

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation  
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## News release

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### **Fewer South Africans say opposition parties should focus on monitoring and criticising the government**

In the run-up to local elections on 3 August 2016, the two leading opposition parties – the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – are portraying the poll as a political watershed for democracy in the country in the wake of the recent Constitutional Court judgment against President Jacob Zuma regarding the use of state funds at his private residence in Nkandla. The two parties have played a crucial role in pushing for accountability on this matter over the past few years and were the applicants in the court case.

Public opinion data from the 2015 Afrobarometer survey in South Africa show, however, that the proportion of South Africans who say that “opposition parties should monitor and criticize the government in order to hold it accountable” has been decreasing since 2008. Furthermore, a majority of citizens say the ANC is better able than the opposition to address national priority areas such as controlling prices, creating jobs, improving health care, and fighting corruption.

These survey findings suggest that opposition parties will face significant challenges in diminishing the ANC's electoral dominance in the upcoming elections, although the impact of the successful opposition-led support for the Public Protector's findings against the president and key ANC members may not be known until local election results are in.

For more information, see Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 88, available at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

#### **Key findings**

- The proportion of South Africans who say that opposition parties should focus on monitoring and criticizing the government, rather than on playing a cooperative role, has declined from about four in 10 citizens (36%) in 2008 to 28% in 2015.
- Less than one-quarter (23%) of South Africans believe that opposition parties are better able than the ANC to address key national priorities such as fighting corruption, creating jobs, improving health care, and controlling prices.
- Fighting corruption in government is the area where citizens are most likely to see the opposition as better able to make a difference (32%), followed by job creation (22%), improving health services (19%), and controlling prices (18%).

#### **Afrobarometer**

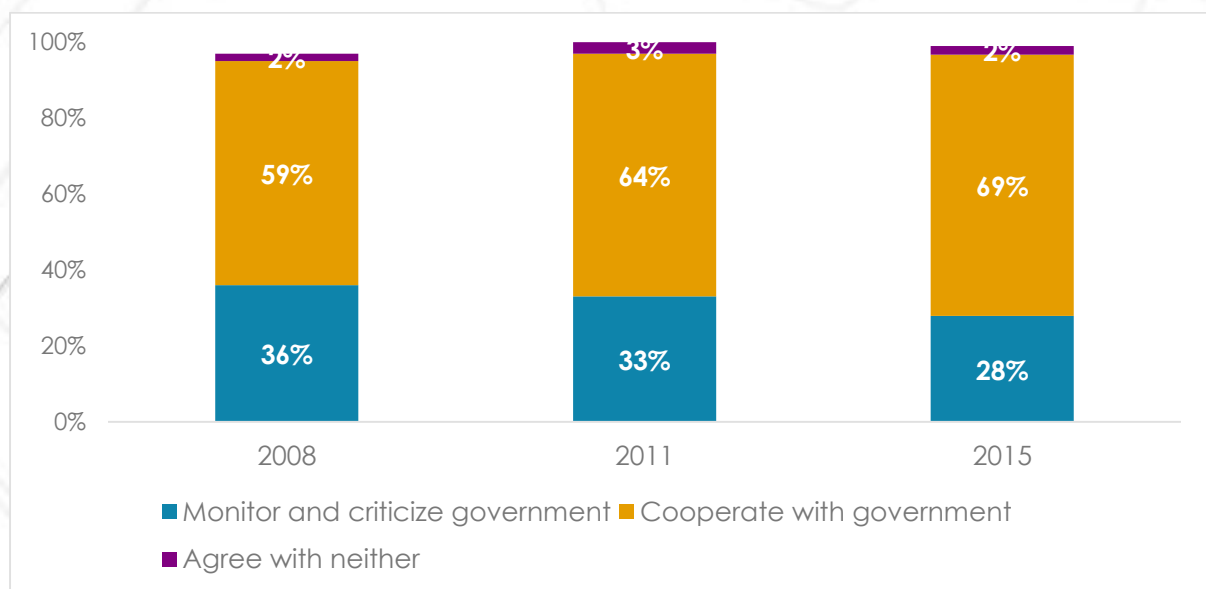
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. After five rounds of surveys between 1999 and 2013, results of Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being published. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-

face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200 or 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) and Plus 94 Research, interviewed 2,400 adult South Africans in August and September 2015. A sample of this size 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, 2008, and 2011.

## Charts

**Figure 1: Role of opposition parties in South African politics | 2008-2015**



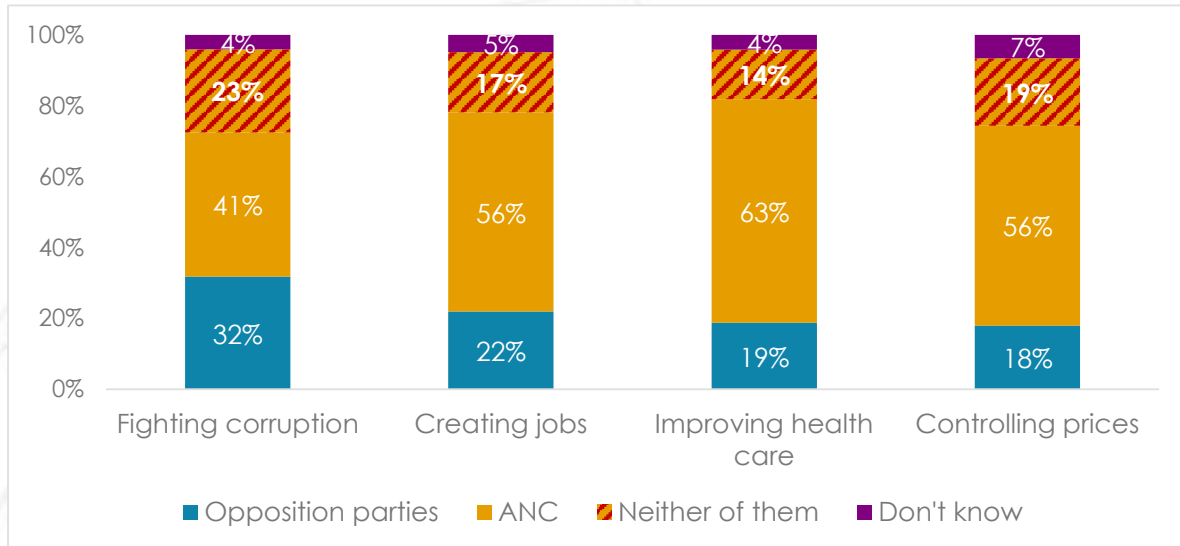
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: After losing an election, opposition parties should monitor and criticize the government in order to hold it accountable.<sup>1</sup>

Statement 2: Once an election is over, opposition parties and politicians should accept defeat and cooperate with government to help it develop the country.

<sup>1</sup> In 2008 and 2011, this response option read "Statement 1: Opposition parties should regularly examine and criticize government policies and actions."

**Figure 2: Ability to address policy priorities | South Africa | 2015**



**Respondents were asked:** Looking at the ruling and opposition political parties in this country, which would you say is most able to address each of the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Controlling prices? Creating jobs? Improving basic health services? Fighting corruption in government?

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