

# Findings from the Afrobarometer South Africa pre-election telephone survey

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22 May 2024

Online results launch

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# At a glance

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Satisfaction with democracy remains low but has improved somewhat compared to 2022.

Fewer than half of South Africans feel close to a political party.

Close to one-third of South Africans who are registered and intending to vote are still uncertain about the party that they will vote for on 29 May



# What is Afrobarometer

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A pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999.

Round 10 surveys are currently underway.

**Goal:** To give African publics a voice in policy and decision making.

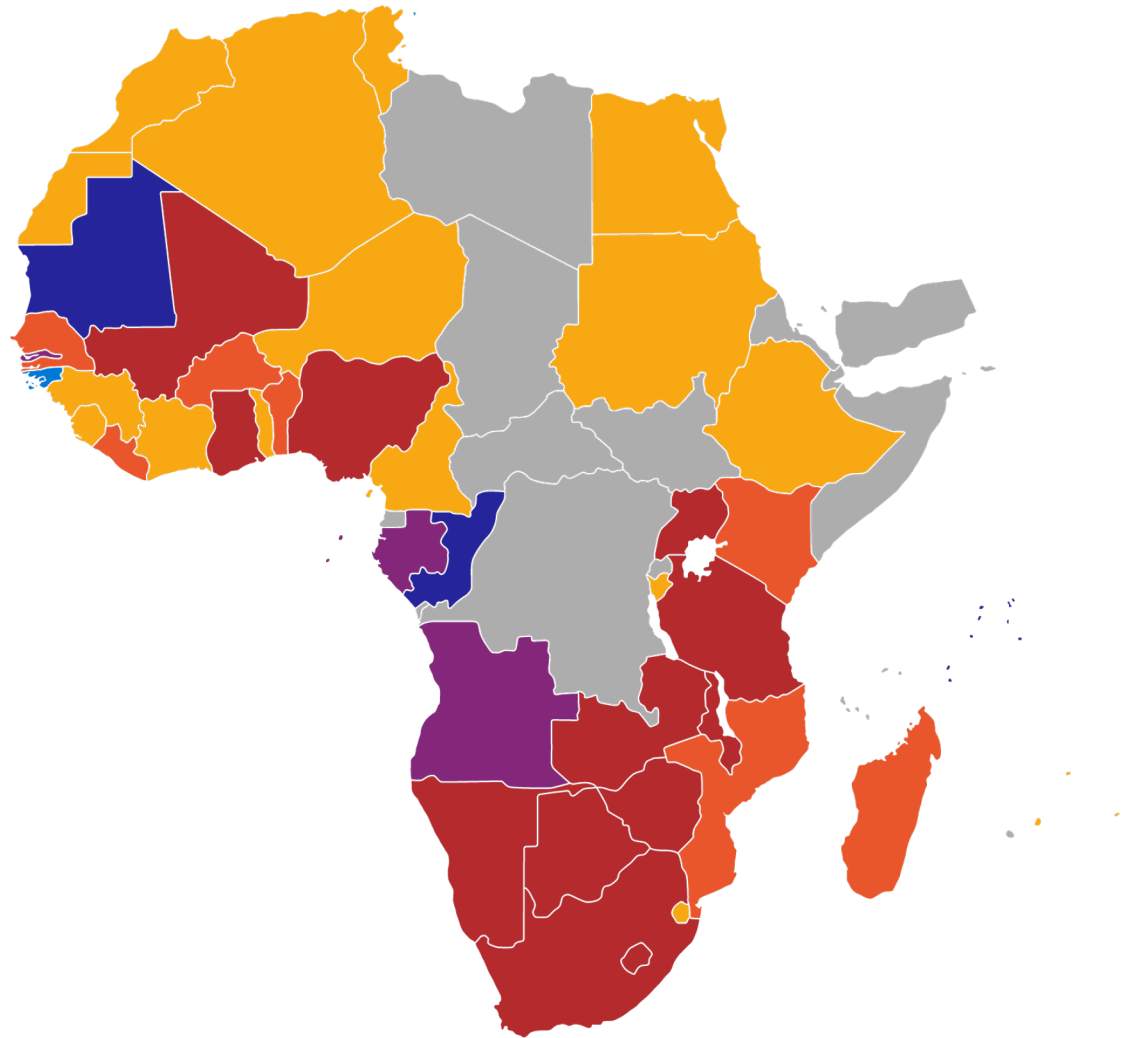


# Where Afrobarometer works



## First surveyed in

- 1999 - 2001
- 2002 - 2008
- 2012 - 2013
- 2015 - 2019
- 2022 - 2023
- To be surveyed in R10
- Never surveyed



# About the Afrobarometer telephone survey in South Africa

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This is the first publicly-released Afrobarometer telephone survey.

Interviewers contacted adult South Africans in all parts of the country between 23 April and 11 May, in the final weeks before the election.

Respondents were randomly selected from a database of more than 14 million cell phone numbers.

This survey will form part of a broader panel study, with a second study to be completed after the 2024 general election.



# Methodology

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Sample size of 1,800 adult South Africans, ages 18 and above.

Representative sample, with respondents selected according to age, race, gender, province, and urban/rural location.

The margin of sampling error is +/-2.3 percentage points.



# Survey demographics

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Gender	Weighted %
Men	48
Women	52
Residence	
Urban	63
Rural	37
Race	
Black	80
White	9
Coloured	8
Indian/Asian	3
Education	
Informal/No formal school	3
Some/Complete primary school	6
Some/Complete secondary school	54
Post-secondary	19
Some/Complete tertiary	16
Don't know	2

# Situation in South Africa today

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# Key insights: South Africa today

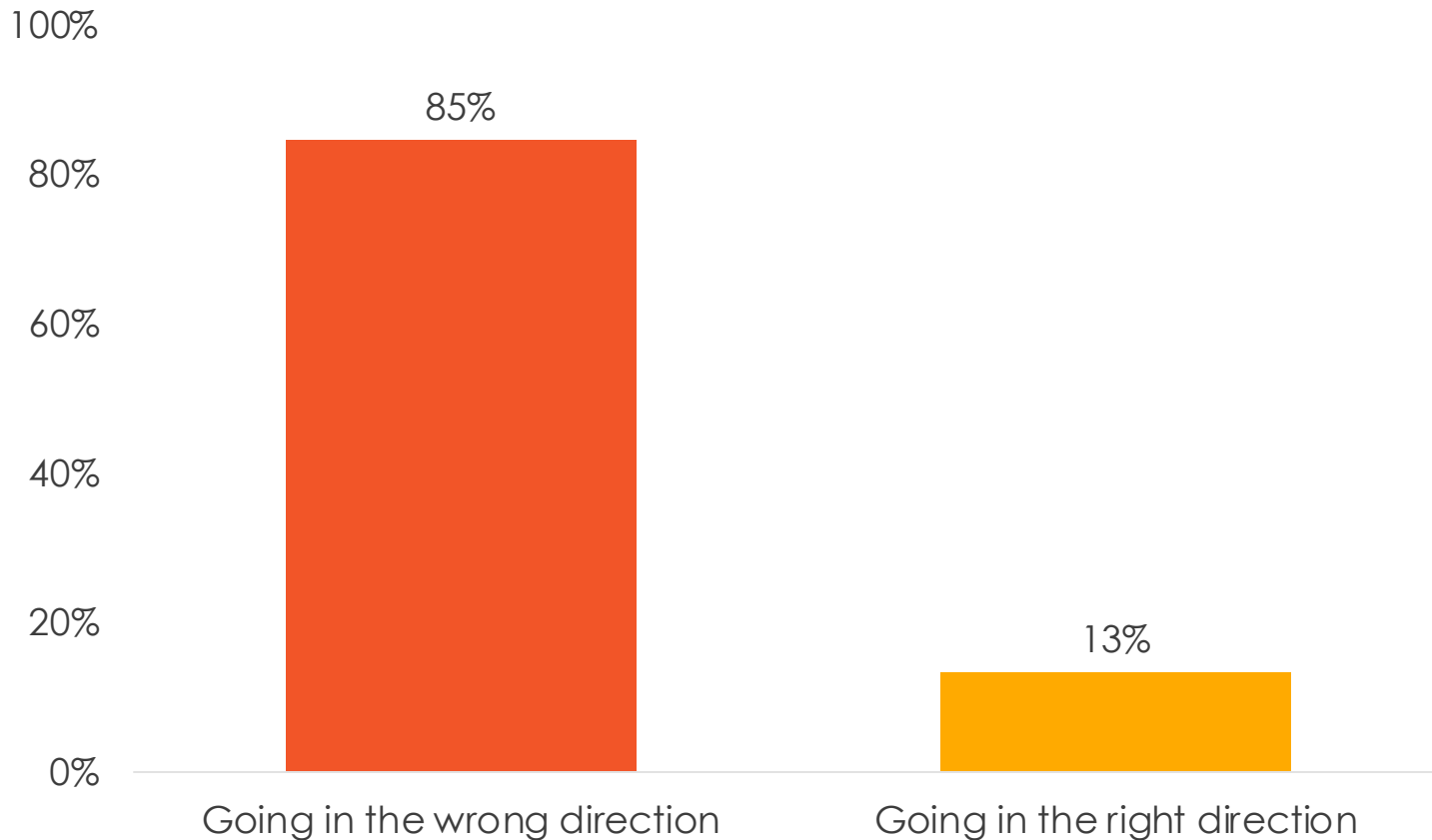
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Citizens indicate growing levels of dissatisfaction with the direction that the country is going.

Unemployment, electricity, and corruption continue to top the list as the most important problems that people want their government to address.

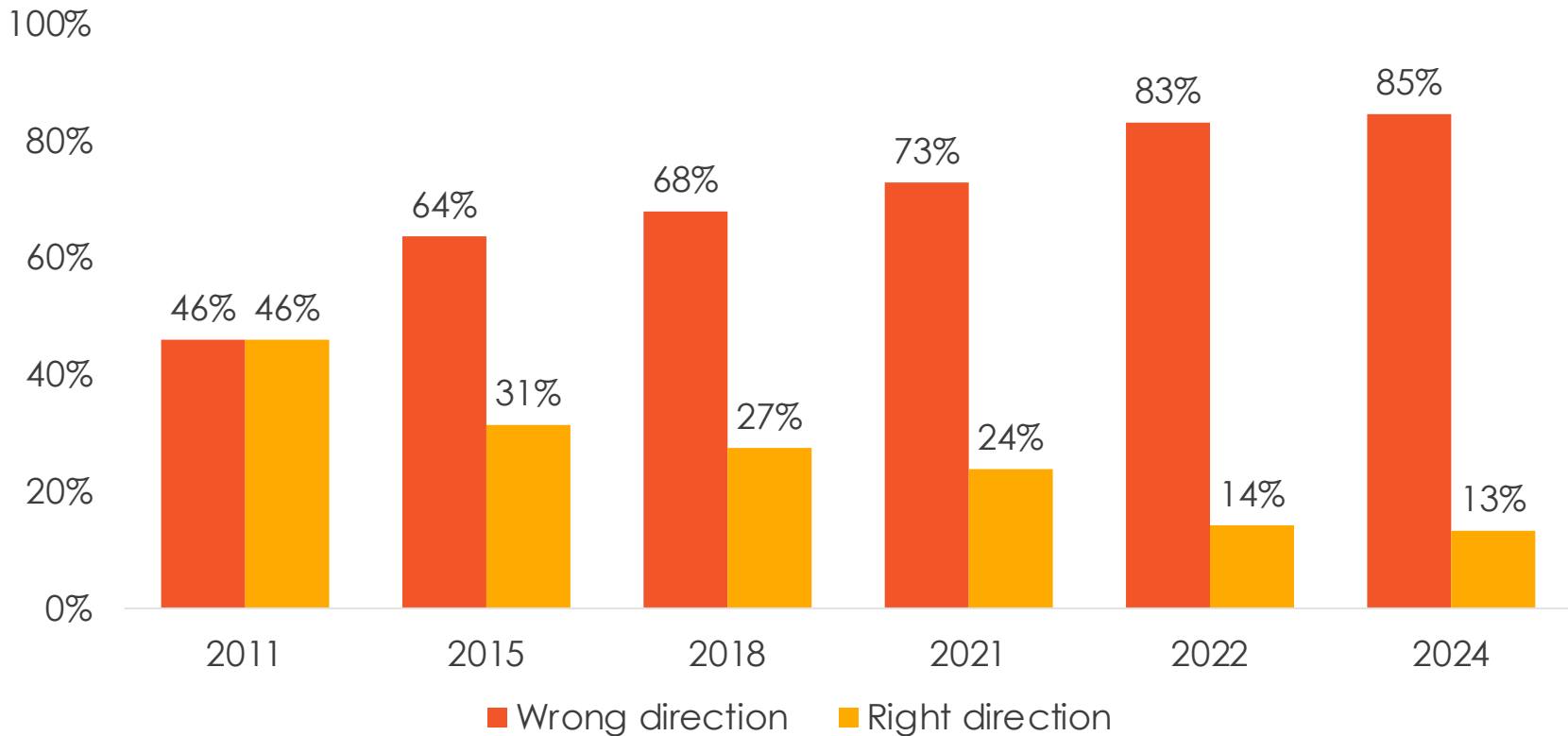


# Overall direction of the country | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?

# Overall direction of the country | South Africa | 2011-2024

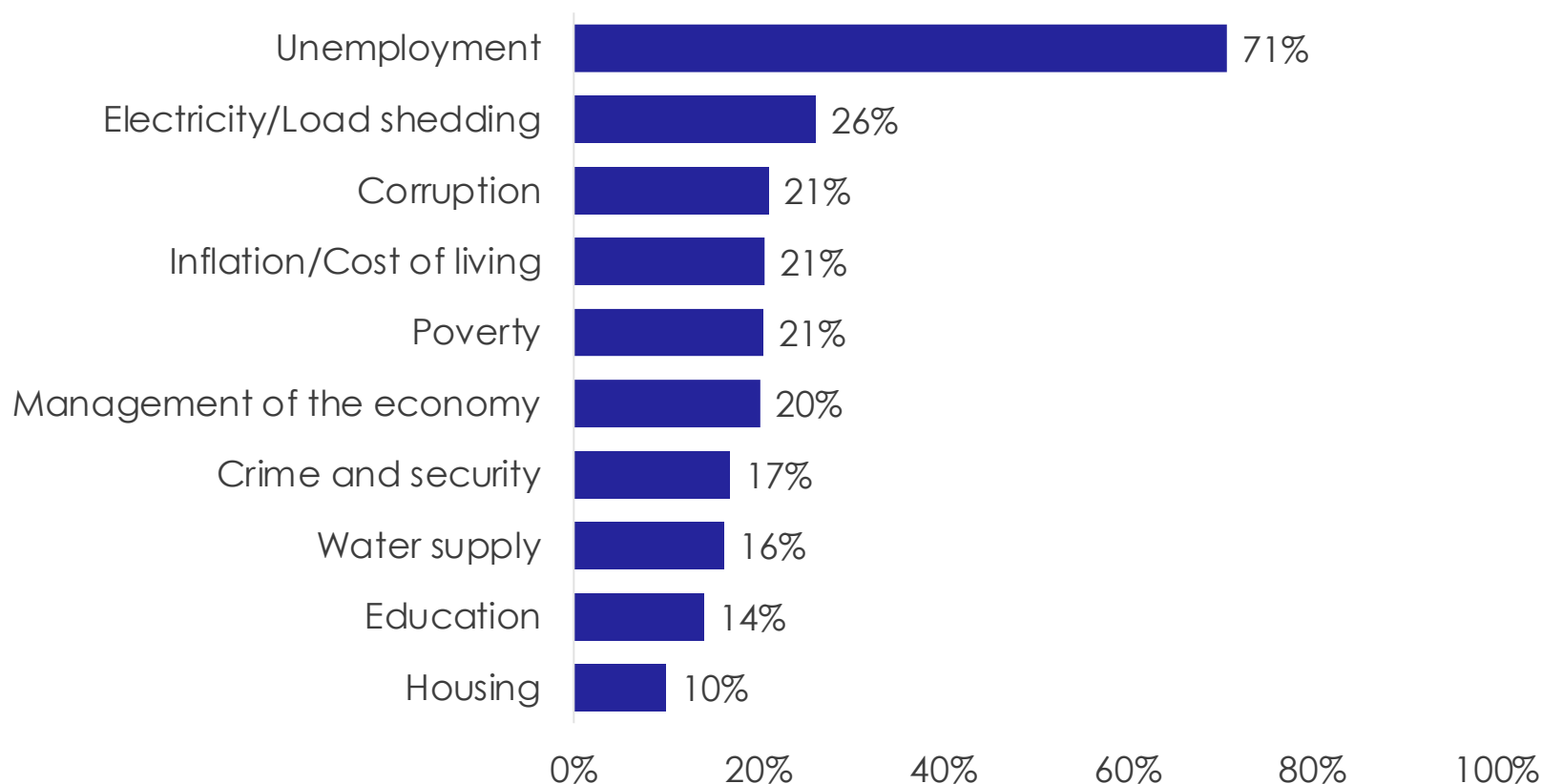


**Respondents were asked:** Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?

**Note:** Results from 2011-2022 are from standard face-to-face Afrobarometer surveys, whereas 2024 survey was conducted by phone.

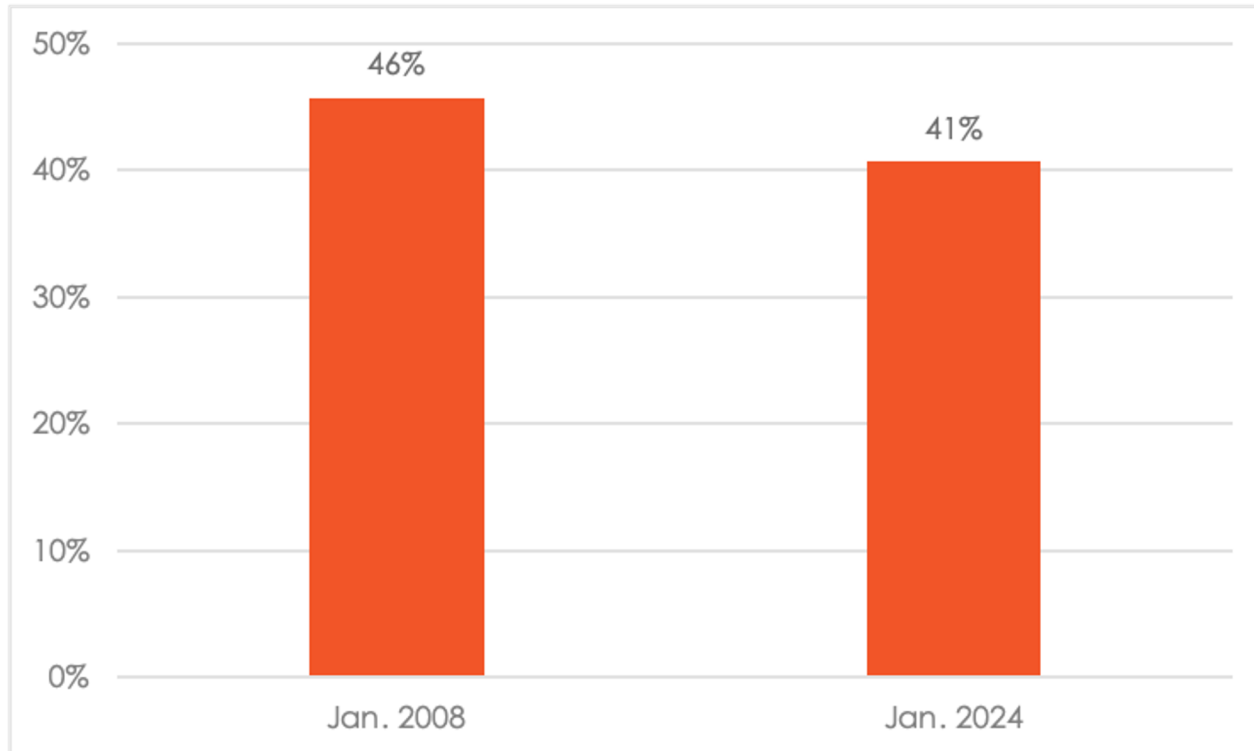


# Most important problems | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, what are the three most important problems facing this country that the government should address after the forthcoming elections?*  
(% of respondents who cite each problem as one of their up to three priorities).

# South Africa's employment rate | 2008 vs. 2024



**Unemployment:** Employed South Africans as a percentage of the total working age population in South Africa.

**Source:** Statistics South Africa, QLFS Q4, 2023

# Perceptions of democracy

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# Key insights: Perceptions of democracy

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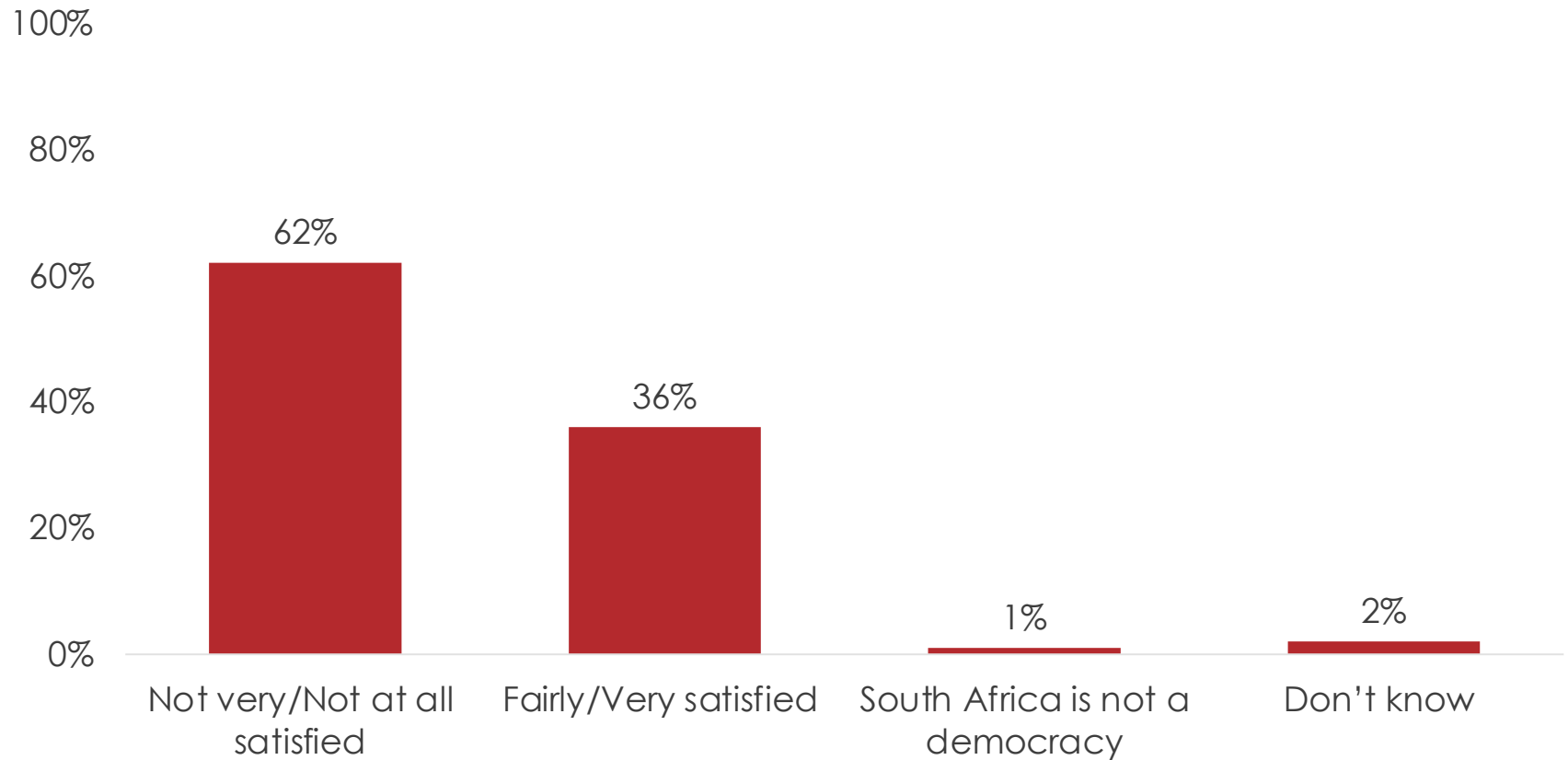
A majority of South Africans are unhappy with the way in which their democracy is functioning.

This sentiment is broadly shared across race, age, location, and education categories.

The vast majority of South Africans anticipate that the 2024 election will be largely free and fair (68%), while a minority (11%) believe it will not be free and fair.

Over time, confidence in the freeness and fairness of the electoral system has declined.

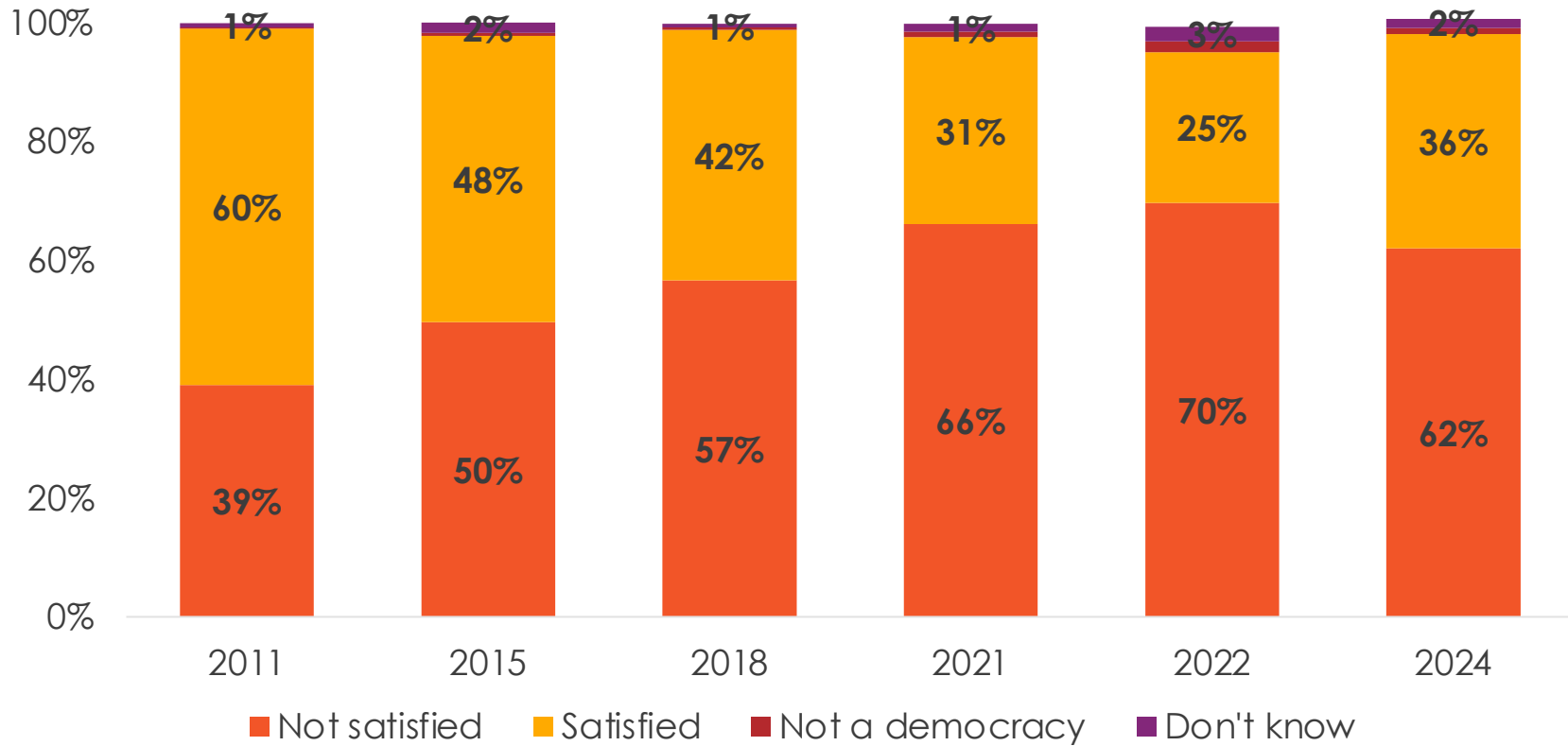
# Satisfaction with democracy | South Africa | 2024



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



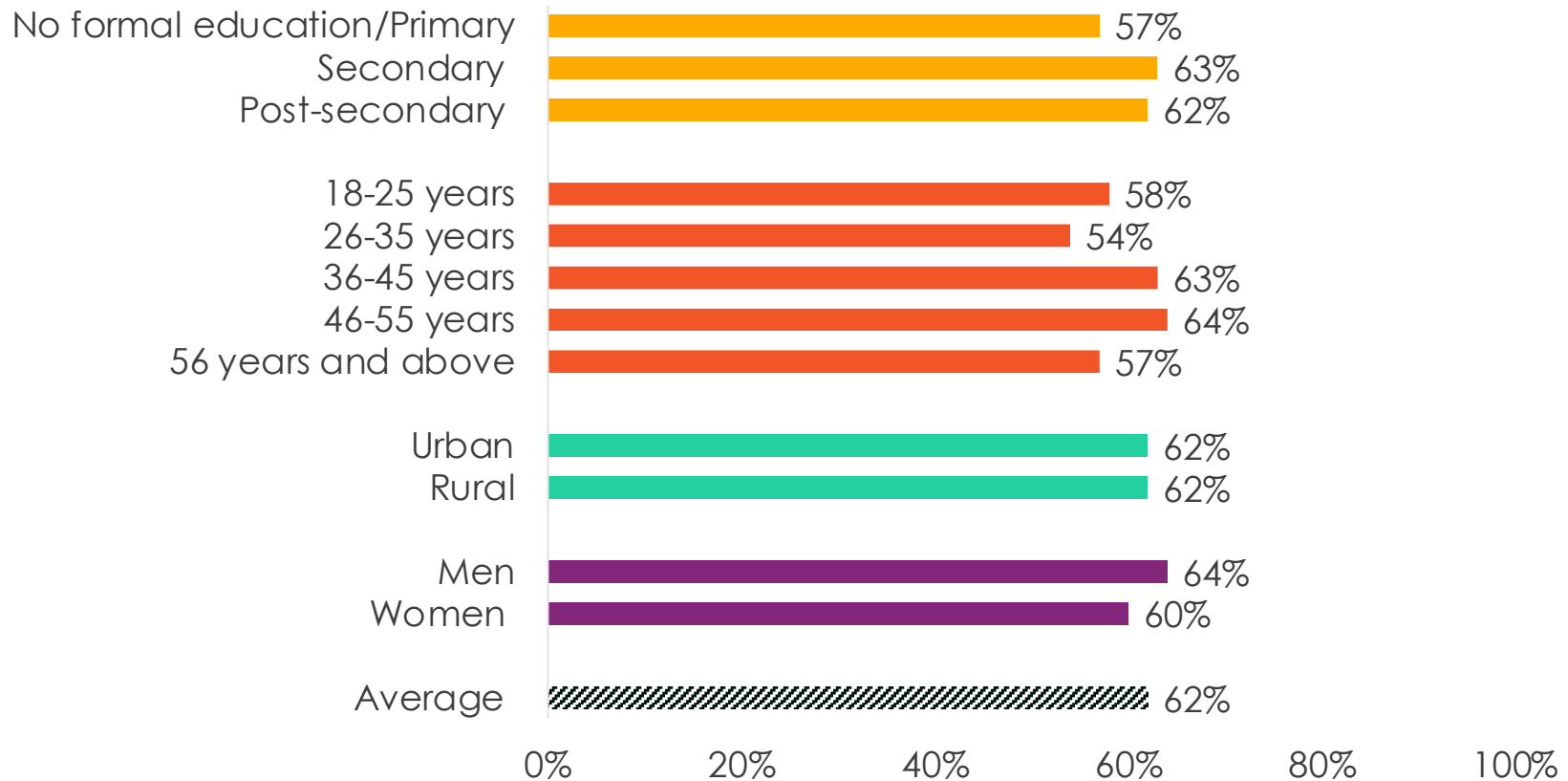
# Satisfaction with democracy | South Africa | 2011-2024



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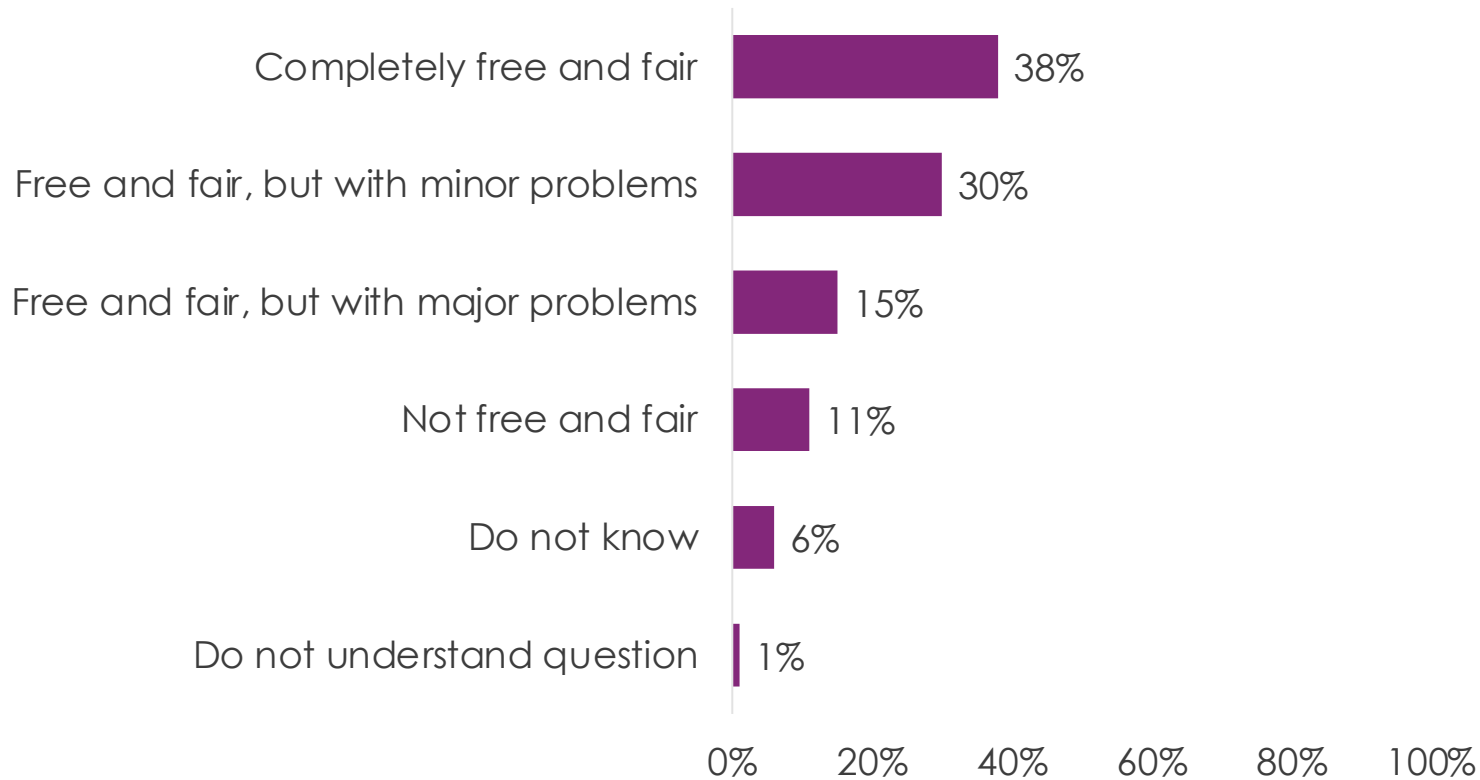
# Dissatisfaction with democracy | by demographic group | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in South Africa? (% who are "not very satisfied" or "not at all satisfied")

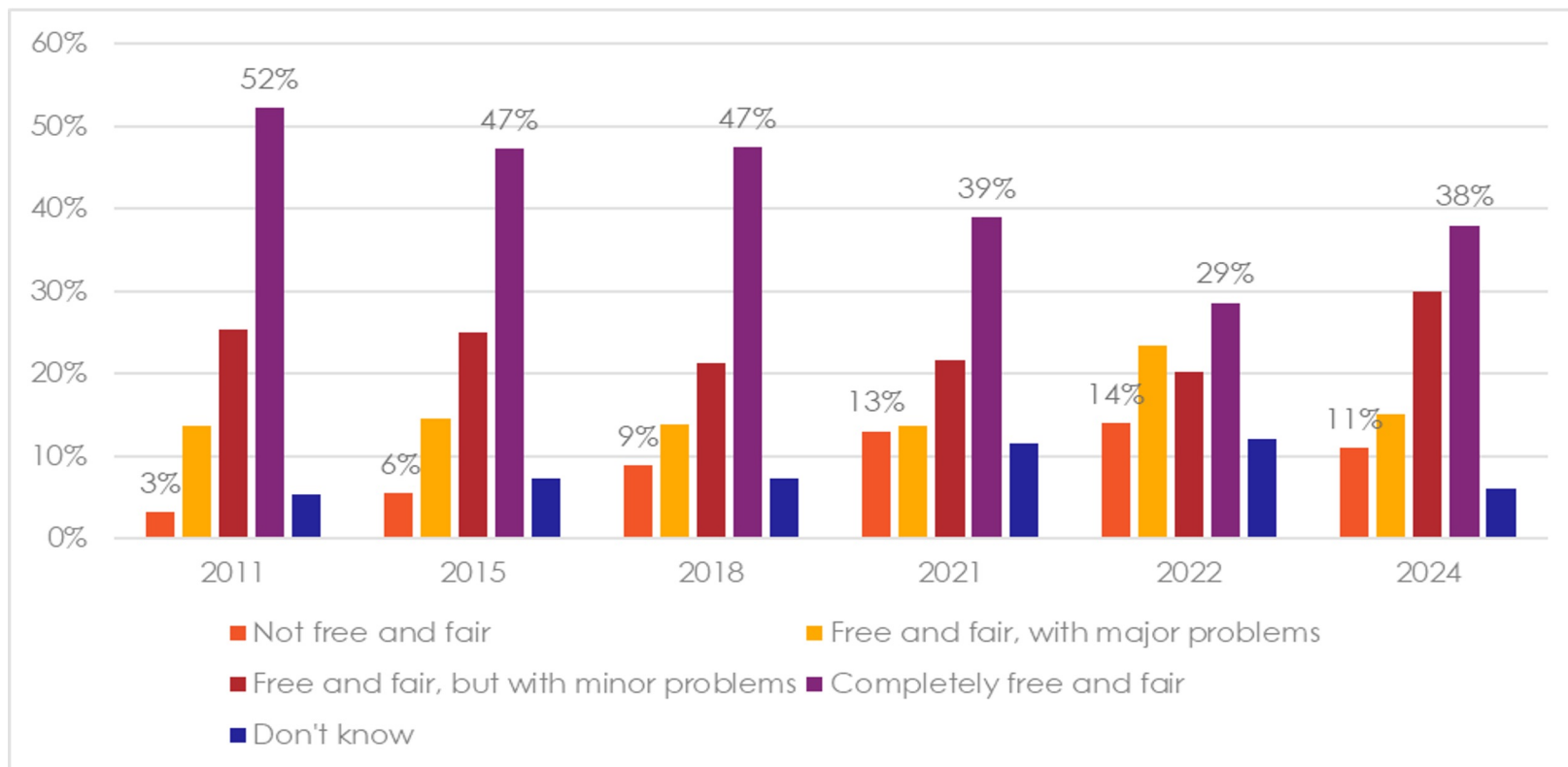
# Expectations of freeness and fairness of 2024 election

## | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** *On the whole, how free and fair do you expect the upcoming May 2024 elections to be?*

# Experience (2011-2022) and expectation (2024) of free and fair elections | South Africa | 2011-2024



## Respondents were asked:

For 2024: On the whole, how free and fair do you expect the upcoming May 2024 elections to be?

For 2011-2022: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [YEAR]?

**Note:** Results from 2011-2022 are from standard face-to-face Afrobarometer surveys, whereas 2024 survey was conducted by phone.

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# Electoral participation

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# Key insights: Electoral participation

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86% of respondents say they are registered to vote in the 2024 election.

Almost 90% of registered voters indicate that they are likely to cast their vote on 29 May.

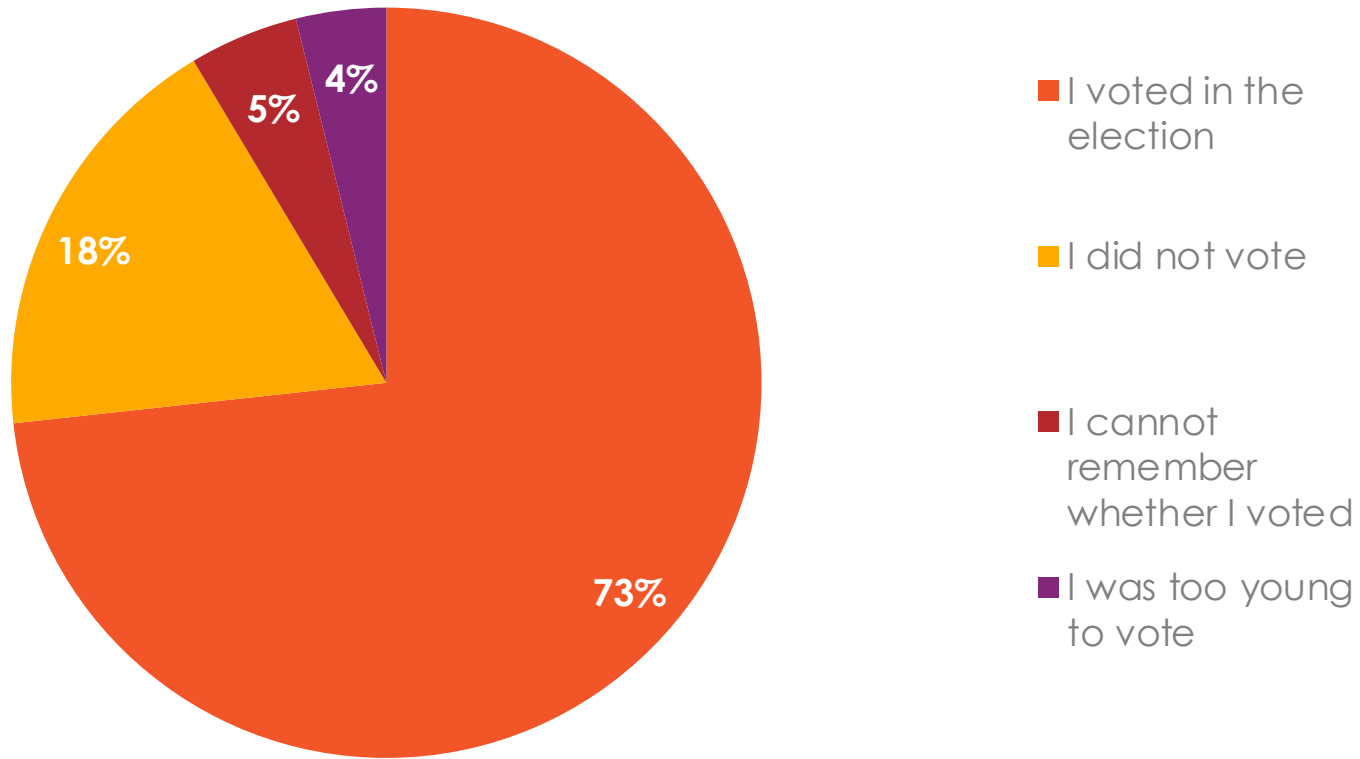
This means about 76% of all respondents say they are both registered and likely to vote.

Of those who say that they are both registered and likely to vote, 68% say that they already know who they are likely to vote for, while 25% are still undecided (6% refused to say).

Many voters can still be swayed in the last week prior to the election.

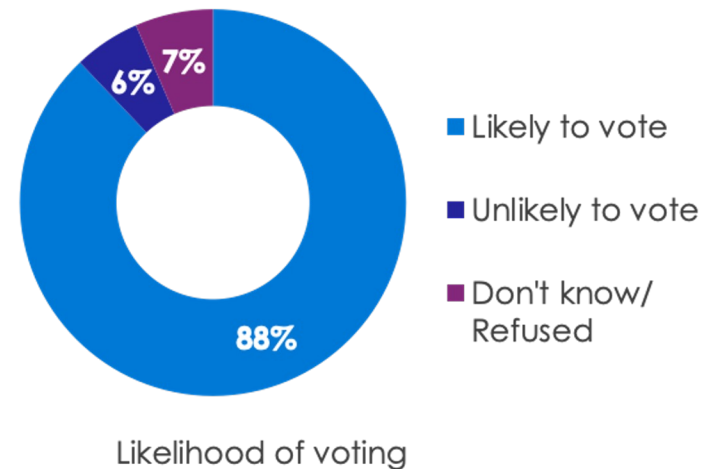
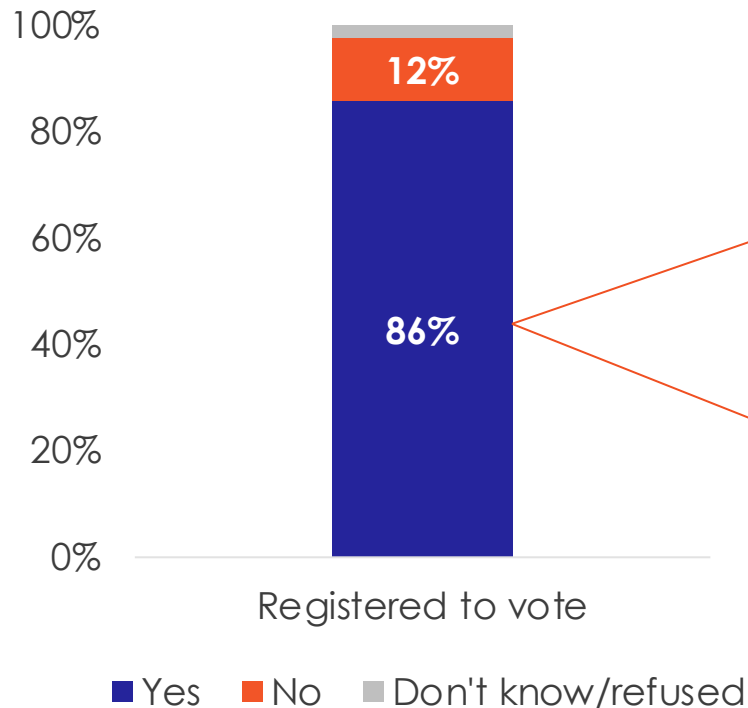
# Voted in 2019 election | South Africa | 2024

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**Respondents were asked:** In the last national election, held in 2019, did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted?

# Voting in 2024 election | South Africa | 2024



→ **76%** are *both* registered and likely to vote

## Respondents were asked:

Are you registered to vote in the upcoming 2024 election?

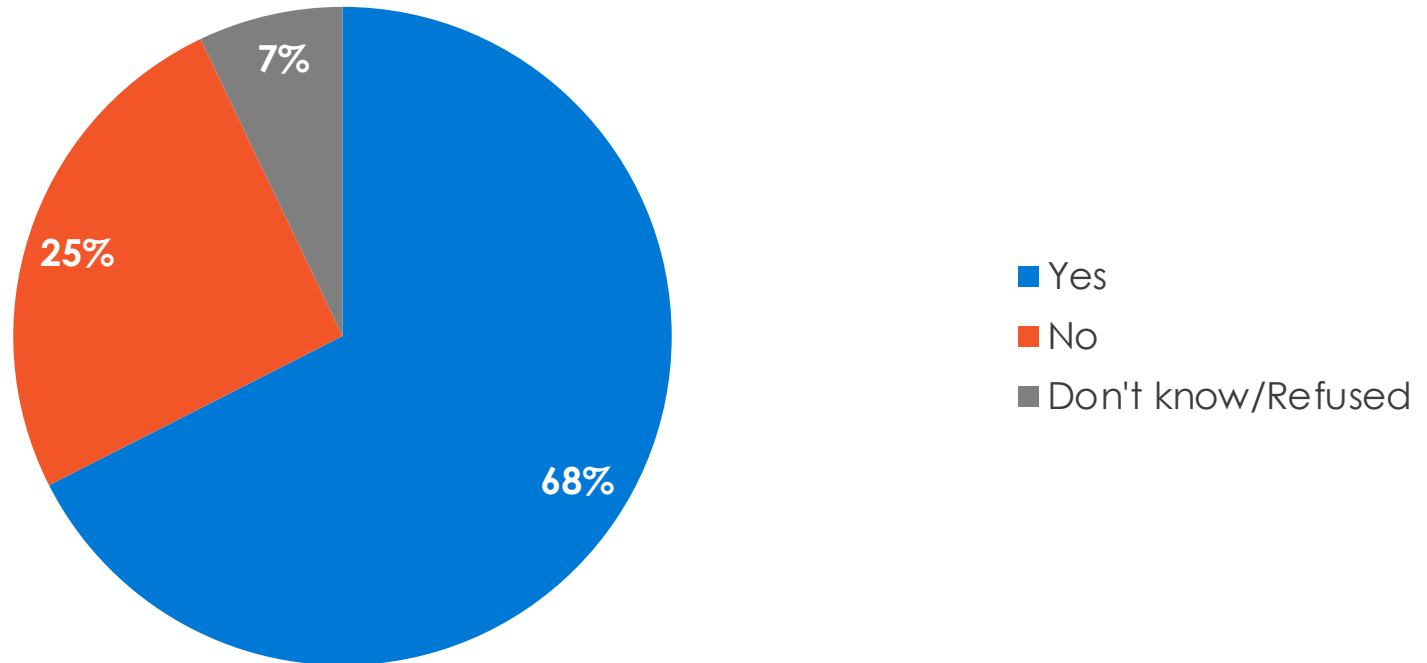
How likely are you to vote in the 2024 elections? (Registered voters' response)



# Have you decided which party you will vote for?

| among registered, likely voters | South Africa | 2024

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**Respondents were asked:** Have you already decided which party or parties you intend to vote for in the 2024 national and provincial elections (registered voters intending to vote)?

# Electoral system changes

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# Key insights: Changes in the electoral system

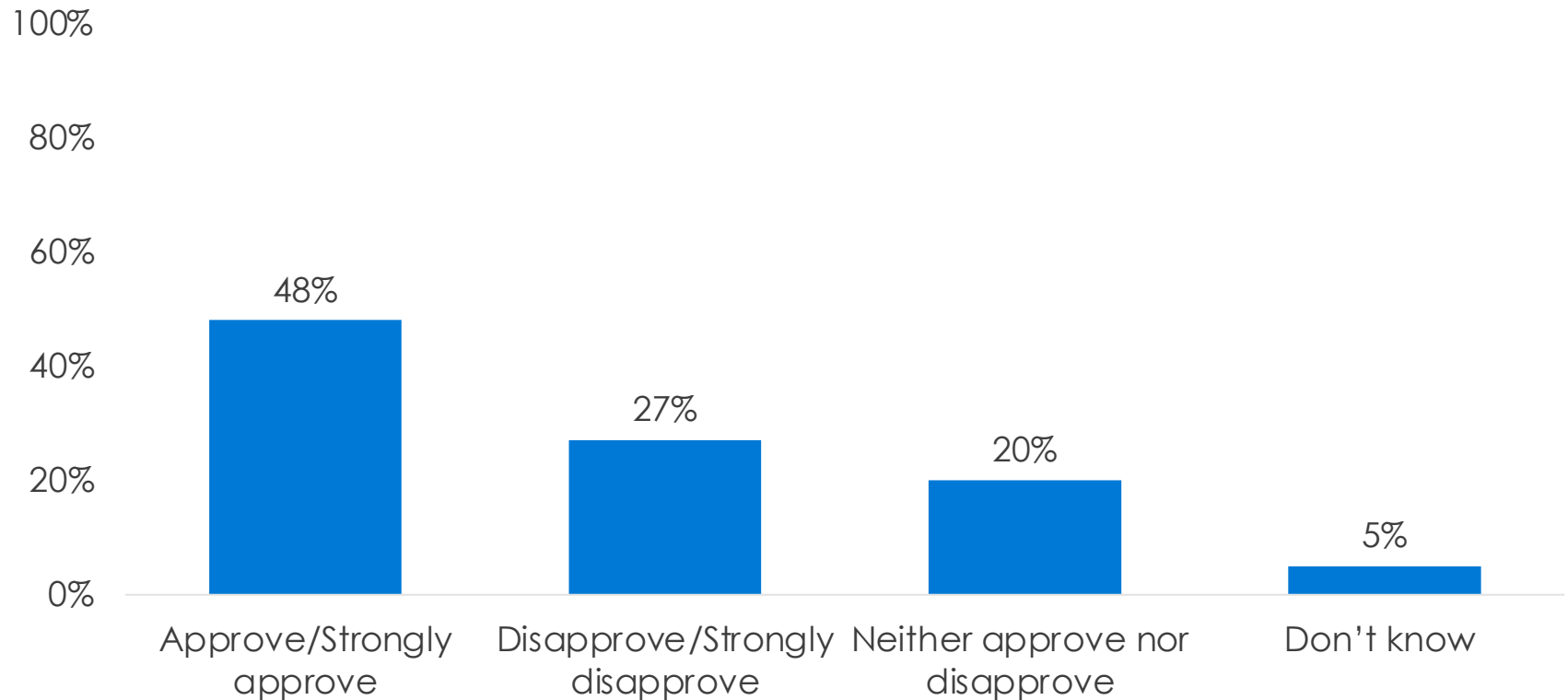
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Changes in the electoral law have allowed for independent candidates to be elected in 2024. Just under half of respondents approve of this reform, while just more than one-quarter disapprove. One in five South Africans do not yet have an opinion on this.

These findings cut across most of the demographic categories, although younger South Africans are likely to show more approval.

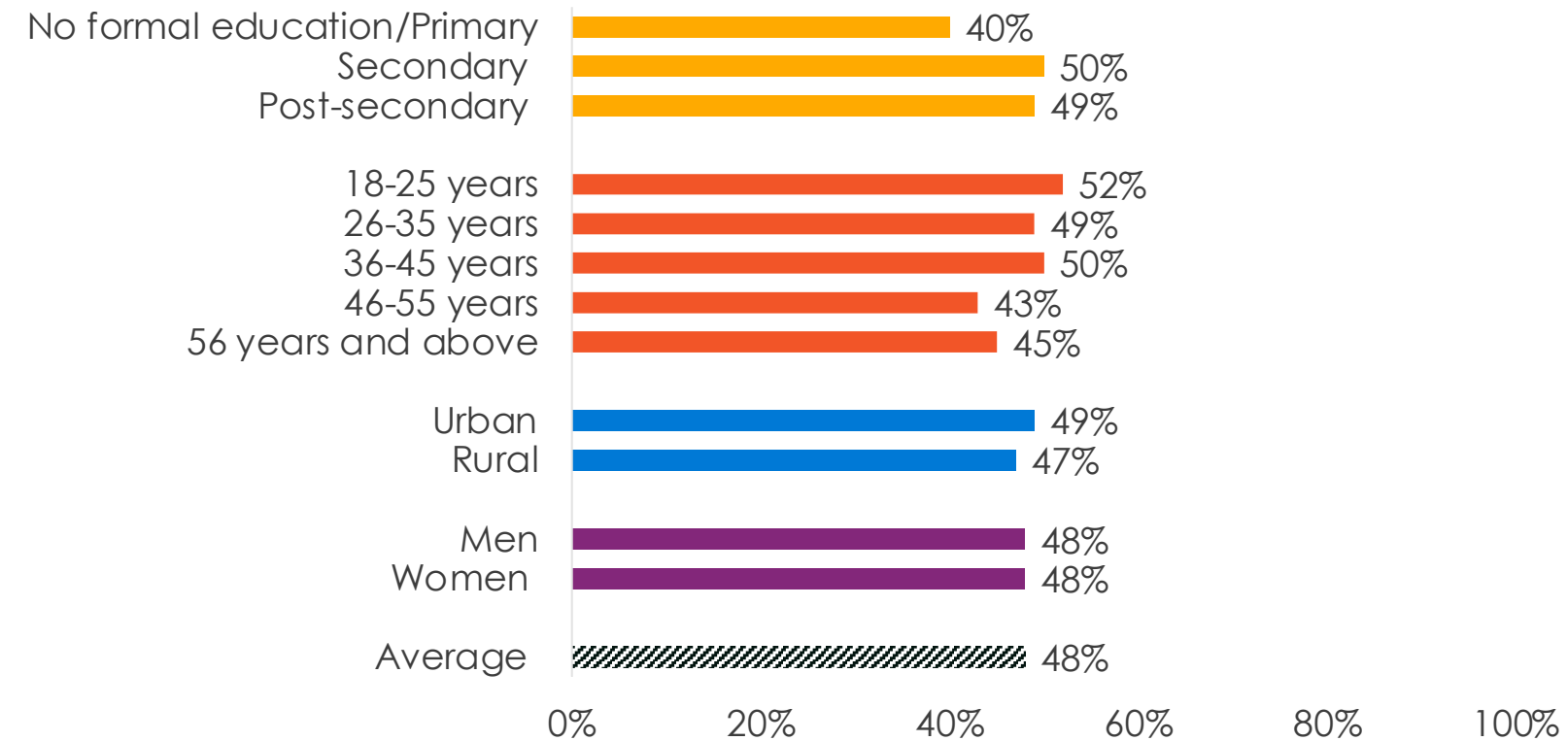
A plurality of South Africans (45%) approve of the potential forming of a governing coalition at the national level, although a substantial minority (28%) disapprove. Respondents with post-secondary education are the most likely to approve of a government consisting of multiple political parties.

# Approval of independent candidates | South Africa | 2024



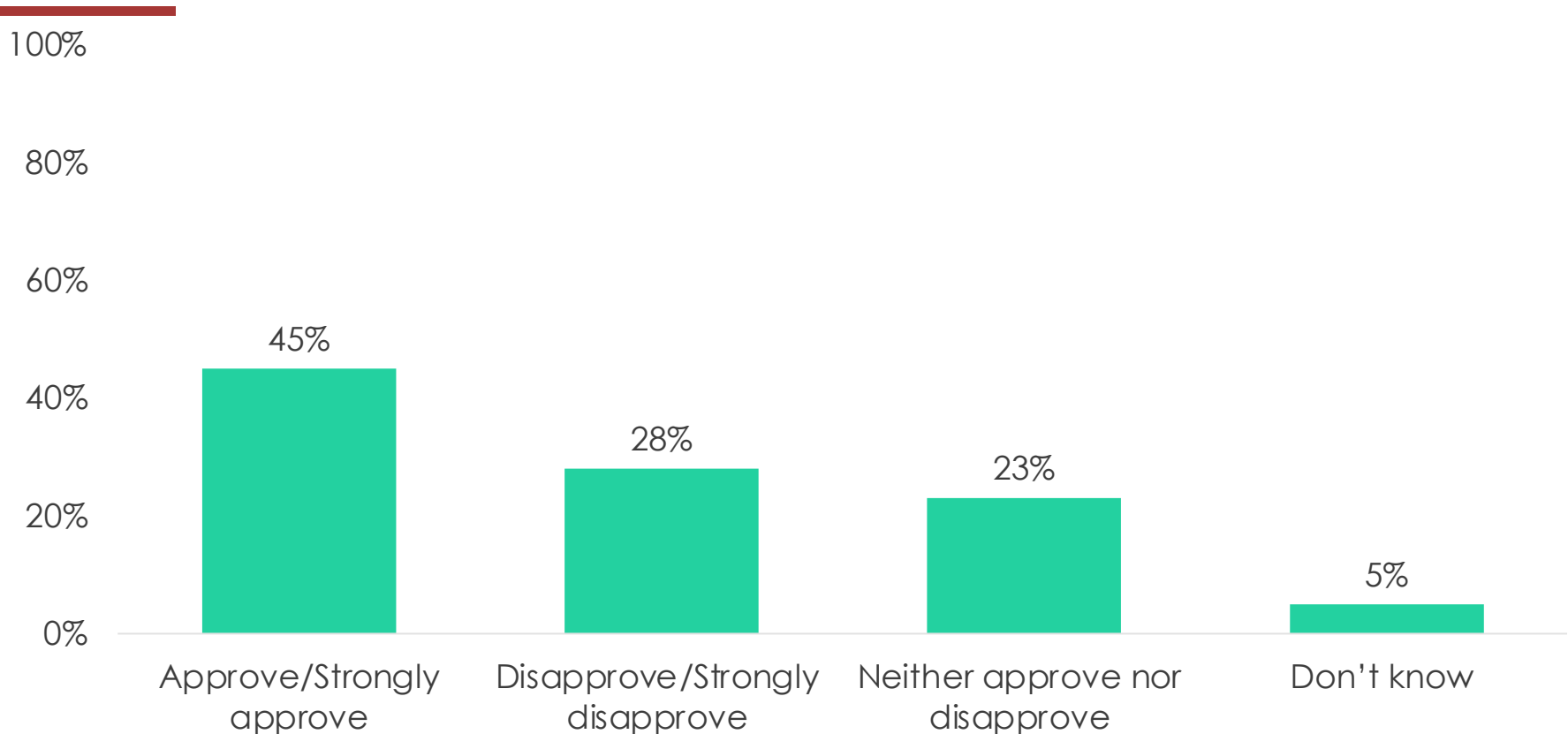
**Respondents were asked:** Do you approve or disapprove of allowing independent candidates to contest the 2024 elections?

# Approval of independent candidates | by demographic group | South Africa | 2024



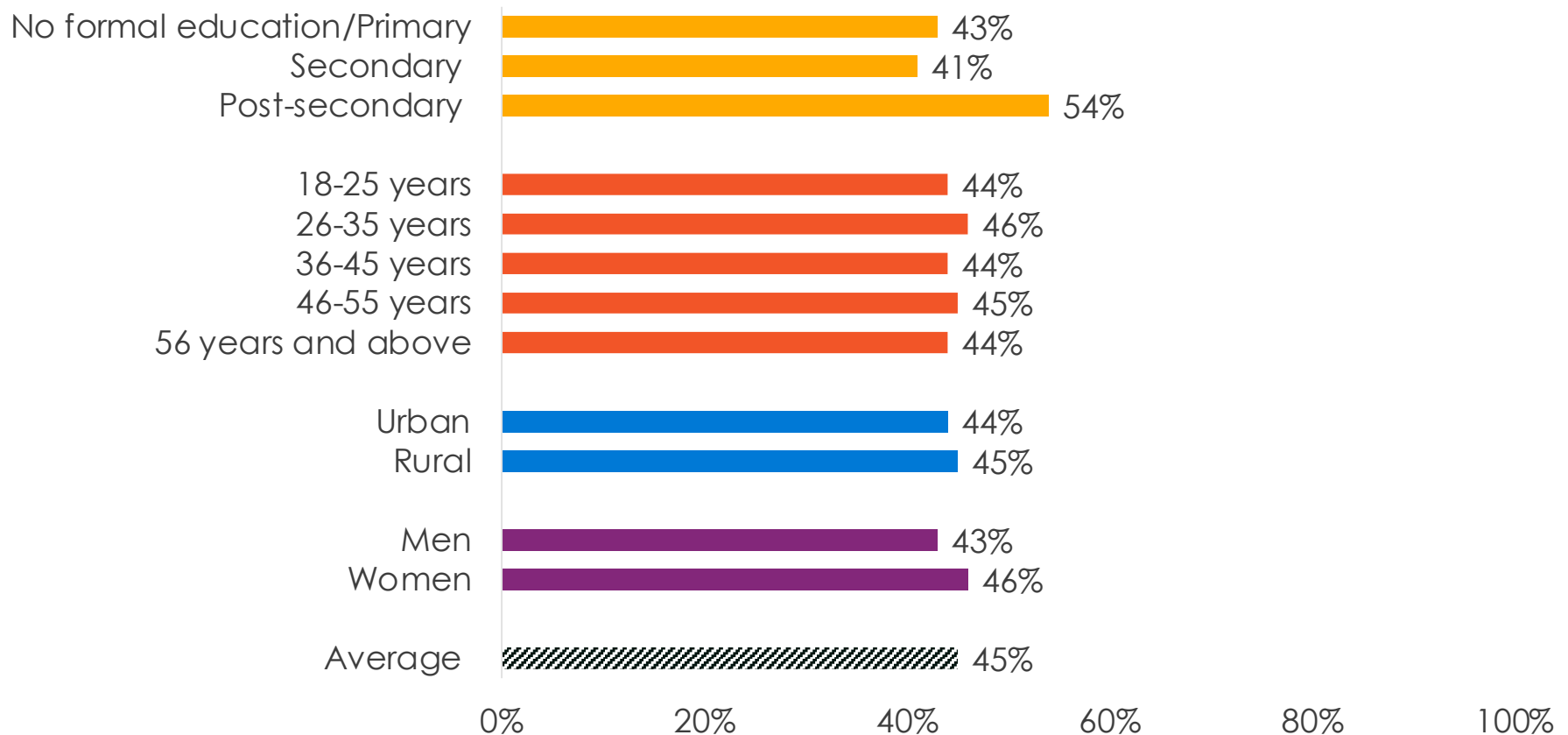
**Respondents were asked:** Do you approve or disapprove of allowing independent candidates to contest the 2024 elections?

# Approval of multi-party coalitions | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** Do you approve or disapprove of the idea of a coalition government, in which two or more political parties run the country together?

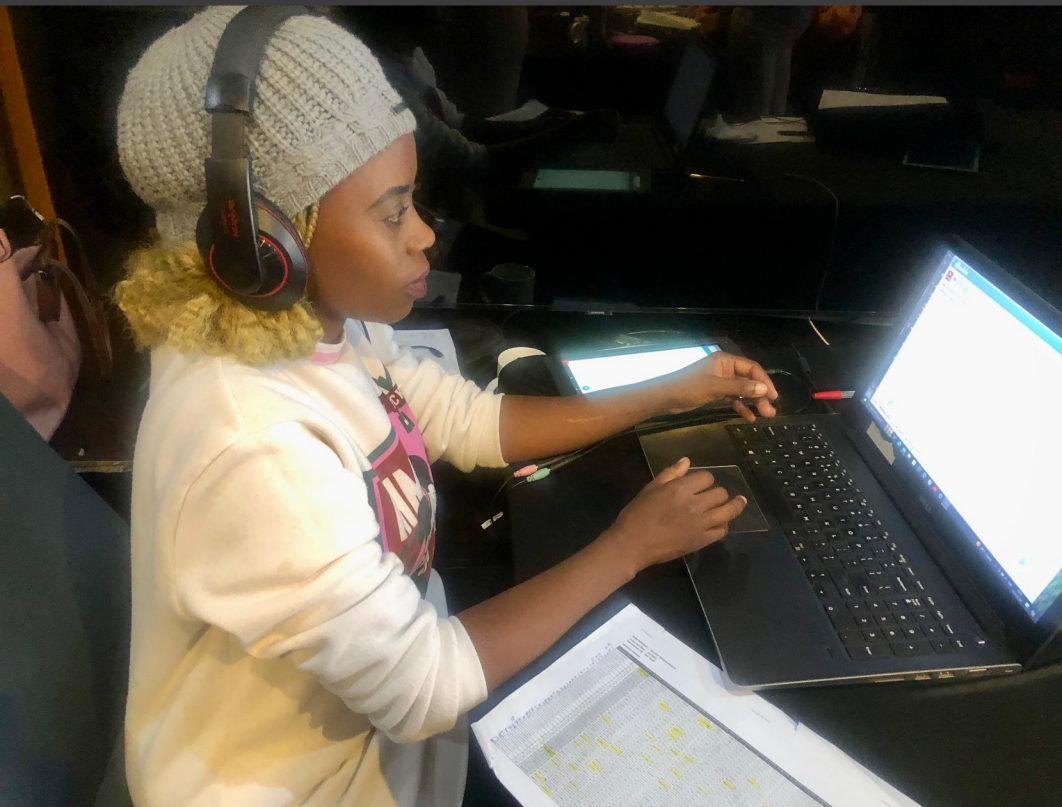
# Approval of multi-party coalitions | by demographic group | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** Do you approve or disapprove of the idea of a coalition government, in which two or more political parties run the country together?

# Political party support

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# Key insights: Voting intentions

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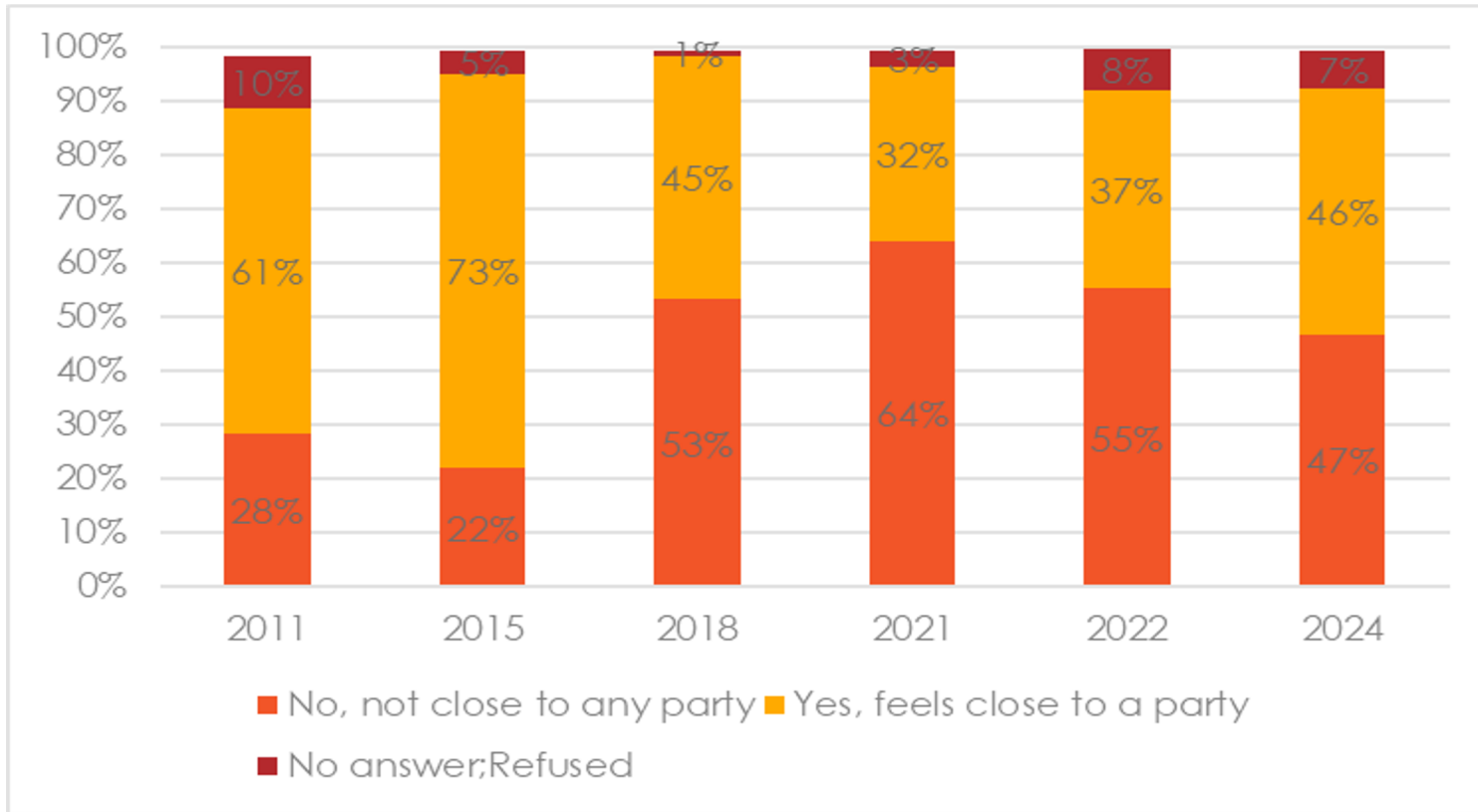
Close to half of South Africans (47%) do not feel close to any political party.

We can ask about voting intentions, but there are critical caveats to consider when interpreting the results, whether we are talking about all respondents, only registered voters, or only likely voters:

Roughly one-third of respondents say they don't know which party they will vote for on 29 May (and others say they will not vote). In short, there are many, even among those who intend to vote, who have not expressed a party preference.

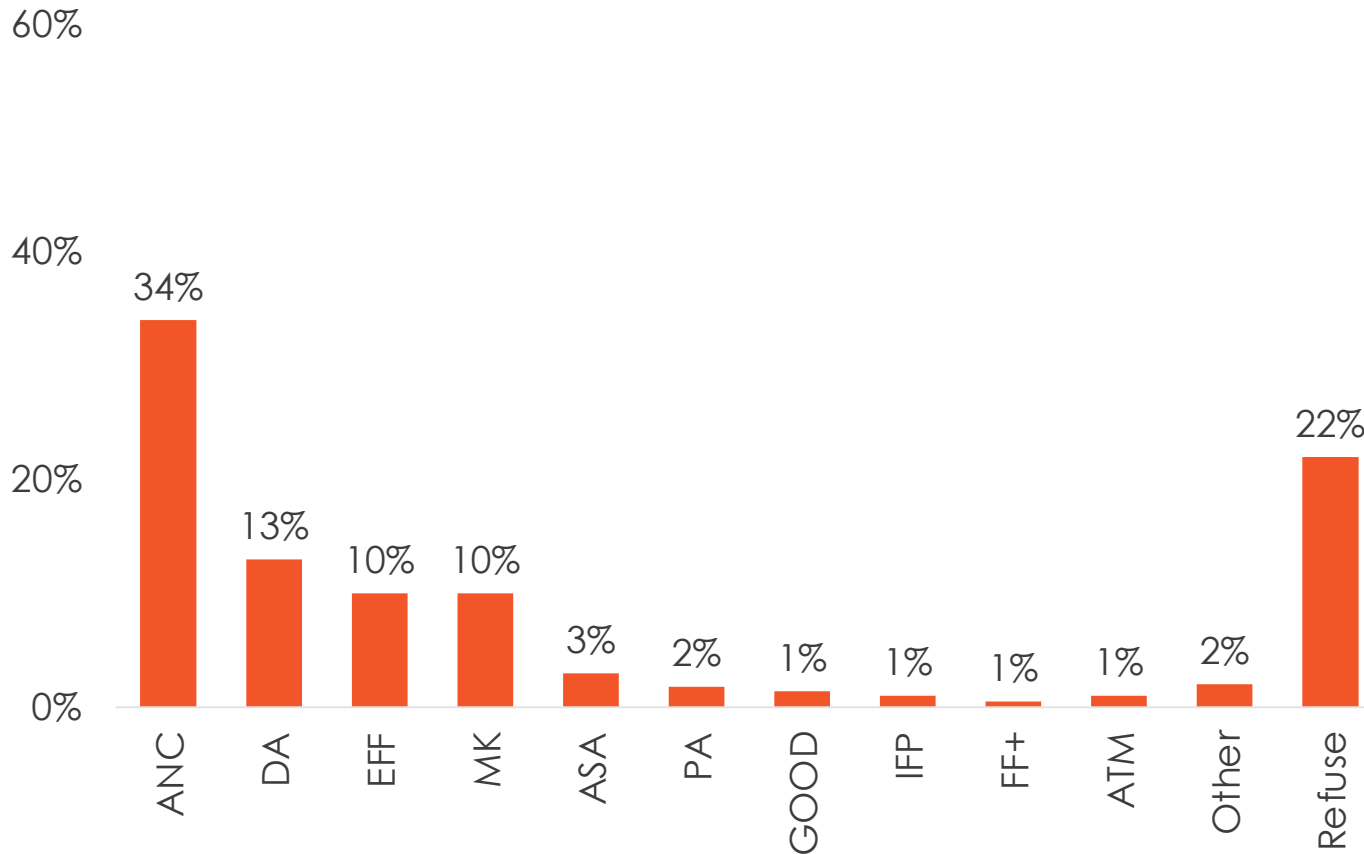
Given this high “undecided” component, it is not possible to make conclusive calls about the likely electoral outcome, and these results should not be considered predictive.

# Closeness to political party | South Africa | 2011-2024



**Respondents were asked:** Do you feel close to any political party?

# Parties that voters feel close to | national election | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** Do you feel close to a political party? If so, which party is that? (only includes respondents that feel close to a party)

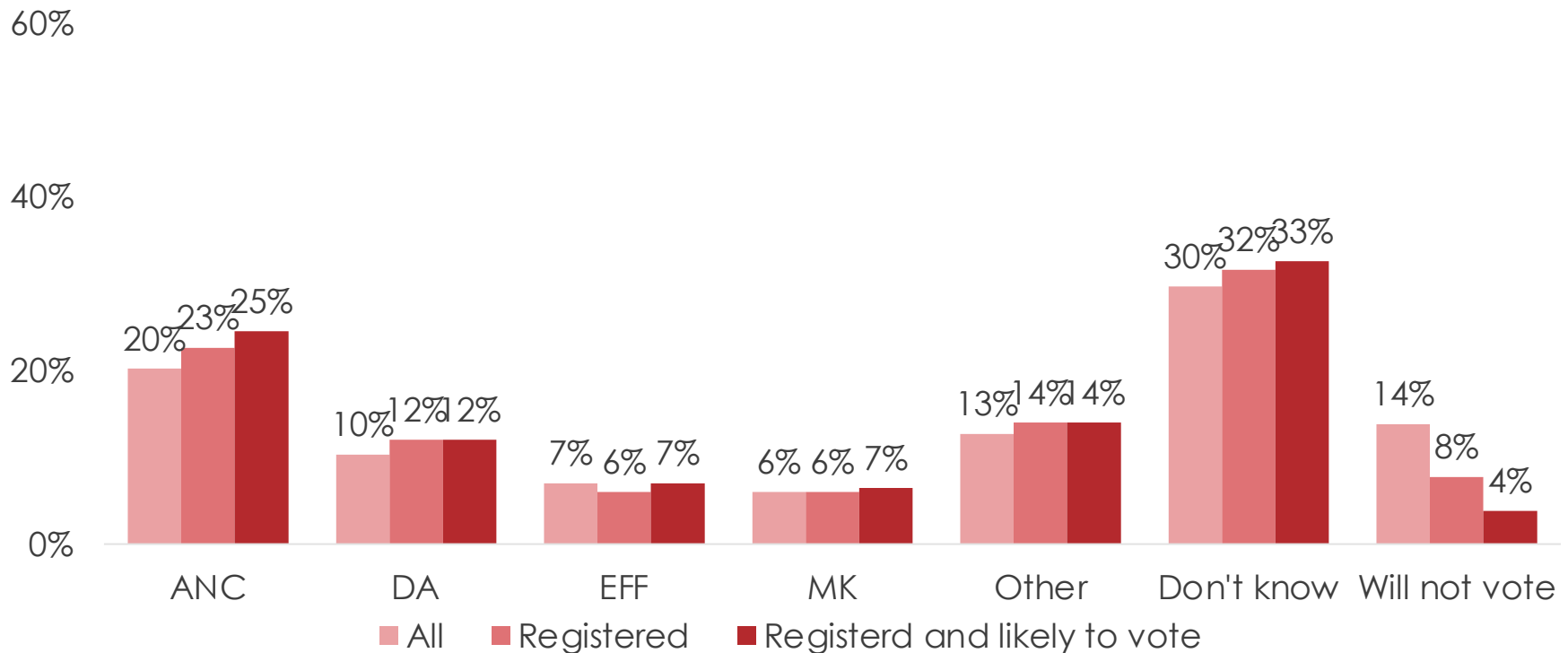
# Key insights: Voting intentions, all responses

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When all responses are included (i.e. including responses from voters who do not say which party they will vote for), support for ANC ranges from 20% among all respondents to 25% among likely voters.

- Support for DA ranges from 10% to 12%, and both EFF and MK register 6%-7% support.

# Voting intention | national election | South Africa | 2024



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

# Key insights: Voting intentions, decided voters only

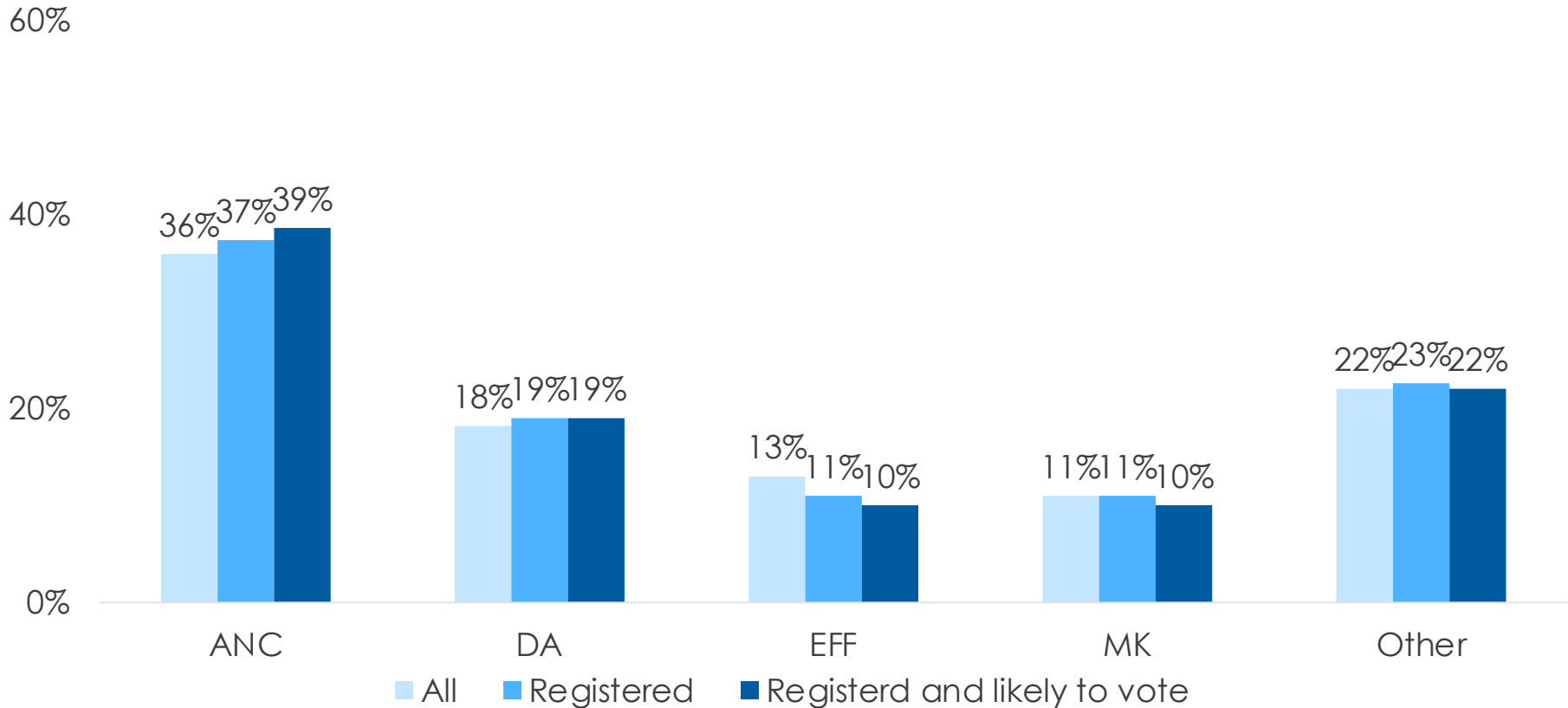
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Many other surveys report their findings on voting intentions with “don’t know” and similar responses excluded.

If we exclude “don’t know” and “will not vote” responses, the ANC’s share increases to between 36% (all respondents) and 39% (likely voters).

However, ***we do not know how undecided voters will “break,”*** so we cannot predict the final election outcome.

# Voting intention among decided voters | national election | South Africa | 2024

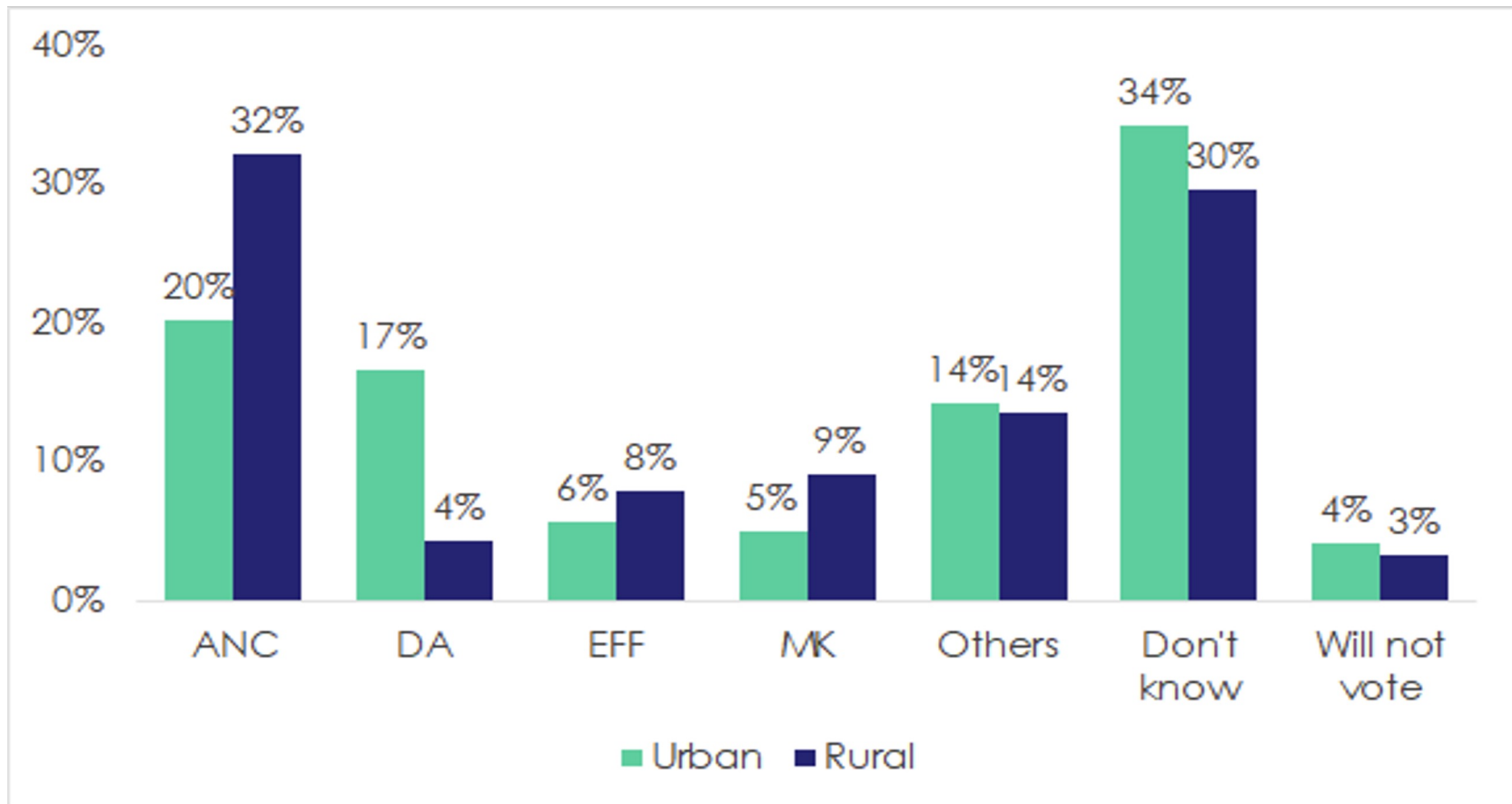


**Respondents were asked:** *If the national elections were held tomorrow, which party or candidate would you vote for?*  
*[excludes respondents who said "don't know" or "will not vote"]*

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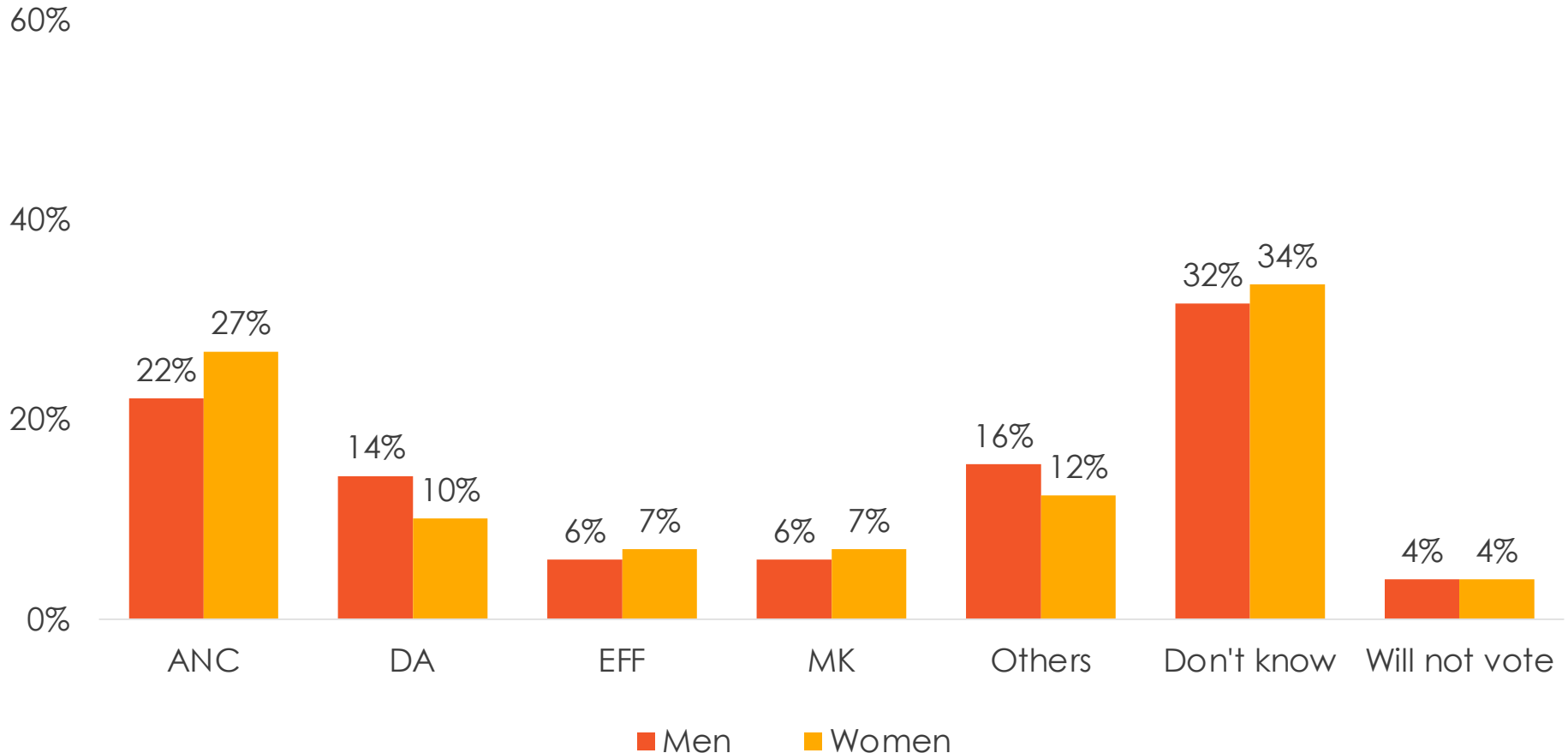
# Voting intention by urban-rural location | registered and likely voters | national election | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** *If the national elections were held tomorrow, which party or candidate would you vote for?*  
*[excludes respondents who said "don't know" or "will not vote"]*



# Voting intention by gender | registered and likely voters | national election | South Africa | 2024



**Respondents were asked:** *If the national elections were held tomorrow, which party or candidate would you vote for?*  
*[excludes respondents who said "don't know" or "will not vote"]*



# Conclusion

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Three decades after South Africa's democratic transition, many South Africans continue to struggle under the burden of poverty, inequality and unemployment. These items continue to feature most strongly as perceived problems that the state is failing to deal with.

While developmental progress has been made during the first decade of democracy, much of this seem to have stalled. In light of this, a majority of South Africans feel that the country is moving in the wrong direction.

While democracy brought political freedom, it has fallen short in expanding economic liberty. As a result, close to two-thirds of South Africans are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working in the country. Electoral turnout has declined over the past three decades. Among those who indicate that they are not registered, one quarter say that elections make no difference.

Nearly half of South Africans do not feel close to any political party. Even among registered voters who intend to vote, close to one-third have not yet decided on a party to vote for.

Against this backdrop, it would be premature to make any precise prediction about a final election result.



# Thank you

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