

Chapter 1

Introduction and methodology

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The Human Sciences Research Council has conducted regular national surveys of public opinion for several years. Topics that are investigated include views about the quality of governance being exercised in South Africa, satisfaction service delivery, perceived national priorities, political preferences and the economy. Respondents are also asked for their opinions on race relations, the fight against crime and the extent to which they trust various national institutions such as labour unions, the courts, the media and the police. This volume report on the shades of public opinion about these and other issues as captured during the national survey of November 1999. The views thus reflect the public mood just five months after the re-election by a wide margin, of the incumbent national government. Public opinion at this juncture can be used as a barometer of the needs and priorities of the electorate and will be of value to all individuals and organisations that are involved in the public domain. Additionally, questions are received from a range of clients on topics ranging from voting behaviour and energy utilisation to safety and security issues. The latter data are the property of the respective clients and are not reported in this volume, however.

The survey instrument comprised a questionnaire containing 34 pages of questions. It was divided into different topics and the duration of interviews of respondents was between 60 and 90 minutes. A sample of 2 704 respondents was selected throughout South Africa in clusters of eight and situated in 338 census enumerator areas (EAs) as determined in the 1996 census. Each EA was classified in terms of the dominant lifestyle category by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in its analysis of the 1996 census data. In order to ensure adequate representation in the sample from each province and from each of the four dominant population groups, the sample was stratified by province and by lifestyle category. Disproportionately large samples were selected from areas known to be inhabited by the two smallest components of the population, namely (i) areas with dominantly Indian populations and (ii) the Northern Cape.

At 2 672 interviews, the realised sample (Table 1.1) was only slightly less than that intended 2 704 (8 in each of 334 EAs). In terms of province and population group, the spread was sufficiently wide to facilitate statistical generalisations about opinions prevailing within each province and amongst persons of each of the four main population groups (Table 1.2).

Each case was then weighted so that the resultant weighted dataset would approximate the distribution of the population of South Africa in terms of population group and province (Table 1.3).

The demographic characteristics of the weighted sample are listed in a series of tables in Appendix 1. These include home language, income, population group, gender, age and province.

Appendix 2 comprises a list of each enumerator area from which a sample of respondents was drawn for this survey. The dominant lifestyle category of the EA is indicated in each case.

Table 1.1 Nov. 1999 realised survey sample by province and lifestyle category

Lifestyle category*		Province								Total	
		EC	FS	GT	KN	MP	NC	NP	NW		WC
1	Mpumalanga					17		104			121
2	Eastern Nkosi				192						192
3	African Ngani			96	48	71		8			223
4	Ugogo	16	40				16		8	16	96
5	Miondolas	8	16	48	8	16		8	24	24	152
6	Farmlands	8	64			40	8	8	24		152
7	Miner's Glory	8	16	16	16	24	8	24	26		138
8	Yokel		16	32	16	8		16	24	8	120
9	No-person's land		8	8				8			24
10	Merino	8					48			24	80
11	Periphery	8		8			40			40	96
12	South Wester	8		8		8	16			40	80
13	Rainbow Crescent			8						24	32
14	Eastern Mosaic			80	136	8				24	248
15	Golden Ages	8								8	16
16	Skyscrapers	8		24	8		8			8	56
17	Hostelry			8			8				16
18	Holdings	16	32	25		24	40	16		24	177
19	Jongens	8	16	39		16	16	8	16	16	135
20	Highbrow	8		40	32					24	104
21	Kei	168									168
22	Elfin		32				32	48	126		238
23	Northlands					8					8
Total		280	248	448	456	248	248	248	248	280	2 672

* Each EA used in the 1996 census was classified according to factors such as dominant income group, language, population group, housing type and urban or ruralness.

Table 1.2: Unweighted sample realisation by province and population, group, Nov. 1999

Population group	Province								Total n	%	
	EC	FS	GT	KN	MP	NC	NP	NW			WC
Black	214	214	206	316	201	82	209	216	65	1723	64,5
White	37	20	129	15	22	38	34	13	62	370	13,9
Coloured	29	6	49	4	8	118	5	19	134	372	13,9
Indian	0	0	56	121	9	2	0	0	19	207	7,8
Total	280	240	440	456	240	240	248	248	280	2 672	100,1
Percentage	10,5	9,0	16,5	17,1	9,0	9,0	9,0	9,3	10,5	99,9	

Table 1.3: Weighted sample percentage by province and population group, Nov. 1999

Population group	Province								Total %	
	EC	FS	GT	KN	MP	NC	NP	NW		WC
Black	11,5	5,8	15,0	15,1	5,8	0,7	9,7	7,8	2,4	73,7
White	0,9	0,8	5,3	1,4	0,7	0,4	0,4	0,6	3,0	13,5
Coloured	1,3	0,1	0,7	0,2	0,1	1,0	0,1	0,2	5,9	9,6
Indian	0,0	0,0	0,5	2,3	0,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,2	3,2
Total	13,7	6,7	21,5	19,0	6,8	2,1	10,2	8,6	11,5	100,0

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Figure 1: Public opinion survey

