

Demography of South Africa's children

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The UN General Guidelines for Periodic Reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, paragraph 7, says that reports made by states should be accompanied by "... detailed statistical information ... Quantitative information should indicate variations between various areas of the country ... and between groups of children ...".

The number and proportion of children living in South Africa

This indicator refers to the number of children under the age of 18 years living in South Africa and includes child population numbers by province, population group, age and sex.

There were a total of 18.3 million children in South Africa in July 2007. Children therefore constitute nearly 40% of the population. This represents a 4% (760,000) growth in the child population from 2002 – 2007.

Two-thirds of all children live in four of South Africa's nine provinces: KwaZulu-Natal (22%), Eastern Cape (16%), Gauteng (16%) and Limpopo (14%). The distribution of children across provinces is slightly different to that of adults, with a greater proportion of children living in provinces with large rural populations (Limpopo, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal), and a

greater proportion of adults in the largely metropolitan provinces. Despite being the smallest province on the map, Gauteng accommodates nearly a quarter of all adults (23%), but only 16% of children.

The child population is skewed slightly with boys (52%) outnumbering girls (48%). Children are evenly distributed across three equal age groups (0 – 5 years, 6 – 12 years, 13 – 17 years). These age groups are used for standard disaggregation of *Children Count* — *Abantwana Babalulekile* data.

The child population is also analysed by population group — 'African', 'Coloured', 'Indian' and 'White' — for purposes of measuring and monitoring persistent racial inequality. In 2007, African children accounted for 84% of the total child population.

Table 1a: Number of children in South Africa 2002 – 2007, by province

Province	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	%
Eastern Cape	2,836,000	2,881,000	3,216,000	3,137,000	3,181,000	2,971,000	16
Free State	990,000	980,000	1,064,000	1,114,000	1,118,000	1,138,000	6
Gauteng	2,741,000	2,779,000	2,642,000	2,656,000	2,720,000	2,884,000	16
KwaZulu-Natal	3,833,000	3,830,000	3,792,000	3,841,000	3,817,000	4,023,000	22
Limpopo	2,501,000	2,533,000	2,616,000	2,615,000	2,660,000	2,504,000	14
Mpumalanga	1,306,000	1,319,000	1,308,000	1,351,000	1,402,000	1,474,000	8
North West	1,431,000	1,453,000	1,489,000	1,461,000	1,431,000	1,295,000	7
Northern Cape	301,000	300,000	337,000	337,000	344,000	433,000	2
Western Cape	1,591,000	1,585,000	1,559,000	1,572,000	1,571,000	1,571,000	9
South Africa	17,530,000	17,660,000	18,022,000	18,087,000	18,243,000	18,292,000	100

Table 1b: Number of children in South Africa 2002 – 2007, by population group

Pop. group	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	%
African	14,590,000	14,770,000	15,078,000	15,181,000	15,364,000	15,441,000	84
Coloured	1,518,000	1,512,000	1,534,000	1,522,000	1,518,000	1,567,000	9
Indian	336,000	317,000	310,000	346,000	337,000	317,000	2
White	1,086,000	1,061,000	1,099,000	1,038,000	1,023,000	968,000	5
South Africa	17,530,000	17,660,000	18,022,000	18,087,000	18,243,000	18,292,000	100

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2008) *General Household Survey 2002*; *General Household Survey 2007*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA. Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Population numbers are rounded off to the nearest thousand. ③ Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ④ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

The number and proportion of orphans living in South Africa

An orphan is defined as a child under the age of 18 years whose mother, father, or both biological parents have died. This includes those whose living status is reported as unknown, but excludes those whose living status is unspecified. For the purpose of this indicator, we define orphans in three mutually exclusive categories:

- A maternal orphan is a child whose mother has died but whose father is alive;
- A paternal orphan is a child whose father has died but whose mother is alive;
- A double orphan is a child whose mother and father have both died.

The total number of orphans is the sum of maternal, paternal and double orphans.

This definition differs from those commonly used by UN agencies and the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA), where the definition of maternal and paternal orphans includes children who are double orphans. As the orphan definitions used here are mutually exclusive and additive, the figures differ from orphan estimates provided by the ASSA models.

The 2007 General Household Survey indicates that there were approximately 3.7 million orphans in South Africa. This includes children without a living biological mother, father or both parents and equates to 20% of all children in South Africa. The total

number of orphans has increased substantially, with approximately 700,000 more orphaned children in 2007 than in 2002. This increase is likely to be driven primarily by the AIDS pandemic.

It is important to disaggregate the total orphan figures because the death of one parent can have different implications for children than the death of both parents, and the death of a mother is likely to have a greater impact on children's lives than the absence of a father from children's lives (Case, Paxson & Ableidinger 2004; Ardington 2007; Cluver, Gardner & Operario 2007).

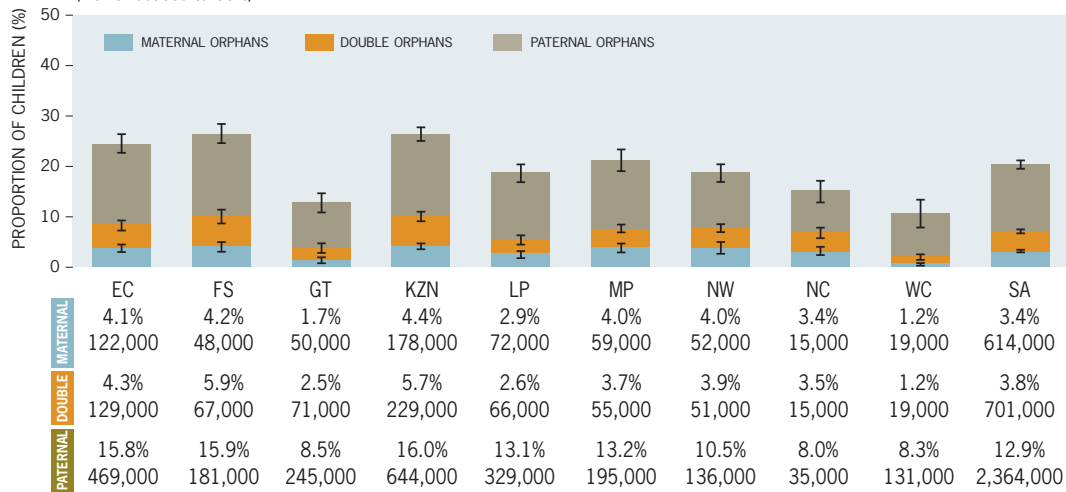
In 2007, 13% of children in South Africa were paternal orphans (whose mothers were still alive), 3% of children (600,000 children) were maternal orphans; and a further 4% of children were double orphans. In other words, the vast majority (64%) of all orphans in South Africa are paternal orphans. The large number of paternal orphans is linked to high mortality rates of men, and the frequent absence of fathers in children's lives (1% or 170,000 children have fathers whose vital status is "unknown").

In 2007, half of all orphans in South Africa lived in KwaZulu-Natal or the Eastern Cape. These orphans account for 26% and 24% respectively of the total number of children in these provinces. Orphaned children also account for 26% of the total child population in the Free State. In 2007, 79% of all orphans were of school-going age (7 – 17 years).



Table 1c: Number and proportion of orphans in South Africa, 2007

(Y-axis reduced to 50%)

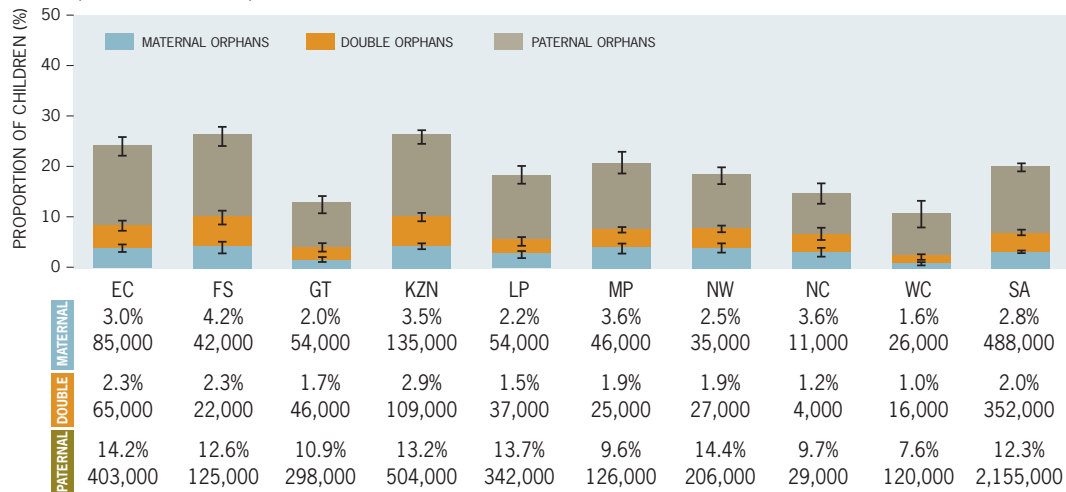


Source: Statistics South Africa (2008) *General Household Survey 2007*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA.
Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Population numbers are rounded off to the nearest thousand. ③ Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ④ The confidence intervals, shown on the graph as a vertical line at the top of each bar, represent the range into which the true value may fall. See p. 69 for more details on confidence intervals. ⑤ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

Table 1d: Number and proportion of orphans in South Africa, 2002

(Y-axis reduced to 50%)



Source: Statistics South Africa (2003) *General Household Survey 2002*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA.
Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Population numbers are rounded off to the nearest thousand. ③ Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ④ The confidence intervals, shown on the graph as a vertical line at the top of each bar, represent the range into which the true value may fall. See p. 69 for more details on confidence intervals. ⑤ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

The number and proportion of children living with their biological parent(s)

South Africa has a long history of children not living consistently in the same dwelling as their biological parents due to poverty, labour migration, educational opportunities or cultural practice. As a result, many children experience a sequence of different caregivers or are brought up without paternal figures.

This indicator shows the number and proportion of children in South Africa who are living in the same household as both their biological parents, their mother only; their father only; or who are not living with either biological parent.

The General Household Survey 2007 indicates that 34% of children lived with both their biological parents. Forty percent of all children — more than 7 million children — live with their mothers but without their fathers. Only 3% of children live in households where their fathers are present and their mothers absent. Twenty-three percent of children live with neither biological parent. Yet only a minority of these children (17%) are double orphans.

In both the Western Cape and Gauteng, the

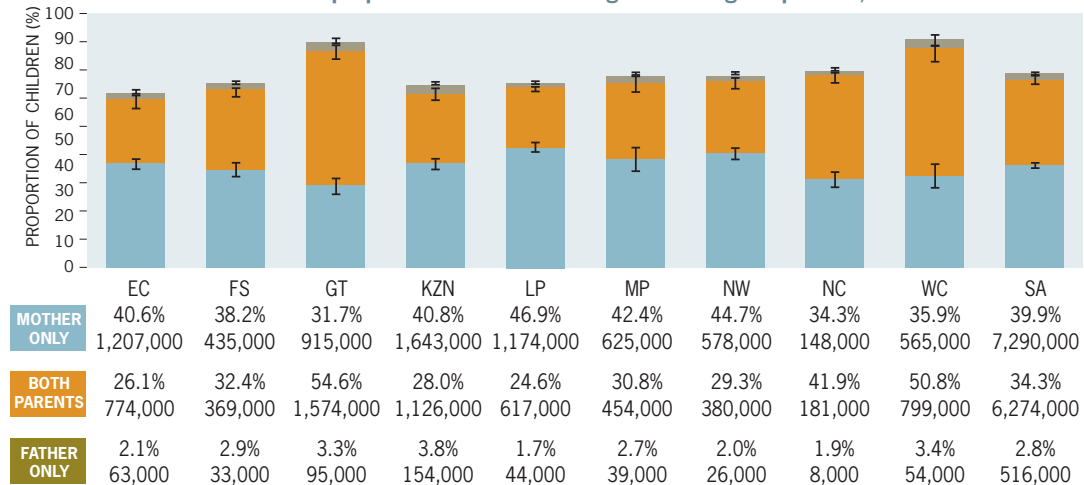
proportion of children living with both parents is significantly higher than the national average, with more than half of children resident with both parents, and small proportions of children living with neither parent. In contrast, nearly a third of children (31%) in the Eastern Cape live with neither parent. These patterns are consistent from 2002 – 2007.

Less than one-third of African children were living with both their parents in July 2007, yet the vast majority of Indian and White children (82% and 80% respectively) were resident with both biological parents. Almost one-quarter (24%) of all African children do not live with either of their parents and a further 43% of African children live with their mothers and without their fathers. These figures indicate an absence of fathers in the domestic lives of large numbers of African children.

Younger children (0 – 5-year-olds) are more likely to be living with their mothers (whether their fathers are present or not) than older children (6 – 17 years), who are more likely than younger children to be living with neither parent.



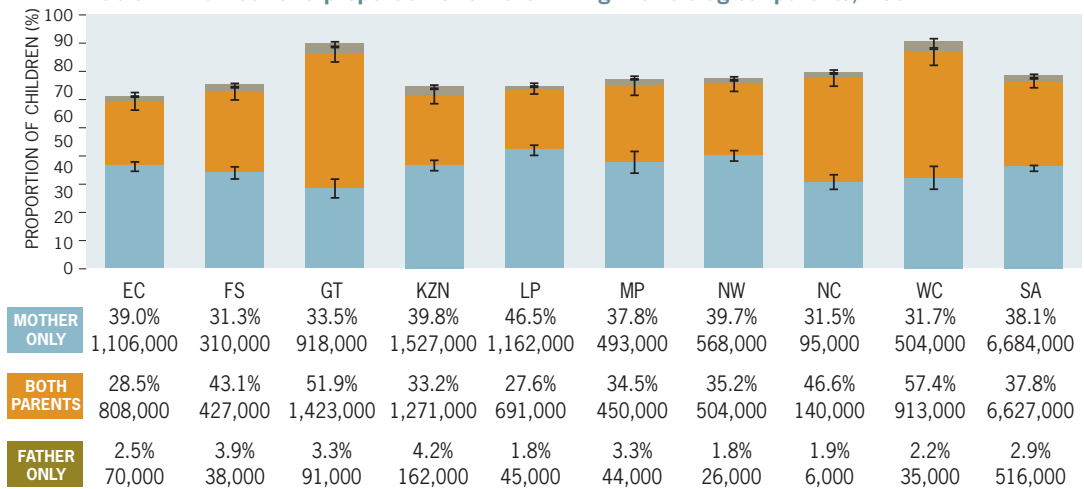
Table 1e: Number and proportion of children living with biological parents, 2007



Source: Statistics South Africa (2008) *General Household Survey 2007*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA.
Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Population numbers are rounded off to the nearest thousand. ③ Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ④ The confidence intervals, shown on the graph as a vertical line at the top of each bar, represent the range into which the true value may fall. See p. 69 for more details on confidence intervals. ⑤ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

Table 1f: Number and proportion of children living with biological parents, 2002



Source: Statistics South Africa (2003) *General Household Survey 2002*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA.
Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Population numbers are rounded off to the nearest thousand. ③ Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ④ The confidence intervals, shown on the graph as a vertical line at the top of each bar, represent the range into which the true value may fall. See p. 69 for more details on confidence intervals. ⑤ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

Number and proportion of children living in child-only households

A child-only household is defined as a household in which all members are younger than 18 years. These households are also commonly known as 'child-headed households'.

There is much concern that the number of children living in child-only households will rise as orphan numbers increase due to the AIDS pandemic. Many argue that kinship networks are "stretched to their limits" and are struggling to support orphaned children. While there is limited evidence that this is the case (Meintjes & Giese 2006), it is important to monitor the prevalence of child-only households as the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues.

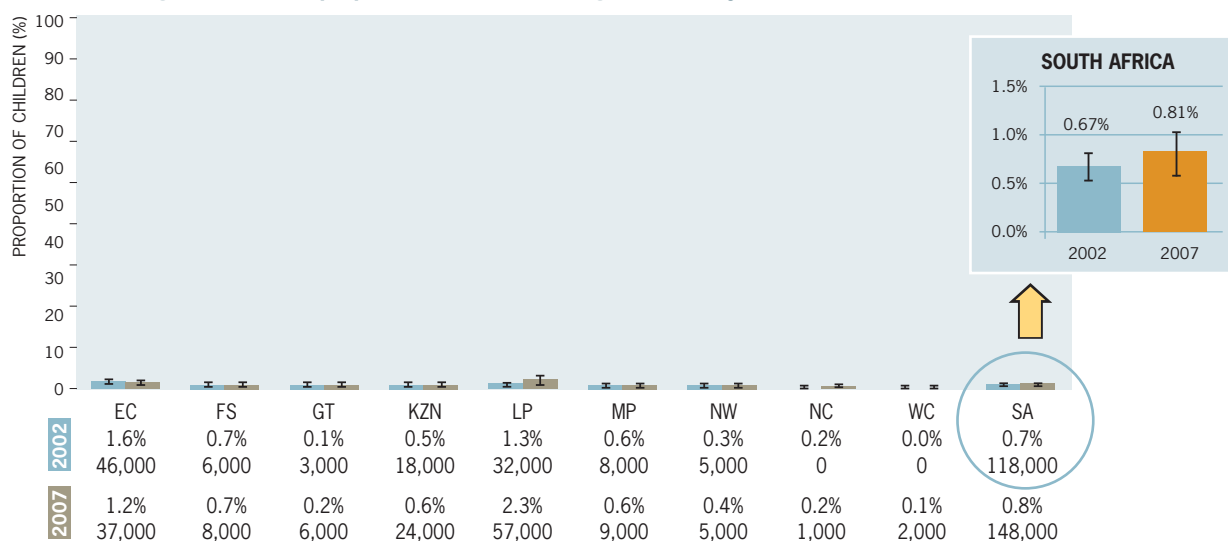
An analysis of the General Household Survey 2007 indicates that there were 150,000 children living in a total of 79,000 child-only households across South Africa. It equates to 0.8% of all children and 0.6% of all households. There has been no change in the proportion of children living in child-only households between 2002 and 2007.

While it is not ideal for any child to live without an adult present, it is positive that half (49%) of all children living in child-only households are over 14 years. Most children living in child-only households (79%) live in three provinces: Limpopo (38%), Eastern Cape (25%) and KwaZulu-Natal (16%).

Research suggests that child-only households often exist for a short period, for example after the death of an adult and prior to other child-care arrangements being made (Meintjes & Giese 2006; Hill, Hosegood & Newell 2008).

There is no robust data on child-only (or 'child-headed') households in South Africa to date. The figures should be treated with caution as the number of child-only households forms just a very small sub-sample of the General Household Survey. In particular, we caution against reading too much into the provincial breakdowns, or into any differences noted between the 2002 and 2007 estimates.

Table 1g: Number and proportion of children living in child-only households, 2002 & 2007



Sources: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2008) *General Household Survey 2002; General Household 2007*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA. Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

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Number and proportion of children living in income poverty

This indicator shows the number and proportion of children living in households that are income-poor. The poverty line is set at R350 per person per month (in 2000 Rands), and increased each year in line with inflation. Per capita income is calculated by adding all reported income for household members older than 15 years, then adding all income from social grants, and dividing the total household income by the number of household members. Both income and social grants are known to be under-reported in the General Household Survey. Child poverty is therefore likely to be over-estimated.

Using a single income measure tells us nothing about how resources are distributed between family members, or how money is spent, but it does give an indication of how many children are living with severely constrained resources. Money is needed to access a range of services, and income poverty often compromises children's rights to nutrition, education and health-care services.

International law and the South African Constitution recognise the link between income and the realisation of basic human rights, and acknowledge that children have the right to social assistance

(social grants) when families cannot meet children's basic needs. Income poverty is therefore an important indicator of people in need of social assistance, and of the State's progress in realising the right to social assistance.

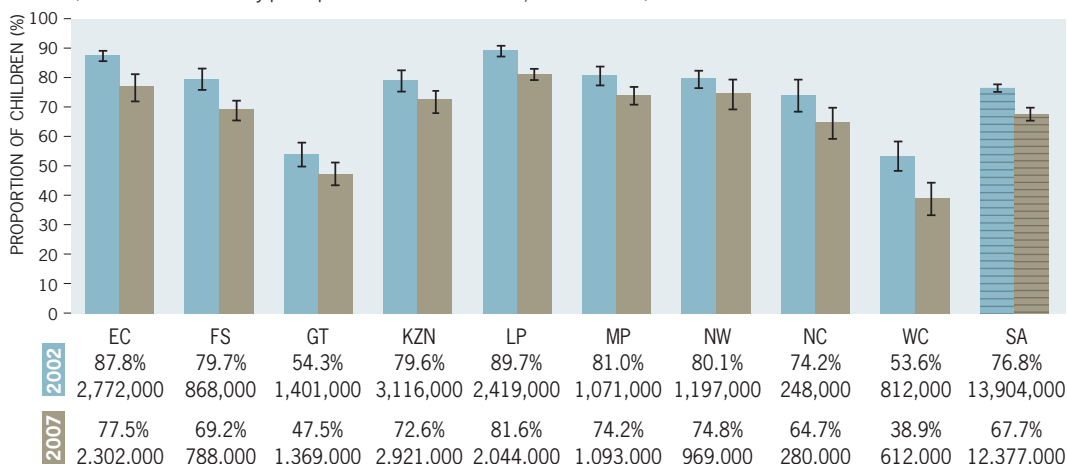
South Africa has very high rates of child poverty. In 2007, two-thirds of children (68%) lived in households with a per capita income below R350. In the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, approximately eight out of 10 children live in households with this low level of per capita income. The Western Cape and Gauteng have the lowest child poverty rates — calculated at 39% and 48% respectively.

The data suggest that there has been a decline in child poverty from 2002 – 2007. It may be partly the result of a massive expansion in the reach of the Child Support Grant (see p. 79) over the same period.

There are glaring racial disparities in income poverty: While three-quarters (75%) of African children lived in poor households in 2007, only 5% of White children lived below the poverty line. Poverty rates for Coloured and Indian children are 43% and 14% respectively.

Table 1h: Number and proportion of children living in income poverty, 2002 & 2007

(Households with monthly per capita income less than R350, in 2000 Rands)



Sources: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2008) *General Household Survey 2002*; *General Household Survey 2007*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

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The number and proportion of children living in households with an employed adult

This indicator gives the number and proportion of children who live in households where there is at least one employed adult. Adults are defined as people aged 18 years and older; so economically active children are excluded from the analysis. The definition of 'employment' is derived from the General Household Survey and includes regular or irregular work for wages or salary, as well as various forms of self-employment, including unpaid work in a family business, subsistence agriculture, construction and home maintenance, and even begging.

In September 2007, the official unemployment rate in South Africa was 23% (Statistics South Africa 2008). This is based on a narrow definition that includes only those adults who had actively looked but failed to find work in the four weeks preceding the survey. An expanded definition of unemployment, which includes "discouraged work-seekers" who were unemployed but not actively looking for work in the month preceding the survey, gives a much higher, and more accurate, indication of unemployment, at around 33%.

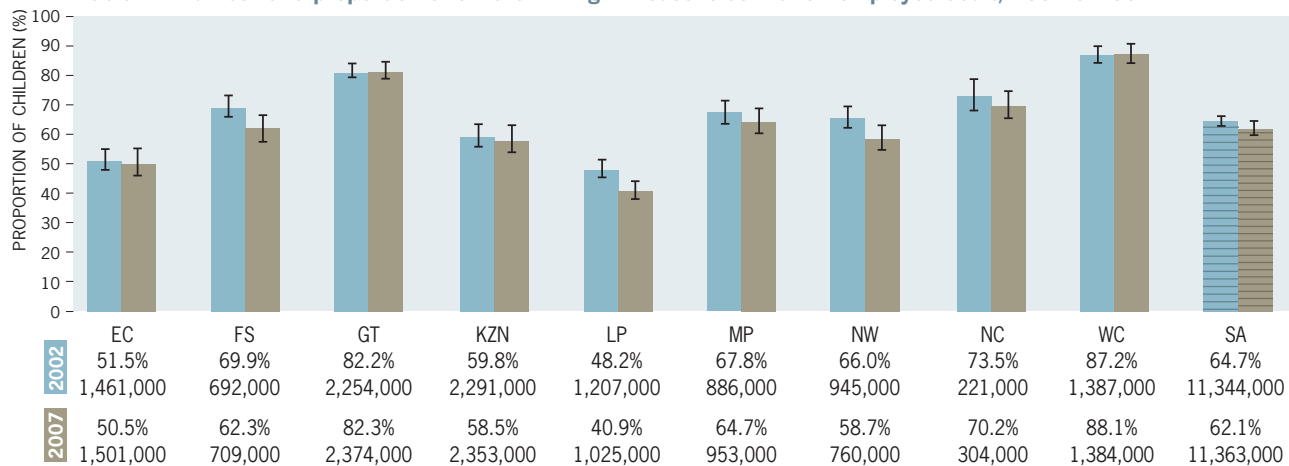
Apart from providing regular income, an employed adult may

bring other benefits to the household, including health insurance, unemployment insurance, and maternity leave, which can contribute to children's health, development and education.

In 2007, some 62% of children in South Africa lived in households with at least one working adult. The other 38% (nearly 7 million children) live in households where no adults are working. There has been little change in the proportion of children living in unemployed households from 2002 – 2007, despite a decrease in the official unemployment rate from 30% to 23% over the same period.

This indicator is very closely related to income poverty, in that provinces with relatively high proportions of children living in unemployed households also have high rates of child poverty. The Eastern Cape and Limpopo have the highest rates of unemployment, and the largest proportions of children living in poverty. While 88% of children in the Western Cape and 82% in Gauteng live with at least one working adult, only 51% of children in the Eastern Cape and 41% in Limpopo live with an employed adult.

Table 1i: Number and proportion of children living in households with an employed adult, 2002 & 2007



Sources: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2008) *General Household Survey 2002; General Household Survey 2007*. Pretoria, Cape Town: StatsSA.
Analysis by Double-Hugh Marera & Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

Notes: ① Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years. ② Population numbers are rounded off to the nearest thousand. ③ Strengths and limitations of the data are described on pp. 103 – 104. ④ The confidence intervals, shown on the graph as a vertical line at the top of each bar, represent the range into which the true value may fall. See p. 69 for more details on confidence intervals. ⑤ See www.childrencount.ci.org.za for more information.

Additional sources for demography

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