

FreeFACTS

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Good matric results again – but what future awaits?

South Africa's latest matric results were again fairly impressive, with over three-quarters of the more than 700 000 learners who wrote passing the final examination. At the same time, nearly 40% of those who wrote passed well enough to be admitted to university (a so-called bachelor's pass).

Provincially pass rates varied from the 66.7% recorded in Limpopo to the 85.7% achieved in the Free State. Limpopo also achieved the lowest rate of bachelor's passes with just over a quarter of those who wrote matric in that province doing well enough to be admitted to a university. The Western Cape achieved the highest bachelor's pass rate at 45.3%, followed by Gauteng, where 43.8% of those writing managed university entrance.

But if we dig further into the numbers some worrying trends emerge. Of all those who wrote Mathematics, for example, fewer than 40% passed with a mark of 40% or above and only 3% managed a mark of 80% and higher. About half of those who wrote Mathematical Literacy achieved more than 40% but just over 2% got a distinction. Physical Science showed a similar trend with 45% managing 40% or above and just over 3% achieving a mark of 80% or more.

Throughput is also a concern. In 2010 there were over one million children in Grade One (this cohort goes on to become the Class of 2021). About half of those manage to pass matric in 2021, fewer than a quarter do so well enough to go to university, fewer than 10% pass Mathematics with more than 40%, and fewer than one percent get above 80%.

At the same time what future is there for our matrics, including those who can go to university? Unemployment is at record highs with our economy shrinking (with a corresponding decline in economic and other opportunities for young people).

Those who completed their school-leaving exams must be celebrated but is there much to celebrate if they face a lifetime of deprivation and unemployment?

— **Marius Roodt**

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Matric Class of 2021

National Senior Certificate results, 2018-2021

	2018			2019			2020		
	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed
Eastern Cape	65 733	46 393	70.6%	63 198	48 331	76.5%	72 926	49 691	68.1%
Free State	24 914	21 806	87.5%	25 572	22 602	88.4%	27 928	23 779	85.1%
Gauteng	94 870	83 406	87.9%	97 829	85 342	87.2%	110 191	92 285	83.8%
KwaZulu-Natal	116 152	88 485	76.2%	116 937	95 017	81.3%	135 225	104 938	77.6%
Limpopo	76 730	53 254	69.4%	70 847	51 855	73.2%	78 695	53 634	68.2%
Mpumalanga	44 612	35 225	79.0%	43 559	34 995	80.3%	53 391	39 367	73.7%
North-West	29 061	23 578	81.1%	26 819	23 272	86.8%	36 871	28 093	76.2%
Northern Cape	9 909	7 264	73.3%	9 138	6 990	76.5%	11 608	7 665	66.0%
Western Cape	50 754	41 350	81.5%	50 404	41 502	82.3%	51 633	41 250	79.9%
South Africa	512 735	400 761	78.2%	504 303	409 906	81.3%	578 468	440 702	76.2%
	2021			Change, 2018-2021					
	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed	Total wrote, change	Total passed, change	Proportion passed, change			
Eastern Cape	91 500	66 770	73.0%	39.2%	43.9%	3.4%			
Free State	35 055	30 037	85.7%	40.7%	37.7%	-2.1%			
Gauteng	127 523	105 526	82.8%	34.4%	26.5%	-5.8%			
KwaZulu-Natal	166 570	127 990	76.8%	42.9%	44.6%	0.8%			
Limpopo	105 101	70 124	66.7%	37.0%	31.7%	-3.9%			
Mpumalanga	66 756	49 133	73.6%	49.6%	39.5%	-6.8%			
North-West	41 081	32 143	78.2%	41.4%	36.3%	-3.6%			
Northern Cape	12 726	9 089	71.4%	28.4%	25.1%	-2.6%			
Western Cape	57 709	46 875	81.2%	13.7%	13.4%	-0.4%			
South Africa	704 021	537 687	76.4%	37.3%	34.2%	-2.3%			

Source: Department of Basic Education, *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination*, January 2020, p7; *National Senior Certificate 2020 Examination Report*, February 2021, p7; *2021 National Senior Certificate Examination Report*, January 2022, p42

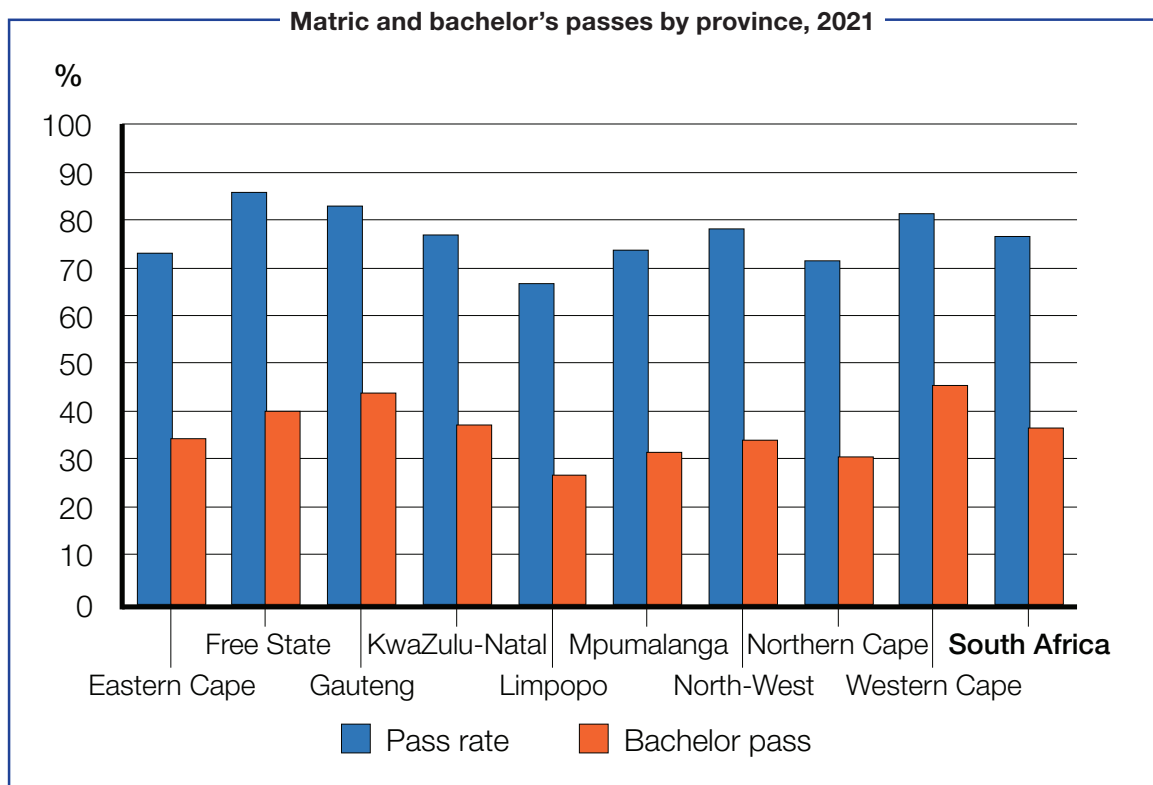
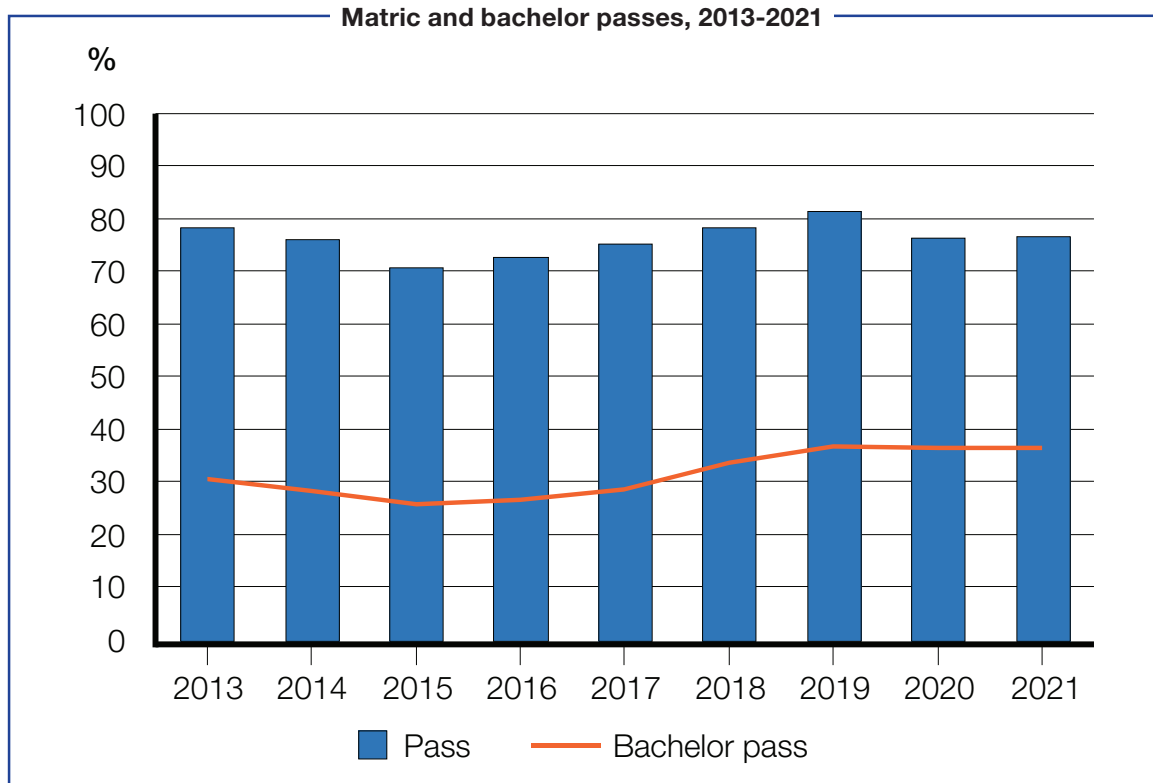
Matric Class of 2021

National Senior Certificate results, 2018-2020 (bachelor's passes)

	2018			2019			2020		
	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed
Eastern Cape	65 733	18 001	27.4%	63 198	20 419	32.3%	72 926	21 886	30.0%
Free State	24 914	9 333	37.5%	25 572	9 992	39.1%	27 928	11 284	40.4%
Gauteng	94 870	41 410	43.6%	97 829	43 494	44.5%	110 191	49 680	45.1%
KwaZulu-Natal	116 152	38 571	33.2%	116 937	44 189	37.8%	135 225	51 060	37.8%
Limpopo	76 730	17 999	23.5%	70 847	19 022	26.8%	78 695	22 907	29.1%
Mpumalanga	44 612	13 199	29.6%	43 559	14 228	32.7%	53 391	16 251	30.4%
North-West	29 061	9 449	32.5%	26 819	9 964	37.2%	36 871	11 822	32.1%
Northern Cape	9 909	2 589	26.1%	9 138	2 769	30.3%	11 608	3 296	28.4%
Western Cape	50 754	21 492	42.3%	50 404	21 981	43.6%	51 633	22 634	43.8%
South Africa	512 735	172 043	33.6%	504 303	186 058	36.9%	578 468	210 820	36.4%
	2021			Change, 2018-2021					
	Total wrote	Total passed	Proportion passed	Total wrote, change	Total passed, change	Proportion passed, change			
Eastern Cape	91 500	31 384	34.3%	39.2%	74.3%	25.2%			
Free State	35 055	13 971	39.9%	40.7%	49.7%	6.4%			
Gauteng	127 523	55 848	43.8%	34.4%	34.9%	0.5%			
KwaZulu-Natal	166 570	61 856	37.1%	42.9%	60.4%	11.7%			
Limpopo	105 101	28 072	26.7%	37.0%	56.0%	13.6%			
Mpumalanga	66 756	21 044	31.5%	49.6%	59.4%	6.4%			
North-West	41 081	13 875	33.8%	41.4%	46.8%	4.0%			
Northern Cape	12 726	3 856	30.3%	28.4%	48.9%	16.1%			
Western Cape	57 709	26 125	45.3%	13.7%	21.6%	7.1%			
South Africa	704 021	256 031	36.4%	37.3%	48.8%	8.3%			

Source: Department of Basic Education, *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination*, January 2020, p7; *National Senior Certificate 2020 Examination Report*, February 2021, p7; *2021 National Senior Certificate Examination Report*, January 2022, p43

Matric Class of 2021



Matric Class of 2021

Pass rate by school quintile, 2021						
		Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
Pass rate: 0-19.9%	Number ^a	10	12	9	0	0
	Proportion ^b	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Pass rate: 20-39.9%	Number	113	56	33	5	3
	Proportion	6.3%	3.4%	2.2%	0.8%	0.4%
Pass rate: 40-59.9%	Number	371	296	260	37	23
	Proportion	20.5%	17.7%	17.7%	6.1%	3.0%
Pass rate: 60-79.9%	Number	703	696	663	235	111
	Proportion	38.9%	41.7%	45.0%	38.5%	14.6%
Pass rate: 80-100%	Number	611	610	508	333	625
	Proportion	33.8%	36.5%	34.5%	55.0%	82.0%
Total	Number	1 808	1 670	1 473	610	762

Source: Department of Basic Education, 2021 National Senior Certificate Examination Report, January 2022, p50

a The number of schools in that particular quintile which achieved the relevant pass rate. For example a pass rate of between 80 and 100% was achieved by 1611 schools in quintile one.

b The proportion of schools in that particular quintile that achieved the relevant pass rate. For example, 1.5% of all Quintile One schools had a pass rate of between 0 and 19.9%.

Note: Quintile 1 schools cater for the poorest 20% of learners. Quintile 2 schools cater for the next poorest 20%, and so on. Quintile 5 schools are those schools that cater for the least poor 20% of learners.

Matric Class of 2021

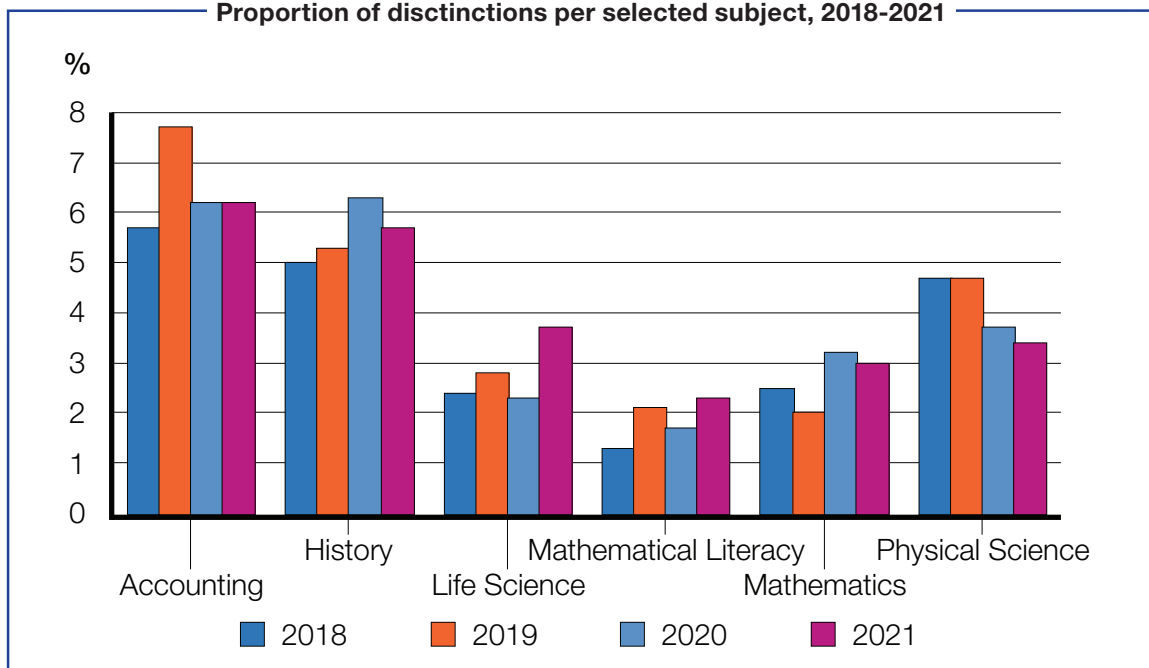
Selected subject performances, 2018-2021

	2018					2019				
	Number wrote	Number achieved above 40%	Proportion achieved above 40%	Number achieved above 80%	Proportion achieved above 80%	Number wrote	Number achieved above 40%	Proportion achieved above 40%	Number achieved above 80%	Proportion achieved above 80%
Accounting	90 278	43 831	48.6%	5 169	5.7%	80 110	42 113	52.6%	3 875	7.7%
History	154 536	112 266	72.6%	7 656	5.0%	164 729	121 936	74.0%	8 702	5.3%
Life Science	310 041	160 208	51.7%	7 507	2.4%	301 037	147 436	49.0%	8 525	2.8%
Mathematical Literacy	294 204	133 568	45.4%	3 957	1.3%	298 607	162 877	54.5%	6 280	2.1%
Mathematics	233 858	86 874	37.1%	5 828	2.5%	222 034	77 751	35.0%	4 415	2.0%
Physical Science	172 319	84 002	48.7%	8 135	4.7%	164 478	85 034	51.7%	7 763	4.7%

	2020					2021				
	Number wrote	Number achieved above 40%	Proportion achieved above 40%	Number achieved above 80%	Proportion achieved above 80%	Number wrote	Number achieved above 40%	Proportion achieved above 40%	Number achieved above 80%	Proportion achieved above 80%
Accounting	92 767	49 103	52.9%	5 777	6.2%	105 894	54 518	51.5%	6 571	6.2%
History	173 498	134 610	77.6%	10 935	6.3%	227 448	166 576	73.2%	12 887	5.7%
Life Science	319 228	153 028	47.9%	7 317	2.3%	384 216	197 017	51.3%	14 310	3.7%
Mathematical Literacy	341 363	197 131	57.7%	5 696	1.7%	441 067	216 692	49.1%	1 005	2.3%
Mathematics	233 315	82 964	35.6%	7 424	3.2%	259 143	97 561	37.6%	7 725	3.0%
Physical Science	174 310	73 982	42.4%	6 368	3.7%	196 968	88 164	44.8%	6 771	3.4%

Source: FreeFACTS, January 2020; Department of Basic Education, *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination*, January 2020, pp61, 64, 65, 67-72; *National Senior Certificate Examination Report*, January 2022, pp57, 59, 60, 64, 67-69

Proportion of distinctions per selected subject, 2018-2021



Matric Class of 2021

Throughput, 2010-2021	
Number of grade ones, 2010	1 116 899
Number of grade tens, 2019	1 045 424
Number of grade 12 candidates, 2021	704 021
Number of matric passes	537 687
Number of bachelor passes	256 031
Number of mathematics passes at above 40%	97 561
Number of mathematics passes at above 80%	7 725

Source: Department of Basic Education, *School Realities*, 2010, p2; *School Realities*, 2019, p3; *National Senior Certificate Examination Report*, January 2022, pp6, 43, 57, and 59

