

South African poverty levels have increased since 2011

While there was a general decline in poverty between 2006 and 2011, poverty levels in South Africa increased in 2015.



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The [Poverty Trends in South Africa report](#), released at a media briefing in Tshwane by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) showed that the proportion of the population living in poverty increased to 55.5%, or 30.4-million, people in 2015. In 2006, the proportion of those living in poverty declined from 66.6% (31.6-million people) to 53.2% in 2011.

“Poverty was declining but now it is starting to pick up, and from 2011 to 2015 poverty has actually swung up. If we think about the drought, the negative growth that South Africa is facing, the number of the poor is increasing as a consequence,” said Statistician General Pali Lehohla.

According to the report that provides statistics on the current levels of poverty in the country, the number of persons living in extreme poverty (people living below the 2015 Food Poverty Line of R441 per person per month) in the country increased by 2.8-million from 11-million in 2011 to 13.8-million in 2015. However, this was lower than in 2009, when people living in extreme poverty were 16.7-million.

The report showed that children were the most vulnerable to poverty. According to the report, the youngest age group (0 to 17) had the highest proportion of people living in poverty.

“As far as poverty is concerned, the children are in the majority of those who are poor and I think that is a key challenge. If children are poor, they are less likely to go to school or even if they are in school, they will perform badly. The majority of children are poor because they are in poor households,” said Lehohla.

Women and children at most risk

The report further found that in general, black African females, children, people from rural areas, those living in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, as well as those with no education are the main victims in the ongoing struggle against poverty.

“Females are much more exposed to poverty than males,” said Lehohla.

The proportion of females living below the upper-bound poverty line (UBPL) in 2015 was at 57.2%, while that for men was at 53.7%.

In terms of poverty and population groups, the report found that the poverty headcount for black Africans increased to 64.2%, meaning that nearly three out of five blacks are poor. Coloureds had the second highest population of people living below UBPL. In 2015, only 5.9% of the Indian/Asian population was living below the UBPL.

The report noted that there is a relationship between poverty and education, with 79.2% of individuals with no formal education being poor compared to only 8.4% of individuals who had a post-matric qualification.

In terms of inequality, this continued to persist with black Africans having the highest level of income inequality. According to the report, white-headed households spent five times more than black African-headed households and three times more than the national average when coming to the average annual household consumption expenditure and income.

Meanwhile, poor households spent 30% of their total expenditure on food compared to just 10.5% in non-poor households.

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