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This article is based on the *State of the Population in the Eastern Cape Report*, written by the HSRC and the Africa Strategic Research Corporation on behalf of the Department of Social Development in the Eastern Cape province.

## The people matter: POVERTY, POPULATION DYNAMICS and POLICY

Fifteen years after apartheid, the Eastern Cape - with an estimated population of 6.74 million in 2010 with 87.6% black Africans - is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa and has an extremely high level of income disparity (Gini coefficient: 0.70). Monde Makiwane and Dan Chimere-Dan recommend that demographic profiles be used to increase the impact of policies aimed at development and poverty reduction in the province.

The Eastern Cape's share of the national population dropped from 15.5% in 1996 to 13.5% in 2010, mainly because of complex changes in fertility, mortality and migration.

This study, *State of the Population in the Eastern Cape Report*, conducted by the HSRC, provides a general description of the region's basic demographic characteristics during the first half of 2010, and highlights issues in population dynamics that are relevant to the development and implementation of policies aimed at fighting poverty in the province.

### BACKGROUND

The Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa and a historical understanding of how successive colonial and apartheid authorities related to this region provides useful insights into the contemporary socio-economic outcomes of the region. Of particular importance is the practice of labour reserve, which started in the early stages of colonial rule but was gradually institutionalised in the apartheid era when the Nationalist Party assumed power. Early in its administration of the area, the colonial authorities set aside large parts of the Eastern Cape as a labour reserve that was indirectly ruled by white magistrates and traditional authorities. These trends which began centuries ago continue to impact on population dynamics in the Eastern Cape with a self-perpetuating cycle of migration due to poor economic opportunities which further distort the population dynamics leading to further out-migration.

## Improving development through changing demographic imbalances

Three recommendations emerged from this research, which feed into existing government development strategy and the programmes of various departments, and will positively impact on the fight against poverty in the province.

- 1. Actively monitor demographic trends in the province**

The demographic trends in the province should be actively monitored by national and provincial departments to integrate these effectively into planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes, especially changes in age and sex distribution of the population, fertility, marriage, childbearing patterns, levels and age patterns of mortality and the volume and age patterns of internal migration.
- 2. Integrate population factors into development plans and programmes**

Basic population indicators and complex demographic dynamics should be integrated into all levels and stages of development activities in the province. This should involve an explicit incorporation of prevailing and projected demographic patterns and trends into the planning and implementation of development programmes.
- 3. Build technical capacity for planning with population information**

Provincial departments should train staff in the technical understanding and effective in-house uses of demographic information for efficient planning and delivery of services at the local level. Part of the technical capacity needed in every department is the skill to produce (where necessary), analyse and apply demographic information in ways that guide programmes and delivery of services at the lowest local levels in the province.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE EASTERN CAPE SKEWED BY MIGRATION

The Eastern Cape is the third most populous province in South Africa, after Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Youth comprise a sizeable portion of the population, with children aged 0-4 and 5-14 accounting for 10.6% and 25%, respectively, and young people aged 19-24 accounting for a further 21.4% of the population. Data from 2007 indicate that adults in the 15-64 age group comprised 57.4% of the total provincial population. The propensity for a sizeable growth in the youth population is tempered by significant out-migration of those less than 35 years of age. Adults aged 65 years or older comprised only 7.0% of the population.

Women outnumber men in the province and comprise 53% of the provincial population in 2007. The male to female ratio in 2007 declined with age (69:100 for those aged 50-54 and 49:100 for those 70 years or older).

#### Sex ratio imbalances

This sex ratio imbalance is the combined effect of sex-selective patterns of migration, especially in active working ages, and gender differences in mortality rates in the older ages. The Eastern Cape suffers more out-migration than any other province, particularly among young people escaping from crippling poverty to search for better livelihoods elsewhere. Most migrants are men in their work ages between 25-39 years. They move from the province to the more economically advanced provinces and to metropolitan parts of the country.

As a result of this sex-selective migration, the Eastern Cape has a large proportion of females compared to more affluent provinces (such as Gauteng and the Western Cape). This is in line with the general trend in South Africa where poorer provinces have a higher proportion of women.

These patterns of out-migration have negatively affected social development and family and social relations and have resulted in a higher than average proportion of the population who are either unable to work (older persons, children) or whose work is not remunerated (women whose main work is childbearing, caregiving, etc.). As such, the socio-economic development of the province is unlikely to benefit from its well-educated and entrepreneurial citizens who migrate to other parts of the country. The resulting burden of heavy economic dependency contributes to the disorganisation of families and the breakdown of the social fabric of the provincial population.

#### Fertility

Fertility rates are declining and differences follow predictable differences in socio-economic status. The prevalence of marriage among women in the reproductive ages of 15-49 has declined since 1996 and this has affected childbearing rates. In 2007, only 30.2% of all people aged 15 years or older were married.

#### Health and mortality

The province lags behind other parts of the country in a number of critical and objective

health indicators. Although the rates of infant mortality have declined from 65 per thousand in 1996 to an estimated level of 57 per thousand in 2010 and child mortality has slightly declined from 88 per thousand in 1996 to a projected 86 per thousand in 2010, they remain among the highest in the country.

#### Education

There have been significant improvements in the educational profile of the provincial population, especially in the areas of literacy and female school attendance. However, major challenges are the matric pass rate, access to a good quality infrastructure for learning, and better models of human capital development.

#### Environmental constraints on human development

The systematic destruction of the rural economy in the past has resulted in the poor performance of subsistence agriculture. In both rural and urban areas of the province a significant percentage of the provincial population lacks basic amenities and services that facilitate sustainable use of natural resources and relationship with the ecosystem. Given this context, global environmental concerns do not resonate with families trapped in poverty and deprivation.

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