

# FreeFACTS

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## A mixed bag for SA education

**Matric examinations are looming with all the stress that these bring to our young people.**

But one of the successes of post-apartheid South Africa is the number of people passing their matric exams (as well as those doing well enough to go to university), providing them with a start in their adult life.

Between 2009 and 2017 the number of people passing matric in public schools grew by nearly 20%. The jump in the number of people who passed well enough to attend university was even more impressive, rising from 107 000 in 2009 to 172 000 in 2018 (an increase of 43%).

However, there are still serious questions around quality and throughput rates. Although the number of people sitting for Independent Examination Board (IEB) qualifications are much smaller than the number sitting government exams, the proportion who pass well enough to go to university is far higher, raising questions around quality of government school examinations. For example, nearly 90% of those who sit for the IEB school-leaving certificate pass well enough to go to university, compared to a third who sit the government exams.

But many public schools are poorly resourced, especially in comparison with some independent schools, lacking access to libraries, science laboratories, and sports field, all necessary to give a young person a well-rounded school education.

There are also serious questions about the quality of school leavers, and whether they are equipped to be able to succeed in either tertiary education or the world of work. This has serious implications, not only for these individuals, but for the success of South Africa as a prosperous society.

Fixing the South African schooling system, is a challenge, and there are a number of interventions which must be implemented. The power of teaching unions (such as the South African Democratic Teachers' Union) needs to be reined in. Too often the interests of children are forgotten.

In addition, we need to give parents both greater control over their children's schooling and how they choose this schooling. This can be done by strengthening governing bodies, but most importantly introducing education vouchers. This will allow parents to have greater choice over their children's education, through greater competition in the sector.

— **Marius Roodt**

## JOIN US

The IRR is an advocacy group that fights for your right to make decisions about your life, family and business, free from unnecessary government, political, and bureaucratic interference. FreeFACTS publishes evidence that communities are better off when individuals are free to make decisions about how they want to live, be educated, work, access healthcare, think, speak, own property, and protect their communities. If you agree with the issues we stand for, welcome to the team. There are millions of people just like you who are tired of South African politicians, activists, and commentators attempting to rein in your freedom to decide. Take control and make sure your voice is heard by becoming a friend of the IRR.

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## Education

### Global comparisons

Public spending on education as a proportion of GDP and of total government spending, selected countries, 2016		
Country	Proportion of GDP	Proportion of total government spending
Australia	5.2%	13.9%
Brazil	5.9%	15.7%
Chile	4.9%	19.6%
Denmark	7.6%	13.8%
France	5.6%	9.7%
Germany	4.9%	11.1%
Ghana	6.2%	21.0%
Hong Kong	3.3%	18.1%
Indonesia	3.6%	20.6%
Ireland	4.9%	13.0%
Israel	5.7%	14.3%
Italy	4.1%	8.0%
Japan	3.6%	9.2%
Kazakhstan	3.0%	13.9%
Lithuania	4.5%	13.2%
Mexico	5.3%	19.1%
Pakistan	2.5%	12.6%
Poland	4.9%	11.6%
South Africa	5.9%	18.1%
Spain	4.3%	9.5%
Switzerland	5.1%	15.5%
Turkey	4.4%	13.1%
Uganda	2.3%	10.9%
United Kingdom	5.6%	13.8%
United States	5.0%	13.5%

Source: World Bank, [wdi.worldbank.org/tables](http://wdi.worldbank.org/tables), *World Development Indicators 2018*, Table 2.7: *Education Inputs*, accessed 6 November 2018

# Government spending

### Public education spending as a proportion of total government spending and the bachelor's pass rate, 1996/97-2018/19

Year	Proportion <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's pass rate <sup>b</sup>
1996/97	22.0%	13.0%
1997/98	21.4%	13.0%
1998/99	20.6%	12.0%
1999/00	20.3%	14.0%
2000/01	20.3%	15.0%
2001/02	20.5%	17.0%
2002/03	19.6%	19.0%
2003/04	19.5%	18.0%
2004/05	18.4%	17.0%
2005/06	18.1%	16.0%
2006/07	18.0%	15.0%
2008/09	17.9%	20.0%
2009/10	17.7%	20.0%
2010/11	18.2%	24.0%
2011/12	19.4%	24.0%
2012/13	19.6%	27.0%
2013/14	20.2%	31.0%
2014/15	20.3%	28.0%
2015/16	19.7%	25.8%
2016/17	20.2%	26.6%
2017/18	20.1%	28.7%
2018/19	20.4%	—

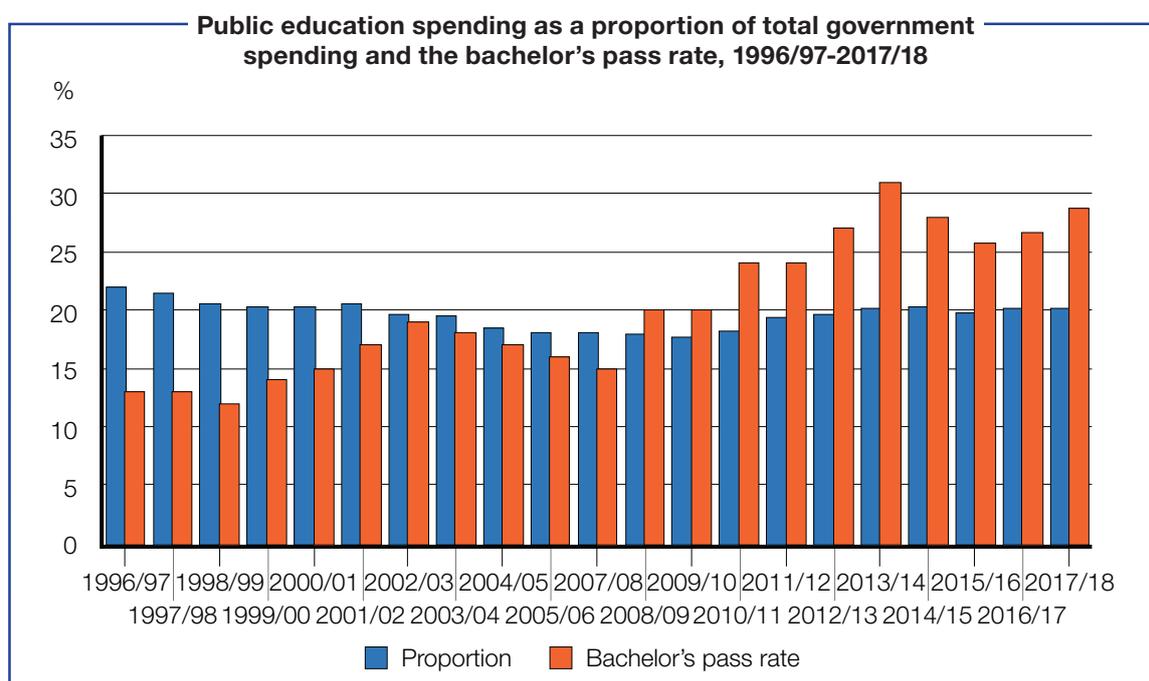
Source: Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Macro Indicator Trends in Schooling: Summary Report 2011*, 2011, p63; National Treasury, *Budget Review 2010*, 17 February 2010, px; *Budget Review 2011*, 23 February 2011, px; *Budget Review 2012*, 22 February 2012, px; *Budget Review 2013*, 27 February 2013, px; *Budget Review 2014*, 26 February 2014, pxii; *Budget Review 2015*, 25 February 2015, pv; *Budget Review 2016*, 24 February 2016, pv; *Budget Review 2018*, 21 February 2018, p57

a IRR calculations.

b Enables a person to study for a bachelor's degree.

As can be seen from the table above, there is no clear link between spending on education and the proportion of people who pass well enough to go to university. The rise in the proportion of people who gain bachelor's passes may be because of an improvement in teaching, but it could as likely be due to a lowering of standards. If it is the latter (which is possible) this has serious implications for South Africa as the country attempts compete for investment with other middle-income and emerging markets.

## Education



## Literacy

**Literacy rates<sup>a</sup> of people aged 15 and above by race and province, 2016**

Race	Literacy status	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo
Black	Proportion literate	74.8%	79.6%	88.8%	78.3%	77.8%
Coloured	Proportion literate	86.3%	82.1%	95.1%	95.0%	88.8%
Indian/Asian	Proportion literate	94.6%	94.5%	95.5%	91.3%	87.0%
White	Proportion literate	98.9%	97.0%	98.3%	98.3%	97.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion literate</b>	<b>77.2%</b>	<b>81.5%</b>	<b>90.6%</b>	<b>80.7%</b>	<b>78.4%</b>

Race	Literacy status	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Western Cape	South Africa
Black	Proportion literate	77.7%	75.9%	74.9%	89.3%	80.9%
Coloured	Proportion literate	88.0%	83.6%	75.4%	85.7%	85.8%
Indian/Asian	Proportion literate	93.7%	92.3%	89.3%	95.4%	92.8%
White	Proportion literate	98.2%	98.3%	98.3%	99.0%	98.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion literate</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>78.0%</b>	<b>77.4%</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>

Source: IHS Global Insight Southern Africa, *Regional Explorer* version 1160

a According to Global Insight, the table above reflects the functional literacy rate of those aged 15 and above — which measures the number of people in a region who have completed their primary education (grade 7), and are thus deemed functionally literate. If someone is functionally literate, they are assumed to have reading and writing skills, enabling them to manage daily life and employment.

## Education

# Matric results

National Senior Certificate examination results (new curriculum), 2008-18					
Year	Candidates	Pass <sup>a</sup>		Higher Certificate admission <sup>b</sup>	
		Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
2008	533 561	334 744	63%	107 274	20%
2009	552 073	334 718	61%	109 697	20%
2010	537 543	364 513	68%	126 371	24%
2011	496 090	348 114	70%	120 767	24%
2012	511 152	377 829	74%	136 047	27%
2013	562 112	439 779	78%	171 755	31%
2014	532 860	403 874	76%	150 752	28%
2015	644 536	455 825	71%	166 263	26%
2016	610 178	442 672	73%	162 374	27%
2017	534 484	401 307	75%	153 610	29%
2018	512 735	400 632	78%	172 043	34%
<b>2008-18</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>	<b>19.7%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>60.4%</b>	<b>67%</b>

Source: DBE, *Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Results, 2009*, January 2010, p39; *National Senior Certificate Examination Report 2018*, 3 January 2019, Table 7.2.2, p48

- a In order to be granted an NSC, a pupil needs to achieve 40% in three subjects, one of which must be their home language, and achieve 30% in three additional subjects. Pass figures include higher certificate, diploma and bachelor's passes.
- b This allows a person to study for a higher certificate. The minimum admission requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching.
- c This allows a person to study for a diploma. The minimum requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching and 40% or more in four other subjects.
- d Or university entrance pass, which allows a person to study for a bachelor's degree. The minimum requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching and 50% or more in four or more 20-credit subjects.

Independent Examinations Board <sup>a</sup> Senior Certificate examination results, 2008-18						
Year	Number of schools	Number of candidates	Pass		Bachelor's pass <sup>b</sup>	
			Number	Proportion <sup>c</sup>	Number	Proportion <sup>d</sup>
2008	159	8 001	7 763	97%	6 169	79%
2009	168	8 056	7 848	97%	6 410	80%
2010	172	8 209	8 076	98%	6 693	82%
2011	173	8 434	8 281	98%	6 763	82%
2012	177	8 957	8 796	98%	7 488	84%
2013	181	9 580	9 443	99%	8 150	85%
2014	191	9 976	9 814	98%	8 524	85%
2015	194	10 212	10 038	98%	8 707	85%
2016	237	11 021	10 871	99%	9 654	88%
2017	212	11 464	11 322	99%	10 146	89%
2018	249	11 514	11 390	99%	10 437	91%
<b>2008-18</b>	<b>56.6%</b>	<b>43.9%</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Source: Independent Examinations Board (IEB), email communication, 23 November 2018; *Politicsweb* (90.65% candidates receive degree passes – IEB), 3 January 2019

- a The IEB is the examining body of independent (or private) schools, although only a small minority of independent schools write IEB exams.
- b Bachelor's passes are officially known as passes with matriculation endorsement, or endorsements, and were formerly known as passes with matriculation exemption, or exemptions. Students who obtained university entrance passes achieved marks high enough to gain entry to university.
- c Proportion of total candidates passing grade 12.
- d The proportion of pupils who gained passes enabling them to study at university for bachelor's degrees.

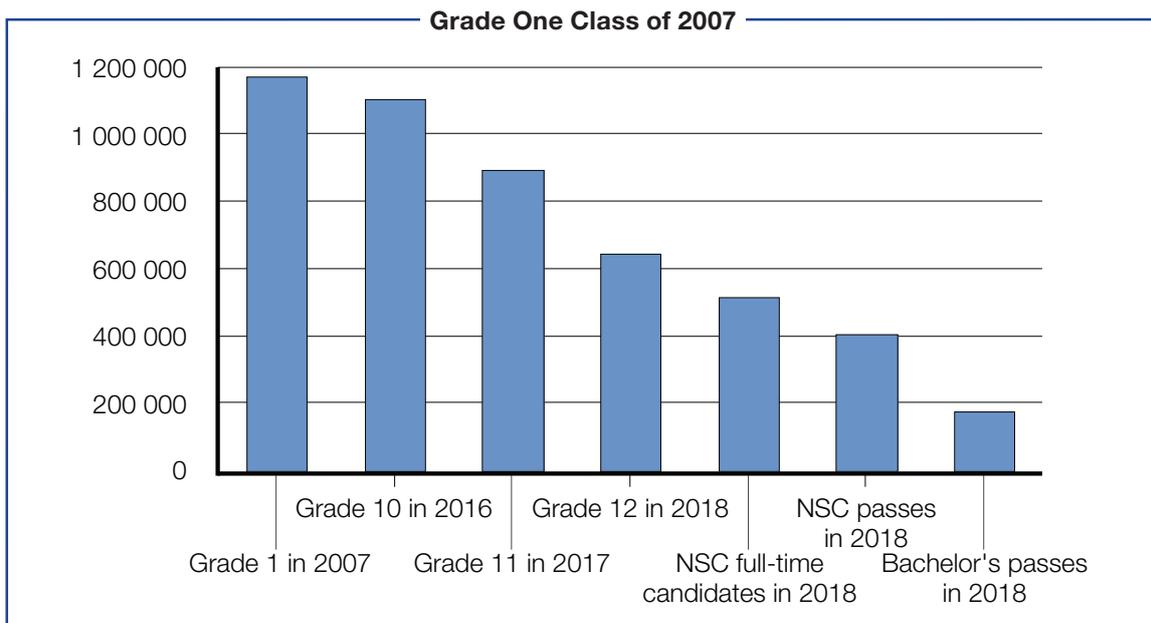
# Education

## Throughput

The grade 1 class of 2007		
Class progress	Number	Proportion
Grade 1 in 2007	1 171 323	100.0%
Grade 10 in 2016	1 104 749	94.3%
Grade 11 in 2017	892 784	76.2%
Grade 12 in 2018	643 802	55.0%
NSC candidates who wrote in 2018	512 735	43.8%
NSC passes in 2018	400 632	34.2%
Bachelor's passes in 2018	172 043	14.7%

Source: DBE, *Education Statistics in South Africa at a Glance in 2007*, January 2009, Table 5, p9; *School Realities 2016*, September 2016, Table 4, p3; *School Realities 2017*, March 2018, Table 4, p3; *School Realities 2018*, March 2019, Table 4, p3; *National Senior Certificate Examination Report 2018*, 3 January 2019, Table 10.2.2, p51

This table indicates the very low throughput of people who enter Grade One. The culling of learners becomes pronounced after Grade Ten, and barely one-in-ten of 2007's Grade One class managed to gain a bachelor's pass in matric, in 2018. The large-scale culling of learners would not inherently be a problem if people who struggled academically were placed into artisanal streams but this unlikely. Far more likely is that people who leave in Grade Ten do not enter another educational establishment. Given South Africa's very high unemployment rate it is also very unlikely that such people manage to find employment.



## Education

<b>The grade 12 class of 2018</b>		
<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion<sup>a</sup></i>
Higher Certificate admission	86 790	16.9%
Diploma admission	141 700	27.6%
Bachelor's admission	172 043	33.6%
NSC <sup>b</sup> /Endorsed Certificate <sup>c</sup>	228	0.0%
<b>Passed</b>	<b>400 761</b>	<b>78.2%</b>
<b>Failed</b>	<b>111 974</b>	<b>21.8%</b>
<b>Total<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>512 735</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: DBE, *National Senior Certificate Examination Report 2018*, 3 January 2018, Table 7.2.2, p48

a IRR calculations.

b Refers to the 68 candidates who passed but did not satisfy the minimum requirements for admission to university to study for a higher certificate, diploma, or bachelor's degree.

c The remaining 125 candidates qualified for the Endorsed Certificate – this is for candidates who cannot, despite concessions granted, meet the stipulated NSC requirements (endorsed NSC candidates only need to offer five subjects, with a minimum pass of 30% in those five subjects).

d Full-time candidates only.

<b>Throughput<sup>a</sup>, 1995-97 and 2016-18</b>			
<i>The grade 10<sup>b</sup> class of 1995 (numbers)</i>		<i>The grade 10<sup>b</sup> class of 2016 (numbers)</i>	
Grade 10 enrolment 1995	719 190	Grade 10 enrolment 2015	1 104 749
Matric candidates 1997	559 233	Matric candidates 2017	512 735
Matric passes 1997	264 795	Matric passes 2017	401 435
Bachelor's passes 1997	70 127	Bachelor's passes 2017	153 610
Maths passes 1997	116 836	Maths passes 2017	135 638
<i>The grade 10<sup>b</sup> class of 1995 (proportions)<sup>c</sup></i>		<i>The grade 10<sup>b</sup> class of 2016 (proportions)<sup>c</sup></i>	
Grade 10 enrolment 1995	100.0%	Grade 10 enrolment 2015	100.0%
Matric candidates 1997	77.8%	Matric candidates 2017	46.4%
Matric passes 1997	36.8%	Matric passes 2017	36.3%
Bachelor's passes 1997	9.8%	Bachelor's passes 2017	13.9%
Maths passes 1997	16.2%	Maths passes 2017	12.3%

Source: *South Africa Survey 2002/2003*, pp247, 255; *South Africa Survey 2001/2002*, p260; DBE, *School Realities 2016*, September 2016, Table 4, p3; *National Senior Certificate Examination Report 2018*, 3 January 2019, Table 7.2.2, pp47-48; Table 7.3.6, p59

a The table compares the throughput of the grade 10 cohorts of 1995 and 2014, showing pupils registered in each cohort who went on to become matric candidates and how many obtained matric, bachelor's, and maths passes. For example, 719 190 grade 10s were enrolled in 1995. Of those, 559 233 became matric candidates in 1997. Some 264 795 passed matric, with 70 127 obtaining bachelor's passes, and 116 836 passing maths. In 2014, there were 1 139 872 grade 10s and 610 178 went on to become matric or NSC candidates in 2016.

b The minimum duration of an NSC or matric is three years, from grade 10 to 12.

c IRR calculations.

## Education

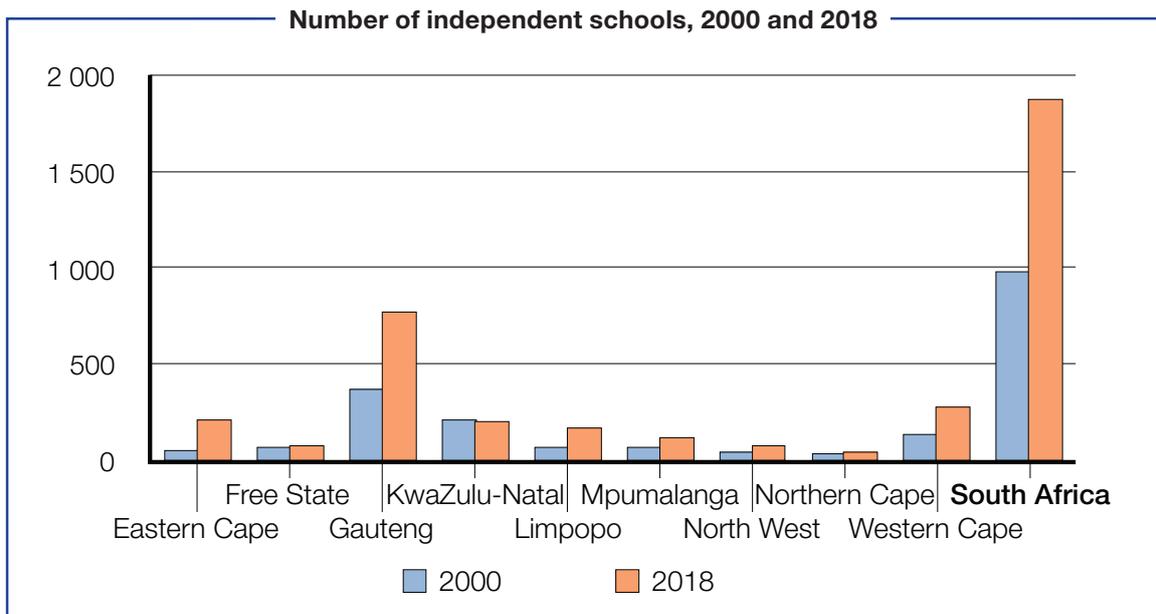
# Independent schools

Independent schools <sup>a</sup> by province, 2000 and 2018			
Province	2000	2018	Change
Eastern Cape	39	199	410.3%
Free State	61	70	14.8%
Gauteng	365	759	107.9%
KwaZulu-Natal	198	189	-4.5%
Limpopo	60	163	171.7%
Mpumalanga	62	112	80.6%
North West	36	69	91.7%
Northern Cape	24	37	54.2%
Western Cape	126	267	111.9%
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>1 865</b>	<b>92.1%</b>

Source: DBE, *Education Statistics in South Africa at a Glance, 2000*, p1; *School Realities 2018*, March 2019, Table 2, p1

a Independent or private schools are owned by individuals or organisations and are established in line with section 29(3) of the Constitution and section 45 of the South African Schools Act of 1996. Section 46 of the Act states that an independent school must not have standards inferior to those of comparable public schools, its admission policy must not discriminate on grounds of race, and it must comply with the grounds for registration of the provincial education department it is registered under.

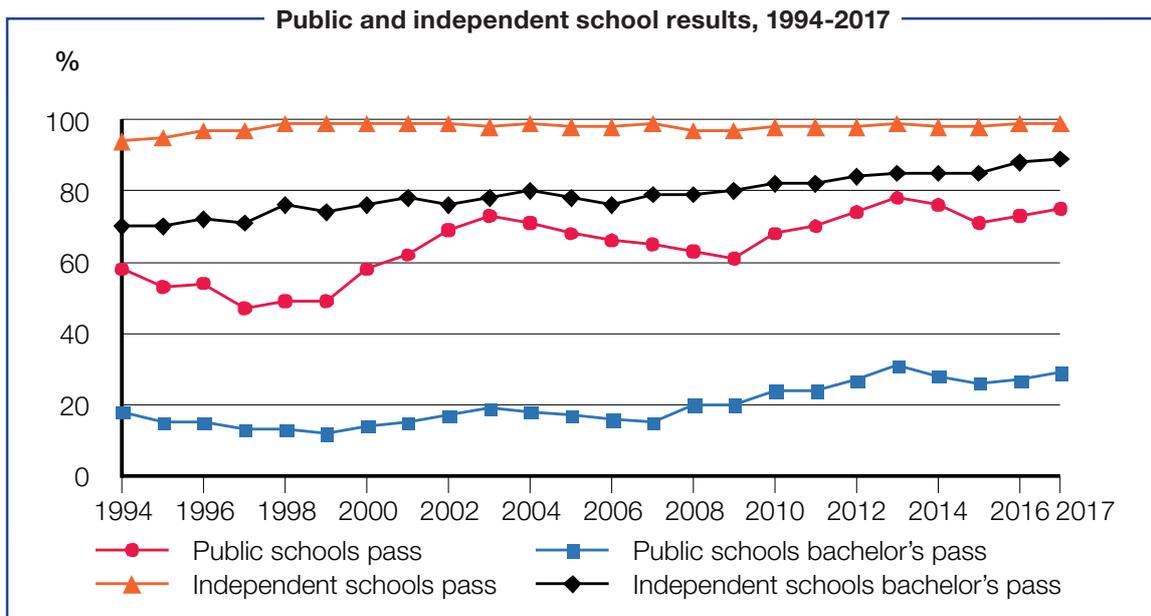
The growth of independent schools is an indication of how parents have lost faith in the public system. Between 2000 and 2018 the number of independent schools almost doubled. It is clear that parents are increasingly looking for alternatives outside of the public system.



# Education

Year	Public schools		Independent schools	
	Pass	Bachelor's pass	Pass	Bachelor's pass
1994	58%	18%	94%	70%
1995	53%	15%	95%	70%
1996	54%	15%	97%	72%
1997	47%	13%	97%	71%
1998	49%	13%	99%	76%
1999	49%	12%	99%	74%
2000	58%	14%	99%	76%
2001	62%	15%	99%	78%
2002	69%	17%	99%	76%
2003	73%	19%	98%	78%
2004	71%	18%	99%	80%
2005	68%	17%	98%	78%
2006	66%	16%	98%	76%
2007	65%	15%	99%	79%
2008	63%	20%	97%	79%
2009	61%	20%	97%	80%
2010	68%	24%	98%	82%
2011	70%	24%	98%	82%
2012	74%	27%	98%	84%
2013	78%	31%	99%	85%
2014	76%	28%	98%	85%
2015	71%	26%	98%	85%
2016	73%	27%	99%	88%
2017	75%	29%	99%	89%

Source: DBE, email communication, 20 June 2013; *National Senior Certificate Examination: 2015 Technical Report*, January 2016, Table 13.1.4, p4; IEB, email communication, 23 November 2018



## Education

### Higher education

Higher education participation rates <sup>a</sup> by race, 2002 and 2016						
Race	20-24 year olds in the country		Students enrolled in higher education		Participation rate	
	2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016
Black	3 594 000	4 479 344	399 915	701 474	11.1%	15.7%
Coloured	358 000	425 581	38 329	61 960	10.7%	14.6%
Indian/Asian	96 000	107 110	47 706	50 450	49.7%	47.1%
White	283 000	303 254	179 380	152 487	63.4%	50.3%
<b>Total<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>4 333 000</b>	<b>5 315 289</b>	<b>667 182</b>	<b>975 837</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>

Source: Stats SA, *General Household Survey 2002*, 15 December 2003, p2; *Census 2011: Census in Brief*, 30 October 2012; *Mid-year population estimates 2016*, Statistical release P0302, 25 August 2016, Table 10, p9; DHET, [www.dhet.gov.za](http://www.dhet.gov.za), Table 2.12 for all institutions to 2nd order CESM (Enrolment, 2002 and 2016), accessed 22 November 2018

a The proportion of people aged between 20 and 24 who are enrolled in public universities.

b Includes unspecified population groups.

One of the successes of post-apartheid South Africa has been the increase in the number of people involved in tertiary education. There may be questions around quality but this is something that we can consider a success of the post-1994 era. For a country at South Africa's stage of development we have a well-developed university sector which must be harnessed for the country to reach its potential.

Undergraduate degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded by all universities <sup>a</sup> by field of study, 1996 and 2016 <sup>b,c</sup>			
Field of study	1996	2016	Change
Agriculture and related sciences	1 215	3 636	199.3%
Architecture and environmental design	1 322	2 564	93.9%
Business, commerce and management	13 913	42 610	206.3%
Communication, journalism and related studies	768	3 208	317.7%
Computer and information sciences	1 697	5 373	216.6%
Education	19 005	27 810	46.3%
Engineering	5 110	12 386	142.4%
Family ecology and consumer sciences	728	739	1.5%
Health professions and clinical sciences	6 772	9 588	41.6%
Language, linguistics and literature	5 722	2 384	-58.3%
Law	5 097	7 105	39.4%
Life and physical sciences	3 577	5 550	55.2%
Mathematics and statistics	1 010	673	-33.4%
Philosophy, religion and theology	1 681	3 780	124.9%
Psychology	4 020	4 061	1.0%
Public management and services	5 896	6 596	11.9%
Social sciences	6 467	8 086	25.0%
Visual and performing arts	1 290	2 667	106.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>85 989</b>	<b>148 773</b>	<b>73.0%</b>

Source: DHET, [www.dhet.gov.za](http://www.dhet.gov.za), Table 2.13 for all institutions to 2nd order CESM (Graduates, 1996 and 2016), accessed 22 March 2018

a Includes universities of technology.

b Undergraduate awards.

c In 2008 the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) revised the South African Classification of Education Subject Matter (CESM), reducing the number of subject matter categories from 22 to 20. These revisions were implemented in the 2010 HEMIS database. As a result, the 1996 and 2006 figures have been adjusted to reflect the new subject categories.