

**Endangering Social Tolerance:
Understanding individual determinants
of attitudes towards immigrants in
South Africa**

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Human Sciences Research Council



FIRE AND FURY: MAY 2008

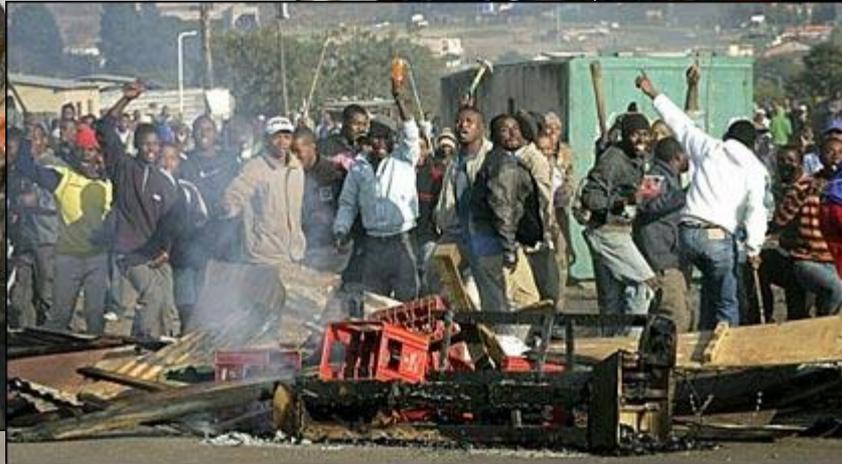


- Demonstrations of anti-immigrant violence most notably the May 2008 anti-immigrant riots which left over 60 people dead and displaced more than a hundred thousands.
- There has been relatively little quantitative research on determinants of attitudes towards migrants.
- Most studies are qualitative in nature, and make subjective judgments on the causes of xenophobia from micro-level analysis.

DENIALISM: XENOPHOBIA IN POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY

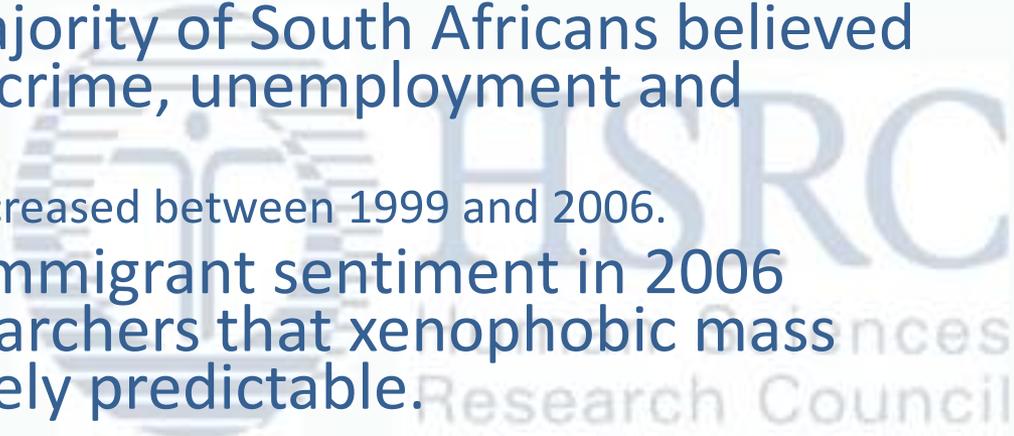
- Former President Thabo Mbeki during a 2008 address stated that:
"What happened during those days was not inspired by possessed nationalism, or extreme chauvinism, resulting in our communities violently expressing the hitherto unknown sentiments of mass and mindless hatred of foreigners—xenophobia. . . . I heard it said insistently that my people have turned or become xenophobic. . . . I wondered what the accusers knew about my people which I did not know. And this I must also say—none in our society has any right to encourage or incite xenophobia by trying to explain naked criminal activity by cloaking it in the garb of xenophobia" .







THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN MIGRATION PROJECT

- In 2001 and 2002, SAMP conducted attitudinal surveys on immigration policy and perceptions of foreigners among the citizens of Southern Africa.
 - Another set of the national attitudinal surveys were conducted by SAMP in South Africa in 1997, 1999 and 2006.
 - Southern Africa citizens tended to exaggerate the number of foreigners residing in their countries, scapegoat immigrants and view immigration as a "problem" rather than an opportunity.
 - SAMP 2006 Survey, a majority of South Africans believed that immigrants caused crime, unemployment and spread disease.
 - Such beliefs seem to have increased between 1999 and 2006.
 - The prevalence of anti-immigrant sentiment in 2006 suggested to SAMP researchers that xenophobic mass action in 2008 was entirely predictable.
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THE AFTERMATH: ATTITUDINAL RESEARCH SINCE 2008?

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- SAMP has not fielded and published a national survey of public attitudes towards immigrants in Southern Africa since 2006.
- This limits the ability of scholars to understand how attitudes towards foreign nationals have changed since the severe economic downturn of 2009 and the nation's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.
- the South African government has pledged to fight xenophobia and promote tolerance towards foreign nationals. In a 2008 address to the national President Thabo Mbeki promised to *“entrench ...full acceptance within all our communities of new residents from other countries”*
- This presentation will provide insight into how attitudes towards foreigners have changed over the last decade by using data from the nationally representative South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS).

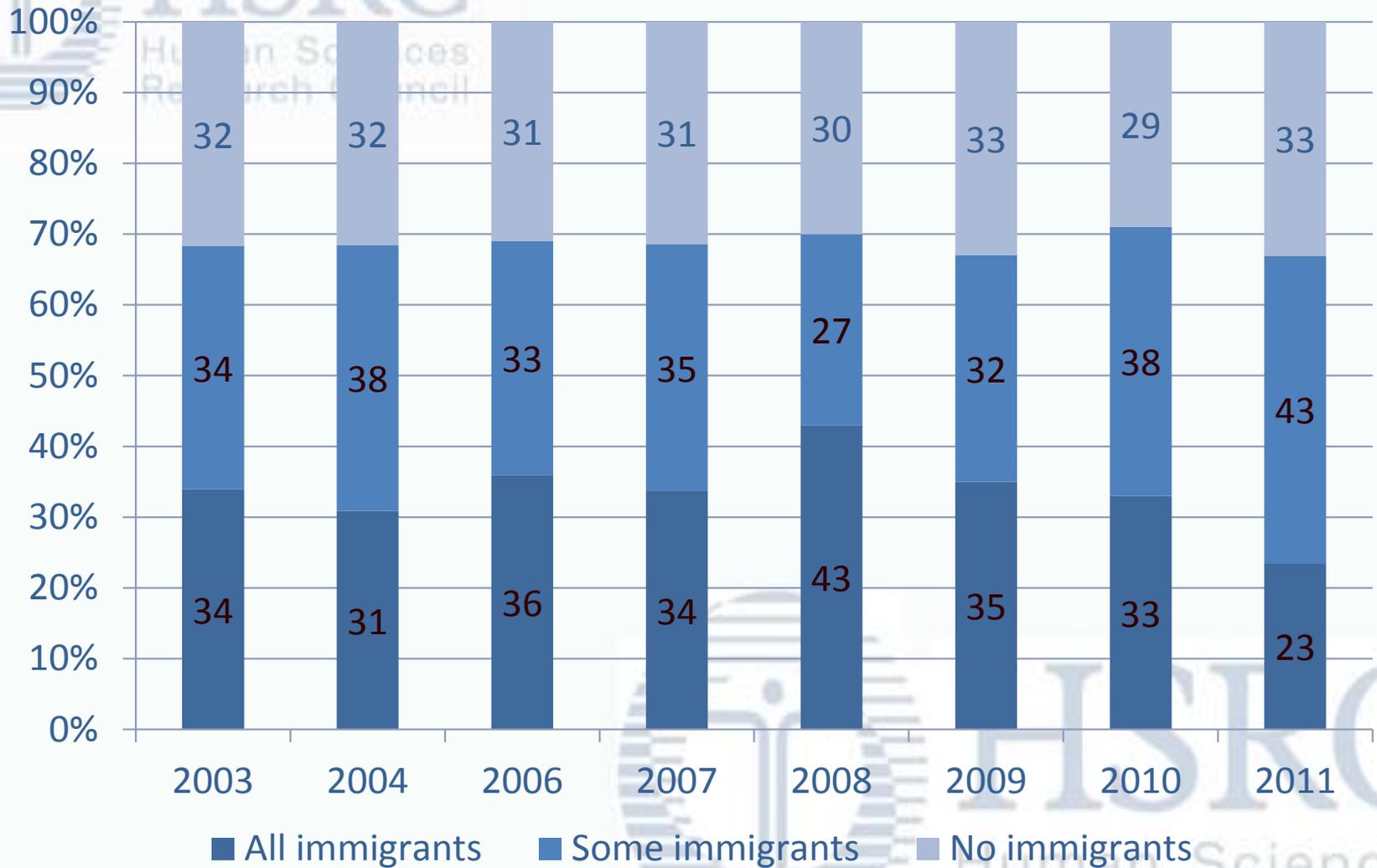


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THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY

- No attitudinal data gathered since 2008.
- To understand changing attitudes towards foreigners, we used data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), a repeated cross-sectional survey that has been conducted annually by the HSRC since 2003.
- SASAS contains detailed information about the socio-economic, demographic and labour-force characteristics of respondents.
- The implicit stratification variable was the enumerator areas from the 2001 census.
- The data was weighted to the mid-year population estimates published by Statistics South Africa.

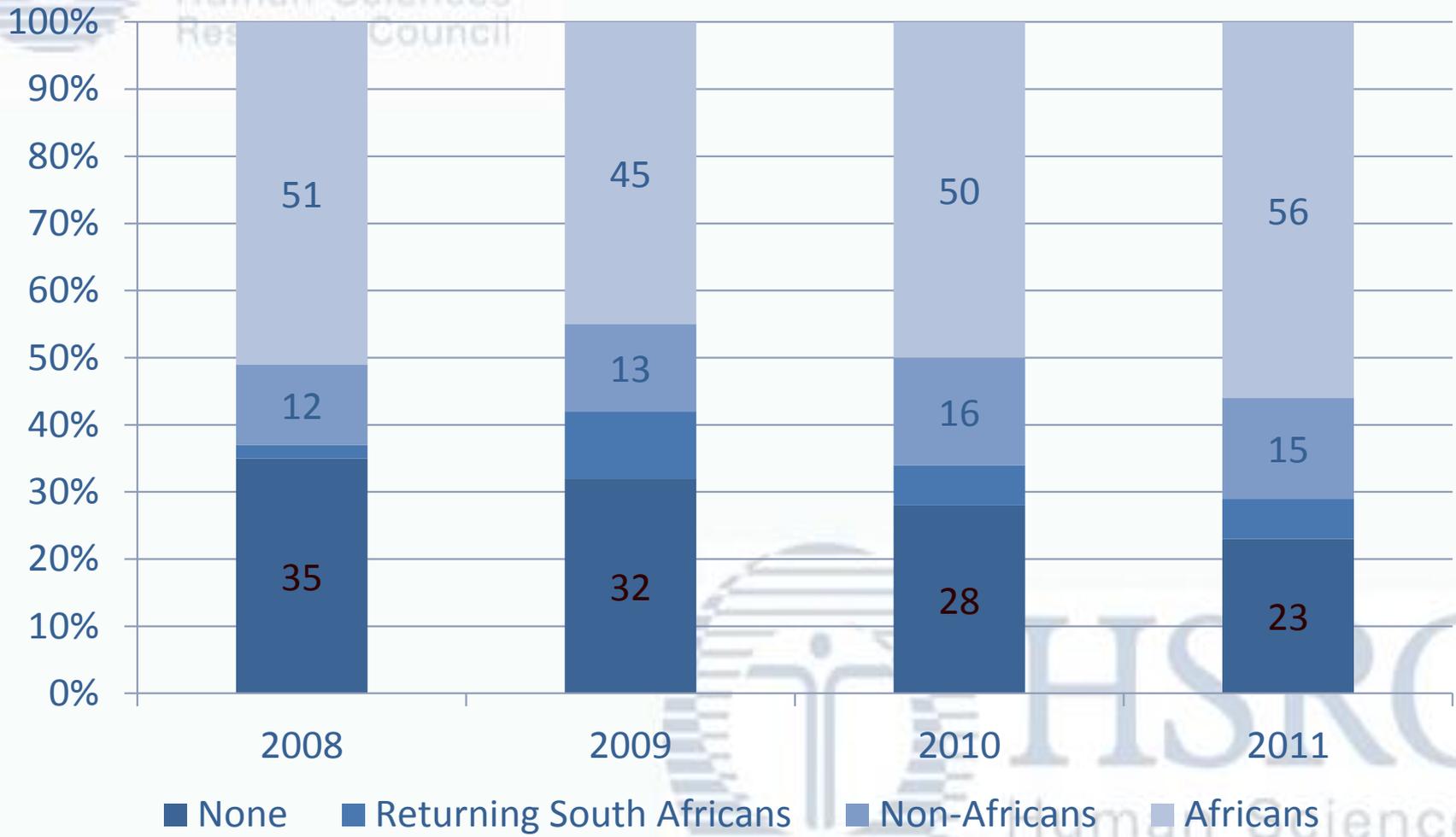
In response to the question, I welcome...





Which, if any, group would you least want to come and live in South Africa?

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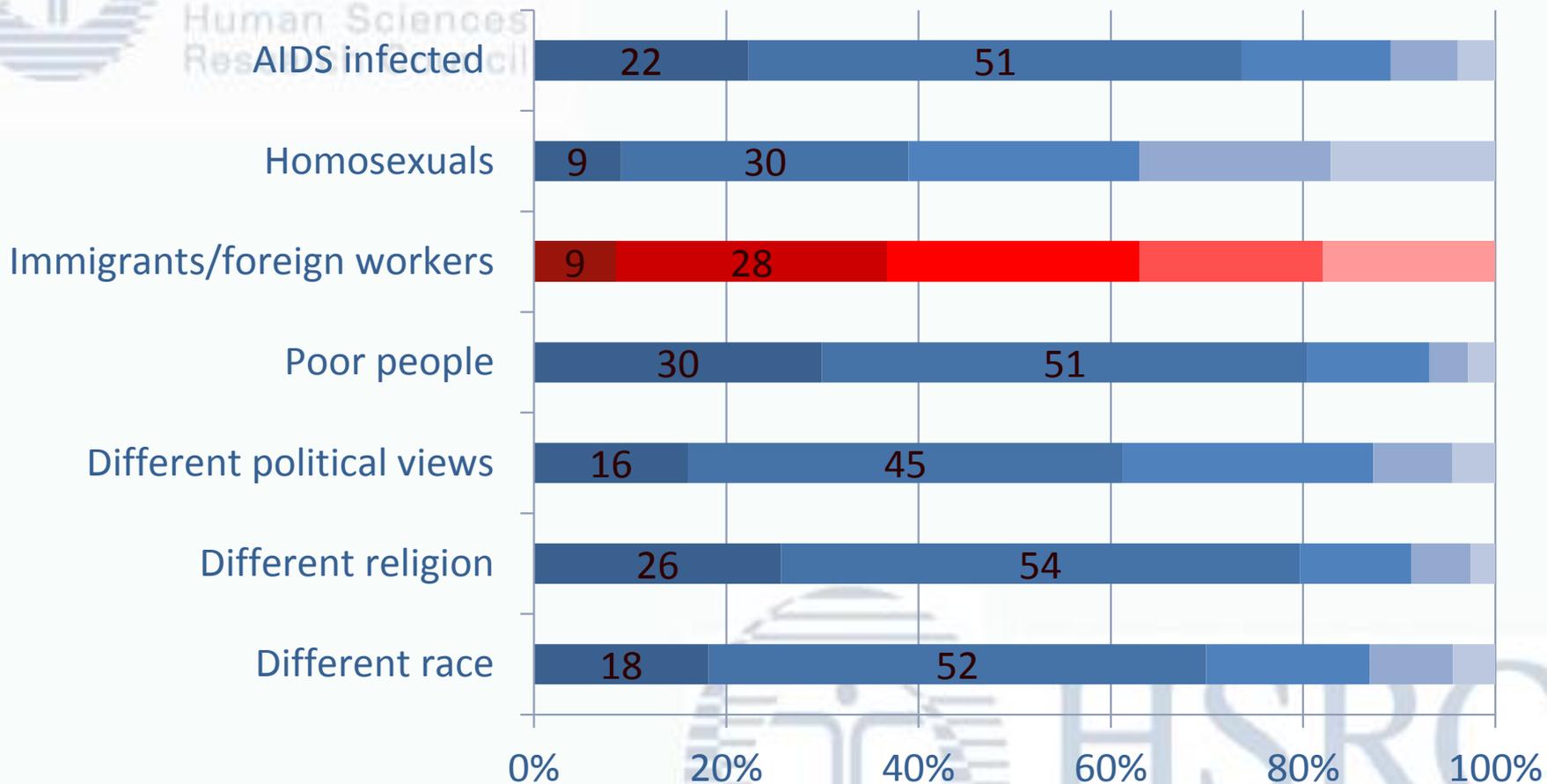


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2011: Tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you would be to have each of them as neighbours?

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■ Very satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ■ Dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied

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THE DETERMINANTS OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA?

- A great deal of work has been conducted on determinants of public opinion. However, as Price and Oshagan (1995:179) note “*a single complete theoretical explanation is not available*” to explain attitude formation.
- Intergroup conflict is attributed to the ‘*struggle of human groups for survival*’ in an environment where resources are scarce
- The study of intergroup relations often focused on race and the pervasiveness of racialised attitudes in the country.
- Increasing attention is given to the relationship between foreigner and citizen, immigrant and native .
- Due in part to the availability of data, the number of empirical studies that have emerged to test this model have been sparse.
- In light of the thinness of available local material, the current paper is one of the few empirical studies on how individual-level factors that could impact attitudes towards immigrants in South Africa.



WHY IS THERE XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA?

- Mondli Makanya Editor-in-Chief Sunday Times:
“I think that most black South Africans understand why black, working class South Africans, feel the way they do. It’s about economics. It’s also about people in transition, about a class of people arriving below them, undercutting them and competing with them in a context where they must scramble, of high unemployment, where the state is absent”.
- International evidence suggest that realist fears about the economic impact of immigration on the local labour market and welfare system affect attitudes towards immigrants
- **Economic Self-Interest Hypothesis:** attitudes vary according among the social strata of any give society.
 - the poor, the unemployed and the uneducated are expected to be the least welcoming of immigrants.





FINDINGS OF A BASELINE STUDY THAT THE **FORCED MIGRATION STUDIES PROGRAMME** .

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Respondents in the nation's townships were quoted as saying:

- These people come here to destroy. They come here and as South Africans we are deprived. They don't even have ID documents, they commit crime...
 - We don't want them here. While they were here, they wanted to rule us and they occupied most spaza shops [...] Yes, these people wanted to rule us, they were taking over our place.
 - Somalis should remain in their country. They shouldn't come here to multiply and increase our population and in future, we shall suffer.
 - People are complaining that illegal foreigners are staying in RDP houses...
 - They said they did not want foreigners because they take their jobs...
 - ...as long as the foreigners are here we will always have unemployment and poverty here in South Africa
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TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

- In order to test the self-interest economic hypothesis, the SASAS rounds for 2011.
 - The dataset includes 3057 respondents, both South African citizens as well as non-citizens.
 - Sample was restricted to citizens of South Africa.
- Dependent variable: how satisfied or dissatisfied you would be to have [immigrants/foreign workers] as neighbours? Measure used a scale coded 1 “very satisfied” and 5 “very dissatisfied”.
- SASAS contained information on respondent’s attitudes towards governance and democracy as well as their socio-economic background.
- We used ordered logit because OLS regression may underestimate the significance of some coefficients.

RESULTS OF THE ORDERD LOGIT REGRESSION

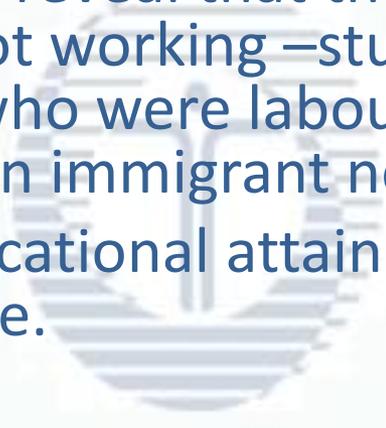




FAILURE TO CONFIRM ECONOMIC SELF- INTEREST HYPOTHESIS

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- Despite what is often quoted in the media, the poor, the unemployed and the residents of informal urban areas do not seem to be more intolerant of anti-immigrants than other South Africans.
- The class score was not found to be a significant determinant of intolerance towards immigrant neighbours indicating that an individual's economic status is not itself indicative of their attitudes towards foreigners.
- The findings of this study reveal that the employed were no more likely than those not working –students, the unemployed and those who were labour inactive –to be dissatisfied with having an immigrant neighbour.
- It is noteworthy that educational attainment was not found to be a significant variable.



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THE ROLE PLAYED BY CONTACT

- Allport's seminal work *The Nature of Prejudice*: intergroup contact has a positive impact on reducing prejudice between groups.
 - The nature of intergroup contact influences the positive impact on reducing prejudice.
- Support was found for the contact hypothesis.
- Those individuals with no contact with immigrants were found to be less tolerant than those who had contact.
- This is a worrisome finding as more than half (55%) of all South African citizens reported no contact with immigrants in 2011.
- The results confirm that the type of contact is important. Those individuals who merely had foreign acquaintances, but did not have any foreign friends, were not significantly more tolerant than those with no contact.



SCAPEGOATING OUTGROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

- When a nation's economic and social status seems to be deteriorating, foreigners are commonly perceived as a cause.
- Those individuals who were concerned about the safety of their neighbourhood and the state of the national economy were found to be more intolerant of immigrant neighbours than their counterparts.
- This study was also able to discern a link between subjective financial security and anti-immigrant attitudes with those pessimistic about their financial future more inclined to be intolerant of immigrants.
- It is interesting to note that concern over the national economy and neighbourhood safety were more salient predictors of prejudice than the subjective personal economic anxiety measure.

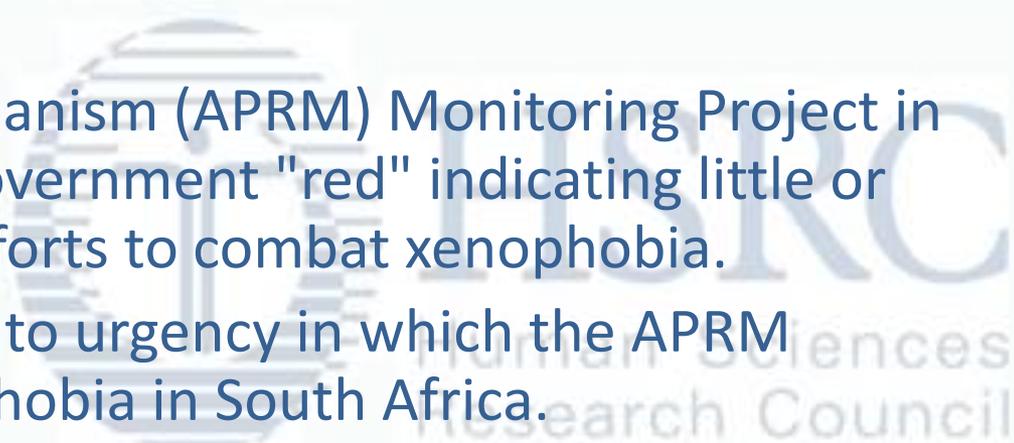


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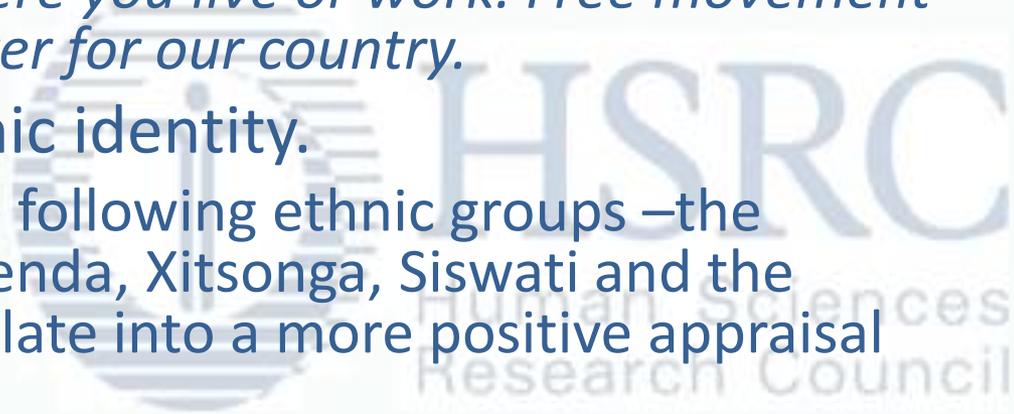
CONCLUSION

- In the years since the xenophobic violence of 2008, there have been numerous anti-immigrant actions. For the first six months of 2012 alone, more than 40 foreign-owned shops and businesses have been looted or destroyed, over 600 have been displaced in the violence and more than 270 individuals have been arrested.
- It is clear that measures to address anti-immigrant sentiment in South Africa must take into account the fact that there is no available evidence to support the link between economic self-interest and xenophobia.
- African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Monitoring Project in rated the South African government "red" indicating little or no progress in terms of efforts to combat xenophobia.
- This paper offers support to urgency in which the APRM frames the issue of xenophobia in South Africa.





FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS

- The role of the media should not be discounted.
 - Danso and McDonald (2001) analyse the role the media in producing xenophobia during the 1990s, finding that during this period media portrayals of immigrants were highly negative, and linked with social problems like drug trafficking and unemployment.
 - Nationalism and social identity.
 - Minister of Home Affairs Mangosuthu Buthelezi (1997): *South Africa is faced with another threat, and that is the SADC ideology of free movement of people, free trade and freedom to choose where you live or work. Free movement of persons spells disaster for our country.*
 - The role played by ethnic identity.
 - Being a member of the following ethnic groups –the Sesotho, IsiNdebele, Venda, Xitsonga, Siswati and the isiZulu –seems to translate into a more positive appraisal of immigrants.
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
QUESTIONS WELCOME

