



'I live in a better Cape Town than my parents did': readers on South Africa's cities after apartheid.

We asked you to share your views on how South African cities have changed in the 25 years since apartheid. Here are some of the responses we received.

By Guardian readers, Mon 3 Feb 2020 12.45 GMT

1. 'My biggest issue is safety'

"I'm a woman so my biggest issue is safety. South Africa is beautiful and has a lot going for it. However, poverty resulting from high unemployment and inequality result in high crime rates and extensive gender-based violence.(...) Those in power(...) seem to be happy behind their gated communities, forgetting that they won't be insulated forever. On the surface the country seems to have integrated well, but rampant poverty and crime are eating into any gains made after the fall of apartheid." *Sovuyo Zee, 43, Johannesburg*

2. 'Cities are inaccessible for most'

"I will speak on Cape Town in particular. The constitutional right to movement has changed so people of colour are able to move in different areas. However, the economic and land ownership disadvantages which are still linked to people of colour make cities inaccessible for most to live and thrive in. Also, the criminalisation of homelessness further entrenches the lived reality that only a few have the right to the city. *Ntandoyenkosi Mlambo, 25, Cape Town*

3. 'We have the vote but that won't keep the gangsters away'

"Cape Town is still very racially polarised. White people still live in the best areas and 'coloured' areas have become significantly more dangerous. In the past 25 years I've spent thousands on beefing up my security. In 1995 I had no front wall and kids played on the grass verges. Today I have a 2m wall, electric gates, CCTV, electric fence and armed response. White areas are still well kept, large plots, and relatively safe. The best schools are still in the white areas. It's unbelievable but true that if you live in a leafy suburb like Constantia and work in the city, you'll think you're in Europe while less than 15km in the opposite direction people still have little access to proper toilets and live in ramshackle houses. This is the price we pay for our 'democracy' and capitalism. We have the vote but that won't keep the gangsters away or protect your family from the rain or feed them."

Anonymous, grew up in Cape Town in a "coloured area" and now lives abroad but visit regularly

4. 'The damage of apartheid can't be undone in 25 years'

There has been more integration in Joburg, still need a lot more though, but definitely things have changed. The schools in Joburg (both public and private) are far more reflective of the actual demographics of the city. Joburg has had a significant growth in its black middle class and I think it is the most cosmopolitan city in the country. Just look at the recent SA supporters at the Rugby World Cup in Japan: there has been a significant increase in black support for what was historically a very white-dominated sport. The idea of a rainbow nation that Nelson Mandela's era inspired is unfortunately a long-term aspiration that will probably take another generation or two to achieve. I don't think the damage of 50 years of apartheid can be undone in 25 years. I hope my reflection in 2044 will be more positive!

Anonymous, Johannesburg

5. 'The effects of apartheid are still with us, even if the laws are not'

"In some ways very little [has changed], and in some ways a great deal. The most noticeable change is that you see black and white people, especially children, playing together in the streets or walking around shopping malls without the police questioning them or their parents. You see black and white people eating at the same restaurants and talking to each other in public.

But in the area where we live, which was a white Group Area during apartheid, most of the residents are still white. When we visit friends in Mamelodi, a formerly all-black township, we see no white people on the streets. The effects of apartheid are still with us, even if the laws are not.

Stephen Hayes, 78, City of Tshwane

6. ‘Some suburbs are now more diverse’

“Since the end of apartheid, people are free to live where they want. Some suburbs have thus become better integrated and more diverse, which is an improvement. However, some areas remain composed of predominantly one racial group because of socio-economic reasons. The new divisions in where people live are along economic lines rather than racial lines, but because apartheid economically and otherwise disadvantaged black and coloured people, the economic lines tend to mirror the racial lines. The cost of living and unemployment has increased, so many people are poorer. The number of townships in Cape Town has increased, because once restriction on movement ended, many people also moved to the cities from rural areas looking for jobs. Although the government has provided new housing since the end of apartheid, the increase in people moving to the city has meant that they are unable to keep up with the demand for housing and other facilities.”

Anonymous, former Cape Town resident

7. ‘South African cities are slowly integrating’

“South African cities are slowly integrating, and will eventually integrate completely, but progress has been slow. This is mostly because a big wealth gap remains between the average white and black South African – and this is largely as a result of poor governance. In spite of good black economic empowerment policies, government incompetence, corruption, and poor economic policies have stifled economic growth and impeded economic growth and the upliftment of poor South Africans into the middle class. There is hope however that this will improve under Cyril Ramaphosa.”

Murray, 52, Cape Town

8. ‘I walk today without labels in this beautiful town’

“It is undeniable that I live in a better Cape Town than the one my parents lived in. I was born in 1987 and registered as a ‘Cape coloured’ man. I walk today without labels in the streets of this beautiful town. However, for all the breakthroughs we’ve experienced, apartheid is pretty much still alive in the townships and the economic structures. By ‘developing’ housing projects in the old townships, government has solidified the geography of apartheid. I know people my age that have never wandered a few miles away from their impoverished communities. Public transportation, or the lack of, keeps people from joining what is otherwise a booming city in many areas.”

Anonymous, 31, Cape Town

Example on one testimony

4. ‘The damage of apartheid can’t be undone in 25 years’

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Anonymous, Johannesburg

	Positive or negative view?	Quotes to justify answer
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Warm up: Spot the stressed syllable

Apartheid

Born-free

Youth: youngsters

Mandela’s generation

Post-apartheid

Rainbow Nation

Legacy: heritage

Diversity

Reconciliation

Conscious: aware

Audacious

Hopeful

Enthusiastic

Talented