

No green lights for government: Ipsos measures public satisfaction with government performance

Issued by [Ipsos](#)

10 Feb 2012

The government did not perform according to a "green light standard" in *any* of the policy areas measured recently, according to the latest poll by market research company, Ipsos. This indicates that 2012 will have to be a year of "delivery" before the important ANC party conference at the end of the year in Mangaung.

This is the most important finding from the Ipsos "Pulse of the People" poll of 3 500 adult South Africans conducted from 26 October to 7 December 2011. In the poll, randomly chosen respondents were asked how they evaluated the performance of the president, the deputy president and the national and local authorities. They were also asked to indicate whether they thought the government was performing very well, fairly well, not really well or not at all well in 25 policy areas.

Six out of every ten (61%) South Africans indicated that, in their view, the president was performing "very well" or "fairly well". This is down from two-thirds (66%) in May 2011.

Those believing that President Zuma was doing very or fairly well came from different political parties: seven in every ten ANC supporters (70%), 64% of IFP supporters, 54% of COPE supporters and 44% of DA supporters said that he was doing very or fairly well as president. Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe's score on the same question was 54%. (In May 2011 his score was exactly the same at 54%). Regarding the national government, 56% (marginally down from 59% in May 2011) believed that the national government was performing "very well" or "fairly well".

The first measurement of satisfaction with the Zuma administration's performance was undertaken in November 2009 (after it took office in May of the same year). At that time, the president's level of approval was 77%; the deputy president's 63% and the national government's 70%. There is thus a substantial gap between the high scores received at the start of this political term and the relatively moderate scores achieved at mid-term. In November 2011, local authorities (in general) were thought to perform at a level of 38%, and the leader of the opposition, Helen Zille, at 39%.

She received a low score (27%) from ANC supporters. A third of IFP supporters (33%) thought that she was doing very or fairly well as opposition leader, while almost two-thirds of COPE supporters (64%) and about eight in every ten DA supporters (79%) concurred.

The government's performance on a number of political, social and economic areas of policy and delivery is summarised below. South Africans, at the start of a new year, would like to receive clear direction regarding the way in which the government will address these issues, build credibility, consolidate and deliver on the plans that exist and help to create some hope for the future.

An important "lead indicator" of the mood in the country is the question on whether the country is moving in the "right" or the "wrong" direction. In November 2011, less than half (45%) of South Africans said that the country was moving in the right direction. A third (33%) said it was moving in the wrong direction, and the rest were uncertain.

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