



## Bi-Weekly Social Listening Updates & Recommendations for Electoral Engagement #9



### *Electoral Reflections*

#### Overview

- The online conversation around the national election and political climate received over one million mentions between 24 – 31 May 2024, tripling the average mention count previously identified in bi-weekly reports.
- Among the main topics during the period were conversations about voter education, with sentiments that the public had been focusing too much on entertainment news, despite not knowing where to vote or who to vote for. (1); (2); (3); (4); (5)
- The general anti-ANC sentiment continues this week, with a number of online South Africans reminding their fellow citizens of the party's failures over the years. Examples of posts reflecting this sentiment can be found [here](#); [here](#) and [here](#).

#### Reflections on Participation — Individual and Administrative Barriers

- We noted calls for voting to either be moved online or be extended by a day, with increased participation and alleged security risks regarding the handling of ballot boxes cited as the reasons behind these calls. (1) ; (2) ; (3). As per common electoral practice, the IEC confirmed that individuals who had entered the queue before 9pm would have the opportunity to [cast their vote](#).
  - One individual shared a high-engagement [post](#) that suggested that South Africa was not ready for voting to be conducted online. While an online registration system has been introduced, South Africa is yet to introduce e-voting with an earlier proposal having been rejected by parliament<sup>1</sup>.
  - Criticism was also directed towards companies, particularly stores, that carried on with 'business as usual'. One individual shared that an employee at a Clicks store said she would not have enough time after work to go and vote. The [post](#) received more than 9,000 likes and was shared by more than 1,000 accounts. In response, some individuals shared how employees at other stores shared similar sentiments.
  - Isolated incidents of disruption were noted in the lead-up to, and on the day of, the election.
  - In the Eastern Cape, the city of Mthatha was beset with taxi violence, protests and looting: (1) ; (2) ; (3). An EFF representative indicated that the discontent in the city impacted [special voting processes](#), with further speculation by the representative that this formed part of a ploy to manipulate the election.
  - Furthermore, the town of Keiskammahoek saw electoral disruption as protestors aired their concerns about [unresolved land claims](#). Residents did not vote as part of their protest.
  - In Thokoza in Gauteng, [Newzroom Afrika reported](#) on the firing of rubber bullets as individuals attempted to enter a voting station.
  - In Taung in the Free State, [eNCA reported](#) on service delivery protests which had impacted special voting. On the day of the election, the protest was disbanded by police, with the firing of rubber bullets.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cipesa.org/2021/03/south-africas-parliament-rejects-plan-to-introduce-e-voting/>

- The CABC has noted discussion on long waiting times at voting stations.
  - Instances of lengthy queuing have been reported across the nation, with one individual reporting that they had waited more than [9 hours to vote](#): (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4) ; (5) ; (6) ; (7)
  - Individuals speculated that the long queues, particularly at universities and wards, which have historically not voted ANC, were the result of a strategic delay tactic designed to slow down the process: (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4) ; (5) ; (6) ; (7). With EFF leader Julius Malema indicating his perspective that the queues lay the groundwork for [electoral manipulation](#).
  - Positive sentiment was noted as well, with individuals expressing pride at the turnout and encouraging those still in line or who had experienced delays to exercise their democratic rights. We further noted individuals calling for support from those who had already cast their vote: (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4) ; (5) ; (6) ; (7) ; (8) ; (9) ; (10) ; (11)
  - Budgetary cuts for the IEC were also discussed and used to explain the waiting times and air of disorganisation at voting stations: (1) ; (2) ; (3)
  
- Among the main talking points during the election period was the Section 24A vote that allowed voters voting outside their district to notify the commission between 15 March and 17 May.
  - Some users argued that they were not aware of this rule. Others alleged that the message was either not shared widely enough, or that the rule did not make provision for those who are unable to vote where they registered due to unforeseen circumstances on the day. (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4).
  - Others criticised those who claim to have had no knowledge of Section 24A of ignoring or not paying attention to IEC messaging. It appears that the rule was not applied the same in various voting stations, with some individuals stating that they were allowed to vote, and others stating that they were turned away. (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4) ; (5) ; (6) ; (7)
  - There were also posts that alleged the names of individuals were not included in the voters' roll at various stations. Posts expressing this sentiment came from users who either claim that they notified the IEC in accordance with the Section 24A vote, or those claiming to be newly registered for voting. Some users urged those whose names were not appearing on the voters' roll, despite applying for Section 24A to ask the IEC for the "Section 24a voters register". (1) ; (2) ; (3)

## Misinformation & Disinformation

- The CABC has noted a series of posts which has sought to cast doubt on the security measures implemented by the IEC in relation to ballot forms and boxes.
  - On Twitter/X, we noted a variety of posts focused on allegations of forgotten or rigged ballots as well as election manipulation, predominantly from MK Party-aligned accounts, @Mokwala\_Dimpho in particular: (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4) ; (5) ; (6) ; (7) ; (8) ; (9)
  - One of the videos that was widely circulated on TikTok and Twitter/X appears to be of someone marking election ballots that are not similar to the ones used in South Africa — with claims of vote rigging in the South African elections posted along with the video: (1) ; (2).
  - An influential Twitter/X account, @ChrisExcel102, [shared a video](#) that showcases members of the MK Party arguing with an unseen official regarding an unsealed ballot box ostensibly sourced from a special election held in Mpumalanga. The video has been posted multiple times: (1) ; (2). The account further posted a meme referencing narratives around a 'captured' [IEC which favours the ANC](#).
  - We have further noted TikTok videos which sought to make the case that the IEC has been captured by the ANC and that the elections have been rigged to favour the ANC: (1) ; (2) ; (3) ; (4)

- The CABC has noted unverified imagery of election result updates on three posts claiming to be from eNCA. The first post showcases the MK Party at 66% of the votes in KwaZulu-Natal. While the second conflates eNCA projection estimates with votes cast. The third, [assessed by the Real411](#), states that the MK Party is set to receive 24% of votes (1); (2).
- Allegations of ballot rigging were noted as a video showcasing the submission of [special votes](#) gained traction online: (1); (2)
  - ‘Rigging’ and ‘rigged’ continued to trend during the week. In addition to the conversation about ballot boxes, some individuals raised concerns about the IEC [dashboard](#) being down early on Friday 31 May. Individuals mobilised a narrative that the alleged “underperformance” of some parties was due to electoral manipulation despite the counting process not being concluded: (1); (2); (3); (4); (5); (6); (7); (8); (9); (10). The [IEC has issued a statement](#) about the accessibility of the results dashboard and has dispelled rumours that the verification of votes was compromised.

## Recommendations

- We recommend that the media, civil society, campaigns and the public continue reporting instances of mis- and disinformation to protect the integrity of the elections as well as the IEC. The [Real411](#) provides a platform should you like to report instances of mis- and disinformation, hate speech, incitement to violence or harassment for further assessment.
- We especially call on parties, leaders and supporters to allow the commission space to conclude the vote-counting process without spreading messages that seek to sow discord online.
- We recommend that media and relevant institutions continue to track the narratives of vote rigging until all results are released because the early release of voting statistics led certain MK party supporters to call an early victory to the results in KZN.