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## **STATISTICAL RELEASE** **P0305**

# Recorded live births

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## **Preface**

This statistical release presents information on live births that occurred and were recorded in the South African birth registration system at the Department of Home Affairs up to 28 February 2023. Live births from 1999 to 2022 are also included to show patterns and trends in occurrence and registrations. The reporting of live births is analysed by year of birth registration (the year during which the birth was captured in the system, irrespective of when it occurred) and year of birth occurrence (the year during which the birth took place).

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), all children have a right to a name, nationality and to have their birth officially registered. Thus, birth registration is mandatory for legalising the existence of a child. Without a legal identity, a child may potentially be precluded from economic and social opportunities later in life such as education, economic participation, or practising and accessing human rights. Goal 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for the provision of legal identity for all, including birth registration (United Nations [UN], 2015). Allocation of legal identity also aids in curbing abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children as noted in Goal 16.2 of the SDGs.

Birth registration in South Africa is governed by Act 51, the Births and Deaths Registration Act which was promulgated in 1992 (Republic of South Africa, 1992). The actual implementation of the birth registration process is carried out by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). According to the Act, a birth ought to be registered within 30 days from the day of occurrence using the DHA-24 form. However, if a birth is not registered within this timeframe, the Act allows for the late registration of births using the DHA-24/LRB form and supporting documentation is required to make the application. Late birth registration is classified into three categories: births within 30 days, after 30 days but before 365 days, after one year but before age 15 years, and 15 years and older (DHA, 2014). After birth registration is completed, a birth certificate is issued to the applicant and information is captured on the National Population Register (NPR). Thereafter Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) obtains the birth data from the DHA in print form and bi-annually from the State Information Technology Agency (SITA).

The South African government has made great strides in eliminating late registration of births through concerted efforts to actively reach those who are hard to reach. Current birth registration in South Africa increased from 22,5% to 87,3% between 1998 and 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). To achieve this remarkable improvement, South Africa has had to overcome several obstacles. This was done by creating several mobile programs that essentially bring social services to communities, including birth registration, to children and their families living far from urban centres, as well as providing on-site registration facilities at designated hospitals with maternity units. This has resulted in an impressive improvement in the registration of vital events in South Africa.

### 1.2 Objective of this statistical release

This statistical release has two main objectives, which are:

- To present information on the births that occurred and were registered at the DHA between January 2022 and February 2023.
- To show a historical pattern of birth occurrence and registration from 1999 to 2022.

## 2. Data and methods

### 2.1 Data source

This statistical release is based on recorded live births data from the DHA. The release includes current birth registrations and occurrences of live births for 2022 recorded for a period of 14 months covering January 2022 to February 2023. Additionally, information on late birth registrations i.e., births that occurred in 2021 and earlier years, but were captured between January 2022 and February 2023 are included. The age of the child at registration determines the categorisation of the birth. The data files received from DHA are based on this categorisation and include births registered:

- i. within 30 days;
- ii. after 30 days up to 365 days;
- iii. within one to 14 years;
- iv. within 15 years and older; and
- v. births registered at health facilities.

The total number of birth registrations for the 2021 and 2022 period are shown in Table 1. As observed from Table 1 birth registrations for the period January 2021 and February 2022 are combined to arrive at the final birth registrations for the analyses in this release. The table indicates that 1 262 114 births were registered between January 2021 and February 2022, of these 80 291 late registrations for the earlier years were removed. A further 94 297 were subtracted for births registered from January to February 2022 as these were 2022 births which were already registered when data was requested from DHA.

Stats SA received 1 161 420 birth registration data pertaining to the year 2022, and of these 55 551 were births that occurred earlier than 2022 but were only registered in January and February of 2022. Furthermore, 107 507 births were removed from 2022 birth registrations as they were 2023 births and will be included in the 2023 recorded live births publication. The final number of births that occurred in 2022 and were registered in the period 01 January 2022 and 28 February 2023 in South Africa was 998 362.

**Table 1 - Birth registrations: 2021–2022**

<b>2021</b>	<b>Number of birth registrations</b>
Total births registered from January 2021 to February 2022	1 262 114
Births for 2020 and earlier years registered from January to February 2021	80 291
	<b>1 181 823</b>
Less 2022 births registered from January to February 2022	94 297
	<b>1 087 526</b>
<b>2022</b>	
Total births registered from January 2022 to February 2023	1 161 420
Births for 2021 and earlier years registered in January to February 2022	55 551
	<b>1 105 869</b>
Less 2023 births registered from January to February 2023	107 507
	<b>998 362</b>

## 2.2 Assessment of the quality of data

### 2.2.1 Completeness of birth registration

Completeness of birth registration is a key measure of the quality of vital statistics data and an assessment of effectiveness and efficiency of processes at the DHA.

The synthetic cohort P/F method suggested by Zlotnik and Hill (1981) and subsequently applied by Hill (2009) to data from several countries, including South African data as an alternative to the Brass P/F ratio method (1964). The method assumes that cumulated age specific fertility rates for every known age is equivalent to the average number of children ever born by woman at particular age. The strength of this method is the ability to assess the level of completeness of birth registration in the absence of constant fertility as is the case in South Africa. The number of births obtained from the registration system for 2011 and 2022 is one set of data input for this method.

One of the weaknesses of birth registration data in South Africa is consistently high level of late registrations, which last a few years after occurrence for any given year. In the current estimation, an adjustment factor was derived for future late births registration pertaining to 2021 births, assumed for up until five years after the occurrence year.

The second input data is age of women aged 15–49 years and the PI ratio computed from children ever born (CEB) from the two census points, 2011 and 2022 censuses. The second adjustment done was for the CEB for age groups 40–44 and 45–49 years by a factor due to observed under reporting of CEB in the 2022 census in these age groups. The female data from both censuses was further moved to mid-year prior to application. The resultant computation produced a completeness of birth registration at 90,0% for the intercensal period 2011–2022.

### 2.2.2 Timeliness of birth registration

The Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act (Act No. 18 of 2010), mandates that a birth must be registered within 30 days of occurrence (Republic of South Africa, 2010). Table 2 shows the distribution of birth registration by the number of days it took to register births over the period 2018 to 2022. There was an increasing trend in the proportion of births registered within 30 days of occurrence over the period 2018 to 2019, with a decline of 9,2% observed in 2020 associated with national lockdown regulations which saw the closure of DHA offices and disruption of services such as birth registration throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

A recovery in the number of births registered within 30 days is observed as of 2021 (74,6%) to 2022 (78,0%). The increase attests to improving services in 2021 due to easing of restrictions during the pandemic. In 2022 registrations that occurred within 30 days were still 2% less than that of 2019 which was before the national lockdown. Almost a quarter of the total births registered in 2020 were registered within 31–364 days after the actual birth.

**Table 2 - Distribution of birth registrations by the number of days it took to register the birth: 2018–2022**

Number of days/years	Number of birth registrations					Percentage*					Cumulative percentage*				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
0–30 days	803 286	840 746	710 814	811 622	778 716	79,6	80,0	70,8	74,6	78,0	79,6	80,0	70,8	74,6	78,0
31–364 days	143 260	132 367	248 209	214 578	157 565	14,2	12,6	24,7	19,7	15,8	93,8	92,6	95,6	94,4	93,8
1–14 years	39 219	50 580	31 332	44 278	44 456	3,9	4,8	3,1	4,1	4,5	97,7	97,4	98,7	98,4	98,2
15 years and older	23 300	27 618	12 952	17 048	17 625	2,3	2,6	1,3	1,6	1,8	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 009 065</b>	<b>1 051 311</b>	<b>1 003 307</b>	<b>1 087 526</b>	<b>998 362</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>					

\*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding off.



### 2.2.3 Year-on-year changes in birth registration

Annual percentage changes in the number of births registered by age in days or years for the period 2018 to 2022 are shown in Table 3. A year-on-year increase is observed in the number of births registered within 30 days over the period 2018–2019 (4,7%) and 2020–2021 (14,2%), while the period 2019–2020 and 2021–2022 showed a decrease in percentage change. The number of births registered within 30 days declined drastically in 2019–2020 (-15,5%), with a large increase in 2020–2021 (14,2%). Regarding births registered between 31 and 364 days, the year-on-year percentage changes are all negative except for 2019–2020, which signifies a decline in the number of days it took to register the births. The period 2019–2020 had an unusually large positive change of 87,5%. However, the year-on-year percentage changes indicate increases in the births registered at 1–14 years (0,4%) and 15 years and older (3,4%) for the years 2021–2022. The total registered birth in South Africa had decreased for the years 2021–2022 by 8,2%.

**Table 3 – Year-on-year changes in the number of days/years it took to register the birth: 2018–2022**

Number of days/years	Number of birth registrations					Percentage changes			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
0–30 days	803 286	840 746	710 814	811 622	778 716	4,7	-15,5	14,2	-4,1
31–364 days	143 260	132 367	248 209	214 578	157 565	-7,6	87,5	-13,5	-26,6
1–14 years	39 219	50 580	31 332	44 278	44 456	29,0	-38,1	41,3	0,4
15 years and older	23 300	27 618	12 952	17 048	17 625	18,5	-53,1	31,6	3,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 009 065</b>	<b>1 051 311</b>	<b>1 003 307</b>	<b>1 087 526</b>	<b>998 362</b>	<b>4,2</b>	<b>-4,6</b>	<b>8,4</b>	<b>-8,2</b>

### 2.2.4 Data confrontation, DHIS

A comparison between data from the District Health Information System (DHIS), DHA data obtained through connect direct and DHA data obtained through SITA for births that occurred in the year 2022 is depicted in Table 4. The DHIS birth data is information on births occurring within public health facilities. It is a system of registers, tally sheets and monthly data collation forms (Department of Health, 2011). The collated data is sent monthly from district or sub-district level to be captured onto computers using DHIS software (Mate *et al*, 2009).

Generally, the number of births is higher in the DHIS. The highest number of births were recorded in March for all data sources, but the highest number was captured in the DHIS (87 803). The lowest number of birth occurrences was recorded in the DHA (direct connect) in November, with only 69 210 births. With the exception of the deviation observed in January, the pattern across the three data sources is consistent from month to month.

**Table 4 - Data confrontation: 2022**

Birth Month	DHIS	DHA (Connect direct)	DHA (SITA)
January	84582	82134	82705
February	78011	76171	76639
March	87803	84837	85488
April	82532	78561	79411
May	83963	79697	80700
June	81418	77171	78555
July	80200	75254	76903
August	78042	72445	74291
September	80274	75231	77241
October	75672	69528	71897
November	75597	69210	72206
December	80034	71747	76168

### 2.3 Data analysis

This release includes descriptive analyses using both bivariate and univariate analyses. Additionally, it also includes trends or patterns of median ages at birth together with cross-tabulations. Analyses were mainly on birth occurrences and registered births. Socio-demographic indicators covered include but are not limited to, the age of the mother, sex of the child, and province of birth registration. Furthermore, statistics on the months of birth occurrence, baby forenames and surnames are covered.

### 3. Birth registrations

#### 3.1 Trends in birth registration

This section reports on the total number of birth occurrences registered at the DHA offices between 1999 and 2022. It is the combination of both current registrations (live births occurring in a specific year and registered within the same year); and late registrations (live births registered later than the year of birth).

The number and proportion of birth registrations by status of registration for the period 1999 to 2022 are presented in Table 5. The number of birth registrations was consistently above one million over the period 1999 to 2015, and the same is observed for the period 2018 to 2021. There was a decline to just below one million registrations for the years 2016 and 2017, and currently in 2022. Up to the present the year, 2003 had the highest number of birth registrations compared to any other year at 1 677 415. It is also worth noting that in the period 1999–2004, the number and proportion of late birth registrations were higher than current birth registrations. Over time, the proportion of late registration constantly declined, from 42,5% in 2005 to 8,7% in 2022. It is also worth noting that in recent years, 2010–2023 specifically, the gap between current and late registrations has increased. Late registrations peaked in 2010 at 31,3% which was the highest level for late registrations in the 13-year period. The decline indicates an improvement in current registrations as an outcome of the DHA's concerted efforts aimed at universal and early birth registration. The increase in late registrations in 2020 and 2021 was due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions imposed by the government. During this period only limited services were provided by DHA, however, with the easing of restrictions, late registrations declined from 10,4% in 2020 to 8,7% in 2022.

**Table 5 - Birth registrations by status of registration, South Africa: 1999–2022**

Year of registration	Number of birth registrations			Percentages		
	Total	Current	Late	Total	Current	Late
1999	1 363 800	344 700	1 019 100	100,0	25,3	74,7
2000	1 407 833	409 707	998 126	100,0	29,1	70,9
2001	1 433 432	477 489	955 943	100,0	33,3	66,7
2002	1 517 671	557 573	960 098	100,0	36,7	63,3
2003	1 677 415	621 887	1 055 528	100,0	37,1	62,9
2004	1 475 809	728 283	747 526	100,0	49,3	50,7
2005	1 380 496	793 788	586 708	100,0	57,5	42,5
2006	1 346 119	860 263	485 856	100,0	63,9	36,1
2007	1 199 712	858 866	340 846	100,0	71,6	28,4
2008	1 277 763	915 674	362 089	100,0	71,7	28,3
2009	1 254 707	879 707	375 000	100,0	70,1	29,9
2010	1 294 694	889 691	405 003	100,0	68,7	31,3
2011	1 202 377	911 353	291 024	100,0	75,8	24,2
2012	1 168 403	926 726	241 677	100,0	79,3	20,7
2013	1 158 622	939 011	219 611	100,0	81,0	19,0
2014	1 142 275	954 385	187 890	100,0	83,6	16,4
2015	1 084 511	919 562	164 949	100,0	84,8	15,2
2016	969 415	876 435	92 980	100,0	90,4	9,6
2017	989 318	897 750	91 568	100,0	90,7	9,3
2018	1 009 065	927 113	81 952	100,0	91,9	8,1
2019	1 051 311	954 532	96 779	100,0	90,8	9,2
2020	1 003 307	899 303	104 004	100,0	89,6	10,4
2021	1 087 526	949 757	137 769	100,0	87,3	12,7
2022	998 362	911 986	86 376	100,0	91,3	8,7

Figure 1 provides information on birth registrations for the period 1999 to 2022, categorised by status of registration. A sharp increase in total birth registrations was observed between the years 2000 and 2003, followed by a gradual reduction until 2007. The total number of births registered annually from 2011 to 2016 continued to steady, but there was an upward change in 2017 and 2018 followed by a decline in 2019–2020, a slight increase in 2021 and another decline in 2022.

In general, current and late birth registrations show two distinct patterns. In the first pattern, late birth registrations were consistently higher than current birth registrations from 2000 to 2003. In 2004, late and current registrations were somewhat equivalent, with slightly more late birth registrations. In the second pattern, current birth registrations experienced an upward trend and were consistently higher than late registrations for the rest of the years 2005 to 2022. It is also worth noting that in the more recent years (2011 to 2022) the gap between late and current registrations has increased, with 2018 having the widest gap between current and late birth registrations.

**Figure 1 - Birth registrations by status of registration, South Africa: 2000–2022**

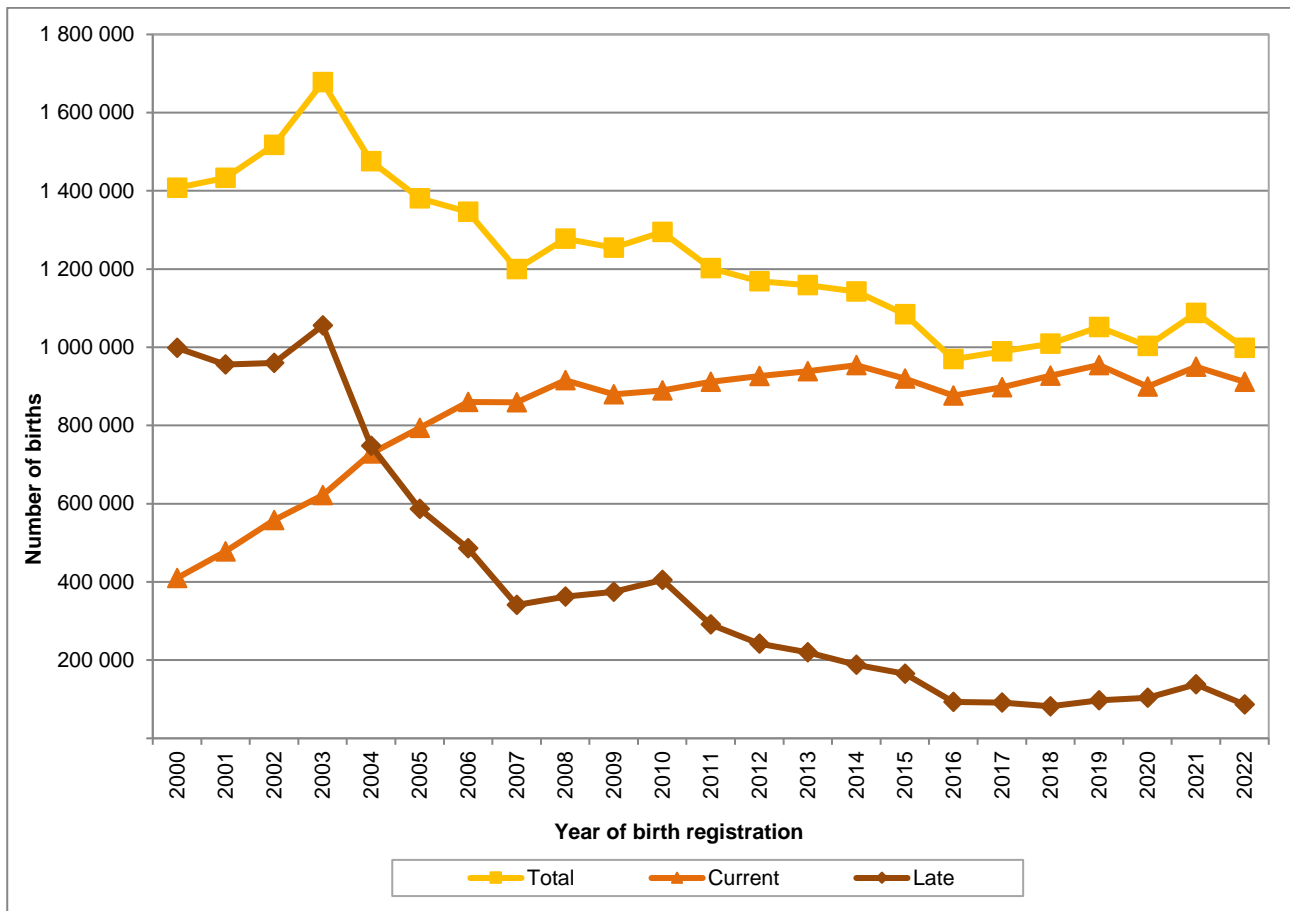
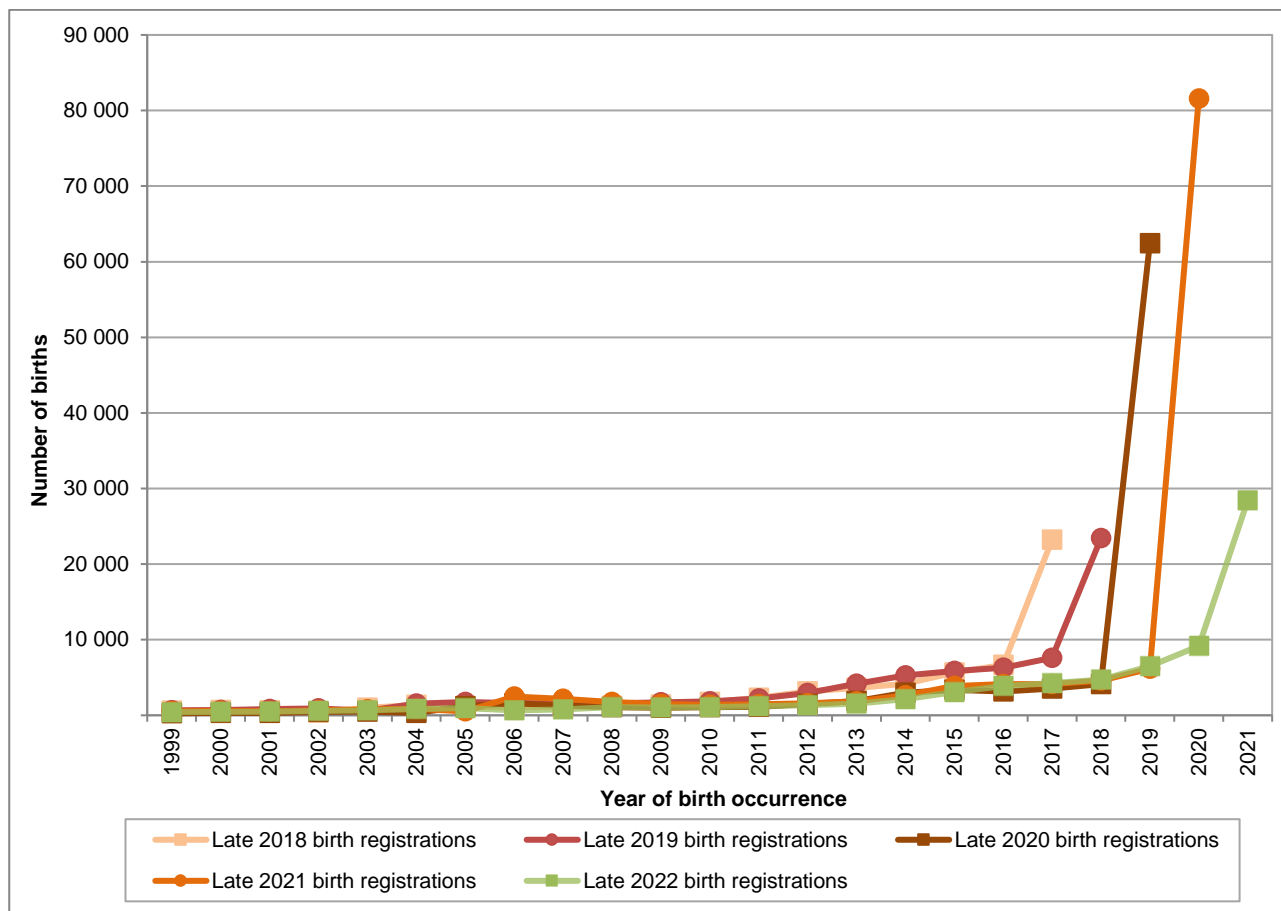


Figure 2 presents the overall number of late birth registrations between 2018 and 2022 for births that occurred during the years 1999 to 2021. Overall, the figure shows that late birth registrations have gradually flattened over the years, suggesting that births registered later than 15 years of age are declining. This is also indicative of the success of efforts by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to expedite birth registrations in line with the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act of 2010 and integrated efforts towards universal and early birth registration.

For the years of observation, late registrations were highest in the year preceding the year of reporting. In the current year of reporting, most late registrations (28 414) are from 2021 birth occurrences that were only registered in 2022. The highest number of late birth registrations was observed in 2021 where 81 582 births of 2020 were registered due to the lockdown restrictions.

**Figure 2 - Late birth registrations by year of birth, South Africa: 1999–2022**



### 3.2 Birth registrations by selected variables

#### 3.2.1 Age of the mother

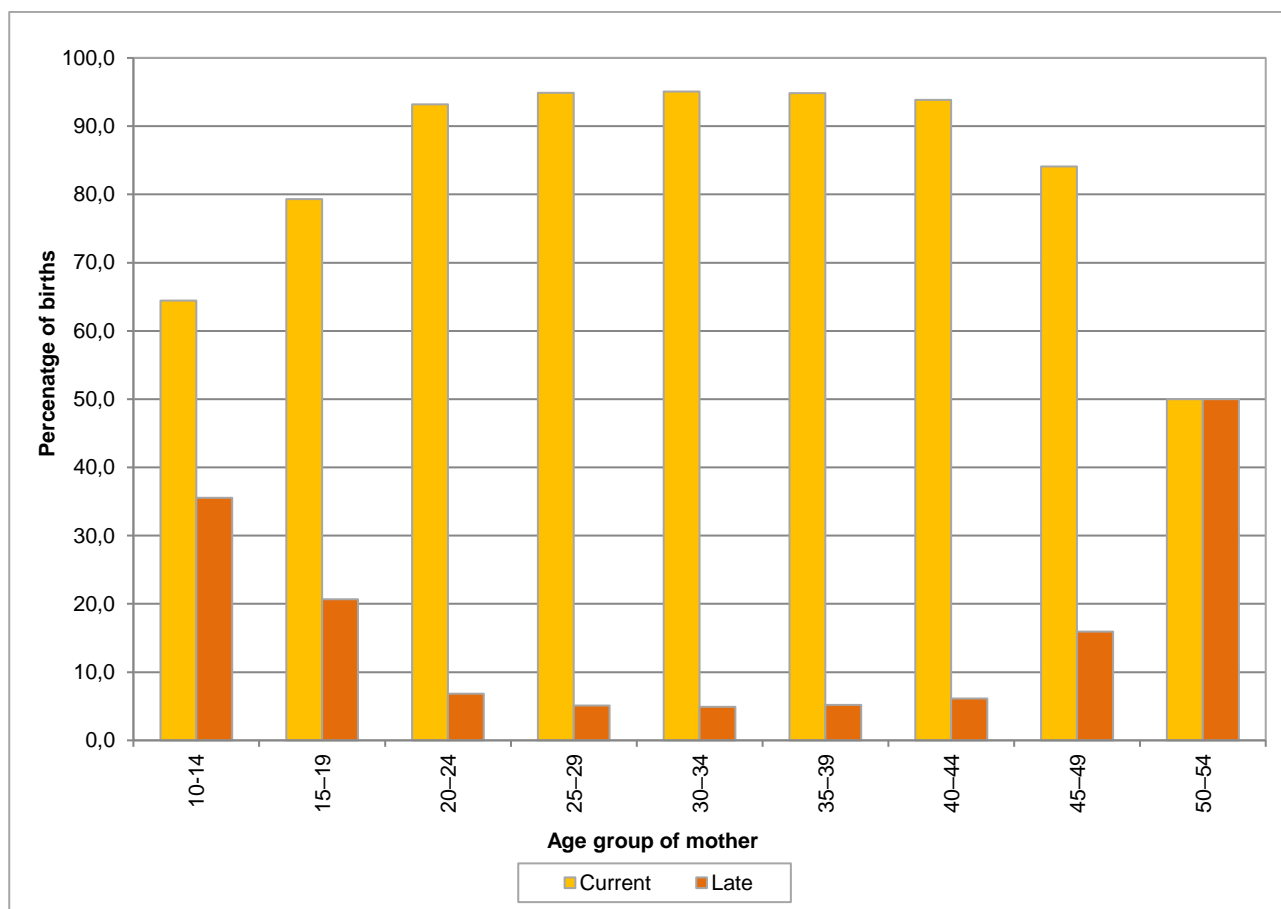
Table 6 describes the number and percentage distribution of registered births by age of the mother and status of registration. The table shows that mothers in the age group 25–29 years accounted for the highest number of total birth registrations (244 789), followed by those aged 20–24 years and 30–34 years at 218 678 and 214 153 respectively. The lowest number of births (268) occurred for mothers in the 50–54 year-old age group, however, this group along with those aged 10–14 and 15–19 years accounted for a higher proportion of late registrations with 50% of births due to this age group registered late.

**Table 6 - Birth registrations by age of mother and status of registration, South Africa: 2022**

Age of mother	Number of birth registrations			Percentage		
	Total	Current	Late	Total	Current	Late
10–14	5 584	3 598	1 986	100,0	64,4	35,6
15–19	128 066	101 569	26 497	100,0	79,3	20,7
20–24	218 678	203 766	14 912	100,0	93,2	6,8
25–29	244 789	232 276	12 513	100,0	94,9	5,1
30–34	214 153	203 622	10 531	100,0	95,1	4,9
35–39	134 311	127 357	6 954	100,0	94,8	5,2
40–44	39 203	36 797	2 406	100,0	93,9	6,1
45–49	3 122	2 625	497	100,0	84,1	15,9
50–54	268	134	134	100,0	50,0	50,0
Unspecified/outside the 10–54 age range	10 188	242	9 946	100,0	2,4	97,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>998 362</b>	<b>911 986</b>	<b>86 376</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>91,3</b>	<b>8,7</b>

Figure 3 shows the proportion of birth registrations by registration status and age of the mother. Current birth registrations were higher than late birth registrations for all age groups with the exception of mothers aged 50–54 years. The figure also depicts that current birth registrations increase as the mother ages increase, until the age group 30–34 years, after which current birth registrations decrease with the increasing age of mothers. This decrease might be attributed to the lower number of birth occurrences at terminal ages.

**Figure 3 - Birth registrations by age of mother and status of registration, South Africa: 2022**



### 3.2.2 Province of birth registration

Province of birth occurrence in this statistical release is based on the 2016 municipal boundaries. Information on the office of birth registration is provided by the DHA, which Stats SA then uses to derive the province of birth registration. It must be noted that for persons 15 years and older, the majority of registrations are allocated to the City of Tshwane metropolitan municipality in Gauteng province, which is where late registrations from 15 years and above are centralised for processing.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of all births registered in 2022 by province of registration and status according to the following four categories:

- i. 0–30 days: registered within the time stipulated by law (classified by DHA as current registrations)
- ii. 31–364: registered after a month but within a year
- iii. 1–14 years: registered between one and 14 years
- iv. 15 years and above: registered from 15 years upward.

The highest number of total births were registered in Gauteng (231 816) followed by KwaZulu-Natal (219 806) and Limpopo (124 065). For all the provinces, there were more births registered within 0–30 days than in the 31–364 days' category. Gauteng had the highest number of births registered within 0–30 days at 177 184, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 152 359, whereas Northern Cape had the lowest number of births registered within 30 days at 19 978. KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of births registered within 31–364 days at 53 575 followed by Gauteng at 25 400. As mentioned previously, due to the centralisation of registrations for persons 15 years and above, Gauteng (16 798) had the highest number of birth registrations in this age category.



**Figure 4 - Number of birth registrations by province of birth registration and status of registration, South Africa: 2022**

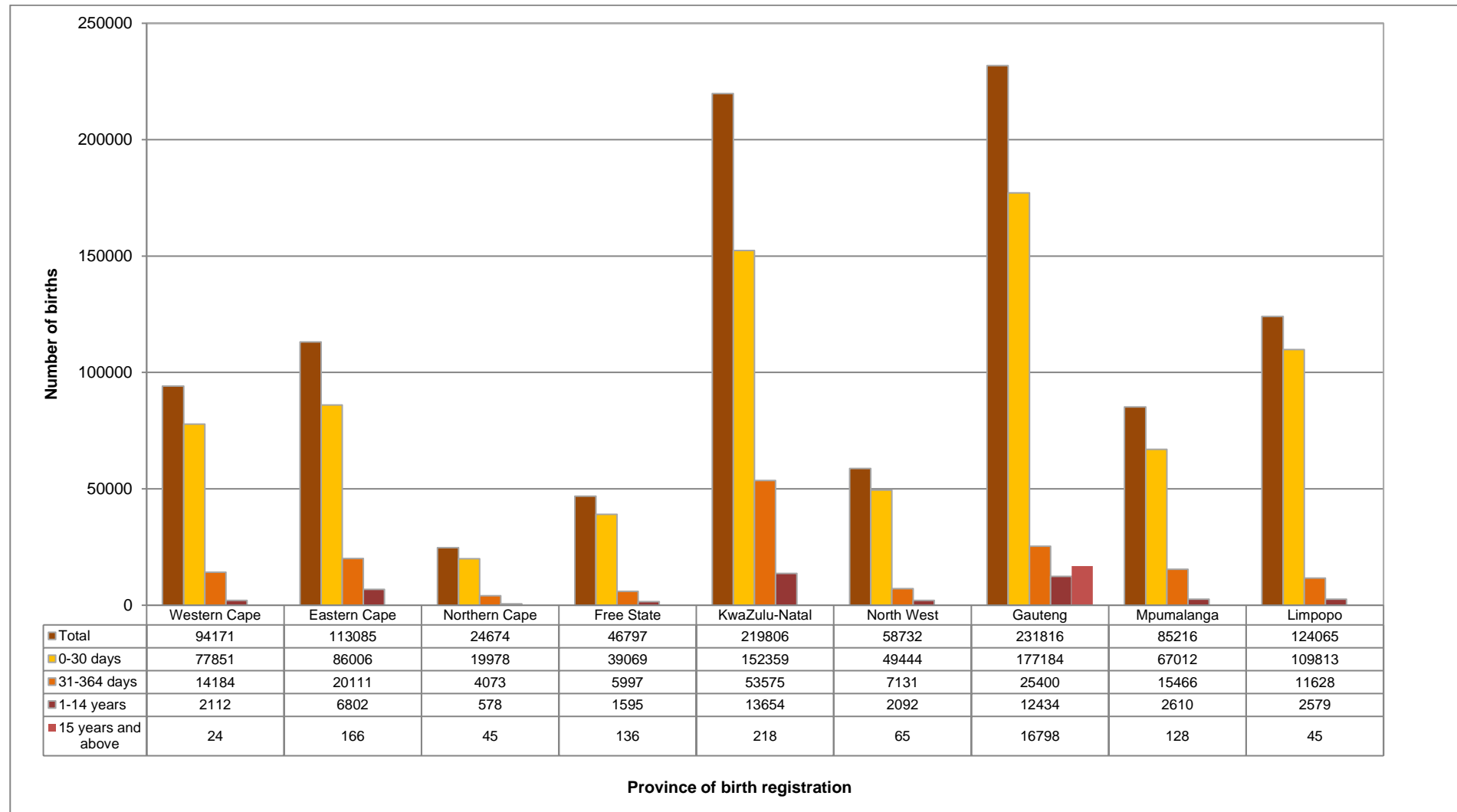
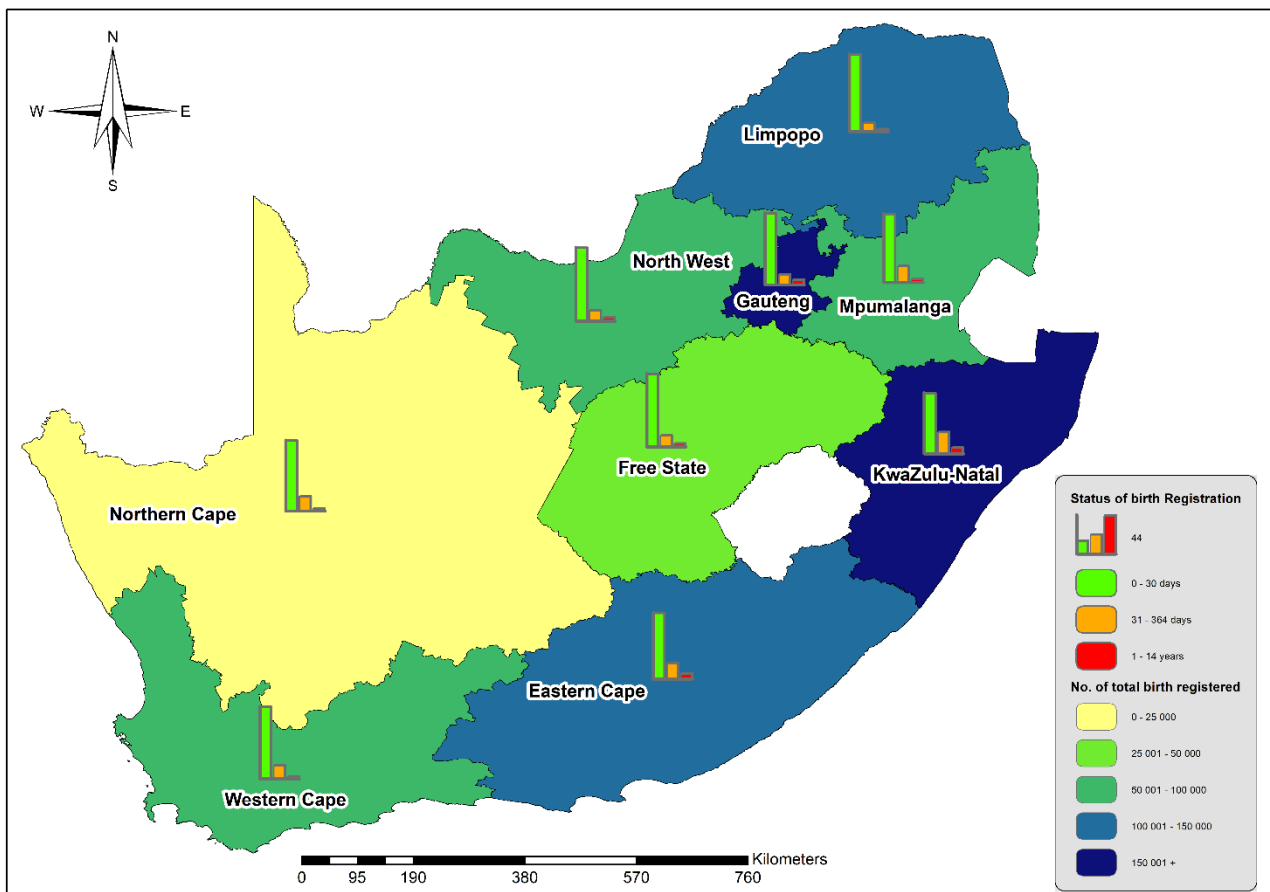


Figure 5 shows the percentage distribution of all registered birth occurrences (998 362) in 2022 by province of birth registration and status of registration. Northern Cape registered fewer births, whereas a high number of registrations were recorded in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal provinces. The figure further shows that Limpopo had the highest proportion of birth registrations within 30 days followed by North West and Free State in second and third place, respectively. The province with the lowest proportion of registrations within 30 days was KwaZulu-Natal at 69,4%, while conversely, had the highest proportion of births registered within 31-364 days at 24,4% and 6,2% of births registered within 1-14 years. In general, birth registration timelines follows a similar pattern across all provinces.

**Figure 5 - Percentage of birth registrations by province of birth registration and status of registration, South Africa: 2022**

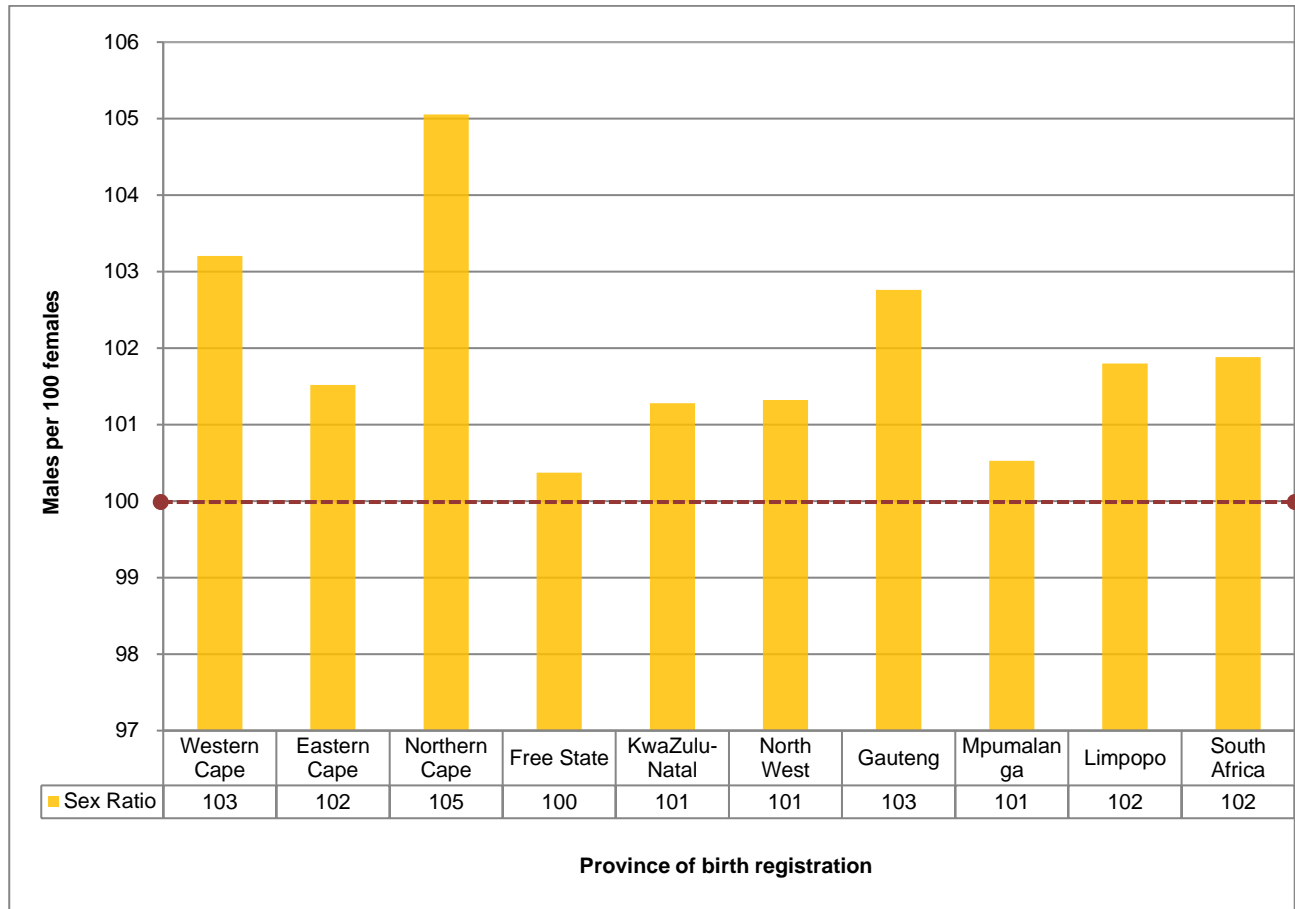


**3.2.3 Sex of the child**

The sex ratio at birth is defined as the number of male births per 100 female births. A ratio of 100 indicates an equal number of male births for every female birth, whereas a number less than 100 indicates relatively more female births and a number above 100 indicates more male births. Sex ratios at birth by provincial distribution are presented in Figure 6. South Africa had a sex ratio of 102 males per 100 females indicating that there were more male birth registrations than female birth registrations in 2022. Northern Cape had the highest sex ratio with 105 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations followed by Gauteng and Western Cape at 103 whilst the Eastern Cape and Limpopo were the only provinces with a sex ratio of 102. KwaZulu-Natal,

North West and Mpumalanga had a sex ratio of 101, whereas Free State had the lowest sex ratio at 100 male birth registrations per 100 female births.

**Figure 6 - Sex ratios by province of birth registration, South Africa: 2022**



\*Sex ratios have been rounded off.

## 4. Birth occurrences

This section covers data on birth occurrences as reported from two different sources. Firstly, it profiles birth occurrences based on transaction files received by Stats SA from DHA using a cloud service solution. Secondly it profiles 2022 birth occurrences obtained from SITA as of 31 July 2023. Generally, births from the transaction files are fewer than births from SITA due to the difference in cut-off dates. The cut-off date for births from NPR was 31 July 2023 while for the transaction files the cut-off date was 28 February 2023. Each time a birth for any particular year is registered, the birth occurrences for that particular year are updated to include those that were registered late for both data sources. It is for this reason that information on birth occurrences varies each time data are extracted from these two sources.

Table 7 shows the total birth occurrences as at 28 February 2023, and updated birth occurrences as at 31 July 2023 for the period 1999 to 2022. It is observed that by 28 February 2023, a total of 911 986 births that occurred in 2022 were registered, increasing to 932 204 by 31 July 2023. This indicates that between 28 February 2023 and 31 July 2023, the national birth register was updated by 20 218 births that occurred in 2022. This follows the general trend observed in previous years whereby birth occurrences indicate an increase between the two reference periods. This is indicative of the continuous updating of the national birth registration system and continued challenges with late birth registrations.

The pattern on birth occurrences for the period 1999–2022 shows that for the period 2004 to 2014, and 2019, the number of registered births exceeded a million, while the remaining years had fewer birth occurrences registered, which were less than 1,0 million. Overall, updated birth occurrences as at the last day of July for each observation period exceed those from February of the same observation period, with the exception of 2019. The decline in the number registered between 28 February 2023 and 31 July 2023 for 2019 is an anomaly, which we were unable to resolve by publication date.

**Table 7 - Birth occurrences by year of birth and reference period, South Africa: 1999–2022**

Year of birth occurrence	Birth occurrences	Updated Birth occurrences
	(as at 28 Feb. 2023)	(as at 31 Jul. 2023)
1999	940 163	969 537
2000	939 310	982 055
2001	933 605	964 805
2002	922 177	975 495
2003	931 111	970 809
2004	1 020 332	1 029 424
2005	1 067 408	1 071 128
2006	1 097 650	1 102 643
2007	1 084 113	1 088 527
2008	1 103 264	1 112 524
2009	1 040 378	1 061 150
2010	1 031 123	1 034 434
2011	1 040 349	1 043 453
2012	1 036 699	1 043 913
2013	1 029 993	1 030 959
2014	1 031 603	1 034 858
2015	982 323	985 277
2016	927 326	927 879
2017	940 457	941 218
2018	963 964	967 468
2019	1 029 617	987 879
2020	990 050	1 007 550
2021	978 171	1 001 955
2022	911 986	932 204
<b>Average over 24 years</b>	998 882	1 011 131

#### 4.1 Birth occurrences as at 28 February 2023

Table 8 shows the number of births that occurred over the 21-year period between 2002 and 2022, ordered by year of birth occurrence and year of birth registration. For each year, births registered within the year they occurred and births registered later than the year of occurrence are shown. The figures in bold indicate all births that occurred and were registered within the year of occurrence, while the rest represent late birth registrations, indicating births that occurred in previous year(s) but were only registered in later year(s). The 'Total' row shows the updated number of births registered up to the end of February 2023.

Over the 21-year period, birth occurrences have been improving with time. The total number of births that occurred and were registered in 2022 was 911 986. The number of birth occurrences for a particular year increase continually due to updating of the national birth register with late registrations. The table further shows a clear pattern where the highest number of late registrations are registered during the year immediately following the year of birth occurrence. Additionally, late registrations have been decreasing over time, with increases in birth registration during the year of occurrence.

**Table 8 - Birth occurrences (as at end of February 2023) by year of birth occurrence and year of birth registration, South Africa: 2001–2022**

Year of birth registration	Year of birth occurrence																				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
2002	557 573																				
2003	194 204	621 887																			
2004	63 234	165 662	728 283																		
2005	27 701	43 404	150 546	793 788																	
2006	26 042	34 601	54 941	154 331	860 263																
2007	16 766	20 009	26 769	42 569	126 358	858 866															
2008	11 378	14 085	17 869	23 732	40 554	128 336	915 674														
2009	6 053	8 322	11 793	14 208	19 510	31 885	101 743	879 707													
2010	3 844	4 852	7 623	10 566	13 736	19 323	30 164	91 064	889 691												
2011	2 743	3 457	4 763	7 298	10 111	12 628	16 091	23 665	80 079	911 353											
2012	2 259	2 644	3 301	4 578	6 599	9 104	10 776	13 065	21 005	74 374	926 726										
2013	1 925	2 357	2 800	3 590	4 742	6 914	9 018	9 938	12 978	21 023	66 775	939 011									
2014	1 866	1 950	2 261	2 673	3 241	4 122	6 039	7 390	8 418	10 898	16 147	55 202	954 385								
2015	1 838	1 759	1 874	2 151	2 489	2 892	3 476	4 908	6 290	7 197	8 882	14 125	46 754	919 562							
2016	1 098	1 072	1 084	1 010	1 186	1 468	1 675	1 973	2 901	3 556	3 771	4 470	7 601	32 680	876 435						
2017	709	1 535	1 488	1 342	1 446	1 578	1 863	2 046	2 636	3 663	3 938	4 118	5 709	8 320	26 812	897 750					
2018	374	996	1 389	1 137	1 089	1 139	1 234	1 399	1 752	2 287	3 147	3 611	4 157	5 641	6 669	23 218	927 113				
2019	891	600	1 555	1 763	1 636	1 600	1 584	1 698	1 845	2 222	2 939	4 177	5 250	5 849	6 290	7 606	23 420	954 532			
2020	455	498	314	1 212	1 595	1 289	1 082	985	1 079	1 138	1 495	1 891	2 968	3 350	3 148	3 516	4 105	62 456	899 303		
2021	644	776	877	514	2 455	2 192	1 755	1 500	1 363	1 451	1 568	1 847	2 655	3 863	4 113	4 132	4 587	6 143	81 589	949 757	
2022	580	645	802	946	640	777	1 090	1 040	1 086	1 187	1 311	1 541	2 124	3 058	3 859	4 235	4 739	6 486	9 158	28 414	911 986
Total	922 177	931 111	1 020 332	1 067 408	1 097 650	1 084 113	1 103 264	1 040 378	1 031 123	1 040 349	1 036 699	1 029 993	1 031 603	982 323	927 326	940 457	963 964	1 029 617	990 050	978 171	911 986

## 4.2 Birth occurrences registered within 30 days from date of birth

According to the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act (Act No. 18 of 2010) all births must be registered within 30 days of birth. Birth can be registered by a parent, guardian or any other person legally responsible for the child at DHA offices. South Africans who give birth outside the country (or where one of the parents is South African) can register their child's birth at the nearest embassy or mission. This is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) which advocates for a functional civil registration that is up to date and reliable for evidence-based decision-making (WHO, 2013). The DHA has opened satellite offices in some health facilities throughout the country, to help register the birth of a child immediately after occurrence. This was an effort to ensure that parents do not leave a hospital or health facility without registering the birth of their child and receiving a birth certificate. Registration of birth after 30 days is considered a late registration and additional requirements apply.

As mentioned earlier in the release, timely birth registration is mandated in terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act. Accordingly, the tabulation of month of birth occurrence by month of birth registration provides necessary information for evaluating progress towards this requirement.

Table 9 shows the distribution of births by month of birth occurrence and month of birth registration. This provides information on assessing and evaluating progress in adherence towards the registration within 30-days requirement. The table shows that a total of 778 716 births that occurred in 2022 were registered within 30 days from the date of occurrence. Proportionally, 85,4% births which occurred in 2022 were registered within the 30-day period.

The month of March had the highest number of births (68 928) that were registered within 30 days of occurrence, followed by January (67 867) and September (67 136). However, this does not necessarily mean that parents who gave birth in March were more compliant with the 30-day legislation as there were also more birth occurrences in March compared to other months.



**Table 9 - Number of births registered within 30 days of occurrence by month of birth occurrence and month of birth registration, South Africa: 2022**

Month of birth registration	Month of birth occurrence												Total
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
January	41 435												41 435
February	26 336	36 678											63 014
March	96	26 912	45 699										72 707
April			23 229	35 436									58 665
May				28 980	41 237								70 217
June					24 642	38 724							63 366
July						25 984	37 929						63 913
August							25 655	39 416					65 071
September								22 967	46 833				69 800
October									20 303	42 305			62 608
November										20 165	45 612		65 777
December											17 322	43 699	61 021
January												21 122	21 122
<b>Total</b>	<b>67 867</b>	<b>63 590</b>	<b>68 928</b>	<b>64 416</b>	<b>65 879</b>	<b>64 708</b>	<b>63 584</b>	<b>62 383</b>	<b>67 136</b>	<b>62 470</b>	<b>62 934</b>	<b>64 821</b>	<b>778 716</b>

#### 4.2.1 Age of the mother for births occurring in 2022

Information on the mother's age is useful when developing maternal and child health policies and planning for the provision of healthcare services. The age of the mother at the birth of a child is crucial for planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes focusing on maternal and child health, social welfare, access to family planning, curbing teenage pregnancies and safe motherhood initiatives (United Nations, 2015). Equally, children born to older mothers are at higher risk of certain chromosomal conditions, such as Down syndrome, and the risk of pregnancy loss is higher (Kathleen et al., 2018). This may be because of pre-existing medical conditions or chromosomal conditions in the baby. Form DHA-24 makes provision for the inclusion of the mother's details, making it possible to derive the mother's age at the birth of her child.

Table 10 shows the distribution of births occurring in 2022 by age of the mother. It is seen in the table that women aged 25–29 had the highest percentage of births (25,5%), followed by women aged 20–24 and 30–34 years, both at (22,3%). Mothers aged 45–54, including mothers with unspecified age, accounted for a lower proportion of births (0,3%). This is to be expected, as the probability to conceive decreases as women get older. About 0,4% of births in 2022 occurred to teenage mothers aged 10–14 years and this is consistent with previous years.

**Table 10 - Number and percentage of births by age of mother, South Africa: 2022**

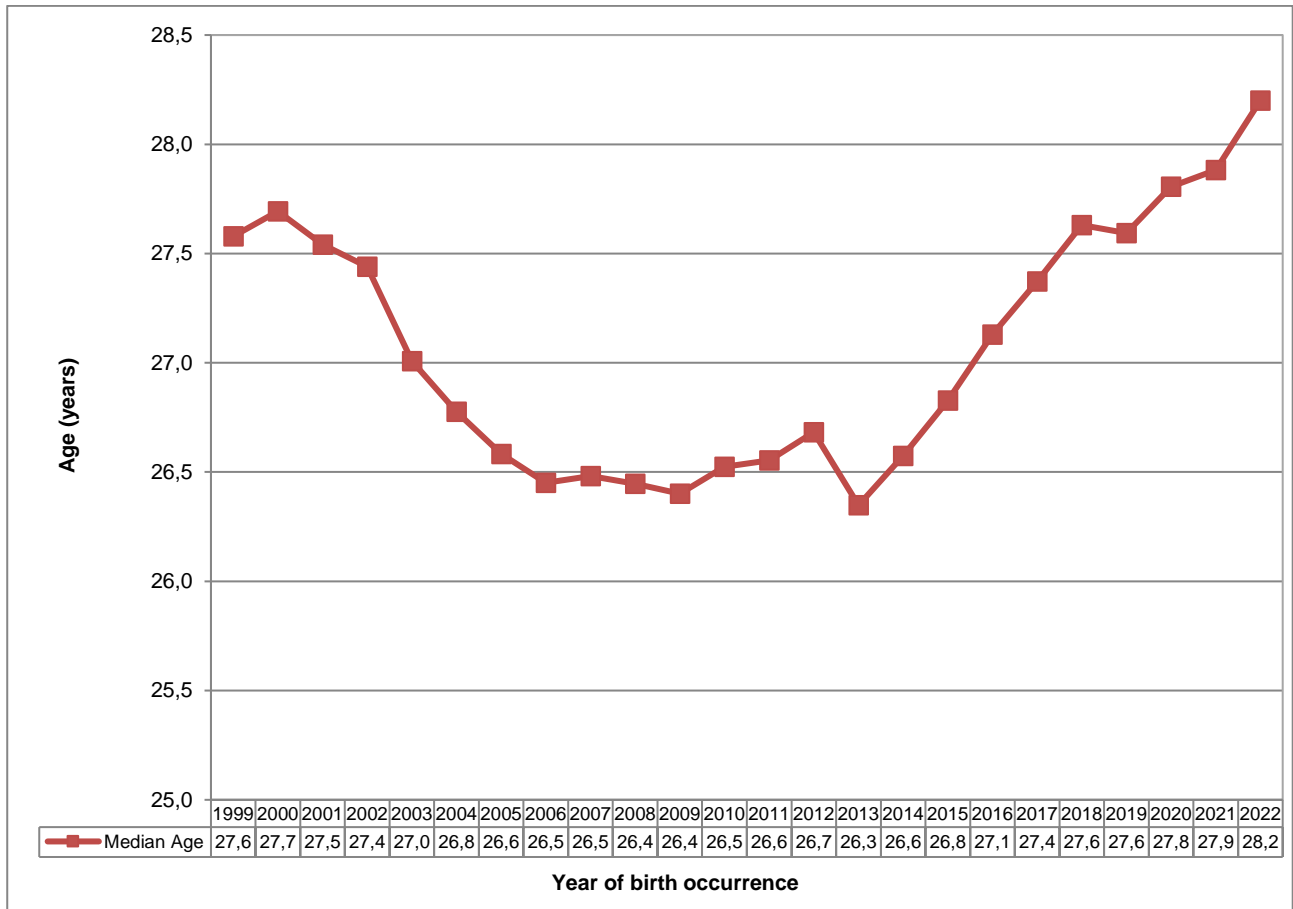
Age of mother	Number of birth occurrences	Percentage
10–14	3 598	0,4
15–19	101 569	11,1
20–24	203 766	22,3
25–29	232 276	25,5
30–34	203 622	22,3
35–39	127 357	14,0
40–44	36 797	4,0
45–49	2 625	0,3
50–54	134	0,0
Unspecified/outside the 10–54 age range	242	0,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>911 986</b>	<b>100,0</b>

#### 4.2.2 Median age of mothers from 1999 to 2022

The median age of mothers i.e., the age that divides the mothers in two parts of equal size, is shown in Figure 7. A higher median age indicates that, on average, childbearing occurs at older ages and the opposite is true for a lower median age. Figure 7 shows the median ages of mothers for births occurring between 1999 and 2022 (updated with late registrations). It is observed that on average the median ages of mothers for the years 1999 to 2022 ranged from 26 to 28 years.

The median age in 1999 was 27,6 years and this slightly increased to 27,7 years in 2000. A steady decline was observed from 27,5 years in the year 2001 down to 26,4 years in 2006, after which there was a slight increase. A notable increase in the median ages of mothers was observed from the year 2013, where the median age of constantly increased from 26,3 years to 28,2 in 2022.

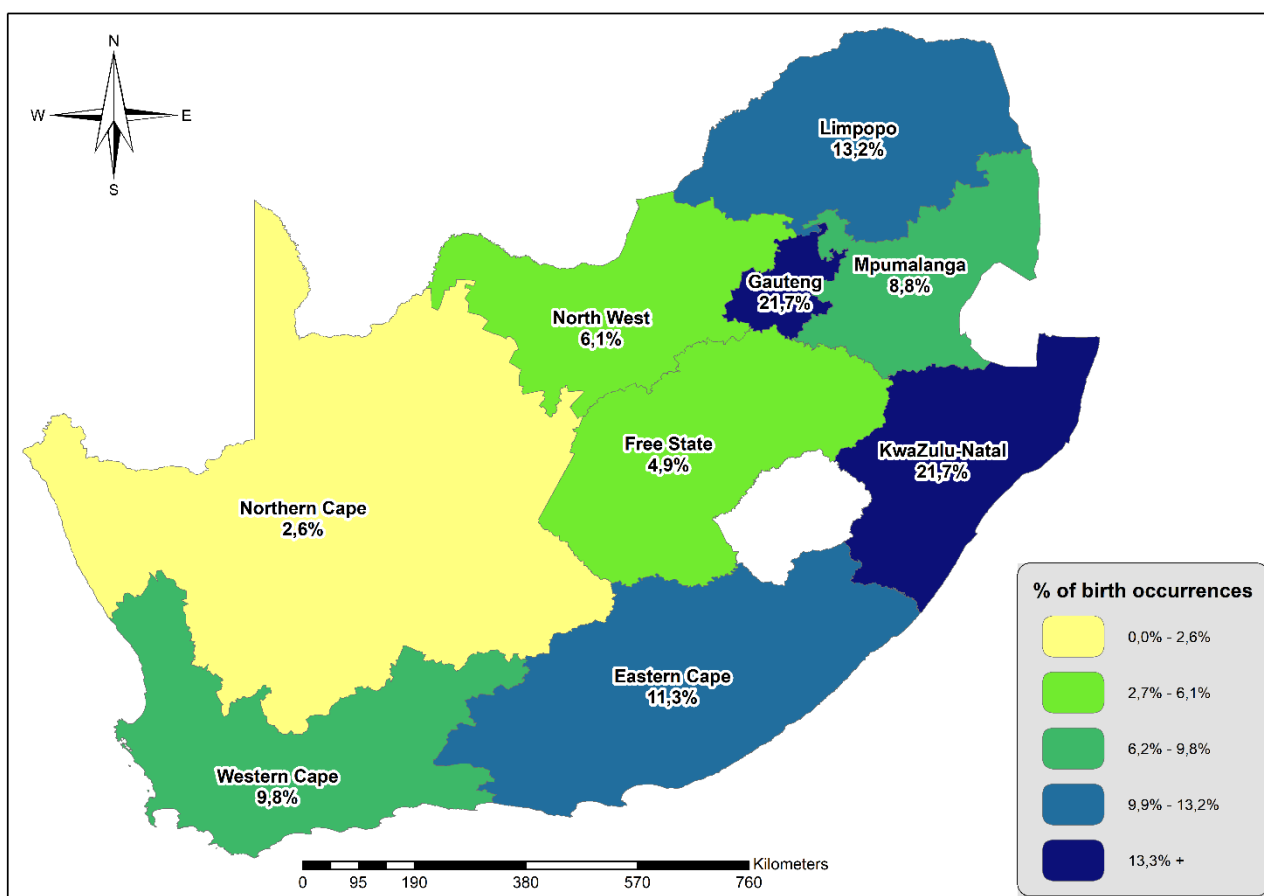
**Figure 7 - Median age of mother by year of birth, South Africa: 1999–2022**



**4.2.3 Provincial distribution of births, 2022**

The distribution of 2022 birth occurrences by province where the birth was registered is depicted in Figure 8 below. Generally, birth registrations remain higher in the most populated provinces in South Africa. The highest proportion of births were registered in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, both at 21,7%, followed by Limpopo at 13,2%. The provinces with lower birth registrations in 2022 were Northern Cape at 2,6% and Free State at 4,9% of birth registrations. The patterns are similar to those recorded for 2021.

**Figure 8 - Birth occurrences by province of birth registration, South Africa: 2022**



### 4.3 Birth occurrences as at 31st July 2023

This sub-section reports on birth occurrences extracted from the national birth register on the 31st of July 2023, categorised by sex of the child and year of birth as a way of providing the most recent data available before publication. Table 11 presents information on the number of birth occurrences by birth year and sex. The total number of birth occurrences per year, as shown in the table indicates that a total of 21 350 747 million births occurred in South Africa between 2002 and 2022, with an average of 1 016 702 births per year over the 21-year period. The table further shows that the highest number of birth occurrences, over 1,0 million were observed between 2004–2014 and 2020–2021, the lowest was observed in 2016 at 927 879.

#### 4.3.1 Sex of the child

Table 11 shows that in the 21-year period, sex ratios were between 100 and 102 male births per 100 female births. In 2002, the sex ratio of birth occurrences was 100, indicating that there was a male child birth for every female child birth. For the years 2003 to 2009, the sex ratio was at 101 male births per 100 female births, signifying slightly more males than females. Since 2010, the sex ratios have been at 102 male births per 100 female births.

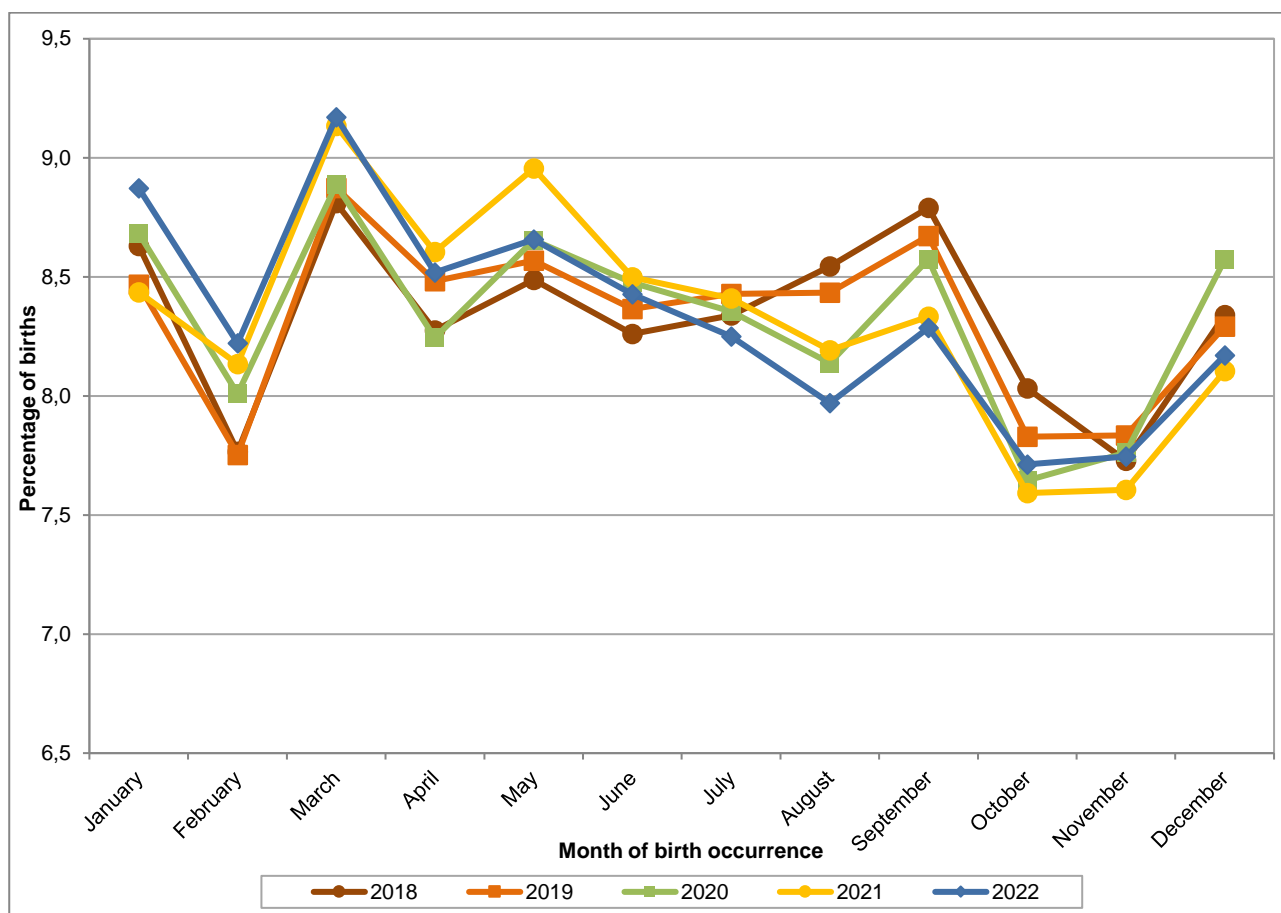
**Table 11 - Birth occurrences (as at 31st of July 2023) by sex and year of birth, South Africa: 2002–2022**

Year	Total	Male	Female	Sex ratio
2002	975 495	488 377	487 118	100
2003	970 809	487 564	483 245	101
2004	1 029 424	517 422	512 002	101
2005	1 071 128	538 809	532 319	101
2006	1 102 643	553 837	548 806	101
2007	1 088 527	547 990	540 537	101
2008	1 112 524	559 512	553 012	101
2009	1 061 150	534 181	526 969	101
2010	1 034 434	521 814	512 620	102
2011	1 043 453	526 293	517 160	102
2012	1 043 913	526 564	517 349	102
2013	1 030 959	520 240	510 719	102
2014	1 034 858	522 105	512 753	102
2015	985 277	496 514	488 763	102
2016	927 879	468 727	459 152	102
2017	941 218	474 861	466 357	102
2018	967 468	488 574	478 894	102
2019	987 879	498 431	489 448	102
2020	1 007 550	508 443	499 107	102
2021	1 001 955	504 854	497 101	102
2022	932 204	470 015	462 189	102
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 350 747</b>	<b>10 755 127</b>	<b>10 595 620</b>	<b>102</b>

### 4.3.2 Month of birth as at 31st July 2022

Figure 9 shows the percentage distribution of birth occurrences by month of birth for the five years 2018–2022 updated as at 31 July 2023. It is observed that the pattern of birth occurrences by month of birth was largely similar over the five years. The highest proportions of births occurred during the month of March for all the years. This suggests that over the five years, a higher proportion of birth occurrences were likely to be conceived during June or July. In 2022 the second most common month of birth occurrence was January, a departure from the previous year, where May was the second highest month. The proportion of births occurring during January and March were also much higher than the pattern seen in previous years.

**Figure 9 - Percentage distribution of birth occurrences as at 31st of July 2023 by year and month of birth, South Africa: 2018–2022**



### 4.4 Baby forenames and surnames in South Africa, 2022

A person’s forename and surname are fundamental human rights enshrined in the Births and Deaths Registration (Act No. 51 of 1992). These names are some of the most distinctive markers of individuality and a prerequisite for issuing of a birth certificate in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1992). Additionally, Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), stipulates that ‘every child has the right to a name from birth’ (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Table 12 shows the distribution of the top ten baby forenames and surnames for 2022. Amongst males, the top three most common first forenames were Lethabo, followed by Lubanzi and Melokuhle. The most common first forenames for females were Onalerona in first place, Melokuhle in second place and Zanokuhle as the third most common. Melokuhle, Lethabo and Omphile appeared on both the males and females top ten list. Junior and Precious were the leading second forenames amongst males and females, respectively. It is also worth noting that the majority of second forenames for both males and females were in English, as opposed to native language first forenames. In general, popular baby forenames for males and females reflect positive hopes for the child, express beliefs and are inspired by positive connotations of joy, abundance and standing for good and blessings.

Table 12 further shows that for both sexes Dlamini was the most common baby surname in 2022, closely followed by Ndlovu and Nkosi. It is also noteworthy that, nine of the surnames were from the Nguni clans namely isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati. Mokoena which featured as the seventh most popular surname was the only non-Nguni surname.

**Table 12 - Number distribution of top ten baby forenames and surnames, South Africa, 2022**

Rank	Male				Female				Both sexes	
	First: Forename	Number	Second: Forename	Number	First: Forename	Number	Second: Forename	Number	Surname	Number
1	Lethabo	3 102	Junior	8 426	Onalerona	3 459	Precious	3 951	Dlamini	7 108
2	Lubanzi	2 538	Blessing	4 491	Melokuhle	3 191	Princess	3 310	Ndlovu	6 188
3	Melokuhle	2 199	Gift	3 346	Zanokuhle	2 335	Blessing	2 788	Nkosi	6 075
4	Nkazimulo	2 194	Prince	2 331	Lisakhanya	2 302	Angel	2 498	Khumalo	5 891
5	Siphosethu	1 931	Lubanzi	1 631	Omphile	2 262	Hope	2 285	Sithole	4 953
6	Lwandle	1 894	Nkazimulo	1 525	Lethabo	2 255	Faith	2 211	Mokoena	4 166
7	Lethokuhle	1 795	Siphosethu	1 501	Lesedi	2 002	Melokuhle	1 559	Mkhize	3 995
8	Omphile	1 751	Innocent	1 340	Amahle	1 963	Zanokuhle	1 346	Gumede	3 781
9	Junior	1 705	Jayden	1 316	Iminathi	1 914	Grace	1 325	Mthembu	3 758
10	Lesedi	1 631	Lethabo	1 304	Rethabile	1 906	Lisakhanya	1 324	Ngcobo	3 714

## 5. Concluding remarks

Birth registration provides a child with legal identity and serves as a foundation for other rights such as education, healthcare, social welfare and protection, among others. The data generated during birth registration is of prime importance because it gives information for the state to plan, monitor, develop and implement policies and related programs. Furthermore, the data is utilised to track and compare national progress with that of other countries in the region and beyond. Among others, this is done through provision of indicators for progress and developmental reports for the National Development Plan, Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals.

This statistical release provided information on recorded live births for births that occurred in 2022 as well as information on late birth registrations from 1999 to 2022. It also shows trends and patterns in birth registrations and occurrences over a period of 23 years. A total of 998 362 births were registered in 2022. Of these registrations, about 911 986 (91,3%) represent births that occurred in 2022, while 86 376 (8,7%) were late registrations for births that occurred in previous years. This indicates a 4% increase in current registrations from levels observed during the previous year (2021).

As observed, women aged 20–29 years accounted for most birth occurrences and most birth registrations, with the mother's median age sitting at 28,2 years for births that occurred in 2022. Out of 86 376 late birth registrations, the majority were of mothers aged 15–19 years (26 497), followed by those aged 20–24 years (14 912). Almost all mothers (97,6%) within the unspecified/outside the 10–54 years age range category were late registrations, a pattern consistent with previous years. Provincial distribution shows that most births were registered in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Limpopo had most births registered within the first 30 days after occurrence (88,5%) followed by North West at 84,3%. Sex ratio in 2022 was 102 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations, indicating slightly more male than female birth registrations.

The report further provided information that could be used to assess and evaluate progress in adherence towards the 30-day legislation. Over eighty-five per cent (85,4%) of total births (911 986) that occurred in 2022 were registered within a 30-day period. Additionally, the month of March had the highest number of births (68 928) that were registered within 30 days of occurrence, followed by January (67 867) and September (67 136). The lowest number of births registered within 30 days was observed in August and October (62 383 and 62 470, respectively).

The top three leading first forenames amongst males were Lethabo, followed by Lubanzi and Melokuhle. While the leading first forenames for females were Onalerona, Melokuhle and Zanokuhle. Melokuhle, Lethabo and Omphile were the most popular names amongst both baby girls and boys nationally. In South Africa, like in many African countries, the top ten first names for both sexes were of native languages, which reflect positive hopes for the child, express beliefs and are inspired by positive connotations of both love and acceptance. Nationally, the most common surname for both sexes was Dlamini.



The Births and Deaths Registration Act stipulates that all births occurring within South Africa must be registered within 30 days of birth (Republic of South Africa, 2010). Over the years there has been an increasing trend in the proportion of births registered within 30 days of occurrence arising from the number of concerted efforts undertaken by DHA aimed at improving registration rates. In 2022, registrations that occurred within 30 days were still 2% less than those of 2019 which was before the national lockdown.

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## Explanatory notes

### Sources of data

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) provides Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) with information on recorded live births. Two sets of birth statistics are provided: registration-based and occurrence-based data. Both these datasets come from the Nucleus Bureau of the DHA. When the officials at the various offices of the Department of Home Affairs capture the information about a birth, they do so directly onto the database at the Nucleus Bureau. These transactions are used to update the database of the birth register.

For the purpose of producing vital statistics, the following system is followed: each day, all civil transactions carried out at all the Department of Home Affairs offices are written onto a cassette. At the end of every month, a combined set of cassettes is created, containing all the transactions done for the month. These transactions are downloaded and the birth transactions are extracted for processing at Stats SA. The year in which the births are registered is the registration year. Using this information, Stats SA provides the breakdown of the registered births according to the year in which the births occurred.

While births information sent to Stats SA is the same as that in the population register, there is a difference in format between the two. On the one hand, Stats SA's data are based on births registered during the year (registration-based), while on the other hand, entries in the population register reflect the date of birth. The date of registration of birth is not stored on the population registration file. For this reason, the population register can only be used to obtain birth data broken down by date of birth (occurrence-based).

By continuously updating the population register for late registration, the occurrence-based data from the population register get closer and closer to the true level of births. In a situation where birth registrations are complete (with very few late registrations), the occurrence-based perspective will be very similar to the registration-based perspective. However, if there are a large number of late registrations, the two perspectives will become widely dissimilar. With improvements in birth registration, the recorded data from the two sources will gradually converge.

### The South African population register

The South African population register covers births, deaths, identity, marriages, divorces and movements of all South African citizens and permanent residents. The Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992) guides the registration of births and deaths throughout South Africa. The Act was subsequently amended in 1997 (Act No. 67 of 1997), in 1998 (Act No. 43 of 1998) and in 2010 (Act No. 18 of 2010). Another Act pertinent to the population register is the Identification Act, 1997 (Act No. 68 of 1997). This Act repealed previous Identification Acts (Act No. 72 of 1986, Act No. 21 of 1991, Act No. 4 of 1993, and Act No. 47 of 1995). Thus, each of the Acts dealing with any aspect of civil registration has implications for the information recorded into the population register.

From these Acts and amendments, the following persons and particulars are eligible to be included on the population register:

- All children born of South African citizens and permanent residents when the notice of the birth is given within one year after the birth of the child.
- All children born of South African citizens and permanent residents when the notice of the birth is given one year after the birth of the child together with the prescribed requirement for a late registration of birth.
- All South African citizens and permanent residents who, upon attainment of the age of 16, applied for and were granted identification cards (or books).
- All South African citizens and permanent residents who die at any age after birth.
- All South African citizens and permanent residents who depart permanently from South Africa.
- Persons whose particulars are not eligible for inclusion on the population register are listed below:
  - Non-South African citizens who sojourn temporarily in the country.
  - All South African citizens and permanent residents who died before notice of their birth had been given.

### **Foreign births**

Statistics South Africa previously received data on foreign birth registrations, as part of birth data obtained from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). These births were subsequently excluded from annual data with effect from 2015 due to technical problems encountered in their retrieval by the DHA. Stats SA has been in discussions with DHA to find solutions to this challenge in order to restore these data as part of the annual births data for better completeness of the statistical release of these births. As such, the total number of births in this statistical release exclude foreign births.

### **Municipal demarcation**

The Department of Home Affairs captured information on places based on the office of birth registration. Stats SA re-classified the offices of birth registration into district councils and metropolitan areas based on the 2016 municipal boundaries. Certain magisterial districts are situated in more than one district council, in which case such magisterial districts are allocated to the district council where the majority of the land area falls. The only exception was with Nigel in Gauteng province. The majority of the land area of Nigel magisterial district is in Sedibeng District Council (which is mainly farm areas and therefore sparsely populated), while the majority of the population lives in the Ekurhuleni metropolitan area. As such, Nigel was classified under Ekurhuleni and not under Sedibeng. Maps for the old and the new classification are available from Stats SA on request.

### **Population group**

As from 1991, no distinction is made between the different population groups on the data collected by the Department of Home Affairs. The statistics collected, therefore, refer to all population groups combined.

## **Definitions of concepts used**

### **1.1 Live birth**

The complete expulsion or extraction from its mother's womb of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy, which, after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles, whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta is attached. Each product of such a birth is considered live born (WHO, 1992).

### **1.2 Recorded live births**

The number of births recorded (registered) in a specific year, irrespective of when the birth actually occurred. The births recorded in any given year include the births that occurred during that year plus other births that occurred in years prior to the year of registration. It should be noted that not all births are recorded (registered).

### **1.3 Current birth registrations**

This refers to the number of births occurring in a specific year and registered within the same year.

### **1.4 Late birth registrations**

This refers to births occurring in a given calendar year but registered in subsequent calendar years. In this release, late registrations are grouped into two: (i) births registered after one year of birth but less than 15 years after birth; and (ii) births registered from 15 years after birth.

