

# South African Voices: Citizens' Perceptions and Expectations 2025 Survey



Yolokazi Mfuto, Eddah Jowah and Rebekah Cross

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2025 South Africa Citizens' Perceptions and Expectations Survey

The 2025 Citizens' Perceptions and Expectations (CPE) Survey captures the views of 3,156 South African citizens on governance, service delivery, economic well-being, and national priorities one year after the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction with government performance at all levels, deepening socio-economic distress, and persistent concern over corruption—yet also a shared vision for a more prosperous and just South Africa.

### 1. Socio-Economic Realities

The survey highlights substantial socio-economic vulnerability:

- 43% of those surveyed were unemployed, with higher unemployment among youth (47%), women (46%), and rural residents (52%).
- 34% of those surveyed have no formal income, and 70% of these depend on government grants.
- Only 20% have education beyond Matric.
- Living conditions remain precarious: 13% live in informal settlements, and 24% live with family/friends.

This economic fragility shapes citizens' expectations and amplifies dissatisfaction with government performance.

### 2. Public Engagement and Participation

Civic participation outside elections is extremely limited:

- 69% voted in the 2024 national elections.
- Only 12% have ever participated in policy processes.
- 55% feel there is *no room* for meaningful input in policymaking.

This signals a disconnect between citizens and governance structures.



### 3. Local Government Performance

Citizens express overwhelming dissatisfaction with municipalities:

- 70% rate their local government's performance as *low*.
- Worst ratings come from KwaZulu-Natal (93%) and Mpumalanga (90%).
- Best performance is reported in the Western Cape (5% high).

Across 13 service delivery areas, municipalities score below 3 out of 5, with:

- **Best:** refuse collection (2.67), clean water (2.58)
- **Worst:** resourcing services (1.78), employment creation (1.94)

Top priorities for local government to focus on for citizens:

1. Employment creation (57%)
2. Clean water & sanitation (44%)
3. Reducing crime (38%)

Major obstacle to the performance of municipalities: Corruption (69%)

### 4. National Government Performance

Dissatisfaction is equally high at the national level:

- 71% rate the GNU's performance as *low*.
- Only 1% consider it *high*.
- Lowest in Mpumalanga (94%), KwaZulu-Natal (91%), Free State (91%)

Across 19 national functions, the national government scored below 3 out of 5, with:

- **Best:** Basic Education (2.50), Healthcare (2.46), Road Maintenance (2.45)
- **Worst:** Climate Change Mitigation (1.45), Resuscitating Industry (1.65)

Top priorities for the national government to focus on:

1. Employment creation (80%)
2. Fighting corruption (53%)
3. Price stability (23%)

Major obstacle affecting the performance of the National Government: Corruption (64%)

## 5. Transparency & Accountability

Perceptions of government transparency are low:

- 63% disagree that the GNU is transparent.
- 35% cannot identify any functional accountability mechanism.

## 6. Vision of a Successful South Africa

Despite widespread frustration, citizens articulate a clear and hopeful vision:

1. Well-paying jobs (33%)
2. Imprisonment of corrupt individuals (25%)
3. Owning homes (9%)
4. Affordable prices and functional healthcare (both 9%)

This vision is shared across gender, age, and location.

## 7. Overall Conclusion

The CPE findings point to a country experiencing:

- Deepening mistrust in government institutions
- Persistent corruption concerns
- Severe unemployment and economic hardship
- Limited citizen engagement in decision-making

Yet the findings also show that citizens remain invested in a South Africa defined by jobs, justice, transparency, and effective service delivery. Rebuilding public trust will require the GNU to act decisively on corruption, expand economic opportunity, strengthen accountability, and improve core services.