

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

South Africa Monthly Briefing October 2023

South Africa Summary 25 October 2023

Recent local government by-elections reveal declining support for the ruling African National Congress (ANC) across the country. The ANC will be most concerned by the decline in support in its rural strongholds as it is dependent on these votes to offset its diminishing support in urban areas. These trends are reflected in recent voter intention surveys which indicate that the ruling party could lose its majority in the 2024 general election. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) delivers the 2022 Population and Housing Census to President Cyril Ramaphosa (2018-present) revealing that the country's population now exceeds 62 million people. However, there are concerns over the high undercount rate in this essential national survey. Ramaphosa formally inaugurates the new Border Management Authority (BMA) which will assume responsibility for South Africa's border management and security functions.

Recent by-election results portend competitive general election

The ruling **African National Congress (ANC)** has continued to experience declining support in recent municipal by-elections leading to rising concerns within the party ahead of the 2024 general election. Indicative of this declining support are the by-election losses incurred in the **KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)**, **Mpumalanga**, **Northern Cape** and **North West** provinces in the past month.¹

In KZN the ANC has continued to lose ground to the resurgent **Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)**. On 27 September, the IFP won the Ward 13 by-election in KZN's **uMhlathuze Local Municipality**, which includes the important port town of **Richards Bay**.² This loss was an upset as Ward 13 had been considered an ANC stronghold in the municipality and the party had won the ward with 63% of the vote in the 2021 local government elections. Instead, the IFP won the seat with a 53% majority while the ANC's support declined to 46%. The ANC has suffered a string of by-election defeats in KZN over the past year. This is a result of voters in the province returning to the Zulu-nationalist IFP as well as the success of the IFP-**Democratic Alliance (DA)** election pact under which the two parties agreed to not contest the same ward seats in order to improve their chances of beating the ANC.

However, the uMhlathuze's Ward 13 was not the only previously safe seat the ANC lost on 27 September, as the **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** opposition party secured a surprise victory in the **Maquassi Hills Local Municipality's** Ward 3 by-election in North West province, ousting the ANC from the seat with 47% of the vote to the ANC's 44%.³ The EFF repeated this success on 11 October in Mpumalanga province's **Msukaligwa Local Municipality**, winning the Ward 13 by-election with 60% of the vote. The ANC only secured 39% of votes in this by-election, down from 63% in 2021.

In another noteworthy development, the **Patriotic Alliance (PA)** opposition party won the Ward 1 by-election in **Sol Plaatje Local Municipality** in Northern Cape.⁴ The PA managed to pull voters from both the ANC and the DA to secure 53% of the vote. Notably, the by-election was precipitated by the incumbent ward councillor defecting from the ANC to the PA. This is the latest indicator of the PA's growth in predominantly Coloured communities across **South Africa**.⁵

¹ Daily Maverick, 12 Oct 2023

² EWN, 28 Sep 2023

³ Daily Maverick, 28 Sep 2023

⁴ Daily Maverick, 12 Oct 2023

⁵ It should be noted that in South Africa the term "Coloured" refers to a distinct ethnic and cultural community and as such is a distinct group in the national census.

These recent results will be concerning to the ANC as they suggest declining support in the party's rural strongholds. The ANC has long been losing support in South Africa's urban areas but has managed to offset this with its command of rural voters. It will not just be the by-election losses that will alarm the party but also the fact that it witnessed declining support even in races the party did win. Illustrative of this was the Ward 11 by-election in **Limpopo** province's **Blouberg Local Municipality** where the ANC won with a commanding majority of 65%, but nevertheless a decline of 20 percentage points from the 85% secured in the 2021 local government election.⁶ Nearly all these lost votes shifted to the EFF, which increased its support in the ward from 13% in 2021 to 35%.

The 2024 general election is expected to be a closely fought election and even marginal declines in the ANC's support base could result in it losing its governing majority in provinces such as KZN and Northern Cape.

... a sentiment supported by the latest polls

The expectation that the 2024 general election will be the most competitive so far is further backed by recently released voting intention polls. A poll released by the **Social Research Foundation (SRF)** on 30 September found that current voter intentions indicate that the ANC would only win 45% of the national vote.⁷ This is notably down from the 57.5% the ruling party secured in the 2019 general election but only slightly less than the 46.05% the party received nationally in the 2021 local government elections. Most significantly, the SRF poll found that the ANC's support in KZN would fall to 40% while the IFP and DA would secure a combined 44%.⁸

A similar scenario was outlined by the 19 October poll compiled by **Sabi Strategy** and the **Brenthurst Foundation**.⁹ This survey found that the ANC's support among likely voters had fallen to 41% as of October 2023 while the combined support for the **Multi-Party Charter** alliance had risen to 36%. The Multi-Party Charter is an alliance of seven opposition parties, namely, the DA, IFP, **ActionSA**, **Vryheid Front (VF) Plus**, **United Independent Movement (UIM)**, **Independent SA National Civic Organisation (ISANCO)** and the **Spectrum National Party (SNP)**.

It should be noted that it is too early for any such polls to be viewed as predictive of the upcoming elections. However, these surveys do suggest that the ANC's majority is at risk both nationally and in at least three provinces. Furthermore, these polls also indicate that there is a small but viable path to victory for the Multi-Party Charter. It is likely this perception of a weakened ANC and a potentially resurgent opposition has led the **African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)** and the **Build One South Africa (BOSA)** party to indicate their desire to join the charter.¹⁰

National Housing and Population Census released

Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) delivered the **2022 Population and Housing Census Report** to President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018 -present) on 10 October.¹¹ According to the census, South Africa's population has increased to 62 million people, of which just over 51.1% are female. South Africa remains a young nation, with a median age of 28 years old. **Gauteng** remains the most populous province with 15.1 million residents.¹² The most commonly spoken home language remains **isiZulu** with 24.4% of South Africans reporting it as their first language.

South Africa's racial makeup has continued along its current trends; according to the census, 81.4% of the country is Black African, 8.2% Coloured, 7.3% White, 2.7% Indian/Asian, and 0.4% responded as "other". Several media outlets and commentators used these figures – especially the decline in the

⁶ Daily Maverick, 28 Sep 2023

⁷ EWN, 4 Oct 2023

⁸ City Press, 1 Oct 2023

⁹ Brenthurst Foundation, 19 Oct 2023

¹⁰ News24, 19 Oct 2023

¹¹ StatsSA, 10 Oct 2023

¹² Daily Maverick, 10 Oct 2023

percentage of Coloured and White populations, which both comprised 8.9% of the total population in 2011 – as evidence of shrinking minority communities due to emigration and the so-called “*white flight*”. However, while net migration has had some impact on this, South Africa’s Coloured and White populations have remained largely static in recent years. This is in line with global trends among urban and middle-to-upper-income populations. The majority of South Africa’s minority groups tend to be located in urban areas and have higher rates of middle and upper-income communities.

In a positive development, the number of households reporting to have access to piped water, flushing toilets and electricity have all increased since the 2011 census. Similarly, the number of residents living in formal housing has increased to 88.5% from 77.6% in 2011 while the percentage of the population living in informal housing has fallen to 8.1% from 13.6% in 2011. These are important developmental gains for the country and underscore at least some service delivery successes in recent years.

However, concerns have been raised about the efficacy of the census after StatsSA revealed that the survey had an undercount figure of 31%.¹³ This means that almost one-third of South Africans were not enumerated in the census. As a result, StatsSA had to rely more heavily on its statistical models and assumptions rather than raw data. For context, the 2011 census had an undercount of 14.6% and even that was cited by officials as a matter of concern. The undercount rate was particularly high among White and Indian/Asian communities, which recorded undercount rates of 61.64% and 72.3% respectively.

This high undercount rate is a serious concern as policymakers rely on the census data to formulate government policies to demarcate electoral boundaries. Inaccuracies in the data could lead to less effective policy outcomes over the coming decade.

Border Management Authority officially launched

President Ramaphosa officially launched the **Border Management Authority (BMA)** in Musina (Limpopo province) on 5 October.¹⁴ Although the BMA was formally launched at this event, the new agency has been slowly implementing its operations ever since the **BMA Act** was signed into law in July 2020.¹⁵ The BMA has already deployed 200 border guards at the entry points across the country and is expected to steadily scale up this force over the coming months. Notably, the BMA will be the country’s third armed force after the **South African National Defence Force (SANDF)** and the **South African Police Service (SAPS)**.

The BMA was created in order to address inefficiencies in South Africa’s border security management. Previously, South Africa’s border management responsibilities were split between seven state entities, namely, the **Department of Home Affairs**, the **Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development**; the **Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment**; the **Department of Health**; the **South African Revenue Service (SARS)**; the SANDF; and SAPS. This multi-agency approach resulted in unintended levels of bureaucracy and issues around assigning responsibilities. As such, it was assessed that in order to improve border security, a new agency should be formed to assume nearly all border management and security responsibilities.

According to officials, the BMA will now oversee frontline border law enforcement functions including, port health; immigration control; access control; biosecurity; food safety and phyto-sanitary control; land border infrastructure development and maintenance; and border information and risk management. In order to perform these functions, relevant staff are expected to be seconded or transferred from the relevant governmental departments.

¹³ Daily Maverick, 12 Oct 2023

¹⁴ Sowetan, 5 Oct 2023

¹⁵ BMA, 24 Oct 2023

Although the creation of the BMA is promising, concerns have already been raised over structural challenges faced by the new agency; specifically, a lack of sufficient funding.¹⁶ The BMA is estimated to need a budget of at least R3 billion (\$160 million) to perform its functions and currently has only received R450m (\$23.5 million). Furthermore, an estimated 6,000 police officers need to be reassigned to the agency as border guards; however, these transfers appear to have stagnated over bureaucratic issues and disputes between the relevant ministers. It is likely that police minister **Bheki Cele** is opposed to the transfer of so many officers at a time when he is under pressure to reduce crime rates in the country.

These challenges are concerning as South Africa's border security issues are among the country's most serious criminal concerns including illegal migration, human trafficking and smuggling. The BMA needs to be rapidly scaled up if it is to address these challenges. Furthermore, the slower and more disruptive the handover of responsibilities to the new agency is, the greater the risk that the country's border security is compromised.

Planner

1 Nov 2022 **Cape Town (South Africa)** Medium Term Budget Policy Statement;
2024 **(South Africa)** General election

Chronology

24 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. An estimated 550 miners at a gold mine in **Springs (Gauteng province)** are reportedly held hostage amid an inter-union dispute at the mine;

23 Oct 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. The ruling **African National Congress (ANC)** removes two of its members as MPs in a wider push to enforce discipline in the party's parliamentary caucus;

23 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. Deputy **South African Reserve Bank (SARB)** (central bank) governor **Kuben Naidoo** resigns from his position leading to increased expectations of a further interest rate hike as Naidoo is believed to be among those on the SARB's **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** opposed to further hikes;

21 Oct 2023 **Durban (South Africa)** *News24*. At least six people are killed in severe storms in **KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)** province leading the provincial government to request for the army to be deployed to assist with the disaster response;

19 Oct 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *EWN*. The **National Assembly** officially endorses current deputy public protector **Kholeka Gcaleka** to be the next **Public Protector**;

18 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. According to **Statistics South Africa (StatsSA)**, annual consumer price inflation increased to 5.4% in September from 4.8% in August;

18 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. **King Willem-Alexander** of the **Netherlands** arrives in South Africa on an official visit;

18 Oct 2023 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. International relations minister **Naledi Pandor** denies offering support to the **Hamas** militant group after it is revealed she had a controversial phone call with the group's political leadership;

16 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. Recently impeached former public protector **Busisiwe Mkhwebane** joins the **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** opposition party and is expected to soon be sworn in as one of the party's MPs;

¹⁶ News24, 24 Oct 2023

13 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. **StatsSA** reveals that South Africa's mining output declined by 2.5% year-on-year in August largely due to power outages and logistical challenges;

11 Oct 2023 **Rustenburg (South Africa)** *Jacaranda FM*. **ActionSA** announces that retired **South African National Defence Force (SANDF)** general **Kwena Mangope** is its premier candidate in **North West Province** ahead of the 2024 general election;

11 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Business Day*. **Eskom** chairperson **Mpho Makwena** resigns his position fuelling speculation over a fallout with public enterprises minister **Pravin Gordhan**;

6 Oct 2023 **Kimberley (South Africa)** *EWN*. Six **South African National Defence Force (SANDF)** soldiers are killed in a wildfire in the **Lohatla** area of **Northern Cape** province;

5 Oct 2023 **uMngeni (South Africa)** *SABC*. The **ANC Youth League (ANCYL)** in **KwaZulu-Natal** stages a protest in **uMngeni Local Municipality** accusing local mayor **Chris Pappas** of corruption and nepotism;

5 Oct 2023 **Mbombela (South Africa)** *City Press*. Ruling **ANC** party former **Mpumalanga** provincial treasurer **Andries Gamede** announces the formation of his new political party, the **Assegai Independent Movement of South Africa (AIMSA)**;

4 Oct 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Africa News*. The government and the **South African Poultry Association** confirm that over 7.5 million chickens have been culled due to an ongoing avian influenza outbreak;

2 Oct 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *News24*. Opposition party **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** shutdown protest in Cape Town is largely unsuccessful as the ruling **ANC** party and **South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO)** refuse to back the protest;

2 Oct 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Parliament*. Parliament's **Joint Committee on Ethics and Members' Interests** resolves that it is unable to make a finding against opposition party **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** leader **Julius Malema** in relation to allegations that he improperly benefitted from embezzlement at the **VBS Mutual Bank**;

2 Oct 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Parliament*. Parliament's **Joint Committee on Ethics and Members' Interests** resolves that it is unable to make a finding against four **ANC** MPs who were accused of corrupt activity during the **State Capture Commission**;

2 Oct 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *Reuters*. The environment ministry has approved the application of **French** energy giant **TotalEnergies** to conduct offshore drilling for oil and gas off the **Western Cape** coast;

30 Sep 2023 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *ENCA*. Anti-immigrant organisation **Operation Dudula** stages a protest in Johannesburg's **Diepsloot** area protesting crime in the area;

29 Sep 2023 **Richards Bay (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. Former **South African Airways (SAA)** chairperson **Dudu Myeni** is arrested and arraigned on charges of corruption related to suspect tenders issued by the national carrier to subsidiaries of the now-defunct controversial services company **Bosasa**;

29 Sep 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *The Guardian*. At least 11 people are killed in severe flooding in **Western Cape** province;

28 Sep 2023 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *StatsSA*. **StatSA** releases the latest **Quarterly Employment Statistics** report revealing a 0.4% quarter-on-quarter increase in the number of employed people in the second quarter (Q2) of 2023;

27 Sep 2023 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *EWN*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** signs the bill separating the **Postbank** from the **Post Office**, paving the way for a larger state-owned bank but undermining the future financial viability of the Post Office;

4 Oct 2022 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *EWN*. The **Judicial Service Commission (JSC)** recommends **Gauteng High Court** judge **Fayeeza Kathree-Setiloane** and **Mpumalanga** judge **Maleshane Kgoele** to the **Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA)** but fails to fill the remaining two SCA vacancies.

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