

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

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SA has made significant progress against HIV/AIDS, but more must be done

South Africa has made considerable progress against the scourge of HIV/AIDS, with a marked decline in the number of new infections since 2009 – but an intensified campaign is needed to sustain the gains.

Research from the IRR shows that the total number of new HIV infections declined countrywide by 39% – from 437 705 to 266 931 – between 2009 and 2016.

IRR analyst Tawanda Makombo says the high rate of new HIV infections – a daunting feature of Thabo Mbeki’s presidency – declined under his successor, former President Jacob Zuma, largely as a result of improved HIV/AIDS awareness and campaigning strategies in schools, hospitals and communities.

Moreover, at present, condom distribution particularly at universities has intensified to such an extent that students even demand that they be supplied with flavoured varieties.

The IRR notes that, based on the latest available figures:

- KwaZulu-Natal, which had the highest rate of new HIV infections in 2009 (121 308), achieved a drastic reduction of almost 50% to 62 117 new infections in 2016;
- While Gauteng’s rate of new infections fell by 27.6% – from 102 074 in 2009 to 73 951 in 2016 – it has the highest number of new infections of all nine provinces;
- The Northern Cape showed the biggest improvement between 2009 and 2016, with a 57.6% drop in new HIV infections, from 5 557 to 2 356.

Makombo says that while the overall reduction in HIV infection rates across the country is encouraging, there is room for improvement.

“The national Department of Health must intensify HIV/AIDS awareness among all South Africans in order to reduce the risk of infection in those at highest risk, especially young people.”

Makombo adds: “Civil society should be more involved in education and support programmes in the fight against HIV and AIDS.”

Ends.