



Social Surveys  
Institute



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## SOUTH AFRICANS STILL HAVE FAITH IN POLITICIANS

Episode Two of the Big Debate, now in its tenth season, focused on values and popular culture in the run-up to South Africa's national elections in May. An electronic poll before and during the television broadcast indicated that many South Africans continue to believe in the existence of politicians who have the vision and values to move the country forward.

The live studio audience engaged with pertinent questions around party policies, campaign strategies and the lifestyle choices of political leaders. Among the issues raised were the use of so-called 'slay queens' during electioneering, the dearth of sexual harassment policies within political parties, and the gulf between the extravagant lifestyles of politicians and the entrenched poverty of the masses of citizens they are meant to serve. The conundrum of parliamentarians who wear luxury brands while their party espouses wearing uniforms in parliament in supposed solidarity with workers was aired in this context. The lack of action against members of political parties who have issued rape threats and participated in violent attacks against journalists and other public figures was also discussed.

More than 24,198 viewers of the Big Debate, and followers of the show on various social media platforms, participated in the poll on whether there are politicians they can vote for in the 2019 elections who have the vision and the values to take South Africa forward. In addition to Facebook and Twitter, participants could vote via a free USSD SMS service and the Khetha! App ([www.khetha.org.za](http://www.khetha.org.za)) which engages young people in conversations on current issues. Thus, the poll was accessible to a large national sample, across demographic and class lines. The show's primary audience is young, black, urban and more politically engaged than the general population.

While the massive corruption scandals of recent years, as well as the prevalent negative perceptions aired on the show and on social media platforms suggested a prevalent negative attitude toward politicians, with many complaining that politicians fail to set a positive moral example on key social issues, the poll results suggest a more optimistic picture. The majority (61%) of poll respondents do have faith that the country's current politicians have the vision and values to take South Africa forward, with just over a quarter of respondents taking the opposite, negative, view, and about 15% indicating that they remain unsure on this issue. While only 45% of Twitter users said yes, 69% of those who voted via the free USSD line and 67% of those who used the Khetha! app had a positive response.

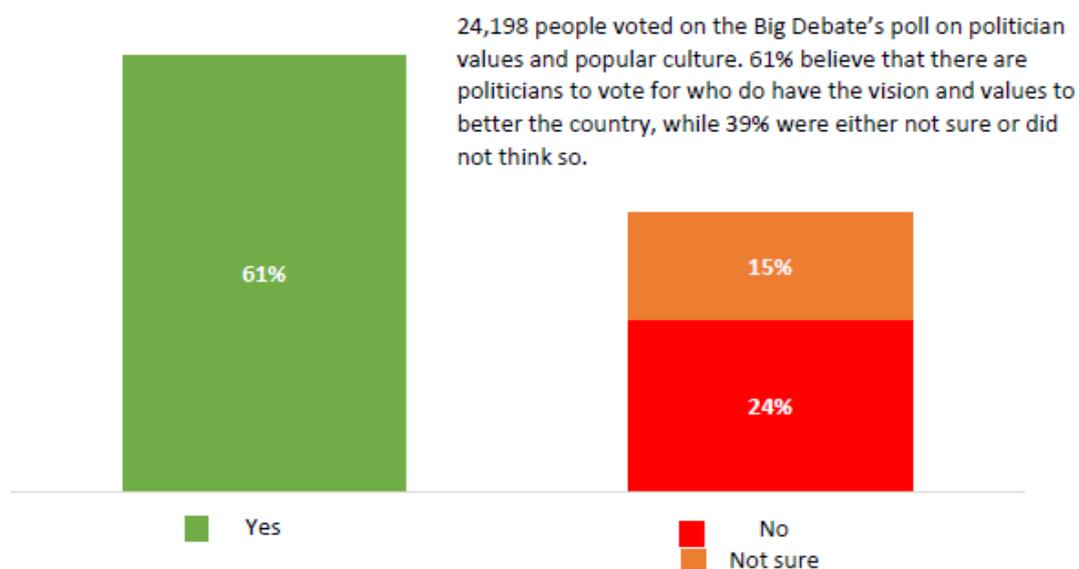
The Big Debate poll was conducted by Grassroots, Social Surveys Institute and OpenUp. Khetha! is supported by Open Society Foundation and Media Development and Diversity Agency.

Big Debate is broadcast on SABC2 and SABC News Channel 404 with financial support from Luminate, Open Society Foundation and Ford Foundation.

This week's episode is online at [www.bigdebate.live/watch](http://www.bigdebate.live/watch)

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## Do you believe there are politicians you can vote for who have the vision and the values to take South Africa forward?



Have your say at [khetha.org.za](http://khetha.org.za)

Source: Big Debate 17 and 21 March 2019. Votes on Twitter, USSD and Khetha!

This sample is not representative but reflects the views of viewers and social media followers of the Big Debate. Nevertheless, the results provide a 'dipstick' measurement of South Africans' views.