

Confidence in the Electoral Commission in late 2015 stood at considerably higher levels than the three tiers of government, Parliament, political parties and politicians.

More importantly, we should be looking at patterns of trust not only over time, but also from a comparative perspective, taking into account the relative ratings of different institutions. From Figure 2, it is clear that confidence in the Electoral Commission in late 2015 stood at considerably higher levels than the three tiers of government, Parliament, political parties and politicians.

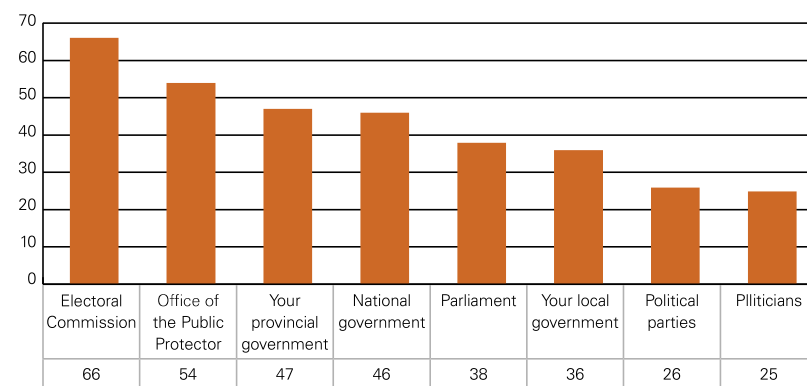
More specifically, trust in the Electoral Commission was 20 percentage points higher than that recorded for national and provincial government, 30 percentage points higher than local government, and 40 percentage points above that of political parties and politicians.

### A matter of performance?

Although not shown in Figure 2, our research shows that the fluctuating pattern of confidence in the Electoral Commission is common to many other political and social institutions in the country over the same reference period. The years where trust in the Commission rose or fell over the last fifteen years are mirrored in evaluations of the various other institutions that we have been monitoring in our survey series.

This raises the question of what factors are driving such evaluations. A thorough discussion of this is beyond the scope of this short article, but our multivariate

Fig 2 Confidence in select institutions, 2015 (percent that trust or strongly trust)



Source: South African Social Survey (SASAS) 2015

analysis of trust in the Commission did point to the role of general political disillusionment. When there is growing negativity in the political mood in the country, including satisfaction with democracy, service delivery, institutions and leadership, then trust in the Commission falls in tandem, and vice versa. The implication is that public evaluations of the election management body are not informed exclusively by its actual performance, but additionally by general political disaffection or contentment among the public.

To put the issue of political disillusionment further into perspective, the Election Satisfaction Survey 2016 found that 91% of the voting public trusted the Electoral Commission. This is appreciably higher than the 66% trust level expressed by the adult public as a whole ten months earlier in the 2015 SASAS round. One might argue that these enthusiastic ratings might be buoyed somewhat by voters having just had a positive voting experience at the time of interview. Irrespective of this, it does suggest that low trust or even distrust in the Commission is likely to be significantly higher among those that did not participate in the election. This is reinforced by the SASAS 2015 finding that political disillusionment accounts for close to three-quarters (72%) of intended electoral abstention, with administrative factors playing a relatively nominal

role. Those who have voted before are generally positive in the assessment of a range of aspects of the Commission's electoral performance.

### The final count

The results outlined in this article demonstrate that the Electoral Commission remains one of the most trusted institutions in the country. Variation in patterns of confidence over time is related to broader views about the performance of democracy and politics in the country. Consequently, when trust in the Commission declines, this does not necessarily reflect unhappiness with the conduct of this institution, and is more likely to signal mounting public disillusionment with democracy and governance at the time.

It is important that we continue to adopt a longer-term, comparative perspective in evaluating the state of public institutions such as the Electoral Commission and ensuring that unwarranted pronouncements of decline are not made. The real story for now lies in political disillusionment and how this is increasingly influencing electoral and other forms of political participation and expression in the country.

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# FAMILIES AND CHILDREN: Promoting family wellbeing and cohesion

Apartheid policies had devastating effects on family life in South Africa; the creation of homelands, forced resettlement and migratory labour policies strained and disrupted family relations. *Ben Roberts, Jarè Struwig and Zitha Mokomane* draw on a recent study on family cohesion and values, and actions for promoting child wellbeing.

The family is critical to achieving a healthy, cohesive society. Stable, well-functioning families tend to exhibit higher levels of social capital and resilience which, in turn, contributes to greater social cohesion at the societal level. Conversely, the absence of a stable, nurturing family environment has been found to have a profoundly damaging impact on the individual, often leading to behaviour which is, in turn, profoundly damaging to society.

Recognising this, and the importance of families, the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Development (PSPPD) financially supported a project that focused on better understanding patterns of family cohesion and values in South Africa, using data from the 2012 round of the South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS).

The intention of the project was to design evidence-based policies aimed at strengthening and promoting the wellbeing of South African families.

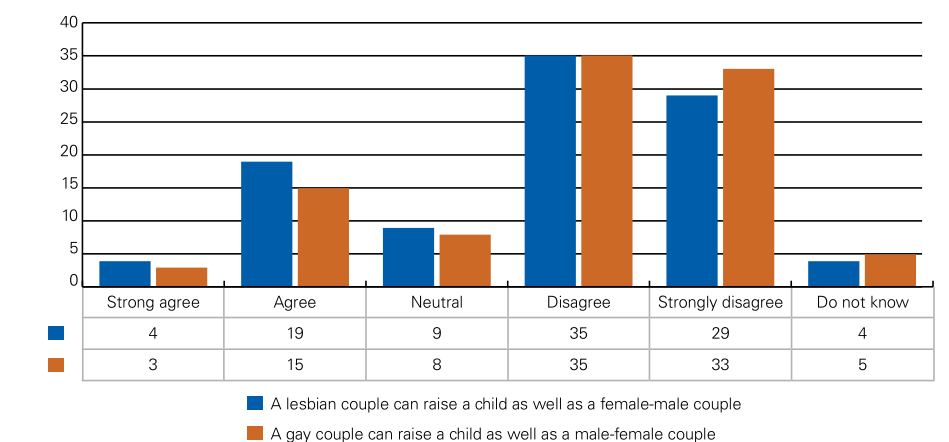
### Children and alternative family forms

South Africans are still relatively prejudiced against certain alternative family forms. Small shares of South Africans believe that a lesbian (23%) or a gay (18%) couple can bring up a child as well as a heterosexual couple. Despite this, trends over the last decade show a

softening of negative attitudes toward homosexual marriages and parenting. Other alternative family forms, such as single parenting, are more readily embraced by South Africans, with 69% agreeing that a single parent can raise a child as well as two parents together.

There is also a strong recognition of the role of fathers in raising children, with 72% of adults saying that men

Fig 1 Level of agreement that lesbian/gay couples can raise a child as well as female-male couples



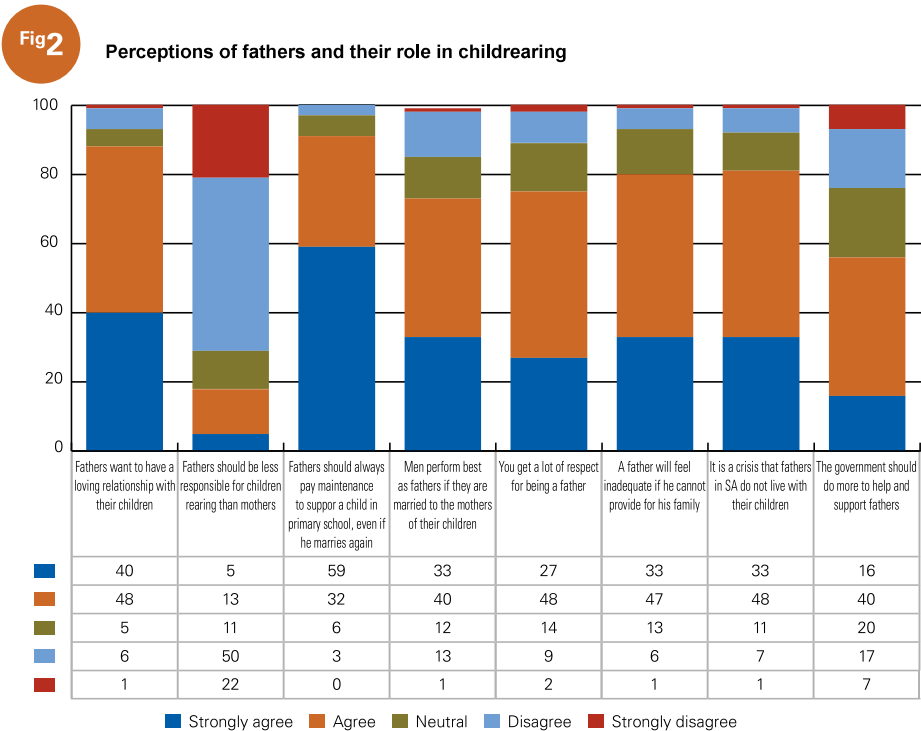
should not have less responsibility for childrearing than mothers, 75% saying being a father merits considerable respect, and 88% holding the view that most fathers want a loving relationship with their children. There is, however, widespread concern that men are unable to be co-resident with their children because of various structural reasons, which has resulted in a reasonably strong appeal (56%) for state assistance to support fathers.

A significant majority of South Africans also continue to support efforts to encourage the adoption of non-kin children in need. Slightly over half (53%) of the adult public agree that society should be doing more to encourage the adoption of children in need.

### Gender ideology and work-family balance

The family survey included a number of items examining gender ideology with specific reference to the tensions between women's economic participation and caregiving responsibilities in families.

Overall, the findings largely point to support for the traditional gendered division of labour, with female employment generally only tolerated



due to economic necessity. Thus, while three-quarters of the adult population believes a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work, 62% express the opinion that most women prefer domestic duties and childrearing to formal employment.

There is also ambivalence in responses to statements regarding young children suffering when their mothers work, and family life suffering when the woman has full-time employment.

The data suggest that women's gender roles have not been fundamentally transformed. The enduring support for the gendered division of labour has a number of implications for both women and men who are unable to break out of their stereotypical roles. Women who work are likely to experience a double burden of domestic and employment responsibilities. In addition, working mothers may experience stigma, with paid employment seen as the antithesis to ideal femininity and motherhood.

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**Table 1: Determining child poverty using the socially perceived necessity method**

Percentage of adults defining items as essential child needs	Percentage saying essential		Rank (1=high; 24=low)		Change 2007 – 2012	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	(%)	Rank
Three meals a day	91	90	1	1	(1)	–
Toiletries to be able to wash every day	90	87	2	2	(3)	–
A visit to the doctor when ill and all medicines required	88	86	4	3	(2)	+1
All fees, uniform and equipment required for school	88	84	3	4	(5)	(1)
Clothing sufficient to keep warm and dry	85	80	5	5	(5)	–
Bus/taxi fare or other transport to get to school	75	73	7	6	(2)	+1
Shoes for different activities	79	63	6	7	(17)	(1)
Own bed	62	60	9	8	(1)	+1
A desk and chair for homework for school aged children	49	54	12	9	5	+3
Own room for children over 10	40	47	16	10	7	+6
Some new clothes	67	46	8	11	(20)	(3)
Educational toys/games	46	43	13	12	(3)	+1
Story books	50	40	11	13	(10)	(2)
Pocket money/allowance for school aged children	59	38	10	14	(21)	(4)
A computer in the home for school aged children	32	32	19	15	(1)	+4
A school trip once a term for school aged children	45	30	14	16	(15)	(2)
Presents at birthdays, Christmas	40	26	15	17	(14)	(2)
Leisure/sports equipment	34	22	17	18	(11)	(1)
Own cell phone for secondary school aged children	22	22	22	19	–	+3
Toys or materials for a hobby	33	21	18	20	(12)	(2)
Some fashionable clothes for secondary school aged children	32	19	20	21	(13)	(1)
A birthday party each year	30	15	21	22	(15)	(1)
A CD player/MP3 player/iPod for school aged children	12	9	24	23	(3)	+1
A PlayStation/Xbox for school aged children	13	9	23	24	(4)	(1)

Source: SASAS 2007, 2012

### Children in the family

Nearly all South African adults (97%) agree that raising children is one of life's greatest joys. Large shares also opposed the idea that having children imposes restrictions on the freedoms of parent (63%), imposes a financial burden on families (59%), or restricts parental career opportunities (58%). There is also a deeply rooted notion that adult children are an important source of help for elderly parents (83% agree). Nevertheless, a notable minority share (25-28%) does recognise that

having children places constraints on employment and career prospects of one or both parents.

### How child poverty affects families

What effect does child poverty have on families? What does the adult population regard as essential for all children to secure an acceptable standard of living? In 2012, 9 of the 25 definitional items were deemed 'essential' by at least 50% of the adult population (Table 1). Many of these items relate to basic needs, such

as food, hygiene, health care, education and clothing, and these were regarded as essential child needs by the highest share of South Africans.

The results confirm that the public's definition of child poverty continues to encompass core elements of material deprivation, human capital deprivation and health deprivation, all of which relate to key areas of government intervention to promote child wellbeing.

Further findings show that inability of parents to provide for their children's basic needs erodes the dignity of the





parents and children alike. Poverty alleviation policies are therefore not only fundamental to material needs but there is a clear demand for the state to address family poverty as the basis of preserving dignity.

**Key recommendations**

Based on the analysis emanating from the research on family cohesion, we propose the following:

- **Child poverty:** The socially perceived necessities method, which includes determining fundamental basic needs such as food, hygiene, health care, education and clothing, should be applied in determining the extent and nature of child poverty, vulnerable groups and spatial concentrations of deprivation.
- **Poverty and material inequalities:** Government intervention should be implemented that respects and protects the dignity of citizens, which is an important indication that the state is seen as a legitimate authority in providing social protection that ensures that the needs of families are adequately met and quality life is promoted.

- **Diverse family forms:** Public support is required for the promotion of non-kin adoption alongside kinship care, which could represent a critical opening the government should build upon to encourage the adoption of children in need. Interventions should be aimed at shifting people's negative views related to same-sex family rights and at promoting the benefits of family diversity.
- **Policy support for fathers:** Policies and programmes should be pursued to promote positive male and fatherhood roles. Mechanisms and policies such as paternity and parental leave need to be put in place to ensure a greater balance between work and family responsibilities and gender equality in parenting.
- **Employment-family policies:** Coherent employment policies should strive to promote gender equity in the labour market and family policies need to recognise the significance of the male's involvement in households, for example, policy provisions for men's parental leave to promote caring by

**Policies and programmes should be pursued to promote positive male and fatherhood roles.**

both parents. Likewise, although family diversity is recognised in policies, the main focus remains on 'family preservation' in line with conventional gender roles.

- **Childrearing:** Caregivers of children need to be provided with information, knowledge and skills that will enable them to accomplish positive child outcomes without delaying their own career and economic advancement. The availability of state-subsidised services such as affordable child day-care and after-school care would go a long way towards complementing parental responsibilities in terms of children's wellbeing, protection and development. Evidence-based, positive parenting programmes could also be implemented and made available to parents nationally.

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# SPECULATIVE MEGA-PROJECTS: Impacts of proposed port expansions in Durban

The age of mega-projects is upon us, with the proposed expansion of the Durban harbour just one example. *Aubrey Mpungose* reviews the literature on similar projects and warns that the port project might result in permanent and irreversible negative social, economic and environmental consequences for the community of South Durban.

Cities around the world are increasingly undertaking large urban development projects (mega-projects) as a way to market and brand their cities as investment, tourism, production and consumption spaces. We are confronted on all sides with large-scale projects such as highways, railways, dams, airports, shopping malls, waterfront projects and sports stadia. This is true also of South Africa with our 2010 FIFA World Cup stadia building frenzy, Gautrain, and the proposed Airtropolis in King Shaka and OR Tambo international airports.

This study focuses on some key findings derived from a literature review of global experiences of mega-projects, particularly as they may provide valuable lessons for the rollout of the port expansion project in the eThekweni Municipality.

**Scepticism about the benefits of mega-projects**

Recent literature in urban studies contends that this increasing trend of cities adopting the mega-project concept is a consequence of globalisation, neoliberalism, and the shift from industrial to post-industrial economies. This is a response to the increasing demand for cities to be internationally competitive and thereby boost tourism and attract investments.

Mega-projects have not been immune to criticism. An emerging body of research examining the social, economic, environmental and spatial outcomes of mega-projects around the globe suggests that large development and investment projects are characterised by:

- Minimal commitment to socially just policies with the primary orientation towards profitability and competitiveness;
- Delivery by quasi-governmental organisations; and
- Operating within introverted business-oriented modes of governance that lack democratic accountability and exclude public participation.

A rapid scan of available literature suggests that a significantly large number of mega-projects overestimate their benefits and undermine the socio-economic and environmental costs and risks.

In a study of 258 transportation mega-projects in 20 countries across five continents, Bent Flyvbjerg from Oxford