

The SA good news stories you don't hear enough about

Private Property Reporter •



With all the doom and gloom that surrounds the South African economy, it's heartening to discover that there are good stories to tell too.

Statistics South Africa's recently released annual [General Household Survey](#), shows that South Africa is very different today compared to 1994.

This survey looks at what South African households have in assets and if they have certain services such as water and electricity. It also asks questions on health and education and gives us insight into how people earn, live and get services.

The home ownership good news story

One aspect which really represents a good story is the fact that South Africa, with a median population age of around 25 years old, has a home-ownership rate of well over 60%.

This is one of the most amazing development stories to come out of an emerging market country, according to calculations based on the survey.

Moreover 78% of South Africans live in formal houses, which is far higher than most other emerging market countries and certainly far higher than anywhere else in Africa. Of these, only 14% live in RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) houses!

In 2002 there were 8.6 million formal houses. This grew to 12.6 million in 2015. This is an increase of four million formal sector houses and suggests that there were more formal houses than the actual total number of households in 2008.

Furthermore of the four million homes, according to government data, only 1.7 million RDP homes were completed. This means that 2.3 million formal houses were built by households themselves, sometimes with subsidies, but mostly without State assistance.

Building data from the private sector suggests that of these 2.3 million houses, fewer than 800 000 were built in large towns and cities. This means that 1.5 million were built in rural areas, with or without formal planning permission. (Planning permission would be the way the building statistics are collected).

No other country with such a young median age has this much wealth! None.

The second home good news story

Add the fact that **South Africa has one of the highest numbers of second home-ownership in the world by far.** Close to 30% of South African households own a second home, which is much higher than the 4% found in Europe. Yes, SA has eight times the rate of second homes than people in the richest trading block in the world.

Something else is happening here that is not explained by poverty and inequality.

The household size success story

A total of 6.5 million households had six or more rooms in 2015, while the average number of people in a household fell from 4.7 in 1996 to 3.4 people in 2015.

That the average household has declined by one-and-a-half people from the mid-1990s is a clear indicator of increasing wealth and resources, as poorer households would tend to be bigger and richer households smaller.

Yes, nearly as many families rely on grants as they do on work as a source of income, leaving many in relative poverty. But the fact remains that South African households have far more in assets than income.

Why are we ignoring the good news?

It's clear that South Africans are too focused on our failures and not our successes. There are problems and there is work to be done. But if we carry on with the current mindset and not see the facts for what they are, we run the risk of destroying this great country.

Adapted from an article by economist Mike Schussler on [MoneyWeb](#).