

Social profile of older persons 2011-2015 report

The elderly population account for 8,1% of South Africa's population, this is a proportional increase of 0,1 of a percentage point compared to 2011 (8,0%). Between 2001 and 2016, the proportion of older persons in the population increased by 0,8 of a percentage point from 7,3% in 2001, this is according to the Social profile of the older persons report released by Statistics South Africa today.

According to the report, between 2002 and 2016, the life expectancy of males increased from 53,6 to 59,7 years, and for females from 56,6 to 65,1 years. The percentage of persons aged 60 years and older who lived below the upper-bound poverty line decreased from 84,8% in 2009 to 80,9% in 2011. The elderly who lived below the lower-bound poverty line decreased by 7,2 percentage points from 83,4% to 76,2% between 2009 and 2011.

Between 2011 and 2015, grants and salaries/wages/commission were the main sources of income for households headed by older persons, accounting for over half of the distribution share. Over 3,1 million of persons aged 60 years and older were recipients of an old-age grant in 2015 compared to 2,7 million in 2011.

Only 22,9% of the elderly in South Africa were members of medical aid schemes in 2015. The percentage of persons aged 60 years and older who were covered by a medical aid or medical benefit scheme or other private health insurance was highest amongst elderly white (73,5%) and Indian/Asian (33,9%) persons. Only 6% of black African elderly persons and 16,6% of coloured elderly persons were members of medical aid scheme. The three health conditions most common amongst the elderly persons were high blood pressure (45,3%), diabetes (15,8%) and arthritis (13,8%).

There has been a reduction in illiteracy across all provinces. Illiteracy rates are currently the highest in Limpopo (87,0% in 1996 to 73,6% in 2016), Mpumalanga (81,5% in 1996 to 70,1% in 2016), North West (71,5% in 1996 to 55,3% in 2016) and KwaZulu-Natal (69,4% in 1996 to 55,5% in 2016).

The elderly in all provinces were more likely to be females than males (60,3% to 39,7% in 2011 and 59,9% to 40,1% in 2016). Elderly-headed households felt less safe in 2015/16 when walking around in their areas at night or during the day than in 2011. The percentage of elderly-headed households who felt safe at night decreased by 6,9 percentage points during the reference period and during the day by 0,6 percentage points.

The percentage of elderly persons occupying formal dwellings increased by 3,9 percentage points between 2011 and 2016 from 83,1% to 87,0%. Between 2011 and 2015, the percentage of older persons who had access to basic services increased across all population groups. However, black Africans were noticeably trailing behind all other population groups for both 2011 and 2015. Nationally, between 2001 and 2016, the ageing index increased from 23 to 27, re-confirming that the South African population is progressively ageing. Provinces with the highest ageing index in 2016 are Western Cape (36), Gauteng (35) and Northern Cape (34), indicating that these provinces had higher proportions of older persons when compared to all other provinces.

<http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=9698>