

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

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South Africans' life expectancy improves, youth are an economic asset – IRR report

A report released by the IRR has found that the HIV/AIDS policies adopted by the government after 2007 have had a very positive effect on demographic trends in the country.

The report found that indicators including life expectancy, recorded deaths, and the death rate (deaths per 1 000 people in a given year) improved from around 2007.

Using data from Stats SA, the IRR showed, for example, that life expectancy increased from 57.5 in 2007 to 62.5 in 2015. Over that same period, the death rate fell from 11.6 to 9.6.

IRR demographic analyst, and report editor, Thuthukani Ndebele said that “the data shows an important success that the Zuma-administration achieved in health policy”.

Mr Ndebele said that his report also showed “the potential economic benefits that South Africa could draw from what was a very youthful population”.

He explained: “With appropriate education, economic, and empowerment policies, it should be possible to accelerate young people into the middle classes where, as entrepreneurs and consumers, they could drive the growth of the economy. Unfortunately, too few of those policies are effective with the result that the youth are too often regarded as a threat – or drain – to our society when they should be regarded as a powerful economic asset.”

Watch IRR CEO Frans Cronjé talk on the report as well as the IRR [here](#).

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