

Press Release

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IRR

South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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Africa's adult mortality: SA in bottom five of thirty-five

The probability of a 15-year-old dying before the age of 60 is higher in South Africa than in over 30 other African countries, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR) 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.

Out of 35 selected African countries, South Africa had the worst average adult male mortality rate and was 32nd in female mortality. Rates for the period 2006-11 were 572 per 1 000 males and 574 per 1 000 females. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique, for example, had lower average male mortality rates, at 405 and 477 respectively. Female adult mortality rates for the two countries were at 351 and 443 per 1 000.

The IRR obtained the data from the World Bank's 2013 World Development Indicators.

South Africa and the DRC spend about 9% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on health. Mozambique spends 7%. The South African economy is far larger than those of these and many other countries.

Thuthukani Ndebele, a researcher at the IRR, said, 'South Africa's male and female average adult mortality rates are up to ten times higher than in some emerging and developed countries'.

'South Africa's high adult mortality rates testify to the negative effects of HIV/AIDS and that high health expenditure may not necessarily translate into positive outcomes', Mr Ndebele said.

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