



# **Measuring the Well-Being of a Society: The South Africa Social Cohesion Index**

Georgi Dragolov and Klaus Boehnke

05.02.2025

Villa Calatrava  
Cape Town, South Africa

# Why social cohesion?

- Hot topic amidst various ongoing crises and challenges

Is our society holding together or falling apart?

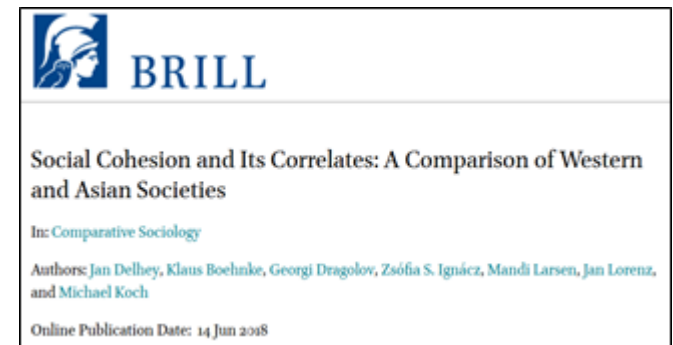
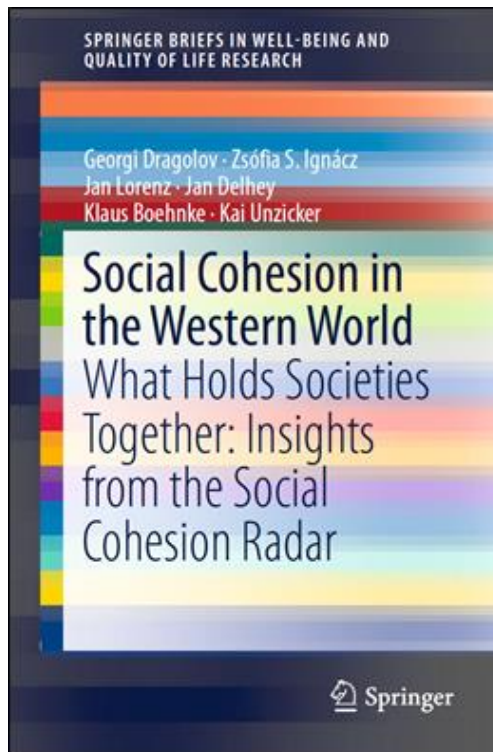
- Measure of human progress beyond GDP emphasizing cooperation

*“Cooperation is the bedrock of human civilisation. Without cooperation and collaboration – between individuals, groups, peoples, nations – humanity cannot progress.”*

Cyril Ramaphosa, WEF 2025

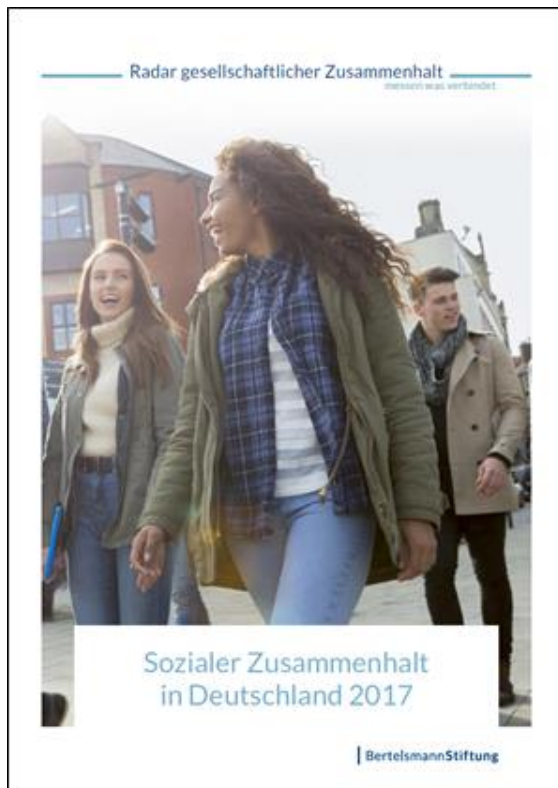
# Our research on cohesion (selection)

- International comparisons
  - 34 EU and OECD societies (4 waves from 1989 to 2012)
  - 22 SSE Asian societies (2 waves from 2004 to 2008)



# Our research on cohesion (selection)

- Intra-German comparisons
  - 16 federal states and 79 regions of Germany (2017, 2020, 2023)



# Our research on cohesion (selection)

- Intra-German comparisons
  - Bremen (2015) and Baden-Württemberg (2019, 2021/22)



# Previous research on cohesion in South Africa

- Very scarce
- Predominantly theoretical or normative
- Only two empirical studies measuring cohesion
  - Both outdated by now (most recent time point: 2014/15)
  - Only one produces an overall index
  - None explores determinants and outcomes of cohesion



# Research questions of our study

- 1) What is the current level of cohesion in South Africa and its nine provinces?
- 2) How has cohesion in South Africa and its nine provinces changed from 2021 to 2024?
- 3) Which structural characteristics promote / hinder cohesion?
- 4) Which social groups experience high / low cohesion?
- 5) How does cohesion relate to citizens' well-being?



# Relevance of our social cohesion

- Established concept of cohesion, applied globally
- Tried-and-tested methodology
- All-round empirical assessment of cohesion
- Evidence-based social policy



# How do we define social cohesion?

## Identification

People feel strongly connected to their country and identify with it.

## Trust in institutions

People have a high level of confidence in social and political institutions.

## Perception of fairness

People believe that society's goods are fairly distributed and that they are being treated fairly.

## Social networks

People have strong, resilient social networks.

## Trust in people

People have a high level of trust in others.

## Acceptance of diversity

People accept individuals with other values and lifestyles as equal members of society.

Connectedness



COHESION



Social relations



Focus on the common good

## Solidarity and helpfulness

People feel responsibility for others and are willing to help them.

## Respect for social rules

People abide by the fundamental rules of society.

## Civic participation

People participate in society and political life and enter into public discussions.

# How do we define social cohesion?

- Quality of social cooperation and togetherness of a collective, defined in geopolitical terms, that is expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of its members
- Three domains with three dimensions each



## 1. Social relations

create cohesion through a network of horizontal relationships between individuals and societal groups of all kinds, which is characterized by trust and allows for diversity.



## 2. Connectedness

promotes cohesion through positive identification with the country, a high level of confidence in its institutions and a perception that social conditions are fair.




## 3. Focus on the common good

promotes cohesion through actions and attitudes that help the weak, are in keeping with society's rules and allow for a collaborative approach to the organization of society.


# How do we define social cohesion?

- Dimensions with Domain 1

Domain	Dimension	Guideline
	1.1 Social networks	People have strong, resilient social networks.
	1.2 Trust in people	People have a high level of trust in others.
	1.3 Acceptance of diversity	People accept individuals with other values and lifestyles as equal members of society.
<p><b>1. Social relations</b> create cohesion through a network of horizontal relationships between individuals and societal groups of all kinds, which is characterized by trust and allows for diversity.</p>		


# How do we define social cohesion?

- Dimensions with Domain 2

Domain	Dimension	Guideline
 <p><b>2. Connectedness</b> promotes cohesion through positive identification with the country, a high level of confidence in its institutions and a perception that social conditions are fair.</p>	2.1 Identification	People feel strongly connected to their country and identify with it.
	2.2 Trust in institutions	People have a high level of confidence in social and political institutions.
	2.3 Perception of fairness	People believe that society's goods are fairly distributed and that they are being treated fairly.

# How do we define social cohesion?

- Dimensions with Domain 3

Domain	Dimension	Guideline
 <p><b>3. Focus on the common good</b> promotes cohesion through actions and attitudes that help the weak, are in keeping with society's rules and allow for a collaborative approach to the organization of society.</p>	<p>3.1 Solidarity and helpfulness</p>	<p>People feel responsibility for others and are willing to help them.</p>
	<p>3.2 Respect for social rules</p>	<p>People abide by the fundamental rules of society.</p>
	<p>3.3 Civic participation</p>	<p>People participate in society and political life and enter into public discussions.</p>

# Data

- Khayabus survey (IPSOS South Africa)
  - fielded at least twice a year face-to-face
    - Waves 1 (May – July) available to us
  - Standardized closed-ended questions on society and politics in the sections Socio-Political Trends, Government Performance Barometer, Party Image, GovDemPol (as of 2021)
    - Our analyses begin with 2021
    - Data on few items not asked in 2021 were taken from 2020
  - Representative for the population of age 15 and above
    - All items needed asked to respondents of age 18 and above
  - Regionalization with respect to provinces

# Data

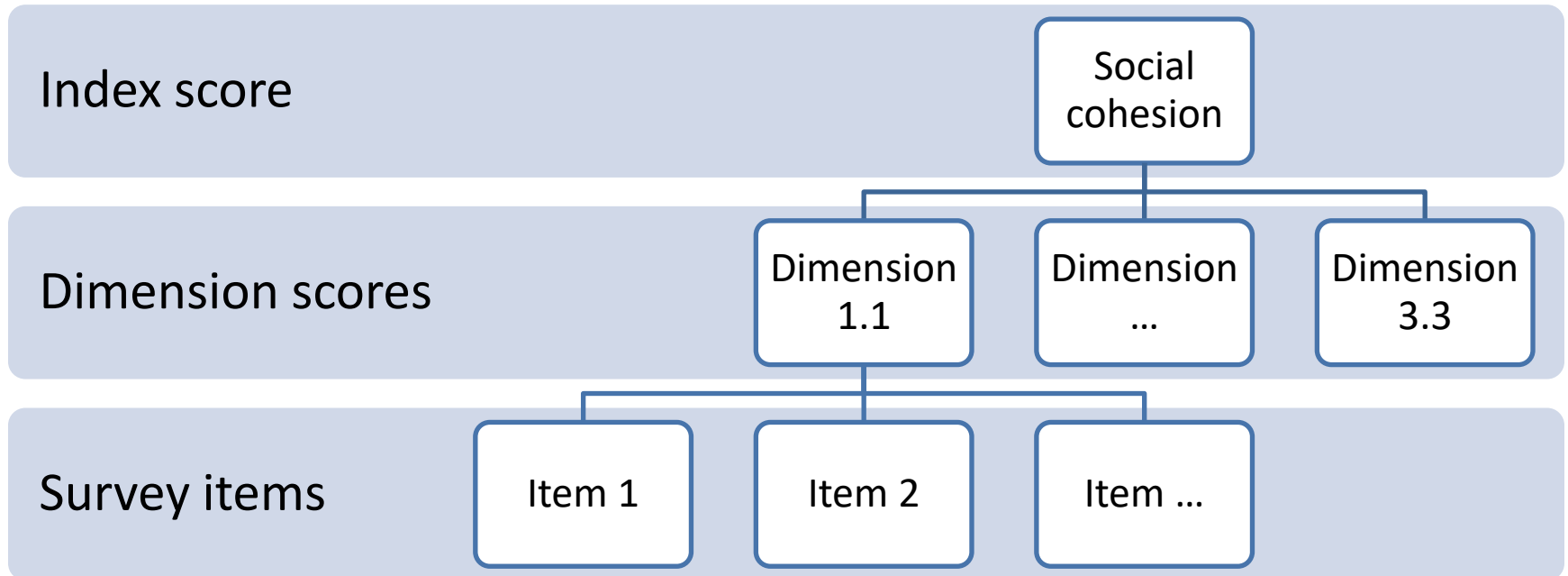
- Samples sizes of Khayabus – Waves 1

Entity	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Province										
Western Cape	447	12.1	461	12.8	454	12.3	461	12.6	395	11.6
Eastern Cape	360	10.8	345	10.6	350	10.9	351	10.9	331	11.8
Northern Cape	76	2.2	23	0.8	66	2.3	64	2.2	63	2.4
Free State	174	5.1	154	5.0	160	5.1	161	5.1	154	5.3
KwaZulu Natal	652	18.5	620	19.0	589	17.4	616	17.5	503	18.1
North West	215	6.4	185	6.6	197	6.8	209	7.0	201	6.6
Gauteng	1278	27.9	1144	28.9	1163	28.5	1168	28.4	1087	27.0
Mpumalanga	245	7.6	202	6.9	227	7.9	229	7.6	186	7.4
Limpopo	311	9.4	268	9.4	253	8.8	260	8.7	252	9.8
South Africa	3758	100.0	3402	100.0	3459	100.0	3519	100.0	3172	100.0

Note: The table shows the absolute (*N*) and population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of respondents from South Africa and its nine provinces in Waves 1 of the Khayabus survey from 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

# How do we measure social cohesion?

- Approach





# How do we measure social cohesion?

- Selection of items for each dimension
  - Each team member independently at face validity
  - Team members jointly at face validity
  - Data preparation
    - Reverse coding of item response options, if needed
    - Rescaling of item response options from 0 (weakest) to 100 (strongest expression of cohesion)
    - Substitution of missing values, if present, per item with sample mean
  - Factor analysis of selected items for each dimension
  - Internal consistency of the resulting scale for the dimension



# How do we measure social cohesion?

- Factor loadings of items per dimension within Domain 1

Item	Factor loadings (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>Dimension 1.1 – Social networks</i>	(.76)	(.77)	(.80)	(.74)
I enjoy working together with people from all population groups.	.69	.70	.74	.68
My friends are from different population groups.	.81	.82	.83	.80
I entertain friends from different population groups at home or another place.	.82	.82	.83	.81
I go to [religious service] with people from different population groups.	.71	.74	.77	.70
<i>Dimension 1.2 – Trust in people</i>	(.78)	(.80)	(.75)	(.72)
How much you trust: Your neighborhood	.80	.80	.79	.76
How much you trust: People you know personally	.79	.81	.79	.75
How much you trust: People you met for the first time	.71	.75	.67	.66
How much you trust: People in your own community	.80	.80	.79	.77
<i>Dimension 1.3 – Acceptance of diversity</i>	(.86)	(.86)	(.84)	(.81)
How much you trust: People of another religion	.77	.78	.76	.71
How much you trust: People of another nationality	.80	.81	.78	.75
How much you trust: Black South Africans	.78	.79	.76	.72
How much you trust: White South Africans	.81	.82	.79	.78
How much you trust: Colored South Africans	.82	.81	.81	.80

*Note:* The table shows the factor loadings of the items from exploratory factor analysis for the pertinent dimension. Values in parentheses refer to Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of internal consistency of the scale, formed by the items selected to measure the pertinent dimension.

# How do we measure social cohesion?

- Factor loadings of items per dimension within Domain 2

Item	Factor loadings (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>Dimension 2.1 – Identification</i>	( <sup>a</sup> )	(.23)	(.25)	(.33)
I am proud to be South African	<sup>a, b</sup>	.75	.76	.78
It is important to unite all South Africans	<sup>a</sup>	.75	.76	.78
<i>Dimension 2.2 – Trust in institutions</i>	( <sup>a</sup> )	(.62)	(.61)	(.61)
Elections are free and fair	<sup>a</sup>	.78	.74	.73
Elections in South Africa express the will of the people	<sup>a</sup>	.74	.73	.72
How well government is handling: Maintaining transparency and accountability	<sup>a</sup>	.64	.64	.60
How likely are you to: Trust Parliament	<sup>a, b</sup>	.57	.60	.64
<i>Dimension 2.3 – Perception of fairness</i>	(.57)	(.58)	(.53)	(.51)
Land expropriation without compensation is fair to all South Africans	.46	.53	.45	.47
How well government is handling: Narrowing the income gap between race groups	.76	.77	.79	.79
How well government is handling: Fighting corruption in government	.79	.76	.77	.75
How well government is handling: Distributing social grants to those who are entitled to it, such as old-age pensions, disability payments, child maintenance grants	.61	.60	.55	.51

*Note:* The table shows the factor loadings of the items from exploratory factor analysis for the pertinent dimension. Values in parentheses refer to Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of internal consistency of the scale, formed by the items selected to measure the pertinent dimension.

<sup>a</sup> Loadings and Cronbach's alpha cannot be computed; <sup>b</sup> substituted with mean from Khayabus 2020 – Wave 1



# How do we measure social cohesion?

- Factor loadings of items per dimension within Domain 3

Item	Factor loadings (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>Dimension 3.1 "Solidarity and helpfulness"</i>	(.71)	(.69)	(.70)	(.66)
I donate money to community organizations if I can	.88	.87	.88	.87
I actively look for ways in which I can support people who are less fortunate than I am	.88	.87	.88	.87
<i>Dimension 3.2 "Respect for social rules"</i>	(.50)	(.53)	(.52)	(.50)
How do you describe your own current feeling of personal safety? Has it improved/stayed the same/worsened compared to a few months ago?	.54	.54	.60	.61
How well government is handling: Reducing the crime rate	.79	.80	.77	.78
How well government is handling: Providing safe and efficient public transport	.78	.80	.77	.74
<i>Dimension 3.3 "Civic participation"</i>	( <sup>a</sup> )	(.36)	(.36)	(.25)
How interested are you in politics and elections?	<sup>a, b</sup>	.32	.35	.25
It is important to get involved in the community where you live.	<sup>a</sup>	.79	.79	.77
I actively work for the welfare of my community.	<sup>a</sup>	.82	.80	.79

*Note:* The table shows the factor loadings of the items from exploratory factor analysis for the pertinent dimension. Values in parentheses refer to Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of internal consistency of the scale, formed by the items selected to measure the pertinent dimension.

<sup>a</sup>Loadings and Cronbach's alpha cannot be computed; <sup>b</sup>substituted with mean from Khayabus 2020 – Wave 1

# How do we measure social cohesion?

- Dimension scores
  - Arithmetic mean of individuals' scores on the respective items
- Overall index of cohesion
  - Arithmetic mean of the nine dimension scores
- Scores for South Africa / provinces:
  - Aggregation of individuals' scores via arithmetic mean to the respective level
- Interpretation of dimension and overall index scores

80 to 100	very high cohesion
60 to 79.99	high
40 to 59.99	medium
20 to 39.99	low
0 to 19.99	very low cohesion

# Level and trend of cohesion in South Africa

- Overall index and dimensions

Social cohesion	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
Overall index	53.5	-1.2	52.4	-0.7	51.7	+1.6	53.3	-0.2
Dimensions								
1.1 Social networks	61.3	-1.3	59.9	-1.1	58.8	+1.0	59.9	-1.4
1.2 Trust in people	52.5	+1.8	54.3	-0.3	54.1	+0.4	54.4	+2.0
1.3 Acceptance of diversity	47.1	-0.9	46.1	+0.6	46.8	+0.1	46.8	-0.2
2.1 Identification	73.2	-3.0	70.2	+1.0	71.2	+1.0	72.2	-1.1
2.2 Trust in institutions	50.7	-1.5	49.2	-2.6	46.6	+1.3	47.9	-2.8
2.3 Perception of fairness	43.4	-1.7	41.7	-1.2	40.5	+2.2	42.7	-0.7
3.1 Solidarity and helpfulness	59.0	-0.0	59.0	+0.0	59.1	+2.2	61.3	+2.2
3.2 Respect for social rules	40.3	-3.6	36.7	-3.7	33.0	+3.6	36.6	-3.8
3.3 Civic participation	54.4	-0.4	54.1	+1.4	55.5	+2.5	58.0	+3.6

*Note:* The table shows the scores of South Africa as a whole on the overall index of social cohesion and its dimensions in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. The table also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in South Africa

- Overall index of cohesion in 2024
  - Moderate (53.3) – neither (very) high, nor (very) low
    - Slightly above the theoretical midpoint of 50
    - Room for improvement
- Overall index of cohesion since 2021
  - Downward trend until 2023 has halted and reversed
  - Decline until 2023 not overcome yet
    - Need to monitor how it develops in the future

# Level and trend of cohesion in South Africa

- Dimensions of cohesion in 2024
  - Strengths
    - high Identification
    - high Solidarity and helpfulness
    - moderate to high Social networks
  - Destabilizing aspects
    - low Respect for social rules
    - moderate to low Perception of fairness



# Level and trend of cohesion in South Africa

- Dimensions of cohesion since 2021
  - All improved from 2023 to 2024
  - Overall decline on all dimensions
    - except for Trust in people, Solidarity and helpfulness, Civic participation
    - most pronounced for Respect for social rules

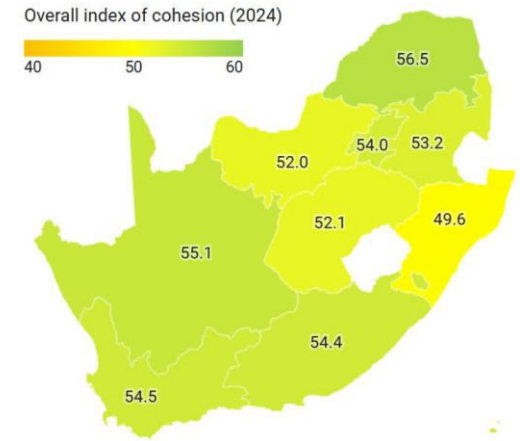
# Level and trend of cohesion in South Africa

- South Africa's profile of cohesion in comparison
  - considerable similarities to that of Israel

Aspect	South Africa	Israel <sup>2012</sup>	Germany <sup>2023</sup>	India <sup>2015</sup>	China <sup>2015</sup>
Social networks	Yellow	Yellow	Light Green	Red	Light Green
Trust in people	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Green
Acceptance of diversity	Yellow	Red	Light Green	Red	Yellow
Identification	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Red	Yellow
Trust in institutions	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Perception of fairness	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red	Light Green
Solidarity and helpfulness	Light Green	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red
Respect for social rules	Orange	Red	Light Green	Yellow	Light Green
Civic participation	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Red

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Overall index in the provinces
  - highest in Limpopo
  - lowest in KwaZulu-Natal
  - Overall decline in seven provinces



Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
Limpopo	56.8	-1.1	55.7	+2.5	58.3	-1.8	56.5	-0.4
Northern Cape	59.2	-8.3	51.0	+1.6	52.5	+2.5	55.1	-4.2
Western Cape	55.5	-0.6	54.9	-0.2	54.7	-0.2	54.5	-1.0
Eastern Cape	51.9	+2.4	54.3	+1.3	55.6	-1.2	54.4	+2.6
Gauteng	54.1	-1.2	52.9	-2.4	50.5	+3.6	54.0	-0.1
<i>South Africa</i>	<i>53.5</i>	<i>-1.2</i>	<i>52.4</i>	<i>-0.7</i>	<i>51.7</i>	<i>+1.6</i>	<i>53.3</i>	<i>-0.2</i>
Mpumalanga	54.0	-0.9	53.1	-1.0	52.1	+1.1	53.2	-0.8
Free State	53.6	-3.6	49.9	-0.6	49.4	+2.8	52.1	-1.4
North West	50.8	-0.4	50.3	+1.8	52.2	-0.2	52.0	+1.2
KwaZulu Natal	51.2	-3.0	48.2	-2.1	46.1	+3.5	49.6	-1.5

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine South African provinces on the overall social cohesion index in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. The table also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 2.1 – Identification in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Limpopo	72.7	-2.8	70.0	+9.1	79.1	+0.2	79.2	+6.5
2	Northern Cape	76.8	+1.9	78.7	-5.8	72.9	+3.5	76.4	-0.4
3	Eastern Cape	74.1	-2.4	71.8	+10.5	82.3	-8.4	74.0	-0.2
4	Gauteng	74.7	-2.5	72.3	-0.5	71.7	+1.8	73.5	-1.3
5	North West	66.3	-4.6	61.7	+13.2	74.9	-1.9	72.9	+6.6
	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>73.2</i>	<i>-3.0</i>	<i>70.2</i>	<i>+1.0</i>	<i>71.2</i>	<i>+1.0</i>	<i>72.2</i>	<i>-1.1</i>
6	Western Cape	73.4	-0.7	72.8	-4.2	68.6	+2.0	70.6	-2.8
7	Mpumalanga	74.6	-11.2	63.4	+0.9	64.3	+5.1	69.4	-5.2
8	KwaZulu Natal	71.8	-1.1	70.7	-7.3	63.4	+4.5	67.9	-3.8
9	Free State	73.3	-7.1	66.2	+1.6	67.8	-0.4	67.4	-5.9

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 2.1 “Identification” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 3.2 – Respect for social rules in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Limpopo	44.9	+2.4	47.4	-2.6	44.8	+0.1	44.9	+0.0
2	Northern Cape	41.9	-2.8	39.1	-7.8	31.4	+12.0	43.3	+1.4
3	Mpumalanga	49.0	-2.9	46.1	-3.9	42.2	-1.4	40.8	-8.2
4	Western Cape	36.8	+1.4	38.2	+2.0	40.2	-1.5	38.7	+1.9
5	North West	43.6	-10.5	33.1	-0.7	32.4	+5.5	37.9	-5.7
6	Eastern Cape	37.9	+1.2	39.2	-8.5	30.7	+6.7	37.4	-0.6
7	Gauteng	39.1	-3.7	35.5	-4.4	31.0	+5.9	36.9	-2.3
	<i>South Africa</i>	40.3	-3.6	36.7	-3.7	33.0	+3.6	36.6	-3.8
8	Free State	43.4	-9.7	33.7	-4.4	29.3	+6.4	35.7	-7.7
9	KwaZulu Natal	38.4	-9.6	28.7	-4.6	24.2	+2.6	26.8	-11.6

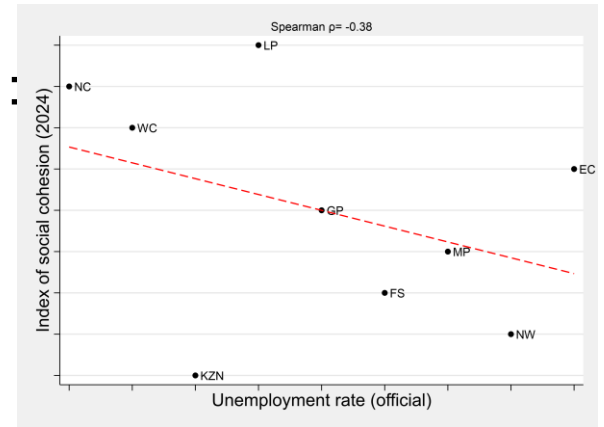
Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 3.2 “Respect for social rules” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Factors promoting / hindering cohesion

- Structural characteristics of the provinces from the thematic fields
  - Economic situation
  - Poverty and inequality
  - Demography
  - Diversity
  - Modernization
- Data sources
  - mostly Statistics South Africa, but also Center for Risk Analysis, Global Data Lab, or own calculations based on these data
  - Data refer to 2021 or 2022
- Assessed using Spearman rank correlations, partialled for GDP
  - Characteristics of provinces ( $N = 9$ ) correlated with the overall index of cohesion there, as measured in 2024

# Factors promoting / hindering cohesion: Economic situation

Social cohesion is higher in provinces where... :  
 ...people-centric economic progress is higher  
 ...unemployment is lower

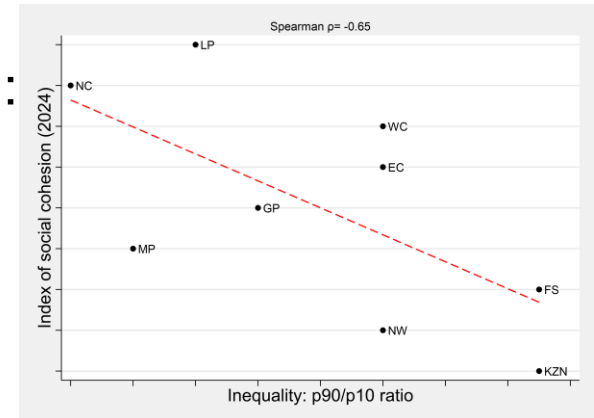


Structural characteristic	Spearman correlation	
	Bivariate	Partial for GDP
<i>Economic situation</i>		
(ln) GDP per capita	.00	
HDI	.30	.39
Unemployment (official)	-.38	-.42
Unemployment (expanded)	-.22	-.32

*Note:* The table shows Spearman correlations (bivariate and partial for GDP) between the overall index of social cohesion and structural characteristics of the provinces, performed on the level of the provinces ( $N = 9$ ). Significance of the coefficients in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

# Factors promoting / hindering cohesion: Poverty and inequality

Social cohesion is higher in provinces where... :  
 ...less people feel poor  
 ...income inequality is lower



Structural characteristic	Spearman correlation	
	Bivariate	Partial for GDP
<i>Poverty and inequality</i>		
Subjective poverty	-.32	-.55
% below food poverty line	.10	.10
% below LB poverty line	.10	.10
% below UB poverty line	.03	.03
Gini index	-.40	-.44
P90/P10 ratio	-.65 *	-.65 *

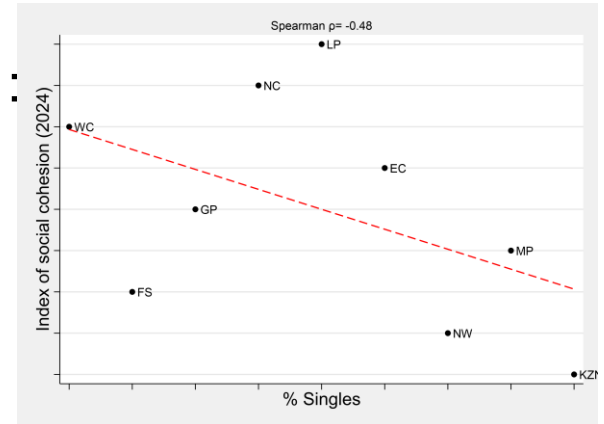
*Note:* The table shows Spearman correlations (bivariate and partial for GDP) between the overall index of social cohesion and structural characteristics of the provinces, performed on the level of the provinces ( $N = 9$ ). Significance of the coefficients in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .



# Factors promoting / hindering cohesion: Demography

Social cohesion is higher in provinces where... :

- ...population density is lower
- ...the degree of urbanization is lower
- ...less singles or more married people live
- ...the population is younger

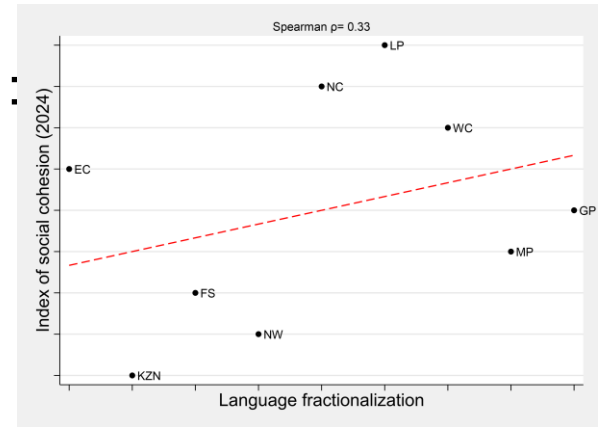


Structural characteristic	Spearman correlation	
	Bivariate	Partial for GDP
<i>Demography</i>		
Population density	-.22	-.22
% urban	-.15	-.30
% rural	.15	.30
% Singles	-.48	-.66 *
% Married	.40	.47
Median age	-.30	-.44

*Note:* The table shows Spearman correlations (bivariate and partial for GDP) between the overall index of social cohesion and structural characteristics of the provinces, performed on the level of the provinces ( $N = 9$ ). Significance of the coefficients in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

# Factors promoting / hindering cohesion: Diversity

- Social cohesion is higher in provinces where...
- ...less Blacks, more Whites or Colored live
- ...more immigrants live
- ...ethnic / linguistic fractionalization are higher
- ...religious fractionalization is lower

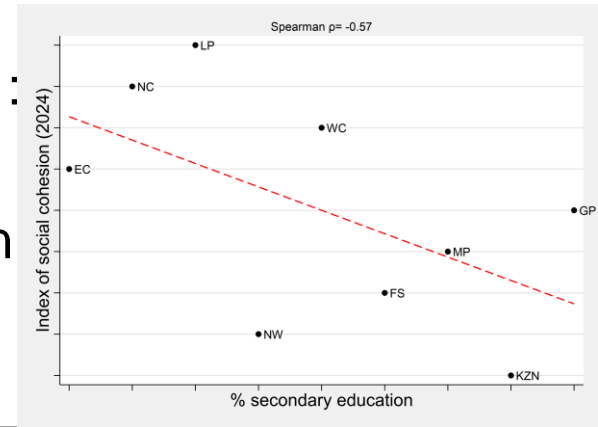


Structural characteristic	Spearman correlation	
	Bivariate	Partial for GDP
<i>Diversity</i>		
% Black	-.13	-.16
% White	.08	.13
% Colored	.28	.32
% Indian/Asian	.08	.09
% Other	.12	.12
% Immigrants	.18	.21
Ethnic fractionalization	.13	.16
Linguistic fractionalization	.33	.43
Religious fractionalization	-.12	-.12

Note: The table shows Spearman correlations (bivariate and partial for GDP) between the overall index of social cohesion and structural characteristics of the provinces, performed on the level of the provinces ( $N = 9$ ). Significance of the coefficients in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

# Factors promoting / hindering cohesion: Modernization

- Social cohesion is higher in provinces where... :
- ...more people have primary education
- ...less people have secondary/higher education
- ...less people have access to internet



Structural characteristic	Spearman correlation	
	Bivariate	Partial for GDP
<i>Modernization</i>		
% primary education	.20	.20
% secondary education	-.57	-.67 *
% post-school education	-.15	-.16
% having a computer	-.05	-.10
% having a cell phone	-.10	-.10
% having no internet	.38	.62

*Note:* The table shows Spearman correlations (bivariate and partial for GDP) between the overall index of social cohesion and structural characteristics of the provinces, performed on the level of the provinces ( $N = 9$ ). Significance of the coefficients in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

- Latent Class Analysis
- Based on respondents' scores on the nine dimensions of cohesion
- Four social groups (classes of respondents) identified
  - Class 1: Critics ( $n_1 = 599$ , 18.6 %)
  - Class 2: Integrated Skeptics ( $n_2 = 865$ , 29.1 %)
  - Class 3: Middle South Africa ( $n_3 = 1353$ , 41.8 %)
  - Class 4: Cohesive Communities ( $n_4 = 355$ , 10.5 %)
  - Goodness of fit: Entropy  $H = .91$ ,  $APCM = 85$  %

# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

- Cohesion in the four classes

Cohesion	Critics		Integrated Sceptics		Middle South Africa		Cohesive communities	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall Index	37.5	8.9	54.6	8.4	54.4	6.7	73.3	7.4
Dimensions								
1.1 Social Networks	49.6	25.5	67.3	20.2	56.0	19.1	73.0	19.2
1.2 Trust in People	25.1	18.5	71.6	15.6	50.2	17.1	75.8	15.8
1.3 Acceptance of Diversity	15.4	15.1	63.6	16.6	42.9	17.6	71.6	17.4
2.1 Identification	67.4	25.0	72.4	23.3	72.1	19.5	80.3	18.0
2.2 Trust in Institutions	30.7	18.7	37.2	17.8	56.5	14.4	74.0	14.9
2.3 Perception of Fairness	27.0	16.0	29.9	15.9	51.5	14.6	71.2	16.1
3.1 Solidarity and Helpfulness	54.6	29.0	66.3	23.2	58.0	22.6	72.5	21.9
3.2 Respect for Social Rules	18.8	15.6	22.1	15.9	46.4	18.8	69.2	18.7
3.3 Civic Participation	48.5	20.9	61.5	20.2	56.1	19.0	72.6	16.6

Note: The table shows the average score (*M*) and the standard deviation (*SD*) of the overall index of social cohesion and its nine dimensions in the four classes of respondents ( $n_1 = 599$ ,  $n_2 = 865$ ,  $n_3 = 1353$ ,  $n_4 = 355$ ). Scores below 20 are highlighted in red, scores between 20 and 40 are highlighted in orange, scores between 40 and 60 are highlighted in yellow, and scores above 60 are highlighted in green.

# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

- Characterization of the four classes
  - with respect to socio-demographics reported in the survey
    - Biological sex
    - Age group
    - Race
    - Main language
    - Marital status
    - Community size
    - Education
    - Employment status
    - Income class
  - using cross-tabulations and chi-square tests of independence

# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

- Class 1 (Critics) overproportionally represents:
  - women (54.9 %)
  - persons of age 25-44 (53.1 %)
  - persons of other race (11.4)
  - speakers of Afrikaans (17.0 %)
  - singles (60.5 %)
  - dwellers in towns or cities (30.0 %)
  - unemployed (39.3 %)
  - members of the low-income class (23.2 %)
  - persons who refused to report household income (43.6 %)

# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

- Class 2 (Integrated skeptics) overproportionally represents:
  - Whites (10.4 %), Indian/Asian (4.1 %)
  - speakers of English (14 %) and Afrikaans (16.7 %)
  - persons with completed secondary education (50.6 %)
  - persons with completed post-secondary education (17.3 %)
  - employed (47.7 %)
  - members of the high-income class (19.1 %)



# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

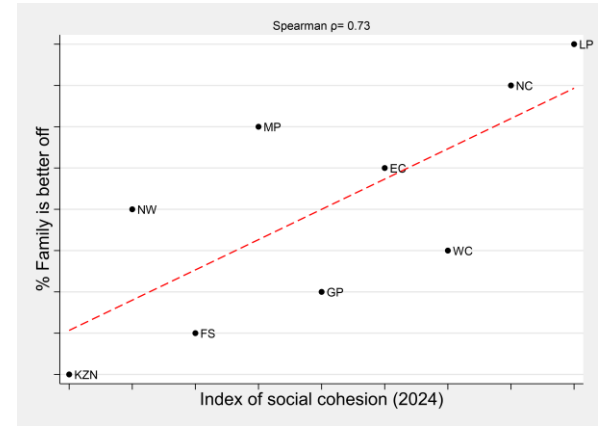
- Class 3 (Middle South Africa) overproportionally represents:
  - persons of age 18-24 years (17.2 %)
  - Blacks (87.7 %)
  - speakers of indigenous languages (79.7 %)
  - dwellers in towns or cities (29.0 %)
  - persons with low or no education (38.4 %)
  - persons not in the workforce (21.9 %)
  - members of the lower-middle-income class (12.9 %)

# Social groups experiencing high / low cohesion

- Class 4 (Cohesive communities) overproportionally represents:
  - men (53.1 %)
  - persons of age 45-64 years (28.6 %)
  - Blacks (85.6 %), Indian/Asian (4.0 %)
  - speakers of indigenous languages (78.9 %)
  - married or living together as married (35.8 %)
  - divorced or widowed (10.7 %)
  - dwellers in metropolitan areas (48.8 %)
  - employed (52.1 %)
  - persons who refused to report their house income (39.7 %)

# Cohesion and subjective well-being

- In more cohesive provinces...
- ...life evaluation is more positive
- ...life satisfaction is greater
- ...optimism is higher



Aspect of well-being	Spearman correlation	
	Bivariate	Partial for GDP
Family is better off than a year ago	.73 **	.79 **
Family's lives will be better off than today	.67 **	.68 *
Children have a bright future ahead	.78 **	.79 **
Satisfaction with life has improved	.77 **	.77 **
Consider emigrating to another country	-.10	-.10

*Note:* The table shows Spearman correlations (bivariate and partial for GDP) between the overall index of social cohesion and aspects of subjective well-being on the level of the nine provinces ( $N = 9$ ). Significance of the coefficients in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

# Cohesion and subjective well-being

- Within the four social groups (classes)
  - Life evaluation and life satisfaction
    - Positive responses mostly in Class 4 (Cohesive communities)
    - Negative responses mostly in Class 1 (Critics) and Class 2 (Integrated skeptics)
  - Optimism
    - Largest share of positive responses in Class 4
    - Largest share of negative responses in Class 1 and Class 2
  - Emigration
    - Unclear pattern

# Conclusions

- Cohesion in South Africa
  - Moderate overall level
  - Strengths: Identification, Solidarity and helpfulness
  - Weaknesses: Respect for social rules, but also Perception of fairness, Acceptance of diversity and Trust in institutions
  - Downward trend since 2021 halted in 2023 and reversed
  - Decline since 2021 not overcome by 2024

# Conclusions

- Cohesion in the provinces
  - Moderate overall level
  - Relatively strongest (again) in Limpopo
  - Relatively weakest (again) in KwaZulu-Natal
- Overall declines in seven provinces since 2021
- Convergence of scores in 2024 due to decline in previously top performing provinces

# Conclusions

- Four distinct social groups in terms of experiencing cohesion
  - low among Critics (18.6 %)
  - moderate among Integrated skeptics (29.1 %) and Middle South Africa (41.8 %)
  - high among Cohesive communities (10.5 %)
- Social groups at risk of experiencing low cohesion
  - women, persons of age 25-44 years, persons of other race, speakers of Afrikaans, singles, dwellers in towns or cities, unemployed, members of the low-income class

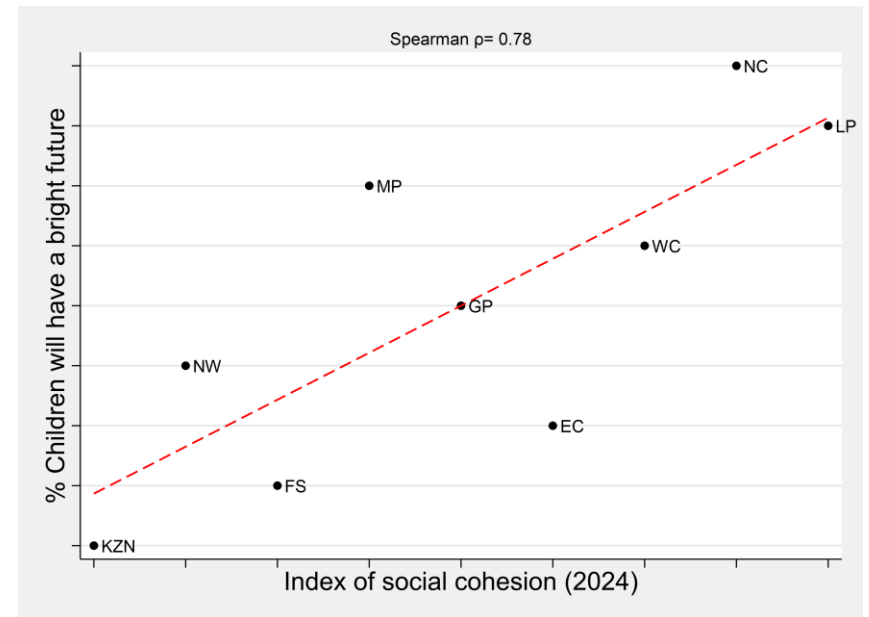
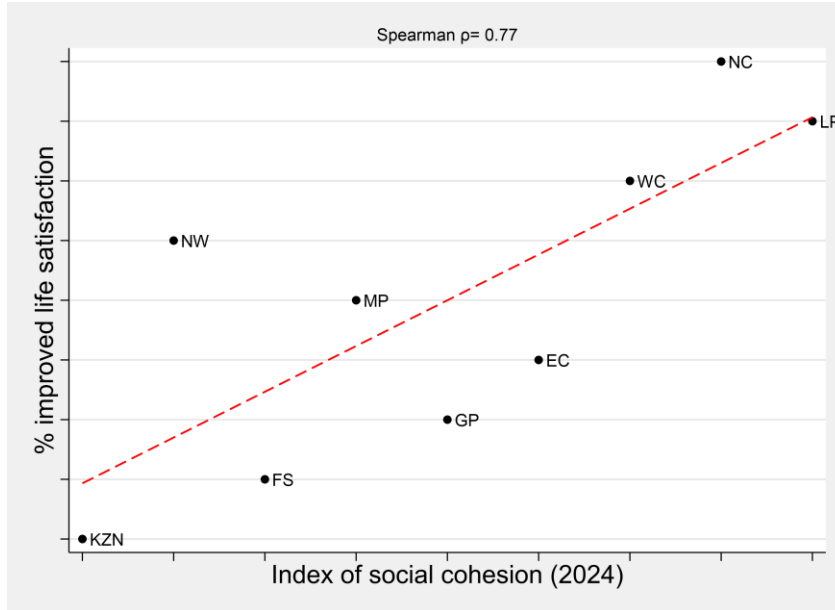
# Conclusions

- Policy recommendations to strengthen cohesion
  - Enable inclusive (people-centered) economic progress
  - Reduce unemployment
  - Lower income inequality
  - Adapt economy to provide adequate jobs for highly qualified
  - Promote family-oriented life style
  - Provide equally adequate living conditions in rural and urban areas



# Conclusions

- Cohesion promotes citizens' well-being
  - More positive life evaluation
  - Higher life satisfaction
  - Greater optimism for own family and children



# Thank you!





# Back-up slides

# Previous research on cohesion in South Africa

- Abrahams (2016)
  - Criticizes the instrumentalization of cohesion in social policy towards nation-building
- Ballantine et al. (2017)
  - Essays by academics and public figures on, among others, inequality, xenophobia, safety, identity
- South African Institute of International Affairs (2021)
  - Review of status quo and progress in the spheres of religion, nationality, race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ rights

# Previous research on cohesion in South Africa

- Burns et al. (2018)
  - Review of concepts, including our Social Cohesion Radar
  - Social cohesion in the South African context
  - Proposes a definition of cohesion for South Africa
 

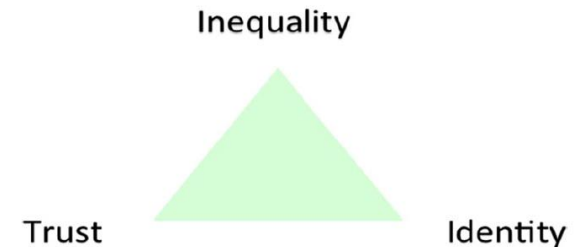
*“extent to which people are co-operative, within and across group boundaries, without coercion or purely self-interested motivation”*
  - Suggests cohesion reflects the idea of ubuntu
 

*“multidimensional concept which represents the core values of African ontologies: respect for any human being, for human dignity and for human life, collective shared-ness, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, communalism, to list but a few.”* (Kamwangamalu 1999, pp. 25-26)

# Previous research on cohesion in South Africa

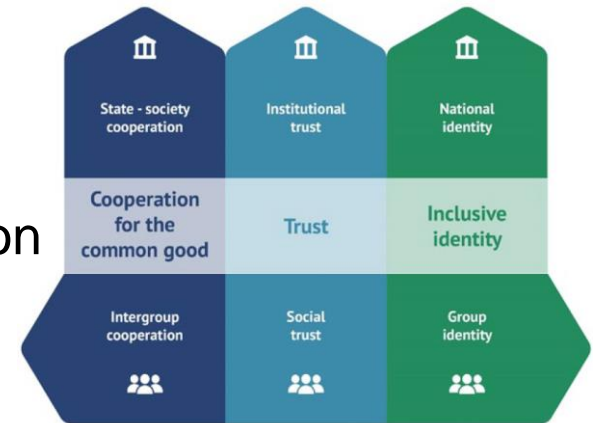
- Langer et al. (2017)
  - Overall index of cohesion
    - Perceived level of equality
    - Institutional and interpersonal trust
    - National vs. group identity
  - Comparison of 19 African societies using Afrobarometer rounds 3 (2005/6), 4 (2008/9), and 5 (2011/13)
  - Ranking of South Africa:
    - Mid position on overall index of cohesion
    - Mid position on perceived equality
    - Lower half on trust
    - Among top countries on identification
    - Ups and downs over time

## Social Cohesion Triangle



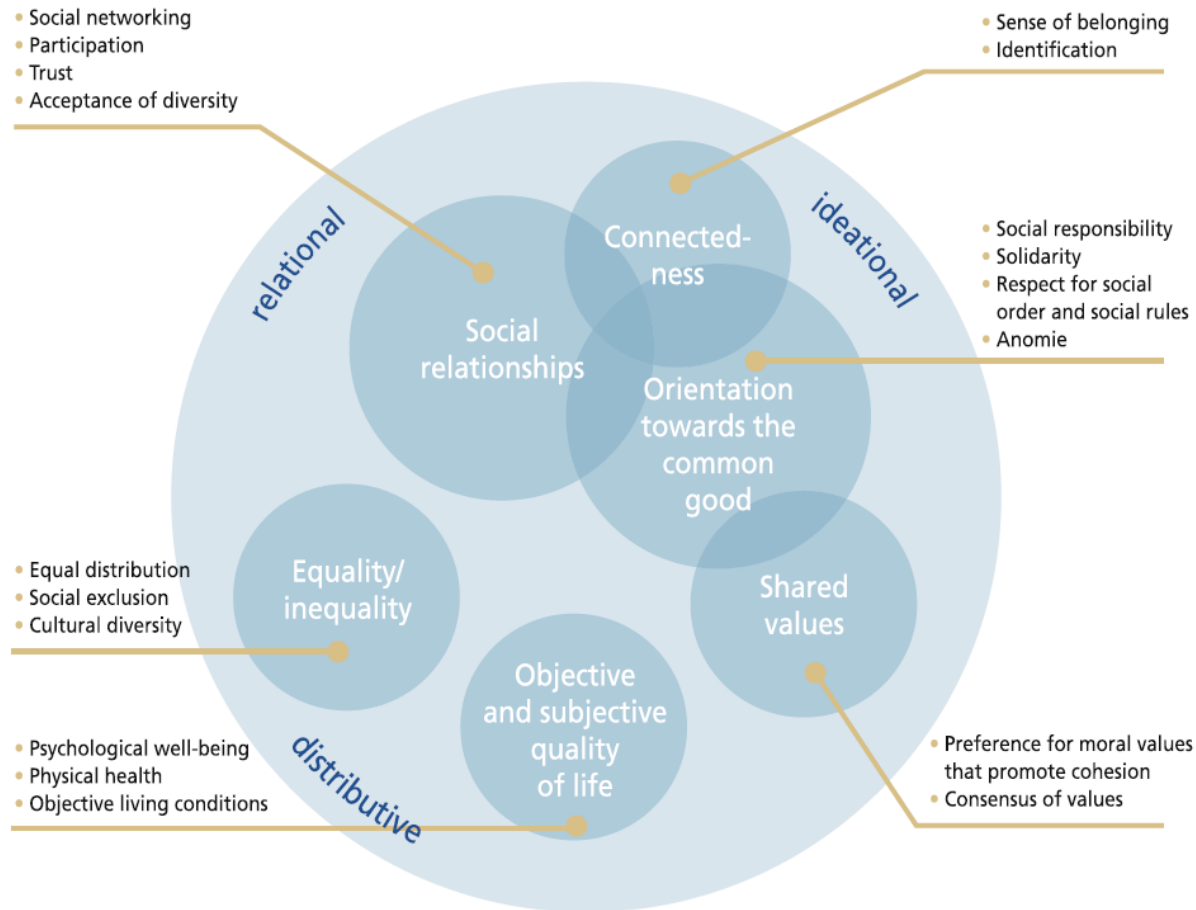
# Previous research on cohesion in South Africa

- Leininger et al. (2021)
  - No overall index of cohesion
    - Intergroup vs state-society cooperation
    - Social vs institutional trust
    - Group vs national identity
  - Comparison of 17 to 36 African societies using Afrobarometer rounds 3 (2005/6), 4 (2008/9), 5 (2011/13), and 6 (2014/15)
  - Results for South Africa
    - Downward trend for each aspect of cohesion
    - Middle rank on trust
    - Lower half on cooperation
    - Among top countries on identification (except in 2015)



# How do we define social cohesion?

- Our concept vs others





# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 1.1 – Social networks in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Northern Cape	62.6	+9.7	72.3	-8.7	63.6	+6.5	70.1	+7.5
2	Western Cape	66.8	-0.2	66.6	-1.2	65.4	+1.8	67.3	+0.5
3	Limpopo	61.0	-0.6	60.4	+2.7	63.1	-0.5	62.6	+1.7
4	Free State	59.7	-8.6	51.1	+4.2	55.2	+7.0	62.2	+2.5
	<i>South Africa</i>	61.3	-1.3	59.9	-1.1	58.8	+1.0	59.9	-1.4
5	Gauteng	63.7	-3.8	59.9	-3.8	56.1	+2.5	58.6	-5.1
6	North West	55.7	+0.1	55.8	+1.6	57.4	+0.7	58.2	+2.5
7	Eastern Cape	55.8	+5.7	61.5	+5.7	67.2	-9.0	58.2	+2.4
8	KwaZulu Natal	58.2	-0.5	57.7	-4.8	52.9	+4.0	56.9	-1.3
9	Mpumalanga	64.1	-6.5	57.6	-0.9	56.7	-1.4	55.4	-8.8

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 1.1 “Social networks” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.



# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 1.2 – Trust in people in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Eastern Cape	49.4	+7.1	56.5	+3.1	59.6	+1.3	61.0	+11.6
2	KwaZulu Natal	50.6	-0.7	49.9	+6.9	56.8	+0.3	57.2	+6.5
3	Gauteng	55.7	+2.1	57.8	-6.6	51.2	+3.3	54.6	-1.2
	<i>South Africa</i>	52.5	+1.8	54.3	-0.3	54.1	+0.4	54.4	+2.0
4	North West	44.9	+7.5	52.4	+0.1	52.5	+1.9	54.4	+9.5
5	Free State	54.9	-1.7	53.2	+2.9	56.1	-2.0	54.1	-0.8
6	Western Cape	55.0	+1.4	56.4	-3.3	53.1	-0.5	52.6	-2.4
7	Mpumalanga	40.2	+10.6	50.8	+1.2	52.1	-0.2	51.9	+11.6
8	Limpopo	57.9	-2.2	55.7	-2.2	53.5	-5.4	48.1	-9.8
9	Northern Cape	67.2	-29.6	37.7	+18.0	55.6	-11.7	44.0	-23.3

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 1.2 “Trust in people” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 1.3 – Acceptance of diversity in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Gauteng	50.5	-0.7	49.8	-5.5	44.3	+5.4	49.6	-0.8
2	Mpumalanga	36.8	+8.6	45.4	+1.5	46.8	+2.3	49.1	+12.3
3	Eastern Cape	44.5	+2.0	46.4	+3.0	49.4	-0.7	48.7	+4.3
4	Free State	51.1	-4.3	46.8	+2.5	49.3	-0.8	48.5	-2.6
5	Western Cape	54.0	-2.5	51.5	-2.2	49.4	-1.9	47.5	-6.5
	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>47.1</i>	<i>-0.9</i>	<i>46.1</i>	<i>+0.6</i>	<i>46.8</i>	<i>+0.1</i>	<i>46.8</i>	<i>-0.2</i>
6	North West	43.8	+2.6	46.3	+0.4	46.8	-0.7	46.0	+2.3
7	KwaZulu Natal	40.1	-3.7	36.4	+9.5	45.9	-0.8	45.1	+5.1
8	Northern Cape	59.7	-24.1	35.6	+18.9	54.4	-10.8	43.6	-16.1
9	Limpopo	50.7	-2.0	48.7	-2.6	46.1	-8.2	37.9	-12.9

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 1.3 “Acceptance of diversity” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 2.2 – Trust in institutions in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Limpopo	55.1	-3.5	51.6	+2.2	53.8	+0.6	54.4	-0.8
2	Mpumalanga	52.9	-2.4	50.5	-3.5	47.0	+7.1	54.1	+1.2
3	North West	51.6	-2.8	48.8	-1.4	47.4	+3.6	51.0	-0.6
4	Eastern Cape	55.5	-2.8	52.7	-4.2	48.5	+2.3	50.7	-4.8
5	Northern Cape	48.3	-3.3	45.0	+3.2	48.2	+2.4	50.6	+2.3
6	Western Cape	47.9	+5.5	53.5	-2.2	51.2	-1.2	50.0	+2.1
7	Free State	52.2	-2.3	49.9	-4.8	45.2	+3.8	49.0	-3.2
8	Gauteng	50.0	-0.5	49.5	-2.8	46.7	+2.1	48.8	-1.2
	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>50.7</i>	<i>-1.5</i>	<i>49.2</i>	<i>-2.6</i>	<i>46.6</i>	<i>+1.3</i>	<i>47.9</i>	<i>-2.8</i>
9	KwaZulu Natal	47.3	-5.1	42.2	-4.0	38.2	-2.7	35.6	-11.7

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 2.2 “Trust in institutions” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 2.3 – Perception of fairness in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Limpopo	47.2	+2.1	49.2	+4.0	53.2	+0.2	53.4	+6.2
2	Mpumalanga	47.4	+1.2	48.6	-5.2	43.3	+3.6	46.9	-0.5
3	Northern Cape	51.4	-8.7	42.7	-1.0	41.7	+5.0	46.7	-4.7
4	Gauteng	42.3	-1.9	40.5	+0.1	40.5	+3.6	44.2	+1.8
5	Western Cape	43.6	+0.5	44.1	+2.7	46.9	-3.0	43.9	+0.2
6	Free State	44.6	-5.4	39.2	-3.2	36.1	+7.6	43.7	-0.9
	<i>South Africa</i>	43.4	-1.7	41.7	-1.2	40.5	+2.2	42.7	-0.7
7	North West	47.1	-6.0	41.1	+1.8	42.9	-0.3	42.6	-4.5
8	Eastern Cape	42.8	+0.2	43.1	-4.6	38.5	+1.5	39.9	-2.9
9	KwaZulu Natal	40.0	-4.9	35.0	-5.2	29.8	+3.4	33.2	-6.8

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 2.3 “Perception of fairness” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 3.1 – Solidarity and helpfulness in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	Limpopo	64.5	+0.5	64.9	+6.6	71.5	-1.2	70.3	+5.8
2	Western Cape	66.1	-7.1	59.0	+0.7	59.7	+3.3	63.0	-3.1
3	Gauteng	56.5	+1.0	57.5	+0.3	57.9	+4.6	62.4	+5.9
4	KwaZulu Natal	57.2	+2.1	59.3	-6.9	52.4	+9.9	62.3	+5.1
5	Northern Cape	64.9	-5.8	59.1	-4.1	55.0	+6.7	61.7	-3.2
	<i>South Africa</i>	<i>59.0</i>	<i>-0.0</i>	<i>59.0</i>	<i>+0.0</i>	<i>59.1</i>	<i>+2.2</i>	<i>61.3</i>	<i>+2.2</i>
6	Eastern Cape	56.7	+2.9	59.6	+3.9	63.6	-4.8	58.8	+2.1
7	Free State	54.4	+3.3	57.8	-3.6	54.2	+2.0	56.2	+1.7
8	North West	54.1	+4.3	58.4	+3.3	61.7	-6.2	55.5	+1.4
9	Mpumalanga	65.3	-7.4	57.9	+1.4	59.3	-6.7	52.6	-12.7

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 3.1 “Solidarity and helpfulness” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.

# Level and trend of cohesion in provinces

- Dimension 3.3 – Civic participation in the provinces

Rank in 2024	Province	2021	$\Delta_{2022-2021}$	2022	$\Delta_{2023-2022}$	2023	$\Delta_{2024-2023}$	2024	$\Delta_{2024-2021}$
1	KwaZulu Natal	57.0	-3.3	53.7	-2.6	51.1	+10.6	61.6	+4.6
2	Eastern Cape	50.0	+8.0	58.0	+3.1	61.1	+0.1	61.2	+11.2
3	Northern Cape	60.3	-11.9	48.4	+1.5	49.8	+9.3	59.2	-1.1
4	Mpumalanga	55.6	+2.3	57.9	-0.5	57.4	+1.3	58.7	+3.1
	<i>South Africa</i>	54.4	-0.4	54.1	+1.4	55.5	+2.5	58.0	+3.6
5	Gauteng	54.5	-1.3	53.2	+1.7	54.9	+2.9	57.8	+3.2
6	Limpopo	57.4	-3.7	53.6	+5.8	59.4	-2.0	57.4	+0.0
7	Western Cape	55.8	-3.5	52.3	+5.4	57.7	-0.7	57.0	+1.1
8	Free State	48.5	+3.0	51.5	-0.3	51.1	+1.3	52.4	+3.9
9	North West	49.8	+5.7	55.5	-1.7	53.8	-4.5	49.3	-0.5

Note: The table shows the scores of the nine provinces on Dimension 3.3 “Civic participation” in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. Scores below 20 (very low cohesion) are shaded in red, scores between 20 and 40 (low) are shaded in orange, scores between 40 and 60 (moderate) are shaded in yellow, and scores above 60 (high) are shaded in green. It also shows changes ( $\Delta$ ) in the dimension over time. Positive changes are highlighted in green, and negative changes are highlighted in red.



# Individual experience of cohesion

- Characterization of the four classes

Characteristic	Relative size of category (%)					Test of independence	
	Total	Critics	Integrated Sceptics	Middle SA	Cohesive comm's	$\chi^2(df), p$	Cramer's V
Biological sex							
Male	47.7	45.1	48.0	47.3	53.1	4.3(3)	.04
Female	52.3	54.9	52.0	52.7	46.9		
Age group							
18-24 years	15.1	14.3	13.0	17.2	14.0	15.8(9) *	.04
25-44 years	50.5	53.1	51.4	48.7	50.2		
45-64 years	26.6	24.1	27.4	26.7	28.6		
65+ years	7.8	8.5	8.2	7.4	7.2		
Race							
White	6.0	5.4	10.4	4.3	1.7	45.1(9) ***	.07
Black	83.1	81.3	76.8	87.7	85.6		
Indian/Asian	2.5	1.8	4.1	1.4	4.0		
Other	8.3	11.4	8.7	6.6	8.7		

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the categories of the pertinent socio-economic and demographic characteristics in the total sample ( $N = 3172$ ) and in each of the four classes of respondents ( $n_1 = 599$ ,  $n_2 = 865$ ,  $n_3 = 1353$ ,  $n_4 = 355$ ), the respective result from a chi-square test of independence between the characteristic and class belonging, and Cramer's V coefficient of effect size. Significance of the estimates in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .





# Individual experience of cohesion

- Characterization of the four classes

Characteristic	Relative size of category (%)					Test of independence	
	Total	Critics	Integrated Sceptics	Middle SA	Cohesive comm's	$\chi^2(df), p$	Cramer's V
Main language							
English	10.7	7.6	14.0	9.9	10.4	33.5(6) ***	.07
Afrikaans	13.5	17.0	16.7	10.3	10.7		
Indigenous	75.8	75.4	69.3	79.7	78.9		
Marital status							
Single	57.5	60.5	57.4	57.3	53.5	6.2(6)	.03
(living as) married	33.0	29.9	33.8	33.1	35.8		
Widowed/divorced	9.5	9.6	8.8	9.6	10.7		
Community size							
Rural/village	30.5	28.9	30.5	31.0	31.0	17.2(6) ***	.05
Town/city	27.7	30.0	26.9	29.0	20.2		
Metropolitan	41.8	41.1	42.6	40.0	48.8		

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the categories of the pertinent socio-economic and demographic characteristics in the total sample ( $N = 3172$ ) and in each of the four classes of respondents ( $n_1 = 599$ ,  $n_2 = 865$ ,  $n_3 = 1353$ ,  $n_4 = 355$ ), the respective result from a chi-square test of independence between the characteristic and class belonging, and Cramer's V coefficient of effect size. Significance of the estimates in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .



# Individual experience of cohesion

- Characterization of the four classes

Characteristic	Total	Relative size of category (%)				Test of independence	
		Critics	Integrated Sceptics	Middle SA	Cohesive comm's	$\chi^2(df), p$	Cramer's $V$
Education							
Lower or none	35.8	36.0	32.1	38.4	35.4	7.1(6)	.03
Secondary	49.1	49.8	50.6	47.5	50.0		
Post-secondary	15.1	14.2	17.3	14.1	14.6		
Employment status							
Employed	44.3	40.2	47.7	41.7	52.1	23.9(6) ***	.06
Not in workforce	19.5	20.5	15.8	21.9	18.4		
Unemployed	36.2	39.3	36.5	36.4	29.5		
Income class							
Low	21.9	23.2	18.2	25.0	17.3	40.3(12) ***	.07
Lower-middle	11.6	9.4	10.9	12.9	12.4		
Upper-middle	14.4	13.2	14.7	14.4	15.3		
High	15.1	10.6	19.1	14.3	15.2		
Missing	37.0	43.6	37.1	33.4	39.7		

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the categories of the pertinent socio-economic and demographic characteristics in the total sample ( $N = 3172$ ) and in each of the four classes of respondents ( $n_1 = 599$ ,  $n_2 = 865$ ,  $n_3 = 1353$ ,  $n_4 = 355$ ), the respective result from a chi-square test of independence between the characteristic and class belonging, and Cramer's  $V$  coefficient of effect size. Significance of the estimates in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .



# Cohesion and subjective well-being

- Within the four social groups (classes)

Aspect of well-being	Relative size of category (%)					Test of independence	
	Total	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	$\chi^2(df), p$	Cramer's $V$
Family is ... than a year ago.							
Better off	23.0	19.6	18.2	22.0	46.3	130.1(6) ***	.14
About the same	49.4	44.8	47.8	55.1	39.5		
Worse off	27.6	35.5	34.0	22.9	14.2		
Life satisfaction has...							
Improved	26.5	18.2	20.3	30.4	50.3	197.1(6) ***	.18
Stayed the same	44.5	40.4	48.4	46.8	35.6		
Worsened	29.0	41.4	31.3	22.8	14.1		

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the pertinent aspect of subjective well-being in the total sample ( $N = 3172$ ) and in each of the four classes of respondents ( $n_1 = 599$ ,  $n_2 = 865$ ,  $n_3 = 1353$ ,  $n_4 = 355$ ), the respective result from a chi-square test of independence between the aspect of well-being and class belonging, and Cramer's  $V$  coefficient of effect size. Significance of the estimates in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .



# Cohesion and subjective well-being

- Within the four social groups (classes)

Aspect of well-being	Relative size of category (%)					Test of independence	
	Total	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	$\chi^2(df), p$	Cramer's $V$
Family's life will be...							
Better off than today	35.5	29.8	28.6	37.0	59.1	133.7(6) ***	.15
About the same	42.9	40.5	44.4	45.3	33.1		
Worse off than today	21.6	29.7	27.0	17.6	7.8		
Children will have...							
A bright future	45.2	36.2	36.1	53.6	71.8	163.5(3) ***	.24
A bleak future	54.8	63.8	63.9	46.4	28.2		
Consider emigrating							
(strongly) disagree	69.5	70.5	65.4	70.4	75.5	17.7(6) ***	.05
neither nor	16.3	14.6	16.7	17.9	11.6		
(strongly) agree	14.2	14.9	17.8	11.7	12.8		

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the pertinent aspect of subjective well-being in the total sample ( $N = 3172$ ) and in each of the four classes of respondents ( $n_1 = 599$ ,  $n_2 = 865$ ,  $n_3 = 1353$ ,  $n_4 = 355$ ), the respective result from a chi-square test of independence between the aspect of well-being and class belonging, and Cramer's  $V$  coefficient of effect size. Significance of the estimates in a two-sided test: \*  $p \leq .10$ , \*\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .01$ .



# Indicators over time

- Dimension 1.1 – Social networks

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
I enjoy working together with people from all population groups.				
strongly disagree/disagree	14.4	13.9	18.8	16.8
neither-nor	15.9	22.1	20.4	20.1
agree/strongly agree	65.0	57.3	58.0	60.6
do not know/refusal	4.7	6.7	2.8	2.5
My friends are from different population groups.				
strongly disagree/disagree	25.6	22.3	28.8	26.2
neither-nor	16.0	19.7	18.1	18.3
agree/strongly agree	54.9	52.2	50.9	53.7
do not know/refusal	3.5	5.8	2.2	1.8
I entertain friends from different population groups at home or another place.				
strongly disagree/disagree	24.7	20.8	25.6	24.8
neither-nor	18.6	23.2	20.4	20.7
agree/strongly agree	52.9	50.1	51.7	52.5
do not know/refusal	3.8	5.9	2.3	2.0
I go to [religious service] with people from different population groups.				
strongly disagree/disagree	29.4	27.3	29.4	28.9
neither-nor	15.7	21.2	19.1	18.1
agree/strongly agree	51.0	45.2	48.6	50.8
do not know/refusal	3.9	6.3	2.9	2.2

Note: The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 1.1 “Social networks” in 2021 (N = 3402), 2022 (N = 3459), 2023 (N = 3519), and 2024 (N = 3172).



# Indicators over time

- Dimension 1.2 – Trust in people

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
How much you trust: Your neighborhood				
not at all	13.6	12.0	12.9	12.6
not very much/somewhat	58.5	56.3	56.9	58.7
Completely	24.8	27.6	28.8	28.1
do not know/refusal	3.1	4.0	1.4	0.6
How much you trust: People you know personally				
not at all	12.3	11.8	11.0	10.8
not very much/somewhat	55.6	53.8	56.3	58.0
Completely	29.9	30.4	31.5	30.1
do not know/refusal	2.2	3.9	1.2	1.1
How much you trust: People you met for the first time				
not at all	36.2	30.9	32.2	34.2
not very much/somewhat	47.3	50.1	53.6	51.8
Completely	12.8	14.5	12.0	12.6
do not know/refusal	3.7	4.5	2.2	1.4
How much you trust: People in your own community				
not at all	18.5	18.8	17.5	16.5
not very much/somewhat	60.7	59.0	62.2	64.6
Completely	18.0	17.4	18.6	17.7
do not know/refusal	2.8	4.8	1.7	1.2

Note: The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 1.2 “Trust in people” in 2021 (N = 3402), 2022 (N = 3459), 2023 (N = 3519), and 2024 (N = 3172).



# Indicators over time

- Dimension 1.3 – Acceptance of diversity

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>How much you trust: People of another religion</b>				
not at all	22.0	20.7	20.9	20.8
not very much/somewhat	58.6	58.1	61.0	60.8
Completely	14.6	15.4	14.9	15.3
do not know/refusal	4.8	5.7	3.2	3.0
<b>How much you trust: People of another nationality</b>				
not at all	25.4	24.6	25.7	25.8
not very much/somewhat	55.9	56.9	59.0	59.8
Completely	13.4	13.0	12.7	12.4
do not know/refusal	5.3	5.5	2.6	2.0
<b>How much you trust: Black South Africans</b>				
not at all	18.1	18.6	16.8	15.8
not very much/somewhat	58.6	58.2	62.5	63.9
Completely	19.4	17.8	18.9	18.8
do not know/refusal	3.9	5.4	1.8	1.5
<b>How much you trust: White South Africans</b>				
not at all	24.5	26.4	25.9	29.1
not very much/somewhat	54.3	56.2	59.0	56.1
Completely	16.6	11.7	12.7	13.0
do not know/refusal	4.6	5.7	2.4	1.8
<b>How much you trust: Colored South Africans</b>				
not at all	26.0	26.7	25.8	28.5
not very much/somewhat	53.6	55.9	57.8	58.9
Completely	15.1	11.4	13.9	10.8
do not know/refusal	5.3	6.0	2.5	1.8

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 1.3 “Acceptance of diversity” in 2021 (N = 3402), 2022 (N = 3459), 2023 (N = 3519), and 2024 (N = 3172).

# Indicators over time

- Dimension 2.1 – Identification

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
I am proud to be South African				
strongly disagree/disagree	10.6 <sup>a</sup>	13.8	17.0	13.9
neither-nor	13.1 <sup>a</sup>	15.2	11.4	9.2
agree/strongly agree	72.2 <sup>a</sup>	67.3	70.3	75.4
do not know/refusal	4.1 <sup>a</sup>	3.7	1.3	1.5
It is important to unite all South Africans				
strongly disagree/disagree	13.2	12.7	15.7	13.9
neither-nor	13.6	16.6	14.4	16.5
agree/strongly agree	70.5	65.8	67.7	67.8
do not know/refusal	2.7	4.9	2.2	1.8

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 2.1 “Identification” in 2021 ( $N = 3402$ ), 2022 ( $N = 3459$ ), 2023 ( $N = 3519$ ), and 2024 ( $N = 3172$ ).

<sup>a</sup> values stem from Khayabus 2020 – Wave 1 ( $N = 3758$ ).





# Indicators over time

- Dimension 2.2 – Trust in institutions

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Elections are free and fair.				
strongly disagree/disagree	29.5	27.6	33.4	30.6
neither-nor	19.4	20.1	17.1	17.3
agree/strongly agree	44.0	46.0	46.3	48.7
do not know/refusal	7.1	6.2	3.2	3.4
Elections in South Africa express the will of the people				
strongly disagree/disagree	25.3	27.2	28.2	28.6
neither-nor	19.7	19.3	16.6	17.2
agree/strongly agree	46.9	46.9	52.3	51.2
do not know/refusal	8.1	6.5	2.9	3.0
How well government is handling: Maintaining transparency and accountability				
not at all well/not very well	57.5	62.8	69.0	68.9
fairly well/very well	34.2	29.7	27.1	26.5
do not know/refusal	8.3	7.5	3.9	4.6
How likely are you to: Trust Parliament				
not at all likely/not very likely	28.7 <sup>a</sup>	28.1	42.5	38.3
neither-nor	23.1 <sup>a</sup>	25.8	20.2	20.4
very likely/extremely likely	42.1 <sup>a</sup>	37.2	33.9	37.9
do not know/refusal	6.1 <sup>a</sup>	8.9	3.4	3.4

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 2.2 “Trust in institutions” in 2021 ( $N = 3402$ ), 2022 ( $N = 3459$ ), 2023 ( $N = 3519$ ), and 2024 ( $N = 3172$ ).

<sup>a</sup> values stem from Khayabus 2020 – Wave 1 ( $N = 3758$ ).

# Indicators over time

- Dimension 2.3 – Perception of fairness

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Land expropriation without compensation is fair to all South Africans				
strongly disagree/disagree	34.5	33.0	38.1	41.2
neither-nor	19.9	21.1	20.9	18.7
agree/strongly agree	35.5	35.6	34.9	33.1
do not know/refusal	10.0	10.3	6.1	7.0
How well government is handling: Narrowing the income gap between race groups				
not at all well/not very well	62.6	63.0	68.2	65.3
fairly well/very well	29.5	28.4	26.7	29.9
do not know/refusal	7.9	8.6	5.1	4.7
How well government is handling: Fighting corruption in government				
not at all well/not very well	63.1	69.3	74.3	73.0
fairly well/very well	30.9	26.0	23.8	24.8
do not know/refusal	6.0	4.7	1.8	2.2
How well government is handling: Distributing social grants to those who are entitled to it, such as old-age pensions, disability payments, child maintenance grants				
not at all well/not very well	39.2	39.5	39.8	35.1
fairly well/very well	55.1	55.1	58.7	63.7
do not know/refusal	5.7	5.4	1.5	1.2

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 2.3 “Perception of fairness” in 2021 ( $N = 3402$ ), 2022 ( $N = 3459$ ), 2023 ( $N = 3519$ ), and 2024 ( $N = 3172$ ).



# Indicators over time

- Dimension 3.1 – Solidarity and helpfulness

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
I donate money to community organizations if I can				
strongly disagree/disagree	29.2	28.0	31.1	26.9
neither-nor	18.3	21.9	18.2	19.3
agree/strongly agree	50.2	45.7	49.1	52.2
do not know/refusal	2.3	4.4	1.6	1.6
I actively look for ways in which I can support people who are less fortunate than I am				
strongly disagree/disagree	23.1	18.7	21.4	18.0
neither-nor	17.3	22.0	19.5	20.4
agree/strongly agree	56.9	55.0	57.6	60.0
do not know/refusal	2.7	4.3	1.5	1.6

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 3.1 “Solidarity and helpfulness” in 2021 ( $N = 3402$ ), 2022 ( $N = 3459$ ), 2023 ( $N = 3519$ ), and 2024 ( $N = 3172$ ).

# Indicators over time

- Dimension 3.2 – Respect for social rules

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
And how you describe your own current feeling of personal safety: Has it ... compared to a few months ago?				
Improved	17.8	14.7	14.9	19.2
staid the same	46.9	50.1	40.2	42.5
Worsened	28.8	29.7	43.2	36.7
do not know/refusal	6.5	5.5	1.7	1.6
How well government is handling: Reducing the crime rate				
not at all well/not very well	65.8	71.9	78.3	74.9
fairly well/very well	28.1	23.5	20.7	23.5
do not know/refusal	6.1	4.6	1.0	1.6
How well government is handling: Providing safe and efficient public transport				
not at all well/not very well	50.7	53.7	57.4	56.9
fairly well/very well	42.0	40.2	40.0	40.3
do not know/refusal	7.3	6.1	2.6	2.8

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 3.2 “Respect for social rules” in 2021 ( $N = 3402$ ), 2022 ( $N = 3459$ ), 2023 ( $N = 3519$ ), and 2024 ( $N = 3172$ ).

# Indicators over time

- Dimension 3.3 – Civic participation

Indicator	%			
	2021	2022	2023	2024
How interested are you in politics and elections?				
not interested	45.3 <sup>a</sup>	48.8	45.0	42.3
somewhat interested	31.1 <sup>a</sup>	32.4	33.4	31.0
very interested	19.9 <sup>a</sup>	15.8	20.8	25.5
do not know/refusal	3.7 <sup>a</sup>	3.0	0.8	1.2
It is important to get involved in the community where you live.				
strongly disagree/disagree	11.5	9.8	12.2	10.4
neither-nor	11.0	13.9	11.0	10.0
agree/strongly agree	75.1	71.8	75.1	78.2
do not know/refusal	2.4	4.5	1.6	1.4
I actively work for the welfare of my community.				
strongly disagree/disagree	33.9	28.6	31.3	28.5
neither-nor	18.6	19.9	19.7	18.2
agree/strongly agree	44.7	46.8	47.2	51.4
do not know/refusal	2.8	4.6	1.8	1.9

*Note:* The table shows the population-weighted relative frequencies (%) of the responses to the items used to measure Dimension 3.3 “Civic participation” in 2021 ( $N = 3402$ ), 2022 ( $N = 3459$ ), 2023 ( $N = 3519$ ), and 2024 ( $N = 3172$ ).

<sup>a</sup> values stem from Khayabus 2020 – Wave 1 ( $N = 3758$ ).