



Press Release

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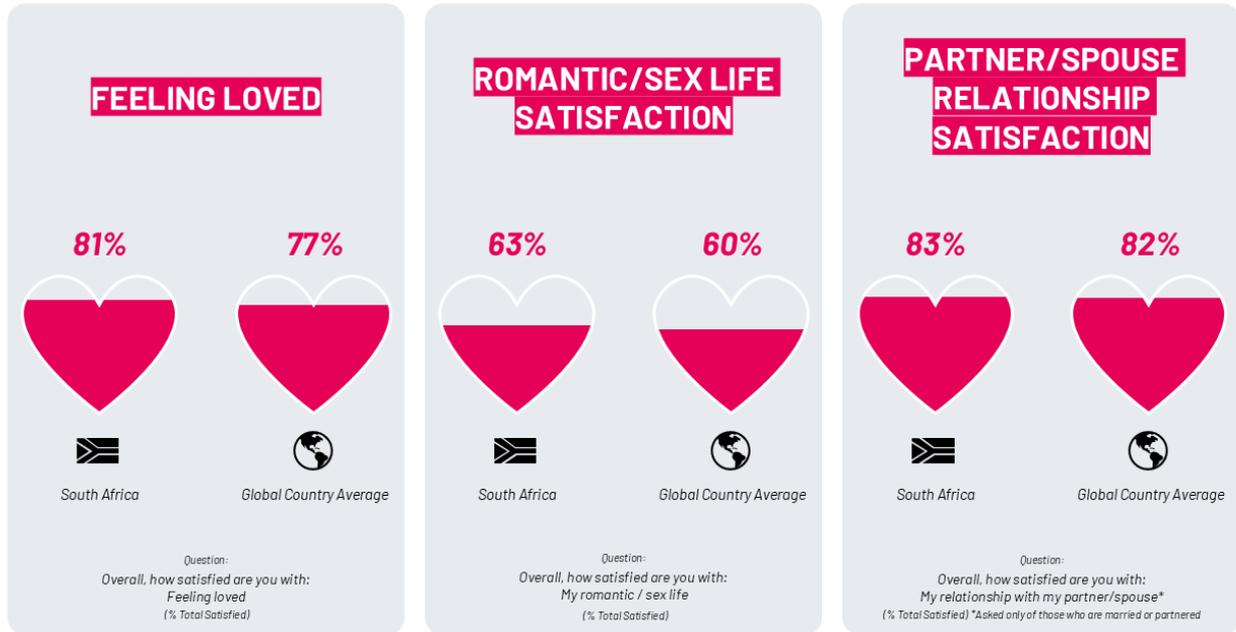
South Africans find joy in relationships despite economic pressures

As Valentine's Day approaches, a new Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction study reveals that South Africans continue to thrive in matters of the heart, with feeling loved and appreciated ranking as the nation's number one source of happiness – even as financial stress weighs heavily on the Rainbow Nation.

The survey, which covered 29 countries, shows that more than 8 in 10 online South Africans (81%) report feeling satisfied with the love in their lives, outperforming the global country average of 77%. This places South Africa among the top 10 countries globally for feeling loved.

Key findings include:

- **South Africans are happier than last year:** Despite the many challenges the country faces, three quarters (75%) of South Africans report being happy, up from just 66% last year. Happiness is highest among those aged 35 – 49 at 81%.
- **Love as the ultimate happiness driver:** More than half of South Africans (51%) say feeling appreciated and loved is a top contributor to their happiness – significantly higher than the global country average of 37%. Only Indonesia ranks higher (60%) on feeling loved as a source of joy.
- **Feeling loved:** 81% of South Africans are satisfied with feeling loved, above the global country average of 77%.
- **Romantic and sexual satisfaction:** 63% of South Africans are satisfied with their romantic/sex lives, higher than the global country average of 60%, and outperforming countries like the United States (57%), Great Britain (54%), Italy (55%) and France (58%).
- **Partner relationships remain strong:** Among partnered South Africans, 83% report satisfaction with their relationship, in line with the global country average of 82%.
- **Financial stress looms large:** Despite the positive love findings, 75% of unhappy South Africans cite their financial situation as a key contributor – significantly higher than the global country average of 57%.



South Africans find joy in relationships despite economic pressures (12 February 2026)
 Source: Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction 2026 | © Ipsos 2026



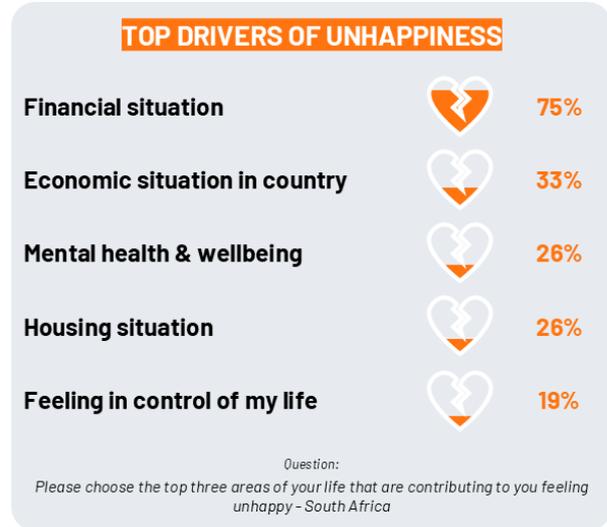
"This Valentine's Day, South Africa presents a compelling picture of resilience," says Natalie Otte, Country Manager at Ipsos in South Africa. "While our economic challenges are undeniable, we remain a happy nation driven by love and relationships. Despite financial pressures, South Africans are finding solace and joy in their relationships. Love, it seems, truly does conquer all in South Africa."

Love amid economic uncertainty

The study reveals a striking contrast in what drives happiness versus unhappiness among South Africans. While financial concerns dominate the unhappiness landscape, personal relationships overwhelmingly drive contentment.

South Africa's love life satisfaction 2026

Love tops happiness list while money tops unhappiness list



South Africans find joy in relationships despite economic pressures (12 February 2026)
Source: Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction 2026 | © Ipsos 2026



"What we're seeing is South Africans actively choosing to find joy in their connections with others, even when broader economic circumstances are challenging," Otte explains. "This speaks to a cultural strength – a prioritisation of relationships and human connection that transcends material concerns."

South Africa outshines developed nations

South Africa's satisfaction with feeling loved (81%) places it ahead of many developed economies. The country also outperforms on romantic and sexual satisfaction, with 63% reporting contentment compared to France (58%), Germany (55%), and Sweden (45%).

FEELING LOVED

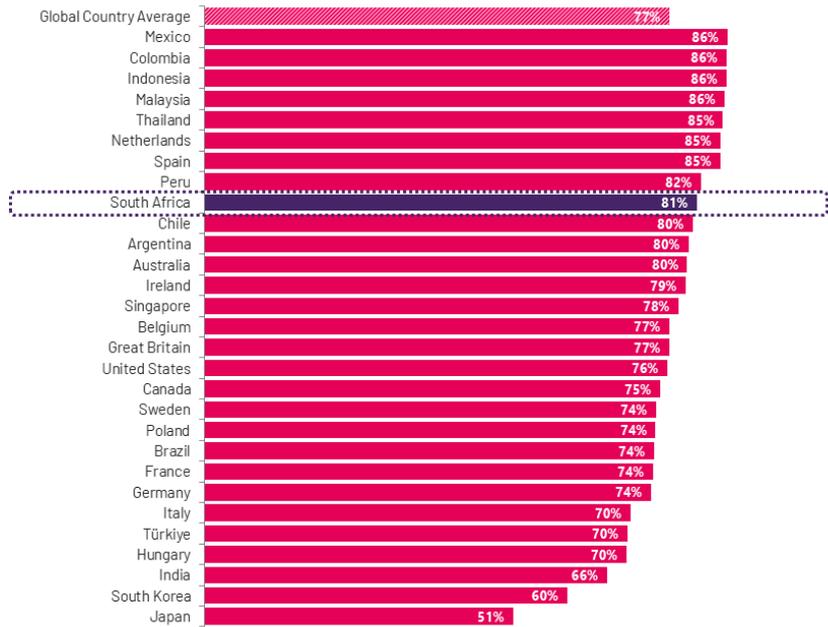
South Africa ranks 9th globally – ahead of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Germany, and France



81% of South Africans say they're feeling loved.

Overall, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your life - Country by Country (% satisfied with feeling loved)

South Africans find joy in relationships despite economic pressures (12 February 2026)
Source: Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction 2026 | © Ipsos 2026



ROMANTIC/SEX LIFE SATISFACTION

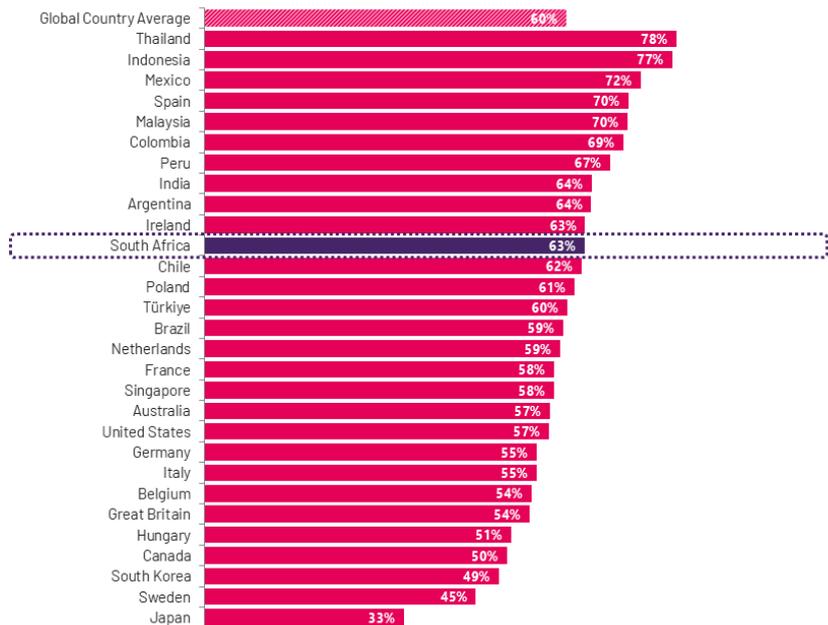
South Africa outperforms the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany



63% of South Africans say they are satisfied with their romantic/sex life

Overall, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your life - Country by Country (% satisfied with my romantic/sex life)

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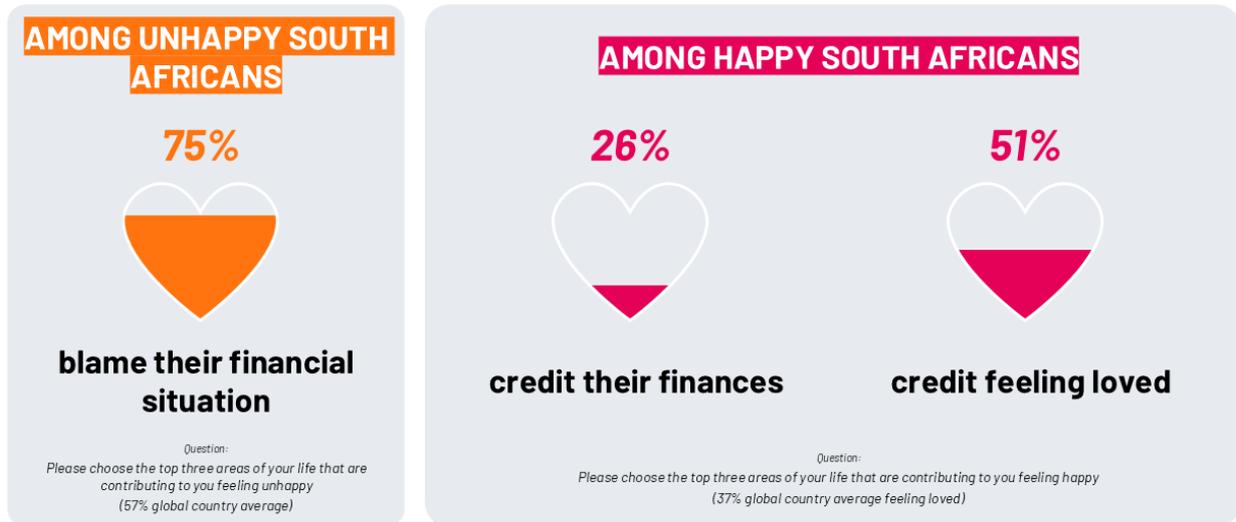
"These findings challenge assumptions about where romantic contentment flourishes," Otte notes. "Despite facing greater economic headwinds than many developed nations, South Africans report stronger satisfaction in their love lives. It suggests that relationship quality isn't solely determined by economic prosperity."

The financial-love paradox

Perhaps the most telling finding is the stark difference between what makes South Africans happy versus unhappy. Financial concerns appear prominently in both – but with opposite effects:

The financial-love paradox

Money troubles cause distress, but love creates happiness



South Africans find joy in relationships despite economic pressures (12 February 2026)
Source: Ipsos Love Life Satisfaction 2026 | © Ipsos 2026



"This creates an interesting paradox," Otte observes. "Money troubles are the primary source of distress, yet financial security barely registers as a happiness driver compared to love and relationships. It's a powerful reminder that while economic stability matters, human connection remains the foundation of wellbeing for South Africans. Money can't buy you love."

Looking ahead

As South Africa continues to navigate economic challenges including high unemployment, and cost-of-living pressures, these findings offer both insight and hope.

Otte concludes, "and for all of us this Valentine's Day, the message is clear: while we can't always control our financial circumstances, we can nurture the relationships that truly sustain us. South Africans are already doing this, and thriving because of it."

For more information on this news release, please contact:

Natalie Otte

Country Manager, Ipsos in South Africa

Mobile: +27 (0) 82 494 0618

natalie.otte@ipsos.com



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About the study

- *Technical note: For this survey, Ipsos interviewed a total of 23,268 adults aged 18 years and older in India, 18-74 in Canada, Republic of Ireland, Malaysia, South Africa, Türkiye, and the United States, 20-74 in Thailand, 21-74 in Indonesia and Singapore, and 16-74 in all other countries.*
- *The sample consists of approximately 2,000 individuals in Japan, 1,000 individuals each in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Mexico, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals each in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, and Türkiye. The sample in India consists of approximately 2,200 individuals, of whom approximately 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face and 400 were interviewed online.*
- *The “chat*
- *29-country average” reflects the average result for all the countries and markets where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.*

ABOUT IPSOS

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www.ipsos.com

35 rue du Val de Marne
75 628 Paris, Cedex 13 France
Tel. +33 1 41 98 90 00