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# South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012

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Statistics South Africa  
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Statistician-General

## **South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012**

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## Preface

South Africa's Constitution recognises the rights of children and has enacted laws and regulations that are aimed at realising these rights. The country ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1997. The Children's Act reinforces provisions in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution and specifically provides details of the responsibilities of parents and guardians in realising South African children's rights.

This report presents statistics on young children aged below five years in South Africa, based on information collected from the General Household Survey undertaken in the country in 2012. It was prepared to provide supplementary information on births published in the *Recorded Live Births, 2012* statistical release in order to describe the context into which children are born in South Africa.

This report highlights the profile of young children in South Africa and provides the characteristics of their biological parents and the home environment in which children are raised. The report addresses questions on: *who are the young children in South Africa; what are the characteristics of mothers and fathers who raise their biological children; and under what material and physical conditions do young children live.*

Answers to these questions provide the current status of the lives of young children in South Africa and how far the country has gone in realising the rights of children. The parental and home environment in which children live and are raised is one of the many factors that affect a child's growth and development.

This report, therefore, provides the necessary evidence, based on quality statistics, to assist policy makers in making decisions towards the development of children in South Africa. This is in line with the theme of the 2013 African Statistics Day on "*Quality Data to support African Progress*" commemorated today (18 November 2013). It is anticipated that the findings presented in this report will provide valuable information that can be used to improve the welfare of young children in South Africa. Furthermore, it is hoped that the importance of using statistical data to inform social and economic policies will be realised and strengthened.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The *Recorded Live Births, 2012* statistical release (P0305) published by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) in November 2013 (Stats SA, 2013a) provided information on live births that occurred in South Africa in 2012 and were registered at the Department of Home Affairs. The release is an annual publication of Stats SA, based on administrative data captured in the birth registration system of South Africa.

Every year Stats SA reports on the number of births from the birth registration system. However, limited information on births is collected from this system as it is primarily operated for administrative and legal purposes. For example, birth registration provide legal documentation of identity and civil status, such as name, sex, date of birth, place of birth, citizenship, and parents' name and their nationality. While a range of socio-economic characteristics may be collected during the registration process, this information is not collected in South Africa, thereby limiting our understanding of the situation of children in the country.

In order to expand the statistical information base as outlined in the Stats SA's 2010/11–2014/15 Strategic Plan (Stats SA, 2010), it became imperative to obtain additional information that may provide the context under which births occur in South Africa and consequently increase the depth and breadth of this subject in the country. As such, an ancillary source, the General Household Survey (GHS), was identified as a supplement to the birth registrations data. This supplementary data source is used to broaden information on all children aged below five years and to provide a general view about young children in South Africa.

The GHS is an annual survey undertaken by Stats SA. The main purpose of this survey is to determine the level of development in South Africa and to measure the performance of programmes and projects that were implemented to address the priorities of the Government. The survey is designed to measure the living conditions of South African households, as well as the quality of service delivery in several key service sectors (Stats SA, 2013b).

The birth registration system and the GHS are two independent sources of data that may be used to complement each other. On one hand, the birth registration system collects information on births, including the sex of the newly-born, dates of birth and registration, as well as the ages of parents and the place of birth occurrence. On the other hand, the GHS collects information on all individuals sampled in the survey, including children. There are also specific questions on pregnancy status of females in the past 12 months and the outcome of the pregnancy at the time of the survey. These two questions provide the number of women who gave birth in the past 12 months but not the number of births that occurred.

The data on births from the birth register provide the overall number of births that occurred in the country and were registered. These data provide information that can be used to monitor fertility trends, population growth and population composition. However, no information is available on the living conditions of these children. Very limited information is available on their mothers and virtually none available on their fathers. Information on the characteristics of children, their biological mothers, their biological fathers and their home environment is available in the GHS. However, the GHS does not collect information on births in the past twelve months such as date of birth, sex of the child and whether or not the birth was registered.

The purpose of this report, therefore, is to present information on young children aged below five years in South Africa and the characteristics of their biological parents and their homes. Children whose parents lived in other households are not included as the information on their parents was not collected in the survey. The home environment focuses on housing and social services available in the households in which the children lived.

## 1.2 Objectives

This report is part of regular series of reports published by Stats SA focusing on special topics of interest. It focuses on the parental and home environment of children aged below five years in South Africa.

The general objective of this report is to provide supplementary information on births that occurred in the country around 2012. Specific objectives include the following:

- Use the GHS 2012 data to provide characteristics of young children in South Africa; concentrating on infants (children aged zero) and other young children (aged 1–2 years and 3–4 years).
- Provide information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of biological parents of young children covered in the GHS 2012. This will provide information on parents who lived with their biological children as an indication of the family environment in which young children are raised in South Africa.
- Present the circumstances in which South Africa's young children are born and raised by studying their living conditions. The attention will be on the physical home environment in which children live.

## 1.3 Organisation and presentation of the report

The remainder of this report is organised as follows:

Chapter 2 reviews national policies on young children available in South Africa. This is followed by Chapter 3 which provides a description of data and methods of analysis used to produce the report. The findings of the results are presented in Chapters 4 to 6. Chapter 4 presents the characteristics of young children in South Africa. Information on the parents is presented in Chapter 5, with separate analyses for mothers and for fathers. The physical home environment in which the children live is presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 provides the summary and discussion of main findings.

## 2. National policies on children

### 2.1 Introduction

UNICEF (2007a) has indicated that the first four years of life are a period of rapid physical, mental, emotional, social and moral growth and development and as such, every child must be ensured the best start in life. Children's experiences in these years have the biggest impact on how their brains develop. It is also the period when children grasp the fundamental skills needed to do well in school and develop as happy and confident individuals. Young children spend most of their time at home and the social and physical environment in which they live has consequences for their current and future health and social development.

This chapter reviews what the Government of South Africa has committed to do for children in the country in order for them to realise their best start in life. This chapter will also provide an indication on how best to invest in children for the overall benefit of the future population of South Africa and the risks children can possibly face as a result of the environment in which they are raised.

### 2.2 Fulfilling children's rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on 20 November 1989 in the General Assembly. The Convention underscores the accountability of government, civil society, parents and the international community to fulfil their obligations towards the realisation of the rights of children and to ensure that these rights remain inalienable, integral and indivisible (South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF, 2011). South Africa ratified the Convention on 16 July 1995 and it is one of the 41 countries in Africa that have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005) and its amendments reinforce provisions in the Bill of Rights and provide details of the responsibilities of parents and guardians. Furthermore, the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities has committed to creating an enabling environment to ensure that children's rights in South Africa are realised (South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF, 2011).

The rights of children are entrenched in the Bill of Rights in South Africa, contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996). According to Section 28 of the Constitution:

1. *Every child has the right:*
  - a. *to a name and a nationality from birth;*
  - b. *to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment;*
  - c. *to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services;*
  - d. *to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation;*
  - e. *to be protected from exploitative labour practices;*
  - f. *not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that:*
    - i. *are inappropriate for a person of that child's age; or*
    - ii. *place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development;*

- g. not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the rights a child enjoys under sections 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be:*
    - i. kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 years; and*
    - ii. treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age;*
  - h. to have a legal practitioner assigned to the child by the state, and at state expense, in civil proceedings affecting the child, if substantial injustice would otherwise result; and*
  - i. not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict.*
- 2. A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.*

The Government of South Africa has a responsibility to ensure that children's rights are protected and must assist families to protect these rights and create an environment where children can grow and reach their potential. It is therefore important to understand and track progress made in the country in protecting the rights of children. While children are defined as those aged below 18 years, this report only focuses on young children (aged less than five years) to assess the world into which South African children are raised during the first five years of their lives.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act (Act No. 51 of 1992) prescribes that notice of a child's birth must be registered at the Department of Home Affairs within 30 days of birth. The Act further states that a forename and surname are required for birth registration. This Act, together with provisions made in the South African Citizenship Act (Act No. 88 of 1995) recognises the right of a child to a name and nationality. It is estimated that around 80% of births were registered within the year of birth each year during the period 2008–2012 (Stats SA, 2013a).

The Constitution of South Africa further recognises the importance of family care or parental or an appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment. Accordingly, the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005) outlines parental responsibilities and their rights as parents. It also makes provision for guardianship, adoption, identification of children in need of care and protection. Furthermore, the Department of Social Development, through foster care, may place a child in the care of a person who is not the parent or guardian of a child as a result of an order of a children's court or transfer of the child in an alternative care.

Every child also has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services and to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. The Department of Social Development offers a range of services that are aimed at facilitating human development and improving the quality of life of the South African population, particularly the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded. Services that incorporate young children aged below five years include child protection, child adoption, national food programme, maintenance, child support grant, foster care grant, care dependency grant, disability grant, children's home and Early Childhood Development Centres (Department of Social Development, 2013). The Social Assistance Act (Act No. 13 of 2004) provides for the rendering of social assistance in South Africa, in recognition of the prescriptions of the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), which indicates that everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) identified nine primary challenges facing South Africa since 1998 (NPC, 2012). Subsequently, a National Development Plan was prepared, with set goals aimed at eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030. Specific objectives and actions were set and the ones of relevance to children include those relating to economy and employment, inclusive rural economy, transforming human settlements, improving education, training and innovation, health care for all and social protection. The plan acknowledged the importance of children and concluded that:

*“When we see it in the faces of our children, we know: there will always be, for us, a worthy future.” (NPC, 2012: 12).*

On 30 May 2013, Cabinet approved the National Plan of Action for Children for the period 2012–2017. This is a comprehensive plan intended to give guidance and direction to government departments, civil society and other partners in the children’s sector towards the realisation of children’s rights (Government Communication and Information System, 2013). The plan brings together rights espoused in the Constitution, international and regional treaties, other legislation on children in South Africa as well as developmental targets in the Millennium Development goals and National Development Plan. The main themes articulated in the plan are: child survival (e.g. reduction of child mortality); child development (e.g. early childhood development services); child protection (e.g. protection from violence and sexual abuse); standard of living of children (e.g. conditions on accommodation for children) and child participation (e.g. children taking responsibility while enjoying their rights).

All in all, South Africa has enacted laws and regulations that are aimed at realising the rights of children in the country. While the information provided above does not include all programmes of the government aimed at improving children’s rights and their welfare, there is sufficient evidence provided to indicate the commitment the country has made to ensure the protection of the rights of children.

## 2.3 Investing in children

*“Children are our future. What happens to children in their first days, months and years of life affects their development, the development of our society, and the development of our world.” (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2004:1)*

Investments in children are increasingly seen as one of best and most valuable long-term investments countries can make (Reese et al., 2012). The authors identified early childhood development, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection as indicative of investments which, in addition to protecting children’s rights, may be of benefit to wider societal and economic gains, particularly with regard to reducing poverty, achieving greater equity and social stability, and increasing economic growth.

South Africa has experienced declines in mortality and fertility, which has resulted in a reduction in the country’s young dependent population. As such, the National Development Plan of South Africa has recognised this as a “demographic dividend” and included plans on better nutrition and health care, improved educational standards, increased access to further and higher education, easier entry into the labour market and greater labour mobility to maximise the benefits of this window of opportunity (NPC, 2012).

The demographic dividend defines the accelerated economic growth that may result from a decline in a country’s mortality and fertility and the subsequent change in the age structure of the population (Population Reference Bureau, 2012). However, Gribble and Bremner (2012) noted that such economic growth is dependent on the adequacy in which families and governments invest in the health, education and gender equality of young people. Otherwise it could lead to a frustrating and destabilising environment where young people cannot get work, resulting in crime, violence, alcohol abuse and other social ills (NPC, 2012). For example, the current status in South Africa indicates that approximately 3,3 million of the 10,4 million youth aged 15–24 years were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the third quarter of 2013 (Stats SA, 2013c). The report further indicated that youth who are categorised as NEET are considered to be disengaged from both work and education.

The future growth and development of children, and the country's demographic and socio-economic profile depends on the wellbeing of young children (UNICEF, 2007b). The level of childhood mortality is a measure that can be used to reflect on a country's health status in general, the quality and efficiency of its health system as well as the level of socio-economic development (Mckerrow and Mulaudzi, 2010). Investing in the health of children and their mothers is not only a human right imperative, it is a sound economic decision and one of the surest ways for a country to set its course towards a better future (UNICEF, 2007b).

Although the South African government has made progress in addressing socio-economic development in the country, poverty remains a serious threat to South African children. The Living Conditions Survey undertaken in South Africa between 2008 and 2009 indicated that poverty was high, particularly among children aged below 18 years (Stats SA, 2013d). The report further indicated that child poverty was highest among children living with neither parent in the household. South Africa reported declining poverty based on money measures in the 2013 Millennium Development Goals country report and further indicated that targets for 2015 were already achieved (Stats SA, 2013e). Limitations of measuring poverty in this way were also highlighted in the report.

According to Albino and Berry (2013), young children in South Africa grow up in a profoundly unequal society in which poverty threatens the sound early development of the majority of children. Poverty creates challenges that may be difficult to manage with only one available parent, especially as more single mothers work outside the home (Cancian and Reed, 2009). The annual unemployment rate in South Africa in 2012 was 25,1%, with the rate higher for women (27,8%) as compared to men (22,9%) (Stats SA, 2013f). The report further indicated that over a period of six years unemployment rate increased from 22,3% in 2007 to 25,1% in 2012. As such, it is important to prioritise the agenda of child poverty in South Africa.

A post-2015 agenda has been drawn and is centred on the transformation shifts on: leave-no-one behind, put sustainable development at the core, transform economies, build peace and effective and accountable institutions, and forge a new global partnership (United Nations, 2013). The leave-no-one transformation shift is meant to ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied basic economic opportunities and human rights.

## **2.4 Physical environment conditions: risks for children**

Children's living environments are an important part of what determines their quality of life. Unfavourable environmental conditions such as poor housing infrastructure, lack of access to adequate water; sanitation facilities and poor hygiene in the home contribute to infections and diseases, particularly in young children. Malnutrition, childhood illness and a lack of early stimulation continue to compromise children's cognitive development and later school performance (Berry and Albino, 2013).

Ittus (2012) noted that inadequate physical environments are responsible for a very large number of deaths among children aged below five years, mainly resulting from pneumonia and diarrhoeal diseases. Diarrhoeal diseases are more prevalent where there is poor sanitation and lack of clean water (Walakira and Sarah, 2012). Inadequate sanitation and drainage, a lack of clean water, uncollected waste, inadequate housing, polluted air, toxic wastes and threats to safety all contribute to high levels of child mortality and morbidity (Bartlett, 2002).

Etzel (2012) indicated that household air pollution through inhaling smoke is particularly harmful to young children due to:

- developmental reasons (children's lungs are growing rapidly and smoke hinders normal lung development);
- physiological reasons (children breathe more air, react more severely to certain toxic substances and are closer to the ground where some air pollutants are more concentrated); and
- behavioural factors (young children are not aware of smoke around them and are unable to escape from the smoky environment).

It was further noted that young children are at risk of lower respiratory tract illnesses such as pneumonia and tuberculosis because of high levels of household air pollution and long periods of exposure to smoke (Etzel, 2012). Overcrowded living conditions also contribute to respiratory and airborne diseases. It was observed in Uganda that children living in households that burn wood or straw for cooking were more likely to be affected by respiratory infections than those living in households that use charcoal (Walakira and Sarah, 2012). The authors further noted that young children's proximity to their mothers as they cook increases their exposure to respiratory illnesses as well as their risk of accidents.

Infants and younger children are also more prone to injuries that occur within their homes and neighbourhoods. Heavy traffic, open fires and exposed heaters, unprotected stairways and heights, unfinished construction, poorly lit walkways, lack of safe storage for chemicals and poisons, piles of debris and a scarcity of safe play space all expose children to high levels of risk (Bartlett, 2002). Burns, falls, traffic accidents, poisoning and drowning are some of the problems that contribute to morbidity and mortality among children.

South African young children seem to follow the general patterns presented above. For example, the leading cause of death in South Africa for children aged below five years was intestinal infectious diseases, the majority of which were due to diarrhoea (Stats SA, 2012). The second leading cause was influenza and pneumonia. Deaths due to non-natural causes of death among children aged below five years accounted for about 5% of children's death. According to the 2010 data on mortality and causes of death, the most common specified non-natural causes of death among children aged below five years were accidental poisoning and exposure to other and unspecified chemicals and noxious substances (0,9%); exposure to unspecified smoke, fire and flames (0,8%); and unspecified drowning and submersion (0,6%). The overall proportion of deaths among young children due to transport accidents during the same year was 0,4%.

However, progress has been made in reducing infant and child mortality in the country. The under-five mortality rate started to decline in South Africa from around 67 child deaths per 1 000 live births in 2007 and was estimated at 53 child deaths per 1 000 live births in 2010 (Stats SA, 2013e).

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the policies and programmes of the government of South Africa that are aimed at improving the welfare of children in the country. Lessons on the importance of investing in children and some statistics on the current situation in South Africa were provided. Additionally, some risks associated with availability of social services that are relevant to young children specifically have been provided.

## 3. Data and methods

### 3.1 Data source

This report is based on data collected in the General Household Survey (GHS) that was conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) during July, August and September in 2012. The GHS is a household survey that has been undertaken by Stats SA since 2002 to determine the level of development in South Africa and to measure the performance of Government's programmes and projects on a regular basis.

The survey followed a multi-stage stratified random sampling design. A total of 25 330 households (including multiple households) were covered in face-to-face interviews. Further technical details of the survey, covering the methodology, questionnaire, response rates, limitations of the survey, sample design, weighting, editing and imputation can be found in Stats SA (2013b).

The GHS collects information on all private households in all nine provinces of South Africa and residents in workers' hostels. It includes demographic, social and economic characteristics of individuals in sampled households; their health and general functioning; general household information and service delivery; food access and supply; and income and expenditure. The information at household level was provided by the head of the household or any responsible adult found in the household when the head was absent.

This report focuses on young children aged below five years covered in the GHS. It provides information on the characteristics of these children, their mothers and their fathers, as well as the conditions of their households. As such, three different data sets were created for this purpose:

- (a) A child-file which included the personal characteristics of all children aged below five years and information on the households in which they live.
- (b) A mothers-file which included characteristics of mothers of young children aged below five years. Only one record of each mother was included in the analysis. That is, one record of each biological mother in the household was analysed for mothers who had more than one child.
- (c) A fathers-file which included characteristics of fathers of young children aged below five years. As with mothers, one record of each biological father in the household was analysed.

The mothers-file and the fathers-file were created by linking the characteristics of the children to those of their biological parents. The GHS listed all individuals in the households. There were additional questions on whether the biological fathers and the biological mothers of each person listed in the household were still alive and if they were part of the household. If the biological fathers or the biological mothers of each person in the household were part of the household, there was an additional question to identify the person numbers of the parents in the list of household members. It was on this basis that children aged below five years were linked to their parents. As such, the analyses on the mothers and the fathers strictly refer to mothers and fathers who lived with their biological children.

Further editing of the data was undertaken for the linked files for correct identification of biological mothers and biological fathers. That is, only cases with valid ages for parents and valid sex of the biological mother and biological father were included in the analyses.



### 3.2 Data analysis

Data files were prepared using SAS Enterprise Guide version 4.3, after which they were converted to SPSS, which was the software used for different types of analyses carried out. The analyses were mainly descriptive: frequency distributions and cross-tabulations. The results are presented in the form of tables and graphs, showing percentage distributions as well as absolute numbers where appropriate.

All analyses were weighted using the person-weight variable provided in the data sets. Therefore, the results from the survey can be generalised for the whole South African population. In all, there were 5 295 283 children aged below five years who were included in the child-file; 3 653 955 mothers who lived with their young biological children (mothers-file); and 2 007 879 fathers who lived with their young biological children (fathers-file).

### 3.3 Comparison of data from the GHS and the birth register

The purpose of this report is to provide supplementary information on data on births that occurred in 2012 and were registered at the Department of Home Affairs, using the GHS. It was therefore deemed important to provide a brief comparison of the data sets to check consistencies in the results on births. For this purpose, information on births from the birth register was compared to approximately similar information from the GHS. The population aged zero in the GHS was selected as these children would have been born within the past 12 months of the survey. The sex of the child was available for comparison with the birth register.

While the reference periods of the two data sources are not exactly the same, they both cover a 12-month period. The births that occurred in the 12 months before the GHS would reflect children that were born between July 2011 and September 2012 (depending on the date of data collection) while the birth registration system data reflect births that occurred between January and December 2012. Therefore, these results have to be interpreted with caution.

Table 3.1 shows the distribution of births (or equivalent) based on the birth register and the GHS. In general, there were over 900 000 births, with more male than female births. However, there were differences in the coverage of boys and girls from these two sources. The sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) from the birth register was 101 male births per 100 female births compared to 110 male births per 100 female births from the GHS.

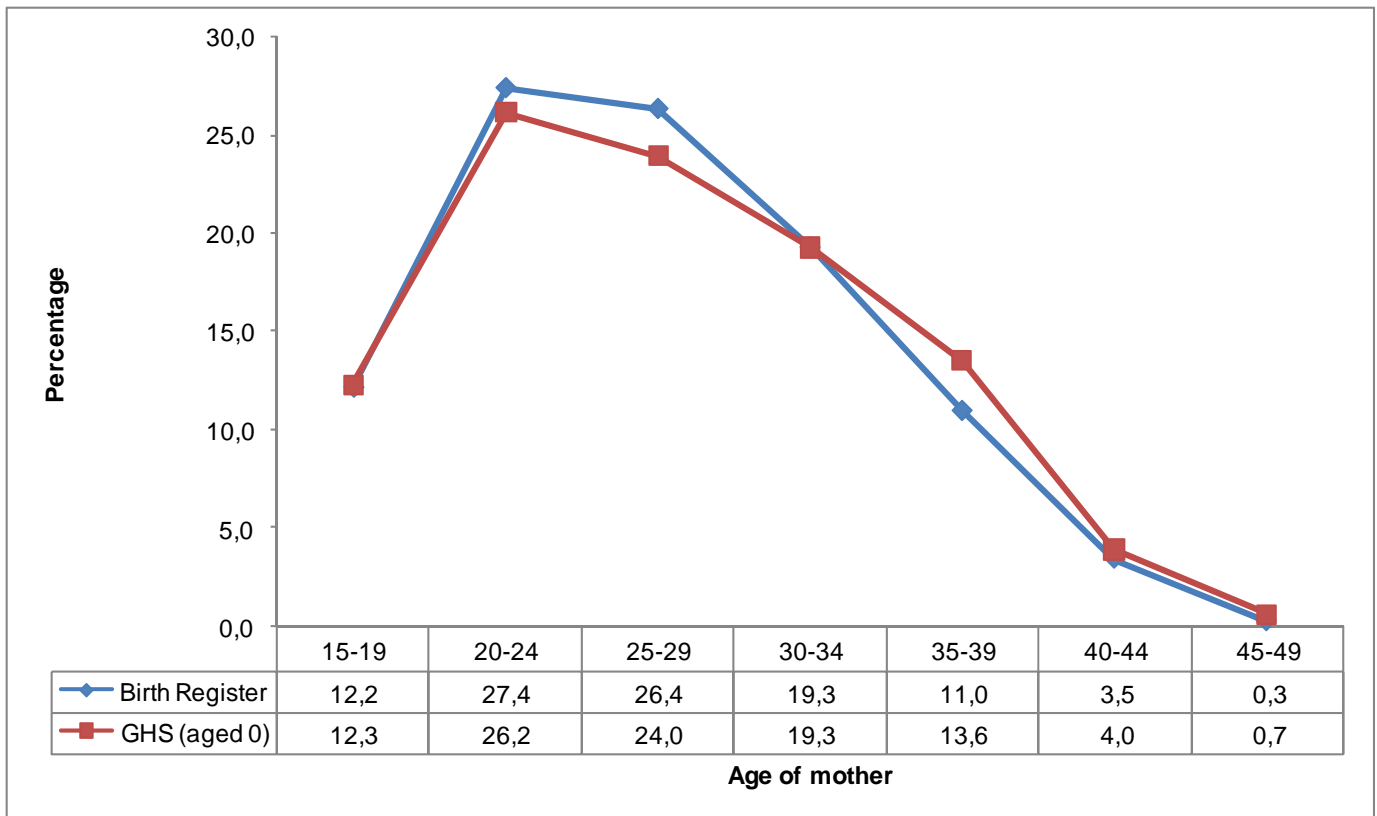
**Table 3.1: Number of births to women aged 15–49 by sex of child and source of data, 2012**

| Sex of child | Birth register | GHS (aged 0)   |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Males        | 466 411        | 490 124        |
| Female       | 459 021        | 445 336        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>925 432</b> | <b>935 460</b> |

Further information is available by age of the mother. The results are shown in Figure 3.1 to compare the age pattern of births from the two sources. It is observed that the birth register and the GHS were largely similar, with the highest proportion of births in age group 20–24, followed by age groups 25–29 and 30–34. There was a sharp decrease in the proportions of births after age group 30–34.

In both sources, about 12% of the births occurred to mothers aged 15–19 years. Notable differences were observed for age groups 25–29 and 35–39. The birth register had relatively more births in age group 25–29 while there were more births in age group 35–39 for births based on the population aged zero.

**Figure 3.1: Percentage distribution of births by age of mother and source of data, 2012**



### 3.4 Summary

This chapter has presented data and methods of analysis used in this report. The report used data from the 2012 GHS covering children aged below five years. A comparison of data from the GHS and the birth register showed a largely consistent pattern.

## 4. Characteristics of South Africa’s young children

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the profile of young children in South Africa based on all children aged below five years included in the General Household Survey (GHS) undertaken in 2012. It specifically describes their demographic characteristics, survival status of biological parents, their living arrangements, attendance at an early childhood development centre, and social security (receiving child support grant and foster care grant).

An understanding of the characteristics of young children assists in influencing development of social programmes and policies with regard to the demand for schools, health care and other social services that are important in meeting the daily needs of families with young children.

For the remainder of this report, the term “young children” is used to refer to all children aged below five years and “infants” to refer to children aged zero, i.e. those who had not reached their first birthday.

### 4.2 Age and sex distribution

There were about 5,3 million young children aged below five years in South Africa in 2012 (see Table 4.1), representing 10,1% of the total population. Just over a million were infants (aged zero years), about 2,1 million were aged 1–2 years and nearly as many were aged 3–4 years.

For all children aged 0–4 years, there were nearly as many boys as girls. Disaggregation of the number of young children by age shows that there were slightly more males than females among infants and those aged 1–2 years. Conversely, there were slightly more female than male children aged 3–4 years. This pattern is typical in many countries whereby the sex ratio at birth favours males (over 100 males per 100 females) but declines as children advance to higher ages due to relatively high mortality among males.

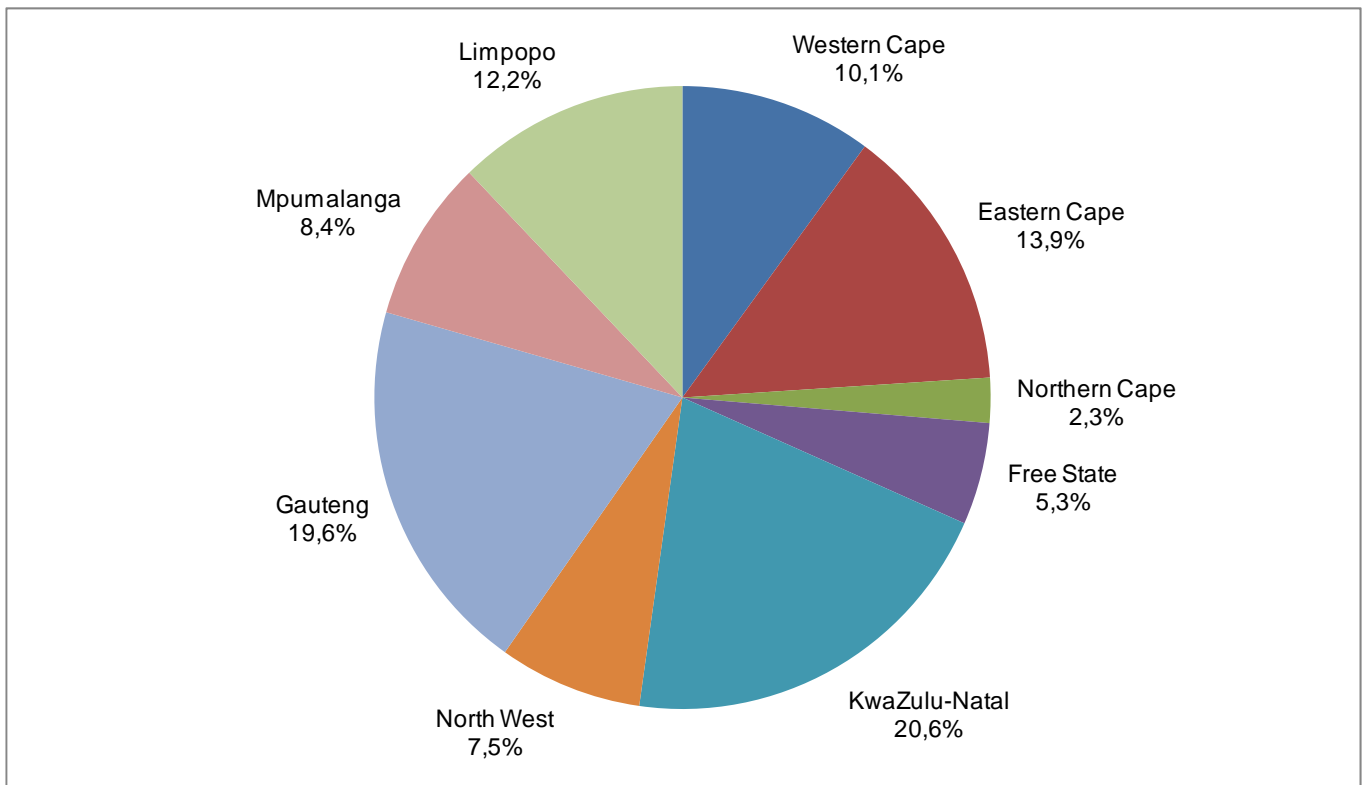
**Table 4.1: Number and percentage of children aged 0–4 years by age and sex, 2012**

| Age              | Number           |                  |                  | Percentage  |             |              |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
|                  | Male             | Female           | Total            | Male        | Female      | Total        |
| Infants          | 551 089          | 513 658          | 1 064 747        | 51,8        | 48,2        | 100,0        |
| 1–2 years        | 1 079 789        | 1 017 910        | 2 097 699        | 51,5        | 48,5        | 100,0        |
| 3–4 years        | 1 036 688        | 1 096 149        | 2 132 837        | 48,6        | 51,4        | 100,0        |
| <b>0–4 years</b> | <b>2 667 566</b> | <b>2 627 717</b> | <b>5 295 283</b> | <b>50,4</b> | <b>49,6</b> | <b>100,0</b> |

### 4.3 Geographic characteristics

The distribution of young children by province of residence is provided in Figure 4.1. The largest numbers of young children in South Africa were found in KwaZulu-Natal (20,6%) and Gauteng (19,6%). The lowest numbers were found in Northern Cape (2,3%) and Free State (5,3%).

**Figure 4.1: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by province of usual residence, 2012**

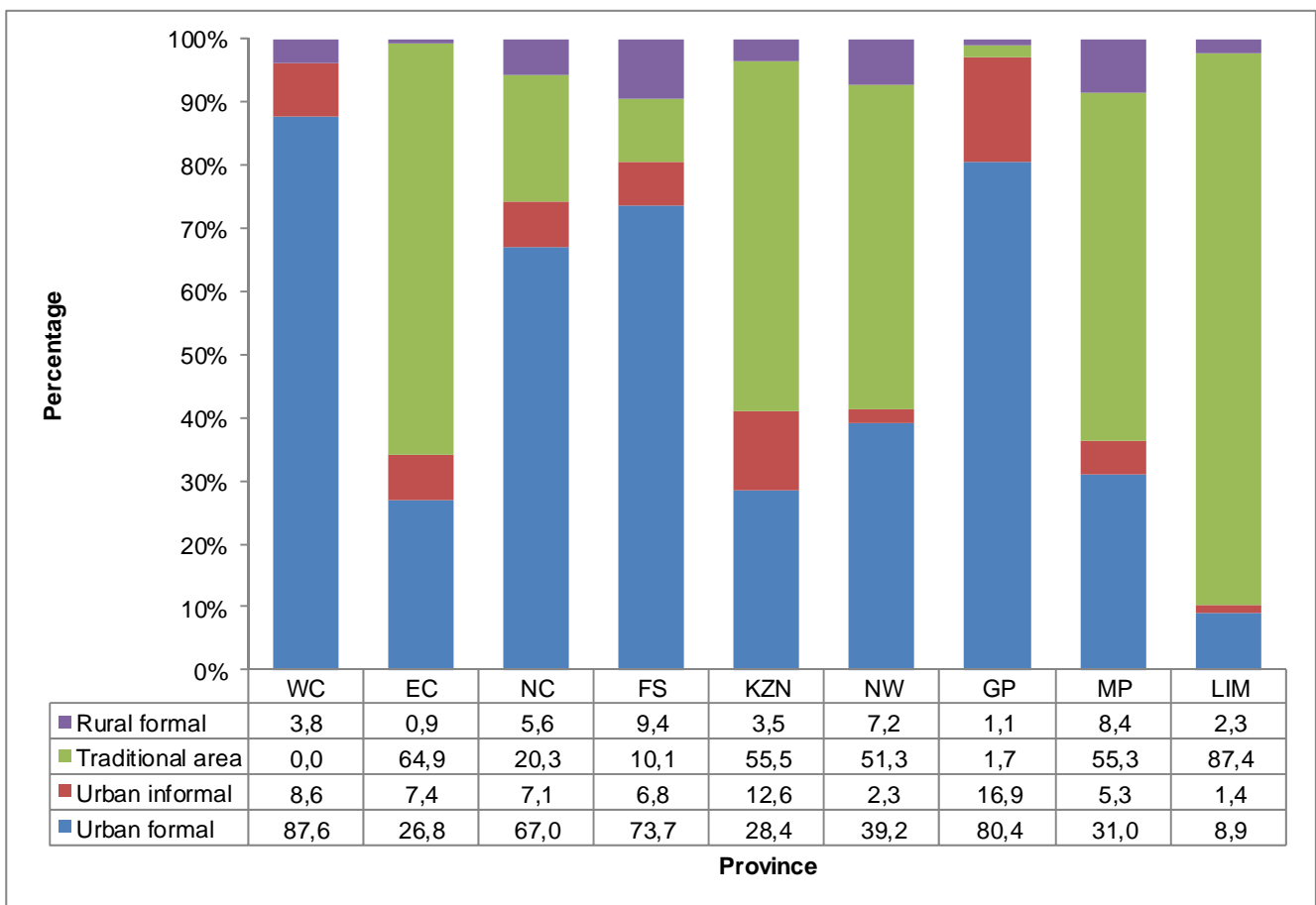


With regard to geographic type, most young children lived in urban formal areas (46,3%) followed by those who lived in traditional areas (41,0%). About 9,1% of young children in South Africa lived in urban informal settlements and 3,6% in rural formal areas (figure not shown).

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of young children who lived in Western Cape (87,6%), Gauteng (80,4%), Free State (73,7%) and Northern Cape (67,0%) lived in urban formal areas. Conversely, the majority of young children who lived in Limpopo (87,4%), Eastern Cape (64,9%), KwaZulu-Natal (55,5%), Mpumalanga (55,3%) and North West (51,3%) lived in traditional areas.

On one hand, Gauteng (16,9%) and KwaZulu-Natal (12,6%) had relatively high proportions of young children living in urban informal settlements. On the other hand, the proportions of young children living in rural formal areas were higher in Free State (9,4%), Mpumalanga (8,4%) and North West (7,2%).

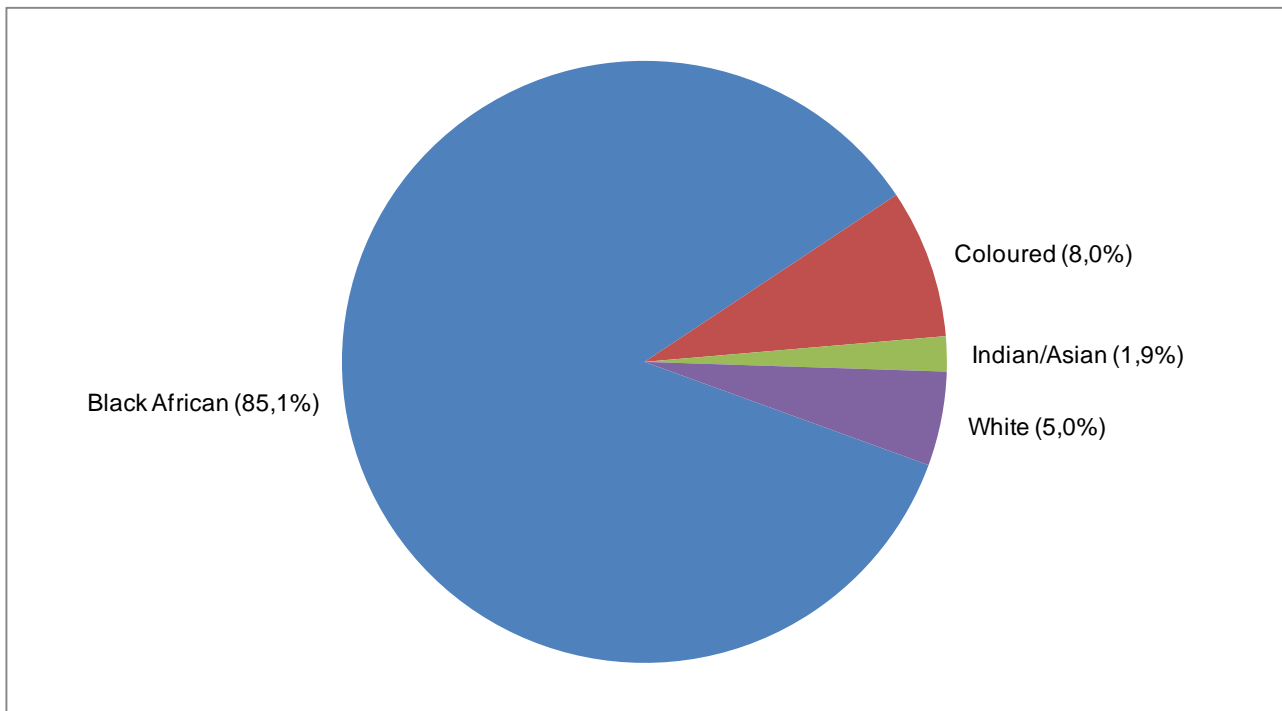
**Figure 4.2: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by province of usual residence and geographic type, 2012**



### 4.4 Population group

Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of young children aged below five years in South Africa were black African (85,1%), followed by the coloured population group (8,0%) and the white population group (5,0%). A small proportion of young children (1,9%) were Indians/Asians. The distribution by population group did not differ much by the different age categories of young children. The proportion of young black African children is higher than the proportion of the black African population overall, where it stands at 79,0%. Should the African children be exposed to life chances that are similar across race, then the demographic force will increasingly change the current composition of the population.

**Figure 4.3: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by population group, 2012**



## 4.5 Living arrangements

### 4.5.1 Survival status of biological parents

Overall, 92,7% of all young children had both their parents alive. As observed in Figure 4.4, 96,7% of infants had both parents alive although this percentage decreased by age. For those aged 1–2 years, 93,5% had both parents alive, decreasing further to 90,0% for those aged 3–4 years.

For those who had one parent surviving, most of them had their mothers alive compared to their fathers. Generally, the proportions with one parent alive and those with both parents dead increased with age among the young children. At infancy, 2,5% of children only had a mother alive compared to 0,4% of those with only the father alive. By age 3–4 years, 6,6% of children had only their mother alive compared to 1,6% of those having only a father alive. On the whole, 0,6% of children under the age of five years had both parents dead, with slightly more (1,1%) among those aged 3–4 years.

In total, 97,7% of young children aged below five years had their mothers alive; 93,9% had their fathers alive; and 98,9% had at least one parent alive. The percentages with each parent alive were higher at infancy. By age 3–4 years, 96,6% of children had their mothers alive and 91,6% had their fathers alive.

**Figure 4.4: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by age and survival status of biological parents, 2012**

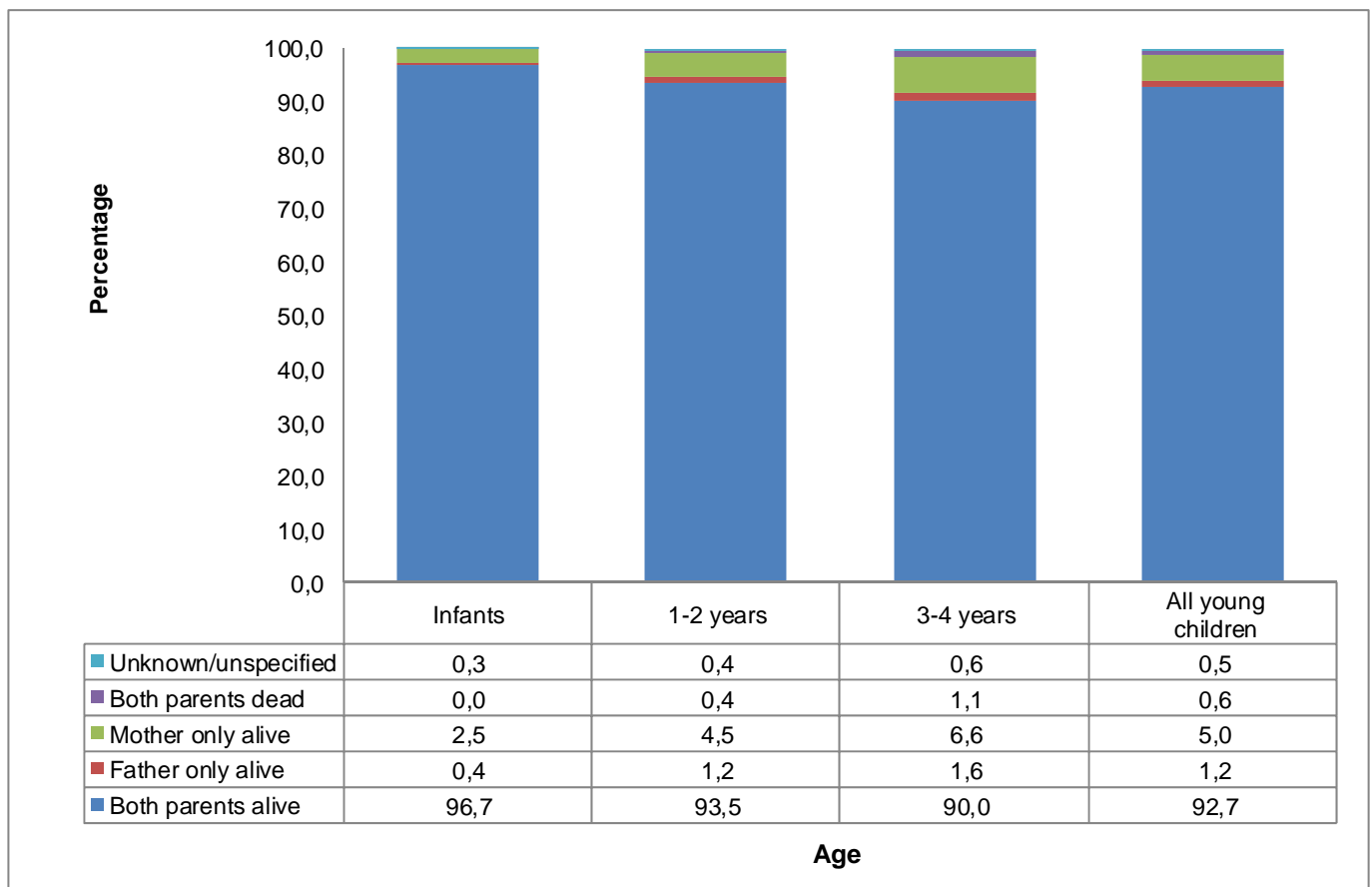
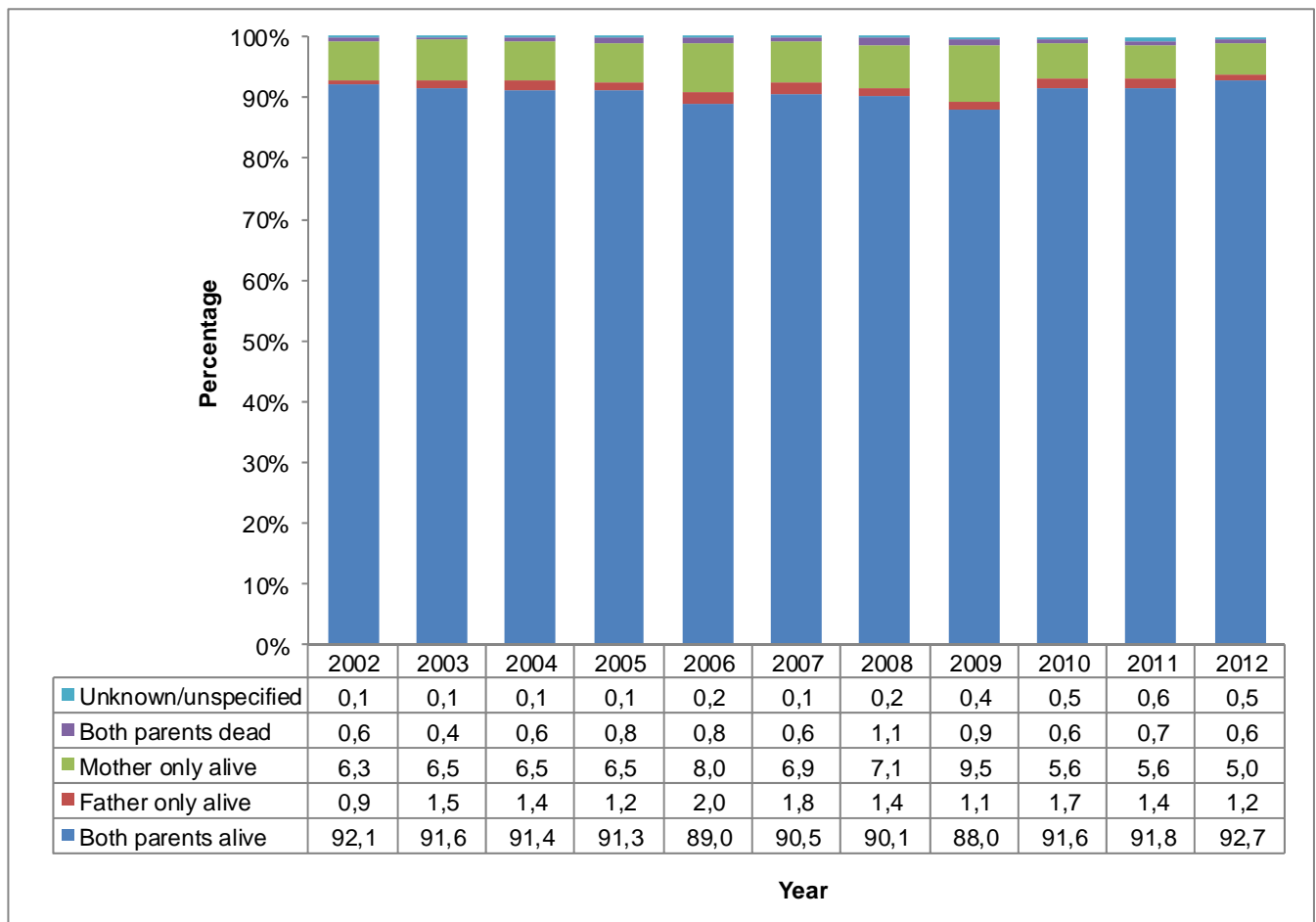


Figure 4.5 shows trends in the proportions of children aged less than five years by the survival status of their biological parents. There has not been much change in the past 11 years on the survival status of biological parents for children in these ages. Over the years, around 90% of young children had both their parents alive and for those who had one parent alive, it was mostly mothers. For all the years, around 1% or less of the children had both their parents dead.

**Figure 4.5: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by survival status of biological parents and year, 2002–2012**





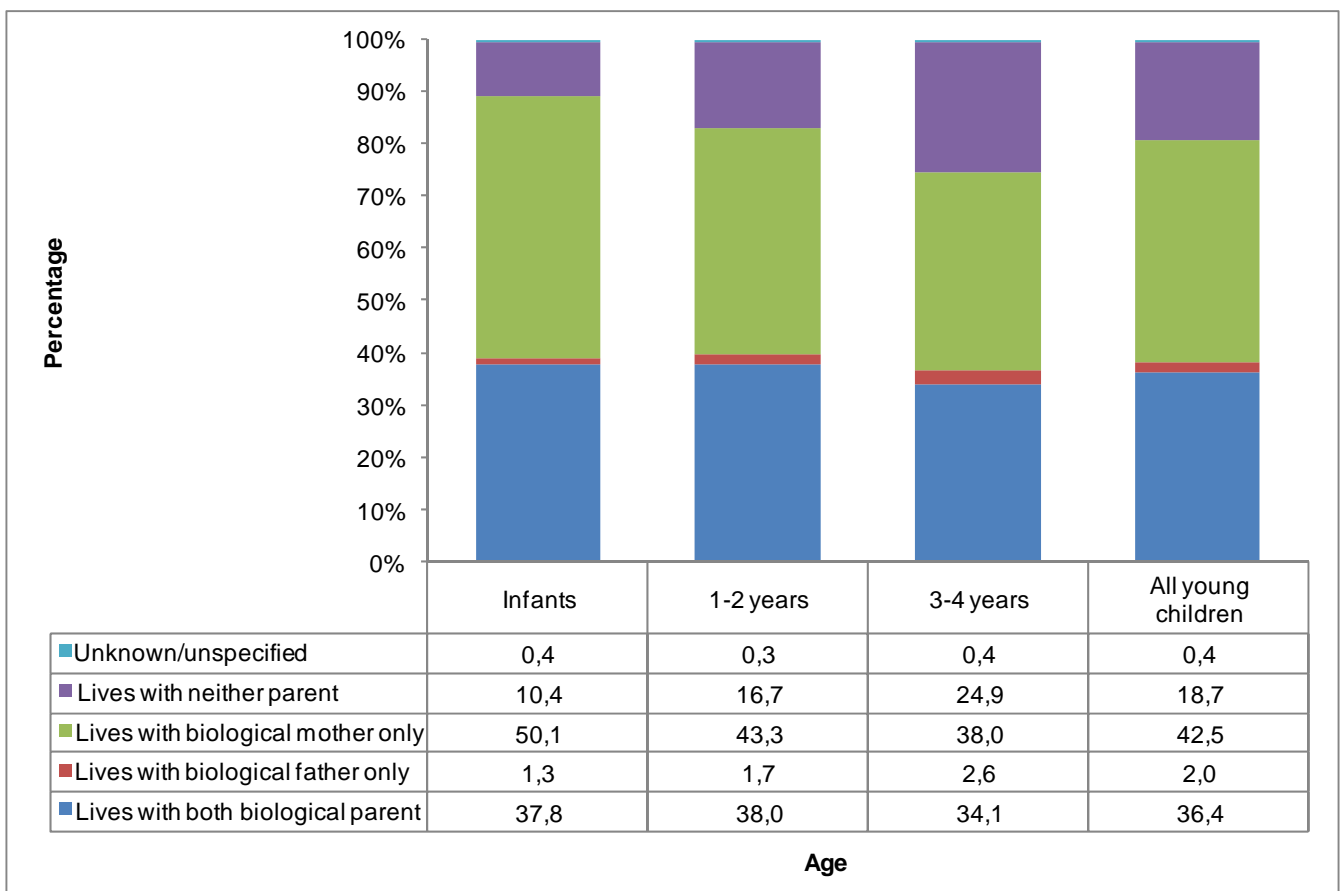
### 4.5.2 Living arrangements with biological parents

There were additional questions to establish whether each individual in the GHS lived with their biological parents in the same household. Overall, Figure 4.6 shows that 42,5% of children aged below five years lived with their biological mother only; 36,4% lived with both their biological parents; 2,0% lived with their biological fathers only and 18,7% lived with neither of their biological parents.

For infants, 37,8% lived with both their parents in the same household. A total of 87,9% of infants lived with their mothers (37,8% with both parents and 50,1% with mother only) but only a total of 39,1% of infants lived with their fathers (37,8% with both parents and 1,3% with father only).

The proportions of young children not living with either the biological mother or the biological father increased with age. While 10,4% of infants lived with neither of their biological parents, 16,7% of those aged 1–2 years lived with neither their biological parents, and by age 3–4 years, 24,9% of the children lived with neither parent. Overall, 18,7% of young children aged below five years lived with neither parent. Despite high proportions of both parents to children under five being alive, the living arrangements reflect a different pattern of child rearing, whereby a much lower proportion of parents play a role in bringing up their own children.

**Figure 4.6: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by age and living arrangements with biological parents, 2012**



Trends in the number of young children by living arrangements with biological parents are provided in Figure 4.7 and the results generally show no change over time. For all the years, it is observed that most young children lived with their biological mothers only (between 40% and 44%), followed by those who lived with both their parents (between 34% and 40%). Those who did not live with their biological parents were between 17% and 22% throughout the 11-year period. Each year, less than 3% of the children aged below five years lived with only their biological fathers. Overall, more than 80,0% of the children each year lived with at least one biological parent.

**Figure 4.7: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by year and living arrangements with biological parents, 2002–2012**

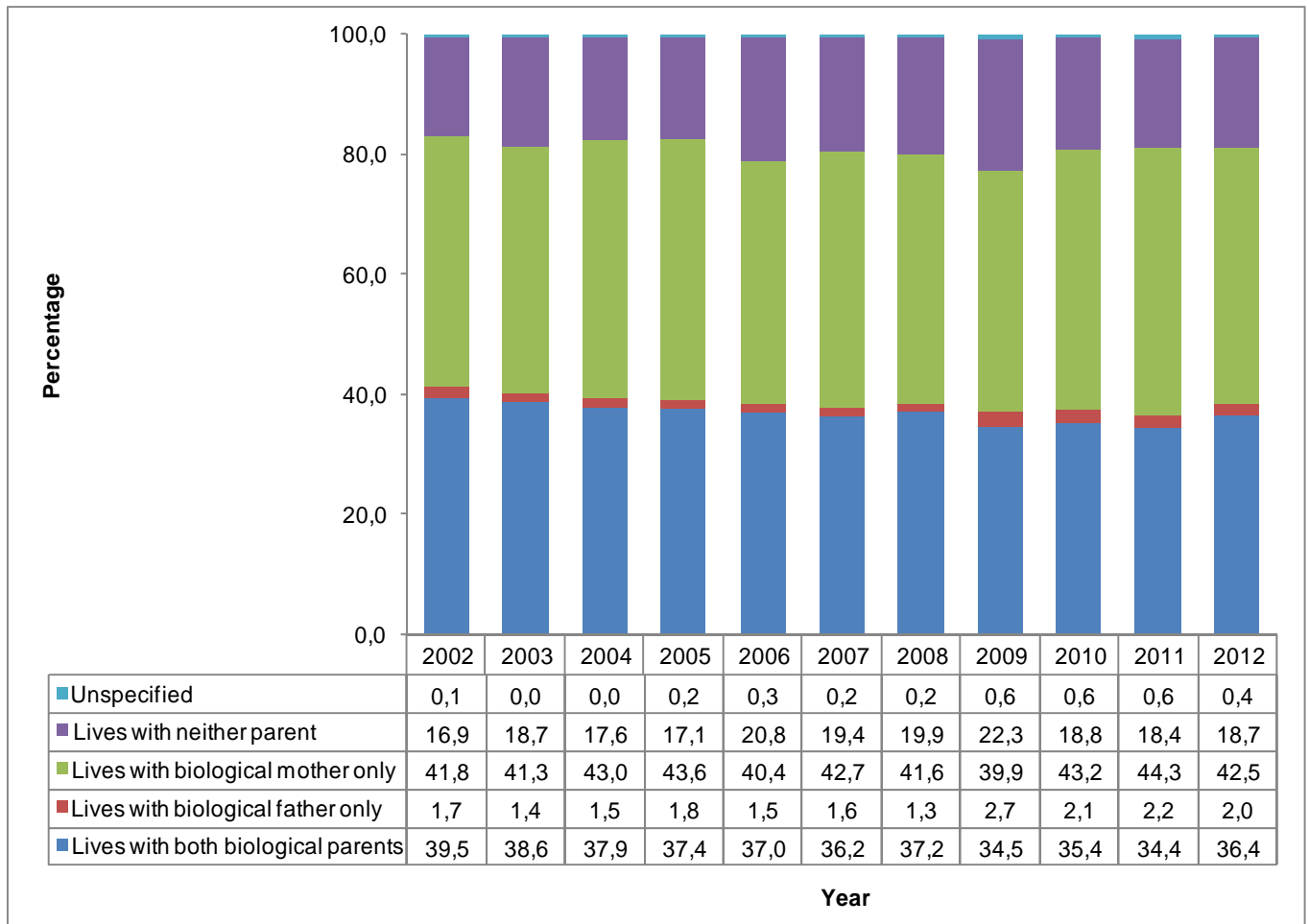
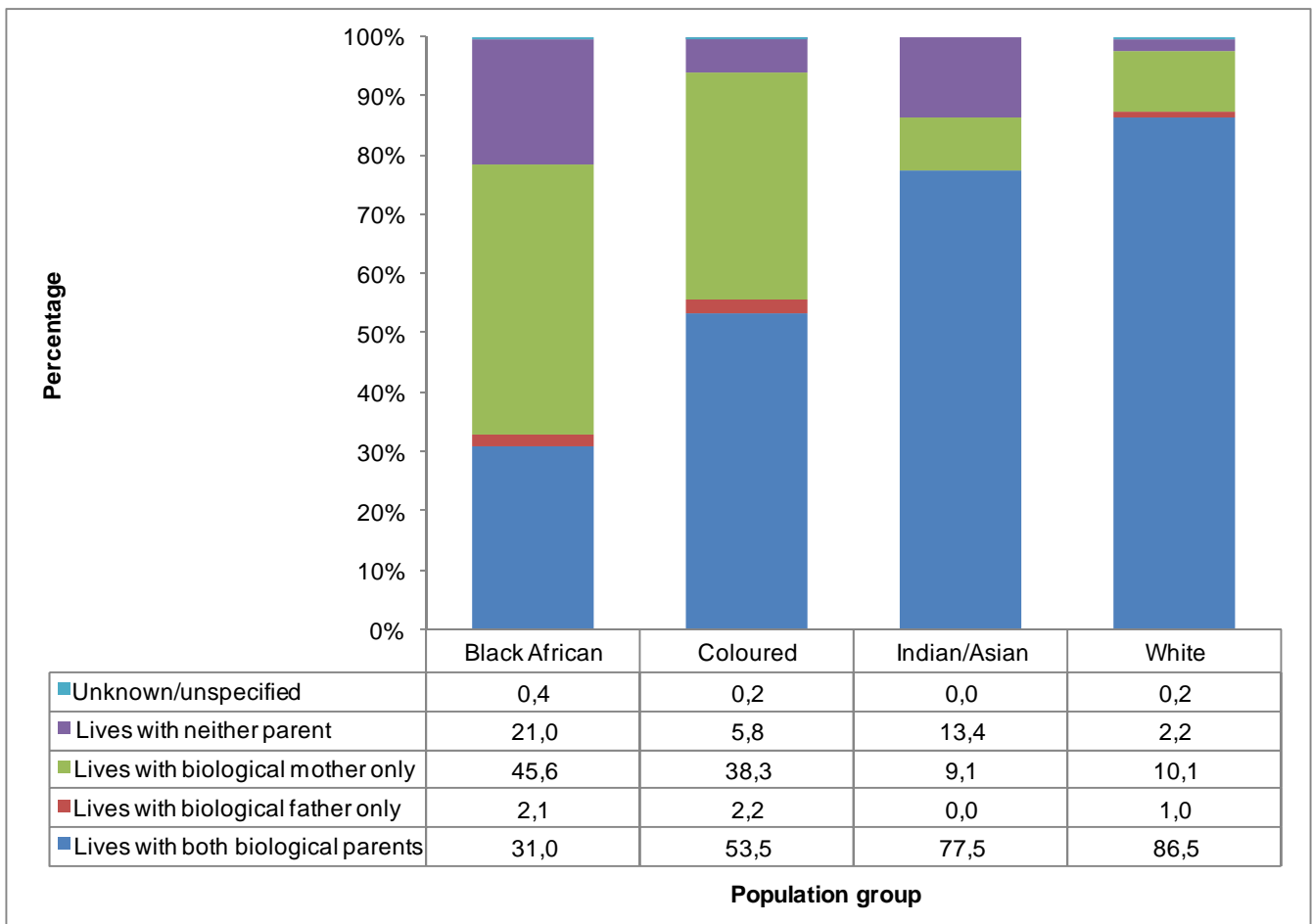


Figure 4.8 shows a further breakdown of living arrangements with biological parents in 2012 by population group. While the majority of young children from the white (86,5%) and the Indian/Asian (77,5%) population groups lived with both their biological parents, 53,5% of those from the coloured population group lived with both their biological parents and only 31,0% of black African children lived with both their biological parents. Most young black African children lived with only their biological mother (45,6%) and 21,0% of them lived with neither parent.

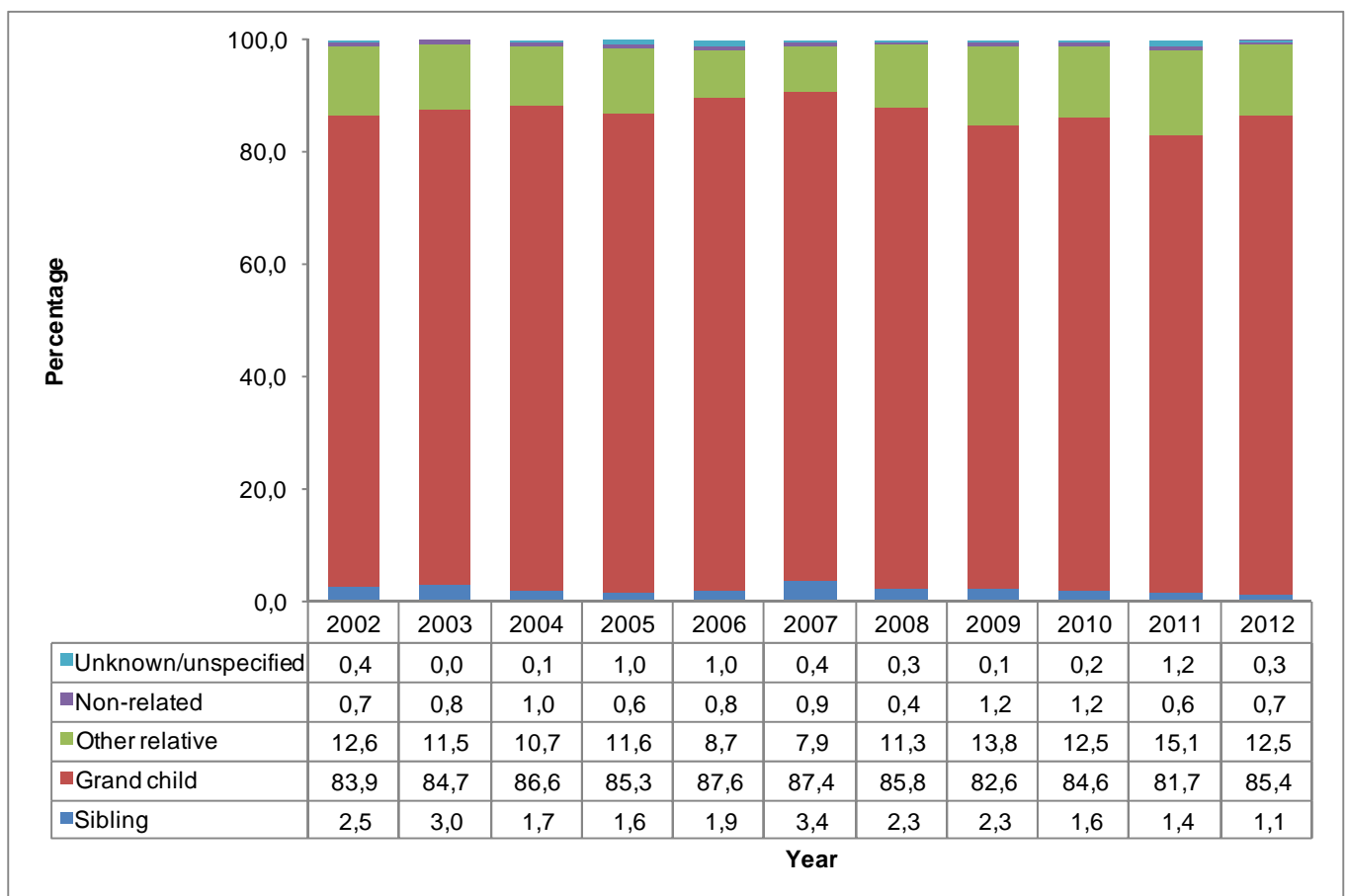
**Figure 4.8: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by population group and living arrangements with biological parents, 2012**



### 4.5.3 Living arrangements for children not living with biological parents

It is of importance to provide a profile of the living arrangements of young children aged below five years who did not live with any of their biological parents. Figure 4.9 shows that the majority of children (over 80%) who did not live with any of their biological parents lived in households headed by their grandparents. Others lived where the head of household was their relative (between 8% and 15%). A small percentage also lived with their siblings (less than 3,5% each year). About 1,2% or less of children aged less than five years not living with their biological parents lived in a household where they were not related to the head of the household. This pattern was consistent throughout the 11-year period.

**Figure 4.9: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years not living with their biological parents by relationship to head of household and year, 2002–2012**



### 4.5.4 Foster care

Questions on foster care were asked of individuals younger than 22 years who were not living with one or two of their biological parents. They or the people responding on their behalf were asked to indicate if they had been placed by the courts in the care of individuals in the household for purposes of foster care. Only those aged less than five years were analysed in this report.

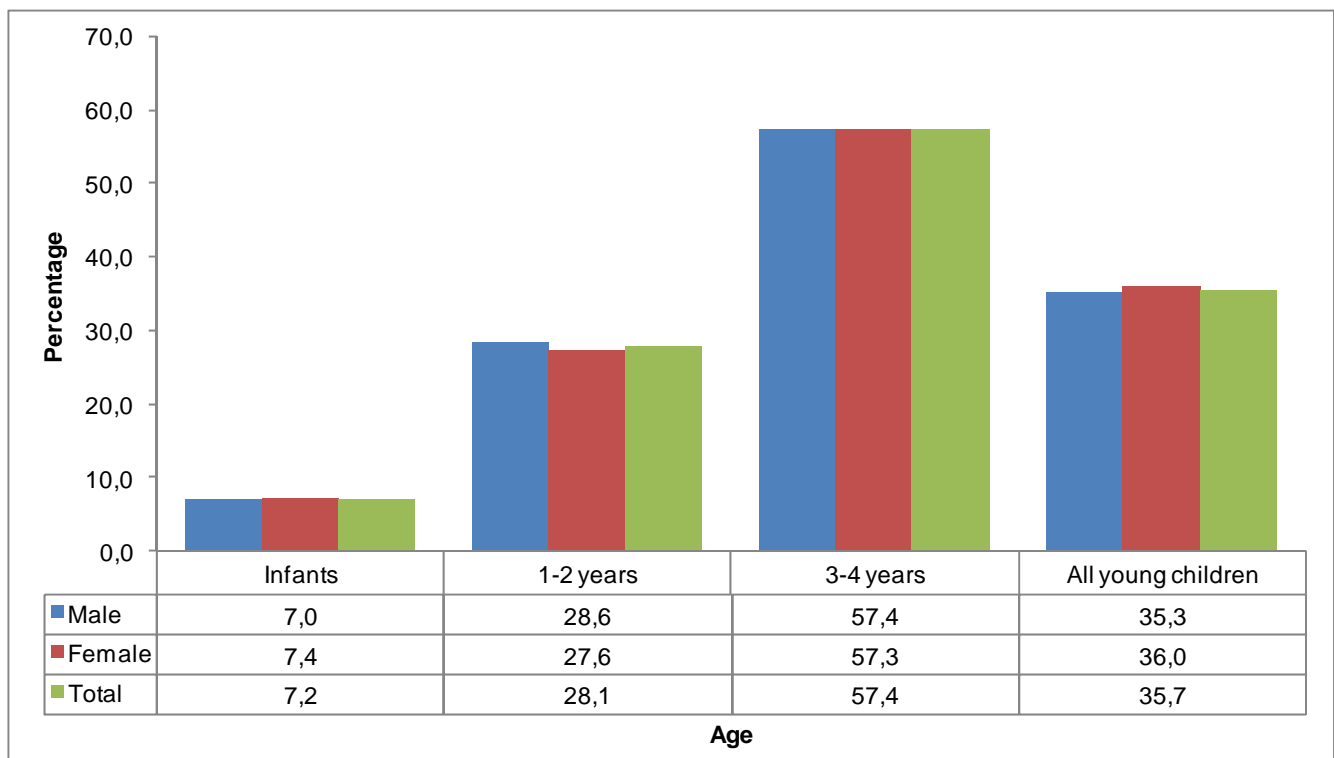
Overall, 0,5% of children aged less than five years were placed in their current households for purposes of foster care. The percentages were slightly higher for female as compared to male children across the three selected age groups of children. There were also slight increases in placement in foster care by age (0,3% for infants; 0,5% for those aged 1–2 years; and 0,7% for those aged 3–4 years) (figure not shown).

### 4.6 Early childhood development

According to the GHS, early childhood development (ECD) refers to the emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of a child. The survey asked if household members aged 0–4 attended an ECD centre and further asked if they were exposed to ECD programmes in any way.

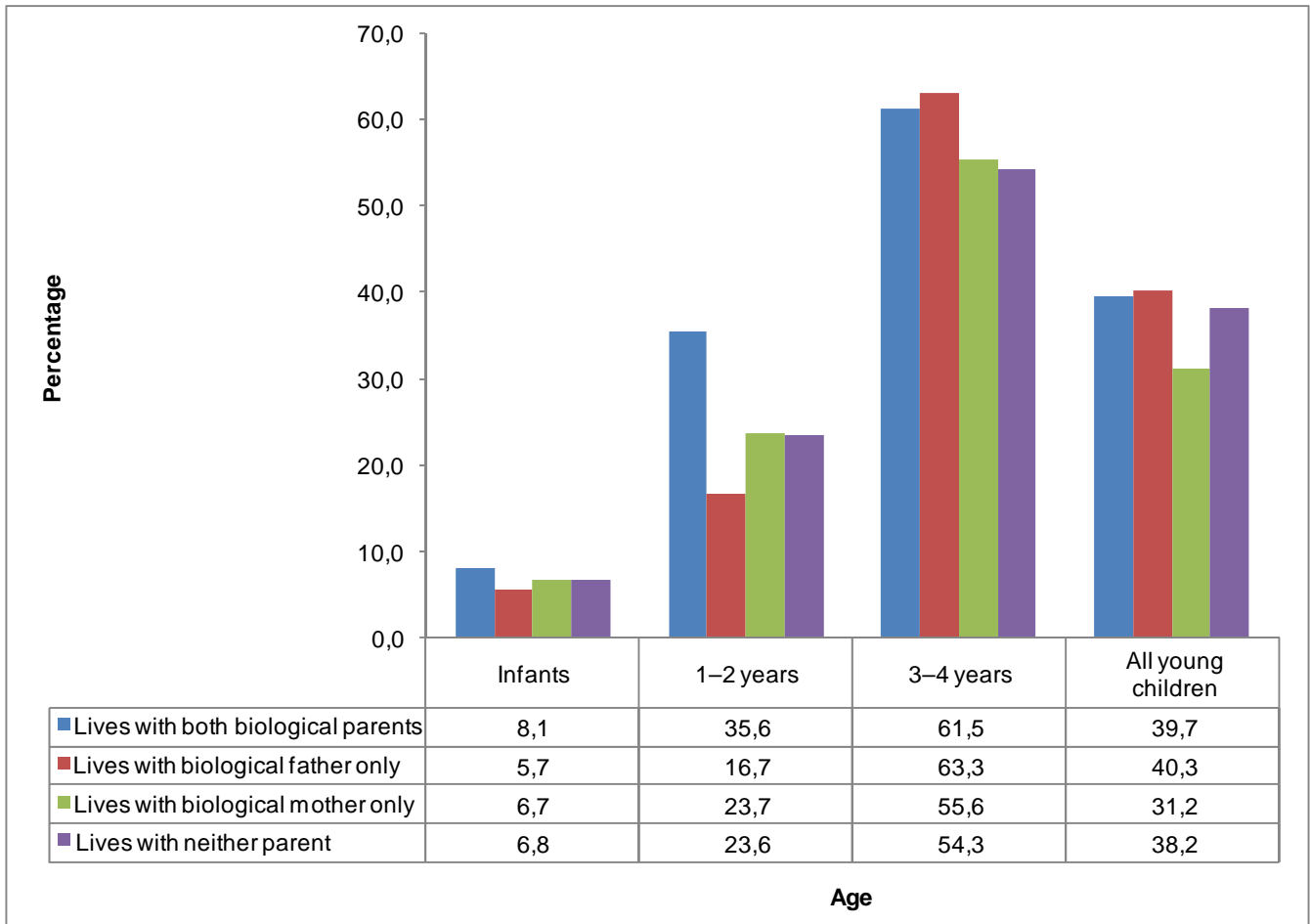
Focussing on attendance at an ECD centre, it was observed that there was variation in attendance in ECD programmes by age but not by sex (see Figure 4.10). A relatively small percentage of infants (about 7%) were attending ECD programmes, followed by about 28% of those aged 1–2 years. About 57% of those aged 3–4 years were attending ECD programmes. A total of 35,7% of children aged below five years were attending ECD programmes.

**Figure 4.10: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years attending an ECD centre by age and sex, 2012**



Differences in attendance at an ECD centre was observed by the living arrangements of children (see Figure 4.11). Generally, a relatively high proportion of much younger children (less than three years) that lived with both their biological parents attended an ECD centre. At ages 3–4 years, the proportions were much higher for those who lived with biological parents and those who lived with their biological fathers only. Throughout the ages, there were not many differences in attendance at an ECD centre for those who lived with their biological mothers only as well as those who lived with neither parent.

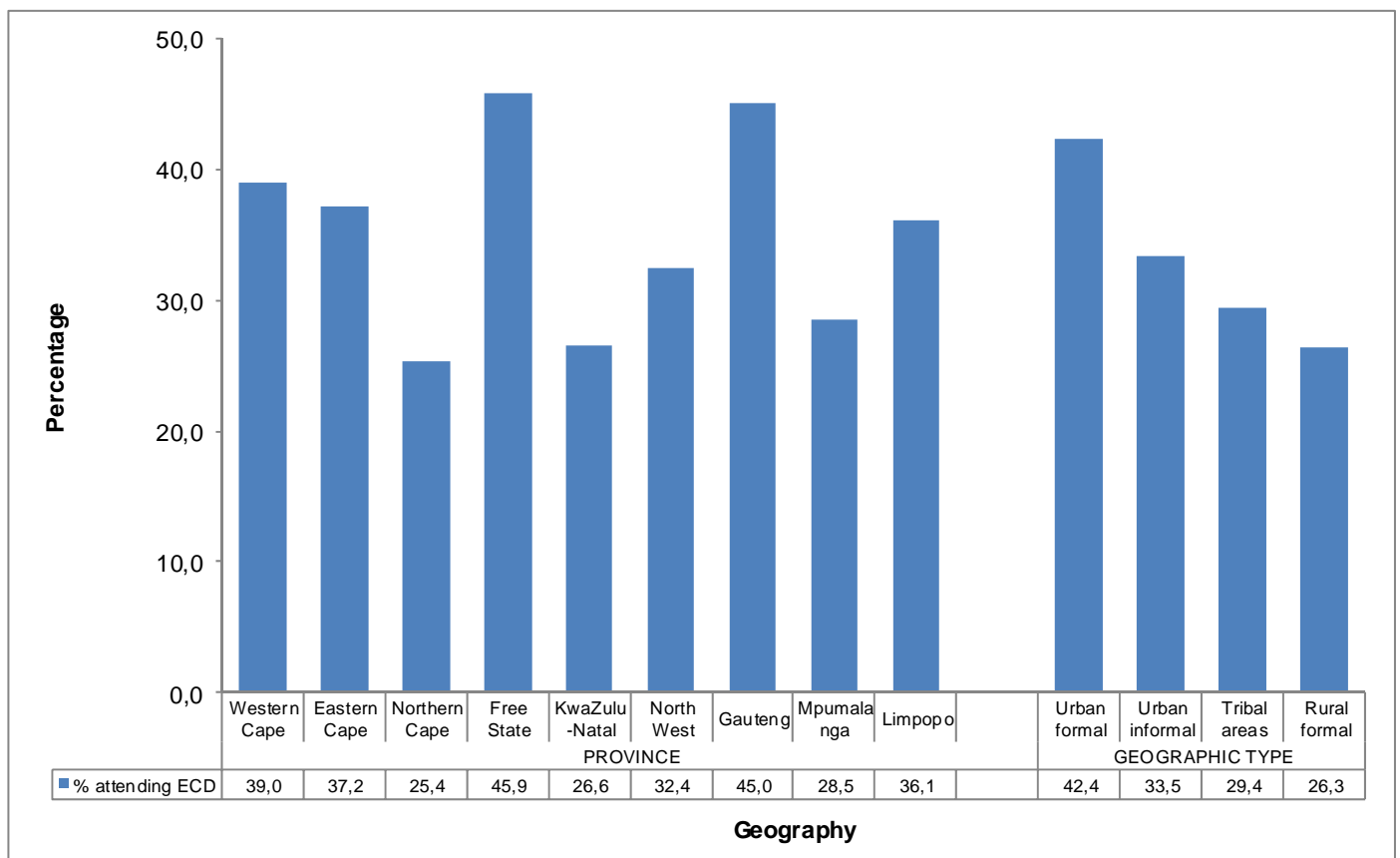
**Figure 4.11: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years attending an ECD centre by age and living arrangements, 2012**



There were some variations in ECD attendance by geographic areas (see Figure 4.12). A higher percentage of children aged below five years who lived in Free State (45,9%) and Gauteng (45,0%) were attending ECD centres at the time of the survey. Other provinces with a relatively high percentage of children attending ECD centres were Western Cape (39,0%), Eastern Cape (37,2%) and Limpopo (36,1%). The lowest proportions were observed in Northern Cape (25,4%) and KwaZulu-Natal (26,6%).

With regard to geographic type, the highest percentage of children aged 0–4 years who were attending ECD centres at the time of survey was observed in urban formal area (42,4%) and the lowest was observed in rural formal areas (26,3%).

**Figure 4.12: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years attending an ECD centre by geographic characteristics, 2012**



## 4.7 Social security

All household members were asked to indicate if they received social grants, pension or social relief assistance from the government. A total of 15,4 million individuals indicated that they received grants, 3,2 million (20,9%) of whom were children aged below five years. Overall, 60,8% of children aged below five years received a social grant, mainly the child support grant (60,5%). Very few children (0,3%) received the foster child grant.

The distribution by age shown in Figure 4.13 indicates that 44,0% of infants received the child support grant in 2012, followed by those aged 1–2 years (62,2%) and those aged 3–4 years (67,1%). The proportion receiving the foster child grant was very small for each of these ages.

**Figure 4.13: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by age and type of child grant received, 2012**

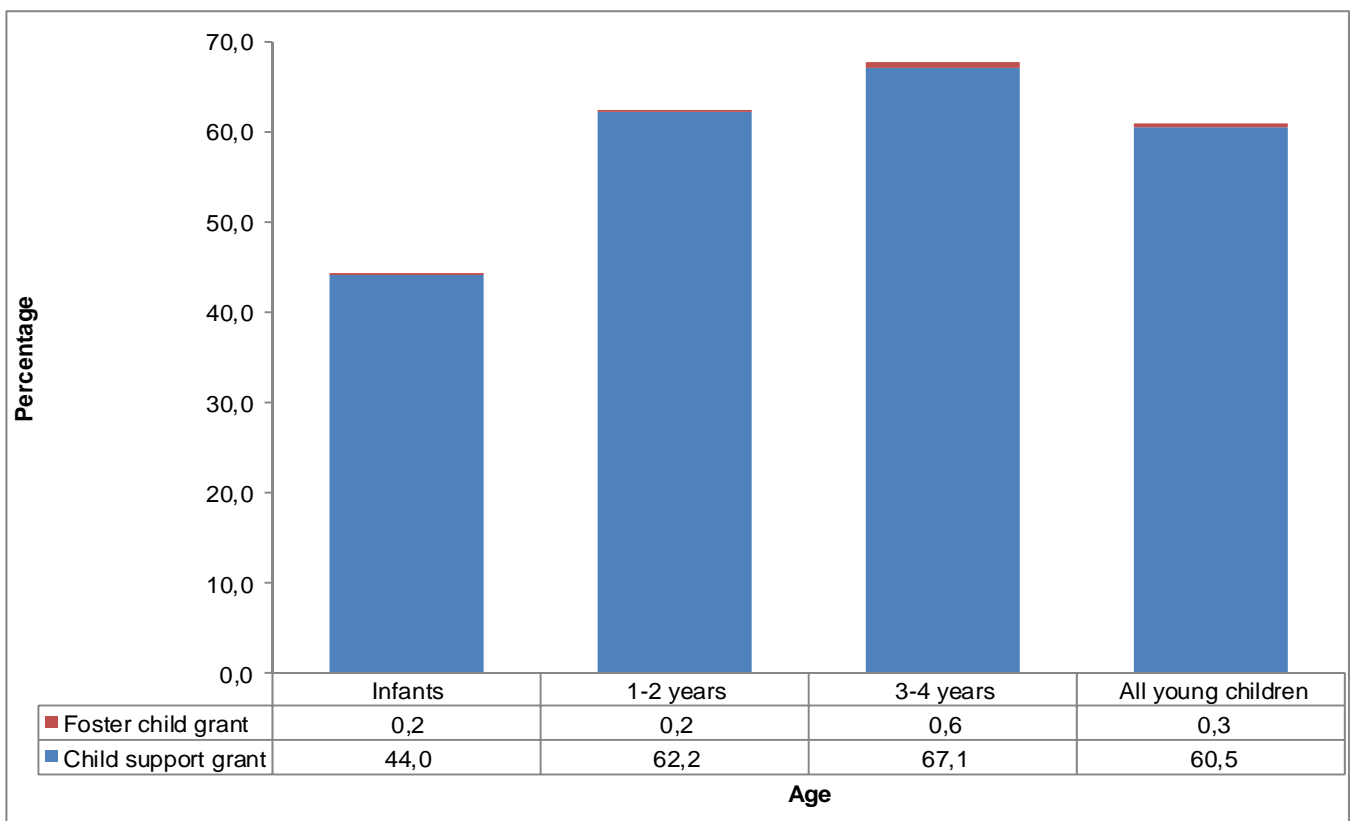
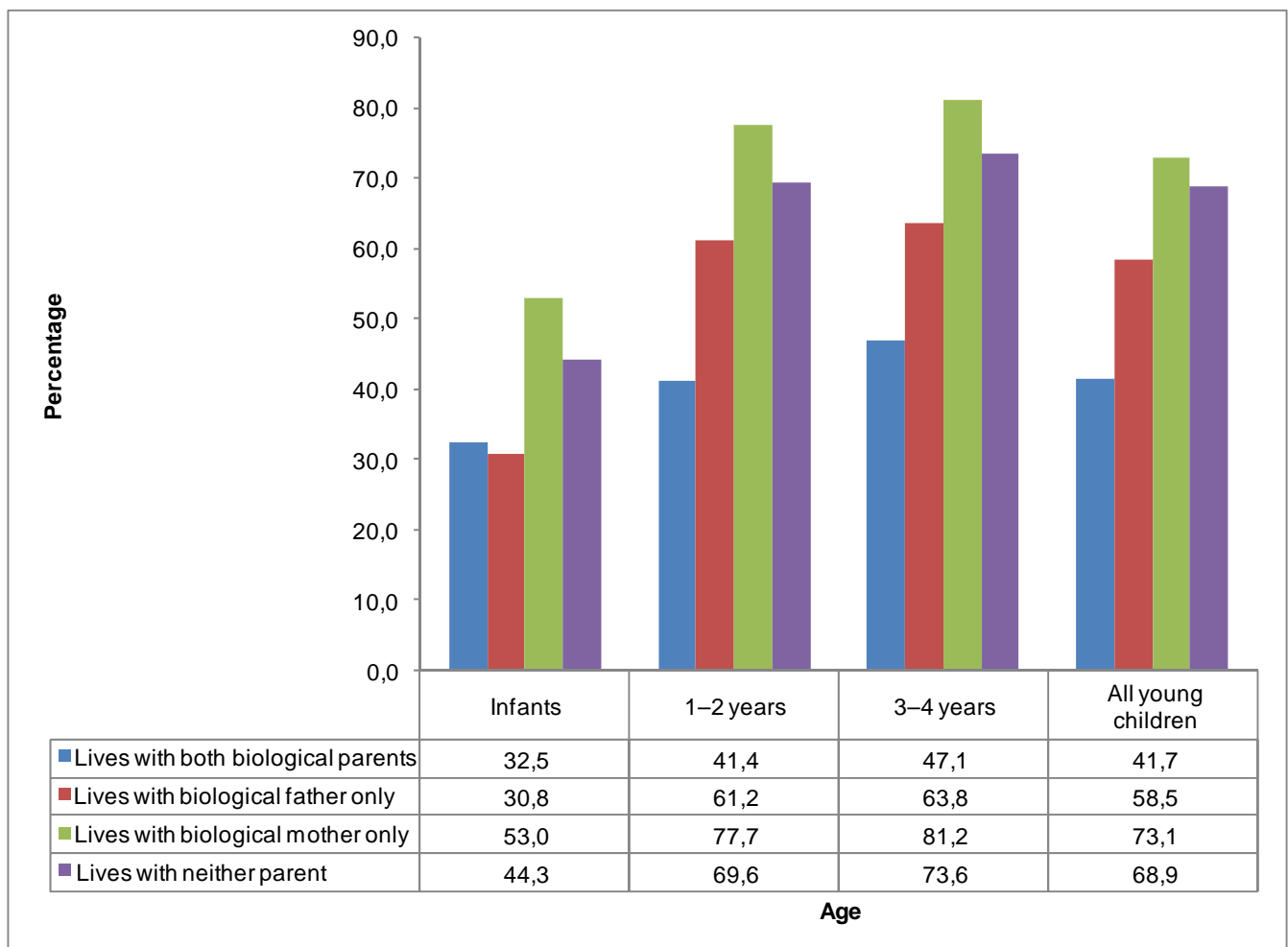




Figure 4.14 shows that the recipients of the child support grant at each age were mostly children who lived with their biological mothers only. During the first year of life, 53,0% of children who lived with their biological mother only received the child support grant, increasing to 77,7% for those aged 1–2 years and further to 81,2% for those aged 3–4 years. Overall, 73,1% of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their biological mothers only received the grant.

In general, the proportions receiving child support grant was much lower among children who lived with both parents, with the exception of infants where there was not much of a difference between those who lived with both biological parents and those who lived with their fathers only.

**Figure 4.14: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years who received child support grant by age and living arrangements, 2012**



## 4.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the characteristics of South African children as portrayed by the General Household Survey undertaken in 2012. Overall, there were slightly more male than female children aged below five years and the majority of South African young children were black African.

While the majority of children aged below five years had both their biological parents alive, many of them did not live with their biological parents in the same households. This pattern did not change much between 2002 and 2012. Fathers appeared to be more absent in the households than mothers. The children who did not live with neither biological parent mostly lived in households where their grandparents were the heads of households.

The living arrangements of children appeared to influence their access to social services. A lower proportion of children who lived with the biological mother only or who lived with neither parent attended ECD centres and they had a higher proportion of child support grant recipients.

## 5. Mothers and fathers of young children in South Africa

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the biological parents of South Africa’s young children based on the General Household Survey (GHS) undertaken in the country in 2012. The GHS asked questions on the survival status of biological parents, residence of the biological parents (whether the biological parents were part of the household) and an identification of the parents for those who lived in the same households as their biological children.

The chapter is only restricted to biological parents living in the same households as their children as the parents could be identified from the questions included in the GHS. No details were collected for parents who were alive but did not stay within the same household as their biological children as well as those that had died. The main limitation of this chapter is that we are unable to report on all biological parents of young children as the characteristics of those who live with their biological children may be different from those who did not live with their biological children or those that had died. There was also no information collected on the reasons for not residing with biological children for the parents that were alive but were not living in the same household as their children.

All children aged below five years were linked to their biological parents and a mothers-file and a fathers-file that included the characteristics of the mothers and fathers respectively, were created. Information available on the parents includes age, sex, population group, province, marital status, education and labour market.

### 5.2 Total number of young children living with biological parents

There was a total of 4 266 641 young children (aged below five years) who lived in the same household as their biological mothers (see Table 5.1). Nearly three-quarters (72,1%) of the children were the only biological children of the mother living in the same household. About 25,4% were young children living with two or more young siblings from the same biological mother in the same household. A total of about 2,4% were with three or more young siblings from the same biological mother.

In the case of fathers, Table 5.1 further shows that 2 007 879 young children below the age of five years lived with their biological fathers. About two-thirds (67,6%) of the children were the only biological child of the father living in the same household and about a third (32,0%) had one young sibling from the same biological father. Less than 1% (0,4%) of children in the household was one of three young siblings from the same biological father.

There was a maximum of three biological children aged below five years per parent for fathers and four per parent for mothers. A total of 97,5% of mothers and 99,6% of fathers had a maximum of two children per parent.

**Table 5.1: Distribution of children aged 0–4 years by number of children per parent, 2012**

| Number of children per parent | Mothers            |              | Fathers            |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
|                               | Number of children | Percentage   | Number of children | Percentage   |
| 1                             | 3 078 360          | 72,1         | 1 356 510          | 67,6         |
| 2                             | 1 084 076          | 25,4         | 642 373            | 32,0         |
| 3                             | 95 889             | 2,2          | 8 996              | 0,4          |
| 4                             | 8 316              | 0,2          | 0                  | 0,0          |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>4 266 641</b>   | <b>100,0</b> | <b>2 007 879</b>   | <b>100,0</b> |

### 5.3 Characteristics of parents living with their biological children

#### 5.3.1 Age distribution

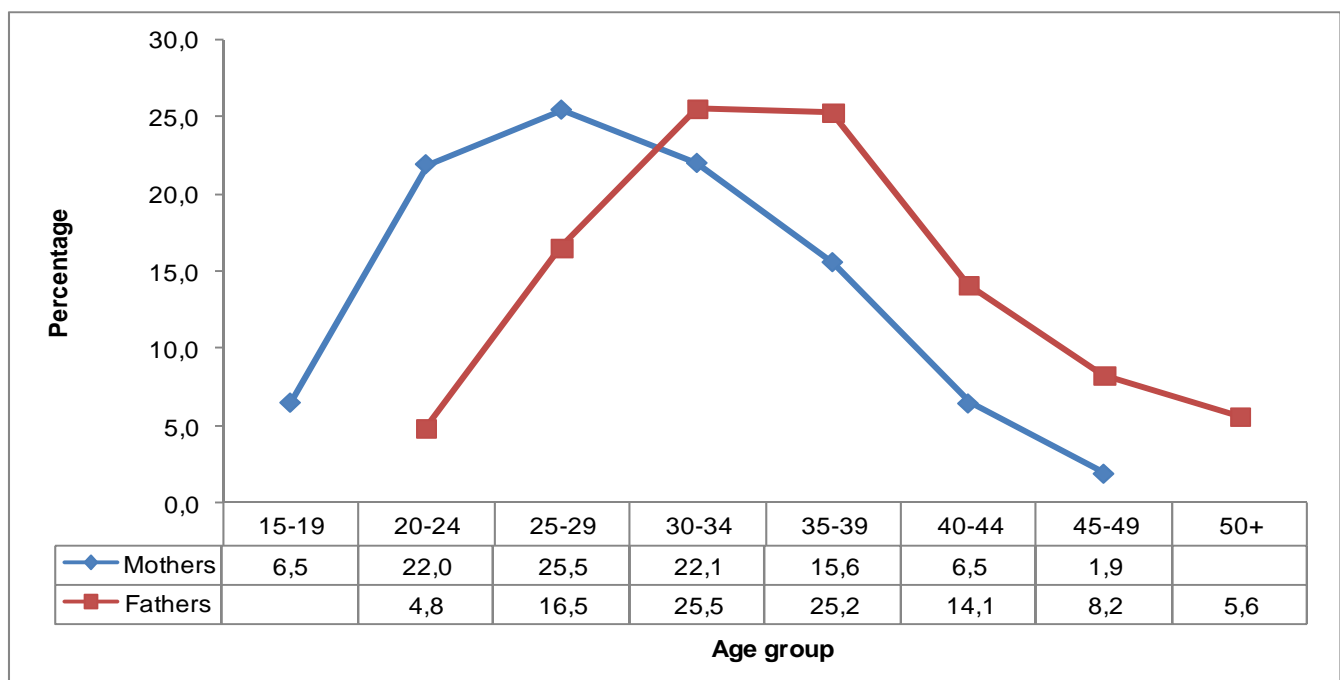
In total, there were 3 653 955 mothers who lived in the same household as their biological children. The information is only available for mothers who were living in the same household as their biological children as explained in Chapter 3. The same applies for fathers. Information on the total number of children that a woman or a man has had, whether alive, dead or living elsewhere, is not available in the GHS. The results showed that 43,2% of mothers lived with the biological fathers of their children.

As observed in Figure 5.1, mothers of young children were generally aged between 20–24 and 30–34 years. A total of 69,6% mothers were in these age groups. A peak was observed at age group 25–29, with 25,5%. Less than 2% of mothers of young children were aged 45 years and older (1,6% aged 45–49 years and 0,3% aged 50–54 years).

There were 1 677 696 fathers who lived in the same household as their biological children. Figure 5.1 further shows that a total of about half of fathers of young children were aged between 30–34 (25,5%) and 35–39 (25,2%) years. The proportions of fathers were lower for much younger fathers (aged 20–24) and much older fathers (45–49 and 50 years and older) from whom 4,8%, 8,2% and 5,6% of the total children were living with their biological children.

The two line graphs portrayed in Figure 5.1 shows that mothers tended to have children earlier and fathers tended to have their children later. About 54,0% of mothers were younger than 30 years and about 53% of the fathers were older than 34 years.

**Figure 5.1: Percentage distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their own biological children by age of parents, 2012\***

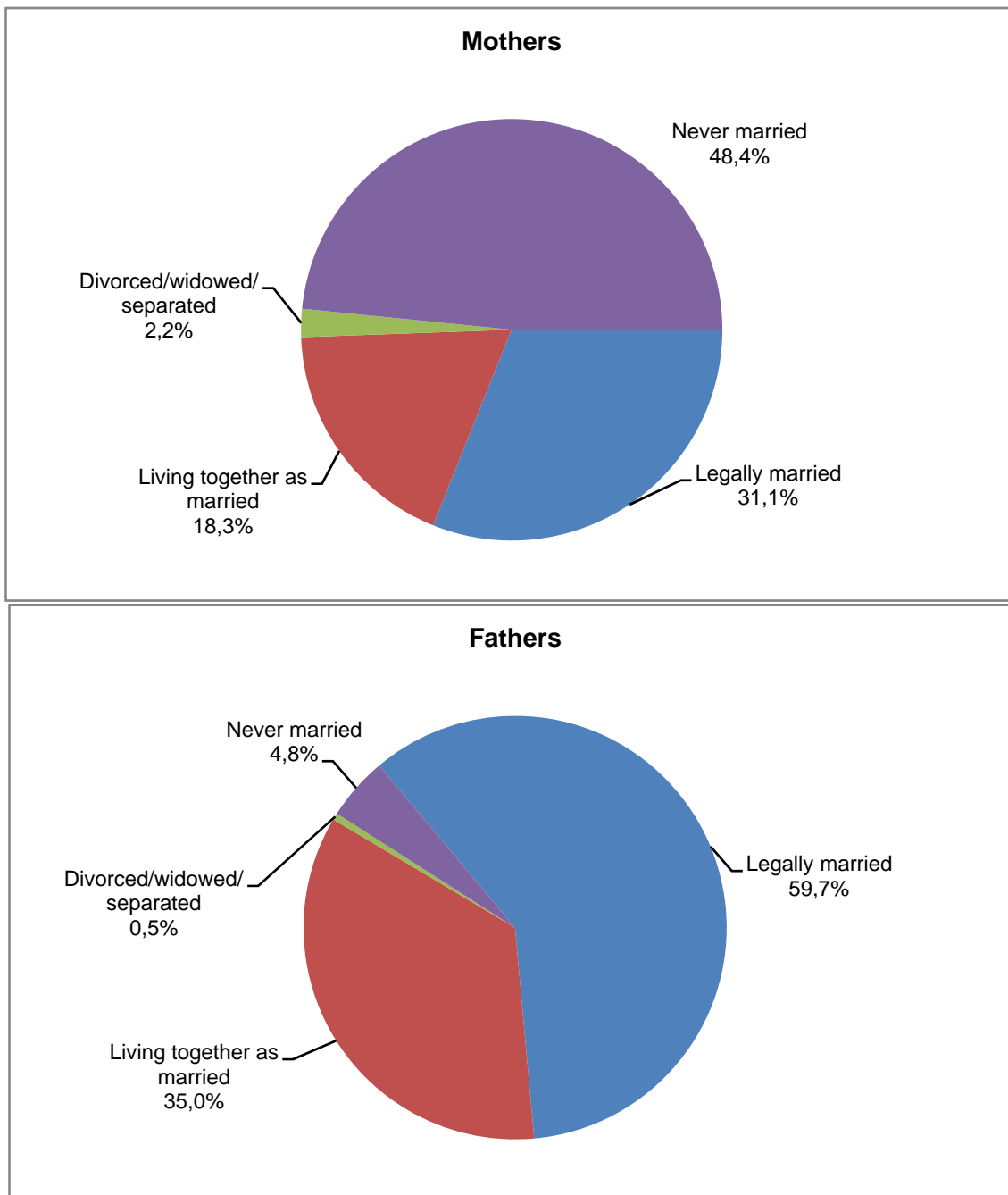


\* There were very few cases for fathers aged 15–19 and were therefore excluded from this analysis. Age group 45–49 for mothers refers to 45+ and includes mothers aged 50–54.

### 5.3.2 Marital status

On one hand, a total of about half of mothers who were living with their young biological children were legally married (31,1%) or were living together with their partners as married (18,3%) (see Figure 5.2). However, most mothers of young children (48,4%) had never married. On the other hand, the majority (94,7%) of fathers who lived with their young biological children were either legally married (59,7%) or living together as married (35,0%). About 4,8% of fathers had never married. Only 2,2% of mothers and 0,5% of fathers were divorced, widowed or separated.

**Figure 5.2: Percentage distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their biological children by marital status, 2012**

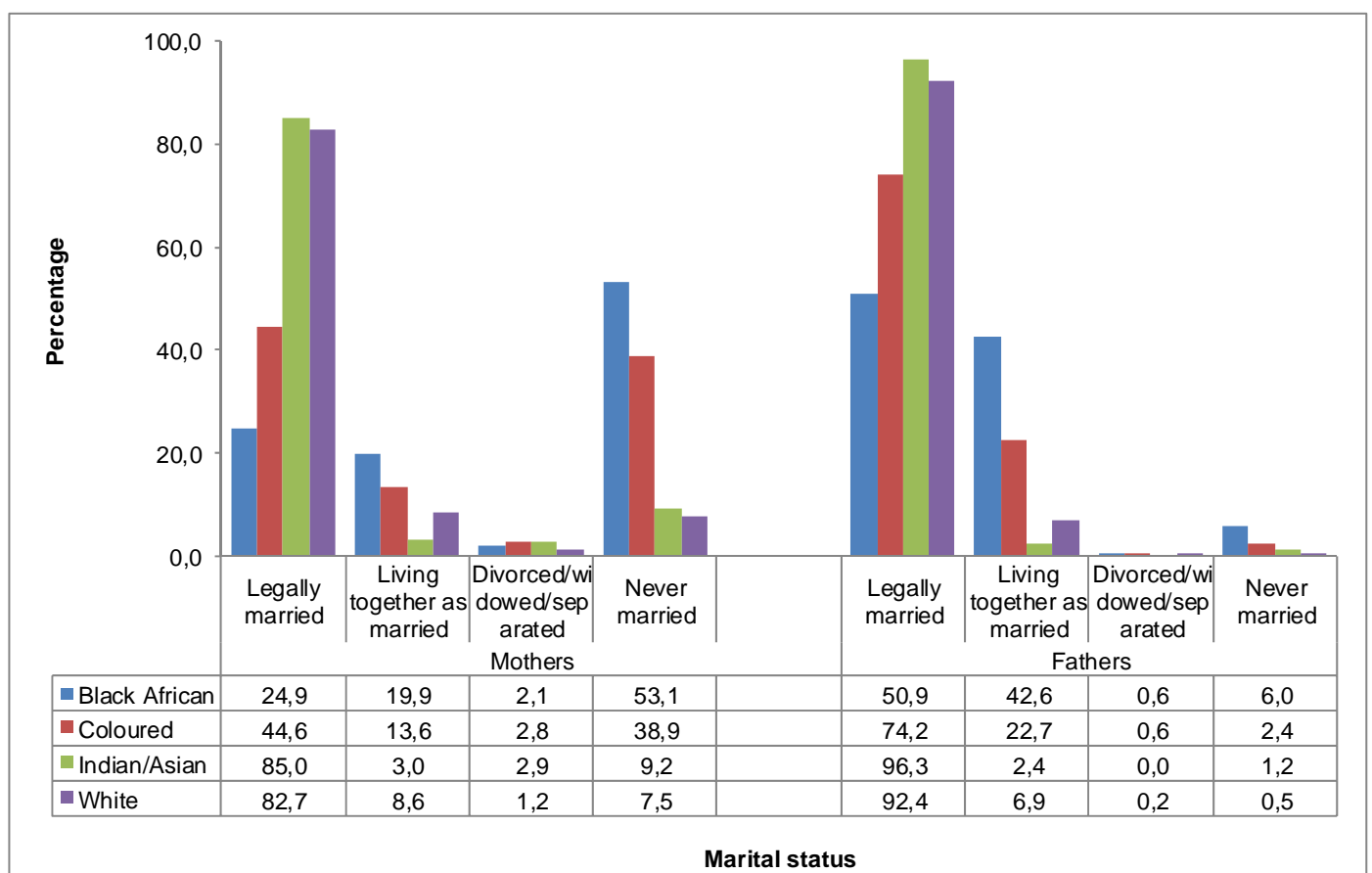


There was wide variation in the distribution of mothers and fathers of young children by both population group and marital status (see Figure 5.3). The majority of mothers from the Indian/Asian (85,0%), and the white (82,7%) population groups were legally married whereas less than half from the coloured (44,6%) and the black African (24,9%) population groups were legally married. The majority (53,1%) of mothers from the black African population group had never married. Comparable figures for the Indian/Asian and white population groups were 9,2% and 7,5%, respectively. Almost one in five (19,9%) mothers from the black African population group were living together with a partner as married.

Differences for fathers show that 96,3% of fathers from the Indian/Asian and 92,4% from the white population group who lived the same household as their biological children were legally married. Conversely, just 50,9% of the black African fathers and 74,2% of the coloured population group were legally married. About 42,6% of black African fathers living with their biological children were living together as married and 6,0% had never married. Similarly, 22,7% of fathers from the coloured population group living with their biological children were living together as married and 2,4% had never married.

Differences between mothers and fathers were particularly noted for those who were never married. A relatively small percentage of fathers from all population groups who had never married were living with their biological children whereas the proportions of mothers who had never married but living with their children was higher, especially the black African mothers.

**Figure 5.3: Percentage distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their biological children by marital status and population group, 2012**



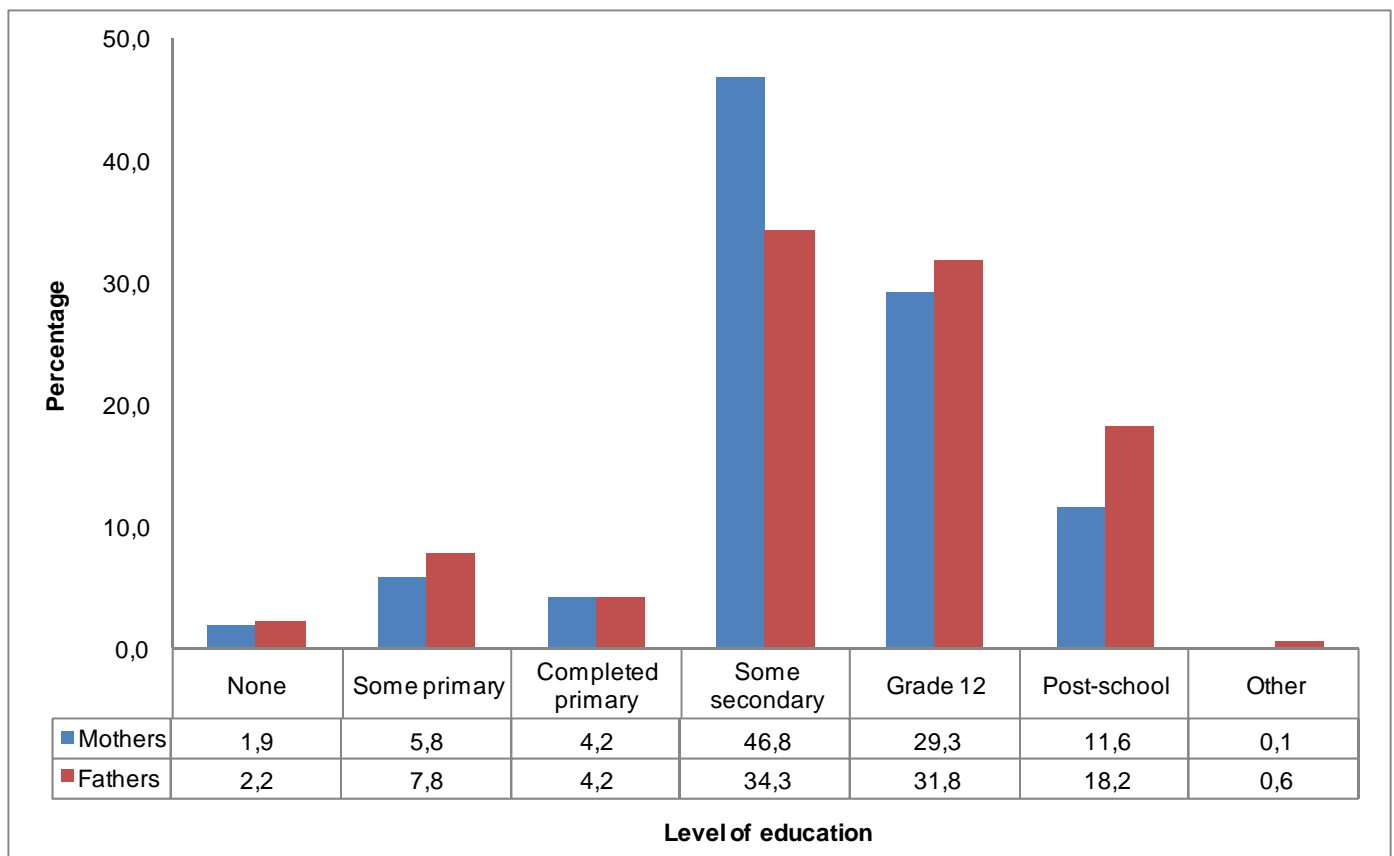
### 5.3.3 Educational background

Figure 5.4 shows that 46,8% of mothers of young children had attained some secondary education, followed by 29,3% who had completed Grade 12. About 12,0% of mothers of young children did not have a minimum of secondary education. Only 11,6% of mothers had received post-school education (any qualification higher than Grade 12).

The figure further shows that most fathers who were living with their young biological children had attained some secondary education (34,3%) or had Grade 12 (31,8%). About 18,2% had a qualification beyond Grade 12 (post-school). Only 2,3% of the fathers living with their biological children were currently attending school, mostly in higher educational institutions.

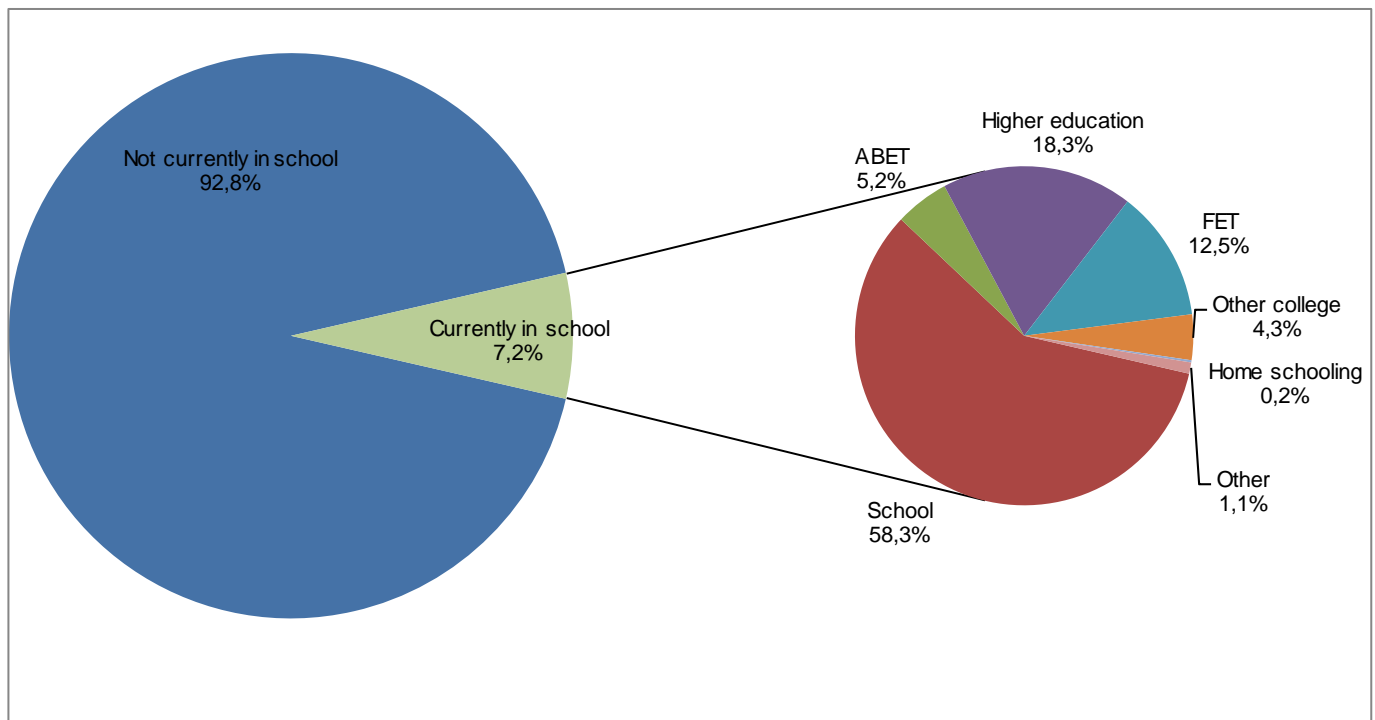
Generally, the proportions of mothers with some secondary level of education were higher than those of fathers while the proportions of fathers were higher than those of mothers from Grade 12.

**Figure 5.4: Percentage distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their biological children by highest level of educational attainment, 2012**



With regard to current attendance at an educational institution, the results showed that 7,2% of mothers and only 2,2% of fathers were attending at the time of the survey. Further analysis on this variable is undertaken only for mothers due a smaller number of fathers who were currently attending an educational institution. Figure 5.5 shows that most mothers (58,3%) who were attending an educational institution were enrolled in formal school (up to Grade 12). A further 18,3% were in higher educational institutions and 12,5% in FET (further education and training) institutions.

**Figure 5.5: Percentage distribution of mothers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their biological children by current attendance in an educational institution, 2012**



### 5.3.4 Labour market status

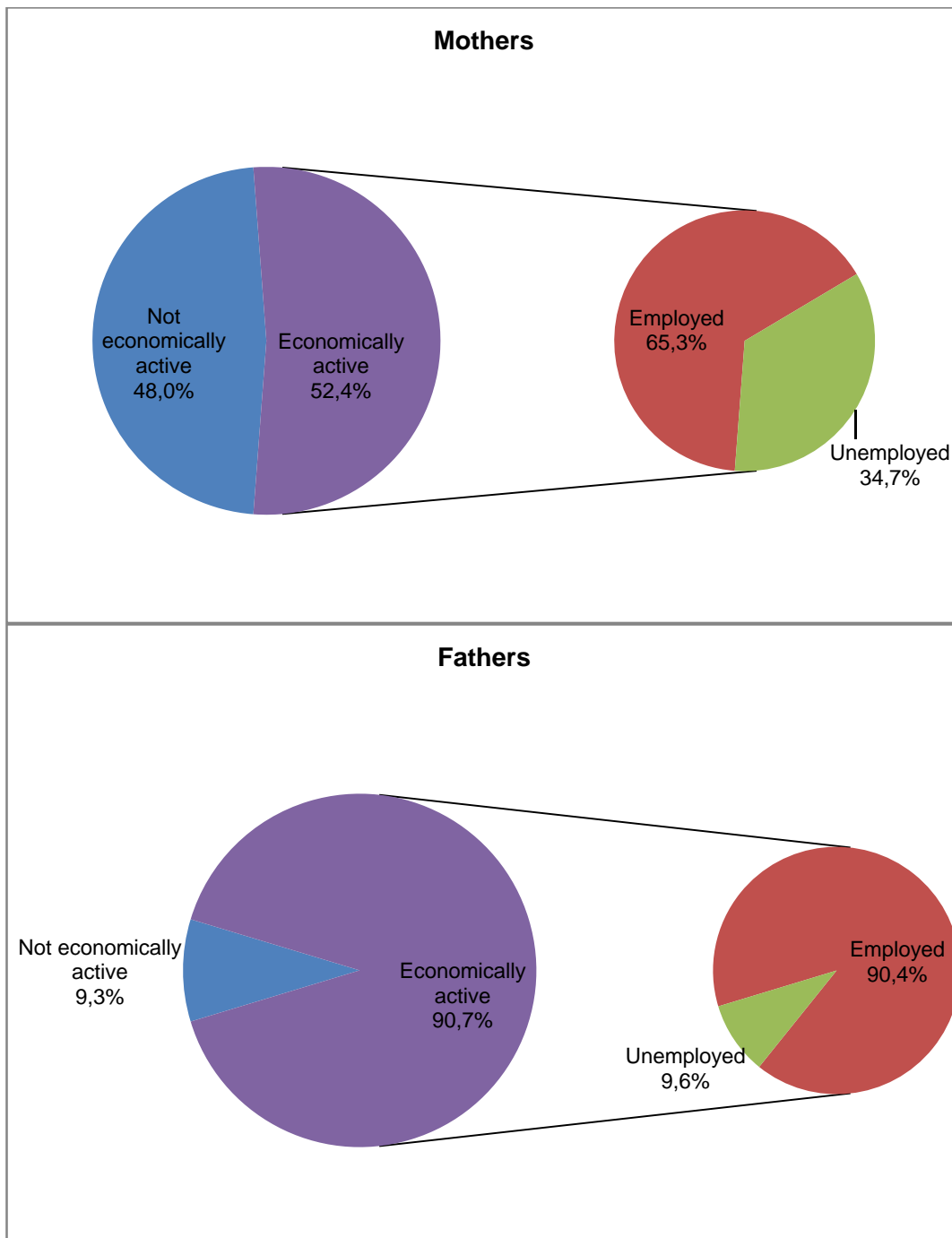
The labour market status of mothers and fathers of young children is provided in Figure 5.6. The economically active population is composed of:

- a) Those employed – worked for a wage, salary, commission or any payment in kind in the week before the survey; ran any kind of business in the week before the survey; helped without being paid in any kind of business run by a member of the household in the week before the survey; or had a job or business that they would definitely return to even though they did not work for pay or profit in the reference week; and
- b) Those unemployed – without work; looked for any kind of work or tried to start any type of business in the four weeks before the survey; and would have started work had a suitable job be offered or started a business had circumstances allowed in the week before the survey.



Just over half (52,4%) of the mothers living with their young biological children were economically active while 90,7% of the fathers were. Out of the total number of mothers who were economically active, 65,3% were employed and 34,7% were unemployed. Of the fathers that were economically active, 90,4% were employed and 9,6% were unemployed. In all, among those economically active who were living with their biological children, the share of the employed was much higher among fathers than among mothers.

**Figure 5.6: Percentage distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their biological children by labour market status, 2012\***



## 5.4 Factors associated with living with more than one biological child

This sub-section describes the relationship between demographic, socio-economic and geographic characteristics of mothers and fathers and the total number of biological children aged less than five years with whom they lived. The number of children aged below five years are categorised into two: (a) one child; and (b) more than one child.

The results shown in Tables 5.2 to 5.7 indicate that the majority of mothers and fathers in all categories of the variables under study lived with only one child aged below five years although the extent differed within each variable. It is further observed that overall, a higher proportion of fathers (19,1%) lived with more than one biological child aged below five years compared to mothers (15,8%).

### 5.4.1 Age

Women in age groups 30–34 and 35–39 had relatively more young children living with them than women in other age groups (see Table 5.2). About 18% in each age group for those aged 30–34 and 35–39 lived with more than one biological child aged below five years. Those aged 20–24 (16,1%) and 25–29 (16,5%) also had a high percentage with two or more children. However, less than 10% of women in the youngest age group (15–19) and the oldest (45+) age groups had two or more one young biological child living with them.

The distribution by age of fathers shows that those aged between age groups 25–29 and 35–39 had a higher proportion living with two or more biological children (around 20% each age group) compared to the other age groups. Fathers who were much younger (20–24 years) and much older (50 years and older) had relatively low proportions (11,5% and 10,8% respectively) living with two or more young biological children.

The comparison of mothers and fathers by age group show that a higher proportion of fathers who lived with their biological children lived with more than one child, except when the fathers were very young. At age group 20–24, 11,5% of fathers lived with more than one biological child aged below five years compared to 16,1% of mothers in the same age. The numbers of fathers aged 15–19 were too small for a meaningful analysis and were therefore excluded.

**Table 5.2: Distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their own biological children by number of children per parent and age group, 2012**

| Mothers        |             |                     | Fathers        |             |                     |
|----------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Age group      | One child   | More than one child | Age group      | One child   | More than one child |
| 15-19          | 93,4        | 6,6                 | 15-19          | -           | -                   |
| 20-24          | 83,9        | 16,1                | 20-24          | 88,5        | 11,5                |
| 25-29          | 83,5        | 16,5                | 25-29          | 78,4        | 21,6                |
| 30-34          | 82,1        | 17,9                | 30-34          | 80,6        | 19,4                |
| 35-39          | 81,9        | 18,1                | 35-39          | 78,4        | 21,6                |
| 40-44          | 88,3        | 11,7                | 40-44          | 80,2        | 19,8                |
| 45+            | 96,8        | 3,2                 | 45-49          | 84,8        | 15,2                |
|                |             |                     | 50+            | 89,2        | 10,8                |
| <b>Overall</b> | <b>84,2</b> | <b>15,8</b>         | <b>Overall</b> | <b>80,9</b> | <b>19,1</b>         |

### 5.4.2 Marital status

With regard to marital status (see Table 5.3), the never married and divorced/widowed/separated mothers and fathers had the lowest proportions living with more than one child (between 12% and 13%). Conversely, those legally married, for both mothers and fathers, had higher proportions living with more than one young biological child, followed by those living together as married (between 18% and 20%). There appeared to be minimal differences in the percentages for both males and females.

**Table 5.3: Distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their own biological children by number of children per parent and marital status, 2012**

| Marital status             | Mothers     |                     | Fathers     |                     |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                            | One child   | More than one child | One child   | More than one child |
| Legally married            | 80,7        | 19,3                | 79,9        | 20,1                |
| Living together as married | 81,8        | 18,2                | 81,6        | 18,4                |
| Divorced/widowed/separated | 86,9        | 13,1                | 86,6        | 13,4                |
| Never married              | 87,3        | 12,7                | 87,4        | 12,6                |
| <b>Overall</b>             | <b>84,2</b> | <b>15,8</b>         | <b>80,9</b> | <b>19,1</b>         |

### 5.4.3 Population group

On one hand, a much higher proportion of women from the white (25,4%) and the Indian/Asian (22,2%) population groups had two or more young biological children living with them (see Table 5.4). On the other hand, a lower proportion of mothers from the black African (14,9%) and the coloured (16,1%) population groups were living with two or more biological children. It is important to note that this does not reflect that these two groups had more children but that they tended to live with their biological children.

Similar results are observed for fathers. Fathers from the Indian/Asian (28,0%) and the white (26,3%) population groups had a higher proportion of living with two or more young biological children compared to those from the coloured (14,8%) and the black African (18,3%) population groups. With the exception of the coloured population group, proportions living with more than one child were highest for fathers as opposed to mothers.

**Table 5.4: Distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their own biological children by number of children per parent and population group, 2012**

| Population group | Mothers     |                     | Fathers     |                     |
|------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                  | One child   | More than one child | One child   | More than one child |
| Black African    | 85,1        | 14,9                | 81,7        | 18,3                |
| Coloured         | 83,9        | 16,1                | 85,2        | 14,8                |
| Indian/Asian     | 77,8        | 22,2                | 72,0        | 28,0                |
| White            | 74,6        | 25,4                | 73,7        | 26,3                |
| <b>Overall</b>   | <b>84,2</b> | <b>15,8</b>         | <b>80,9</b> | <b>19,1</b>         |

### 5.4.4 Educational attainment

The results on the proportion of parents with more than one child by educational attainment and sex of the parents shown in Table 5.5 indicates that the proportions of both mothers and fathers living with young biological children generally increased from no education to those who had completed primary education and then decreased for those with some secondary education. After this level, the proportions increased again, reaching the highest level among those with post-school such that mothers and fathers with post-school education had the highest proportion living with more than one biological child aged below five years.

Both mothers and fathers who had completed primary education had the second highest proportion of those living with more than one of their young biological children, followed by those with some primary education. Mothers with some secondary education and those with Grade 12 had the lowest proportions living with more than one young biological child while for the fathers, the lowest was observed among those with no education.

With the exception of those with no education, the proportions living with more than one child were higher for fathers as compared to mothers.

**Table 5.5: Distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with more than one of their own biological children by highest level of educational attainment, 2012**

| Population group  | Mothers     |                     | Fathers     |                     |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                   | One child   | More than one child | One child   | More than one child |
| None              | 83,0        | 17,0                | 84,6        | 15,4                |
| Some primary      | 82,5        | 17,5                | 79,7        | 20,3                |
| Completed primary | 79,9        | 20,1                | 77,5        | 22,5                |
| Some secondary    | 85,4        | 14,6                | 83,1        | 16,9                |
| Grade 12          | 84,5        | 15,5                | 83,0        | 17,0                |
| Post-school       | 79,1        | 20,9                | 73,7        | 26,3                |
| <b>Overall</b>    | <b>84,2</b> | <b>15,8</b>         | <b>80,9</b> | <b>19,1</b>         |

### 5.4.5 Employment status

Table 5.6 shows that relatively more women who were not economically active (17,3%) had a higher proportion of instances of living with two or more young children as compared to those who were economically active (14,4%). Among the economically active, those employed (15,1%) had a higher proportion of women living with two or more children than those unemployed (13,0%).

There appears not to be much difference by employment status and the number of young biological children living with their fathers. The comparison of proportions with more than one child for mothers and fathers indicate that fathers in all categories of employment status had higher proportions than mothers.

**Table 5.6: Distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their own biological children by number of children per parent and labour market status, 2012**

| Labour market status    | Mothers     |                     | Fathers     |                     |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                         | One child   | More than one child | One child   | More than one child |
| Not economically active | 82,7        | 17,3                | 79,7        | 20,3                |
| Economically active     | 85,6        | 14,4                | 81,0        | 19,0                |
| Employed                | 84,9        | 15,1                | 80,9        | 19,1                |
| Unemployed              | 87,0        | 13,0                | 81,3        | 18,7                |
| <b>Overall</b>          | <b>84,2</b> | <b>15,8</b>         | <b>80,9</b> | <b>19,1</b>         |

### 5.4.6 Geography

Differences by geographic variables (province and geographic type) and number of young biological children mothers and fathers lived with are shown in Table 5.7. For all the categories of the two variables of geography, the proportions living with more than one child were higher for fathers as compared to mothers.

For both mothers and fathers, the proportions with more than one child were highest in KwaZulu-Natal, followed by North West. Just over a quarter of fathers in each of these two provinces lived with more than one biological child aged below five years. The lowest for both mothers and fathers were observed in Northern Cape (13,0% and 14,7%, respectively).

Mothers and fathers living in rural formal areas had the highest proportions living with more than one biological child aged below five years. About 24,8% of mothers and 26,7% of fathers lived with more than one biological child. They were followed by those living in urban informal settlements. The lowest were observed for those living in urban formal areas (15,2% for mothers and 18,4% for fathers) and those living in traditional areas (15,3% for mothers and 19,0% for fathers).

**Table 5.7: Distribution of mothers and fathers of children aged 0–4 years that lived with their own biological children by number of children per parent and geographic characteristics, 2012**

| Geographic characteristics | Number of young biological children in the same household |                     |             |                     |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                            | Mothers   |                     | Fathers     |                     |
|                            | One child   | More than one child | One child   | More than one child |
| <b>Overall</b>             | <b>84,2</b>   | <b>15,8</b>         | <b>80,9</b> | <b>19,1</b>         |
| <b>Province</b>            |   |                     |             |                     |
| Western Cape               | 84,9  | 14,2                | 84,9        | 15,1                |
| Eastern Cape               | 83,7  | 15,3                | 80,6        | 19,4                |
| Northern Cape              | 86,0  | 13,0                | 85,3        | 14,7                |
| Free State                 | 85,9  | 14,1                | 79,4        | 20,6                |
| KwaZulu-Natal              | 79,5  | 18,6                | 73,8        | 26,2                |
| North West                 | 82,1  | 17,5                | 74,7        | 25,3                |
| Gauteng                    | 84,6  | 14,8                | 82,5        | 17,5                |
| Mpumalanga                 | 83,4  | 15,7                | 83,8        | 16,2                |
| Limpopo                    | 85,0  | 14,1                | 81,9        | 18,1                |
| <b>Geographic type</b>     |   |                     |             |                     |
| Urban formal               | 84,8  | 15,2                | 81,6        | 18,4                |
| Urban informal settlements | 83,0  | 17,0                | 79,6        | 20,4                |
| Traditional areas          | 84,7  | 15,3                | 81,0        | 19,0                |
| Rural formal areas         | 75,2  | 24,8                | 73,3        | 26,7                |

## 5.5 Summary

More mothers than fathers were living with their young biological children. Mothers and fathers from the Indian/Asian and white population groups were mostly legally married. While the proportions were lower, most mothers and fathers from the coloured population group were also legally married. However, most black African mothers were never married while the fathers were mostly legally married or living together as married.

Marriage imposes contractual obligations and responsibility of parents to their children. Where the two parents are obliged by marriage, child security fares better because even with the force of mortality, at least there is a 50% chance that the child will have one parent surviving and the likelihood of both perishing and the child remaining a complete orphan is 25,0%. But where the obligation is only falling on the mother as is the case in the coloured and black African populations, the chances of complete orphanhood and production and reproduction of poverty amongst the children in these households is very likely.

A small percentage of both mothers and fathers had attained post-school qualifications, with the percentage relatively lower for mothers. Furthermore, a much higher percentage of fathers were employed as compared to mothers.

Most parents were living with one biological child aged below five years. The number of young children living with their biological parents differed by characteristics of the parents. A higher proportion of mothers and fathers in middle ages lived with two or more children, as well as those from the Indian/Asian and the white population groups. Legally married mothers and fathers and those living together as married had a higher proportion living with more than one biological child aged less than five years.

There were no notable difference on the number of biological children fathers lived with by labour market status but differences were observed for mothers. The mothers who were not economically active had a relatively high proportion with two or more children. For both mothers and fathers, those with no education had a higher proportion living with two or more young biological children.

Differences by geographic areas showed that those living in KwaZulu-Natal and North West, as well as those who lived in rural formal areas had higher proportions living with two or more children aged below five years.

## 6. Home environment of South Africa's young children

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the physical environment in which young children (aged below five years) in South Africa lived in 2012. It is based on information from the General Household Survey undertaken in 2012 and covers all children included in the survey, regardless of the living arrangements of their parents. The analysis is based on household information provided by the heads of the households in the survey.

The type of housing or dwellings for households, access to services such as water, sanitation, electricity, waste management and refuse removal, health and welfare, food, sources of household income and domestic work form the basis of this chapter. Only differences by population group were considered as there were no differences observed by age groups of children and by sex of the children.

### 6.2 Types of housing

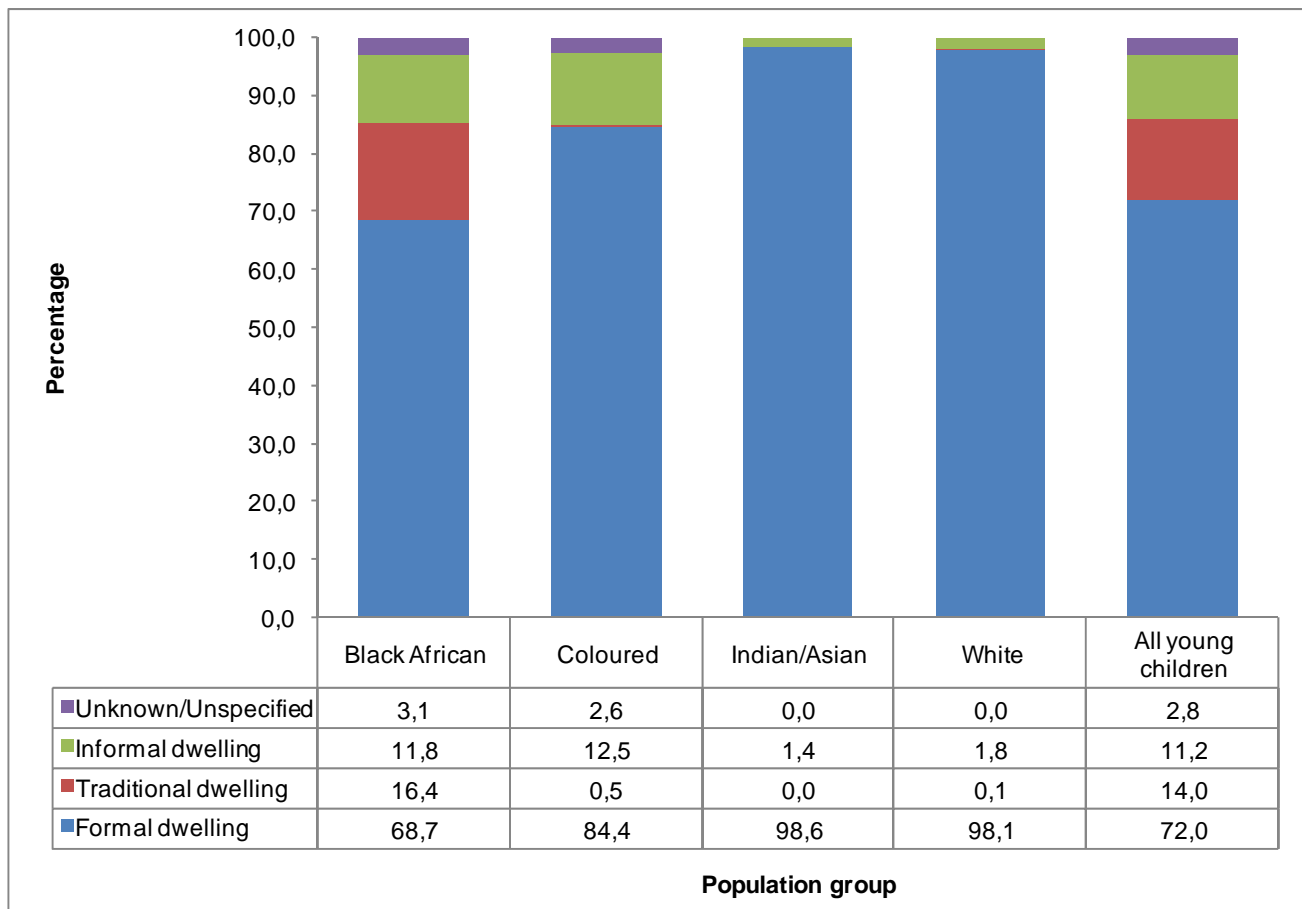
Figure 6.1 shows the proportion of young children by type of dwelling and age. The options on dwelling type have been re-grouped into three main categories:

- Formal dwelling – dwelling/house or brick/concrete block structure on a separate stand or yard or on a farm; flat or apartment in a block of flats; cluster house in a complex; town house (semi-detached house in complex); semi-detached house; dwelling/house/flat/room in backyard; and room/flat let on a property or a larger dwelling/servants' quarters/granny flat.
- Traditional dwelling – traditional dwelling/hut/structure made of traditional materials.
- Informal dwelling – informal dwelling/shack in backyard; and informal dwelling/shack not in backyard.



About 72,0% of young children lived in formal dwellings, followed by 14,0% who lived in traditional dwellings (see Figure 6.1) and then 11,2% who lived in informal settlements. Differences by type of dwelling and population group show that over 98,0% of young children from the white and Indian/Asian population groups lived in formal dwellings. However, 84,4% of young children from the coloured population group and 68,7% black Africans lived in formal dwellings. A higher proportion of young children from the coloured and black African population groups lived in informal dwellings (12,5% and 11,8% respectively).

**Figure 6.1: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by type of dwelling and population group, 2012**



### 6.3 Access to social services

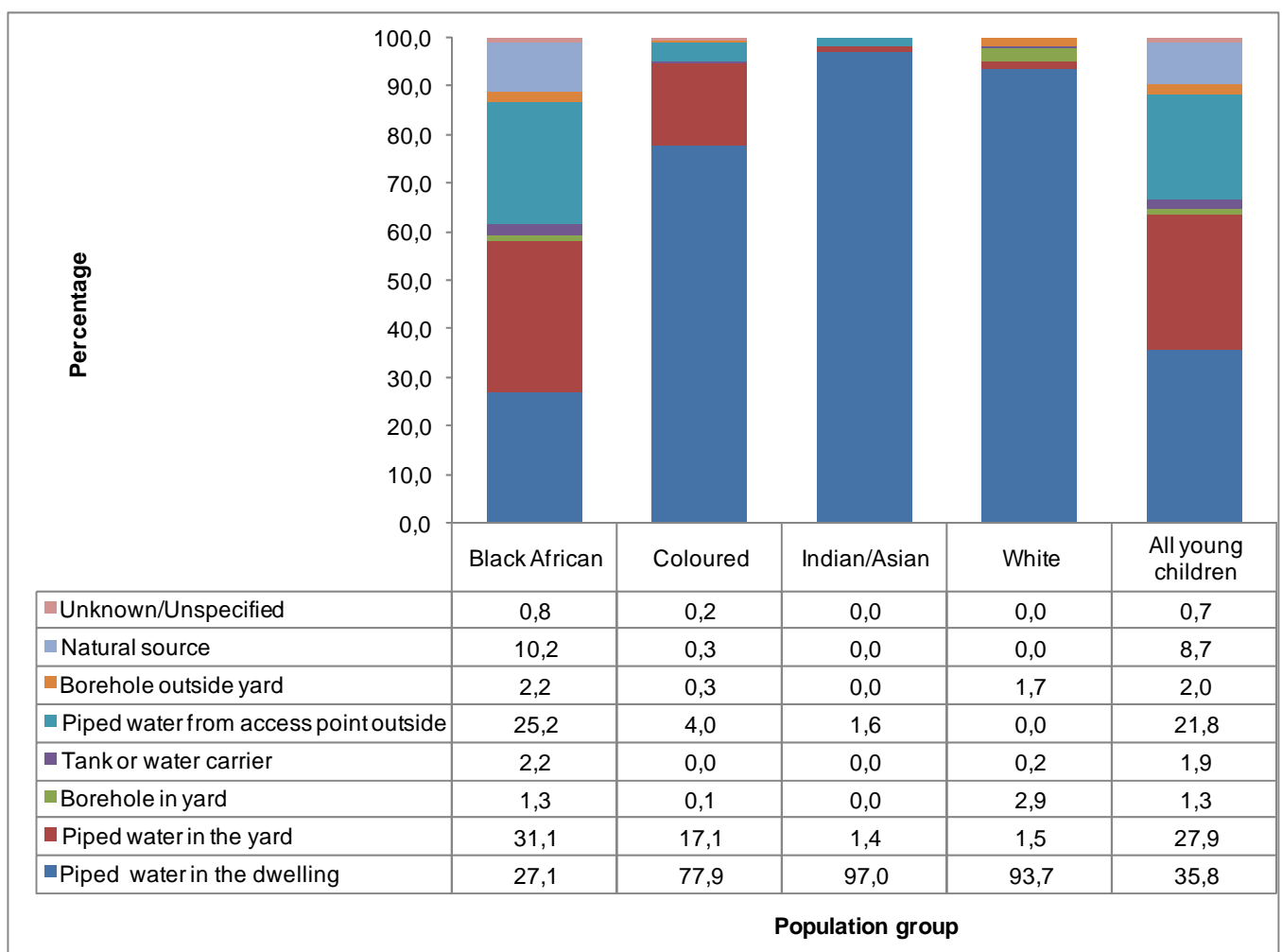
This sub-section discusses the proportions of young children who had access to different household services (water, sanitation, sources of energy and waste management and refuse removal). A comparison of access to services by population group of the child is presented for each home environment indicator.

### 6.3.1 Water

Figure 6.2 shows that 35,8% of young children aged below five years lived in households that had piped water in the dwelling. The second highest measure of access to drinking water was piped water in the yard, with 27,9% of children living in such households. Taken together (piped water in the dwelling and in the yard), this translates to about 63,7% of young children living in households where the source of water was within the yard.

Access to drinking water by population group shows huge disparities. Over 90% of children from the Indian/Asian (97,0%) and white (93,7%) population groups lived in households with piped water in the dwelling. About 77,9% of young children from the coloured population group resided in households with piped water in the dwelling while only 27,1% of black African children had the same access, with an additional 31,1% living in households with piped water in the yard. A relatively high proportion of young black African children also lived in households that accessed piped water outside their homes [(e.g. neighbour’s tap or public/communal tap) (25,2%)] or natural sources (10,2%) (i.e. flowing water/stream/river, well and spring). Children from other population groups rarely depended on these outside sources of water.

**Figure 6.2: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by source of drinking water and population group, 2012**



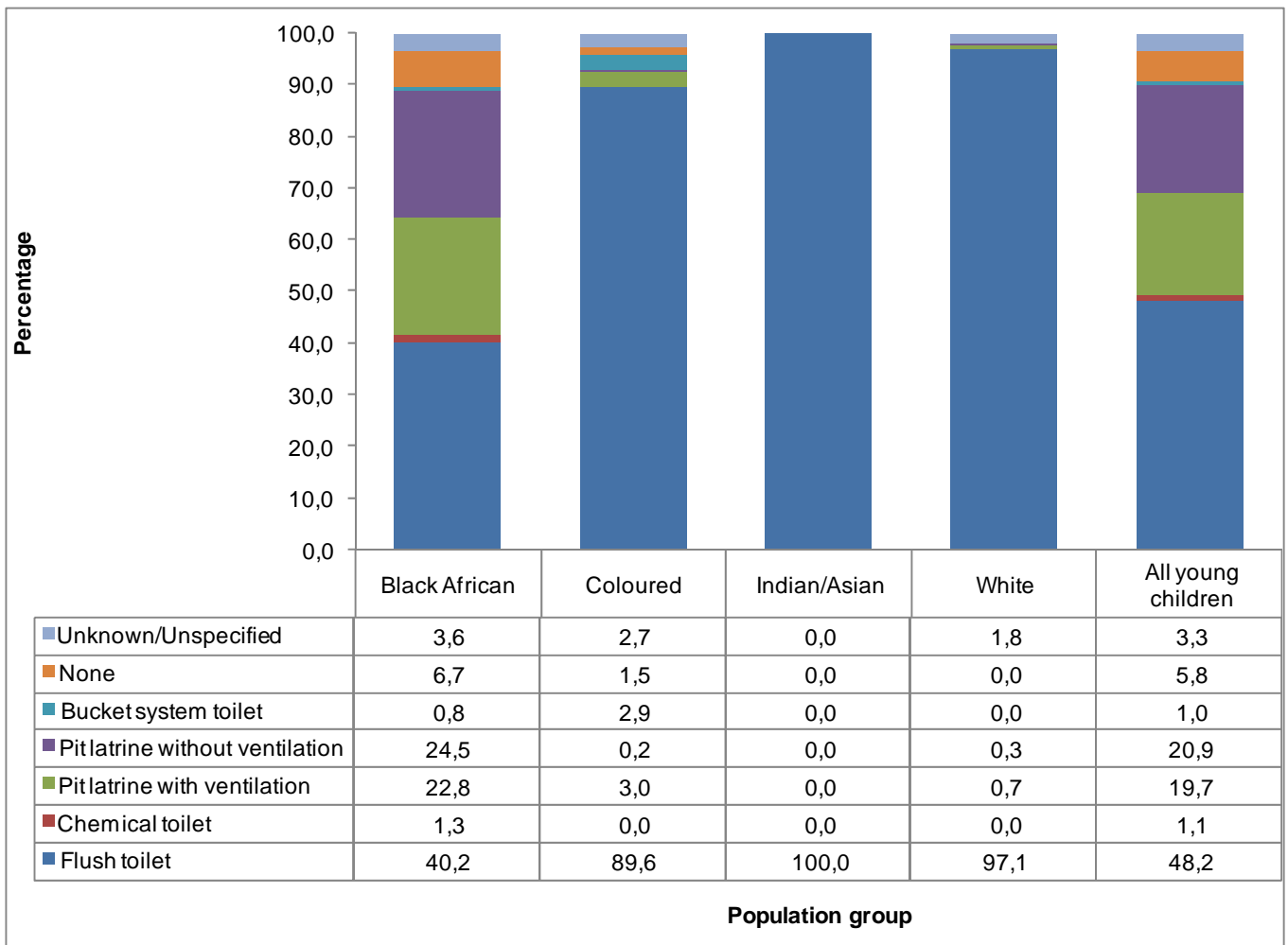
### 6.3.2 Sanitation

The overall proportion of young children who had access to a flush toilet was less than half (48,2%) as shown in Figure 6.3. A total of 40,6% of young children lived in households that used a pit latrine (19,7% pit latrine with ventilation and 20,9% pit latrine without ventilation). About 5,8% of young children lived in households with no sanitation and 1,0% lived in households that used a bucket system toilet.

Figure 6.3 further shows wide differences by population group. All Indian/Asian children lived in households that used flush toilets, followed by those from the white (97,1%) and the coloured (89,6%) population groups. Only 40,2% of young black African children lived in households that used flush toilets.

A relatively high proportion (24,5%) of black African children lived in households with pit latrines without ventilation and 6,7% in households without sanitation facilities. The use of bucket systems was comparatively higher among young children from the coloured population group (2,9%).

**Figure 6.3: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by type of sanitation and population group, 2012**

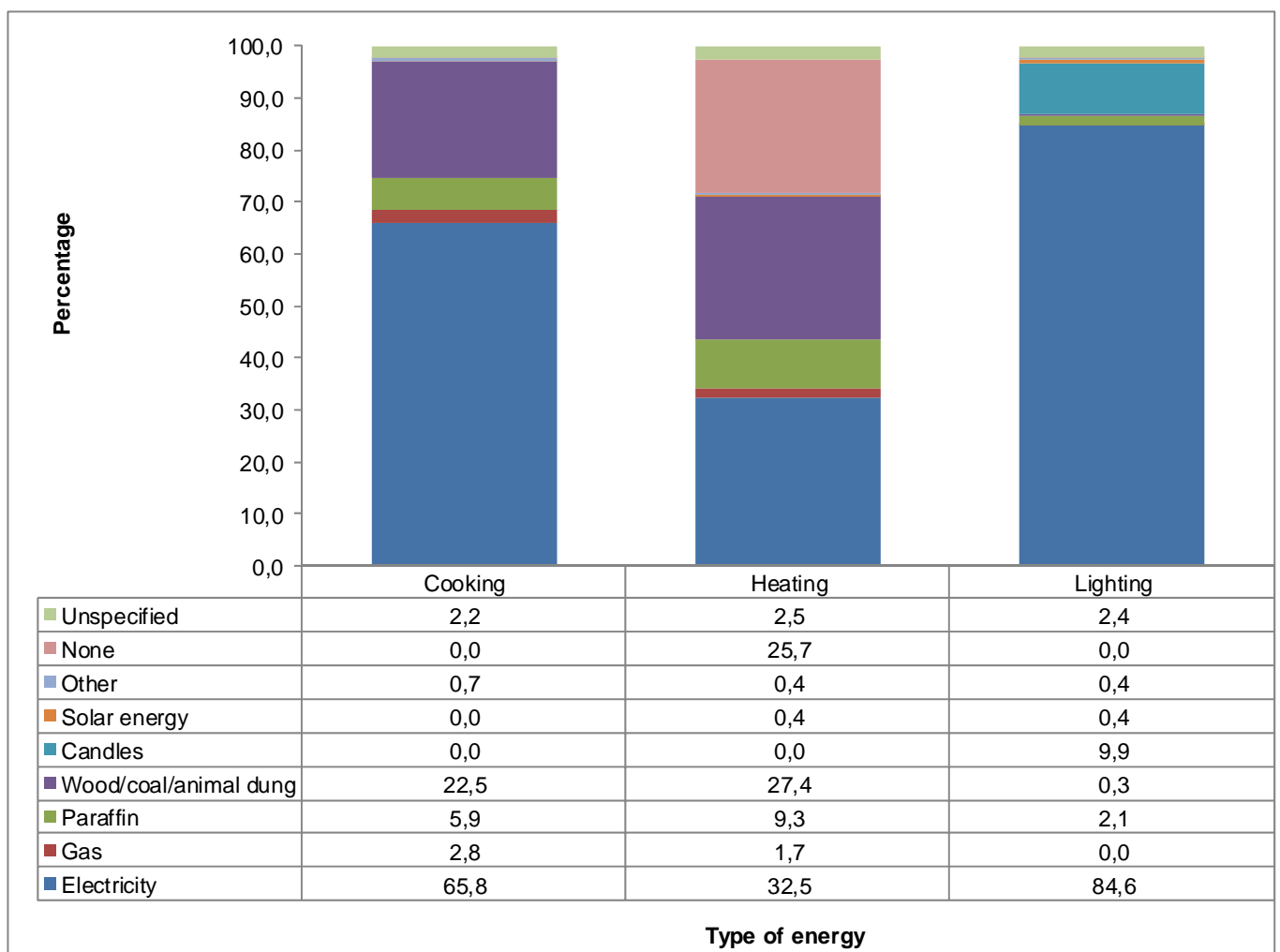


### 6.3.3 Energy

Another important dimension pertaining to living conditions of young children would be to understand different sources of energy/fuel used by their households for cooking, heating and lighting. Figure 6.4 shows the overall distribution of sources used for cooking, heating and lighting for all young children. The most common energy used for all the three functions was electricity. About 84,6%, 65,8% and 32,5% of children lived in households that used electricity for lighting, cooking and heating, respectively.

Wood/coal/animal dung was also more commonly used for cooking (22,5%) and heating (27,4%). Other types of energy used for heating was paraffin (9,3%) while candles were also a common type of energy used for lighting (9,9%). About 25,7% of young children lived in households that did not use any energy source for heating. This may, to some extent, reflect underreporting on this variable as the answers are somewhat dependent on the necessity for heating at the time of the survey.

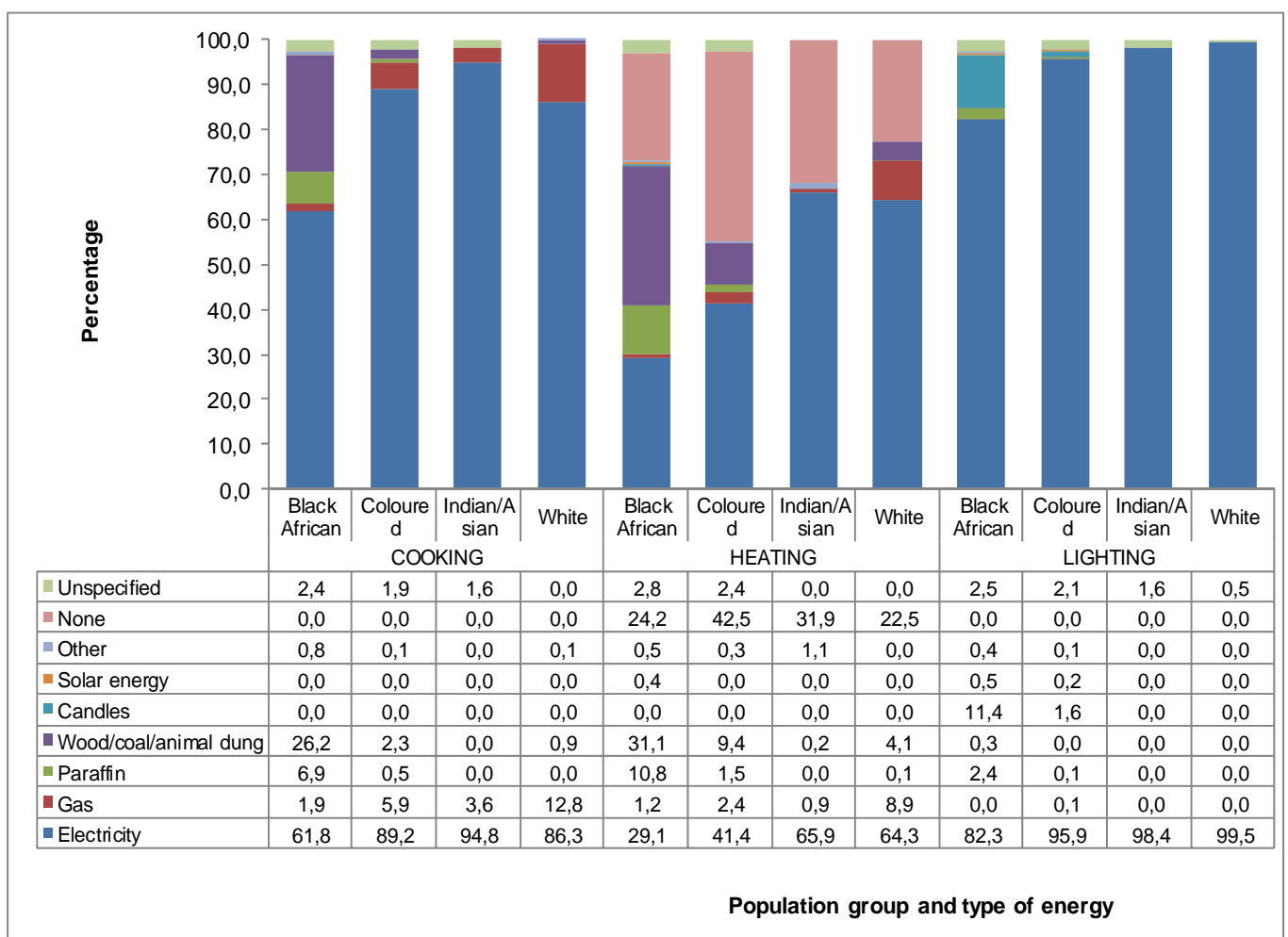
**Figure 6.4: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by sources of energy/fuel used for cooking, heating and lighting, 2012**



A high proportion of young children from the white (99,5%), Indian/Asian (98,4%) and coloured (95,9%) population groups mainly lived in households that used electricity for lighting whereas 82,3% of black African children did so (see Figure 6.5). Electricity was also used for cooking for the majority of children from all population groups, although the proportion was relatively lower (61,8%) for the black African children. For them, 26,2% also used wood/coal/animal dung and 6,9% used paraffin. Gas was used more by the white population group (12,8%) for cooking but not so much by other population groups.

With regard to energy used for heating, it is observed that there were large proportions of children who lived in households that did not use any energy for heating for all population groups. Usage of wood/coal/animal dung for heating was still common among black Africans (31,1%), as well as a relatively high usage of paraffin (10,8%). Wood/coal/animal dung was also used for heating by a relatively high proportion of the coloured population group (9,4%) while gas was used for the same purpose comparatively more by the white population group (8,9%).

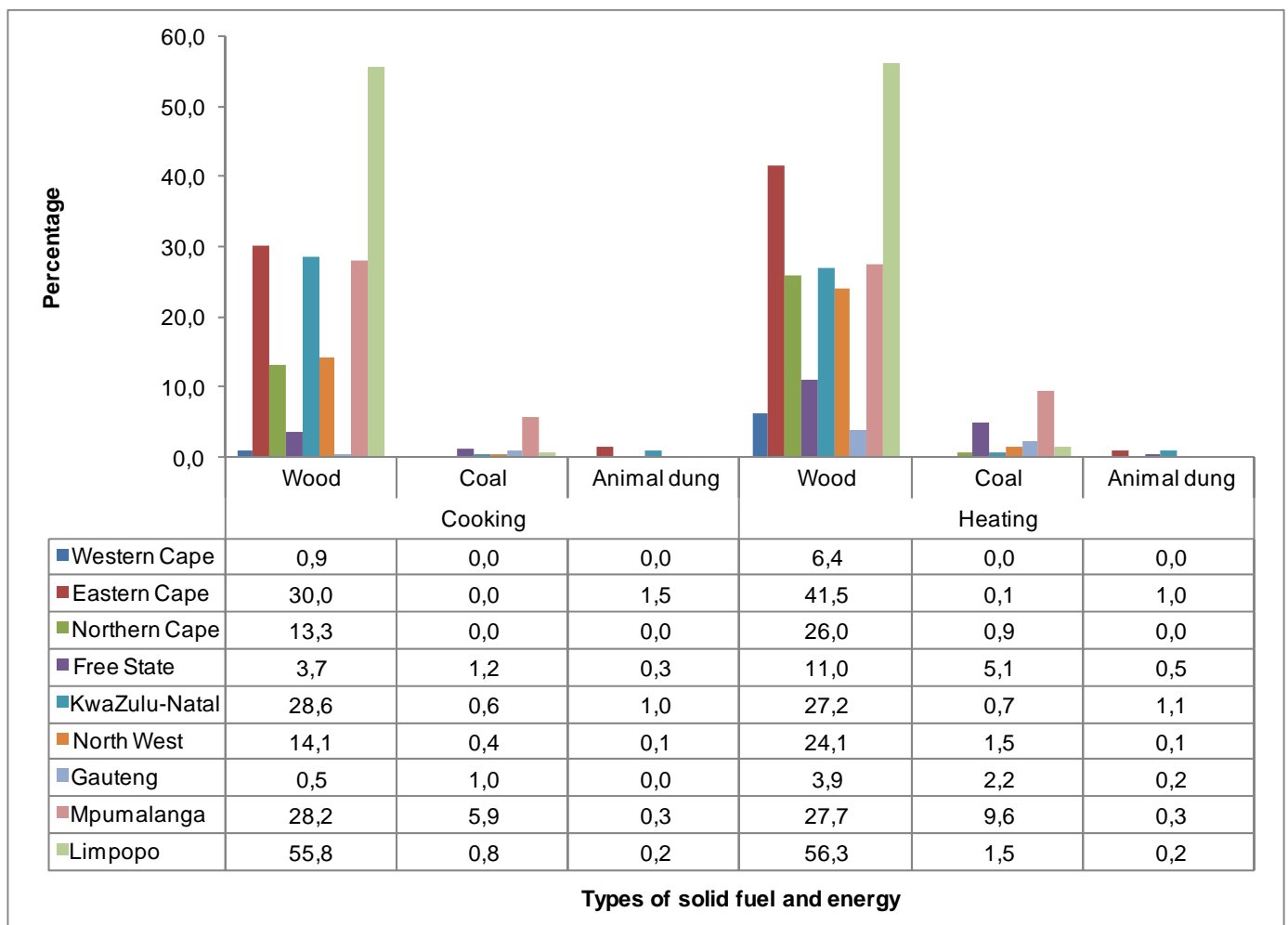
**Figure 6.5: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by sources of energy/fuel used for cooking, heating and lighting and population group, 2012**



Further analyses on energy were undertaken specifically for solid fuels (wood/coal/animal dung) in consideration of their harmful effects on children. The analyses focus on only these three sources of energy and disaggregate the information by province and geographic type.

Figure 6.6 shows that relatively more young children aged below five years in Limpopo lived in households that used wood for both cooking (55,8%) and heating (56,3%). Wood was also used more commonly for heating (41,5%) and cooking (30,0%) in Eastern Cape while it was used more for cooking only in KwaZulu-Natal (28,6%) and Mpumalanga (28,2%). The use of coal was more common in Mpumalanga, both for cooking (5,9%) and heating (9,6%). Animal dung was relatively uncommon in all provinces.

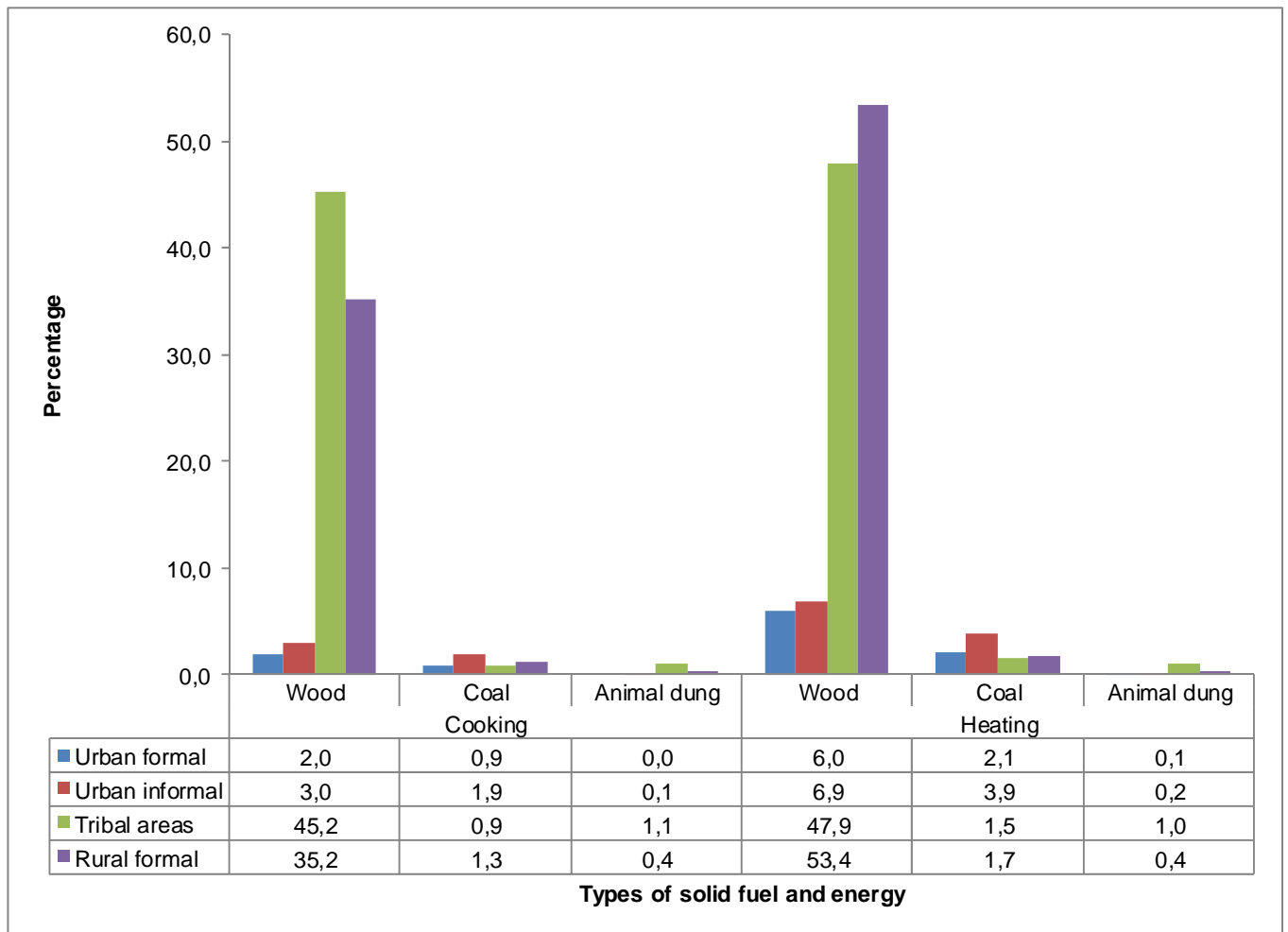
**Figure 6.6: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by province of residence and type of solid fuel used for cooking and heating, 2012**



With regard to geographic type, Figure 6.7 shows that usage of wood for both cooking and heating was highest in tribal areas (45,2% and 47,9%, respectively) and rural formal areas (35,2% and 53,4%, respectively).

Very small proportions of children aged below five years in urban formal and urban informal areas lived in households which used any of the solid fuels for cooking and heating. However, 6,0% of children in urban formal areas and 6,9% in urban informal areas lived in households that used wood for heating.

**Figure 6.7: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by geographic type and type of solid fuel used for cooking and heating, 2012**

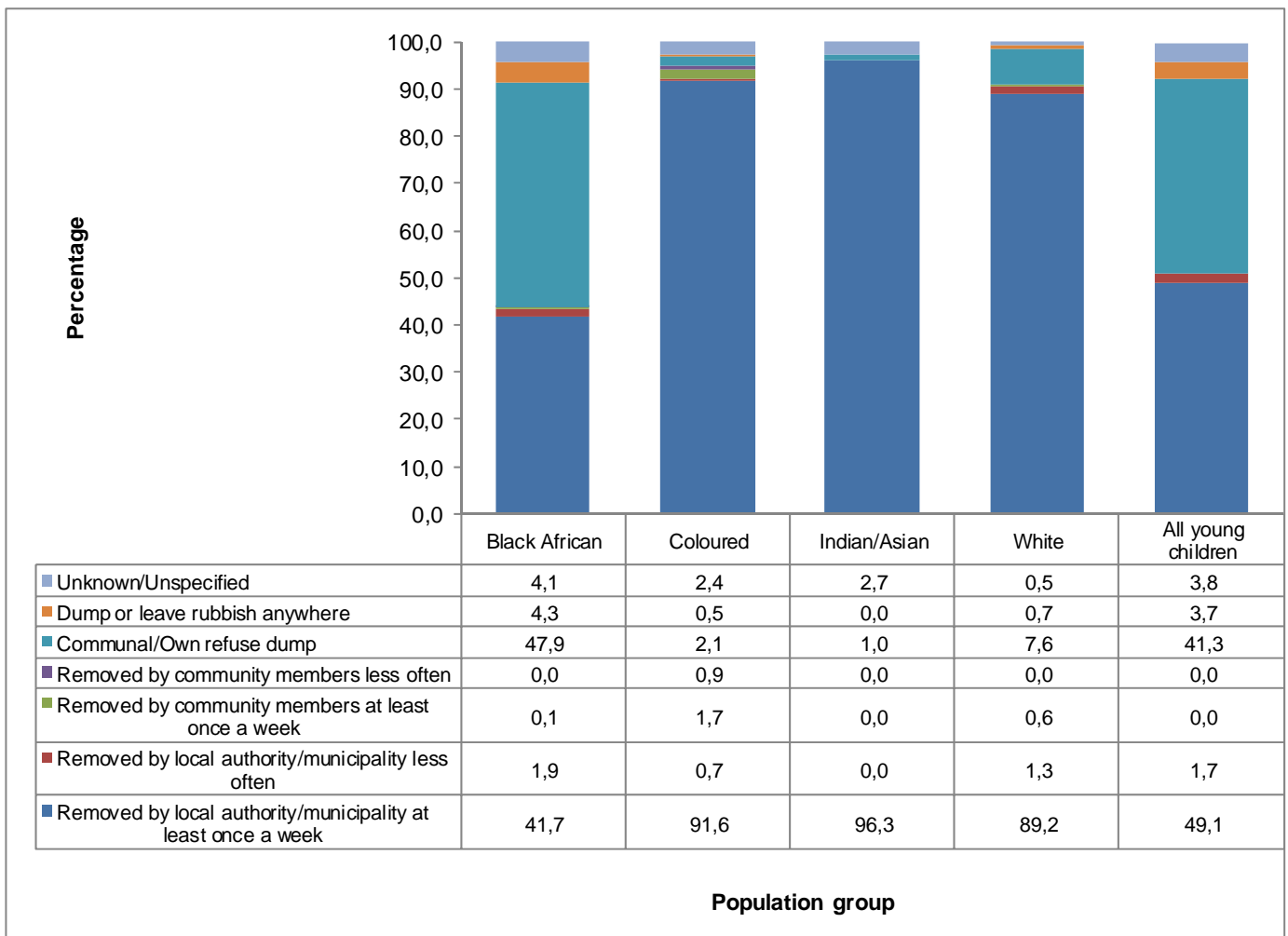


### 6.3.4 Waste management and refuse removal

Overall, about half of young children lived in households where refuse was removed by a local authority at least once a week (see Figure 6.8). There was also a relatively high proportion of children who lived in households where the family used communal or own refuse dumps(41,3%) and 3,7% of children lived in households which dumped or left rubbish anywhere.

Differences by population group show that, with the exception of black African children, the majority of children from the other population groups (between 89,2% and 96,3%) lived in households where refuse was removed by the local authority or municipality at least once a week. Conversely, 41,7% of black African children lived in households where refuse was removed by a local authority at least once a week. Most black African children (47,9%) lived in households where the family used communal or own refuse dumps. In addition, a relatively high proportion of black African children (4,3%) were living in households which dumped or left rubbish anywhere, whereas less than 1% of those from other population groups were in the same circumstances.

**Figure 6.8: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by refuse disposal and population group, 2012**



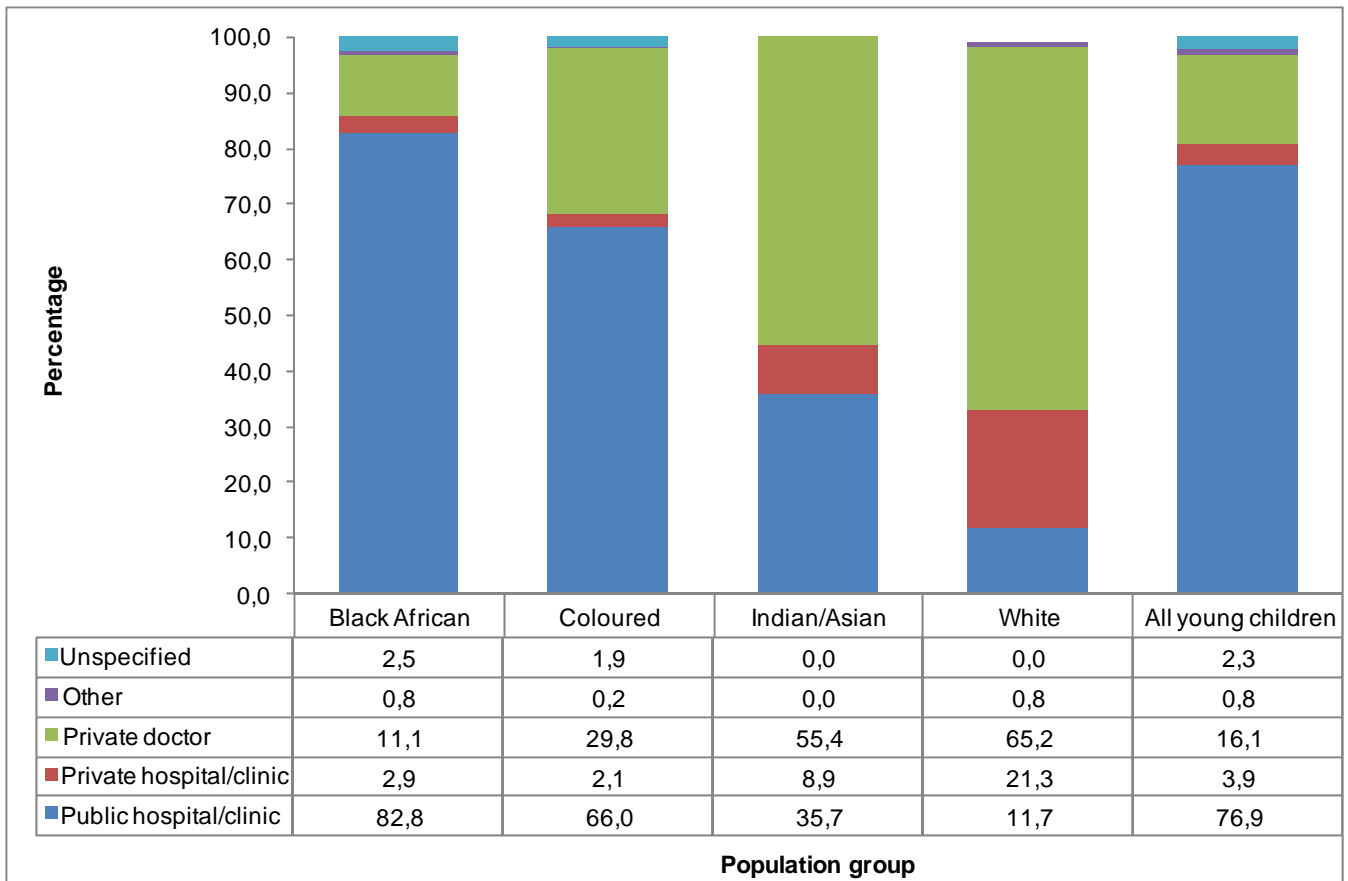


### 6.3.5 Access to health services

The GHS included a question on where any member of the household would usually go first if they became ill and decided to seek medical help. The results, based on households with young children aged below five years, classified by population group, are provided in Figure 6.9. Overall, 76,9% of young children lived in households that used public hospitals or clinics when ill or injured and decided to seek medical help. They were followed by 16,1% of children who lived in households that used private doctors.

With regard to differences by population group, it is observed that the majority of young children from the black African (82,8%) and coloured population groups (66,0%) lived in households that used public hospitals or clinics whereas the majority of those from the Indian/Asian and white population groups mainly used private doctors (55,4% and 65,2% respectively). Only 11,7% of children from the white population group lived in households that used public hospitals or clinics.

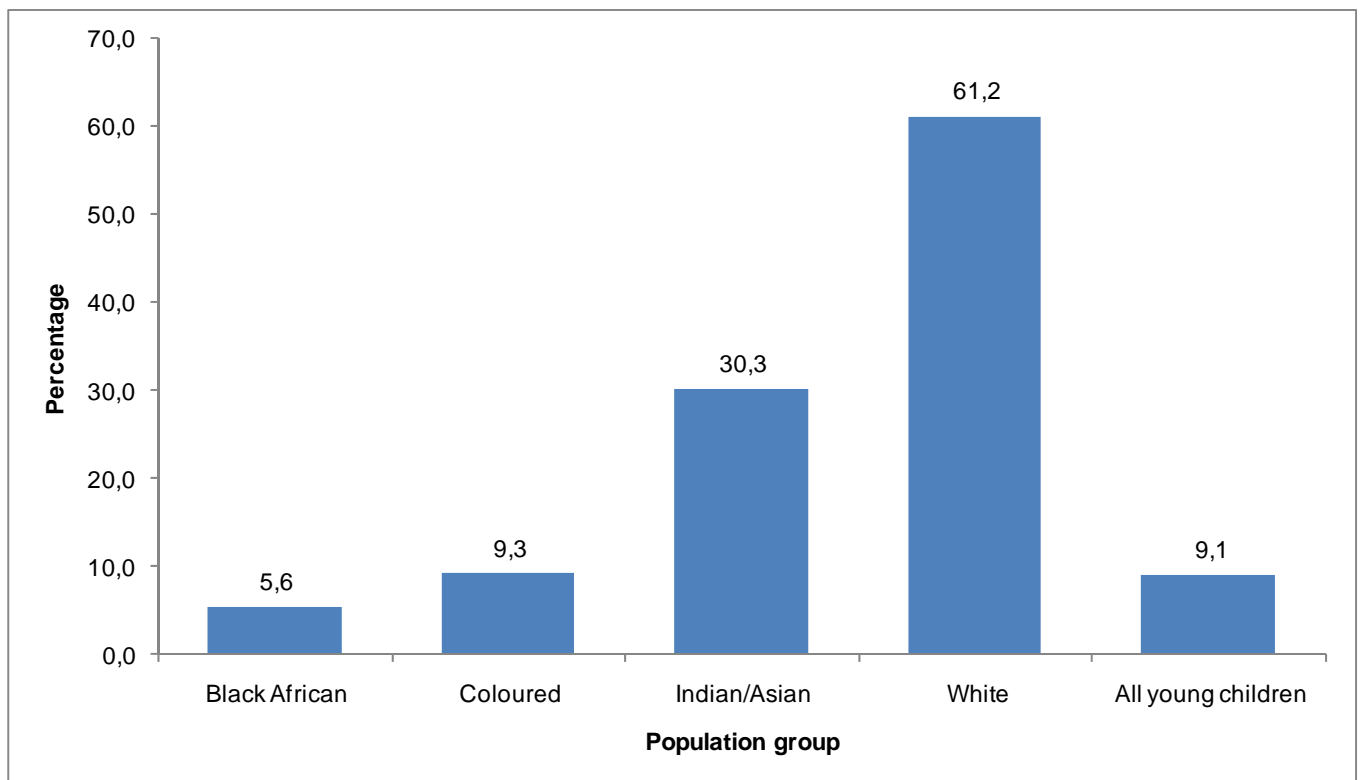
**Figure 6.9: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by access to health care services and population group, 2012**



## 6.4 Use of domestic services

The GHS asked questions on whether the household made use of domestic or household workers' services in the previous month. Figure 6.10 shows that 9,1% of young children lived in households that utilised domestic services in the month before the survey. The utilisation of domestic services was largely common among children from the white population group (61,2%) and least common for young children from the black African (5,6%) and coloured (9,3%) population groups. About 30,3% of young children from the Indian/Asian population group lived in households which used domestic services in the month prior to the survey.

**Figure 6.10: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by access to domestic services and population group, 2012**



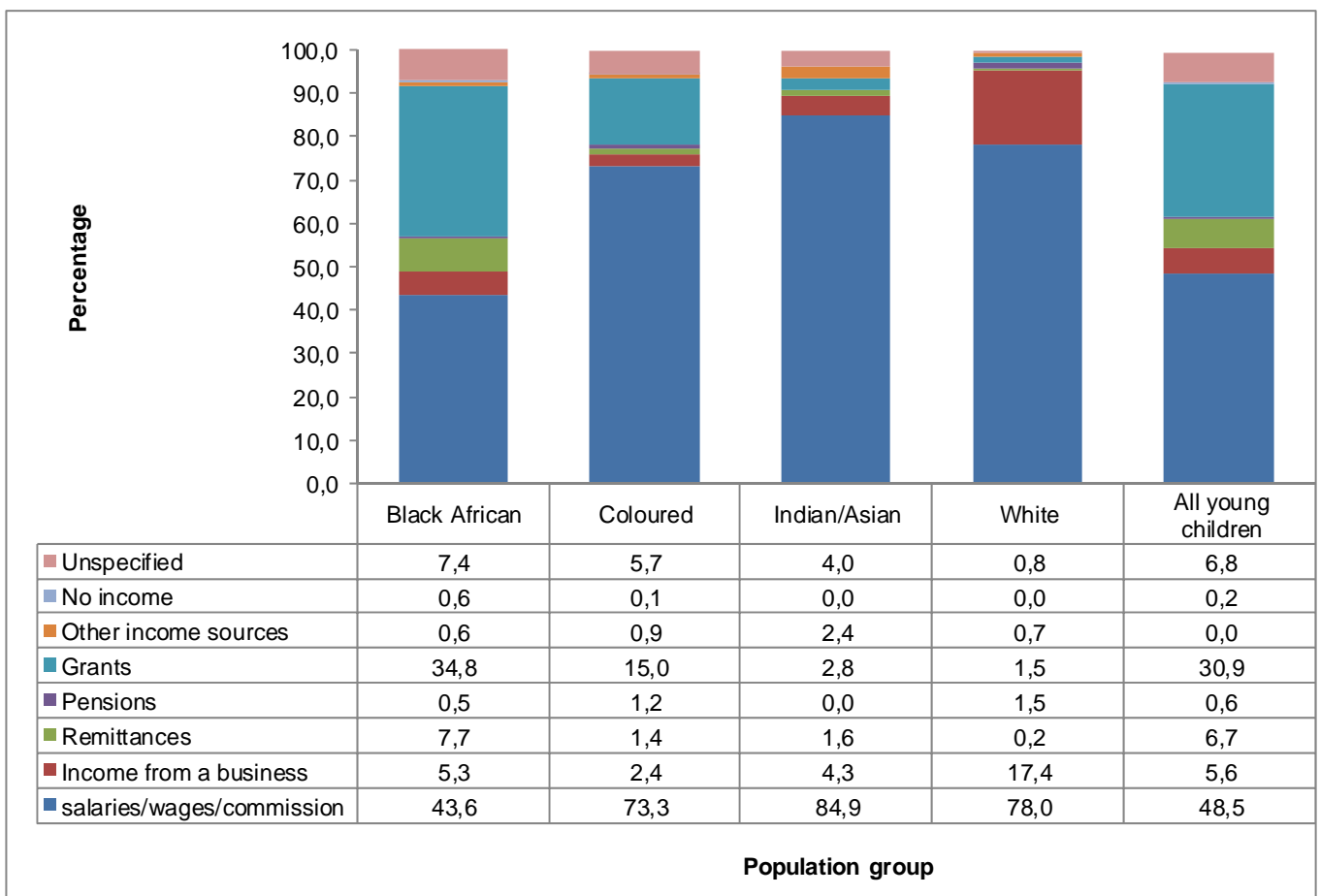
## 6.5 Main source of income

All households were asked to indicate the main sources of income for their households. Figure 6.11 shows that 48,5% of young children lived in households where the main source of income was salaries/wages/commission, followed by grants (30,9%). Less than 10% of children lived in households where the main source of income was remittances (6,7%) and income from a business (5,6%).

Figure 6.11 further shows that 84,9% of young children from the Indian/Asian, 78,0% from the white and 73,3% from the coloured population groups lived in households where the main source of income was salaries/wages/commission. A higher proportion of children from the white population group (17,4%) also lived in households where the main source of income came from business.

About 43,6% of black African children lived in households where the main source of income was salaries/wages/commission and 34,8% in households where the main source of income was grants. Grants as the main source of income was uncommon for young children from the white (1,5%) and the Indian/Asian (2,8%) population groups. A relatively high proportion of black African children (7,7%) also lived in households where the main source of income was remittances.

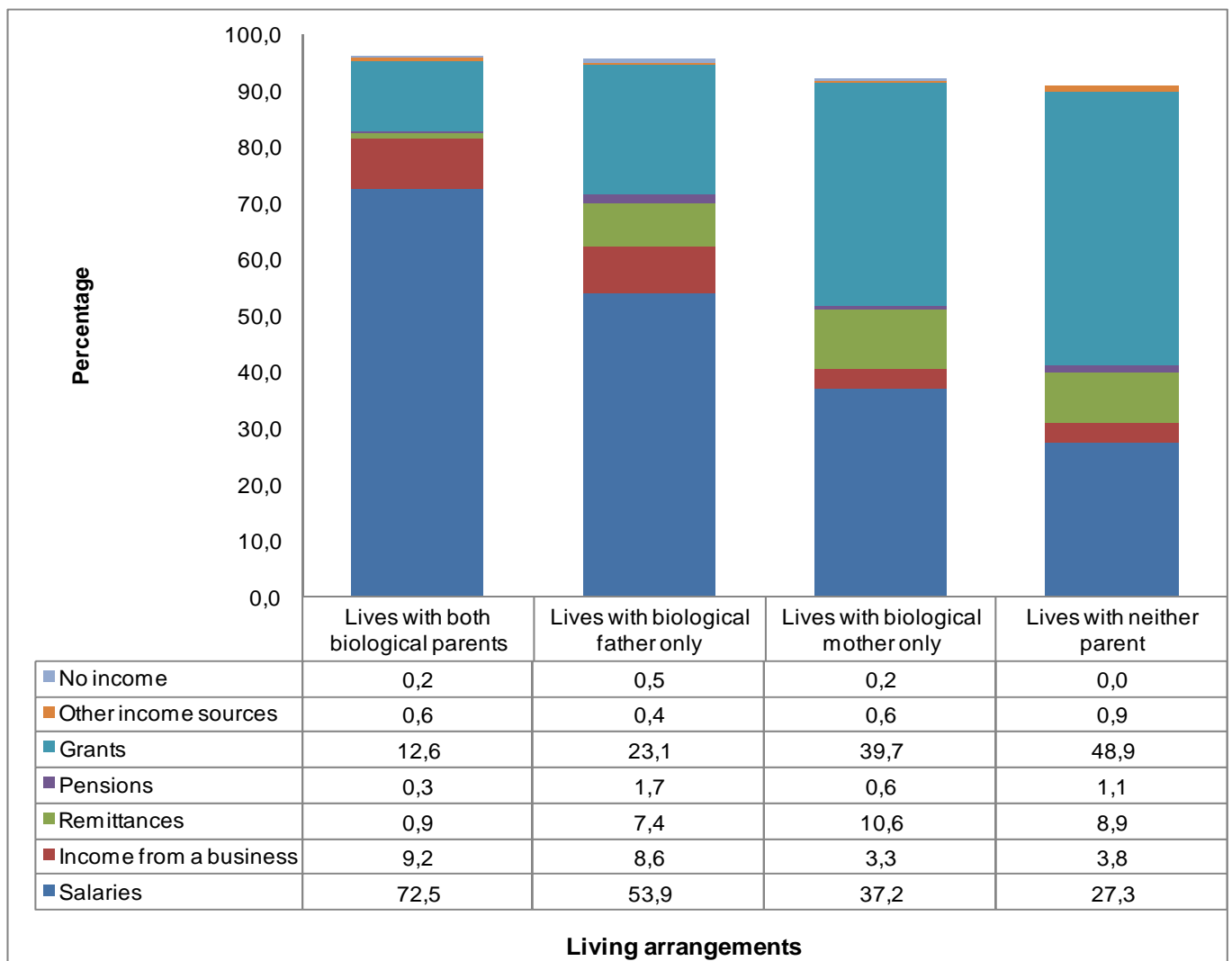
**Figure 6.11: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by main source of income in households and population group, 2012**



Wide variations of main sources of income by living arrangements of children aged below five years were observed (see Figure 6.12). The majority of young children who lived with both biological parents or lived with the biological father only lived in households where the main source of income was salaries/wages/commission (72,5% and 53,9%, respectively). However, most of those who lived with biological mothers only or who lived with neither parent lived in households where grants was the main source of income (39,7% and 48,9%, respectively). Only 37,2% of those who lived with the mother only and 27,3% of those who lived with neither parent lived in households where salaries/wages/commission was the main source of income.

The figure further shows that remittances were relatively more common in households where young children lived with the biological mother only (10,6%) or where children lived with neither parent (8,9%). In contrast, income from a business was relatively more common in households where children lived with both parents (9,2%) or lived with the biological father only (8,6%)

**Figure 6.12: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by main source of income in households and living arrangements of children, 2012**



## 6.6 Access to food

The following four questions were asked to determine access to food in the GHS:

- i. Did your household run out of money to buy food during the past 12 months?
- ii. Did you cut the size of meals during the past 12 months because there was not enough food in the house?
- iii. Did you skip any meals during the past 12 months because there was not enough food in the house?
- iv. Did you eat a smaller variety of foods during the past 12 months than you would have liked to, because there was not enough food in the house?

For all the four questions, about a quarter or more of young children lived in households where it was confirmed that there were limitations with food in the past 12 months (see Table 6.1). The highest proportion (28,9%) was observed for children who lived in households that ran out of money to buy food and the lowest (24,0%) for those who lived in households that skipped meals because there was not enough food.

The table further shows that for all food access problems, the proportions were highest for households of black African children, followed by the coloured population group in which over 20% suffered problems of food access. The percentages were much lower for the Indian/Asian and white population groups. For example, while 31,5% and 25,0% of the young children from the black African and coloured population groups, respectively, lived in households that ran out of money to buy food, only 2,0% of children from Indian/Asian population and 2,3% of children from the white population group lived in households with the same problem.

**Table 6.1: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by access to food in the past 12 months and population group, 2012**

| Food access   | Black African | Coloured | Indian/Asian | White | All young children |
|---|---------------|----------|--------------|-------|--------------------|
| Ran out of money to buy food  | 31,5          | 25,0     | 2,0          | 2,3   | 28,9               |
| Cut the size of meals because there was not enough food in the house          | 29,9          | 25,2     | 2,0          | 2,4   | 27,6               |
| Skipped any meals because there was not enough food in the house              | 26,1          | 21,0     | 2,0          | 2,2   | 24,0               |
| Ate a smaller variety of foods because there was not enough food in the house | 30,1          | 24,9     | 2,0          | 5,1   | 27,9               |

Further analysis of food access was undertaken according to the living arrangements of children aged below five years (see Figure 6.13). A relatively lower proportion of children who lived with both biological parents, followed by those who lived with their fathers had problems with accessing food compared to those who lived with their mothers only or with neither parent. For example, 19,2% and 24,0% of young children who lived with both biological parents or biological father only, respectively, ran out of money to buy food compared to 34,6% and 34,8% of those who lived with their biological mother only or those who lived with neither parent, respectively, with the same problem. This pattern was consistent throughout the different categories of food access.

**Figure 6.13: Percentage distribution of children aged 0–4 years by access to food in the past 12 months and living arrangements, 2012**

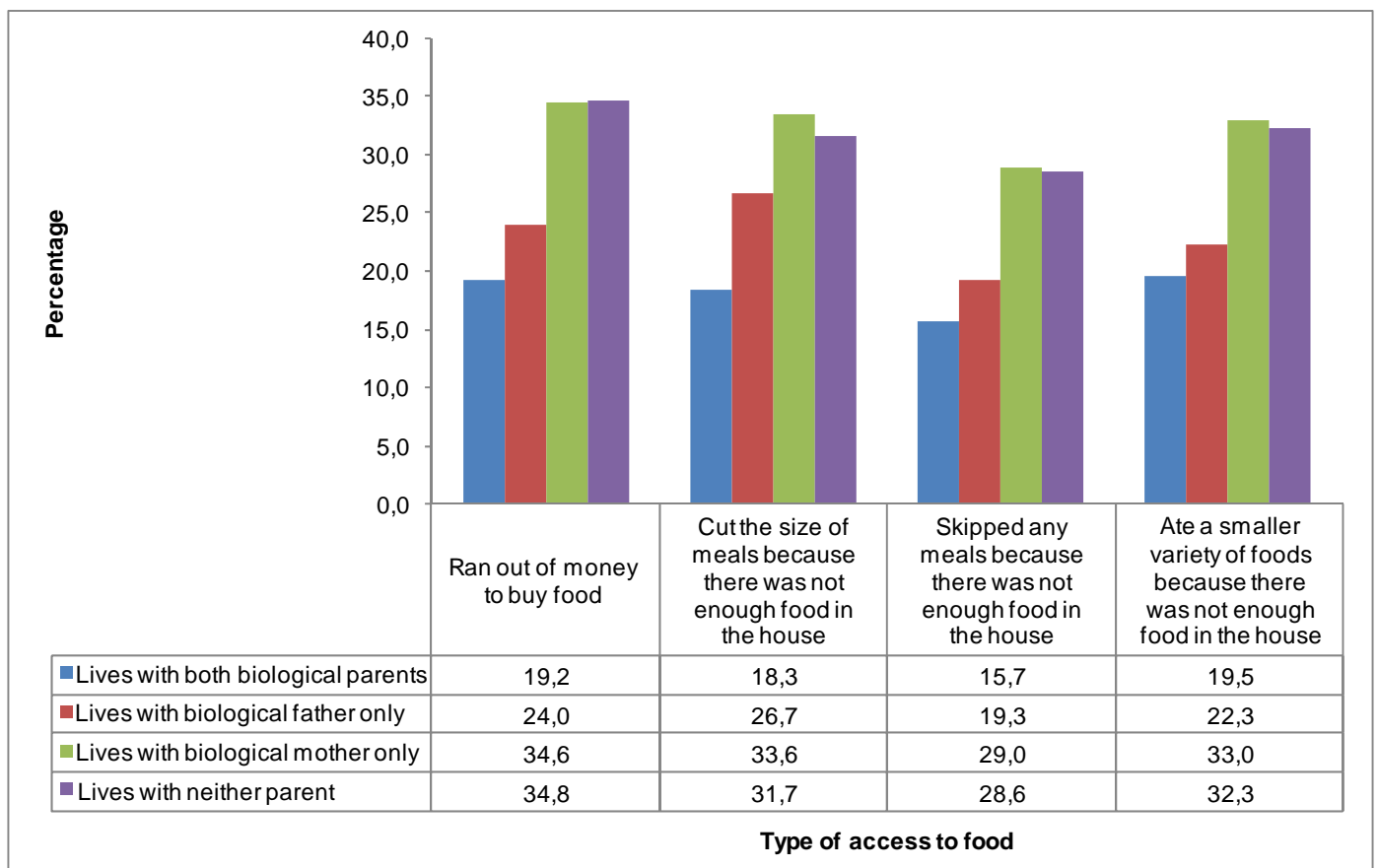


Table 6.2 shows a percentage distribution of households with young children aged 0–4 years by access to food in the past 12 months, living arrangements and number of young children. For each food shortage dimension, children living with mother only and neither parent had suffered food shortages in the past 12 months. For example 28,1% of children living with mother only and 31,1% of those living with neither parent ran out of food in the past 12 months. Households that skipped meals, cut size of meals and ate smaller amounts were largely in households with mother only or neither parent.

**Table 6.2: Percentage distribution of households with children aged 0–4 years by access to food in the past 12 months, living arrangements and number of young children, 2012**

| Food access  | Number of children |                     |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|
|  | One child          | More than one child |
| <b>Ran out of money to buy food</b>  |                    |                     |
| Lives with both biological parents   | 18,4               | 20,2                |
| Lives with biological father only  | 16,6               | 31,0                |
| Lives with biological mother only  | 28,1               | 39,8                |
| Lives with neither parent  | 31,1               | 37,6                |
| Unknown/Unspecified  | 58,2               | 71,9                |
| <b>Cut the size of meals because there was not enough food in the house</b>          |                    |                     |
| Lives with both biological parents   | 20,7               | 32,3                |
| Lives with biological father only  | 26,8               | 39,0                |
| Lives with biological mother only  | 28,0               | 34,6                |
| Lives with neither parent  | 49,3               | 68,5                |
| Unknown/Unspecified  | 17,1               | 19,9                |
| <b>Skipped any meals because there was not enough food in the house</b>              |                    |                     |
| Lives with both biological parents   | 15,2               | 23,2                |
| Lives with biological father only  | 21,4               | 35,1                |
| Lives with biological mother only  | 25,2               | 31,1                |
| Lives with neither parent  | 56,2               | 68,8                |
| Unknown/Unspecified  | 14,9               | 16,8                |
| <b>Ate a smaller variety of foods because there was not enough food in the house</b> |                    |                     |
| Lives with both biological parents   | 16,4               | 27,9                |
| Lives with biological father only  | 26,4               | 38,3                |
| Lives with biological mother only  | 28,7               | 35,1                |
| Lives with neither parent  | 65,1               | 68,8                |
| Unknown/Unspecified  | 18,3               | 21,0                |

## 6.7 Summary

The home environment of young children aged below five years was presented in this chapter. Generally, South African children lived in formal dwellings and in households with piped water either in the dwelling or in the yard. However, a large proportion of children lived in households without proper sanitation and refuse removal.

The majority of young children lived in households that used public hospitals or clinics when ill. Not many children lived in households with domestic help. While most children lived in households with salaries/wages/commission as the main source of income, there was also a high percentage of children who lived in households where the main source of income was grants. In addition, some children lived in households with limited access to food.

Overall, the results show wide disparities by population group where young children from the black African and coloured population groups were generally at a disadvantage. Furthermore, young children living with their mothers only or with neither parent were also at a disadvantage.



## 7. Summary and discussions

The report has used secondary data from the General Household Survey (GHS) undertaken in South Africa in 2012 focusing specifically on young children aged below five years. The preparation of this report was informed by lack of contextual data to support the findings of the statistical release on Recorded Live Births, based on 2012 birth registration data. This report has presented a profile of young children in South Africa and provided the characteristics of the biological parents they lived with, as well as the physical environment in which they were raised.

Overall, the report shows a diversity of issues surrounding young children in the country and underscores the importance of using available data sources to complement each other in order to provide extensive information on a subject of interest and provide sufficient evidence for decision making. The GHS data, while limited in some issues on young children, proved to be a valuable source for assessing progress made in improving the welfare of young children in South Africa and identifying emerging social and economic issues affecting young children.

This chapter presents the summary of key findings and discussions based on the following four main issues:

- i. Importance of investing in children– as a basic right of children and as a long-term investment;
- ii. Unfavourable living arrangements of children;
- iii. Unfavourable living conditions and
- iv. Persisting racial disparities in the country.

### 7.1 Investing in young children

The government of South Africa has committed to protecting the rights of children in the country through a number of laws and regulations that have been put in place. The country has initiated several programmes that are aimed at ensuring that children's rights are realised and consequently facilitating human development and improving the lives and welfare of children. There were about 5,3 million young children in South Africa in 2012, representing about 10% of the population in the country. This number determines the demand for schools, health care and other social services that are essential for meeting the needs of families with young children. Investing in the health and education of these children has been recognised as important in shaping a brighter future for South Africa.

The country has experienced some declines in fertility and mortality, which places it in a good position towards a demographic dividend. The investments that the country can make now on these young children, in relation to improving their health, early childhood development, water and sanitation, and social protection, can benefit the country in future. Action plans in the National Development Programmes have to be implemented to ensure that the country reaps the benefits of accelerated economic growth resulting from the demographic transition in South Africa.

The findings indicated that 35,7% of children below the age of five years attended an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre. Children who lived with their mothers only (31,2%) had the lowest proportions attending ECD centres. Children who lived in rural formal areas (26,3%) also had the lowest proportion attending an ECD centre. The Department of Social Development is involved in ECD programmes in the country, with the aim of facilitating human development, particularly among the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded. As observed

from the results, the disadvantaged groups are unable to always take this advantage. ECD was identified as one of investments that a government can make towards children and these results indicate that there is a lot of improvement required in South Africa in this regard.

In this study, the majority (60,5%) of children below five years received the child support grant (CSG). Hall (2013) stated that there is substantial evidence that grants such as the CSG are spent on food, education and basic goods and services. Despite the positive and cumulative effects of the grant, Hall (2013) further raises a concern that there is a slow uptake of grants by young children. She argues that grant up-take only peaks at four years of age. The South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF (2011) report on children's rights purports that the lack of documentation is one of the biggest barriers to accessing the CSG. However, it has been noted that birth registration has improved in the country over time and that more and more births are being registered within the first year of birth. Therefore it is worth noting that the registration of births opens up a lot of possibilities for young children.

## 7.2 Unfavourable living arrangements

The main finding of this report is that 18,7% of young children did not live with their biological parents in the same household, although the majority (92,7%) of the parents were still alive. Meintjes and Hall (2013) explained that South Africa has a long history of children not living consistently in the same dwelling with their biological parents because of poverty, labour migration, educational opportunities or cultural practices. However, this is against Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Separation from Parents), which states that "*children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them*" (UNICEF, no date).

The results further indicated that mothers who lived with their young biological children were mostly never married (48,4%) while the majority of fathers (59,7%) were legally married. Willey et al. (2009) found favourable growth outcomes among children of mothers who were married or were cohabiting with a partner. The authors further noted that children were significantly less vulnerable to poverty if their mother was married or was cohabiting with a partner. These findings demonstrate the benefits of having both parents in the household as parents provide a major source of social and economic support in children's lives.

In particular, the results highlighted the absence of fathers in their children's lives. A total of only 39,1% of young children lived with their biological fathers. This was also noted in the Recorded Live Births, where it was indicated that details of the fathers were missing in 66,6% of birth registrations (Stats SA, 2013a). What was encouraging for the fathers was the fact that those who lived with their biological children appeared to be better positioned to improve the lives of their children (e.g. the fathers were employed and had better education). In addition, where the father was present (living with the mother or living with the child as the only biological parent), children were better off. Willey et al. (2009) has indicated that having a father who was resident in the home favoured the growth of children (Willey et al., 2009).

There were high levels of non-marital childbearing which implies that a large number of children will experience some period without fathers. Richter et al. (2012) argue that South Africa has one of the highest rates of father absence in the world. In order to address the epidemic of absence among fathers, the authors suggest interventions for the involvement of fathers and have grouped these into the following categories: early identification of paternity, fathers' involvement in the early years, activity-based programmes for fathers and children, programmes involving fathers and others, and context-specific interventions.

### 7.3 Unfavourable living conditions

The living conditions of children are known to be critical in the well-being of young children. The results in this report indicated that a substantial proportion of children lived within households that used pit latrine without ventilation (20,9%) or lived within households that did not have sanitation facilities (5,8%). Sanitation is closely linked to child health and survival (The Presidency, 2009). Worku (2011) found that a child whose parents did not have access to a flush toilet facility was 2,35 times more likely to die before celebrating his or her fifth birthday as compared to a child whose parents had access to a flush toilet facility.

Use of solid fuels was observed to be detrimental in particular to young children's health, mainly resulting from household air pollution (Etzel, 2012; Walakira and Sarah, 2012). Inhalation of smoke can seriously affect the development of young children's lungs and they are exposed to the risk of lower respiratory tract illnesses. Usage of wood/coal/animal dung for cooking and heating was relatively high in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North West and Eastern Cape. It was also higher in rural formal and tribal areas. Therefore, special programmes that address these conditions that put children at risk and thereby affecting their health need to be put in place.

### 7.4 Racial disparities

One of the important findings was the continuous racial differences in the country, even at young ages, which has consequences for the future population of South Africa. The results highlighted that children from the black African and the coloured population groups were perpetually disadvantaged when compared to those from the Indian/Asian and the white population. For example, the majority of households with young children from the white (93,7%) and Indian/Asian (97,0%) population groups had piped water inside the house/dwelling whereas 77,9% and only 27,1% of children from the coloured and the black African population groups, respectively, had access to the same source. Furthermore, all young children from the Indian/Asian and 97,1% from the white population groups lived in households that used a flush toilet. However, 89,6% of young children from the coloured population group and 40,2% from the black African population lived in households with a similar access to sanitation. These conditions illustrate that the legacy of apartheid is still entrenched in the South African society and thus policies targeted at correcting racial disparities remain a key priority for realising the rights of children.

### 7.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings from this report have highlighted some adverse conditions under which South African children live. Notwithstanding these conditions, the efforts of the South African government to realise the rights of children and improve their health and welfare are commendable. Thus it is imperative that the government continues with efforts to promote the rights of children and improve their welfare.

It was noted that the data were inadequate for measuring children's complex living arrangements. Information was available on children living with their biological parents, but less remains unknown about circumstances of children whose parents lived elsewhere. The report did not also go into details about the living arrangements of young children with non-biological parents, other relatives or non-relatives. Considering the diversity of living arrangements in the country, it will be worth undertaking this analysis in detail in future.

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