

BRIEF

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HOW TO REDUCE XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

2020

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REDUCING PREJUDICE AGAINST REFUGEES + ASYLUM-SEEKERS THROUGH APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATIONS

SUMMARY



The South African government's National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance aims to lessen xenophobia. But state anti-xenophobia strategies struggle to be successful, partly because quality data on this issue is hard to come by.



An IPSOS Poll was conducted last year in the four South African provinces where most refugees and cross-border migrants live: Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape; and Gauteng. Poll data can be used to develop relevant anti-xenophobia strategies.

Findings of the IPSOS Poll



A fifth of the surveyed population could be described as welcoming to migrants and 26% were strongly opposed. The remainder (54%) had somewhat mixed feelings on refugees, asylum-seekers and cross-border migrants.



Religiosity shaped both how pro-immigrant individuals thought about outsiders as well as their opinions on caring and compassion.



South Africans with anti-immigrant sentiments get most of their information about non-nationals from the broadcast media. Most trusted the media's reporting on migration related matters.

Recommendations



The media is a highly influential platform which can help change public opinion on migration.



A communication campaign requires cooperation from prominent leaders who have the trust of South Africans, and prominent South African celebrities.



Religious institutions to take a stand as these organisations can have a significant effect on how the anti-immigrant people see refugees and asylum-seekers.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, foreigners (including refugees and asylum-seekers) throughout South Africa have been harassed, attacked and discriminated against.

Blamed for a range of different [social ills](#) (such as unemployment, crime and neglect by the government) this group has been the target of xenophobia. Moreover, foreign nationals have repeatedly been labelled as carriers of [disease](#) that threaten the health of the population in the past ten years.

A recent report from the [Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change](#) shows how social media in South Africa is now being actively manipulated to fuel pre-existing discord and prejudice against non-nationals. In a special report on xenophobia, [Human Rights Watch](#) highlights how government officials as well as ordinary people often deny the existence of xenophobia.

In March 2019, the South African government launched its [National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance](#) (hereafter the NAP). Among the actions the NAP identifies that are needed to combat xenophobia, one of the foremost is creating mechanisms to create a humane and welcoming environment for refugees and asylum seekers living in South Africa.

The NAP should include steps that can quickly and effectively reduce prejudice towards this vulnerable group in the country. This would include a communication campaign to redress anti-refugee sentiments amongst the general public.

Despite clear commitment to addressing the issue, policymakers are often confronted by a lack of quality data on how to change public attitudes on non-nationals.

To assist with the creation of anti-xenophobia campaigns, this policy brief will examine anti-immigrant attitudes and behaviours in South Africa.

THE IPSOS POLL

HOW DATA WAS COLLECTED

Ipsos conducted a survey of how people in four South African provinces (Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, and Gauteng) thought about refugees and cross-border migrants.

The four provinces (hereafter the LKWG cluster) provide a good cross-section of the nation. The survey was collected at the household level with fieldworkers conducting interviews face-to-face at the respondent's home.

The questionnaire was translated into multiple languages and (where appropriate) the interview was conducted in the home language of the respondent. The questionnaire took an average of 20 minutes to administer and was largely made up of closed-ended questions.

Fieldwork began in October 2019 and concluded in November of that year. The sample was restricted to adults (18 years or older) living in private households. After cleaning, the Ipsos sample size was 2,004. Benchmark weights are then applied to ensure that the data is representative at the provincial level. This allows us to present an accurate picture of public attitudes in the LKWG population.

THE FOUR 'CATEGORIES' OF PUBLIC OPINION

To organize effective targeted campaigns that expand positive public sentiment towards refugees, we need to identify and effectively map attitudinal networks and preferences on this issue.

A population segmentation analysis method was employed, drawing on a range of attitudinal characteristics of the South African public, thus providing a rich amalgamated picture of differences in opinions.

Respondents were asked fifteen questions on refugees. This form of segmentation goes beyond basic demographic factors to illustrate the existing connection between constellations of attitudes and opinions.

It identifies the profile of the population segments that were the most and least receptive to refugees and cross-border migrants as well as those with mixed views.

Four segments were created: (i) Liberal; (ii) Careful; (iii) Judgmental and; (iv) Ambivalent (see Figure 1).

LIBERAL CLUSTER

The Liberal cluster is more likely to have open-minded views on refugees and are more positive about the impact of both refugees and cross-border migrants. This segment represents a fifth of the LKWG population.

CAREFUL CLUSTER

The Careful cluster is composed of those who accept the rights of refugees to seek sanctuary but are concerned about their impact. The Careful cluster contains 23% of the populace.

AMBIVALENT CLUSTER

The Ambivalent cluster was the largest segment and accounts for 31% of the LKWG public. The segment is largely disengaged, and, when compared to other segments in this study, do not have strong views about migrants and refugees.

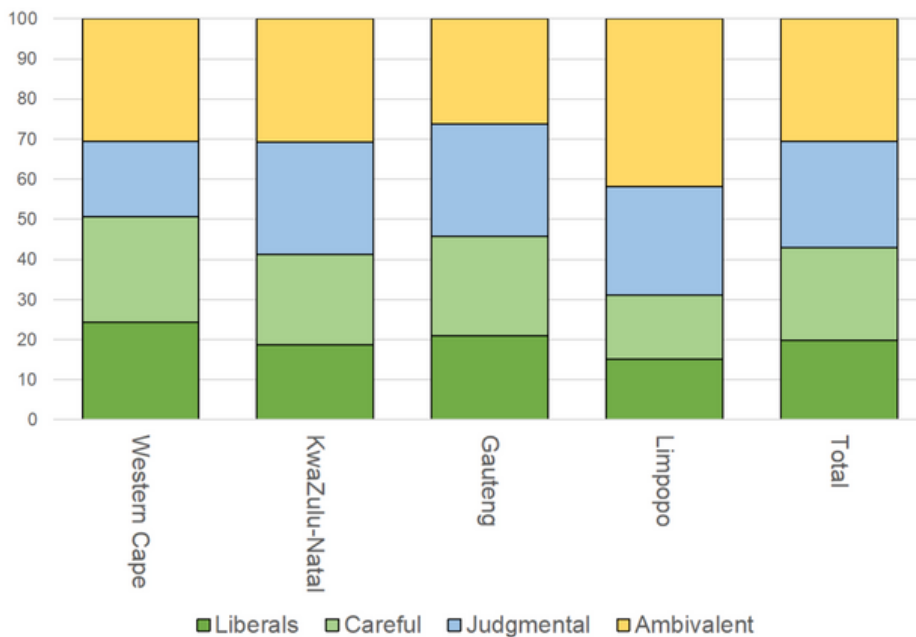
JUDGEMENTAL CLUSTER

The Judgmental represents the second largest segment and comprises 26% of the weighted sample. This segment has the most negative views of refugees and tends to feel that this group is a danger to the South African population.

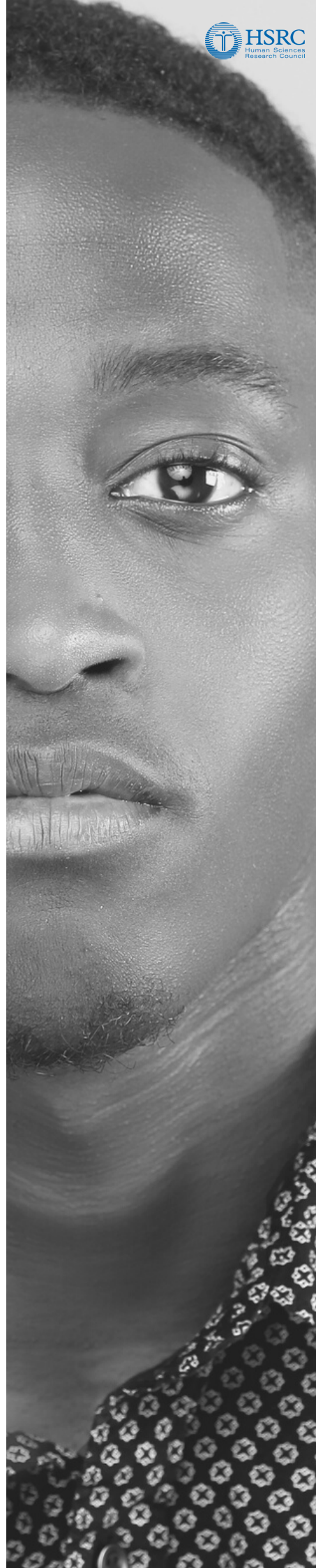
BRIEF #1

Figure 1: Percentage of the provincial population into the four attitudinal segments

% of the adult population who belong to the attitudinal groups



Source: Ipsos 2019



RELIGION

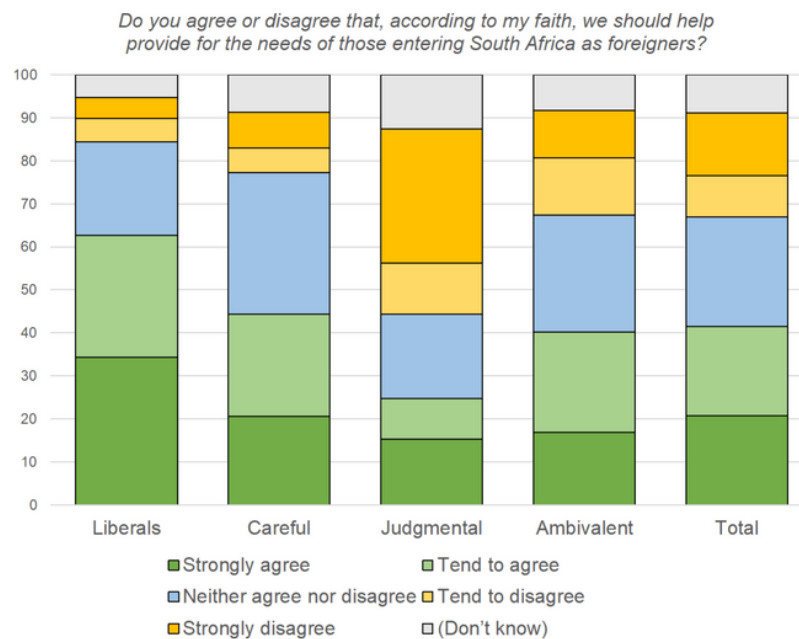
RELIGION IS A CORNERSTONE TO SOUTH AFRICANS' VIEW ON THE WORLD - AND RELATES TO CARING FOR THE 'OTHER'

Spiritual beliefs are the cornerstone of how many people in South Africa see the world, informing how important concepts such as compassion and charity are understood.

Survey participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed that, according to their faith, they should help provide for the needs of those migrants entering South Africa. About two-fifths of the LKWG populace agreed with the statement and 25% disagreed. The Liberal segment was found to be more likely to agree with the statement than the Judgemental group (Figure 2).

Let us explore whether religion influenced membership of one of the four attitudinal segments outlined in above. The non-religious and those belonging to non-mainline Protestant churches were found to be over-represented among the Judgemental group. The group that was the most over-represented in this cluster were members of the Zionist Christian Church -34% of this denomination were located in the Judgemental segment compared to 26% of the LKWG population. Non-Christians were also less likely to be identified as part of the Judgemental group.

Figure 2: Public agreement and disagreement on the influence of faith in deciding whether to help non-nationals



Source: Ipsos 2019



TRUSTED INFORMATION

TV AND RADIO ARE STILL IMPORTANT AS WELL AS SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

One of the most important factors driving the formation of attitudes (and, therefore, behaviour) is information. The kind and quality of information an individual can access should influence that person’s [attitudes](#). Where does the general public get information on foreign nationals?

In the absence of first-hand experience, individuals often need to acquire information from secondhand sources. In the modern era, the media acts as one of the main bases from which an individual can access knowledge. Of course, people tend to be biased towards information that is consonant with their [own views](#). But the media can play an important determining factor in terms of [challenging or confirming](#) existing attitude formations.

In order to understand where respondents got information on foreign nationals, Ipsos survey participants were asked to indicate which sources provide the best/most honest information on this subject. Participants were then read a list of different sources that ranged from traditional media platforms (e.g. radio, television, newspapers etc.) to more communal forms. In Table 1 responses to this question are displayed by the four attitudinal segments already outlined.

As can be observed, the most popular sources of information were (perhaps unsurprisingly) television and radio. When compared to the other attitudinal segment groups, radio was much more popular amongst the Judgmental group. Despite their prominence in our popular discourses, newspapers were only listed by 35% of the adult LKWG public as a trusted source. Newspapers were much less popular amongst the Liberal group. In addition, notwithstanding concerns about the role of social media in promoting hate speech, internet sources (including Twitter and Facebook) were only mentioned by 13% of the adult population.

Remarkably, only about a sixth (16%) of the general public identified interpersonal networks (i.e. friends and family) as an important source of information. The above highlights the role of the print and broadcast media as a trusted source of information for the general populace on the refugee issue. Let us ask ourselves how people view the media and their reporting on migration issues. Ipsos 2019 required respondents to indicate whether they trusted the media’s coverage of immigration and refugees. The LKWG population generally trusted the way media reported while only a small share (25%) distrusted how the media covered this important issue. Considering trust in the media across the attitudinal segment groups, the results show that distrust in the media was low across all segment groups.

Table 1: Most trusted sources for information on foreign nationals living in South Africa by Attitudinal Segments (multiple response, cell percentages)

	Attitudinal Segments				Total
	Liberals	Careful	Judgmental	Ambivalent	
Traditional or community leaders	5 (0,014)	5 (0,011)	7 (0,013)	8 (0,012)	6 (0,006)
Radio	42 (0,031)	52 (0,029)	65 (0,026)	49 (0,024)	52 (0,013)
Television	72 (0,030)	89 (0,016)	89 (0,017)	79 (0,019)	82 (0,010)
Newspapers	25 (0,027)	36 (0,027)	42 (0,027)	34 (0,023)	35 (0,013)
Magazine	7 (0,015)	7 (0,014)	12 (0,017)	10 (0,016)	10 (0,008)
Internet and other social media	11 (0,018)	13 (0,019)	16 (0,018)	10 (0,014)	13 (0,008)
Personal experience	14 (0,021)	16 (0,022)	20 (0,021)	15 (0,017)	11 (0,008)
Friends/family	9 (0,020)	5 (0,012)	11 (0,016)	5 (0,010)	16 (0,010)
Politicians and political parties	5 (0,018)	2 (0,008)	2 (0,007)	4 (0,010)	7 (0,007)

Source: Ipsos South Africa 2019
Note: Standard errors in parenthesis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO BUILD EFFECTIVE ANTI-XENOPHOBIA CAMPAIGNS

Targeted communication campaigns can be very effective in expanding public tolerance of refugees and asylum-seekers. Areas of focus for anti-xenophobia communication programmes include:

- Target those that had mixed feelings on refugees, asylum-seekers and cross-border migrants (i.e. those in the Careful and the Ambivalent segments) rather than those who were strongest prejudicial views.
- Communication efforts should target those media platforms that act as prime sources of information on immigration such as television and radio. Here communication specialists need to look at successful media campaigns in other parts of the [African continent](#).
- A communication campaign requires cooperation from prominent leaders who have the trust of the general population. While political leaders do command respect amongst some, data shows that much of the general populace [distrust politicians](#). Leaders in entertainment (e.g. music and sport) may be better placed to change hearts and minds on this issue.
- South Africans are [deeply religious](#), and religious institutions and leaders could, therefore, play an essential role in pro-refugee communication campaigns. People belonging to the Zionist Christian, for example, were found to be the most negative in their view of refugees and the least likely to agree that their religion wants them to help migrants. Through greater engagement with Zionist leaders on the issue, we may be able to shift public attitudes amongst this important part of the South African Christian community.