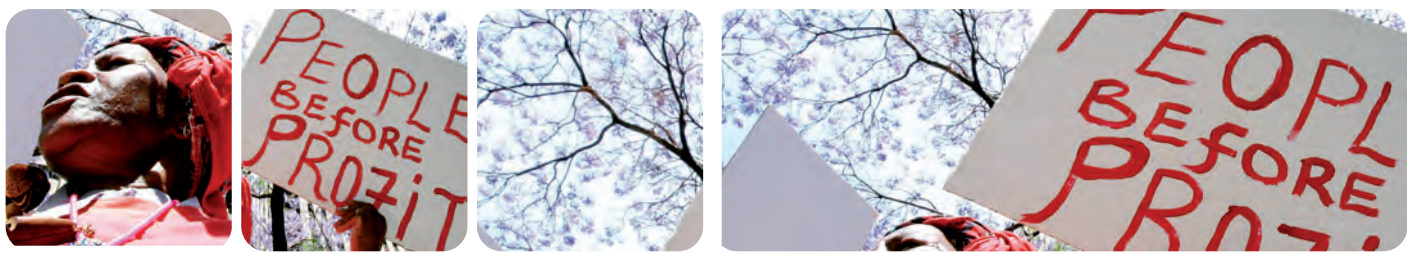


*“Good governance refers to the capacity of city councils and their partners to formulate and implement sound policies and systems that reflect the interests of local citizens, and to do so in a way that is transparent and inclusive of those with least power and resources.”*



City Governance



# City Governance



The quality of city government has been the focus of growing public concern. Escalating service delivery protests and campaigns about rates bills have fuelled perceptions of dysfunctional municipalities with incompetent leaders. High-profile interventions by national government have reinforced doubts about the technical and managerial capacities of councils, the integrity and accountability of city officials and politicians, and their apparent lack of responsiveness to local communities. Yet there has been little systematic analysis of the impact and effectiveness of city councils, partly because they are consistently overshadowed by research and political interest in national and provincial government, where power is (wrongly) perceived to be concentrated.

Governance is the activity of governing, whereas government is usually the instrument that undertakes it, often in conjunction with civil society or the business sector. Hence governance is what the government and its partners do; it is the exercise of leadership, management power and policy. Governance includes the formal institutions and procedures, as well as the informal arrangements and practices. It involves political authority and the allocation of institutional resources to plan and manage the common affairs of the city and to tackle its problems. Good governance refers to the capacity of city councils and their partners to formulate and implement sound policies and systems that reflect the interests of local citizens, and to do so in a way that is transparent and inclusive of those with least power and resources.

The main functions of city councils are:

- to reflect and represent local interests and attitudes
- to deliver essential household services
- to regulate the natural and built environment and
- to support the economy to boost jobs, incomes and tax revenues.

The UN-Habitat definition of good urban governance promotes equal access of all citizens to the benefits of urban living, which include adequate shelter, safe water, a clean environment, sanitation, health, education, nutrition, employment, public safety and mobility. Cities also have a wider responsibility to society as the main generators of jobs, tax revenues, carbon emissions and other externalities. Effective governance covers issues of political leadership and stability, accountability and relevance, efficient organisation and delivery, and the quality of laws and regulations. It also covers the probity of systems and procedures covering the award of contracts, staff appointments and related matters.

The concept of resilience implies that city-level institutions have the responsibilities, resources and strategic capabilities to anticipate and adapt to shifting conditions. Learning, innovation and appropriate investment help to achieve resilience. It is important for institutions to develop and sustain policies and practices that equip the city and its communities to address existing sources of vulnerability and future problems. Public confidence and trust can make it easier to address trade-offs and to make difficult, long-term decisions. Resilience also implies adopting a different approach to strategy and planning, with an onus on flexibility and the capacity to recognise and act upon emerging trends and altered circumstances.

The performance of local government is crucial to the long-term prosperity of cities and the cohesion of communities. Some of the qualities of good governance are difficult to define and measure, while judgements are often conditioned



*“The UN-Habitat definition of good urban governance promotes equal access of all citizens to the benefits of urban living, which include adequate shelter, safe water, a clean environment, sanitation, health, education, nutrition, employment, public safety and mobility.”*

by the perspective of the observer. For example, there is a big difference between external review and self-assessment. Ideally, the diagnosis of city governance achievements and shortcomings should include evidence from resident communities, business and labour representatives, local public officials and other local and national stakeholders. However, in the absence of comprehensive data of this kind, the focus here is on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of local citizens, as expressed in the yearly South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), supplemented by information on service delivery protests that vividly illustrate governance deficiencies.

The chapter assesses the progress made since the restructuring of city government in 2000/01. The 1996 Constitution established local government as an autonomous and equal sphere in its own right, rather than a third tier of government, in recognition of its crucial role in improving people’s everyday lives and promoting inclusive growth and development. In the major cities, sizeable, relatively powerful, single-tier metropolitan authorities were created with boundaries that are probably among the largest in the world. The restructuring facilitated the integration of communities divided by apartheid laws and planning, a more equitable distribution of municipal resources, and economies of scale for financial viability and sustained service delivery. By creating large municipalities, the risk was that local responsiveness and accountability might suffer. Drawing heavily on popular perceptions, the chapter assesses whether the quality of city governance has improved.

## RESTRUCTURING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The 1980s were characterised by widespread conflict and mass action, during which local civic and community structures were key drivers of wider societal changes. The re-organisation of local government that followed during the 1990s was a long drawn-out process of transition to fully democratic, non-racial institutions. The transition reflected the compromises made during the political negotiations of the early 1990s and the search for a safe landing for local government.

The transition was characterised by a series of incremental phases of local government restructuring, from a highly fragmented and unequal system towards one that was integrated and provided wall-to-wall coverage across the country.

Amalgamating and consolidating many different administrative structures and procedures proved to be a complex task, particularly as institutional capacity, services and infrastructure were so uneven across each city and district. The number of municipalities across the country as a whole reduced from 1100 in 1993, to 283 in 2001. Serious housing and service backlogs in many areas, and financial constraints resulting from extensive poverty and an emerging culture of non-payment of local taxes, meant that the intergovernmental fiscal system had to be overhauled to bring far more financial resources down to municipal level. The unrepresentative character of local officials and inexperience of new political leaders were added complications. Given the magnitude of these problems, the sheer physical establishment of new structures and systems with enhanced powers and resources was a notable achievement during the early 2000s.

The Constitution states that the objectives of local government are:

- to provide a democratic and accountable government for local communities
- to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner
- to promote social and economic development
- to promote a safe and healthy environment and
- to encourage the involvement of communities in local government matters.

The Constitution also states that municipalities should ‘give priority to the basic needs of the community, and promote the social and economic development of the community.’<sup>1</sup> There was considerable enthusiasm and optimism at the time about the potential for large, capacitated municipalities to improve living conditions by fostering development, and to engage communities in creating a vibrant grassroots democracy.

Developmental local government was the fundamental idea behind the proposal to create large metropolitan authorities in the landmark White Paper on Local Government (1998), and subsequent legislation. This important principle was defined as ‘local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives.’<sup>2</sup> Three compelling reasons for the creation of a metropolitan government were given in the 1998 White Paper:

- to promote a more equitable distribution of resources across the major cities (the principle of one city, one tax base)
- to promote spatial integration through strategic planning and co-ordinated investment in physical and social infrastructure across functional economic areas
- to develop coherent policies to improve the economic performance of the cities, in view of their national economic significance and the dangers of divisive competition between separate administrations.

The 1998 White Paper required municipalities to establish their own systems of participatory governance to complement the existing system of representative democracy. These systems included ward committees and forums to participate in preparing the integrated development plan and municipal budget. Executive mayors would ensure visionary leadership, and powerful city-wide administrations would have the capability to equalise the provision of services, boost political representation of the poor, and eliminate the separate tax bases and spatial divisions inherited from apartheid.

## POPULAR TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Institutional trust is an important barometer of well-being or malaise in a country or city. People who judge a government as trustworthy are more likely to vote, to support policy reforms and to comply with government regulations and other social norms. Public confidence or trust in municipal government is conducive to the collection of household rates and service charges, to participation in consultative exercises and decision-making, and to organisational stability. Dwindling trust can create uncertainty and friction, and undermine popular support and legitimacy for government action. Distrust may reflect all kinds of institutional difficulties, from poor communication and staff shortages to political infighting, maladministration, tender irregularities, fraud and corruption.

Table 5.1 compares the level of trust in local government with national government and other institutions of society over the last decade, based on data from the SASAS and its predecessor, the national opinion survey.

**Table 5.1 Trust in institutions, 1998–2008 (percentages ranked in descending order by trust in 2008)**

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Churches	82	81	74	81	84	81	81	82	83	82
SABC	–	–	–	–	75	73	71	72	–	71
National government	47	60	43	52	57	69	64	59	52	51
Courts	42	45	37	45	50	58	56	52	49	49
Parliament	–	–	–	–	57	65	59	55	46	47
Police	42	47	39	40	42	46	45	39	38	40
Local government	37	48	32	38	45	55	48	44	34	38
Political parties	30	39	29	27	–	–	42	37	27	29

*Note: Percentages saying they strongly trust or trust in each institution in South Africa at present. The data for 1998–2001 is from an earlier HSRC national opinion survey, which explains the gap in 2002.*

*Sources: HSRC, 1998–2008; Roberts B, 2008<sup>3</sup>*

Public confidence in most state institutions clearly improved from 1998–2004, followed by a decline from 2004–2007. Trust then seemed to stabilise in 2007 and 2008, with only a bare majority of people seeming to retain confidence in national government. This appears consistent with national political developments from 2006–2008, including a groundswell of discontent resulting in events at Polokwane and the subsequent change in government leadership.



## HOUSEHOLD LIVING STANDARDS

A different approach to the issue of service provision is to consider the living standards of households, focusing on those whose basic needs are not being met. The SASAS 2008 asked people whether their housing, access to transport, health care and schooling were inadequate, just adequate or more than adequate for their household needs. Of course people's living standards may be inadequate for many reasons, some of which have nothing to do with local government. Further, the rating is subjective and expectations of what is adequate may differ between metros and other areas. Nevertheless, the scale of unmet needs is clearly relevant in whether government policy is proving to be effective.

To compare individual metros and the rest of the country, Figure 5.1 looks at the proportion of respondents who state that their needs for housing, transport, health care and schooling are inadequate.

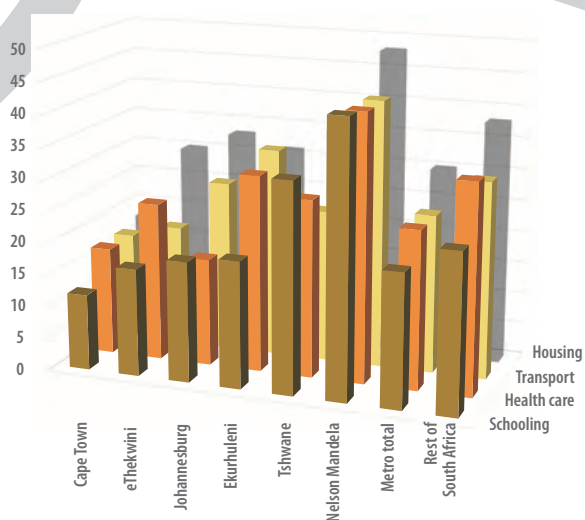


Figure 5.1 People with unmet basic needs, 2008

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>4</sup>

Housing is almost always identified as the biggest unmet need, followed by access to transport, health care and schooling. Interestingly, these services are mainly the responsibility of provinces rather than municipalities. The level of unmet needs is 5–10% lower in the metros than elsewhere in South Africa, but the variation among individual metros is large. Cape Town is consistently rated as having lower unmet needs than the other cities, followed by eThekweni and Johannesburg, while Nelson Mandela Bay is consistently rated as having the highest unmet needs, followed by Tshwane.

Over the full period, trust in local government was much lower than in most other state institutions. Political parties were the only other institutions that consistently received lower public ratings. Local government received majority support from the public only once in the last decade (in 2004), and from 2004–2007 local government suffered the biggest decline of any institution. There appears to have been growing unease and scepticism about municipal performance, perhaps with a slight recovery in 2007 and 2008. Considering the far-reaching democratic and structural reforms to the municipal system in the early 2000s, the lack of improvement in public trust in local government is striking when comparing the late 1990s and the late 2000s. In contrast, trust in national government and the courts of law appear to have increased over the decade.

Table 5.2 compares the level of trust in each of the metros with trust in other local authorities.<sup>5</sup>

Table 5.2 Trust in local government, 2003/04 compared to 2007/08

	2003/04 average	2007/08 average	Difference
Cape Town	45	47	2
eThekweni	35	47	12
Nelson Mandela Bay	46	42	(4)
Johannesburg	36	27	(9)
Ekurhuleni	52	25	(27)
Tshwane	47	24	(23)
Metro average	42	36	(6)
Rest of South Africa	54	37	(17)

Note: Percentages of people who say they strongly trust or trust in local government. The percentages are ranked in descending order by trust in 2007/08.

Source: HSRC, 2003–2008<sup>6</sup>

There was little difference between average levels of trust in the metros and elsewhere, with, in both areas, just over one-third of citizens appearing to trust their local authorities. In 2003/04 there was a higher level of public confidence in non-metro councils, but subsequently, this fell sharply. Confidence in the metros also declined from 2003/04 to 2007/08, although not by as much as elsewhere. The limited trust in the metros is a cause for concern if the government is to devolve additional policy responsibilities onto them and/or amalgamate them with surrounding authorities.

Among the individual municipalities, trust in the three coastal metros appeared significantly higher than in the three Gauteng metros or the rest of the country, although this was not the case in 2003/04. Trust in the City of Cape Town was consistently higher than in most other metros. The City of eThekweni experienced the biggest increase in trust, against the national trend, and enjoyed the same level of public confidence as Cape Town in 2007/08. In contrast, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane saw the biggest falls in trust since 2003/04 – from about half of the citizens trusting these municipalities in 2003/04 to only one-quarter in 2007/08. Trust in Johannesburg was consistently low.

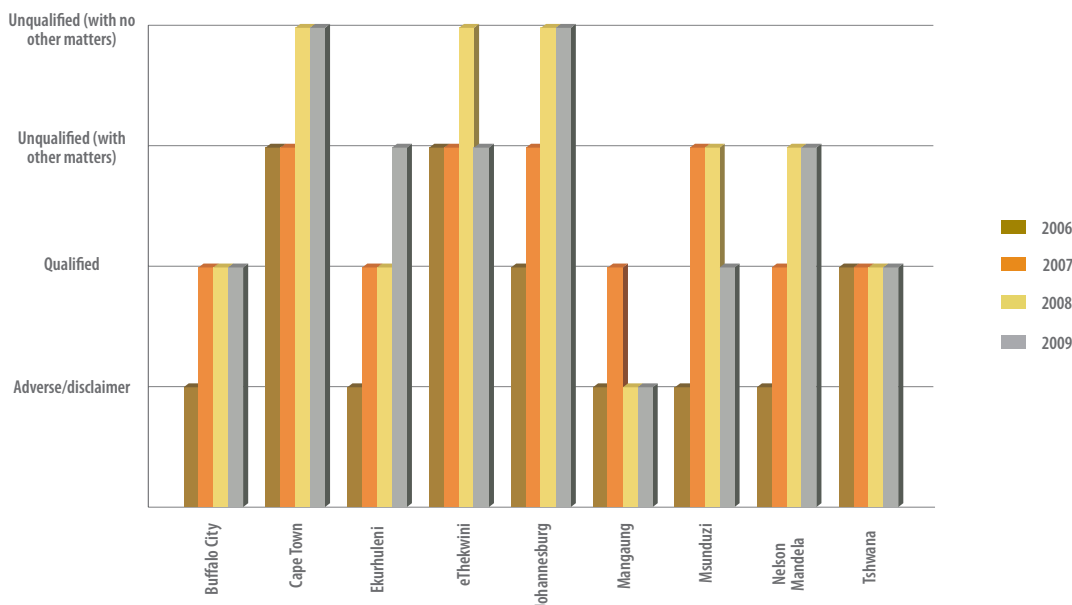
Municipal mismanagement and corruption are obvious sources of community mistrust. Under the authority of the president, the Special Investigation Unit subjected the two metros with the biggest declines in local trust, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane, to wide-ranging investigations into alleged corruption. Announced in November 2010, the official terms of reference for investigation include procurement processes, mismanagement, wasteful spending, irregular staff appointments, and misappropriation of the municipality's money and assets over a four-year period from 2007–2010. There were also allegations of tender rigging in Ekurhuleni's waste management department, involving contracts worth about R850 million.<sup>7</sup> The problems, said to be linked to political factionalism and infighting in the region, resulted in the disbanding of the ANC's regional committee and the redeployment of the Ekurhuleni mayor to serve as health minister in the Gauteng province. Tshwane's municipal manager was suspended in October 2009 on charges of misconduct and maladministration, and 15 officials implicated in an internal corruption report were suspended pending a full investigation. Tshwane's mayor was redeployed to serve as deputy health minister in the national government.

There is a loose connection between dismissals or suspensions and popular perceptions in the eThekweni, Cape Town, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni metros. However, this is not the case for the Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay metros. An indication of mismanagement is the number of senior (section 57) managers dismissed or suspended by a municipality. The total numbers involved vary widely across the major cities. Over the five-year period from 2006–2010, no one was dismissed or suspended in eThekweni or Johannesburg. Two people were dismissed or suspended in Cape Town, five in Msunduzi, eight in Nelson Mandela Bay, nine in Tshwane and Mangaung, 10 in Ekurhuleni and 13 in Buffalo City.<sup>8</sup>

The Msunduzi municipality is an extreme illustration of mismanagement and breakdown in external trust. In March 2010 the KwaZulu-Natal provincial cabinet decided to place the Msunduzi municipality under administration. The mayor and municipal manager were stripped of their executive powers after the financial position of the administration was described as being in turmoil and on the verge of collapse. The financial systems were weak, revenue collection was neglected and net available cash was very limited.

A different indicator of trust is an external audit report. The Auditor-General produces a yearly assessment of each municipality's overall state of financial management and performance information. The purpose is to build public confidence and trust by enabling oversight and accountability. The most positive (cleanest) audit rating is 'unqualified (with no other matters)' and the most critical is 'disclaimer'. To receive a clean audit, municipalities have to show close leadership involvement in financial and performance management, effective internal controls and risk management strategies, appropriately qualified staff and effective information systems.

***“The limited trust in the metros is a cause for concern if the government is to devolve additional policy responsibilities onto them and/or amalgamate them with surrounding authorities.”***



**Figure 5.2 Auditor-General's audit opinion, 2005/06–2008/09**

Source: Auditor-General, 2007–2010<sup>9</sup>

Figure 5.2 shows the audit opinion for the nine South African Cities Network (SACN) member cities from 2005/06 to 2008/09 (the latest available year).

Most cities improved their ratings over the five-year period, except Mangaung, Msunduzi and Tshwane. Cape Town, Johannesburg and eThekweni had the best track record of clean audits. In 2008/09 Cape Town and Johannesburg were two of only four municipalities throughout the country to receive clean audits. The main reasons for municipalities not getting clean audits are serious financial misstatements, non-compliance with laws and regulations, and lapses in governance arrangements (internal audit, audit committees and risk management). In his report for 2008/09 the Auditor-General noted that '[m]etros fared significantly better than high-, medium- and low-capacity municipalities in all three broad areas audited'.<sup>10</sup>

A credit rating provides a narrower indication of a municipality's financial situation and governance, particularly its ability to repay a major loan, which will depend upon its revenue base and financial management procedures and controls. The metros and other large cities are not all assessed by the same rating agency, which complicates any simple comparison of their position. Table 5.3 summarises the best available information.

**Table 5.3 Municipal credit ratings**

	Cape Town	Ekurhuleni	eThekweni	Johannesburg	Msunduzi	Nelson Mandela	Tshwane
2006	AA+	na	AA	na	short term A1 long term A	zaA	na
2007	AA-	na	AA	A and F1(Zaf)	short term A1 long term A	Aa3.za	na
2008	AA-	na	AA	A+ and F1 (Zaf)	short term A1- long term A	Aa3.za	na
2009	AA-	AA	AA-	AA- and F1+ (Zaf)	na	Aa3.za, A+	BBB+
2010	AA-	AA-	AA-	A	na	A+	BBB+

Source: SACN, 2010<sup>11</sup>



The credit ratings of several cities deteriorated over the last two years, perhaps because of the recession and increased borrowing associated with the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. The City of eThekweni had the best track record, followed by Cape Town and Ekurhuleni. Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay and Tshwane had patchier records.

## PERCEIVED MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE

The quality of public services is a foundation of trust and a vital indicator of effective city government. In 1997 the national government introduced a framework to establish a new, democratic, service delivery ethic in the public sector. This was in line with the Constitutional ideal of promoting the use of public resources in a manner that is efficient, development-oriented and responsive to people's needs, which was described as the Batho Pele, or people first principles and is especially relevant at the municipal level. The adoption of these principles was supposed to lead to a clear break from the over-centralised, hierarchical and rule-bound systems inherited from the previous regime.<sup>12</sup> The principles provide a useful framework for assessing the extent to which municipal services have been democratic and put people, especially poor people, first. They include issues of consultation, information, transparency, competence, effectiveness, equity, responsiveness and value for money.

Popular attitudes towards the performance of municipalities against these principles were included in the 2008 SASAS. Eight attitudinal statements were developed in order to assess the degree to which people felt municipalities were implementing the principles in their provision of household services (Table 5.4). Survey participants were asked to respond to positive statements about services relating to each of these principles. They could (strongly) agree or disagree, or neither agree nor disagree.

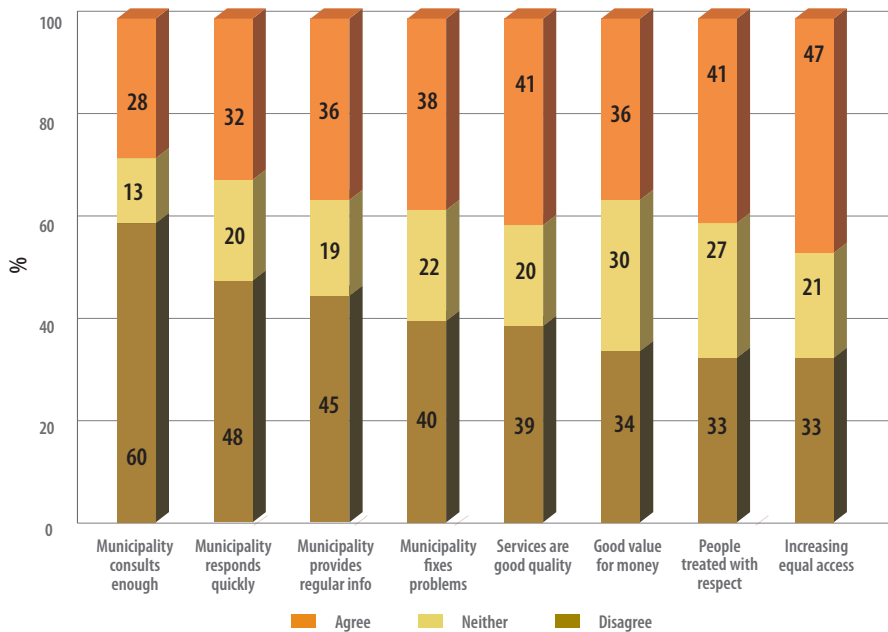
**Table 5.4 SASAS statements about municipal performance**

1	Municipality consults communities enough on basic services.
2	Municipality responds quickly to complaints about problems with services.
3	Municipality provides regular information on its performance in delivering services.
4	Municipality fixes problems and follows through.
5	Government provides basic services that are of good quality.
6	Municipality provides good value for money in charges for basic services.
7	Municipality treats people with respect.
8	Government is making progress in giving all South Africans equal access to services.

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>13</sup>



Figure 5.3 shows the level of agreement with the various statements about municipal services. The responses are restricted to people living in the metros.



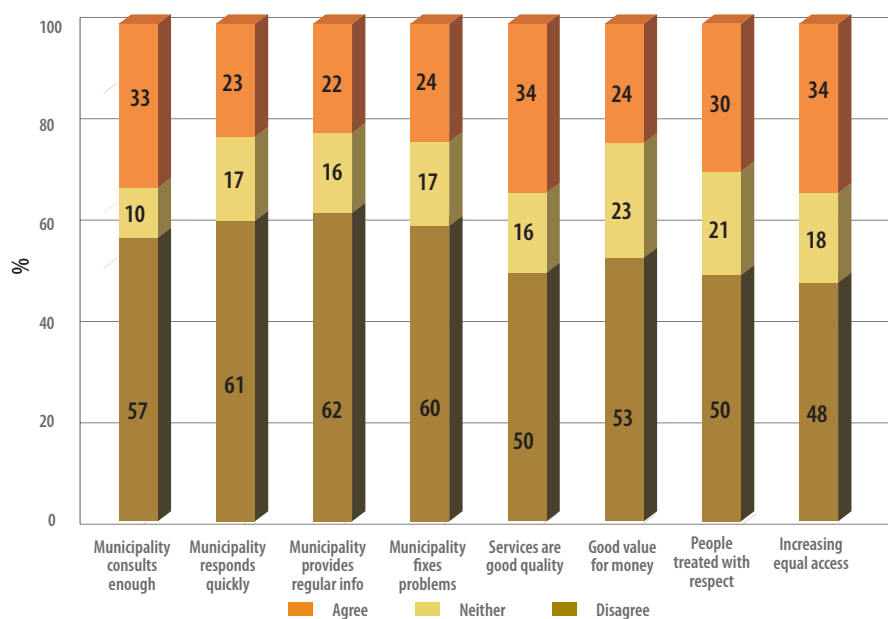
The results show that people are mostly in agreement that their municipality is making good progress to give all South Africans equal access to services, with nearly half of respondents agreeing and a third disagreeing with this statement. More respondents also agree that people are treated with respect. The responses are more finely balanced for statements about the quality and value for money of municipal services. The least agreement is found with statements about consultation, information and responsiveness.

Figure 5.3 Agreement with statements about municipal performance – metros, 2008<sup>14</sup>

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>15</sup>

The overall message seems to be that the metros are improving service delivery, but are not communicating or responding quickly enough to people’s problems. This is in marked contrast to the 1998 White Paper idea of developmental local government and the commitments made to build community participation. Another important finding is that the level of public agreement with these statements about municipal services is generally low. It is always a minority of people who give municipal performance a positive rating. A culture of public service and accountability seems to be some way off.

Figure 5.4 shows the equivalent responses from people living in the rest of the country (small cities, towns and rural areas).



The results show that people outside the metros are generally less positive about municipal services, with the exception of consultation. Up to one-third of respondents outside the metros give municipal performance a positive rating. At least half of all respondents disagree with all the positive statements about services. This supports the conclusions of the analysis undertaken for the Local Government Turnaround Strategy, which found that many of the municipalities outside the metros are struggling to meet the service needs of local communities. It is also consistent with General Household Survey (GHS) 2009 data on the availability of basic services shown in Chapter 3.

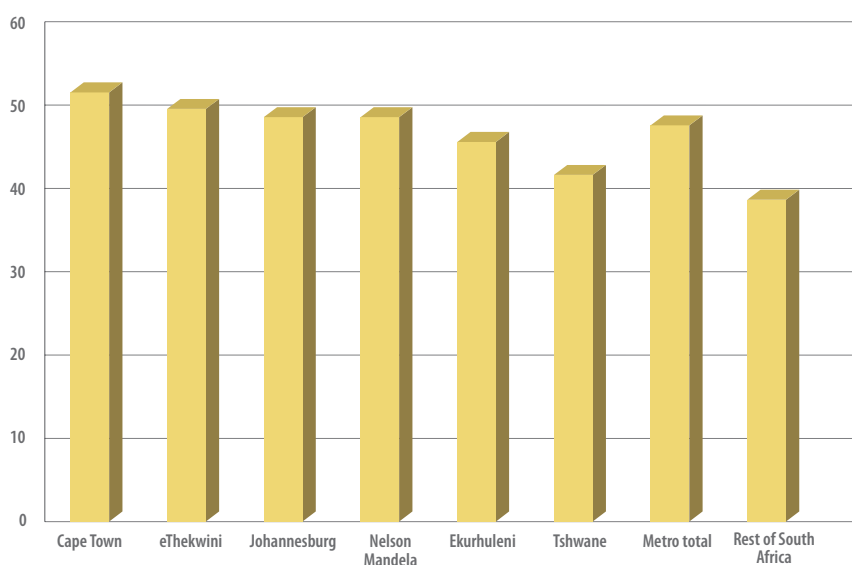
Figure 5.4 Agreement with statements about municipal performance – non-metros, 2008<sup>16</sup>

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>17</sup>

The biggest discrepancy between people living in the metros and those living elsewhere relates to the municipality doing a good job of fixing problems. The metros appear to perform far better in this respect. The metros also seem to be better than other municipalities at providing information, offering good value for money and treating people with respect.

One way of comparing the metros is to create a composite service quality index of all the responses. The index is the sum of the responses to each of the nine statements converted into a range of values from 0 to 100. The lowest possible overall score of municipal performance is 0 and the highest is 100. The highest score would require all respondents to agree strongly with each of the nine statements and the lowest score would require all respondents to disagree strongly with each of the nine statements.

Figure 5.5 compares the ratings for each of the metros together with the metro total and the rest of the country.



All the metros have a higher service quality index than the average for the rest of the country. There is also a notable difference between overall attitudes to services in most of the metros and elsewhere. Cape Town has the highest rating, followed by eThekweni, Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay, while Tshwane has the lowest rating. This order of ranking is broadly consistent with the levels of trust in local government shown in the previous section (especially Table 5.2).

**Figure 5.5 Municipal service quality index for the metros, 2008 (%)**

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>18</sup>

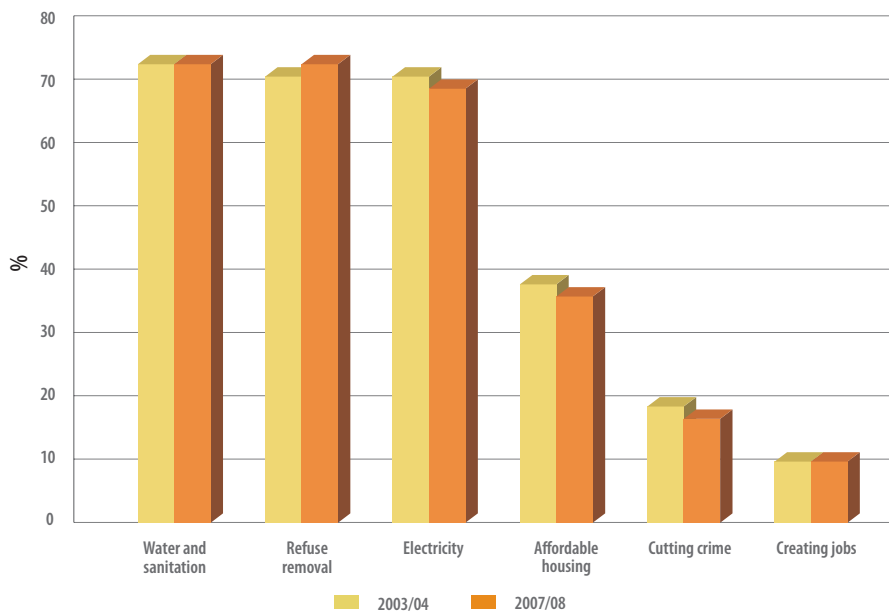
What is also worth noting is that there is no room for complacency anywhere, since even the best performing metros are achieving about only half of their potential. Furthermore, people with low incomes (who have the most acute need for basic services) are generally more dissatisfied with municipal performance than people with medium and higher incomes, suggesting they receive poorer service.<sup>19</sup>

## SATISFACTION WITH SPECIFIC SERVICES

The above assessment of municipal performance discusses the quality of municipal services in general and is limited to a single year. People's perceptions of particular services are available for all the surveys from 2003–2008, which enables some analysis of whether people believed that specific services had improved over time. The survey covers services that are not all strictly municipal services, but municipalities have important roles and responsibilities in relation to most of them. The relevant question asked was people's degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with government handling of:

- water and sanitation
- electricity
- refuse removal
- affordable housing
- cutting crime
- creating jobs

Figure 5.6, which shows the proportion of respondents in the metros who were either satisfied or very satisfied with the handling of each issue for 2003/04 and 2007/08, reveals that there are big differences in the rates of satisfaction.

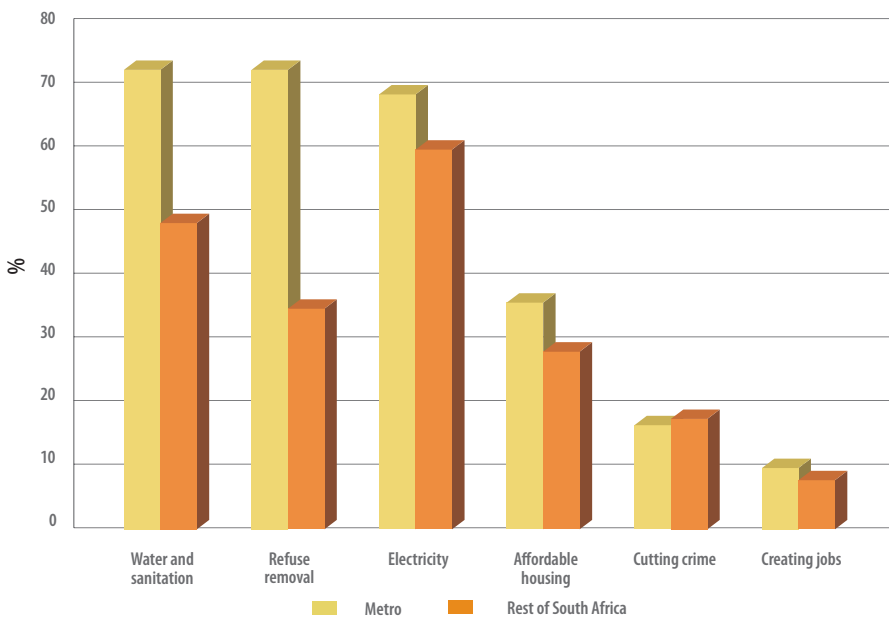


Satisfaction levels with water and sanitation, refuse removal and electricity were all relatively high and changed little over the six-year period. However, people were far less satisfied with the provision of affordable housing, efforts to cut crime and job creation policies. The high levels of dissatisfaction with crime reduction and job creation were striking, with no sign of improvement over the period. It is notable that the functions over which municipalities have most control were the ones on which they were most highly rated.

**Figure 5.6 Satisfaction with specific services in the metros, 2003/04 compared to 2007/08**

Source: HSRC, 2003–2008<sup>20</sup>

Figure 5.7 compares the levels of satisfaction with specific services between the metros and the rest of the country.



Satisfaction levels with the municipal functions of water and sanitation, refuse removal and electricity are all noticeably higher in the metros than elsewhere, especially water and sanitation and refuse removal. Cutting crime is the only issue that non-metro residents were more satisfied about, which may be because crime is less of a problem outside the major cities, where there is less wealth and lower inequalities. Overall, the evidence strongly suggests that service delivery is superior in the metros.

**Figure 5.7 Satisfaction with specific services in the metros and elsewhere, 2007/08**

Source: HSRC, 2007/08<sup>21</sup>

To analyse and compare individual metros, a composite index of all the responses was created. The overall index is the sum of the responses on each of the six issues converted into a range of values from 0 to 100. The lowest possible overall score of satisfaction is 0 and the highest is 100. The highest score would require all respondents to express strong satisfaction with the handling of each issue, whereas the lowest score would require all respondents to express strong dissatisfaction. The data for individual years was added together and averaged to increase the number of responses and to reduce sampling errors, using the same procedure followed in the section above on trust.

Table 5.5 compares the ratings for each of the metros together with the metro total and the rest of the country for the periods 2003/04 and 2007/08.

**Table 5.5 Satisfaction with services, 2003/04 compared to 2007/08**

	2003/04 average	2007/08 average	Difference
Cape Town	55	50	(5)
Johannesburg	43	49	6
eThekweni	47	48	1
Ekurhuleni	44	48	4
Nelson Mandela Bay	54	46	(8)
Tshwane	54	43	(11)
Metro average	49	48	(1)
Rest of South Africa	41	37	(4)

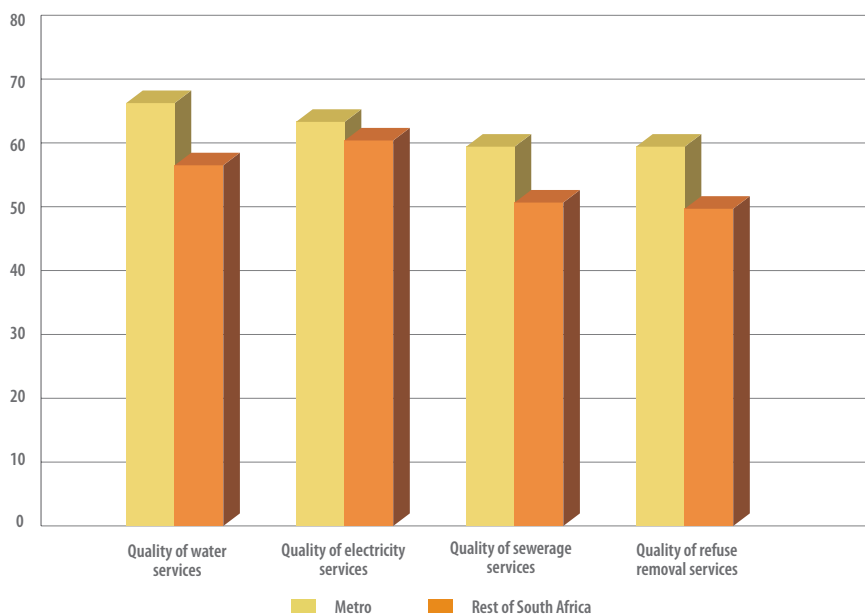
*Note: Percentages are ranked in descending order by satisfaction in 2007/08.*

*Source: HSRC, 2003–2008<sup>22</sup>*

The levels of satisfaction with these services were higher in the metros than elsewhere, which is consistent with all other evidence provided in this report. Satisfaction with services in the metros and elsewhere showed a notable difference, which grew over time. Service satisfaction was highest in Cape Town, although it had declined. Johannesburg, eThekweni and Ekurhuleni were close behind, with satisfaction levels improved over time. Conditions in Nelson Mandela Bay and Tshwane appeared to have deteriorated.

The SASAS 2008 also asked respondents a related but slightly different question about the quality of water, electricity, water-borne sewerage and refuse removal services in their area. To compare the metros and the rest of the country, an index was created of each response with a range of values from 0 to 100. The highest score would require all respondents to rate a particular service of a very high quality, whereas the lowest score would require all respondents to rate it of a very poor quality. Figure 5.8 shows the results of the survey.

***“Low electoral turnouts may reflect dissatisfaction with national or local government performance, lack of conviction in any of the existing political parties, apathy and belief that voting cannot change anything, or a broader sense of alienation from the political process, which could have many wider social consequences.”***



The quality of these basic services is consistently rated more highly in the metros than elsewhere, in line with all other evidence available. The disparity is clear, although not wide. The variation is less across the rating of these essential services in the metros than elsewhere, which probably reflects the reduced availability of refuse removal, water-borne sewerage and water services in rural areas, resulting in lower subjective assessments.

**Figure 5.8 Index of service quality, 2008 (%)**

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>23</sup>

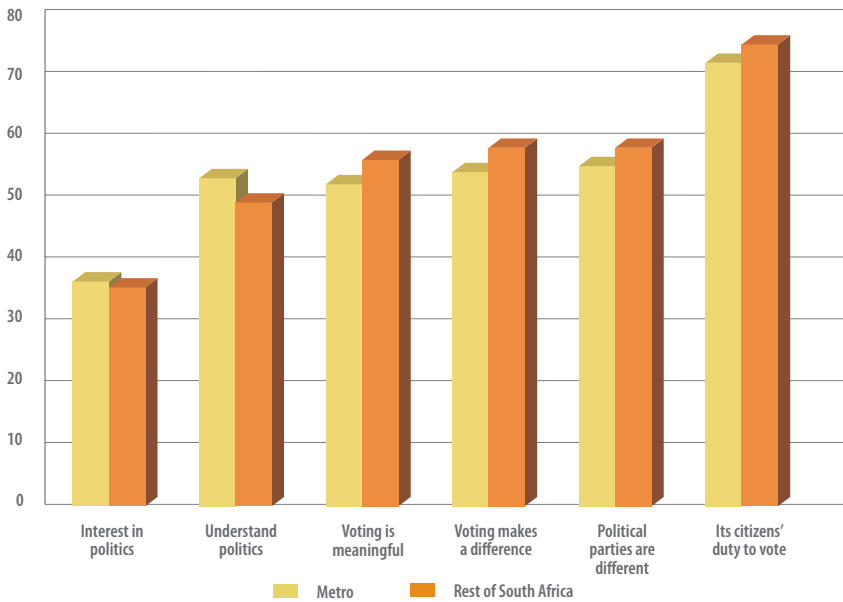
## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation can take many different forms, with different implications for city governance. Conventional forms of participation include voting and related activities, such as supporting the electoral campaigns of politicians and their parties. They also include participation in ward committees, stakeholder consultative forums, wider political discussions, writing letters to newspapers, signing petitions, and involvement in electronic forums that cover matters of public interest and debate. High levels of voting and related activities are important for democratic accountability and for the legitimacy of political leaders and governing institutions. Low electoral turnouts may reflect dissatisfaction with national or local government performance, lack of conviction in any of the existing political parties, apathy and belief that voting cannot change anything, or a broader sense of alienation from the political process, which could have many wider social consequences.

Unconventional political behaviour tends to refer to more direct forms of action, including involvement in mass protests, street demonstrations, civil disobedience campaigns and rates boycotts. High levels of engagement in such activities are likely to reflect people's disillusionment with government performance and possibly a desire for radical change. They may also reflect scepticism about the efficacy of the electoral system, perhaps caused by a context in which people typically vote along racial, cultural or religious lines, or in which powerful social and economic forces undermine democratic processes. The role of direct action and protest politics in democratic societies, and the extent to which they complement or contradict conventional electoral politics, may depend on the character and responsiveness of the existing political system and the kind of change being advocated. This includes whether the focus of concern is a particular policy or leader, a broader shift in policy direction or approach, or a change in the governing system or political regime.



Figure 5.9 compares popular attitudes with conventional political participation in the metros and the rest of the country.

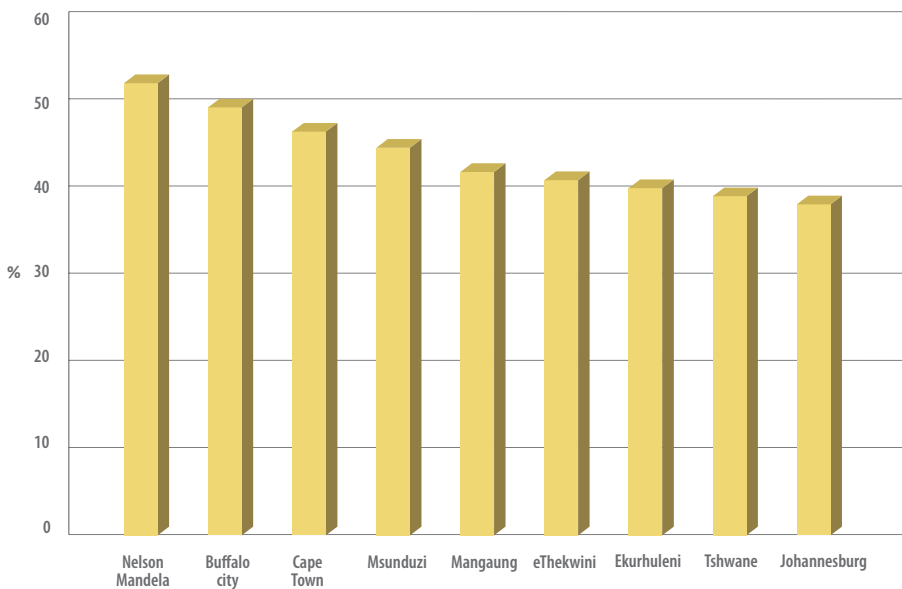


**Figure 5.9 Belief in utility of conventional political participation, 2008 (%)**

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>24</sup>

The 2008 SASAS identifies six measures of conventional political behaviour, including people's level of interest in politics and their views on whether voting is important or pointless. The results show a strong sense of duty to vote, but little interest in politics. People are also inclined to believe that voting makes a difference. People in the metros seem slightly more sceptical about conventional political participation than those in the rest of the country.

The actual levels of voting are much higher for national elections than for local, which is a common pattern internationally. Figure 5.10 shows the turnout of registered voters in the 2006 local government elections.



**Figure 5.10 Registered voter turnout in 2006 local elections**

Source: PDG report, 2010<sup>25</sup>

Nelson Mandela Bay has the highest level of turnout and Johannesburg and Tshwane the lowest, but these levels are not especially low when judged by international standards.

The 2008 SASAS also identifies six ways in which respondents may have tried to improve things more directly. Table 5.6 compares the different forms of direct participation in the metros and elsewhere.

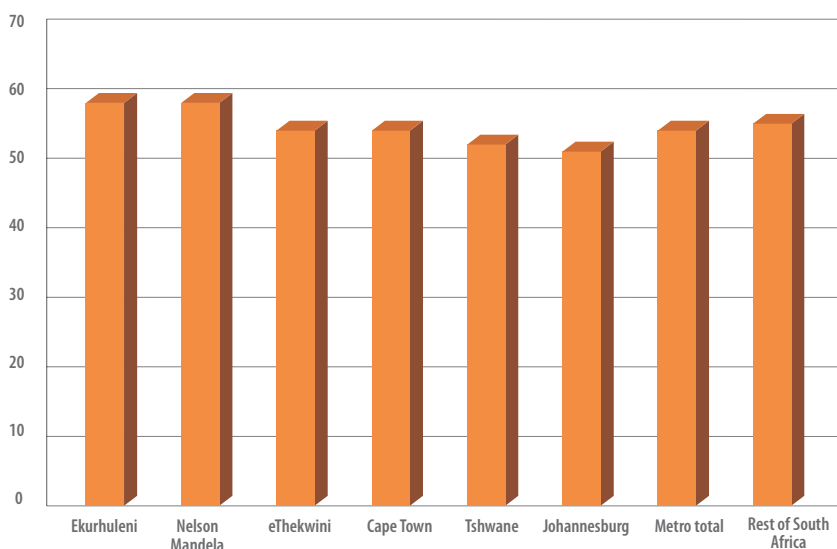
**Table 5.6 Extent of participation in direct action, 2008 (%)**

<b>During the last 12 months have you:</b>	<b>Metros</b>	<b>Rest of South Africa</b>
Contacted a politician, government or local government official?	11	9
Contacted a traditional leader?	5	9
Contacted a radio or TV station, or a newspaper?	9	5
Signed a petition?	7	4
Taken part in a protest march or demonstration?	12	6
Worked in a political party or action group?	3	3

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>26</sup>

Residents of the metros are more likely to involve themselves in direct action than those living elsewhere. The biggest difference is the proportion of people who have participated in a protest march or demonstration, which is twice as high in the metros as elsewhere. Nevertheless, the proportion is still quite small, at less than one-eighth of respondents.

To compare individual metros, a composite participation index was created as the sum of the responses to each of the six statements about conventional political behaviour. Its values range from 0 to 100. The highest score would require all respondents to say they were very interested in politics, and to agree strongly that voting makes a difference, that political parties are not all the same, and that citizens have a duty to vote. The lowest score would require all respondents to say the opposite. Figure 5.11 displays the index of political participation by metro for 2008.



**Figure 5.11 Index of political participation by metro, 2008 (%)**

Source: HSRC, 2008<sup>27</sup>

The results show little variation in attitudes to participation among the metros. People in Ekurhuleni and Nelson Mandela Bay appear to be slightly more positive about politics and voting than those in Johannesburg and Tshwane. People in eThekweni and Cape Town are somewhere in-between.

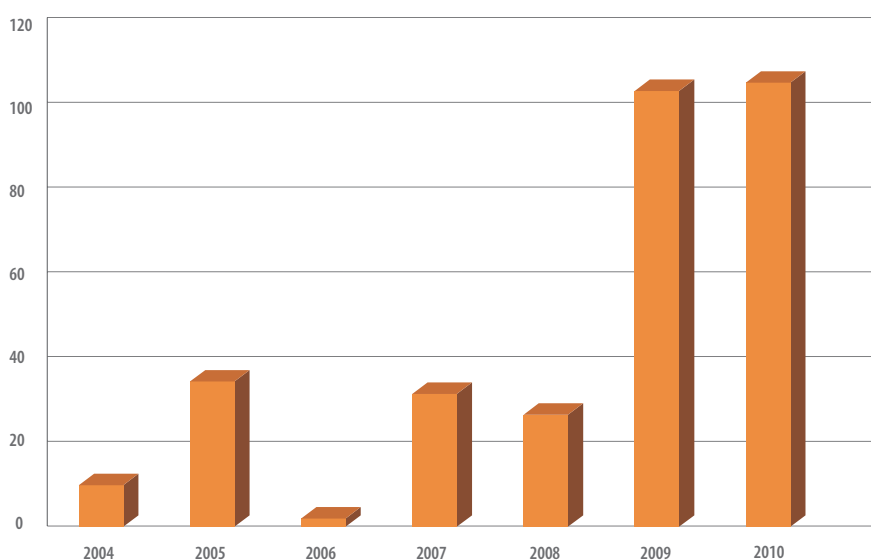
An obvious question that arises is whether political participation, trust in local government and experience of service delivery are linked. One might expect people who are more satisfied with public services to show greater trust in their municipality and more positive attitudes to participation.

The evidence available provides some support for this virtuous circle. For example, Cape Town and eThekweni are rated relatively high in terms of trust, service quality and satisfaction, and moderately in participation. Conversely, Tshwane is rated low in all these respects. Johannesburg is an anomaly – rated high in service quality and satisfaction, but low in trust and participation. The position of the non-metro areas is also contradictory – services are rated low but trust is about average and political participation is relatively high. Summing up, the quality of services, trust in local government and political participation may be linked, but other factors also appear to complicate this linkage.

## SERVICE DELIVERY PROTESTS

Service delivery protests are an extreme form of direct political action seemingly born out of frustration with the pace and quality of state provision of housing, water, sanitation, roads, schools and other essential services. Most protests have been targeted at local government and linked with accusations of incompetence, misconduct and corruption.<sup>28</sup> Some marches and demonstrations have ended up in violent confrontations and caused considerable damage to public facilities and disruption to everyday life.<sup>29</sup> They have succeeded in drawing attention to serious impoverishment, injustice and maladministration. They have also reinforced popular perceptions that municipalities are in crisis and that failure is widespread. Some commentators have suggested that the grievances with housing should be directed at national and provincial government because housing is their mandate. However, local government is also implicated through its responsibility for essential infrastructure and services, the lack of which has often delayed the building of new housing. With the imminent devolution of housing and public transport functions to the metros, metros might become even more of a focus of popular protest if they do not carry out their new functions effectively.

Municipal IQ has compiled systematic information on service delivery protests through scanning media reports and creating a database that is regularly updated, and the results for 2010 are shown in Figure 5.12.

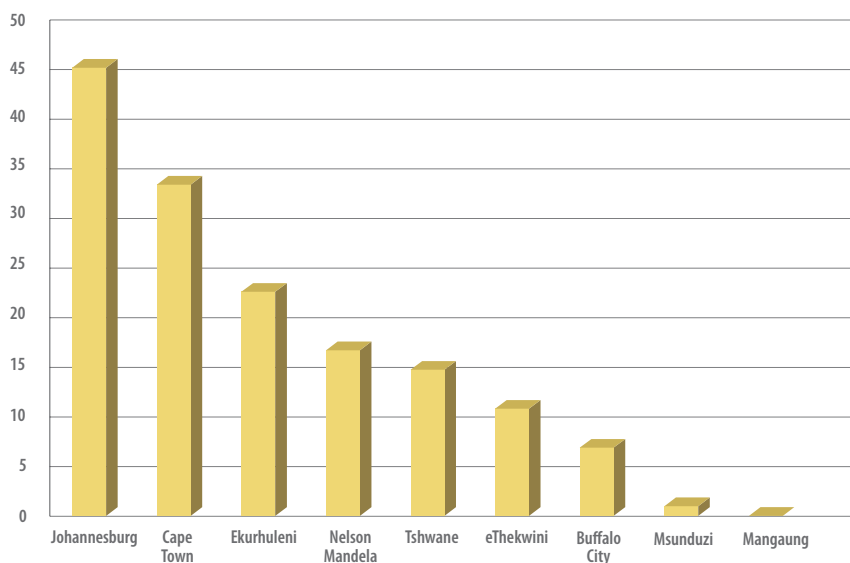


The number of protests appear to rise sharply in 2009 after the national and provincial elections, and to continue throughout 2010. Protests in 2009 and 2010 are three to four times higher than in previous years, a significant escalation in mass protest that gives considerable cause for government concern. Social unrest can destabilise communities and vandalised infrastructure and property can be costly for municipalities to repair. Overt oppositional action of this kind also threatens the legitimacy of the democratic system and can cause serious reputational damage to the government and nation.

**Figure 5.12 Major service delivery protests, 2004–2010**

Source: *Municipal IQ, 2010*<sup>30</sup>

The location of service delivery protests has been very uneven across the country, with a strong concentration in the larger metros. Figure 5.13 shows the total number of protests in each of the nine SACN member cities from 2004–2010, which is about half of the national total. Considering their population size, Johannesburg and Cape Town experienced disproportionate numbers of protests, whereas eThekweni and Tshwane had less than their proportionate share. Most protests occurred in informal settlements and were associated with demands for better living conditions. The relatively few protests in the worst performing (non-metro) municipalities with the largest service backlogs, and in towns or rural areas with the poorest economic conditions, means that the actions were not simply a function of objective economic and institutional circumstances.



**Figure 5.13 Major service delivery protests by municipality, 2004–2010**

Source: *Municipal IQ, 2010*<sup>31</sup>

A special parliamentary report identified some of the general reasons for the protests that might help to explain their spatial distribution:<sup>32</sup>

While dissatisfaction with poor service delivery has certainly been a factor in triggering some of the service delivery protests, the causes of the protests are far more varied and complex than this. It must therefore be acknowledged that there are a multiplicity of factors at the root of the current protests and that these can best be placed into three broad categories: systemic (such as maladministration, fraud, nepotism and corruption in housing lists); structural (such as healthcare, unemployment and land issues); and governance (such as weak leadership and the erosion of public confidence in leadership).

Additional underlying factors appear to be the pressures of urbanisation and consequent congestion in informal areas, coupled with frustrated expectations of achieving a better life by moving to the cities in pursuit of improved economic opportunities.<sup>33</sup> Population growth contained within the boundaries of existing shack settlements intensifies the competition for scarce resources (especially land and access to services) within and among communities. A related factor may be the constrained household aspirations from being trapped on the outskirts of cities, aggravated by hollow promises of improved delivery and job creation in the face of councillor indifference or municipal incapacity. Communities believe that the formal channels of political influence – such as ward committees – are too slow, ineffectual or dysfunctional. During 2009 the protests peaked in winter, when living conditions were harsher, utility costs had risen and industrial action was also widespread.<sup>34</sup> The recession may have been another factor, pushing more households into poverty and debt, increasing the demands on free municipal services, and reducing council revenues from rates and service charges.<sup>35</sup>

The implication is that the appropriate response to the protests is multifaceted. Improved communication, transparency and realistic timeframes are vital to explain to existing and potential protestors how and by when the underlying problems will be addressed. This supports earlier findings in this chapter, that many people distrust municipalities and are dissatisfied with the extent of information and consultation that takes place. Beyond this, the protests clearly require a step change in institutional support, capacity building and public investment in housing, infrastructure and community services to upgrade informal settlements, create more employment and improve livelihoods. In a context of constrained resources, and given the enormous challenges faced, efforts to involve and mobilise communities more directly in the development process are fundamental. A more active citizenry would help to hold municipal leaders and officials to account and thereby strengthen local democracy. For example, systems of participatory budgeting at community level would help to expose and reduce corruption and ensure that available funds are used for those who need them most. The role of municipalities remains critical, but their effectiveness as the hands and feet of the developmental state in turn depends on greater backing from provincial and national authorities. Increased material support from national and provincial government is essential, as well as direct intervention in instances of municipal indifference, political infighting, nepotism, fraud and outright failure.

## OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS

The SASAS provides information on the major problems identified by the general public and how these vary between places. Table 5.7 summarises the evidence by identifying the five concerns mentioned most often by people in priority order in each of the metros and the rest of the country, in 2003 and 2008.

**Table 5.7 Top five national priority issues, 2003 and 2008**

		1	2	3	4	5
Cape Town	2003	Unemployment (74%)	Crime/safety (67%)	HIV/Aids (46%)	Poverty (23%)	Corruption (17%)
	2008	Crime/safety (74%)	Unemployment (69%)	HIV/Aids (50%)	Poverty (32%)	Education (14%)
eThekweni	2003	Unemployment (80%)	HIV/Aids (70%)	Crime/safety (49%)	Poverty (39%)	Housing (16%)
	2008	Unemployment (77%)	HIV/Aids (69%)	Crime/safety (56%)	Poverty (33%)	Xenophobia (10%)
Ekurhuleni	2003	Unemployment (81%)	HIV/Aids (68%)	Crime/safety (60%)	Poverty (47%)	Corruption (11%)
	2008	HIV/Aids (72%)	Unemployment (71%)	Crime/safety (56%)	Poverty (52%)	Human rights (7%)
Johannesburg	2003	Unemployment (80%)	HIV/Aids (47%)	Crime/safety (46%)	Housing (30%)	Poverty (25%)
	2008	Unemployment (66%)	HIV/Aids (63%)	Crime/safety (53%)	Poverty (39%)	Education (15%)
Nelson Mandela Bay	2003	Unemployment (75%)	Crime/safety (63%)	HIV/Aids (49%)	Poverty (25%)	Housing (24%)
	2008	Unemployment (62%)	Crime/safety (48%)	HIV/Aids (44%)	Poverty (30%)	Corruption (16%)
Tshwane	2003	Unemployment (71%)	Crime/safety (66%)	HIV/Aids (60%)	Poverty (28%)	Corruption (18%)
	2008	Unemployment (65%)	HIV/Aids (63%)	Crime/safety (54%)	Poverty (41%)	Service delivery (15%)
Metro total	2003	Unemployment (77%)	Crime/safety (58%)	HIV/Aids (57%)	Poverty (32%)	Housing (15%)
	2008	Unemployment (69%)	HIV/Aids (62%)	Crime/safety (58%)	Poverty (38%)	Education (10%)
Rest of SA	2003	Unemployment (83%)	HIV/Aids (48%)	Poverty (45%)	Crime/safety (42%)	Service delivery (16%)
	2008	Unemployment (75%)	HIV/Aids (48%)	Poverty (47%)	Crime/safety (43%)	Service delivery (18%)

Source: HSRC, 2003 and 2008<sup>36</sup>

Unemployment emerged consistently as the most commonly cited problem, identified by about three-quarters of the population. This was followed by three issues that roughly half of the respondents mentioned: HIV/Aids, crime/safety and poverty. Lastly, the four issues mentioned by less than one-fifth of the respondents were corruption, education, affordable housing and service delivery.

Looking at trends over time, unemployment remained the most commonly identified problem from 2003 to 2008, although its importance diminished slightly, which is not surprising, as this was a period of employment growth and falling unemployment. HIV/Aids remained the second major concern across the country as a whole, and rose slightly in importance, moving from third to second most important concern in the metros. The importance of crime and safety remained unchanged from 2003 to 2008. Poverty grew in importance, especially in the metros.

Comparing different parts of the country, unemployment, poverty and service delivery seemed slightly less important in the metros than elsewhere, perhaps reflecting the better availability of jobs and livelihoods. In contrast, HIV/Aids and crime/safety were perceived to be far bigger problems in the metros than elsewhere.

Comparing individual cities, Cape Town was the only place where crime/safety was considered the main problem facing society and a bigger issue than unemployment. Ekurhuleni was the only city where HIV/Aids was considered a (slightly) greater problem than unemployment. Otherwise, the responses to the four biggest challenges were fairly consistent across the cities, apart from a switch in priority between HIV/Aids and crime/safety. In most cities, especially Cape Town and Johannesburg, education rose in importance. Housing appeared to have diminished slightly in importance. This evidence may provide some foundation for thinking that the service delivery protests relate to structural concerns about unemployment and poverty as well as the quality of municipal services. It would be worthwhile for each of the metros to question whether they are responding adequately to popular priorities.

## A NATIONAL TURNAROUND STRATEGY

Despite many documented examples of good practice and successful progress in extending essential services and infrastructure to marginalised communities, at the end of the first decade of democratic local government it has become increasingly apparent that many municipalities are not meeting the objectives outlined in the Constitution. In 2009 the government acknowledged that 'on the whole local government is struggling to fulfil this developmental mandate, and many municipalities are failing altogether'.<sup>38</sup> The delivery agreement reached between the presidency and the Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) during 2010 stated that:<sup>39</sup>

*There are many municipalities that are in deep distress. This distress refers to their faltering ability to deliver services, to manage their institutions, and to engage with communities. [...] All these problems combined have shattered the confidence of the majority of our people in our local government system. Municipalities were envisioned as sites where our commitment to participatory governance would achieve meaning and content. Instead communities feel alienated and disconnected from decision-making processes and feel disempowered in influencing the affairs of the municipality.*

This helps to explain why the government initiated a Local Government Turnaround Strategy during 2009/10.<sup>40</sup> The authors of the strategy produced a stark assessment of the state of municipal government that highlighted many serious shortcomings:<sup>41</sup>

*[T]here is a risk that the overall positive progress and success of the new local government system is increasingly being overwhelmed by a range of factors and negative practices both internal and external to municipalities [...] much of local government is in distress and this state of affairs has become deeply rooted within our system of governance.*

The authors acknowledged the need for widespread improvements in leadership, policy, regulation and oversight at local, provincial and national levels, stating that 'the current state of local government necessitates a fresh approach and a collective response from the state and its social partners'.<sup>42</sup>



The metropolitan authorities were generally considered to be functioning better than the smaller municipalities: 'the economically stronger metros and large cities are generally the best performing municipalities in the country. Per capita expenditure in these municipalities is also amongst the highest in the country'.<sup>43</sup> However, the metros also had weaknesses. Instances of excellence and innovation too often depended on a few personalities and were not institutionalised or sustained. More generally:<sup>44</sup>

*[T]hey are struggling to manage the huge social and economic implications of urbanisation and apartheid spatial planning – growing populations, extremely high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality; large informal settlements on the urban fringe; inadequate public transport and a shortage of land for development. This convergence of pressures has created dangerous conditions for social instability. Public protests are common, widespread and often violent.*

The turnaround strategy highlighted a breakdown of trust between communities and elected councillors, and a poor relationship between municipal management and councillors, in many parts of the country. Internal political party factionalism and conflicts had resulted in instability and undermined decision-making in many places. Several municipalities had been placed under administration because of blatant governance failures. In addition, senior managers and councillors were often political appointments (cadre deployment) and lacked the skills required to do their jobs properly. A number of municipal managers had been suspended for a wide variety of reasons, and many municipalities lacked the organisational systems and procedures for effective service delivery. The financial state of many municipalities was poor, with a weak tax base and financial mismanagement leading to unsustainable and wasteful patterns of spending. Deficient professional capacity had resulted in under-investment in bulk infrastructure, poor project planning and management, and neglected operations and maintenance.

The report recognised that the reasons for this alarming state of affairs were not confined to municipalities and their political masters. Powerful social and economic forces were shaping local government and society as a whole, including shifts in values and norms of ethical behaviour. National and provincial authorities and parastatals were also criticised for fragmented policies and regulations, uncoordinated municipal supervision and support systems, and general insufficient co-operation. Other external problems included weak local economies, resulting in limited potential for revenue generation, large-scale poverty and widespread service backlogs in some parts of the country.

Table 5.8 shows the variable status of different authorities and the marked contrasts in the underlying conditions affecting their areas. The Gross Value Added (GVA) statistics reflect that the metros have a slightly lower incidence of poverty and a stronger potential tax base than other types of municipalities. COGTA considers the metro councils to have low levels of vulnerability in terms of municipal capacity and social, economic and environmental conditions. None of them is regarded as financially distressed and none has audit problems.

**Table 5.8 Socio-economic conditions and municipal capacity across South Africa**

Type of municipality	Total number of municipalities	Total number of households ('000)	Percentage in poverty	Percentage of national GVA	GVA per household (R'000)	Number of municipalities by level of vulnerability (1=high, 4=low)				Number of financially distressed municipalities	Households with access to basic services				Adverse audit opinions	Disclaimer audit opinions	Audit reports not submitted
						1	2	3	4		Over 90%	60–89%	30–59%	Under 30%			
A (metro)	6	4 714	36	59	154				6	–	1	5					
B1	21	2 207	42	18	103			7	14	14	1	13	5	2		6	2
B2	29	1 095	44	7	78		4	8	17	17	3	13	10	3	1	6	5
B3	111	1 606	52	9	70	7	34	43	27	27	4	53	34	20	4	39	19
B4	70	2 878	74	6	27	50	20			–				70	3	25	8
C1	25	3 838	44	0.3	–	1	2	10	12	4						3	1
C2	21	3 949	66	–	–	11	9	1		3						6	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>12 500</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>39</b>

Source: Department of COGTA, 2010b<sup>45</sup>

One of the turnaround strategy's conclusions was that there had been insufficient appreciation by government of the differences among municipalities:<sup>46</sup>

*[B]y and large governance and financial management frameworks, functional arrangements and policy targets apply uniformly irrespective of the vast capacity and economic differences between municipalities [...] National targets for service delivery that apply uniformly irrespective of the economic and institutional differences between municipalities simply set municipalities up to fail.*

Some municipalities had found it far more difficult than others to establish themselves, consolidate their systems, recruit competent professional staff, improve their revenue collection, manage their cash flow and achieve viability:<sup>47</sup>

*Much of the reason for the limited success of past attempts to improve the performance of local government stemmed from the fact that we tended to treat all municipalities as uniform, undifferentiated entities. This was clearly a mistake and we now recognise that municipalities have different capacities and their social and economic contexts also vary.*

Other conclusions were that government's whole approach to local government had to be different, and a collective response was required (local government is everyone's business): 'government has not addressed the root causes of these failures and has not to date coordinated a forceful agenda for change arising from these lessons'.<sup>48</sup> An independent observer stated that 'the intergovernmental system has largely failed to support local government adequately. [...] Municipal governments are bearing the brunt of state failure regarding policies that actually have nothing to do with them'.<sup>49</sup> The 2010 Delivery Agreement acknowledged that many departments and parastatals were unsupportive of, and unresponsive to, the needs of municipalities. The agreement stated that '[a] further explanation for limited success was the inability of national government departments that impact local government to develop a cohesive plan and fully co-operate to ensure a unified approach in their engagements with municipalities'.<sup>50</sup>

One of the far-reaching proposals to emerge from COGTA's analysis has been for the creation of a national special purpose vehicle (SPV) to take over the infrastructure delivery role of weaker municipalities. This SPV could pool government infrastructure funds, draw in private sector skills and resources, and create a more streamlined (centralised) procurement process for service providers. Another proposal has been for the expansion of the metros into surrounding areas to replace ill-performing district councils. The metros, which have not experienced the same level of difficulties, could be delegated additional powers and responsibilities to alleviate some of the strain experienced by other municipalities. For example, Tshwane could absorb the under-performing Metsweding district and end up covering a much larger territory.

## CONCLUSION

A bold vision of developmental local government underpinned the creation of metropolitan municipalities in 2000/01. They were expected to establish the strategic capabilities to overcome the damaging divisions of apartheid, to promote inclusive economic growth, and to accommodate the pressures of urbanisation. A new, more responsive mode of decision-making was also envisaged with greater community involvement in the development process in order to broaden and deepen democracy. Development was to be far more than the provision of basic services to a passive citizenry.

A decade later, these goals seem rather idealistic and remote in the face of massive basic challenges. Metropolitan government has struggled to cope with the competing demands placed upon it and to address the fundamental challenges of social and spatial inequality, unemployment and poverty. The many signs of systemic stress and vulnerability include political instability and factionalism; institutional capacity constraints and mismanagement; insecure revenue streams and under-investment in infrastructure and services. Local government has been criticised for its lack of openness, unresponsiveness and poor consultation. Its standing in society has deteriorated over the last decade and it has been one of the least trusted public institutions in the country for at least this period.

The actual delivery of basic services in the metros seems to have been better compared with the rest of the country, which was reflected in higher levels of public satisfaction. Yet there is no room for complacency, as a sizeable proportion of metro residents have also expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of service provision. Furthermore, satisfaction levels appear to have declined recently in some of the metros, suggesting deterioration in some aspects of delivery. According to many indicators examined, a distinction seems to have emerged between the slightly stronger performance of Cape Town, eThekweni and Johannesburg on the one hand, and Ekurhuleni, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Bay on the other.

## City Governance *continued*

People generally seem to have a high level of respect for conventional electoral politics and only a small minority of the population have engaged in protest action. Metro residents appear to be slightly more sceptical about conventional political participation than people elsewhere, and to have slightly more experience of direct action. The most visible form of mass action has been the escalating service delivery protests of recent years, which focused on informal settlements in the larger metros. Frustration at the pace and quality of state provision of housing and improved services seems to have been a key factor, especially for people who have migrated to the cities in search of better living standards.

In principle, the energy and determination of these communities needs to be channelled in more constructive directions through participatory forms of planning and development, and practical projects of lasting value. Empowered communities could provide valuable human capacity for useful work and at the same time constitute an important means to hold civic leaders and officials to account. The Township Development Strategies proposed at the end of Chapter 3 might be a good way of doing things differently and engaging in practical problem-solving. By listening to and working with poor communities, all sorts of schemes could be devised to enhance human and organisational capabilities, and produce jobs and facilities. Creating community-based organisations could build upon local knowledge and social networks, strengthen the capacity of people to organise themselves and represent their interests, and provide public services and infrastructure more cost-effectively than by using private contractors.

The governance difficulties experienced by the metros indicate vulnerability and instability rather than resilience. The root causes of these problems need more explicit attention from national government and political leaders. Looking ahead, there are dangers in overloading the metro authorities with additional functions and larger boundaries without commensurate support from national and provincial government and parastatals, and without reforms of various kinds to enable them to cope. Some metros are currently better placed than others to play a bigger role, and a differential approach may avoid pushing fragile and insecure institutions beyond the tipping point. The steady phasing-in of extra functions would also help to ensure that progressive improvements can occur in staffing, policies, systems and practices. There seems to be a particular need for procedural changes to ensure greater community participation, local accountability and responsiveness. Government proposals for SPVs could undermine local democracy by drawing responsibilities and resources back towards the centre, thereby reducing the scope for community engagement and empowerment. SPVs should, therefore, only be considered as a last resort and as a temporary measure until local capabilities can be restored.





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