

Cape Town, South Africa  
9 July 2021

## News release

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### **Imprisoned former South African President Zuma's tenure was marked by low trust and high perceived corruption**

For former South African President Jacob Zuma, who this week entered prison under a 15-month sentence for boycotting an inquiry into high-level corruption, declining public trust and increasing perceptions of corruption marked his tenure well before it ended with his resignation in 2018.

In Afrobarometer's last South Africa survey during Zuma's 2009-2018 presidency, in 2015, popular trust in Zuma had fallen and perceived corruption in his office had risen dramatically.

Zuma was the least trusted among selected South African leaders and institutions, and his performance approval rating had plummeted. He was poorly rated on several performance indicators, including fighting corruption, reducing crime, creating jobs, narrowing income gaps, and keeping prices stable. Majorities also believed Zuma was rarely accountable to Parliament and the courts.

#### **Key findings**

- As of August-September 2015, only one-third (34%) of South Africans said they trusted Zuma "a lot" or "somewhat" (Figure 1). Citizens were twice as likely to trust the army (70%) than the president.
  - Between 2011 and 2015, public trust in Zuma decreased by about half (from 62% to 34%) (Figure 2).
- Nine in 10 South Africans (92%) perceived at least "some" officials at the Presidency to be corrupt (Figure 3), including almost half (46%) who thought "most" or "all" of them were corrupt.
  - The proportion of citizens who perceived "most" or "all" officials at the Presidency as corrupt was almost triple the proportion recorded in 2008 (17%) (Figure 4).
- About six in 10 citizens said the president "often" or "always" ignored Parliament (57%) and the courts (59%) (Figure 5).
- Zuma's popular approval rating was respectable (64%) in 2011 but dropped by almost half over the next four years; only about one-third (36%) of South Africans said he was doing his job "fairly well" or "very well" in 2015 (Figure 6).
- The Zuma government was seen as performing "fairly well" or "very well" in distributing welfare (83%) but not in fighting corruption (20%) or narrowing gaps between rich and poor (22%) (Figure 7).

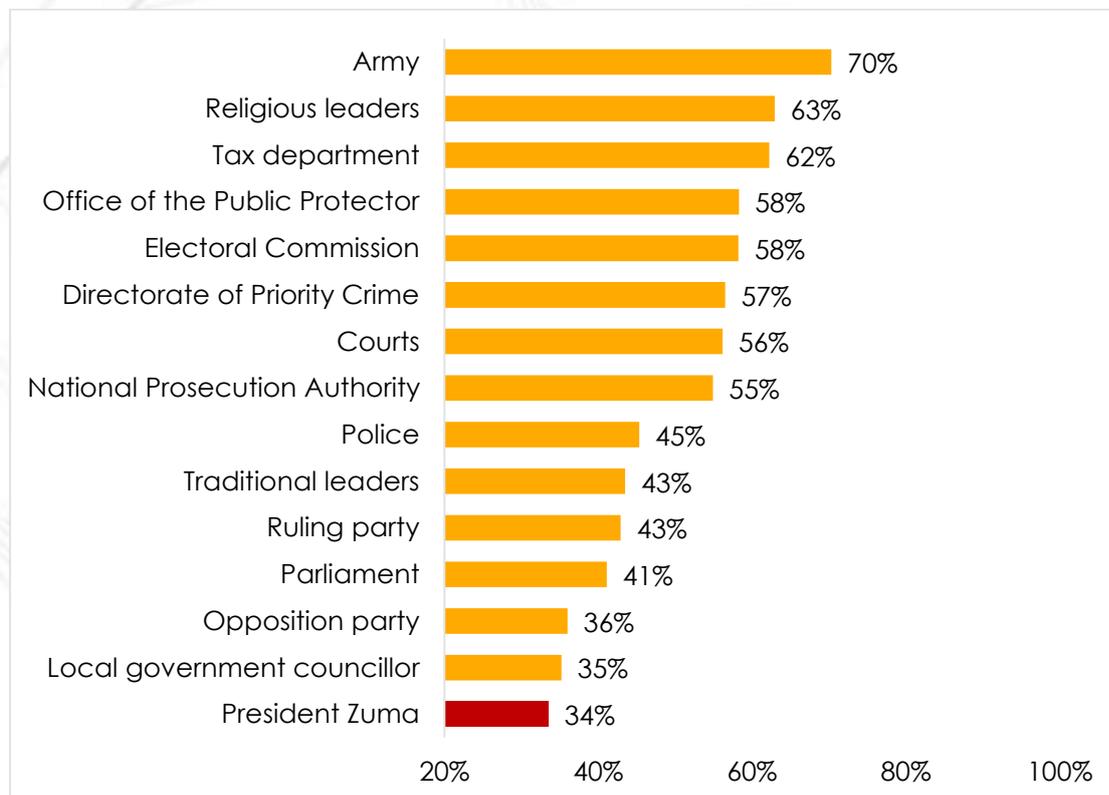
## Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a non-partisan African survey research network that provides reliable data on citizens' experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 38 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

For Afrobarometer's Round 6 survey in South Africa, teams led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus94 Research interviewed 2,400 adult South Africans between 14 August and 21 September 2015. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Afrobarometer has also conducted national surveys in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2018, and 2021.

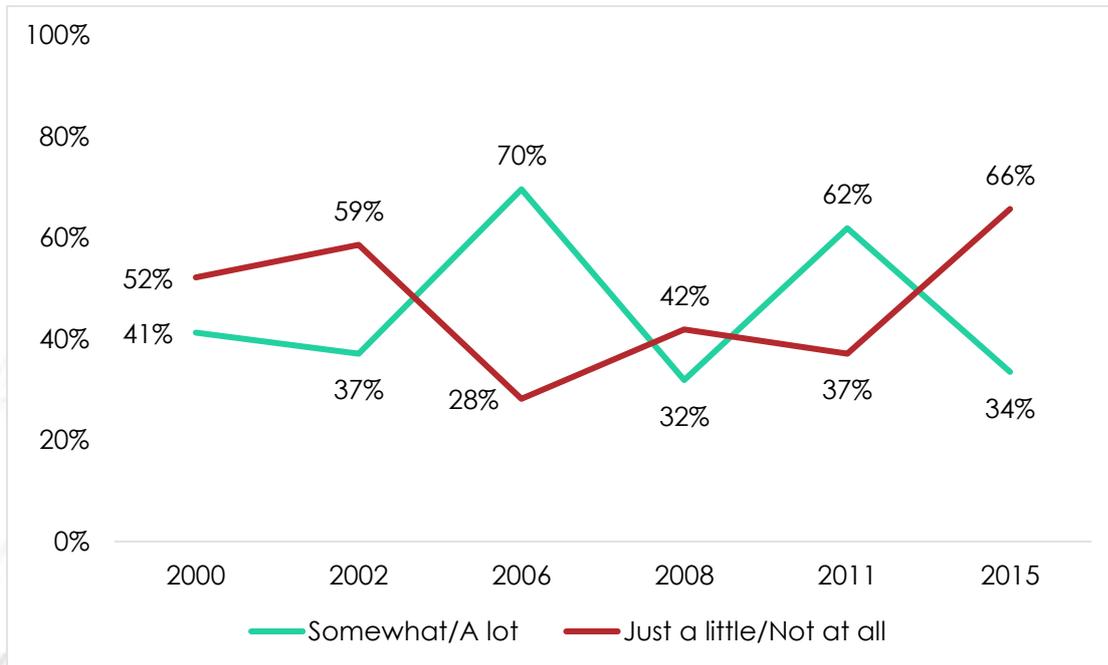
## Charts

**Figure 1: Trust in institutions and leaders | South Africa | 2015**



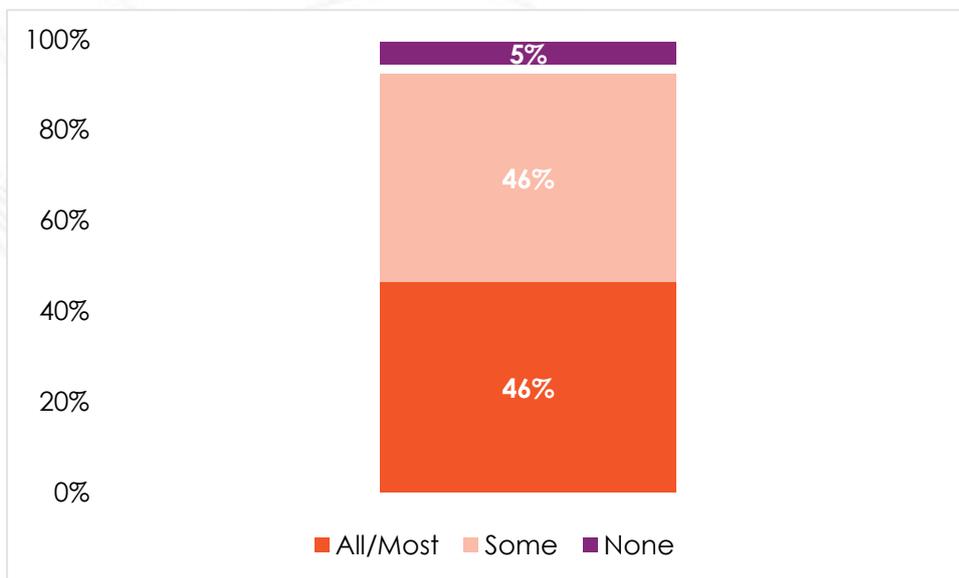
**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "a lot" or "somewhat")

**Figure 2: Trust in the president | South Africa | 2000-2015**



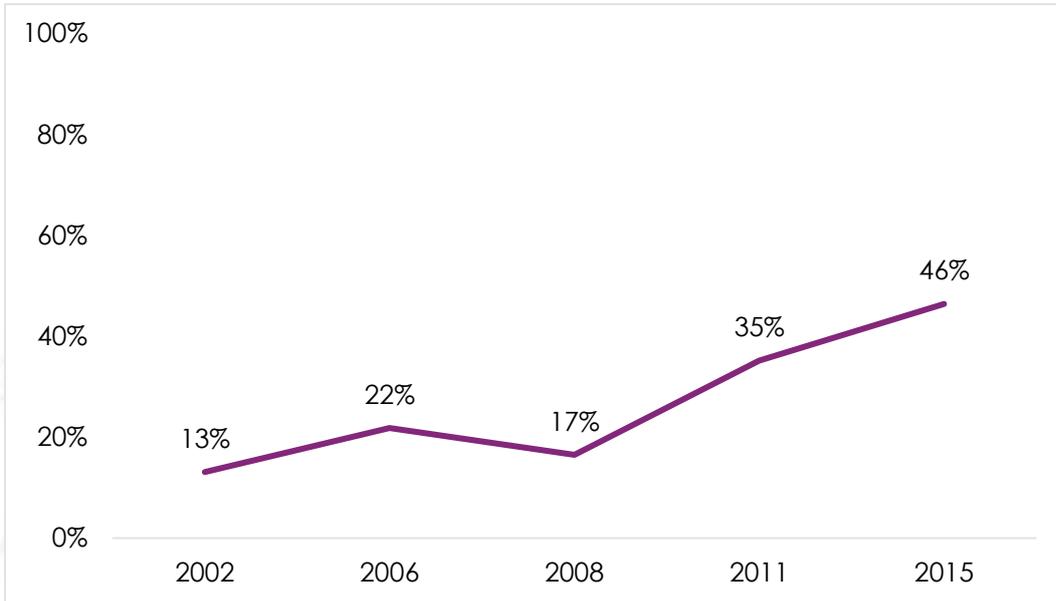
**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president?

**Figure 3: Perceived corruption at the Presidency | South Africa | 2015**



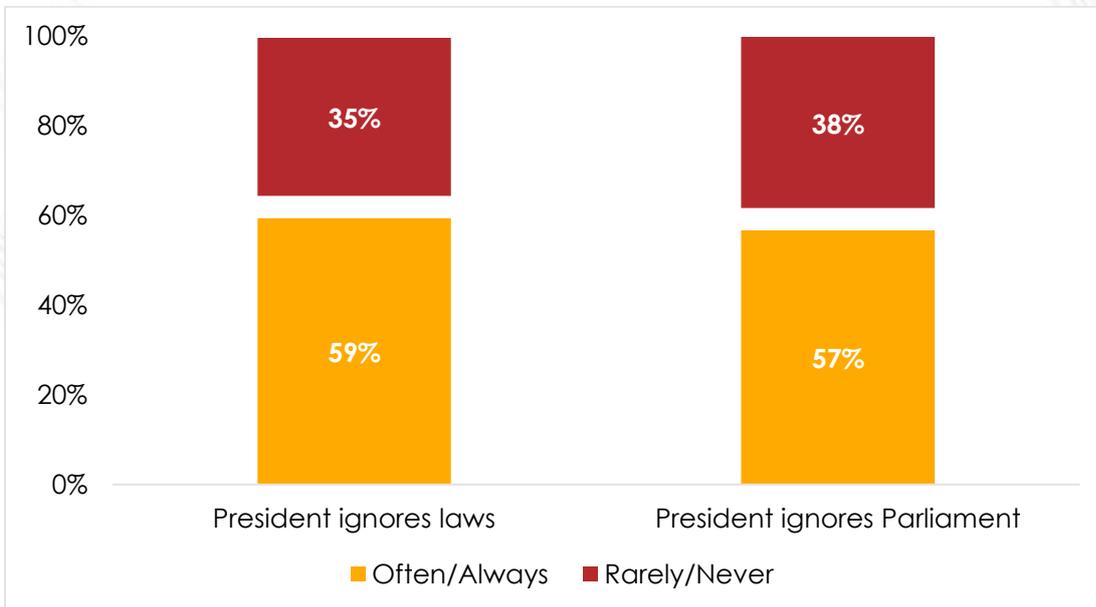
**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president and officials in his office?

**Figure 4: Perceived corruption at the Presidency | South Africa | 2002-2015**



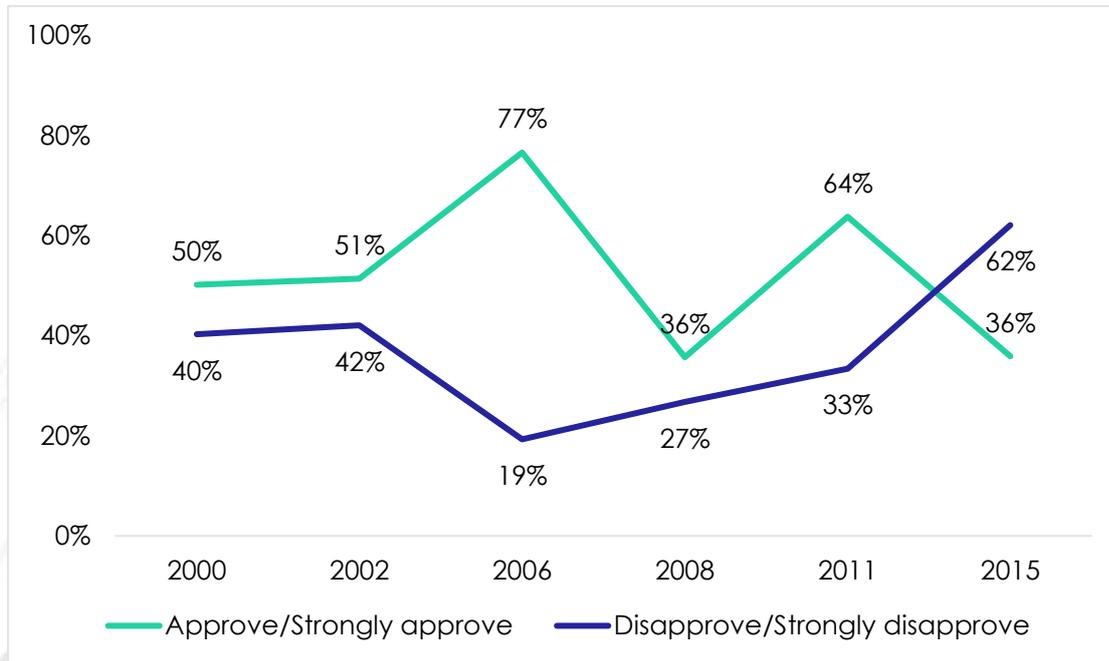
**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president and officials in his office? (% who said "most" or "all")

**Figure 5: How often Zuma ignored Parliament and the courts | South Africa | 2015**



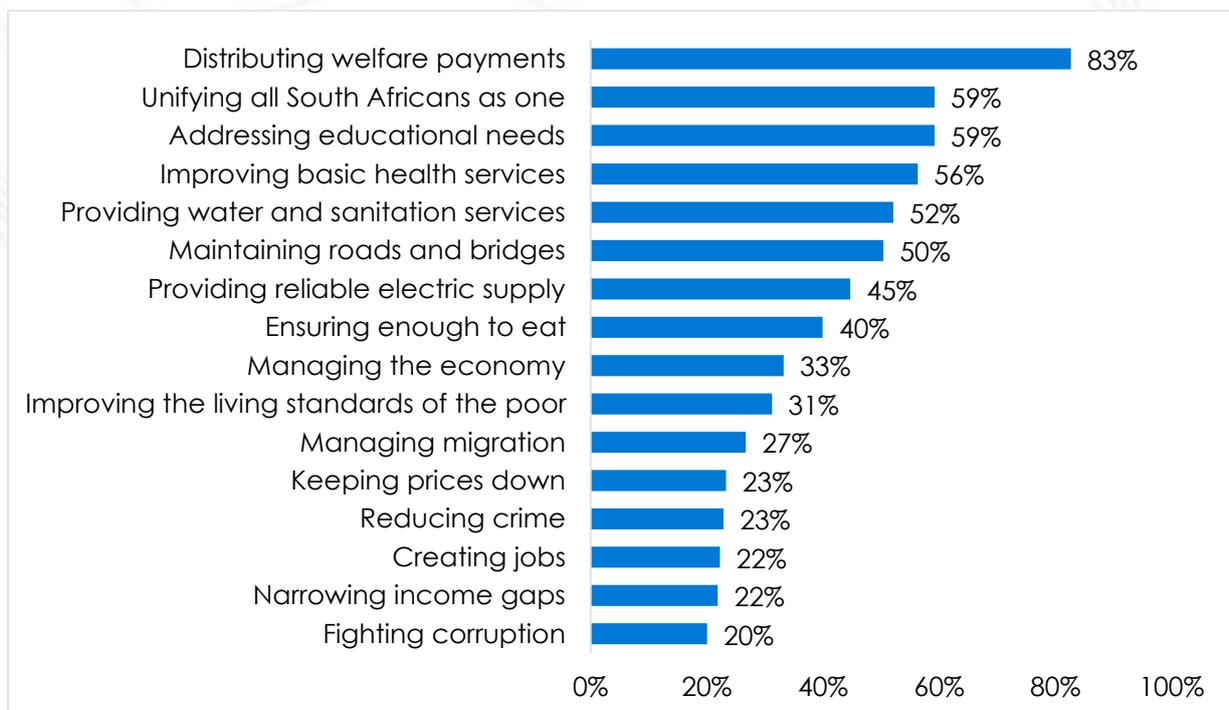
**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how often, in this country:  
 Does the president ignore the courts and laws of this country?  
 Does the president ignore the Parliament and just do what he wants?

**Figure 6: Approval of president's performance** | South Africa | 2000-2015



**Respondents were asked:** 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: President [insert name]?

**Figure 7: Government performance under Zuma** | South Africa | 2015



**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who said "fairly well" or "very well")

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