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**FACTS, FICTION AND FABRICATION: SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH  
AFRICA, 1994-1999**

Paper presented at the Third Biennial International Conference of the Society for  
South African Geographers, Namibia 5-9, July 1999

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## PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE DELIVERY, 1994-1999

*'In 1994, about a quarter of homes had telephones; today, after -1.3 million have been connected, 35% are linked to the telephone system. This means that every day on average since our democratic elections has meant another 1,300 homes electrified; another 750 telephones installed; and another 1,700 people gaining access to clean water... every day!' (President Nelson Mandela, Opening of Parliament, 5 February 1999).*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In his opening of Parliament in February 1999, State President Nelson Mandela reported an impressive list of achievements of the Government of National Unity elected into office in April 1994. The State President correctly observed that South Africa is undergoing a momentous process of change, blazing a trail towards what he calls 'a secure prosperous future'. These dramatic political and social changes have been variously called 'epoch-making progress', 'profound changes' and 'miraculous'.

The tenets of Nelson Mandela's speech at the opening of Parliament is also captured in several annual reports of various government departments, which make bold and impressive claims about successful service and infrastructure delivery since 1994:

- That the government delivered running water to more than 3 million people (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, 1997; African National Congress, 1999);
- connected 2 million households to electricity (Department of Communication, 1997; African National Congress, 1999);
- and improved health care for the poor, with over 500 new clinics were built or upgraded, and provide free medical care for children under six years and pregnant women (Department of Health, 1997; African National Congress, 1999); and that
- nearly 3 million people have been housed, with 750,000 houses built or under construction (Department of Housing, 1997; African National Congress, 1999).

The achievements are remarkable given the structural legacy of the apartheid system (African National Congress, 1999).

However, these impressive facts and figures raise more questions than there are answers. First, to what extent will these infrastructure and services be sustained within the context of fiscal restraints? What are the differential social and ecological impacts of service delivery on the part of the beneficiaries? Who are these beneficiaries and how have they been targeted or selected? To what extent are the newly created delivery mechanisms empowering the poor or private sector infrastructure and service deliverers? Given the shrinking employment opportunities and increasing cost of living, will the poor be able to afford to pay for services in future?

The aim is to assess, evaluate, and analyse perceptions of infrastructure and service delivery since 1994. The analysis of infrastructure and service delivery in this paper goes beyond just providing 'statistics', which are often used uncritically.

### 2. RDP AUDIT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

One of the most important contributions to the assessment of transformation in South Africa was the commissioning of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) audit in 1998. This section of the paper is based on aspects of the RDP audit, which was conducted, in part, by the Human Sciences Research Council (1998). The RDP audit involved assessment of



infrastructure and service delivery records based on official documents and in-depth interviews. Official claims in terms of infrastructure and service delivery were assessed using the RDP 'mandates'.

Key findings of the RDP audit are summarised through a series of Boxes as a point of departure. Whereas Boxes 1 through 4 capture delivery claims of housing, electricity, water, and health care delivery in South Africa since 1994, the third section presents changing public perceptions of service delivery since 1994.

## *2.1 Affordable Housing Delivery*

During the 1994 election campaign, the ANC promised to deliver one million houses in five years. Apart from introducing new housing policy legislation, new institutional arrangements were also created to deal with housing backlogs.

### **Box 1 Housing Delivery**

'Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing' (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, chapter 2, section 22 (subsection 1)).

'The Government would come very close to reaching its 1 million housing target in 1999, and it would 'definitely' be reached by March 2000' (Race Relations Survey, 1998, p. 317).

'By July 1998, almost half (596,059) of the promised one million low cost houses were completed' (Nomvula, Department of Housing, August 1998).

'By July 1998, th[e] number of total [housing] subsidies approved rose to 792,552' (Minister Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele, Minister of Housing, Parliamentary Media Briefing, 6 August 1998).

## *2.2 Electricity*

The electrification programme forms part of Eskom's distribution function. Since 1991 Eskom embarked on a major electrification programme with a commitment to electrify 1,750,000 homes between 1994 and 1999, approximately 300 000 homes per annum. The electrification programme is driven by the universal access policy.

Eskom estimates that approximately 59% of all households were electrified by the end of 1997. However only 32% of rural households are electrified, and the Eastern Cape and Northern Province have the highest number of households not electrified i.e. 60%. Beyond the electrification of households, which is based on the principle of cost recovery, the government has made commitment to electrify schools and clinics (Department of Finance, 1998).

## Box 2 Electricity Delivery Record

'In 1994 Eskom undertook to electrify 1 million 750 thousand homes by the year 2000 in terms of its RDP commitment. By December 1997 Eskom had electrified 1 million 148 thousand homes and again was on track to meet its obligations. Eskom has made available 50 million rand per annum until 1999 to be spent on the electrification of schools and other community development activities.' (Stella Sigcau, Minister of Public Enterprise Budget Vote, 25 May 1998).

'In 1994, less than 40% of South African households had electricity; today, after more than 2 million connections, 63% of households are connected to the electricity grid.' (President Nelson Mandela, Opening of Parliament, 5 February 1999).

The provision of electricity has been noted in both official and independent circles to be one of the most successful achievements since 1994.

## 2.3 Water

Infrastructure investment programmes by the water and forestry sector are initiated to address a backlog in rural water services. Since 1994, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's water supply and sanitation programme has provided the basic minimum level of service to more than 1.5 million people.

## Box 3 Water Delivery

'Everyone has a right to have access to.... sufficient water.... (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, chapter 2, section 27, subsection 1 (b)).

'In 1994, some 30% of South Africans lacked access to a safe supply of water near their homes; today, after three million people have benefited from the government's water supply programme, that has been reduced to 20%.' (President Nelson Mandela, Opening of Parliament, 5 February 1999).

'As at September 1997, 1,020 water supply projects had been identified, were under way or had been completed. These would provide some 8.9 million people with access to water supply and 100,000 to adequate sanitation. By the end of October 1997 the water supply programme had provided water supply and sanitation to about 1.2 million people' (*Race Relations Survey, 1998*, p. 329).

## 2.4 Health Care

The denial of adequate health care to the majority of South Africans was one of the most inhuman aspects of the apartheid system. The provision of 'health for all' was central to the RDP when adopted by cabinet in September 1994. Since 1994 the government has spent enormous resources and energy to extend health care to those who were disenfranchised prior to 1994. Box 4 presents some of the health care service delivery claims stated by officials.

#### Box 4 Health care delivery

'During 1997, 204 new clinics were built, 364 new and existing clinics had residential units added to them, 38 existing clinics were upgraded and 53 mobile clinics were purchased.... On average, four new clinics were completed each week. Expenditure on this programme in 1997 amounted to R313,586, 172.' (Department of Health, 1997, p. 8).

To improve accessibility to health services, free health care for children and pregnant mothers was introduced in June 1994. This was extended to free PHC services for all South African citizens in 1996....' (Department of Health, 1997, p. 6).

'Independent evaluation of the implementation of the policy of free health care suggested that it has achieved its aims as most clinics report increased attendance; improved attendance at ante-natal and family planning clinics; and nearly three quarters of the health workers surveyed ...' (Department of Health, 1997, p. 6.)

### 3. PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

At the centre of the 1994 election campaign of the African National Congress was a promise to implement a radical programme to improve the quality of life for all, especially for those who were disenfranchised. In essence the first democratic government committed itself to the empowerment of the poor, and those who were historically disadvantaged, namely, rural women and blacks.

The aim in this section of the paper is to analyse perceptions of infrastructure and service delivery since 1994 by comparing the four Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) surveys of public attitudes, conducted in June 1995, October 1995, February 1998 and December 1998. The surveys targeted a representative national survey of 2 200 adults in each case. The delivery of services is one way in which to interpret the success of the empowerment programme outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

#### *3.1 A 10-year Agenda*

##### **3.1.1 Perception of Government Priorities**

In successive national sample surveys during the past five years, the HSRC included a question on what respondents consider to be the most important priorities in the next ten years. The December 1998 HSRC survey revealed that 41% of South Africans placed crime prevention at the top of agenda. However, Table 1 suggests that perceptions of government priorities differ by race, with the majority of whites noting fighting crime as the most important priority. It is significant that slightly more blacks identified job creation over fighting crime as the priority.

**Table 1 'There is a lot of talk about what the government's priorities should be for the next 10 years. Which important priority would you consider the most important?'**

Service priority	Black	Coloured	Asian	White	Total sample
	%	%	%	%	%
Fighting crime	34	38	43	64	41
Creating jobs	36	34	23	14	32
Providing better services	10	10	5	1	8
More influence on government decisions	8	6	7	7	8
Improve educational system	6	5	13	5	7
Keep prices from rising	3	6	6	3	4
Eliminate political violence	2	0	0	3	1
Protecting political rights	1	1	3	3	1

### 3.1.2 Perceptions of Services at Local Areas

In another question, respondents were asked which services respondents consider the most important in their local areas, more than one in four (27%) named the provision of running water. Affordable housing was the top priority for 20% of respondents, while electricity and health care came in at 16% each. Curiously, respondents ranked the provision of local police services was placed fifth, at 6%. Other service priorities included tarred roads, recreational facilities, and libraries (see Table 2).

Respondents nevertheless ranked the provision of local police services fifth among the government's service priorities, and they gave a low score to the current performance of their local police service. This suggests that South Africans believe that bolstering the provision of local police services is a necessary, but by no means sufficient condition to fight crime.

**Table 2** 'If you had to pick, which of the following kinds of services would you say is the most important to you?'

Services	Black	Coloured	Asian	White	Total sample
Running water	30	19	16	26	27
Affordable housing	20	25	28	14	20
Electricity	18	3	10	20	16
Health care	13	25	18	22	16
Local police services	4	6	15	14	6
Tarred roads	5	9	4	2	4

*Source:* HSRC, 1999.

Table 2 suggests that almost a third (30%) of blacks noted running water. The service priorities among coloureds tended to focus on affordable housing and health care (25% each). About a quarter of whites indicated running water (26%) followed by health care (22%) and electricity provision. A larger proportion of Asians indicated affordable housing (28%) as the most important service in their area.

### 3.2 Perceptions of Trends in Service Delivery at Local Area

Since 1994 analysts have used various yardsticks to measure progress in terms of service delivery. For example, the *Mail and Guardian* provides largely a superficial ministerial report card for all cabinet ministers. On the other hand, the *RDP Monitor* has produced a monthly report monitoring the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme with a similar goal. This article takes as its starting point the results of four national representative surveys carried out in June 1995, October 1995, February 1998, and December 1998.

Assessing the delivery of infrastructure services since the 1994 election, a significant proportion of South Africans gave the most unambiguously positive assessments on the provision of both electricity and running water. For example, some 41% reported that the provision of electricity in their neighbourhoods had improved, while only 16% reported that it had worsened. With respect to water provision, 35% reported an improvement, while 14% reported a decline. The remainder either reported that the service in question had 'stayed about the same', or they did not express an opinion (see Table 3).

**Table 3** 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of the following services has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

Service	Improved %	Stayed the same %	Worsened %	Uncertain/ Did not know %
Running water	35	50	14	1
Affordable housing	22	38	35	6
Electricity	41	42	16	1
Health care	36	32	30	2
Local police services	21	44	33	2
Tarred roads and street drainage	25	38	35	1
Recreational facilities	17	44	29	10
Local public libraries	19	47	24	10
Water-borne sewerage	21	53	21	5
Public transport	33	36	24	7
Refuse removal	27	45	23	5

*Source:* HSRC, 1998, 1999.

Opinions about other services were generally less clear cut. At face value, the services seen to have worsened during the first term of democratic governance in South Africa included affordable housing and local policing. Although 22% reported an improvement in the availability of affordable housing in the area where they live, 35% indicated that the housing situation had got worse. One in three (33%) reported a deterioration in local police services, with 21% reporting an improvement. Perceptions of service delivery since the 1994 elections vary more when disaggregated by race, province and income than they do when gender differences are considered.

### 3.3 Perception of Service Delivery by Sector

#### 3.3.1 Running Water

Access to water was recognised in the Constitution as a fundamental human right to the provision of which government committed itself. The majority of respondents ranked access to running water as the most important local service in December 1998. It is significant that government has also prioritised this service since 1994.

In the survey of December 1998 (Table 4) some 35% South Africans felt that the provision of running water had improved in the areas compared to 14% who felt that this had worsened since 1994. The percentage of those perceiving improvement increased from 25% in February 1998. These figures suggest that the delivery of running water was extended to a substantial proportion of the population during the period February and December 1998. During the same period, the number of people who had indicated worsening of delivery of running water declined from 24% to 14%.

**Table 4** 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of [running water] has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

	February 1998	December 1998
	%	%
Improvement	25	35
Same	48	50
Worsened	24	14
Uncertain	2	1

*Source:* HSRC, 1998, 1999.

### 3.3.1.1 Perception of running water by race

Analysis of the survey results suggests that perceptions of the delivery of running water differ by race. For instance, the disaggregation of the data by race reveals that about half (47%) of blacks feel that there has been an improvement in the delivery of running water as compared to 15% who feel the situation has worsened. The proportion of blacks indicating improvement increased from 31% in February to 47% in December 1998. In contrast, blacks indicating worsening of situation declined from 31% to 15% in the same period.

The percentage of whites that felt that water provision had improved increased only marginally from 5% to 7% in the same period. These figures are not surprising as the majority of whites had access to water prior to the 1994 elections. Those whites indicating worsening situation increased from 3% in February to 10% in December 1998. What emerges from this is that the perception of whites on the provision of service delivery has worsened. These results suggest that access to running water has improved in general, but more so on the part of those who were historically disenfranchised, and did not have access to running water during the apartheid period. The generally better off white population would be comparing the already high standard of water delivery to which it had access prior to the commencement of the transformation in 1994, with a substantially similar standard five years later.

### 3.3.1.2 Perception of running water by income

Perception of access to running water also differs by income. Of the 34% of those who indicated improvement on the supply of running water, the majority are those earning R2 500 and under per month. This supports the contention that the primary new beneficiaries of the provision of running water are low-income groups. There is a close relationship between those who indicated high levels of improvement and those earning low wages, or were unemployed.

### 3.3.1.3 Perception of running water by province

Table 5 suggests that there has been an improvement in the delivery of running water in seven provinces between June 1995 and December 1998. The national average of improvement increased from 21 % in June 1995 to 38 % in December 1998. The only provinces, in which levels of improvements appear to be below national average are KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province.

**Table 5 Comparing levels of improvement on the provision of running water, by province**

Province	June 1995	October 1995	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Western Cape	18	22	36	22
Northern Cape	18	32	31	33
Eastern Cape	21	24	20	36
Free State	20	20	41	57
KwaZulu-Natal	19	16	16	29
Mpumalanga	27	28	31	58
Northern Province	27	19	17	20
Gauteng	19	17	26	42
North West	24	22	38	48
<b>Average</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>

*Source:* HSRC, 1998, 1999.

Mpumalanga and the Northern Province are water scarce provinces. According to the December HSRC 1998 survey, Mpumalanga ranked the highest with 58% of residents indicating an improvement in the delivery of running water, compared to only 4% who said the supply of running water had worsened in 1998. Mpumalanga recorded a higher proportion of people indicating improvement even though running and piped water is a scarce resource in the province. It appears that there has been some significant improvement in the delivery of water in Mpumalanga, Free State and North West.

In February 1998, the highest proportion of respondents who indicated improvement in the supply of water was in the Free State (41%). This level improved markedly to 51% in December 1998, only 1% lower than Mpumalanga. Provinces with fewer than 25% positive assessments in December 1998 were the Western Cape and Northern Province. It is significant that the Northern Province had also received less than 25% positive assessment in the February 1998 HSRC survey. Positive assessments decreased in the Western Cape from 36% to 22%. However, the Western Cape is a relatively resource rich province with advanced infrastructure and technology. Per capita income in the Western Cape is higher than any other province. On the other hand, the Northern Province ranked the lowest in almost all development indicators. It appears from the survey that the delivery of running water has not as yet reached significant numbers of people in the province.

### 3.3.2 Electricity

Both the February and December 1998 surveys indicated that significantly more people feel that electricity provision has improved rather than worsened in their areas since 1994. Conversely, the percentage of those who indicated worsening situation in the delivery of electricity declined by 6% between February and December 1998 (Table 6).



**Table 6** 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of [electricity] has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

Perception	February 1998	December 1998
Improvement	35	41
Same	42	41
Worsened	22	16
Uncertain	1	1

*Source:* HSRC, 1998, 1999.

### 3.3.2.1 Perception of electricity by race

As with other services, perceptions of service delivery differ by race. Analysis of the December 1998 survey results reveals that some 55% of blacks indicated improvement in the delivery of electricity as compared to only 34% in February 1998. The proportion of whites that perceive improvement in the delivery of electricity increased from 5% in February 1998 to 9% ten months later. However, the percentage of whites indicated worsening in the delivery of electricity increased from under 2% to 13% in the same period. Again, stark differences in access to services between the races during the apartheid years would account for current perceptions of change for better or worse, based on vastly different points of comparison.

### 3.3.2.2 Perception of electricity by province

Perceptions of access to electricity provision also differ by province. For example, a larger proportion of those who are satisfied in terms of electricity provision are resident in the Free State (66%), Mpumalanga (61%), the Eastern Cape (46%), the North West (46%), and Gauteng (45%).

A proportion of people indicating improvement is higher in all South Africa's provinces compared to those noting that the delivery of electricity had worsened. In the Free State and Mpumalanga over 60% of respondents indicated that there was improvement or significant improvement on the supply of electricity. Dissatisfaction with electricity provision is largely noted in the Northern Cape, Gauteng KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Province and North West (Table 7).

**Table 7** Comparing levels of improvement in the provision of electricity by province, 1995-1998

Province	Improved June 1995	Improved October 1995	Improved December 1998
	%	%	%
Western Cape	22	30	23
Northern Cape	26	44	43
Eastern Cape	14	15	46
Free State	17	25	66
KwaZulu-Natal	27	26	35
Mpumalanga	23	25	61
Northern Province	23	31	34
Gauteng	17	18	45
North West	19	16	46
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>44</b>

*Source:* HSRC, 1998.

### 3.3.2.3 Perceptions of electricity by income

Analysis of perceptions by income groups indicate that some 48% of those earning less than R2 500 per month felt that the delivery of electricity has improved as compared to 14% who indicated otherwise. As with other services, the new government, under the auspices of Eskom, embarked on a programme of rural and school electrification. The survey results indicate that the beneficiaries of the programme are largely the poor low-income groups.

### 3.3.3 Affordable Housing

The provision of one million houses in five years was an election slogan of the African National Congress in 1994. Apart from health care delivery and job creation, the provision of affordable housing has been one of the most central delivery issues since the 1994 elections. Several policy measures informed by the ideological underpinnings of home ownership were set in place to create an enabling environment for the creation of affordable housing.

The HSRC found that more people are dissatisfied than satisfied with access to affordable housing. For example, only 21% reported improvement in the availability of affordable housing in their areas, compared with more than a third 35% who said that the housing situation had got worse. However, when comparing data from the February and December 1998 surveys, those reporting improvement in access to affordable housing increased from 12% in February to 22% in December 1998. This implies that even though there are more people who are dissatisfied with access to affordable housing, the percentage of those who are satisfied increased by a margin of 10% between February and December 1998.

Table 8 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of [affordable housing] has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

Perception	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Improvement	12	22
Same	50	38
Worsened	35	35
Uncertain	4	6

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

#### 3.3.3.1 Perception of affordable housing delivery by race

Perceptions of access to affordable housing also differ by race. For example, the percentage of whites indicating dissatisfaction with affordable housing increased from 17% in February to 45% in December 1998. The high proportion of whites indicating that access to affordable housing worsened were in part responding to sky-rocketing interest rates which hit consumers from July 1998.

Whites who felt that affordable housing had improved remained the same at 8% in the same period. In contrast, the proportion of blacks indicating improvement in affordable housing increased from 13% to 26%, while those who perceived worsening of the delivery of affordable housing decreased from 41% to 33% between February and December 1998. Analysis suggests that the delivery of affordable housing has increased from February to December 1998. However, most beneficiaries of affordable housing appear to be blacks, as the majority of whites are not eligible for the R15 000 housing subsidy available to households earning less than R3 500 per month.

### 3.3.3.2 Perceptions of affordable housing by province

Provincial populations, which noted that housing provision had improved or improved were, located in the Free State (42%), Gauteng (36%), and Mpumalanga (29%). Although the proportion of those highlighting improvement in housing provision is less than those who were discontent, in fact, affordable housing delivery appear to have improved between February and December 1998. Relative improvement in affordable housing appears to be in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces.

The province with the largest proportion of those who mentioned that housing had worsened or worsened considerably is the Northern Province (47%). This is despite the claim by the provincial government that they have spent over R938 million on 58 housing projects in 88 000 units, housing 400 000 people. Provinces, which received less than 20% positive approval in terms of affordable housing include the Western Cape, Northern Province and North West.

Nonetheless, the Western Cape reported that more houses were built during 1998 than in the previous three years. Provincial officials have admitted that they would not be able to meet the target of 114 000 houses set in 1994. Some of the problems hampering the delivery of houses include: funding constraints imposed by the national treasury, long delays in processing housing subsidies and getting approvals, and access to available land.

**Table 9 Perceptions of provincial improvement of affordable housing**

Province	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Western Cape	19	22
Northern Cape	24	29
Eastern Cape	5	25
Free State	36	42
KwaZulu-Natal	8	20
Mpumalanga	6	29
Northern Province	1	5
Gauteng	19	36
North West	14	18

*Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.*

### 3.3.4 Health Care

At the heart of the restructuring of the apartheid health system was the introduction of primary health care through the district health system. During the apartheid years, there were historical disparities in the allocation of human, material and financial resources. The December 1999 HSRC survey found that a third of South Africans (36%) believe that health care delivery had improved compared with 30% who said the situation had worsened. The percentage of those noting improvement has increased from 27% in February to 36% in December 1998 (Table 10).

**Table 10 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of [health care] has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'**

Perception	February 1998 %	December 1998 %

### 3.3.3.2 Perceptions of affordable housing by province

Provincial populations, which noted that housing provision had improved or improved were, located in the Free State (42%), Gauteng (36%), and Mpumalanga (29%). Although the proportion of those highlighting improvement in housing provision is less than those who were discontent, in fact, affordable housing delivery appear to have improved between February and December 1998. Relative improvement in affordable housing appears to be in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces.

The province with the largest proportion of those who mentioned that housing had worsened or worsened considerably is the Northern Province (47%). This is despite the claim by the provincial government that they have spent over R938 million on 58 housing projects in 88 000 units, housing 400 000 people. Provinces, which received less than 20% positive approval in terms of affordable housing include the Western Cape, Northern Province and North West.

Nonetheless, the Western Cape reported that more houses were built during 1998 than in the previous three years. Provincial officials have admitted that they would not be able to meet the target of 114 000 houses set in 1994. Some of the problems hampering the delivery of houses include: funding constraints imposed by the national treasury, long delays in processing housing subsidies and getting approvals, and access to available land.

Table 9 Perceptions of provincial improvement of affordable housing

Province	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Western Cape	19	22
Northern Cape	24	29
Eastern Cape	5	25
Free State	36	42
KwaZulu-Natal	8	20
Mpumalanga	6	29
Northern Province	1	5
Gauteng	19	36
North West	14	18

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

### 3.3.4 Health Care

At the heart of the restructuring of the apartheid health system was the introduction of primary health care through the district health system. During the apartheid years, there were historical disparities in the allocation of human, material and financial resources. The December 1999 HSRC survey found that a third of South Africans (36%) believe that health care delivery had improved compared with 30% who said the situation had worsened. The percentage of those noting improvement has increased from 27% in February to 36% in December 1998 (Table 10).

Table 10 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of [health care] has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

Perception	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
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Improvement	27	36
Same	43	32
Worsened	28	30
Uncertain	2	2

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

### 3.3.4.1 Perceptions of health care provision by race

Perception of access to health care delivery also differs by race. The proportion of blacks who indicated that they have access to improved health care increased from 34% to 45% between February and December 1998. Those indicating deterioration declined from 24% to 20% in the same period. The proportion of Whites who indicated worsening health care increased from 34% to 40% between February and December 1998. Whites would be reacting to a decline (more expensive) in the provision of specialised health care facilities in which they had been accustomed. Blacks would be registering approval of the marked increase in primary health care clinics, especially in rural locations where such services had not existed before.

### 3.3.4.2 Perception of health care delivery by province

Although there are also provincial differences in terms of perception of health care delivery (PHC), there are proportionally more people who indicated health care improvement as opposed to decline in eight provinces. The Northern Cape was the exception. Even in the Northern Province, which has the highest dissatisfaction levels with the delivery of most services, nearly a third indicated that they have more access to improved health than before 1994. Those provinces, which recorded highest levels of improved health care, are in the Free State (52%), Eastern Cape (42%), North West (40%), and Mpumalanga (36%) (Table 11).

Table 11 also indicates that between 1995 and December 1998, there was a marked relative increase in positive assessment of the delivery of health care in Gauteng, Northern Province and North West. It is also significant that there was no decrease in the levels of positive assessment in any province. These figures point to increasing levels of health care delivery in all the provinces.

Table 11 Comparing levels of health care improvement  
1995 - 1998

Province	June 1995	October 1995	February 1998	December 1998
	%	%	%	%
Western Cape	26	24	18	21
Northern Cape	45	30	19	26
Eastern Cape	28	24	33	42
Free State	45	33	55	52
KwaZulu-Natal	27	20	29	29
Mpumalanga	37	31	31	36
Northern Province	48	47	18	30
Gauteng	24	21	23	48
North West	31	21	15	40
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

### 3.3.5 Public Transport

Evidence suggests that almost a third of respondents felt that the provision of public transport had improved or improved substantially. Less than 20% indicated that public transport provision had worsened or worsened substantially. Evidence suggests that over a period of ten months, positive assessments of public transport increased by a 4% margin.

Table 12 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say the delivery of [public transport] has changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

Perception	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Improvement	29	33
Same	46	36
Worsened	20	23
Uncertain	5	7

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

#### 3.3.5.1 Perceptions of public transport by race

The proportion of blacks indicating improvement in public transport increased from 36% to 45% between February and December 1998. Whereas the percentage of blacks who were discontent marginally decreased from 21% to 19%, that of whites increased from 24% to 41% in the same period. However, the proportion of whites who indicated improvement in public transport remained relatively stable over the same period. Blacks are the major users of public transport with the majority of whites owning private motor cars.

#### 3.3.5.2 Perceptions of public transport by province

Proportionally more people are satisfied than dissatisfied with public transport. For example, the December 1998 HSRC survey revealed that the greatest improvement in terms of public transport is recorded in the North West (48%), Gauteng (42%), and Free State (41%). One in five people in the Northern Province felt that public transport had worsened or worsened substantially since 1994.

**Table 13** Comparing levels of improvement in the provision of public transport, by province

	Improved	Improved	Improved
	June 1995	October 1995	December 1998
	%	%	%
Western Cape	15	14	23
Northern Cape	11	19	16
Eastern Cape	12	18	31
Free State	17	25	41
KwaZulu-Natal	21	17	33
Mpumalanga	25	32	31
Northern Province	36	31	19
Gauteng	19	14	42
North West	20	19	48

Source: HSRC, 1995, 1998

### 3.3.6 Local Police Services

Asked in December 1998 whether the provision of police services had changed since 1994, nearly a third (32%) indicated in that this had worsened or worsened considerable since 1994. Only one in five (21%) indicated improvement in the delivery of local police services. There were proportionally more people dissatisfied with the provision of local police services in December than in February 1998 (Table 14).

**Table 14** 'Since the general elections of 1994, how would you say [police services have] changed in the area where you live, if at all?'

Perception	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Improvement	21	21
Same	53	44
Worsened	22	32
Uncertain	3	2

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

#### 3.3.6.1 Perceptions of police services by race

As with other services, the perceptions of police services varies by race. For example, a quarter of blacks (27%) revealed improvement in the delivery of local police services in December 1998. This figure equals the proportion of those who were discontent with this service. Only 8% of whites felt that police services had improved since 1994, as compared to a quarter who were discontent. Once again, the access to police services enjoyed by whites would be comparable to a much higher base line before 1994 than would be the use for blacks.

### 3.3.6.2 Perceptions of police services by province

The December 1998 HSRC survey indicated that only in the Eastern Cape and Free State was there a proportionally higher number of people indicating improvement in the provision of local police services, than in other provinces. Moreover, the provision of local police services worsened or substantially worsened in the opinion of high proportions of respondents in Gauteng (51%), Northern Province (39%), Mpumalanga (39%), and in KwaZulu-Natal (31%) (HSRC, 1998).

Table 15 suggests that the provision of local police service relatively improved in Northern Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and North West. However, provinces, which received decreasing positive assessment, are the Northern Province, KwaZulu-Natal, and Free State.

Table 15 Comparing perceptions of improvement levels of the delivery local police services, by province

Province	February 1998 %	December 1998 %
Western Cape	18	18
Northern Cape	10	20
Eastern Cape	24	30
Free State	42	32
KwaZulu-Natal	21	15
Mpumalanga	34	26
Northern Province	23	11
Gauteng	18	30
North West	5	25

Source: HSRC, 1998, 1999.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The importance of national representative surveys is in providing a macro picture at a national level. By using time series surveys, it is possible to trace emerging trends. This paper attempted to provide an assessment of perceptions of change in infrastructure service delivery since 1994. Data sets based on four national surveys carried out in 1995 and 1998 were used.

Several observations can be made from the analysis of four surveys, conducted in June 1995, October 1995, February 1998 and December 1998. First, there has been some improvement in the delivery of some services since 1994. However, the improvement has been uneven by race and province. Those services, which rank high in terms of improvement are running water, electricity, public transport and waste removal. Services, which at face value appear to have worsened, are: affordable housing, local police services, tarred roads and recreational facilities. Evidence also points out that although more people are dissatisfied than satisfied with the provision of affordable housing, local police services and tarred roads, the relative number of those satisfied has increased between February and December 1998. These findings also warn against only basing analysis on once off snap-shot survey at one point in time.

Second, in almost in all services, whites tended to perceive worsening of the delivery of services. On the other hand, blacks tended to note improvement in the delivery of services. The richer groups in society tended to indicate that services had not improved in their areas. This is not surprising as the wealthy had access to better services and facilities prior to 1994.

Third, it is important to note that there are racial and provincial variations in terms of these perceptions. In relation to almost all the services, whites are more likely than blacks to



indicate some level of deterioration. One way to explain this is that in the past more resources were allocated to whites than to coloureds, Asians and blacks. Since 1994, the Nelson Mandela government has tended to allocate increasing amount of resources and capacity to address the legacy of apartheid.

Fourth, there is also an uneven perception of service delivery by province. At face value, in almost all services, the Northern Province appears to have suffered massive worsening in the delivery of services. Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West appear to score quite high on infrastructure and service delivery improvement in most services. The Northern Province is one of the poorest in South Africa and there were high hopes there that an improvement of services could be expected after the April 1994 elections. The Northern Province appears to be facing challenges which may result in electoral swings to other parties, which will certainly utilise the anxieties of local people to their own political advantage.

If the delivery of services is seen as a yardstick to measure levels of empowerment, there has been a certain degree of black empowerment after 1994. However, this does not necessarily mean that empowerment has not been uneven. More analysis is required to appraise the sustainability of service delivery, service affordability and the extent of participation of different communities in the delivery of services.

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