



## INCLUSIVE SOCIETY INSTITUTE

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **MISTRUST IN IMMIGRANTS THREATENS SOCIAL COHESION** **Findings from the Inclusive Society Institute's *GovDem Survey***

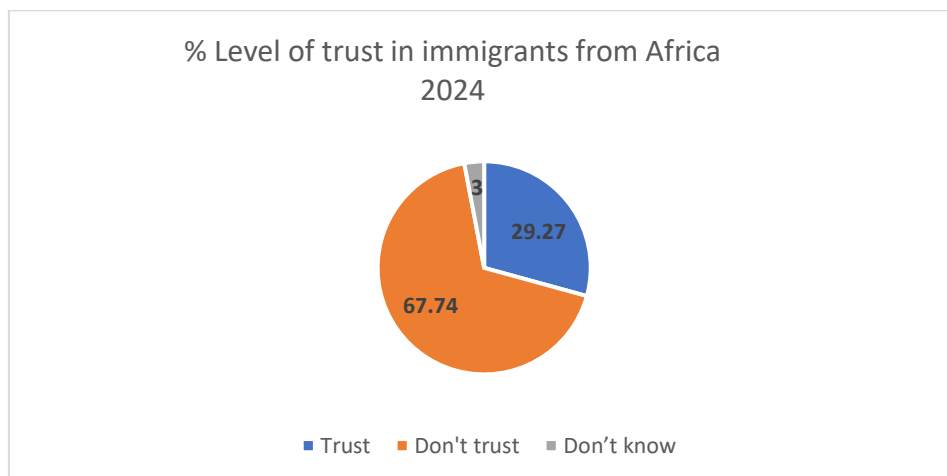
As unemployment remains stubbornly high and the anti-immigrant narrative is heightened, mistrust between South Africans and immigrants from Africa is deepening. Nationally, more than two-thirds of respondents indicated that they did not trust immigrants from Africa very much or at all.

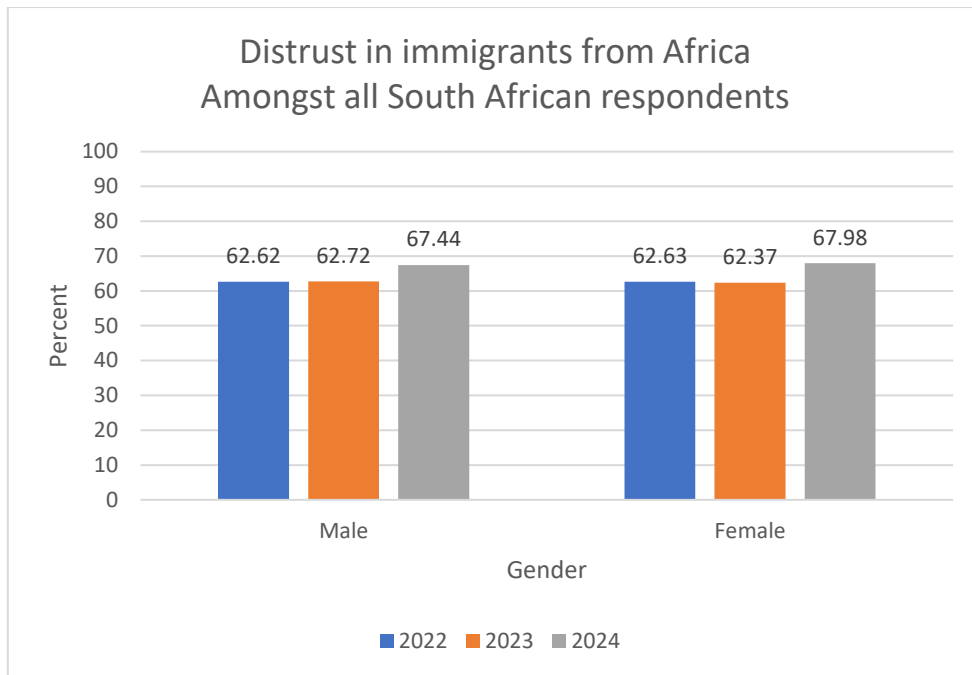
The *GovDem survey* suggest that generally speaking, there is not enough trust in South Africa to sufficiently underpin social cohesion. But in particular, the alarmingly high level of mistrust of immigrants from Africa, suggests that the country should stop and take note and that the political narrative be toned down so as not to inflame the precarious level of mistrust. The early signs of xenophobic instability is evidenced in the sporadic incidents of xenophobia in the country.

The lack of trust runs across most dimensions, be it race, gender, age, education, income or political party. The survey shows that no progress has been made since the previous year in improving the relationship between South Africans and immigrants from Africa. In fact, it has slipped further.

#### **Immigrants from Africa**

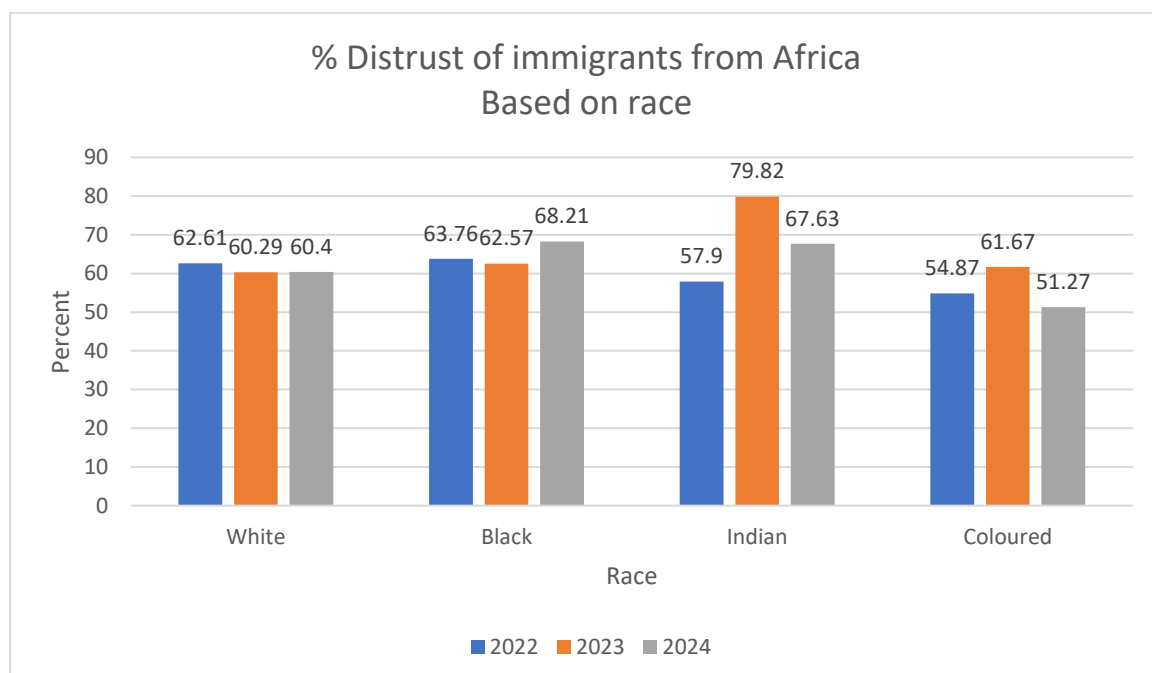
Overall, only 29,27 percent (previous survey: 31,21 percent) of respondents said they completely trusted or somewhat trusted immigrants from African countries, with only a slight differentiation between men and women respondents. 67,44 percent (previous survey: 62,72 percent) of the male and 67,98 percent (previous survey: 62,37 percent) of female respondents either did not trust immigrants very much or at all.





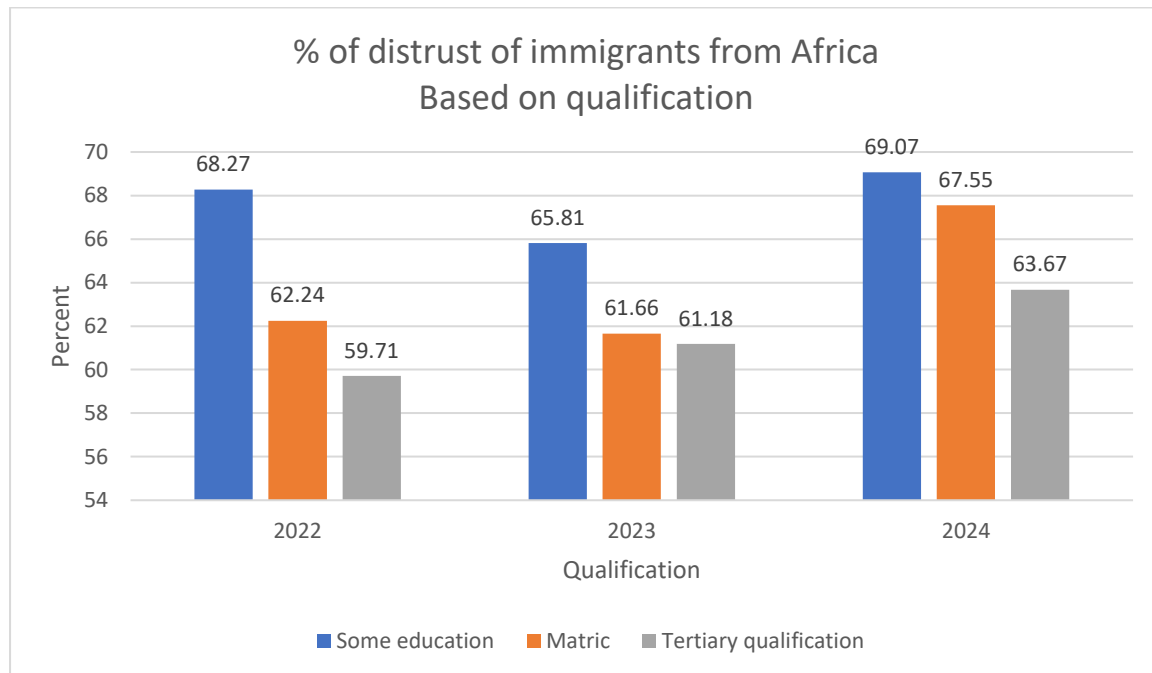
*Based on race*

Mistrust of immigrants from Africa deepened amongst all South Africans. Respondents from the Indian and coloured communities saw significant improvements, but only to the extent that they now reflected the average South African. 67,63 percent of the Indian respondents (previous survey: 79,82 percent) and 51,27 percent of the coloured respondents (previous survey: 61,67 percent) indicated that they did not trust immigrants from Africa very much or at all. The survey suggests that the level of trust of immigrants from Africa amongst the white respondents remained more or less in line with the results from the previous survey, but had deepened significantly amongst black respondents. This was 60,40 percent (previous survey: 60,29 percent) and 68,21 percent (previous survey: 62,57 percent) of white and black respondents respectively.



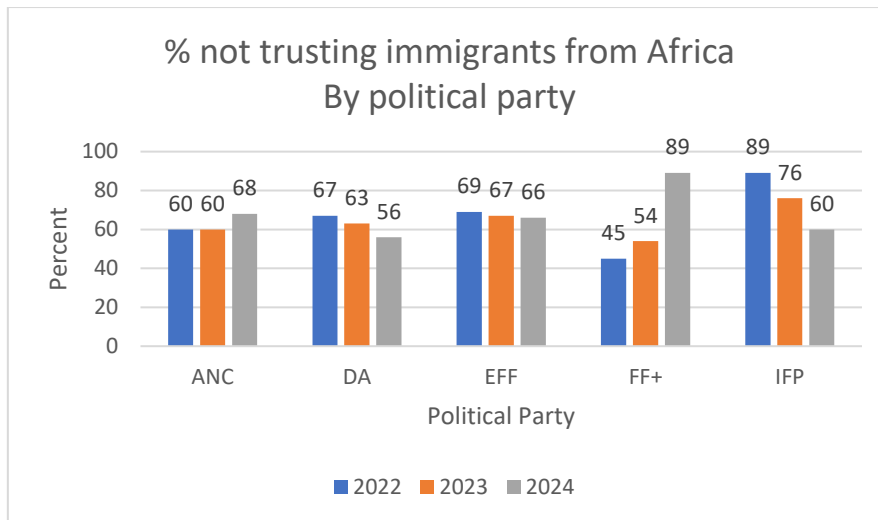
### *Based on education*

The survey results suggest that the more educated South Africans are, the more likely they are willing to trust African immigrants, albeit that the distrust amongst all groups remained shockingly high and had deepened since the previous survey. 69,07 percent (previous survey: 65,81 percent) of respondents with some high schooling either did not trust immigrants very much or at all. For those that had matric the distrust deepened to 67,55 percent (previous survey: 61,66 percent), and for those with higher education it was 63,67 percent (previous survey: 61,18 percent).



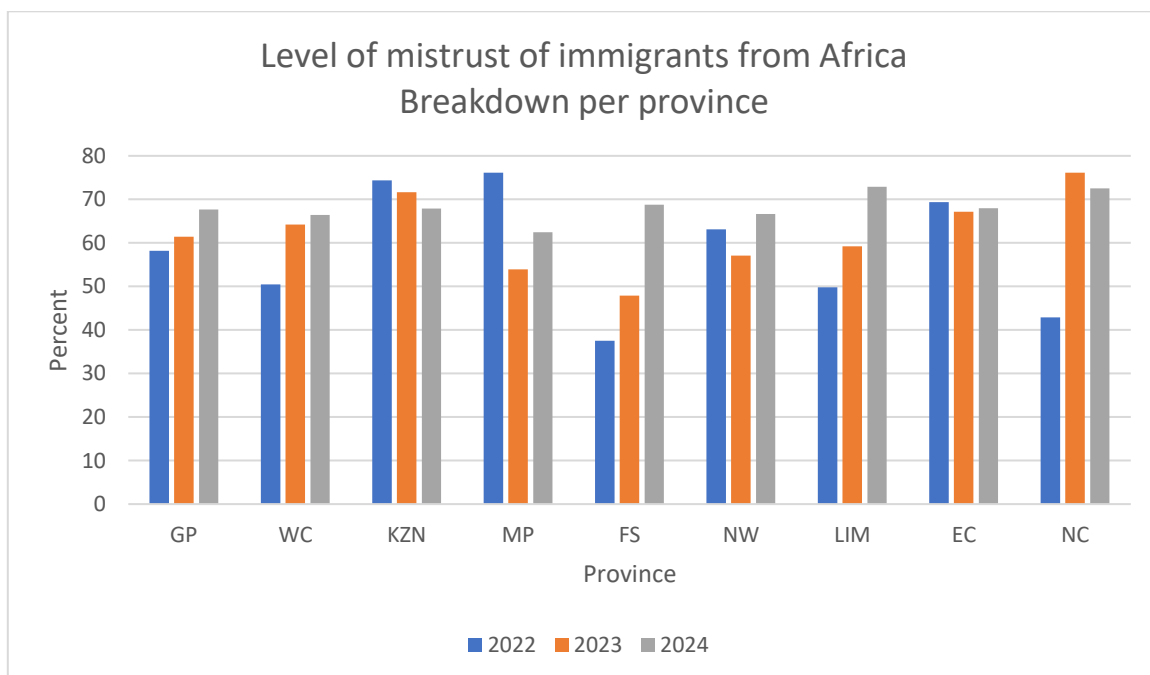
### *Based on political party support*

There is a high level of distrust of immigrants from Africa amongst the supporters from all of the political parties. DA supporters appear to be the most trusting. 56, 26 percent (previous survey: 62,5 percent) of DA supporters either did not trust these immigrants very much or at all. The FF+ supporters were the most distrusting, which was quite a turnaround from the previous survey where they were the most trusting. In this survey, 88,93 percent indicated that they did not trust immigrants from Africa very much or at all (previous survey: 53,97 percent). The IFP supporters were becoming more tolerant, with 60,37 percent indicating that they did not trust immigrants from Africa very much or at all. In the previous survey, at 75,98 percent, they were the most distrusting.



*Based on provinces*

In all provinces a majority of respondents indicated that they do not trust immigrants from Africa very much or at all. In the previous survey a small majority of Free State respondents trusted immigrants from Africa – this had now evaporated. Limpopo, closely followed by the Northern Cape emerged as the most distrusting of immigrants from Africa. Most provinces reflected an increase in distrust of immigrants from Africa, with Kwazulu-Natal bucking the trend by registering a sustained improvement.



**Conclusion**

There is a worrying low level of trust between South Africans in all demographic groups, be it race, gender, age, education, income, political party or province, and immigrants from Africa. This does not bode well for social cohesion and presents a serious socio-political risk within an environment which is prone to xenophobic confrontation.

The Inclusive Society Institute has previously cautioned authorities to heed these warning signs and to ensure that social interventions are undertaken to improve relationships between the local and immigrant communities. The anti-immigrant narrative remains high and it appears to have a negative impact on societal attitudes towards the immigrants from Africa. Political leaders will do well to reverse opportunistic negative political narratives. Flaming the anti-immigrant sentiment must not form part of the parties' election rhetoric.

According to Stats SA mid-year population estimates, 3,98 million foreign born persons – legal and illegal - were living in South Africa, which is a far call from the figures of between 8 and 13 million which are regularly bandied about. Commentators would, in the interest of tolerance and harmonious co-existence, do well by not further inflaming the already highly charged environment through over-exaggeration.

Th Institute again implores policymakers to in the interest of national stability give urgent attention to this predisposition of our society.

**Note**

The survey was undertaken by Ipsos on behalf of the Inclusive Society Institute.

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