



# Press Release

IPSOS SOUTH AFRICA, JOHANNESBURG: 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

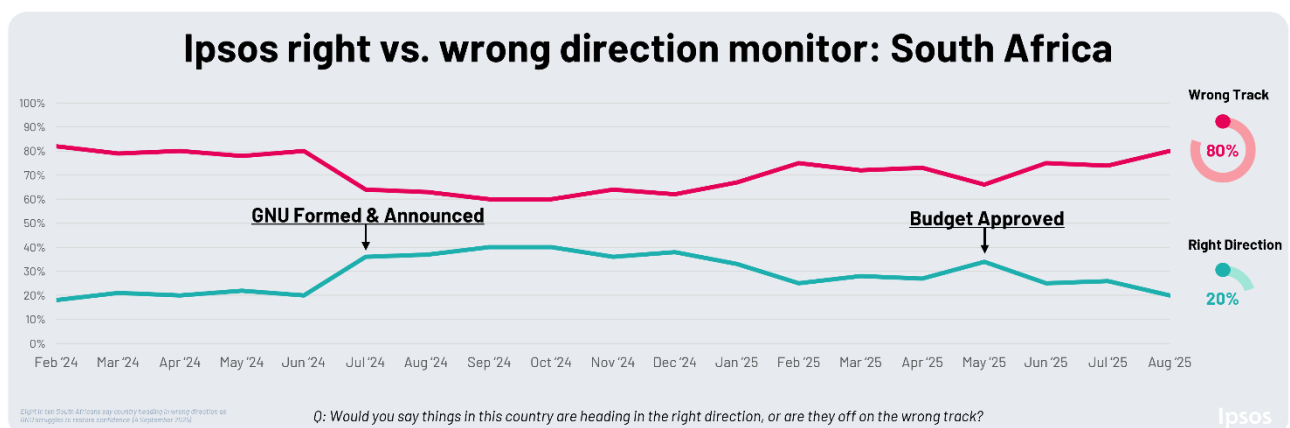
## Eight in ten South Africans say country heading in wrong direction as GNU struggles to restore confidence

*New Ipsos data reveals persistent pessimism about South Africa's trajectory, despite initial post-election optimism following GNU formation*

South Africans remain deeply pessimistic about their country's direction, with 80% saying South Africa is on the wrong track according to Ipsos' latest "What Worries the World"<sup>1</sup> study. This represents a return to pre-election pessimism levels, despite an initial surge in optimism following the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in mid-2024.

The monthly tracking data provides a compelling narrative of online South African sentiment over the past 20 months, clearly reflecting major political developments. The study shows how public mood fluctuated from the uncertainty preceding the May 2024 national elections, through the challenging GNU negotiations in June, to a notable improvement in July-September 2024 when optimism peaked at 40% saying the country was heading in the right direction.

"The 'What Worries the World' study offers an exceptional snapshot of world opinion on pressing global issues. The cornerstone of this study is a question on whether a particular country is going in the right or the wrong direction. The findings of this measurement show that it reacts to the reality on the ground in the country and tells the story of South Africa's political journey over the past two years," says Robyn Williams, Service Line Manager at Ipsos South Africa. "We can clearly see how major political events, from election uncertainty to GNU formation and subsequent challenges, directly impact public confidence about the country's trajectory."



The tracking data shows a clear pattern: initial GNU optimism in July-September 2024 (when 36-40% were positive about the country's direction) gradually declined through various political challenges, including budget disagreements between GNU partners that culminated in the narrow parliamentary budget acceptance vote in April 2025.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en/what-worries-world>

## GNU performance: Mixed public assessment

Despite the current pessimism, South Africans show measured views on the GNU's performance. The latest Ipsos South Africa Khayabus "Pulse of the People" study reveals that just over four in ten South Africans (42%) believe different parties are working together "very or fairly well" in the GNU, while a similar proportion (43%) feel the government is handling inter-party issues adequately.

However, public opinion remains divided on the GNU's effectiveness:

### Skeptical views:

- 40% believe "the GNU has changed nothing in South Africa"
- 39% think "the GNU will fall apart shortly as the parties differ too much"

### Supportive views:

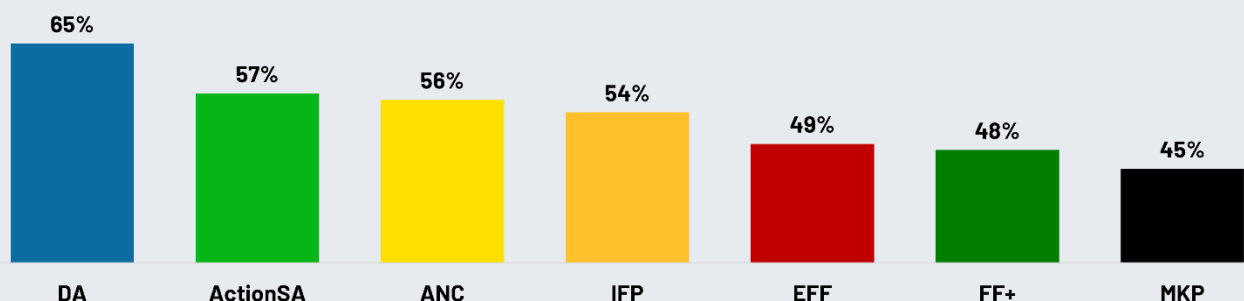
- 41% agree "the GNU is governing in the interest of all South Africans"
- 36% say "people like me are satisfied with how the GNU is performing"

## Strong appetite for local government cooperation

Looking ahead to the planned local government elections (expected to take place between November 2026 - January 2027<sup>2</sup>), the study reveals significant public support for inter-party cooperation at municipal level. More than half of voting-age South Africans (54%) believe different political parties should work together at local government/municipality level, with only 24% opposing this approach. This sentiment extends across party lines, with supporters from both GNU and opposition parties showing backing.

"What's particularly striking is how this appetite for cooperation cuts across party lines," notes Williams. "Even supporters of opposition parties like the EFF (49%) and MKP (45%), who are highly critical of the GNU at national level, still see value in collaborative governance where it directly impacts their daily lives."

### Parties supporters' views on cross-party collaboration in local government



Eight in ten South Africans say country heading in wrong direction as GNU struggles to restore confidence (4 September 2025)

Q: I think different political parties should also work together on the Local Government/municipality level? (Strongly agree / Agree)

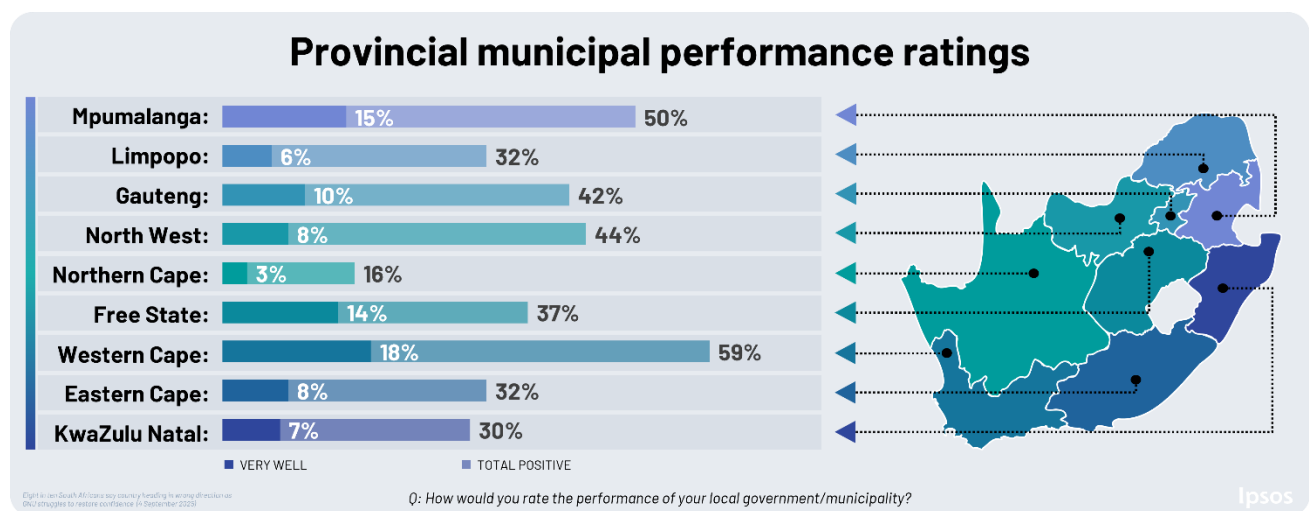
Ipsos

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.elections.org.za/content/About-Us/News/Road-to-the-2026-Local-Government-Elections/>

## Municipal performance crisis drives cooperation demands

This appetite for collaboration becomes clearer when examining current municipal performance across the country. The "Pulse of the People" study reveals widespread dissatisfaction with local government, with nearly 6 in 10 South Africans (59%) dissatisfied with their municipality's performance, compared to 39% who are satisfied.

The crisis extends across all provinces, though with notable variations. While the Western Cape achieves the highest citizen satisfaction at 59% positive ratings, nearly half of the nine provinces fall below one-third approval ratings, including major population centres like KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.



"These municipal performance figures help explain why South Africans are so eager for political cooperation at local level," observes Williams. "When basic service delivery is failing this comprehensively across the country, with even our best-performing province seeing only 18% of citizens rating their municipality as 'very well', citizens naturally look for solutions that transcend party politics and the possibility of a solution for their everyday struggles with non-responsive Local Councils, electricity, clean water supply and potholes."

## Looking forward

The combination of poor municipal performance and strong public support for inter-party cooperation suggests the 2026-2027 local government elections could reshape South African politics at the grassroots level. Political parties that can demonstrate effective collaboration and efficient service delivery may find themselves rewarded by voters frustrated with decades of municipal failures.

"These findings underscore both the challenges and opportunities facing South Africa," Williams concludes. "The upcoming local government elections will be a crucial test - not just of party politics, but of whether South African democracy can evolve to meet citizens' clear demand for competent, collaborative governance that actually delivers services. The question for all parties is whether they can translate the public's appetite for collaboration into the competent governance South Africans desperately need."



# Press Release - Continued

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**About the study**

**Khayabus:**

- This press release is based on the views of 3,600 randomly selected respondents. Interviews were conducted by trained Ipsos interviewers in the homes and home languages of respondents. Interviews were conducted from June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 to August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- A scientific process of multi-stage stratified random selection distributed interviews in all areas of the county, including deep rural areas. This methodology ensured that the results are representative of the views of the universe (adult South Africans) and that findings can be weighted and projected to the universe.
- Trained quantitative fieldworkers were responsible for the interviewing and CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) was used.
- All results were collated and analysed in an aggregate format to protect the identity and confidentiality of respondents.
- All sample surveys are subject to a margin of error, determined by sample size, sampling methodology and response rate. The sample error for this sample at a 95% confidence level is a maximum of plus or minus 1.9%.

**What Worries the World:**

- This 30-country Global Advisor survey was conducted between July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 via the Ipsos Online Panel system among 500 adults aged 18-74 in Canada, Israel, Malaysia, South Africa, Türkiye and the United States, 20-74 in Indonesia and Thailand, 21-74 in Singapore, and 16-74 in all other nations.
- The "Global Country Average" reflects the average result for all the countries where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country and is not intended to suggest a total result.
- The sample consists of approximately 1000+ individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, and the US, and approximately 500+ individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand and Türkiye.
- The sample in India consists of approximately 2,200 individuals, of whom approximately 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face and 400 were interviewed online. India's sample represents a large subset of its urban population — social economic classes A, B and C in metros and tier 1-3 town classes across all four zones.
- The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the US can be taken as representative of these countries' general adult population under the age of 75.
- The samples in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and Türkiye are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these markets should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more "connected" segment of these populations.
- Weighting has been employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent census data.
- The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.
- Where results do not sum to 100 or the 'difference' appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of don't know or not stated responses. The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

## ABOUT IPSOS

Ipsos is one of the largest market research and polling companies globally, operating in 90 markets and employing nearly 20,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. Our 75 business solutions are based on primary data from our surveys, social media monitoring, and qualitative or observational techniques.

"Game Changers" – our tagline – summarizes our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence our rapidly changing world.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has been listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120, Mid-60 indices, and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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