

Press Release



**South African
Institute of
Race Relations**

South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation

For immediate release

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Number of female politicians on the rise

Between 1994 and 2009 the number of women serving in the National Assembly (NA) increased by 56%, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg this week.

In 1994 there were 111 women out of the 400 members of Parliament (MPs) in the NA, equating to 28% of all MPs. By 2009 the number of women in the NA had increased to 173, or 43% of all MPs.

A similar trend was seen in the nine provincial legislatures. All legislatures saw increases, sometimes significant.

The province with the biggest jump in the number of women holding seats in its legislature was KwaZulu-Natal. In that province there were 11 women holding seats in the 81-member legislature in 1994, or 14%. In 2009, when the legislature had been reduced by one seat to an 80-member chamber, there were some 30 women members, or 38%. This represented an increase of 173% in the number of women holding seats there.

The province with the smallest increase in the number of women legislators was Gauteng. In that province there were 25 women holding seats in the 86-member legislature in 1994, or 29%. In 2009, when the legislature had been reduced to a 73-member chamber, there were 33 women holding seats, or 32%. This represented an increase of 32% in the number of women holding seats.

The number of seats in provincial legislatures changes from time depending of the population of the province. For every 100 000 people in a province, a seat is awarded, with a maximum of 80 seats and a minimum of 30 seats in each legislature. The last time the number of seats of provincial legislatures was changed was in 1999.

Of the 428 seats in all the provincial legislatures in 1994 there were 99 women holding seats, or 23% of the total. In 2009, when the total number of seats had increased to 430, there were 179 women holding seats, or 42% of the total. The increase in the number of women in all provincial legislatures between 1994 and 2009 was 81%.

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A researcher at the Institute, Marius Roodt, said, 'The efficacy and impact of legislatures, national and provincial, is questionable. South Africans must ensure that they hold their legislatures to account. They must ensure that the National Assembly is not simply a rubber stamp for the executive, and that provincial legislatures do not fill the same role for the central Government.'

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