



# Press Release



For immediate release

Inspire Engage Create  
10 February 2010

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## People's take on the State of the Nation

### Politics

TNS regularly conducts surveys on topics of general political, economic and social interest: these are 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%. A variety of such studies was carried out in 2009

An overarching event was the very successful April general election. But how has Government fared since then? We start with the President.

- President Zuma's approval level rose from 40% at the start of the year to 52% at the time of the election to a high of 58% in November 2009.
- This was despite serious reservations around the practice of polygamy with 74% of metro adults feeling that it is a problem if a man has more than one wife at a time. It is clear that many ordinary citizens separate out their approval of Mr Zuma as President from his private life. Indeed, whilst just 38% of people feel that a leader's morality should be beyond reproach, a half do NOT expect this and 55% feel that the press should respect a leader's private life.

Next we turn to some of the more controversial decisions Government has had highlighted in the media:

- Only 21% feel that the cost of ministerial cars is fair: 61% do not.
- However, 54% support the police's declared policy of "shoot to kill" compared with 38% rejecting it.
- The appointment of Mo Shaik was received with mixed views: 37% felt it was a mistake, 25% were happy with the appointment but a very high 39% gave a "don't know" response.

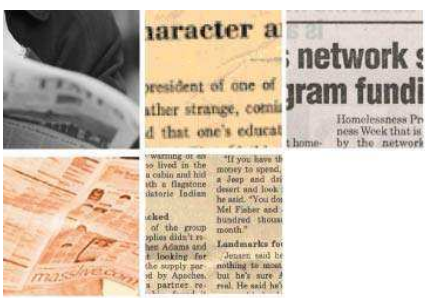
Other controversial feelings were invoked when people were asked about Julius Malema:

- 27% support what Julius Malema says and does but 56% do not.
- 59% feel he should be disciplined by the ANC whilst 23% do not.
- What is revealing is that, amongst the metro black youth (aged 18 to 24%), 44% support him but 43% do not: he is clearly a divisive character in this age group and lacks support everywhere else.

The taxi industry and the various rapid bus transport systems received much coverage.

- 63% of people feel that the taxi industry has too much power.
- 60% feel that the police are too lenient on taxi drivers.

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- 69% of people feel that the BRT system or its equivalent is indeed the right way to go.
- However, 45% feel that the Government should have consulted more with the taxi industry on the system.

## Peripheral issues in which the Government became or was involved

- Only 26% of metro adults feel that the way the Caster Semenya issue was handled correctly by the ASA - 57% felt that the ASA had handled it badly.

## The judiciary

- Only 44% of metro adults feel that judges in South Africa are free of political interference; 28% feel that they are not and 29% are not sure.
- However, 55% have confidence in the Constitutional Court (25% do not and 19% are not sure).

## Eskom

- 84% of metro dwellers feel that it will be difficult to cope with the mooted Eskom price hikes.
- Only a quarter feel that these hikes are necessary to build essential infrastructure. This represents a signal failure in communication by Eskom and Government.

## Service delivery

Whilst no specific research on service delivery was carried out by TNS in 2009 (but a study is currently underway), in the Brand Leadership Academy Public Service Excellence Awards study carried out in late 2009, the ImageGauge™ scores for local government were extremely low (40 out of a possible 100) - the lowest ever seen using this corporate reputation model. This shows that there is extreme unhappiness with the performance of local government - especially Gauteng (37) and Mpumalanga (36). This follows on from a service delivery study completed in 2008 in which it was shown that less than 60% of people are satisfied with the performance of their local authority. At the time, TNS warned that violence could be expected in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

Local government was also seen to be particularly poor on leadership skills (only 12% felt local government had good leadership), ability to manage taxpayers' money (12%) and deliver on promises (27%). In addition, local government had high scores on being perceived as corrupt (53%), being slow and bureaucratic (46%) and as treating people unfairly (42%).

## The Economy

The TNS Research Surveys Economic Confidence Index (ECI) showed clearly that the major impact of the recession hit in the third quarter of 2009 and was still having a strong effect in the fourth quarter, although there were signs then that people felt it was bottoming out. There was strong optimism for the future state of the economy as 2010 began. In marketing terms, whilst 22% felt that the recession had not affected them much, 67% disagreed. The result was that 58% said that they were putting off making bigger purchases whilst 62% said they were switching to smaller pack sizes.

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The policy of inflation targeting, a major input into the SA Reserve bank's approach to setting interest rates, is poorly understood by most people, even the more affluent and financially literate. Given the crucial role that interest rates play in the economy, this suggests a strong need for better financial understanding. This is further underscored by the finding that, whilst 39% lay the blame for the recession at the doors of the banks, most have no real idea how the recession arose.

In terms of overall optimism levels about South Africa, 2009 ended with two-thirds of people feeling positive about the country. Although down from the 73% high achieved in mid-2009, this is much better than the lows of around 59% seen throughout 2008.

## The 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup

To end on a positive note, 76% of people at the end of 2009 felt excited by the upcoming 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup.

## Our take-out

The new administration came in and raised high expectations around service delivery, poverty alleviation and job creation. That Mr Zuma enjoys high approval levels is of note - but one wonders how long this popularity can be milked in light of increased dissatisfaction around service delivery and some of the more controversial decisions it has made. People do seem to dissociate the President from the man to some extent and it may be that, despite the clamour around his private life in recent days, many people will ignore that - unless service delivery becomes so poor, corruption so rife and poverty so unalleviated that his current approval levels will take a knock. It seems that these are the real issues at hand to most people.

## 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 via an in-home, face-to-face interview: it has a margin of error of under 2.5% for the results found for the total sample. The study was conducted by TNS Research Surveys (Pty) Ltd as part of their ongoing research into current social and political issues and was funded by TNS Research Surveys. For more details, please contact Neil Higgs on 011-778-7500 or 082-376-6312. [www.tnsresearchsurveys.co.za](http://www.tnsresearchsurveys.co.za)

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