



SOUTH AFRICAN PROVINCIAL BASELINE SUMMARIES

February 2023



GAUTENG

Gauteng is one of the nine provinces of South Africa, located in the north-eastern part of South Africa. Bordered to the north by Limpopo, Mpumalanga to the east, and Free state to the south, it is the smallest province by land area, representing 1.5% of the country's size. Although the smallest, it holds over a quarter of South Africa's population, approximately 16.1 million¹. Black people make up three-fourths of the people, and Whites, about one-fifth. It is highly urbanised and contains the country's largest city, Johannesburg, its administrative city, Pretoria, and more affluent cities like Sandton, Midrand, and Ekurhuleni, making it an economic and financial hub. Also located in Gauteng are informal settlements and townships like Soweto, Thembisa, Katlehong, and Alexander. Several languages are spoken in the province, including Zulu, Sotho, English, and Afrikaans².

Gauteng boasts the highest number of hospitals, care professionals, and hospital beds. However, people access healthcare through the public system due to the high cost of private healthcare³. The public healthcare system in the province of Gauteng is poorly managed and understaffed, and in recent years, the covid-19 pandemic has revealed the worsening of healthcare services and gaps⁴.

As of June 2022, Edholm et al. reported that the densely populated region had registered over one million cases of covid-19. The rapid spread of the virus led to lockdowns, temporary closures of schools, restricted mobility, and bans on alcohol to help reduce the spread of the virus. From March 2021, however, the province began to vaccinate healthcare workers and people over sixty⁵. While vaccinations presented a well-established method for controlling the spread and transmission of the virus, vaccine hesitancy within communities posed a threat to these vaccinations. In Gauteng, barriers to covid-19 vaccination included safety concerns. Most communities were concerned over the expiry of the vaccines. These people had heard that the first batch of Johnson and Johnson had expired and, thus, expressed misgivings about the safety of the available vaccines. Also, vaccine hesitancy stemmed from insecurities about the biochemical composition of the vaccines. People expressed reservations over the vaccines' quick and fast-paced development over a short period. They compared the speedy manufacture of covid-19 vaccines to the slow growth of HIV vaccines. In addition, Gauteng communities feared the side effects or efficacy of the vaccines⁶.

Motivations to vaccinate included ensuring easy accessibility to vaccination sites. In Gauteng, rapid covid vaccinations were enabled through vaccination campaigns from partners to urge the public to vaccinate. In 2022, the Transport Education Training Authority, in collaboration with the Gauteng Provincial Government, established the Road to Community Immunity campaign to encourage responsible road use and vaccinations. These campaigns ensured easy access to sites to encourage those not vaccinated, those partially vaccinated and those who needed boosters to go to vaccination sites and take the jab⁷. The province also implemented a mobile vaccination drive to assist people in getting vaccinated.

- 1 Mid-year population estimates" (PDF). Statistics South Africa. 2019. Retrieved 11 April 2019.
- 2 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2023. Gauteng. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gauteng>
- 3 Rensburg, R. (2021, July 6). *Healthcare in South Africa: how inequity is contributing to inefficiency*. The Conversation. <http://>
- 4 Mkhize, S.P., Parker, A., & Kadt, J. 2021. Gauteng health and wellbeing survey highlights the plight of women and black Africans.
- 5 Edholm, C. J., Levy, B., Spence, L., Agosto, F. B., Chirove, F., Chukwu, C. W., Goldsman, D., Kgosimore, M., Maposa, I., Jane White, K. A., & Lenhart, S. (2022). A vaccination model for COVID-19 in Gauteng, South Africa. *Infectious Disease Modelling*, 7(3), 333–345.
- 6 Myburgh, N., Mulaudzi, M., Tshabalala, G., Beta, N., Gutu, K., Vermaak, S., Lau, C., Hill, C., Stanberry, L., James, W. and Madhi,
- 7 South African Government. 2022. Gauteng Provincial Government and Transport Education Training Authority (TETA) launch the Road to Community Immunity campaign. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/gauteng-provincial-government-and-transport-education-training-authority-teta-launch-road>

MPUMALANGA

Mpumalanga lies in eastern South Africa and has a land surface area of 78,370 square km, representing 6.4% of South Africa's total land area. Located on the Crocodile River, the city lies about 110 km (68 mi) by road west of the Mozambique border, 330 km (210 mi) east of Johannesburg and 82 km (51 mi) north of the Eswatini border. The population is just over three million people representing 7.3% of the entire country's population, with its capital, Mbombela⁸, also known as Nelspruit.

The Mpumalanga Department of Health's Provincial Offices is located at Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. The Mpumalanga Department of Health is plagued by many challenges ranging from water shortages, poor medicine distribution, robberies,⁹ and assaults, putting health workers at risk. These health centres presented structural challenges in the distribution of covid-19 vaccines in Mpumalanga. For example, due to the inadequate health staff in health facilities, people had to wait in long queues to get vaccinated. Most available health centres needed more capacity to receive, register, and address people needing covid-19 vaccination¹⁰. Also, it is essential to mention that in Mpumalanga, covid-19 vaccinations have remained low due to misinformation and rumours about the vaccine's safety. Most people do not believe in the vaccine's efficacy in curing the disease. In addition, vaccinations have been low because of disinformation. Social media anti-covid-19 narratives have led to inaccurate information concerning vaccines. While anti-vaccine sentiments have spread widely, information and education regarding vaccines have remained low. People are unaware of their vaccination eligibility, allowing for rumours and misinformation to swell, threatening rapid vaccination¹¹ in the province.

Measures to increase confluence in covid-19 vaccinations in Mpumalanga have been through the provincial government's vaccination campaign with traditional leaders to mobilise communities to vaccinate. For example, in Gert Sibande District, the second among the three districts in Mpumalanga with the lowest number of unvaccinated people, a campaign in December 2021 received a significant boost when traditional leaders joined health practitioners to show their commitment to the cause of protecting communities against the virus through their participation in door-to-door visits¹². Further, the Vooma Vaccination Weekend was a campaign started in 2021 to mobilise citizens to vaccinate against the covid-19 infection¹³. By making mobile health services available and healthcare workers accessible, vaccinations were noted to have increased, enabling communities to get vaccinated.

8 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. Mpumalanga. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mpumalanga>

9 Lefafa, N.2022. Mpumalanga healthcare plagued by water shortages and poor security that threatens worker safety. Daily Maverick. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-04-06-mpumalanga-healthcare-plagued-by-water-shortages-and-poor-security-that-threatens-worker-safety/>

10 Mpumalanga COVID-19 Vaccination Roll-Out Programme. 2021. Mpumalanga Province Republic of South Africa.

11 Kahn, K., Pettifor, A., Mataboge, P., Kelly, N.K., Mashinini, D.P., Nair, H., Campbell, H., Cohen, C., Gómez-Olivé, F.X. and Tollman, S., 2022. COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in rural South Africa: Deepening understanding to increase uptake and access. Journal of Global Health, 12.

12 South African Government. 2021. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/mpumalanga-provincial-government-progress-its-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-12>

13 Mpumalanga Provincial Government. 2021. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TO HOST 3RD VOOMA VACCINATION WEEKEND CAMPAIGN.

LIMPOPO

Limpopo is in the northernmost part of South Africa. It is named after the Limpopo River, which forms the province's western and northern borders. Its capital is Polokwane, and its provincial legislature is situated in Lebowakgomo. The area comprises three ethnic groups, the Venda, Pedi People, and Tsonga. The population of Limpopo consists of rural Black people and Whites who speak Afrikaans¹⁴. Black residents in Limpopo live in rural settings, earning a living through subsistence farming and migrant labour¹⁵. According to Statistics South Africa, Limpopo has the highest poverty rate, with 78.9% living below the poverty line¹⁶.

The public health system caters to most residents in Limpopo. It faces many challenges, such as shortage of medicine, dilapidated infrastructure, and long waiting queues¹⁷. Covid-19 cases in Limpopo have increased steadily. Although vaccine coverage has been high in Limpopo, it could be faster¹⁸. The slow pace of covid-19 vaccinations has been influenced by limited access to vaccination sites, religion- high stereotypes to vaccine have come from non-Christians in Limpopo, mistrust in the vaccine, conspiracy theories, unknown side effects the vaccines, and lack of education on the vaccines.¹⁹

To increase the uptake of vaccinations, there has been decentralised rollout at grassroots areas. Provincial health authorities deployed health professional to rural communities to increase uptake. These vaccinations by mobile health teams were administered in conjunction with other services like HIV screening, TB testing, and Cervical cancer screening. In Westfalia Fruit Estate, on the outskirts of Tzaneen, north-west of Limpopo, mobile health services were deployed to make vaccines accessible to members of the public. Makeshift tents were built on lawns to give everyone easy access.

14 "Limpopo Province - An Overview". dolimpopo.com. Archived from the original on 1 February 2017. Retrieved 20 January 2017

15 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. Limpopo. Britannica

16 Africa Health. 2020. Healthcare Market Insights for South Africa

17 Mukwevho, N. 2021. Limpopo public health facilities: Report paints grim picture. Health E-News.

18 Limpopo expands Coronavirus COVID-19 vaccination to primary health care facilities. 2021. South African Government.

<https://www.gov.za/speeches/limpopo-expands-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-primary-health-care-facilities-17-sep-2021>.

19 Matlala, S. F., Tshitangano, T. G., Setati, M. E., Ramalivhana, N. J., & Mphekgwana, P. M. (2022). Determinants of the Limpopo Province of South Africa's Response to COVID-19: A Mixed Methods Protocol to Analyze and Share Lessons Learned. *Healthcare (Basel, Switzerland)*, 10(5), 926. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare10050926>

