

Children's access to social assistance

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The Constitution of South Africa, section 27(1)(c), says that "everyone has the right to have access to ... social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance".

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right "to a standard of living adequate for his or her development" (article 27) and obliges the State "in case of need" to "provide material assistance".

Article 26 guarantees "every child the right to benefit from social security".

The number of children receiving the Child Support Grant

This indicator shows the number of children receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG), as reported by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), which disburses social grants on behalf of the Department of Social Development.

The right to social assistance ensures that people living in poverty are able to meet basic subsistence needs. Government is obliged to support children directly when their parents or caregivers are too poor to do so. Income support is provided through social assistance programmes, such as the CSG, which is an unconditional cash grant paid to the caregivers of eligible children.

From April 2009 the CSG has a value of R240 per month per child. Introduced in 1998 with a value of R100, the CSG has become the single biggest programme for alleviating child poverty in South Africa. Take-up of the CSG has increased dramatically over the past decade, and in July 2008, the monthly CSG was paid to nearly 8 million children aged 0 – 13 years.

There have been two important changes in eligibility criteria related to the age and income thresholds. At first the CSG was only available for children 0 – 6 years old. Later it was progressively extended to older children, and in January 2009 the age threshold increased to 15 (so that 14-year-old children may apply).

From 1998, children were eligible for the CSG if their primary caregiver and his/her spouse had a joint monthly income of R800 or less and lived in a formal house in an urban area. For those who lived in rural areas or informal housing, the income

threshold was R1,100 per month. This threshold remained static for 10 years until August 2008 when a formula was introduced for calculating income threshold — set at 10 times the amount of the grant. Therefore the 2009 income threshold is R2,400 per month for a single caregiver (and R4,800 per month for the joint income of the caregiver and married spouse).

Using the 2004 General Household Survey, Budlender calculated that 65% of all children under the age of 14 were eligible for the CSG in that they passed the old means test (Budlender, Rosa & Hall 2005). Applying this eligibility rate to the most recent available population data (mid-2007), it is estimated that the number of children accessing the CSG that year was equivalent to 86% of eligible children, although the actual take-up rate would be lower due to errors of inclusion. After the means test was adjusted in 2008, Budlender (2008) again calculated the eligibility rates and found that 82% of children 0 – 13 years would be eligible for the CSG.

There is substantial evidence that grants, including the CSG, are being spent on food, education and basic goods and services. This evidence shows that the grant not only helps to realise children's right to social assistance, but also improves their access to food, education, and basic services (Case, Hosegood & Lund 2005; Budlender & Woolard 2008; Samson, Lee, Ndlebe, Mac Quene, Van Niekerk, Ghandi, Harigaya & Abrahams 2004).

Table 2a: The number of children under 14 years receiving the CSG, 2005 – 2008

Number of child beneficiaries				
Province	2005	2006	2007	2008
Eastern Cape	1,078,442	1,413,830	1,489,191	1,497,736
Free State	361,318	417,076	438,230	441,397
Gauteng	723,432	862,346	921,509	926,179
KwaZulu-Natal	1,338,045	1,746,944	1,945,026	1,963,944
Limpopo	990,194	1,200,185	1,249,818	1,253,794
Mpumalanga	489,663	613,008	643,727	645,565
North West	465,242	604,525	611,625	613,002
Northern Cape	101,728	121,332	174,604	175,250
Western Cape	365,655	431,514	457,077	458,980
South Africa	5,913,719	7,410,760	7,930,807	7,975,847
CSG amount	R180	R190	R200	R220

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) SOCPEN database. Pretoria: SASSA.

Notes: ① SOCPEN figures are taken from mid-year (June/July) to coincide with data collection for the annual General Household Survey. ② Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ③ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

The number of children receiving the Foster Child Grant

This indicator shows the number of children who are accessing the Foster Child Grant (FCG) in South Africa, as recorded in the SOCPEN administrative data system of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).

The FCG is available to foster parents who have a child placed in their care by an order of the court. It is a non-contributory cash grant to the value of R680 in 2009.

The grant was initially intended as financial support for children removed from their families and placed in foster care for protection in situations of abuse or neglect. However, it is increasingly used to provide financial support to caregivers of children who have lost their biological parents because of the AIDS pandemic. The appropriateness and effectiveness of this approach has been questioned (Meintjes, Budlender, Giese & Johnson 2003).

At the end of July 2008, caregivers of over 430,000 children were receiving the FCG. The number of grants has doubled since 2004, with figures increasing by more than 100% in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West provinces. Take-up of the FCG varies substantially between provinces, and nearly half of all grants go to just two provinces: KwaZulu-Natal (111,582) and Eastern Cape (81,404).

It is not possible to calculate a take-up rate for the FCG as there is no accurate record of how many children are eligible for placement in foster care. A large proportion of children are not receiving the FCG even though, under current policy, they would be eligible for the grant, based on their orphan status alone. For example: 422,000 children received the FCG in 2007, yet the double-orphan figures for the same year came to 701,000.

Table 2b: The number of children receiving the Foster Child Grant, 2004 – 2008

Province	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Eastern Cape	39,772	53,383	68,197	79,766	81,404
Free State	25,140	33,653	40,712	44,170	45,122
Gauteng	28,281	34,647	40,576	50,580	51,719
KwaZulu-Natal	49,462	57,351	81,420	108,423	111,582
Limpopo	18,718	25,615	36,020	43,291	44,201
Mpumalanga	7,642	12,662	18,252	21,436	21,813
North West	14,154	19,000	27,737	31,341	31,821
Northern Cape	8,693	9,480	11,462	14,358	14,494
Western Cape	23,903	26,026	27,326	28,518	28,735
South Africa	215,765	271,817	351,702	421,883	430,891

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) SOCPEN database. Pretoria: SASSA.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104.

③ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

Additional sources for social assistance

- Berry L (2002) *The Social Assistance Needs of Children with Chronic Health Conditions: The Application and Comparison of Two International Instruments in the South African Context*. Unpublished Masters thesis, UCT.
- Budlender D, Rosa S, & Hall K (2005) *At all costs? Applying the means test for the Child Support Grant*. Cape Town: Children's Institute and the Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.
- Budlender D (2008) *Feasibility and appropriateness of attaching behavioural conditions to a social support grant for children aged 15-17 years*. Unpublished report commissioned by the Department of Social Development. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry.
- Budlender D & Woolard I (2006) *The Impact of the South African Child Support and Old Age Grants on children's schooling and work*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Case A, Hosegood V & Lund F (2005) The reach and impact of Child Support Grants: Evidence from KwaZulu-Natal. In: *Development Southern Africa* 22(4), October 2005.

The number of children receiving the Care Dependency Grant

This indicator shows the number of children who are accessing the Care Dependency Grant (CDG) in South Africa, as recorded in the SOCPEN administrative data system of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).

The CDG is a non-contributory monthly cash transfer to caregivers of children with severe disabilities who require permanent care. It excludes those children who are cared for in state institutions, because the purpose of the grant is to replace lost earnings of the caregiver looking after the child. It also excludes infants under one year because young babies have full-time care needs, whether or not they have disabilities. To qualify for the CDG, the child needs to undergo a medical assessment and the parent must pass an income or means test.

The value of the CDG increased to R1,010 in April 2009. Although the grant is targeted at children with severe disabilities, children with chronic illnesses are eligible for the grant once the illness becomes disabling, for example children who are very sick with AIDS-related illnesses.

As children with severe disabilities and chronic illnesses need substantial care and attention, a parent may need to stay at home or employ a caregiver to tend to the child. Children with health conditions may need medication, equipment or to attend hospital often. These extra costs can put strain on families that are already struggling to make ends meet. Poverty and chronic health conditions are therefore strongly related (Berry 2002).

It is not possible to calculate a take-up rate for the CDG because there is little data on the number of children living with disability in South Africa, or who are in need of permanent care. In July 2008, 99,621 children were receiving the CDG — an increase of nearly 20,000 since 2004.

The provincial distribution of CDGs is fairly consistent with the distribution of children. The provinces with the largest numbers of children, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, receive the largest share of CDGs. There has been a consistent and gradual increase in access to the CDG over the five-year period.

Table 2c: The number of children receiving the Care Dependency Grant, 2004 – 2008

Province	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Eastern Cape	18,246	19,925	20,367	20,274	20,253
Free State	3,210	3,401	3,679	3,871	3,924
Gauteng	10,522	11,468	12,140	12,672	12,667
KwaZulu-Natal	20,510	20,994	24,098	27,578	27,855
Limpopo	8,844	9,609	10,553	11,316	11,396
Mpumalanga	4,188	4,273	4,532	4,991	5,018
North West	6,424	6,961	7,791	7,759	7,795
Northern Cape	1,853	2,186	2,582	3,394	3,403
Western Cape	6,290	6,881	7,111	7,307	7,310
South Africa	80,087	85,698	92,853	99,162	99,621

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) SOCPEN database. Pretoria: SASSA.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ③ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*
- Meintjes H, Budlender D, Giese S & Johnson L (2003) *Children 'in need of care' or in need of cash? Questioning social security provisions for orphans in the context of the South African AIDS pandemic.* Joint working paper of the Children's Institute and the Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.
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- Samson M, Lee U, Ndlebe A, Mac Quene K, Van Niekerk I, Ghandi V, Harigaya T & Abrahams C (2004) *The Social and Economic Impact of South Africa's Social Security System.* Commissioned by the Department of Social Development, 30 September 2004. Cape Town: Economic Policy Research Institute.