# Moxii Africa's Assessment of Media Performance, Regulatory Compliance and the Enabling Environment for Free and Fair ElectionsLGE26

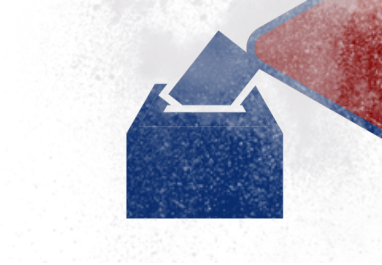
## Media Brief 7: 27 September –04 October 2026

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# INTRODUCTION

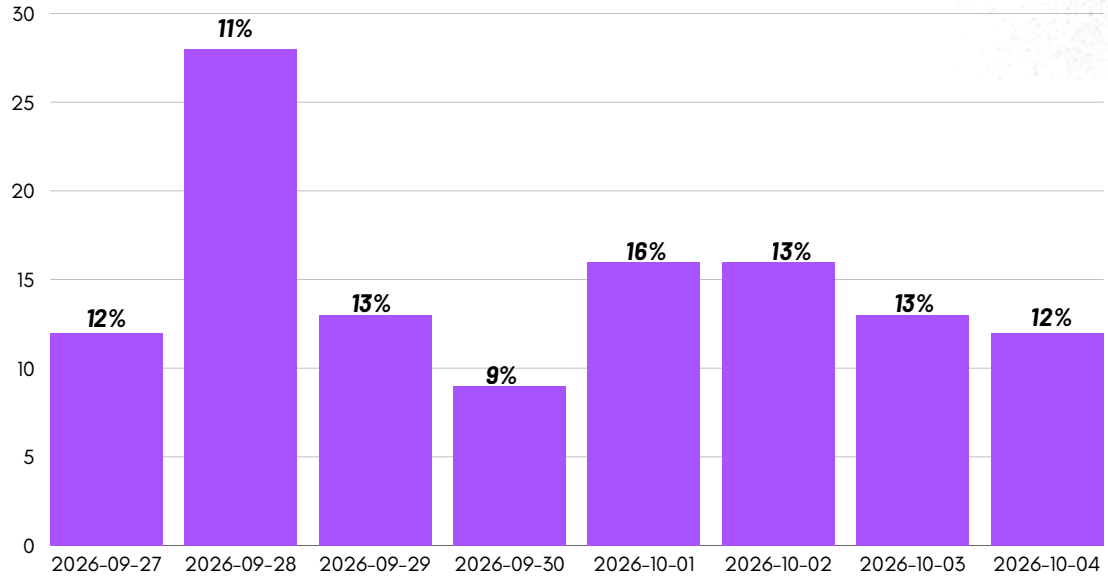


Moxii Africa, formerly known as Media Monitoring Africa, is conducting comprehensive media monitoring ahead of South Africa's 2026 Local Government Elections. Having monitored every democratic election since 1994, the organisation systematically analyses election-related coverage across broadcast, print, and digital media platforms. The project assesses the quality and nature of election reporting, evaluates compliance with relevant regulatory and ethical standards, and examines the extent to which the media environment contributes to free, fair, and informed electoral processes. Through this work, Moxii Africa aims to promote fair, balanced, and responsible election coverage by tracking the representation of political parties, key electoral issues, and diverse democratic voices in the media.

This brief presents findings from the monitoring period of **27 September to 4 October 2026**, during which **231 election-related news items** were recorded and analysed. This represents a substantial decline from the **423 stories** monitored during the previous reporting period. While the earlier reporting cycle coincided with heightened campaign activity, increased party mobilisation, and greater media attention to election-related developments, the findings from this period suggest a moderation in the volume of election coverage. However, the monitoring data alone cannot determine the specific factors responsible for the decrease in reporting.

Despite the decline in the number of election stories, the findings provide valuable insight into the evolving character of election coverage as the campaign progresses. The analysis examines the issues receiving the greatest media attention, the visibility and prominence afforded to political parties, the range of sources shaping election narratives, and the gender distribution of voices featured in election reporting. Together, these findings offer an important snapshot of the media landscape and its role in informing the public about the electoral process, political contestation, and the issues likely to influence voter decision-making ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

***Figure 1: Daily LGE Stories Article Count***



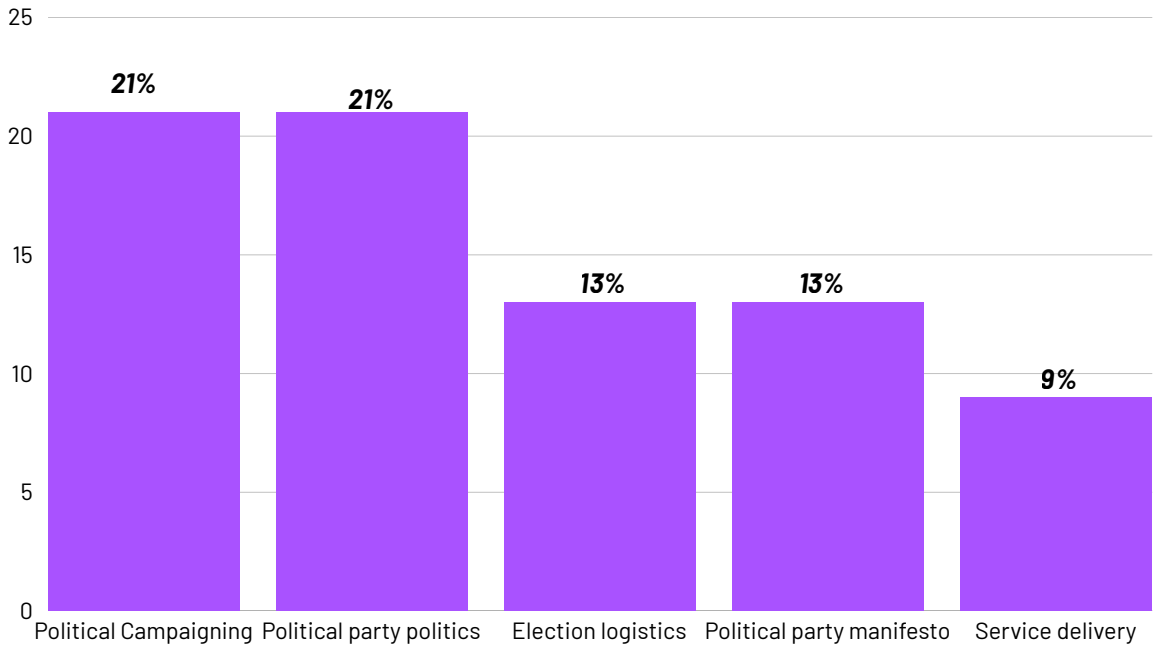

Brief 8 recorded relatively stable election coverage throughout the monitoring period. The highest levels of coverage were recorded on 1 and 2 October, when election stories accounted for approximately 16% of all stories. Coverage remained consistent across most days, ranging between 11% and 13%, before dropping to its lowest point of 9% on 30 September.

In comparison, Brief 7 recorded significantly more volatility in election coverage. The highest peak occurred on 23 September when election stories accounted for approximately 20% of coverage, followed by additional peaks on 26 September (17%) and 25 September (14%). Coverage fell to its lowest level of 7% on 24 September.

The decline in the peak from 20% in Brief 7 to 16% in Brief 8 suggests that election reporting became less driven by major campaign events and more routine in nature. During Brief 7, the media agenda was likely influenced by campaign launches, candidate announcements, election-related controversies, and political rallies. By Brief 8, coverage appears to have stabilised, indicating a transition towards sustained reporting on election developments rather than reacting to specific high-profile events.

This trend is commonly observed during local government election campaigns in South Africa. Initial periods often feature dramatic spikes due to campaign activities and political competition. As the campaign progresses, reporting generally becomes more focused on ongoing issues such as voter mobilisation, service delivery promises, governance concerns, and election preparedness.

***Figure 2: Top five topics***

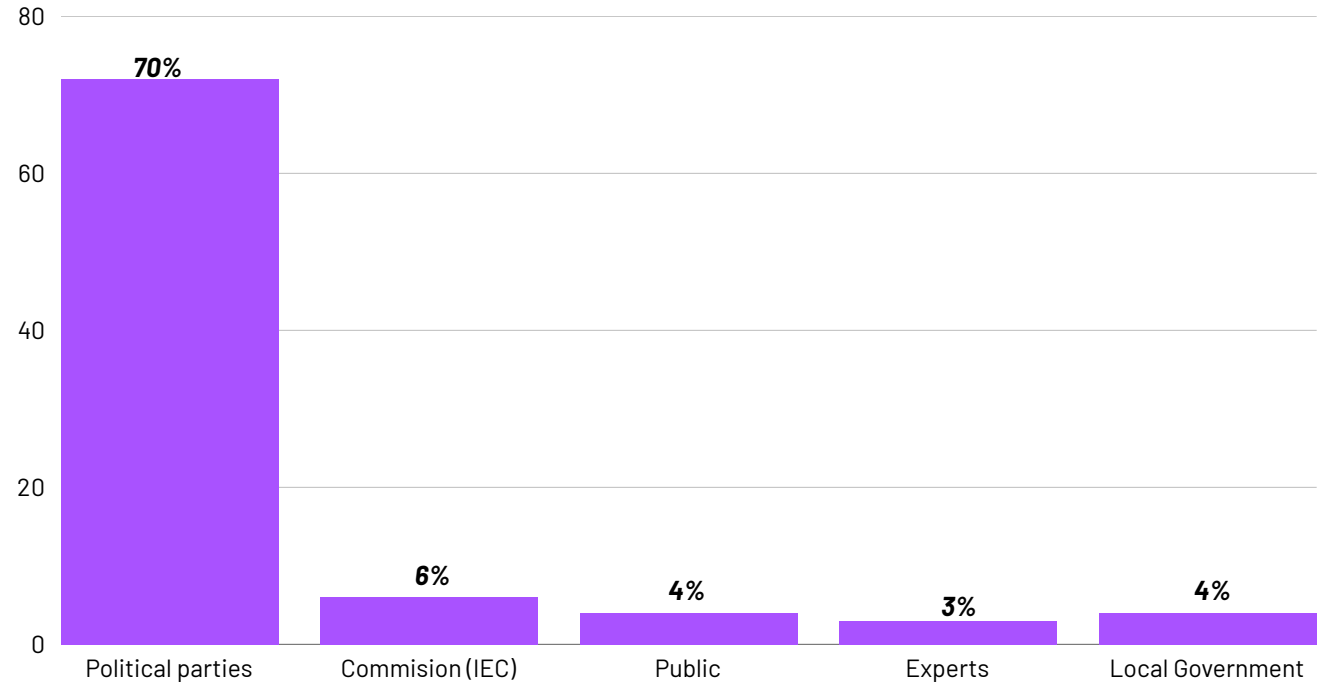



Brief 8's more stable coverage pattern suggests that reporting may have moved beyond event-driven campaign news and focused more consistently on election-related governance issues, voter concerns, campaign messaging, and policy debates. Instead of isolated campaign events dominating the agenda, journalists may have focused on evaluating election promises, service delivery records, coalition prospects, and municipal governance challenges.

In contrast, Brief 7's sharper spikes suggest that election coverage was more heavily influenced by campaign events and political activities capable of generating immediate media attention.

This shift would be consistent with current trends in South African election reporting, where media coverage tends to evolve from reporting campaign activities toward examining the implications of party promises and assessing parties' governance records as election day approaches.

## *Figure 3: Top five sources by affiliation*




Brief 8 continued to be dominated by political party sources, which accounted for approximately 70 % of all sources. The IEC represented 6%, while local government sources accounted for 4 %, slightly surpassing public sources at 4 %. Experts constituted 3 % of all sources.

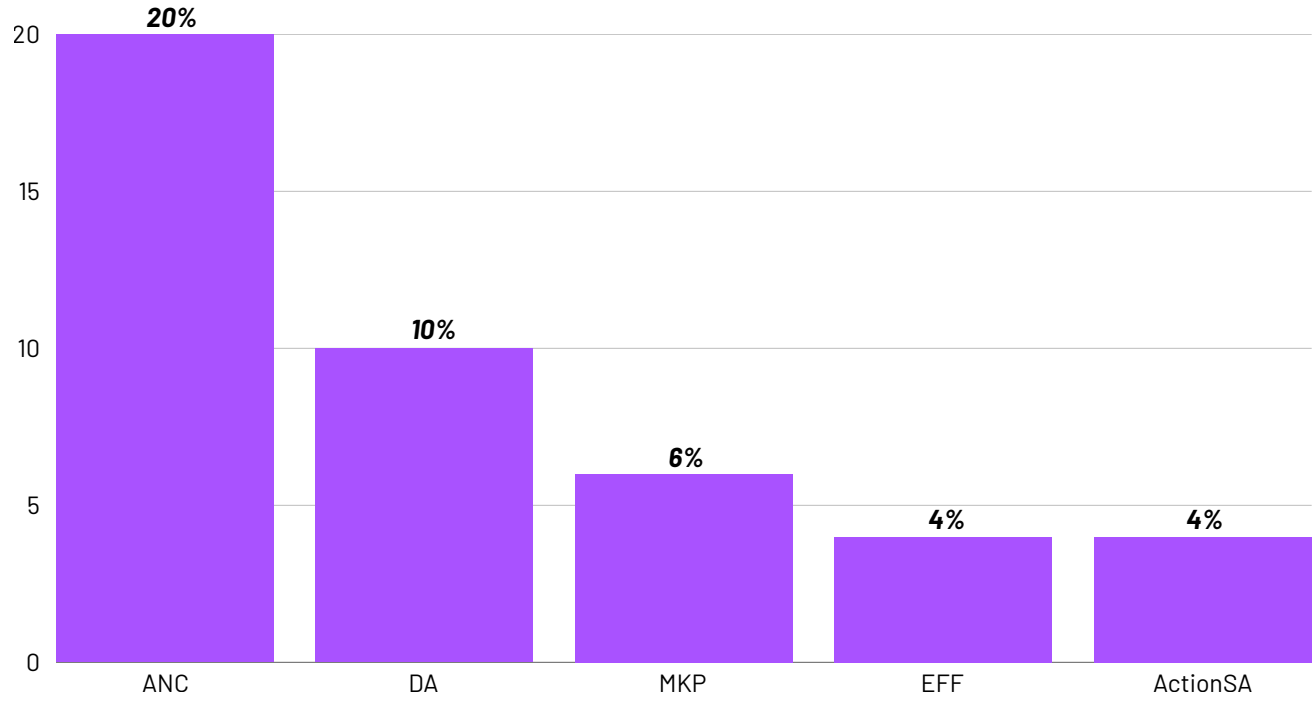
By comparison, Brief 7 recorded an even higher reliance on political party sources at 72%. The IEC contributed 9% of sources, public voices accounted for 3%, experts represented 2%, and local government contributed only 1.%.

While political parties remained overwhelmingly dominant in both periods, Brief 8 shows some positive changes in source diversity. Political party representation declined slightly from 72% to 70%, while local government sources increased substantially from 1% to 4%. Expert voices also increased from 2% to 3%, and public voices rose from 3% to 4%.

These shifts may indicate that journalists increasingly sought perspectives beyond political parties as the election discussion broadened to include governance and municipal performance issues. The increased inclusion of local government representatives is particularly significant, as voters often evaluate municipal election candidates based on service delivery performance and local governance outcomes.

The decline in IEC visibility from 8 % to 6% may suggest that election administration issues became less newsworthy following earlier periods of voter registration and electoral preparation.

## *Figure 4: Top five parties*

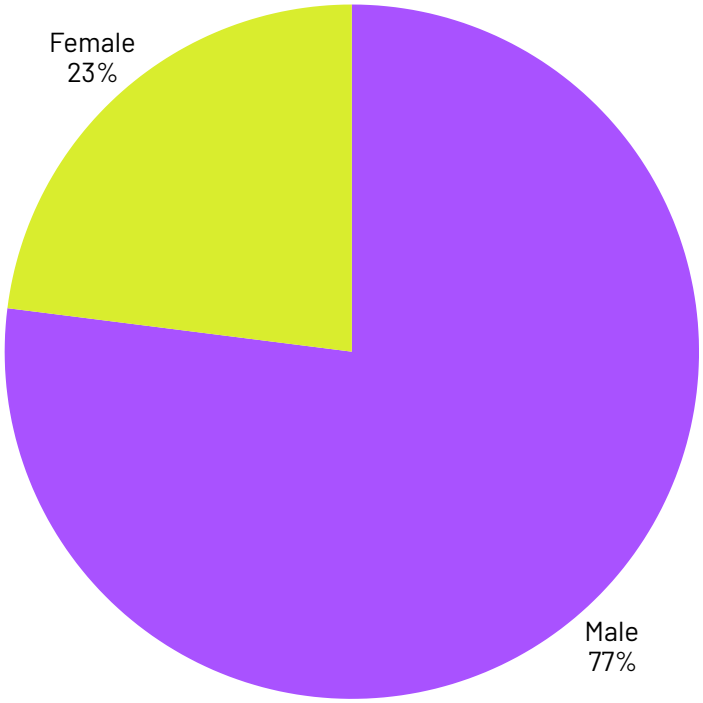



In Brief 8, the ANC was likely to remain the most visible political actor, alongside continued visibility for major parties such as the DA, EFF, and IFP. These parties continue to dominate election discourse because they are major electoral contenders and generate substantial news coverage through campaign events, policy announcements, and responses to competing parties.

Similarly, Brief 7 was characterised by strong visibility of the major political parties as election campaigning intensified.

The absence of substantial shifts in source affiliation suggests that media attention remained focused on the major political actors, reinforcing existing election reporting trends in which established parties receive most of the media exposure while smaller parties and independent candidates receive comparatively limited visibility.

***Figure 5: Male vs Female Sources***




One of the most significant changes between the two monitoring periods is evident in gender representation.

In Brief 8, women accounted for 101 sources while men accounted for 330 sources. This translates to approximately 23% female representation and 77% male representation.
By contrast, Brief 7 recorded the same number of female sources (101), but male sources were considerably higher at 614. This meant women constituted only approximately 14% of sources, while men accounted for 86%.

The improvement in female representation from 14% to 23% is one of the most noteworthy findings in this comparison. Although women remain significantly underrepresented, Brief 8 demonstrates a meaningful increase in gender diversity among sources.

This improvement may be linked to the increased inclusion of local government, public, and expert sources observed in Figure 3. Expanding sourcing beyond political party officials often creates greater opportunities for women to be included as community representatives, subject specialists, municipal officials, and civil society voices.

However, despite this improvement, male voices continue to dominate election reporting. This suggests that structural gender imbalances within South African politics and public institutions continue to influence media sourcing patterns.

# CONCLUSION

The comparison between Brief 8 and Brief 7 suggests that election coverage entered a more stable and mature phase during the Brief 8 monitoring period. Whereas Brief 7 was characterised by pronounced peaks associated with intensive campaign activity, Brief 8 showed more consistent levels of election coverage across the monitoring period.

Political parties remained the dominant voices in election reporting, but Brief 8 demonstrated modest improvements in source diversity. Journalists included more local government representatives, public voices, and expert sources, while dependence on political party voices declined slightly.

Most importantly, gender representation improved significantly. While women remain underrepresented overall, their share of sources increased considerably from 14% in Brief 7 to 23% in Brief 8, indicating a more inclusive sourcing pattern.

Overall, the findings suggest a gradual shift away from highly event-driven campaign reporting toward coverage that increasingly incorporates governance, service delivery, and community-related perspectives. This reflects a broader trend in South African local government election reporting, where media attention increasingly focuses on the practical implications of elections for municipalities and citizens as voting day approaches.

# 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.

## CONTACT US

For any questions, comments, or clarifications, please contact Moxii Africa Formerly Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) from Media Monitoring Africa on (011) 788 1278 or
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