

Poverty and inequality: a threat to a socially inclusive Rainbow Nation

A series of legislative and policy reforms since 1994 have aimed to bring about solidarity and a safer, caring, more equal and harmonious national society – in short, social cohesion. However, poverty and inequality, and specifically the lack of basic services, are threatening the aspirations of becoming Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s truly united Rainbow Nation. *Yul Derek Davids, Benjamin Roberts, Jare Struwig and Moses Sithole* examined whether poverty, inequality or other development challenges impacted social cohesion by analysing results from the 2009 SASAS, a national representative survey of 3 305 adults aged 16 years and older.

In measuring social cohesion, three different sets of questions were compiled for three specific dimensions, namely national identity (proudly South African), social attachment and racial trust.

The *Proudly South African Measure* was constructed by combining the following two statements: 1) ‘I would rather be a citizen of South Africa than of any other country in the world’ and 2) ‘Generally speaking, South Africa is a better country than most other countries’. The response options ranged from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

The *Social Attachment Measure* was based on the extent respondents felt attached to the following types of people: 1) ‘Those who speak the same language as you’ 2) ‘Those who belong to the same race group as you’ 3) ‘Those who are in the same financial position as you’ and 4) ‘Those who live in your neighbourhood’. The response options ranged from 1 = very attached to 4 = not at all attached.

The *Trust in other Race Groups Measure* was constructed based on the following two statements: 1) ‘People of different racial groups do not really trust or like each other’ and 2) ‘People of different racial groups will never really trust or like each other’. The response options ranged from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

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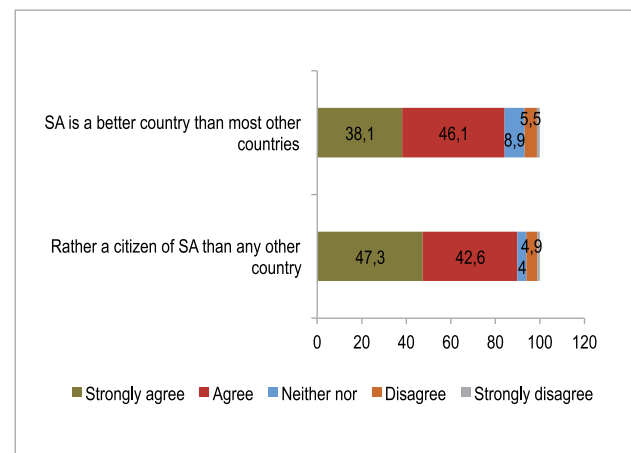
It is important to keep in mind that social cohesion is a broad and complicated concept integrated in many domains of life. In this article we specifically examine the impact economic domain variables have on social cohesion. To investigate

the impact of economic conditions on social cohesion, we borrowed from a conceptual framework developed by Turok (2006), according to which economic measures such as employment, income, health, education and housing are preconditions of social cohesion. These basic necessities are the foundation of strong relationships and strong communities.

Key findings

The SASAS 2009 results indicated that levels of social cohesion with regard to national pride and social attachment were relatively high, but trust in other race groups was much lower. For example, the vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (89.9%) that they would rather be a citizen of South Africa than of any other country (Figure 1). Similarly, large proportions of respondents felt very attached or slightly attached to those people who spoke the same language (93%) and who belonged to the same race group (89.9%) (Figure 2). On the other hand, a large proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (71 %) that people of different racial groups did not really trust or like each other (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Proudly South African



The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would rather be a citizen of South Africa than of any other country.

Figure 2: Social Attachment

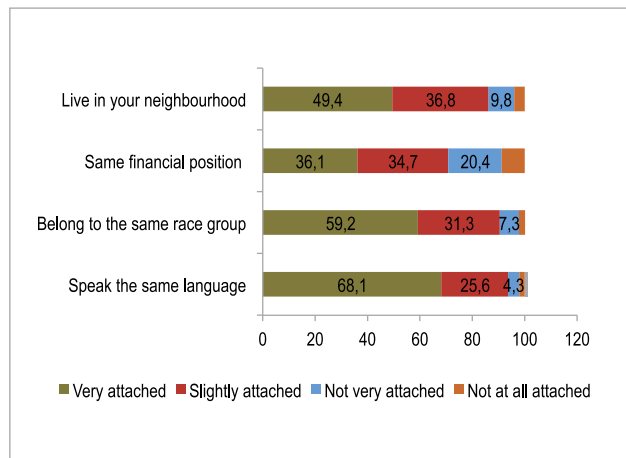
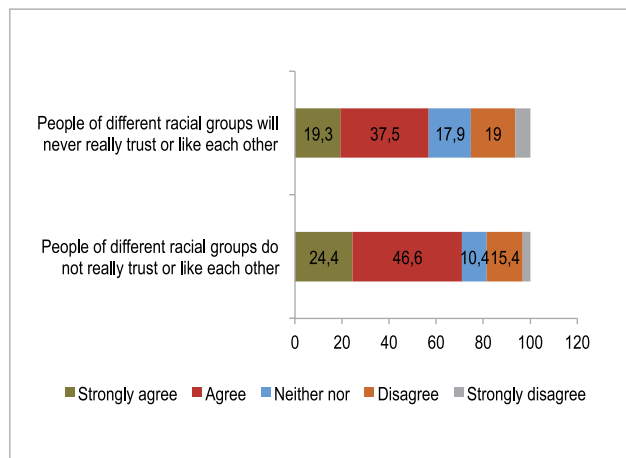


Figure 3: Racial Trust



Explaining national pride

When explaining national pride, the study found that the respondents' race group and level of income had a significant influence on how proud they were of South Africa. For example, we established that coloureds with high incomes had higher levels of being proudly South African compared to whites with the same income. Similarly, it was determined that black Africans and coloureds earning high incomes had higher levels of being proudly South African when compared to Indians with the same income.

The study also revealed that males living in urban formal areas were more proud of South Africa than males in urban informal areas. On the other hand, males in the urban informal areas were more proud of being a South African compared to those males living respectively in rural formal and traditional

areas. In other words, these results seem to suggest that those respondents living in the urban areas of South Africa are more proud of South Africa than those in the rural areas.

We also found that those respondents who were satisfied with the quality of basic services (in terms of water supply, electricity provision, refuse removal, affordable housing and access to health care), were more proudly South African than those living in urban formal areas, or those who lived in rural and traditional areas. Similarly, it was found that those respondents who were satisfied with the quality of basic services and lived in urban informal areas were more proud of South Africa than those who lived in traditional areas.

Explaining racial trust

The results of this dimension revealed that older individuals (50 years and over) had lower trust in other groups compared to younger individuals (25-34 years). In terms of race, it was established that black Africans were the least trusted by the other major groups: whites, Indians and coloureds. Another interesting finding was that as the incomes of urban informal and urban formal residents increased to the same level of other urban informal or urban formal residents, there was an increase in trust in other groups.

Explaining social attachment

The results of the third dimension showed that an increase in satisfaction with quality of service resulted in a higher increase in social attachment among black Africans, coloureds and Indians, compared to whites. In other words, if the quality of services was improved, blacks, coloureds and Indians would have a higher social attachment than whites. The study also found that the social attachment would be much higher among blacks compared to whites and Indians when labour redress action was addressed or improved.

Conclusion

In general, the results from this study demonstrated that South Africa as a society continues to be plagued by large-scale inequalities along various dimensions such as race group and geographic location. Furthermore, these economic inequalities have a negative impact on creating a more unified South Africa that cuts across all boundaries. The South African Reconciliation Barometer also demonstrated that unchecked, economic inequality remains a key factor in keeping South Africans apart¹. More specifically, its results showed that 'levels of interracial contact are closely linked to income'. The implication of these findings is that by improving the economic conditions of South Africans, their level of social cohesion increases. Thus, government should be encouraged to continue efforts to improve the nation's economic conditions to achieve its social cohesion objectives. ■

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¹ The South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) is a national representative survey of approximately 2 000 metro and 1 500 non-metro inhabitants with equal gender split. The sample frame is based on the 2001 Census enumerated areas. In 2010 the sampling error was 1.7% with a confidence interval of 95% (www.ijr.org.za).