

Progress in the collection and utilization of International Migration data in the 2020 Round of Population Censuses (The case for South Africa)

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BACKGROUND

Migration can be defined as a change in a person's permanent or usual place of residence. Along with fertility and mortality, migration is one of the components of population change (Moultrie et al, 2013). However, analysing migration poses more conceptual and methodological challenges than the other two components of population change (Hinde, 1998). Unlike fertility and mortality where single populations are involved (a person is only born once and as a result dies once), migration on the other hand involves two populations, place of birth and place of usual residence. (Rogers et al, 2010).

As South Africa celebrates thirty years of democracy, numerous efforts have been put in place to strengthen and improve migration data collection. This is in the form of official statistics and other administrative data from the government. For Instance, the government of South Africa through the National Statistics Office has digitalised data collection and continues to more stakeholders in the data ecosystem through the National Statistics System. The world population day in 2024 is celebrated under the theme of *“Embracing the power of inclusive data towards a resilient and equitable future for all”*, this *“theme is a reminder of the importance of understanding and addressing the needs of our growing and diverse population”* (DSD, 2024). The theme of inclusive data also highlights the crucial role that data plays to ensure that no one is left behind and that every individual has the opportunity to thrive, irrespective of their nationality or migration status.

Within the context of the SADC region, South Africa has shown to be a receiver of mixed migration flows (Stats SA, 2015). Reasons for international migration to South Africa ranges from economic social and political. Globally, the world has also witnessed increasing number of people being displaced, within and out of their country of origin, because of conflict, violence, political or economic instability as well as climate change and other disasters. While those who have been displaced, such as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), comprise a relatively small proportion of people, they are often the most vulnerable and require assistance and support (IOM, 2024).

Beyond the African continent, South Africa is also known as a sending country, experiencing the emigration of its citizens to more developed countries such as United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia, amongst others (Phillips, 2006, Stats SA, 2024). Migration can be considered an instrument of development, which has the potential to facilitate economic, social and political freedom; however, if not better managed, it may also, in its process, hinder economies, and create social instability and anarchy (Stats SA, 2015).

The linkages between migration and development, including the opportunities and challenges that migration brings, are acknowledged in a series of global agreements adopted by the UN member states. This includes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, most recently, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) adopted in 2018. The SDGs recognizes that migration is a powerful driver of sustainable development, for migrants and their communities.

The GCM is the first negotiated global agreement covering all dimensions of migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner, in which countries have placed emphasis on data. Objective 1 “*Collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated [migration] data as a basis for evidence-based policies*” is one of the 23 objectives of the GCM (UN, 2018). As outlined in the GCM, “*migration is a multi-dimensional reality that cannot be addressed by one government sector alone*”, it therefore needs a whole of government approach. This chapter presents an overview of migration data collection in South Africa over the 30 years and showcase some high-level indicators overs, some challenges on data and opportunities for the future.

DEFINING MIGRATION, MIGRANT AND OTHER KEY TERMS

It is imperative that concepts and definitions of migration be understood, as the derived estimates of migration stocks and flows are determined by the parameters of the definitions.

Table 1: Concepts and Definitions

Term	Definition
Internal migration	Defined as a change in province (or administrative region) of residence.
Immigrant	A person who enters a country from another country for a period of most of the year or with the intention of doing so (All persons born outside

	South Africa and enumerated in the Census and CS are automatically considered immigrants).
Emigrant	A person who leaves a country with the intention of spending most of a 12 month period in the country of arrival
Migrant Stock	The stock gives the size of the migrant population at a specific point in time.
Migrant Flows	A flow is a measure of the change in the migrant population over a defined period (e.g. Month, or Year).
Lifetime migration	Measures movement of people according to where they were born (province/ country) in relation to where they resided during enumeration.
Period migration	Measures movements according to where the person was residing during a previous Census/Survey in relation to where they resided during enumeration.
Refugees	As defined by the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	As defined by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998/2004)
Remittances	Remittances are financial or in-kind transfers made by migrants directly to families or communities in their countries of origin

MIGRATION DATA SOURCES

Sources of migration data can be broadly grouped into four categories, namely (a) Administrative (b) Big data, (c) Census/ Household surveys; and (d) Demographic and Health Surveillance sites. These data sources have been discussed in detailed through a study on “*alternative sources of demographic data*” published by Stats SA in 2021.

Due to the need to address health and environmental data gap. There is a rise in the collection of Common Operational Datasets (CODs). This dataset are mainly collected by Humanitarian actors in the event of disasters and crises such as the UNFPA, WHO, OCHA, IOM, UNHCR. The Common Operational Datasets (CODs) are authoritative reference datasets which are needed to support operations and decision-making for all actors in a humanitarian response. Furthermore, these datasets can play a crucial part in the data ecosystem and to inform policy.

Table 2: Sources of migration data

Type of source	Example of source
1. Existing data sources	
Administrative	Permits data, National Population Register (NPR), Other administrative records from government.
Population Census	Census 1996, 2001, 2011, 2022.
Household surveys	Community Surveys 2007, 2016, Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2012, 2017 and 2022, and Income and Expenditure survey 2022/2023.
Demographic (and Health) Surveillance Sites (HDSS)	Collects longitudinal data on surveillance sites e.g. SAPRIN data.
2. Innovative: Emerging sources in the data ecosystem	
3. Big data	Private sector data from banks, cell phone companies.
4. Humanitarian data (Common Operational Datasets on Population Statistics (COD-PS))	Assist during emergency settings or humanitarian contexts e.g. forced displacement statistics.

KEY INDICATORS ON GENERAL CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

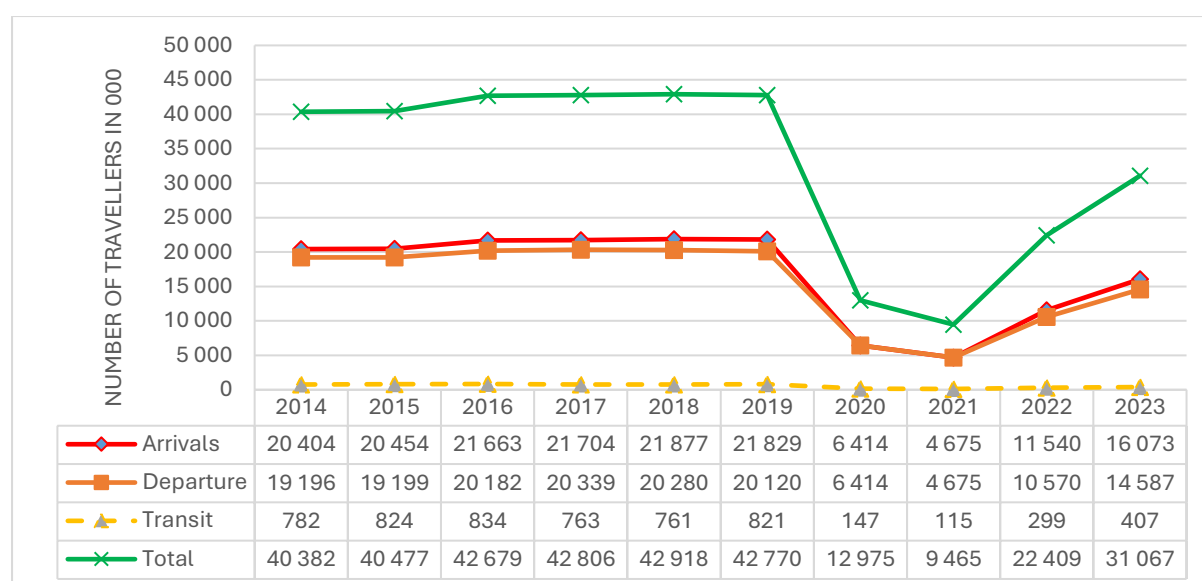
General cross border mobility data is data mainly collected by are the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). This is administrative records regulating the flow of people across boundaries, specifically border statistics, which are an important source of statistical data on temporary population movements (Stats SA, 2023). Data routinely collected by immigration officers at all ports of entry/exit (land, air and sea ports) on all travelers (South African residents and foreign travelers) arriving into or departing from South Africa are captured into the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) population Movement Control System (MCS). The data provide the best national coverage (in terms of both space and time) on the population movements of South African residents and foreign travelers.

Number of travellers

Figure 1.1 below provides a comprehensive overview of arrivals, departures, and transients from 2014 to 2023. The data reveal distinct patterns and fluctuations in travel activities over the specified period. Notably, there is a general upward trend in arrivals and departures from 2014 to 2018. This surge could be attributed to increased global connectivity facilitating greater

travel and migration. However, the subsequent years (2019-2021) show a decline in both arrivals and departures (turnover mobility), suggesting a potential plateau or slowdown in movement trends. This is likely a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic's profound impact on global mobility, leading to travel restrictions, border closures, and decreased international travel. Post-covid recovery, there has been improvements in mobility.

Figure 1.1 Number of arrivals, departures, and travellers in transit by year of travel, 2014 – 2023



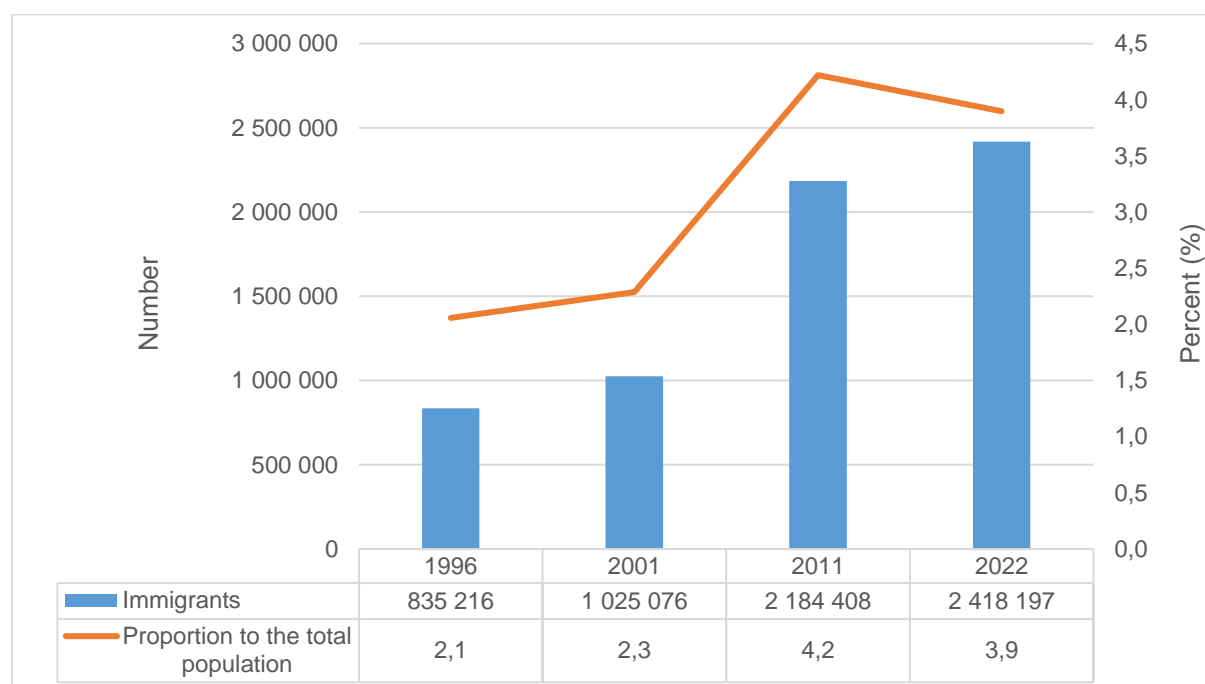
Source: Statistics South Africa, Tourism 2023

KEY TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS

Distribution of immigrant's population overtime

Figure 1.2 illustrates the distribution of immigrants and the proportion to the population of South Africa for Censuses 1996 to 2022. Over time, the results show an increase in the population of immigrants from 835 215 in 1996 to 2 418 197 in 2022. However, by 2022, this trend shows a slight decline which could be linked to the impact of Covid-19 on international migration and general mobility of people.

Figure 1.2: Distribution of immigrants and the proportion to the total population of South Africa, Census 1996–2022



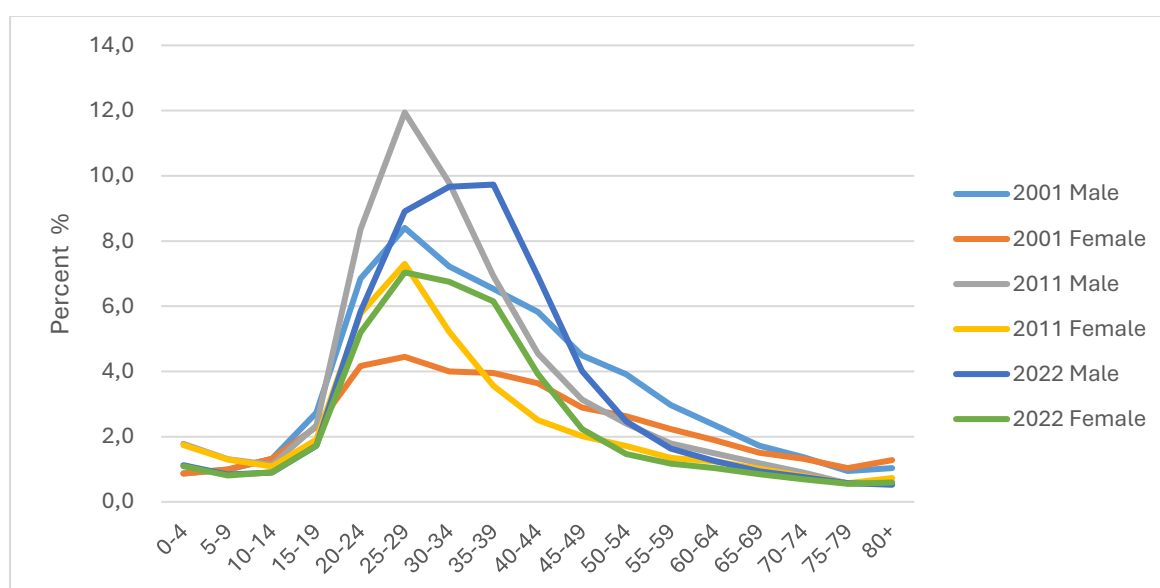
Source: Stats SA, 2024

Distribution of immigrants by age and sex

Research has shown that certain age groups are more likely to migrate than others. Young adults are more likely to migrate than children and the elderly. In the past years, males were more likely to migrate than females in most countries/regions (Newell, 1988).

Figure 1.3 below presents data on the distribution of immigrants by age and sex for the years 2001, 2011, and 2022. The figure shows that in each year, the largest age group for both males and females was in the 25–29 age range, which suggests that young adults are more likely to migrate internationally. Over the years, the percentage distribution in each age group generally increased, reflecting the overall growth in the immigrant population. This growth was more pronounced in males compared to females, as the male–female gap widened.

Figure 1.3: Age and sex distribution of immigrants, 2001-2022

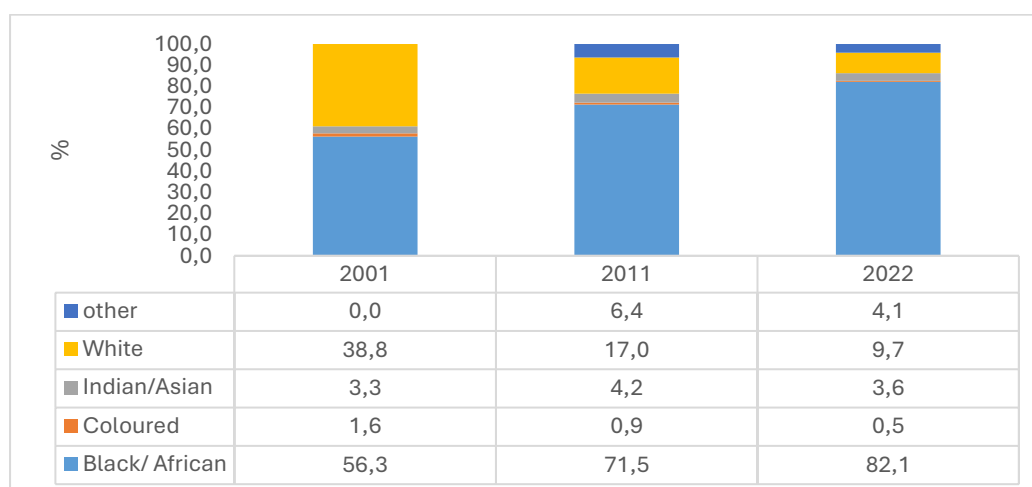


Source: Stats SA, 2024

Distribution of immigrants by Population groups

Figure 1.4 below provides data on the distribution of immigrants by population group for the years 2001, to 2022. Overtime, the highest proportion of immigrants belonged to the black African population group, constituting 56,3% of the total number of migrants in 2001, and 82,1% in 2022 respectively. The White population group saw a significant decrease in 2022. The Indian/Asian and coloured population groups also showed changes in percentage distributions.

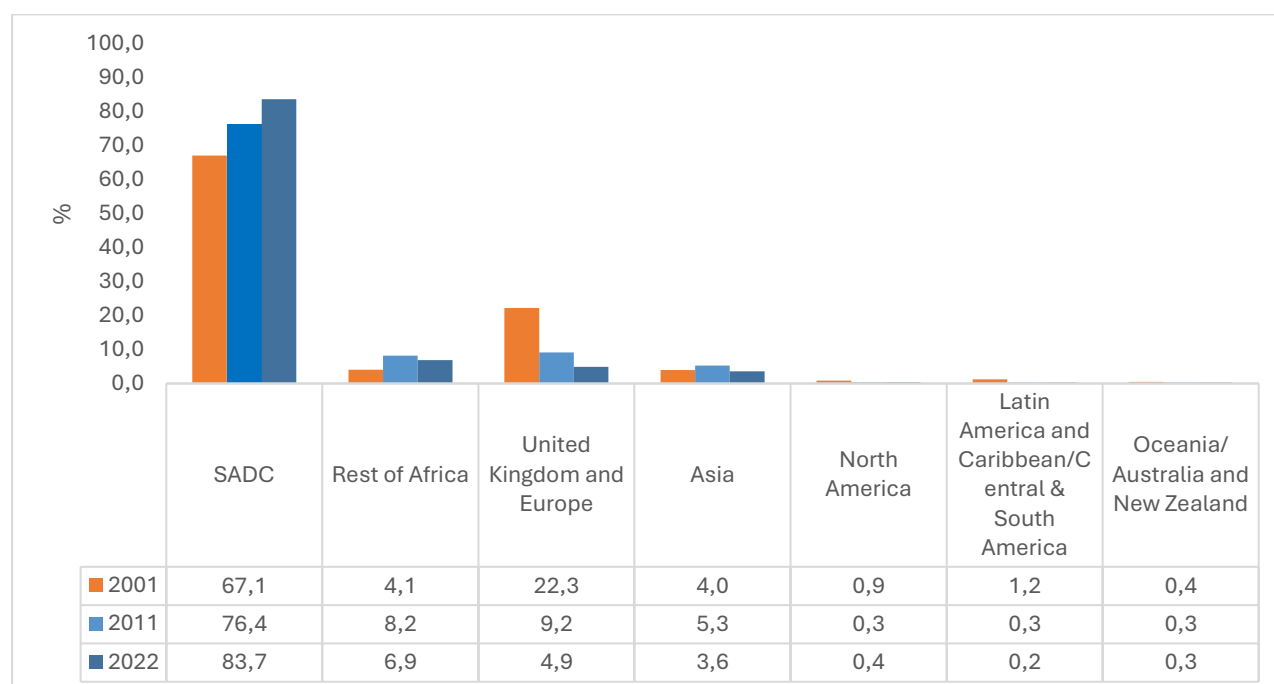
Figure 1.4: Percentage distribution of immigrants by population group, 2001, 2011 and 2022



Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 2001- 2022

Figure 1.5 below presents data on the distribution of immigrants in South Africa by the region of their birth for the years 2001- 2022. This figure offers insights into the geographic origins of immigrants and how these origins have evolved over time. Across all the years, most immigrants came from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, accounting for 67,1% in 2001 to 83,7% in 2022 of the total migrant population. This reflects the significance of neighbouring countries in contributing to South Africa's immigrant population. The second-largest group was from the United Kingdom and Europe, making up 22,3% in 2001, with smaller contributions from the rest of Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania. In 2022, the distribution further evolved. The SADC region remained the dominant source, contributing 83,7% of the total immigrant population. The United Kingdom and Europe saw a significant decrease, with only 4,9%. The rest of Africa and Asia also made up a smaller proportion.

Figure 1.5: Percentage distribution of immigrants by region of birth, 2001- 2022

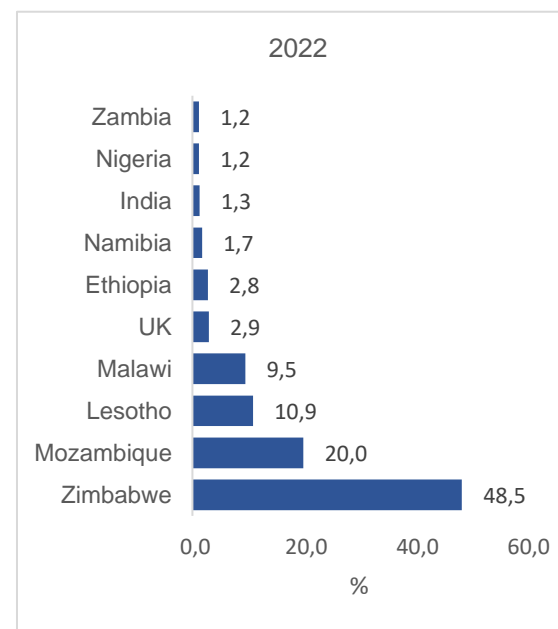


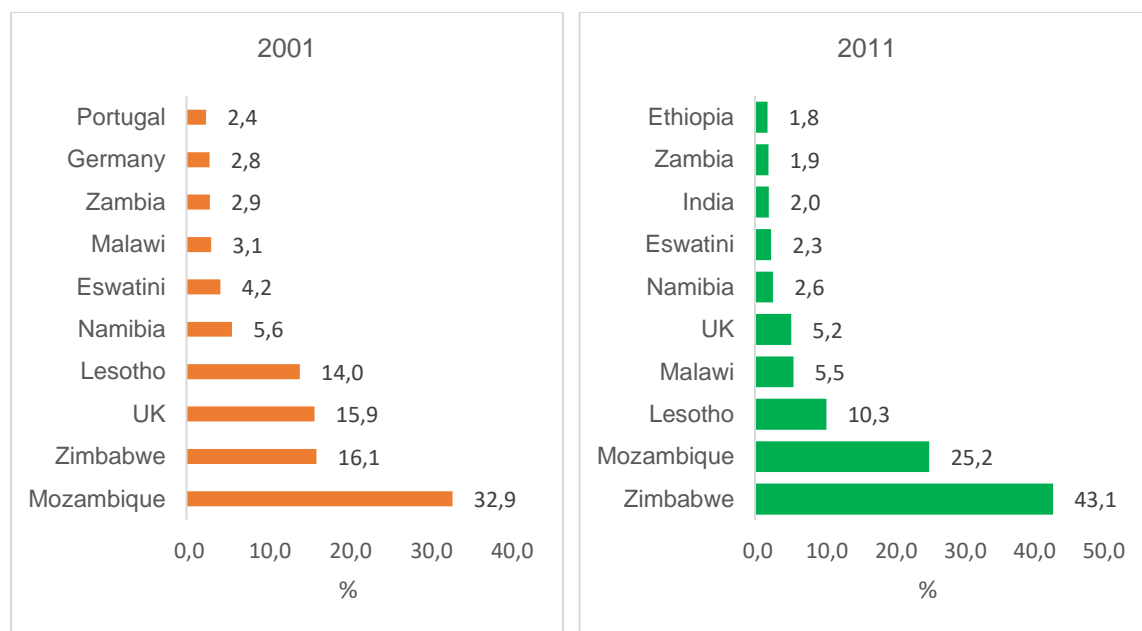
Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 2001, 2011 and 2022

Distribution of top 10 sending countries

Figures 1.6 below provides data on the distribution of immigrants to South Africa from the top 10 migration sending countries for the years 2001 to 2022. This figure highlights the significant countries of origin for migrants and how their representation has changed over time. In 2001, the largest group of migrants came from Mozambique, constituting 32,9% of the total immigrant population. Zimbabwe was the second-largest group, making up 16,1%. The United Kingdom/Great Britain and Lesotho were also significant contributors, with 15,9% and 14,0%, respectively. Other countries in the top 10 included Namibia, Eswatini, Malawi, Zambia, Germany, and Portugal. By 2011, distribution had evolved. Zimbabwe became the leading country of origin, contributing 43,1% of the total migrant population, while Mozambique remained important at 25,2%. Lesotho, Malawi, and the United Kingdom/Great Britain were also notable contributors. In 2022, Zimbabwe remained the leading country of origin, with 48,5% of the total migrant population. Mozambique was the second-largest contributor at 20,0%.

Figure 1.6: Percentage distribution of top 10 sending countries to South Africa, 2001 – 2022





Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 2001, 2011 and 2022

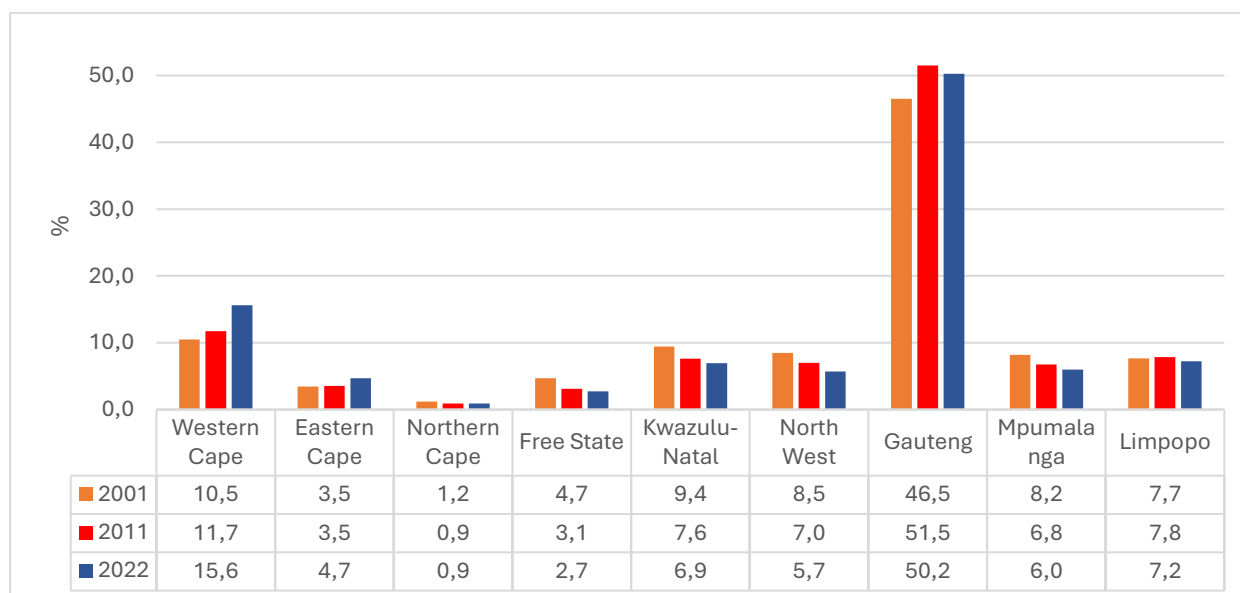
Note: UK refers to the United Kingdom/Great Britain.

Distribution of immigrant by usual place of residence in South Africa

Figure 1.7 below provides data on the distribution of immigrants by the province of usual residence for the years 2001 to 2022. This figure offers insights into the geographic distribution of immigrants within the country. In 2001, the province with the highest number of immigrants was Gauteng, accounting for 46,5% of the total migrant population. The Western Cape also had a notable percentage of 10,5%. The other provinces had varying percentages, with KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape being among the significant contributors.

By 2011, the distribution shifted slightly. Gauteng remained the province with the highest number of immigrants, with a higher percentage of 51,5%. The Western Cape also saw an increase in both numbers and percentage. In 2022, the distribution continued to evolve. Gauteng remained the province with the highest number of immigrants, contributing 50,2% of the total migrant population. The Western Cape also continued to see growth in both numbers and percentage, making up 15,6%. Other provinces had varying percentages, with changes in the numbers of migrants.

Figure 1.7: Percentage distribution of immigrants by province of usual residence, 2001-2022



Source: Stats SA Census 2001, 2011 and 2022

Note: Excludes do not know and unspecified cases.

Labour Migration

Statistics South Africa has incorporated the first Migration questions in the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first time in the third quarter of 2012. The second module was conducted in the third quarter of 2017 and the latest module was collected in the third quarter of 2022. These migration questions were posed to all persons aged 15 years and older.

The migration module in the QLFS allows to measure migrant labour market outcome and the participation thereof. Furthermore, the module provides an opportunity to generate indicators relating to decent work agenda. Decent work is central to efforts to reduce poverty and is a means for achieving equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development. It involves productive work opportunities that deliver a fair income, provide security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families, and give people the freedom to express their concerns, organize and participate in decisions that affect their lives. Decent work is the best route to reducing inequalities and combating poverty, leaving no one behind including migrants.

Table 3 below shows that the working-age population increased from 34,2 million in 2012 to 40,3 million in 2022. In 2022 about 94,6% of the working-age population were born in South Africa and 5,4% were born outside of South Africa.

Table 3: Distribution of the working-age population by place of birth, 2017 - 2022

Place of birth	2012	2017	2022
	Thousand		
Foreign	1 333	1 984	2 182
RSA born	32 920	35 387	38 127
Unspecified	0	2	12
Total	34 253	37 373	40 332
	Percent		
Foreign	3,9	5,3	5,4
RSA born	96,1	94,7	94,6
Unspecified		0,0	0,0
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: Stats SA, Labour market dynamics 2012, 2017 and 2022

International migrant workers

Table 4 provides data on the distribution of employed persons by migratory status in South Africa. The share of immigrants who are in employment increased over time from 6,0% in 2012 to 8,9%

in 2022. South African-born persons made up most of the employed workforce, accounting for 94,0% of the total employed in 2012.

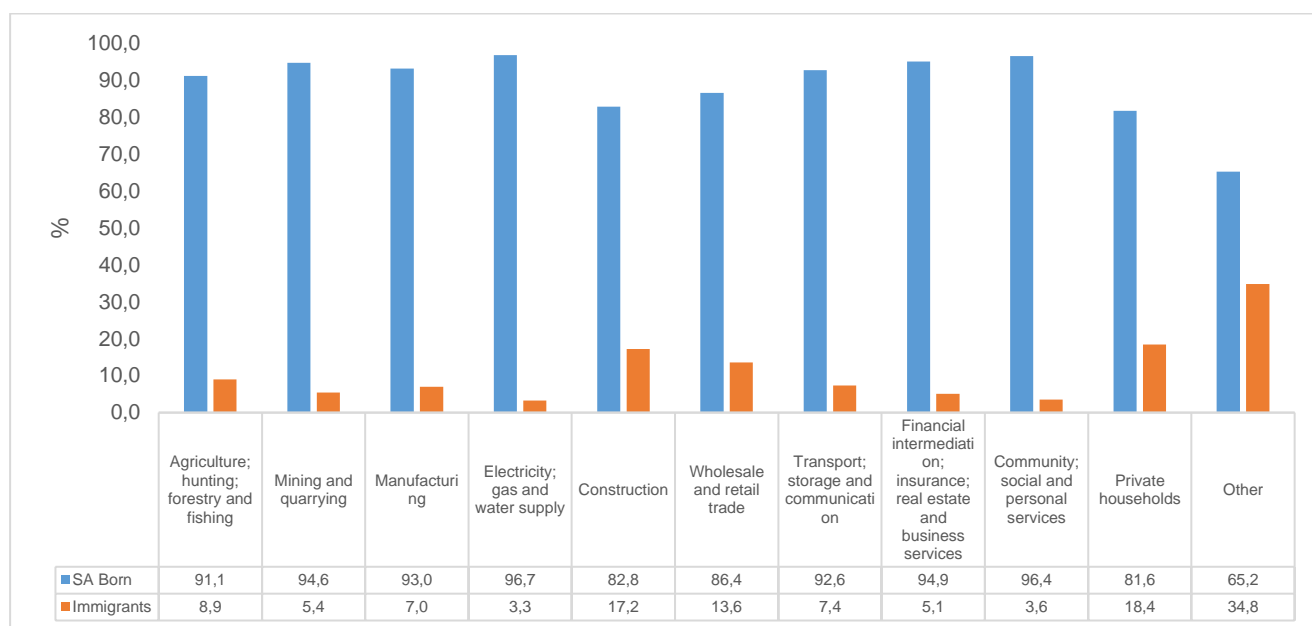
Table 4: Distribution of the employed by migratory status, 2012, 2017 and 2022

Migratory status	2012		2017		2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Born outside SA (immigrants)	871 165	6,0	1 251 477	7,7	1 396 826	8,9
South African-born persons	13 690 451	94,0	14 938 696	92,3	14 364 570	91,1
Total	14 561 615	100,0	16 190 173	100,0	15 761 396	100,0

Source: Statistics South Africa, QLFS 2012, 2017 & 2022

Figure 1.8 shows the percentage distribution of the employed population by industry and migratory status using the QLFS 2022 Quarter 3 data. The results indicate that the highest percentage share of immigrants employed by industry worked in private households at 18,4%. Whilst the highest percentage share of South African born is employed in the electricity, gas and water supply with 96,7%.

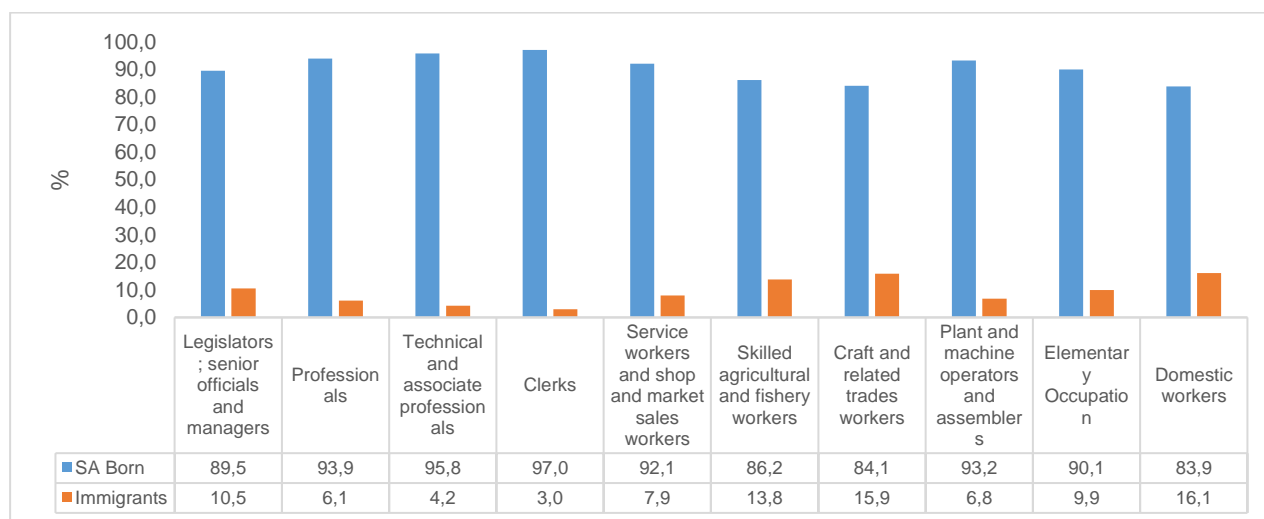
Figure 1.8: Percentage distribution of the employed by industry and migratory status, 2022



Source: Statistics South Africa, QLFS 2022, Q3

Figure 1.9 below shows the percentage distribution of the employed population by migratory status using the QLFS 2022 Quarter 3 data. The results indicate that the percentage share of immigrants employed as domestic workers is 16%. The percentage share of immigrants employed as craft-related trades workers is 15,8%.

Figure 1.9: Percentage distribution of the employed by occupation and migratory status, Q3: 2022



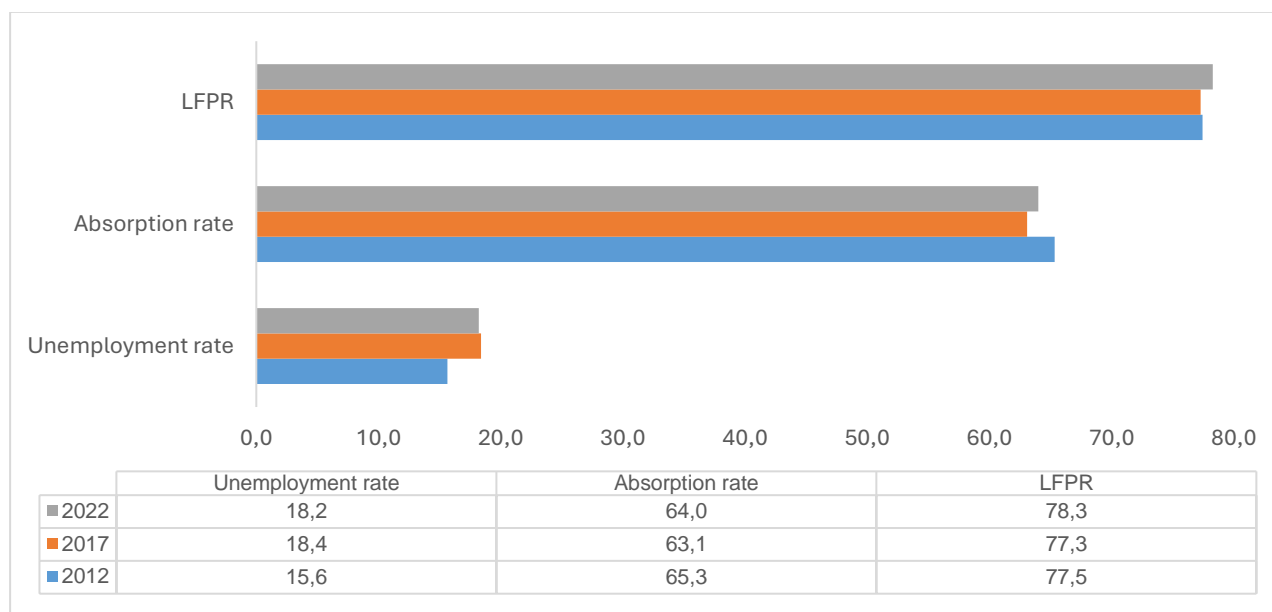
Source: Statistics South Africa, QLFS Q3: 2022

Figure 1.9 below provides data on immigrant employment rates for the years 2012, 2017, and 2022, presenting key indicators such as unemployment rate, absorption rate, and labour force participation rate (LFPR). In 2012, the unemployment rate among immigrants was 15,6%, indicating the percentage of individuals actively seeking employment but unable to find work. This rate slightly increased to 18,4% in 2017 and further rose to 18,2% by 2022, suggesting challenges in securing employment opportunities among immigrant populations over the analysed period.

The absorption rate, which represents the percentage of immigrants who successfully entered the labour market, stood at 65,3% in 2012, indicating a considerable portion of immigrants being absorbed into the workforce. This rate decreased to 63,1% and increased to 64,0% signalling a fluctuation in the proportion of immigrants finding employment opportunities.

The labour force participation rate (LFPR), which measures the percentage of the working-age population actively participating in the labour force, was 77,5% among immigrants in 2012. This rate slightly decreased to 77,3% by 2017 and increased to 78,3%, indicating a fluctuation in labour force participation. However, by 2022, the LFPR declined to 78,3%, suggesting a slight decrease in immigrant labour force participation over the analysed period.

Figure 1.9: Immigrant employment rates, 2012, 2017 and 2022



Source: Statistics South Africa, QLFS 2012, 2017 & 2022, Q3

Migration and Economic Development: International remittances

The economic implications of migration in South Africa have been a subject of considerable debate. On one hand, there is evidence to suggest that immigrants have made significant contributions to the country's economy. This is because immigration has been found to have a positive impact on the labour market, particularly in terms of employment creation and skills enhancement (Biyase & Tregenna, 2016). This is further supported by a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which found that migrant workers contribute significantly to the economy, both in terms of their direct contributions to GDP and their indirect contributions through the multiplier effect (OECD/ILO, 2018).

The World Bank compiles global data on international remittances, notwithstanding the data gaps, i.e. do not capture unrecorded flows through formal or informal channels, and the actual magnitudes of global remittances are therefore likely to be larger than available estimates. Despite these issues, available data reflect a long-term increasing trend in global international remittances in recent years, rising from around USD 128 billion in 2000 to USD 831 billion in 2022 (World Bank, 2022).

Migration has long been a significant factor in shaping the economic landscape of developing countries in Africa, including South Africa. Table 6 shows estimated amounts of remittances received by the country during the period 2016 to 2021. Although the amounts of remittances have been fluctuating over the years, there is a slight increase in the amount of remittances received by the country from 755 million dollars to 873 million dollars. Furthermore, the outbound

remittances from South Africa by migrant nationals residing in the country increased from 897 million dollars in 2016 to 1 012 million dollars in 2022.

Table 6: Remittance inflows and outflows to and from South Africans abroad in million (US\$), 2016–2022 in million

Remittances	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Remittance inflows (US\$ million)	755	874	929	890	811	927	873
Remittance outflow (US\$ million)	897	1 033	1 098	1 052	921	1 066	1 012

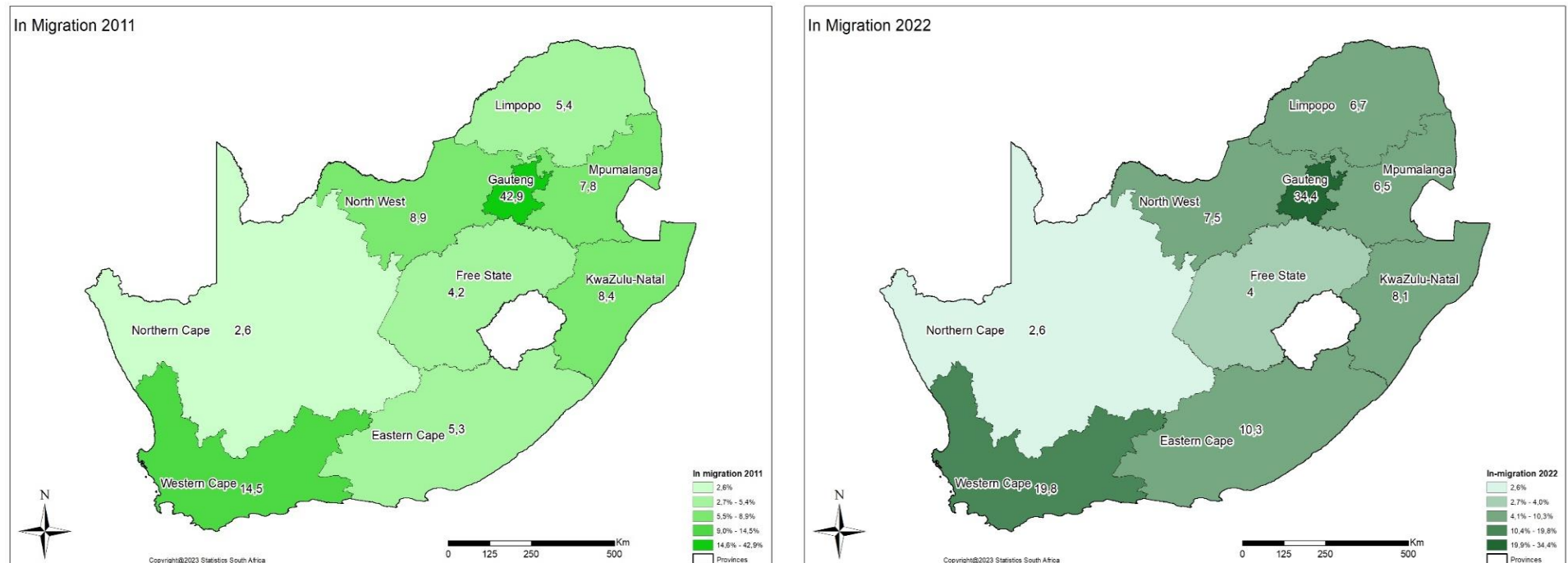
Sources: World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ALLD.CD?locations=ZA>;

Another notable effect of migration is the substantial contribution made by immigrants to the South African economy. It is evident that immigrants play a crucial role in the labour market. Occupational growth is mostly driven by new entrants, emphasising the significant role of immigrants in driving occupational growth (OECD/ILO, 2018). This is further supported by the breakdown of occupational growth, which reveals the contributions from different age groups, including "new immigrants (defined as those migrant-born who have entered the country in the past ten years)" (OECD/ILO, 2018). This indicates that immigrants, particularly recent arrivals, have been instrumental in driving economic growth and filling labour market gaps.

INTER-PROVINCIAL MIGRATION

Figure 1.10 presents an analysis of inter- provincial migration dynamics based on usual residence and province of previous residence variables derived from the Census. The results indicate that Gauteng and Western Cape are the two main provinces that attract a high number of in-migrants. Northern Cape is the province with the lowest share of period migrants (2,6%). Eastern Cape on the other hand shows an increase of 5 percentage points between Census 2011 (5,3%) and Census 2022 (10,3%) respectively.

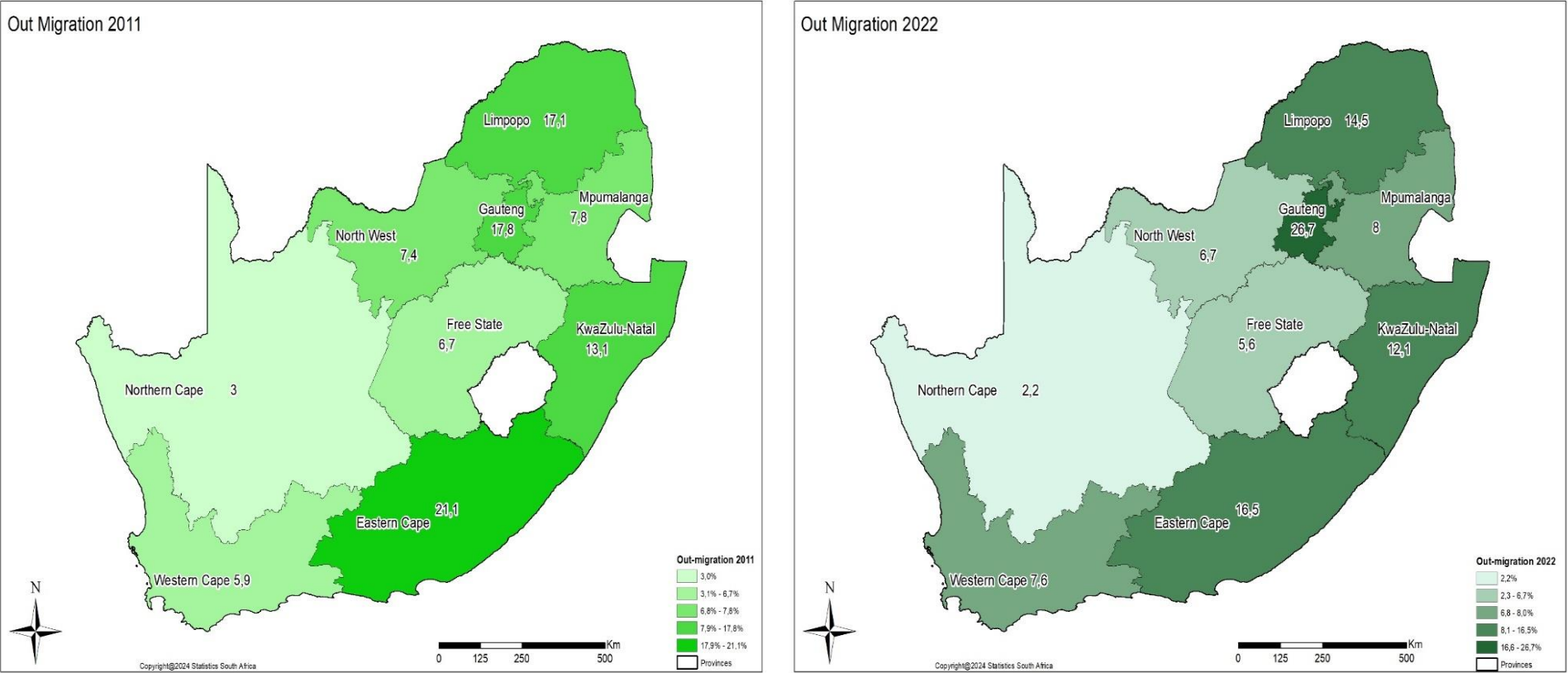
Figure 1.10: Percentage distribution of period in-migration by province, 2011 and 2022



Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 2011 and 2022

Figure 1.11 presents period out-migration by province between 2011 and 2022. In both censuses, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal experienced a high share of out-migration. Notably, Gauteng had a share of 26,7% in Census 2022 and 17,8% in Census 2011. The province with the lowest share of out-migration is Northern Cape with 3,0% in Census 2011 and 2,2% in Census 2022.

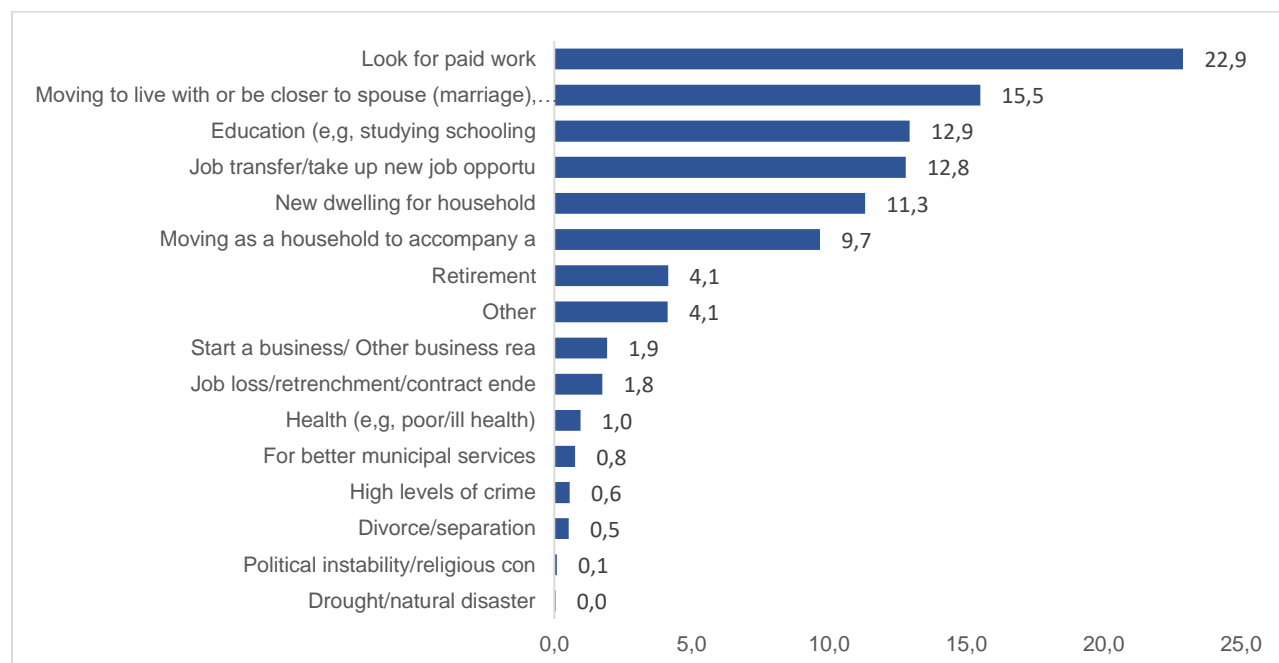
Figure 1.11: Percentage distribution of period out-migration by province, 2011 and 2022



Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 2011 and 2022

Figure 1.12 below presents the main reasons for moving from previous place of residence in 2022. The results indicate that the main reason for migrating is to look for paid work at 22,9%, followed by moving to live with or be closer to spouse at 15,5%. It is also noteworthy to mention that education (12,9%) and job transfer (12,8%) are some of the top reasons for migrating.

Figure 1.12: Main reason for moving previous place of residence, 2022



Source: Stats SA, Census 2022

Internally displaced persons statistics

South Africa is a member of the UN Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons, and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS) which is a multi-stakeholder group mandated by the UN Statistical Commission to develop statistical standards on refugees, IDPS and stateless persons statistics. Since the endorsement of the International Recommendations on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics (IRRS and IRIS), the EGRISS Secretariat has been monitoring their implementation at national, regional, and global levels. For Statistics South Africa, plans are underway to incorporate these new emerging issues into the migration modules.

Challenges in Migration Data Collection

- **Data Gaps:** Issues with data availability, and comparability across surveys, particularly the Community surveys and the census.
- **Limited data sources to address certain migration data requests such as on environmental induced mobility, trafficking in persons, irregular Migration, and the Health of migrants.**
- **Political climate:** Political climate in RSA made it hard to enumerate immigrants in time such as the census 2022. Xenophobic attacks made it more challenging to enumerate immigrants.
- **No migration specific survey in South Africa**

Solutions and Innovations

- **Standardization Efforts:** Efforts by international organizations to standardize data collection methodologies (e.g., UN's International Recommendations on Migration Statistics).
- **Technology and Big Data:** Leveraging mobile phones, social media, satellite imagery, and big data analytics.
- **Development of the Migration and Urbanisation** forum was important to improve stakeholder engagement and to remain relevant in producing migration products that are responsive to data needs.
- **Collaborative Initiatives:** Partnerships between governments, NGOs, and academia for comprehensive data gathering and addressing stakeholder needs. The inclusion of the migration module in the IES 2022, QLFS 2012, 2017 and 2022 highlights that desire to address indicators from developmental strategies such as SDG, IDP.
- **Partnership** with **international** organisations such as IOM, UNHCR, EGRIS, UNFPA SADC and AU. **Capacity Building:** Training and resources to enhance the ability of countries to collect and analyse migration data.

Key Opportunities for the Future

- **Migration Profile report** allowed to enhance and tap into the use of admin data. Creating a platform where more migration related indicators can be addressed.
- **Data Sharing and Collaboration:** Creating more robust platforms for data sharing among international and local entities.
- **Focused Research and Analysis:** Identifying areas where more in-depth research is needed, such as the impact of climate change on migration.

- **Inclusive and Comprehensive Approaches:** Ensuring that data collection methods are inclusive of all migrant groups and capture the full spectrum of migration experiences.

References