

Poverty is a concept that is difficult to define. Poverty occurs when individuals are unable to obtain sufficient resources that will enable them to meet a minimum standard of living. Vulnerability is when the individual is unable to cope during a time of crisis. The linkages between poverty and the environment can be understood in terms of the risks and vulnerabilities poor people face when trying to secure a livelihood. Poor people are often victims as well as agents of environmental change.

The indicators selected for this purpose include:

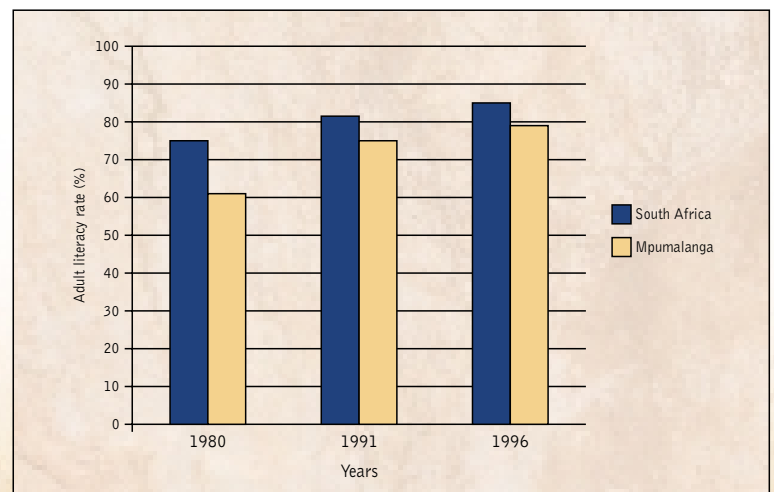
- Household income;
- Adult literacy rate;
- Unemployment rate;
- Life expectancy;
- Notifiable diseases;
- HIV/AIDS prevalence; and
- Level of service provision.

### Household income

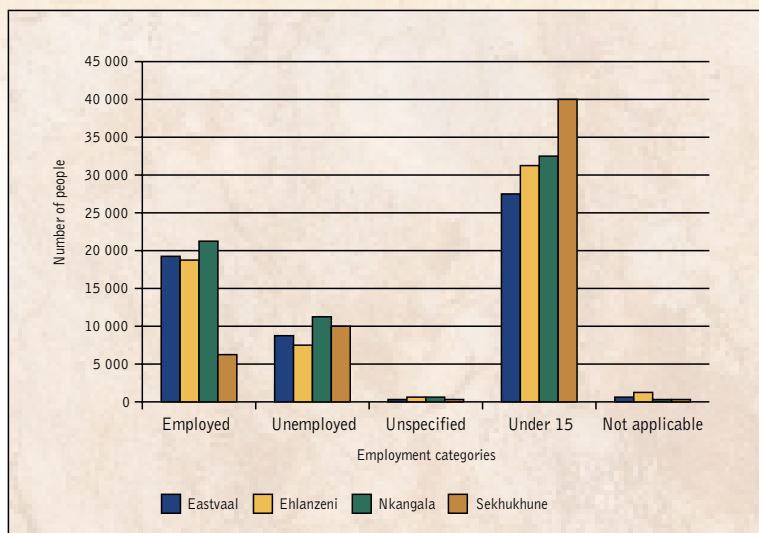
Household income is provided as an indicator of people's formal financial resources, although it does not provide an indication of the number of households living below the poverty line in Mpumalanga. The poverty line is an income level below which individuals are not able to maintain an acceptable standard of living. For South Africa the household poverty line is an income of R800 per household per month, while the individual poverty line is an income of R250 per person per month. In Mpumalanga 60% of households live below the poverty line while 68% of individuals receive an income less than R250 per month.

### Adult literacy rate

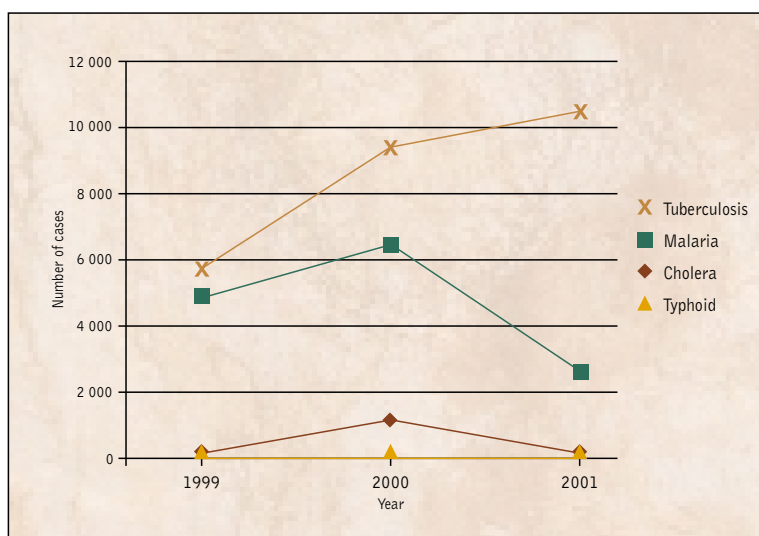
The literacy rate is the proportion of the adult population aged 15 years and older that are able to read and write. The literacy rate in Mpumalanga (79% in 1996) is still below the national literacy rate (86% in 1996) although it has increased over the past two decades.



Adult literacy rate in Mpumalanga and South Africa (Statistics SA)



Status of employment in Mpumalanga - 1996 (Municipal Demarcation Board)



Notifiable diseases in South Africa (Department of Health)



### Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate in Mpumalanga is reported to be 33%, marginally lower than the national unemployment rate of 34%. A significant trend is shown in the figures, where employment of children under the age of 15 years is in most districts double the number of employed adults. In all four district municipalities children under the age of 15 years appear to be the dominant labour source.

### Life expectancy

Life expectancy measures the number of years that a new born baby could expect to live if he/she were to pass through life subject to the age-specific death rates of a given period. The life expectancy in Mpumalanga in 1980 was 57.7 years. This figure rose to 62.4 years in 1991 but decreased again to 53.5 years in 1996. This recent decline in life expectancy is possibly due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the province.

### Notifiable diseases

This indicator reports on four of the 44 notifiable diseases in South Africa, tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid and malaria. Of these four diseases, tuberculosis has increased the most in recent years. Malaria has also shown an increasing trend since 1996. Figures for 2001 are incomplete.

### HIV/AIDS prevalence

HIV/AIDS is a concern in both Mpumalanga and the rest of South Africa. Recent surveys show the ante-natal HIV prevalence in Mpumalanga to be roughly 30% since 1998. The national HIV prevalence is only 25%.

### Level of service provision

The level of service provision in Mpumalanga differs between services. Most households rely on pit latrines for sanitation, while tapped water is common in most municipalities. Natural water sources are used by many households in Sekhukhune. The majority of households have access to a public telephone rather than one in their own dwelling. Formal housing is the dominant housing type. Electrification appears to be increasing and is the dominant energy source in the province. Many households still have no refuse removal services and must rely on their own dump for this purpose.