

# Press Release

For immediate release

29 April 2015



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

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## South Africa's favourable demographic profile is its Achilles heel

Born frees, people born after 1990, will increasingly become more involved in violent protests, and abandon democratic institutions, due to ongoing political and economic alienation. This is according to the South African Institute of Race Relations' (IRR) *Born free but still in chains: South Africa's first post-apartheid generation* report. The report provides an investigation into the extent of this alienation and what can be done to include born frees politically, economically and socially. The report was released in Johannesburg on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2015.

According to the report "unemployment rates are higher among younger people, women and Africans". On the expanded definition of unemployment, the rate among African males aged 15 to 24 years is 67% compared to 75% of African females. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), estimated that South Africa constitutes 0.77% of the global youth population but 1.9% of global youth unemployment.

Born frees are also receiving poor quality education. Literacy and numeracy scores in grade 3 are barely above 50%. This has a major ripple effect later on as only 51% of matric candidates pass their final school-leaving exam. The health system has also produced mixed results when it comes to the born free population. Severe malnutrition amongst under five year olds have dropped significantly, however of the 1 million born frees living with HIV, only 25 % are receiving antiretroviral treatment.

Furthermore, only 74 000 of informal businesses are run by people aged 15 to 24 years. This compares unfavourably with 384 000 of such enterprises run by 25 to 34 year olds. Child support grants, of which children up to the age of 18 are entitled to, could diminish the incentive for born frees to become entrepreneurs. Social alienation and a lack of job opportunities may force many born frees to participate in criminal activities. The report found that "people aged 14 to 25 years account for 29% of the country's prison population".

Economic alienation could further effect political participation. Voter registration amongst 18 to 19 year olds is only 31%. Violent protests have almost doubled in the last three years and it is suspected that the economically disenfranchised youth may play a huge part in it. A survey indicated that people who have some university education but who had not completed it are the most likely to attend protests.

In order to improve the conditions of born frees, the following proposals must be implemented: The state must lessen its control over the education system and allow independent schools to thrive, the country's economy must grow between 5% to 8% in order to reduce unemployment, appointments should be based on merit rather than on race or political affiliation, and corruption and nepotism must be rooted out in especially local government.

Download the *Born free but still in chains: South Africa's first post-apartheid generation* report [here](#).

Ends.