

Press Release

For immediate release

24 February 2014



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More than 20 shacks destroyed by fire everyday

An average of 23 shacks a day were destroyed by fire between 2010 and 2013, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR) in Johannesburg recently.

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

Some 8 500, 9 600, and 7 100 shacks were ravaged by fire in 2010/11, 2011/12, and 2012/13 respectively, bringing the total to 25 000 shacks in three years. This translates into 23, 26, and 19 shacks per day in the respective three years.

The information was provided by the minister of cooperative governance and traditional affairs to Parliament in May 2013.

The Western Cape was the worst affected when it came to shack fires. The proportion of shacks gutted by fire in the province out of all shacks burnt down nationally, in each of the three years reviewed, was 50%, 39%, and 55%. Gauteng had the second highest proportion of fire-ravaged shacks in the first two years at 26% and 24%. In 2012/13 the Eastern Cape registered the second highest proportion of shacks burnt down by fire, at 18%, which was marginally higher than Gauteng's 17%.

'Most shacks are erected in densely-populated informal settlements in urban areas. Most of the areas lack proper road infrastructure. For these reasons, fires spread fairly rapidly in informal settlements and are harder to contain because firefighters have difficulty accessing the areas,' said Kerwin Lebone of the IRR research department.

Mr Lebone said the Department of Human Settlements had tried to upgrade half of the existing informal settlements by providing basic services and improving infrastructure.

Ends
