

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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IRR report – Young people are a powder keg primed to explode

The IRR has released an issue of *Fast Facts* on the socio-economic circumstances of young people.

Unathi Matwasa, the IRR's lead analyst for the report said: "the NEET figure is the single most important indicator of the circumstances of young people. It reveals the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training. For example, 23 year-olds have a NEET rate of 55.4%. For people aged 28, it is 48%. For those aged 18, it is 15.9% (this figure is low because many in that age group are still in school). Without doubt however, these are alarming facts".

The youth unemployment rate, measured on the expanded definition, is 46.7%. Worryingly, the economically active youth population is increasing at half the rate of the overall economically active population – an account of the low levels of economic inclusion of young people. Between 2001 and 2015, total employment increased by 25.3% but that of young people increased by only 13.4%. Roughly 6 in 10 young people who are unemployed have not worked for more than a year.

There are just a million households headed by people aged 15 to 24. Young people are mobile and leave South Africa's more rural provinces for Gauteng and the Western Cape in great numbers. Gauteng, for example, has over two million young residents who were born elsewhere.

Only half of children who enrol in Grade 1 can expect to reach Grade 12. Also, poverty does matter in education - children in poor schools show significantly worse mathematics results than those in more affluent ones.

Matwasa said the numbers suggested a "powder keg primed to explode".

Ends.
