

Demography - Children living with biological parents

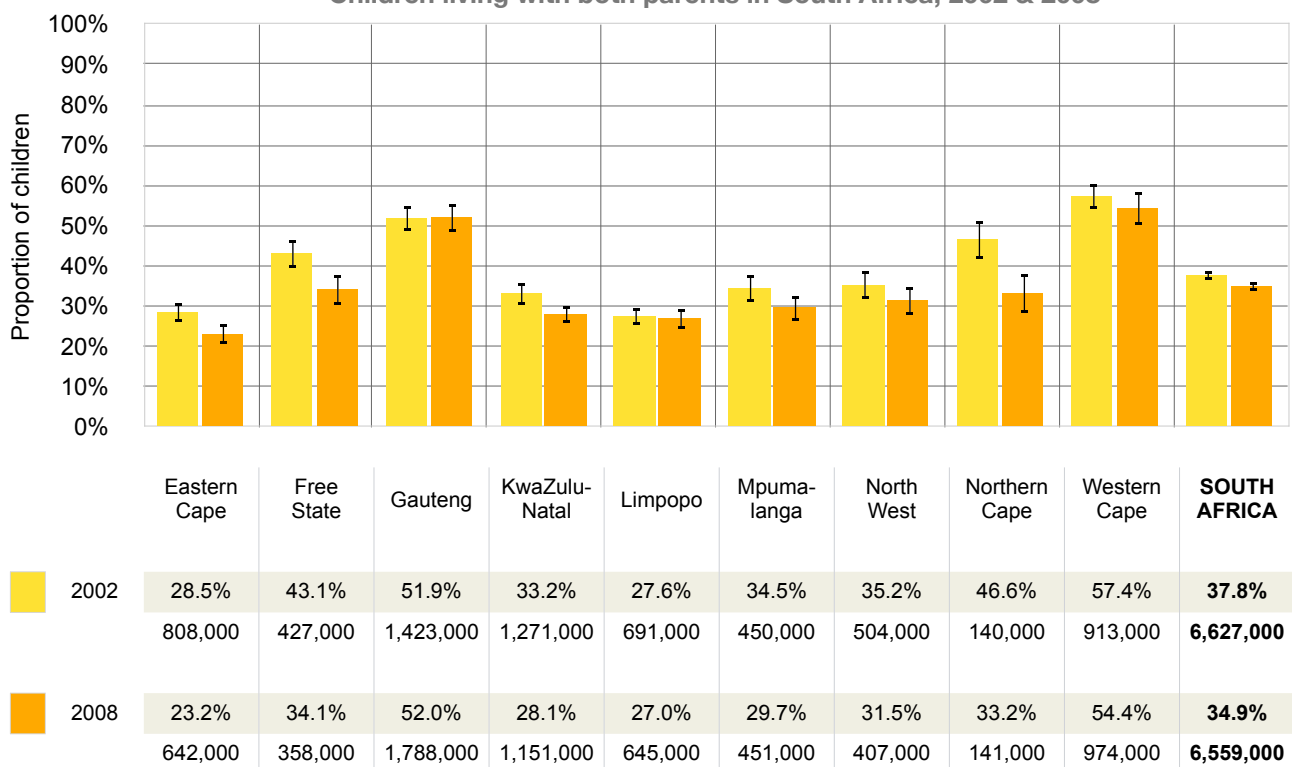
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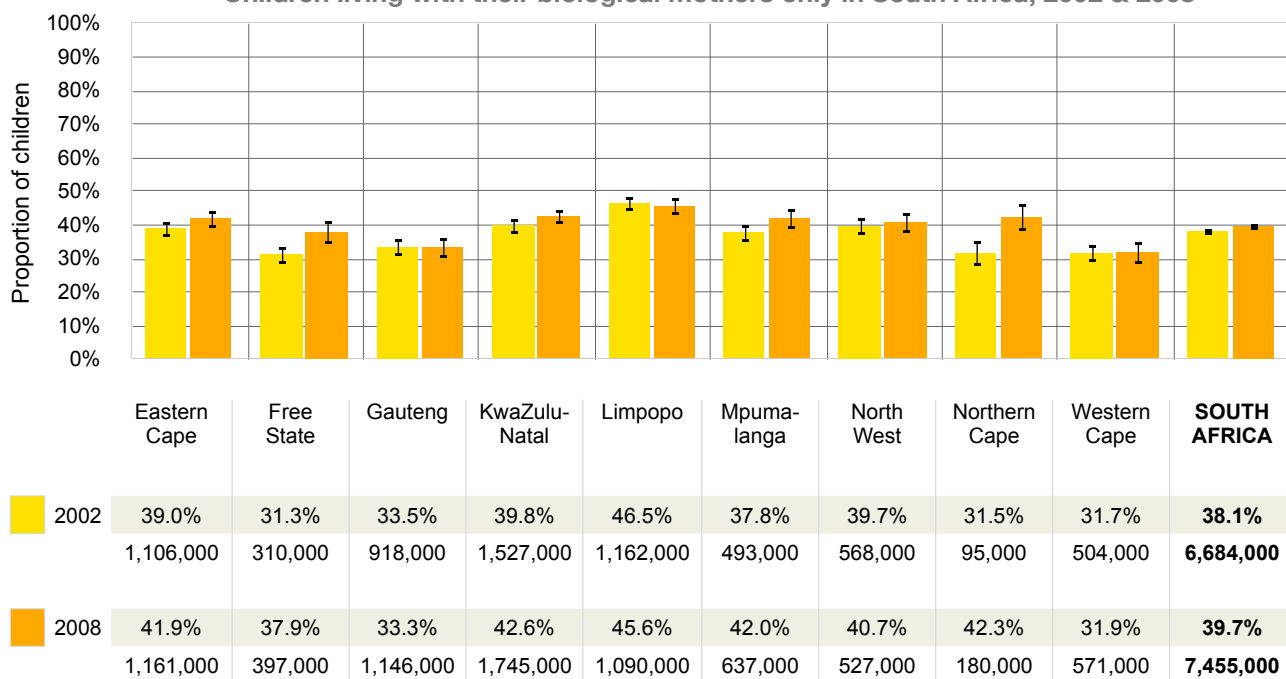
Definition

This indicator shows the number and proportion of children in South Africa who are living in the same household/dwelling with both their biological parents, with their mother only; with their father only; or who are not living with either of their biological parents.

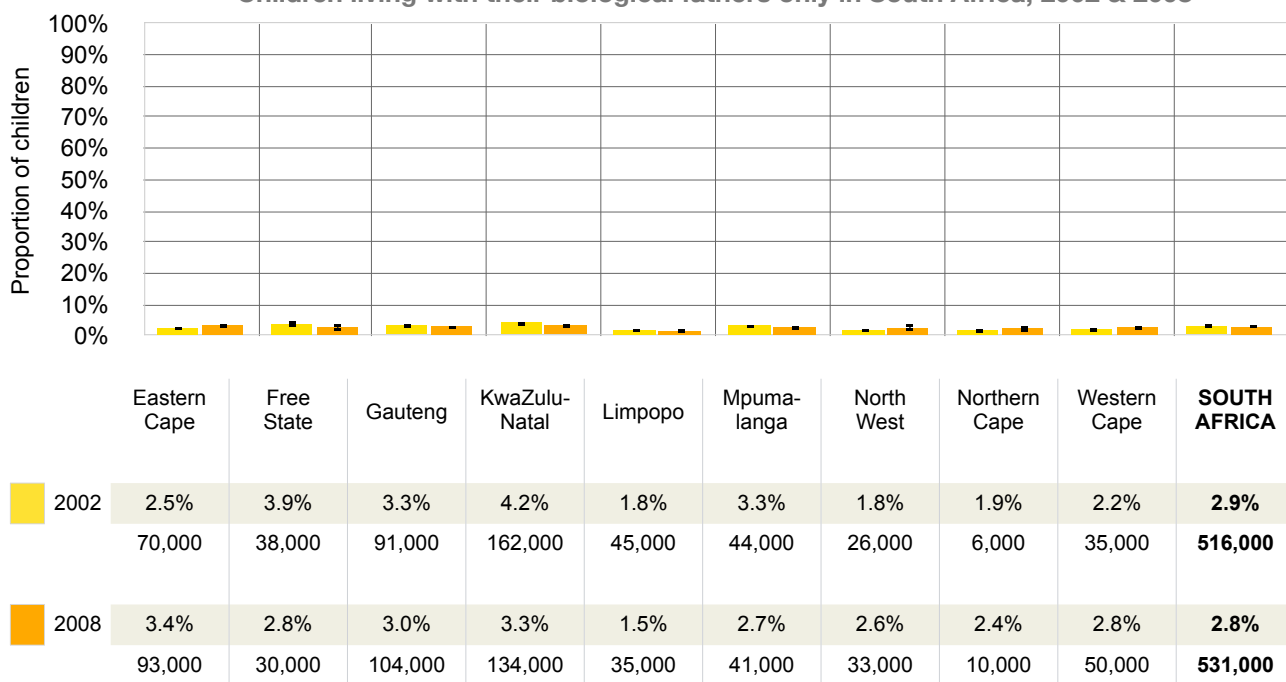
Children living with both parents in South Africa, 2002 & 2008



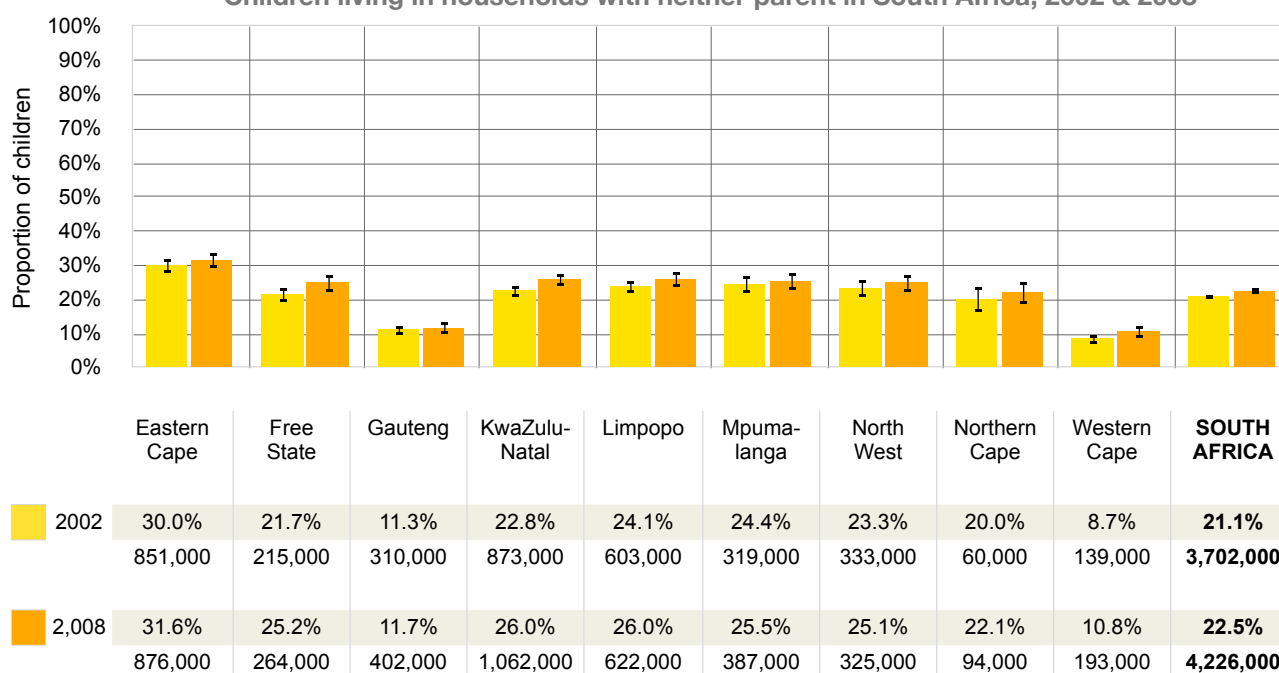
Children living with their biological mothers only in South Africa, 2002 & 2008



Children living with their biological fathers only in South Africa, 2002 & 2008



Children living in households with neither parent 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 2. Children are defined as persons aged 0 - 17 years.

3. Population numbers have been rounded off to the nearest thousand.

4. 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-point proportions differ. CIs are represented in the bar graphs by the vertical lines at the top of each bar.

What do the numbers tell us?

South Africa has a long history of children not living consistently in the same dwelling as their biological parents as a result of poverty, labour migration, educational opportunities, or cultural practice, among other things. It is common for relatives to play a substantial role in child-rearing. Children often experience a sequence of different caregivers, and many children are brought up without paternal figures, or live in different households to their biological siblings.

The General Household Survey indicates that, in July 2008, 35% of children (0 - 17 years) in South Africa were resident with both their biological parents. A further 23% of children were resident with neither biological parent. The vast majority of these children were not double orphans: 81% of children living with neither parent still had one or both parents alive. Of the remaining children, almost all were living with their mothers in the absence of their fathers: 40% of all children - a total of nearly 7.5 million children - were living in households with their mothers but in which their fathers were not resident. Very few children live in households in which their fathers are present and their mothers are not: the national average of 3% applies roughly across all provinces. Between 2002 and 2008, there was a decrease of three percentage points (38% to 35%) in the proportion of children living with both parents.

There is some provincial variation in these patterns. In both the Western Cape and Gauteng, the proportion of children living with both parents was significantly higher than the national average, with more than half of children resident with both parents (54% and 52% respectively). Similarly, the number of children living with neither parent was low in these two provinces (11% and 12%). In contrast, nearly a third of children (32%) in the Eastern Cape lived with neither parent. These patterns are consistent from 2002 to 2008.

Less than one third of African children were living with both their parents in July 2008; yet the vast majority of Indian and White children (86% and 81% respectively) were resident with both biological parents. One quarter (25%) of all African children do not live with either parent and a further 43% of African children live with their mothers but without their fathers. These figures are striking for the way in which they suggest the limited presence of fathers in the domestic lives of large numbers of African children.

Younger children (0 - 5-year-olds) are more likely to be living with their mothers (whether their fathers are present or not) than older children (6 - 18-years), who are more likely than younger children to be living with neither parent. While 15% of children aged 0 - 5 years were not resident with either parent in 2008, this situation applied to more than a quarter of children aged 6 - 17 years.

Technical notes

Statistics South Africa, the agency responsible for the General Household Surveys, defines a household as consisting of people who have stayed in a common dwelling for an average of at least four nights a week in the month preceding the survey.

The General Household Survey asks whether children's biological mothers and fathers are part of the same household. This indicator is therefore calculated by identifying children who have their mothers living with them but not their fathers, their fathers but not their mothers, neither parent resident, or both parents resident with them, and dividing the resulting figures by the total child population.

For purposes of measuring and monitoring persistent racial inequality, population groups are defined as 'African', 'Coloured', 'Indian', and 'White'.

Strengths and limitations of the data

The data are derived from the General Household Survey¹, 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).

References

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