MOXII AFRICA





OTHER NEWS ON ELECTION COVERAGE





Compiled by
Ntombifuthi Kubeka

Edited by
Tinotenda Lisa Bangajena

Designed by
Kgothatso Baatile Mohale

1 Introduction

This report forms part of the ongoing election monitoring work conducted by Moxii Africa, formerly known as Media Monitoring Africa (MMA). For over two decades, the organisation has played a leading role in strengthening media accountability, promoting ethical journalism, and supporting democratic participation in South Africa. Through systematic media monitoring and analysis, Moxii Africa examines how elections are reported across a range of media platforms and evaluates the media's role in fostering an informed and engaged electorate.

Election periods represent critical moments for democratic participation, placing heightened responsibility on the media to provide citizens with accurate, fair, and reliable information. Moxii Africa's monitoring seeks to assess whether election coverage equips voters with the information necessary to make informed decisions, encourages meaningful public discourse, and upholds the principles of transparency and accountability.

This report analyses key patterns and trends in election coverage during the monitoring period. It examines the visibility of political parties and candidates, the issues prioritised in reporting, and the overall quality and balance of election-related content. The report also explores the extent to which coverage reflects diverse voices and perspectives, contributes to public understanding of electoral processes, and supports democratic engagement. By identifying emerging trends and areas of concern, the findings provide valuable insights into the media's performance during elections and its contribution to South Africa's democratic landscape.

2 Methodology

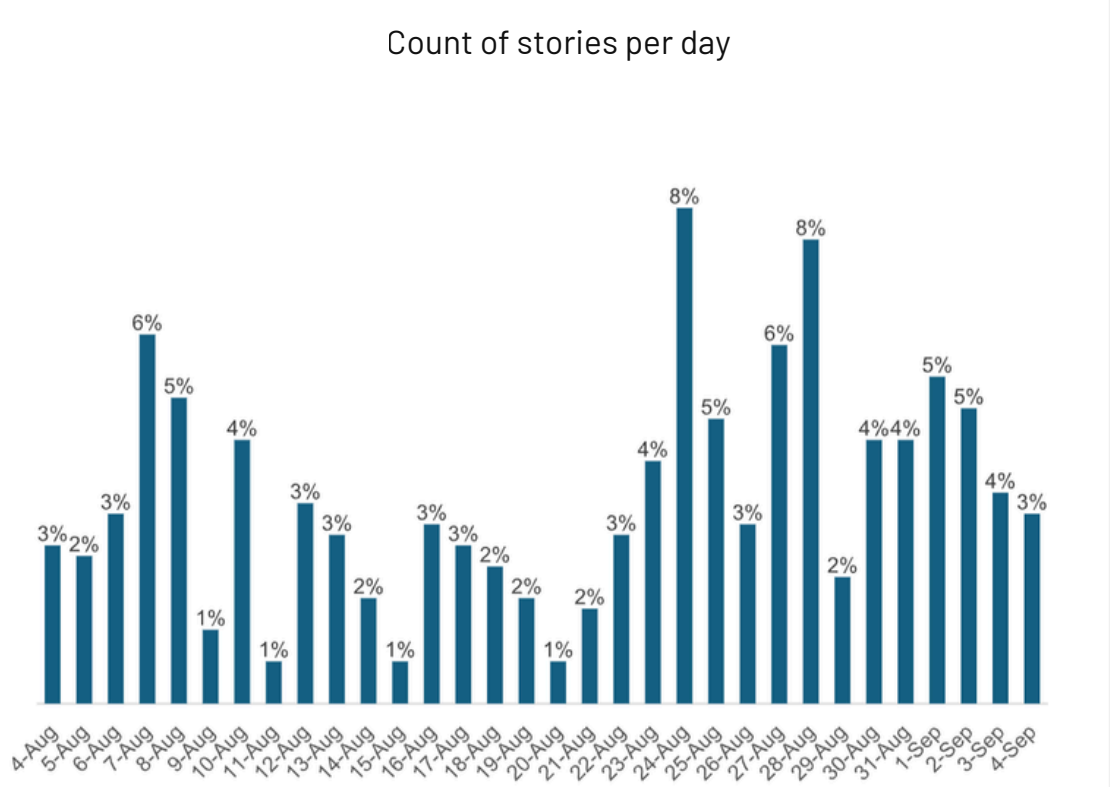
The monitoring process involved the systematic identification, collection, and analysis of election-related content published and broadcast between 4 August 2026, when the election date was officially announced, and 4 September 2026. During this period, all election-related stories were reviewed and coded using a predetermined set of indicators developed to assess both the quantity and quality of election coverage.

The analysis examined several key dimensions of reporting, including the volume of election-related stories, geographic distribution of coverage, the issues and topics receiving media attention, the sources featured in reports and their affiliations, gender representation among quoted or interviewed sources, and the overall fairness and balance of reporting. These indicators were designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of how elections were covered across the media landscape.

To ensure consistency and reliability, each story was analysed using Moxii Africa's standardised monitoring framework. All data were captured and managed through Dexter, Moxii Africa's proprietary media monitoring tool, enabling the systematic collection and analysis of findings throughout the monitoring period.

3 Findings

3.1 Count of stories per day



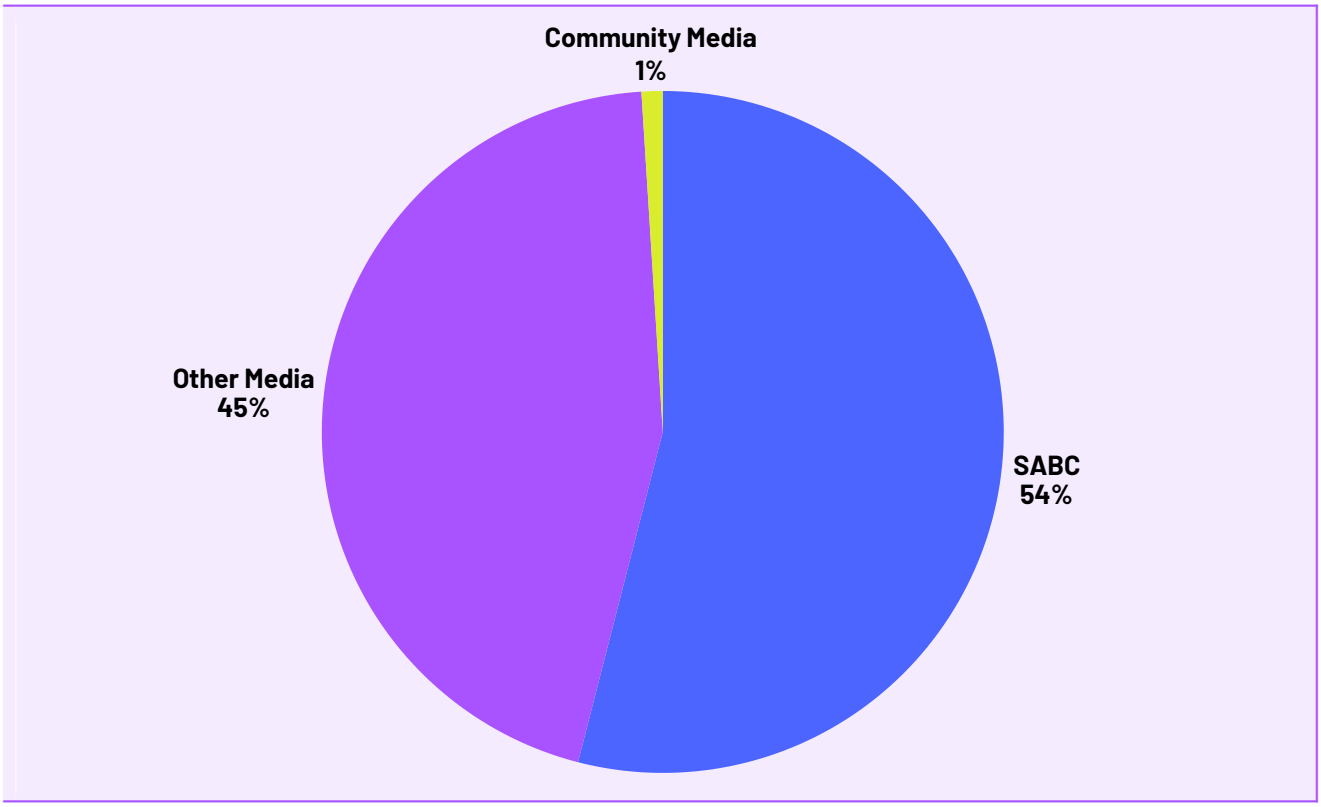
The first notable spike in election-related coverage occurred on 7 and 8 August, with story volumes of 3% and 2%, respectively. The surge on 7 August coincided with the announcement of the election date and timetable, the closure of the voters' roll, and the opening of candidate nominations. Coverage focused on voter registration requirements, voter roll verification, and ensuring that voters were registered in the correct wards. On 8 August, reporting shifted towards party campaigning and manifesto messaging, as political parties began positioning themselves ahead of the election. The combination of key electoral announcements and early campaign activity contributed to elevated coverage during this period.

Another notable spike occurred on 24 and 28 August, when coverage increased sharply, peaking at 8% on both days; the highest volume recorded during the monitoring period, and remaining elevated at 6% on 27 August and 8% on 28 August. This increase coincided with the final stages of the candidate nomination process, which closed on 28 August, as well as intensified campaigning and manifesto launches by political parties. Media attention focused on candidate lists, campaign rallies, voter outreach initiatives, and parties' policy priorities, resulting in sustained high levels of election-related reporting.

A further rise in coverage was recorded towards the end of the monitoring period, with story volumes increasing from 4% on 30 and 31 August to 5% on 1 September.

This sustained attention reflects continued reporting on campaign activities, political messaging, and other election-related developments as parties sought to strengthen their visibility ahead of the election.

3.2 Number of election-related stories



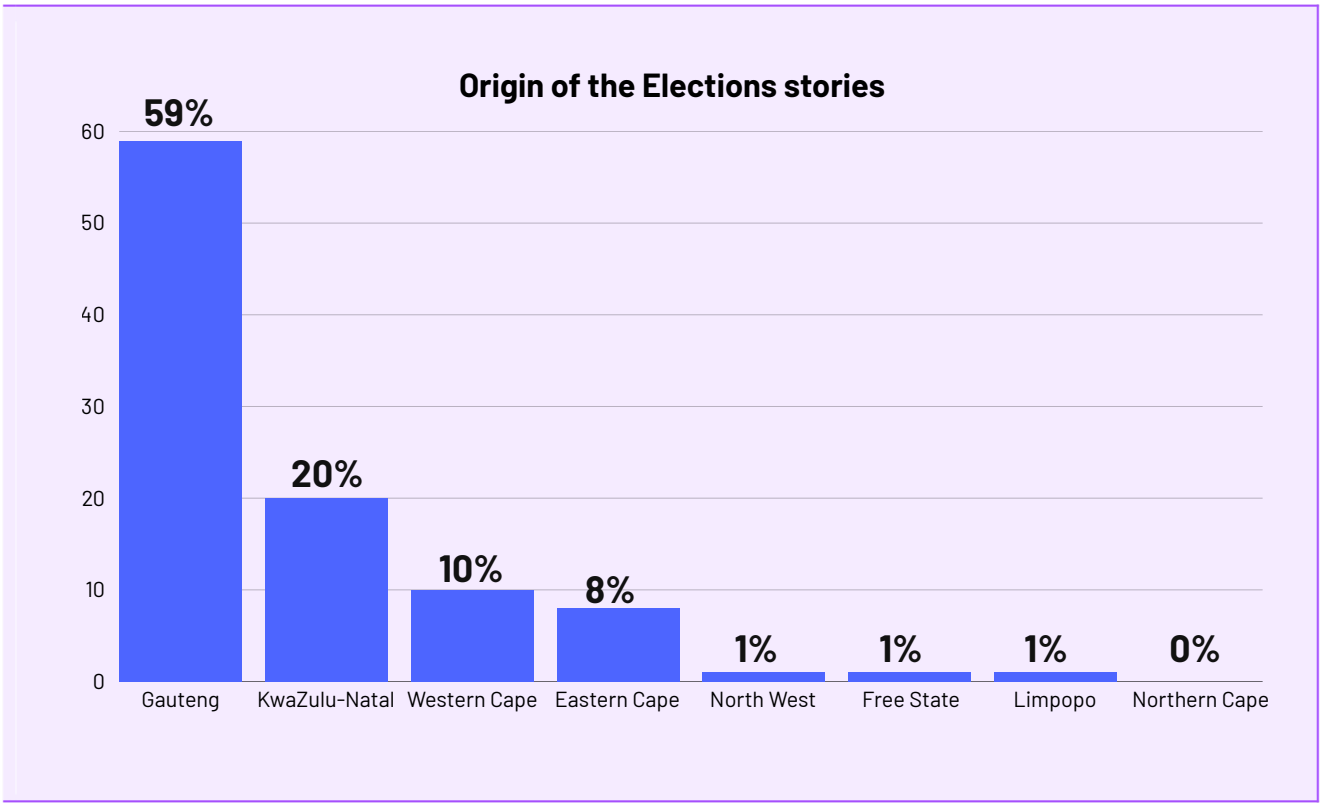
Monitoring the volume of election-related stories provides an important indication of the prominence given to electoral issues across the media landscape. During election periods, the media plays a critical role in informing voters about political developments, electoral processes, and campaign activities. Examining the distribution of election coverage across different media sectors, therefore, offers insight into the extent to which citizens are exposed to election-related information.

The findings show that SABC accounted for 54% of all monitored election-related stories, while other media outlets contributed a substantial 45%, and community media only 1%. While SABC emerged as the single largest contributor to election coverage, the high proportion recorded by other media demonstrates that election reporting was not confined to public broadcasting but received significant attention across the broader media sector. The relatively small gap between the SABC and other media suggests a strong, diverse news agenda focused on electoral issues during the monitoring period.

The substantial contributions of other media outlets highlight their important role in expanding public access to election information. Through regular reporting on campaign activities, manifesto launches, candidate nominations, voter registration processes, and political developments, these outlets complemented SABC's coverage and helped ensure that election-related information reached audiences through multiple platforms. Together, SABC and other mainstream media accounted for virtually all monitored election reporting, reflecting their greater resources, wider reach, and capacity to provide sustained coverage of a rapidly evolving electoral environment.

In contrast, community media accounted for only 1% of monitored election-related stories, indicating a limited presence in election reporting during the period under review. This may be linked to resource constraints, smaller newsroom capacities, or a greater focus on local community issues. Nevertheless, community media remains an important platform for grassroots engagement and has the potential to strengthen citizens' access to locally relevant election information.

3.3 Origin of the election stories



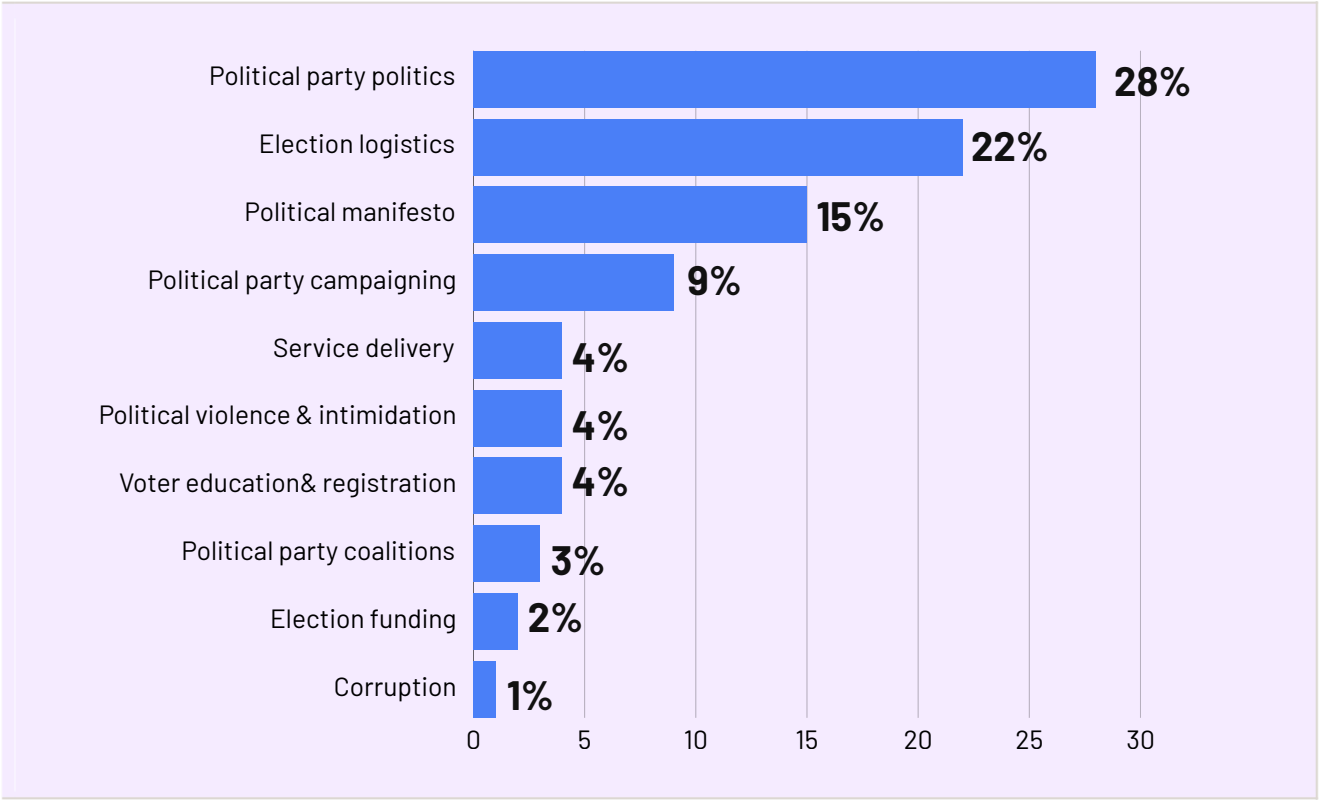
Monitoring the geographic origin of election-related stories provides insight into whether election coverage reflects developments and concerns from across the country. Balanced geographic representation is important to ensure that voters in different provinces are visible in the media and that local electoral issues form part of the national discourse.

The findings show that Gauteng dominated election coverage, accounting for 59% of all stories, followed by KwaZulu-Natal at 20%. The Western Cape contributed 10%, while the Eastern Cape accounted for 8%. In contrast, the North West, Free State, and Limpopo each accounted for just 1% of stories, while the Northern Cape recorded no election-related coverage during the monitoring period.

The concentration of coverage in Gauteng reflects the province's role as the country's political, economic, and media hub, where many major campaign events, party announcements, and political activities take place. The relatively higher levels of coverage in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape, and the Eastern Cape also indicate significant reporting from provinces with considerable political activity and electoral competition.

However, the limited representation of several provinces suggests that local election issues and perspectives from these areas received comparatively less media attention. This uneven distribution highlights the need for more geographically diverse election reporting to ensure that the experiences and concerns of voters across all provinces are adequately reflected in the national election narrative.

3.4 Top 10 topics



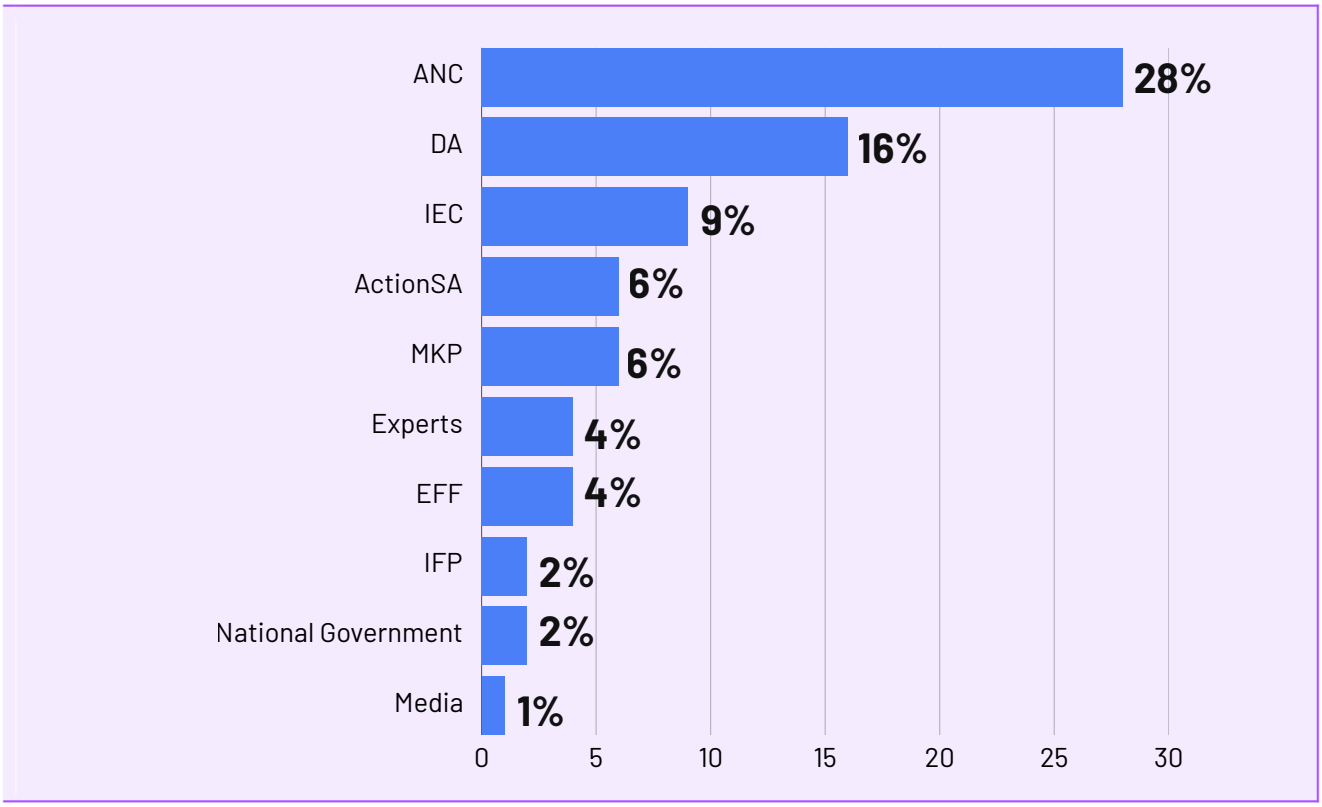
Monitoring the topics covered in election reporting provides insight into the issues that received the greatest media attention during the monitoring period. The prominence of certain topics helps to reveal the aspects of the electoral process that dominated public discourse and shaped the information available to voters.

The findings show that political party politics was the most frequently covered topic, accounting for 28% of all election-related stories. This was followed by election logistics (22%), including voter registration, candidate nominations, electoral timelines, and IEC processes. Political party manifestos accounted for 15% of coverage, reflecting media interest in parties' policy positions and campaign promises, while party campaigning accounted for 9% of stories.

A second tier of topics received comparatively less attention. Service delivery, political violence and intimidation, and voter education and registration each accounted for 4% of coverage. Political party coalitions accounted for 3%, while election funding accounted for 2%. Corruption was the least covered topic, accounting for only 1% of election-related reporting.

The results suggest that election coverage was largely driven by party-political developments, campaign activities, and the administration of the electoral process. The strong focus on party politics, election logistics, and manifestos indicates that media attention was concentrated on electoral competition and election preparations. In contrast, issues such as corruption, election financing, and coalition politics received relatively limited coverage, despite their potential importance for voter decision-making.

3.5 Top 10 sources



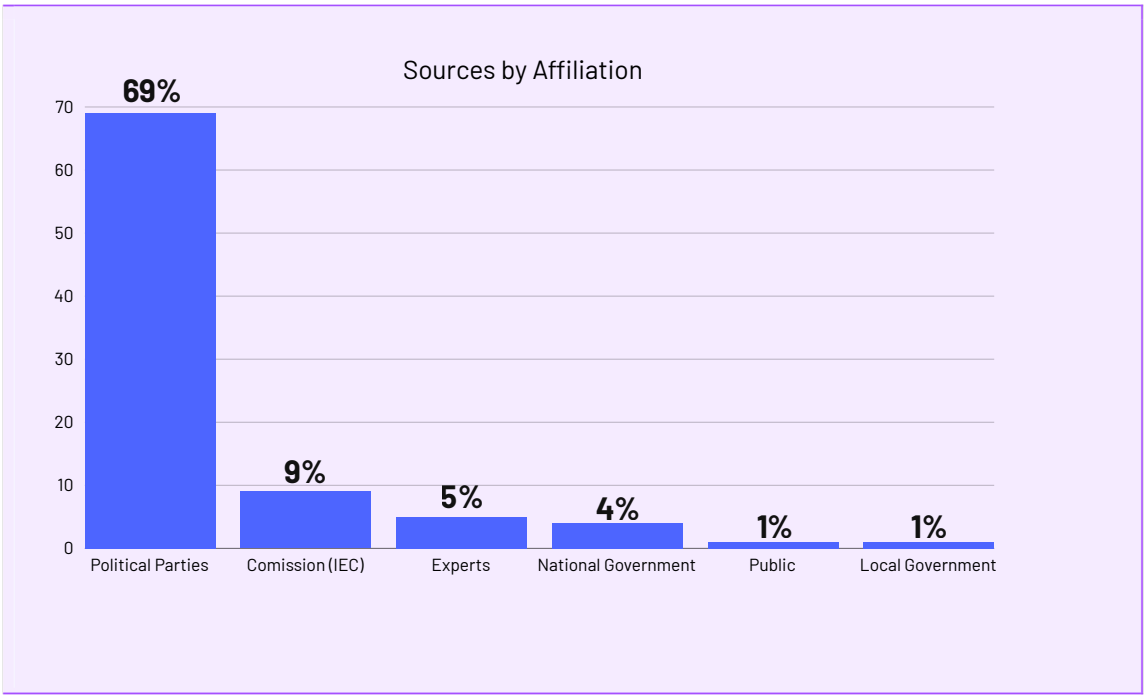
Monitoring sources is an important measure of editorial balance and diversity in election reporting. The range of voices featured in media coverage influences the quality of public discourse and the extent to which audiences are exposed to different perspectives on electoral issues.

The analysis indicates that the ANC accounted for 28% of all sources featured in election coverage. The DA represented 16% of sources, followed by the IEC at 9%. ActionSA and the MK Party (MKP) each accounted for 6%, while experts and the EFF each represented 4%. The IFP and national government each contributed 2%, while the media itself accounted for 1% of sources.

The ANC was primarily covered for its efforts to retain and rebuild voter support, defend its record in government, and respond to growing competition, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Its campaign messaging emphasised water provision, housing, infrastructure development, the cost of living, and service delivery. The DA featured prominently in coverage of its manifesto launch and campaign messaging, which focused on service delivery, job creation, clean governance, municipal accountability, and the provision of basic services such as water and electricity.

Coverage of the EFF centred on its anti-corruption agenda, calls for greater accountability in municipalities, and its positioning against larger political parties. The MK Party (MKP) received significant attention for its electoral ambitions in KwaZulu-Natal and Johannesburg, its challenge to the ANC's support base, favourable polling trends, and internal organisational tensions. Across all major parties, the dominant election themes included service delivery failures, corruption, unemployment, coalition politics, political violence, and growing voter dissatisfaction with established political parties.

3.6 Sources by affiliation



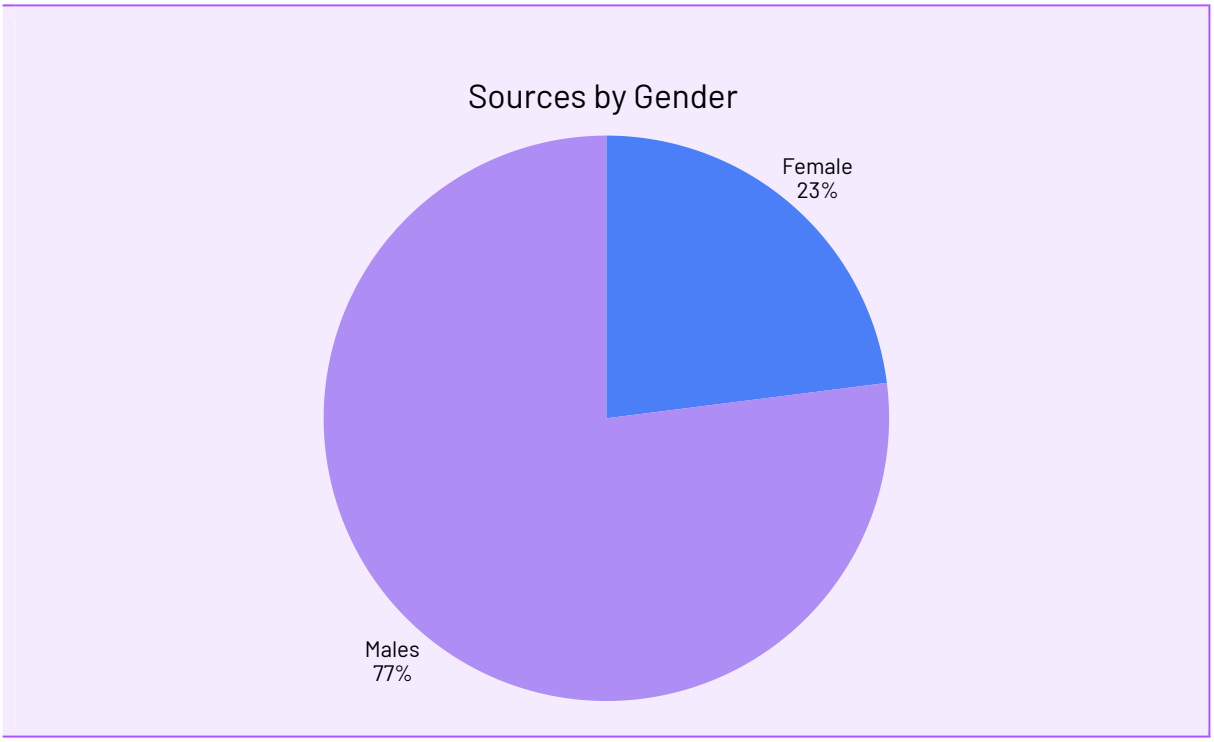
Monitoring sources by affiliation is an important measure of balance and diversity in election reporting, as it reveals which voices and perspectives are shaping public discourse.

The analysis indicates that political parties accounted for 69% of all sources featured in election coverage. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) represented 9% of sources, followed by experts (5%) and the national government (4%). The public and local government each accounted for 1% of the sources.

The dominance of political party sources suggests that election coverage was largely driven by campaign activities, policy positions, and political contestation. The presence of the IEC highlights the media's reliance on official electoral information and procedural updates. A notable portion of IEC-related coverage focused on legal disputes involving political parties, including challenges around candidate nominations and the DA's Electoral Court case involving ActionSA, the EFF, GOOD, and MK. The IEC also featured prominently in election-integrity reporting, including efforts to debunk false claims that asylum seekers were registered to vote.

However, the limited use of experts, members of the public, and local government representatives suggests that coverage prioritised political voices over independent analysis and citizen perspectives. Greater inclusion of these sources could provide additional context, strengthen public understanding of electoral issues, and contribute to a more balanced and diverse election discourse.

3.7 Sources by Gender



Monitoring sources by gender is an important indicator of diversity and inclusivity in election reporting. The gender composition of sources influences whose perspectives are represented in public debate and the extent to which different voices are included in discussions on electoral issues.

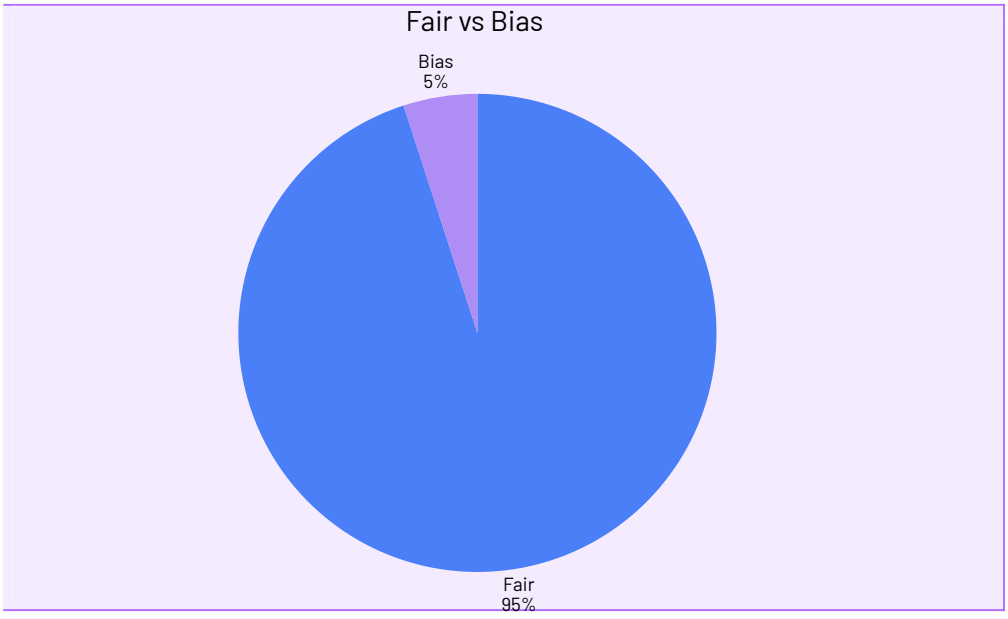
The analysis shows that male sources accounted for 77% of all sources, while female sources represented only 23%. This indicates a significant gender imbalance in election coverage during the monitoring period.

The disparity may partly reflect the continued dominance of men in political leadership, party spokesperson roles, and other high-profile political positions. As a result, journalists are more likely to rely on male political representatives as sources. However, the underrepresentation of women limits the diversity of perspectives presented to audiences and risks reinforcing existing inequalities in both political participation and media representation.

These findings are particularly significant given ongoing national concerns around issues affecting women, including gender-based violence, economic inequality, and community safety. The limited inclusion of female voices represents a missed opportunity to bring perspectives that reflect the lived experiences of many South African women into election coverage. Greater representation of women as political leaders, experts, civil society representatives, and citizens could enrich reporting and broaden discussions on key policy issues.

The low proportion of female sources also suggests that women's perspectives were not consistently incorporated into debates on electoral priorities and policy responses. Consequently, issues that disproportionately affect women may have received less attention within election coverage. Newsrooms should therefore make deliberate efforts to include more women as sources, commentators, analysts, candidates, and community voices. Improving gender balance in sourcing practices would strengthen both the diversity and quality of election reporting.

3.8 Balance and Fairness in Election Reporting

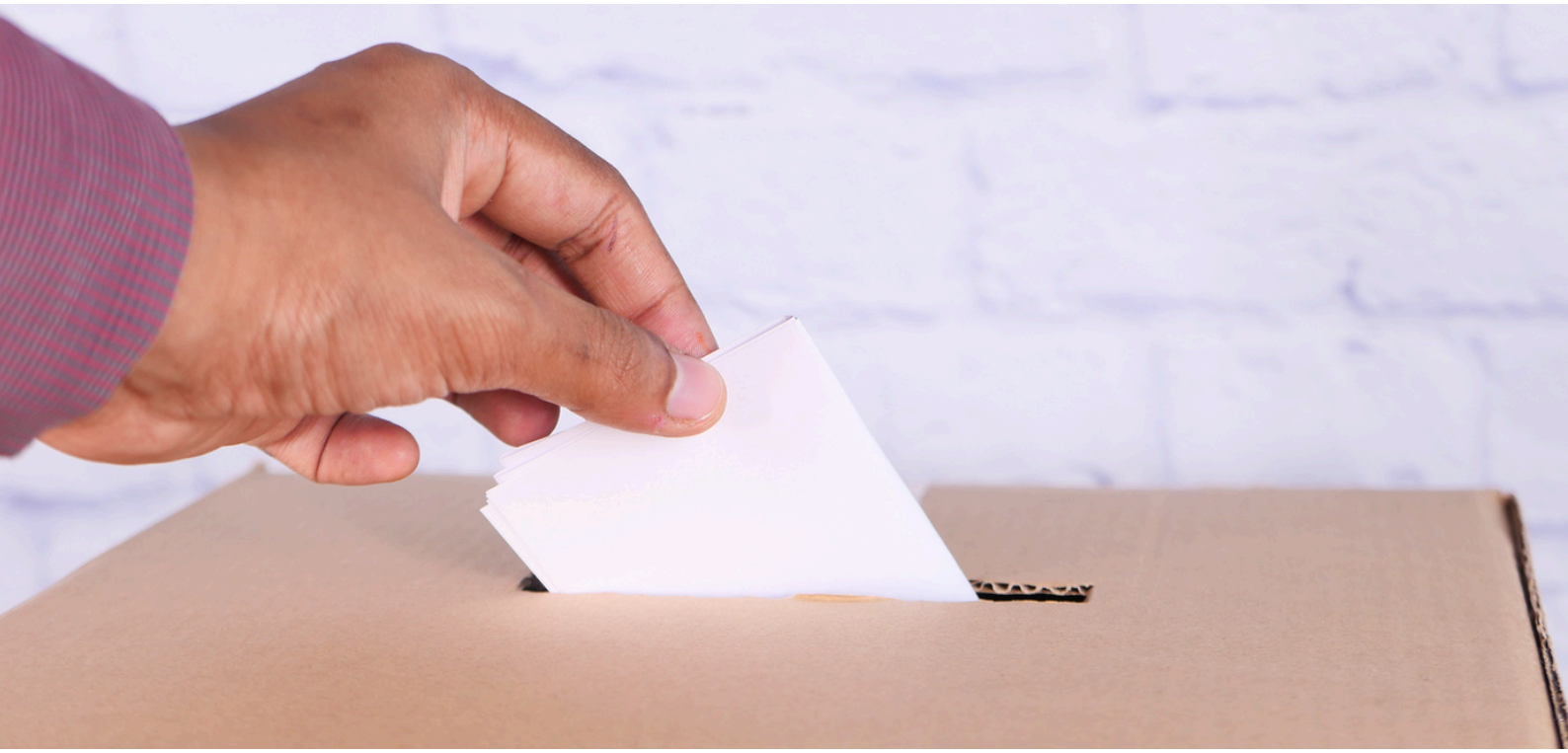


Monitoring fairness and bias in election reporting is important for assessing whether media coverage provides balanced and impartial information to voters. Fair coverage helps ensure that audiences are exposed to diverse viewpoints, competing political perspectives, and accurate information, enabling them to make informed electoral decisions.

The analysis shows that 95% of election-related stories were assessed as fair, while only 5% were identified as biased. This suggests that election coverage during the monitoring period was largely balanced and aligned with professional journalistic principles of accuracy, impartiality, and fairness.

The high proportion of fair reporting indicates that most stories presented election issues, political parties, candidates, and electoral processes in a factual and balanced manner. In many instances, reports included multiple viewpoints, provided opportunities for responses to allegations, and focused on informing audiences about electoral developments rather than promoting particular political interests. Coverage generally reflected a broad range of election-related themes, including campaign activities, voter registration, manifesto launches, candidate nominations, coalition politics, and electoral administration.

The relatively small proportion of biased coverage suggests that instances of partiality were limited rather than systemic. Where bias occurred, it was typically reflected through the selective presentation of viewpoints, disproportionate emphasis on particular political actors, or reporting that appeared to favour or disadvantage a specific party or candidate. However, such cases represented a small minority of the overall coverage and did not significantly affect the broader pattern of fair reporting observed during the monitoring period.



4 Conclusion

This report examined election-related coverage across monitored media outlets during the reporting period, focusing on story volume, geographic distribution, sourcing patterns, gender representation, and fairness. The findings indicate that elections received substantial media attention, with coverage increasing around key electoral milestones, including the announcement of the election timetable, the opening and closing of candidate nominations, manifesto launches, and intensified campaigning by political parties.

The analysis found that SABC and other mainstream media outlets played a central role in informing the public about election developments, collectively accounting for almost all election-related coverage. Reporting was concentrated in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, reflecting the location of major political events and campaign activities, although this pattern highlights the need for more geographically diverse coverage that better reflects the experiences and concerns of voters across all provinces.

In terms of sourcing, election reporting was dominated by political party voices, with the ANC, DA and IEC emerging as the most prominent sources. While this reflects the central role of political actors in the electoral process, the limited inclusion of experts, ordinary citizens, and local government representatives suggests opportunities to strengthen the diversity of perspectives included in election coverage. Similarly, the significant underrepresentation of female sources underscores the need for more deliberate efforts to amplify women's voices and experiences in election reporting.

Importantly, the assessment of fairness and bias found that 95% of election-related stories were fair, demonstrating a strong commitment by media outlets to balanced and impartial reporting. This suggests that the media largely fulfilled its democratic responsibility by providing voters with credible information and a range of viewpoints during the election period.
Overall, the findings indicate that the media played a positive role in supporting public access to election information and facilitating democratic participation. However, greater attention to geographic diversity, gender representation, and the inclusion of non-political voices would further strengthen the quality, inclusiveness, and public value of election coverage as the country approaches election day.

List of the media monitored

Online	Online	TV	Radio station
Cape Argus	Mail and Guardian	Newsroom Prime News	Kaya FM
Cape Times	News24	eNCA Prime	Power FM
City Press	Political Web	E-tv News Prime Time	702 Talk Radio
Daily Dispatch	Pretoria News		
Daily Maverick	Saturday Star		
Daily News	Sowetan		
Daily Sun	The Citizen		
Daily Voice	The Mercury		
ENCA online	The Post		
Eyewitness News	The Star		
Groundup	The Sunday Independent		
Herald live	The Witness		
IOL	Timeslive		
Isolezwe			

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 with key stakeholders and 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.

Stay ahead of the LGE26 narrative with Dexter, Moxii Africa's media monitoring platform that captures live and near-live election trends across print, broadcast, and digital news. Discover who gets heard, what drives headlines, and how media quality shapes public understanding in real time.

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) on (011) 788 1278 or email:ntombik@mma.org.za