



Press Release



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Approval of Barack Obama: A challenge for President-elect Jacob Zuma?

As a fast-moving, decisive and visible US President Barack Obama last week reached his milestone 100 days in office with an approval rating of 68% - on a par with ex-President Mbeki's highest score of 66% - TNS Research Surveys, South Africa's leading marketing and social insights company, today released the results of a survey to ascertain what South Africans feel about Barack Obama being the new president of the United States. The study 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%. Interviewing was in February 2009.

In South Africa, Barack Obama is held in higher regard than both President-elect Jacob Zuma and President Kgalema Motlanthe with 81% of people interviewed agreeing with the statement, "You think that it is a good thing that Barack Obama has become the new president of the United States". Only 6% disagree with the statement and 18% say that they don't know. When asked to respond to the statement, "The election of Barack Obama as president of the United States will be good for Africa", 66% agreed, 11% disagreed and 29% said that they don't know.

A similar study, also conducted in February this year, indicated that, when South Africans were asked whether they thought Jacob Zuma would do a good job as President of the country, only 40% said "Yes". Similarly, when asked whether Kgalema Motlanthe was doing a good job as president of the country, only 41% said "Yes". President Obama's US approval rating of 68% amongst Americans is higher than that of President Bush's figure of 56% after his first 100 days. By contrast, President Thabo Mbeki's early readings were in the low 30s, only rising to 66% in 2004 and 2005 before dropping to the low 30s again at the end of his term.

President Zuma's 100-day milestone will be reached on 17 August.

A closer look at Obama supporters

Amongst the South Africans who think that it is a good thing that Barack Obama is the new president of the US, 65% are positive about South Africa and its future, compared to 60% of the total sample who felt positive about South Africa and its future. Also looking at these Obama supporters, 44% of them think that Jacob Zuma will do a good job and 45% say that Kgalema Motlanthe is doing a good job as president. These percentages are slightly higher amongst Obama supporters than within the sample as a whole.

The results by area, for people who feel that it is a good thing that Barack Obama has become the president of the United States, show that Gauteng generally is the most positive province, with Durban also showing high scores. The Eastern Cape exhibited the lowest scores: **More...**



- Gauteng 83%
 - Johannesburg and environs 84%
 - Johannesburg 89%
 - East Rand 83%
 - West Rand 71%
 - Soweto 88%
 - Vaal Triangle and South Rand 84%
 - Pretoria 78%
- Cape Town 75%
- Durban 86%
- Eastern Cape 68%
 - Port Elizabeth 69%
 - East London 67%
- Bloemfontein 78%

The results by area, for people who feel that the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States will be good for Africa, show that Durbanites and those in Johannesburg are the most optimistic with most other centres having results in the mid-60s.

- Gauteng 67%
 - Johannesburg and environs 68%
 - Johannesburg 78%
 - East Rand 61%
 - West Rand 64%
 - Soweto 64%
 - Vaal Triangle and South Rand 72%
 - Pretoria 62%
- Cape Town 56%
- Durban 77%
- Eastern Cape 65%
 - Port Elizabeth 66%
 - East London 62%
- Bloemfontein 60%

The incidences by race of those who are positive about Obama being president of the US show that the majority of all race groups are positive:

- 86% black
- 63% white
- 80% coloured
- 85% Indian

It is interesting to note that most of the Obama supporters come from LSM¹ 6-7. Fifty-two percent of people who think it is good that Obama is president and 52% of those who think that Obama is good for Africa are in LSM 6-7.

More...

¹ LSM or Living Standards Measure is a categorisation ranging from 1 to 10 used extensively by marketers and advertisers as a means to segment the population. It is crude proxy for wealth, with the lower LSM groups comprising the most impoverished end of the spectrum. LSM figures are based on SAARF's 2006 algorithm.



Our take out

Although President Barack Obama is held in high esteem and South Africans are positive about him occupying the presidency in the US, 29% of respondents said that they were unsure whether he would be good for Africa. Given the uncertainties that accompany the current world economic climate, this fence-sitting by 29% of respondents is not unexpected. People may be more wary when it comes to thinking about the more long-term and broader question concerning Africa.

Technical note

The study was conducted amongst 2 000 adults (1260 blacks, 385 whites, 240 coloureds and 115 Indians/Asians) in the seven major metropolitan areas: it has 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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