

The North West Province¹



Source: www.commonwealth-towns.net/.../north_west.htm

Basic Statistical Overview²

Capital	Mafikeng						
Principal Languages	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Setswana</td> <td>67,2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Afrikaans</td> <td>7,5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IsiXhosa</td> <td>5,4%</td> </tr> </table>	Setswana	67,2%	Afrikaans	7,5%	IsiXhosa	5,4%
Setswana	67,2%						
Afrikaans	7,5%						
IsiXhosa	5,4%						
Population	3,562,280						
% of total	8,3%						
Area (km²)	116 320						
% of total	9,5%						
GGP* at current prices	R22,974 million						
% of total GDP**	5.3%						
Per Capita GGP	R 6,905						
Economically active population	1.35 million						
% of population	37.7%						

The North-West province is one of the smaller provinces of South Africa and is completely landlocked with its northern neighbour being Botswana. At present, it has no major airport, but has strong functional links with Gauteng.

The capital is Mafikeng, and other important towns include: Klerksdorp, Orkney and Stilfontein, the three most important centres of gold and uranium production; Potchefstroom and Rustenburg and Brits, an important irrigation agricultural area with its adjacent industrial growth point, GaRankuwa. Rustenburg is the location of two of the biggest platinum mines in the world, while new platinum mines are being developed on a large scale. Other minerals such as chrome, palladium, nickel and copper are also mined. There are large granite quarries 19km from Rustenburg. Agriculture however is also important for Rustenburg as it is one of the country's most important citrus

1 The information for this section is from the following sources: www.nwpg.org.za; www.nw-platinumprovince.co.za

2 1999 Statistics SA estimates based on 1996 census

areas. The cultivation of tobacco also plays an important role and 187 million kg of tobacco on average are yearly cultivated on approximately 19 500 ha. The phenomenal growth of the town can be measured against the fact that over the past 15 years the growth rate fluctuated between 3.55% and 15.50% - at all times higher than the national growth rate.

Some of the biggest tourist attractions of the province are the Pilanesberg National Park, the Madikwe Game Reserve, and the Sun City and the Lost City resort of Sun International

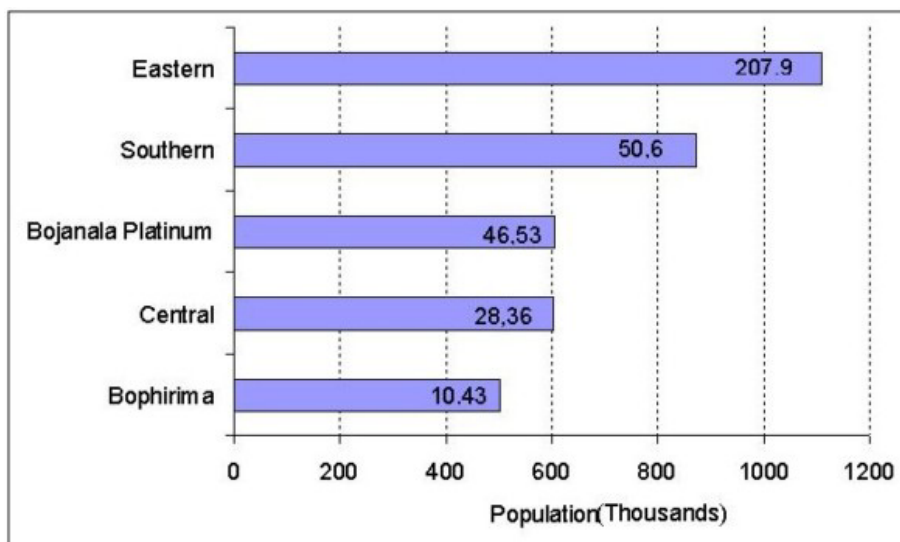
Pilanesberg is the fourth largest park in South Africa. It boasts a 140km road network and attracts 120,000 visitors annually, many of whom spend at least a night with accommodation ranging from safari tents, chalets and caravan parks to luxury hotels. Situated only about 15 kilometres from Sun City and an hour's drive from Johannesburg International Airport, Pilanesberg is one of the largest national parks in southern Africa and home to the "Big Five".

The people

About 3.5 million people reside in the North-West on some 116,320 km² of land. The main languages spoken are Setswana, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa. The human resource development levels in this province are low, with 22.7 % cent of adults never having received any formal education. There are two universities in the North-West: Potchefstroom University and the University of the North-West.

The Province is divided into four district municipalities (the Bophirima, Central, Southern, Bojanala Platinum and Eastern) and 21 local municipalities. The former Eastern District Municipality has recently been incorporated into the Bojanala Platinum District Municipality.

Distribution of the population by district



The majority of the North-West's population is found in the Eastern District Region which is the most densely populated in the province (208 people / km²). Bophirima District Region has the least population with the least demographic density (10.43 people / km²). The population is currently growing at a rate of 3.1% per annum, thus increasing the need to meet the food and energy requirements of the people.

About 3.1 million people are of African descent (91.2%), while Whites make up 6.6%, Coloureds 1.4% and Asians 0.3%. The male-female ratios are 49.2% and 50.8% respectively. The population is relatively young, with a high percentage of teenagers, and more than 33% of the total population is younger than 14 years old.

The Province is predominantly rural, with 65.1% of the population living in rural areas and 34.9% in urban areas. However, the rate of urbanisation is increasing, largely due to the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas. There are numerous industrialised towns found in the eastern part where platinum and gold mining have stimulated development. There are no large cities (> 1 million people) within the province and the distribution of settlements, particularly the smaller ones, has been highly influenced by policies of colonialism and apartheid. Very few settlements are self-sustaining and therefore rely on external resources. Generally, the rural settlements, informal settlements and traditional villages are on state or tribal land have poorly developed or few basic services. Most of the land in the province is privately owned.

Economic trends and structures

The North West is made up of sections of the previously independent homeland state Bophuthatswana, plus parts of the former Transvaal and Cape provinces. It is well positioned in relation to the economic powerhouse of Gauteng in the east and Botswana in the west, with strong functional road and rail links.

The main economic sectors are agriculture, mining and tourism and investment opportunities are seen in the following sectors: agri-business, food processing, dimension stone, leather tanning & finishing, and tourism & eco-tourism. The North-West’s economy, with the exception of the mines, is characterised by small, medium and micro-enterprises.

The economy of the province is relatively small, with a 4.9% contribution to the South African national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is mainly natural resource based, with the main contributors being the mining (35.5%) and agricultural (35%) sectors. Recently an increase in the manufacturing, retail and tourism sectors has led to diversification and upswing in the economy (with a 2% growth rate being reported in 2001).

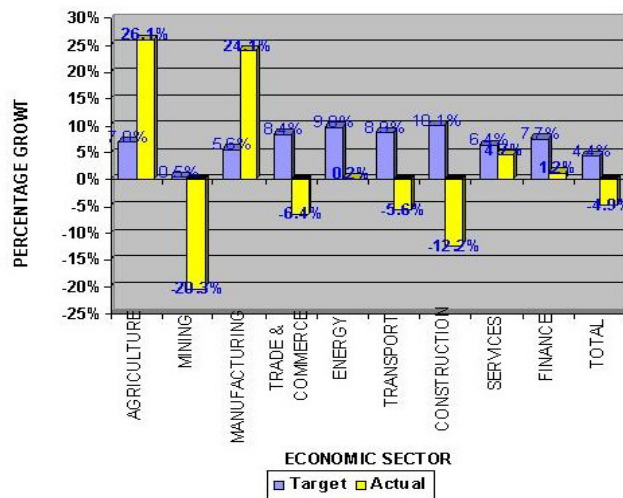


Figure 1: growth rates of the main economic sectors of the North West Province in 2001

The North-West is one of the most important food baskets of South Africa. A third of South Africa’s maize is produced here, as well as sunflower oil, groundnuts, fruit, tobacco, cotton and wheat. Some of the largest cattle herds in the world are found near Vryburg. The areas around Rustenburg and Brits are fertile mixed-crop farming land. Crops include tobacco, citrus, paprika, wheat, peppers, cotton and sunflowers. Agriculture in the eastern, wetter parts of the Province largely comprises livestock and crop farming, while the semi-arid central and western parts have livestock and wildlife farming. Approximately 54% of the surface area has been transformed by agriculture. The North West Province has a dualistic agricultural economy, which is comprised of a well-developed commercial sector and a predominantly subsistence sector in communal areas. There are approximately 7,600 commercial farms. The number of small-scale farmers in the former Bophuthatswana amounts to approximately

147,000. Three major irrigation schemes are located on the Crocodile, Vaal and Harts Rivers. The Vaal-Harts irrigation scheme covers a total area of about 43,700 ha with wheat, maize and groundnuts taking 36%, 23% and 22% respectively of the total irrigated fields.

Known as the Platinum Province because it generates 94% of South Africa's platinum production, the North West also produces 46% of South Africa's granite and 25% of its gold. Diamonds are mined at Lichtenburg, Koster, Christiana and Bloemhof, while Orkney and Klerksdorp have rich gold-mines. The area around Rustenburg and Brits is the largest single platinum production area in the world. Marble is also mined here, but mainly in Taung, noted for its variety and high quality. Fluorspar is mined at Zeerust. Mining plays a dominant role in the economy of the province, contributing some 55% of its GGP and employing 18.5% of the active provincial labour force (approximately 100,000 workers). There are 87 large active mines in the Province, which is 10% of the national total. Most of the mining activity is in the Eastern, Southern and Bojanala Platinum Regions. There is very little mining activity in the Bophirima Region. Alluvial diamond mining still occurs in ancient river beds within the Harts River catchment and some rivers in the central and southern regions.

Industry is centred around the towns of Brits, Klerksdorp, Vryburg and Rustenburg. The Brits industries concentrate mostly on manufacturing and construction, while those at Klerksdorp are geared for the mining industry, and those at Vryburg and Rustenburg for agriculture. Much of the future growth of the province is predicted to lie in manufacturing, with great potential for investment in the areas of both infrastructure and industry. The manufacturing of non-metallic mineral products (24.9%), metal products, machinery and household appliances (18.3%), and food beverages and tobacco products (19.5%) account for the majority of manufacturing production. Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, Brits and Rustenburg are the major contributors to manufacturing, contributing between them more than 50% of total manufacturing production.

The wholesale and retail sector is the third largest economic sector in the North West Province and has increased in importance since 1990, growing to an output of R 4,7 billion in 1999 (5% growth per annum). The contribution to the provincial economy was 11.2% in 1999.

Tourism

The North West Province, with its favourable geographical location close to the main hubs of Gauteng, as well as its eco-tourism potential is one of South Africa's most visited provinces. It is estimated that international tourism generating R1.4 billion in 1999.

The main corridors for tourism are: Hartbeespoort-Rustenburg-Sun City-Madikwe Game Reserve; Hartebeespoort-Rustenburg-Zeerust-Mafikeng-Lehurutshe, and Gauteng-Potchefstroom-Klerksdorp-Wolmaransstad-Bloemhof.

The main tourist attractions are:

- the casino and leisure resorts of Sun City and The Lost City (the "Las Vegas" of South Africa).
- The Magaliesberg, a wilderness area with 125km of mountain ridge.
- The Pilanesberg National Park, situated in an extinct volcano,
- the game reserves at Madikwe
- and Rustenburg provide a foundation for the development of eco-tourism.

Tourism investment in South Africa in general has grown from R 1.4 billion in 1995 to R 1.8 billion in 1997, before tapering off to R 1.1 billion in 1998. For this period, a total investment of R 4.4 billion was thus made into the tourism industry. The bulk of this investment was made in the metropolitan areas of Gauteng (51%) and the Western Cape (18%), while a relatively small amount of 5% went to the North West province. Of the 220 million that was invested in the North West province between 1995 and 1998 29% was made in the accommodation

sector, 25% in gaming and 21% in tourism resorts, i.e. in particular Sun City. Only 2% was invested in Ecotourism products, although the province places great emphasis on developing this segment.