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IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS



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 from 1 January 2024 up to 28 February 2025. Live births from 2005 to 2023 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

Registration of births allows individuals access to essential rights such as education and healthcare, and it is a critical step towards the realisation of citizenship. The importance of birth registrations has been echoed through a number of global frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 7 of this framework states the right of every child to be registered immediately after birth, the right to a name, to acquire a nationality and to know and be cared for by his or her parents (UNCRC, 1989). Within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework two indicators explicitly centred on birth registrations are 16.9.1; which tracks the proportion of children under five years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority (United Nations, 2023a). The second indicator is 17.19.2 (b); which monitors the proportion of countries that achieved 100 percent birth registration and 80 percent death registration (United Nations, 2023b). The official output of the registration process, which is possession of a birth certificate, helps to establish entitlement to nationality (UNHCR, 2024). In South Africa, it is a prerequisite to obtain documentation that proves nationality, which facilitates access to economic participation and access to other rights.

The mandate for registration of births in South Africa falls under the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and is governed by the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992), which was last amended in 2010 as the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act, 2010 (Act No. 18 of 2010) (Republic of South Africa, 1992; Republic of South Africa, 2010). The DHA uses form DHA-24 to register children within 30 days of birth and form DHA-24/LRB (late registration of birth) for persons registered after 30 days of their birth date. The requirements include submission of DHA-24/PB, also known as a notice of birth form. Where birth registration is delayed, a letter from the hospital where the child was born, a letter from the first school attended by the child, and an affidavit are prescribed for late registration of a birth. After a birth is registered, the department captures relevant information on the South African Population Register (NPR) for those eligible for entry in the register (see explanatory notes for further details), and then issues an electronic birth certificate. In instances where a birth is not eligible for entry in the NPR, a handwritten birth certificate is issued, and the details are not captured in the NPR. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) obtains the birth data from the DHA through direct connect and in print form from the State Information Technology Agency (SITA).

One of the key challenges with births registrations in South Africa is the continued presence of late birth registrations. Estimations are that about 10% of births are registered one year or later after the occurrence of birth. Barriers to birth registration have been described as either supply-related, demand-related, or a combination, and contribute to the delays or non-registration of children at birth (Paleker et al, 2023). Although DHA has created satellite offices within some health facilities, and more than 90% of births occur within health facilities, the current Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992), still puts the onus on the parents rather than the health facility or DHA to register the child. Other legal barriers within the current legislation include stringent requirements needed at the time of birth registration, including the child's name (often not decided immediately after birth), the father's name or a marriage certificate.

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 2024 and February 2025.
- To show a historical pattern of birth occurrence and registration from 2005 to 2024.

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 birth occurrences for 2024 recorded for a period of 14 months, covering January 2024 to February 2025. Additionally, information on late birth registrations – i.e. births that occurred in 2023 and earlier years but were captured between January 2024 and February 2025 – are included.

Primarily, 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. at health facilities;
- ii. within one month of birth;
- iii. after one month of birth, but before 16 years of birth;
- iv. from 16 years of birth and above; and
- v. by a legal guardian.

The total number of birth registrations for the reporting periods 2023 and 2024 is shown in Table 1. As observed from Table 1, birth registrations for the period January 2024 to February 2025 are combined to arrive at the final birth registrations for the analysis in this release. The table indicates that 1 090 204 births were registered between January 2023 and February 2024; of these, 50 239 were late registrations that were analysed in the previous publication. A further 107 827 were subtracted for births registered from January 2023 to February 2024, as these were 2024 births that were already registered when the 2023 data were requested from DHA.

Stats SA received 1 009 598 birth registration data pertaining to the year 2024. Of these, 39 681 were births that occurred earlier than 2024 but were registered from January to February of 2024. These 39 681 records were excluded from the 2024 data as they were reported in the 2023 publication. Furthermore, 106 059 births were removed from 2024 birth registrations as they were 2025 births and will be included in the 2025 recorded live births publication. The total number of births that were registered in the 2024 period (from 1 January 2024 to 29 February 2025) in South Africa was 863 858.

Table 1 – Birth registrations: 2023–2024

2023	Number of birth registrations
Total births registered from January 2023 to February 2024	1 090 204
Less births for 2022 and earlier years registered in January to February 2023	50 239
	1 039 965
Less 2024 births registered in January to February 2024	107 827
	932 138
2024	
Total births registered from January 2024 to February 2025	1 009 598
Less births for 2023 and earlier years registered in January to February 2024	39 681
	969 917
Less 2025 births registered in January to February 2025	106 059
	863 858

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 the effectiveness and efficiency of processes at the DHA. It measures how well we actually capture all births that occurred in the population.

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, is used as an alternative to the Brass P/F ratio method. The method assumes that cumulated age-specific fertility rates for every known age are equivalent to the average number of children ever born by a woman at a 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 data, as is the case in South Africa. For 2024 births and for the remainder of the 2011–2022 intercensal period, the completeness of birth registration is maintained at 90,0%.

2.2.2 Timeliness of birth registration

The Births and Deaths Registration Act, 2010 (Amendment 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 a birth over the period 2020 to 2024. The proportion of births registered within 30 days of occurrence had decreased below 80,0% in the period between 2020 and 2022. This was associated with national lockdown regulations that saw the closure of DHA offices and disruption of services such as birth registration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A recovery in the number of births registered within 30 days is observed from below 80,0% in the period between 2020 and 2022 to 80,7% in 2023 and 83,2% in 2024. The increase attests to improved services due to easing of COVID-19 restrictions. In 2024, registrations that occurred within 30 days were 12,4% more than those of 2020, which was during the national lockdown. However, the proportion of children who were registered within a year of birth was higher in 2020 at 95,5% compared to 2024 at 92,9%.

Table 2 – Distribution of birth registrations by the number of days it took to register the birth, 2020–2024

Number of days/years	Number of birth registrations					Percentage (%)*					Cumulative percentage (%)*				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
0–30 days	710 814	811 622	778 716	752 412	718 486	70,8	74,6	78,0	80,7	83,2	70,8	74,6	78,0	80,7	83,2
31–364 days	248 209	214 578	157 565	116 335	84 014	24,7	19,7	15,8	12,5	9,7	95,6	94,4	93,8	93,2	92,9
1–14 years	31 332	44 278	44 456	49 770	46 496	3,1	4,1	4,5	5,3	5,4	98,7	98,4	98,2	98,5	98,3
15 years and older	12 952	17 048	17 625	13 621	14 862	1,3	1,6	1,8	1,5	1,7	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Total	1 003 307	1 087 526	998 362	932 138	863 858	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0					

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

2.2.3 Year-on-year changes in birth registration

Year-on-year analysis of birth registrations supports the assessment of data quality by highlighting how registrations change (deviations) independently within observed categories over time (Scottish Government, 2011). It should be noted that these figures are best understood when interpreted alongside birth trends.

Annual percentage changes in the number of births registered by age in days or years for the period 2020 to 2024 are shown in Table 3. A year-on-year decrease is observed in the proportion of births registered within 30 days over the period 2021–2022 to 2023–2024. While births registered between 31 and 364 days show year-on-year decreases from 2020–2021 to 2023–2024. The observed decreases show a continuous decline in the volume of births registered for these categories.

Registrations of births for individuals aged one year and older show general fluctuations. Relative increases in registrations during 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 were observed as a result of increased access to registration services that were previously restricted during COVID-19. Notably, a sharp decrease in late registrations for individuals aged 15 years and older was observed during 2022–2023, indicating a possible clearance of delayed registrations that had accumulated during the COVID-19 restriction period.

Table 3 – Year-on-year changes in the number of days/years it took to register the birth, 2020–2024

Number of days/years	Number of birth registrations					Percentage (%) changes			
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
0–30 days	710 814	811 622	778 716	752 412	718 486	14,2	-4,1	-3,4	-4,5
31–364 days	248 209	214 578	157 565	116 335	84 014	-13,5	-26,6	-26,2	-27,8
1–14 years	31 332	44 278	44 456	49 770	46 496	41,3	0,4	12,0	-6,6
15 years and older	12 952	17 048	17 625	13 621	14 862	31,6	3,4	-22,7	9,1
Total	1 003 307	1 087 526	998 362	932 138	863 858	8,4	-8,2	-6,6	-7,3

2.2.4 Data confrontation, DHIS

A comparison between data from the District Health Information System (DHIS), DHA data obtained through direct connect and DHA data obtained through SITA for births that occurred in the year 2024 is depicted in Table 4. The DHIS birth data are 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 are sent monthly from the 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 primarily because some of these births have not been registered at DHA. The highest number of births was recorded in May 2024 in the DHIS (73 183). The month of November recorded the lowest number of birth occurrences across the three sources. The DHA (direct connect) system recorded 57 055 births, while the DHA (SITA) reflected a slightly higher, but still the lowest count of 58 595 births, for the year. Generally, the pattern across the three data sources is consistent from month to month.

Table 4 – Data confrontation, 2024

Birth month	DHIS	DHA (direct connect) as at 28 February 2025	DHA (SITA) as at 1 July 2025
January	70 372	69 251	69 615
February	65 139	63 941	64 228
March	72 839	71 064	71 423
April	72 317	70 517	70 972
May	73 183	70 655	71 298
June	69 878	67 086	67 860
July	69 788	66 808	67 617
August	68 611	65 049	65 984
September	69 064	65 269	66 367
October	64 180	60 333	61 537
November	61 398	57 055	58 595
December	65 800	60 905	63 085
Total	822 569	787 933	798 581

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 2005 and 2024. It is the combination of both current registrations and late registrations.

The number and proportion of birth registrations by status of registration for the period 2005 to 2024 are presented in Table 5. Current birth registrations are births that occurred in a specific year and were registered in that year or in January and February of the subsequent year. The number of birth registrations was consistently above one million over the period 2005 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 to 2017 and 2022 onward. The highest number of birth registrations was registered in 2005 compared to any other year at 1 380 496. It is also worth noting that in the periods 2016–2019 and 2022–2024, the number and proportion of late birth registrations were below 100 000 and 10,0%. Over time, the proportion of late registrations constantly declined, from 42,5% in 2005 to a low of 8,8% in 2024. 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; with the easing of restrictions, late registrations declined below 10,0%.

Table 5 – Birth registrations by status of registration, South Africa, 2005–2024

Year of registration	Number of birth registrations			Percentage (%)		
	Total	Current	Late	Total	Current	Late
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
2023	932 138	848 337	83 801	100,0	91,0	9,0
2024	863 858	787 933	75 925	100,0	91,2	8,8

Figure 1 provides graphic information on birth registrations for the period 2005 to 2024, categorised by status of registration. A high proportion of total birth registrations was observed in 2005, followed by a gradual reduction until 2007. The total number of births registered annually from 2011 to 2016 declined steadily, but there was an upward change between 2017 to 2019 and in 2021, followed by a decline from 2022 to 2024. The proportion of current registrations has been consistently higher than late registrations since 2005 as they rose steadily from 2005 (57,5%) to a peak in 2024 (91,2%). Late registrations dropped from 42,5% in 2005 to just 8,8% in 2024.

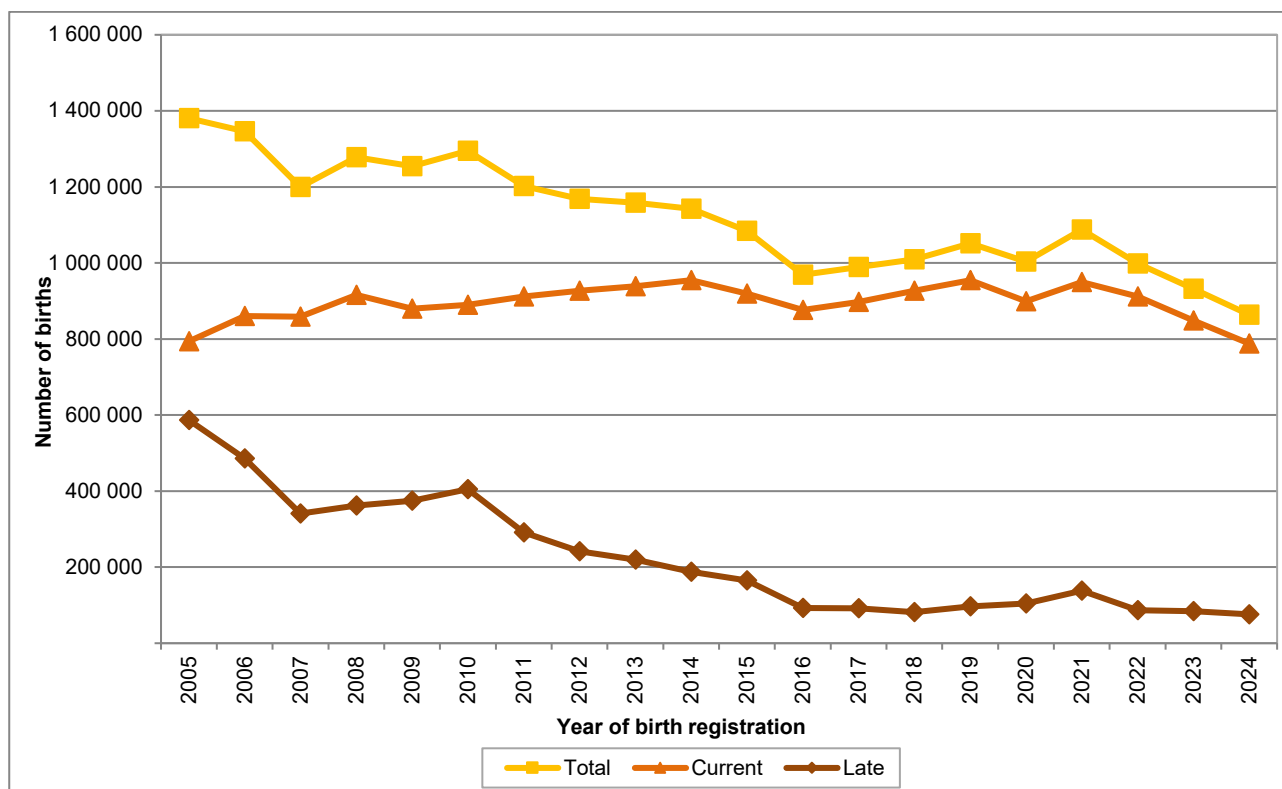
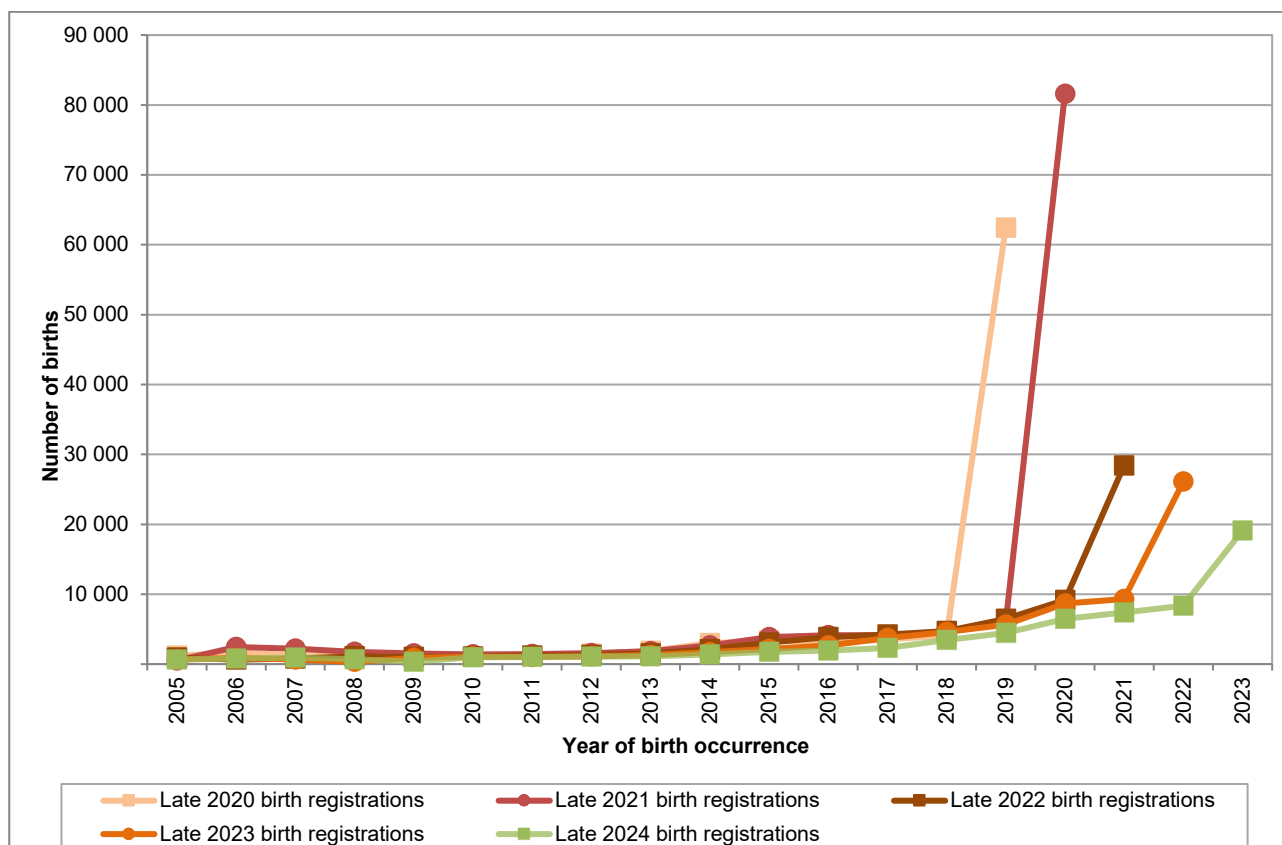
Figure 1 – Birth registrations by status of registration, South Africa, 2005–2024

Figure 2 presents the overall number of late birth registrations between 2020 and 2024 for births that occurred during the years 2005 to 2023. For the years under observation, the highest numbers of late registrations are of the year preceding the year of reporting. In the current year of reporting, 2024, the highest number of late registrations (19 103) is from 2023 birth occurrences that were registered. Overall, the highest number of late birth registrations was observed in 2021, where 81 589 births of 2020 were registered. This was primarily due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

Figure 2 – Late birth registrations by year of birth, South Africa, 2005–2024

3.2 Birth registrations by selected variables

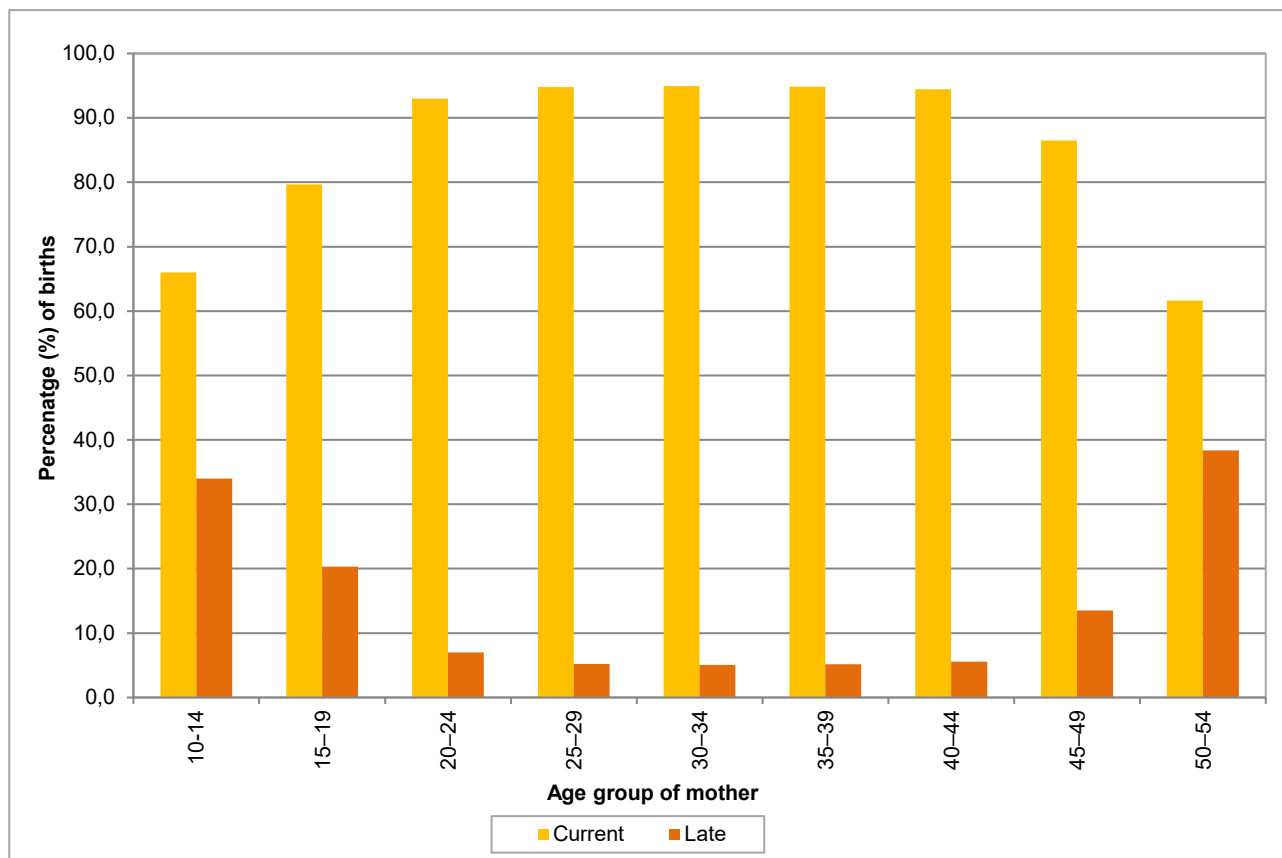
3.2.1 Age of the mother

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 aged 25–29 years accounted for the highest number of total birth registrations (202 506), followed by those aged 30–34 years and 20–24 years at 186 340 and 182 298 respectively. The lowest number of birth registrations (172) was for mothers aged 50–54 years.

Table 6 – Birth registrations by age of mother and status of registration, South Africa, 2024

Age of mother	Number of birth registrations			Percentage (%)		
	Total	Current	Late	Total	Current	Late
10-14	3 186	2 103	1 083	100,0	66,0	34,0
15-19	120 785	96 248	24 537	100,0	79,7	20,3
20-24	182 298	169 562	12 736	100,0	93,0	7,0
25-29	202 506	191 918	10 588	100,0	94,8	5,2
30-34	186 340	176 928	9 412	100,0	94,9	5,1
35-39	119 808	113 615	6 193	100,0	94,8	5,2
40-44	37 134	35 062	2 072	100,0	94,4	5,6
45-49	2 526	2 185	341	100,0	86,5	13,5
50-54	172	106	66	100,0	61,6	38,4
Unspecified/outside the 10-54 age range	9 103	206	8 897	100,0	2,3	97,7
Total	863 858	787 933	75 925	100,0	91,2	8,8

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. Age group 50–54 years, followed by 10–14 years, had the highest proportion of late birth registrations (above 30,0%). The figure also depicts that current birth registrations increase as the mother's age increases, until the age group 40–44 years, after which current birth registrations decrease.

Figure 3 – Birth registrations by age of mother and status of registration, South Africa, 2024

3.2.2 Province of birth registration

Information on the office of birth registration is provided by the DHA, which Stats SA then uses as a proxy 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, which is where late registrations from 15 years and older are centralised for processing.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of all births registered in 2024 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 1 and 14 years; and
- iv. 15 years and older: registered from 15 years upward.

The highest number of total births was registered in Gauteng (207 120), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (183 377), Limpopo (105 384) and Eastern Cape (93 308). For other provinces, total birth registrations were below 90 000. In all the provinces, there were more births registered within 0–30 days than in any of the other categories. Gauteng had the highest number of births registered within 0–30 days at 166 724, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 145 732 and Limpopo at 95 721. Northern Cape had the lowest number of births registered within 30 days at 19 321. KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of births registered within 31–364 days and 1–14 years, followed by Gauteng.

Figure 4 – Number of birth registrations by province of birth registration and status of registration, South Africa, 2024

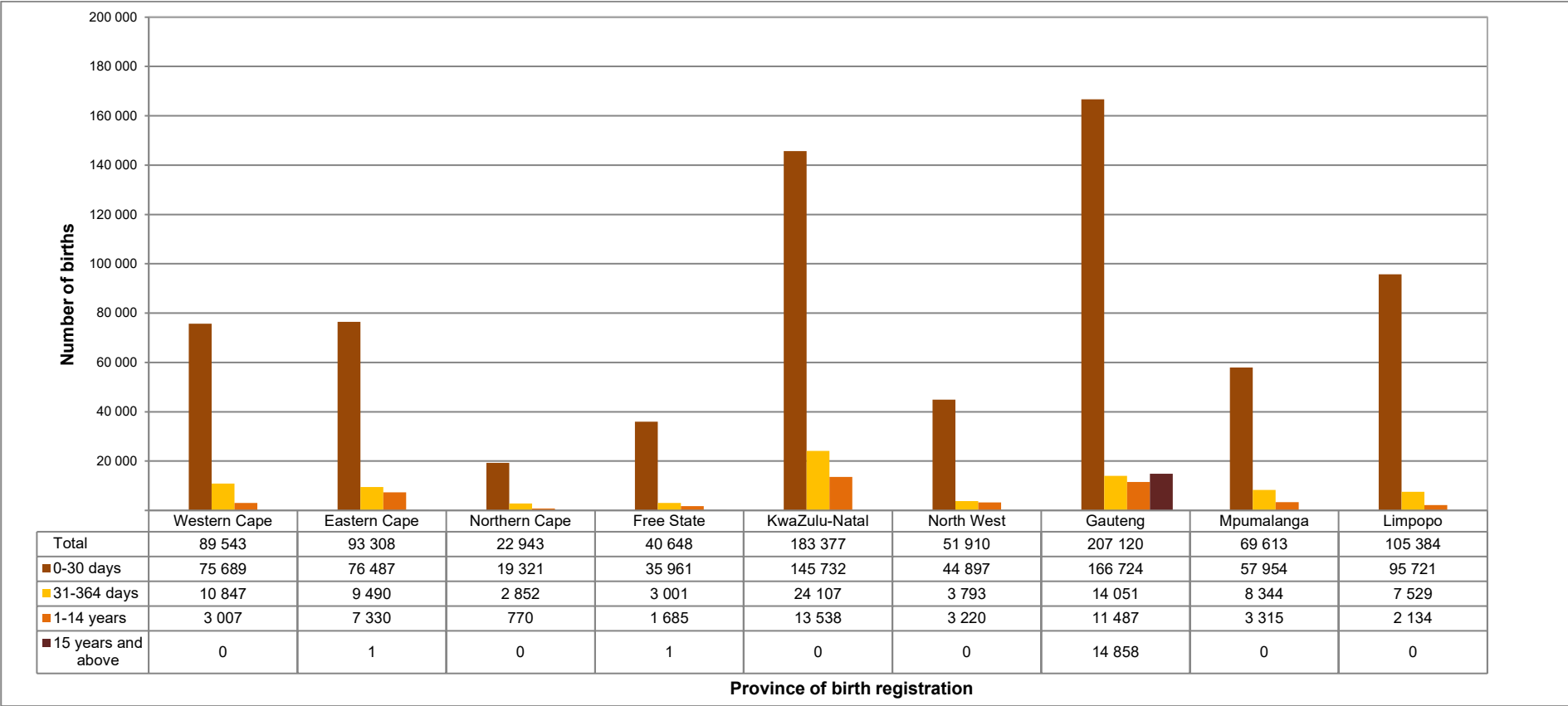
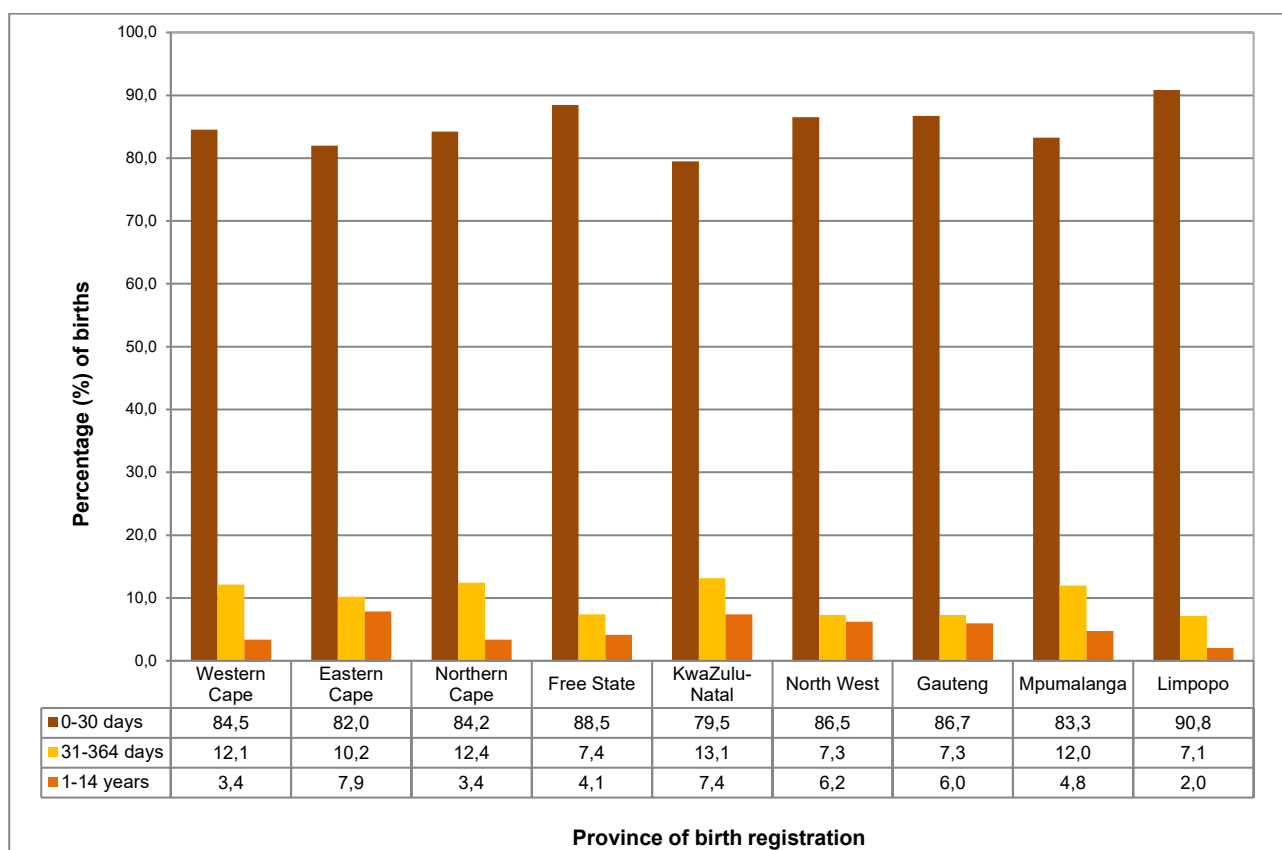


Figure 5 shows the percentage distribution of all registered birth occurrences in 2024 by province of birth registration and status of registration. The figure shows that Limpopo (90,8%) had the highest proportion of birth registrations within 30 days, followed by Free State (88,5%) and Gauteng (86,7%) in second and third place, respectively. The province with the lowest proportion of registrations within 30 days was KwaZulu-Natal at 79,5%; conversely, it had the highest proportion of births registered within 31–364 days at 13,1% and 7,4% of births registered within 1–14 years. In general, birth registration timelines follow a similar pattern across all provinces as observed from previous years.

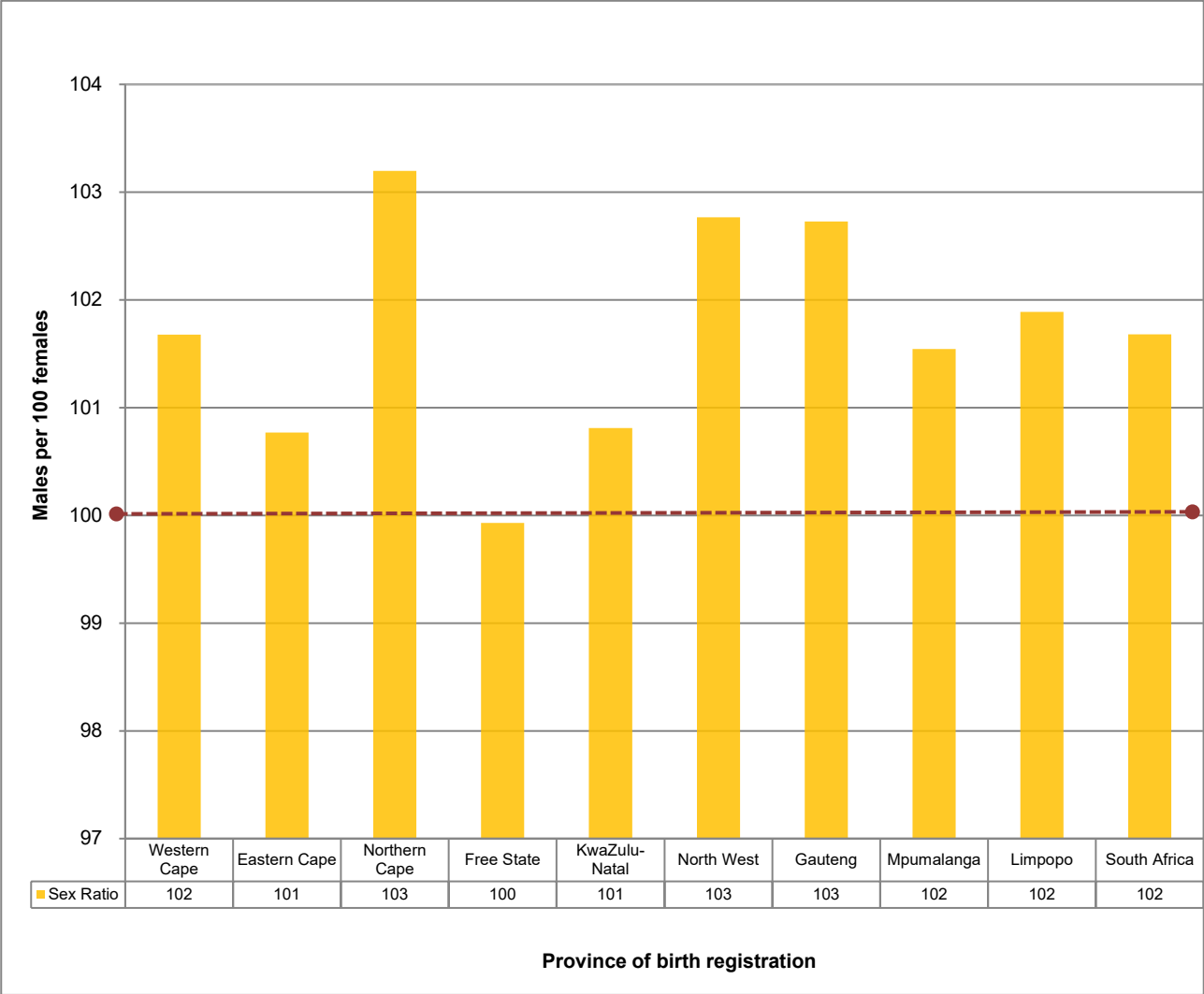
Figure 5 – Percentage (%) of birth registrations by province of birth registration and status of registration, South Africa, 2024



3.2.3 Sex ratio

Sex ratio at birth is defined as the number of male births per 100 female births in a population. 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 2024. Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo had the same sex ratio (102) as the national ratio. Northern Cape, North West and Gauteng had the highest sex ratio with 103 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations, while Free State had a ratio of 100 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations.

Figure 6 – Sex ratios by province, South Africa, 2024



*Sex ratios have been rounded off.

4. Birth occurrences

This section refers to data on birth occurrences as captured from two sources of data from the DHA. Firstly, it shows birth occurrences based on transaction files received by Stats SA from DHA using a cloud service solution (direct connect). Secondly, it profiles 2024 birth occurrences obtained through the SITA printout for 2024 births registered at DHA as at 1 July 2025. Generally, births from the transaction files are fewer than births from the SITA print due to the difference in cut-off dates. The cut-off date for births from the SITA printout was 1 July 2025, while the cut-off date for the transaction files from direct connect was 28 February 2025. 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.

It was observed that by 31 December 2024 a total of 787 933 births that occurred in 2024 were registered with DHA, which increased to 798 581 by the 1 of July 2025. This is an indication that between the periods 28 of February 2025 and 1 of July 2024, the national birth register was updated by 10 648 births that occurred in 2024. 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 due to late birth registrations.

The pattern on birth occurrences for the period 2005–2024 shows that for the period 2005 to 2014 and 2020, the number of registered births exceeded a million for both data sources, while the remaining years had fewer birth occurrences registered, which were less than a million. Overall, updated birth occurrences as at 1 July for each observation period exceed those from February of the same observation period, with the exception of 2019 as mentioned in previous publications.

Table 7 – Birth occurrences by year of birth and reference period, South Africa, 2005–2024

Year of birth occurrence	Birth occurrences	Updated birth occurrences
	(as at 28 Feb 2025)	(as at 1 Jul 2025)
2005	1 068 693	1 072 588
2006	1 099 315	1 104 399
2007	1 085 703	1 090 379
2008	1 104 280	1 113 857
2009	1 041 610	1 063 439
2010	1 033 130	1 036 395
2011	1 042 382	1 045 507
2012	1 038 849	1 046 070
2013	1 032 398	1 033 325
2014	1 034 655	1 037 787
2015	986 231	989 001
2016	931 956	932 186
2017	946 493	946 770
2018	971 990	974 995
2019	1 039 722	997 486
2020	1 005 190	1 021 664
2021	994 861	1 017 807
2022	946 455	953 951
2023	867 440	872 792
2024	787 933	798 581
Average over 20 years	1 002 964	1 007 449

4.1 Birth occurrences as at 28 February 2025

The number of births that occurred over the period between 2005 and 2024 is depicted in Table 8, arranged 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 diagonal figures in bold indicate all births that occurred and were registered within the year of occurrence, while the rest represent late birth registrations, which are 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 2025.

In 2024 a total of 787 933 births occurred and were registered in 2024. The number of birth occurrences for a particular year increases continually due to the updating of the national birth register with late registrations. The table further shows a clear pattern where the highest number of late registrations is 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 the end of February 2025) by year of birth occurrence and year of birth registration, South Africa, 2005–2024

Year of birth registration	Year of birth occurrence																			
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
2005	793 788																			
2006	154 331	860 263																		
2007	42 569	126 358	858 866																	
2008	23 732	40 554	128 336	915 674																
2009	14 208	19 510	31 885	101 743	879 707															
2010	10 566	13 736	19 323	30 164	91 064	889 691														
2011	7 298	10 111	12 628	16 091	23 665	80 079	911 353													
2012	4 578	6 599	9 104	10 776	13 065	21 005	74 374	926 726												
2013	3 590	4 742	6 914	9 018	9 938	12 978	21 023	66 775	939 011											
2014	2 673	3 241	4 122	6 039	7 390	8 418	10 898	16 147	55 202	954 385										
2015	2 151	2 489	2 892	3 476	4 908	6 290	7 197	8 882	14 125	46 754	919 562									
2016	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	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	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	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	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	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	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		
2023	642	866	663	317	898	1 052	1 017	1 101	1 290	1 686	2 169	2 682	3 714	4 596	5 644	8 651	9 292	26 100	848 337	
2024	643	799	927	699	334	955	1 016	1 049	1 115	1 366	1 739	1 948	2 322	3 430	4 461	6 489	7 398	8 369	19 103	787 933
Total	1 068 693	1 099 315	1 085 703	1 104 280	1 041 610	1 033 130	1 042 382	1 038 849	1 032 398	1 034 655	986 231	931 956	946 493	971 990	1 039 722	1 005 190	994 861	946 455	867 440	787 933

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

Timely birth registration is mandated in the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act (Act No. 18 of 2010), which stipulates that all births must be registered within 30 days from the date of occurrence (Republic of South Africa, 2010). In an effort to encourage timely registration of births, the DHA has set up satellite offices in some hospitals and health facilities throughout the country to facilitate registration of births immediately after occurrence. This is an effort to ensure that parents do not leave a hospital or health care facility without registering the birth of their child and receiving a birth certificate.

The Act No. 18 of 2010 also introduced additional requirements for parents who register a birth after the stipulated period such as requiring a proof of birth affidavit and another affidavit giving reasons for late registration. Even if registration of births is anchored in a legal framework, if there is a lack of oversight or enforcement of the legal framework, birth registration requirement can be undermined (WHO, 2013). The DHA also opened satellite offices in some health facilities throughout the country, to help register birth immediately after occurrence. This is 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.

As mentioned earlier in the publication, timely birth registration is mandated in terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act. Accordingly, the tabulation of the 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 the 30-days requirement. The table shows that a total of 718 486 births that occurred in 2024 were registered within 30 days of the date of occurrence. Proportionally, 91,2% of births that occurred in 2024 were registered within the 30-day period.

The month of April had the highest number of births (66 410) that were registered within 30 days of occurrence, followed by July (64 991) and May (64 603).

Table 9 – Number of births registered within 30 days of occurrence by month of birth occurrence and month of birth registration, South Africa, 2024

Month of birth registration	Month of birth occurrence												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
January	50 048												50 048
February	12 897	43 519											56 416
March	10	14 087	43 537										57 634
April			19 739	46 671									66 410
May				16 980	47 623								64 603
June					15 505	41 033							56 538
July						19 232	45 759						64 991
August							14 906	45 020					59 926
September								14 480	44 412				58 892
October									16 024	43 495			59 519
November										12 794	40 697		53 491
December											12 824	43 689	56 513
January												13 505	13 505
Total	62 955	57 606	63 276	63 651	63 128	60 265	60 665	59 500	60 436	56 289	53 521	57 194	718 486

4.2.1 Age of the mother for births occurring in 2024

Table 10 shows the distribution of births occurring in 2024 by age of the mother. It is observed that the highest proportion of births that occurred and were registered in 2024 were from women aged 25–29 (24,4%), followed by women aged 30–34 (22,5%) and 20–24 (21,5%). Mothers aged 10–14 and 45–54, including mothers of an unspecified age, accounted for a lower proportion of births (0,3%).

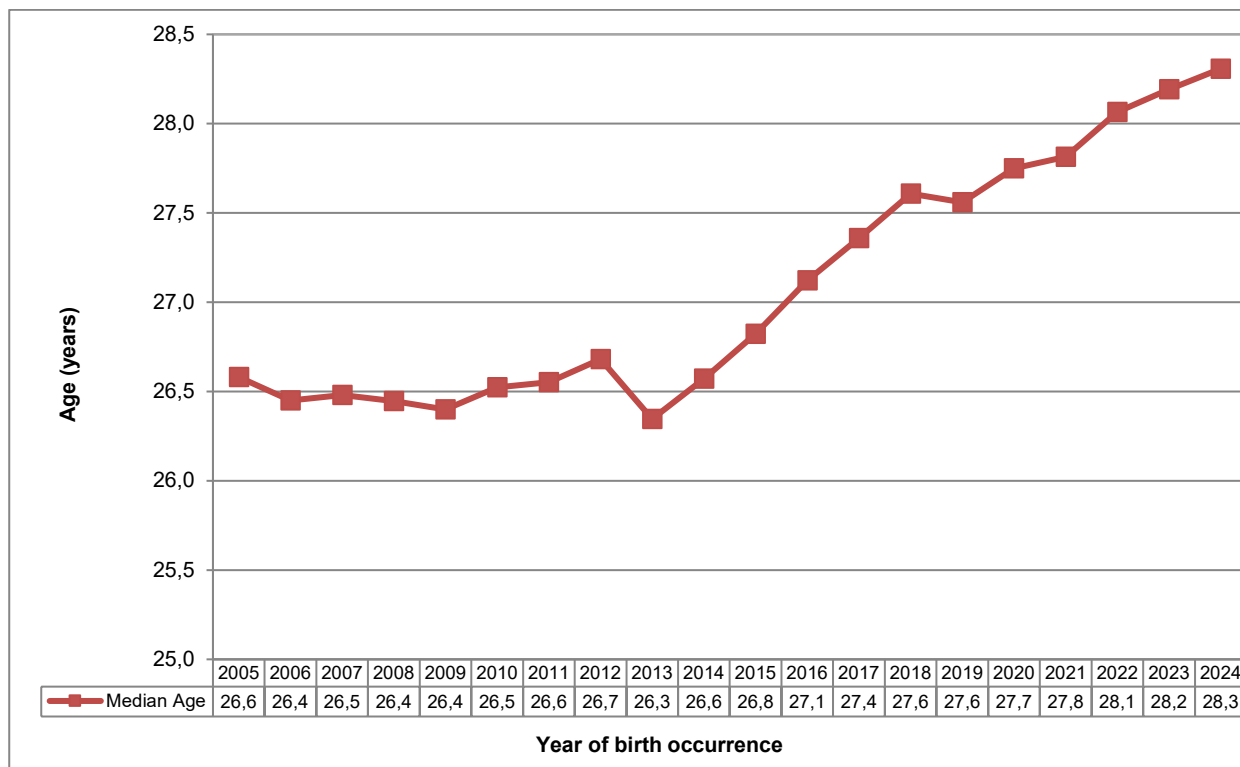
Table 10 – Number and percentage of births by age of mother, South Africa, 2024

Age of mother	Number of birth occurrences	Percentage (%)
10–14	2 103	0,3
15–19	96 248	12,2
20–24	169 562	21,5
25–29	191 918	24,4
30–34	176 928	22,5
35–39	113 615	14,4
40–44	35 062	4,4
45–49	2 185	0,3
50–54	106	0,0
Unspecified/outside the 10–54 age range	206	0,0
Total	787 933	100,0

4.2.2 Median age of mothers from 2005 to 2024

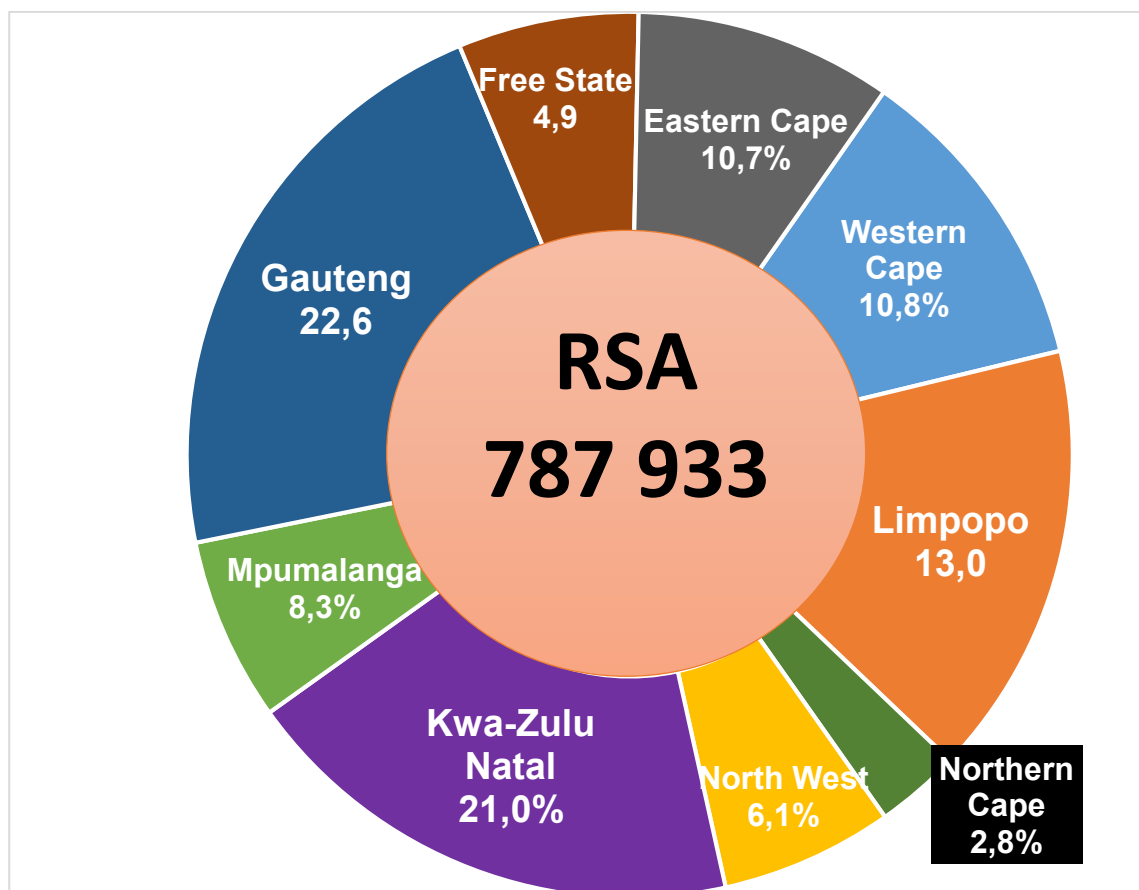
The median age of mothers, i.e. the age at which half of the mothers gave birth to a child in a particular year in a given population, is shown in Figure 7. A higher median age indicates that, on average, childbearing occurs at older ages, and the opposite is true for a lower median age. Figure 7 shows the median ages of mothers for births occurring between 2005 and 2024. It is observed that, on average, the median ages of mothers for the years 2005 to 2024 ranged from 26 to 28 years.

The median age in 2005 was 26,6 years, declining steadily to 26,4 years in 2009. There was a slight increase from 26,5 years in 2010 to 26,7 years in 2012, then a decline the following year reaching the lowest of 26,3 years in 2013. From 2014 to 2024, a constant increase in the median ages of mothers was observed, where the median age of mothers increased from 26,6 years to 28,3 years.

Figure 7 – Median age of mother by year of birth, South Africa, 2005–2024

4.2.3 Provincial distribution of births, 2024

Figure 8 presents the distribution of 2024 birth occurrences by province of birth registration. The information excludes unspecified province of birth registrations. The highest proportion of births was registered in Gauteng (22,6%), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (21,0%). Northern Cape and Free State reflected the lowest proportions of birth registrations at 2,8% and 4,9% respectively.

Figure 8 – Birth occurrences by province of birth registration, South Africa, 2024

4.3 Birth occurrences as at 1 July 2025

This sub-section reports on 2024 birth occurrences extracted from the national birth register on the 1st of July 2025, 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 20 148 979 births occurred and were registered in South Africa between 2005 and 2024, with an average of 1 007 449 births per year over the 20-year period. The table further shows that the highest number of birth occurrences was observed in 2008, and the lowest in 2024, although this figure will still increase as late registrations occurs in subsequent years.

4.3.1 Trends in sex ratio

Table 11 shows that in the 20-year period, sex ratios were between 100 and 102 male births per 100 female births. In the years 2005 to 2009, the sex ratio was at 101 male births per 100 female births, signifying slightly more males than females. From 2010, the sex ratios were at 102 male births per 100 female births, indicating that there was a male child birth for every female child birth. It remained at 102 male births per 100 female births even in 2024.

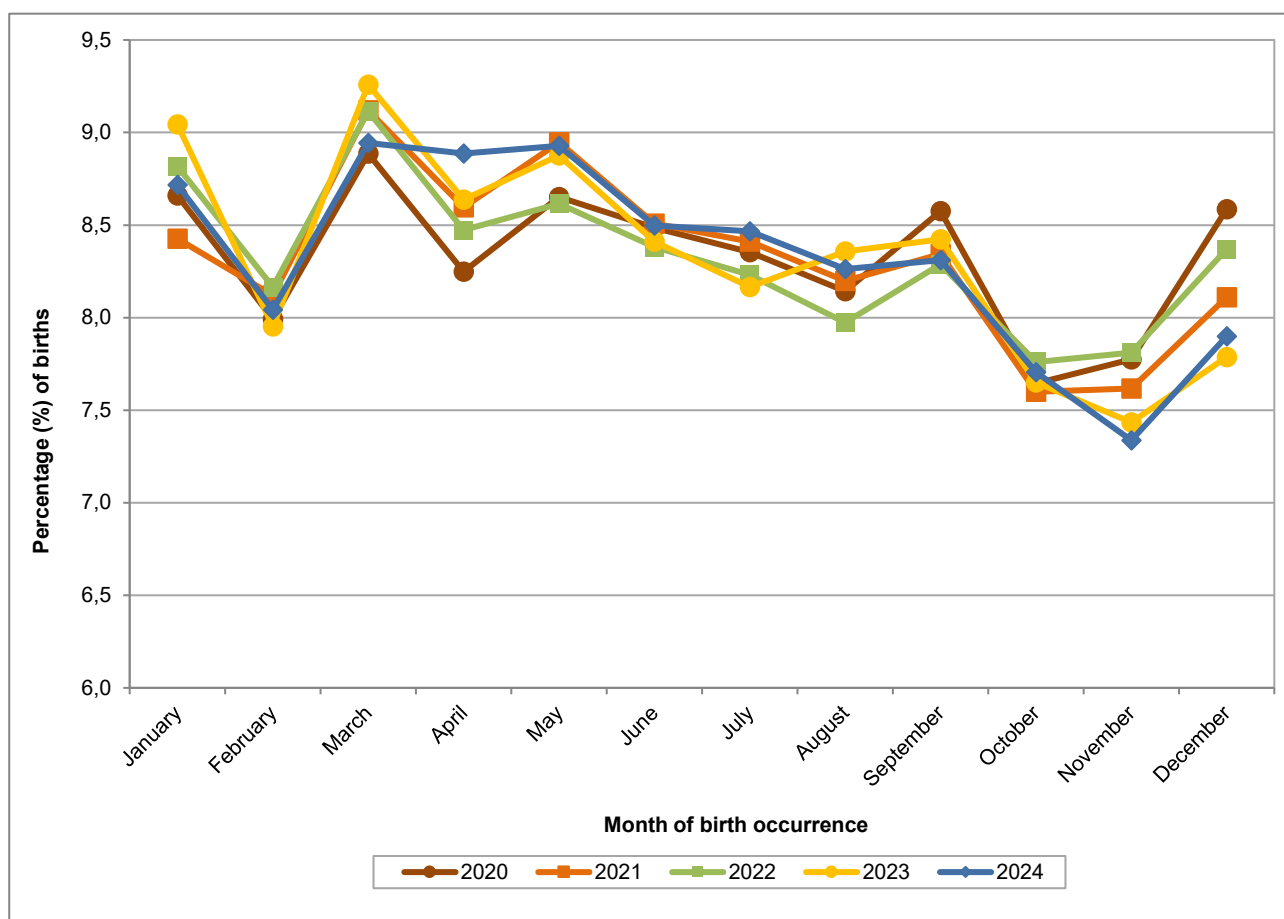
Table 11 – Birth occurrences (as at 1 July 2025) by sex and year of birth, South Africa, 2005–2024

Year	Total	Male	Female	Sex ratio
2005	1 072 588	539 572	532 998	101
2006	1 104 399	554 723	549 676	101
2007	1 090 379	548 944	541 435	101
2008	1 113 857	560 212	553 645	101
2009	1 063 439	534 836	527 603	101
2010	1 036 395	522 815	513 580	102
2011	1 045 507	527 329	518 178	102
2012	1 046 070	527 667	518 403	102
2013	1 033 325	521 481	511 844	102
2014	1 037 787	523 593	514 194	102
2015	989 001	498 380	490 621	102
2016	932 186	470 958	461 228	102
2017	946 770	477 626	469 144	102
2018	974 995	492 336	482 659	102
2019	997 486	503 264	494 222	102
2020	1 021 664	515 644	506 020	102
2021	1 017 807	512 924	504 883	102
2022	953 951	480 704	472 447	102
2023	872 792	440 364	432 428	102
2024	798 581	402 316	396 265	102
Total	20 148 979	10 155 688	9 991 473	102

4.3.2 Month of birth as at 1 July 2025

Figure 9 shows the percentage distribution of birth occurrences by month of birth for the five years 2020–2024, updated as at 1 July 2025. It is observed that the pattern of birth occurrences by month of birth was largely similar over the five years with the only difference observed in the month of April for 2024; whereby the proportion of birth occurrences was slightly higher compared to April of the other four 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 2024, November had the lowest proportion of births at 7,3%.

Figure 9 – Percentage (%) distribution of birth occurrences as at 1 July 2025 by year and month of birth, South Africa, 2020–2024



4.4 Baby forenames and surnames in South Africa, 2024

A person's forename and surname are part of the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992). These names are some of the most distinctive markers of individuality and a prerequisite for issuance of a birth certificate in South Africa (Republic of South Africa,

1992). Additionally, section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (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 number distribution of the top ten baby forenames and surnames for 2024. In general, the popular baby forenames for males and females reflect positive hopes for the child, express beliefs and are inspired by positive connotations of both love and acceptance. Lethabo was the most popular forename for males while the most popular name amongst females was Onalerona. Lethabo which was the most popular name for males was the fifth most popular name for females. The names which were on the top 10 most popular baby names for both sexes were Lethabo, Nkanyezi and Lesedi. For middle names, the most popular choices for females were Precious, Princess and Blessing. Amongst males Junior, Blessing and Gift were the top three popular middle names.

Table 12 further shows that for both sexes, Dlamini was the most common baby surname in 2024, closely followed by Ndlovu and then Nkosi. It is worth noting that as in previous years, nine of the surnames were from Nguni clans, namely isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati. Mokoena which featured as the sixth most popular surname, was the only non-Nguni surname.

Table 12 – Number distribution of top ten baby forenames and surnames in South Africa, 2024

Rank	Male				Female				Both sexes	
	First: Forename	Number	Second: Forename	Number	First: Forename	Number	Second: Forename	Number	Surname	Number
1	Lethabo	2 791	Junior	7 220	Onalerona	2 289	Precious	3 034	Dlamini	5 928
2	Lubanzi	1 907	Blessing	3 785	Zanokuhle	2 223	Princess	2 655	Ndlovu	5 142
3	Nkazimulo	1 808	Gift	2 584	Melokuhle	2 108	Blessing	2 452	Nkosi	5 038
4	Nkanyezi	1 691	Prince	1 819	Lisakhanya	2 097	Angel	1 921	Khumalo	4 974
5	Langelihle	1 555	Jayden	1 503	Lethabo	1 934	Faith	1 820	Sithole	4 100
6	Lesedi	1 519	Nkanyezi	1 348	Nkanyezi	1 824	Hope	1 805	Mkhize	3 431
7	Lethokuhle	1 508	Lubanzi	1 298	Onthatile	1 765	Nkanyezi	1 358	Mokoena	3 385
8	Siphosethu	1 484	Lethabo	1 225	Lesedi	1 745	Zanokuhle	1 274	Mthembu	3 218
9	Junior	1 467	Nkazimulo	1 177	Omphile	1 725	Lisakhanya	1 243	Gumede	3 161
10	Leano	1 441	Siphosethu	1 113	Olwemihla	1 591	Grace	1 157	Ngcobo	3 117

5. Concluding remarks

Birth registration is a fundamental human right. From a legal perspective, it opens the way to other rights such as nationality, education and health facilities. Birth registration is also required for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Data on births will be required for monitoring progress in poverty eradication, reducing hunger, promoting good health and well-being, access to education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnerships for these goals (UN, 2015).

This statistical release provided information on birth registrations and occurrences in South Africa for 2024. In addition, information for the period 2005 to 2023 was analysed to review trends on birth registrations and occurrences. A total of 863 858 births were registered in 2024. This reflects a decline of 68 280 from the 932 138 births registered in 2023.

The findings also show that the timeliness of birth registration continues to improve. Efforts to reduce late birth registrations are evidently paying off. More than 80,0% of births in South Africa are now registered within 30 days of occurrence. In recent years, the slight decrease in this percentage was in 2020, 2021 and 2022, where birth registration within 30 days of occurrence dropped to less than 80,0%. A notable drop was in 2020, where only 70,8% births were registered within the 30-day regulation. This was, however, due to COVID-19 regulations.

Differentials at birth by sex showed that there were slightly more male births than female births, with a sex ratio of 102 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations. Three provinces; Northern Cape, North West, and Gauteng, had sex ratios above the national figure, at 103 male births per 100 female births. Analysis by age of the mother reflects higher proportions of births among women aged 20–34 years, while fewer occurred to women aged 10–14 and 45–54 years.

Provincial distributions show that the highest birth occurrences were in Gauteng (22,6%) and KwaZulu-Natal (21,0%), followed by Limpopo (13,0%). On the other hand, Northern Cape (2,8%) had the lowest birth occurrences among the provinces, followed by Free State (4,9%) and North West at 6,1%.

In 2024, more births occurred in the months of March, January, and May. At the national level, the most popular first name among baby girls was Onalerona, while the most popular first name among baby boys was Lethabo. Dlamini remains the most common surname among babies born and registered in South Africa since 2016.

Although the completeness of birth registration has improved as more births are being recorded within the year of birth, there remains a need to increase not only birth registration but also the quality of birth registration information collected, particularly of the fathers. Efforts to improve birth registration coverage in South Africa exist as some health institutions currently provide registration services. The continued improvement in the registration of births puts South Africa in the forefront of many sub-Saharan countries in monitoring the SDGs.

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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. For the purpose of producing vital statistics, the following system is followed: each day, all civil transactions carried out at all the DHA 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.

Municipal demarcation

The DHA captures information on the office of birth registration. Stats SA reclassifies 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.

Population group

Starting from 1991, the Department of Home Affairs ceased differentiating between the population groups in the recorded birth data. Therefore, the statistics presented in this release are aggregated across all population groups.

Births of children born to foreign nationals

Stats SA previously received information on births to foreign parents occurring in the country, as part of birth data obtained from the DHA. These births were subsequently excluded from the recorded live births statistical release with effect from 2015 due to technical problems encountered in the retrieval of such births 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 excludes births by foreign parents that occurred in South Africa.

Definitions of concepts used

1.1 Live birth

the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother 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.

1.2 Recorded live births

The number of births recorded (registered) in a specific year, irrespective of when the birth actually occurred. It should be noted that not all births that occur are recorded (registered).

1.3 Current birth registrations

The number of births that occurred in a specific year and were registered in that year or in January and February of the subsequent year.

1.4 Late birth registrations

Births that take place within a specific calendar year but are registered after March of the following calendar year or in later years.

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 12 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.

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