

# SONA sees a mostly neutral media response

Media coverage of the annual State of the Nation (SONA) by President Cyril Ramaphosa has been 28% positive and 28% negative, with the dominant sentiment neutral.



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This is one of the main takeaways from a newly-released special report on the SONA 2022 by media monitoring company, Novus Group.

“Our research found more than 3,500 online clippings around the SONA. Mainstream publications such as *IOL*, *TimesLive*, and *Business Live* were the most active among local online sites. The three of them combined to publish 351 articles focused on the presidential address,” says Novus Group director, Joe Hamman.

On the positive reporting side, articles focused on how president Ramaphosa stressed that alongside a capable and developmental State, South Africa needs a thriving private sector that invests in productive capacity.

With the government's focus this year on small, medium-sized and micro businesses, cooperatives, and the informal sector, many articles focused on how government plans to make ‘bounce back’ finance more accessible for small businesses.

“Generally, there was a sentiment of cautious optimism following the SONA despite the president not cancelling the state of

disaster.

“Even so, one cannot ignore the significant portion of negative reporting following what has been a long period of continued lockdowns,” says Hamman.



#SONA2022: "We're in a battle for the soul of our country"

Katja Hamilton 10 Feb 2022



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## Run-up coverage

Coverage in the run-up to the SONA event was relatively quiet with spikes only starting to occur from 6 February which carried through until the end of the Novus reporting period on 14 February.

The most articles published, at 773, was on Thursday, 10 February, which reflected many outlets analysing predictions around what the president could be announcing.

Given ongoing debate around the national state of disaster, it was no surprise that this was one of the key conversation drivers in the lead-up to the address.

Some publications carried anticipatory articles focused on the tourism sector being hopeful that the president would end the state of the disaster. Others were more cautious expecting 'nothing new'.

Early reports focused on the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) having opposed the decision to hold the address at Cape Town City Hall, following the fire at Parliament earlier this year.

The party questioned why a larger venue could not be found to accommodate all members of Parliament in response to the announcement that 300 MPs would attend the event in person, while the remainder would participate virtually.

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