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

Media Brief 11: 21 to 28 October 2026

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INTRODUCTION

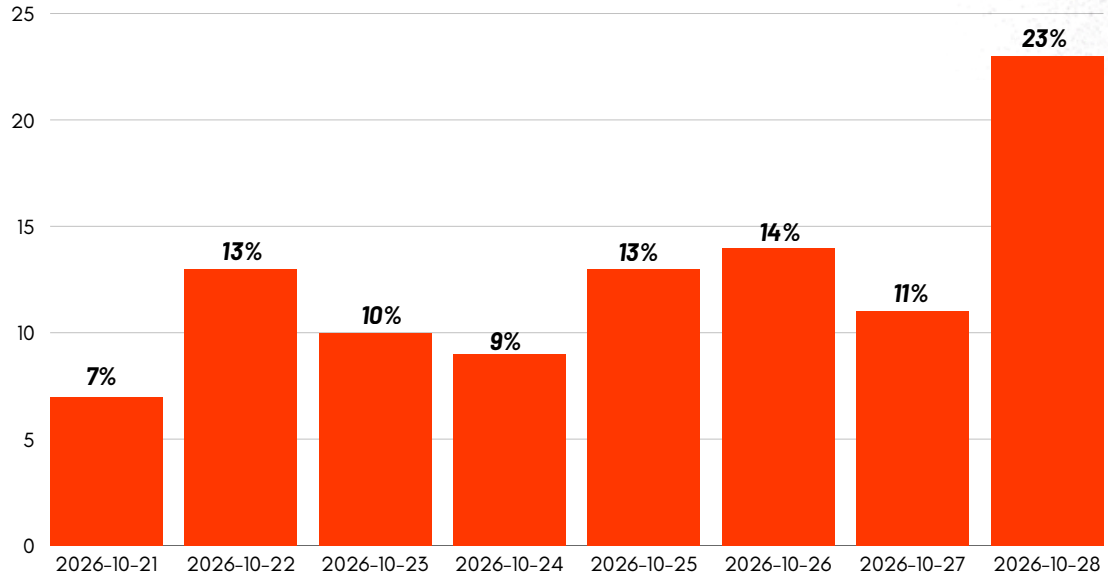


Moxii Africa, formerly known as Media Monitoring Africa, is conducting comprehensive monitoring of media coverage in the lead-up to South Africa's 2026 Local Government Elections. Having monitored every democratic election since 1994, the organisation analyses election-related content across broadcast, print, and digital media platforms to assess the quality, fairness, and diversity of election reporting. The monitoring also examines compliance with relevant regulatory and ethical frameworks and evaluates the extent to which the media environment supports free, fair, and informed democratic participation.

This brief presents findings from the monitoring period 21 to 28 October 2026, during which 395 election-related news items were recorded and analysed. This represents a substantial increase from the 53 stories monitored during the previous reporting period. The rise in coverage coincided with the final stages of the election campaign, a period typically characterised by intensified campaigning, increased voter mobilisation efforts, heightened political contestation, and growing media focus on election-related developments as voting day approaches. However, the monitoring data alone cannot establish the precise factors responsible for the increase in coverage.

The findings provide valuable insight into the evolving nature of election reporting during a critical phase of the electoral process. The analysis examines the issues receiving the greatest media attention, the visibility and prominence of political parties, the diversity of sources shaping election narratives, and the gender distribution of voices featured in election coverage. Together, these findings offer an important snapshot of the media landscape and its role in informing the public about the electoral process, political competition, and the issues likely to influence voter decision-making ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections.

Figure 1: Daily LGE Stories Article Count

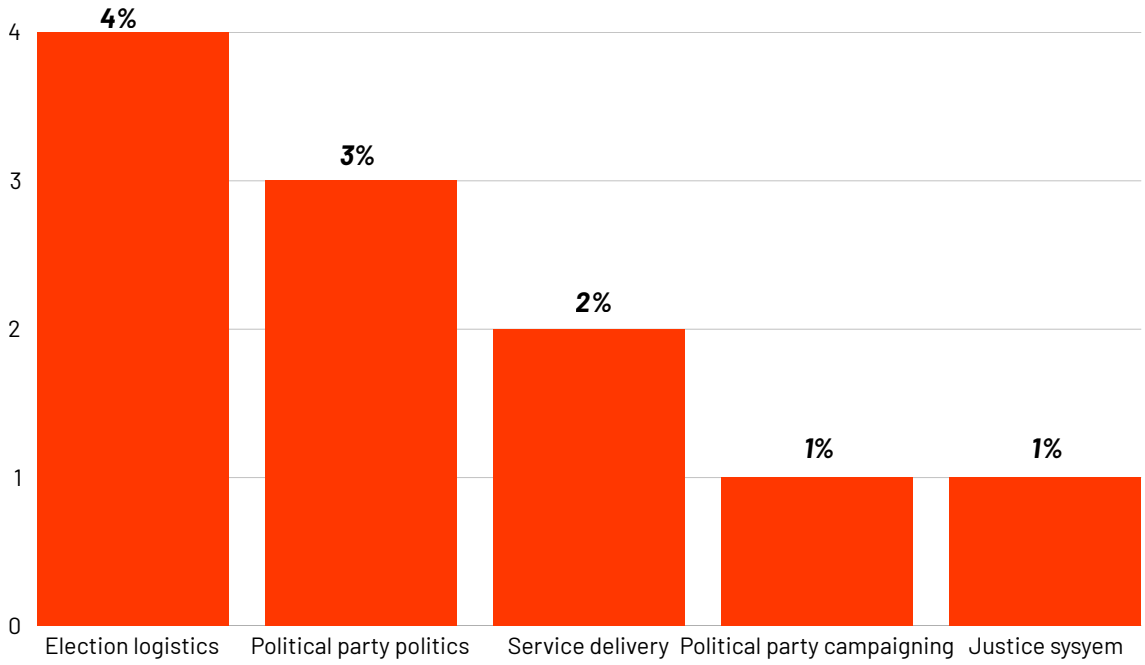


Brief 11 recorded fluctuating levels of election coverage between 21 and 28 October 2026. The highest peak occurred on 28 October, when election stories accounted for approximately 23 % of all coverage. Other notable peaks were recorded on 26 October (14 %), 22 October (13 %), and 25 October (13 %). The lowest level of coverage was observed on 21 October, where election stories accounted for only 7 % of total coverage.

In comparison, Brief 10 was marked by a dramatic spike on 14 October, when election stories accounted for approximately 38% of all coverage. Coverage then declined sharply before recovering modestly on 18 and 20 October (15.1%). The lowest level of coverage was recorded on 17 October at just 2%.

Unlike Brief 10, which was dominated by a single major news event, Brief 11 reflects more sustained and consistent election reporting across the monitoring period. The significant increase on 28 October likely reflects heightened media attention as election day moved closer. During this phase of South African local government elections, media coverage typically intensifies around campaign deadlines, voter mobilisation efforts, final campaign pushes, coalition discussions, and election preparedness announcements. The absence of an extreme peak similar to 14 October suggests that coverage was driven by multiple election-related developments rather than a single dominant event.

Figure 2: Top five topics

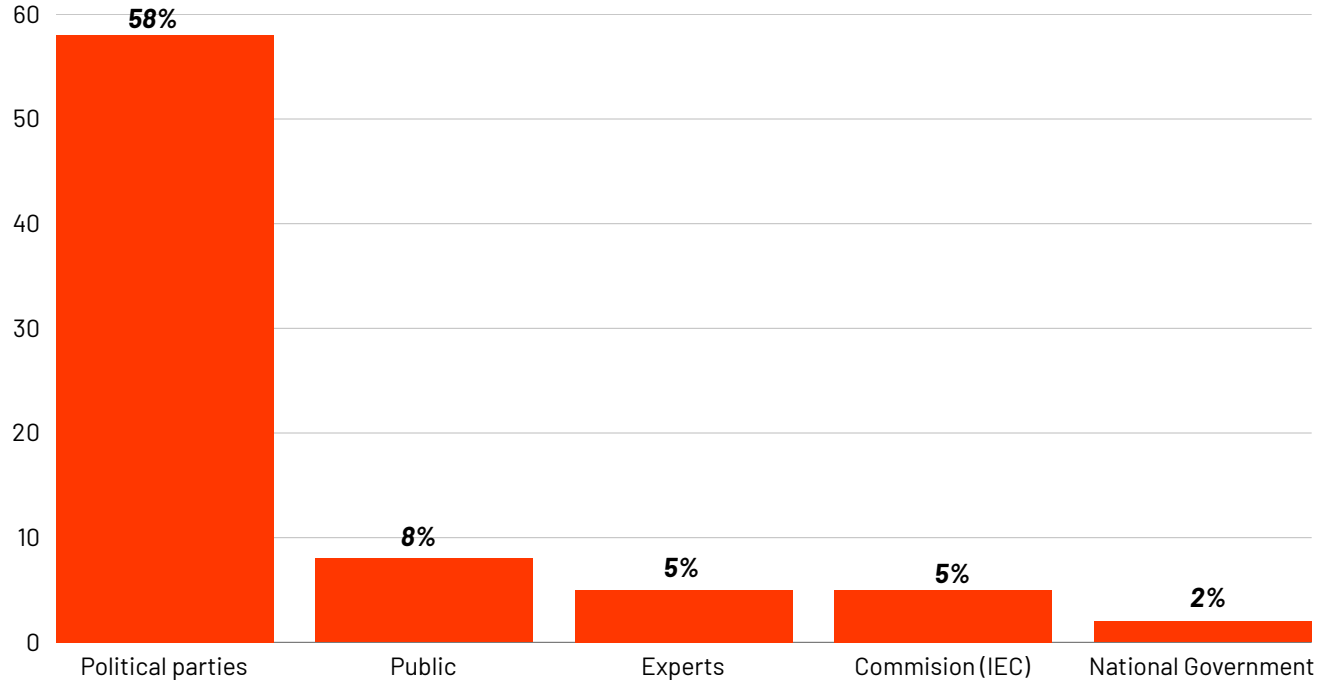


Brief 11 appears to reflect increasing attention to election participation, voter concerns, campaign activities, and national political developments. The inclusion of public voices, experts, and national government representatives among the leading source categories suggests a broader range of election-related issues under discussion.

By comparison, Brief 10 appeared more focused on election administration and accountability matters, with the strong presence of IEC and justice system sources indicating media attention on electoral compliance, legal disputes, and governance-related developments.

The shift may indicate that election reporting moved from a period dominated by legal and procedural concerns toward a broader public discussion about voter choices, campaign messaging, and governance issues. This trend is consistent with media behaviour in the final stages of local government election campaigns, when journalists often focus on what the election means for voters and municipalities rather than solely covering electoral processes.

Figure 3: Top five sources by affiliation



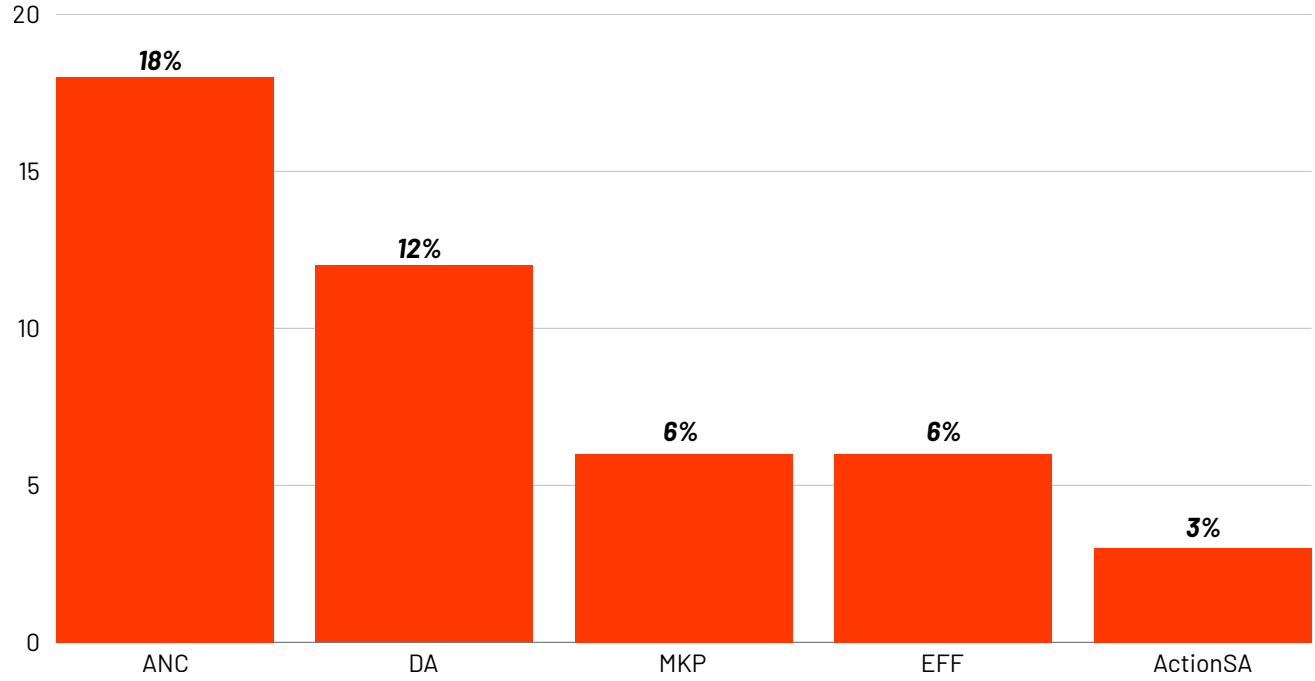
Brief 11 continued to be dominated by political party sources, which accounted for approximately 58% of all sources. Public voices represented 8%, experts accounted for 5%, the IEC contributed 5%, and national government sources represented 2%.

In Brief 10, political parties accounted for 56% of all sources, while the IEC represented 12%, justice system sources accounted for 11%, public voices contributed 5%, and NGOs represented 3%.

The most notable change is the decline in both IEC and justice-system sources. IEC representation fell from 12% to 5%, while justice system sources, which featured prominently in Brief 10, no longer appeared among the top five source categories in Brief 11.
At the same time, public voices increased from 5% to 8%, while expert sources increased from approximately 4% in the previous period to 5%. National government sources also emerged among the top affiliations.

These shifts suggest that reporting became less focused on electoral administration and legal disputes and more focused on public-facing election issues. As election day approached, journalists may have increasingly sought perspectives on voter priorities, government performance, policy debates, and broader electoral implications.

Figure 4: Top five parties

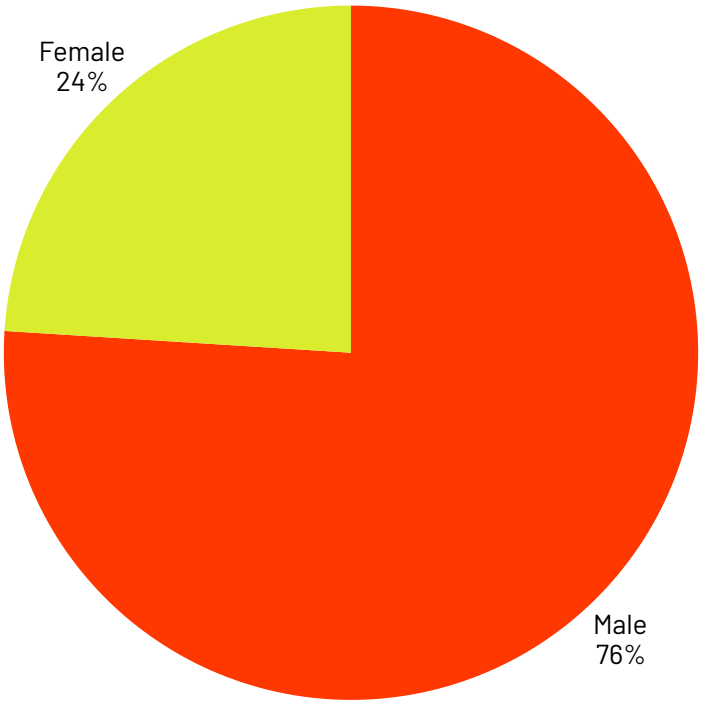


In Brief 11, the continued prominence of political party sources, combined with increased election coverage towards the end of the monitoring period, suggests that major parties were intensifying their campaigning efforts as election day drew closer. Coverage during this period was likely driven by campaign events, voter mobilisation activities, policy messaging, and responses to emerging electoral issues.

By comparison, political visibility in Brief 10 appears to have been shaped not only by campaign activities but also by election administration and legal developments. The strong presence of IEC and justice-system sources during that period indicates that political parties were often featured within stories relating to electoral processes, legal disputes, objections, or regulatory matters rather than campaigning alone.

The shift from a reporting environment heavily influenced by electoral administration and legal issues in Brief 10 to one characterised by greater public engagement and campaign activity in Brief 11 reflects a common trend in South African local government election coverage. As voting day approaches, media attention typically shifts towards the electoral contest itself, increasing the visibility of leading political parties and their efforts to persuade voters. Consequently, the ANC, DA, EFF, IFP and other major parties were likely to have remained the most visible political actors, benefiting from extensive campaign coverage and media attention in the final stages of the election period.

Figure 5: Male vs Female Sources



Brief 11 recorded 159 female sources and 501 male sources, resulting in approximately 24% female representation and 76% male representation.

In comparison, Brief 10 recorded 28 female sources and 80 male sources, resulting in approximately 26% female representation and 74% male representation.
While the total number of women quoted increased substantially from 28 to 159, the proportion of female voices declined slightly from 26% to 24%. The increase in overall sourcing during Brief 11 therefore benefited both male and female voices, but men continued to dominate election discourse.

One possible explanation is that election coverage remained heavily focused on political parties and government actors, sectors where leadership and spokesperson roles are still disproportionately occupied by men. Although the inclusion of more public voices and experts may have improved source diversity, it was insufficient to substantially close the gender gap.

CONCLUSION

The comparison between Brief 11 graphs and Brief 10 graphs reveals a shift in election reporting between 21 and 28 October 2026. Brief 10 was characterised by a major spike in coverage driven by election administration and legal issues, while Brief 11 reflected a broader and more sustained pattern of election reporting

The most significant change was the decline in the prominence of IEC and justice-system sources, coupled with increased visibility of public voices and experts. This suggests that media coverage moved away from regulatory and legal concerns and became more focused on voter interests, campaign messaging, and broader governance issues.

The strong peak on 28 October is likely linked to intensified campaigning and voter mobilisation efforts as election day approached. This pattern aligns with established South African local government election reporting trends, where media attention increasingly focuses on the electoral choices facing voters, party competitiveness, and the potential implications of election outcomes

While political parties remained the dominant voices in election coverage, Brief 11 demonstrates some improvement in source diversity. However, gender representation remains a challenge, with women accounting for less than a quarter of all sources despite a substantial increase in the number of female voices featured during the monitoring 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.

CONTACT US

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

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