

# Press Release



**South African  
Institute of  
Race Relations**

*South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation*

**For immediate release**

**5 April 2011**

Media Contact: Lucy Holborn  
Tel: 011 482 7221 Ext 2003  
E-mail: [lucy@sairr.org.za](mailto:lucy@sairr.org.za)

## **Two thirds of children grow up without both parents**

Only a third of children are living with both of their biological parents, according to a new report released by the South African Institute of Race Relations this week.

The report, *The First Steps to Healing the South African Family*, shows that 40% of children live with their mother only, 3% live with their father only, and 23% live with neither of their biological parents. Some 8% of children live in 'skip generation households' with their grandparents or great aunts and uncles.

Ms Lucy Holborn, family project manager at the Institute, said, 'There are nearly 4 million orphans in the country, 859 000 of whom are double orphans who have lost both their parents. Many of these children have lost their parents to AIDS. However, nearly half of all children have living but absent fathers, meaning that the AIDS pandemic alone cannot explain family breakdown in South Africa.'

The proportion of children with absent but living fathers has risen from 42% in 1996 to 48% in 2009.

'What emerges from the data is a pattern of many men not taking responsibility for their children. Unemployment and poverty contribute to this phenomenon, but probably so too do male attitudes to women and sex,' Ms Holborn said.

The report highlights international and local research which shows that children growing up without a father are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to educational outcomes, employment prospects, behaviour, and future relationships.

'Family is not an issue that is high on most policy agendas, but we believe our research demonstrates that the cycle of dysfunctional families needs to be broken in order to address many of the social problems in the country.'

**ends**