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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 from 1 January 2023 up to 29 February 2024. Live births from 2004 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 (UN, 2015).

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). The Act was amended in 2010 as the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act, 2010 (Act No. 18 of 2010). 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 registered after 30 days but before 365 days of occurrence, 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 the information is captured on the National Population Register (NPR). Thereafter, 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).

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 25,3% to 91,3% between 1999 and 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2023). To achieve this remarkable improvement, South Africa had to overcome several obstacles. This was done by creating several mobile programmes that essentially bring social services to communities that live far from urban centres, including birth registration, 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 2023 and February 2024.
- To show a historical pattern of birth occurrence and registration from 2004 to 2023.

## 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 2023 recorded for a period of 14 months, covering January 2023 to February 2024. Additionally, information on late birth registrations – i.e. births that occurred in 2022 and earlier years but were captured between January 2023 and February 2024 – 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 legal guardian.

The total number of birth registrations for the reporting periods 2022 and 2023 are shown in Table 1. As observed from Table 1, birth registrations for the period January 2023 to February 2024 are combined to arrive at the final birth registrations for the analysis in this release. The table indicates that 1 161 420 births were registered between January 2022 and February 2023; of these, 55 551 were late registrations that were analysed in the previous publication. A further 107 507 were subtracted for births registered from January 2022 to February 2023 as these were 2023 births that were already registered when the 2022 data were requested from DHA.

Stats SA received 1 090 204 birth registration data pertaining to the year 2023. Of these, 50 239 were births that occurred earlier than 2023 but were registered from January to February of 2023. These 50 239 records were excluded from the 2023 data as they were reported in the 2022 publication. Furthermore, 107 827 births were removed from 2023 birth registrations as they were 2024 births and will be included in the 2024 recorded live births publication. The total number of births that were registered in the 2023 period (from 01 January 2023 to 29 February 2024) in South Africa was 932 138.

**Table 1 – Birth registrations: 2022–2023**

<b>2022</b>	<b>Number of birth registrations</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 2022 to February 2023	107 507
	<b>998 362</b>
<b>2023</b>	
Total births registered from January 2023 to February 2024	1 090 204
Births for 2022 and earlier years registered in January to February 2023	50 239
	<b>1 039 965</b>
Less 2024 births registered from January 2023 to February 2024	107 827
	<b>932 138</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 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 (1964). 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. The number of births obtained from the registration system for 2011 and 2022 is one set of data input for this method.

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, Census 2011 and Census 2022. The second adjustment done was for the CEB for age groups 40–44 and 45–49 years by a factor due to observed underreporting of CEB in the 2022 census in these age groups. The female data from both censuses were 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 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 2019 to 2023. 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 throughout 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. The increase attests to improving services in 2021 due to easing of restrictions during the pandemic. In 2023 registrations that occurred within 30 days were 0,7% more than that of 2019, which was before the national lockdown. Almost a quarter (24,7%) 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, 2019–2023**

Number of days/years	Number of birth registrations					Percentage*					Cumulative percentage*				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
0–30 days	840 746	710 814	811 622	778 716	752 412	80,0	70,8	74,6	78,0	80,7	80,0	70,8	74,6	78,0	80,7
31–364 days	132 367	248 209	214 578	157 565	116 335	12,6	24,7	19,7	15,8	12,5	92,6	95,6	94,4	93,8	93,2
1–14 years	50 580	31 332	44 278	44 456	49 770	4,8	3,1	4,1	4,5	5,3	97,4	98,7	98,4	98,2	98,5
15 years and older	27 618	12 952	17 048	17 625	13 621	2,6	1,3	1,6	1,8	1,5	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 051 311</b>	<b>1 003 307</b>	<b>1 087 526</b>	<b>998 362</b>	<b>932 138</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 2019 to 2023 are shown in Table 3. A year-on-year increase is observed in the number of births registered within 30 days over the period 2020–2021 (14,2%) from -15,5% in the period 2019–2020, then it decreased to -4,1% in 2021–2022 and decreased further to -3,4% in 2022–2023. 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 births in South Africa had decreased for the years 2022–2023 by 6,6%.

**Table 3 – Year-on-year changes in the number of days/years it took to register the birth, 2019–2023**

Number of days/years	Number of birth registrations					Percentage changes			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
0–30 days	840 746	710 814	811 622	778 716	752 412	-15,5	14,2	-4,1	-3,4
31–364 days	132 367	248 209	214 578	157 565	116 335	87,5	-13,5	-26,6	-26,2
1–14 years	50 580	31 332	44 278	44 456	49 770	-38,1	41,3	0,4	12,0
15 years and older	27 618	12 952	17 048	17 625	13 621	-53,1	31,6	3,4	-22,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 051 311</b>	<b>1 003 307</b>	<b>1 087 526</b>	<b>998 362</b>	<b>932 138</b>	<b>-4,6</b>	<b>8,4</b>	<b>-8,2</b>	<b>-6,6</b>

### 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 2023 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 were recorded in March 2023 for all data sources, and the highest number was captured in the DHIS (80 367). The lowest number of birth occurrences was recorded in the DHA (direct connect) in November, with only 61 886 births. Generally, the pattern across the three data sources is consistent from month to month.

**Table 4 – Data confrontation: 2023**

Birth month	DHIS	DHA (direct connect) as at 29 February 2024	DHA (SITA) as at 1 July 2024
January	79 211	77 655	78 366
February	70 299	68 400	68 858
March	80 367	79 624	80 228
April	76 713	74 095	74 819
May	77 818	75 926	76 867
June	74 160	71 810	72 903
July	72 665	69 389	70 661
August	74 139	70 632	72 078
September	74 557	70 886	72 529
October	68 301	64 161	65 776
November	66 149	61 886	63 788
December	68 865	63 873	66 574

### 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. Analysis was 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 2004 and 2023. 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 2004 to 2023 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 2004 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, 2017, 2022 and 2023. 2004 had the highest number of birth registrations compared to any other year at 1 475 809. It is also worth noting that in the periods 2016–2019 and 2022–2023, 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 a high of 50,7% in 2004 to a low of 9,0% in 2023. 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: 2004–2023**

Year of registration	Number of birth registrations			Percentage		
	Total	Current	Late	Total	Current	Late
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
2023	932 138	848 337	83 801	100,0	91,0	9,0

Figure 1 provides graphic information on birth registrations for the period 2004 to 2023, categorised by status of registration. A high proportion of total birth registrations was observed in 2004, 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 and 2019 and in 2021, followed by a decline in 2022 to 2023. In 2004 late and current registrations were somewhat equivalent, with slightly more late birth registrations. From 2005, current birth registrations were consistently higher than late registrations.

**Figure 1 – Birth registrations by status of registration, South Africa: 2004–2023**

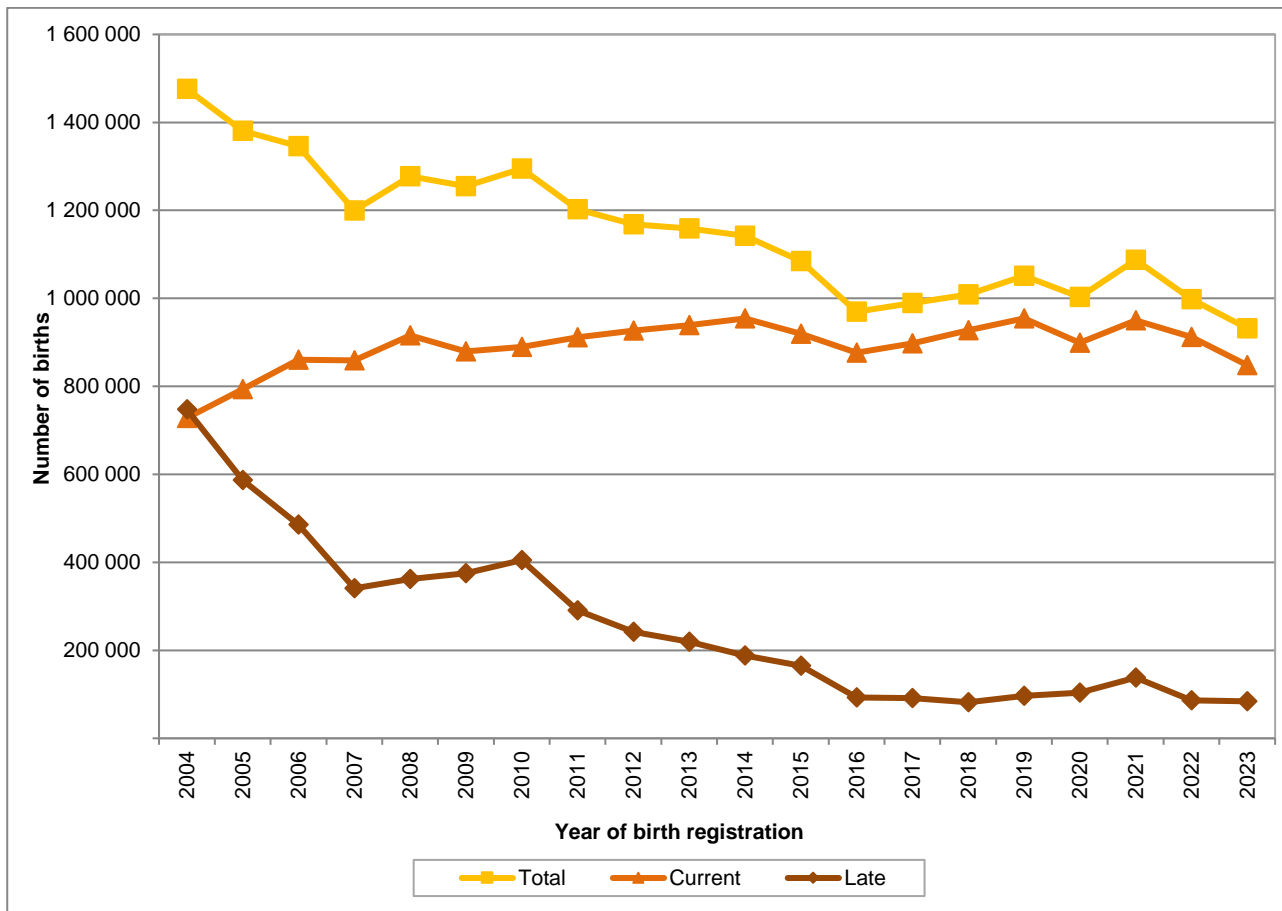
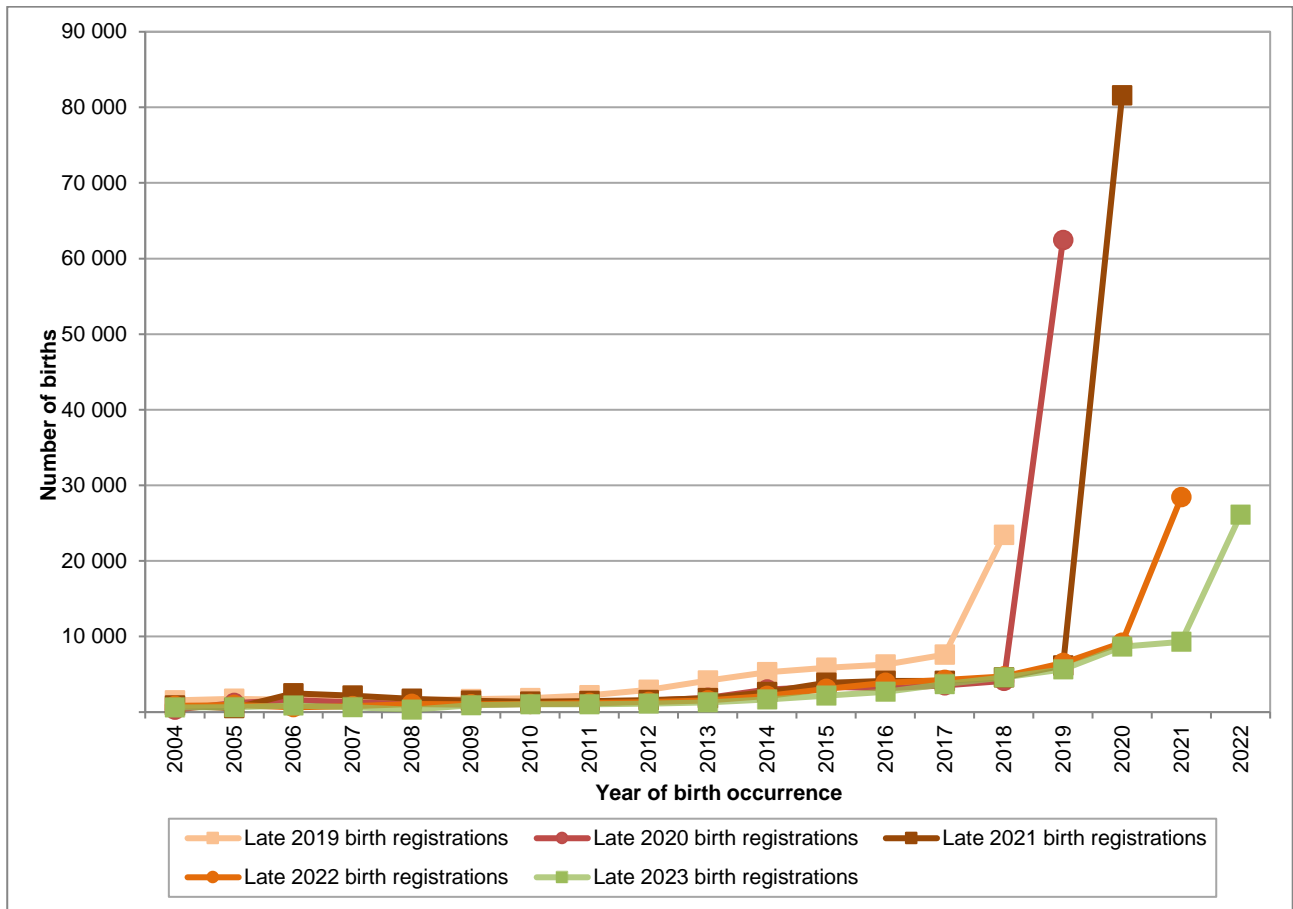


Figure 2 presents the overall number of late birth registrations between 2019 and 2023 for births that occurred during the years 2004 to 2023. This is also indicative of the success of efforts by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to expedite birth registrations in line with the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act and integrated efforts towards universal and early birth registration.

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, 2023, the highest number of late registrations (26 100) is from 2022 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: 2004–2023**



### 3.2 Birth registrations by selected variables

#### 3.2.1 Age of the mother

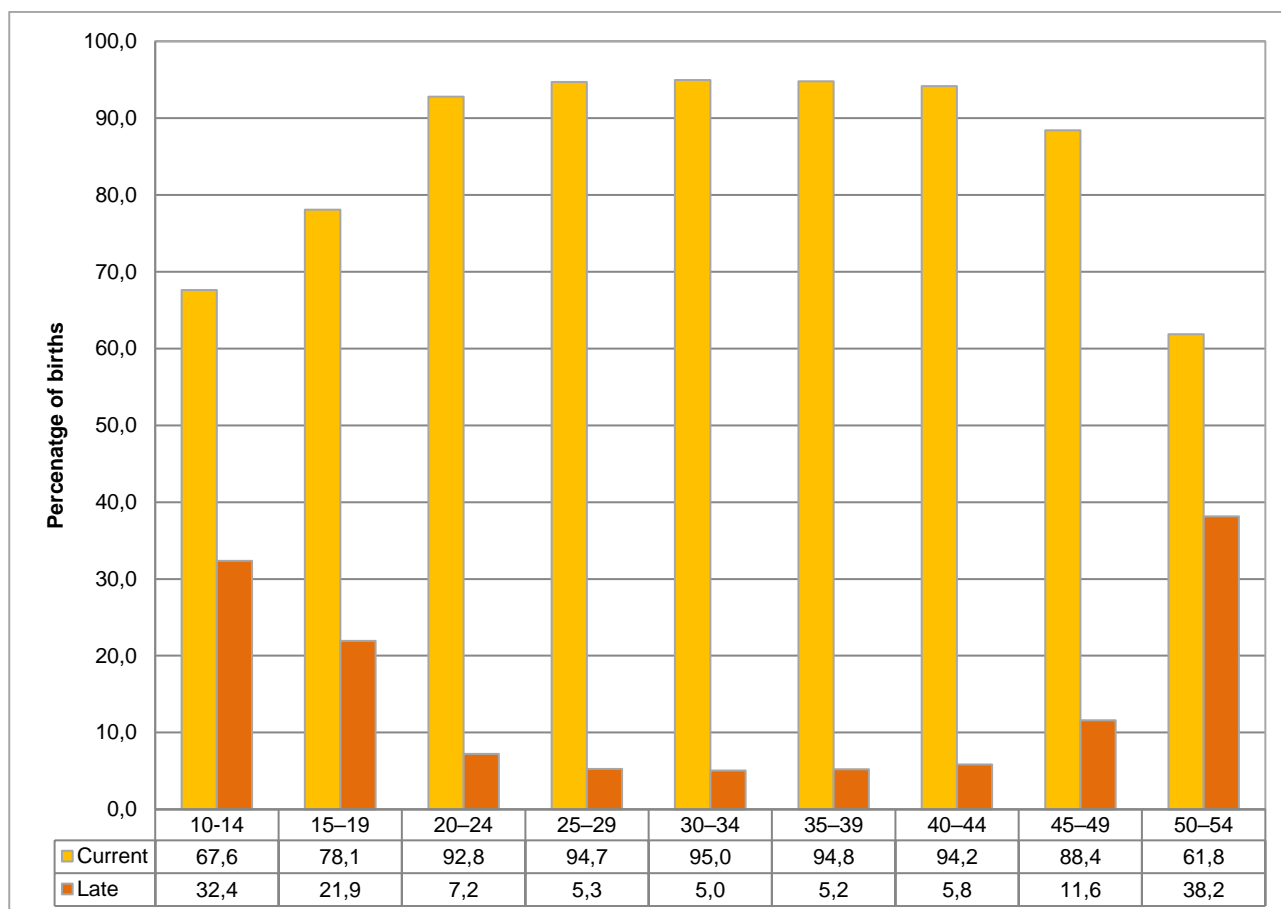
Table 6 describes the number and percentage distribution of registered births by age of the mother and status of registration. The table shows that mothers aged 25–29 years accounted for the highest number of total birth registrations (224 081), followed by those aged 30–34 years and 20–24 years at 200 301 and 198 314 respectively. The lowest number of birth registrations (173) was for mothers aged 50–54 years.

**Table 6 – Birth registrations by age of mother and status of registration, South Africa: 2023**

Age of mother	Number of birth registrations			Percentage		
	Total	Current	Late	Total	Current	Late
10–14	3 417	2 311	1 106	100,0	67,6	32,4
15–19	128 192	100 095	28 097	100,0	78,1	21,9
20–24	198 314	183 990	14 324	100,0	92,8	7,2
25–29	224 081	212 256	11 825	100,0	94,7	5,3
30–34	200 301	190 186	10 115	100,0	95,0	5,0
35–39	127 010	120 396	6 614	100,0	94,8	5,2
40–44	38 650	36 391	2 259	100,0	94,2	5,8
45–49	2 702	2 389	313	100,0	88,4	11,6
50–54	173	107	66	100,0	61,8	38,2
Unspecified/outside the 10–54 age range	9 298	216	9 082	100,0	2,3	97,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>932 138</b>	<b>848 337</b>	<b>83 801</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>91,0</b>	<b>9,0</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. Age group 50–54 years followed by 10–14 and 15-19 years had the highest proportion of late birth registrations (above 20,0%). The figure also depicts that current birth registrations increase as the mother’s age increases until the age group 30–34 years, after which current birth registrations decrease with the increasing age of the mother.

**Figure 3 – Birth registrations by age of mother and status of registration, South Africa: 2023**





### 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 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 2023 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 were registered in Gauteng (219 023), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (205 831), Limpopo (114 688) and Eastern Cape (101 901). For other provinces, total birth registrations were below 100 000. 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 175 577, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 151 001 and Limpopo at 102 325. Northern Cape had the lowest number of births registered within 30 days at 20 094. KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of births registered within 31–364 days at 37 495, followed by Gauteng at 16 661.

**Figure 4 – Number of birth registrations by province of birth registration and status of registration, South Africa: 2023**

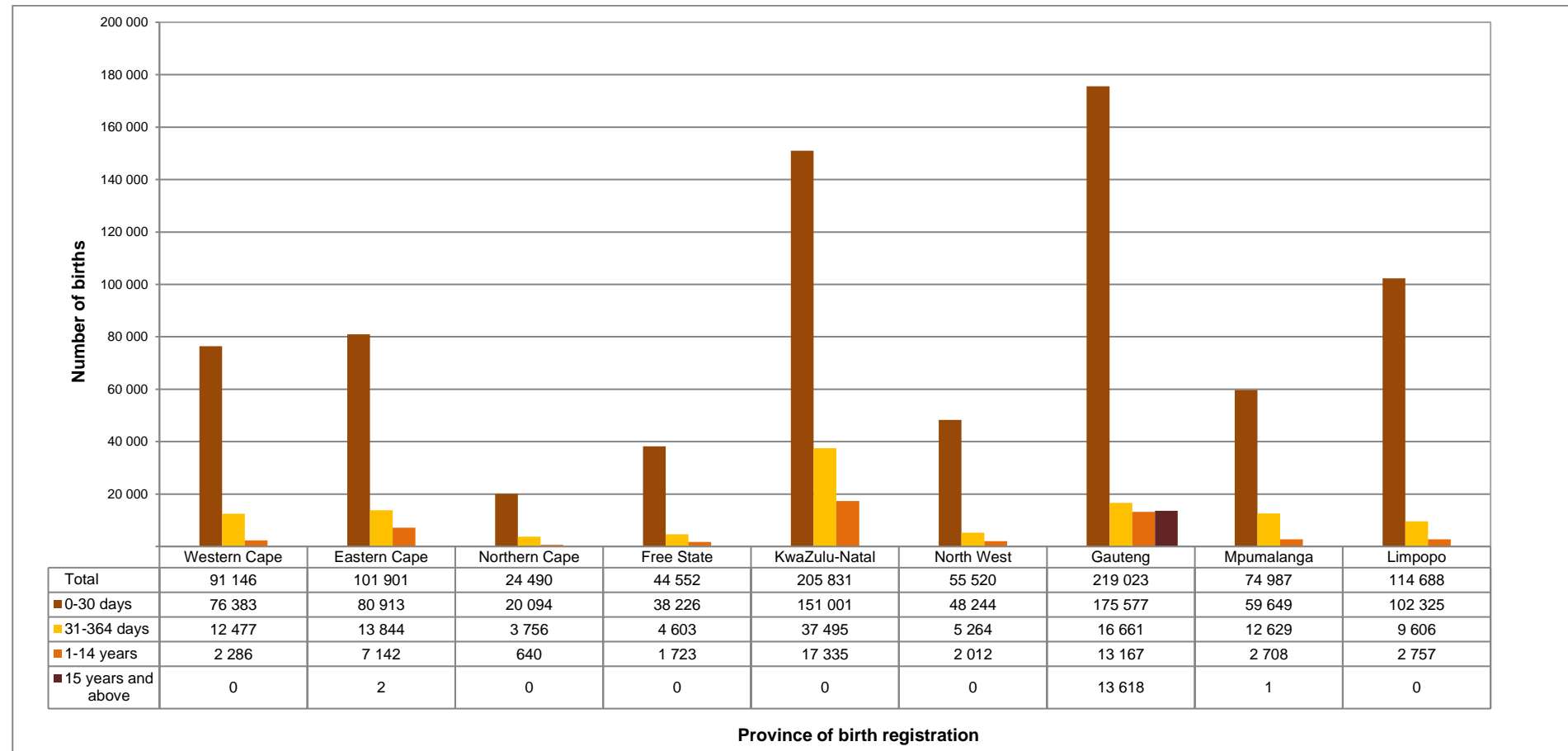
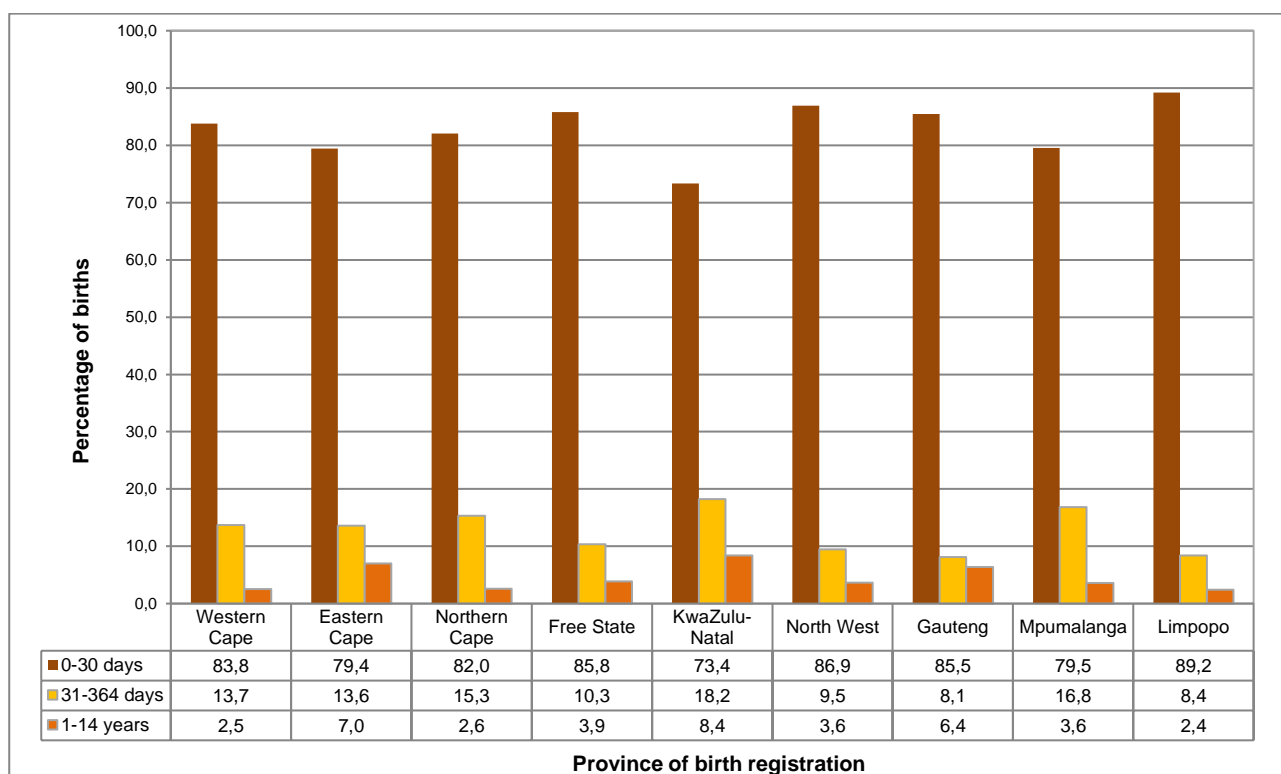


Figure 5 shows the percentage distribution of all registered birth occurrences in 2023 by province of birth registration and status of registration. The figure shows that Limpopo (89,2%) had the highest proportion of birth registrations within 30 days, followed by North West (86,9%) and Free State (85,8%) in second and third place, respectively. The province with the lowest proportion of registrations within 30 days was KwaZulu-Natal at 73,4%; conversely, it had the highest proportion of births registered within 31–364 days at 18,2% and 8,4% of births registered within 1–14 years. In general, birth registration timelines follow a similar pattern across all provinces as observed from previous years.

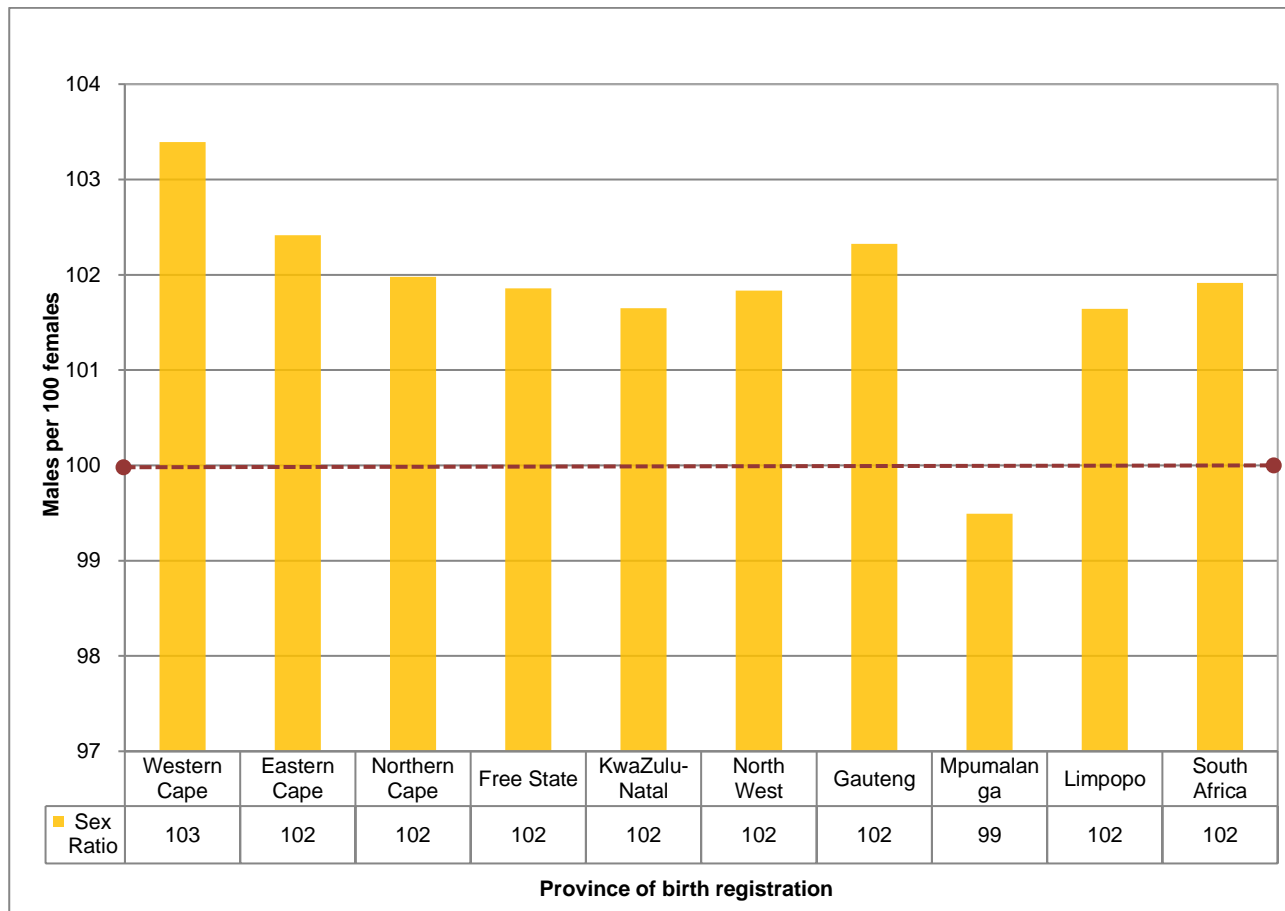
**Figure 5 – Percentage of birth registrations by province of birth registration and status of registration, South Africa: 2023**



**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 2023. Seven provinces, with the exception of Western Cape and Mpumalanga – had the same sex ratio (102) as the national ratio. Western Cape had the highest sex ratio with 103 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations, while Mpumalanga had the lowest ratio with 99 male birth registrations per 100 female birth registrations.

**Figure 6 – Sex ratios by province of birth registration, South Africa: 2023**



\*Sex ratios have been rounded off.

#### 4. Birth occurrences

This section covers data on birth occurrences as reported from two sources. Firstly, it profiles birth occurrences based on transaction files received by Stats SA from DHA using a cloud service solution. Secondly, it profiles 2023 birth occurrences obtained from SITA printout as at 1 July 2024. 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 the SITA printout was 1 July 2024, while the cut-off date for the transaction files from direct connect was 29 February 2024. 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 29 February 2024, and updated birth occurrences as at 1 July 2024 for the period 2004 to 2023. It is observed that by 29 February 2024, a total of 848 337 births that occurred in 2023 were registered, increasing to 863 447 by 1 July 2024. This indicates that between 29 February 2024 and 1 July 2024, the national birth register was updated by 15 110 births that occurred in 2023. 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 2004–2023 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 1 July for each observation period exceed those from February of the same observation period, with the exception of 2019 and as mentioned in previous publications.

**Table 7 – Birth occurrences by year of birth and reference period, South Africa: 2004–2023**

Year of birth occurrence	Birth occurrences	Updated birth occurrences
	(as at 29 Feb 2024)	(as at 1 Jul 2024)
2004	1 020 941	1 030 202
2005	1 068 050	1 071 906
2006	1 098 516	1 103 581
2007	1 084 776	1 089 522
2008	1 103 581	1 113 041
2009	1 041 276	1 062 077
2010	1 032 175	1 035 509
2011	1 041 366	1 044 539
2012	1 037 800	1 045 083
2013	1 031 283	1 032 259
2014	1 033 289	1 036 533
2015	984 492	987 424
2016	930 008	930 435
2017	944 171	944 727
2018	968 560	981 870
2019	1 035 261	993 478
2020	998 701	1 015 904
2021	987 463	1 011 245
2022	938 086	945 663
2023	848 337	863 447
<b>Average over 20 years</b>	<b>1 011 407</b>	<b>1 016 922</b>

#### 4.1 Birth occurrences as at 29 February 2024

Table 8 shows the number of births that occurred over the period between 2004 and 2023, 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 diagonal 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 2024.

The total number of births that occurred and were registered in 2023 was 848 337. 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 2024) by year of birth occurrence and year of birth registration, South Africa: 2004–2023**

Year of birth registration	Year of birth occurrence																			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2004	728 283																			
2005	150 546	793 788																		
2006	54 941	154 331	860 263																	
2007	26 769	42 569	126 358	858 866																
2008	17 869	23 732	40 554	128 336	915 674															
2009	11 793	14 208	19 510	31 885	101 743	879 707														
2010	7 623	10 566	13 736	19 323	30 164	91 064	889 691													
2011	4 763	7 298	10 111	12 628	16 091	23 665	80 079	911 353												
2012	3 301	4 578	6 599	9 104	10 776	13 065	21 005	74 374	926 726											
2013	2 800	3 590	4 742	6 914	9 018	9 938	12 978	21 023	66 775	939 011										
2014	2 261	2 673	3 241	4 122	6 039	7 390	8 418	10 898	16 147	55 202	954 385									
2015	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	1 084	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	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	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	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	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	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	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	
2023	609	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
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 020 941</b>	<b>1 068 050</b>	<b>1 098 516</b>	<b>1 084 776</b>	<b>1 103 581</b>	<b>1 041 276</b>	<b>1 032 175</b>	<b>1 041 366</b>	<b>1 037 800</b>	<b>1 031 283</b>	<b>1 033 289</b>	<b>984 492</b>	<b>930 008</b>	<b>944 171</b>	<b>968 560</b>	<b>1 035 261</b>	<b>998 701</b>	<b>987 463</b>	<b>938 086</b>	<b>848 337</b>

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

According to the Births and Deaths Registration Amendment Act, 2010 (Act No. 18 of 2010), all births must be registered within 30 days of birth. A birth can be registered at DHA offices by a parent, guardian or any other person legally responsible for the child. 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 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. Registration of birth after 30 days is considered a late registration and additional requirements apply.

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 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 752 412 births that occurred in 2023 were registered within 30 days from the date of occurrence. Proportionally, 88,7% of births that occurred in 2023 were registered within the 30-day period.

The month of May had the highest number of births (71 235) that were registered within 30 days of occurrence, followed by March (69 357) and September (66 023).



**Table 9 – Number of births registered within 30 days of occurrence by month of birth occurrence and month of birth registration, South Africa: 2023**

Month of birth registration	Month of birth occurrence												Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
January	45 440												45 440
February	20 798	38 537											59 335
March	73	19 601	49 683										69 357
April			18 146	38 596									56 742
May				24 641	46 594								71 235
June					19 537	45 592							65 129
July						17 911	44 416						62 327
August							17 222	47 880					65 102
September								15 524	45 395				60 919
October									19 129	46 894			66 023
November										12 779	46 373		59 152
December											11 774	45 788	57 562
January												14 089	14 089
<b>Total</b>	<b>66 311</b>	<b>58 138</b>	<b>67 829</b>	<b>63 237</b>	<b>66 131</b>	<b>63 503</b>	<b>61 638</b>	<b>63 404</b>	<b>64 524</b>	<b>59 673</b>	<b>58 147</b>	<b>59 877</b>	<b>752 412</b>

#### 4.2.1 Age of the mother for births occurring in 2023

Table 10 shows the distribution of births occurring in 2023 by age of the mother. It is observed that women aged 25–29 had the highest percentage of births (25,0%), followed by women aged 30–34 (22,4%) and 20–24 (21,7%). Mothers aged 10–14 and 45–54, including mothers with unspecified age, accounted for a lower proportion of births (0,3%).

**Table 10 – Number and percentage of births by age of mother, South Africa: 2023**

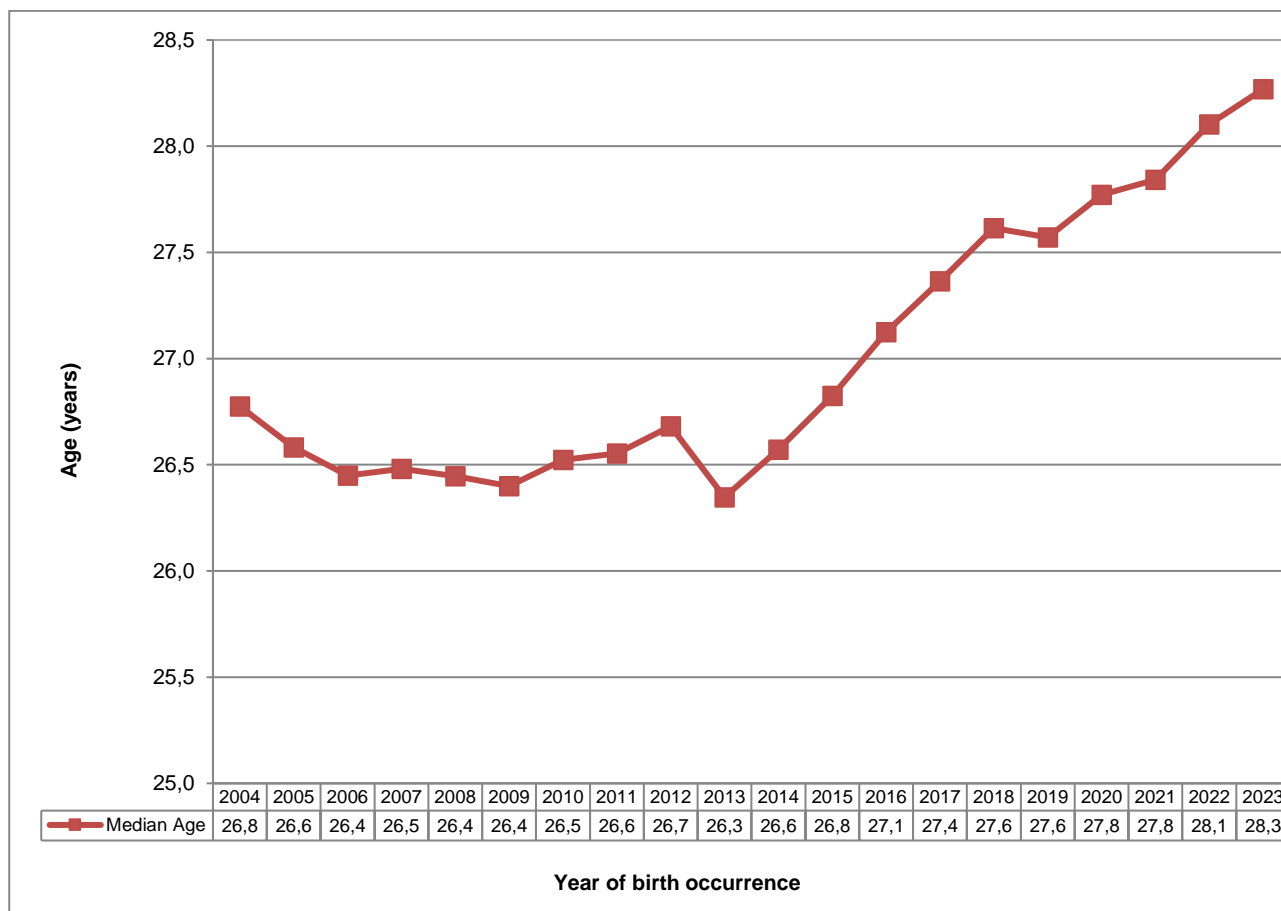
Age of mother	Number of birth occurrences	Percentage
10–14	2 311	0,3
15–19	100 095	11,8
20–24	183 990	21,7
25–29	212 256	25,0
30–34	190 186	22,4
35–39	120 396	14,2
40–44	36 391	4,3
45–49	2 389	0,3
50–54	107	0,0
Unspecified/outside the 10–54 age range	216	0,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>848 337</b>	<b>100,0</b>

#### 4.2.2 Median age of mothers from 2004 to 2023

The median age of mothers, i.e. the age at which half of 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 2004 and 2023 (updated with late registrations). It is observed that, on average, the median ages of mothers for the years 2004 to 2023 ranged from 26 to 28 years.

The median age in 2004 was 26,8 years and steadily declined to 26,4 years in 2009. There was a slight increase from 26,5 years in 2010 to 26,7 years in 2012, while reaching the lowest in 2013 at 26,3 years. A notable increase in the median ages of mothers was observed from 2016, where the median age of mothers constantly increased from 27,1 years to 28,3 in 2023.

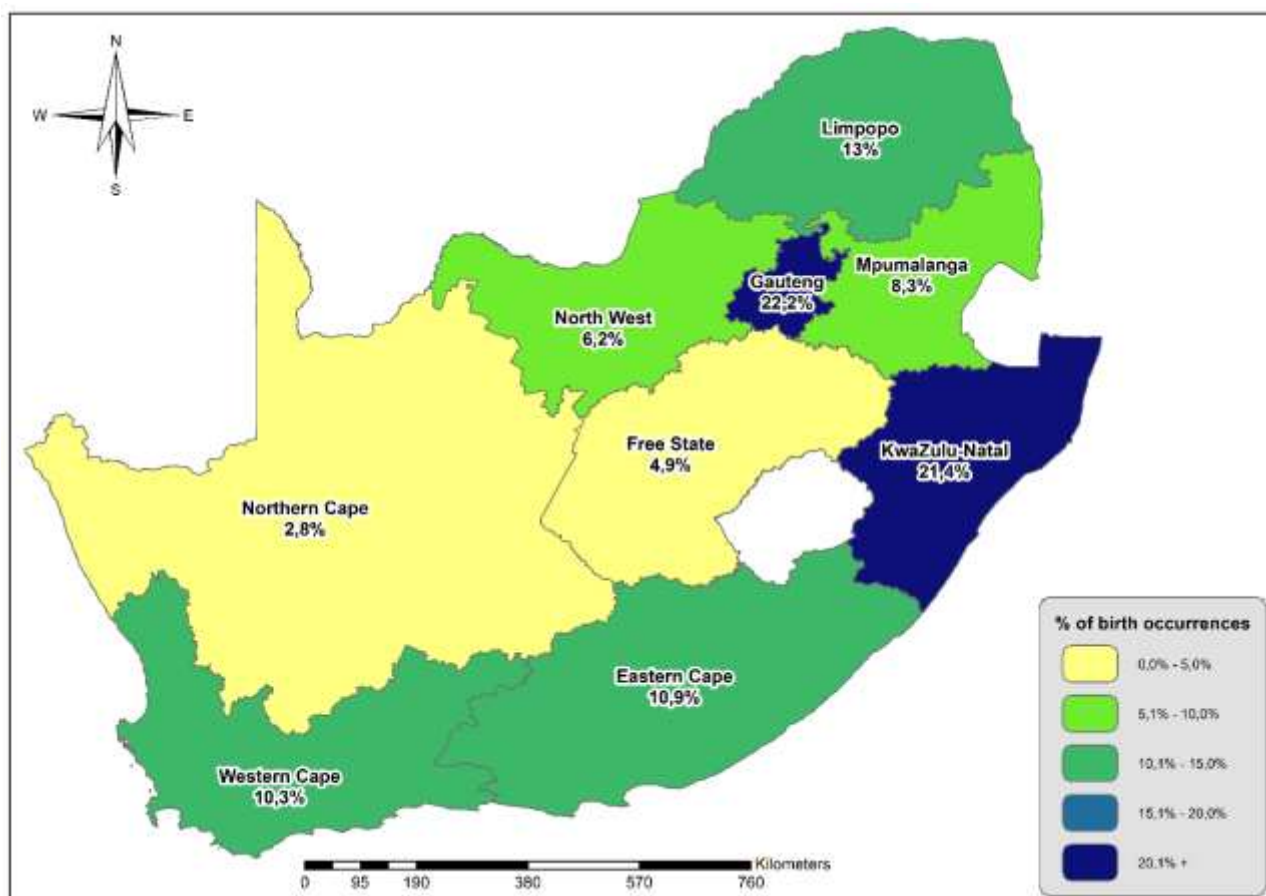
**Figure 7 – Median age of mother by year of birth, South Africa: 2004–2023**



**4.2.3 Provincial distribution of births, 2023**

The distribution of 2023 birth occurrences by province where the birth was registered is depicted in Figure 8. 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 at 22,2% and 21,4%, respectively, followed by Limpopo at 13,0%. The provinces with lower birth registrations in 2023 were Northern Cape at 2,8% and Free State at 4,9% of birth registrations. The patterns are similar to those recorded for 2022.

**Figure 8 – Birth occurrences by province of birth registration, South Africa: 2023**



**4.3 Birth occurrences as at 1 July 2024**

This sub-section reports on birth occurrences extracted from the national birth register on 31 July 2024, 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 20 338 445 million births occurred in South Africa between 2004 and 2023, with an average of 1 016 922 births per year over the 20-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 2023 at 863 447.

### 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 2004 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; however, in 2018 the sex ratio dropped to 100, indicating that there was a male child birth for every female child birth. In the period 2019–2023 the sex ratio at birth remained at 102 male births per 100 female births.

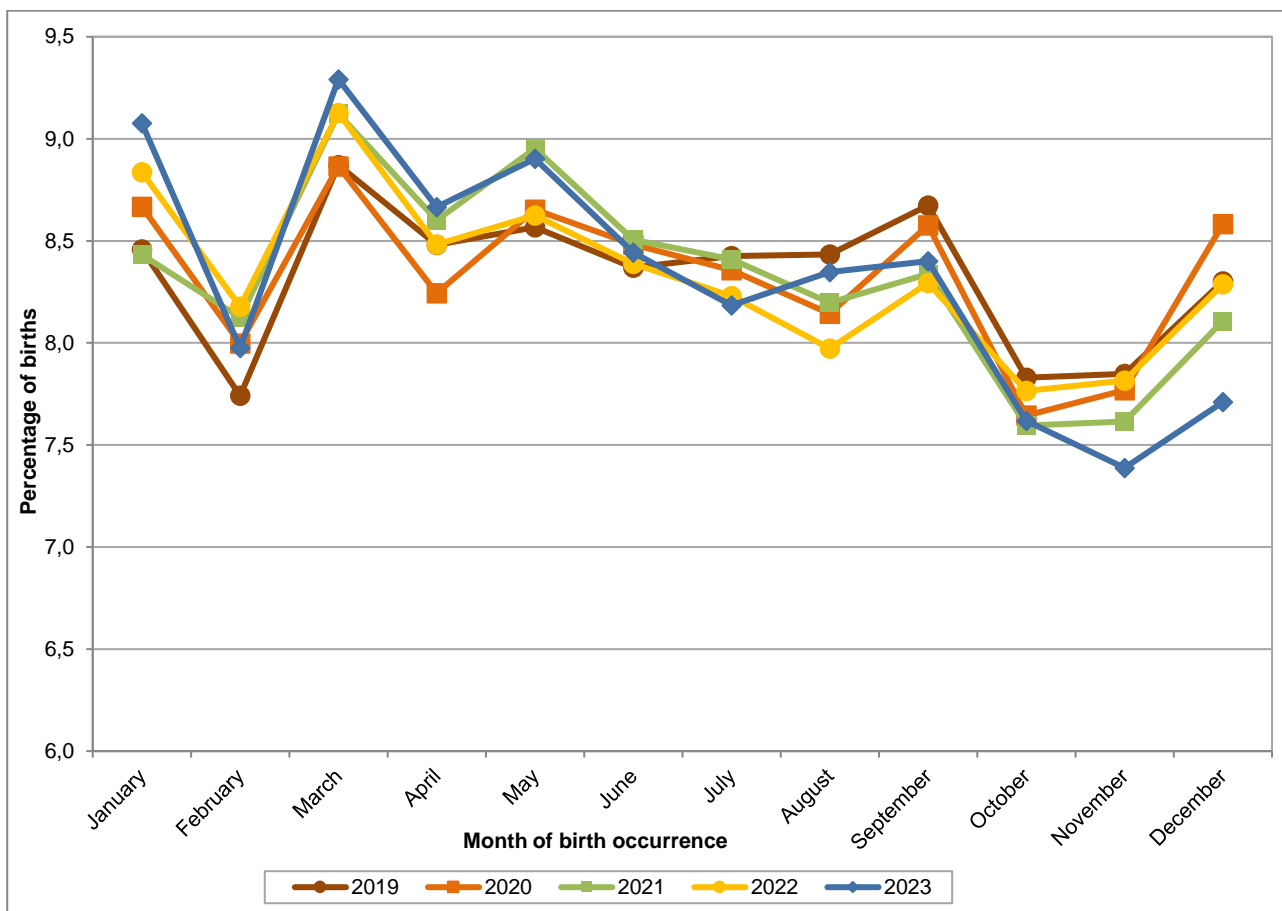
**Table 11 – Birth occurrences (as at 1 July 2024) by sex and year of birth, South Africa: 2004–2023**

Year	Total	Male	Female	Sex ratio
2004	1 030 202	517 856	512 346	101
2005	1 071 906	539 210	532 696	101
2006	1 103 581	554 320	549 261	101
2007	1 089 522	548 495	541 027	101
2008	1 113 041	559 796	553 245	101
2009	1 062 077	534 640	527 437	101
2010	1 035 509	522 377	513 132	102
2011	1 044 539	526 851	517 688	102
2012	1 045 083	527 149	517 934	102
2013	1 032 259	520 951	511 308	102
2014	1 036 533	522 935	513 598	102
2015	987 424	497 581	489 843	102
2016	930 435	470 046	460 389	102
2017	944 727	476 604	468 123	102
2018	981 870	490 859	491 011	100
2019	993 478	501 249	492 229	102
2020	1 015 904	512 740	503 164	102
2021	1 011 245	509 616	501 629	102
2022	945 663	476 855	468 808	102
2023	863 447	435 614	427 833	102
<b>Total</b>	<b>20 338 445</b>	<b>10 245 744</b>	<b>10 092 701</b>	<b>102</b>

### 4.3.2 Month of birth as at 1 July 2024

Figure 9 shows the percentage distribution of birth occurrences by month of birth for the five years 2019–2023, updated as at 31 July 2024. 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 both 2022 and 2023 the second most common month of birth occurrence was January, a departure from the previous years where May was the second-highest month. The proportion of births occurring during January and March was also much higher than the pattern seen in previous years.

**Figure 9 – Percentage distribution of birth occurrences as at 1 July 2024 by year and month of birth, South Africa: 2019–2023**



### 4.4 Baby forenames and surnames in South Africa, 2023

A person’s forename and surname are 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 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, 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 distribution of the top ten baby forenames and surnames for 2023. Among males, the top three most common first names were Lethabo, followed by Nkazimulo and Lubanzi. The most common first names for females were Onalerona in first place, Melokuhle in second place and Lisakhanya as the third most common. Melokuhle, Lethabo and Omphile appeared on both the male and female top ten list. Junior and Precious were the leading second names among males and females, respectively. It is also worth noting that the majority of second names for both males and females were in English, as opposed to native language first names.

Table 12 further shows that for both sexes, Dlamini was the most common baby surname in 2023, closely followed by Ndlovu and Nkosi. It is also noteworthy that nine of the surnames were from the Nguni clans, namely Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swati. 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 in South Africa, 2023**

Rank	Male				Female				Both sexes	
	First name	Number	Second name	Number	First name	Number	Second name	Number	Surname	Number
1	Lethabo	2 965	Junior	8 125	Onalerona	2 836	Precious	3 544	Dlamini	6 433
2	Nkazimulo	2 377	Blessing	4 174	Melokuhle	2 463	Princess	2 866	Ndlovu	5 590
3	Lubanzi	2 249	Gift	2 789	Lisakhanya	2 298	Blessing	2 636	Nkosi	5 526
4	Nkanyezi	1 890	Prince	2 009	Zanokuhle	2 273	Angel	2 173	Khumalo	5 394
5	Langelihle	1 874	Nkazimulo	1 606	Lethabo	2 093	Faith	2 058	Sithole	4 490
6	Lethokuhle	1 656	Nkanyezi	1 472	Lesedi	2 010	Hope	2 038	Mkhize	3 808
7	Junior	1 640	Lubanzi	1 442	Omphile	1 909	Lisakhanya	1 371	Mokoena	3 750
8	Melokuhle	1 614	Jayden	1 398	Amahle	1 778	Zanokuhle	1 339	Mthembu	3 407
9	Siphosethu	1 607	Lethabo	1 295	Naledi	1 771	Grace	1 307	Ngcobo	3 396
10	Omphile	1 606	Siphosethu	1 265	Nkanyezi	1 694	Nkanyezi	1 230	Gumede	3 311

## 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 (United Nations [UN], 2015).

This statistical release provided information on birth registrations and occurrences in South Africa for 2023. In addition, information for the period 2004 to 2022 was analysed to review trends on birth registrations and occurrences. A total of 932 138 births were registered in 2023. This reflects a decline of 66 224 from the 998 362 births registered in 2022.

The findings also show that 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. Only Western Cape's sex ratio was 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 20–29 years, while fewer occurred to women aged 50–54 years.

Provincial distributions show that the highest birth occurrences were in Gauteng (22,2%) and KwaZulu-Natal (21,4%), 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 6,2%.

In 2023, 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. 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

Stats SA 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 excludes 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. 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**

Current birth registrations refer to 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**

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.

## 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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