



FAST FACTS

Migrants in South Africa



Many South Africans experience terrible hardships – but migrants are not the cause. **Blaming migrants means the real problems never get fixed.**

EIGHT MYTHS AND WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

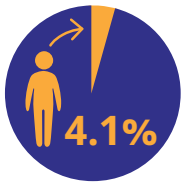
MYTH 1



"Millions of illegal immigrants are flooding the country"

FACT

4.1% of the population



The South African Census shows migrants are **2.4 million** out of **58.5 million** people in South Africa - just **4.1%**. This includes all types of migrants – documented and undocumented. The census counts everyone present on census night regardless of legal status. Anyone missing or "hiding" is adjusted for via the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES).

Stats SA Census 2022; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) International Migrant Stock 2024; IES 2022/23

MYTH 2



"Migrants are stealing our jobs"

FACT

2 jobs created per immigrant employed



Data shows that migrants in South Africa act as net job creators rather than job displacers. A 2018 World Bank report shows that for every migrant employed, about 2 jobs are created for South Africans through business activity. This is supported by local and institutional research including the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), which confirms migrant entrepreneurs frequently hire South African workers. Many migrants have no choice but to generate their own employment - in retail, tailoring, food services and repair. Research shows they are embedded in networks that include South African workers, suppliers, landlords and wholesalers.

World Bank 2018; Stats SA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) 2022 Q3; HSRC 2022
Mago, S. (2023) Migrant entrepreneurship, social integration and development in Africa

MYTH 3



"Migrants are clogging up our hospitals"

FACT

Many avoid public services entirely



Many migrants with documents use private healthcare. Many without documents avoid clinics out of fear of being reported or deported. Research shows migrants are actually less likely than South Africans to seek care even when sick. Those who do use public services pay the same fees as citizens - or more.

BMC Public Health 2021; Scalabrini Centre; Stats SA QLFS 2022

MYTH 4



"Migrants are collapsing the health system"

FACT

R2 billion - from one hospital



Corruption and maladministration are the real problems to the health system. For example, the government's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) found that **R2 billion** was looted from Tembisa Hospital by government officials alone - not migrants. The Health Department Director-General was arrested in 2026 for fraud. Between 2009 - 2013, **R24 billion** in irregular health expenditure was recorded nationally.

SIU Interim Report September 2025; IOL March 2026

MYTH 5



"Migrants are draining our social grants"

FACT

Less than 0.5% of grant recipients are migrants



By law, the only migrants who can access grants are permanent residents and refugees. Of **13.2 million** Child Support Grant recipients in 2024, only **57,715** were non-SA-born children. Of **165,000** Care Dependency Grant recipients, just **657** were non-SA-born. **Most migrants cannot access grants** even if they wanted to.

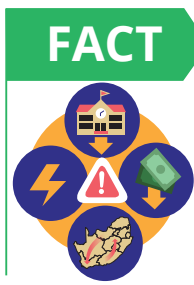
SASSA data 2024; Social Assistance Act 2004; Stats SA Census 2022

EIGHT MYTHS AND WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

MYTH 6



"Migrants are causing unemployment"



FACT

32.4% unemployment — a structural crisis

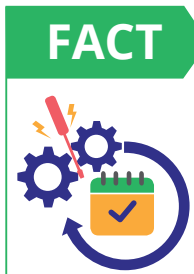
Unemployment comes from failing schools, load-shedding, low investment, and apartheid's legacy - not migration - as confirmed by data from the World Bank. The World Bank says migration is not the cause. Meanwhile, **8.1 million** South Africans moving between provinces put far more pressure on services – because systems don't sufficient plan for people moving - than all international migrants combined.

World Bank 2025; Stats SA Census 2022; QLFS 2022 Q3

MYTH 7



"Undocumented migrants are in SA illegally- by choice"



FACT

Home Affairs is broken for everyone

Many migrants were legally documented before their permits expired and **renewals stalled** – sometimes for years. Around **13%** of South African citizens also lack adequate ID, for the same reasons: backlogs, corruption, and system failure. Undocumented does not mean unwilling to be documented. It often means being failed by the same broken system that fails millions of South Africans too.

Stats SA Census 2022; civil society submissions to the Revised White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection (2026)

MYTH 8



"More deportations will fix things"



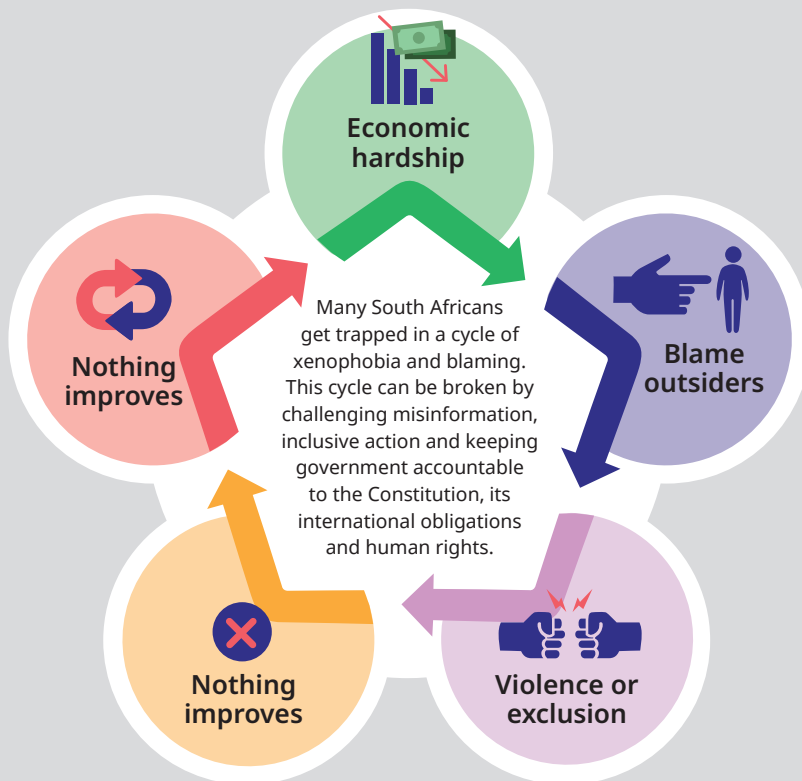
FACT

109 000+ deported — nothing changed

Government deported over **109 000** people between 2024-2026. Migration continues at the same rate. Research across multiple countries consistently shows that enforcement-only approaches do not reduce migration – they push it underground, make journeys more dangerous, and create conditions for exploitation and trafficking. South Africa spent over **R73 million** on detention alone in 2024/25. The evidence is clear: functional humane systems reduce harm and costs. Harsher enforcement of broken ones does neither.

IOM World Migration Report 2022; Castles, Ethnic and Racial Studies (2004); DHA Annual Report 2024/25

THE CYCLE OF XENOPHOBIA AND SCAPEGOATING



Reporting incidents of Xenophobia and Fact checking claims:

REPORTING XENOPHOBIA

- Report incidents of xenophobia immediately to your local police station or call **10111** – it is SAPS's duty to assist.
- Lodge a human rights complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission office in your province see <https://www.sahrc.org.za/lodge-complaints> **011 877 3600**
- Remember to write down all the details including Location of the incident: Township/Village/City, Street name; Date & Time of incident; Short description of the incident, and names and/or descriptions of people involved
- You can ensure that the incident is included in a research tracker by sending information of xenophobic incidents to Xenowatch via to **+27 (0) 63 839 0124** with the details above.
- Report biased or xenophobic journalism to the Press Council of SA at <https://presscouncilsa.org.za/complaints/>

FACT CHECKING

- If you come across something that you think is misinformation alert Whats Crap () on **+27 82 709 3527** They will fact check such things