

GOVERNMENT

# The best and worst municipalities for drinking water in every province in South Africa

Seth Thorne · 9 Jan 2024



Nearly half of the country's municipalities are not complying with drinking water standards.

This is outlined in the country's most recent [Blue Drop Watch Report](#), which shows (as Minister of the Department of Water and Sanitation [DWS] Senzo Mchunu describes) "a concerning decline in the performance of drinking water systems."

The report investigated the current condition of drinking water infrastructure and



A total of 277 out of 958 (29%) water supply systems in the country have been identified as being in a critical state – a sharp increase from the 174 systems identified in 2014.

Just over half of the country's water supply systems attained excellent or good microbiological water quality compliance, whereas **46% failed** to meet the required standards and were, therefore, labelled as “poor” or “bad”.

Dr. Ferrial Adam, executive manager of citizen non-profit organisation WaterCAN, said, “while [the minister of DWS] seems reluctant to call the water situation a crisis, WaterCAN believes that this is indeed a crisis.”

Adam says that if nearly half of the country's “municipalities are not complying with drinking water standards... [people] should not drink water from those systems without boiling it.” “Are they not letting people know that the water is contaminated? Surely that is a crime,” she added.

While all provinces have instances that show some form/s of deterioration (and improvement), certain regions find themselves in a far worse situation than others. For example, water quality from the worst-performing municipality in Gauteng is performing better than the top-performing municipalities of the Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, and Northern Cape.

## How results are determined

How these results came to be was from a scorecard used to rate the WSAs and subsequent supply systems based on evidence from:

- Capacity Management;
- Drinking Water Quality Risk Management;
- Financial Management;
- Technical Management;
- Drinking Water Quality Compliance.

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≥80-<95%	Good performance, some room for improvement
≥50-<80%	Average performance, ample room for improvement
≥31-<50%	Very poor performance, need targeted intervention towards gradual sustainable improvement
0-<31%	Critical state, need urgent intervention for all aspects of the water services business

If a water supply system secures a Blue Drop score of 95% or more, it's considered exceptional and granted the esteemed Blue Drop Certification/Certificate, but if it scores less than 31%, it is deemed inadequate and in a critical state – initiating necessary regulatory action.

## Best and worst performing systems per province

### Eastern Cape

Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Nelson Mandela MM	85.0%
2) Buffalo City LM	83.5%
3) Kouga LM	64.6%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Koukamma LM	24.1%
2) Dr Beyers Naude LM	24.2%
3) Sundays River Valley LM	25.6%

The Eastern Cape provides drinking water to just over 5 million people. In the province, there are 14 WSAs, with 154 water supply systems.

Of these, no Blue Drop Certificates were awarded in the province.

Three of the WSAs (21.4%) and 27 of the water supply systems (17.53%) have been defined as being in a critical state and placed under a regulatory focus. In addition, three (21.4%) of

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Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Metsimaholo LM	84.2%
2) Dihlabeng LM	76.6%
3) Tswelopele LM	73.8%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Mafube LM	4.3%
2) Maluti-a-Phofung LM	17.7%
3) Tokologo LM	24.8%

The province provides drinking water to a total population of just over 3 million by means of 19 WSAs with 80 water supply systems. Five of these WSAs (26.3%) and 31 supply systems (38.75%) are recorded to be in a critical state, with Mafube LM receiving the lowest rating in the country.

No Blue Drop Certificates were awarded in the province.

Additionally, many WSAs showed deterioration, with seven having just missed the critical condition label but still scoring an unsatisfactory performance result.

## Gauteng

Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) City of Johannesburg	98.1%
2) City of Ekurhuleni	97.1%
3) <u>Midvaal</u> LM	94.8%

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1) Emfuleni LM	85.9%
2) Lesedi LM	86.2%
3) Rand West LM	87.2%

Nearly 14 million people rely on drinking water provided by the province. Gauteng's nine WSAs, two water boards and 29 water supply systems performed well in the report, no WSA or water supply system defined as being in a critical state.

Ekurhuleni, Greater Johannesburg and Meyerton all received Blue Drop Certificates for their supply systems.

The lowest-scoring WSA in the province was Emfuleni LM, with a score of 85.9% (down from 88.2% in 2014), which is still defined as "fully functional" with minor improvements needed – a better rating than the top-performing municipalities in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo and Northern Cape.

## KwaZulu-Natal

Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Msunduzi LM	97.94%
2) uMgungundlovu DM	96.44%
3) eThekweni MM	94.95%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Umzinyathi DM	31.59%
2) King Cetshwayo DM	40.7%
3) Zululand DM	43.93%

KwaZulu-Natal provides drinking water to nearly 8.8 million residents. There are 14 WSAs,

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Contrastingly, four WSAs (28.57%) are defined as being in a poor state, whilst 21 water supply systems (12.2%) are in a critical state. Umzinyathi DM WSA is less than 1% away from being labelled as critical.

## Limpopo

Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Vhembe DM	63.8%
2) Bela-Bela LM	60.3%
3) Polokwane LM	56.2%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Capricorn DM	38.1%
2) Greater Sekhukhune DM	39.6%
3) Mogalakwena LM	40.9%

Nearly 3.4 million people rely on drinking water from the province which has 10 WSAs with 84 water supply systems. Of this, 26 water supply systems (30.95%) and five WSAs (50%) were considered critical.

Only two WSAs (Bela-Bela LM and Vhembe DM) improved in their ratings from 2014. Notable drops include Lephalale LM (from 85.5% to 48.4%), Polokwane (from 92.5% – 56.2%), and Capricorn DM (70.9% – 38.1%).

No facility in the province was awarded a Blue Drop Certificate, with the top spot over 30% below the required score.

## Mpumulanga

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1) Govan Mbeki LM	90.8%
2) Victor Khanye LM	90.1%
3) Thembisile LM	75.3%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Dipaleseng LM	7.0%
2) Thaba Chweu LM	8.2%
3) Albert Luthuli LM	19.1%

There are 17 WSAs, with 100 water supply systems providing drinking water to 4,770,957 people. Four WSAs (23.53%) and 34 supply systems (34%) are determined to be in a critical state. In addition, four WSAs are in poor condition.

Contrastingly, four supply systems in the province received Blue Drop Certificates, namely, Karino Water Treatment Works, Matsulu, Nelspruit Supply System, and Primkop WTW – all of which are part of the Mbombela/Umjindi WSA.

## North West

Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) JB Marks LM	92.60%
2) Matlosana LM	87.82%
3) Rustenburg LM	78.31%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Kgetlengrivier LM	21.60%
2) Dr. Ruth S Mompoti DM	31.47%

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received a Blue Drop Certificate.

Contrastingly, one WSA (10%) and seven water systems (17.95%) were defined as being in critical condition: Dr Ruth S Mompoti DM, Kgetlengrivier LM and Ngaka Modiri Molema DM.

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## Northern Cape

Best performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Dawid Kruiper LM	83.85%
2) Thembelihle LM	59.52%
3) Tsantsabane LM	56.00%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Kamiesberg LM	8.02%
2) Renosterberg LM	9.20%
3) Emthanjeni LM	11.94%

With a population of around 1.13 million, the province's 26 WSAs with 176 water supply systems are in an overall poor state. Eighteen (69.23%) WSAs and 123 (69.88%) water supply systems have been found to be in a critical state. In some municipalities, all of the water supply systems have been flagged as critical.

Only two of 26 WSAs improved on their 2014 scores, namely: !Kheis LM and Gamagara LM. No Blue Drop Certificates were awarded in the province.

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## Western Cape

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1) Overstrand LM	99.99%
2) City of Cape Town MM	98.1%
3) George LM	94.95%

Worst performing WSAs in the province	2023 Blue Drop Score (%)
1) Kannaland LM	25.8%
2) Prince Albert LM	28.2%
3)Cederberg LM	35.9%

Twenty-five WSAs with 124 water supply systems supply drinking water to 6,241,092 residents. The province is home to the municipality with the best-scoring WSA, Overstrand LM.

Fifteen Blue Drop Certificates were awarded in the province to the water supply systems of Berg Rivier LM, City of Cape Town MM, Drakenstein LM, George LM, Overstrand LM, Saldanha Bay LM, Swartland LM and Theewaterskloof LM.

Two WSAs (8%) and eight supply systems (6.45%) were defined as being in a critical state. Some areas experienced extreme drops, like Beaufort West LM and Breede Valley LM, which dropped their scores 36% and 30%, respectively, since 2014.

## A way forward

Adam says that this deterioration has occurred because of “a combination of a lack of funding for maintenance on infrastructure, lack of skills, mismanagement, systems are not able to deal with the volumes. In addition, another key issue is the lack of enforcement or holding anyone accountable when things go wrong.”

“As long as government says there is no crisis, they will not act with urgency and this cycle of disaster will continue,” added Adam. “If government does not act with urgency then... it is

Additionally, DWS minister Senzo Mchunu said that the department – along with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Municipal Infrastructure Agency and national treasury – have “developed an action plan to address issues in municipalities that have performed poorly.” This encompasses working with 30 municipalities across seven provinces that achieved less than 10%.

This means the allocation of funding for repairs and refurbishment. However, “routine maintenance must be funded from municipal revenues, which requires interventions to improve municipal billing and revenue collection and prioritisation of maintenance budgets by municipal leadership,” the report added.

“While the report brings bad news, WaterCAN applauds the Department of Water and Sanitation for delivering these reports” said Adam, welcoming the promises by the department to take action.

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Read: [South Africa water quality collapses – beware the taps in these provinces](#)

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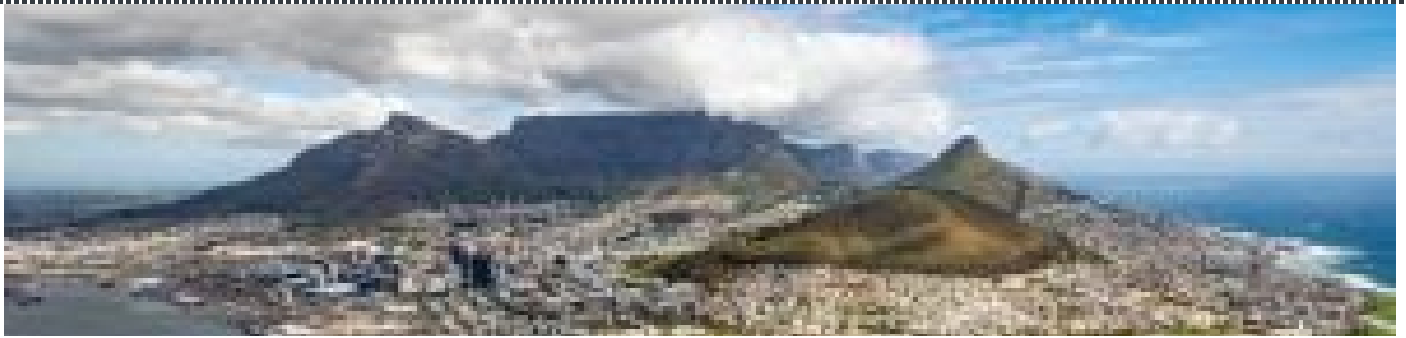
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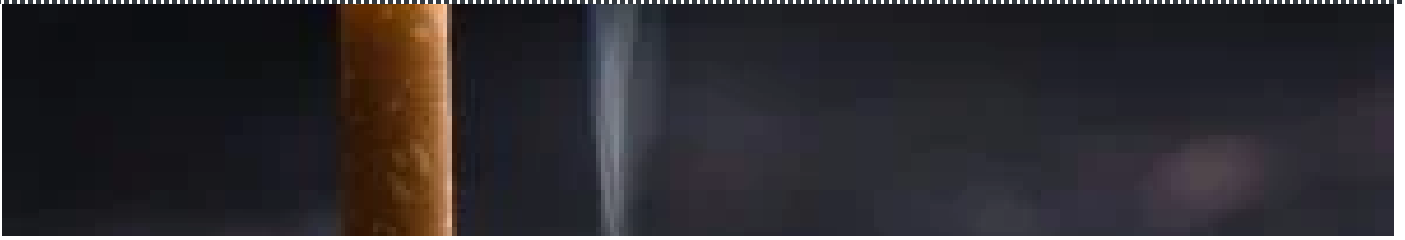
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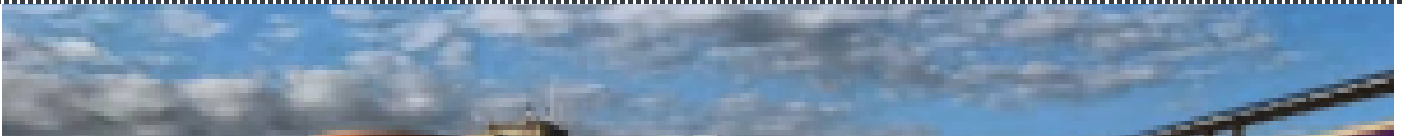
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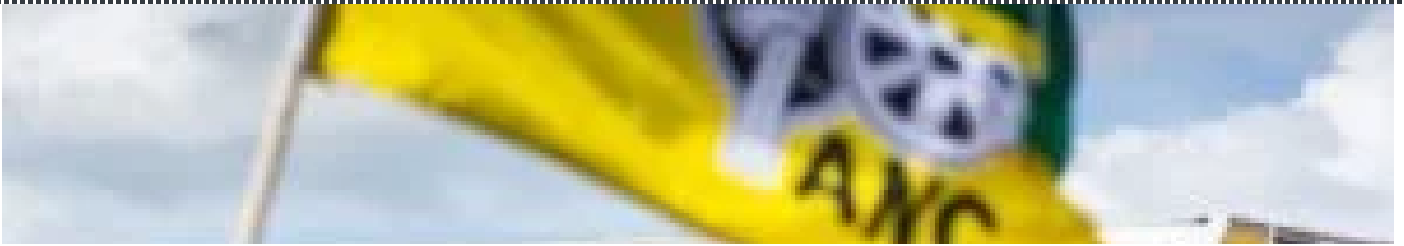
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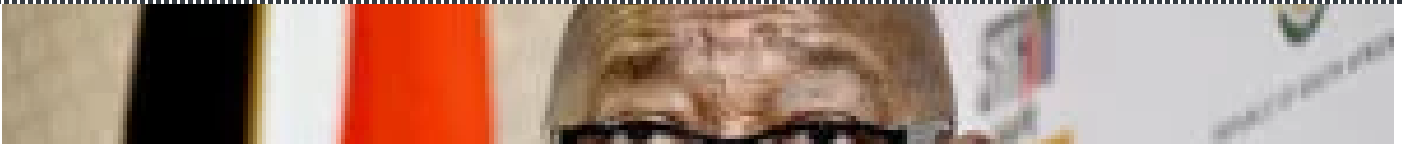
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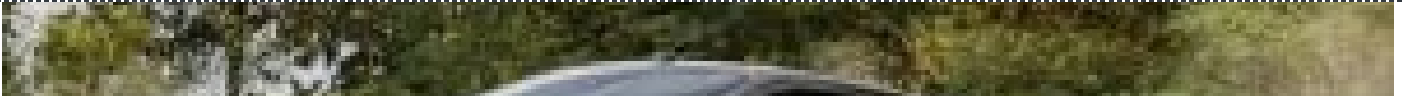
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