A study of youth identity, the media and the public sphere in South Africa

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The data show young South Africans tend to participate more in civic or social activities than political activities. Helping a neighbour was the most common answer from survey respondents (79.1%), with being involved in a social group (67.4%) and being active in a religious activity (64.9%). Respondents reported relatively low participation even in activities specifically aimed at youth involvement, such as activity in a youth movement, and being part of the student council.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Help a Neighbour
Political Party Activity

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/digitalpublications/Sanpad%20Report%202013/#/0
The results show significantly low levels of trust in all three levels of government with trust in local government showing the lowest level. Only 34.4% respondents say they trust local government a great deal or quite a lot. Close to four out of ten (38.3%) respondents say they trust provincial government quite a lot or a great deal and 40.9% of respondents say they trust national government a great deal or quite a lot.

Young people in South Africa are generally uninterested and mistrustful of political institutions and political parties. This includes low levels of trust in the legal system, the police, and in parliament. Only 30.7% of respondents say they trust political parties either a great deal or quite a lot. Most young South Africans note the older generation as an institution they trust most (77.4%).

Compared to levels of trust in political institutions, levels of trust in the media are significantly high amongst South African youth: TV news (79.5%), radio news (78.3%) and newspapers (71.9%). Almost six out of ten respondents say they trust magazines and social media (59.2% and 57.7% respectively).

The top three media most relevant to respondents are radio (37.7%), social media (34.1%), and Google or other search engines (33.8%). This is significantly different (except for radio) to usage figures for the media that show TV, radio, and SMS as the three top media regularly used by young people. This may indicate that while young South Africans regularly use certain media, they find the information they receive on those platforms as less than relevant to their lives. The generally negative perceptions about the news media raised by focus group participants correspond with the survey results. Focus group participants raised two issues in particular: the first was that negativity in the news media is unappealing to them and secondly, that they find the news media irrelevant because it does not help them to make sense of specific contexts.