

Children's access to education

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Section 29 (1) (a) of the South African Constitution states that "everyone has the right to a basic education". Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child also obliges the State to "make primary education compulsory and available free to all".



THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CHILDREN (AGED 7 – 17 YEARS) ATTENDING AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Education is a critical socio-economic right that provides the foundation for children's life-long learning and work opportunities. At a national level, the high proportion (96%) of children of school-going age (7 – 17 years) attending some form of school or educational facility in 2005 is extremely positive. Unfortunately, this figure does not tell us about the regularity of children's school attendance.

At a provincial level, three provinces have attendance rates that are slightly lower than the national average: the Northern Cape, North West, and Western Cape each have rates of 95%. There appears to be very little variation in the provincial attendance rates between 2004 and 2005 – however, differences between the two years' data should be viewed with caution as confidence intervals¹ for the data are not available.

In July 2005, 10.6 million children (96%) of school-going age were reported to be attending an educational facility. Of the 417,705 children of school-going age who were not attending an educational

facility at the time of the *General Household Survey 2005*, the majority (74%) were children aged 13 – 17 years. Nearly half (44%) of the children who were out of school at the time of the survey lived in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. Based on these figures, the large number of children of both primary and secondary school-age who appear to be out of school is very concerning.

It is encouraging to note that 1.3 million children (10%) younger than six years of age were attending some form of educational facility in 2005, of which nearly 1.2 million children were in the 3 – 5-year age group. This constitutes more than one-third (39%) of children aged 3 – 5 years. Given the importance of early childhood development, access to appropriate resources and facilities to enable caregivers to stimulate their children's development from an early age is essential. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 84.)

¹ A confidence interval is a statistical term that gives a level of confidence in the accuracy of the data.

TABLE 8: The number and proportion of children (7 – 17 years) attending an educational facility in South Africa, by province

Province	2004		2005	
	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape	1,910,252	94.9	1,916,531	95.6
Free State	609,839	95.8	643,289	96.6
Gauteng	1,523,850	97.9	1,462,991	97.0
KwaZulu-Natal	2,277,356	95.6	2,324,628	96.0
Limpopo	1,656,163	98.0	1,627,458	97.8
Mpumalanga	778,961	97.4	793,600	96.9
Northern Cape	176,497	93.7	195,262	95.2
North West	876,120	96.0	822,961	94.7
Western Cape	907,255	94.9	890,380	94.7
South Africa	10,716,294	96.3	10,677,100	96.2

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2005: 2006) *General Household Survey 2004*. *General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Debbie Budlender, Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.

THE LEARNER-TO-EDUCATOR RATIO FOR CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Educators are key resources in the learning process. The number of children per educator in a classroom setting contributes directly to the individual attention an educator is able to give each child. In the context of HIV/AIDS, it is necessary for educators to be in touch with individual children's circumstances and to offer care and support to children in need of assistance. This becomes increasingly difficult if an educator has large numbers of children to attend to. In addition, high rates of educator absence in the context of HIV/AIDS exacerbate the situation.

South Africa has seen a slight increase in the learner-to-educator ratio for public schools between 2000 and 2004 (Department of Education 2005). As can be expected, there are huge differences in the learner-to-educator ratio between public and independent schools. The ratio also tends to be higher in primary schools than in secondary schools. While the national learner-to-educator ratio (34.5) is considerably high, four provinces – KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Western Cape – have higher ratios than the national average. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 84.)

TABLE 9: The learner-to-educator ratio for children enrolled in public schools in South Africa in 2004

Province	2004 Ratio
Eastern Cape	33.6
Free State	30.2
Gauteng	34.2
KwaZulu-Natal	36.3
Limpopo	35.6
Mpumalanga	35.7
Northern Cape	34.0
North West	30.0
Western Cape	37.7
South Africa	34.5

Source: Department of Education (2005) *Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2004*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CHILDREN RELATIVE TO THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED TO SCHOOL IN SOUTH AFRICA

The location of a child's school in relation to his or her home can pose a barrier to accessing education. In addition to distance travelled, availability of transport, safety in the community and environmental barriers should also be considered. Young children are most vulnerable and in danger of falling victim to foul play if travelling to school by themselves. Children who travel far distances are also likely to be physically tired from their long journey to school, which impacts negatively on their ability to learn.

According to an analysis of the *General Household Survey 2005*, of the 6.9 million children of primary school-age living in South Africa, 1.3 million attended schools that are far from their homes, i.e. more

than 30 minutes travelling time. The majority of these children live in the KwaZulu-Natal (30%) and the North West (26%) provinces. Slightly more than five million children in South Africa are of secondary school-age. Close to one-third of these children (32%) attend schools that are situated far from their homes.

On the whole, one-quarter (25%) of South African school-aged children travelled far distances to reach their schools in 2005. Of the nine provinces, the Eastern Cape (34%), KwaZulu-Natal (34%), North West (30%), and Mpumalanga (25%) provinces have one-quarter or more of their children attending far-away schools. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 84.)

TABLE 10a: The number and proportion of children relative to the distance travelled to primary school in South Africa in 2004 and 2005

Province	2004		2005	
	Primary school is far from home Number	%	Primary school is far from home Number	%
Eastern Cape	294,047	22	295,102	24
Free State	57,121	14	58,343	14
Gauteng	97,073	10	111,303	12
KwaZulu-Natal	458,942	30	464,891	30
Limpopo	190,542	18	157,204	15
Mpumalanga	117,235	24	100,357	19
Northern Cape	19,350	16	14,870	12
North West	118,851	20	135,848	26
Western Cape	43,579	7	28,872	5
South Africa	1,396,740	20	1,366,791	20

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2005; 2006) *General Household Survey 2004*. *General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Debbie Budlender, Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.

TABLE 10b: The number and proportion of children relative to the distance travelled to secondary school in South Africa in 2004 and 2005

Province	2004		2005	
	Secondary school is far from home Number	%	Secondary school is far from home Number	%
Eastern Cape	422,408	49	450,307	49
Free State	72,755	25	59,708	19
Gauteng	101,301	14	105,567	15
KwaZulu-Natal	444,882	41	427,329	40
Limpopo	255,826	33	255,135	35
Mpumalanga	134,362	37	125,392	35
Northern Cape	22,119	27	18,770	20
North West	130,539	33	148,949	36
Western Cape	53,343	13	39,575	9
South Africa	1,637,535	33	1,630,732	32

Sources: Statistics South Africa (2005; 2006) *General Household Survey 2004*. *General Household Survey 2005*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Debbie Budlender, Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT.

SOURCES

- *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*
- Department of Education (2005) *Education statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2004*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Statistics South Africa (2005) *General Household Survey 2004*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa.
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