

More than 1,100 rapes daily in DR Congo: study

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More than 1,100 women are raped every day in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), making sexual violence against women 26 times more common than previously thought, a study concluded Wednesday.

More than 400,000 women and girls between the ages of 15 to 49 were raped in the vast, war-ravaged country in [central Africa](#) during a 12-month period in 2006 and 2007, according to the study published in the [American Journal of Public Health](#).

That is 26 times more than the 15,000 women that the [United Nations](#) has reported were raped there during the same 12 months.

"Our results confirm that previous estimates of rape and [sexual violence](#) are severe underestimates of the true prevalence of sexual violence occurring in the DRC," said Amber Peterman, lead author of the study.

"Even these new, much higher figures still represent a conservative estimate of the true prevalence of sexual violence because of chronic underreporting due to [stigma](#), shame, perceived impunity, and exclusion of younger and older age groups as well as men," she said.

The study, which gathered data from 2007, did not capture sexual violence among girls younger than 15 years or women older than 49 years and did not include sexual violence among boys and men.

"Although the burden of sexual violence among these groups is

uncertain, a review of the records of 4,133 women attending Panzi Hospital in Sud Kivu showed that six percent were younger than 16 years and 10 percent were older than 65 years," said the study.

"In addition, Human Rights Watch reported that sexual violence in 2009 doubled in comparison with 2008. If this assessment is accurate, then the current prevalence of sexual violence is likely to be even higher than our estimates suggest."

Commenting on the study, Michael VanRooyen, director of the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, said that "rape in the DRC has metastasized amid a climate of impunity, and has emerged as one of the great human crises of our time."

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