

# Income poverty, unemployment and social grants

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The Constitution of South Africa, section 27(1)(c), says that “everyone has the right to have access to ... social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance”.<sup>1</sup>

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 27, states that every child has the right “to a standard of living adequate for his or her development” and obliges the state “in case of need” to “provide material assistance”. Article 26 guarantees “every child the right to benefit from social security”.<sup>2</sup>

## Children living in income poverty

This indicator shows the number and share of children living in households that are income-poor. Because money is needed to access a range of goods and services, income poverty is often closely related to poor health and nutrition, reduced access to education and Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilities, and physical living environments that compromise health and personal safety.

International law and the 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 measures are therefore important for determining how many people need social assistance, and for evaluating the state's progress in realising the right to social assistance.

No poverty line is perfect. Using a single income measure tells us nothing about how resources are distributed between family members, or how money is spent. But this measure does give some indication of how many children are living in households with severely constrained resources.

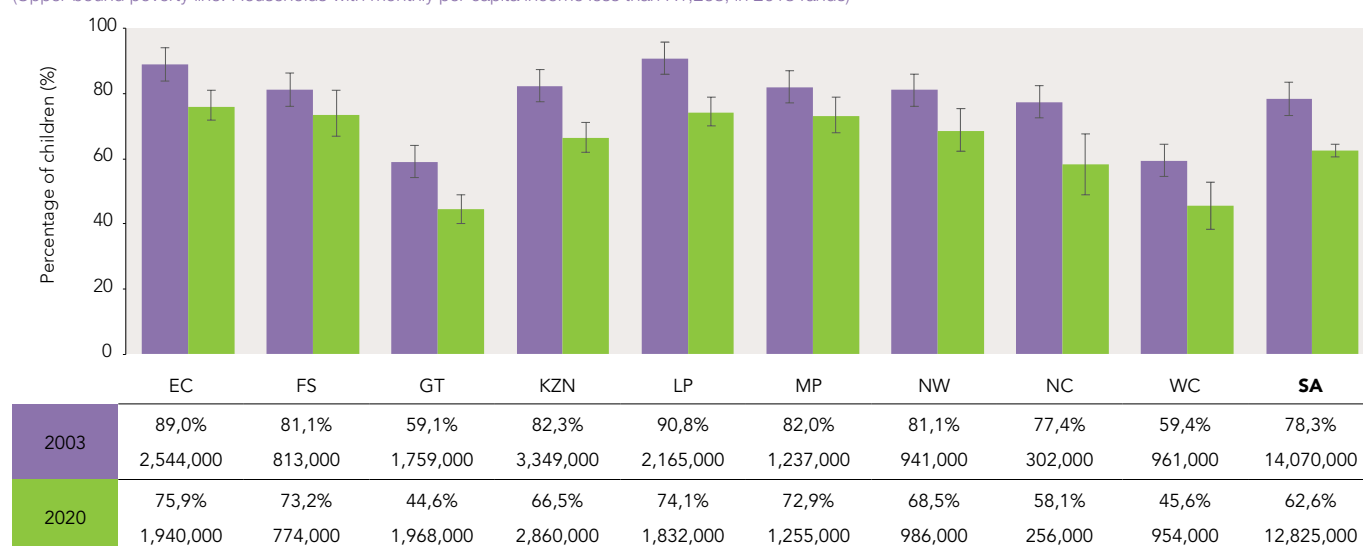
The measure used is the Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) 'upper bound' poverty line that was set at R779 per person per month in 2011 prices. Poverty lines increase with inflation and in 2020 the real value of the upper bound line was R1,268.<sup>3</sup> Per capita income is calculated by adding all reported earnings for household members older than 15 years, adding the value of social grants received by anyone in the household, and dividing the total household income by the number of household members.

Stats SA proposed two other poverty lines:

- A 'lower bound' poverty line is calculated by adding to the food poverty line the average expenditure on essential non-food items by households whose food expenditure is below but close to the food poverty line. The value of the lower bound poverty line in 2011 prices was R501 per person per month (R840 in 2020 prices). Those living below this line would not be able to pay for the minimum non-food expenses or would be sacrificing their basic nutrition to pay for non-food expenses.

**Figure 2a: Children living in income poverty, by province, 2003 & 2020**

(Upper-bound poverty line: Households with monthly per capita income less than R1,268, in 2018 rands)



Source: Statistics South Africa (2003; 2021) *General Household Survey 2002; General Household Survey 2020*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children's Institute, UCT.

- A 'food' poverty line is based on the cost of the minimum nutritional requirement of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day, without any allowance for non-food basic necessities. The value of the food poverty line in 2011 prices was R335 per person per month (R585 in 2020). Anyone living below this line will be malnourished and their health and survival may be at risk.

We use the upper bound poverty line as our main indicator for tracking child poverty, as this is linked to the minimum requirement for basic nutrition as well as other basic needs such as clothing and shelter. In other words, the upper bound line is the only poverty line that meets the minimum requirement for children's basic needs.

South Africa has very high rates of child poverty and, although poverty rates have reduced substantially over the last two decades, a large number of children remain in poverty. In 2019, 56% of children (11.2 million) lived below the upper bound poverty line and 33% were below the food poverty line. Income poverty rates have fallen substantially since 2003, when 78% (14.1 million) children were defined as 'poor' at the upper bound threshold. The reduction in the child poverty headcount is partly the result of a massive expansion in the reach of the Child Support Grant (CSG) over the same period.

The 2020 child poverty rate (upper bound) is estimated at 63%, based on reported income from earnings and grants. This is an increase of seven percentage points from 2019, the year before COVID-19. In terms of population numbers, this translates as an additional 1.7 million children below the poverty line, compared with the previous year.

There are substantial differences in poverty rates across the provinces. Using the upper bound poverty line, around three-quarters of children in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Free State and Mpumalanga are poor. Gauteng and the Western Cape have

the lowest child poverty rates, although there was a substantial increase in poverty in both these provinces – from 35% in 2019 to 45% in 2020 in Gauteng, and from 27% to 46% in the Western Cape. Child poverty remains most prominent in the rural areas of the former homelands, where 81% of children were below the poverty line in 2020. The urban child poverty rate, by contrast, was 51%.

There are also glaring racial disparities in income poverty: while 68% of African children lived in poor households in 2020, and 47% of Coloured children were defined as poor, only 3% of White children lived below this poverty line. There are no significant differences in child poverty levels across gender or between different age groups in the child population.

Using Stats SA's lower bound poverty line (which does not provide enough for basic essentials), 51% of children (10.5 million) were poor in 2020 (up from 43% in 2019), and 39% (8 million children) were below the food poverty line, meaning that they were not getting enough nutrition. Food poverty had increased from 33% in 2019, with an additional 1.5 million children in food poverty in 2020.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and set a global agenda for development by 2030. Target 1.1 is to eradicate extreme poverty using the international poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day (equivalent to R401 per person per month in 2020, using the IMF purchasing power parity conversion). This poverty line is extremely low – below survival level – and is not appropriate for South Africa. No child should be below it. In 2003, 52% of children (9.3 million) lived below the equivalent of the SDG poverty line. By 2019, this had decreased to 22% (4.3 million), but in 2020 the ultra-low 'SDG' poverty rate had increased again to 28% (5.7 million children).

## Impact of disaster relief grants and grant top-ups on child poverty

The poverty rates presented above are based on reported income and the normal grant amounts – in other words, the graph reflects poverty rates in the absence of disaster relief.

There was a sharp rise in unemployment in the lockdown of 2020. Three million jobs were lost between February and April 2020. Two million of those who lost employment were women.<sup>4</sup> This had a direct effect on child poverty, especially as children in South Africa are more likely to be co-resident with women than with men.

The South African government introduced disaster relief grants and top-ups to existing grants, starting in May 2020 and ending in October. Only the newly introduced R350 COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant for unemployed adults (SRD) continued into 2021 and beyond.

The General Household Survey, on which the analysis for this indicator is based, took place telephonically between September and December 2020. The survey therefore spans two months when grant top-ups were in place, and two months after they had been terminated. For this reason, the child poverty rates for 2020 have been estimated in two ways:

- First, the poverty rates are calculated in a scenario without the disaster relief grants and top-ups (i.e., including existing

grants but excluding disaster relief) as presented above; and

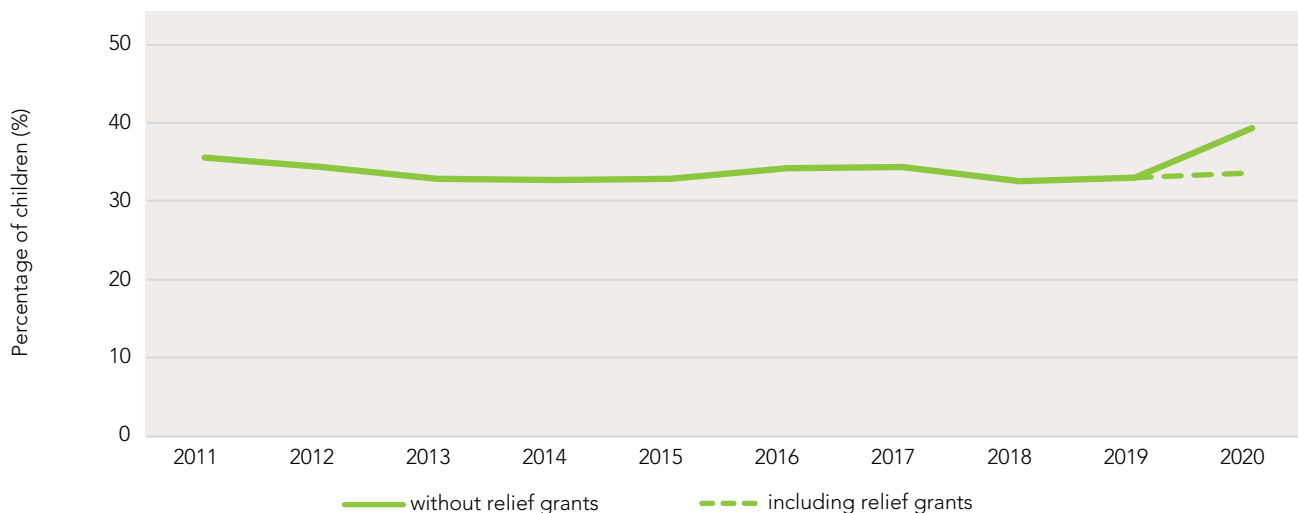
- Second, the poverty rates are calculated in a scenario that includes the R250 top-ups to existing grants, the temporary caregiver grant (R500 per month per caregiver who receives a child support grant for one or more children) and the R350 COVID-19 SRD. The CSG received a top-up for only one month, in May 2020, and this has not been included in the poverty calculations as it was a once-off top-up that preceded the survey.

The disaster relief grants and top-ups had a small impact on child poverty at the upper bound poverty line, reducing the poverty rate from 63% (without disaster relief) to 60% (including disaster relief). The impact of disaster relief was more pronounced at the food poverty line: during the months where grant top-ups and the caregiver grant were active, the food poverty rate for children would have decreased from 39% (8 million children) to 34% (6.9 million children).

As shown in the trend graph below, the disaster relief grants and top-ups had a strong protective effect, counteracting rising poverty in the context of lockdown. This protective effect would have ended when the top-ups and caregiver grant were withdrawn.

**Figure 2b: Child food poverty and impact of COVID-19 disaster relief, 2011 – 2020**

(Food poverty line: Households with monthly per capita income less than R585, in 2020 rands)



Source: Statistics South Africa (2012–2021) *General Household Survey 2011 – 2020*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children’s Institute, UCT.

### Children living in households without an employed adult

This indicator measures unemployment from a children’s perspective and gives the number and proportion of children who live in households where no adults are employed in either the formal or informal sector. It therefore shows the proportion of children living in ‘unemployed’ households where it is unlikely that any household members derive income from labour or income-generating activities.

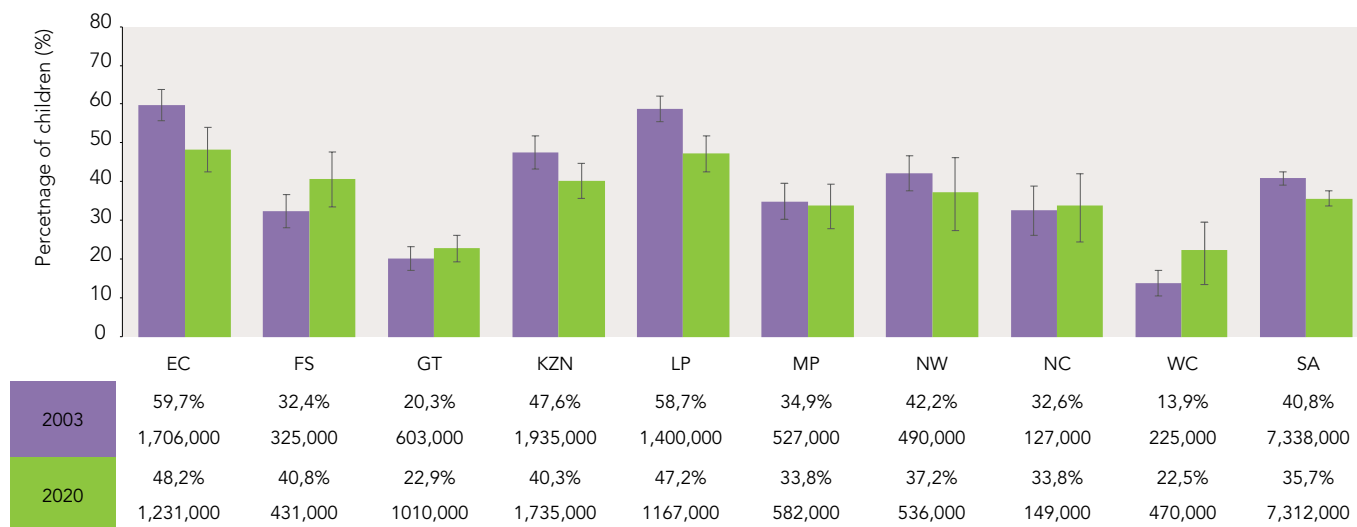
Unemployment in South Africa continues to be a serious problem, and the situation worsened during lockdown. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020, the expanded unemployment rate breached the 40% mark for the first time since the Quarterly Labour Force Survey was introduced in 2008, and it remained above 40% for the rest of the year.<sup>5</sup>

Although there was some clawback of jobs, in the last quarter of 2020 Stats SA still recorded a net decrease of 1.4 million (8.5%)

in total employment numbers, compared with the same period the previous year. By the end of 2020, 39% of men and 46.3% of women in the labour force were unemployed.<sup>6</sup>

The official national unemployment rate was 29.1% in the fourth quarter of 2019 and 32.5% in the fourth quarter of 2020.<sup>7</sup> This official rate is based on a narrow definition of unemployment that includes only those adults who are defined as economically active (i.e. they are not studying or retired or voluntarily staying at home) and 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 higher, and more accurate, indication of unemployment. The expanded unemployment rate (which includes those who are not actively looking for work) was

**Figure 2c: Children living in households without an employed adult, by province, 2003 & 2020**



Source: Statistics South Africa (2004; 2021) *General Household Survey 2003; General Household Survey 2020*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Katharine Hall, Children’s Institute, UCT.

38.7% in the fourth quarter of 2019 and 42.6% a year later at the end of 2020. Gender differences in employment rates are relevant for children, as it is mainly women who provide for children's care and material needs. Unemployment rates are consistently higher for women than for men. At the end of 2019, 42.4% of women were unemployed by the expanded definition (compared with 35.5% of men) and this increased to 46.3% for women at the end of 2020 (compared with 39.4% of men).<sup>7</sup>

Apart from providing regular income, an employed adult may bring other benefits to the household, including health insurance, unemployment insurance and parental leave that can contribute to children's health, development and education. The definition of 'employment' is derived from the Quarterly Labour Force 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.

In 2019, 70% of children in South Africa lived in households with at least one working adult. The other 30% (5.9 million children) lived in households where no adults were working. The number of children living in workless households had decreased by 1.4 million since 2003, when 41% of children lived in households where there was no employment. By late 2020, the share of children in workless households had increased again to 36% (7.3 million) – effectively back to the 2007 rate in percentage terms, though substantially higher in terms of numbers due to a growing population.

## Children receiving the Child Support Grant

This indicator shows the number of children receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG), as reported by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) which disburses social grants on behalf of the Department of Social Development.

The right to social assistance is designed to ensure that people living in poverty can meet basic subsistence needs. Government is obliged to support children directly when their parents or caregivers are too poor to do so. Income support is provided through social assistance programmes such as the CSG, which is an unconditional cash grant paid to the caregivers of eligible children.

Introduced in 1998 with an initial value of R100, the CSG has become the single biggest programme for alleviating child poverty in South Africa. Take-up of the CSG has increased dramatically over the years and the grant amount is increased slightly each year, more or less keeping pace with overall inflation. At the end of March 2022, a monthly CSG of R460 was paid to 13 million children aged 0 – 17 years. The value of the CSG increased to R480 per month from the beginning of April 2022.

There have been two important changes in eligibility criteria over the years. The first concerns age eligibility. Initially the CSG was only available for children younger than seven years. From 2003 it was gradually extended to older children up to the age of 14. Since January 2012, following a second phased extension, eligible children can receive the grant until they turn 18.

The second change concerns the income threshold for the means test. The income threshold remained static for 10 years until a formula was introduced – set at 10 times the amount of the grant. This means that every time the grant is increased, the

This indicator is very closely related to the income poverty indicator in that provinces with relatively high proportions of children living in unemployed households also have high rates of child poverty. At the end of 2020, nearly 50% of children in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo lived in households without any employed adults, and 40% of those in KwaZulu-Natal were in workless households. These provinces are home to large numbers of children and also have relatively high rates of child poverty. In contrast, Gauteng and the Western Cape have the lowest poverty rates, and the lowest unemployment rates, although the effects of job loss were also evident in these provinces in 2020. In the Western Cape, 22% of children lived in households where nobody was working (up from 12% in 2019), and in Gauteng the rate was 23% in 2020 (up from 14% in 2019).

Racial inequalities are striking: 39% of African children had no working adult at home in 2020 (up from 33% in 2019), while 25% of Coloured children and less than 5% of Indian and White children lived in these circumstances. There are no significant differences in child-centred unemployment measures when comparing girls and boys or between age groups. In the rural former homelands, 53% of children lived in workless households in 2020, an increase from 47% in 2019.

Income inequality is clearly associated with unemployment. Nearly 80% of children in the poorest income quintile live in households where no adults are employed.

means test also increases. From April 2022, the income threshold was R4,800 per month for a single caregiver and R9,600 per month for the joint income of the caregiver and spouse, if the caregiver is married.

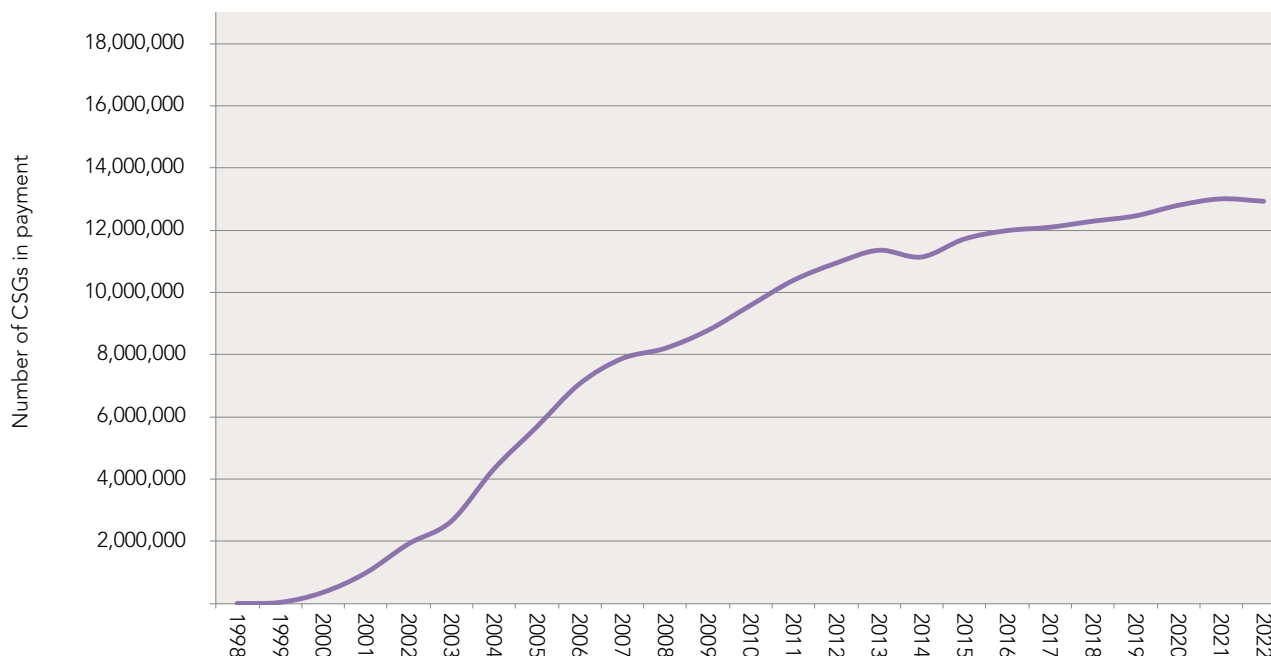
A slight dip in grant access in 2014 was probably the result of the introduction of a biometric system which led to the

**Table 2a: Children receiving the Child Support Grant, by province and age group, 2022**

Province	Number of child beneficiaries at end March 2022			
	0 – 5 years	6 – 11 years	12 – 17 years	TOTAL
Eastern Cape	604,759	670,077	651,350	1,926,186
Free State	222,178	245,974	238,712	706,864
Gauteng	637,190	707,032	636,780	1,981,002
KwaZulu-Natal	950,709	1,029,300	981,543	2,961,552
Limpopo	695,844	675,668	578,911	1,950,423
Mpumalanga	405,844	396,380	362,219	1,164,443
North West	299,752	311,591	282,815	894,158
Northern Cape	110,030	116,029	103,141	329,200
Western Cape	294,186	366,821	340,905	1,001,912
South Africa	4,220,492	4,518,872	4,176,376	12,915,740

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2020) SOCPEN database – special request. Pretoria: SASSA.

**Figure 2d: Children receiving the Child Support Grant, 1998 – 2022**



Sources: 1998 – 2007: National Treasury Intergovernmental Fiscal Reviews. 2008 – 2022: South African Social Security Agency SOCPEN monthly reports, by special request.

identification and removal of beneficiaries who were not verified biometrically or were found to be fraudulent. From 2014, the numbers have increased again gradually, only tapering off in 2021 and 2022. In March 2022, fewer CSGs were in payment than in March the previous year – the number of CSGs had decreased by nearly 80,000, from 13 million in 2021. This was the first overall decline in the number of CSGs since 2014, with the decrease being most pronounced in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape. The year-on-year decrease is spread across all age groups and the reasons for it are not clear. However, in the previous period (2020 – 2021), there was a clear decrease (of over 100,000) in the number of CSGs paid to infants under a year. This was almost certainly the result of delays in birth registration and grant applications in the context of lockdown.

There is substantial evidence that grants, including the CSG, are being spent on food, education and basic goods and services. The grant not only helps to alleviate income poverty and realise

children’s right to social assistance, it is also associated with improved nutritional, health and education outcomes.<sup>8-17</sup>

Given the positive and cumulative effects of the grant, it is important that caregivers can access it for their children as early as possible. One of the main concerns is the slow take-up for young children. An analysis of exclusions from the CSG found that exclusion rates for eligible infants under a year were as high as 43% in 2014, up only three percentage points from 47% in 2008. Exclusion rates were found to be highest in the Western Cape and Gauteng. The total rate of exclusion for all ages was estimated at 17.5% (more than 1.8 million children).<sup>18</sup> Barriers to take-up include confusion about eligibility requirements and the means test in particular; lack of documentation (mainly identity books or birth certificates, and proof of school enrolment, although the latter is not an eligibility requirement) and problems of institutional access (including the time and cost of reaching SASSA offices, long queues and lack of baby-friendly facilities).

### CSG and grant top-ups in the context of COVID-19 and lockdown

The disaster relief package announced by the President in late April 2020 included a R300 top-up to the CSG for just one month (in May). This reached 13 million children on the CSG. From June, the CSG top-up was discontinued and a temporary caregiver allowance of R500 was introduced, reaching just over 7.1 million caregivers who received CSGs for children in their care. The caregiver allowance was paid for five months (from June to October), after which it was discontinued. Until April 2021, caregivers who received CSGs were excluded from applying for the R350 COVID-19 SRD grant for unemployed working age adults. The one-month additional amount to the CSG used the most efficient available mechanism to transfer much-needed cash into millions of highly vulnerable

households. The CSG is the most pro-poor of all the grants and reaches 74% of all households in the poorest income decile.<sup>19</sup> The CSG also reaches around 80% of households that rely on income from informal employment and would therefore not receive assistance through the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) or the Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS).<sup>20</sup>

When the caregiver allowance was introduced in June 2020, the CSG reverted to its previous value of R440. The CSG already had the lowest value of all the social grants, was the only grant below the food poverty line (R585 per month in 2020 Rands), and whereas all other grants received R250 top-ups for six months (May to October 2020), the CSG remained at its base value.

## Children receiving the Foster Child Grant

This indicator shows the number of children who are accessing the Foster Child Grant (FCG) in South Africa, as recorded in the SOCPEN administrative data system of the SASSA.

The FCG is available to foster parents who have a child placed in their care by an order of the court. It is a non-contributory cash grant valued at R1,070 per month from April 2022.

The relatively large value of the grant, compared to the CSG, is justified on the basis that the child is technically a ward of the state, and the state is therefore directly responsible for ensuring that all the child's needs are provided for. The grant was initially intended as financial support for children removed from their families and placed in foster care for protection in situations of abuse or neglect.

However, the FCG has increasingly been used to provide financial support to caregivers of children who are orphaned and has effectively been used as a poverty alleviation grant for orphans in kinship care. The appropriateness and effectiveness of this approach was questioned as far back as 2003, particularly because many children live with grandparents, aunts or other relatives, whether or not their parents are alive.<sup>21</sup>

The number of FCGs remained stable for many years when foster care applied mainly to children who were in need of care and protection because of abuse or neglect, or because they were awaiting adoption. Its rapid expansion since 2003 coincided with the rise in HIV-related orphaning and an implied policy change by the Department of Social Development, which from 2003 started encouraging family members (particularly grandmothers) caring for orphaned children to apply for foster care and the FCG. During the subsequent five years, the number of FCGs increased by over 50,000 per year as orphans were brought into

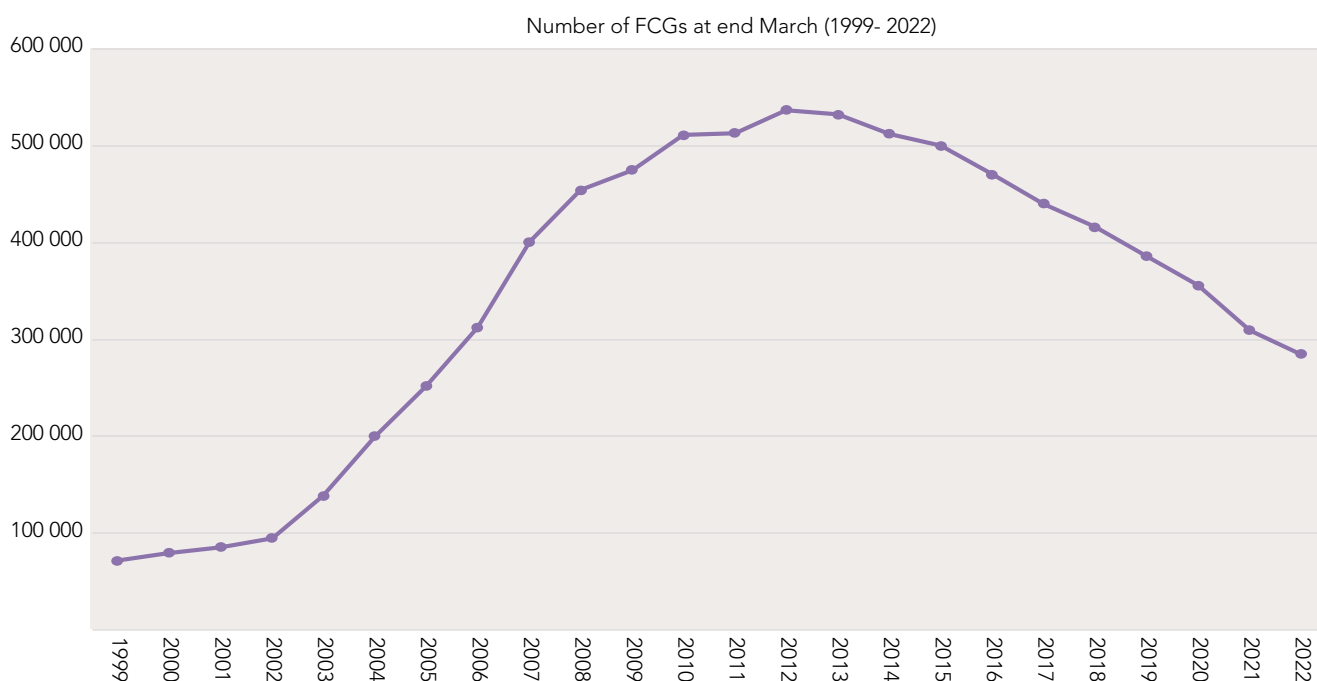
the foster care system. The increases were greatest in provinces with large numbers of orphaned children: the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

By 2010, more than 500,000 FCGs were in payment and the foster care system was struggling to keep pace with the numbers due to the legally required initial investigations and reports by social workers, court-ordered placements, and additional two-yearly social worker reviews and court-ordered extensions. SASSA is not allowed to pay the FCG without a valid court order or extension order, and more than 110,000 FCGs lapsed between April 2009 and March 2011 because of backlogs in the extensions of court orders.<sup>22-24</sup>

In 2011, a court-ordered settlement stipulated that the foster care court orders that had expired – or that were going to expire in the following two years – must be deemed to have been extended until 8 June 2013. This effectively placed a moratorium on the lapsing of these FCGs. As a temporary solution, social workers could extend orders administratively (without having to go to court) until December 2014, by which date a comprehensive legal solution should have been found to prevent qualifying families from losing their grants in future.<sup>25</sup> Yet, no policy solution had been developed by the 2014 cut-off date. Instead, the Department of Social Development sought (and received) an urgent court order extending the date to the end of 2017, which was then extended until the end of November 2019, then to the end of November 2020 and again to the end of November 2022.

After a decade during which the Department has failed to meet the terms of the court order, the High Court is now closely supervising the Department's compliance by requiring and engaging with regular progress reports. Two laws need to be

Figure 2e: Children receiving the Foster Child Grant, 1999 – 2022



Sources: 1999 – 2007: National Treasury Intergovernmental Fiscal Reviews. 2008 – 2022: South African Social Security Agency SOCPEN monthly reports, by special request.

amended to enable a sustainable solution. The Social Assistance Act was passed by Parliament in 2020 to provide for a CSG top-up; but the Children's Amendment Bill is still with Parliament and will also require regulations before it can be implemented. The Bill needs to clarify that the majority of orphaned children in the care of relatives should be referred to the CSG top-up, and only those who are in need of care and protection should be placed in foster care.

Since its height in 2012, when nearly 540,000 FCGs were paid each month, the number of FCGs has declined year-on-year. At the end of 2014, 300,000 court orders had expired, representing more than 60% of all foster care placements.<sup>26</sup> The grants remained in payment only because the High Court order mentioned above prevented them from lapsing. In March 2022, 285,000 FCGs were paid to caregivers of children in foster care, effectively back to below 2006 levels. The most dramatic drop has been in KwaZulu-Natal, where the number of FCGs fell by 64%, from 142,000 to 51,000.

The declining numbers are partly due to lower rates of foster care placement and enrolment onto the grant, and partly because of an increase in the numbers of grants terminating at the end of each year when children turn 18. This in turn is because the beneficiaries of the FCG are mainly orphaned children, who are typically older children as orphaning rates increase with age. In 2020, only 14% of FCGs went to children who were not orphaned, while 6% went to paternal orphans, 8% to maternal orphans and 72% to double orphans.<sup>27</sup> The Western Cape is the only province that has not experienced a drop in the number of FCGs, probably because it is also the only province where foster care is used mainly for its original purpose, rather than to supplement the income of orphans living with relatives. Rural provinces tend to bear the main burden of caring for orphans.

It is not possible to calculate a take-up rate for the FCG as there is no accurate record of how many children are eligible for placement in foster care because they are abused or neglected and in need of care and protection. Currently, orphans in the care of relatives are still legally eligible to be placed in foster care and receive the CSG,<sup>i</sup> but only a small portion of these children are being supported to access it. The declining numbers are therefore regressive in terms of the current law.

If all double orphans were to be placed in foster care, this would require around 620,000 foster care placements, excluding those who need to be placed in foster care because they are awaiting adoption or have been removed from their families for reasons of abuse or neglect. This would once again send the number of children in foster care well above half a million – which the system has not previously been able to support.

## Children receiving the Care Dependency Grant

This indicator shows the number of children who are accessing the Care Dependency Grant (CDG) in South Africa, as recorded in the SOCPEN administrative data system of the SASSA.

The CDG is a non-contributory monthly cash transfer to caregivers of children with disabilities who require permanent care or support services. It excludes those children who are cared for in state institutions because the purpose of the grant is to

i In terms of section 150(1)(a) of the Children's Act No 38 of 2005.

**Table 2b: Children receiving the Foster Child Grant, by province, 2012 & 2022**

Province	2012	2022	Difference	% difference
Eastern Cape	116,826	63,046	-53,780	-46%
Free State	43,311	20,230	-23,081	-53%
Gauteng	56,451	35,415	-21,036	-37%
KwaZulu-Natal	142,114	51,241	-90,873	-64%
Limpopo	56,066	34,728	-21,338	-38%
Mpumalanga	32,886	18,612	-14,274	-43%
North West	45,634	22,493	-23,141	-51%
Northern Cape	14,456	9,342	-5,114	-35%
Western Cape	29,003	29,999	996	3%
South Africa	536,747	285,106	-251,641	-47%
FCG amount	R 770	R 1,070		

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2012; 2022) SOCPEN database, by special request. Pretoria: SASSA.

The systemic problems that caused FCGs to lapse and reduced social worker capacity to respond to children and others in need of protection and welfare services need to be addressed through a legislative amendment to clarify the eligibility criteria for foster care and provide an adequate grant for orphans in the care of relatives.

An amendment to the Social Assistance Act has been passed by Parliament and signed by the President, providing for a CSG top-up (instead of the FCG) for orphaned children living with kin. The 2022 budget provided for a CSG top-up for orphans, and the plan is that implementation should start in mid-2022. Certain sections of the Children's Act also need to be amended to clarify the revised eligibility criteria for foster care.

The Children's Amendment Bill is currently before Parliament and is scheduled to be passed by the end of 2022. The CSG top-up approach would give orphaned children living with relatives access to a larger child support grant, around half-way between the value of the CSG and the FCG, without first having to go through a foster care placement. If implemented effectively, the reforms could improve access to social grants for orphans and responsive child protection services for children in need of state care and protection, irrespective of who their caregivers are and whether or not they are orphans.

cover the additional costs (including opportunity costs) that the parent or caregiver might incur as a result of the child's disability. The child needs to undergo a medical assessment to determine eligibility and the parent must pass an income or 'means' test.

Although the CDG targets children with disabilities, children with chronic illnesses are eligible for the grant once the illness becomes disabling, for example, children who are very sick with

AIDS-related illnesses. Children with disabilities and chronic illnesses need substantial care and attention, and parents may need to stay at home or employ a caregiver to tend to the child. Children with health conditions may need medication, equipment or to attend hospital often. These extra costs can put strain on families that are already struggling to make ends meet. Poverty and chronic health conditions are therefore strongly related.

It is not possible to calculate a take-up rate for the CDG because there are no reliable data on the number of children with disabilities or who are chronically ill, and in need of permanent care or support services. At the end of March 2022, 151,000 children were receiving the CDG, and from the beginning of April 2022, the grant was valued at R1,980 per month.

The provincial distribution of CDGs is fairly consistent with the distribution of children. The provinces with the largest numbers of children – KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Gauteng – receive the largest share of CDGs, though the number of CDG recipients has also increased in the Western Cape. There has been a gradual but consistent increase in access to the CDG each year since 1998, when only 8,000 CDGs were disbursed.

**Table 2c: Children receiving the Care Dependency Grant, by province, 2012 & 2022**

Province	2012	2022	Difference	% difference
Eastern Cape	18,235	22,775	4,540	25%
Free State	5,419	8,831	3,412	63%
Gauteng	14,170	21,163	6,993	49%
KwaZulu-Natal	34,969	39,044	4,075	12%
Limpopo	11,318	16,668	5,350	47%
Mpumalanga	7,950	11,408	3,458	43%
North West	8,736	9,528	,792	9%
Northern Cape	4,236	5,725	1,489	35%
Western Cape	9,960	16,054	6,094	61%
South Africa	114,993	151,196	36,203	31%
	R 1 200	R 1 980		

Source: South African Social Security Agency (2012; 2022) SOCPEN database, by special request. Pretoria: SASSA.

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