WEEK 12

DIGITAL BUZZ

SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS OF THE #LGE2026



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Introduction

This is the 12th weekly digital buzz brief, and the online conversation shows how close polling day now is. Parties are crisscrossing the provinces; soldiers have been deployed to support police during anti-immigration protests in KwaZulu-Natal and proposals to end municipalities' automatic authority to supply water and electricity have put the basics of daily life at the centre of the debate. Underneath it all runs a question that will be answered at the polls on 4 November: who do South Africans trust to run their municipalities?

Moxii Africa tracks this conversation because the final days before a vote are when information, and misinformation can carry the most weight. By showing which issues are driving the debate, which narratives are gaining traction and where claims remain unverified this series aims to help the public tell what us being told online from what is confirmed.

This edition covers 22 to 28 October 2026. It looks at the competition between parties and confidence in the ANC's leadership, the polarizing debate on immigration and public order, pressure on service delivery and state capacity and how accountability and institutional trust ate being argued, including in conversations that reach beyond South Africa to Kenya and Zambia. As in previous editions, monitoring is conducted on the Meltwater platform using the same keyword set, so trends stay comparable from week to week.

Insights and Trends framing this week

- The fallout from the 15 October Constitutional Court ruling remained a major election talking point.
- Discussion focused on the reinstatement of 181 ANC candidates, the IEC's implementation of the judgement and whether the ruling reflected equal application electoral law of preferential treatment of larger parties. It also reflected continuing tension between the ANC and DA within the Government of National Unity (GNU).
- Election integrity and public trust stayed under scrutiny, with concern about electoral fairness, candidate nominations, misinformation and the preparedness of electoral institutions.
- Claims that the ANC was mobilizing or registering asylum seekers to vote were rejected by President Ramaphosa on 20 October. The IEC and government have said that only registered South African citizens can vote.



- Coalition politics became more prominent as polling day approached. Online discussion centred on polling projections, particularly in Johannesburg and other metros where voters and commentators expected coalition governments rather than outright majorities.
- Concerns about coalition instability, governance effectiveness and accountability features strongly.
- Immigration remained one of the most polarizing campaign issues. Action SA and the MK Party and other actors framed immigration, border management and national identity as election issues, while counter-narratives challenged the attribution of unemployment and service-delivery failures to foreign nationals.
- Anti-immigration protests in KwaZulu-Natal reportedly prompted the deployment of 510 SANDT members to support police under Operation Prosper. Online commentary linking immigration to crime and border failures often relied on unverified or inflammatory claims, and opponents argued that a militarized response restricts protests rights.
- Service delivery became an increasingly important lens for judging the parties. Water shortages, contaminated water concerns in Tshwane, infrastructure deterioration, electricity challenges and municipal governance featured prominently and parties used them to mobilize support and criticize opponents.
- A proposed compulsory licensing system, which would end municipalities' automatic authority to supply water and electricity, raised concern that access to water could become more conditional.
- Campaigning intensified across the ANC, DA, EFF, MK Party and ActionSA with grassroots mobilization, voter outreach and community engagements. Messaging focused on service delivery, governance, jobs, crime and local government performance.
- The ANC emphasized door-to-door and turnout campaigning, Action SA focused on Johannesburg and immigration, the EGF on economic issues and service delivery , and the DA positioned itself as a governing alternative in key metros.
- Political personalities continued to drive engagement. Cyril Ramaphosa, Fikile Mbalula, Julius Malema, Herman Mashaba and Jacob Zuma remained among the most discussed figures, and their campaign activities and public statements frequently shaped the wider conversation.
- Accountability and institutional trust were contested well beyond the elections themselves. Debate included alleged surveillance of the EFF, which is unverified and the conversation extended to political realignment in Kenya and to Zambia's elections and democratic continuity.

What people were talking about



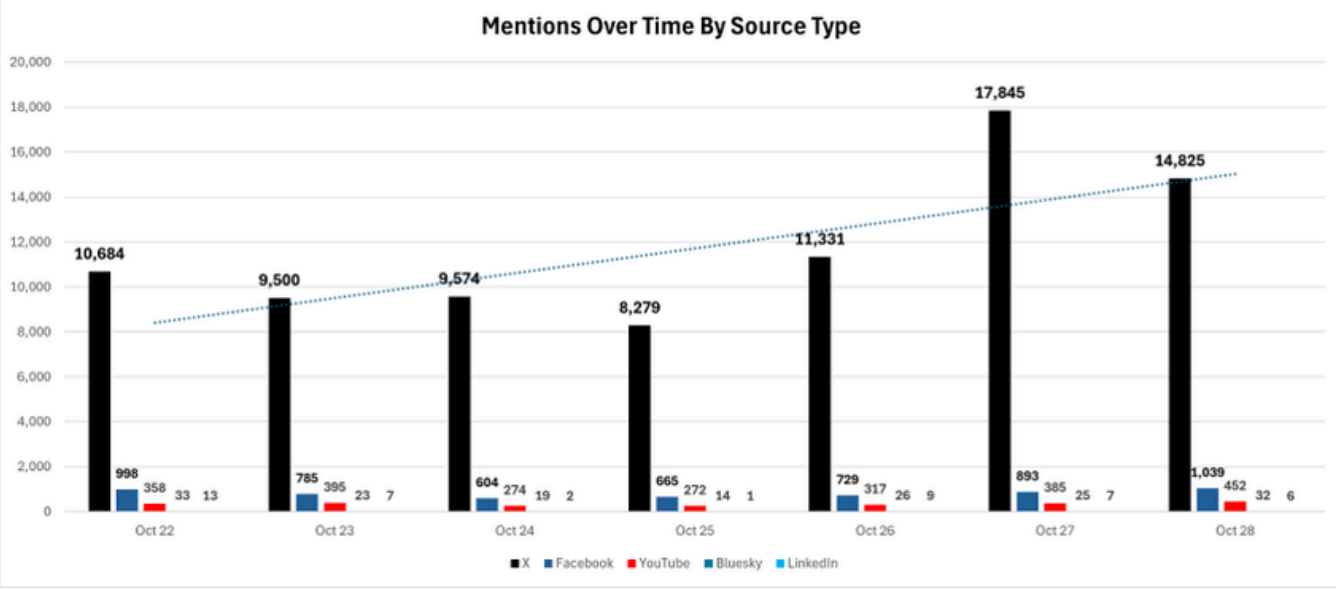
- The ANC remained the most prominent by a wide margin at 40.6K mentions. The EFF (15.8K), the DA (5.29K), *"elections"* (17K), and Cyril Ramaphosa (10.3K) followed.
- Julius Malema and Jacob Zuma were also highly visible, with Action SA , the MK Party and the IFP present in the cloud. Cyril Ramaphosa was one of the most prominent political figures with conversations focused on local government reform, service delivery, immigration and security responses.
- Campaign hashtags stayed consistent with previous weeks, including *#voteanc2026*, *#voteeff2026*, *#voteeff*, *#victoryordeath*, and *#lge2026*.Geographic terms such as Johannesburg, KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town show the conversation tied to both local contests and local flashpoints.
- The deployment of 510 SANDT members to support police in KwaZulu-Natal became the week's central flashpoint with *"army"* at 4.62K mentions and the South African Police Service at 2.07K.
- Government said the deployment was meant to contain violent anti-immigration unrest, which reported linked to misinformation about a Constitutional Court asylum ruling .
- It stressed that immigration enforcement is the state's responsibility and condemned attacks on foreign nationals. Critics called the deployment repression, compared it to apartheid-era emergency rule and questioned its reported R34 Million cost.
- Protest rights and policing drew heavy engagement, with "khohlwani" at 2.35K mentions and the Durban Magistrate Court in the cloud.



- The highest-engagement post alleged that police sought court restrictions on protest which is unconfirmed and many reposts repeated it. Others argued that protest must stay lawful and backed action against property damage and attacks which they characterized as vigilantism.
- Immigration emerged as one of the most polarizing topics with users debating border control, undocumented migration, crime, jobs and the government's handling of migration issues.
- *"Illegal immigrants"* (4.87K mentions) and *"foreigners"* were keywords linked to this topic. Some users endorsed ActionSA as the more responsive party, others rejected all the major parties and some rejected anti-immigrant hostility, arguing that Africans should not be treated as foreigners on the continent.
- Anti-immigration violence also featured, including a reported mob killing of a migrant in Durban and concern raised by Nigeria's envoy over killing Nigerians.
- History was also used as political framing in conversation. *"Apartheid laws"* (3.65K) was applied by critics to the state's response to protest and to some policy measures. *Solomon Mahlangu* (1.14K) was invoked to question what the liberation struggle achieved under ANC, while anti-immigration replies claimed he did not sacrifice his life for foreigners.
- *"Kempton Park"* rose on reports that 11 or 12 women were killed nearby. The highest engagement posts accused Ramaphosa of neglecting the killings while responding forcefully to protests. Some replies disputed this, saying the government had addressed them. The DA also held its final Ekurhuleni rally in Kempton Park which contributed to posts and comments online.
- The ANC defended its record on grants, housing and education through rallies and door-to-door outreach while critics including KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape blamed it for poor governance.
- Ramaphosa's proposed compulsory licensing for municipal water and electricity provision raised concerns about privatization and affordability, alongside some support for financial accountability.
- The other parties campaigned on their own terms. The EFF held large rallies and door-to-door visits and argued that mines should benefit communities while the DA argued that outright majorities are needed to avoid coalition instability which critics called fear-based.
- Service delivery and institutional trust remained concerns, with contaminated water and illness in Bronkhorstspruit prompting ministerial intervention reported shortages of up to 50 critical medicines and a court setting aside awards for R15 billion HIV tender amid alleged conflict of interest.
- Election-period security also featured as the killing of DA candidate Thulani Mbana prompted a murder investigation while authorities prepared security measures for the elections.

- Halal certification emerged as a culture war issue under the *"concerns"* keyword (6.41K mentions). Posts portrayed certification as imposing religious costs or limiting access to contracts, while commentators and fact-checkers challenged those claims and discussion shifted toward fairness, transparency and consumer choice.

Mentions Over Time by Source Type



- **Overview:** X again carried most of the volume, about 91% of the mentions charted, with daily totals between 8 273 and 17 845. Facebook ranged from 604 to 1 039 mentions a day and YouTube from 272 to 452, while Bluesky and LinkedIn each stayed under 35. Unlike Weeks 10 and 11, which opened at their peaks, this week built toward its peak at the end. Volume on X ended at 14 825 on 28 October well above last week's closing day of 12 124.
- **Peak Activity:** Mentions on X peaked at 17 845 on 27 October, a jump from 11 331 the day before. Across all platforms the day reached 19.2K mentions. The peak was below the previous two weeks' peaks (20 733 and 20 241) but the weekly low of 8 279 on 25 October was also lower than last weeks.
- **Peak Drivers:** The clearest driver was the deployment of 510 soldiers to KwaZulu-Natal to support police amid violence linked to misinformation about refugee-law changes. Critics portrayed the deployment and protest restrictions as authoritarian repression and March and March leaders linked alleged court action and special prosecutions to a wider campaign against anti-immigration activism.

Migration anxiety also fed anti-ANC criticism in KwaZulu-Natal, including claims that the ANC will lose the province. Alongside this, election-related conversation rose through the week as polling day approached, with the ANC campaigning on welfare and service delivery and the EFF and DA setting out their own appeals. Part of this rise likely reflects broader election and government coverage captured by the keywords

- **Post Peak Decline:** Volume on X eased on 28 October but the drop was modest and the deployment story stayed in the conversation. Facebook and YouTube both reached their highest levels of the week that day (1 039 and 452) and election-focused coverage kept rising. The week's earlier dip, with X falling from 10 684 on 22 October to 8 279 on 25 October, reflects a weekend slowdown in news output and no major trigger.

Top 10 Authors

	Accounts	Mentions	Estimated Views	Engagement	Reach
1	ANC 24/7	13	3.06m	87.4K	43.7m
2	Economic Freedom Fi...	220	7.32m	43.6K	105m
3	SABC News	476	10.4m	39.8K	148m
4	MyANC	410	12m	37.6K	172m
5	Jacinta Ngobeseza	5	245K	30.1K	437K
6	Comment on Newzroo...	196	1.01m	21.4K	14.4m
7	Kurrently.	12	284K	18.5K	4.06m
8	Comment on SAN24 N...	33	102K	16.1K	1.46m
9	Penuel The Black Pen	7	582K	15.7K	959K
10	Comment on eNCAnews	99	6.57m	15.1K	93.9m

- Facebook continued to dominate the most influential voices, accounting for eight of the top ten authors despite X driving much of the broader election conversation. This suggests Facebook remained a key platform for high-engagement political content and discussion.
- Party-owned pages were particularly successful this week. ANC 24/7 generated the highest engagement (87.4K) from just 13 mentions, while the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) page ranked second (43.6K engagement) and MyANC ranked fourth (37.6K engagement). This indicates that official party content was highly effective at mobilizing audiences during the final stage of the campaign.

- News organizations remained important spaces for political debate. SABC News ranked third with 39.8K engagement and more than 500 mentions while comment sections on Newzroom, SAN24 News, and eNCA also featured in the top ten. Users were not only consuming election news but actively debating issues in these forums.
- Jacinta Ngobese emerged as one of the most influential individual political voices on X. Her highly engaged posts focused on criticism of Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC, police and military deployments, anti-immigration protests and alleged restrictions on protest rights. Her content consistently framed the government as suppressing dissent and mishandling public concerns.
- Penuel The Black Pen ranked 9th despite only 7 mentions, demonstrating how a small number of posts can generate significant reach when they engage with controversial or polarizing issues.
- Penuel's content focused heavily on electoral alternatives and political realignment. His posts discussed support for Action SA and the GNU, immigration concerns and speculation about broader political instability generating substantial engagement relative to posting volume.
- The strong performance of both Jacinta and Penuel suggests that audiences were engaging heavily with commentary-driven and opinion-based content rather than only official campaign messaging.

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.

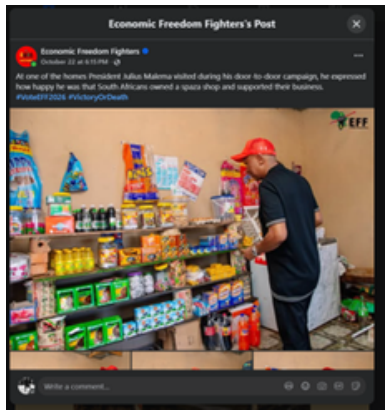
Explore live media tracking, accountability tools, and election insights at Moxii Africa's LGE2026 Hub or learn more about the coalition at PIIE. Important Notice: For official election dates, voter registration details, candidate lists, and official results, please consult only the Electoral Commission 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.

Top 5 Most Engaged Content

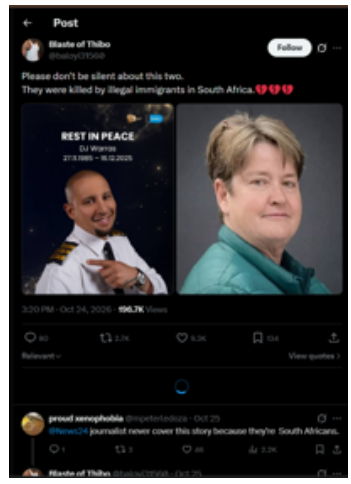
Click on the image to see the actual post











Call to action for the public and platforms

As South Africa approaches polling day, citizens should engage critically with election-related content, particularly claims about voter registration, immigration, electoral integrity, political violence, and security deployments. Social media users are encouraged to verify information through credible news sources, the IEC, official government statements, and trusted fact-checking organisations before sharing content. Caution is needed where emotionally charged claims rely on screenshots, recycled images, anonymous sources, or allegations that cannot be independently verified.

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At the same time, digital platforms have a responsibility to strengthen the visibility of authoritative information and reduce the spread of demonstrably false or misleading election-related content. Platforms should prioritise context, transparency, and rapid responses to misinformation that could undermine trust in the electoral process or inflame tensions around immigration, public safety, and political competition. With campaigning entering its final days, keeping an informed electorate and a fact-based public conversation is still essential to supporting peaceful participation, public trust, and the credibility of South Africa's 2026 local government elections.

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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.

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CONTACT US

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

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