

Analysing South Africa's 2014 election results

Jonathan Faull

Key points

1 The ANC has returned to power with a comfortable victory. However, the seeds of future challenges lurk in the details of the elections data, which the party should pay attention to.

2 The DA has dramatically increased its share of the vote, but will need to fundamentally revisit its message and strategy if it is to go toe to toe with the ANC as a 'government in waiting'.

3 The EFF will have to adopt a coherent legislative strategy across 10 legislatures and build a credible presence beyond the one created during the campaign trail.

Summary

This policy brief interrogates the South African 2014 national and provincial elections results, focusing on the implications of the results for the three largest political parties: the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). There is specific focus on the national outcome, the outcome of the Gauteng provincial contest, and a speculative look forward to the 2016 local government election races for the City of Johannesburg, Tshwane and the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipalities.

THERE HAD BEEN much breathless speculation in the press and in the punditry that 2014 might be a watershed in South African politics. President Jacob Zuma was repeatedly booed on the campaign trail. The country reeled in the aftermath of Marikana, the death of Andries Tatane and a rising tide of service delivery protests.

The scandals of Nkandla and the Waterkloof Gupta debacle, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa's (NUMSA's) electoral go-slow, the rise of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) and the EFF, persistent joblessness and increasing inequality were all cited as cumulative evidence that significant constituencies within the ANC would abandon ship, and that the party was in for a shock.

The African National Congress

Needless to say, we are not what we tweet, and for the moment the ANC's fate remains shrouded in the unknowable future. The party ultimately won more than three in five votes cast in the elections (62,2 per cent) – an overwhelming majority in any polity, and one that the ANC will interpret as a clear mandate to govern.

But the party should not be complacent. The final outcome does disguise challenges and disquiet within the ANC and its support base.

The loss in absolute votes on the part of the ANC is largely accounted for by a combination of lower turnout in various key provinces where the party is relatively

uncontested, an ascendant DA result, and the rise of the EFF as a significant force in a number of provinces.

The ANC lost 213 827 votes across the full election cycle, representing a real loss of 1,84 per cent of the 11,65 million it won in 2009. Just short of a 2 per cent loss is no train smash by any account, but when one controls for the growth in the population of registered voters (GPRV) and the 2,2 million voters added

down 4,5 per cent to 72,5 per cent; and Mpumalanga down 4,7 per cent to 75,7 per cent. In all of these provinces, turnout fell to a greater extent than the national downturn of 3,8 per cent, and the ANC lost support in each contest, haemorrhaging a cumulative 235 559 votes across these four provinces. Critically, in the context of the final electoral outcome, in all of these provinces – with the exception

Had the turnout trend held in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, we would have seen more significant movement in the outcomes to the detriment of the ANC

to the voters' roll between the 2009 and 2014 elections, the scale of the ANC's loss becomes more stark, representing a real loss of 10,41 per cent.

In Limpopo turnout was down 6,3 per cent to 63,3 per cent compared to 2009; the Eastern Cape down 6,4 per cent to 70,3 per cent; the Free State

of Mpumalanga – provincial turnout was lower than the national average of 73,5 per cent.

Had the turnout trend held in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, we would have seen more significant movement in the outcomes to the detriment of the ANC. The critical importance of these two



Figure 1: Relative support for the ANC and the DA¹

Party	Percentage of national ballots won	Difference in votes from 2009	Real gain/loss	Gain/loss controlling for GPRV	Absolute gain/loss (2009 – 2014)
ANC	62,15%	-213 827	-1,84%	-10,41%	-3,75%
DA	22,3%	1 145 755	38,89%	26,77%	5,57%

Figure 2: Relative support for the ANC, DA and EFF

Gauteng	Percentage of national ballots won in province	Difference in votes from 2009	Real gain/loss	Gain/loss controlling for GPRV	Absolute gain/loss (2009 – 2014)
ANC	22,05%	-292 265	-10,39%	-21,40%	-9,84%
DA	32,01%	385 651	41,73%	30,71%	7,26%
EFF	40,29%	471 074	NA	NA	10,26%

Figure 3: Relative support for the ANC and DA

KwaZulu-Natal	Percentage of national ballots won in province	Difference in votes from 2009	Real gain/loss	Gain/loss controlling for GPRV	Absolute gain/loss (2009 – 2014)
ANC	22,13%	274 579	12,17%	-2,17%	1,35%
DA	12,65%	152 943	41,96%	27,61%	3,02%

provinces is underlined by the fact that the ANC won 22,05 and 22,13 per cent of their national ballots in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal respectively; 44,2 per cent of all national ballots cast for the party.

As it is, despite a turnout of 76,5 per cent in Gauteng (above the national average, but an almost 4 per cent reduction on 2009), the party still lost 292 265 votes to the triple threat of apathy, the DA and the EFF. Importantly, in the context of the outcome in Gauteng, the DA won 32 per cent and the EFF won 40 per cent of all their national ballots in the election in the province.

However – and critically for the ANC's final takings – KwaZulu-Natal, with a nearly 77 per cent turnout (a 3,9 per cent reduction on 2009, but above the national average for 2014) and an ascendant ANC constituency at the polls, offset the comparatively poor turnout that would have hurt the ANC in the final analysis. In KwaZulu-Natal the ANC won 274 579 more votes in 2014 compared to 2009.

Ultimately, the only other provinces where the ANC managed to increase its vote – much more modestly – were the Western

Cape (70 996) and the Northern Cape (25 276).

The ANC can be pleased; superficially, the odds appeared to be stacked against the party to perform as well as it has. The ANC has an unpopular leader, but belief on the part of a majority of the voting population that the party can rejuvenate itself and continue to lead the country means that it remains the custodian of the dreams and aspirations of the vast majority of South Africans.

This outcome represents solid evidence that some ANC supporters split their votes across the two ballots

However, if one scratches the surface of the data, there is cause for concern for the ANC.

The ANC was ultimately able to win Gauteng with 53,59 per cent of the vote, despite losing over a quarter of a million votes since 2009. There is evidence to suggest that some voters in the province did use their vote strategically to weaken the ruling party's provincial hand.

If one compares the ANC's vote in Gauteng on the national and provincial

sides of the ballot, the ANC won 173 448 fewer votes in the Gauteng provincial race than Gauteng voters cast for the ANC nationally. One would usually expect that parties would win more national votes in urban centres, as voters outside of their home province cannot vote in provincial elections if they are out of their provinces (overall 167 795 fewer votes accrued to all parties in the Gauteng provincial race). But, alarmingly for the ANC, this trend does not hold

for its primary competitor, with the DA winning 39 139 more provincial votes in Gauteng than they did national votes. This outcome represents solid evidence that some ANC supporters split their votes across the two ballots, a lead indicator of voting intention that the DA will be particularly pleased with.

Moreover, the ANC can expect very competitive races in the City of Johannesburg, Tshwane and the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipalities in 2016.

Figure 4: Change in votes for ANC, DA and EFF – provincial ballot

Metropole	Percentage of provincial votes won in 2009	Percentage of provincial votes won in 2014	Change in votes won/lost	Real change (2009 – 2014)	Gain/loss controlling for GPRV	Absolute gain/loss (2009 – 2014)
City of Johannesburg						
ANC	62,35%	52,28%	-104 072	-11,25%	-18,62%	-10,07%
DA	21,79%	32,37%	185 077	57,25%	44,19%	10,58%
EFF	–	10,13%	159 105	–	–	10,13%
Tshwane Municipality						
ANC	59,95%	49,31%	-28 565	-5,23%	-20,68%	-10,64%
DA	25,06%	33,75%	126 056	55,20%	29,90%	8,69%
EFF	–	11,51%	120 849	–	–	11,51%
Nelson Mandela Bay						
ANC	49,64%	48,81%	-11 195	-5%	-9%	-0,83%
DA	28,13%	40,80%	50 965	40,13%	34,23%	12,67%
EFF	–	4,15%	18 077	–	–	4,15%

In all three metros the ANC lost votes across the two elections, winning 52 per cent of the provincial vote in Johannesburg (down from 62 per cent in 2009), 49 per cent in Tshwane (from 59,95 in 2009) and 48,81 per cent in Nelson Mandela Bay (down from 49,64 per cent in 2009). In real terms these losses represent an 11,25 per cent reduction in the ANC's vote in Johannesburg, a 5,25 per cent loss in Tshwane, and a 5 per cent loss in Nelson Mandela Bay. However, when one controls for the increase in the population of registered voters, the ANC

geography of the province and the high levels of population mobility, citizens will be routinely exposed to comparative data points and presented with a regular opportunity to compare notes on the different party administrations.

The Democratic Alliance

In the final analysis, this should be considered a mixed result for the DA.

On the plus side of the ledger, the party increased its poll takings by more than 1,1 million votes (see Figure 3),

The DA also benefits from a disproportionately higher turnout among relatively wealthy voters

losses are stark: 20,31 per cent down in Johannesburg, 24,71 per cent in Tshwane and 9,4 per cent in Nelson Mandela Bay. Over the same period, the DA's real gains, controlling for growth in the population of registered voters, were profound – 48,19 per cent in Johannesburg, 35,72 per cent in Tshwane and 35,73 per cent in Nelson Mandela Bay – and compounding the ANC's worries is the rise of the EFF, especially in the Gauteng metros.

The DA will be confident of their chances of pushing the ANC hard in these three metros – if not to win them outright, they could force coalition governments that either include or exclude a weakened ANC. The dynamics of local government elections favour the DA's ground game, which very effectively mobilises urban supporters. The DA also benefits from a disproportionately higher turnout among relatively wealthy voters.

Should the DA win the City of Johannesburg or Tshwane, it will make for fascinating political posturing in the run-up to 2019. Gauteng has three metropolitan municipalities, and if the ANC retains Tshwane and/or Ekurhuleni, showcasing governance will be an interesting exercise. Given the political

representing an astonishing 38,89 per cent increase on the vote won in 2009. If one considers the growth in the national voters' roll, this real increase falls to 29,37 per cent. However, this still represents a significant achievement. Overall the party increased its share of the national vote by 5,57 per cent to 22,23 per cent, from the 16,61 per cent won in 2009, and will retain its position as the official opposition in the National Assembly with an emboldened and expanded caucus.

Moreover, the DA will serve as the official opposition in all of the provinces it does not govern, with the exception of North West and Limpopo, where the EFF will occupy that position. In KwaZulu-Natal the DA will occupy the benches of the official opposition previously occupied by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

The DA won the Western Cape with an overwhelming endorsement from the province's voters, accruing almost 60 per cent of the provincial vote, and will govern with a majority similar to that of the ANC at the national level.

Importantly from a political narrative perspective, the DA won more votes in Gauteng than it did in the Western

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Cape. While the changes in the party's regional spread are modest, they will help the party counter efforts to paint it as a regional party, and embolden the efforts to brand the DA as the only party capable of challenging the ANC nationally and in all of the provinces. In 2014, the DA won 30,34 per cent of its national ballots in the Western Cape compared to 33,6 per cent in 2009, while Gauteng now represents 32 per cent of the DA's national support, up marginally from 31,4 per cent in 2009.

On the red side of the ledger, the party had publicly speculated and then

But this apparently enormous increase arose from a very low base and needs to be understood in that context. The party will argue that what it has achieved is setting the stage for further expansion among black constituencies and will look to demonstrate further inroads in 2016.

The DA will spin good numbers – 38 per cent growth nationally, and so forth – but this does not yet represent the kind of growth that will challenge the ANC. The DA needs to fundamentally revisit its message and strategy if it is to go toe-to-toe with the ANC as a

The DA has grown and can deservedly claim ascendance, but it is not the kind of growth that would fundamentally hurt the ANC

retracted a target of 30 per cent, which they manifestly failed to reach.

The DA has grown and can deservedly claim ascendance, but it is not the kind of growth that would fundamentally hurt the ANC. Success is in evidence, but it is premised on the consolidation of constituencies that have traditionally voted for the opposition and the extremely successful turnout of core DA constituencies. The Western Cape is in the bag – but even here, the ANC has marginally increased its share of the vote.

The DA has not been able to prise a significant section of the black vote from the ANC and seems to have only marginally increased its appeal to black voters since the 'breakthrough' in the 2011 local government elections.

According to the party's own polling data, the party won 6 per cent of the black vote, up only marginally from the party's claims to have won 5 per cent in the previous local government elections. If the DA's numbers are to be believed, the party has increased its share of the black vote by over 600 per cent in this election cycle, from just under 1 per cent in 2009.

'government in waiting'. But to what extent this is possible remains an important question.

It can be argued that the glass ceiling of growth premised on the consolidation of opposition voters (overwhelmingly concentrated in minority demographics) has been cracked and that the ANC is leaking marginally. However, the ANC's party strategists will not be kept awake at night based on this DA election result.

Former DA strategist Ryan Coetzee mused on Twitter as results came in and the ANC's majority became clear that, 'The big challenge for the DA and the commentariat is to understand and confront exactly why so many voters remain loyal to the ANC.' Answering this question and countering that evidence with an effective political strategy will be key to the party continuing to build its support.

The Economic Freedom Fighters

The EFF won over a million votes, 6,35 per cent of the national vote, will be the official opposition in

6,35%

THE PORTION OF THE
NATIONAL VOTE WON BY
THE EFF

Limpopo and the North West, and will be represented in every provincial legislature. This is an astonishing achievement for a party formed less than a year ago, and one that had to rely on nascent political structures and a comparatively small election campaign budget. The party will now benefit from monies accrued through the Represented Political Parties Fund Act, a consistent stream of revenue to which they previously had no access – unlike their primary opponents.

The challenge for the EFF is now to cohere a legislative strategy across 10 legislatures and build a credible presence beyond the campaign trail

The EFF campaign was extremely effective in garnering media attention and very well branded. The party also benefitted from a complementary grass-roots campaign, especially in Gauteng where they won four in 10 votes.

The challenge for the EFF is now to cohere a legislative strategy across 10 legislatures and build a credible presence beyond the campaign trail. The vast majority of its leadership has never served in a legislature, and this challenge could be significant.

Precedent has not been kind to upstart political parties, and the EFF will do well to learn the lessons of the 'one hit wonders' who have come before them (the Congress of the People, COPE, the Independent Democrats, to some extent the United Democratic Movement and the 'no hit wonder' of Agang). Should EFF leader Julius Malema be unable to take up his seat in Parliament, the party will need to manage its leadership structures with care to avoid infighting and factionalism. These are not insignificant challenges as the party moves forward.

Small parties

Notwithstanding the fact that smaller parties will represent 15 per cent of parliament, these elections have been tough on the minnows.

- The ANC and especially the DA effectively squeezed the small parties.
- Turnout data seems to imply that COPE's base did not resort to apathy, but was swept up by the bigger parties.

- The IFP looks like it will die with its increasingly elderly voters.
- Single issue and ethnic parties (the African Christian Democratic Party, IFP, and Freedom Front Plus) have taken a big hit.

Looking ahead

Unless a new left formation does come into view – or coalesce around a more orthodox left version of the EFF – it looks like our national politics will be more and more defined by discourse emanating from Luthuli House and Wale Street.

As this election has demonstrated again, the more things change, the more they seem to stay the same on the black, green and gold side of the ballot.

The outcome of the elections has been more predictable than many had expected. Outside of elections, the real action will remain within the ANC and its relationship with its alliance partners. With a National General Council (NGC) and a competitive elective conference in store prior to 2019, the ANC faces significant challenges in the next

five years. But if 2014 demonstrates anything, it is the ANC's resilience in the face of challenges.

Note

1 All data obtained from IEC (www.elections.org.za).

For Figures 1, 2 and 3, 'real gain/loss' was calculated by subtracting the party's total national vote in 2009 (TNV09) from its total national vote in 2014 (TNV14) and dividing this number by TNV09: $(TNV14 - TNV09) / TNV09$.

'Real gain/loss taking into account change in the population of the voters' roll' was calculated by taking into account the percentage growth in the population of registered voters (GPRV) and assumed that new voters are distributed across party support in line with 2009 outcomes. The figure was calculated by adding votes to a party's takings in 2009 in line with the GPRV, adding these new voters to the party's TNV09, subtracting this sub-total from TNV14, and dividing the outcome by the sum of TNV09 adjusted for increases in the voting roll: $(TNV14 - (TNV09 + (TNV09 * GPRV))) / (TNV09 + (TNV09 * GPRV))$.

'Absolute gain/loss' was calculated by subtracting the total share of the vote won by the party in 2014 from the total share of the vote won in 2009.

All data relating to the EFF is calculated off a base of zero.



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