

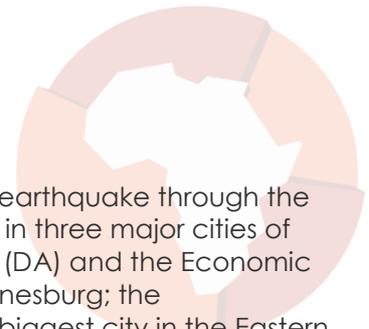


**AFRO**  
**BAROMETER**  
LET THE PEOPLE HAVE A SAY

**Public service  
delivery in South Africa**  
**Councillors and citizens critical links  
in overcoming persistent inequities**

By Sibusiso Nkomo

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## Introduction

The August 2016 local government elections in South Africa sent an earthquake through the political class when the African National Congress (ANC) lost power in three major cities of the country. Coalition governments led by the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) took over the economic powerhouse, Johannesburg; the administrative capital and seat of the Presidency, Pretoria; and the biggest city in the Eastern Cape and the country's vehicle-manufacturing hub, Nelson Mandela Bay. Additionally, the DA grew its share of the vote to more than two-thirds in Cape Town, the home of Parliament. In Ekurhuleni and other cities, the ANC created coalitions and barely clung to power.

These elections can be seen as a milestone, indicating for the first time since 1994 that the ANC could lose power anywhere in the country. They also point to continuing perceptions of political and systemic weaknesses – including a lack of qualified staff, capacity, professionalism, and accountability (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009) – at the local level of government, which deals most directly with citizens, is the coalface of service delivery, and thus may be most directly affected by public dissatisfaction with public services (Mungai, 2015; Institute for Security Studies, 2009).

Since 1994, South Africa's democratic governments have extended basic service provision to poorer areas of many cities, towns, and rural areas. For the first time, many citizens have enjoyed electricity and sewage systems that had previously been reserved for whites-only suburbs.

According to the 2016 Statistics South Africa General Household Survey, electricity mains now reach 84% of the population. Water access is at 88%; 81% have access to improved sanitation; and only 4% are without a toilet facility. About two-thirds (65%) have their refuse removed once a week, compared to half or less before 1994 (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

Nonetheless, numerous demonstrations and protests, often violent, have highlighted popular perceptions that local governments have not kept campaign promises of good service delivery – most fundamentally, Nelson Mandela's 1994 promise of "a better life for all." Although services may be reaching people who never had them, is the quality of services inadequate to satisfy their recipients? Do service-delivery deficits reflect and perpetuate the apartheid-era spatial design of most towns, retarding racial and class integration and equality?

This paper explores public opinion on basic services provision at the local government level in South Africa. Building on Bratton (2012), which focused on local councillors' responsiveness to constituents' needs, I explore other factors that may influence public perceptions of local service delivery, including contact with local councillors and councillors' job performance and trustworthiness. I also examine which actions, if any, citizens take when they see problems in their municipality.

## Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys (2017/2018) are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

This policy paper draws mainly on data from the Afrobarometer Round 5 (2011) survey in South Africa, conducted by Citizen Surveys and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa. (The Round 6 (2015) survey did not ask the full module of service-delivery questions.) The sample of 2,400 adults yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008.

## Key findings

- Half or more of South Africans said municipalities performed “fairly badly” or “very badly” in maintaining roads (56%), maintaining marketplaces (55%), managing land use (54%), and maintaining health standards (50%). Local governments scored slightly better on keeping communities clean (52% said this was handled “fairly well” or “very well”).
- Positive assessments of local services were more common among urban, more educated, employed, and white respondents.
- Perceptions that local councillors listen to their constituents and perform their jobs well were associated with positive assessments of how local government was handling service delivery. Living in rural areas and experiencing poverty were associated with negative evaluations of service delivery.
- About half (47%) of South Africans said they saw problems with the way local government was run, and substantial proportions said they took steps to address these problems by discussing or joining with other community residents and approaching religious, traditional, or community leaders.

## Local government and service delivery in South Africa

Under Section 152 of the South African Constitution of 1996, local government is the engine of basic service delivery. Local government is charged, among other things, with ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, promoting social and economic development, and promoting a safe and healthy environment (Constitution, 1996).

Under a long-standing grading streamlined through the Organised Local Government Act (1997), South Africa has eight metropolitan cities, 44 district municipalities, and 226 local municipalities (South African Government, 2017). All these types of municipalities have a core responsibility for water, sanitation, markets, refuse removal, and land management.

Owusu-Ampomah and Hemson (2004) describe service delivery as playing a greater role in local government in South Africa and other developing countries than in developed countries. Because of constitutional provisions and high poverty levels, they argue, service delivery in South Africa is seen as an instrument and social contract to create social inclusion and raise living standards of the poor majority previously excluded by the apartheid government.

In line with this approach, Bratton and Sibanyoni (2006) found that many Africans see democratization in instrumental terms, i.e. through the lens of whether socioeconomic goods are delivered. In their analysis of 2006 Afrobarometer data, fewer than half of South Africa's adult citizens thought the then-new local government system was working well. They also found that local government is often judged in personalized terms, especially based on whether local government councillors are perceived as doing their jobs well and as listening to constituents.

Popular dissatisfaction with local government may be expressed at the ballot box, which Diamond and Morlino (2004) portray as the primary vertical-accountability mechanism. If elections are perceived as inadequate to enforce the “obligation of elected political leaders to answer for their political decisions” (Diamond & Morlino, 2004, p. 25), dissatisfaction may also be expressed in protests aimed at ensuring that local people get access to public services.

According to Alexander (2010), local political protests can take the form of mass meetings, drafting of memoranda, petitions, toyi-toying, processions, stay-aways, election boycotts, blockading of roads, burning of tires, looting, destruction of buildings, chasing unpopular



individuals out of townships, confrontations with the police, and forced resignations of elected officials. Alexander notes that protests over service delivery seem to emanate from poorer neighborhoods, especially shack settlements and townships, rather than the better-off suburbs.

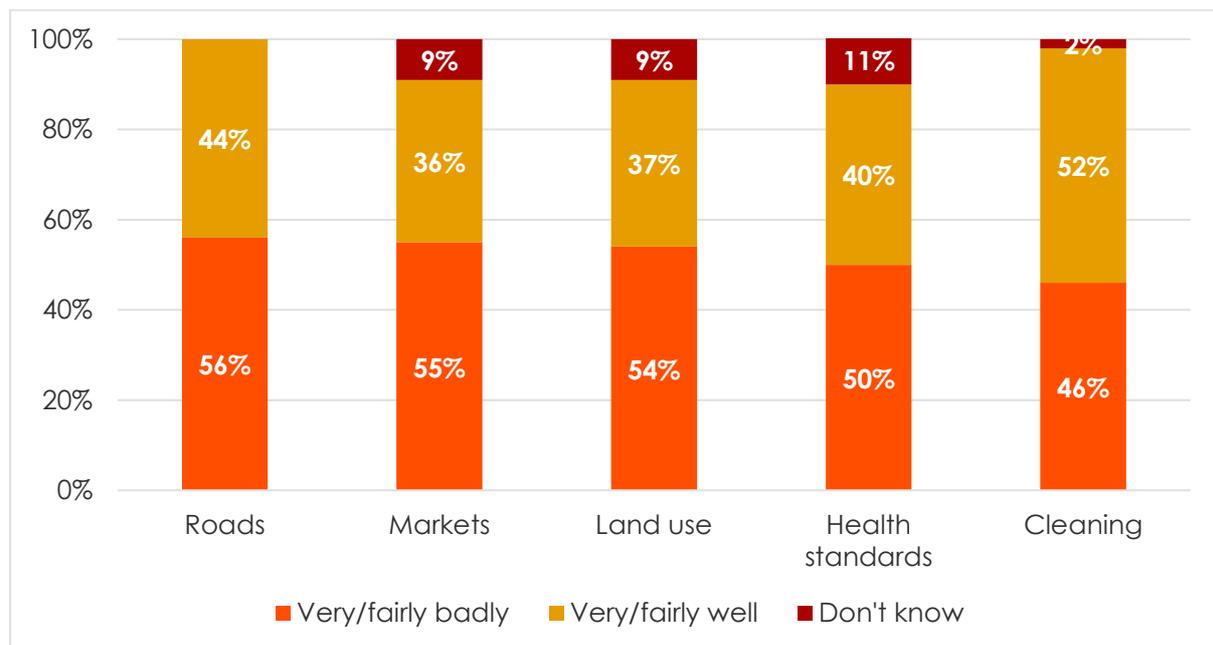
Municipal IQ (2017), a research organization that collects data on service-delivery-related protests targeting municipalities, found that on average, 94 protests per year took place in South Africa between 2004 and 2016 – suggesting that (as Bratton (2012) argues) accountability for service delivery is perceived as lacking in many South African communities. While access to services has increased over time, protesters' demands typically focus on the poor quality of services provided (Hunter, 2015).

### Public perceptions of service delivery

The 2011 Afrobarometer survey asked South Africans how well or badly they think their local government was handling five service-delivery tasks.

Half or more of respondents said their municipalities were performing “fairly badly” or “very badly” at maintaining local roads (56%) and marketplaces (55%), managing the use of land (54%), and maintaining health standards, such as in restaurants and food stalls (50%). Only on one task, keeping the community clean, did a slim majority (52%) assess their local government’s performance as “fairly” or “very” good (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Popular assessments of local government service delivery | South Africa | 2011**

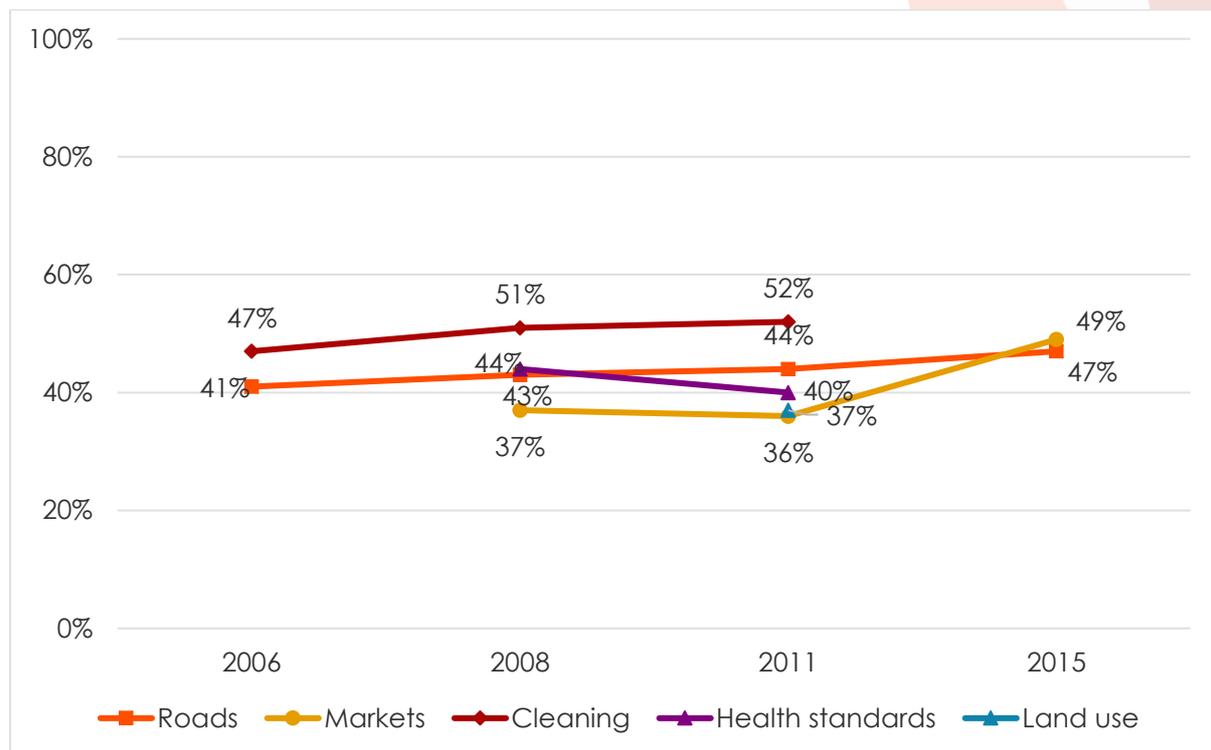


**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Maintaining local roads? Maintaining local marketplaces? Maintaining health standards, for example in restaurants and food stalls? Keeping our community clean, for example, by refuse removal? Managing the use of land?

Changes over time show some modest improvements in assessments of local government performance in maintaining roads (from 41% fairly/very well in 2006 to 44% in 2011, continuing to 47% in 2015) and keeping the community clean (from 47% in 2006 to 52% in 2011) (Figure 2). Perceptions that the municipality performed well in maintaining local marketplaces was stable, then rose (from 36% to 49%) between 2011 and 2015.

Positive performance evaluations for maintaining health standards declined, from 44% to 40%, between 2008 and 2011.

**Figure 2: Positive assessments of local government service delivery | South Africa**  
| 2006-2015



**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Maintaining local roads? Maintaining local marketplaces? Maintaining health standards, for example in restaurants and food stalls? Keeping our community clean, for example by refuse removal? Managing the use of land? (% who said "fairly well" or "very well")

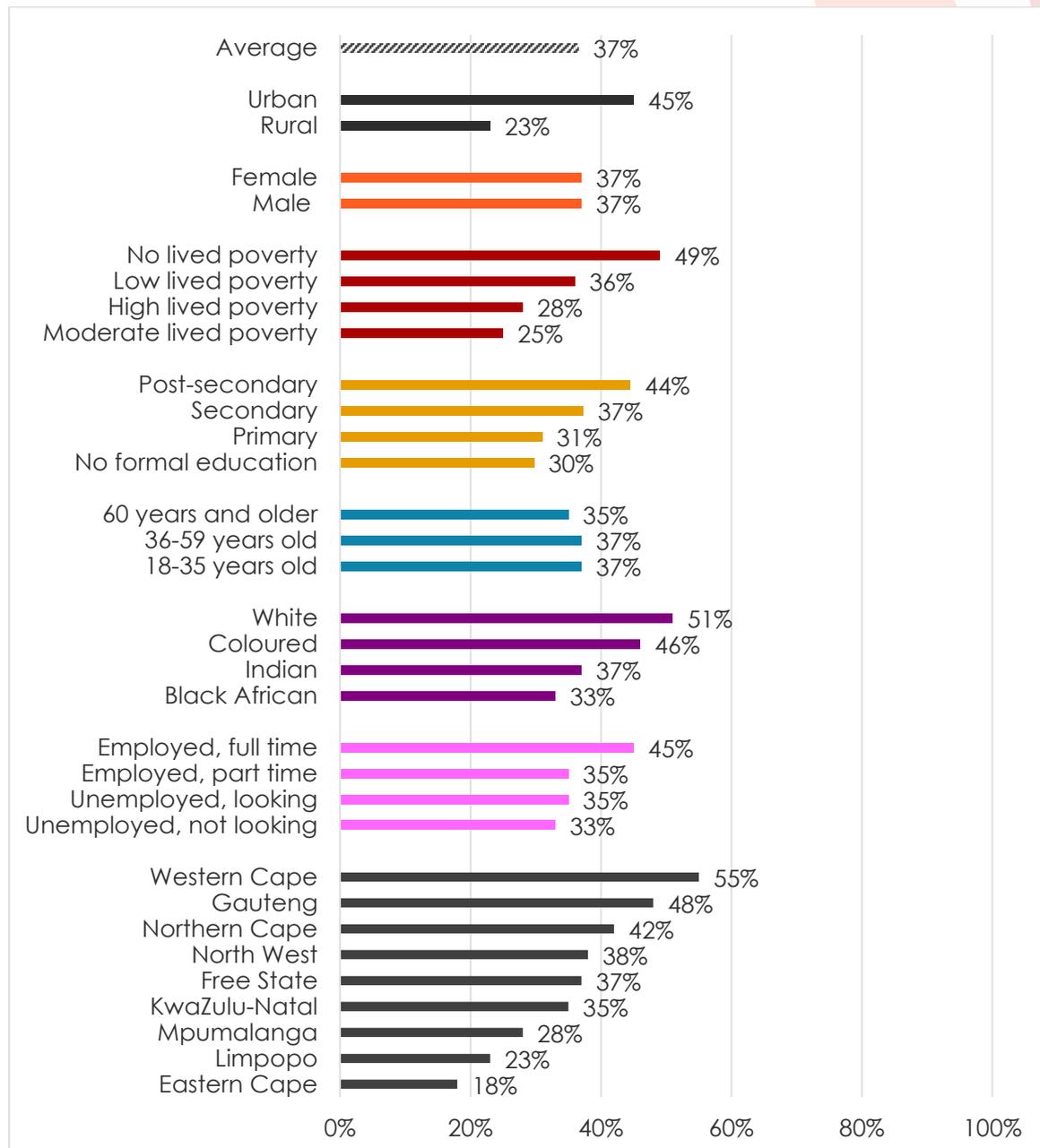
Disaggregation by demographic factors reveals significant differences in average assessments of service-delivery quality across these five indicators (Figure 3). Overall, only 37% of all respondents said that local government was performing "fairly well" or "very well" in providing basic services. But urban residents (45%) were almost twice as likely as their rural counterparts (23%) to express satisfaction ("fairly well" or "very well") with local service provision. The best-educated respondents, who may also tend to be the best-off economically, were more likely to approve than those with less schooling. Similarly, citizens who were employed on a full-time basis expressed more positive views (45% fairly/very well) than those employed part time or unemployed (33%-35%).

White South Africans expressed higher levels of approval of local government service delivery (51%) than Coloured (46%), Indian (37%), or Black (33%) citizens.

A breakdown by province reflects the urban-rural divide, with higher levels of approval in areas with higher concentrations of big cities, such as the Western Cape (55% fairly/very well) and Gauteng (48%) compared to more rural provinces such as Mpumalanga (28%), Limpopo (23%), and the Eastern Cape (18%).

These results suggest that two decades after the end of apartheid, many of the structural barriers to good service delivery remain. If you are more educated, have a full-time job, are white, and live in a city, you are more likely to enjoy good-quality services from your local municipality. If you are less educated, are under- or unemployed, are non-white, and live in a rural area, you are likely to have more to complain about in terms of basic service delivery. The data suggest that, perhaps inadvertently, local government authorities may be perpetuating the apartheid-era spatial design of most towns and retarding integration and equality.

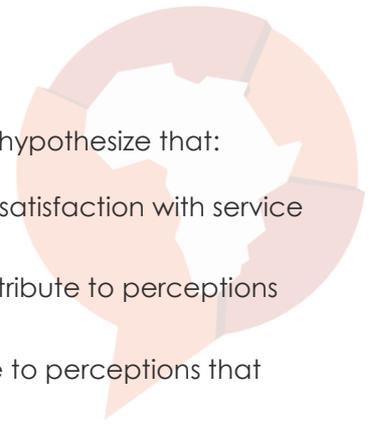
**Figure 3: Positive assessments of local government service delivery**  
 | by demographic factors | 2011 | South Africa



**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Maintaining local roads? Maintaining local marketplaces? Maintaining health standards, for example in restaurants and food stalls? Keeping our community clean, for example by refuse removal? Managing the use of land? (Figure shows average % across all five indicators who said "fairly well" or "very well")

### What affects perceptions of service delivery?

While many Africans' perception of democracy is instrumental, Bratton and Sibanyoni (2006) and Bratton (2012) also highlight that perceptions of how local governments operate is often more important than the substance of the services they actually deliver. The responsiveness of key actors within the local government system, such as local councillors, is thus at the heart of how citizens view this level of government and its service-delivery performance. In line with responsiveness finding, we hypothesize that councillors who listen to their constituents contribute to higher levels of satisfaction with service delivery.



What else might affect views of service delivery? In this analysis, we hypothesize that:

- Contact with local councillors contributes to higher levels of satisfaction with service delivery.
- Lower levels of perceived corruption among councillors contribute to perceptions that services are being delivered.
- High levels of trust in local government councillors contribute to perceptions that local government services are being delivered.
- Positive assessments of councillor performance are associated with satisfaction with service delivery.
- Participation in protest activities is correlated with dissatisfaction with service delivery.

To test these hypotheses, we conduct a multiple regression analysis on a service-delivery index (adapted from Bratton & Sibanyoni, 2006) combining maintenance of roads, marketplaces, and health standards as well as keeping the community clean and managing land use.<sup>1</sup> We add a secondary regression test on the individual services asked about in the survey. In both cases, citizen assessment of service delivery is the outcome (dependent) variable.

Independent variables include councillors' perceived willingness to listen to constituents, direct contact with councillors, public trust, perceived corruption among councillors, councillor accountability, councillor job performance, payment of bribes for services, and participation in protests or demonstrations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The survey questions were: *How well or badly would you say your local government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Maintaining local roads? Maintaining local marketplaces? Maintaining health standards, for example in restaurants and food stalls? Keeping our community clean, for example by refuse removal? Managing the use of land?* (% who said "fairly well" or "very well")

<sup>2</sup> Survey questions (and response options) for these variables were:

*How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say: Local government councillors?* ("Never," "only sometimes," "often," "always," "don't know")

*During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A local government councillor?* ("Never", "only once," "a few times," "often," "don't know")

*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your local government council?* ("Not at all," "just a little," "somewhat," "a lot," "don't know")

*How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Local government councillors?* ("None of them," "some of them," "most of them," "all of them," "don't know")

*Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, local government councillors do their job?* ("President/executive," "Parliament/local council," "their political party," "voters," "no one," "don't know")

*Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your elected local government councillor?* ("Strongly disapprove," "disapprove," "approve," "strongly approve," "don't know")

*How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor to government officials in order to obtain water or sanitation services?* ("No experience with this in past year," "never," "once or twice," "a few times," "often," "don't know")

*Please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a demonstration or protest march?* ("Yes, often," "yes, several times," "yes, once or twice," "no, but would if had the chance," "no, would never do this," "don't know")

In testing this model, we use age, gender, education level, employment status, lived poverty, urban or rural location, and race as controls. These controls are assumed to be relevant factors due to the country's apartheid history and citizens' instrumental view of democracy, as well as differences highlighted above in Figure 3. In addition, previous analysis by Lekalake (2016) has shown large racial-group differences in economic status that may be reflected in service-delivery levels.

## Results

A multiple linear regression model testing associations between perceptions of service delivery (the dependent variable) and the independent variables is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level, meaning that it effectively explains or predicts citizen assessments of local government service delivery.

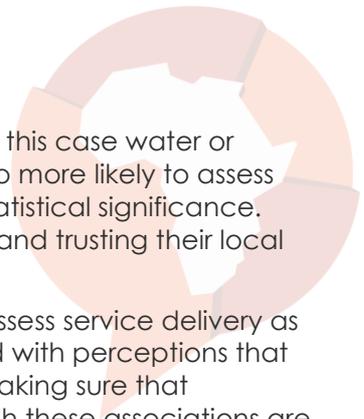
As shown in Table 1, assessments of local government service delivery are positively or negatively related to several political attitudes and behaviours. Citizens who think their councillors are doing a "fairly" or "very" good job and who think councillors "often" or "always" listen to their constituents are more likely to see local government as handling service delivery well.

In addition, urban residents, wealthier respondents, and (to a lesser extent) citizens with full-time jobs are more likely to appraise service delivery positively.

**Table 1: Correlations between citizen attitudes/actions and assessments of local government service delivery** | multivariate regression | South Africa | 2011

	Standardized beta coefficient	Standard error	p
Constant	2.749	.117	.000**
Political behaviours and attitudes			
Contacted local government councillor	.037	.019	.057
Trust elected local government council	.010	.014	.456
Attended a demonstration or protest	-.030	.014	.032*
Paid bribe for water or sanitation services	.004	.006	.543
Local government councillors listen	.070	.013	.000**
Corruption among local councillors	-.017	.012	.159
Performance of local councillor	.083	.010	.000**
Voters responsible that local councillors do their job	-.005	.012	.673
Demographic controls			
Rural location	-.438	.042	.000**
Age	-.069	.030	.022*
Education	.004	.005	.366
Race	-.007	.009	.469
Gender	-.006	.038	.753
Lived poverty	-.165	.025	.000**
Employment status	.040	.017	.022*

\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



Remarkably, citizens who report paying bribes to receive services (in this case water or sanitation services, which are supplied by local government) are also more likely to assess service delivery as good, although this association falls far short of statistical significance. Similarly, having contacted their councillor during the previous year and trusting their local councils are not significant predictors of service-delivery assessment.

Unsurprisingly, citizens who participated in protests are less likely to assess service delivery as good. Assessments of service delivery are also negatively associated with perceptions that councillors are corrupt, the attitude that voters are responsible for making sure that councillors do their job, and respondents' race and gender, although these associations are not statistically significant.

When the regression test is applied to individual services (tables 2-6), rural location generally maintains its position as the strongest factor in explaining negative assessments of service delivery, followed by lived poverty. Respondents' race, which was not a significant explanatory factor in the overall service-delivery index, shows a statistically significant, though relatively weak, correlation with assessments of local government performance in maintaining roads and managing land use.

**Table 2: Correlations between citizen attitudes/behaviours and assessments of individual services: Roads** | multivariate regression | South Africa | 2011

	Standardized beta coefficient	Standard error	p
Constant	2.593	.120	.000
Political behaviours and attitudes			
Contacted local government councillor	-.340	.020	.878
Trust elected local government council	.051	.014	.000**
Attended a demonstration or protest	-.001	.014	.966
Paid bribe for water or sanitation services	.003	.006	.693
Local government councillors listen	.073	.013	.000**
Corruption among local councillors	-.055	.012	.000**
Performance of local councillor	.078	.010	.000**
Voters responsible that local councillors do their job	-.057	.012	.000**
Demographic controls			
Rural location	-.340	.043	.000**
Age	-.047	.031	.124
Education	.005	.005	.267
Race	.023	.009	.017*
Gender	-.002	.040	.955
Lived poverty	-.117	.026	.000**
Employment status	.044	.018	.015*

\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Again, among citizens' attitudes and behaviours, assessments of local councillors' performance and willingness to listen show the strongest positive correlations with evaluations of service delivery. The consistent strong association and statistical significance of councillors' perceived willingness to listen offers support for Bratton and Sibanyoni's (2006) emphasis on responsiveness as a critical factor in popular assessments of local government performance.

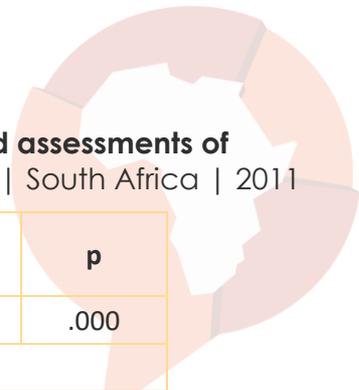
Interestingly, perceived corruption among local councillors and the belief that voters are responsible for holding local councillors accountable for doing their job are significant predictors of popular assessments of service delivery in the roads model (Table 2), though not in the general model (Table 1). This may reflect the high visibility of roads, in news media reports as well as citizens' day-to-day experience of potholes and decaying bridges, as emblematic of corruption and inefficiency in local government performance.

Councillors' performance and accountability to voters appear to matter more when it comes to management of land use (Table 6) than for other services. While the data do not speak directly to this difference, it may reflect, in part, the difficulties of negotiating the procedural complexities involved in obtaining land for homes, agriculture, or business. It might also reflect perceptions that some cities are dealing with inner-city gentrification by moving residents to new settlements on the outskirts that recall apartheid-era practices and exacerbate racial and class divisions (see, for example, Hogg, 2016).

**Table 3: Correlations between citizen attitudes/behaviours and assessments of individual services: Markets** | multivariate regression | South Africa | 2011

	Standardized beta coefficient	Standard error	p
Constant	3.758	.259	.000
Political behaviours and attitudes			
Contacted local government councillor	.121	.043	.004*
Trust elected local government council	-.035	.030	.248
Attended a demonstration or protest	-.045	.031	.149
Paid bribe for water or sanitation services	-.030	.014	.034*
Local government councillors listen	.054	.029	.061
Corruption among local councillors	-.038	.027	.156
Performance of local councillor	.114	.022	.413
Voters responsible that local councillors do their job	.022	.026	.413
Demographic controls			
Rural location	-.776	.092	.000**
Age	-.062	.067	.353
Education	-.009	.010	.378
Race	-.008	.020	.704
Gender	-.015	.087	.862
Lived poverty	-.094	.056	.093
Employment status	.088	.039	.022*

\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



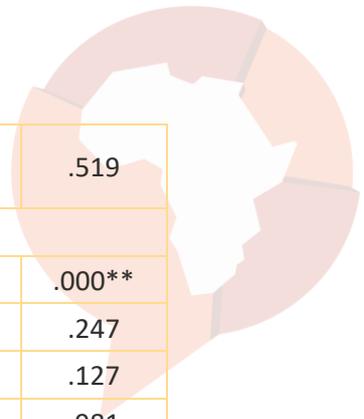
**Table 4: Correlations between citizen attitudes/behaviours and assessments of individual services: Health standards** | multivariate regression | South Africa | 2011

	Standardized beta coefficient	Standard error	p
Constant	3.804	.270	.000
Political behaviours and attitudes			
Contacted local government councillor	.110	.044	.014**
Trust elected local government council	-.068	.031	.030*
Attended a demonstration or protest	-.010	.032	.766
Paid bribe for water or sanitation services	.003	.015	.818
Local government councillors listen	.125	.030	.000**
Corruption among local councillors	.027	.028	.336
Performance of local councillor	.095	.023	.807
Voters responsible that local councillors do their job	-.007	.027	.807
Demographic controls			
Rural location	-.659	.096	.000**
Age	-.134	.070	.055
Education	-.019	.011	.080
Race	-.012	.021	.590
Gender	.015	.090	.867
Lived poverty	-.141	.058	.015*
Employment status	.054	.040	.182

\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table 5: Correlations between citizen attitudes/behaviours and assessments of individual services: Cleaning** | multivariate regression | South Africa | 2011

	Standardized beta coefficient	Standard error	p
Constant	2.590	.164	.000
Political behaviours and attitudes			
Contacted local government councillor	.056	.027	.040*
Trust elected local government council	.002	.019	.917
Attended a demonstration or protest	-.009	.020	.648
Paid bribe for water or sanitation services	.019	.009	.032*
Local government councillors listen	.094	.018	.000**
Corruption among local councillors	.006	.017	.735
Performance of local councillor	.090	.014	.519



Voters responsible that local councillors do their job	.011	.017	.519
<b>Demographic controls</b>			
Rural location	-.235	.058	.000**
Age	-.049	.042	.247
Education	.010	.007	.127
Race	.000	.013	.981
Gender	.031	.055	.570
Lived poverty	-.251	.035	.000**
Employment status	.032	.024	.186

\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table 6: Correlations between citizen attitudes/behaviours and assessments of individual services: Land use** | multivariate regression | South Africa | 2011

	<b>Standardized beta coefficient</b>	<b>Standard error</b>	<b>p</b>
Constant	2.654	.252	.000
<i>Political behaviours and attitudes</i>			
Contacted local government councillor	.024	.042	.566
Trust elected local government council	.006	.029	.832
Attended a demonstration or protest	-.055	.030	.065
Paid bribe for water or sanitation services	.026	.014	.058
Local government councillors listen	.089	.028	.001**
Corruption among local councillors	-.043	.026	.102
Performance of local councillor	.148	.021	.000**
Voters responsible that local councillors do their job	.090	.026	.000**
<i>Demographic controls</i>			
Rural location	-.311	.090	.001**
Age	-.128	.065	.050*
Education	-.007	.010	.514
Race	-.042	.020	.037*
Gender	.243	.084	.004**
Lived poverty	-.305	.054	.000**
Employment status	.043	.038	.247

\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); \*\* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



## What do citizens do when they have problems with service delivery?

If local councillors' job performance and willingness to listen help explain South Africans' assessments of local service delivery, what do citizenry do when they have problems with the way local government runs?

When asked whether they had seen problems, during the previous year, with the way local government was run, about half (47%) of respondents said they had (Figure 4). Those who saw problems or said they "don't know" were asked how often, if at all, they took certain actions to address such problems (Table 7).

About three-fourths (76%) of those who had a problem with the way local government was run said they discussed the problem with other people in their community at least once, including 43% who said they did so "several" or "many" times.

More than six in 10 (63%) said that on at least one occasion, they joined with others in the community to address a problem, including 36% who said they did so several/many times.

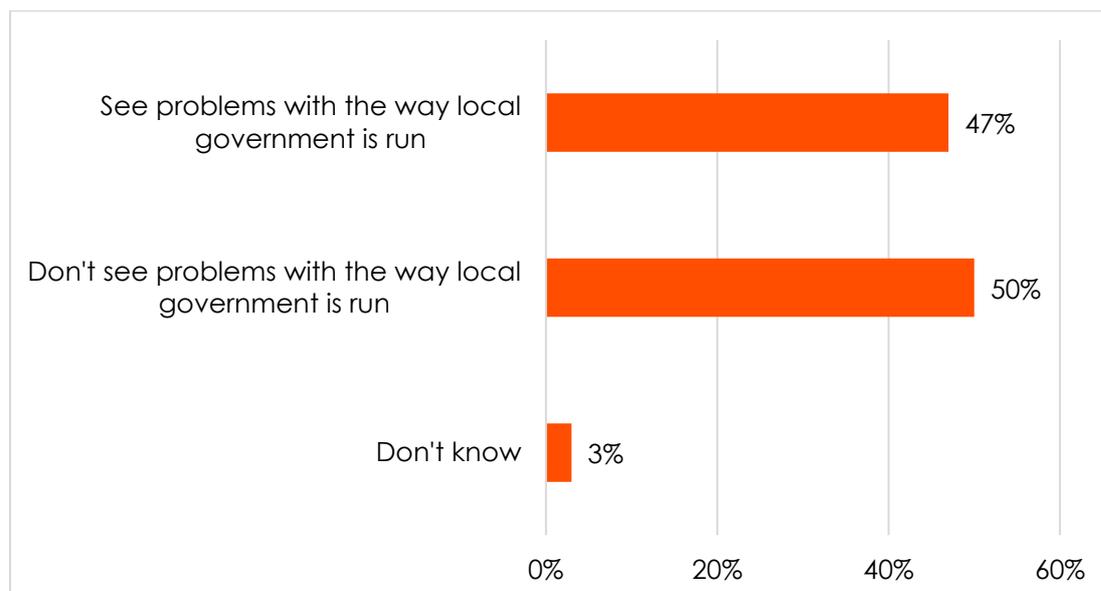
As for discussing the problems with community, religious, or traditional leaders, a majority (58%) said they "never" took this step; four in 10 (41%) said they did so at least once.

Exposing the problem in public forums such as writing to newspapers or calling radio shows was even less common: 84% said they "never" did so, while only 14% said they did so at least once.

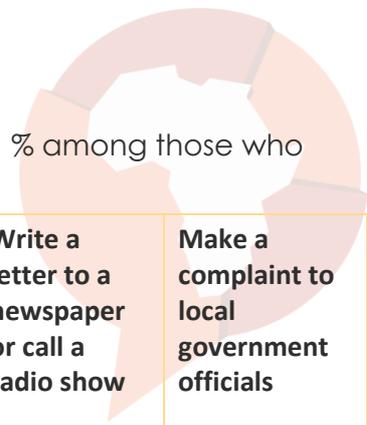
Finally, about one in four (24%) said they took their complaint to local government officials, for example by going in person or by writing a letter, at least once, including 12% who said they had done so several or many times.

For a relatively small proportion of the overall population, dissatisfaction with government performance calls for a more forceful response. About one in nine respondents (11%) said they had participated in at least one demonstration or protest march during the preceding year, including 5% who said they had done so often or several times. Black South Africans were far more likely to join protests than other racial groups (Table 8), which may reflect continuing deficits in high-quality services in predominantly black areas of the country. Three-fourths of white (76%) and Indian (74%) South Africans said they "would never" participate in a protest, compared to 54% of black and 65% of Coloured citizens.

**Figure 4: Problems with the way local government is run** | South Africa | 2011



**Respondents were asked:** *In the past year, have you yourself seen any problems with the way local government is run?*



**Table 7: Actions to remedy problems with local government** | % among those who perceived problems | South Africa | 2011

	Discuss problem with other people in your community	Join with others in community to address problem	Discuss problem with community, religious, or traditional leaders	Write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show	Make a complaint to local government officials
Never	24%	37%	58%	84%	75%
Once or twice	33%	26%	18%	6%	12%
Several/many times	43%	36%	23%	8%	12%

**Respondents who said they saw a problem with the way local government was run were asked:** How often, if at all, did you do any of the following: Discuss the problem with other people in your community? Join with others in your community to address the problem? Discuss the problem with other community, religious, or traditional leaders? Write a letter to a newspaper or call a radio show? Make a complaint to local government officials, for example, by going in person or by writing a letter? (Note: Respondents who said they saw no problem with the way local government was run are excluded.)

**Table 8: Citizen action through protest** | by race | South Africa | 2011

	Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Average
Would never join protest	54%	76%	65%	74%	58%
Would if had the chance	31%	23%	24%	24%	29%
Joined protest once or twice	7%	0%	4%	0%	6%
Joined protest several times/often	5%	1%	3%	2%	5%

**Respondents were asked:** Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a demonstration or protest march? If not, would you do this if you had the chance?

## Conclusion and policy implications

This analysis confirms Bratton and Sibanyoni's (2006) finding that councillors are important actors in service delivery, highlighting their job performance and their willingness to listen to constituents as important factors in how satisfied people are with the government services they receive. Councillors' receptiveness to constituents' views may be seen as complementary to good job performance, creating space for finding solutions to problems within a community. Mere interaction (contact) with councillors, however, does not appear to guarantee that they will work for good service delivery, and may in fact reflect citizen dissatisfaction as a factor motivating the contact.

Where people live – in the city or a rural area – is also a strong predictor of whether they will enjoy satisfactory public services: Rural residents continue to be at a significant disadvantage, though this is probably tied more closely to government and infrastructure capacity than to councillor performance. Respondents' employment status is a weaker predictor of their assessments of service delivery, likely linked to their socioeconomic status and the relative wealth of the community where they live.

The finding that race is not a significant explanatory factor for assessments of service delivery is surprising, and runs counter to the higher rate of participation in protest actions by black



South Africans as well as the predominance, in media reports, of poor black neighborhoods as sites where demonstrations occur.

While the association of perceived levels of official corruption with assessments of service delivery missed our cut-off for statistical significance, it seems plausible that citizens who think their councillors are corrupt might be less likely to trust them and more likely to perceive service delivery to be suffering. Both of these could contribute to protests of the type seen in South Africa, with crowds destroying infrastructure and chasing away councillors deemed not to be doing their jobs. As Bratton (2012) found, civic activism may be a corrective, but South Africans have yet to make use of their tax power to hold councillors accountable by withdrawing from paying rates and taking over the services at the community level.

These findings have a number of implications for addressing service-delivery issues in South Africa:

- ✓ Drivers of service-delivery problems have both broad national and specific local components, and responses should take both levels into account. Urban-rural differences, for example, reflect longstanding national policies as well as local decisions. Even issues such as councillor performance and corruption are affected by national or cultural norms as well as individual behaviours.
- ✓ Both activists and government can benefit from a reminder that the Constitution charges local government with being accountable, ensuring the provision of services in a sustainable manner, promoting social and economic development, promoting a safe and healthy environment, and encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations.
- ✓ Cities and towns should consider how decisions affecting their spatial designs may perpetuate – or potentially eliminate – vestiges of apartheid-era inequalities, including barriers to good service delivery.
- ✓ Citizens and local councillors should seek space to build strong and fruitful relationships and solve local problems.
- ✓ Citizens should accept their responsibility for holding their elected councillors accountable by attending meetings, following up on issues, and using the power of the vote.

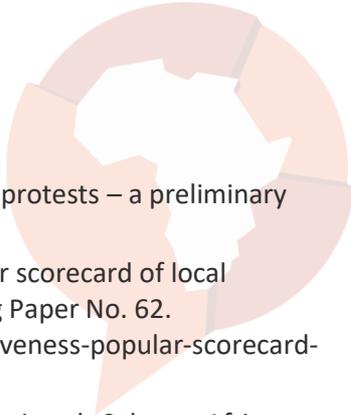
South Africa's municipalities are charged with making sure that taps have running water, streets are clean, and sewage and garbage are removed, and when these things don't happen, citizens know where to lay the blame – even if many of them are not (yet) willing to take corrective action.

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# AFRO BAROMETER

LET THE PEOPLE HAVE A SAY



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