

Children's access to basic services

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Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution of South Africa provides that “everyone has the right to have access to ... sufficient ... water” and section 24(a) states that “everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being”.

Article 14(2)(c) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child obliges the State to “ensure the provision of ... safe drinking water”.

Article 24(1)(c) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that State Parties should “recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ...” and to this end should “take appropriate measures to combat disease and malnutrition ..., including the provision of clean drinking-water”.

The number and proportion of children with access to drinking water on site

This indicator shows the number and proportion of children who have access to a safe and reliable supply of drinking water at home — either inside the dwelling or on site. This is used as a proxy for access to adequate water. All other water sources, including public taps, water tankers, dams and rivers, are considered inadequate because of their distance from the dwelling or the possibility that water is of poor quality. The indicator does not show if the water supply is reliable, or if households have broken facilities or are unable to pay for services.

Water is essential for health, hygiene and sanitation. Young children are particularly vulnerable to illnesses associated with poor water quality, such as diarrhoea and cholera.

In 2007, nearly 7 million children lived in households without access to clean drinking water on site. A significantly higher proportion of children (37%) than adults (27%) lived in households without water on site. There has been little improvement in children's access to water from 2002 – 2007.

Provincial differences are striking. Over 90% of children in the Western and Northern Cape provinces, Gauteng and the

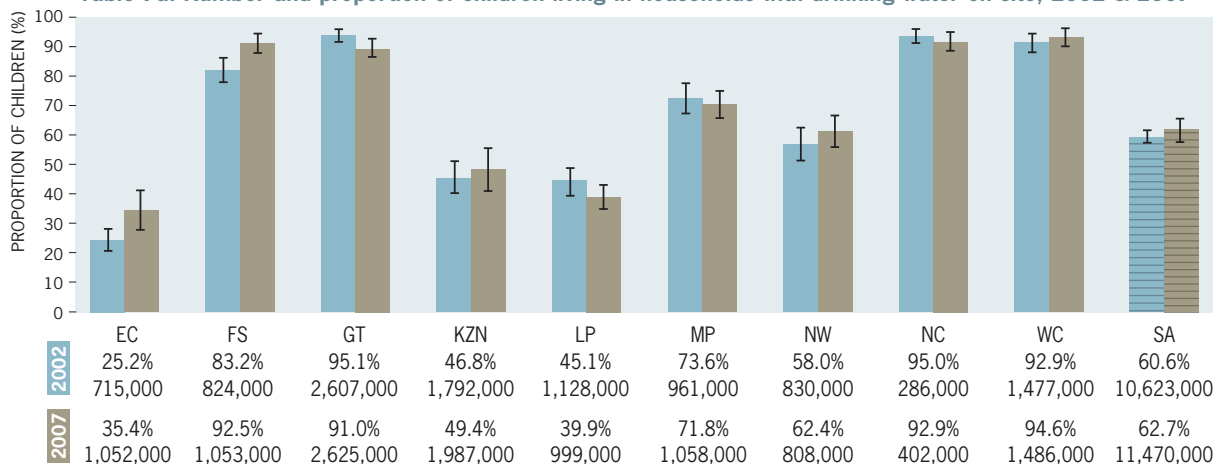
Free State have an adequate supply of drinking water. However, access to water remains poor in KwaZulu-Natal (49%), Limpopo (40%) and the Eastern Cape (35%). The Eastern Cape appears to have experienced the greatest improvement in water provisioning since 2002 (when only 25% of children had water on site).

Children living in formal areas are most likely to have services on site. While the majority of children in formal dwellings (74%) and informal dwellings (67%) had water on site in 2007, only 15% of children living in ‘traditional’ housing had clean water available on the property.

Racial inequalities persist: Only 56% of African children had clean water at home in 2007, while over 90% of all other population groups had clean water on site.

Policy guidelines for basic water supply recommend that water must be within 200 metres of the house (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry 1994); however collecting water from a public source is physically burdensome and can be dangerous, especially for children.

Table 7a: Number and proportion of children living in households with drinking water on site, 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.

The number and proportion of children living in households with basic sanitation

This indicator includes the number and proportion of children living in households with basic sanitation. Adequate toilet facilities are used as proxy for basic sanitation. This includes flush toilets and ventilated pit latrines that dispose of waste safely and that are within or near a house. Inadequate toilet facilities include pit latrines that are not ventilated, chemical toilets, bucket toilets, or no nearby toilets at all.

Good sanitation is essential for safe and healthy childhoods. Poor sanitation compromises children's health, safety and nutritional status, and is associated with diarrhoea, cholera, malaria, bilharzia, eye infections and skin disease. The use of open land and bucket toilets also impacts on water quality and contributes to the spread of disease.

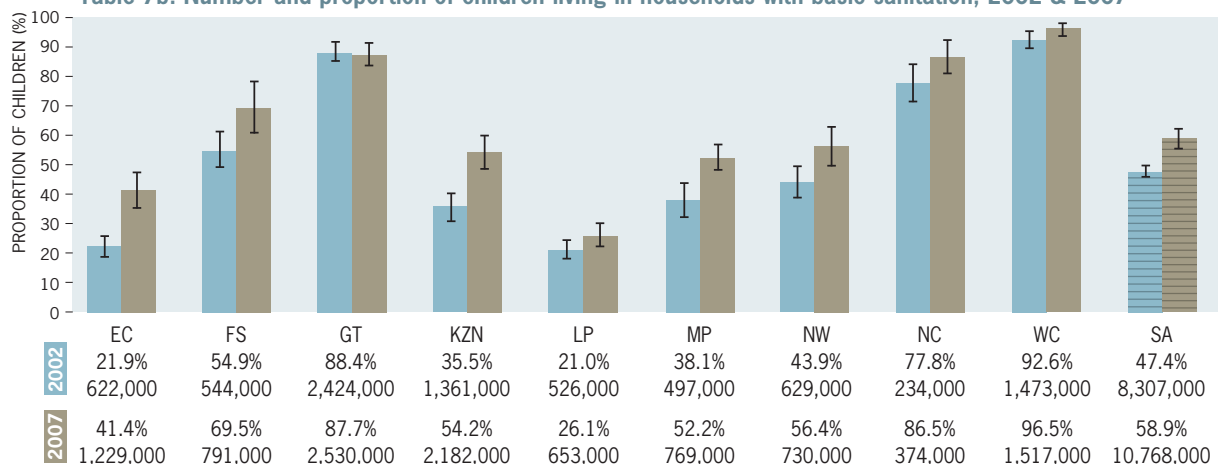
Children's access to adequate sanitation facilities has risen over the six-year period from 47% in 2002 to 59% of children in 2007. Yet nearly 8 million children still use unventilated pit latrines, buckets or open land, despite the State's goal to provide adequate sanitation to all, and to eradicate the bucket system.

There are great provincial disparities. In provinces with large metropolitan populations, like Gauteng and the Western Cape, over 85% children have access to adequate sanitation, while provinces with large rural populations have the poorest sanitation. The proportion of children with adequate toilet facilities in the Eastern Cape increased from 22% in 2002 to 41% in 2007 and from 36% to 54% in KwaZulu-Natal. Only 26% of children in Limpopo had adequate sanitation in 2007.

Racial inequalities persist: over 90% of Indian, White and Coloured children had access to adequate toilets in 2007, while only 52% of African children had access to basic sanitation. This is a marked improvement from 38% of African children in 2002.

Effective sanitation is not simply about toilet technology. It is equally dependent on personal hygiene and effective sanitation services. Data from the General Household Survey do not indicate if toilets are in clean and working order.

Table 7b: Number and proportion of children living in households with basic sanitation, 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.

The number and proportion of children living in households with an electricity connection

This indicator shows the number and proportion of children who live in households that are connected to the mains electricity supply. There may be many children without access to electricity because their families cannot afford to buy electricity or electrical appliances. On the other hand, many households use electricity even though they are not formally connected to the grid. Illegal connections often consist of long extension wires that run along the ground that can shock children or start electrical fires.

Access to a safe energy source such as electricity impacts on a child's right to housing, health, nutrition and education. Other energy sources pose health hazards, for example, wood or dung fires can cause chest infections. Fires spread rapidly in informal settlements where many households use dangerous energy sources (such as paraffin) for cooking and lighting. Families without fridges struggle to keep food fresh.

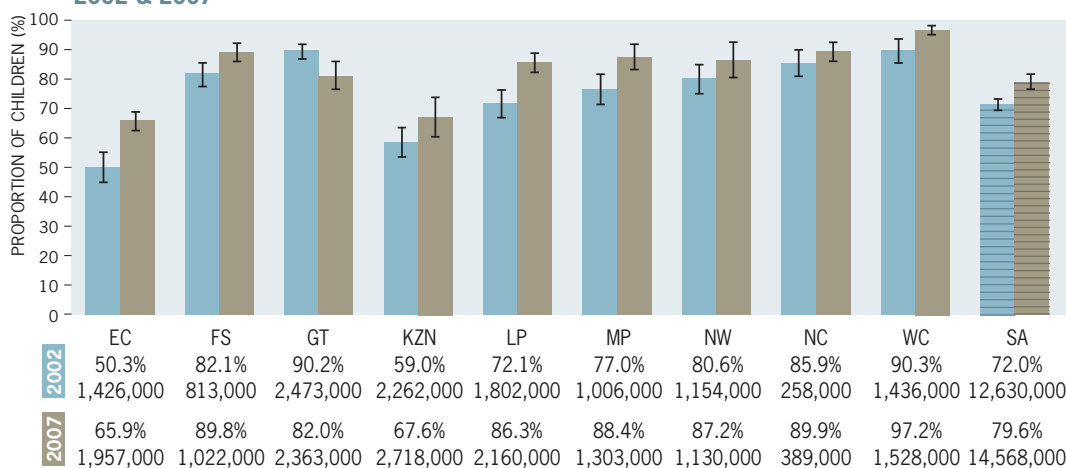
Women and children are often responsible for collecting wood and other fuels, which can be labour intensive. Time spent collecting fuel can impact on children's ability to do homework and keep up at school. Poor lighting makes it hard for children to study after dark.

In 2007, more children had electricity in their homes (80%) than had access to clean drinking water (63%) or basic sanitation (59%). Even in informal areas, the majority (65%) of children had a main electricity supply to their dwelling. Access to electricity does not necessarily mean that households discontinue using flammable fuels, but it does provide an alternative that is safer and usually cheaper — if the appliances are there.

In 2007, only half of children living in traditional homesteads (47%) had access to electricity. This was considerably higher than access to basic sanitation (27%) and to safe drinking water at home (15%).

There has been a gradual improvement in children's access to electricity across the country — from 72% in 2002 to 80% in 2007. Five provinces have made significant progress over the six-year period: Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the Western Cape. A small but significant decline in access to electricity in Gauteng (from a high 90% in 2002 to 82% in 2007) may be the result of urbanisation and the rapid growth of informal settlements.

Table 7c: Number and proportion of children living in households with an electricity connection, 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 have been 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 basic services

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (1994) *White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation*. Pretoria: DWAF.
- Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25*. Geneva: United Nations.
- 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*.