

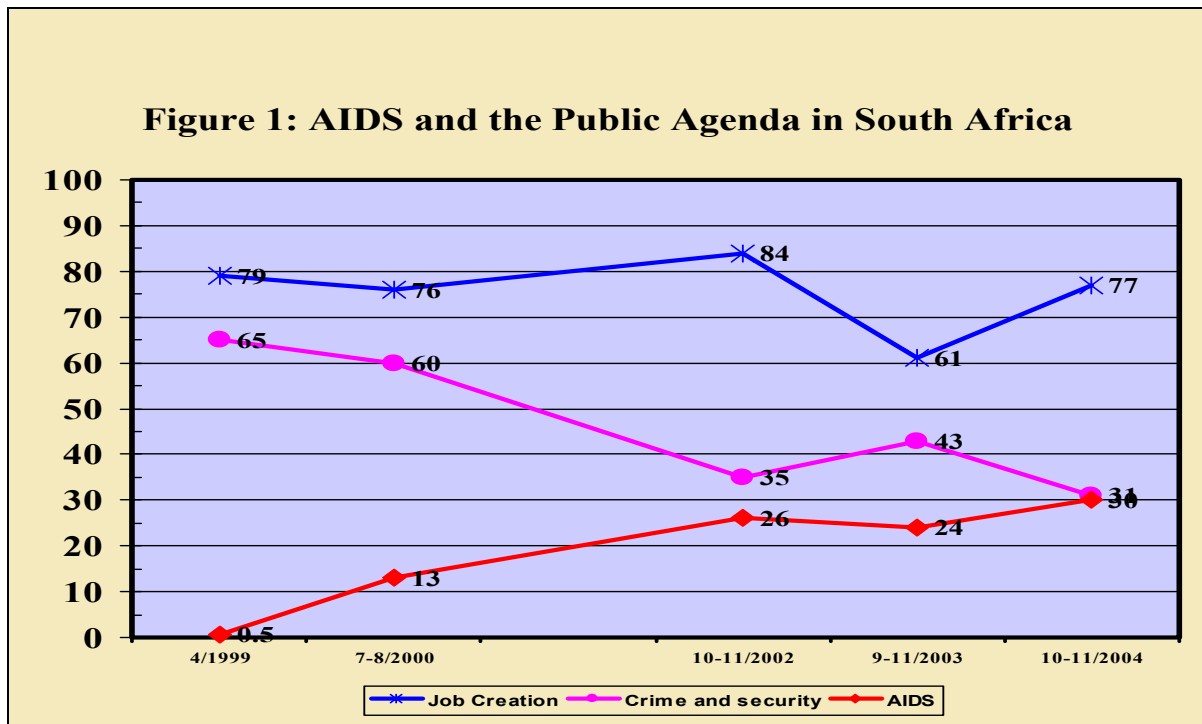


## AIDS and Public Opinion in South Africa

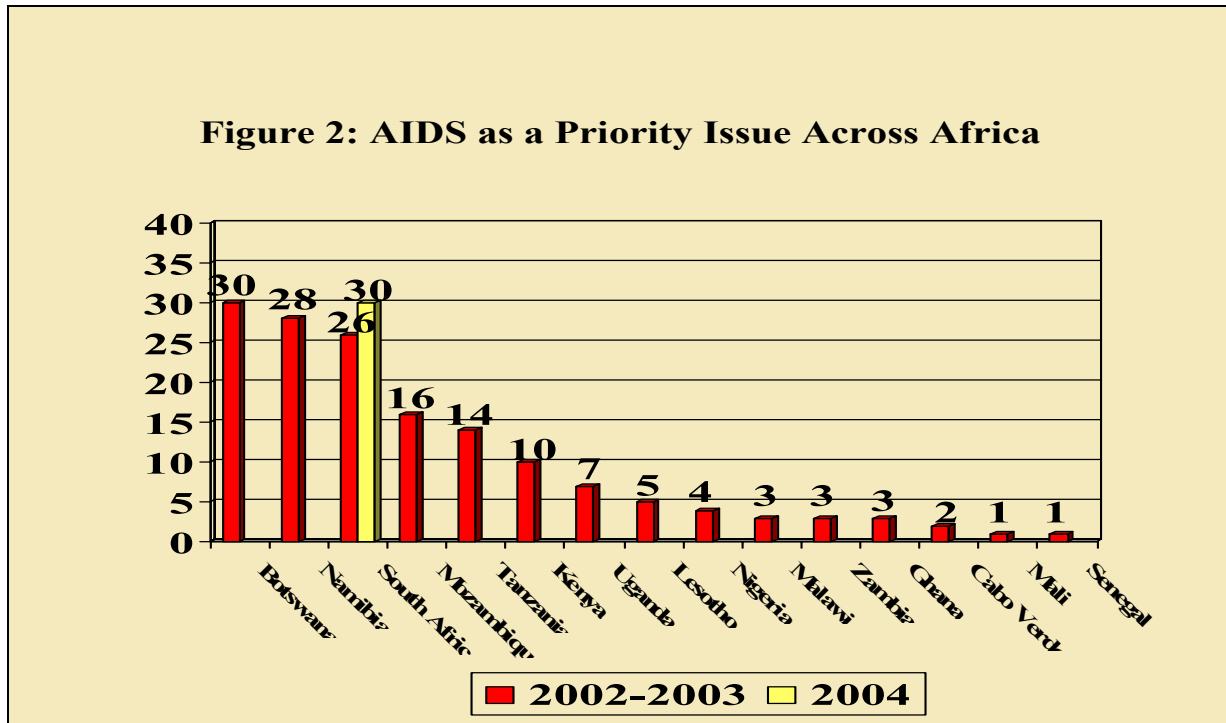
HIV/AIDS is now tied with crime as the public's second most frequently mentioned priority problem facing the country. The proportions of South Africans who say they have lost a friend or family member to an AIDS-related illness has doubled over the past four years.

These are some of the important findings revealed in the Afrobarometer survey conducted in South Africa in October and November 2004.

Almost one third of South Africans (30 percent) now cite AIDS as one of the three "most important problems facing the country that government ought to address," virtually the same as the 31 percent who cite issues of crime and security. Only job creation outdistances these two issues, selected by 77 percent. Popular focus on AIDS as a public problem has increased substantially over the last few years, moving from less than 1 percent in 1999, to 13 percent in 2000, 26 percent in 2002, and now to 30 percent measured in late 2004.



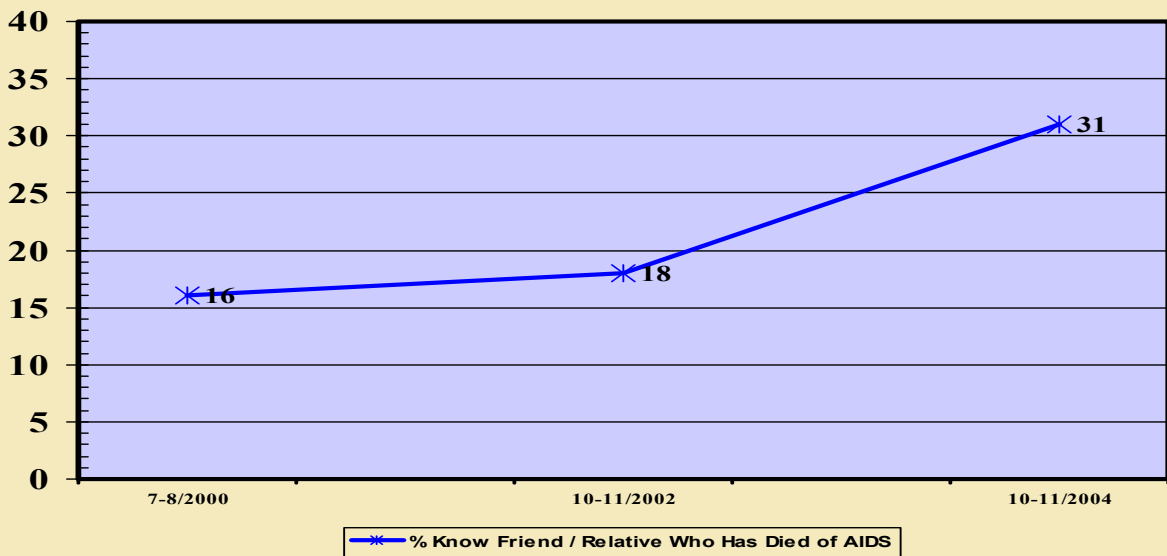
Along with its Southern African neighbors, Botswana (30 percent) and Namibia (28 percent), South Africa is the only other country surveyed by the Afrobarometer where AIDS has come to be seen as a public problem of high priority.



Just under one third of all South Africans 18 years or older have now experienced some form of personal loss to the AIDS pandemic. Thirty-one percent report that they know of a family member, relative or friend who has died of an AIDS-related illness, up sharply from the 16 percent measured in 2000.

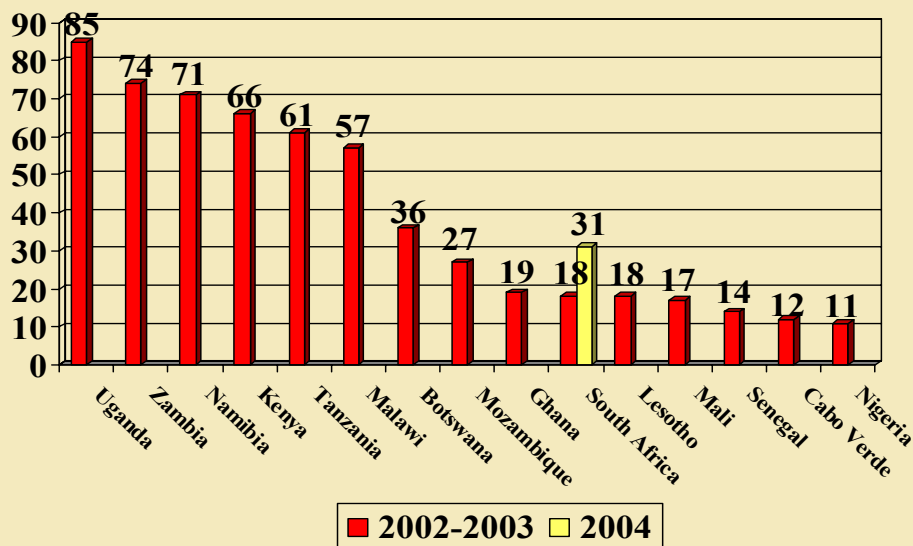
These everyday experiences, rather than any increased attention by the news media, offer the best explanation of the rise in public attention to AIDS. A recent study by *Media Tenor* found that less than 2 percent of all news stories in newspapers and television in the past year in South Africa mentioned HIV/AIDS.

**Figure 3: Personal Loss to AIDS In South Africa**

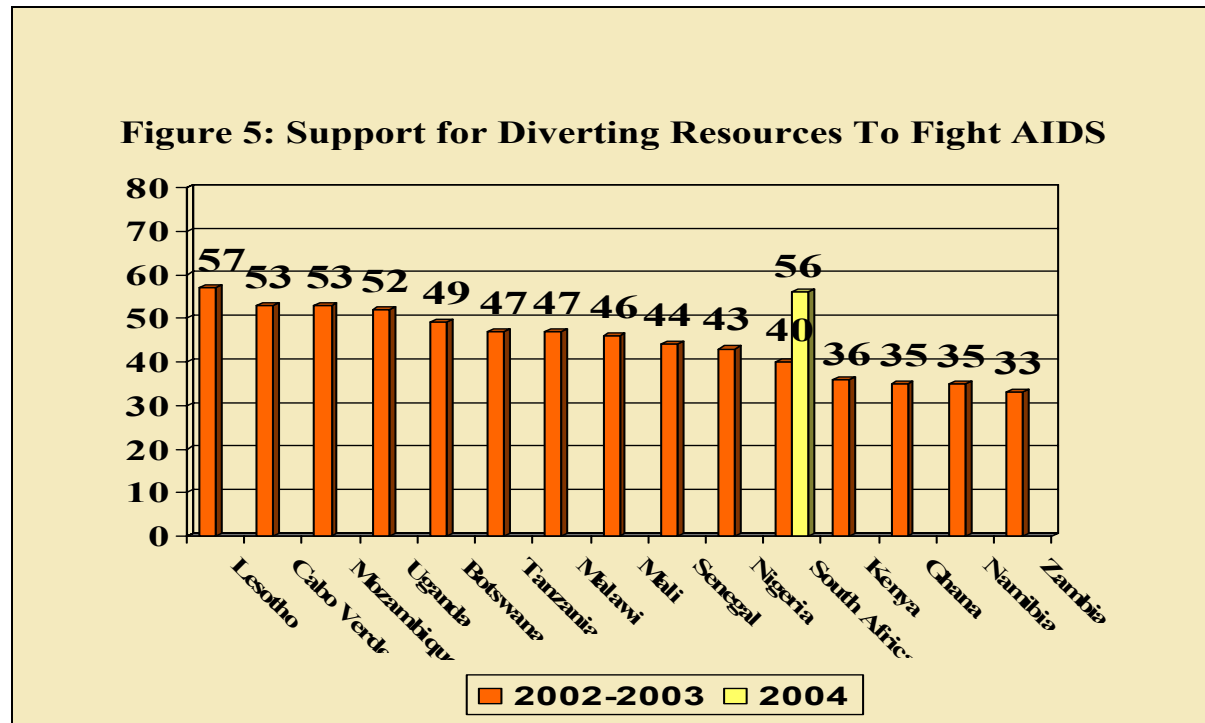


Yet while levels of HIV infection are relatively high in South Africa, personal loss is still relatively low (though growing). This is due to the fact that the annual level of deaths will only match current infection rates in about five to six years due to the incubation period of the disease. We see far higher levels of reported personal loss in countries where the disease is older, such as Uganda, where 85 percent have experienced personal loss, Zambia (74 percent) and Namibia (71 percent).

**Figure 4: Personal Loss to AIDS Across Africa**



If there is anything positive to take from these numbers, it might be that the popular constituency calling for increased levels of government commitment of resources to fighting HIV/AIDS is growing. Since 2002, there has been a sharp jump in the proportion of South Africans willing to divert government resources from other key development areas, like housing and education, to fight HIV/AIDS. Fifty six percent of all South Africans now support this position, compared to just 40 percent in 2002, one of the highest levels measured in all Afrobarometer surveys.



Face to face interviews were conducted in the eleven official languages with 2400 respondents across all nine provinces in October / November 2004. Data was collected from the smallest geographic units, Enumeration Areas (EA's), using the South Africa census data for 2001. All EA's across the country were stratified by province, population group and type of area; 600 EA's were randomly selected with the probability proportionate to its size in the overall population. This ensures that every eligible adult has an equal and know chance of being selected. Four interviews were randomly conducted in each EA generating an overall sample size of 2,400 which is sufficient to yield a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent. Fieldwork for this survey was conducted by AC Nielsen, South Africa.

The Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from 18 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Michigan State University. Several donors support the Afrobarometer's research, capacity-building and outreach activities, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For more information, see: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)