

## The state of South African democracy

**One of the great achievements of post-apartheid South Africa has been the robustness of the country's democracy. While in certain areas South Africa has fallen far short, particularly in the creation of jobs and sustainably tackling issues such as poverty, this is not the case with regard to democracy.**

While the ANC still dominates electoral politics (although this is changing quickly) South Africans enjoy the other trappings of democracy. People are free to criticise the government or the President without fear of retaliation, the press is free and uses that freedom robustly, and elections – although not without issues – are widely acknowledged as reflecting the will of voters.

This is also reflected in global rankings, with various organisations ranking South Africa as a democracy, although one that does have some issues. For example, the Democracy Index, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit ranks South Africa as a 'flawed democracy,' the same category as countries such as the United States, and a number of European countries, including Italy, Spain, Greece, and Poland. Freedom House releases a similar index and rates South Africa as a 'Free' country, one of the few to achieve this ranking in Africa.

However, South Africans may be falling out of love with democracy. As this edition of *FreeFACTS* shows the proportion of eligible voters who turn up at the polls is on a downward trend. In the 2021 local government election, for the first time ever, fewer than half of all South African voters turned out for a nationwide post-apartheid poll.

In addition, a survey conducted by Afrobarometer, showed that a large proportion of South Africans would be willing to live under a dictatorship if that meant that there would be job creation and law and order.

This should serve as a warning that continued economic failure could have serious implications for the sustainability of democracy in South Africa, with a growing proportion of people willing to give up their freedoms if it means that other basic needs are met.

This is not a threat that can or should be ignored.

— **Marius Roodt**

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The IRR is an advocacy group that fights for your right to make decisions about your life, family and business, free from unnecessary government, political, and bureaucratic interference. FreeFACTS publishes evidence that communities are better off when individuals are free to make decisions about how they want to live, be educated, work, access healthcare, think, speak, own property, and protect their communities. If you agree with the issues we stand for, welcome to the team. There are millions of people just like you who are tired of South African politicians, activists, and commentators attempting to rein in your freedom to decide. Take control and make sure your voice is heard by becoming a friend of the IRR.

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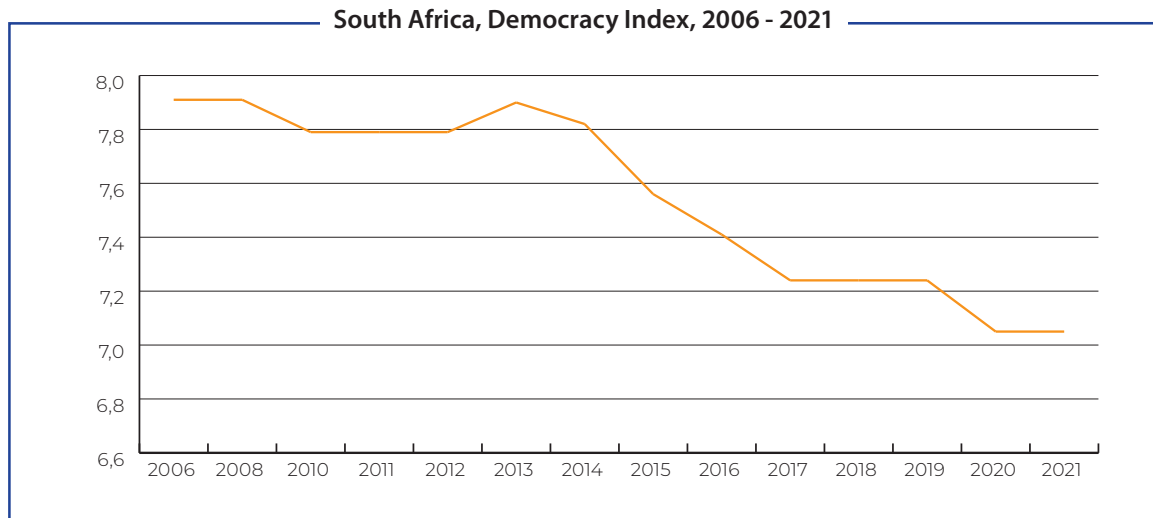
## Freedom and democracy

Democracy Index <sup>a</sup> , selected countries, 2021			
Country	Rank (out of 167)	Overall score 0-10	Classification
Australia	9	8,90	Full Democracy
Botswana	30	7,73	Flawed Democracy
Brazil	47	6,86	Flawed Democracy
Chile	25	7,92	Flawed Democracy
China	151	2,21	Authoritarian
Denmark	6	9,09	Full Democracy
Egypt	132	2,93	Authoritarian
France	22	7,99	Flawed Democracy
Germany	15	8,67	Full Democracy
Ghana	56	6,50	Flawed Democracy
Greece	34	7,56	Flawed Democracy
Hong Kong	85	5,60	Hybrid Regime
India	46	6,91	Flawed Democracy
Indonesia	52	6,71	Flawed Democracy
Ireland	7	9,00	Full Democracy
Israel	23	7,97	Flawed Democracy
Italy	31	7,68	Flawed Democracy
Japan	17	8,15	Full Democracy
Kazakhstan	128	3,08	Authoritarian
Lithuania	40	7,18	Full Democracy
Mozambique	116	3,51	Authoritarian
Nigeria	107	4,11	Hybrid Regime
Pakistan	104	4,31	Hybrid Regime
Philippines	54	6,62	Flawed Democracy
Poland	51	6,80	Flawed Democracy
Russia	124	3,24	Authoritarian
Saudi Arabia	152	2,08	Authoritarian
South Africa	44	7,05	Flawed Democracy
Spain	24	7,94	Flawed Democracy
Switzerland	9	8,90	Full Democracy
Turkey	103	4,35	Hybrid Regime
Uganda	100	4,48	Hybrid Regime
United Kingdom	18	8,10	Full Democracy
United States	26	7,85	Flawed Democracy
Venezuela	151	2,11	Authoritarian

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index 2021

<sup>a</sup> The Democracy Index is calculated by analysing 60 indicators which are grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. In 2020, South Africa is ranked 44th out of 167 countries, with an overall score of 7.05 out of a possible 10. The index ranked South Africa as a flawed democracy.

## Freedom and democracy



**Source:** Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2021*

**Note:** South Africa has shown a small but clear decline on the *Democracy Index*, with its score (out of ten) showing a steady drop. However, this has been something of a global trend, with many countries seeing some level of democratic backsliding. Of the five pillars analysed by the EIU South Africa does best on political participation, where it receives a score of 8.33 out of ten and worst on political culture, with a score of 5.

## Freedom and democracy

Freedom in the world, selected countries, 2022			
	Political rights <sup>a</sup>	Civil liberties <sup>b</sup>	Freedom status
Australia	39	56	Free
Botswana	28	44	Free
Brazil	31	42	Free
Chile	38	56	Free
China	-2	11	Not free
Denmark	40	57	Free
Egypt	6	12	Not free
France	38	51	Free
Germany	39	55	Free
Ghana	35	45	Free
Greece	37	50	Free
Hong Kong	10	33	Partly free
India	33	33	Partly free
Indonesia	30	29	Partly free
Ireland	39	58	Free
Israel	34	42	Free
Italy	36	54	Free
Japan	40	56	Free
Kazakhstan	5	18	Not free
Lithuania	38	51	Free
Mexico	27	33	Partly free
Mozambique	14	29	Partly free
Nigeria	20	23	Partly free
Pakistan	15	22	Partly free
Philippines	25	30	Partly free
Poland	34	47	Free
Russia	5	14	Not free
Saudi Arabia	1	6	Not free
South Africa	33	46	Free
Spain	37	53	Free
Switzerland	39	57	Free
Turkey	16	16	Not free
Uganda	11	23	Not free
United Kingdom	39	54	Free
United States	32	51	Free
Venezuela	1	13	Not free

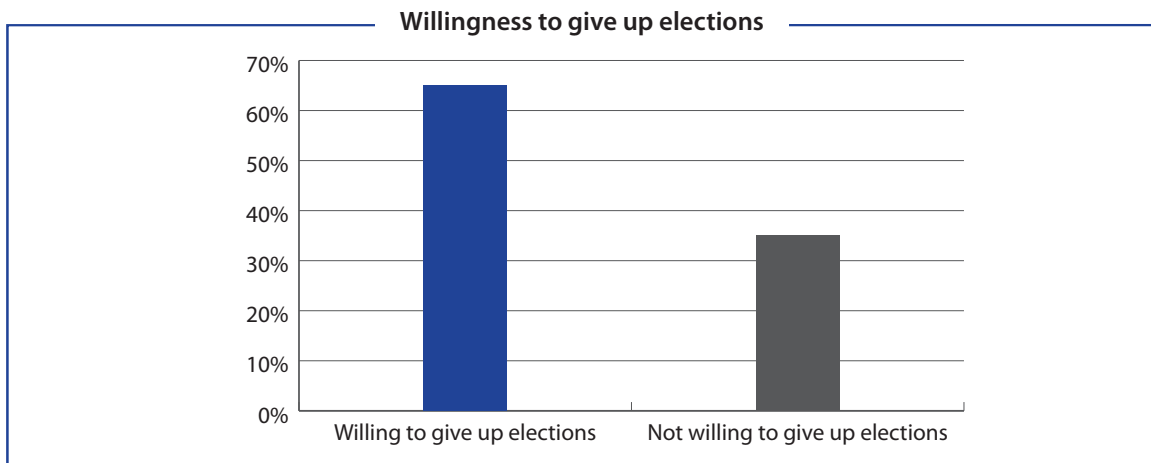
Source: Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022, [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

<sup>a</sup> Countries are ranked on 10 elements of political rights each ranked on a scale of 0 to 4, and given a score out of 40.

<sup>b</sup> Countries are ranked on 15 elements of civil liberties, each ranked on a scale of 0 to 4, and given a score out of 60. The two above scales are then combined and it is determined whether a country is 'Free,' 'Partly Free,' or 'Not free.'

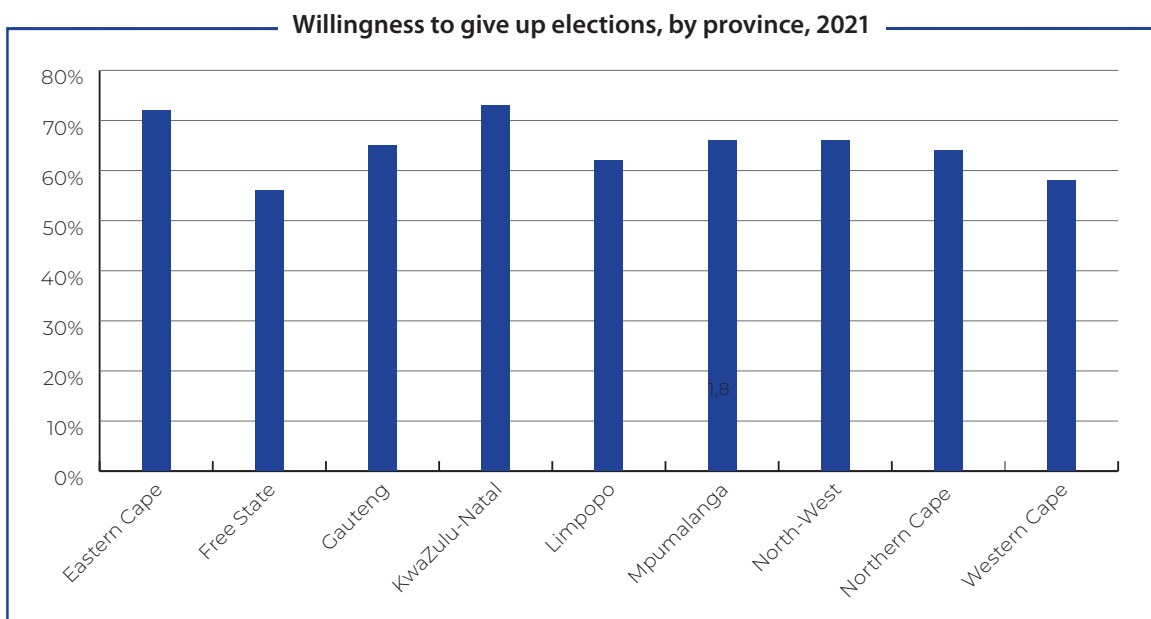
Note: South Africa's rating has been relatively stable over the years and is normally rated as 'Free'.

## Freedom and democracy



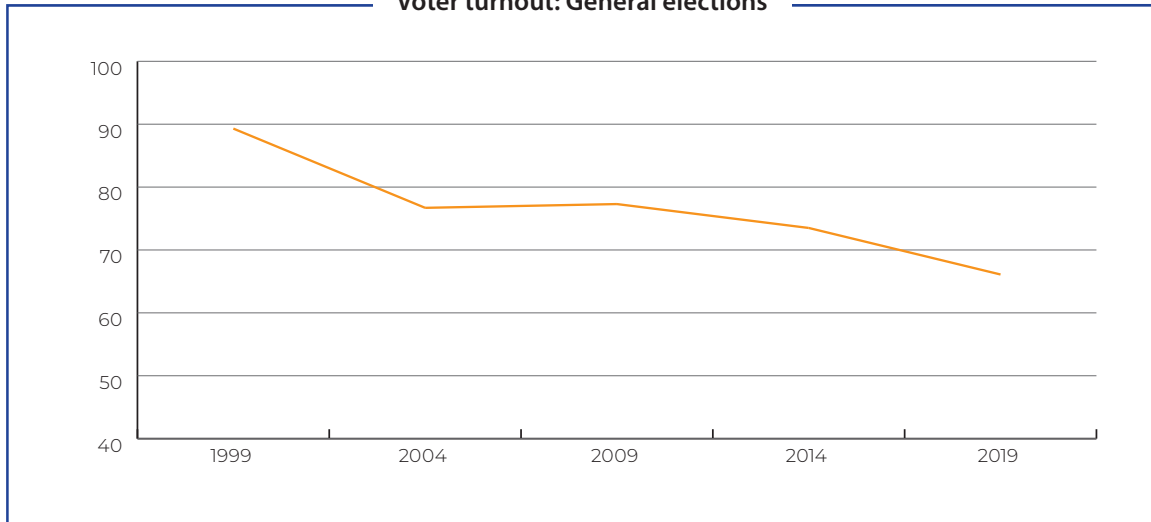
**Source:** Afrobarometer, *Summary of Results, Round 8*, available at: [https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/summary\\_of\\_results-south\\_africa\\_r8\\_26nov21.pdf](https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/summary_of_results-south_africa_r8_26nov21.pdf)

**Note:** An Afrobarometer survey was conducted in 2021 and asked respondents if they would be accept a nonelected government or leader who would impose law and order, and deliver houses and jobs, and how willing or unwilling respondents be to give up regular elections and live under such a government.



## Freedom and democracy

Voter turnout: General elections



Voter turnout: Local elections

