

FreeFACTS

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Fix South Africa's cities to fix South Africa

The world is rapidly urbanising and South Africa is no exception. In the 1980s about half of all South Africans lived in urban areas, today about 70% of us live in cities, and by 2050 this is expected to be closer to 80%.

But it should be no surprise that people are increasingly moving to urban areas. In general people who live in urban areas – not just in South Africa but around the world – are richer, are more likely to be employed, and have more access to opportunities.

There are other less tangible benefits, such as culture, bigger social networks, and being able to access a greater variety of experiences. It is no surprise that cities were called humanity's greatest invention by Ed Glaeser, a professor at Harvard University.

This edition of *FreeFACTS* looks at the state of South Africa's cities, with a focus on the eight metros – Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Tshwane, Buffalo City, Nelson Mandela Bay, Mangaung, eThekweni, and Cape Town. It shows that the eight metros' contribution to overall unemployment and the national economy are greater than their overall population numbers. For example, about 43% of South Africans live in one of the eight metros but together they account for nearly 60% of South Africa's total economic output.

It is clear that cities are vitally important, they are engines of economic growth and they need to be places which are functional and where people want to come live and work. One of the biggest challenges facing South Africa today is to ensure that our cities are pleasant places for people to live in. With some exceptions many of our cities are falling into disrepair and face what are seemingly insurmountable problems. But with hard work and political will, our cities can be fixed.

And this needs to be an imperative, this should not be done because it is something nice to do, but because cities are vital to South Africa's future success. It has been said that if Johannesburg dies, South Africa dies, and that is not an exaggeration.

We need to save our cities.

— Marius Roodt

JOIN US

The IRR is an advocacy group that fights for your right to make decisions about your life, family and business, free from unnecessary government, political, and bureaucratic interference. FreeFACTS publishes evidence that communities are better off when individuals are free to make decisions about how they want to live, be educated, work, access healthcare, think, speak, own property, and protect their communities. If you agree with the issues we stand for, welcome to the team. There are millions of people just like you who are tired of South African politicians, activists, and commentators attempting to rein in your freedom to decide. Take control and make sure your voice is heard by becoming a friend of the IRR.

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Politics

Metros, population and population density			
Municipality	Population	Total as proportion of South Africa's population	Population density
Buffalo City	797,681	1.3%	314.5
Nelson Mandela Bay	1,212,654	2.0%	619
Mangaung	838,806	1.4%	133.5
Johannesburg	6,094,057	10.1%	3,704.60
Ekurhuleni	4,145,061	6.8%	2,098.80
Tshwane	3,910,179	6.5%	620.9
eThekweni	4,040,082	6.7%	1,763.50
Cape Town	4,756,255	7.8%	1,945.30
Metro total	25,794,775	42.6%	1,041.20
South Africa	60,604,992	N/A	49.60

Source: The Gaffney Group, *Gaffney's Local Government in South Africa — Official Yearbook 2013-2015*, November 2013, pp 406-1 606; Stats SA, www.statssa.gov.za, *Mid-year population estimates 2022*, accessed 7 November 2023

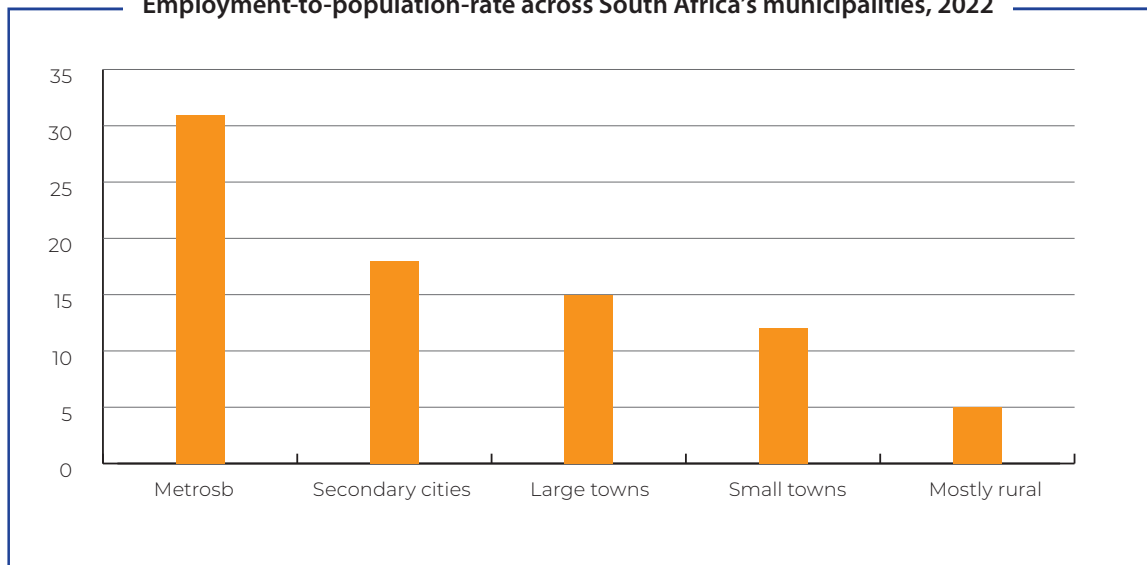
Employment-to-population-rate across South Africa's municipalities ^a	
Metros ^b	31
Secondary cities	18
Large towns	15
Small towns	12
Mostly rural	5

^a The number of formal jobs per 100 residents

^b Buffalo City and Mangaung were classified as secondary cities, rather than metros for this research

Source: Visagie, J., Turok, I. (2024). The significance of cities for jobs. Map of the Month. Gauteng City-Region Observatory. March 2024. <https://doi.org/10.36634/AIIH4878>

Employment-to-population-rate across South Africa's municipalities, 2022



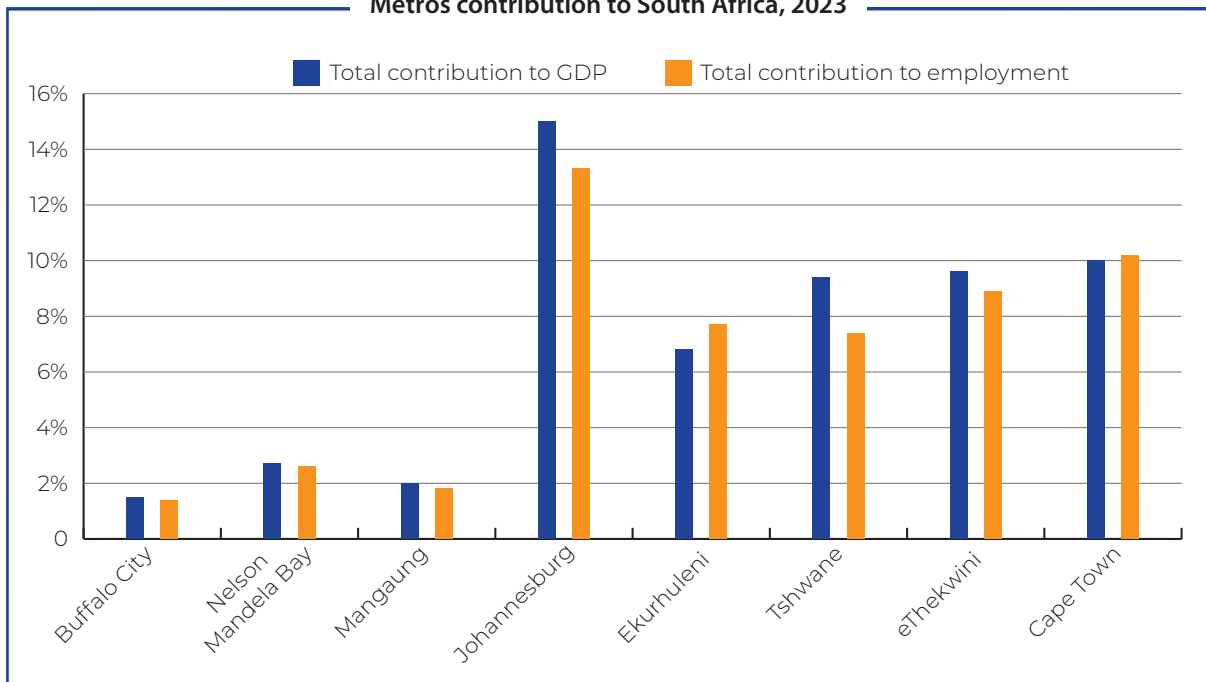
Politics

Contribution to South Africa's economy, 2023

Metro	Total contribution to GDP	Total contribution to employment
Buffalo City	1.5%	1.4%
Nelson Mandela Bay	2.7%	2.6%
Mangaung	2.0%	1.8%
Johannesburg	15.0%	13.3%
Ekurhuleni	6.8%	7.7%
Tshwane	9.4%	7.4%
eThekwini	9.6%	8.9%
Cape Town	10.0%	10.2%
Metros (total)	57.0%	53.3%
Rest of South Africa	43.1%	46.7%

Source: Economic Performance Indicators for Cape Town, 2024, Quarter 1, available at: https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20research%20reports%20and%20review/CCT_EPIC_2024_Q1.pdf

Metros contribution to South Africa, 2023



Politics

Unemployment rate, by metro, 2024		
Metro	Strict Unemployment	Expanded Unemployment
Buffalo City	33.7%	35.0%
Nelson Mandela Bay	30.9%	33.2%
Mangaung	30.5%	40.5%
Johannesburg	34.3%	36.6%
Ekurhuleni	33.4%	39.6%
Tshwane	35.3%	38.9%
eThekweni	23.0%	37.5%
Cape Town	23.4%	25.5%
South Africa	33.5%	42.6%

Source: Stats SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 2, 2024, Statistical release P0211

