

Press Release

For immediate release

10 February 2014



South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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New HIV infections halve from almost 2 000 to fewer than 1 000 a day

Approximately 1 000 people get infected with HIV daily in South Africa. High as this may seem, the figure has decreased by more than 50% since 1999. This is according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR) in Johannesburg last week.

The *Survey* is the annual yearbook on all social, economic, and political aspects of South Africa that the IRR has been publishing since 1946.

In 1999 there were 646 806 new infections, the equivalent of 1 772 a day. By 2013, new infections had decreased to 321 300, the equivalent of 880 a day.

The data was sourced from the *ASSA2008 AIDS and Demographic Model* published by the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA).

Ms Lerato Moloji, head of research at the IRR, attributed the decrease in new HIV infections to a number of interventions including awareness programmes, condom distribution, and male circumcision. 'The Department of Health (DoH) distributed almost 400 million condoms, both male and female, in 2011/12. It is quite important that the condoms are not only distributed but also used. It is therefore quite encouraging that the *National HIV Communication Survey*, published by the DoH, shows that condom use at first sex went up from 18% to 66% between 1996 and 2012. This is an important indicator because those who use condoms at first sex are more likely to use them throughout their lives', Ms Moloji said.

In addition, the DoH has embarked on a campaign to circumcise as many men as possible through the public health system as research has shown that this can reduce men's risk of contracting HIV by up to 76%. Circumcision is expected to prevent one million new infections in South Africa by 2025.

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