

Human Sciences Research Council

The age of digitality and the future of society will take centre stage at the annual HSRC Conference

Ekurhuleni, Tuesday, 08 September 2026 – Hundreds of social science experts will gather at the Radisson Destiny Hotel & Convention Centre, O.R. Tambo, Ekurhuleni, for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Annual Conference from 15 to 16 September 2026.

The conference aims to establish a platform for intellectual exchange, policy engagement, and collaborative research on the societal implications of digital transformation.

Taking place under the theme, *The Age of Digitality and the Future of Society*, the conference seeks to foster interdisciplinary dialogue on how societies can navigate digital transformation in ways that advance inclusion, justice, dignity, and sustainable development.

The conference places particular emphasis on African and Global South perspectives, recognising the importance of locally grounded knowledge, digital sovereignty, and alternative pathways to technological development.

Artificial intelligence, data systems, digital platforms, and emerging technologies are transforming the way knowledge is produced, economies are organised, institutions are governed, and citizens participate in public life.

While these developments present new opportunities for innovation and social progress, they also raise important questions about ethics, power, inequality, democracy, labour, and human agency.

Regarded as one of the South Africa's largest social science conferences, the two-day gathering will bring together researchers and academics, postgraduate students, policymakers and government officials, development practitioners, civil society organisations, funders, and private-sector partners working at the intersection of technology and society.

The conference theme is timely for rethinking knowledge, ethics, and the role of the humanities and social sciences.

Digital technologies now mediate how people learn, work, govern, care, and relate to one another. They generate new forms of knowledge and new forms of exclusion. For this reason, the conference has invited contributions that take digitality seriously as a social, political and epistemic condition – not merely as a set of tools.

The programme will feature papers and studies covering sub-themes such as

- **Rethinking knowledge production in the age of AI** – Exploring how artificial intelligence is transforming research, scholarship, creativity, and knowledge systems.

- **Digital humanities and African knowledge systems** – Examining the intersection of digital technologies, indigenous knowledge, heritage, language, and culture.
- **Communication, digital publics, and society** – Investigating digital media, online communities, information ecosystems, and public discourse.
- **Ethics, power, and accountability in AI** – Addressing ethical challenges, algorithmic bias, governance frameworks, and responsible innovation.
- **Data, infrastructure, and sovereignty** – Exploring data governance, digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and digital sovereignty in Africa.
- **The future of work, education, and scholarship** – Examining the impact of technological change on labour markets, education systems, skills development, and academic work.
- **Democracy and digital society** – Investigating digital citizenship, democratic participation, governance, and the regulation of digital spaces.
- **Digital inequality and social justice** – Addressing issues of access, exclusion, inequality, and the social consequences of technological transformation.
- **Global South pathways and alternative digital futures** – Exploring alternative models of digital development, innovation, and governance from African and Global South perspectives.

Apart from academic activities, the conference will offer exhibition space as part of an exciting, interactive knowledge area. The HSRC Exhibition & Interactive Engagement Hub will serve as the dynamic heart of the Conference. This is a step beyond keynotes into an immersive, interactive space designed to connect delegates, including the media, showcase ground-breaking research, and shape the digital future together.

For more information about the conference, speakers and the programme, please visit the conference website: <https://annual-conference.hsrc.ac.za/>

ENDS.

For media enquiries, please contact Adziliwi Nematandani: Cell: +27 82 765 9191 Email: anematandani@hsrc.ac.za

Join the conversation:
#HSRCConference
#AgeOfDigitality
#FutureOfSociety
#DigitalTransformation

Notes to the editor

About the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

Established in 1968, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) is South Africa's statutory research agency and the largest dedicated social science and humanities research institute on the African continent. The HSRC generates evidence and insights that inform public policy, support development and improve lives. Through high-quality research, strategic partnerships and research capacity development, the Council contributes to evidence-informed decision-making in South Africa, Africa and globally.

Join the conversation at:



www.hsrc.ac.za



<https://x.com/HSRCza>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/hsrc>



<http://www.facebook.com/HumanSciencesResearchCouncil>

Click <https://repository.hsrc.ac.za/> to search the HSRC Research Output Repository.

Visit <https://hsrcpress.ac.za/books/> to access HSRC Press online catalogue.