

Life in South Africa: Reasons for Hope

South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Report

November 2016

The following text comes from the SAIRR Report:

“This report is about the things that have gone right in South Africa. It features a selection of the socio-economic successes we have achieved as a country and the many ways in which life has become better. Some people will think it an odd time to release such a report. The context is one in which the economy is not performing strongly. Too many people are unemployed. There is a great deal of corruption. Violent protests are commonplace. Questions are being asked about the future of South Africa’s democracy.

“But amidst the turmoil, SAIRR analysts see the story of a young democracy that has made a vast amount of progress in fields ranging from the economy and employment to living standards, poverty, education, healthcare and crime. This is not captured by screaming newspaper headlines but by the substantive progress we have made as a country since the end of apartheid. It is a story of hope amid change.

“Not for a moment does this report discount the many serious problems our country faces. Rather, it tries to introduce some perspective and show that South Africans have much to be hopeful for despite current difficulties. Most importantly, we should not lose sight of the gains the country has made, lest we become too pessimistic and cynical about our future and fail to build on the solid foundations that have been laid over the past two decades.

There is definitely a lot of good achieved over the past twenty years. The SAIRR expresses its gratitude to the trustees of the Millennium Trust for investing in this project.”

The Journalist has extracted some facts from this report to support these conclusions. For the full report, see <http://irr.org.za/reports-and-publications/occasional-reports/files/life-in-south-africa-reasons-for-hope.pdf>.

SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OUR COUNTRY OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

- In 2015, the South African economy was 85% bigger in real terms (ignoring changes in price levels) than it was in 1994.
- Crime decline. Murder rate, though still unacceptably high, has fallen from 68 per 100 000 in the 1995/96 financial year to 34 per 100 000 in the 2015/2016 year
- Economy: our inflation rate has virtually halved from 9% to 4.6%
- Since 1992/93, there has been a clear decline in 10-year government bond yields. This means that the South African government has been able to access capital (to invest in infrastructure development, for example) more cheaply than was the case in the 1990s.
- Despite problem of unemployment, the total number of persons with jobs almost doubled from 7 971 000 to 15 657 000.

- Living conditions: households which have access to formal housing have risen by 131% since 1996. This means that 1 042 formal houses have been built every day.
- Enrolments at tertiary institutions increased in the 1985 – 2014 period by staggering 281.4%
- Increase in African students from 19.8% to 70.1%
- The number of households with access to piped water has increased by 110,4% since 1996. This translates to a daily increase of 1 094.
- The number of households with access to electricity for cooking has increased by 228,5% since 1996. This translates to an average daily change of 1 335.
- Black South Africans passing Grade 12 have increased from just 259 in 1955 to 369 903 in 2015.
- The proportion of all graduates who graduated with awards in the SET fields has increased from 27.8% to 30%.
- There has been a substantial decline in the number of new HIV infections over the period – the number has fallen by half.
- Over the period 1998 to 2015, there was a 50.4% increase in professional nurses, while the number of enrolled nurses increased by over 100%.
- The number of general practitioners in the public sector has increased by 79,9%, while the number of specialists increased by 28,5%