

Pretoria, South Africa  
14 June 2023

## News release

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### **ANC clings to lead in a hypothetical election, but South Africans' faith in democracy is weak**

A majority of South Africans are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country, an Afrobarometer survey indicates.

Few citizens see South Africa as a well-functioning democracy, and a growing majority would be willing to forgo elections in favour of an unelected but efficient government that delivers security, jobs, and housing.

South Africans rank unemployment as the most important problem facing the country, followed by crime/security, electricity, water supply, and corruption.

Only a minority say they feel close to any political party. If elections were held tomorrow, the ruling African National Congress would hold the lead, with about one-third of respondents, but a larger share decline to state a voting intention.

#### **Key findings**

- Fully seven in 10 South Africans (70%) are dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country, while only one-quarter (25%) express satisfaction (Figure 1).
- Only one-third of citizens (33%) consider South Africa “a full democracy” (11%) or “a democracy with minor problems” (22%) (Figure 2).
  - Nearly two-thirds (63%) say the country is “a democracy with major problems” (49%) or is “not a democracy” (14%).
- A growing majority (72%) of South Africans would be willing to forgo elections if a non-elected government could provide security, jobs, and housing (Figure 3).
  - This has been the majority view in all survey rounds since 2006 but reached a new high in 2022 amid the health and economic crises presented by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war.
- South Africans rank unemployment as the country's most important problem that the government urgently needs to address, cited by 52% of respondents as one of their three priorities (Figure 4).
  - Unemployment is followed by crime/security (38%), electricity (32%), water supply (21%), and corruption (19%).
- A majority (63%) of citizens say they do not feel close to any particular political party, while 37% say they do (Figure 5).
  - Among respondents who identify with a political party, slightly more than half (52%) say they feel close to the African National Congress (ANC), 17% say the Democratic Alliance (DA), 12% the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and 7% the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

- Asked which party they would vote for in a hypothetical election, 32% indicate they would vote for the ANC, 12% for the DA, and 11% for the EFF. But almost four in 10 say they would not vote (14%), say they don't know how they would vote (9%), or refuse to say how they would vote (15%) (Figure 6).

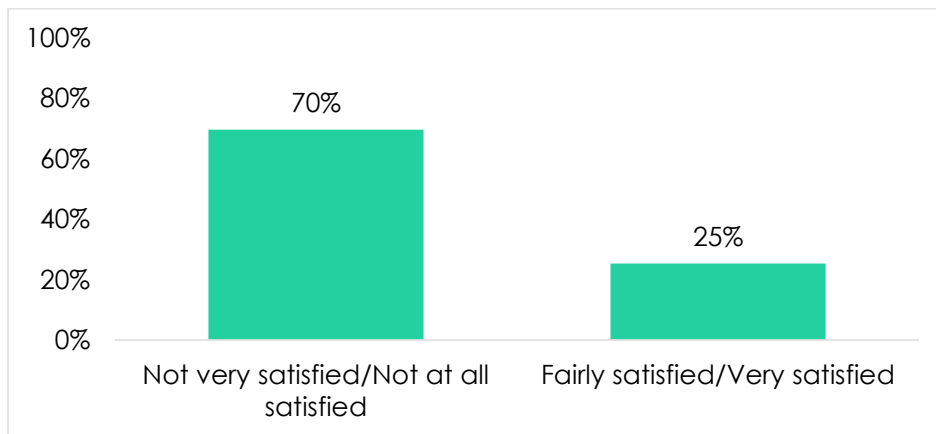
### Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys are being completed in 2023. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,582 adult South Africans in November-December 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

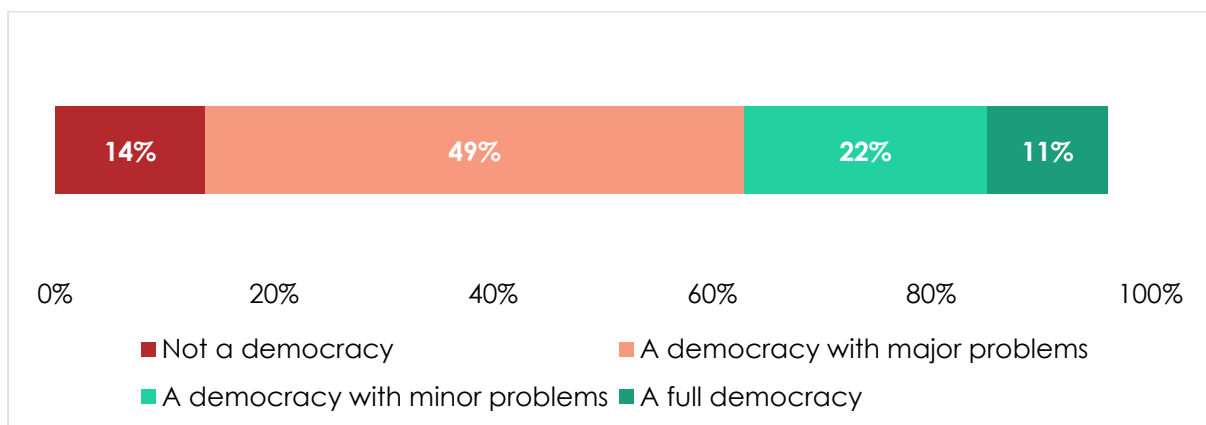
### Charts

**Figure 1: Satisfaction with democracy | South Africa | 2022**



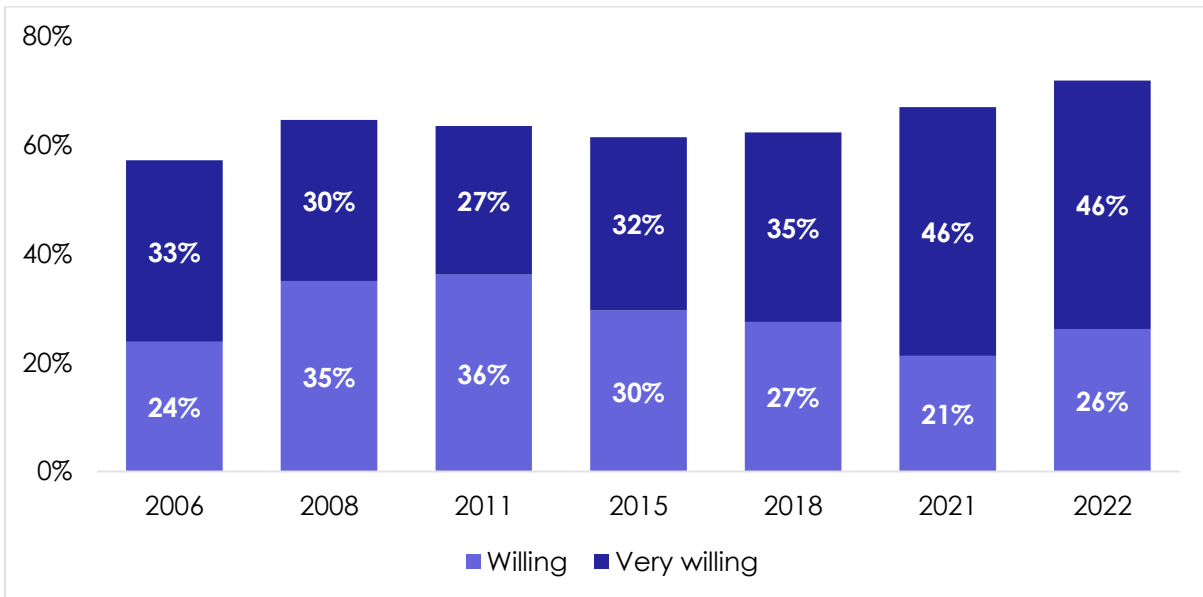
**Respondents were asked:** Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in South Africa?

**Figure 2: Extent of democracy | South Africa | 2022**



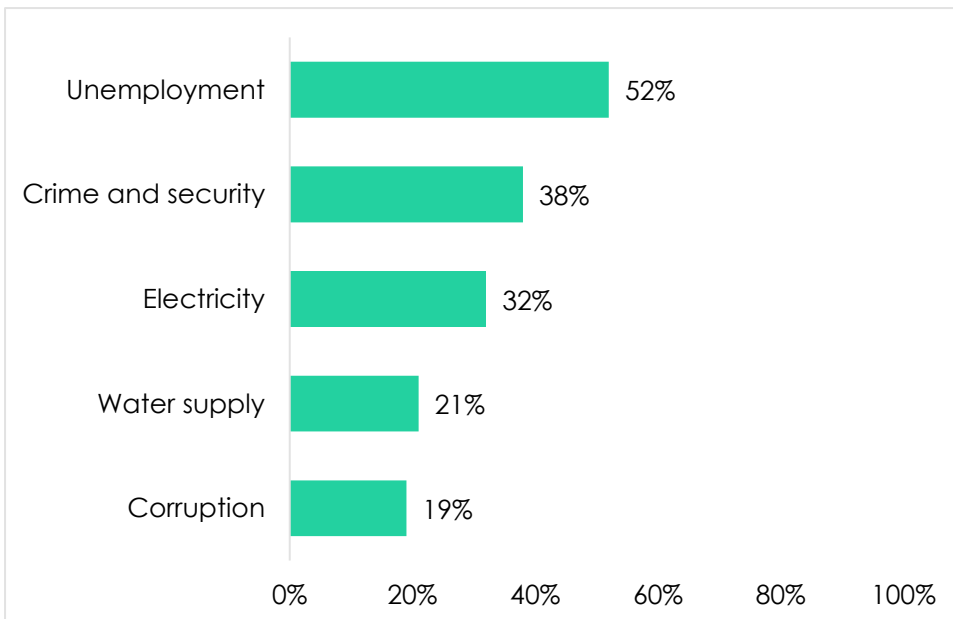
**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how much of a democracy is South Africa today?

**Figure 3: Willing to forgo elections** | South Africa | 2006-2022



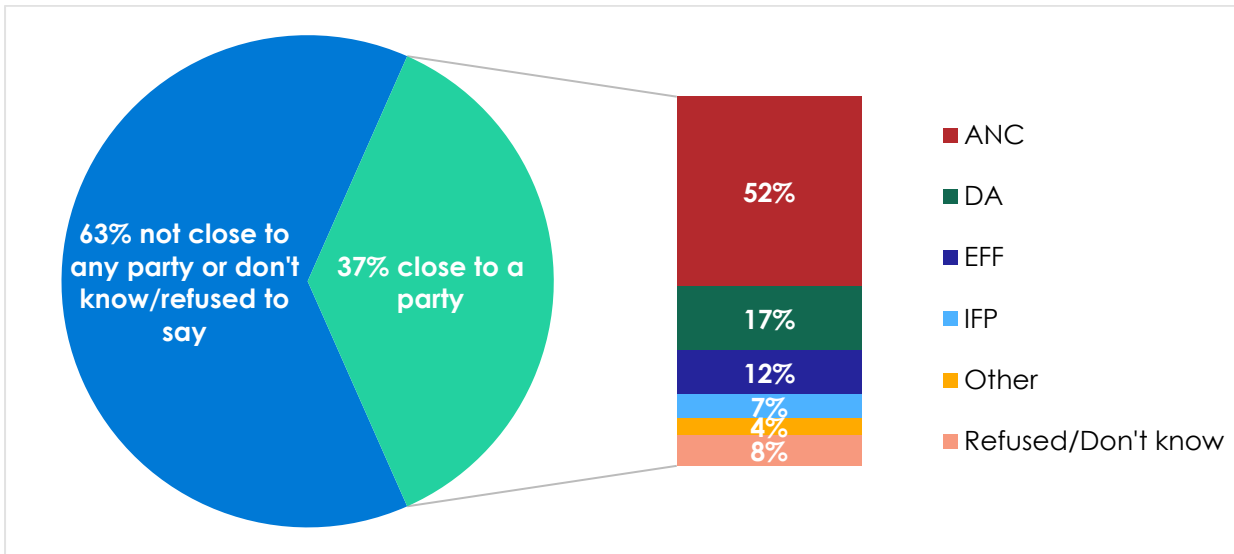
**Respondents were asked:** *If a non-elected government or leader could impose law and order, and deliver houses and jobs, how willing or unwilling would you be to give up regular elections and live under such a government?*

**Figure 4: Most important problems** | South Africa | 2022



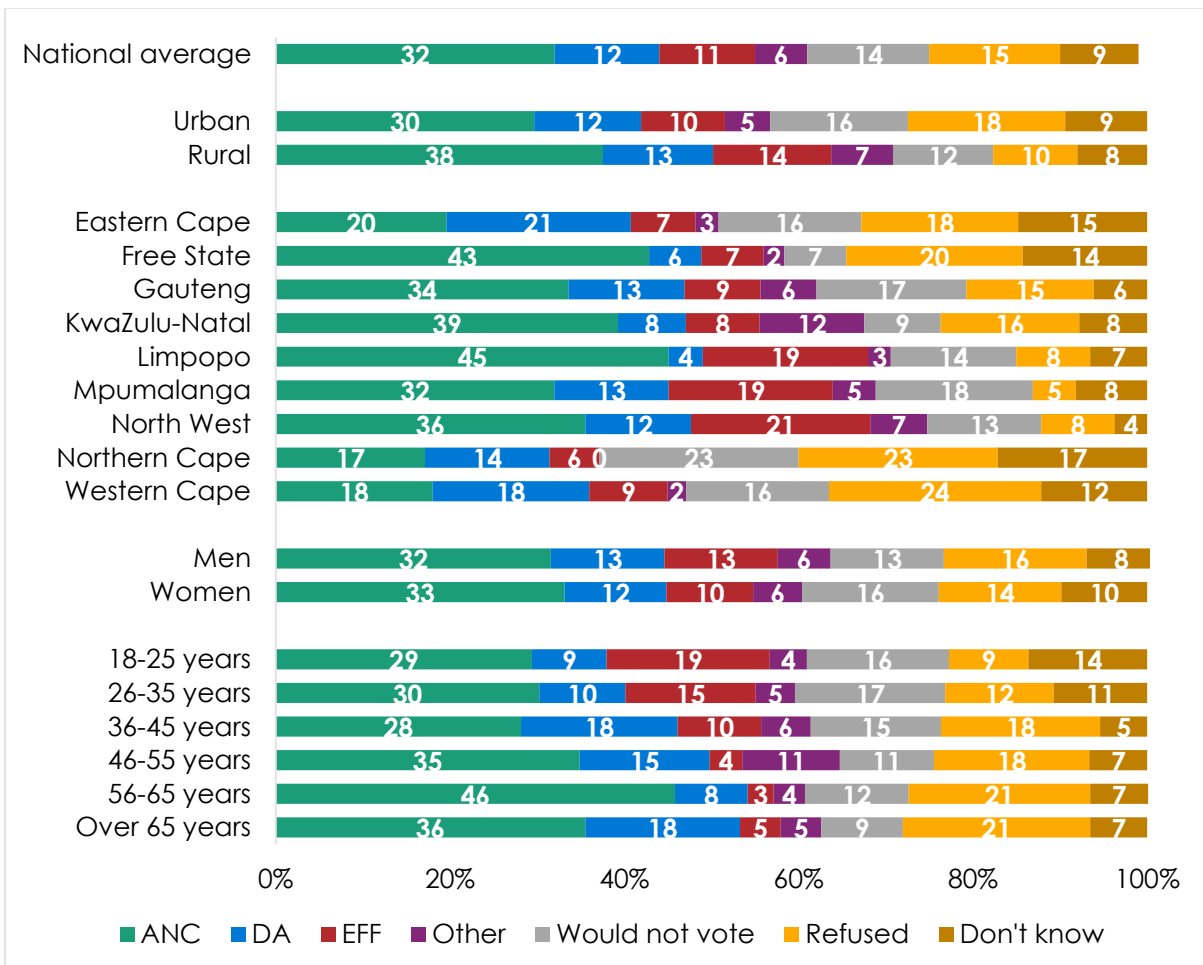
**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person. Figure shows percentage of respondents who cite each problem as one of up to three priorities.)*

**Figure 5: Do citizens feel close to a political party? | South Africa | 2022**



**Respondents were asked:** Do you feel close to any particular political party? [If yes:] Which party is that?

**Figure 6: Voting intentions (%) | South Africa | 2022**



**Respondents were asked:** If national elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

**For more information, please contact:**

Asafika Mpako  
Communications coordinator for Southern Africa  
Telephone: 0839798299  
Email: [ampako@afrobarometer.org](mailto:ampako@afrobarometer.org)

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