

A research report by the Breaking Down Borders Africa  
Initiative



## **BDBA REPORT:**

**African Youth Perceptions and  
Apathy for Racial Injustice and  
Xenophobia**

# Table of Contents

BREAKING DOWN BORDERS AFRICA INITIATIVE |  
TOOLKIT SERIES RESEARCH REPORT: AFRICAN YOUTH,  
XENOPHOBIA AND RACIAL INTOLERANCE

## INTRODUCTION

1

## CONCEPTS

2

## RESEARCH DESIGN

3

## FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

6



# 1. INTRODUCTION

# Introduction

Globalization and the movement of people is one of the themes that have characterized the twenty-first century. Today, most nations are rapidly morphing into multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies. These movements make people even more vulnerable to xenophobia, racism and discrimination.

This study aims to unpack the status of the reality faced by an ever- increasing number of people on the move. There is a significant absence of literature and research specifically about how this issue affects the youth in Africa. There is a growing need for research such as this one specifically. Since the emergence and increase of “third culture kids”, over the last few decades that requires more of their unique experiences and the impact of that growing up in a globalized world has on them, to be documented.

Many of the discrimination that exists and even erupts into violent attacks, in Africa, today are the result of actions and inactions that were established towards the end of the twentieth century when many African countries gained independence.



The aftermath in some instances led to political instability which gave rise to the increase in the movement of people. Focusing on the youth is important in this context due to the rich amount of personal experience that they possess and how their behaviour today will shape the occurrences in the near future.



## 1.1. Problem Statement

The study will aim to gain insight into the level of discernment that African Youth have towards xenophobia and racial intolerance. It is important to mention that there is a significant absence of literature that focuses on this particular group.

## 1.2. Purpose Statement

This study aims to explore how African youth perceive diversity based on the different lived, witnessed experiences and schooling environment.

## 1.3. Research question

What are African youth perceptions, understanding and apathy on xenophobia and racial intolerance?



## 1.4. Objectives

- To identify youth opinions and experiences of xenophobia and racial discrimination.
- To outline the factors that contribute towards the continuation of these forms of prejudice and discrimination.
- To understand the role of youth activism and participation in addressing these issues.

## 1.5. Limitations

The African continent is rich in cultures and languages, and this can pose an issue with communication. The survey will be made available in English and French in attempt to accommodate more participants.

Additionally, Africa has a large youth population, in the hundreds of millions, this project sample size was small with 100 participants, the findings are not reflective of all African youth but rather a focus group of youth within the larger community of African youth.





# 2. CONCEPTS



## 2.1. Conceptualization

TERM	DEFINITION
Xenophobia	Attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity OHCHR (2001:2)
Perception	The Longman Dictionary of contemporary English defines perception as:  a) the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like  b)the way you notice things with your senses of sight, hearing, etc  c)the natural ability to understand or notice things quickly
Racism	An ideological construct that assigns a certain race and/or ethnic group to a position of power over others on the basis of physical and cultural attributes as well as economic wealth, involving hierarchical relations where the “superior” race exercises domination and control over others.

**According to the Declaration on Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance against Migrants and Trafficked Persons:**

Discrimination	Discrimination can be defined as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour descent or national or ethnic origin which has the effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms (1965)
----------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

TERM	DEFINITION
Injustice	"violation of right of another" according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary
Intolerance	"is equated with prejudice as generalized negativity or antipathy toward a group of people that is different from oneself in various respects, often because of feelings of threat" Verkuyten et al (2020:467)

## 2.2. Theoretical approaches

### 2.2.1. Isolation theory

Social isolation theory can be used to analyse multiple forms of prejudices including racial discrimination and xenophobia particularly because of the position to distinguish between "us" and "them". This oversimplified manifestation of misinformed fundamental positions based on the presumption that one group is superior and isolates the other. In the context of xenophobia, a dangerous form of exaggerated nationalism has been observed for many generations. "Nationalism was seen as a social and political phenomenon contributing to the marginalization and/or exclusion of non-nationals in a social and national setting" Crush et al (2009:4)

### 2.2.2. Scapegoating theory/hypothesis

According to Allport (1954:255) the scape-goat theory is a sociological theory which examines prejudice in the context of social transition and change. He further explains that frustrations lead to prejudice especially amongst disadvantaged people and in so doing they identify a scapegoat who are usually foreigners. These sorts of sentiments have the potential to have disastrous effects especially when they are expressed by notable politicians and media. These ideas can easily influence people as they are easily absorbed even by children, who learn from their parents. This education directly influences their behaviour outside of the home and creates a cycle of hate based on unfounded information.

## 2.3. Literature Review



### 2.3.1. Xenophobia, racism and its coexistence

It is possible to explore multiple forms of prejudice at a time when there are striking similarities between the basis of the prejudice concerned. For example, in the context of this study, “xenophobic rhetoric or actions may also intersect with racism to serve as interrelated and mutually supporting forms of oppression” Yakushko (2009:47). In fact, it is possible for an individual to be both xenophobic and racist towards one person at the same time.

It’s also important to understand that some people are unaware that they are racist or xenophobic. Subtle behaviors such as racial slurs, comments perpetuating harmful stereotypes and invalidating peoples’ experiences and soft but harmful forms of transporting the problem. “The ethnic and racial inequalities implied by discrimination or racism would be inconsistent with official ideologies of liberal democracies, and thus instead recognizing such imperfections, it is more expedient to deny them or explain them away as characteristics of the victims, or as temporary phenomenon of transition for new immigrants. Furthermore ... as long as the existence of racism is denied, it also denies the need for anti-racist and anti-discrimination legislation” Van Dijk (1996)



Demonstrators march against the wave of xenophobic attacks in Khayelitsha township, South Africa (May 2008). (REUTERS/THE BIGGER PICTURE)

### 2.3.2. South Africa

After South Africa emerged from the end of apartheid, a long period characterized by extreme racism and injustice, it was almost immediately confronted with the issue of xenophobia. The context of South Africa is particularly complex because of the overlapping of racism and xenophobia. The youth in South Africa are very familiar with xenophobia as the country has been exposed to it frequently in the last two decades.

“The explosion of xenophobic violence in South Africa’s poorer urban communities in May 2008 led to over 60 deaths (including several by grotesque necklacing method of burning people alive), numerous assaults and injuries and widespread damage to property owned by foreign nationals” Crush et al (2008:11). Unfortunately, because of this ongoing issue, South Africa has a long-standing diplomatic issue with many other African countries as eruptions have flared up almost every year since the 2008 attacks.



<https://issafrica.org/iss-today/xenophobia-again-jeopardises-south-africas-interests-in-africa>

### 2.3.3. Libya

One form of combined racism and xenophobia that exists on the African continent that is less often spoken about is the one that exists between Northern Africa and the rest of the continent. The sentiment is generally that Northern African states identify more with the Middle East and Arab Nationalists and not Pan Africanism. A good example of this would be how it manifested in Libya. In a report to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2001, Maurice Glele-Ahanhanzo, then Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance condemned this xenophobic aggression as 'witch hunts targeting blacks'. *Fraternite Matin*, an Ivorian newspaper quoted him in an article on the 22nd of November 2000 as saying:

"Immigrants said that they were victims of racist attacks resulting in deaths, expulsions, and reparations for the luckiest... immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and especially nationals from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Chad and even Cote d'Ivoire, were treated by locals and especially by young rebels in a way reminiscent of apartheid. The authorities, who attribute this violence to clashes between gangs from black Africa, expelled several thousand back to their countries of origin."

It is particularly important to highlight the role of young rebels in the quote above as they belong to the youth of the country and already possess an intolerance that they attribute towards a particular group of people.

photo credit: Amnesty International



## 2.4. Methodology

This study will adopt an interpretivist paradigm as it will aim to analyze reality as it is experienced by the participants independently. Saunders et al. (2016) state that interpretivist approaches define truth and reality based on subjective experiences of individuals.

This paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and therefore subjective interpretation of meaning forms the truth of the matter (Saunders et al. 2016). According to Hennink et al (2011:15) the interpretivist paradigm emphasizes that human experiences and perceptions are subjectively formed and expressed, hence there is need to understand them in the context of multiple realities.

Interpretivist paradigm emerged more appropriate for the current study based its emphasis on the detailed and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm is not limited to the fixed perspectives and understanding human beings as passively respond to the social forces, rather they are actively creating reality and attach meaning to their experience. This makes interpretivist paradigm more suitable in the understanding of the effects of how participants interpret their experiences.



A low-angle photograph of a diverse group of people looking upwards. Several hands are raised in the air, some in peace signs, suggesting a moment of agreement or celebration. The background is a bright, slightly overcast sky with some green foliage visible at the bottom. A semi-transparent grey horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

# 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

# 3

## Research Design

A research design informs the knowing framework of the research study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016), a research design guides the researcher from classifying the nature of the research problem to the methodologies used to collect, analyse and present the data and research findings.

The research design for this study presents an interpretivist paradigm and uses a qualitative approach where the use of an online questionnaire is applicable.

### 3.1. Approach

This study will be qualitative in nature, and it will collect data through personal narratives of youth that have been affected by the subject matter in various ways. Qualitative methods are suitable for studying phenomenon that needs to be understood in detailed context (Scott & Garner 2013). Babbie (2014) states that in contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative data, though not generalisable helps to explain subjective research topic which can be followed up by quantifiable studies for generalisability. Qualitative research emphasizes the understanding of social phenomena through inquiry from the real world setting or context through the naturalistic approach that do not allow the researcher to manipulate the phenomena concerned.

According to Patton (2011:39) qualitative research approach gives more detailed findings and insight which cannot be reached by statistical means or numerical quantification, however, qualitative derived its findings from the real-world context where phenomena observed is occurring naturally without any kind of manipulation. Denscombe (2010) further justifies the use of qualitative approach considering its richness in deep understanding of how people perceive their social reality and ways in which they interact with the social world around them.

In this study, using a qualitative approach will enable the findings to provide a more nuanced approach into the experiences and sentiments of the participants as far as the topic is concerned. Through a questionnaire, participants will be granted an opportunity to express their opinions and detail their encounters.

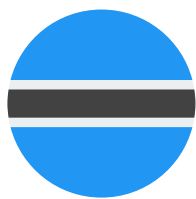
## 3.2. Population and sampling

### 3.2.1. Unit Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study included 100 youth from 22 African countries, namely:



Benin



Botswana



Burkina Faso



Burundi



Cameroon



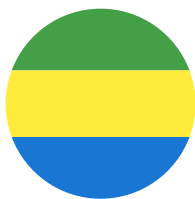
Democratic  
Republic  
of Congo



Eswatini



Ethiopia



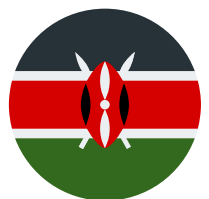
Gabon



Ghana



Ivory Coast



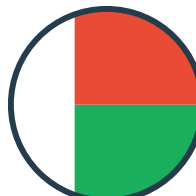
Kenya



Lesotho



Libya



Madagascar



Nigeria



South Africa



South Sudan



Togo



Uganda



Zambia



Zimbabwe

There are no prerequisites for participants to be from any specific gender, social class, nationality, race, ethnicity and religion.

### **3.2.2. Target Population**

In this study, the target population was African youth from 22 different African countries. With the survey being online, African youth could easily be accessed through publishing and sharing the link. The participants were able to complete the questionnaire during a time that is convenient for them.

### **3.2.3. Population parameters**

According to Du Plooy-Cillers et al (2014, p.133), population parameters or characteristics refers to the attributes, size, nature and unique features of which the population of the study is identified with and separate it from other contexts or groups. The population parameters for this study included African youth of all genders in 22 African countries.

### **3.2.4. Sampling**

Research generally uses two types of sampling namely probability and non-probability. Non-probability sampling is applied qualitative, while probability sampling is more often applied during quantitative research.

## **3.3. Data collection method**

The data was collected by means of an online questionnaire that was completed by the participants. All the data was collected by means of an online questionnaire. The link was shared through various social media platforms. The participants willingly partook in the research and were free to withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. Participants were free to complete the survey within measures that suit their convenience. They chose the time, location and even the preferred device to avail themselves.



## PART 1:

- Are you interested in taking part in the BDBA Toolkit Series beyond participating in this questionnaire
- I identify as :
- I identify as : (Race) Nationality
- Age
- Documentation Status
- How many languages do you speak?
- Are you associated to a particular religion? If yes, what is your religious affiliation?
- How many people live in your home?
- Do you keep abreast of current affairs and news in your home?



## PART 2:

**QUESTION:** Some people would regard the following behaviour as wrong. What is your opinion?

**RESPONSES:** Always wrong/ Usually wrong/ Sometimes wrong/ Really wrong/ Never wrong/ Not sure

1. Jokingly calling someone a racial or xenophobic slur
2. Classifying someone according to their skin colour
3. Burning down foreign-owned businesses and homes
4. Denying someone healthcare because of their status in the country
5. Rejecting an application to study because of race
6. Denying food Parcels to illegal immigrants
7. Teaching children to befriend only other children that look like them
8. Having residential areas designated to specific races
9. Associating darker complexion to criminality
10. Creating service delivery divisions because of language differences



## PART 3:

1. Immigration policies in my country are too relaxed
2. If there were less foreigners in my country, it would be more developed
3. Foreigners steal jobs
4. Foreigners contribute negatively to the economy
5. Most of the criminals in my country are foreign
6. I would feel safe living in another African country
7. I feel safe using public transport and accessing public services
8. Xenophobia as a concept is exaggerated
9. Racism is a thing of the past
10. I do not see colour
11. Today all races have access to the same opportunities
12. Racial tensions are blown out of proportion by the media
13. More needs to be done in my country to accommodate asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people
14. I have been a victim of a racially motivated incidents
15. I have been the victim of xenophobic harassment
16. I have experienced discrimination based on my religion
17. I have experienced discrimination based on nationality

## PART 3:

18. I have had to pretend to be of a different culture or nationality because of victimization
19. I have experienced discrimination because of a physical feature
20. Most victims of xenophobia in my country are Africans
21. I always come to the aid of someone who was a victim of targeted discrimination
22. I have educated friends and family members who were using racial slurs
23. I enjoy meeting people from different countries
24. I prefer to date people with the same origins as me
25. I have been told to never date a specific nationality
26. There are certain races that I could never date
27. There are certain African countries that I will never visit out of fear of racism and xenophobia
28. I would like to travel the African continent
29. My peers at school are/were racially diverse



A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a group of people. Several hands are raised in the air, some pointing upwards, suggesting a gesture of agreement, celebration, or participation. The background is a bright, slightly overcast sky with some green foliage visible at the bottom. The overall mood is positive and collaborative.

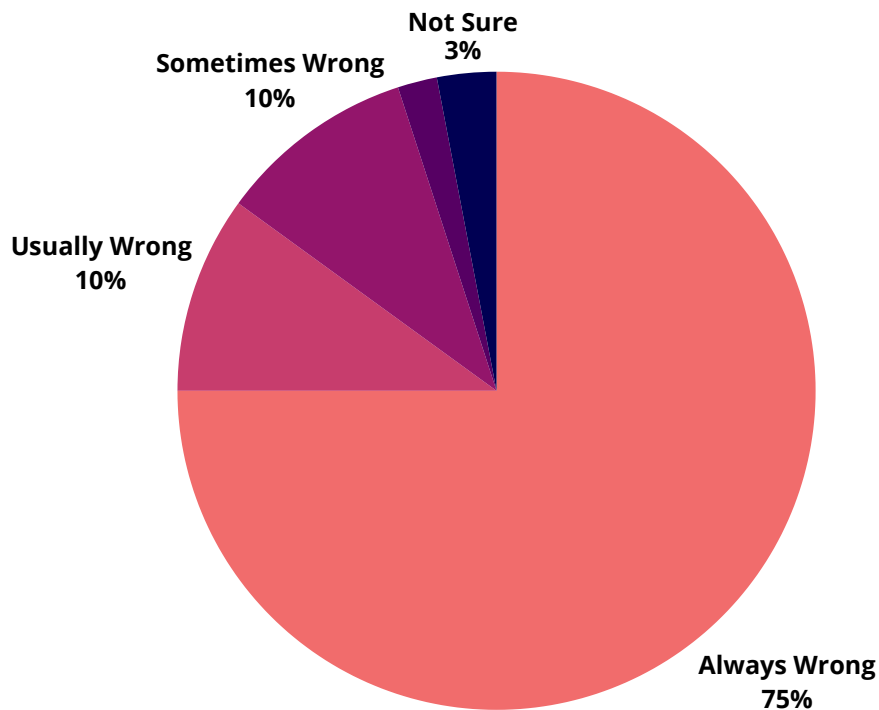
# 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

# 4

## Findings and Interpretations

**QUESTION:** Some people would regard the following behaviour as wrong. What is your opinion?

### 1. "Jokingly calling someone a racial or xenophobic slur"

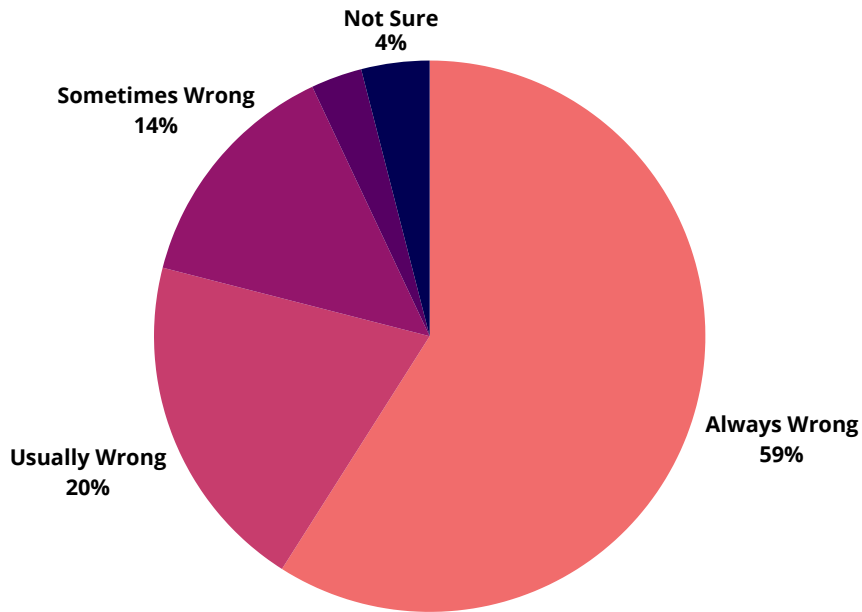


Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
75	10	10	2	3

Most participants (75%) answered that it was always wrong to jokingly call someone a racial or xenophobic slur.

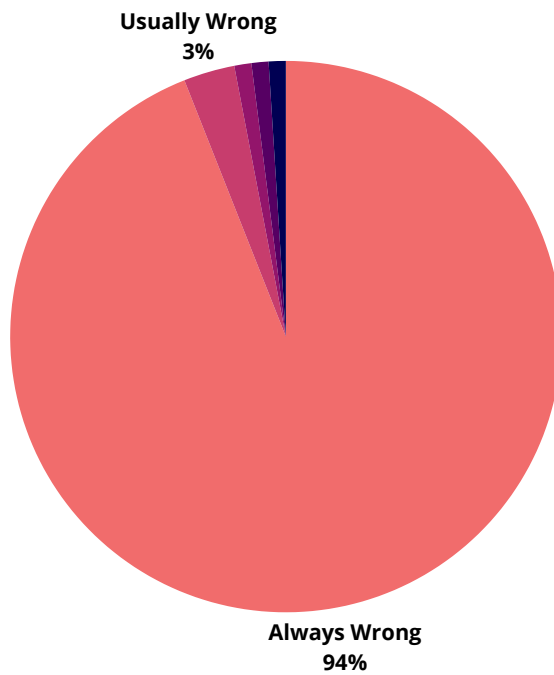
### 2. Classifying someone according to their skin colour

Most participants (59%) answered that it was always wrong to classify someone according to their skin colour.



Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
59	20	14	3	4

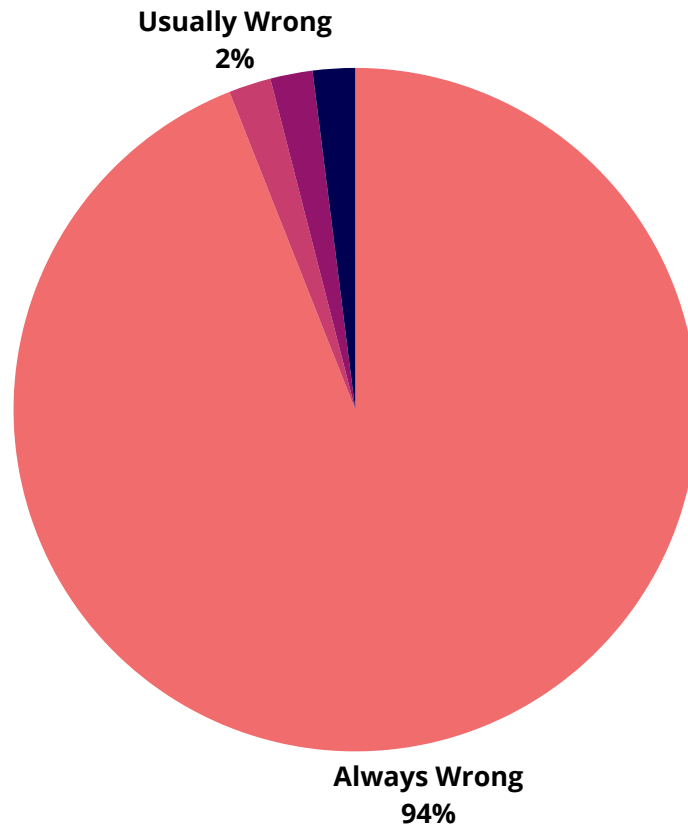
### 3. Burning down foreign-owned businesses and homes



Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
94	3	1	1	1

Most participants (94%) answered that it was always wrong to burn down foreign-owned businesses.

#### 4. Denying someone healthcare because of their status in the country

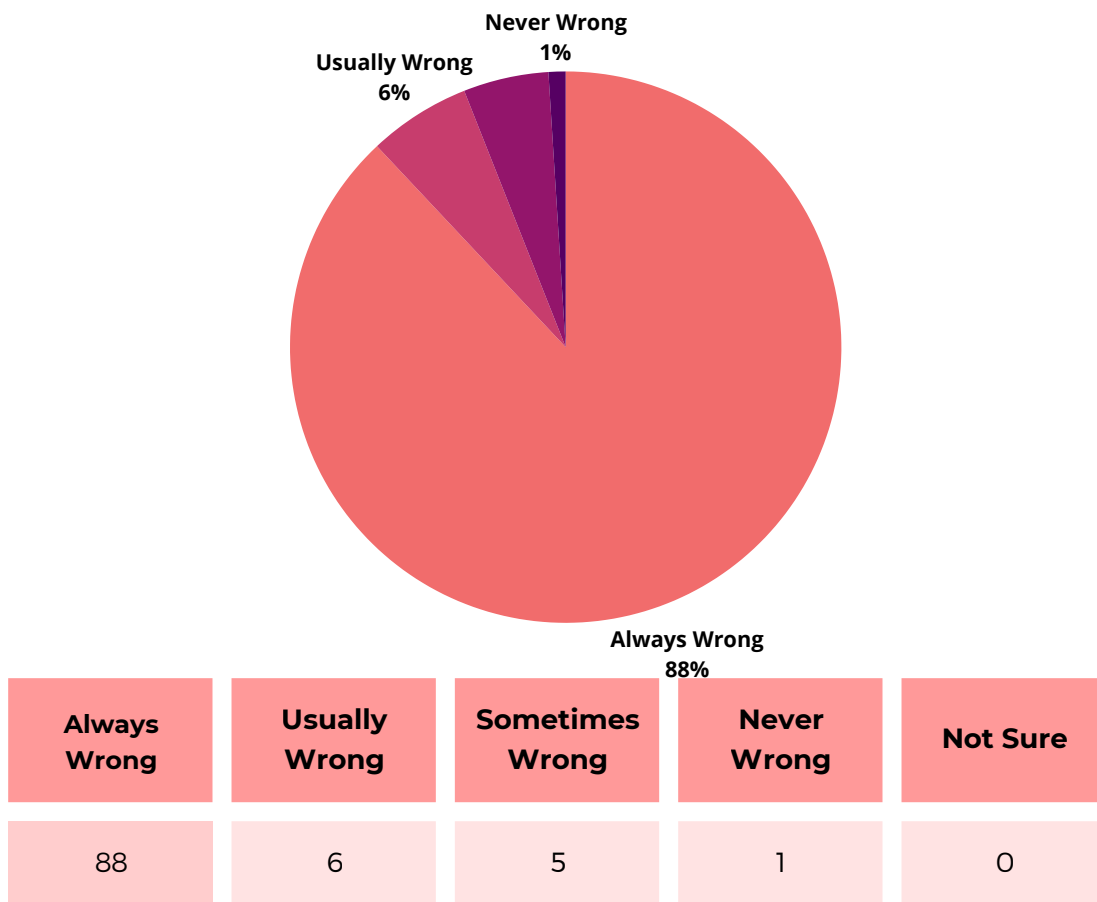


Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
94	2	2	0	2

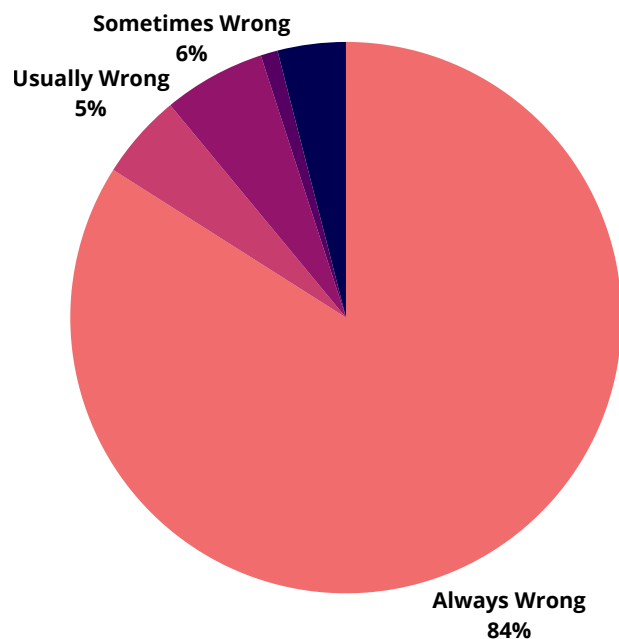
Most participants (94%) answered that it was always wrong to deny someone healthcare because of their status in the country.

#### 5. Rejecting an application to study because of race

Most participants (88%) answered that it was always wrong to reject an application for someone to study because of race.



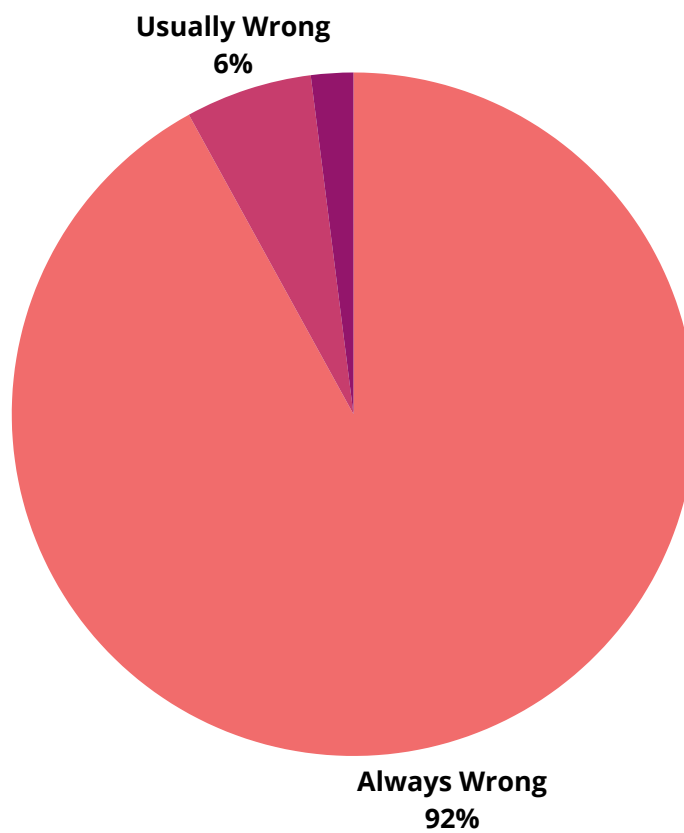
### 6. Denying food Parcels to illegal immigrants



Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
84	5	6	4	1

Most participants (84%) answered that it was always wrong to deny food parcels to illegal immigrants.

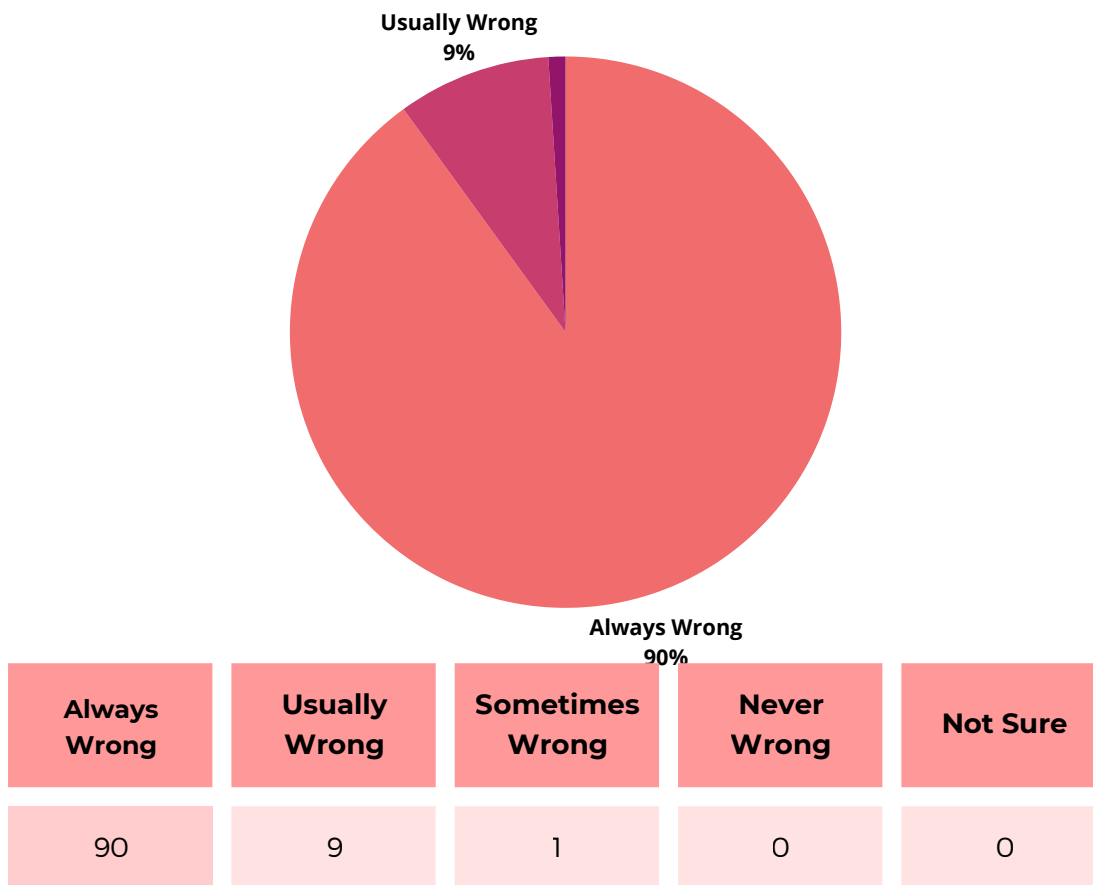
### 7. Teaching children to only befriend other children that look like them



Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
92	6	2	0	0

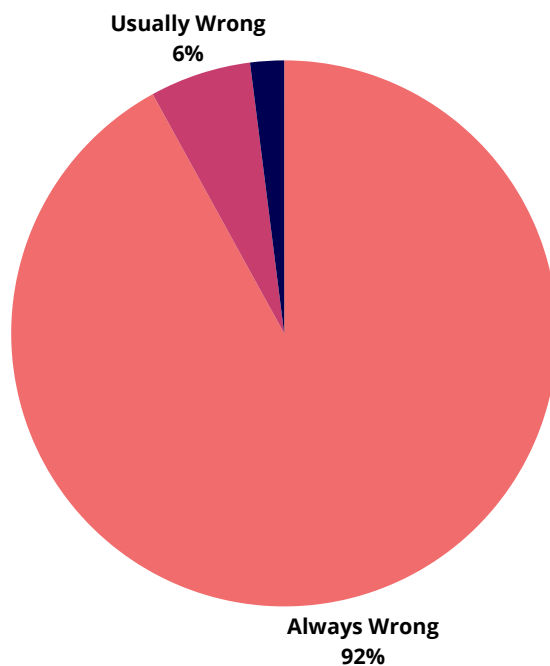
Most participants (92%) answered that it was always wrong to teach children to only befriend other children who look like them.

## 8. Having residential areas designated to specific races



Most participants (90%) answered that it was always wrong having residential areas designated to specific races

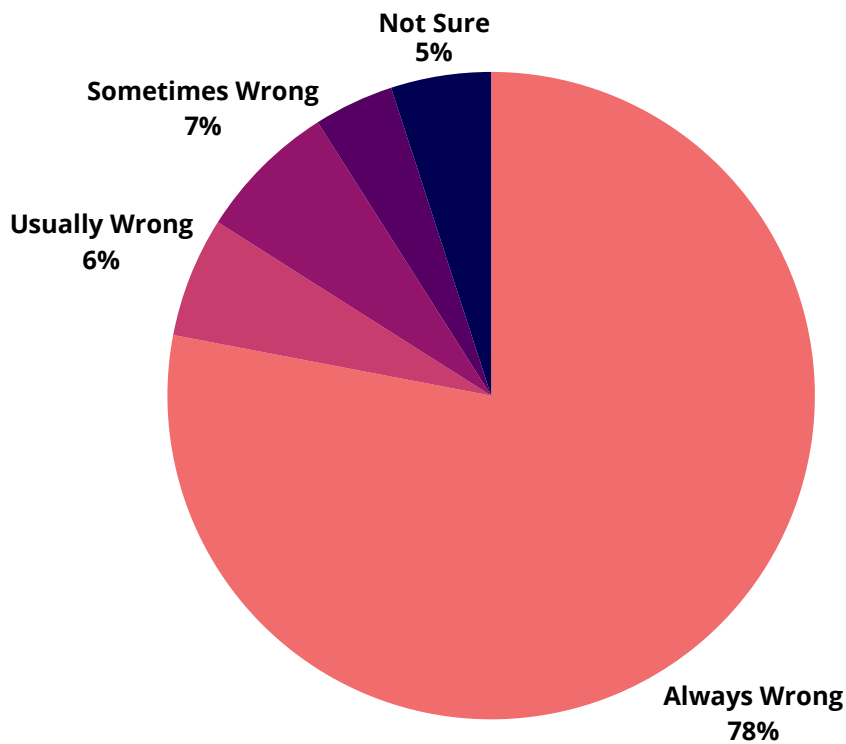
## 9. Associating darker skin complexion to criminality



Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
92	6	0	0	2

Most participants (92%) answered that it was always wrong to associate darker skin complexion to criminality

### 10. Creating service delivery divisions because of language differences



Always Wrong	Usually Wrong	Sometimes Wrong	Never Wrong	Not Sure
78	6	7	4	5

Most participants (78%) answered that it was always wrong to create service delivery divisions because of language differences

## STATEMENTS

**Responses :** Strongly agree/Agree/ Uncertain / Disagree/ Strongly disagree



1. "Immigration policies in my country are too relaxed."



Strongly  
Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly  
Disagree



Not Sure



2. "If there were less foreigners in my country, it would be more developed."



Strongly  
Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly  
Disagree



Not Sure



3. "Foreigners steal jobs."



3%

Strongly  
Agree



3%

Agree



36%

Disagree



52%

Strongly  
Disagree



6%

Not Sure



4. "Foreigners contribute negatively to  
the economy."



3%

Strongly  
Agree



4%

Agree



32%

Disagree



51%

Strongly  
Disagree



10%

Not Sure



5. "Most of the criminals in my country  
are foreign."



2%

Strongly  
Agree



1%

Agree



32%

Disagree



58%

Strongly  
Disagree



7%

Not Sure



6. "I would feel safe living in another African country."



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



7. "I feel safe using public transport and accessing public"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



8. "Xenophobia as a concept is exaggerated."



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



9. "Racism is a thing of the past"



Strongly  
Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly  
Disagree



Not Sure



10. "I do not see colour"



Strongly  
Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly  
Disagree



Not Sure



11. "Today all races have access to the  
same opportunities"



Strongly  
Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly  
Disagree



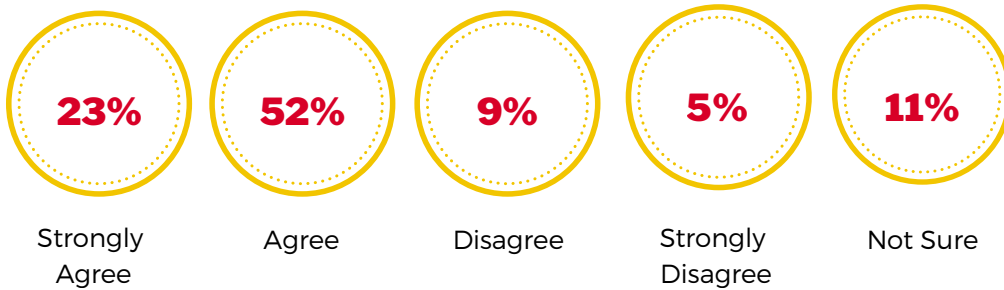
Not Sure



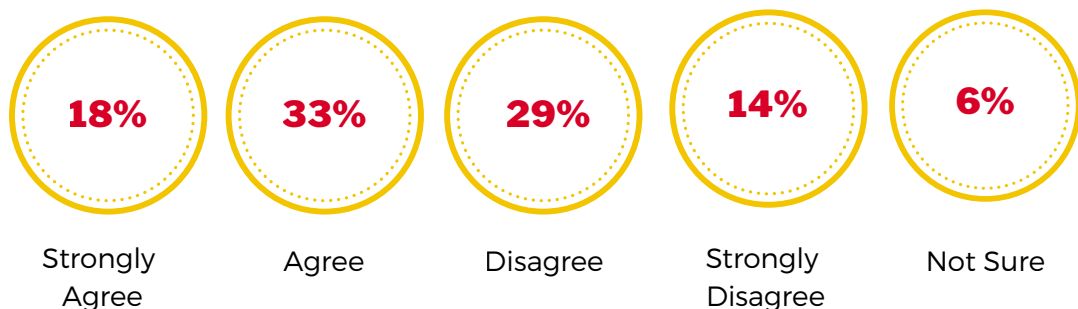
12. "Racial tensions are blown out of proportion by the media"



13. "More needs to be done in my country to accommodate asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people"



14. I have been a victim of a racially motivated incidents





15. I have been the victim of xenophobic harassment



Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Sure



16. I have experienced discrimination based on my religion



Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Sure



17. "I have experienced discrimination based on nationality"



Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Sure



18. "I have had to pretend to be of a different culture or nationality out of fear of victimization"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



19. "I have experienced discrimination because of a physical feature"



Strongly Agree



Agree



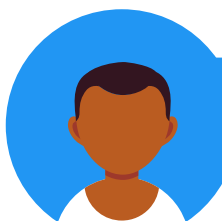
Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



20. "Most victims of xenophobia in my country are Africans"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



21. "I always come to the aid of someone who was a victim of targeted discrimination"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



22. "I have educated friends and family members who were using racial slurs"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



23. "I enjoy meeting people from different countries"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



24. "I prefer to date people with the same origins as me"



Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Sure



25. "I have been told to never date a specific nationality"



Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Sure



26. "There are certain races that I could never date"



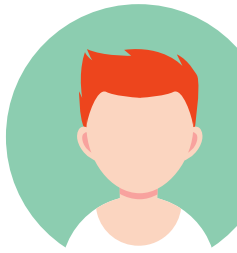
Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Not Sure



27. "There are certain African countries that I will never visit out of fear of racism and xenophobia"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



28. "I would like to travel the African continent"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure



29. "My peers at school are/were racially diverse"



Strongly Agree



Agree



Disagree



Strongly Disagree



Not Sure

## Interpretations:

This section represents the themes outlined in the results provided by the participants, interpreted under five themes:



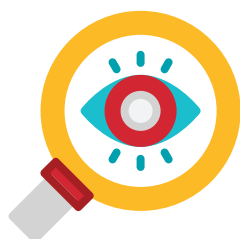
Perceptions of their government and administration regarding foreigners



Perception of the daily realities of foreigners and other marginalized groups



Perceptions of xenophobia and racial discrimination from personal experiences



Perceptions of xenophobia and racial discrimination from observation



Perceptions of xenophobia and racial discrimination through education and upbringing influences

### 4.1. Perceptions of their government and its administration regarding foreigners

The political climate and legislation of a country play a significant role in how the population responds to the most vulnerable portion of those contained within its borders. In recent times, immigration policies have even become the centre or certain political campaigns. Statements to establish participants perceptions on the theme were presented as follows:

**"Immigration policies in my country are too relaxed."**

44% of participants either strongly disagreed or agreed with the statement, while 48% participants strongly agreed with the statement. This statement gives a direct opinion of the participants sentiment towards government immigration policies.

Other participants answered that they didn't know whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The small difference shows that there is almost an equal number of participants on either side of the statement and indicates that participants are almost equally divided in their perceptions of immigration policies in their countries.

*"If there were less foreigners in my country, it would be more developed"*

49% participants strongly disagreed, while only 4% participants strongly agreed with the statement. This statement directly evokes the participants perception regarding how immigration in their country is linked to service delivery and development in their countries. This results indicate that most participants did not hold the perceptions that if there were less foreigners in their country, it would be more developed.

## **4.2. Perception of the daily realities of foreigners and other marginalized groups**

It was important to establish the level of apathy that the participants are willing to give others, whether affected or not by the topic. A good way to assess apathy would be to be certain whether the participants are familiar with the daily experiences of people.

*"Xenophobia as a concept is exaggerated"*

71% participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, whereas 22% out of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed.

*"Racism is a thing of the past"*

83% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The reactions to these statements are particularly important because the responses have the potential to validate or invalidate a person's experience. It also indicates how in or out of touch with reality the participants are. The participants response indicate that they have a level of awareness of the reality of racism and xenophobia and that there are people who experience them.

The response to the following statements further demonstrates that the participants are empathetic towards people who experience xenophobia:

- 75% of participants answered that it was always wrong to jokingly call someone a racial or xenophobic slur.
- 94% of participants answered that it was always wrong to burn down foreign-owned businesses.
- 94% of participants answered that it was always wrong to deny someone healthcare because of their status in the country.
- 55% of participants strongly disagreed that "Today all races have access to the same opportunities", while 24% disagreed, so a majority of participants to varying degrees believed that there is no racial equality in their perception.

### **4.3. Perceptions of xenophobia and racial discrimination from personal experiences**

It is quite common for perceptions and the ability to show consideration to be greatly influenced by personal experiences through lived realities.

*"I have been a victim of a racially motivated incident"*

43% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed, while 51% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. For this statement, it is quite important to report that 6% of participants were not sure whether they have been a victim of racially motivated incidents or not.

*"I have experienced discrimination based on nationality"*

54% of participants strongly disagreed or agreed to having experienced discrimination based on their nationality and 42% of participants stated that they had not experienced discrimination based on nationality.

### **4.4. Perceptions of xenophobia and racial discrimination from observation**

Although personal experiences could give participants the ability to provide a more nuanced approach, it is not a prerequisite to discuss or be able to speak about a topic. A participant may feel affected and drawn to feel apathy based on an observation of an incident.

"Today all races have access to the same opportunities"

55% of participants strongly disagreed that "Today all races have access to the same opportunities", while 24% disagreed, so a majority of participants to varying degrees believed that there is no racial equality in their perception. The reaction to this statement indicates the participants perception of reality based on the knowledge they have gained from personal and interpersonal interactions.

"Racial tensions are blown out of proportion by the media"

34% of participants strongly agreed, while 8% of participants strongly disagreed with the statement. Overall, most participants (59%) strongly agreed and agreed that the statement was incorrect. The responses to the statements in this section show that for participants are more inclined to put other people realities into perspective.

## **4.5. Perceptions of xenophobia and racial discrimination through education and upbringing influences**

Naturally, one's education plays a significant role in the character and attitudes of a person. A large part of this education comes not only from school, but also from parents and family. Although this is very significant, it does not rule out the possibility that growing up, unlearning and new interactions can influence perceptions.

My peers at school are/were racially diverse

71% of participants strongly disagreed or agreed, with the statement. Interacting with racially diverse groups increases the participants chances of experiencing elements of their lives.

I enjoy meeting people from different countries

78% of participant strongly agreed with the statement. This indicated the intention to be tolerant and inclusive, to learn about new people and their challenges.



# SECTION 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

# 5

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Often people foreigners and other marginalized groups experience discrimination or unfair treatment due to perceptions formed by negative stereotypes. Most participants strongly disagreed or disagreed to statements that indicated that they held negative perceptions or stereotypes.

It is clear from the study that the majority of participants understand the negative effects of and acknowledge the existence of racism and xenophobia. Where apathy is concerned, it is easier for them to relate when they or someone close to them were directly affected. A small number of participants are unaware of the realities that characterize the plight of others.

Majority of the literature available discusses the concepts in general, and when there are instances for specific groups, women and children are studied. It is important for more research to be done with the youth at the center. Children should have value clarification and attitude transformation exercises on tolerance, racism and xenophobia from primary school level.





# SECTION 6: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# 8

## Acknowledgements

BDBA | AFRICAN YOUTH PERCEPTIONS, UNDERSTANDING AND APATHY ON  
XENOPHOBIA AND RACIAL INTOLERANCE

Breaking Down Borders Africa acknowledges the contributions of the people and organisations who worked tirelessly on this research project

**Concept and Coordination.** : Nthabiseng Modjadji and Motlatsi Motseole

**Researcher Team** : Louise Kanza  
Kago Research  
Mapula Rakubu

**Designer** : Chantel Morafi

This research project part of the BDBA Toolkit Series Project and it is a key outcome is the project which is to gain knowledge on African youth perceptions, understanding and apathy on xenophobia and racial intolerance .

This research project was supported by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations through its Youth Solidarity Fund



Leaders Who Dare to Dream Foundation  
Breaking Down Borders Africa Initiative  
Johannesburg, South Africa  
[www.breakingdownbordersafrica.com](http://www.breakingdownbordersafrica.com)