



## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY INSTITUTE

### MEDIA RELEASE

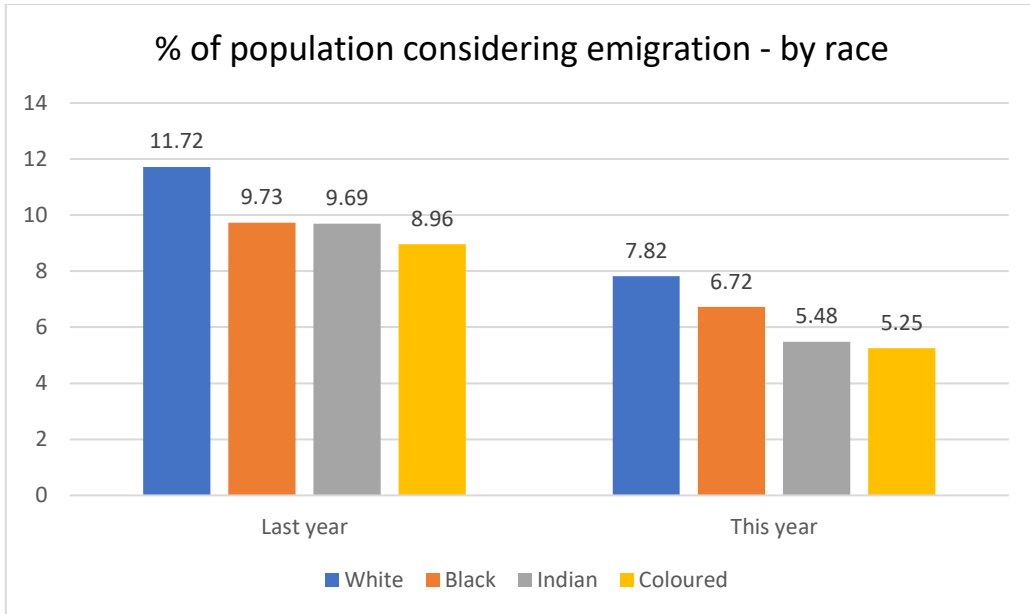
#### **INTENT TO EMIGRATE DECREASES BUT REMAINS A RISK** **Findings from the Inclusive Society Institute's *GovDem Poll***

According to a comprehensive survey conducted by the Inclusive Society Institute in late 2022, emigration continues to pose a tangible threat to the South African economy. While there is some cause for optimism, as the survey shows a decrease in the number of respondents seriously contemplating emigration compared to the previous year, it remains concerning that 9.25 percent (down from 11.13 percent) of those with higher education expressed a serious intention to emigrate within the next two years. This is particularly alarming given the existing skills shortage in the country, as losing more than nine percent of highly educated individuals would deal a significant blow to the economy.

The trend is confirmed when cross-correlating the results of respondent incomes, where 9,01 percent (previous poll: 10,35 percent) of the top earners indicated that they were seriously considering emigrating in the next year or two. Apart from the impact that a loss of skills will have on the economy, the potential loss of tax to the fiscus resulting from the high-income earners' departure needs to be borne in mind.

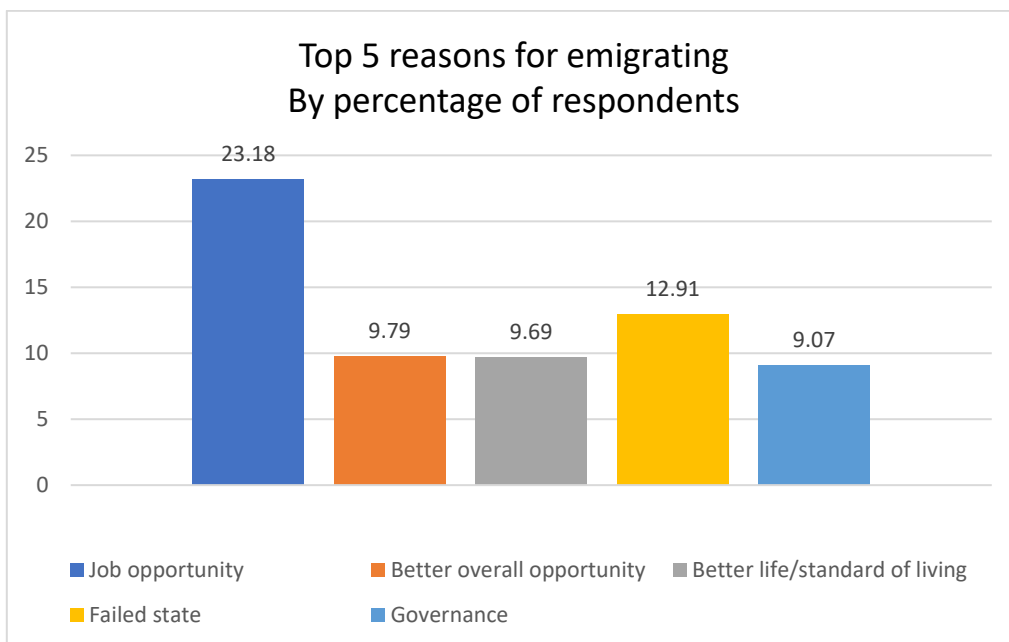
#### **Similar trends across race groups**

It appears that race is not a material driving force behind the motivation to emigrate, since similar trends are found among white and black respondents. Whilst white respondents still registered the highest interest in emigrating, namely 7,82 percent (previous poll: 11,72 percent), black respondents at 6,72 percent (previous poll: 9,73 percent) were not far behind. Indian and coloured respondents lagged somewhat behind their white and black compatriots. 5,48 percent (previous poll: 9,69 percent) of Indian respondents and 5,25 percent (previous poll: 8,96 percent) of coloured respondents suggested that they wanted to emigrate.



### Opportunity the driving force

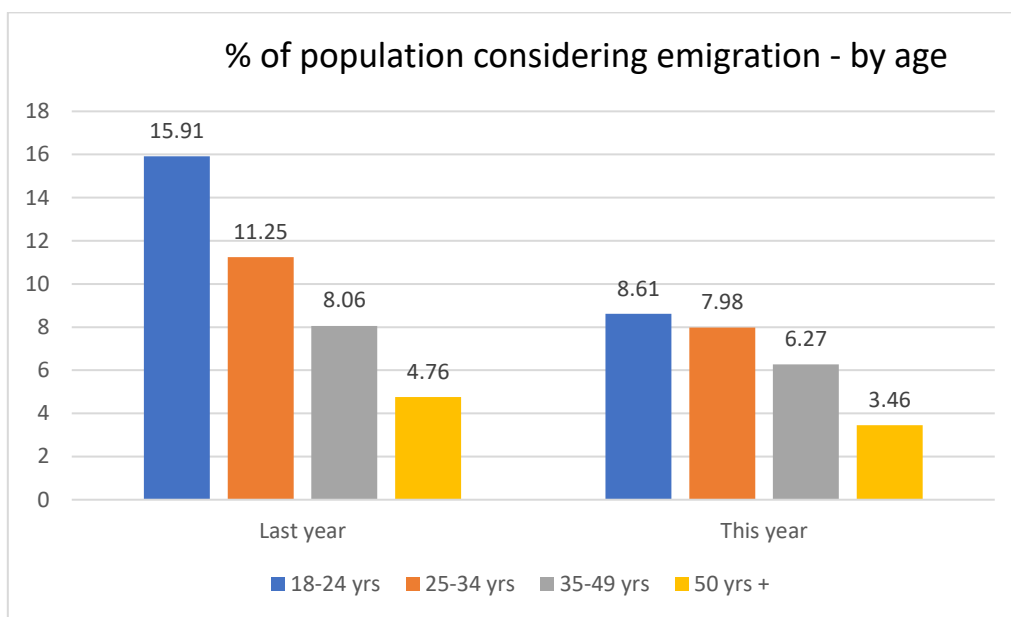
Respondents indicating their intention to emigrate were mainly driven by economic and personal well-being considerations. Three of the top five reasons for emigration suggested this. 23,18 percent (previous poll: 24,26 percent) of respondents that indicated that they were considering emigration (22,86 percent of those with higher education and 16,90 percent of higher income earners) cited better job opportunities as the rationale for their consideration, whilst 9,79 percent (previous poll: 8,36 percent) suggested overall better opportunity and 9,69 percent (previous poll: 5,42 percent) cited a better life/standard of living as the reason. A failing South African state and bad governance were the other contenders in the top five.



### Younger people remain most vulnerable group

As may be expected, given the high youth unemployment statistics and greater flexibility of younger people to emigrate (e.g., single, early stage of career, still building asset base), the aspiration to emigrate seems to reduce the older people become. In this poll it, as in the last poll, still proves to be significantly so. More than two and a half times the respondents in the 18–24-year-old category, considered emigrating than those respondents over the age of 50.

The results of the poll show that as people get older, their intention to emigrate declines. In the category 18-24 years, 8,61 percent (previous poll: 15,91 percent) were considering emigration. In the category 25-34 years, it reduced to 7,98 percent (previous poll: 11,25 percent). In the category 35-49 years this went down to 6,27 percent (previous poll: 8,06 percent). And in the category 50 years and older it was only 3,46 percent (previous poll: 4,76 percent).



### Top five emigration destinations

It is mainly developed economies, and English-speaking countries, that seem to appeal to those considering emigration. The previous year’s outlier, Germany, which then came in third, was this year pipped by another outlier, Botswana. Germany still registered amongst the top five preferred destinations, whilst Canada fell out of the top five preferred destinations.

The top five emigration destinations are:

2022			2023		
Country	Percentage		Country	Percentage	
1	United States of America	23,88	1	United States of America	15,80
2	United Kingdom	14,87	2	United Kingdom	14,87
3	Germany	9,94	3	Australia	9,19
4	Canada	6,32	4	Botswana	7,14
5	Australia	4,69	5	Germany	7,13

## **Conclusions**

It appears that the number of South Africans considering emigration is on the decline. Considering the current skills deficit in the country, this may be due to many that considered moving abroad having already done so.

Nevertheless, the country is still at risk of losing more than nine percent of its working age population. Of even greater concern is the number of educated and high-income earners considering emigration. For any economy to lose so many of its qualified workforce is problematic, more so in an economy such as ours, which lacks skills and expertise.

The risk is real. The South African economy is not providing enough job opportunities for the educated and high-income earners to grow. This against a backdrop of developed economies – including those favoured most by the respondents – that have a qualified jobs deficit and are actively seeking especially qualified individuals to relocate to their shores.

The driving motivation behind emigration from South Africa appears, in the main, economic and wellbeing opportunity. There is little evidence in the poll to suggest that politics, race and or cultural assimilation play much of a role in emigration decisions. But the perception of South Africa being a failed state and bad governance are issues that drive emigration.

The inherent danger that emigration holds for the current stagnant and job-losing South African economy, is that it is also driving too many qualified people abroad, which in turn, because of the skills deficit in the economy, further reduces its ability to perform optimally. And optimal performance is needed to expand GDP and employment growth.

## **Note**

The poll was undertaken by Ipsos on behalf of the Inclusive Society Institute. The data was captured in late 2022.

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