CENSUS 2022

A profile of education enrolment, attainment and progression in South Africa

Report no. 03-01-81

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS

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Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

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For technical enquiries please contact:
Seble Worku
Tel.: 012 310 8480
Email: seblew@statssa.gov.za

Table of content

List of figures

List of tables

List of maps

Abbreviations and acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET	Adult Education and Training
CET	Community Education and Training
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further education and training
GHS	General Household Survey
GER	The gross enrolment ratio
GPI	Gender parity index
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MTSF	Medium-Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan Vision
NET	Net Enrolment Rate
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NQF	National Qualification Framework
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programmes
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

WC	Western Cape
EC	Eastern Cape
NC	Northern Cape
FS	Free State
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NW	North West
GP	Gauteng
MP	Mpumalanga
LP	Limpopo
RSA	South Africa

Glossary of concepts

Terms	Definitions/description
Census year	Census year is a year in which a census is conducted to count ever resident in the country
Disability	A physical or mental handicap which has lasted for six months or more, or is expected to last at least six months, and which prevents the person from carrying out daily activities independently or from participating fully in educational, economic or social activities. Disability is a lack of ability relative to a personal or group standard. It includes mental disability, physical disability or impairment of the senses (hearing, seeing, walking, smelling, touching). The disability can be the result of a defect at birth, a chronic illness or an accident.
Early childhood development (ECD)	The process of emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical and social and communication development of children from birth to school-going age. In South Africa this usually refers to the age group 0–6 years.
Gross Enrolment Ratio	The total enrolment within a country in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Gender parity index	GPI is defined as GER for females divided by GER for males. This index is used to indicate the level of access to education that females have, compared to the level of access that males have.
Net Enrolment Rate	the ratio of official school age individuals enrolled in a specific level of education, to the total population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Foreword

Since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the country has grappled with the challenge of integrating its previously marginalised and oppressed majority into a new educational system. Substantial strides have been made in education reforms, including the establishment of no-fee schools, school nutrition programs, improved access to scholar transport, implementation of the child support grant, and introduction of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), all of which have had a significantly positive impact on enrolment, particularly among previously disadvantaged groups.

Attendance of early childhood development programs for children aged 0–4 has seen a remarkable increase from 12,2% in 2001 to 60,2% in 2022. Notably, Western Cape and Gauteng showed the highest percentages of children attending such facilities in 2022, at 69,6% and 66,4%, respectively. However, across census years 2001, 2011, and 2022, gross enrolment in schools (GER) among black Africans remained high, possibly due to enrolments that include students older or younger than the official age group. Provinces with late school entry ages also exhibited very high GER levels in 2022, such as Limpopo (119,6%), KwaZulu-Natal (114,6%), Eastern Cape (114,0%), and Mpumalanga (114,0%). Conversely, Western Cape had a GER below 100%, indicating a closer alignment with the official age group for students.

Over two decades, the gender gap in GER for tertiary education widened to ten percentage points. Net enrolment ratios (NER) varied considerably by sex in primary and tertiary education. In 2022, primary school education recorded the highest overall NER (80,0%), with girls lagging behind boys by 3,1 percentage points (78,5% for girls and 81,6% for boys). The gender gap narrowed at secondary school level to 0,6 percentage points but widened notably at tertiary level, with females having higher NER levels (30,3%) compared to males (20,9%). Additionally, Indian/Asian and white learners were more likely to enrol at each level according to official age guidelines than other population groups.

Despite significant progress over the past two decades, universal completion of secondary education remains elusive. Among individuals aged 25 years and older, the attainment of at least secondary education increased from 21,5% in 1996 to 48,1% in 2022. Notably, the black African population saw substantial gains, with the percentage of individuals aged 25 and older with only primary education or less declining from around 57,9% in 1996 to 22,2% in 2022. Furthermore, secondary education achievement among black Africans more than tripled from 9,4% in 1996 to 34,7% in 2022.

The gender gap in tertiary education achievement nearly closed by 2022, with the percentage of females surpassing that of males (8,6% in 1996 to 12,3% in 2022 for males and 6,7% in 1996 to 13,1% for females). Disparities in educational attainment between more urbanised regions and others persisted from 1996 to 2022, with Western Cape and Gauteng leading in the percentage of graduates with tertiary education.

Although significant strides have been made with access to and achievement of education, much remains to be done to address gross inequities for people with disabilities. The percentage of individuals with disabilities who completed secondary education increased by nearly 18 percentage points, from 5,8% in 1996 to 23,7% in 2022. Similarly, the percentage of individuals with disabilities who achieved tertiary education increased by almost 10 percentage points, from 2,6% in 1996 to 12,1% in 2022. However, the achievement gap remained wide between individuals with and without disabilities, with approximately 34,1% and 19,5%, respectively, having only primary education or less.

Analysis of progression ratios revealed significant inequalities among population groups in the transition from secondary education to the completion of a bachelor's degree. Coloureds and black Africans had the lowest proportions of individuals completing bachelor's degrees after secondary education. In 2022, the attainment of bachelor's degrees for these population groups resembled that of the white population in the 1960s.

Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Freedom Charter of 1955 and the Bill of Rights in 1996 enshrined education as a fundamental human right in South Africa. Following the end of apartheid, the country faced the formidable challenges of integrating its previously marginalised and oppressed majority population into a new educational system. This necessitated extensive reforms through initiatives like the Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP), with a particular focus on the education sector. The overarching goal was to establish an inclusive system of education and training that offered equal opportunities to all individuals, regardless of race, sex, class, language, age, religion, geographical location, political beliefs, or other factors. The envisioned system aimed to bring about both qualitative and quantitative improvements in educational outcomes through reforms in school curricula, education policies, norms, and standards.

Key initiatives such as the introduction of no-fee schools, school nutrition programs, access to scholar transport, and the child support grant significantly boosted enrolment rates, especially among previously disadvantaged population groups. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) aligned well with South Africa's development strategies, with the two education-related targets providing valuable guidance for progress in education. Notably, South Africa made considerable strides in achieving universal access to primary and secondary education. However, challenges persisted, particularly regarding the completion of secondary education, as early school leaving remained a prevalent issue. While school attendance was high among children within the compulsory school age bracket (ages 7–15), younger children often found themselves excluded from the education system.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global development agenda spanning from 2015 to 2030 continue the trajectory set by the MDGs. This new framework emphasizes the measurement of access to early childhood education (ECD) for young children, recognising it as the foundation upon which all subsequent levels of education are built. In 2015, South Africa approved the Integrated Early Childhood Development policy, signalling a commitment to comprehensive early childhood care and education. Furthermore, the government pledged to universalize the Reception Year (Grade R) and incorporate it into the foundation phase of primary education. In 2022, the responsibility for the provision of ECD programs shifted from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education, underscoring the importance of early childhood education within the broader education framework.

1.2 Monitoring progress in education

South Africa unveiled the National Development Plan Vision for 2030 (NDP) in 2011, serving as a comprehensive roadmap to address the nation's challenges and outline its long-term aspirations. While some education targets were clearly defined in 2011, others remained less specific. The NDP aims to achieve the following targets by 2030:

- Ensure that all children receive at least 2 years of pre-school education.
- Attain a 90 percent literacy rate in grades 3, 6, and 9, with 50 percent or more achieving proficiency in literacy, mathematics, and science.
- Increase the completion rate of 12 years of schooling or vocational education to between 80 and 90 percent, with at least 80 percent passing exit exams successfully.
- Eliminate infrastructure deficiencies in schools by 2016, ensuring that all schools meet minimum standards.
- Expand the college system, aiming for a participation rate of 25 percent to accommodate approximately 1,25 million enrolments.
- Provide 1 million learning opportunities through Community Education and Training Centres (CET).

- Improve the throughput rate to 80 percent by 2030.
- Produce 30 000 artisans annually.
- Increase university enrolment by at least 70 percent by 2030, reaching approximately 1,62 million from 950 000 in 2010.
- Boost the number of students eligible for math and science-based degrees to 450 000 by 2030.
- Increase the percentage of PhD-qualified staff in higher education from 34 percent to over 75 percent by 2030.
- Produce over 100 doctoral graduates per million annually by 2030, up from 1 420 in 2010.
- Enhance science, technology, and innovation outputs by increasing research and development spending and encouraging industry participation.

The current Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) for 2019–2024 prioritises early childhood development (ECD), school education, post-school education, and skills training. Notable targets for 2024 include:

- Achieving a 99% enrolment rate for 6-year-olds (Grade R) and a 95% enrolment rate for 5-year-olds.
- Increasing access to post-school education and training, with targets for enrolments at public universities, TVET colleges, and CET colleges.
- Increasing the annual number of university and doctoral graduates, as well as TVET college students completing N6 qualifications.

As we approach 30 years of democracy in 2024, and marking a decade since the inception of the NDP Vision 2030, this report assesses the progress made in the education sector since 1996. It utilises population census data sets spanning nearly three decades to analyse various indicators, offering insights not previously available through household surveys.

Chapter 2: Attendance of educational institutions

School attendance is undeniably crucial in shaping the lives of children, often influencing their future outcomes significantly. However, it has remained a persistent challenge in many countries worldwide. To address this issue, various campaigns and initiatives have been launched with the aim of enhancing school attendance rates and ensuring equal access to quality education for all. Key programs include endeavours to achieve universal primary education, the implementation of nine years of free schooling in designated no-fee public schools, and efforts to promote equal access to education.

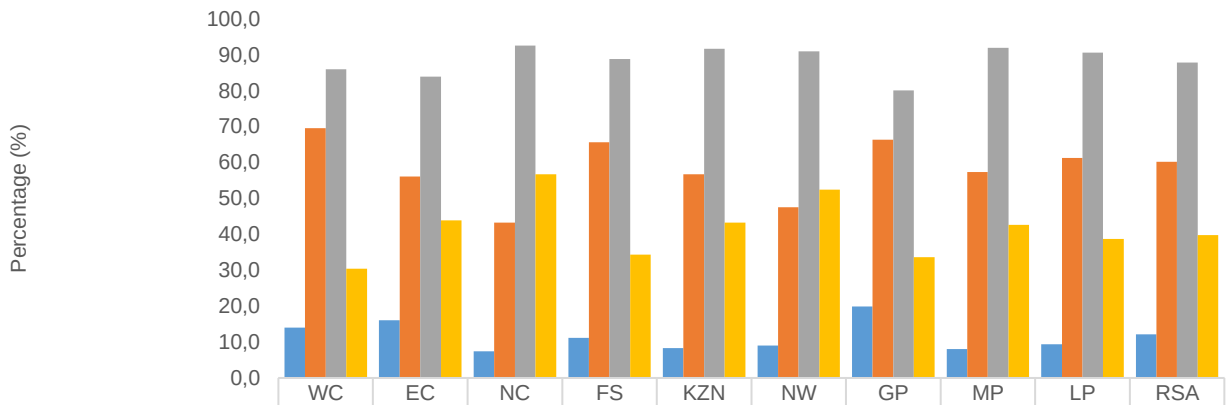
These initiatives have yielded significant improvements in attendance rates and the completion of schooling. By providing free education in designated schools and prioritising equal access, barriers to education have been reduced, enabling more children to attend and complete their schooling. As a result, these programs have played a pivotal role in fostering positive educational outcomes and improving the prospects for children's future success.

2.1 Participation in early childhood development

The primary objective of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy in South Africa was to guarantee universal access to ECD services. This encompassed various aspects, including ensuring access and active participation in safe care and high-quality early learning opportunities for children from birth until they transition into formal schooling. These services were to be provided through both centre-based and non-centre-based ECD programs.

In this section, data pertaining to participation in ECD programs is presented, specifically focusing on children aged 0–4 years old. This data sheds light on the extent to which children in this age group are accessing and engaging with ECD services, thus providing insights into the effectiveness and reach of ECD initiatives in South Africa.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of children aged 0–4 who attended ECD by province, Census 2001–2022



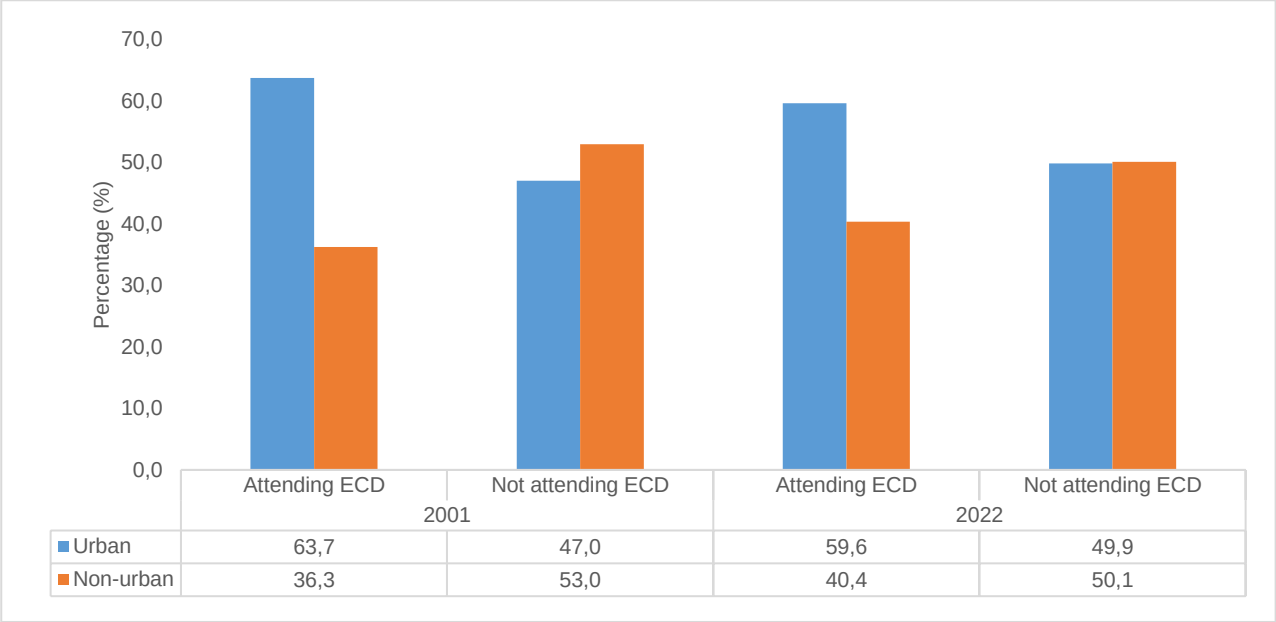
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	RSA
Attending ECD 2001	14,0	16,1	7,4	11,2	8,3	9,0	19,9	8,0	9,4	12,2
Attending ECD 2022	69,6	56,1	43,3	65,7	56,7	47,6	66,4	57,4	61,3	60,2
Not attending ECD 2001	86,0	83,9	92,6	88,8	91,7	91,0	80,1	92,0	90,6	87,8
Not attending ECD 2022	30,4	43,9	56,7	34,3	43,3	52,4	33,6	42,6	38,7	39,8

Source: Census 2001 & 2022

According to the above graph, it appears that in 2001, nearly 87,8% of children aged 0–4 did not attend any educational institutions, indicating a significant gap in attendance. There were notable differences in attendance rates across provinces, with Northern Cape and Mpumalanga having lower attendance rates compared to the national average and other provinces (7,4% and 8,0% respectively).

However, by 2022, there was a noticeable improvement, with 60,2% of children aged 0–4 attending early childhood learning centres. This represents a substantial increase relative to the attendance rates in 2001. Western Cape and Gauteng stood out with the highest percentage of children attending such facilities, with rates of 69,6% and 66,4% respectively. These figures suggest progress in providing access to early childhood education, though disparities across provinces still persist.

Figure 2.2: Percentage of children aged 0–4 who attended ECD by geography, Census 2001 & 2022

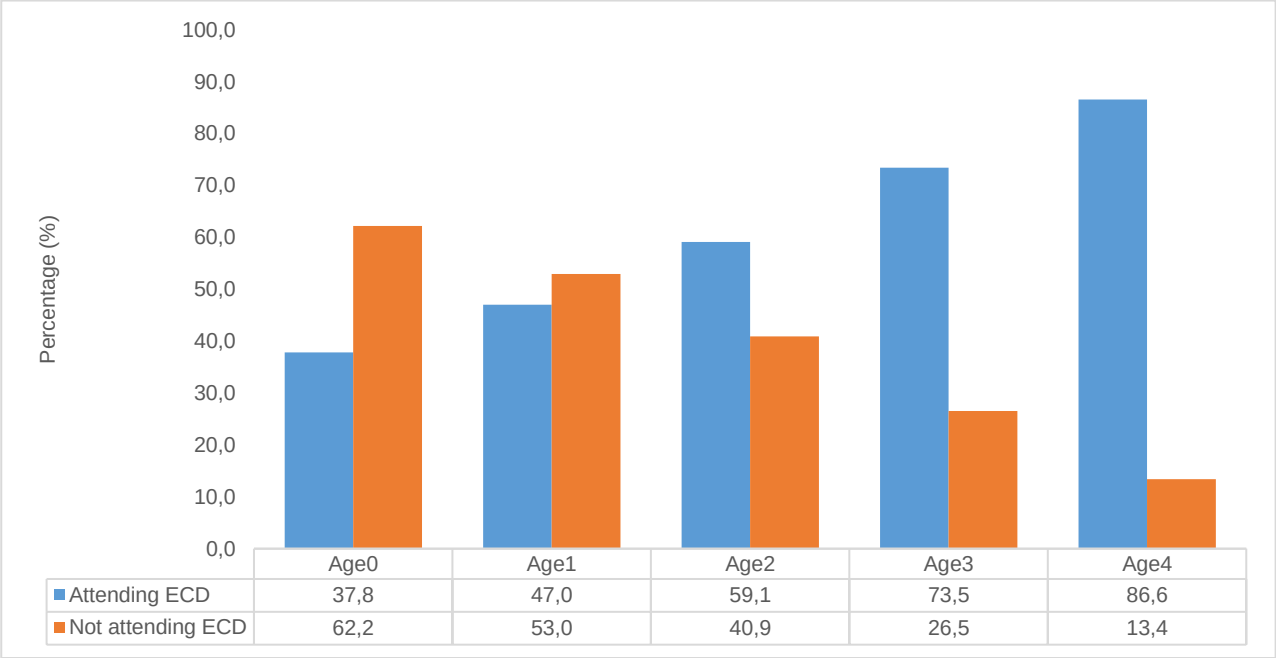


	Attending ECD	Not attending ECD	Attending ECD	Not attending ECD
	2001		2022	
Urban	63,7	47,0	59,6	49,9
Non-urban	36,3	53,0	40,4	50,1

Source: Census 2001 & 2022

Figure 2.2 illustrates that in 2001, the majority of children aged 0–4 years who attended ECD facilities resided in urban areas. Likewise, in 2022, nearly 60% of children in the same age group who attended ECD facilities were located in urban areas. This suggests a consistent trend over the years, with urban areas continuing to host a significant portion of children enrolled in early childhood development programs.

Figure 2.3: Percentage of children aged 0–4 who attended ECD by age, Census 2022



	Age0	Age1	Age2	Age3	Age4
Attending ECD	37,8	47,0	59,1	73,5	86,6
Not attending ECD	62,2	53,0	40,9	26,5	13,4

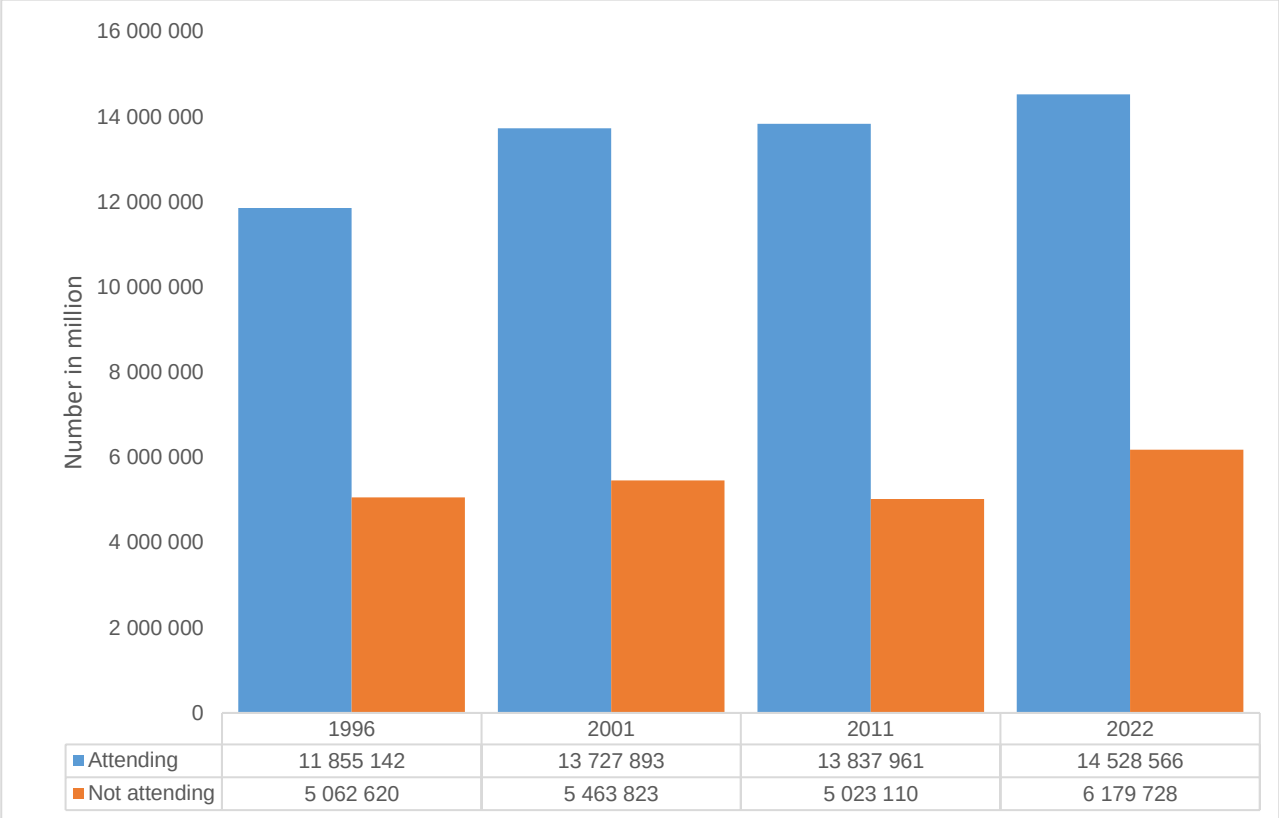
Source: Census 2022

According to the provided graph, in 2022, 40 out of 100 children aged two years did not attend any ECD facility. Similarly, among three-year-olds, 26 out of 100 did not attend an ECD facility, while close to 13% of four-year-olds did not attend any educational facility. This suggests that approximately 87% of children aged four attended early learning programs. Generally, it is expected that children aged 3–4 years old would attend ECD learning centres, indicating a high participation rate in this age group.

2.2 Attendance of school and tertiary institutions

South Africa's Schools Act of 1996 had a significant impact on providing equal access to educational institutions and eliminating major barriers to school participation. Post-apartheid school and children-related programs have contributed to increased school participation. However, the transition to post-secondary education faces challenges as the system struggles to accommodate the rapidly growing number of grade 12 graduates. This section presents data on school participation and the transition to post-secondary education.

Figure 2.4: Number of individuals aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions, Census 1996–2022



	1996	2001	2011	2022
Attending	11 855 142	13 727 893	13 837 961	14 528 566
Not attending	5 062 620	5 463 823	5 023 110	6 179 728

Source: Census 1996–2022

The figure above illustrates a notable increase in the number of individuals aged 5–24 attending educational institutions, as observed from Census data spanning from 1996 to 2022. Starting from a base of 11 855 142 in 1996, there was a substantial rise to 14 528 566 in 2022. This data suggests a positive trajectory in educational participation among individuals aged 5–24 over the specified period, reflecting improvements in access to and enrolment in educational institutions.

Table 2.1: Attendance of educational institutions of individuals aged 5–24 years old by population group and sex, Census 1996–2022

		1996		2001		2011		2022	
Population group	**Sex**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Black African	Male	4 752 378	49,1	5 730 661	49,9	5 911 667	50,7	6 300 135	50,2
	Female	4 927 545	50,9	5 762 457	50,1	5 755 231	49,3	6 240 167	49,8
	Total	**9 679 923**	**100,0**	**11 493 118**	**100,0**	**11 666 898**	**100,0**	**12 540 302**	100,0
Coloured	Male	459 493	50,1	512 652	49,9	538 554	50,2	523 722	49,9
	Female	458 029	49,9	513 790	50,1	535 058	49,8	526 623	50,1
	Total	**917 523**	**100,0**	**1 026 442**	**100,0**	**1 073 612**	**100,0**	**1 050 345**	100,0
Indian or Asian	Male	139 274	50,6	139 674	50,4	130 198	50,4	137 007	51,3
	Female	136 225	49,4	137 730	49,6	127 989	49,6	130 089	48,7
	Total	**275 498**	**100,0**	**277 404**	**100,0**	**258 186**	**100,0**	**267 096**	**100,0**
White	Male	451 381	51,1	474 183	50,9	408 712	51,2	325 797	50,9
	Female	431 726	48,9	456 746	49,1	390 182	48,8	313 754	49,1
	Total	**883 107**	**100,0**	**930 929**	**100,0**	**798 894**	**100,0**	**639 551**	**100,0**
Other	**Male**	49 258	49,4	*	*	20 499	50,7	16 087	51,4
	Female	49 833	50,6	*	*	19 871	49,3	15 184	48,6
	Total	**99 091**	**100,0**	*****	*****	**40 371**	**100,0**	**31 271**	**100,0**
South Africa	**Male**	**5 851 784**	**49,4**	**6 857 170**	**50,0**	**7 009 630**	**50,7**	**7 302 748**	**50,3**
	Female	**6 003 358**	**50,6**	**6 870 723**	**50,0**	**6 828 332**	**49,3**	**7 225 818**	**49,7**
	Total	**11 855 142**	**100,0**	**13 727 893**	**100,0**	**13 837 961**	**100,0**	**14 528 566**	**100,0**

Source: Census1996-2022

Table 2.1 above presents the number of individuals aged 5–24 years who attended educational institutions by population group, comparing Census data from 1996 to 2022. Notably, the gender gap in education participation was minimal across all years presented and across all population groups. Additionally, black African individuals consistently represented the largest percentage of individuals attending educational institutions across all census years. This suggests a relatively equitable distribution of educational opportunities across gender and population groups, with black Africans comprising the majority of students attending educational institutions over the specified period.

Table 2.2: Attendance of educational institutions of individuals aged 5–24 years old by province and sex, Census 1996–2022

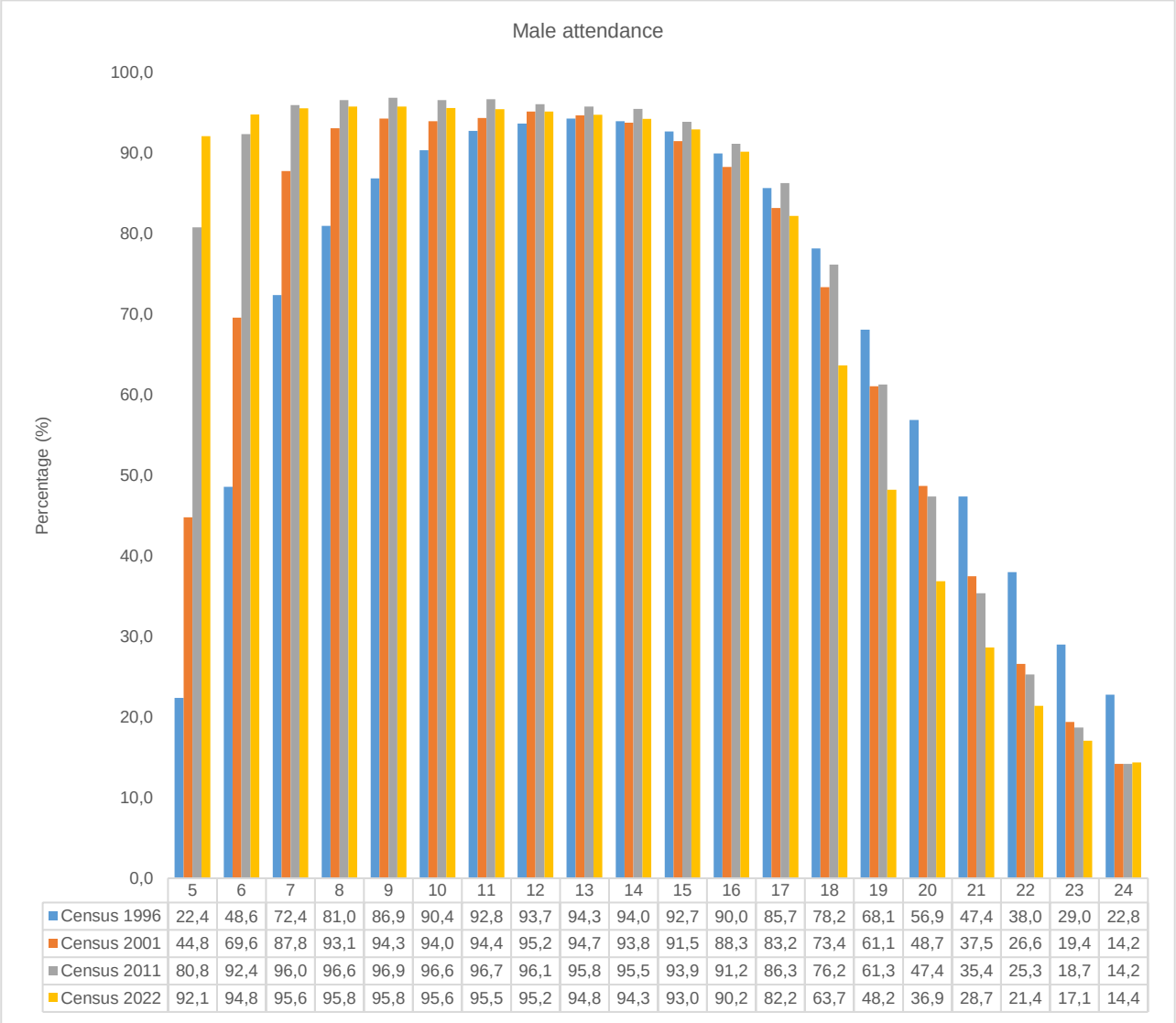
		1996		2001		2011		2022	
Province	**Sex**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
WC	Male	460 846	49,6	549 906	49,3	606 176	49,6	700 374	49,0
	Female	469 135	50,4	566 048	50,7	615 056	50,4	730 067	51,0
	Total	**929 981**	**100,0**	**1 115 954**	**100,0**	**1 221 232**	**100,0**	**1 430 441**	**100,0**
EC	Male	1 002 221	48,7	1 124 402	49,6	1 040 185	51,0	996 842	50,9
	Female	1 054 737	51,3	1 144 786	50,4	1 000 126	49,0	960 771	49,1
	Total	**2 056 958**	**100,0**	**2 269 189**	**100,0**	**2 040 311**	**100,0**	**1 957 613**	**100,0**
NC	Male	131 942	49,7	134 419	50,0	147 683	51,0	167 590	50,2
	Female	133 528	50,3	134 172	50,0	142 129	49,0	166 069	49,8
	Total	**265 470**	**100,0**	**268 591**	**100,0**	**289 812**	**100,0**	**333 658**	**100,0**
FS	Male	390 083	49,4	415 959	50,3	372 948	50,7	378 206	49,8
	Female	399 559	50,6	411 449	49,7	363 054	49,3	381 281	50,2
	Total	**789 642**	**100,0**	**827 408**	**100,0**	**736 002**	**100,0**	**759 488**	**100,0**
KZN	Male	1 285 384	49,6	1 558 813	50,2	1 532 916	50,7	1 528 709	50,0
	Female	1 307 606	50,4	1 546 282	49,8	1 487 804	49,3	1 526 343	50,0
	Total	**2 592 990**	**100,0**	**3 105 095**	**100,0**	**3 020 720**	**100,0**	**3 055 052**	**100,0**
NW	Male	380 555	49,1	420 241	50,0	452 029	51,3	470 820	50,6
	Female	394 184	50,9	420 709	50,0	428 592	48,7	458 805	49,4
	Total	**774 739**	**100,0**	**840 950**	**100,0**	**880 621**	**100,0**	**929 625**	**100,0**
GP	Male	875 883	49,5	1 102 391	49,9	1 308 327	50,0	1 490 033	50,5
	Female	893 533	50,5	1 108 380	50,1	1 308 203	50,0	1 461 558	49,5
	Total	**1 769 416**	**100,0**	**2 210 771**	**100,0**	**2 616 530**	**100,0**	**2 951 591**	**100,0**
MP	Male	498 223	49,2	571 094	50,1	606 975	50,8	635 874	50,4
	Female	514 908	50,8	568 801	49,9	588 561	49,2	625 189	49,6
	Total	**1 013 131**	**100,0**	**1 139 895**	**100,0**	**1 195 535**	**100,0**	**1 261 063**	**100,0**
LP	Male	826 647	49,7	979 939	50,3	942 391	51,3	934 299	50,5
	Female	836 168	50,3	970 052	49,7	894 807	48,7	915 736	49,5
	Total	**1 662 816**	**100,0**	**1 949 991**	**100,0**	**1 837 198**	**100,0**	**1 850 035**	**100,0**
RSA	**Male**	**5 851 784**	**49,4**	**6 857 170**	**50,0**	**7 009 630**	**50,7**	**7 302 748**	**50,3**
	Female	**6 003 358**	**50,6**	**6 870 723**	**50,0**	**6 828 332**	**49,3**	**7 225 818**	**49,7**
	Total	**11 855 142**	**100,0**	**13 727 893**	**100,0**	**13 837 961**	**100,0**	**14 528 566**	**100,0**

Source: Census1996-2022

Table 2.2 above presents the population distribution of individuals aged 5–24 years who attended educational institutions by sex and province. Across all years, KwaZulu-Natal had the highest number of attendees, with close to 3 million individuals participating in education in 2022. This was followed by Gauteng with 2,9 million individuals, Eastern Cape with close to 2 million individuals, and Limpopo with 1,9 million individuals. Additionally, most provinces experienced growth in attendance, except for Eastern Cape and Free State.

The gender gap among individuals aged 5–24 years who attended any educational institution was narrow for all censuses. This indicates that being a male or a female did not present a significant barrier to access to educational institutions when types of educational institutions attended were not taken into account.

Figure 2.5: Percentage of male individuals 5–24 years old attending educational institution by single age, Census 1996–2022



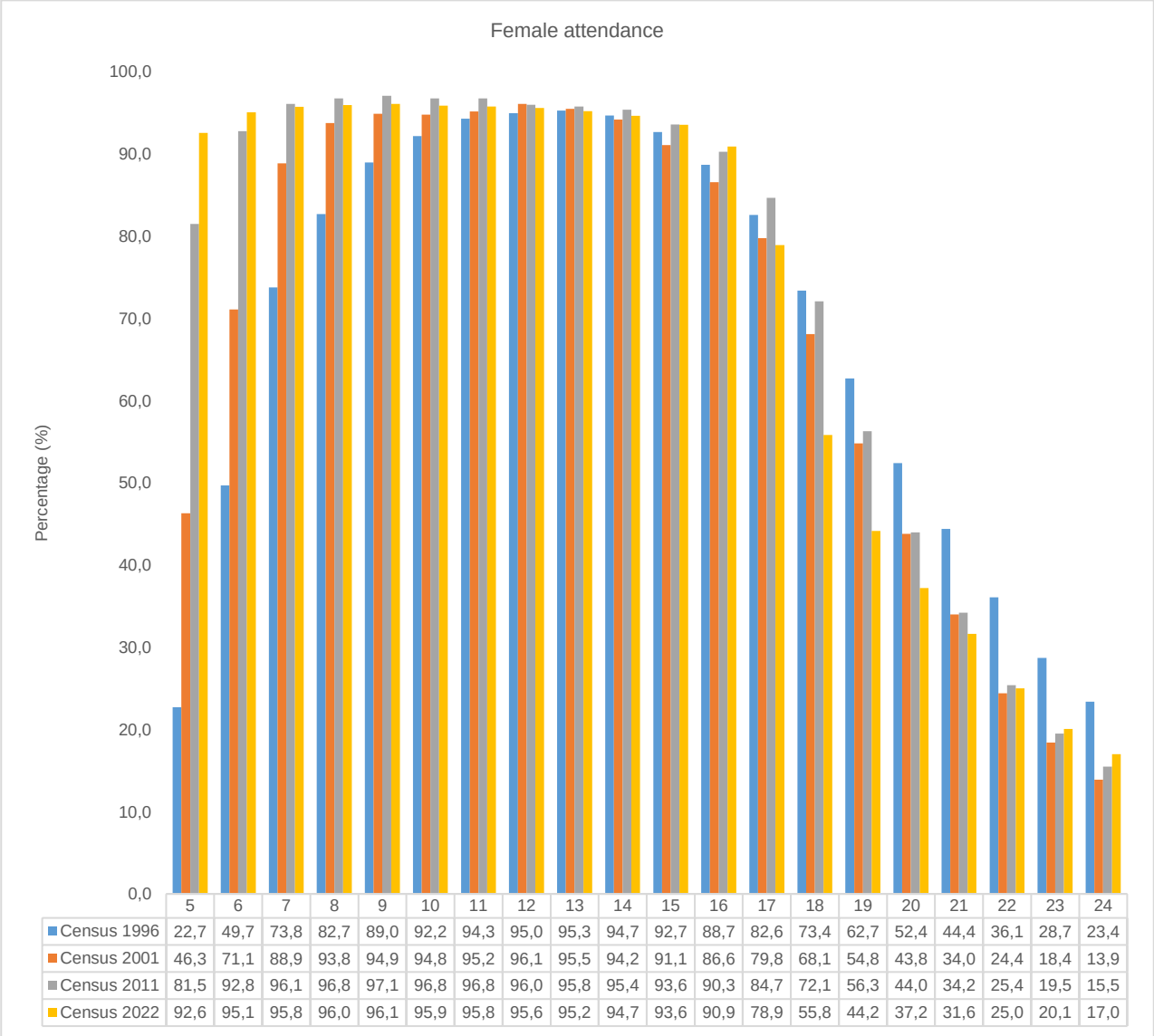
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Census 1996	22,4	48,6	72,4	81,0	86,9	90,4	92,8	93,7	94,3	94,0	92,7	90,0	85,7	78,2	68,1	56,9	47,4	38,0	29,0	22,8
Census 2001	44,8	69,6	87,8	93,1	94,3	94,0	94,4	95,2	94,7	93,8	91,5	88,3	83,2	73,4	61,1	48,7	37,5	26,6	19,4	14,2
Census 2011	80,8	92,4	96,0	96,6	96,9	96,6	96,7	96,1	95,8	95,5	93,9	91,2	86,3	76,2	61,3	47,4	35,4	25,3	18,7	14,2
Census 2022	92,1	94,8	95,6	95,8	95,8	95,6	95,5	95,2	94,8	94,3	93,0	90,2	82,2	63,7	48,2	36,9	28,7	21,4	17,1	14,4

Source: Census1996-2022

Figure 2.5 above illustrates the percentage of male individuals aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions by single age. According to Census data from 2022, more than nine out of ten (90,0%) individuals within the compulsory age of education (7–15 years) attended educational institutions.

However, the graph also highlights a decline in attendance rates among male individuals aged 5–24 at the age of 18 years, which coincides with the completion of grade 12. Consequently, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of 19-year-old males attending educational institutions, dropping from 68,1% in 1996 to 48,2% in 2022. This suggests that the number of students transitioning from school or other activities to post-secondary schooling was not as high as those completing matric.

Figure 2.6: Percentage of female individuals 5–24 years old attending educational institution by single age, Census 1996–2022



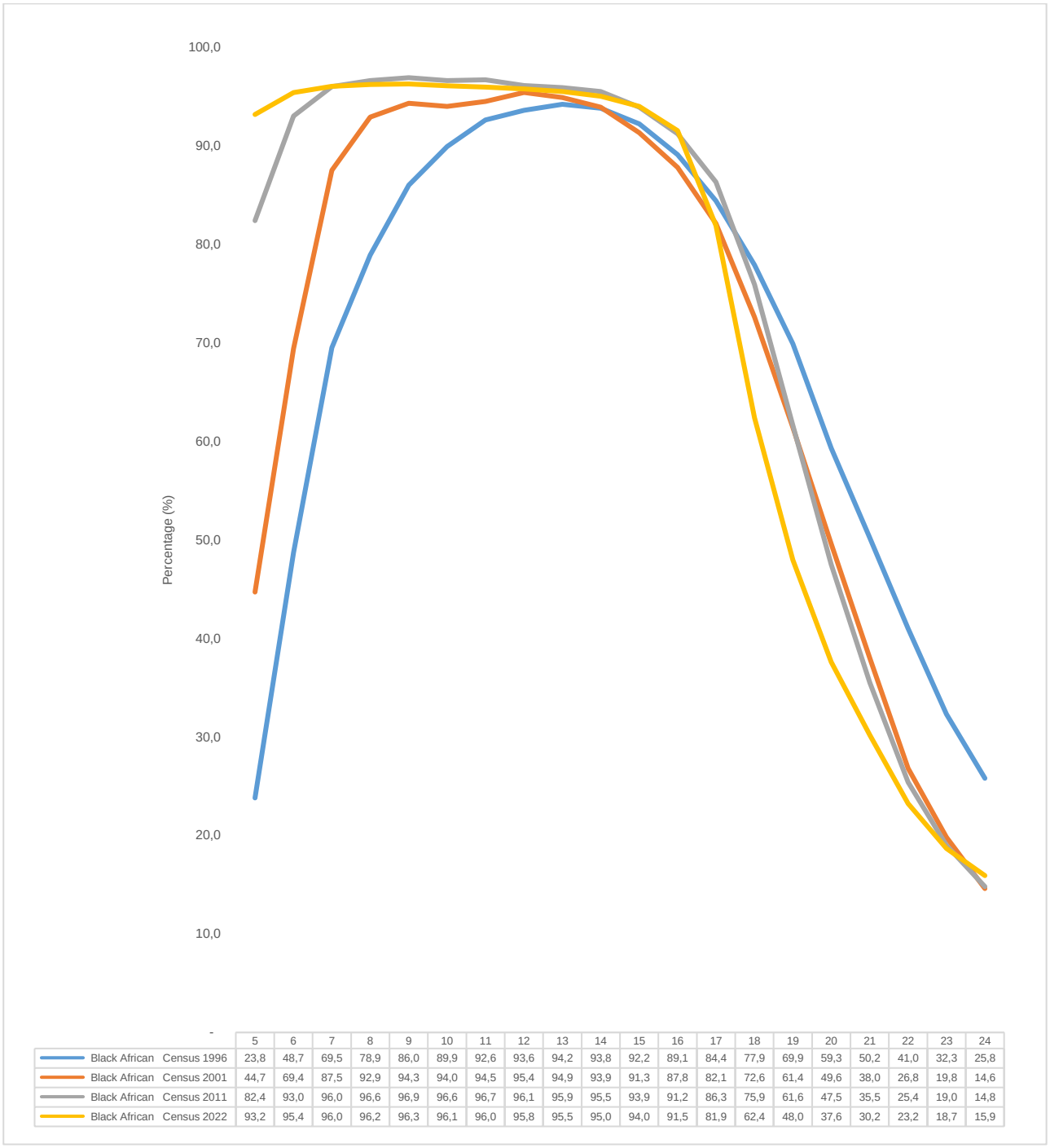
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Census 1996	22,7	49,7	73,8	82,7	89,0	92,2	94,3	95,0	95,3	94,7	92,7	88,7	82,6	73,4	62,7	52,4	44,4	36,1	28,7	23,4
Census 2001	46,3	71,1	88,9	93,8	94,9	94,8	95,2	96,1	95,5	94,2	91,1	86,6	79,8	68,1	54,8	43,8	34,0	24,4	18,4	13,9
Census 2011	81,5	92,8	96,1	96,8	97,1	96,8	96,8	96,0	95,8	95,4	93,6	90,3	84,7	72,1	56,3	44,0	34,2	25,4	19,5	15,5
Census 2022	92,6	95,1	95,8	96,0	96,1	95,9	95,8	95,6	95,2	94,7	93,6	90,9	78,9	55,8	44,2	37,2	31,6	25,0	20,1	17,0

Source: Census1996–2022

Figure 2.6 above illustrates the distribution of females aged 5–24 attending educational institutions by single age. The graph indicates that, compared to previous analyses, the school-going population had achieved gender uniformity across all age groups. Like their male counterparts, more than nine out of ten (90,0%) female individuals within the compulsory education age also attended educational institutions.

Interestingly, the graph also highlights that more females aged between 20 and 24 were likely to attend educational institutions compared to their male counterparts. This observation suggests a potentially higher participation rate among females in pursuing post-secondary education or other forms of further education compared to males in the same age group.

Figure 2.7: Percentage of black African individuals attending educational institution by single age, Census 1996–2022

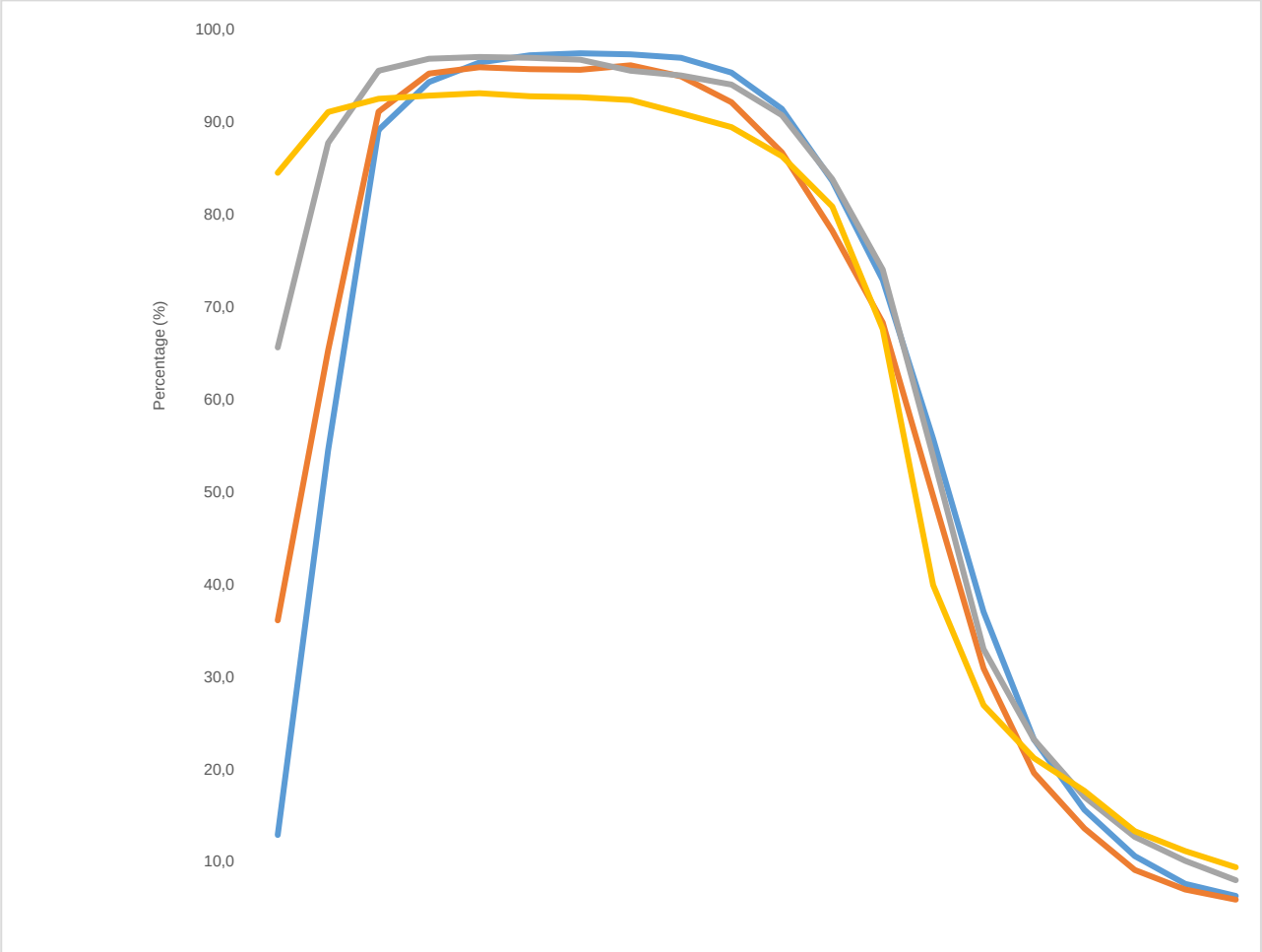


	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Black African Census 1996	23,8	48,7	69,5	78,9	86,0	89,9	92,6	93,6	94,2	93,8	92,2	89,1	84,4	77,9	69,9	59,3	50,2	41,0	32,3	25,8
Black African Census 2001	44,7	69,4	87,5	92,9	94,3	94,0	94,5	95,4	94,9	93,9	91,3	87,8	82,1	72,6	61,4	49,6	38,0	26,8	19,8	14,6
Black African Census 2011	82,4	93,0	96,0	96,6	96,9	96,6	96,7	96,1	95,9	95,5	93,9	91,2	86,3	75,9	61,6	47,5	35,5	25,4	19,0	14,8
Black African Census 2022	93,2	95,4	96,0	96,2	96,3	96,1	96,0	95,8	95,5	95,0	94,0	91,5	81,9	62,4	48,0	37,6	30,2	23,2	18,7	15,9

Source: Census1996–2022

The graph above displays the percentage of black Africans aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions by single age. It reveals a noticeable pattern of entry into education among younger learners, as well as an early exit among individuals aged 18 years and older. Notably, between 2011 and 2022, the highest attendance rates were observed among black Africans, with a concentration within the age range of 5–14. This indicates a strong commitment to education among black African youth, particularly during the formative years of schooling.

Figure 2.8: Percentage of coloured individuals attending educational institution by single age, Census 1996–2022



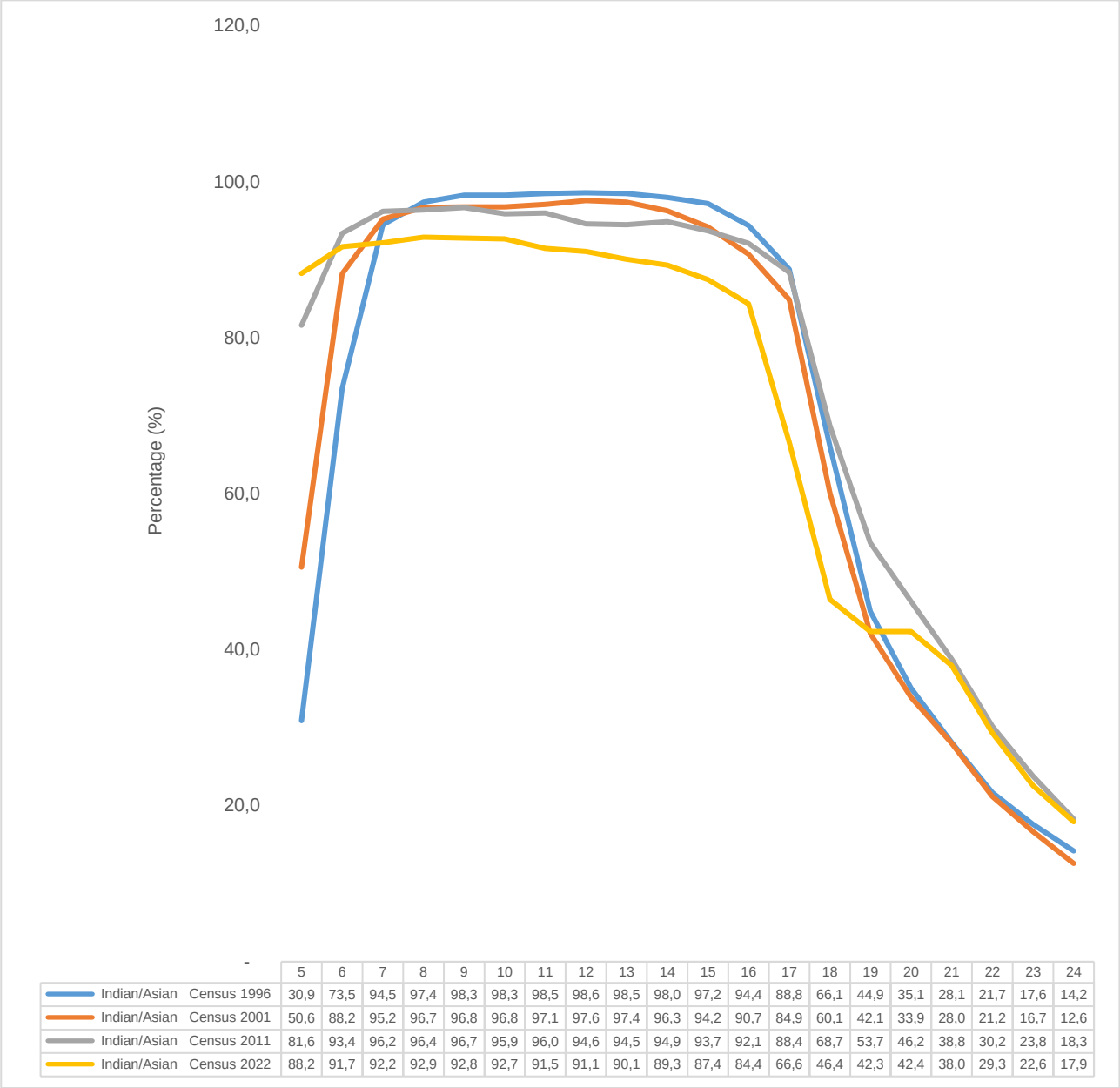
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Coloured Census 1996	12,9	54,5	89,1	94,3	96,4	97,2	97,4	97,3	96,9	95,3	91,4	83,6	72,9	55,7	37,0	23,2	15,6	10,6	7,6	6,3
Coloured Census 2001	36,1	65,3	91,1	95,2	95,9	95,7	95,6	96,1	94,9	92,1	86,7	78,2	68,3	49,5	30,9	19,6	13,6	9,1	7,0	5,9
Coloured Census 2011	65,6	87,7	95,5	96,8	97,0	96,9	96,7	95,5	95,0	94,0	90,7	83,8	74,0	53,8	33,0	23,2	17,0	12,7	10,1	8,0
Coloured Census 2022	84,5	91,0	92,5	92,8	93,1	92,8	92,7	92,4	90,9	89,4	86,3	80,8	67,6	39,9	26,9	21,2	17,7	13,3	11,2	9,4

Source: Census 1996–2022

The graph above illustrates the percentage of coloured individuals attending educational institutions. The data reveals significant increases in attendance rates for 5-year-old coloured individuals, rising from 12,9% in 1996 to 84,5% in 2022, and for 6-year-olds, increasing from 54,5% in 1996 to 91,0% in 2022.

However, there appears to be a trend of early departure from the educational system, potentially associated with individuals starting their education at a younger age. Additionally, a decrease from near-universal attendance was observed among individuals aged 10–13 years, which declined from 97,0% in 1996 to close to 93,0% in 2022. This suggests a need for further investigation into factors influencing attendance patterns and potential interventions to address any barriers to sustained educational participation.

Figure 2.9: Percentage of Indian/Asian individuals attending educational institution by single age, Census 1996–2022



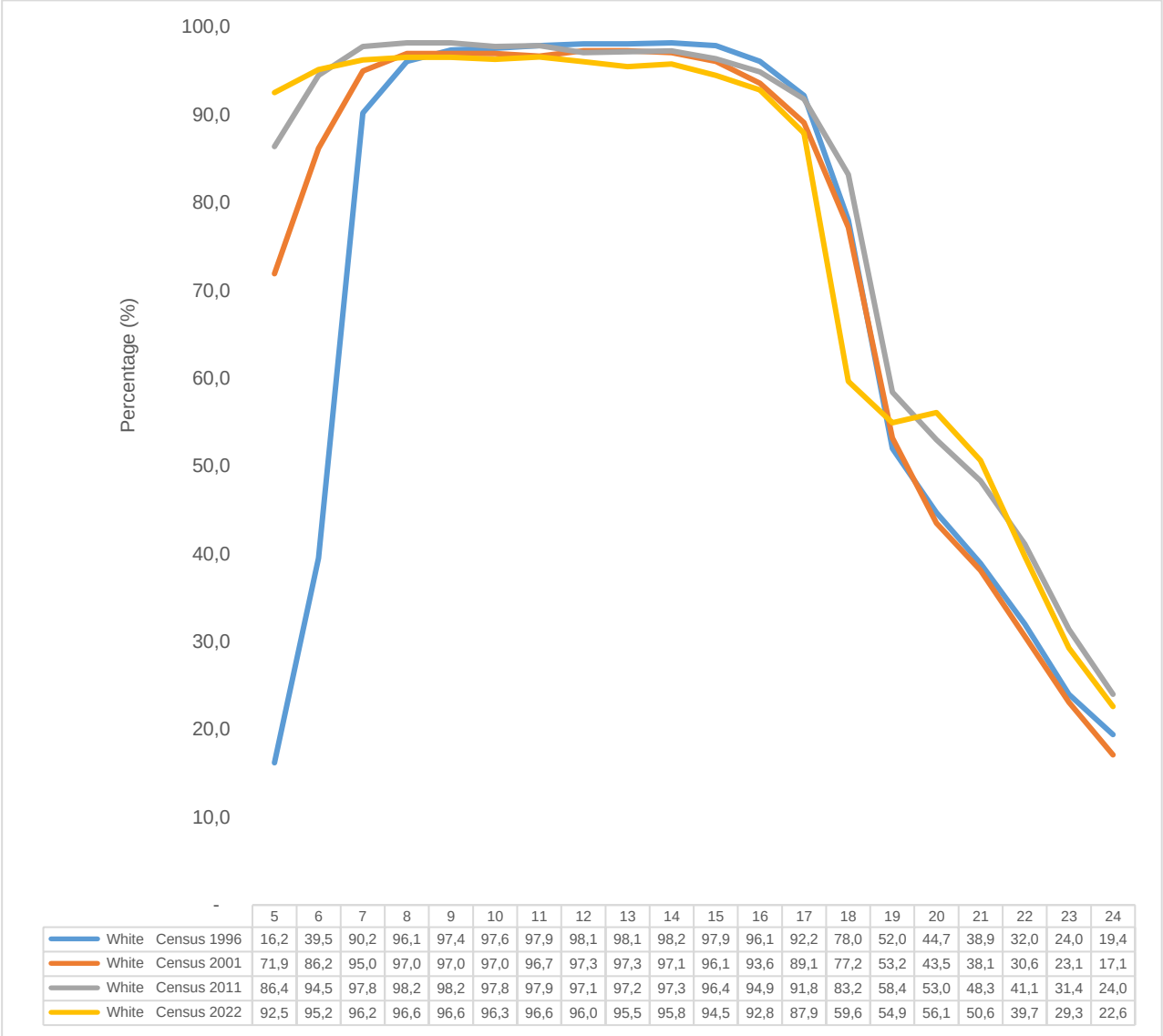
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Indian/Asian Census 1996	30,9	73,5	94,5	97,4	98,3	98,3	98,5	98,6	98,5	98,0	97,2	94,4	88,8	66,1	44,9	35,1	28,1	21,7	17,6	14,2
Indian/Asian Census 2001	50,6	88,2	95,2	96,7	96,8	96,8	97,1	97,6	97,4	96,3	94,2	90,7	84,9	60,1	42,1	33,9	28,0	21,2	16,7	12,6
Indian/Asian Census 2011	81,6	93,4	96,2	96,4	96,7	95,9	96,0	94,6	94,5	94,9	93,7	92,1	88,4	68,7	53,7	46,2	38,8	30,2	23,8	18,3
Indian/Asian Census 2022	88,2	91,7	92,2	92,9	92,8	92,7	91,5	91,1	90,1	89,3	87,4	84,4	66,6	46,4	42,3	42,4	38,0	29,3	22,6	17,9

Source: Census 1996–2022

The graph above illustrates the percentage of Indian/Asian individuals attending educational institutions. Between 1996 and 2022, there were notable increases in attendance rates for Indian/Asian individuals aged 5 and 6 years, rising by 57,3% and 18,2%, respectively.

Furthermore, the data reveals that in 1996, Indian/Asian individuals aged 8–15 years nearly reached universal attendance. However, by 2022, this figure had declined to less than 94,0%. This decline suggests a potential decrease in educational participation among Indian/Asian individuals in this age group over the specified period.

Figure 2.10: Percentage of white individuals attending educational institution by single age, Census 1996–2022



	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
White Census 1996	16,2	39,5	90,2	96,1	97,4	97,6	97,9	98,1	98,1	98,2	97,9	96,1	92,2	78,0	52,0	44,7	38,9	32,0	24,0	19,4
White Census 2001	71,9	86,2	95,0	97,0	97,0	97,0	96,7	97,3	97,3	97,1	96,1	93,6	89,1	77,2	53,2	43,5	38,1	30,6	23,1	17,1
White Census 2011	86,4	94,5	97,8	98,2	98,2	97,8	97,9	97,1	97,2	97,3	96,4	94,9	91,8	83,2	58,4	53,0	48,3	41,1	31,4	24,0
White Census 2022	92,5	95,2	96,2	96,6	96,6	96,3	96,6	96,0	95,5	95,8	94,5	92,8	87,9	59,6	54,9	56,1	50,6	39,7	29,3	22,6

Source: Census 1996–2022

The graph above depicts the percentage of white individuals attending educational institutions by age. Between 1996 and 2022, there were substantial increases in attendance rates for white individuals aged 5 and 6 years, rising by 76,3% and 55,7% basis points respectively.

Additionally, the data indicates that in 1996, similar to Indian/Asians, white individuals aged 8–15 years achieved near-universal attendance. However, by 2022, this figure had declined to less than 97,0%. This decline suggests a potential decrease in educational participation among white individuals in this age group over the specified period. Further investigation may be necessary to understand the factors contributing to this trend and to develop appropriate strategies to address any barriers to educational access and participation.

Table 2.3: Attendance of educational institution by individuals aged 5–24 years old by population group, Census 2001–2022

Educational phase	Census years	Population group				
		Black African	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White	South Africa
Pre-school	2001	3,9	4,9	5,1	6,7	4,2
	2011	0,8	1,2	1,5	2,8	0,9
	2022	1,3	2,3	2,5	2,8	1,5
School	2001	92,9	91,5	82,4	79,3	91,7
	2011	93,5	93,0	81,5	78,5	92,4
	2022	92,1	91,3	82,2	77,5	91,2
FET College/College	2001	1,2	1,2	3,0	3,7	1,4
	2011	2,5	2,2	3,4	3,7	2,6
	2022	2,8	1,9	3,1	3,1	2,7
University/Technikon	2001	1,6	1,9	8,8	9,4	2,3
	2011	2,2	2,3	11,7	12,1	2,9
	2022	2,7	2,7	9,7	12,6	3,2
ABET	2001	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,2	0,2
	2011	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,2
	2022	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,3	0,3
Home based education	2001	*	*	*	*	*
	2011	0,3	0,3	0,7	1,3	0,4
	2022	0,0	0,2	0,4	1,7	0,1
Other	2001	0,2	0,3	0,6	0,7	0,2
	2011	0,5	0,7	1,0	1,4	0,6
	2022	0,8	1,3	1,7	1,9	0,9
Total	**2001**	**83,7**	**7,5**	**2,0**	**6,8**	**100,0**
	2011	**84,6**	**7,8**	**1,9**	**5,8**	**100,0**
	2022	**86,5**	**7,2**	**1,8**	**4,4**	**100,0**

Source: Census 2001–2022
*Census 1996 was excluded from analyses due to unavailability of data on educational phase

The table above illustrates the percentage of attendance at educational institutions among individuals aged 5–24, categorised by population group and type of institution attended. Across all census years, approximately 9 out of 10 black Africans and coloured individuals attended schools, while approximately 8 out of 10 Indian/Asians and whites attended similar institutions.

Additionally, whites and Indian/Asians had a higher percentage of attendance at post-school institutions compared to the other population groups. This suggests potential disparities in access to post-school education opportunities, with whites and Indian/Asians being more likely to pursue further education beyond the school level compared to black Africans and coloured individuals.

Table 2.4: Attendance of educational institutions of individuals aged 5–24 years old by education phase and sex, Census 2001–2022

Attendance of educational institution	Sex	2001		2011		2022	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Pre-school	Male	287 311	49,9	65 474	50,9	109 213	51,1
	Female	288 625	50,1	63 245	49,1	104 591	48,9
	Total	575 936	100,0	128 719	100,0	**213 804**	**100,0**
School	Male	6 304 289	50,1	6 519 498	51,0	6 729 007	50,8
	Female	6 280 529	49,9	6 266 940	49,0	6 514 858	49,2
	Total	12 584 818	100,0	12 786 438	100,0	**13 243 865**	**100,0**
FET College/College	Male	159 533	47,3	165 758	46,1	162 995	40,9
	Female	177 687	52,7	193 470	53,9	235 484	59,1
	Total	337 220	100,0	359 229	100,0	**398 478**	**100,0**
University/Technikon	Male	76 549	45,1	180 685	44,1	196 945	41,7
	Female	93 057	54,9	229 379	55,9	275 496	58,3
	Total	169 606	100,0	410 063	100,0	**472 441**	**100,0**
Adult education centre	Male	11 351	42,8	9 282	39,1	23 211	47,8
	Female	15 154	57,2	14 475	60,9	25 326	52,2
	Total	26 505	100,0	23 756	100,0	**48 536**	**100,0**
Home based education	Male	*	*	26 926	50,2	9 562	49,9
	Female	*	*	26 746	49,8	9 591	50,1
	Total	*	*	53 672	100,0	**19 153**	**100,0**
Other	Male	18138,0	53,6	42 008	55,2	71 816	54,3
	Female	15671,0	46,4	34 078	44,8	60 472	45,7
	Total	33809,0	100,0	76 086	100,0	**132 288**	**100,0**
Total	**Male**	**6 857 170**	**50,0**	**7 009 630**	**50,7**	**7 302 748**	**50,3**
	Female	**6 870 723**	**50,0**	**6 828 332**	**49,3**	**7 225 818**	**49,7**
	Total	**13 727 893**	**100,0**	**13 837 961**	**100,0**	**14 528 566**	**100,0**

Source: Census 2001, 2011& 2022
*Census 1996 was excluded from analyses due to unavailability of data on educational phase

The table above reveals that across all census years, in relation to the appropriate school-age population, there were consistently more male learners than female learners in the school system. However, a significant shift occurred when considering tertiary educational institutions, as females were more likely to attend relative to male learners of the same appropriate school-age population. This indicates a disparity in favour of females in tertiary education attendance.

Moreover, the gender gap for attending Further Education and Training (FET) and other colleges increased from 5,4 percentage points in 2001 to 18,2 percentage points in 2022. Similarly, the gender gap for attending university/technikon grew from 9,8 percentage points in 2001 to 16,6 percentage points in 2022. These widening gender gaps suggest ongoing challenges in achieving gender equity in tertiary education attendance, warranting further examination and targeted interventions to address underlying barriers.

Table 2.5: Percentage of individuals aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions by province, Census 2001–2022

Educational phase	Census years	Provinces									
		WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	RSA
Pre-school	2001	5,4	3,9	4,8	3,8	3,3	4,7	5,7	4,0	3,5	**4,2**
	2011	1,5	0,5	0,8	1,2	0,5	1,0	1,7	0,6	0,5	**0,9**
	2022	2,4	1,2	2,2	1,5	1,2	1,3	1,9	1,5	0,7	**1,5**
School	2001	87,7	93,8	93,1	92,5	93,5	92,3	83,6	94,0	94,9	**91,7**
	2011	89,8	95,8	96,0	92,3	93,7	93,8	84,9	95,5	95,4	**92,4**
	2022	87,4	93,8	92,5	90,9	92,6	93,4	86,5	93,4	93,6	**91,2**
FET College/College	2001	3,4	1,4	1,5	2,0	1,9	1,7	6,7	1,4	0,9	**2,5**
	2011	2,9	1,3	1,4	2,5	2,1	2,0	5,0	2,0	2,0	**2,6**
	2022	2,9	1,9	2,9	3,1	2,2	2,0	4,2	2,3	2,6	**2,7**
University/Technikon	2001	2,8	0,6	0,2	1,0	1,0	0,8	3,1	0,2	0,5	**1,2**
	2011	4,5	1,4	0,6	2,9	2,5	2,1	6,7	1,0	1,1	**3,0**
	2022	5,3	2,1	1,6	3,2	2,8	1,9	5,6	1,7	2,2	**3,3**
Adult education centre	2001	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,4	0,2	0,3	0,3	0,1	0,1	**0,2**
	2011	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,3	0,1	0,2	**0,2**
	2022	0,3	0,3	0,2	0,3	0,4	0,3	0,5	0,3	0,3	**0,3**
Home based education	2001	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*****
	2011	0,4	0,4	0,5	0,3	0,5	0,3	0,5	0,3	0,3	**0,4**
	2022	0,4	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,1	**0,1**
Other	2001	0,4	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,4	0,2	0,2	**0,2**
	2011	0,7	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,4	0,6	0,8	0,5	0,4	**0,6**
	2022	1,4	0,7	0,6	0,9	0,7	0,9	1,3	0,7	0,7	**0,9**
Total	**2001**	**8,1**	**17,0**	**1,5**	**6,0**	**22,1**	**7,6**	**15,0**	**7,5**	**15,1**	**100,0**
	2011	**8,8**	**14,8**	**2,1**	**5,3**	**21,8**	**6,4**	**18,8**	**8,6**	**13,3**	**100,0**
	2022	**9,8**	**13,5**	**2,3**	**5,2**	**21,0**	**6,4**	**20,3**	**8,7**	**12,7**	**100,0**

Source: Census 2001, 2011& 2022
*Census 1996 was excluded from analyses due to unavailability of data on educational phase

Table 2.5 indicates that nationally, the percentage of individuals aged 5–24 years old attending school remained stable during the period from 2001 to 2022. However, provincially, the highest school attendance rates in 2022 were observed in Eastern Cape (93.8%), Limpopo (93,6%), and North-West (93,4%), while the lowest attendance rates were observed in Western Cape (87,4%) and Gauteng (86,5%).

Moreover, there are relatively few institutions of higher education across the country, and these institutions tend to be clustered in specific provinces. Nationally, the percentage of individuals attending tertiary educational institutions increased from 1,2% in 2001 to 3,3% in 2022. This suggests a gradual expansion in access to tertiary education opportunities over the specified period.

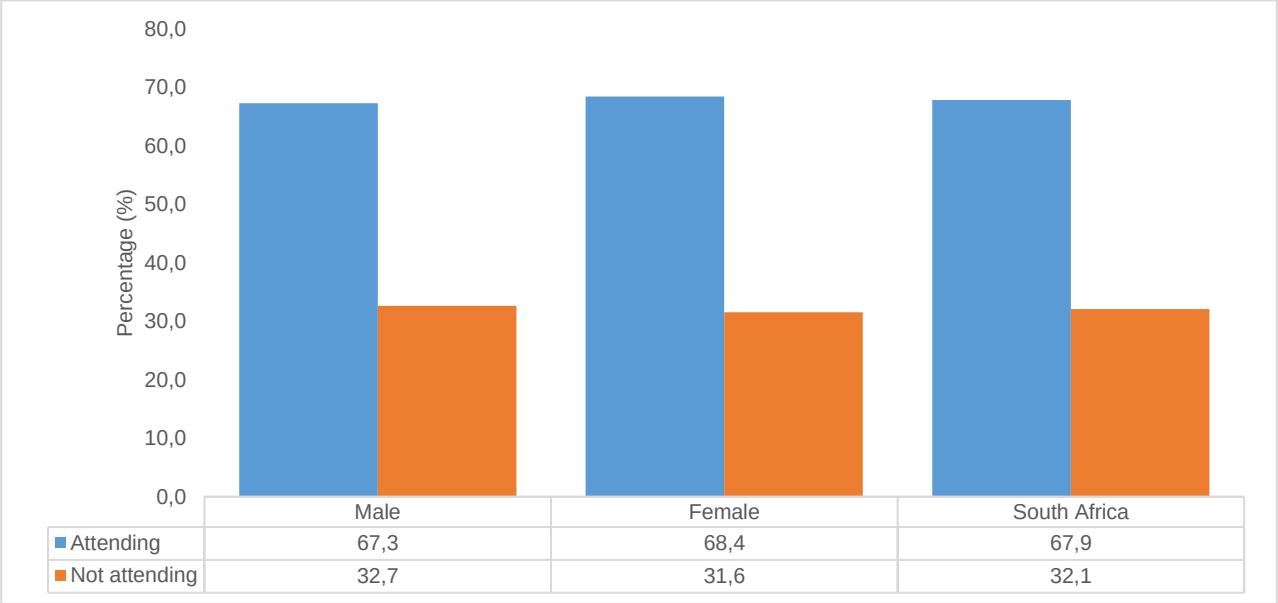
Table 2.6: Percentage of individuals aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions by metropolitan, Census 2001–2022)

Education institution attendance		Metropolitan city								Total
		City of Cape Town	Buffalo City	Nelson Mandela bay	Mangaung	Ekurhuleni	City of Johannesburg	City of Tshwane	eThekwini	
Pre-school	2001	5,3	4,4	3,9	3,8	5,8	5,8	5,5	4,0	**5,0**
	2011	1,6	0,9	0,9	1,4	1,6	2,1	1,8	0,8	**1,5**
	2022	2,3	1,5	1,7	1,3	2,0	2,1	1,6	1,5	**1,9**
School	2001	86,5	90,0	88,8	87,5	86,4	83,3	80,4	88,4	**85,9**
	2011	89,2	92,0	90,6	86,4	89,4	85,7	81,1	88,4	**87,3**
	2022	86,8	91,6	89,5	87,4	88,2	87,5	84,7	89,1	**87,6**
FET College/ College	2001	2,3	2,4	2,4	2,5	3,9	4,0	4,0	2,0	**3,0**
	2011	3,4	4,1	3,3	4,3	4,8	4,7	6,4	4,2	**4,5**
	2022	3,4	2,7	3,5	3,9	4,4	3,7	4,4	3,3	**3,7**
University/ Technikon	2001	5,2	2,8	4,4	5,5	3,1	6,1	9,3	5,1	**5,4**
	2011	5,6	2,9	5,2	7,7	4,0	7,3	10,4	6,4	**6,5**
	2022	6,1	3,3	4,0	6,4	4,3	5,5	8,1	5,2	**5,7**
Adult education centre	2001	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,2	**0,3**
	2011	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,3	0,2	0,3	0,2	**0,2**
	2022	0,3	0,2	0,3	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,4	**0,4**
Other	2001	0,5	0,2	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,5	0,4	0,3	**0,4**
	2011	1,3	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,3	1,4	1,2	1,3	**1,3**
	2022	0,7	0,5	0,9	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,4	**0,5**

Source: Census 2001–2022
*Census 1996 was excluded from analyses due to unavailability of data on educational phase

Table 2.6 above presents percentages of individuals aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions in metropolitan areas. Across all the years, several notable trends are observed. The percentage of pre-school attendance was consistently the highest in the City of Johannesburg. The percentage of school attendance was the highest in Buffalo City. City of Tshwane had the highest participation in post-school institutions. These findings highlight variations in educational participation across different metropolitan areas, with each area exhibiting strengths in different educational stages.

Figure 2.11: Percentage of individuals living with disability aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions by sex, Census 2022

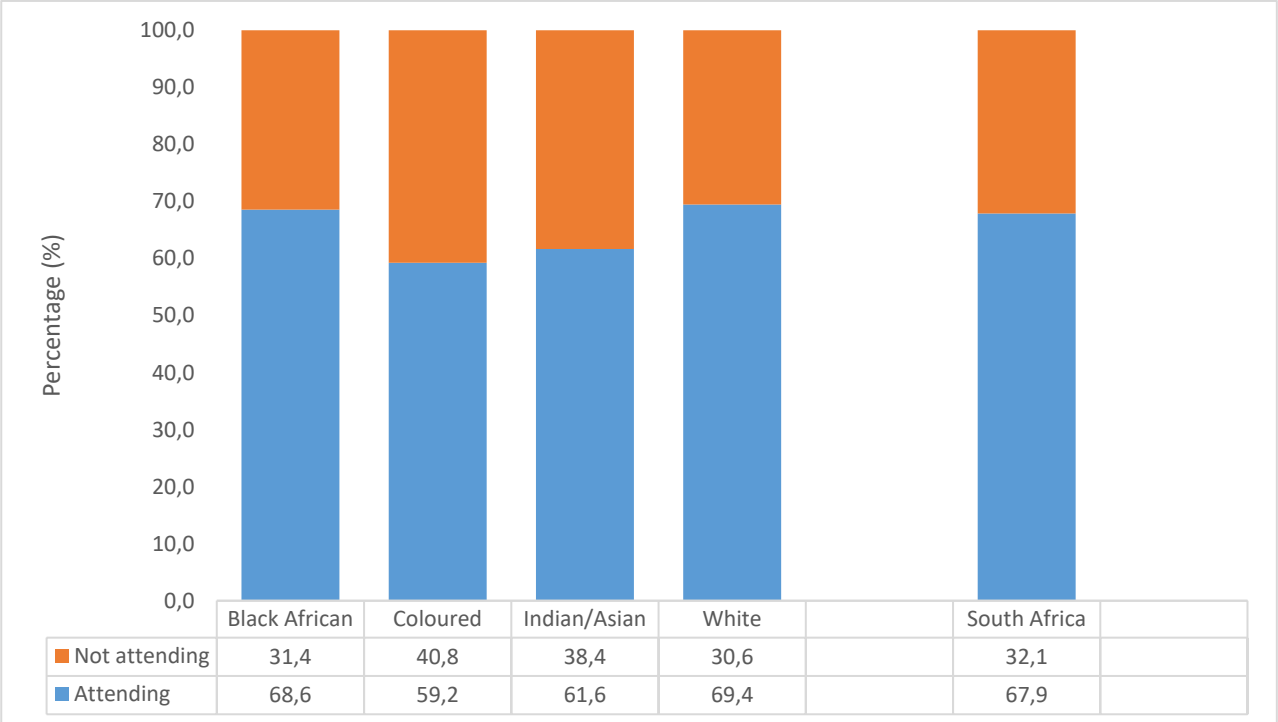


	Male	Female	South Africa
Attending	67,3	68,4	67,9
Not attending	32,7	31,6	32,1

Source: Census 2022

The graph above illustrates the percentage of individuals with disabilities aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions by gender. In 2022, it is observed that overall, close to one-third (32,1%) of individuals with disabilities did not attend educational institutions. Proportionately, slightly more females than females attended educational institutions, with attendance rates of 68,4% for females and 67,3% for males. This data suggests that while there is still a significant portion of individuals with disabilities not attending educational institutions, there is a relatively small difference in attendance rates between males and females in this population group.

Figure 2.12: Percentage of individuals living with disability aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions by population group, Census 2022



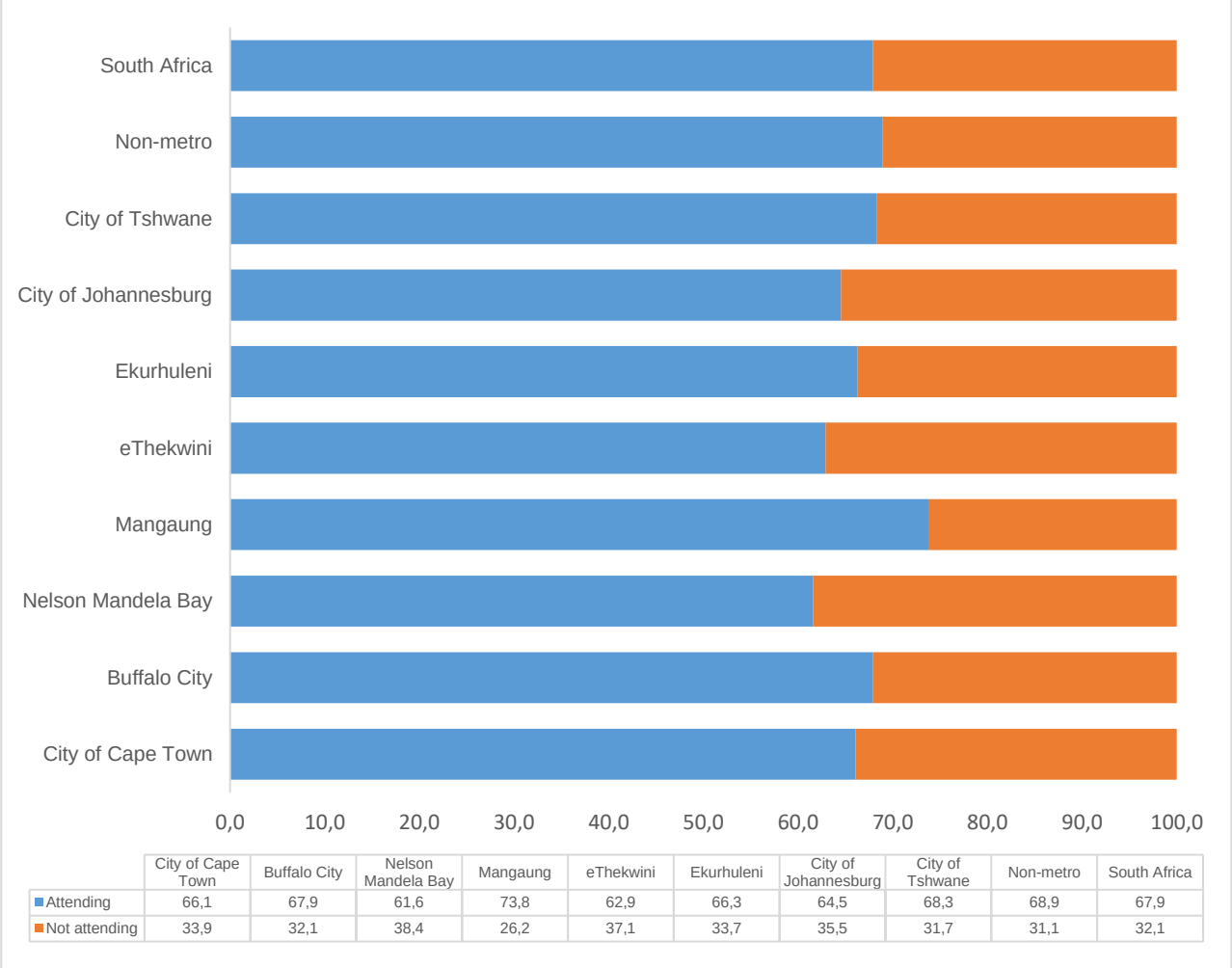
	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White		South Africa	
Not attending	31,4	40,8	38,4	30,6		32,1	
Attending	68,6	59,2	61,6	69,4		67,9	

Source: Census 2022

Figure 2.12 above displays the percentage of individuals with disabilities aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions by population group. In 2022, the data indicates the following attendance rates; four out of ten (40,8%) coloured individuals with disabilities did not attend any educational institutions. Close to 38,0% of Indian/Asians with disabilities did not attend any educational institutions. Among black Africans and whites with disabilities, close to 69,0% each attended educational institutions.

These figures highlight disparities in educational access among individuals with disabilities across different population groups. While attendance rates are higher among black Africans and whites with disabilities, there are significant proportions of coloured and Indian/Asian individuals with disabilities who do not attend educational institutions.

Figure 2.13: Percentage of individuals living with disability aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions by Metropolitan area, Census 2022



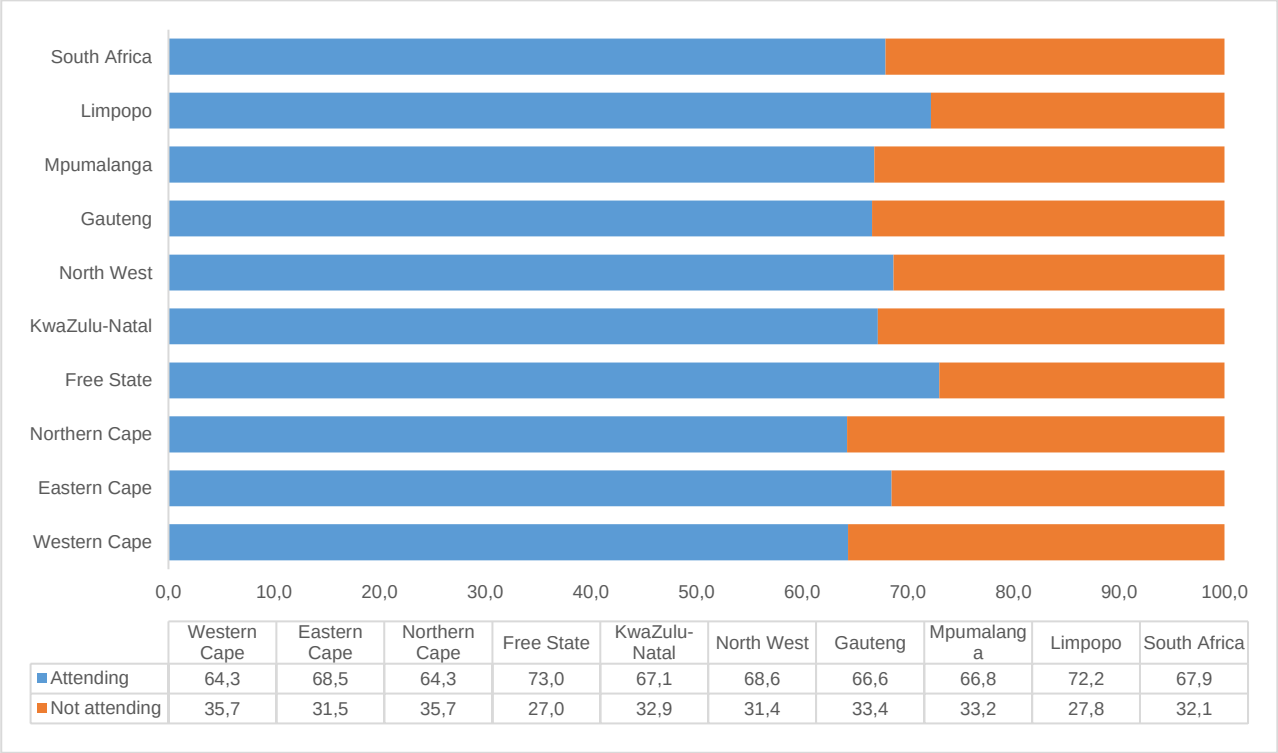
	City of Cape Town	Buffalo City	Nelson Mandela Bay	Mangaung	eThekwini	Ekurhuleni	City of Johannesburg	City of Tshwane	Non-metro	South Africa
Attending	66,1	67,9	61,6	73,8	62,9	66,3	64,5	68,3	68,9	67,9
Not attending	33,9	32,1	38,4	26,2	37,1	33,7	35,5	31,7	31,1	32,1

Source: Census 2022

The graph above depicts the percentage of individuals with disabilities aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions by metropolitan area. Several key observations can be made. Across most metropolitan areas, the majority of individuals with disabilities aged 5–24 years attended educational institutions. Nelson Mandela Bay, eThekwini, and City of Johannesburg were the top three cities where individuals with disabilities did not attend educational institutions, indicating potential areas for targeted intervention to improve access to education for this population group. Conversely, Mangaung was the metropolitan area with the highest percentage of individuals with disabilities attending educational institutions, with an attendance rate of 73,8%.

These findings underscore the importance of understanding and addressing barriers to educational access for individuals with disabilities, particularly in specific metropolitan areas where attendance rates are lower. Targeted efforts to improve access to educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities can contribute to greater inclusion and equity in education across metropolitan areas.

Figure 2.14: Percentage of individuals living with disability aged 5–24 years old attending educational institutions by province, Census 2022



	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Northern Cape	Free State	KwaZulu-Natal	North West	Gauteng	Mpumalanga	Limpopo	South Africa
Attending	64,3	68,5	64,3	73,0	67,1	68,6	66,6	66,8	72,2	67,9
Not attending	35,7	31,5	35,7	27,0	32,9	31,4	33,4	33,2	27,8	32,1

Source: Census 2022

The graph above illustrates percentages of individuals with disabilities aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions by province. Key observations include firstly that the highest percentage of educational attendance among individuals with disabilities aged 5–24 years was observed in Free State and Limpopo, with attendance rates of 73,0% and 72,2% respectively. Furthermore, these findings highlight the relatively higher rates of educational attendance among individuals with disabilities in Free State and Limpopo provinces compared to other provinces. Understanding the factors contributing to these higher attendance rates can inform efforts to improve access to education for individuals with disabilities in other provinces as well.

2.3 Conclusion

In 2022, nearly 15 million individuals aged 5–24 years attended educational institutions, including pre-school, primary, secondary, and special schools, as well as Adult Education and Training (AET) and home-schooling, in addition to tertiary institutions such as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, universities, and private colleges. Over the 26-year period presented in the report, attendance increased by close to 3 million, with approximately 12 million individuals aged 5–24 years attending educational institutions in 1996. This represents a 3,4 percentage point increase, from 70,0% in 1996 to 73,4% in 2022.

This chapter highlights that educational attendance among individuals aged 5–24 years old increased to nearly universal levels between 1996 and 2022 for children aged 5 and 6 years old. However, attendance decreased notably among individuals aged 15–24 years over the same period. Additionally, in 1996, white individuals aged 8–15 years reached near-universal attendance, exceeding 97,0%. However, by 2022, this figure had dropped below 97,0%. Furthermore, more females aged between 20 and 24 years were more likely to attend educational institutions compared to their male counterparts.

Chapter 3: Enrolment[1] ratios

The purpose of calculating enrolment ratios is to gauge the level of participation at each educational phase. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) offers a broad measure of the capacity of the education system to enrol students of a particular age group. On the other hand, the net enrolment rate (NER) factors in the official school age, thereby measuring the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment in the education phase. In this section, both the GER and NER are estimated at the pre-primary and early childhood education phase (ECD), the school phase encompassing both primary and secondary levels, and the tertiary phase, which includes enrolment at all post-school education institutions.

In South Africa, the official compulsory school age for Grade 1, as stipulated by the South African School Act of 1996, is seven years. However, it's notable that most children in South Africa commence schooling by age six. Application for admission in Grade R must be made for children aged at least four years, who would turn five or older by 30 June in the year of admission. Similarly, applicants for Grade 1 must be aged at least five years old and turn six or older by 30 June in the year of admission. These guidelines provide a framework for the admission process and ensure age appropriate enrolment in the educational system.

Table 3.1: Attendance age per phase

Pre-primary (ECD)		Primary School		Secondary School	
Age (0–5)	Grade	Age (6–13)	Grade	Age (14–18)	Grade
0-3	Nursery	5–6	R	13–14	8
4	000	6–7	1	14–15	9
5	00	7–8	2	15–16	10
		8–9	3	16–17	11
		9–10	4	17–18	12
		10–11	5		
		11–12	6		
		12–13	7		

3.1 Gross enrolment ratios

The GER, sometimes referred to as the gross enrolment index, is a metric used to assess the number of students enrolled at school across various grade levels or education phases, including pre-school, school, and tertiary education. It serves to indicate the ratio of enrolled students to the total population eligible for a particular phase of education within a country.

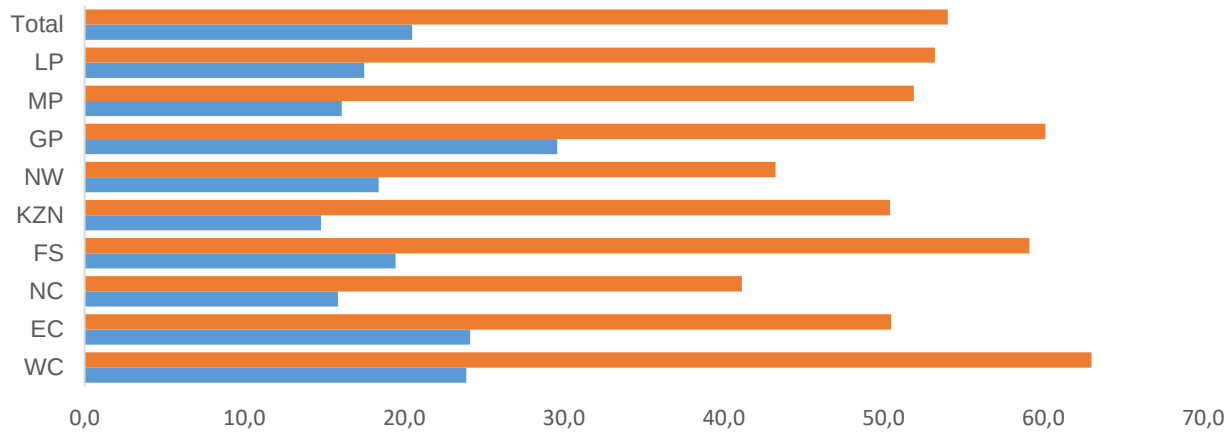
The computation of this indicator involves taking the total number of individuals enrolled in the education phase, regardless of their age, and dividing it by the total population who fall within the official school age for that specific school phase. This result is then multiplied by 100 to express the ratio as a percentage.

It is important to note that the GER can exceed 100%, as it encompasses students who may be older or younger than the official age group. This includes individuals who are repeating a grade, those who enrolled late and are older than their peers, or those who have progressed quickly and are younger than their classmates. Consequently, the total enrolment may surpass the population corresponding to that level of education.

Below, GERs are presented for pre-primary, school, and tertiary education using census data from 2001, 2011, and 2022. This data provides insights into enrolment trends across different educational phases over time.

[1] Use of attendance instead of enrolment

Figure 3.1: Gross enrolment ratios in pre-school by province, 2001, 2022



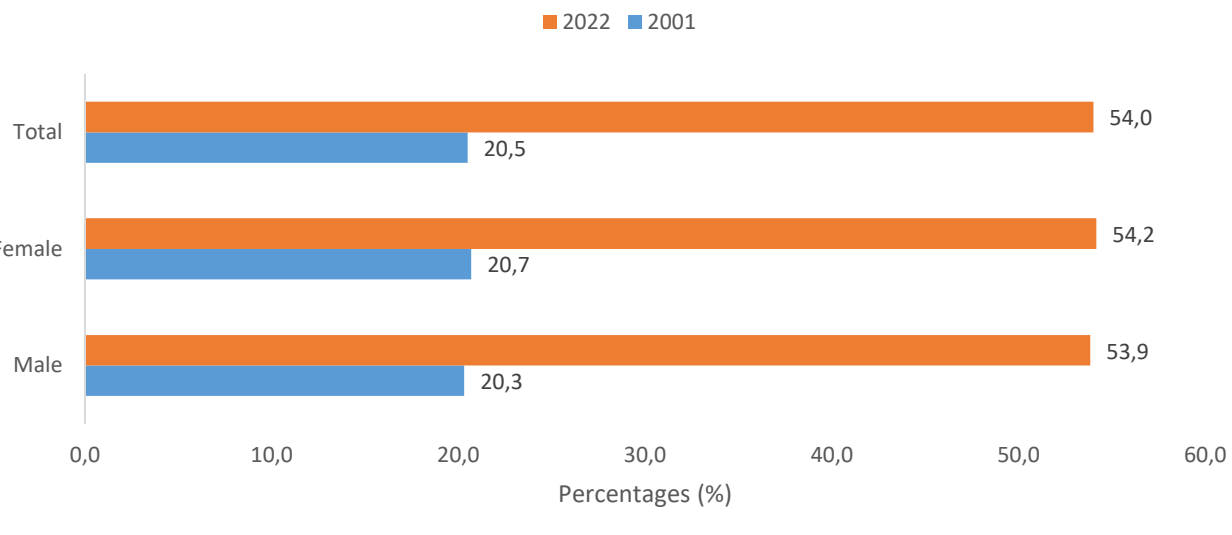
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	Total
2022	63,0	50,5	41,1	59,1	50,4	43,2	60,1	51,9	53,2	54,0
2001	23,9	24,1	15,9	19,5	14,8	18,4	29,6	16,1	17,5	20,5

Source: Census 2001, 2022

The graph above illustrates the GER in pre-school education by province. Over the two decades presented, the GER almost tripled for provinces with predominantly rural areas such as Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo. Despite this significant increase, the GER for these provinces remained below 100 percent throughout the period.

The highest rise in the GER was observed in Western Cape and Free State. However, as of 2022, the highest GER was recorded in Western Cape at 63,0%, followed closely by Gauteng at 60,1%. These figures indicate variations in pre-school enrolment rates across provinces, with Western Cape and Gauteng leading in terms of GER.

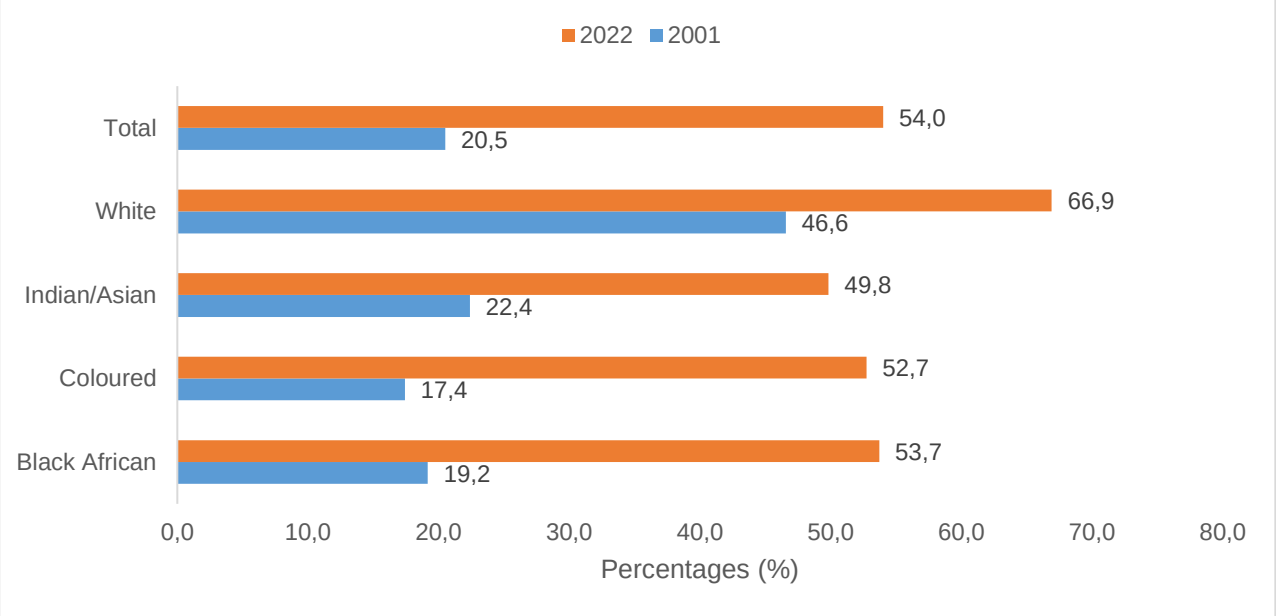
Figure 3.2: Gross enrolment ratios in pre-school by sex, 2001, 2022



Source: Census 2001, 2022

The graph above displays the GER in pre-school education by sex. Over the two decades depicted, the GER more than doubled for both genders, although it remained below 100 percent for all genders throughout the period. As of 2022, the GER for both males and females was close to 54,0%, indicating relatively similar enrolment rates between males and females in pre-school education. This suggests that efforts to improve access to pre-school education have contributed to increased enrolment rates for both boys and girls over time.

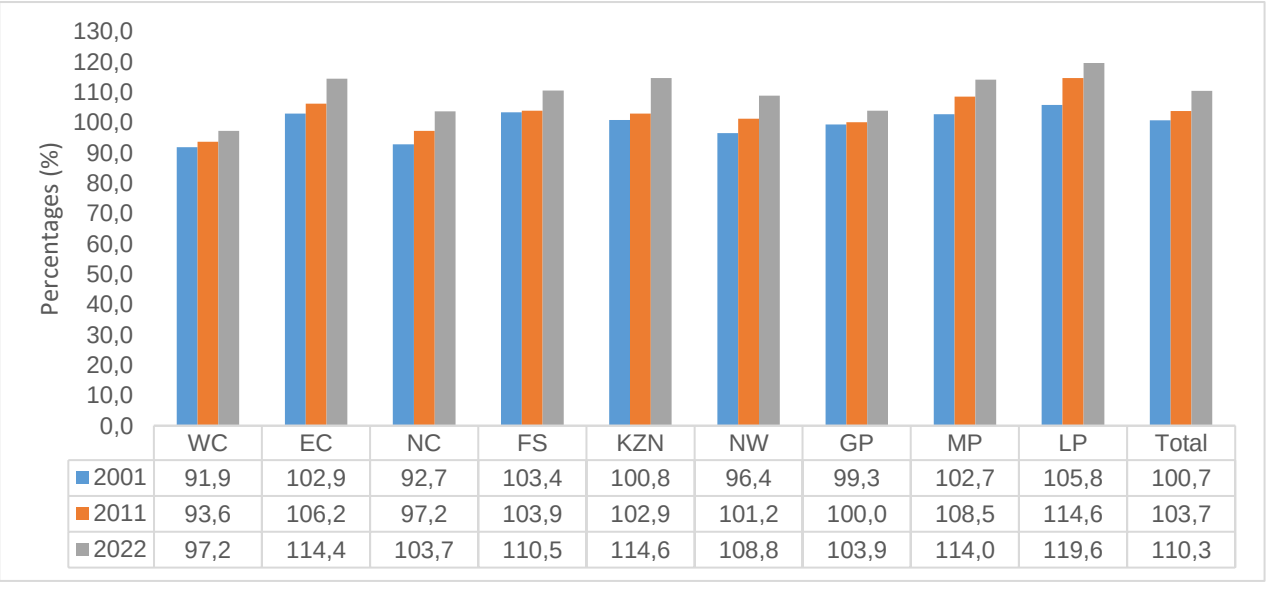
Figure 3.3: Gross enrolment ratios in pre-school by population groups, Census 2001–2022



Source: Census 2001–2022

The graph above illustrates the GER in pre-school education by population group. Over the two decades depicted, the GER more than doubled for all population groups, although it remained below 100 percent for each group. In 2022, the GER for pre-school was notably lower for Indian/Asians, at 49,8%. This may indicate a tendency for late school enrolment among this population group. Meanwhile, the GER almost tripled for both black Africans and coloureds from 2001 to 2022. However, the GER for whites remained the highest for both periods, suggesting relatively higher enrolment rates among this population group compared to others.

Figure 3.4: Gross enrolment ratios in school by province, Census 2001–2022



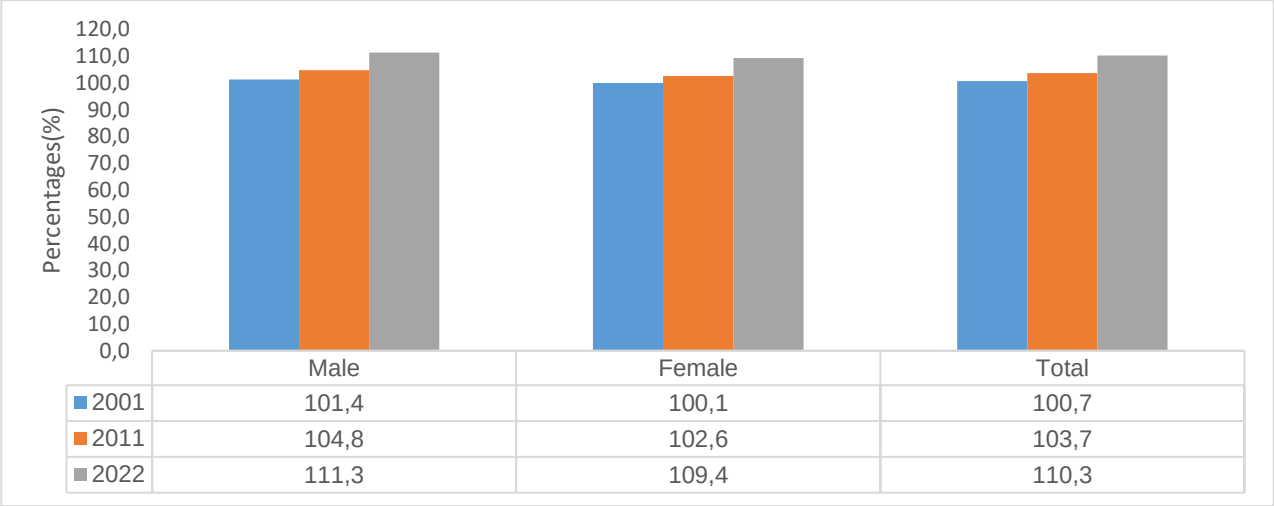
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	Total
2001	91,9	102,9	92,7	103,4	100,8	96,4	99,3	102,7	105,8	100,7
2011	93,6	106,2	97,2	103,9	102,9	101,2	100,0	108,5	114,6	103,7
2022	97,2	114,4	103,7	110,5	114,6	108,8	103,9	114,0	119,6	110,3

Source: Census 2001–2022

The graph above illustrates the GER in school education by province. Across the years presented, the GER demonstrated growth in all provinces, with an overall increase of close to ten percentage points from 100,7% in 2001 to 110,3% in 2022. In 2001, the GER ranged from 91,9% in Western Cape to 105,8% in Limpopo, while in 2022, it ranged from 97,2% to 119,6% in the same provinces. Notably, the highest growth occurred between 2011 and 2022. Limpopo experienced the highest increase in GER from 2001 to 2011, with close to nine percentage points growth, while Free State had the lowest growth during that period.

KwaZulu-Natal witnessed a substantial growth of 11,7 percentage points from 2001 to 2011, which was the highest growth observed in the country during that period. Provinces with high GER levels in 2022 included Limpopo (119,6%), KwaZulu-Natal (114,6%), Eastern Cape (114,4%), and Mpumalanga (114,0%). Overall, the GER exceeded 100% for all years presented, except for Western Cape, which had a GER lower than 100%. This suggests that Western Cape may be the only province with students close to the official age group for schooling.

Figure 3.5: Gross enrolment ratios in school by sex, Census 2001–2022

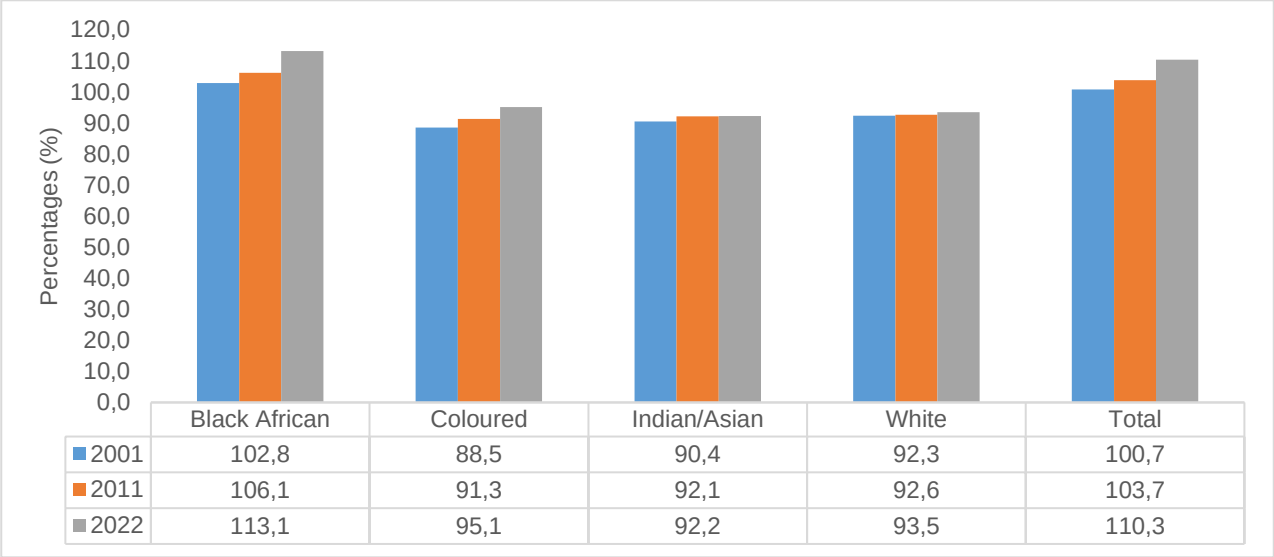


	Male	Female	Total
2001	101,4	100,1	100,7
2011	104,8	102,6	103,7
2022	111,3	109,4	110,3

Source: Census 2001–2022

The graph above depicts the GER in school education by sex. Generally, GERs were lower for females compared to males. Over the 20-year period presented, the percentage increase in GER was slightly higher for males, at 10 percentage points, compared to females, which stood at 9,3 percentage points, from 2001 to 2022.

Figure 3.6: Gross enrolment ratios in school by population groups, Census 2001–2022



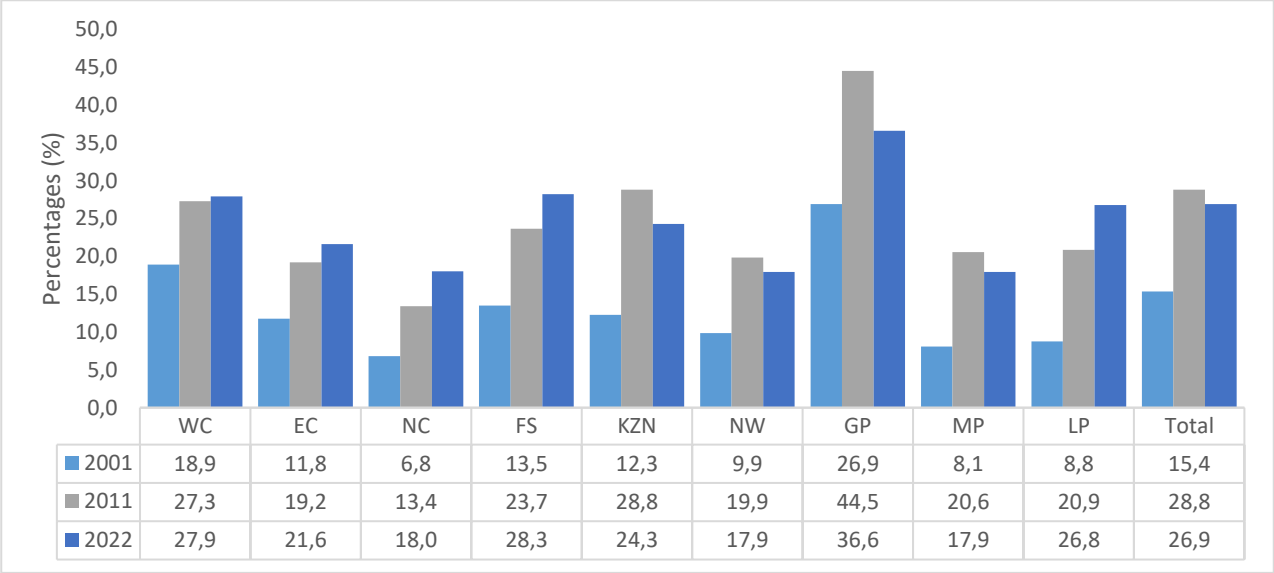
	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Total
2001	102,8	88,5	90,4	92,3	100,7
2011	106,1	91,3	92,1	92,6	103,7
2022	113,1	95,1	92,2	93,5	110,3

Source: Census 2001–2022
*Note: Age 19-24 have been used for official transition into tertiary education

The graph above illustrates the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by population group. GERs for all population groups were lower than 100, except for black Africans. The change in GER between 2001 and 2022 was relatively low among Indian/Asians and whites, with increases of 1,8 and 1,2 percentage points, respectively. In contrast, the changes were higher among black Africans and coloureds, with increases of 10,3% and 6,6%, respectively.

School attendance among black Africans likely includes students who may be older or younger than the official age group, which could explain the higher GER observed for this population group compared to others.

Figure 3.7: Gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education by province, Census 2001–2022

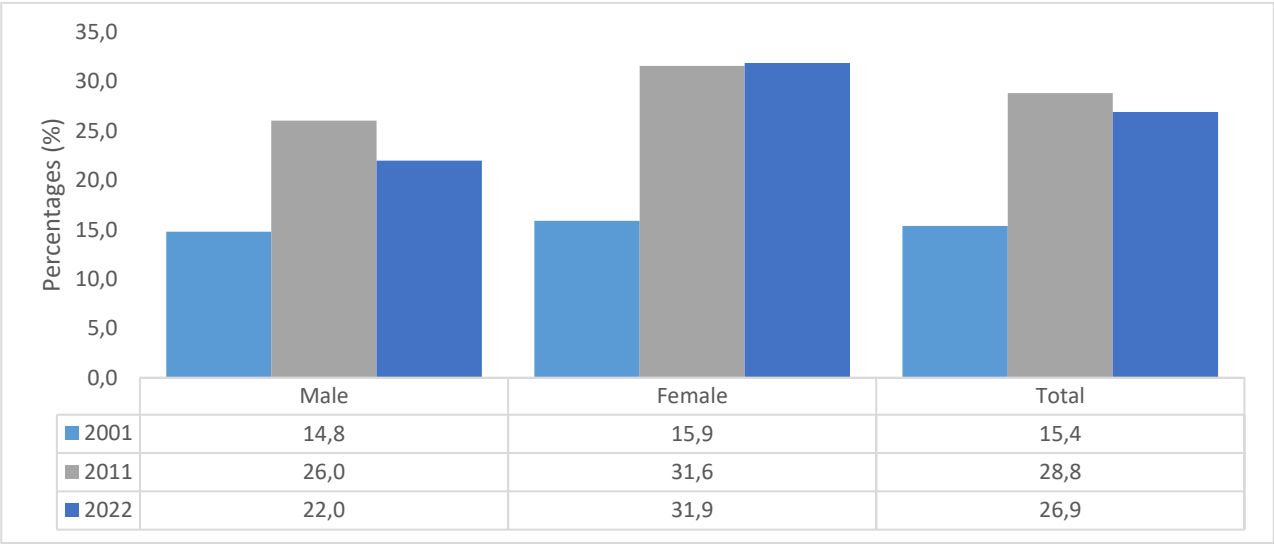


	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	Total
2001	18,9	11,8	6,8	13,5	12,3	9,9	26,9	8,1	8,8	15,4
2011	27,3	19,2	13,4	23,7	28,8	19,9	44,5	20,6	20,9	28,8
2022	27,9	21,6	18,0	28,3	24,3	17,9	36,6	17,9	26,8	26,9

Source: Census 2001–2022

The graph above illustrates the GER in tertiary education by province. Overall, the total GER almost doubled from 15,4% in 2001 to 28,8% in 2011, before experiencing a slight decline to 26,9% in 2022. While GERs showed growth in all provinces from 2001 to 2011, Gauteng exhibited the largest increase with 17,6 percentage points, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 16,5 percentage points. However, from 2011 to 2022, there was an overall decline of close to two percentage points, with some provinces showing smaller increases compared to the previous period and others experiencing a decline in GER. Notably, the GER in tertiary education for Limpopo almost tripled in 20 years from a low base of 8,8% in 2001 to 26,8% in 2022, demonstrating significant progress in access to tertiary education in the province over the period.

Figure 3.8: Gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education by sex, Census 2001–2022

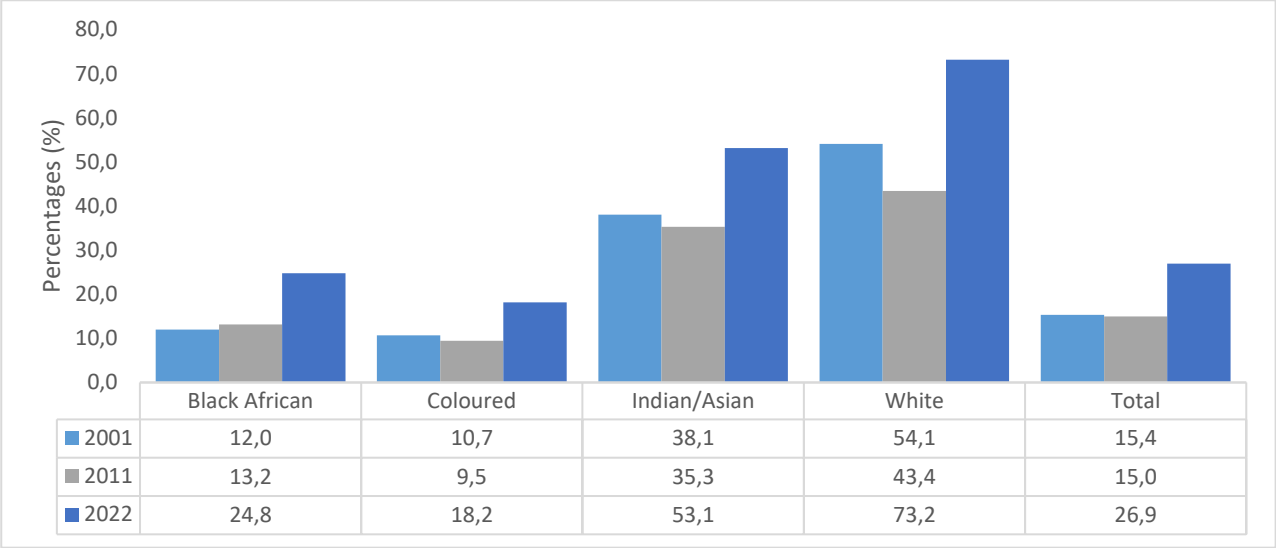


	Male	Female	Total
2001	14,8	15,9	15,4
2011	26,0	31,6	28,8
2022	22,0	31,9	26,9

Source: Census 2001–2022

The graph above illustrates the GER in post-school education by gender. The GER for females almost doubled from 15,9% in 2001 to 31,6% in 2011 and remained consistent in the following decade (31,9% in 2022). In contrast, males' GER was one percentage point lower than females in 2001. However, within two decades, the gap widened to close to ten percentage points. This suggests a significant disparity in access to post-school education between genders over the period analysed.

Figure 3.9: Gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education by population groups, Census 2001–2022



	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Total
2001	12,0	10,7	38,1	54,1	15,4
2011	13,2	9,5	35,3	43,4	15,0
2022	24,8	18,2	53,1	73,2	26,9

Source: Census 2001–2022

The graph above displays the GER in post-school education by population group. Whites consistently had higher GER across all the years, while coloureds had the lowest. However, whites experienced a significant decline in GER in the decade following 2001 (a reduction of 10,7 percentage points), while the GER for black Africans increased only marginally by 1,2 percentage points.

In 2022, the GER for black Africans and coloureds is notably below the national average. In contrast, those of Indian/Asians and whites were close to twice and three times more, respectively, than the national average. This disparity underscores the ongoing challenges in access to post-school education among different population groups in South Africa.

3.2 Net enrolment ratios

The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) is calculated by taking the number of enrolled children of official school age for a specific phase of education as a percentage of the total children of the official school age population for that phase. The maximum value for the NER is 100%, and a high NER indicates a high degree of enrolment in education by the official school age population.

A low NER does not necessarily indicate non-enrolment of individuals, as some may be enrolled at other levels of education. Therefore, it is advisable to compare the GER with the NER to identify under-aged or over-aged enrolment, as well as to assess progress through the grades.

Table 3.2: Net enrolment ratios by sex, Census 2022

	NER pre-primary	NER primary	NER secondary	NER tertiary
Male	53,0	81,6	73,0	20,9
Female	53,3	78,5	72,4	30,3
Total	**53,2**	**80,0**	**72,7**	**25,6**

Source: Census 2022

*Note: Only enrolment of individuals aged 19—24 year-olds in tertiary education were considered for the above analysis

The above table presents the NER for the year 2022, categorised by educational phase and gender. NER values ranged from 80,0% to 25,6% on average and exhibited considerable variation by gender, particularly in primary and tertiary education.

Primary education showed the highest overall NER at 80,0%, with a slight discrepancy between sexes. Specifically, the NER for girls was 3,1 percentage points lower than that of boys (78,5% for girls and 81,6% for boys). This indicates a slight gender gap favouring boys in primary education.

At secondary school level, the gender gap in NER narrowed significantly to just 0,6 percentage points. This suggests a more equitable distribution of enrolment between males and females in secondary education.

However, a notable gender disparity was observed within the tertiary education phase. Females exhibited a higher NER level at 30,3%, compared to males at 20,9%. This substantial difference in NER between males and females indicates a significant enrolment gap favouring females in tertiary education.

Table 3.3: Net enrolment ratios by population groups, Census 2022

	NER pre-primary	NER primary	NER secondary	NER tertiary
Black African	53,0	80,4	74,2	23,6
Coloured	51,3	78,6	62,0	17,0
Indian/Asian	47,1	71,4	59,5	49,0
White	64,2	78,6	68,7	68,8
Total	**53,2**	**80,0**	**72,7**	**25,6**

Source: Census 2022

The above table presents the NER for the year 2022, categorised by educational phase and population group. Disparities in NER by population group were particularly noticeable within the pre-primary and tertiary education phases.

In pre-primary education, NER levels were relatively low across all population groups, but the gap between them was notable. NER values ranged from 21,4% for black Africans to 54,7% for whites, indicating a substantial disparity in access to pre-primary education.

Similarly, significant disparities were observed in tertiary education NER. Indian/Asians and whites exhibited much higher NER levels at 49,0% and 68,8% respectively, compared to black Africans and coloureds with NER values of 23,6% and 17,0% respectively. These findings underscore the persistent inequalities in access to higher education among different population groups in South Africa.

Table 3.4: Net enrolment ratios by province, Census 2022

	NER pre-primary	NER primary	NER secondary	NER tertiary
WC	61,7	79,4	65,5	26,1
EC	49,6	82,6	74,9	20,6
NC	39,8	82,9	67,2	17,4
FS	58,2	83,0	75,8	26,8
KZN	49,6	78,1	72,7	23,1
NW	42,5	81,5	72,5	17,1
GP	59,2	78,8	70,8	34,8
MP	51,1	79,5	74,4	17,3
LP	52,7	80,9	78,4	25,8
Total	**53,2**	**80,0**	**72,7**	**25,6**

Source: Census 2022

The above table presents the NER for the year 2022, categorised by educational phase and province. Regional disparities in NER exist, particularly in the pre-primary phase, where Gauteng and Western Cape exhibit the highest NER values at 59,2% and 61,7% respectively. In contrast, Northern Cape recorded the lowest NER in this phase at 39,8%.

Similarly, in tertiary education, Gauteng stands out with the highest NER, indicating a relatively higher rate of enrolment in higher education institutions compared to other provinces. These regional variations underscore the importance of addressing educational inequalities across different provinces in South Africa.

3.3 Conclusion

In education, indicators are crucial for measuring progress in access, equity, and quality. In this section, indicators on enrolment have been disaggregated by gender, population group, and province to assess equity in access. While there has been improvement in access and participation in education over time, progress has not been uniform across all groups. Some disadvantaged groups started from a lower base, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address inequities.

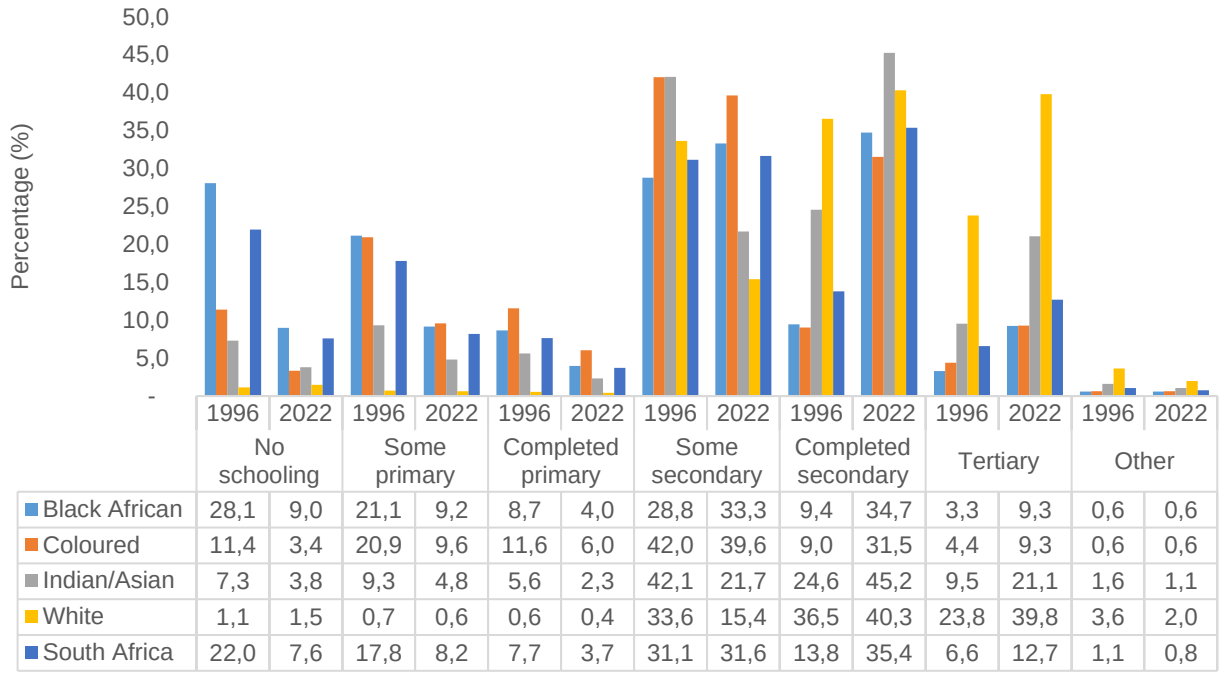
Chapter 4: Educational attainment

The post-apartheid governments in South Africa made significant investments in the education sector, leading to the expansion of educational infrastructure nationwide. However, the country began from a very low base, especially for certain population groups, with the majority of the black African population having limited educational attainment, mostly at the primary education level. Over almost three decades, from the 1990s to the 2020s, extensive reforms have been implemented, resulting in substantial improvements in social welfare and educational attainment across the country.

4.1 Highest level of education

Enrolment and participation in education are essential for achieving functional literacy, acquiring competencies at each stage of the educational phase, and developing work skills for both youth and adults. In this section, educational attainment is measured by the highest level of education attained, which is disaggregated by various equity factors that were prevalent during the apartheid era and remain subjects of debate in contemporary South Africa.

Figure 4.1: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by population group, Census 1996 and 2022



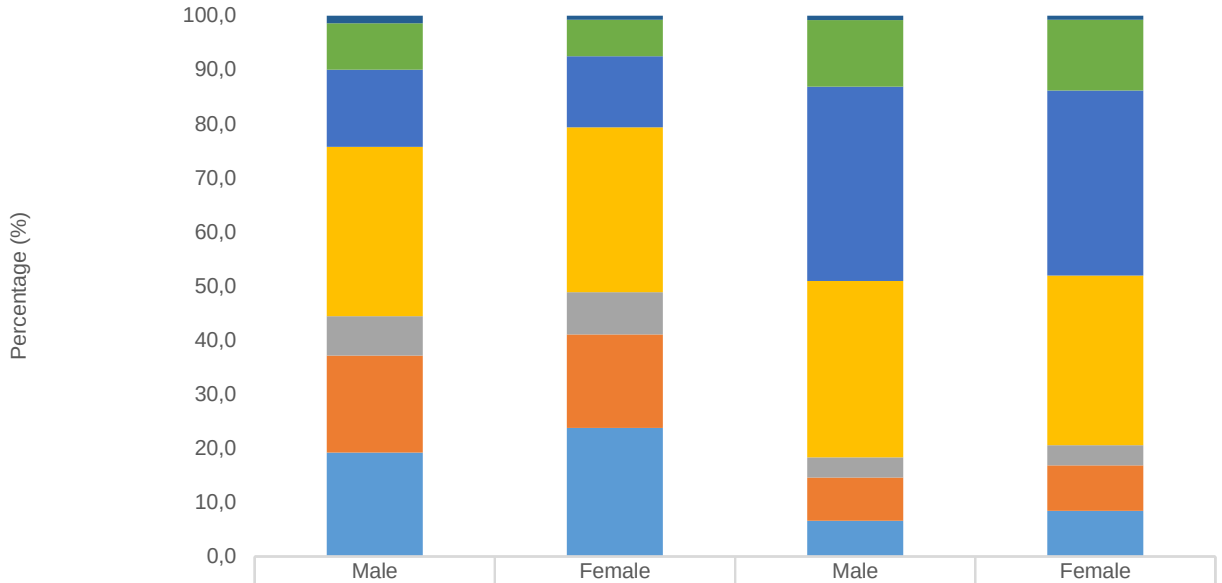
	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022
	No schooling		Some primary		Completed primary		Some secondary		Completed secondary		Tertiary		Other	
Black African	28,1	9,0	21,1	9,2	8,7	4,0	28,8	33,3	9,4	34,7	3,3	9,3	0,6	0,6
Coloured	11,4	3,4	20,9	9,6	11,6	6,0	42,0	39,6	9,0	31,5	4,4	9,3	0,6	0,6
Indian/Asian	7,3	3,8	9,3	4,8	5,6	2,3	42,1	21,7	24,6	45,2	9,5	21,1	1,6	1,1
White	1,1	1,5	0,7	0,6	0,6	0,4	33,6	15,4	36,5	40,3	23,8	39,8	3,6	2,0
South Africa	22,0	7,6	17,8	8,2	7,7	3,7	31,1	31,6	13,8	35,4	6,6	12,7	1,1	0,8

Source: Census 1996-2022

The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, segmented by population group. In 1996, approximately 47,5% of the South African population had only completed primary education or less, while 31,1% had attained some level of secondary education, 13,8% had completed secondary education, and only around 6,6% had obtained tertiary education. By 2022, there was a noticeable decrease in the proportion of individuals with no formal schooling, whereas the percentage of those who completed secondary education more than doubled. Moreover, the percentage of individuals achieving tertiary qualifications almost doubled.

The data reveals the most significant educational advancement among the black African population, with a marked decline in the percentage of individuals aged 25 years and older with only primary education or less, dropping from around 57,9% in 1996 to 22,2% in 2022. Additionally, the attainment of secondary education among black Africans more than tripled from 9,4% in 1996 to 34,7% in 2022.

Figure 4.2: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by gender, Census 1996 and 2022



	1996 Male	1996 Female	2022 Male	2022 Female
Other	1,4	0,8	0,8	0,7
Tertiary	8,6	6,7	12,3	13,1
Completed secondary	14,3	13,2	35,9	34,3
Some secondary	31,3	30,5	32,6	31,4
Completed primary	7,3	7,8	3,7	3,7
Some primary	17,9	17,3	8,0	8,4
No schooling	19,2	23,8	6,6	8,5

Source: Census 1996-2022

The graph above depicts the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, stratified by gender. In 1996, 6 out of 10 males (61,5%) had achieved at least primary education, while this proportion increased to 8 out of 10 males (84,6%) by 2022. Similarly, in 1996, 5 out of 10 females (58,2%) had attained at least primary education, which rose to 8 out of 10 females (82,4%) by 2022.

As both men and women have increasingly completed secondary education, the percentage of individuals with “completed primary education” as their highest completed educational credential has decreased from 7,3% in 1996 to 3,7% in 2022 for males and from 7,8% in 1996 to 3,7% in 2022 for females.

The data indicates a narrowing gender gap in educational attainment over time. Notably, the percentage of females achieving tertiary education surpassed that of males by 2022, with 12,3% of males and 13,1% of females attaining tertiary qualifications. This represents a significant increase from 1996, where 8,6% of males and 6,7% of females had obtained tertiary education.

Table 4.1: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by province, Census 1996–2022

Highest level of education	Year of census	Province									
		WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	RSA
No schooling	1996	7,4	24,2	25,1	18,5	25,9	26,0	10,8	35,7	43,8	**21,9**
	2001	6,3	25,6	21,6	18,2	24,8	23,1	9,7	32,8	38,3	**20,2**
	2011	3,0	12,1	12,9	8,3	12,7	13,6	4,1	16,6	20,6	**10,0**
	2022	2,4	8,0	7,5	5,5	9,2	8,9	4,2	13,2	15,8	**7,6**
Some primary	1996	16,5	22,3	22,6	24,3	19,4	21,9	12,8	15,6	13,4	**17,8**
	2001	16,5	20,9	23,2	24,1	18,9	21,7	12,7	17,4	15,5	**17,5**
	2011	11,9	20,4	19,0	18,5	15,8	18,7	8,4	13,5	13,4	**13,9**
	2022	6,7	13,5	12,0	10,8	8,9	11,3	4,8	8,2	8,2	**8,2**
Complete primary	1996	9,1	9,1	8,5	9,1	6,8	8,0	7,1	6,7	6,3	**7,7**
	2001	8,3	7,7	8,1	8,2	6,0	7,0	6,0	5,8	5,5	**6,7**
	2011	5,9	6,7	6,7	5,8	4,6	5,6	3,6	4,5	4,8	**4,9**
	2022	4,1	5,6	5,7	4,4	3,5	4,6	2,6	3,6	3,5	**3,7**
Some secondary	1996	38,8	29,4	27,7	30,3	28,7	28,4	39,0	23,5	20,1	**31,2**
	2001	36,1	26,6	27,0	27,7	26,2	26,4	33,7	22,1	20,7	**28,6**
	2011	37,3	33,5	32,9	32,9	29,6	31,1	32,8	29,0	30,9	**32,3**
	2022	34,1	36,8	38,2	33,9	28,1	34,0	29,8	29,1	32,5	**31,6**
Completed secondary	1996	16,0	9,5	9,5	11,5	13,0	10,4	19,9	12,3	10,8	**13,8**
	2001	20,9	12,4	13,9	15,3	16,9	15,8	25,1	15,5	12,4	**18,1**
	2011	26,5	18,0	20,5	24,3	27,4	23,0	32,0	26,1	20,2	**26,1**
	2022	33,3	25,2	28,6	34,3	39,0	32,8	40,9	37,7	29,0	**35,4**
Tertiary	1996	12,2	5,6	6,6	6,3	6,3	5,3	10,4	6,1	5,6	**7,7**
	2001	11,8	6,7	6,2	6,5	7,3	6,0	12,7	6,4	7,5	**8,9**
	2011	15,3	9,3	7,9	10,1	9,9	8,1	19,0	10,3	10,0	**12,8**
	2022	18,4	10,3	7,5	10,4	10,7	7,8	16,9	7,6	10,1	**12,7**

Source: Census 1996-2022

The table above presents the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, disaggregated by province. In 1996, Limpopo had the highest percentage of uneducated adults aged 25 years and older, at 43.8%. However, this percentage gradually decreased to 15,8% by 2022, although Limpopo still had the lowest educational attainment compared to other provinces. Conversely, Western Cape consistently had the lowest percentage of adults with no education, decreasing from 7,4% in 1996 to 2,4% in 2022.

Across the 26-year period, most provinces experienced a reduction in the percentage of individuals who did not complete primary education. The most significant improvement was observed in Free State, where this percentage decreased from 24,3% in 1996 to 10,8% in 2022.

While progress has been made, completion of secondary school education remains far from universal. In 2022, Gauteng had the highest percentage of individuals achieving matric, at around 41%, which doubled from 19,9% in 1996. However, dropout rates from secondary education have worsened in most provinces over the years.

Disparities in educational attainment persist between more urbanised regions and others. Western Cape and Gauteng continued to have the highest percentage of tertiary education graduates. Eastern Cape and Limpopo showed an increase of close to five percentage points in the proportion of individuals with tertiary qualifications from 1996 to 2022.

Table 4.2: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by metro, Census 1996–2022

Highest level of education	Year of census	Buffalo City	Nelson Mandela Bay	Mangaung	Ekurhuleni	City of Johannesburg	City of Tshwane	eThekwini	City of Cape Town	Total
No schooling	1996	14,7	7,4	11,9	11,1	8,7	11,5	12,2	4,9	**9,7**
	2001	12,6	7,5	12,4	10,3	8,0	10,1	11,3	4,5	**9,0**
	2011	5,6	3,4	5,1	4,1	3,2	4,7	4,9	1,9	**3,8**
	2022	4,4	2,6	3,3	4,5	3,8	4,2	4,8	2,0	**3,8**
Some primary	1996	16,1	15,0	20,9	13,0	11,5	11,3	14,6	13,2	**13,4**
	2001	16,2	14,2	21,0	12,7	11,2	11,6	14,8	12,9	**13,2**
	2011	12,3	9,9	15,4	8,5	7,5	7,7	10,9	9,0	**9,1**
	2022	7,7	6,3	9,6	4,7	4,3	4,2	5,8	5,0	**5,1**
Complete primary	1996	9,7	9,5	9,3	7,3	7,2	6,2	7,0	8,7	**7,7**
	2001	8,4	8,1	8,2	6,1	5,8	5,2	6,2	7,6	**6,5**
	2011	5,7	5,0	5,2	3,6	3,7	3,1	3,9	5,0	**4,1**
	2022	4,0	3,6	4,3	2,5	2,8	2,2	2,6	3,3	**2,8**
Some secondary	1996	37,3	43,7	34,0	40,8	40,9	33,6	38,6	42,5	**39,6**
	2001	34,2	39,4	30,5	35,3	34,8	28,9	34,1	38,9	**34,8**
	2011	36,6	40,4	32,6	35,2	32,8	28,2	33,3	38,2	**34,1**
	2022	35,5	37,9	32,5	30,3	30,8	26,0	27,1	33,4	**30,4**
Completed secondary	1996	14,4	15,6	15,2	19,3	20,9	22,4	18,4	17,5	**18,9**
	2001	18,7	21,8	18,7	25,4	26,0	26,8	23,7	22,8	**24,2**
	2011	25,2	28,7	27,1	33,4	32,5	31,5	33,9	28,2	**31,3**
	2022	32,1	35,7	35,9	42,9	41,8	39,0	45,7	34,4	**40,0**
Tertiary	1996	7,8	8,7	8,7	8,4	10,8	15,0	9,2	13,2	**10,7**
	2001	9,8	8,9	9,2	10,2	14,3	17,4	10,0	13,2	**12,4**
	2011	14,7	12,6	14,6	15,3	20,4	24,8	13,0	17,6	**17,7**
	2022	15,6	13,1	13,6	14,3	15,6	23,4	13,3	20,9	**17,1**

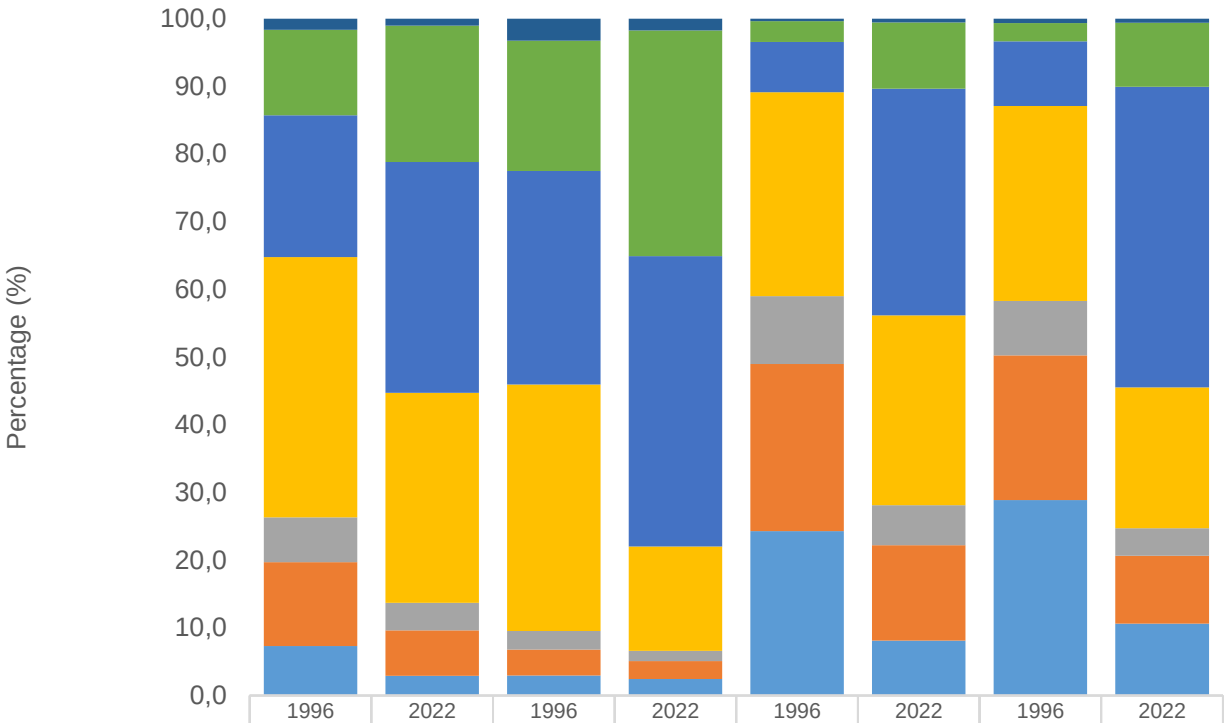
Source: Census 1996-2022

The table above presents the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, disaggregated by metropolitan area. In 2022, adults with primary education or less were more concentrated in non-metropolitan regions. City of Tshwane and eThekwini had the lowest concentration of secondary school dropouts, at 26,0% and 27,1% respectively. Conversely, the largest concentration of secondary school dropouts was found in Buffalo City and Nelson Mandela Bay, at 35,5% and 37,9% respectively.

However, by 2022, metropolitan city dwellers had largely completed secondary school education, particularly in eThekwini (45,7%) and Ekurhuleni (42,9%). Additionally, City of Tshwane and City of Cape Town had the highest percentage of tertiary education qualification holders, at 23,4% and 20,9% respectively.

These findings suggest that while progress has been made, there is still room for improvement in levelling spatial disparities in educational attainment across metropolitan areas.

Figure 4.3: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by language spoken, Census 1996 and 2022



	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022
	Afrikaans		English		IsiXhosa		IsiZulu	
Other	1,6	1,0	3,3	1,8	0,3	0,6	0,7	0,6
Tertiary	12,6	20,1	19,2	33,3	3,1	9,8	2,7	9,5
Completed secondary	21,0	34,1	31,5	42,9	7,4	33,5	9,6	44,4
Some secondary	38,4	31,0	36,4	15,4	30,2	28,1	28,8	20,8
Completed primary	6,6	4,1	2,7	1,5	10,0	5,9	8,0	4,1
Some primary	12,4	6,7	3,8	2,6	24,7	14,1	21,4	10,1
No schooling	7,3	2,9	3,0	2,5	24,3	8,1	28,9	10,6

Source: Census 1996–2022

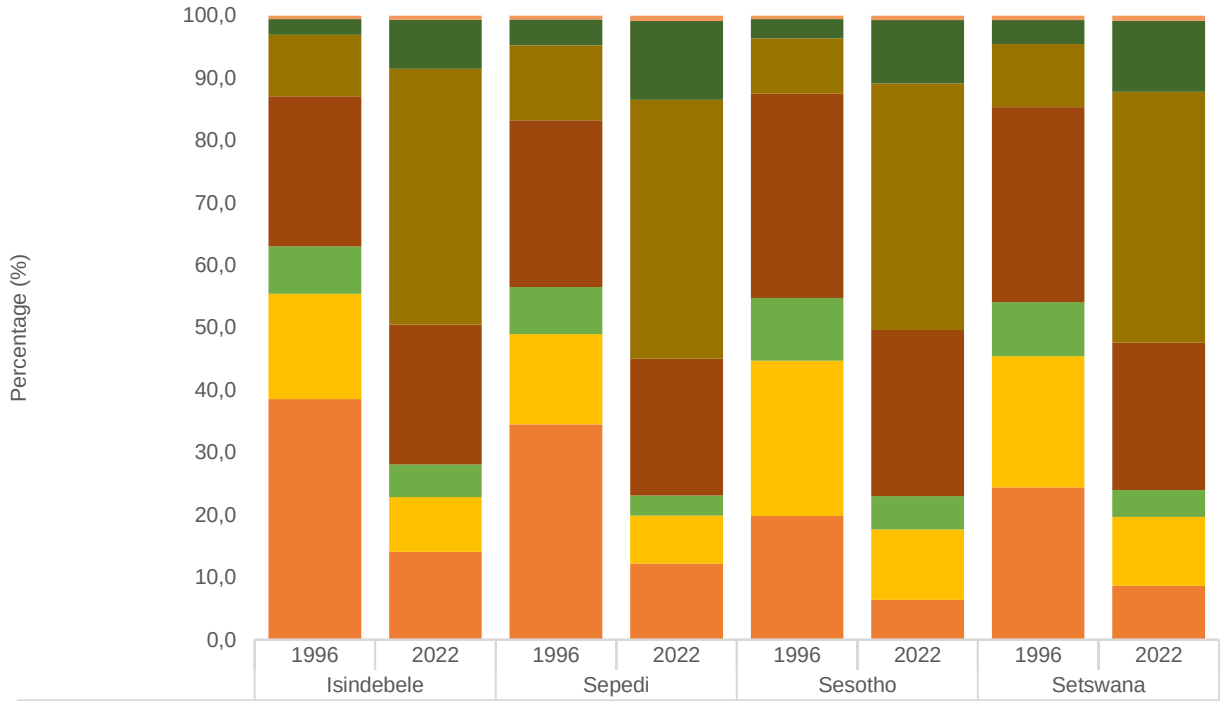
The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, categorised by selected languages. The languages presented were described as first languages in 1996 and as languages often spoken in 2022.

Overall, there has been progress in educational achievement for all the languages presented from 1996 to 2022. However, there are variations in the educational attainment trajectories among different language speakers.

For instance, while Afrikaans and English speakers showed higher rates of progression into tertiary education, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu speakers demonstrated greater progress in completing secondary education.

Moreover, in 2022, the percentage of school dropouts (those who left school without completing grade 12) was lower among IsiZulu speakers compared to IsiXhosa speakers (34,9% and 48,1% respectively). Additionally, IsiZulu speakers exhibited better improvement in secondary school completion compared to IsiXhosa speakers (44,4% and 33,5% respectively).

Figure 4.4: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by language spoken, Census 1996 and 2022 (a)



	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022	1996	2022
	Isindebele		Sepedi		Sesotho		Setswana	
Other	0,5	0,7	0,6	0,9	0,5	0,7	0,7	0,8
Tertiary	2,5	7,8	4,2	12,6	3,1	10,2	3,8	11,4
Completed secondary	9,9	41,0	12,0	41,5	8,9	39,5	10,1	40,2
Some secondary	24,1	22,4	26,7	21,9	32,7	26,6	31,2	23,6
Completed primary	7,6	5,2	7,6	3,2	10,1	5,3	8,7	4,3
Some primary	16,9	8,8	14,5	7,7	24,9	11,3	21,0	11,0
No schooling	38,6	14,1	34,5	12,2	19,8	6,4	24,4	8,7

Source: Census 1996-2022

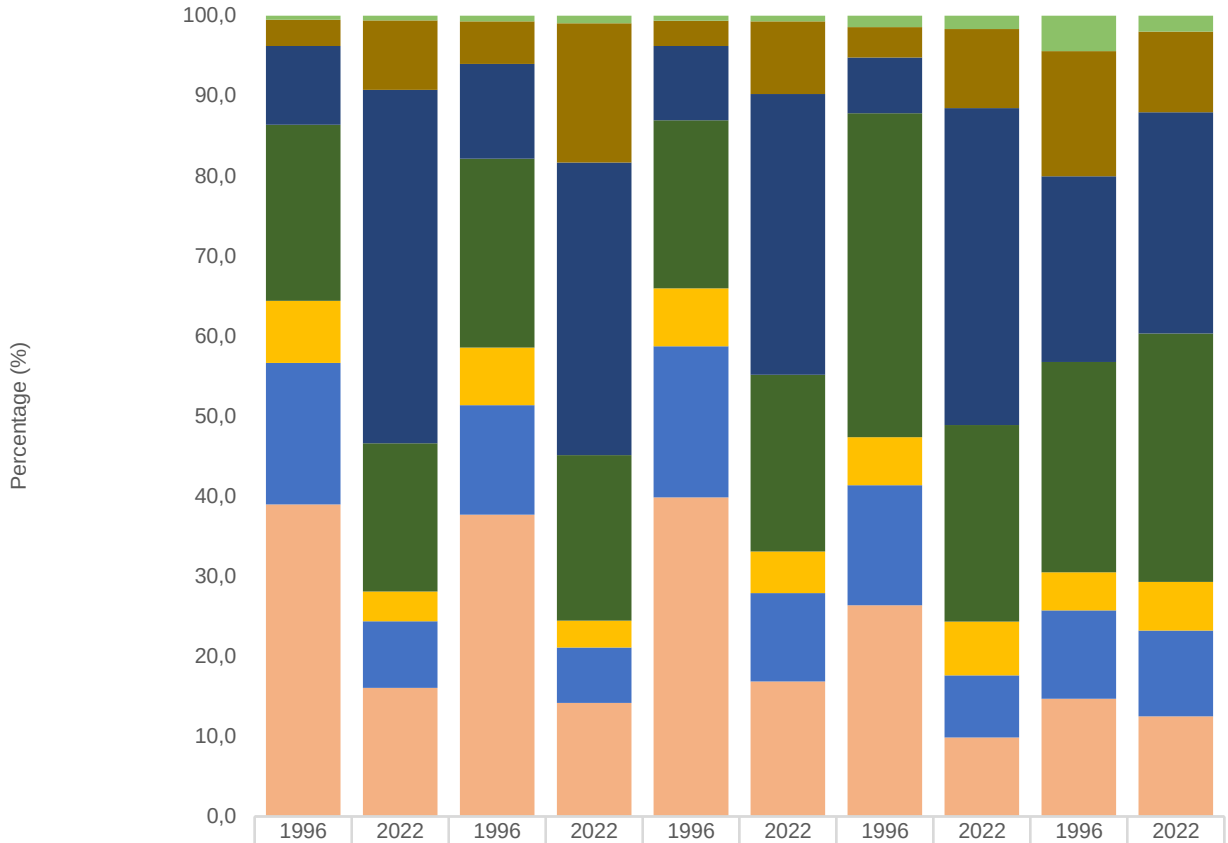
The graph above depicts the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, categorised by selected languages.

One notable trend observed across all the languages presented is the significant reduction in the percentage of adults aged 25 years and older with no formal schooling, which decreased by almost threefold during the period from 1996 to 2022.

With the exception of Sepedi speakers, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of individuals who attained secondary school education only, with four times more achievers of this level of education for all other language speakers.

However, IsiNdebele speakers still exhibit a lag in tertiary qualification achievement compared to the other population groups, indicating a potential area for targeted interventions to improve educational outcomes in this linguistic community.

Figure 4.5: Highest level of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by language spoken, Census 1996 and 2022 (b)



	1996 Siswati	2022 Siswati	1996 Tshivenda	2022 Tshivenda	1996 Xitsonga	2022 Xitsonga	1996 Shona	2022 Shona	1996 Other	2022 Other
Other	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,9	0,6	0,7	1,4	1,7	4,4	2,0
Tertiary	3,3	8,7	5,3	17,4	3,2	9,1	3,8	9,9	15,6	10,1
Completed secondary	9,8	44,1	11,8	36,5	9,3	35,1	7,0	39,6	23,2	27,6
Some secondary	22,0	18,5	23,6	20,7	21,0	22,1	40,5	24,6	26,3	31,0
Completed primary	7,7	3,7	7,2	3,3	7,3	5,2	6,0	6,7	4,8	6,1
Some primary	17,7	8,3	13,7	6,9	18,9	11,1	15,0	7,8	11,0	10,7
No schooling	39,0	16,1	37,7	14,2	39,8	16,9	26,4	9,9	14,7	12,5

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

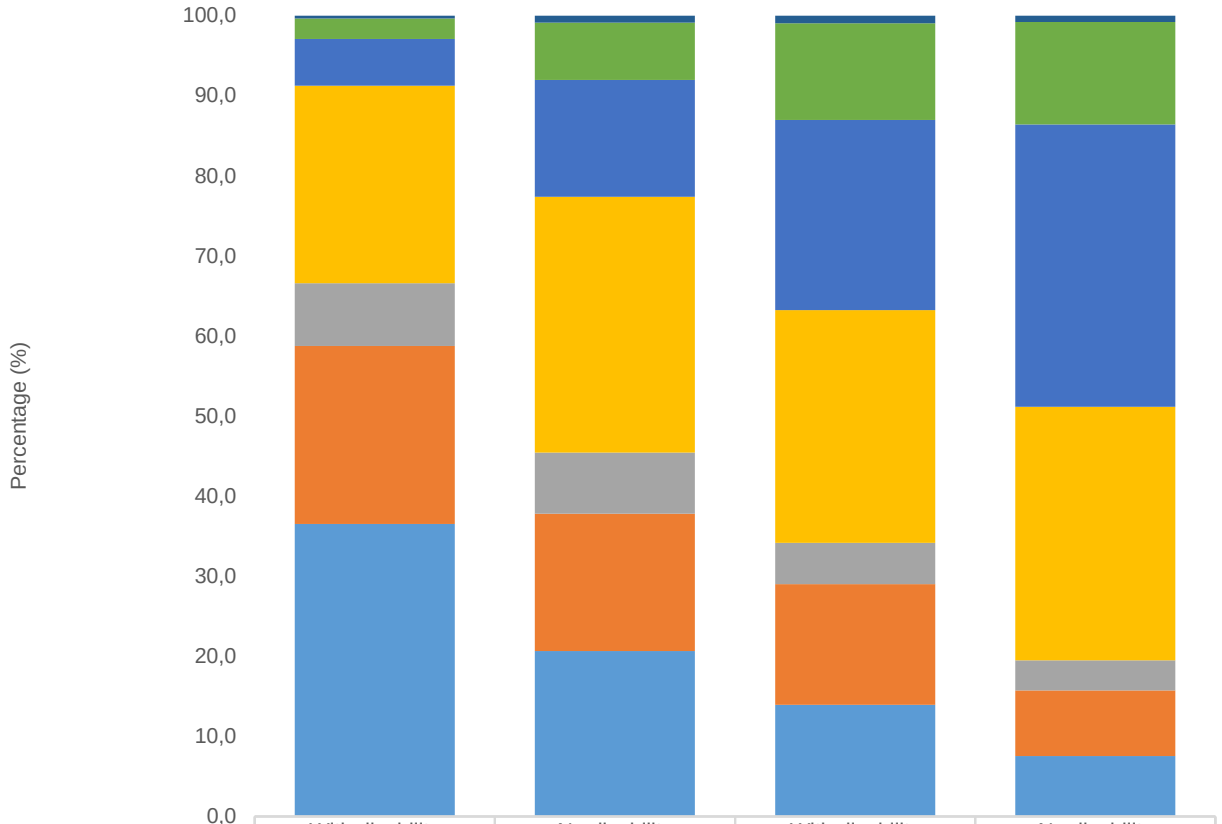
The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by individuals aged 25 years and older, categorised by languages mostly spoken at home.

Notably, all languages except for Shona and other language speakers began with a high percentage of adults aged 25 years and older with no formal education in 1996. However, by 2022, there was a significant reduction in this percentage across all languages, indicating improvements in educational access and attainment over time.

Furthermore, substantial increases in secondary school completion were observed for all languages, with Shona exhibiting a particularly notable rise from a 7,0% completion rate in 1996 to close to 40,0% in 2022.

Additionally, Tshivenda speakers experienced a significant increase in the proportion of tertiary qualification holders, rising from 5,3% in 1996 to 17,4% in 2022, highlighting advancements in higher education attainment within this linguistic community.

Figure 4.6: Persons with disability aged 25 years and older by highest level of education, Census 1996 and 2022



	1996		2022	
	With disability	No disability	With disability	No disability
Other	0,4	0,9	1,0	0,8
Tertiary	2,6	7,1	12,1	12,8
Completed secondary	5,8	14,6	23,7	35,3
Some secondary	24,7	31,9	29,1	31,7
Completed primary	7,9	7,6	5,1	3,7
Some primary	22,2	17,1	15,1	8,2
No schooling	36,5	20,7	13,9	7,6

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

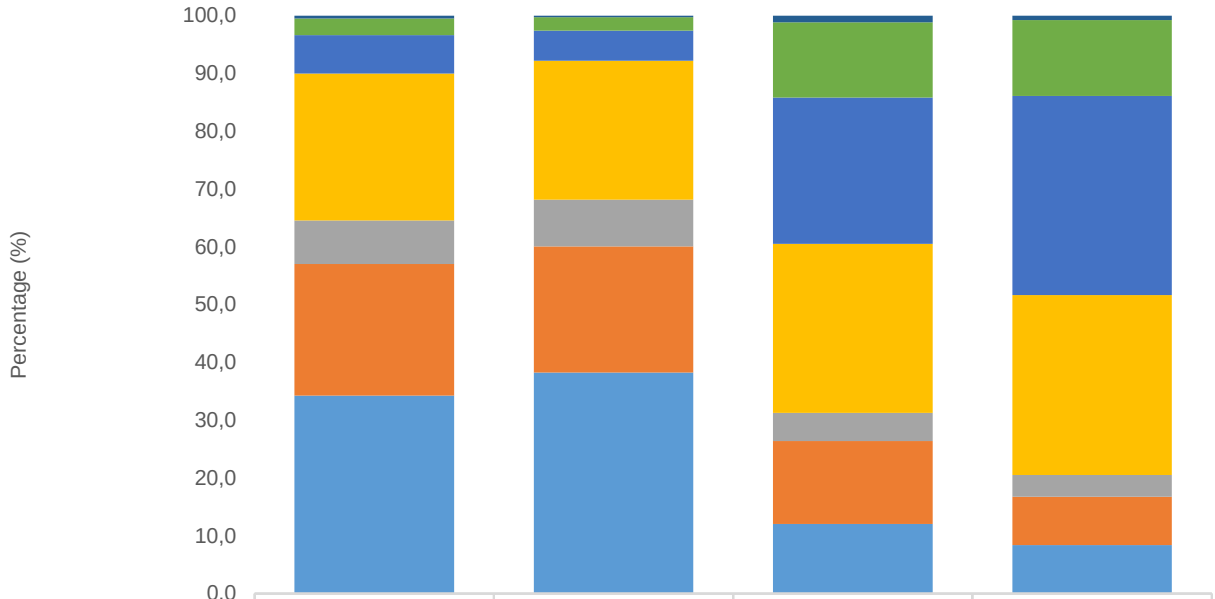
The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older.

Over the period from 1996 to 2022, significant gains in educational achievements were observed among individuals with disabilities. The proportion of individuals with no formal schooling decreased notably, declining by nearly 23 percentage points. Similarly, there was a reduction of 7,1 percentage points in the percentage of individuals with disabilities who did not complete primary education.

Moreover, there were substantial increases in the proportion of individuals with disabilities who completed secondary education and tertiary education. The percentage of individuals with disabilities who completed secondary education rose by nearly 18 percentage points, from 5,8% in 1996 to 23,7% in 2022. Similarly, the percentage of individuals with disabilities who achieved tertiary education increased by almost 10 percentage points, from 2,6% in 1996 to 12,1% in 2022.

These trends reflect significant progress in improving educational access and attainment for individuals with disabilities in South Africa over the specified period.

Figure 4.7: Persons with disability aged 25 years and older by highest level of education and sex, Census 1996 and 2022



	Male	Female	Male	Female
	1996		2022	
Other	0,5	0,2	1,1	0,8
Tertiary	2,9	2,3	13,0	13,1
Completed secondary	6,6	5,2	25,3	34,5
Some secondary	25,4	24,1	29,3	31,1
Completed primary	7,5	8,1	4,8	3,7
Some primary	22,8	21,8	14,4	8,4
No schooling	34,3	38,2	12,0	8,4

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

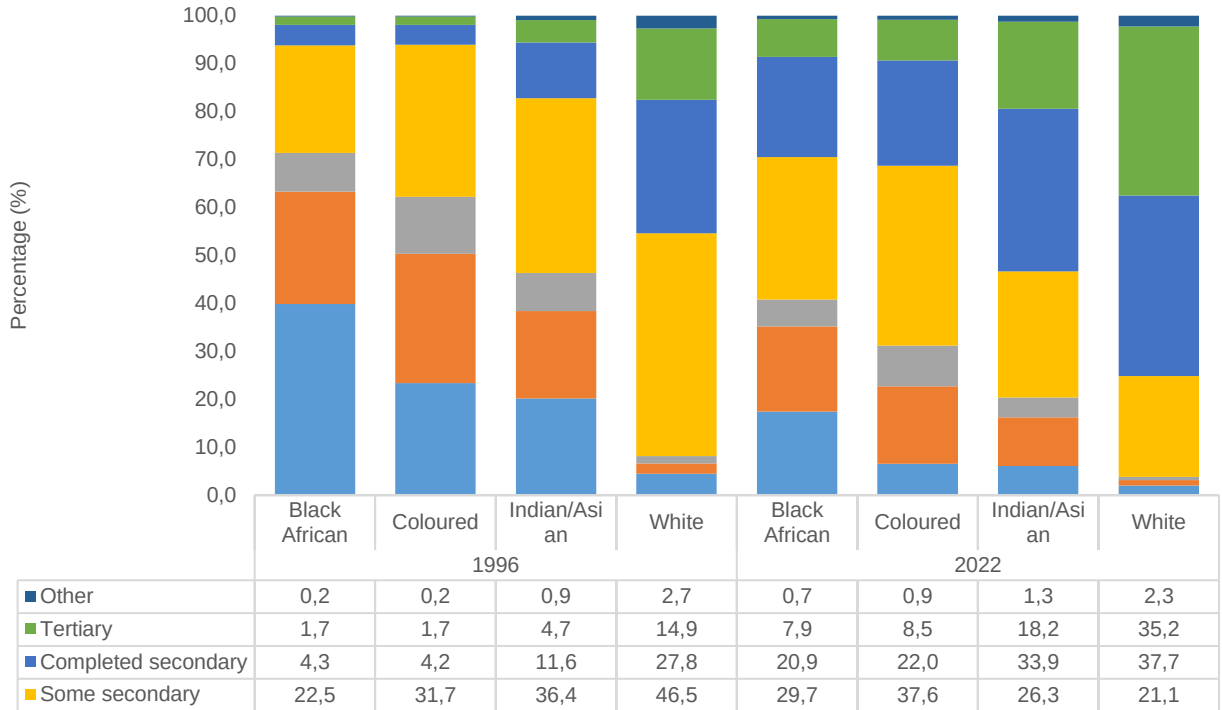
The graph above depicts the highest level of education attained by individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older, disaggregated by sex.

From 1996 to 2022, substantial gains in educational achievements were observed for both males and females with disabilities. However, the progress was more pronounced among females, surpassing that of males.

The percentage of females with disabilities who had no formal schooling decreased significantly by nearly 30 percentage points over the specified period, while the proportion of females who did not complete primary education reduced by nearly 14 percentage points. Moreover, there was a remarkable increase in the percentage of females with disabilities who completed secondary education, rising by almost 29 percentage points from 5,2% in 1996 to 34,5% in 2022.

On the other hand, although males with disabilities also experienced improvements in educational attainment, the gains were comparatively lower than those of females. However, the gender gap in the completion of secondary education remained high in 2022, indicating disparities in educational opportunities between males and females with disabilities. Nonetheless, the gender gap in the achievement of tertiary education closed, suggesting more equitable access to higher education for both genders among individuals with disabilities.

Figure 4.8: Persons with disability aged 25 years and older by highest level of education and population group, Census 1996 and 2022



	1996				2022			
	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White
Other	0,2	0,2	0,9	2,7	0,7	0,9	1,3	2,3
Tertiary	1,7	1,7	4,7	14,9	7,9	8,5	18,2	35,2
Completed secondary	4,3	4,2	11,6	27,8	20,9	22,0	33,9	37,7
Some secondary	22,5	31,7	36,4	46,5	29,7	37,6	26,3	21,1
Completed primary	8,1	11,8	8,0	1,5	5,6	8,4	4,1	0,7
Some primary	23,4	27,0	18,2	2,1	17,8	16,2	10,1	1,1
No schooling	39,9	23,4	20,2	4,5	17,4	6,5	6,1	2,0

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older, disaggregated by population group.
Persistent education gaps among different population groups are evident in the data from 1996 to 2022. While there have been notable improvements in educational attainment across all population groups, significant disparities remain.

For black Africans with disabilities, the percentage of individuals with no formal education decreased by almost half from 39,9% in 1996 to 17,4% in 2022. Similarly, for coloured individuals with disabilities, the percentage decreased four-fold from 23,4% in 1996 to 6,5% in 2022. Indian/Asian individuals with disabilities also experienced a significant reduction in the percentage with no formal education, decreasing by three-fold from 20,2% in 1996 to 6,1% in 2022.

However, despite these improvements, substantial differences in educational achievement persist among population groups. In 2022, the attainment of secondary education was five times higher for black Africans and coloureds compared to 1996 and tripled for Indian/Asians. Nonetheless, disparities in educational achievement, both at the secondary and tertiary levels, remained significant in 2022, particularly for previously disadvantaged population groups. Efforts to address these disparities and promote equitable access to education for individuals with disabilities across all population groups are crucial for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Table 4.3: Persons with disability aged 25 years and older by highest level of education and province, Census 1996 and 2022

		WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	RSA
No schooling	1996	16,2	37,8	39,6	30,6	40,6	39,2	19,5	52,5	60,8	**36,5**
	2022	4,1	14,5	14,5	9,9	17,7	16,7	6,7	25,8	30,0	**13,9**
Some primary	1996	23,1	27,3	26,6	27,0	23,6	24,6	17,9	16,6	13,5	**22,2**
	2022	10,9	21,5	20,0	19,3	16,9	19,2	9,0	14,5	14,1	**15,1**
Completed primary	1996	10,3	9,2	8,2	9,1	6,5	7,5	8,8	5,9	5,2	**7,9**
	2022	5,4	7,0	7,4	5,9	4,8	5,8	3,7	4,5	4,4	**5,1**
Some secondary	1996	35,6	21,2	20,1	25,5	21,4	22,2	38,1	17,3	14,0	**24,7**
	2022	31,7	31,3	31,6	31,0	25,8	29,5	30,9	24,5	24,8	**29,1**
Completed secondary	1996	9,1	3,0	3,5	5,2	5,3	4,4	10,6	5,2	4,3	**5,8**
	2022	26,8	16,2	19,1	23,9	24,0	20,8	30,9	23,0	17,3	**23,7**
Tertiary	1996	5,3	1,6	1,8	2,4	2,1	2,0	4,0	2,3	2,1	**2,6**
	2022	19,5	8,9	6,6	9,2	10,0	7,1	17,6	7,1	8,6	**12,1**
Other	1996	0,5	0,1	0,2	0,2	0,4	0,2	0,9	0,2	0,1	**0,4**
	2022	1,5	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,8	0,8	1,2	0,7	0,9	**1,0**

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The table above outlines the highest level of education attained by individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older, categorised by province.

Over the 26-year period from 1996 to 2022, there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older with no formal education across all provinces. The most substantial decreases were observed in Western Cape and Free State, where the percentage decreased by almost four-folds and three-folds respectively. In Mpumalanga and Limpopo, which started with lower percentages in 1996, the percentage of individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older with no formal education was reduced by half in 2022, although they continue to have the highest percentages in this category compared to other provinces.

However, despite these improvements, Mpumalanga and Limpopo still have the largest percentages of individuals with disabilities aged 25 years and older with no formal education in 2022.

Western Cape and Gauteng stand out as the provinces with the highest percentages of individuals with at least secondary school completion in 2022, indicating significant progress in educational attainment for individuals with disabilities in these regions. Efforts to continue reducing educational disparities and promoting inclusive education across all provinces remain essential for ensuring equitable access to education for individuals with disabilities.

Table 4.4: Highest level of education of youth by population group, Census 1996–2022

Education level		Youth 15–24				Youth 15–34			
		Black African	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White	Black African	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White
No schooling	1996	6,3	2,6	1,5	1,1	5,5	9,1	3,7	1,5
	2001	5,5	1,8	1,0	0,6	4,7	8,2	2,8	1,3
	2011	1,6	0,7	0,9	0,4	1,4	2,4	0,9	1,1
	2022	1,7	1,0	1,9	0,9	1,6	2,6	1,2	2,7
Some primary	1996	17,0	13,4	1,2	0,7	14,9	17,3	15,0	1,6
	2001	14,1	9,8	1,8	1,7	12,6	14,0	11,5	1,7
	2011	6,1	5,5	1,9	1,3	5,7	6,4	5,9	2,0
	2022	2,8	4,2	1,7	1,0	2,8	3,0	3,8	1,6
Completed primary	1996	10,1	10,1	1,7	1,1	9,2	9,7	10,2	2,0
	2001	9,5	8,3	1,9	1,9	8,7	8,1	8,4	1,6
	2011	5,2	5,8	1,8	1,6	5,0	4,5	5,4	1,5
	2022	3,5	5,0	1,4	1,1	3,4	2,9	4,3	1,2
Some secondary	1996	52,0	53,0	45,3	43,4	51,2	45,5	49,4	40,4
	2001	51,9	54,1	42,1	45,6	51,4	44,3	48,1	33,6
	2011	57,1	57,9	39,5	41,1	55,9	48,7	50,5	27,7
	2022	50,7	49,9	35,4	37,7	49,8	42,0	44,8	23,6
Completed secondary	1996	13,3	18,4	42,5	41,9	16,8	15,4	17,3	42,4
	2001	16,7	23,5	43,1	37,6	19,3	20,8	24,8	46,1
	2011	25,8	26,3	42,6	38,8	27,0	30,8	30,8	45,2
	2022	36,4	35,5	48,4	42,3	36,8	40,9	38,2	50,1
Tertiary	1996	1,0	2,1	6,5	10,1	2,0	2,5	4,0	10,3
	2001	2,4	2,5	10,2	12,5	3,3	4,6	4,3	15,7
	2011	4,1	3,6	12,8	16,3	4,9	7,0	6,2	21,8
	2022	4,3	3,6	10,0	15,7	4,8	7,8	6,9	19,5
Other	1996	0,3	0,4	1,2	1,8	0,5	0,5	0,6	1,8
	2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2011	0,1	0,2	0,5	0,5	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,8
	2022	0,7	0,8	1,3	1,3	0,7	0,7	0,8	1,3

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

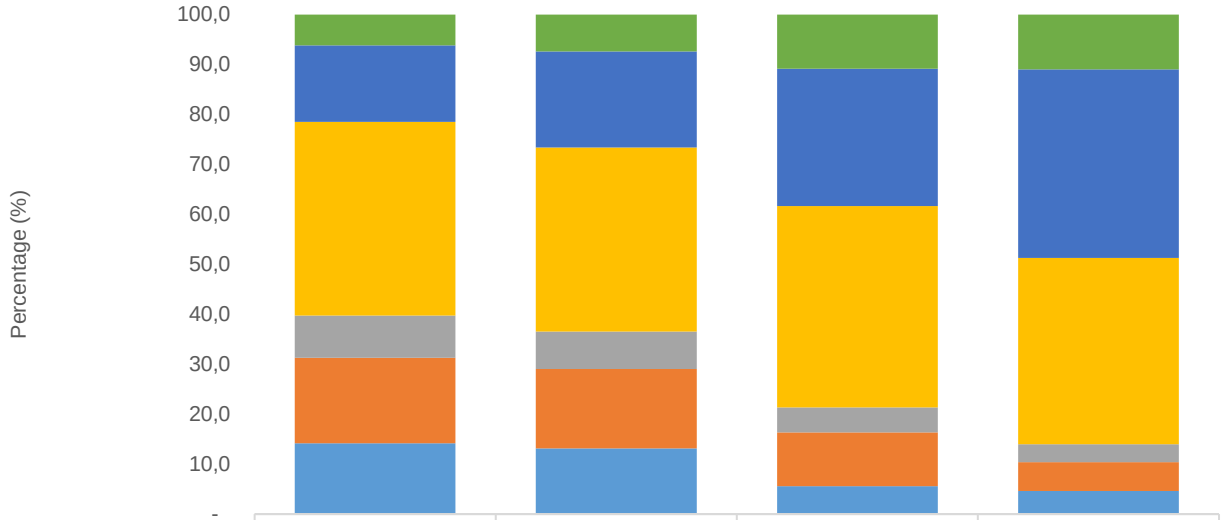
The table above provides insights into the highest level of education attained by youth, categorised by population group, over the period from 1996 to 2022.

For black African youth aged 15–24 years, there has been a significant improvement in educational attainment, with the percentage with less than secondary education declining from 33,4% in 1996 to 8,0% in 2022. Similarly, for black African youth aged 15–34 years, the percentage with less than secondary education decreased from 29,6% in 1996 to 7,8% in 2022. This indicates substantial progress in educational access and attainment among black African youth over the years.

Coloured youth also experienced notable improvements, with the percentage of those aged 15–24 years with less than secondary education decreasing by half from 26,1% in 1996 to 10,2% in 2022. Similarly, for coloured youth aged 15–34 years, this percentage reduced by a quarter from 36,1% in 1996 to 8,5% in 2022. This suggests significant strides in educational attainment among coloured youth as well.

However, despite these improvements, there remains a gap in educational attainment compared to whites. On average, black Africans and coloureds did not fully close this gap compared to whites during the period from 1996 to 2022. Efforts to address disparities in educational access and outcomes among different population groups remain crucial for achieving educational equity and promoting social development.

Figure 4.9: Highest level of education by working age population, Census 1996 and 2022



	1996	2001	2011	2022
Tertiary	6,1	7,4	10,9	11,0
Completed secondary	15,3	19,2	27,4	37,8
Some secondary	38,8	36,9	40,4	37,3
Completed primary	8,5	7,5	5,0	3,5
Some primary	17,1	15,9	10,7	5,8
No schooling	14,2	13,1	5,6	4,6

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by the working-age population aged 15–64 years over the period from 1996 to 2022.

From 1996 to 2022, there has been a significant improvement in the educational profile of the working-age population. In 1996, only 21,4% of individuals aged 15–64 years had completed at least secondary education. However, by 2022, this figure had increased to 48,8%. This indicates a notable increase in the percentage of individuals with at least a secondary education over the 26-year period.

The data suggests a positive trend in educational attainment among the working-age population, reflecting increased access to education and efforts to improve educational outcomes over the years. This upward trajectory in educational attainment is essential for enhancing human capital, promoting economic growth, and fostering social development within the country.

Table 4.5: Highest level of education by working age population by population group, Census 1996 and 2022

Population group	Census year	Highest level of education					
		No schooling	Some primary	Complete primary	Some secondary	Completed secondary	Tertiary
Black African	1996	17,5	19,9	9,5	38,5	11,4	3,2
	2001	16,0	18,2	8,3	37,0	15,9	4,6
	2011	6,7	12,0	5,3	42,3	26,0	7,8
	2022	5,3	6,2	3,7	39,0	37,4	8,4
Coloured	1996	7,5	18,3	11,2	46,3	12,4	4,4
	2001	6,1	16,5	9,8	44,8	18,4	4,4
	2011	2,9	11,7	7,2	46,2	24,9	7,1
	2022	2,1	7,0	5,4	42,7	34,5	8,3
Indian/Asian	1996	4,0	6,2	4,4	43,9	30,8	10,6
	2001	3,3	5,8	3,8	37,6	35,5	14,0
	2011	1,7	4,4	2,4	29,0	40,9	21,6
	2022	2,9	2,6	1,6	22,4	49,2	21,3
White	1996	1,0	0,6	0,6	33,5	38,8	25,5
	2001	1,1	1,1	0,9	28,7	39,9	28,4
	2011	0,5	1,1	0,8	22,1	38,5	37,0
	2022	1,2	0,6	0,5	17,3	40,9	39,5

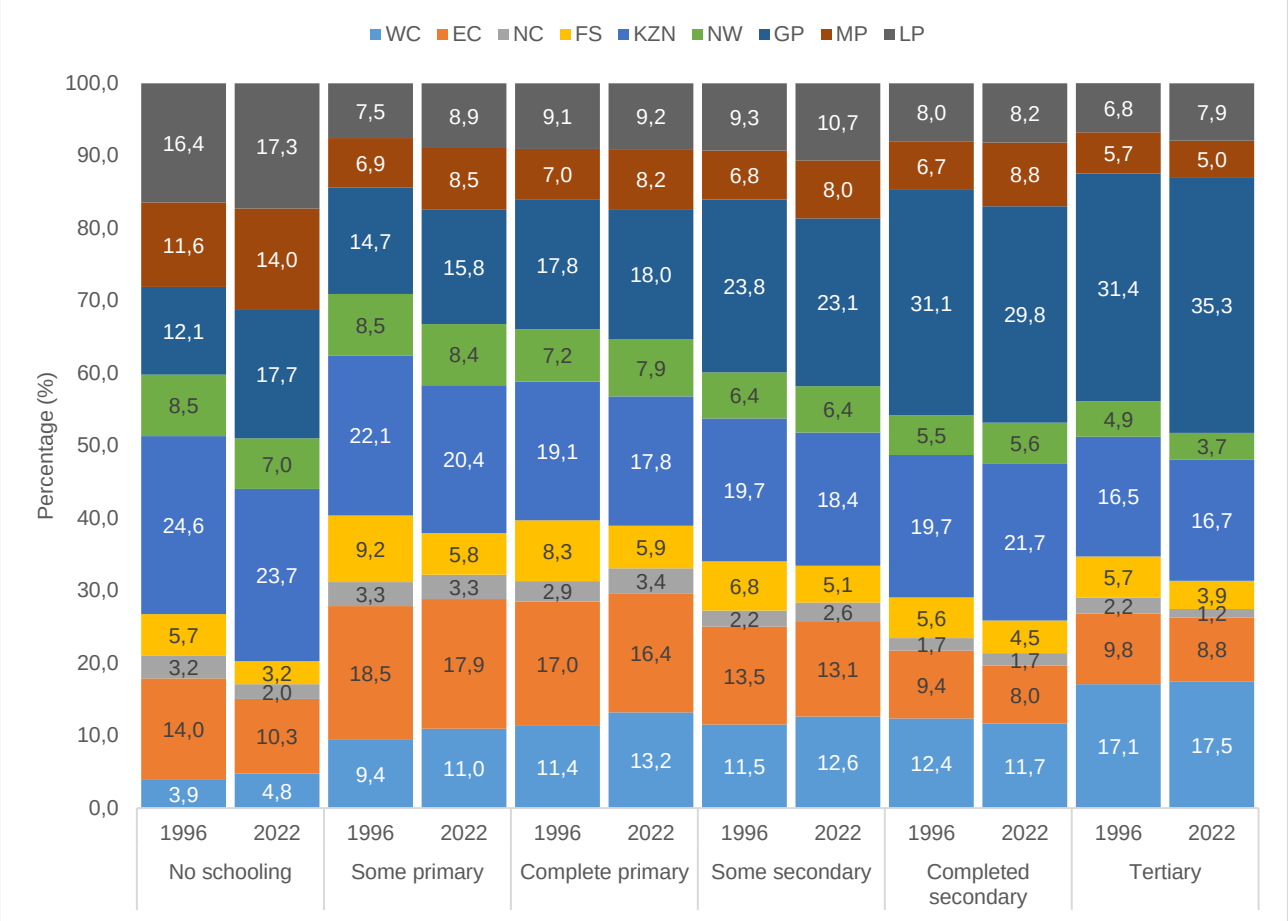
Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The table above provides insight into the highest level of education attained by the working-age population aged 15–64 years, disaggregated by population group.

The data reveals that, despite increased participation in post-school education among previously disadvantaged population groups, educational achievement gaps persist. In 2022, approximately 80% of whites within the working-age group had completed at least secondary education, representing an increase from 64,3% in 1996. Similarly, Indian/Asians saw a notable increase of 29,1 percentage points, with the majority (70,5%) achieving secondary and post-secondary education in 2022.

However, less than half of the working-age population among black Africans and coloureds had achieved at least secondary education in 2022 (45,8% and 42,9% respectively). Despite progress, these groups still face significant educational attainment disparities compared to whites and Indian/Asians. Closing these gaps remains a crucial challenge for achieving greater equity and inclusivity in education and society as a whole.

Figure 4.10: Highest level of education by working age population by province, Census 1996 and 2022



Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The graph above illustrates the highest level of education attained by the working-age population aged 15–64 years, categorised by province. It indicates that the gap in educational attainment has slightly widened in predominantly rural provinces over time.

Provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo have the highest percentages of the working-age population with less than primary educational achievement. This suggests that these provinces may face greater challenges in terms of educational access and quality, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure and resources may be limited.

Conversely, predominantly urban regions showed lower percentage gains in the completion of secondary and post-secondary education over the period from 1996 to 2022. This could indicate that urban areas may already have higher levels of educational attainment or face different barriers to educational progress compared to rural areas.

Overall, the data highlights the need for targeted interventions to address educational disparities across provinces, particularly in rural and historically disadvantaged areas, to ensure equitable access to education and opportunities for all segments of the population.

Table 4.6: Highest level of education of adult population by age, Census 1996–2022

Education level		Adult population 34–64				Elderly population 65+			
		Black African	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White	Black African	Coloured	Asian/ Indian	White
No schooling	1996	31,0	12,6	6,7	1,1	67,3	33,1	36,7	1,9
	2001	27,7	9,9	5,2	1,3	62,1	25,2	27,0	2,6
	2011	12,7	4,8	2,1	0,5	44,7	15,9	13,0	1,1
	2022	8,2	2,9	3,0	1,3	34,6	10,4	8,0	2,0
Some primary	1996	24,1	22,8	11,2	0,6	17,4	26,8	23,6	1,6
	2001	24,7	22,4	9,8	1,0	20,8	27,8	24,8	2,9
	2011	19,7	17,4	6,3	1,2	28,2	28,1	25,5	2,5
	2022	9,7	9,6	3,1	0,5	27,3	24,1	16,6	1,1
Completed primary	1996	9,3	12,6	7,1	0,4	4,1	9,8	6,7	1,4
	2001	8,5	11,5	5,8	0,6	4,3	10,5	7,1	1,8
	2011	6,4	8,9	3,1	0,5	4,9	10,2	7,0	1,3
	2022	4,5	6,2	1,9	0,3	6,1	11,0	6,0	0,7
Some secondary	1996	27,0	42,1	47,7	34,3	9,6	26,5	25,8	49,9
	2001	25,8	40,8	41,3	26,6	10,2	30,6	29,0	40,8
	2011	32,5	41,3	29,4	18,4	16,7	35,9	32,9	31,3
	2022	34,8	40,1	21,1	13,9	21,3	37,2	33,5	20,7
Completed secondary	1996	5,1	5,6	18,0	35,9	0,7	1,6	4,4	29,6
	2001	8,7	10,9	25,4	38,9	1,5	3,8	7,8	33,8
	2011	19,8	19,7	37,4	39,5	3,4	6,4	14,1	37,4
	2022	33,1	30,9	47,7	40,2	7,0	11,7	26,4	41,6
Tertiary	1996	3,0	3,8	7,9	24,1	0,6	1,2	2,1	13,0
	2001	4,7	4,5	12,4	31,6	1,1	2,1	4,3	18,2
	2011	8,7	7,6	21,0	38,8	2,0	3,2	6,9	24,8
	2022	9,1	9,6	22,3	41,9	3,3	5,1	8,7	31,6
Other	1996	0,5	0,5	1,3	3,7	0,3	0,9	0,8	2,6
	2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2011	0,2	0,3	0,7	1,0	0,2	0,3	0,6	1,6
	2022	0,6	0,6	1,1	1,9	0,4	0,4	0,7	2,4

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The table above provides insights into the highest level of education attained by the adult population aged 35 years and above in South Africa, categorized by population group.

In 1996, a significant portion of the black African elderly population aged 65 years and older had no formal education, with nearly two-thirds (67,3%) lacking formal education. Similarly, around one-third (33,1%) of coloured individuals in the same age group had no formal education.

However, by 2022, there was a notable improvement in educational attainment among both black Africans and coloureds in the elderly population. The percentage of black African elderly individuals aged 65 years and older with no formal education decreased to 34,6%, while only 10,4% of coloured individuals in the same age group lacked formal education.

Moreover, secondary school completion witnessed significant growth among both black Africans and coloureds, increasing by five to six times from 1996 to 2022. This suggests that educational reforms implemented after the end of apartheid likely benefited the younger generations, leading to improved educational outcomes.

However, the growth in secondary school achievement did not match the growth in tertiary education, indicating that while more individuals attained secondary education, fewer progressed to tertiary education.

This could imply challenges or barriers to accessing higher education among older individuals or a slower uptake of tertiary education opportunities among this demographic.

Overall, the data highlights the progress made in educational attainment among older population groups in South Africa over the years, particularly among black Africans and coloureds. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in increasing access to tertiary education for older individuals.

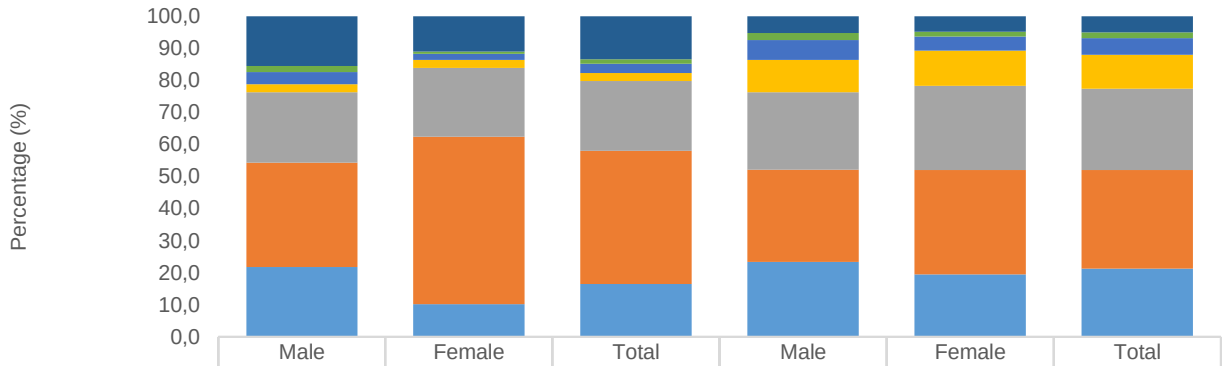
4.2 Tertiary qualification

Tertiary qualifications typically refer to certificates, diplomas, or degrees obtained after completing secondary education. While universities offer degrees such as bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, technical and vocational colleges provide certificates and diplomas in various fields such as engineering, hospitality, healthcare, and business, among others.

Technical and vocational colleges often offer more practical and hands-on training compared to universities, which may focus more on theoretical knowledge. As a result, access to technical and vocational training programs may be more accessible to individuals who may not meet the strict entrance requirements of universities or who prefer a more practical approach to learning.

These qualifications from technical and vocational colleges are highly valued in many industries, as they provide specialised skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to specific professions or trades. They play a crucial role in preparing individuals for the workforce and addressing skills gaps in various sectors of the economy.

Figure 4.11: Highest post-school qualification level by individuals aged 25 years and older by sex, Census 1996 and 2022



	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	1996			2022		
Other	15,5	11,0	13,4	5,3	4,8	5,0
Doctorate degree	1,9	0,8	1,4	2,2	1,5	1,8
Master's degree	3,8	1,9	2,9	6,2	4,3	5,2
Honours degree	2,5	2,5	2,5	10,0	11,0	10,6
Bachelor's degree	21,9	21,4	21,7	24,1	26,3	25,3
Diploma	32,5	52,3	41,6	28,8	32,5	30,8
Certificate	21,8	10,2	16,5	23,4	19,5	21,3

Source: Census 1996 & 2022

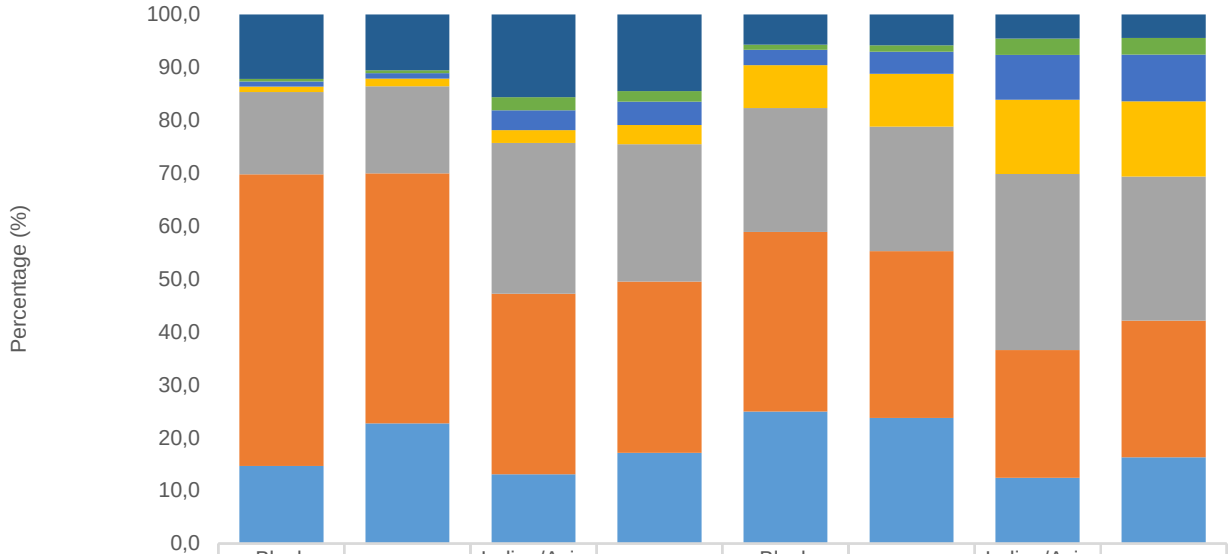
It is interesting to note the trends in educational attainment by sex over the years. The data suggests that while there have been increases in educational achievement across the board, there are still some gender disparities, particularly at the higher levels of education such as master's and doctoral degrees.

In 1996, females already had a higher percentage of bachelor's degree holders compared to males, and this trend continued into 2022, where the percentage of female bachelor's degree holders slightly surpassed that of males. This could reflect broader societal shifts towards greater gender equality in education and employment opportunities.

Additionally, the substantial increases in honours degree achievements for both sexes in 2022 compared to 1996 indicate a growing emphasis on specialised education and skills development.

However, the gender gaps persist in master's and doctoral degree achievements in 2022, although there have been significant increases in the percentage of female holders of these advanced degrees compared to 1996. Closing these gaps could require targeted efforts to address barriers and biases that may still exist in higher education and career advancement.

Figure 4.12: Highest post-school qualification level by individuals aged 25 years and older by population group, Census 1996 and 2022



	1996 Black African	1996 Coloured	1996 Indian/Asian	1996 White	2022 Black African	2022 Coloured	2022 Indian/Asian	2022 White
Other	12,2	10,5	15,6	14,5	5,7	5,8	4,6	4,4
Doctorate degree	0,5	0,6	2,5	2,0	1,0	1,2	3,1	3,2
Master's degree	0,9	1,0	3,7	4,4	2,9	4,2	8,5	8,8
Honour's degree	1,0	1,4	2,5	3,7	8,1	10,0	14,0	14,2
Bachelor's degree	15,6	16,5	28,4	25,9	23,4	23,5	33,3	27,2
Diploma	55,1	47,3	34,2	32,4	33,9	31,5	24,2	25,9
Certificate	14,7	22,7	13,1	17,1	24,9	23,8	12,4	16,3

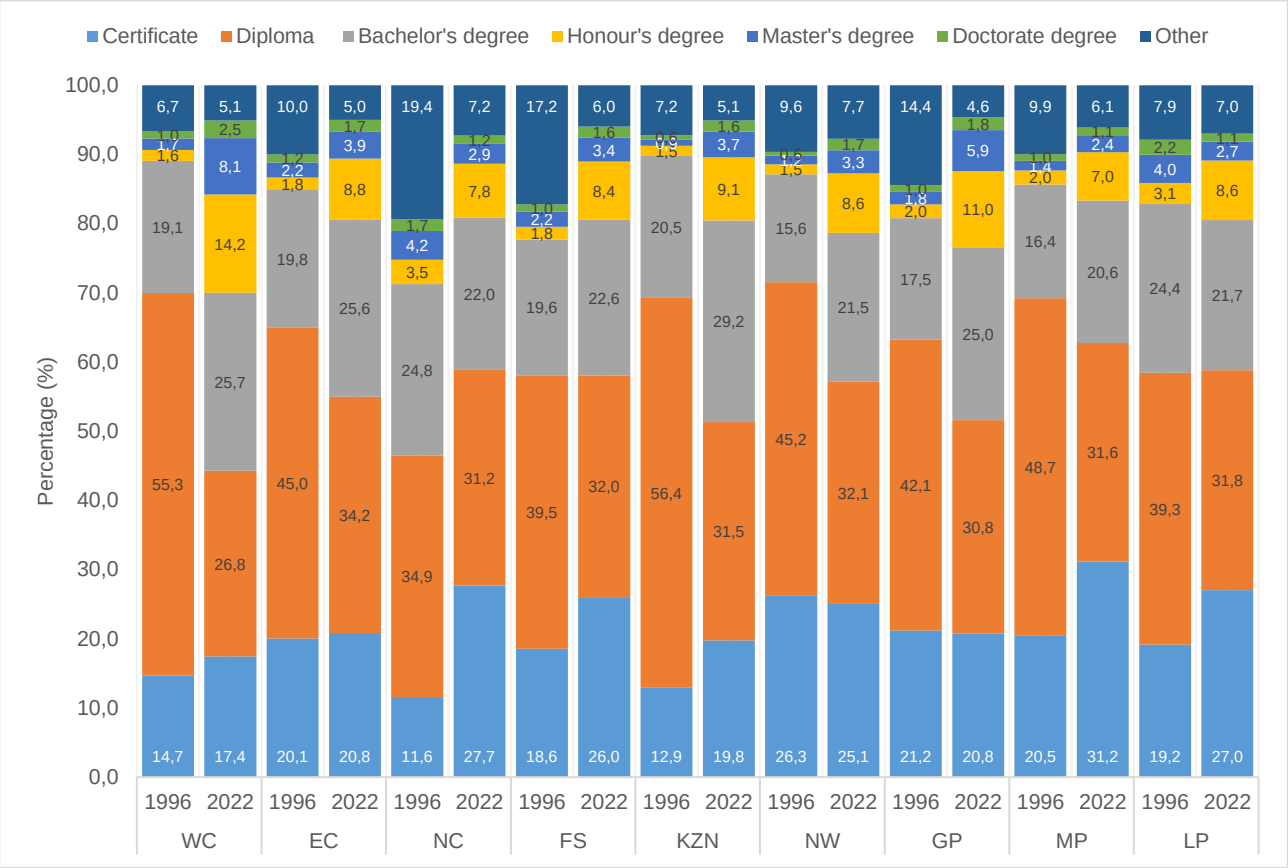
Source: Census 1996 & 2022

The data highlights the disparities in educational attainment among different population groups in South Africa, both in 1996 and 2022. In 1996, coloureds and black Africans had the majority of diploma or certificate graduates, but they lagged behind other population groups in terms of bachelor's degrees and higher qualifications. This indicates potential barriers to accessing higher education opportunities for these groups during that time.

Meanwhile, Indian/Asians and whites had higher percentages of individuals with bachelor's degrees and senior degrees in 1996, and this trend continued into 2022. The significant increase in the percentage of individuals with senior degrees among Indian/Asians and whites by 2022 suggests a growing emphasis on postgraduate education within these communities.

These disparities underscore the importance of addressing systemic barriers to education and ensuring equitable access to higher education opportunities for all population groups in South Africa. Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in education and employment can help bridge these gaps and foster a more equitable society.

Figure 4.13: Highest post-school qualification level by individuals aged 25 years and older by province, Census 1996 and 2022



Source: Census 1996 & 2022

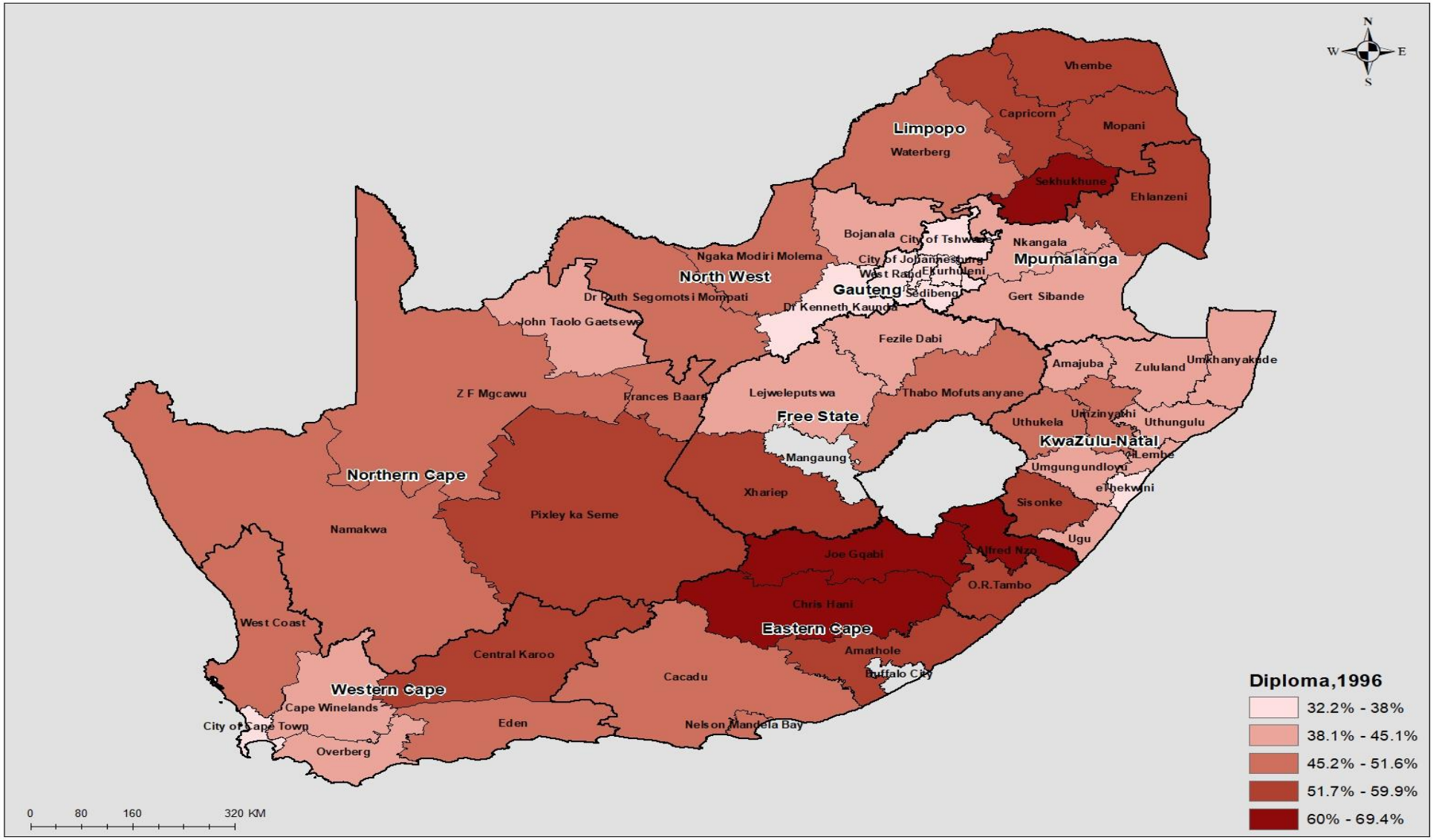
The graph illustrates significant progress in post-school qualification attainment across various provinces in South Africa between 1996 and 2022. Specifically, there has been substantial growth in certificate qualifications in Northern Cape, Free State, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo. This suggests an increase in vocational training and skills development opportunities in these provinces over the years.

Moreover, most provinces have witnessed gains in bachelor's degree achievements, with notable increases in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape. This reflects an improvement in access to higher education institutions and the pursuit of undergraduate studies by residents in these provinces.

Additionally, the graph highlights significant growth in honours degree qualifications in Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo. This indicates an increased focus on postgraduate education and specialised training programs in these provinces.

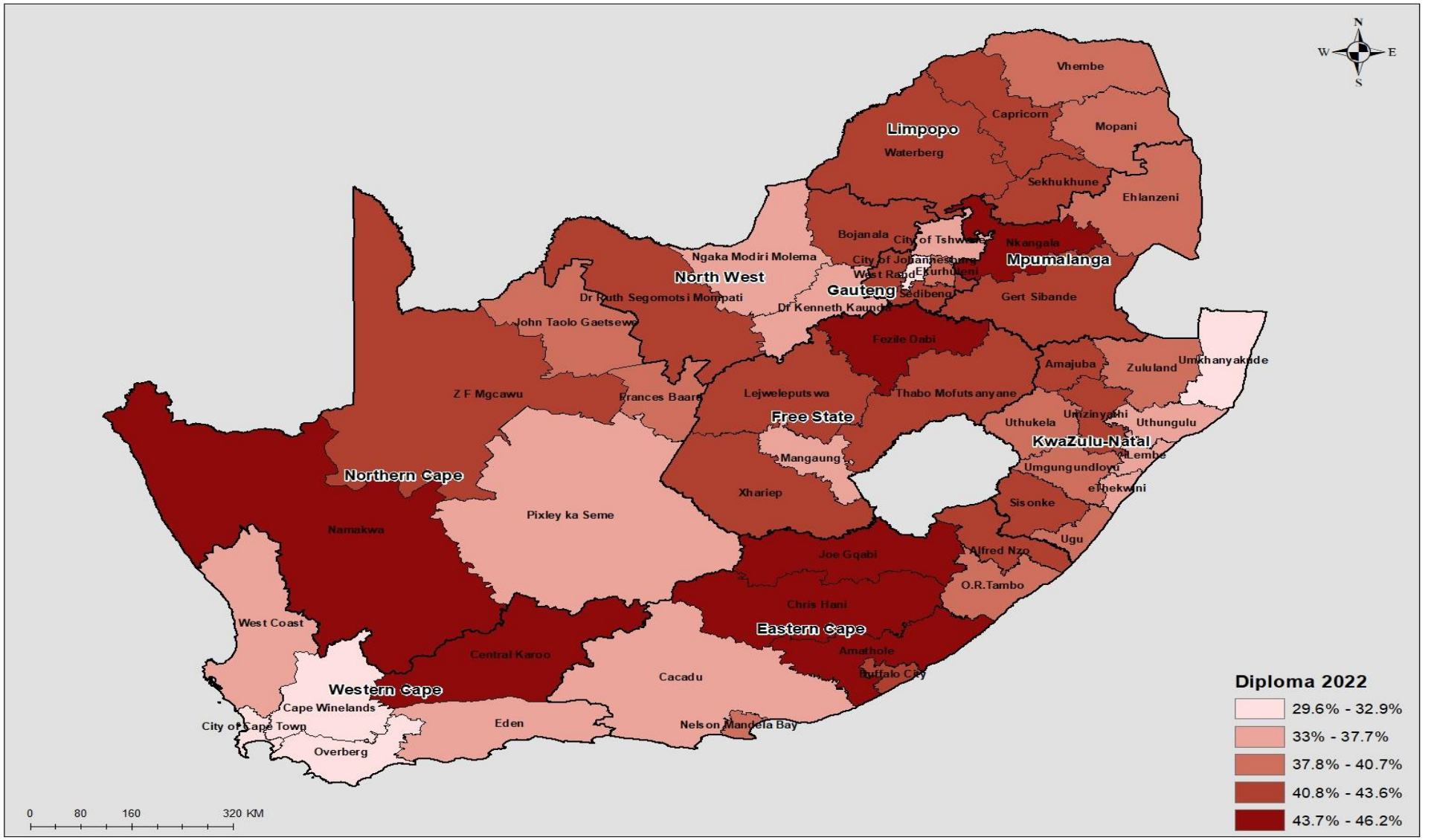
Overall, the data indicates positive trends in educational attainment and access to higher education opportunities across various provinces in South Africa, signalling progress towards a more skilled and educated workforce.

Map 4.1: Diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



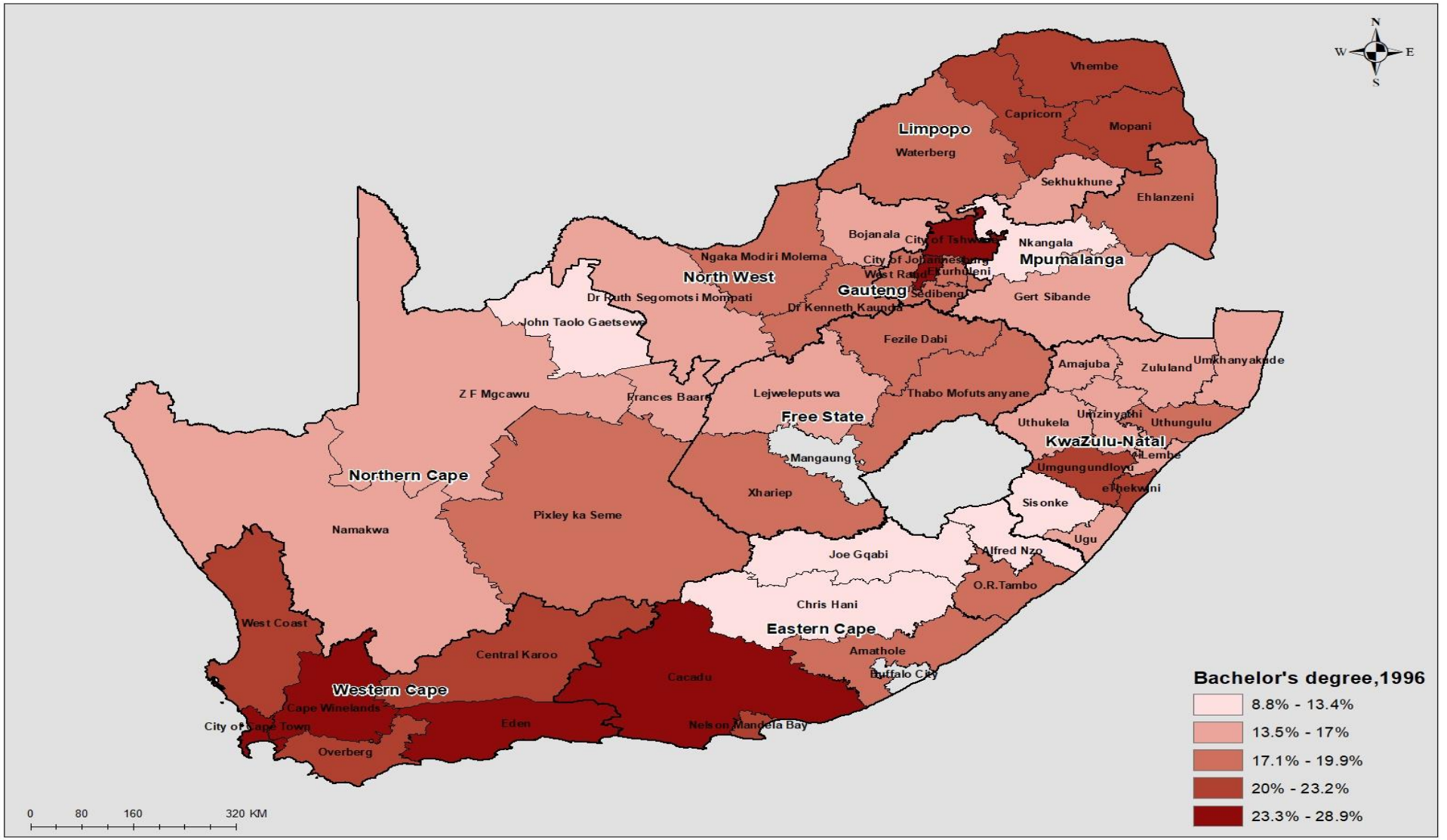
Source: Census 1996

Map 4.2: Diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



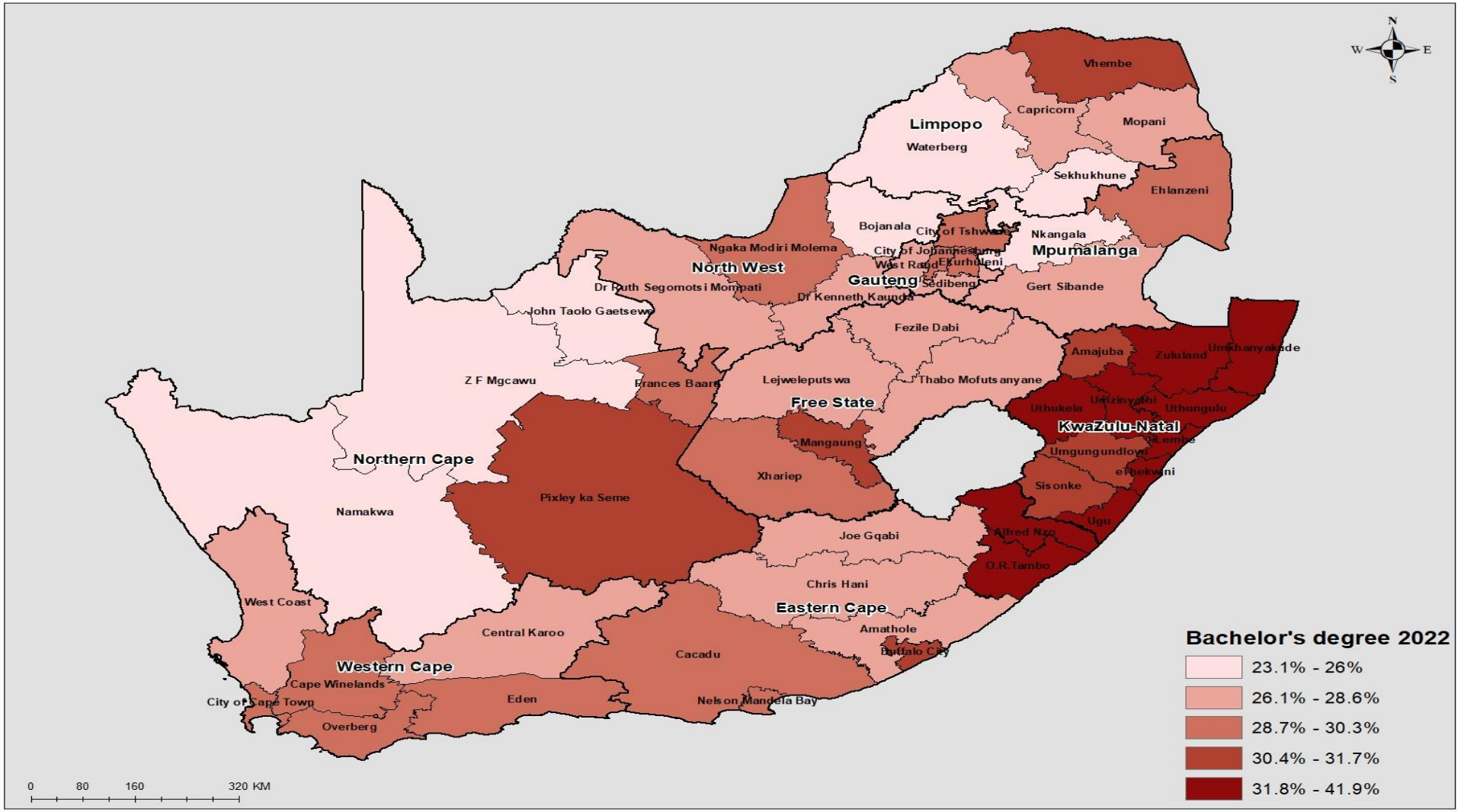
Source: Census 2022

Map 4.3: Bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



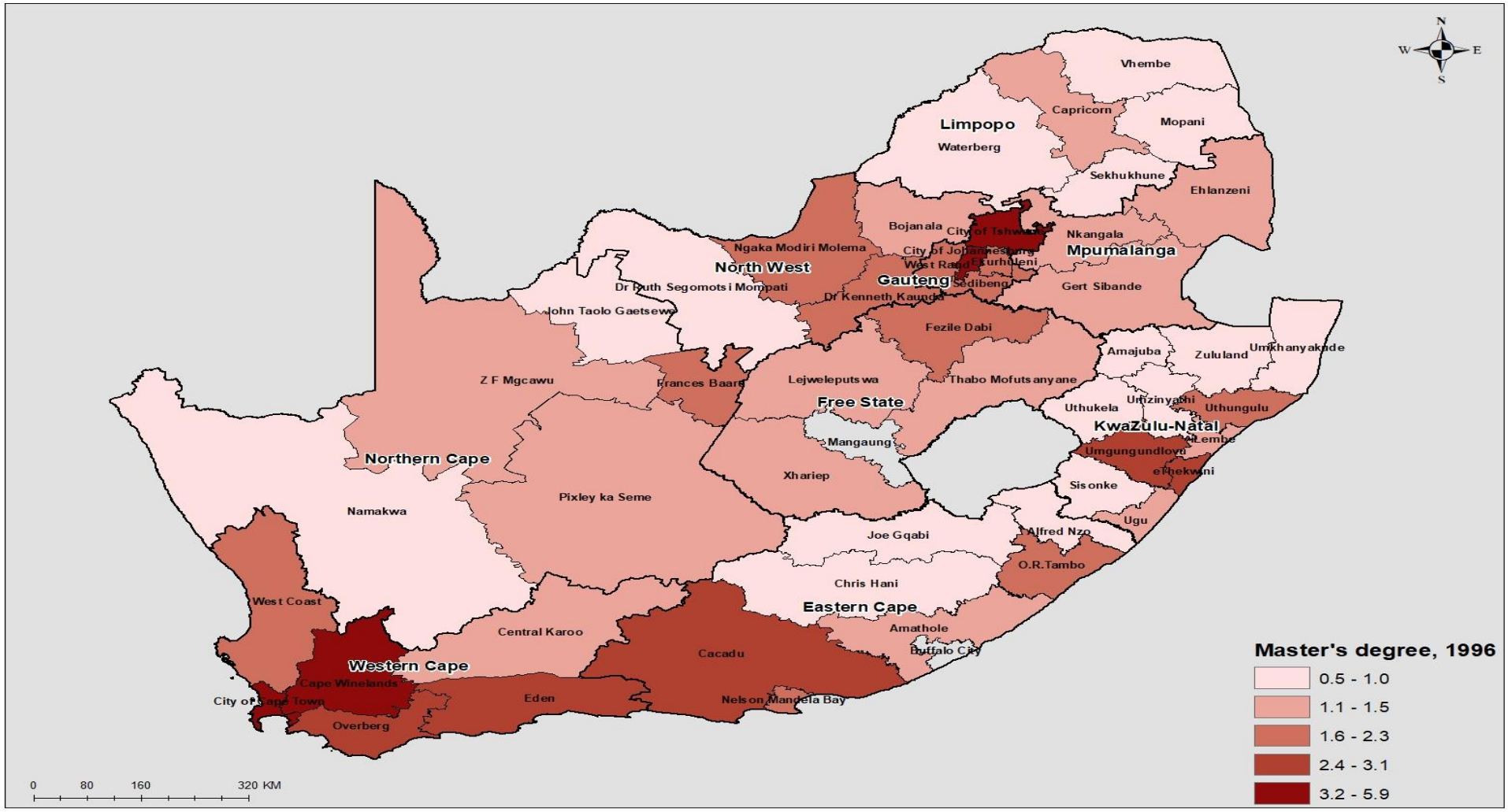
Source: Census 1996

Map 4.4: Bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



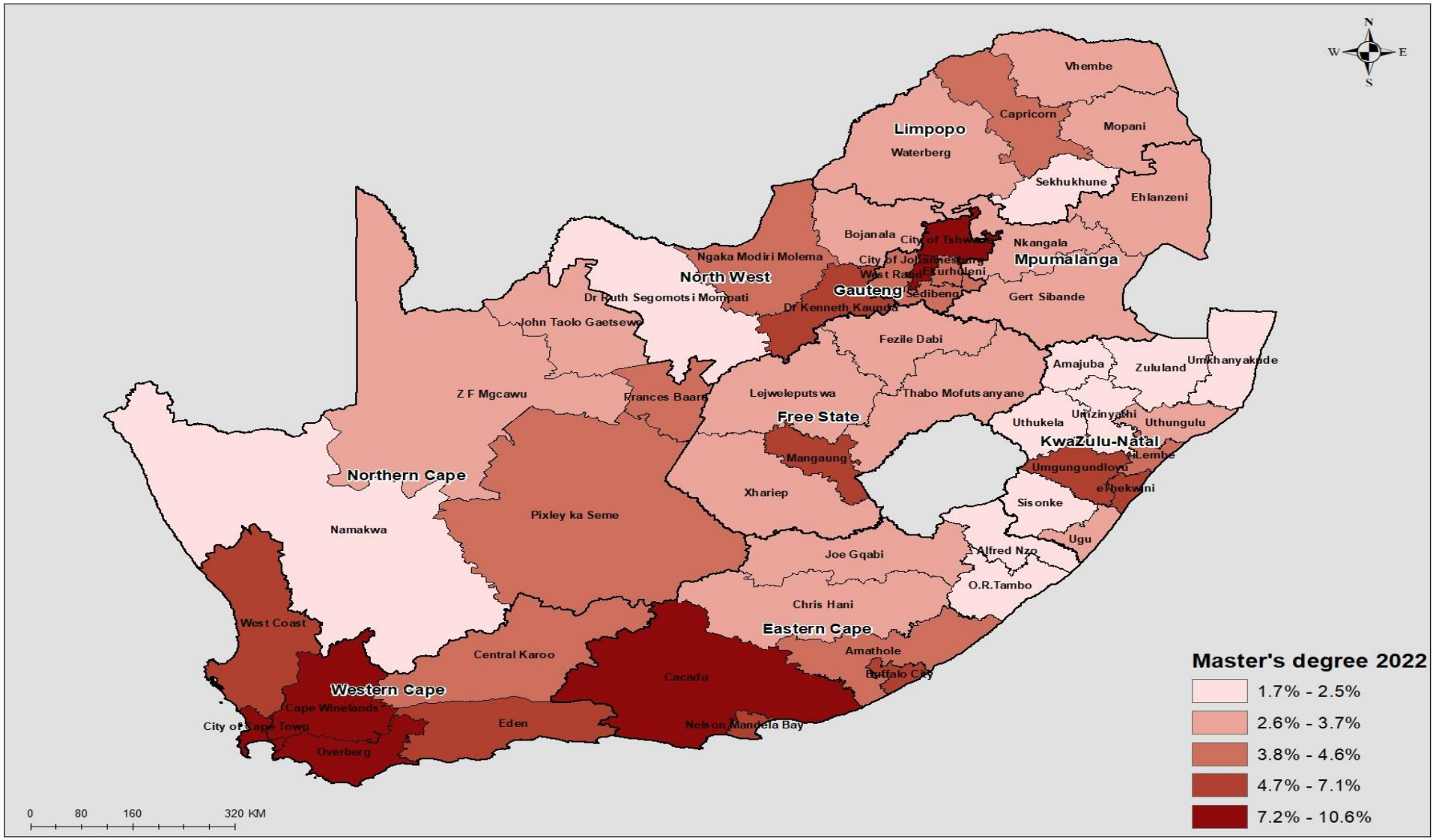
Source: Census 2022

Map 4.5: Master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



Source: Census 1996

Map 4.6: Master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

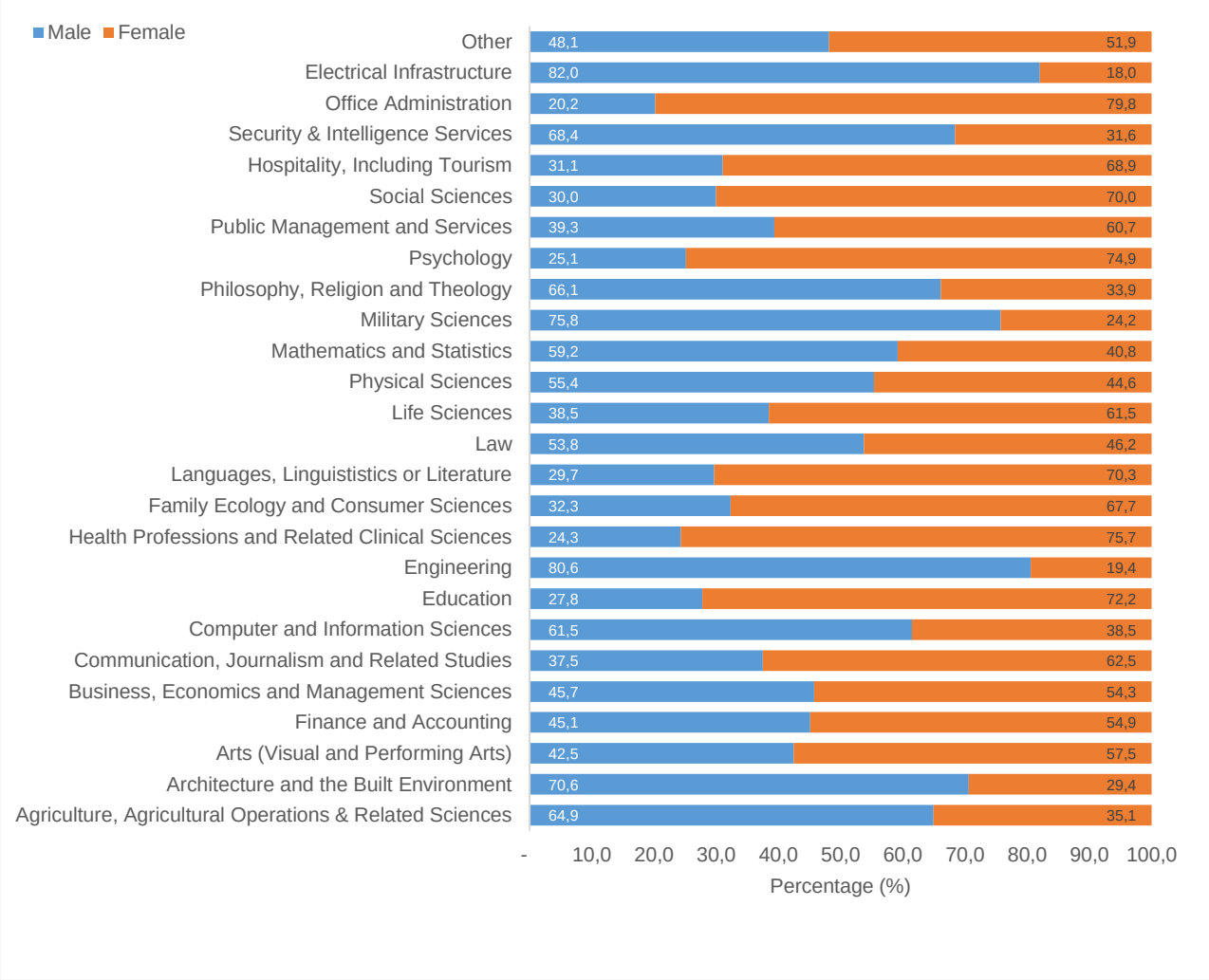
The above maps present the distribution of graduates by type of qualifications by districts. Prominent regional disparities exist in the distribution of diploma, bachelor's degree, and master's degree graduates. In 1996, Limpopo and Eastern Cape were notable for their higher concentration of diploma graduates. Despite an overall decline in the percentage of diploma graduates by 2022, Limpopo and Eastern Cape remained prominent in this regard. Additionally, districts in Mpumalanga and certain parts of the Free State also experienced growth in the percentage of diploma graduates. Initially, in 1996, bachelor's degree graduates were predominantly located in the three major metropolitan areas: City of Cape Town, City of Johannesburg, and City of Tshwane. However, by 2022, there was a significant shift, with KwaZulu-Natal emerging as the primary region for bachelor's degree graduates. Interestingly, in 1996, master's degree graduates were primarily concentrated in the metropolitan areas of City of Cape Town, City of Johannesburg, and City of Tshwane. However, by 2022, there was a notable migration of these graduates to coastal districts in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. It's worth noting that districts with high concentrations of diploma and bachelor's degree graduates in 2022 tended to have lower percentages of master's degree graduates.

4.3 Fields of education

Education plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for successful careers and contributing to the overall development of society. By providing access to education and ensuring equity, quality, and relevance in educational and training programs, countries can empower individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the workforce. Efforts to align educational curricula with the needs of the economy are essential to address skill gaps and ensure that graduates are equipped with relevant competencies sought by employers. This involves fostering partnerships between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers to identify emerging skills demand and adapt educational programs accordingly.

Furthermore, promoting efficiency in education delivery and investing in innovative teaching methodologies can enhance learning outcomes and equip students with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. This not only prepares individuals for current job market demands but also enables them to adapt to future changes in the labour market. In summary, education serves as a cornerstone for personal and societal development, and by prioritising access, equity, quality, efficiency, and relevance, countries can ensure that their education systems effectively prepare individuals for successful and fulfilling careers while meeting the evolving needs of the economy.

Figure 4.14: Fields of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by sex, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

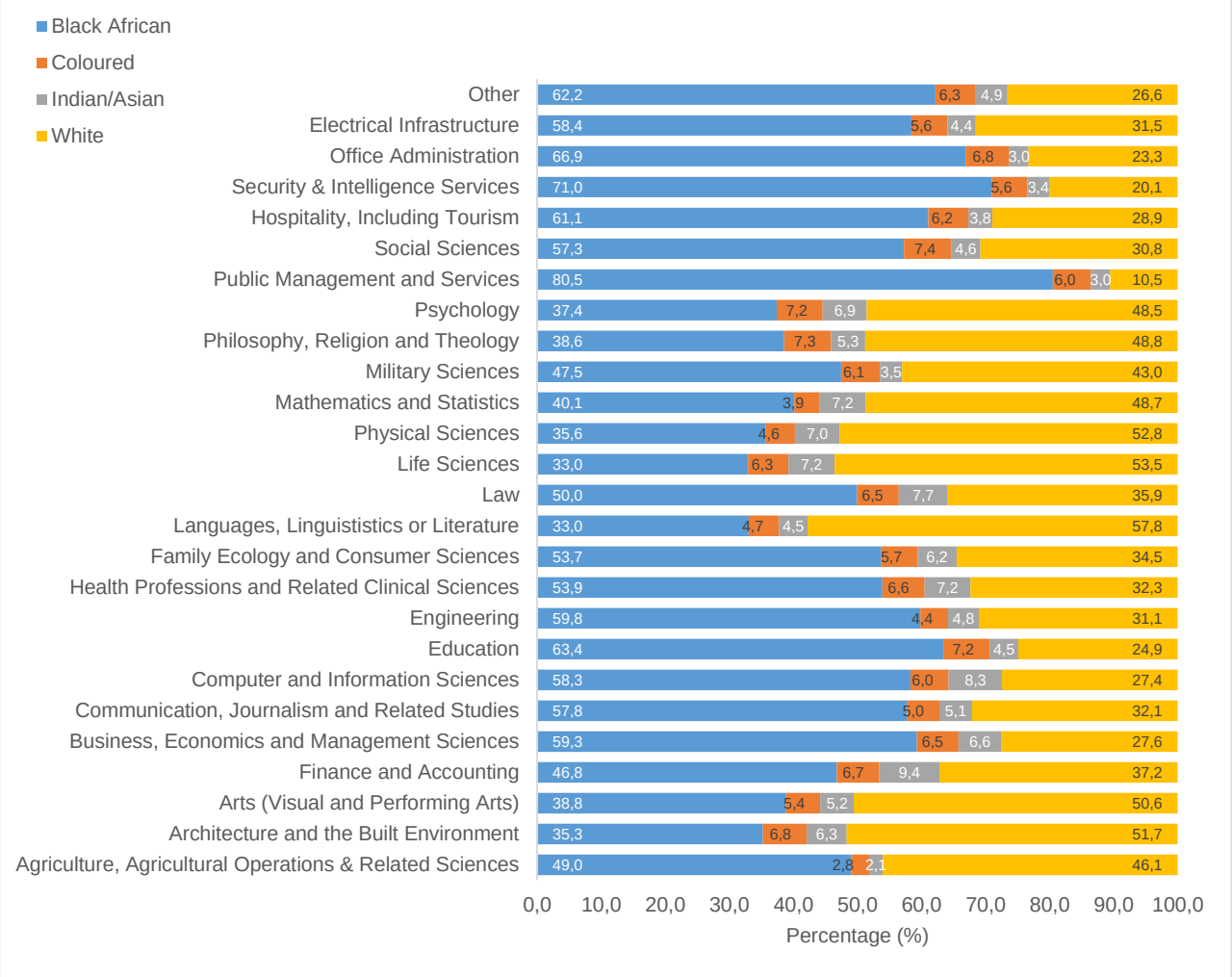
The distribution of fields of education by gender highlights certain trends and disparities in educational choices among individuals aged 25 years and older in 2022. While women dominate in fields such as office administration, social sciences, psychology, languages, health professions, and education, they remain underrepresented in fields traditionally associated with male-dominated industries.

Fields such as electrical infrastructure, security and intelligence services, military sciences, engineering, architecture, and the built environment continue to have a majority of male graduates. This underrepresentation of women in these fields reflects broader societal norms and stereotypes regarding gender roles and career paths.

Efforts to promote gender equality and diversity in education and the workforce should focus on addressing these disparities by encouraging greater participation of women in traditionally male-dominated fields. This can be achieved through targeted initiatives to attract and retain women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, as well as promoting gender-neutral career guidance and educational opportunities.

Additionally, creating supportive environments and eliminating barriers to entry for women in non-traditional fields can help foster inclusivity and diversity in the workforce, ultimately contributing to more balanced representation across all fields of education and professions.

Figure 4.15: Fields of education by individuals aged 25 years and older by population group, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

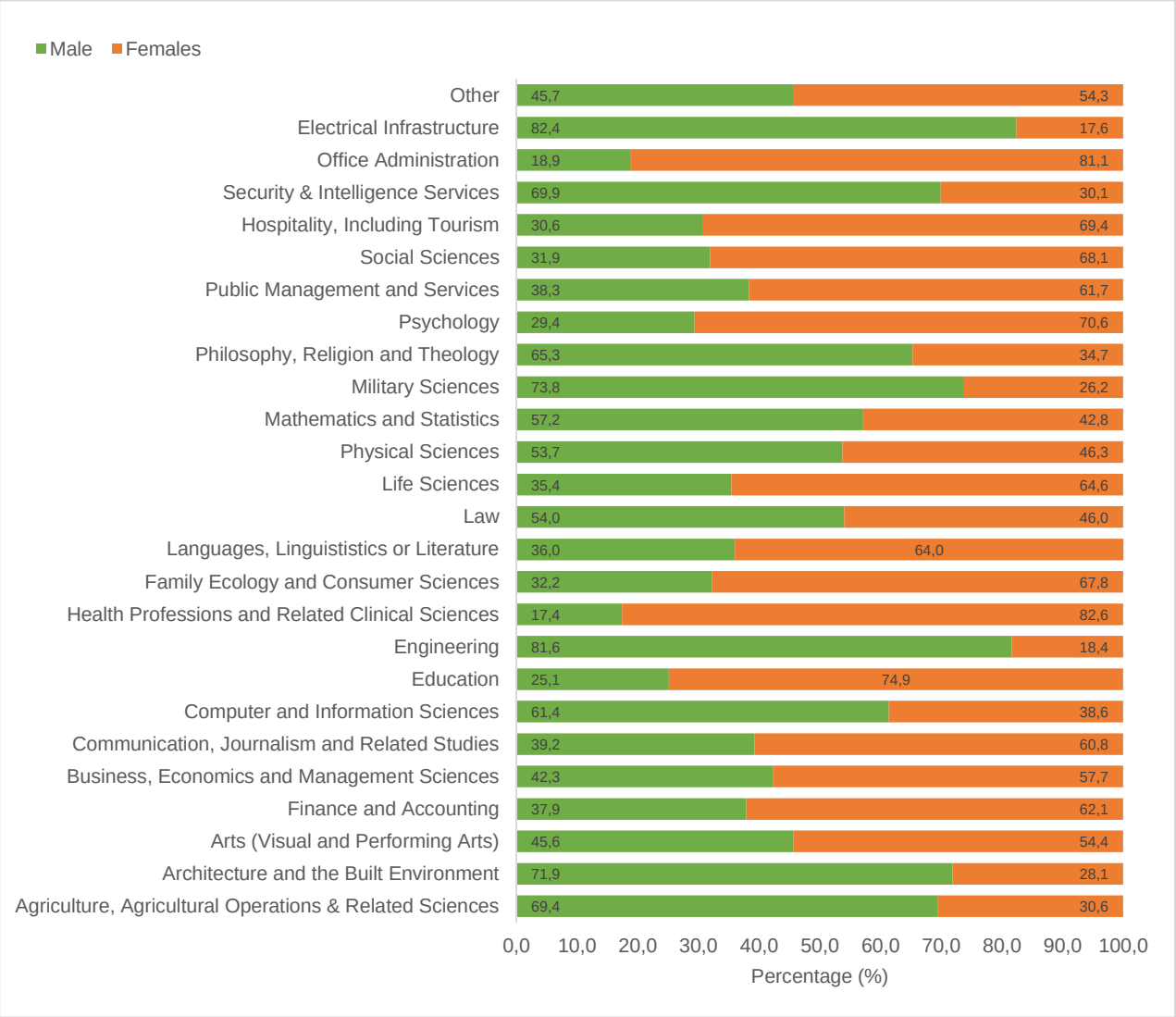
The distribution of fields of education by population group in 2022 reveals distinct patterns and preferences among different demographic segments. Certain fields of study are predominantly pursued by specific population groups, reflecting a combination of historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors.

For instance, fields such as security and intelligence services, public management and services, health professions, engineering, education, business, economics, and management sciences are predominantly chosen by black Africans. This may be influenced by factors such as historical barriers to entry in certain professions, socio-economic background, and government initiatives aimed at promoting access to education and employment opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups.

Conversely, fields such as physical sciences, life sciences, languages, arts, architecture, and the built environment are predominantly pursued by whites. This could be attributed to historical advantages, cultural preferences, and socio-economic factors that have traditionally shaped educational and career choices among this population group.

Efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in education and the workforce should take into account these disparities and aim to address barriers to entry and create equal opportunities for all population groups. This may involve targeted interventions such as scholarship programs, mentorship initiatives, and outreach efforts aimed at encouraging participation in underrepresented fields among historically disadvantaged groups. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment within educational institutions and workplaces is essential for ensuring equal access and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background or demographic characteristics.

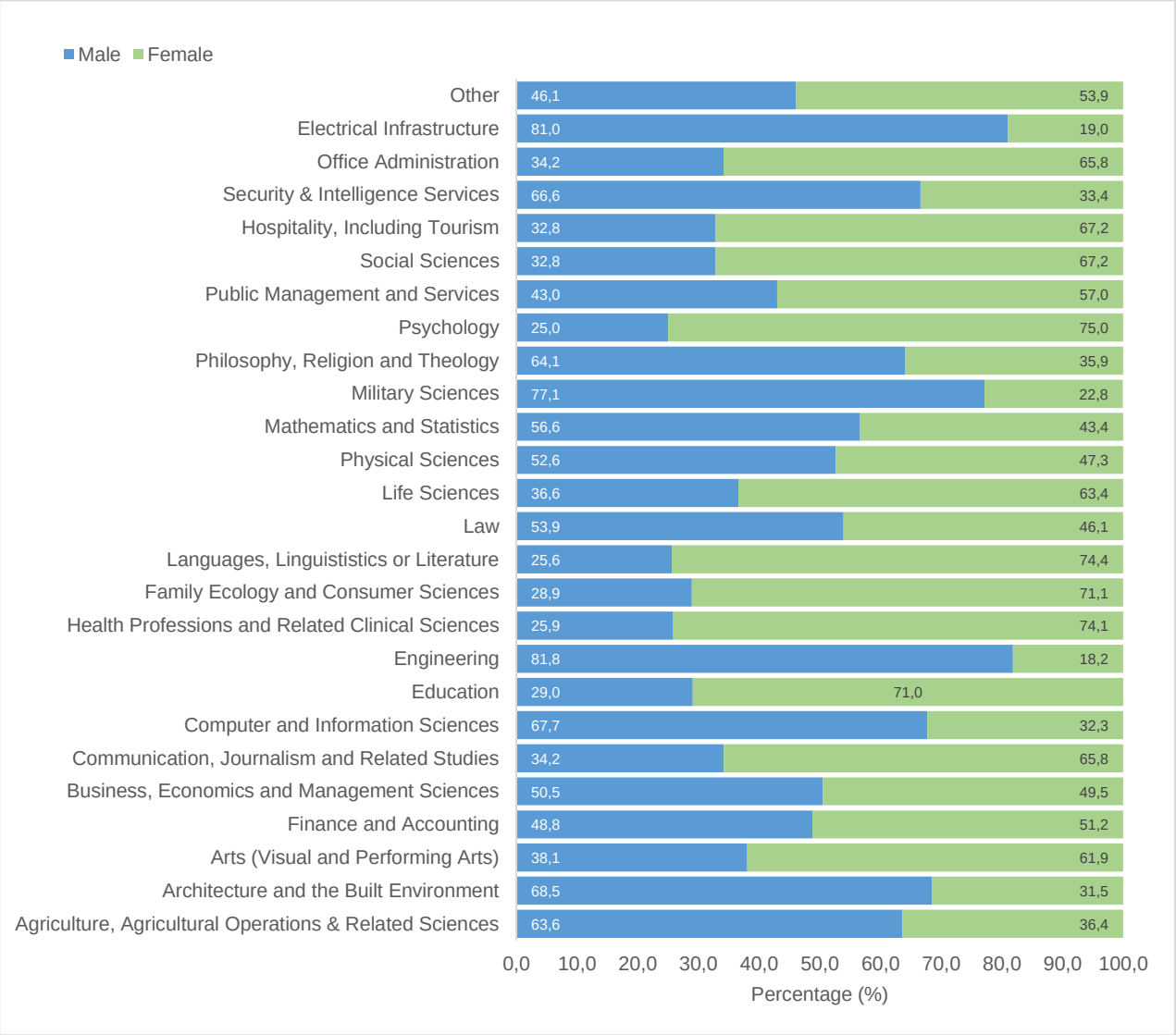
Figure 4.16: Diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by fields of education and sex, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

The above graph shows the distribution of diploma graduates by fields of education and sex. South Africans have sustained a long-term trend toward higher education by increasingly completing post-secondary qualifications and achieving diploma and bachelor's degree qualifications. The top five fields of study in with the highest number of graduates in diploma were found in: finance and accounting; business, economics and management sciences; education; engineering; and health professions and related clinical sciences. However, the top four fields of education in which females held the majority of diplomas were in the health professions and related clinical sciences (82,6%), office administration (81,1%), education (74,9%) and psychology (70,6%). This demonstrates that women dominated two out of the top five fields of study.

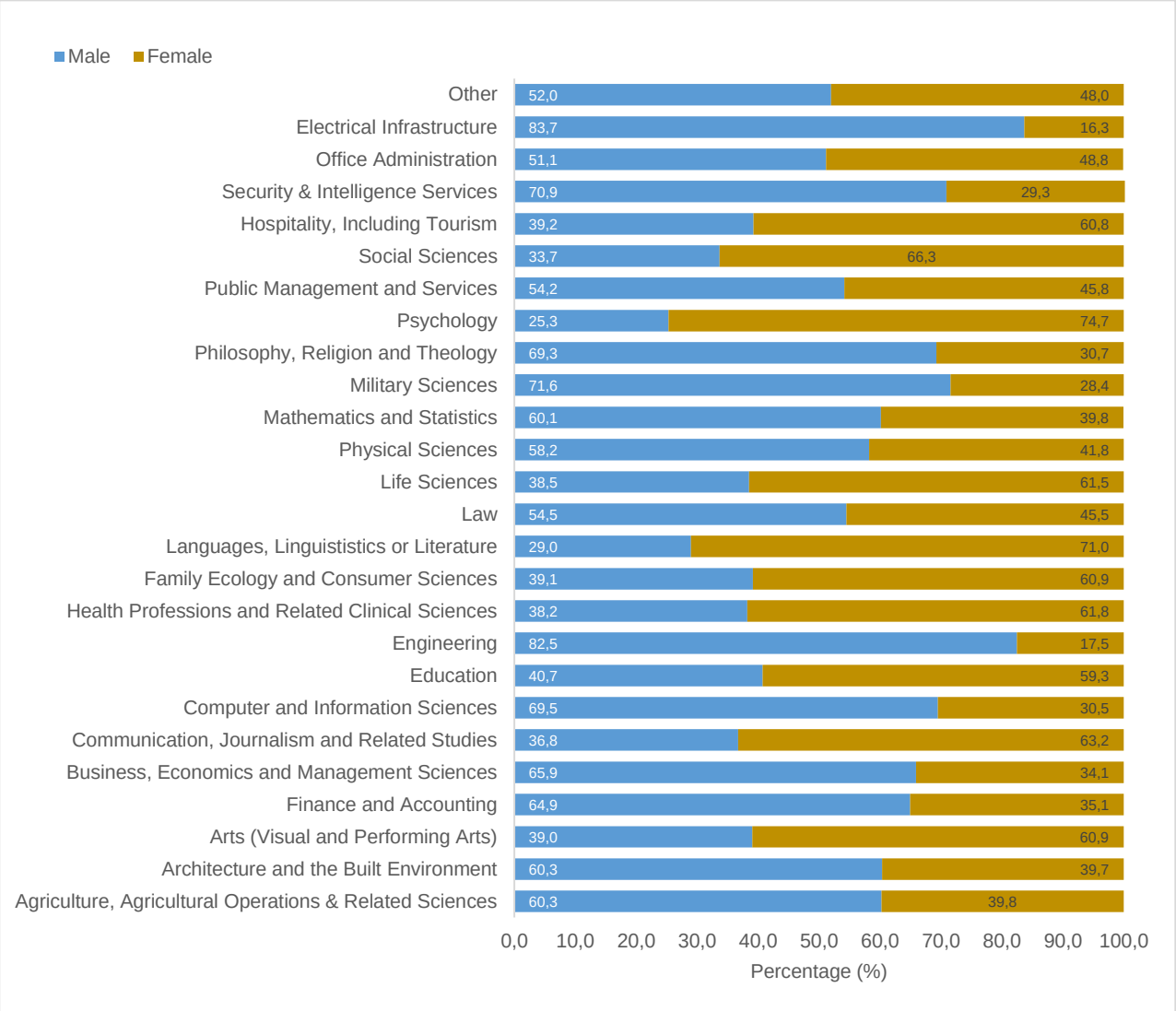
Figure 4.17: Bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by fields of education and sex, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

The above graph shows the distribution of bachelor's degree graduates by fields of education and sex. Women in South Africa are currently better educated than they have ever been but the type of fields of study in which women held bachelor's degree qualifications varied from that of men's. Women continue to have fewer trades certificates as well as STEM university degrees than their male counterparts. The engineering and the electrical infrastructure fields were largely dominated by males (81,8% and 81,0% respectively). Close to three-quarters of the bachelor's degree qualifications in psychology and languages, linguistics or literature were held by females (75,0% and 74,4%).

Figure 4.18: Master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by fields of education and sex, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Among the senior degrees, master's degrees are popular in South Africa compared to honours and doctorate degrees. However, some master's fields of studies turn out to be more popular than others in 2022, while these fields of study also align to the popular fields of studies in diploma and bachelor's degrees. These fields focus on six major subjects which include finance and accounting; business, economics and management sciences; education; engineering; health professions and related clinical sciences and law.

Electrical infrastructure and engineering remained the preferred majors for most male master's degree candidates (83,7% and 82,5% respectively). However, master's degrees in security and intelligence services, military sciences and computer and information sciences were also much desired degrees by men. Master's degrees in psychology, and languages, linguistics or literature were the subjects of choice for the majority of women. The master's degree in social sciences was also a highly preferred choice for women.

4.4 Conclusion

The importance of education cannot be overstated, as it serves as a cornerstone for individual success, economic development, and social progress. While the cost of providing education may seem significant, it pales in comparison to the cost of not educating citizens. Individuals who lack basic skills face significant barriers in accessing well-paying jobs and are more likely to remain trapped in cycles of poverty. Moreover, the societal benefits of education, particularly for females, are immense. Educated women have lower maternal and infant mortality rates, contribute to healthier families, and play crucial roles in driving economic growth and social stability.

South Africa's apartheid legacy left deep-seated educational disparities based on population group, gender, and geographic location. While significant progress has been made in bridging these gaps since the end of apartheid, persistent structural inequalities continue to hinder efforts to achieve true equity in education. Despite strides made in improving access to education for previously disadvantaged groups and rural communities, disparities in educational attainment persist.

Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that includes targeted interventions to improve access to quality education, address socio-economic barriers, and promote gender equality. Investments in education must prioritise closing achievement gaps and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal opportunities to realise their full potential. Additionally, fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity within educational institutions and society at large is essential for building a more equitable and prosperous future for all South Africans.

Chapter 5: Educational progressions

Analysing the progression of individuals through the education system in South Africa reveals important insights into educational attainment and career pathways. Specifically, understanding the proportions of individuals who complete grade 12 after finishing grade 9, as well as those who go on to achieve a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12, provides valuable information about the effectiveness of the education system and the opportunities available to students.

Firstly, examining the proportion of individuals who successfully complete grade 12 after grade 9 completion sheds light on retention rates within the education system. Higher retention rates indicate a stronger commitment to education and may suggest that students have access to the necessary resources and support to continue their studies. Conversely, low retention rates may indicate barriers to educational progression, such as socioeconomic factors or inadequate educational infrastructure.

Secondly, analysing the progression of individuals from grade 12 to bachelor's degree attainment offers insights into the effectiveness of higher education pathways. A high proportion of students progressing to bachelor's degree programs suggests that the education system adequately prepares students for further academic pursuits and provides sufficient opportunities for advanced education. Conversely, a low proportion may indicate challenges in accessing or completing higher education programs, such as limited university capacity or inadequate support for students transitioning from secondary to tertiary education.

Understanding these progression patterns can inform policy decisions aimed at improving educational outcomes and promoting equitable access to education. Strategies to enhance retention rates and facilitate smooth transitions between educational levels, as well as initiatives to support students from diverse backgrounds in pursuing higher education, can contribute to a more inclusive and effective education system in South Africa.

5.1 Progression ratios

Using time plot analysis to examine the relative progression of different population groups in South Africa provides valuable insights into educational trends and disparities over time. By focusing on key milestones such as completion of compulsory education (grade 9), grade 12, and attainment of a bachelor's degree, we can track the educational trajectories of various demographic groups and identify areas where interventions may be needed to address disparities and promote educational equity.

To conduct this analysis, we collect data on the number of individuals within each population group who have achieved each educational milestone at different points in time. By plotting this data on a time axis, we can observe trends and patterns in educational attainment over time for each population group.

For example, we may observe that certain population groups experience faster rates of progression through the education system compared to others, or that disparities in educational attainment persist over time despite overall improvements in educational access and quality. Additionally, we can examine how factors such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, and gender may influence educational progression patterns.

By identifying areas where certain population groups lag behind in educational attainment, policymakers and educators can develop targeted interventions to address barriers to education and promote equitable access to educational opportunities for all South Africans. This may include initiatives such as improving access to quality schooling in underserved areas, providing financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and implementing programs to support academic success and retention among vulnerable populations.

Overall, time plot analysis of educational progression can serve as a valuable tool for understanding trends in educational attainment and guiding efforts to improve educational outcomes and promote social mobility in South Africa.

Following the method proposed by Feeney[2] (1995, 2009), the time at which a particular educational level was completed was calculated using the following procedure:

$Time = Census_t\ (2022{,}275) - (age_x + 0{,}5) + age_e$

In the formula, $Census_t$ represents the calendar time at which Census 2022 data collection begun; age_x represents the age of persons completing a particular education level; and age_e represents the age at which most of the persons complete that particular educational level e.g. Grade 9. Even though there has been an improvement in the relationship between expected age and completion of key educational milestones in for example the black African population group, the historical average age at completion of key grades were also taken into consideration when determining the age_e to be used in the analysis. Hence age 26 years was used for completion of at least grade 12, age 28 for completion of certain level towards a TVET qualifications and age 35 for completion of at least a bachelor's degree.

The actual attainment ratios are calculated by using the number of individuals who attained a particular grade or qualification divided by the number who attained the previous qualification. For example, completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 is calculated as follows:

$$Ratio\ Grd12 - Grd9 = \frac{No.\ of\ learners\ of\ a\ particular\ age\ who\ complete\ at\ least\ Grade\ 12}{Number\ of\ learners\ who\ completed\ at\ least\ Grade\ 9}$$

5.2 Education progression ratios by sex

This section summarises progression rates through the education system using time plot techniques by sex.

Table 5.1: Number and proportion of persons aged 20 years and older who completed one level and progressed to the next level by sex, Census 2022

	Number				Proportion	
Sex	Completing grade 9	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12	Total	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12
Male	13 781 688	8 853 399	997 206	**23 632 293**	64,2	11,3
Female	17 369 561	10 467 469	1 207 775	**29 044 805**	60,3	11,5
Total	**31 151 249**	**19 320 868**	**2 204 981**	**52 677 098**	**62,0**	**11,4**

Source: Census 2022 *Excludes persons who reported that they had completed levels lower than grade 9 and those who reported to have completed their educational levels by means of other education systems. Hence total will not add up to the universe.

This table highlights the educational progression of individuals aged at most 20 in South Africa, specifically focusing on the completion rates of grade 12 after completing grade 9 and the attainment of a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12. Here are the key findings:

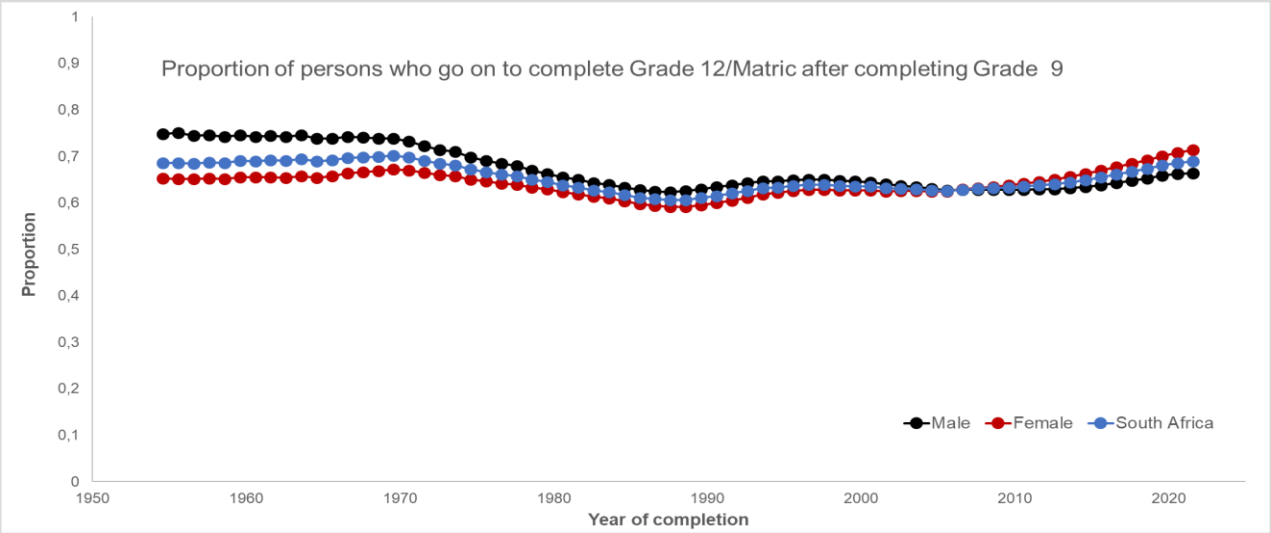
The proportion of males who completed grade 12 after completing grade 9 is 3,4 percentage points higher than females. This suggests that, at this stage of education, males have a slightly higher completion rate compared to females.

However, the gender gap narrows when it comes to the attainment of a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12. This indicates that while males may have a slightly higher completion rate at the grade 12 level, both males and females have similar rates of progression to higher education and achieving a bachelor's degree.

[2] Given a population, a class of events that may occur to members of a population, and a cohort of persons born to this population at some time T. Q denotes the average number of events per person in the cohort, such as attainment of some educational level and the average age at which these events occur to members of the cohort. The latter are defined by a point in time such as Census 2001; such a point is used as the reference time. The horizontal axis represents the time at which members of the cohort reach age M. The best way to apply this method is by the use of large sample or census data in order to generate time plots from data collected at a point in time, with birth cohorts specified by age group (Feeney, 2009).

Overall, these findings suggest that while there may be some gender disparities in educational attainment at certain stages, such as completing grade 12, these disparities tend to diminish as individuals' progress to higher levels of education. This highlights the importance of ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for both genders and addressing any barriers that may hinder educational progression for specific demographic groups.

Figure 5.1: Time plot for proportions of persons completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 by sex, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

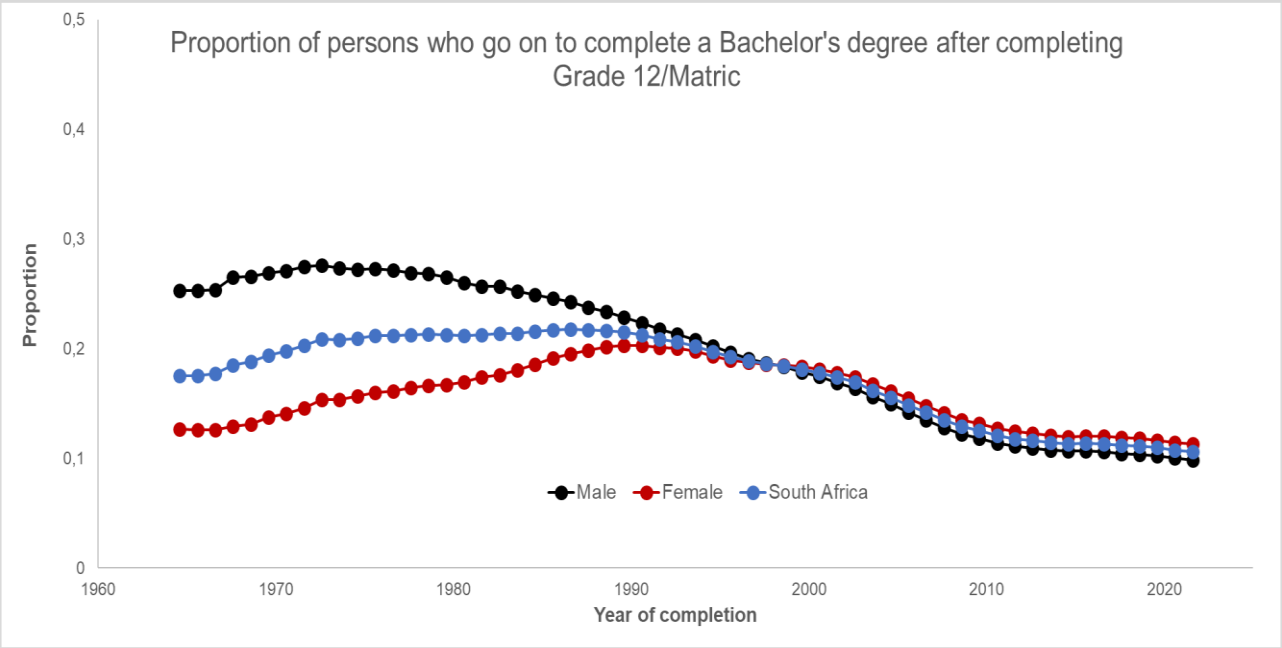
The progression ratios for completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 were initially higher for males up until the early 2000s. However, around that time, parity was reached, meaning that both males and females had similar rates of progression from grade 9 to grade 12.

The progression ratios for completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 for females were at the start lower than the national average, up until gender parity were reached.

Interestingly, while the progression ratios for males began to decline gradually after reaching parity, the ratios for females continued to increase. Eventually, in the late 2000s, the progression ratios for females surpassed those of males.

This trend suggests a significant shift in educational attainment patterns over time, with females increasingly outpacing males in terms of completing grade 12 after completing grade 9. It may indicate changes in societal norms, educational policies, or other factors that have led to improved educational opportunities and outcomes for females.

Figure 5.2: Time plot for proportions of persons completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by sex, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.2 illustrates the attainment ratios by sex for individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12. The graph indicates that the throughput for both males and females to complete a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 has decreased over time.

Males initially had much higher attainment ratios compared to females and compared to the national average during the period from 1970 to 1990. However, females' attainment ratios showed small increases during the same period, eventually reaching parity with males in the 2000s.

Although females briefly surpassed males in attainment ratios in the 2000s, the increase reversed gradually over time. However, females' progression ratios remained slightly higher compared to males, indicating that more females were completing bachelor's degrees after completing grade 12, although at lower rates compared to the peak levels achieved in the mid-1960s to 1990.

5.3 Education progression ratios by population group

This section summarizes progression rates through the education system using time plot techniques by population groups.

Table 5.2: Number and proportion of persons aged 20 years and older who completed one level and progressed to the next level by population group, Census 2022

	N				%	
Population group	**Completing grade 9**	**Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9**	**Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12**	**Total**	**Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9**	**Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12**
Black African	22 220 594	13 747 831	1 079 769	**37 048 194**	61,9	7,9
Coloured	2 309 153	1 332 223	125 877	**3 767 253**	57,7	9,4
Indian/Asian	1 044 276	837 608	171 308	**2 053 192**	80,2	20,5
White	3 169 597	2 727 427	807 356	**6 704 380**	86,0	29,6
Total	**24 529 747**	**15 080 054**	**1 205 646**	**40 815 447**	**61,5**	**8,0**

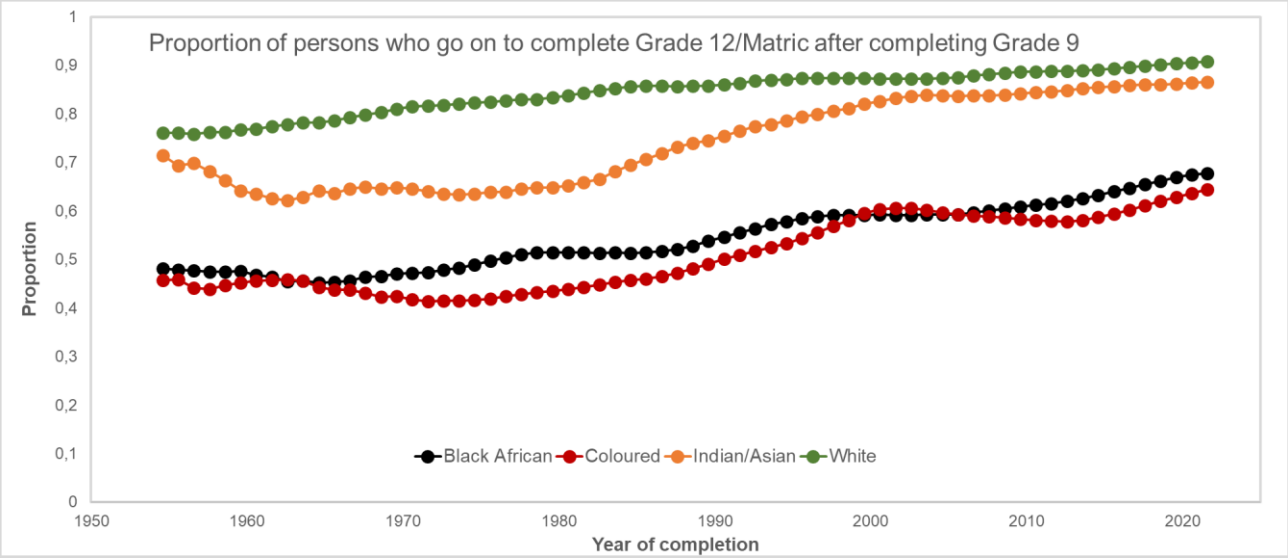
Source: Census 2022 *Excludes persons who reported that they had completed levels lower than grade 9 and those who reported to have completed their educational levels by means of other education systems. Hence total will not add up to the universe.

Table 5.2 above provides an overview of the proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed grade 12 after completion of grade 9 and the proportion of individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after completion of grade 12, broken down by population group.

The data indicates that the proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed grade 12 after completion of grade 9 was the highest for whites, with 86.0% achieving this milestone. On the other hand, the lowest proportion was observed among coloureds, with only 57.7% completing grade 12 after completing grade 9.

Similarly, the highest rates observed for individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after the completion of grade 12 were among the white population (29,6%) followed by Asian/Indians (20,5%). The throughput for coloureds (9,4%) from secondary education to achieving a bachelor's degree slightly exceeded that of black Africans (7,9%).

Figure 5.3: Time plot for proportions of persons completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 by population group, Census 2022



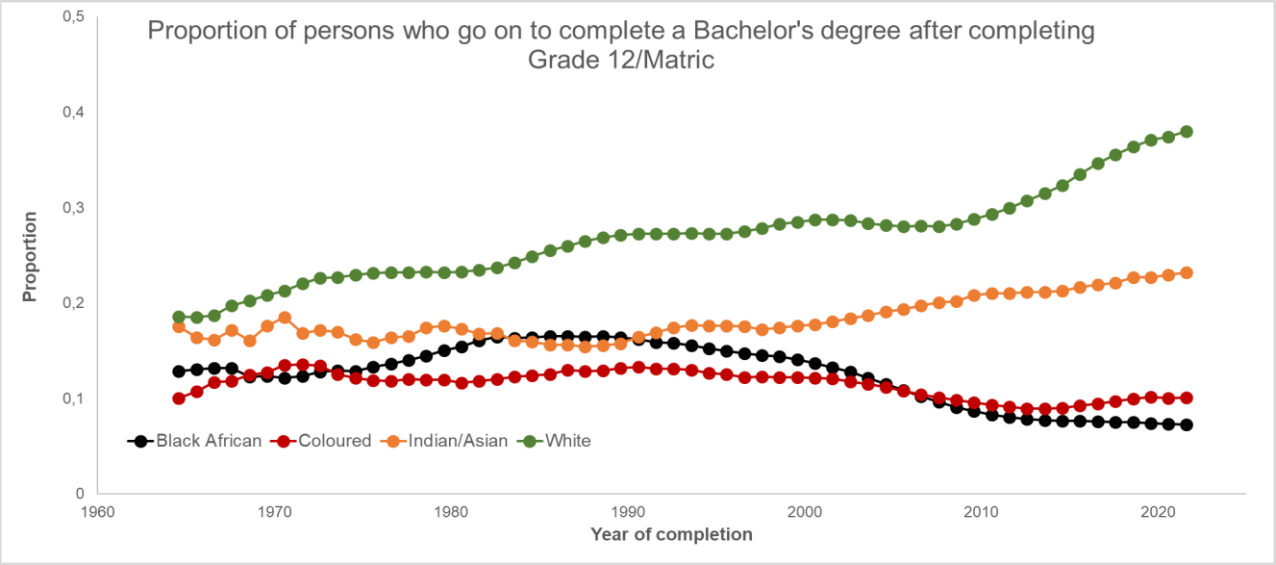
Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.3 above illustrates the attainment ratios by population group for individuals who completed grade 12 after completing grade 9.

The data indicates that the throughput for achieving grade 12 after completing grade 9 was consistently the highest for the white population groups, followed by Asian/Indians. In contrast, the throughput for achieving grade 12 after completing grade 9 was lower for both black Africans and coloureds.

Progression ratios for whites and Asian/Indians exhibited large differences from 1960 to 1995, after which the gap began to narrow. This suggests a gradual improvement in educational attainment among black Africans and coloureds over time, although they still lag behind whites and Asian/Indians in terms of completing grade 12 after completing grade 9.

Figure 5.4: Time plot for proportions of persons completing bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by population group, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.4 above illustrates the attainment ratios by population group for individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12.

The data indicates that the throughput for achieving a bachelor's degree increased over time for whites and Asian/Indians, while it declined for black Africans and coloureds. This trend suggests a widening gap in educational attainment between whites and the other population groups.

Progression ratios among Asian/Indians began to separate rapidly from black Africans from 1995 onwards, despite having similar levels in the late 1980s to mid-1990s. This indicates a significant disparity in educational achievement between Asian/Indians and black Africans over time.

5.4 Education progression ratios by province

This section summarises progression rates through the education system using time plot techniques by province.

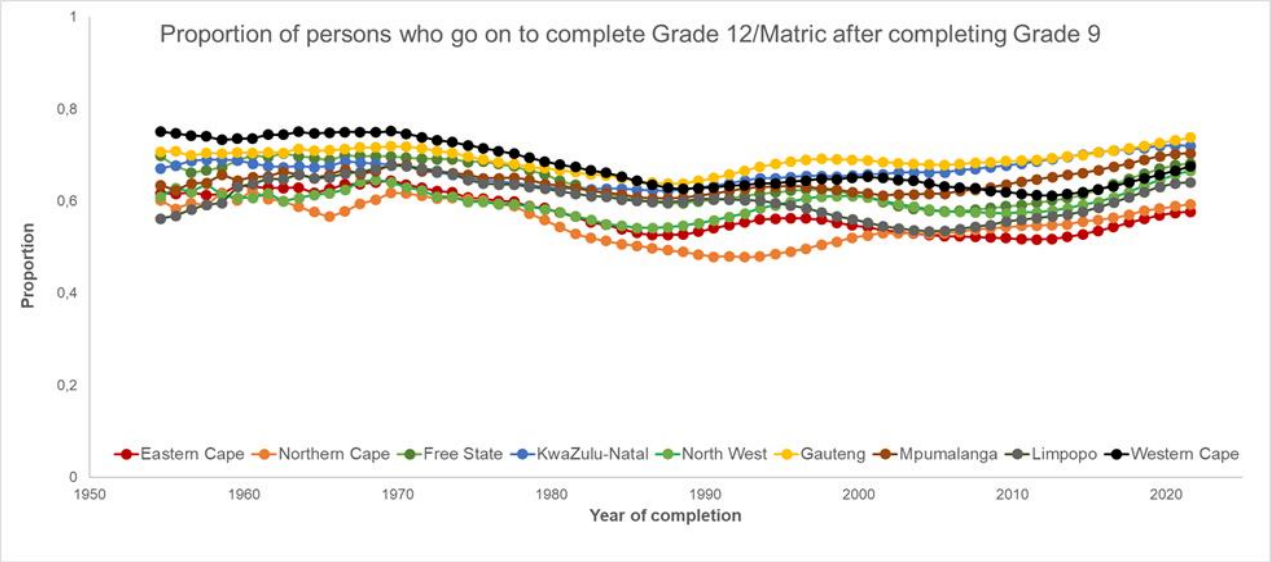
Table 5.3: Number and proportion of persons aged 20 years and older who completed one level and progressed to the next level by province, Census 2022

	Number				Proportion	
Province	Completing grade 9	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12	Total	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12
Western Cape	3 886 320	2 525 212	471 711	**6 883 243**	65,0	18,7
Eastern Cape	2 821 620	1 546 049	185 840	**4 553 509**	54,8	12,0
Northern Cape	460 412	248 017	21 161	**729 590**	53,9	8,5
Free-State	1 109 440	683 406	66 727	**1 859 573**	61,6	9,8
KwaZulu-Natal	5 582 381	3 798 560	373 749	**9 754 690**	68,0	9,8
North West	1 578 697	952 647	69 734	**2 601 078**	60,3	7,3
Gauteng	8 398 499	5 857 735	784 387	**15 040 621**	69,7	13,4
Mpumalanga	2 214 912	1 444 281	82 236	**3 741 429**	65,2	5,7
Limpopo	2 521 150	1 483 817	141 521	**4 146 488**	58,9	9,5
Total	**28 573 431**	**18 539 724**	**2 197 066**	**49 310 221**	**64,9**	**11,9**

Source: Census 2022 *Excludes persons who reported that they had completed levels lower than grade 9 and those who reported to have completed their educational levels by means of other education systems. Hence total will not add up to the universe.

Table 5.3 above shows the proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed grade 12 after completion of grade 9 was the highest in Gauteng (69,7%) and the lowest in Northern Cape (53,9%). The proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed a bachelor degree after completion of grade 12 was the highest in Western Cape (18,7%) and the lowest in Northern Cape (53,9%).

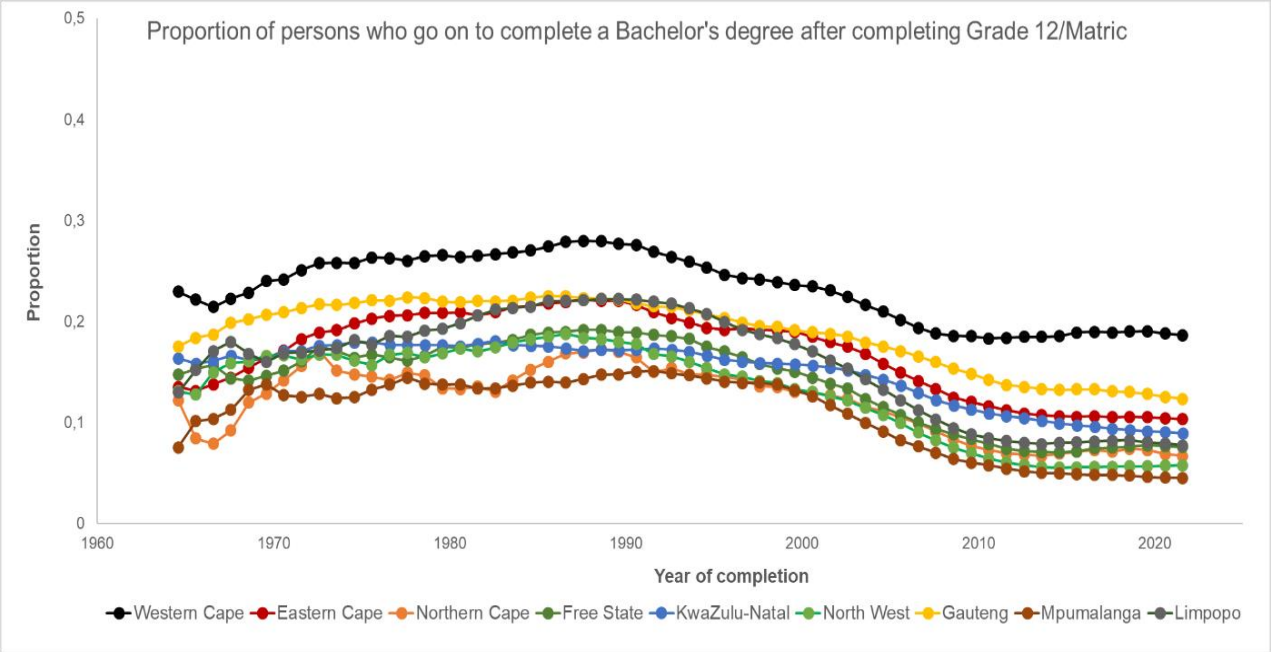
Figure 5.5: Time plot for proportions of persons completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 by province, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.5 above shows the attainment ratios by province for individuals who completed grade 12 after completing grade 9. The graph shows the throughput for achieving grade 12 declined over time for all the provinces up until the 1990s. The decline was quite steep particularly for Western Cape, Eastern Cape, North West and Northern Cape. These provinces also were not able to return to their progression ratios levels of the late 1950s. Moreover, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Limpopo were the provinces with the lowest attainment ratios in recent times while KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Mpumalanga were provinces with the top three achievement ratios.

Figure 5.6: Time plot for proportions of persons completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by province, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.6 shows the attainment ratios by province for individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12. The graph shows the throughput for achieving a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 was the highest in Western Cape and the lowest in Mpumalanga. The progression ratios consistently increased for all provinces until 1990 and started to gradually decrease until the early 2020s. Nevertheless, the Western Cape's progression ratios stabilised and slowly increased after 2010. Gauteng which ranked second in attainment ratios did not quite manage to narrow the existing gap with Western Cape.

5.5 Education progression ratios by settlement type

This section summarizes progression rates through the education system using time plot techniques by settlement type.

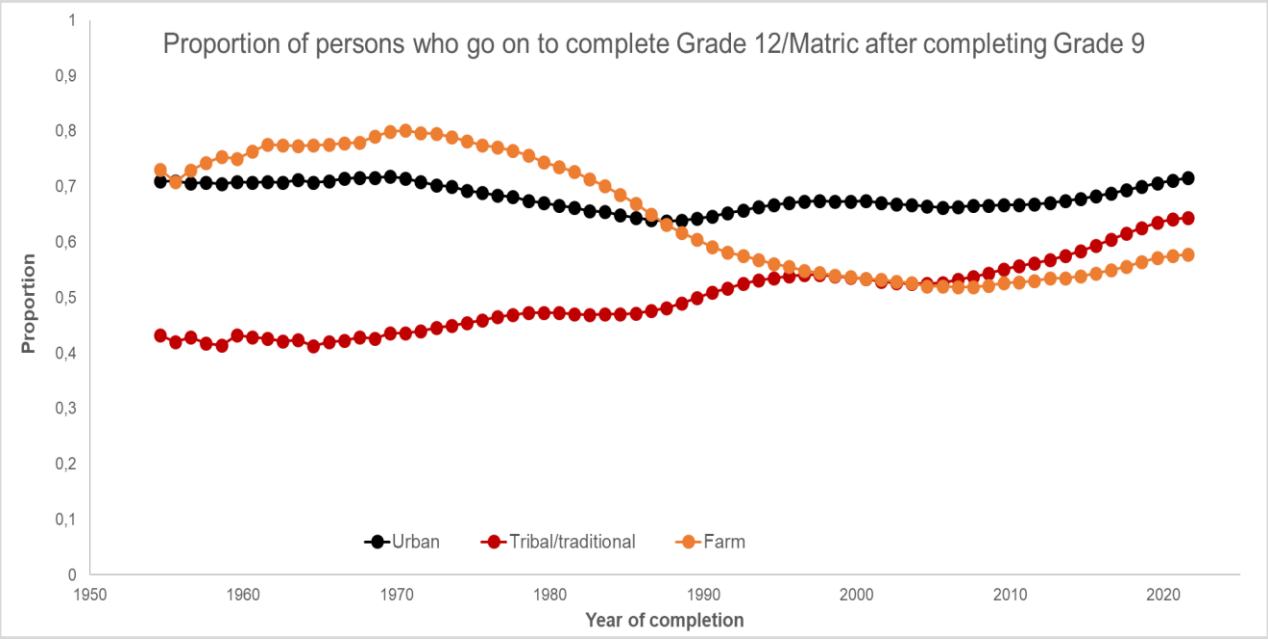
Table 5.4: Number and proportion of persons aged 20 years who completed one level and progressed to the next level by settlement type, Census 2022

	Number				Proportion	
Type of settlement	Completing grade 9	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a Bachelor's degree after completing grade 12	Total	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a Bachelor's degree after completing grade 12
Urban	20 735 646	14 097 464	1 900 684	**36 733 794**	68,0	13,5
Tribal/traditional	7 098 155	4 048 065	234 123	**11 380 343**	57,0	5,8
Farm	1 022 341	580 575	70 060	**1 672 976**	56,8	12,1
Total	**27 833 801**	**18 145 529**	**2 134 807**	**48 114 137**	**65,2**	**11,8**

Source: Census 2022 *Excludes persons who reported that they had completed levels lower than grade 9 and those who reported to have completed their educational levels by means of other education systems. Hence total will not add up to the universe.

Table 5.4 shows the proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed grade 12 after completion of grade 9 was the highest in urban areas (68,0%) and close to 57% in both Tribal/traditional and farm areas. The proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed a bachelor's degree after completion of grade 12 was the highest in urban areas (13,5%) and the lowest in tribal/traditional areas (5,8%).

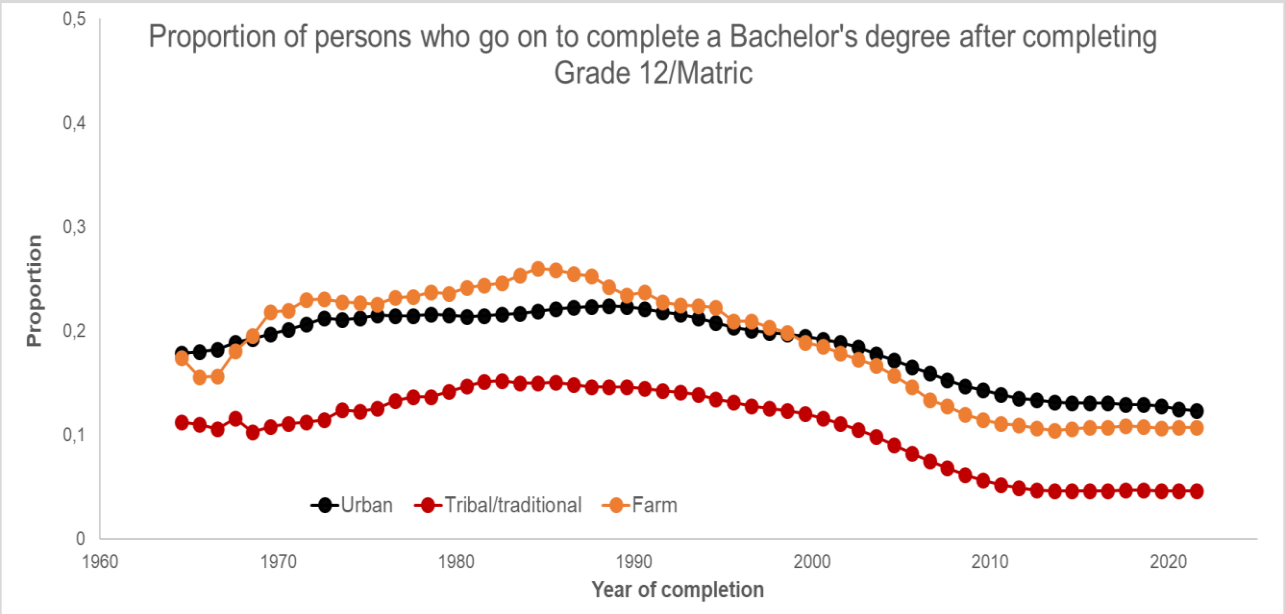
Figure 5.7: Time plot for proportions of persons completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 by settlement type, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.7 shows the attainment ratios by individuals who completed grade 12 after completing grade 9 by settlement type. The graph shows the throughput for achieving grade 12 after completing grade 9 was the highest, but declining rapidly in farm areas up until the mid-1980s, by when they were first overtaken by progression ratios in urban areas, and later by those in traditional/farm areas. By contrast, attainment ratios in both urban and tribal/traditional areas remained stable across most periods with a slight increase after mid-1980s.

Figure 5.8: Time plot for proportions of persons completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by settlement type, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.8 above shows the attainment ratios by individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by settlement type. For residents of farm areas, the throughput for completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 mirrors that of the throughput for completing grade 12 after completing grade 9. Even though, bachelor's degree attainment ratios for farm dwellers compared to urban areas were at higher base in the 1970s to mid-1990s, the gap narrowed eventually. By 2010, attainment ratios in urban areas overtook those of farm areas.

5.6 Education progression ratios by place of birth

This section summarises progression rates through the education system using time plot techniques by country of birth.

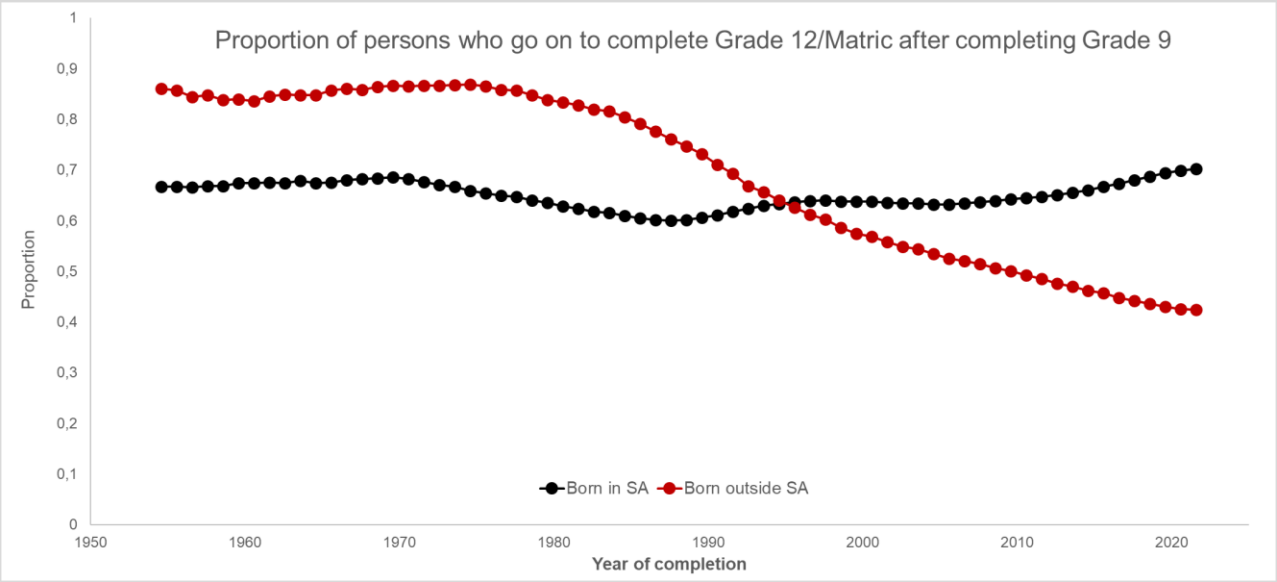
Table 5.5: Number and proportion of persons aged 20 years and older who completed one level and progressed to the next level by place of birth

	Number				Proportion	
Place of birth	Completing grade 9	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12	Total	Completing grade 12 after completing grade 9	Completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12
Born in South Africa	27 367 709	17 925 135	2 051 243	**47 344 087**	65,5	11,4
Born outside South Africa	1 384 118	731 074	141 081	**2 256 273**	52,8	19,3
Total	**28 751 827**	**18 656 209**	**2 192 324**	**49 600 360**	**64,9**	**11,8**

Source: Census 2022 *Excludes persons who reported that they had completed levels lower than grade 9 and those who reported to have completed their educational levels by means of other education systems. Hence total will not add up to the universe.

Table 5.5 above shows the proportion of individuals aged at most 20 who completed grade 12 after completion of grade 9 was the highest among individuals born in South Africa (65,5%). Those born outside South African were more likely to have attained a bachelor's degree (19,3%) after completing grade 12.

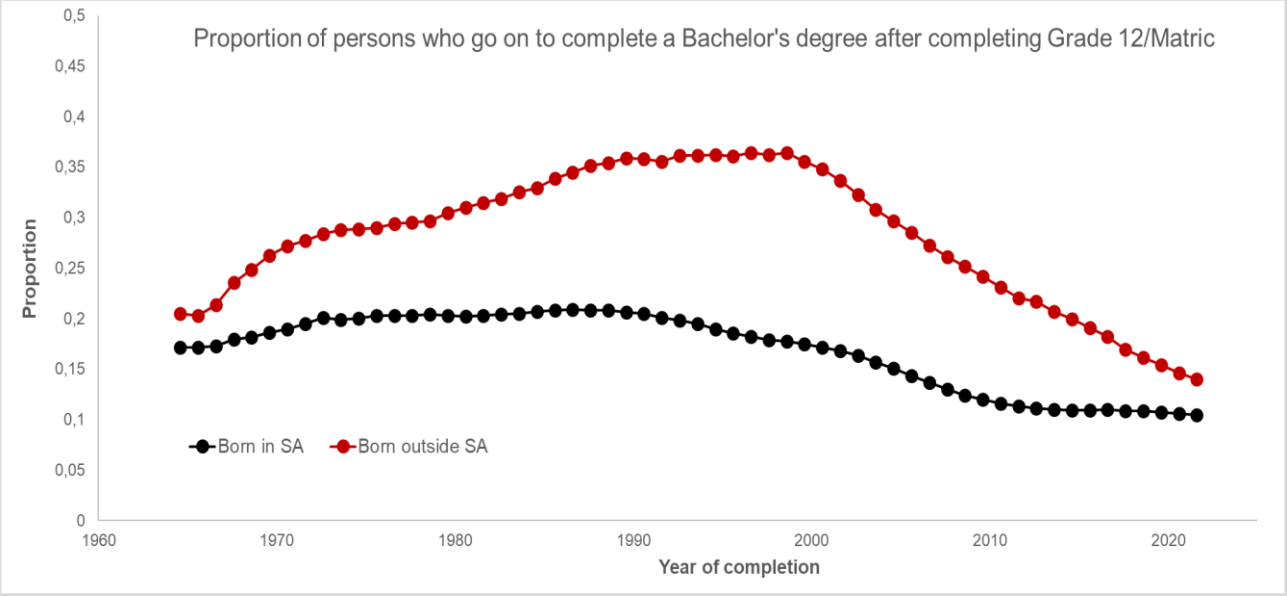
Figure 5.9: Time plot for proportions of persons completing grade 12 after completing grade 9 by place of birth, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.9 above shows the attainment ratios by individuals who completed grade 12 after completing grade 9 by place of birth. The graph shows that secondary school attainment for those born in South Africa was lower than for those born outside South Africa until 1994. Subsequent to 1994, the proportion of those born in South Africa who completed their secondary education increased and surpassed those born outside South Africa.

Figure 5.10: Time plot for proportions of persons completing a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by place of birth, Census 2022



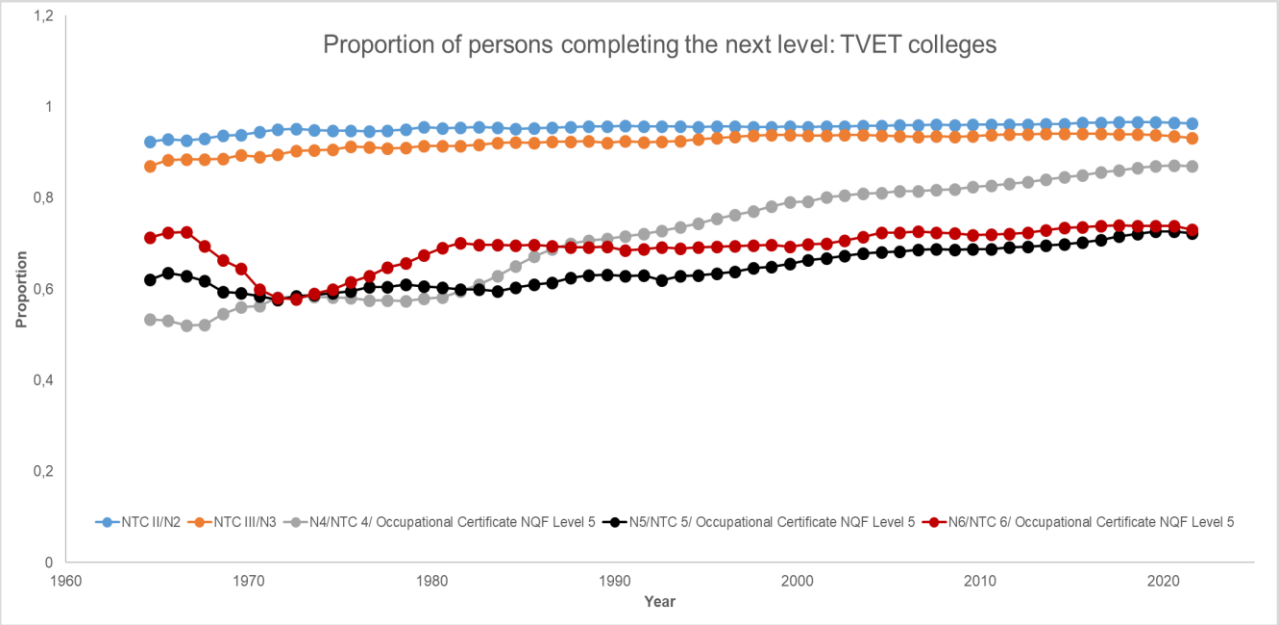
Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.10 above shows the attainment ratios by individuals who completed a bachelor's degree after completing grade 12 by place of birth. The graph shows a large disparity in the attainment of a bachelor's degree by place of birth. Those born in South Africa are less likely than those born outside South Africa to have completed a bachelor's degree. Whilst the attainment of a bachelor's degree increased to some extent over the years for those born in South Africa, the attainment for those born outside South Africa fluctuated with the gap between the two getting smaller from 2016.

5.7 Education progression ratios for persons completing the next level: TVET colleges

The following sections highlights the progression ratios of persons who completed the next level after completing the preceding level at TVET colleges. Ideally learners who follow the TVET college stream do so after completing grade 9. However, there are some instances where learners who followed the academic stream up to grade 12 but passed with poor marks deviate back to the TVET stream, beginning at NTC1, which according to the NQF levels is considered to be lower than grade 12. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this report, all learners starting at TVET colleges and completing a certain level are treated as having started immediately after completing grade 9.

Figure 5.11: Time plot for proportions of persons completing the next level: TVET colleges



Source: Census 2022

Figure 5.11 shows, that the highest proportion is of persons who progressed from the first level (NTCI) to NTCII/N2 over the years, followed by those who progressed to NTCIII/N3 after completing NTCII/N2. Furthermore, the proportion of persons who completed NTC6/N6 after completing NTC5/N5 is higher compared to those who progressed from NTC4/N4 to NTC5/N5.

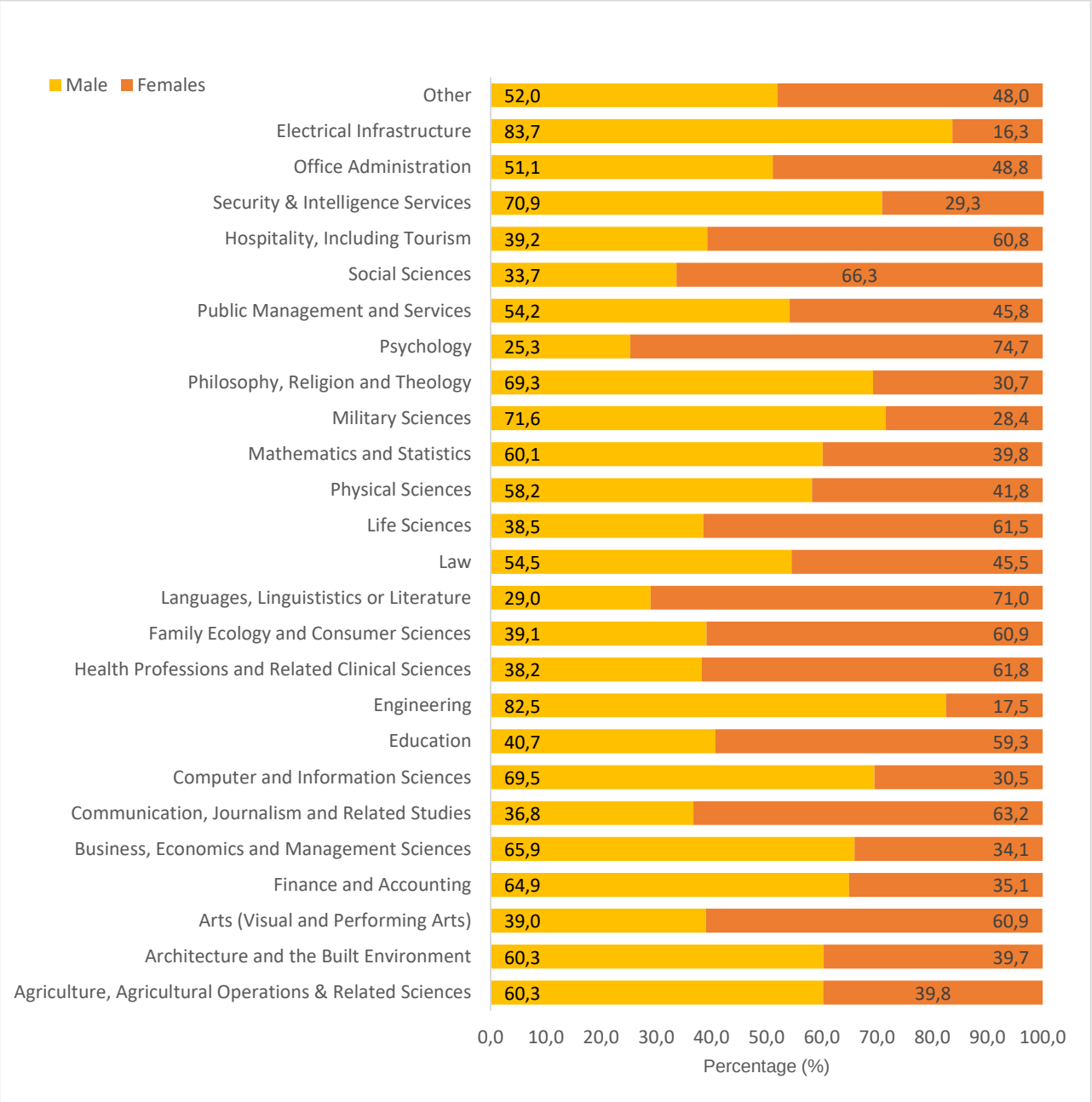
5.8 Conclusion

Trends in South African education highlighted that steady, but insufficient progress has been made in educational attainment. The data shows significant increases since 1994 in attainment in secondary education, especially amongst black Africans. However, large inequalities between the different population groups remain with regard to the transition from secondary education to the completion of a bachelor's degree. The coloured and black African populations had the lowest proportion of persons completing a bachelor's degree. In 2022, coloureds and black Africans bachelor's degree attainment was similar to that of the white population in the 1960s.

Given the poor socio-economic conditions of most South African households, educational and other authorities have achieved a lot in increasing primary and secondary school attendance rates with interventions such as for example providing free education, free meals, free transport, social grants, and financial aid such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) for students aiming to pursue higher education. Further improvements in the quality of education is needed, through interventions such as smaller classes and better-trained teachers.

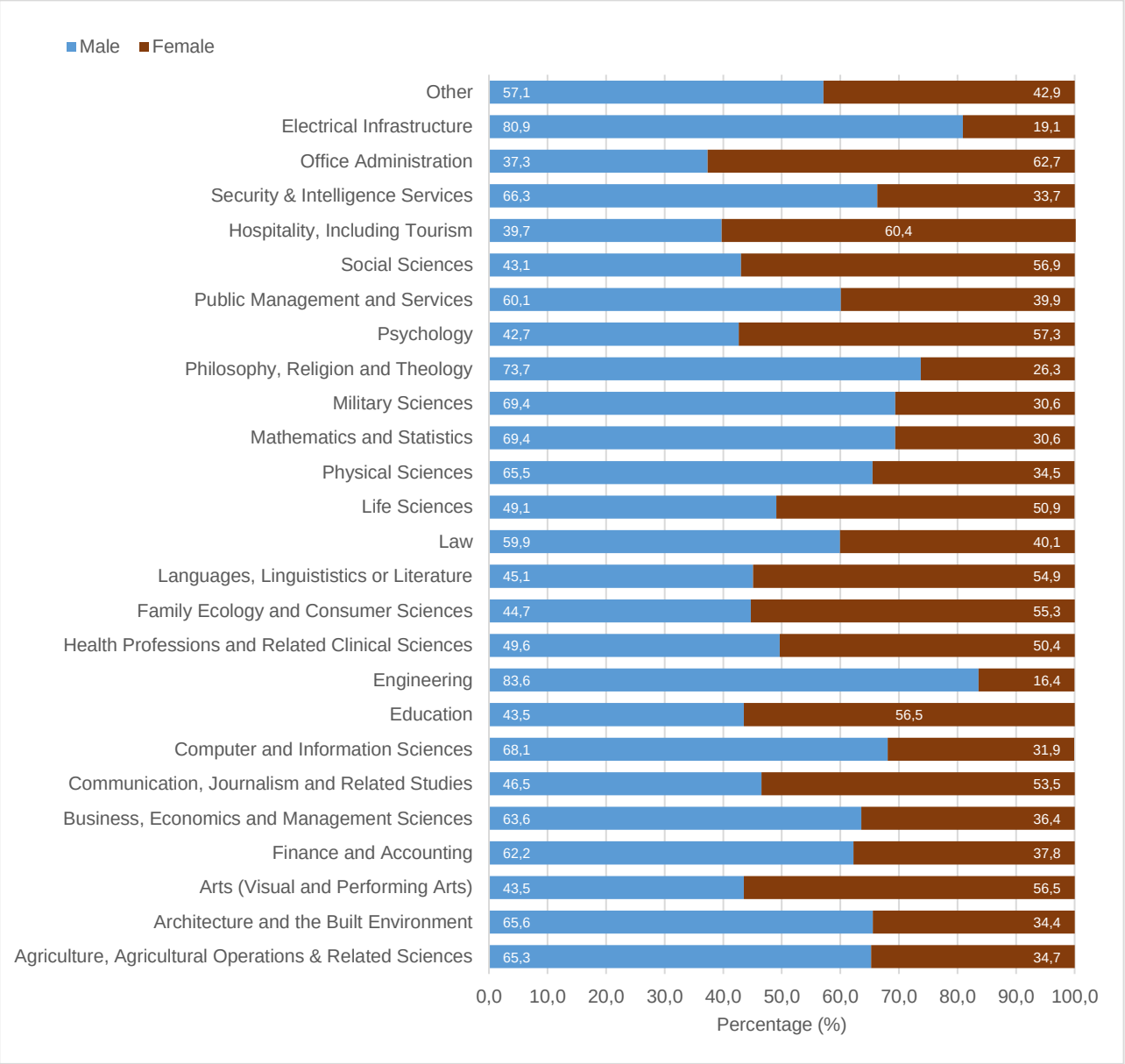
Annexures

Figure A1: Honour's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by fields of education and sex, Census 2022



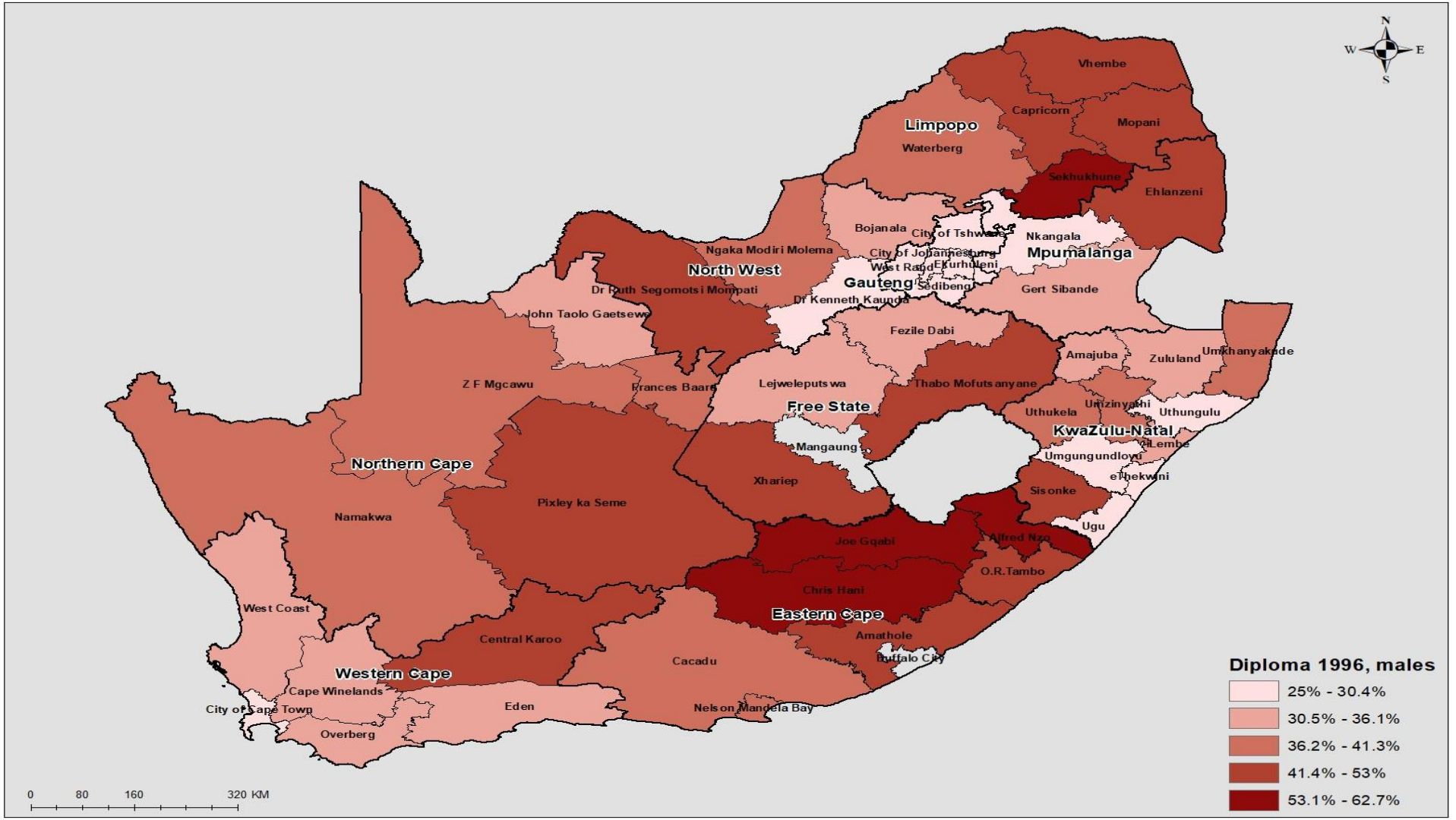
Census 2022

Figure A2: Doctorate's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by fields of education and sex, Census 2022



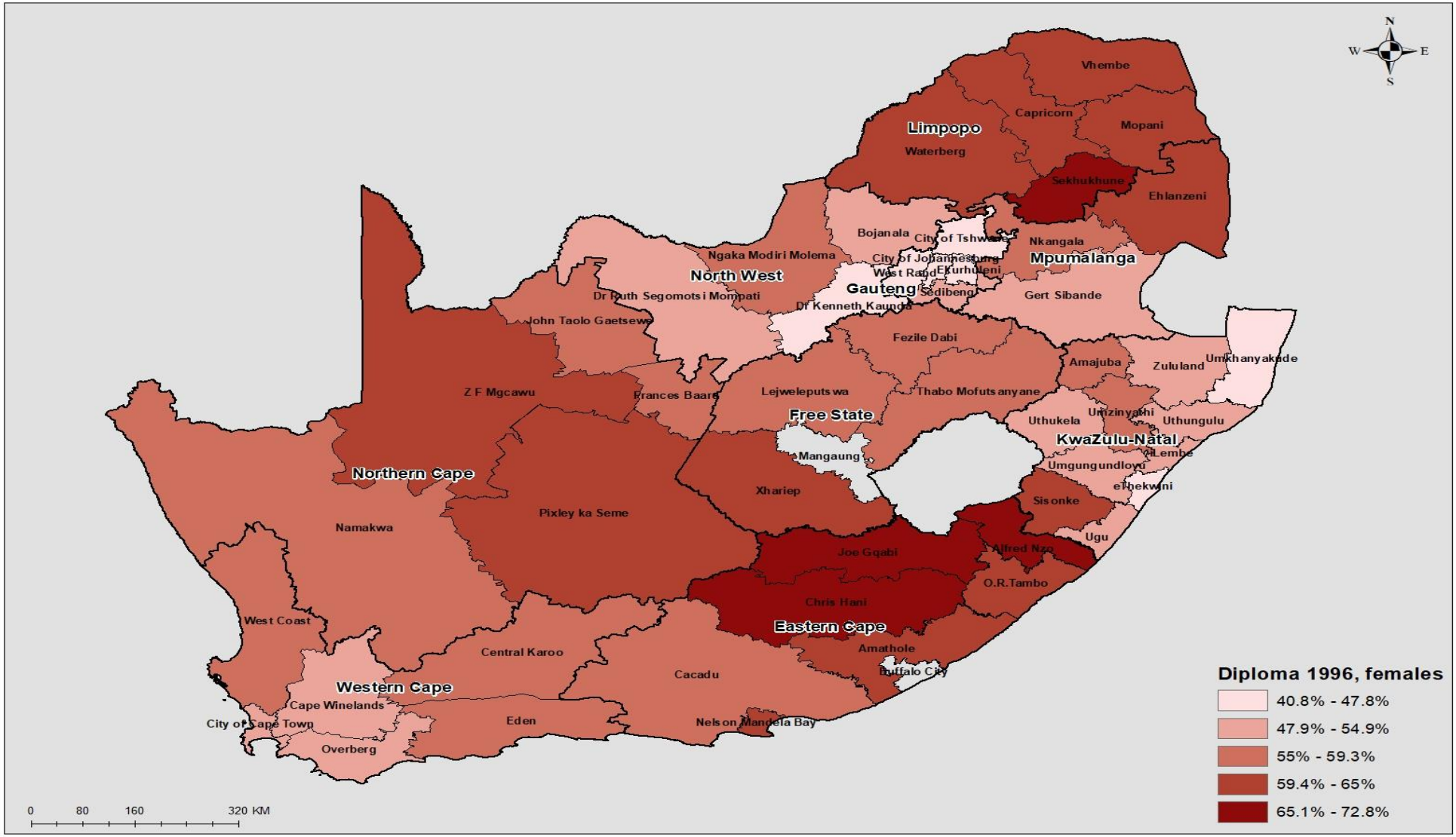
Source: Census 2022

Map A1: Male diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



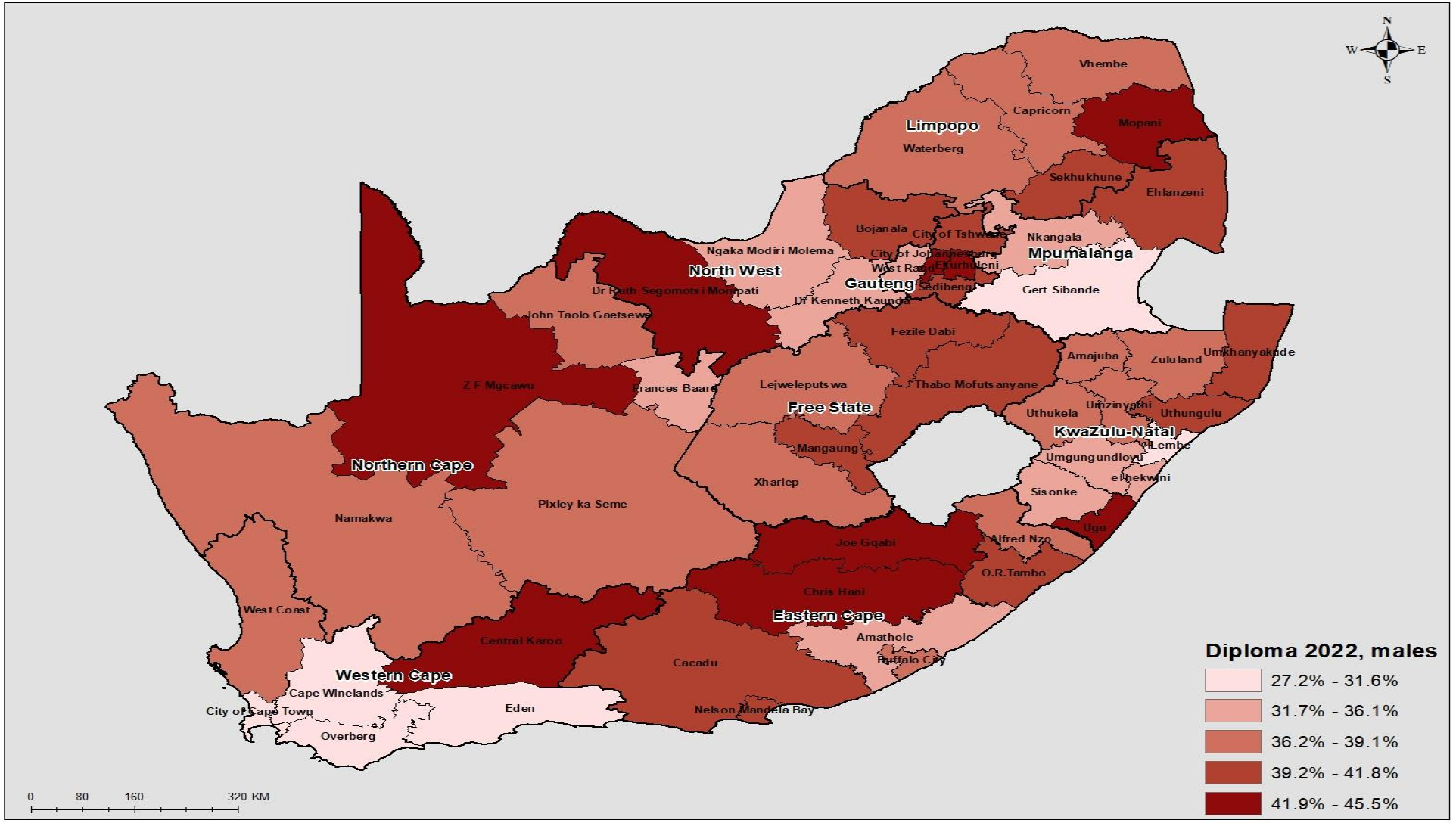
Source: Census 1996

Map A2: Female diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



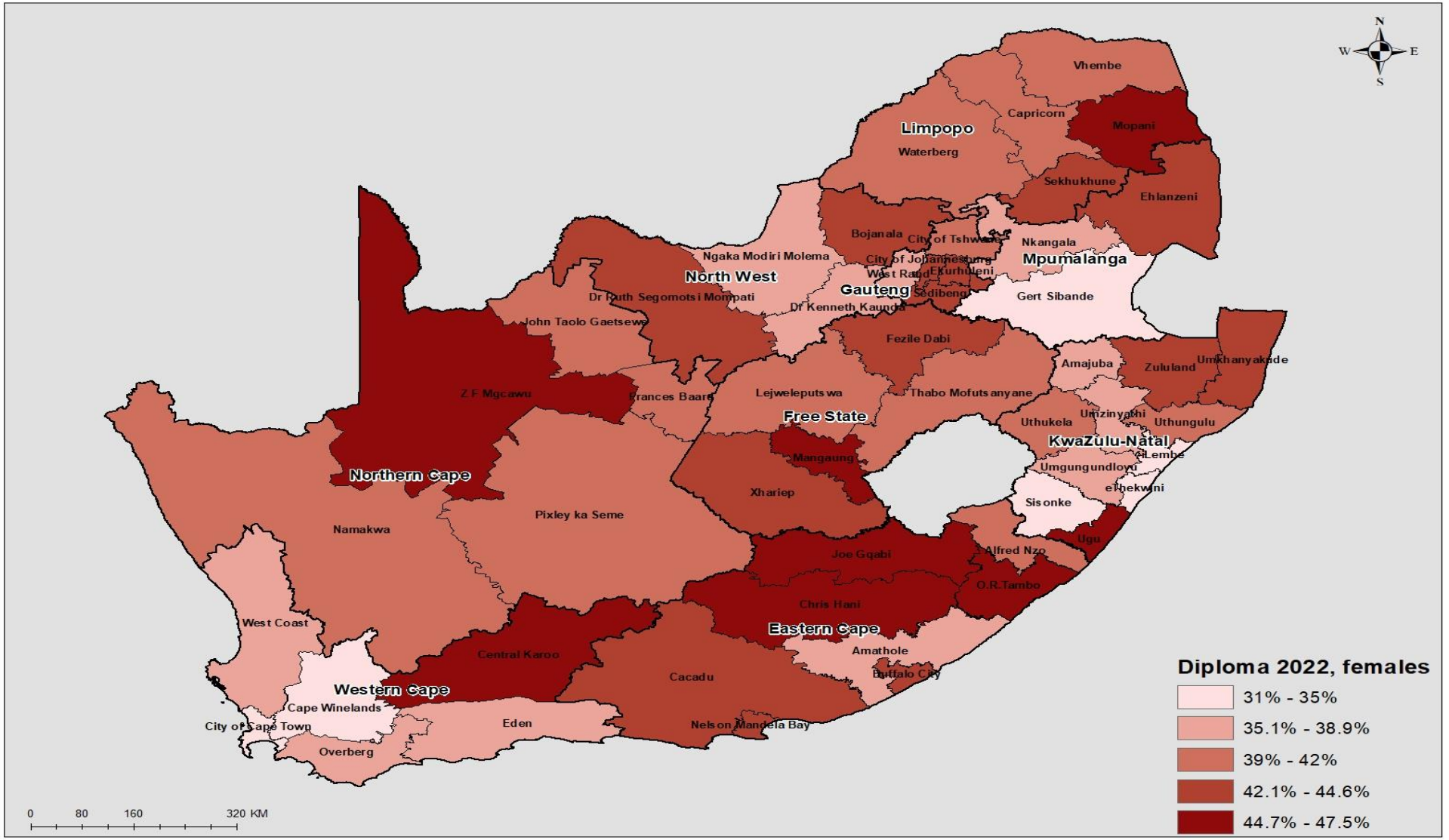
Source: Census 1996

Map A3: Male diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



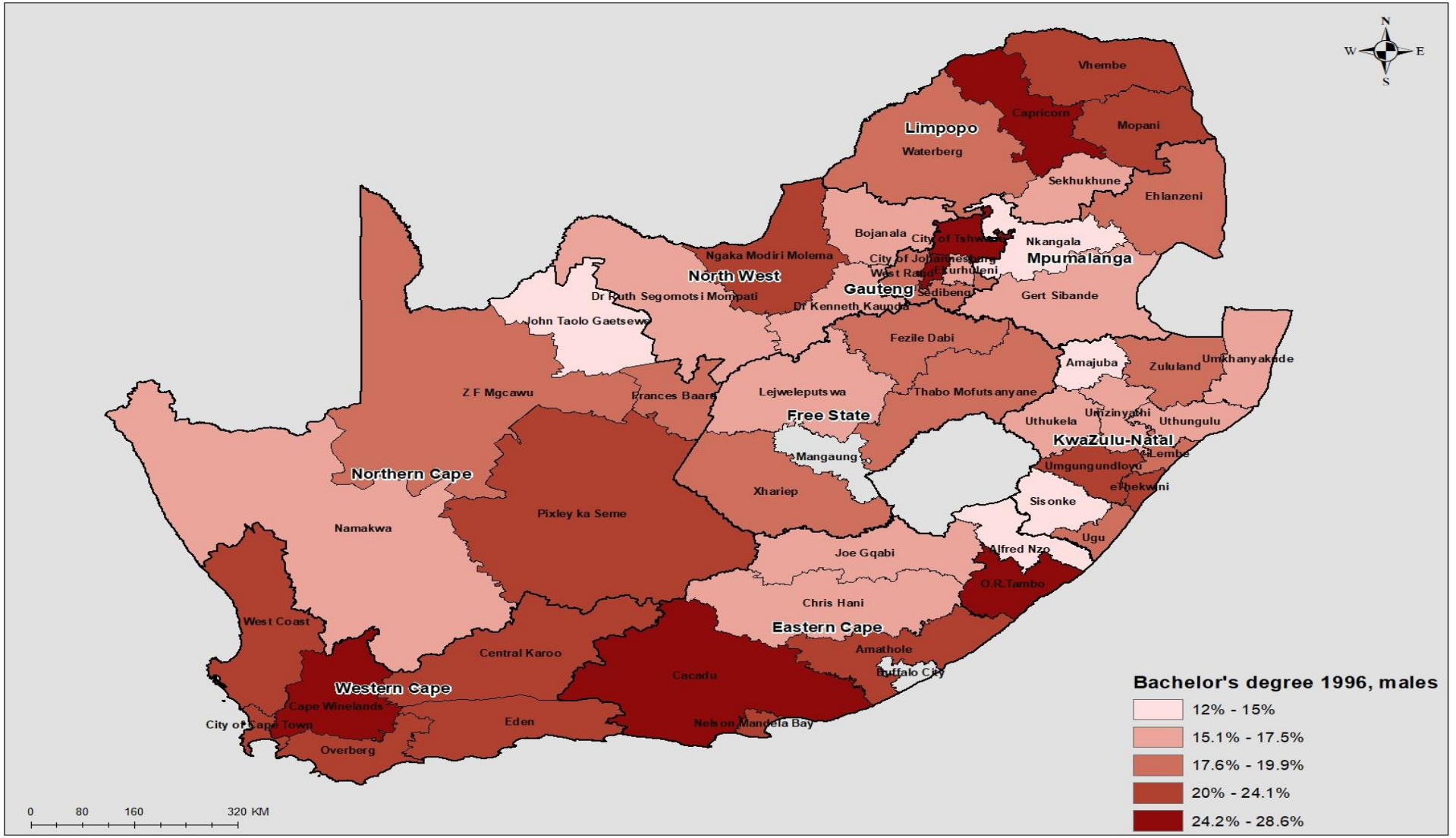
Source: Census 2022

Map A4: Female diploma graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



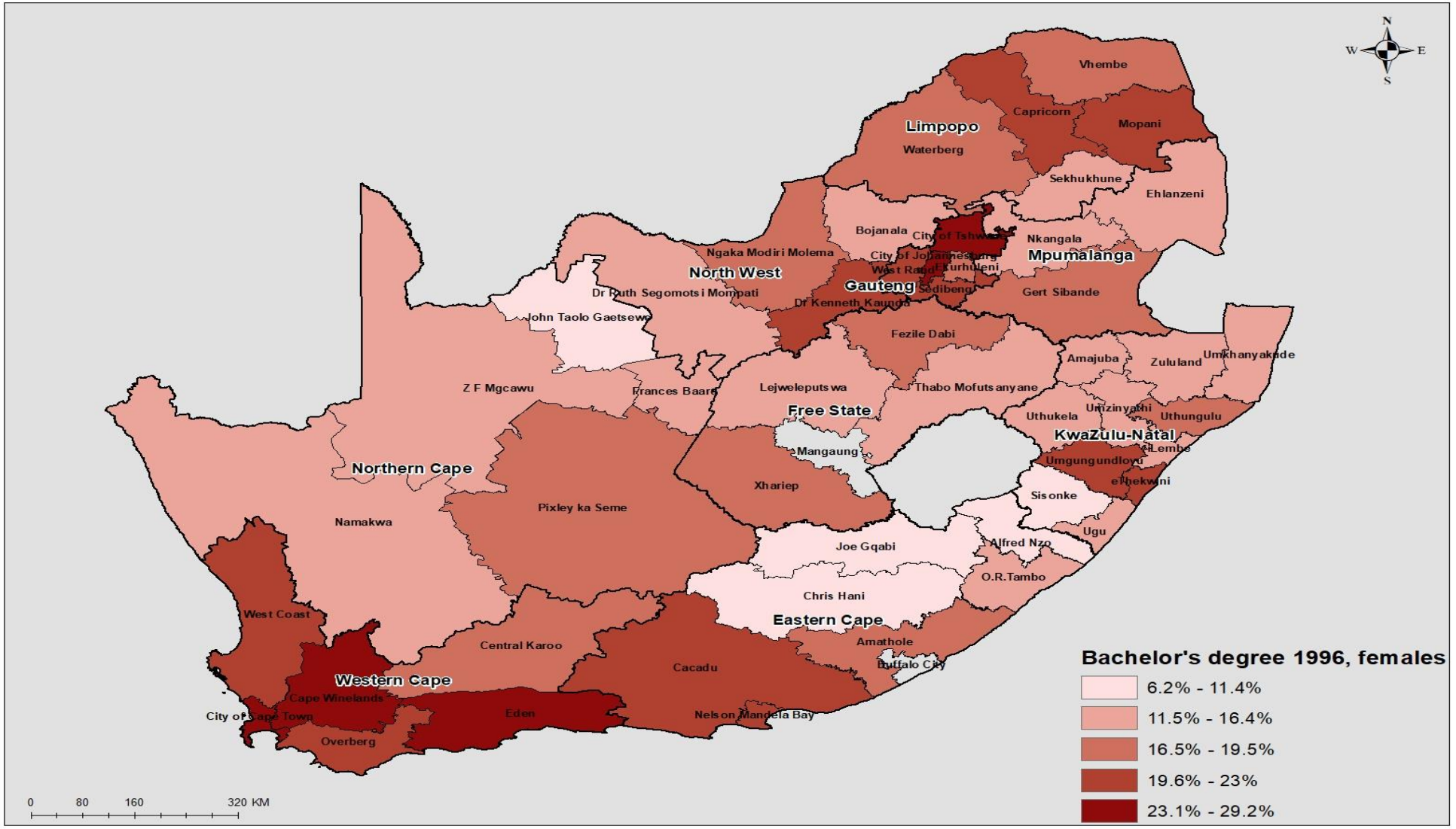
Source: Census 2022

Map A5: Male bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



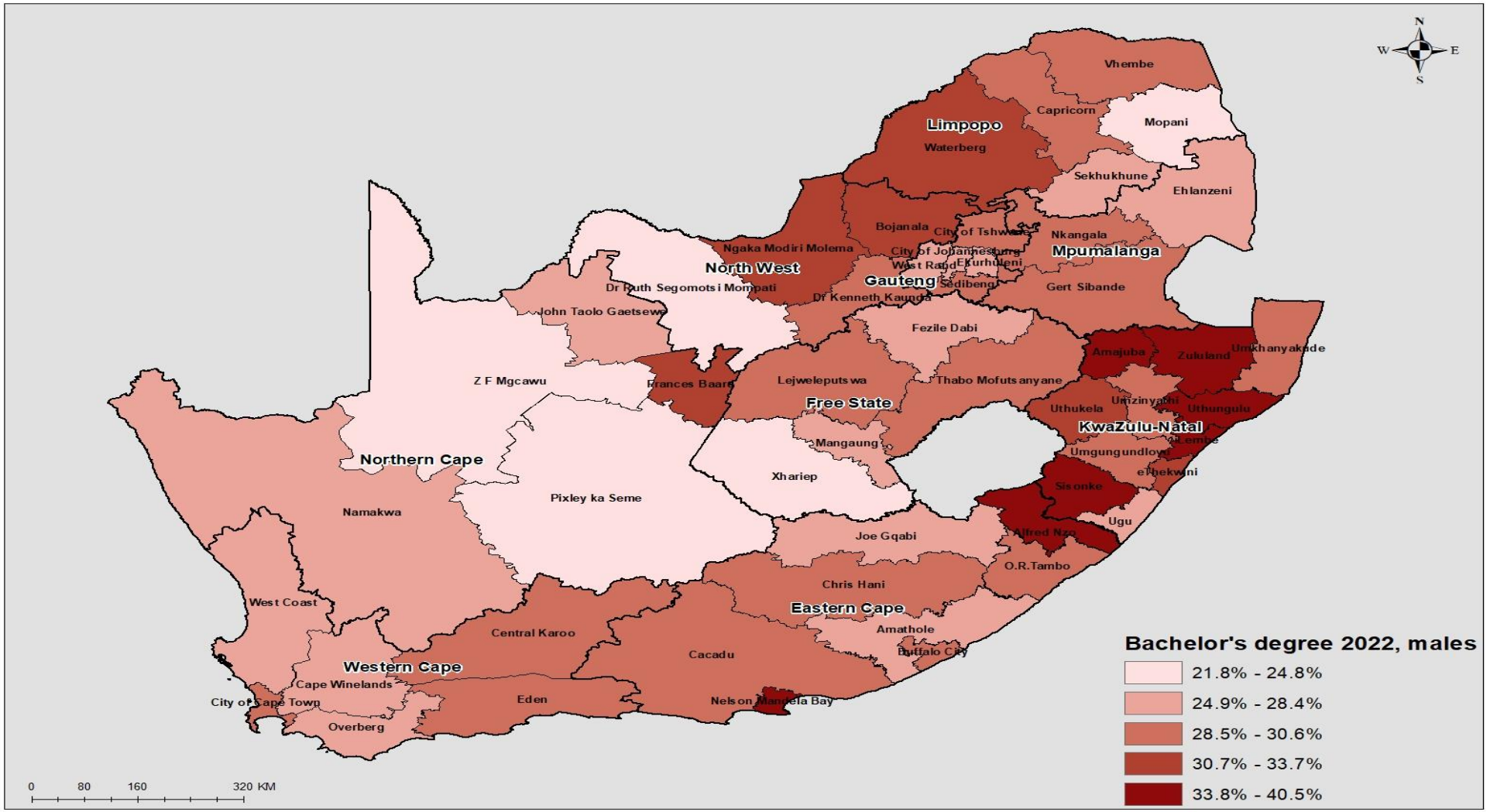
Source: Census 1996

Map A6: Female bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



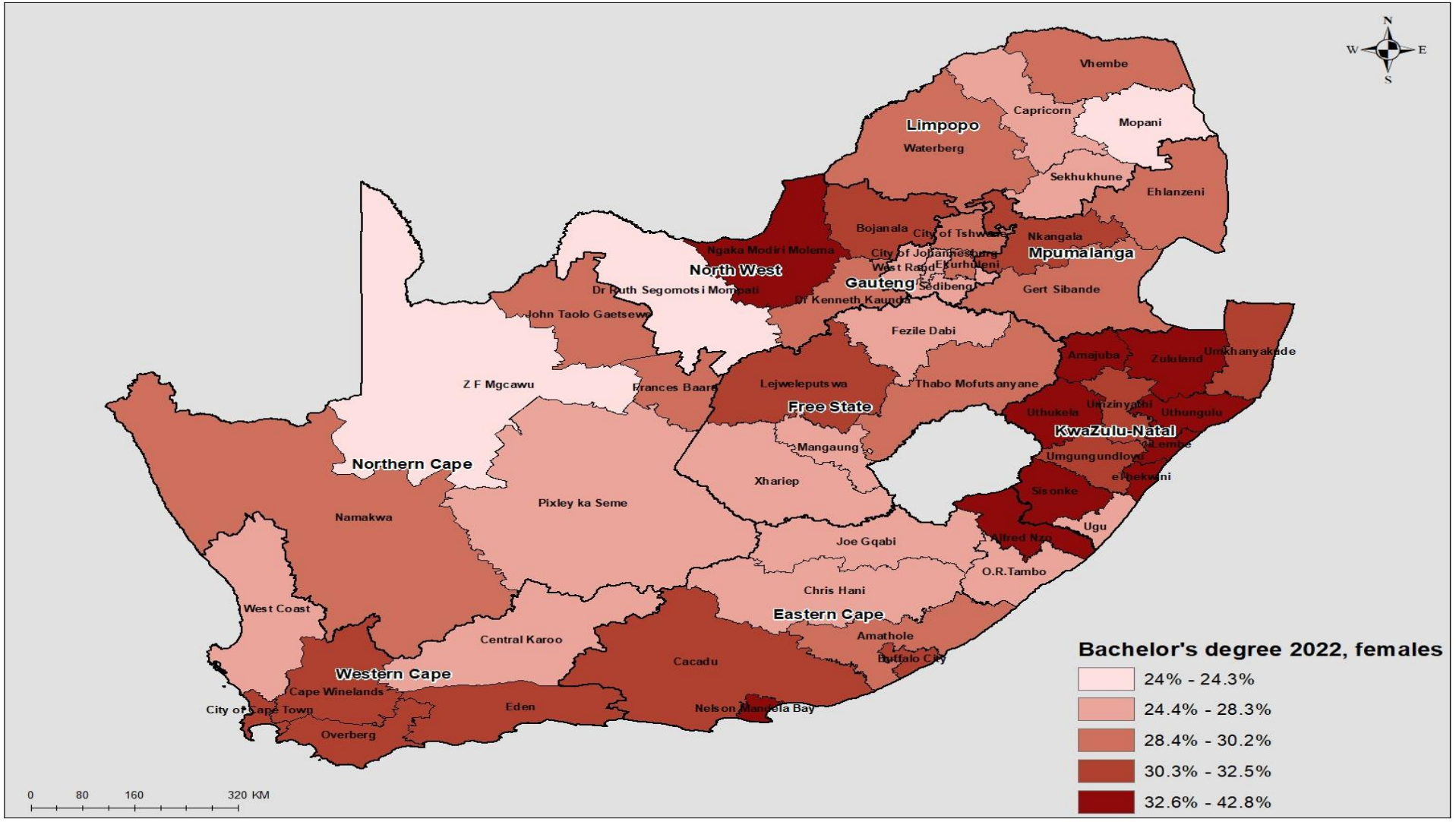
Source: Census 1996

Map A7: Male bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



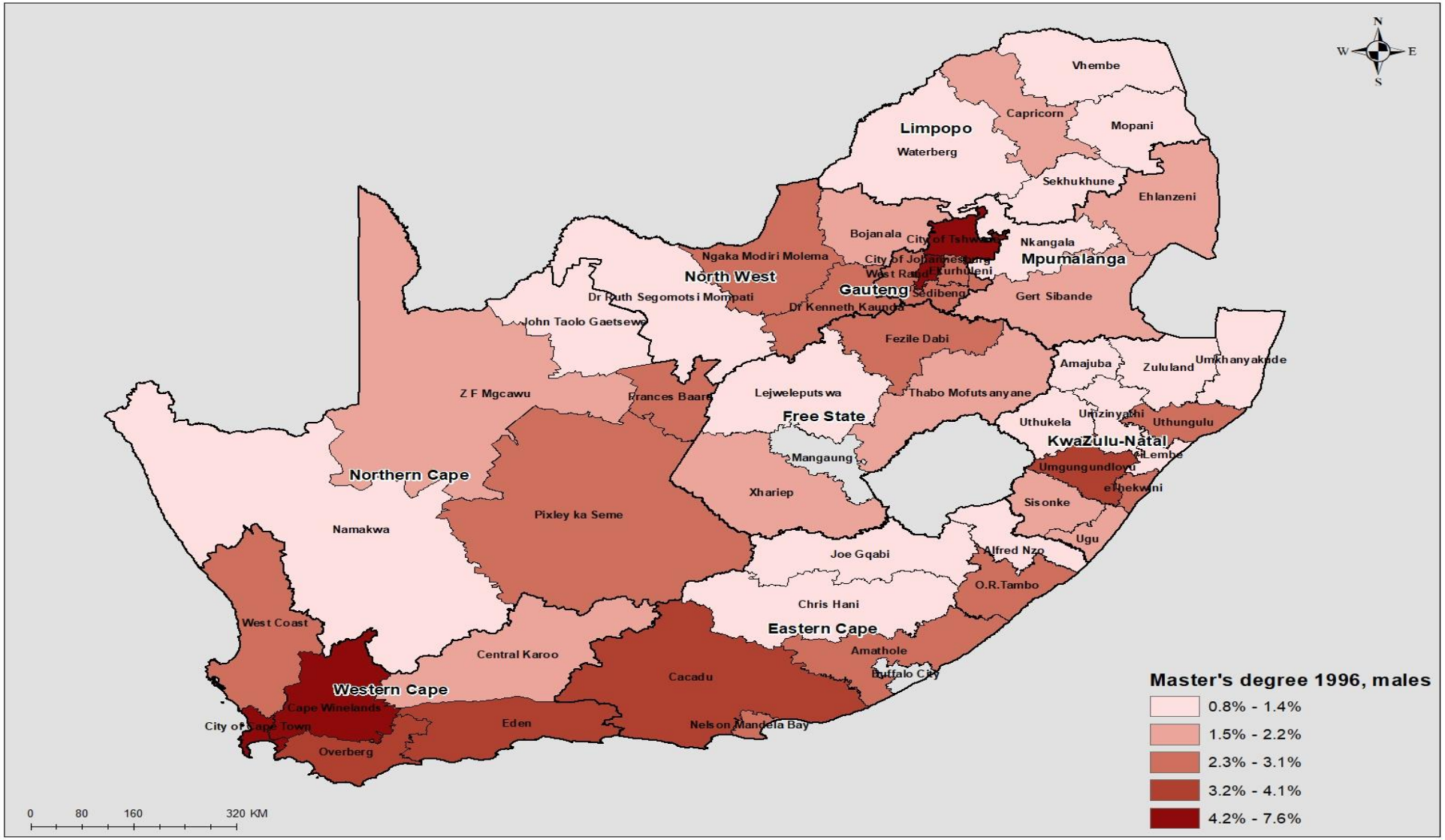
Source: Census 2022

Map A8: Female bachelor's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



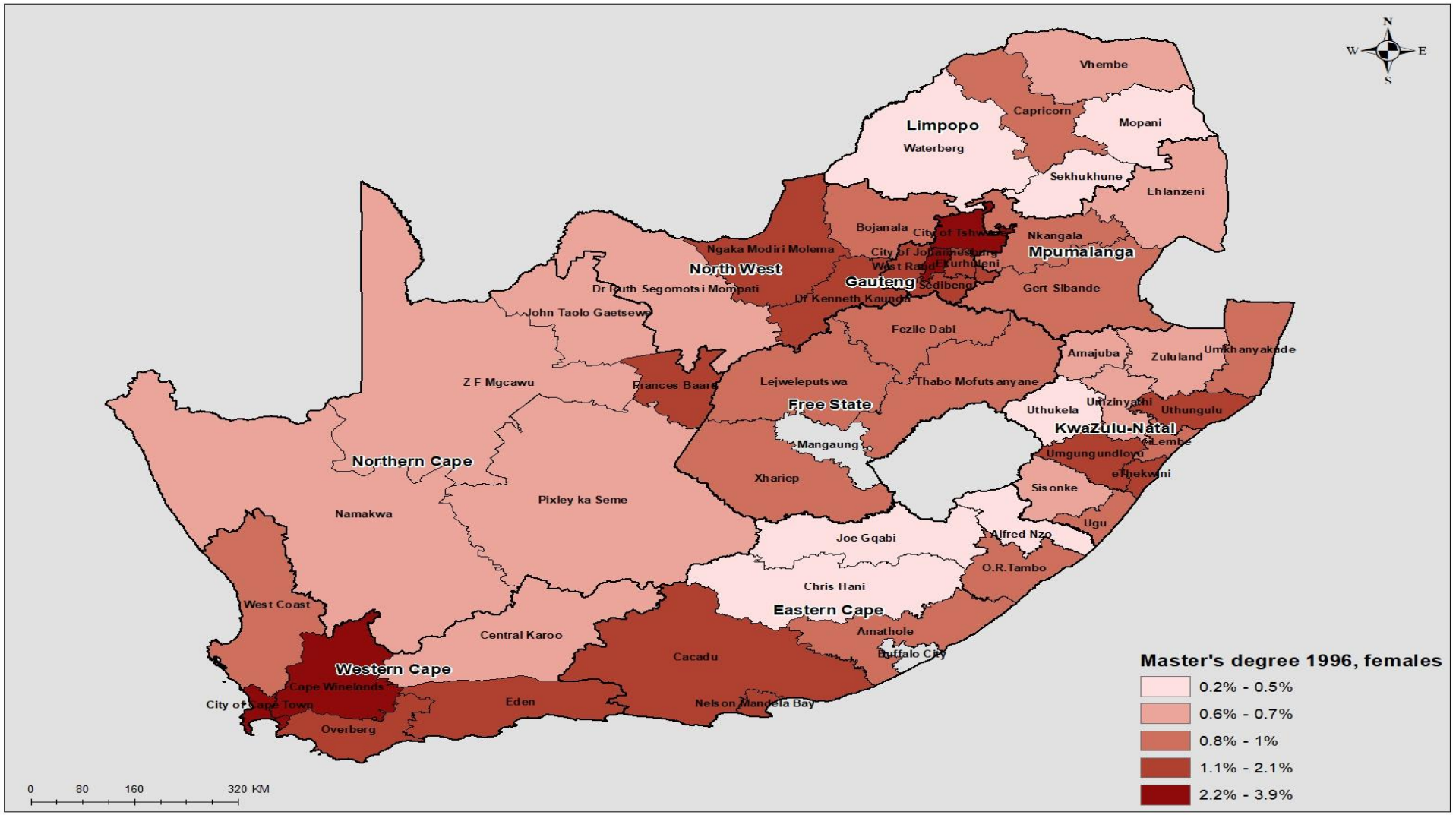
Source: Census 2022

Map A9: Male master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



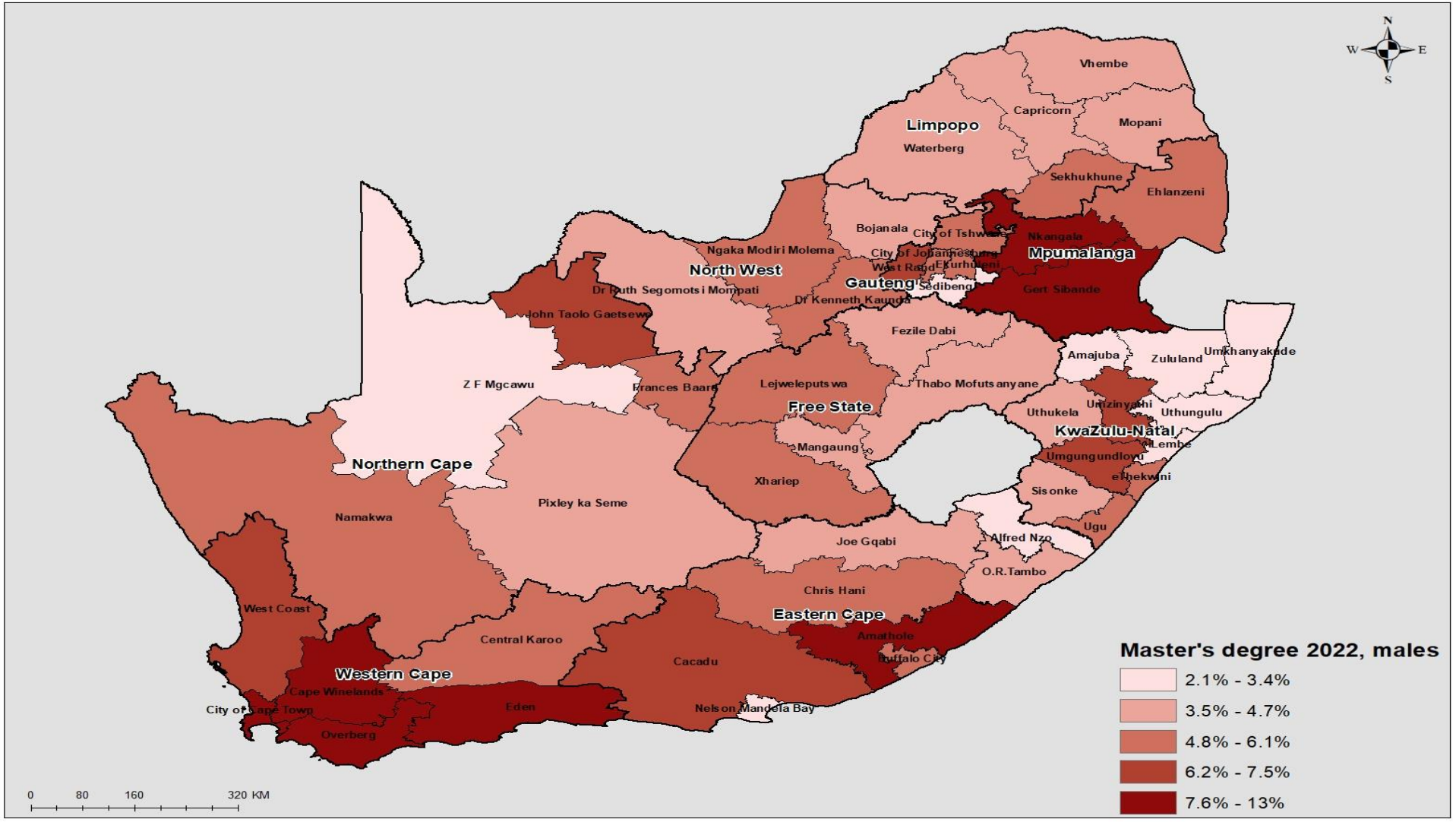
Source: Census 1996

Map A10: Female master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 1996



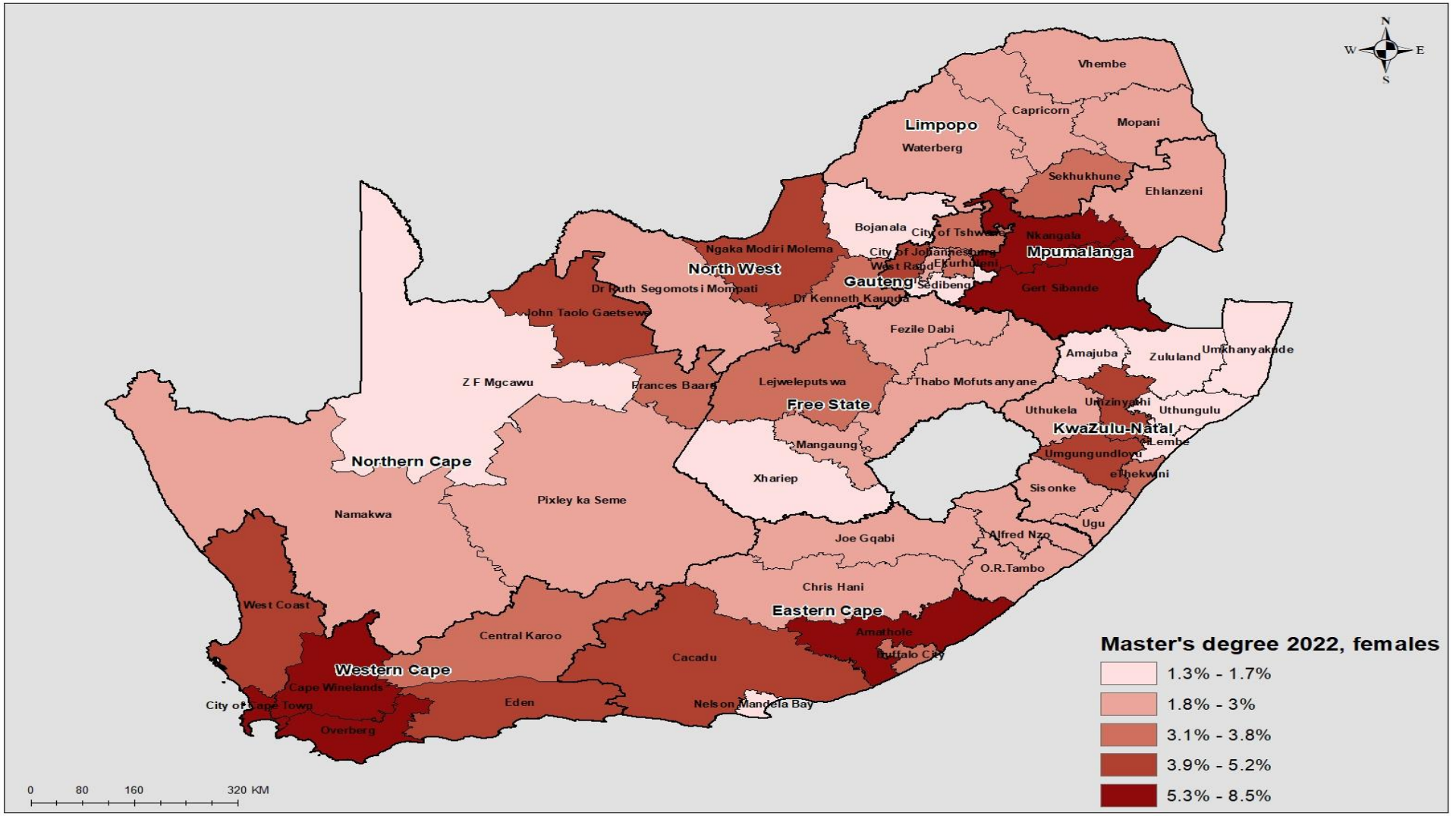
Source: Census 1996

Map A11: Male master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

Map A12: Female master's degree graduate individuals aged 25 years and older by district, Census 2022



Source: Census 2022

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