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Understanding Intergenerational Solidarity in Democratic South Africa: A Quantitative Analysis of the Determinants of Intergenerational Support

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INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational solidarity has been defined as bonding between and among individuals in multigenerational family networks and among different age cohorts in the larger community.

- In 2014 the twentieth anniversary of the **International Year of the Family** will be celebrated and one of the three key themes that have been established by the **United Nations** for this commemoration is intergenerational solidarity.
- In South Africa, there is a concern that **traditional lines of support** between generations are weakening.
- Those born after the advent of majority democracy are often seen as **different from previous generations** and **less likely to support their older counterparts**.

**BUT ARE SUCH FEARS
JUSTIFIED?**

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CONSENSUAL SOLIDARITY

Inspired by Durkheim's concept of **mechanical solidarity**, assumption is that **ideological similarity among family members** would **reinforce** and be **reinforced** by **high levels of affect** and **association**.

- **Consensual solidarity** refers to the *degree of consensus or conflict in beliefs, or orientations, external to the family, and as well to perceived subjective consensus*.
- Developing countries grapple with **demographic changes** that threaten the **intergenerational social compact**.
- Escalating debates about **pensions**, **social security** and **health care** create an environment of fear.

DOES CONSENSUAL SOLIDARITY...

1. MAKE FAMILIES HAPPIER?
2. INCREASE FEELINGS OF FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY?
3. PROMOTE FAMILIAL SUPPORT?

**WHAT ROLE DOES
CONSENSUAL SOLIDARITY
PLAY IN SOUTH AFRICA?**

METHODOLOGY: DATA USED

Survey conducted by **Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)**

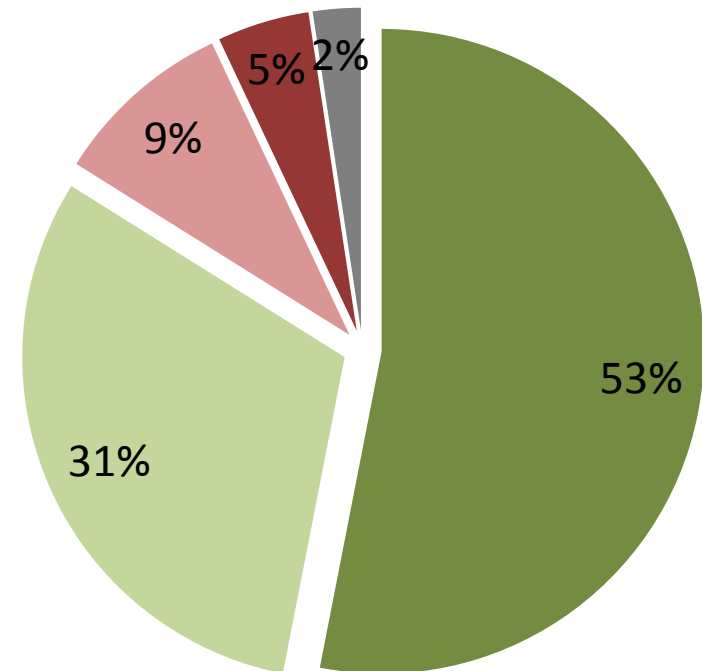
- Nationally representative of the population **16 years and older** living in **private households** in the 9 provinces
- *Primary sampling units:* 500 census enumerator areas (EAs), **stratified by province, geography type and majority population group**
 - One respondent 16+ years **randomly selected** per household
- Of 3,500 addresses issued **2,547 interviews achieved**
- Responses to the **survey voluntary and confidential**, collected by **face-to-face interview**

INTERGENERATIONAL CONSENSUS WITHIN FAMILIES

Simple measure of intergenerational consensus

The results of our 2012 survey suggest that many South Africans **hold the same opinions as their parents.**

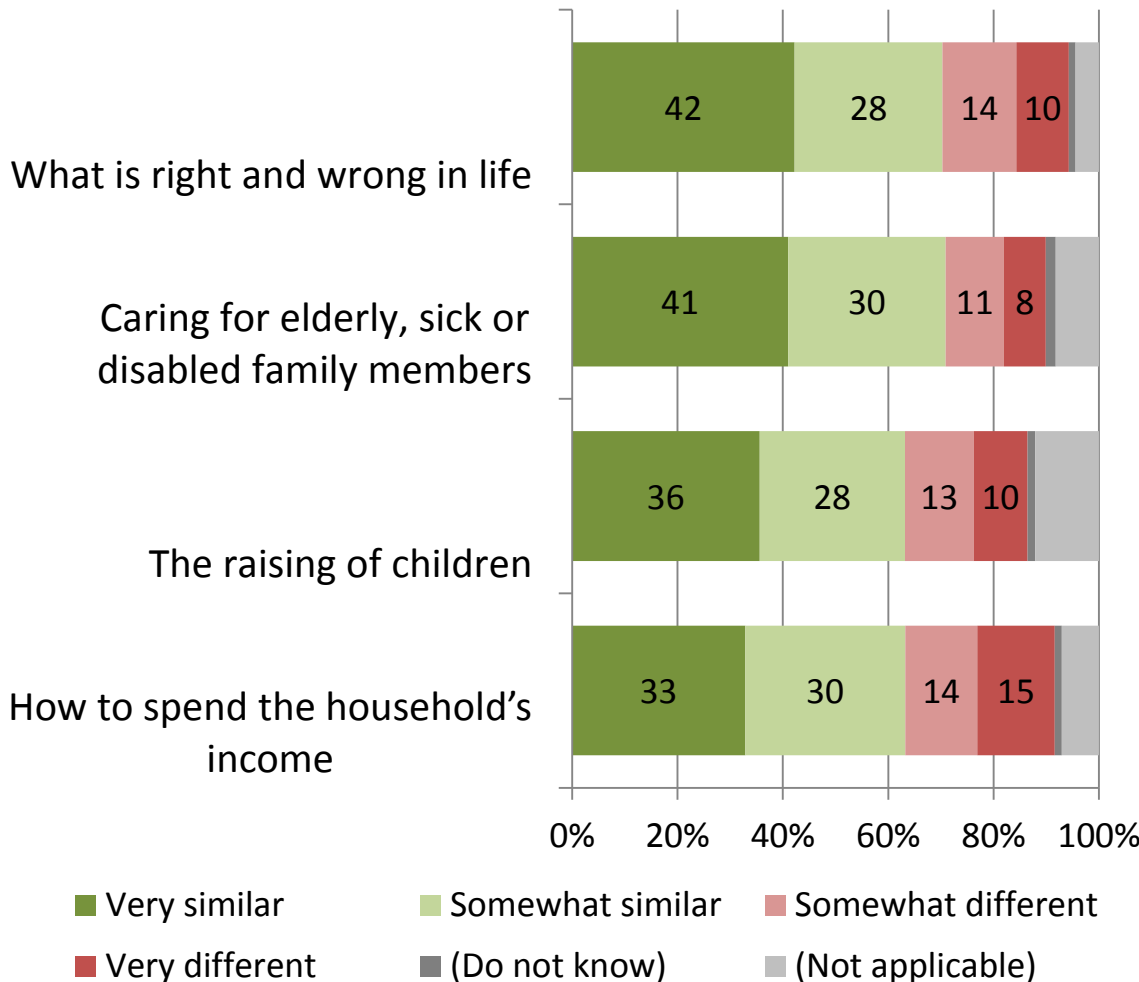
- A **majority** (53%) said their views were **very similar** to those of their parents and 31% indicated that their views were **similar**.
- Only a small **minority** (7%) said that their views were **dissimilar** to those of the people who raised them.



■ Very similar ■ Somewhat similar
■ Somewhat different ■ Very different
■ (Do not know)

TESTING CONSENSUS BETWEEN GENERATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILIES

Detailed measure of intergenerational consensus



Respondents were asked **how similar or different** the views of younger persons and older persons in their families were with **regard to important family issues**

Item	Obs.	Sign	item-test correlation	item-rest correlation	average interitem covariance	alpha
How to spend the household's income	2295	+	0.808	0.618	0.593	0.814
The raising of children	2177	+	0.841	0.696	0.557	0.779
Caring for elderly, sick or disabled family members	2256	+	0.816	0.663	0.603	0.795
What is right and wrong in life	2358	+	0.828	0.663	0.581	0.791
Test scale					0.583	0.838
Factor analysis/correlation					Number of obs =	2052
Method: principal-component factors					Retained factors =	1

Factor analysis allowed an **intergenerational family consensus solidarity (IFCS)** score to be created.

- A **high score** indicates **perceived dissimilarity in views** while a **low score** indicates **perceived similarity in views**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
IFCS	2052	-0.013	1.000285	-1.141	2.444

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Racial Minorities	White	-0,055	0,932
	Coloured	-0,084	0,898
	Indian	-0,259	0,918
Black African	isiXhosa	0,493	1,187
	isiZulu	0,010	0,797
	Other	0,123	1,186
	Sepedi	-0,223	0,906
	Sesotho	-0,157	1,045
	Setswana	-0,208	0,924

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Age Cohort	16-19	0.181	1.036
	20-29	0.055	0.974
	30-39	0.074	0.965
	40-49	-0.114	0.928
	50-59	-0.024	1.072
	60-69	-0.147	0.980
	70+	0.065	1.118
Gender	Male	0.082	0.997
	Female	-0.053	0.999

METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN

To test for determinants of **intergenerational consensual solidarity** would require a multivariate analysis.

Three regressions were created for this study:

Basic Socio-economic and demographic model

Attitudinal Model testing attitudes towards family solidarity and family satisfaction on consensual solidarity

Behavioural Model testing receiving help from/giving help to family members on consensual solidarity

FIRST REGRESSION: DEMOGRAPHICS

Of all **ethnic groups**, isiXhosa and isiZulu showed the **lowest level of perceived intergenerational family consensus solidarity** while the Setswana and the Indian population groups show the **highest**.

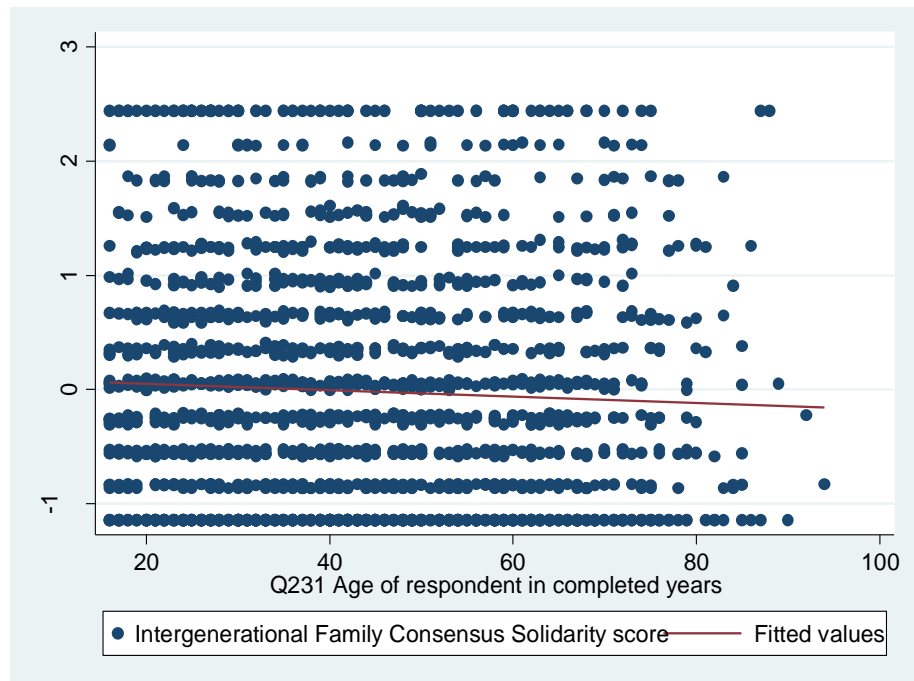
- Even controlling for a host of different **socio-demographic variables**, ethnicity was found to be a **strong predictor** of perceived intergenerational family consensus solidarity.

- Being **married without traditional ceremony** (in civic ceremony only) was associated with a **high IFCS score** in comparison to the other marriage categories
- Gender was **weakly correlated** with IFCS with women more likely than men to a **low IFCS score**

AGE AS A PREDICTOR OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONSENSUAL SOLIDARITY BETWEEN FAMILIES?

- Despite rapid change in the post-apartheid period, there is **no evidence** to suggest that age is a determinant of **shared values** between familial generations.
- International evidence suggests that **consensual solidarity** is not influenced by **demographic characteristics** but rather by attitudes towards **family solidarity**.

Scatter Plot: IFCS score and Age of respondent in completed years



CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Affectional solidarity refers to the degree of positive sentiments present in the intergenerational relationships, for example, feelings of trust, understanding, respect, fairness, affection, and warmth.

Associational solidarity refers to the degree to which members of a lineage are in contact with one another and includes frequency of intergenerational interaction, formal, and ritualistic contacts and informal contacts.

Structural solidarity refers to the opportunity for cross-generational interaction reflecting geographic proximity between family members.

Normative solidarity is the expectations regarding filial obligations and parental obligations, as well as norms about the importance of familistic values

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOLIDARY WITHIN FAMILIES

Speculation about South Africans becoming more individualistic over time BUT our findings suggest most want strong intergenerational familial relationships.

- Three-quarters of the adult population agreed that grown-up children **should live close to their parents.**
- Almost nine out of ten (81%) believed that grown-up children **should talk to their parents at least once a week.**
- Almost nine out of every ten (87%) thought that adults **should be willing to sacrifice some things** they want in order to support their aging parents

SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES AND FAMILY SOLIDARITY

Differences between age groups

- Younger South Africans were **not found to be less likely** to support close relationship between adult children and their parents.
- 91% of those aged 16-19 believed that adults should be willing to **sacrifice to support their elderly parents**.

Differences between population groups

- Only 52% of White South Africans agreed that adult children should have **weekly contact with their parents** compared with 70% of Coloured, 79% of Black African and 84% of Indian South Africans.
- **No differences** between population groups in attitudes towards supporting aging parents.

	Normative Solidarity		Associational Solidarity		Structural Solidarity	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Strongly Agree	-0,09	1,03	-0,14	1,03	-0,13	1,02
Agree	-0,02	0,98	-0,02	0,94	0,08	0,99
Neutral	0,26	0,84	0,23	0,84	-0,04	0,86
Disagree	0,57	1,01	0,33	1,13	0,03	1,05
Strongly Disagree	0,70	1,03	0,72	1,05	0,04	0,99

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Family Satisfaction	Completely satisfied	-0.223	0.937
	Very satisfied	-0.030	1.014
	Fairly satisfied	0.047	0.925
	Neutral	0.182	1.071
	Fairly dissatisfied	0.204	0.949
	Very dissatisfied	0.404	1.011
	Completely dissatisfied	0.746	1.288

SECOND REGRESSION: ATTITUDES

Those who believed that **people should be willing to sacrifice some things they want in order to support their aging parents** were less likely to score low on the IFCS score.

- The same was true of those who believed that **grown-up children should talk to their parents at least once a week**.
- A belief that **grown-up children should live close to their parents** was not associated with the IFCS score.
- **Dissatisfaction with family life** was positively associated with the IFCS score.

PATTERNS OF FAMILIAL ASSISTANCE

Functional solidarity (assistance): *the giving and receiving of support across generations, including exchange of both instrumental assets and services as well as emotional support.*

- There is a clear **conceptual connection** between the concepts of **filial responsibility expectations** and **functional solidarity**
 - implies a **positive relation** between **filial responsibility expectations** and **functional solidarity**
- South African **labour market** and **general state of the economy** may lead to a **belief that children should provide support** to their aging parents but also to recognize that, **for whatever reason,** they cannot (or will not) do so.

KINSHIP NETWORKS AND FAMILY SUPPORT

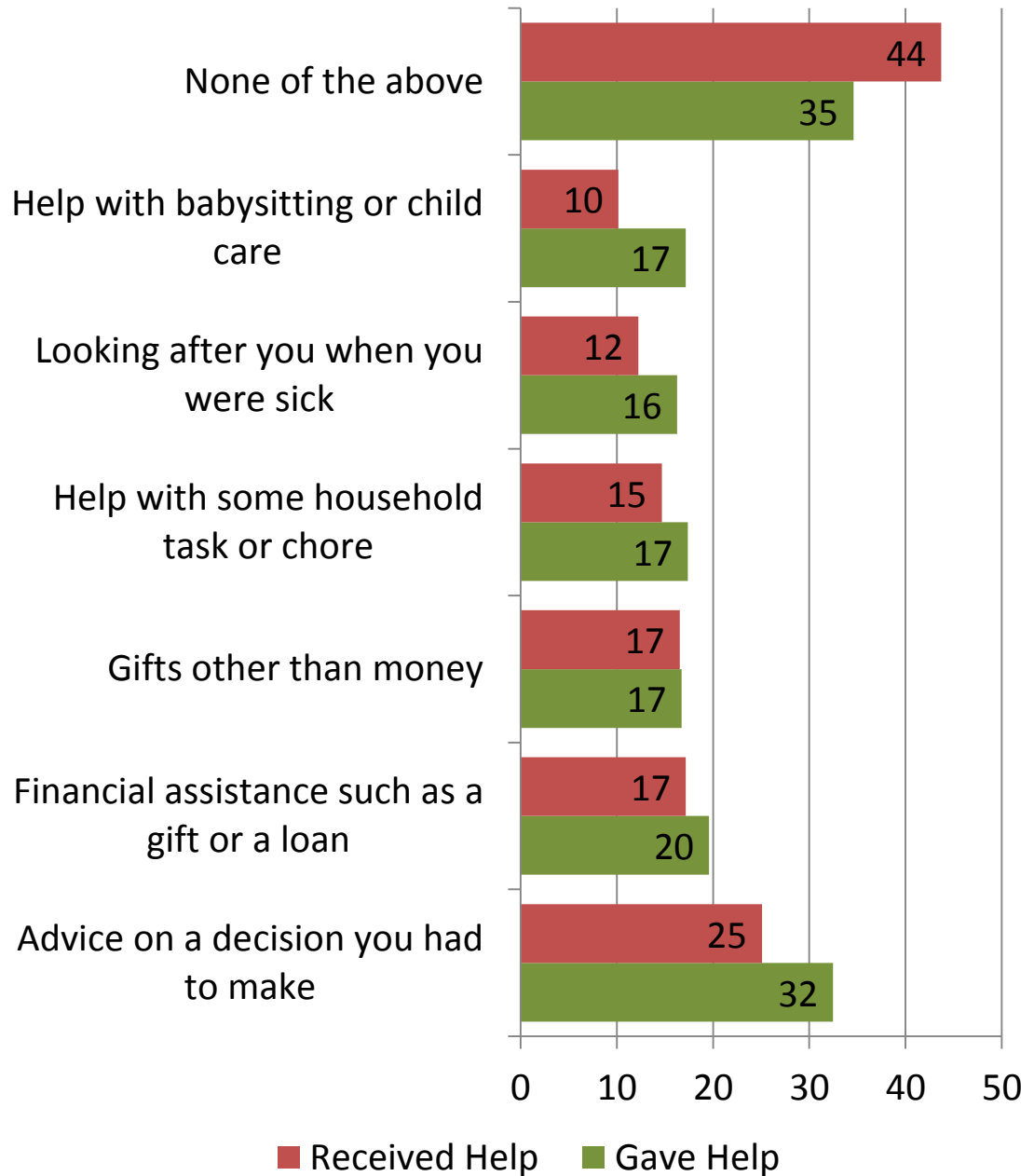
Historical family structures in South Africa have been **consanguineous** with **strong kinship networks** providing assistance and support to members of the network.

- There are concerns that **kinship networks are breaking down** under the weight of changing **family values** and **economic pressures**.
- To test the **strength of existing family networks**, we asked respondents what ***kind of help they received and gave to family members who did not live in their household in the past three months***.
- More than two-thirds (65%) **helped** family members outside the household in some or other way. Fewer (56%) indicated that they had **received** some form of assistance in 2012.

Forms of assistance received and given

The form of assistance given depended on the **economic resources of the household**, with wealthy South Africans **twice as likely to assist** family members financially when compared to their poorer counterparts.

Most individuals **gave or received only one form of aid**, with 29% giving and even less (22%) receiving **multiple forms of assistance**.



THIRD REGRESSION: BEHAVIOURAL

Receiving from/giving to assistance to family members was also **not associated** with the IFCS score.

Those who **currently had children** in the house scored higher than those who had **never had children** in the house and those **who previously had children** in the house.

If an individual was a **parent or care giver**, they would be more **likely to have a low IFCS score**.

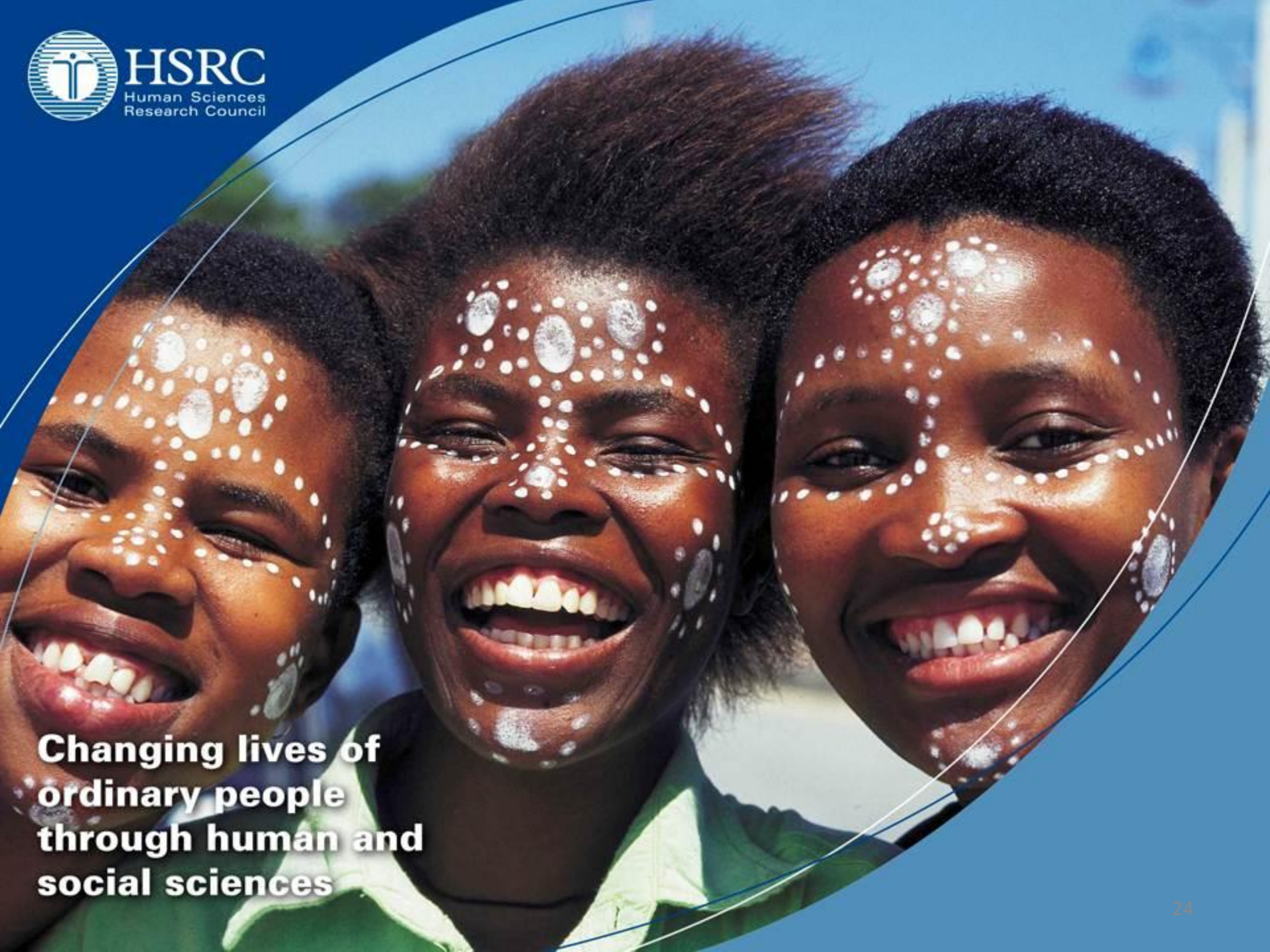
Being **wealthy is negatively associated** with the IFCS score.

Religiosity (measured as religious attendance) is only **weakly correlated** with IFCS score.

CONCLUSION

The **National Planning Commission** in charting its national long-term perspective and strategy for the country has placed **significant emphasis** on the need for and challenges associated with **promoting nation-building and social cohesion in the country**.

- The **family and its structure and functioning** plays an integral role as part of a **broader conceptualisation of socio-cultural cohesion**.
- The results present here suggest that **traditional lines of support between generations are not weak**.
- Such findings are encouraging and should be used by government as **building blocks to implement** the new **national strategy on social cohesion** and **policies on family cohesion**.



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