

# Press Release

## For immediate release

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South African Institute of Race Relations  
*The power of ideas*

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#### **Racial goodwill in South Africa an important reason for hope**

The SA Institute of Race Relations (IRR) celebrates Human Rights Day with the release of its latest research showing that relations between South Africans of different races are mainly positive, with an overwhelming majority believing that ‘the different races need each other for progress and there should be equal opportunities for all’.

The report, ‘Race Relations in South Africa: Reasons for Hope 2018 – Holding the Line’, underscores the IRR’s conviction that the values and opinions of ordinary South Africans justify optimism in the country’s future.

The report cautions against complacency, however, noting that “racial rhetoric has increased minority fears and encouraged blacks to see South Africa as a country in which whites, in particular, must now take second place”.

‘Race Relations in South Africa: Reasons for Hope 2018 – Holding the Line’ is based on a poll commissioned by the IRR and conducted in December 2017 among a representative sample of South Africans.

Against the backdrop of various disturbing racial incidents in 2017, most of which earned considerable attention in the media, the poll shows that 77% of black respondents have never personally experienced racism. The same percentage (77%) believes that, ‘with better education and more jobs, the differences between the races will disappear’. The poll also finds that 90% of black respondents believe that ‘the different races need each other for progress and there should be equal opportunities for all’.

However, as author of the report IRR Head of Policy Research Dr Anthea Jeffery notes: “It is important to guard against complacency on race issues, for 61% of black respondents also agree that ‘South Africa is now a country for black Africans and whites must take second place’”.

Overall, though, the “mainly positive” results “should once again fill the country with hope”, Jeffery says.

Key findings in the poll are that

- 63% of black South Africans think race relations have improved since 1994, while 16% think race relations have remained much the same since then;
- Close on 80% of all respondents and 77% of blacks agreed that better education and more jobs would in time 'make the present differences between the races steadily disappear';
- 'Creating more jobs', 'improving education' and 'fighting crime' were the three top issues which most South Africans wanted the government to focus on;
- Only 5% of all respondents (and 4% of blacks) wanted the government to concentrate on 'fighting racism'. In addition, a mere 1% of black respondents wanted the government to focus on 'speeding up affirmative action', while the same proportion of blacks (1%) wanted it concentrate on 'speeding up land reform';
- More than two-thirds of all respondents (67%) agreed that the focus in hiring should be on merit, rather than race, with 62% of blacks endorsing this view;
- Two thirds of all respondents agreed that politicians are exaggerating the problems posed by racism and colonialism in order to excuse their own shortcomings. A high proportion of black respondents (62%, or close on a two-thirds majority) agreed with this statement; and
- Almost 60% of all respondents agreed that, in selecting sports teams, the best players should always be picked, even if representivity was then not evident. Support for this was particularly strong among whites (91%), coloureds (77%) and Indians (67%). A little over half of black respondents (51%) also endorsed this perspective.

Says Jeffery: "Racial goodwill is still strong, as the IRR's 2017 field survey shows. This is an important and very positive phenomenon. It is also a tribute to the perceptiveness and sound common sense of most South Africans. Despite the urgings of politicians and many other commentators, most ordinary people have avoided over-simplifying complex issues by blaming them on race. This provides the country with important reason for hope."

**Ends.**