

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 72.

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72. Ms L L van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Whether her department records the total number of learner pregnancies in each (a) province and (b) district; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details in each case in the past five years?

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Response

The Department of Basic Education collects data on learner pregnancies through the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS). However, due to the reliance on self-reporting and voluntary disclosure by learners, the response rate remains low. To supplement this data, the Department also utilizes information from the General Household Survey (GHS) and receives quarterly updates from the Department of Health on deliveries at health facilities for individuals aged 10 to 19.

Focusing on the GHS, which is conducted by STATS SA and the data re-analysed by DBE, this survey asks respondents whether a person in the household has fallen pregnant in the previous twelve months. This information on learner pregnancy assists the Department with measuring the prevalence of learner pregnancy in the schooling system, as well as with developing interventions and strategies to address learner pregnancy as a barrier to education. It is, however, necessary to note the difficulties in capturing accurate information on the exact number of learners of a school-going age that are pregnant. The GHS survey is often filled out by a guardian or a parent on behalf of learners who are in school during the data collection visit, and the parent or guardian might not be aware of a learner being pregnant. Furthermore, societal norms regarding teenage pregnancy may prohibit learners from reporting that they are pregnant and therefore it is expected that there will be an under-reporting of teenage pregnancy.

The figure below shows the percentage of all female learners at school aged 14 or older who were reported by the household respondent in the GHS as having been pregnant in the last 12 months. Over the years since 2010, this percentage has hovered around 3%, although in the last three years, it has been just under 2% of learners. The figure also shows 95% confidence intervals. This is because this is a sample survey, and therefore, we need to know how wide the interval is around the point estimate in which we can be 95% sure that the true population statistic exists.

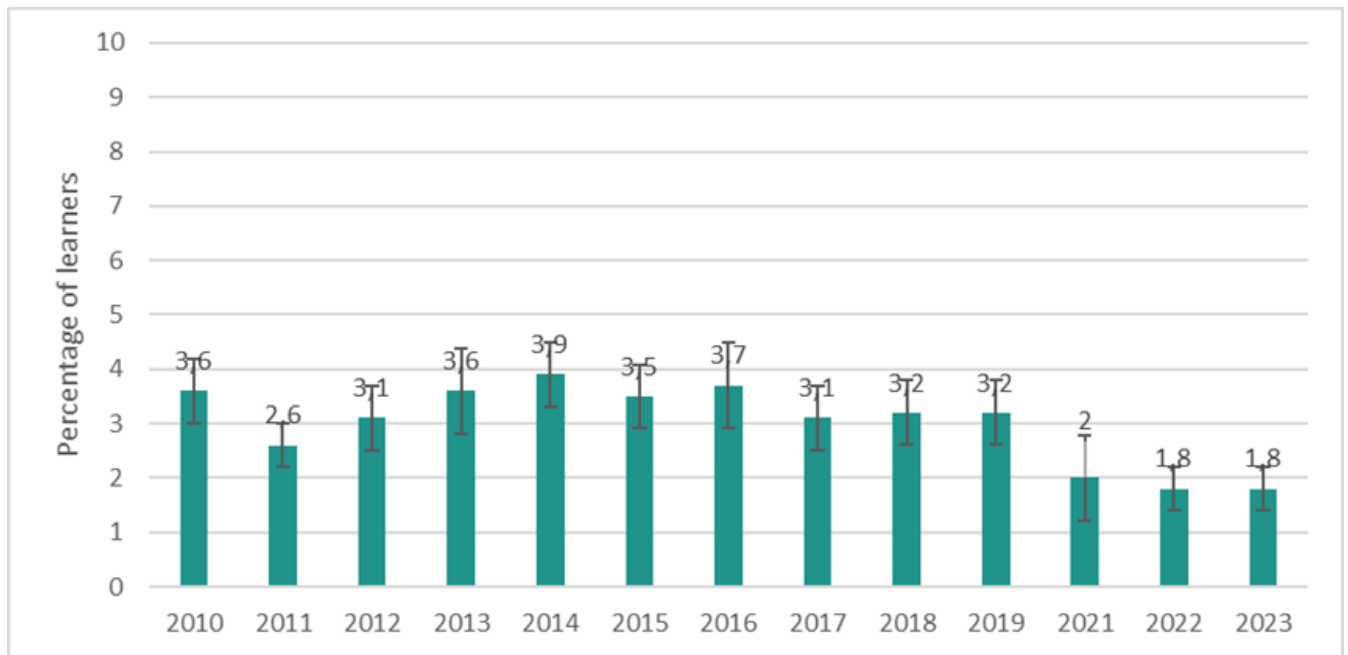
The table below shows the percentage of female learners aged 14 and above who were pregnant by province. In order to get a large enough sample size, this table is based on several years' worth of GHS data since 2018. Again, the confidence intervals are provided, which are fairly large, meaning that caution needs to be exercised in making strong claims about the differences observed in the point estimates between provinces. For example, it is estimated that 1.8% of female learners in the Northern Cape were pregnant, but the 95% confidence interval for this statistic ranges from 0.7% to 2.8%. This range includes the estimated percentage for Free State of 2.3%, meaning that although we estimate learner pregnancy to have been higher in the Free State than in the Northern Cape, we cannot be sure that this is indeed the case.

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Percentage of female learners aged 14 and above who were pregnant in the last 12 months



Source: General Household Surveys 2010 – 2023

Table: Percentage of female learners aged 14 and above who were pregnant in the last 12 months by province

Province	Percentage been pregnant	95% Confidence Interval Lower bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper bound
Western Cape	1.4	0.5	2.3
Eastern Cape	2.8	2.0	3.6
Northern Cape	1.8	0.7	2.8
Free State	2.3	1.2	3.5
KwaZulu-Natal	2.5	1.9	3.1

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North West	2.4	1.3	3.5
Gauteng	1.4	0.9	1.8
Mpumalanga	3.5	2.5	4.5
Limpopo	3.4	2.5	4.3

Source: General Household Surveys 2018-2019 & 2021–2023 combined