MEDIA PERFORMANCE REVIEW ELECTIONS 2024

INTERIM REPORT

MEDIA MONITORING AFRICA

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Executive Summary

General comment on the media coverage of the 2024 National Elections. One of the goals of this report is to begin to provide a standardized means of assessing the role media have played in contributing to, and/or undermining free, fair, and credible elections. By media, we mean specifically news and journalism media, and in South Africa, those that subscribe to the Press Council, or the BCCSA. To help with a quick overview and relying on MMA's three decades of expertise in monitoring and analysing media's coverage of elections, we have provided the following ratings:

Not Achieved
Partially Achieved
Achieved
Largely Achieved
Excelled

Equitability of coverage

Rating: LARGELY ACHIEVED: To the extent that most media houses demonstrated a conscious effort to allocate equitable coverage to different political parties. That said, smaller parties and new parties, particularly under-resourced ones, may feel justly aggrieved at the lack of coverage afforded to them.

Diversity of coverage and plurality

Rating: ACHIEVED: Trends in coverage are very similar to those of previous elections, despite the context and political parties being very different. The top three issues covered, had a combined share of 56% of the total elections coverage for the period.

Inclusion of women

Rating: PARTIALLY ACHIEVED: The dominance of selected male politicians from the biggest parties are largely responsible for the very low number of women sources in media coverage. That said, the levels are significantly below South Africa's usual average in an election period, and undermine efforts towards greater gender equality.

Credibility of information and critical analysis

Rating: LARGELY ACHIEVED: It is a unique strength of South African media, that despite differences in region, format and ownership, there is an overwhelming level of fairness in coverage.

Reasonableness and compliance

Rating: Data not currently available. Indicators will included cases from the Press Council and the Complaints, Compliance Committee.

Interim Recommendations

- As the online attacks against journalists show, there is a clear need for greater and more meaningful commitment to protecting journalists, therefore the recommendation is that the IEC consider adopting the draft code developed by SANEF for the local government elections. MMA also recommends additional focus and commitment to the protection of journalists is given when political parties pledge the electoral code.
- Innovation demonstrated by the SABC in their coverage, including their social media live streaming events, as well as their Elections Pop Up channel, should be commended by the IEC, including the SABC's own elections dashboard.
- As journalist resources continue to dwindle, and as early career entrants join the industry, we would recommend that the IEC carry out in-depth voter education with media, specifically covering the entire elections period, from preparation to vote counting and results declaration. In this regard, IEC and SANEF should be commended running such training leading up to the 2024 elections.
- In addition to voter education, there is also a need to ensure journalists are trained in covering elections, from the perspective of voters, so that there can be more issue based coverage.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to offer interim data analysis and findings. A full report will be produced within one month, covering the full election period.

A credible and pluralistic media landscape is inescapably critical to any democracy. This has been consistently affirmed by our courts and other constitutional bodies: in exchange for the constitutional protection afforded to the press, they in turn bear constitutional obligations to act with vigour, integrity, and responsibility. This is even more heightened in the context of elections where the news media, as primary disseminators of information, are at the frontline of providing credible information, creating platforms for different opinions, and opposing views, countering the proliferation of false information, and ensuring an engaged and informed electorate. Against this backdrop, the proposed Media Performance Review ("MPR") is underpinned by two key facets: (i) to safeguard the media's ability to perform their duties in an enabling environment without undue hindrance; and (ii) to reflect on the way these duties are conducted in accordance with legal and professional ethical standards.

Any assessment of the media landscape must be responsive and multi-faceted given the wide range of elements that factor into this. This also calls for different methods of data gathering, analysis and reporting. Accordingly, the MPR is structured in two parts:

Part 1: Analysis of media coverage: The first part of the report is essentially geared towards a consideration of the media's performance in the elections based on their journalistic obligations to ensure fair and balanced coverage. The assessment in this regard is underpinned by certain pre-identified indicators, and the data collection informing the indicators is more quantitative in nature relying on the data collection tools referred to below. In simple terms, this is a comparative analysis that can be graphically represented in terms of the different conduct of different media organisations.

Part 2: Assessment of media landscape: The second part differs from the first in that this is geared towards the broader enabling environment in which the media operates during the elections. This part of the report is more qualitative in nature, providing a narrative description and reflections on what has been experienced both in what fostered and what hampered the media in their work. While this too will comprise certain indicators reflecting different types of conduct, there is currently no baseline data on which to undertake a comparative analysis. (This however may be an aspect that is developed in future reports once further data has been collected.)

The MPR will be fundamentally underpinned by certain key factors, including for instance the following: (i) a data-driven approach through a public interest lens; (ii) openness, fairness and transparency; (iii) reliance on credible information and resources; (iv) a commitment to diversity and plurality; and (v) a resource that is of use to electoral stakeholders not only for the upcoming election but also for future elections going forward.

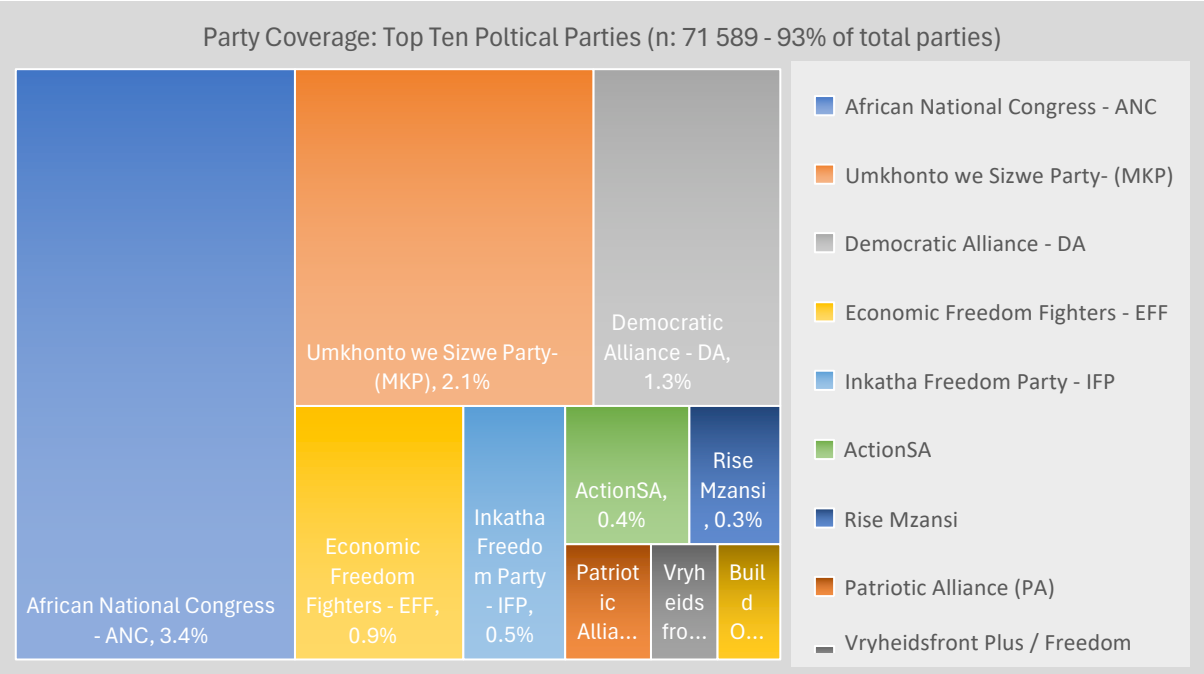
PART I INDICATORS // ASSESSMENT OF MEDIA COVERAGE

To assess the conduct of the media and fairness of election coverage in line with relevant regulatory standards and journalist practices

Equitability of coverage

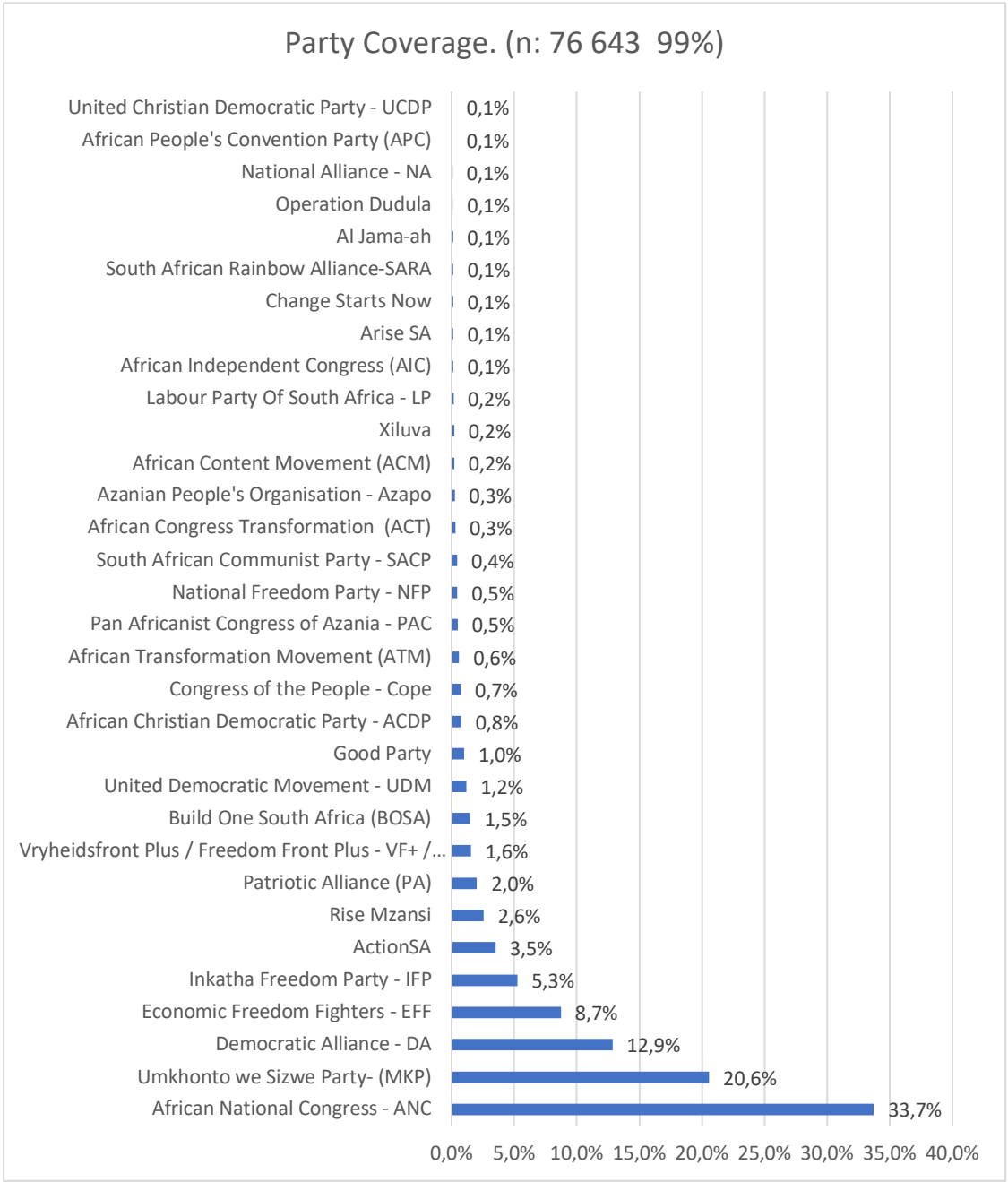
Rating: **LARGELY ACHIEVED**

Media have a responsibility to provide equitable coverage during an election period. Equitable coverage ensures diverse coverage of political parties and politicians, and as a result, media contribute towards potential voters' ability to make an informed decision on voting day. Due to a high number of new political parties registering for the national elections, media had a challenge balancing equitable coverage with public interest news.



The graph above shows which political parties (top ten parties) were given the most media coverage during this period. The coverage accounts for 93% of all party coverage. The data indicates that the ANC received the majority share, at 34%. The assumption is that media follow equitable coverage regulations, according to party representation, however, the data shows that MK Party received the second highest amount of coverage, at just over 20%. This is a significant share of the coverage, especially for a new political party not represented in parliament. Given the controversy and public interest issues around the MK party, the legal challenges between MK and the IEC, it is not surprising that media focused on the party.

Other political parties that received a large portion of media coverage include Democratic Alliance, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Action Sa and Rise Mzansi. While the coverage can be said to be equitable there is also little doubt that smaller new parties would feel legitimately aggrieved by the minimal coverage they received across the media.



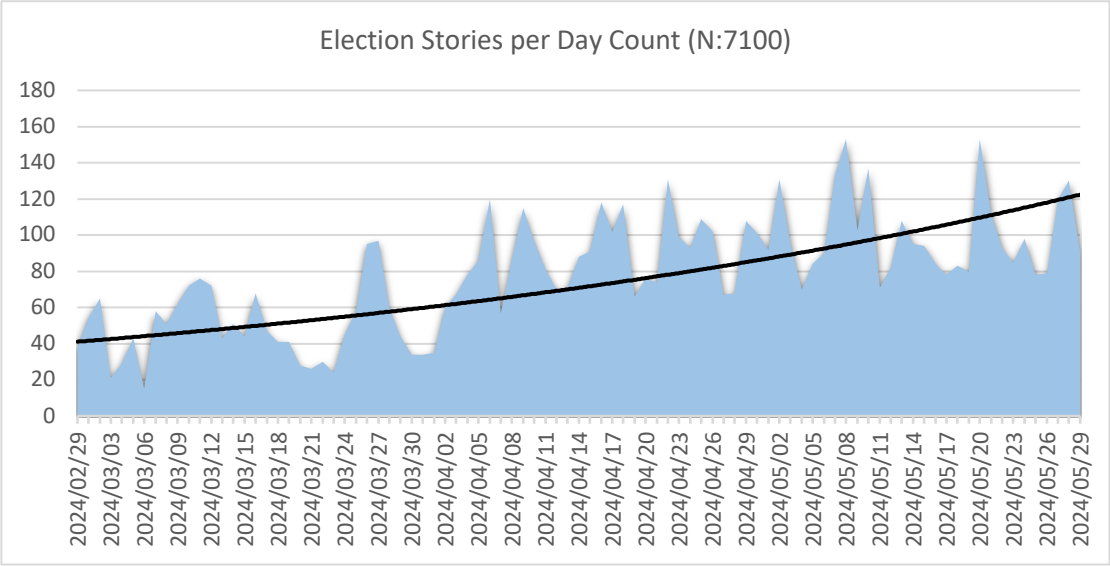
Even the SABC which tends to offer greater diversity of party coverage struggled to give sufficient coverage to smaller parties and independent candidates. The reality is that with fewer resources some parties will miss out.

The graph above shows the media's coverage of all political parties mentioned in elections related coverage. Generally, all parties represented in parliament received coverage relatively in line with party representation, however, the new parties, including Rise Mzansi, Build One SA, and MK party have dominated coverage in relation to their representation.

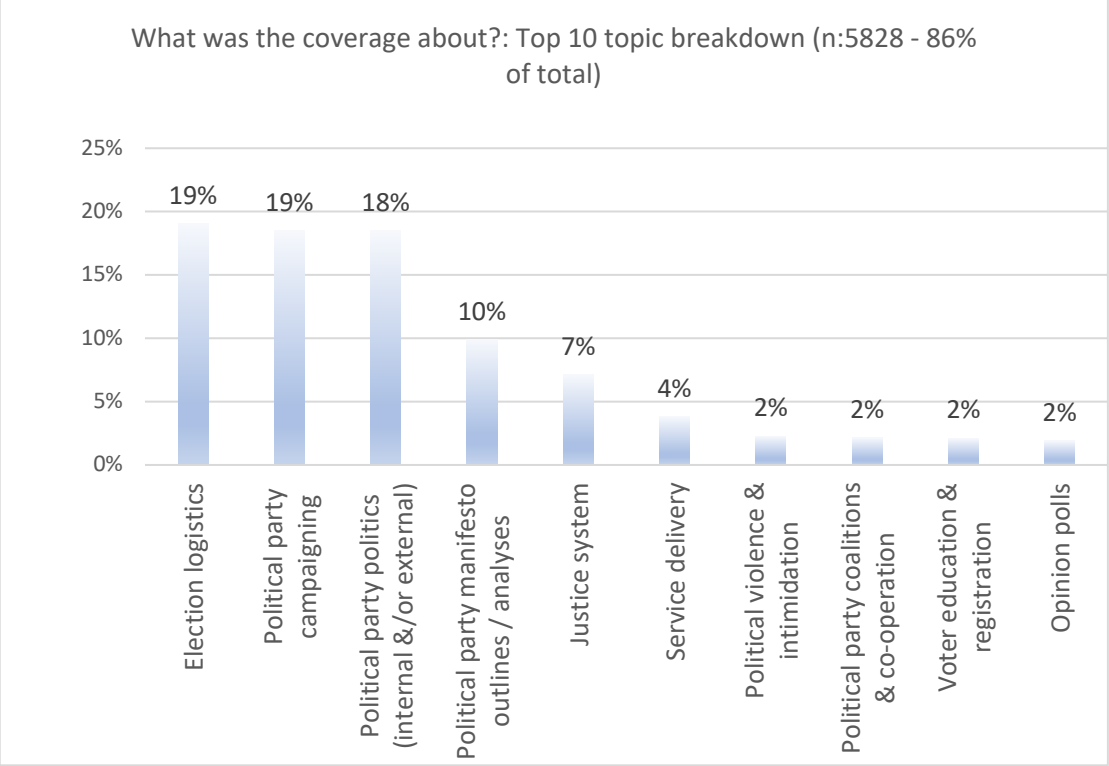
Diversity of coverage and plurality

Rating: **ACHIEVED**

During an election period, one of the important elements in media coverage is the amount of coverage given to elections, as well as the issues that are focused on in the media. Media represent ordinary people. One of the critical roles of media is to hold political parties and politicians accountable, and one of the ways to do this is to unpack what issues are important to people, and whether these issues are given attention by political parties. The graph below indicates the number of election related stories media produced over time, during the period.

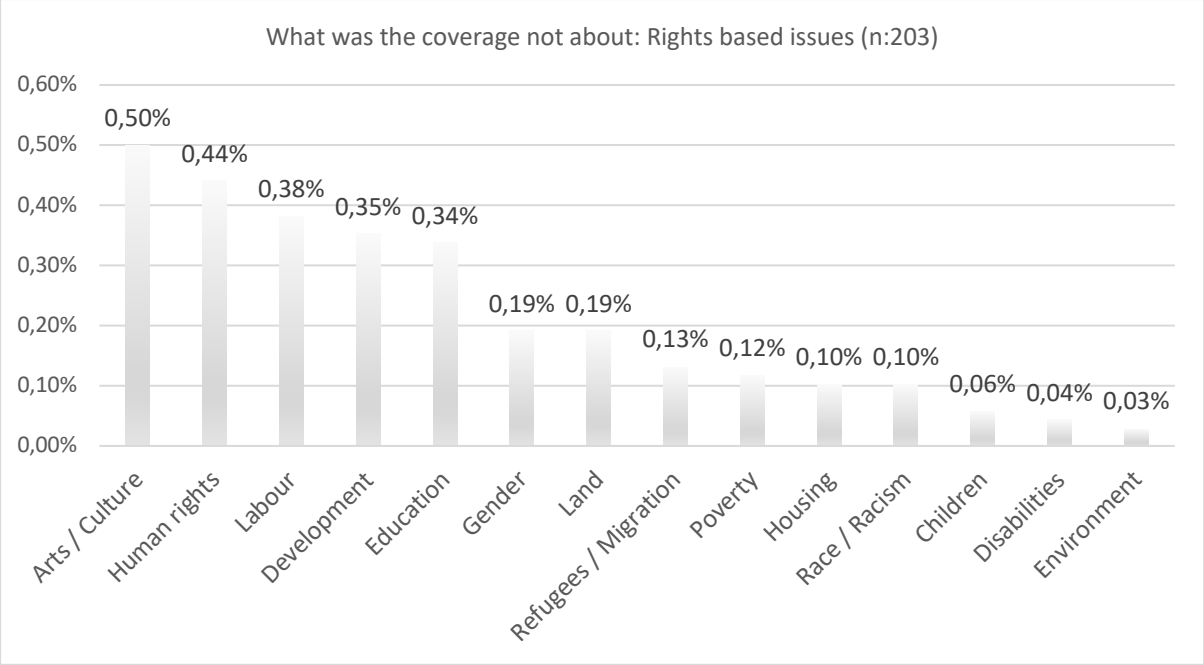


There are two clear peaks in coverage, which occurred one 17 May, and again on 20 May. On the 17th of May, international voting commenced and the first ballot of the 2024 national elections was cast so media coverage focused on election logistics, and reports of the voting day. Coverage on the 20th May focused on the Constitutional Court ruling on the eligibility of former president Jacob Zuma to stand for office representing the MK party. Overall, the average number of election related stories gradually increased over the period, as would be expected.

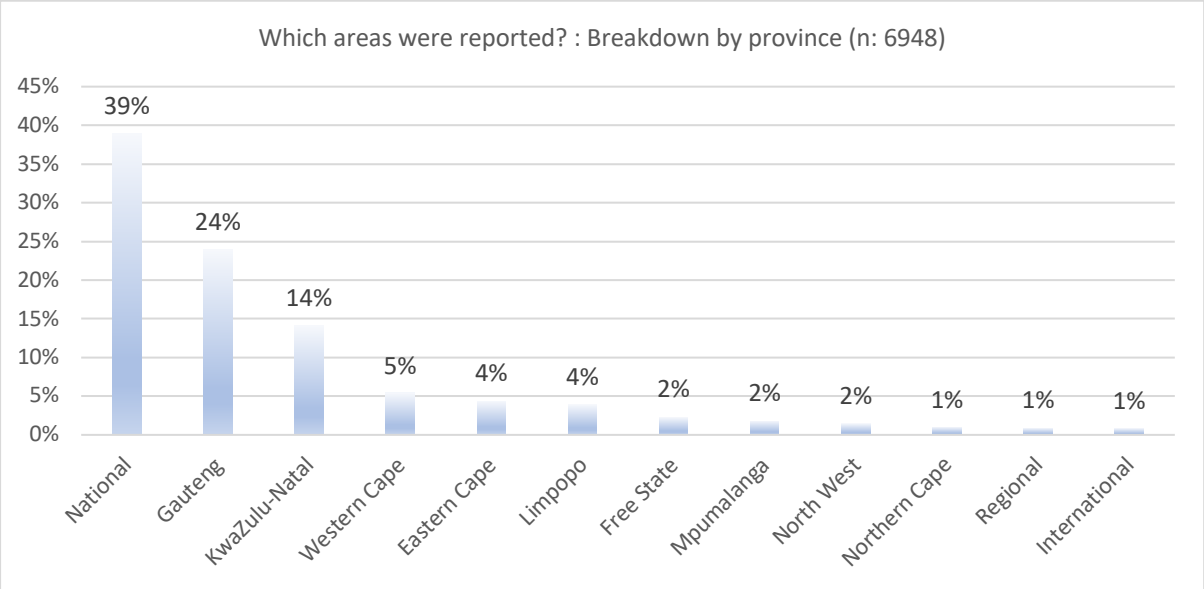


The topics that media cover is important to consider as these issues shape the narrative of the election period. The top three topics covered during elections include election logistics, political party campaigning, and political party politics. It is not surprising that these topics dominated coverage, however, it is disappointing that media did not offer more analysis on issues that are of concern to the public. The data shows that media allowed political parties to set the agenda, focusing on the narratives driven by politicians. Political party internal politics was one of the dominating topics, and this overshadowed key human rights-based issues, or service delivery concerns. It is also concerning that the media did not seem to challenge many of the concerning statements made by politicians, especially when those statements challenged the legitimacy of our constitution, and other claims or statements that were particularly offensive, such as xenophobic utterances. It is important for the media to be able to hold politicians accountable when making claims that are broadly anti-democratic.

The graph below indicates the topics that were largely left out of media's coverage of the elections, creating an obvious gap in media offering analysis of critically important issues. Topics such as children, climate change, and housing were afforded less than 1% of coverage, even though the climate crisis is one of the biggest global risks currently. Gender, education, and development were also largely ignored as key issues during the election period.



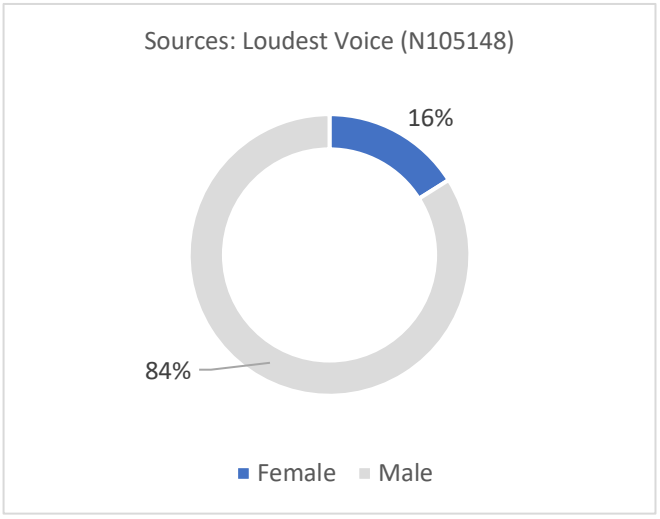
The regional spread of coverage during a national election should follow the demographic breakdown of the country. A high percentage of national coverage is expected, given that the elections were national and provincial elections. Data shows that coverage was predominantly focused on three provinces, Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Western Cape, sharing 43% of the total coverage. These trends while in line with those observed historically do indicate the need for more efforts at diverse local news in marginalised areas. The remaining six provinces shared only 14% of the total coverage.



Inclusion of women

Rating: **PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**

To determine the voice share in the media (who is sourced and quoted the most on coverage) data is gathered on the spread of male versus female sources. Women's voices have been grossly underrepresented in the media this election period. Only receiving 16%, with male voices dominating at 84%. This reiterates the analysis that media seem to be allowing the political parties and politicians to set the agenda, given that the political landscape is predominantly male. Generally, women's voices are heard approximately 19 – 22% in the media, and news media in South Africa are usually in line with the global average of women's voices in the media. Data indicates that the current results are far below this average.



Media may to some degree argue that they cannot tell a party who to field as their head and hence if the parties only offer up make voces that's who will be interviewed. Again, this we also know that more women vote than men, that gender equality isn't just good for women but leads to better coverage generally. Media need to be more assertive in demanding women to speak to, and if the parties don't offer them then media can ensure they make every effort to access more women experts, candidates and have a clear focus on gender equality in their coverage.

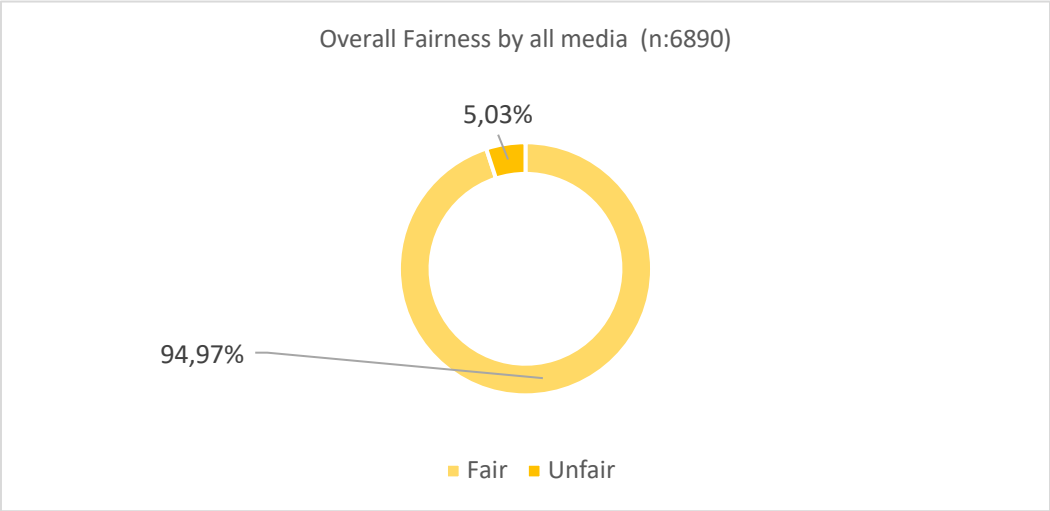
Credibility of information and critical analysis

Rating: **LARGELY ACHIEVED**

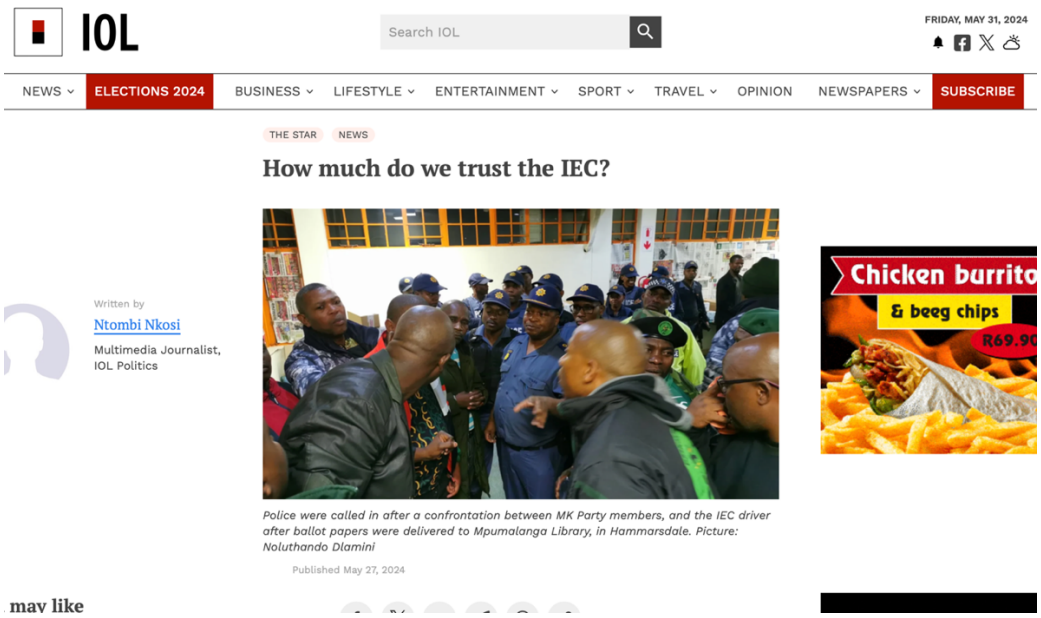
A critical element in determining media performance during elections is looking at whether media's covered was biased, or generally fair. Each elections related article is analysed according to the following criteria:

- Language:
    - Language bias by exaggeration
    - Language bias by generalisation
    - Language bias by trivialisation
- Presentation
    - Bias occurs when it is clear that one or more parties are favoured by virtue of how they are reported
- Omission

- Bias occurs where a party is not given the opportunity to respond to substantial allegations or to an issue of substantial importance to that party



The data clearly indicates that the overall media coverage of the elections has been fair. IT is one of the strongest findings that media coverage across media, from small community to commercial and the public broadcaster cover the elections in an overwhelmingly fair manner. That 30 years later we should be in a space where media are overwhelmingly fair is a credit to our journalism. That said it is worth noting that there were some stories, like those in the Star that actively sought to give credence to mis and disinformation – to questions around whether the IEC can be trusted. These stories undermine the integrity of all news media and should be condemned.



https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/how-much-do-we-trust-the-iec-0275d508-bbc5-4ca9-8050-eb59f25bc2e9

Reasonableness and compliance

No data available.

PART II INDICATORS // ASSESSMENT OF MEDIA ENABLING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

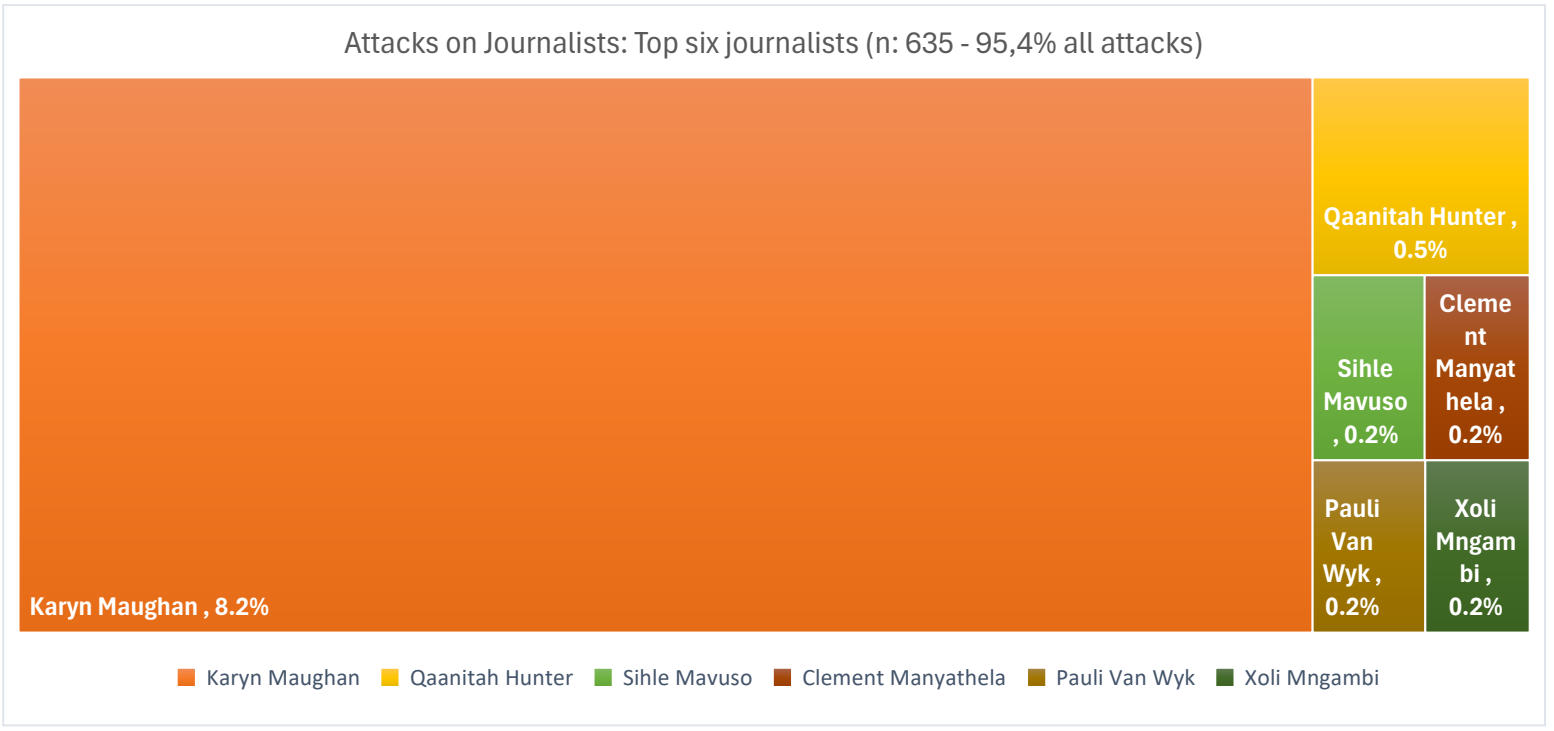
To assess the enabling environment for the media to operate during the election period and its conduciveness to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections

A key element for a conducive environment is whether journalists are able to do their job. We saw some instances where journalist were harassed at an MK rally.1 Outside of that it has become common practice for journalist to be attacked for being online, and this is even more egregious for women journalists. This research highlight some of the attacks against Daily Maverick journalists2.

For our part MMA has been working on a tool called Media Attack Reporting System (MARS) where attacks against journalists online can be tracked. Two MMA monitors were asked to upload attacks against journalists online. Over the period of May 793 attacks were recorded on MARS.

Number of recorded incidences

During the period, a total of 793 online attacks against journalists were recorded.



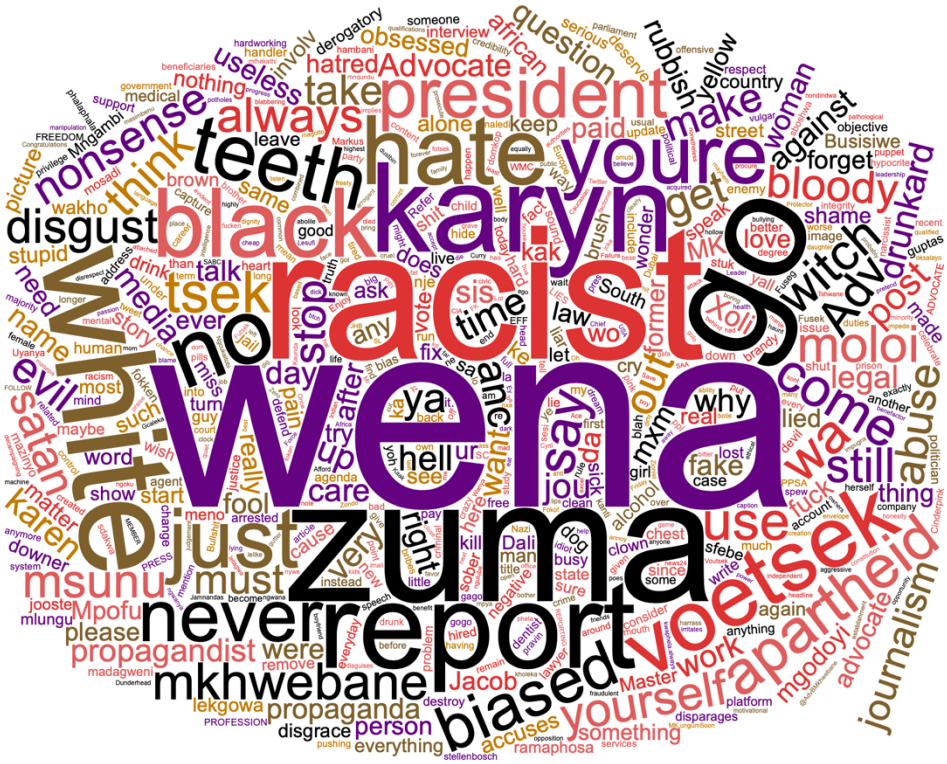
[1] See: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-05-20-electoral-code-and-protection-of-journalists-parties-take-note/

[2] See: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-05-22-sexualised-silenced-and-labelled-satan-horrific-levels-of-online-violence-targeting-women-journalists/

What is clear from the chart above is that Karyn Maughan is one of the focal points for attacks. Almost anything Maughan posts will be subjected to abuse and ridicule. While the list of journalists who are subjected to attacks is relatively small, we see that the list of attackers is almost one insult one user. That is for most attacks each comment tends to come from a unique user. Thus, instead of there being a clear pattern of abuser accounts there is a list of over 500 different accounts where attacks emanate from. The diversity of attacker identities makes it harder to track and block. While there may well be a small group responsible, they make sure to cover their tracks by offering up an almost unending list of attacker accounts.

Nature of threats

The word cloud below shows a visual representation of the words and phrases used the most in the attacks on journalists.



The table below is a random sample of just under one third of the online attacks received in the last month. The level of hate and harassment against journalists, especially during an election period, should be condemned by every single political party and clearly more needs to be done to protect journalists online.

Selected Quotes from Attacks on Journalists
Voetsek wena racist!
You are nothing but a disgusting racist who wants to destroy black people... disgusting!

Leave our president alone you blood useless woman @karynmaughan
Racists remain racists you will never change don't use the law because you are talking from a point of privileged so shut up
Fusek Shaitan
You still belong in jail
You are going to jail Satan
We know you love them Dark and handsome
When people want to an epitome of disgrace in Journalism, you are a perfect example. You not only a disgrace but disgusting to say the least. You may hate the guy but be objective in your reporting. Afford Adv Dali Mpofu the same title as you afforded Adv Thembeka Ngcukaitobi.
Wena madagweni le phalaphala defender le bua masepa
Your satanic views will come back to haunt you, moloi, madagweni
White supremacy 👺😈😡
Hatred can develop a bad odour from the evil soul 😈
Got you little devil 😈
When you say "we know" you are referring to whites who knows everything including what works and what doesn't or journalists
You hate Zuma so much may be you dream every night about him. I can't wait black pan Africanist have full control of this country and kick your type out of this country
You're a sick and twisted bad woman. Your job is to character assassinate real black leaders. This is to fail black people's independence. That's why you post Ace's picture in a sentence talking about someone else. Failure is what you're awaited.
Wena only fools still think of you as a journalist,the way you're obsessed with our president you can even intelligently try to spew bile against him 😹😹😹
Maybe if you can stop with your biased reporting on thise people you don't like, you would see that the consistent division you talking about is in your head because you use emotions to report of issue. Our problem is journalists like you have no shame
Fuck you and your DA leave Zuma alone
She's patriotic at heart. Unlike your evil self.
We will be there only to watch @XoliMngambi being cooked live on TV as he will be posing questions based on lies and not evidence or facts 🤞💯🤣🤣🤣 And we demand 45 minutes for the interview so that DP @FloydShivambu can clearly articulate issues without hiding behind " I'VE RAN OUT OF TIME" nonsense 💯🤞
Luck you btch
Voetsek. [There's an offensive image attached]
Pink racist
U won't rest racist. U better run to Europe after 29 may
You are such an ANC puppet. Sad really. We are just going to hear lies.
I put it to you Karyn that President Zuma will prosecute you and Downer when ANC is voted out of power on 29 May 2024. You, Downer, Jamnandas, Phalaphala Protector, Cyril and Zondo will be arrested for all the nonsense u have been doing. Enjoy while it last, clock is ticking
You are crazy in the head.
Aai voetsek wena
Bloody agent Karyn
Satan
anything loved by you is rotten exactly like you
Uyanya 🖕🏾

Wena nje foetsek
You are disgusting
Jou racist poes...
Hows your depression going?
Lap dogs will always defend their owners. Focusing on yourself is the best option.
I hate everything you personally stand for.
It's long way to go for you , that won't happen. Sit down and watch the game wena 🤡🤡
When you are a useless journalist
You b*tch stop reporting about Zuma and report ant you white brother
Votsek wena with chocolate teeth
The new stratcom
You are disgusting
Wanya wena ur hate on black will never make u rich
You're in pain Satan 😄😄
Fokof
We will vote for MK...call us whatever you like...and whether you like it or not sf****
You a very Biased and factional journalist. your journalism is very questionable , as a journalists your credibility was compromised when you accepted payola to write bad stuff about people, every time your name comes up I see corrupted journalists, try another career.
She's called Satan
FK U
VOETSEK SFEBE!!! #VOTEMK2024
VOETSEK
VOETSEK JOU MASE POES!!!
FK U EVIL RACIST WHITE BTXH
VOETSEK RACIST BTCH
Masimbenu!!!! Your hatred towards @AdvBMkhwebane stinks
So the DUSTBIN FAKE LEGAL Politician wrote an article ABOUT HERSELF? 🤣
It is rude for you to address Advocate Ngcukaitobi but when it comes to Adv Mpofu you address him ,by his surname, it's shows how biased you are ,and you can't control yourself for hating black people bloody racist.
Go fuck yourself leave Zuma alone 😔
And you still fat! 🙄
Zuma right were violated Wena Gogo
You guys are modern day witches. You have very dark hearts. Voetsek!!!
This user posts an offensive image in response to a post made by the journalist related to a legal matter involving former president Jacob Zuma.
They say Karyn feed people 'bullshit' everyday.
U are a slut don't forget that
This woman is such a bitter narcissist. Honestly mkhwebane should be embarrassed at how she is so entitled to Sans hard earned taxes.@CyrilRamaphosa@MbalulaFikile here's another economic failures cause it ain't ever greedy anc cadres.
You sound like a witch
U are anti black moron u white racist

Bese ukhala Ngo bullying wena sdakwa sehunters
Wena karyn with fake tears your days will come the sooner the better
The good thing about Karen is that when she dies is that the will be nothing to remember her with.
The dog Karen has been sent out!!!
Only retards will listen to the mantanyula liar.
Oh voetsek wena and go bleach your yellow teeth.
You're disgusting, your day will come.
Did u brush your brown teeth?
You arr getting very close to meeting your maker, usijwayela amasimba manje!
You can't even hide it that you're a witch.
I am sure you are not happy because the judgement does not serve the white agenda you represent.
I used to respect this little witch @karynmaughan. What a waste of respect msuzo
Trash, Kaak, and fake news journalism by yellow teeth and News24. The mouthpiece of unreliable newsfeed. Sies 🤧🤮😪
They say she must be probably drunk by the statement she made
Voetsek, wena dirty teeth 🤮
Did you 💊💊💊 perhaps before posting this?
Pink 🫁 are so disrespectful to us Africans yoh 🥷
This user disparages the journalist for commenting on a legal matter.
Fat cat
Wena unesidina nje kwaphela.always reporting negatively about MK...ungumSoon uyezwa
Wena unesidina nje kwaphela.always reporting negatively about MK...ungumSoon uyezwa
You must keep quiet sometimes Racist
Like your teeth
You just gotta shut your white mouth
You must be having an orgasm now
U Are Disgusting @karynmaughan U Are A Filthy Human Being
Ey umubi nawe Karyn, qala mlungu omubi kanje
Your problem is you are a resist who doesn't hide her mentality towards black people.go to hell President Zuma will never pay for that forget
Mazinyo ka Curry when are you updating us on Markus Jooste???
The hate you have will kill you one day.
Go brush your teeth with baking soda first wena
Futsek sfebe
"ADVOCATE" JOU SWINE
I thought that Indian racist left journalism 🙄🙄🙄
You bloody hypocrite, Pravin sold SAA state capture style you have made no comment you bloody hypocrite
Tsek wena msunu wakho
Nizizinja shame dogs 🤮🤮🤮🤮 Tomorrow you crying journalism blah blah shutdown yokunya nibe nibhala ukunya😡😡
Go to hell

She's attracked using a picture
Her reporting is always biased, how did the become a journalist? What an evil woman
You are struggling with chest pains wena FAKE LEGAL JOURNALIST
Keep trying Cinderpink
She's being called Cinderpink and to also bring out her 'pom poms'
Karyn o satane ya motho
Go fix the wrinkled neck
Die poes afrikaaner racist
@karynmaughan is evil. Why on earth would a reporter consciously misrepresent the truth.
Karyn, you are a disgrace. Bias reporting
They say she's a "gogo"
You are just a hopeless clown 🤡
So it must be white racists that must be given bursaries 🤔
Voutsek Wena everyday it's Zuma can you speak about the white racist company and the DA that has killed people in George. We want to know the owners of all those companies involv
Always thinking about Zuma even you boyfriend fucking you scream Zuma Zuma Zuma 💭
😂🤣😅 I wonder when Zuma passes away what will you report on?? I guess your career will also go to the grave 😂🤣😅
So you care for Zuma your arch enemy,Zuma WMC your masters enemy ,you eat ,you sleep ,you dream Zuma ,wherever you are kuduma uZuma in your big Dunder head ,next thing you complain of abuse in the social media all started by your hate in anyone hated by your masters
You bloody thief you talk as if you are inocebt mxm
Are you still an alcoholic???????
You racist thing.
Here fotsek wena Meno a gold O bua nonsense. Tsek
And journalists are paid propagandists and are destroyers of nations. When a journalist speaks, don't listen to her. She's not human but an evil entity.
U look like shit
Msunu
Fuck you and your racist DA.
Puppet, racist and biased journalists.
You witch, you will cry when we treat you like the propaganda you are spreading. Indeed you deserve all the things you are crying about
You are kak
You’re not a journalist wena. You’re a paid mouth piece. A propaganda machine, a liar, a criminal, a jail bird in waiting.
Go fuck yourself
Clown
Voetsek wena
Stop irritating us you ugly face
Who cares about your cockeyes
Stop drinking and twitting
You need a boyfriend, clearly the dildos don't work anymore

Wena nje always reporting rubbish, no one takes you seriously, bloody propagandist nx
Wena nkare o moloi. You said nothing when she was mishandled by parliamentary "men". Today, "she is one of the most hardworking females". O moloi!!😂😂😂😂😂😂
No wonder Soweto smells like sulphur
Bullshit drunkard blabbering, TSEK. 🖕🖕🖕🖕🖕🖕🖕🖕🖕
Nonsense, what you have in common is racist and hate towards black people, all of you combined, Msoonu yenu
Futsek qgwirha
Futseka msunu wakho, nyamao
Stupid racist bastard
Yellow journalist! Sies
Tsek wena msunu wakho
This white girl is dom
Fokof wena
Coz you there for negative reporting since ya'll his enemy!! Ofcos they won't bow to your nonsense msunu yenu!!
Sies, I hate this woman.
Vintage @PaulivW spewing 💩in the administration of her paid propagandist duties. SA is cursed with fools running around with a fancy accent calling themselves journalists . It worked 5-6 years ago, make no mistake our eyes are wide open this time around!
Evil sadistic Narcissist racist.
Go back to Palestine
Tsa monyaaaa
F U drunkard
You drunkard

Platforms used

Most of the reports of the attacks originate from Twitter/X. This is a similar trend to what we see on Real411 where many of the complaints originate on Twitter/X.

Responsiveness

Given that the key platform for attacks online and mis and disinformation is Twitter/X, this is not surprising because of the lack of general regulation of the platform, and lack of presence across the African continent.