

# Press Release



SOUTH AFRICAN  
INSTITUTE OF  
RACE RELATIONS

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

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## Fewer than two children per woman in future

The fertility rate will drop below two births per woman by 2040, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, to be published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg next week.

Births per woman will drop by 17% between 2010 and 2040, following a 20% slump over the past decade. The country's fertility rate will fall below the replacement level of 2.1 in 2035. The replacement level is the rate that enables the population to substitute itself.

The African population will fall below the replacement level in the same year, while the coloured population will have reached this point in 2015. The white and Indian populations, which already have fertility rates below 2.1, are expected to experience slight increases in fertility.

'The data, which is sourced from Statistics South Africa's *Mid-year population estimates* and the Institute for Futures Research (IFR), shows a trend resembling the drop in developed countries. This decline is partly due to improved education levels and higher female labour participation. Better education and income levels increase the affordability and accessibility of contraceptives, so preventing or delaying child-birth. The continuing drop in fertility rates also partially flows from urbanisation, and the high costs of raising a child,' the SAIRR said.

A decline in year-on-year population growth from plus 0.6% in 2010 to minus 0.1% in 2040 is also partly a consequence of women having fewer children.

Mr Thuthukani Ndebele, a researcher at the Institute, said that low fertility rates, combined with reduced mortality and increased life expectancy, would result in a growing proportion of older people and decreasing numbers of children and young people.

'The resultant shrinking workforce within an ageing population may have harmful economic consequences in the long term, notably an increasing burden of dependency on the economically active population. The country's social welfare system will also be stretched', Mr Ndebele said.

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