

# FreeFACTS

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## Information gap exposed thanks to Covid-19

**The Covid-19 crisis and the resulting lockdown has forced many South Africans to change the way they work, with many being encouraged to work from home or reduce how often they go to their workplace.**

However, only a minority of the South African workforce can work from home. Only certain jobs lend themselves to being able to be done from home, and those that do still require having access to – for example – a computer and the internet. At the same time there have been questions about ensuring how children and young adults can still access their educational institutions during the lockdown.

But how accessible are various communication tools to South Africans? This edition of *FreeFACTS* looks at the access that South Africans have to communication mediums such as radio, television, and cell phones.

What this edition shows is that South Africans have access to a wide range of media and some tools, such as cell phones are now nearly ubiquitous. Over 90% of South Africans have access to a television and a similar proportion have access to a radio.

Traditional newspapers are used by fewer and fewer South Africans, as we find other ways of consuming information.

Most South Africans have access to a cellphone with the vast majority of people living in households with at least one cellphone and the number of cellular line subscriptions have risen rapidly.

However, a barrier exists in the proportion of South Africans who have access to computers and the internet. In 2018 less than a quarter of South Africans owned a desktop or laptop computer (although 60% owned a smart phone). In that same year only one-in-ten South Africans had access to the internet at home.

This indicates that the country still has some way to ensuring that all South Africans have equal access to information and devices with which to access it. Until then there will be large differences between how different South Africans access information, which will similarly have implications for how they can work and learn, exposed to an even greater extent by the Covid-19 crisis.

— **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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## Communication

Adults with access to radio and television, 2005-18			
Year	Number of adults <sup>a</sup>	Radio access <sup>b</sup>	Television access <sup>b</sup>
2005	30 655 696	81.4%	60.3%
2006	30 903 002	81.7%	61.5%
2007	31 109 074	79.4%	61.3%
2008	31 305 016	79.7%	66.9%
2009	32 498 063	79.9%	67.0%
2010	34 019 661	80.1%	72.4%
2011	34 933 809	91.4%	88.5%
2012	34 935 454	92.6%	91.5%
2013	37 214 317	83.0%	91.7%
2014	37 664 536	83.0%	91.8%
2015	38 258 907	82.9%	92.2%
2016	38 800 000	83.0%	93.0%
2018	40 100 000	88.0%	96.0%
<b>2005-18</b>	<b>30.8%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>59.2%</b>

Source: Eighty20, *All Media and Products Survey (AMPS): Overwhelming and under-mined reasons to love AMPS data*, May 2012, p13; *AMPS 2013B (January-December 2013)*, 8 April 2014; *AMPS 2014 (July 2013-June 2014)*, accessed 6 March 2015; *AMPS 2015 Individual (June 2014-June 2015)*, accessed 23 February 2016; *Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRC)*, [www.brcsa.org.za](http://www.brcsa.org.za), *RAM 2016 (January-September 2016)*, accessed 8 March 2017; *Establishment Survey: Demographic and Media Consumption Trends, ES Wave 1 Launch Presentation (Jul-Dec 2016)*, March 2017, pp 31 and 38; *The Establishment Survey: March 2019 release*, March 2019, p33

a People aged 15 and above.

b Respondents were asked if they had listened to radio or watched television in any seven-day period.

Television viewers <sup>ab</sup> by average monthly household income, 2016-18				
Average income R	Jul16-Jun17	Jan-Dec17	Jul17-Jun18	Jan-Dec18
0	–	–	–	2.0%
1- 1 999	9.0%	7.0%	8.0%	7.0%
2 000-3 999	24.0%	21.0%	19.0%	17.0%
4 000-4 999	10.0%	10.0%	9.0%	9.0%
5 000-9 999	27.0%	29.0%	29.0%	29.0%
10 000-19 999	18.0%	19.0%	20.0%	21.0%
20 000-39 999	9.0%	10.0%	10.0%	11.0%
40 000-59 999	2.0%	2.0%	3.0%	3.0%
60 000+	1.0%	1.0%	2.0%	2.0%

Source: BRC, [www.brcsa.org.za](http://www.brcsa.org.za), *The Establishment Survey: March 2019 release*, March 2019, p45

a Viewers per seven-day period. For example adult television, 29% of people aged 15 and above with an average income of between R5 000 and R9 999 watched television between January and December 2018.

b Past 7 day television viewers.

## Communication

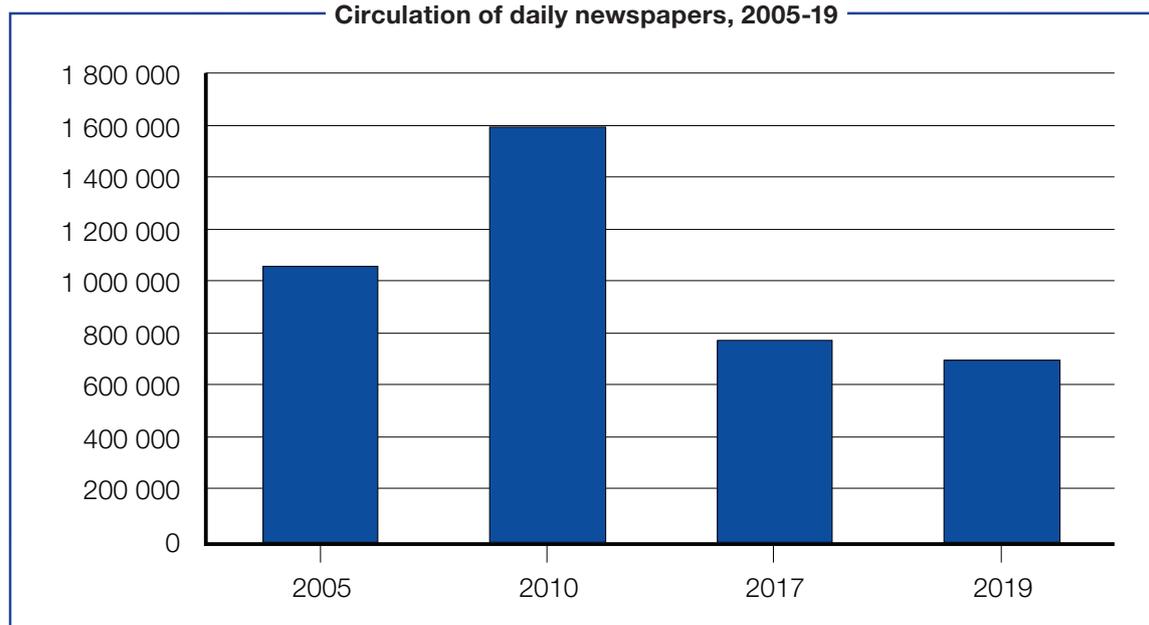
### Circulation of daily newspapers, 2005-19

Newspapers <sup>a</sup>	Headquarters	2005	2010	2017	2019	Change 2005-19
Beeld (Afrikaans)	Johannesburg	51 064	91 772	35 934	32 797	-35.8%
Business Day	Johannesburg	29 559	37 103	20 313	18 053	-38.9%
Cape Argus	Cape Town	30 393	56 455	27 662	27 245	-10.4%
Cape Times	Cape Town	32 371	47 631	29 673	29 523	-8.8%
Daily Dispatch	East London	26 147	30 249	17 958	15 468	-40.8%
Daily News	Durban	26 973	40 054	23 508	22 393	-17.0%
Daily Sun	Johannesburg	265 993	484 588	143 981	117 220	-55.9%
Diamond Fields Advertiser	Kimberley	9 161	10 010	7 599	7 113	-22.4%
Die Burger (Afrikaans)	Cape Town	56 145	75 013	47 400	39 625	-29.4%
Isolezwe (Zulu)	Durban	110 155	104 481	79 476	72 495	-34.2%
Pretoria News	Pretoria	8 511	26 163	12 532	12 478	46.6%
Son (Afrikaans)	Cape Town	82 579	121 599	66 045	55 126	-33.2%
Sowetan	Johannesburg	92 244	125 902	71 797	70 737	-23.3%
The Citizen	Johannesburg	57 097	73 274	43 694	40 481	-29.1%
The Herald	Port Elizabeth	20 919	23 830	17 067	14 793	-29.3%
The Mercury	Durban	27 499	35 002	25 432	24 402	-11.3%
The Star	Johannesburg	91 735	160 135	74 520	72 010	-21.5%
The Witness	Pietermaritzburg	16 544	21 455	11 641	10 779	-34.8%
Volksblad (Afrikaans)	Bloemfontein	18 652	27 233	13 906	13 341	-28.5%
<b>Total</b>	—	<b>1 053 741</b>	<b>1 591 949</b>	<b>770 138</b>	<b>696 079</b>	<b>-33.9%</b>

Source: Eighty20, [www.eighty20.co.za](http://www.eighty20.co.za), *AMPS 2012B (January-December 2012) Individuals*, accessed 14 May 2013; *Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa (ABC)*, [www.abc.org.za](http://www.abc.org.za), accessed January to May 2014; ABC, *email correspondence*, 29 March 2017; ABC, [www.abc.org.za](http://www.abc.org.za), *ABC analysis, Q4 2017*, accessed 17 April 2018; Marklives.com, [www.marklives.com](http://www.marklives.com), accessed 20 May 2019

a Published in English unless otherwise stated in brackets.

### Circulation of daily newspapers, 2005-19



## Communication

Magazine reach <sup>a</sup> , 2016-18				
Period	July 16-June 17	Jan-Dec 17	Jul 17-Jun 18	Jan-Dec 18
Yesterday	5.0%	6.0%	5.0%	5.0%
In the last week	14.0%	18.0%	18.0%	17.0%
In the last month	22.0%	28.0%	28.0%	27.0%
In the last 3 months	26.0%	32.0%	33.0%	32.0%
In the last 6 months	29.0%	37.0%	38.0%	37.0%
In the last 12 months	32.0%	41.0%	42.0%	40.0%

Source: BRC, [www.brcsa.org.za](http://www.brcsa.org.za), *The Establishment Survey: March 2019 release*, March 2019, p52

a Adult magazine readers per seven-day period. For example, 17% of people aged 15 and above read a magazine between January and December 2018.

Media trends by type of media (Southern Africa), 1991-2018					
Type of media	1991	2015	2016	2017	2018
Radio stations	34	245	270	260	260
Television stations	7	330	320	300	300
Daily newspapers	22	22	22	22	20
Major weeklies	25	27	27	27	27
Consumer magazines and newspapers	250	580	525	470	420
Business-to-business print media	300	600	550	525	480
Community/local newspapers and magazines	N/A	520	500	500	490

Source: OMD, *Media Facts 2018: South Africa & Southern African Development Community*, December 2018, p5

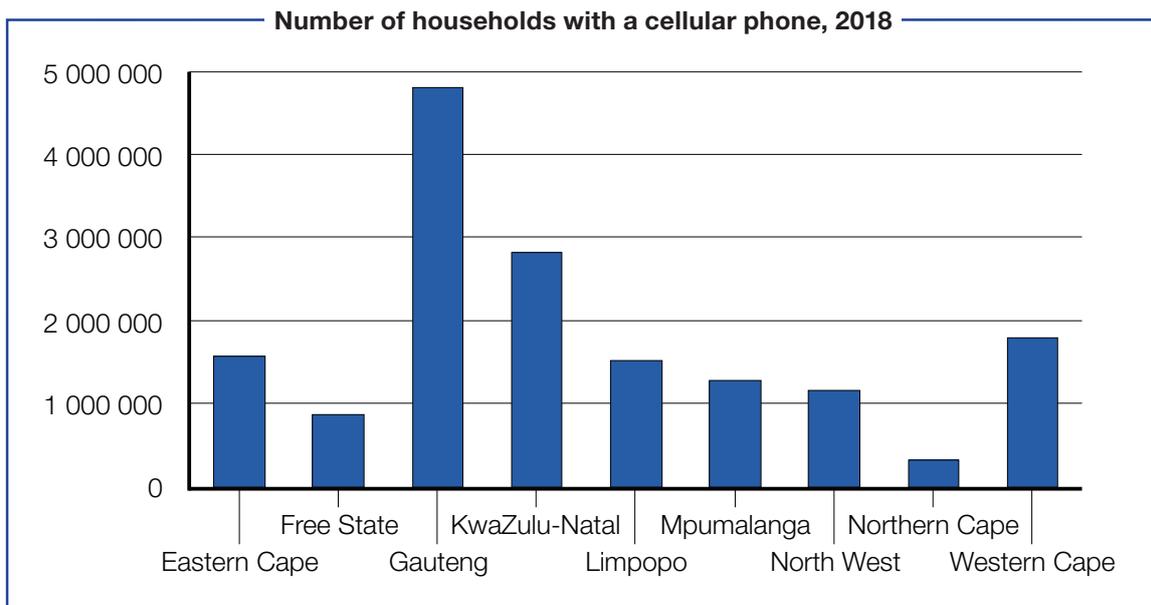
N/A — Not available.

## Communication

### Fixed-line and cellular phones

Households with a fixed-line and cellular phone by province, 2018					
Province	Total households	Fixed-line telephones		Cellular phones	
		Have	Do not have	Have	Do not have
Eastern Cape	1 685 000	71 000	1 582 000	1 557 000	128 000
Free State	901 000	47 000	838 000	858 000	42 000
Gauteng	4 884 000	377 000	4 420 000	4 808 000	72 000
KwaZulu-Natal	2 905 000	211 000	2 664 000	2 823 000	82 000
Limpopo	1 579 000	30 000	1 529 000	1 521 000	57 000
Mpumalanga	1 289 000	30 000	1 246 000	1 274 000	15 000
North West	1 210 000	42 000	1 161 000	1 155 000	53 000
Northern Cape	342 000	22 000	318 000	305 000	36 000
Western Cape	1 877 000	346 000	1 519 000	1 792 000	84 000
<b>South Africa<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>16 671 000</b>	<b>1 176 000</b>	<b>15 277 000</b>	<b>16 094 000</b>	<b>569 000</b>

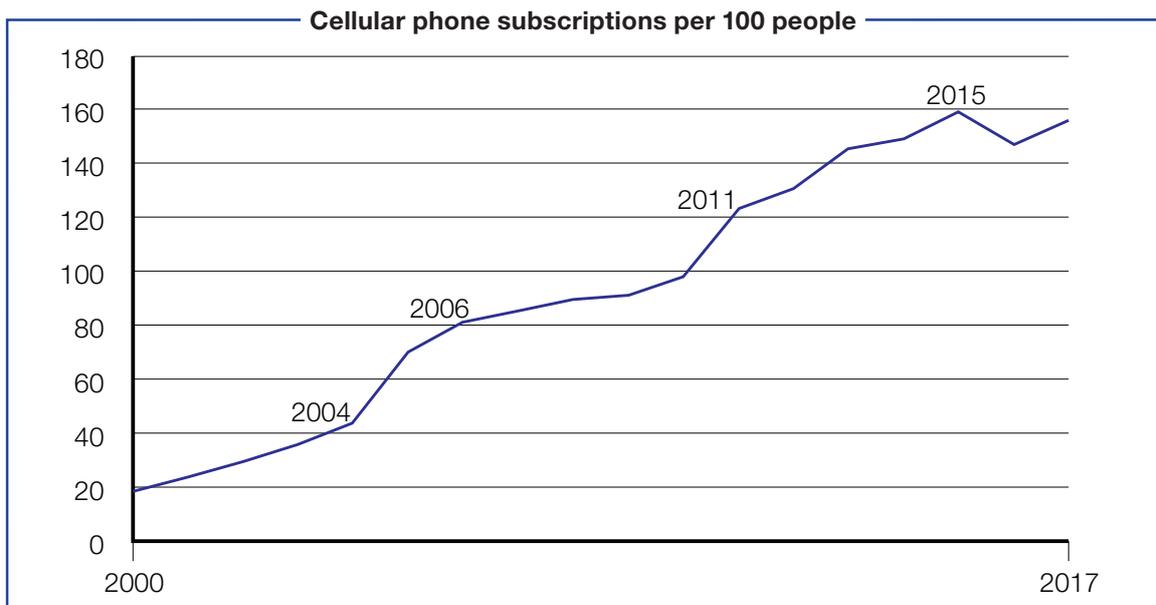
Source: Stats SA, *General Household Survey 2018*, Statistical release P0318, 28 May 2019, pp157 and 159  
 a Figures may not add up vertically, owing to rounding.



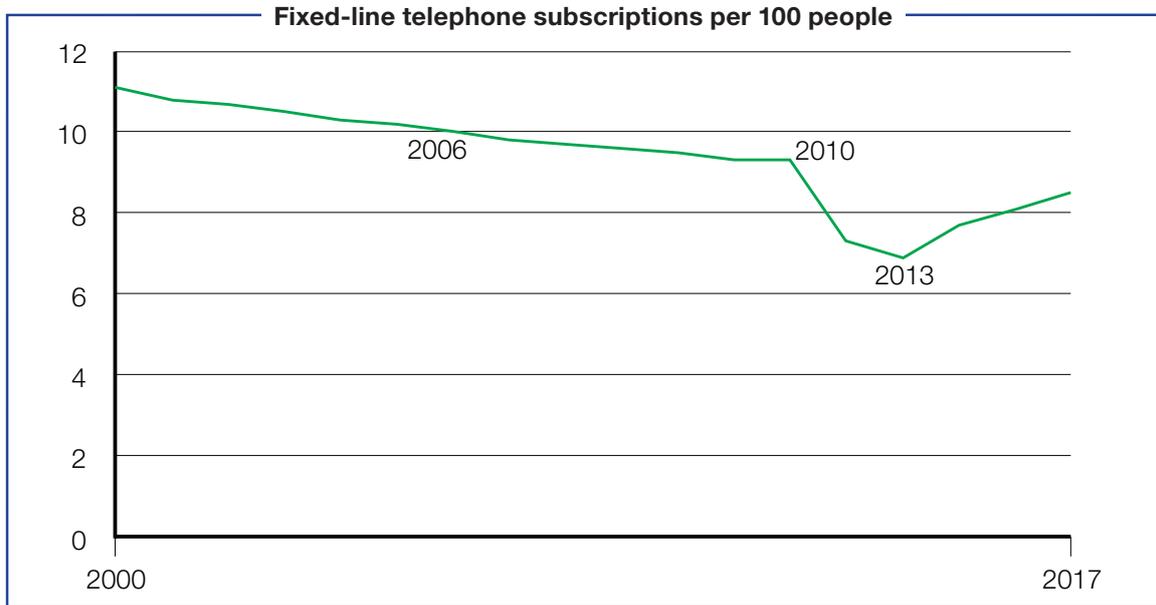
# Communication

Fixed-line and cellular phone subscriptions <sup>a</sup> , 2000-17				
Year	Number		Number per 100 people	
	Fixed-line telephone subscriptions	Cellular phone subscriptions	Fixed-line telephone subscriptions	Cellular phone subscriptions
2000	4 961 743	8 339 000	11.1	18.6
2001	4 924 458	10 787 000	10.8	23.7
2002	4 917 000	13 702 000	10.7	29.7
2003	4 910 000	16 860 000	10.5	36.0
2004	4 903 000	20 839 000	10.3	43.8
2005	4 896 000	33 959 958	10.2	70.4
2006	4 889 000	39 662 000	10.0	81.1
2007	4 882 000	42 300 000	9.8	85.3
2008	4 875 000	45 000 000	9.7	89.5
2009	4 868 000	46 436 000	9.6	91.3
2010	4 861 000	50 372 000	9.5	97.9
2011	4 854 000	64 000 000	9.3	123.2
2012	4 847 000	68 394 000	9.3	130.6
2013	3 875 582	76 865 278	7.3	145.6
2014	3 647 770	79 280 731	6.9	149.2
2015	4 131 055	87 999 492	7.7	159.3
2016	4 522 850	82 412 880	8.1	147.1
2017	4 810 074	88 497 610	8.5	156.0
<b>2000-17</b>	<b>-3.1%</b>	<b>961.2%</b>	<b>-23.4%</b>	<b>738.7%</b>

Source: International Telecommunications Union (ITU), [www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int), *Time series by country (2000-2017)*, accessed 25 February 2019.



## Communication



Households with a cellular phone by race and sex of household head, 2018			
Race		Sex	Proportion that owns a cell phone <sup>a</sup>
		Male	96.1%
		Female	97.2%
<b>Black</b>	Proportion of all black South Africans	<b>Total</b>	<b>96.6%</b>
		Male	91.9%
		Female	91.5%
<b>Coloured</b>	Proportion of all coloured South Africans	<b>Total</b>	<b>91.8%</b>
		Male	99.7%
		Female	93.8%
<b>Indian/Asian</b>	Proportion of all Indian/Asian South Africans	<b>Total</b>	<b>98.5%</b>
		Male	99.9%
		Female	98.3%
<b>White</b>	Proportion of all white South Africans	<b>Total</b>	<b>99.4%</b>
		Male	96.4%
		Female	96.8%
<b>Total</b>	Proportion of all South Africans	<b>Total</b>	<b>96.5%</b>

Source: Stats SA, *General Household Survey 2018*, Statistical release P0318, 28 May 2019, p156

a IRR calculations. For example the proportion of households that are headed by a black male that have a cell phone is 96.1%.

## Communication

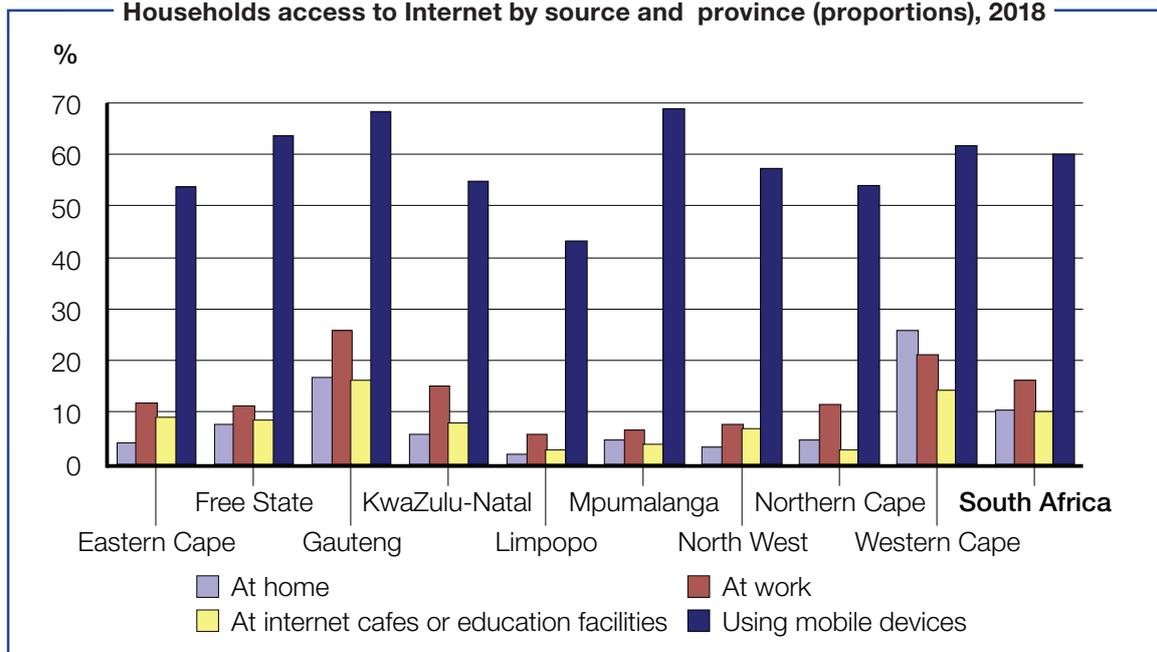
**Households access<sup>a</sup> to Internet by source and province (proportions), 2018**

Province	At home	At work	At internet cafes or education facilities	Using mobile devices
Eastern Cape	4.1%	11.8%	9.0%	53.7%
Free State	7.6%	11.1%	8.3%	63.6%
Gauteng	16.7%	25.8%	16.1%	68.3%
KwaZulu-Natal	5.6%	15.1%	7.8%	54.9%
Limpopo	1.7%	5.7%	2.7%	43.3%
Mpumalanga	4.4%	6.5%	3.7%	68.8%
North West	3.0%	7.6%	6.7%	57.2%
Northern Cape	4.6%	11.4%	2.6%	53.9%
Western Cape	25.8%	21.1%	14.1%	61.7%
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>60.1%</b>

Source: Stats SA, *General Household Survey 2018*, Statistical release P0318, 28 May 2019, Table 13.1, p58

a IRR calculations. Households with access to the Internet at home, or for which at least one member has access to, or used the Internet.

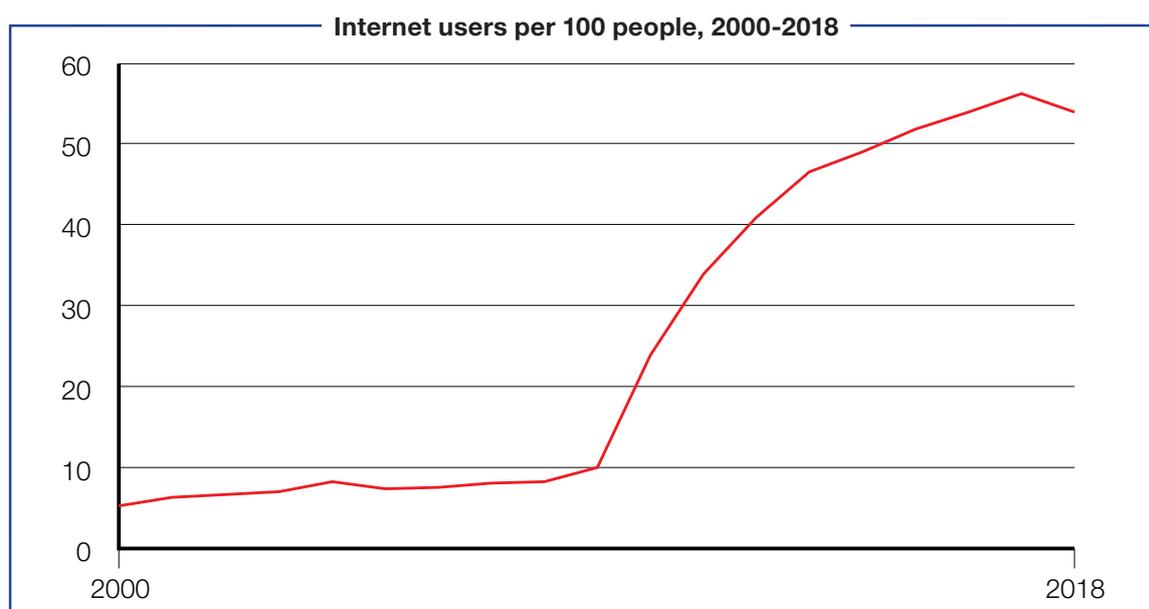
**Households access to Internet by source and province (proportions), 2018**



## Communication

Internet users, 2000-18			
Year	Per 100 people	Year	Per 100 people
2000	5.4	2010	24.0
2001	6.4	2011	34.0
2002	6.7	2012	41.0
2003	7.0	2013	46.5
2004	8.4	2014	49.0
2005	7.5	2015	51.9
2006	7.6	2016	54.0
2007	8.1	2017	56.2
2008	8.4	2018	54.0
2009	10.0		

Source: ITU, [www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int), *Time series by country (2000-2017)*, accessed 25 April 2019; *We are social, Digital 2019: South Africa*, accessed 2 June 2019



Internet users <sup>a</sup> by age, 2016-18				
Age group	July 16-June 17	Jan-Dec 17	Jul 17-Jun 18	Jan-Dec 18
15-24	67.0%	71.0%	77.0%	79.0%
25-34	60.0%	64.0%	69.0%	72.0%
35-49	48.0%	52.0%	56.0%	59.0%
50-64	26.0%	30.0%	33.0%	37.0%
65+	13.0%	16.0%	19.0%	21.0%

Source: BRC, [www.brcsa.org.za](http://www.brcsa.org.za), *The Establishment Survey: March 2019 release*, March 2019, p61

a Past 7-day internet usage.

## Communication

### Devices

**Weekly online activity<sup>a</sup> by device, 2017**

Device	Using a search engine	Visiting a social media platforms	Playing games	Watching videos	Looking for product information
Smartphone	17.0%	30.0%	3.0%	7.0%	4.0%
Computer	5.0%	7.0%	1.0%	3.0%	2.0%

Source: We are social, Digital in 2018 in Southern Africa: *Essential insights into internet, social media, mobile, and ecommerce use across the region*, accessed 26 April 2019

a For example, over an average seven-day period in 2017, 4% of people in South Africa used their smartphones to look for product information.

**Digital device usage<sup>a</sup>, 2015-18**

Device	2015	2016	2017	2018
	Proportion			
Mobile phone (all types)	92.0%	92.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Smart phone	60.0%	69.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Laptop/Desktop Computer	18.0%	20.0%	24.0%	24.0%
Tablet device	7.0%	10.0%	12.0%	12.0%
TV streaming device	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
E-reader device	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Wearable tech device	1.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%

Source: Google Consumer Barometer 2015, [www.consumerbarometer.com](http://www.consumerbarometer.com), accessed 2 May 2017; Google Consumer Barometer 2017, accessed 15 May 2018; We are social, [www.wearsocial.com](http://www.wearsocial.com), *Digital 2019 South Africa*, accessed May 2019

a Ownership by people aged 16 and above.

**Top ten South African websites<sup>a</sup>, 2019**

Rank	Publisher	Category	Unique <sup>b</sup> browsers in South Africa	Page views
1	News24.com	General News	6 457 780	58 822 541
2	Gumtree	Classifieds	4 911 792	109 413 921
3	Independent Online	General News	3 922 521	24 121 269
4	Timeslive.co.za	General News	3 652 242	29 430 066
5	BBC sites	General News	3 359 838	11 286 144
6	Ewn.co.za	Communications	3 072 264	20 483 119
7	Vodacom	General News	2 842 005	39 154 167
8	Citizen.co.za	General News	2 668 729	17 523 167
9	Msn.com	IT News	2 659 820	30 909 109
10	Fin24.com	Vehicles	2 518 044	7 516 894

Source: Narrative, [www.narrative.com](http://www.narrative.com), accessed 21 May 2019

a As at March 2019.

b The number of visitors to a website within a specified reporting period (usually 24 hours). The visitors are recorded only once regardless of the number of times they visit a site.