

South Africans resent foreign-owned spaza shops

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There is significant resentment towards foreigners running spaza shops in SA, a survey revealed on Friday, 13 July 2012.

These negative feelings were found across all demographic groups.

The survey, conducted by consumer insights company Pondering Panda, interviewed 5,641 South Africans aged 18 years and older.

"The findings of this survey confirm that we are facing a very real threat of xenophobia. Recent outbreaks of violence in the Western Cape show that the problem is deep seated," says Butch Rice of Pondering Panda.

Over the last two years, SA has seen sporadic incidents of xenophobic violence that have include looting and public violence.

The worst of this occurred in 2008, when more than 62 people were killed and about 670 wounded in violent attacks that broke out in Johannesburg and later spread across the country.

The cause is believed to have been unemployed locals who blamed foreigners for "taking" available jobs.

When respondents in the survey were asked how they felt about foreigners running spaza shops, 44% felt that foreigners should be stopped from running spaza shops, compared to 46% saying they should be allowed to stay, with 10% undecided.

Men were more negative than women, with 48% of men feeling that foreign run spazas should be stopped, compared to 40% of women.

Age also played a part in defining attitudes, with older respondents being more negative.

Of those aged 35 years and older 54% were negatively disposed, compared to 43% of those aged between 18 and 24.

In terms of region, the Western Cape (48%), and the North West (50%) were most negative.

Poorer respondents were most likely to feel resentment.

"Given the relatively high percentage of people opposed to foreigners running spaza shops, the violence can be expected to continue, unless the authorities take decisive action. The study indicates that the problem is most acute in the Western Cape, the North West, and amongst poorer communities," Rice said.

Pondering Panda is a member of the World of Avatar group, owners of Mxit.

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