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

Media Brief 10 13 -20 October 2026

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INTRODUCTION

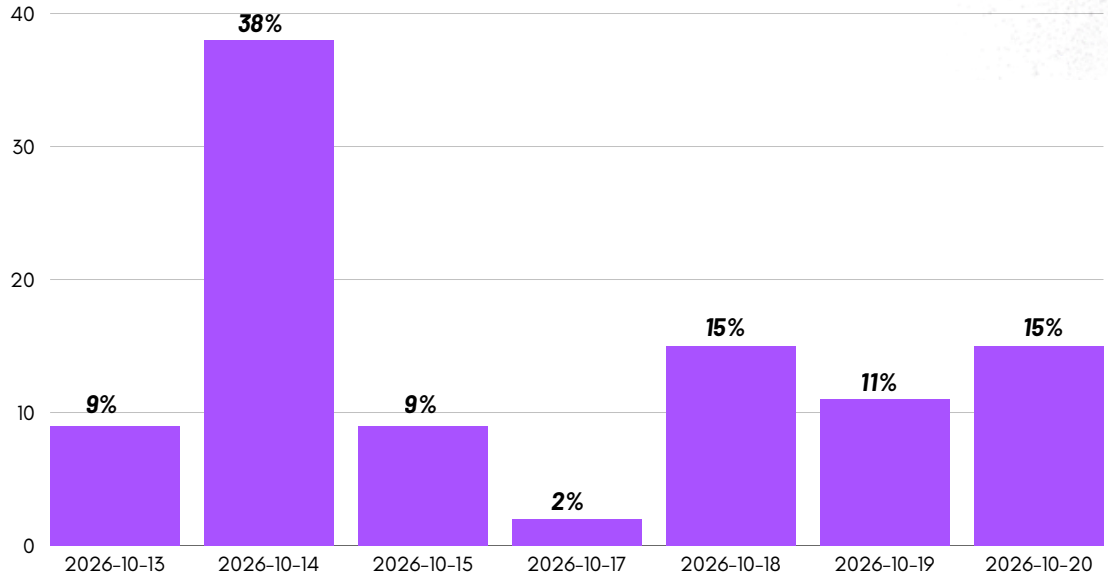


Moxii Africa, formerly known as Media Monitoring Africa, is undertaking comprehensive monitoring of media coverage in the lead-up to South Africa's 2026 Local Government Elections. Drawing on more than three decades of election monitoring experience, having observed every democratic election since 1994, the organisation systematically analyses election-related content across broadcast, print, and digital media platforms. The monitoring assesses the quality and nature of election reporting, evaluates compliance with relevant regulatory and ethical frameworks, and examines the extent to which the media environment supports free, fair, and informed democratic participation. Through this work, Moxii Africa seeks to promote balanced, accurate, and responsible election coverage by tracking the representation of political parties, key electoral issues, and diverse voices within the public discourse.

This brief presents findings from the monitoring period 13 to 20 October 2026, during which 53 election-related news items were recorded and analysed. This represents a marked decline from the 340 election stories monitored during the previous reporting period. The decrease suggests a significant reduction in the volume of election coverage across the monitored media platforms. While the preceding period was characterised by heightened campaign activity, intensive political mobilisation, and sustained media attention to election developments, coverage during this monitoring cycle appears to have been shaped by a more selective news agenda, with attention focused on a smaller number of election-related developments.

Despite the reduction in reporting volume, the findings provide important insight into the changing nature of election coverage as the local government elections draw closer. The analysis explores the issues receiving the greatest media attention, the visibility and prominence of political parties, the diversity of sources informing election narratives, and the gender balance of voices featured in election reporting. Collectively, these findings offer a valuable snapshot of the media landscape and its role in shaping public understanding of the electoral process, political competition, and the issues likely to influence voter choices ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

Figure 1: Daily LGE Stories Article Count



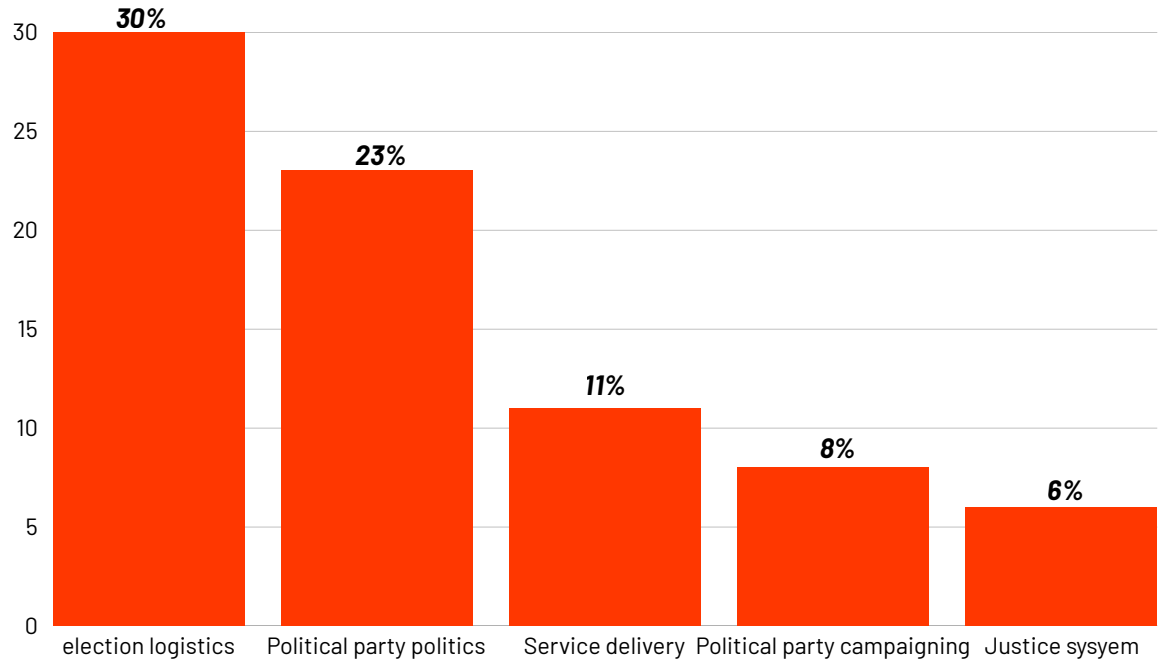
Brief 10 recorded substantial fluctuations in election coverage. The most notable feature of the period was a significant spike on 14 October, when election stories accounted for approximately 38% of all coverage. This was considerably higher than every other day in the monitoring period. Coverage then declined sharply to approximately 9 % on 15 October and reached a low of just 2% on 17 October before increasing again to approximately 15% on both 18 and 20 October.

In contrast, Brief 9 displayed a much more stable pattern of election coverage. The highest levels of reporting were recorded on 12 October (16%) and 6 October (15%), while the lowest levels were approximately 10% on 8 and 10 October. Election coverage remained relatively consistent throughout the monitoring period.

The dramatic spike recorded on 14 October suggests the occurrence of a major election-related event that captured national media attention. Given current South African local government election reporting trends, this increase may have been associated with a significant campaign announcement, a major legal development involving a political party, coalition negotiations, candidate disputes, or an important electoral administration announcement. The simultaneous rise in the justice system and IEC sources discussed later in this report strengthens the possibility that legal or electoral governance issues drove coverage during this period.

Unlike Brief 9, where election reporting was relatively predictable and issue-driven, Brief 10 demonstrates the continued capacity of major political and electoral developments to dominate the media agenda despite the overall maturation of election coverage.

Figure 2: Top five topics

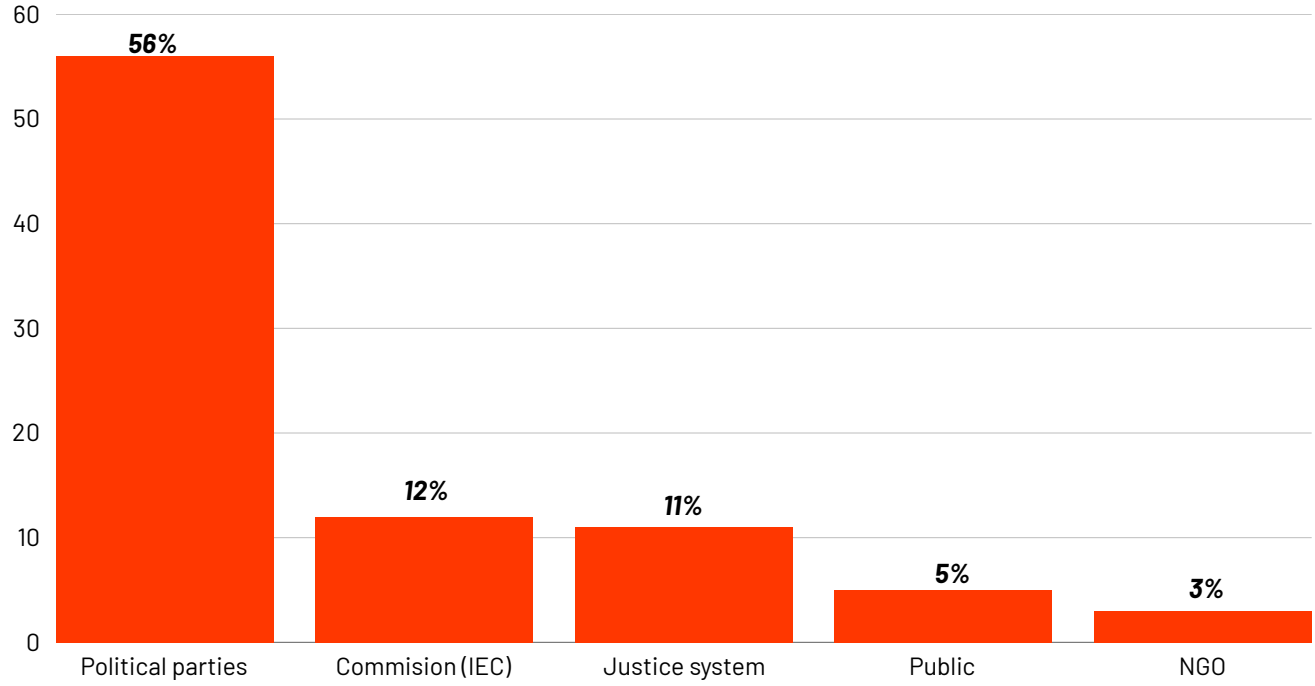


Brief 9 appeared to focus on governance, public concerns, accountability issues, election administration, and campaign-related reporting. The prominence of public sources and justice system actors suggested that journalists were increasingly evaluating election issues beyond campaign rhetoric.

In Brief 10, the increased prominence of IEC and justice system sources strongly suggests heightened media attention to electoral processes, legal disputes, election compliance matters, candidate eligibility issues, or governance-related controversies. The combination of these source categories indicates that election reporting may have become more focused on institutional and regulatory aspects of the election rather than routine campaign events.

This trend aligns with patterns commonly observed during South African elections. As election day approaches, media coverage increasingly examines the integrity and administration of the electoral process, while also reporting on legal disputes involving political actors, electoral objections, and regulatory matters that may affect electoral outcomes.

Figure 3: Top five sources by affiliation



Brief 10 was dominated by political party sources, accounting for approximately 56% of all sources. The IEC represented 12%, justice system sources accounted for 11%, public sources contributed 5%, and NGOs represented 3% of all sources.

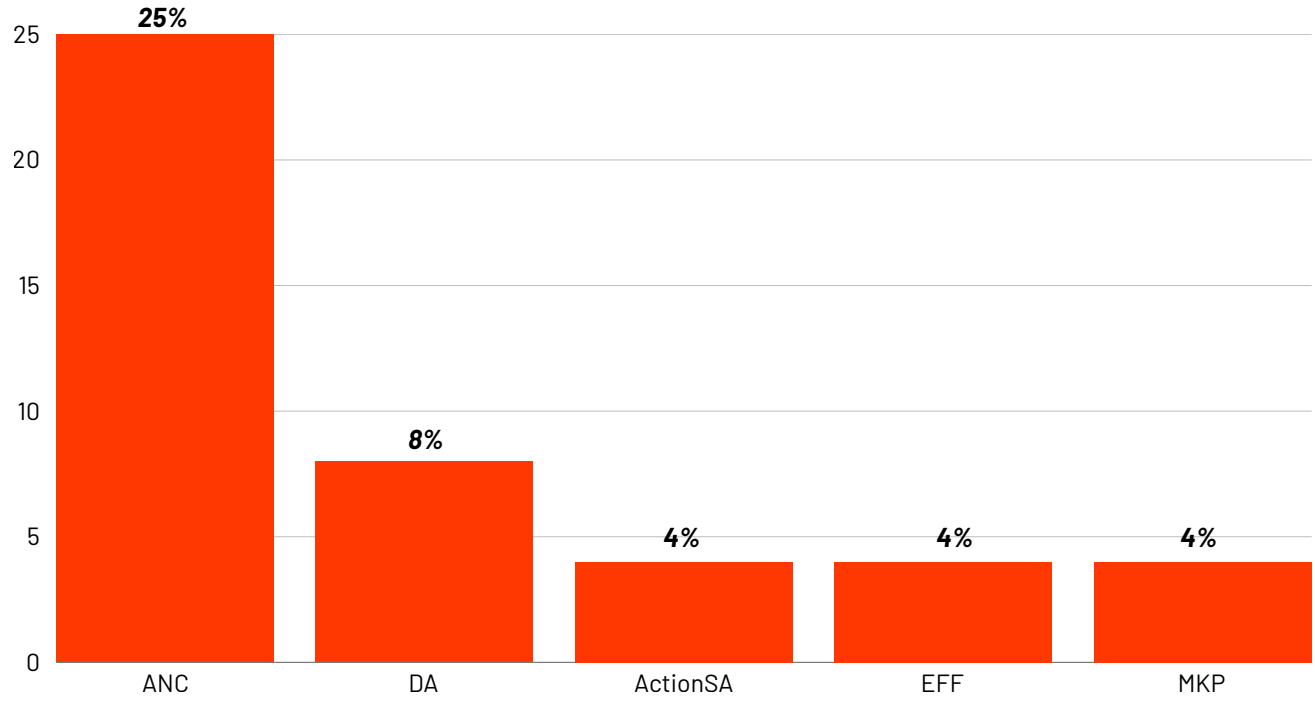
In Brief 9, political parties also dominated coverage, constituting 56 %of all sources. Public voices represented 13%, justice system sources accounted for 7%, the IEC contributed 5%, and experts represented 4%.

The most significant change between the two periods is the substantial increase in IEC sources, which more than doubled from 5% to 12%. Justice system sources also increased from 7% to 11%. Meanwhile, public voices declined sharply from 13% to 5%.

These shifts suggest that election reporting became increasingly focused on institutional actors and official processes between 13 and 20 October. The increase in electoral and legal sources may reflect heightened media attention to election governance, legal challenges, candidate disputes, or administrative preparations. The decline in public voices indicates that election narratives during this period were driven more by official actors than by citizens or community representatives.

The emergence of NGOs among the top five source categories also suggests increased media interest in election monitoring, governance oversight, civic participation, and democratic accountability.

Figure 4: Top five parties

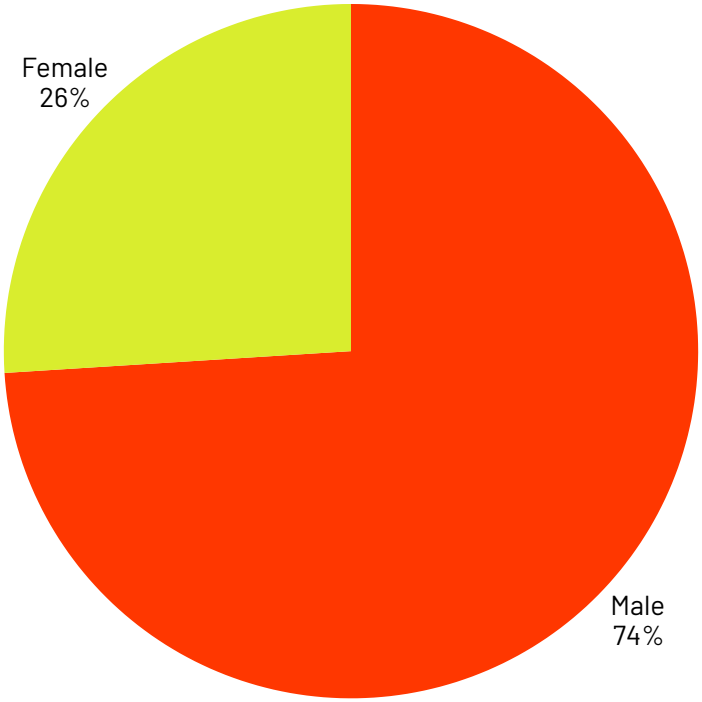


In Brief 10, political parties remained the largest source category despite the growing visibility of institutional actors. This suggests that the ANC, DA, EFF, IFP, and other major political parties likely continued to receive substantial media attention through campaign activities, public statements, and reactions to emerging election-related developments.

Similarly, Brief 9 reflected strong political party visibility, driven by campaign messaging and political competition.

The stability in political party sourcing suggests that political actors remained central to election coverage even as reporting increasingly incorporated legal, regulatory, and institutional dimensions.

Figure 5: Male vs Female Sources



Brief 10 recorded 80 male sources and 28 female sources, resulting in approximately 74% male representation and 26% female representation.

In comparison, Brief 9 recorded 501 male sources and 122 female sources, resulting in approximately 80% male representation and 20% female representation.

While male voices continued to dominate election reporting in Brief 10, gender representation improved compared to the previous monitoring period. Female representation increased from approximately 20% to 26%, reducing the gender gap.

One possible explanation is the broader diversification of sources observed in Brief 10. The inclusion of NGOs, the justice system, and electoral institutions may have created more opportunities for women to be represented as election experts, civic leaders, legal professionals, and election administrators. Additionally, civic and monitoring organisations often have stronger gender representation than political party leadership structures.

Although this improvement is encouraging, women remain substantially underrepresented relative to men, highlighting the continued need for more inclusive sourcing practices during election reporting.

CONCLUSION

The comparison between Brief 10 and Brief 9 suggests an important shift in the character of election coverage between 13 and 20 October 2026. While overall reliance on political party sources remained stable at approximately 56%, election reporting became increasingly focused on institutional and legal dimensions of the electoral process. The substantial increases in IEC and justice system sources indicate heightened attention to election governance, compliance, and accountability issues.

The most striking development was the dramatic spike in election coverage on 14 October, where election stories accounted for nearly 38% of all monitored coverage. This suggests that a major electoral, political, or legal event temporarily dominated the news agenda. Unlike Brief 9, which showed steady and predictable election reporting, Brief 10 demonstrates how significant developments can rapidly reshape media priorities even during an otherwise stable election period.

The findings also point to improved gender representation, with women accounting for a larger share of sources than in the previous period. At the same time, the reduction in public voices suggests that official institutions and political actors increasingly shaped election narratives.

Overall, Brief 10 reflects a transition from primarily campaign-focused reporting toward greater scrutiny of electoral governance, legal processes, and democratic accountability. This mirrors broader trends in South African local government election coverage as media attention increasingly focuses on the integrity and administration of the electoral process ahead of voting day.

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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