

# 2019 National and Provincial Elections: Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS)



**YOUR X IS YOUR SAY**

## National Results

*Report Prepared for*

### The Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)

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**Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)**  
Democracy, Governance & Service Delivery (DGSD) research programme

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## 1. Introduction

The Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in late 2018 to conduct two studies related to the 2019 National and Provincial Elections: firstly a Voter Participation Survey (VPS), which was conducted in November 2018 and January 2019, and secondly an Election Satisfaction Survey (ESS) conducted on Election Day, 8 May 2019.

The main aim of the Election Satisfaction Survey 2019 was to determine opinions and perceptions of voters regarding the freeness and fairness of the electoral process. A further aim of the study was to assess the operational efficiency of the Electoral Commission in managing the 2019 National and Provincial Elections. This is important in evaluating the credibility and integrity of the 2019 elections.

The study was conducted among South Africans who voted in the 2019 National and Provincial Elections. The target population for the study was individuals aged 18 years and older who are South African citizens, and who are registered as voters for the 2019 National and Provincial Elections.

## 2. Survey Sample

A complex sample design was used in drawing the sample of voting stations. The design included stratification and a multi-stage sampling procedure. This was to ensure that a nationally representative sample of voting stations was selected and the results of the survey could be properly weighted to the population of registered voters in the country. At the actual voting stations, fieldworkers used random sampling to select voters to ensure a fair representation in terms of gender, race, age, and disability status.

A sample of 300 voting stations countrywide has been selected for the purposes of the study. In order to ensure representative data from each province, the distribution of the voting stations and the number of interviews at the voting stations will be proportional to the Electoral Commission's distribution of registered voters. At each voting station, 50 voters were expected to be interviewed during the course of the day. These were divided into four time slots to ensure a fair spread of interviews over different times of the day, when different situational dynamics might have been experienced at the voting stations. Interviewing was conducted by means of computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

The following results are based on the fully **captured sample of voter responses (number = 13,570)** collected on **8<sup>th</sup> May 2019**. The results have not yet been weighted to the population of registered voters, but this is expected to have either minor or no discernible effect on the percentages reported.

### 3. Voter Election Satisfaction Survey Results

#### **General Voting Experience**

- 68% of voters took less than 15 minutes to reach their voting stations, with 22% taking between 16-30 minutes, 7% taking between 31-60 minutes and 3% longer than an hour.
- On average, voters waited 16 minutes in the queue before voting.
- Overall, 88% of the voters found the voting stations easily accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly while 6% did not.
- 97% found the voting procedures inside the voting station easy to understand.

#### **Consideration of voting procedure for people with special needs**

- The majority of voters stated that the voting procedures considered the needs of the elderly (93%), persons with disabilities (88%), the partially sighted and blind (80%), pregnant women (81%), and women with babies (81%).

#### **Timing of decision on political party of choice**

- Decisions about party choice were mostly made months prior to Election Day (70%), with only a small share deciding upon their voting preference on Election Day (10%) or during the month beforehand (19%).

#### **Perceived secrecy of vote**

- 97% of voters expressed satisfaction with the secrecy of their vote.

|                                    | <b>Satisfaction with the secrecy of one's vote (percent)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Very satisfied                     | 68.5   |
| Satisfied                          | 28.6   |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 1.9  |
| Dissatisfied                       | 0.5  |
| Very dissatisfied                  | 0.2  |
| (Don't know)                       | 0.2  |
| Total                              | 100.0  |
| Total % "satisfied"                | 97.1   |

### Political party tolerance

- 64% of voters expressed the view that political parties were very tolerant of one another during the 2019 election campaigns, with 21% reporting that parties were somewhat tolerant of each other and 8% perceived intolerance.

### Electoral Freeness and Fairness

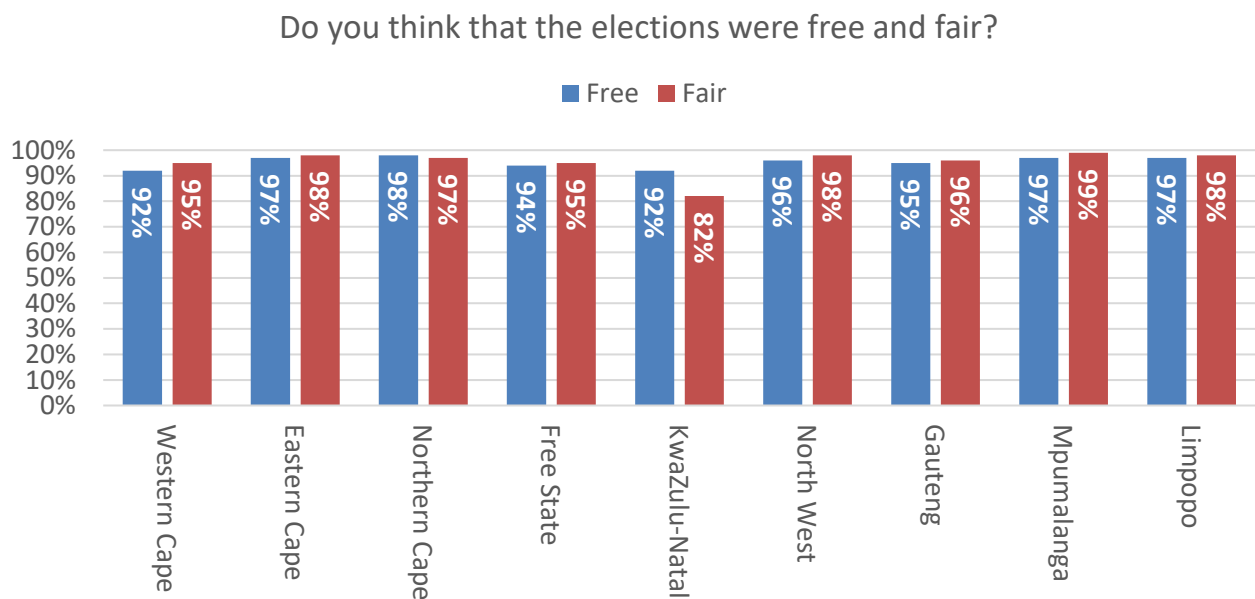
- An overwhelming majority of sampled voters (95%) feel that the election procedures were free.
- Similarly, 95% of the voters are of the opinion that the election procedures were fair.

#### Do you think that the election procedures were free and fair?

|                          | Election procedures were free<br>(percent) | Election procedures were fair<br>(percent) |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Yes                      | 92.8                                       | 92.6                                       |
| Yes, with minor problems | 2.3  | 1.8  |
| Not at all               | 1.8  | 3.3  |
| (Don't know)             | 2.3  | 1.8  |
| (Refused)                | 0.8  | 0.5  |
| Total                    | 100.0                                      | 100.0                                      |
| Total % "yes"            | 95.1                                       | 94.45                                      |

- The proportion who thought elections were free and fair were highest in Northern Cape and lowest in KwaZulu-Natal.

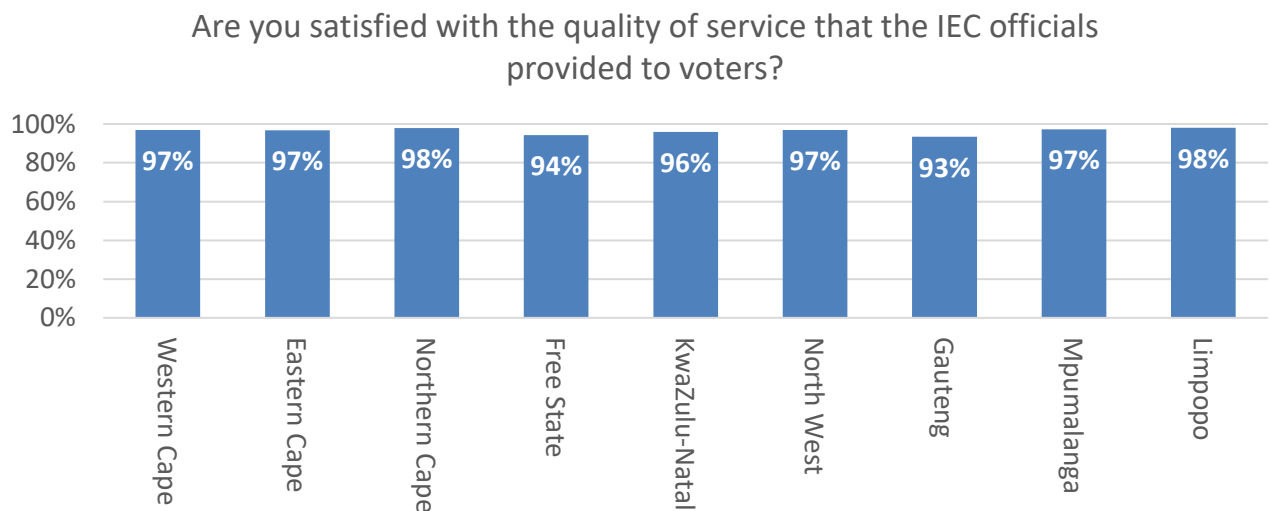
**Figure 1: Proportion of the Voter Population who stated that the National and Provincial Elections were fair and free by Province**



## IEC performance

- 96% voiced general satisfaction with the quality of services rendered by IEC officials to voters, with 2% expressing a neutral position and 1% dissatisfied.
- Voters were asked to rate 10 aspects of the conduct of IEC officials at their voting station. Overall, there was a very positive assessment of officials. They rated officials as extremely helpful (82%), co-operative (83%), patient (83%), friendly (84%), professional (81%), honest (81%), considerate (81%), knowledgeable about elections (81%), interested in their jobs (71%), and impartial (81%).

**Figure 2: Proportion of the Voter Population who stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of service that the IEC officials provided to Voters by Province**



- Voter satisfaction with the IEC performance were highest in Northern Cape (98%) and lowest in Gauteng (93%).

## Voter education

- 63% of voters believed that the IEC's voter education was very effective, 25% somewhat effective (total effectiveness = 88%), and 3% indicating that it was ineffective. 8% were uncertain or unsure of how to respond to the question on voter education effectiveness.
- Voters were asked to indicate the extent of the usefulness of various informational sources that they had access to in providing them with information about voting. Radio and television (both 92%) were regarded as the most useful information sources about voting. Radio was identified as rated as more useful by voters in the North West (98%) than voters in other provinces and least useful by voters in the Western Cape. A similar pattern was observed for the voter attitudes of television.
- Posters and billboards (88%), as well as political parties (86%) and pamphlets (80%) did fare as well as conventional media.



- Slightly lower but still resolute levels of perceived usefulness were reported in relation to the IEC communication campaign (**77%**). The communication campaign was rated as least effective by voters in the Free State (65%) and most informative by those in the North West (89%). Civil society organisations (**75%**), social media (**74%**) and workshops (**67%**) were not considered as useful as the communication campaign by voters.
- The IEC website was rated as useful by 55% of voters with access to these forms of media, which is lower due to the higher share reporting ‘don’t know’ responses (31%). This suggests that a considerable share of internet users have not browsed the IEC website, so this could serve as an area for future voter education campaigns. The website was rated as least informative by voters in the Free State (49%) and most informative by those in the North West (81%).

**Table 1: Proportion of voters who said that they found different sources that provided voters with information and voter education very useful or somewhat useful by Province**

|                          | Western<br>Cape | Eastern<br>Cape | Northern<br>Cape | Free<br>State | KwaZulu-<br>Natal | North<br>West | Gauteng | Mpumal<br>anga | Limpopo |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| Newspapers               | 74%             | 76%             | 81%              | 67%           | 86%               | 94%           | 76%     | 70%            | 80%     |
| Political parties        | 81%             | 87%             | 84%              | 78%           | 89%               | 94%           | 83%     | 85%            | 89%     |
| Civil society            | 60%             | 80%             | 71%              | 64%           | 78%               | 87%           | 72%     | 70%            | 81%     |
| IEC website              | 54%             | 56%             | 51%              | 49%           | 69%               | 81%           | 61%     | 52%            | 69%     |
| IEC workshops            | 44%             | 74%             | 49%              | 57%           | 76%               | 82%           | 64%     | 63%            | 75%     |
| Pamphlets/ other printed | 71%             | 77%             | 86%              | 68%           | 84%               | 90%           | 80%     | 77%            | 88%     |
| Voter education campaign | 66%             | 81%             | 69%              | 65%           | 83%               | 89%           | 77%     | 75%            | 83%     |
| TV                       | 86%             | 94%             | 94%              | 86%           | 92%               | 97%           | 89%     | 87%            | 96%     |
| Radio                    | 84%             | 93%             | 92%              | 89%           | 94%               | 98%           | 90%     | 92%            | 95%     |
| Posters/billboards       | 80%             | 86%             | 93%              | 82%           | 90%               | 92%           | 89%     | 80%            | 94%     |
| Social media             | 67%             | 73%             | 72%              | 66%           | 83%               | 85%           | 74%     | 59%            | 79%     |

Note: Figures shaded in green indicate satisfaction levels above the national average

### Satisfaction with new procedures to validate addresses

- Following the ruling of the Constitutional Court regarding correct and complete voters’ addresses being on the voters’ roll, the Electoral Commission expected voters without an address or with an incomplete address to provide address details before they voted. This procedure was part of the voting process at each voting station in the 2019 National and Provincial Election.
- Taking all things into account, 89% of voters reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with these procedures to check and update the home addresses of voters at this voting station.

### Safety and Security

- 96% of voters expressed satisfaction with the safety and security that was provided at their voting stations.

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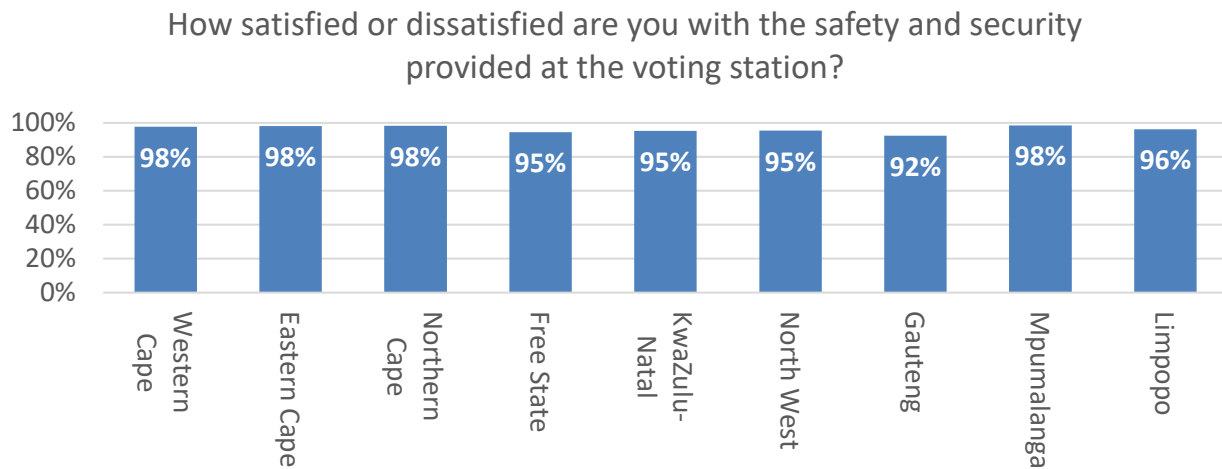
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**Figure 3: Proportion of the Voter Population who stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the safety and security provided at the voting station by Province**

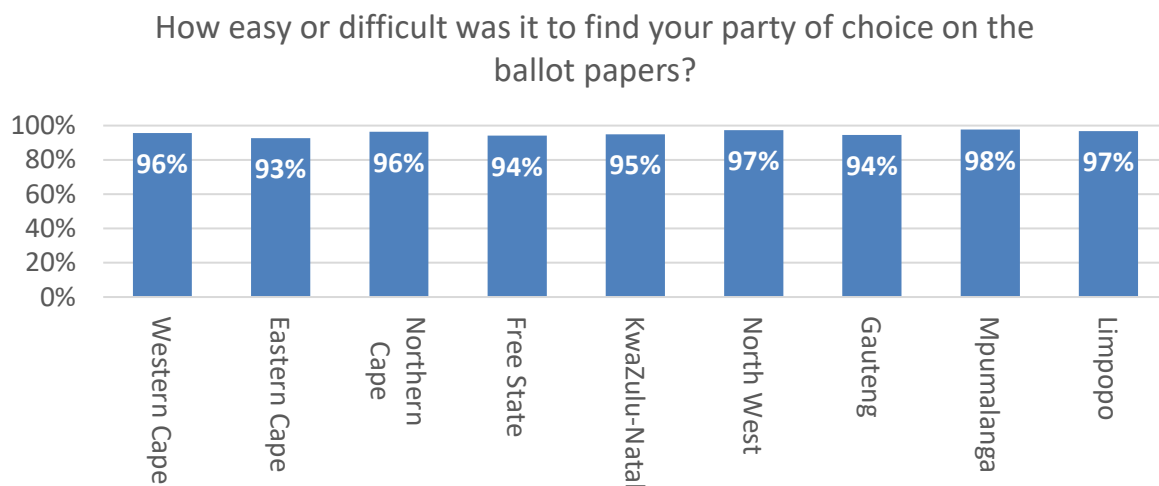


- The percentage of voters who were satisfied with the safety and security at voting stations was highest in Mpumalanga (98%) and lowest in Gauteng (92%).

#### **Views on the ballot paper**

- The Electoral Commission is committed to ensuring that the national and provincial ballot papers were easily usable by the voting public, allowing each voter to quickly and accurately record their preferred choice of party in a context of increasing numbers of contesting parties.
- 95% of voters were satisfied overall with the ballot papers used in this election.
- Similarly, 95% found it easy to find their party of choice on the ballot papers.

**Figure 4: Proportion of the Voter Population who stated that they found it very easy or easy to find their party of choice on the ballot papers by Province**

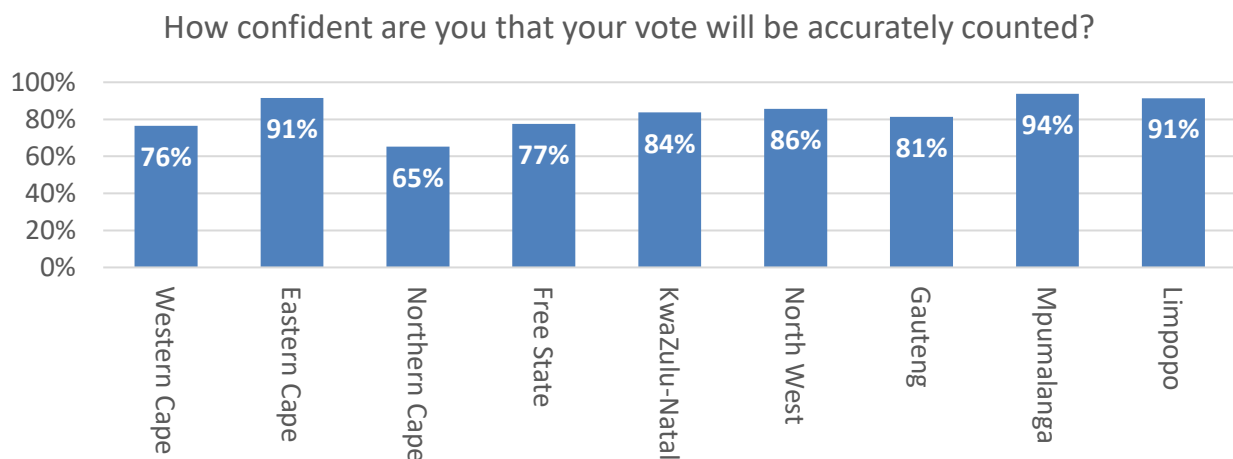


- The share of the voting population who found the ballot paper easy to use was highest in Mpumalanga (98%) and lowest in Eastern Cape (93%).
- Voters were asked if the ballot paper could be improved. Only 18% of the voter population said that they had suggestions to improve the ballot paper for future elections. Of this group, nearly half (46%) thought that the size of the party logos should be bigger. A third indicated that the size of the photos of the party leaders should be larger and 31% said that there were too many parties on the ballot paper. Only 20% of this group thought that the way the parties were ordered on the ballot paper could be improved.

### **Confidence in the vote counting process**

- In total, 84% of voters were completely or very confident that their vote would be accurately counted (58% completely confident; 26% very confident). Only 2% said that they were 'not confident at all' in the vote counting process.

**Figure 5: Proportion of the Voter Population who stated that they were completely confident or very confident that their vote would be accurately counted by Province**



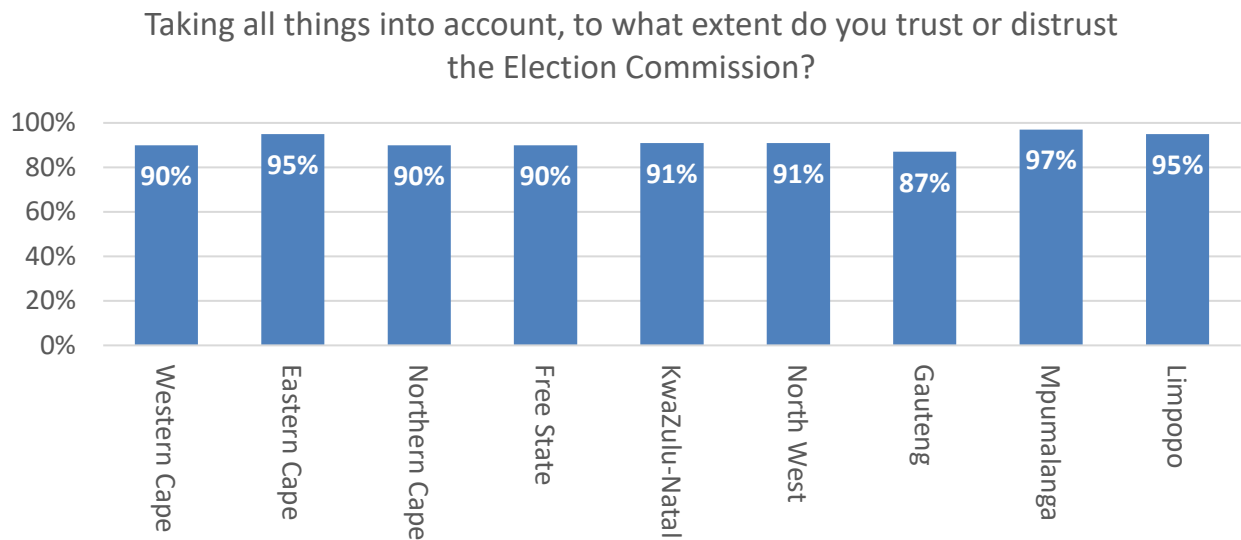
- The part of voters who were reasonably confident that their vote would be counted accurately was highest in Mpumalanga (94%) and lowest in Northern Cape (65%).

### **Overall confidence in the Electoral Commission**

- Taking all things into account, 92% of voters indicated that they trust or strongly trust the Electoral Commission in general, while only 5% were neutral, and 2% were distrusting.



**Figure 6: Proportion of the Voter Population who stated that they strongly trusted or trusted the Election Commission by Province**



- The proportion of voters who said that they trusted the Election Commission was highest in Mpumalanga (97%) and lowest in Gauteng (87%).

#### 4. Final assessment

Based on an assessment of voter interviews collected on Election Day, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) finds that the voting public is overwhelmingly confident that the 2019 National and Provincial Elections were both free and fair. As with previous national and provincial as well as municipal elections, voters provided an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the management performance of the Electoral Commission (IEC) and the conduct of officials at voting stations. These voter evaluations point firmly to the continued integrity of elections in the country.

**ENDS**