
Homecoming Revolution Insights Report 2015

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1. Introduction

Established in 2003, Homecoming Revolution is the proven Brain Gain company for Africa with a focus on South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana, introducing worldwide African professionals to employers and relocation services back home.

Together with like-minded partners, Homecoming Revolution is creating a powerful wave of economic & societal prosperity for Africa. Since its inception, it has had face-to-face contact with over 17,000 Africans abroad

Thousands of skilled Africans have returned home over the past five years for a number of reasons. Over 359,000 high-skilled South Africans have returned home in the last five years alone (Adcorp 2014). The ripple effect of this is incredible in terms of job creation. For every 1 skilled person that returns home, 9 new jobs are created in the formal and informal sectors in South Africa (Solidarity 2004).

Two years ago, Homecoming Revolution expanded its offering beyond South Africa's borders and now also focuses on Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana.

Homecoming Revolution undertook a study from February - August 2015 to better understand African repatriation and immigration patterns. The online survey examines a broad range of issues including the core reasons why people move abroad, the key trigger factors that encourage people to return home, what people miss most and least about home and what links people still retain with their home countries.

The survey has yielded some invaluable insights on both Africans in the diaspora and returnees and has revealed a range of emotions and opinions towards the continent.

2. Methodology

The survey, designed and conducted by Homecoming Revolution, has had 720 responses. It was conducted in three parts, focusing on Africans Abroad and Africans Back Home.

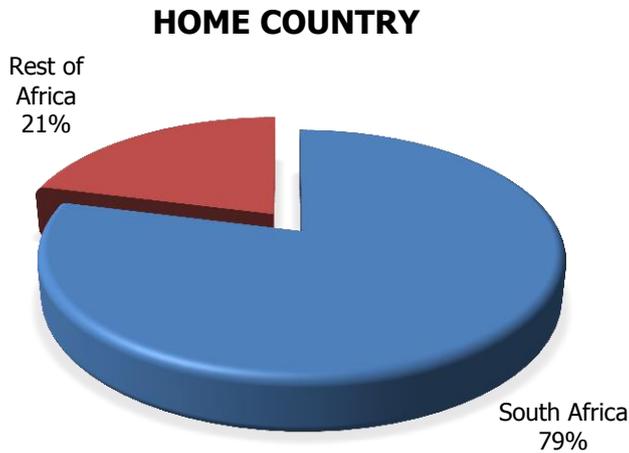
- First group: Africans Abroad = 290 respondents (11 February 2015)
- Second group: Africans Back Home= 119 respondents (26 May 2015)
- Third group: Africans Abroad = 311 respondents (26 May 2015)

The survey focuses on both groups, but certain questions refer specifically refer to one or the other. Certain questions were multiple choice with multiple answer categories.

Homecoming Revolution utilised SurveyMonkey to conduct the survey and promoted it via various platforms including social media, our website and emailers to our 44K database.

3. Country of birth

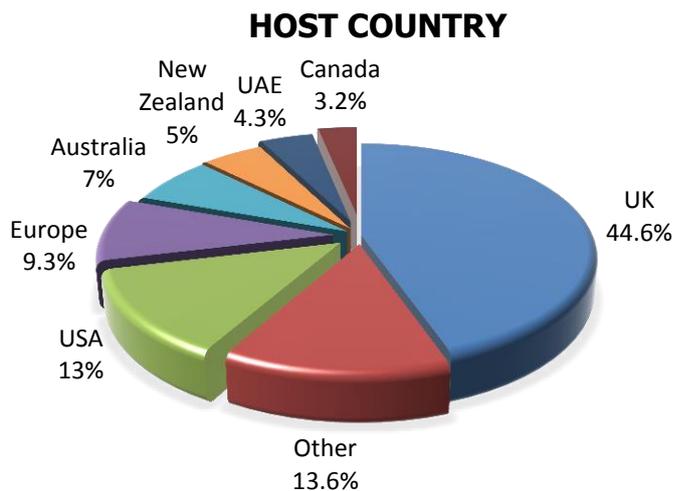
The majority of respondents (79%) are from South Africa while the remaining 21% are from the rest of Africa.



4. Host Country

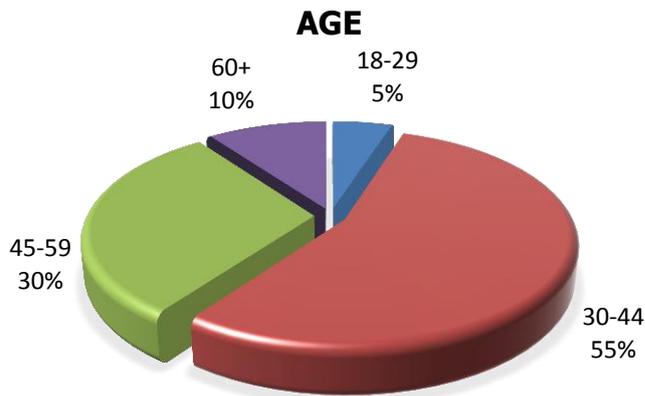
Majority (44.6%) of the respondents are living or lived in the United Kingdom followed by the United States (13%), Europe (9.3%), Australia (7%), New Zealand (5%), United Arab Emirates (4.3%) and Canada (3.2%). The remaining 13.6% of respondents selected the 'other' option. Countries mentioned as part of the 'other' category include: Taiwan, Italy, Singapore, Bermuda, Kuwait and South Korea.

It can be determined from the data that respondents chiefly leave African countries for more Westernised or "first world" countries.

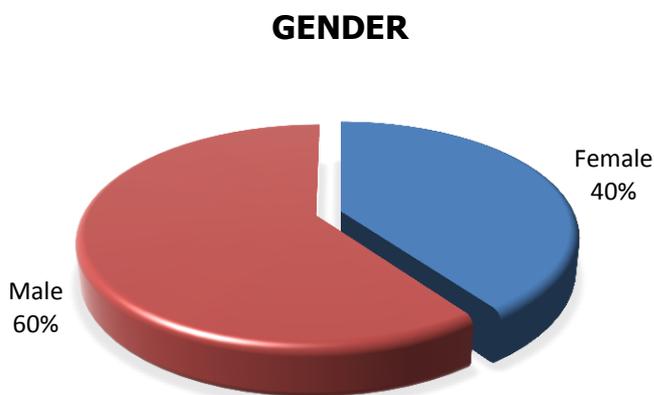


5. Age & Gender

Majority of the respondents (56%) are aged between 30-44, meaning that the bulk of the respondents represent a working age group. The remaining respondents are aged between 45 and 59 (30%), while 10% of the respondents are above the age of 60 years and 5% are between the ages of 18-29.

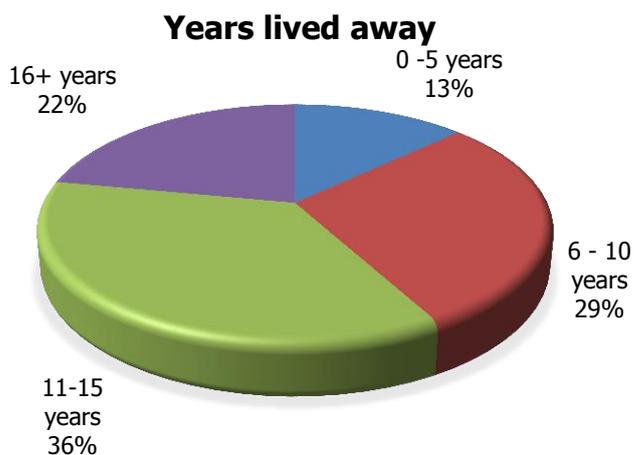


With regards to gender, 60% of the respondents are male, while 40% are female.



6. Years lived away

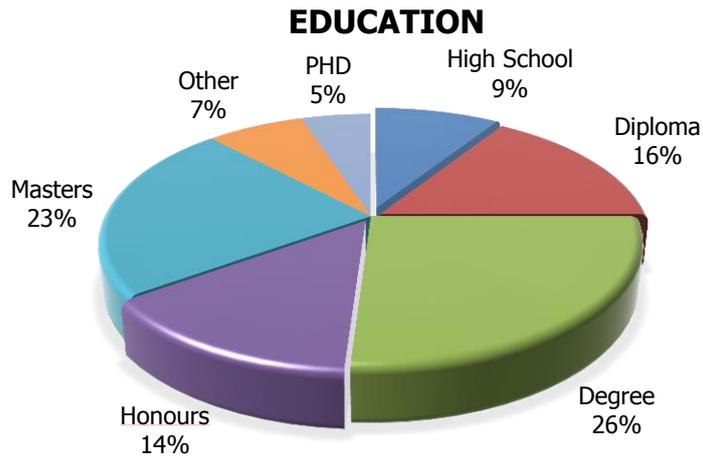
Most respondents (36%) have/did spend between 11 and 15 years living abroad. The remaining respondents have/did between 6 to 10 years (29%), 16 or more years (20%) and 0 to 5 years (13%) living abroad.



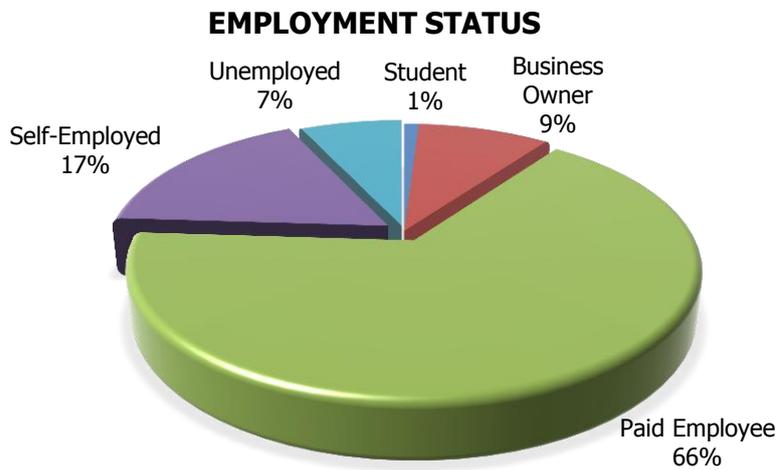
7. Education & Employment Status

A highly interesting insight from the survey is that the majority of the respondents who participated are highly educated. The majority of respondents (26%) have a university degree, a significant portion (23%) have a

master's degree while 16% have a diploma from a higher learning institution, 14% have an honour's degree, 9% have a high school diploma and 5% have a PHD. The remaining 7% of respondents selected the 'other' option.

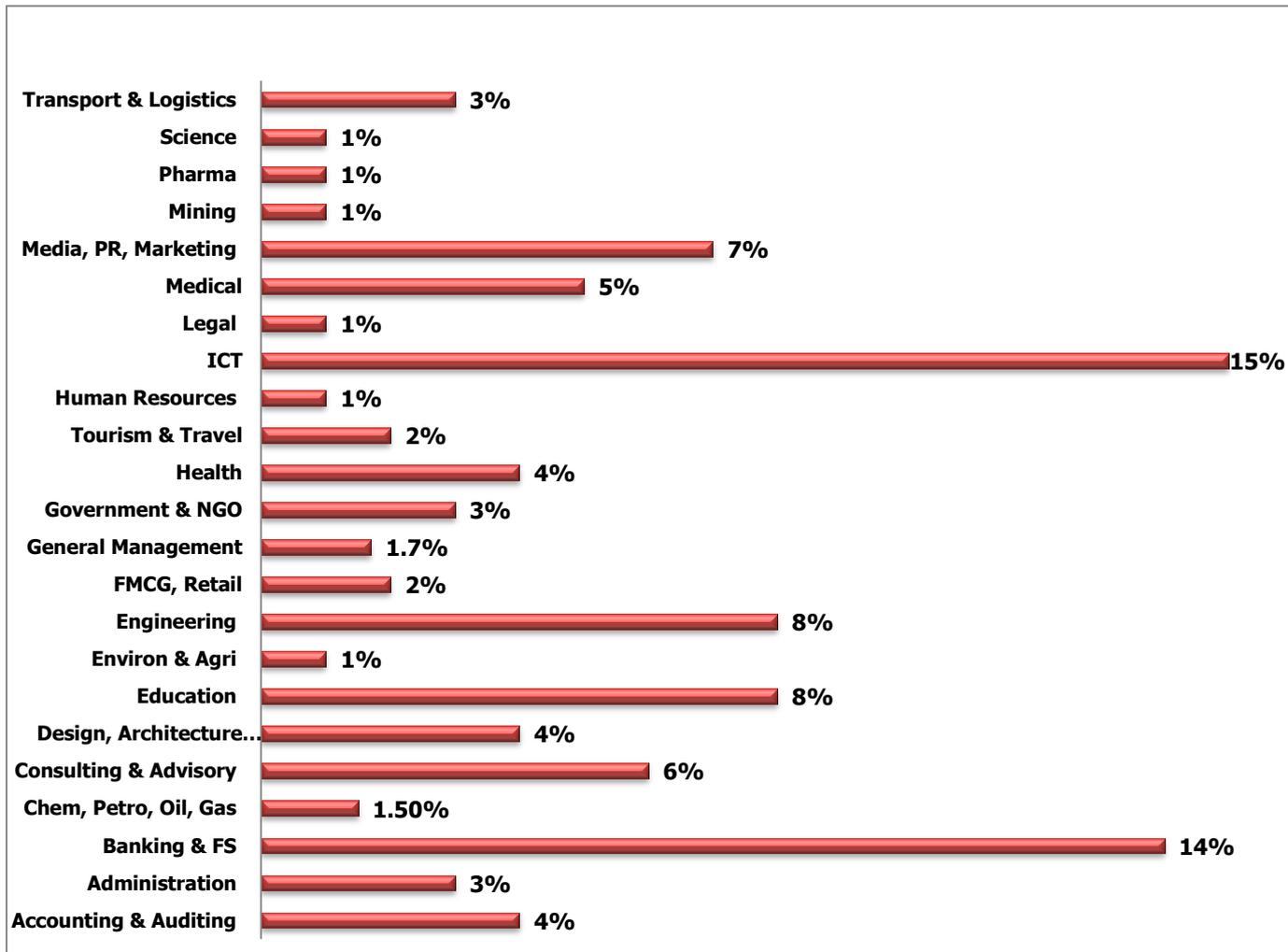


The majority of respondents (66%) are paid employees in senior positions. The remaining respondents are self-employed (17%), business owners (9%), unemployed (7%) and a small percentage (1%) are students.



8. Industry

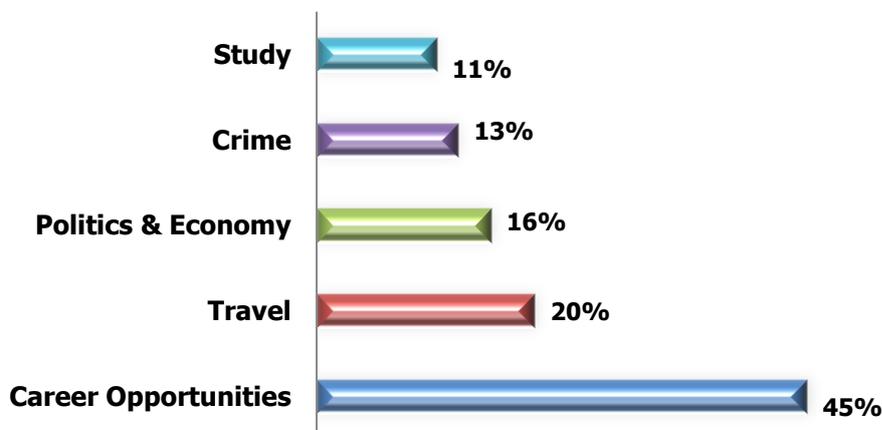
Most respondents work in the ICT (15%) and Banking & Financial Services sectors (14%), followed by Engineering and Education, both at 8%.



9. Why did you leave?

Most respondents (45%) said they left the continent to pursue career opportunities. A large portion left to pursue travel experiences (20%), while 16% left due to the political and economic situation in their respective countries and 13% left due to crime and safety concerns. The remaining 11% left to study abroad.

WHY DID YOU LEAVE?



A key insight from this question is that the number of people leaving their respective countries due to the political and economic circumstances in their respective countries has increased significantly while the number of people citing crime as a reason for leaving has decreased. When comparing the data from a survey conducted by Homecoming Revolution in 2013 titled, *South Africans Abroad: "Home is where the heart is"*, it is interesting to note that crime has decreased as a key deciding factor and political and economic uncertainty has climbed markedly.

Comparison to previous study: Homecoming Revolution’s South Africans Abroad: “Home is where the heart is” (2013)

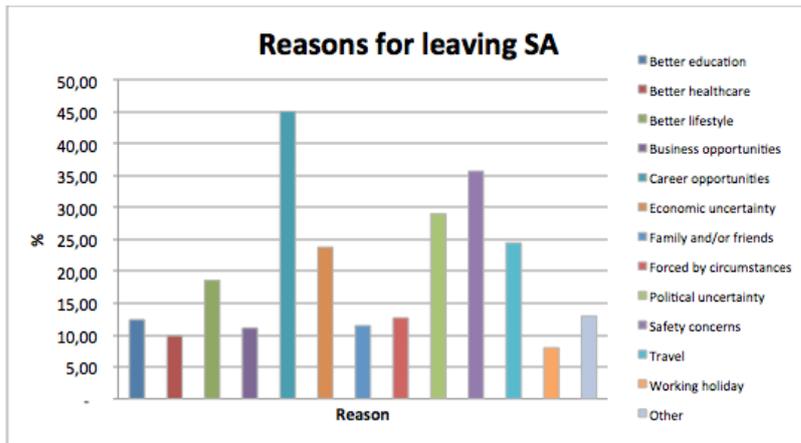
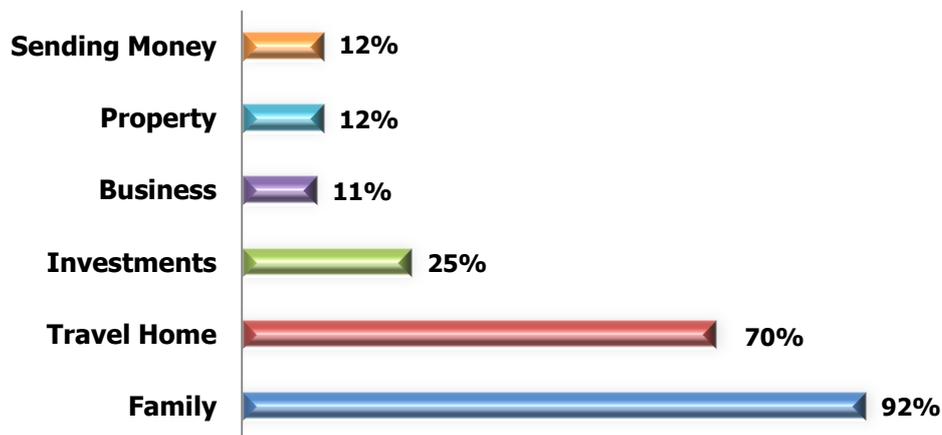


Figure 6: Reasons for leaving South Africa

10. Links to home

Family & friends remains the strongest link for Africans in the diaspora with 92% of respondents citing it as the key connection to their home countries. Travelling home for visits also encourages a strong link to home with 70% of respondents saying they remain connected to their home countries through regular visits. Investments are another important link with 25% of respondents saying they remain connected to their home countries through investments. Sending money and property are equally significant links to home with 12% of respondents citing each as reasons why they remain connected to their home countries. Lastly, business is another crucial link to home with 11% of respondents citing it as the reason they are still connected to home.

LINKS TO HOME



11. Do you wish to return?

Another key finding from the survey is that the majority of participants (53%) said they wish to return home at some stage. Another 21% of respondents said they were undecided on whether or not they wished to return home. The remaining 26% of participants said they had no desire to come home at any stage.

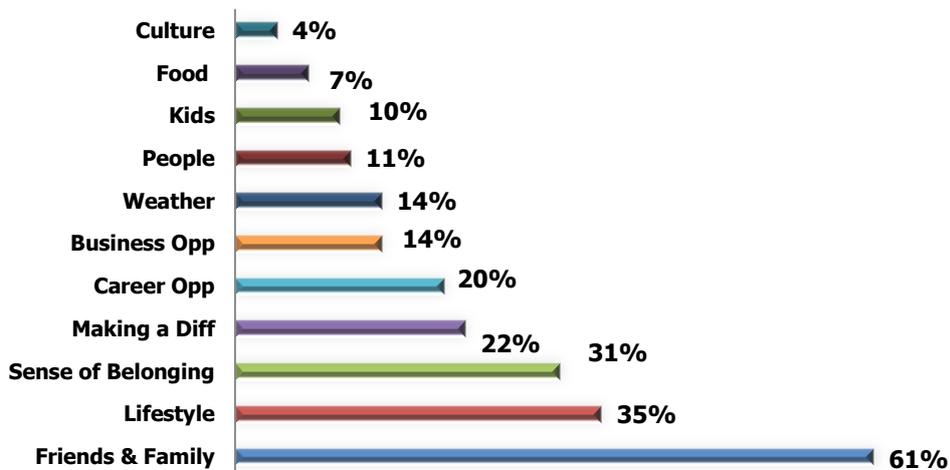
DO YOU WISH TO RETURN?



12. What encouraged/would encourage you to return?

Friends & family remains the strongest reason why Africans return home. Majority of the respondents (61%) said friends & family are the key reason why they did or would make the decision to come home. Lifestyle also remains a trigger for Africans abroad with 35% citing it as a significant reason why they did or would move home. A sense of belonging is also a core reason why people decide to return, with 31% of respondents citing it as reason why they would or did move home. Making a difference (22%) and career opportunity (20%) are also important reasons why Africans abroad did or would return. Other reasons cited include weather (14%), the people (11%), having kids (10%), food (7%) and culture (4%).

TRIGGERS



12A. The best things about being home: Homecomers

- Looking at the vast opportunity in being part of the stunning African continent pregnant with opportunity
- That my family is beside me all the time
- I like being around successful Nigerians. Africa has been overlooked for so long and I look forward to exploring the continent, not just Nigeria
- After studying and working abroad, one needs to go home and impart their learned experiences
- Feeling the spirit of Africa
- Opportunities to make a difference in someone else's life in a noticeable way
- New beginnings
- Being welcomed back with open arms
- This is a much better place for me to raise my young family
- I was brought up here. I feel I belong, everything is familiar and there's nothing better than an African sunset
- Being able to make a difference
- Having my parents, brothers and sisters nearby

- As an only child, to be able to spend quality time with my parents in their twilight years. Once they knew my husband and I had settled in South Africa, they bought the house next door to us so they can see our twin girls often
- Seeing Africa through my children's eyes
- Being close to family and friends, new and old
- Knowing I made the correct decision event 5 years later
- Everything! Feeling the sun again, hearing the birds again, smelling the dust
- Space, sunshine and opportunity
- Being around South Africans, fresh air, space, relaxed lifestyle, my new job.
- The feeling that I was home once again and being able to see my family members in person
- Kids spending time with their grandparents
- The sense of truly being home. The vibrant people with their adventurous spirit and passion, the landscape and wildlife. Nowhere else compares.
- The sense of belonging and sharing moments that matter in life with the people we care about

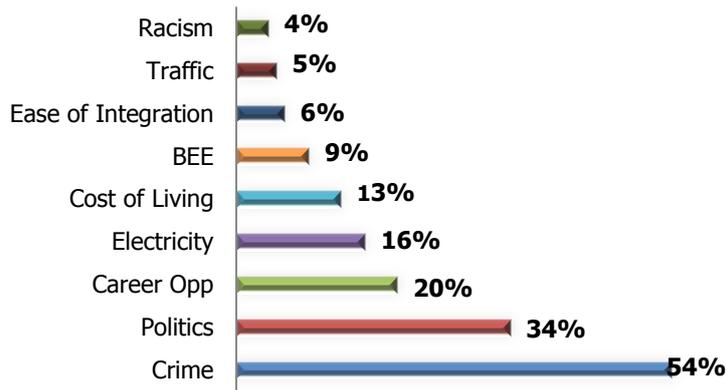
12B. Africans Abroad: What would encourage you to return?

- Opportunities for my kids
- Highveld thunderstorms
- The bush
- The vibrancy
- The soul
- The vibe
- The can-do positive attitude of people
- The friendly smiles
- The humour
- The language
- The colourful people
- Good environment to raise my family
- The clean air
- Braaing while watching sport on a sunny weekend with friends
- African hairdressers
- The sense of contribution to the development of my country
- The smells
- I miss watching cricket at the Wanderers!
- Stress-free living
- The openness of the people
- I like the relative simplicity of life in South Africa
- The entrepreneurial spirit
- The creative expression
- The smells of the veld or garden after a thunderstorm
- Ubuntu
- The smell of rain on the red soil
- The shared sense of humour
- Sunshine, food, people and braais
- The speed for career progression and personal development

13. What concerns do you/did you have about returning home?

Both Africans abroad and Africans homecomers share the same concerns around returning home. Most respondents (54%) cite crime as their main concern. Politics and economy is also a big concern, with 34% participants citing it as their chief concern. At the same time, 20% said career opportunity is/was one of their biggest concerns. Other concerns include poor infrastructure (16%), cost of living (13%), BEE (9%), ease of integration (6%), traffic (5%) and racism (4%).

CONCERNS ABOUT RETURNING



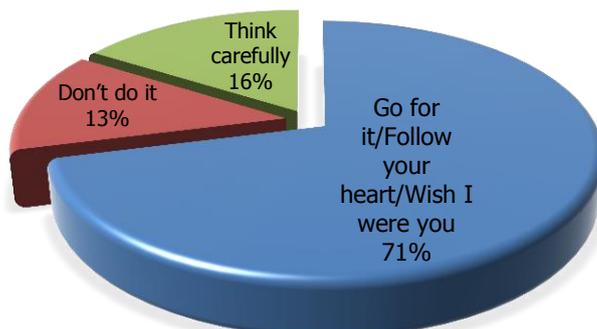
13A. African homecomers: Key concerns on returning

- Slowing down my career progression
- Safety, lack of infrastructure and basic amenities, distance from loved ones in the US, fear of failure
- Long-term career opportunities
- Finding the right role career wise
- Dealing with BEE
- Business infrastructure
- To impact my fellows
- Adjustment for the children, financial stability
- The government
- Crime and political instability
- Finding my own home with decent standard at a reasonable price.
- Starting again literally - where to live, what to do, who to hang out with etc
- To contribute in boosting the economy as a tax payer and employ other people
- Not getting work as a white man
- None - I have an open mind
- Crime.
- Ensuring that my husband (a physicist and telecommunications engineer) would be able to find a good job in SA
- Getting employment and earning a decent salary!
- None. I was sure I was going to get a job even though I am white

14. What would you say to someone thinking of returning home?

Of the homecomers who participated in the survey, the majority (71%) were optimistic when asked what they would say to someone considering returning home. While 16% said they would tell a potential homecomer to 'think carefully' and weigh up the pros and cons before making their decision. The remaining 13% were negative in their outlook, saying they wouldn't encourage potential homecomers to return.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE THINKING OF RETURNING?



This question highlights an interesting trend, with the number of optimistic and encouraging responses increasing extensively since Homecoming Revolution conducted its last survey in 2013. The number of positive responses has increased distinctly since the 2013 survey, reflecting a significantly more positive outlook among participants.

Comparison to previous study: Homecoming Revolution’s South Africans Abroad: “Home is where the heart is” (2013)

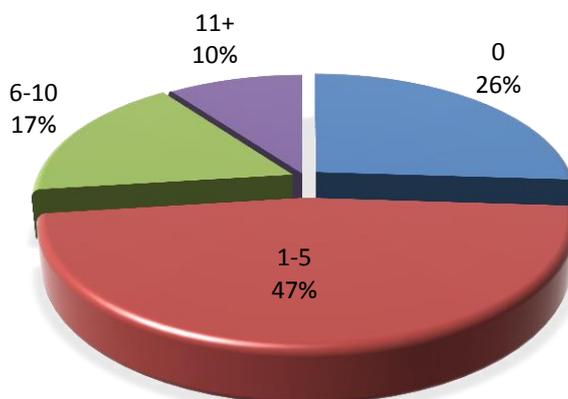
Table 6: Attitudes towards returning home

Main Category	Sub-category	Percentage of Responses
Optimistic	Go for it!	25.92
	Great idea, good luck!	6.53
	Welcome home.	1.05
	Wish I were you!	3.16
	Follow your heart.	5.16
TOTAL		41.83
Rational	Think carefully.	18.97
	Consider the following	9.17
TOTAL		28.13
Indifferent	Your choice	1.48
Pessimistic	Don't do it!	8.43
No response		20.13

15. How many of your friends have returned?

Most respondents (47%) said they have between 1 and 5 friends who have returned home. While 17% said they have between 6 and 10 friends who are homecomers and 10% said they have 11 or more friends who have returned. The remaining 26% of respondents said none of their friends had returned.

HOW MANY FRIENDS HAVE RETURNED?



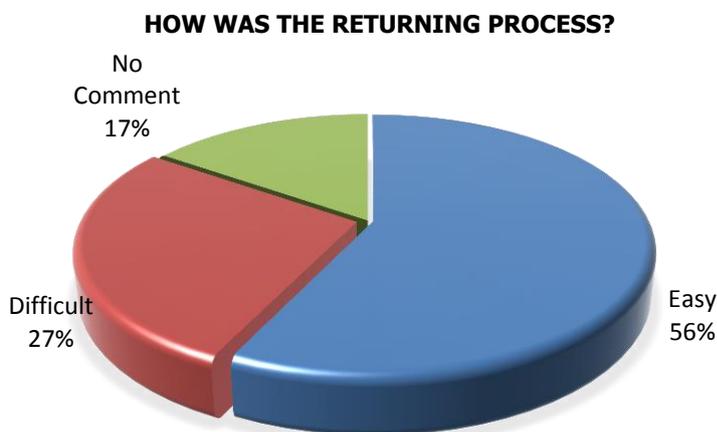
15A. Homecomer comments on returning

- Return to your roots but prepare first
- Your experience is sorely needed
- Keep an open mind, embrace a beautiful experience and contribute to the building and strengthening of a great nation
- Think very carefully and weigh the pros & cons on why you are going back home
- Keep an open mind, utilise your network
- One of the best decisions you could make
- You have to take the risk otherwise you will always be debating in your head whether it's the right thing to do
- Don't overthink it, just do it!
- You only live once and there is no place quite like it!
- The world isn't perfect so don't be over critical of your critical of your country. You will encounter problems wherever you go. Heaven doesn't exist on earth
- Consider why you left, why you are coming back and what your goal is once you are back. If you come back to make a difference however small, the reward is waiting for you. I've found the more I give with an open mind and heart, the more I see tangible results

- It's better to return sooner rather than later. Make a plan and stick to it in spite of what comes your way
- Think positively about Africa. There is a good life on this continent as long as you are open minded
- Do it! SA needs as many skilled workers coming back to its shores to fulfil its potential. The sense of change and optimism is palpable wherever you go and it's wonderful being part of a country alive with possibility
- Do it with open eyes don't put all your eggs in one basket
- Every single person who has taken the big step to return home is happy & content
- Come home NOW! Don't waste another day thinking about it
- You will know when the time is right for you, listen out for the drums
- I spent years suppressing a desire to return & finally decided I didn't want to spend my whole life wondering what if & took the plunge. After 11 years away, it was a big decision & it certainly hasn't been easy from a work perspective so consider your unique circumstances carefully
- Have other reasons for returning home besides family. Be prepared - it takes time to settle back into life in South Africa
- If family & sense of belonging are important to you, it is the best thing
- Think about your children growing up with an identity vastly different to yours
- If family and sense of belonging are important to you, it is the best thing
- If you think you will be happier in SA than where you are now, you are probably right, just do it
- All countries have problems you just have to choose the ones you can live with
- Make a decision based on your own priorities
- It's the best thing I ever did
- Please come back the country needs your skills
- There are amazing opportunities for an entrepreneur in Africa. Come home with your skills, start a business and contribute to Africa's growth

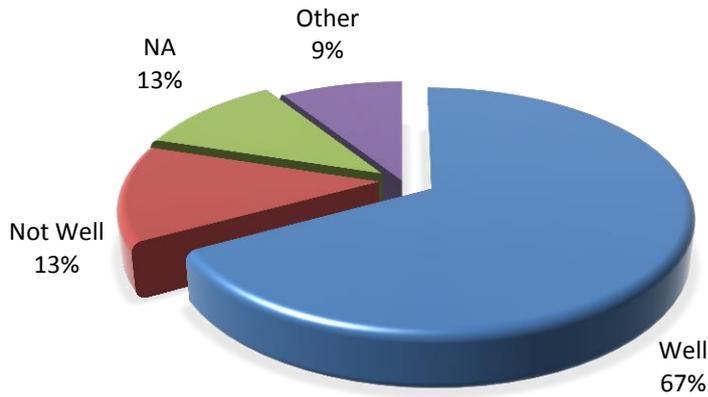
16. The returning process

Most homecomers were positive when asked about how they found the returning process with 56% saying they found it easy. While 27% of respondents said they found the process difficult. The remaining 17% didn't comment.



When asked how well the homecomer's family adjusted to the move, 67% said their families adjusted well, 13% said the process didn't go well and 11% said the answer is not applicable. The remaining 9% marked the 'other' option.

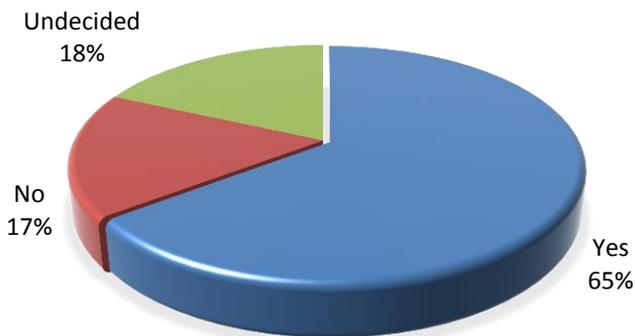
HOW DID YOUR FAMILY ADJUST ?



Was it the right decision to return home?

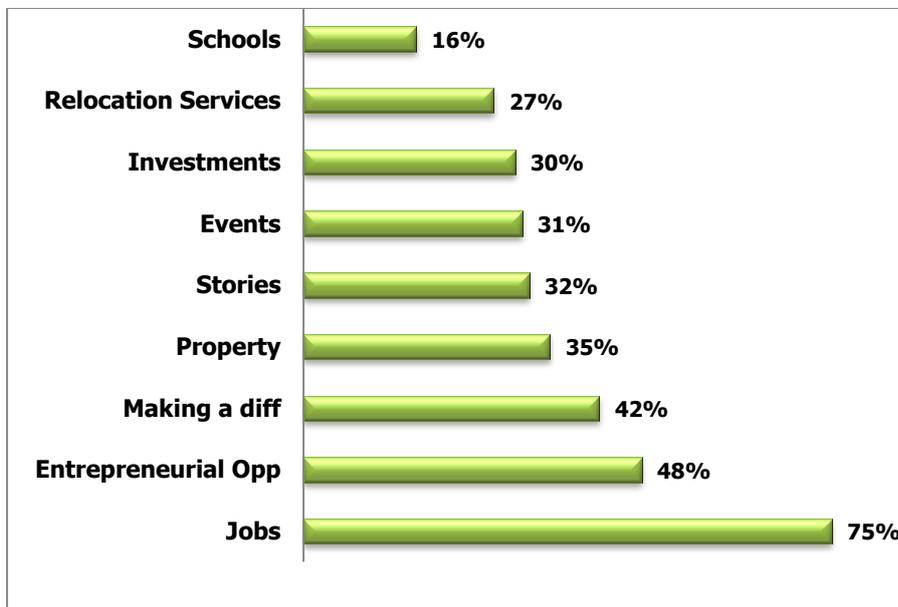
The majority of homecomers who participated in the survey (65%) said coming home was the right decision for them and their families ,17% said it wasn't the right decision and 18% were undecided.

WAS IT THE RIGHT DECISION TO RETURN?



17. Keep me updated on

Most participants (75%) said they wanted Homecoming Revolution to keep them updated on career opportunities.



A fascinating insight is that requests to make a difference have increased markedly from 20% to 42% since Homecoming Revolution conducted its 2013 survey. A number of participants also said a desire to make a difference would be an important motivator in their decision to return home (Q10).

Comparison to previous report: South Africans Abroad: "Home is where the heart is" (2013)

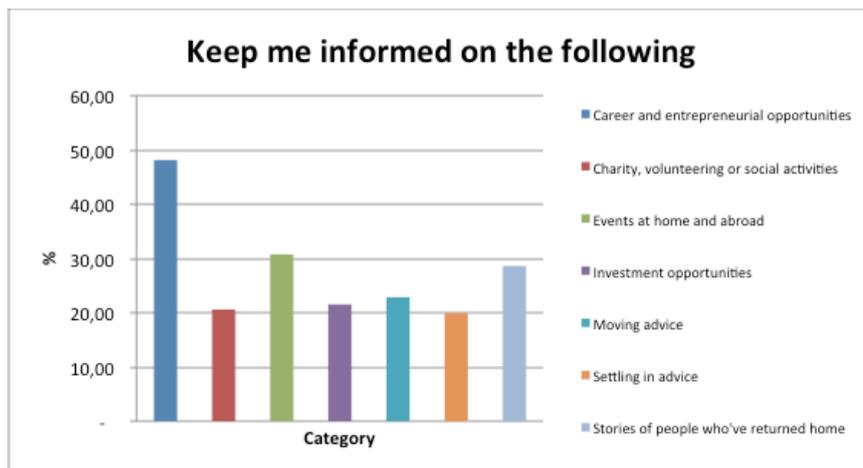


Figure 11: Topics South African respondents would like to stay informed on

18. Anecdotal Evidence

In addition to our online report, we approached a number of companies to gain further anecdotal evidence to gauge if the trends we spotted were similar to what they have seen.

Stuart James, a Director at Intergate Immigration, says the organisation has had exactly the same number of enquiries from people wanting to move home this year as there were last year, saying the number of South Africans per year is still buoyant. Although he warns new regulations are making it more challenging for people to return.

James says the main reasons people leave South Africa is the political and economic situation, corroborating Homecoming Revolution’s research which shows an increase in people leaving due to political and economic instability. He also says the demographic of people leaving is mixed with people leaving of differing ages, races and familial situations.

“Of course there has been bad press about South Africa recently but certainly it is not the only country getting some poor media coverage. It's too early to say whether this is temporary increase or something more substantial and currently the figures suggest this is nothing like the reported brain drain of the late 1990's and 2000's. The reality is that workforces are becoming more global and countries now have to compete to retain and attract skilled workers,” he says.

He also says Intergate is issuing a substantial amount of work visas for foreigners due to the massive skills shortage in South Africa, particularly in the IT & Engineering sectors.

Another interesting insight is that Intergate has seen a marked increase in the number of South Africans wanting to go work and do stints within Africa. He says most requests they receive are from South Africans wanting to work in Ghana.

James also says the number of new business enquiries from foreign SMEs wanting to establish operations in South Africa has decreased. He attributes this to the red tape for foreign businesses wanting to start operations in South Africa.

At the same time, Moira Luyckx, Group Marketing Manager for Elliott Mobility, echoes James’s sentiments, saying the organisation hasn’t seen a significant increase in the number of people leaving this year in comparison with the same period last year.

"The number of people leaving is the average for this time of year."

While Richard Day, national GM for Pam Golding Properties says from a national perspective, Pam Golding Properties has not noticed any increase in South Africans wanting to leave the country.

“On the contrary, we are seeing more and more South African expatriates returning to the country, in various regions and areas around the country.”

Day says the group is seeing ongoing activity in the market for all the usual reasons such as relocation for business or for a change in lifestyle, downsizing once children have left the home or upgrading and upscaling as families grow, people retiring to accommodation which best suits their changing needs and importantly, continued confidence in the residential property market as young, first-time buyers and other potential purchasers and investors demonstrate their appetite for investment in real estate.

At the same time, Adrienne Hersch Properties echoes these sentiments, with Brand Manager Ari Hersch saying the company hasn't seen an increase in people wanting to sell their homes for immigration reasons.

“We have however experienced an increase in the number of international home owners on the coast wanting to sell their homes due to red tape around property legislation.”

19. South African visa challenges

Intergate Immigration says there have been two main changes that have had an adverse effect on returning South Africans in terms of visa legislation. Stuart James, a director at Intergate Immigration, says both are caused where the South African is in a relationship with a foreigner. These are: Proving cohabitation of 2 years and the requirement to show funds of R8,500, which is not always possible as the South African is giving up their job abroad to return home and in a number of cases, they have not yet secured employment in SA.

Other issues that make it difficult for South Africans to return

1. No permanent residency (PR) status based on South African children: Since the new rules came into effect, the DHA has refused every application for permanent residency based on having a South African child.
2. It remains the case that life partners and spouses of South Africans have to apply for an endorsement to work, study or run a business. The endorsement is both time consuming and off putting to employers and in addition is specific to, for example, the job.
3. An inability to work on a relatives visa – referring back to the issue of having a South African child this visa is relatively useless for many potential applicants.
4. Spousal permit applications for permanent residency – this cannot be applied for until you have been married for 5 years. It can then take another 1.5 years to get. Other immigration destinations allow for such applications after 2 years.
5. A broader issue is the structure of South African visa regulations – many who do obtain permanent residency never apply for ID books nor citizenship.
6. There is little distinction, other than voting rights, between PR and citizenship. Most regulations for other destinations insist the PR holder, after a period of years apply for citizenship.

20. The importance of intra-African relationships

In a separate website poll we conducted, with only 50 respondents, we asked if there is enough collaboration between Africans.

One hundred percent of respondents voted no. Furthermore, when Homecoming CEO Angel Jones was a guest at the Times Higher Education African Universities Summit in August 2015, this same sentiment was echoed by a number of university leaders from across the continent. It has led Homecoming Revolution to create a new terminology for the importance of intra-African talent mobility which we are calling the “African brain chain”.

21. Conclusion

In conclusion, Homecoming Revolution's survey found that Africans in the diaspora still retain a strong link to their home countries, with most still regarding the continent as home, despite spending several years abroad. At the same time, the majority of African homecomers don't regret their decision to return and would strongly encourage other Africans abroad to return. On the other side of the spectrum, there are a number of Africans in the diaspora and homecomers who have a negative outlook on the continent and its prospects. While there are people leaving Africa for various reasons, a significant number of Africans are also returning. Overall, the positive does outweigh the negative in this survey, with majority of participants maintaining an optimistic outlook on the continent and its future.
