

South African Voices: Citizens' Perceptions and Expectations 2025 Survey



Yelokazi Mfuto, Eddah Jowah and Rebekah Cross

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List of Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
CPE	Citizens' Perceptions and Expectations
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GNU	Government of National Unity
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
MEC	Member of the Executive Council



Introduction

Background

South Africa went to the polls for the national and provincial elections in May 2024. As a consequence of no outright majority win for any party in Parliament, a Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed, led by the African National Congress (ANC), constituted in July 2024. This marked a significant moment in the country’s democratic journey, since for about 30 years, the ANC has been the dominant party in government. After one year in office, public sentiment about the new administration remains unclear. To better understand public sentiment, we conducted a Citizens’ Perceptions and Expectations (CPE) Survey in August 2025—shortly after the celebration of the GNU’s first year in governance.

The survey uses a nationally representative sample, ensuring that the views expressed reflect the country’s diverse population and regional differences. Most importantly, it functions as a vital tool for assessing levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among citizens regarding the government’s performance across key sectors. Its goal is to understand how South Africans perceive progress in governance, service delivery, economic management, and social cohesion under the GNU. This report presents the findings of the CPE Survey, providing valuable insights into the prevailing attitudes, expectations, and confidence levels of citizens towards their government.

Context

As South Africa approached the 2024 national elections, the country was confronted with deep-seated socio-economic and political challenges. Thirty years after the first democratic elections of 1994, public confidence in governance was waning, economic growth was stagnating, citizens' dissatisfaction was increasing, and socio-economic unrest and new political formations were continuing to shape the national political landscape. A complex interplay of public dissatisfaction, institutional strain, and perpetual hope for renewal marked the period preceding the elections. Of course, this is not peculiar to South Africa; a recent [World Bank](#) (2025) report states that across the continent, there is a rise of social unrest by an average of 12% each year. There has been a total of 7,224 demonstrations in Africa alone, and this is potentially an indicator and sign that citizens have become disillusioned with governance regionally.

In South Africa, public sentiment is characterised by widespread frustration over many issues that cut across unemployment, corruption, service delivery failures, and power outages. By late 2023, South Africa's Gross Domestic Product growth fell to approximately 0.6%, down from 1.9% in 2022, largely due to persistent energy shortages, resulting in load shedding episodes implemented by Eskom, lack of investment, and structural inefficiencies (African Development Bank Group, [2024](#)).

South Africa's [unemployment rate](#) rose further to 33.2% in Q2 2025, from 32.9% in Q1 and slightly above market estimates of 33%. It was the highest jobless rate since Q2 2024, as the number of unemployed individuals increased by 140,000 in a one-year high to 8.4 million (Trading Economics, 2025).

Corruption scandals within state-owned enterprises such as Eskom, Transnet, and South African Airways and the South African police and correctional services are continuously eroding public trust in government institutions. Revelations from the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture (2022), the Madlanga Commission (2025) and the parliamentary ad hoc committee on allegations of corruption in the South African Police Service continue to shape the narrative and perceptions of citizens. Therefore, this CPE report came at an opportune time for citizens to express their views on the local leaders, provincial representative and the performance of the national government.



Methodology and Description of the Sample

The report is based on findings from a field survey carried out across the nine provinces of South Africa from 19 August until 19 September 2025. It is designed to capture public sentiment on the performance of the GNU after its first year in office. Similar CPE surveys have been carried out annually in Zimbabwe since 2018. This is the first CPE survey in South Africa.

The study targeted a nationally representative sample of adult citizens across all nine provinces, with a focus on geographic and gender diversity. A team of 18 enumerators were deployed and collected data from all nine (9) provinces. The enumerators received training on the methodology, conducted a 3-day pilot test and were tasked with administering the survey to ensure response quality. Once the research team refined and approved the

survey tool, the enumerators were assigned to collect data. Based on daily reports generated by the SIVIO team, continuous monitoring and adjustments were made to maintain the quota requirements and ensure data quality. The survey focused on South African citizens aged 18 years and above, encompassing a wide range of demographic segments, including:

- Gender and age groups
- Socio-economic status
- Urban, peri-urban, and rural residency

The survey employed a convenience sampling approach at community hubs (e.g., shopping centres, institutions of higher learning and local events) to ensure practical access to diverse respondents. To mitigate selection bias, a quota for gender and area was applied to ensure national representation. The survey sought to interview at

least 3,006 respondents, made up of 52% women and 48% men; and of these 63% would be resident in urban areas, 32% based in rural areas and an additional 5% for those who identify they reside in a peri-urban location.

TABLE 1 Description of the Sample

Province	Gender		Area			Total Sample	
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Peri-urban	#	%
Eastern Cape	147	187	150	167	17	334	11%
Free State	150	184	234	84	17	334	11%
Gauteng	167	167	301	23	10	334	11%
KwaZulu-Natal	154	180	167	150	17	334	11%
Limpopo	154	180	117	200	17	334	11%
Mpumalanga	164	170	184	134	17	334	11%
Northern Cape	164	170	251	67	17	334	11%
Northwest	170	164	200	117	17	334	11%
Western Cape	164	170	284	33	17	334	11%
Total - #	1,433	1,573	1,887	975	144	3,006	100%
Total - %	48%	52%	63%	32%	5%	100%	

Source: Sample quotas based on national mid-year population estimates

A structured questionnaire was deployed using Kobo Toolbox and enumerators collected responses using their mobile phone, accessing the survey using a link in their browser. If an enumerator was outside cellular network, they saved the response under drafts and then uploaded when back online. The survey was used to gather data on:

- Demographics
- Livelihood and economic activity
- Civic engagement
- Perceptions of local councils/municipalities
- Expectations and evaluations of the GNU

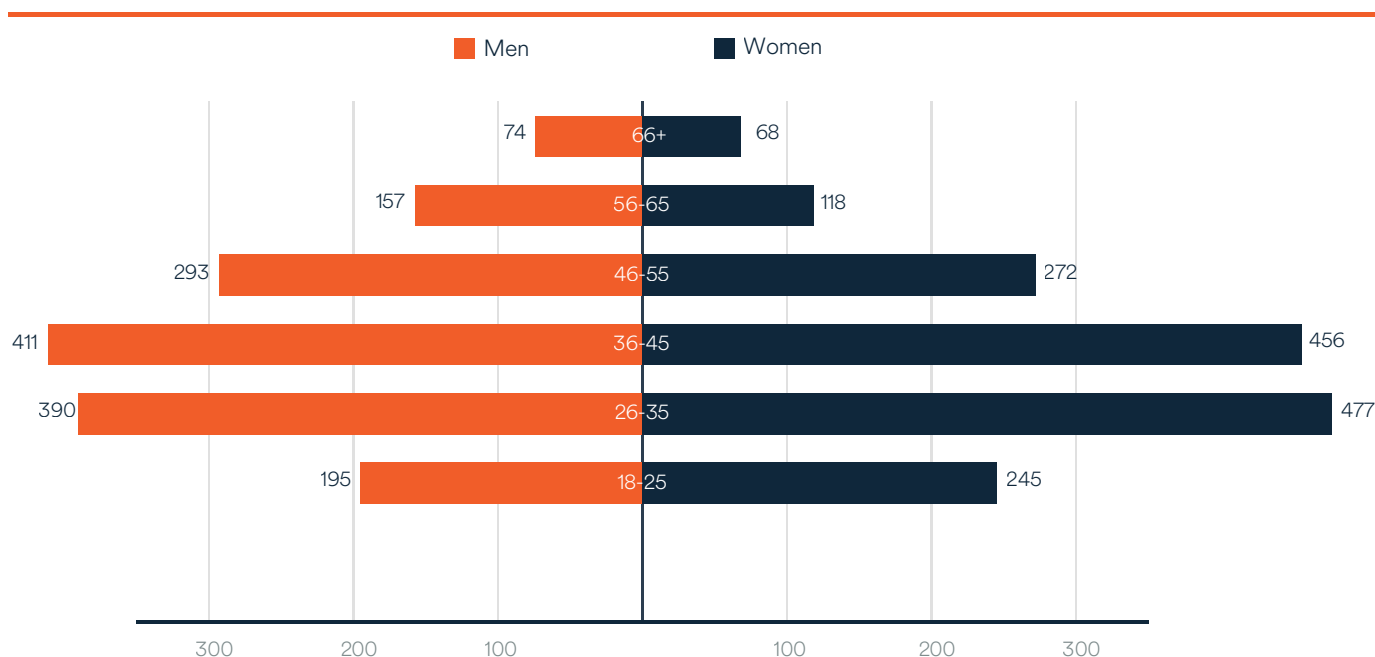
No personally identifiable information was collected to ensure the respondent's anonymity. Once the data collection was completed, a total of 3,156 respondents had been surveyed, with approximately 334 individuals sampled per province to ensure representation. This sample size supports a 95% confidence level with a ±5% margin of error. The findings are documented below, following the same structure as the survey.

Demographics of Respondents

The survey captured the perceptions of 3,156 citizens over the age of 18 years spread across the nine (9) provinces of South Africa. The survey captured an average of 351 respondents per province. Limpopo had the most respondents of 371, constituting 12% of the overall sample, while KwaZulu-Natal was the province with the least, with 327, constituting 10%.

The gender balance was maintained with 52% (n=1,636) women surveyed. The youth (ages 18-35) made up 41% (n=1,307) of the sample, while 5% (n=142) were at retirement age of over 66 years (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 Demographic Overview: Age and Gender



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

In terms of marital status, the majority of the sample (58%; n=1,821) were single, followed by 26% (n=808) who were married. Over half of the respondents (54%; n=1,686) reside in an urban area, followed by 27% (n=859) in a rural area and 19% (n=611) in a peri-urban area.

Respondents were asked about their levels of literacy and education; 10% (n=302) said they were unable to read and write, and 7% (n=234) had not managed to complete Grade 9 education, while 9% (n=293) had no formal education. The survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews to assist this demographic. Just 21% (n=651) had pursued an education beyond Matric level, with 44% (n=1,377) completing Matric and another 19% (n=601) completing Grade 9 but not Matric (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 Overview of Respondents' Demographics

Demography	Variable	Respondents	
		Number	Percentage
Total	-	3,156	100%
Gender	Women	1,636	52%
	Men	1,520	48%
Age	18-25	440	14%
	26-35	867	27%
	36-45	867	27%
	46-55	565	18%
	56-65	275	9%
	66+	142	5%
	Area	Urban	1,686
Rural		859	27%
Peri-urban		611	19%
Province	Limpopo	371	12%
	Northern Cape	366	12%
	Northwest	359	11%
	Eastern Cape	355	11%
	Free State	351	11%
	Western Cape	349	11%
	Mpumalanga	344	11%
	Gauteng	334	11%
	KwaZulu-Natal	327	10%
Marital Status	Single	1,821	58%
	Married	808	26%
	Widowed	231	7%
	Divorced	189	6%
	Separated	107	3%
Literacy Rate	Yes	2,854	90%
	No	302	10%
Education Level	No formal education	293	9%
	Grade 7	234	7%
	Completed Grade 9 but did not complete Matric	601	19%
	Grade 12 (Completed Matric)	1,377	44%
	Post secondary education	383	12%
	Tertiary education	268	9%

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Living Arrangements

Regarding the living arrangements, 24% (n=752) of respondents indicated that they were living with family or friends, followed by renting (20%, n=619), living in an informal settlement (13%, n=424) or living in accommodation that they own (13%, n=408).

When it came to accommodation type, 53% (n=1,681) currently reside in a full house, followed by 16% (n=514) in an informal dwelling and another 16% (n=506) who have rooms in a house (see Table 3).

TABLE 3 Overview of Living Arrangements

Living Arrangement	Accommodation Arrangement					Total	
	Cottage	Flat/ Apartment	Full house	Informal dwelling	Room(s) in a house	#	%
Boarding House	2	4	5		22	33	1%
Company-owned	10	9	13	1	8	41	1%
Government-provided housing (RDP)	14	4	324	13	38	393	12%
Homeless			1	4		5	0%
Informal Settlement	5	1	18	393	7	424	13%
Living with family or friends	6	43	426	43	234	752	24%
Own – fully paid for	3	13	373	4	15	408	13%
Own – mortgage	3	10	67	4	2	86	3%
Own – rural home	10	6	310	25	44	395	13%
Rental	61	251	144	27	136	619	20%
Total - #	114	341	1,681	514	506	3,156	100%
Total - %	4%	11%	53%	16%	16%	100%	

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Employment Status

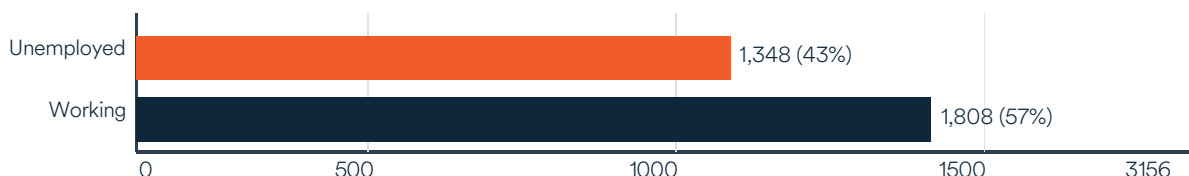
When asked about their employment status, 57% (n=1,808) were working; 45% (n=1,413) indicated they were employed and an additional 12% (n=395) said they were self-employed. Two fifths of the respondents (43%, n=1,348) indicated they were unemployed.

Of those who were working, 1,038 indicated they worked full time, with the remaining 375 working part time. Those self-employed were evenly split between full-time (n=198) and part-time (n=197). The largest sector of employment is retail (n=282), followed by agriculture (n=169) and education (n=153) (see Figure 2).

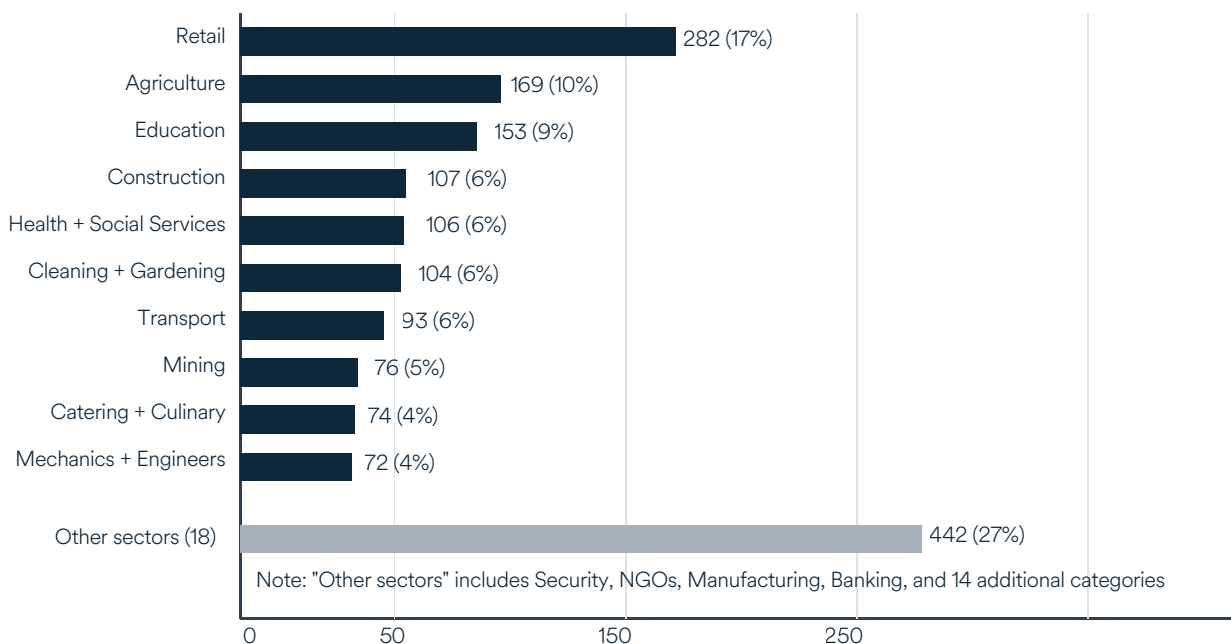
FIGURE 2 Sector of Employment

Employment spread across retail, agriculture, and services

Employment status



Employment sectors (n=1,808)



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

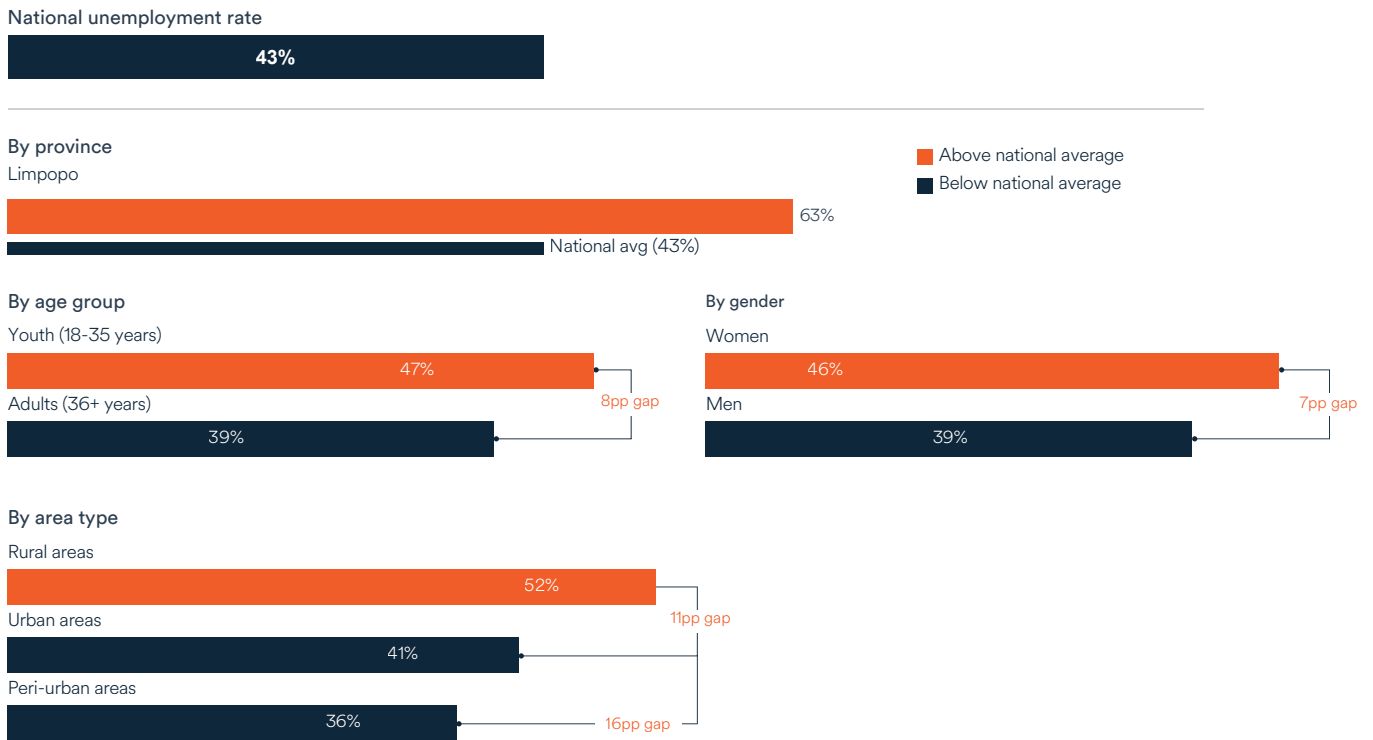
Unemployment in South Africa continues to affect a significant portion of the population, with 43% of survey respondents reporting they are currently out of work. The burden is not evenly distributed. In provinces like Limpopo (63%) and the Western Cape (53%), more than half of the respondents are unemployed. Young people are especially vulnerable, with 47% of youth (ages 18-35 years) respondents being unemployed compared to 39% of adults (ages 36 years+).

Women are affected more, with 46% of women unemployed compared to 39% of men. Unemployment is highest in rural areas at 52%, followed by urban communities at 41%, and peri-urban areas at 36% (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 Employment Demographics

n=3,156. Gaps show percentage point (pp) difference within each demographic

Unemployment burden falls disproportionately on youth, women, rural areas, and Limpopo province



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Some respondents, 34% (n=1,075), indicated they did not have any income, as they are unemployed. About 30% of the respondents, n=956, had an income of under R5,000 (US\$290.00)¹; 17% (n=536) earned between R5,000 and R10,000 (US\$580.00)¹ (see Table 4).

For those who do not have a monthly income, 70% (n=754) are dependent on government grants. The most common grant is the social relief or disaster grant that caters for about 50% of the respondents who indicated that they receive social grants (n=374), followed by a child support grant with 26% (n=199) and an old age grant with 22% (n=165).

¹ US\$1=R17,24: xe.com (20 October 2025)

TABLE 4 Monthly Income Breakdown

Monthly Income	Unemployed	Self-employed	Employed	Total	
				#	%
None	1,054	13	8	1,075	34%
Less than R1,000	121	61	33	215	7%
R1,000 – R5,000	141	191	409	741	23%
R5,000 – R10,000	18	76	442	536	17%
R10,000 – R15,000	3	41	215	259	8%
R15,000 – R20,000	2	8	133	143	4%
R20,000 – R25,000	4	2	67	73	2%
R25,000 – R30,000	1		48	49	2%
R30,000 – R35,000	2	1	23	26	1%
R35,000 – R40,000	2		20	22	1%
More than R40,000		2	15	17	1%
Total	1,348	395	1413	3,156	100%

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



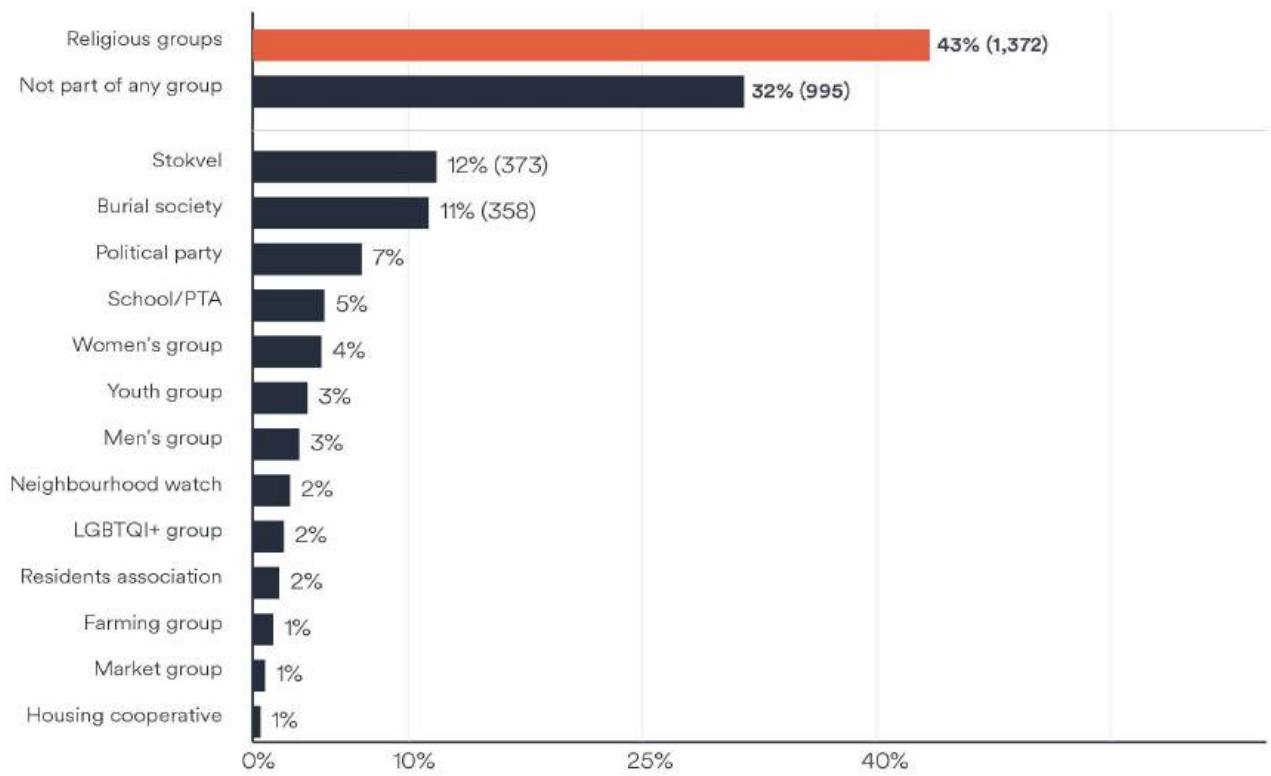
Citizens and Community Engagement – Associational Life

The survey sought to assess the level of associational life or community engagement amongst citizens. There is a school of thought which argues that the quality of democracy is not necessarily determined by the effectiveness of existing rules and regulations to do with holding elections. Instead, there is a need to focus on how citizens interact with each other. When asked which

type of association they were a part of, 43% (n=1,372) of respondents indicated religious groups, followed by Stokvels (12%; n=373) and then burial societies (11%; n=358). A third of respondents, 32% (n=995), are not involved in any form of associational life (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4 Association Involvement

Religious groups dominate associational life, but one-third remain unengaged



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



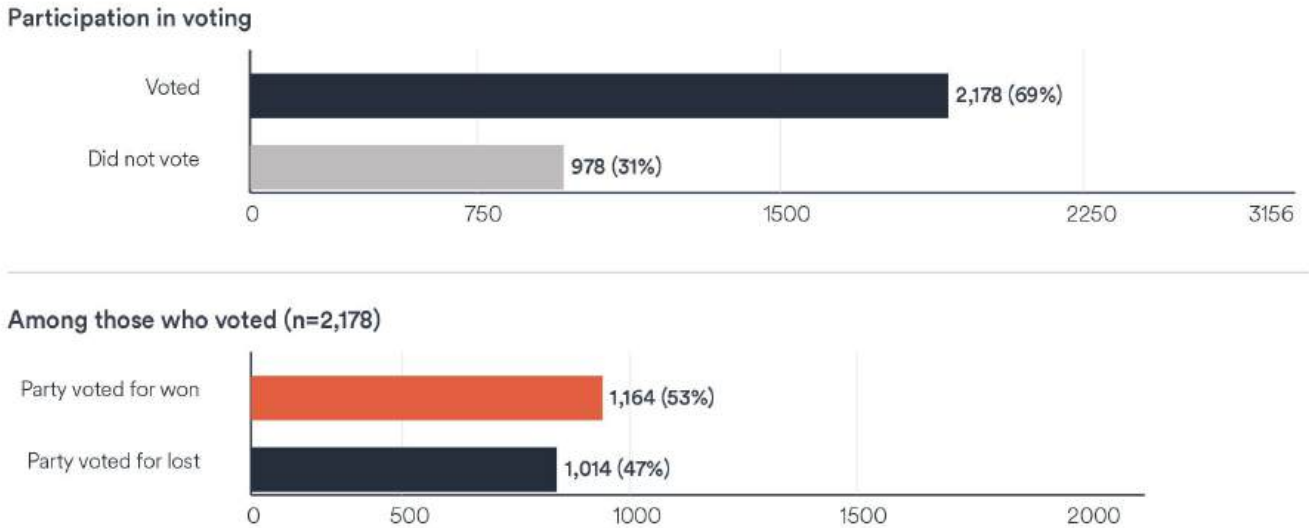
Levels of Participation in Public Processes

Election Participation

South Africa held national and provincial elections in 2024. When asked if they voted in the last national and provincial elections, about 69% (n=2,178) of respondents indicated that they had voted, while 978

(31%) did not vote in the last election. Of the 2,178 respondents who voted, 53% (n=1,164) indicated that the political party that they had voted for won the election (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 Breakdown of Voting Patterns in 2024



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

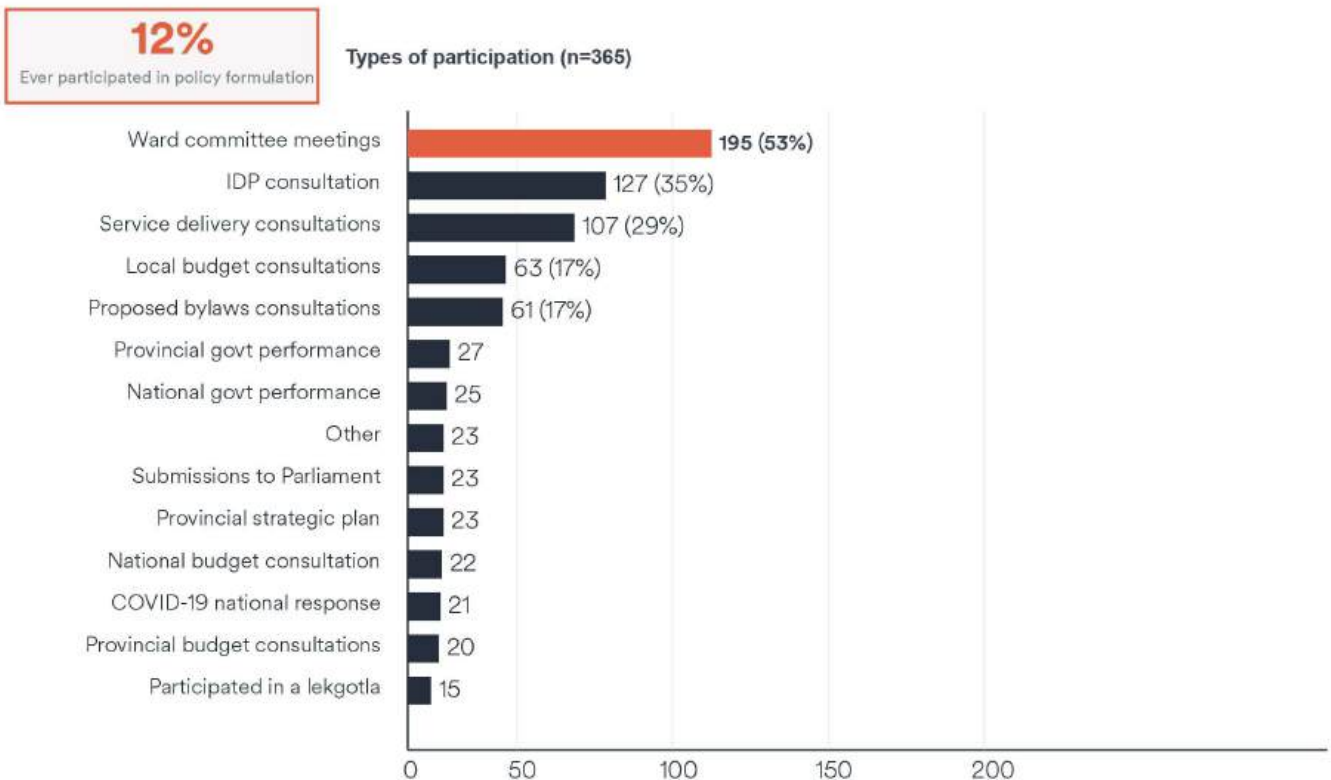
Policy Formulation and Implementation Processes

When asked if they had ever been a part of a policy formulation process, only 12% (n=365) of respondents indicated they had. For these respondents, the most common form of participation was in ward committee

meetings 53%(n=195), followed by Integrated Development Plan (IDP) consultation 35% (n=127) and consultations on service delivery 29% (n=107) (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 Participation in Policy Formulation Processes

Only 12% participate in policy formulation, mainly through ward committees and IDP consultations

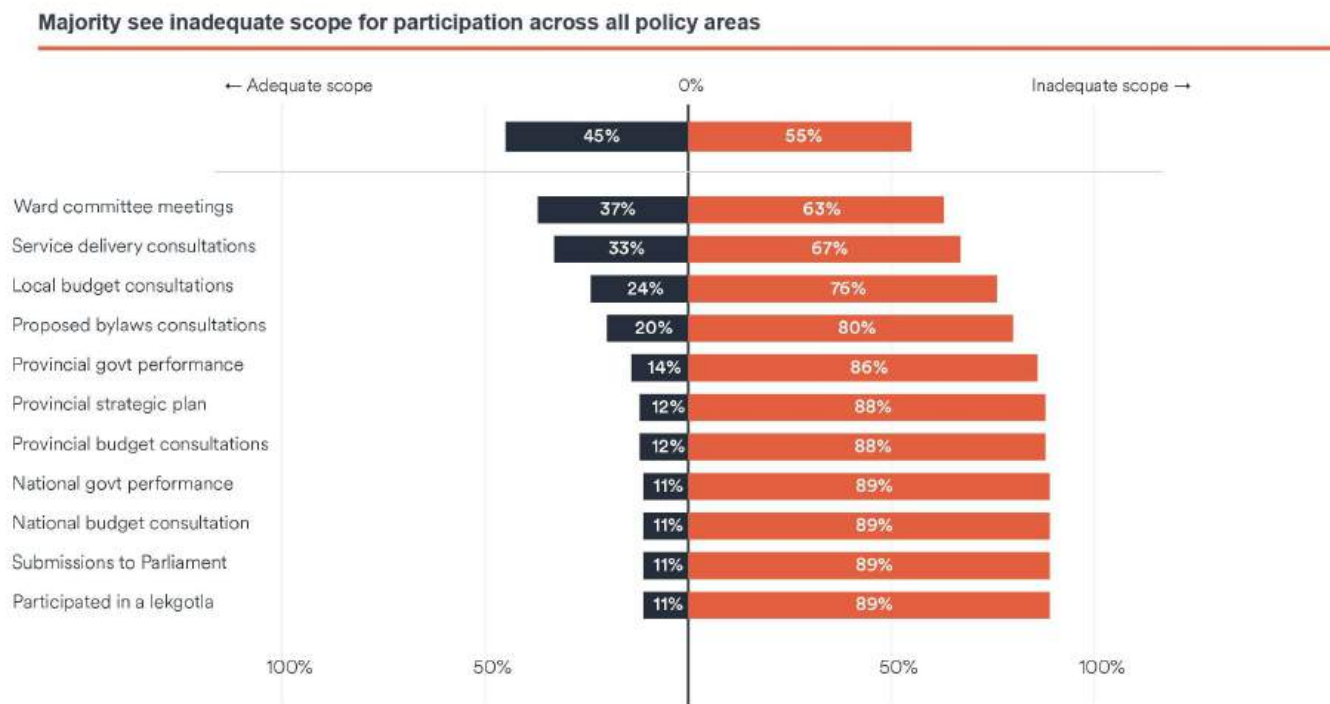


Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Furthermore, respondents were asked whether there is adequate scope for their participation going forward. About 37% (n=1,181) felt there was adequate scope for them to give input on ward committee meetings and consultations on service delivery.

Another 11% (n=340) could make submissions to Parliament, and 11% (n=334) feel that they can participate in a [lekgotla](#). It is important to note that most (n=1,737, 55%) citizens feel there is no room for them to make an input in the policy processes (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 Scope for Contribution in Policy Formulation Processes



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



Citizens' Levels of Satisfaction with the Performance of their Representatives

One objective of the CPE survey is to understand citizens' perceptions and expectations of their elected representatives, which consists of their ward councillors, ward committees, municipal councils, mayors, members of the provincial legislature, Members of the Executive Council (MECs) and the Premier of the province. Citizens were asked to rate the performance of elected and unelected representatives at different levels of government, starting with the local level to the national level. The survey revealed that citizens rate the performance of local government leaders, such as ward councillors, committees, mayors, and municipal councils and premiers, as very poor.

An average of 60% (n=1,893) of the sample believes that their representative's performance is very poor or poor; 19% (n=600) believe that their performance is average. Only 7% (n=221) rated their representative's performance as good or very good; while 14% (n=442) said that they did not know their representatives.

Almost two thirds (60%; n=1,900) of respondents ranked their ward councillors as very poor or poor, while 9% (n=288) ranked their ward councillors as satisfactory, and 3% (n=109) did not know the councillors or their work.

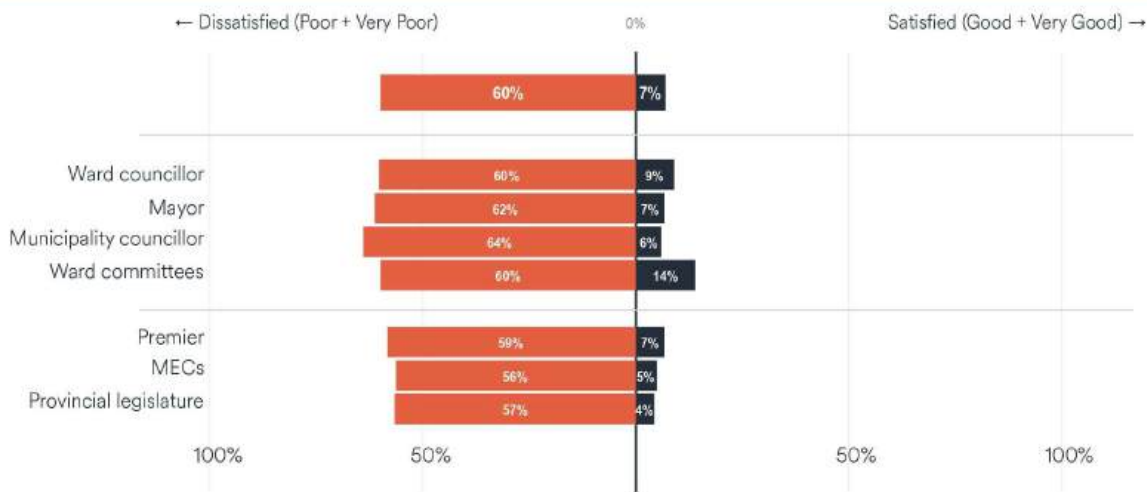
With regards to the performance of mayors, 62% (n=1,964) of respondents ranked their mayors as dissatisfactory, 7% (n=211) said they are satisfactory, while 13% (n=403) did not know the mayor. They were also

asked to rank the performance of the Premier of their province; 59% (n=1,849) were dissatisfied, while 7% (n=206) were satisfied, and 19% (n=591) did not know the Premier (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 8 Citizens' Rating of Performance of Local Government Officials

Excludes "Average" and "Don't Know" responses

60% dissatisfied with representatives across all levels, only 7% satisfied



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



Citizens' Assessment of Local Municipalities

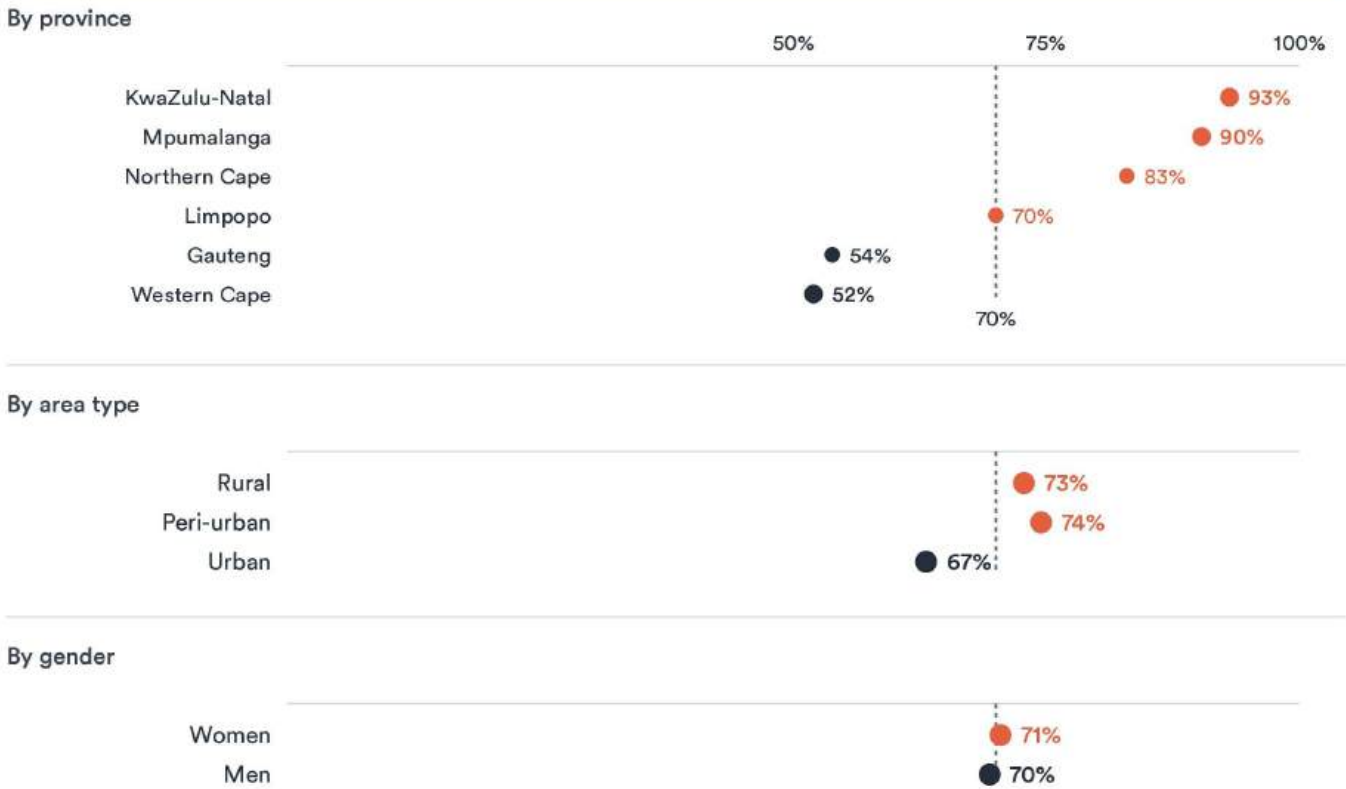
The respondents were then asked to rank their municipalities' performances. Overall, 70% (n=2,210) of respondents ranked the performance of their local municipality as low, and only 2% (n=63) indicated that it was high. When responses were disaggregated by location, 74% (n=452) of peri-urban residents ranked their municipalities' performance as low, 73% (n=627) of rural residents ranked their municipalities as low, and 67% (n=1,129) of urban residents ranked their municipalities as low. When disaggregated by province, 5% (n=17) of

respondents in the Western Cape rated the performance of their municipalities as high, while the highest levels of dissatisfaction with municipalities were in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, where 93% (n=304) and 90% (n=309) of respondents respectively ranked performance as low (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9 Assessment of Local Municipality Performance

(n=3,156) | % rating municipal performance as “low” | Dashed line = 70% national average

Rural areas and women report higher municipal dissatisfaction than urban areas and men



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

The respondents were asked to rate their local municipalities on service delivery aspects such as clean water and sanitation, refuse collection, housing and land allocation, local roads and bridge maintenance, health provision, employment creation, street light maintenance, basic education, higher education, food security, crime

reduction and community safety, resource services and upskilling on Gender Based Violence (GBV). In all these deliverables, their local governments scored below 3 out of 5 (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10 Local Municipality Rating on Service Delivery

(n=3,156)

All municipal services show majority stagnation or decline, with none achieving strong improvement

	Non-existent	Decreased	Same	Improved	Improved a lot
Employment creation	33%	36%	23%	4%	1%
Crime reduction	31%	35%	25%	4%	1%
Upskilling on GBV	31%	19%	24%	12%	2%
Higher education	4%	30%	36%	14%	2%
Street light maintenance	29%	29%	29%	8%	1%
Resourcing services	25%	24%	29%	4%	1%
Housing + land	23%	32%	29%	7%	1%
Food security	19%	41%	27%	4%	1%
Local road + bridge	18%	36%	32%	9%	1%
Health care	5%	40%	36%	13%	1%
Basic education	3%	32%	40%	15%	1%
Clean water	16%	22%	42%	15%	2%
Refuse collection	14%	19%	41%	20%	3%

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Local municipalities scored over half on areas like refuse collection, clean water and sanitation, basic education and healthcare provision. In contrast, employment

creation and resourcing services performed the worst (see Table 5).

TABLE 5 Service Delivery Rating for Local Municipalities

Rating	Average
Improved a lot	5
Improved	4
Stayed the same	3
Decreased	2
Non-existent	1
I don't know	0

Area	Average
Refuse collection	2,67
Clean water and sanitation	2,58
Basic Education	2,54
Health care provision	2,52
Higher Education	2,36
Local road and bridge maintenance	2,27
Street light maintenance	2,12
Housing and land allocation	2,05
Food security	2,03
Upskilling on GBV	1,99
Crime reduction and community safety	1,97
Employment creation	1,94
Resourcing services	1,78

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

South Africa's local municipalities highlight notable disparities in service delivery across provinces, with scores spanning from 1.8 to 2.6 out of a possible 5 across 13 service delivery areas (see Figure 11). Western Cape leads with a score of 2.6, reflecting stronger performance in areas such as clean water, healthcare, and education, while Eastern Cape trails at 1.8, highlighting persistent

challenges in basic services. Provinces like Gauteng (2.5) and Free State, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, and Northwest (each at 2.3) show moderate consistency, though sectoral weaknesses—such as housing and employment creation—remain evident.

FIGURE 11 Assessment of Local Municipalities Across Provinces

(n=3,156)



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



Citizens' Perception of Priority Areas for Local Municipalities

Citizens identified the top three (3) priorities for their local municipalities as decent jobs (57%; n=1,806), the provision of clean water and sanitation (44%; n=1,375) and then reducing crime (38%; n=1,209). This was then followed by land and housing allocation (31%; n=992). The top three (3) priorities were consistent even when data was disaggregated across gender, age, area and employment (see Table 6). When disaggregated by

province, we see other priorities such as food security, affordable housing and vocational training as a top priority for residents. Interestingly, Mpumalanga is the only province where the provision of decent jobs was not one of the top three priorities – the priorities were around land allocation and refuse collection.

TABLE 6 Citizens' Priorities for Local Municipalities

Demographic	Variable	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Total		Decent jobs 57%	Clean water & sanitation 44%	Reducing crime 38%
Gender	Women	Decent jobs 59%	Clean water & sanitation 44%	Reducing crime 37%
	Men	Decent jobs 55%	Clean water & sanitation 43%	Reducing crime 40%
Age	Youth	Decent jobs 61%	Clean water & sanitation 39%	Reducing crime 35%
	Adult	Decent jobs 54%	Clean water & sanitation 47%	Reducing crime 40%
Area	Urban	Decent jobs 55%	Reducing crime 38%	Clean water & sanitation 34%
	Rural/Peri-urban	Decent jobs 60%	Clean water & sanitation 54%	Reducing crime 39%
Employment	Employed	Decent jobs 57%	Reducing crime 37%	Clean water & sanitation 37%
	Self-employed	Clean water & sanitation 56%	Decent jobs 55%	Reducing crime 50%
	Unemployed	Decent jobs 58%	Clean water & sanitation 47%	Reducing crime 37%
Province	Eastern Cape	Clean water & sanitation 67%	Decent jobs 60%	Food security 23%
	Free State	Decent jobs 76%	Land allocation 72%	Affordable & safe housing 54%
	Gauteng	Clean water & sanitation 34%	Affordable & safe housing 33%	Decent jobs 27%
	KwaZulu-Natal	Decent jobs 83%	Reducing crime 56%	Vocational training 54%
	Limpopo	Decent jobs 78%	Clean water & sanitation 68%	Reducing crime 63%
	Mpumalanga	Land allocation 69%	Refuse collection 63%	Clean water & sanitation 63%
	Northern Cape	Decent jobs 66%	Reducing crime 51%	Clean water & sanitation 48%
	Northwest	Decent jobs 50%	Reducing crime 38%	Clean water & sanitation 37%
Western Cape	Reducing crime 44%	Decent jobs 44%	Land allocation 41%	

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Factors Affecting the Performance of Local Municipalities

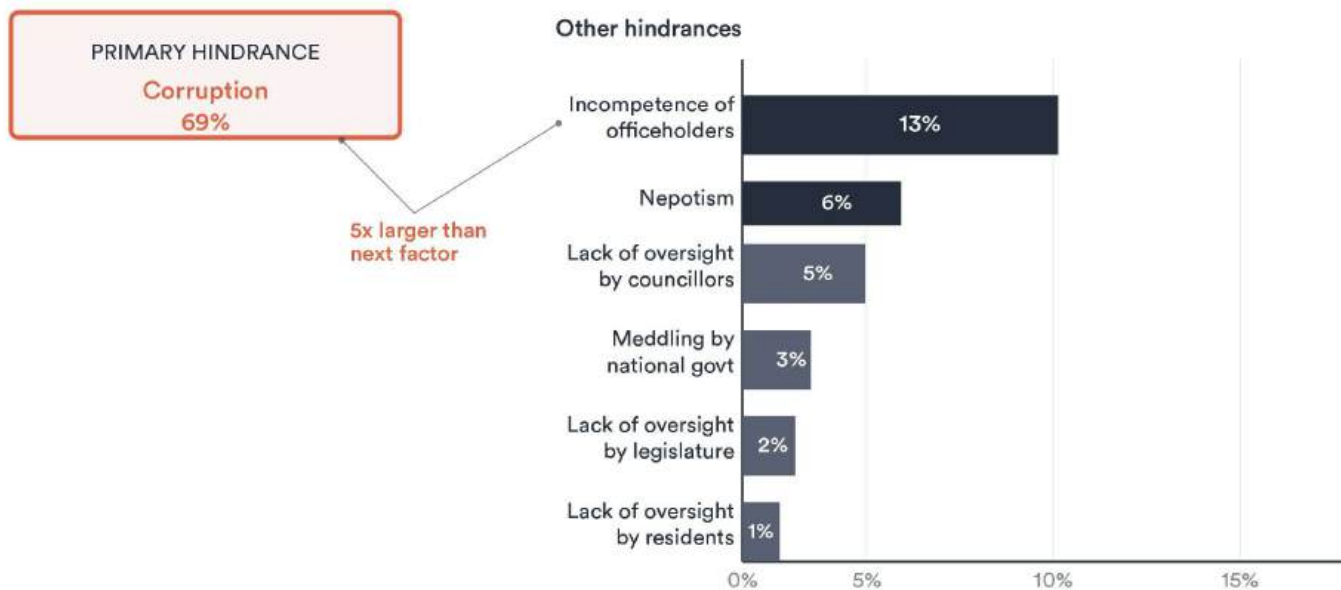
As these scores suggest, citizens are not fully satisfied with the performance of their local municipalities. When asked what hinders their effective performance, 69% (n=2,188) said corruption, 13% (n=400) felt incompetence

by officeholders, 6% (n=190) said nepotism and 5% (n=156) lack of oversight by councillors (see Figure 12).

FIGURE 12 Hinderances in Local Municipalities' Operation

(n=3,156)

Corruption identified as primary hindrance to municipal performance by 69% of respondents



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



Citizens' Assessment of the National Government

Respondents were asked to evaluate the performance of the GNU since the elections in May 2024. When citizens were asked to rank the performance of the national government, only 1% (n=34) ranked the

government's performance as high, 28% (n=983) ranked it as medium, and 71% (n=229) ranked it as low (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13 Assessment of National Government Performance

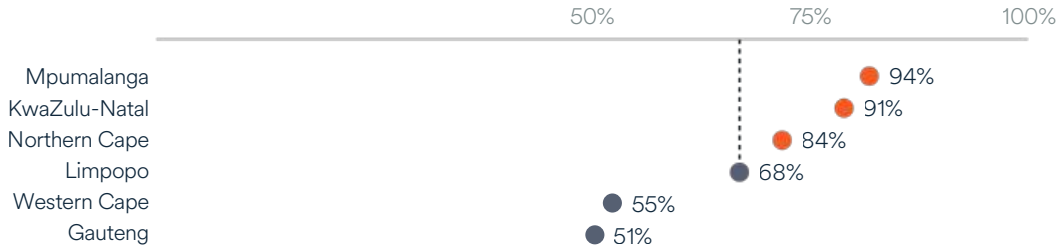
(n=3,156) | % rating municipal performance as “low” | Dashed line = 70% national average

Rural areas and women report higher municipal dissatisfaction than urban areas and men

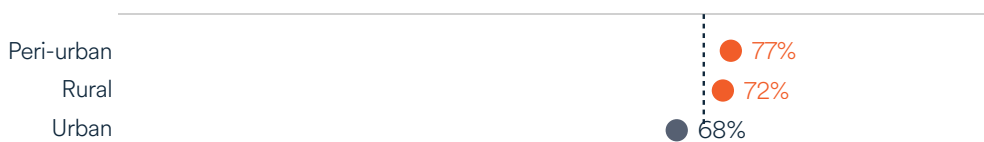
Overall GNU performance



By province



By area type



By gender



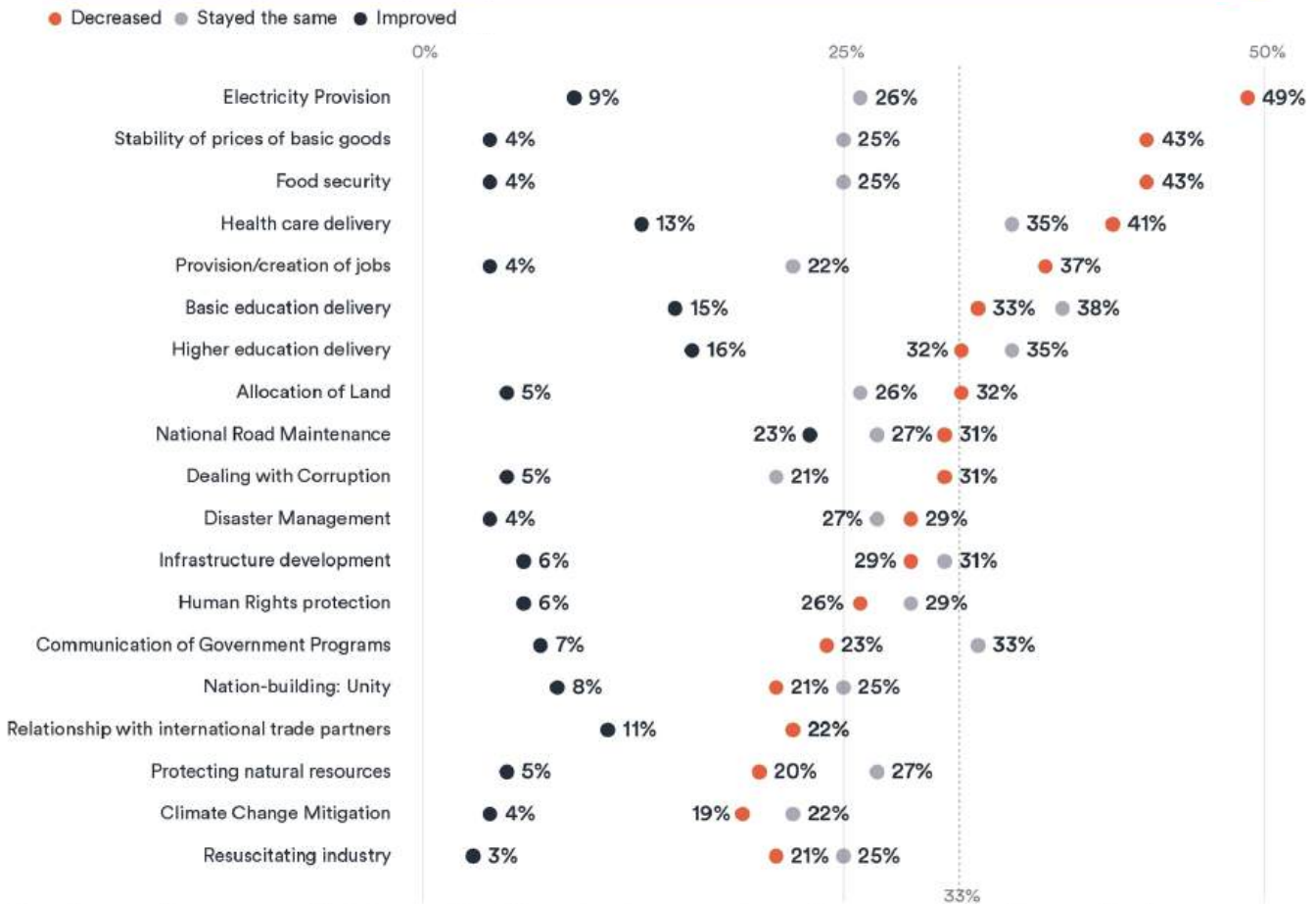
Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

When the responses of citizens were analysed depending on where they lived, 77% (n=470) of respondents from peri-urban areas ranked the government performance as low, as did 72% (n=618) from rural areas, and 68% (n=1,146) from urban areas. When responses were disaggregated by province, except for the Northwest province, the majority of respondents ranked the national government’s performance as low. The highest levels of dissatisfaction with national government performance were seen in Mpumalanga, where 94% (n=322) of respondents in that province ranked performance as low; followed by KwaZulu-Natal, where 91% (n=299) ranked performance as low, and the Free State, where 91% (n=321) also rated government performance as low (see Figure 13).

The respondents were asked to rate the performance of the national government across several aspects such as nation building, dealing with corruption, human rights protection and infrastructure development, amongst others. An average of 33% (n=1,026) of respondents said that government programs have remained the same. When it came to job creation, 37% (n=1,180) of citizens said that government performance in terms of job creation has decreased, and 41% (n=1,303) said stability of basic goods has decreased (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14 National Government Rating on Service Delivery

Citizens report declining government performance across most policy areas, with electricity provision, stability of prices, and job creation seeing sharpest drops



Note: "Decreased" represents combined "Decreased" and "Non-existent" responses; "Improved" represents combined "Improved" and "Improved a lot" responses. The 33% reference line represents the average "Stayed the same" response across all policy areas.

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

When scored out of 5, across all deliverables, citizens scored the national government less than 3 out of 5. Basic education delivery performed best, followed by healthcare delivery and road maintenance.

In contrast, protecting natural resources, resuscitating industry, and climate change mitigation performed the worst (see Table 7).

TABLE 7 Service Delivery Rating for the National Government

Area	Score	Rating	Average
Basic education delivery	2,50	Improved a lot	5
Health care delivery	2,46	Improved	4
National Road Maintenance	2,45	Stayed the same	3
Higher education delivery	2,37	Decreased	2
Electricity Provision	2,23	Non-existent	1
Infrastructure development	2,02	I don't know	0
Communicating Govt Programs	1,99		
Stability of prices of basic goods	1,98		
Food security	1,97		
Human Rights protection	1,91		
Provision/creation of jobs	1,91		
Allocation of Land	1,87		
Dealing with Corruption	1,85		
Disaster Management	1,76		
Nation-building: Unity	1,72		
International Relationships	1,71		
Protecting natural resources	1,65		
Resuscitating industry	1,65		
Climate Change Mitigation	1,45		

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

The national government's performance across South Africa's nine (9) provinces shows a mixed picture, with average scores ranging from 1.5 to 2.3 out of 5, across the 19 service delivery areas. Gauteng leads with a score of 2.3, reflecting relatively strong delivery in basic and higher education, as well as healthcare. Western Cape (2.2), Mpumalanga and Northern Cape (both at 2.1) also show above-average performance, particularly in education and road maintenance.

In contrast, KwaZulu-Natal records the lowest score at 1.5, with notable weaknesses in higher education, land protection, and climate change mitigation. Across all provinces, consistent underperformance is evident in nation-building, climate resilience, and relationship-building, suggesting systemic gaps in fostering unity and long-term sustainability.

FIGURE 15 National Government Assessment Across Provinces

(n=3,156)

Performance of national government

Score is the average across all 19 service delivery options. Listed are the 3 best performing areas and the 3 worst performing areas



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



Citizens' Perception of Priority Areas for the National Government

Citizens identified the top three (3) priorities for their national government as employment creation (80%; n=2,519), dealing with corruption (53%; n=1,666), and price stability (23%; n=738). This was then followed by healthcare (20%; n=647). The top three (3) priorities

were consistent when data was disaggregated across gender, age, area and employment. Land allocation featured as a 4th priority area for men, youth, those in urban areas and those who are employed or self-employed (see Table 8).

TABLE 8 Citizens' Priorities for the National Government

Demographic	Variable	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Total		Employment Creation 80%	Dealing with Corruption 53%	Price Stability 23%	Healthcare 21%
Gender	Women	Employment Creation 80%	Dealing with Corruption 53%	Price Stability 24%	Healthcare 22%
	Men	Employment Creation 79%	Dealing with Corruption 53%	Price Stability 22%	Land Allocation 20%
Age	Youth	Employment Creation 83%	Dealing with Corruption 54%	Price Stability 23%	Land Allocation 21%
	Adult	Employment Creation 77%	Dealing with Corruption 52%	Price Stability 21%	Healthcare 21%
Area	Urban	Employment Creation 83%	Dealing with Corruption 51%	Price Stability 24%	Land Allocation 21%
	Rural/Peri-urban	Employment Creation 76%	Dealing with Corruption 55%	Price Stability 23%	Healthcare 24%
Employment	Employed	Employment Creation 81%	Dealing with Corruption 53%	Healthcare 22%	Land Allocation 20%
	Self-employed	Employment Creation 63%	Dealing with Corruption 59%	Price Stability 22%	Land Allocation 20%
	Unemployed	Employment Creation 84%	Dealing with Corruption 51%	Price Stability 29%	Healthcare 21%
Province	Eastern Cape	Employment Creation 82%	Dealing with Corruption 46%	Improved Food Security 35%	Price Stability 32%
	Free State	Employment Creation 91%	Land Allocation 57%	Dealing with Corruption 54%	Infrastructure 25%
	Gauteng	Employment Creation 63%	Dealing with Corruption 32%	Improved Communication 28%	Healthcare 23%
	KwaZulu-Natal	Employment Creation 91%	Dealing with Corruption 71%	Resuscitating Industry 41%	Healthcare 21%
	Limpopo	Employment Creation 91%	Price Stability 55%	Dealing with Corruption 35%	Resuscitating Industry 30%
	Mpumalanga	Employment Creation 93%	Dealing with Corruption 66%	Land Allocation 41%	Healthcare 22%
	Northern Cape	Dealing with Corruption 77%	Employment Creation 51%	Healthcare 36%	Improved Communication 33%
	Northwest	Employment Creation 75%	Dealing with Corruption 37%	Improved Infrastructure 24%	Resuscitating Industry 20%
	Western Cape	Employment Creation 81%	Dealing with Corruption 58%	Price Stability 50%	Land Allocation 25%

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

When asked about the priorities of the government, aggregated by province, eight (8) provinces out of the nine (9) ranked the creation of employment as the top priority, followed by dealing with corruption, which six (6) out of the nine (9) provinces see as the second priority. The third and fourth priorities are scattered between health care, land allocation, food security, price stability and improved infrastructure.

An overwhelming majority (93%, n=321) of respondents in Mpumalanga, 91% in Free State (n=320), KwaZulu-Natal (n=298) and Limpopo (n=337), 82% (n=292) in Eastern Cape, 81% (n=282) in Western Cape, 75% (n=271) in Northwest, 63% (n=210) in Gauteng and 51% (n=188) in Northern Cape ranked employment as a top priority for the national government (see Table 8).

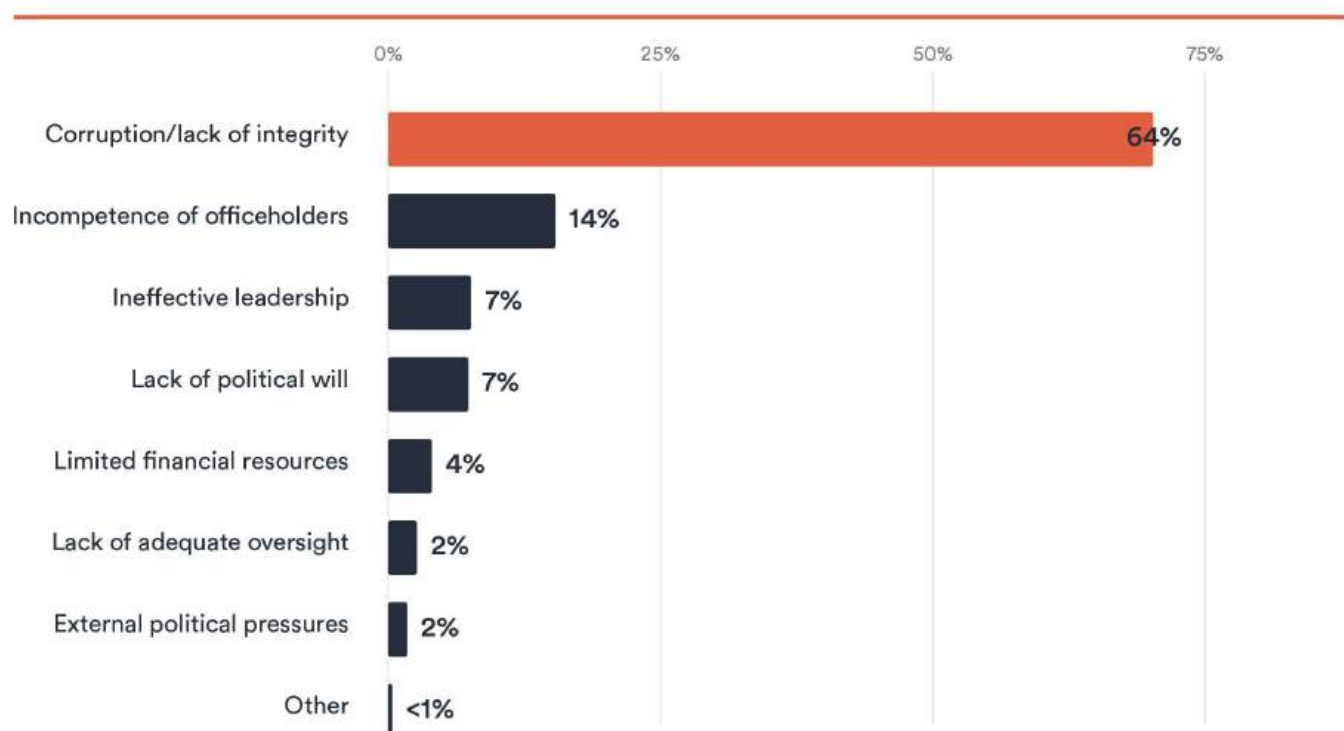
Factors Affecting the Performance of the National Government

Respondents were asked what they felt was the top factor negatively affecting the performance of the national government. The majority (64%; n=2,026) said that corruption and the lack of integrity was the top factor, 14% (n=446) said it was incompetence of office

holders, 7% (n=219) said was ineffective leadership and another 7% (n=212) said it is lack of political will, 4% (n=115) said it was limited financial resources and 2% said it was lack of adequate oversight (see Figure 16).

FIGURE 16 Hinderances to National Government Operation

Corruption and lack of integrity identified as primary hindrance to government performance



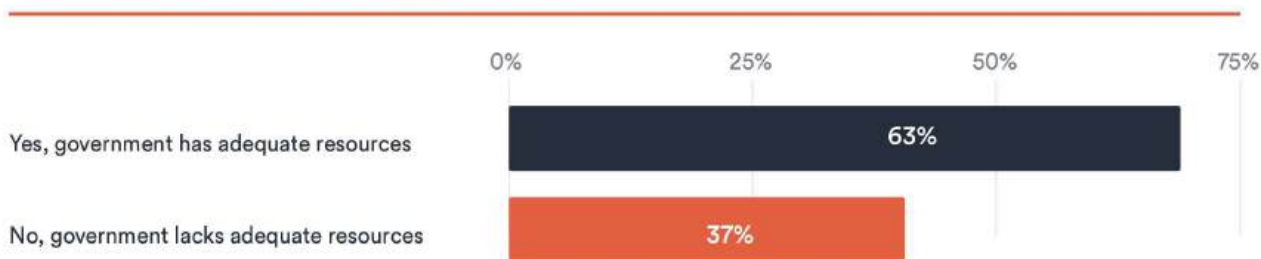
Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Respondents were asked whether the national government has adequate financial resources to address all issues. The majority (63%; n=1,985) think that the

government has adequate resources, while 37% (n=1,171) said there were not enough resources (see Figure 17).

FIGURE 17 Perceptions of Government Resources

Majority believe government has adequate resources,



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

When those who said that the government did not have adequate resources to address challenges were asked about the mechanism by which the government should use to mobilise more resources, 79% (n=925) suggested

fighting corruption, 6% (n=74) suggested the reduction of expenditure, and 6% (n=71) said there was a need to leverage mining resources for development (see Table 9).

TABLE 9 Resource Mobilisation Strategies

Resource Mobilisation Strategies	#	%
Fight corruption	925	79%
Reduce expenditure	74	6%
Leverage mining resources for development	71	6%
Attract foreign direct investors	70	6%
Borrow from bilateral and multilateral donors	19	2%
Increase taxes	8	1%
Other	4	0%
Total	1,171	100%

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



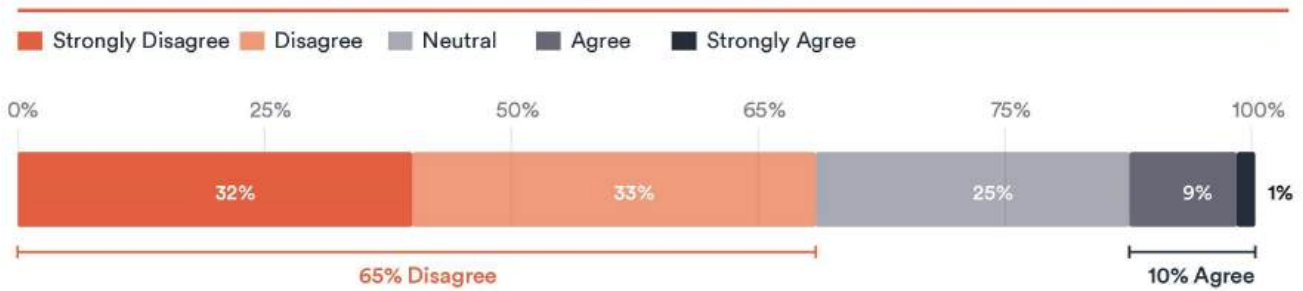
Citizens' Perception of Government Transparency and Accountability

Respondents were asked to share their opinions and perceptions of the GNU and transparency. This statement was shared: 'The GNU and other government structures are transparent in sharing information with citizens'; 65% (n=2,030) disagreed with the statement

that GNU is transparent in sharing information with citizens, meanwhile 25% (n=805) were neutral, with only 10% (n=321) agreeing with the statement (see Figure 18).

FIGURE 18 Perceptions of Government Transparency

Two-thirds of citizens disagree that GNU is transparent in sharing information,



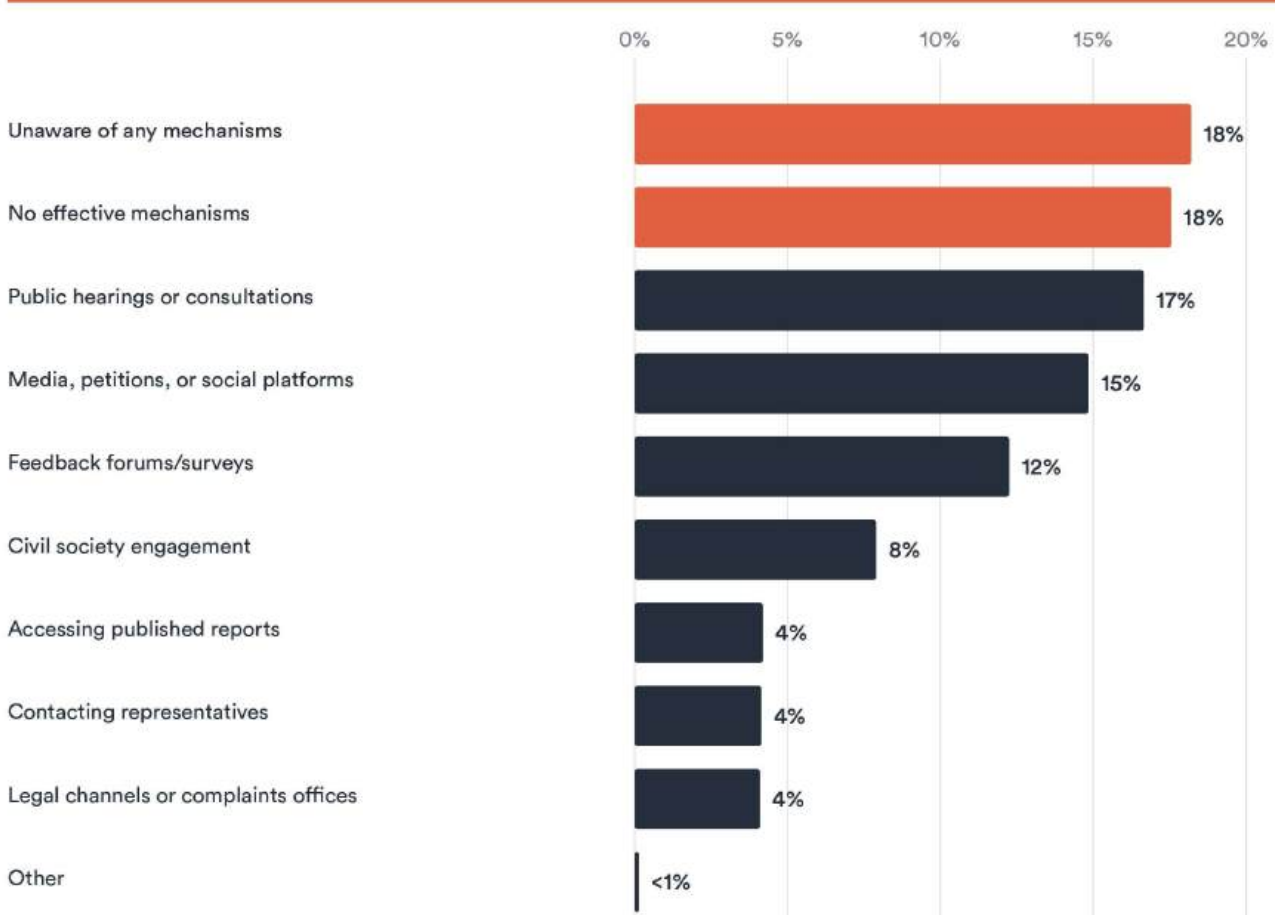
Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Respondents were asked to share their opinions and perceptions of the GNU and accountability. A question was posed: ‘What is one existing mechanism (if any) that may have helped in holding government structures accountable for their policy decisions and spending?’ Some respondents (18%, n=574) said they are not aware of any mechanism in place, 18% (n=554) said they have

not found any mechanism, 17% (n=469) said public budget hearings or community consultations, 15% (n=525) said raising concerns through media, petitions, or social platforms and 7% (n=469) said through engaging with civil society organisations or advocacy (see Figure 19).

FIGURE 19 Accountability Mechanisms

Over one-third of citizens either unaware of accountability mechanisms or find none effective, while public hearings and media engagement lead among known channels



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



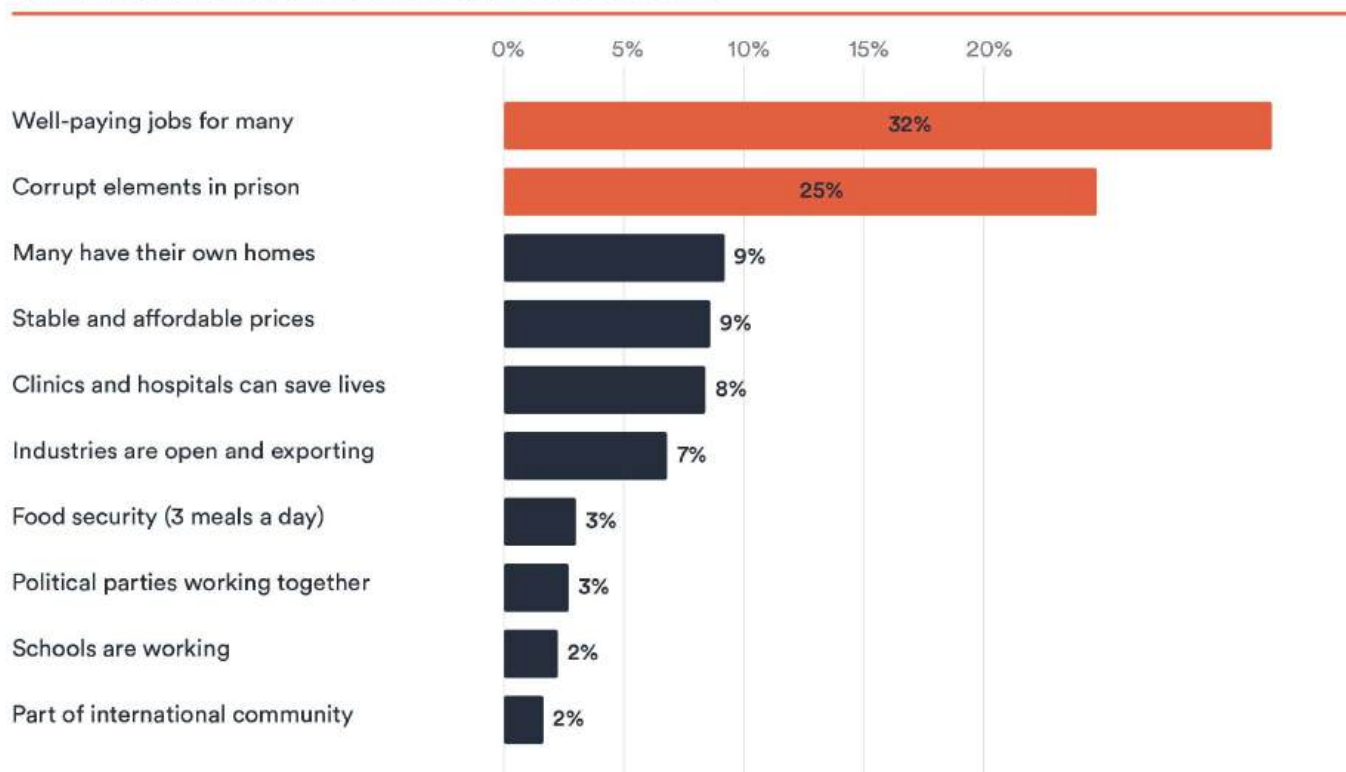
Citizens' Perception of What a Successful South Africa Looks Like

Respondents were asked about what vision they have for a successful South Africa, and overall, about 32% (n=1,028) of respondents said well-paying jobs would be the most important indicator, 25% (n=779) said corrupt

elements to be in prison, and approximately 9% (n=290, and 272 respectively) said owning homes and stable and affordable prices of goods would be indicators of success (see Figure 20).

FIGURE 20 Indicators of Success for South Africa

Well-paying jobs and anti-corruption enforcement emerge as top priorities for South African success, with 57% identifying these two factors



Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)

Well-paying jobs and the imprisonment of corrupt elements were consistent as the top two indicators of success when further disaggregated by gender, age, location and employment (see Table 10). For those in urban areas and who indicated that they were unemployed, the 3rd indicator of a successful country was stable and affordable prices. Healthcare was a key indicator for female respondents, those who lived in a rural or peri-urban area and who were employed; while

owning a home was an indicator of success for men, youth and those who were self-employed. Most provinces said employment is the top indicator of success. Interestingly, in KwaZulu-Natal, employment creation is not one of the top three indicators - in fact, only 3% (n=10) of residents in KwaZulu-Natal consider employment the indicator for success. For them, the focus is on ending corruption and access to healthcare.

TABLE 10 Indicators of Success for South Africa

Demographic	Variable	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3
Total		Well-paying jobs 33%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 25%	Own home 9%
Gender	Women	Well-paying jobs 33%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 25%	Healthcare to save lives 9%
	Men	Well-paying jobs 32%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 25%	Own home 11%
Age	Youth	Well-paying jobs 34%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 23%	Own home 9%
	Adult	Well-paying jobs 30%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 26%	Own home Healthcare to save lives Tie – 9%
Area	Urban	Well-paying jobs 33%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 23%	Affordable Prices 10%
	Rural/Peri-urban	Well-paying jobs 32%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 26%	Healthcare to save lives 10%
Employment	Employed	Well-paying jobs 30%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 27%	Healthcare to save lives 10%
	Self-employed	Corrupt elements imprisoned 39%	Well-paying jobs 30%	Own homes 9%
	Unemployed	Well-paying jobs 36%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 18%	Affordable Prices 10%
Province	Eastern Cape	Well-paying jobs 31%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 23%	Food secure 14%
	Free State	Well-paying jobs 65%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 21%	Industries exporting 5%
	Gauteng	Well-paying jobs 27%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 20%	Own homes 12%
	KwaZulu-Natal	Corrupt elements imprisoned 49%	Healthcare to save lives 23%	Collaborating political parties 6%
	Limpopo	Well-paying jobs 38%	Industries exporting 25%	Affordable Prices 16%
	Mpumalanga	Well-paying jobs 41%	Corrupt elements imprisoned 28%	Own homes 11%
	Northern Cape	Corrupt elements in prison 52%	Well-paying jobs 16%	Own homes 15%
	Northwest	Well-paying jobs 27%	Own homes 16%	Healthcare to save lives 13%
Western Cape	Well-paying jobs 43%	Affordable prices 19%	Own homes 15%	

Source: 2025 South Africa CPE Survey (Aug-Sep 2025)



Growing Pessimism

The findings of the 2025 CPE Survey reveal deep public concern regarding the state of socio-economic development in South Africa, accountability and governance, following the first year of the GNU. Despite a fairly high level of participation during the 2024 national and provincial elections, most citizens express a profound lack of confidence in both local and national governance structures. In addition, most citizens feel that there is an inadequate scope for them to participate in public processes and spaces linked towards addressing the concerns they have. Across all provinces, perceptions of poor performance in service delivery, particularly in employment creation, corruption control, and municipal service provision, highlight persistent challenges in realising the democratic and developmental aspirations of South Africa's post-apartheid era. It is also interesting to note that respondents in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal registered the highest levels of dissatisfaction with

the performance of both local municipalities and national government.

A dominant theme emerging from the survey is the need for the creation of employment and dealing with cases of corruption. Citizens in the survey felt that corruption was the biggest hindrance in terms of the performance of local municipalities and the national government. The overwhelming concern with unemployment underscores ongoing economic exclusion, particularly among youth and women, who remain disproportionately affected by joblessness. A third of respondents (n=1,075) do not have an income, and of these, 754 depend on government grants. This statistic alone further underscores the fragility of household incomes and the limited scope of economic empowerment.



Conclusion

South Africa stands at a crossroads. Citizens' voices point to both a crisis of performance and the urgent need for renewal. For the GNU to meet public expectations, it must prioritise transparency, fight corruption decisively, stimulate inclusive economic growth, and strengthen participatory governance structures. Rebuilding confidence in democratic institutions will require tangible improvements in service delivery, accountability, and social justice, which are core pillars for achieving the citizens' vision of a prosperous and united South Africa.

Despite these challenges, the survey also captures a sense of resilient hope. When asked to describe what a successful South Africa looks like, most citizens envisioned a nation characterised by decent jobs, justice for corrupt actors, and access to essential services. This collective vision underscores the continued belief in democratic governance as a pathway to transformation. It also signals that, while frustration is high, the public remains invested in the idea of a responsive, inclusive, and ethical state.

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