (as seen in Figure 7) graphically illustrates the age structure of Free State (FS) in 2025. The base of the pyramid shows that 26,4% of the province's population is between 0 and 14 years. The broad base of the pyramid also indicates that births have been somewhat constant over the last 15 years. The larger 15–19 age category can be attributed to higher fertility rates 15 to 20 years prior. The indentation in the 20–29 age group may indicate out-migration from the province as young people seek out employment and better economic opportunities in other provinces. However, for the ages 20–40, females outnumber males, but only marginally, likely due to lower mortality rates at adult ages. This gender imbalance becomes more pronounced in the older age groups, especially from 60+ years onward, where the female population significantly surpasses the male population. This trend is consistent with the higher life expectancy of females compared to males. The pyramid reflects a youthful population at the bottom, with a notable increase in female dominance in the older age categories, indicating typical demographic aging patterns in the Free State. The population pyramids for all districts can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 7 – Population pyramid for Free State province, 2025



3.4. Fertility and Mortality

Crude birth and death rates are basic measures of both fertility and mortality. Both of these measures are referred to as crude, as they do not reflect the nuances of the fertility and mortality by sex and age, but rather as measures reflective of an entire population. These indicators can loosely be defined as total births/deaths per 1000 population. These measures provide trends in mortality and fertility over time. The district estimates are based on a 5-year cohort-component method, and as such, input data is required in 5-year periods.

Figure 8 – Crude birth rate (CBR), 2021–2026 period

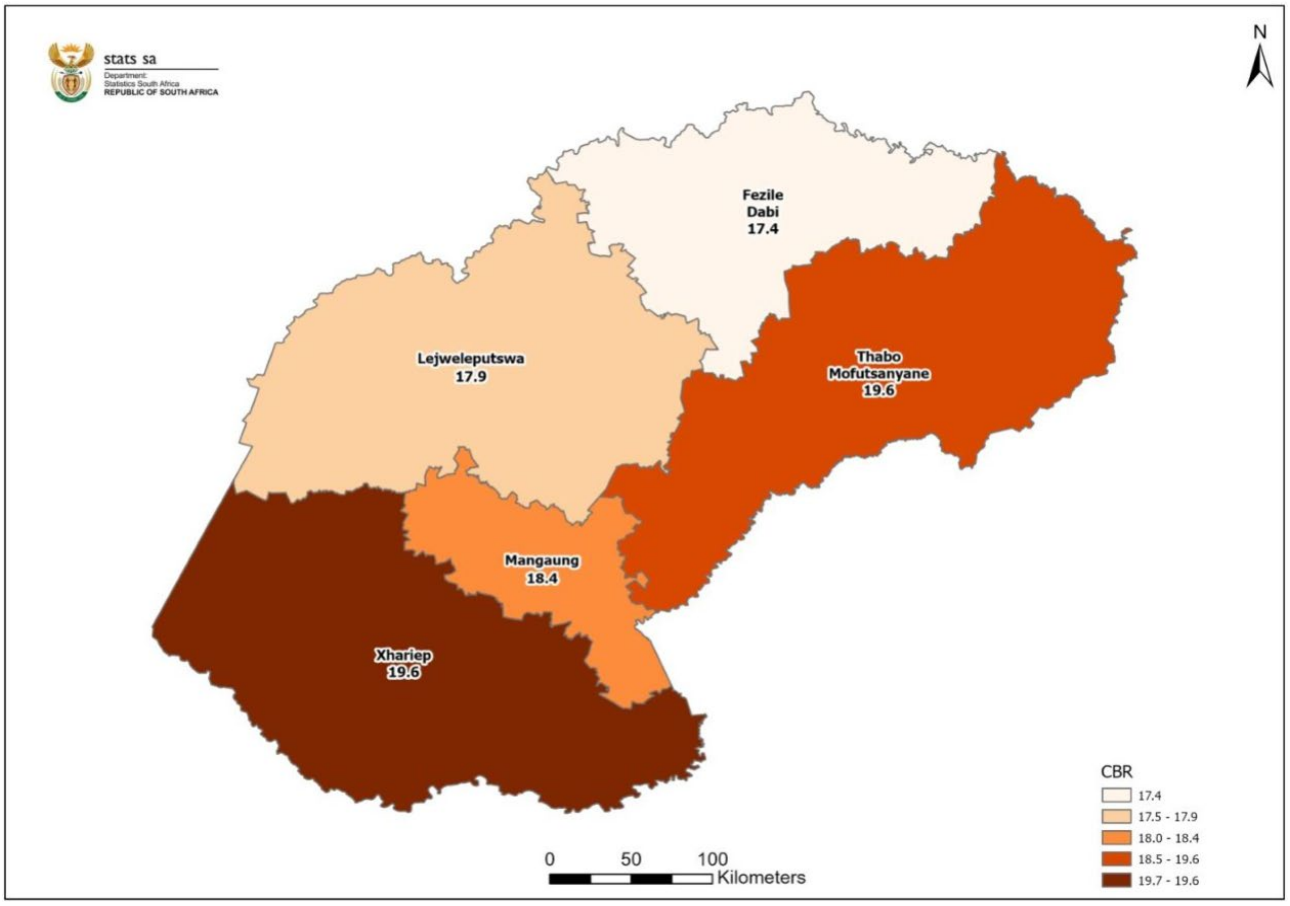


Figure 8 above shows the crude birth rate (CBR) by district/metropolitan municipalities in FS for the period 2021–2026. The CBR across the district municipalities of FS varies, reflecting differences in demographic patterns, socio-economic conditions, and levels of urbanisation. Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipalities both record the highest CBR at 19,6 births per 1 000 people, suggesting relatively youthful populations and possibly higher fertility levels in these more rural areas. In comparison, Mangaung metropolitan has a slightly lower CBR of 18,4, which aligns with the trend of declining fertility often seen in urban settings where access to healthcare, education, and employment tends to reduce birth rates. Lejweleputswa District Municipality reports a CBR of 17,9, while Fezile Dabi District Municipality has the lowest rate at 17,4, indicating a gradual demographic transition that may reflect improved family planning and changing socio-economic dynamics. The CBR distribution suggests a province undergoing fertility decline, with rural districts still experiencing higher birth rates compared to more urbanised counterparts.

Figure 9 – Crude death rate (CDR), 2021–2026 period

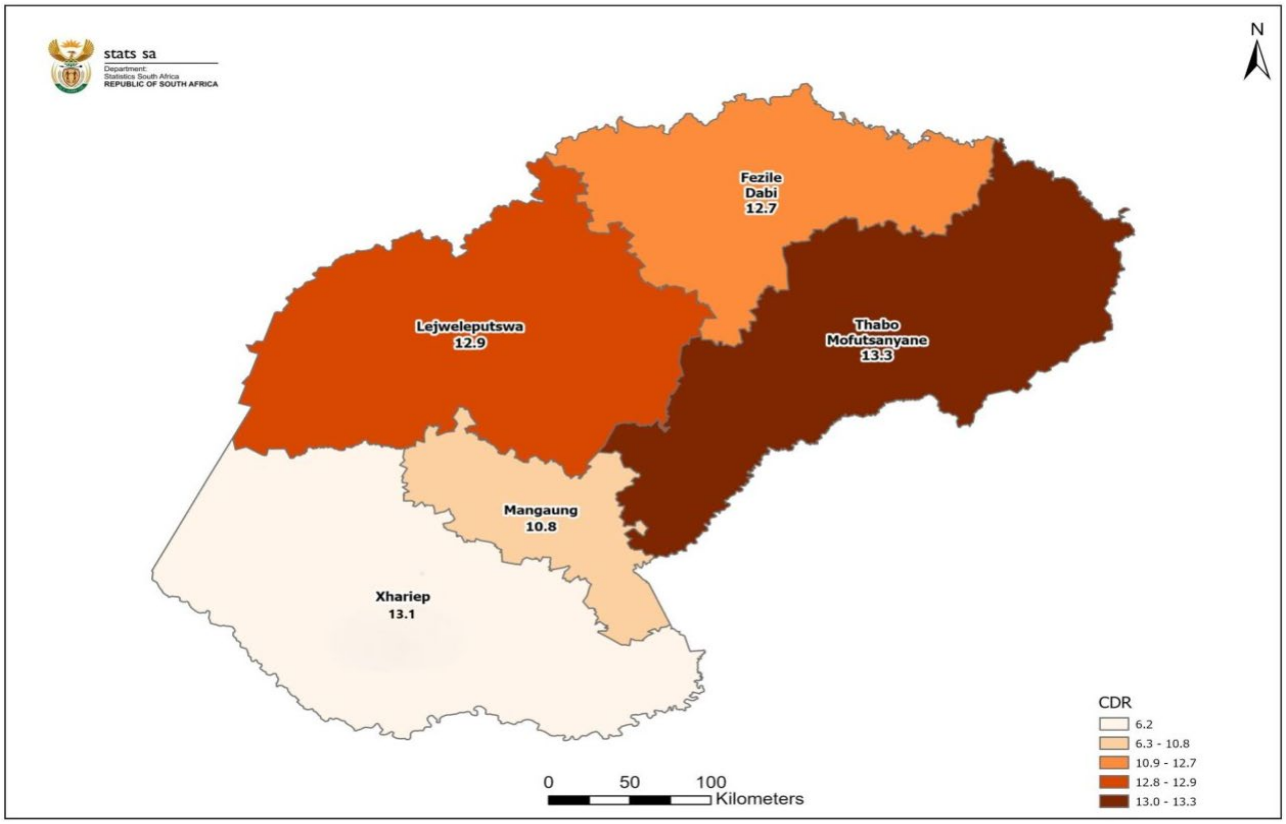
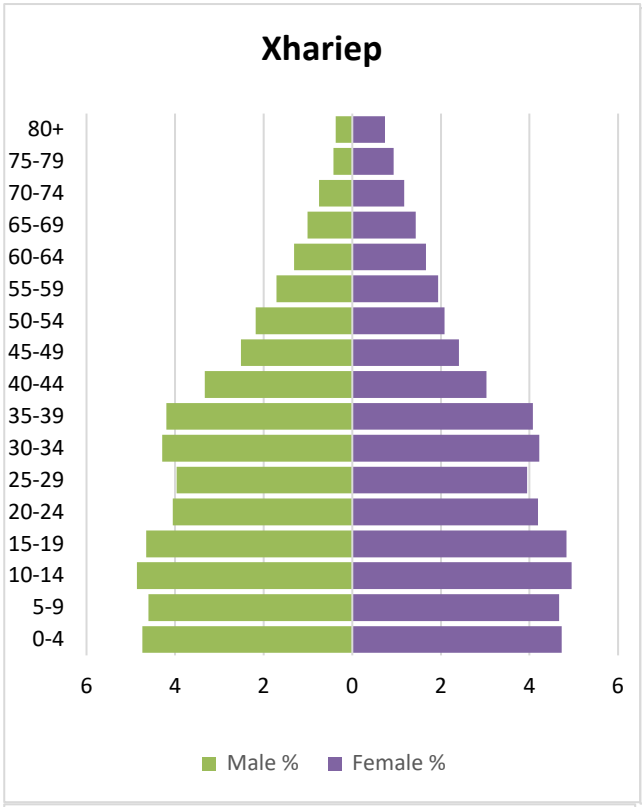


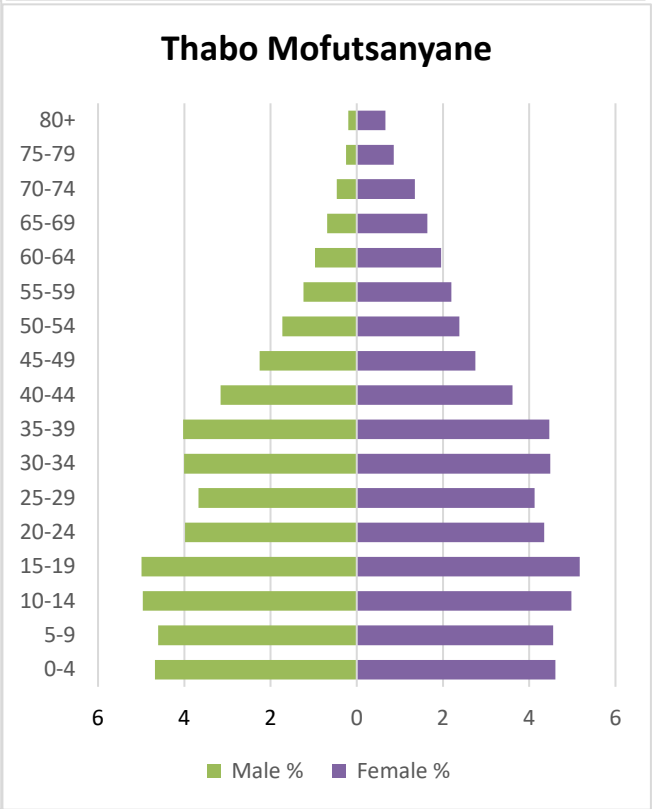
Figure 9 above displays CDR for districts in the Free State for the period 2021–2026. Thabo Mofutsanyane records the highest CDR at 13,3 deaths per 1,000 people. Xhariep (13,1) and Lejweleputswa (12,9) also show relatively high mortality levels, pointing to similar structural and socio-economic challenges that may contribute to poorer health outcomes in these districts. Fezile Dabi District reports a somewhat lower, though still elevated, CDR of 12,7. This suggests that while the district may experience slightly better health conditions than the highest-mortality districts, it continues to face pressures related to chronic diseases, ageing, or uneven service provision. In contrast, Mangaung Metropolitan has the lowest CDR at 10,8 deaths per 1,000. As an urban centre, Mangaung benefits from better healthcare infrastructure, greater availability of medical facilities, and improved access to emergency and specialist services, which collectively support lower mortality rates.

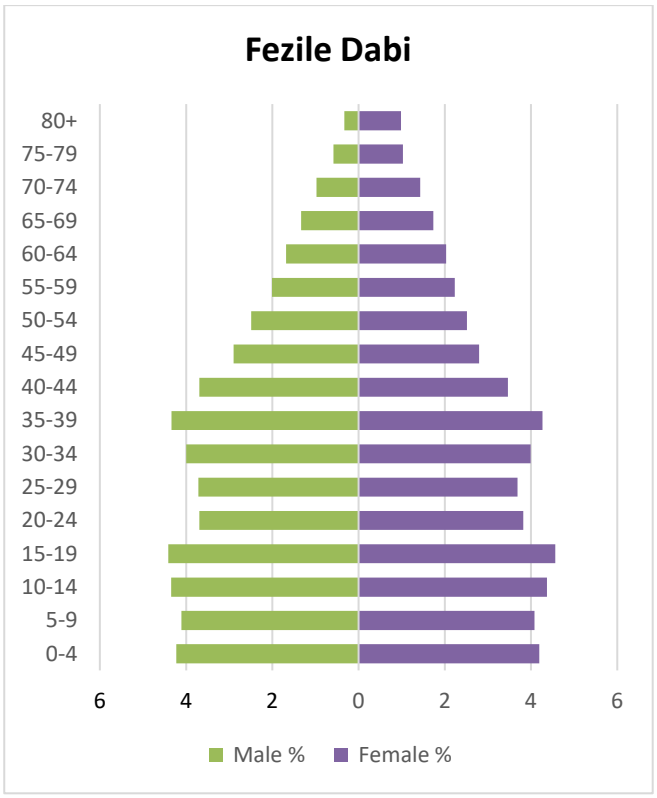
According to Appendix D, which indicates the CRB & CDR over time 2011–2026, in general, CDR has remained relatively constant across the districts/metro between 2011 and 2026. Much of the health gains in SA were made following the access and utilisation of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) treatment program since 2005. By 2011, access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) was universal in SA. In contrast, the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (pre-vaccine) between March 2020 and July 2021 resulted in a significant number of deaths in SA. This has seen some districts having CDR levels marginally higher in the period 2016–2021. CBR, on the other hand, has shown to have declined over time between 2011 and 2026.

Appendices

Appendix A – Population pyramids per district/metropolitan municipality, 2025






Fezile Dabi
80+
75-79
70-74
65-69
60-64
55-59
50-54
45-49
40-44
35-39
30-34
25-29
20-24
15-19
10-14
5-9
0-4
6
4
2
0
2
4
6
Male %
Female %

Appendix B – Sex ratios by age groups and district/metropolitan municipality, 2025

	FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)
0-4	100	101	100	102	101
5-9	98	99	99	101	101
10-14	98	98	97	100	99
15-19	96	96	95	96	97
20-24	97	92	96	92	97
25-29	101	88	100	89	101
30-34	102	85	101	89	100
35-39	103	82	101	90	102
40-44	110	80	100	87	107
45-49	105	79	93	82	104
50-54	105	77	84	72	99
55-59	88	67	77	56	90
60-64	79	62	79	50	83
65-69	71	59	80	42	77
70-74	64	53	72	34	68
70-79	46	48	58	29	57
80+	51	24	49	29	33

Appendix C – Population by selected age groups and indicators per district/metropolitan municipality over time in Free State, 2012–2025

District municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Old age dependency ratio														
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	10,1	10,2	10,3	10,4	10,4	10,5	10,6	10,7	10,7	10,7	10,7	10,7	10,6	10,6
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	9,3	9,5	9,7	10,0	10,3	10,6	10,9	11,2	11,5	11,7	11,9	12,1	12,4	12,6
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	8,0	8,1	8,3	8,5	8,7	9,0	9,4	9,7	10,0	10,2	10,5	10,9	11,2	11,5
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	8,9	9,0	9,1	9,2	9,3	9,4	9,5	9,6	9,6	9,5	9,5	9,4	9,3	9,3
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	10,4	10,6	10,8	11,0	11,3	11,6	11,8	12,0	12,2	12,2	12,3	12,4	12,6	12,7
School-going age 4–17														
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	28,3	28,1	27,9	27,8	27,9	27,8	27,8	27,8	27,7	27,7	27,5	27,2	27,0	26,7
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	24,8	24,7	24,7	24,7	24,8	24,9	24,9	24,9	24,8	24,8	24,8	24,7	24,6	24,4
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	25,4	25,3	25,3	25,3	25,3	25,2	25,0	24,8	24,5	24,4	24,3	24,1	23,9	23,7
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	28,5	28,4	28,3	28,4	28,5	28,5	28,5	28,4	28,3	28,2	28,0	27,7	27,5	27,2
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	25,1	25,1	25,1	25,2	25,3	25,3	25,2	25,1	24,9	24,9	24,7	24,5	24,3	24,1
Voting-age population (18+)														
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	63,2	63,5	63,6	63,7	63,8	64,0	64,2	64,4	64,5	64,6	64,8	65,1	65,4	65,7
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	67,4	67,6	67,7	67,8	68,0	68,1	68,1	68,1	68,1	67,9	67,9	68,0	68,2	68,5
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	66,5	66,7	66,9	67,2	67,7	68,1	68,4	68,6	68,7	68,6	68,7	68,9	69,2	69,5
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	62,6	62,9	63,1	63,3	63,5	63,8	64,0	64,1	64,1	64,1	64,3	64,7	65,0	65,4
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	66,9	67,1	67,2	67,4	67,7	68,0	68,2	68,2	68,3	68,2	68,3	68,5	68,8	69,2

Appendix D – Crude Birth Rate and Crude Death Rate by district/metropolitan municipalities in FS, 2011–2026

District municipality	CBR			CDR		
	2011–2016	2016–2021	2021–2026	2011–2016	2016–2021	2021–2026
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	22,2	19,9	19,6	14,4	13,4	13,1
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	19,9	19,4	18,4	10,6	11,0	10,8
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	19,6	18,3	17,9	14,4	13,6	12,9
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	22,2	20,3	19,6	13,6	13,6	13,3
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	19,5	18,2	17,4	12,5	13,2	12,7

Appendix E – Population estimates by district/metropolitan municipality, 2002–2025

	FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)		FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)		FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)		FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)		FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
2002	60 985	63 586	344 572	386 970	321 295	330 202	351 034	416 843	237 048	241 679
2003	60 670	63 257	345 650	388 766	319 234	328 391	349 514	415 097	236 785	241 860
2004	60 443	63 024	347 398	391 264	317 157	326 603	348 516	413 874	236 726	242 290
2005	60 298	62 886	349 797	394 489	315 006	324 835	347 994	413 119	236 852	242 963
2006	60 187	62 813	352 648	398 334	312 667	323 000	347 551	412 597	237 036	243 782
2007	60 231	62 761	354 812	401 262	312 857	323 483	347 469	412 357	238 247	245 289
2008	60 274	62 723	357 170	404 517	313 419	324 476	347 446	412 276	239 660	247 017
2009	60 275	62 645	359 484	407 754	314 132	325 639	347 193	411 973	241 119	248 738
2010	60 239	62 517	361 755	410 841	314 932	326 807	346 725	411 331	242 601	250 363
2011	60 205	62 406	364 210	414 180	315 952	328 261	346 303	410 756	244 232	252 132
2012	60 657	62 850	366 475	418 022	318 051	330 988	348 735	413 292	246 017	254 071
2013	61 136	63 341	368 716	421 919	319 829	333 465	351 131	415 754	247 660	255 923
2014	61 688	63 918	371 255	426 173	321 578	335 957	353 798	418 452	249 379	257 882
2015	62 198	64 475	373 508	430 213	322 821	338 019	356 117	420 789	250 803	259 608
2016	62 624	64 974	375 325	433 914	323 479	339 597	357 901	422 635	251 850	261 039
2017	63 225	65 581	377 012	437 439	324 971	342 300	359 667	424 811	253 131	262 637
2018	63 860	66 238	379 179	441 408	326 836	345 419	361 830	427 383	254 669	264 520
2019	64 473	66 900	381 518	445 586	328 829	348 754	364 056	430 082	256 276	266 533
2020	64 986	67 504	383 556	449 512	330 537	351 929	365 869	432 448	257 642	268 393
2021	65 150	67 804	383 761	451 424	330 574	353 557	365 999	432 871	257 694	269 042
2022	65 444	68 150	384 890	455 183	331 714	355 290	366 816	433 622	258 415	270 212
2023	65 863	68 618	386 389	459 433	333 225	357 380	368 119	435 016	259 476	271 677
2024	66 366	69 149	388 044	463 807	334 907	359 534	369 744	436 693	260 703	273 206
2025	66 928	69 724	389 741	468 232	336 666	361 691	371 557	438 540	262 012	274 743

Appendix F – District/metropolitan municipality population in Free State, 2025

District municipality	Population					Age structure			Age structure %		
	Total	Male	Female	Male %	Female%	0-14	15-64	65+	0-14	15-64	65+
FS - Xhariep District Municipality (DC16)	136 652	66 928	69 724	49,0	51,0	39 008	88 292	9 352	28,5	64,6	6,8
FS - Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MAN)	857 973	389 741	468 232	45,4	54,6	223 256	563 604	71 113	26,0	65,7	8,3
FS - Lejweleputswa District Municipality (DC18)	698 356	336 666	361 691	48,2	51,8	175 293	468 929	54 134	25,1	67,1	7,8
FS - Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality (DC19)	810 097	371 557	438 540	45,9	54,1	230 009	530 766	49 323	28,4	65,5	6,1
FS - Fezile Dabi District Municipality (DC20)	536 755	262 012	274 743	48,8	51,2	135 945	355 732	45 078	25,3	66,3	8,4

References

Bryan, T. (2004). Population estimates. In J. S. Siegel & D. A. Swanson (Eds.), *The methods and materials of demography* (2nd ed., pp. 9–41). Elsevier Academic Press.

Lomahoza, K., Brockerhoff, S., & Frye, I. (2013). *A review of national and provincial government budgets in South Africa (2007/2008–2011/2012): Monitoring the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights project*.

Lymer, S., & Brown, L. (2012). Developing a dynamic microsimulation model of the Australian health system: A means to explore impacts of obesity over the next 50 years. *Epidemiology Research International, 2012*, Article 13.

Rayer, S. (2015). Demographic techniques: Small-area estimates and projections. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 6, pp. 162–169). Elsevier.

Siegel, J. S., & Swanson, D. A. (2004). *The methods and materials of demography* (2nd ed.). Elsevier Science & Technology.

Smith, S. K., & Cody, S. (2013). Making the housing unit method work: An evaluation of 2010 population estimates in Florida. *Population Research and Policy Review, 32*, 221–242.

Smith, S. K., & Morrison, P. A. (2005). Small-area and business demography. In P. Dudley & M. Micklin (Eds.), *Handbook of population* (pp. 819–838). Springer.

Statistics South Africa. (2024). *Recorded live births, 2023* (Statistical Release P0305). Statistics South Africa.

Statistics South Africa. (2025a). *Mid-year population estimates* (Statistical Release P0302). Statistics South Africa.

Statistics South Africa. (2025b). *Mortality and causes of death in South Africa, 2021: Findings from death notification* (Statistical Release P0309.3). Statistics South Africa.

United Nations. (1992). *Preparing migration data for sub-national population projections*. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.

Willekens, F., & Rogers, A. (1978). *Spatial population analysis: Methods and computer programs* (Research Report RR-78-18). International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.

Willekens, F., Por, A., & Raquillet, R. (1979). *Entropy multi-proportional and quadratic techniques for inferring detailed migration patterns from aggregate data* (Working Paper WP-79-88). International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis.

General Information

Stats SA publishes approximately 300 different statistical releases each year. It is not economically viable to produce them in more than one of South Africa's eleven official languages. Since the releases are used extensively, not only locally but also by international economic and social-scientific communities, Stats SA releases are published in English only.

Stats SA Library Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) Data
District Population Estimates - Free State Report: MYPE 2025 series/ Statistics South Africa.
Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2025

Report no. 03-02-48
27 pp

Advance release calendar
An advance release calendar is disseminated on www.statssa.gov.za

Stats SA products
A complete set of Stats SA publications is available at the Stats SA Library and the following libraries:
National Library of South Africa, Pretoria Division
National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Division
Natal Society Library, Pietermaritzburg
Library of Parliament, Cape Town
Bloemfontein Public Library
Johannesburg Public Library
Eastern Cape Library Services, Qonce
Central Regional Library, Polokwane
Central Reference Library, Mbombela
Central Reference Collection, Kimberley
Central Reference Library, Mmabatho

Stats SA also provides a subscription service.

Electronic services
A large range of data are available via on-line services, diskette and computer printouts. For more details about our electronic data services, contact 012 310 8600.

You can visit us on the internet at: www.statssa.gov.za

Enquiries

User information services	Telephone number: 012 310 8600
	Email address: info@statssa.gov.za
Technical enquiries:	diegoi@statssa.gov.za chantalmu@statssa.gov.za lesegol@statssa.gov.za andisar@statssa.gov.za
Postal address	Private Bag X44, Pretoria, 0001