



**14 January 2013**

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## **Dependency on employed down but still high among Africans**

Every worker in South Africa supports themselves and on average three additional non-working people, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, to be published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg next week.

The Institute used the number of people not working (including those officially unemployed, those who choose not to work, and those too young or old to work) to calculate that in 1994 there were 3.8 people dependent on every employed person, a figure which had fallen to 2.8 by 2012.

Lucy Holborn, research manager at the Institute, noted that there are significant racial discrepancies in levels of dependency. Among the African population there were 3.2 people dependent on every employed person, among coloured people 2.1, among Indians 1.7, and among white South Africans 1.4.

'Dependency among Africans has come down significantly from a high of nearly six people depending on every employed person in 1997 to just over three in 2012. Nevertheless, with high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity among the African population, dependency on the employed is still much higher than for other races,' Ms Holborn said.

'Given that median monthly earnings for Africans are about a third of what they are for whites, and that Africans on average support more non-working dependants, it is perhaps not surprising that we are witnessing often violent protests and strikes to bring about higher wages for lower-paid and lower-skilled workers, many of whom are African. However, the demanded wage increases are unlikely to significantly dent the poverty and poor living conditions experience by such workers when many of them are supporting so many people. Therefore, while higher wages may ease frustrations in the short term, fuller employment is the only long-term solution to poverty and poor living conditions.'

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