

Children's access to education

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Section 29(1)(a) of the South African Constitution¹ states that "everyone has the right to a basic education", and section 29(1)(b) says 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 Child² 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 Child³ recognises "the right of the child to education" and also obliges the state to "make primary education compulsory and available free to all".

Number and proportion of children attending an educational institution

This indicator reflects the number and proportion of children aged 7 – 17 years who are reported to be attending a school or educational facility. This is different from "enrolment rate", which reflects the number of children enrolled in educational institutions, as reported by schools to the national department early in the school year.

Education is a central socio-economic right that provides the foundation for life-long learning and economic opportunities. Children have a right to basic education and are admitted into grade 1 in the year they turn seven. Basic education is compulsory in grades 1 – 9, or for children aged 7 – 15. 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.

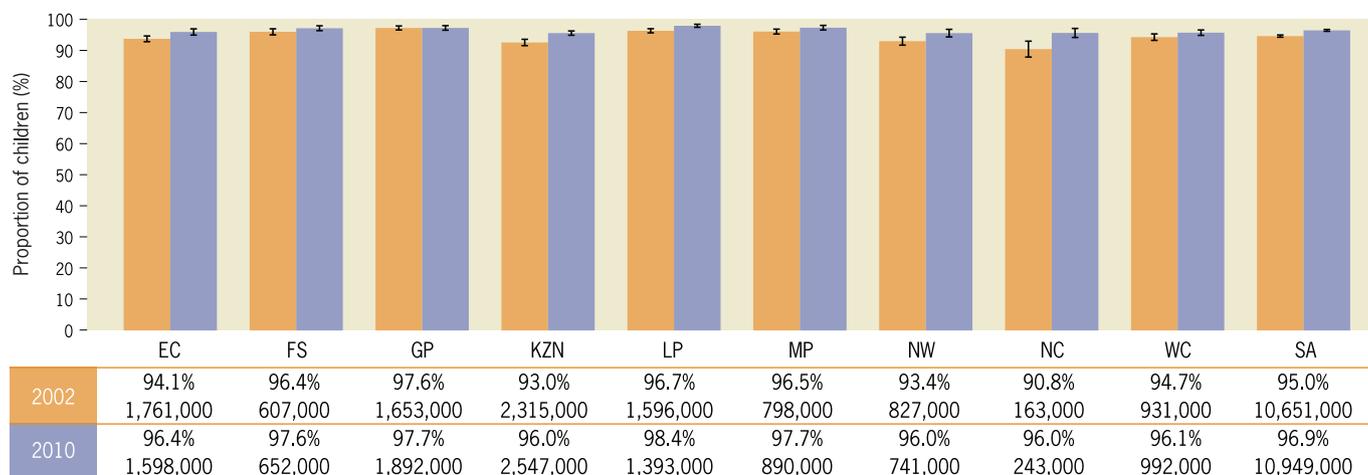
South Africa has high levels of school enrolment and attendance. Amongst children of school-going age (7 – 17 years) the vast majority (97%)

attended some form of educational facility in 2010. Since 2002, the national attendance rate has seen a two percentage point increase. Of a total of 11.3 million children aged 7 – 17 years, just over 350,000 are reported as not attending school in 2010.

At a provincial level, the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have all seen significant increases in attendance rates. In the Northern Cape, attendance increased by five percentage points from 91% in 2002 to 96% in 2010, while attendance in KwaZulu-Natal increased by three percentage points and attendance in the Eastern Cape by two percentage points.

There has been a small but real increase in reported attendance rates for African and Coloured children over the nine-year period from 2002. Attendance rates for Coloured children remain slightly below the national average.

Figure 4a: School-age children attending an educational institution, 2002 & 2010



Sources: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2011) *General Household Survey 2002*; *General Household Survey 2010*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Overall attendance rates tend to mask the problem of drop-out among older children. Analysis of attendance among discrete age groups shows a significant drop in attendance amongst children older than 14. Whereas 99% of 13-year-olds were reported to be attending an educational institution in 2010, the attendance rate dropped to 98% and 96% for 14- and 15-year-olds respectively. As schooling is compulsory only until the age of 15 or the end of grade 9, the attendance rate decreases more steeply from age 16 onwards, with 93% of 16-year-olds, 86% of 17-year-olds, and 71% of 18-year-olds reported to be attending school.⁴ There is no significant difference in drop-out rates between boys and girls overall. The cost of education is the main reason for non-attendance in the high school age group, followed by a perception that “education is useless”.⁵ Other reasons for drop-out are illness and exam failure. Pregnancy accounts for around 8% of drop-out amongst teenage girls not attending school.⁶

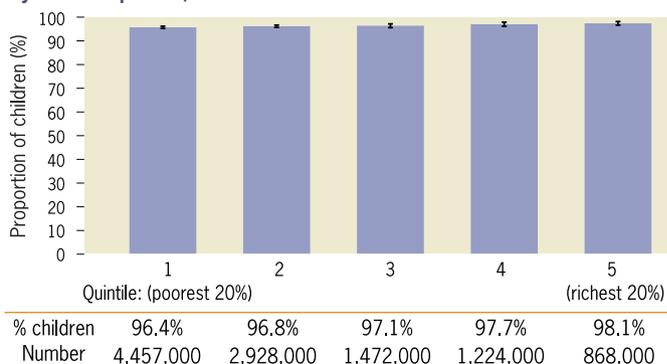
It is encouraging to note that 88% of children (just over 1.9 million) in the pre-school age group (5 – 6-year-olds) were attending some kind of educational institution in 2010, and 77% of children in the younger age group 3 – 4 years were attending an educational institution or ECD facility.⁷

Attendance rates alone do not capture the regularity of children’s school attendance, or their progress through school. Research has shown that children from more “disadvantaged” backgrounds – with limited economic resources, lower levels of parental education, or who have lost one or both parents – are indeed less likely to enrol in school and are more prone to dropping out or progressing more slowly than their more advantaged peers.⁸ Similarly, school attendance rates tell us nothing about the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in school. Systemic evaluations by the Department of Education have

recorded very low pass rates in numeracy and literacy amongst both grade 3 and grade 6 learners,⁹ and continued inequities in the quality of education offered by schools reinforce existing social inequalities, limiting the future work opportunities and life chances of poor children.¹⁰

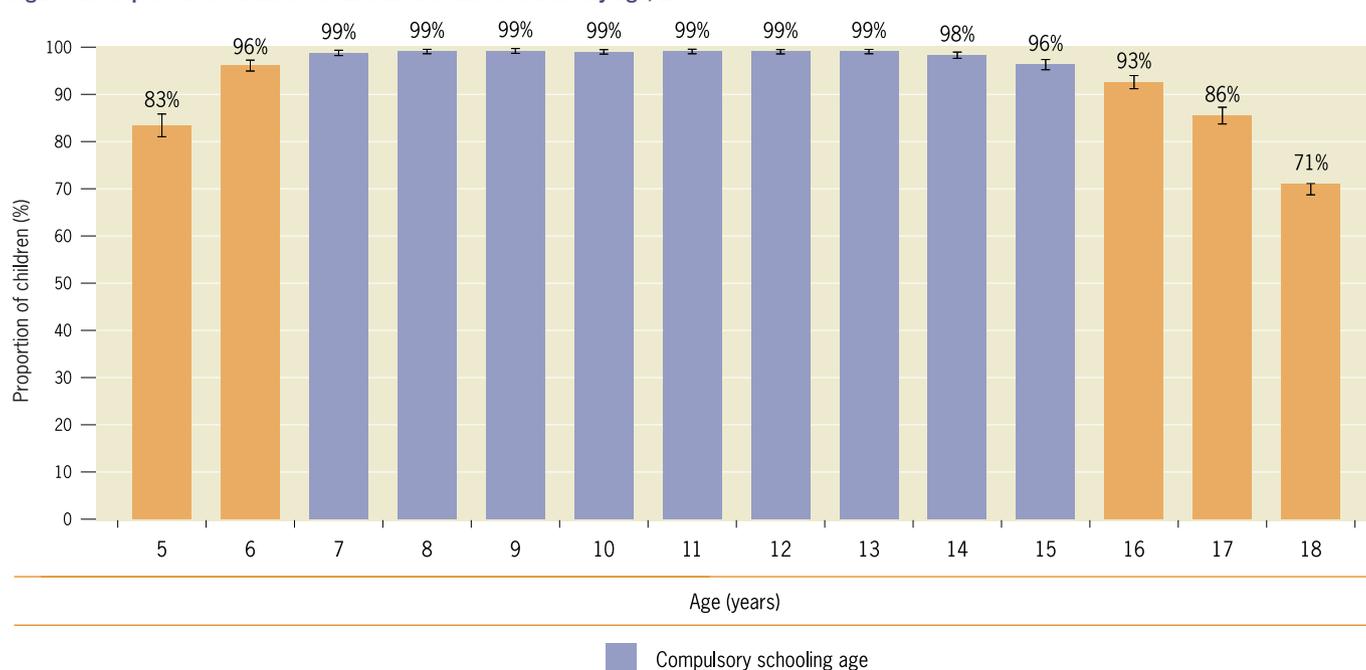
Despite the inequities in the school system, there is little variation in school attendance rates across the income quintiles. Irrespective of whether they live in the poorest or wealthiest 20% of households, children’s school attendance rates remain high – between 96% and 98%.

Figure 4c: Reported attendance at an educational institution, by income quintile, 2010



Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *General Household Survey 2010*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children’s Institute, UCT.

Figure 4b: Reported attendance at an educational institution by age, 2010



Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *General Household Survey 2010*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children’s Institute, UCT.

The number and proportion of children living far from school

This indicator reflects the distance from a child's household to the school s/he attends. Distance is measured through a proxy indicator: length of time travelled to reach the school attended, which is not necessarily the school nearest to the child's household. The school is defined as "far" if a child would have to travel more than 30 minutes to reach it, irrespective of mode of transport. Children aged 7 – 13 are defined as primary school age, and children aged 14 – 17 are defined as secondary school age.

Access to schools and other educational facilities is necessary for achieving the right to education. A school's location and distance from home can be a barrier to education. Access to schools is also hampered by poor roads, unavailable or unaffordable transport, and danger along the way. Risks may be different for young children, for girls and boys, and are likely to be greater when children travel alone.

For children living far from schools, the cost, risk and effort of getting to school can influence decisions about regular attendance and participation in extramural activities and after-school events. Those who travel long distances may wake very early and risk arriving late or physically exhausted, which may affect their ability to learn. Walking long distances to school may also lead to learners being excluded from class or attending school regularly.¹¹

Three-quarters of South Africa's learners walk to school, while 9% use public transport. Around 2% report using school buses or transport provided by the government. The vast majority (80%) of White children are driven to school in private cars, compared with only 7% of Black children.¹² These figures provide a picture of pronounced disparity in child mobility and means of access to school.

The ideal indicator to measure physical access to school would be the distance from the child's household to the nearest school.¹³ This analysis is no longer possible due to question changes in the General Household Survey. Instead, this indicator shows the number and proportion of children who travel far (more than 30 minutes) to reach the actual school that they attend, even if it is not the closest school. School-age children not attending school are therefore excluded from the analysis.

Overall, the vast majority (82%) of the 11.3 million children of school-going age travel less than 30 minutes to reach school, and most learners

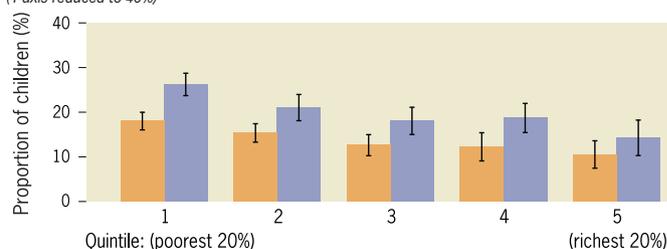
(84%) attend their nearest school. Children of secondary age are more likely than primary school learners to travel far to school. In mid-2010 there were approximately seven million children of primary school age in South Africa. Over a million of these children (16%) travel more than 30 minutes to school every day. Of the 4.2 million children of secondary school age, 22% travel more than 30 minutes to reach school.

Physical access to school remains a problem for many children, particularly those living in more remote areas where public transport is lacking or inadequate and where households are unable to afford private transport.¹⁴ A number of rural schools have closed since 2002, making the situation worse for children in these areas. Nationally, the number of public schools has dropped by 8% (over 2,000 schools) between 2002 and 2010, with the largest decreases in the Free State, North West and Limpopo. Over the same period, the number of independent schools has risen by 21% (239).¹⁵

Children living in the poorest 20% of households are more likely to travel far to school than children living in the richest 20% of households.

Figure 4e: Children living far from school by income quintile, 2010

(Y-axis reduced to 40%)

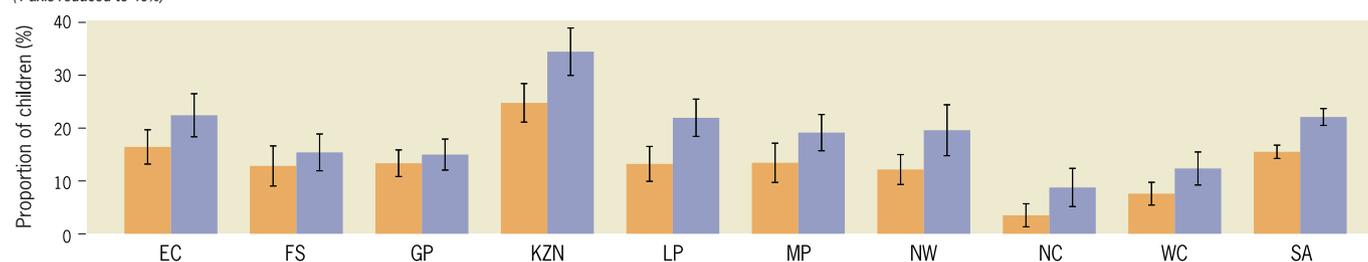


	1 (poorest 20%)	2	3	4	5 (richest 20%)
Primary	18.2%	15.5%	12.7%	12.4%	10.6%
	526,000	299,000	120,000	97,000	57,000
Secondary	26.5%	21.2%	18.2%	18.9%	14.4%
	457,000	231,000	105,000	88,000	50,000

Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *General Household Survey 2010*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Figure 4d: Children living far from school, 2010

(Y-axis reduced to 40%)



	EC	FS	GP	KZN	LP	MP	NW	NC	WC	SA
Primary	16.4%	12.8%	13.3%	24.8%	13.2%	13.4%	12.2%	3.5%	7.6%	15.5%
	165,000	55,000	169,000	405,000	110,000	78,000	60,000	6,000	52,000	1,099,000
Secondary	22.4%	15.4%	15.0%	34.4%	21.9%	19.1%	19.6%	8.8%	12.4%	22.1%
	146,000	37,000	101,000	351,000	128,000	63,000	54,000	8,000	43,000	930,000

Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *General Household Survey 2010*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

References

- 1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996.
- 2 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. Addis Ababa: OAU.
- 3 Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UN General Assembly resolution 44/25. Geneva: United Nations.
- 4 A similar trend of lower numbers among higher grades is found in the enrolment data presented by the Department of Education over the years. See for example: Department of Basic Education (2011) *Macro-Indicators Trends in Schooling: Summary report 2011*. Pretoria: DBE.
- 5 Statistics South Africa (2011) *General Household Survey 2010*. Pretoria: Stats SA.
- 6 See no. 5 above.
- 7 See no. 5 above. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.
- 8 Crouch L (2005) *Disappearing Schoolchildren or Data Misunderstanding? Dropout Phenomena in South Africa*. North Carolina, USA: RTI International;
- 9 Department of Education (2008) *2007 Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation*. Pretoria: DOE. [leaflet]; Department of Education (2005) *Grade 6 Intermediate Phase Systemic Evaluation Report*. Pretoria: DOE.
- 10 Van der Berg S, Burger C, Burger R, de Vos M, Gistafsson M, Moses E, Shepherd D, Spaull N, Taylor S, van Broekhuizen H & von Fintel D (2011) *Low Quality Education as a Poverty Trap*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- 11 See no. 9 above.
- 12 See no. 5 above. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.
- 13 See no. 5 above. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.
- 14 See no. 9 above.
- 15 Department of Education (2004) *Education Statistics in South Africa at a Glance in 2002*. Pretoria: DOE; Department of Basic Education (2012) *Education Statistics in South Africa 2010*. Pretoria: DOE.