

FreeFACTS

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South Africa's political earthquake

The May general election was one of South Africa's most historic elections. It was the first time since the end of apartheid that the ANC failed to win more than 50% of the vote nationally, forcing it into a coalition government.

In Gauteng it also lost its provincial majority for the first time since 1994. It was also brought below 50% in KwaZulu-Natal, the first time this had happened since 2004. In the Northern Cape it also failed to win more than 50%, the only time that it had failed to do in the past was in the 1994 election.

While much can still happen this election is what could be described as a "realigning election" – one where old certainties are overturned and loyalties change. In terms of the significance of this election it would not be an exaggeration to say this poll was as important and changed South Africa and its politics as significantly as the 1948 or 1994 elections.

This edition of *FreeFACTS* provides information on the May election, and shows how the ANC has lost its dominance nationally and in a number of provinces. Trends around municipal by-elections since 2021 are also shown, indicating that ANC support has been sliding for some time.

However, at the same time it is still important to remember that the ANC is still by some way the biggest single party in the country, even though it lost its national majority. It still won more than 50% of the vote in five of the nine provinces, with very big majorities in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, which remain ANC strongholds.

But there is a cause for concern which cannot be ignored and this is the decline in the number of people who are turning up to vote in South African elections.

This edition of *FreeFACTS* also shows how voter turnout has been on a broadly declining trend since 1994. This could have implications for the sustainability of South African democracy.

But in the meantime, the historical significance of the May poll cannot be overstated.

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— Marius Roodt

Politics

Proportional representation and seats held by party, 2009-2019								
Party	—2009—		—2014—		—2019—		—2024—	
	Seats	Proportion	Seats	Proportion	Seats	Proportion	Seats	Proportion
ANC	264	65.90%	249	62.15%	230	57.50%	159	40.18%
NP/NNP ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DA/DP ^b	67	16.66%	89	22.23%	84	20.77%	87	21.81%
EFF	—	—	25	6.35%	44	10.80%	39	9.52%
IFP	18	4.55%	10	2.40%	14	3.38%	17	3.85%
NFP	—	—	6	1.57%	2	0.35%	—	—
UDM	4	0.85%	4	1.00%	2	0.45%	3	0.49%
COPE	30	7.42%	3	0.67%	2	0.27%	—	—
ACDP	3	0.81%	3	0.57%	4	0.84%	3	0.60%
ID ^c	4	0.92%	—	—	—	—	—	—
FF+	4	0.83%	4	0.90%	10	2.38%	6	1.36%
PAC	1	0.27%	1	0.21%	1	0.19%	1	0.23%
ATM	—	—	—	—	2	0.44%	2	0.40%
GOOD	—	—	—	—	2	0.40%	1	0.18%
UCDP ^d	2	0.37%	—	—	—	—	—	—
FA ^e	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MF	1	0.25%	—	—	—	—	—	—
AEB ^f	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Azapo ^g	1	0.22%	—	—	—	—	—	—
APC ^h	1	0.20%	1	0.17%	—	—	—	—
AIC ⁱ	—	—	3	0.53%	—	—	—	—
Agang SA	—	—	2	0.28%	—	—	—	—
Al Jama-a ^h	—	—	—	—	1	0.18%	2	0.24%
ActionSA	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	1.20%
Rise Mzans ⁱ	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	0.42%
BOSA ⁱ	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	0.41%
NCC ^k	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	0.23%
UAT ^l	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.22%
MKP ^m	—	—	—	—	—	—	58	14.58%
PA ⁿ	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	2.06%
Total^o	400	100.00%	400	100.00%	400	100.00%	400	100.00%

Source: IEC, www.elections.org.za

^a National Party/New National Party.

^b In June 2000, the Democratic Party (DP) became the Democratic Alliance (DA).

^c Independent Democrats.

^d United Christian Democratic Party.

^e Federal Alliance.

^f Afrikaner Eenheidsbeweging.

^g Azanian People's Organisation.

^h African People's Convention.

ⁱ African Independent Congress.

^j Build One South Africa

^k National Coloured Congress

^l United Africans Transformation

^m uMkhonto weSizwe Party

ⁿ Patriotic Alliance

^o Proportions may not add up vertically, owing to rounding and the exclusion of 'Other'.

Politics

Seats held in provincial legislatures^a after the 2024 provincial elections

Party	EC	FS	GAU	KZN	LIM	MPU	NW	NC	WC	SA
ACDP	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
ANC	45	16	28	14	48	27	21	15	8	222
Al Jama-ah	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
ATM	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
GOOD	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
DA	11	7	22	11	4	6	5	7	24	97
EFF	8	4	11	2	9	7	8	4	2	55
FF+	1	1	2	—	1	1	1	1	1	9
IFP	—	—	1	15	—	—	—	—	—	16
NFP ^b	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
UDM	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
PA	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	3	3	10
MKP	1	1	8	37	1	9	1	—	—	58
ACT	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
ActionSA	—	—	3	—	—	1	1	—	—	5
Rise Mzansi	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
BOSA	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
UAT	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
NCC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	72	30	80	80	64	51	37	30	42	486

Source: IEC, www.elections.org.za

^a Each of the nine provincial legislatures has between 30 and 80 seats, depending on the number of people who live in the province.

^b National Freedom Party

Delegates to the National Council of Provinces after the 2024 provincial elections

Province	ANC	DA	EFF	IFP	FF+	MKP	PA	ActionSA	UDM	Total
Eastern Cape	6	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	10
Free State	5	2	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	10
Gauteng	4	3	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	10
KwaZulu-Natal	2	1	—	2	—	5	—	—	—	10
Limpopo	8	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Mpumalanga	5	1	2	—	—	2	—	—	—	10
North West	6	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Northern Cape	5	2	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	10
Western Cape	2	6	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	10
South Africa	43	20	10	2	2	9	2	1	1	90

Source: Parliament of South Africa, www.parliament.gov.za

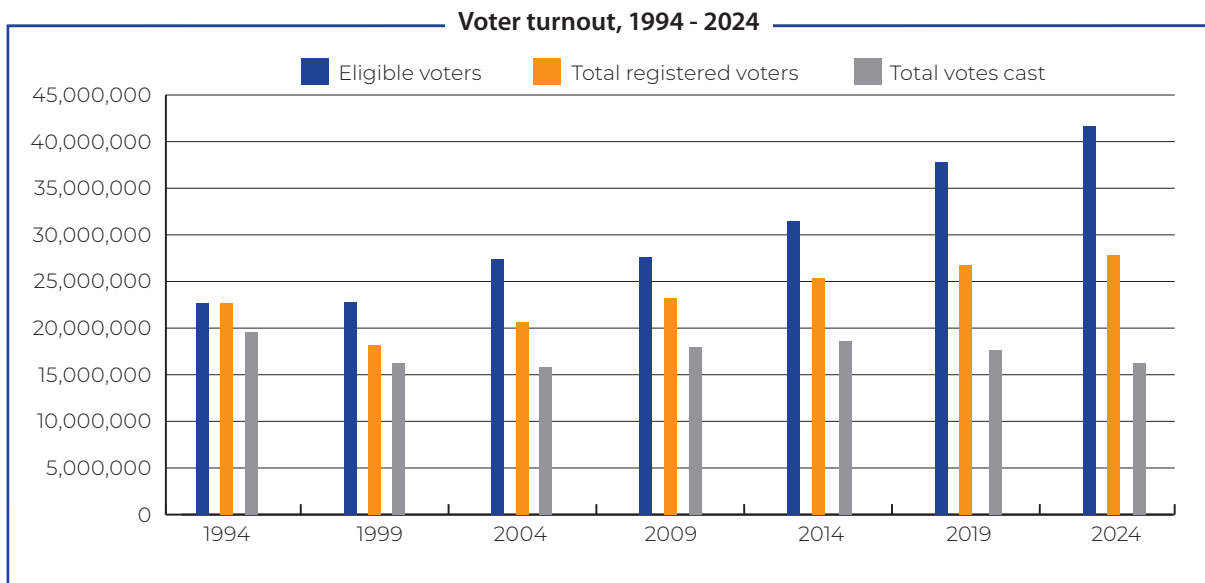
^a There are 54 permanent delegates — six (6) from each province — in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). There are also 36 special delegates — four (4) from each province — in the NCOP. All delegates are headed by a provincial premier or a member of the provincial legislature designated by the premier. Selection is based on proportional representation from party lists in the respective provinces.

Politics

Voter turnout, 1994 - 2024						
Year	Eligible voters	Total registered voters	Total votes cast	Votes as a proportion of total eligible voters	Proportion of eligible voters who did not vote	Proportion of registered voters who voted
1994 ^a	22,709,152	22,709,152	19,533,498	86.0%	14.0%	86.0%
1999	22,798,845	18,177,751	16,228,462	71.2%	28.8%	89.3%
2004	27,436,898	20,674,923	15,868,558	57.8%	42.2%	76.8%
2009	27,574,414	23,181,997	17,919,966	65.0%	35.0%	77.3%
2014	31,434,035	25,388,082	18,654,771	59.3%	40.7%	73.5%
2019	37,834,277	26,736,725	17,672,851	46.7%	53.5%	73.5%
2024	41,631,020	27,782,081	16,291,516	39.1%	60.9%	58.6%
Change: 1994 - 2004	83.3%	22.3%	-16.6%	-54.5%	335.5%	-31.8%

Source: The Presidency, Development Indicators, 2012; IEC; Stats SA

^a In 1994 there was no voter registration and permanent residents without South African citizenship were allowed to vote. This was not the case in subsequent elections.



Politics

Municipal by-elections since the 2021 local government elections*

	Hold	Gain	Loss	Net
ANC	110	9	39	-30
IFP	16	23	2	21
NFP	1	1	0	1
AUM ^a	0	1	1	0
Independent	0	2	4	-2
DA	45	9	7	2
EFF	1	10	1	9
PA	0	7	3	4
KGP ^b	0	0	1	-1
Al Jama-ah	0	0	1	-1
FF+	0	1	1	0
TSSA ^c	1	0	1	-1
CFRA ^d	1	1	0	1
GOOD	0	0	3	-3
MK	0	1	0	1
ABC ^e	0	0	1	-1

Source: Hold means a seat was held by a party and successfully defended in a by-election. Gain means a party gained a seat in a by-election from another party while loss means the party failed to defend a seat. Net is the number of seats lost from the number of seats gained, so the ANC has gained 9 seats, lost 39, giving it a net loss of 30 seats, while the IFP has a net gain of 21 seats.

* Up to and including by-elections held on 17 July 2024

^a African United Movement

^b Karoo Gemeenskap Party

^c Team Sugar South Africa

^d Cederberg First Residents' Association

^e Abantu Batho Congress