

Leadership, morality and multiple wives

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TNS Research Surveys, South Africa's leading marketing and social insights company, conducted a survey in February to ascertain what people expect of their leaders with respect to morality and their private lives. This survey was conducted amongst a sample of 2 000 SA adults from the seven major metropolitan areas of South Africa, interviewing them face-to-face in their homes, with a margin of error of under 2.5%.

In light of the charges against Mr Zuma with respect to corruption - charges that have been withdrawn and re-instated - and are still the subject of much controversy and rumours of again being withdrawn, it is important to determine what people do expect of a country's leader.

A half of people do not expect a leader's credentials to be impeccable but most do not agree that a man should have more than one wife at a time.

On the issue of a leader's morality being unable to be questioned, a half of people surveyed do not expect a leader's morality to be impeccable - a perhaps surprisingly high number given the continual outcry against crime and corruption. This figure differs by race group:

- Blacks - 45%; whites - 56%; coloureds - 45%; Indians/Asians - 70%

The figure drops to 43% amongst people who feel that Jacob Zuma will make a good President of South Africa.

However, 38% agree that a leader's morality should be above reproach, this response being consistent across all race groups except Indians/Asians:

- Agree that a leader's morality should be unable to be questioned - total - 38% >Blacks - 40%; whites - 36%; coloureds - 39%; Indians/Asians - 23%

Interestingly, amongst those who feel that Mr Zuma will do a good job as President of SA, this response rises to 44%. This seems an apparent contradiction given the controversy surrounding the charges brought against Mr Zuma which suggests that some people at least do question his morality. It may be that other perceived leadership qualities are more important to these people than morality.

There are no differences by region.

However, only 18% of metro adults feel that it is no problem if a man has more than one wife at a time:

- Agree it is no problem - total - 18%
 - Blacks -23% (males - 34%, females 13%); whites - 7%; coloureds - 10%; Indians/Asians - 10%
 - A quarter of people in Soweto, Durban and the East Rand agree compared with only one in nine in Cape Town and the Eastern Cape.

Conversely, 74% of people feel that this IS a problem, especially females:

- Blacks - 68%; whites - 86%; coloureds - 85%; Indians/Asians - 78%
- Males - 64%; females - 83%

- Black males - 55%; black females - 80%

Not surprisingly perhaps, the black response is higher, but 68% of blacks still disagree that multiple wives are “no problem”. Disagree levels for other race groups average 80%. Amongst Mr Zuma's supporters, 26% agree that it is no problem if a man has more than one wife at a time (but 66% do not agree that it is “no problem”).

Perhaps unlike some western countries, metro adults here in South Africa tend to feel that the private life of a country's leader should be that person's private business and that the press should respect that - 55% agree with this view, with blacks being more likely to agree than other race groups:

- Agree - total - 55%

Blacks - 63%; whites - 38%; coloureds - 43%; Indians/Asians - 43%

This rises to 72% amongst Mr Zuma's supporters.

How do people feel Jacob Zuma will perform as a possible President of SA?

People were asked if they thought that Jacob Zuma would do a good job as President of South Africa. Exactly 40% feel that he will do a good job but exactly 40% feel he will not, with 20% giving a “don't know” response. This means that the metro population is equally divided on the merits of Jacob Zuma as President. In October/November 2008, the same question elicited a 36% positive response, a 40% negative response and a 24% “don't know” response: hence, people formerly saying “don't know” are moving slowly into a more positive stance.

As in most things political in South Africa, race is still a major differentiator:

%s	Total metro areas		Blacks		Whites		Coloureds		Indians/Asians	
	Nov	Feb	Nov	Feb	Nov	Feb	Nov	Feb	Nov	Feb
Will do a good job	36	40	51	58	4	5	10	12	27	12
Will not do a good job	40	40	25	22	66	77	71	71	45	52
Don't know	24	20	24	20	29	17	18	18	28	36
Net positives	-4	0	26	36	-62	-72	-61	-59	-18	-40

* Net positives are given by subtracting those who feel he will NOT do a good job from those who feel he WILL do a good job.

This table shows that Mr Zuma's support has risen amongst blacks (but still a quarter of the sample are sitting on the fence), has stayed the same for Coloureds but has dropped for whites and Indians/Asians. Absolute support levels are very low for all race groups except blacks.

In terms of other demographics, males of all race groups are more likely to be positive about a Zuma Presidency (44% are positive as against 36% for females). Older people tend to be more negative (36% of those aged under 34 are negative compared with 53% of those aged 60 years and over) as do the more wealthy (though this is also correlated with race). Amongst blacks, the most positive are, not surprisingly, those whose home language is Zulu (75% are positive), this dropping to 57% for Sotho speakers, 48% for Tswana speakers and only 38% for Xhosa speakers.

The level of the “don't know” response is still quite high, however, for all race groups.

Results by area

There are considerable differences by area:

Net positive	
Feb	Nov
11	7
17	11
17	12
14	33
32	16
-6	-18
0	-4
-13	-9
-48	-59
26	30
-2	-36
-29	-44
-29	-23
18	25

- Gauteng - 46% (40% in November)
 - Johannesburg and environs - 49% (43% in November)
 - Johannesburg excluding Soweto - 48% (44% in November)
 - Soweto - 51% (57% in November)
 - East Rand - 57% (46% in November) (highest)
 - West Rand - 35% (23% in November)
 - Vaal Triangle and South Rand - 41% (34% in November)
 - Pretoria - 32% (29% in November)
- Cape Town - 16% (12% in November) (lowest)
- Durban - 53% (53% in November)
- Eastern Cape - 23% (18% in November)
 - Port Elizabeth - 25% (17% in November)
 - East London - 18% (22% in November)
- Bloemfontein - 53% (53% in November)

The extreme negativity in Cape Town and the Eastern Cape is very evident here, though attitudes have softened somewhat. Soweto has swung to a less positive stance whilst the reverse is true for East Rand.

Our take-out

Mr Zuma's support has shown an increase amongst blacks but a drop amongst whites and Indians/Asians. All race groups except blacks are more negative about Mr Zuma being likely do a good job as President.

It seems that Metro South Africans are relatively tolerant about a leader's morality, with a half feeling that this is not an issue and four in ten feeling it is an issue. This is clearly a divisive issue. That Mr Zuma's supporters are more critical on this issue - given the charges that have been ranged against him - suggests that he has a personal charisma or other qualities that somehow supersede their scruples.

Further, whilst the vast majority of people do not approve of multiple wives at one time, over a half feel that a leader's private life is his or her own affair and that the press should respect this.

It is clear that, to some people as we approach the elections, Mr Zuma's perceived leadership abilities outweigh the combined negatives of the charges against him and what that might imply about his morality, and his multiple wives. Whether this personal positivity towards the man despite these negatives will last once his administration has settled in remains to be seen. It does suggest that these may come home to roost unless he does indeed deliver on his election promises.

Technical note

The studies were conducted amongst a sample of 2 000 adults (1260 blacks, 385 whites, 240 coloureds and 115 Indians/Asians) in the seven major metropolitan areas: they have a margin of error of under 2.5% for the results found for the total sample. The studies were conducted by TNS Research Surveys (Pty) Ltd as part of their ongoing research into current social and political issues and were funded by TNS Research Surveys. For more details, please contact Neil Higgs on 011-778-7500 or 082-376-6312. www.tnsresearchsurveys.co.za

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