

EISA ELECTION RESOURCE CENTER



A weekly review of South Africa's 2019 election period

WHO DETERMINED SOUTH AFRICA'S 2019 ELECTION RESULTS?

WRITTEN BY MELANIE MEIROTTI

To illustrate South Africa's diverse population, Justice Albie Sachs once noted that "South Africans come in all shapes and sizes". (SAHRC, 2016). In the run-up to the 2019 national and provincial elections, which took place on 8 May, 48 political parties devoted their resources to appeal to various segments of this diverse population in the hopes of securing seats in the country's sixth democratic Parliament.

The Independent Electoral Commission's statistics on voter registration and turnout reveal some interesting and surprising trends regarding the identity politics of South African voters. This final edition of the EISA weekly election review will consider which constituencies were most influential in terms of determining the outcome of the 2019 elections.

In their review of women voters in South Africa, Maite Dithebe and Qiqa Nkomo examine some of the key social challenges facing the numerically largest segment of voters in the country. The article explores how aspects of women's diverse identities informed how parties appealed to them and whether this influenced how women voted.

*Who voted and
why in the 2019
elections*

**WOMEN VOTERS
IN SOUTH
AFRICA**

**2019 ELECTIONS:
WHERE DID THE
YOUTH GO?**

**SOUTH AFRICA'S
INFLUENTIAL
'MIDDLE' VOTERS**

**URBAN AND
RURAL VOTERS
IN SOUTH
AFRICAN
ELECTIONS**

What appears to be the active disengagement of South African youth in electoral politics is a serious concern for the country's democratic future. Nancy Hakizimana and Grant Masterson unpack some of the concerns facing young people today and how political parties have sought to attract their support.

In contrast to the worryingly low turnout of youth (18-29) at the polls, the generation directly above it (aged 30-39 and 40-49) form the largest segment of the voter population. Melanie Meirotti and Sizwe Nene explore the intersection of age and inclusion in the economy in this group and how it has influenced their culture of participation.

The geographic location of voters has always been a key determinant of party loyalty in South Africa. Sandile Khuboni and Thembelani Mazibuko explore how political parties used their resources during the campaign period to maintain party support in traditional strongholds or gain ground in rural and/or urban areas of the country.

WOMEN VOTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

WRITTEN BY MAITE DITHEBE AND QIQA NKOMO

Since 1994, the adoption of various democratic policies have given rise to institutions that promote women's rights in South Africa. Data from United Nations Women indicates that the South Africa fares relatively well in enabling women to take an active role in government (Anon, 2016). Data from the Independent Electoral Commission shows that women constitute 51% of potential voters in South Africa. In the 2019 national and provincial elections, women across all adult age groups accounted for 55% of all registered voters (Phakgadi, 2019). Globally, South Africa has the 10th highest representation of women in parliament, where 42.7% of all MPs are women (Thornton, 2019). Although South Africa has made impressive strides regarding gender representation in government, it seems women's rights and opportunities are only taken seriously by politicians during elections.

Leading up to the 2019 elections, political parties promoted gender equality and committed to eradicating gender-based violence (GBV) and inequality. The DA's manifesto describes GBV as "incalculable", while the EFF states that women have suffered under the oppression of "sexism and patriarchy" for the last 20 years. This as the ANC simply labelled GBV a "crisis" and aligned its policy on gender representation with the Constitution. Yet these election commitments are not reflected in parties' day-to-day operations, as well as in the attitudes of senior party officials (Gouws, 2019).

For example, it was not up until very recently that the 107-year-old ANC developed a policy on sexual harassment (Davis, 2019). In stark contrast with their party manifestos, in the months leading up to the 2019 elections, there were multiple sexual harassment allegations against party officials in the ANC, the DA and the EFF (Africa, 2019). This was also foregrounded by the fact that incidents of GBV in South Africa have consistently increased over the years. In 2016/17, StatsSA reported that "250 out of every 100 000 women were victims of sexual offences compared to 120 out of every 100 000 men" (StatsSA, 2018). But

these statistics did not deter women in the 2014 elections, as they constituted 60% of those who voted (Berkowitz, 2019).

In spite of political parties not actioning their policies and commitments regarding women's rights and empowerment, according to Berkowitz (2019), women voters should not be analysed as a monolithic bloc; and their choices should not be measured in terms of party manifestos. There might be no detailed polling information that segments voters by income or education, but there is research that links the voting choices of some women to their socioeconomic concerns.

"A 2017 study by the Centre for Social Development in Africa found that women were less likely to vote for the ANC than men. A subsequent study in 2018 found that the gender divide had narrowed or disappeared. A possible explanation is that the resignation of [Jacob] Zuma changed women's feelings towards the ANC." (Patel, 2019).

The same study revealed a correlation between women who are social welfare grant recipients and their likelihood to vote for the ANC. Survey responses suggested that grant recipients were motivated by a fear of losing their grants under another party.

Considering that more women voted in the 2019 elections than men, if women voters collectively voted for a single party, their votes would have changed the outcome of the elections (Gouws, 2019). Hence, it was surprising that political parties only referred to the advancement and protection of women in their manifestos but failed to match their behaviour during elections. The lack of better commitment by political parties to women's issues versus the number of women who voted in the last two elections would suggest that what motivates women to vote is not necessarily linked to how political parties, especially the ANC, deal with gender-related social ills such as GBV.

It would appear that what drives women to vote is linked more to general concerns such as job opportunities and social grants. This may be due to South Africa's high unemployment rate, which results in basic needs not being met, thereby placing issues such as sexual assault as secondary. Until the broader issue of unemployment, corruption and crime are dealt with, political parties are likely to continue to go unpunished at the polls for their failure to address gender-related concerns in spite of attracting more women than men at the polls.

References

Africa, B., D., S. 2019. The big debate season 10 Episode 2/ Pop culutre. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0hJSNE-iS8> :16 May 2019

Anon. 2016. South Africa's women in politics, 25 August: *Brand South Africa*:

<https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/governance/developmentnews/south-africa-s-women-in-politics>: 16 May 2019

Apleni, L. 2012. Women's role in the transformation of South Africa, 1 November: *Polity*.

<https://www.polity.org.za/article/womens-role-in-the-transformation-of-south-africa-2012-11-01>: 15 May 2019

Berkowitz, P. 2019. How the women's vote could make all the difference, 8 May: *Times live*.

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2019-05-08-analysis-how-women-vote-could-make-all-the-difference/>: 16 May 2019

- Davis, R. 2019. In search of policies on sexual harassment? Don't ask most SA political parties, 19 February: Daily Maverick. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-02-19-in-search-of-policies-on-sexual-harassment-dont-ask-most-sa-political-parties/>: 16 May 2019
- Gouws, A. 2019. Women have the power to swing the 2019 election, 6 May: *Mail and Gaudian*. <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-05-06-women-have-the-power-to-swing-the-2019-election>: 16 May 2019
- Patel. L. 2019. Trust in Presidency may be a game changer for ANC in 2019 elections, 23 April: *the journalist*. <https://www.thejournalist.org.za/spotlight/trust-in-presidency-may-be-a-game-changer-for-anc-in-2019-elections>: 16 May 2019
- Phakgadi, P. 2019. 26.75m - IEC records highest number of registered voters since democracy, 22 March: *News24*. <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/2675m-iec-records-highest-number-of-registered-voters-since-democracy-20190322>: 16 May 2019
- StatsSA. 2018. Crime against women in South Africa. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-40-05/Report-03-40-05June2018.pdf>: 16 May 2019
- Thornton, A. 2019. These countries have the most women in parliament. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/chart-of-the-day-these-countries-have-the-most-women-in-parliament/>: 16 May 2019

2019 ELECTIONS: WHERE DID THE YOUTH GO?

WRITTEN BY NANCY HAKIZIMANA AND GRANT MASTERSON

With more than 36% of its citizens aged between 15 and 34, South Africa has one of the youngest populations in the world (StatsSA, 2016). However, when comparing statistics from the 2014 and 2019 national and provincial elections, the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) found a 47% decrease in the number of people aged between 18 and 19 on the 2019 voters' roll. The PMG also found that the number of registered voters between the ages of 20 and 29 decreased by 9% in 2019 (PMG, 2019). On 9 May 2019, the day after South Africa's national elections, the Southern African Development Community observer mission announced that it had noticed a lower youth turnout at the polls (Kubheka, 2019). This decrease in youth participation in elections becomes even more pronounced when considering that South Africa's population has grown by approximately 7.5% over the past five years (GroundUp, 2019).

These statistics suggest that the 2019 election results do not accurately reflect the voice and aspirations of the largest age segment of South Africa's adult population; and that young South Africans are apathetic when it comes to politics and governance. However, the youth have been central in shaping South Africa throughout its history. Examples of this can be seen as far back as the Soweto uprising in 1976 or as recent as the 2015 #FeesMustFall protests. Crucial events such as these also illustrate that South African youth are more inclined to use alternative means to voice their concerns.

Leading up to the 2019 elections, the Independent Electoral Commission ran the "Xsê" campaign, which was intended to encourage young South Africans to vote. The campaign used a play on words from the Afrikaans slang phrase "Ek sê", literally translated to English as "I say". The phrase is understood by a multitude of South Africans across cultures as one that is used to draw attention to the speaker so they may be heard, as in, "listen up, I am speaking". The use of "X" was also a clever play on the mark used by voters on ballot sheets. The "Xsê" campaign featured images of young South Africans across all forms of media, from billboards to social media.

Various political parties also targeted the youth in their respective campaigns. While the ANC used #FeesMustFall leader Fasiha Hassan to campaign and attract young voters, the DA released a TV ad inspired by US musician Childish Gambino's hit 2018 music video "This is America". While the EFF also ran a campaign that featured #FeesMustFall leaders, it mainly targeted the youth on social media platforms such as Twitter. On these platforms, the party made use of hashtags such as #MCM (man crush Monday), #WCW (women crush Wednesday) and #EFFRedFridays. This approach was, in essence, drawn from the #FeesMustFall protests, where students demonstrated that they could mobilise thousands of young South Africans by using hashtags. While using social media does, indeed, reach certain youth audiences, it is, however, important to note that only 12% of eligible South African voters are on social media (De Villiers, 2019).

The question of youth participation in elections is made even more complex by the variety of youth interests and frustrations. To appeal to the youth, parties must understand and address issues that young people are interested in. Studies conducted by YouthLab and the Institute of Security Studies found that the most pressing issues for the youth, which may inform their decisions on whether to vote, are unemployment, free and quality education, corruption, crime, and drug use (YouthLab 2019). This especially as 55.2% of all unemployed people in South Africa are youth (StatsSA 2019). Most parties prioritised unemployment during their campaigns leading up to the 2019 elections. For example, the ANC vowed to strengthen its efforts to attract investment for job creation, while the DA stated its aim to enhance the manufacturing, agriculture and tourism sectors.

South Africa's youth appear to have actively disengaged from electoral politics just 25 years since the dawn of democracy. Often, the age gap between political leaders and their constituents is offered as an explanation for this kind of disconnect in electoral politics, however, the DA and EFF both fielded young leaders in these elections. Given the grim prospects for young people in South Africa in 2019, the fact that they do not appear to view politics as relevant to their circumstances represents a growing risk to South Africa's "young" democracy.

References

- Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: The case of #RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(2), 221-232.
- De Villiers, J. (2019). If Twitter was a country, the EFF would have beaten the ANC in the elections. *Business Insider*. Accessed at: <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/twitter-facebook-elections-results-2019-social-media-following-eff-anc-da-2019-5>
- GroundUp. (2019). Fewer young people have registered to vote in the May election. Accessed at: <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/fewer-young-people-register-vote-may-election/>
- IEC. (2019). Xsê campaign. Electoral Commission of South Africa. Accessed at: <https://www.elections.org.za/content/Elections/2019-National-and-provincial-elections/Xs%C3%AA-campaign/>
- Kubheka, T. (2019). SADC ELECTION OBSERVERS RAISE CONCERNS OVER LOW YOUTH TURNOUT AT VOTING STATIONS. *EWN*. Accessed at: <https://ewn.co.za/2019/05/08/sadc-election-observers-raise-concerns-over-low-youth-turnout-at-voting-stations>
- Mahlangu, S. (2019). #SAElectionResults2019: Leveraging social media to make gains at the polls. *IOL*. Accessed at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2019-02-02-eff-promises-free-education-higher-social-grants-and-50-of-land-owned-by-women-and-youth/>
- PMG. (2019). Parliament not told about 47% drop in registered 18 & 19 yr olds for elections. Accessed at: <https://pmg.org.za/blog/2019elections>

StatsSA. (2016). Community Survey. Accessed at: <http://cs2016.statssa.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/NT-30-06-2016-RELEASE-for-CS-2016- Statistical-releas 1-July-2016.pdf>

StatsSA. (2019). Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Accessed at: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2019.pdf>

Tonisi, T. (2019). Young South Africans are politically engaged, but can't see how the system works for them, studies find. Daily Maverick. Accessed at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-04-01-young-south-africans-are-politically-engaged-but-cant-see-how-the-system-works-for-them-studies-find/>

YouthLab. (2019). South African Youth Manifesto 2019. Accessed at: <https://youthlab.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/The-South-African-Youth-Manifesto-2019.pdf>

SOUTH AFRICA'S INFLUENTIAL 'MIDDLE' VOTERS

WRITTEN BY MELANIE MEIROTTI AND SIZWE NENE

Much concern has been raised about the limited participation of youth voters in South Africa (those aged between 18-19 and 20-29 years – see IEC registration figures below) in the 2019 national and provincial elections. In contrast, the segment of voters aged between 30 and 39, known for purposes of this article as “middle” voters, outnumber registered voters in the 18-29 age segment by more than 1.3 million. Even though the 30-39 age segment is proportionately smaller than the 18-29 segment in terms of South Africa's total population, this remains a telling feature in the country's electoral landscape (IEC, 2019). This article briefly explores possible reasons for the significant differences in voting trends between the two age segments.

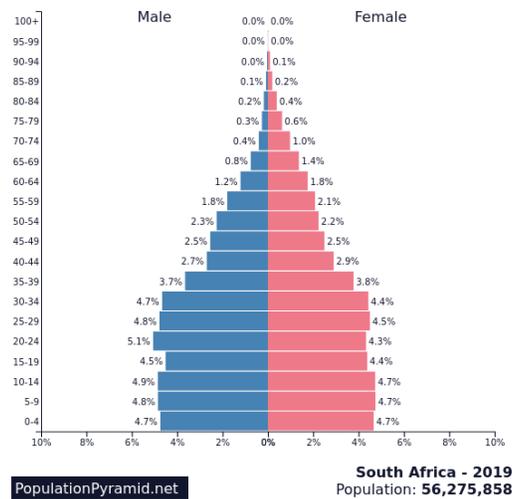
Figure 1



Source: StatsSA, 2018

Figure 2

South African population breakdown by age



Source: PopulationPyramid.net. 2019

Culture of political participation

As past statistics indicate, South Africans who were considered youth during the first decade of South Africa’s democracy (1994-2004) were more inclined to vote owing to the relative freshness of Nelson Mandela’s “rainbow nation” narrative and Thabo Mbeki’s notion of an “African renaissance”. This enthusiasm also came on the back of economic growth and the rise of a black middle class. As such, these voters were likely to have cultivated an optimism in South Africa’s future during the first decade of democracy and, in turn, developed a culture of participation in the following decade and beyond (HSRC, 2005).

Political issues and political homes

Education and employment are the major issues concerning South Africa’s youth (YouthLab, 2019), while older generations are more likely to be educated and included in the economy (formal or informal). According to StatsSA (2019) first quarter statistics, just over 70% of the youth do not have jobs. By contrast the unemployment rate among adults (aged 35–64 years) was 18,0% during this period. This does not necessarily mean that the latter group can be classified as middle or working class in the traditional sense, it does however mean that this group are less likely to form part of the most vulnerable and economically marginalized groups than their younger counterparts. Depending on the method of measuring middle class, between 13.5% and 43.2% fall into this bracket (Korhonen, 2018).

Those in the “middle” group are primarily concerned with issues such as the state of the economy, corruption and accountability, unemployment, and poverty and inequality (Heywood, 2013). During the previous election cycle, various political issues affected the economy and standard of living in South Africa. These included: instability within the finance ministry since 2015, followed by credit-ratings downgrades (Donnelly, 2017); a VAT increase from 14% to 15% in 2018; and multiple government scandals affecting

the finances and functions at crucial state-owned enterprises, most notably power utility Eskom (Meirotti, 2019). In contrast, many so-called born-frees have failed to find political homes as they have grown disillusioned in an environment that has not been conducive to their economic growth.

The rising middle class

While members of older generations participate in elections in greater numbers compared with the youth, there is an increasing number of middle-class voters (particularly black middle-class voters) who do not relate to the narratives and messages of political parties (Everatt, 2019). Members of this segment are critical of the governing party's performance in power and are sceptical of opposition parties. The failure of political parties to address these concerns could impact heavily on the turnout of the largest voting age segment in the 2024 national and provincial elections.

Conclusion

The largest portion of South Africa's economically active population – those aged between 35 and 44 (StatsSA, 2019) – are likely to be the most invested in South Africa's politics as they have the most to lose. If the 2019 election campaign narratives of South Africa's two largest parties, the ANC and the DA, are to be believed, economic growth and tackling corruption are high on the agenda. Should these parties succeed in addressing these issues, the "middle" voter segment is likely to continue participating in elections. It is, however, clear that there is an increasing number of people, in all age and economic segments, who are finding less traction with political parties. This has already impacted voter turnout in the 2019 elections and, more worryingly, will likely have consequences for South Africa's culture of voter participation in future.

References

- Donnelly, L. 2017. Global credit ratings agency has downgraded South Africa to junk status. Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-11-25-global-credit-ratings-agency-has-downgraded-south-africa-to-junk-status>.
- Everatt, D. 2019. Who will South Africa's black middle class vote for. Available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/314340/who-will-south-africas-black-middle-class-vote-for/>.
- Heywood, A. 2013. Politics. 4th eds. MacMillane Palgrave: New York.
- HSRC. 2005. Survey on South African voter participation in elections. Available at: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/research-outputs/view/2343>.
- Independent Electoral Commission. 2019. Percentage registered voters: Summary. Available at: <https://www.elections.org.za/content/Voters-Roll/Percentage-registered-voters--Summary/>.
- Korhonen, M. 2018. Factsheet: Measuring South Africa's (black) middle class. Available at: <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-measuring-south-africas-black-middle-class/>
- Meirotti, M. 2019. Heading into the South African Elections: 2014-2019. EISA: Johannesburg.
- StatsSA. 2017. Whither a Demographic Dividend South Africa: The Overton Window of Political Possibilities. Available at: <http://www.statssa.gov.za>.
- StatsSA. 2019. South Africa's population. Available at: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?m=2019>.
- StatsSA. 2019. Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Available at: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2019.pdf>
- YouthLab. 2019. SA Youth manifesto 2019. Available at: <https://youthlab.org.za/sa-youth-manifesto-2019/>

URBAN AND RURAL VOTERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS

WRITTEN BY SANDILE KHUBONI AND THEMBELANI MAZIBUKO

Political commentators draw a distinction between urban and rural voters as two discrete constituencies representing different demographics and interests. Urban and rural voters are not homogenous, rather, these constituencies can be influenced by various issues, including service-delivery, party loyalty, ethnicity, corruption, patronage and the charisma of party leaders. According to a survey conducted by Afrobarometer, the split between urban and rural voters in the period leading up to the 2019 national and provincial elections favoured the ANC, as the party had 59% support in rural areas and 43% support in urban areas (Felton 2019). The poll showed the DA had 14% support in urban areas and 4% in rural areas, while the EFF had 11% support in urban and rural areas (Felton 2019).

The term “rural” can be understood to refer to areas where farming is the main economic activity, while “urban” refers to areas that have far greater economic diversity. This distinction can be applied broadly to provinces, which are considered either “rural” or “urban”.

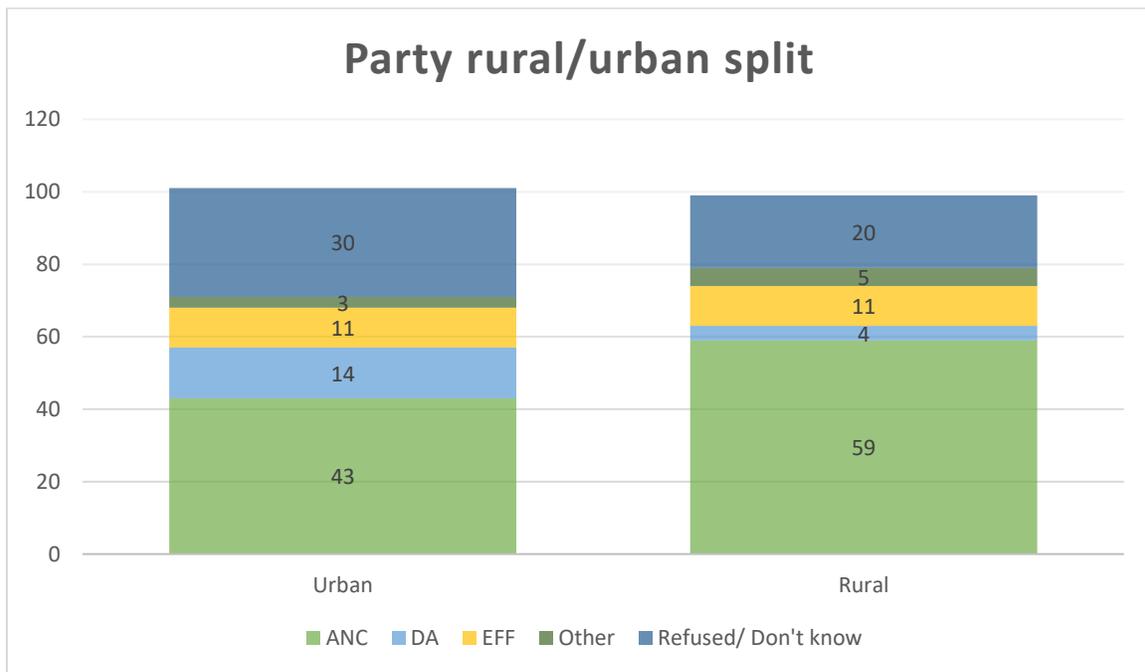
Rural areas tend to be homogeneous, whereas urban areas tend to be heterogeneous or cosmopolitan. Furthermore, rural residents tend to be older, whereas urban areas contain a mix of young and old people. As wealth tends to be concentrated in urban areas, young people in search of opportunities flock to them, with many of these people ending up living in informal settlements. As such, urban areas in South Africa typically have higher Gini coefficients where the poor, the working class and the rich live side by side. Today, 63% of South Africans live in urban areas (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2016).

Given the limited resources some political parties have during elections, they are most likely to campaign in areas where they have a relative advantage. During the 2019 election campaign period, the DA disproportionately focused its campaign in Western Cape (its stronghold), Northern Cape and Gauteng. Worth noting is that Northern Cape is arguably the most rural province in the country, whereas Gauteng is the most urban. This suggests that, for the DA, the decision on which provinces to focus its campaigns is based on high levels of urbanisation (as the party has higher levels of support in urban areas) as well as other factors. The EFF campaigned across the country with a strong focus on the northern provinces (North West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo). However, the EFF did not have a specific rural or urban focus, and campaigned in both.

With its vast network of branches, the ANC campaigned countrywide in rural and urban areas. However, given the results of the 2016 local government elections, as well as the Afrobarometer survey, the ANC clearly needed to increase its support in urban areas, especially in Gauteng.

The graph below details the urban/rural split between political parties.

Figure 1: Rural/ Urban split according to Afrobarometer survey



Source: Jamy Felton, 2019

2019 election results

The ANC maintained its overall dominance by winning more than 57% of the national vote, while the DA came second with 20% and the EFF received 10% (Elections.org.za, 2019). The ANC also maintained its dominance in most rural areas. The DA maintained its urban (and rural) appeal in Western Cape as well as its urban appeal in Gauteng, winning 27% while slightly increasing its voter share in Northern Cape to 25% (Elections.org.za, 2019). The EFF gained in all provinces and overtook the DA to become the official opposition in Mpumalanga.

Rounding off the top 5, the IFP made impressive inroads in rural KwaZulu-Natal, most likely due to its historical strength in the Zululand area as well as its appeal to a section of Zulu-speaking people, particularly in northern KwaZulu-Natal. However, these inroads for the IFP came on the back of a drastic decrease in support for the NFP. Freedom Front Plus, another party with an ethnically defined base, also made inroads in northern rural areas where there is a high Afrikaner presence (Feketha, 2019). The party's gains could be attributed to its mobilisation against land expropriation without compensation.

Conclusion

Rural and urban voters have distinct voter profiles. Rural voters still tend to vote ANC, with the exception of Western Cape, where the DA still has the lion's share of voter support. The ANC continues to face threats from the two major opposition parties in urban areas. The DA lost some of its particularly conservative voters to Freedom Front Plus in rural and urban areas.

References

Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2016. *Intergrated Urban Developemnt Framework: A New Deal for South African Cities and Town.* [Online]

ISSUE NO. 7 | 22 May 2019

Available at: https://www.africancentreforcities.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IUDF-2016_WEB-min.pdf (Accessed 21 May 2019).

Elections.org.za. 2019. 2019 National and Provincial Elections. *Independent Electorate Commission*.

<https://www.elections.org.za/NPEDashboard/app/dashboard.html> (online 19 May 2019)

Fetheka, S. 2019. "FF+ credits land issue for improved poll performance". *IOL*. 9th May. <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/ff-credits-land-issue-for-improved-poll-performance-22895393> (online 19 May 2019)

Felton, J. 2019. Increasingly non-partisan, South Africans willingly to trade elections for security, housing, jobs. *Afrobarometer*. 30th October.

https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r7_dispatchno248_south_africa_elections1.pdf (online 19 May 2019)

14 Park Road, Richmond
Johannesburg, 2092, South Africa
P.O Box 740 Auckland Park 2006
Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 381 6000
E-mail: melanie@eisa.org.za
www.eisa.org.za



The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) or the Embassy of Germany.

EISA gratefully acknowledges the financial support for this project from the Embassy of Germany in South Africa.



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Pretoria