

IPSOS SOUTH AFRICA, JOHANNESBURG: 26 OCTOBER 2021

Local Authorities do not live up to the expectations of voters

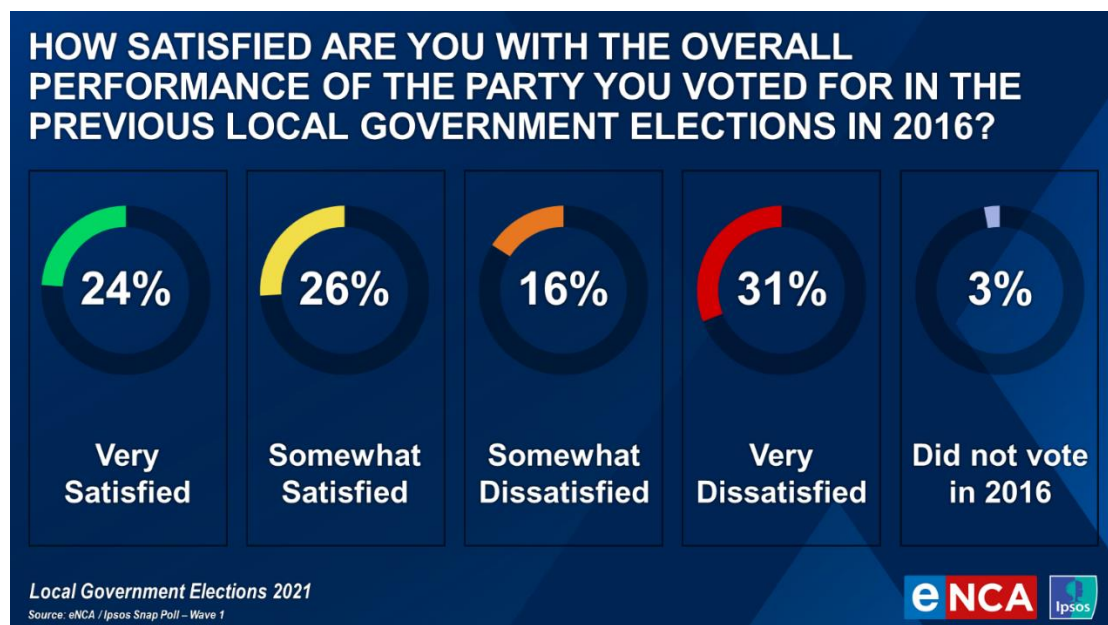
A week before the local government elections on 1 November 2021, registered voters are largely dissatisfied with the choices they made in the previous local government elections in 2016. The majority of those able to draw their crosses next Monday also want their local authorities to provide safety and security as a priority.

Research recently undertaken by [Ipsos](https://www.ipsos.com), on behalf of the [eNCA](https://www.enca.co.za), revealed these and other interesting findings about the South African electorate and prevailing opinions on local government. The study was undertaken between 9 and 14 October 2021 and made use of a CATI methodology (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing).

Does your local authority work for you?

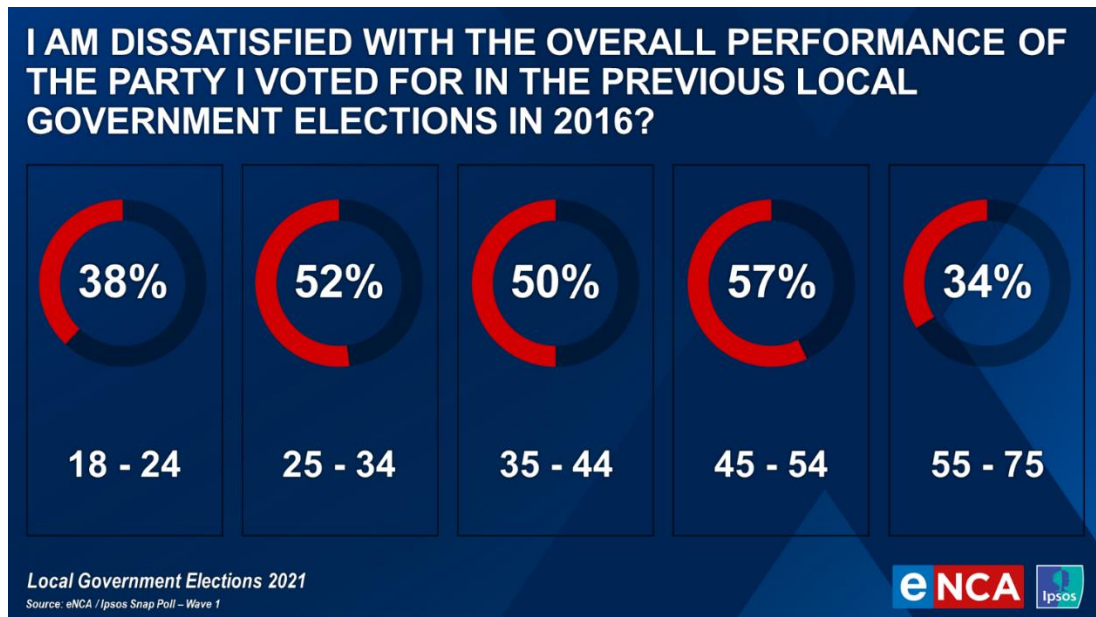
Clearly, many of the current local authorities do not work optimally or not at all for South African voters, as almost half (47%) of those who are registered to vote on 1 November 2021, say they are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the party they voted for in the 2016 local government election.

As can be seen in the graph below, only about a quarter (24%) is very satisfied with the party they voted for in the 2016 local government election and a further quarter (26%) is somewhat satisfied.



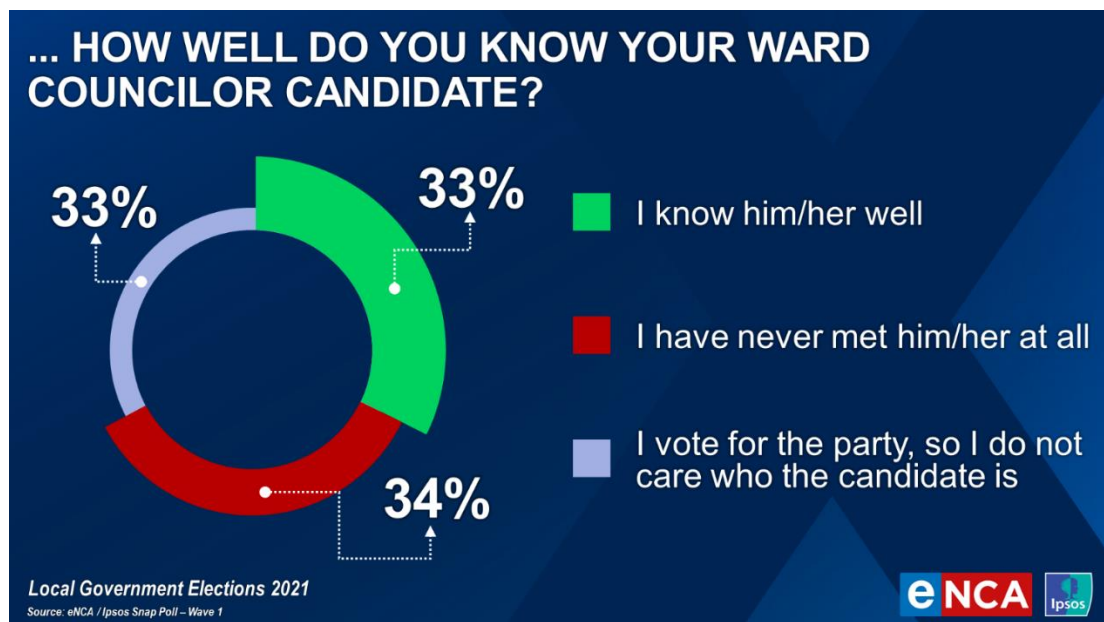
Looking into these results more closely, we see that women are a little bit more forgiving than men, with 44% of women indicating that they are somewhat or very dissatisfied in their 2016 choice, while half (50%) of men is dissatisfied. It is also clear that current registered voters between the ages of 25

to 54 are the most dissatisfied, while those who are a little bit older or younger are slightly more forgiving:



Do you know your ward councilor?

This feeling of dissatisfaction may have something to do with the fact that few registered voters have met their ward councilor candidate:



While the function of local government is to be the “coalface” where voters can interact with their political representatives, and can easily contact their councilors and expect some action or answers about issues in the local area, it seems that candidates for the position of councilor are rather “voter shy”.

Only a third (33%) of registered voters have met and/or know their candidates, while 34% have never met him or her. There is a further third (33%) who say that they vote for a political party and not specifically for the ward councilor. However, in our election system of proportional representation, the opportunities for direct interaction with a candidate is low, we can thus possibly assume that these people also have no idea about who their candidates are – or what they promise to do.

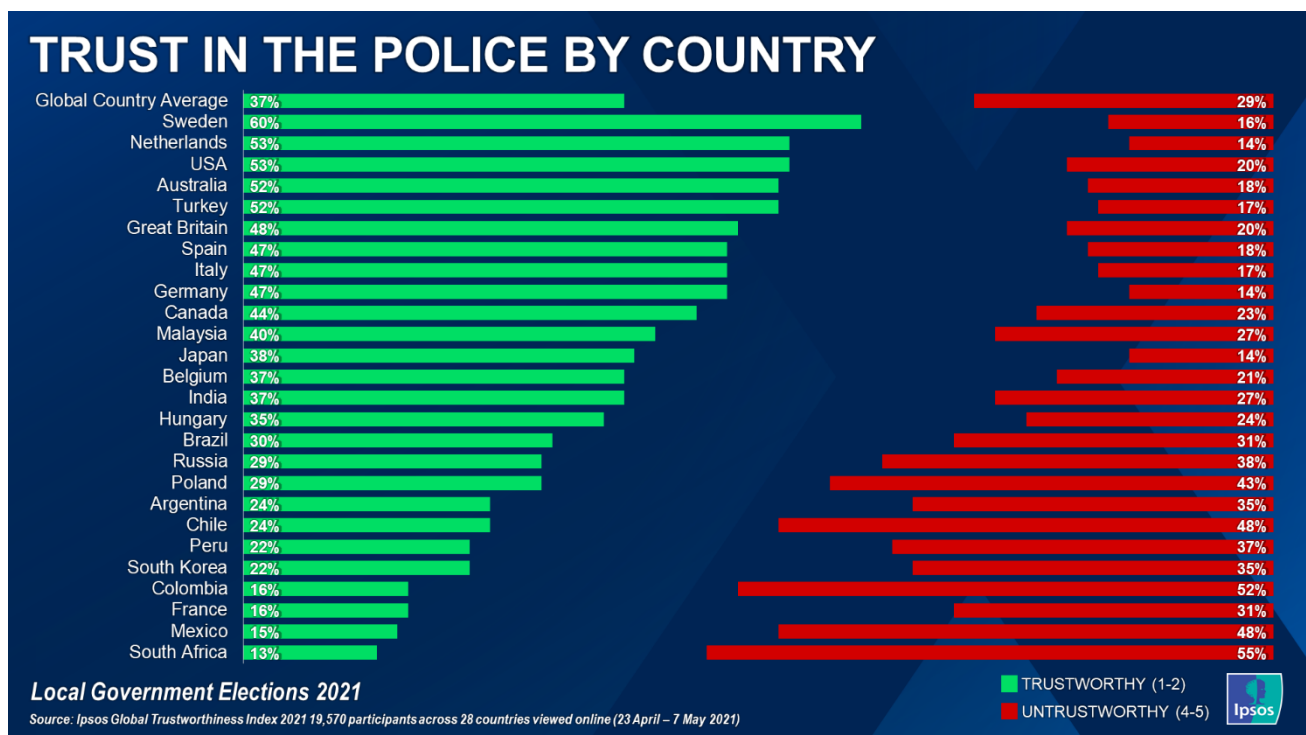
In addition, the larger political parties use their high-profile leaders in the campaigns, which are mainly driven on a national stage, with the launches of national manifesto's, rallies, and meetings (sometimes within the Covid-19 regulations). Therefore, the campaigns at a local level, if they exist, are rather watered down. As a result of this the real local issues do not get much attention in campaigns, and national issues dominate and drive the discourse, like the vaccination drive to halt Covid-19 infections or unemployment and job creation – things that can only partly be addressed by local authorities.

Voters want local governments to focus on safety and security

Another example of such a national issue overflowing into the area of local politics is that of safety and security. This can be seen in a recent poll that Ipsos undertook in 26 countries, giving respondents a list of people in different professions and then asking:

*"In general, do you think each is trustworthy or untrustworthy in your country?
Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very trustworthy and 5 is very untrustworthy."*

From the table below it is clear that only 13% expressed trust in the police – the lowest proportion of all 26 countries.



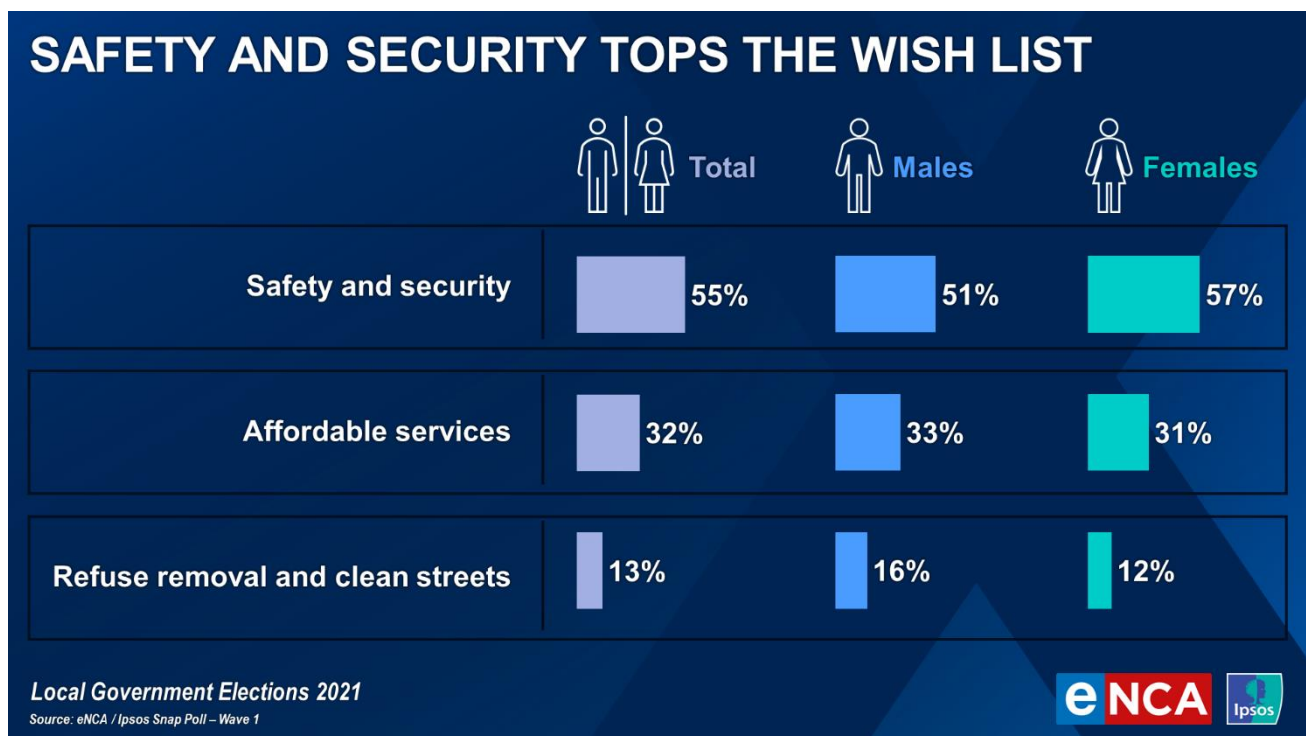
In the [eNCA](#) pre-election study, Ipsos asked registered voters to indicate:

“Which one of the following basic services is the most important when you decide who to vote for in the Local Government Elections?”

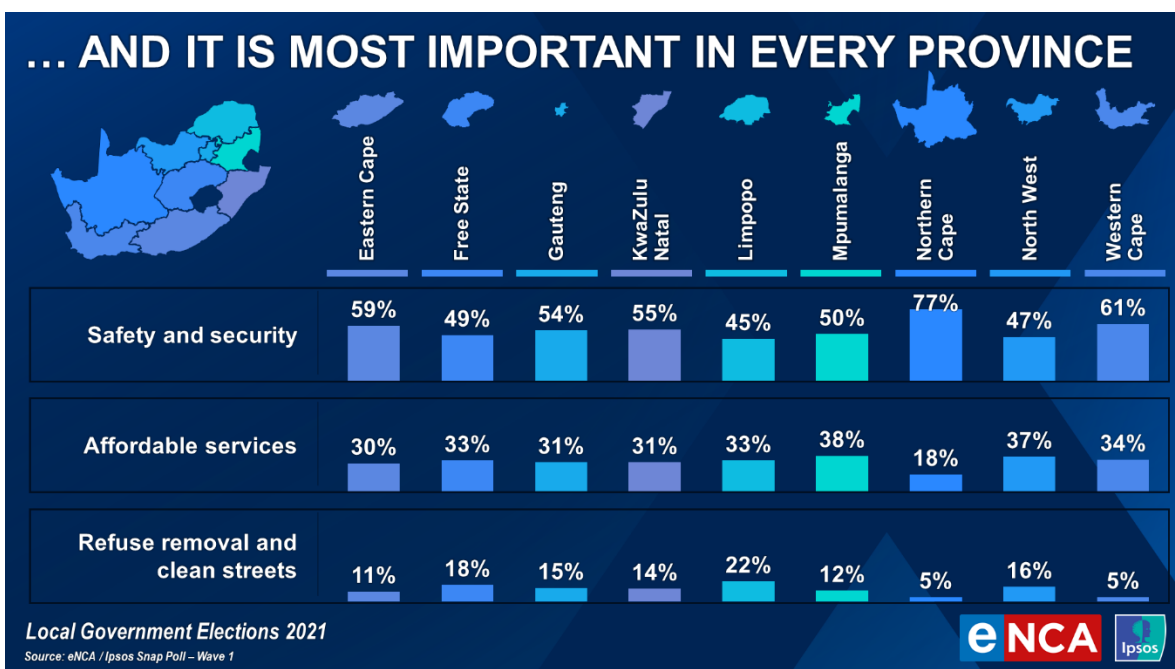
The three choices offered were:

- Safety and Security
- Affordable Service
- Refuse Removal and Clean Streets

In view of the results of the previously shared international results, it should probably be no surprise that registered voters chose “Safety and Security” above the two other options by wide margins.



“Safety and security” were also mentioned as a top priority by the registered voters in all provinces. The agenda of local governments is thus rather clear in terms of what should be addressed in the coming months – together with the list of other things mentioned by voters.



What are the best and the worst things about the area where you live?

Feelings about the area where voters live were probed by two deceptively simple questions:

- Which ONE of the things on this list is the best thing about the area where you live?
- Which ONE of the things on this list is the worst thing about the area where you live?

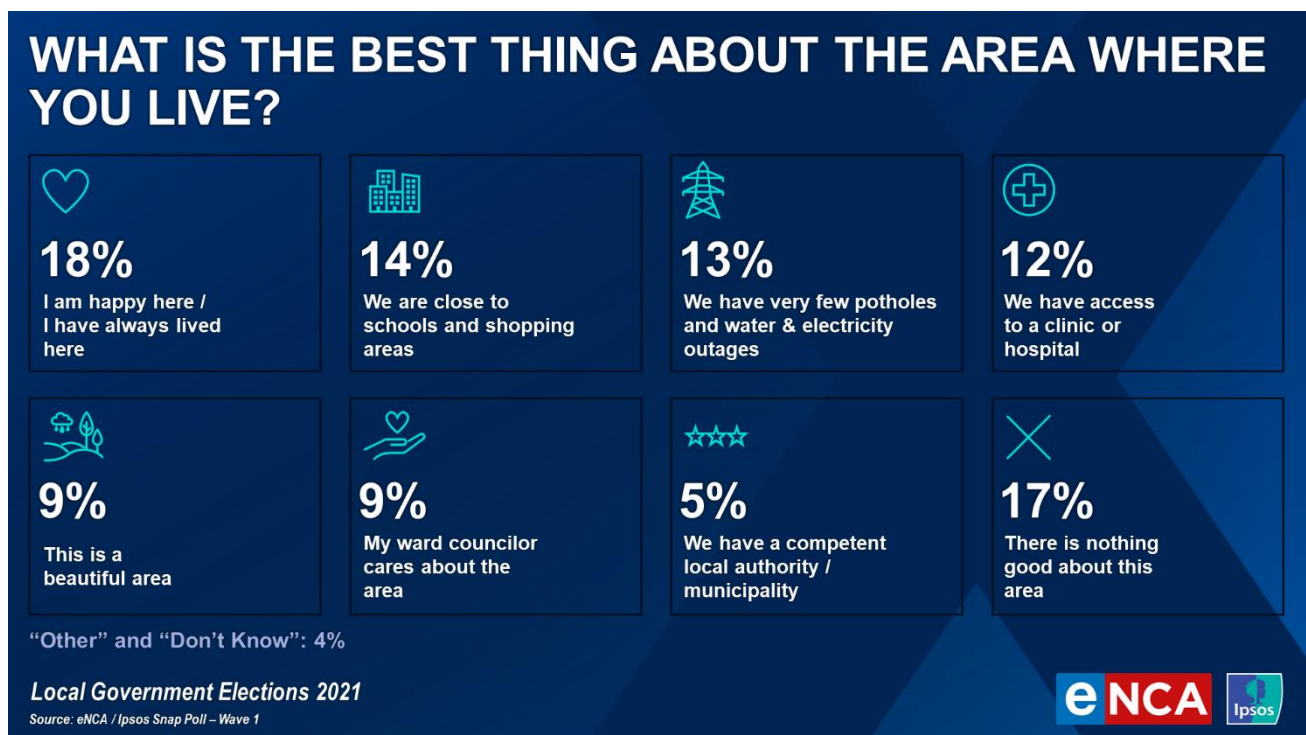
We have already seen that safety and security are priorities for registered voters, what else would they like the local authorities to sort out?



The two worst things chosen were that facilities for young people were inadequate in the area and that municipal councilors were incompetent / corrupt or did not do their jobs.

In the case of young people and things for them to do, we do believe that respondents looked at this holistically and meant opportunities to find work, opportunities to study, opportunities to use their skills and entertainment facilities.

In view of the large number of municipalities currently under administration or in financial distress and the report delivered in early 2021 to Parliament that 47% of senior municipal officers do not have the minimum competency level to do their jobs, the only way that incompetent or corrupt candidates can be weeded out is if they are not receiving enough votes in this election. This is largely up to the electorate next Monday.



Although almost a fifth (17%) see nothing good in the area where they live, a similar proportion (18%) are happy with their choice of residence and around one in every ten (9%) think that they live in a beautiful area. There is also good access to amenities in some areas and 9% say that their ward councilor does care about the area.

However, to underline many of these findings, only 5% think that they have a competent local authority.

Technical detail

- A total of 1,346 CATI (Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews) with South Africans, 18+, who are registered to vote were conducted from 9-14 October 2021. The Margin of Error

(depending on sample size, response rate and sampling methodology used) on this sample is between 1.16 and 2.57 percentage points on a 95% confidence level.

- The incidence of mobile phones in South Africa is 96% and includes people from all backgrounds and in all provinces – also in deep rural areas. This universe was used as the basis of a RDD (Random Digit Dialling) methodology to achieve the widest countrywide spread possible.
- A total of 3,576 phone calls were made to achieve this sample, as many people are not registered to vote – although they might be eligible to vote.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

Mari Harris

Director and Political Analyst, Ipsos SA
Mobile: +27 (0)82 557 5058
mari.harris@ipsos.com

Ezethu Nsiki

Service Line Manager: Public Affairs, Ipsos SA
Mobile: +27 (0)74 617 8023
ezethu.nsiki@ipsos.com

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