

# World Values Survey 1981-2006

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# Background and Methodology

- The World Values Survey (WVS) is a worldwide investigation of **socio-cultural and political change** and explores values relating to family, gender, work, politics, economics, religion and leisure time.
- The **South African** leg of this survey is administered by the Centre for International and Comparative Politics, University of Stellenbosch, in partnership with Markinor.
- The South African WVS has been conducted in **1981, 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2006**, offering the opportunity to assess changing values over time.
- Implementation of this research around the world allows for **global cross-cultural analysis**.

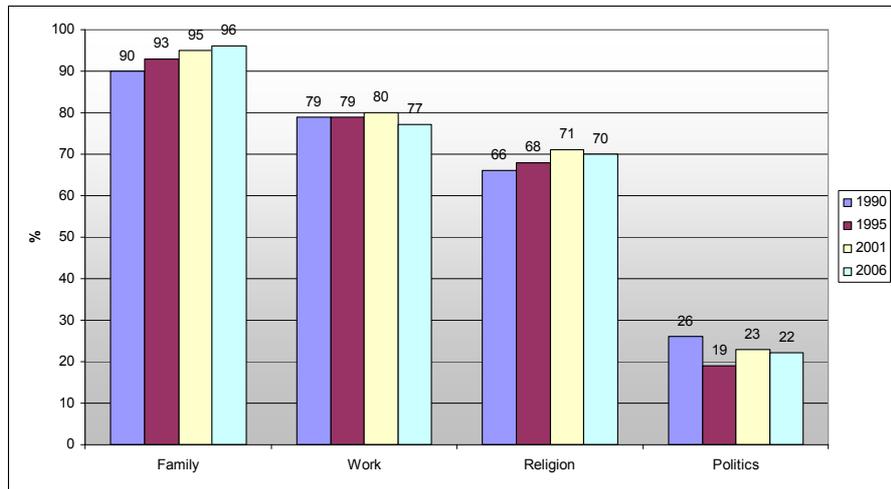
- **Probability samples** drawn from SA population 16 yrs and older
- Sample stratified into homogenous sub-groups defined by **province, gender, population groups and community size**
- Sample size: 1990 = 2736; 1995 = 2899; 2001 = 3000; 2006 = 3000
- Surveys conducted in English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana and Xhosa
- **Face-to-face interviews**
- **Representative of the adult population of South Africa**, within a statistical margin of error (of less than 2%) at 95% confidence level

## Analysis

In this overview of WVS findings, race is often used as a category for analysis. Although the categorization of individuals is not endorsed by the author, race nevertheless remains an important source of social and political division in South Africa and it is in this context that these terms are applied.



### How important are the following domains in your life?



% that regards it as "very important"

## Life Domains

*Item: For each of the following (family, work, religion and politics), indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is: very important, rather important, not very important or not at all important?*

The family is seen as central within South African society, in fact rising slightly in importance since 1990. This is followed by work and religion. Politics does not seem to be prioritized, remaining relatively constant at around 20% who view it as 'very important' over the last 26 years.

In 2006, between the different race groups, family appears to be most important amongst coloureds, though only slightly higher than amongst the other races. While work and religion are important to all races, blacks place the most importance on work, while Indians have a notably high regard for religion. Politics is very important to 24% of blacks, 15% of Indians, and 14% of whites and coloureds.

The initial euphoria in response to democratisation is reflected in the WVS in terms of the rise in pride amongst all racial groups in 1995. All groups centered in a narrow band between 95% and 99%. No doubt, winning the Rugby World Cup earlier that year also contributed to this high level of pride. The trend amongst white South Africans is particularly interesting - after having dipped substantially in 2001, there was a notable rise in pride in 2006 (83% in 2001 to 95% in 2006). Pride amongst the other race groups seems to have remained relatively constant in the middle nineties, although having dropped slightly amongst the Indians.

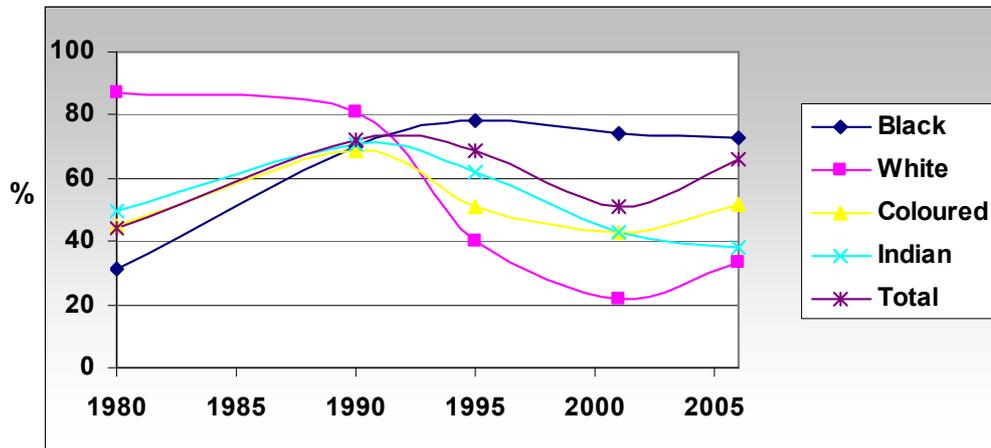
South Africans seem to be becoming increasingly positive with regards to the rating of the current political system. By contrast, the Apartheid regime is increasingly being negatively viewed (the average rating of 5.1 on a 10-point scale in 1995 dropped to 3.1 in 2006, 1 being very bad and 10 being very good).

Even more important is the significant rise in positive expectations about the future political system – up from 5.5 on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being very bad and 10 being very good) in 1995 to 7.5 in 2006.



## Confidence in State Institutions:

Parliament, Police, Armed Forces, Courts, Civil Service



% who have "a great deal" and "quite a lot" of confidence

## Politics

*Item: For each organisation (parliament, police, armed forces, courts and civil service), could you tell me how much confidence you have in them? A great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or no confidence at all.*

The data (in index format) indicates a very positive trend: overall, confidence levels in state institutions have been rising steadily since 2001. However, variation exists amongst the different population groups. While the confidence of whites and coloureds both increased by about 10% since 2001, that of blacks and Indians declined by 1% and 5% respectively.

## Work Values

Few will disagree that unemployment is a major problem in South Africa. As a result, starting in 2001, South Africans have come to value job security more than income. It is interesting that the only race group that does not conform to this trend, are the blacks who continue to value income more than job security (in 2006 rating them at 43% and 38% importance respectively).

This outcome most certainly could be explained by the fact that such a large percentage of the black population is unemployed (about 37% in 2006).

## Gender Values

There was a marked decline since 1995 in the number of South Africans who believe that being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay. However, South Africa remains far from attaining gender equality, with around half of all South Africans still believing that men make better political leaders than women do. The percentage of South Africans who believe that a university education is more important for a boy than a girl has remained relatively constant at around 20% over the last 10 years.

Interestingly, a fair number of women (37%) also indicated that men make better political leaders than women do.

## Gender Values

Currently, more than half of South African men (and about a third of all women) continue to doubt the leadership abilities of women in business and politics. Also worrying, is that 23% of men and 17% of women still believe that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.

The latter value, linked with the general pattern of gender values, may perhaps be an important explanation for the slow pace of rural development in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, with women essentially being sidelined.

## Gender Values

Compounding the problem of gender inequality in South Africa, is the fact that nearly 10% of South Africans believe that it is in some way justifiable for a man to beat his wife. In fact, only 74% of South Africans are completely against this practice. Amongst the different race groups, Indians (11%) and blacks (10%) are most tolerant of this violent practice, compared to coloureds (7%) and whites (5%).

One of the strongest variables that explains this pattern is the level of education of the respondent. The higher the level of education of the respondent, the less justifiable this practice becomes.

## Orientations to Life

In South Africa, 12 years after the end of Apartheid, happiness is on the rise. In total, South Africans are 11% happier today than they were in 1990. Of the different race groups, the black population shows a marked improvement in their overall happiness, having increased by 22% since 1990.

One important reason for this increase, at least on a theoretical level, may be the link that exists between the happiness of a respondent and his/her locus of control.

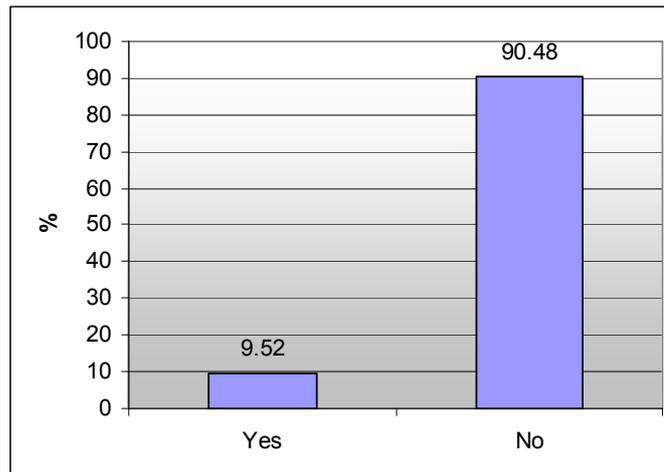
South Africans feel that they have much more control over their lives than they did in 1990; especially the black population whose lives were controlled by repressive laws under Apartheid. This may account for the previously noted rise in happiness. Interestingly, the Indians are the only population group that feels that they have less control over their lives today, than they did in 1990.

## Family Values

Hard work and tolerance continue to be those values which are prioritized by South Africans. Since 2001, independence has also become increasingly important. By contrast, imagination, thrift, determination and unselfishness appear to be the least important values in South Africa at present. The low premium placed on thrift is particularly worrying, as this value has been a driver of economic development in many developing nations, especially in South East Asia.



### Have you heard of the Millennium Development Goals?



## MDGs

Despite the recent international attention that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have received, especially in Africa, less than 10% of South Africans say that they have ever heard about the MDGs.

As can be expected, knowledge about the MDGs is related to both the level of education and income of respondents. As education increases, and as a result also income, so does the level of knowledge of the MDGs.

## Moral Values

Despite South Africa's move towards greater tolerance of different races and cultures (values embodied in our constitution), we seem to remain intolerant of many moral values connected to individual rights.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 means never justifiable and 10 means always justifiable), homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, divorce, euthanasia and suicide all received a score of less than 5, indicating that the nation finds a choice in favour of these values difficult to justify. Of these items, respondents find prostitution, abortion and suicide to be the least justifiable.

## Social Capital

Social Capital can be defined as 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'. This concept has widespread implications in terms of South Africans working together towards common goals. Cooperation is promoted between people from across various social divides, creating benefits for the nation as a whole.

Social Capital includes 3 important dimensions: trust, tolerance and networks. With regards to the tolerance dimension, South Africans are particularly intolerant of drug addicts, heavy drinkers, homosexuals and immigrants. Interestingly, black people are least tolerant of people from a different race as well as those who speak a different language. Indians seem most intolerant towards people who have AIDS.

Trust, another important element necessary in building social capital, is also severely lacking in South Africa. As the data indicates, only about 20% of South Africans believe that most people can be trusted. Of the different population groups, blacks have the least trust in others (18%), while whites and Indians have somewhat more (22%), as measured in 2006.

With regards to the third element of social capital, membership of organisations, the data also reflects a declining trend.

Further information and analysis on items from the World Values Survey (2006) and the South African Opinion Leaders Survey (2007) are now available on request.

They cover a wide variety of themes, including:

- family and gender;
- religion;
- work;
- politics, economics and the environment; and
- democracy, confidence in institutions, protest potential and social cohesion (a special section was included in the 2006 WVS on the Millennium Development Goals).

These themes can be analysed by:

- race
- age
- gender
- income
- education
- province and
- type of dwelling, amongst others

Further information and specialised reports may be ordered by contacting:

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