

Home truths about living and loving in SA

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South Africans are developing more liberal attitudes about marriage, monogamy and the role of women in families, albeit at different rates.

The 2005 South African Social Attitudes Survey, compiled by the Human Sciences Research Council, found that race, gender and generation gaps fuelled these differences of opinion.

More than 5 700 people took part.

While the institution of marriage is not disappearing, compared with other sub-Saharan African countries, marriage rates in South Africa are low and predicted to continue dwindling.

The report identified increasing scepticism about the institution of marriage. Only half the population believe married couples are happier than singles.

Those between the ages of 16 and 18 were less likely to support marriage than those 50 and older. African and coloured individuals were more likely to support it than whites and Indians.

When couples do become man and wife, there is a near universal belief that monogamy leads to higher living standards and emotional security. About 87% of all racial groups supported the idea.

Support for polygamy was low. Some 18% of Africans, 11% of Indians and whites, and 4% of coloured people said they embraced the idea of multiple wives.

A total of 61% of whites believed races should not intermarry, while half of Indians, 43% of Africans and 38% of coloureds agreed.

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