

Press Release

For immediate release



SOUTH AFRICAN
INSTITUTE OF
RACE RELATIONS

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

www.sairr.org.za

31 January 2013

Media Contact: Georgina Alexander Tel: 011-482-7221 E-mail: galexander@sairr.org.za

Disappearing domestic workers

The number of domestic workers in South Africa has declined over the past ten years according to data published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in its annual *South Africa Survey* this month. The number of domestic workers declined from 1 215 000 in 2003 to 1 153 000 in 2012, or by 5%.

A researcher at the Institute, Georgina Alexander, said that the decline was all the more significant as the number of people in South Africa's middle classes had increased substantially over the same period. For example, Living Standard Measures data shows that the number of people in the highest living standard category had increased from 1.5 million to 2.1 million or by 37% over the same period. Average household incomes have also risen in nominal terms by 113% over the last decade.

'The inference is that South Africa's middle classes are less inclined to employ domestic workers than was the case in past decades,' Ms Alexander said.

'The reasons for this are unknown and have to be left to speculation. However, stricter labour law and minimum wage regulations, security concerns, smaller homes and properties, racial and cultural shifts in the social attitudes of the new middle class, increasing administered prices such as electricity, rates, and fuel bills, and increased household debt levels may all have contributed to the phenomenon.'

ends