

## Education - Schools with adequate water

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### Definition

This indicator shows the number and proportion of schools with access to water on or near site, as a proxy for adequate water. Data for 2006 include schools served by the municipality and schools depending on boreholes on site, or rainwater harvesting systems.

Water provision in ordinary public schools in South Africa, 1996, 2000 & 2006					
Province (2006)	Ordinary schools (N)	Schools with water on or near site		Schools served by municipality	
		(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
Eastern Cape	5,724	4,589	80	2,274	40
FreeState	1,717	1,397	81	885	52
Gauteng	1,972	1,940	98	1,854	94
KwaZulu-Natal	5,822	5,174	89	2,943	51
Limpopo	4,037	3,640	90	2,449	61
Mpumalanga	1,981	1,757	89	1,280	65
North West	1,796	1,708	95	1,201	67
Northern Cape	620	607	98	433	70
Western Cape	1,476	1,442	98	1,344	91
<b>SA 2006*</b>	<b>25,145</b>	<b>22,254</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>14,663</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>SA 2007*</b>	<b>27,148</b>	<b>19,331</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>not available</b>	
<b>SA 1996</b>	<b>26,734</b>	<b>17,366</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>not available</b>	

- Source**
- \* Department of Education (2007) National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: Department of Education.
  - \*\* Department of Education (2007) School Register of Needs, reported in National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Notes**
1. There are known errors with 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.
  2. The 2006 data (NEIMS) reflects public (government) schools only, while the 2000 & 1996 data (School Register of Needs) included both public and independent schools.
  3. The School Register of Needs 1996 and 2000 reported 'water on site', while 2006 NEIMS reported 'water on or near site'. It is not possible to determine the extent to which an apparent increase in schools with access to water is the result of different (broader) question formulation, as opposed to expansion of water service provisioning to schools.
  4. In the 2006 NEIMS report only, the category 'Water on or near site' was divided into two sub-categories, namely 'Schools depending on boreholes on site or rainwater harvesting systems' and 'Schools served by the municipality'. In this indicator the two categories have been collapsed to indicate 'Schools with water on site or near site', for comparison with previous years.
  5. 'Water near site' refers to situations where the provision of water is based outside of the school premises such as on nearby boreholes, communal taps, mobile tankers etc. 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.'

## What do the numbers tell us?

Children need reliable access to safe drinking water to prevent illness and promote health and hygiene. As most children attend school for seven hours a day, five days a week, it is crucial that they have access to an adequate supply of potable water while at school.

Access to sufficient water is recognised as a right in the South African Bill of Rights and in international human rights treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. If children do not have access to safe drinking water at school, their right to water is not being realised. This also impacts on their right to health, as illnesses spread rapidly in crowded conditions. It is therefore vital that children can wash their hands after using the toilet and before touching food. Poor water supply can also impact on children's right to basic nutrition because water is needed to prepare the food and the nutritious drinks provided by the National School Nutrition Programme, which is made available to primary school children in poor areas of South Africa.

South Africa seems to have made good progress in decreasing the number of schools without on-site water. In 1996, 17,366 South African schools (66%) had potable water (clean water on site). In the 2000 Register of Needs survey, 19,331 (72% of schools) had potable water on site. In a different survey of schools (National Education Infrastructure Management System – NEIMS), conducted by the Department of Education in 2006, 22,254 (89%) had access to clean water on or near site. The extent to which this apparent increase reflects improved water provision is unclear, because the surveys are not directly comparable (see Technical Notes).

The 2006 data reflect the situation of schools with regards to water on site or water off site but near to the school. Based on 2006 figures, the Western Cape, Northern Cape and Gauteng each had 98% of schools with water on or near site. The Eastern Cape and Free State had the highest proportion of schools without water even near to the site, at 20% and 19% respectively.

These data do not indicate whether the water source is reliable or whether taps and standpipes are in working order so that children can indeed have access to clean water for drinking and hand-washing purposes. In addition, it would be useful to know what sources of water schools use if on-site water is not available. A third (34%) of schools classified as having water on/near site were not receiving municipal water but relied on alternative sources, such as rain-water tanks, which may not provide a reliable source of safe water all year round. The data do not indicate the quantity of water available, but the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry defines the minimum standards for basic water supply at schools as 15 – 20 litres per learner per day (assuming the use of flush toilets) and one water supply terminal per 130 persons (within 200 meters of the main building).<sup>1</sup>

## Technical notes

Data for different years are not directly comparable:

- There are known errors with 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) reflects public (government) schools only, while the 2000 & 1996 data (School Register of Needs) included both public and independent schools.
- The School Register of Needs 1996 and 2000 reported “water on site”, while the 2006 NEIMS reported “water on or near site” It is not possible to determine the extent to which an apparent increase in schools with access to water is the result of different (broader) question formulation, as opposed to expansion of water service provisioning to schools.

In the 2006 NEIMS report only, the category ‘Water on or near site’ was divided into two sub-categories, namely ‘Schools depending on boreholes on site or rainwater harvesting systems’ and ‘Schools served by the municipality’. In this indicator the two categories have been collapsed to indicate ‘Schools with water on site or near site’, for comparison with previous years.

‘Water near site’ refers to situations where the provision of water is based outside of the school premises such as on nearby boreholes, communal taps, mobile tankers etc.

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.”

## Strengths and limitations of the data

The School Register of Needs survey (2000) 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 ECD centres, public ELSEN centres (Exceptional Learners with Special Educational 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.

## Related links

> [Department of Water and Environmental Affairs](#)

## 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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