

# Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations  
*The power of ideas*

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## Jack and Jill went down the hill...

The IRR's *Fast Facts* report published this week takes a glance at South Africa's 'born frees', defined as people born in or after 1990. As the figures show, born frees have not been guaranteed free passage to prosperity by political freedom. The road to a better life is fraught with major hurdles, mainly poor education and high unemployment.

Born frees account for half — about 27 million — of South Africa's population. Many are of working age, and are part of what the Government's National Development Plan calls the 'demographic dividend' or 'sweet spot' — the stage at which the country can harness younger human resources for economic prosperity. However, the foundations are weak.

A case in point is poor schooling:

- Of the 1 094 189 grade 10s enrolled in 2011, for example, only 562 112 (51%) wrote matric in 2013;
- Only 171 755 (16%) qualified to study at university;
- And just 142 666 (13%) passed mathematics.

Unemployment levels also paint a gloomy picture:

- In the second quarter of 2014, people aged 15 to 24 had the highest official unemployment rate, at 52%.
- Some 3.4 million people in that age group are not in employment, education, or training.

Not surprisingly, a poll by Ipsos, a market research firm, found that most young people regarded unemployment as their main concern.

Levels of education have a significant bearing on job opportunities or even entrepreneurship and the less educated must climb a steeper hill. For instance, only about a third of people who have not completed schooling are employed, while more than three quarters of those with tertiary education are employed.

Says IRR researcher Thuthukani Ndebele: "Without better education and increased labour market participation, young peoples' prospects appear grim. Their plight was perhaps aptly described by 19th century English poet Robert Browning: 'So free we seem, so fettered we are!'"

Watch researcher Gerbrandt van Heerden and Mienke Steytler talk about the IRR's *Born Free But Still In Chains: South Africa's First Post-Apartheid Generation* report [here](#).

Ends.