

Sowetans say, "Zuma for president"

A survey conducted in 2006 shows that surprising numbers of Sowetans support Jacob Zuma as future president. **Claire Ceruti** looks at what the survey tells us about Zuma's supporters.

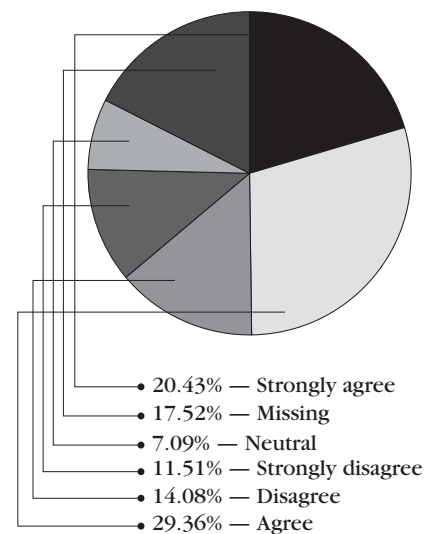
In June 2006, the Centre for Sociological Research presented 2 400 Sowetans with the statement: "Jacob Zuma should be the next president". We asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement. This question was part of a much bigger questionnaire about the connections between class, opinions, lifestyles and living conditions in the second phase of the Classifying Soweto Project.

Out the window goes the idea that Zuma's support was confined to rural areas. Half of the Sowetans in our sample agreed with the statement. Pie 1 illustrates that there are two 'agrees' for every one 'disagree'. Only a little more than a quarter of the sample disagreed that Zuma should be the next president. Fewer than one in ten were neutral. The opinions of nearly two out of ten were unknown. (The unknowns can change the balance a lot: if they all supported Zuma then its six out of ten agrees compared to two or three out of ten disagrees, but if all the unknowns were against him it would be much closer, five out of ten agrees to four out of ten disagrees.)

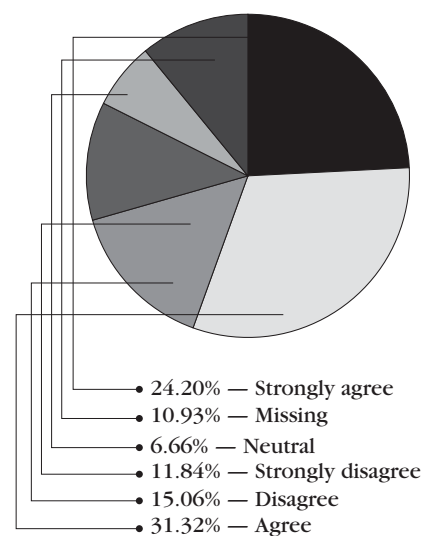
There is good reason to believe that the support is higher still in the

whole of Soweto, perhaps closer to 55% (see pie 2). When you arrive at the gate of a Soweto yard you do not know how many people you will find living in that yard until you go inside. Some have just one house and one small family, others have many backyard shacks and rooms, each occupied by a different household. Amongst the people we interviewed, people from more populated yards are more likely to support Zuma than those from less populated yards. But our survey did not cover enough people from the more populated yards, because for practical purposes we selected just one person from each selected yard, no matter if the yard had many people or few. You can estimate how this changes the picture for the whole of Soweto by letting each response count for every person on that stand (a response from a stand with ten people counts as ten responses, a response from a stand with two people counts as two responses). This produces the figures in the second pie which shows possible higher support for Zuma in Soweto as a whole.

"I am going to read a statement.



Pie 1
Jacob Zuma should be the next president



Pie 2
Jacob Zuma should be the next president – adjusted for stand size

You tell me how much you agree or disagree – Jacob Zuma should be the next president.

	1. Number of people	2. Percent of people in the sample	3. Rough percent of all Sowetans
Strongly agree	522	20.4	24.7
Agree	749	29.4	32.1
Neutral	181	7.1	6.8
Disagree	360	14.1	15.2
Strongly disagree	294	11.5	12.2
Total	2 106	82.5	91.0
Missing			
Person would not answer	101	4.0	3.5
Person answered 'Don't know' or 'I do not understand the question'	73	2.9	3.0
Could not find the person to interview	273	10.7	2.5
Total	447	17.5	9.0
Total	2 553	100	100.0

So who are the people who agreed that Zuma should be the next president? The statement found support in every party. Nearly eight out of ten Zuma supporters were ANC members or supporters, and about 60% of ANC supporters supported the statement. The majority of Inkatha Freedom Party supporters and more than half of Democratic Alliance supporters in the Soweto sample also backed Zuma. (Very few people in our sample said they were from the South African Communist Party, Azanian People's Organisation, or other organisations so we cannot say much about their members' support for Zuma.)

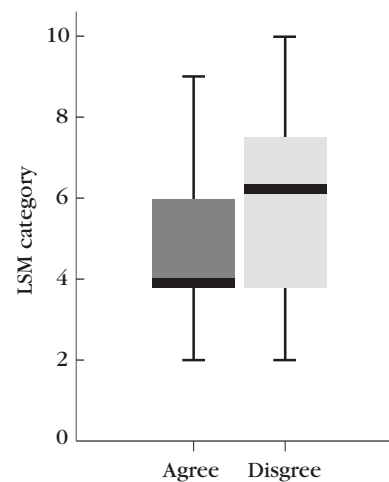
Zuma support comes from a range of diverse people – there was no single characteristic that clearly defined a Zuma supporter. Rather, Zuma supporters were more likely to include people with certain characteristics or opinions. Zuma supporters differed from non-supporters in their attitudes to women, their mother tongue, and their living standards.

Nearly eight out of ten people whose mother tongue is Zulu or

Ndebele agreed with the Zuma statement, compared to less than half of all those who spoke other languages. A bigger proportion of Zuma 'agrees' also agreed with the statement "a man's word should be final in a marriage".

Zuma supporters were on average poorer, and more likely to consider themselves poor. In all of these cases, we can talk about a significant difference between supporters and non-supporters but only for poverty can we generalise a little from one Zuma supporter to all Zuma supporters. (For example, fully 49% of Zuma supporters disagreed that a man's word should be final in a marriage. We can't really say Zuma supporters were sexist. But 59% of non-supporters disagreed that a man's word should be final, so we can guess that people who think women and men should be equal may have been put off him in his rape trial, while people with conservative attitudes didn't mind.)

Living Standards Measures (LSMs) give a person a score according to the appliances they own, the kind of house they live in and access to various services. The LSM graph on



I am going to read a statement.
You tell me how much you agree or disagree – Jacob Zuma should be the next president

this page compares the living standards of Zuma backers with the living standards of people who did not back him. The 'whiskers' on each side of the boxes indicate that Zuma backers range from the highest to the second level of the standard of living measure, and the same is true for his detractors. The thick black lines mark midpoints: half of the people in that category fall below the line and half above it. It's clear that the midpoint for Zuma supporters is much lower than the midpoint for those who don't want Zuma to become president, which shows that Zuma supporters tend to be poorer.

The link between Zuma support and poverty is backed up in other parts of the questionnaire. Zuma backers were more likely to answer "yes" to the question "would you call yourself poor?" and they were more likely to identify themselves as lower class. (By contrast, people who called themselves middle class and working class were not more likely to support Zuma than those who answered they did not.)

There was also a connection between support for Zuma and lower levels of education. This chain could have two links – lower

education levels are clearly linked with lower LSMs, and Zuma support is linked with lower LSMs. But it also makes sense that people with lower education levels might be drawn to Zuma because he also did not complete school and learned to read only when he was an adult.

Zuma's support appears strongest in hostels, shacks, backyard shacks, and RDP houses and weakest in houses where people had bonds. People who said they did not work were also more likely to support Zuma.

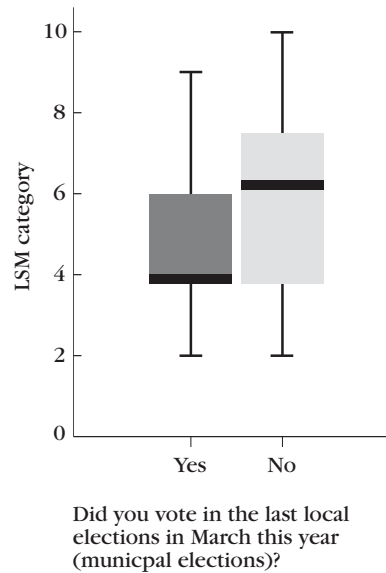
We have heard that Zuma's 'home-boy manner' is comfortable for people to whom Mbeki's posh, literary manners are a world away. It's also highly plausible that the poorest felt hardest hit by slow service delivery, and were therefore most in need of a change.

Unfortunately we did not ask a question about support for Mbeki, so we cannot say to what extent the support for Zuma is a backlash against Mbeki, but we do know that Zuma has been presented as part of the challenge to slow delivery.

Membership of community organisations was similar between Zuma supporters and non-supporters, and there was no difference in whether they had been on strike or joined a demonstration. Zuma supporters were significantly more likely to attach themselves to a party although only two-fifths of Zuma supporters had talked politics within the month before the survey. Three-fifths last talked politics longer than a month before the survey, possibly never. By contrast more than half of Zuma detractors had talked politics in the past month. People at lower living standards were less likely to have talked politics (or perhaps don't call it politics).

People who voted in the last elections tended to be poorer than those who did not. About 60 out of 100 Zuma supporters voted in the

last local government elections compared to about 57 out of 100 Zuma detractors.



Could it be that the poorest were more likely to deal with their limited power by voting in the hope that a powerful individual would intervene on their behalf? I am reminded of the security guard who, in the middle of a bitter strike, ran up to us breathlessly and said, "Zuma has been acquitted, now he will sort out our wages for us".

Zuma-backers in 2006 were reacting not only to the fact of poverty, but also to a sense of inequality. People who backed Zuma were more likely to agree with the statement: "They are rich because we are poor," than people who do not back him.

Where does a Zuma supporter see this yearning for justice reflected in Zuma? He or she might connect with the fact that Zuma got treated badly too; but is Zuma really capable of ending the inequality that pushes people towards him? The survey cannot answer the difficult political question: Is the Mbeki-Zuma choice actually offering chicken or beef, when what the growing mass movements need is a nice fresh piece of fish? Zuma

might remember being poor but he hasn't been poor for a long time, even when he "lost everything".

My opinion is that Zuma is a populist. He plays to the lowest common denominator to maintain his own place. During the recent public sector strike Zuma had a chance to publically support a fight against unequal pay. Two of the biggest unions in the strike had backed Zuma consistently in his battle with Mbeki. Zuma had a chance to explain on national TV that the strike was rooted in growing inequality. He could have suggested ways to build solidarity. Instead he chewed his tongue, saying both parties should have prevented the strike.

There may be a difference between the attitudes to Zuma in 2006 and attitudes to inequality at the moment. The limit of our survey is that it's a snapshot of three weeks in mid-2006. By now, many of the same poorer people could have been involved in the delivery protests around Soweto, and we don't know how that has affected their opinions about Zuma or fed from them. The recent strikes may also have affected many members of unions which have supported Zuma. It might be that they have gained confidence to take matters into their own hands from feeling that a powerful figure is on their side; it may be that they have forgotten Zuma in the turmoil. This is the next important question. LB

The Classifying Soweto Project was conceived by Peter Alexander from the University of Johannesburg. Peter, Claire Ceruti and Rudzani Mudau designed the survey and 50 fieldworkers did interviews. Mosa Phadi and Siniko Qinqwa helped process data. Claire Ceruti is editor of "Socialism from Below" and a member of the Anti-Privatisation Forum.