



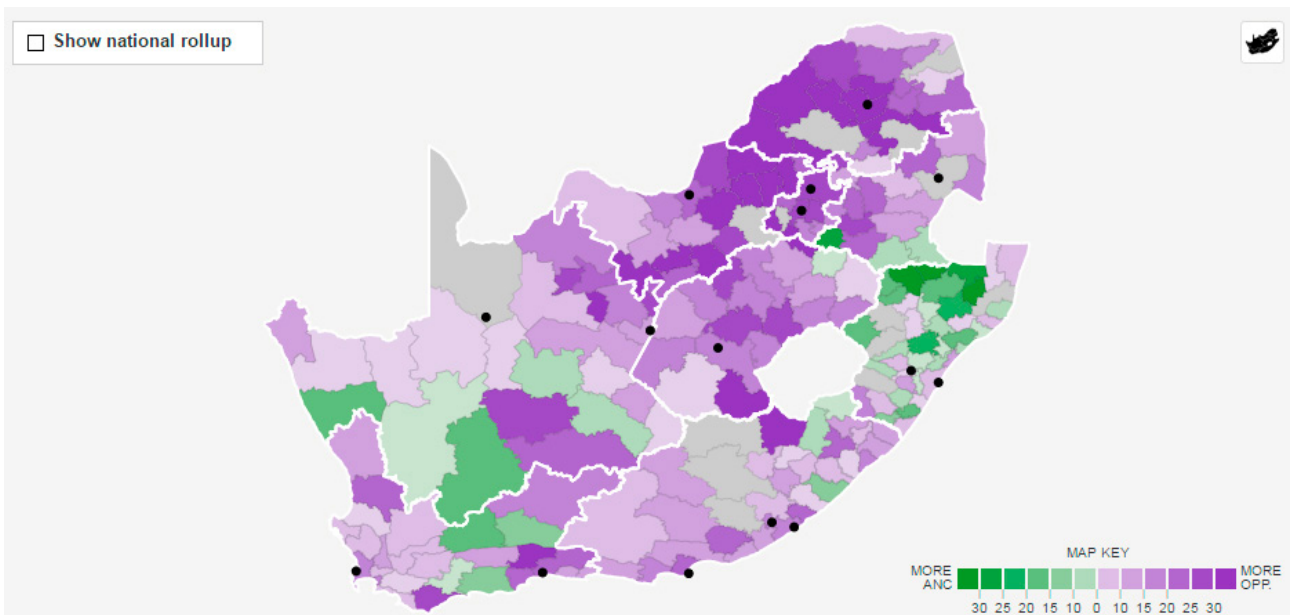
WHAT NOW ?

South Africa's 2016 Local Government Elections

August 2016

THE SOUTH AFRICAN 2016 local government elections were a game-changer. The country is, it turns out, a competitive multi-party democracy after all. The electoral dominance of the African National Congress (ANC) suffered a notable blow, with its core working class voters giving it a sharp rebuke. Its share of the vote nationally fell beneath 55% for the first time and below 50% in three key battlegrounds - Tshwane (Pretoria), Nelson Mandela Bay (PE) and Johannesburg. This unprecedented blow for the ANC heralds a new era of coalition politics and government. It may also have broken the post-apartheid paradigm in which just one party – the ANC – enjoyed a monopoly of political legitimacy and power. The Democratic Alliance (DA) increased its share of the national vote to above 25% for the first time and now seeks to form coalition governments in all three battleground cities. For its part, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by militant populist Julius Malema, built on its 2014 national election result and is now the kingmaker in several municipalities, including Tshwane and Johannesburg, presenting acute dilemmas for all the main protagonists and raising profound questions about what will happen next.

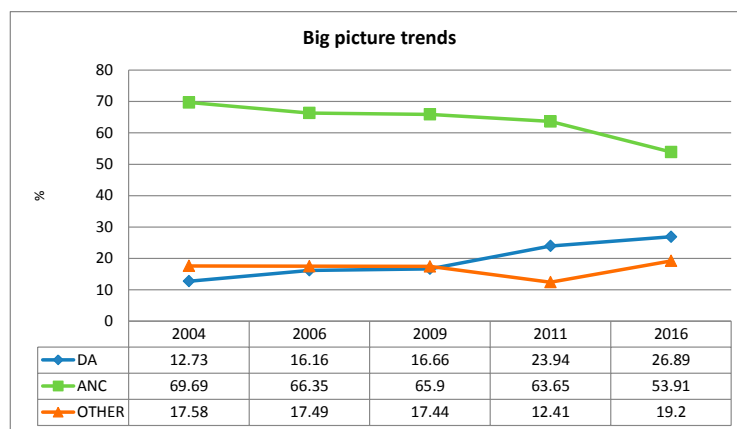
Election results 2016: A big, game-changing shift in South Africa's electoral map



Source: News24

THE BIG PICTURE: ANC HEGEMONY PENETRATED

The ANC's electoral dominance is being challenged and has now clearly entered a downward trajectory, falling 10% from its 2011 result at the last local government election (and down 8% since the last national election in 2014). Rather than dominant, the ANC's national showing suddenly looks increasingly precarious, at just under 54%. But will this trend continue at the next national election in 2019, or will the ANC bounce back? These are just two of many questions that remain to be answered.



Source: Authors / IEC.

THREE KEY BATTLEGROUND

The country's focus was on three key cities - Tshwane (Pretoria), Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) - and the key battleground wards (constituencies) and voting districts within them. In each, the ANC suffered significant losses, dropping to well beneath 50% of the votes and council seats (seats are allocated on the basis of wards won and votes on a PR party list system).

Tshwane (Pretoria)

Party	%	Seats
ANC	41 (-14)	89 (-29)
DA	43 (+8)	93 (+11)
EFF	10 (+10)	25 (+25)

Johannesburg

Party	%	Seats
ANC	45 (-14)	121 (-32)
DA	38 (+3)	104 (+14)
EFF	11 (+11)	30 (+30)

Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth)

Party	%	Seats
ANC	41 (-9)	50 (-13)
DA	47 (+7)	57 (+9)
EFF	5 (+5)	6 (+6)

The results seem to confirm that not only were the opposition DA and EFF the almost exclusive winners of the ANC losses (i.e. Johannesburg), but also that these two parties took a share of the vote from smaller parties (i.e. Tshwane, Nelson Mandela Bay).



BENEATH THE SURFACE: THE 'BELLWETHER' WARDS

Our approach to watching the results come in was to dig down beneath the surface of the big numbers and look for trends in key 'bellwether' wards. By doing so, three hypothetical questions guided our analysis:

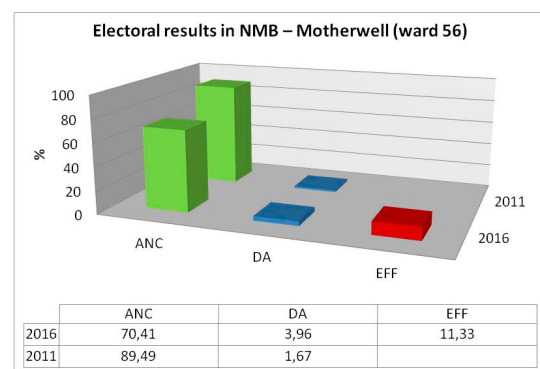
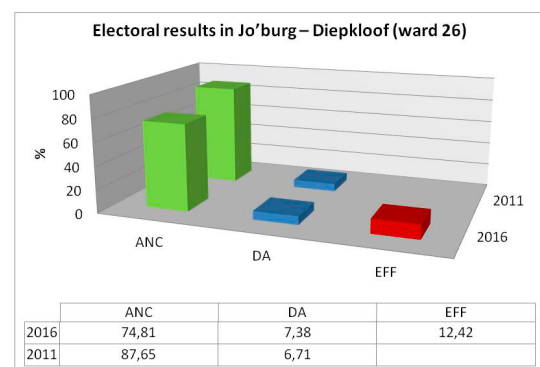
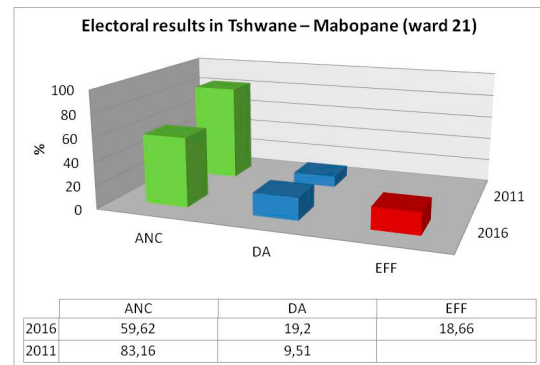
- Has the ANC black working class vote held up in the three key battlegrounds?
- Has the DA made any inroads in those areas?
- Has the EFF built on its 2014 performance?

As the first significant urban results came in as dawn broke on Thursday 4 August, it became rapidly clear that the ANC was 'getting a bloody nose' in areas where normally it does very well, specifically in 'township' areas, where black, working class voters were offering the ANC a remarkable, and sharp, rebuke.

In Tshwane, we took a closer look at those areas where intra-party conflict and violence erupted when the ANC made such a hash of choosing its mayoral candidate for the City last June. In **Mabopane** (ward 21), for example, ANC support dramatically fell from 83% at the last municipal elections in 2011 to 59% now, with the DA's vote doubling to about 19%, and the EFF harvesting a very similar score.

But this high DA score seems like an exception to the rule in these areas. Although a similar drop in ANC support was observed in Mamelodi (ward 15), the EFF that seems to have benefited the most, arguably obstructing the DA's progress in working class areas. A similar trend also appeared in Johannesburg in **Diepkloof** (Ward 26) and Jabulani, Soweto (Ward 46).

In Nelson Mandela Bay, the ANC also suffered a notable erosion of its 'core' urban black working class vote. In **Motherwell** (Ward 56), ANC support fell by about 20% from 89% in 2011 to 70% now, with the EFF taking 11% from the ruling party and a new regional party, the United Front Eastern Cape, established by NUMSA and former COSATU general-secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, getting 6% (and the DA gaining modestly, from 1.6% to 4%). A similar erosion of the ANC's super-political dominance was also noted in our 'Bellwether wards' Soweto-on-Sea (Ward 27), Kwazakele (Ward 19) and Zwide (Ward 20).

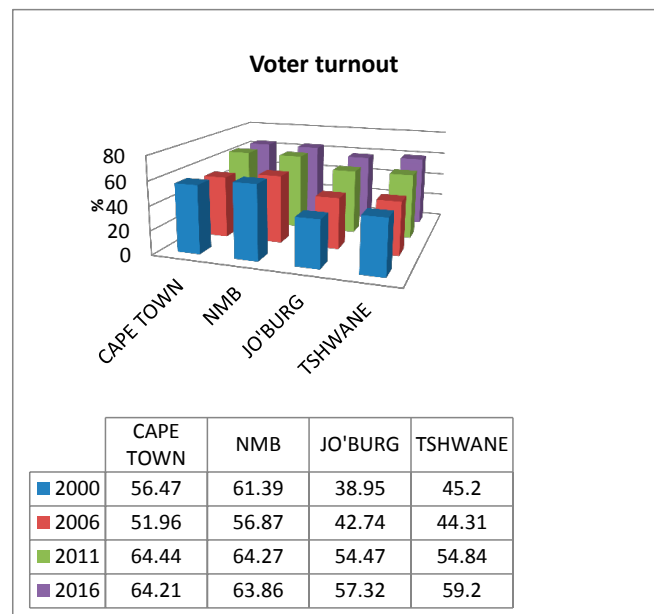


Source: Authors / IEC.

LESSONS FROM THE VOTER TURNOUT

While turnout in this election was almost identical to the last election, at just under 58%, what was significant this time was the pattern of turnout: in many suburban areas, where the opposition was stronger, turnout was extraordinarily high, but in working-class township areas it was surprisingly low, prompting ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe to say that ‘black people don’t appreciate the vote’. The ANC will draw some comfort from this: the fact that they failed to ‘get their vote out’ is clearly a negative for the party, since it provides clear evidence of a protest vote against the ruling party, but the fact that the stay-away core voters did not actually transfer their vote to other parties will encourage the ANC to think that they can reclaim their support in 2019.

Year	Registered voters	Voter turnout	Voter turnout (%)
2016	26 333 353	15 296 746	57,97
2011	23 654 347	13 664 914	57,64



Source: Authors / IEC.

HOW WILL THE ANC REACT TO LOSING ITS GRIP ON POLITICAL POWER?

This is the big question – the one we have been waiting twenty years to find out the answer to. On the night of the results it was a party in shock and in denial. There will still be serious introspection (the new buzzword) and repercussions leading to a very divisive blame game, in which Zuma and his allies attempt to deflect responsibility from the President. That the ANC did badly not just in Gauteng, but also in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape (its share of the vote in the City of Cape Town, for example, falling to a dismal 25%), will make it harder for him to do so.

The ANC also lost support in all the other provinces as well, save for Zuma's own homeground province, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), where the dial barely moved upwards not even 1%; curiously, the IFP gained more from the absence of the breakaway party, the NFP (who failed to register in time for the election), than the ANC. Zuma may not immediately suffer and may survive a bit longer, but there is a growing acknowledgement within his own organisation that he is an electoral liability.

The pattern is that municipal elections are coupled with the national election to follow three years later, in terms of trends. For example, in the 2014 national election the DA got almost precisely the same share of the vote (23.5%) as it did in the 2011 municipal elections as did the ANC (62%). So, this result may be a portent for what lies ahead in 2019. And the ANC leadership, and members of its National Executive Committee (NEC) will be looking at this and fretting – about their own individual political futures as well as their party's, and this could shift the balance of power in the NEC away from Zuma in the coming months as the party heads towards its December 2017 national elective conference.

A NEW ERA OF COALITION POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

As the above map shows, the tide turned against the ANC in this election; the opposition made significant advances across the country and now have an opportunity to make their case for change from government in City Hall. Although there have been numerous coalitions in small municipalities in recent years, and one bigger coalition formation in Cape Town after the 2006 municipal election, this is a new era, with higher stakes to play for. The country has had little experience of how to 'do' coalition politics. It will be very interesting to see how the coalition or co-operation negotiations unfold. The party leaders face some very tough decisions in terms of coalition strategy and tactics. Both in Johannesburg and Tshwane, the leader of the EFF, Julius Malema, is the kingmaker in any coalition negotiations for the DA as well as the ANC.

NOW WHAT? FUTURE SCENARIOS

In Port Elizabeth (NMB), the DA can form a coalition government with ease. It requires just 4 councillors from other, smaller opposition parties to side with it. The 4 councillors from the UDM (2), ACDP (1) and COPE (1) will provide a neat solution, given that all three parties have been yearning for coalition collaboration for years and have worked well with the DA in Parliament in recent times. The negotiations in the three Gauteng metros (including Ekurhuleni, which was also 'hung' without any clear winner, as well as Tshwane and Johannesburg), will be far more complicated. There are acute dilemmas for all the main protagonists.

For the ANC, desperate perhaps to remain in power, there is the dilemma of having to persuade themselves to eat humble pie and work with Malema, the man who has made life so uncomfortable for President Jacob Zuma over the past two years. On this, the ANC appears divided and uncertain as to how to proceed: the 'Zumarites' cannot abide the idea of working with Malema, whereas the Gauteng ANC is more pragmatic, and, of course, more concerned with remaining in city hall. Getting into bed with the DA would arguably be a much more comfortable ideological fit, given that on hard policy issues there are fewer substantive divisions than between either of them and the EFF.

The DA might find this an easier coalition to run than having to contend with the unpredictability of Malema, who would likely prove to be an unreliable and erratic coalition partner (although he is on record as saying that any coalition agreement will be in writing and renewable annually), placing unreasonable demands on whichever big party he agreed to bring into power. For example, he has already set out his stall on the two non-negotiable binding principles for the EFF: land reform and the removal of Zuma as President (in the case of the ANC).

The ability of the local sphere of government to deal with land reform is very limited. But the dilemma for both the DA and the EFF in terms of doing business with the ANC is that it would mean bringing back into power a governing party that the majority of people in the three Gauteng cities have voted against. And, for the EFF, it would mean an immediate and potentially fatal diminution of its core political USP, that it is not the ANC. It is, therefore, impossible to predict what will emerge. Any of the three possible 'grand coalition' scenarios are possible: DA-ANC, DA-EFF & ANC-EFF.

In coalition politics, creativity, pragmatism and flexibility, and imagination are the names of the game. However, the electorate will expect clarity about the basis for any coalition and parties will themselves have to enter into any coalition agreement with a clear-minded sense of purpose about how the coalition will operate and its own rules of the game, otherwise unstable and unsustainable government may quickly follow.

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