

WISE MOVE

Wise Move Migration Report

2025

Table of contents

3 The Great South African shift

6 Where are we headed?

8 Cities we love and towns to watch

11 The moving calendar

13 Days that move us

16 What's the change?

19 What's driving the move?

21 The pulse of SA moves

Welcome to the inaugural 2025 South African Migration Report

A note from our CEO

We tend to think of moving to a new home as a personal milestone—somewhere to start fresh or settle down. But behind every relocation lies a wider economic ripple that reaches far beyond the four walls of a new house.

Each new resident influences property markets, local businesses, and even infrastructure development. In many ways, these moves offer a window into broader trends: Where are jobs emerging? Which areas are gaining popularity, and why? How are neighbourhoods adapting to meet the needs of new arrivals?

We wanted to understand how these movements influence not just where people live, but how they shape communities, drive growth, and create new opportunities. The 2025 Wise Move Migration Report sets out to explore the patterns behind the moves and discover what they reveal about South Africa's shifting economic landscape.

Having helped over 25,000 South African families relocate, we've seen how moving isn't just about logistics — it's about new beginnings. But we wanted to dig deeper. Migration has always been part of South Africa's story. During COVID-19, we saw people leaving cities in search of support, family, and Ubuntu. What's happened since?



This report uncovers the shifts in moving trends, highlighting what's shaping the landscape for the year ahead.

If you're curious about where people are heading — or where you might find your next opportunity — this report is for you.

Chante Venter

Co-Founder and CEO, Wise Move

Migration

The Great South African shift

We explore how South Africa's migration trends are reshaping the economy — uncovering shifting moving patterns, the rise of new growth hubs, and the far-reaching economic ripple effects of relocations across the country.

Migration trends

Considering inter-provincial movement, all roads seem to lead to Gauteng — or do they? As South Africa’s economic powerhouse, Gauteng naturally attracts young professionals starting their careers.

However, the data reveals a striking trend. While Gauteng saw a high volume of internal migration, it faced the largest net loss of residents (-20.1%) for 2024. It seems that while many South Africans head to Johannesburg to launch their careers, most eventually move on.

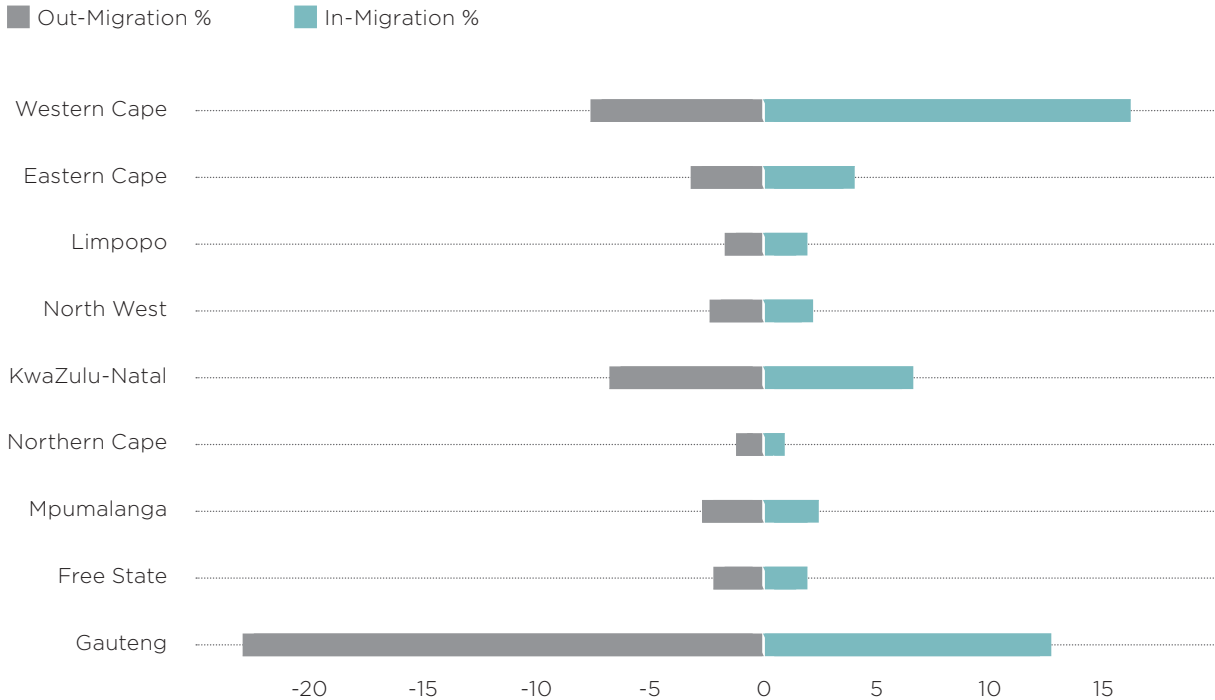
In contrast, the Western Cape emerged as the biggest winner in inter-provincial migration. With 32.4% of all inter-provincial moves headed to the Cape, it has also retained its talent — contributing only 15.1% to out-migration to a different province. This shift hints at changing economic dynamics — with lifestyle preferences, remote work opportunities, and emerging economic hubs drawing talent from Gauteng to the coast.

**SOUTH AFRICA'S
MOVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS**

70%
of all moves were within
the same province

30%
were between provinces

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL MIGRATION FLOWS



Not all is lost

Local moves are king

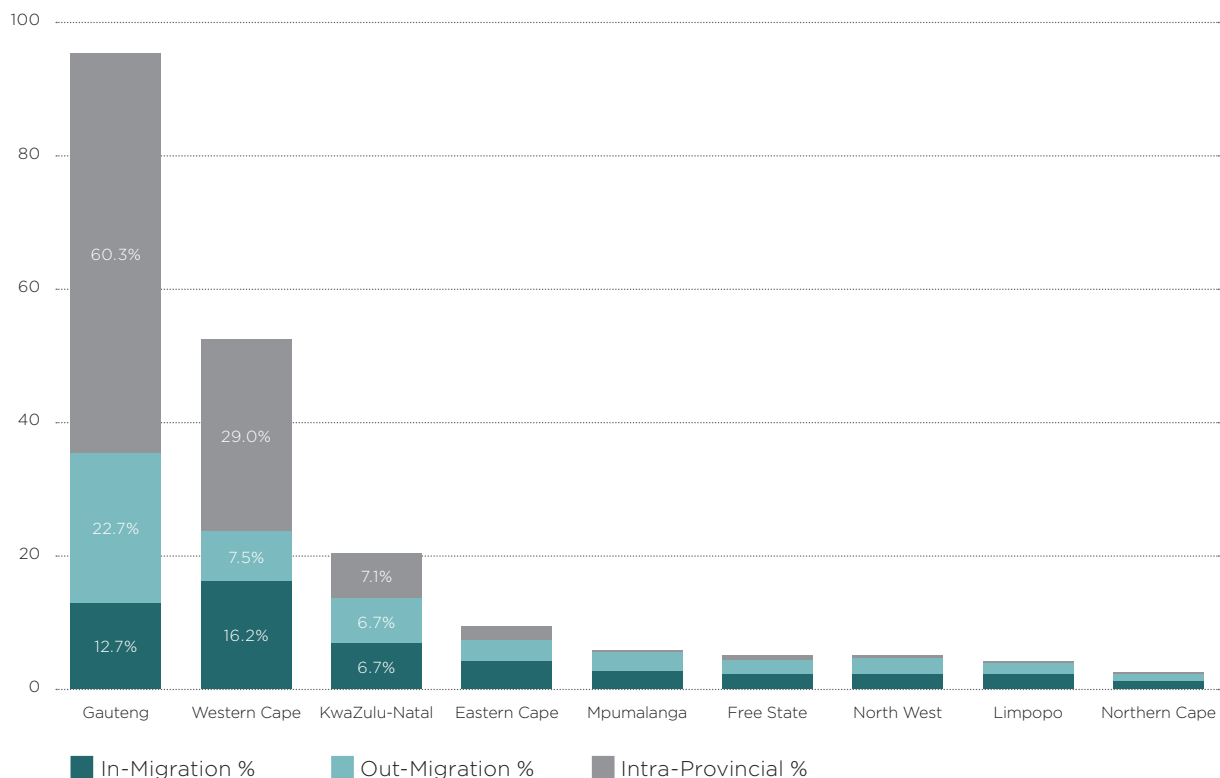
Gauteng is home to over 16 million people*. While it experienced a net loss in inter-provincial migration, it remains the heartbeat of internal mobility — accounting for a staggering **60.3% of all intra-provincial moves**. This high turnover reflects the province’s dense population, dynamic job market, and fast-paced urban development—where career shifts, housing demands, and lifestyle changes drive constant internal relocations.

The Western Cape, however, punches above its weight. With a population of around 4.77 million*, it **accounted for 29% of all internal moves** in the country. This showcases not only its ability to attract talent from other provinces but also its thriving local property market—driven by lifestyle changes and economic opportunities.

In contrast, South Africa’s largest province by land area, the Northern Cape, is home to just 1.3 million people. Despite its vast size, it shows minimal internal movement — reflecting stable, close-knit communities and a more settled way of life.

Together, these trends reveal how population size, economic hubs, and lifestyle preferences shape the movement of South Africans within their own provinces.

*Source: Stats SA, Mid-year population estimates, 2024



Migration

Where are we headed?

South Africans are on the move — but not where you might expect. The data reveals a strong pull toward urban hubs, with the City of Cape Town leading the way.

The road most travelled

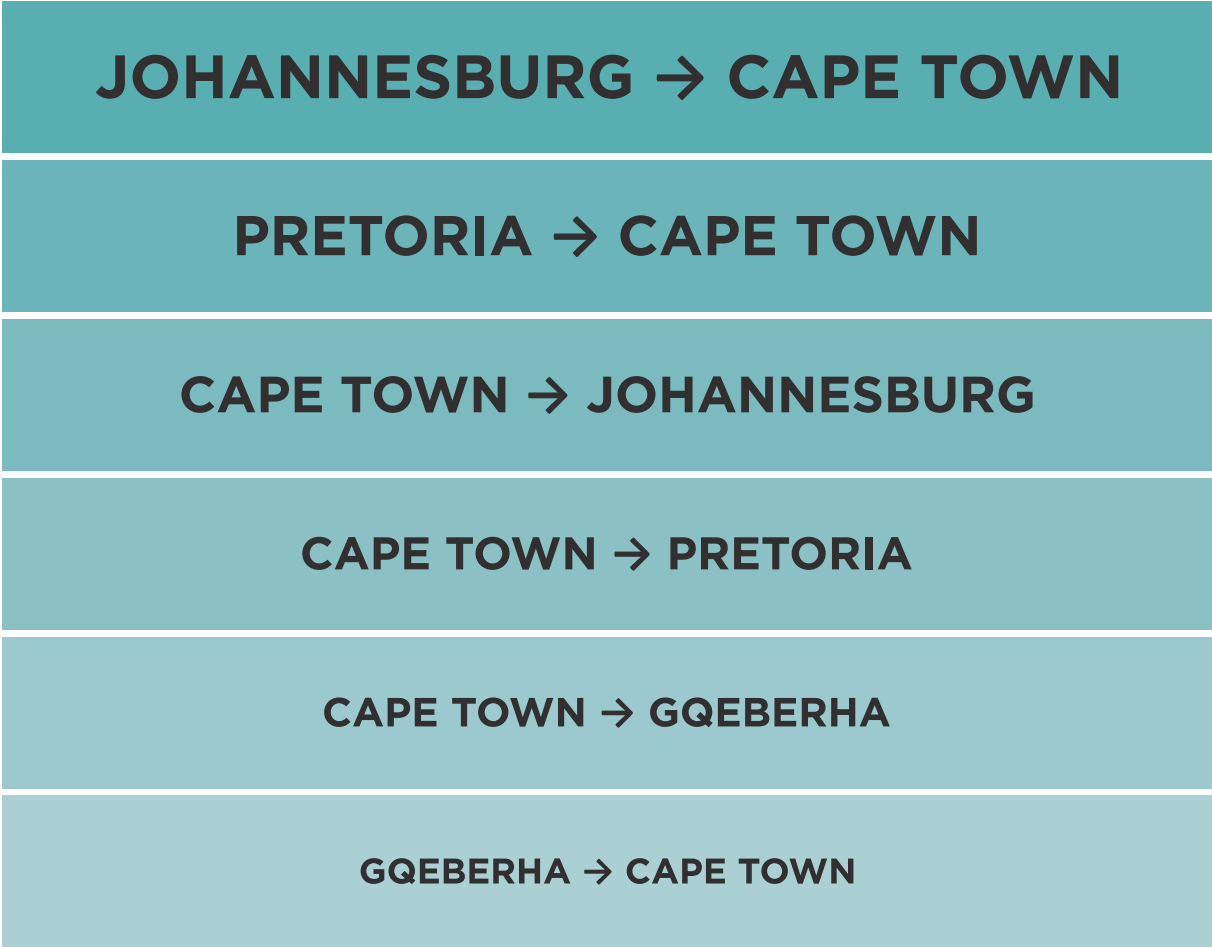
When South Africans decide to make a big move, certain routes stand out as the highways of change.

As expected, there's a constant flow of people between Gauteng and the Western Cape. The data revealed that residents from affluent areas like Sandton are leading the march south. In total, people moving from Johannesburg and Pretoria to the Western Cape accounted for a combined 48% of all inter-provincial moves. This trend highlights the magnetic pull of the Western Cape's coastal lifestyle, economic opportunities, and quality of life.

But it's not a one-way street. While many are heading to Cape Town, there is a subtle flow in the opposite direction. People are also relocating from Cape Town back to Gauteng's key hubs and many to Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape – these routes account for 25% of out-migration in the Western Cape.

These patterns reflect a complex dance of career shifts, lifestyle choices, and economic factors driving mobility between South Africa's major urban centres.

Whether it's the lure of coastal living, new job opportunities, or the search for a fresh start, these routes reveal the beating heart of South Africa's migration story – one move at a time.



Migration

Cities we love and the towns to watch

Where are South Africans moving? From our cities to our rising stars, we reveal the hotspots shaping the country's migration trends.

Zoom Town bust

Are we still working remotely?

An impressive 71% of moves to the Western Cape point to the City of Cape Town and surrounding suburbs.

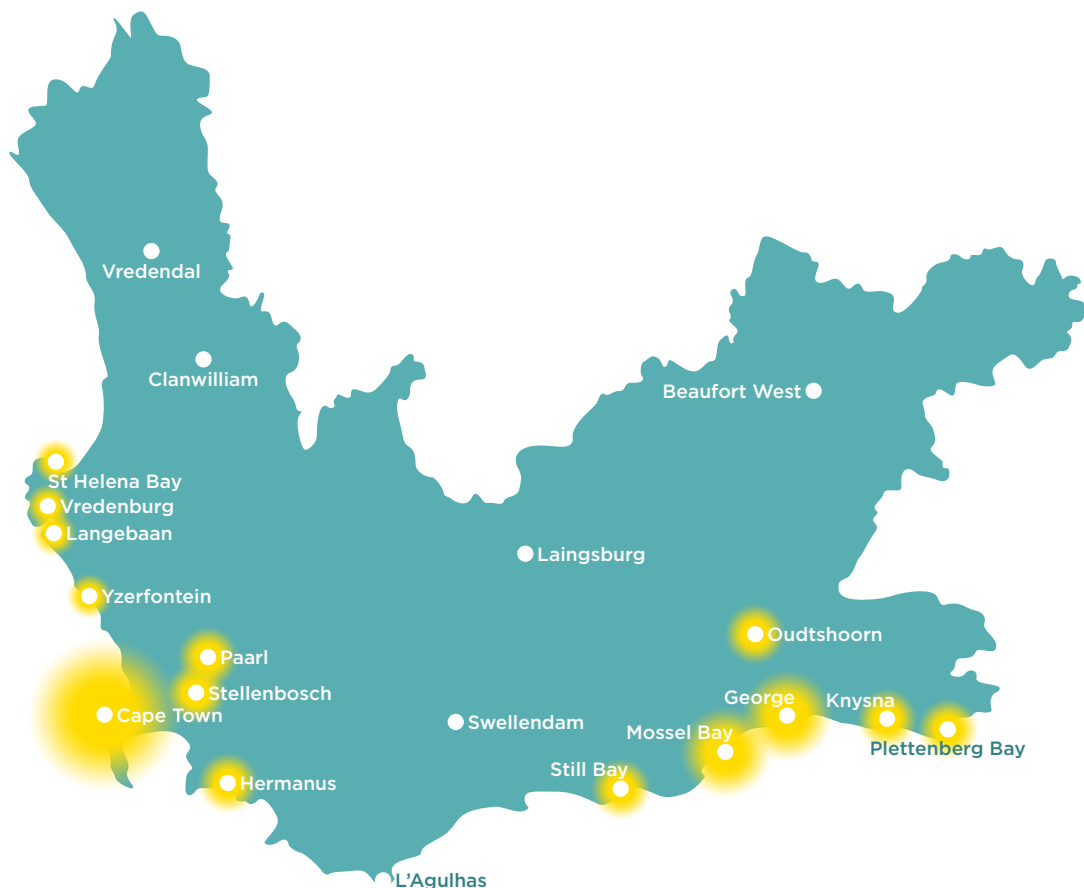
Despite the global trend of people seeking small town living in the wake of the remote work boom, South Africans in the Western Cape are bucking the trend. In 2024, an impressive 71% of moves were directed towards the City of Cape Town, showing a clear preference for metropolitan life. While bigger “city towns” like Paarl and George still attracted some of the Joburg traffic, the numbers pale in comparison. Overall, only around 9% of in-migration to the Western Cape went to the Garden Route, while 5% headed to the West Coast.

This suggests that, even with the flexibility of remote work, urban centres remain king — and as we’ll see this is likely due to better job opportunities, the variety of educational institutions, great healthcare, and existing family support networks.

The idea of escaping to a peaceful, small-town life might be appealing, but when it comes to actual moving decisions, people still gravitate toward the hustle and bustle of city life.

It seems it’s not a “Zoom Town Boom” — but rather an urban repopulation.

WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA



Seeking Jozi Gold

From Sandton to Suburbia

When it comes to moving within Johannesburg, one area stands out from the rest.

Sandton, the city's financial heart is a magnet for professionals chasing career opportunities, taking 26.5% of all local relocations.

With its high-end apartments, corporate headquarters, and urban lifestyle, it's no surprise that Sandton tops the list as Johannesburg's most in-demand area.

Following Sandton is Johannesburg Central (18.7%), offering a mix of urban convenience and historic neighbourhoods. Randburg (16.5%), on the other hand, attracts those looking for a balance between city life and quieter, family-friendly suburbs.

Further north, Midrand (11.2%) continues to grow as a key hub, perfectly positioned between Johannesburg and Pretoria. Roodepoort (10.1%) draws movers with its mix of affordability and access to green spaces.

Meanwhile, the East Rand shows steady activity, with Boksburg (4.3%), Kempton Park (3.8%), Germiston (3.3%), Benoni (3.2%), and Edenvale (2.4%) proving that Jozi's gold isn't just in the city centre — it's spread across its diverse suburban landscape.

Most popular suburbs	%
Sandton	26.5
Johannesburg	18.7
Randburg	16.5
Midrand	11.2
Roodepoort	10.1
Boksburg	4.3
Kempton Park	3.8
Germiston	3.3
Benoni	3.2
Edenvale	2.4

SANDTON'S HOTTEST MOVING SPOTS

For those looking to strike gold in Sandton, a few key suburbs stand out.

Bryanston offers spacious homes and business hubs, while Morningside and Sunninghill attract professionals with their mix of luxury and convenience.

Paulshof provides a green escape just minutes from the action, and Sandown sits at the very heart of Sandton's corporate district.

Whether it's for work, lifestyle, or prime location, these top Sandton suburbs remain the most sought-after for people wanting to be at the centre of it all.

Migration

The moving calendar

When do South Africans move? We uncover the key seasons that drive our nation's migration trends.

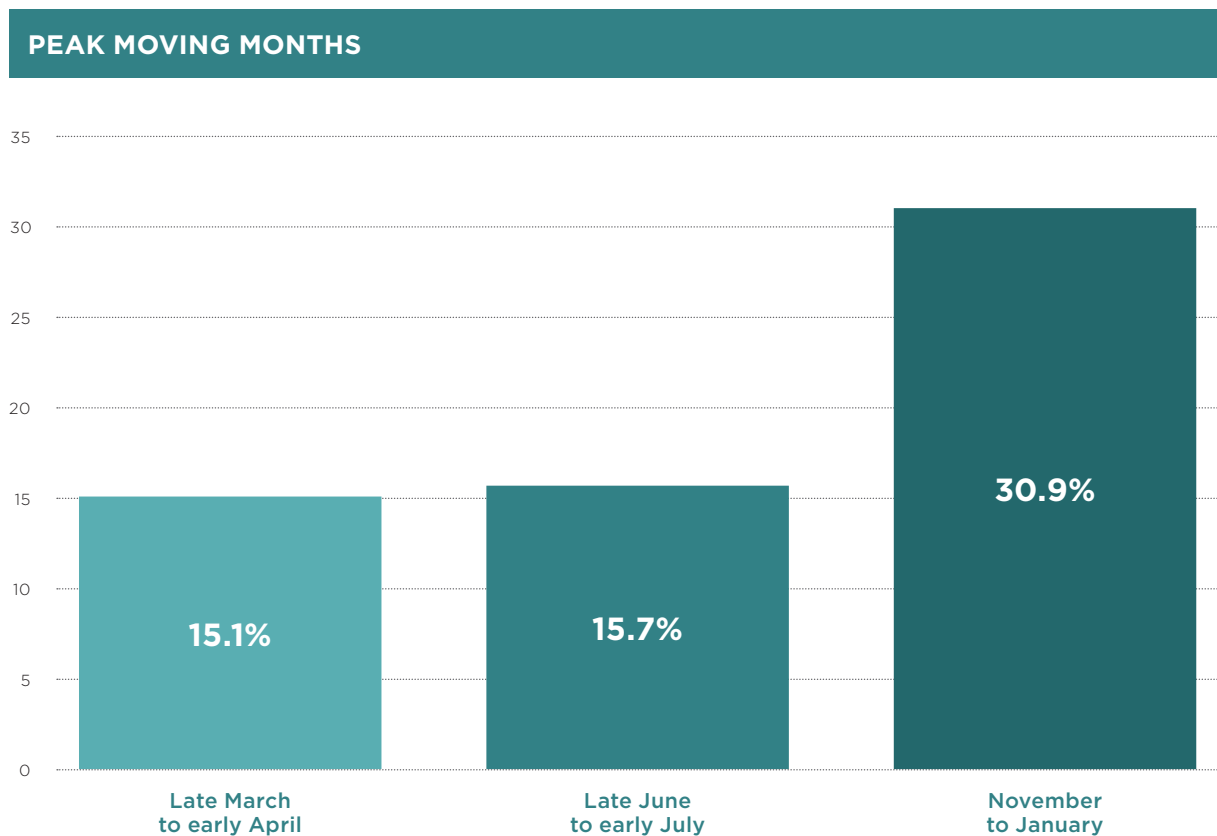
Peak move times

When do South Africans prefer to move? The data points straight to the school holiday calendar.

November kickstarts the rush which then peaks in December – slowly tapering off in January. These are the peak moving months for South Africans – perfectly aligned with the year-end school holidays. The mid-year breaks also see spikes in movement, with June and July offering just enough time to make a big move.

The March/April holiday aligns with the first spike in movement for the year, and while there is another peak halfway through the year, the September/October holidays are slow-moving – too late in the year for anyone to make big decisions and disrupt life.

In short, families move when the school bell stops ringing, showing how personal schedules shape national moving trends.



Migration

Days that move us

When do South Africans prefer to move? Weekends dominate, but the data reveals some surprising trends — especially about the most popular time we tend to plan our moves.

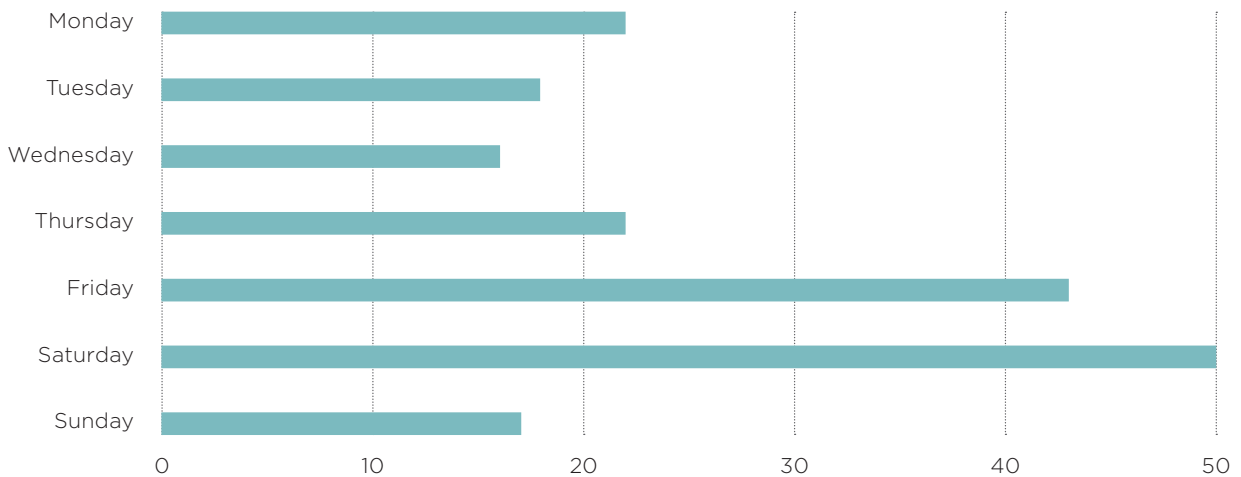
Not your standard working days

Not all days are created equal when it comes to moving. Saturdays reign supreme as the most popular day to relocate, offering the perfect balance of convenience without interfering with the work week.

In contrast, Sundays see a noticeable dip. This is likely due to people needing a day to unpack and settle before the new week starts.

Mid-week moves, however, are still popular — especially among those looking to secure better deals and avoid peak weekend demand.

MOST POPULAR MOVING DAYS



WHEN WE PLAN OUR MOVE

Our data has shown that the most popular time for bookings is 9am on a Monday morning when people are planning their week.

9:00am
Most popular hour

Monday
Most popular day

Who's moving?

A look at the demographics

The data reveals that young professionals dominate the moving landscape, with the 25-34 age group making up the largest share (31.19%), followed closely by 35-44 year-olds (24.39%). This suggests that moves are largely driven by career changes, lifestyle upgrades, and family growth.

While movement slows with age, 16.73% of movers are between 45-54, and a notable 10.7% fall into the 55-64 range, indicating that relocation remains relevant even in later life. The 65+ group (7.57%) represents retirees and those seeking a lifestyle shift.

In terms of gender, women (56.98%) outnumber men (43.74%) in moving decisions, reflecting trends in household relocations, family planning, or career mobility.

Overall, the data suggests that moving is most common during key life transitions, particularly in the early career and family-building stages.

Age range	%
18-24	9.60
25-34	31.19
35-44	24.39
45-54	16.73
55-64	10.70
65+	7.57

Gender	%
Male	43.74
Female	56.98



Migration

What's the change?

When South Africans make a move, what are they really looking for? Current trends indicate that stability is key.

Upsizing or downsizing?

What about same sizing?

South Africans prefer to stick with what they know. Opting more often to stay in a similar sized home or apartment.

The majority of moves are like-for-like relocations, with the most common being a move from a 2-bedroom apartment to another, accounting for 11.19% of relocations. Close behind is moving from a 1-bedroom apartment to another 1-bedroom at 10.54%. This trend suggests that people aren't necessarily moving for more space but rather for reasons like location, lifestyle, or work opportunities.

Downsizing, though less common, still plays a role — with moves from 2-bedroom to 1-bedroom flats (1.88%) being the most frequent. Less than 2% of people are also moving their household items into storage units (1.87%). This suggests lifestyle shifts, cost-cutting measures, or transitional phases.

In short, stability is key, but when people do change, they're more likely to be scaling up than scaling down.

When things do change...

Our data shows that upsizing is more common than downsizing. Moves from 1-bedroom to 2-bedroom apartments (6.18%) and from 2-bedroom apartments to 3-bedroom standalone homes (3.89%) are more common than moves going into smaller spaces or storage. This indicates that many South Africans are looking for more space due to growing families and the need for home offices.

Average distance
per move:

331.7 km



What are people moving?

Moving isn't just about changing homes — it's about transporting everything that makes a space feel like home.

The data shows that home moves dominate, making up nearly half of all our relocation needs. But beyond full-house moves, furniture delivery is a significant driver, followed by vehicle and motorcycle transportation.

Specialty moves, including piano transport, pet relocation, and storage solutions, highlight the need for tailored moving services.

Whether it's a single item or an entire household, South Africans are constantly on the move — bringing their essentials, valuables, and *definitely* their furry friends along for the journey.

Moves	%
Home	48
Furniture delivery	23
Car transportation	14
Motorcycle transportation	4
Item delivery	3
Piano transportation	2.5
Storage	2
Office	1
Pet transportation	1



Migration

What's driving the move?

Why did your neighbours *really* move? Here are the top reasons South Africans are on the move — and it's probably not what you think.

The real driving forces behind every move

When it comes to why South Africans relocate, the data tells a clear story — it’s all about opportunity and connection.

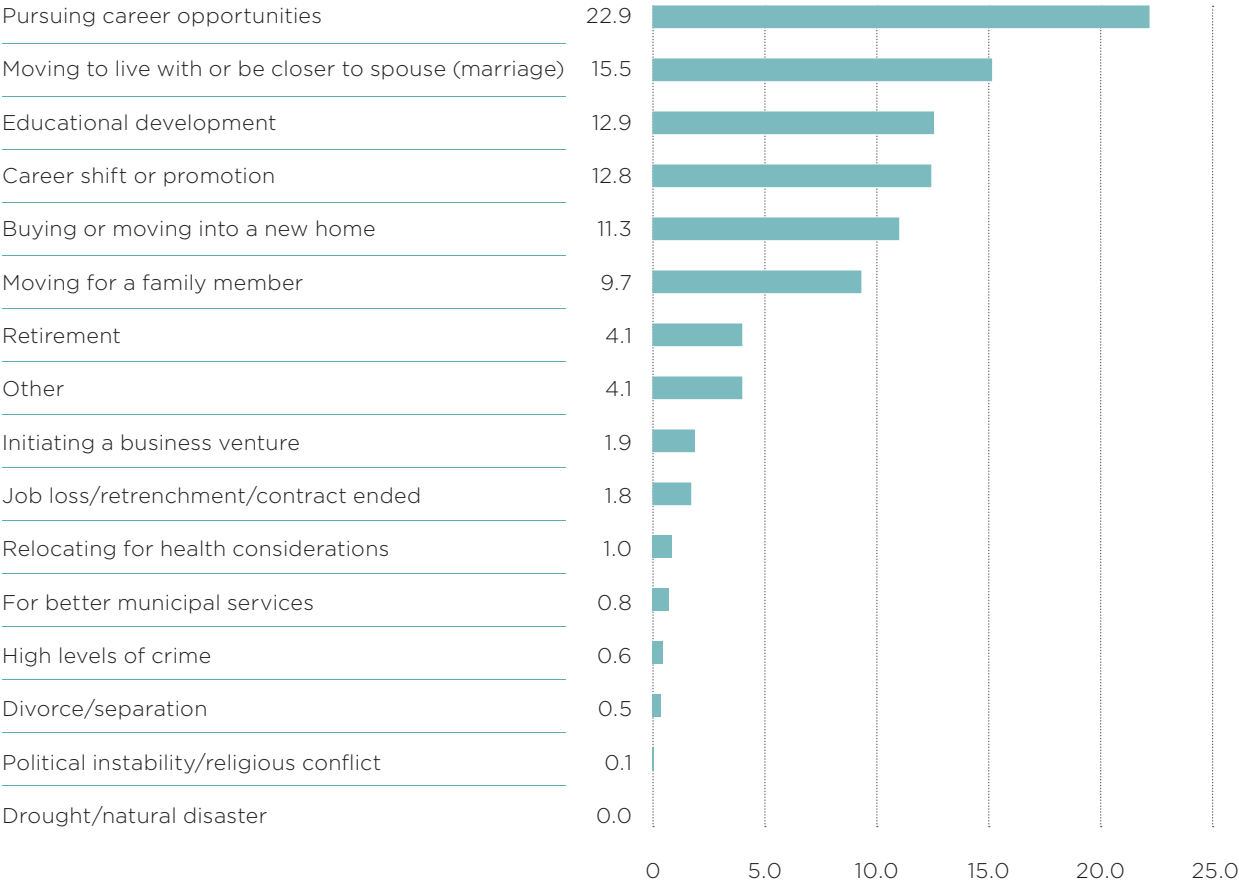
The top reason for moving is the pursuit of paid work (22.9%) — highlighting the economic drivers behind many relocation decisions.

Following closely, 15.5% of people move to be closer to a spouse or for family reasons, emphasising the importance of personal connections.

Interestingly, reasons like crime (0.6%), divorce (0.5%), and political instability (0.1%) are among the least cited, challenging common assumptions.

In short, South Africans move for better jobs, stronger relationships, and brighter futures — not out of fear, but in pursuit of opportunity.

WHY SOUTH AFRICANS RELOCATE*



*Source: Stats SA, Mid-year population estimates, 2024

Migration

The pulse of SA moves

As we conclude, the 2025 Wise Move Migration Report reveals more than migration — it captures South Africa in motion.

The pulse of SA moves

South Africa is a nation on the move — literally and figuratively. Behind every relocation is a story of ambition, opportunity, and change.






Whether it's the pursuit of better jobs, the draw of vibrant cities, or the desire for more space and stability, our migration patterns reflect who we are and what we value.

At the heart of these moves are our movers. They don't just transport belongings — they fuel the economy, support local businesses, and create opportunities across the country.

In 2024 alone, Wise Move took South Africans over 4.5 million kilometres — generating over R20 million in revenue for our moving teams and in effect creating over 75,000 employment opportunities.

But this success isn't just measured in stats and figures. It's in the thousands of families we've helped to experience a stress-free move to the local carriers who've grown their businesses and employed more staff. Every move matters, not just to those making it, but also to the broader local economy.

As the dust starts to settle on the neatly placed furniture, one thing is clear: South Africans aren't standing still. And neither is Wise Move.

	<p>Migration trends: 70% of moves happen within provinces, with Gauteng leading.</p>
	<p>Popular routes: 48% of inter-provincial moves flow between Gauteng & the Western Cape.</p>
	<p>Lifestyle changes: Most still prefer similar-sized homes, but upsizing is on the rise.</p>
	<p>Timing the move: December is the peak moving season in SA, while school holidays during the year also see spikes.</p>
	<p>What's driving the move: 22.9% move for work, not due to crime (0.6%).</p>

www.wisemove.co.za
press@wisemove.co.za

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