

# Press Release

For immediate release



SOUTH AFRICAN  
INSTITUTE OF  
RACE RELATIONS

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

[www.sairr.org.za](http://www.sairr.org.za)

**26 November 2012**

Media Contact: Jonathan Snyman

Tel: 011-482-7221

E-mail: [jsnyman@sairr.org.za](mailto:jsnyman@sairr.org.za)

## **More start school, but fewer complete their education**

Attendance at educational institutions by children aged between 5 and 7 has improved significantly since 1996, according to the 2011 census. However, attendance rates for people 19 years and older have shown a marked decline.

The 2011 census data, published by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) in October, showed that attendance rates in the foundation phase of schooling (Grade R to Grade 3) have improved drastically. The proportion of 5 year olds attending an educational institution has grown from 23% in 1996 to 81% in 2011, an overall increase of 252%. The proportion of 6 year olds attending an educational institution grew from 49% to 93%, or by 96%. Similarly, the proportion of 7 year olds attending an educational institution increased from 73% to 96%, a rise of 32%. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996, it is compulsory for children aged between 7 and 15 to attend school.

Despite the gains in educational attendance among younger children, there has been a noticeable dip in attendance rates among people 19 years and older. The proportion of 19 year olds attending an educational institution declined from 65% in 1996 to 59% in 2011, an overall decrease of 9%. The proportion of those aged 20 and older also showed a marked decline between 1996 and 2011. For instance, the proportion of 21 year olds declined from 46% to 35%, a drop of 24%.

Drop-out rates are particularly high in the final grades of high school, as well as at universities. Only 35% of pupils who started grade 10 in 2009 went on to finish matric in 2011. Similarly, of all the students who enrolled for a three-year degree in 2008, only 14% graduated at the end of 2010.

'The decline in attendance at educational institutions by people aged between 19 and 24 is particularly worrying given South Africa's skills shortage and the country's high rate of youth unemployment', said Jonathan Snyman, a researcher at the Institute. Mr Snyman added that people in this age bracket should be studying at Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and also at universities. 'Given that only a small proportion of matric students pass well enough to get into university, it is important that the Government improves access to and the quality of education offered at FET colleges to accommodate those that cannot study at university.'

ends