



Country profile

# Republic of South Africa

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Republic of  
South Africa



Capital City: Pretoria  
Population, 2010: 50.5 million  
Languages: English & Afrikaans  
Monetary Unit: South African Rand

## 1. Overview

Migration from South Africa to Australia increased rapidly in the 1990s due to the changing political situation. Today it remains relatively strong with 11 948 permanent additions in 2009-10, only a slight decrease of 0.4 per cent from 2008-09. The vast majority of South African migrants come to Australia via the Skill Stream, though a large proportion of these new additions are dependents of the Primary Applicant. For South Africans, the number of permanent visas granted annually has doubled since 2006-07.

With a population of around 50.5 million, South Africa is an upper-middle income country, although there remain large disparities in income. South Africa's main long-term social and economic challenges are the high rate of unemployment, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and high levels of violent crime. For South Africa's skilled population there is a strong economic incentive to migrate, on a purchasing-power-parity basis South Africa's per capita GDP is a little over a quarter of Australia's and the unemployment rate in December 2010 of 24 per cent was much higher than Australia's 5.0 per cent. In 2009-10, 7.5 per cent of the total tertiary-educated population were living outside South Africa.

There were 149 020 South African expatriates in Australia in 2009. Australia is the third most common destination country for South Africans choosing to live abroad. In 2009-10 skilled visas made up 89 per cent of permanent visas granted to South Africans and the number of skilled visa grants has more than doubled since 2006-07.

A summary measure of well being is the Human Development Index (HDI), produced by the United Nations. The HDI is a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: health, education and income. Australia ranks very high on this measure, with a 2010 score of 0.94, second only to Norway. Table 1

South Africa's HDI in 2010 was 0.66 – giving the country a rank of 110 out of 169 countries. Although this ranking is quite low in international terms, South Africa's HDI of 0.66 was in line with the the regional average of 0.65 for Sub-Saharan Africa in 2010.

## 2. Community in Australia

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At the end of June 2009 there were 149 020 South Africa born people living in Australia, 43.2 per cent more than was reported in the August 2006 Census of Population and Housing. This is equivalent to 1.7 per cent of Australia's overseas born population and 0.7 per cent of Australia's total population.

For Australia's South Africa born migrants:

- Their median age of 38 years, was one year above that of the general population.
- Males and females were equally represented.
- At June 2010 the unemployment rate of 4.5 per cent, was slightly lower than the national rate of 5.2 per cent.\*
- The labour force participation rate was 76 per cent, considerably higher than the national rate of around 65 per cent.
- 100 800 South African born people were employed in Australia at September 2010, of these – the largest components were professionals (34.4 per cent) and technicians and trade workers (13.4 per cent).

## 3. Permanent Migration and Temporary Entry

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### Summary, 2009-10

#### **Permanent Additions to the Australian Population\***

There were 11 948 South Africa born permanent additions to the Australian resident population in 2009-10. Among the new additions to the Australian resident population:

- The Skill Stream accounted for 85 per cent of all permanent additions and comprised 3119 skilled migrants and 7037 accompanying family members.
- The Family Stream comprised 1255 family migrants and accounted for 11 per cent of all permanent additions.
- Non-program migration of South African born New Zealand citizens accounted for the bulk of the remaining 4 per cent of permanent additions.

#### **Permanent Migration Visas Granted, 2009-10\***

TABLE 2

There were 11 081 South African nationals that were granted a permanent visa, among the new permanent visa holders:

- The Skill Stream accounted for 89 per cent (9855 persons) of the permanent visas granted, with employer sponsored migrants accounting for half of skilled visa grants.
- The Family Stream accounted for 11 per cent (1220 persons) of the permanent visas granted, nearly half (46 per cent) of all grants to parents of Australian residents.

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\* Please see the Explanatory Notes for definitions of the terms used in this document.

## Temporary Entry Visas Granted, 2009-10

Table 3 & 4

Of the main temporary entry program visas granted to South African nationals:

- 591 Student visas were granted, of which almost half (46 per cent) were granted to those intending on pursuing a Vocational Educational and Training course in Australia.
- 2 780 South African workers were granted a Business Long Stay (subclass 457) visa, with Registered Nurses, Computing Professionals and Specialist Managers among the main occupations for which Australian employers recruited from abroad.
- 37 072 Visitor visas were granted.

## Detailed Analysis

### Permanent Migration Visas Granted

Table 2 & 4

#### Skilled Migration

Skilled migration is focused on facilitating the permanent entry of those who can make a positive contribution to Australia through their skills, qualifications, entrepreneurial spirit and future employment potential.

- Skilled visa grants to South Africans fell 6 per cent in 2009-10, exactly in line with the national decline. However, while total skilled visas granted have only increased by 10 per cent since 2006-07, those granted to South Africans have more than doubled.
- Over the past four years the share of migrants coming from South Africa has increased significantly. In 2009-10 there were 9855 skilled visas granted to South African nationals – a 9.1 per cent share of the 107 868 skilled visas granted that year up from 4.4 per cent in 2006-07.
- Of these 9855 grants in 2009-10, 3119 were to Primary Applicants, making South Africans the fourth largest group of Skilled Primary Applicants. Their most common occupations were accountants, computing professionals and registered nurses.
- Skilled migration is the predominant route for a majority of South African nationals seeking permanent residency in Australia. In 2009-10, skilled migration accounted for almost 9 in every 10 permanent visas granted to South African nationals through the Migration Program.
- Reflecting the shift in skilled migration towards, demand-driven entry, there has been substantial growth in the employer sponsored component, increasing from 1961 visas granted in this category in 2006-07 to 4929 grants in 2009-10.
- Almost half (46 per cent) of the skilled visas were granted under the points-tested General Skilled Migration\* Program, with numbers increasing from 2158 grants in 2006-07 to 4492 grants in 2009-10 running counter to an overall decline.
- Accountants, Computing Professionals and Secondary School Teachers were among the main occupations among the new General Skilled Migration visa holders.

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\* Please see the Explanatory Notes for definitions of the terms used in this document.

### Family Migration

Family migration facilitates the entry of close family members of Australian citizens, permanent residents and eligible New Zealand citizens. The program is currently dominated by fiancés, partners and dependent children, but also provides options for other family members such as parents, aged dependent relatives, carers and remaining relatives to join family in Australia.

- In 2009-10, 60 254 Family visas were granted, with grants to South African nationals accounting for 2.0 per cent (1220 grants) of the total.
- The number of family visas granted to South Africans fell slightly in 2009-10 but has increased 23.6 per cent since 2006-07.
- The Family Stream accounted for 11 per cent of all permanent visas granted to South African nationals, down from a 19 per cent share in 2006-07. This fall reflects a shift towards skilled migration rather than a decline in numbers of family stream migrants - noting that these have risen.
- The South African parents of Australian residents accounted for nearly half (46 per cent) of all visas granted in the last year, while a further 32 per cent were partners of an Australian resident.

### Temporary Entry Visas Granted

Table 3 & 4

#### International Students

The Student Visa Program consists of a range of visa categories that broadly correspond to education sectors. Students must study with an education provider and in a course registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students.

In 2009-10 there was a reduction in both the number of student visa applications received and the number of visas granted. Reasons included increased competition from overseas markets compounded by the strengthening of the Australian dollar, the introduction of robust student visa integrity measures and changes made to the General Skilled Migration program. While student visa grants fell by over 15 per cent, the total stock of international students in Australia remained relatively unaffected, only decreasing 1.1 per cent in 2009-10.

- As at June 2010, there were 900 South African student visa holders in Australia, representing 0.3 per cent of all international students in Australia.
- Though the numbers of South African students are small compared to other country groups, Australia is the fourth most popular tertiary study destination for international students originating from South Africa. In 2008, 10 per cent of all South African international tertiary students chose Australia.
- In 2009-10, 591 South African nationals were granted a student visa – down 8 per cent on the previous year. Of the new visas granted in 2009-10, almost half (46 per cent) of the grants went to students intending on pursuing a Vocational Education and Training course in Australia.

#### Business Long Stay (subclass 457) Workers

The subclass 457 visa program allows Australian employers to sponsor foreign workers for employment in management, professional, technical and skilled trades' positions. The program is demand-driven and highly responsive to Australian labour market conditions. Statistics shows that the demand for subclass 457 visas increases in line with increased skilled vacancies.

The demand for foreign workers under this program declined following the economic downturn, but application rates steadily increased over the second half of 2009-10. In recent months business conditions have begun to improve and the number of applications lodged has increased.

In 2009-10, 67 980 visas were granted globally, a reduction of 33 per cent on the previous year.

- South Africa is the fourth largest source of Australia's subclass 457 visa migrants with 9570 South Africa born migrants on this visa in Australia at June 2010, of which 3570 were Primary Applicants.
- In 2009-10, there were 2780 subclass 457 visas granted to South African nationals, representing 4 per cent of the total granted.
- Subclass 457 visa grants fell 33 per cent overall in 2009-10, but grants to South Africans declined even more steeply, by 71 per cent.
- Registered Nurses, Computing Professionals and Specialist Managers were the main occupations for which Australian employers recruited from South Africa.

#### Visitors

The vast majority of temporary entrants from South Africa are visitors here for a holiday or a short business visit. In 2009–10, there were 37 072 visitor visas granted to South African citizens—placing South Africa at 18th on the list of visitor source countries to Australia. This was a decrease of just over 10 per cent on 2008–09.

## 4. Emigration \*

Table 5

In 2009-10, 758 South Africa born permanent residents indicated at departure that they were leaving Australia permanently.

- Almost a quarter (24 per cent) intended to return to South Africa.
- Approximately 31 per cent of these emigrants were professionals, while managers and administrators accounted for 11 per cent.
- The largest proportion were emigrating from New South Wales and Western Australia, with each State accounting for 39 per cent and 21 per cent respectively.

## 5. State and Territory summary

Table 5

New South Wales was the most popular state of residence accounting for around a third (32 per cent) of South Africa born residents in Australia at the time of the last Census. Over a third (36 per cent) of new skilled migrants from South Africa indicated that they intended on living in Western Australia, while 30 per cent of new family migrants intended on living in New South Wales. South African international students showed a preference for Queensland and Western Australia – with over a quarter (27 per cent) enrolled in an academic institution based in each of those States. Over one third (33 per cent) of all South African 457 workers were sponsored for employment in New South Wales and a further 27 per cent in Western Australia.

<sup>1</sup>Please see the Explanatory Notes for definitions of the terms used in this document.

## Explanatory notes

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- i. Unemployment rates for individual migrant countries are calculated from the monthly ABS labour force survey (using published and unpublished data) and have been averaged across six months to account for monthly fluctuations and a small sample size. The national unemployment rate is the seasonally adjusted figure for December 2010.
- ii. Permanent Additions are the sum of those granted a permanent residency visa while in Australia, and those granted a visa through an Australian mission abroad, that have entered Australia during the respective reporting period.
- iii. Visa grants are the sum of all permanent migration and temporary entry visa applications granted in Australia, through the Australian Government's online visa portal, and visa grants made at an Australian mission abroad.
- iv. Australian residents are Australian citizens residents in Australia and other permanent residents.
- v. General Skilled Migration (GSM) is the sum of total Skilled Family Sponsored, Skilled Independent and State/Territory Sponsored visas.
- vi. Emigration is the number of persons who reported on their overseas departure card that they were leaving Australia permanently.

## Further reading

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This profile was prepared using information and statistics collated by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, from the following publications:

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**See:** [Country, economy and regional information](#)

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

**See:** [Community Information Summaries](#)

International Monetary Fund

**See:** [Country Information](#)

Central Intelligence Agency

**See:** [World Fact Book 2010](#)

United Nations Development Program

**See:** [Human Development Report 2010](#)

World Bank

**See:** [The Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011](#)

## Statistical tables – South Africa

Table 1: Economic and Human Development Indicators, 2010

	Australia	South Africa
Adult Literacy (%)	99.0	89.3
Fertility Rates (children per female)	1.9	2.4
GDP per capita PPP (current international \$)	36 692	10 505
Life Expectancy at birth (years)	81.9	52.0
Mean years of schooling	12	8.2
Human Development Index	0.94	0.66
Median Age (years)	37.8	24.9
Population (millions)	22.3	50.5
Population growth, 2010 (%)	1.7	0.5

\* All data (with the exception of adult literacy rates) were sourced from the UNDP Human Development Report 2010. Data on adult literacy was sourced from the CIA World Factbook, due to incomplete country information in the UNDP Report. Australia's data was sourced from the ABS. Data on GDP per capita from International Monetary Fund, World Economics Outlook Database Oct 2010.

Table 2: Number of persons granted a permanent Australian visa (by nationality), 2006-07 to 2009-10

South Africa	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
<b>Skilled Migration</b>				
Business Skills	172	320	493	420
Distinguished Talent	2	14	23	14
Employer Sponsored	1 961	2 941	5 474	4 929
<b>General Skilled Migration*</b>				
Skilled Family Sponsored	469	656	711	165
Skilled Independent	1 481	2 417	2 838	2 982
State/Territory Sponsored	208	208	946	1 345
Total - Skilled visa grants	4 293	6 556	10 485	9 855
Skilled visas as a proportion of all permanent visas (%)	81	88	89	89
<b>Family Migration</b>				
Child	122	108	108	82
Prospective Marriage (fiancé)	104	93	94	107
Partners	445	416	516	390
Parent	278	260	473	559
Preferential/Other Family	38	39	49	82
Total - Family visa grants	987	916	1 240	1 220
Family visas as a proportion of all permanent visas (%)	19	12	11	11
<b>Special Eligibility</b>				
Special Eligibility	2	0	4	6
<b>Total - Permanent Migrants</b>	<b>5 282</b>	<b>7 472</b>	<b>11 729</b>	<b>11 081</b>

Sourced from internal data collected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Table 3: Number of persons granted a temporary Australian visa (by nationality), 2006-07 to 2009-10

South Africa	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
<b>International Students</b>				
English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students	0	0	1	1
Schools	36	29	34	25
Vocational and Education Sector (VET)	166	239	319	269
Higher Education	137	182	233	229
Postgraduate	18	10	24	25
Non-Award	12	10	13	24
AusAID or Defence	21	25	16	18
<b>Total number of international student visa grants</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>591</b>
<b>Business Long Stay (subclass 457)</b>	<b>6 680</b>	<b>9 350</b>	<b>9 740</b>	<b>2 780</b>
<b>Visitors</b>				
Tourist	30 225	35 360	34 221	31 124
Business Visitor	8 289	8 324	6 911	5 898
Sponsored Family Visitor	24	34	68	50
<b>Total number of visitor visa grants</b>	<b>38 538</b>	<b>43 718</b>	<b>41 200</b>	<b>37 072</b>

Sourced from internal data collected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Table 4: Main occupations among those granted a permanent (GSM) or temporary (subclass 457) visa, 2006-07 to 2009-10

South Africa	Business Long Stay (subclass 457)		General Skilled Migration	
	Temporary Entry (employer sponsored)		Permanent Entry (un-sponsored)	
2009-10	Registered Nurse	120	Accountant	470
	Computing Professional *	50	Computing Professional *	190
	Specialist Managers *	50	Secondary School Teacher	80
	Accountant	30	Mechanical Engineer	60
	General Medical Practitioner	30	Registered Nurse	50
	Dentist	30	Electronics Engineer	40
	Sales and Marketing Manager	20	Chemical Engineer	30
	Management Consultant	20	Electrical Engineer	30
	Metal Fabricator	20	Fitter	20
	Corporate General Manager	20	Quantity Surveyor	20
2008-09	Registered Nurse	200	Accountant	220
	Business & Information Professional *	120	Computing Professional *	90
	Fitter	110	Fitter	80
	Computing Professional *	100	General Electrician	60
	Motor Mechanic	90	Registered Nurse	50
	Civil Engineer	90	Secondary School Teacher	40
	General Electrician	80	Mechanical Engineer	30
	Specialist Managers NEC	80	Business and Information Professionals NEC	30
	Accountant	70	Motor Mechanic	30
Engineering Manager	70	General Manager	30	

Sourced from internal data collected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

\* Within the broad professionals field, where no actual classification exists for the specific occupation.

Table 5: National Geographical Distribution, by country of birth and nationality

South Africa	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
	%							
Proportion of all persons counted in the Census, 2006	33	25	20	8	10	2	1	2
Proportion of all South Africa born counted in the Census, 2006	32	19	22	4	21	1	0	1
Geographical Distribution, Permanent Additions 2009-10								
Skill Stream	22	13	21	6	36	1	1	1
Family Stream	30	14	26	3	25	1	0	1
Geographical Distribution, Temporary Entrants 2009-10								
International Students	23	14	27	5	27	0	0	3
Business Long Stay (subclass 457) visa	33	13	20	3	27	1	2	1
Most recent State or Territory of Residents, Emigration								
All South Africa born	39	16	18	3	21	1	0	1

Information on migrants was sourced from internal data collected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Information on the geographical distribution of the total population was sourced from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 6: South Africa's migration ranking relative to other countries

South Africa	2008-09	2009-10
South African born Population in Australia	8	8
General Skilled Migration	4	4
Employer sponsored	3	3
Total Skilled Stream	4	4
Total Family Stream	9	9
International Students	46	49
Business Long Stay (subclass 457) visa	5	7
Visitors	18	18

All information refers to the number of visas granted that year and was sourced from internal data collected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, except for Population in Australia which is sourced from the ABS and refers to the stock of overseas born persons in Australia at the time.