

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
Cape Town, South Africa
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News release

South Africans give the government a failing grade on immigration, split on how to manage immigrant influx

A majority of South Africans say the government is doing a poor job of managing immigration, an issue that is back in the headlines after recent xenophobic attacks in Durban.

Findings from the 2018 Afrobarometer survey show that a large majority of South Africans express tolerance toward immigrants and people from different ethnic groups.

But they are divided on three policy proposals discussed as part of the government's 2017 White Paper on International Migration, including barring foreigners from working in South Africa, keeping refugees in camps, and maintaining an open door for foreigners facing political persecution in their own countries.

Key findings

- A majority of South Africans (62%) say the government is doing "fairly badly" or "very badly" in managing immigration issues (Figure 1).
- Large majorities of South Africans say they would like or not mind having an immigrant (69%) or a person from a different ethnic group (84%) as a neighbour (Figure 2).
- About half of respondents support proposals to bar foreigners from working in South Africa because they take jobs and benefits away from citizens (50%) and to manage the influx of foreigners by keeping refugees in camps (48%). Only 37% "agree" or "strongly agree" that South Africa "should always accept people who are persecuted for political reasons in their own countries" (Figure 3).

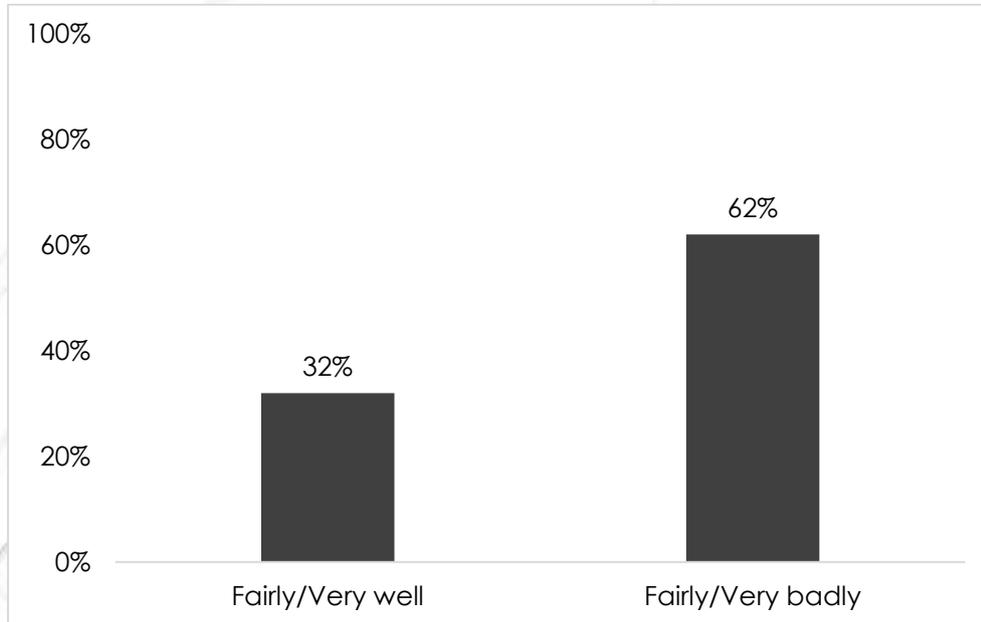
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys were completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus 94 Research, interviewed 1,800 adult South Africans in August and September 2018. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015.

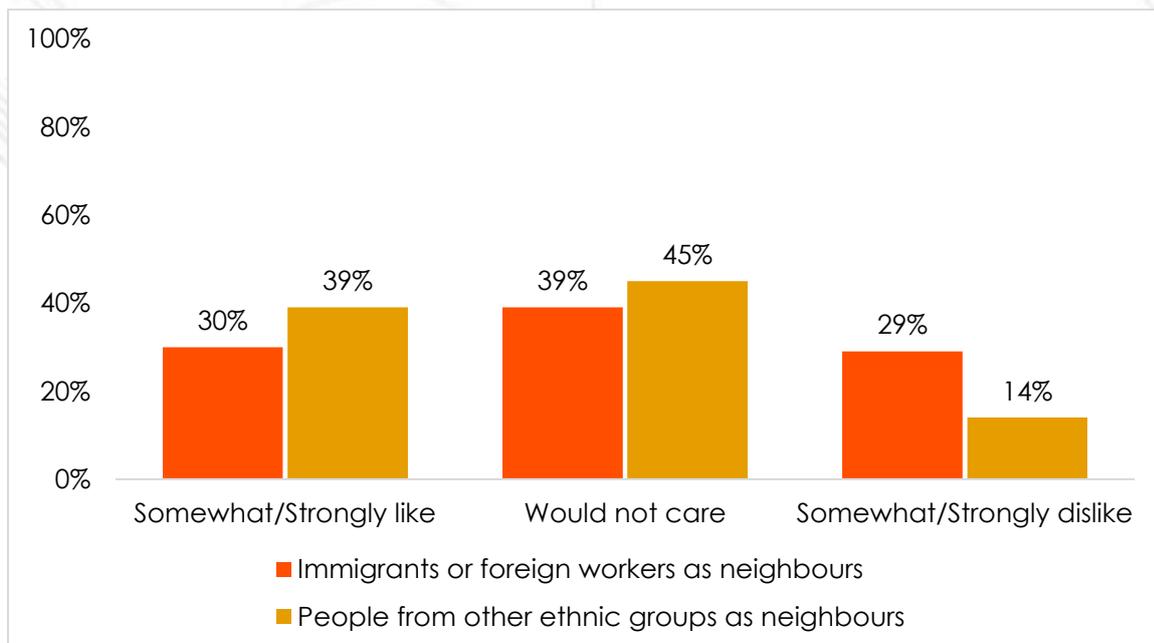
Charts

Figure 1: Government performance on managing immigration | South Africa | 2018



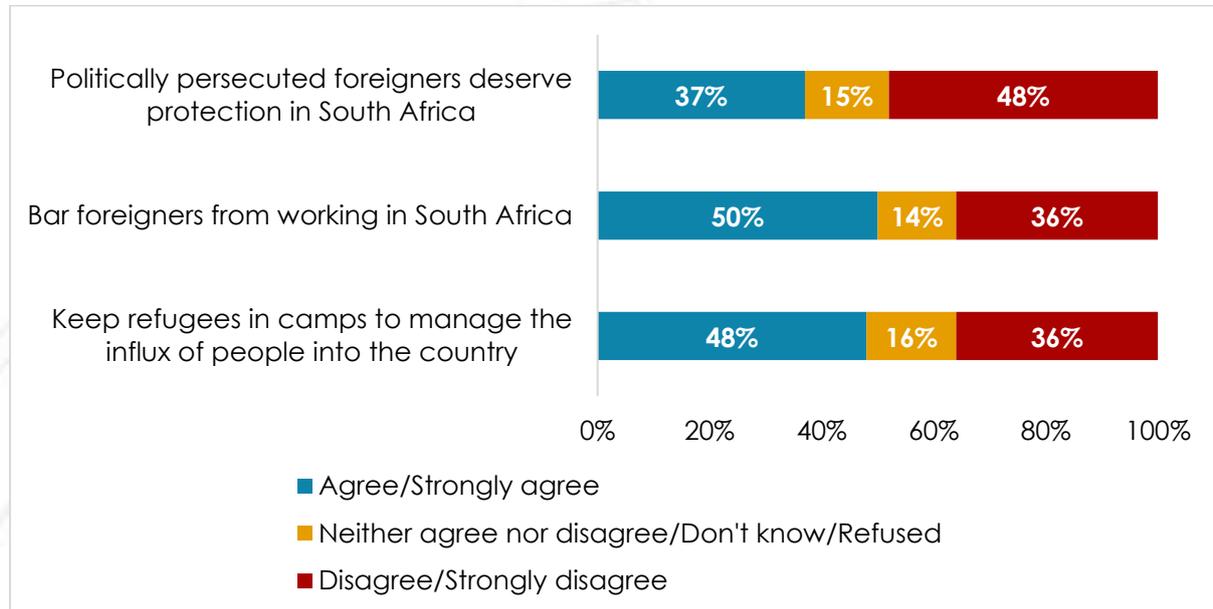
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Managing immigration?

Figure 2: Tolerance toward immigrants and people from other ethnic groups | South Africa | 2018



Respondents were asked: For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Immigrants or foreign workers? People from other ethnic groups?

Figure 3: Attitudes regarding immigration | South Africa | 2018



Respondents were asked: I would like now to ask you about a number of proposals on how South Africa should handle the issue of immigrants and refugees. For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree, or haven't heard enough to say:

South Africa should always accept people who are persecuted for political reasons in their own countries.

The government should not allow foreigners to work in South Africa because they take jobs and benefits away from South Africans.

The government proposal to keep all refugees in camps is a good way of managing the influx of people into the country.

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