

## Education - Schools with adequate sanitation

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### Definition

This indicator reflects the number and proportion of schools with adequate sanitation facilities. “Type of toilet” is used as proxy for “adequate sanitation”. For the purposes of this indicator, basic sanitation facilities include flush toilets, ventilated improved pit latrines (VIPs) and Enviroloops. Inadequate sanitation facilities include ordinary pit latrines, buckets or no toilets.

**Sanitation provision in ordinary public schools in South Africa, 1996, 2000 & 2006**

Province (2006)	Ordinary Public schools	TYPE OF SANITATION							
		Flush toilets		VIP / Enviroloo		Pit latrines		Bucket / none	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Eastern Cape	5,724	1,126	20	1,086	19	2,884	50	628	11
Free State	1,717	854	50	159	9	589	34	115	7
Gauteng	1,972	1,861	94	14	1	54	3	43	2
KwaZulu-Natal	5,822	1,583	27	1,753	30	2,251	39	235	4
Limpopo	4,037	805	20	1,564	39	1,577	39	91	2
Mpumalanga	1,981	961	49	397	20	511	26	112	6
North West	620	430	69	101	16	67	11	22	4
Northern Cape	1,796	936	52	185	10	571	32	104	6
Western Cape	1,476	1,436	97	7	0	5	0	28	2
<b>SA 2006</b>	<b>25,145</b>	<b>9,992</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5,266</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8,509</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1,378</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SA 2007</b>	<b>27,148</b>	<b>10,361</b>	<b>38</b>			<b>15,398 (57%)</b>		<b>2,691</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SA 1996</b>	<b>26,734</b>	<b>8,867</b>	<b>33</b>			<b>16,120 (60%)</b>		<b>3,674</b>	<b>14</b>

**Source** \* Department of Education (2007) National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: Department of Education.

\*\* Department of Education (2007) School Register of Needs. In: National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: Department of Education.

**Notes** Data for different years are not directly comparable, for a number of reasons:

1. There are known errors and omissions in the School Register of Needs data. In this (and other) categories, the numbers do not add up to the total number of schools. It is not clear why there are more schools counted in 2000 and 1996 than in 2006.
2. The 2006 data (NEIMS) reflect public schools only, while the 2000 & 1996 data (School Register of Needs) included both public and independent schools.
3. The NEIMS report notes: "These statistics should not be interpreted to mean that infrastructures are either at the appropriate level of service or in an acceptable condition."
4. In the 2006 NEIMS report, the category "Pit latrines/Enviroloo" was divided into two categories, namely "[ordinary] pit latrines" and "VIP & Enviroloo toilets". These figures cannot be compared with those from the Schools Register of Needs, where all three types were collapsed into a single category.
5. VIP stands for "Ventilated Improved Pit latrine".

## What do the numbers tell us?

Access to adequate sanitation facilities is essential for children, as their rights to health and survival depend on it. The danger of the spread of disease increases greatly when large numbers of children are brought together on a daily basis at school. It is therefore critical that learners are taught about the importance of sanitation and personal hygiene practices and that the necessary sanitation facilities are made available at school.

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) considers flush toilets, ventilated pit latrines (VIP) and Enviroloos (urine-diversion or composting toilets) as acceptable sanitation facilities. <sup>1</sup> While most people prefer flush toilets, VIPs and Enviroloos offer a safe and healthy alternative in areas where there is not enough water or suitable infrastructure to support waterborne sanitation. Ordinary pit latrines and bucket toilets are considered inadequate as they fail to stop flies and other pests spreading germs.

In 2006, 61% of schools (15,258 institutions) had acceptable sanitation on site. Forty percent (9,992 schools) had flush toilets and 21% (5,266) had VIPs or Enviroloos. Nearly four out of every 10 schools had unacceptable sanitation – mostly in the form of ordinary pit latrines, although nearly 1,400 schools used the bucket system or had no toilets on site at all.

Service provision shows a clear rural-urban bias. Predominantly urban provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape have the highest proportion of schools using flush toilets at 94% and 97% respectively. Schools using dry sanitation options such as VIPs and Enviroloos are concentrated in predominantly rural provinces such as Limpopo (39%), KwaZulu-Natal (30%), Mpumalanga (20%) and Eastern Cape (19%).

Service delivery is poorest in rural provinces. High proportions of schools using ordinary pit latrines are found in the Eastern Cape (50%), KwaZulu-Natal (39%), Limpopo (39%), Free State (34%) and Northern Cape (32%). Eastern Cape has the highest proportion of schools that have no toilets at all or are using the bucket system (11%).

Although the overall figures seem positive, it is unclear how many children are attending schools with adequate sanitation, and whether the facilities meet the needs of the children. The Department of Education does report on learner-to-toilet ratios, but is currently using a minimum standard of 50:1. This falls well below the minimum standard, recommended by the DWAF, of 25 learners to one toilet and/or urinal. These figures also do not indicate whether facilities are clean, hygienic and in working order. It is important that sufficient funds are allocated to ensure that sanitation facilities are used and maintained correctly, and that emergency and structural repairs are carried out.

Access to flush toilets appears to have improved slightly from 1996 to 2006. In 1996, only 33% of schools had access to flush toilets according to the School Register of Needs. The next survey, in 2000, found that 38% of schools had flush toilets. The National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS)

reports that 40% of schools had flush toilets in 2006. These results suggest an improvement of less than 10 percentage points over a 10-year period, with the majority of schools still without flush toilet facilities. Conversely, the number of schools without access to sanitation appears to have decreased over the 10-year period. It is not possible to compare trends for acceptable and unacceptable sanitation, as data for VIPs, Enviroloos and pit latrines are not disaggregated for 1996 and 2000.

On the whole, it appears that children's access to basic sanitation facilities at schools has improved since 1996, but this is not enough considering that nearly 40% of schools still had inadequate sanitation in 2006. Sanitation is not simply about access to safe and appropriate toilets; it also includes personal hygiene practices. Access to water is therefore an essential component of effective sanitation and this has also shown improvement since 1996.

## Technical notes

Data for different years are not directly comparable:

- There are known errors and omissions in the School Register of Needs data. In this (and other) categories, the numbers do not add up to the total number of schools. It is not clear why there are more schools counted in 2000 & 1996 than in 2006.
- The 2006 data (NEIMS) reflect public (government) schools only, while the 2000 & 1996 data (School Register of Needs) include both public and independent schools.
- In the 2006 NEIMS report, the category "Pit latrines/Enviroloo" was divided into two categories, namely "[ordinary] pit latrines" and "VIP & Enviroloo toilets". These figures cannot be compared with those from the Schools Register of Needs, where all three types were collapsed into a single category.

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## Strengths and limitations of the data

The 2000 School Register of Needs survey collected information from 27,148 public and independent schools – covering more schools than the previous (1996) survey. School principals completed the survey forms themselves, and this may have influenced the objectivity of reporting. Provincial departments were required to verify the data provided by schools in their province. The survey was conducted in eight of the nine provinces, while Mpumalanga conducted its own survey. This may have influenced the national results, although there were attempts to control for variation.

The National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS, 2006) collected information from 30,117 education sites comprising public schools, public early childhood education centres, public ELSEN centres (Exceptional Learners with Special Education Needs), public Adult Basic Education Training centres and educational offices operated by the Department of Education. Of these education sites, 25,145 were public schools. Independent schools were excluded from the assessments, or specified separately.

Information on the data collection processes is not readily available, therefore the quality of the data cannot be easily ascertained.

The Department of Education (2007) provides the following caveats:

- The master list of education sites is regularly improved and may change as new schools are established.
- There have been differences in the definition of various parameters from previous School Register of Needs assessments. These include level of water supply and type of sanitation.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (2008) Minimum Requirements for Ensuring Basic Water Supply and Sanitation in Schools and Clinics. DWAF: Pretoria.

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