

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

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Rape plague terrorises SA women, children – IRR report

More than 300 000 adult women reported being raped or sexually assaulted in South Africa over the past decade although the actual number is very much higher. This finding comes from the latest *South Africa Survey* published by the IRR last week.

IRR head of media, Mienke Steytler, said: “According to police records, 315 561 women reported being raped or sexually assaulted over the past decade. The data is certainly an undercount as many women are too afraid to report rapes. Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on rape reporting rates although a series of dated and localised studies have suggested that reporting rates may be lower than 20%. If reporting rates are indeed that low it is quite possible that more than 1 million adult women have been raped or sexually assaulted over the past decade.”

Steytler added, “While a lot of media attention is rightly focused on women as victims of sexual violence, police data shows that almost 1.3 million South Africans were victims of sexual offences since 1994/95. And, furthermore, in 2015/16 alone, 20 254 children were reported to have been victims of rape and sexual assault.”

The IRR feels that there is a lot of talking and politicking around South Africa’s rape and sexual violence scourge. While reported sexual offence numbers have dropped slightly over the past decade that may be a function of under-reporting.

What is certain is that the police are not making sufficient inroads towards winning this battle and cannot do this alone. The social issues that give rise to these horrific violations need to be debated and acted upon more deeply and honestly by South African society.

Also, by sharing these numbers with journalists and the broader public, the IRR hopes that lawmakers and political leaders will take sexual violence more seriously and do something about it.

The first *Survey* was published in 1946. Click [here](#) for more information.

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