



CITY PROFILING REPORT 2025

Johannesburg



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COVER PHOTO: Commercial buildings in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa

Photo: Waldo Swiegers/Bloomberg via Getty Images

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1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Johannesburg Profiling Report is part of the African Cities Profiling project, which aims to enhance understanding of individual cities across the continent with a view to improving government effectiveness and empowering citizens to hold their governments to account at the local level. With Africa's rapid urbanisation, cities face significant challenges, including the growth of informal settlements and deficiencies in service delivery. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive understanding of city dynamics and the factors influencing them.

The report supports local authorities by providing comparative data that facilitates learning from peers and incentivises improvements in underperforming areas. It also assists national governments in regulating and supporting local authorities. For citizens, the report offers accessible information on the developmental context of their cities, fostering transparency and engagement.

This report on Johannesburg is part of a series of city profiles being developed by GGA for ten cities across the SADC region (with plans to extend to other African cities). Other cities in the GGA SADC sample include Bulawayo, Cape Town, Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, Luanda, Lilongwe, Maputo, and Ndola. The selected cities represent a mix of primary and secondary urban centres in the region. Where relevant, comparisons are made between Johannesburg and these other cities.

By profiling multiple cities using standardised measures, the project enables stakeholders – local authorities, national governments, and citizens – to compare cities, identify best practices, and foster mutual learning.

2. URBAN GEOGRAPHY AND HUMAN SETTLEMENT

From the 6th century, the area surrounding what is now Johannesburg was occupied by Sotho-Tswana people who were farmers, living in small villages, also developing iron ore smelting techniques. From about 1836, European settlers moving from the Cape as part of the 'Great Trek' started occupying land in the area, starting a process of displacing Sotho-Tswana people. The historic trajectory of Johannesburg changed dramatically with the discovery of gold in 1886. This resulted in a gold rush, with rapidly expanding numbers of European settlers and a changing lifestyle for black Africans who became mine workers and small traders. At the time, the area was under the government of the Boer-controlled Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR).¹

Gold mining soon became dominated by powerful mining magnates, creating an oligarchic structure in the gold mining industry. Within a decade, South Africa became the world's largest gold producer, expanding British interest in the region. This led to tensions between the British and the ZAR, culminating in the South African War (1899–1902).² British forces occupied Johannesburg in 1900. This was followed by the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, ending the colonial era.

The city's growth was shaped by mining and socio-economic disparities. Initially, settlement developed along a north-south axis, with Johannesburg formally established on state-owned land.³ Early urbanisation was chaotic, with a mix of banks, shops, hotels, and entertainment venues, alongside the development of a stock exchange. The city's population surged, surpassing Cape Town's by the 1890s, though war and economic downturns periodically stalled growth.⁴ By 1928, the government formally recognised Johannesburg as a city, signalling confidence in its future.

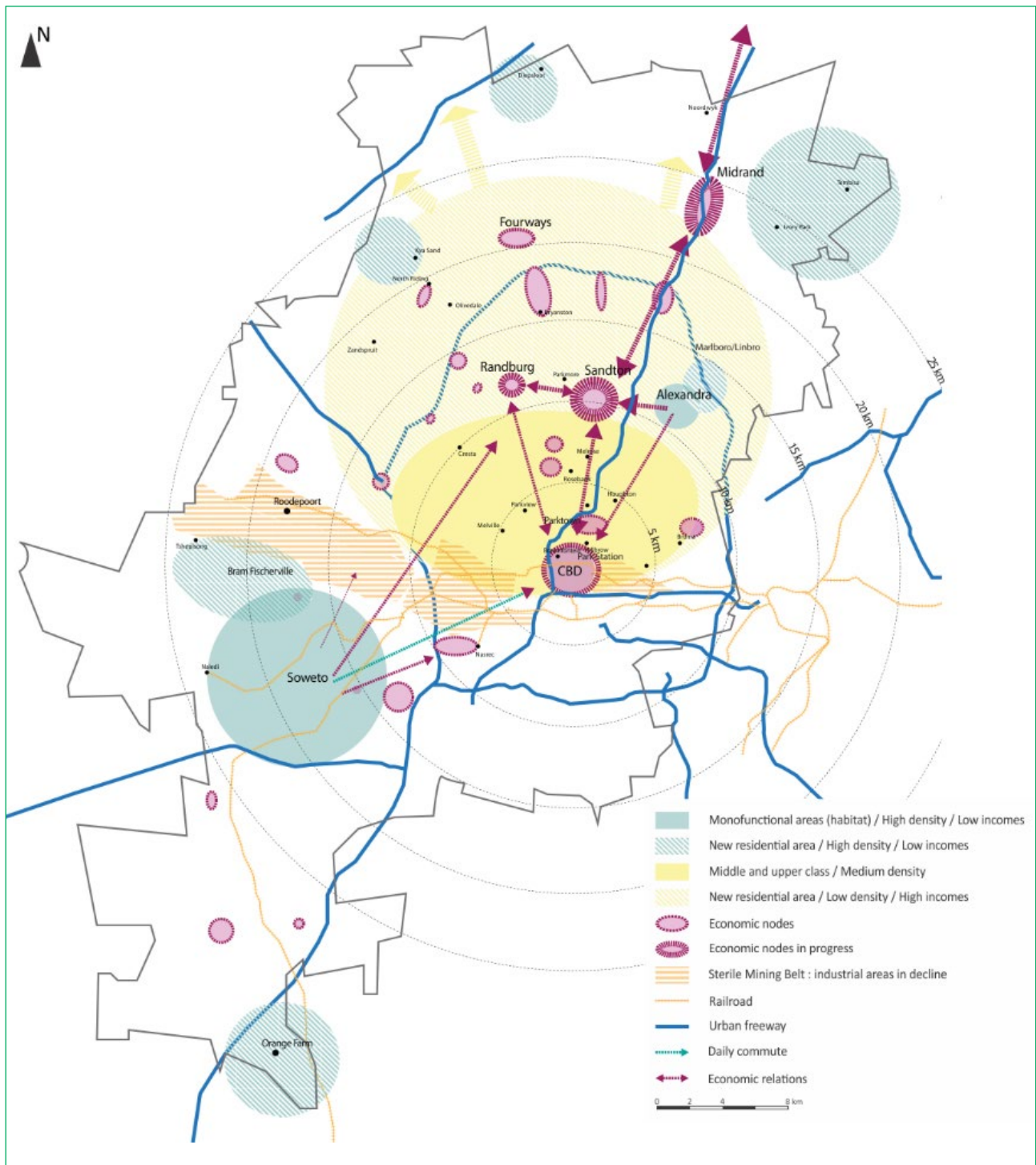
¹ Martin Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War: The Making of South Africa* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007).

² Beavon, Keith. *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 9.

³ Harrison and Zack, "The power of mining: the fall of gold and rise of Johannesburg," p554

⁴ Harrison and Zack.

Figure 1: Map of the City of Johannesburg showing nodes and economic axes



Source: OpenEdition

The 1930s mining boom spurred further expansion, leading to the construction of high-rise buildings and a growing financial sector. Manufacturing industries also flourished, particularly along the mining belt.⁵ However, Johannesburg's development was marked by deep social and racial segregation, entrenched as early as the late 19th century. By 1946, demographic shifts reflected growing urbanisation, yet stark inequalities persisted, shaping the city's spatial and economic landscape for decades to come.⁶

Johannesburg grew to be the largest city in South Africa, part of a metropolitan area including what was Pretoria (now Tshwane) and the East Rand (now Ekurhuleni), all of which were incorporated into the Gauteng Province, with new local and provincial boundaries established by the ANC government in 1995. Under this new system of local government, Johannesburg became one of six metropolitan (Category A) municipalities covering an area of 1,644km²,⁷ retaining its position as the local government with the largest economy in the country and, indeed, in Africa. Its current structure is shown in Figure 1.

Since the end of apartheid in 1994, Johannesburg has undergone significant spatial changes, with its population growing by 0.8% per annum (on average) from 2011 to 6.09 million in 2024.⁸ The settlement pattern is typically considered in three categories:

- Middle to high-income **suburbs** with formal housing, mostly privately funded, were historically occupied by white people, but demographics are changing, particularly in the inner city.
- Middle to low-income **townships**,⁹ almost wholly occupied by black people, with formal housing mostly publicly funded as part of national housing programmes, with formal dwellings sometimes sharing a property with informal 'back yard shacks'.
- **Informal settlements** with informal housing, mostly made of corrugated steel.

The profile of dwellings in these settlements in 2022 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Portion of population by main dwelling type¹⁰

MAIN DWELLING TYPE	PERCENTAGE
Formal dwelling/house or brick/concrete block structure on a separate stand or yard or on farm	66.9%
Flat or apartment in a block of flats/flat or apartment in a block of flats in a complex	6.9%
Cluster house or town house in complex	2.1%
Semi-detached house	3.7%
Formal dwelling/house /flat/room in backyard/servants' quarters/granny flat/cottage	8.2%
Informal dwelling/shack in back yard	5.6%
Informal dwelling/shack not in backyard, e.g. in an informal/squatter settlement or on farm	6.0%
Other	0.6%
Total	100%

The percentage of formal dwellings has increased from 78% in 1994 to 89.8% in 2022,¹¹ growing at an average of 1.0% per annum, with the balance (10.2%) living in informal dwellings in 2022.^{12,13}

Household *growth* has been faster than population growth, at 2.5% per annum from 2011, but household *size* declined to 2.8 people per household with 2.19 million households in 2024. This is influenced by smaller family sizes and better access to housing, catalysing younger household members to leave home.

Around 52% of residents are homeowners.

Many townships and informal settlements, often lacking land use diversity, are situated far from economic opportunities. While there are positive

⁵ Harrison and Zack, p 558

⁶ Beavon. *Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City*

⁷ Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs. "City of Johannesburg metropolitan GAU: Profile and analysis district development model, (Johannesburg: Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs, 2020), [PROFILE: city of Johannesburg METRO \(cogta.gov.za\)](https://www.cogta.gov.za/profile/city-of-johannesburg-metro).

⁸ Demographic and spatial data taken from Johannesburg Integrated Development Plan 2024/25 and national census, 2022.

⁹ Townships in South Africa were racially segregated residential areas created through colonial and apartheid spatial planning policies. Their expansion and formalisation were driven primarily by various laws. Which regulated the presence of Black Africans in urban areas. These policies systematically displaced Black, Coloured, and Indian communities to peripheral urban settlements, shaping enduring patterns of spatial inequality that persist in post-apartheid South Africa.

¹⁰ Stats SA. 2022. "Dataset: Dwellings by municipality." Last modified 2022. <https://superweb.statssa.gov.za/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>.

¹¹ This figure of 89.8% differs from the 87.8% from Table 1 evidently due to differing interpretations of the census data.

¹² City of Johannesburg, Integrated development plan. 2024/25

¹³ There are other references claiming 26% of people live in informal settlements but the Johannesburg IDP has been given precedence as it is close to the Stats SA figure.

trends regarding the provision of formal housing, the persistence of informal settlements where the most vulnerable people live and where access to services is lowest remains a primary concern.

Spatially, the city's major urban development initiatives are based on the development of mixed use economic nodes and interlinking transport corridors. These corridors include freeways, rail lines and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes.

Despite these efforts, Johannesburg continues to be shaped by the legacy of apartheid-era spatial policies. The continuation of post-apartheid housing development on the peripheries of the city has further entrenched this spatial segregation. Additionally, the trend of car-oriented developments, such as shopping malls, office parks, and gated residential estates, has contributed to sprawling development patterns, exacerbating spatial inequality and placing additional pressure on the natural environment.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The population of Johannesburg, stated above at 6.09 million in 2024, is notably young, with 65% below the age of 34.¹⁴ While this youth dividend has the potential to drive the economy, it is not currently evident given high levels of youth unemployment.

3.1 POVERTY

The international wealth index (IWI) measures the position of households regarding assets, access to services and housing.¹⁵ The value for Johannesburg (using Gauteng as an approximation) was 72.9 in 2019, declining from 78.3 in 2011. Compared to other cities, the average for SADC cities in the sample of 64.4 is relatively high (range is 89.4 for Cape Town to 28.7 for Lilongwe).

Using income poverty as a measure, about 37%¹⁶ of households live below the poverty threshold set by the

SDGs (Goal 1.1.1) in 2022, with poverty increasing from 25% in 2011. This can be compared to Luanda (26%) and Cape Town (16%). The food poverty line, currently set at R663 (US\$1.17) per person per month, represents the minimum amount of money required for an individual to afford the necessary daily energy intake. Alarming, the percentage of people living below the food poverty line in Johannesburg has increased significantly over the past decade, rising from 14.3% in 2011 to 24% in 2020.

In response to this widespread economic hardship, nearly half of all households (47%) rely on at least one social grant, and 39% are registered as indigent. These statistics highlight the extensive challenges faced by a substantial portion of Johannesburg's population, necessitating robust social support systems and targeted interventions to address economic inequalities.

3.2 QUALITY OF LIFE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Human Development Index (HDI), promoted by UN-Habitat, is a summary measure that combines indicators of life expectancy, education, and income to provide a broad picture of human development. Johannesburg's HDI was 0.72 in 2019,¹⁷ which is relatively high compared to most other cities in the SADC region, with a range from 0.76 for Cape Town and 0.52 for Lilongwe. However, this average conceals significant racial disparities that continue to shape the lived experiences of different communities within the city, with the figure for white people exceeding 0.90 and that for black African people being 0.59.

This picture of an unequal society is confirmed by the Gini coefficient, which measures the extent to which the distribution of income within a society deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. In Johannesburg, the Gini coefficient between 2015 and 2019 was 0.62.¹⁸ This is in line with the national average of 0.67. Other SADC cities with lower Gini coefficients (being more equal) include Lilongwe (0.50), Bulawayo (0.40), Harare (0.39), and Luanda (0.34).

¹⁴ City of Johannesburg, "Proportion of Population Below the International Poverty Line."

¹⁵ Global Data Lab. These assets include seven consumer durables (possession of a TV, fridge, phone, bike, car, a cheap utensil and an expensive utensil), access to two public services (water and electricity) and three housing characteristics (number of sleeping rooms, quality of floor material and of toilet facility).

¹⁶ Dalimore, Anthea, et al. Quality of life survey 6 (2020/21) municipal report: City of Johannesburg (Johannesburg: Gauteng City-Region Observatory, 2021).

¹⁷ City of Johannesburg, "Human Development Indicators within City of Johannesburg," Joburg, accessed July 20, 2024, [PowerPoint Presentation \(joburg.org.za\)](#).

¹⁸ UN-Habitat, "City Prosperity Index (CPI)"

Finally, positioning Johannesburg as a place to live for higher-income households in relation to global cities, according to the Mercer Quality of Life survey,¹⁹ Johannesburg ranks 105 out of 241 global cities. Along with Cape Town, this is the highest ranking of cities in Africa, equivalent to the ranking of Sao Paulo in Brazil and Shanghai in China and significantly higher than Bogota in Colombia and Bangkok in Thailand (ranked 129 and 133, respectively).

Despite the city's efforts to improve the quality of life for its residents, the evidence indicates increasing levels of poverty, although some decline in inequality. Significant challenges remain, particularly in addressing deep-rooted racial and economic disparities.

3.3 EDUCATION

According to the 2016 Community Survey,²⁰ 53% of the city's population had completed secondary school (referred to as matric in South Africa), a figure that is significantly higher than the national average of 25%. Only 6% of the city population holds an undergraduate degree, 5% have completed a postgraduate qualification, and 3% have no formal education at all. However, the number of people with matric is increasing steadily at a rate of 3.6% per annum from 2015 to 2019, with the number of graduates with bachelor's degrees increasing at a similar rate. Yet the situation with the youth is a great concern: while 65.5% of young people have completed matric, only 9% hold post-matric qualifications, which limits their career opportunities.

Using South African data as an approximation, people in Johannesburg have completed 12.8 years of education on average.²¹ This is substantially higher than the average of 8.7 years globally and an average of 9.1 for seven SADC cities outside South Africa, with only Zimbabwe cities (11.1 years) being comparable.

3.4 HEALTH

The health status of Johannesburg is not good by global standards. For example, using child mortality rates as an indicator, there were 15.7 deaths of children under five years old per thousand live births in 2011,²² with more recent data indicating a figure of 16.9.²³ In London for the same year, the figure was 4.4, and in Japan, it was 2.2 deaths per thousand live births. On the other hand, the average rate for seven non-South African SADC cities was 58 deaths per thousand live births. Considering life expectancy, the figure for Johannesburg in 2022 was 67 years, increasing from 62 years in 2020,²⁴ which, while somewhat better than a sample of five other SADC cities, is way below typical figures for Global North cities: in New York, it was 81 years in the same year.

Yet Johannesburg has a well-established health system with 159 health facilities in the city of which 108 are clinics, 11 are Community Health Care Facilities, 2 are District Hospitals, 2 are Regional Hospitals, 3 are Tertiary hospitals, and 36 have been classified as 'other' and include private hospitals. Although primary health care is a provincial function, the Johannesburg Municipality runs 79 of the 108 clinics in the city.²⁵

Considering the extent of healthcare facilities, the relatively poor health status of people in Johannesburg remains, originating partly through the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with high levels of infection remaining, as well as communicable diseases in younger people – tuberculosis, particularly – and through lifestyle (non-communicable) diseases in older people. Between 2017 and 2020, the City of Johannesburg recorded a 5.8% increase in the total number of people living with HIV.²⁶ The city has a higher number of people living with HIV than any other city worldwide at 600 000.²⁷

19 Mercer, "Quality of living city ranking 2023." Accessed August 20, 2024. Mercer's quality of living data assesses the practicalities of daily life for expatriate employees and their families in assignment locations worldwide.

20 Department of Statistics South Africa, "Community Survey, 2016" Stats SA, Stats SA,

21 World Economics, South Africa's Average Years of Schooling.

22 Stats SA 2011 population census.

23 UN-Habitat's City Prosperity Index. Data for 2015 is latest for comparable cities.

24 City of Johannesburg IDP 2024/25.

25 City of Johannesburg Integrated Annual report 2023/24.

26 City of Johannesburg. "City of Johannesburg: Profile on the HIV epidemic trends to accelerate progress of HIV response", accessed October 13, 2024.

27 World Bank. "Ending AIDS in Johannesburg: An analysis of the status and scale-up towards HIC treatment and prevention strategies", accessed October, 15, 2024.

4. ECONOMY

Johannesburg is a critical driver of both the national and provincial economies. The city contributes almost 16%²⁸ to South Africa's GDP and about 40% to the Gauteng province's economy. Although the city enjoys higher average incomes than other parts of the country (the average income per household in the city is R31,000 per month (\$1,700), which is 57% higher than the national average), it is one of the most unequal cities in the world.²⁹

The per capita Gross Domestic Product per capita for Johannesburg was US\$16,400 in 2024,³⁰ which is much higher than the average of \$5,400 for five non-South African SADC cities in the GGA sample and somewhat higher than the \$13,700 figure for Cape Town. Johannesburg is by far the wealthiest city in Africa, using total private wealth as a measure,³¹ with a value of 239 billion US\$ in 2021. Cape Town follows with a figure of 131 billion, and then Cairo and Lagos (US\$128 bn and US\$97 bn respectively).

While the gross geographic product of the city has been growing, this is taking place at a slow and declining rate (2.6% pa in 2011 and 0.8% in 2020), and the growth in the number of jobs has been slow to static; hence, the unemployment rate in the city has grown from 24.5% in 2011 to 32.7% in 2020.³² Youth unemployment is even higher at 41.2%.

In 2018, there were 650,000 employed people in the city, with the employment profile shown in Table 2.

The employment profile of Johannesburg, with a high percentage of finance, insurance and real estate jobs, is consistent with its status as the financial hub of the country and, to a considerable extent, of the continent. On the other hand, the percentage of employment in manufacturing has been in decline, as it has been for the country as a

Table 2: Employment by economic sector³³

ECONOMIC SECTOR	% EMPLOYMENT
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	<1%
Mining	1%
Construction	7%
Manufacturing	11%
Transportation and public utilities	7%
Wholesale and retail trade	22%
Finance, insurance & real estate	26%
Other services	17%
Households as employers	9%

whole, although there are sectors and municipal regions where manufacturing jobs are increasing.³⁴ This is consistent with a shift in the city from a secondary to a tertiary (services) economy.

Among Johannesburg's formally employed, 40% are unskilled, 45% are classified as skilled, and only 15% are highly skilled. This skills deficit remains a critical challenge, exacerbating unemployment and limiting economic mobility for many residents. The informal sector employs about 20% of the workforce, most employed in the wholesale, retail trade, and private household sectors, with only 5% working in the highly skilled manufacturing sector.

Globally, South Africa is ranked 84th out of 190 countries in the world, based on the World Bank's³⁵ Ease of Doing Business Indexⁱ. The Index has also been applied to cities within South Africa, providing insight into Johannesburg's business environment. The city ranks well in areas such as getting electricity (3rd) and registering property (2nd) among the 9 metros in the country.³⁶ However, it faces challenges in dealing with construction permits and enforcing contracts, ranking 8th in both areas.

28 City of Johannesburg, "About the City: Economic data," City of Joburg.

29 UN-Habitat, *City context report: Johannesburg* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2018), 9.

30 Growth Lab, *Metroverse: Urban Economy Navigator – Similar Cities for City ID 3268*, Harvard Kennedy School, accessed July 27, 2022, <https://metroverse.hks.harvard.edu/city/3268/similar-cities>. <https://metroverse.cid.harvard.edu/city/3268/economic-composition>.

31 Statista, 2021, Total private wealth in major cities in Africa as of 2021.

32 City of Johannesburg. 2020. Joburg demographics and key socio economic indicators.

33 https://www.cogta.gov.za/dm/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Take2_DistrictProfile_JHB1606-2-2.pdf

34 GCRO, 2024, Spatial changes in Gauteng's formal manufacturing jobs: 2014 – 2022.

35 World Bank Group. Comparing Business Regulation in 190 Economies (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2020). [ZAF.pdf \(doingbusiness.org\)](https://www.doingbusiness.org).

36 World Bank Group, "Ease of doing business in Johannesburg – South Africa," Subnational studies measuring business regulations, accessed July 26, 2024, [Doing Business in Johannesburg \(Johannesburg\), South Africa - Subnational Doing Business - World Bank Group](https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/locations/south-africa/johannesburg).

i The Doing Business report was discontinued in 2021

5. LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The structure of South Africa's local government is outlined in five core documents:

- The constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, chapter 7
- White Paper on Local Government, 1998
- Municipal Structures Act, 1998, Act 117 of 1998, as amended
- Municipal Systems Act, 2000, Act 32 of 2000
- Municipal Financial Management Act, 2003, Act 56 of 2003

The structure of South Africa's system of local government is outlined in Chapter 7 of the Constitution and Chapter 1 of the Municipal Structures Act. These documents create three spheres of government: national, provincial and local, and two tiers of local government for most of the country: district (Category C) and local municipalities (Category B). However, metropolitan municipalities (Category A) are single-tier with no district municipality associated with them. There are 8 metropolitan which have the highest urban populations and largest economies. Moreover, four in ten South Africans reside in these metros.

5.1 FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The functions of the three tiers of government are defined in the Constitution of South Africa. For local government, these functions are:

- Electricity distribution, including street lighting
- Water and sanitation services
- Municipal roads, including stormwater management, traffic management and parking
- Municipal public transport
- Municipal health (equivalent to environmental or public health)
- Refuse removal, including waste disposal and cleansing
- Economic and business development is limited to tourism, street trading, billboards and abattoirs
- Community services, including: parks and gardens; markets; community centres; sporting facilities; child-care facilities; cemeteries and crematoria. Libraries and museums are excluded, being provincial functions.

- Firefighting services
- Various regulatory functions such as control of noise pollution, trading regulations, and licensing of food premises, liquor outlets and dogs.

Social services such as education and health care are provincial functions. Two key functions given to provincial government cause overlaps with local government functions: housing and public transport.

Compared to most other African cities, the allocation of electricity distribution, water supply and sanitation to local government is a key factor as these require large investments and specialised management. Not only are these functions allocated in legislation in South Africa, but they are undertaken in practice.

5.2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Considering the three-tier structure of government in South Africa, national government plays a regulatory role in relation to local government, with national sector departments regulating specific services, the Department of Cooperative Governance overseeing governance and administrative aspects, and the National Treasury overseeing finances.

The Gauteng Province can be seen primarily as a provider of social services: education and health, most significantly. Constitutionally, they are also responsible for housing and public transport, key urban development functions which, as mentioned, create overlaps with city responsibilities for spatial planning and land development.

Johannesburg is unusual in South Africa in that it has set up a corporatised structure for managing services, with separate companies (such as Johannesburg Water, Pikitup, City Power, Johannesburg Development Agency and so forth), wholly owned by the City, established for water supply and sanitation, electricity, solid waste management, roads, and parks. While this arrangement was successful³⁷ in turning around a city in decline in the late 1990s, there are shortcomings. Some of these are caused by the City's decision to integrate billing; the service companies are not responsible for raising

³⁷ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *City Development Strategy in Johannesburg, South Africa*, accessed February 6, 2026, 2, <https://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/JohannesburgSummary.pdf>.

Table 3: Table showing responsibilities for service provision in the City of Johannesburg

FUNCTION	INSTITUTION PROVIDING	NOTES
Water supply	Johannesburg water	Municipal entity owned by CoJ
Sanitation	Johannesburg water	Municipal entity owned by CoJ
Electricity distribution	City Power; Eskom	City Power is a Municipal entity owned by CoJ; Eskom is also a distributor in some areas
Roads – distributor and collector	Johannesburg Road Agency and Gauteng Province	Some of the trunk and distributor roads are provincial or national responsibility
Roads – local (streets)	Johannesburg Road Agency	Municipal entity owned by CoJ
Mass transit	CoJ (Bus rapid Transit); Gauteng Province (Gautrain); Metrorail (passenger rail)	Considerable overlaps, discussed in Section 5.
Solid Waste Management	Pikitup	Municipal entity owned by CoJ
Community services including sporting facilities, community halls, and parks	CoJ (Department of Community Development); and City Parks	Johannesburg City Parks is a municipal entity owned by CoJ
Emergency and security services (fire, police etc)	CoJ (Emergency Management Services and Metropolitan Police)	
Primary health care	Gauteng Province	However, CoJ runs some clinics on an agency basis.
Education	Gauteng Province	

their own revenue and are thus subject to revenue uncertainty, aggravated by a flawed³⁸ City billing system.

The institutional framework is summarised in Table 3.

6. ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, published in 1996, is a foundational document that underscores the importance of equitable water service delivery. Section 152 of the Constitution mandates that local governments must provide services to communities in a sustainable manner, making service delivery a core function of municipal governance.

6.1 WATER SUPPLY

The Water Services Act of 1997³⁹ covers water supply and sanitation services, and under this Act, the City of

Johannesburg functions as a Water Services Authority (WSA), thereby assigning it the constitutional responsibility to ensure access to water and sanitation services.⁴⁰ The bulk of Johannesburg’s water is sourced from Rand Water, the largest water board in the country, which draws from the Vaal River System, particularly the Vaal Dam, and undertakes the necessary treatment processes before distributing water to Gauteng municipalities, Johannesburg included. The Vaal System benefits from water imported from neighbouring catchments and from Lesotho via the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which channels water from the Lesotho mountains.⁴¹ On average, Rand Water supplies 4,000 Megalitres of water per day across its service area, with a significant portion allocated to Johannesburg.

CoJ does not act as a Water Service Provider, contracting the provider role for water supply and sanitation to Johannesburg Water, the corporatised entity under CoJ ownership. It manages an extensive infrastructure that

38 Luyolo Mkentane, “Technical upgrades, political will needed to resolve Joburg’s billing crisis,” *Business Day* (December 1, 2024), <https://www.businessday.co.za/bd/national/2024-12-01-technical-upgrades-political-will-needed-to-resolve-joburgs-billing-crisis>.

39 Republic of South Africa, Water Services Act 1997, December 19, 1997, https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a108-97.pdf.

40 Other metros, secondary cities, some district municipalities and some local municipalities are also Water Services Authorities.

41 Resilience Rising, *City Water Resilience Approach: City of Johannesburg*, Johannesburg: Resilience Rising, 2020.

Table 4: Water supply statistics for City of Johannesburg

INDICATOR	VALUE	SOURCE
a) Improved water coverage access - % of city residents with access to improved water supply	98%	CoJ IDP 2024/25
b) City population served by utility - Number of residents served by utility	5.9 million	CoJ IDP 2024/25
c) Residential water consumption in city or utility coverage area – l/cap/day	274l/c/d compared to the global average of 173l/c/d	CoJ, 2022; Blue drop report
d) Water sold by utility that is metered - % of water sold by utility	No data	
e) Collection rate - % of collection rate from population billed	83%	Joburg Water Annual Report 2022/23
f) Non-revenue water - % of non-revenue water from total water supplied into the system	46.1%	Joburg Water Annual Report 2022/23
g) % customers with 24/7 supply	75%	Stats SA household survey 2023

includes 11,000 km of distribution pipes, 33 water towers, 87 reservoirs, and numerous pump stations, all of which are crucial for ensuring a consistent water supply across the city.

Key statistics for Johannesburg Water are given in Table 4. It distributes water to around 1.5 million households, covering formal and informal areas within the city,⁴² reaching 98% of households in 2022, with 77% having water within their dwelling, 18% with a tap on their property, 3% using communal standpipes and 2% with no access to tap water.⁴³ However, 24% of households reported having water interruptions.⁴⁴ ii

Notably, over 98% of the water supplied meets stringent safety standards, ensuring it is safe for consumption.

The non-revenue water (NRW) figure of 46.1% for the 2022/23 financial year is made up of commercial losses at 9.4%, unbilled authorised consumption at 12.7%, and physical losses at 24.1%. This is a key performance indicator and is very high in relation to the international benchmark for good performance of 25%. Further, it has increased by 1.3% from the previous year, which is of significant concern for the entity and the city.

Johannesburg is currently facing water scarcity, partly relating to delays in Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands project and partly due to an increase in demand, driven by an increasing population and high levels of water use per household. To address these challenges, ongoing efforts need to be made to maintain and upgrade the city's water infrastructure and make it more efficient, ensuring it can meet growing demand and reduce water losses.

6.2 SANITATION SERVICES

Sanitation is a critical public service that directly impacts the health, well-being, and quality of life of residents in any urban environment, yet it is often difficult to manage in informal settlements. Johannesburg Water is responsible for sanitation services, for maintaining and expanding the sewer network, managing wastewater treatment facilities, and ensuring that all households have access to basic sanitation.

96% of households in Johannesburg have access to an adequate sanitation service. The majority of properties (93%) are served by a sewerage sanitation system, prevalent in the city's suburbs and townships. Joburg Water also provides services to 184,000 households⁴⁵ in informal

⁴² Johannesburg Water. Integrated Annual Report 2018/19, Johannesburg: Johannesburg Water, 2020. <https://johannesburgwater.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Annual-Report-201819.pdf>

⁴³ Stats SA. Population census 2022.

⁴⁴ Stats SA. General household survey, 2023.

⁴⁵ City of Joburg, "Thousands more homes get water, sanitation." Accessed July 30, 2024. https://joburg.org.za/media/_Pages/Media/Mayoral%20Newsletter/Newsletter%202020/October%202020/Thousands-more-homes-get-water-sanitation.aspx.

ii In the period since these access figures were recorded, Johannesburg has experienced periodic and, at times, prolonged water supply interruptions across both formal and informal areas. In late 2025 and early 2026, residents in multiple suburbs including Midrand, Westbury and Coronationville - reported dry taps for days or weeks due to infrastructure failures, maintenance issues and bulk supply disruption.

settlements across the city through ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines and chemical toilets. Based on the 2022 population census, 3.4% of households use pit latrines, 2% bucket toilets, 1.2% chemical toilets and 0.3% have no sanitation.⁴⁶ 45% of the service in informal settlements is below the 'basic' standard, which is considered inadequate. While these on-site systems can be effective in managing human waste in informal areas, they also pose challenges, particularly regarding faecal sludge management for pit latrines, collecting and replacing buckets and servicing chemical toilets. As a result, residents of informal areas may face higher health risks and environmental challenges related to inadequate sanitation.

The disparity in service provision is associated with a lack of investment in these areas. Maintenance backlogs, insufficient funding, and a lack of skilled personnel have all contributed to the uneven quality of sanitation services across the city.

In the case of the sewered system, wastewater was collected and reticulated through 11,900 km of sewer networks and 38 sewer pump stations. The condition of Johannesburg's sewer network is a growing concern as it is ageing and unable to deal effectively with growing demand. Insufficient attention is being given to the renewal of these assets.

Johannesburg Water treated 819 Ml/day of wastewater at its six wastewater treatment works.⁴⁷ These works use activated sludge treatment technology, with two of the works having biogas-to-energy facilities, where methane gas from sludge digestors is used to generate electricity, contributing to the city's sustainability efforts. Two of these wastewater treatment works have insufficient capacity and operate above their designed capacity. Beyond the capacity concern, the poor operational status of all six WWTWs in Johannesburg is evident from the Green Drop with the 2023 results showing significant compliance challenges across Johannesburg's WWTWs.⁴⁸ The poor

effluent quality from these treatment works is having serious environmental consequences on downstream water quality (see Section 7).

The frequent power outages over the period 2018 to 2023, known locally as load shedding, further exacerbate these issues by disrupting the operation of wastewater treatment plants and pumping stations, leading to delays and service interruptions.

6.3 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Solid waste management is the responsibility of Pikitup, a corporatised utility owned by the City of Johannesburg, tasked with the service across Johannesburg's 1,625 square kilometres.⁴⁹ Each year, Pikitup collects and disposes of approximately 1.4 million tons of domestic waste generated by the city's residents and businesses. The utility provides weekly household refuse collection to around 17,000 businesses, and waste removal services to all informal settlements within the city; 92% of households had weekly municipal refuse removal service in 2022.

In addition to these services, Pikitup is responsible for cleaning and sweeping approximately 9,000 kilometres⁵⁰ of streets across Johannesburg's seven regions. The challenges of littering and illegal dumping are significant, costing the city an estimated R80 million per year (US\$4.5 million).

Pikitup operates a robust infrastructure to manage the city's waste, which includes 12 waste management depots, 33 garden refuse sites, four landfill sites, and one incinerator.⁵¹ These facilities are crucial in maintaining the city's cleanliness and ensuring that waste is managed efficiently and sustainably.

The role of the private sector in Johannesburg's sanitation services is notable. Several private companies are involved in the waste management process, particularly in areas such as waste collection from non-residential properties, transportation, and recycling.

46 City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, *Issue 36: Analysis of Population Structure and Basic Services as per Census Data* (Johannesburg: City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, December 2023), accessed September 8, 2025, https://joburg.org.za/documents/_Documents/Issue_36-Analysis-of-population-structure-and-basic-services-as-per-Census-data.pdf.

47 City of Johannesburg Integrated Annual Report 2022,23.

48 The Department of Water and Sanitation monitors all major treatment works in the country and rates them based on a number of criterion with the results published under the moniker 'Green Drop' to aligned with the 'Blue Drop' monitoring system for water supply. https://ws.dws.gov.za/iris/releases/GDPAT_2023_Report.pdf.

49 City of Johannesburg, "City Services: waste management." Accessed July 30, 2024. https://joburg.org.za/services/_Pages/City%20Services/Waste%20Management/Waste-Management.aspx.

50 City of Johannesburg, "Departments Pikitup." Accessed July 30, 2024. https://joburg.org.za/departments/_Pages/MOEs/Pikitup.aspx.

51 Ibid

6.4 ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY

Johannesburg is a major urban centre with high energy demands, with City Power purchasing 87%⁵² of its bulk electricity in 2022 from Eskom, South Africa's national utility company. The balance generated by the Kelvin power station, an IPP.⁵³ While Johannesburg's energy mix is predominantly based on coal-fired electricity from Eskom, there is a growing interest in diversifying energy sources to include renewables, solar and wind, to improve sustainability and reduce the carbon footprint.

City Power Johannesburg⁵⁴ is the municipal entity responsible for distributing electricity to residents and businesses in Johannesburg. It distributes 80% of the power, while Eskom distributes the balance to consumers in parts of the city, notably Sandton, Soweto and Alexandra.⁵⁵

Johannesburg has one of the highest electricity access rates⁵⁶ in South Africa, with 94% of households in 2022 having access to electricity and using it for lighting, at least.⁵⁷

City Power purchased some 11,000 GWh of electricity in 2022. It had 378,000 customers, served via 303 substations, 18,100 km of underground cables and 823km of overhead cables, with 277,000 streetlights.⁵⁸ Its customer numbers are split as follows:

- Large Power Users – 1%
- Business – 3%
- Postpaid Domestic – 27%
- Prepaid Domestic – 69%

City Power loses 9% of its power in the reticulation system and in 2022 was striving to get non-technical losses to below 13.5%.⁵⁹ This is sub-standard performance in relation to international benchmarks. City Power is also facing a high level of non-payment, with customers owing R50

billion (US\$2.8 billion) in 2024. Socioeconomic factors also play a role here, with poorer communities facing either an inability or unwillingness to pay. On the other hand, City Power has been financially successful with a growing surplus on its operating account.

Johannesburg, like the rest of South Africa, has been severely affected by load shedding, implemented by Eskom, with power outages being most severe over the period 2022-2023 when Eskom's coal-fired fleet of power stations was performing poorly and unable to meet demand. Planned power outages typically lasted for several hours a day, occurring frequently during 2023. However, the situation improved markedly in 2024⁶⁰ with little load shedding in the latter part of the year as Eskom improved the performance of its power stations.

Johannesburg's electricity system is negatively influenced by illegal behaviour with widespread electricity theft through illegal connections, particularly in informal settlements, theft of copper cables and vandalism of substations.

Households use other sources of energy other than grid electricity. About 26% of households in higher-income areas use solar geysers, and some 4% generate their own solar or wind-powered electricity. For lower-income households, figures of 15% (solar geysers) and 2% (renewable power) are more typical.⁶¹ Lower-income households which have electricity also supplement this with other sources of energy for cooking. For example, in Gauteng, 36% use gas (mainly LPG), 17% use paraffin and 7% use an open fire, typically burning wood, coal or charcoal.⁶²

Johannesburg has committed to increasing its use of renewable energy⁶³ as part of its broader sustainability goals. The city is investing in:

52 City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, "City Power's intended extension of Kelvin Power agreement to 2026," *City of Johannesburg Media* (June 14, 2022), accessed February 6, 2026, https://joburg.org.za/media/_Newsroom/Pages/2023%20News%20Articles/June/City-Power%E2%80%99s-intended-extension-of-Kelvin-Power-agreement-to-2026.aspx.

53 Eskom, "About Eskom." Accessed July 30, 2024. <https://www.eskom.co.za/about-eskom/>.

54 City Power Johannesburg (City Power), *Official Website*, accessed August 6, 2025, <https://www.citypower.co.za/home>.

55 Ibid.

56 My broadband, "Most expensive cities for electricity in South Africa." March 28, 2024. <https://mybroadband.co.za/news/energy/530247-most-expensive-cities-for-electricity-in-south-africa.html>.

57 Stats SA. Population census. 2022

58 City Power. Integrated annual report 2022/23.

59 City Power. 2020/21 Business plan.

60 Staff Writer, "Good news for electricity users in Joburg," *BusinessTech*, February 4, 2025, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/energy/810177/good-news-for-electricity-users-in-joburg/>.

61 City of Johannesburg. 2019. Joburg energy use.

62 Stats SA. General household survey 2023.

63 City of Johannesburg, *City of Johannesburg Climate Action Plan (March 2021)*, Johannesburg: City of Johannesburg. https://joburg.org.za/documents/_Documents/City%20of%20Johannesburg%20-%20Climate%20Action%20Plan%20-%28CAP%29.pdf.

- **Solar energy:** Rooftop solar installations are being encouraged, especially in residential areas and commercial buildings. The city has initiated programs to subsidise solar panel installations for households.
- **Waste-to-energy projects:** The city is exploring waste-to-energy projects at landfill sites.
- **Wind energy:** Though less prevalent than solar, wind energy projects are being considered.

These initiatives are part of Johannesburg’s Climate Action Plan,⁶⁴ which aims to reduce the city’s carbon emissions by 35% by 2030.

6.5 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Access to information and communications technology (ICT) is crucial for economic development and social inclusion. Johannesburg is home to nine of the twelve major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) listed by the Internet Service Providers Association, making it a central hub for the internet industry⁶⁵ in South Africa.

From a household perspective, in 2022, 97% owned a phone, 83% had access to the internet, and 27% owned a computer.⁶⁶ By the standards of African cities, this is a high level of connectivity: The average % access to the internet in six SADC cities excluding South Africa was 33%. Looking more broadly, Johannesburg ranks 3rd of 30 cities in the Global South for mobile connectivity, but just 21st out of 30 for internet access.⁶⁷

The Metropolitan Trading Company (MTC), a broadband and technology company owned by the City, is responsible for expanding internet access in Johannesburg and reducing the cost of telecommunications and internet access, particularly in previously disadvantaged communities. Initiatives such as the establishment of public Wi-Fi hotspots in key areas have been instrumental in ensuring that job seekers, entrepreneurs, small

businesses, and students have the necessary digital tools to function in an increasingly connected world.

Access to the internet is more than just having the facility; much depends on the extent to which content is freely available. In this regard, South Africa fares well based on Freedom House’s internet freedom survey, with a score of 73 out of 100 for South Africa, comparable to the USA, which scores 75. From the GGA sample of SADC cities, the average score for Zimbabwe, Angola, Malawi and Zambia was 57.

6.6 ROADS

Johannesburg boasts the most extensive urban road network in South Africa, reflecting its status as the country’s largest city and economic hub. A summary of road lengths in the city is given in Table 5 based on OpenStreetMap data.⁶⁸

Table 5: Road lengths for City of Johannesburg

CATEGORY	KM	SPLIT
Motorway	503	2.6%
Trunk	20	0.1%
Primary	605	3.1%
Secondary	1,114	5.8%
Tertiary	1,048	5.4%
Residential & service	13,905	72.3%
Paths, tracks etc	1,050	5.5%
Unclassified	986	5.1%
Total	19,230	100.0%

63% of roads are paved, a much higher percentage when compared to other SADC sample cities (10% on average). Johannesburg has 1.99 metres of paved road per capita compared with an average of 0.28m per capita for Luanda, Lusaka and Maputo City.

64 City of Johannesburg, City of Johannesburg Climate Action Plan.

65 City of Johannesburg, "Work in Joburg: Internet." Accessed August 1, 2024. <https://joburg.org.za/work/Pages/Work%20in%20Joburg/Key%20Sectors/Links/Internet.aspx>.

66 City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, 2022-27 Draft Integrated Development Plan (Johannesburg: City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, 2022), accessed June 26, 2025, <https://joburg.org.za/documents/Documents/2022-27%20Draft%20IDP/2022-27%20Draft%20Integrated%20Development%20Plan.pdf>.

67 Catapult. 2021. Johannesburg urban mobility. <https://cp-catapult.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2021/02/Johannesburg-ULA-market-intelligence.pdf>

68 Openstreetmap using human data interface.

Johannesburg has an extensive freeway system with major highways such as the M1, M2, N1, and N3 serving both as distributors within the city and as key arterial routes that connect the city to other parts of the province and beyond. This freeway system is managed primarily by SANRAL, the national roads agency, with some of the routes – the M1 and M2 – managed by the City. The SANRAL network had an extensive upgrade, completed in 2011, which has substantially improved traffic flows but has been controversial as the upgrades were implemented along with an electronic tolling system.^{69 iii 70}

The road system in Johannesburg is the responsibility of the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA), an independent company wholly owned by the municipality. JRA has performed poorly over the past decade in terms of road maintenance. For example, the municipal councillor responsible for roads has reported that “a concerning 3,968 km languishes in a state ranging from poor to very poor, necessitating reconstruction efforts.”⁷¹ That said, in recent years, Johannesburg has undertaken several major infrastructure projects aimed at improving the road network. These include the expansion of key distributor roads, the construction of new interchanges, and the upgrade of existing roads to accommodate increased traffic. The city has also focused on improving pedestrian safety by installing better crosswalks and traffic calming measures in high-density areas.

Despite the extensive road network, Johannesburg faces significant challenges related to traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours. The city’s rapid urbanisation and population growth have led to increased demand for road space, resulting in heavy traffic on many of the city’s main roads and highways. That said, congestion is typical for most large cities in the world. Based on the TomTom traffic index,⁷² Johannesburg is moderately congested having a value 32%, which is comparable to other South African cities (Cape Town has

an index of 36%) and most European cities (London’s index is 32%). It is much better off than many highly congested Latin American cities, including Mexico City (52%), Bogota (45%) and Sao Paulo (42%) and many Asian cities such as Manila (42%), Bangkok (50%) and Istanbul (41%) (in Eastern Europe).

To address these challenges, the City of Johannesburg has implemented various traffic management strategies, including the use of intelligent traffic systems (ITS) and traffic signal coordination to improve the flow of vehicles. However, ultimately, the traffic problem can only be improved by improved public transport on mass transit systems.

6.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Johannesburg has a complex public transport system which relies primarily on minibus taxis (privately owned) and conventional buses (some run by CoJ – Metrobus - and some privately run) operating on the road network, but including three mass-transit systems:

- The Rea Vaya bus rapid transit (BRT) system, which operates primarily in the central areas of the city and Soweto to the South-West of the city. This is managed by the City of Johannesburg.
- The Gautrain, a modern high-speed rail system linking the OR Tambo Airport to the CBD, affluent suburbs to the North of the city and then to Pretoria in the North of Gauteng. This is run by a private company contracted to the Gauteng Province.
- The passenger rail system operated by Metrorail, a subsidiary of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) with limited routes running East to West through the CBD and then linking to other areas of Gauteng. PRASA is a national entity, answering to the national Department of Transport.

The coordination of the public transport systems has been difficult, given the multiple players active in the

69 Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA), “E-Toll Concerns,” accessed February 6, 2026, <https://www.oua.co.za/main-etoll-concerns>.

70 No booms at toll stations, only gantries with a numberplate reading system feeding data to a centralised billing system. Payment of tolls have been boycotted by most road users, putting SANRAL into substantial financial difficulties. This has been a political hot potato and currently the Gauteng Government is planning to withdraw the tolls.

71 https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-08-22-jra-knuckles-down-to-improve-joburg-roads/#google_vignette

72 <https://www.tomtom.com/traffic-index/about/>

iii No booms at toll stations, only gantries with a numberplate reading system feeding data to a centralized billing system. Payment of tolls have been boycotted by most road users, putting SANRAL into substantial financial difficulties. This has been a political hot potato and currently the Gauteng Government is planning to withdraw the tolls.

public transport sector. This highlights the importance of initiatives to coordinate public transport along primary corridors in the city and align this with well-connected, pedestrian-friendly urban spaces (See Figure 1).

The modal split for passenger trips in the metro area is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Modal split of passenger trips in City of Johannesburg⁷³

MODE	SPLIT
Taxi	23.7%
Private car	35.3%
Walking/cycling	35.4%
Bus	4.5%
Train	0.2%
Other	0.9%

As evident from Table 6, Johannesburg is dominated by private cars, with the main mode of public transport being minibus taxis and with limited use of mass transit systems (trains and some of the bus service which includes Rea Vaya).

About 21%⁷⁴ of residents have convenient access to public transport, defined as living within 500 meters of a low-capacity system and 100 meters of a high-capacity system, such as trains. This places the city 40th out of 717 cities globally in terms of convenient transport access.⁷⁵ About 70% of commuters spend between 0-30 minutes on their most frequent trip⁷⁶ while 78% of households spend more than 10% of their income on public transport.⁷⁷

7. ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

With climate change considerations being so vital, the efforts made by stakeholders in the city regarding carbon emissions and adaptation initiatives are important. Currently, carbon emissions from the city are estimated at 3.2 tons of CO² per capita in 2020.⁷⁸ This is far higher than the average figures for seven non-South African SADC cities of 0.49 tons of CO² per capita.⁷⁹ Internationally, it can be compared with London (3.2), Bogota (2.3) and Mumbai (2.7). Based on the climate action plan for the City of Johannesburg,⁸⁰ “the largest contributor to these emissions is ‘stationary’ energy use by buildings and industry, for example, which accounted for 54% of greenhouse gas emissions. These energy-related emissions resulted primarily from electricity use, due to the carbon-intensive nature of South Africa’s energy system, which relies predominantly on coal-fired power plants for generation. The transport sector accounted for 35% of emissions, most of which were generated by private vehicles.

The City’s climate action plan identifies key mitigation measures, including: energy efficiency (e.g. stricter building standards/codes) and renewables (e.g. grid decarbonisation and rooftop solar PV). Transport emissions can be reduced through a modal shift from private to public transport, the use of cleaner fuels (e.g. electric and hybrid vehicles) and higher vehicle efficiency (e.g. vehicle emissions standards).

Considering air pollution, the PM_{2.5} concentration of particulates in the air in Johannesburg was 42 µg/m³ in 2022, above the WHO 2021 guideline of 5 µg/m³.⁸¹ This is also significantly above the average for the other 9 SADC cities profiled at 14 µg/m³ (Cape Town 8 and Luanda 20).⁸² Internationally, this can be compared to 9 µg/m³ for London, 16 for Bogota and 68 for Mumbai. The WHO standard is 15 µg/m³.

73 City of Johannesburg. 2022. General travel patterns of Joburg residents. https://joburg.org.za/documents/_Documents/Statistical%20Briefs/Issue%2031%20Transport%20in%20the%20city%20FINAL.pdf

74 UN Habitat. World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the future of cities (Nairobi: UN Habitat, 2022), 354. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/06/wcr_2022.pdf

75 UN Habitat. World Cities Report 2022, 350

76 Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), Quality of Life Survey 6 (2020/21) Municipal Report: City of Johannesburg (Johannesburg: GCRO, 2022), 43

77 South African cities network. “City of Johannesburg” accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/S1-City-of-Johannesburg.pdf>

78 Global Human Settlements Layer.

79 Global Human Settlements Layer.

80 City of Johannesburg Climate action plan - 2021

81 World Health Organization, *WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines: Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀), Ozone, Nitrogen Dioxide, Sulfur Dioxide and Carbon Monoxide* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2021), accessed February 6, 2026, <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/551b515e-2a32-4e1a-a58c-cdaecd395b19/content>

82 Global Human Settlements Layer.

Only 33% of the city's rivers are in a natural state, and only 1% are protected, with all rivers in the city being a health risk.⁸³ Of particular concern are the Jukskei, Klip, and Braamfontein Spruit rivers⁸⁴ with pollution caused by poor solid waste management and below-standard effluent from wastewater treatment works. Below-standard effluent is also having an impact regionally, with effluent from Johannesburg's treatment works flowing into the Klip River, a tributary of the Vaal River, and into the Crocodile River, which flows into Hartbeespoort Dam, which is facing serious eutrophication problems.⁸⁵

8. ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

8.1 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

CoJ has an excellent website with high-quality documents across a range of sectors readily available. Nationally, comparative financial information is available on the National Treasury Municipal Money website, and other national departments, such as the Department of Water and Sanitation, publish key monitoring information on their websites.

8.2 PLANNING AND MONITORING

Johannesburg's planning process is guided by the Integrated Development Plan⁸⁶ (IDP), which serves as a strategic framework guiding the city's socio-economic and spatial development over a five-year period. The IDP is supported by the Medium-Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF), which provides a three-year budget plan, allocating resources to priority areas such as infrastructure, housing, and social services.

The City of Johannesburg uses a performance management system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of its IDP and budget. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are set for each department, allowing for regular assessment

of progress and the identification of areas requiring improvement. This system is integral to ensuring that the city meets its service delivery targets and that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

8.3 GOVERNANCE

Johannesburg's performance is assessed through the Governance Performance Index (GPI), which evaluates municipalities according to their constitutional mandates. Within this, the metros are therefore evaluated across five categories: administration and governance; service delivery; planning, monitoring and evaluation; leadership and management; and economic development. The GPI in 2024 ranked Johannesburg 5th among eight metro municipalities with a score of 3.2, behind the City of Cape Town (1st, 4.5), the city of Ekurhuleni (2nd, 4.3), eThekweni (3rd, 3.6), and Nelson Mandela Bay (4th, 3.3). Johannesburg scored highest in planning, monitoring, and evaluation, yet performs poorly in service delivery and economic development.

Johannesburg has faced persistent governance challenges since 2016, when the ANC lost its majority in the municipal council. Since then, coalition governments have dominated, characterised by frequent instability and political parties prioritising self-interest over the city's needs. Control of the council has shifted between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance, with smaller parties such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and Action SA influencing the appointment of the mayor, resulting in ten mayors from 2016 to 2024. This instability has caused similar volatility in the city's administration, as evidenced by frequent changes in the position of the city manager.

Political instability continues to undermine the city's ability to effectively implement plans, pass budgets, contract service providers and engage stakeholders. The frequent changes in leadership have hindered consistent policy execution, thereby limiting Johannesburg's ability to achieve sustainable development and improved service delivery.

83 City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, *Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan for the City of Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, 2020), accessed September 5, 2025, <https://joburg.org.za/documents/Documents/City%20of%20Johannesburg-%20Environmental%20Sustainability%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

84 <https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/sewage-waste-neglect-joburgs-rivers-are-drowning-in-pollution/>

85 <https://www.wessa.org.za/hands-on-hartbeespoort-dam/>

86 City of Johannesburg, *The City of Johannesburg: Final Integrated Development Plan 2020/21*. Johannesburg: City of Johannesburg.

Table 7: Budgeted revenue for City of Johannesburg 2024/25⁸⁹

REVENUE	SA RAND MILLION	US\$ MILLION	SPLIT	US\$/CAP
Property rates	16,989	971	22.2%	156.6
Other minor revenue items	4,210	241	5.5%	38.9
Fines, licences, penalties and levies	490	28	0.6%	4.5
Interest earned	808	46	1.1%	7.4
Sales of goods and assets	1,170	67	1.5%	10.8
Rental of fixed assets	432	25	0.6%	4.0
Agency services	389	22	0.5%	3.6
Operational revenue	929	53	1.2%	8.6
Revenue from trading services	42,440	2,425	55.6%	391.3
Service charges - Electricity	21,467	1,227	28.1%	197.9
Service charges - Water	10,632	608	13.9%	98.0
Service charges - Waste Water Management	7,246	414	9.5%	66.8
Service charges - Waste Management	3,094	177	4.1%	28.5
Transfers	12,721	727	16.7%	117.3
Operational transfers	8,594	491	11.3%	79.2
Total levy	4,128	236	5.4%	38.1
Total	76,368	4,364	100.0%	704.1

8.4 MUNICIPAL ENTITIES

As noted in Section 6, Johannesburg runs all the primary services in the city (water, sanitation, electricity, solid waste management, roads and parks) through municipal entities owned by the City. While these entities have been relatively successful in the past, their performance is in decline with increasing electricity and water outages and deteriorating road conditions.⁸⁷ This raises questions about the merit of having separate governance arrangements with independent boards of directors for each of the entities which are run under a company structure.

8.5 AUDIT REPORT

The audit report is a critical measure of Johannesburg's financial health and governance. The Auditor-General of South Africa⁸⁸ (AGSA) conducts annual audits of the City's

financial statements, assessing their accuracy, compliance with laws and regulations, and the effectiveness of internal controls. Over the years, Johannesburg's audit outcomes have fluctuated, reflecting the challenges faced by the city in maintaining consistent financial management practices.

In recent years, the City has made strides in improving its audit outcomes, but challenges remain. For example, in the 2021/22 financial year, the City of Johannesburg received a qualified audit opinion, indicating that while the financial statements were largely accurate, there were areas of concern, particularly around the completeness of revenue and the management of assets. In 2022/23, the report was 'unqualified with findings', an improvement but still below a 'clean' unqualified report. Of the eight metros in South Africa, only one, Cape Town, received a clean audit.

⁸⁷ Fariel Haffajee. "Johannesburg's collapse, capture, corruption is a national risk, President to hear". Daily Maverick. 6 March 2025.

⁸⁸ Auditor General South Africa, "About Us." Accessed August 10, 2024. <https://www.agsa.co.za/AboutUs.aspx>.

⁸⁹ Converted from SA Rands to US\$ at a rate of 17.5 R/\$ as at 11 Nov 2024.

Table 8: Budgeted expenditure for City of Johannesburg 2024/25

EXPENDITURE	SA RAND MILLION	US\$MILLION	SPLIT	US\$/CAP
Governance and administration	22,733	1,299	30.3%	209.6
Planning, facilitation and regulation	1,542	88	2.1%	14.2
Planning, regulation and development facilitation	1,218	70	1.6%	11.2
Economic and business development		-	0.0%	0.0
Environmental protection	324	18	0.4%	3.0
Social, safety and community services	7,766	444	10.3%	71.6
Public order and safety	2,787	159	3.7%	25.7
Community services	1,777	102	2.4%	16.4
Housing	2,052	117	2.7%	18.9
Health services	1,149	66	1.5%	10.6
Roads and drainage	4,020	230	5.4%	37.1
Trading services	39,026	2,230	52.0%	359.8
Electricity distribution	19,281	1,102	25.7%	177.8
Water supply	13,080	747	17.4%	120.6
Sanitation	2,820	161	3.8%	26.0
Solid waste management	3,844	220	5.1%	35.4
Total	75,086	4,291	100.0%	692.3

9. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

In 2024, the City Council passed a budget of R83.1 billion (US\$4.7 billion), R7.4 billion (9%) of which was for capital expenditure (US\$0.42 billion). The budgeted operating budget for CoJ for the 2023/24 is given in Tables 7 and 8.⁹⁰

The City raises 83.3% of its own revenue, with 55.6% of revenue coming from trading services (tariffs charged for electricity, water, wastewater management and solid waste management), noting that this includes services provided by the municipal entities (City Power, Joburg Water and Pikitup). This makes CoJ unusual compared to other African cities, which typically do not provide the full spectrum of trading services.⁹¹ The scale of property rates revenue at US\$156.6 per capita per year also sets CoJ apart compared with other African cities. For example, for

Luanda, the estimated value is US\$2.6 per capita, and for Lusaka it is US\$2.2 per capita. This disparity is largely due to the scale of Johannesburg's economy, which translates into high property values in aggregate.

The primary operational transfer paid to the City from the national fiscus is the Local Government Equitable Share (LGES) of national revenue, which is a formula-based transfer and is unconditional. The City also receives a share of the national fuel levy, which is also unconditional.

Within the expenditure budget, a substantial percentage (30.3%) is spent on governance and administration, which includes financial administration. Regarding trading services, these are typically run at a surplus (in this budget, expenditure is US\$360/capita while revenue is US\$391/capita). However, some of this surplus is allocated towards

⁹⁰ Data sourced from National Treasury municipal finance tables A2 and A4

⁹¹ In most other African cities where a local authority is served by a public utility this utility keeps its own accounts and they are not reported in city budgets and financial statements.

city administration. For the other, non-trading, city services, their expenditure needs to be covered by property rates, transfers and other minor sources of revenue.

The 2023/24 figures are substantially higher than for 2022/23, when audited revenue was R60.6 billion and expenditure was R61.8 billion.

Within the capital expenditure category, the budgeted R7.4 billion is low in relation to operational expenditure (9%). For example, the City of Cape Town's capital budget for the 2023/24 year is R12.0 billion, 16% of its total operating and capital budget. This variable is a strong proxy for ascertaining resilience. Johannesburg's R7.4 billion capital budget is financed by a mix of conditional transfers intended for capital expenditure (50%), borrowing (34%) and internally generated funds (16%). It covers the full range of capital works, primarily new and renewal of infrastructure, but is insufficient, leading to a declining state of assets and ongoing service backlogs.

The fact that CoJ can borrow is significant, although levels of borrowing over recent years – and as projected in the budget at R2.5 billion a year – are low, even though the City has reasonably high credit ratings:

- Moody's: Ba3, with 'stable' outlook.
- GCR ratings: A1 with 'negative' outlook.

Overall, CoJ is in reasonably good financial health, with adequate liquidity and a positive operating surplus, but there are challenges which are included in assessments by credit rating agencies, including:

- Underperforming billing system.⁹²
- Low capital expenditure with growing pressure to increase capital spending to address social and environmental risks (Moody's).
- High and consistently increasing levels of unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure (GCR Ratings).
- Lower debtor collection has led to reduced cash flows and weaker service delivery (GCR Ratings).

10. CLOSURE

Johannesburg is the economically strongest city in Africa, with a high GDP per capita, and the city is in a strong financial position. Yet it has been underperforming based on several metrics: poverty is increasing, along with unemployment; the status of health and education is below par; the condition of infrastructure is in decline, with service utilities not performing well; and environmental conditions are not what they should be. In stating this, it needs to be recognised that many of the economic and social challenges faced by Johannesburg's residents and enterprises are outside the control of the municipality, with national and provincial government primarily responsible. However, given the economic and social potential of the city, there is much that the City of Johannesburg can do, but this is being hampered by the poor state of governance within the city council.

⁹² See for example, Business Day. 1 Dec 2024. Technical upgrades, political will needed to resolve Joburg's billing crisis link?



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