

# Children’s access to water, sanitation and electricity

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Section 28 (1) (c) of the Constitution of South Africa gives children “the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, and social services”. Article 24 (1) (2) (c) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that States Parties should “recognise the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ... through the provision of clean drinking-water”.

## The number and proportion of children living in households with adequate water in South Africa in 2004

Across South Africa, there are some 7.7 million children whose families rely on unsafe or distant water sources. They make up 43% of all children in South Africa. There is a significant racial bias in the distribution of adequate water as 99% of children without access to water on site are Black.

Some areas are performing well in delivering water to children. The Western Cape, Northern Cape and Gauteng provinces all have more than 90% of their child populations able to access water on site. In contrast, some provinces have well over half of their children

exposed to inadequate water sources. This means that they are exposed to health risks or are responsible for fetching and carrying water to their homes. The Eastern Cape is home to nearly 2.5 million children (76%) living under such circumstances. In Limpopo, 60% of children are living without water on site, and 58% in KwaZulu-Natal are living in similar conditions. Lack of access to adequate water is also closely related to poor sanitation and hygiene. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 69.)

Table 13: The number and proportion of children living in households with adequate water in South Africa in 2004

Province	Adequate		Inadequate		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Eastern Cape	782,685	24	2,433,162	76	3,215,847
Free State	902,396	85	161,446	15	1,063,842
Gauteng	2,435,458	92	206,278	8	2,641,736
KwaZulu-Natal	1,608,636	42	2,183,739	58	3,792,375
Limpopo	1,047,299	40	1,568,307	60	2,615,606
Mpumalanga	877,356	67	430,509	33	1,307,865
Northern Cape	307,641	91	29,551	9	337,192
North West	841,374	57	647,272	43	1,488,646
Western Cape	1,456,965	93	101,743	7	1,558,708
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>10,259,810</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7,762,007</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18,021,817</b>

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

## The number and proportion of children living in households with adequate sanitation in South Africa in 2004

Good sanitation is essential for safe and healthy childhoods. There are a number of negative consequences for children and youths who are not able to access good toilets. It is very difficult to maintain good hygiene without water and toilets, and children are exposed to worms and bacterial infection. Public toilets and open bush can be dangerous and girls are especially likely to need clean and private toilet facilities. 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 disease.

There are large numbers of South Africans under the age of 18 years without access to adequate sanitation. Just over half of South African children have access to adequate toilet facilities, while the other 8.75 million are using inadequate facilities. More than two-thirds of all children in the Eastern Cape (73%) and Limpopo (71%) are reliant on inadequate sanitation. According to an analysis of the *General Household Survey 2004* by Debbie Budlender, nearly all children using inadequate sanitation facilities are Black and only 43% of Black children live in households with access to flush toilets or improved ventilated pit toilets. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 69.)

**Table 14: The number and proportion of children living in households with adequate sanitation in South Africa in 2004**

Province	Adequate		Inadequate		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Eastern Cape	869,424	27	2,346,423	73	3,215,847
Free State	644,280	61	419,562	39	1,063,842
Gauteng	2,357,434	89	284,302	11	2,641,736
KwaZulu-Natal	1,555,960	41	2,236,415	59	3,792,375
Limpopo	755,390	29	1,860,216	71	2,615,606
Mpumalanga	570,765	44	737,100	56	1,307,865
Northern Cape	268,431	80	68,761	20	337,192
North West	783,443	53	705,203	47	1,488,646
Western Cape	1,462,033	94	96,675	6	1,558,708
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>9,267,160</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>8,754,657</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>18,021,817</b>

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

## The number and proportion of children living in households with an electricity connection in South Africa in 2004

Access to electricity in the physical structure of the house is important for a range of reasons. Where there is no electricity, families use fuels for heating and cooking. These pose health hazards. Wood or dung fires can result in chest infections. 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.

Also, the lack of adequate electric lighting is a contributing factor in children not being able to study after dark.

In June 2004, 76% of children in South Africa lived in households that were connected to electricity. There are some provinces, however, where an electricity connection is still difficult to access. In the Eastern Cape, 1.5 million children (47%) do not have electricity connections on site. Another 1.4 million children (38%) in KwaZulu-Natal are in the same situation. (For more details about this indicator refer to page 69.)

**Table 15: The number and proportion of children living in households with an electricity connection in South Africa in 2004**

Province	Connected		Not connected		Unspecified		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Eastern Cape	1,688,944	53	1,525,637	47	1,266	0	3,215,847
Free State	919,071	86	143,541	13	1,230	0	1,063,842
Gauteng	2,392,998	91	242,742	9	5,996	0	2,641,736
KwaZulu-Natal	2,364,592	62	1,427,783	38	0	0	3,792,375
Limpopo	2,054,565	79	560,393	21	648	0	2,615,606
Mpumalanga	1,092,455	84	213,525	16	1,885	0	1,307,865
Northern Cape	297,030	88	40,162	12	0	0	337,192
North West	1,374,988	92	113,658	8	0	0	1,488,646
Western Cape	1,450,041	93	106,761	7	1,906	0	1,558,708
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>13,634,684</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>4,374,202</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12,931</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18,021,817</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa (2005) *General Household Survey 2004*. 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.*

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.