



South Africans have a grim view of Government's handling of crime

The South African public has a relatively high level of trust in the activities of the Scorpions; almost six in every ten (58%) agree that they trust the Scorpions. A similar proportion (56%) agree with the way in which the Scorpions handle high profile corruption investigations.

However, when it comes to government's crime fighting efforts in general, a November 2006 public opinion survey shows a significant drop in confidence, after two years during which there was an increase in the belief that our government is slowly making progress in the battle against crime.

Markinor's bi-annual Government Performance Barometer, the last phase of which was conducted in November 2006, revealed that only four in every ten adult South Africans think that the government does enough to reduce crime.

These results are published shortly after Pres. Thabo Mbeki made his annual statement as leader of the ANC. In the January 8 statement the President acknowledged the negative impact of crime on the South African community and highlighted the fight against violent crime as a priority for the year. However, the public does not necessarily agree with the President's statement on January 15, that crime 'is not out of hand'.

The importance of visible policing in crime fighting efforts is emphasised quite often. Although this survey did not look at the level of trust and confidence in the national police service, about six in every ten (62%) South Africans agree that the government is doing very or fairly well in bringing the police service closer to the communities where they serve.

A total sample of 3 500 adults were interviewed and all interviews were done face-to-face to ensure that no bias is created by using an interviewing medium such as telephones or the internet. Randomly selected South Africans from all walks of life and living all over the country were interviewed, making the sample nationally representative. Markinor's Government Performance Barometer probed 23 policy delivery areas; respondents had to indicate whether the government handles these particular issues very well, fairly well, not very well or not well at all. Other issues, like views on the Scorpions, were also tested in the survey.

Regarding the Scorpions, respondents had to give their views on three statements, focusing on:

- Trust in the Scorpions
- Feelings about the Scorpions' handling of high-profile corruption cases, and
- The cost of maintaining the Scorpions.

These findings are summarised in the table below:

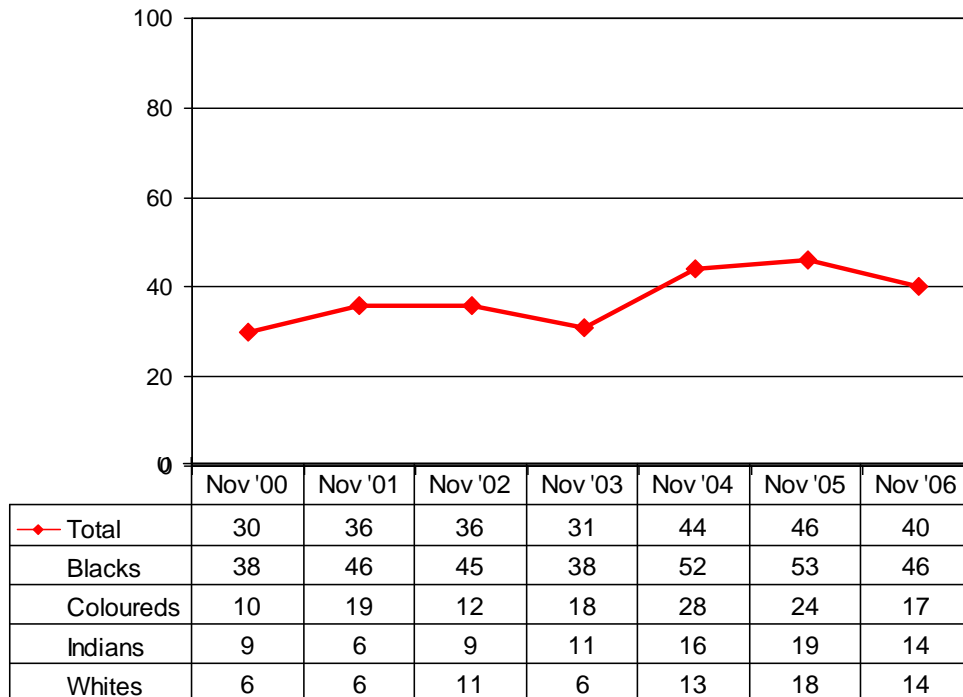
	“You trust the activities of the Scorpions” %	“The Scorpions’ handling of high-profile corruption cases is correct” %	“The Scorpions are costing the country a lot of money without producing many results” %
Strongly agree/Agree	58	56	26
Neither agree nor disagree	18	19	18
Strongly disagree/Disagree	14	14	39
Don’t know	10	11	17

Looking at these results in more detail, it becomes clear that supporters of the opposition are more willing to trust and support the actions of the Scorpions:

- 74% of DA supporters trust the activities of the Scorpions and a similar proportion (73%) agree with the Scorpions’ handling of high-profile corruption cases;
- The views of ANC supporters are somewhat different; 57% of ANC supporters trust the Scorpions and 54% agree with the way they handle high-profile corruption cases;
- Only 18 % of DA supporters thought that the cost of maintaining this unite does not justify the results achieved, while almost three in every ten (28%) ANC supporters feel this way.

South Africans have always been critical about government’s handling of crime. In 2004 and 2005, the percentage of adults that thought government was effectively reducing the crime rate “very well” or “fairly well” was above four out of ten for the first time since the inception of the survey in 1994. Only one year later, in November 2006, this percentage slid back. All population groups, especially blacks and coloureds, are more critical of government’s handling of crime than a year ago.

The following graph shows the proportion who said the government is handling the effort to reduce the crime rate very well or fairly well:



In fact, crime and unemployment are two of the 23 critical delivery areas in which government has consistently achieved less than a “pass mark” over the years.

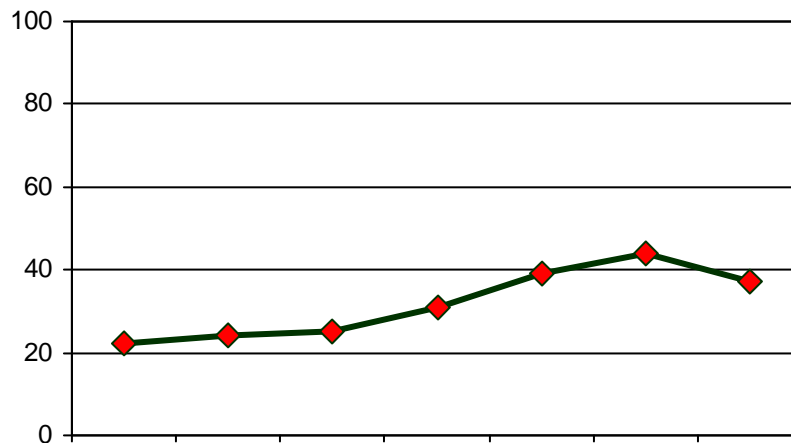
The survey shows that ANC supporters are also critical of government’s current efforts; less than half (47%) believes that government is handling crime well - only slightly more than one in every seven is of the opinion that the issue is handled “very well”.

Another interesting feature of these results was that everybody had a view – nobody refrained from expressing an opinion:

	Total %	ANC supporters %	DA supporters %
Very well	12	14	3
Fairly well	28	33	7
Not very well	34	35	30
Not at all well	26	18	60

These results are related to reduced feelings of personal safety amongst South Africans. Just more than a year ago (in November 2005), 44% rated their personal safety as improving, as opposed to only 37% in November 2006. (This was in response to the question ‘How would you describe your current feeling of personal safety?’)

Looking closer at these results it is clear that the percentage of those who thought that things remain the same, stayed constant over the last few surveys. As those who thought their personal safety was improving became less, those who felt their personal safety was deteriorating, became more. In fact, a fifth of adult South Africans are of the opinion that the country is becoming even less safe – and ANC supporters form a substantial part of this group: if we look *only* at the group who feel that their personal safety is deteriorating, almost half (45%) of them indicates that they would vote for the ANC if there were an election. It should also come as no surprise that just more than six in every ten people in this group (61%) live in metropolitan areas; inhabitants of Gauteng (24%) and KwaZulu-Natal (23%) together account for half of this group.



Improving	22	24	25	31	39	44	37
Remaining same	52	50	46	46	43	42	43
Deteriorating	26	26	30	24	17	15	20

South Africans thus do not necessarily share the perception expressed by the president that crime is under control. Efforts from the government's side are judged by a growing proportion of citizens, including their own core supporters, to be either invisible or not fundamental enough.