



Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
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News release

In South Africa, trust in political leaders plunges to near-record low

In assessing the health of democracies, it is impossible to ignore citizen trust in public institutions. Trust is a cornerstone of democratic legitimacy, triggering citizens' willingness to contribute to a strong and robust democracy: Citizens who trust their government are more willing to listen and render support to government policies aimed at improving the country (Government Communication and Information System, 2014).

With South Africa facing economic difficulties and corruption scandals, at the time of the latest Afrobarometer survey in August-September 2015, could have contributed to a dramatic drop in public trust of political leaders.

Survey findings show that citizens' trust in the president has dropped by almost half from 2011, and is second-lowest level since the first survey in 2000. Trust in members of Parliament (MPs), premiers, local government councils, the ruling party, and opposition parties has also declined dramatically, making political leaders the least-trusted public officials in the country. Furthermore, trust in the president is lower than in any of the other 17 institutions and leaders that the survey asked about.

For more information, please refer to the Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 90 (available at www.afrobarometer.org).

Key findings

- The proportion of South Africans who say they trust the president "somewhat" or "a lot" dropped by almost half between 2011 and 2015, from 62% to 34%, reaching its second-lowest level since the Afrobarometer survey in 2002.
- Trust in elected political leaders (president, parliament, local government councils and the premier) is relatively low among supporters of the opposition parties-29% for the DA and 25% for EFF, lowest for Gauteng residents (28%), the younger generations (18-30years) at 36%.
- Further, urban South Africans (36%) and Indians (12%) portray the lowest levels of trust in their leaders, when compared to their counterparts.

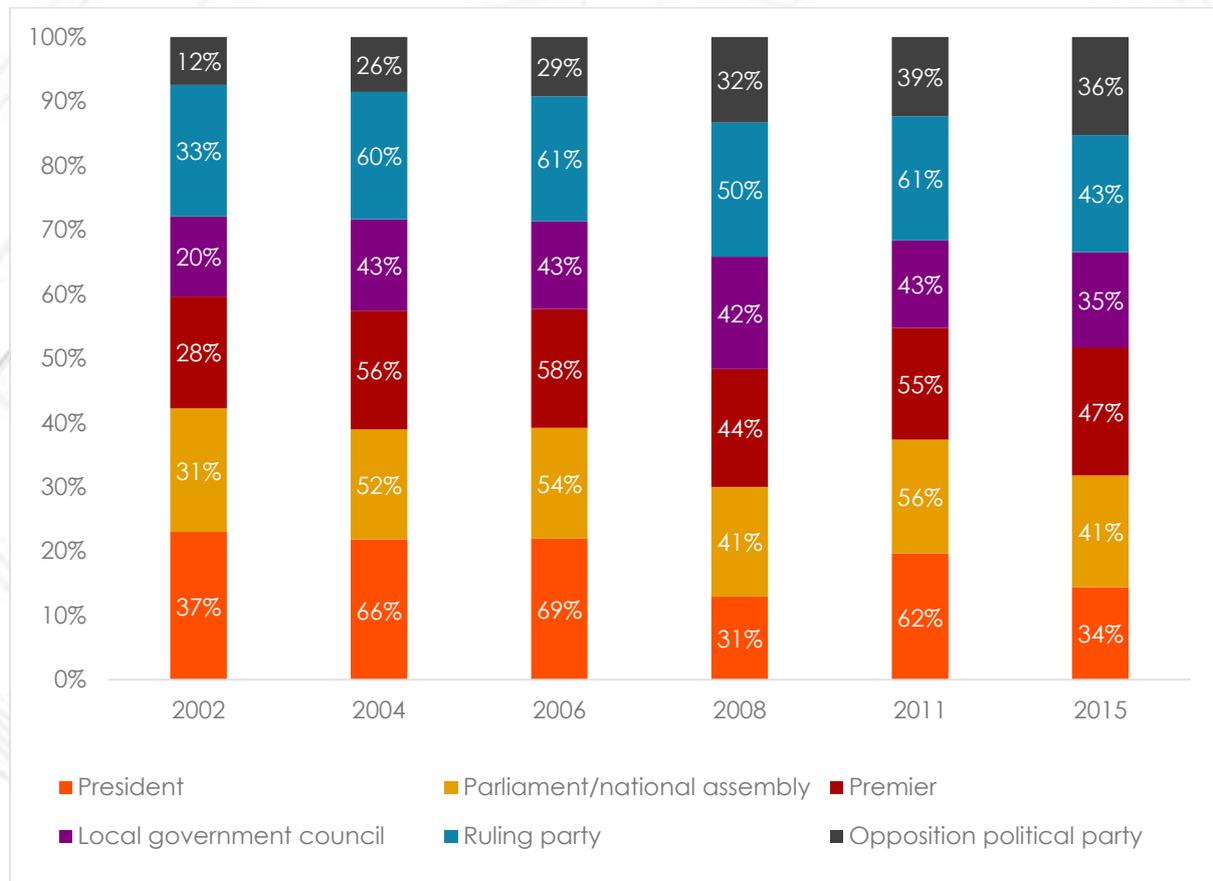
Afrobarometer

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. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus 94 Research interviewed 2,400 adult South Africans in August and September 2015. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011.

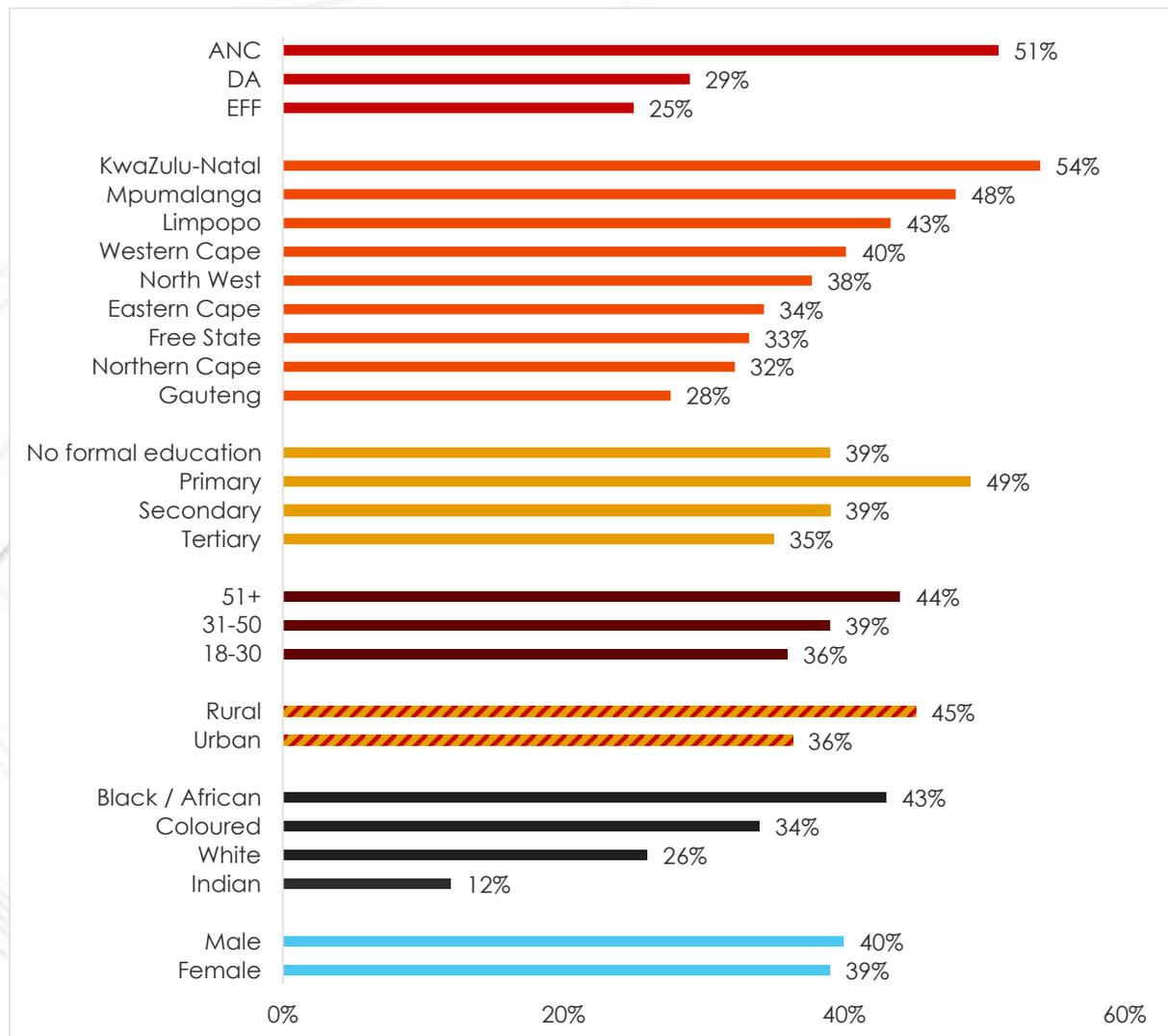
Charts

Figure 1: Trust in political leaders and institutions | South Africa | 2002-2015



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president? The Parliament? Your local government council? The premier of this province? The ruling party? Opposition political parties

Figure 2: Average trust in president, parliament, premier, and local government council | by demographic and social indicators | 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 "somewhat" or "a lot")

For more information, please contact:

Anyway Chingwete, Afrobarometer project manager for the Southern Africa region
 Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
 Telephone: 021 202 4098/4071
 Email: achingwete@afrobarometer.org / achingwete@ijr.org.za

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