

Children's access to education

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Section 29(1)(a) of the South African Constitution states that "everyone has the right to a basic education" and section 29(1)(b) states that "everyone has the right to further education" and that the State must make such education "progressively available and accessible."

Article 11(3)(a) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child says "States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving the full realisation of this right and shall in particular ... provide free and compulsory basic education".

Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises "the right of the child to education" and also obliges the State to "make primary education compulsory and available free to all".

The number and proportion of children (aged 7 – 17 years) attending an educational institution in South Africa

Education is a critical socio-economic right that provides the foundation for children's life-long learning and work opportunities. For children, basic compulsory education spans the ages 7 – 15 years, or Grades 1 – 9. The admission age for children to Grade 1 in a public school is six, turning seven in the year of admission. Children who have completed basic education also have a right to further education (Grades 10 – 12) which the government must take reasonable measures to make available.

At a national level, the high proportion (96%) of children of school-going age (7 – 17 years) attending some form of school or educational facility in 2006 is extremely positive. The proportion of children attending an educational facility has remained constant at 96% over four consecutive years (2003 to 2006). On this basis, it could be claimed that children's right to education is close to

being fully realised. However, these figures do not tell us about the *regularity* of children's school attendance, the *quality* of teaching and learning in schools, or about repetition and throughput rates.

Although a 96% attendance rate is relatively high, the number of children who do not attend an educational facility is a serious concern. At the time of the *General Household Survey 2006*, about 447,000 children of school-going age were not attending an educational facility. Of these, nearly 337,000 (75% of children not attending) were children aged 13 – 17 years.

At a provincial level, four provinces have attendance rates that are slightly lower than the national average for 2006: KwaZulu-Natal (95%), Northern Cape (94%), North West (94%), and Western Cape (94%). There are slight increases in attendance rates for most provinces over the five years between 2002 and 2006.

TABLE 9: The number⁺ and proportion of children (7 – 17 years) attending an educational institution in South Africa in 2002 – 2006

Province	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	1,761,000	94	1,807,000	94	1,910,000	95	1,917,000	96	1,922,000	96
Free State	607,000	96	607,000	95	610,000	96	643,000	97	643,000	98
Gauteng	1,653,000	98	1,658,000	98	1,524,000	98	1,463,000	97	1,425,000	96
KwaZulu-Natal	2,315,000	93	2,356,000	95	2,277,000	96	2,325,000	96	2,330,000	95
Limpopo	1,596,000	97	1,657,000	97	1,656,000	98	1,627,000	98	1,634,000	98
Mpumalanga	797,000	96	827,000	97	779,000	97	794,000	97	829,000	97
North West	827,000	93	861,000	95	876,000	96	823,000	95	762,000	94
Northern Cape	163,000	91	160,000	92	176,000	94	195,000	95	191,000	94
Western Cape	931,000	95	937,000	94	907,000	95	890,000	95	888,000	94
South Africa	10,651,000	95	10,870,000	96	10,716,000	96	10,677,000	96	10,624,000	96

⁺ Numbers have been rounded off to the nearest thousand.

Source: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) *General Household Survey 2002; General Household Survey 2003; General Household Survey 2004; General Household Survey 2005; General Household Survey 2006*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Marera DS, Children's Institute, UCT.

TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator reflects the number and proportion of children attending a school or educational institution as at July 2002 to July 2006. The data reflects the attendance of children aged 7 – 17 years at a public or private educational facility.

The *General Household Survey* asks, "Is ... (name) ... currently attending school or any other educational institution?" (Statistics South Africa 2004). A simple 'yes' or 'no' reply is required.

The learner-to-educator ratio for children enrolled in public schools in South Africa

Realising the right to education for all children is not just a matter of universal access to schools. The quality of the learning environment is also crucial and educators play a key role in enabling learning. Learner-to-educator ratios are a proxy for quality. They present averages and therefore do not tell us much about class size. The number of children in a class may vary across grades and learning areas within a school, and among schools, even when the learner-to-educator ratio is relatively low. A low learner-to-educator ratio is not the only factor in providing an enabling environment for learning. Educators' professional competence and content knowledge, their regular presence at school, and the proportion of time they and the learners spend 'on task' are all as important as the number of learners per educator.

The context of HIV/AIDS complicates the roles and responsibilities of educators. Part of their role is to support learners whose social circumstances may be a barrier to learning. Educators also have a responsibility to be aware of children who may need refer-

ral. This becomes increasingly difficult if an educator has large numbers of children to attend to. In addition, high rates of educator absence in the context of HIV/AIDS exacerbate the situation.

Learner-to-educator ratios for public schools in South Africa have remained fairly steady between 2000 and 2005, with a slightly lower ratio in 2005 (32.8) than in the two previous years (34.6 and 34.5 respectively). As can be expected, the learner-to-educator ratio in independent schools is more favourable. The ratio also tends to be higher in primary than in secondary schools. This is concerning, as younger children are likely to need more support than older children who are more mature, independent learners.

Over the period 2003 to 2005, the KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga provinces had higher ratios than the national average; the same applies to Limpopo province for the 2004 to 2005 period. In 2005 the Western Cape reduced its learner-to-educator ratio to below the national average. The Free State province has been below the national average consistently over the 2000 to 2005 period.

TABLE 10: The learner-to-educator ratio for children enrolled in public schools in South Africa in 2000 – 2005

Province	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Eastern Cape	32.1	33.3	31.8	32.9	33.6	33.0
Free State	32.6	31.4	31.6	31.2	30.2	29.7
Gauteng	33.2	33.0	33.2	33.6	34.2	31.6
KwaZulu-Natal	36.5	37.2	37.4	39.6	36.3	34.4
Limpopo	33.6	31.8	32.9	33.7	35.6	34.1
Mpumalanga	34.5	36.9	36.9	36.4	35.7	33.6
Northern Cape	30.7	31.4	30.6	32.8	34.0	31.9
North West	30.6	30.7	30.1	29.7	30.0	31.1
Western Cape	32.1	35.5	36.3	36.9	37.7	31.5
South Africa	33.4	33.9	33.8	34.6	34.5	32.8

Source: Department of Education (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) *Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2000; Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2001; Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2002; Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2003; Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2004; Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2005*. Pretoria: Department of Education. Available: www.education.gov.za/EMIS/emisweb/statistics.htm

TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

The learner-to-educator ratio is the number of learners per educator for a specific type of school (i.e. public schools) in a given school year (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2005).

This ratio is calculated by dividing the number of learners by the number of educators at public schools.

For more data, visit www.childrencount.ci.org.za

The number and proportion of children relative to the distance travelled to school in South Africa

Access to schools and other educational facilities is a necessary condition for achieving the right to education. The location of a child's school and the distance between school and home can pose a barrier to accessing education. A child's access to educational facilities may also be hindered by poor roads, unreliable or unaffordable transport and unsafe conditions on the journey to school. Children travelling alone are most at risk. Children who travel a long way to school are also likely to be physically tired from their journey and therefore not able to participate fully at school.

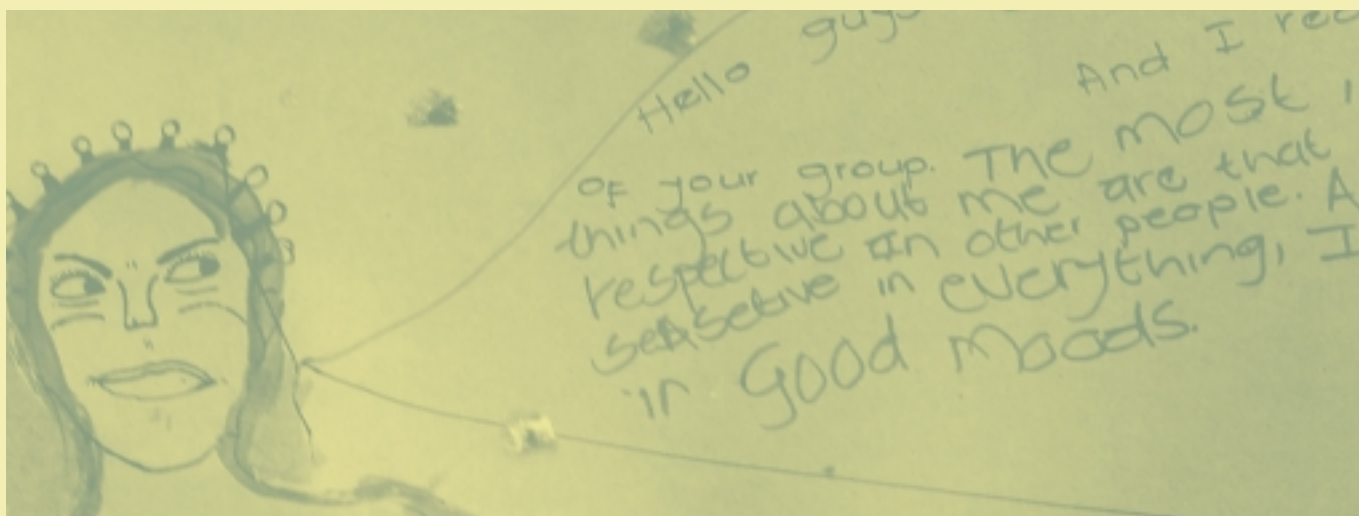
According to an analysis of the *General Household Survey 2006*, of the 6.9 million children of primary school-age living in South Africa, 1.25 million (21%) attended schools that are far from their homes. Over a five-year period (2002 – 2006), the largest proportions of primary school-age children who travel a long way to school were in KwaZulu-Natal (29% in 2002 and 31% in 2006) and North-West (21% in 2002 and 25% in 2006). In Gauteng, the proportion of primary school children who travel far to school has increased from 8% in 2002 to 15% in 2006. Possible explanations for this are that children are travelling to what their families

perceive as better quality primary schools or that they live in areas where there are not enough schools.

Slightly more than five million children in South Africa are of secondary school age. In 2006, one-third of these children (33%) attended schools that are situated far from their homes. In the Eastern Cape, nearly half (48%) of the secondary school-age population lived far from school in the same year.

The situation is almost as bad (41%) for secondary school-aged learners in KwaZulu-Natal, followed closely by the North West (38%). In Gauteng, the proportion of secondary school-age learners who travel far to school has increased from 12% in 2002 to 21% in 2006.

On the whole, just over one-quarter (26%) of South Africa's school-aged children travelled far distances to reach their schools in 2006. The Eastern Cape (35%), KwaZulu-Natal (35%), and North West (32%) provinces had more than one-quarter of their children attending far-away schools. Between 2002 and 2006 the proportion of children living far from school has increased in all provinces, except the Western Cape and the Free State.



TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator reflects the distance that children (aged 7 – 17 years) travel from their homes to the school that they attend. The distance is regarded as far if children travel more than 30 minutes to reach the school. This indicator is defined by school-going age and not by school attendance. Children are therefore categorised according to their ages and corresponding level of schooling – primary or secondary school. The indicator is based on the

General Household Survey question, "How long does it take ... (name) ... to get to the school/educational institution where he/she attends?" (Statistics South Africa 2004). Where respondents indicated that children spent more than 30 minutes travelling to their school, the distance to school was categorised as 'far'. Where children spent 30 minutes or less travelling to their school, the distance was categorised as 'not far'.

TABLE 11a: The number⁺ and proportion of children relative to the distance travelled to primary school in South Africa in 2002 – 2006

Province	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	184,000	18*	174,000	16*	253,000	22*	260,000	24	251,000	23*
Free State	70,000	21*	66,000	20*	49,000	14*	49,000	14	57,000	17*
Gauteng	68,000	8	102,000	11*	86,000	10	95,000	12	121,000	15*
KwaZulu-Natal	384,000	29*	419,000	32*	406,000	31*	403,000	30	408,000	31*
Limpopo	108,000	12	130,000	15*	167,000	18*	141,000	15	160,000	18*
Mpumalanga	66,000	15*	83,000	18*	103,000	24*	89,000	19	90,000	19*
North West	105,000	21*	107,000	22*	105,000	20*	118,000	26	102,000	25*
Northern Cape	17,000	16*	16,000	16*	16,000	15*	13,000	12	21,000	18*
Western Cape	44,000	8	44,000	8	38,000	7*	26,000	5	38,000	8
South Africa	1,047,000	17	1,141,000	19	1,224,000	20	1,194,000	20	1,248,000	21

⁺ Numbers have been rounded off to the nearest thousand.

* This proportion should be interpreted with caution, as the confidence interval is relatively wide.

Source: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) *General Household Survey 2002; General Household Survey 2003; General Household Survey 2004; General Household Survey 2005; General Household Survey 2006*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Marera DS, Children's Institute, UCT.

TABLE 11b: The number⁺ and proportion of children relative to the distance travelled to secondary school in South Africa in 2002 – 2006

Province	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	361,000	42*	381,000	44*	428,000	50*	450,000	49*	444,000	48*
Free State	72,000	24*	86,000	28*	73,000	25*	60,000	19*	64,000	20*
Gauteng	96,000	12	157,000	19*	104,000	15*	106,000	15*	138,000	21*
KwaZulu-Natal	427,000	37*	469,000	40*	446,000	42*	427,000	40*	449,000	41*
Limpopo	203,000	27*	268,000	33*	256,000	33*	255,000	35*	232,000	31*
Mpumalanga	118,000	31*	106,000	27*	135,000	37*	125,000	35*	120,000	32*
Northern Cape	18,000	24*	19,000	25*	23,000	28*	19,000	20*	25,000	29*
North West	128,000	33*	155,000	38*	133,000	34*	149,000	36*	154,000	38*
Western Cape	69,000	15*	55,000	12*	54,000	13*	40,000	9*	35,000	8*
South Africa	1,492,000	29	1,696,000	32	1,652,000	33	1,631,000	32	1,660,000	33

⁺ Numbers have been rounded off to the nearest thousand.

* This proportion should be interpreted with caution, as the confidence interval is relatively wide.

Source: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) *General Household Survey 2002; General Household Survey 2003; General Household Survey 2004; General Household Survey 2005; General Household Survey 2006*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Marera DS, Children's Institute, UCT.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES FOR CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.
- Secretary General of the Organisation of the African Union (1990) *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, OAU resolution 21.8/49*.
- Statistics South Africa (2004) *General Household Survey Questionnaire 2004*, page 8. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2005) *Interpreting the Country Profiles*. Available: www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/selectCountry_en.aspx
- United Nations Children's Fund (1990) *First Call for Children. World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

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