

**Press
Release
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Electricity the fastest delivered basic service

Households were connected to the electricity grid faster than they received housing, water, and sanitation services, 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.

Between 1996 and 2011, some 7 million houses were connected to the electricity grid, or at a rate of 1 300 homes a day. The connection of electricity during the period made it possible for 6.4 million more homes to use it for cooking and 4.5 million more for heating purposes.

Access to piped water, the basic service with the second highest number of recipients, was extended to 5.95 million homes over the same period – almost 1 100 homes a day. Under half that number managed to put new taps into their homes

Some 5.4 million households moved into formal houses during the period, or at a rate of 991 households a day. Though some of this growth arises from the initiatives of private households, the state made an immense contribution through the delivery of around 3 million houses between 1994 and 2012.

Some 4.5 million homes gained access to flush and chemical lavatories in the period under review.

‘There is no doubt from the IRR’s point of view that a lot of lives have been improved through the delivery of basic services. The quality of life of many previously marginalised households has improved tremendously through access to services that some might take for granted,’ said Kerwin Lebone of the IRR research department.

Mr Lebone said the IRR was aware of criticism regarding the quality of some of the services provided, but said it did not diminish the value added to poor households by the extension of these basic services.

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