

Press Release

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Worrying dropout rates at school and university level – IRR report

A *Fast Facts* report released by the IRR reveals vastly improving levels of access to education but it also uncovers significant dropout rates at both school and university level.

This report reviewed South Africa's educational foundations. It found:

- The proportion of South Africans aged 20 and above with no schooling declined from 11.6% in 2002 to 5.5% in 2013.
- The proportion of those with matric increased from 29.8% to 38.8%.
- The proportion with post-school education almost doubled from 3.7% to 6.9%.

However, such progress must be weighed against significant dropout rates, says IRR CEO Frans Cronjé: "The IRR was the first to point out some six or seven years ago that only half of children who enrol in grade 1 will ever have the experience of sitting in a matric class. Of those fortunate enough to make it to matric, only half will write mathematics as a subject. Also, only one in four matric pupils will pass maths with 50% or higher."

Cronjé adds: "The same dropout pattern then applies to students enrolled in higher education."

The findings are initially positive:

- The proportion of people aged between 20 and 24 enrolled in higher education has increased from 15.4% in 2002 to 19.2% in 2012.
- The head-count enrolment in universities has almost doubled since 1995.
- The proportion of African students also increased from 50.2% in 1995 to 69.5% in 2012.

However, data we publish in this edition shows that 51% of students who enrol for 3- and 4-year degrees never graduate.

Says Frans Cronjé: "Put plainly, if ten children enrol in grade 1 in any given year, one can expect five of them to reach matric, three to pass, and at most, only one to pass maths with 50%. There is no better way to explain the damage that the current school system causes to the life prospects of South Africa's children and the reason why education policy reform is vitally needed."

Watch IRR head of research Lerato Moloi and head of media Mienke Steytler discuss the findings [here](#) on IRR TV.

Ends.
