

30 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY UNVEILED



**AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA'S COVERAGE OF
THE 2024 SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS**

BRIEF

8

Written By:

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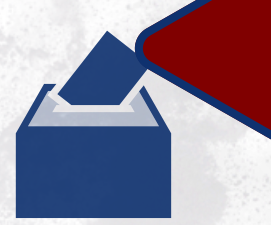
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Nomshado Nkosinkulu

ELECTIONS



1. INTRODUCTION

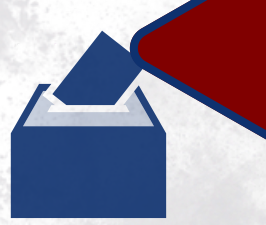


Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) is conducting monitoring of media coverage of the 2024 South African National and Provincial Elections (NPE) to identify the prioritised issues, dominant political parties, and any potential biases in the coverage. The monitoring includes the public broadcaster, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), community media, and other news media. The data collected will be analysed in separate detailed reports for SABC, community media, and other news media. MMA will also release bi-weekly briefs to highlight any gaps in the coverage to encourage improvement.

This fourth brief focuses on the key trends observed in media coverage of the National and Provincial Elections from 7th to 20th June, 2024. A total of 621 articles were collected during this two-week period, averaging 44 stories per day. This is a huge decrease from the previous monitoring period which recorded 1,299 stories on the NPE. This decrease could be attributed to the fact the monitoring period includes dates post the May 29, elections.



2. FINDINGS



ARTICLE COUNT OVER TIME

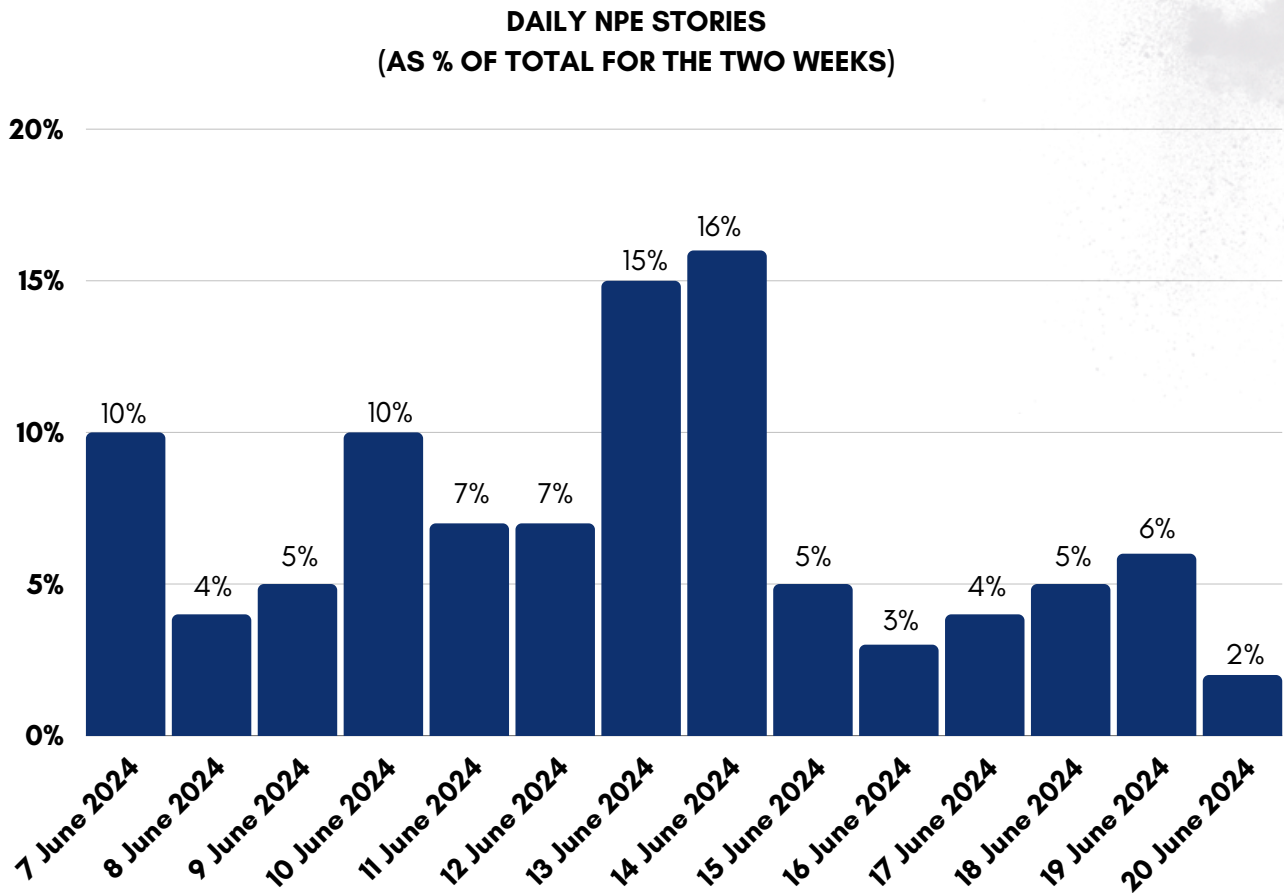


Figure 1: Daily percentage of stories on NPE

The graph shows the daily percentage of stories on NPE over a two-week period from 7th to 20th June, 2024. The percentage of stories varied each day, with some days having higher coverage than others. The highest percentage of stories occurred on the 13th and 14th of June, accounting for 15% and 16% respectively.



TOP 5 TOPICS

TOP 5 TOPICS (WHICH IS 86% OF ALL CODED TOPICS)

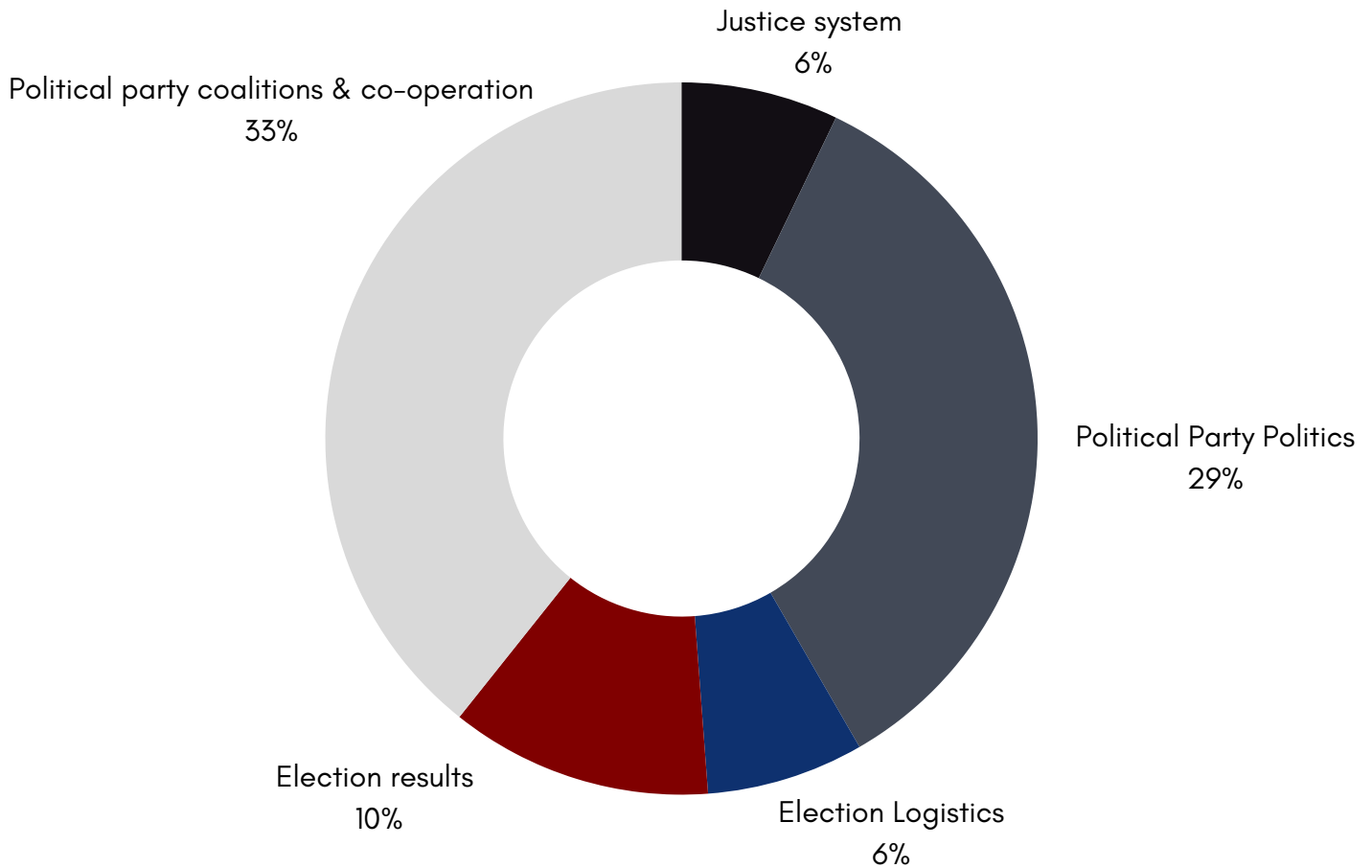
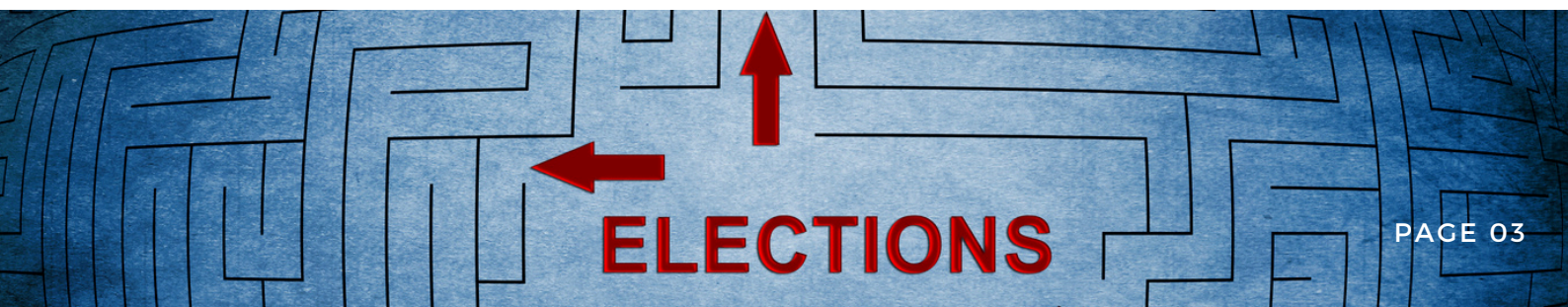


Figure 2: Top 5 topics in coverage

The graph displays the top 5 topics covered in the media's coverage of the elections. The most dominant topic during the monitoring period is political party coalitions & cooperation with 33%. This topics dominating coverage can easily be attributed to the fact post voting day (29th May), coverage was focused on coalitions and the formation of the Government of National Unity. Other dominant topics included political party politics (29%), election results (10%), election logistics (6%), and justice system (6%). These top 5 topics collectively accounted for 86% of all coded topics, leaving only 14% to be shared among other elections-coded topics such as service delivery, election funding, election fraud, among many.



TOP 10 PARTY & ELECTIONS RELATED GROUP COVERAGE

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POLITICAL PARTY/GROUP COVERAGE (WHICH IS 70% OF ALL CODED POLITICAL PARTIES/GROUPS)

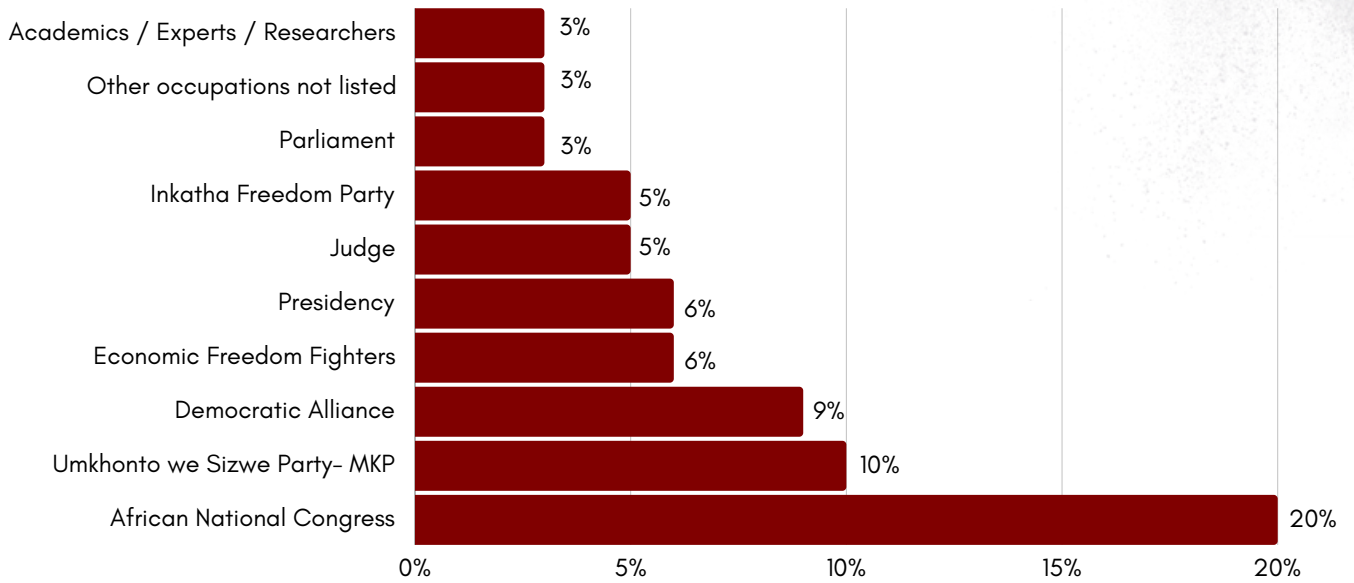
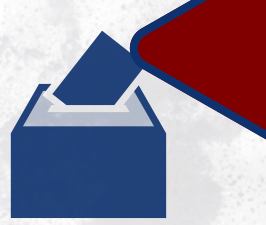


Figure 3: Top 10 political party/group coverage

The table presents the top 10 political parties/groups that received coverage in the media. The African National Congress (ANC) received the highest coverage, accounting for 20% of the total coverage. Other parties/groups that received notable coverage include Umkhonto we Sizwe Party (10%), Democratic Alliance (9%), and the Economic Freedom Fighters (6%). The voice of the public has also been featuring on the top 10 list but in this monitoring period, this voice seemed to have been replaced with the voice from the affiliation, Judge at 5%. These top 10 parties/groups collectively accounted for 70% of all coded parties/groups.



GENDER REPRESENTATION OF SOURCES



Gender representation of sources

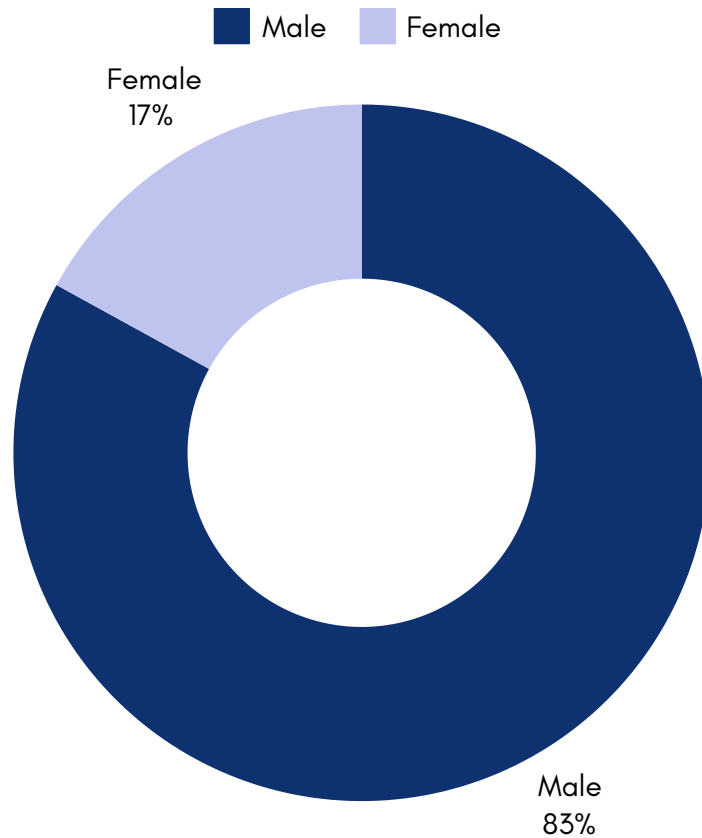
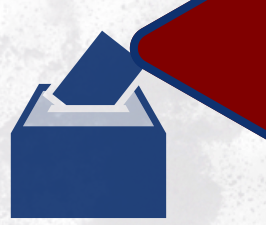


Figure 4: Gender representation of sources in coverage of NPE

The graph illustrates the gender representation of sources in the media coverage of the NPE. The majority of sources were male, representing 83% of the total sources. Female sources were significantly underrepresented, accounting for only 17% of the sources. MMA has noted with concern the continued underrepresentation of females in coverage of the NPE showing that the media prioritises male sources over female sources.



CONCLUSION



The following are key conclusions that can be drawn from the data presented above;

1. Shift in Coverage Trends: There was a noticeable decrease in media coverage post the voting day (May 29), suggesting a shift in focus from general election preparation and campaigning to more specific topics such as coalition negotiations and the formation of a government.

2. Dominant Topics: The dominant topics in media coverage included political party coalitions and cooperation, political party politics, election results, election logistics, and the justice system. These topics collectively shaped the narrative around the elections, reflecting the immediate post-election landscape and governance formation.

3. Party Focus: The African National Congress (ANC) received the highest media coverage, followed by other prominent parties such as the Umkhonto we Sizwe Party, Democratic Alliance, and Economic Freedom Fighters.

4. Gender Disparity: There was a significant gender disparity in sources quoted in media coverage, with male sources dominating representation at 83%, while female sources were notably underrepresented at 17%. This imbalance highlights ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity in media representation and suggests a need for more inclusive sourcing practices.


5. Media's Role in Democracy: The media's role in shaping public discourse around elections is crucial, but the findings also underscore areas for improvement, such as more diverse coverage of topics beyond political manoeuvring and greater inclusion of diverse voices, including women and minority groups.


While the media provided extensive coverage of key election-related issues and prominent political actors post voting day, there remains room for enhancing diversity in coverage and ensuring a more balanced representation of voices, which is essential for fostering a more inclusive democratic process in South Africa.

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