

---

# THE LENS

---

## THIS MONTH'S EDITION

### **SA RECONCILIATION BAROMETER, AFROBAROMETER RESPOND TO 30-YEAR REVIEW**

By Kate Lefko-Everett, Preston Govindasamy and Jan Hofmeyr

South Africa's national Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) – located within The Presidency – has undertaken periodic reviews of the state of the country since the 1994 transition to democracy. As described by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his foreword to the 25-Year Review published in 2019, these provide the opportunity to reflect on the “strengths and short-comings of government in fulfilling its mandate for social and economic transformation”, as well as serving as an “instructive tool on how to continue the task to build and consolidate a capable state” and confront endemic challenges such as poverty and unemployment, spatial exclusion and social fragmentation.<sup>1</sup>

The DPME is currently drafting the Presidency's 30-Year Review, which will be published in 2024 at the end of the current Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) period.<sup>2</sup>

The DPME contacted the IJR's Research and Policy (R&P) programme with an invitation to attend a dialogue session and provide feedback on a section of the Draft Review focused on MTSF Priority 6: Social Cohesion. A series of consultative workshops were held in late September, with participation from civil society together with government officials and other stakeholders.

This is not the first engagement between the DPME and IJR. Both the SA Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) and Afrobarometer surveys produce longitudinal data with answers to some of the key questions on social cohesion and democracy posed within the Draft 30-Year Review – and both have been cited in previous editions.<sup>3</sup>

Both the R&P programme and the Institute more broadly, are committed to conducting rigorous research and sharing results as widely as possible to encourage debate and inform policy and decision-making. In addition to participating in the consultative workshop, the R&P programme submitted a response to the DPME’s draft findings on social cohesion, focusing on five key issues and building on data from both surveys as well as more than two decades of insights and experience within the IJR.

### **Striving for equity in education**

First among these was recognition of the advances made within public education, including in relation to policy changes and equitable financing system. Although clear progress has been made since 1994, the IJR raised concerns over the fundamental differences in educational quality, infrastructure and outcomes for learners throughout the country.

There is perhaps no clearer evidence of this than the tragic reality that even in 2023, thousands of vulnerable young children continue to risk their lives by using unsafe pit latrines at school. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE), there were 667 sanitation projects pending completion in 2023/24.<sup>4</sup>

*“70% of South Africans are unsatisfied with the state of democracy in the country. Less than a third (28.6%) viewed the 2019 national elections as completely free and fair.”*

Furthermore, the 2030 Reading Panel convened by former Deputy President Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka reported that up to 82% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning, and estimated that this will “still take 86 years from 2023” to correct at the current trajectory.<sup>5</sup>

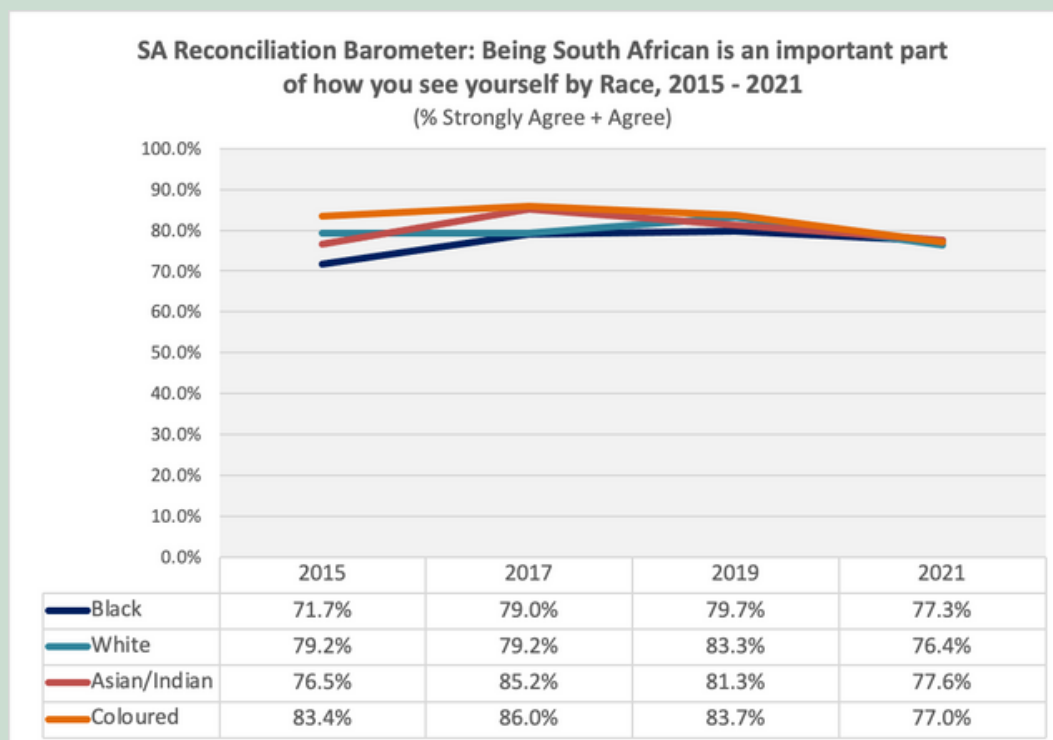
### **Fostering an inclusive history curriculum**

Participants at the DPME consultative workshop also discussed the importance of a shared national history in strengthening social cohesion, and limited knowledge of critical events of the past among youth in particular. However, the IJR raised questions about both the uptake and content of history as a subject in schools – a critical concern of our late colleague and Schools Oral History Project Leader Cecyl Esau. In 2018, a dedicated Ministerial Task Team recommended that history should become a compulsory high school subject by 2024, but plans for implementation remain unclear.<sup>6</sup>

## Building a shared national identity

Noting the DPME's interest in issues of national identity, the IJR shared data from multiple rounds of the Reconciliation Barometer, confirming that most citizens view being South African as an important part of their identity, across all race groups (See Figure 1). Many also want their children to identify in this way. At the same time, the highest percentages of South Africans continue to associate most strongly with others who share their first language, ethnic group or race.

**Figure 1: Importance of South African identity**



Source: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation

## Challenges to democracy and social cohesion

Consistent with previous editions, the forthcoming 30-Year Review also identifies challenges to democracy and social cohesion – a number of which are echoed in SARB and Afrobarometer data. For example, recently-released Afrobarometer results reveal that 70% South Africans are unsatisfied with the state of democracy in the country. Less than a third (28.6%) viewed the 2019 national elections as completely free and fair.

## **Binding constraints and challenges**

Finally, the draft Review and consultative discussions with stakeholders raised a number of additional critical constraints and challenges confronting the country towards the close of the current MTSF period. Results of both the SARB and Afrobarometer point to important additional issues for social cohesion and nation-building, including widespread concern over corruption, declining trust in public institutions and negative attitudes towards migrants. Successive rounds of the Reconciliation Barometer conducted in 2019 and 2021 found that the majority of South Africans agreed that corrupt officials often “get away with it” and that politicians have “no real will” to fight corruption. Further, recent Afrobarometer results showed that only a fourth of South Africans believed it was possible to report corruption without fear.

### **Amid serious concerns, constructive dialogue**

While acknowledging how far the country has come is important, South Africa faces a number of critical issues with the potential to impede and even reverse advances in social cohesion since 1994. Engagement and dialogue surrounding the development of the 30-Year Review, however, presents an important opportunity for national reflection – hopefully, followed with appropriate action.

All SARB data since 2003 is freely available and can be accessed through the IJR website – with the latest 2023 results scheduled for released on the 14th of December. All Afrobarometer data is also freely available online including Round 9, which was conducted in 2002 and released this year.

For more information, visit <https://www.ijr.org.za/resources/sarb-oda-analysis/> and <https://www.afrobarometer.org>.

---

[1] DPME 2019, Towards a 25-Year Review, 1994 – 2019. Available:

<https://www.dpme.gov.za/news/SiteAssets/Pages/25-Year-Review-Launch/Towards%20A%2025%20Year%20Review.pdf>

[1] DPME 2019, “Priority 6: Social Cohesion and Safer Communities”, MTSF 2019 – 2024. Available:

[https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/outcomesSite/MTSF\\_2019\\_2024/2019-2024%20MTSF%20PRIORITY%206.pdf](https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/outcomesSite/MTSF_2019_2024/2019-2024%20MTSF%20PRIORITY%206.pdf)

[1] DPME 2019, Towards a 25-Year Review, 1994 – 2019; DPME 2014, Twenty Year Review: South Africa 1994 – 2014.

Available: <https://www.dpme.gov.za/news/Documents/20%20Year%20Review.pdf>

[1] Department of Basic Education 2023, “Detailed progress report on school infrastructure.” Available online through the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), at: <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/37096/>

[1] 2030 Reading Panel Background Report. Available at:

[https://www.readingpanel.co.za/\\_files/ugd/b385b7\\_7476724ee8a74ba8be8320a3be46b5cc.pdf](https://www.readingpanel.co.za/_files/ugd/b385b7_7476724ee8a74ba8be8320a3be46b5cc.pdf)

[1] See Portfolio Committee on Basic Education 2018, “History as a compulsory subject; Rural Education Draft Policy: with Deputy Minister”, available at: <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/26856/>. See also DBE 2018, “Report of the History Ministerial Task Team.” Available at:

[https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive\\_files/Report%20of%20the%20History%20Ministerial%20Task%20Team%20for%20the%20Department%20of%20Basic%20Education%20Final.pdf](https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive_files/Report%20of%20the%20History%20Ministerial%20Task%20Team%20for%20the%20Department%20of%20Basic%20Education%20Final.pdf);

Macupe, B, 2022, “Angie Motshekga: Process to overhaul history curriculum to be finalised this year”, City Press, 12 January 2022. Available at:

<https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/angie-motshekga-process-to-overhaul-history-curriculum-to-be-finalised-this-year-20220112>.

SABC News 2018, “History could become a compulsory subject from 2023”, 19 December 2019. Available at: <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/history-could-become-a-compulsory-subject-from-2023/#:~:text=The%20History%20Ministerial%20Task%20Team,2020%20to%20complete%20its%20work>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.IJR.ORG.ZA](http://WWW.IJR.ORG.ZA)**