

South Africa: Estimated abortions, 1997-2015

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Abstract: This document reviews available abortion-related data for South Africa for 1997-2014 and associated limitations, and describes methodology and results for estimating total abortions through 2015.

South Africa abortions have been reported by province from 1997 to 2014 but with inconsistent reporting years and varying levels of underreporting (Health Systems Trust, 2016). National Department of Health figures are by calendar year from 1997 to 2005-2009 (depending on which province) and are given in Table 1. District Health Information System figures are by fiscal year (April to following March) from 2005-2014 and are given in Table 2.

Table 1. South Africa abortions by calendar year & state, National Dept. of Health figures.

Year	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Nata	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	Northern Cape	North West	Western Cape	SOUTH AFRICA
1997	2,670	2,527	13,497	1,259	570	1,489	429	218	3,796	26,455
1998	2,938	4,107	19,005	5,167	823	1,857	552	455	5,008	39,912
1999	3,109	4,062	19,195	5,766	1,288	2,269	642	2,166	5,741	44,238
2000	3,264	6,919	15,172	11,592	1,962	3,697	583	2,286	6,697	52,172
2001	4,652	4,824	19,970	4,688	4,254	3,520	738	3,021	8,300	53,967
2002	5,814	3,949	18,227	9,592	4,706	3,218	910	3,070	10,065	59,551
2003	6,819	4,952	29,021	11,015	4,236	2,206	779	2,011	10,513	71,552
2004	6,210	8,343	37,806	10,602	4,587	3,757	1,408	3,165	11,157	87,035
2005	10,034	8,890	33,727	12,706	4,357	1,346	1,305	2,336	15,149	89,850
2006	10,015	7,834	32,464	9,679	4,241		1,418	4,948	13,314	83,913
2007		7,142	23,268	3,883	6,506		1,734	1,377	14,131	58,041
2008		9,275	28,995		5,773		1,227		18,390	63,660
2009		6,641	32,814		5,024		1,266			45,745

Table 2. South Africa abortions by fiscal year & state, District Health Info. System figures.

Year	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Nata	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	Northern Cape	North West	Western Cape	SOUTH AFRICA
2005	7,614	6,783	1,575	8,533	11,496	1,601	1,088	4,006	2,713	45,409
2006	9,579	9,841	6,253	8,109	11,092	1,862	1,659	8,500	12,200	69,095
2007	11,716	7,494	9,841	4,427	10,562	1,736	1,883	5,291	15,545	68,495
2008	11,814	7,265	15,211	5,536	9,401	3,332	1,293	6,133	15,307	75,292
2009	10,530	6,262	23,521	5,540	8,630	2,456	975	5,959	13,274	77,147
2010	8,980	5,595	20,955	5,040	8,342	2,680	1,241	6,444	12,271	71,548
2011	12,397	5,648	21,318	6,560	8,555	3,340	1,144	6,890	11,928	77,780
2012	14,357	5,588	21,794	8,675	8,226	3,158	855	6,812	13,445	82,910
2013	16,632	6,682	20,590	9,910	8,718	2,702	1,433	7,887	15,606	90,160
2014	14,096	6,144	18,465	9,590	8,387	2,405	1,756	8,294	19,989	89,126

To merge data from these two sources with different reporting periods, estimates needed to be obtained for calendar years from the fiscal year data. RPA (2002) provided monthly abortion data from February 1997 to January 2002 (Table 3). These data show significant month-to-month variations: even when averaged over the four years of data, a given calendar month of the year will vary 17% from the overall trend (Table 4). Based on this, on average 26.5% of a year's abortions are in January to March and 73.5% in April to December. This result was used to allocate fiscal year figures by state to calendar years.

Table 3. South Africa abortions by month and year, February 1997-January 2002.

Month	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Jan		2,920	3,566	4,939	4,019	3,562
Feb	1,903	2,902	3,852	4,824	3,889	
Mar	1,935	3,008	4,086	4,254	4,629	
Apr	1,814	3,109	3,157	4,092	3,911	
May	2,041	3,139	4,100	4,483	4,994	
Jun	2,226	3,070	3,661	4,844	4,821	
Jul	3,183	3,767	3,600	4,310	4,551	
Aug	2,813	3,679	3,807	4,700	4,767	
Sep	2,575	3,632	3,790	5,062	4,257	
Oct	2,945	3,791	3,581	4,245	4,245	
Nov	3,020	3,782	4,119	3,448	4,336	
Dec	2,000	3,123	2,919	2,971	4,820	

Table 4. South Africa abortion trends by month and year, February 1997-January 2002, as the ratio of current month to the average of prior and following months.

Month	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Average
Jan		1.191	1.023	1.276	1.172	1.165
Feb		0.979	1.007	1.049	0.899	0.984
Mar	1.041	1.001	1.166	0.954	1.187	1.070
Apr	0.912	1.012	0.771	0.937	0.813	0.889
May	1.010	1.016	1.203	1.003	1.144	1.075
Jun	0.852	0.889	0.951	1.102	1.010	0.961
Jul	1.263	1.116	0.964	0.903	0.949	1.039
Aug	0.977	0.994	1.030	1.003	1.082	1.017
Sep	0.894	0.972	1.026	1.132	0.945	0.994
Oct	1.053	1.023	0.906	0.998	0.988	0.993
Nov	1.221	1.094	1.267	0.956	0.957	1.099
Dec	0.673	0.850	0.645	0.796	1.221	0.837

Figures were composited from these and supplementary sources for each province and each year, with estimates for calendar year for all years. Given the persistent problems of underreporting, the highest credible figures were adopted in each case. For 2015, the approach described above for extrapolating national figures to 2015 was applied to South Africa as a whole and to the provinces individually, with both giving consistent results.

Table 5 provides final adopted figures, by state and by year, for 1997-2015. Yellow highlighted figures are estimates for calendar years derived from fiscal year figures. Unhighlighted figures are calendar year National Department of Health figures. Blue highlighted figures are calendar year figures from Engelbrecht (2005) or from Epidemiological Research and Surveillance Management (2006) (the latter only applies to Eastern Cape figures for 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004), as these reported figures are higher than the NDH figures.

Table 5. South Africa abortions by calendar year and state, adopted figures and estimates.

Year	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Nata	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	Northern Cape	North West	Western Cape	SOUTH AFRICA
1997	2,693	2,534	13,505	1,259	570	1,509	435	218	3,796	26,519
1998	2,938	4,107	19,417	5,167	852	1,857	552	455	5,008	40,353
1999	3,115	4,062	19,298	6,900	1,728	2,558	642	2,231	5,775	46,309
2000	3,310	6,919	17,408	11,592	2,493	3,728	615	2,329	6,721	55,115

2001	4,671	4,824	20,321	7,533	4,512	3,520	738	3,120	8,300	57,539
2002	5,887	3,949	18,256	9,592	4,706	3,218	910	3,070	10,065	59,653
2003	6,819	4,952	30,250	11,015	4,236	2,206	779	2,011	10,513	72,781
2004	6,330	8,343	37,806	10,602	4,587	3,757	1,408	3,165	11,157	87,155
2005	10,034	8,890	33,727	12,706	9,670	1,346	1,305	3,780	15,149	96,600
2006	10,015	7,834	32,464	9,679	11,250	1,790	1,418	7,310	13,314	95,000
2007	11,150	7,142	23,268	3,883	10,700	1,770	1,734	6,140	14,131	79,900
2008	11,790	9,275	28,995	5,240	9,710	2,910	1,227	5,910	18,390	93,400
2009	10,870	6,641	32,814	5,540	8,830	2,690	1,266	6,010	13,810	88,500
2010	9,390	5,770	21,630	5,170	8,420	2,620	1,170	6,320	12,540	73,000
2011	11,490	5,630	21,220	6,160	8,500	3,170	1,170	6,770	12,020	76,100
2012	13,840	5,600	21,670	8,110	8,310	3,210	930	6,830	13,040	81,500
2013	16,030	6,390	20,910	9,580	8,590	2,820	1,280	7,600	15,030	88,200
2014	14,770	6,290	19,030	9,670	8,470	2,480	1,670	8,190	18,830	89,400
2015	16,320	6,190	18,050	10,060	9,320	2,530	1,730	9,230	20,160	93,600

Figure 1 shows abortions by year for South Africa and its states for 1997 to 2015.

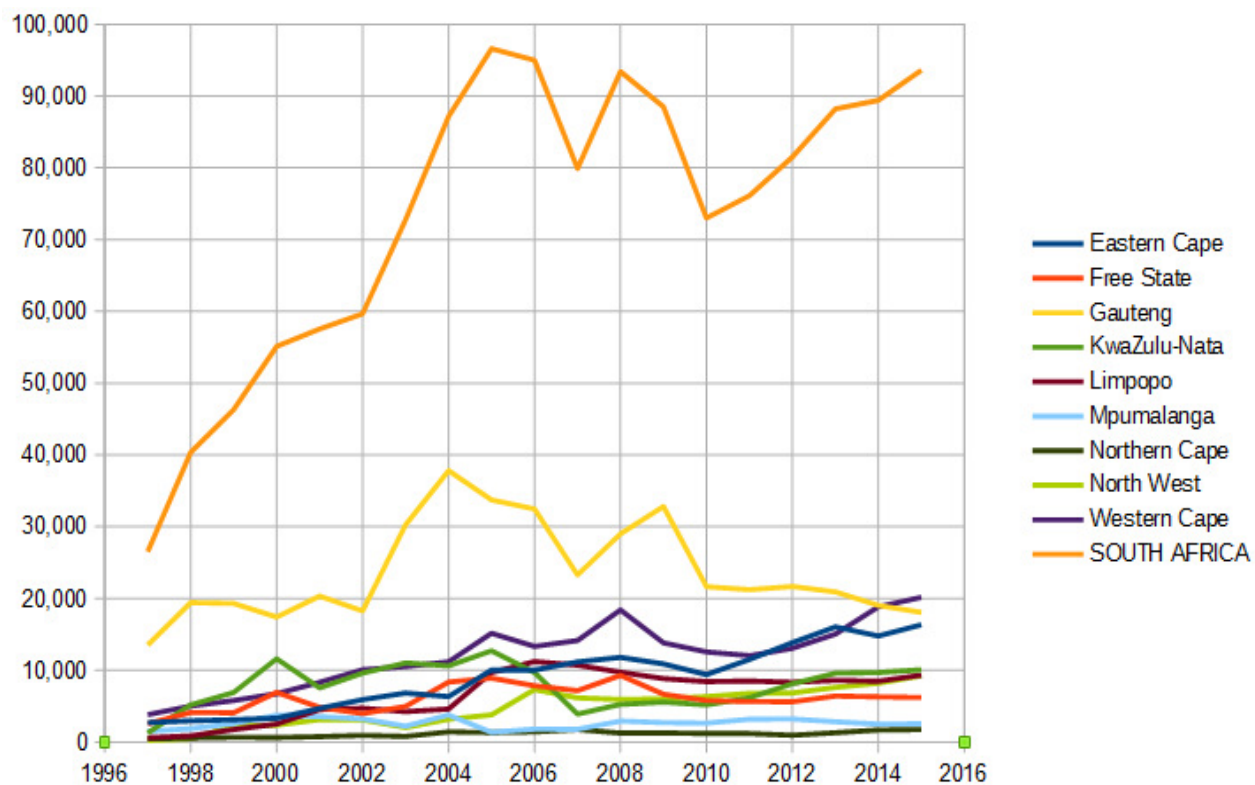


Figure 1. Reported and estimated abortions, South Africa and its states, 1997-2015.

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