

Moxii Africa's Assessment of Media Performance, Regulatory Compliance and the Enabling Environment for Free and Fair Elections

LGE26 Media Brief 3: 19 – 25 August 2026

Written By:

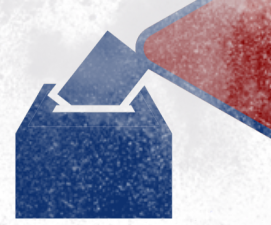
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INTRODUCTION



Moxii Africa (formerly Media Monitoring Africa) is monitoring print, broadcast, and online media during South Africa’s 2026 Local Government Elections. The goal is to ensure journalists cover political parties, key issues, and local communities fairly and responsibly while upholding legal and regulatory standards essential for free and fair elections.

[The last week brief](#) showed that political parties were the focus of election reporting, with topics such as party manifestos, party politics, and election campaigning receiving the most attention. Political parties were also the most frequently quoted sources, making up most voices in the coverage. The report further looks at which political parties received the most media attention and compares the number of male and female sources featured in the news

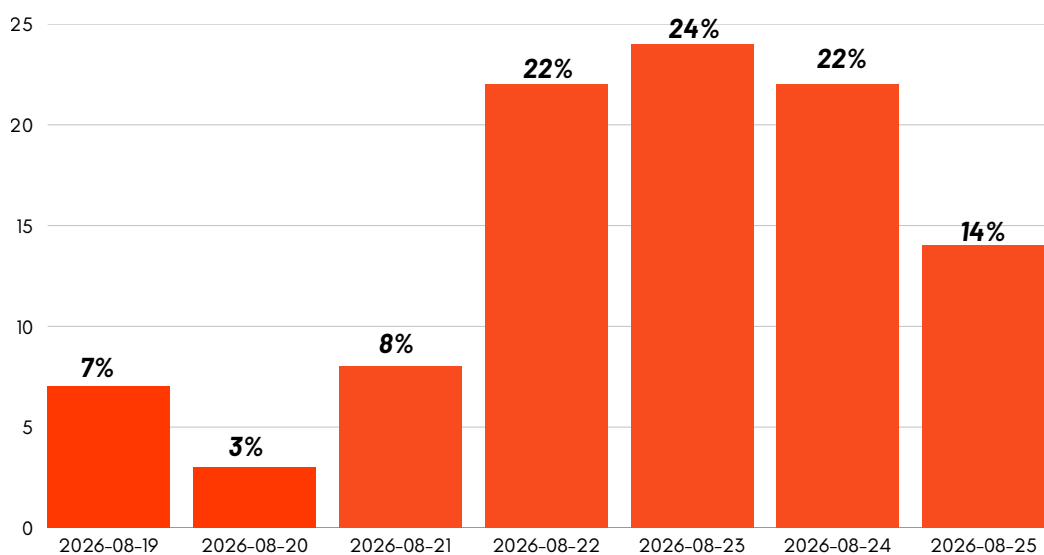
This week’s brief highlights findings from the monitoring period, 19 to 25 August 2026. During this period, 155 election-related items were recorded and analysed. In the previous brief, 142 election-related news stories were recorded and analysed. This increase may be attributed to ANC as officially launching its 2026 Local Government Elections Manifesto on August 23, 2026, at Riverside Park in Diepsloot, Johannesburg.

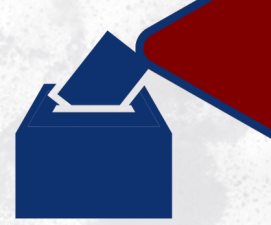
Key Findings

The figure below summarises the main trends in election-related media coverage from 19 to 25 August 2026.

During this period,155 election-related news items were analysed. The findings show which issues received attention, how visible political parties were, and who shaped election narratives between male and female.

Figure 1: Daily LGE Stories Article Count

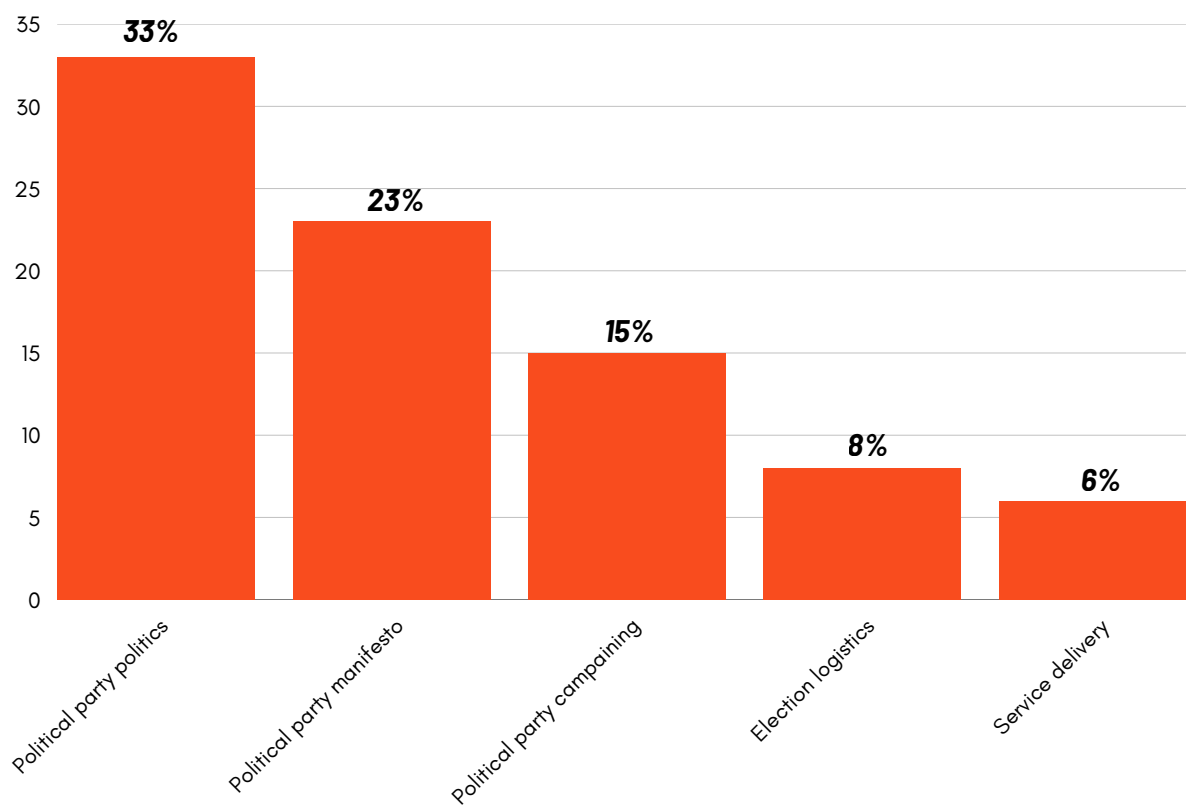




The results suggest a shift in the intensity and timing of election coverage. Last week's results appeared to show a relatively dispersed pattern of reporting across the monitoring period, this result demonstrate more concentrated peaks in coverage, particularly on 20 August (24%) and on 21 and 24 August (22% each). This indicates that media attention became increasingly event-driven, with specific political developments generating bursts of reporting.

This trend is consistent with the current local government election environment in South Africa, where political parties are intensifying campaign activities.

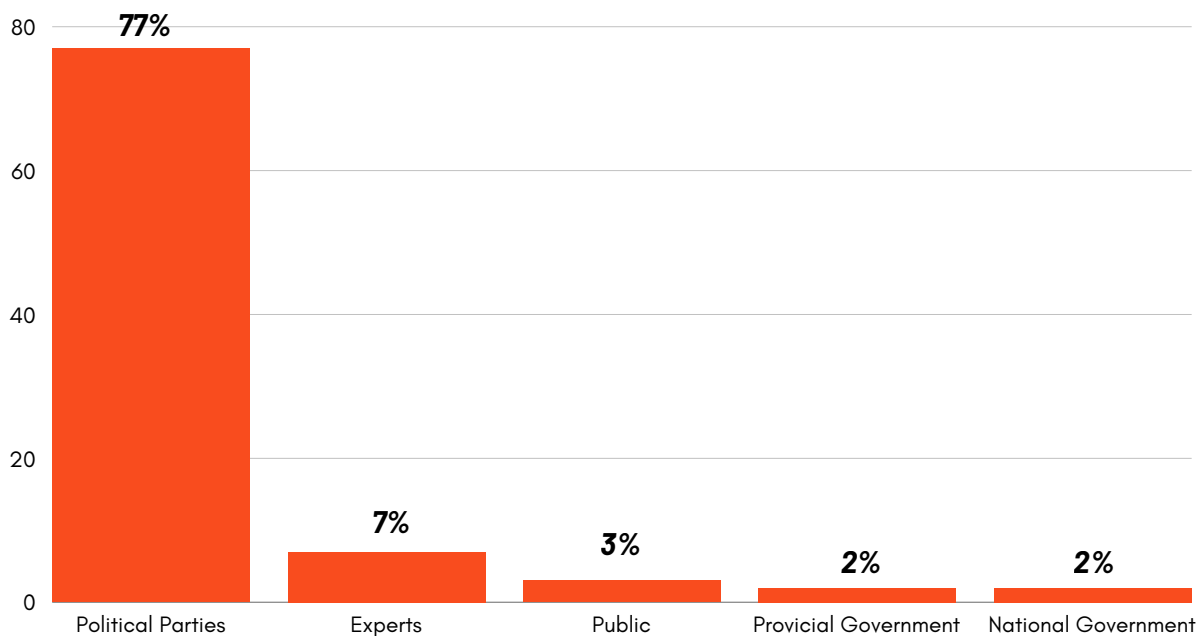
Figure 2: Top Five Topics



The most significant change between the last monitoring period and this one is the increase in reporting on Political Party Politics, which rose from 15% last week to 33% in this week. In contrast, coverage of Political Party Manifestos declined from 30% to 23%, while Political Party Campaigning increased slightly from 12% to 15%. Election logistics also decreased from 11% to 8%. Additionally, corruption, which featured among the top topics last week, was replaced by service delivery at 6%.

These shifts suggest that media coverage moved from focusing on manifesto launches toward competition between political parties. As campaigns mature, journalists tend to focus less on policy announcements and more on political rivalries, coalition possibilities, and electoral manoeuvring. The emergence of service delivery as a leading topic reflects broader public concerns regarding municipal performance, including water provision, electricity supply, infrastructure maintenance, and overall governance.

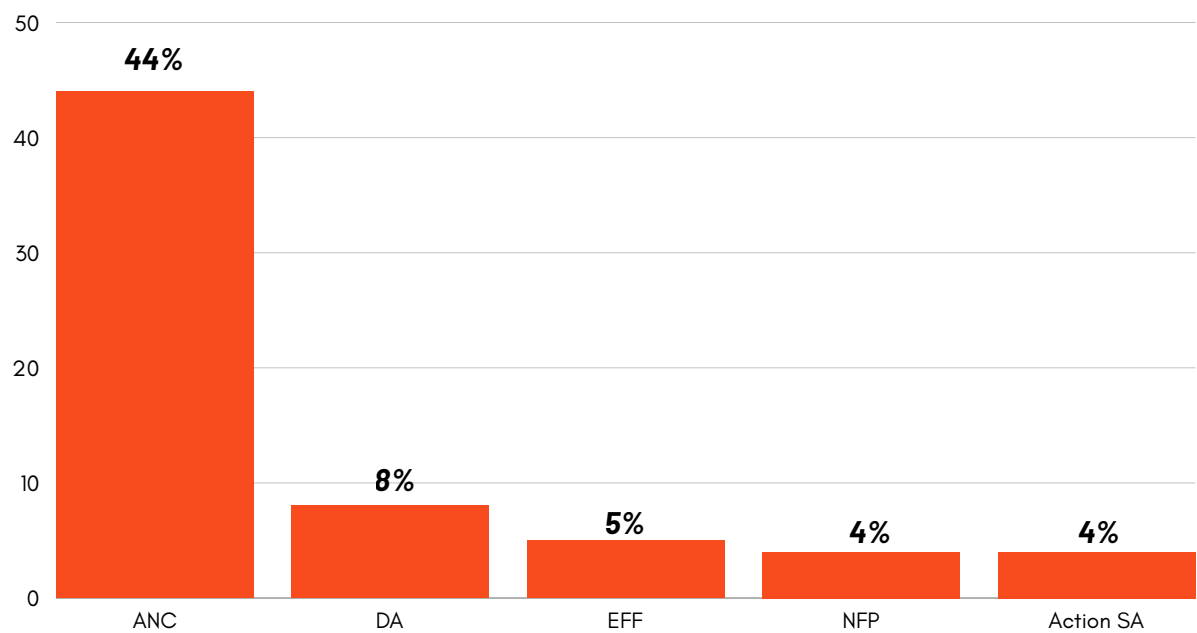
Figure 3: Top Five Sources by Affiliation



Political parties became even more dominant sources in election reporting, increasing from 67% last week to 77% in this week. Expert sources also increased slightly from 4% to 7%, while representation from national government sources decreased from 7% to 2%. Sources such as Public and commissions (IEC), which appeared in last week, no longer featured among the leading source categories.

This suggests that media reporting became increasingly centred on political actors rather than broader stakeholder groups. As the election period progresses, journalists often rely more heavily on party leaders, candidates, and spokespersons because they are actively driving the news agenda through campaign events, policy debates, and public statements. The reduction of the public’s voices may also indicate a stronger focus on elite political competition, particularly as parties seek to define electoral strategies.

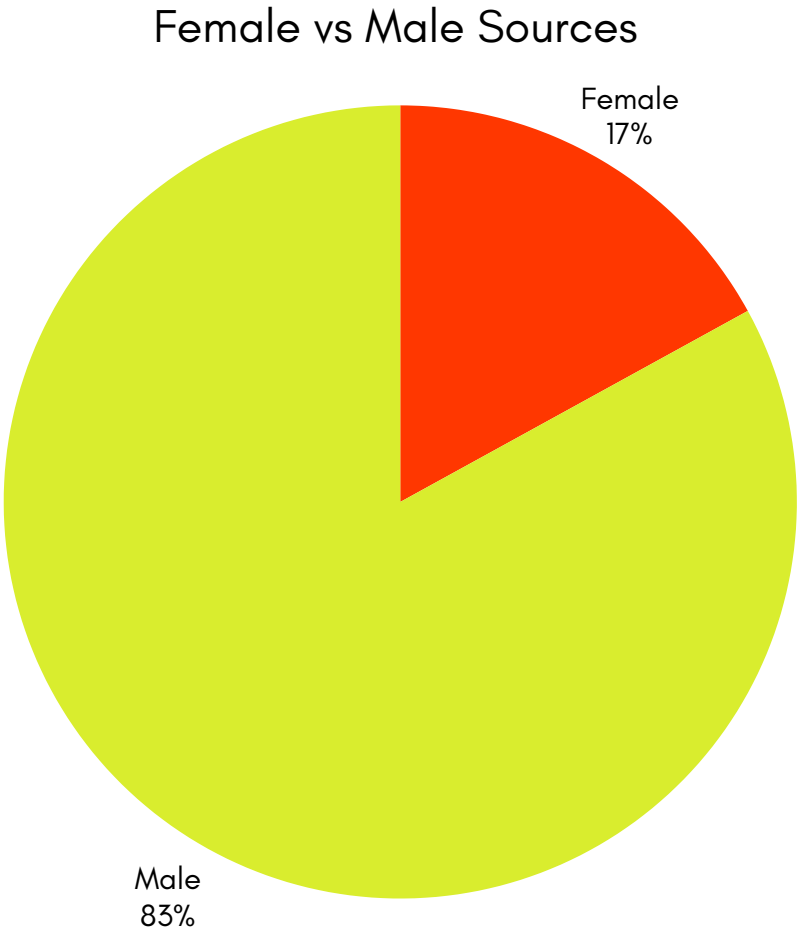
Figure 4: Top Five Political Parties



The results show that the ANC dominated the coverage this week at 44%, which is more than double compared to the leading party’s share last week, which stood at 21%. This week DA has decreased in coverage to 8% The EFF remained the third most-covered political party at 5%, despite a one-percentage-point decline. Meanwhile, the NFP and ActionSA made it to the top five. This could be attributed to various events they had across the country announcing their mayoral candidates.

The ANC’s dominance in media coverage can be linked to its position as South Africa’s largest political party and to the party’s manifesto launch in Diepsloot. At the same time, coverage of smaller parties such as the NFP suggests an effort by the media to give visibility to a broader range of political voices, not only the major parties. This wider coverage gives voters more information about the parties contesting the election and the choices available to them.

Figure 5: Male vs Female Sources



The comparison of gender representation in sources indicates that election reporting remains heavily male dominated. In the previous brief, male sources accounted for 76% of all quoted sources compared to only 24% female sources. The percentage of male sources has increased to 83% while the female sources decreased to 17%.

The persistence of this trend may be attributed to the continued prominence of male political leaders and spokespersons within major parties. As election campaigns intensify, journalists tend to prioritise high-profile party representatives who are often men, thereby reproducing existing gender disparities in political reporting. The findings suggest that greater effort is needed to include women candidates, analysts, activists, community leaders and the general female electorate in election coverage to achieve more balanced representation and a wider range of sources.

In conclusion, the report shows that news coverage has become mostly about male leaders and big political parties. Instead of explaining election rules or plans, reporters focused on "Political party politics" reaching 33% of all news. The ANC party dominated the news at 44% because of their big event in Diepsloot. This focus meant that regular people and outside experts were left out, leaving party leaders to make up 77% of all quoted sources. Finally, the gender gap got worse, with men making up 83% of voices and women dropping to just 17%. Overall, the news is focusing on powerful men fighting for votes rather than sharing diverse community voices.



About Moxii Africa's Election Work

Moxii Africa has monitored every democratic election in South Africa since 1994, bringing three decades of independent, evidence-based media monitoring to safeguard information integrity. For #LGE2026, Moxii Africa anchors the **Partnership on Information Integrity in Elections (PIIE)**—working in partnership key stakeholders and with the IEC to safeguard information integrity in elections. Other election work focuses on tracking media coverage, monitoring political party ad spending via [PAdRe](#), and holding candidates accountable.

Explore live media tracking, accountability tools, and election insights at [Moxii Africa's LGE2026 Hub](#) or learn more about the coalition at [PIIE](#).

Important Notice: For official election dates, voter registration details, candidate lists, and official results, please consult only the [Electoral Commission of South Africa \(IEC\)](#).

Report Online Harm: Seen something misleading online? Report disinformation, hate speech, or incitement through [Real411](#), the official platform for reporting digital electoral harms.



For any questions, comments, or clarifications, please contact Moxii Africa Formerly Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) from Media Monitoring Africa on (011) 788 1278 or email: musar@mma.org.za

