



Policy Brief No 13 of 2025

Bridging Population Data Gaps for Effective Planning and Policy.

Overview:

Reliable, timely, and disaggregated population data are the foundation of effective planning, equitable service delivery, and accountable governance. In Kenya, growing demands for data driven decision making have revealed persistent gaps in population data availability, quality, integration, and use. While progress has been made through censuses, surveys, and administrative data, significant challenges remain in translating population data into actionable policy insights.

This policy brief highlights the importance of strengthening population data systems through enhanced research, innovation, and coordination. Bridging data gaps will enable policymakers to respond more effectively to demographic dynamics, allocate resources efficiently, and ensure that no population group is left behind.

Background:

Global commitments such as the ICPD Programme of Action, SDG 17.18, and the UN Pact for the Future emphasise data driven decision making supported by strong national data systems. At the regional level, the AU Agenda 2063 and the Africa Data Consensus call for inclusive, interoperable, and innovation driven data ecosystems. Kenya has aligned with these frameworks through policies such as the Kenya National Population Policy for Sustainable Development (2023), the National Research Agenda on Population and Sustainable Development (2019–2030), and the Kenya Strategy for the Development of Statistics (2023/24–2027/28).

Despite these advances, challenges still persist. These include data fragmentation across institutions, delays in data availability, limited data disaggregation, underutilization of administrative data, and weak linkages between research and policy. In addition, emerging demographic issues such as urbanization, youth transitions, ageing, and climate related mobility require innovative data approaches beyond traditional methods.

Strengthening population data research and innovation is therefore critical for ensuring that Kenya's planning and policy processes are responsive, inclusive, and forward looking.

Key Findings:

Persistent data quality gaps: Completeness of birth and death registration remains below UN targets, with birth registration at 77.1% and death registration at 45.1% nationally (KNBS, 2024).

Fragmentated data ecosystem: Research efforts across institutions are often uncoordinated, leading to duplication, inconsistencies, and underutilisation of data.

Technological adoption: Digital tools, AI, and citizen generated data have been integrated to some extent, but full utilisation remains limited.

Institutional capacity: While KNBS and other agencies maintain high standards, CSO's and private sector actors face constraints in technical and financial capacity to contribute reliably to population research.

Financing constraints: Heavy reliance on external funding threatens the sustainability and frequency of key data initiatives such as DHS survey.

Limited Disaggregation of data: Insufficient disaggregation by age, sex, disability, geography, and socio-economic status constrains the ability to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Policy Brief No 13 of 2025

Implications:

Failure to address population data gaps will result in:

- Ineffective policies due to unreliable or outdated data.
- Inefficient resource allocation,
- Weak monitoring of development outcomes,
- Missed opportunities to harness Kenya's demographic dividend,
- Inability to track progress toward Vision 2030, SDGs, and ICPD commitments.

Recommendations:

1. NCPD, in collaboration with KNBS and the State Department for Economic Planning, should establish an integrated national population data exchange and interoperability framework.
2. KNBS and the Department of Civil Registration Services (DCRS) should strengthen data quality and completeness, with emphasis on death registration and harmonised data standards across MDACs.
3. NCPD and KIPPRA should institutionalise regular research to policy dialogue platforms to ensure population evidence informs national and county planning.

4. KNBS and NCPD should scale up digital, innovative, and citizen-generated data to complement official statistics and improve policy responsiveness.

Conclusion:

Bridging population data gaps is not merely a technical exercise, it is a strategic investment in effective governance, inclusive development, and sustainable growth. Strengthening population data systems through research and innovation will enable Kenya to anticipate demographic change, design responsive policies, and allocate resources more efficiently. A robust, integrated, and well financed population data ecosystem is essential for translating evidence into impact and ensuring that development planning is guided by accurate and timely population insights.

References

1. Population Situation Analysis (2025). National Council for Population and Development.
2. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). 2024. Vital Statistics Report. Nairobi: KNBS.

This Policy Brief is based on the Kenya Population Situational Analysis Report 2025.

Collaborating Organizations: National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), Population Studies and Research Institute (PSRI) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

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NCPD is a semi-autonomous government agency that formulates and promotes population policy and coordinates related activities for sustainable development in Kenya.

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