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What are participants telling us as we collect data for the next Quality of Life survey?

👤 [Dr Julia de Kadt, \(/about/staff\)](#) [Christian Hamann, \(/about/staff\)](#) [Sthembiso Pollen Mkhize \(/about/staff\)](#)

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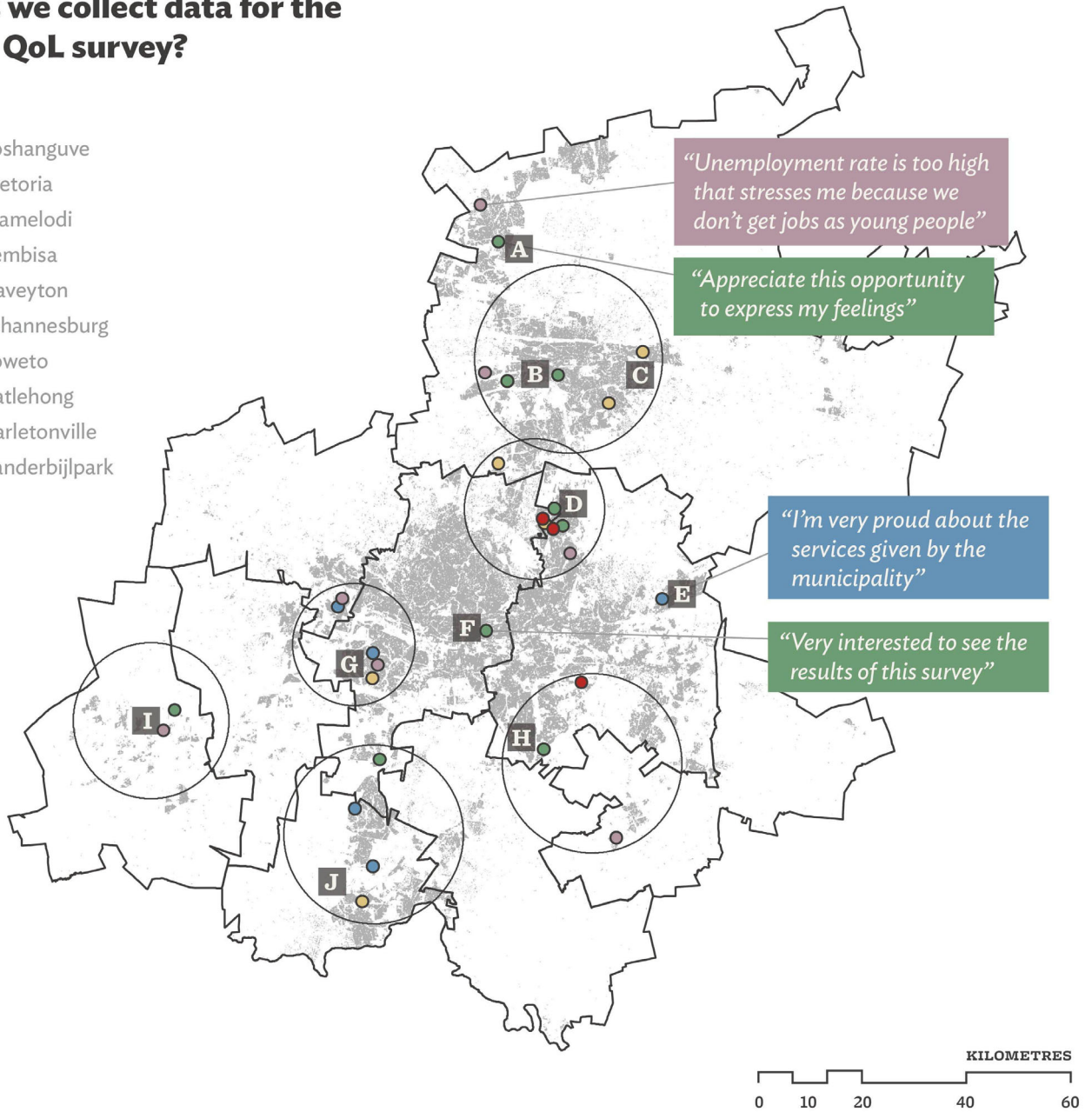
Data collection for our forthcoming Quality of Life 2020/21 Survey (QoL 2020/21) (<https://www.gcro.ac.za/research/project/detail/quality-life-survey-vi-202021/>) is now over two thirds complete, with well over 9 500 randomly selected participants interviewed. Along with the regular difficulties of data collection such as ensuring everyone's safety and negotiating access to conduct the survey, data collection has also had to navigate the challenges of COVID-19, and more recently, heavy rains and flooding due to Cyclone Eloise. We hope to complete data collection by the end of May 2021, and share preliminary results in July 2021. While data collection is still underway, our February Map of the Month shares some of the comments and feedback we've received from survey participants since the survey began. These comments remind us of the very real people behind our data, and also provide a reminder of why we continue to conduct this challenging survey.

As part of our regular scrutiny of incoming survey data, we spent some time reviewing comments shared by participants at the end of the survey questionnaire. The last section of our questionnaire is self-completed by participants on the data collection tablet, and finishes with an opportunity for participants to provide us with any additional comments. For the February Map of the Month, we have identified some of the most prominent themes in these comments, and shared a variety of colour-coded maps (https://cdn.gcro.ac.za/media/documents/1_February_PDF_Map_V5.pdf) of selected comments. While these comments cannot be viewed as representative survey data, they tell us something about the issues that some of our participants feel most strongly about, and the very real challenges they face in their daily lives. Consequently, they remind us of why we conduct the Quality of Life survey, and motivate us to do our utmost to ensure that survey findings will influence decision making and action to improve living conditions in the Gauteng City-Region.

We were struck that one of the strongest themes, shaded in green on our maps, was one of gratitude for the opportunity that the survey provides for participants to share their experiences and challenges. Many of the participants also expressed hope that their voices and concerns will be heard by the government, and will inform positive change. These comments were often accompanied by requests for feedback about what the survey showed, and that survey results be shared with participants. These comments are encouraging in terms of the value of the survey, although they might also suggest that many participants do not currently feel that their voices are being heard through more direct modes of communication with government. In the words of a participant from the City of Johannesburg "Well the interview was okay, it had all the necessary questions that government has not asked the general public in my community, and the interviewer was kind and friendly." Of course, some participants also expressed frustration with some aspects of the survey, most notably the length of the questionnaire. A different participant in Johannesburg said "I don't want to be rude but your interview is too long", while a participant in Tshwane commented "The survey was ok, but quite long."

What are participants telling us as we collect data for the next QoL survey?

- A Soshanguve
- B Pretoria
- C Mamelodi
- D Tembisa
- E Daveyton
- F Johannesburg
- G Soweto
- H Katlehong
- I Carletonville
- J Vanderbijlpark



Comment themes

- Appreciation for the survey
- Unemployment
- Gender-Based Violence
- Crime and safety
- Governance
- Municipalities in Gauteng

Data Source GCRO Quality of Life 2020/21 Survey (forthcoming)

Figure 1: Selected comments from participants in QoL 2020/21, extract 1

Other participants used the opportunity to highlight concerns about broader societal issues. At this point in our data collection, the strongest themes are around crime and safety (yellow), unemployment (purple), governance (orange) and gender-based violence (red). In speaking about crime and safety, one participant in the City of Ekurhuleni noted: "I don't feel safe around my community because of crime that is happening". Similarly, a participant in the City of Tshwane wrote: "I hope this study can help because we are not safe in this community, crime is very high." Other

participants pointed to particular challenges in regards to crime, such as poor service from police, and drugs. A participant in the City of Ekurhuleni stated “The police should take more time in doing their job in fighting crime, and not put most of their energy into taking bribes.” In the City of Johannesburg, we were told “The community needs help as the community is struggling with drugs.” A number of participants pointed to foreigners as the reason for crime. A participant in the City of Johannesburg highlighted the need for government action to keep xenophobia at bay: “The question of crime is very serious and it has to be decisively dealt with otherwise the xenophobic [attacks] will come again.” These comments highlight crime, but also provide a reminder of the ways that social and economic forces interact in Gauteng. They highlight important areas of work in ensuring safety and security for all residents of our diverse city-region.

Another prominent theme is unemployment, shaded purple in our map. Across the province, participants consistently highlighted concerns about unemployment. In the City of Tshwane a participant noted “I am satisfied, just help us with jobs.” A comment from Lesedi reads “Create jobs to fellow SAs.” A participant living in Merafong stated “We only need jobs in this area.” In Rand West, another participant wrote “Create jobs for our people.” A number of participants who shared these types of concerns clearly saw government as primarily responsible for the creation of jobs. For example, a participant in the City of Johannesburg commented “Government needs to work on creating jobs as people are suffering.” Another respondent, this time in the City of Tshwane, wrote “Government should create jobs. Unemployment is a problem.”

B Pretoria
C Mamelodi

“Please look into lowering higher education fees. Tackle drug problem in our communities and create jobs for our youth” **B**

“Wonderful and enlightening survey” **B**

“Thanks for taking the time to check on our community and neighbourhood” **B**

“I hope this study can help because we are not safe in this community crime is very high” **C**

“This is not a safe country to live in” **C**

D Tembisa

“Reduce xenophobia in Gauteng and job creation” **D**

“We (are) pleading for the government to reduce crime in (this) area” **D**

“Please help us with GBV that is on our daily lives” **D**

“Our community needs to be taught about dealing with rape and GBV victims” **D**

“Do this (survey) often” **D**

I hope by answering these questions something will be done to improve our lives” **D**

“Because of COVID-19 my son, the bread winner, lost his job and now we are struggling” **D**

G Soweto

“No youth programmes and jobs so they end up taking drugs” **G**

“We really need support from our ward councillor and the police” **G**

“Government should work hard to stop crime and drugs abuse” **G**

“We need hands on counsellors. That would benefit our community very much and even end poverty. We have many ideas that go unheard because our counsellors don’t give us attention” **G**

“Government needs to work on creating jobs as people are suffering” **G**

Comment themes

- Appreciation for the survey
- Unemployment
- Gender-Based Violence

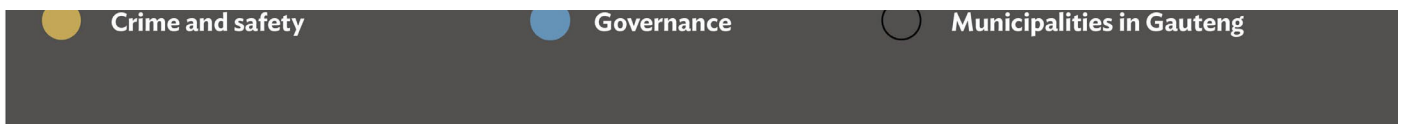


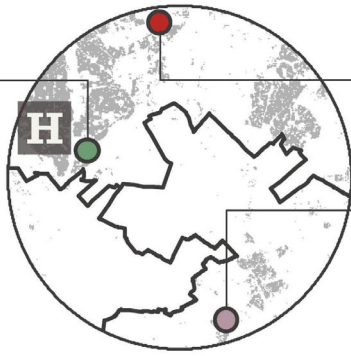
Figure 2: Selected comments from participants in QoL 2020/21, extract 2

In raising their concerns, several participants noted their frustrations with government and governance in the GCR. In the City of Tshwane, a participant expressed disappointment with municipal service delivery: “Municipality should have provided us with the services.” In Emfuleni, another participant held both national and municipal government to blame: “We need service delivery. National government needs to liaise with municipalities.” In Rand West a participant simply said “Not happy with basic services from our municipality.” In Lesedi, a participant said she was “hopeful that... the municipality will do right” by her. One resident of the City of Johannesburg wrote “My wish is for our government from national, provincial and local can do more better than now to assist with their promises”, while another simply said “Our government should stop promising us promises they know they can’t keep.” Frustration is also expressed towards ward councillors. A participant in Emfuleni commented “I am really not satisfied with our councillors service delivery, its very poor and unhygienic.” There are a number of requests for more hands-on councillors. In the City of Johannesburg, we were told “We need hands on councillors that would benefit our community very much and even end poverty. We have many ideas that go unheard because our councillors don’t give us attention.”

The final theme highlighted on our map is gender-based violence. As the last section of our questionnaire asks about gender-based violence, it is not surprising that this topic was still on the minds of many of our participants. Most comments related to this theme were calls to action. In the City of Ekurhuleni, a participant wrote “Gender violence should be monitored on a daily basis”. Many participants placed the responsibility for action in the hands of the government. They also made an explicit link between the prevalence of gender-based violence, and economic challenges. In the City of Tshwane, a participant stated “the government should do more to protect women and children and to create more jobs for women in our community.” In the City of Ekurhuleni, a participant called for government to “help women with jobs so that they can help themselves”, and made the case that “due to lack of jobs many women they had stayed in their abusive relationship because they don’t know where to go. So our government must improve...”

H **Katlehong**

“Thanks for the check-up”

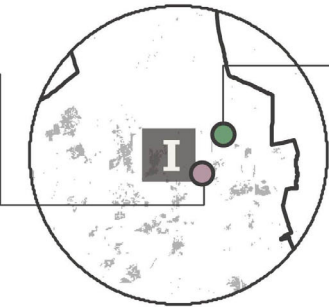


“Gender violence should be monitored on a daily basis”

“I just wish the gov can concentrate more on creating job opportunities especially for graduates”

I **Carletonville**

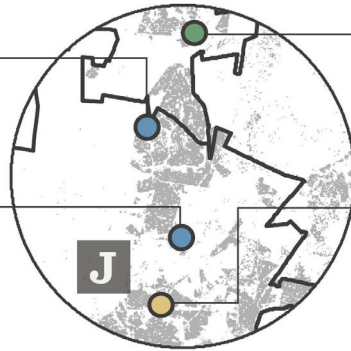
“We only need jobs in this area”



“This study is a very good. Hoping (it) will help us with what we are crying about”

J **Vanderbijlpark**

“We need service delivery. National government need to liaise with municipalities”



“I like that there are people going around our neighborhood asking about how we survive it gives me hope”

“Corruption destroys our country”

“This living condition is very bad and unsafe”

Comment themes

- **Appreciation for the survey**
- **Unemployment**
- **Gender-Based Violence**
- **Crime and safety**
- **Governance**
- Municipalities in Gauteng**

Figure 3: Selected comments from participants in QoL 2020/21, extract 3

While many comments focus on a single issue, others are multifaceted. A participant in the City of Ekurhuleni expressed a range of frustrations, with a comment that reads “Am tired of renting, if the government can build us RDP houses. Unemployment, and the kids cannot go to universities because NSFAS does not pay for them anymore.” Some are very personal and heartfelt. A participant in Midvaal wrote “I would like for my family to get electricity and a job for myself so I can be able to take care of my parents and child.” In Emfuleni, a participant reflected on what gives people the best opportunities in life: “Having best opportunities is having individual willpower and hardwork and having a good education, and maybe not education that much but hard work. Pay something towards varsity education it must not be too expensive.”

Comments from participants have also come in a variety of languages. For example, a participant who completed the survey in Setswana commented “Ke kwa ke thabile thata go abelana le lena a bophelo baka” (“I feel very happy to share my life with you”). Another, answering in isiZulu, told us “Ngingajabula uma uhulumeni engathumela abantu emizini ukuze azi ukuthi angaba siza kanjani” (“I would be happy if the government could send people home to find out how they can help”). We are reminded that the QoL questionnaire is translated into and administered in eight official South African languages other than English. This is easy to lose sight of when analysing a final survey dataset. We are reminded of the diversity of our audiences, and the residents of the GCR, and the importance of finding ways to share results that are broadly accessible. The GCRO has been working hard to make our research findings easier for non-academic audiences to understand and interpret, through tools such as infographics (https://cdn.gcro.ac.za/media/documents/QoL_infographics_on_A4_PRINT_Ex57yui.pdf), interactive data visualizations (<https://village-of-100.gcro.ac.za/>), story maps (<https://gcro.ac.za/outputs/map-of-the-month/detail/women-and-covid-19-gauteng/>), media articles (<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-11-13-evidence-based-governance-is-essential-to-improving-quality-of-life/>), and multimedia content (<https://gcro.ac.za/outputs/photo-essays/detail/video-what-is-the-gcr/>). These comments remind us how important these efforts are - and also that we need to do more to communicate research findings in the diversity of languages spoken by Gauteng’s residents.

In addition to the types of comments we have showcased on the map, a number of our participants noted their thanks and appreciation to the fieldworkers who interviewed them. One participant in the City of Ekurhuleni wrote “The interview was a nice one. She made me to feel free.” and another told us “I’m grateful for your employee. The survey went well 5 stars.” A participant in Merafong, “The person that was asking me question was good at explaining and make me feel safe with my answers.” In Emfuleni, “Thank you for today’s survey the interviewer was outstanding.” In Mogale city “The interview went very well. The professionalism was on a hundred.” These notes of appreciation highlight the crucial role that fieldworkers play in a study such as this, and provide insight into the levels of professionalism maintained by the field team. Data collection takes them across all parts of the province, including areas where they may be subjected to violence or abuse by residents. Fieldworkers need to convince residents that they are legitimate, and then also invite them to participate in a lengthy interview. This work is made even more challenging by the need to follow strict COVID-19 protocols during public interactions.



Figure 4: Interactions during fieldwork

GCRO thanks the fieldworkers from GeoSpace International for their enormous contributions to making this survey possible. We also thank all the participants across Gauteng who have generously given of their time to participate in the survey. Without their willingness to share information about their lives and challenges, we would not be able to conduct this survey. As we are still collecting data all across Gauteng province, there is a chance that a GeoSpace International fieldworker may still knock on your door. If they do, we hope you’ll be willing to allow them to interview you!

Link to projects: Quality of Life 2020/21 Survey (<https://www.gcro.ac.za/research/project/detail/quality-life-survey-vi-202021/>); Quality of Life 10 year review (<https://gcro.ac.za/research/project/detail/quality-life-survey-10-year-review/>); Seminar series on collecting social data during the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://gcro.ac.za/news-events/news/detail/seminar-series-collecting-social-data-adapting-covid-19-pandemic/>)

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