

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

South Africa Monthly Briefing August 2026

South Africa Summary 28 August 2026

Cooperative governance and traditional affairs (COGTA) minister Velenkosini Hlabisa proclaims the 4 November as the date of the upcoming local government elections (LGE), effectively launching the official election campaign period. The election is centring on major urban areas, particularly Johannesburg (Gauteng Province). Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) releases its latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), revealing that the unemployment rate worsened in the second quarter of 2026, underscoring South Africa's concerning economic environment. The Investigating Directorate Against Corruption's (IDAC) investigating director Andrea Johnson resigns from office amid a scandal which has done damage to the important anti-corruption unit's standing.

Parties intensify campaigning as local government election date proclaimed

Cooperative governance and traditional affairs (COGTA) minister **Velenkosini Hlabisa**, on 7 August, officially [proclaimed](#) 4 November as the date for the upcoming local government elections (LGE), paving way for the **Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)** to publish the final [election timetable](#). As per this schedule, political parties must submit party lists and ward councillor nominations by 28 August, and any substitutions to these lists and nominations must take place by 11 September. Special voting will take place on 2 and 3 November prior to the countrywide elections on 4 November. The official proclamation marks the start of the formal campaign period. Most political parties were already campaigning, especially in major urban areas; they have now intensified campaigning and can erect posters and flight adverts without worrying about breaching election regulations.

Following the announcement, the country's major political parties held their election manifesto launches. The **Democratic Alliance (DA)** held [its launch](#) on 8 August in central **Johannesburg (Gauteng Province)**, while the **African National Congress (ANC)** [launched](#) its on 23 August in Johannesburg's **Diepsloot** area. The decision by the country's two largest parties to hold their manifesto launches in Johannesburg underscored the fact that the country's commercial capital is the main electoral battlefield in the upcoming LGE. The DA has been aggressively courting Johannesburg voters for several months already and has nominated former party leader and political heavyweight **Helen Zille** as the party's mayoral candidate (*see ARC Briefing South Africa Sep 2025*). Zille is a polarising figure in South African politics but is a proven campaigner and administrator. Over the past year, she has actively been trying to shed her confrontational reputation and recast herself, and the DA, in a more humorous light with a laser focus on service delivery and infrastructure recovery. Her campaign has done this by ensuring that she is a large political presence in Johannesburg as well as by staging public stunts such as going [snorkelling](#) in water-filled potholes.

The Johannesburg election has developed into a competition [between major political figures](#). In addition to Zille, **ActionSA** (the third-largest party in the city council) has put forward its party leader and former mayor **Herman Mashaba**, the **Patriotic Alliance (PA)** has nominated its deputy leader **Kenny Kunene**, and the **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** has put forward **Tlaleng Mofokeng**, a respected public health advocate. Given this crowded field of competitive candidates, it is particularly noteworthy that the ANC is yet to announce its mayoral candidate for the city – or any of the major metros. The party was expected to announce its candidates on 22 August ahead of its manifesto launch but instead released its shortlists, comprising 42 possible candidates for the eight metros.

The ANC's failure to have settled on mayoral candidates with less than 90 days before the election is the latest indicator that the party has failed to understand South Africa's changing political landscape and has lagged in its electoral preparations. The major metro elections will likely be influenced by the personalities chosen to spearhead the respective election campaigns. This is true for both voters and the potential success of the inevitable coalition governments that are formed in the wake of the election.

ANC leaders should be particularly concerned about its electoral prospects given that the party's vote share is expected to fall significantly since the 2021 LGEs. The main threat to the ANC's voting base will come from the **uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP)**, which former president **Jacob Zuma** (2009-2018) formed in 2023. The party went on to win 14.26% of the vote in the 2024 general election, primarily by pulling votes away from the ANC. As a result of the MKP's success, the ANC experienced a near-nationwide decline in support and was virtually decimated at the ballot boxes in **KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province**.

If voting patterns hold between the 2024 general election and the 2026 LGE, the eight metro elections will break down as follows:

- **Cape Town (Western Cape Province)** – DA 53.29%; ANC 20.86%; EFF 6.97%.
- **Ekurhuleni** (Gauteng) – ANC 35.41%; DA 26.33%; MKP 14.08%
- **eThekweni** (KZN) – MKP 47.93%; DA 23.93%; ANC 14.91%
- **Gqeberha (Eastern Cape Province)** – ANC 38.19%; DA 35.67%; EFF 11.08%
- **Johannesburg** – ANC 32.86%; DA 24.56%; MKP 12.73%
- **KuGompo** (Eastern Cape) – ANC 56.50%; DA 16.73%; EFF 16.16%
- **Mangaung (Free State Province)** – ANC 51.02%; DA 23.61%; EFF 13.67%.
- **Tshwane** (Gauteng) – ANC 37.03%; DA 30.26%; EFF 14.07%.

Although the 2024 election was considered a political disaster for the ANC, forcing it below 40% nationally, the party would be relieved if it were to hold onto those levels of support in the upcoming LGEs. The ANC always performs worse in LGEs as the party cannot rely on its more popular national leaders and must face voters' anger over municipal service delivery. The quality of municipal services in ANC-led coalition governed cities has markedly declined over the past five years; most notably in Johannesburg, which is experiencing collapsing infrastructure, poor governance, and is at risk of bankruptcy (*see ARC Briefing South Africa Jul 2026*). As such, the ANC's support was already set to fall sharply in the LGEs, even before it faced parties such as the MKP, which will split its voting base.

South African think tank, the **Social Research Foundation's (SRF)** latest [polling](#) highlights that the ANC's national support is currently 34%, while the DA is backed by 27% of likely voters, followed by the MKP with 13%. It should be noted that the SRF is a conservative-leaning organisation that has past ties to the DA. However, these numbers are in line with expectations given current trends and the 2024 general election results. A national support of 34% for the ANC portends significant drops in the party's urban support, where it is weakest. The DA's internal polls are even more bullish on its prospects; the party's polling shows it could win as much as 40% of the vote in Johannesburg while the ANC's support has fallen to 27%. This is an optimistic and unlikely outcome for the DA, but not outside the realm of possibility given the ANC's current poor standing in the city and the current lack of a competitive mayoral candidate.

It is evident that the stage is set for a highly competitive election in South Africa's urban hubs. Parties such as the DA and MKP are feeling momentum going into the campaign period, while the ANC is clearly on defence and scrambling to meet this challenge. As such, the next two months will be marked by elevated political tensions and an intensification of political campaigning. This will also lead to an increased threat of political violence during this time as parties battle for control of the lucrative patronage systems in the country's municipalities.

Unemployment worsens in second quarter

Popular anger over poor service delivery and maladministration is expected to worsen in the build-up to the election, especially given the country's sluggish economic growth and persistent unemployment crisis. This was highlighted by **Statistics South Africa's (StatsSA)** latest **Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS)**, which was released on 19 August and [revealed](#) that the unemployment rate increased by 90 basis points from 32.7% in the first quarter (Q1) of 2026 to 33.6% in Q2. As per the QLFS, this deterioration was driven by an increase in the size of the available workforce combined with job losses in key sectors, most notably social services, manufacturing, and utilities. This was partially offset by gains in the construction, trade, and agriculture sectors.

It should be noted that the 33.6% is the official unemployment rate; the expanded unemployment rate, which includes discouraged jobseekers, is estimated to be 43.8%, meaning that StatsSA believes that over four in ten working-age people in South Africa are unemployed. South Africa's high unemployment rate is a serious long-term threat to the country's political and social stability. These high unemployment rates will only be addressed through higher rates of economic growth; it is estimated that GDP growth of 5% or higher is required to achieve this. This is not feasible until South Africa manages to address major structural issues, key among which is municipal service delivery, including infrastructure maintenance and utility provision, factors that are essential for the economy to thrive and for private sector growth.

Head of anti-corruption unit resigns amid scandal

The **Investigating Directorate Against Corruption's (IDAC)** investigating director **Andrea Johnson** [resigned](#) from office on 27 July with immediate effect after allegations of impropriety against her emerged at the ongoing **Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference, and Corruption in the Criminal Justice System** (known as the **Madlanga Commission**). President **Cyril Ramaphosa** (2018-present) notably [approved](#) Johnson's request for her three-month notice period to be waived on the recommendation of justice minister **Mmamoloko Kubayi** and the national director of public prosecutions, **Andy Mothibi**.

Allegations against Johnson include that she allowed deputy head of crime intelligence, Major General **Feroz Khan** (suspended), unauthorised access to investigation dockets involving him. Khan is currently facing trial for a variety of criminal charges, including illicit gold trafficking. Johnson has also been accused of pursuing a politically motivated campaign against senior crime intelligence officers, including Khan's boss, crime intelligence head Lieutenant General **Dumisani Khumalo**. After Johnson's resignation, IDAC [withdrew](#) its fraud and corruption case against Khumalo and his co-accused. Johnson has also been accused of [encouraging](#) witnesses to avoid the Madlanga Commission.

These revelations have left IDAC severely weakened and fundamentally damaged the anti-corruption body's reputation. In the wake of this scandal, Kubayi and Mothibi [launched](#) a turnaround programme to stabilise the unit. This has included suspending senior IDAC officials pending investigations and announcing a comprehensive audit of all of IDAC's ongoing cases. Such measures may be necessary to stabilise IDAC and restore its reputation, but they will disrupt ongoing anti-corruption cases and slow down IDAC's work. Johnson's alleged actions have also potentially compromised key cases, which could result in corruption cases being withdrawn, leading to a major setback in ongoing efforts to combat organised crime and state capture.

Planner

4 Nov 2026 **(South Africa)** Local government elections;

16 Nov 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** Final **Madlanga Commission** report due;

Chronology

26 Aug 2026 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *News24*. The **Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)** motion of no confidence against **National Assembly** speaker **Thoko Didiza** fails by a margin of 282 votes to 101;

25 Aug 2026, **Bloemfontein (South Africa)** *Moneyweb*. Supreme court of appeal begins hearing arguments in the **National Treasury's** appeal of the January 2025 high court judgement ordering the state to expand the **Social Relief of Distress (SRD)** grant;

23 Aug 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** appoints small business development minister **Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams** as the acting health minister following incumbent **Aaron Motsoaledi** going on sick leave;

23 Aug 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. Reports reveal that sports, arts and culture **Gayton McKenzie** has appointed 19 political and personal allies to boards of public entities his department oversees;

19 Aug 2026 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *ENCA*. The **Democratic Alliance (DA)** removes its federal finance chairperson and member of parliament (MP), **Mark Burke**, from Parliament's finance committee following the **South African Reserve Bank (SARB)** (central bank) announcement that it is investigating Burke's company, **Kastelo**, for exchange rate violations;

19 Aug 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *StatsSA*. **Statistics South Africa (StatsSA)** reveals that annual consumer price inflation fell by seven basis points to 4.3% in July from 5% in June;

17 Aug 2026 **Durban (South Africa)** *SA News*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** formally assumes the chairpersonship of the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** at the bloc's **Heads of State and Government Summit**;

16 Aug 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *News24*. The **South African Communist Party (SACP)** launches its local government elections manifesto at a rally in **Soshanguve**, located north of Pretoria;

13 Aug 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *Daily Maverick*. The prosecution in the corruption and money-laundering trial of former **National Assembly** speaker **Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula** concludes its arguments before the high court in Pretoria;

11 Aug 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. The **South African Reserve Bank (SARB)** (central bank) moves to take direct control of key regulatory and oversight functions from the **Payments Association of South Africa (PASA)**;

5 Aug 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. International relations minister **Ronald Lamola** welcomes the **African Union's (AU)** decision to reject **Ghana's** request to debate 'South Africa's xenophobia' and calls for the AU instead to organise a continent-wide summit on immigration;

4 Aug 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Bloomberg*. **National Treasury** director general **Duncan Pieterse** confirms the government's plans to list a \$500m credit-guarantee vehicle aimed at unlocking private investment in infrastructure;

4 Aug 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *News24*. Transport minister **Barbara Creecy** orders a forensic investigation into a R1 billion (\$62m) tender awarded by the **Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA)** to a politically connected security firm;

3 Aug 2026, **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *Bloomberg*. The **Absa Group Purchasing Managers' Index** reveals that manufacturing sentiment fell once again in July to 47.3 points from 46.8 in June;

3 Aug 2026 **Cape Town (South Africa)** *EWN*. The Western Cape high court begins hearing arguments in the case challenging the legality of the **Expropriation Act**;

31 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. President **Cyril Ramaphosa** endorses the first phase of the **Eskom Restructuring Task Team's** report in an important step to spin the national transmission grid out of Eskom and establish an independent **Transmission System Operator (TSO)** outside of the electricity utility;

31 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *SARS*. The **South African Revenue Service (SARS)** announces that the country recorded a R17.8 billion (\$1.1 billion) trade surplus in June 2026;

31 Jul 2026 **Johannesburg (South Africa)** *EWN*. **United States (US)** investment bank **Goldman Sachs** predicts that South Africa will receive further credit upgrades in the foreseeable future;

28 Jul 2026 **Pretoria (South Africa)** *EWN*. The **National Treasury** announces that it will release the July equitable share allocation to outstanding municipalities despite previously suspending these payments over poor governance and compliance.

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