BIZCOMMUNITY

South Africans weigh in on attitudes towards women

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With the focus on women during August, the demonstrations in Cape Town at the same time as the WEF conference on Africa and the attention in the media the last few weeks on incidents of gender-based violence, Ipsos examines the diverse opinions that South Africans have towards issues of women's place in marital relations as well as violence towards women.

The relationship between a woman and her husband/partner is the closest and most trusted that a woman should have in her life.

So, how do South Africans feel about the dynamics between man and wife and is it necessary for a woman to “obey” her partner or husband?

There is very little difference in the country about this issue, with the majority - more than six in every ten (63%) - believing that a woman should obey her husband or partner. This illustrates a deep-seated paternalism and conservative view in our society, seeing a woman as a possession rather than an individual in her own right.

There is not a significant difference in female and male opinions on the issue – but slightly more females than males agree with the statement.

I believe that a woman must obey her partner or husband – Sex			
	Total %	Male %	Female %
Agree	63	62	64
Neither	16	14	18
Disagree	14	14	14
DK	7	10	4

Younger people are slightly less likely to agree, with 51% of the 15 - 17 year old population agreeing with this, compared to higher proportions of older people.

I believe that a woman must obey her partner or husband - Age						
	Total %	15-17 %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-49 %	50+ %
Agree	63	51	61	64	65	63
Neither	16	10	17	16	16	15
Disagree	14	9	14	15	14	13
DK	7	30	8	5	5	9

Looking at the opinions held by different population groups, whites and Indians are also less likely to agree, but overall agreement is still very high.

I believe that a woman must obey her partner or husband - Age					
	Total %	Black %	White %	Coloured %	Indian %
Agree	63	65	55	61	58
Neither	16	15	21	17	16
Disagree	14	13	15	19	23
DK	7	7	9	3	3

Social norms and community values are important when looking at why these opinions still pervade and to this end, Ipsos also explored the opinions of partners, family and the community.

My partner believes that a woman must obey her partner or husband			
	Total	Males	Females
Agree	62	61	63
Neither	16	14	17
Disagree	14	14	14
DK	8	11	6

My family believes that a woman must obey her partner or husband			
	Total	Males	Females
Agree	63	63	63
Neither	15	14	16
Disagree	13	12	14
DK	9	11	7

My community believes that a woman must obey her partner or husband			
	Total	Males	Females
Agree	57	57	58
Neither	16	15	16
Disagree	15	15	15
DK	12	13	11

With the high incidence of domestic violence and abuse happening in our society, Ipsos has also examined South African opinions about whether husbands have the right to physically attack his partner.

The majority (78%) do not agree with this opinion! Levels of disagreement are highest when thinking about themselves as individuals but decrease when it comes to their opinion of what the community thinks.

However, the levels of agreement that physical abuse is acceptable are still alarmingly high and at least one in every ten South Africans find this acceptable. Is it then strange that physical abuse of women is so prevalent in our country?

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know
I believe that a man has the right to hit his partner or wife	12	7	78	5
My partner believes that a man has the right to hit his partner or wife	10	7	77	6
My family believes that a man has the right to hit his partner or wife	11	6	77	6
My community believes that a man has the right to hit his partner or wife	12	8	73	7

Technical detail

- Fieldwork: 22 March – 17 April 2019
- 3,600 in-home face-to-face interviews. Conducted in home languages of randomly selected respondents.
- Countrywide representation.
- Results weighted and projected to official population figures.
- The margin of error for this study is between 0.75% and 1.65%, depending on sample size, response rate and sampling methodology.

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