

Education - Children attending an educational institution

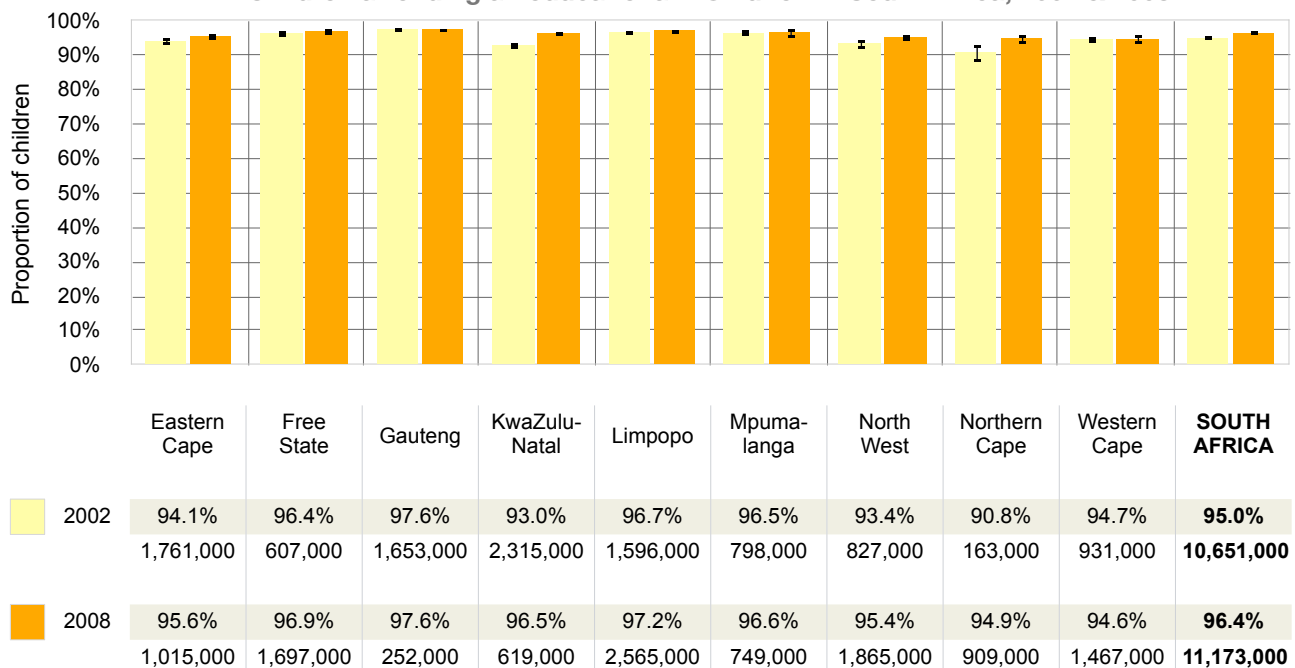
Author/s: Arianne De Lannoy & Katharine Hall

Date: July 2010

Definition

This indicator reflects the number and proportion of children aged 7 – 17 years who are reported to be attending any school or educational facility.

Children attending an educational institution in South Africa, 2002 & 2008



Source

- Statistics South Africa (2003-2009) *General Household Survey 2002-2008*. Pretoria, Cape Town: Statistics South Africa. Analysis by Katharine Hall & Double-Hugh Marera, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

Notes

1. Children are defined as persons aged 0 – 17 years.
2. Population numbers have been rounded off to the nearest thousand.
3. Sample surveys are always subject to error, and the proportions simply reflect the mid-point of a possible range. The confidence intervals (CIs) indicate the reliability of the estimate at the 95% level. This means that, if independent samples were repeatedly taken from the same population, we would expect the proportion to lie between upper and lower bounds of the CI 95% of the time. The wider the CI, the more uncertain the proportion. Where CIs overlap for different sub-populations or time periods we cannot be sure that there is a real difference in the proportion, even if the mid-points differ. CIs are represented in the bar graphs by vertical lines at the top of each bar.
4. Denominator is based on children of school-going age: 7-17 years.

What do the numbers tell us?

Education is a central socio-economic right that provides the foundation for life-long learning and economic opportunities. Children have a right to basic education and are admitted into Grade 1 in the year they turn seven. Basic education is compulsory in Grades 1 – 9, or for children aged 7 – 15. Children who have completed basic education also have a right to further education (Grades 10 – 12), which the government must take reasonable measures to make available.

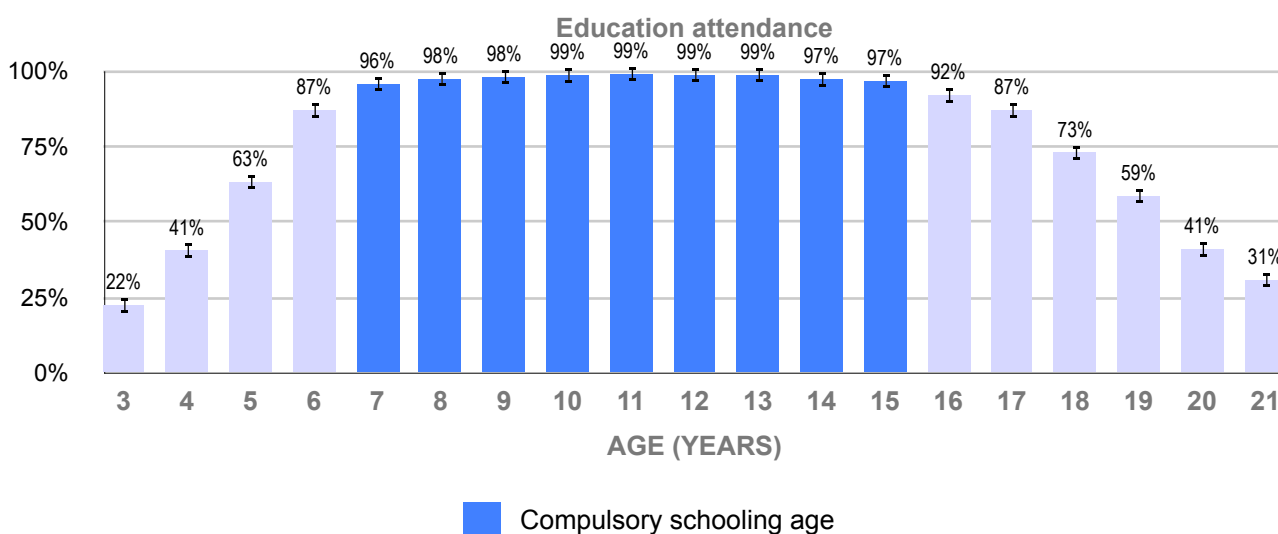
South Africa has high levels of school enrolment and attendance. Amongst children of school-going age (7 – 17 years) the vast majority (96.4%) attended some form of educational facility in 2008. Since 2002, the national attendance rate has seen a one percentage point increase. Of a total of 11.6 million children aged 7 – 17 years, just over 400,000 are reported as not attending school in 2008.

At a provincial level, the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have all seen significant increases in attendance rates. In the Northern Cape, attendance increased by four percentage points from 91% in 2002 to 95% in 2008, while attendance in KwaZulu-Natal increased by over three percentage points and attendance in the Eastern Cape by nearly two percentage points. In July 2008, four provinces had attendance rates that were slightly lower than the national average: North West and the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape provinces each had rates of just below 96%.

There has been a small but real increase in reported attendance rates for African and Coloured children over the seven-year period from 2002, and by 2008 there were no significant differences between attendance rates for African and White children. Attendance rates for Coloured children remained slightly below the national average, while those for Asian children were slightly higher.

Overall attendance rates tend to mask the problem of drop-out among older children. Analysis of attendance among discrete age groups shows a significant drop in attendance amongst children older than 14. Whereas 99% of 13-year-olds were reported to be attending an educational institution in 2008, the attendance rate dropped to 97% for 14- and 15-year-olds. As schooling is compulsory until the age of 15 or the end of grade 9, the attendance rate decreases more steeply from age 16 onwards, with 92% of 16-year-olds, 87% of 17-year-olds, and 73% of 18-year-olds reported to be attending school. ¹ There is no significant difference in drop-out rates between boys and girls. Cost of education is the main reason for non-attendance in the high school age group, followed by a perception that “education is useless”. ² Other reasons for drop-out are illness and exam failure. Pregnancy accounts for between 11% and 20% of drop-out amongst teenage girls not attending school. ³

It is encouraging to note that 42% of children (just over 1.3 million) in the pre-school age group (3 – 5-year-olds) were attending some kind of educational institution in 2008.



Source: General Household Survey 2008; calculations K Hall

Attendance rates alone do not capture the regularity of children's school attendance, or their progress through school. Research has shown that children from more 'disadvantaged' backgrounds – with limited economic resources, lower levels of parental education, or who have lost one or both parents – are indeed less likely to enrol in school and are more prone to dropping out or progressing more slowly than their more advantaged peers.⁴ Similarly, school attendance rates tell us nothing about the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in school. Systemic evaluations by the Department of Education have recorded very low pass rates in numeracy and literacy amongst both grade 3 and grade 6 learners.⁵

The results indicate relatively low levels of youth enrolment in tertiary educational institutions, and point to ongoing racial inequality in education outcomes. Until we understand, and find solutions for, the various factors that push or pull 'disadvantaged' youth out of school, it is impossible to state that everyone's right to further and even basic education in the country has been realised.

Technical notes

The General Household Survey asks: "Is (name) currently attending school or any other educational institution?" A simple "yes" or "no" reply is required.

'Attendance' thus reflects the proportion of children that were reported as "attending school" by one of the adults in their household interviewed for the GHS, which is conducted in July each year. This is different from "enrolment rates" that reflect the number of children enrolled in a basic or secondary educational institution, as reported by the schools to the national government early in the school year. The latest enrolment rates can be found in the Department of Education's Education Statistics in South Africa 2007.

The number of children aged 7 – 17 years (school-going age) who were attending an educational institution was extracted from the GHS data. This figure was divided by the number of children of school-going age to develop the proportion of children of school-going age attending an educational facility. The numbers of children in each province aged 7 – 17 years were also determined, and the same procedure was applied to develop the provincial attendance rates.

Younger children's attendance at an educational facility (eg pre-school or early childhood development centre) was also analysed, specifically children younger than six years of age.

Strengths and limitations of the data

The data are derived from the General Household Survey⁶, a multi-purpose annual survey conducted by the national statistical agency, Statistics South Africa, to collect information on a range of topics from households in the country's nine provinces. The survey uses a sample of 30,000 households. These are drawn from Census enumeration areas using multi-stage stratified sampling and probability proportional to size principles. The resulting estimates should be representative of all households in South Africa.

The GHS sample consists of households and does not cover other collective institutionalised living-quarters such as boarding schools, orphanages, students' hostels, old age homes, hospitals, prisons, military barracks and workers' hostels. These exclusions should not have a noticeable impact on the findings in respect of children.

Changes in sample frame and stratification

The current master sample was used for the first time in 2004, meaning that, for longitudinal analysis, 2002 and 2003 may not be easily comparable with later years as they are based on a different sampling frame. From 2006, the sample was stratified first by province and then by district council. Prior to 2006, the sample was stratified by province and then by urban and rural area. The change in stratification could affect the interpretation of results generated by these surveys when they are compared over time.

Provincial boundary changes

Provincial boundary changes occurred between 2002 and 2007, and slightly affect the provincial populations. Comparisons on provincial level should therefore be treated with some caution. The sample and reporting

are based on the old provincial boundaries as defined in 2001 and do not represent the new boundaries as defined in December 2005.

Weights

Person and household weights are provided by Statistics South Africa and are applied in Children Count – Abantwana Babalulekile analyses to give estimates at the provincial and national levels. Survey data are prone to sampling and reporting error. Some of the errors are difficult to estimate, while others can be identified. One way of checking for errors is by comparing the survey results with trusted estimates from elsewhere. Such a comparison can give an estimate of the robustness of the survey estimates. For this project, GHS data were compared with estimates from the Statistics South Africa's mid-year estimates, as well as the Actuarial Society of South Africa's ASSA2003 AIDS and Demographic model.

Analyses of the seven surveys from 2002 to 2008 suggest that over- and under-estimation may have occurred in the weighting process:

- When comparing the weighted 2002 data with the ASSA2003 AIDS and Demographic model estimates, it seems that the number of children aged 0 – 9 years was under-estimated in the GHS, while the number of children aged 10 – 19 was over-estimated. The pattern is consistent for both sexes. The number of very young males aged 0 – 4 years appears to be under-estimated by 15%. Girls in this age group have been under-estimated by 15.8%. Males in the 10 – 14-year age group appear to be over-estimated by 5.7%.
- Similarly in 2003, there was considerable under-estimation of the youngest age group (0 – 9 years) and over-estimation of the older age group (10 – 19 years). The pattern is consistent for both sexes. The results also show that the over-estimation of males (9%) in the 10 – 19-year age group is more than double the over-estimation for females in this age range (3.8%).
- In the 2004 results, it seems that the number of children aged 7 – 12 years was over-estimated by 6%, as well as the number of persons aged 13 – 22 years. The number of very young children appeared to have been under-estimated. The patterns of over- and under-estimation appear to differ across population groups. For example, the number of White children appears to be over-estimated by 14%, while the number of Coloured persons within the 13 – 22-year age group appears to be 9% too low.
- In 2005, the GHS weights seem to have produced an over-estimate of the number of males within each five-year age group. The extent of the overestimation is particularly severe for the 10 – 14-year age group. In contrast, the weights produce an under-estimate of the number of girls – the error seems greatest in respect of the younger age groups. These patterns result in male-to-female ratios of 1.06, 1.13, 1.10 and 1.09 respectively for the four age groups covering children (ie 0 – 4, 5 – 9, 10 – 14 and 15 – 19 years).
- The 2006 weighting process yielded the same results as in 2005. The one exception is that the under-estimation of females is greatest in the 5 – 9 and 15 – 19-year age groups. This results in male-to-female ratios of 1.03, 1.10, 1.11 and 1.12 respectively for the four age groups covering children.
- The 2007 weighting process produced an over-estimation for boys and an under-estimation for girls. The under-estimation of females is in the range of 3 – 5% while the over-estimation is in the range of 1 – 7%. This results in male-to-female ratios of 1.07, 1.06, 1.08 and 1.08 respectively for the four age groups covering children.
- Overall, assuming the ASSA2003 Aids and Demographic model to be the 'gold standard', it appears that the GHS2008 over-estimates both male and female populations under the age of 19 years, except for 0 – 4- year-old females. The extent of over-estimation for boys is in the range 0 – 7%. It is particularly severe for boys aged 10 – 14 years. Over-estimation is in the range of 2 – 5% for girls aged five years and above. For girls aged 0 – 4 years, the ASSA2003 model suggests that these may have been under-estimated by about 1%. The GHS2008 suggests a sex ratio of 1.03 for children aged 0 – 4 years, which is higher than that of the ASSA model and Statistics South Africa's mid-year estimates.

The apparent discrepancies in the seven years of data may slightly affect the accuracy of the Children Count – Abantwana Babalulekile estimates. Since 2005 the male and female patterns vary in respect of a particular characteristic, which means that the total estimate for this characteristic will be somewhat slanted toward the

male pattern. A similar slanting will occur where the pattern for 10 – 14-year-olds, for example, differs from that of other age groups. Furthermore, there are likely to be different patterns across population groups.

Disaggregation

Statistics South Africa suggests caution when attempting to interpret data generated at low level disaggregation. The population estimates are benchmarked at the national level in terms of age, sex and population group while at provincial level, benchmarking is by population group only. This could mean that estimates derived from any further disaggregation of the provincial data below the population group may not be robust enough.

Reporting error

Error may be present due to the methodology used, ie the questionnaire is administered to only one respondent in the household who is expected to provide information about all other members of the household. Not all respondents will have accurate information about all children in the household. In instances where the respondent did not or could not provide an answer, this was recorded as “unspecified” (no response) or “don’t know” (the respondent stated that they didn’t know the answer).

Related links

- > [National Department of Education](#)
- > [Education Management and Information Systems \(EMIS\)](#)

References

¹ A similar trend of lower numbers among higher grades is found in the enrolment data presented by the Department of Education (2008: 13).

² Statistics South Africa (2009) General Household Survey 2008. Pretoria: StatsSA.

³ Ibid

⁴ Crouch L (2005) Disappearing schoolchildren or data misunderstanding? Dropout phenomena in South Africa. North Carolina, USA: RTI International; Lam D & Seekings J (2005) Transitions to Adulthood in Urban South Africa: Evidence from a Panel Survey. Prepared for the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) General Conference, 18 – 23 July 2005, Tours France.

⁵ Department of Education (2008) 2007 Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation. Pretoria: DOE. (leaflet); Department of Education (2005) Grade 6 Intermediate Phase Systemic Evaluation Report. Pretoria: DOE.

⁶ Statistics South Africa (2003-2009). General Household Survey 2002-2008 Metadata. Cape Town, Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.



This fact sheet has been updated with the financial support of the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD), a partnership programme of the Presidency, Republic of South Africa and the Delegation of the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the Presidency or the European Union.



Copyright

The Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, holds copyright of the papers and publications on this site. Permission is granted to reproduce and distribute copies of these works for non-profit or library purposes, provided that the author, source, and copyright notice are included on each reproduced copy. Users who cite the material must acknowledge the author and copyright holder, and fully reference the work. It is also the policy of the Children's Institute to respect the intellectual property rights of others, and the authors have attempted to ensure that no unauthorised use of copyrighted resources occurs.

Disclaimer

Every attempt is made to ensure that the material on these pages is accurate and as up-to-date as possible. Neither the University of Cape Town, its Faculty of Health Sciences, staff, agents nor any other person shall be liable to whomsoever may have sustained any loss of any kind as a result of having relied to his/her detriment upon any information contained in or downloaded from any of the pages at the World Wide Web – Children Count site of the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town.