

did you know?

This factsheet is a summary of the synthesis report which highlights briefly some of the key findings that emanated from the series of thematic papers that were commissioned by the Department of Social Development in 2009 to Human Science Research Council (HSRC) to produce in order to assist with the background and thinking about the implication of South Africa's current demographic transition¹ with reference in particular to implications of the growing youth population to South Africa.

In order to investigate the matter five thematic issues were identified, which could give a picture on the current state of young people and the importance of deliberate policies to ensure that the country is indeed able to make use of its youth bulge as an opportunity. The thematic papers were as follows:

- The Youth Population of South Africa: A Demographic Perspective by Makiwane and Chimere-Dan (2009);
- Is the Health Status of South African Youth Improving? by Chimere-Dan and Makiwane (2009);
- Trends in the Educational Attainment of South African Youth by Sheppard (2009);
- The Post-Apartheid Youth Generations: Social Dynamics, Social Cohesion by Potgieter-Gqubule and Ngcobo (2009);
- Youth Labour Market Policy in South Africa – Scope and Challenges by Altman and Potgieter-Gqubule (2009)

The aim for synthesization of these reports was to:

1. Provide a foundation for understanding the demographic dividend;
2. Positioning the demographic dividend in South Africa and various possibilities that it presents;
3. Understanding the context of post apartheid generations of youth;
4. Outline aspects of the current policy context and major issues which will influence how the South African demographic transition will unfold over the next decade and years to follow and;
5. Stimulate discussion and debate and translate these dialogues into guided action for a targeted advocacy and policy audience.

Brief Background of the Demographic Dividend

The phenomenon of large youth cohorts population coupled with declining fertility is referred to as a 'youth bulge', and can either be regarded as an opportunity or a threat. A key requirement for any country to make use of the current demographic transition is

to significantly broaden and deepen opportunities for young people to develop their human capital and to participate in the economy. If not, the growing youth populations can contribute to high unemployment and increase social instability.

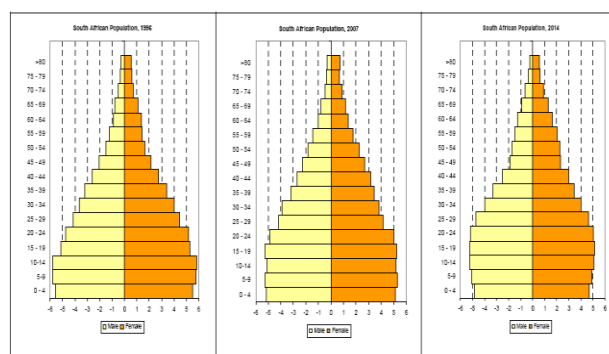
Literature on the demographic dividend has identified three overarching mechanisms through which the dividend can be 'realized' or 'reaped'. These are highlighted as labour supply, savings and human capital (Ross, 2004: 3).

The case of demographic dividend in South Africa

According to Statistics South Africa 2011 mid year population estimates, the population of South Africa is estimated to be 50, 59 million¹. Population under 15 is estimated to make up one-third (31.3%) of the total population according 2011 mid year population estimates and approximately 7.7% is 60 years and older². Life expectancy² for males is 54.9 years and 59.1 years for females. Studies are indicating that population trends suggest that South Africa fertility rate is declining see Caldwell and Caldwell (1993);³ Moultrie and Timaeus (2003)⁴; Moultrie and Dorrington (2004)⁵ and Udjo (2005)⁶. Fertility decline is believed to have taken place since in the 1960s it is now estimated to be 2.35⁷ children per woman -the lowest in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

This demographic situation in South Africa has resulted into the emergence of a "youth bulge" which is expected to be in existence for the next decade, see figure 1 below which highlights that the youth population (i.e. individuals aged 14-35 years of age) will form an increasing proportion of the South African population as fertility rates continue to decline and a slight increase for female population above 64 years.

Figure 1: Comparison of South African Population Pyramids for 1996, 2007 and 2014.⁸



If the scenario is projected to the year 2015 see figure 2 below, the case for the dividend in South Africa becomes even more apparent and credible. The affected age groups (i.e. especially younger economically active groups) reflected in the pyramid in **Figure 2** widen significantly. The proportion of older age groups increases whereas younger populations (0-4 years and 10-14 years) decrease. A possible implication caused by this is the

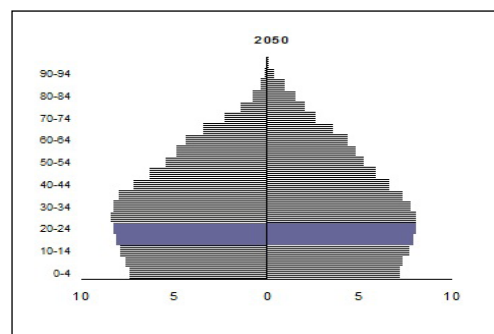
¹ Demographic transition refers to fall in the birth rate and the gradual decline in death rates over time in a country.

² See Census 1996, Census 2001 and 2007 Community Survey to have an overview about LE in South Africa over the past few years.

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increase in the age dependency ratio and its negative effect on per capita production³.

Figure 2: Projected Future Trends in the Population Pyramid – 2050



Source: Makiwane and Chimire-Dan (2009:22)

According to statistics South Africa the youth population (14-35) is estimated to be around 39 %⁹. Comparatively, this slice of the population has been growing at a faster rate when compared to the national annual growth rate. From a demographic perspective this is a key pull factor in establishing the case for the dividend.

Policy implications and recommendations

The crucial question that is posed to policy makers and development planners at this juncture is to what extent is South Africa's current policy and planning context prepared and able to cater for the varied social and economic expectations of the growing number of young South African men and women in the decades to come?

Given the current demographic transition; young South Africans need to be educated and healthy in order to contribute to economic growth and development in the country. If their needs are not catered and are not addressed; their sheer of a large number within the population have the potential to create social and political upheaval.

There is a need for fresh approaches to understanding the youth component of the South African population in the context of fundamental demographic changes and prevailing socioeconomic transitions.

Keep the youth population healthy, primarily as a basic human right, and in order for them to contribute to national economic growth and human development in the longer term.

An active labour market policy focus on youth is needed, though it will not increase aggregate jobs per se, but will better prepare young people to make use of opportunities as the economy picks up.

Current patterns and trends in the youth population may act as a catalyst for gains in socio-economic growth and human

development if they are provided with adequate social services in order to develop their skill and meet their basic development expectations.

Large youth population could create more pressure for the provision of social, educational and health infrastructure and other social services if the youth demography is not properly integrated into development plans and implementation at national, provincial and local levels.

Failure to cater for the needs of the youth with each year passing continue to add new generations of low-skilled workers to the labour force, condemning emerging youths to the long-term unemployed and thus perpetuating intergenerational poverty.

REFERENCES:

¹ Statistics South Africa., (2011). "Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011". Statistical Release P03022011. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria.

² Statistics South Africa., (2011). "Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011". Statistical Release P03022011. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria.

³ Caldwell, J.C., and Caldwell, P., (1993). "The South African Fertility Decline" *Population and Development Review*. Vol 19 (2), pp. 225-262.

⁴ Moultrie, T.A., and Timaus, I.M., (2003). "The South African Fertility Decline: Evidence from Two Censuses and a Demographic and Health Survey" *Population Studies*, Vol 57 (3), pp. 265-283.

⁵ Moultrie, T. A., and Dorrington, R., (2004). "Estimation of Fertility from the 2001 South African Census Data" CARE Monograph No 9, Centre for Actuarial Research: University of Cape Town.

⁶ Udjo, E.O., (2005). "Fertility Levels, Differentials and Trends" in Zuberi, Sibanda and Udjo (eds). *The Demography of South Africa*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

⁷ Statistics South Africa., (2011). "Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011". Statistical Release P03022011. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria.

⁸ Census 1996, Community Survey 2007, and Unpublished Statistics South Africa Projections 2008-2014.

⁹ Statistics South Africa., (2011). "Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011". Statistical Release P03022011. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria.

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³ Refer to the Synthesis report and the paper by Makiwane and Chimire-Dan 2009 for detailed discussion.