

Income and Social Grants - Child Support Grants

Author/s: Katharine Hall

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Definition

This indicator shows the number of children who are accessing the Child Support Grant (CSG) in South Africa, as recorded in the administrative data system of the South African Social Security Agency, "SOCPEN".

The number of children receiving the Child Support Grant in South Africa, 2005 – 2009

Province	Number of child beneficiaries				
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Eastern Cape	1,078,442	1,413,830	1,497,736	1,491,223	1,605,479
Free State	361,318	417,076	441,397	457,169	494,433
Gauteng	723,432	862,346	926,179	969,267	1,067,729
KwaZulu-Natal	1,338,045	1,746,944	1,963,944	2,128,967	2,344,413
Limpopo	990,194	1,200,185	1,253,794	1,278,711	1,392,140
Mpumalanga	489,663	613,008	645,565	662,316	717,075
North West	465,242	604,525	613,002	637,557	682,991
Northern Cape	101,728	121,332	175,250	184,183	209,818
Western Cape	365,655	431,514	458,980	480,394	557,784
South Africa	5,913,719	7,410,760	7,975,847	8,289,787	9,071,862
CSG amount	RM180	RM190	RM200	RM220	RM240

Source • South African Social Security Agency (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009) SOCPEN database. Pretoria: SASSA.

- Notes
1. For the years 2005 and 2008, the child support grant was only available to children aged 0-13 years. From 2009, the grant was extended to include children aged 14 years.
 2. SOCPEN figures are taken from mid-year (June/July), to coincide with data collection for the annual General Household Survey.
 3. For trends from 1998 to 2009 (April figures), see the Social Grants link on the home page

What do the numbers tell us?

The purpose of the right to social assistance is to ensure that people living in poverty are able to access a minimum level of income sufficient to meet basic subsistence needs. The South African government is obliged to support children directly when their parents or caregivers are too poor to support them adequately. This is done primarily through social assistance programmes, the biggest of which is the Child Support Grant.

The CSG is an unconditional cash grant paid to the caregivers of eligible children. From April 2010 it has a value of R250 per month per child. Introduced in 1998 with a 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 past decade, and by mid-2009, the monthly CSG was paid to nine million children aged 0 – 14 years.

There have been two important changes in eligibility criteria which would affect take-up. These are related to the age threshold and the income cut-off. The CSG was initially available only to children until their seventh birthday. It was later extended in three phases to higher age groups and, from April 2005, the age threshold was set at 14 (i.e. children had to be under 14 years to receive the grant). Between June 2005 and July 2006, over 1.5 million new children received the grant, after which new take-up slowed again. In January 2009 the age threshold increased to 15 (so that 14-year-old children may apply), and there have been numerous indications that the Department of Social Development is considering the extension of the CSG to children under 18 years.

To access the grant, caregivers make an application and need to pass an income test. From 1998, children were eligible for this grant if their primary caregiver and his/her spouse jointly had R800 per month or less in income and lived in an urban area and formal house. For those who lived in rural areas or informal housing in urban areas, the income threshold was R1,100 per month. This threshold remained unchanged for 10 years. In August 2008 the income threshold for the CSG was increased – effectively doubled – to adjust for devaluation as the result of inflation since 1998. Rather than setting a static threshold again, a formula was introduced whereby the income threshold is calculated at 10 times the amount of the grant. In 2009, therefore, the income threshold would be R2,400 per month for a single caregiver (or a maximum of R4,400 per month for the joint income caregiver and married spouse).

Using the General Household Survey (GHS) 2004, Budlender calculated that 65% of all children under the age of 14 years were eligible for the CSG in that they passed the old means test.¹ Following the adjustment of the means test in 2008, Budlender repeated the calculation, this time using the new inflation-adjusted means test and the 2007 General Household Survey, which suggested that around 82% of children aged 0 - 13 years were eligible for the grant.² Applying this eligibility rate to the most recent available population data (mid-2008), it is estimated that 71% of eligible children are accessing the CSG, although the actual take-up rate would be lower due to errors of inclusion.

There is substantial evidence that grants, including the CSG, are being spent on food, education and basic goods and services.³ This evidence shows that the grant not only helps to realize children's right to social assistance, but also improves their access to food, education, and basic services.

See the Children's Institute website for a range of working papers, fact sheets, alerts and research reports on social security.

Technical notes

The number of children receiving Child Support Grants is taken from the Department of Social Development's administrative database – SOCPEN. The figures are taken from daily reports for July of each year, to coincide with the timeframes for the General Household Survey.

Strengths and limitations of the data

There has never been a published review of the SOCPEN database, and the extent of the limitations of validity or reliability of the data has not been quantified. However, it is regularly used by the Department of Social Development and other government bodies to monitor grant take-up.

References and related links

- ¹ Budlender D, Rosa S, & Hall K (2005) *At all costs? Applying the means test for the Child Support Grant*. Cape Town: Children's Institute and the Centre for Actuarial Research, University of Cape Town. Available: www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/poverty/resrep/AtAllCosts.pdf.
- ² Budlender D (2008) *Feasibility and appropriateness of attaching behavioural conditions to a social support grant for children aged 15-17 years*. Unpublished report commissioned by the Department of Social Development. Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry.
- ³ Budlender D & Woolard I (2006) *The Impact of the South African Child Support and Old Age Grants on children's schooling and work*. Geneva: International Labour Office;
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- ⁴ Budlender D, Rosa S, & Hall K (2005) – see reference 1.
- ⁵ Statistics South Africa (2008). *General Household Survey 2007 Metadata*. Cape Town, Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

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