

Press Release



**South African
Institute of
Race Relations**

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

For immediate release

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Independent schooling growing apace in South Africa

The number of pupils attending independent schools in South Africa increased by 50% between 2000 and 2009. At the same time the number of pupils attending public schools increased by only 1.6%, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, to be published by the South African Institute of Race Relations next week in Johannesburg.

In 2000 there were 11.6 million pupils attending public schools in the country. This increased to 11.8 million in 2009. In 2000 the number of pupils attending independent schools was 256 283. This increased to 386 098 in 2009. The data was sourced from the Department of Basic Education.

The number of pupils attending public schools dropped in a number of the country's provinces. The biggest decline was in the North West, where the number of pupils attending public schools dropped by 15%. Other provinces which saw the number of pupils attending public schools falling were the Eastern Cape (a decline of 5%), the Free State (14%), and Limpopo (9%).

The Northern Cape saw the greatest growth in the number of pupils attending public schools between 2000 and 2009, with an increase of 35%. This was off a relatively low base, however. In 2009 pupils attending public schools in the Northern Cape accounted for only 2% of all pupils attending public schools in South Africa.

All provinces with the exceptions of the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal saw increases in the number of pupils attending independent schools between 2000 and 2009. In the Free State the number of pupils at independent schools declined by 27%. In KwaZulu-Natal the decline was negligible, at 0.2%.

All other provinces saw significant increases in the number of pupils at independent schools. For example, in the Eastern Cape the number of pupils attending independent schools increased by 422% between 2000 and 2009.

All other provinces saw the number of pupils attending independent schools growing by more than 10% between 2000 and 2009. The Western Cape was the only exception, with an increase of only 6% in the number of pupils attending independent schools.

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According to Marius Roodt, a member of the Institute's research team, the growth in the numbers of pupils attending independent schools could be an indication that parents were losing faith in the public school system.

'However, the independent school sector in South Africa is still quite small in comparison with the public school system. The growth in the number of pupils attending independent schools has been significant, but has been off a small base,' he said.

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