



**Zimbabwe Election
Support Network**
Promoting Democratic
Elections In Zimbabwe



AHEAD
Africa

**Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA)
Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)**

**South Africa 2024 National and Provincial Elections
Observation and Learning Mission Report**

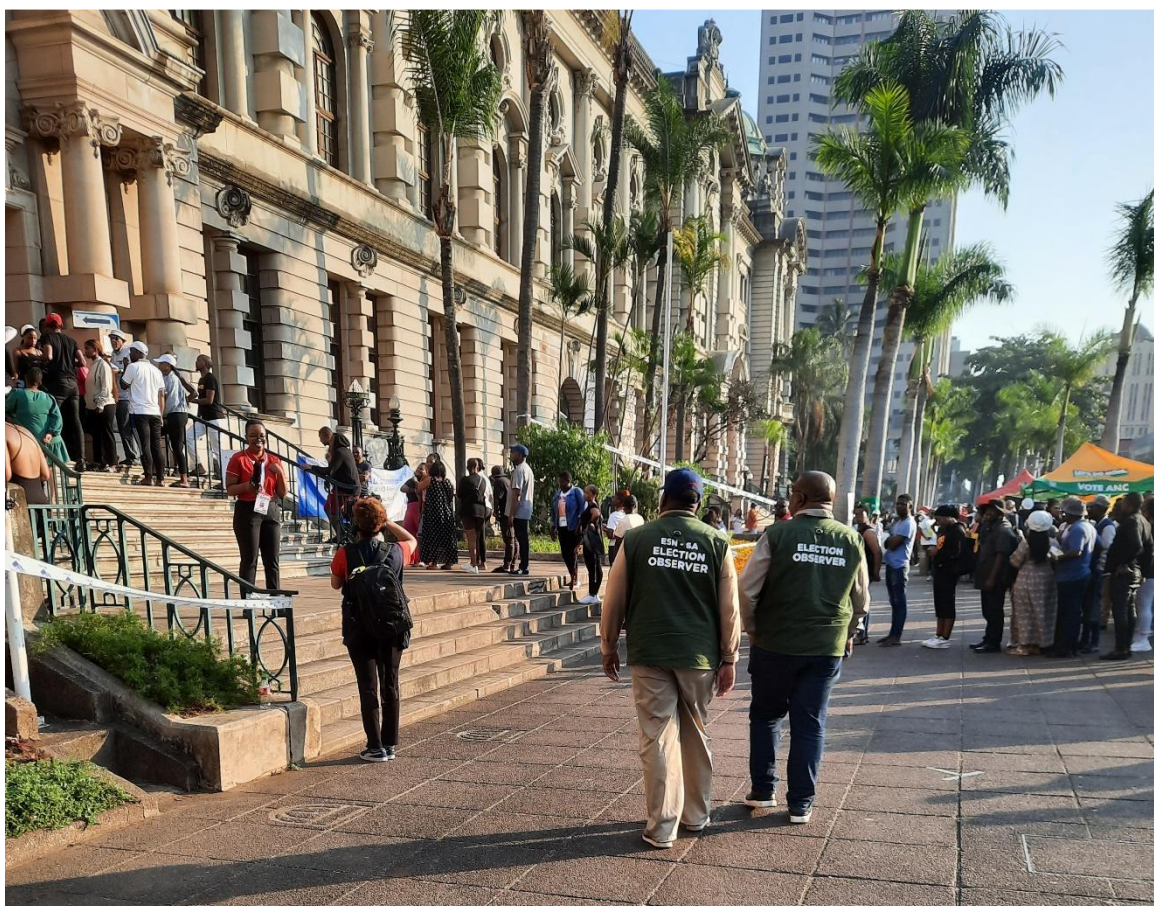


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1. Executive Summary

The Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) deployed a joint observation and learning mission to South Africa's 2024 National and Provincial Elections. The mission comprised 10 observers who were deployed to three (3) Provinces, namely Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape Provinces, from 26 to 31 May 2024.

South Africa held its National and Provincial Elections on 29 May 2024 to elect a new National Assembly and the Provincial Legislature in each of the nine (9) Provinces. These elections were the seventh elections since the end of the apartheid system.

The political landscape changed significantly after the elections as the ANC, for the first time, received less than 50% of the vote, necessitating the need to form a governing coalition with other parties. The political contestation ahead of these elections was considered more intense than the previous elections. The National and Provincial Elections were contested by 70 political parties and 11 independent candidates. The national ballot had 52 parties listed. Over 14,903 candidates competed for 887 seats in the National Provincial Legislatures, thus the South African voters were presented with a wide choice.

The ESN-SA and ZESN Joint observation and learning mission observed the following:

- I. The elections were held following electoral reforms that, while not changing the electoral system, ushered in significant changes such as; the inclusion and nomination of independent candidates as contesters to elections in the National Assembly and provincial legislatures; a revised formula for the allocation of seats and their re-allocation in the event of vacated seats; and provisions for Home Affairs Minister to establish the Electoral Reform Consultation Panel. Following independent investigations and consultations, the Panel will make non-binding recommendations on potential electoral system reforms for future elections of the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures after the 2024 elections.
- II. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is a constitutional institution that falls under Schedule 1 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Act 1 of 1999). It is an independent, impartial institution established by Chapter 9 of the Constitution of South Africa to strengthen constitutional democracy. The Commission manages national, provincial, and municipal elections. South African electoral framework provides sufficient safeguards to guarantee the independence of the IEC.
- III. Voter registration was generally well conducted in the two rounds of the voter registration exercise by the IEC. The first, was at the beginning of November 2023 and the second at the beginning of February 2024. The online registration of voters was noted as having helped to increase the number of young, first-time voters and those in the diaspora. Out of a total population of approximately 62 million, a total

of 27, 782, 477 people registered to cast their votes on 29 May 2024, with 55.23% representing females, and 44.77% representing males. While stakeholders who met with the Mission expressed satisfaction with the IEC's efforts to enrol all eligible voters, some stakeholders still noted that the estimated figure of 14 million eligible voters that were not yet registered, was a cause for concern.

- IV. The interlocutors that the Joint Mission met with were of the overwhelming opinion that mass media/mainstream media played a positive role by providing balanced and fair coverage of parties across the political divide. Public debates were cited as one of the key ways the media provided a platform for electoral contestants to inform the public about their manifestos. The IEC collaborated with social media companies in responding to and mitigating the adverse effect of misinformation, misinformation and mal-information whenever they occurred during the campaign season.
- V. The IEC provided extensive voter education focusing on sensitising the voters on the introduction of the three ballots that were to be used during the elections, special votes and the necessity of voting where one is registered to vote. The IEC partnered with CSOs, political parties, the Media and the corporate world in the delivery of voter education.
- VI. The Joint Mission noted the various special voting arrangements (SVAs) that are available for South African voters including Special Voting which was conducted on 27 and 28 of May 2024 (at voting stations and home visits). The participation of South Africans living abroad whose turnout during this election surpassed that of the 2019 elections was also noted. The IEC made deliberate efforts to enhance access to the electoral process by, among other things, involving organisations working with Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the creation of voter education curriculum, providing voting booths whose heights were adjusted for the convenience of people using wheelchairs, the use of the universal ballot template (UBT) for the visually impaired.
- VII. The Mission covered 33 voting stations on election day in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal provinces. At all the polling stations that the joint mission observed the polling officials were courteous, and professional and exhibited confidence when administering polling procedures, save for some instances where there were clear discrepancies in how the queues were managed. Voter Management Devices (VMDs) in some voting stations experienced network failure, leading to slow voter processing.
- VIII. Despite the long winding queues which were witnessed on election day, the turnout is the lowest since the first democratic elections in 1994. The voter turnout stood at 58.58 per cent for the National and Provincial Elections. Over 16,2 million South Africans who exercised their Constitutional right as well as civic duty to cast their ballots
- IX. The final results were announced officially by the IEC on 2 June 2024, the results showed that for the first time in South Africa, no single party won a mandate to govern. The ANC received over 6.4 million votes, followed by the DA and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), a new entrant to South African politics. In this election, a record

¹ <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/south-africa-has-over-14-million-unregistered-voters-mainly-youth/>

number of 52 political parties contested the national ballot (compared to 48 parties in 2019).

The joint mission noted several lessons, and in addition, proffered the following recommendations for the IEC's consideration:

- i. Polling officials need further training on the management of voting stations to address the inconsistencies observed in some voting stations such as approaches to managing long queues at different voting stations.
- ii. The IEC should consider using separate, colour-coded ballot boxes to expedite ballot paper sorting before counting commences.
- iii. The IEC should ensure that an adequate number of voter management devices are available to all voting stations, together with a backup internet connection.
- iv. The IEC should also ensure adequate lighting for all voting stations.
- v. There is a need to strengthen voter education efforts about changes in electoral laws.
- vi. To reduce voter waiting time, the IEC must consider increasing the number of polling streams at voting stations.
- vii. To ensure the opening of voting stations on time, the IEC should enhance logistical arrangements so that essential election materials are delivered timeously.

2. Introduction

The Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) deployed a joint observation and learning mission to South Africa's 2024 National and Provincial Elections. The Mission deployed ten (10) observers from Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The ESN-SA and ZESN chairpersons led the joint Mission, Ms. Emma Kaliya and Mr. Andrew Makoni, respectively. The teams were deployed to three (3) Provinces, namely Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape Provinces, from 26 to 31 May 2024.

The joint Mission observed the National and Provincial Elections following the Laws of the Republic of South Africa, the Revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

3. South African National and Provincial Elections Background

South Africa held its National and Provincial Elections on 29 May 2024. On that day, South Africans elected a new National Assembly and the Provincial Legislature in each of the country's nine (9) Provinces. These elections were the seventh elections since the end of the apartheid system. In 1994, the country held its first democratic elections after the fall of the racial segregationist system of apartheid that had oppressed the blacks and other non-white South Africans since 1948.

President Cyril Ramaphosa sought a second term as President in a vote that proved to be historic, with opposition parties gaining ground over his African National Congress (ANC) in some provinces. The ANC led the country since 1994, however, for the first time, the ANC got less than the 50 per cent parliamentary majority, necessitating the need to forge a governing coalition. In the previous six (6) elections, the party has generally polled over 60% every time - however, its vote share has fallen steadily since its highest percentage of 70% in 2004. The state of the economy is one (1) of the key factors that impacted the ANC's popularity, high unemployment and crime rates, and service delivery issues, among other socio-economic challenges.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) were the most dominant opposition parties. Former President Jacob Zuma backed the newly formed uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) or Spear of the Nation party, which added to the intense political contest ahead of the elections. The 2024 General Elections were the most contested in the history of this country, and for the first time, the governing ANC party received less than 50% of the overall voter share. The National and Provincial Elections were contested by 70 political parties and 11 independent candidates. The national ballot had 52 parties listed. Over 14,903 candidates competed for 887 seats in the National Provincial Legislatures, thus the South African voters were presented with a wide choice.

The 2024 Elections were widely regarded as the most contested since the 1994 elections, despite this, the campaigns were largely smooth. Campaigns using various social media platforms were prevalent, with some political parties using bot accounts on the X (formerly Twitter) Platform. Fewer parties used the mass media platforms owing to the cost of paid adverts. Direct contact campaigning methods were largely used by dominant political parties, which included rallies and door-to-door campaigns. The campaigns were overall peaceful, with some isolated incidents of intimidation recorded.

4. Mission Objectives and Activities Undertaken

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa has demonstrated leadership in election management over the last 30 years by conducting elections widely considered as examples of well-managed elections. Hence, the Joint Mission sought to:

- a. To deepen understanding of the election management practices in South Africa.
- b. To develop evidence-based recommendations to inform ESN-SA's regional advocacy initiatives.
- c. To support ESN-Member (Kwa-Zulu Natal Christian Council) observation initiatives for the National and Provincial Elections.
- d. To establish rapport with international and regional institutions that were accredited to observe the elections in South Africa.

In pursuit of the above-stated objectives, the ESN-SA and ZESN Joint Mission implement the following activities:

I. Application for accreditation

The ESN-SA and ZESN successfully applied for and were granted permission² to observe the NPEs by the South African Independent Electoral Commission. The application and accreditation processes were seamless. Applications were submitted virtually via the IEC's website, there were no accreditation fees, and the accreditation cards were provided via email. All enquiries that applicants had were promptly responded to.

II. Development of Observation Checklist

To standardise observers' reports the members of the Joint Mission utilised checklists specifically developed to guide the observers on the key electoral aspects that observers needed to track and report on during the observation effort. The checklist covered the polling station set-up, the polling process, and the closing and counting procedures. An additional checklist was developed for reporting when critical incidents occurred.

² Observers Accreditation was approved on 2 May 2024, and electronic accreditation cards were sent to ESN-SA and ZESN.

III. Observer Briefing and Deployment

ESN-SA and ZESN conducted in-person briefing sessions to prepare the ESN-SA and ZESN observers for the observation effort. Members of the ZESN secretariat briefed the teams in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces on the pre-electoral developments, the observation checklists, and the hotspots identified in proposed areas of deployment. The Joint Mission deployed to three (3) provinces, namely Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Western Cape. The deployment period lasted 6 (six) days, from 26 to 31 May 2024. The observers observed the final campaign rallies, special voting, attended the IEC's briefing sessions and visited the provincial results tabulation centres in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape while the Gauteng team visited and followed proceedings at the National Results Operations Centre (NROC).

IV. Meetings with Stakeholders:

Additional briefings were provided by in-country experts and South African organisations that included:

1. **The Kwazulu Natal Council of Churches (KZNCC):** the KZN team held a series of meetings with the representative of the KZNCC before, during and after the elections to among other things, discuss the KZNCC pre-election findings, KZNCC team also supported the Joint Mission's mapping out of voting stations in support of a coherent deployment plan for the Joint Mission. After the elections, the Mission exchanged notes with the KZNCC on the key observations made, lessons learnt and recommendations.



Picture 1: Picture taken moments before the commencement of the de-briefing session with the KZNCC and ESN-SA/ZESN observation missions

2. **The Women's Election Mechanism for Peace (WEMP):** The Western Cape and KZN Teams met with WEMP representatives. The meetings discussed, among other things, the Election Situation Rooms (ESRs) that the WEMP

had set up in various provinces and the work of their Peace Monitors. They also discussed the ZESN and ESN-SA experience with ESRs in the member countries where these have been conducted. Below are two (2) pictures of the Western Cape team meeting with representatives of WEMP.



Picture 2 &3: Meeting with representatives of the WEMP, ZESN and ESN-SA

- 3. Kagiso Trust:** The Western Cape team had several engagements with Kagiso Trust, which, in addition to briefing the team on the prevailing and pre-electoral environments, also supported the team's mapping of voting stations, setting up meetings with the Provincial IEC representatives, and navigating areas identified as hotspots. Below is a pic of the Western Cape team with representatives from Kagiso Trust.



Picture 3: Members of the ESN-SA and ZESN meeting with representatives of Kagiso Trust

- 4. The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA):** The Gauteng team paid a courtesy call to the EISA Head of Mission, the Former President of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr Goodluck Jonathan. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Joint Mission and share key observations on the 2024 National and Provincial Elections.



Picture 4 & 5: Representatives of the ESN-SA/ZESN Joint Observation Mission with the EISA Observation Mission representatives

5. **Briefing sessions with Eminent Academics:** The Gauteng team also met with eminent academics from the University of South Africa and Johannesburg to appreciate the key pre-electoral developments and their significance in this election.

V. Reports and Statements

To raise the visibility of the Joint Mission and its observation findings the Mission produced and widely disseminated a Pre-election Statement, Preliminary

Statement³, and an Election Report. The Mission will also formally submit its findings and recommendations to the IEC.

5. Legal Framework

The National and Provincial Legislative elections were largely governed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and legislation that includes the following:

- i Electoral Act (No.73 of 1998) and notably (including the Electoral Amendment Act, 1 of 2023);
- ii Electoral Commission Act (No. 51 of 1996);
- iii Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act (No. 103 of 1997), which was subsequently amended in 2024;
- iv Political Party Funding Act (No.6 of 2018); and
- v Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000.

Changes in the legal framework introduced provisions that, among other things, provided for the participation of independent candidates in national elections and amended the rules governing the funding for political parties and independent candidates. However, enforcing transparency measures in political party funding has been challenging. The legal framework supports gender equality, but no specific legislation mandating women's representation in politics exists.

The inclusion of independent candidates widened the electorate's pool of choices. This was a significant development in South Africa's elections as citizens were no longer compelled to join a political party to contest at the national assembly (regional elections). The Mission also notes a December 2023 Court ruling that reduced the signature requirement for independent candidates from 15,000 regional voters to 1,000 signatures, making it easier for independent candidates to contest.

Meetings with stakeholders revealed that some of the changes were regarded as having been instituted late in the electoral cycle and, in some instances, even causing confusion among some electoral stakeholders. One such change was the Electoral Matters Amendment Act, (Act 14), 2024, which was gazetted on 7 May 2024, three weeks before election day.

The President of the Republic of South Africa signed the Electoral Amendment Bill into law on 17 April 2023.

³ <https://connectstories.co.zw/esn-sa-zesn-joint-mission-commends-iec-for-smooth-conduct-and-transparency-in-sa-elections/>

According to the IEC, the main implications of the Electoral Amendment Act (the Act)⁴, 1 of 2023, are as follows:

- The inclusion and nomination of independent candidates as contesters to elections in the National Assembly and provincial legislatures for the first time;
- The requirements which must be met by persons who wish to be nominated as independent candidates;
- The inspection of copies of lists of independent candidates and accompanying documents;
- Provision for objections to independent candidates;
- The inclusion of a list of independent candidates entitled to contest elections;
- Requirement for the appointment of agents by independent candidates;
- Obligation for independent candidates to abide by the Electoral Code of Conduct;
- A revised formula for the allocation of seats and their re-allocation in the event of vacated seats and;
- Provisions for the Home Affairs Minister to establish the Electoral Reform Consultation Panel. Following independent investigations and consultations, the Panel will make non-binding recommendations on potential electoral system reforms for future elections of the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures after the 2024 elections.

5.1. South Africa Electoral System

National Assembly

South Africans vote in National and Provincial Elections every five years. In terms of the Constitution, the elections must be held within 90 days of the expiry of the sitting National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures. The President of the Republic of South Africa proclaims the election date.

National and Provincial Elections

South Africa has a parliamentary system of government. The National Assembly consists of 400 members elected on a proportional representation basis from candidate lists of political parties using a closed-list approach. 200 members are elected from national lists of political parties, and the other 200 are elected

⁴ <https://www.elections.org.za/content/Documents/Laws-and-regulations/Elections/Electoral-Amendment-Act,-1-of-2023/>

from parties' provincial lists for each of the nine provinces. The President of South Africa is elected by the National Assembly after the election.

Provincial legislatures, which vary in size from 30 to 90 members, are also elected based on proportional representation with closed lists. After the election, at its first sitting, the members of the legislature must elect a provincial premier from amongst its members.

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) consists of 90 members. Each provincial legislature, based on the proportional representation of the political parties that comprise that legislature, elects ten (10) of its members to serve as NCOP members. National and Provincial Elections are held together and take place every five years. Voters vote for the national and provincial legislatures on separate ballot papers.

6. Election Administration

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is a constitutional institution that falls under Schedule 1 of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Act 1 of 1999). It is an independent, impartial institution established by Chapter 9 of the Constitution of South Africa to strengthen constitutional democracy. The Commission manages national, provincial, and municipal elections. It ensures that these elections are free, fair, and credible through the participation of citizens, political parties, and municipal elections. It ensures these elections are free, fair and credible through the participation of citizens, political parties and civil society. The duties and functions of the Commission are outlined in section 5 of the Electoral Commission Act (Act 51 of 1996). The Commission's duties and functions regarding National and Provincial Elections are outlined in the Electoral Act (Act 73 of 1998).

At the head of the IEC is a five-member Commission, one of whom must be a judge. The Commissioners are appointed for seven years by the President of South Africa. Their term can be renewed only once. The Commissioners appoint a Chief Electoral Officer, who is the head of the administration and is the accounting officer for the Commission. The Chief Electoral Officer appoints employees.

The functions of the IEC are as follows:

- To promote conditions to ensure free and fair elections
- To compile and update the national common voters' roll
- To compile and update the register of political parties
- To administer elections
- To promote knowledge of electoral voter processes
- To work and partner with key stakeholders
- To review the legislation that applies to elections

- To educate voters

Stakeholders met by the joint Mission expressed confidence in the IEC’s ability to deliver credible elections. In general, there was confidence and trust amongst stakeholders in the manner in which the previous elections were conducted. Stakeholders expressed confidence in the integrity and independence of the IEC based on what they described as their regular interactions with the Commission, expeditious resolution of issues raised in their consultative platforms, responsiveness and openness to the public.

7. Voter Registration

Voter registration was generally well conducted in the two rounds of the voter registration exercise by the IEC. The first, was at the beginning of November 2023 and the second at the beginning of February 2024. The online registration of voters was noted as having helped to increase the number of young, first-time voters and those in the diaspora.

Out of a total population of approximately 62 million, a total of 27, 782, 477 people registered to cast their votes on 29 May 2024, with 55.23% representing females, and 44.77% representing males. Out of the total number of registered voters, 1,682,316 were special voters who registered to cast their votes on 27th and 28th May 2024. A significant proportion of the registered voters on the voter’s roll were below the age of 49. While stakeholders who met with the Mission expressed satisfaction with the IEC’s efforts to enrol all eligible voters, some stakeholders still noted that the estimated figure of ⁵14 million eligible voters that were not yet registered, was a cause for concern.

Table 1: Province and gender breakdown (Certified Voters’ Roll - 12 March 2024) -

Province	Female	% of Prov Total	Male	% of Prov Total	Total	% of Total
Eastern Cape	1 951 491	56.74%	1 487 829	43.26%	3 439 320	12.38%
Free State	807 820	55.45%	649 107	44.55%	1 456 927	5.24%
Gauteng	3 451 073	52.75%	3 090 905	47.25%	6 541 978	23.55%
KwaZulu-Natal	3 240 549	56.47%	2 497 700	43.53%	5 738 249	20.65%
Limpopo	1 626 567	58.52%	1 153 090	41.48%	2 779 657	10.01%
Mpumalanga	1 109 398	54.78%	915 672	45.22%	2 025 070	7.29%
North West	937 281	53.00%	831 295	47.00%	1 768 576	6.37%
Northern Cape	351 605	53.53%	305 221	46.47%	656 826	2.36%
Western Cape	1 838 054	55.41%	1 479 018	44.59%	3 317 072	11.94%
Out of Country	31 195	53.05%	27 607	46.95%	58 802	0.21%
Total	15 345 033	55.23%	12 437 444	44.77%	27 782 477	

Credit: Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa

⁵ <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/south-africa-has-over-14-million-unregistered-voters-mainly-youth/>

8. The Media Environment

The Joint Mission appreciates the media's role in informing the public and educating voters. It commends South Africa's press freedom and collaboration efforts to combat misinformation. However, it notes the absence of a regulatory framework for data protection and cybersecurity, allowing cyberbullying and incitement messages.

The interlocutors that the Joint Mission met with were of the overwhelming opinion that mass media/mainstream media played a positive role by providing balanced and fair coverage of parties across the political divide. Public debates were cited as one of the key ways in which the media provided a platform for electoral contestants to inform the public about their manifestos.

The IEC collaborated with social media companies in responding to and mitigating the adverse effect of misinformation, disinformation and mal-information whenever they occurred during the campaign season. To combat disinformation in the 2024 National and Provincial elections, the IEC partnered with social media companies Google, Meta, TikTok and local NGO Media Monitoring Africa (MMA)⁶. The IEC, MMA and social media companies signed a cooperation framework which, among other things, enabled its signatories to cooperate with the IEC and MMA in initiatives including the complaints platform Real411.org⁷ and PADRE.org.za.⁸ In addition to the complaints platform, the IEC collaborated with MMA to counter deep fakes, the initiative allowed voters to fact check information regarding South Africa's political parties and the statements they made.

9. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

In its interaction with civil society in South Africa, the Joint Mission was impressed by its role in the 2024 elections. CSOs' involvement in the elections included voter mobilisation, and it actively participated in educating voters about their rights and the importance of voting. There was deliberate targeting of underrepresented groups such as young people and marginalised communities. The number of interventions undertaken contributed to the high voter participation observed in the elections.

10. Voter Education

The IEC provided extensive voter education focusing on sensitising the voters on the introduction of the three ballots that were to be used during the elections, special votes and the necessity of voting where one is registered to vote. The education programmes were conducted in person and on social media, television, radio, TV and via printed information factsheets. The IEC partnered with CSOs and its efforts were also complemented by the political parties and the Media. The civic and voter education was tailored for the various demographics. The corporate world also spreads voter education messages to their customers through branded materials and grocery items in

⁶ <https://www.news24.com/news24/politics/government/meta-tiktok-google-agree-to-help-iec-combat-election-disinformation-20230705>

⁷ <https://real411.org/>

⁸ <https://padre.org.za/>

supermarkets such as Pick n Pay. This enhanced the IEC voter education initiatives and ensured that people were capacitated on how to vote during the elections.

However, some sections of the society were of the opinion that the civic and voter education was a bit limited, especially information on the introduction of the third ballot, and the new law reforms relating to the introduction of Independent Candidates. Further, the systematic issues such as the methodology for the allocation of seats, the distinction, if any, between Regional and Provincial seats and ballots was generally not well understood by some stakeholders.

11. Inclusive Electoral Processes

Central to democracy is the right of eligible persons to vote to choose their elected representatives.

The IEC made deliberate efforts to enhance access to the electoral process by, among other things, involving organisations working with Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the creation of voter education curriculum, providing voting booths whose heights were adjusted for the convenience of people using wheelchairs, the use of the universal ballot template (UBT) for the visually impaired. At polling stations nursing mothers, the elderly and PWDs were given first preference to cast their votes. At some polling stations, special arrangements were made such as separate entrances and dedicated polling officials for the elderly and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), demonstrating inclusivity and efficient management. Of the 16.2 million voters who cast their ballots, 1.1 million voters did so using the special voting on 27 and 28 May 2024 provisions to record their political choices, some of these included PWDs.

12. Voting by South Africans Living Abroad

The Joint Mission noted that out-of-country voting took place on 17 of May 2024. South Africans living abroad voted at one hundred and eleven (111) designated voting stations. The Mission learnt that the turnout of voters living abroad was higher than the turnout for the 2019 elections.

13. Special Voting

Special Voting was conducted on 27 and 28 of May 2024. In all the polling stations that the Mission visited, all polling stations had adequate voting materials and the polling staff consistently followed set procedures for conducting the polls.

⁹The following categories of registered voters were eligible to apply to cast special votes during the 2024 National and Provincial Elections in South Africa:

- The physically infirm, disabled and pregnant

⁹ <https://www.elections.org.za/pw/SpecialVotes/About-Special-Vote>

- Election officials and security service personnel involved in the election
- Registered voters who are unable to vote in the voting district in which they are registered to vote on Election Day due to their intended absence
- Registered voters outside the Republic of South Africa

To facilitate the principle of universal suffrage, South African electoral laws provide special voting arrangements (SVAs) designed to expand voting opportunities to individuals who are otherwise unable to vote on election day. SVAs allow voters to exercise their right to vote by alternative means of casting their ballot in person at the polling station where they are registered.

14. Election Day Observations

The Mission covered 33 voting stations on election day in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal provinces. The teams observed the setting up of polling stations, opening, voting, closing and counting procedures. The following observations were made:

14.1. Opening and setting up

At one of the three polling stations where the team observed the opening of voting stations, voting commenced an hour late owing to a delay in setting up the polling stations, which was further complicated by the late arrival of some voting material. It was commendable that Presiding Officers, together with the Police, made an effort to keep voters apprised of the progress in setting up and the anticipated start time. This helped keep the voters calm, most of whom had joined the queue at dawn. Below are pictures of the Gauteng team observing opening procedures at a voting station.



Picture 5: ESN-SA/ZESN and African Union Observers following the opening of voting stations

The pictures below show voters in a voting station ready to cast their ballots and some casting their ballots.



Picture 6: Illustration of an efficient set up of voting station allowing for smooth flow of voters

14.2. Signage

The signage used to direct voters was very prominent and adequate. Inside polling stations, banners illustrating the polling procedures served as a reminder to polling officials. Below are pictures of signage directing voters to their respective voting stations.



Picture 7: Some of the signage that IEC used to direct voters to a voting station

14.3. Voter Management Devices

Voter Management Devices (VMDs) in some voting stations experienced network failure, leading to slow voter processing. In some voting stations where the VMDs had malfunctioned, the manual voter's roll was used to facilitate voting.

14.4. Queue Management

The time it took for voters to cast their ballots varied. In some voting stations, queues moved faster because Presiding Officers had created streams within their voting stations, whilst in other voting stations, the queues moved slowly because no additional streams had been created to expedite the processing of voters.

14.5. Polling Officials

Overall, the polling officials were courteous, and professional and exhibited confidence when administering polling procedures. The Mission notes with satisfaction the opportunity that the IEC afforded both the youth and women to serve as polling officials. In all the polling stations visited on Election Day, the polling officials were predominantly women.

14.6. Party Agents

Party agents for the dormant political parties were present at all polling stations visited. Parties set up tables outside voting stations but did not seem to interfere with voters going to and returning from voting stations. Generally, the mood around these tables was peaceful and jovial at the same time. The Mission commends political party supporters for exhibiting high levels of political tolerance, demonstrating their openness to diverse political influences and a commitment to participatory democracy. However, the Joint Mission observed that only the major political parties established booths with extensive paraphernalia, which helped to enhance their visibility. This creates an uneven playing field as smaller parties were not observed employing similar strategies. Below are pictures of political parties booths set outside voting stations.





Picture 8 & 9: shows some of the political parties' booths set outside voting stations

14.7. Security

The police appeared adequate, with officers deployed to voting stations in tandem with the¹⁰ risk assessments that were conducted ahead of and during the election. The police prepared and shared with members of the public a detailed description of the hot spots as well as the identity of voting stations located in flashpoints of violence. In addition, the police conducted themselves professionally at the polling stations visited by the Joint Mission's teams.

14.8. Closing and Counting

The procedures for closing and counting were adequately followed, and all voters in queues at the time of closing were given an opportunity to cast their ballots.

14.9. Results Management and ICTs

The Joint Mission visited the National Results Operations Centre (NROC) and closely followed the results collation process and the ongoing post-electoral developments. The Joint Mission was impressed by the establishment of an advanced results operational centre equipped with modern digital infrastructure to enhance transparency. The Mission noted the pivotal role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in capturing, managing, and disseminating electoral data and information. The Mission commends the IEC for the well-managed real-time updates on results transmission, which contributed to the overall transparency of the results management process.

One of South Africa's leading wireline and wireless telecommunications providers offered robust connectivity solutions, which supported 320 IEC results-capturing sites

¹⁰ https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2024-05-20-police-identify-hotspot-areas-say-visibility-will-be-high-for-elections/#google_vignette

nationwide, including ten result centres, utilising technologies such as WiFi 6, layer-3 networking and high-speed fibre¹¹.

15. Voter Turnout

The voter turnout stood at 58.58 per cent for the National and Provincial Elections. Despite the long winding queues which were witnessed on election day, the turnout is the lowest since the first democratic elections in 1994. The over 16,2 million South Africans who exercised their Constitutional right as well as civic duty to cast their ballots did so with admirable patience, tolerance and enthusiasm.

16. Results Declaration

With the final results announced officially by the IEC on 2 June 2024, for the first time in South Africa, no single party won a mandate to govern.

The ANC received over 6.4 million votes, followed by the DA and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), a new entrant to South African politics. The ANC only retained its outright majority in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, the Free State, North West and Mpumalanga, down from the eight it held after the previous elections. The ANC is the opposition once again in the Western Cape. As with the national government, coalition arrangements will be forged in KwaZulu-Natal, the Northern Cape and Gauteng.

In the National Assembly, COPE, the NFP and the AIC will not have any seats in the Seventh Parliament. New parties to the National Assembly include Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), Patriotic Alliance (PA), Action SA, Rise Mzansi, Build One SA (BOSA), Cape Coloured Congress (CCC) and United Africans Transformation (UAT).

In this election, a record number of 52 political parties contested the national ballot (compared to 48 parties in 2019).

List of Parties that Won National Assembly Seats (Out of 400 seats)

Party	Leader	Percentage	Seats
ANC	Cyril Ramaphosa	40.18	159
DA	John Steenhuisen	21.81	87
MK	Jacob Zuma	14.58	58
EFF	Julius Malema	9.52	39
IFP	Velenkosini Hlabisa	3.85	17
PA	Gayton McKenzie	2.06	9
VF+	Pieter Groenewald	1.36	6
ActionSA	Herman Mashaba	1.20	6

¹¹ <https://www.itweb.co.za/article/telkom-to-support-iec-connectivity-during-elections/raYAyMorE1r7J38N>

ACDP	Kenneth Meshoe	0.60	3
UDM	Bantu Holomisa	0.49	3
RISE	Songezo Zibi	0.42	2
BOSA	Mmusi Maimane	0.41	2
ATM	Vuyolwethu Zungula	0.40	2
Al Jama-ah	Ganief Hendricks	0.24	2
NCC	Fadiel Adams	0.23	2
PAC	Mzwanele Nyhontso	0.23	1
UAT	Wonder Mahlatsi	0.22	1
Good	Patricia de Lille	0.18	1

The National Assembly has 400 seats allocated proportionally according to the votes parties received. The 2024 election was different in that there was a regional ballot. The regional ballot allowed for the contestation of independent candidates, and the ballot differed from province to province. The allocation of the 400 NA seats is done by factoring in national (200 seats) and regional ballots (200 seats) according to complex electoral seat formulas.

In the Seventh Parliament, 18 parties will be represented. No independent candidates will be represented.

17. Key Lessons

One of the Mission's objectives was to identify and document good practices for consideration by stakeholders in the SADC region. Below is a list of some of the practices that, if adopted, may further enhance the integrity of electoral processes in the SADC region.

17.1. Stakeholders' engagements

Sustained stakeholder engagement is critical in addressing any concerns that may arise and providing timely and complete information on the state of preparedness to hold elections. The IEC excelled in this regard, as stakeholders who were met by the mission expressed satisfaction with the IEC's response to issues raised. The effective use of the Party Liaison Committees (PLC) allowed for the resolution of low-level disputes.

17.2. Voter registration

To encourage voters to register, the process of enrolling voters needs to be as simple as possible. The online voter registration platform was partly credited with the higher enrolment rates for first-time voters and the youth.

17.3. Use of technology

The use of technology in results collation and transmission supported enhanced transparency and verifiability of results. Political parties and other stakeholders were able to closely follow the results collation process in real-time at the various national and provincial results operation centres. The use of the voter management devices

served as an effective integrated system that supported voter registration, voter participation on election day, and tracking of ballots and other logistics.

17.4. Electoral code of conduct

Political parties and independent candidates signed an Electoral Code of Conduct, which among other things, required all presidential candidates and leaders of political parties to remind their supporters to exercise tolerance, respect the rights of others and conduct themselves in an orderly and peaceful manner during the electoral period. The electoral period was largely peaceful, save for isolated incidents. The tolerance of diverse political opinions was best illustrated by the jovial mood that could be seen at the different stations/tables that were set up by political parties outside the polling stations.

17.5. Observer accreditation

The observer accreditation process in South Africa is the most efficient and convenient in the region. The process was online based, on the IEC website, making it inexpensive and convenient for the local, regional and international organisations that sought permission to observe the elections.

17.6. The principle of Universal Suffrage

The South African Government and the IEC should be commended for their deliberate effort to ensure that the right to vote was available for as many people as possible, as permitted by the government's laws. Some of the arrangements that facilitated the realisation of this right to vote include

17.6.1. Special Voting

The special voting arrangements were accessible to a broad category of eligible voters in South Africa. Special voting took place at voting stations and through home visits two (2) days before election day.

17.6.2. Mobile voting

To improve access to voting stations by voters, the IEC also had mobile voting stations that on election day moved from one area to another within the voting district. These stations operated on a schedule between fixed points within the voting district.

17.6.3. Diaspora voting

South Africans living abroad could register and vote in South Africa's national elections at South Africa's Foreign Missions, where they were registered to vote. The management of the diaspora vote was without hiccups.

18. Recommendations

The Joint Mission proffers the following recommendations for consideration by the IEC.

- i. Polling officials need further training on the management of voting stations to address the inconsistencies observed in some voting stations such as approaches to managing long queues at different voting stations.

- ii. The IEC should consider using separate, colour-coded ballot boxes to expedite ballot paper sorting before counting commences.
- iii. The IEC should ensure that an adequate number of voter management devices are availed to all voting stations, together with a backup internet connection.
- iv. The IEC should also ensure adequate lighting for all voting stations.
- v. There is a need to strengthen voter education efforts about changes in electoral laws.
- vi. To reduce voter waiting time, the IEC must consider increasing the number of polling streams at voting stations.
- vii. To ensure the opening of voting stations on time, the IEC should enhance logistical arrangements so that essential election materials are delivered timeously.

19. Conclusion

Well-managed elections hugely contribute to the promotion of democratic governance, peace, and development. Despite the operational and technological challenges, South Africa's 2024 National and Provincial Elections provided significant takeaways for consideration by stakeholders in the SADC region and beyond. The participation of women and youth as voters and as electoral officials was commendable. The generally peaceful conduct of voters and political parties indicated a high level of political tolerance. The IEC facilitated transparency in the conduct of the elections and invited parties to audit the results management system, thus entrenching mechanisms to verify the credibility of the election results.

About ESN-SA

The Election Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) is a regional network of fifteen non-governmental organisations working in the area of elections in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The ESN-SA (formally known as Southern African Development Community–Election Support Network (SADC-ESN) was established in January 1998 at a launching conference held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. It is a regional network of organisations working in the field of democracy and elections organised into country chapters. In its early formation, the ESN-SA focused mainly on domestic election observation and thereafter on regional election observation; building the capacity of network members to design and develop voter and civic curricula and internal capacity building. In 2013, ESN-SA observed the Zimbabwe Harmonised Elections and the first round of the Malagasy Presidential Elections. The Network provides opportunities for sharing lessons learnt and peer exchange, encourages exchange of best practices at the regional level and provides opportunities for members to participate in various workshops and conferences, including workshops on election observation, electoral reforms, and gender equity in the democratic process.

ESN-SA is currently being hosted by one of its member organisations, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), the current Secretariat. Hence, all the Network's activities are coordinated from the said organisation based in Zimbabwe. ESN-SA is a member and sits on the Steering Committee of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM) and The African Election Observers Network (AFEONET). Both GNDEM and AFEONET are, pivotal in ensuring international best practices and good conduct of domestic election observation.

About ZESN

Founded in 2000, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) is an alliance of 37 NGOs united in their mission. Their primary focus is promoting democracy, with a special emphasis on ensuring credible elections in Zimbabwe. ZESN was established not only to coordinate election-related activities among NGOs but also to standardize their methodologies and achieve broader geographical coverage. This collaborative effort aims to elevate the quality of Zimbabwe's electoral process, ultimately strengthening both democracy and good governance, while upholding internationally recognized standards. ZESN is the secretariat of the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa (ESN-SA) and is a member of The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM).