

2021 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS MEDIA COVERAGE

WEEKLY TRENDS

4th October 2021 - 11th October 2021

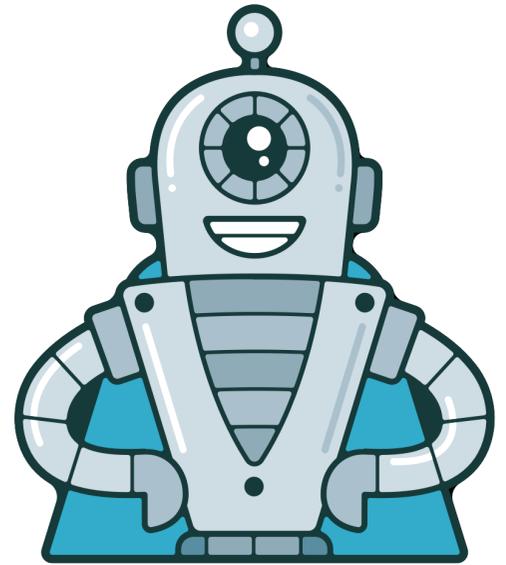
By Lister Namumba



INTRODUCTION

Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) is monitoring selected media's coverage of the run up to the 2021 Local Government Elections (LGE) to determine what issues are considered a priority by the media, check whether political parties and/or their candidates are represented fairly and without bias and, whether there is an equitable representation of the different racial and gender groups, among other things. More in-depth analyses will be written on these findings every month and at the end of the election monitoring period, an overall report will be compiled.

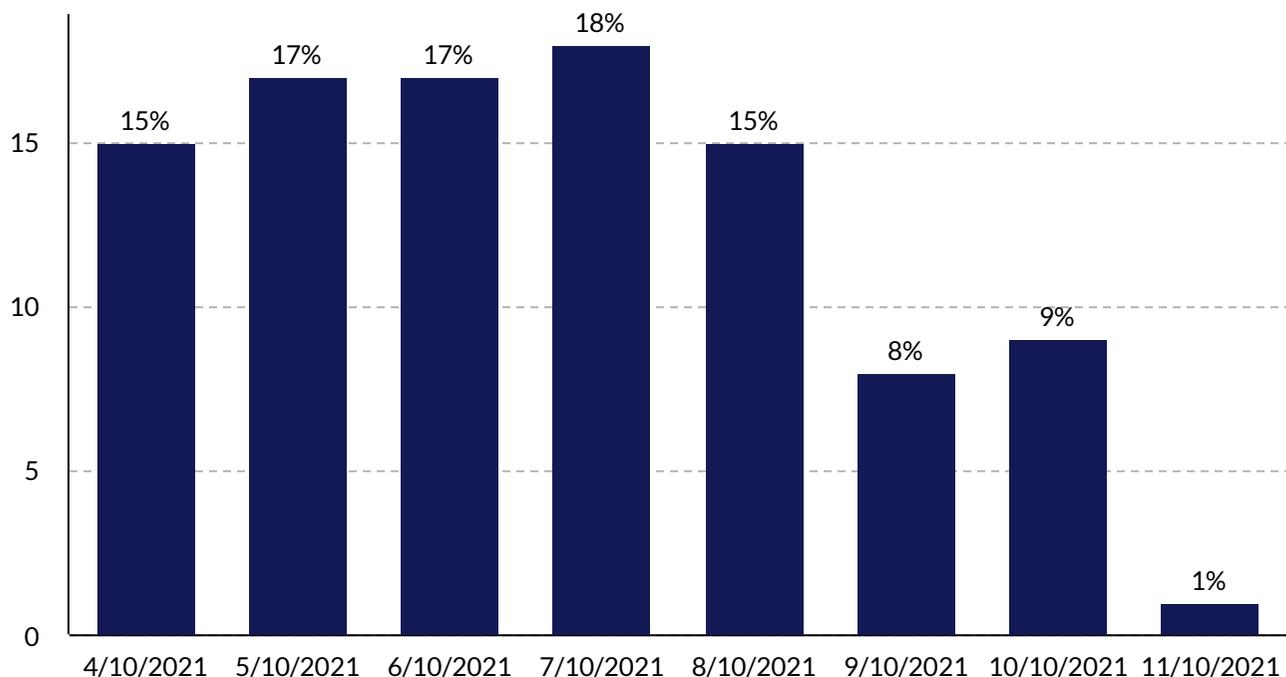
Below is a brief analysis to show what and who dominated media coverage from the **4th of October to the 11th of October, 2021**. A total of **570 stories on elections** were recorded in this monitoring period, 41 more from the 529 stories recorded in the previous week. The gradual increase in elections stories is typical of media trends at this time.



DEXTER
MEDIA MONITORING AFRICA INITIATIVE

DAILY LGE STORIES ARTICLE COUNT

1. Daily LGE Stories (as % of total for the week)



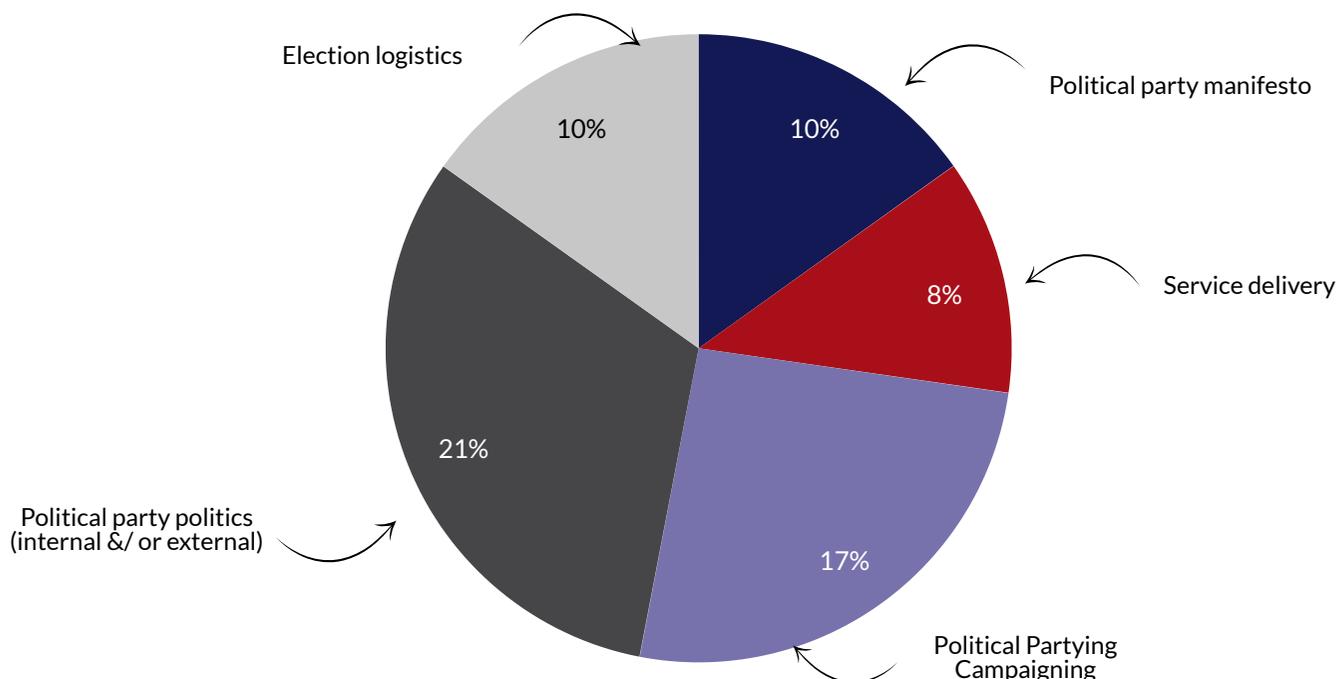
Media coverage of the 2021 local government elections has continued to slowly increase as expected, and will likely continue as we get closer to the 1st of November. The previous monitoring period recorded 529 stories and this monitoring period has a total of 570 stories on the local government elections recorded and monitored.

As per the graph above, the 7th of October, 2021 recorded the highest amount of coverage on or relating to the 2021 local government elections. Stories reported on this day included those on the Democratic Alliance (DA) posters that were erected in Phoenix, Kwa-Zulu Natal which some people called racially insensitive. [The two posters which read, “The ANC called you racists” “The DA calls you heroes”](#) resulted in extensive controversy and both members of the public and other political parties reacted. Coverage of this issue has focused on the posters being erected in reference to how Phoenix residents acted during the July unrest which resulted in a reported 36 people losing their lives in Phoenix alone.

Other media coverage on or relating to the local government elections on this day was on Action South Africa (ActionSA) accusing the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of [“sabotage” after the party’s ballot paper for Tshwane and Johannesburg were presented without the party name](#) and just with the logo and candidate’s name.

TOP FIVE TOPICS

2. What are the stories about? (Top 5 which is 66% of all coded stories)

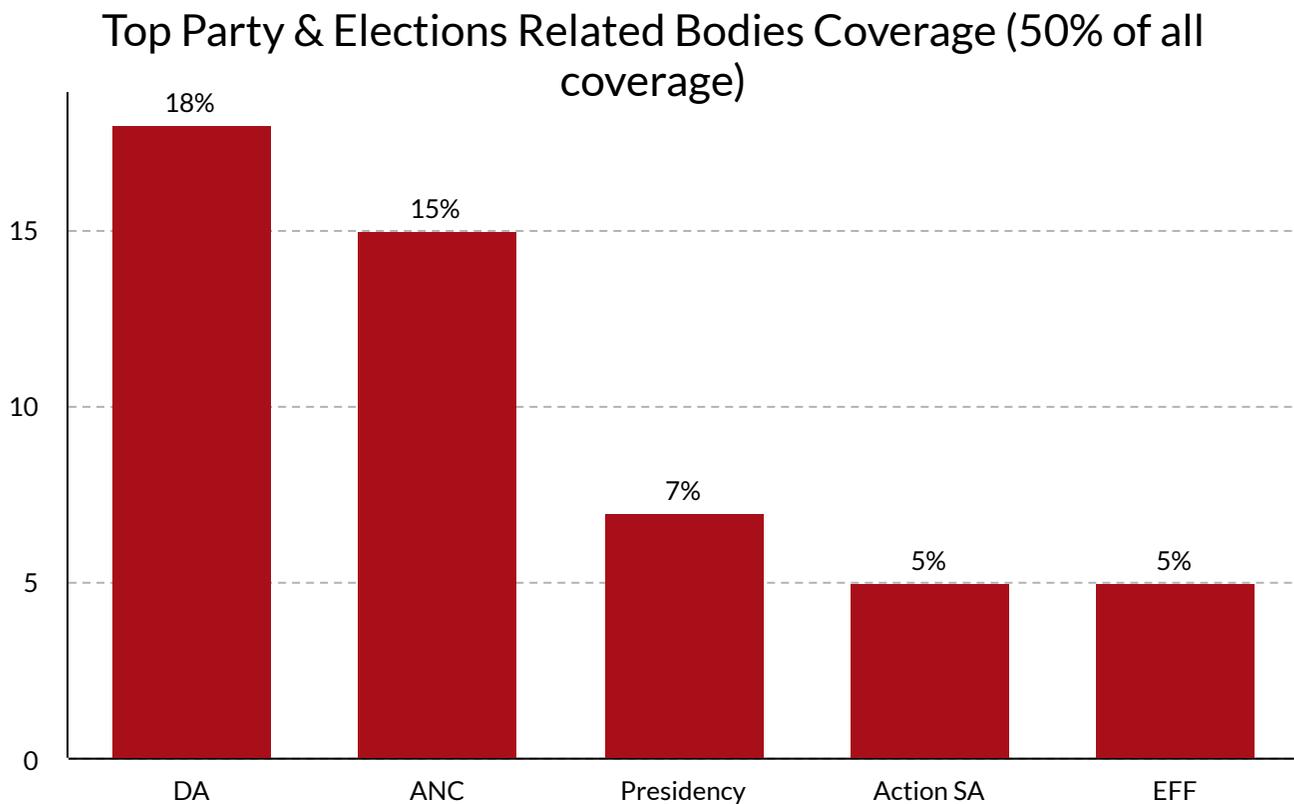


The graph above shows that the top five coded topics had a combined coverage share 66%, leaving only 34% to be shared among the more than 10 topics remaining which include voter education, political violence and intimidation, and corruption, among others. The topics, political party politics and political party campaigning received the largest amount of coverage at 21% and 17% respectively. In the previous monitoring period, the topic, political party politics was third on the list of the top five topics on or related to the 2021 local government elections with a coverage share of 14%. The increase can largely be attributed to the debates and outrage that the [DA election posters in Phoenix](#) caused with some political parties[1] and members of the public condemning the racism and division that the posters were believed to have been promoting. This issue received significant amount of coverage and this could have caused the topic, political party politics to move from third to top of the list of topics.

Stories on political party campaigning included those of [political parties and candidates on the campaign trail](#) ahead of the local government elections.

It's easy to forget that these are local government elections, as much of the content seems to be nationally focused. While understandable for national media to focus on issues of national impact, issues relating to service delivery received only 8% coverage. Given the parlous state of local government, it might have been expected that coverage of service delivery related issues would have received greater attention. Service delivery is the topic continuously receiving the least amount of coverage on the top five list.

TOP FIVE PARTY & ELECTIONS RELATED BODIES COVERAGE



The total number of parties sourced (i.e. where they speak or were mentioned) in the media monitored during the monitoring period for affiliation of sources was 962. The graph above only shows the top five affiliations and as can be seen, the top five affiliations dominated media coverage as sources with a combined total voice share of 50%. Only four political parties feature on the list of the top five sources shown above and these combined make up 43% of the overall coverage share. According to the IEC, [325 political parties will be contesting the 2021 local government elections](#). This means that the remaining 320 odd parties had to share the 57% coverage share remaining. There has been analysis of the role of independents and also coverage around coalition governments. Given these issues, we can expect some of the smaller parties to receive some more attention in the coming weeks.

Since our monitoring started, the ANC, DA and the EFF have continued to feature on the list of top five sources. While it possibly crowds out smaller parties and unknown candidates, the top three have the majority of seats in parliament and in power in government and as such it is to be expected that the media will afford them greater coverage. In previous monitoring periods, the ANC has dominated media coverage of the 2021 local government elections but during this monitoring period, the DA took the top spot with a coverage share of 18% largely due to the [controversial election posters erected in Phoenix](#).

Below is the countdown of sources for the period of monitoring:

5 **Number 5 – the EFF at 5%:** While not always featuring last on the top five sources in media coverage of the local government elections (sometimes fourth), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has since the beginning of MMA's monitoring received a coverage of five percent. During this monitoring period, the EFF was in coverage such as the one about its [support for Judge John Hlophe for the position of Chief Justice](#). Other coverage was on the [corruption case the party opened against the Enoch Mgijima local municipality that reportedly spent R15 million on a stadium](#). Other stories with the EFF as a source included those on the DA Phoenix posters where the EFF reportedly [“reiterated its stance of referring to Indian people living in Phoenix, north of Durban as racists”](#) and the call by the party leader, Julius Malema for the [establishment of a DNA bank in South Africa to curb crimes like rape](#). During the monitoring period, there was also coverage of the [EFF on the campaign trail](#). The story of a 19-year-old University of [Cape Town student, Jesse Griese, running for the Student Representative Council on the EFF ticket who was called a “traitor” because she is white](#) also contributed to the EFF landing a spot on the top five sources list.

4 **Number 4 – ActionSA at 5%:** First time making an appearance on the top five list of sources since the monitoring began is the ActionSA which was mostly in coverage where ActionSA was accusing the IEC of [“sabotage” after the party’s ballot paper for Tshwane and Johannesburg were presented without the party name](#) and just with the logo and candidate’s name. This issue that ended up in the [Electoral Court](#) was massively reported during this monitoring period.

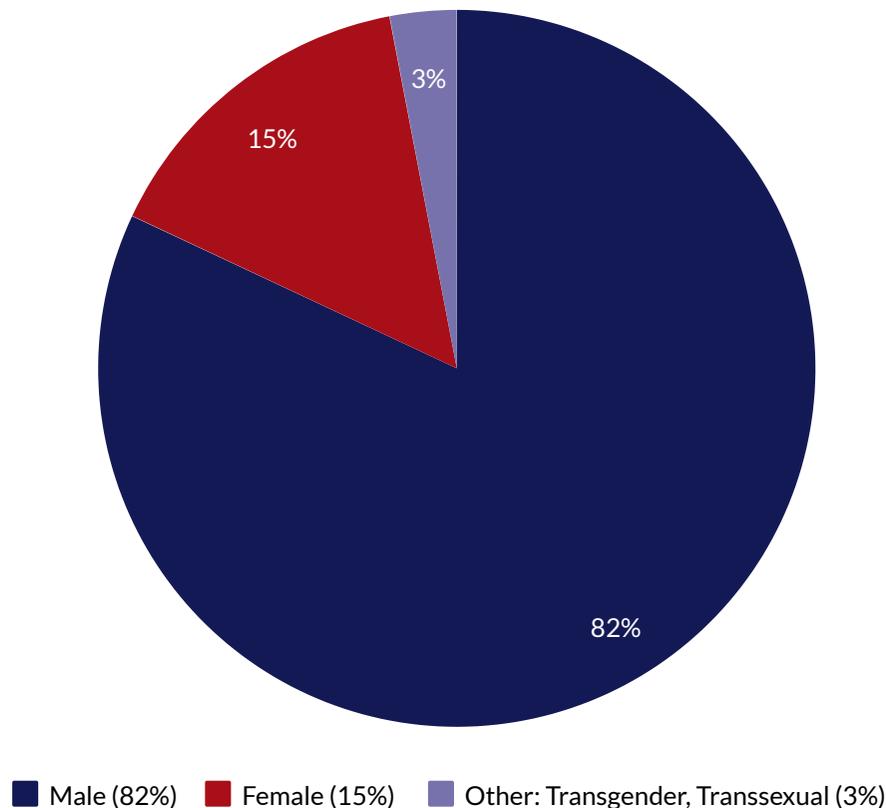
3 **Number 3 – the Presidency at 7%:** During this monitoring period, the Presidency was mostly in coverage of National Police Commissioner, Khehla Sitole who was facing suspension for misconduct and unfitness to hold office. In this coverage, the [President, Cyril Ramaphosa was confirming that the Commissioner was facing suspension](#) and also announcing that the Commissioner had [“already responded with reasons why he should not be suspended”](#). Other coverage on the presidency was on the [tributes sent to Archbishop, Desmond Tutu on his 90th birthday..](#)

2 **Number 2 – the ANC at 15%:** The ANC has been taking the top spot on the list of top five sources since the beginning of the monitoring and this is the first time the party is coming second. During this monitoring period, the ANC has mostly been in coverage of the scandal involving Enoch Mgijima Municipality councillors who allegedly spend R15 million on a sports field in Komani, Eastern Cape. Coverage of this issue revealed that the EFF had taken the municipality to court over the alleged corruption. ANC signatories in eight provinces who are calling for disciplinary action against ANC president, Cyril Ramaphosa for “taking money from private funders to campaign for his presidential election campaign during the run-up to the 2017 ANC elective conference” was also in the news during the period. This story received a significant amount of coverage and could have contributed to the topic, political party politics receiving the highest amount of coverage as shown in figure two. The party’s comments on the DA posters in Phoenix stating that the posters were “shameful and fascist” was also in the news during the monitoring period and so was the continued campaigning by the party.

1 **Number 1 – the DA at 18%:** Occupying the top spot for the first time since the monitoring began, the DA was mostly in coverage of the party’s posters that were erected in Phoenix which some people called racially insensitive. The two posters which read, “The ANC called you racists” “The DA calls you heroes” received huge media coverage with political parties and members of the public condemning the DA. Coverage of this issue revealed that the party ended up taking down the posters. The Constitutional Court’s judgment that the Gauteng government’s decision to place Tshwane under administration was unlawful also contributed to the DA receiving the largest share of coverage during this monitoring period. Coverage of this issue revealed that in 2020, the Tshwane council which was led by the DA was dissolved with administrators taking over city functions.

GENDER OF SOURCES

Gender of sources



Women have continued to speak less and less in media coverage of the 2021 local government elections. In the two previous monitoring periods, women as sources received voice shares of 22% and then down to 20%. In this monitoring period and as can be seen from the graph above, women spoke in coverage of the local government elections at 15%. In September, the [ANC announced that 46% of their candidates in the 2021 local government elections were women](#) and yet this number is not reflected in the amount of voices in media coverage of the elections. If the ANC's 46% and the other political parties' female candidates as well as those standing as independents speak in coverage of elections, the media will be able to achieve an equitable gender representation in coverage of the local government elections. Since the majority of South Africa's population is women, if more females from the electorate speak, the equitable gender representation in coverage of the elections will be achieved.

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