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## **Independent schools on the rise, public schools dropping**

Despite an increase in the number of independent schools the number of all schools in South Africa dropped between 2000 and 2010, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, recently published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg.

The period between 2000 and 2010 saw a decline of 9% in the number of public schools, from 26 789 to 24 451. Only the Northern Cape experienced a notable increase (23%) in the number of public schools over this period.

Independent schools, on the other hand, increased by more than 44% in the whole country. This trend was particularly strong in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, with increases of roughly 295% and 135% respectively. Only in the Northern Cape did the number of independent schools decrease.

The total number of independent schools in South Africa, which stood at 971 in 2000, was 1 399 in 2010.

The Institute's analysis is based on data provided by the Department of Basic Education. Although there has been a strong increase in the number of independent schools, such schools still account for only 5.4% of all South African schools – up from 3.5% in 2000.

In total, there are 1 910 fewer schools of all kinds today than there were in 2000.

Nationwide pupil enrolment has increased by 3% since 2000. There are, however, significant differences between public and independent schools. Enrolment in the former increased by merely 1.4% as compared to an increase of 76% in the latter.

'Obviously, there is a growing trend of parents preferring to send their children to independent schools, but independent schools still represent only a small proportion of South African schools', said Mr Jonathan Snyman of the Institute's research department.

With about 30 pupils per teacher, the nationwide pupil-teacher ratio in public schools is almost double the ratio in independent schools, which have an average of only 16 pupils per teacher.

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