

# What do people really think about the Zuma affair?

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Research Surveys (Pty) Ltd, South Africa's leading marketing insights company, has, for many years, researched issues of general interest to South Africans. This has been particularly intensive over the past few years. One of the highly topical and very controversial issues has been the Schabir Shaik trial, its verdict and the subsequent release from office by President Mbeki of Jacob Zuma as a result of that verdict.

This is an important issue for South Africa as it concerns perceptions people have over corruption in the country. There are also serious internal ramifications as the release of Jacob Zuma has received huge media attention, raising many questions as to the wisdom of the President's decision and the respect due to court rulings.

RS has conducted four studies of increasing depth into these issues.

## What was the initial reaction at the time?

In a small telephone study conducted by RS, amongst a sample of 300 SA adults in *metropolitan areas and who had access to a landline telephone over the period 17 to 19 June 2005*, the weekend after Jacob Zuma's release, the majority of those polled felt that the President's action in releasing the Deputy President from his duties was the correct one:

- "Thabo Mbeki was correct to release Jacob Zuma from his position as Deputy President."
  - Agree - 74% (Africans 59%, whites 97%, Indians and coloureds 90%)
  - Disagree - 23%; don't know - 3%

The margin of error on this study is approximately six points.

There were some who felt that the President had used this to get rid of a rival:

- "Thabo Mbeki used this as an opportunity to get rid of his rival, Jacob Zuma"
  - Agree -28% (Africans 34%, whites 16%, Indians and coloureds 24%) (Durban - 54%)
  - Disagree - 63%
  - Don't know - 9%

On the other side of the coin, positives were perceived in that people generally felt that the President's action sent a very positive message on corruption and transparent government (75% to 85% of people agreed with a set of statements around this topic). The same telephone study showed a remarkable improvement in the President's approval rating from 48% in January 2005 to 83% in this more-affluent sample in June - the weekend after he released Jacob Zuma.

## Cosatu's role

In a subsequent small follow-up survey in July of 300 people also in *metropolitan* areas, also by telephone, RS found that Cosatu's proposed funding of Jacob Zuma's legal costs was not generally well-received:

1. 33% of these adults felt that Cosatu was doing the right thing by establishing a fund for Jacob Zuma's legal costs.

48% of blacks felt was a good thing, only 16% of whites felt that it was a good thing, with Indians and Coloureds coming in at 27%

2. Younger people were more likely to approve of the Cosatu move.

### **Extending these findings - 1**

The issue was briefly examined in a study amongst 2 000 metropolitan dwellers in June, where people were asked if Jacob Zuma should be allowed to stay in office given his involvement with Schabir Shaik. Over this much larger sample, not restricted to people with telephones, 55% said "no", this coming largely from white, coloured and Indian people (80%), with black people coming in at 41%. This black figure was largely driven by people in Durban (39%) with other provinces having a 58% response.

### **Extending these findings - 2**

A study of much greater depth was carried out in early August 2005 amongst a fully representative national sample of people of 3 500 from metropolitan areas, smaller urban areas and rural areas, permitting, for the first time, a full analysis of how people feel about the Zuma affair and the President's handling of it. This study has a margin of error of approximately 2%.

At a national level, 53% of people felt that Jacob Zuma had been released in accordance with the Constitution and the law whilst 28% felt it was as the result of party politics. The action received approval by 58% across the country with 36% disapproving. President Mbeki's management of the country as a whole received approval from 65%.

#### ***But these averages hide some strong differences across the country***

Looking at the various demographics at play in South Africa reveals that there are two key issues where there are very strong differences between different groups:

1. Approval of the President's release of Jacob Zuma is lower amongst four groups: those in KwaZulu-Natal, and - as a national average without taking regional variation into account - isiZulu speakers, people in rural areas, poorer people (LSM 1 to 3) and younger people (18 to 24 years old).
2. Feeling that it is acceptable to reject a verdict of the courts if one does not agree with it is also higher in the same four groups, as well as in Limpopo.

The next question that needs to be considered is to what extent these four groups are related or not. So, for example, are rural people across the country of the same mind? Are poorer people across the country of a similar belief system with respect to these two issues?

#### ***The deviation is primarily centred in KwaZulu-Natal and is not shared across the whole country***

Deeper analysis of the data shows the following with respect to the Zuma affair:

- Approval of the President's action in releasing Jacob Zuma drops from the overall average of 58% to 20% in KwaZulu-Natal (and 46% in Mpumalanga). The average in the other seven provinces is 69%.
- Amongst people whose home language is isiZulu, approval of this action drops from the overall average for all isiZulu speakers of 24% to 8% in KwaZulu-Natal - in other provinces, the figure averages 56%, close to the overall average for the whole country, so the low national figure for isiZulu speakers is driven by the KwaZulu-Natal component.
- Amongst people in rural areas, the overall average approval is 50%, but this drops to a minimal 7% in Kwa-Zulu Natal - everywhere else, rural support averages 65%.
- For poorer people (LSM 1 to 3), the average is 48%: this is pulled down by the KwaZulu-Natal figure of just 5%. For poorer people in other provinces, the average is again 65%.
- Finally, amongst the 18 to 24 year old group, the approval figure averages 51%; in KwaZulu-Natal, it is 12% whilst in Mpumalanga, it is 25%. For all the other provinces, the average is 64%

#### ***What does this mean?***

It is clear that, in all provinces other than KwaZulu-Natal, and, to a much lesser extent, Mpumalanga, support for the President's action in releasing Jacob Zuma is high: two-thirds of people from all walks of life and all demographics say this was the correct action. If Kwa-Zulu-Natal is excluded from the analysis, it turns out that 62% of black people support the President's action on Jacob Zuma - higher than the national average. In KwaZulu-Natal, that figure drops to just 9%.

Hence, there are very high levels of disapproval in KwaZulu-Natal; clearly Jacob Zuma's support base is very largely derived from this province.

### ***Approval of the President in general***

On the broader question of the President's general management of the country, this sits at 65% across the whole country. That means that two out of three South Africans generally approve of how he runs the country.

By province, his approval ratings are -

- Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Free State - 79%
- North West - 75%
- Limpopo - 74%
- Gauteng - 66%
- Western Cape - 54%
- Mpumalanga - 51%
- KwaZulu-Natal - 49%

### ***What about the appointment of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka?***

In overall terms, this received a more divided response, with 47% approving, 39% disapproving and the rest saying "don't know". Once again, KwaZulu-Natal is the least positive: the figure falls to just 19% here, no doubt explaining the heated reception she has received there. The Northern Cape is also less positive at 31%; the average everywhere else is 54%. Differences other than by province are generally small.

### ***The question of the courts - what happens if one disagrees with a verdict?***

Do people accept the appeal process if they disagree with a verdict, or do they feel that it is acceptable simply to reject the verdict if they disagree with it? Overall, the vast majority of 71% accept that the appeal process is the correct route to take. However, 23% feel otherwise.

- It is acceptable to reject court judgements if one disagrees:
  - Overall average - 23%; KwaZulu-Natal - 47%; Limpopo - 37%; elsewhere - 16%
  - isiZulu speakers - 38%; KwaZulu-Natal - 47%; all other provinces - 20%
  - Rural areas - 29% - KwaZulu-Natal - 51%; elsewhere - 20%
  - Poorer people - 28%; KwaZulu-Natal - 50%; elsewhere - 19%

This is a concerning finding as it represents a philosophy that rejects the judiciary particularly in one province - KwaZulu-Natal. Is it because of the findings in the Schabir Shaik case and the fall out that these have had for this province's favoured son, Jacob Zuma? This cannot be answered definitively from this study but the fact that the major differences on both issues skew almost exclusively to this province suggests that this hypothesis cannot be ruled out.

## **Summary**

The results of the study show that Jacob Zuma's support base is massively dominated by people in KwaZulu-Natal, and that any perceptions of it being generally stronger amongst younger people, poorer people, isiZulu speakers and rural people are entirely driven by the very strong support coming from those people in **KwaZulu-Natal**, this then lowering the overall average for these groups. Excluding KwaZulu-Natal, 62% of black people support the Presidents' stance on the release of

Jacob Zuma - higher than the national average.

The President's approval rating is 65% overall - but only 49% in KwaZulu-Natal.

That it is seen to be much more acceptable to ignore court verdicts in that province is a major concern, and not a view that is generally shared outside KwaZulu-Natal.

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