Housing in South Africa is a serious political issue around which communities have rallied continuously, accompanied by violent protests. CATHERINE NDINDA, UFO OKEKE UZODIKE and LOLITA WINNAAR examine the changing housing landscape by discussing issues of access and mobility.

The data used for this article is derived from the 2006 to 2008 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), a nationally representative survey that targets adults living in households aged 16 years and older. The question that was analysed reads as follows: ‘Indicate the type of dwelling that the household occupies’.

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TYPES OF HOUSING
An analysis of the residential patterns from 2006–2008 indicates the proportion of the population that lives in the different housing typologies and the concentrations in these typologies in terms of race. Figure 1 shows that in 2006, 66% of the population lived in brick structure dwellings on a separate stand, compared to 67% in 2007 and 70.2% in 2008. This suggests that over a period of three years the proportion of the population living in formal brick structure dwellings on a separate stand has been steadily increasing.

A breakdown of access to housing suggests that the residential landscape is still divided according to race. The proportion of those who live in brick structures on a separate stand increased across race between 2006 and 2007. However the pattern of access changed in 2008 when the proportion of Africans and whites living in brick structures continued to increase whereas that of coloureds and Indians slightly declined.

Informal shack dwellings are the most common form of accommodation after the formal brick structure dwellings. Between 2006 and 2008, the proportion of residents living in informal shack dwellings, whether in an informal settlement or outside, seems to have declined from 14.2% in 2006 to 11.8% in 2007 and 10% in 2008.

While there appears to be a steady decline in the proportion of residents living in informal housing, 10% still represents a large section of the population that is inadequately housed. The rapid delivery of housing for such residents, either through in-situ upgrading or the provision of alternative housing, remains critical.

The proportion of residents living in traditional dwellings indicates that in 2006 about 6% lived in traditional dwellings (hut structure), about 10% of the population lived in similar housing in 2007, and in 2008 the proportion was 6%. This suggests that the proportion of those living in the traditional type of housing has been fluctuating within the three year period. In terms of race, the only group shown to be living in the traditional type of dwelling is African.
Municipalities are required to set their housing delivery targets, and to ensure that they allocate land for housing development.

This decline points to some gains in removing people from inadequate and insecure housing into improved housing. The decline in the proportion of those living in informal housing and the increase in the proportion of those living in formal brick structure dwellings may partly be attributed to state spending on subsidised housing. Over the same period the policy of the department of human settlements has been to reduce the growth of informal settlements and provide better quality subsidised housing for households whose total combined income is below R3 500 a month.

**WHOSE JOB IS IT ANYWAY?**

In terms of Housing Act 107 of 1997, the function of the provincial government is to formulate provincial housing policy and to capacitate municipalities to deliver on their mandate of ensuring that there is progressive development of adequate housing for residents within the jurisdiction of each municipality. Municipalities are required to set their housing delivery targets, and to ensure that they allocate land for housing development.

**RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY**

Post-apartheid housing mobility in South Africa appears to be a result of state intervention and market forces. The purpose of state intervention in housing provision is to provide adequate shelter, security and comfort to the poor, while market forces are at play in the upwardly mobile residents.

The data on the racial breakdown of the population groups that live in the different housing typologies suggests more Africans are moving into brick structures on separate stands, whereas coloureds and Asians show a tendency to move into flats or apartments.

In 2006, about 1.4% of coloureds lived in flats or apartments and this proportion rose to 2.7% in 2007 and again in 2008 to 2.9%. The same upward trend is observed for Asians, of whom 7% lived in flats and apartments in 2006, increasing to 9% in 2007 and in 2008 to 10.6%.

**SHAKING UP OR SHIPPING OUT**

Black Africans and coloureds are the only two race groups represented in the informal, or shack housing typology, with the former group constituting the majority in informal shack housing, whether in a backyard or in an informal settlement.

The proportion of black Africans in informal shack housing increased from 12.2% in 2006 to 17.3% in 2007 and then declined to 14.3% in 2008. This data is comparable to the Statistics South Africa General Household Survey, which indicates that the proportion of Africans living in informal, or shack housing, was 19.9% in 2006, 18.7% in 2007 and 14.1% in 2008.

The decline in the proportions of Africans and coloureds living in informal settlements during the last SASAS survey in 2008 may be an indicator of local government efforts to eradicate the growth of informal settlements through fast-tracking upgrading programmes in these areas. Yet, the inconsistent pattern of housing mobility into and out of informal shack housing suggests that this type of dwelling will be with us for a long time unless drastic measures are taken to address housing poverty among black Africans and coloureds.

Although all race groups are represented in the dominant form of housing – brick structures on a separate stand – the concentrations of certain race groups in specific types of dwellings point to the persistence of race in housing patterns in post-apartheid South Africa.