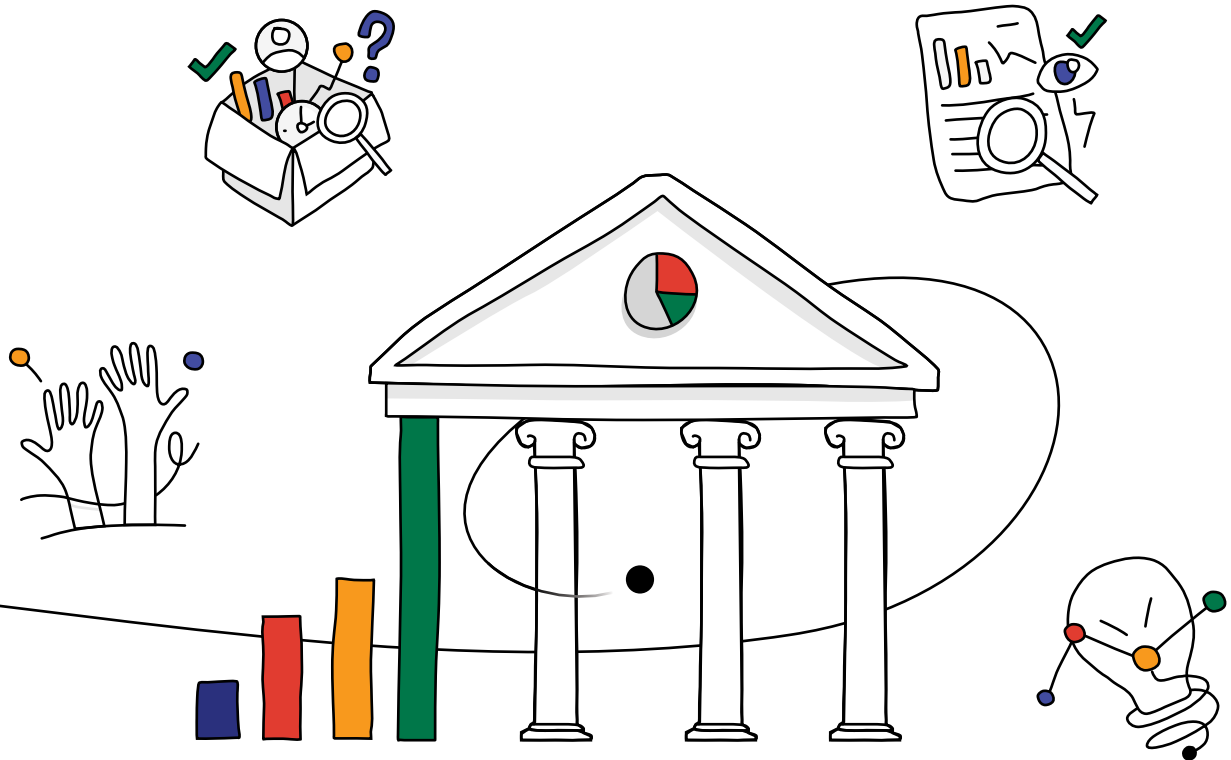




# EU Parliamentary Report

Assessing the South African Parliament:  
Using the assessment Criteria of the  
Indicators for Democratic Parliament

Target 7: Representative Parliament



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**PMIG** PARLIAMENTARY  
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**OUTA** openup:  
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## Contents

1. Acronyms .....	4
2. Executive summary .....	5
3. Introduction .....	8
4. Background to and methodology used for the assessment of the IDP framework.....	10
5. Observations .....	14
6. Assessment of Target Seven for the South African Parliament .....	15
6.1 Indicator 7.1 Electoral integrity.....	16
6.1.1 Voting and election rights .....	16
6.1.2 Candidacy, party and campaign rights and responsibilities .....	22
6.1.3 Role of public authorities in elections.....	25
6.2 Indicator 7.2 Composition of parliament .....	31
6.2.1 Representation of political diversity .....	31
6.2.2 Representation of women.....	36
6.2.3 Representation of youth .....	41
6.2.4 Representation of other underrepresented groups.....	47
6.3 Indicator 7.3 Composition of parliamentary bodies .....	54
6.3.1 Composition of governing bodies .....	54
6.3.2 Composition of committees .....	59
6.3.3 Gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies .....	64
7. Way forward & Conclusion .....	69
8. References .....	71
9. Glossary.....	80

## List of Tables

Table 1 Rating Criteria .....	11
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## List of Figures

Figure 1 Phases and steps of assessment .....	11
Figure 2 Assessment Checklist .....	12
Figure 3 Observations from analysis .....	14
Figure 4 Indicators for Democratic Parliaments .....	15

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## 1. Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EMB	Electoral Management Body
GBV	Gender-based violence
GNU	Government of National Unity
IDP	Indicators For Democratic Parliaments
IEC	Electoral Commission of South Africa
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MPS	Members of Parliament
PR	Proportional Representation
OUTA	Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse
SA	South Africa
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nation

## 2. Executive summary

This report assesses Target 7: Representative Parliament within the Indicators for Democratic Parliaments (IDP) framework, focusing on three core areas: electoral integrity, the composition of parliament, and the composition of parliamentary bodies. The assessment draws on document analysis, case studies, and benchmarking to evaluate how far South Africa's (SA) parliament reflects the diversity of society and upholds the principles of fair representation, inclusivity, and democratic legitimacy. The report is grounded in a broad range of constitutional, legislative, parliamentary, civil society, and academic sources, enabling an evidence-based external assessment of parliament's representative character.

The findings show that SA has a strong constitutional and institutional foundation for representative democracy. The electoral framework protects voting and candidacy rights, and the [proportional representation](#) (PR) system supports political pluralism by enabling a broad range of parties to gain representation in parliament. These features contribute positively to democratic inclusion and help ensure that parliament broadly reflects the [political](#) choices of the electorate. The report also finds that there are established rules and procedures governing the composition of parliamentary bodies, including committees and leadership structures, and that these arrangements are intended to promote fairness and proportionality.

At the same time, the assessment highlights several practical challenges that affect the full realisation of a representative parliament. While legal and procedural frameworks are in place, representation in practice is not always equally balanced across decision-making spaces. The [dominance of larger parties](#) may limit the influence of smaller and opposition parties, particularly in key governing and committee structures. This creates a gap between formal representation and substantive influence. The report therefore indicates that representativity should be measured not only by who is present in parliament, but also by who is able to shape parliamentary debates, priorities, and decisions in a meaningful way.

The assessment further suggests that representative democracy requires more than electoral access alone. It also depends on whether parliamentary institutions and internal arrangements enable fair participation across political groups, genders, ages, and other social categories. Although SA has made progress in building a representative system, continued attention is needed to strengthen the practical inclusion of underrepresented groups and to ensure that diversity is reflected not only in overall parliamentary membership, but also in leadership, committees, and other influential structures. In this regard, the report points to the importance of sustained institutional review and reform to deepen representativity over time.

*Key Findings of the Report:*

SA's parliament benefits from a strong constitutional and electoral framework that supports democratic representation and political inclusion. The PR system remains a major strength in enabling political diversity and broad access to parliamentary representation. Clear rules and procedures also exist for the composition of governing bodies and committees, which provides an important formal basis for fair and transparent institutional design. This formal framework has become especially important in the context of the Government of National Unity (GNU), where multiple parties are represented in government and parliament is expected to manage a more complex political environment.

However, the report finds that important challenges remain in translating formal representation into meaningful influence. Larger parties vis à vis the GNU, continue to exercise greater control over key parliamentary processes, which can reduce the practical influence of smaller and opposition parties. This is the result of a democratic process where the political party or coalition with the majority of seats has the power to make most decisions and pass legislation. Although the GNU has broadened political participation at the executive level, it does not automatically guarantee equal influence within parliament's internal decision-making processes. This weakens the balance that a representative parliament should maintain within its internal decision-making structures. Furthermore, representation should not be understood only in numerical terms, as meaningful democratic inclusion also depends on who holds leadership roles, who participates in agenda-setting, and whose voices shape final outcomes.

The report therefore concludes that SA's parliament has many of the formal features of a representative institution, but that continued improvement is required to strengthen substantive inclusion, institutional balance, and the equitable participation of all political and social groups. The long-term credibility of representative democracy depends not only on the fairness of elections, but also on whether parliament's internal structures reflect and give effect to the diversity of the society it serves.

*The following recommendations aim to address these challenges:*

Parliament should strengthen mechanisms that ensure smaller and opposition parties are able to participate meaningfully in leadership, committees, and other decision-making structures. This should include fairer speaking time, more opportunities to initiate debates and ask oral questions, and encouragement of good practices where committee chairs allow smaller parties to chair meetings or

lead parts of committee proceedings. Parliament should also regularly review the allocation of seats and leadership roles in parliamentary bodies to ensure that proportionality is not only formally maintained, but also effective in practice. While formal leadership positions are often shaped by majority-party control or coalition negotiations, parliament should promote inclusive practices that give smaller parties greater visibility and influence, and ensure that minority voices are not marginalised in key parliamentary discussions and processes.

Parliament should also continue to monitor the composition of committees and governing bodies to ensure that they reflect a fair cross-section of political representation and social diversity. Transparent and well-publicised procedures for the election or appointment of leadership positions should be maintained and strengthened where necessary. This would help improve fairness, trust, and inclusion within parliament's internal institutional arrangements.

Therefore, parliament should deepen its efforts to support the inclusion and influence of underrepresented groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised communities. Representation should be strengthened not only through access, but also through leadership development, institutional support, and ongoing review of barriers to participation. Continued institutional self-assessment will be essential to ensure that parliament's structures evolve in ways that more fully realise the promise of representative democracy in SA.

Through this assessment, OUTA aims to offer a comprehensive evaluation of the SA parliament's current state and provide guidance for its continued development in line with IDPs and within the framework of the co-funded EU project on Enhancing Accountability and Transparency in SA.

### 3. Introduction

This section examines the extent to which SA's parliament reflects the core principles of a representative parliament, with particular attention to the relationship between constitutional design, electoral arrangements, institutional practice, and substantive inclusion. The concept of a representative parliament extends beyond the mere election of members to a legislative body. It concerns whether parliament, in its composition, structures, and functioning, adequately reflects the diversity of the society it serves and whether different political and social interests are able to participate meaningfully in democratic processes. [Representation](#) must therefore be understood in both formal and practical terms: formally, in relation to the laws, systems, and rules that govern elections and parliamentary participation; and practically, in relation to whether these frameworks translate into fair access, meaningful influence, and inclusive decision-making.

SA's democratic order provides a strong normative and legal basis for representative governance. The [Constitution](#), electoral framework, and parliamentary arrangements establish a system intended to support political inclusion, protect democratic rights, and promote broad participation in public life. The [closed-list proportional representation](#) system, in particular, has played an important role in enabling multiple political parties to gain representation in parliament, thereby supporting political pluralism and ensuring that a wider range of voices is present in the legislative sphere. In this regard, SA's parliament has important institutional strengths that distinguish it as a constitutional democracy committed to representativity, equality, and democratic accountability. These features provide an essential foundation for assessing parliament's representative character.

At the same time, representation cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of formal compliance with democratic principles. The presence of inclusive laws and procedures does not automatically ensure that parliament functions in a way that is fully representative in substance. A representative institution is not only one that permits access, but one that enables [meaningful participation](#) and influence across the full range of its activities. This includes not only the election of members, but also the distribution of power within parliament, the composition of committees and leadership structures, and the extent to which women, youth, minority voices, and other underrepresented groups are able to shape parliamentary priorities and outcomes. It is therefore necessary to move beyond a narrow understanding of representation as presence alone and to consider whether representation is experienced in ways that are equitable, balanced, and impactful.

The observations set out in this section are intended to explore these deeper dimensions of representativity. They consider how SA's parliament performs not only as an elected institution, but also as an internal system of governance in which power, participation, and influence are distributed in particular ways. This includes examining the strengths of the electoral design, the extent to which diversity is translated into effective institutional representation, and the challenges that may arise when formal inclusion is not matched by practical influence. Particular attention is given to the tension between broad access and meaningful participation, as well as to the role played by parliamentary bodies and decision-making structures in either strengthening or limiting representative outcomes.

The target also recognises that the quality of representation is closely connected to democratic legitimacy. Public confidence in parliament depends not only on whether elections are free and fair, but also on whether the institution appears [responsive](#) to the diversity of the population and capable of reflecting a broad range of interests in its work. Where representation is concentrated, uneven, or merely symbolic, the legitimacy of parliament may be weakened even in the presence of strong formal democratic structures. Conversely, where different voices are able to participate substantively and where institutional arrangements support balanced inclusion, parliament's representative role is strengthened. For this reason, assessing representativity requires attention to both the visible composition of parliament and the less visible institutional dynamics that shape who is heard, who participates, and who ultimately exercises influence.




Taken together, the observations in this target aim to provide a fuller understanding of representative parliament as both a democratic ideal and an institutional practice. They highlight the considerable strengths of SA's constitutional and electoral framework, while also drawing attention to areas where representativity remains incomplete or uneven in practice. In doing so, the section frames representation not as a static achievement, but as an ongoing democratic responsibility requiring continual reflection, institutional adaptation, and reform. A [representative parliament](#) must not only resemble the society it serves, but must also create the conditions under which that society can be meaningfully reflected in its decisions, priorities, and leadership. It is against this broader understanding that the observations which follow should be read.

#### 4. Background to and methodology used for the assessment of the IDP framework

The Indicators for Democratic Parliaments (IDPs) framework provides a tool to help national parliaments assess and enhance their effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. This multi-partner initiative aims to align parliamentary practices with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG targets [16.6](#) [*Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels*] and [16.7](#) [*Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels*], which aim to develop transparent and accountable institutions and ensure inclusive, participatory decision-making.

The indicators cover various dimensions of parliamentary function, from autonomy and legislative procedures to oversight and public participation, supporting self-assessment to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The framework is designed to assist parliaments, regardless of their political system or size, in fostering reforms that enhance democratic governance and strengthen public trust.

The framework not only serves as a [self-assessment tool](#) for parliaments but also helps guide them through processes of modernisation, reform, and greater public accountability. By utilising this tool, parliaments can improve their responsiveness to public concerns, better serve their constituencies, and contribute meaningfully to achieving the broader SDGs of peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Grading	Rate 0-5	Description
	0	The object of the assessment criterion simply does not exist in parliament.
	1	The object of the assessment criterion exists but in a rudimentary form. It is not an established part of parliament's capacity and practice.
	2	The object of the assessment criterion exists in a basic form. It is part of parliament's capacity and practice but is not well-developed.

<b>Good</b>	3	The object of the assessment criterion is an established part of parliament’s capacity and practice and is somewhat developed.
<b>Very Good</b>	4	The object of the assessment criterion is a well-established part of parliament’s capacity and practice.
<b>Excellent</b>	5	The object of the assessment criterion is a highly developed part of parliament’s capacity and practice, with little obvious room for improvement.

Table 1 Rating Criteria

There are three phases of the assessment:

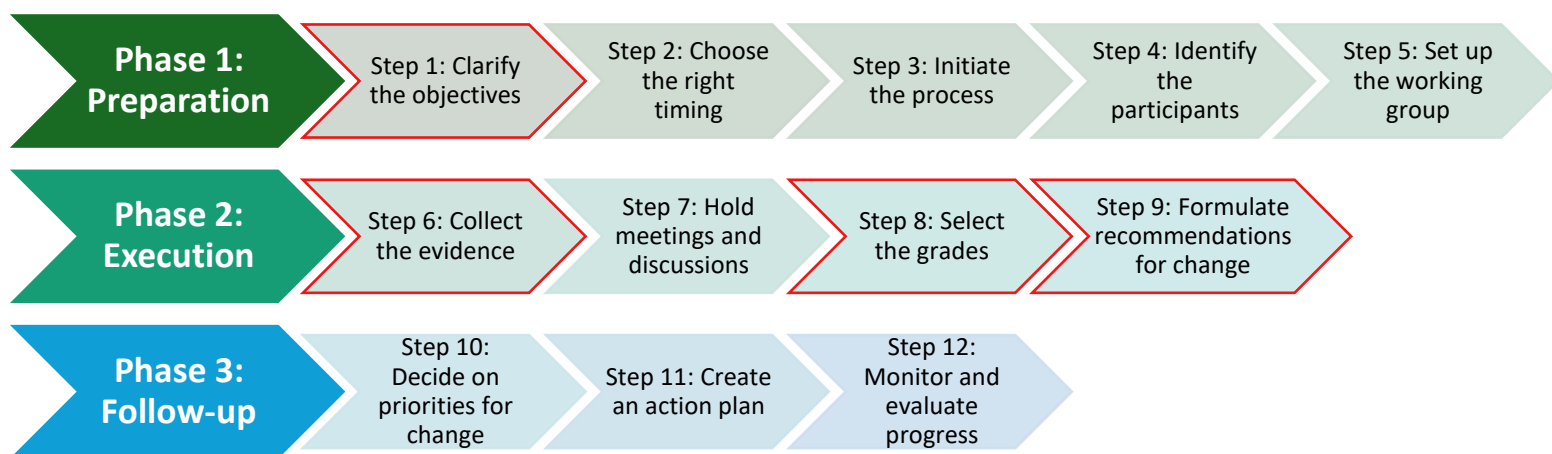


Figure 1 Phases and steps of assessment

Figure 1 indicates the phases of the assessment, and specifically in this report the following phases are covered: Step 1, 6, 8, and 9. It is recommended that the steps not initiated should be completed by parliament internally. The aim of this report is to provide recommendations on how to increase parliament’s ratings based on the external assessment ratings we have assigned for each assessment criteria. The IDPs provides an Assessment Checklist to guide parliaments through the preparation and execution of the assessment process. This checklist includes ten key items:

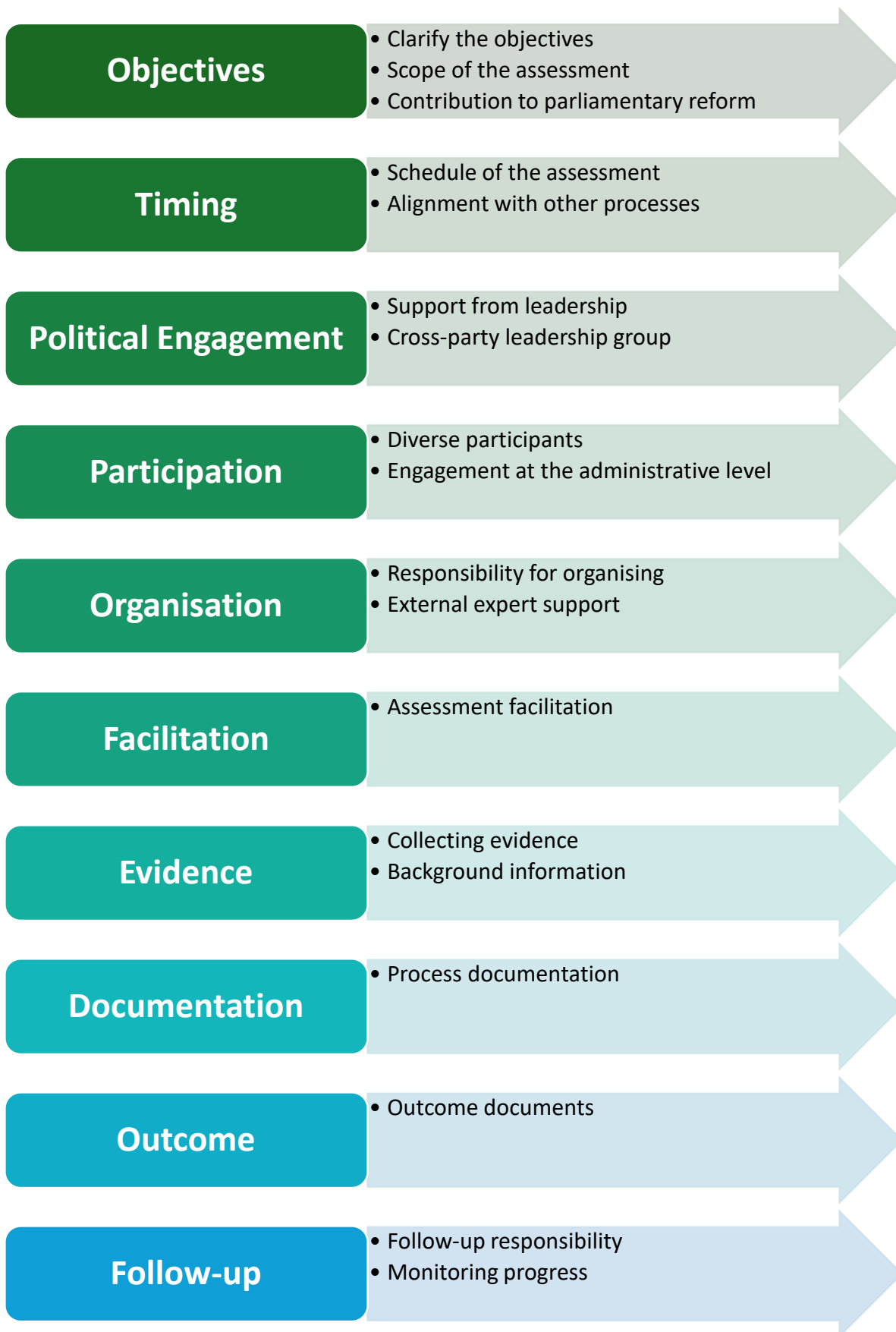


Figure 2 Assessment Checklist

### *Methodology used:*

In order to conduct the assessment of Target 7, three research methods have been implemented.

1. **Document Analysis:** This method was used to search, find and gather qualitative data on parliamentary procedures, laws, and practices. Thereafter a systematic review was conducted to search through and find material from various documents such as constitutional documents, legal manuals, public reports, parliamentary proceedings, budget and financial reports, international and local civil society reports and IDP publications and articles.
2. **Case Studies:** This method was used to analyse existing material for both the local and international levels on the IDPs. Academic articles and journals were also scrutinised to examine what information related to IDPs, and the assessment criteria that have been previously documented and applied.
3. **Benchmarking:** This technique was used to analyse what has already been done in SA as well as other countries, who have submitted their assessments to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Furthermore, this technique aided in the recommendations provided.

The sources used for this report include the following websites: SA parliament's [website](#), Indicators for Democratic Parliaments [website](#) and [case studies](#), South African Legal Information Institute's ([SAFLII](#)) website, reports and publications from the Inter-Parliamentary Union ([IPU](#)), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — International [website](#) and South African [website](#), Auditor-General of South Africa's ([AGSA](#)) website, Public Protector South Africa's [website](#), South African Human Rights Commission ([SAHRC](#)), National Treasury South Africa's [website](#), and UN Sustainable Development Goal ([SDG](#)) publications. The portals include: the South African Government's [portal](#), South African Institute of International Affairs ([SAIIA](#)) and African Peer Review Mechanism ([APRM](#)). The CSOs publications include various reports from: Corruption Watch South Africa's [website](#), Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse ([OUTA](#)), [My Vote Counts](#), and Parliamentary Monitoring Group ([PMG](#)). The academic databases include: [JSTOR](#), [Sabinet](#), and Google Scholar for relevant and reliable international governance reports and articles.

By applying these three research methods to collect information, it enables one to thoroughly research and conduct an external assessment of Target 7. Thus, using a wide range of legal, procedural, government, parliamentary, CSOs publications and academic sources, the report provides a balanced and evidence-based evaluation of the application of this assessment criterion.

## 5. Observations



Figure 3 Observations from analysis

## 6. Assessment of Target Seven for the South African Parliament

For this section the Target, indicators and sub-indicators will be discussed.

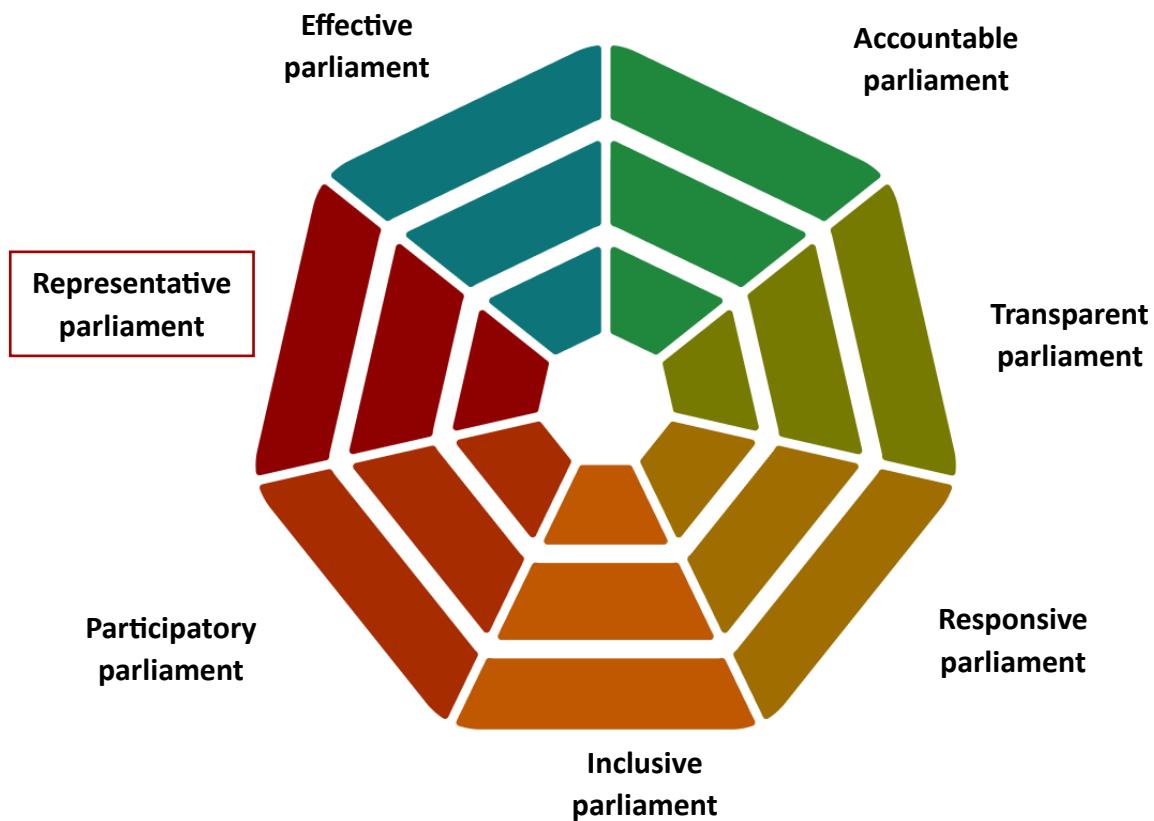


Figure 4 Indicators for Democratic Parliaments

A representative parliament<sup>2</sup> is one that reflects the diverse composition of society, ensuring that all groups, including minorities and underrepresented populations, are fairly represented. It prioritises electoral integrity, fairness in parliamentary composition, and inclusive participation in its structures and decision-making bodies.

- Indicator 7.1: Electoral Integrity
- Indicator 7.2: Composition of Parliament
- Indicator 7.3: Composition of Parliamentary Bodies

<sup>2</sup> Parliamentary Indicators. 2023. *Parliamentary Indicators*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.parliamentaryindicators.org/>> [Accessed 15 July 2024].

## 6.1 Indicator 7.1 Electoral integrity

Electoral integrity is a foundation for representative democracy. This indicator evaluates the fairness, transparency, and accessibility of the electoral process, ensuring that voting and candidacy rights are protected and upheld. It looks at the role of public authorities in overseeing elections, ensuring that all citizens can freely exercise their voting rights and that elections are free from corruption, manipulation, or interference. A representative parliament is built on an electoral system that reflects the will of the people.

### 6.1.1 Voting and election rights

This dimension focuses on the fundamental rights of citizens to vote in elections and participate in the democratic process. It ensures that voting rights are guaranteed, accessible, and protected for all eligible citizens, without discrimination. This dimension also ensures that electoral laws provide equal opportunities for citizens to exercise their right to vote freely and without undue hindrance.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Constitution and/or legal framework	The constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework establish fundamental electoral principles. These provisions are clear, consistent, and unambiguous and are	SA's <a href="#">Constitution</a> establishes strong electoral principles, including the right to vote and stand for election, universal suffrage, proportional representation, and the transparency of elections. The legal framework is based on democratic principles that align with international electoral standards, ensuring fairness,	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue reviewing and updating electoral laws to ensure they remain aligned with international best practices, particularly in terms of inclusivity and fairness.</li> <li>Strengthen the implementation of constitutional provisions to ensure that <a href="#">marginalised groups</a> are adequately</li> </ul>

		in line with international electoral standards.	equality, and non-discrimination in the electoral process. The Constitution explicitly guarantees electoral rights and principles that uphold democracy. SA's parliament is a signatory to various international treaties and agreements, including the <a href="#">African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance</a> , which reinforces the alignment of the country's electoral laws with international norms. While the legal framework is clear, there are periodic concerns about the practical implementation of some provisions, such as the representation of marginalised groups, and ensuring access to voting for all citizens, particularly in remote areas or for persons with disabilities.		represented and have equal access to voting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote awareness of electoral rights among all citizens to ensure full participation in the electoral process.</li> </ul>
2	Stability of electoral law	Changes to electoral law are made in a timely manner and at	<a href="#">SA's electoral laws</a> , particularly those governing the structure and process of elections, are designed to remain stable,	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that any necessary amendments to electoral laws are introduced and</li> </ul>

		<p>least one year in advance of any elections.</p>	<p>with amendments made well in advance of elections. Changes to electoral law are formally subject to parliamentary debate and public participation, but the electoral reform process has not always worked smoothly in practice. Following the <a href="#">Constitutional Court ruling</a> that parts of the former Electoral Act were unconstitutional, meaningful legislative reform was required to allow independent candidates to contest national and provincial elections. However, the reform process was delayed and heavily contested, with concerns raised about delays by the Minister of Home Affairs, the adequacy of public participation, and whether the final <a href="#">Electoral Amendment Act</a> of 2023 went far enough. SA generally adheres to the <a href="#">principle</a> of stability in electoral law. Any changes to the law are made with adequate lead time before</p>	<p>implemented in a timely manner, with a clear timeline for consultation and review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a more streamlined process for addressing urgent <a href="#">legal reforms</a>, especially when technological or procedural changes are required.</li> <li>• Create a proactive approach to electoral law review, addressing potential issues before they become urgent in the run-up to elections.</li> <li>• Prioritise meaningful public participation which is preceded by civic education to properly educate citizens on the complexities of electoral legislation, processes and consequences of any changes (or the absence thereof).</li> </ul>
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			<p>elections, allowing for proper planning, training, and preparation for all stakeholders involved, including the <a href="#">Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)</a>. Although there is a commitment to stability, the process of amending electoral law can be slow and may not always allow for timely adaptation to changing political dynamics or emerging needs (e.g., technological advancements in <a href="#">voting systems</a>).</p>		
3	Practice	<p>In practice, elections take place regularly. A significant proportion of citizens participate in these elections. Elections are competitive and citizens' fundamental rights are respected before, during and after election day.</p>	<p>SA's parliament holds regular elections, with <a href="#">national and provincial elections</a> occurring every five years. Elections are competitive, with multiple political parties contesting the elections. The country continues to have millions of citizens casting their votes, but voter participation has been steadily declining over time. <a href="#">Voter turnout</a> declined from 89.3% in 1999 to an all-time low of 58.6% in the 2024 general elections. Of a</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address challenges to voter participation by improving accessibility, particularly for marginalised communities and people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Strengthen voter education programs to combat apathy and ensure that citizens understand the importance of participating in elections.</li> <li>• Continuously monitor and improve the election process to ensure that any irregularities are addressed promptly and</li> </ul>

			<p>registered voter population of 27.7 million people in 2024, only 16.2 million cast their ballots, meaning that more than 11 million registered voters did not vote. Citizens' rights are respected before, during, and after election day, with mechanisms in place to protect the integrity of the election process. SA has a strong track record of holding regular, peaceful, and competitive elections. However, the declining level of voter participation raises concerns about voter public trust and the depth of democratic participation. The <a href="#">Electoral Commission of SA</a> (IEC) is widely regarded as independent and transparent. <a href="#">Voter education campaigns</a> are also conducted regularly to ensure that citizens are informed and empowered to participate in elections, but do fall short on its scope and depth. The IEC does not get allocated adequate funding to design</p>	<p>transparently, maintaining public confidence in the electoral system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament and the IEC should strengthen voter education to address misinformation and disinformation by providing timely, trusted and accessible information on electoral rights, voting procedures, irregularities and official results, while using rapid fact-checking, community outreach and multilingual communication to rebuild public trust and encourage voter participation.</li> </ul>
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			and rollout meaningful civic education prior to elections. Despite the regularity and competitiveness of elections, challenges persist, such as voter apathy, logistical issues in rural areas, and occasional reports of irregularities in the election process. There may also be concerns about the accessibility of elections for persons with disabilities and ensuring that all citizens can cast their votes without barriers.		
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Ensure that all citizens, especially those in [rural areas and persons with disabilities](#), have equal access to voting. This may include providing more accessible voting locations, digital engagement options, and removing barriers to voting for marginalised groups. Create a more flexible framework for making necessary amendments to electoral law, particularly in response to technological or procedural challenges, to ensure that electoral reforms are timely and relevant. Implement stronger voter education campaigns that emphasise the importance of participation and help address issues such as voter apathy and misinformation. Encourage young voters and first-time voters to actively engage in the electoral process. Continue to enhance monitoring mechanisms to address any electoral irregularities quickly and ensure that all stakeholders, including political parties and voters, have confidence in the fairness and transparency of the elections.



### 6.1.2 Candidacy, party and campaign rights and responsibilities

This dimension addresses the rights and responsibilities of individuals and political parties involved in elections. It ensures that candidates have the freedom to stand for election, that political parties can freely operate, and that all campaign activities are conducted transparently and fairly. This dimension also highlights the importance of protecting the integrity of the election process by regulating campaign financing, party activities, and candidate conduct.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Right to stand for election	The legal framework establishes that every eligible citizen has the right to stand for election, including as an individual candidate and/or as a member of a political party.	SA's legal framework, including the <a href="#">Constitution</a> , guarantees that every eligible citizen has the right to stand for election, whether independently or as a member of a political party. This right is clearly defined in the Electoral Commission Act 1996 and <a href="#">Electoral Amendment Act 1 of 2023</a> which specifies the qualifications and conditions for candidacy. The Constitution and <a href="#">Electoral Commission Act</a> protect the right to stand for election, ensuring that all eligible SA citizens, irrespective of gender, race, or background, can participate in the	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore ways to reduce financial and logistical barriers for independent candidates and individuals from marginalised communities, ensuring a more equitable field for all.</li> <li>• Strengthen programs that support underrepresented groups in standing for election, such as training, mentorship, and funding initiatives.</li> </ul>

			<p>electoral process as candidates.</p> <p>Although the legal framework guarantees the right, practical barriers may still exist, such as financial or logistical challenges that limit the ability of some individuals, especially from marginalised groups, to effectively run for office.</p>		
2	Right to join or form political parties	Individuals and groups have the right to join or form political parties in order to contest elections. Any exceptions to this right are non-discriminatory, consistent with international obligations, and clearly defined by law.	<p>The right to join or form political parties is protected in SA's <a href="#">Constitution</a> and the Electoral Commission Act. Individuals and groups are free to form and join political parties, and any restrictions on this right are narrowly defined and compliant with <a href="#">international human rights</a> obligations. SA has a strong legal framework that guarantees the right to form and join political parties. The country has a vibrant political party landscape, with a wide range of parties representing diverse interests and ideologies. The <a href="#">party registration</a></p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider simplifying the party registration process to reduce barriers for smaller parties and new political groups, fostering a more competitive and inclusive political environment.</li> <li>• Introduce measures that ensure the fair representation of smaller parties, such as increased visibility in media or public debates, to ensure a more balanced political landscape.</li> </ul>

			<p><a href="#">process</a> can be bureaucratic, and there may be concerns about the dominance of larger political parties in the electoral process, which could make it more difficult for smaller or newly formed parties to compete on equal terms.</p>		
3	Right to appeal	<p>The legal framework guarantees the right to appeal regarding alleged violations of political and electoral rights to a competent and independent body. The appeal procedure, as well as the powers and responsibilities of the bodies involved, are clearly regulated. The time limits for lodging and deciding on appeals are reasonably short.</p>	<p>SA's legislation provides a <a href="#">clear legal framework</a> for appealing violations of political and electoral rights. The Electoral Court and the <a href="#">IEC</a> are tasked with hearing appeals regarding electoral issues. The <a href="#">appeal process</a> is well-regulated, with time limits in place to ensure timely resolution of cases. SA's legal framework includes a well-established and independent body to handle appeals, ensuring that <a href="#">violations of political</a> and electoral rights are addressed fairly and efficiently. The IEC plays an important role in monitoring elections and ensuring compliance with electoral laws. While the appeal process</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance public awareness of the right to appeal electoral violations and raise objections about the eligibility or suitability of candidates. This should include clearer guidance on how to file appeals or objections, more time for the public to do so, clearer eligibility criteria, and more transparent decision-making on the outcomes.</li> <li>• Ensure that the appeal process is efficient and transparent, with regular updates on the progress of cases to maintain public trust in the system.</li> <li>• Expand support services for individuals or parties seeking to appeal electoral violations, particularly in rural or</li> </ul>

			is established, the accessibility of the system may be a concern, especially for marginalised groups who may lack the resources or knowledge to navigate the legal process. The responsiveness and speed of the appeal process could also be improved to enhance public confidence in the system.		underserved areas, to ensure equitable access to the appeal process.
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Simplify the process for registering independent candidates, new political parties and ensure that smaller parties have an equal opportunity to compete in elections by providing them with access to funding, media coverage, and public debates. Make the appeals process more accessible to marginalised groups, providing clearer guidance and support for those wishing to challenge electoral violations, particularly in areas with limited access to legal resources. Increase efforts to inform citizens about their electoral rights, including the right to stand for election, the right to join or form political parties, and the right to appeal electoral violations. This could help improve overall participation in the political process. Focus on making the appeal process quicker and more transparent, ensuring that any electoral violations are addressed promptly to maintain public confidence in the electoral system.



### 6.1.3 Role of public authorities in elections

This dimension focuses on the role of public authorities in overseeing and administering elections. It ensures that independent, impartial, and effective bodies are responsible for managing elections, maintaining electoral integrity, and ensuring that elections are conducted according to the law. Public authorities are also responsible for providing a fair and transparent environment that upholds the democratic process.

**The assessment:**

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Neutrality of public authorities	The legal framework guarantees the integrity and transparency of the entire electoral process, including sanctions for electoral fraud. The neutrality of public authorities in the electoral process is ensured by law and in practice.	SA's <a href="#">legal framework</a> guarantees the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. The <a href="#">Constitution</a> , the Electoral Commission Act, and other relevant laws ensure the neutrality of public authorities in the electoral process. Public authorities are prohibited from interfering in the electoral process or from using state resources for partisan purposes. The <a href="#">IEC</a> is an independent body that oversees elections to ensure their fairness. SA has a robust legal framework that ensures the neutrality of public authorities and the integrity of the electoral process. The IEC, as an independent institution, ensures that elections are <a href="#">free, fair, and transparent</a> , and the country has mechanisms in place to address electoral fraud. While neutrality is ensured by law,	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that all public authorities adhere to neutrality and that sanctions for electoral fraud are consistently applied.</li> <li>• Increase transparency regarding the processes for addressing electoral fraud and violations of neutrality, ensuring that the public is informed of actions taken by the IEC and other authorities.</li> <li>• Continue to educate the public and political parties on the importance of neutrality in the electoral process and how to report violations.</li> </ul>

			<p>there are occasional concerns regarding the potential misuse of state resources or influence over the election process, particularly in close elections.</p> <p>Enforcement of sanctions for electoral fraud and violations of neutrality may not always be swift or sufficiently visible to the public.</p>		
2	Electoral management body (EMB)	An EMB is tasked with ensuring the proper conduct of the electoral process. The EMB operates according to clearly defined and publicly available rules and enjoys independence of decision-making and action. The EMB carries out its tasks impartially and transparently and enjoys the trust and	<p>The <a href="#">IEC</a> is SA's EMB, and it operates according to clearly defined rules and regulations. The IEC is an independent body, as enshrined in the Constitution, and it is responsible for managing the electoral process. It is required to act impartially, and its rules and procedures are publicly available. The IEC is widely respected and trusted by the public for its impartiality and professionalism. It has the <a href="#">legal authority</a> to manage the election process and ensure that elections are conducted in a fair and transparent manner. The IEC is also</p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the IEC has the necessary resources and capacity to manage elections effectively and address emerging challenges, such as ensuring voting accessibility in remote areas or addressing issues related to digital voting.</li> <li>• Maintain regular reviews of the EMB's procedures and operations to ensure continued independence, impartiality, and effectiveness.</li> <li>• Ensure that the IEC maintains its transparency by publishing regular reports on its activities and election processes, including complaints and resolutions.</li> </ul>

		respect of the community.	responsible for voter registration, oversight of political parties, and election monitoring. Despite the IEC's independence, some concerns remain regarding the adequacy of resources and capacity to manage elections effectively, particularly in a country as large and diverse as SA. There may also be occasional questions about the IEC's ability to swiftly address election-related complaints.		
3	Access to information about the electoral process	Information about the electoral process is widely available, including as part of civic education programmes. Public authorities ensure that voters are aware of electoral procedures and have access to candidate lists and	SA's public authorities, particularly the IEC, provide extensive information about the electoral process. <a href="#">Civic education</a> programs are conducted to ensure that voters understand the electoral process, including how to register, vote, and the importance of participating in elections. Information about candidates, parties, and election procedures is widely available, including in the country's official languages. The <a href="#">IEC</a> and other	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the reach of <a href="#">civic education programs</a> to ensure that they are inclusive and effectively reach marginalised groups, including those in remote areas and those with limited literacy.</li> <li>• Provide more accessible information formats, such as videos or infographics, to accommodate people with different literacy levels.</li> <li>• Continue to improve multilingual access to electoral information by ensuring that</li> </ul>

		<p>information.</p> <p>Information is available in the languages that are widely used in the country.</p>	<p>governmental bodies conduct public outreach and civic education programs, , although these efforts are not regular or comprehensive enough to be regarded as fully effective. Information on electoral procedures, candidates, and parties is accessible to the public through various channels, including websites, social media, and print media. While efforts have been made to ensure broad access to electoral information, challenges remain in reaching certain groups, particularly those in rural areas or those who are less literate.</p> <p>Furthermore, the language diversity of SA can make it challenging to ensure that all information is fully accessible in the country's 12 official languages.</p>		<p>materials are available in all widely used languages and accessible formats, such as braille or audio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament and the IEC should strengthen efforts to counter electoral misinformation and disinformation by providing clear, accurate and accessible information on voting procedures, candidates, parties and election timelines across multiple platforms, languages and communities.</li> </ul>
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Ensure that all public authorities adhere to neutrality during election periods and that any violations are addressed promptly and effectively, maintaining public trust in the electoral process. While the IEC is highly regarded, further strengthening its resources and capacity will ensure that it can manage increasingly complex elections, especially with technological advancements and increasing voter turnout. Continue to enhance the accessibility of electoral information, particularly for marginalised communities. This can include expanding outreach efforts and utilising innovative methods of communication to reach diverse populations effectively. Ensure continued transparency and public trust in the electoral process by regularly publishing reports on election-related activities and addressing public concerns in a timely manner.



## 6.2 Indicator 7.2 Composition of parliament

The composition of parliament is key to ensuring broad representation of society. This indicator assesses how well parliament reflects the diversity of the electorate, considering factors such as political diversity, gender, youth, and the inclusion of other underrepresented groups. It ensures that parliament is representative of the population it serves, giving all segments of society a voice in the legislative process and decision-making. A representative parliament balances the interests of various groups, ensuring fairness and inclusivity in its composition.

### 6.2.1 Representation of political diversity

This dimension focuses on ensuring that parliament represents a broad spectrum of political ideologies and parties. It assesses whether parliament provides space for diverse political views and encourages the participation of multiple political groups. Effective representation of political diversity ensures that the legislative process reflects the full range of political opinions and promotes democratic debate.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Electoral system design	The design of the electoral system ensures that the allocation of parliamentary seats accurately reflects the proportion of votes	SA's parliament uses <a href="#">a proportional representation system</a> (PR), where parties receive seats in parliament based on the proportion of votes they receive in national and provincial elections. This system ensures that the allocation of seats is broadly in line with the voters' preferences. The PR system is a key	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the balance between proportionality and stability in the political system, considering potential reforms that might limit the influence of very small parties while maintaining proportional representation.</li> <li>Consider adjusting the thresholds for parliamentary representation to better</li> </ul>

		received by political parties and candidates.	strength of SA's electoral design, ensuring that smaller parties are represented in parliament according to the level of support they receive, leading to a more inclusive political environment. Although PR ensures fair representation of votes, it can sometimes lead to fragmented representation, with a large number of <a href="#">small parties holding a disproportionate</a> amount of power in parliament. This can make coalition building and decision-making more complex.		<p>balance the diversity of voices with the need for effective governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament should assess how smaller parties contribute to representation, oversight and decision-making, while identifying whether current arrangements create practical challenges for stable governance.</li> <li>• Any future electoral reform should preserve the inclusive benefits of proportional representation while addressing weaknesses linked to fragmentation, weak constituency accountability and slow decision-making.</li> </ul>
2	Party/candidate registration	The legal framework establishes clear and transparent procedures for registering political parties and candidates for elections, including reasonable eligibility criteria, consistent	SA's parliament has a clear and transparent registration process for political parties and candidates. Political parties are required to <a href="#">submit applications</a> and meet the legal eligibility criteria defined in the Electoral Commission Act. The process for registering candidates is well-regulated,	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the party and candidate registration process remains inclusive by providing additional support or resources to smaller or newly formed parties to help them meet registration criteria.</li> <li>• Regularly review the registration procedures to identify any potential barriers for new parties or candidates,</li> </ul>

		procedures, and feasible deadlines.	and deadlines are clearly specified in the Electoral Commission Act. The registration process for political parties and candidates is efficient, clear, and accessible. The legal framework provides an open and inclusive process for all political actors to participate in the electoral system, provided they meet the set eligibility requirements. While the process is transparent, some smaller parties may face practical challenges in meeting registration requirements, particularly when it comes to collecting the necessary number of signatures or resources for registration.		especially in terms of financial or logistical requirements.
3	Electoral thresholds	Where applicable, the legal framework maintains a reasonable electoral threshold for parties and/or candidates to gain seats in parliament.	SA's parliament does not impose an electoral threshold for parties to gain representation in parliament, which is a distinctive feature of its <a href="#">proportional representation system</a> . The absence of an electoral threshold ensures that even small parties with limited support have a	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue evaluating the system to ensure that the absence of an electoral threshold does not hinder the effectiveness of governance or lead to excessive fragmentation.</li> <li>• Consider introducing a minimum threshold for participation in the</li> </ul>

			<p>voice in parliament, leading to greater political diversity and a more inclusive representation of voters' preferences. While the absence of a threshold promotes inclusivity, it can lead to a highly fragmented parliament, with numerous small parties potentially complicating coalition-building and governance.</p>		<p>allocation of seats, if future electoral performance indicates that the fragmentation of parliament becomes a barrier to efficient governance.</p>
4	Practice	<p>In practice, political parties are represented in parliament in proportion to their support among the electorate. No parties or candidates are arbitrarily prevented from participating in elections or taking up seats in parliament.</p>	<p>In practice, SA political parties are <a href="#">represented in parliament</a> in proportion to the votes they receive, and there is a high level of political competition and participation. No political party or candidate is arbitrarily excluded from elections, and the IEC ensures that all parties and candidates are given an equal opportunity to participate. SA's PR system and the effective functioning of the IEC ensure that all political parties and candidates are fairly represented in Parliament. The process is transparent</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore mechanisms to promote more stable coalition governments, such as revisiting the balance between proportional representation and the need for political stability.</li> <li>• Improve voter education and awareness to ensure that citizens understand the impacts of voting for smaller parties and the potential consequences of a fragmented parliament.</li> <li>• Encourage political parties to build stronger, more coherent platforms that can unite diverse interests, ensuring that</li> </ul>

			<p>and inclusive. The <a href="#">fragmented nature of the party system</a> can sometimes make it challenging to form stable, effective governments, and coalition politics may result in less clear mandates from the electorate. Furthermore, while the system is inclusive, it could be more effective if parties demonstrated greater accountability to voters. In addition, the current electoral system makes it challenging for independent candidates to stand for, and potentially be elected. More political parties are expanding their internal processes to draw candidates from the broader public and not just a closed, internal process. Some parties also consider quotas to make their candidates more representative.</p>		<p>coalition governments are more effective and accountable.</p>
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Explore ways to balance the inclusiveness of proportional representation with the need for stable, effective governance. This could include considering modest thresholds for party representation or exploring other methods for reducing the fragmentation of parliament. Provide targeted resources or support to smaller parties, especially those that may face challenges in meeting registration criteria, so they can participate effectively in elections and gain representation proportionate



to their support. Continue to strengthen voter education campaigns to help citizens understand the impacts of their voting choices, particularly regarding the diversity of the party system and coalition governance. Regularly review the electoral system to assess its effectiveness in representing the electorate's preferences while also maintaining political stability. Consider future adjustments if fragmentation begins to undermine the effectiveness of governance.

### 6.2.2 Representation of women

This dimension ensures that women are adequately represented in parliament, both in terms of the number of female MPs and their participation in decision-making processes. It assesses whether there are mechanisms in place to promote gender equality in parliamentary representation and whether women have equal opportunities to hold office and influence policy. A diverse parliament, including significant female representation, promotes inclusivity and gender equality in governance.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Equal opportunities	The legal framework guarantees equal opportunities for the political participation of women and men in parliament.	SA's <a href="#">Constitution</a> guarantees equal rights for men and women, including the right to participate in political processes. The Electoral Commission Act and other related legislation promote equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of gender, to participate in elections and to stand for political office. SA has strong legal provisions that <a href="#">promote gender equality in political participation</a> . The	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue reinforcing the legal framework through public awareness campaigns to encourage women's full participation in politics.</li> <li>• Address cultural barriers and promote social attitudes that support women's involvement in politics.</li> <li>• Provide <a href="#">training and mentorship programs</a> for women to help them navigate the</li> </ul>

			<p>country's legal framework is inclusive, ensuring that both women and men have the same opportunities to engage in political life, stand for election, and take up parliamentary positions. While the legal framework is robust, there may still be barriers in practice, such as social and cultural norms, which can limit women's full participation in politics. Moreover, some structural and institutional challenges remain, particularly in encouraging women to pursue political careers and leadership roles.</p>		<p>political landscape and pursue leadership roles.</p>
2	Measures to increase women's representation	Parliament has adopted legislative and other measures designed to increase women's representation in parliament, such as quotas.	SA's parliament has implemented various measures to increase women's representation in parliament. The country uses a <a href="#">mixed system</a> of proportional representation with mechanisms that encourage gender balance, including the political party quota system. Political parties are	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the effectiveness of the quota system and ensure that women are not only represented numerically but also hold decision-making positions within parliament.</li> <li>• Introduce initiatives that promote women's leadership in parliament, such as leadership development programs, to</li> </ul>

			<p>encouraged to ensure that at least 50% of their candidates are women. SA has made significant progress in increasing <a href="#">women's representation in parliament</a>, with women holding a notable proportion of seats. The quota system and other measures have led to a higher percentage of women in elected office, contributing to a more inclusive parliament. While the quota system has helped increase women's representation, challenges remain in terms of the actual political influence women have once they are in office. Ensuring that women have equal power and influence in decision-making roles is an ongoing challenge.</p>		<p>ensure that they are equipped to take on high-level positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue working with political parties to strengthen the implementation of gender balance in candidate selection and ensure that women's participation goes beyond just meeting quotas.</li> </ul>
3	Violence against women in politics	Legislative and policy measures are taken to address and prevent violence against women in politics, both	SA's parliament has taken legislative and policy steps to address violence against women in politics. Measures include legal protections for women, efforts to raise awareness about <a href="#">gender-based</a>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen enforcement of laws addressing violence against women in politics, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and that women are</li> </ul>

		<p>as candidates for election and while in office.</p>	<p><a href="#">violence</a> (GBV), and provisions to address violence in the political sphere. The government and civil society organisations also engage in advocacy and campaigns to reduce violence against women in politics. SA has robust legal frameworks <a href="#">that protect women from violence</a>, including laws specifically addressing GBV. Parliament has supported initiatives aimed at tackling violence against women in politics, with efforts to create a safer environment for women candidates and MPs. Despite legal protections, violence against women in politics remains a significant issue, especially during election campaigns. Women politicians and candidates, particularly in rural areas, may still face threats, harassment, and intimidation. The effectiveness of policies to prevent such violence can be inconsistent.</p>	<p>protected throughout their political careers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase training and awareness programs for law enforcement and political leaders to better address and prevent violence against women in politics.</li> <li>• Expand support networks for women who face violence in politics, including providing safe spaces and counselling services for victims of violence.</li> <li>• Strengthen the Legislature’s Sexual Harassment Policy.</li> </ul>
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4	Practice	<p>In practice, consistent progress is made towards gender parity in parliament and the elimination of violence against women in politics.</p>	<p>In practice, SA has made significant progress toward gender parity in parliament, with a high proportion of women serving as MPs. However, while progress has been made in increasing women's representation, achieving gender parity in leadership positions and eliminating violence against women in politics remains a work in progress. Violence against women in politics, while being addressed, still poses a significant challenge, and more work is needed to fully eliminate it. SA has made considerable progress toward <a href="#">gender equality</a> in parliament, and women's participation in politics continues to grow. Many women hold key roles in government and political parties, contributing to policy decisions and leadership. Achieving true <a href="#">gender equality</a> in practice is challenging, particularly in leadership and decision-</p>	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue working toward gender parity by implementing initiatives to support women in leadership roles, ensuring that they have the resources and mentorship needed to succeed in higher offices.</li> <li>• Enhance programs to address gender-based violence in the political sphere, ensuring that women are able to run for office and serve without fear of violence or intimidation.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor progress toward gender parity, using data and feedback to ensure that women's representation and influence in parliament are continually improving.</li> </ul>
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			making positions. Violence against women, both online and offline, continues to affect female politicians, limiting their full participation and influencing their political careers.		
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While SA has made progress in reducing violence against women in politics, further measures are needed to protect women candidates and MPs from violence, especially in rural areas. Increasing safety measures and ensuring swift action when violence occurs are key steps to supporting women in politics. To achieve gender parity in decision-making positions, parliament should prioritise leadership development programs for women. This includes ensuring that women have the necessary skills, mentorship, and support to assume key leadership roles in parliament. Expand efforts to combat gender-based violence, particularly targeting women in politics. This includes enhancing the legal framework, increasing public awareness, and ensuring that women politicians are supported when they face harassment or threats. While significant progress has been made, further initiatives should focus on achieving true gender parity in both the representation and influence of women in parliament. Measures like ensuring equal access to leadership positions and addressing any structural barriers to women’s advancement are critical.

### 6.2.3 Representation of youth

This dimension ensures that young people are represented in parliament and have a voice in the legislative process. It evaluates the extent to which young MPs are involved in decision-making and whether the needs and interests of younger generations are addressed in policy. Encouraging youth representation fosters intergenerational dialogue and ensures that the perspectives of younger citizens are considered in national governance.

**The assessment:**

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Minimum age of eligibility	The legal framework establishes that the minimum age of eligibility to run for political office is the same as the minimum voting age.	SA's legal framework aligns the minimum age for voting and standing for election. According to the Constitution and the Electoral Commission Act, the minimum age for <a href="#">voting is 18</a> , and the same age is required to stand for election to parliament. The legal alignment between the voting age and the age to stand for election ensures equal political rights for all eligible citizens, providing young people with the opportunity to both vote and run for office at the same age. While the minimum age is set at 18, young people may face other barriers such as lack of resources, <a href="#">access to political networks</a> , and experience, which can limit their ability to engage in the political process.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the minimum age alignment for voting and candidacy to ensure continued equality for young people in the political process.</li> <li>• Introduce programs aimed at increasing the political engagement and preparation of young people to run for office and participate in politics.</li> </ul>

2	Promoting youth representation	Legislative and policy measures are taken to promote youth representation in parliament.	SA has several policies in place to encourage <a href="#">youth representation</a> , including youth wings within political parties and specific provisions for young candidates. The ruling party and some opposition parties have introduced youth quotas and initiatives to increase the number of young MPs. Policies such as youth quotas and targeted <a href="#">youth engagement</a> efforts help ensure that young people have opportunities to stand for election and participate in politics. These initiatives are particularly focused on increasing youth representation within political parties and the broader political system. While there is a focus on youth representation, the proportion of young MPs remains relatively low, especially when compared to the overall voting population. Furthermore, young MPs may face challenges in gaining political	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen initiatives within political parties to create pathways for young people to rise to leadership positions, ensuring that they have access to key political roles and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Introduce additional measures such as stipends or funding to support young candidates, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to ensure they can run for office and compete fairly.</li> </ul>
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			influence and competing with more experienced candidates.		
3	Bodies addressing youth issues	Parliamentary bodies, such as committees, caucuses, or networks of young MPs, are mandated to address youth issues.	SA's parliament has established several bodies that address youth issues, such as developing a <a href="#">Parliamentary Youth Caucus</a> , which will advocate for youth rights and policies. Therefore, parliamentary committees, including those on education and social development, regularly discuss youth-related matters. The Parliamentary Youth Caucus will play a vital role in ensuring that youth issues are addressed in parliament. This body allows young MPs to raise concerns and advocate for policies that <a href="#">benefit the youth demographic</a> , including education, employment, and healthcare. The effectiveness of these bodies can sometimes be limited by the overall influence of younger MPs within the broader parliamentary system. While youth issues are discussed, they may not	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the mandate and influence of youth-focused parliamentary bodies to ensure that youth issues are consistently prioritised in policymaking.</li> <li>• Promote cross-generational collaboration between young and more senior MPs to ensure that youth issues are integrated into broader political debates and decisions.</li> </ul>

			always be prioritised in policymaking or receive the same level of attention as other issues.		
4	Enabling environment for young MPs	There is an enabling environment for young MPs in parliament, including the availability of training and mentoring.	SA's parliament has made efforts to create an enabling environment for young MPs by providing them with <a href="#">training and mentorship programs</a> . These programs are aimed at equipping young MPs with the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their parliamentary duties. The availability of training and mentorship helps young MPs navigate the complexities of parliamentary procedures and governance. Initiatives such as youth caucuses and <a href="#">networking events</a> also provide young MPs with opportunities to learn from more experienced colleagues. Despite these efforts, young MPs may still face challenges in gaining visibility and influence within parliament. There may also be gaps in the mentorship and training programs, particularly in ensuring	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand mentorship programs to ensure that young MPs are paired with experienced mentors who can guide them in navigating the political landscape and rising to leadership positions.</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for young MPs to gain hands-on experience in committee work, policymaking, and leadership roles to help them build credibility and influence within parliament.</li> </ul>

			that young MPs are adequately prepared for leadership roles.		
5	Practice	In practice, there is commitment to enhancing youth representation in parliament. Over the past three parliaments, there has been an increase in both the number and proportion of seats held by MPs under age 45, under age 40 and under age 30.	SA's parliament has made some progress in increasing <a href="#">youth representation</a> in parliament, with a noticeable increase in the number of younger MPs in recent years. However, the proportion of MPs under age of 45 remains relatively low compared to the overall population, and there are challenges in achieving a more significant increase in youth representation. The increase in youth representation over the past three parliaments is a positive trend, reflecting a commitment to enhancing youth involvement in politics. The country's legal and policy frameworks have facilitated this growth, and political parties are increasingly recognising the importance of <a href="#">youth participation</a> . Despite progress, the actual number of young MPs remains limited, and	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce additional measures to increase the number of young MPs, such as targeted recruitment, youth-specific political training, and leadership programs aimed at preparing young people for higher office.</li> <li>• Establish long-term strategies to increase youth representation in parliament, focusing on both electoral strategies and party leadership reforms that allow young people to rise through the ranks.</li> <li>• Encourage political parties to allocate more resources to support the candidacy of young people, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to ensure more diverse youth representation.</li> </ul>

			<p>achieving true parity in youth representation remains a challenge. Thus, the political environment can be challenging for young people to break into, particularly when competition for seats is intense.</p>		
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Strengthen pathways for young people to enter politics and advance in their careers by providing leadership training, mentoring programs, and financial support for youth candidates. Ensure that young MPs are not only elected but also hold key decision-making positions in parliament. This can be achieved through targeted leadership development initiatives and mentorship. Expand the availability of youth-focused programs, including those aimed at engaging young people in the political process at earlier stages, such as internships, youth caucuses, and community-based political participation. Continue to track the number and proportion of young MPs and ensure that progress is being made toward greater representation. Use data to identify barriers and implement strategies to overcome them.



#### **6.2.4 Representation of other underrepresented groups**

This dimension focuses on ensuring that parliament is inclusive of other underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, or other marginalised communities. It evaluates whether parliament creates opportunities for the participation of these groups, ensuring that their voices are heard in the legislative process. Effective representation of underrepresented groups promotes equality and ensures that all citizens' concerns are addressed in policymaking.

**The assessment:**

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Right to participate in public affairs	The legal framework guarantees the right of all people, including underrepresented groups, to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including the right to vote and to stand for office, without discrimination.	SA's <a href="#">Constitution</a> guarantees the right of all citizens to participate in public affairs, including the right to vote and stand for office, without discrimination. These rights are protected for all individuals, including <a href="#">women, youth, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities</a> . SA's parliament has strong legal protections in place to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their background, can participate in public life. The right to vote and stand for office is enshrined in the Constitution and is accessible to all citizens who meet the eligibility criteria. Although the legal framework guarantees these rights, practical barriers remain for certain underrepresented groups, such as people with disabilities, those in rural areas, and some marginalised	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue promoting voter education to ensure that all citizens, particularly underrepresented groups, are aware of their political rights and how to exercise them.</li> <li>• Address barriers to political participation for marginalised groups, particularly in rural and remote areas, ensuring that voting stations and information are accessible to all.</li> </ul>

			communities, who may face challenges in accessing voting stations or engaging in the electoral process.		
2	Special measures	Parliament has adopted special measures to promote the representation of underrepresented groups in parliament, such as quotas and reserved seats.	SA's parliament has adopted various measures to promote the representation of underrepresented groups in parliament. The country uses a <a href="#">proportional representation</a> system, which allows for broader representation of women, youth, and other marginalised groups. Political parties are encouraged to implement gender quotas, and the country has taken steps to increase the representation of persons with disabilities. The quota system and other affirmative action measures have significantly increased the <a href="#">representation of women and other underrepresented groups</a> in parliament. Political parties are actively working to meet these quotas, and efforts to include persons with disabilities are	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen and enforce measures to increase the representation of persons with disabilities and youth in parliament, possibly through additional quotas or targeted initiatives.</li> <li>• Focus on ensuring that underrepresented groups not only have numerical representation but also hold significant political power and decision-making roles in parliament.</li> </ul>

			gaining traction. While progress has been made, some groups, particularly persons with disabilities and youth, remain underrepresented in parliament. Quotas alone do not always guarantee equal power or influence for these groups, and more work is needed to ensure that marginalised groups are meaningfully included in political decision-making.		
3	Rules of procedure	Parliament's rules of procedure provide opportunities for MPs representing minority groups to participate actively in the work of parliament.	SA's parliamentary <a href="#">rules of procedure</a> ensure that all MPs, including those from minority groups, have opportunities to participate in the legislative process. Committees, caucuses, and other structures within parliament allow MPs from diverse backgrounds to contribute to debates, decision-making, and policy formulation. SA's parliamentary procedures provide structured opportunities for MPs from underrepresented groups to be involved	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the mechanisms within parliament that enable MPs from underrepresented groups to actively participate in decision-making, ensuring that their voices have a meaningful impact on policy.</li> <li>• Monitor the <a href="#">representation and participation of minority groups</a> in key committees and leadership positions to ensure they are effectively engaged in the legislative process.</li> </ul>

			<p>in all aspects of parliamentary work.</p> <p>Parliamentary bodies such as the <a href="#">Women’s Caucus</a> and the <a href="#">Youth Parliament</a> provide forums for minority groups to engage in discussions on issues that directly affect them. While there are opportunities for participation, the real influence of minority groups in decision-making processes can be limited, especially for those who hold fewer seats or lack political power. The effectiveness of participation can also be hindered by party politics and the dominance of larger political parties.</p>		
4	Practice	<p>In practice, underrepresented groups are represented in parliament and are able to engage effectively in parliamentary work.</p>	<p>In practice, SA has made significant strides in ensuring that underrepresented groups, especially women, are represented in parliament. The use of quotas has resulted in an increase of <a href="#">women MPs</a>, and there are increasing efforts to include youth and people with disabilities. However,</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue efforts to increase the representation of youth and persons with disabilities in parliament, focusing on both numerical representation and influence in key decision-making positions.</li> <li>• Strengthen mentorship and leadership development programs to help underrepresented groups, particularly</li> </ul>

			<p>challenges remain in ensuring that all underrepresented groups can effectively engage in parliamentary work and have an equal say in decision-making. There has been consistent progress toward increasing the number and influence of underrepresented groups in parliament. <a href="#">Women</a> in particular, have made significant strides in political representation. Efforts to engage youth and people with disabilities are also gaining momentum. Despite these improvements, certain underrepresented groups, particularly youth and people with disabilities, still face barriers to meaningful engagement in parliamentary work. Furthermore, women’s representation in leadership roles within parliament remains a challenge, with many women holding fewer influential positions.</p>	<p>women and youth, gain influence and power within the parliamentary system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the effectiveness of policies aimed at promoting the participation of underrepresented groups, using data and feedback to ensure continuous progress toward inclusivity.</li> </ul>
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Increase support for underrepresented groups, including persons with disabilities and youth, to ensure they not only participate in parliament but also hold key leadership roles and influence policy decisions. Regularly monitor the representation of underrepresented groups in parliament, ensuring that any barriers to effective participation are identified and addressed. This may include reviewing the implementation of quotas and other measures to promote diversity and inclusion. Provide more opportunities for underrepresented groups to have a significant voice in parliamentary committees, debates, and decision-making processes. This can be achieved through targeted leadership programs and mentoring initiatives. Ensure that marginalised groups, especially youth and people with disabilities, are fully informed about their right to participate in the electoral process and have access to resources that enable their engagement.



### 6.3 Indicator 7.3 Composition of parliamentary bodies

This indicator examines the composition of parliamentary bodies such as committees and governing structures to ensure they represent a fair cross-section of society. It assesses whether the distribution of political power within committees and other parliamentary bodies reflects the diversity and proportional representation of the electorate. A representative parliament ensures that all groups are equitably included in decision-making bodies, enhancing transparency, accountability, and the quality of democratic governance.

#### 6.3.1 Composition of governing bodies

This dimension examines the composition of the governing bodies of parliament, such as the executive leadership or parliamentary presidium. It ensures that these bodies are representative of the broader parliament and reflect the diversity of the political, social, and demographic makeup of society. A balanced composition of governing bodies promotes fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in decision-making within parliament.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Representation of all political groups	The principles for the composition of parliament's governing bodies are clearly set out in the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure. These	SA's legal framework and <a href="#">parliamentary rules of procedure</a> ensure that political groups, including smaller and opposition parties, are represented in parliament's governing bodies. This includes the allocation of seats in key committees, as well as the fair representation of all political parties in discussions and	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to monitor and adjust the allocation of seats in parliamentary committees to ensure that smaller parties have adequate representation in crucial decision-making bodies.</li> <li>Strengthen mechanisms that ensure the inclusion of minority voices in parliamentary debates, ensuring that no</li> </ul>

		provisions guarantee the representation of all political groups in the governing bodies and ensure an appropriate balance between them.	decisions. SA's PR electoral system, ensures that smaller parties have a voice in parliament. The rules governing the <a href="#">composition of parliamentary</a> bodies are designed to ensure that political diversity is maintained in decision-making forums. Although there is a focus on fair representation, larger parties sometimes dominate key parliamentary functions (due to larger numbers for distribution), limiting the influence of smaller opposition parties. Furthermore, the practical implementation of proportionality may face challenges in areas such as leadership positions or in committees with more significant decision-making power.		<p>political group is marginalised or excluded from key discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce <a href="#">regular reviews</a> of the balance in parliament's governing bodies to ensure proportionality remains effective.</li> </ul>
2	Leadership positions	Parliament reserves leadership positions, such as at least one Deputy Speaker role, for the opposition or	SA's parliament has mechanisms that allow for broader political representation in parliamentary <a href="#">leadership positions</a> , although this does not always guarantee that opposition parties hold presiding	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to reserve leadership positions for opposition parties to maintain political balance and ensure that the opposition's voice is heard in the highest levels of decision-making.</li> </ul>

		<p>political minority groups.</p>	<p>officer positions. In the 7<sup>th</sup> parliament, the Deputy Speaker position reflects a more politically diverse leadership arrangement in the context of the GNU. However, because some parties that may previously have been considered opposition parties now form part of the GNU, such appointments should not automatically be described as opposition representation. This differs from the 6<sup>th</sup> parliament, where the <a href="#">Deputy Speaker position</a> was held by a member of the majority party. While these arrangements can promote political balance and cooperation across parties, the practical influence of smaller and non-government parties may still be limited by broader power dynamics within parliament. This is a key feature of SA's commitment to <a href="#">democratic governance</a> and pluralism. While opposition parties hold important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the authority of opposition leaders in parliamentary debates and committees to ensure that they have a meaningful impact on the legislative process.</li> <li>• Regularly review the allocation of leadership roles to ensure that minority parties are adequately represented and that their leadership roles are sufficiently empowered.</li> </ul>
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			<p>leadership positions, their influence can sometimes be limited in practice, especially when the ruling party has a dominant position. The role of the opposition in <a href="#">leadership</a> may also be affected by the overall power dynamics in parliament.</p>		
3	Practice	<p>In practice, there is balanced representation of political groups in parliament's governing bodies.</p>	<p>In practice, SA's parliament strives for balanced representation, but the dominance of the ruling party often results in larger parties holding more influence in key decision-making bodies. This is currently also more evident with the GNU, where previous opposition parties are now holding the majority. While opposition parties are represented, they may struggle to exert the same level of influence as larger parties. SA's system of <a href="#">closed-list proportional representation</a> ensures that political groups are represented in parliament in line with their electoral</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the mechanisms by which opposition parties can influence parliamentary decision-making, ensuring that they can play a more meaningful role despite the dominance of larger parties.</li> <li>• Introduce reforms that ensure that the views and concerns of smaller parties are taken into account more effectively during parliamentary discussions and legislative processes.</li> <li>• Monitor the effectiveness of political group representation in practice, making adjustments where necessary to ensure true political balance in the governing bodies of parliament.</li> </ul>

			<p>support. There are also practical steps taken to involve opposition parties in discussions and decisions. The influence of smaller parties and the opposition can be limited by the dominance of the ruling party, which holds a larger proportion of seats and therefore has more control over key decision-making processes. The balance of power can skew in favour of the majority, reducing the effectiveness of minority representation.</p>		
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Strengthen the influence of opposition parties in parliamentary decision-making by ensuring that leadership roles and committees are genuinely empowered, allowing opposition MPs to have a meaningful impact on the legislative process. Regularly review the composition of parliamentary committees to ensure that all political groups, especially smaller ones, are adequately represented in key decision-making processes. While the legal framework ensures proportional representation, continued efforts should be made to monitor and ensure that the actual representation in parliamentary bodies reflects the diversity of political opinions in the country. Encourage cross-party collaboration and dialogue, especially between the ruling party, within the GNU, and opposition groups, to ensure that all political voices are heard and contribute to the shaping of policy.



### 6.3.2 Composition of committees

The composition of committees refers to how parliamentary committees are structured and the diversity of members within them. This dimension assesses whether committees are composed in a way that reflects the diversity of parliament, ensuring that they include representation from various political parties, regions, genders, and other groups. A well-composed committee system helps ensure that all voices are considered during scrutiny and decision-making processes.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Rules and procedures for composition of committees	There are clear, fair, and transparent rules and procedures for determining membership of committees and for the selection or election of committee leadership roles.	SA's parliament has established clear <a href="#">rules and procedures</a> for determining the composition of committees. The allocation of committee seats is generally based on proportional representation, reflecting the relative strength of political groups in parliament. Leadership roles within committees are typically elected by committee members, and the process is designed to ensure fairness and transparency. The use of <a href="#">proportional representation</a> for committee composition ensures that political	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly review the committee composition rules to ensure they remain fair and effective in promoting inclusivity and political diversity.</li> <li>Enhance transparency in the election of committee leadership roles by ensuring that the process is well-publicised and accessible to all MPs, particularly those in smaller or opposition parties.</li> </ul>

			<p>groups are fairly represented in line with their support among the electorate. Transparent procedures for electing committee leadership roles further ensure fairness in the process. While the rules are designed to be transparent, there may still be challenges related to the practical implementation of proportional representation, particularly in balancing the interests of larger parties with smaller parties. The influence of smaller parties may sometimes be limited in key committees.</p>		
2	Small political groups and independent MPs	Special consideration is given to small political groups and independent MPs in order to ensure their representation in committees.	SA's parliament ensures that small political groups are represented in committees. The <a href="#">proportional representation system</a> used for committee composition guarantees that all political groups, including smaller ones, have a voice in parliamentary committees. The <a href="#">proportional representation system</a> ensures that	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that smaller parties are given meaningful roles in committees, such as leadership positions or committee chairs, to increase their influence.</li> <li>• Provide additional support and resources to smaller groups that enable them to contribute more effectively to committee work.</li> </ul>

			<p>small political groups are not excluded from parliamentary committees. This system fosters diversity in parliamentary work and ensures that all political perspectives are heard. While small political groups are represented, their influence in larger, more powerful committees can sometimes be limited. Therefore, in committees with a high concentration of larger parties, smaller groups may struggle to make their voices heard.</p>		
3	Expertise and interests of MPs	The expertise and interests of MPs are taken into consideration when assigning committee roles.	<p>SA's parliament generally takes the expertise and interests of MPs into consideration when assigning <a href="#">committee roles</a>. MPs are often appointed to committees based on their professional background, previous experience, and interests. This approach ensures that MPs are well-equipped to contribute to committee discussions and decision-making. The consideration of MPs'</p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue prioritising MPs' expertise and interests when assigning committee roles, ensuring that members are appointed to committees where they can contribute most effectively.</li> <li>• Ensure transparency in the committee assignment process, with clear criteria for how MPs' expertise and interests are considered.</li> </ul>

			<p>expertise and interests helps ensure that committees benefit from members who are knowledgeable and passionate about the subjects under discussion. This approach can improve the quality of parliamentary <a href="#">scrutiny and policy formulation</a>. While expertise is considered, there may be cases where committee assignments do not fully reflect MPs' qualifications, experience or areas of interest, particularly when political considerations take precedence over expertise. The potential for political favouritism in committee assignments remains a challenge.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase professional development opportunities for MPs to help them build expertise in specific areas of policy, improving the overall effectiveness of committee work.</li> </ul>
4	Practice	<p>In practice, the composition of committees and committee leadership roles reflects that of parliament as a whole.</p>	<p>In practice, SA's parliamentary committees generally reflect the <a href="#">composition of parliament</a>, with political groups represented in proportion to their size in the House. However, some practical challenges remain, particularly with ensuring that smaller parties are</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to ensure that smaller parties are effectively represented in committee leadership roles to ensure that their influence is not diminished.</li> <li>• Periodically review the committee structure to ensure that the composition</li> </ul>

			<p>adequately represented in leadership positions within committees. The PR system for committee composition ensures that <a href="#">political groups</a> are generally represented according to their size in parliament. This system encourages inclusivity and ensures that diverse political perspectives are included in parliamentary work. In practice, the influence of smaller parties can be limited, especially in larger or more powerful committees. Larger parties tend to dominate in terms of committee leadership and decision-making, which can limit the ability of smaller groups to shape outcomes.</p>		<p>of committees continues to reflect the overall political balance of parliament.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore reforms that could strengthen the role of minority groups in committee leadership and decision-making, ensuring that all political perspectives are effectively represented.</li> </ul>
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Ensure that small political groups are not only represented in committees but also have meaningful roles in leadership positions to enhance their influence and participation in the legislative process. Continue to prioritise expertise when assigning MPs to committees, ensuring that MPs are placed where their skills and interests will most benefit parliamentary work. Ensure that the processes for assigning committee roles and leadership positions are transparent and accessible to all MPs, particularly those from smaller or opposition parties. Regularly monitor the effectiveness of the committee composition system to ensure that it remains balanced and that no political group is marginalised. Adjust the structure as necessary to enhance fairness and inclusivity.



### 6.3.3 Gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies

This dimension focuses on ensuring gender and age balance within parliamentary bodies, including both committees and other decision-making structures. It evaluates whether parliament actively promotes the participation of both men and women and considers the representation of different age groups. Achieving gender and age balance in parliamentary bodies helps ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, fostering a more inclusive and equitable legislative process.

#### The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Measures to promote equitable representation	Parliament takes measures to promote the equitable representation of women and young MPs in all parliamentary bodies.	SA's parliament has implemented several measures to promote the representation of <a href="#">women and young</a> MPs in parliamentary bodies. The PR system, along with party quotas for women, ensures that a significant proportion of MPs are women. Political parties are encouraged to select young candidates, and mechanisms have been introduced to include youth and women in key parliamentary committees and bodies. The PR system and political party quotas have led to significant progress in women's representation. The inclusion	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen policies and programs that encourage the candidacy and election of young people and women to leadership positions, such as mentorship programs and leadership training initiatives.</li> <li>Continue to enforce quotas for women and youth within political parties, ensuring that their representation goes beyond just numerical targets.</li> </ul>

			of <a href="#">youth-focused programs and initiatives</a> further supports the inclusion of younger MPs in parliament. These measures have helped to ensure a diverse and representative parliamentary body. Despite these efforts, achieving gender and age parity in leadership roles within parliament remains a challenge. Women and young MPs are often underrepresented in higher leadership positions, particularly in committee chairs and vice-chairs.		
2	Gender and age balance in leadership positions	MPs of different genders and ages are equitably represented in parliamentary leadership positions, including among committee chairs and vice-chairs.	While SA has made strides in achieving gender balance in parliament, the representation of <a href="#">women and young MPs</a> in leadership positions is still limited. Women and young MPs are underrepresented in leadership roles such as committee chairs. In practice, leadership positions are still often <a href="#">dominated</a> by more senior MPs, many of whom are male. The commitment to	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce policies that allocate specific leadership roles to women and young MPs, particularly in committees, to ensure equitable representation in leadership.</li> <li>• Promote gender and age diversity in leadership development programs, offering mentorship and leadership training to women and young MPs to help them succeed in higher roles.</li> </ul>

			<p>gender and age balance in leadership positions is clear, and there are instances of women and young MPs holding leadership roles, examples of women holding senior parliamentary leadership roles in the 7th Parliament, including in the presiding officer structure of the National Assembly. Women also chair several <a href="#">portfolio committees</a>, which shows that gender representation is visible in some leadership positions. However, evidence of age balance in leadership positions is less clear. <a href="#">IPU data</a> for the National Assembly shows that only 2.8% of MPs were aged 30 or younger in June 2024, suggesting that youth representation remains limited and should not be overstated. Achieving balanced representation in leadership remains a challenge, as women and young MPs continue to be underrepresented in influential positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set targets for leadership positions to ensure gender and age balance, with regular reviews to track progress and adjust as needed.</li> </ul>
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			within parliament. Structural and institutional barriers, as well as deeply entrenched political dynamics, contribute to these imbalances.		
3	Monitoring and reporting	Parliament monitors and reports on gender and age balance in the composition and leadership of parliamentary bodies	SA's parliament regularly monitors and reports on the gender and age balance of parliamentary bodies, including committee composition and leadership roles. The <a href="#">Parliamentary Budget Office</a> and the Office of the Speaker provide periodic reports on gender representation in parliament. However, there is limited detailed reporting on the distribution of leadership roles based on age and gender. The monitoring mechanisms (such as CGE and PMG in place ensure that there is some transparency in the representation of women and young MPs in parliament. Regular reports on gender balance provide an overview of the progress made in increasing representation. The	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance reporting on the distribution of leadership roles in parliament by providing regular updates on the gender and age profile of presiding officers, House Chairpersons, whips, committee chairpersons and other recognised leadership positions. Where vice-chairperson or co-chairperson roles are not commonly used, reporting should focus on the formal leadership positions that exist in parliamentary rules and practice.</li> <li>• Ensure that gender and age balance are integrated into the regular monitoring and evaluation of parliament's composition, with clear targets and timelines for achieving progress.</li> </ul>

			reporting on leadership roles by gender and age is not as comprehensive or frequent as it could be. More detailed and regular reporting would provide better insights into the areas where further progress is needed.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish annual reports on the representation of women and youth in leadership positions to increase transparency and hold parliament accountable to its goals for equitable representation.</li> </ul>
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Continue to focus on increasing the representation of women and young MPs in leadership positions by setting quotas for committee chairs and offering additional leadership training and mentorship opportunities. Improve the frequency and depth of reporting on the gender and age balance in both parliamentary bodies and leadership positions. Regular and detailed reports will help track progress and identify areas needing improvement. Strengthen institutional support structures, including mentoring programs and political networks, to help women and young MPs navigate the political landscape and rise to leadership roles. Set clear and measurable targets for the representation of women and young MPs in leadership roles, including in committees, and regularly review the progress toward meeting these targets.



## 7. Way forward & Conclusion

To strengthen SA's performance as a representative parliament, the focus should now move beyond formal inclusion towards the quality and depth of representation in practice. Although the constitutional and electoral framework provides a strong foundation, [parliament's representative character](#) will increasingly depend on whether diversity is reflected not only in overall membership, but also in leadership, committee structures, and decision-making spaces. Future reform efforts should therefore aim to ensure that representation is not merely visible, but meaningful across all levels of parliamentary work.

Greater emphasis should be placed on the substantive inclusion of underrepresented groups, including women, [youth](#), smaller political parties, and others whose influence may remain limited despite formal access. This requires a more deliberate approach to the composition of committees, leadership positions, and internal parliamentary bodies so that participation extends beyond presence to real influence over parliamentary processes and outcomes. Strengthening this dimension would support a more balanced, credible, and effective model of representation.

There is also a need for continued review of internal parliamentary arrangements to ensure that institutional practices promote fairness, inclusivity, and [effective participation](#). Representation should be assessed not only at the point of election, but throughout the functioning of parliament itself. Regular evaluation of how power, responsibility, and participation are distributed within parliamentary structures would help identify gaps and support a more equitable institutional design.

At the same time, parliament should continue to protect political diversity while improving its capacity to manage the pressures associated with fragmentation and [coalition politics](#). The objective should not be to restrict pluralism, but to strengthen the rules, practices, and cooperative mechanisms that allow a diverse parliament to function effectively. In this regard, representative democracy must be supported by institutions that are both inclusive and stable.

The observations in this section show that SA's parliament rests on a substantial democratic foundation that supports the principles of representative governance. The constitutional order, electoral framework, and broader institutional design provide an important basis for political inclusion, pluralism, and democratic legitimacy. These are significant strengths, as they create the formal conditions necessary for a representative parliament and affirm representativity as a central democratic objective.

At the same time, the findings make clear that a representative parliament cannot be understood through formal structures alone. Representation is not exhausted by electoral access, seat allocation, or inclusive legal provisions. It also depends on whether these arrangements produce meaningful and equitable participation in practice. A parliament may appear representative in numerical or procedural terms while still falling short substantively if [influence](#) remains unevenly distributed, institutional structures favour some voices over others, or underrepresented groups are present without being adequately empowered.

A key theme emerging from the observations is therefore the distinction between presence and influence. While SA's democratic framework allows for broad inclusion, this does not guarantee equal participation across parliamentary life. The composition of committees, leadership bodies, and decision-making spaces directly shapes whether representation is meaningful. If diversity is visible in membership but less evident in positions of authority, then representativity remains incomplete.

The observations also suggest that the electoral system presents both opportunities and pressures. Proportional representation supports political diversity and enables a broader range of parties and viewpoints to enter parliament. At the same time, this diversity can generate governance challenges where fragmentation affects cohesion, coalition-building, or the stability of decision-making. This does not diminish the value of pluralism; rather, it highlights the need to balance diversity with institutional effectiveness. A representative parliament must be open and diverse, but also capable of functioning coherently so that inclusion translates into democratic action.

In the end, representativity should be understood as an ongoing democratic project rather than a settled achievement. SA's parliament has important strengths, but these must be continually reinforced through reflection, reform, and institutional commitment. The task is not simply to preserve formal democratic arrangements, but to deepen them so that parliament more fully embodies the diversity, equality, and inclusiveness that representative democracy requires. Its long-term legitimacy and effectiveness will depend not only on who is represented, but also on how representation is exercised, whose voices carry influence in practice, and whether parliament continues to evolve in ways that reflect the full breadth of SA's democratic aspirations.

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## 9. Glossary

Campaign Rights	The freedoms and protections that allow political parties and candidates to campaign fairly and lawfully during elections.
Candidacy	The right or process through which an eligible person stands for election as a candidate.
Candidacy Rights	The rights of eligible citizens to stand for election either independently or through a political party.
Coalition Building	The process through which political parties cooperate to form working majorities or governing arrangements.
Committee Composition	The structure and membership of parliamentary committees, including how members are allocated across parties and groups.
Committee Leadership	Positions of authority within parliamentary committees, such as chairpersons or vice-chairs, responsible for guiding committee work.
Constitutional Principles	The basic legal values and rules set out in the Constitution that guide elections, representation, and democratic governance.
Decision-Making Bodies	Formal parliamentary structures, such as committees and governing bodies, where important discussions and decisions take place.
Electoral Fraud	Illegal or dishonest actions that undermine the fairness or integrity of an election.
Electoral Integrity	The fairness, transparency, credibility, and inclusiveness of the electoral process.
Electoral Management Body	The institution responsible for managing and overseeing elections, such as the IEC in SA.
Electoral Reform	Changes made to electoral laws, systems, or processes to improve fairness, inclusivity, or effectiveness.
Electoral System Design	The way an electoral system is structured to convert votes into parliamentary seats.

Electoral Threshold	The minimum level of electoral support a party or candidate may need to gain parliamentary representation.
Gender Balance	A distribution of men and women in parliament or parliamentary bodies that promotes fairness and inclusion.
Gender Parity	A situation where women and men are represented in roughly equal numbers, especially in parliament and leadership roles.
Legislative Process	The formal process through which laws are proposed, debated, amended, and adopted in parliament.
Marginalised Communities	Groups that face social, economic, political, or structural barriers to full participation in public life.
Opposition Parties	Political parties that are represented in parliament but are not part of the governing majority.
Parliamentary Bodies	Internal structures of parliament, including committees, caucuses, and governing bodies, through which parliamentary work is organised.
Political Competition	The contest between political parties and candidates for public support and electoral success.
Political Diversity	The representation of a broad range of political parties, ideologies, and viewpoints within parliament.
Political Pluralism	The presence and recognition of multiple political parties, viewpoints, and interests within a democratic system.
Proportional Representation	An electoral system in which parties receive seats in proportion to the number of votes they obtain.
Proportionality	The principle that seats or positions should be allocated in proportion to electoral support or representation levels.

Public Authorities	State institutions or officials with responsibility for administering, regulating, or overseeing public processes such as elections.
Quota System	A measure used to increase representation by reserving or encouraging a certain proportion of seats or candidates for particular groups.
Ruling Party	The political party or coalition that holds the majority of power in parliament and forms government.
Universal Suffrage	The right of all eligible adult citizens to vote, without unfair discrimination.
Voter Apathy	A lack of interest or motivation among citizens to participate in elections or political processes.