

Comparison of the Historical Fertility Levels among the Nine Provinces of South Africa

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ABSTRACT Women education, industrialization, urbanization, contraceptive use, etc. have brought fertility levels in developing countries down. Black South African women who were discriminated against by apartheid system and with higher fertility now control much wealth and live in cities as other racial groups. This study uses data from Statistics South Africa on historical fertility to determine whether fertility levels among them have come down; and that there are neither fertility differentials among the provinces nor age groups of the women. Demographic and statistical methods of analysis have been used. Based on the data on children ever born by 2001, this study has found out that fertility level was lowest in the more urbanized and highly educated provinces of Western Cape and Gauteng, and highest in least educated and rural province of Limpopo. The mean number of children ever born is less than three in Western Cape and Gauteng, but five in Limpopo and three in each of the remaining six provinces.

INTRODUCTION

Better estimates of levels, differentials and trends in fertility in sub-Saharan Africa can be made with the information available now than twenty years ago. However, the registration of vital events is very poor, almost non-existent and in most cases where it exists, the results are not useful in sub-Saharan Africa (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) 1989; Kyei 2007).

Fertility is directly determined by a number of factors that in turn, are affected by many social, cultural, economic, education, health, and other environmental factors. Where educated women become much less fatalistic regarding their family size, their fertility levels drop significantly (Cochrane 1979: 104-5). In most research studies, it has been found that desired family size becomes smaller with the increase in women's educational levels after primary school level (Cochrane 1979; Kyei 1995:45). Low level of education has less impact in highly gender-stratified societies than in relatively egalitarian societies.

Despite the advances that South Africa has made in data collection, there is still insufficient data on current fertility (the number of children born in the past twelve months). It is, therefore, difficult to estimate the current fertility levels in the country. Statistics South Africa however, has data on historical fertility- mean number of children ever born. This study uses this information to determine fertility levels and differentials among the provinces and among age groups.

Background

The "new" South Africa was "born" sixteen years now (since 1994). Black women who because of apartheid, were found predominantly in the rural areas without good social and health infrastructure with higher fertility level, now control much wealth and live in cities as other racial groups with access to the best amenities. A fairly good number of women in the child bearing age (15-49 years) work outside home and some are holding key positions in the ruling government and in their work places.

When women become more educated, work outside home, live in urban areas and have access to modern contraception, their fertility levels drop. Fertility level among black women is, therefore, now anticipated to be low and consequently, fertility level in the country is expected to be low. In fact, Theuissen (2002) put the fertility level among the black population at 3.5.

An Overview of the Characteristics of South Africa's Nine Provinces

South Africa is divided into nine provinces, of which Limpopo Province is the northernmost province, lying within the great curve of the Limpopo River. The population of Limpopo (L) consists of several ethnic groups distinguished by culture, language and race. The principal home language is Sesotho, spoken by roughly half of the population, followed by Tshivenda and Xitsonga. With a total area of 125,755 square

kilometers, Limpopo is slightly larger than the US state of Pennsylvania (Limpopo City Guide 2006). It is the fifth-largest (or fifth-smallest) of the country's nine provinces, taking up 10 percent of South Africa's land area and with a mid-2006 population estimate of 5.4 million people (Limpopo City Guide 2006). Limpopo is the second poorest province in South Africa with a poverty rate of 59.1 percent of the total population. The province is predominantly rural and poverty levels differ from one district to another. According to Statistics South Africa 1996 census report, the rural population in the province accounted for 89 percent and the urban only 11 percent. The more the province is rural, the worse the problem of no schooling among the population in that province and the higher the levels of mortality and fertility.

Mpumalanga (MP) lies in the eastern South Africa, north of Kwazulu-Natal and bordering Swaziland and Mozambique. It constitutes 6.5 percent of the South Africa's land area. With a total area of 76,495 square kilometers, Mpumalanga is slightly larger than the Czech Republic. It is the second-smallest province after Gauteng, and with a mid-2006 population of 3.5-million people (Limpopo City Guide 2006). Mpumalanga's urban centers have one of the South African's fastest growing employment rates at 2 percent per annum. The country's highest economic growth rate is at 4 percent per annum. The former farming town of Nelspruit has boomed since being declared capital in 1995, and wears the air of a frontier town, with multinationals setting up offices in Nelspruit to spearhead the expansion into neighbouring Mozambique and Swaziland. Mpumalanga produces about 80 percent of the country's coal and remains the largest production region for forestry and agriculture. Mining, manufacturing and electricity contribute to 41.4 percent of the province's GDP, with the remainder from government services, agriculture, forestry and related industries. Mpumalanga is the fourth-biggest contributor to the South Africa's GDP.

Eastern Cape (EC) was formed in 1994 out of the "independent" homelands of Transkei and Ciskei, as well as the eastern portion of the Cape Province. It is the traditional home of the Xhosa, and the birthplace of many prominent South Africans, such as Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Steve Biko and Charles Coghlan. The majority of people speak isiXhosa, followed by Afrikaans

and English. At 168,966 square kilometers, Eastern Cape is roughly the size of Uruguay. It is the country's second-largest province after the Northern Cape, taking up 13.9 percent of South Africa's land area and with a mid-2006 population estimate of 6.9-million people (Limpopo City Guide 2006). In 1996, it had the third largest population (15.5 percent of the national total of 40.5 million people). Eastern Cape remained the poorest province in South Africa. This is largely due to the extreme poverty found in the former homelands, where subsistence agriculture predominates. It is an agricultural region producing mainly grains and fruits, though there are some cattle and sheep ranches. Eastern Cape has four universities and three technikons (now known as University of Technology). The number of schools that this province had is 5,442. The literacy rate was more or less similar to that of South Africa as a whole. About 86 percent of male residents and 84 percent of female residents could read and write in at least one language.

Northern Cape (NC) is one of the nine newly founded provinces of the Republic of South Africa. It has the biggest land mass of all the provinces, being more than 20 times the size of Gauteng, or thrice the size of the new Federal German Republic. It covers 29.7 percent of South African's land surface at 361,830 square km (Statistics South Africa 2008). Northern Cape is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the west, Namibia and Botswana to its north west and north respectively. It is fringed by the Swartberg mountain range on its southern border with the Western Cape Province in the Calvinia district. By 2001 the official census population of the Northern Cape was 840,000. This comprised a sizeable Coloured component of 51.8 percent followed by Blacks 33.2 percent, Whites 13.3 percent, Indians 0.3 and Chinese and others 1.4. Minor cultural groups also occur in scattered settlements throughout the province. Afrikaans is widely spoken by almost all racial groups, followed by Setswana speakers, about 20 percent, and isiXhosa 6.3 percent. English follows a distant fourth at 2.4 percent. About 70 percent of the population is urbanized while the rest is rural. Kimberly, the capital of the Northern Cape is often called the Diamond Capital of the world.

North West (NW) lies in the north of South Africa next to the Botswana border, fringed by the Kalahari desert in the west, Gauteng province to the east, and Free State to the south. It is

known as the Platinum Province for the wealth of the metal it has underground. With a total area of 106,512 square kilometers, North West is slightly smaller than the US state of Pennsylvania. It is the country's fourth-smallest province, taking up 8.7 percent of South Africa's land area and with a mid-2006 population estimate of 3.4-million people. Two-thirds of the people speak Setswana, the language of the neighboring Botswana, with the rest speaking Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Only 35 percent of the population is urbanized. Of the 3.4 million people in North West, 65 percent live in the rural areas. In spite of its small population, it is estimated that 9 percent of all the poor people in the country live in North West. The poverty rate is estimated at 57 percent. As far as educational attainment and skills availability are concerned, North West lags behind the South African average. The literacy rate is in the region of 57 percent.

Gauteng (G) was formed from the old Transvaal province after South Africa's first all-race democratic elections on 27 April 1994. This part of old Transvaal was called Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (or PWV). The name Gauteng was "born" in December 1994. Situated in the heart of the Highveld, Gauteng is the smallest province in South Africa, with only 1.4 percent or 17,010 square km of the South Africa's land area. It is highly urbanized, containing the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Gauteng province is also the fastest growing province in the country, experiencing a population growth of over 20 percent between the 1996 and 2001 censuses. Thus, Gauteng will be the province with the highest population in South Africa, soon. Gauteng is considered the economic hub of South Africa and contributes heavily to the financial, manufacturing, transport, technology and telecommunications sectors, amongst others. It also plays host to a large number of overseas companies requiring a commercial base and gateway to Africa. Although Gauteng is the smallest of the South Africa's nine provinces, it contributes 33.9 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). Indeed Gauteng generates 10 percent of the GDP of the entire African continent. Gauteng is a centre of learning in South Africa with 8 universities and other schools of higher learning.

Kwazulu-Natal (KZN) prior to 1994 consisted of the territory of Natal and all pieces of region that made up the homeland of Kwazulu. It is located in the southeast of the country; it borders three other provinces and the countries

of Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho, along with a long shoreline on the Indian Ocean. Its capital is Pietermaritzburg and its largest city is Durban. Kwazulu-Natal is home to the Zulu monarchy, and the majority of the population and language of the province is Zulu. It is also the only province in South Africa which includes the name of its dominant ethnic group in its name. The province produces considerable amounts of coal (especially coke) and timber. About 82 percent of the population is black. One of the most urgent crises facing the province is the unparalleled prevalence of the HIV among its citizens. South Africa as a whole has more HIV-positive citizens than any other nation, and Kwazulu Natal province has the highest rate of HIV infection – 39 percent (UNAIDS 2009).

Western Cape (WC) province is in the south west of South Africa. In 1994, after the inauguration of South Africa's first black president Nelson Mandela, the Cape "Province" was divided into three provinces: Western Cape, Northern Cape and Eastern Cape (which encompasses the former Xhosa homelands of Transkei and Ciskei). However, the Western Cape set itself apart early in post-apartheid South African history by being one of the two provinces to have rejected an ANC mandate (the other being Kwazulu-Natal) by electing former South African law and order ministers Hernus Kriel (NP) as the first premier of Western Cape. The constitution of Western Cape was adopted in 1998 and is published in the official languages of the province: Afrikaans, English and Xhosa. Western Cape's total GDP is the third-highest contribution to the country's total, at 14.6 percent. Western Cape is the most highly educated province with very skilled work force in comparison with any other African region. Western Cape has the highest school graduation rate consistently around 80%. The province also boasts of three internationally acclaimed universities, namely the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and the University of Western Cape.

Free State (FS) province has its capital as Bloemfontein, which is also South African's judicial capital. Its historical origin lies in the Orange Free State Boer republic. The current borders of the province date from 1994 when the Bantustans were abolished and included into the provinces of South Africa. It is also the only one of the former provinces of South Africa which has not undergone border changes. The Free State is situated on flat boundless plains in the he-

art of South Africa. The rich soil and pleasant climate allow a thriving agricultural industry. With more than 30,000 farms producing over 70 percent of the country's grains, it is known locally as South African's bread basket. The province is high-lying, with almost all land being 1,000 meters above sea level. Free State is also rich in mineral wealth- gold, representing 20 percent of the world's total gold production. Mining is the province's major employer. The province has 12 gold mines, producing 30 percent of South Africa's output and making it the fifth-largest producer of gold in the world.

METHODOLOGY

Secondary data were used in the study. The data used are from Census 2001. The data cover nine provinces in South Africa. Demographic and statistical methods are used in the analyses. Women in the age group 15 – 49 years were considered. Estimation of mean number of children ever born, parity progression ratios well as graphical presentations are done for easy comparison to showcase the differentials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Zero Parity

Table 1 represents the proportion of women who had not yet given birth by the time of the 2001 interview. As seen in Table 1 and Figure 1, the proportion of women aged 15-19 years that had never given birth was 0.875 in Eastern Cape. That means only about 12.5 percent had given birth to at least one child. About 48.7 percent of women aged 20-24 years had given birth to at least one child, and about 93.5 percent of women aged 40-44 years had given birth to at least one child. In fact for women aged 45-49 years only

6.2 percent had never given birth. Thus, 93.8 percent of these women were fertile. For Free State, almost the same observation was made. The proportion of women aged 15-19 years that had never given birth was 0.866. About 13.4 percent of these women had given birth to at least one child.

For Gauteng, the proportion of women aged 15-19 years that had never given birth was 0.870. About 13 percent of them had given birth to at least one child and for women aged 45-49 years, only 7.6 percent had never given birth. The proportions of women aged 15 – 19 years that had never given birth were 0.828 for Kwazulu Natal, 0.830 for Limpopo, 0.794 for Mpumalanga, 0.867 for North West, 0.840 for Northern Cape, and 0.855 for Western Cape. The proportions of women aged 45 – 49 years that had never given birth were; 6.7 percent for Limpopo, 6.9 percent for Mpumalanga, 6.8 percent for North West, 6.2 percent for Northern Cape and 7.5 percent for Western Cape.

Looking at the provinces, we observe that the highest proportion of women aged 15-19 years who had never given birth was from Eastern Cape (87.5 percent). This was followed by Gauteng and the lowest was from Mpumalanga. Meaning that child birth among women aged 15-19 years was lowest in Eastern Cape and the highest was in Mpumalanga. For women aged 20-24 years, the highest proportion of them who had not given birth at all was from Gauteng (52.8 percent). This was followed by Western Cape with a proportion of 52.2 percent and the lowest was Limpopo. This means that child birth among women aged 20-24 years was lowest in Gauteng, followed by Western Cape and highest in Limpopo.

For women aged 40-44 years, the highest proportion of women who had never given birth was from two provinces: Gauteng and Kwazulu Natal, each with 7.9 percent. They were followed

Table 1: The distribution of zero parity by age group of women

Province	Age group (in years)						
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
E.C	0.875	0.513	0.233	0.115	0.075	0.065	0.062
F.S	0.866	0.511	0.238	0.112	0.076	0.066	0.062
G	0.870	0.528	0.259	0.141	0.095	0.079	0.076
KZN	0.828	0.440	0.225	0.123	0.079	0.079	0.067
L	0.830	0.358	0.137	0.072	0.052	0.044	0.044
MP	0.794	0.397	0.184	0.102	0.077	0.069	0.069
N.W	0.867	0.480	0.206	0.105	0.078	0.070	0.068
N.C	0.840	0.400	0.169	0.094	0.071	0.062	0.062
W.C	0.855	0.522	0.269	0.141	0.088	0.075	0.075

Source: Statistics SA Census 2001

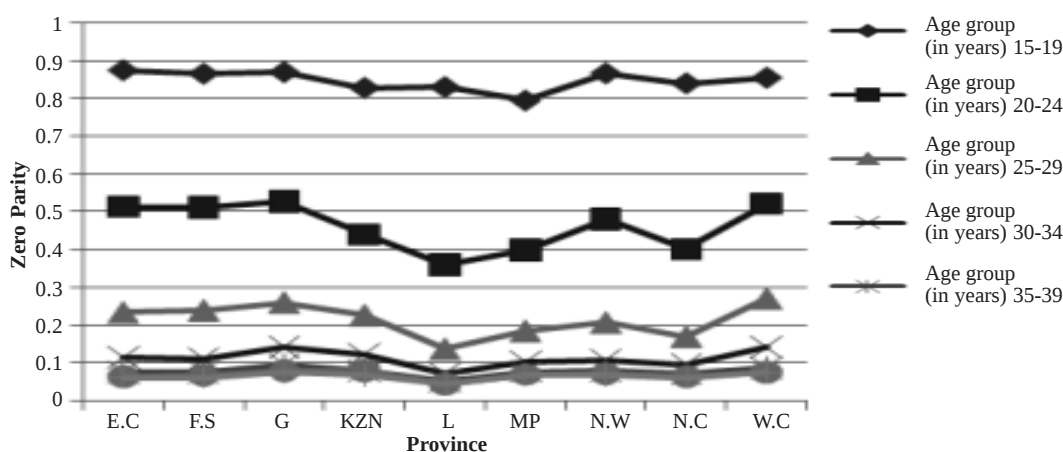


Fig. 1. Distribution of zero parity by age group and province

Source: Statistics SA census 2001

by Western Cape with a proportion of 7 percent. The lowest again was Limpopo. Meaning that, fertility for women aged 40-44 years was highest in Limpopo and lowest in Gauteng.

Finally, for women aged 45-49 years, the highest proportion of women who had not given birth at all was from Gauteng with 7.6 percent which was followed by 7.5 percent from Western Cape. The lowest was 4.5 percent from Limpopo. This confirms that child birth for women aged 45-49 years was lowest in Gauteng and Western Cape and highest in Limpopo. In summary, it can be said from the foregoing discussions that fertility level is high in Limpopo and low in Gauteng and Western Cape.

Mean Number of Children Ever Born (MNCEB)

Table 2 gives the number of children ever born by age group.

As expected, the mean number of children ever born was highest at the age group 45-49

years for all the provinces. These are the “completed” fertility rates and are higher than the mean number of children ever born by women in the lower age groups (Fig. 2).

In Eastern Cape it was observed that the “completed” fertility rate was 3.757. In Free State the “completed” fertility rate was 3.505. The rates in the other provinces were: Gauteng, 2.197; Kwazulu Natal, 3.874; Limpopo 4.817; Mpumalanga, 3.760; North West, 3.610; Northern Cape, 3.336 and Western Cape, 2.858.

The highest “completed” fertility rate was therefore seen in Limpopo followed by Kwazulu Natal and the lowest “completed” fertility rate was seen in Western Cape followed by Gauteng. These observations suggest the fact that fertility levels are higher in the provinces where over 80 percent of the population are blacks, and lower among the non-black population. Limpopo, Kwazulu Natal and Eastern Cape have higher black populations; well over 85 percent of their populations are blacks, poor and rural. On the other hand, Gauteng and Western Cape are most

Table 2: Distribution of the mean number* of children ever born by age group

Province	Age group (in years)						
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
E.C	0.140	0.676	1.492	2.391	3.179	3.698	3.757
F.S	0.147	0.730	1.305	2.033	2.664	3.115	3.505
G	0.145	0.612	1.234	1.884	2.397	2.724	2.917
KZN	0.192	0.714	1.493	2.355	3.132	3.597	3.874
L	0.184	0.863	1.684	2.636	3.579	4.184	4.817
MP	0.227	0.836	1.591	2.625	3.240	3.714	3.760
N.W	0.146	0.682	1.402	2.150	2.810	3.236	3.610
N.C	0.175	0.795	1.504	2.184	2.728	3.136	3.336
W.C	0.157	0.620	1.255	2.253	2.405	2.524	2.858

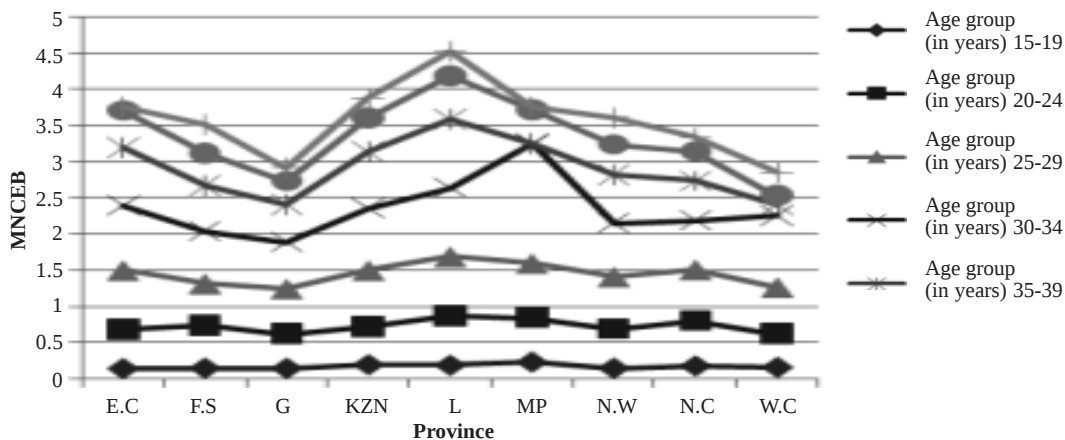


Fig. 2. The mean number of children ever born by age and province
Source: Statistics SA census 2001

urbanized and highly educated with more non-black population comparatively.

The proportion of women with one child was highest in Mpumalanga with 0.186 followed by Limpopo with 0.154 and the lowest was in Eastern Cape with 0.112. The second lowest was in Gauteng with 0.116. For women aged 15-19 with two children, the highest was still in Mpumalanga with 0.031 followed by Kwazulu Natal with 0.029 and the lowest proportion was in Western Cape with 0.018 and the second lowest was in Eastern Cape and Free State with 0.019 each. This means that child bearing starts earlier and is higher in Mpumalanga than other provinces, including Limpopo province.

Table 3 shows the proportion of women aged 20-24 with one or two children specified by province. The table shows that the highest proportions of women with one and two children are found in Limpopo and the lowest proportions found in Gauteng.

In Table 4, the highest proportion of women aged 25-29 years with two children is again from Limpopo.

The proportion of women with two children in Western Cape and Gauteng was highest at age group 30-34 years and followed by those aged 35-39 years. An indication that women in these two provinces join child bearing class late compared with women in all the other provinces probably because of urbanization or economic activities (Fig. 3).

Figures 4 to 7 give the summary of the fertility differentials by age group by province. Interesting information can be retrieved from the figures. For example, in Figure 5, the proportion of women with three children is highest at age 30-34 years in Limpopo. All other provinces except Gauteng and Western Cape, the highest occur at the age 35-39 years, meaning a shift of five years. In Gauteng and Western Cape, the highest happens at the age 40-44 years, a difference of ten years older than that of Limpopo.

Table 3: Parity for the age group 15-19 years by province

Children	Province								
	E.C	F.S	G	KZN	L	MP	N.W	N.C	W.C
1child	0.112	0.122	0.116	0.153	0.154	0.186	0.121	0.146	0.132
2chn	0.019	0.019	0.020	0.029	0.022	0.031	0.020	0.023	0.018

Source: Statistics SA Census 2001

Table 4: Proportion of women aged 20-24 with children by province

Children	E.C	F.S	G	KZN	L	MP	N.W	N.C	W.C
One	0.344	0.364	0.356	0.392	0.465	0.421	0.387	0.436	0.358
Two	0.216	0.203	0.193	0.195	0.288	0.285	0.218	0.274	0.202

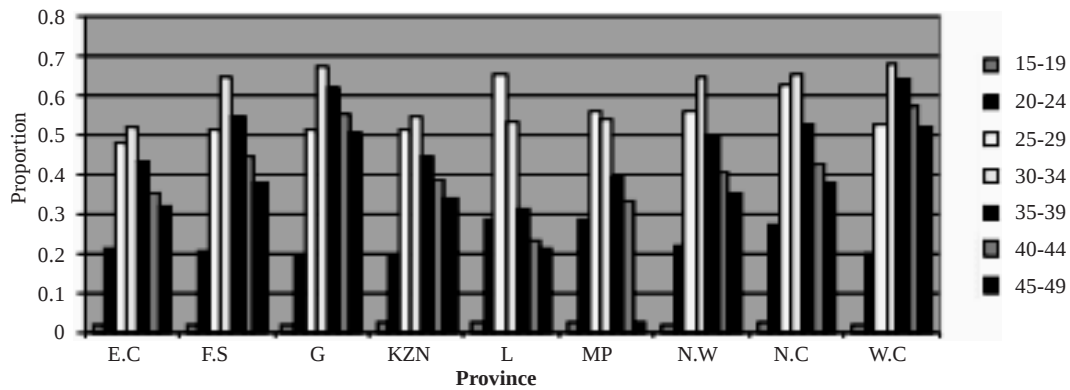


Fig. 3. The proportion of women with two children by age-group by province

Source: Statistics South Africa, 2001

From Figure 4, the proportion of women with three children in Limpopo and Mpumalanga was highest at the age group 30-34 years, while the highest proportion of women was at 35 – 39 years in the other six provinces. For Gauteng and Western Cape, the highest proportion of women with three children was at age group 40 – 44 years

Similar observation is made for women with four children. As can be seen from Figure 6, the highest proportion of women with four children in Limpopo and Mpumalanga was at the age group 35-39 years while the highest in the other six provinces occurred at 40 – 44 years, in contrast with Gauteng and Western Cape provinces where the highest proportion occurred at 45 – 49. The figure shows that though Limpopo and Mpumalanga appear to have the same distribution, the proportion of women with four children

in Limpopo is far higher (> 0.8) than that of Mpumalanga (< 0.62).

Again, similar observation was made for women with five children. While the highest proportion in Limpopo is at the age group 40 – 44 years, the highest for all the provinces, including Mpumalanga is at 45 – 49 years. Besides, in all the provinces, the highest proportion of women with five children is less than 0.65, in Limpopo the highest proportion is more than 0.8 (Table 5).

For women aged 45-49 years, the proportion which had not given birth to at least one child at the time of the interview ranges from 8 percent in Western Cape and Gauteng (the lowest), to 4.6 percent in Limpopo (the highest). Similarly, the mean number of children ever born for the same women aged (45-49 years) was lowest in

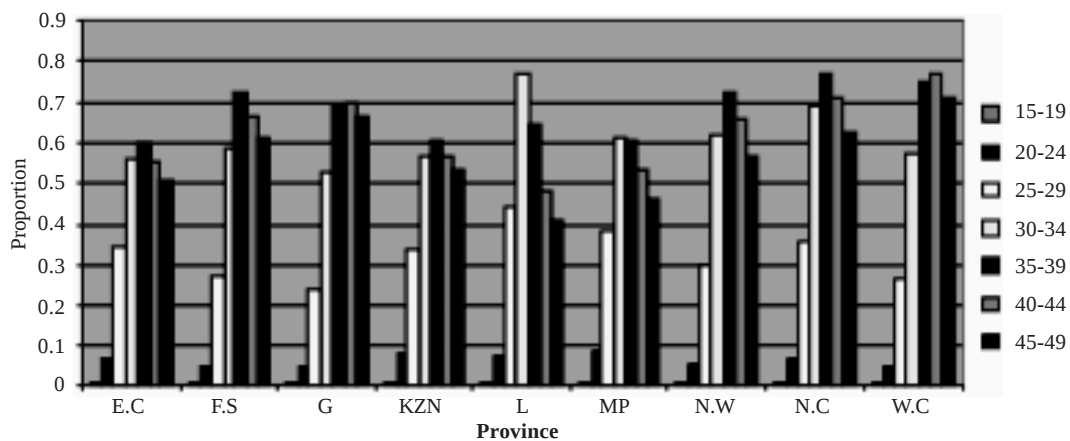


Fig. 4. The proportion of women with three children by age-group by province

Source: Statistics South Africa, 2001

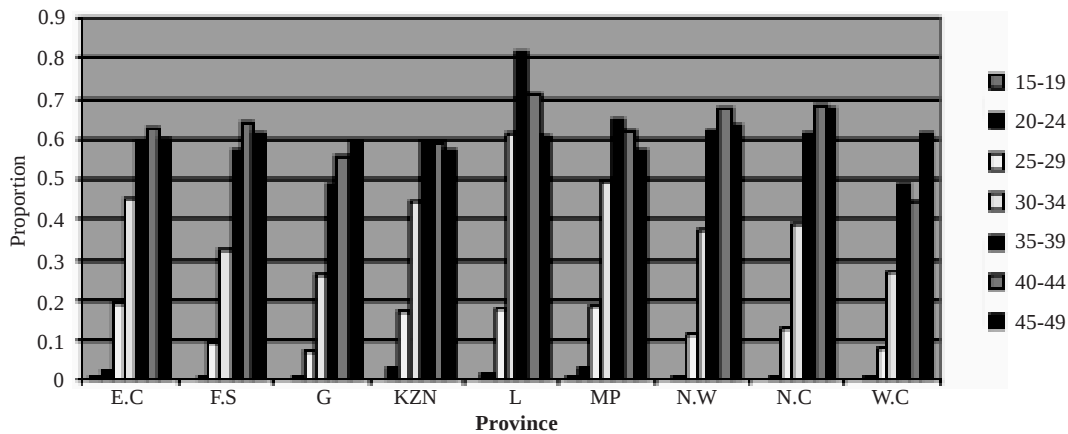


Fig. 5. The proportion of women with four children by age-group by province
Source: Statistics South Africa, 2001

Table 5: Parity Progression Ratio (PPR) for women aged 45-49 years

Province	PPR					
	A0	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5
E.C	0.937	0.900	0.809	0.753	0.709	0.669
F.S	0.937	0.884	0.771	0.682	0.646	0.750
G	0.922	0.858	0.682	0.591	0.536	0.523
KZN	0.932	0.901	0.795	0.734	0.706	0.685
L	0.954	0.929	0.881	0.826	0.765	0.685
MP	0.929	0.901	0.827	0.778	0.737	0.699
N.W	0.931	0.890	0.789	0.711	0.657	0.626
N.C	0.935	0.897	0.776	0.679	0.619	0.579
W.C	0.921	0.873	0.677	0.563	0.498	0.467

Source: Statistics SA Census 2001

Western Cape, 2.86 percent and Gauteng 2.93, and was highest in Limpopo, being 4.52, which was followed by Kwazulu Natal with 3.87. And in fact considering the “completed” fertility level, it could be said that the province with the lowest fertility is Western Cape, 2.86, followed by Gauteng, 2.92, Northern Cape, 3.34, Free State, 3.51, North West, 3.61, Eastern Cape, 3.76, Mpumalanga, 3.76, Kwazulu Natal, 3.87 and the highest is Limpopo, 4.52.

Table 6 for modal parity shows that Gauteng and Western Cape have the lowest number of two children per woman for women aged 45-49 years. While the modal parity for the other provinces was three children, that of Limpopo was five children for the same age group 45-49 years.

Even though we do not have enough data to confirm, from the figures above we could however say that fertility is highest in the provinces that have a high proportion of the African population, and is lowest in provinces with a high proportion of the non-blacks groups (see also

Theuissen 2002). Provinces that are highly urbanized such as Gauteng and Western Cape have lower fertility as compared to the least urbanized provinces of Limpopo and Eastern Cape.

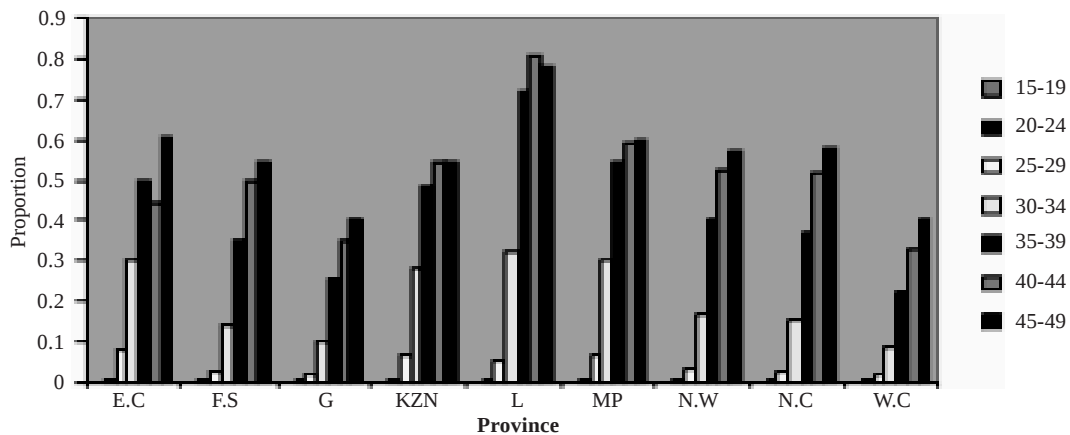
Western Cape and Gauteng are the most urbanized provinces and with most economic activity in the country. Western Cape is the most highly educated province in the country while Gauteng is considered the economic hub of South Africa. Therefore the fact that fertility levels in these two provinces are lowest is therefore not surprising because they support the general theory of fertility (Lotter and Van Tonder 1976: 42).

The foregoing analyses and tables show that teenage fertility level is fairly high. More than 10 percent of the young women aged 15-19 years have had at least one child. The proportion ranges from 20.5 percent in Mpumalanga (the highest) to 12.4 percent in Eastern Cape (the lowest). The second lowest is Gauteng with 12.9 percent. Thus, fertility starts relatively earlier in Mpuma-

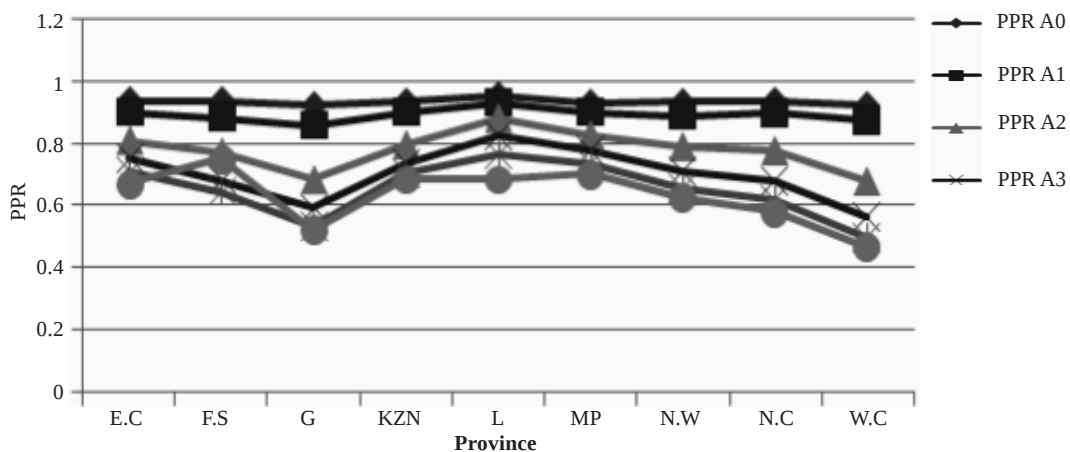
Table 6: Modal parity for women aged 45-49 years

Province	Age	Parities						Total
		P0	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	
F.S	45-49	0.062	0.108	0.189	0.203	0.154	0.108	0.82
L	45-49	0.045	0.067	0.105	0.135	0.151	0.155	0.65
MP	45-49	0.070	0.092	0.144	0.153	0.141	0.119	0.72
NW	45-49	0.068	0.101	0.175	0.188	0.159	0.114	0.80
NC	45-49	0.064	0.095	0.187	0.208	0.168	0.115	0.83
WC	45-49	0.078	0.116	0.259	0.237	0.154	0.081	0.92
G	45-49	0.077	0.130	0.251	0.220	0.148	0.081	0.90
KZN	45-49	0.067	0.091	0.171	0.177	0.144	0.109	0.75
E.C	45-49	0.062	0.093	0.160	0.168	0.149	0.120	0.75

Source: Statistics SA Census 2001

**Fig. 6. The proportion of women with five children by age-group by province**

Source: Statistics SA census 2001

**Fig. 7. Parity progression rate for women aged 45 – 49 years**

Source: Statistics SA census 2001

langa than in Limpopo. Comparatively fertility level in Gauteng for the younger women (15-24 years) is lower than their counterparts in the

Western Cape, but the level for older women 40-49 years is lower in Western Cape than in Gauteng.

There were similarities in the pattern of the fertility levels. For example, for the distribution of zero parity for women aged 15-19 years, the pattern was the same for Free State and North West, and also almost same for Gauteng and Western Cape. For the modal parity, the pattern was also the same in Gauteng and Western Cape. For women aged 20-24 years, the highest proportion with at least two children was from Limpopo, 28.8 percent and the lowest was Gauteng with 19.3 percent.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that fertility (the mean number of children born), and in particular, historical fertility (mean number of children ever born) in South Africa is not very high, about 3 children per women except in Limpopo where it is 5 children.

The modal number of children born to women aged 15-24 years was one child for all the provinces. But the modal number of children ever born to women aged 40-49 years was three children per woman for six provinces, namely Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, Kwazulu Natal, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga, and two children in Western Cape and Gauteng. For Limpopo however, the modal number of children was five for women in the same age bracket 40-49 years.

The study has found that by 2001, the completed fertility was three children per woman and that the lowest fertility level was found in the more urbanized and highly educated provinces of Western Cape and Gauteng, while the highest found in the least educated and rural province of Limpopo.

NOTES

*The number of children has been expressed in 3 decimal places which is *illogical* because we are dealing with human beings. However, because of the closeness of the values from one age group to another, or from one province to another, it has become necessary that the calculation be done to 3 decimal places in order to enable us to spell out differences among them clearly.

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