

Press Release



**South African
Institute of
Race Relations**

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

For immediate release

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A lost generation?

A third of 15-24 year-olds are not in education, employment, or training, according to a new report on families and youth released by the South African Institute of Race Relations this week.

The report, which draws on a number of sources of data and is entitled *The First Steps to Healing the South African Family*, describes the damaging effects of family breakdown on young people. It suggests that children growing up in dysfunctional families are more likely to have poorer educational outcomes, go on to be unemployed, practise sexually risky behaviour, commit crime, or use alcohol and drugs.

South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, standing at 51% in 2010. The average youth unemployment rate was 12% in sub-Saharan Africa and 13% in the world in 2009.

In addition, drop-out rates in secondary and tertiary education are very high. Of the one million students who enrolled in Grade 10 in 2007 only 51% sat matric in 2009 and only 31% achieved a pass. Of the 138 000 students who enrolled at universities in 2002, 52% had dropped out and 15% were still studying five years later.

Only 38% of sexually active young people describe themselves as consistent condom users and nearly 50 000 school girls fell pregnant in 2007.

More than a third of the country's prison population is under the age of 25. Young people are also nearly twice as likely as adults to be the victims of crime.

Ms Lucy Holborn, family project manager at the Institute, said, 'The data points to a generation in crisis. If a third of young people have nothing to occupy them all day, it is not surprising that sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, and crime rates are high

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among young people. Our research suggests that the lack of a stable family life contributes to many of the social problems besetting young people, the country's future workers, entrepreneurs, and leaders.'

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