



INCLUSIVE SOCIETY INSTITUTE

MEDIA RELEASE

GOVDEM SURVEY REVEALS RISING DISTRUST TOWARD AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town, 25 August 2025. The Inclusive Society Institute (ISI) has released the latest results of its *GovDem Survey*, which reflects a significant increase in negative sentiment that South Africans hold towards immigrants from other African countries.

The 2025 survey, which was conducted between June and July of this year, found that 73.1% of adult South Africans (older than 18) indicated that they do not trust African immigrants “at all” or “not very much.” This represents a sharp increase from 62.6% in 2021 and 67.7% in 2023.

Methodology

The *GovDem Survey* forms part of IPSOS’s long-standing syndicated *Khayabus Survey*, which is one of South Africa’s most comprehensive public opinion research programmes. Around 3,600 respondents were interviewed face-to-face in their homes and in their home languages. The sample was weighted to reflect the national demographics across age, race, gender and geography. The survey carries a margin of error of around 2% (determined by sample size, response rate and sampling methodology).

Key findings

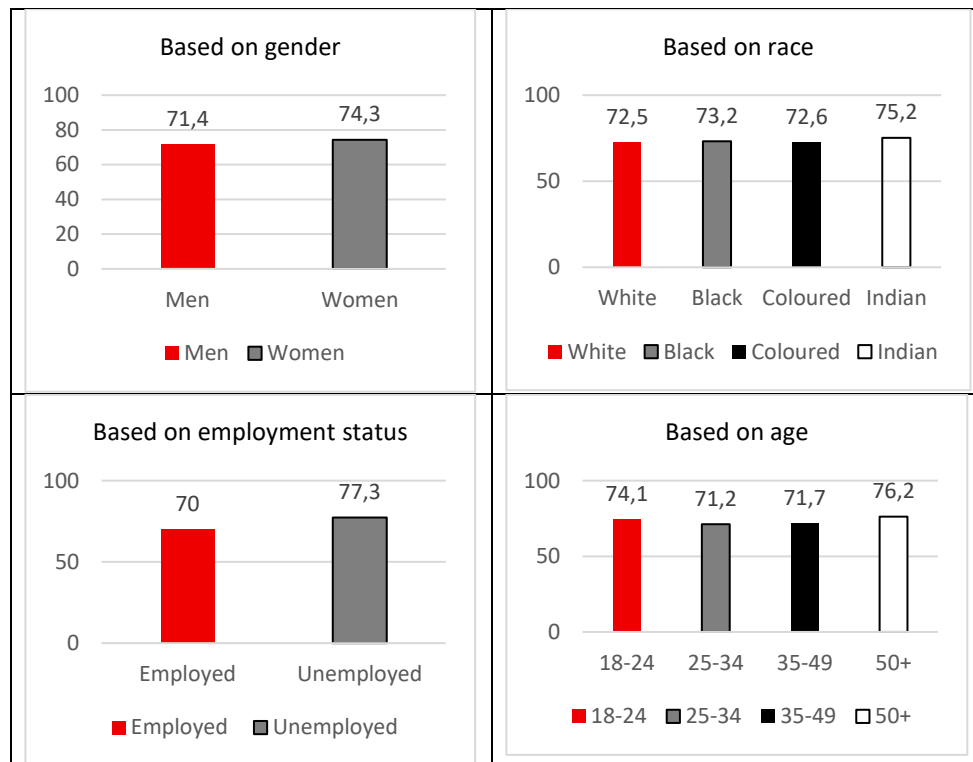
The results show that distrust is not confined to any single demographic group, but rather, it is shared broadly across South African society. Among racial groups, Indians are marginally more critical at 75.2%, followed by black (73.2%), coloured (72.6%) and white respondents (72.5%) that indicated their distrust of African immigrants. The sentiment is therefore not isolated, but widely held across the racial spectrum.

When examined by age, levels of distrust remain consistently high, although levels of distrust are the strongest from people older than fifty and from the youngest age group of 18-24-year-olds. Among respondents aged 50+, 76.2% expressed the distrust in immigrants from Africa, followed by 18 to 24 years (74.1%), 35-49 years (71.7%) and 25-34 years (71.2%).

Employment status appears to influence attitudes more significantly. Among those who are unemployed, 77.3% expressed distrust about immigrants from Africa. Responding to the same question, 70% of employed adult South Africans reported distrust of African immigrants. This difference suggests that joblessness may amplify concerns about competition in the labour market – actually this concern is often voiced by unemployed individuals.

Gender also reveals a slight divergence, with 74.3% of women reporting distrust, compared to 71.4% of men. Although the difference is marginal, it indicates that negative sentiment is shared almost equally between men and women.

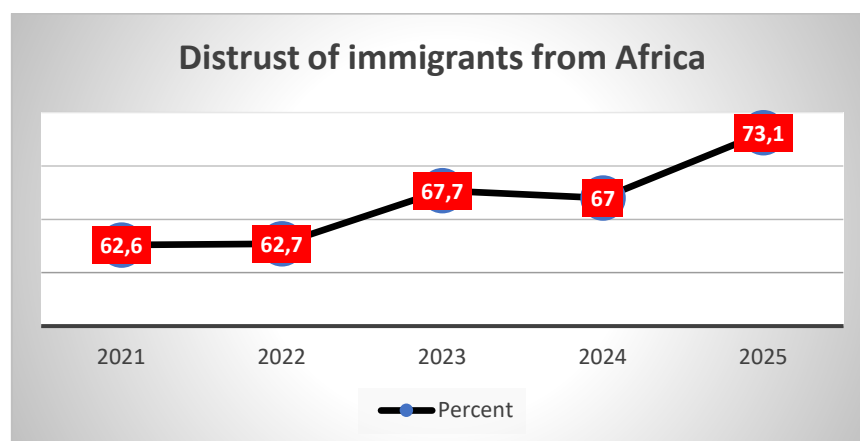
% of respondents distrusting of immigrants from African countries (various demographics)



(Source: Inclusive Society Institute, GovDem Survey, 2025)

Trends over time

The GovDem Survey data further shows how attitudes have hardened over the past five years. In 2021, 62.6% of respondents indicated distrust of immigrants from Africa and in 2022 the figure was virtually unchanged at 62.7%. By 2023, however, the percentage had risen to 67.7% and in 2024 it remained elevated at 67.0%. The most recent results from mid-2025 show a sharp increase to 73.1%. This represents one of the steepest year-on-year rises since the survey began tracking these attitudes.



(Source: Inclusive Society Institute, GovDem Survey, various years) 2025

Conclusion

The 2025 GovDem Survey confirms that distrust of African immigrants in South Africa is alarmingly high, widespread and increasing. The findings show that negative sentiment cuts across race, gender

and age groups, with unemployment emerging as a significant factor in shaping attitudes. The Inclusive Society Institute notes that these trends highlight the importance of evidence-based debate and careful governance to safeguard social cohesion.

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