

## We voted with hearts, not wallets

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### Despite economic woes, government retains support

PEOPLE might be dissatisfied with the economy, but that did not affect how they voted in the general election.

The Human Sciences Research Council's South African Social Attitude Survey showed that the global economic crisis between late 2007 and 2008 did not influence their vote this year.

Ben Roberts, a research specialist at the HSRC, said: "International evidence suggests that national economic perceptions exert a significant influence on voting decisions in democracies.

"Therefore, a salient question was whether the South African electorate used their assessment of how the economy is being managed to assign praise or blame on the incumbent administration through their vote."

The survey showed that, despite a 37 percent year-on-year increase in unhappiness with the state of the economy, citizens nevertheless had confidence in the government.

The survey of 3321 people showed that the 43 percent of South Africans of 16 years and over who were satisfied with national economic performance in 2007 decreased to 27 percent in 2008, and the proportion of those who were dissatisfied increased from 36 percent to 52 percent.

Dissatisfaction exceeded 50 percent in the 16-to-29 and 30-to-44 age groups.

Men were slightly more satisfied with the state of the economy than women.

About 30 percent of male respondents were moderately satisfied with economic conditions compared to 25 percent of female respondents.

But at least half of all the respondents said they were dissatisfied with the state of the economy.

South Africans of Indian origin expressed the highest level of economic dissatisfaction, 60 percent, followed closely by white and black South Africans at 53 percent.

Coloured respondents were somewhat more upbeat, but 43 percent were dissatisfied with the economic situation.

The survey said the poor were significantly more dissatisfied with the general economic situation than those with medium and high living standards.

Roberts said that the study's findings were "important in that they show that the effects of public assessments of economic conditions extend beyond their impact on electoral behaviour.

"[They also] have a discernible influence on confidence in the national government, satisfaction with democracy, expectations of life improvements and hopes for the future."

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