

# Children's access to sanitation, water and electricity

Johannes John-Langba and Double-Hugh Marera (Children's Institute)

Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution of South Africa provides that "everyone has the right to have access to ... sufficient ... water".

Article 14(2)(c) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child similarly 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 states that States 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 living in households with basic sanitation in South Africa

Good sanitation is essential for safe and healthy childhoods. There are a number of negative consequences for children and youth who are not able to access proper toilets. It is very difficult to maintain good hygiene without water and toilets, and children are exposed to worms and bacterial infection which compromise nutrition. Using public toilets and open bush can be dangerous because of crime, and a lack of adequate sanitation undermines human dignity. The use of buckets and open *veldt* (fields) is also likely to have consequences for water quality in the area, and can lead to the spread of diseases.

This indicator suggests an increasing trend in children's access to basic sanitation in South Africa over the period 2002 – 2006. In 2002, just under half (47%) of South Africa's children had access to adequate toilet facilities. In 2006, the proportion rose to about

55%. The increase over time has been gradual.

Provincial disparities in children's access to basic sanitation are also evident. The Western Cape (95%), Gauteng (89%) and Northern Cape (82%) provinces have the highest proportions of children with access to basic toilet facilities. The Eastern Cape (37%) and Limpopo (24%) provinces have the lowest proportions of children with access to adequate sanitation. This could be due to the fact that these are predominantly rural provinces where many people use pit latrines.

Due to the legacy of apartheid, African children are more likely to be using inadequate sanitation. Analysis of the *General Household Survey 2006* shows that a large proportion (53%) of African children were using inadequate sanitation facilities in 2006.

TABLE 21: The number<sup>+</sup> and proportion of children living in households with basic sanitation in South Africa in 2002 – 2006

Province	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	622,000	22*	655,000	23*	869,000	27*	1,129,000	36*	1,162,000	37*
Free State	544,000	55*	566,000	58*	644,000	61*	729,000	65*	753,000	67*
Gauteng	2,422,000	88*	2,430,000	87*	2,357,000	89*	2,329,000	88*	2,425,000	89*
KwaZulu-Natal	1,360,000	35*	1,545,000	40*	1,556,000	41*	1,800,000	47*	1,870,000	49*
Limpopo	526,000	21*	486,000	19*	755,000	29*	628,000	24*	633,000	24*
Mpumalanga	497,000	38*	599,000	45*	571,000	44*	585,000	43*	679,000	48*
Northern Cape	234,000	78*	222,000	74*	268,000	80*	280,000	83*	282,000	82*
North West	629,000	44*	761,000	52*	783,000	53*	737,000	50*	673,000	47*
Western Cape	1,470,000	92*	1,437,000	91*	1,462,000	94	1,462,000	93*	1,495,000	95*
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>8,304,000</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>8,702,000</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>9,267,000</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>9,678,000</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9,970,000</b>	<b>55*</b>

<sup>+</sup> 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.

### TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator includes the number and proportion of children (aged 0 – 17 years) living in households with basic sanitation. Basic or adequate sanitation includes facilities that are safe, reduce odours and are within or near a house. Inadequate sanitation includes a wide range of poor toilet facilities including pit latrines that are not ventilated, chemical toilets, buckets, or no facilities at all.

The *General Household Survey* asks about each household's sanitation facilities. The following facilities are included in the category of adequate sanitation: 'flush off-site', 'flush on-site', and 'VIP', standing for ventilated improved pit toilet. Inadequate sanitation includes the following: 'chemical' toilets, 'other pit', 'bucket', 'none' and a small number of 'unspecified'.

For more data, visit [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za)

## The number and proportion of children with access to drinking water on site in South Africa

Children without access to adequate water are exposed to substantial health risks. The most common of these is diarrhoea, but other diseases such as cholera are also water borne. Lack of access to adequate water is also closely related to poor sanitation and hygiene and in the absence of a water source on site, most children carry the burden of fetching and carrying water to their homes from communal taps, wells, rivers and streams.

This indicator refers to adequate water as drinking water that is on site; this means a water supply that is clean and reliable, and located at or near a house. Across South Africa, the proportion of children who have access to drinking water on site appears to have slightly increased between 2005 and 2006. However, there are insufficient data to make a strong claim that more children are progressively accessing drinking water on site in South Africa over time. The following can be noted about the current status of children's access to water:

Some areas have performed well in delivering safe drinking water to children. In 2006, the Western Cape (93%), Free State (92%) and Gauteng (91%) provinces have the highest proportions of children with access to drinking water on site. In contrast, more than half of the children in two provinces did not have access to drinking water on site. The Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces have the lowest proportions of children with access to drinking water on site in 2006 – with only 33% and 38% of children with access to adequate water respectively. About 50% of children in KwaZulu-Natal have access to drinking water on site.

By population group, only 54% of African children had access to drinking water on site in 2006. This is in sharp contrast with white children who almost universally (99%) have access to drinking water on site. The proportions of coloured (96%) and Indian (92%) children who have access to drinking water on site are also very high.

TABLE 22: The number<sup>†</sup> and proportion of children with access to drinking water on site in South Africa in 2005 – 2006

Province	June 2005		June 2006	
	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	991,000	32*	1,045,000	33*
Free State	1,005,000	90*	1,030,000	92*
Gauteng	2,391,000	90*	2,484,000	91
KwaZulu-Natal	1,807,000	47*	1,935,000	51*
Limpopo	848,000	32*	1,011,000	38*
Mpumalanga	874,000	65*	936,000	67*
Northern Cape	307,000	91*	309,000	90*
North West	901,000	62*	871,000	61*
Western Cape	1,457,000	93*	1,462,000	93*
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>10,580,000</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>11,084,000</b>	<b>61*</b>

<sup>†</sup> 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 (2006; 2007) *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

For the purposes of this indicator, children (aged 0 – 17 years) have access to adequate drinking water if they have access to a clean and reliable water supply that is at their house. All other water supplies, including rivers and communal taps, are considered inadequate.

The *General Household Survey* asks what the household's main source of water is – a specific response is required with respect to drinking water. There are 13 options. The first four water sources are considered adequate in this indicator and include a piped tap in the

dwelling or on the site or yard, a borehole on site or a rain-water tank on site. The remaining water sources are considered inadequate because of their distance from the house or the likelihood that the water is of poor quality. These inadequate water sources include public taps or those at other houses, rivers, dams, and springs. The specific question on drinking water was only asked in the GHS 2005 and 2006.

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

Access to a safe energy source such as electricity has an impact on a child's right to housing, health, nutrition and education. Access to electricity in the physical structure of a house is important for a range of reasons. Where there is no electricity, families use fuels for heating and cooking. These pose health hazards, for example, wood or dung fires can result in chest infections, and burns due to open fires are a common cause of injury and death. Where families do not have access to fridges, they are also less likely to be able to keep food fresh.

There are a number of time-use consequences to not having electricity. It is usually women and children who collect wood and other fuels, and more effort is required in cooking and heating with these fuels. Also, the lack of adequate electric lighting is a contributing factor in children not being able to study after dark.

In June 2002, 72% of children in South Africa lived in households that were connected to electricity. In 2006, the proportion of

children living in households connected to electricity rose to 77%. The data show that more children are progressively living in households with a mains connection over the period 2002 – 2006.

Across the provinces, the proportions of households with an electricity connection have remained stable over time. Children in the KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces have the least access to electricity: 64% of these child populations had access to a mains electricity connection in 2006. In all the remaining provinces, over 80% of children live in households that have access to an electricity connection. Western Cape and Northern Cape provinces have the highest proportions of children living in households with a mains connection, with over 90% of children in these provinces living in such households in 2006. In the Gauteng province, the proportion of children whose households have an electricity connection appears to have gradually declined over the last five years from 90% in 2002 to 83% in 2006.

TABLE 23: The number<sup>+</sup> and proportion of children living in households with an electricity connection in South Africa in 2002 – 2006

Province	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	1,426,000	50*	1,468,000	51*	1,689,000	53*	1,932,000	62*	2,028,000	64*
Free State	813,000	82*	830,000	85*	919,000	86*	1,011,000	91*	1,003,000	90
Gauteng	2,471,000	90	2,494,000	90*	2,393,000	91*	2,233,000	84*	2,246,000	83*
KwaZulu-Natal	2,261,000	59*	2,270,000	59*	2,365,000	62*	2,312,000	60*	2,428,000	64*
Limpopo	1,802,000	72*	1,873,000	74*	2,055,000	79*	2,126,000	81*	2,201,000	83*
Mpumalanga	1,006,000	77*	1,060,000	80*	1,092,000	84*	1,125,000	83*	1,189,000	85*
Northern Cape	258,000	86*	245,000	82*	297,000	88*	304,000	90*	315,000	91*
North West	1,151,000	80*	1,238,000	85*	1,375,000	92	1,280,000	88*	1,237,000	86*
Western Cape	1,432,000	90*	1,444,000	91*	1,450,000	93	1,480,000	94*	1,471,000	94*
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>12,622,000</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>12,923,000</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>13,635,000</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>13,802,000</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>14,118,000</b>	<b>77*</b>

<sup>+</sup> 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.

### TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator refers to the number and proportion of children (aged 0 – 17 years) that live in households that are connected to the mains electricity supply. The *General Household Survey* asks, "Does this household have a connection to the mains electricity supply?"

(Statistics South Africa 2004) This indicator is calculated according to the number and proportion of children in households that answered 'yes' (connected) and 'no' (not connected).

### SOURCES FOR CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SANITATION, WATER AND ELECTRICITY

- *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*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.
- 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.

For more data, visit [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za)