



## South Africa's elections: no change?

Standard Note: SN05983

Last updated: 15 May 2014

Author: Jon Lunn

Section: International Affairs and Defence Section

On 7 May 2014, South Africa held its fifth national and provincial elections since the end of Apartheid. The four best performing parties in the 400-seat [National Assembly elections](#) were as follows:

Party	Share of vote	Seats
AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS	62.15%	249
DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE	22.23%	89
ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS	6.35%	25
INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY	2.40%	10

The remaining 27 seats were shared amongst nine parties each of which gained less than 2%. The ruling ANC won all the provincial elections with the exception of the Western Cape, where the DA retained power.

So were the elections a case of no change? Yes and no. The ANC's political dominance remains unchallenged. Its overall share of the vote in 2014 was down 3.75% on 2009. But this seems a small drop in support given the relatively poor ratings given by some commentators to President Jacob Zuma, who is now set for a second term in office, for his [performance](#) over the past five years.

The centre-right DA added 7.57% to its vote as compared with last time around. It improved its political position without transforming it. The Inkatha Freedom Party continued its gradual political decline, losing 2.15%. Last but not least, the EFF, which is largely composed of ex-ANC radicals, largely supplanted the Congress of the People, also the creation of disillusioned ANC members, which scored 7.42% in 2009 but then subsequently imploded.

As for the provincial elections, no province changed hands. The ANC improved its vote in some provinces but saw it fall in others. Perhaps the two most significant results came in Gauteng, the economic power-house of the country, where the ANC's vote dropped by over 10% to 53.59% and the DA's tally reached 30.78%; and in Western Cape, the only province not controlled by the ruling party, where the DA pushed its vote up to 59.38% and the ANC marked time at 32.89%, just over a percentage point up on 2009. Elsewhere, it was only in Limpopo Province that the DA failed to come second.

By any realistic standard, the DA made good progress in these elections. There is still some dispute about how it did in terms of black support, with some sources saying it managed only [6%](#), while the DA has claimed it was [20%](#). But it is yet to dispel the public perception that it is not a party for the black majority. Whatever her undoubted qualities, some wonder whether the DA ever can while Helen Zille (or any other white South African) leads the party. Zille was

damaged by the failed attempt to parachute the leader of *Agang*, [Mamphela Ramphela](#), in as the DA's presidential candidate in early 2014, but an open challenge to Zille has yet to emerge. Meanwhile, Lindiwe Mazibuko has [stepped down](#) as the DA's leader in parliament to go and study in the US. Her relations with Zille had reportedly deteriorated. Mazibuko has been replaced by Mmusi Maimane, who led the party's campaign in Gauteng Province.

The EFF performed well at the first attempt, given its formation in 2013. It came second in Limpopo Province. But the often quixotic and populist leadership of Julius Malema undoubtedly alienated some potential supporters. Corruption allegations continue to hang over him. In the end, the liberation credentials and organisational reach of the ANC appear to have limited the EFF's advance.

As for the ANC, the result underscored its sheer durability and the depth of loyalty upon which it can still call. This helped to overcome the doubts of some about President Zuma, whose reputation has been damaged, most recently by a [controversy](#) over high levels of official expenditure on his private home in KwaZulu Natal. But the ANC's vote share is slowly decreasing with each election. There is underlying discontent over its failure to deliver enough jobs and sufficiently improved public services. This regularly bubbles to the surface in street protests. The result in Gauteng is a warning shot – it has prompted the party to seek a new provincial leadership). Analysts are looking ahead to the 2016 local government elections; the ANC looks vulnerable in [eight metropolitan areas](#) where it only just secured a majority on this occasion.

Talk of political realignment remains in the air – as it has for many years, but so far without tangible effect. For some time now, socialist currents within an increasingly [divided](#) trade union movement have talked about establishing an independent labour party. The general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), [Zwelinzima Vavi](#), who is attempting to fight off efforts by supporters of Jacob Zuma to depose him, has been mentioned as a possible future leader, although he has not committed himself explicitly to such a project. Were a new party of this kind to emerge, the EFF might look like a natural ally. But the left in South Africa is fractious and COSATU is not the force it was; some [claim](#) that radical union activism is increasingly to be found outside its ranks. In addition, the Communist Party remains wedded to the ANC. So there is no reason to believe that the ANC will simply be swept away by a realignment of this kind, if it does eventually happen.

Overall, the ANC's manifesto was a pragmatic document at whose heart was its [National Development Plan 2030](#) and the legacy of Nelson Mandela. It steered clear of promises to nationalise the mines but did offer support for greater unionisation and collective pay bargaining, as well as a national minimum wage. Crucial to its fortunes over the next five years will be whether it is able to navigate internal divisions without being immobilised by them. Some argue that South Africa cannot afford another five years of ANC Government like the last. The [Economist](#) is in the pessimistic camp:

The party's troubles are multiplying. The economy is in bad shape. Barely four in ten people of working age have jobs. Most of the jobless masses are young. An alarming slide in the rand forced the central bank to raise interest rates from 5% to 5.5% on January 29th, despite the economy's weakness (see [article](#)). South Africa relies heavily on foreign borrowing to pay for an excess of imports over exports. As monetary policy in America slowly gets back to normal, foreign investors are choosier about which countries they lend to. South Africa's appeal is waning.