

Quality of Life 2013

The Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) is a partnership between the University of Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, Gauteng Provincial Government and South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Every two years, the GCRO commissions a 'Quality of Life' survey, as a vehicle to allow residents of the Gauteng City-Region to express their views on topics ranging from service delivery to informal traders to use of amenities to politics and far more.

Over the years, the GCRO surveys have grown in both size and complexity on the one hand, and public and policy impact on the other. The results of the 2013 survey, presented to the Premier of Gauteng, Hon. David Makhura, and the Gauteng Chair of SALGA, Hon. Ciller Parks Tau, serve as a powerful signal from all residents as to what they feel is going right, and what is going wrong, in the city-region.

According to GCRO Executive Director, Prof David Everatt, "This third survey in the sequence is probably the largest ever survey of social attitudes in Gauteng, with a sample of 27 493 respondents, and is accurate to ward level. This remarkably powerful dataset has been analysed and mapped at city-region, city and ward level, to give both overview results and fine-grained ward-level comparisons."

Key findings include:

- High levels of satisfaction with many areas of service delivery but coupled with...
- Very low levels of satisfaction with government and governance, indicating that service delivery alone is not enough;
- Deep dissatisfaction with the local sphere in particular, across the board, suggesting that the 2016 local elections are going to be very keenly fought;
- A hardening of racial attitudes, with 73% of Africans agreeing or strongly agreeing that they will never trust whites;
- Growing levels of xenophobia, but...
- More tolerant attitudes towards abortion than in the last two quality of life surveys.

The results cover a far wider range of areas, including transport/mobility, decent work, attitudes to the LGBTI community, attitudes towards violence against women, poverty, participation in street protests, cross-border and internal migrants and many others.

From these 200+ variables, 54 are used to construct a 'Quality of Life' index across all local entities. This core index suggests that the three major cities, joined by Mogale City, are consolidating their economies of scale to provide enhanced services, and are found at the upper end of the scale – in complete contrast with previous surveys, where first Midvaal (in 2009) and then Randfontein (in 2011) were the top-scoring municipalities. They are now the victims of their own success, as population growth increases the burden on the tax base and on service delivery – and as such, mirror the province as a whole.

More worrying is the fact that while the 'hard' areas of delivery – housing, connectivity, roads, water and electricity connections and so on – are rated highly, mistrust of all spheres of government has reached the highest levels yet recorded by GCRO. So have related areas of social capital, alienation, massively reduced levels of participation in fora such as IDP meetings, and so on.

The basic needs of many Gautengers have been met, and they acknowledged this. The more complex issues, of building integrated communities that include 'active citizens' to take forward the democratic project, however, are failing, badly.