

# **SOME ASPECTS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA 1994-2017**

**BY**

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## **SUMMARY**

The World Bank recognises the potential of youth to become either a trigger for or a hindrance to economic and social development. The South African Government recognizes the problems facing the youths in South Africa. The Reconstruction and Development Programme therefore stressed that policy should be aimed at empowering the youths to enable them to reach their full potential. This study examined the progress made during the period 1994 - 2017 in the advancement of young people in the country in education and skills development, economic participation, and health utilising census and survey data as well as death registration records.

The results indicate that although the percentage of the youth population with no schooling has declined over the years, the percentage with at least a university degree qualification has remained low since 1996 – less than 5% in 2016. Two sobering concerns stood out from the analysis:(1) high endemic unemployment among the youths; (2) high contribution of the youths to total assault deaths in the country as well increasing trend in assault deaths among the youths. Current employment programmes such as the Expanded Public Works, Community Work, Entrepreneurship programmes appear to be ineffective in reducing endemic unemployment among the youths. Aside job creation and intensification of current employment programmes, radical strategies that would enable the youths attain high levels of educational qualifications need to be implemented to make the youths more employable in the private and public sectors. Regarding assault deaths, the factors promoting the high contribution and rising trend among the youths need in-depth investigation so that appropriate intervention strategies can be implemented to mitigate these.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Importance of Youth in Development**

Bessant (2004) writing in the context of the western world noted that enhanced youth participation is part of a discourse about modern citizenship to the extent that governments routinely and publicly declare their commitment to consultation and improving young people's opportunities to have real say and real choices about policies and services that directly affect them. Also, that the official message is that youth participation enhances citizenship while tackling a range of social problems. Furthermore, that although the official message is not a new idea, the notion of participation and application to youth policy is often not critically appraised. According to Epstein (2009) our understanding of youth is complicated.

Recognising the importance of youth participation in development, Chaaban (2009) noted that the interest of the United Nations in issues related to youth, dates to 1965 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideal of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between People. According to Chaaban (2009), the World Bank recognises the potential of youth to become either a trigger for or a hindrance to economic and social development, and as such has elevated its commitment to questions of youth development and needs. Despite the recognition of the importance of youth in development, Chaaban has pointed out that the increasing number of young people in the developing world has been commonly associated with increased violence and political unrest around the world. The importance of youth analysis in development in South Africa therefore needs to be contextualized in the global context.

The 1998 white paper on population policy for South Africa's noted among others, that the more youthful the population, the greater the proportion of the nation's resources that will have to be invested in the provision of services such education, health, thereby reducing the resources available for stimulating economic growth in the short term (Ministry for Welfare and Population Development 1998). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) noted that "The problems facing the youth are well known. If we are to develop our human resources potential, then special attention must be paid to the youth. Our human resource

policy should be aimed at reversing youth marginalization, empowering youth, and allowing them to reach their full potential. Programmes of training, education and job creation will enable our youth to play a full role in the reconstruction and development of our society". (RDP cited in O'Malley (1994)). There is no specific mention of youth in South Africa's Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy. This is not surprising as GEAR was a macroeconomic strategy (Department of Finance undated). The National Development Plan (NDP) specifically states: "South Africa must find ways to urgently reduce alarming levels of unemployment and to provide young people with broader opportunities" (National Planning Commission undated). The NDP further states that "South Africa has an urbanizing, youthful population. This presents an opportunity to boost economic growth, increase employment and reduce poverty". (National Planning Commission undated).

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study therefore was to examine progress made during the period 1994 - 2017 in the advancement of young people in three development domains namely: (1) education and skills development; (2) economic participation; (3) Health. To provide a context, the demographic profile of youths in South Africa was first examined. The above mentioned three domains are among the five development domains considered as key to youth development by the Government of South Africa (Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Department, undated), the other two domains being social cohesion and nation building. The latter two domains are beyond the scope of the study as these do not fall within the research interest of this author.

### **DATA AND LIMITATIONS**

The data utilized for this study were primarily South Africa's post-apartheid censuses namely the 1996, 2001 and 2011 censuses, large scale surveys including the 2016 Community Surveys (CS) conducted by Statistics South Africa as well death registration data. Although there were two large scale surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa prior to 1996 namely the 1994 and 1995 October Household Surveys, these were not be utilized in the present review. This is because the weighting of the data from these two surveys are questionable for the following reasons. The last census that covered the whole of South Africa was that of 1970.

All other censuses after 1970 and prior to that of 1996 were fragmentary. Estimates of the size of the population after 1970 until 1996 were therefore based on models from different agencies including the then Central Statistical Service. The estimates often differed. In view of this, the weighting of the 1994 and 1995 October Household Surveys were based on a consensus agreement between the different agencies about South Africa's population size that had been produced by the different agencies i.e. an average of the different estimates. Comparing 1994 and 1995 levels of indicators on youth with post 1995 levels of indicators could therefore be misleading since the base population pre-1996 and post-1996 were estimated differently.

This does not imply that the post-apartheid censuses do not have limitations. For example, Udjo (2014) observed that estimating demographic parameters from the 2011 South Africa census poses a challenge due to quality issues. Similar challenges are encountered when estimating certain indicators from the 2016 Community Survey (2016 CS) data.

A recurring issue in South Africa's population censuses and surveys is the accuracy of the reported age distributions. See for example Dorrington (1999), Phillips et al (1999), Sadie (1999), Shell (1999). This is of relevance when defining the youth population in terms of age. Regarding death registration data, among the major limitations in using such data are coverage of registration and misclassification of cause of death. For example, AIDS and Tuberculosis related deaths for several reasons may be classified as deaths due to other causes. The extent of misclassifications in causes of death data is often difficult to firmly establish. This is of relevance in the health section in this study. Regarding coverage, the commonest form is incomplete registration of deaths or the registration system may not cover the entire country, especially in the rural parts. In the context of South Africa, Groenwald et al. (2005) estimated coverage of vital registration to be over 90%. Thus, vital registration coverage though high, is incomplete in South. These limitations have implications for the accuracy of the levels of indicators presented in this study. Consequently, the levels of indicators presented in this section should be interpreted as indicative.

## **METHODS**

### **Defining Youths**

Epstein (2007) has questioned the often-assumed notion that there exists a clearly demonstrable demarcations between childhood, youth, and adulthood as distinct stages of human development. While such demarcations may not exist in human development, the definition of youth for analytical purposes needs to consider such demarcations. Often, lack of consistent definition in the analysis of youths makes interpretation of figures and comparability difficult. Of critical importance in the definition of youth is that it needs to be considered alongside the definition of children in the analysis of youth development.

The National Youth Policy and the National Youth Commission define youth as any person between the age of 14 years and 35 years (South Africa Fact Sheet undated). This definition according to the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (2002), is broad as it embraces varied categories of the youths that have been exposed to different socio-political and historical experiences (Southern African Regional Poverty Network, 2000). One sees from this definition that children are included. This poses analytical issues because if this definition were used, the computations of certain indicators on youths for example, unemployment would be biased upward (if children at school are not identified as not economically active in the computation). At another extreme is the definition employed by UNESCO which defines youths as “those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years without prejudice to other definitions by member states” (UNESCO Undated). This definition is restrictive and has some of the pitfalls noted above. The school leaving age in South Africa is about 17 or 18 years and below this age, many persons would not be expected to be in employment. It would therefore be inappropriate when analysing unemployment to include persons between the age of 14 years and 16 years.

Budlender (2000) has noted that South Africa’s constitution and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child define a child as someone who is under eighteen years of age. Budlender has further noted that eighteen is the age at which South Africans become eligible to vote in national, provincial and local government elections. Article G of the

constitution of the African National Congress Youth League amended and adopted in September 2015, states that “Membership of the ANCYL shall be open to all South African youth between the ages of fourteen and thirty-five who accept its policy guidelines, aims and objectives ....” (ANC Youth League 2015). Based on the above and because 34 years is a neat middle cut off point in analyzing certain demographic phenomena, it appears reasonable to use 18 years as the lower age limit and 34 years as the upper age limit in the analysis presented below. In certain demographic analysis because persons aged 18-19 years form part of the 15-19 age group, the closest upper age group to the 15-19 years (20-24 years) was used as the lower limit in such analysis.

### **The Role of Indicators**

It is an international practice to use quantitative indicators in monitoring progress in socio-economic development, see for example, Williams and Smith (2000). The use of indicators therefore formed part of the analysis presented in this study.

### **Analytical Approach**

The approach utilized in this study consisted of computing relevant indicators for a specific key development domain among persons aged 18-34 years (or closest age group) for a base year for comparison with other years. For reasons noted above, the base year for the comparison is 1996. Due to contentious issues regarding the weighting of the community surveys only rates and ratios are presented for survey data. Absolute numbers from survey data were avoided. Although there might have been improvements in youth development during the period 1994-1996, the levels of the indicators for the year 1996 largely reflect the conditions of youth that the democratic government inherited from the apartheid regime.

To avoid random fluctuations in the rates and ratios, the indicators were computed for the census years 1996, 2001, 2011 as well as for large-scale Community or General Household Survey for 2016. Regarding the health aspect that focused on mortality from communicable diseases and from intentional injuries of assault, the analysis was based on the causes of death data. Due to doubts about the quality of the causes of death data prior to 2000, the base period for the analysis in this aspect was 2000 and for five-year intervals and the year

2017 (the year of the most current data on death registration) to avoid fluctuations and to make interpretation of the results easier.

Since age structure in a population changes with time, it is necessary to take this into consideration when comparing crude death rates due to specific causes from one period to another. The conventional way of doing this, is by means of direct or indirect standardization. Indirect standardization was computed to examine progress in mortality due to certain causes among the youths. Indirect standardization entails: (1) defining a standard set of rates for specific causes of death; (2) computing expected numbers of cases of deaths based on the standard rates; (3) computing standardized mortality ratios (SMR); (4) computing age standardized crude rates (Udjo, 2017). The age groupings used were the five-year youth age groups 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34.

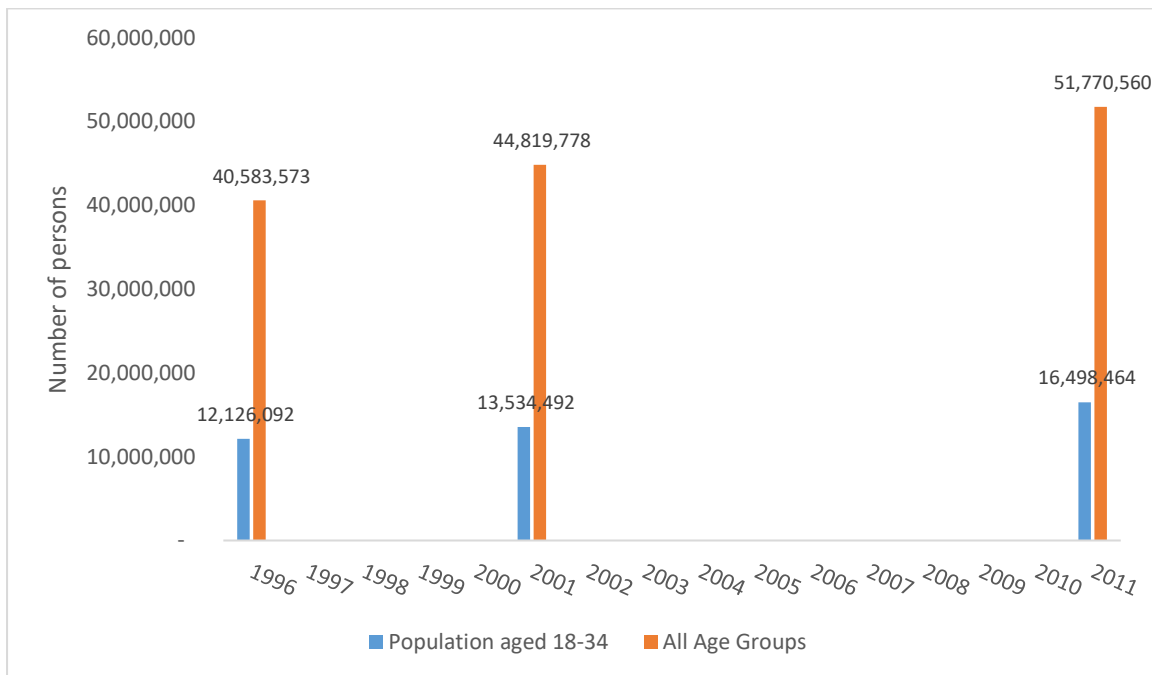
## **RESULTS**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE YOUTH POPULATION**

#### **Size and Growth of the Youth Population**

The size of a population or specific age group reflects past levels of fertility, mortality, and net migration. Figures extracted from South Africa's post-apartheid censuses suggest that the absolute number of persons aged 18-34 years increased from 12.1 million in 1996 to 16.5 million in 2011 (see Figure 1.). This age group constituted about 29.9% and 31.9% of the total population of South Africa in 1996 and 2011, respectively. The increase in the absolute number imply a growth rate of about 2.2% per annum during the period 1996 to 2001 and 2.0% per annum during the period 2001 and 2011. In comparison, the overall growth rate in the national population was about 2.0% per annum during the period 1996 to 2001 and 1.4% per annum during the period 2001 and 2011.

**Figure 1: Size of the Population aged 18-34 years and all Age Groups, South Africa**



Sources: Extracted from 1996, 2001, 2011 South African censuses by this author

Statistics South Africa's mid-year estimates provide break down of its estimated population by five-year age group, consequently, does not provide figures for the 18-19 age group. In a Bureau of Market Research Study, Udjo (2018) estimated the population of the 18-34 age group to be 16.7 million in 2018. If the growth rate during the period 2001 and 2011 noted above continued, the size of the population aged 18-34 could be expected to double after every 35 years i.e. by 2046 the population aged 18-34 in South Africa could possibly reach 33 million.

### **Sex Composition**

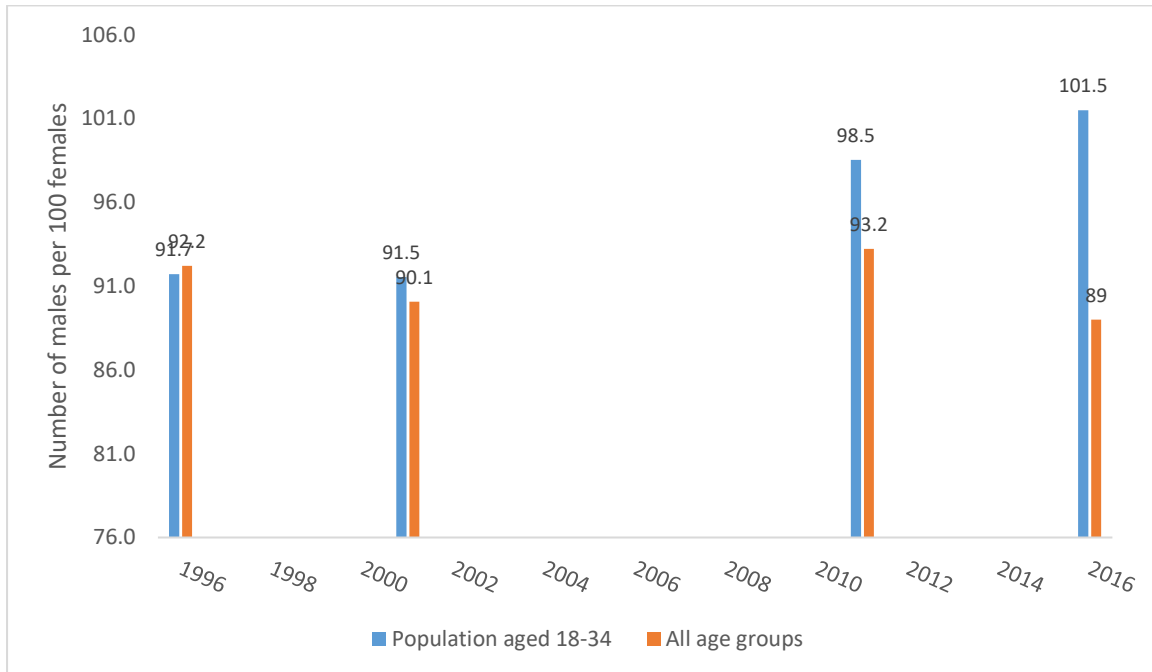
The sex composition of a population is measured by computing the sex ratio conventionally defined as the number of males per 100 females. This can be computed for specific age groups (age specific sex ratios) or for the entire population (overall sex ratio). Overall sex ratios in human populations usually range between 95 and 98. One of the highly controversial issues in South Africa's census is the overall sex ratio of the population. Although in human populations, there is usually excess females over males overall resulting in the range of sex ratios indicated above (except in some Muslim countries and parts of Asia where it is over



100), the indications are that males were generally under reported in South Africa's censuses (see Shell 1999, Udjo 2005) hence the seemingly low sex ratios observed in post-apartheid censuses and surveys in South Africa. As seen in Figure 2, the census data indicate that in 1996 the reported sex ratio for persons aged 18-34 was about 92 i.e., 92 males for every 100 females (exceptionally low) but was adjusted upward by Statistics South Africa to 101 for this same age group in the 2011 census data. Documentation as to how this adjustment was made is not available. The reported sex ratio for the age group 18-34 in the 2011 census was 98.5. Although at birth there is excess males over females, sex ratios decline with age largely reflecting the higher force of mortality among males compared to females in any specific age group in human populations. Figure 2 appears to suggest that the ratio of men to women aged 18-34 years in South Africa has been increasing since the year 2000. This is most likely a reflection of more complete reporting of men aged 18-34 years in the censuses and surveys rather than increasingly lower mortality of males compared with female in this age group. The latter, though theoretically can result in increasing sex ratio in the age group 18-34, is demographically unlikely.

For all age groups in the population, the reported overall sex ratio in the 1996 census was 92 and the corresponding figure for the 2011 census was 93 but adjusted upward to 95 in the published/released data. The reported overall sex ratio in the 2016 South African Community Survey (Statistics South Africa 2016) was 89. This is implausibly low suggesting that males were heavily underreported during the 2016 Community Survey. Some people often report sex composition as percentage i.e. the percentage of male or females in a specific age group or the percentage male or females in the overall population. This practice may not reveal oddities that may be present in the data.

**Figure 2: Sex ratio for persons aged 18-34 years and for persons in all age groups, South Africa**



Source: Author's computations from the 1996, 2001, 2011 censuses and 2016 CS

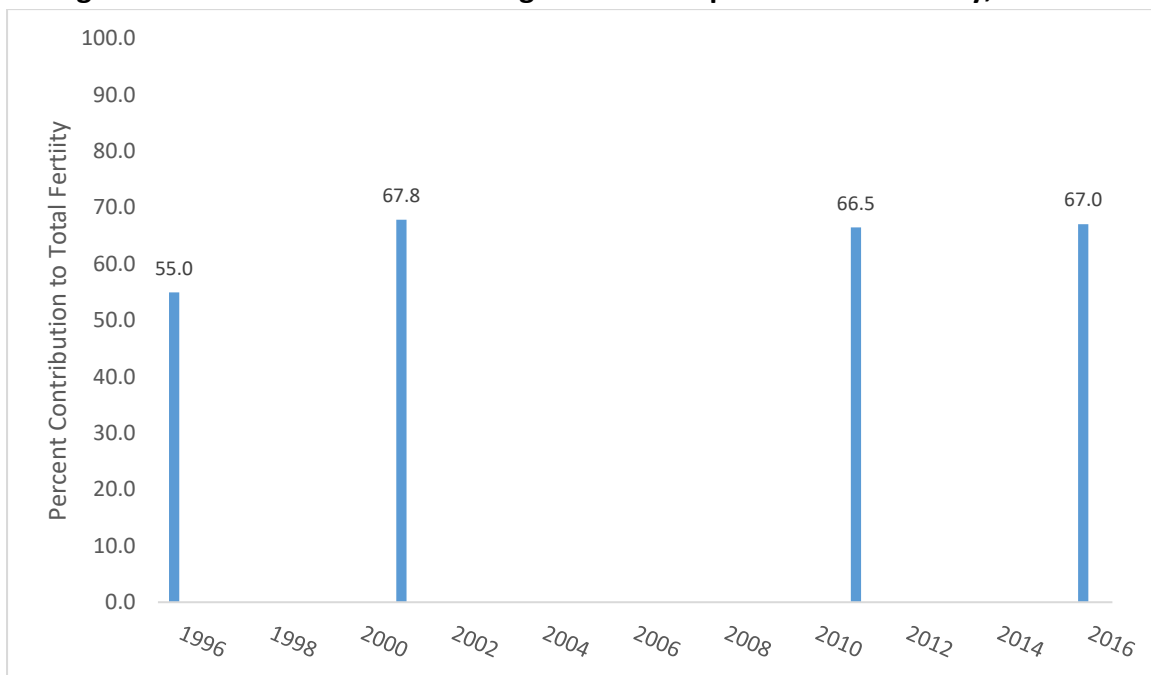
### Fertility among the Youths

The commonly used measure of the level of fertility in a population is the total fertility rate – the number of children a woman would have by age 50 years if she experienced the current fertility rates by age. To contextualize this, the 2016 South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS) provided a total fertility rate for South Africa as 2.6 in 2016 (National Department of Health et al. 2019). Women in the reproductive age group (defined as 15-49 years) contribute to a total fertility rate in varying degrees due to biological and socio-cultural factors. The peak in age pattern of fertility is usually around the age group 20-24 or 25-29 in human populations. We now examine the contribution of female youths to total fertility rate in South Africa over time. In view of the peak of age pattern of fertility noted above, we focus on the age 20-34 in what follows.

Without adjusting for errors in the report on live births in the censuses and surveys, it appeared that the percentage contribution of women aged 20-34 to the reported total fertility rates in South Africa increased from about 55% in 1996 to about 67% in 2016. It is thus clear that women aged 20-34 contribute more than half one half to the total fertility rate

in South Africa. For example, the reported total fertility rate derived from the 2011 census was 2.5 which means about 1.6 live births of that figure were attributable to women aged 20-34 in 2011. Although total fertility rate has been declining in South Africa - from about 3.2 in 1996 (Udjo 2005) to about 2.6 in 2016 (National Department of Health et al. 2019), the trend in Figure 3 suggests that the youth population has been making an increasing contribution to the levels of fertility in South Africa.

**Figure 3: Contribution of Women Age 20-34 to Reported Total Fertility, South Africa**



Source: Author's computations from the 1996, 2001, 2011 censuses and 2016 CS

### **Migration among the Youths**

Migration consists of two components: (a) internal migration (movement of people across administrative boundaries within a country resulting in change of residence); (b) International migration (movement of people between two countries resulting in change of residence). Internal and international migration have two components: people moving in as well as people moving out. Unfortunately, in both internal and international migration the focus is often on one component - the people coming in - because they are more visible. This one-sided focus often makes migration a sensitive and controversial subject resulting sometimes in xenophobia in subtle and violent expressions. Analysis of historical data from South Africa's Department of Home Affairs indicate that South Africa was losing more people (emigrants)

than it was gaining (immigrants) up till 2001 (the last year for which immigration and emigration data were available). Those who emigrated were largely semi-skilled and professionals. There are economic development implications for a country when emigration is characterized by largely highly educated and skilled professionals especially when scarce skills are a challenge in the country.

Migration is selective of certain demographic and social characteristics such as age and sex and educational level. There are several indicators for measuring or assessing the volume, prevalence, and incidence of migration. In this study the focus was on the prevalence of emigration derived from two questions included in South Africa’s censuses and surveys: (1) were you living in this place the past 10 years? (2) What is your province of previous residence? Appropriate coding and analysis of these questions provided insight into in-migration (internal migration) and immigration (international migration). The results below were based on the 1996 and 2011 census. The migration information in the 2016 CS was unreliable thus, not included in the analysis.

Table 1 indicates that the youths are highly mobile persons. The table indicates that 10 years prior to the 1996 census, nearly 50% of the youths aged 18-34 years were living in a different province or country. As of 2011, the prevalence of migration among the youths appeared to have declined: ten years prior to the 2011 census, about 27% of the youth aged 18-34 were living in a different province or country. The table also indicates that proportionately, male, and female youths were equally migratory.

**Table 1: Percentage of Youths Living in a different Province or Country 10 years Prior to the Census, South Africa**

	Male	Female
1996 Census	49.4	49.2
2011 Census	27.9	26.5

Source: Author’s computations from the 1996 and 2011 censuses.

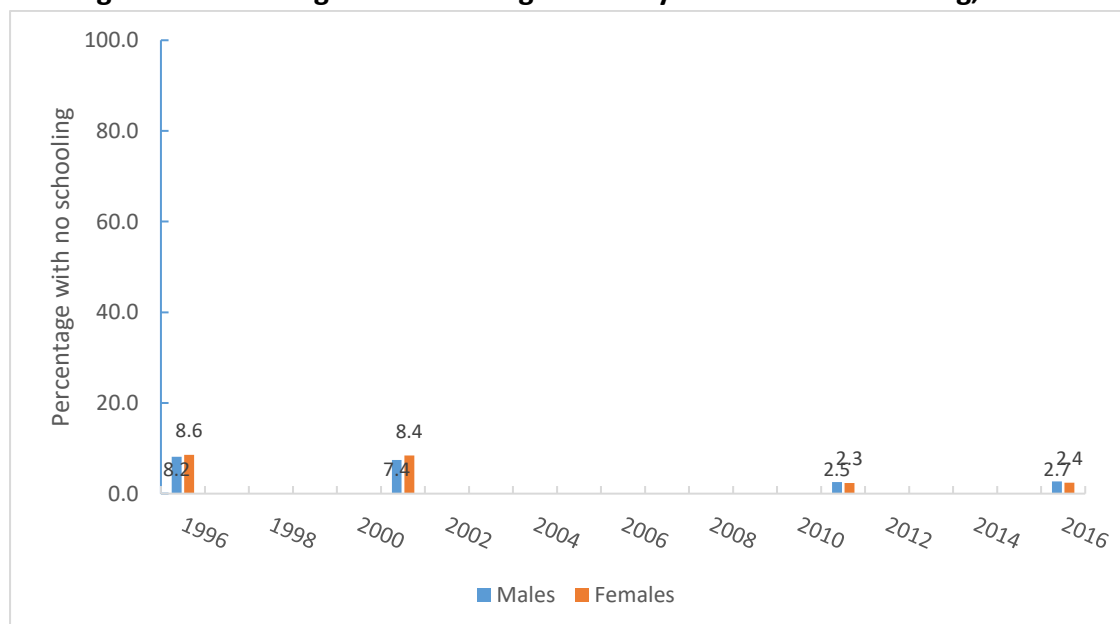
Given the above demographic context, we now examine progress in youth development in three key development domains.

## PROGRESS IN EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE YOUTHS

Several indicators can be used to assess progress in youth development in education and skills development. Basic education is a catalyst for employment and skills development in the job environment. On the job training is usually provided after employment by employers of labour. Employers often specify certain minimum educational qualifications for employment, matric qualification usually being the barest minimum in South Africa. In assessing progress in educational advancement over time among the youths therefore, the percentage of the population aged 18 – 34 years without any schooling, the percentage of youth without grade 12 qualification, the percentage of the youth with at least a university degree qualification were examined.

Ignoring the figures from the 2011 census that seem anomalous, Figure 5 suggests that the percentage of male and female youths with no schooling has declined over the years - from about 8.4% in 1996 to about 2.6% in 2016. This suggests that proportionately, the youths are becoming more educated.

**Figure 5: Percentage of Persons Aged 18-34 years with no Schooling, South Africa**

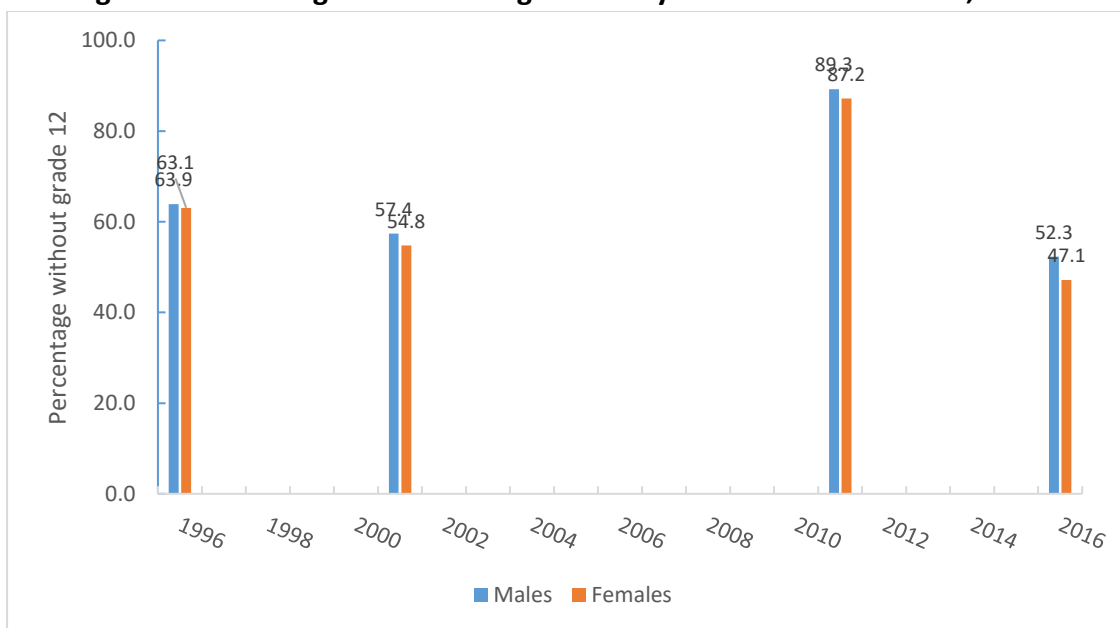


Source: Author's computations from the censuses and 2016 CS data

Consequently, the percentage of the youths without grade 12 qualification seemingly declined from about 64% in 1996 to about 50% in 2016 (Figure 6). However although, the percentage of the youth population aged 25-34 years with at least a bachelor's degree marginally increased from about 3% in 1996 to about 4%, the percentages of the youth

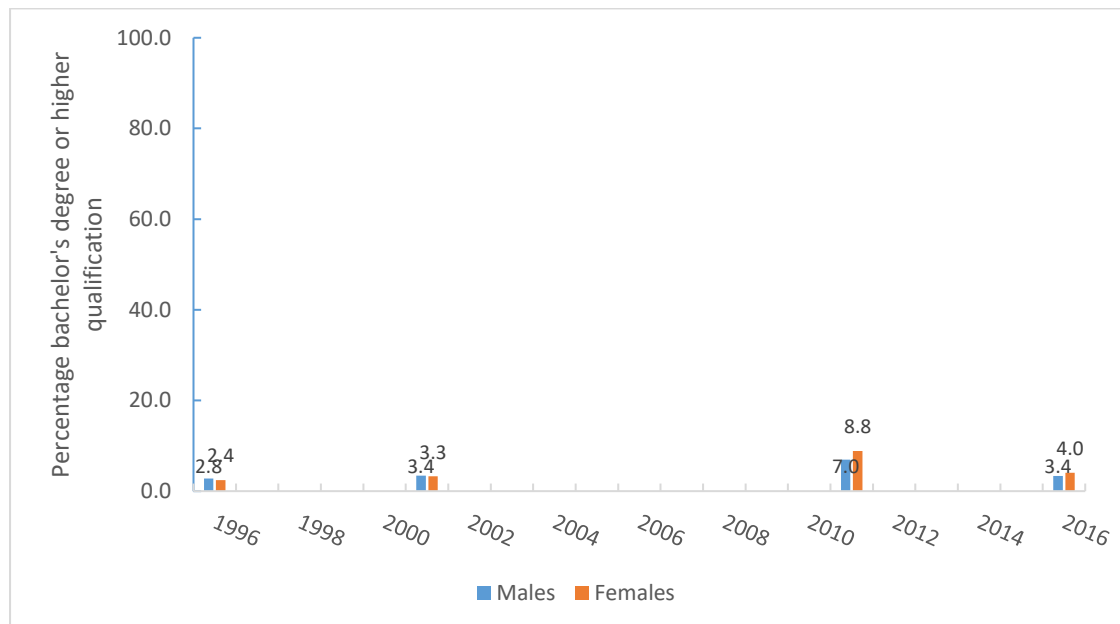
population with at least a university degree qualification have remained very low since 1996. This has serious implications for employment among the youths. The low levels of degree qualifications among youths restrict employability of youths in jobs demanding degree or high academic skills as criteria for employment in these jobs. Vulnerability to unemployment among the youths may partly be seen in this context. As seen in Figures 5-7 there is little difference between males aged 18-34 years or 25-34 regarding the educational attainment outlined above since 1996.

**Figure 6: Percentage of Persons Aged 18-34 years without Grade 12, South Africa**



Source: Author's computations from the censuses and 2016 CS data

**Figure 7: Percentage of Persons Aged 25-34\* years with at least a Bachelor’s degree, South Africa**



Source: Author’s computations from the censuses and 2016 CS data

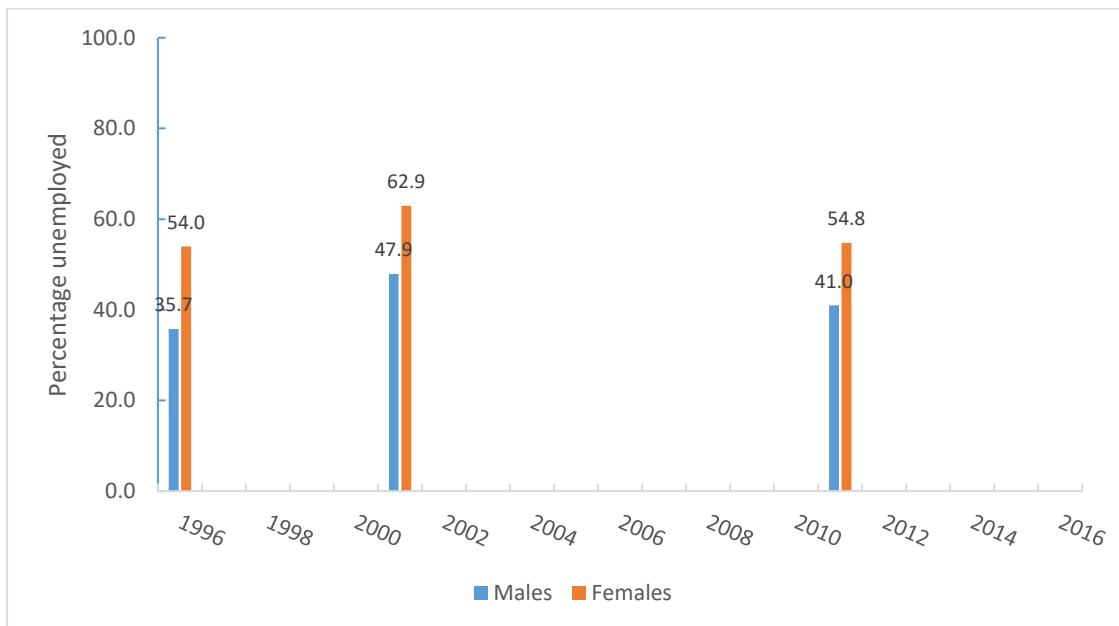
\* The choice of 25 years as the lower age limit is because it is expected that persons who enroll for university degree after matric should have completed the degree program by the age 25 or earlier in most cases.

### **PROGRESS IN ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AMONG THE YOUTHS**

Economic participation among the youths may be viewed using different lenses. One of these is analysis of employment among the youths. However, from the standpoint of informing policy it may be more useful to examine unemployment to capture more clearly the scale of non-economic participation among the youths. A useful indicator in this regard is the unemployment rate using the expanded definition. The strict definition of employment does not fully reveal the scale of non-economic participation.

Figure 8 shows the unemployment rates computed from the 1996, 2001 and 2011 census based on the expanded definition. The graph does not show rates from the 2016 CS because due to the unreliability of the employment information from the survey, Statistics South Africa did not publish data on employment from that survey.

**Figure 8: Unemployment Rates among Persons Aged 18-34 Expanded Definition\*, South Africa**



Source: Author's computations from the censuses and 2016 GHS data

\* The value of the percentage unemployed depends on how the economically active population is defined – the denominator for calculating the percentage unemployed. In the expanded definition, the economically active population is defined as the people who either worked in the last seven days (i.e. employed) prior to the interview or who did not work during the last seven days (i.e. unemployed) but want to work and available to start work within a week of the interview whether or not they have taken steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview. The strict definition excludes from the economically active population persons who have not taken any steps to look for work or start some form of employment in the four weeks prior to the interview (Statistics South Africa: 2009).

Figure 8 paints a sobering picture. It indicates unemployment rate increased from about 36% in 1996 among the economically active male youths to about 48% in 2001 and marginally declined to about 41% in 2011. Among female youths, unemployment increased from about 54% in 1996 to about 63% in 2001 and marginally declined to about 55% in 2011. Some studies indicate the consequences of high unemployment as including poverty, health and mortality, mental health, crime and delinquency and breakdown of the general social fabric (see the review in Shaw 1983). It has also been shown that unemployment is correlated with propensity to divorce or the wellbeing of the spouse and children Strom (2003).



## PROGRESS IN HEALTH STATUS AMONG THE YOUTH

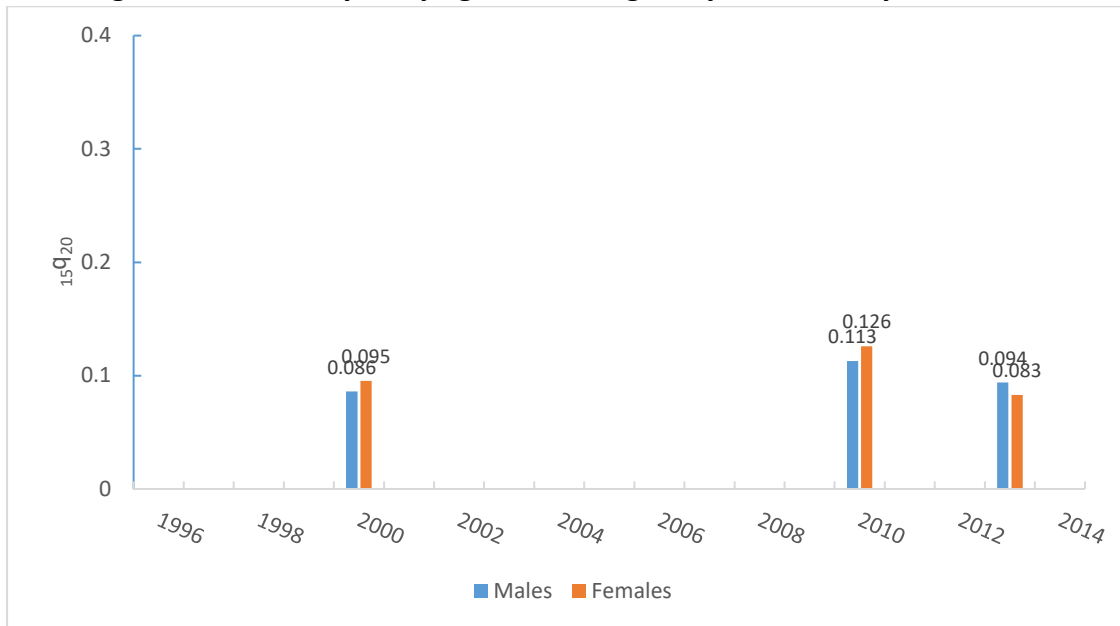
### Mortality among the Youth

The level of mortality in a population is one of the indicators of the overall health status in a population. Several indicators can be used to examine mortality in a population or among subgroups in a population. The conventional approach is by means of life tables. Although life tables can be computed for single years of age, this is often not practical and hence life tables are usually computed for 5-year age groups except for the first five years of life. In view of this, the closest 5-year age range (20-34 age group) to the 18-34 age group was used in computing life tables to examine the overall status of the youths. One of the appropriate indicators in this regard is the probability of dying between age 20 years and 35 years ( $_{15}q_{20}$ ). The data utilized were the death registrations for the years 2000, 2010 and 2013. It should be noted however, that the death registration data from 2007 onwards even after correcting for under registration using the method described by Hill (1987), are highly suspect as some of the trends are demographically implausible (see Udjo 2017).

The estimation from the data suggest that the probability of dying between age 20 years and 35 years among males and females increased during the period 2000 and 2010 but declined during the period 2010 and 2013 (Figure 9). The probabilities of death shown in Figure 9 imply that in the year 2000 of every 1,000 males who survived to age 20, 86 were expected to die before they attained the age of 35 years. The corresponding figure for females for the same period was 95. However, in 2010, the data suggest that of every 1,000 males that survived to age 20, 113 of them were expected to die before they attained the age 35 years. The corresponding figures for females was 126 (Figure 10).

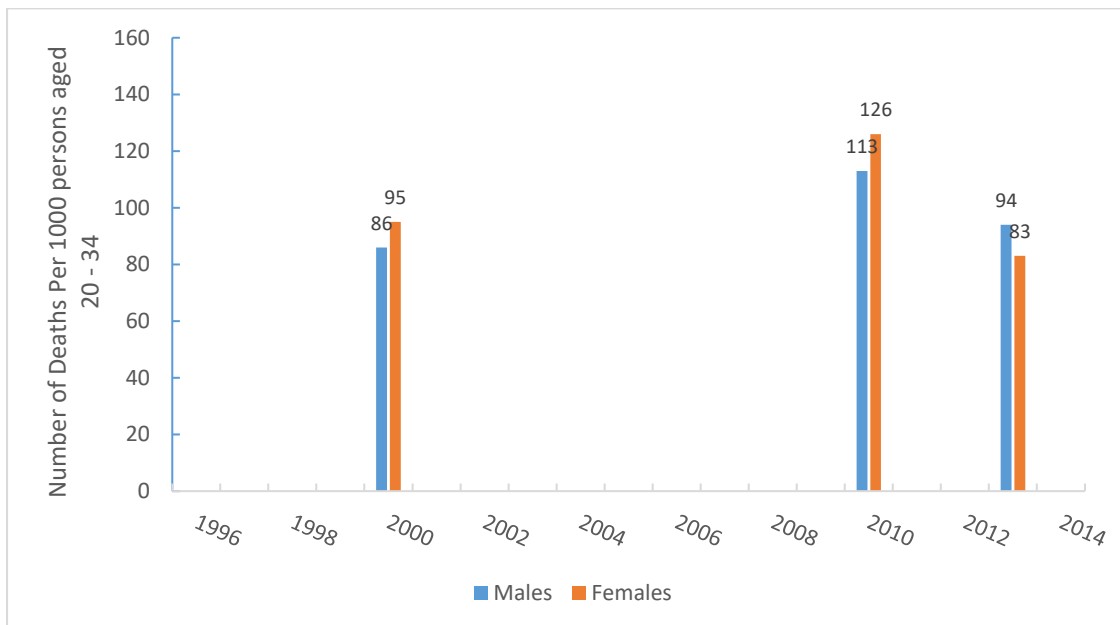
Thus, the data suggest higher female mortality compared to males among persons aged 20 - 34 – an unlikely situation in the specified periods. Official mortality data in South Africa either from censuses or surveys or death registration are highly contentious. While the male female differences are highly questionable, one may cautiously infer from the data that mortality among the youths aged 20-34 (males and females combined) may have increased during the period 2000 and 2010 and probably declined after 2010.

**Figure 9: Probability of Dying Between Age 20 years and 35 years, South Africa**



Source: Author's computations from Death Registrations Data

**Figure 10: Age Specific Mortality Rates Among Persons Aged 20 years and 34 years, South Africa**



Source: Author's computation from Death Registrations Data

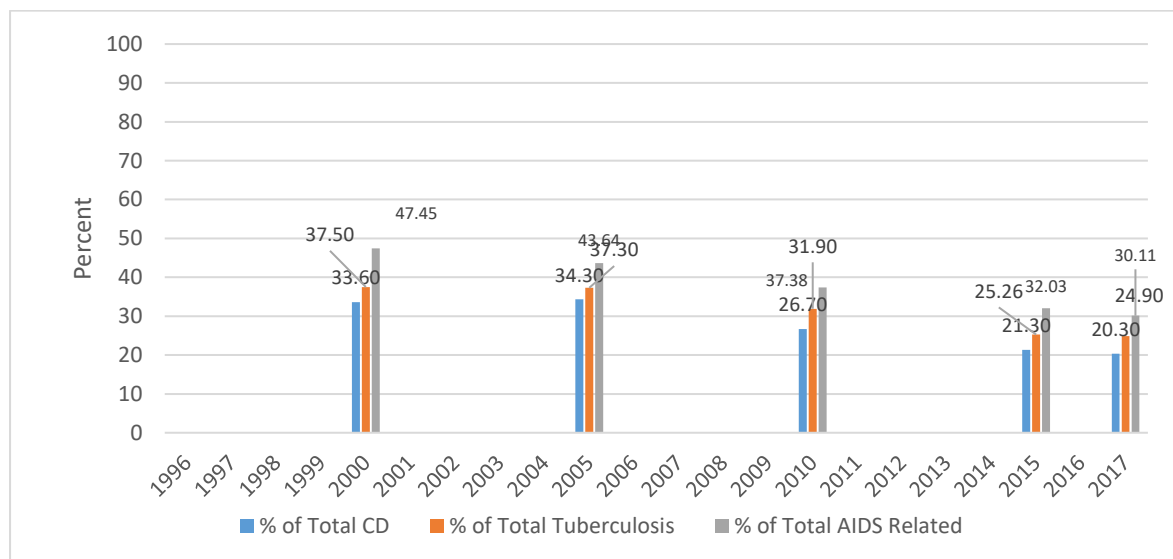
### Mortality from Communicable Diseases among the Youth

As populations transit from high to low levels of mortality and fertility, communicable diseases (CD) become less prominent relative to non-communicable diseases (NCD). However, in less developed countries, CD still constitute a large proportion of total deaths.

Evidence from the deaths registration data in South Africa appears to suggest that in 2017, CD accounted for about 27% of all the officially reported registered deaths (446,544 deaths) in South Africa.

Figure 11 shows the relative contribution of youths aged 15-34 to the total registered CD and two CD sub-groups deaths during the period 2000 – 2017. It appears from the graph that the contribution of CD deaths to total registered deaths among the youths declined during the period 2005 (34%) and 2017 (20%). A similar pattern is evident regarding tuberculosis and AIDS related deaths. This is despite the increase in the absolute numbers of and the proportion of youths in the overall population of South Africa.

**Figure 11: Percent Contribution of Youths aged 15-34 to Total Registered CD And to Total Registered AIDS related Deaths**

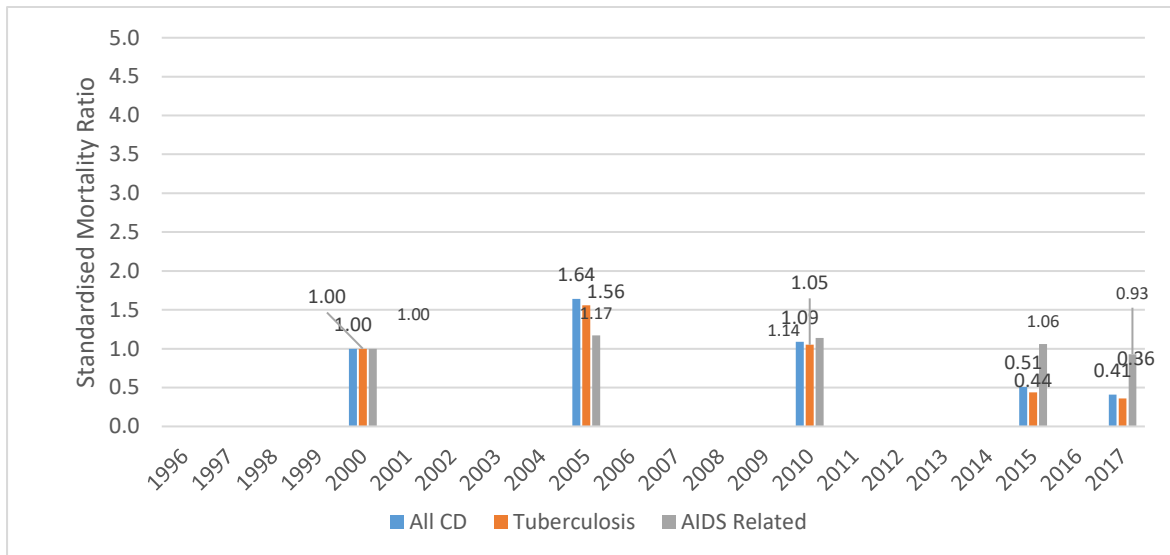


Source: Author’s computation from Death Registrations Data

The dynamics of CD mortality within the youth population are summarised in Figure 12. Controlling for changing proportions in the five-year age groups in the youth population aged 15 -34 years (i.e standardising for changing age distribution), the overall CD crude death rate among the youths in 2005 appeared to be 64% higher than the level in 2000 (265 deaths per 100,000 youths aged 15-34 in 2000) but 69% lower in 2017 than the level in 2000. Figure 12 suggests that Tuberculosis mortality among the youths declined during the period 2005-2017

however, AIDS related mortality was about 17%, 14%, 6% higher in 2005, 2010 and 2015 respectively than the level in 2000 among the youths.

**Figure 12. Standardised Mortality Ratios from CD and Selected CD Sub-groups**

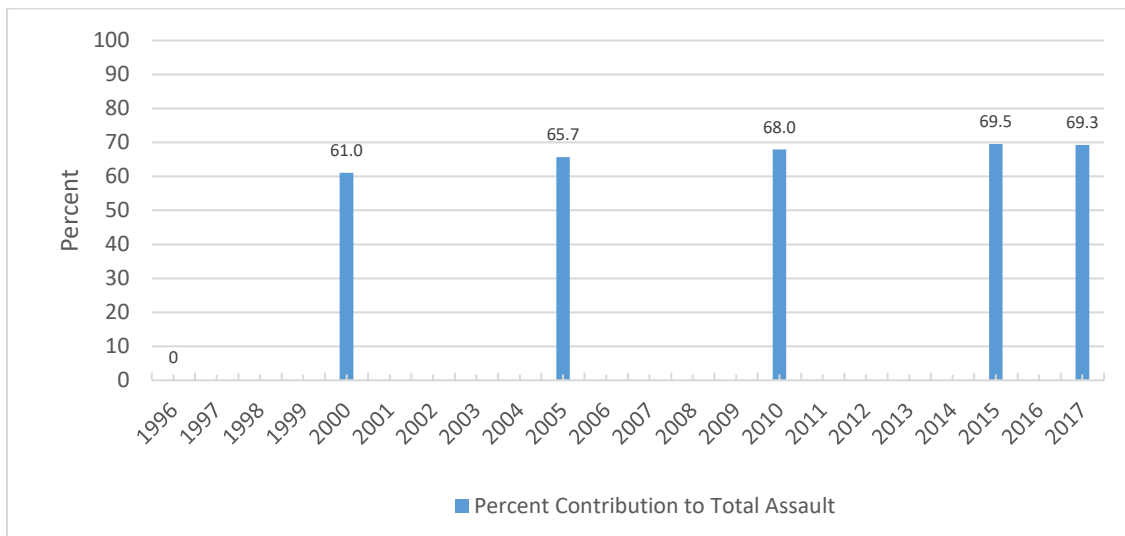


Source: Author's computation from Death Registrations Data

### **Mortality from Assault (Intentional Injury) among the Youths**

Figure 13 shows the relative contribution of youths aged 15-34 to the total registered assault deaths during the period 2000 – 2017. The graph suggests that the contribution of the youths to total officially registered assault deaths increased during the period 2000 – 2015. The figures indicate that during the period 2000 – 2017, youths contributed between 61% - 69% of the total registered deaths in South Africa, thus, assault deaths are more prevalent among youths aged 15-34 than all other broad age groups combined in the country.

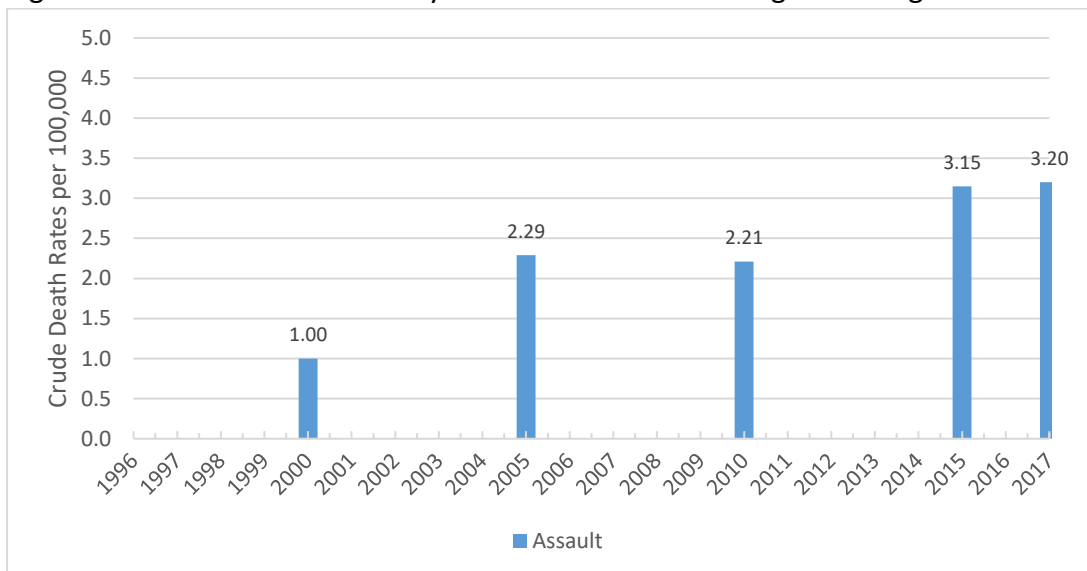
**Figure 13: Percent Contribution of Youths aged 15-34 to Total Registered Assault Deaths**



Source: Author’s computation from Death Registrations Data

Controlling for changing proportions in the five-year age groups in the youth population aged 15 -34 years the overall overall assault crude death rate among the youths in 2005 was more than double the rate in 2000 (8 deaths per 100,000 youths aged 15-34) and more than tripple in 2017 than the rate in 2000 (Figure 14).

**Figure 14. Standardised Mortality Ratio from Assault among Youths Aged 15-34 Years**



Source: Author’s computation from Death Registrations Data

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The problems facing the youths in South Africa are well recognized by the South African Government and include alarming levels of unemployment and poverty. The RDP observed

that there should be special focus on youth in the country to develop its human resources potential by empowering youth to reach their full potential. This includes among others, programmes of training, education, and job creation. This study examined the demographic profile of youths in South Africa as a context to examining the progress made during the period 1994 - 2017 in the advancement of young people in the country, in education and skills development, economic participation, and health.

Key features of the demographic profile of the youths in South Africa include the following. The youth population aged 18-34 years constituted about 32% of the total of South Africa in 2011. In absolute terms the annual growth rate of the youth population was higher than that of the general population during the period 1996 to 2011. Although fertility has been declining in South Africa the youths' contribution to the level of fertility in the country has increased over time.

The expanded definition indicates that unemployment rate among the youths increased during the period 1996 – 2011 to the extent that in 2011 nearly 50% of the youths (both sexes combined) were unemployed. Low levels of degree qualifications among the youths no doubt, impedes employability of youths in jobs demanding degree or high academic skills.

Regarding advancement in health, it appeared that mortality among the youths aged 20-34 increased during the period 2000 and 2010 and probably declined after 2010. Although mortality from CD among the youths appeared to have declined in recent years compared to the level in 2000, AIDS related mortality among the youths was higher during the period 2005-2015 than the level in 2000. The youths accounted for at least two thirds of all the registered assault deaths in the country during the period 2000 – 2017. Among the youth population, crude death rate from assault increased during the period 2005 – 2017 compared with the level in 2000.

Two sobering concerns stood out from the analysis:(1) high endemic unemployment among the youths; (2) high contribution of the youths to total assault deaths in the country as well increasing trend in assault deaths among the youths. Regarding the first, it appears that current employment programmes such as the Expanded Public Works, Community Work,

Entrepreneurship programmes have been ineffective in reducing endemic unemployment among the youths. An underlying issue in the endemic unemployment appears to be the low levels of educational qualifications among the youths. Aside job creation and intensification of current employment programmes, radical strategies that would enable the youths attain high levels of educational qualifications i.e., degree qualifications or equivalent technical qualifications need to be implemented to make the youths more employable in the private and public sectors. Radical strategies should include incentives and support to youths to enable them transit from matric level of education to university degree or equivalent specialised levels of education.

Regarding assault deaths, the factors promoting the high contribution and rising trend among the youths need in-depth investigation so that appropriate intervention strategies can be implemented to mitigate these. Premature death among the youths due to assault or other causes prevent youths from attaining their full potential and contribution to the development of the country.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I wish to acknowledge the critical comments of the reviewers of this study: Dr Monde Makiwane (Independent Consultant at MBMAK LTD PTY, formerly Research Director, Human and Development Unit, Human Sciences Research Council) and Professor Zurika Robinson (Department of Economics, University of South Africa). My profound gratitude to them for taking time to review the study. The views expressed in this paper, however, are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the MBMAK LTD PTY or the University of South Africa (UNISA), or the College of Economics and Management Sciences, UNISA or the Department of Economics, UNISA.

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