

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO. 198

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(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 01)

Mrs M O Clarke (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:

- (1) What is the current ratio of (a) patient to doctor and (b) patient to nurse in public (i) hospitals and (ii) clinics (aa) nationally and (bb) provincially,
- (2) what are the forecast ratios over the medium term?

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REPLY:

- Patient-to-Doctor and Patient-to-Nurse Ratios:

The figures below presents the patient-to-doctor and patient-to-nurse ratios in South Africa's public healthcare sector calculated based on overall provincial 2022 census report against the number of employed health practitioners. These figures represent the combined data for both hospitals and clinics, without differentiating between the two. Furthermore, medical doctors from district and regional hospitals may be responsible for managing patients at local primary healthcare (PHC) facilities through outreach programs.

Province	Census 2022 Population	Public Service Doctors	Doctor per 10 000 population	Public Service Nurses	Nurse per 10 000 population
Eastern Cape	7 230 204	2263	3.280	10510	14.535
Free State	2 964 412	1140	3.846	2917	9,843
Gauteng	15 099 422	7143	4.730	15507	10.941
KwaZulu-Natal	12 423 007	4763	3.834	15510	12.484
Limpopo	6 572 721	1674	2.547	8004	12.180
Mpumalanga	5 143 224	1404	2.730	6097	11.848
North West	3 804 548	1534	4.032	4549	11.962
Northern Cape	1 355 945	498	3.672	1247	9.200
Western Cape	7 433 020	3391	4.562	5311	7.143

Source: 2022 Census and January 2025 Persal /Data (HRIS)

However, the national ratio for public is calculated on 2022 census report minus the insured population, 8.95 million people, as provided by the annual report of Council of Medical Schemes. Notwithstanding that some of the insured population does make use of public health care services for various reasons, ranging from actual diagnosis like TB to exhausted benefits.

The National public health coverage is as follows:

- Doctor-to-Patient Ratio: 1:2 230 (4.484 doctors per 10 000 population)
- Nurse-to-Patient Ratio: 1:762 (13.123 nurses per 10 000 population)

- Forecasted Ratios Over the Medium Term:

In relation to the work that was put into developing the Human Resources for Health (HRH) Strategy 2030, projections suggest that South Africa will face a significant shortage of healthcare professionals in the coming years. By 2030, the country is expected to have a shortfall of approximately 97,000 health workers (including all categories) to address inequities across the provinces.

The HRH Strategy indicates that due to population growth alone, the shortfall in essential health workers will worsen by 2030 if health workforce expenditure increases only in line with inflation. For financial year 2025/26 the department will be conducting a mid-term review of the strategy with an intention to develop practical projections and

implementation plan towards 2030.

It is important to note that these figures are subject to change based on various factors, including policy interventions, training and retention programs, and changes in healthcare demand.

To project the doctor and nurse-to-patient ratios in South Africa, it is assumed that the healthcare workforce will grow by 5% over the next five years, with the population size remaining relatively stable. This increase in the workforce is expected to result in improved doctor and nurse-to-patient ratios.

The Projected National public health coverage is as follows:

- Doctor-to-Patient Ratio: 1:2 123 (from 1:2 234)
- Nurse-to-Patient Ratio: 1:729 (from 1:767)

END.