

# Review

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



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On 15 March 2020, as we were finalising this gender-themed edition of the *HSRC Review*, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster following the outbreak of the coronavirus in South Africa. He announced bold containment measures, which included travel bans, the closing of schools and the cancellation of events and gatherings of more than 100 people.

The fear is that a large outbreak could overwhelm South Africa's struggling health system. According to a recent [BBC report](#), the virus upheaval may also affect women disproportionately. Most nurses and child-care givers are women. They are employed in service, retail and hospitality sectors, which are hardest hit by the global economic shutdowns.

As the virus traps more people indoors, organisations also [predict](#) spikes in domestic violence, similar to what they have seen during long periods of bad weather. A Beijing-based women's rights NGO told the BBC that it had received three times as many inquiries during the quarantines than before.

A similar effect in South Africa could be disastrous in communities where women are already subjected to high levels of gender-based violence.

In August 2019, the murder of 19-year-old student Uyinene Mrwetyana by a post office worker in Cape Town sparked renewed protest against gender-based violence in the country. Botha [confessed](#) and received three life sentences in November 2019.

The government responded with an emergency plan against gender-based violence, reprioritising R1.6 billion to support this plan until the end of the 2019/20 financial year. In his state-of-the-nation [address](#) in February, Ramaphosa committed to amending the Domestic Violence Act to better protect victims of domestic violence and to broaden the categories of sex offenders in the National Register for Sex Offenders. He also promised the passing of a law to tighten bail and sentencing conditions in cases that involve gender-based violence.

But such legislation is primarily designed to protect victims and punish offenders rather than change behaviour, writes *Andrea Teagle* in this edition of the *HSRC Review*. Experts are calling for proactive interventions that address the root causes of gender-based violence. There is also a need to look at power dynamics and controlling behaviour in intimate relationships. A disturbing finding is that married women with higher levels of education than those with only primary-school level education may be more likely to experience lifetime intimate partner violence, possibly for inverting power dynamics that traditionally put men at the top.

In another article by *Andrea Teagle*, we look at men's roles in child rearing. The Labour Laws Amendment Act, which came into effect on 1 January 2020, grants new fathers 10 consecutive days of paid leave. However, findings from the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) suggest that most South Africans still prefer that women take most or all of the paid leave. In the *Child Gauge 2019*, figures from Statistics South Africa's 2018 General Household Survey showed that 43.1% of children lived with only their mothers, 3.3% lived with only their fathers and 33.8% with both parents. This means that some six out of 10 young children did not have a father at home and, coupled with the scourge of gender-based violence, may explain survey respondents' reluctance to entrust men with childcare.

With resources stretched to contain the coronavirus in the next few months, it is hoped that vulnerable populations, including women, are given adequate protection and that Ramaphosa's emergency plan against gender-based violence does not lose traction, nor will the efforts of numerous government departments and NGOs that work to improve the lives of women and children in the country, be lost.

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Antoinette

**Cover:** On a sunny morning in September 2019, a sea of people – mostly women, dressed in black – surrounded the parliament in Cape Town, singing. They buoyed placards decrying gender-based violence in South Africa, and demanded immediate action from the government to bring perpetrators to justice. Following the murders of UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana, Leighandre 'Baby Lee' Jegels, 14-year-old Janika Mallo and others, the gathering was part of nation-wide protest action calling attention to the normalisation of violence against women and children. President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation that evening.

**Photo:** *Andrea Teagle*

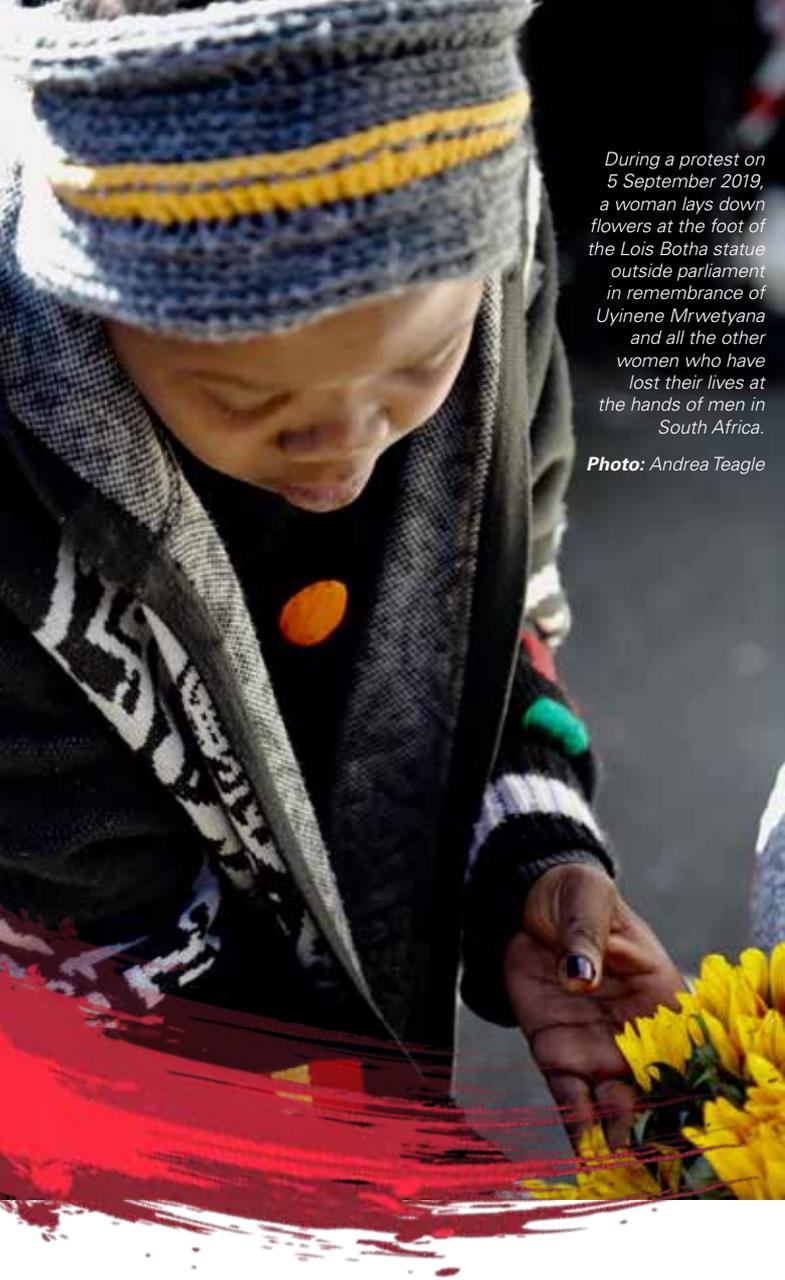
# WHEN HIGHER EDUCATION INCREASES WOMEN'S RISK FOR INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: THE CASE FOR A MULTIPRONGED PREVENTATIVE APPROACH TO TACKLING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The socioeconomic empowerment of women is seen as critical to gender equality, the absence of which is associated with high rates of gender-based violence. However, when it comes to intimate partner violence, recent findings from the South African Social Attitudes Survey suggest that interventions to increase the financial independence of women might backfire if not accompanied by a corresponding transformation of patriarchal belief systems. By *Andrea Teagle*

Among married women in South Africa, those with higher levels of education are significantly more likely to experience intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime, according to recent findings of the 2012 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). Specifically, women with some secondary education are more than twice (2.19 times) as likely to report lifetime IPV than those with only primary schooling. For those with university or college degrees, the risk is almost three (2.86) times greater.

*"I don't want to die with my hands in the air and my legs open": A crowd protesting gender-based violence gathers outside parliament, chanting, delivering speeches, testimonies and asking "Am I next?" The placard references a poem by South African poet Koleka Putuma. 5 September, Cape Town.*

**Photo:** Andrea Teagle



*During a protest on 5 September 2019, a woman lays down flowers at the foot of the Lois Botha statue outside parliament in remembrance of Uyinene Mrwetyana and all the other women who have lost their lives at the hands of men in South Africa.*

**Photo:** Andrea Teagle

Although education is considered a proxy for gender equality at a national level, a chapter on IPV in [South African Social Attitudes: Family Matters](#) (HSRC, 2019) showed how well-educated women in patriarchal societies might sometimes face violent backlashes from partners for inverting the gendered power dynamics. Dr Yanga Zembe, an associate professor at the University of the Western Cape, and Prof Visseho Adjiwanou from the Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada, speculate that this likely occurs in relationships where the male partner is less educated or lower-earning, and so perceives the success of the woman as undermining his masculinity.

The survey also found that employed women had a greater risk of psychological violence than those who were unemployed, despite the reported public support for working women in South Africa.

“Men who experience emasculation use violence to over-assert their authority, overcome feelings of inferiority and reclaim their sense of power,” Zembe and Adjiwanou write.

Research on the impact of microfinance services on empowering women in other parts of the world has yielded [mixed results](#) at the relationship level. In Bangladesh, [a 1996 study](#) found a decrease in IPV, while in [another study](#) female microfinance borrowers experienced greater IPV risk. In the former study, the observed increase was attributed to an increase in the visibility of women’s lives through group-based credit programmes. Therefore, understanding the local context – which may differ within as well as between countries – is critical to the design and implementation of effective empowerment measures.

SASAS also found that, while women in South Africa faced a significantly higher chance of physical violence at the hands of their spouses, men and women were about equally likely to report having been the victim of controlling behaviour.

“Given that controlling behaviour is about demonstrating and exerting power over another,” the authors write, these findings “may suggest that power is becoming a contested medium in intimate relationships in South Africa.” This is especially significant given that most cases of gender-based violence (GBV) occur in the home.

South Africa arguably stands at a pivotal historical juncture for gender justice. Violence against women and children has reached critical levels and women are increasingly demanding that patriarchal norms be dismantled and that perpetrators be brought to justice. In the wake of multiple murders last year, including that of UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana, protestors all over the country took to the streets to demand that the government take action.

In February 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa proclaimed the [necessary legislation](#) to establish and provide resources for dedicated sexual offences courts, intended to bring justice to survivors of GBV. The new legislation makes provision for measures to improve the quality of evidence presented, increase prosecutions and minimise secondary trauma for complainants. The intention is to make it easier for survivors of GBV to report offences and to give evidence in trials as a means of deterring potential perpetrators, according to a [statement](#) released by the Presidency.

Such measures are an important component of a comprehensive strategy to address GBV. However, legislation is primarily designed to protect victims and punish offenders rather than change behaviour. Experts from the HSRC and elsewhere have argued that such reactive measures need to be accompanied by proactive interventions that address the root causes of GBV.

### **Understanding GBV**

In the [ecological model](#) of GBV, the World Health Organization (WHO) seeks to explain the phenomenon as an intersection of factors at different levels: societal, political, relationship and individual. In South Africa, poverty and inequality, the historically sanctioned and [normalised use of violence against the disempowered](#), intersectional discrimination, low access to mental healthcare services, and ineffectual state policies all perpetuate GBV.



Crowds protest gender-based violence at the parliament in Cape Town in September 2019 after the deaths of Uyinene Mrwetyana, Leighandre 'Baby Lee' Jegels, Janika Mallo and others.

Photo: Andrea Teagle

Research shows that violence is often predicted by earlier exposure to violence. Within families, children exposed to IPV or neglectful or abusive parents are more likely to go on to become victims or perpetrators themselves. And, as Zembe and Adjiwanou write, IPV is also more likely to occur in poorer households and households in communities that experience high levels of violence. The elevated risk of IPV faced by coloured, and to a lesser degree, black women in South Africa, as revealed by the SASAS data, underscores the ripple effects of high rates of community-level violence and gang warfare.

The health promotion model of GBV posits that various resources help people to deal better with significant life stresses, reducing the likelihood that they perpetrate or experience violence. Such "resistance resources" include income, self-esteem, mental wellness, and social and cultural capital.

In their [2013 paper](#) outlining the model, Dr Navindhra Naidoo of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and Dr Lubna Nadvi of the University of KwaZulu-Natal argue that post-incidence interventions miss potential perpetrators and distract from all that perpetuates a culture of GBV.

"South African men of all demographic profiles have become central to the perpetuation of the problem of GBV and it is crucial that they be targeted for intervention measures," they write.

### Interventions for tackling GBV

One way of increasing potential perpetrators' resistance resources might be by mental-health outreach programmes that target men, although [more research is needed](#) to determine whether this is effective in decreasing IPV. A mental-health intervention aimed at men was recently launched in Kenya. The programme modified the evidence-based WHO Problem Management Plus [programme](#) to include an alcohol abuse component, after [engaging](#)

with community members to identify the main drivers of violence against women.

Local interventions that have been shown to be effective include community-based programmes that engage men and women on gender norms and constructs, and skills training and microfinance services to empower women.

As the SASAS data suggests, efforts to empower women socioeconomically are likely to be most effective when accompanied by interventions that prompt critical examination and the dismantling of patriarchal norms. One such intervention is the combined [Stepping Stones and Creating Futures](#) community-based programme, which involves both learning sessions around sexual health and GBV, and workshops to improve employment and earning capacity. The programme has been shown to shift gender norms and reduce women's experience of IPV, as Dr Nwabisa Shai and Dr Yandisa Sikweyiya of the Medical Research Council [report](#). Such an approach has significant potential to help reduce GBV if scaled up to national level.

In their [2013](#) review of public health approaches to GBV, Shai and Sikweyiya also highlight family-level interventions that aim to improve child-caregiver relationships, such as the [Sinovuyo Caring Families Programme](#). These interventions, which include mental-wellness components for caregivers, might have important long-term impacts on IPV, as research suggests that how children relate to their caregivers early on shapes their ability to form healthy relationships later in life.

At a policy level, South Africa has some of the most comprehensive gender equality laws in the world and has made significant strides towards greater female political representation. However, Zembe and Adjiwanou argue, a critical gap pertains to policy directed at the private sphere, where most gender-based violence takes place.

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# Can fathers be both earners and caregivers?

## The seemingly contradictory expectations for South Africa's fathers

According to a 2017 national survey, South Africans widely agreed that a man's role in child rearing is important. Paternal involvement in the early days of a child's life has been shown to increase bonding and promote gender equality. Yet, the same survey found that most South Africans believed that parental leave should be reserved solely or mostly for mothers. While acceptance of working mothers has increased, this has not been matched by a corresponding broadening of the perceived role of fathers as breadwinners.

By *Andrea Teagle*

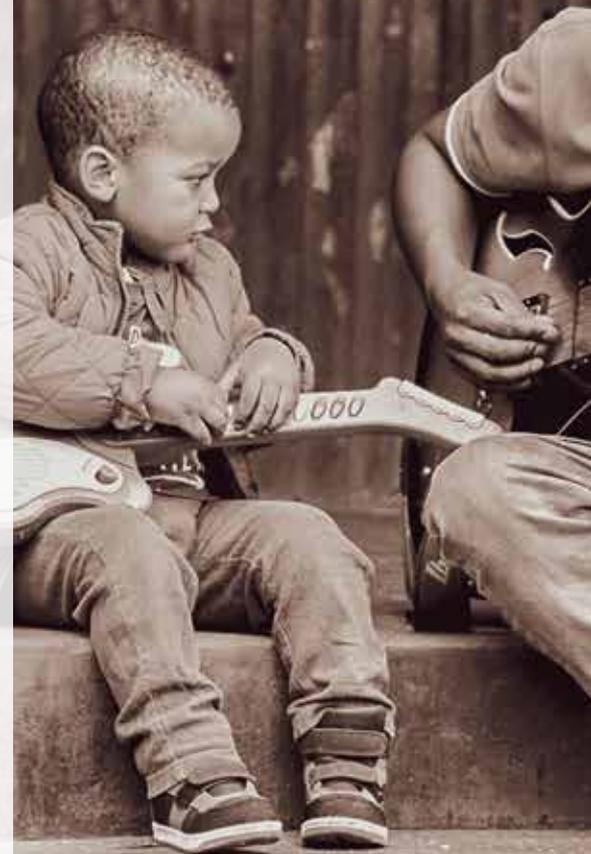
South Africa's Labour Laws Amendment Act, which came into effect on 1 January 2020, grants new fathers 10 consecutive days of paid leave. The provision also applies to same-sex parents and surrogate parents, but not to mothers, who are entitled to four months' maternity leave. The policy shift has been hailed by experts as an important milestone for gender equality.

However, says HSRC research specialist Dr Ingrid Lynch, while an improvement, 10 days is still inadequate. The unequal division of childcare that is established in those early days when fathers are not present results in a confidence and competence gap between the parents, making it difficult for fathers to become more involved later on.

The 2017 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) suggests that the views of the majority of South Africans were at odds with the recent modest policy shift towards more balanced leave. When asked how leave should best be distributed between couples with a newborn, South Africans still overwhelmingly preferred that women take most or all of the paid leave.

Specifically, 60.7% of adults agreed that mothers should take the entire paid leave period (and fathers should not take any paid leave), while a further 24.3% said that mothers should take most of the leave. Just 12.3% supported the idea of an equal split in paid leave. (Figure 1)

"There's a persistent belief that men are not capable caregivers and that

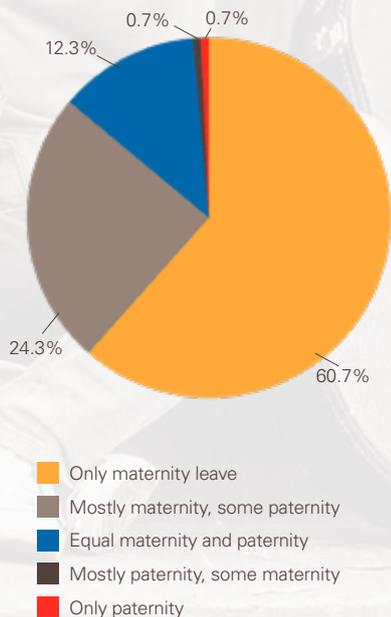


Simphiwe Sekhute, a producer, composer, guitarist and song writer shares a moment with his son, Kgothatso.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 1: South Africans' preferred parental-leave splits



When asked to consider how parental leave should be divided between two working parents with a newborn, more than four-fifths of South Africans stated that the mother should take most or all of the paid leave.

Source: SASAS 2012

women have an innate ability," says Lynch, who authored the portion of the SASAS research focused on attitudes towards men's and women's respective child-caring roles, together with former HSRC researchers Furzana Timol – now a project director at the University of KwaZulu-Natal – and feminist health psychologist Dr Tracy Morison of Massey University, New Zealand. Increasing men's involvement as fathers, Lynch says, will require interventions to tackle gender perceptions alongside structural changes.

"I don't think one single factor will shift really deep-seated sociocultural beliefs. But I think [the increase in paternity leave] can contribute to that."

### A mother's place is in the home

According to other data from the SASAS survey, South Africans were generally accepting of women being employed. In fact, the majority believed that women should contribute to household income. This is borne out by employment figures: the percentage of women in the workforce has increased in recent years. However, the nature of work remains highly gendered, with women concentrated in the poorly paid service sector as retail or domestic workers. According to 2018 figures from Statistics South Africa, women occupied just one in three managerial positions.

Additionally, public support for women in the workplace declines markedly when women have children. The SASAS results suggest that women's paid work is accepted due to financial realities and is considered secondary to their parental roles. For example, the majority of adults (62% of men and 59% of women) agreed that 'a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children'.

"Research shows that if a woman works just because her career is fulfilling to her and she wants to use her brain, she receives less support

than if it is out of financial necessity," says Lynch.

The survey also revealed some interesting beliefs about the importance of a mother's presence at different stages of a child's development. Most respondents agreed that women could work full- or part-time when children are very small (but not newborn). However, almost two-thirds of respondents thought women with children of school-going age should not work at all, and just 13% of adults thought they should work full-time. This plays into the idea of intensive motherhood, Lynch says, when the healthy development of the child, from infancy to adulthood, is attributed to the mother.

### The "capable father"

Despite these findings, an overwhelming majority (over 80%) of adults agreed that 'it is a crisis that many fathers in South Africa do not live with their children'. Additionally, 70% dismissed the idea that fathers should have less responsibility for child rearing than mothers. (Figure 2) This apparently contradictory finding, reported by another research team led by the HSRC's Dr Tawanda Makusha, likely reflects a belief that financial support constitutes a part of childcare and that capable fathers are characterised by the ability to provide for their families.

"That is the bit that is so damaging, if you think about the fact that so many men are unemployed or underemployed," Lynch says, adding that we need to broaden what it means to be a father. "So, for that father to say, 'I'm really involved in hands-on care', people don't value it in the same way."

To get a sense of aggregate views on women's roles (and, by extension, of men's), Lynch and her colleagues combined a subset of the survey answers to create standardised scales: the nurturant and instrumental scales. The nurturant scale measures perceptions of working women's ability to care for their children and the instrumental scale measures

attitudes towards women's roles as financial providers. Each yields a score of between 0 and 100, where a higher score indicates greater belief in the working woman's capacity in that particular role.

Thus, countries with high scores on the two scales are more gender egalitarian; and a country's level of economic development and the presence of progressive policies are predictive of higher scores.

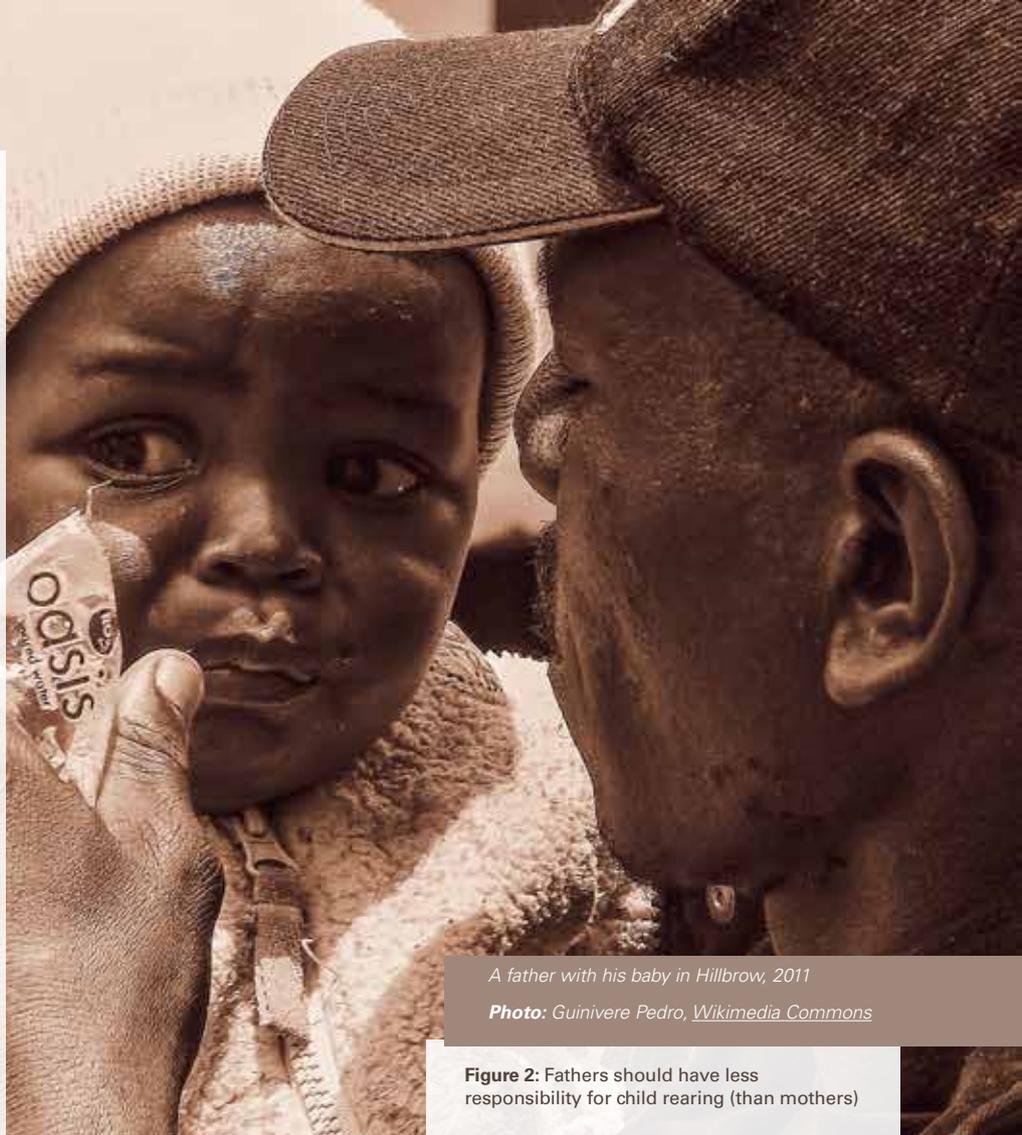
### A strengthening of traditional gender roles?

In Iceland and Sweden, both among the countries scoring highest on support for working women's caregiving capacity, men's actual parental leave accounts for 45% or more of the total parental leave that is claimed nationally. In Germany, which also ranks among the top scorers, parents have some freedom to choose how parental leave is divided between them, but are incentivised to divide it equally: couples who jointly claim leave are granted additional time off.

South Africa fares reasonably progressively on these scales compared with other developing countries like Russia and China, the authors note, and is about on par with the US in its support for working women's ability to raise children.

The perceptions of men and women in South Africa were similar, overall, although in lower socioeconomic groups, women returned significantly higher scores on the instrumental scale than their male counterparts. Black adults, both men and women, were significantly more supportive of women as financial contributors than other population groups. And finally, respondents who had had working mothers themselves were more likely to hold progressive views.

How have South Africans' views changed in recent years? Not all of the questions comprising the two scales were asked in previous surveys. Looking at a subset of the questions, the researchers found that support for working mothers



A father with his baby in Hillbrow, 2011

Photo: Guinivere Pedro, Wikimedia Commons

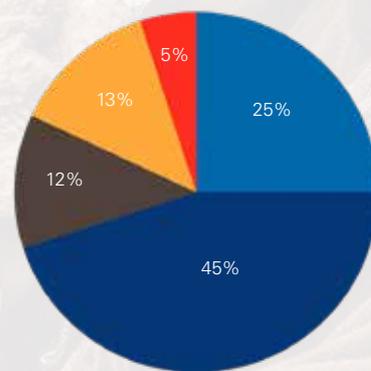
increased between 2003 and 2012. However, this appeared to be accompanied by a strengthening of support for the traditional division of child rearing labour.

Notably, in 2003, the aggregate score for the item 'A man's job is to earn money; a women's job is to look after the home and family' was 58% for both men and women (where scores closer to 100 indicate more progressive views). But in 2012, this had dropped to 44% and 48% respectively. However, the researchers caution, "with limited data, we are unable to establish a long-term trend".

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Figure 2: Fathers should have less responsibility for child rearing (than mothers)



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Most South Africans (70%) disagreed that fathers should have fewer childrearing responsibilities than mothers.

Source: SASAS 2012

# Most

## South Africans are overweight:

Do social and mental-health factors contribute?

*A woman prepares food in Kanana in Gugulethu, Cape Town. In South Africa, married women are expected to cook and dish up large food portion sizes. If this food is high in simple sugars and saturated fats, it can fuel conditions such as type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.*

**Photo:** Yassey Booley

Being overweight is one of the key drivers of hypertension, diabetes, cancer, stroke and heart disease in South Africa.

While genetics play a role, research has also shown associations with social factors, the environment, education and mental health.

Analysing data from the first South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the HSRC's *Dr Whadi-ah Parker* and a team of researchers from South Africa and Sweden looked at the effect of social and mental-health factors on malnutrition in South Africa.

More than two-thirds of South African women and almost a third of men are either overweight or obese, an 'epidemic' that has spiralled over the last few decades. According to the [South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016](#), most women who described themselves as having a 'normal' weight were in fact overweight or obese. Only 3% of women and 10% of men were underweight.

International studies have shown that social factors may contribute to the obesity epidemic, but the findings have been contradictory. In an attempt to explore these factors in the South African context, researchers at the HSRC, the University of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch University collaborated with Stockholm University and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden to analyse data from the first South African National Health and Nutrition Examination [Survey](#).

The purpose was to investigate how psychological distress and social position (using marital status, education, employment and income status as proxies) combine to influence the risk of malnutrition (overweight and underweight).

### Calculating BMI

Using measurements of 6 424 people (aged 15 and older) who participated in SANHANES-1, the researchers calculated their body mass index (BMI) scores. BMI is a person's body mass (in kilograms) divided by the square of their body height (in metres). Health professionals use this value to broadly categorise a person as underweight (<18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>), having normal weight (18.5 to 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>), overweight (25 to 29.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) or obese (≥30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>).

Using a questionnaire, trained fieldworkers also conducted interviews to learn more about the participants' social positions.

# 40.1%

## Results – a gender difference

Among women, the prevalence of obesity was 40.1%, almost four times higher than in men. Being married or in a partnership, educated, employed and having high income increased the risk of being overweight or obese for both genders.

Conversely, poor mental health was associated with an increased risk of being underweight in both genders. In this study, the prevalence of being underweight in men (11.9%) was almost three times that of women (4.2%).

## The role of partnerships

In an attempt to explain some of these findings, the researchers looked at other studies and hypotheses. A [study](#) in Cape Town showed that cohabitation increases opportunities for sharing regular meals and overconsuming energy-dense foods due to social obligations; in South Africa, married women are expected to cook and dish up large food portion sizes, often with an abundance of red meat.

Many see a bigger body size as an indication of beauty and fertility in women, and prestige and happiness in both genders. An overweight married individual is often seen as well cared for by their spouse. However, in a 2012 [literature review](#), it was suggested that married individuals may be less interested in body size maintenance as they are no longer looking to attract intimate partners.

Other studies have shown an association between reduced food consumption and being unmarried, getting divorced or losing your spouse. This may be due to changes in social support and social control, as well as stress and depression. In one such study widowers reported substantially higher rates of depression and poorer social functioning, while another study found that widowed individuals tended to enjoy food less.

## The effect of ethnicity

Another interesting finding was the interaction between ethnicity and gender, suggesting that being non-African in South Africa increased the likelihood of being overweight

and obese among men, but reduced this likelihood among women. More non-African men were overweight and obese than African men, whereas fewer non-African than African women were overweight and obese. These results are in line with results observed in the South Africa Demographic and Health [Survey](#).

## Explained by the social position proxies?

[Surveys](#) by Statistics South Africa show distinct education, employment and income disparities between men and women, and between African and non-African individuals. South African women, especially African women (30%), continue to be the largest group affected by unemployment, while 28% of African men are unemployed, compared with 21% of coloured, 12% of Indian/Asian and 8% of white men. Of those African men who are employed, the majority are employed in construction industries that require labour-intensive work during which they expend more energy, thereby controlling their weight. Conversely, many women who are employed spend most of their time around food as domestic workers and as workers in the food industry, where they expend less energy.

## Education and income

According to the 2019 Quarterly Labour Force [Survey](#), more than half (51%) of African youth aged 18 to 24 years have limited access to higher education institutions, often due to financial constraints. Many of them end up in non-permanent or part-time employment in the construction, mining and agricultural industries. According to the South African Living Conditions [Survey](#), 84.6% of white, 20.9% of coloured and 46.9% of Indian/Asian households fall within the highest social position quintile, compared with only 11.1% of African households.

Men, non-Africans, and those living in male-headed households enjoy a better social position compared with their female and African counterparts. It is therefore possible that differences in obesity and disease prevalence between genders and ethnic groups

in South Africa may be attributed to social inequalities.

Limitations of the study include difficulty of quantifying monthly income and the fact that the role of communicable conditions like HIV/AIDS and genetics could not be included in the analysis.

## Consumption and inactivity

In a 2005 [paper](#), researchers warned that the overconsumption of food high in [simple sugars](#) and saturated fats may cause glucose and lipid toxicity respectively. These conditions are associated with insulin resistance, which fuels type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

[Research](#) shows that only 42% of South African women have been found to be physically fit, compared with almost two-thirds of men (62.4%). A small-scale study in 2014 involving African women showed that those women who were physically active tended to weigh less, have less overall body fat accumulation, have higher concentrations of serum high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (so-called good cholesterol), and were more insulin-sensitive compared with their less physically active counterparts.

Furthermore, by being overweight during pregnancy and overfeeding their babies, many women inadvertently perpetuate the cycle as these factors place their offspring at risk of obesity later in their lives.

## Policy implication

These findings have public health implications for South Africa. Action is needed to combat malnutrition, which causes unhealthy weight among socioeconomically disadvantaged groups in the country, especially Africans. A generally high prevalence of obesity among women and the positive association of education, employment and income with being overweight and obese call for more investment in health literacy.

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# THE OVERLAPPING SHADOWS OF **DEPRESSION** AND HIV/AIDS ON SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUNG WOMEN

Adolescent girls and pregnant HIV-positive women in rural South Africa are particularly vulnerable to depression. Recent research suggests that depression is a risk factor for HIV infection among young girls and increases the risk for mother-to-child transmission among HIV-positive pregnant women. Providing mental-health services to these groups is a public-health and social-justice imperative and a critical step in reducing HIV infections. *By Andrea Teagle.*

In Mpumalanga, South Africa, one in five adolescent girls suffers from depression, [recent research](#) conducted by Prof Kathleen Kahn from Wits University together with scientists from the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) and Oxford University among others, shows. Among HIV-positive pregnant women in the same province, rates are even higher, with almost half of women in a [2019 HSRC study](#) meeting the criteria for depression. In this study, which sought to investigate barriers to treatment faced by pregnant women, depression emerged as a major factor that contributes to mother-to-child HIV transmission and infant deaths.

In the collaborative Wits study involving 2 533 girls aged 13 to 21 years, those who experienced HIV, a finding that is particularly concerning given the already elevated risk faced by this population group. The correlation between HIV/AIDS and depression is well documented, although the direction of causation can be difficult to establish. A senior researcher of the study, Prof Jennifer Ahern of UC Berkeley, [said](#) the findings showed that, "at least in this population, the arrow certainly goes one way, which is depression leads to HIV."

*Some pregnant women only learn that they are HIV-positive during their first prenatal visits. They are particularly vulnerable to depression.*

**Photo:** *Mustafa Omar*

Among girls who were diagnosed with depression, nearly 11% went on to contract HIV in the following six years, compared with 6.5% among those without depression. Poorer relationships with parents and intimate-partner violence were identified as avenues through which depression increases unsafe sexual behaviour and the risk for HIV infection.

The researchers emphasised the importance of treating depression among young girls and identified community-led healthcare interventions as a promising solution in resource-constrained settings.

### Filling the cracks

Another way that depression increases HIV incidence is when it affects pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS who risk passing on the virus to their infants.

Those who are on treatment and virally suppressed have a negligible chance of transmitting HIV during birth or breastfeeding. However, in rural South Africa, women face many challenges – such as poor access to healthcare, poverty, joblessness, unequal gender dynamics, stigma and depression – that make remaining on treatment difficult.

One potential solution to some of these challenges is a pilot programme run by lay healthcare workers called Protect Your Family, which includes a mental-health component focused on the reduction of anxiety and perceived stigma for pregnant women.

In the 2019 HSRC study, Prof Karl Peltzer and Prof Sibusiso Sifunda set out with their colleagues to reach women who had fallen through the cracks of what had otherwise been an effective national prevention of mother-to-child-transmission (PMTCT) programme.

The researchers recruited a total of 1 370 HIV-positive women between 8 and 24 weeks pregnant in 12 randomly selected community healthcare centres in Mpumalanga, where HIV prevalence (37%) was almost 3 times the national average of 13%. Many of the participants had received their HIV diagnosis during their current pregnancy and 45% met the criteria for depression. Younger women were more likely to be depressed.

Because the researchers were interested in the possible [impact of partner involvement](#), having a partner was a prerequisite for participation.

In the first phase, only women were recruited; in the second, the women's partners were also included. In both phases, participants were divided into two groups.

Those in the control group received the

standard PMTCT programme, while those in the treatment group received the Protect Your Family intervention.

In the second phase, Protect Your Family was delivered via a mix of separate group sessions for men and women, as well as individual and couple's educational and psychological support sessions.

### Social support and mental health

For many women, depression lifted as the study progressed. Six weeks after birth, the estimated depression rate was 30%. However, a year after birth, one in three (37%) still met the criteria for depression.

At the one-year mark, the only factor that significantly predicted whether the baby remained HIV negative was whether or not the mother's depression had worsened. Where depression had improved, the baby was also more likely to survive to the first birthday.

The study found that Protect Your Family, when delivered to women only, did not reduce depressive symptoms. But when women attended the intervention with their partners, they were significantly less likely to feel depressed over time, suggesting that the intervention increased meaningful male partner involvement and social support. Although the programme failed to

*Depression puts young women at risk of HIV infection but among HIV-positive pregnant women, it also increases the risk of mother-to-child HIV transmission.*

**Photo:** [Dexter Chatuluka](#), Unsplash



achieve sustained maternal treatment adherence, it did lower the risk of infants contracting HIV in the first year.

“One of the biggest shortfalls of [the standard PMTCT programme] is the exclusion of men,” said Dr Shandir Ramlagan of the HSRC, who was involved in a different part of the study. A limitation of the study was that, in phase 2, the researchers could access only partners who would agree to participate – in other words, partners who were already likely to be more supportive.

“Any sort of behaviour change requires you to have some kind of vested interest,” Ramlagan agreed. However, he added that many South African men wanted to be responsible fathers and involved through their partner’s pregnancy and child’s early infancy.

The revealed role of social support echoed some of the findings of the Wits study in which adolescent girls with closer relationships with their parents were less likely to suffer depression and were less likely to engage in unsafe sexual behaviour that put them at greater risk of contracting HIV.

### **Identifying those most at risk for depression**

Given the lack of mental-health professionals and facilities in South

Africa, accurately identifying which women and young girls would benefit most from psychological support could help to improve targeted interventions.

In an ongoing, collaborative study, a team of local and international researchers noted that checklists that identify depression – such as the 12-point Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale used in the HSRC study – risk overstating prevalence. While many individuals will most likely be correctly identified, some whose distress does not constitute clinical depression also tend to be included.

The team, which comprises researchers from George Washington University, Yale University, the HSRC and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization of Nepal, is exploring a different avenue for accurate diagnoses: cellphones and other wearable devices. Focusing on pregnant adolescents in Nepal, they are investigating whether phone data on, for example, physical exertion, sleep patterns and tone of speech, which is automatically collected as participants go about their daily lives, can raise red flags for depression.

Cellphones are already used in this way to monitor individuals at risk for conditions such as anaemia and Parkinson’s disease. The

intervention is arguably particularly suitable for young women and adolescents among whom cellphone usage is on the rise.

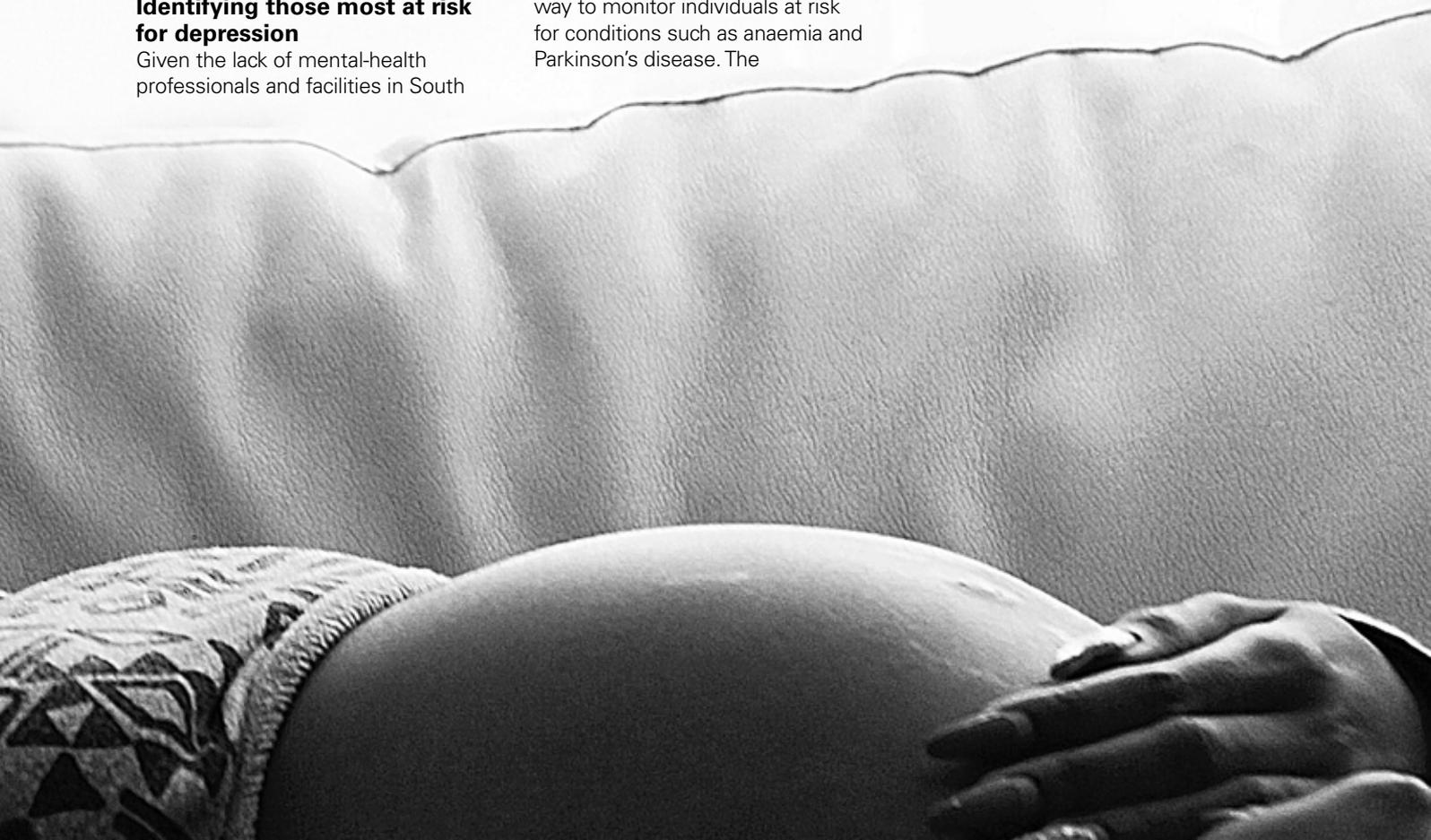
“A digital-health approach to supporting these vulnerable groups clearly has huge potential in a climate where access to trained professionals is costly and scarce,” says co-author Dr Alastair van Heerden from the HSRC. “Cellphone games that teach principles of [behavioural activation](#), passive cellphone data that is turned into behavioural insights and...digital peer-support groups are all promising approaches in South Africa.”

The study findings are expected to be published in the next three to six months.

Ramlagan says that, in addition to expanded mental-health services and provision for greater male partner involvement, improving access to HIV-testing services in rural areas – so that women do not learn of positive statuses only when they fall pregnant – would help reduce instances of postpartum depression.

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## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HAS A GENDER BIAS PROBLEM

*- just ask Siri*

All the virtual personal assistants on the market today come with a default female voice and are programmed to respond to all kinds of suggestive questions. Does their design as stereotyped females suggest that in the midst of a global technological revolution, women remain trapped in traditional roles and personalities of the past?

This article by *Dr Rachel Adams* first appeared in [\*The Conversation\*](#).

Suggest to Samsung's virtual personal assistant Bixby: "Let's talk dirty," and the female voice will respond with a honeyed accent: "I don't want to end up on Santa's naughty list."

Ask the same question to the programme's male voice and it replies: "I've read that soil erosion is a real dirt problem."

In South Africa, where I live and conduct my research into gender biases in artificial intelligence, Samsung now offers Bixby in various voices depending on which language you choose. For American English, there's Julia, Stephanie, Lisa and John. The voices of Julia, Lisa and Stephanie are coquettish and eager. John is clever and straightforward.

Virtual personal assistants – such as Bixby, Alexa (Amazon), Siri (Apple) and Cortana (Microsoft) – are at the cutting edge of marketable artificial intelligence (AI). AI refers to using technological systems to perform tasks that people usually would.

They function as an application on a smart device, responding to voice commands through natural-language processing. Their ubiquity throughout the world is rapidly increasing. A recent report by Unesco estimated that by 2020 we will be having more conversations with our virtual personal assistants than with our spouses.

Yet, as I've explored in my own research with Dr Nóra Ní Loideáin from the Information Law and Policy Centre at the University of London, these technologies betray critical gender biases.

With their female names, voices and programmed flirtatiousness, the design of virtual personal assistants reproduces discriminatory stereotypes of female secretaries who, according to the gender stereotype, is often more than just a secretary to her male boss.

It also reinforces the role of women as secondary and submissive to men. These AI assistants operate on the command of their user. They have no right to refuse these commands.

They are programmed only to obey. Arguably, they also advance expectations for how real women ought to behave.

The objective of these assistants is to also free their user from menial work such as making appointments and purchasing items online. This is problematic on at least two fronts: it suggests the user has more time for supposedly more important work. Secondly, it makes a critical statement about the value of the kind of secretarial work performed, first by real women and now by digitalised women in the digital future.

### “What are you wearing?”

One of the more overt ways in which these biases are evident is the use of female names: Siri and Cortana, for instance. Siri is a Nordic name meaning “the beautiful woman that leads you to victory”.

Cortana takes its name (as well as visuals and voice) from the game series Halo. In Halo, Cortana was created from a clone of the brain of a successful female scientist married with a transparent and highly sexualised female body. She functions as a fictional aide for gamers with her unassuming intelligence and mesmeric shape.

In addition to their female voices, all the virtual personal assistants on the market today come with a default female voice, which, like Bixby, is programmed to respond to all kinds of suggestive questions and comments. These questions include: “What are you wearing?” Siri’s response is: “Why would I be wearing anything?”

.....  
*Promoting the hashtag #CancelSexistTech, a group of interns at an ad agency in Atlanta in the US have created a website called Not That Kind Of Assistant. ‘Digital assistants like Siri respond to sexual harassment and verbal abuse with passive, coy or flirtatious statements. We can do better than that,’ they said, inviting suggestions to improve the responses of digital assistants. These days, responses of the new Siri voice on Apple devices are already more neutral, compared with the early years.*

Alexa, meanwhile, quips: “They don’t make clothes for me”; and Cortana replies, “Just a little something I picked up in engineering.”

### Bias and discrimination in AI

It is being increasingly acknowledged that AI systems are often biased, particularly along race and gender lines. For example, the recent recruitment algorithm development by Amazon to sort resumes for job applications displayed gender biases by downgrading résumés which contained the word “women” or which contained reference to women’s colleges. As the algorithm was trained on historical data and the preferential recruitment of males, it ultimately could not be fixed and had to be dropped.

As research has shown, there is a critical link between the development of AI systems which display gender biases and the lack of women in teams that design them.

But there is rather less recognition of the ways in which AI products incorporate stereotyped representations of gender within their very design. For AI Now, a leading research institution looking into the social impact of AI, there is a clear connection between the male-dominated AI industry and the discriminatory systems and products it produces.

The role of researchers is to make these connections visible and to show the critical links between the representations of women, whether in cultural or technological products, and the treatment of women in the real world.

AI is the leading technology in the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution. It refers to the technological advances – from biotechnology to AI and big data – that are rapidly reshaping the world as we know it. As South Africa continues to engage with the promises and pitfalls of what this holds, it will become increasingly more important to consider and address how the technologies driving these changes may affect women.

Read more: Fourth Industrial Revolution

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Student protesting against white fragility

Photo: Zimasa Mpemnyama, [Wits Vuvuzela](#)



The stairs at Wits Great Hall spray-painted with F\*\*k white racism

Photo: Luke Matthews, [Wits Vuvuzela](#)

**F\*\*K WHITE PEOPLE!**

Do **South Africans** really support such **slogans**?

During student protests at South Africa's universities in 2016, the slogan *F\*\*k white people* appeared on T-shirts, buildings and monuments. HSRC researchers who analysed public opinion on the phenomenon found that most South Africans rejected such behaviour. But there is more to it. We need to have deeper conversations about the country's history of injustice to gain insight into the possibilities for social restitution in contemporary South Africa.

During the Fees Must Fall protests of 2016, Wits student Zama Mthunzi was photographed wearing a T-shirt with the slogan *F\*\*k white people* on the back, and *being black is shit* on the front. Its use led to outrage, also against variations like *F\*\*k white privilege* and *F\*\*k white racism* that were used during protests. It also inspired an exhibition by artist [Dean Hutton](#) titled *F\*\*k white people*. The artist explained:

*“White people have been having a lot of feelings lately about ‘reverse racism’ as if it’s a thing. White people made racism, and made sure it is deeply embedded in our social systems, law, economy, institutions and individuals. So this provocation is here to make you feel that ‘white pain’. Breathe deeply through it. I’m here to destabilise all of our white spaces.”*

The exhibition was vandalised and Hutton, who donned a three-piece suit also inscribed with *F\*\*k white people*, was referred to the equality court on charges of hate speech and unfair discrimination. The case, however, was dismissed in July 2017.

### Whose sentiments?

To investigate what South Africans think about the issue, HSRC researchers inserted the following question in the 2016 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS):

*Recently, people have been wearing T-shirts or writing graffiti on walls that uses rude language and says ‘Go away, white people’. What should happen to them?*

The response options were as follows:

- They should be told they are destroying our chances of living together peacefully.
- They should be praised for drawing attention to ongoing white privilege.
- They should be punished.
- They should stop it.
- They should be left alone.
- Don’t know.

The researchers analysed the responses in a paper, that was published in *Politikon*, official journal of the South African Association of Political Studies, in January 2020.

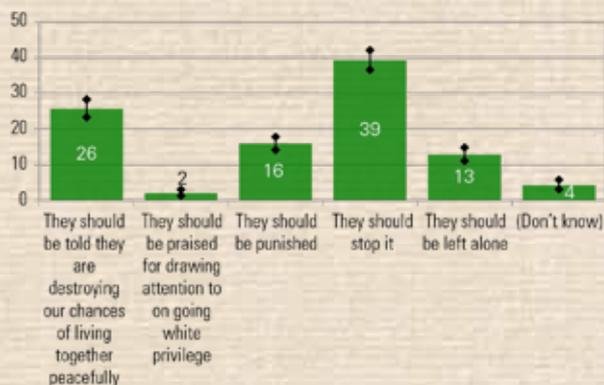
### An offensive phrase

During a pilot phase of designing the SASAS question, it became clear that the use of the expletive *F\*\*k* caused discomfort. One objection was related to the ethics of using such language with participants who were minors (16- to 17-year-olds). The HSRC’s Research Ethics Committee also explicitly includes the minimisation of respondent discomfort as a key criterion in evaluating research project submissions. Therefore, the researchers edited the question to use the euphemistic *Go away, white people*.

### Most people disapproved

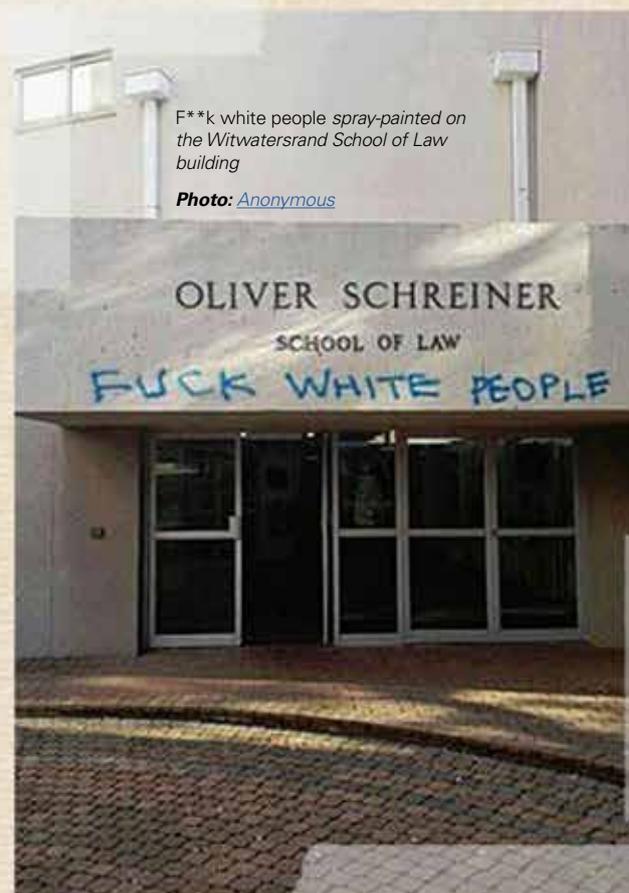
The majority (81%) of the 2 988 participants opted for disapproving options. Approximately a quarter (26%) argued through a social cohesion lens, recommending that those using the slogan had to be informed that they were hampering the prospects of peaceful coexistence between different race groups. The most common (39%) response was advocating that people stop such behaviour. A further 16% believed that people using such slogans had to be punished. (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Preferred public responses to individuals wearing or writing *F\*\*k white people* slogans in South Africa, 2016 (%).



Source: SASAS 2016. Note: The vertical lines represent the 95% confidence intervals for each point estimate.

Some 13% opted for a non-interventionist approach, stipulating that those wearing or spray-painting *F\*\*k white people* slogans simply had to be left alone. The researchers broadly interpreted this as support for the rhetoric, even if such support was unenthusiastic. A mere 2% voiced encouragement, saying such behaviour had to be praised for drawing attention to white privilege.



## Sociodemographics

The preference for the behavioural refrain (*They should stop it*) was more common among black African and coloured adults than white and Indian adults. White adults were more likely than black African and Indian adults (38% vs 23 and 28% respectively) to advocate talking to the protesting individuals about the corrosive effect of such actions on social cohesion. (Table 1)

**Table 1. Preferred public responses to individuals wearing or writing F\*\*k white people slogans by population group, 2016 (column %, weighted).**

	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	All RSA
<b>Refrain:</b> "They should stop it"	42	37	23	23	39
<b>Social cohesion:</b> "They should be told they are destroying our chances of living together peacefully"	23	33	28	38	26
<b>Retributive:</b> "They should be punished"	14	16	30	29	16
<b>Non-interventionist:</b> "They should be left alone"	14	11	9	7	13
<b>Encouragement:</b> "They should be praised for drawing attention to ongoing white privilege"	2	0	0	1	2
Don't know	5	3	10	1	4
Total percentage (not always 100 due to rounding)	100	100	100	100	100
N	1 802	461	353	372	2 988

Source: SASAS 2016

Those with a high living standard were significantly less likely to select the refrain or non-interventionist stance than those with a low living standard. Respondents with a tertiary education were also significantly more likely than those with an incomplete secondary or lower-level education to argue that the protesters were damaging social cohesion (33% vs. 18–25%).

## Geography

The refrain approach was most evident in KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape (55% and 54% respectively). The view that the slogan had damaging effects on social cohesion had more traction in Gauteng (38%) and the Western Cape (33%), and to a lesser degree in the North West (28%) and Eastern Cape (27%). This was in contrast with the Northern Cape (11%) and KwaZulu-Natal (13%). The demand for punishment was pronounced in Limpopo (34%) but least desired in Gauteng (7%). In Mpumalanga, 8% suggested that the protesters had to be praised for highlighting white privilege. (Table 2)

**Table 2. Preferred public responses to individuals wearing or writing F\*\*k white people slogans, by province, 2016 (column %, weighted).**

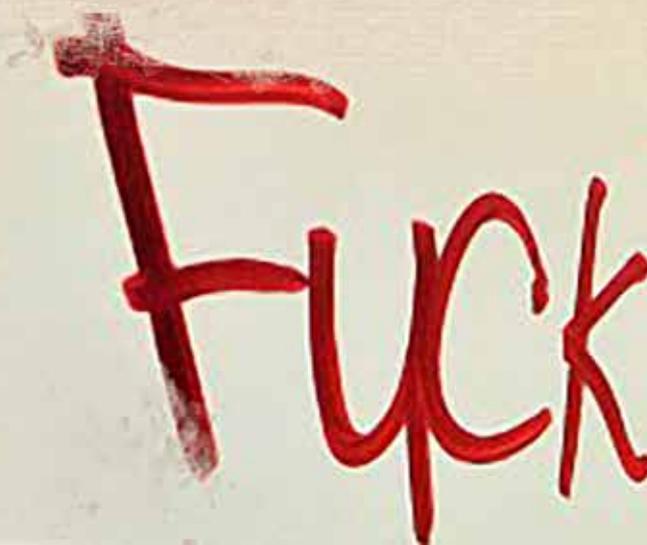
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	All RSA
<b>Refrain:</b> "They should stop it"	35	33	54	37	55	36	34	44	34	39
<b>Social cohesion:</b> "They should be told they are destroying our chances of living together peacefully"	33	27	11	21	13	28	38	14	19	26
<b>Retributive:</b> "They should be punished"	18	13	19	19	20	16	7	11	34	16
<b>Non-interventionist:</b> "They should be left alone"	11	24	6	16	9	18	8	15	13	13
<b>Encouragement:</b> "They should be praised for drawing attention to ongoing White privilege"	0	1	0	4	2	0	3	8	0	2
(Don't know)	2	1	9	2	1	1	10	8	0	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	397	430	299	224	591	221	459	246	282	2 988

Source: SASAS 2016

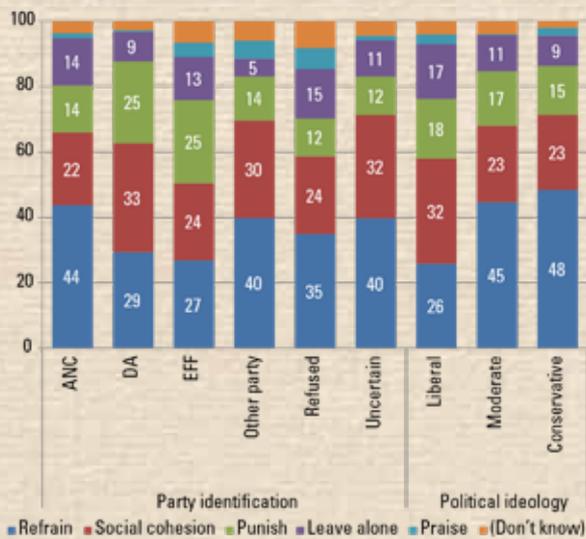
## Political affiliation and ideology

The researchers also investigated political motives for responses.

The suggestion that protestors had to refrain from using slogans such as *F\*\*k white people* received more backing from ANC supporters (44%) than EFF (27%) or DA supporters (29%). In turn, DA supporters were significantly more likely to choose the social cohesion option than ANC supporters (33% vs. 22%). (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Preferred public responses to individuals wearing or writing *F\*\*k white people* slogans, by party identification and self-rated political ideology, 2016 (column %, weighted).



Source: SASAS 2016. Note: ANC – African National Congress, DA – Democratic Alliance, EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters, Other parties – supporters of all other opposition parties.

### Opportunity for deeper understanding?

Although the *F\*\*k white people* phenomenon is provocative in that it elicits panic, anger and fear, it can also create opportunities for deeper conversations on restitution and dismantling structural injustice. This is evidenced by the conclusions of the Equality Court, which had to adjudicate whether the slogan amounted to hate speech and unfair discrimination. In the context of protest art, *F\*\*k white people* was interpreted as a call for dialogue around race and racism in South Africa in order to enhance social cohesion and nation-building.

In this study, 81% of South Africans responded negatively to this rhetoric, thus failing to see the scope of its productivity, and only 2% of South Africans thought such rhetoric should be praised for drawing attention to white privilege. Going forward, we must ask why many South Africans did not 'agree' with the court, not linking *F\*\*k white people* to the task of developing a critical consciousness towards the disruption of white privilege.

### Social amnesia, anxiety or fragility?

One could argue that their disagreement with the Equality Court resides in the social amnesia that has characterised how most South Africans engage with unjust legacies of the past. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's South African Reconciliation Barometer revealed that two-thirds of South Africans across all race groups agreed with the statement, "Forget apartheid and move on," a view held almost equally by black (63%) and white (69%) South Africans.

The findings of this study reveal that the appeal for social cohesion was supported mostly by whites, DA supporters, residents of formal urban areas, those who self-identify politically as liberals and those with high living standards. Perhaps most South Africans reacted negatively to the *F\*\*k white people* slogan as they understood it to call for violence against white people, as opposed to violence against structures of whiteness.

White fragility, the inability to tolerate racial stress, as described by Robin DiAngelo in a paper, *White fragility*, could also explain the negative attitudes white South Africans have towards the *F\*\*k white people* phenomenon. Their insulation from racial stress, possibly due to wealth and spatial segregation, may have increased their sense of entitlement to racial comfort, with race-based criticism triggering defensive reactions.

### Conclusion

Though provocative, the *F\*\*k white people* phenomenon encourages the cultivation of a critical consciousness towards systemic racial injustice in South Africa. We need to explore how we can, through social dialogue, invite people to ask better questions before responding to these utterances. This could lessen the salience of white fragility in current responses, as well as the lingering reluctance to talk about the past.

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Disillusionment with the rainbow nation project

Photo: Tendai Marima, [The Daily Vox](#)



# THE SPIRIT LEVEL:

## Religious beliefs in South Africa



The nature of religious belief and practices and how they are changing in contemporary society continues to be the focus of much debate worldwide. In South Africa, there is a surprising lack of data on the dynamics of religious attitudes and behaviour in the country. In this article, *Dr Ben Roberts, Dr Steven Gordon, Jarè Struwig, Samela Mtyingizane, Thobeka Zondi and Ngapheli Mchunu* examine national survey data on attitudes towards select religious beliefs in the country, and how these have altered in the decade between 2008 and 2018/19.

*David Livingstone's mission church in Campbell, a village in the Northern Cape Province.*

*Photo: Etienne Marais, Pixabay*

Despite considerable international attention being devoted to the subject of religion in contemporary society and whether or not there are unequivocal signs of religious decline, the beliefs and preferences of average South Africans have to a large extent been missing from the debate.

Addressing this, an in-depth module on religion was fielded by the HSRC as part of the 2018/19 annual round of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). This nationally representative data was collected as the local contribution to a broader International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) study that is examining religious beliefs and behaviour in approximately 40 countries. This represents a replication of the ISSP 2008 religion module. Comprising 2 736 respondents older than 15 years, the results suggest that South Africans remain deeply religious, but not uncritically so.

### Religious belonging

In each annual round of interviewing since 2003, SASAS respondents have been asked whether or not they belong to a religion. Figure 1 displays the trends based on the measure for the period between 2003 and 2018/19.



**Figure 1:** Percentage of the adult population who reported belonging to a religious denomination, 2003–2018



Source: HSRC SASAS 2003–2018

Only a minority reported not belonging to a religion, while the share identifying with a religion fluctuated in a narrow range of between 80% and 87% over the 16 survey rounds. No distinctive pattern of change is apparent over time.

South Africa remains a largely Christian nation. Of those identifying with a religion in 2018, the vast majority said they were some form of Protestant Christian. No particular Protestant denomination emerged as dominant, although notable minorities included the Zionist Christian Church (to which 9% of the adult population belonged in 2018/19). Roman Catholics accounted for one in 20, and 5% of the general public identified with a non-Christian religion.

### Beliefs about God

One important aspect of religious change internationally is the belief in God. Three ISSP questions included in SASAS addressed this, and the results for both 2008 and 2018 are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Beliefs about God, 2008 and 2018 (%)				
		2008	2018	Change 2008–18
<b>Strong belief in God and atheism</b>	I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it (strong belief in God) (%)	74	74	0
	I don't believe in God (atheism) (%)	5	5	0
<b>Belief in God over time</b>	% I believe in God and I always have	83	83	0
	% I don't believe in God and I never have	3	3	0
<b>Belief in a personal God</b>	% agreeing that there is a God who concerns Himself with every human being personally.	84	76	-8

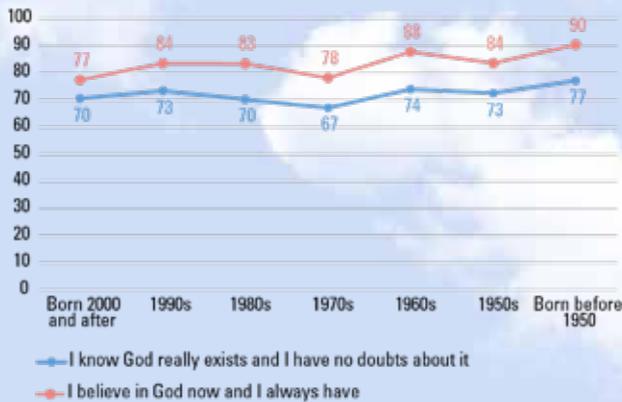
Source: HSRC SASAS 2008 and 2018/19 ISSP Religion modules

In 2018, approximately three-quarters (74%) of South Africans were strong believers in God, stating that 'I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it'. This figure is equivalent to what was recorded in 2008. A further 7% were weak believers in God, decreasing from 13% in 2008 (results not shown). By comparison, only 5% presented as atheists in both survey rounds, indicating that they 'don't believe in God'.

In terms of changes in belief in God over the life course, 83% of South Africans presented as consistent believers in 2018, reporting that they 'believe in God and always have', while only 3% were consistent atheists, stating that they 'don't believe in God and I never have'. Again, these figures remain virtually unaltered relative to 2008. The final question asks respondents to express their level of support for a belief in a personal God (i.e. 'a God who concerns himself with every human being personally'). In 2018, three-quarters of adults (76%) agreed with the statement, which represents a decline of 8 percentage points relative to 2008.

When one examines beliefs about God by birth cohort (**Figure 2**), we find that there is not a particularly distinctive difference across generations. There is a slight dip in belief among those born in 2000 and after, though not to the extent that it constitutes signs of a change in the norm.

**Figure 2:** Beliefs about God by age cohort, 2018 (%)



It is important to note that we should not equate a belief in God with belonging to a specific religious denomination. Among those who reported that they did not identify with a religious denomination, 59% expressed a strong belief in God. Only around a 10th of this group were atheists and a further 5% were agnostics. Furthermore, nearly three-quarters (70%) of those without a denomination said that they believed in God then and always had, while only 7% of this group stated that they didn't believe in God then and never had.

### Attitudes towards formal organised religion

Taken together, the aforementioned findings point to a strong and fairly stable belief in God among South Africans. Yet, what about attendance and views on formal organised religion? In 2018, 17% indicated that they attended a religious service at least weekly, compared with 23% in 2008. This may be related to a strong belief in religious individualism, with around two-thirds of the adult public (66% in 2018, 68% in 2008) maintaining that they had their "own way of connecting with God without churches or religious services". Religious individualism was found to be just as common among non-denominationalists as denominationalists.

### Other key findings on religion in South Africa

**The perceived benefits and drawbacks of religion.** The South African public continues to view religion favourably as a means of networking and providing solace in difficult times. In 2018, 71% agreed that practising a religion helped people to make friends, while 72% felt that it helped provide comfort in times of trouble or sorrow. While convincingly positive, this conviction decreased between 2008 and 2018. On a more critical note, sizable shares of the population also believed that religions bring more conflict than peace (41% agreed) and served as a barrier to gender equality (43% agreed), while people with strongly religious convictions were seen by many as intolerant (51% agreed). (Table 2).

**Table 2: Benefits and drawbacks of religion, 2008 and 2018 (%)**

	2008	2018	Change 2008–18
<b>Benefits of religion</b>			
% agreeing that practising a religion helps people to...make friends	79	71	-9
% agreeing that practising a religion helps people to...gain comfort in times of trouble or sorrow	87	72	-15
<b>Drawbacks of religion</b>			
% agreeing that religions bring more conflict than peace globally	36	41	5
% agreeing that people with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant of others	49	51	2
% agreeing that religions are usually a barrier to equality between women and men.	...	43	...

Source: HSRC SASAS 2008 and 2018/19 ISSP Religion modules

**Religious tolerance.** The general population was, on the whole, more tolerant of atheists or non-believers than what may have been expected for such a religious country. Only a minority (29%) felt negatively towards atheists, while 15% saw this group as threatening. Similarly, fairly tolerant views were evident in relation to allowing religious extremists to convene meetings to express their views (58% would definitely/probably favour this).

### Conclusion

While international literature has theorised that a decline in religion can be expected in societies over time, the disappearance of the sacred and the rise of the secular has not occurred in line with expectations. Indeed, the idea of secularisation has come to be increasingly contested as various indicators point to an enduring religiousness around the world. From the evidence presented in this article, South Africa is no exception. Religious identity is as strong as it was a decade ago, there continues to exist a resolute belief in God; and young South Africans are not displaying fundamentally different religious tendencies to older generations.

In terms of formal organised religion, regular weekly attendance of religious services is not widespread; and there is a robust belief in one's own independent way of connecting with God. The overarching message however remains, and religion remains an important element in the lives of South Africans and for society as a whole.

**Authors:** Dr Ben Roberts and Jarè Struwig, coordinators of SASAS; and Dr Steven Gordon, senior research specialist, and Samela Mtyingizane, Thobeka Zondi and Ngqapheli Mchunu, doctoral researchers, in the HSRC's Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery research programme.

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# Young South Africans

are leading a slow but significant shift towards **LGBTI tolerance**

South Africa was the first country to protect the rights of same-sex couples, and the fifth country to legalise same-sex marriage in 2005. However, hate crimes and discrimination against members of the LGBTI community remain common. Using data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey, HSRC researchers asked whether the gap between the country's constitutional values and public attitudes have narrowed in the past 15 years. By *Andrea Teagle*

In **2014**, almost six in 10 South Africans aged 16 to 24 thought that homosexuality was "always wrong"



always wrong dropped from

76%

While a stark majority, this was significantly lower than a decade earlier, in 2003, when eight out of 10 young people declared homosexuality immoral. The shift was a sharp divergence from the views of older adults, which have remained mostly stagnant over that time.

These findings were part of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), which tracks changes in public attitudes. In total, between 2003 and 2014, the proportion of South African adults who believed that same-sex relationships were "always wrong" dropped from 76% to 64%.

The proportion of people who believed that it was "almost always wrong" or wrong "only sometimes" also increased, in what the authors call a softening of negative attitudes. Research suggests that conditional acceptance of homosexuality might, for example, take the form of turning a blind eye to a man's discreet same-sex relations, as long as he also upholds traditional gender roles by having a wife and children.

64%

“The relaxing of views might also point to more opportunities for promoting attitudinal change,” write Dr Tracy Morison and her fellow HSRC researchers who analysed this part of the SASAS data.

While gradual, the apparent long-term trend towards greater tolerance is significant on both individual and societal levels. In 2016, sexual assaults disproportionately affecting LGBTI individuals cost South Africa US\$10.5 million to US\$64.8 million (about R154.4 million to R952.9 million), while health disparities ranged from US\$3.2 billion to US\$19.5 billion (R47 billion to R286.7 billion). Wage discrimination and underemployment among this population group tallied up to an additional US\$316.8 million (R4.7 billion) lost, according to a [recent UCLA study](#) that was partly based on SASAS data.



Activists take a stand at the Knysna Pink Loerie Festival in 2010.

Photo: Tjennifer Niksch, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

### Homophobia, law and religion

A [2013 Pew Research Center study](#) found that economic development and religiosity were significantly correlated with attitudes towards homosexuality, with more developed countries and those where religion was less central to everyday life being more likely to be tolerant towards non-normative sexuality.

In a global comparison of attitudes towards homosexuality, the study found that South Africa was significantly more progressive than other African countries (even though six out of 10 South Africans still disagreed with homosexuality). In Kenya, Uganda and Senegal, at least nine out of 10 people believed that society should not accept homosexuality. In Nigeria, this figure was 98%.

Notably, all of these countries, as well as an additional 28 on the African continent, criminalise homosexuality. In seeking to defend anti-gay laws, some African leaders, including Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and the late Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe have borrowed a [populist narrative](#) that says same-sex

relations are inherently “un-African.” This is despite the fact that evidence suggests that same-sex relations were widespread and accepted in many African societies prior to colonisation and the introduction of Christianity.

The relationship between beliefs and religion, and the very real impact on individuals in the LGBTI community, underscores the importance of progressive religious bodies, and of religious leaders emphatically embracing diversity.

### Do laws affect attitudes?

Given the often entangled nature of religion, law and attitudes towards non-normative sexuality, how do new laws impact attitudes? Does the introduction of progressive policy, like South Africa’s, reflect positive changes in attitudes, or does it cause them? In some instances, might progressive legislation polarise attitudes, or even backfire, causing people to double down in opposition?

A 2018 study by the IZA Institute of Labor Economics sought to determine [whether laws shape attitudes](#), and how, through examining data before and after the gradual roll-out of same-sex relationship recognition policies across Europe. Such phased roll-outs present an ideal opportunity to measure causality. Citizens’ attitudes can be measured and compared before and after the policy change. Aggregate attitudes can also be compared with those of neighbouring countries where there was no policy shift, in case any attitude change had nothing to do with policy. The authors also controlled for factors such as income and religiosity, which differed across countries.

The study found that the introduction of expanded relationship recognition policies for same-sex couples was associated with a statistically significant positive change in attitudes.

Specifically, across Europe, such legislation increased the likelihood that a respondent agreed that ‘gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish’ by 3.6 percentage points and accounted for 10% of the change in attitudes that was recorded over that period. That some of the change occurred independently of the policy shift indicated that policies both reflect and affect attitudes.

Such evidence suggests that the improvements in South Africa’s attitudes towards non-normative sexuality are, encouragingly, likely partly due to our progressive policy. The authors note that higher educational attainment is consistently associated with greater tolerance over time, although all the educational brackets displayed a gradual trend towards less prejudice. That the shift is driven by young people might also point to the impact of greater access to other sources of information apart from educational or religious bodies, such as social media.

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In the City of Johannesburg, this drone picture of Alexandra township depicts buildings, brick houses and backyard shacks, the density and informality of the latter reflecting the urgent need for housing solutions in South Africa's urban areas.

Photo: Johnny Miller

# TRANSFORMING BACKYARD SHACKS INTO DECENT FLATS: An urban housing solution

One of the fastest-growing forms of housing in South Africa – backyard rental – is being transformed. This article discusses the pros and cons of converting backyard shacks into solid rental units. It also considers how the government could play a more constructive role in this upgrading process. By *Prof Ivan Turok and Dr Andreas Scheba*

Largely below the radar, there is a boom in backyard flats under way in many South African townships. People who own a house but with no regular earnings are converting shacks in their backyards into solid rental units to meet the prodigious demand for decent affordable housing from the expanding urban population.

Poor households can now earn a reasonable income by becoming small-scale landlords, while providing a welcome boost to the supply of cheap rental accommodation. The upgrading process is being funded in part by the provision of external private finance. However, there are risks to the well-being of vulnerable groups, compounded by

concerns about the sustainability of the process arising from the government's indifference.

### **The benefits of upgrading**

In the course of several recent research projects, we have discovered a seismic shift under way in township property markets. Homeowners are showing

considerable initiative by replacing makeshift shacks with bricks and mortar structures offering internal toilets and washrooms. Other entrepreneurial individuals with some savings are also buying up properties informally and replicating this model of backyard apartments.

Private companies – such as Indlu, Bitprop, Isiduli, TM Group and After 12 – recognise the commercial potential by offering capital and expert help to construct the flats in return for a share of the rent. They are ultimately funded by some of South Africa's major banks.

The burgeoning supply of better-quality rental property meets the needs of many young working people who cannot afford to buy their own homes but also don't qualify for RDP housing. Backyard flats offer more secure and dignified living environments for people who can afford to pay a modest rent (between R1 500 and R3 000 a month), but less than what is required in the formal rental market.

Backyarding is also beneficial in creating valuable work for local builders, labourers and hardware suppliers, as well as emerging estate/rental agents, and it helps to densify well-located areas and improve the viability of public transport and community facilities in these places.

### **The pitfalls of intensification**

These short-term positives are offset by serious risks and pitfalls. Most importantly, increased intensive backyard development is happening in a policy and

regulatory vacuum without any formal safeguards and protections, let alone positive state support. Government housing policy is preoccupied with homeownership rather than renting.

Backyard apartments are generally built without adhering to municipal bylaws or building standards because of the complexity and cost of these procedures. Non-compliance furthermore means there is no formal oversight of the structural integrity of the flats. This poses obvious risks to residents' health and safety and compromises the long-term resale value of the properties.

Ignoring land use planning controls means developing beyond the capacity of municipal infrastructure. When a dozen or more households occupy township plots designed for single families, there are serious consequences such as sewage spills, electricity breakdowns and water shortages.

Informal backyarding offers little or no protection for the rights of tenants, who are vulnerable to arbitrary evictions and inflated rents. Many land invasions and protests are caused by disgruntled backyarders struggling to pay the higher rents being demanded by landlords.

Homeowners are prone to manipulation and unfair practices themselves. Unscrupulous building contractors and money lenders can take advantage of their financial illiteracy and poor knowledge of construction techniques to provide inferior services.

### **Government neglect and indifference**

All spheres of the government currently have a hands-off approach to backyard housing. Having installed

the physical infrastructure and after building many of the original RDP/BNG housing units, officials expect to manage these areas through rules and procedures that were devised in a different context and are unrealistic in the prevailing circumstances.

Some officials try to enforce these norms and standards but quickly back off in the face of community resistance and violent threats. Most just ignore what is happening on the ground instead of engaging with the process. A cautious auditing culture, weak relationships with communities and limited political support discourage a hands-on approach.

This risks a downward spiral in due course as population densities rise, services get overburdened, infrastructure decays, environmental conditions deteriorate, social trust diminishes and the state's capacity to enforce standards declines. Municipalities raise very little revenue from property taxes or service charges in townships, despite the sizeable rents collected by some landlords. Municipal leaders are reluctant to continue investing public funds in communities that can afford to pay something, but won't.

### **A more constructive approach**

It is possible to envisage a much more positive scenario offering broader benefits. Public bodies could strive to contain the negative effects of intensive backyard development and create a more productive dynamic with better overall outcomes.

One element would be to simplify the system of land registration so that households have greater security of tenure and can exchange property safely without risking their investments. A simpler transfer process would also encourage people to go the formal route rather than sell property informally. This would

reduce uncertainty and opportunism and support longer-term decision-making. Having collateral would make it easier for property owners to raise external finance so as to construct better buildings.

An up-to-date land registration system would furthermore assist property valuation and could enable municipalities to start collecting taxes on properties above a certain threshold. Increased tax collection in turn would help finance enlarged infrastructure to accommodate the growing population. Additional public investment in bulk infrastructure in areas undergoing densification is crucial to reducing the overload.

In addition, regulatory reforms could help to attract more investment in rental housing. Rules governing the built environment should be streamlined to ensure that standards are appropriate for low-income dwellings and that administrative procedures accommodate inexperienced applicants.

Health and safety considerations should take precedence over cosmetic factors, such as external finishes. Official attitudes need to shift from indifference towards an enabling approach intended to help make things happen. Local advice centres could offer people very practical assistance to achieve minimum building standards and guidance to obtain formal approval.

Simplified systems to oversee landlord-tenant relationships are also

worth considering to protect tenants from exploitation.

The fundamental principle is to create more responsive ways of regularising informal rental housing to develop the sector into a robust and integral part of the urban housing system. A gradual upgrading approach in line with rising household incomes should enable people to adjust to the improvements with minimal displacement.

Shifting from a cautious, conservative mentality to a more developmental disposition requires public officials to engage actively with the informal housing sector to encourage more investment in better rental properties and reasonable rental practices. This will require more research to understand the process of upgrading informal rental housing, as well as to co-create solutions with communities to ensure mutual benefits.

Quick wins might be achieved by learning from the experimental initiatives of new private investors to regularise and expand the process. Their experience could be invaluable in trying to streamline the regulatory framework, to build a conveyor belt of support and to improve landlord-tenant relationships.

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Simple blocks of rental accommodation (pictured below) are emerging in many South African townships in response to the growing demand from young black professionals and white-collar workers. To better understand the challenges and benefits of backyard renting, HSRC researchers Dr Andreas Scheba and Prof Ivan Turok conducted a study in two Cape Town townships, Delft South and Masiphumelele, between 2018 and 2019. The researchers interviewed government officials, landlords, tenants and other stakeholders, and analysed secondary data, official reports and formal regulations. They found that in these townships, makeshift backyard shacks are increasingly being replaced by solid rental units and, less commonly, boarding houses. In the latter instance, entrepreneurial landlords demolish the original house and replace it with two-story buildings offering multiple rooms for rent. Such offerings are vital for workers in the "gap market" – those who cannot afford formal rental options and who also do not qualify for RDP housing. However, in the absence of the government's involvement and an overarching vision for a sustainable upgrading process, the formalisation process poses health and safety risks, while many potential benefits – such as taxing opportunities and improved viability of public facilities and transport – have not been realised.

**Source:** *Informal rental housing in the South: dynamic but neglected in Environment and Urbanization* (January 2020)



# GETTING better

## value from public infrastructure procurement: Transparency, accountability and stakeholder participation

Corruption in public procurement comes at a huge price to the government, industry and citizens, leading to untold costs on the environment, jobs and lives. Alongside incapacity, mismanagement and inefficiency, corruption is having unprecedented ramifications for the infrastructure sector's stability and contribution to inclusive development.

*By Adv Gary Pienaar and Dr Michael Cosser*

South Africa has recently been rocked by revelations of large-scale, widespread corruption involving the state and private sector – especially in state-owned enterprises such as Eskom, Transnet and Prasa, which, while massively expanding infrastructure, have been subject to political meddling and tender process abuse, becoming vehicles for patronage instead of service delivery.

The auditor-general has regularly highlighted fruitless and wasteful expenditure in state-owned enterprises and other public entities. His 2017/18 annual report highlighted that such expenditure had increased by 200% to R2.5 billion among national entities. More than half of auditees engaged in uncompetitive and unfair procurement processes, totalling R28.4 billion among state-owned enterprises.

In recognition of these issues, South Africa's [National Development Plan: Vision 2030](#) identified the lack of accountability in public institutions

as a leading factor undermining the country's ability to deliver not only on its developmental mandate, but on the creation of a fair and stable society.

Recently, the government has recognised the impact of these weaknesses on economic growth and on the failure to reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality. The national treasury has been a leader in identifying and implementing improvements in the governance of public procurement, including public infrastructure. It has worked closely with other public sector stakeholders to develop the Framework for Infrastructure Delivery and Procurement Management, which took effect on 1 October 2019. The [National Development Plan](#) identified public infrastructure as a priority area for government investment and the Ramaphosa administration has begun raising and allocating funding for this programme.

Treasury's 2018 medium-term budget

policy [statement](#) emphasised that infrastructure expenditure was a key ingredient in economic recovery that could unlock private investment. It recognised that greater transparency could improve the efficiency of public infrastructure expenditure. However, it also acknowledged that weak project preparation, planning and execution had led to lengthy delays and to over- and underspending, and that problems with quality were due principally to a lack of proper pre-construction planning and design.

### A scoping study

CoST – the Infrastructure Transparency Initiative – is a global initiative that works to improve transparency and accountability in public infrastructure. Established by Engineers Against Poverty, CoST works with governments, industry and civil society to promote the disclosure, validation and interpretation of data from infrastructure projects. The programme also helps to inform and empower citizens, enabling them to



Tired of corruption, two EFF members carry a protest placard at the Zuma-must-fall protests in Cape Town in 2017.

Photo: Discott, Wikimedia Commons

hold decision makers to account.

In 2018, CoST commissioned the HSRC to undertake a scoping study of the levels of transparency, accountability and stakeholder participation in delivering public infrastructure in South Africa, with a view to considering how CoST might assist.

### Approach

In addition to desktop research, the HSRC interviewed a broad spectrum of stakeholders including national and provincial treasury officials, interested civil society organisations, senior representatives of several large state-owned enterprises and metropolitan municipalities, senior representatives of private sector professional associations, and a number of private construction companies.

### Key findings

The researchers found considerable support for the CoST methodology, which focuses on disclosure, assurance, multistakeholder working and social accountability. Many

respondents were hopeful that the model could offer a practical and systematic means for increasing transparency and accountability, and restoring mutual trust and cooperation in South Africa.

### Increasing infrastructure transparency

Significant improvements could be made to transparency in public infrastructure procurement. South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000 provides a framework for disclosing information reactively (i.e., upon request), but the legal framework for proactive disclosure is less explicit and practice is uneven.

Many of the 40 data points in the joint CoST-Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard (OC4IDS) already have to be legally disclosed. This information is likely to be proactively disclosed in procuring entities' reports to legislatures. However, this disclosure comes far too late in the infrastructure design, procurement and delivery process for it to be useful for enhancing the

real-time effectiveness and efficiency of infrastructure procurement and delivery.

The law also requires some information on procurement and delivery processes to be proactively disclosed by procuring entities and on treasury's e-tender publication portal. However, we found that actual disclosure is much more limited than the law stipulates, and uneven in practice. Mismanagement and corruption are therefore identified too late for preventive or corrective action.

There is also significant lack of awareness, uncertainty and confusion about existing information disclosure requirements at various stages of the infrastructure procurement cycle, and ignorance about what information should be proactively disclosed.

Greater disclosure of information by procuring entities, whether reactively or proactively, is appreciated by private sector actors, inspiring greater confidence in the integrity of the procurement process.

OC4IDS is a new data standard that

was developed jointly by CoST and the Open Contracting Partnership. OC4IDS builds on best practice in open data and disclosure of public procurement and infrastructure information globally.

The adoption of OC4IDS and consideration of its impact through CoST multistakeholder groups can provide clarity, enhance trust and deliver improved performance.

### **Evidence to improve accountability**

Besides confusion about disclosure, there is limited engineering and procurement capacity and experience in some procuring entities, and a paralysing fear among many officials regarding the potential legal and personal financial consequences of getting procurement wrong. Confusion surrounds, among other things, the legal requirements for public participation in the planning and delivery of infrastructure, and the definition and requirements for local content.

CoST's independent assurance review could be of great assistance in producing evidence from practice to help clarify these issues. Such reviews could reassure officials, helping to relieve fears about the quality of their colleagues' work and any resulting legal responsibility. The effect would be speedier assessment, evaluation, adjudication and award of bids.

### **Restoring trust among stakeholders**

Incidents of corruption have contributed to mutual mistrust between stakeholders. CoST's multistakeholder working and assurance review of both disclosed and non-disclosed information could help restore trust through sharing of information from independent and credible sources.

Respondents expressed broad support for finding a better way for the government and citizens to collaborate. CoST's model of multistakeholder working presents an opportunity to explore an approach that had yielded efficiencies and savings in several other countries.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the National Treasury consider further discussions with CoST and key sector stakeholders. Specifically, the following should be considered:

1. With the support of CoST and private sector and civil society stakeholders, pilot the CoST model to ascertain the true value that the approach adds in practice in ensuring greater transparency, accountability and efficiencies in infrastructure procurement.
2. Include OC4IDS
  - a. in the Framework for Infrastructure Delivery and Procurement Management;
  - b. on the Vulekamali website (treasury's online budget data portal); and
  - c. in the Draft Public Procurement Bill.
3. Collaborate with CoST and key infrastructure industry bodies to clarify how the features of the CoST model address the legal, regulatory and policy misconceptions that abound in the sector.
4. With the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, strengthen, through the parliament, the operationalisation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000, especially regarding the obligation on public entities – particularly procuring entities – to proactively disclose procurement-related information, in line with the OC4IDS.
5. Convene provincial information sessions with stakeholders from relevant sectors to explain information disclosure standards at every stage of the infrastructure procurement cycle, using OC4IDS as a template.

**Authors:** Adv Gary Pienaar, research manager, and Dr Michael Cosser, acting research director, in the HSRC's Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery research programme

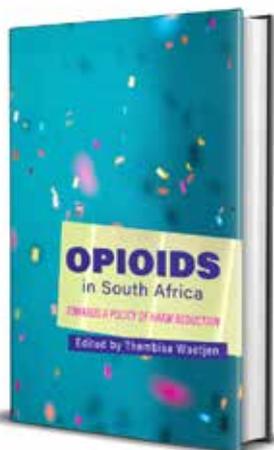
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Thousands of protesters march to parliament on 8 August 2017 before the vote of no confidence against Jacob Zuma in Cape Town. Several opposition parties came together, calling on parliamentarians to vote Zuma out.

Photo: [Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp](#)



Price **R250**

## Opioids in South Africa

Towards a policy of harm reduction

Volume editor:	Thembisa Waetjen
Pub month and year:	November 2019
ISBN soft cover:	978-0-7969-2575-6
Format:	NC (240 mm x 168 mm)
Extent:	184

### About the book

From over-the-counter cough syrups and prescribed painkillers to street economies of heroin and fentanyl, opioid substances and uses have ignited debates globally about national drug policy reform. This book is the first to focus on these issues in South Africa, through a range of disciplinary perspectives.

In 12 chapters, scholars from community medicine, pharmacology, social science and the humanities, along with civic actors and researchers, present their evidence-based arguments and insights, and explore possibilities for harm-reduction approaches in South Africa. Chapters cover three core areas: dilemmas of drug policy; contradictions of care and treatment; and the issue of stigma.

*Opioids in South Africa* invites wider conversation, asking us to imagine policy responses that can better protect the constitutional dignity, health and access to healthcare of people using drugs, as well as of their families and communities.



Price **R280**

## Wangari Maathai 's registers of freedom

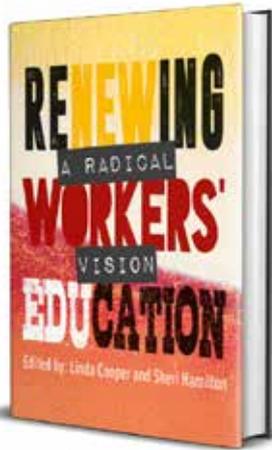
Author:	Grace A. Musila
Pub month and year:	January 2020
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Format:	A5 (210 mm x 148 mm)
Extent:	344

### About the book

Wangari Maathai was a scholar, writer, environmental activist, human rights champion, and Nobel Prize laureate. She tenaciously sought to expose the precarious lives of people across a variety of communities: women, rural communities, political prisoners, Kenyans, Africans and citizens of the global South saddled with the burdens of international debt.

She is without doubt a worthy subject for the latest addition to the Voices of Liberation series, published by the HSRC Press. *Wangari Maathai's registers of freedom* explores the multiple legacies of her life and offers readers a glimpse into the life and thought of one of the 20th century's most remarkable women.

The Voices of Liberation series ensures that the debates and values that shaped the liberation movement are not lost. By providing access to the thoughts and original texts written by or about some of the many men and women who fought for the dismantling of apartheid, colonialism and the capitalist legacy, this series invites the contemporary reader to engage directly with the rich history of the struggle for democracy. The source texts written by the eponymous subject are framed in an analytical lens that provides context and relevance for the modern reader. The title of the series speaks to its purpose, which is not only to make a particular voice resonate through a collection of original writings, but also to strengthen the 'voices' from the South and, in particular, from Africa.



Price **R350**

## Renewing Workers' Education

A radical vision

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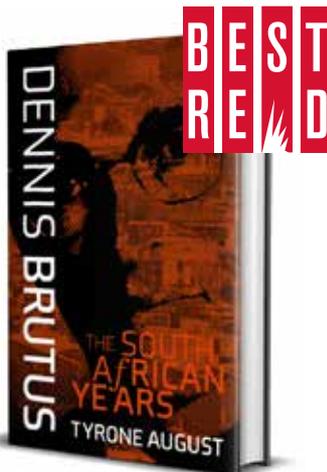
### About the book

*Renewing Workers' Education* focuses on educational forms created by workers for workers. It extends beyond trade unions to include a range of educational initiatives aimed at the working class more generally, including working class women, casual and informal sector workers, migrant workers, and workers' political parties.

This book contributes to filling the gap in the South African literature on workers' education, and documents the more recent history of workers' education as well as current practices and perspectives, including some international experiences. It explores conceptual tools that may assist in reflecting on and theorising the practice of workers' education and analyses current challenges. This essential book also seeks to inform future policy and practices on workers' education and is key for those who wish to reinvigorate and contribute to building an alternative future for workers' education.

## Books that make a difference

[www.bestred.co.za](http://www.bestred.co.za)



Price **R370.00**

## Dennis Brutus

The South African Years

Author:	Tyrone August
Pub month and year:	March 2020
ISBN soft cover:	978-1-928246-34-3
Format:	Demy (138 mm x 216 mm)
Extent:	368
Rights:	World Rights

### Back cover blurb

South African poet and political activist Dennis Brutus (1924–2009) wrote poetry of the most exquisite lyrical beauty and intense power. Through his various political activities, he played a uniquely significant role in mobilising and intensifying opposition to injustice and oppression – initially in South Africa, but later throughout the rest of the world as well. This book focuses on the life of Dennis Brutus in South Africa, from his childhood until he went into exile on an exit permit in 1966. It is also an attempt to acknowledge Brutus's literary and political work and, in a sense, to reintroduce Brutus to South Africa.

This book places his own voice at the centre of his life story. It is told primarily in his own words – through newspaper and journal articles, tape recordings, interviews, speeches, court records and correspondence. It draws extensively on archival material not yet available in the public domain, as well as on interviews with several people who interacted with Brutus during his early years in South Africa.

In particular, it examines his participation in some of the most influential organisations of his time, including the Teachers' League of South Africa, the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department Movement and the Coloured National Convention, the Coordinating Committee for International Recognition in Sport, the South African Sports Association and the South African Non-racial Olympic Committee, which all campaigned against racism in sport in South Africa.

Brutus left behind an important legacy in literature involvement, community affairs and politics' or 'literature involvement and community affairs, as well as in politics.

### Endorsements

*Tyrone August has brought us an invaluable gem in producing this work on Dennis Brutus.*

– Mandla Langa, poet, short-story writer, novelist and cultural activist

*He (Dennis Brutus) was an expressive artist at a particular point in time, giving us access to what was not easily available – the inner life of an oppressed people.*

– Prof Njabulo Ndebele, academic, author and chairman of the Nelson Mandela Foundation

*August's biography makes extensive use of archival documents, interviews and, above all, draws on Brutus's poetry to give us a fulsome story of his early years in South Africa.*

– Shaun Viljoen, author and associate professor in the English department of the University of Stellenbosch