

# IEC Voter Participation Survey 2013/14: An Overview of Results



Benjamin Roberts, Jarè Struwig & Steven Gordon  
Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery (DGSD)  
Research Programme, HSRC

Election House, Centurion  
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# Purpose of the study



## Objective

To provide information on the views and behavioural preferences of adult South Africans in order to (i) better understand the 2014 electoral context and (ii) inform the IEC in its electoral management mandate

## Primary aims

- To determine people's **interest** in, and **perceptions** that have a bearing on, the **forthcoming 2014 elections**
- **To examine voting behaviour patterns** in South Africa.
- To assess the **perceptions of voters** on the **performance of democracy and democratic institutions** and how this influences voter participation.
- To examine the electoral and political involvement of specific groups such as **women, youth and persons with disabilities**.
- To evaluate **public opinion on IEC performance** and measure **public trust** in the Commission



# Quantitative Methodology



- Survey was conducted by the **Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)**
- **Nationally representative** of the population 16 years and older in private households across the 9 provinces
- **500 Small Area Layers (SALs)** were selected using Census 2011 framework
- **3,500** addresses issued
- Collected by **face-to-face interview**
- Data collection: **October-December 2013.**
- Realised sample: **2911 respondents**
- Data **weighted** using StatsSA's **2013 mid-year population** estimates (36 million aged 16+ years)





# Political Context



## POLITICAL MOOD AHEAD OF THE 2014 ELECTIONS:

- Satisfaction with democracy
- Importance and evaluation of key dimensions of democracy
- Institutional trust
- Service delivery evaluations

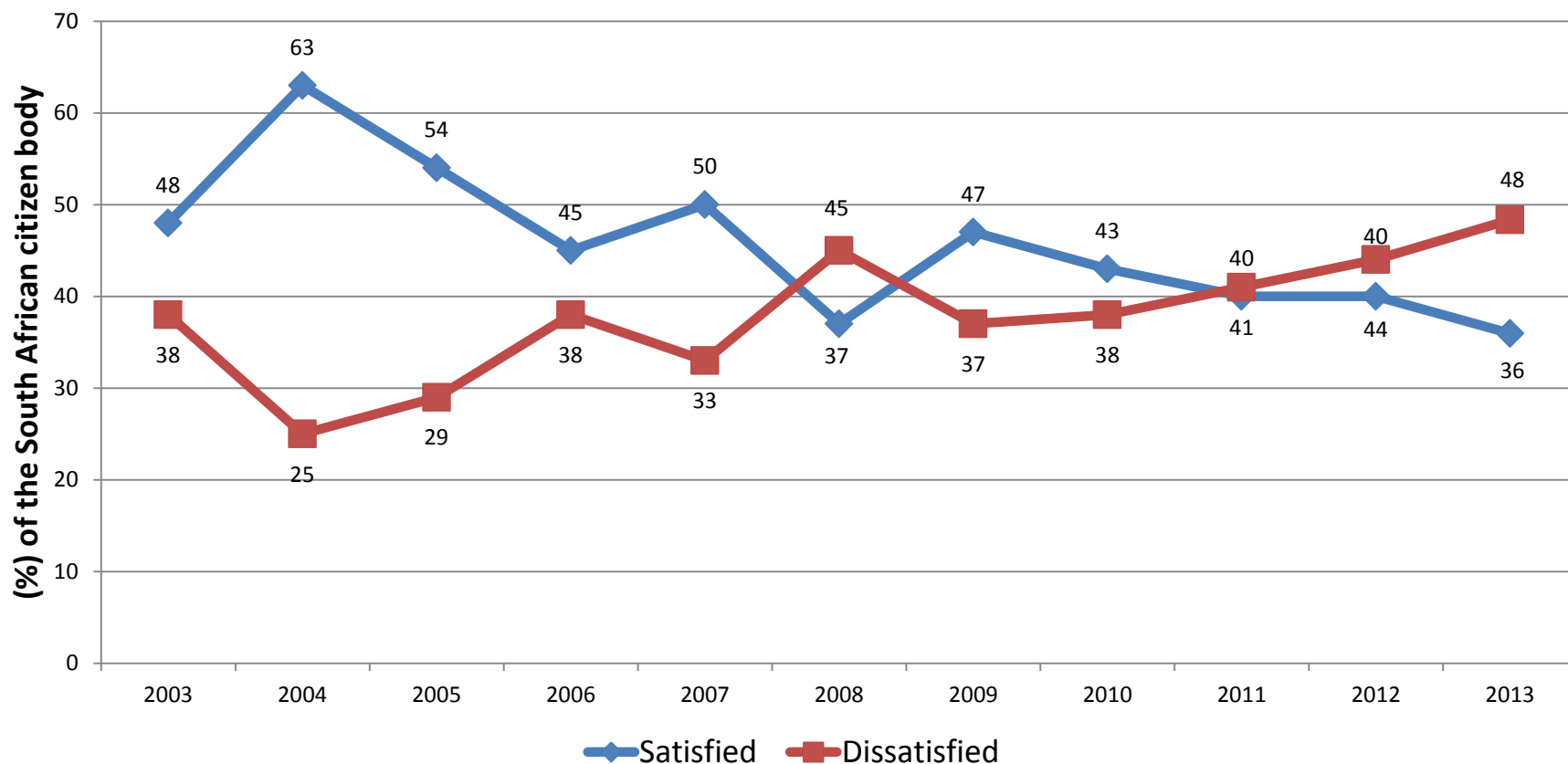




# Satisfaction with Democracy (2003-2013)



**How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy is working in South Africa?**





# Meaning and evaluation of democracy compared (mean scores)



SA faring well



SA faring fairly well



SA failing

	Importance of concept	Applies in South Africa	Discrepancy between ideal and application
National elections are free and fair	81	73	8
That opposition parties are free to criticise the government	70	63	7
That citizens are able to take part in peaceful and legal protest action to express their dissatisfaction	76	61	15
That everyone is free to express their political views openly, even if they are extreme	78	62	16
That ruling parties are punished in elections when they have done a bad job	73	45	28
That politicians listen to people before making decisions	74	46	28

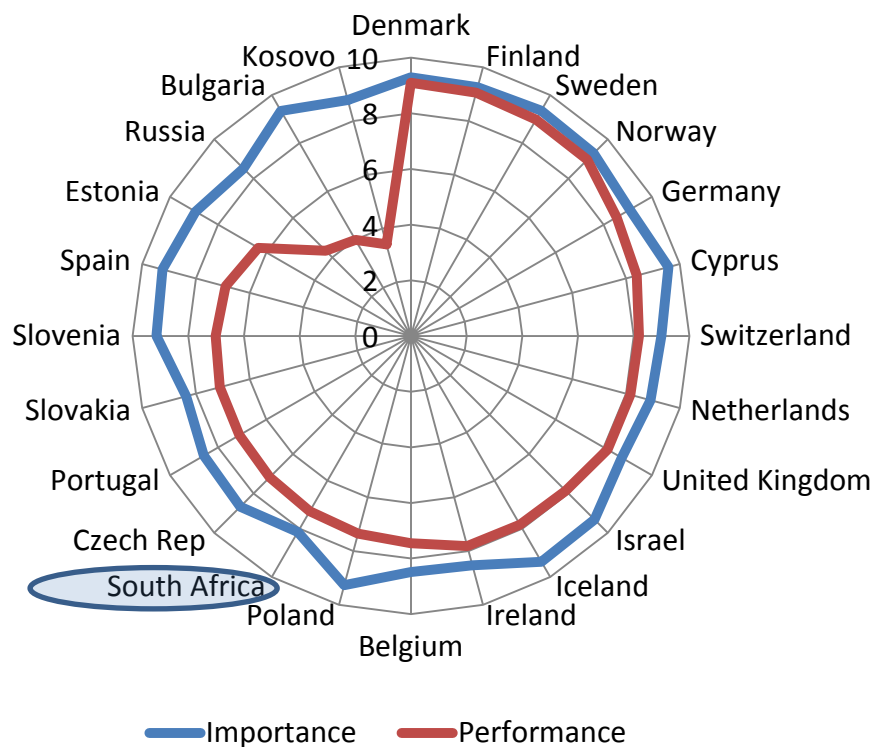




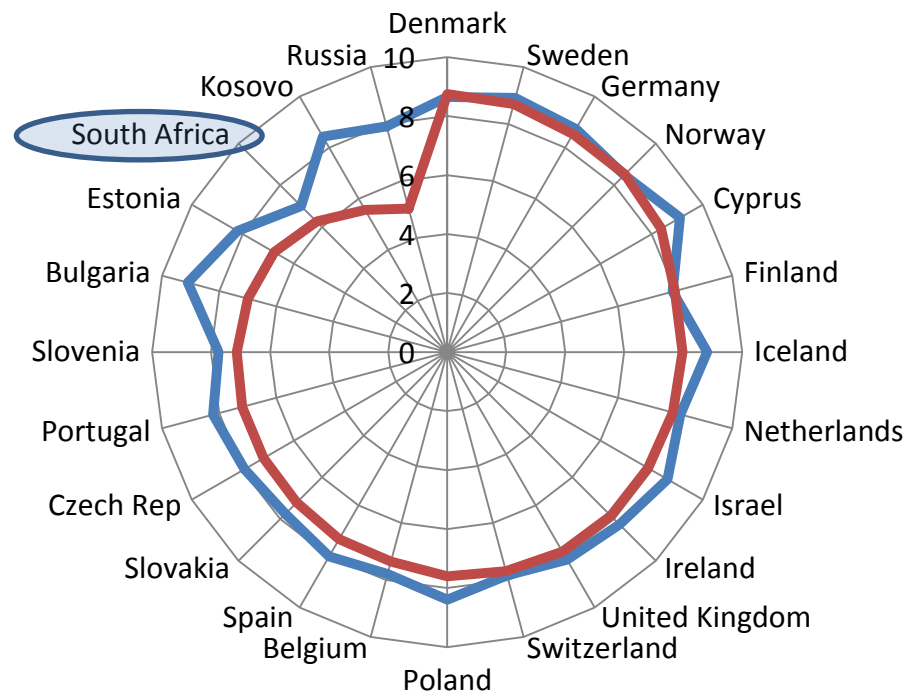
# European Social Survey (ESS) and South African Comparison on Democracy



## National elections Free and Fair



## Opposition parties are free to criticise government





# Institutional Trust (1998-2013)

## (% trust/Strongly trust)



	1998	1999	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Political system</b>															
National government	47	60	43	52	57	69	64	59	52	52	61	52	51	46	44
Provincial government	41	50	34	..	52	63	59	54	..	..	..	..	..	..	44
Local government	37	48	32	38	45	55	48	44	34	38	40	36	36	34	34
Parliament	..	..	..	..	57	65	59	55	46	48	56	49	45	44	..
Political parties	30	39	29	27	..	..	42	37	27	29	34	29	29	25	25
Politicians	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	32	22	26	29	24	25	21	22
<b>Social and political institutions</b>															
Religious institutions	82	81	74	81	84	81	81	82	82	83	84	81	79	77	76
The SABC	..	..	..	..	75	73	71	72	..	73	73	74	65	69	67
Electoral Commission	..	54	49	63	63	69	65	68	..	67	72	71	61	60	63
Defence force	48	..	45	49	62	56	59	49	..	56	64	58	57	53	..
Courts	42	45	37	45	50	58	56	52	49	50	57	54	50	48	46
Big business	56	55	39	43	57	55	53	56	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
The police	42	47	39	40	42	46	45	39	39	40	41	41	41	36	35
Trade unions	38	38	26	38	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	34	43	29	30

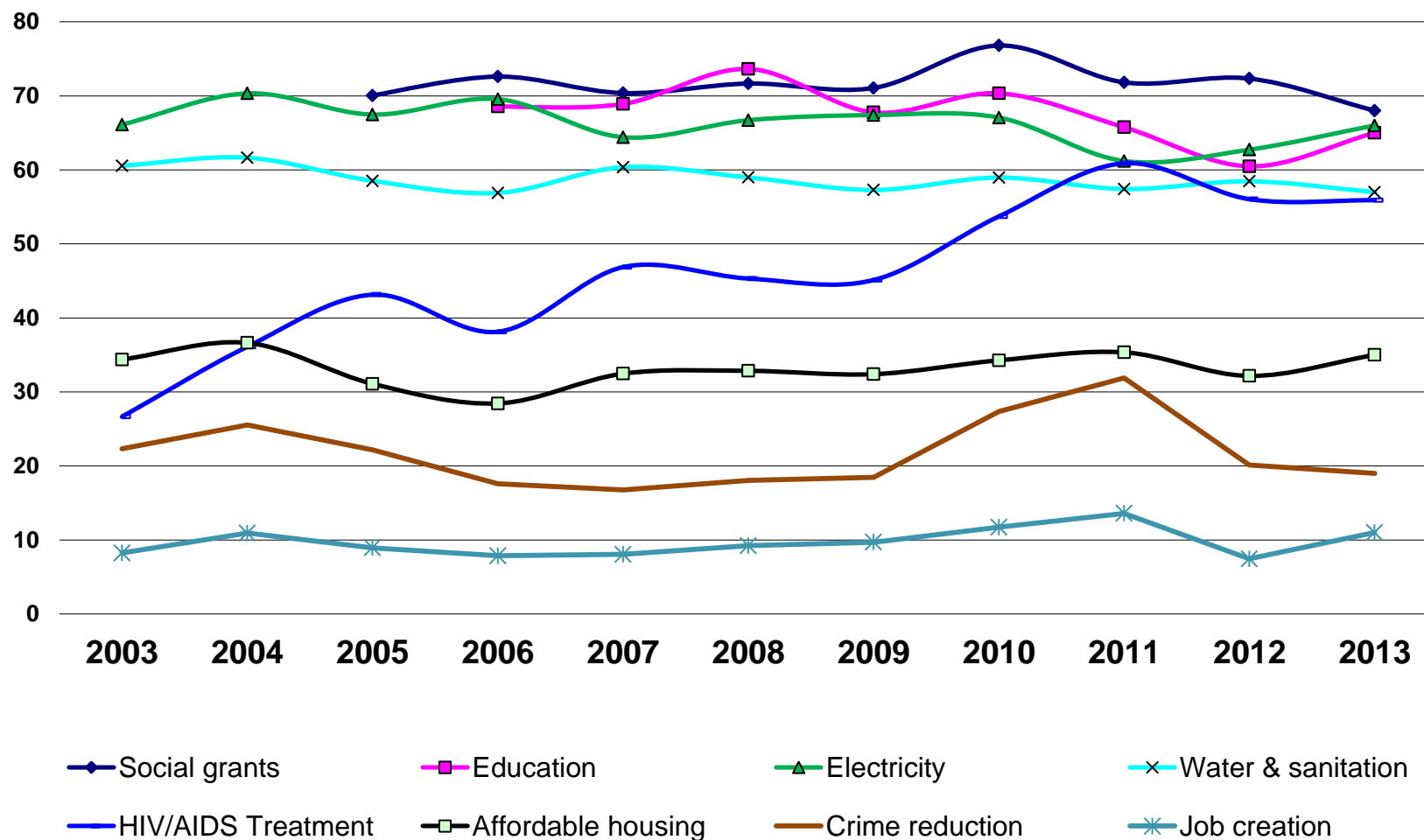
Note: green shaded cells mean year-on-year improvement; red-shaded cells mean a year-on-year decline; unshaded cells mean no change or no data.

Source: HSRC South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2003-2012; IEC VPS 2013.



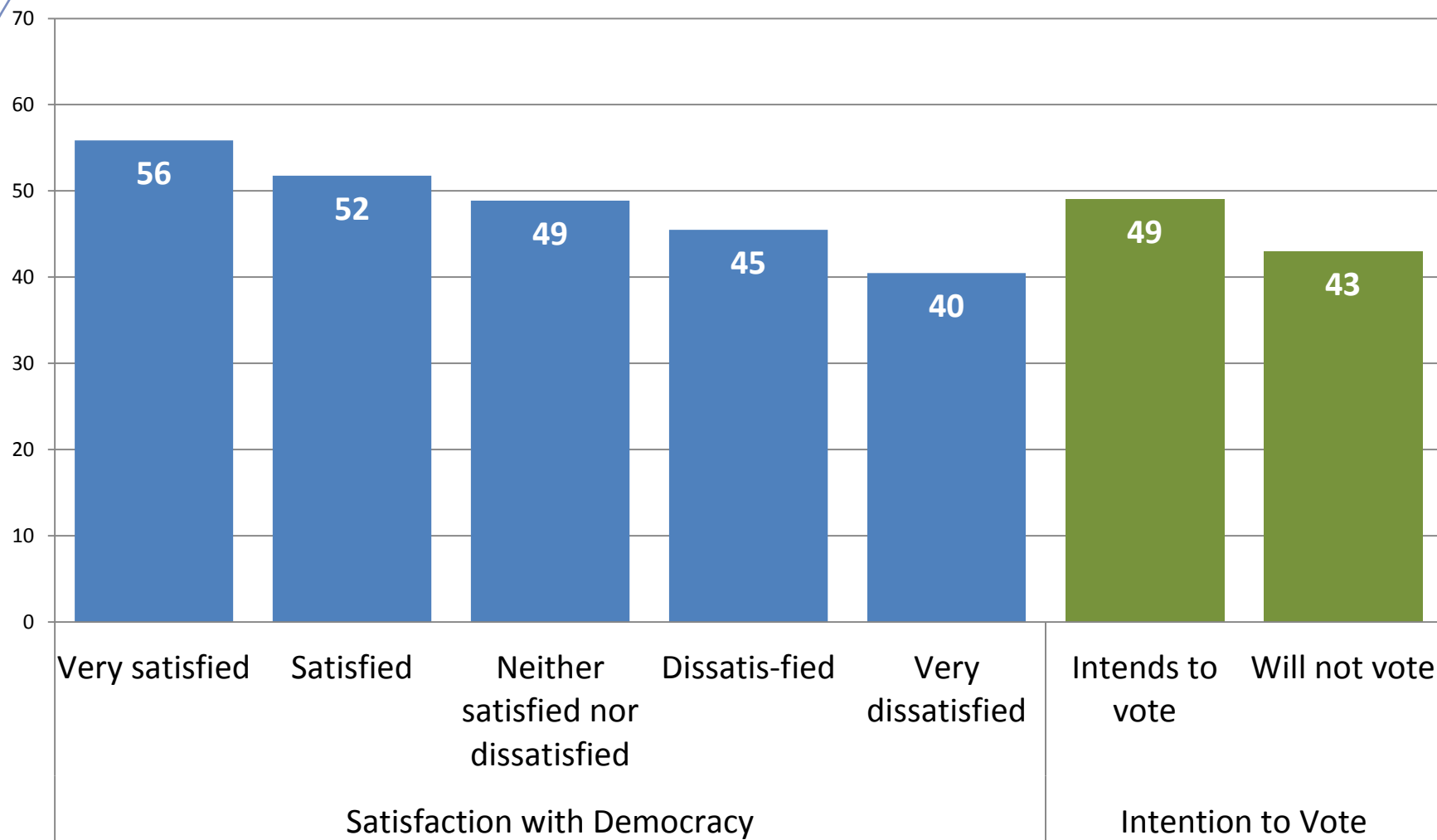


# Service Delivery Evaluations (2003-2013)





# Service Delivery Evaluations and Political Behaviour and Attitudes





# Political Participation

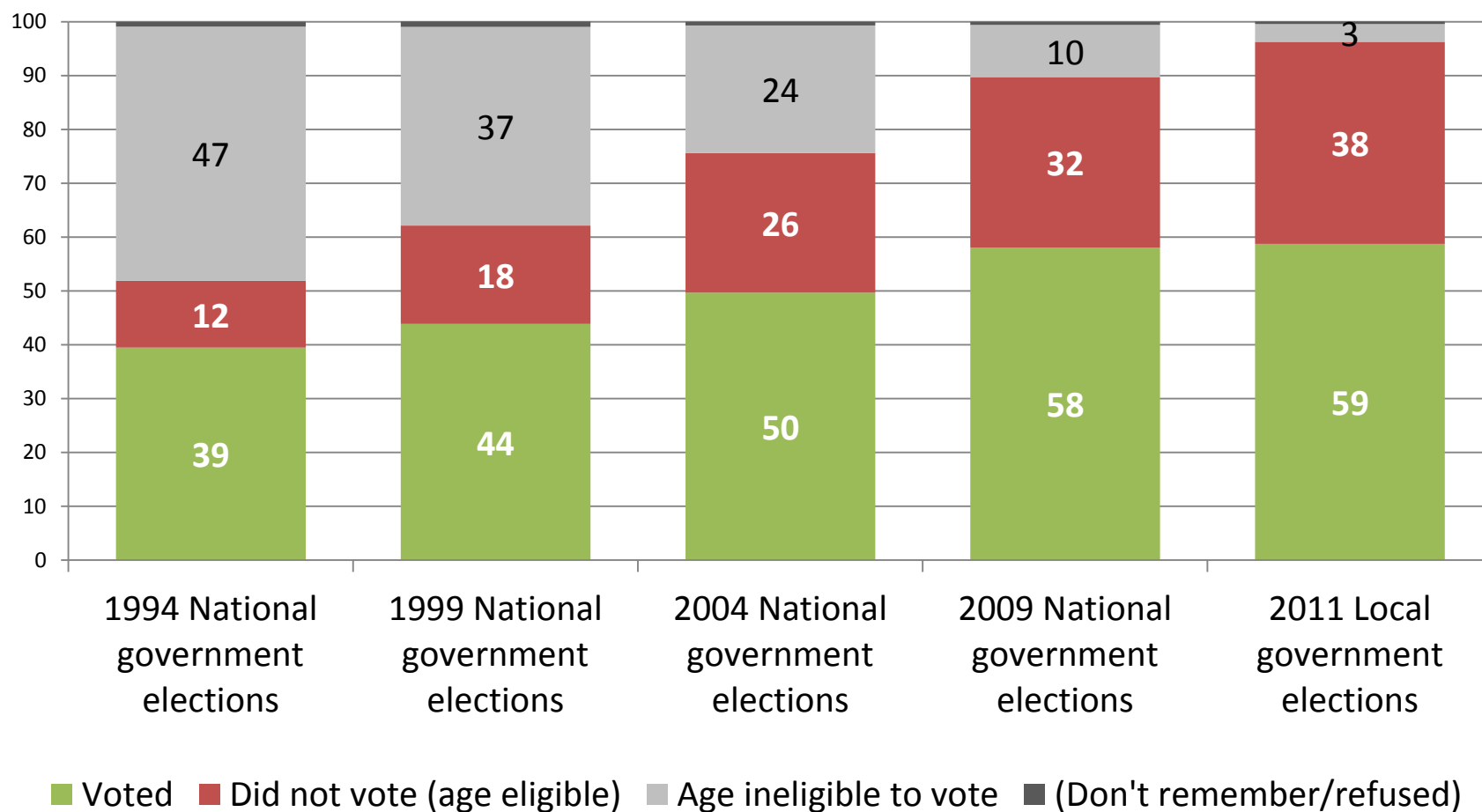
## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

- Voting history of the voting age population in 2013
- Participation in less institutionalised forms of political action (2004 and 2013)



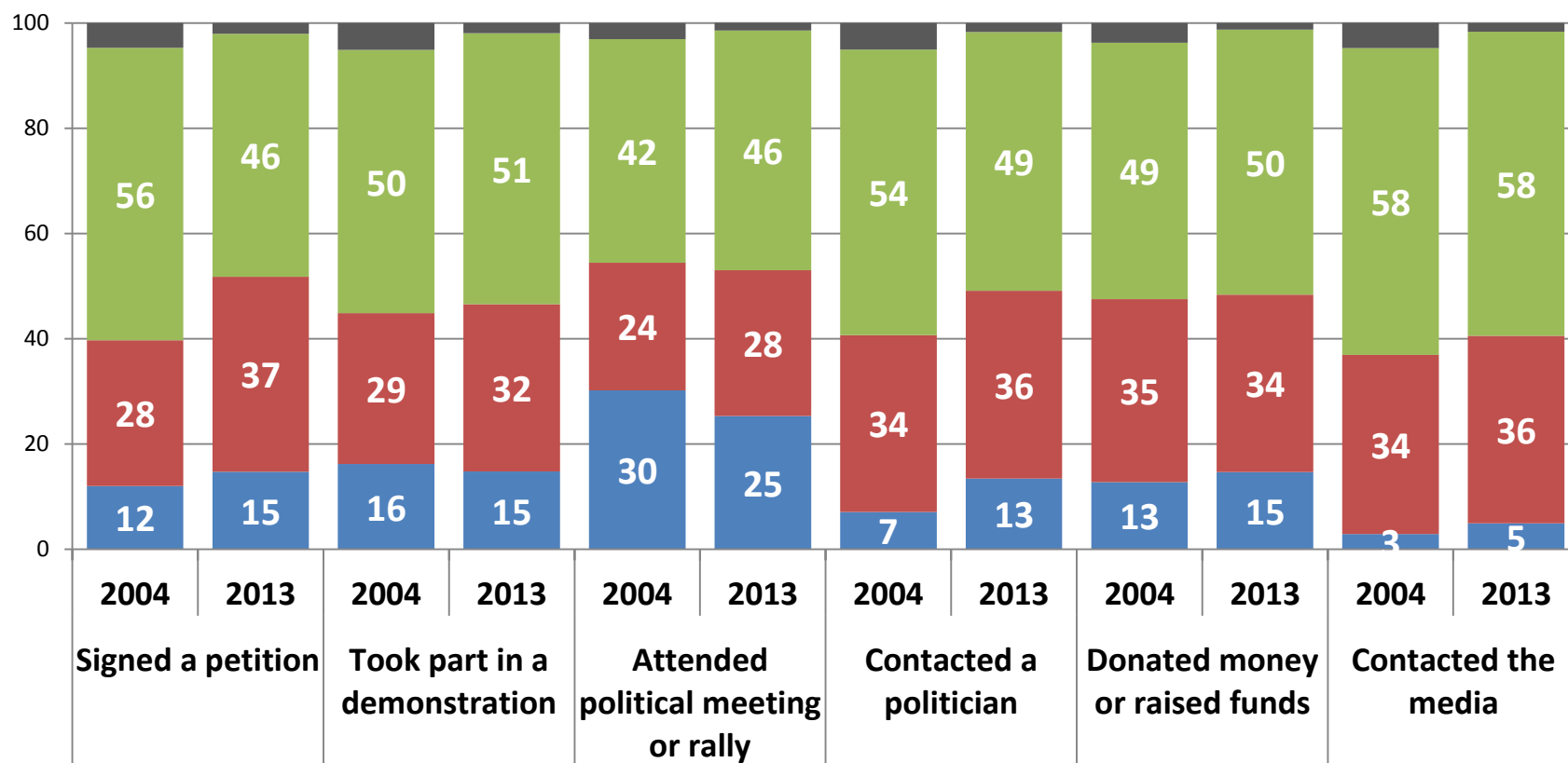


# Voting history among the voting age population in 2013 (percent)





# Participation in less institutionalised forms of political action (2004 and 2013)



■ Have done it

■ Have not done it and would not do it

■ Have not done it but might do it

■ (Can't choose)





# Most recent voting experience and irregularities

## SATISFACTION WITH MOST RECENT ELECTORAL EXPERIENCE

- General voting experience
- Evaluations of voting stations
- Evaluations of IEC staff

## VOTING IRREGULARITIES

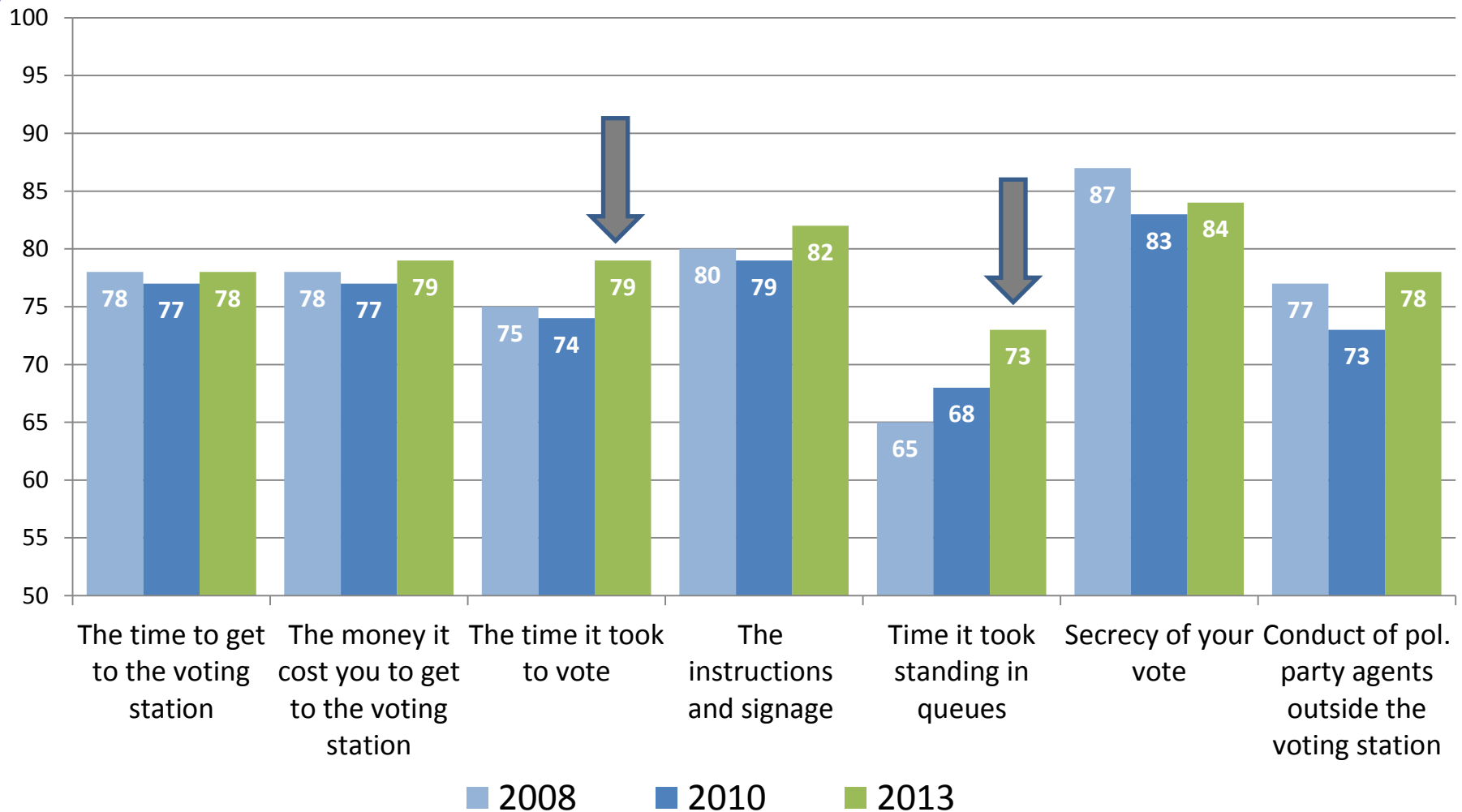
- Perceptions of voting irregularities
- Perceived accuracy of counting and reporting of votes in 2009 national election





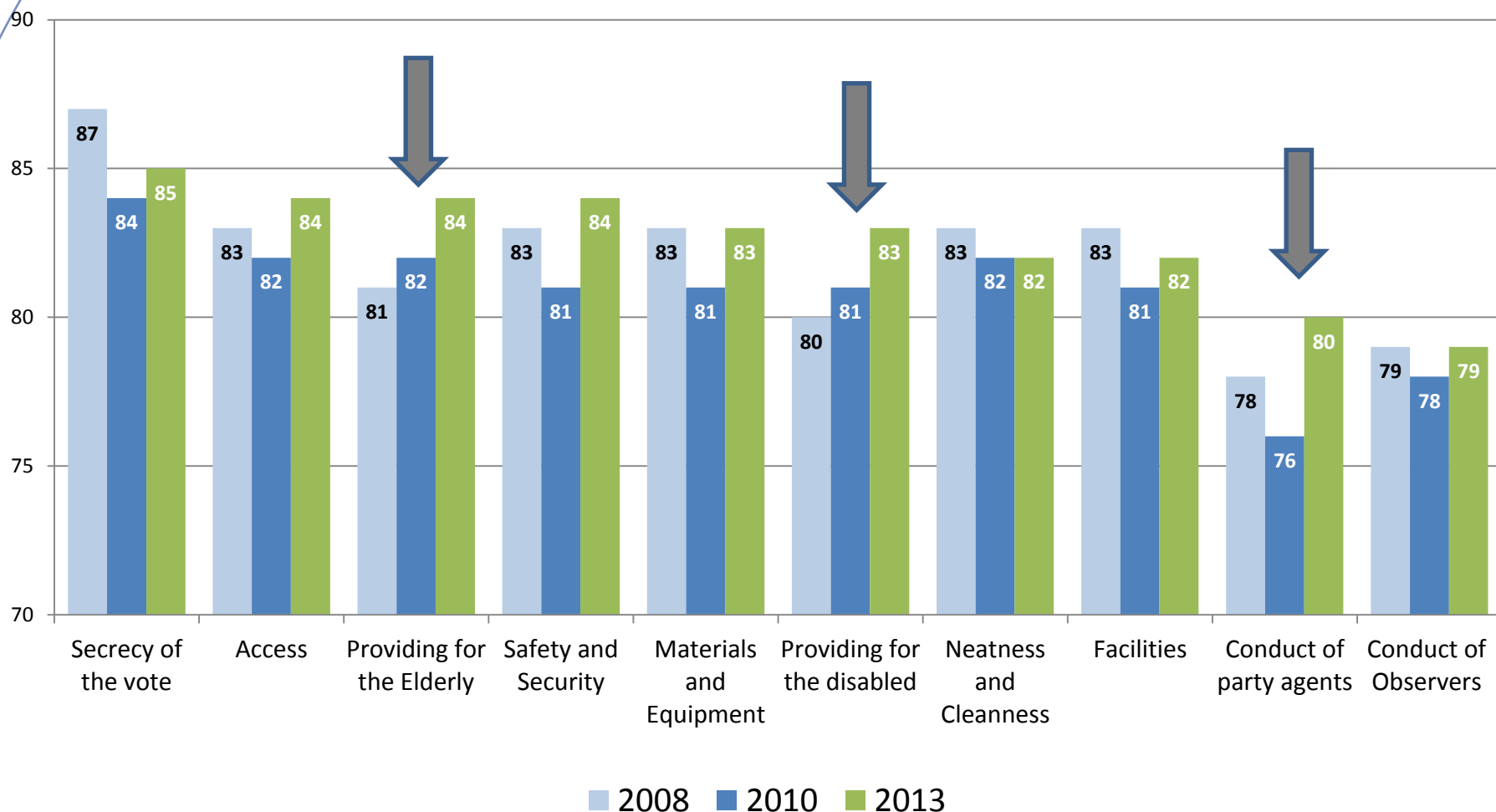


# Satisfaction with the General Voting Experience (mean scores)



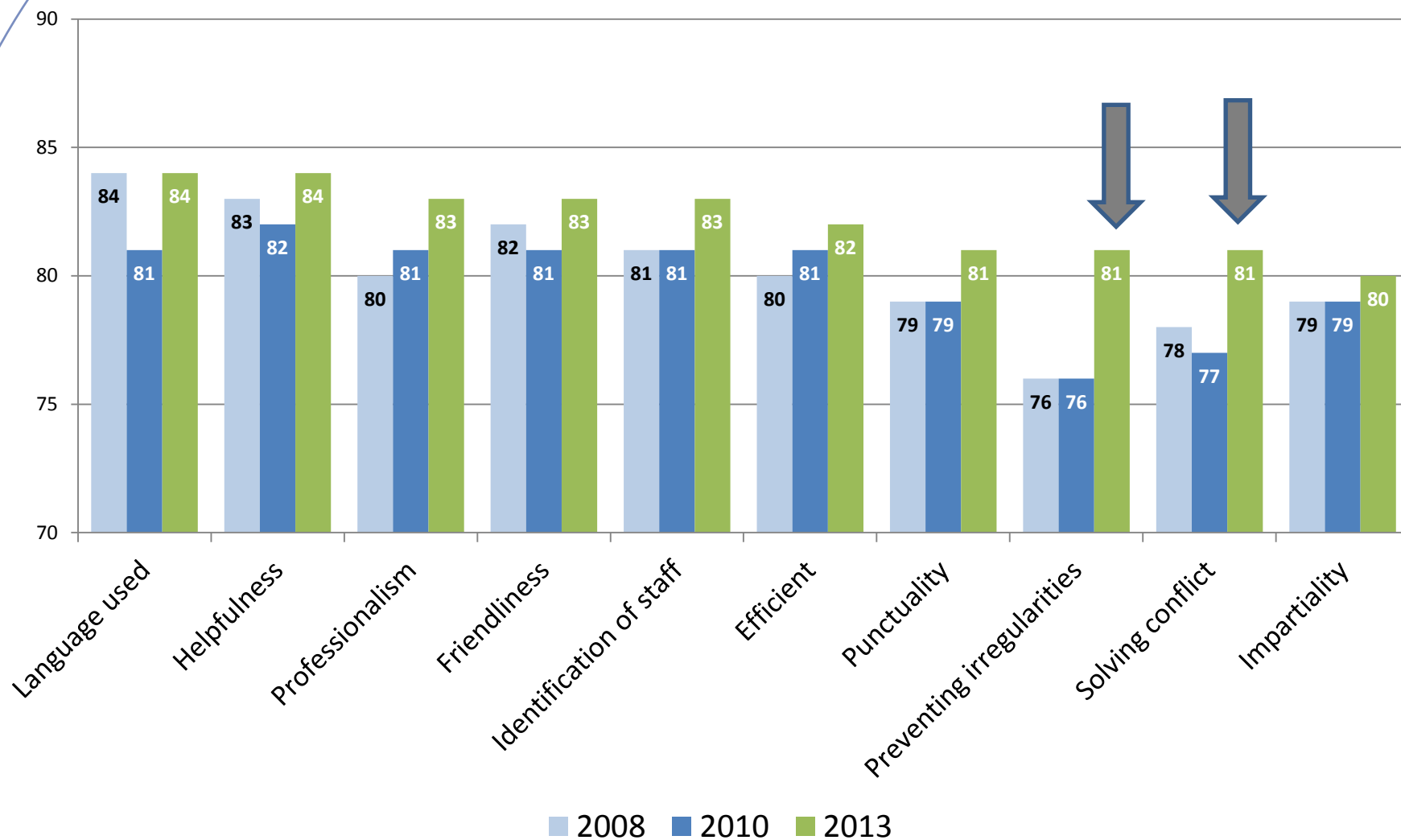


# Satisfaction with voting stations (mean scores)





# Satisfaction with IEC officials (mean scores)

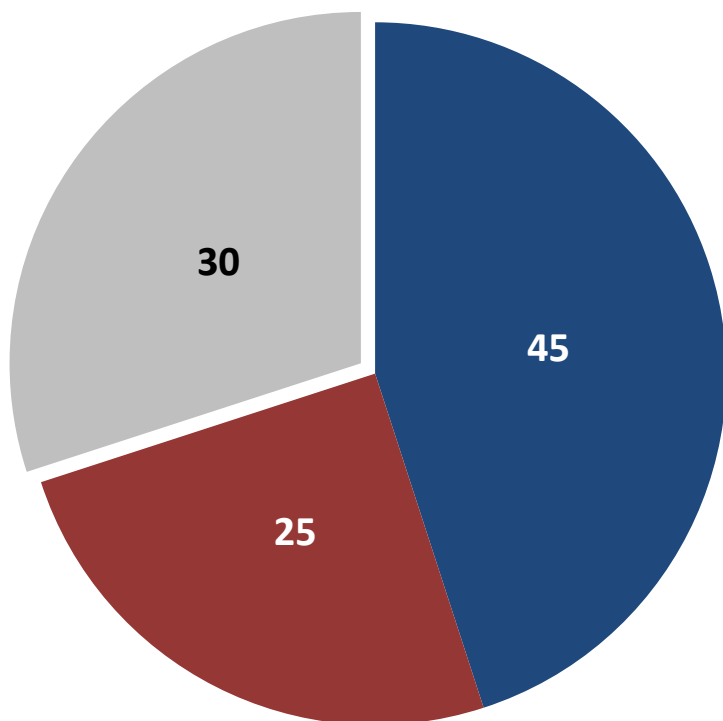




# Reported Voting Irregularities Since 1994 and During 2009 Elections

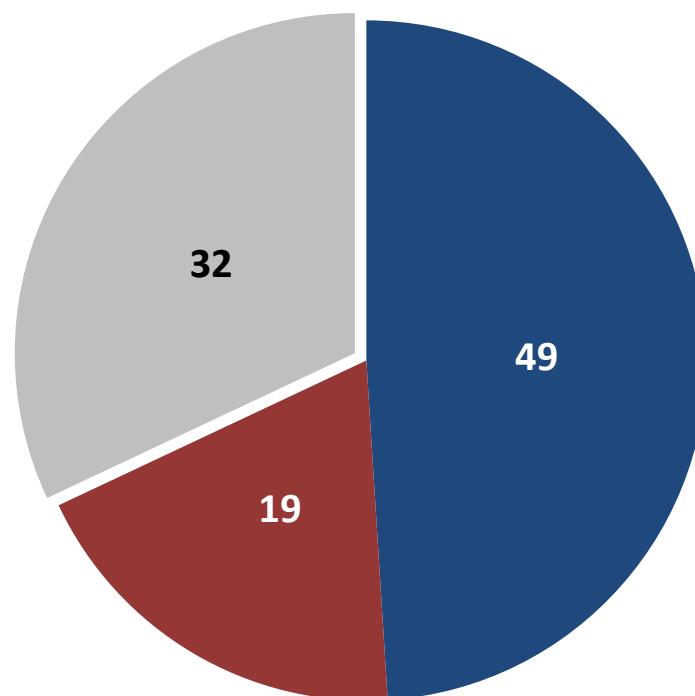


Reported irregularities occurring  
since 1994 Election



■ Irregularities Did Not Occur ■ Irregularities Occurred  
■ (Don't Know/Unsure)

Reported irregularities in  
2009 Election



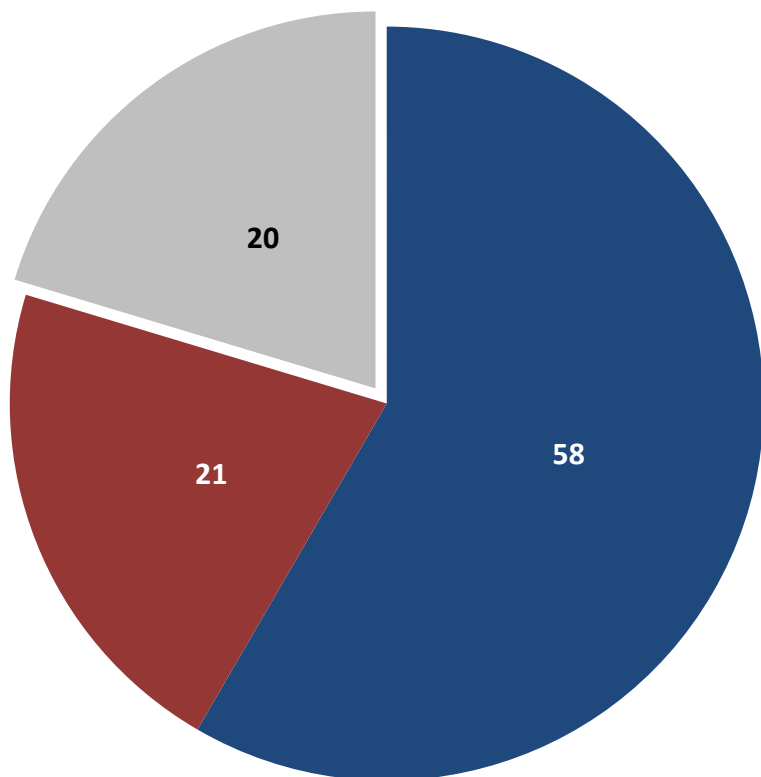
■ Irregularities Did Not Occur ■ Irregularities Occurred  
■ (Don't Know/Unsure)



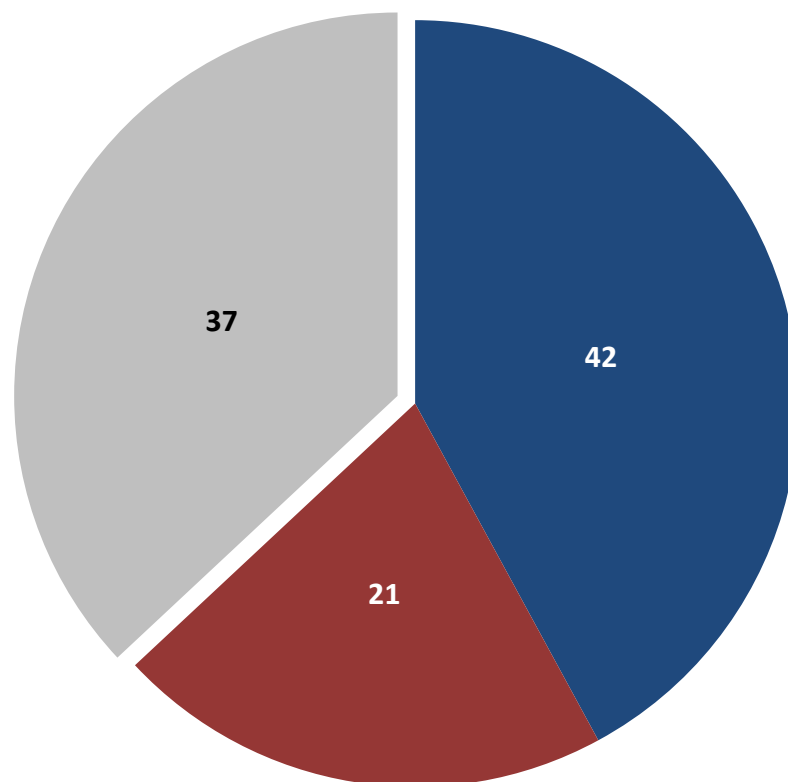
# Reported Voting Irregularities Participants and Non-Participants



## Voters in the 2009 Elections



## Non-Voters for the 2009 Elections

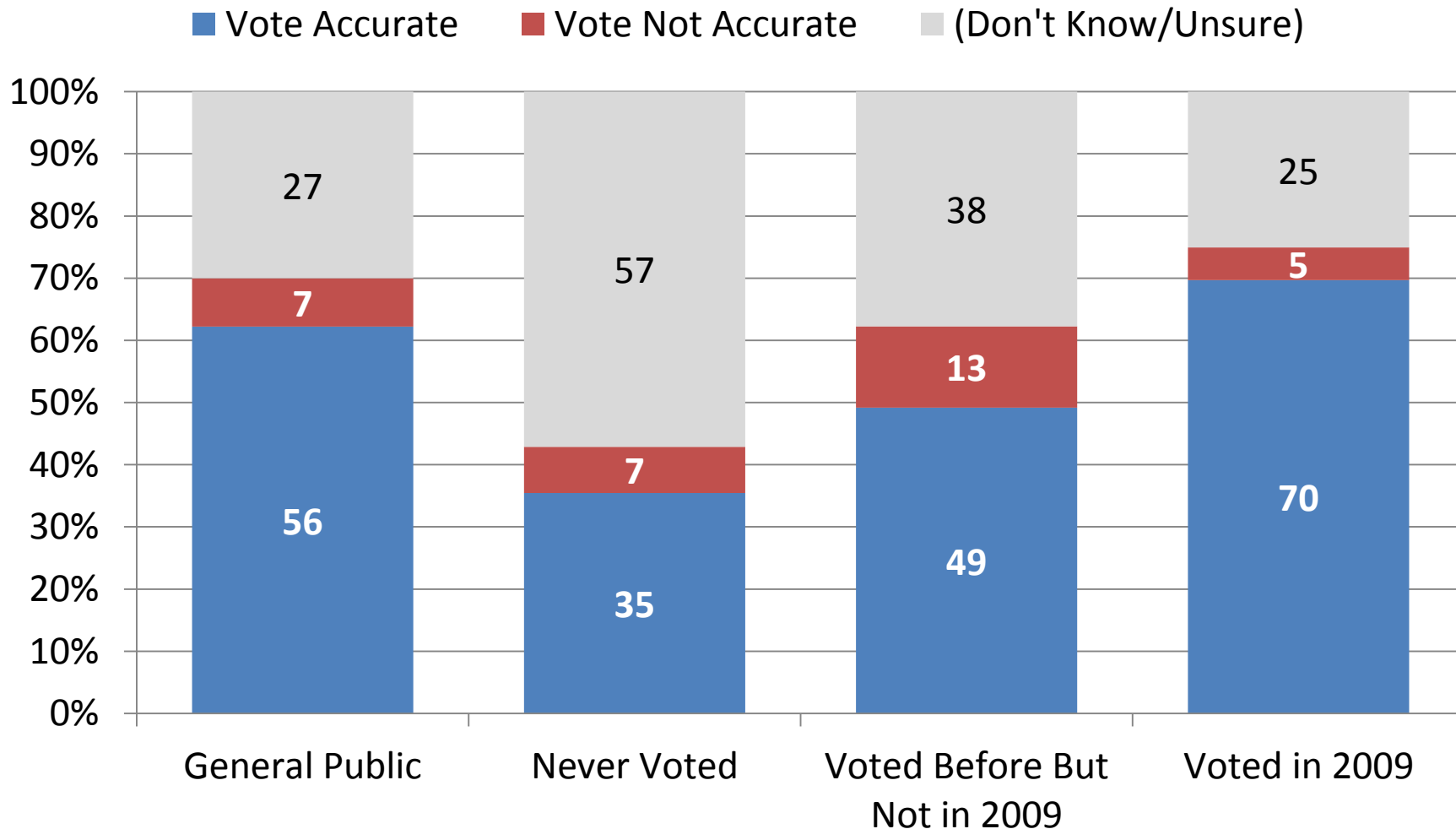


■ Irregularities Did Not Occur ■ Irregularities Occurred  
■ (Don't Know)

Source: IEC VPS 2013



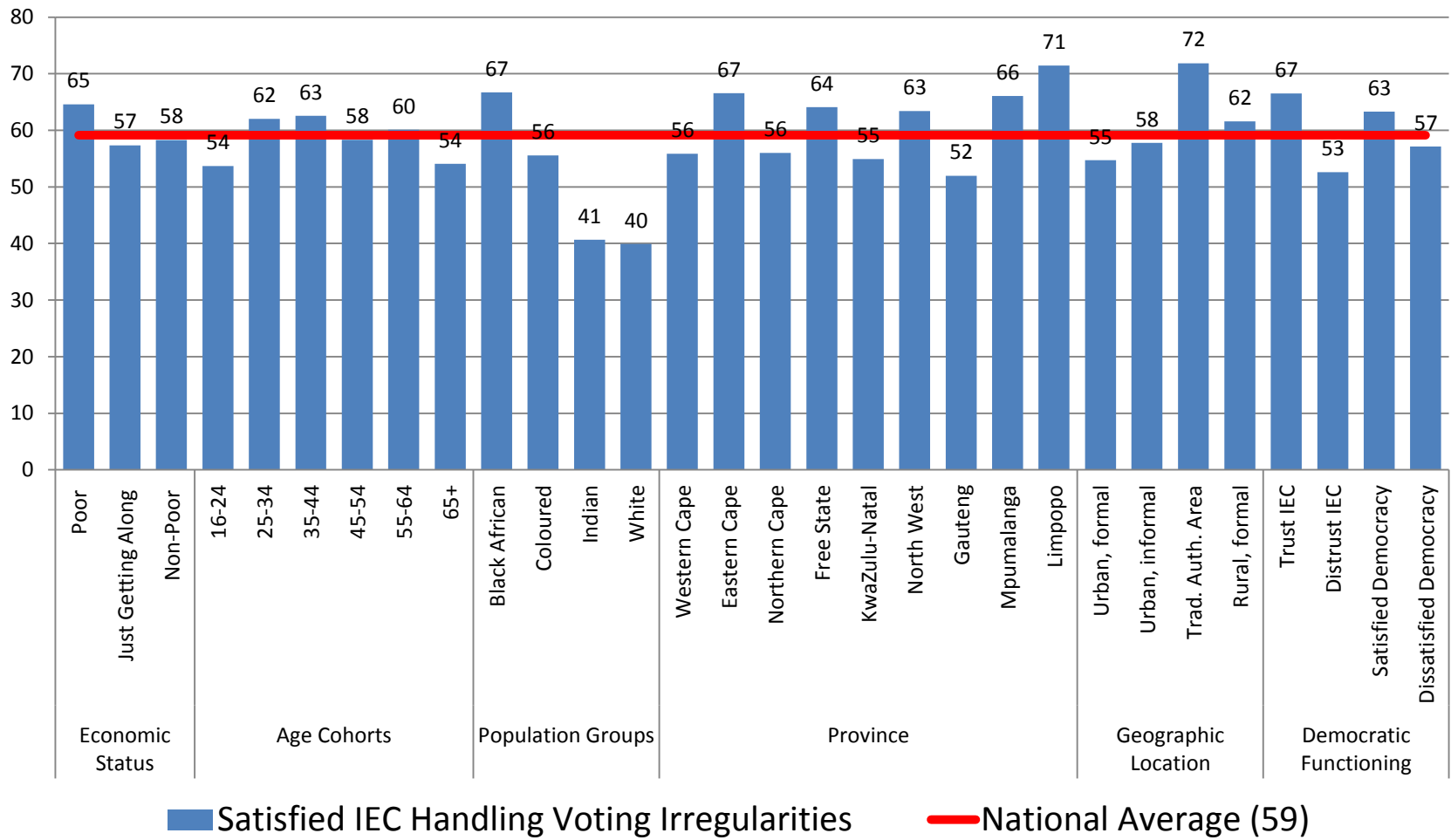
# Perceived Accuracy of the Counting and Reporting of Votes in the 2009 Elections







# Satisfaction with the Way the IEC Addressed Voting Irregularities





# Voting and Electoral Attitudes



## ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOTING

- Political interest
- Political efficacy and duty to vote
- Intention to vote
- Reasons for intended abstention
- Factors that would encourage voting





# Voting attitudes

## (2004 and 2013)



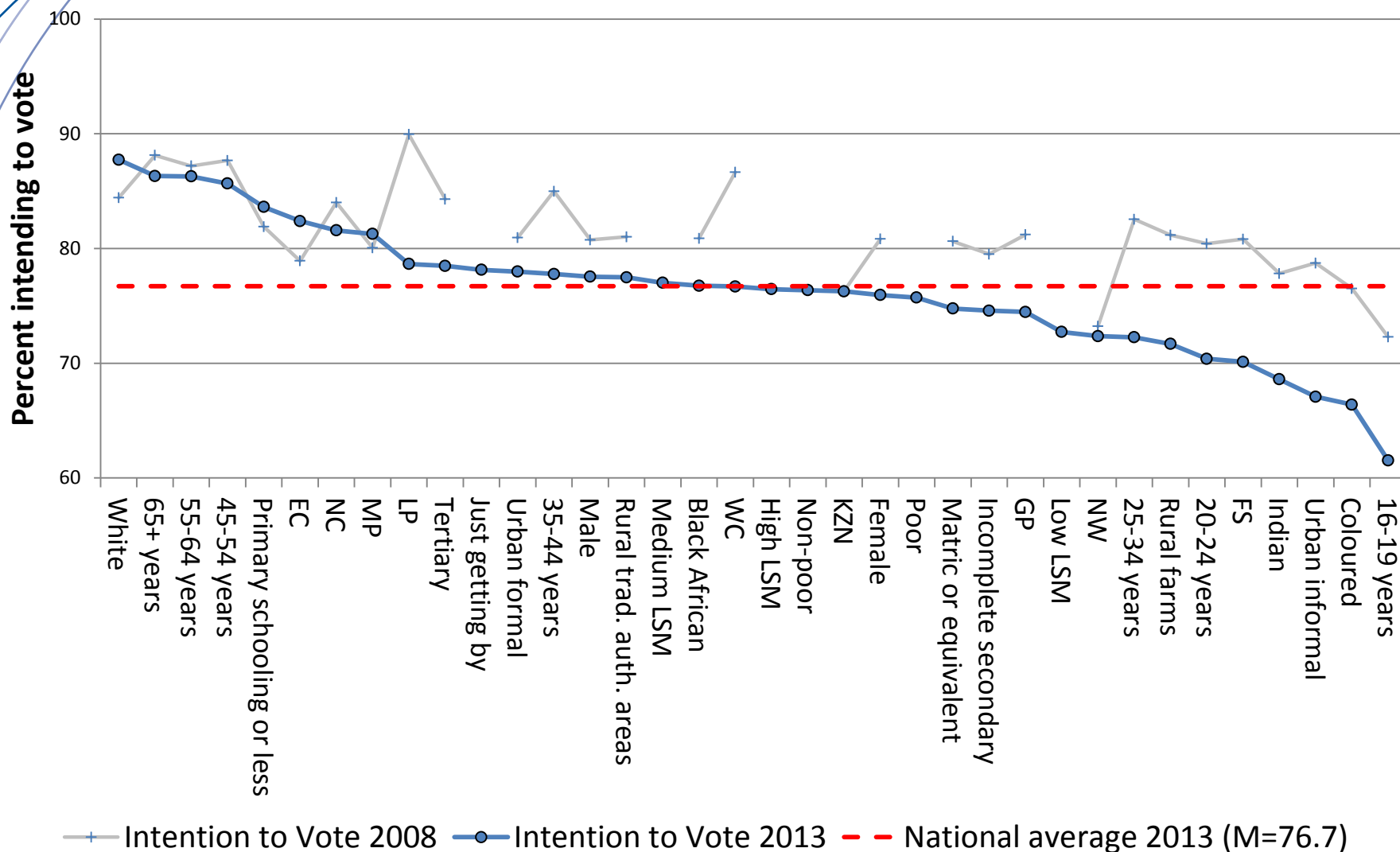
- **Interest in politics** fairly constant between 2004 and 2013 (36% in 2004; 38% in 2013).
- **Interest in forthcoming election:** 36% had given the election considerable thought, and 27% to some extent. Only 36% had given the election very little or no thought.

		Agree	Neutral	Disagree	(Don't know)	Total
<b>Duty to vote:</b> “It is the duty of all citizens to vote”	2004	84	7	8	2	100
	2013	79	10	11	1	100
<b>Internal efficacy (1):</b> “My vote makes a difference”	2004	68	6	23	2	100
	2013	46	8	45	2	100
<b>External efficacy (1):</b> “After being elected all parties are the same, so voting is pointless”	2004	20	11	66	4	100
	2013	41	11	46	2	100
<b>External efficacy (2):</b> “Voting is meaningless because no politician can be trusted”	2004	19	15	63	4	100
	2013	43	15	40	1	100



# Intention to Vote

(2008 and 2013, % of VAP)



Source: HSRC South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2004, 2012



# Reasons for not intending to vote (2008, 2010, 2013)



Reasons why would not vote if was an election tomorrow	2008	2010	2013
<b>Administrative barriers</b>	21	17	17
Not registered	14	10	13
Do not possess necessary documents to register	6	5	3
Polling station too far away	0	1	0
Very long queues	0	1	0
Do not know where to vote	1	0	0
<b>Disinterest and disillusionment</b>	71	65	71
Not interested	48	37	49
My vote would not make a difference	9	11	8
Disillusioned with politics	5	8	5
Not interested in any of the existing political parties	8	7	9
Too much effort required	1	1	1
Only one party could win	1	0	0
Intimidation	0	2	0
My employer would not allow me to vote	0	2	0
<b>Individual barriers</b>	1	2	1
I am away from home	1	1	0
<b>Other</b>	6	14	12
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100
<b>Unweighted N</b>	528	548	466



# Factors That Would Encourage Voting (percent)

	2008	2010	2013
<b>Institutional factors – voting facilities</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>
If the queues to vote were shorter	16	13	12
If the polling station was closer	7	6	6
If I was able to get to the voting station more easily	3	3	2
<b>Institutional factors – registration process</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>
If I did not have to register	8	7	5
If I could use my old ID to register	0	1	2
<b>Political efficacy factors</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>38</b>
If I felt that my vote would make a difference in the election outcome	15	12	13
If there was a political party that I strongly believed in	12	8	9
If I was more convinced it was important to vote	7	8	5
If the political parties had tried harder to get my vote	7	7	6
If I understood why national government elections were important	5	6	3
<b>Other socio-demographic factors:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
If more people of my age voted	2	3	3
If persons with disabilities were assisted to go and vote	1	1	1
<b>Nothing would encourage me to vote</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>

*Note: categories mentioned by very small shares have been excluded for ease of presentation.*

*Source: IEC VPS 2008; IEC VPS 2010; IEC VPS 2013*





# What Drives Intention to Vote in South Africa?



- **Regression analysis** undertaken to explore determinants of voting intention before the 2014 national elections
- **Trust in institutions and leaders:** higher confidence in political institutions and leadership contributes positively to the decision to vote.
- **Political efficacy:** A belief in the power of one's vote is an important factor in electoral behaviour.
- **Civic duty:** those believing it is their duty to vote are more inclined to want to vote.
- **Political engagement:** Those more interested in national and provincial elections express a greater intention to vote.
- **Participation in politics:** Being registered as a voter or having voted in a previous election are factors associated with an increased desire to vote. This highlights the importance of registration drives and the existence of a culture of voting.



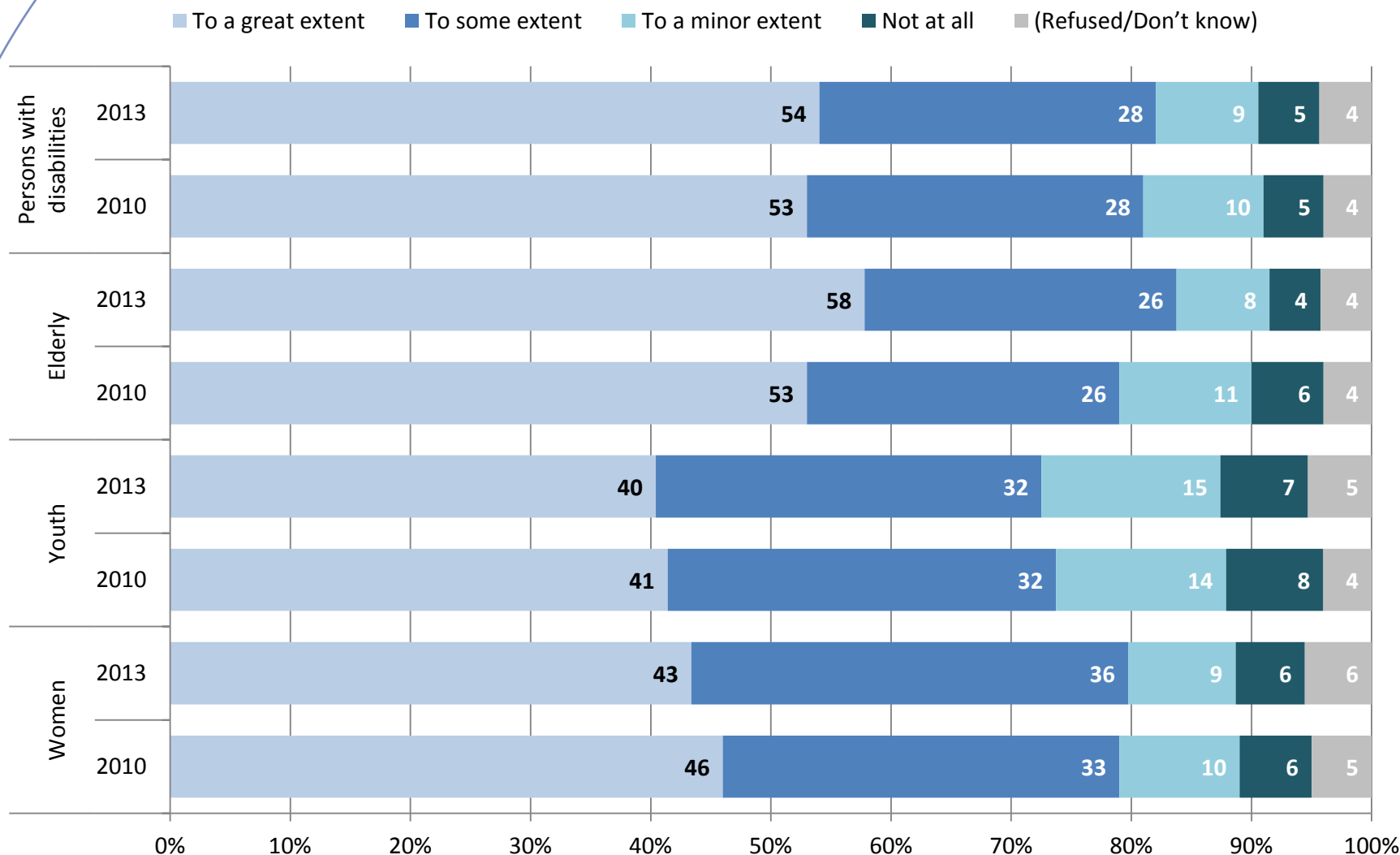
# Voting and Special Groups

- Perceived consideration of the needs of special groups
- Attitudes towards youth participation in politics



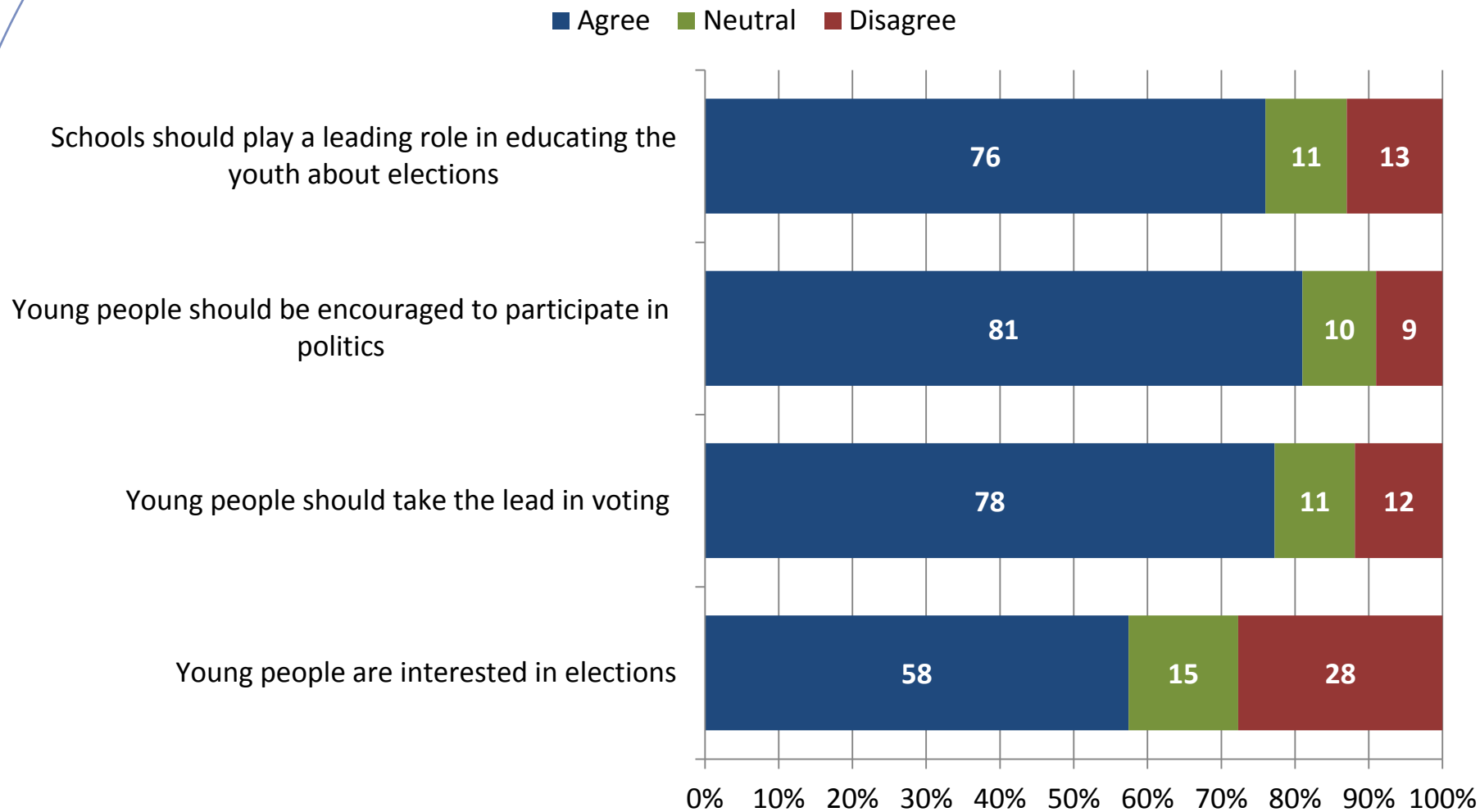


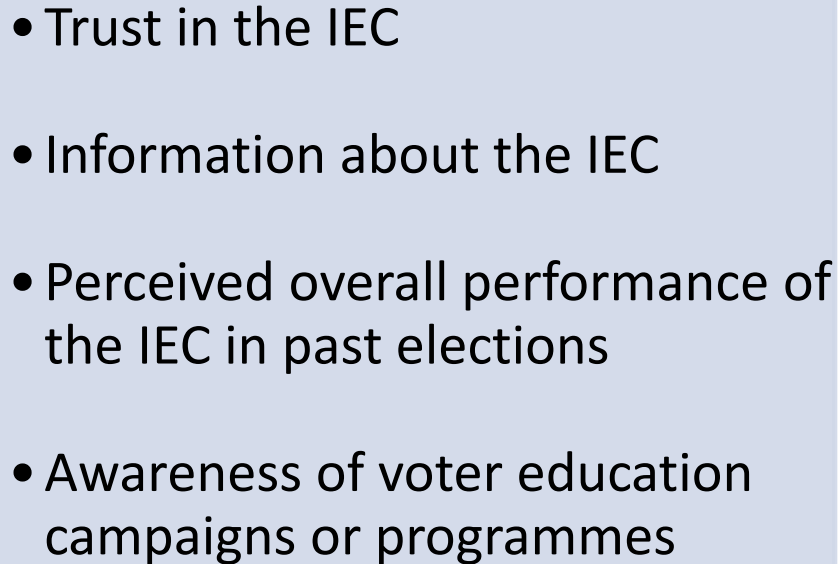
# Perceived Consideration of the Needs of Special Groups





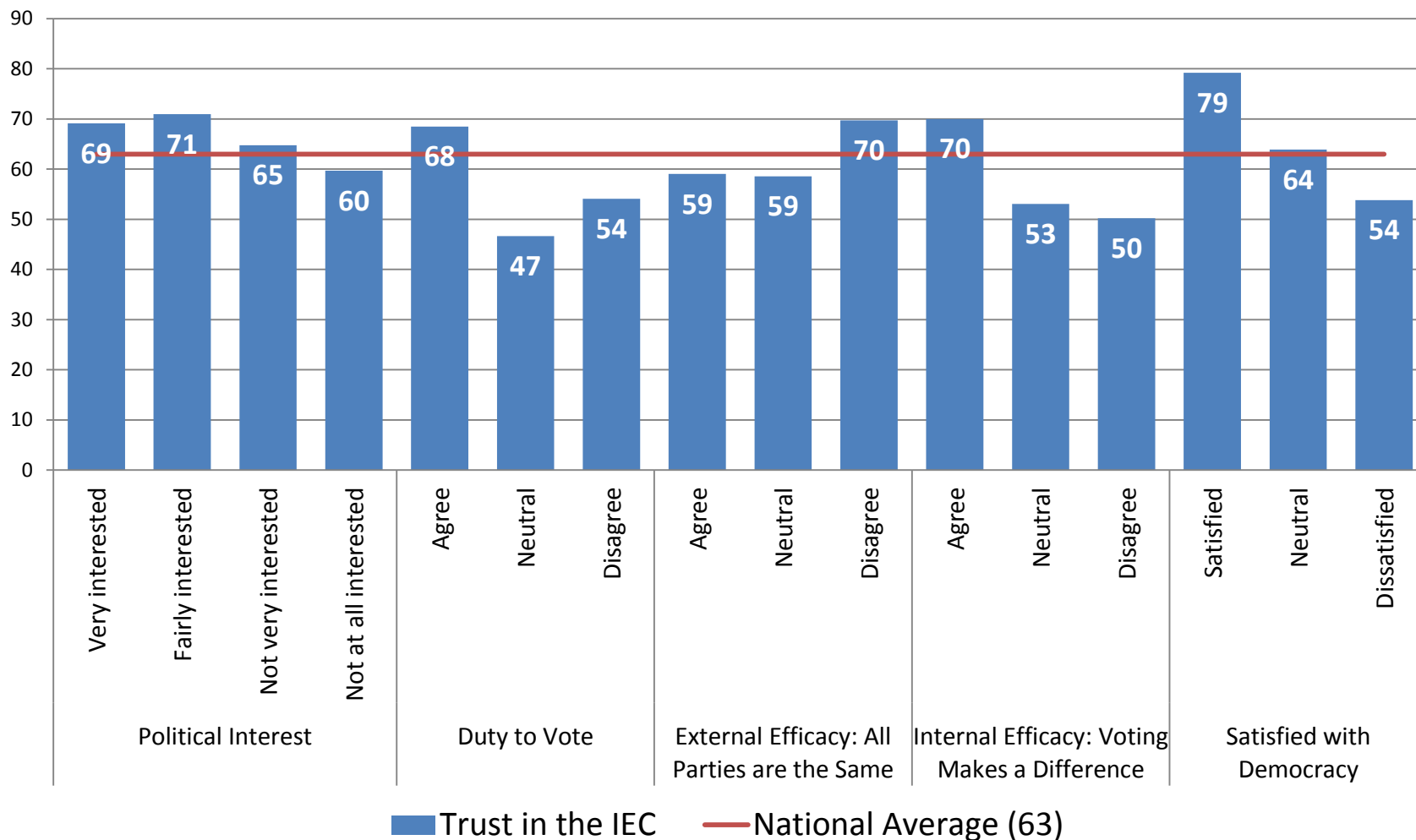
# Views on Youth and the Electoral Process (percentages)







# Trust in the IEC by Voting Attitudes and Democratic Satisfaction







# Information about the IEC and perceived performance



**80%**

get information about the IEC via television; 59% via radio; 48% by newspapers and posters; 31% via contacts



**58%**

Feel television is the preferred way of getting IEC related information. All else mentioned by nominal shares



**56%**

feel they have too little information about the services provided by the IEC



**37%**

say they have too little information on how to vote



**63%**

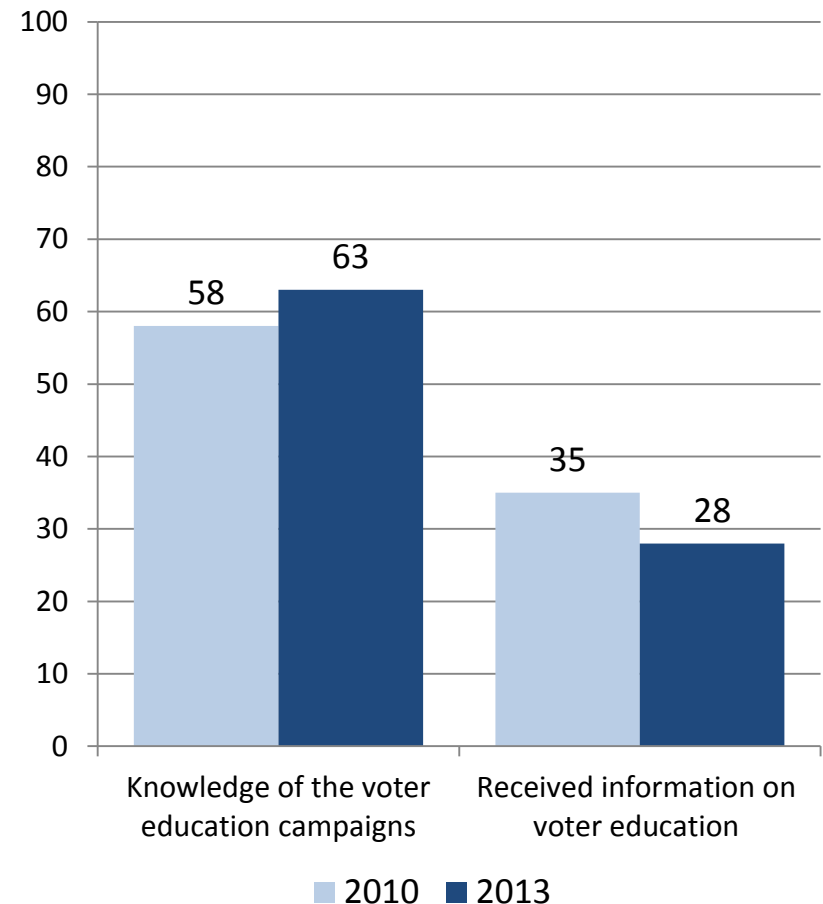
were pleased with IEC performance in past elections, 15% were neutral, and only 6% were dissatisfied. This is a modest decline compared with 2010 (74% satisfied)



# Awareness of IEC Voter Education Campaigns or Programmes



- 16-19 year-olds less likely to have knowledge of voter education campaigns.
- Poor have high levels of knowledge about voter education programmes compared with the more affluent.
- Only 27% are aware that a person can register as a voter at the age of 16 years





## *Conclusion*





# Conclusions

- Even though South Africans exhibit **relatively strong support for democracy** and
- ...have a **resolute attachment to a range of core democratic principles**, especially free and fair elections
- They tend to ...
  - ... demonstrate increasing **concern about the functioning of democracy**
  - ... feel that **democratic performance falls short of the ideal** in relation to issues such as electoral accountability and citizen engagement
  - ...vest relatively **low confidence in notable political institutions** such as national and local government, Parliament and political parties
  - ... be **critical of current political leadership**





## Conclusions (2)

- The survey also shows a **deeply rooted belief in the duty to vote**, though internal and external political efficacy has declined over the last decade
- **Electoral participation remains the predominant form of political expression** with less institutionalised forms of political engagement tending to be circumscribed
- The **sombre political mood** and in instances harsh evaluations of democracy ahead of the 2014 elections...
  - ... might signal the **emergence of a more critical citizen that is concerned with the accountability** of institutions and office-bearers, which in turn could be a positive development for South African democracy and civic culture







## Conclusions (3)



- Past electoral experiences have yielded considerably **positive evaluations of voting processes, voting stations and electoral staff**
- A majority of those perceiving irregularities in the 2009 election were satisfied with the IEC handling of these issues
- In 2013, there **remains a strong intention to vote** (77%) despite a modest decline since 2010
- Disinterest and disillusionment remain substantially more important than administrative reasons for planned abstention
- While continued improvements in terms of access to voting facilities and registration processes would further encourage turnout, political efficacy factors tend to be equally as important
- **Confidence in the IEC remains high** but is correlated with democratic satisfaction, political interest and efficacy. If these indicators decline so will trust in the IEC





# Recommendations



## Electoral management and staffing

- While electoral staff performance and training is highly praised, need to ensure that...
- ... staff closely monitor the conduct of party agents and observers
- ... punctuality, swift conflict resolution and impartiality continue to be emphasised

## Voting stations

- Queuing times need to be monitored and bottlenecks promptly addressed
- Signage needs to be clearly visible
- Needs of women and youth should be carefully considered

## Registration

- Getting young South Africans registered key to removing electoral barriers
- Official IEC registration statistics show that commendable strides have been made in this regard in the lead-up to the 2014 elections
- Yet there is low knowledge of registration eligibility at 16 years of age
- Youth citizen starter pack initiative: important to emphasise early registration in school messaging alongside civic values
- Important step in ensuring a culture of voting among youth, many of whom have not previously voted in a national election





## Recommendations (2)



### Civic education

- **Disinterest and disillusionment speaks more to the performance of elected representatives** than the performance of the IEC in fulfilling its electoral management mandate
- But this disaffection has the **unintended consequence of pulling down confidence in IEC** alongside other core democratic institutions
- **Requires strong civic messaging** concerning duty to vote, power of the vote, and use of one's vote to ensure electoral accountability and post-election responsiveness
- Under 35s, minority groups, informal urban settlements and residents in the Free State, North West and Gauteng are notable focal points due to high levels of democratic discontent
- Important to challenge creeping disinterest and disillusionment as VPS results suggest that **once political efficacy is lost, it is extremely difficult to recapture** and inspire a return to the ballot box

## IEC Voter Participation Survey 2013/14



Benjamin Roberts  
SASAS Coordinator  
Tel: (031) 242 5606  
Cell: 084 523 0374  
email: broberts@hsrc.ac.za

Jarè Struwig  
SASAS Coordinator  
Tel: (012) 302 2511  
Cell: 082 774 5749  
email: jstruwig@hsrc.ac.za