

Review

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Editor: Antoinette Oosthuizen
Correspondence: For feedback and questions, email aoosthuizen@hsrc.ac.za
Pretoria: Private Bag X41, Pretoria, South Africa 0001
Tel: +27 (0)12 302 2000
Fax: +27 (0)12 302 2001
Cape Town: Private Bag X9182, Cape Town, South Africa 8000
Tel: +27 (0)21 466 8000
Fax: +27 (0)21 466 8001
Durban: Private Bag X07, Dalbridge, South Africa 4014
Tel: +27 (0)31 242 5400
Fax: +27 (0)31 242 5401
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Cover: A resident in Khayelitsha votes during the 2024 elections in Cape Town, South Africa.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

By Antoinette Oosthuizen

With South Africa's seventh national and provincial elections behind us, the country is on a new political path. As with all elections since the late 1990s, the HSRC conducted a voter satisfaction survey on Election Day, which provided evidence that the Electoral Commission used in declaring the election free and fair. In our feature article, HSRC researchers discuss more survey findings, the history of the HSRC's electoral survey series, and the importance of understanding electoral attitudes in the country.

Shifting to specific country challenges, our researchers weigh in on filicide – when a parent or guardian murders a child. Experts who participated in an HSRC Connect panel discussion in February explored the drivers of filicide, with a focus on mental health and societal stressors related to poverty and interpersonal relations.

Two articles examine behavioural and structural risk factors faced by young pregnant teenage girls in South Africa and the role of mobile health communications interventions in encouraging young people to access sexual and reproductive health services.

In March 2024, the HSRC, in collaboration with Business Unity South Africa and the Department of Science and Innovation, hosted a [high-level forum](#) to deepen private sector engagement with South Africa's innovation policy goals, incentive instruments and data. We report back on the perspectives shared by sector role-players at this event.

As South Africa moves beyond its apartheid past, the fate of historical statues ignites fierce debate across the nation and among political powers. We highlight the HSRC's role in bringing essential information, popular perspectives, and insightful analysis on this contentious issue to the forefront.

We also feature HSRC researchers' work on assessing the status of women in South Africa's labour force. Cultural structures and political climates have long influenced women's participation in the labour force. While only half of the female population in South Africa are currently economically active, many prominent stakeholders agree that increasing this participation has the potential to grow, transform, and expand economies.

Another HSRC study provides key insights into what motivates graduate entrepreneurs to forge opportunities and futures for themselves and others. Many participants cited the desire to make money while helping others as a significant motivation for starting their own businesses.

Finally, our book review page features two volumes. *Transformative Leadership in African Contexts: Strategies for Social Change* was edited by Sharlene Swartz, Tarryn De Kock and Catherine A. Odora Hoppers. Through a series of case studies, the authors demonstrate how leaders in Africa "navigate complexity, chaos, struggle, controversy, and change in a context still emerging from colonial exploitation and facing new challenges".

Poetic Inquiry for the Human and Social Sciences: Voices from the South and North, edited by Heidi van Rooyen and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, introduces new voices, insights, and approaches to making research poetic in the human and social sciences. Each peer-reviewed chapter presents original research that contributes to scholarly debates about the dynamic relationship between poetry and the human and social sciences.

Please feel free to contact our researchers at the email addresses provided.

[The Review Team](#)

30 years of electoral democracy in SA: HSRC survey captures voter experiences and informs electoral processes



Residents in Khayelitsha queue to vote during the 2024 elections in Cape Town, South Africa.

Photo by Ashraf Hendricks, [GroundUp](#) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

*Election 2024 is behind us, and the people have spoken as reflected in the HSRC’s Election Satisfaction Survey, which was conducted for the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC). In this article, **Ben Roberts, Narnia Bohler-Muller and Jarè Struwig** offer insights into the survey series and its significance in assessing whether the elections were free and fair from a democratic perspective.*

Marking 30 years since the first democratic elections in South Africa, the country’s seventh national and provincial elections took place on 29 May 2024. As with all elections since the late 1990s, the HSRC conducted a voter satisfaction survey, which provided evidence that was then used by the Electoral Commission in declaring the election free and fair.

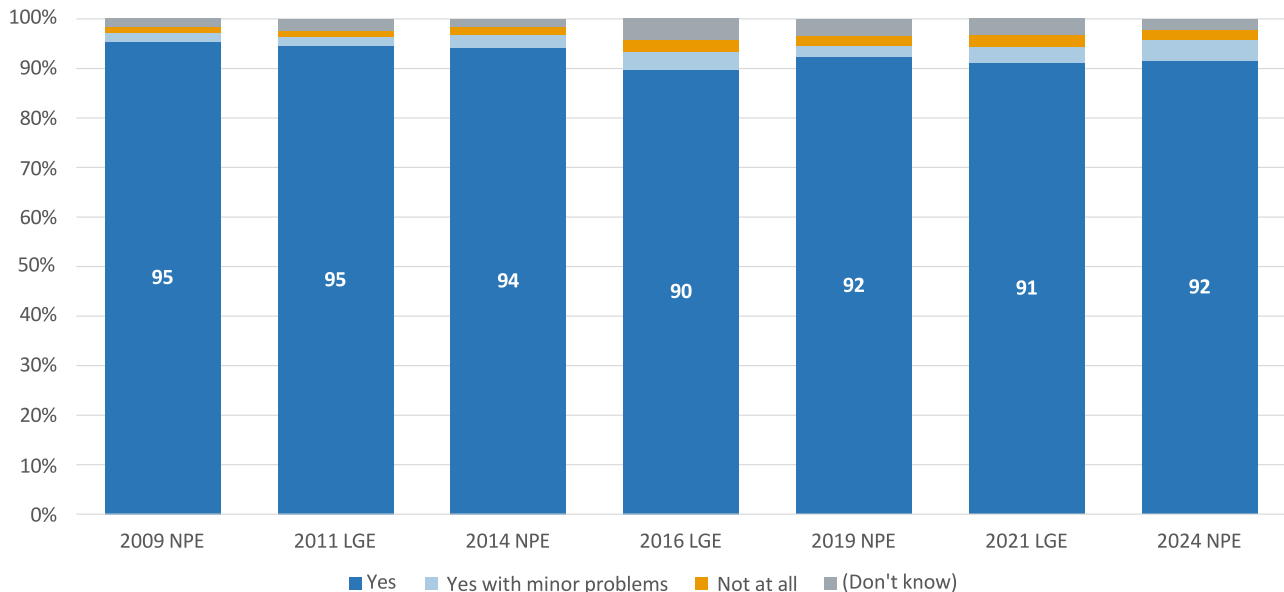
On the day, HSRC data collectors each interviewed 50 voters at 300 randomly selected voting stations across the country. These voting stations were selected based on provincial distribution, the number of

registered voters per voting station, and other key demographic characteristics.

The data collectors ultimately conducted 13,155 interviews across all nine provinces. Voters were asked about their views on various aspects of their election experiences, including the perceived integrity of the election process and the operational efficiency of the IEC.

The [results](#) of this latest round of the Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) indicated that voters overwhelmingly believed the 2024 elections were free and fair (92%) and positively rated the conduct of officials at voting stations (Figures 1–3).

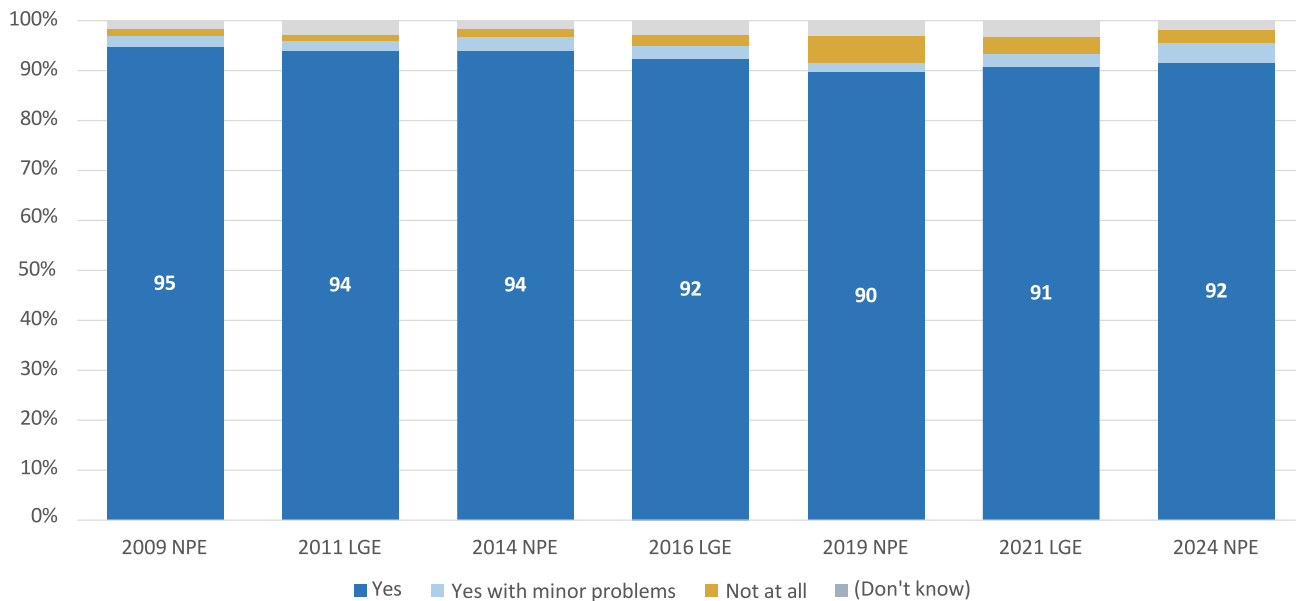
Figure 1. Voter responses to the question: “Do you think that the election procedures were free?” (2009–2024)



Source: Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) 2024

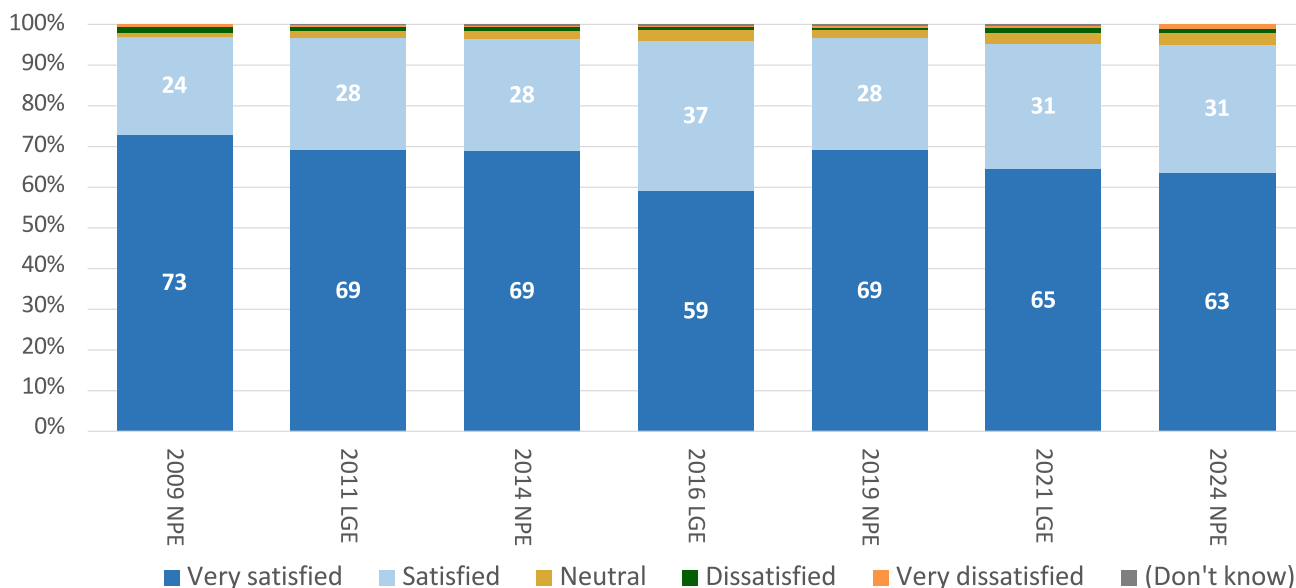
When asked why they deem the elections to be free and fair, voters emphasised their ability to make political choices freely, without force, pressure or intimidation. Political freedom and the right to choose freely are key values upheld by the South African voting public and remain crucial for the integrity and legitimacy of the electoral process.

Figure 2. Voter responses to the question: “Do you think that the election procedures were fair?” (2009–2024)



Source: Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) 2024

Figure 3. Voter responses to the question: “Are you satisfied with the quality of service that the IEC officials provided to voters?” (2009–2024)



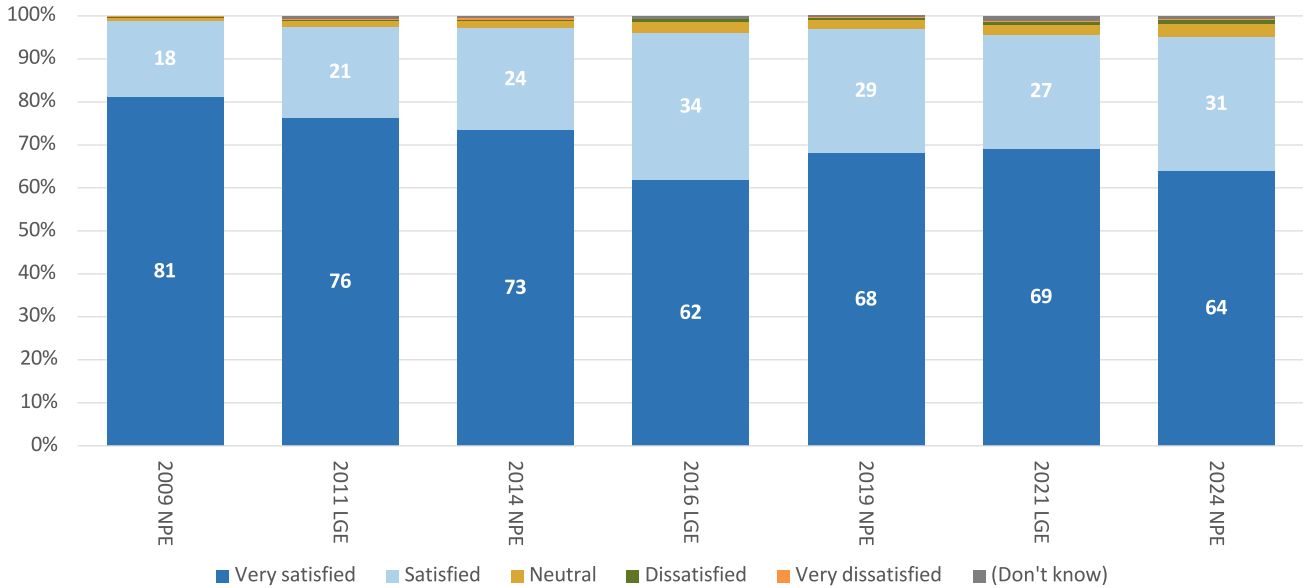
Source: Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) 2024

Of the seven indicators measured to gauge views on officials, “helpful” received the most positive evaluation, with 84% of voters describing officials as helpful to “a great extent”. The indicator that received the lowest rating was “impartial”, with 71% saying this applied “to a great extent”, while 8% stated that officials were not at all impartial.

Trust

Trust in the IEC was high among the voting public (84%). As shown in Figure 4, almost all voters (95%) felt safe casting their ballots in secrecy (64% very satisfied, 31% somewhat satisfied).

Figure 4. Voter responses to the question: “Are you satisfied that your vote in this voting station was secret?” (2009–2024)

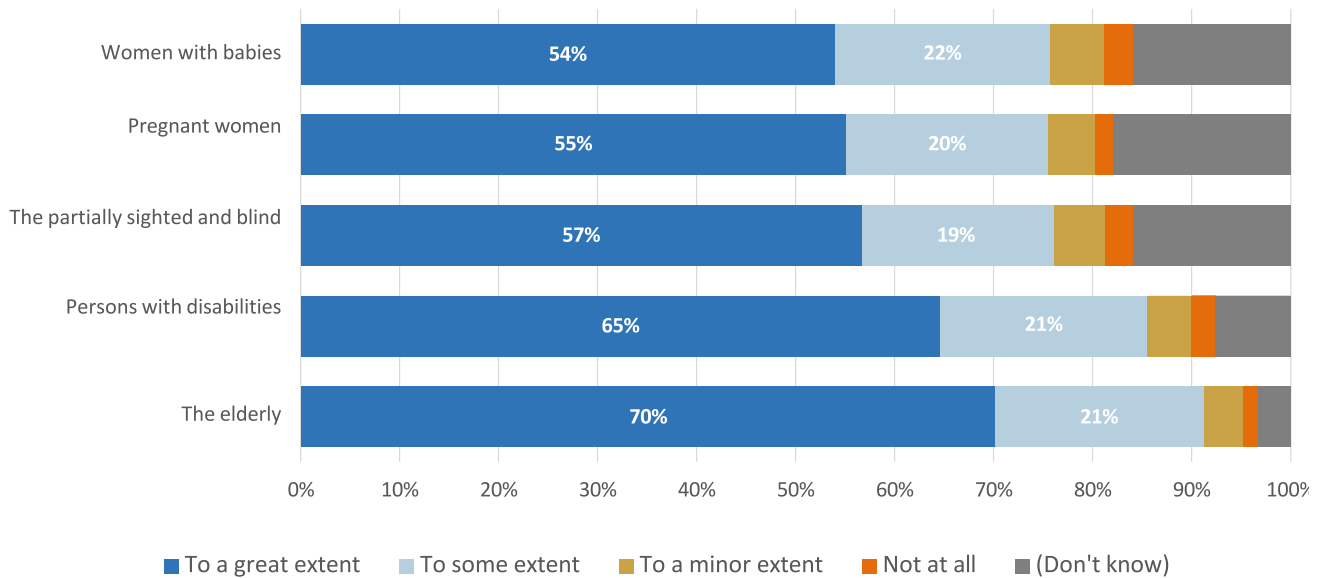


Source: Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) 2024

Vulnerable groups

The majority of voters felt that the IEC adequately addressed the needs of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Voter responses to the question: “To what extent did the voting procedure at this voting station consider the needs of special groups?” (2009–2024)



Source: Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) 2024

Queuing times and their effect

Queuing time at voting stations increased in 2024 compared to recent elections, with the percentage of voters reporting a wait of 15 minutes or less declining from 76% in 2019 to 60% in 2024. The share reporting a wait of over one hour was the highest recorded since 2009, with voters in Gauteng particularly affected by disproportionately lengthy queuing times. Longer waits had a bearing on electoral evaluations, leading to slightly more negative responses (Table 1).

Table 1. Queuing times and their impact on voters' evaluations (2024)

	Up to 15 minutes	16- 30 m	31- 60 m	1- 2 hours	More than 2 hours	All voters	PP difference (high minus low)
Confidence that vote will be counted accurately (% completely/ fairly)	81	78	74	71	63	79	18
Support for electronic voting (e-voting)	47	53	60	62	64	51	17
Satisfaction with IEC officials	96	95	91	91	82	95	14
IEC officials were INTERESTED IN THEIR JOBS?	83	79	75	76	67	80	16
IEC officials were HELPFUL?	87	82	77	83	72	84	15
IEC officials were IMPARTIAL?	73	69	67	70	60	71	13
IEC officials were FRIENDLY?	85	82	76	78	70	82	15
IEC officials were PATIENT?	86	82	77	78	72	83	14
IEC officials were HONEST?	83	80	74	79	70	81	13
Trust in the IEC	87	83	81	81	74	84	13
Perceived fairness of NPE 2024	93	90	90	90	83	92	10
Safety and security	96	95	94	92	89	95	7
Perceived freeness of NPE 2024	93	90	88	89	86	92	7
Satisfaction with ballot paper	94	93	89	93	89	93	5

Self-reported coercion

In the context of Election 2024, 12% of voters reported experiencing attempts to force them to vote for a certain political party or candidate, indicating a noticeable increase compared to previous elections. This pressure predominantly occurred before Election Day, with political party agents, friends and family being the primary sources. Among those reporting coercion, 73% stated that it had no impact on their electoral choice, 25% said it influenced their vote, and 2% were uncertain. This translates to 3% of all voters who changed their vote due to reported coercion.



Officials of the Electoral Commission handing out ballot papers during the 2024 elections in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa.

Photo by Ashraf Hendricks, [GroundUp](#) (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Overall, the results of the 2024 survey indicate the ongoing integrity of the election process and the Commission. Despite longer queuing times and technical challenges experienced with voter management devices (VMDs) on Election Day, voters provided positive evaluations.

Impact of the HSRC research

The survey results of the ESS are typically available within 48 hours after the election and serve as evidence that informs the Electoral Commission’s official declaration that the elections were free and fair. Following the election, these results also inform operational decision-making in preparation for future polls.

History of supporting the Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission’s mandate is to ensure proper administration of elections in South Africa. Additionally, the Commission is dedicated to boosting voter registration and turnout by investing in civic education and outreach programmes between elections.

Since the 1990s, the HSRC has supported the Electoral Commission with several surveys. This collaboration has focused on generating survey-based evidence to inform operational planning and outreach efforts.

Apart from the ESS series, the HSRC has conducted pre-election surveys, namely the nationally representative Voter Participation Survey (VPS) series.

While the primary goal of the ESS is to assess the Electoral Commission’s operational efficiency on election days, the VPS provides a broad view of the socio-political landscape leading up to an election.

Since 2010, the HSRC has successfully conducted the VPS and ESS for the municipal elections of 2011, 2016 and 2021, as well as the national and provincial elections of 2014, 2019 and 2024. Additionally, the Electoral Commission has engaged the HSRC to curate all election surveys conducted by the HSRC on their behalf.

Public opinion surveys of this type are an essential and valuable tool for capturing a nationwide perspective on voters’ views, electoral experiences and evaluations. Understanding electoral attitudes, behaviours and experiences is crucial for understanding the functioning of electoral democracy, both at the institutional and societal levels.

Improving the ballot paper

In 2018, the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) commissioned the HSRC to review the ballot paper used in national, provincial and local government elections. Based on interviews with focus groups, electoral staff and academics, several recommendations from the HSRC's report were incorporated into the design of the May 2019 provincial and national ballot papers. While the alphabetical listing of parties was retained, those with similar identifiers were randomised to prevent them from appearing adjacent to each other on the ballot paper. This adjustment aimed to help voters to easily identify their chosen party. The study's success stemmed not only from the revised ballot paper but also from the fact that it highlighted the importance of balloting education.

The HSRC survey continues to collect data aimed at enhancing ballot papers. According to the 2024 ESS results, the majority of the voting population expressed satisfaction with the ballot papers, with 58% stating they were "very satisfied" and 35% indicating they were "satisfied". Among the 38% who wanted to improve the ballot paper for future elections, 51% favoured changing the size of the party logos, 38% wanted adjustments to the number of parties and candidates listed, and 36% supported altering the size of the party names or acronyms, as well as candidate names.

The introduction of a third ballot paper in Election 2024 and the unprecedented number of contesting parties and independent candidates appearing on the ballots not only underscored the need for further balloting education but also raised questions about the potential adoption of electronic voting (e-voting) in future elections. This method would involve voters using voting machines rather than paper ballots at voting stations. While public opinion on this matter remains divided, the Electoral Commission commissioned the HSRC to conduct a desktop review of e-voting experiences internationally in 2023/24. Additionally, the HSRC was tasked with preparing a discussion paper and conducting consultations in the current financial year to lay the groundwork for a green paper on the topic.

Research contacts:

Dr Benjamin Roberts (director), Professor Narnia Bohler-Muller (divisional executive), and Dr Jarè Struwig (chief research specialist) in the Developmental, Capable and Ethical State research division of the HSRC

broberts@hsrc.ac.za

nbohlermuller@hsrc.ac.za

jstruwig@hsrc.ac.za



Photo by Ashraf Hendricks, GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Exploring the connection between mental health and filicide in South Africa

*The murder of a defenceless child is incomprehensible, especially when committed by a parent or guardian. Research has shown that tackling filicide requires confronting and addressing complex mental health issues and societal structures. In February 2024, the HSRC Connect video series and the HSRC Podcast each hosted a panel discussion where researchers highlighted current understandings of filicide drivers in South Africa. **Jessie-Lee Smith** and **Antoinette Oosthuizen** report on the insights and potential solutions discussed in these panels.*

On a Sunday evening in September 2023, Ntombizanele Mntizela (35) took her four children to a forest near Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape. The next morning, Mntizela was reportedly found dead alongside Iyapha (13), Inga (8) and Phila (3) after ingesting deadly agricultural rat poison and feeding it to her children. The fourth child, an 11-year-old girl, managed to escape by pretending to be dead.

In the days that followed, it became apparent that Mntizela had been struggling with financial problems and depression for some time.

Throughout history, such tragic incidents of filicide – when parents or guardians kill their own children – have shocked communities. These acts are deemed incomprehensible, and talking about the causes and prevention may be particularly difficult in communities where many of the reported contributing factors are prevalent.

Recently, the HSRC's Dr Gadija Khan joined experts in an HSRC Connect panel discussion and on the HSRC Podcast to explore the

complexities of this type of crime. This followed the earlier publication of an HSRC desktop report on filicide.

Khan emphasised that filicide occurs across various cultures, geographic locations, and socio-economic conditions. South Africa is one of only a few developing nations that are conducting in-depth research into the underlying causes and potential solutions to filicide.

According to a study by the South African Medical Research Council, an estimated 454 children under the age of five were victims of homicide in South Africa in 2009. This estimate was based on data from 38 medico-legal laboratories, mortuary files, autopsy reports, as well as child and perpetrator data from police interviews. The study found that 74.4% of these victims were under the age of one, more than half of them were four weeks and younger, and the majority died within the first six days of their lives. Among the newborn group, the most common manner of homicide was death due to abandonment, accounting for 84.9% of cases.



Image generated by AI, Freepik

In the Connect episode, Khan highlighted that the motives behind filicide often involve complex psychological influences, many of which stem from maladaptive coping mechanisms. “Many mothers who perpetrate filicide do so because they feel overwhelmed and unsupported, particularly by their child’s father, leading to the burden of child-rearing becoming too much to tolerate,” Khan told the *Review*. “This strain is often compounded by financial difficulties as well as untreated mental health disorders such as depression.”

On the HSRC Podcast, Khan emphasised the importance of filicide research in shaping effective policies and preventive measures. She explained that men often commit filicide through violent and impulsive acts known as revenge killings. These acts are carried out to punish the child’s mother for perceived wrongdoing and often occur when the parental relationship dissolves and the father perceives that his access to the children is threatened.

Researchers from Stellenbosch University [analysed](#) 20 cases of revenge filicide offenders who had killed 42 children. The researchers suggested that the inability to control a situation and extreme emotional distress can lead to “blinding anger”, which results in revenge filicide. In that sample, one of the most common methods of killing was using rat poison.

An HSRC [analysis](#) of media-reported filicide cases revealed that the three most common methods of killing were poisoning (27%), followed by strangulation and suffocation (using hands, a rope or a plastic bag) and assault (beating with hands without any objects or bludgeoning with sharp or blunt objects, e.g. with a sledgehammer, an axe or rocks), both at 15%.

In a recent HSRC [policy brief](#), Khan and her research team recommend that entities such as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, local government authorities, and trade licensing agencies can mitigate the risks of poisoning through stricter and more precise methods of poison control, regulation, and surveillance.

They also emphasised the need for responsible agencies such as the Office of the Family Advocate and local family mediation organisations to enhance the visibility and accessibility of their services. These mediation services include consultations and interventions between parents and couples, which can help to mitigate violent outcomes. Similarly, it was deemed necessary to expand trauma and mental health counselling in areas that have high rates of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

Exacerbated by socioeconomic conditions, many South Africans still grapple with a cycle of generational trauma stemming from years of national segregation and poverty. During the [HSRC Connect panel discussion](#), Khan explained that mental health services are often lacking in areas where they are most needed. Additionally, many perpetrators are diagnosed with severe mental illness only during the forensic assessments they undergo to identify their criminal liability.

Researchers [examined](#) the forensic files of 32 women admitted for forensic psychiatric observation in Pretoria before going to trial for the murder or the attempted murder of children. Only 13 were found to have no mental illness. Of the nine women with psychotic illness and the eight with mood disorders, only three and two, respectively, had received prior treatment. Five cases involved women with both conditions. In many cases, relationship problems and family conflict were identified as contributing factors, and most of the women had used weapons and poisoning to commit the acts.

Khan pointed out that even when mental health services are available, cultural stigmas and pressures often discourage struggling parents from reaching out for help. She and her team highlight in their [desktop report](#) that mental health practitioners should focus on equipping parents with adaptive and functional coping styles. Additionally, there is a crucial need for early screening of mental health conditions to ensure timely intervention and support.



Photo by Alexa from Pixabay

Not merely a matter of criminal activity but a complex socio-economic and mental health challenge, the HSRC team also [called](#) for policymakers to revise existing legislation and increase access to mental health and mediation services. Despite its uncomfortable nature, more people need to join the collection of voices speaking up about the realities of this issue, Khan said during the podcast discussion. She encouraged the South African public to seek help for psychological distress and to share their parenting or relationship struggles with family members, friends, and neighbours to foster a culture of destigmatisation and community support.

Research contacts:

Dr Gadija Khan (senior research specialist), Dr Mokhantšo Makoae (research director), Noncedo Maphosho (PhD research trainee), and Dimpho Makitla (DSI-HSRC intern) in HSRC's Developmental Capable and Ethical State division

gkhan@hsrc.ac.za

makoae@hsrc.ac.za

nmaphosho@hsrc.ac.za

dmakitla@hsrc.ac.za



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Among the most vulnerable populations in South Africa: recently pregnant adolescents living with HIV

*Four decades into the HIV epidemic, adolescent girls and young women remain disproportionately affected by HIV due to family circumstances, reproductive service disruptions, gender inequalities, violence, poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education. Recently, HSRC researchers published a report on the most prominent behavioural and structural risk factors faced by young pregnant teenage girls in South Africa. By **Jessie-Lee Smith, Dr Inbarani Naidoo and Dr Nompumelelo Zungu***

According to UNAIDS, [an estimated 1.65 million](#) adolescents aged 10–19 years are living with HIV across the globe. South Africa remains one of the [highest HIV-burdened countries](#), with [high rates](#) of teenage pregnancy exacerbating the risk among adolescents. The persistently high number of reported teenage pregnancies in South Africa raises several concerns about associated health risks and social factors for young girls. High teenage pregnancy rates significantly impact HIV transmission and maternal and child health, with stakeholders expressing urgency to mitigate these risks.

In November 2023, the HSRC released a summary of its completed 6th South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey ([SABSSM VI](#)). Key findings from the survey show that young women continue to be disproportionately infected with HIV. The HIV prevalence among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged 15–24 years was 6.9%, compared to 3.5% among

males of the same age. Additionally, just over two-thirds (68.2%) of young women aged 15–24 years living with HIV were virally suppressed.

The suppression of an individual’s HIV viral load is an important determinant of HIV transmission. When people living with HIV consistently take antiretroviral treatment, they can achieve undetectable viral loads and reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. The SABSSM VI results highlighted that a critical need remains for HIV advocacy and behaviour change interventions.

Using data from the past four SABSSM surveys (2005, 2008, [2012](#) and [2017](#)), HSRC researchers recently published a [report](#) on HIV-risk-related behaviours among adolescent girls and young women living with HIV. This analysis estimated pregnancy rates, HIV prevalence, and associated risk behaviours among women of childbearing age (15–49 years), with a specific focus on AGYW (15–24 years) and adolescents (15–19 years).

Recently, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the South African Minister of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, called for action to address the consequences of teenage pregnancies.

In April 2024, the [South African Government News Agency](#) cited the minister saying, “Early pregnancy in South Africa forces many girls to drop out of school and trap others in a cycle of poverty and leaves most stigmatised by society for being teenage mothers or forced into early marriages.”

These sentiments are echoed in the HSRC’s [report](#), which links teenage pregnancy, HIV prevalence, low levels of education attainment, reliance on government grants and unemployment. About one-fifth (22.3%) of recently pregnant participants were aged 20–24 years, and 6.4% were teenagers. Among recently pregnant adolescent girls and young women, HIV prevalence was 24% in 2005, 17.3% in 2008, and 19.2% in 2017. In 2017, this prevalence translated to nearly 110,000 HIV-positive adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24 years.

Recently pregnant adolescents faced a combination of structural and behavioural factors that exacerbated their risk of contracting HIV. One of the most significant structural challenges for these adolescents was compromised economic conditions. The HSRC [report](#) found that the majority of recently pregnant adolescent girls and young women had completed some levels of secondary school. However, most had no income, and some relied on government grants. The HIV prevalence was higher among 15–24-year-old adolescent girls and young women who had completed only primary school as their highest educational attainment.

Age-disparate relationships

The [report](#) found that HIV-related risk behaviours were more prevalent among adolescent girls and young women living with HIV in South Africa. For example, these young women were more likely to participate in age-disparate relationships (with a partner

that was five or more years older). Those in such relationships were more likely to be HIV positive compared to those having relationships with their peers.

According to an HSRC [report](#) on adolescents living with HIV, age-disparate relationships among adolescents increased in popularity from 39.2% in 2005 to 47.5% in 2017. The primary reason young girls entered these relationships was the financial benefit, which society seemed to accept. HSRC researchers [analysed](#) behaviours associated with age-disparate relationships and found that females were more likely to engage in these relationships if they had had their sexual debut before age 15, and if they were unemployed, lived in urban areas and had recently engaged in condomless sex.

Condom use

Inconsistent or lack of condom use among sexually active adolescent girls and young women remains a general concern for their sexual and reproductive health. In 2017, about 28% of recently pregnant adolescents reported never using a condom with their sexual partner, and 37.5% indicated only sometimes using one. These trends are mirrored in the [SABSSM VI](#) summary findings, which indicate that at last sex, less than half (43.5%) of adolescent girls and young women who had multiple partners in the previous year had used a condom.

The HSRC’s [report](#) on pregnant women also highlights that young women in unequal relationships were less likely to use condoms optimally. These relationships often diminished their agency to negotiate protected sex and to make informed decisions about their sexual health. Consistent with these risk behaviours, HIV prevalence was higher among recently pregnant women who reported sub-optimal (inconsistent or lack of) condom use.

Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence was a concern among adolescents. Among recently pregnant women (15–45 years), intimate partner violence was most commonly [reported](#) by adolescents.

Over one-third (37.1%) of recently pregnant girls aged 15–19 reported having experienced violence from an intimate partner.

Healthcare

Teenage pregnancies remain a concern in South Africa because of the inherent relationship between unprotected sex and exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Pregnancy also increases the need for timely access to healthcare services to ensure the health of mother and child.

Adolescents with restricted access to healthcare were less likely to adhere to antiretroviral therapy (ART). This age group [was shown](#) to have the lowest proportion of viral load suppression (68.2%) in the country, as reported in the 2022 survey. [Analyses of data](#) collected between 2010 and 2013 showed

that adolescent mothers had a lower uptake of prevention of mother-to-child-transmission interventions and a higher risk of early mother-to-child transmission compared with older mothers.

These findings suggest an ongoing need to identify and seek opportunities to address gaps in South Africa's HIV response. Effective protocols should be sensitive to young people's evolving needs, incorporate gender perspectives, and ensure equitable access to prevention, treatment, and care. This work points to the need for adolescent girls and young women to be provided with opportunities to understand their sexual and reproductive health rights so they can make informed decisions about protecting themselves. They also need support to attain higher education and develop skills to enhance their employment prospects.

Research contacts:

Dr Inbarani Naidoo (chief research specialist) and Dr Nompumelelo Zungu (strategic lead) in the HSRC's Public Health, Societies and Belonging Division

inaidoo@hsrc.ac.za

mzungu@hsrc.ac.za

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Photo by Erin Li, Pexels

mHealth interventions: Are they effective in enhancing adolescent sexual and reproductive health service uptake?

*Globally, adolescents face challenges regarding their sexual and reproductive health (SRH), such as limited access to contraceptives, condoms, and information on safe sex practices. The widespread use of mobile phone devices has prompted experts to develop mobile health (mHealth) interventions to reach young people more effectively. HSRC researchers have scoped the literature to estimate how these interventions have enhanced SRH knowledge and attitudes among adolescents in low-, middle- and high-income countries. The findings showed that although mHealth interventions may improve SRH knowledge, more research is required to understand the effect of the interventions on influencing SRH behaviours and practices. By **Nazeema Isaacs, Xolani Ntinga, Allanise Cloete and Candice Groenewald***

According to [Census 2022](#), more than 92% of South African households owned at least one working mobile phone, up from 3.3% in 2001. This widespread mobile phone ownership has made cellphone-based interventions a popular method for many forms of public communication. Particularly, mobile health (mHealth) interventions have received growing attention, with much emphasis on the development of interventions that target the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of young people.

[Evidence](#) suggests a decline in the use of SRH services in various contexts, especially in low- and middle-income countries. This [decline is particularly pronounced among young people aged 10–24](#), who face unequal access to SRH education, services and quality healthcare. Various factors hinder access to SRH services, including social stigma, restrictive policies and procedures regarding abortion and family planning for girls, and the attitudes and behaviours of healthcare professionals towards adolescents.

Over the past decade, researchers in community-based clinics have leveraged digital communication via the Internet, text messaging, and social media to disseminate SRH information to young people. However, providing information alone does not always lead to action or behaviour change. This raises the question of whether mHealth interventions can improve the uptake of SRH services among adolescents.

To address this, HSRC researchers have conducted a [scoping review](#), a type of evidence synthesis that identifies and maps relevant literature related to a specific topic that is of interest to researchers. [The review](#) included published literature that evaluated mHealth interventions and the extent to which the interventions promoted SRH outcomes among young people worldwide. The scoping review analysed 636 articles from four databases – EBSCOhost, Scopus, ProQuest and Cochrane – published between 2012 and 2022. Out of these, 12 relevant articles were identified,

critically appraised and analysed using the [knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviour \(KAPB\) model](#).

Findings

The review revealed that some mHealth interventions can potentially improve SRH knowledge among young people. Promising interventions included the [Health Education and Relationship Training \(HEART\) programme](#), the [miPlan app](#), and the [Sexual Health and Youth \(SHY\) intervention](#). While knowledge acquisition seemed to be a favourable outcome, researchers generally agreed that knowledge and awareness of SRH information did not necessarily lead to the adoption of protective SRH behaviours.

Many interventions concentrate on increasing knowledge rather than implementing effective strategies to bring about behavioural change. Behavioural change is complex and multifaceted, often requiring long-term evaluations beyond the scope of many studies. The complexity of adolescent behaviour is influenced by various socioeconomic factors, such as peer pressure, cultural norms, and family dynamics, which result in a gap between knowledge acquisition and behaviour modification.

Practical strategies for behaviour modification can be gleaned from successful interventions that target attitudes and behaviours. For instance, [the HEART intervention](#) showed rapid positive changes in attitudes and assertiveness among adolescent girls. Its effectiveness over a long-term period underscores the importance of addressing specific behavioural domains.

For example, [the intervention recruited](#) participants from four rural, low-income high schools in the United States, who participated in a 45-minute digital sexual health web programme online, featuring interactive games and quizzes aimed at increasing knowledge about HIV and other STDs. Participants gained access to content on five key areas of sexual decision-making: [safer sex motivation, HIV/STD knowledge, sexual norms/attitudes, safer sex self-efficacy and sexual communication](#)

[skills](#). After four months, follow-up with the participants who completed the programme [revealed positive results](#).

A need for inclusivity

The review highlighted a lack of studies that use [mHealth interventions](#) that could provide adolescents with accurate and non-judgmental SRH information and services. Still, none of the studies in [this review](#) specifically focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and intersex+ (LGBTQI+) youth. Further research is required to elaborate on the scope of current studies and promote a comprehensive understanding of SRH for diverse populations.

SRH initiatives typically prioritise maternal and other reproductive healthcare services aimed at assisting heterosexual and cisgender women, often overlooking the needs of diverse

populations such as transgender individuals. Achieving effective mHealth interventions and improving SRH uptake requires inclusivity, such as access to non-judgmental and gender-affirming SRH services for LGBTQI+ individuals.

The way forward: Personalised messages

To fully unlock the potential of mHealth interventions, it is vital to bridge the gap between knowledge enhancement and behaviour modification. A comprehensive approach is needed, encompassing diverse SRH topics, contextually relevant content, technological advancements, and inclusive techniques to bridge the gap and help young

For example, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance SRH outcomes for young people globally by personalising and targeting interventions. With the [current developments](#)



Photo by Karolina Grabowska, Pexels

[and improvements](#) in AI, mHealth interventions could be supported by chatbots or AI-supported educational modules to provide tailored and accessible solutions for SRH education and behaviour change. AI systems can analyse user data to offer customised SRH recommendations based on adolescents' requirements and preferences.

[Researchers](#) who have used machine learning techniques [have argued](#) that personalisation increases engagement and the relevancy of the material, leading to a more effective intervention. [Others believe](#) machine learning algorithms can be used in mHealth interventions to target demographics and regions that need them most, resulting in a more efficient approach. AI can also analyse user behaviour patterns to provide insightful data on intervention efficacy.

Hence, in presenting the currently available evidence, our scoping review advances the science of enhancing the uptake of SRH mHealth interventions for young people by identifying the gaps and mapping out the best practices, such as using digital platforms to disseminate SRH knowledge and information on SRH services.

The importance of conducting scoping reviews

Conducting scoping reviews such as [this one](#) is an integral part of researchers' work at the HSRC. These reviews allow researchers to consolidate current evidence on the topic under study. A clear understanding of the existing research findings helps researchers to identify gaps and provide recommendations for future research studies on the topic. This also helps to prevent the unnecessary duplication of existing work, thereby supporting the HSRC and the broader South African research community to apply their limited research funding and other resources optimally to serve South Africa's developmental challenges.

Research contacts:

Nazeema Isaacs (PhD research trainee) in the HSRC Impact Centre, Drs Allanise Cloete and Candice Groenewald (chief research specialists), as well as Xolani Ntinga, Thabo Keetsi, Lindelwa Bhembe and Bongumenzi Mthembu (researchers) in the HSRC Public Health Societies and Belonging research division

nisaacs@hsrc.ac.za

acloete@hsrc.ac.za

cgroenewald@hsrc.ac.za

xntinga@hsrc.ac.za

tkeetsi@hsrc.ac.za

lbhembe@hsrc.ac.za

bslmthembu@hsrc.ac.za

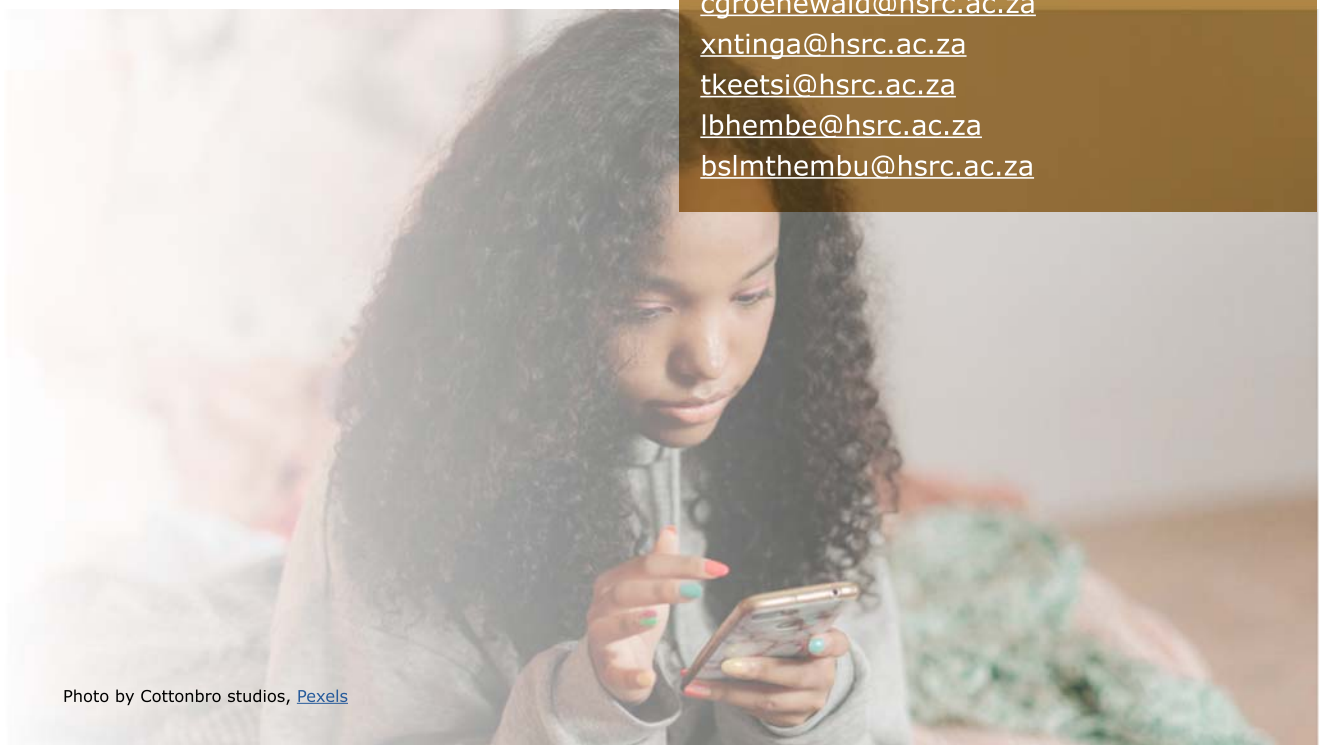
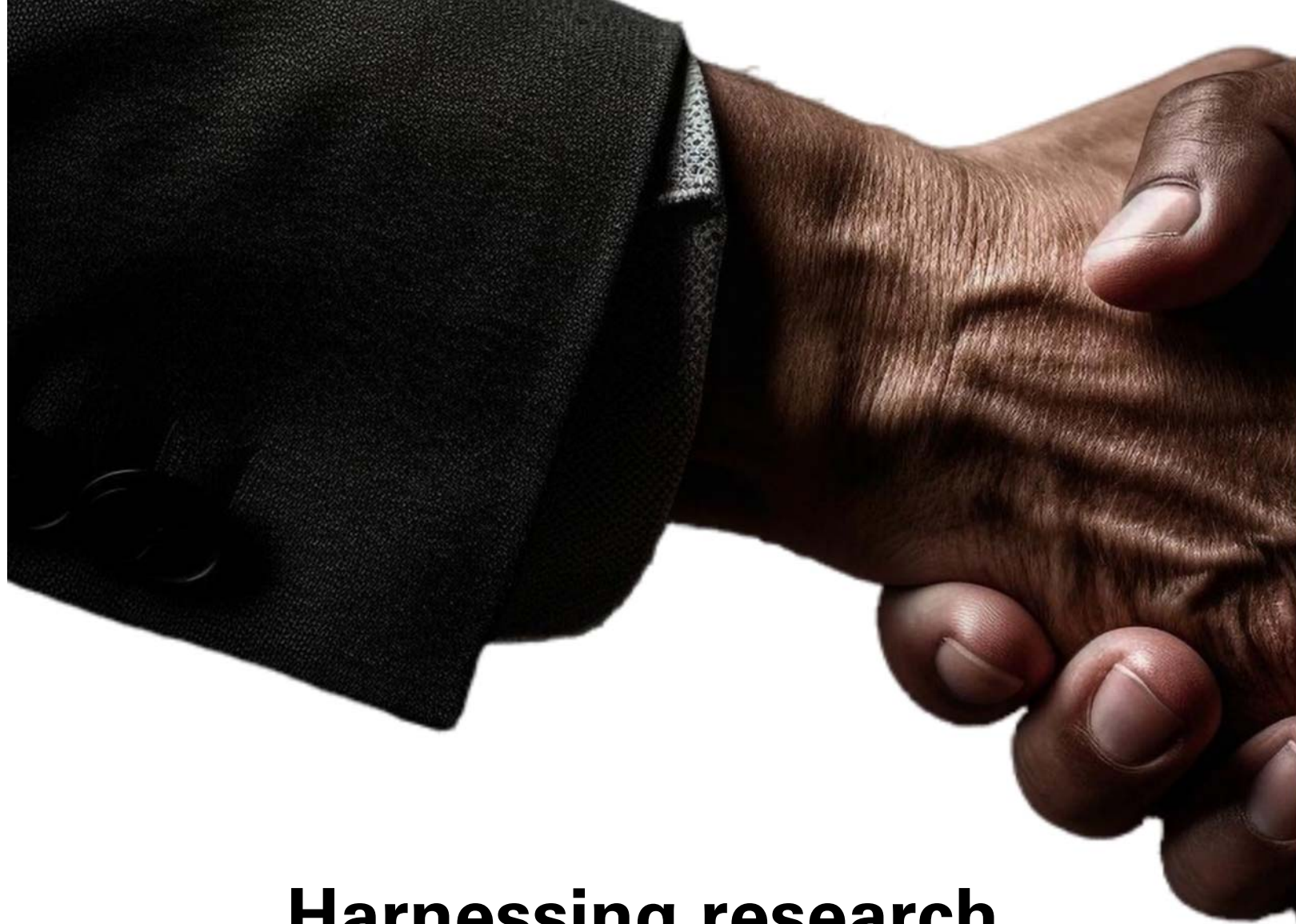


Photo by Cottonbro studios, [Pexels](#)



Harnessing research, development and innovation in SA's business–government partnership

*When organised business leaders and the South African Government [resolved](#) in June 2023 "to urgently work together to remove obstacles to inclusive economic growth and job creation", a fresh era for business–government relations in South Africa may just have been ushered in. In what ways might business and the government use research, development and innovation as part of constructing an effective cross-sectoral partnership in the national interest? By **Gerard Ralphs** and **Amy Kahn***

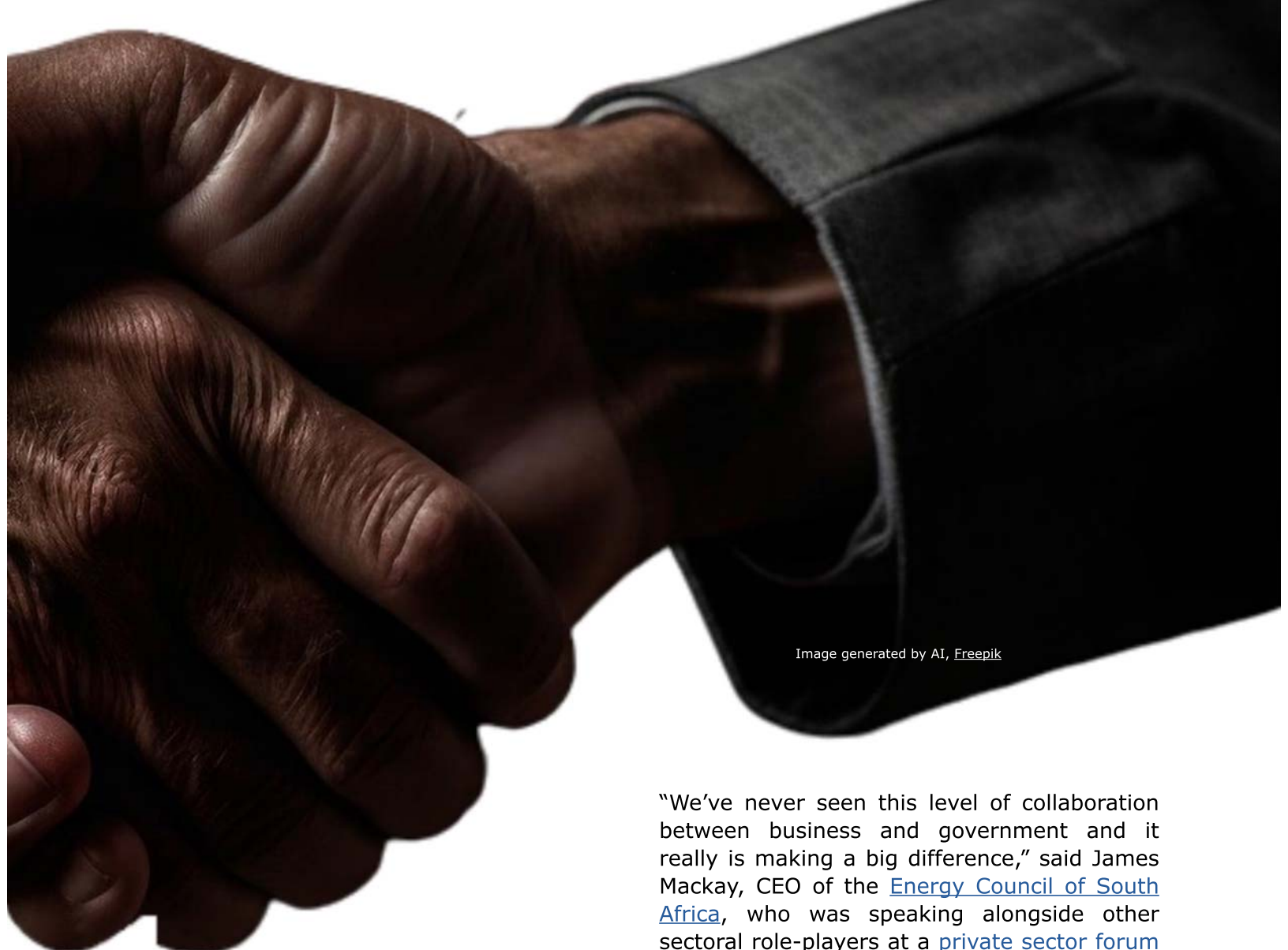


Image generated by AI, Freepik

Since an [agreement](#) in June 2023, the South African Government and organised business have been working together towards removing obstacles to inclusive economic growth and job creation.

Addressing the most urgent crises faced by the country's economy (including transport and logistics, energy, and crime and corruption), the partnership represents a key innovation at the level of South Africa's governance architecture.

To date, hundreds of millions of rands from the private sector and the public sector, along with hundreds of technical experts, [have been deployed](#) through the newly established national crisis committees for energy and logistics and the establishment of the Joint Initiative for Crime and Corruption, contributing vital resources.

"We've never seen this level of collaboration between business and government and it really is making a big difference," said James Mackay, CEO of the [Energy Council of South Africa](#), who was speaking alongside other sectoral role-players at a [private sector forum](#) jointly arranged by the HSRC, Business Unity South Africa and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) on 13 March 2024.

Indeed, relations between business and government in post-apartheid South Africa have been strained, at best, with significant low points for both sides. For example, during the Zondo Commission's public hearings and its [final reports](#), global consultancy firms and local businesses faced a severe backlash from public sector actors for their role in state capture deals. Similarly, despite the intensification of load-shedding over the past decade, the initial slow pace of reforms was heavily criticised by business lobby groups across various sectors of the economy, especially by independent power producers.

In this respect, the CEO of Business Unity South Africa, Cas Coovadia, spoke bluntly.

“What’s been happening in South Africa between business and the government is that we’ve been throwing bricks at each other, instead of using those bricks to actually build stuff.”

But this was now shifting, according to Coovadia. “I think business in South Africa in our context is increasingly beginning to realise in my view that the line between business and society is not there,” he said. “It is very much in business’s interest to ensure that society works.”

Mackay reinforced this view, calling for a bolder stance by business. “We’ve got to embrace the partnership between business and the government, get on with it, and business must be more confident in things to be done, calling out the government, being bold in creating some structure and pushing for action,” he said.

The Business for SA (B4SA) initiative, which regularly meets with the government through the Presidency, is an apex structure for 115 CEOs representing 1.2 million jobs and over one trillion rand in market capitalisation. However, B4SA is not the only public–private partnership that is aiming to make a positive impact on the South African business environment.

Public–private innovation models

Speaking at the forum, Sietse van der Woude of the Minerals Council South Africa highlighted increased collaboration on innovation within the mining ecosystem, involving companies, science councils and higher education institutions through the [Mandela Mining Precinct](#).

Van der Woude cited the development of the [Isidingo Drill](#) as an example of collaborative problem-solving in the industry.

“One of the first things the Mandela Mining Precinct did was to get the mining companies together and say, ‘What do you want from a new generation or next generation rock drill?’ And they put together their criteria, and they agreed on their criteria, and then went out into

an open innovation challenge. And today we have a rock drill that is not only much quieter and less vibrating and safer, but it is also more productive.”

In a similar vein, Dr Ronald Heath of Forestry South Africa described the DSI’s Sector Innovation Fund as a “game-changer”.

“It’s an amazing programme, but there’s an incentive to actually invest because the government is walking the path with you. Of course, sometimes it’s challenging to balance the imperatives that the government would like to seek and what industry would like to seek. But it works.”

Heath also emphasised the need for long-term coordinated approaches tailored to the specific needs of each sector.

“If we want to deploy a new tree that addresses climate change, or a new insect, or new growing conditions, it takes us 15 to 20 years from start to deployment. We can’t work on three-year horizons.”

The forestry sector in South Africa comprises a handful of large corporations, 1,300 timber farmers, and 20,000 small-scale timber growers, Heath explained. Therefore, it is essential for the sector as a whole to articulate a clear research agenda and to conduct research that is in the interest of all role-players.

“For our sector, what we’ve realised is multidisciplinary research is an old word. We’ve now gone to multi-institutional research where we have little capacity. There’s not enough for everybody to go around. We need to be innovative in how we use the money that’s available.”

Dr Malika Khodja-Möller from the Toyota Wessels Institute for Manufacturing Studies highlighted the benefits of sector collaboration models within manufacturing. She described an Institute programme that provides manufacturing companies with experimental space to aid them in making investment decisions.

“We actually created the management sandbox, which is a kind of technological playpen, where we have 4IR (fourth industrial revolution) industry technologies, like industrial internet of things, 3D printing, virtual reality, augmented reality, and other technologies for companies to come and experiment with the technologies without putting a capital investment in this technology.”

But Khodja-Möller called for increased sectoral collaboration to optimise resources and encourage positive spillovers.

“I always say: ‘Instead of fighting over a small piece of cake, grow the cake and everyone can have their own piece and benefit from it.’ So, if you adopted a technology and you know it worked for your business, make it open, make it accessible to others even if it’s not in your relevant sector [...] to enhance and maximise economic growth.”

What the data says about innovation collaboration

The [recent economy diagnostic](#) conducted by the Harvard Growth Lab, published in 2023, identified state capacity, spatial exclusion, and green growth as significant priorities for South Africa to address.

One proposed strategy to address these priorities, according to the Harvard Growth Lab, is through partnerships: in particular, collaboration between businesses and other organisations to share productive expertise.

However, based on an [HSRC policy brief](#), which analysed data from the [South African Business Innovation Survey for the 2019–2021 reference period](#), researchers found that only 29% of innovation-active South African businesses engaged in any form of collaboration.

Moreover, among the businesses that engaged in partnerships, their most likely partners were suppliers of equipment, materials, components and software, rather than research institutions, whether public or private.

Equally, the researchers demonstrate that the high costs associated with coordination were a key barrier to interacting with other parties in the production or exchange of knowledge.

The authors of the policy brief argue that policy instruments should be designed based on a differentiated evidence-informed view of how business collaboration for innovation actually occurs, or why it may not occur.

For instance, non-innovation-active firms need to build interactive capabilities to engage in innovation activities, while innovation-active firms that prioritise research and development (R&D), for example, in their collaborations, require support for these activities.

South Africa’s new business–government partnership has opened the way for new thinking on how the respective capabilities of the state and private sector actors can be leveraged for the benefit of the nation.

With [R&D expenditure increasing nationally and in the business sector](#), and with the introduction of new policy directives outlined in the [DSI’s Decadal Plan 2022–2032](#), there are opportunities to re-design research, development and innovation (RDI) models.

Using existing evidence from RDI surveys can guide decision-makers in the government and business towards mutually reinforcing outcomes.

Learn more:

[Innovation trends in the mining sector, 2019–2021](#)

[Innovation trends in the manufacturing sector, 2019–2021](#)

[Innovation trends in the electricity, gas and water supply sector, 2019–2021](#)

[Innovation trends in the transport, storage and communication sector, 2019–2021](#)

Research contacts:

Gerard Ralphs (policy analyst) and Dr Amy Kahn (research specialist) in the HSRC Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators

gralphs@hsrc.ac.za

akahn@hsrc.ac.za



Ketso Gordhan, CEO of the SA SME Fund, alongside panellists (from right to left) Phethiwe Matutu (Universities South Africa), Shameela Soobramoney (National Business Initiative), Imraan Patel (Department of Science and Innovation), Dr Crispian Olver (Presidential Climate Commission), and Prof. Erika Kraemer-Mbula (University of Johannesburg). Photo: Antonio Erasmus, HSRC

Incentives for growing private sector R&D and innovation investment: Insights from industry leaders

*In March 2024, the HSRC, in collaboration with Business Unity South Africa and the Department of Science and Innovation, hosted a high-level forum to deepen private sector engagement with South Africa's innovation policy goals, incentive instruments and data. The forum discussions, which were frank and collegial, highlighted some ground-level barriers to research, development and innovation spending, as well as current partnerships and initiatives. By **Theodore Sass**, **Katharine McKenzie** and **Gerard Ralphs***

One of the key targets of South Africa's National Development Plan is to grow investment in research and experimental development (R&D) to 1.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030. However, the [latest national R&D Survey](#), covering the 2021/2022 financial year, shows that gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP is 0.62%.

This represents a significant gap that needs to be addressed, but no single sector can accomplish this task alone. Analysts and policymakers generally concur that meeting the National Development Plan's ambitious research intensity target will require far greater expenditure across the board. The government was the largest funder of R&D, said Dr Glenda Kruss, executive head of the HSRC Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators (CeSTII), which conducts [longitudinal studies on R&D and innovation](#).

However, Kruss cautioned there were indications that this funding "might be coming to its ceiling" and that the imperative was "growing the business part of the pie in investing in R&D in order to be able grow the system as a whole".

Kruss was speaking at a recent high-level forum hosted by Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI).

In the context of the global competition for innovation talent, resources and markets, it is vital that South Africa has its own strategies, argued Daan du Toit, the DSI's acting director-general. Some large economies, such as India and the US, use tax incentives to stimulate business R&D and innovation. "The first priority is incentives to increase private sector investment by the Indian private sector, because right now in India R&D spending is about 70% coming from the Indian Government," he explained. In the US, private sector investment has seen a significant boost following the introduction of the [Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors \(CHIPS\) and Science Act](#) in August 2022. This

Act allocates \$280 billion in subsidies through tax incentives for manufacturers of memory chips and semiconductors.

Barriers for business

James Mackay, CEO of the [Energy Council of South Africa](#), argued business confidence was the primary obstacle to investment in the country. He attributed this lack of confidence to factors such as loadshedding, the energy crisis, the collapse in supply chains and transport and Transnet specifically, and "the hollowing out" of skills capacity and capability in key government institutions.

Mackay added, "Business is not in bad shape financially: they're sitting on cash, but the confidence index is so low, the money is just not being deployed. But if we see a turnaround in the confidence and the ability to deploy money, there are reserves in the South African economy that can be moved quite quickly."

The forum discussed ongoing efforts to incentivise and stimulate business R&D and innovation activity, but there was some reluctance among business representatives regarding these initiatives.

BUSA CEO, Cas Coovadia, pointed out that although there are good incentives available, the processes to access them are such that people eventually decide it's not worth their while.

The [Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme \(THRIP\)](#), which supports R&D and scientific talent in the national interest, was cited as an example. While acknowledging its past successes, both Professor Reza Daniels, Director of the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, and Dr Ronald Heath of Forestry South Africa proposed that the DSI and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic), revisit THRIP's current implementation model.

Heath remarked, "It was an amazing model, our industry benefitted tremendously from it. Then they changed the model completely and when it changed, we were quite excited

initially, working with industry. But that whole initiative has now been implemented in such a way that nobody can actually work with it. It's not a feasible programme anymore."

Green shoots

Forum speakers also looked to current areas of competence as a basis on which to build new strategies.

Dr Crispian Olver, executive director of the Presidential Climate Commission, noted South Africa's strong climate capacity in the atmospheric sciences as an asset to build on.

"We do need to be broadening the base in terms of our R&D activities, particularly in the universities," Olver said. "We want to see a much wider spectrum of universities playing a significant role in this [energy] transition, but our big problem is converting the R&D into innovation and commercially viable initiatives."

Olver pointed to the potential of net-zero technology centres as sites of collaboration between government, business and universities in the transition to achieving net-zero carbon emissions. "The core to these successful net-zero technology centres, is [to bring] the academic community into dialogue with

the business community [and] government regulators," Olver added.

Ketso Gordhan, CEO of the [SA SME Fund](#), emphasised the Fund's work on small-business investments within the township economy. He also expressed concern about the limited outcomes from university-owned intellectual property and noted that the Fund is working in this space. "The thing that we are the proudest of is something called the university-technology fund," Gordhan said. "We commercialise IP coming out of universities. They believe that what we are doing as a private sector organisation to leverage public IP is beginning to work."

Reflecting on current work in progress, CEO of the National Business Initiative, Shameela Soobramoney, introduced a collaboration between the dtic, Cape Town municipality, the private sector and local contractors in the Western Cape's Atlantis special economic zone. "We can definitely scale private sector RDI through sectoral agreements between business and government," she said. "One of our models is installation, repair, maintenance, where we are looking at technical skills and busy working and localising the renewable

The HSRC's Dr Glenda Kruss presents new evidence from recent R&D and innovations surveys undertaken by the Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators. Seated from left to right are Department of Science and Innovation officials, Dr Mmboneni Muofhe, Konanani Rashamuse and Daan du Toit.

Photo: Antonio Erasmus, HSRC



energy value chain.” Soobramoney highlighted the need for new skill sets to support the just energy transition and suggested that these should align with an overarching strategy. Skills that empower individuals to engage with net-zero technologies are essential to remain globally competitive as trading partners factor carbon emissions into the market as potential barriers, she explained.

Dr Phethiwe Matutu, CEO of Universities SA, which represents South Africa’s 26 public universities, indicated there were numerous international collaborations among universities with a focus on work-integrated learning and existing links between industry and universities. “We understand that the human capacity is at universities,” Matutu said. But Matutu also emphasised growing the R&D infrastructure ‘commons’. “It is important that the industry invests in infrastructure and that it gets shared among universities. Without that investment by industry, we rely on government, and we are aware of the shrinking resources of government.”

Fit to purpose

Through its [White Paper](#) and [Decadal Plan](#),

the DSI has adopted a national system of innovation approach to managing and governing innovation policy. This approach requires coordinated efforts from all actors in the system, and strategic guidance to align the system direction with policy goals.

“We need to be working in a much more integrated and intentional way, and we need a mix of policy instruments of incentives, and we need these in all spheres of the national system of innovation,” Kruss argued.

Du Toit shared this sentiment: “We live in a world which comes together through science because ultimately we are on this planet together, and despite competition we need to work together.”

But the national system of innovation also needs tailored approaches to meet the needs of different role-players. “To build the innovation system, it’s not going to be one-size-fits-all,” said Imraan Patel, DSI’s deputy director-general responsible for research, development and support. “What’s going to be good for the mining sector is going to be very different from the forestry sector.”

Authors:

Theodore Sass (senior researcher) and Gerard Ralphs (policy analyst) in the HSRC Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators, and Katharine McKenzie (writer)

tsass@hsrc.ac.za

gralphs@hsrc.ac.za

Cas Coovadia, the CEO of Business Unity South Africa, addresses panellists, James Mackay (SA Energy South Africa), Dr Ronald Health (Forestry South Africa) and Sietse van der Woude (Minerals Council South Africa) Photo: Antonio Erasmus, HSRC





LOUIS BOTHA
BOER
KRYGSMAN
STAATSKIND

Defaced statue of Louis Botha outside the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town during the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in 2015. The wreaths were placed on the defaced statue by members of [AfriForum](#).

Photo by HelenOnline, Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

South Africa's historical and contemporary statues: a public and political battleground

*As South Africa moves beyond its apartheid past, the fate of historical statues ignites fierce debate across the nation and among political powers. This discussion reflects deep-rooted tensions and divergent views on how a nation reconciles with its tumultuous history. **Jessie-Lee Smith** explores this debate by highlighting the HSRC's role in bringing essential information, popular perspectives, and insightful analysis on this contentious issue to the forefront.*

In early [2022](#), the South African Parliament complex in the City of Cape Town was set alight and severely damaged in the fire. A few months later, [two men and a woman were arrested](#) for defacing a statue of Louis Botha, which stands outside the parliament complex. This was not the first time this statue had drawn attention. In [2014](#), Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) leader Julius Malema commented on the statue saying, "Louis Botha is not our hero and cannot be a hero of a democratic South Africa. He is a colonial warmonger, who fought for the exclusion of black and indigenous people from running their own country and affairs." Similarly, in June 2020, protests outside parliament called for the statue's removal.

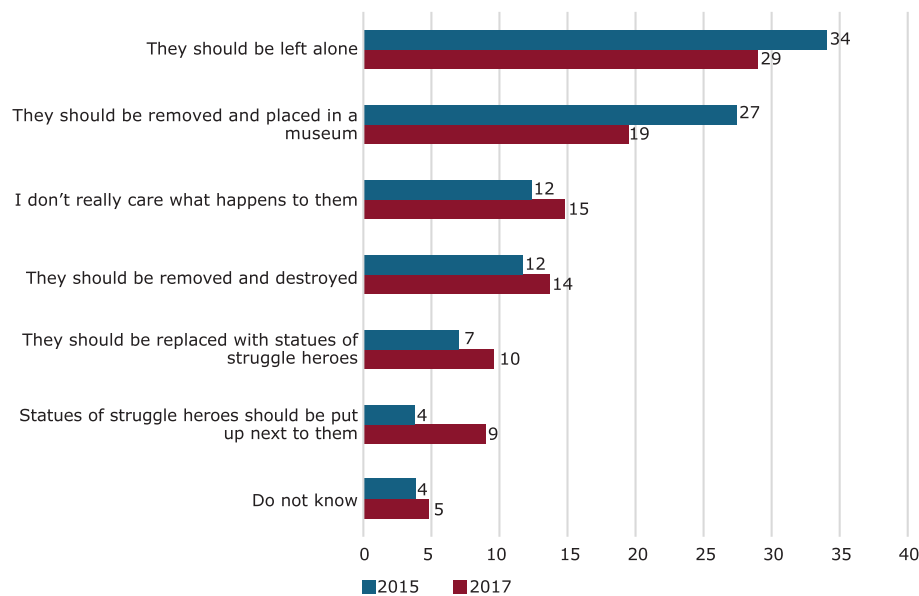
In 2024, the reconstruction of South Africa's Parliament has begun. To inform the public about reconstruction timelines and new design concepts, Secretary to Parliament, Xolile George, held a [press briefing](#) on 9 May 2024. During the question-and-answer session, he was asked about the future of the Louis Botha statue. George explained that the design team was being guided by heritage legislation and had been tasked with carefully considering how historical and contemporary symbols would function in the space while managing the tensions of the past and present. Included in this task was deciding where to place the bust

of Nelson Mandela, which had been exhibited in front of the National Assembly, and whether and where other contemporary statues should be displayed.

Public and political voices, like those opposing the Louis Botha statue, are an important part of a larger debate about how nations like South Africa should address their complex histories while meeting the broader public's expectations. To understand these expectations, the HSRC's 2015 and 2017 South African Social Attitude Surveys ([SASAS](#)) gathered quantitative data on what public perceptions were at a time when debates surrounding statues were ignited by the [#RhodesMustFall](#) movement.

Perceptions on what should happen to these statues ranged from calls for destroying them to support for maintaining them (Fig. 1). The majority perspective, which was that 'they should be left alone' remained relatively consistent across both survey rounds. The second most common opinion, that 'they should be removed and placed in a museum' also remained stable. While fewer people selected these as their dominant preferences in 2017, they remained the top-ranked options. Other options increased slightly between the survey rounds, but the rank order remained unchanged.

Figure 1. Public preferences relating to statues of apartheid and colonial leaders, 2015 and 2017 (%)



Source: HSRC SASAS 2015 and 2017

In both surveys, opinions on the fate of statues differed greatly among races. For example, the removal of the statues remained the most popular perspective among black Africans in both 2015 and 2017 with variations in what should be done with the statues thereafter. In contrast, most of the white population advocated for leaving the statues alone.

One notable change between 2015 and 2017 was the decrease in the share of Indian/Asian and white adults wanting to maintain the statues, dropping by 16 percentage points (from 49% to 33%) and 17 percentage points (from 61% to 44%), respectively. For Indian/Asian adults, the decline was accompanied by a rise in support for having the statues removed. Among white adults, there was a mixture of growing support for replacement with statues of struggle heroes, destroying them, and a rise in indifference.

Perspectives surrounding the maintenance or removal of statues are heavily influenced by South Africa's colonial and apartheid history. In a recent [article](#), HSRC senior research specialist Dr Fubah Alubafi and colleagues presented qualitative perspectives on the statue debate

based on earlier interviews with students and heritage practitioners. For some participants, these statues were cherished landmarks and important relics of the past that warranted preservation. One student [noted](#):

"We cannot build a new society by destroying our history. The past and the present are inseparable." (Ntombi, 47 years old)

Conversely, others [felt that these statues offered a skewed representation](#) of history and evoked memories of oppression and discrimination.

"The statues and monuments of colonial and apartheid heroes and heroines must be removed and burned to make our streets and public spaces welcoming to us and our visitors. We cannot be in the present and still live in our unjust historical pasts." (Mulalo, 28 years old)

Alubafi [highlighted](#) the importance of shifting historical narratives towards the decolonial gaze – a way of viewing history that reflects the history and attitudes of colonised people rather than those of Western colonisers. In a country like South Africa, where systemic oppression

is woven into its past, decolonial theologians [believe](#) that historical narratives can be shifted by encouraging a decolonial gaze to promote national reconciliation, healing and unity.

For example, the South African Government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), has actively engaged in promoting the decolonial gaze in the cultural landscape by constructing statues and monuments that celebrate anti-colonial and anti-apartheid icons.

In 2004, the government erected the [Freedom Park Heritage Site](#) in Pretoria to commemorate those who fought in the struggle to end apartheid. This site was [strategically](#) positioned near the Voortrekker Monument, which is dedicated to the white Afrikaans Voortrekkers who undertook an arduous journey north from Cape Colony to South Africa's interior. Over the past few decades, the government has commissioned and erected dozens of bronze statues representing anti-apartheid struggle heroes, starting [in the Groenkloof Nature Reserve \(GNR\)](#) near Freedom Park. These statues represent the broader historical narrative of South Africa, including the fight for democracy and the fall of the apartheid era. Some participants interviewed by Alubafi for the [study](#) viewed the statues of struggle heroes in a positive light, believing they helped to reverse the colonial gaze.

"If I compare the GNR statues and monuments with the Voortrekker Monument, I see myself and that of the majority of South Africans reflected [more] at the GNR statues park than at the Voortrekker Monument. The GNR park tells me that I am living in the present and that I have a voice." (Makitla, 33 years old)

Others felt that the construction of new statues was not enough to ensure a reversal of the colonial gaze.

"Constructing new statues and monuments in honour of struggle heroes and heroines is desirable, while retaining historical statues and monuments in honour of colonial and apartheid heroes and heroines is undesirable to South Africa's cultural health" (Chauke, 40 years old)

Creating contemporary monuments that reflect South Africa's freedom struggle could help to reshape the country's historical narrative, enhancing national pride and identity. Yet, the [SASAS](#) surveys show that over the three-year period, the idea of erecting statues of struggle icon statues alongside historical ones was the least popular option among respondents.

Moreover, such initiatives may disproportionately benefit the ANC party by solidifying their role as leaders in the struggle for democracy and national transformation. "The ANC [government]'s agenda for decolonial politics through decolonising the cultural landscape might be a mere state apparatus for masking a neo-colonial elitist agenda of a failed state," write Alubafi and colleagues in the [article](#). In support of this position, most participants who were loyal to the ANC cited their commitment to issues of cultural transformation, such as the GNR statues and monument park, as a reason for being so.

Contributions to the statue debate made by Alubafi, his colleagues, and the SASAS findings have important practical implications for the future of statues like Louis Botha. These insights also stimulate ongoing and global debates surrounding what to do with colonial or historically discriminatory legacies. Finally, by exposing the complexities and political influences related to this issue, the South African public can better understand their stance, their demands, and their electoral influence.

Research contacts:

Dr Fubah Alubafi (senior research specialist) and Dr Benjamin Roberts (research director) in the HSRC's Developmental, Capable and Ethical State division
malubafi@hsrc.ac.za
broberts@hsrc.ac.za



Access to and outcomes of education continue to show stark inequalities between genders and races.

Photo by CandiceDavisZA, [Wikimedia Commons](#) (CC BY-SA 4.0)



Women's position and barriers in the South African labour market

*Cultural structures and political climates have long influenced women's participation in the labour force. While only half of the female population in South Africa are currently economically active, many prominent stakeholders agree that increasing this participation has the potential to grow, transform, and expand economies. **Jessie-Lee Smith** highlights HSRC researchers' work on assessing the status of women in South Africa's labour force.*

Women still face many institutional barriers that impede their socio-economic empowerment and independence. For example, limited [water](#) rights restrict their ability to contribute to food security and benefit from agricultural opportunities. HSRC [research](#) on gendered water access disparities shows that women in South Africa hold only 11% of the water licences required to conduct commercial agriculture. Similarly, [approximately half](#) of South Africa's female population participates in the workforce, compared to the participation of almost [two-thirds](#) of men.

The significance of female labour force participation extends beyond individual economic independence. According to [United Nations Women](#), the [International Monetary Fund](#), and the [International Labour Organization](#), female labour force participation is a vital component of broader economic development and gender equality. As women represent a substantial portion of potential human capital, their active participation in labour markets can lead to considerable economic gains and higher economic growth rates.

Women who are active in the labour force also contribute to improved family and community well-being. Dr Shanaaz Dunn, a data manager at the HSRC, [argues](#) that economically empowered women are more likely to invest in their families and communities in ways that catalyse broader social benefits, such as better health, education, and a reduction in child mortality.

Considering a [continuous and disproportionate](#) rise in female unemployment, Dunn [analysed](#) statistics from the 2017 South African National Income and Dynamics Survey to examine the position of South African women in the workforce and the factors influencing their participation. Research to better understand these factors is crucial for the empowerment of women. The findings could lead to the implementation of policies and the development of effective strategies and reforms, ensuring interventions are well informed and targeted to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women in South Africa, thereby advancing [global development agendas](#).

According to Dunn, the variety of cultural and socio-economic landscapes in South Africa means that women across the country often have drastically different experiences, depending on where they live and work. For example, women in rural areas are potentially more likely to be influenced by traditional gender roles and cultural expectations, while urban women may face increased economic burdens. The [findings](#) confirmed that workforce participation is affected by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political and cultural factors.

Education level significantly affects a woman's likelihood of entering the labour force. Women with tertiary education are eight times more likely to be part of the labour force, while those with secondary and primary education are, respectively, nearly three and two times more likely to be part of the work force compared to those without any formal education. [Access to](#) and [outcomes of](#) education continue to show stark inequalities between genders and races.

Similarly, there is a significant disparity between rural and urban female participation in the labour force. Urban women have a higher participation rate of 55.77%, compared to 40.29% for rural women. Urban areas offer more job opportunities than rural areas, leading to higher participation rates in cities. In contrast, rural areas often adhere to traditional attitudes of gender roles, which can crucially affect women's ability, desire, or freedom to

engage in the workforce. In the [article](#), Dunn and her colleagues suggest that enhancing education opportunities in rural areas could increase women's employability.

Household size, income level, and family dynamics also influence the likelihood of a woman's participation in the workforce. Women in households with higher incomes are more likely to participate in the labour force. Specifically, those in households earning more than R11,000.00 per month are nearly twice as likely to be economically active compared to those in households earning R3,500.00 or less per month. The [article](#) emphasises that this indicates women's contributions to households are not insignificant and that better access to resources such as childcare and transportation facilitates participation in the workforce.

Conversely, larger household sizes negatively affect women's participation in the labour force. For example, women in households with 10 or more members are significantly less likely to participate in the labour force compared to those in smaller households (1–3 members). Dunn explains that larger households in South Africa tend to include more children and elderly people. The burden of care may therefore often fall on women, and they become unable to join the workforce. To alleviate this burden and to support women in large households, the [article](#) suggests that policies should extend social protection, increase access to affordable childcare, and implement programmes that support women entrepreneurs and workers.

This [article](#) also highlights the impact of marriage on the likelihood of female labour force participation. Marriage trends in South Africa have significantly shifted over the last few decades, reflecting global trends, with fewer people choosing marriage. Despite the assumption that unmarried women would dominate the labour force, the study found that married women are in fact more actively engaged in the workforce. These findings underscore the importance of implementing strategies driven by families and communities to promote gender equality in the labour market.

The participation of women in South Africa's workforce is not just about achieving gender equality but may be a crucial economic imperative. Dunn and her colleagues have shed light on significant disparities in participation rates across urban and rural areas, as well as among educated and uneducated women, underscoring the pivotal role of education in enhancing workforce involvement.

This research has also elucidated how cultural norms and household dynamics pose challenges that can restrict women's economic prospects. Importantly, the economic contributions of women significantly boost household incomes and national economic growth, demonstrating the broader social and economic advantages of empowering women.

Research contact:

Dr Shanaaz Dunn, data manager in the HSRC's Developmental, Capable and Ethical State division

sdunn@hsrc.ac.za

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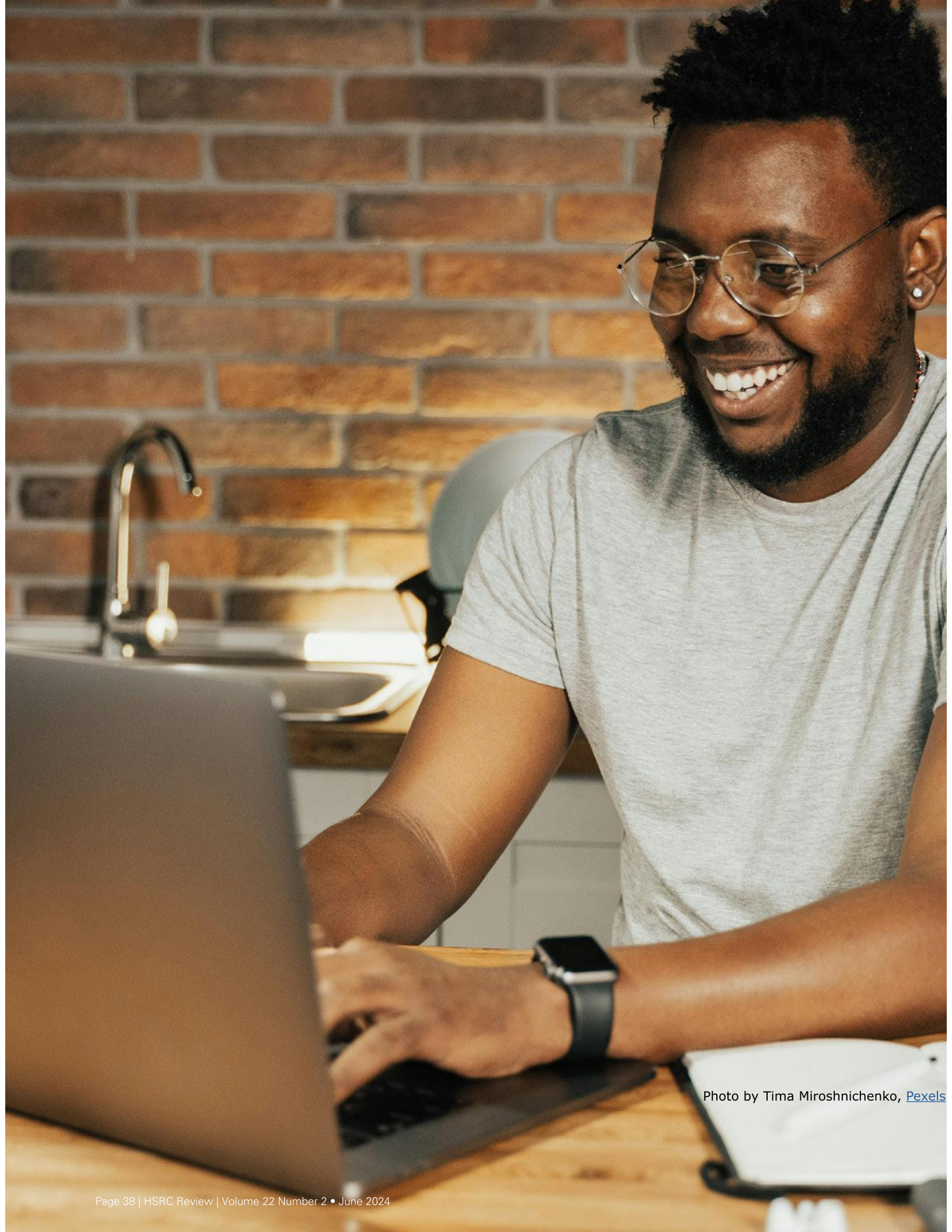


Photo by Tima Miroshnichenko, [Pexels](#)



'Profit for purpose' is a key motivation for African youth entering entrepreneurship

*In many African countries, young people face a [lack of formal employment](#) opportunities. Therefore, they need to explore and assume alternative livelihoods, such as entrepreneurship. Stakeholders and policymakers need to encourage and support these endeavours. An HSRC study provides key insights into what motivates graduate entrepreneurs to forge opportunities and futures for themselves and others. By **Jessie-Lee Smith** and **Vuyiswa Mathambo***

Pedro*, a 29-year-old man who participated in an HSRC [study](#), lives in Ghana. While working on his undergraduate degree, which was funded by a scholarship, Pedro started planning a yoghurt business. Today, his business is a success; it has provided a desirable product to local communities and various job opportunities to community members.

Similarly, an e-commerce business started by Relebohile*, a 28-year-old South African graduate, has given owners of small online businesses access to a virtual platform. This platform enables entrepreneurs to better manage their businesses. It allows them to identify market opportunities, reach more clients, analyse business operations, and plan better by anticipating peaks and slumps in sales.

The number of job seekers in South Africa and many other African countries is high, and opportunities for [formal employment](#) are becoming increasingly scarce – even for [individuals who have completed tertiary education](#). Yet, the stories of Pedro and Relebohile show how entrepreneurship offers opportunities for young people to innovate and succeed, while also stimulating economies and creating opportunities for others.

[Studies](#) have shown that entrepreneurship can substantially contribute to employment opportunities and economic growth in developing countries. Therefore, it is essential to identify pathways that lead young people into entrepreneurship so they can be better supported.

One way in which the HSRC has been doing this is through [The Imprint of Education \(TIE\)](#) study. Following African graduates who were funded by scholarships, this study conducted annual quantitative surveys with 544 scholarship recipients who completed their degrees at selected universities in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and at other institutions outside Africa. In 2022, 36% of surveyed participants were running their own entrepreneurial ventures. Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted with participants from the same universities, with the number of participants ranging from 122 in 2020 to 106 in 2022. Through these interviews, stories like Pedro's and Relebohile's have provided researchers with valuable insight into what motivates young entrepreneurs.

Literature has pointed to 'necessity' (economic survival) and 'opportunity' (gaps in the market) as the primary drivers

of youth entrepreneurship. These drivers have become apparent in the entrepreneurial journeys of participants in the TIE study. For example, when Pedro was an undergraduate student, he lived away from home in Ghana’s capital, Accra. During this time, he noticed the frequent consumption of yoghurt-drinks. He recognised their popularity and a market gap in his hometown, where no similar products were being sold. “I realised there are a lot of people who are buying it; people enjoyed the beverage... So, I [thought] if people are enjoying this product over here, there is a higher possibility that back home they are also going to enjoy it,” he told researchers.

However, a significant finding of the TIE study, in line with other [studies](#), is that the factors that encourage young people to start their own businesses are not simply a matter of necessity or opportunity. These factors often overlap, are complex, and can be tied to the desire to benefit others. For example, while recognising the opportunity in the market, Relebohile cited ‘social entrepreneurship’ – a desire to find business solutions to social problems – as an important driver of her entrepreneurship.

Relebohile was motivated by a desire to find solutions to problems rather than by profits alone. She attributed her drive to solve problems to the entrepreneurial training she received at university. “It’s taught me to be...

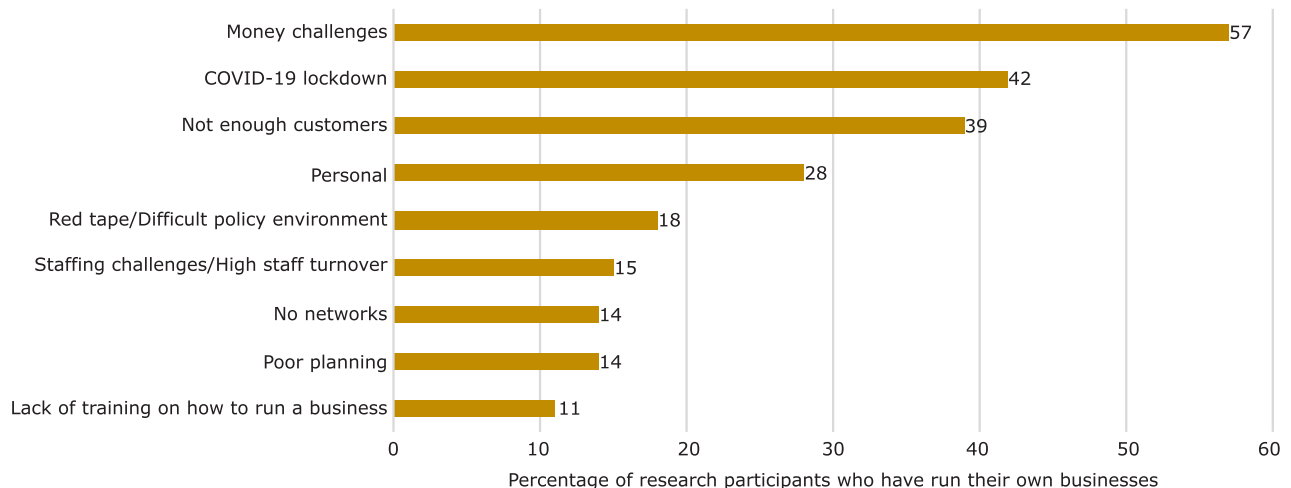
solution-oriented... believing that [I] can actually make a difference... having the power to lead and make changes even on a small scale... So, taking that same mentality and applying it to the world is... a skill that has been useful for me,” she told researchers.

Pedro also exhibited a strong desire to solve problems. He cited that establishing a yoghurt manufacturing company with several distribution channels could lead to the employment of a few of the young people in his community, giving them some form of livelihood.

Pedro and Relebohile’s stories are common among African graduate entrepreneurs. The HSRC team has found that many entrepreneurs started businesses to make a social impact. A noteworthy finding was what a 33-year-old male participant from Kenya referred to as “profit for purpose”. While many entrepreneurs in the study valued the profits, their primary purpose was often to improve the lives of others.

However, despite their desire to make a positive impact in their communities, many young entrepreneurs faced challenges in running and growing their businesses. The most common challenges, [mentioned](#) by more than half of the participants operating businesses in 2022, included a lack of capital and cash flow (Figure1).

Figure 1. Challenges faced by young entrepreneurs



Source: *The Imprint of Education study: Wave 3 data*

According to the same [study](#), in 2022, 68% of the interviewed entrepreneurs had started their business using their own savings. Additionally, 25% had accessed seed funding from the scholarship programme. Other funding sources included grants (15%), family and friends (14%), investors and donations (9%), and government loans (7%). A small proportion of participants (6%) reported that they had not required any funding to start their businesses.

Pedro, for instance, attributed his ability and success at starting his yoghurt business to the seed funding provided to scholarship recipients interested in starting entrepreneurial ventures. The wide range of funding sources accessed by participants to start their businesses underscores individual and collective agency, showing that institutions and networks play a pivotal role in nurturing youth entrepreneurship.

The TIE [study](#) helped to identify how entrepreneurs can be encouraged and supported to create successful ventures. A [presentation](#) at the Next Generation Insights on Intractable National and Global Challenges Research Conference in September 2023 highlighted how stakeholders could be encouraged to do this through financial and training support.

By offering seed funding, grants, or loans, public and private stakeholders can help entrepreneurs launch and scale their ventures. Training programmes at institutions could cover essential skills such as business management, market identification, strategic planning, and effective networking to prepare entrepreneurs for the challenges of the business world. Governments could look into creating enabling environments for upcoming entrepreneurs, ensuring that registration requirements are simple and accessible through online platforms.

While this [study](#) captured the stories of a special group of African youth – university graduates funded through scholarships – the stories of successful entrepreneurs like Pedro and Relebohile offer valuable insights and lessons for young people who are contemplating entrepreneurship. In developing countries, the pressing need to diversify income sources

further propels entrepreneurial ambitions. This sentiment was echoed by a 31-year-old male participant from Uganda, who remarked, “So, from our upbringing, we are often told... you cannot just rely on your salary... So, from the start, we are taught that you have to do something on the side...”

Many participants cited the desire to make money while helping others as a significant motivation for starting their own businesses, emphasising social entrepreneurship. Lessons gleaned from Pedro and Relebohile’s experiences reflect that social entrepreneurship can be bolstered by academic programmes at secondary and tertiary levels. By cultivating problem-solving mindsets and fostering entrepreneurial skills, students can be equipped to turn societal challenges into business opportunities and catalyse meaningful change in their communities.

Disclaimer: The Imprint of Education (TIE) is conducted by the HSRC in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Foundation, its staff, or its Board of Directors.

**not their real name*

Research contact:

Vuyiswa Mathambo, a senior research manager in the HSRC’s Equitable Education and Economics division.

vmathambo@hsrc.ac.za



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