

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

Media Brief 4: 26 August–02 September 2026

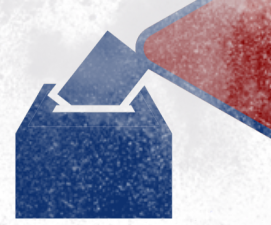
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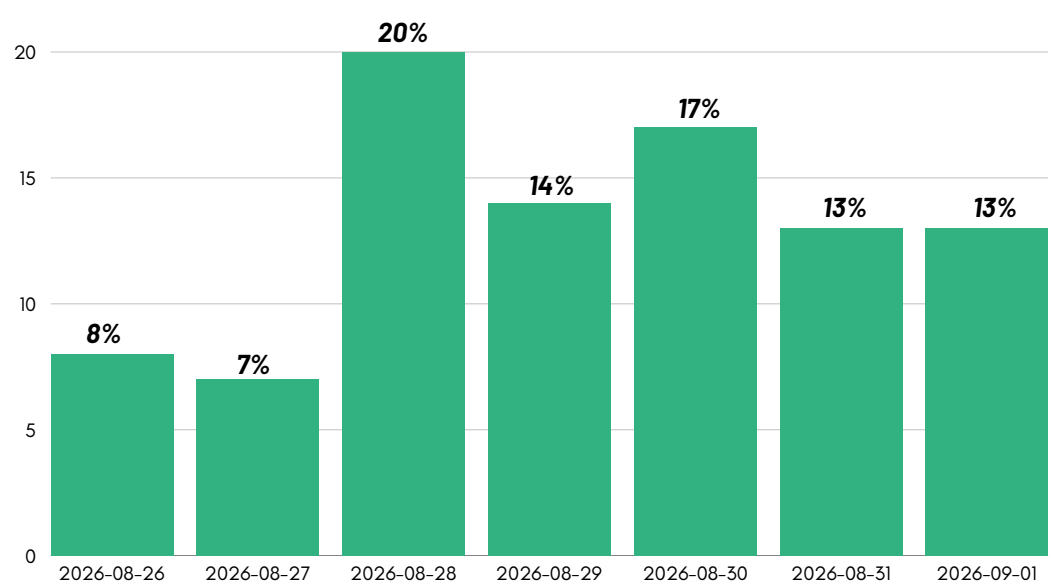


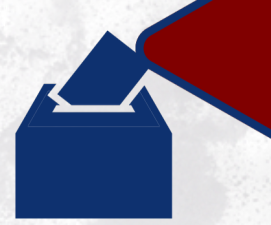
Moxii Africa, formerly known as Media Monitoring Africa, is actively tracking media coverage in the build-up to South Africa's 2026 Local Government Elections. Having monitored every election since 1994, the organisation reviews election-related content across broadcast, print, and digital media. This ongoing initiative assesses media performance, evaluates compliance with regulatory frameworks, and ensures the presence of an enabling environment necessary for free and fair elections. Ultimately, the project aims to promote fair, balanced, and responsible reporting by tracking how media houses cover political parties, critical election issues, and democratic voices.

This week's brief highlights key findings from the monitoring period spanning **26 August to 02 September 2026**, during which 208 election-related items were recorded and analysed. This represents a noticeable increase in media activity compared to the previous reporting period, which captured 155 election-related news stories. The increase could be attributed to amongst other things, the 28 August deadline for political parties to submit their candidates list to the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC).

The main trends from this monitoring cycle illustrate the shifting dynamics of election narratives across the country. By analysing these 208 news items, the findings pinpoint which local government issues received the most editorial attention, map out the overall visibility of various political parties, and highlight the gender breakdown between male and female voices shaping the discourse.

Figure 1: Daily LGE Stories Article Count

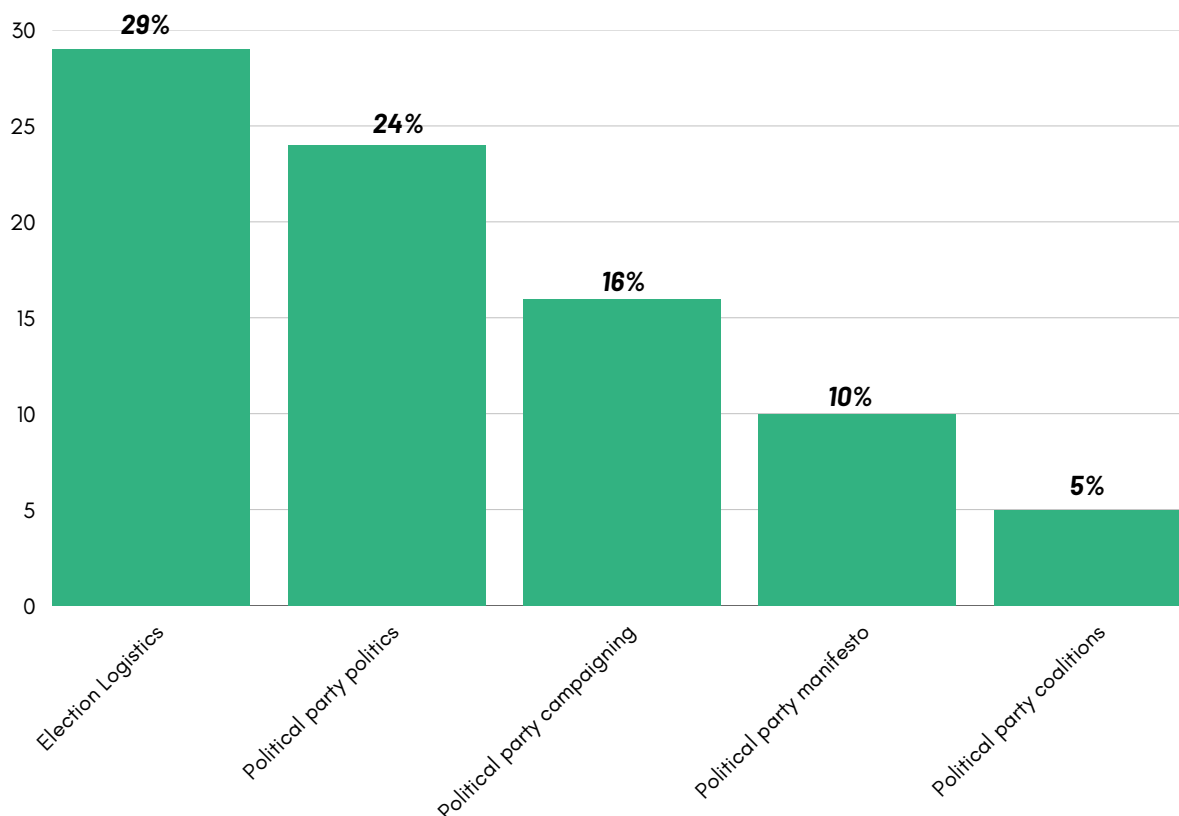




Media coverage remained relatively consistent throughout both reporting periods, although the distribution of stories shifted. The last monitoring period recorded strong peaks on 20 August (24%) and on 21 and 24 August (22% each), indicating concentrated coverage around key events. In contrast, this week shows a more evenly distributed news cycle, with coverage peaking at 20% on 28 August and then remaining relatively stable between 13% and 17% across subsequent days. This suggests that election reporting moved away from single high-profile events towards sustained day-to-day campaign coverage.

This trend may reflect the transition from headline-grabbing campaign launches and manifesto announcements to routine election activities, candidate engagements, and local campaigning., which has kept election coverage consistently prominent in the news agenda.

Figure 2: Top five topics

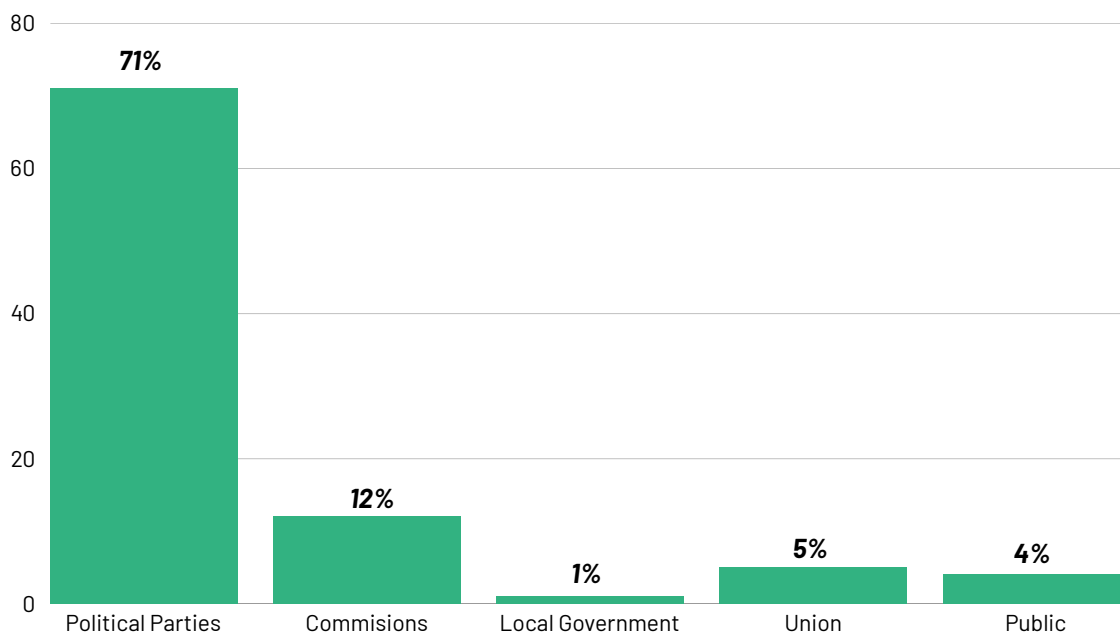


The most notable shift between the two periods is the changing focus of election reporting. In the previous monitoring period, Political Party Politics was the dominant topic at 33%, followed by Political Party Manifestos (23%) and Political Party Campaigning (15%). In this monitoring period, however, Election Logistics became the leading topic at 29%, while Political Party Politics declined to 24%. Campaigning increased slightly to 16%, and a new topic, Political Party Coalitions and Alliances, entered the top five topics with 5% coverage.

The increase in election logistics coverage likely reflects growing attention to electoral preparedness as election day approaches. Media attention often shifts toward electoral administration, and the readiness of the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) during the final stages of an election cycle.

The emergence of coalition-related reporting is also significant. Current media coverage suggests widespread expectations that many municipalities will produce coalition governments rather than outright majorities, making coalition negotiations a key issue in election reporting.

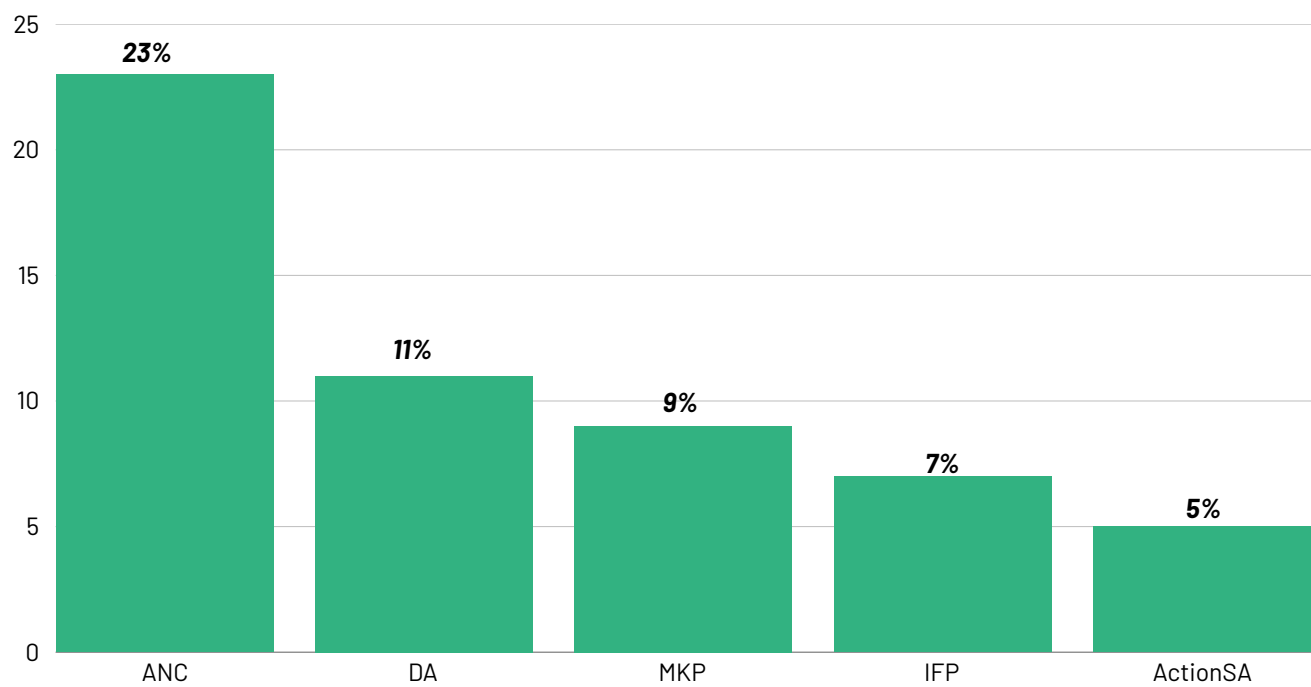
Figure 3: Top five sources by affiliation



Political parties remained the dominant source affiliation in both periods, although their share declined slightly from 77% in last week to 71% in This week. Meanwhile, commission sources increased from negligible levels to 12%, local government sources appeared at 1%, public sources accounted for 4%, and unions contributed 5% of the sources.

The decrease in Political parties as sources suggests that election reporting is broadening beyond party political messaging to include institutional actors and stakeholders involved in managing and monitoring the electoral process. The increase in commissions (which is predominantly IEC) and public’s voice shares is consistent with a period in which election logistics and political party campaigns become more prominent. During the campaigns media has accessed the public for their views. As election day draws nearer, journalists often seek perspectives from electoral authorities, local government officials, and organised labour on issues affecting municipalities and voters. This may explain why political party sources, while still dominant, became somewhat less dominant in this week.

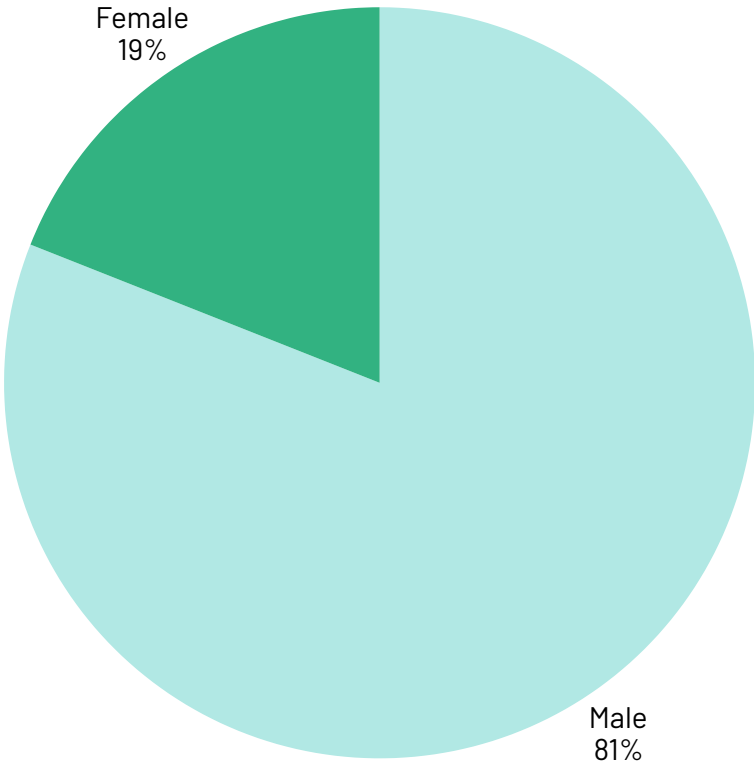
Figure 4: Top five parties



The composition of the most-covered political parties changed noticeably between the two briefs. In the previous monitoring period, the ANC dominated coverage with 44%, followed by the DA (8%), EFF (5%), and NFP (4%). In Brief 4, the ANC remained the most prominent party, but its share dropped substantially to 23%. The DA increased to 11%, while the MKP emerged strongly with 9%, followed by the IFP (7%) and ActionSA (5%).

This shift suggests a more competitive and fragmented political landscape. The reduced dominance of the ANC in media coverage mirrors broader trends reported in South African election analysis, where electoral competition is becoming increasingly multiparty. The emergence of the MKP among the leading parties reflects its growing relevance, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and other contested areas. Similarly, the increased visibility of the IFP and ActionSA indicates growing media interest in parties that could become decisive coalition partners in municipalities where no party achieves an outright majority. However, the continued lack of coverage of the “small political parties” and independent candidate remain a great concern. When the media ignores smaller parties and independent candidates, it creates an unfair political system that locks out new ideas and stops voters from learning about all their choices.

Figure 5: Male vs Female Sources



Gender representation remained highly unequal across both briefs. In the previous brief, male sources accounted for 83% of all sources compared with 17% female sources. This week shows only a slight improvement, with male sources decreasing to 81% and female sources increasing to 19%.

While the change is relatively small, it suggests a modest increase in the visibility of women in election coverage. This may be linked to broader efforts by political parties, civil society organisations, and media institutions to improve gender representation during election campaigns. Nevertheless, the overwhelming dominance of male sources indicates that election reporting continues to rely heavily on male political leaders, spokespersons, and officials. Greater inclusion of women candidates, community leaders, analysts, and election experts would help create more balanced and representative coverage of the election process.

CONCLUSION

These results reveal a shift from party-centred political competition toward broader election administration and coalition-focused reporting. While political parties remain the dominant voices in election coverage, their influence as sources declined slightly as commissions (predominantly IEC, public institutions, and other stakeholders gained prominence. Coverage also moved away from partisan political contestation toward practical election concerns, with election logistics becoming the leading topic. The increasing visibility of coalition-related issues and a wider range of political parties reflects the growing expectation that many South African municipalities will be governed through coalition arrangements after the 2026 local government elections. These findings are broadly consistent with current media narratives emphasising fragmented voter support, coalition governance, and service delivery as the defining themes of the election period.

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

