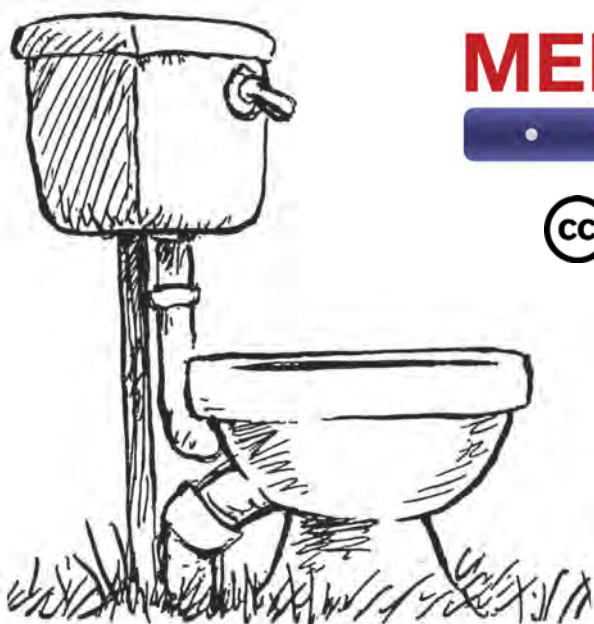


Citizens' Agenda Flushed Away

Uncovering Media on Municipal Elections

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Foreword

Media Monitoring Africa was started in 1993 as a small project, the Broadcast Monitoring Project. Its main aim was to monitor the content of the South African Broadcasting Corporation to ensure that the content was fair, accurate and informative. The monitoring highlighted not only the importance of the media in an election period but also served to highlight the value of media monitoring itself. Thanks to the ongoing support of the Open Society Foundation we have been able to carry out monitoring projects of all of South Africa democratic elections. This report is the most recent addition to our work and as such I believe it not only adds to the body of work but it offers crucial insights into a critical period of our democracy.

The 2011 Municipal elections were dominated by coverage surrounding a crucial issue of service delivery – provision of sewerage and sanitation. Unfortunately the discussions were dominated not by the citizens affected and policy issues of parties involved but rather the politicians. This report seeks to explore various aspects of media coverage from fairness, party and topic coverage to who spoke and where stories originated. In doing so it provides a wealth of information as to not only how elections were covered but how we can build on strengths and address weaknesses. The role of the media in an election period is too important to not be continually analysed with a view to ensuring citizens are able to make informed choices. The report should stimulate debate, discussion and encourage change, if it does we will have done our previous reports justice and, hopefully, made a contribution to the deepening of democracy.

Thank you Wellington for your role and commitment to making it happen



William Bird

Director

Media Monitoring Africa

Executive summary

With every election, there is always need for media to critically engage with politicians, political parties and their policies, and ask the right questions for the electorate to cast informed votes. To become informed voters, the electorate require a variety of information on government and political parties, and the democratic system itself. The information comes from a variety of sources, however, media coverage must be balanced, equitable, fair and accurate, in order to contribute to free and fair elections. This is a significant and certainly demanding responsibility that makes it essential for the media's coverage of elections to be explored. In light of this, Media Monitoring Africa has extensively analysed elections coverage in all the National and Provincial, and Municipal election periods in South Africa since 1994, with the view to deepen democracy through encouraging responsible and quality media that enables an engaged and informed citizenry. This report presents the research findings of the 2011 Municipal elections coverage conducted for 40 days (from 15 April 2011 to 25 May 2011) across 41 South African media (including print, radio and television). The research found that:

- Most coverage was given to bigger political parties, meaning that the electorate did not get to hear about other smaller parties and independent candidates and what they promised;
- The coverage was limited to bigger metropolitan areas, which means that the rural and peri-urban areas did not receive as much relevant information;
- 'Bread-and-butter' issues received less coverage while political party campaigns took centre stage;
- The minority of election stories focused on local concerns despite these being local elections;
- Overall elections coverage was 18 percent of all news over the period despite the fact that free and fair elections are the pinnacle of our democracy;
- Despite having the space and perhaps the time to provide detailed and nuanced information about elections, some media performed below average in terms of depth of information;
- Politicians set the agenda for the elections thereby offering citizens only information they wanted to disseminate;
- Gender issues and women's voices were limited. This means that issues affecting more than half the country's population were neglected;
- White people were overrepresented as sources of information about elections to the detriment of other races; and,
- Children's issues and voices were virtually non-existent in the coverage, despite the fact that children constitute approximately 40 percent of the country's population.

In light of these findings, Media Monitoring Africa encourages media to:

- Allocate more coverage to smaller parties and independent candidates so that the electorate get to know more about what they stand for. This may also require changes in the electoral system;
- Devote more coverage to rural areas and marginalised provinces that are currently information deficient;
- Give preference to 'bread-and-butter' issues over political party campaigns;
- Focus more on local issues especially when covering Municipal elections;
- Dedicate more coverage to elections;
- Move away from breaking news to providing more nuanced coverage since anyone can now break news through social media like Tweeter and Facebook;
- Award more time and space for other groups in society other than politicians to air their views about elections;
- Mainstream gender issues and women's voices in their elections coverage;
- Afford more time and space for Coloured, Indian and Asian people to provide information about elections; and,
- Cover more children's issues and include their voices because South Africa ideally belongs to all who live in it.

If the media would do these and other things, perhaps the electorate would be better informed about political parties and their promises, candidates and their visions for the country as well as issues that affect society and the country's democratic system. This will in turn contribute to more free and fair elections in the future, thereby aiding the growth and development of our democracy.

Top 20 performers

Medium / Programme	Ranking
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	1
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	2
Lesedi FM	3
Thobela FM	4
Mail & Guardian	5
The New Age	6
Weekend Argus	7
SABC 1 Elections Debate	8
SAfm	9
Motsweding FM	10
Phalaphala FM	11
Daily Sun	12
The Herald	13
Cape Argus	14
Business Day	15
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	16
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Abbreviations

ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
APC	African People's Convention
AU	African Union
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
COPE	Congress of the People
DA	Democratic Alliance
FF+	Freedom Front Plus
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
MF	Minority Front
NFP	National Freedom Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UCDP	United Christian Democratic Party
UDM	United Democratic Movement





1. Introduction

On 18 May 2011, South Africans cast their vote in the country's fourth Municipal elections since it became a democracy in 1994.

Elections do not only represent the pinnacle of political change in a democracy. They also provide an opportunity to examine the role media play in contributing to free and fair elections. In other words, elections offer the possibility to assess whether media are fulfilling their task of being an independent observer as well as their function to inform and educate the electorate. More importantly, Municipal elections present citizens and media with the chance to engage on issues that impact the people's livelihood and development. This means that media must navigate between personal contentions and accusations of different candidates and political parties to clarify core issues of principles and policies so that the public are in a better position to make an informed vote.

With every election, there is always need for media to critically engage with politicians, political parties and their policies, and ask the right questions for the electorate to cast informed votes.

To become informed voters, the electorate require a variety of information on government and political parties, and the democratic system itself. The information comes from a variety of sources, however, media coverage must be balanced, equitable, fair and accurate, in order to contribute to free and fair elections. This is a significant and certainly demanding responsibility that makes it essential for the media's coverage of elections to be explored. In light of this,

Media Monitoring Africa analysed the coverage of the 2011 Municipal elections in South Africa by 41 media cross print, radio and television.¹

Although people also depend on new media² for news, the study was limited to traditional media (print, radio and television) because South Africans mostly rely on the latter for election information.³

¹ Media Monitoring Africa has extensively analysed election coverage in all the National and Provincial, and Municipal election periods in South Africa since 1994 with the view to deepen democracy through encouraging responsible and quality media that enables an engaged and informed citizenry.

² Generally, new media refers to forms of communication that make use of online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and other digital media services.

³ See **section 3** of this report for further elaboration on this point.

The analysis aimed to encourage the media to improve their reporting on elections in terms of salience, visibility and quality. It also aimed to increase public participation around the role of the media during elections. This was achieved through three seminars that Media Monitoring Africa held during the period leading to the elections. The seminars had social media interaction at their core and highlighted service delivery, gender and children as crucial election issues.⁴ The seminars also raised some hard questions the media / journalists could ask politicians around service delivery, gender and issues that affect children. However, this research sought to answer the following related questions:

- What was covered in terms of political parties, geographical areas and election-related topics?
- Was the elections coverage prominent, fair, balanced, nuanced and in-depth?
- Did the media amplify the voices of ordinary citizens in the elections coverage?
- Did the coverage adequately inform and prepare the electorate to cast informed votes?
- If not, what could be done to improve the quality of elections coverage in future?

In answering these questions, this report is divided into five sections, including this one which introduces the report and outlines the research questions. The second section briefly provides background information about Municipal elections, the role of the media during elections and the South African media landscape. The third section describes how the research was conducted using content analysis. It also details how media performance was rated and highlights some of the research limitations. Section four details what the study found. It reveals that the media did not adequately inform the electorate as much as they could have done. The report concludes, in section five, by encouraging media to improve their elections coverage so that they adequately equip the electorate so more people can cast informed votes.

⁴ The outcomes of the seminars are discussed in detail in the findings section of this report.



2. Background information

This part of the report situates the research as it provides brief information about Municipal elections, what they are about, when and how they are conducted. It also briefly describes the role of media during elections and the challenges the media face in reporting on elections, including the media environment and media freedom in South Africa, as these may have had a bearing on how the media covered the elections.

2.1 Municipal elections in South Africa

In general, Municipal elections refer to those elections where citizens vote for councillors to represent them in all municipalities in the country. In South Africa, Municipal elections take place every five years.⁵ The country's first democratic Municipal elections took place in 1995/6 and the 2011 Municipal elections were held on 18 May. A mixed or hybrid system is used for Municipal elections.⁶ This system makes use of both the ward system and the proportional representation system. The ward system is whereby the electorate vote for specific individuals to represent their ward in the Municipal Council. On the other hand, the proportional representation system is whereby the electorate vote for a political party, not individuals. The political party then gets a share of seats in the Municipal Council in proportion to the number of votes it gets in the election. The party then deploys its candidate(s) to take the seat(s) in the Municipal Council. According to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) South Africa website,⁷ there are three types of Municipal Councils in the country, namely, Metropolitan,⁸ Local and District, which all have executive and legislative powers. For both Metropolitan and Local Councils, 50 percent of the councillors come from individual ward candidate votes and the other 50 percent come from political party votes.⁹ For District Councils, 40 percent of the councillors come from party votes and 60 percent are indirectly appointed by Local Council councillors.¹⁰ The merits and demerits of such an electoral system for Municipal elections are not subject of this report. They are discussed in detail other in literature.¹¹ However, given that the electoral system is perhaps complicated for ordinary citizens to comprehend, it is important that the media, IEC and political parties explain this to the electorate so that they understand what Municipal elections are about and how they affect them.

5 IEC website. <http://www.elections.org.za/content/Dynamic.aspx?id=998&name=Elections&LeftMenuId=100&BreadCrumbId=220>

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 There are nine such metros in South Africa with the largest being the City of Johannesburg Metro, the City of Cape Town Metro, the Ekurhuleni Metro, the eThekweni Metro, the City of Tshwane Metro and the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro (February, 2009, p.55).

9 Fine (2011, p.91-92).

10 Ibid, p.93.

11 See for example February (2009).

2.2 The role of media during elections

The media play an essential communication function in any democracy and particularly during an election period.¹² The media bear the significant responsibility of ensuring that the electorate are provided with the information they need to make informed decisions. Generally, the more information people receive, the better their connection to candidates and political party positions and promises.¹³ Therefore, an independent and critical media can and must present high quality dialogue on party policy issues thereby allowing voters to make choices that are more informed.¹⁴ When this happens, voters are better equipped to hold governing and opposition parties accountable.¹⁵ This is the media's democratic as well as democratising role.

The effective fulfilment of this function begins with the generation of interest, awareness, knowledge and understanding.¹⁶ It also begins with the acquisition of skills and techniques of the use of communication to support socio-cultural, political and economic development.¹⁷ Over and above, the effectiveness of the media in support of democratic governance requires that all sectors of society have access to news, information, opinions and ideas as well as the opportunity to express their own viewpoints in a language they normally use and understand.¹⁸ However, the ability of the media to provide nuanced and in-depth information that allows voters to make informed decisions is not without constraints. Frère (2010) notes that some of the obstacles the media face include:

- The ownership structures and intrinsic weaknesses of media enterprises;
- The media's close contacts with the political sphere;
- Media freedom violations;
- The weaknesses of regulatory authorities;
- Difficulties in accessing information; and,
- Inflaming discourse from political candidates.¹⁹

Although Frère writes about these and other obstacles in relation to the media in post-conflict countries in Central Africa, these constraints are also faced by the media in countries like South Africa. In relation to the South African media landscape, Krüger (2012, p.231) argues that it is largely dominated by a small number of companies that focus primarily on national and metropolitan audiences. Print media is largely urban and elitist.²⁰ Four large media companies dominate the print media space in terms of the number of titles they own. These are; Caxton with 130 newspaper titles (89 wholly owned and 41 co-owned), Naspers (Media24) with more than 64 titles, the Irish-owned Independent Newspapers group with 35 titles and Avusa (formerly known as Times Media Limited and then Johnnic Communications) with 22 titles.²¹

¹² Schulz Herzenberg (2012, p.137).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kwame Boafo (2001, p.23).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Frère (2010, p.5-10).

²⁰ Krüger (2012, p.232).

²¹ MDDA (2009, p.16).

A smaller, but influential print title is the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper largely owned by Zimbabwean publisher and entrepreneur, Trevor Ncube.²² The *Mail & Guardian* is the sole survivor of the alternative media sector that flourished in the 1980s.²³ In 2010, *The New Age* newspaper was launched. This newspaper is owned by the Gupta family group, which has close ties with the current president of the country, Jacob Zuma.²⁴ Fighting off allegations that it would be the mouthpiece of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, its then editor, Henry Jeffreys, wrote “*The New Age* has no formal links with the ANC (or any other political party, for that matter)..., [however], we will, generally, support the government of the day, at all levels.”²⁵

With regard to broadcasting, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is by far the biggest and arguably the most important player. The majority of the country’s population rely on the broadcaster’s radio and television services for news because the services are broadcast in all the 11 official languages of the country.²⁶ The SABC has over 40 percent of the country’s total radio audience and 70 percent of the television audience.²⁷ However, the broadcaster has been and is still experiencing financial and managerial woes, which have affected its credibility²⁸ and perhaps its ability to effectively deliver quality news. Apart from the SABC, there is one private television (eTV) and about 13 private commercial radio stations which have taken a significant share of the audience since the liberalisation of the airwaves in the mid-1990s.²⁹ This is aside from approximately 150 community radio stations and more than 130 community newspapers also available in the country and several subscription television services provided by Multichoice.

Duncan (2009) observes that the media landscape in South Africa has developed the character of a funnel, with more media catering for the few elite being clustered further up the funnel, while media access tapers off drastically towards the lower end of the funnel.³⁰ Although 940 million newspapers circulate in South Africa per year,³¹ radio still commands vast listenership, with community stations catering to specific target audiences and national stations targeting people across the country. However, both print and broadcast are concentrated in major metropolitan areas, namely, Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.³² In addition, such media are editorially weak and this may have had implications for how the 2011 Municipal elections were covered.³³

With regard to regulation, print media self-regulates through an independent press ombudsman while broadcast media is regulated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). Whether self-regulation for print and ICASA for broadcast is effective or not is another issue. What is clear though is that the 2011 Municipal elections took place at a time when tensions between the ruling ANC and the media (particularly print) were high,³⁴ as evidenced by the cartoon below.

22 *Mail & Guardian* website. <http://mg.co.za/page/history>

23 Krüger (2012, p.232).

24 Ibid.

25 Sapa (6 December 2010).

26 Krüger (2012, p.231).

27 MDDA (2009, p.9-10).

28 Krüger (2012, p.231).

29 Ibid, p.232.

30 This is hardly a justifiable situation for a media system aiming for universality and diversity (Duncan, 2009).

31 MDDA (2009, p.16).

32 Ibid.

33 Krüger (2012, p.231).

34 The elections came at a time when the tension between journalists and the ruling party was probably at its most intense since 1994 (Krüger (2012, p.230).

Figure 1: Cartoon depicting the tension between the ANC and the media



This cartoon was published in *The Times* on 19 April 2011 on page 16. It is one among many voices that echoed the tension between the ruling party and the media during the elections period. The cartoon reflects one of the challenges the media may have faced in reporting on the elections. This is particularly true because some analysts and some politicians argue that the South African media (particularly print) are inherently elitist and therefore serve reactionary interests.³⁵ It is important to recognise that such an argument is an integral part of the larger, long-running debate about the role of the media in the new South Africa, its transformation and its relationship with the new state and the ANC.³⁶ Whether the argument is valid or not is another issue. However, it points out to the fact that tension between the ruling party and the media has been around for a long time, and is unlikely to disappear soon.³⁷

Media freedom has always been important to South Africans. During apartheid, 'liberal' media were severely restricted but despite restrictive legislation, harassment and imprisonment of journalists, the news was still defiantly reported. Given this history, it is no surprise that media freedom is guaranteed in South Africa's new democratic Constitution. However, in June 2011, the *Mail & Guardian*³⁸ reported that Freedom House, a Washington-based non-profit organisation released its report on global media freedom in which South Africa's place in the ranking dropped from 'free' to 'partly free' mostly due to the growing hostile rhetoric from top government officials as well as officials' encroachment on the editorial independence of the SABC.


It is against this backdrop that the 2011 Municipal elections were covered by the media. The following section reveals how the coverage was analysed as well as how media performance was rated.

³⁵ See Jacobs (1999), cited in Davis (2004, p.2).

³⁶ Krüger (2012, p.231).

³⁷ Ibid. See also Duncan (2009).

³⁸ *Mail & Guardian*, 17 June 2011, p.26-27.



3. How media coverage was analysed

This section describes how the media's coverage of the 2011 Municipal elections was evaluated using content analysis. As a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication,”³⁹ content analysis made it possible for us to provide a detailed analysis of the media's performance. The section ends with a discussion on the limitations of content analysis as a research technique and how the shortcomings were mitigated.

3.1 Period of analysis

As highlighted earlier, the 2011 Municipal elections were held on 18 May. Due to resource constraints, the period of analysis was limited to 40 days, that is, one month before voting day and ten days after the elections were concluded. As such, the period of analysis was from 15 April 2011 to 25 May 2011.

3.2 Media analysed

Again, due to resource limitations, 41 different media across print, radio and television were selected and their news content and selected elections programming (where applicable) was investigated. The Figures (2, 3 and 4) that follow show the:

25 print media,

12 radio services and

4 television services whose content was explored, respectively.

³⁹ Kerlinger (1986, p.477).

Print Media

Medium	Language	Published
Business Day	English	Daily
Cape Argus	English	Daily
City Press	English	Weekly
Daily Dispatch	English	Daily
Daily Sun	English	Daily
Daily Voice	English	Daily
Die Burger (Western Cape Edition)	Afrikaans	Weekly
Free State Times	English	Weekly
Grocott's Mail	English	Bi-weekly
Mail & Guardian	English	Weekly
Public Eye	English	Weekly
Saturday Dispatch	English	Weekly
Saturday Star	English	Weekly
Sowetan	English	Daily
Sunday Sun	English	Weekly
Sunday Times	English	Weekly
Sunday World	English	Weekly
The Citizen	English	Daily
The Herald	English	Daily
The New Age	English	Daily
The Star	English	Daily
The Sunday Independent	English	Weekly
The Times	English	Daily
Volksblad	Afrikaans	Weekly
Weekend Argus	English	Saturday & Sunday

Figure 2: Print media whose content was reviewed

Radio services

Medium	Programme	Time slots	Broadcast language	Broadcast day(s)
Kaya FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	English	Monday - Sunday
Lesedi FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	Sesotho	Monday - Sunday
Ligwalagwala FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	Siswati	Monday - Sunday
Metro FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	English	Monday - Friday
Motsweding FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	Setswana	Monday - Sunday
Phalaphala FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	Tshivenda	Monday - Sunday
RSG	News	Morning, midday, evening	Afrikaans	Monday - Sunday
SAfm	News	Morning, midday, evening	English	Monday - Sunday
Talk Radio 702	News	Morning, midday, evening	English	Monday - Sunday
Thobela FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	Sepedi	Monday - Sunday
Ukhozi FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	IsiZulu	Monday - Sunday
Umhlobo Wenene FM	News	Morning, midday, evening	IsiXhosa	Monday - Sunday

Figure 3: Radio services whose content was examine

Television programmes

Medium	Programme	Time slot(s)	Broadcast language(s)	Broadcast day(s)
eTV	News	19:00 - 19:30	English	Monday - Sunday
SABC 1	Elections Debate	18:30 - 19:30	English	Sunday
SABC 1	News	19:30 - 20:00	IsiZulu / IsiXhosa	Monday - Sunday
SABC 2	News	19:00 - 19:30	Afrikaans	Monday - Sunday
SABC 2	News	20:00 - 20:30	Sesotho/Setswana	Monday - Sunday
SABC 2	Special Elections Programme	18:00 - 18:30	English	Monday - Thursday
SABC 3	News	19:00 - 19:30	English	Monday - Sunday

Figure 4: Television programmes whose content was explored

These media were limited to print, radio and television because, in general, South Africans rely on these forms of media for information about elections.⁴⁰ Therefore, the sample above was purposively selected to be representative of the country's media coverage of the Municipal elections. The limitation in terms of diversity of language is a mere reflection of the South African media landscape, "which is overwhelmingly English, although there is a longstanding and influential Afrikaans newspaper tradition."⁴¹

3.3 Criteria used for analysis

The analysis was conducted by 23 first-language speakers (hereafter Monitors) who underwent training tailored for this particular research. All news reports, comments and columns making specific reference to the Municipal elections were analysed. This is with the exception of advertising, paid-for content, classifieds, weather reports, non-political cartoons and market indicators for print media. The data was sent to Media Monitoring Africa on a weekly basis, where it was checked and captured into a specially designed database. The database was then cleaned to get rid of repeats following which results were generated and interpreted.

Drawing on our vast experience in exploring the media's coverage of elections since 1994, we looked at the following in each election story / item:

- **Story / Item number:** The page numbers on which the stories appeared in the newspapers or the sequential order in which the stories appeared on the news bulletins and election programmes was captured. Since the media report on stories in order of perceived importance, capturing the item number allowed us to see the stories that the media perceived to be important during the election period.
- **Type of story / programming:** Different types of stories or programming such as news reports, panel discussions and interviews were distinguished. This differentiation is important in that different types of stories / programming usually contain different levels of information that could inform the audience in different ways about Municipal elections. For example, a local politician talking about the achievements of his / her political party in a news story could be biased in favour of his / her political party and perhaps less critical than a panel of experts discussing the achievements of the same political party. Therefore, if the media are aiming to give a balanced view of the elections, a variety of stories or programmes are necessary.
- **Authorship:** The authorship of an item / story, for instance, a journalist, a guest writer, an agency or a combination of these was captured. Where possible (and obvious), the sex of the author(s) was also captured. Authorship enabled us to determine whether the media committed its own journalists to covering Municipal election issues, which also is an indicator of editorial commitment to the issues. The sex of the author was also captured so that we could determine whether the media was concerned about gender representation in regard to covering Municipal elections.
- **Summary:** Each election story was summarised. Although stories do not often deal with one issue, each summary reflected the most important aspect of the story in terms of Municipal election issues. Summaries enabled us to get a succinct account of each item and also served as quality indicators for the analysis.

40 See Davis (2004, p.2).

41 Krüger (2012) and MDDA (2009).

- **Topic:** The topic or central subject of each story was identified. Monitors were obliged to choose one topic per story. As such, they chose topics that closely captured the major thrust of the story. More general topics were chosen in those instances where a specific topic could not be assigned to the story. This allowed us to ascertain whether or not the stories covered an issue that was relevant to Municipal elections, or if it was simply a political party campaigning story, for instance.
- **Issues:** The purpose of analysing the issues raised in the stories was primarily to flag important Municipal election concerns. This enabled us to gain a better sense of the trends exhibited in the media's coverage, than was provided solely by the topics. Hence the issues raised in the items were identified.
- **Origin:** For the purposes of this analysis, origin referred to where the story originated from. Two levels were used to determine this, namely, place and relevance. Place referred to the place the story happened or took place. In an effort to ascertain the reach of the subject matter, it was necessary to obtain clarity on the geographical relevance of the story. For example, a story may have originated or taken place in Johannesburg but could be of national relevance and interest. So both place and relevance were captured under origin. It was essential to capture origin as we wanted to see which areas were receiving most information about Municipal election processes and candidates.
- **Sources:** For the purposes of this research, we defined a source as a person who was directly or indirectly quoted (accessed) in the item or merely named, mentioned, photographed or depicted in a cartoon. Where clear, further information about the race, sex and the role (function) of the sources were also categorised. Capturing sources in this manner allowed us to see whose voices were amplified or silenced during the election period; whether it was political parties, citizens, men, women, etc.
- **Depth of information:** Ideally, a good quality story should give more detail than the bare facts of the event or a particular issue. It should accurately set the context, show the implications of the course of events and how a particular issue or event might impact society at large. To determine the depth of information provided in the election stories, Monitors recorded whether the stories provided a basic context and an in-depth context. In addition, Monitors noted whether the items discussed relevant legislation or policy, and provided a citizen's perspective and / or a gender perspective to the elections.
- **Fairness / Balance:** One of the most important elements of media analysis in an election period is ensuring that the coverage is balanced and fair. In light of this, we identified the stories that were deemed biased on three levels, that is, language, presentation and omission. Language bias was detected where the language used in the story clearly and distinctly favoured one party over another, or substantially disfavoured or damaged the image of a party or parties. Presentation bias was captured when it was clear that one or more parties were favoured by virtue of how they were reported on in the entire newspaper or the overall news bulletin or the entire elections programme. Bias by omission was spotted where a party was not given the opportunity to respond to substantial allegations or to an issue of substantial importance to that party. Using these criteria allowed us to measure how fair and balanced the media's coverage of the elections was.

3.4 How media performance was rated

Rating media performance is essential in that it opens up opportunities for improvement in terms of elections coverage. Thus, drawing on the previous rating systems we have employed in past elections, media performance was evaluated on four levels, specifically, overall elections coverage, depth of coverage, balance, and gender coverage, as outlined below:

- The overall elections rating focused on the prominence given to elections as well as whether the media dedicated its coverage to bread-and-butter issues like housing, access to land, health and the environment, poverty and unemployment, crime and safety, etc.
- Depth of coverage rating considered whether the election stories provided a basic context and an in-depth context as well as a citizen's perspective to the elections. The rating also considered the number of sources per story and the type of stories as these have a bearing on the quality of the elections coverage.
- The balance rating looked at the diversity or spread of political party coverage as well the number of fair and unfair stories.
- The gender rating measured the number of female sources, the number of stories that focused on gender-related issues as well as whether the stories discussed election issues in relation to how they affect men and women, boys and girls in different ways socially, economically, culturally, etc.

It is worth noting that these ratings were informed by Media Monitoring Africa's human rights agenda, which seeks to promote better quality and ethics in media reporting. Since there is no yardstick from which comparisons can be made, the ratings explained above were determined in relation to how media performed against each other.

As such, the rating system we used offers key indicators with regards to the performance of each of the media whose content was analysed. This means that the ratings can be used as a benchmark from which further and future comparisons can be made. As indicators, the ratings offer a means of opening areas of further analysis and discussion. For example, if a media scores poorly in terms of the diversity of political party coverage, it offers an opportunity to investigate the possible cause(s) of the relatively low score and seek explanations. Similarly, if a media scores highly, the reason(s) should be interrogated so that other media may draw information on how they might improve their own coverage, and so that well performing media better understand how to continue rating highly.

3.5 How further information was gathered

During the period of analysis, Media Monitoring Africa held three seminars on service delivery,⁴² gender⁴³ and children⁴⁴ as election issues. The seminars brought together media practitioners, civil society, politicians, academics and the public to discuss how these issues can be put on the elections agenda. To ensure a broader audience reach, the seminars made use of Media Monitoring Africa's established social media platforms such as Twitter to interact with the public to solicit questions they wanted journalists / media to ask politicians and political parties contesting the Elections. The seminars also encouraged discussion and debate around media's role in a democracy and its performance during the 2011 Municipal election. The discussions also educated the public and encouraged critical thinking about the media and the information they receive through newspapers, news websites, radio and television programmes, and new media, with the purpose of contributing to more informed decision making when it came to casting their votes and to clarify their demands on the media.

3.6 Research limitations

There are various limitations to the method we used for this analysis. First, the media do not operate in isolation from the rest of society and the inter-connectedness between the two is both fluid and complex. However, this research was primarily limited to analysing the media's election coverage in terms of content. It did not attempt to look at the context, including the constraints (both internal and external), which journalists face in covering elections. It also did not interrogate the political economy of South African politics, which is "unfortunately structured along racial lines"⁴⁵ – a factor that may have contributed to how the Municipal elections were covered by the media. These could be the subject of entire separate studies.

Secondly, since these were Municipal elections, it would have been ideal to examine the content on community media (both print and broadcast) as they tend to focus on issues that affect the communities they serve. However, community media in South Africa are largely underfunded.

42 See Media Monitoring Africa. (2011). *Service delivery: An election issue? Piercing the promises: Election accountability pack*. Available from http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/ServiceDelivery_Pack_v1.pdf

43 See Media Monitoring Africa. (2011). *Gender: An election issue? Piercing the promises: Elections accountability pack*. Available from http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Gender_pack_Final_v2.pdf

44 See Media Monitoring Africa. (2011). *Children: An election issue? Piercing the promises: Election accountability pack*. Available from http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Children_Pack_v6.pdf

45 Zulu (2012, p.84).

This means that they lack the capacity to consistently publish and/or broadcast. This would have caused a logistical problem for us to consistently analyse their coverage, hence we decided to focus on bigger media, which tend to be consistent and have a larger audience.

Thirdly, it would have also been ideal to examine elections coverage in all newspapers and on all radio and television programming at all times, but due to limited resources, the analysis was restricted to selected newspapers and programmes on certain radio stations and television channels. Be that as it may, the sample analysed in this study is representative of the media's coverage of the Municipal elections. The sample also made it possible for comparisons to be made between different media.

Fourthly, analysing the media's coverage of any particular issue is a subjective exercise. This means that the results presented in this research could be interpreted differently by different people depending on their background, educational qualifications, theoretical orientation, etc. However, an effort was made to ensure that the analysis was undertaken in a uniform fashion. This was done through a standardised user guide, training, regular communication and rigorous checking and data cleaning. In addition, the analysis framework was case-tested before being widely applied.

Finally, while there are limitations to any rating system, especially in terms of coverage of an area as contentious as elections, a rating system that has been carefully designed and tested provides a clear indicator for the media to assess and compare their performance. Drawing on our extensive experience in media analysis and on lessons learnt from rating systems we have implemented in previous research on the media's coverage of elections, the rating criteria we used for this study is in line with the our human rights framework that is a foundation of media quality and ethical practice. In developing the rating system, we worked with the former Head of the Wits School of Statistics and Actuarial Science and a data specialist and also involved a respected media academic to refine the system.

Given the methodology, its limitations and how they were minimised for this research, we feel that this report provides a concise, detailed and informative analysis of the media's coverage of the 2011 Municipal elections, and that the recommendations provided should be seriously considered.



4. What the research found

In a democracy like South Africa, the media are expected to provide impartial or fair, and informative reporting of elections. This may seem like an easy task, but it is certainly not, for reasons (some of which are) discussed in section 2.2 of this report. Be that as it may, this section reveals what we found regarding the media's coverage of the 2011 Municipal elections. The section is divided into three parts. The first part deals with what was covered. The second part focuses on media performance and the third part looks at voices the media amplified or silenced their coverage of the elections.

4.1 What was covered?

This part reveals the political parties that were covered as well as the geographical areas that received media coverage and the election-related stories that the media focused on.

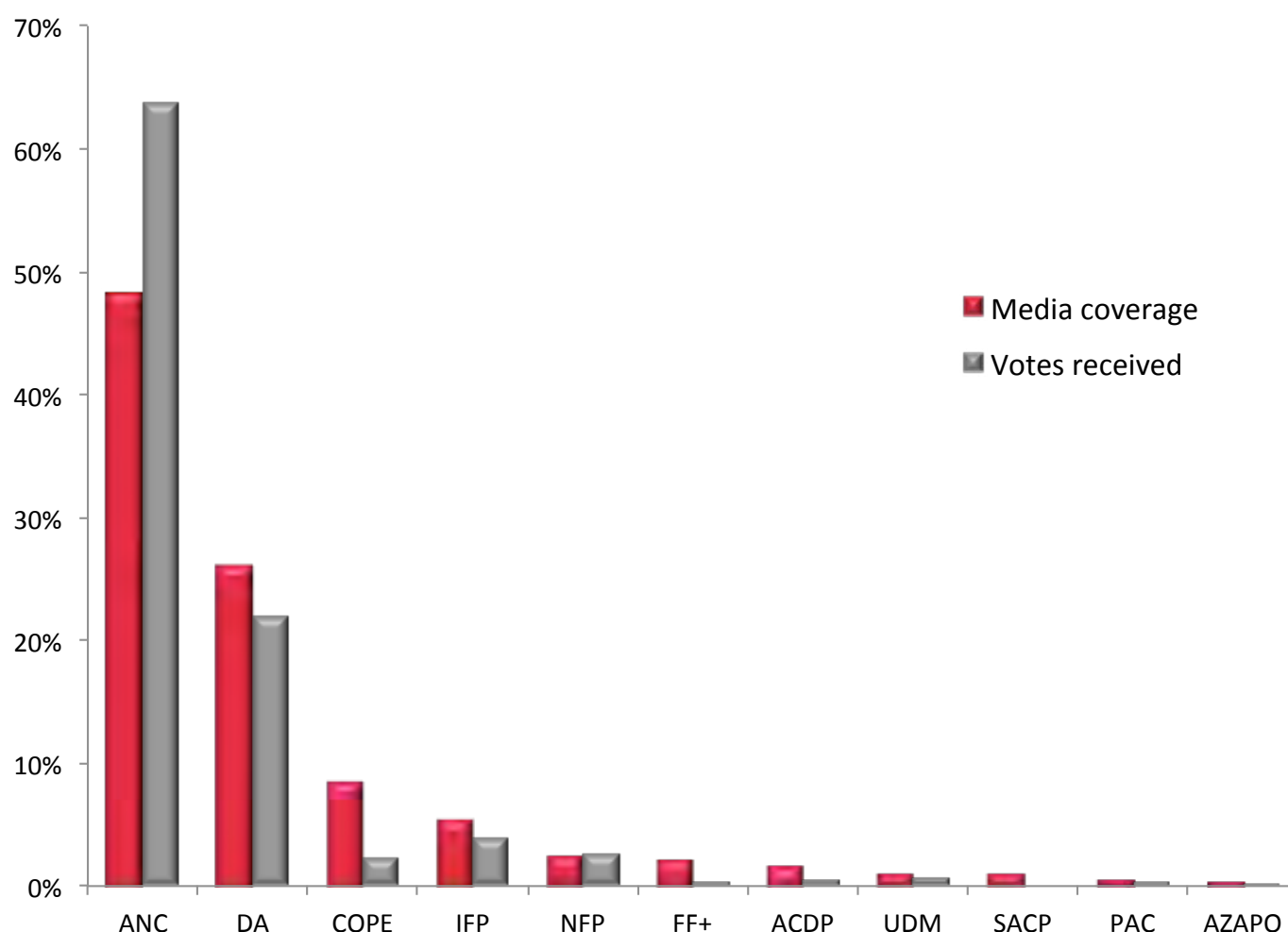
4.1.1 Which political parties were covered?

One of the most important aspects of elections coverage is how political parties are covered by the media. This is because the media have the ability to increase or decrease the visibility of political parties; a situation that may have a bearing on the outcome of the elections. Aside from independent candidates, about 120 political parties contested the 2011 Municipal elections.⁴⁶ As such, we sought to find out which political parties received the most coverage during the elections period and whether the coverage was broadly speaking, in-line with the proportion of the votes the parties ultimately received. This is not to suggest that there is a correlation between the amount of coverage a political party receives and the political party's performance. While media coverage may have a bearing on how the political parties perform, it is certainly not the only variable that affects the parties' performance.

Figure 5 reveals the most covered political parties across all the media whose content was examined against the votes the parties received in the elections. We determined the amount of coverage given to political parties by the media through the number of sources accessed from the political parties and not through the time or space allocated to the political parties. We did this to ensure that we captured the diversity of who spoke in the media rather than simply adding up the number of words or space allocated to a person or party.

⁴⁶ See IEC (2011, p.1-10).

Figure 5: Most covered **political parties** against
the **votes they received**



Please note that the political parties in Figure 5 received over 99 percent of the total media coverage. This means that the other 110 political parties outside of the ones in Figure 5 as well as independent candidates shared less than one percent of the media coverage. With regard to the overall election results, the ANC received 63.65 percent of the votes followed by the DA at 21.97 percent, then IFP at 3.94 percent, NFP (2.58 percent), COPE (2.33 percent), independent candidates (0.87 percent), UDM (0.68 percent), ACDP (0.61 percent), FF+ (0.44 percent), PAC (0.43 percent), APC (0.33 percent), MF (0.33 percent), AZAPO (0.20 percent), and UCDP (0.15 percent).⁴⁷ While this is how political parties and independent candidates performed in the 2011 Municipal elections, Figure 5 shows that, in terms of overall media coverage, the ANC received 48 percent followed by the DA at 26 percent, then COPE at nine percent, IFP (six percent), etc.

The fact that the ANC and the DA top the list is not surprising because the ANC is the biggest political party and the DA is the biggest opposition party in the country. If the findings in Figure 5 are compared with the election results, it could be argued that the ANC was underrepresented while the DA, COPE, IFP, FF+, ACDP and UDM were overrepresented by the media. It is also noteworthy that independent candidates received almost one percent of the votes yet they did not feature in the media coverage.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Another point worth noting is that while the SACP is a partner in the Tripartite Alliance consisting of the ANC and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and has never contested in any election, it received one percent of the overall media coverage. This one percent could be added to the ANC's overall media coverage to make it 49 percent.

If we compare the findings in Figure 5 to the 2009 National and Provincial Elections results we observed in the SABC's coverage,⁴⁸ we notice that ANC coverage increased by two percentage points from 46 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2011.

Interestingly, the DA's coverage increased by more than double from 12 percent in 2009 to 26 percent in 2011, while COPE's coverage declined to almost less than half the coverage it received in 2009, which was 15 percent. Although COPE's coverage declined, IFP gained by one percentage point from five percent in 2009 to six percent in 2011. There are a number of possible explanations for these observations.

First, the 'open toilets' saga by both the DA and the ANC earned both parties a significant amount of coverage.

The 'open toilets' saga:



Residents of Makhaza in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape took the City of Cape Town to court for providing them with toilets without enclosures. The Western Cape High Court found the City guilty of violating the human rights and dignity of Khayelitsha residents by providing them with open toilets. Since Makhaza was run by the DA, at the beginning of the electioneering period, the ANC used the 'open toilets' saga to discredit the DA and a lot of political smearing was covered by the media. Later on, it was also 'discovered' that there were open toilets in Rammulotsi in the Free State municipality of Mophaka, a municipality under the ANC, and this led to more political smearing between the two parties.

The following cartoons reveal how the media covered the ANC and the DA in relation to the 'open toilets' saga.

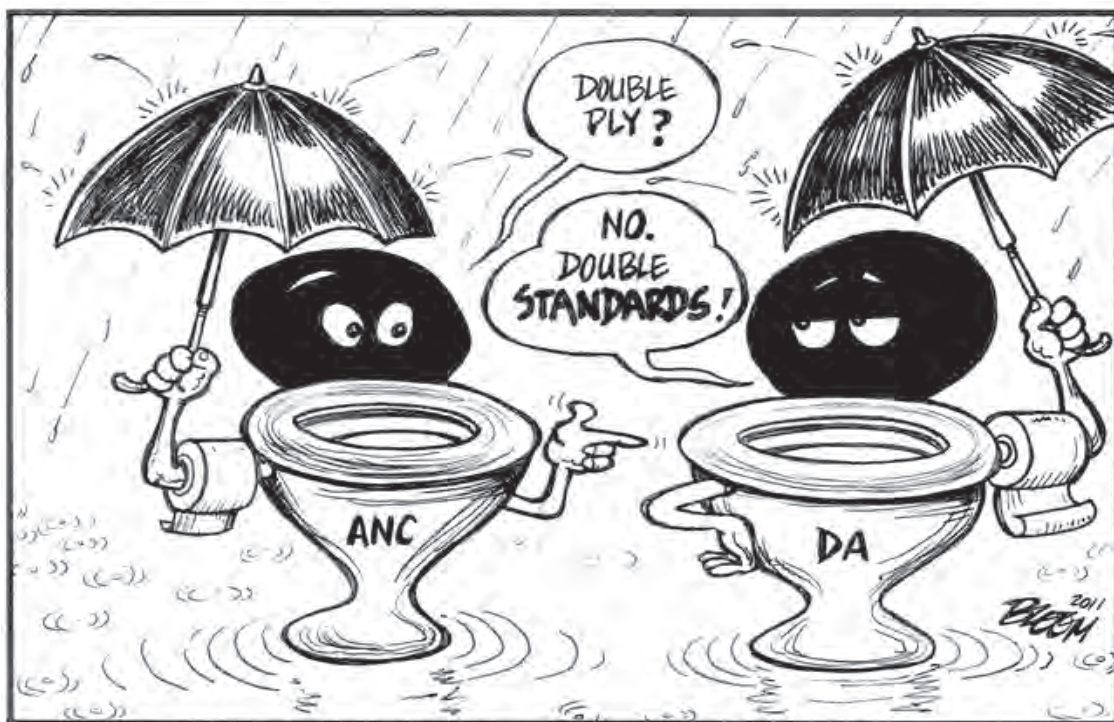
⁴⁸ These results can be requested from Media Monitoring Africa.

Figure 6: Depiction of the mudslinging between the ANC and the DA



This cartoon appeared in *The Times* on 10 May 2011.

Figure 7: Artist impression of the double standards between the ANC and the DA



The cartoon was published by *The Citizen* on 10 May 2011 on page 12.

These cartoons are reflective of the many stories covered by the media. For instance, in reporting on the Western Cape High Court verdict, the *SABC 3 English News* at 19:00hrs on 29 April 2011 had a clip where the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) leader, Julius Malema, was shouting at the DA leader, Helen Zille, regarding the open toilets. From this clip, one gets the impression that the 'open toilets' saga was not really about the people who suffered the humiliation of being expected to use open toilets. In fact, it was pitched as a battle between the ANC and the DA.

While this may have been the case (that is, it was being used by the major parties for political gain), the media could be expected to have ensured it remained focused on the people and communities themselves, and crucially issues of provision of sanitation.

Secondly, with regard to COPE, prior to the electioneering period, there were power battles within the party. Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how one looks at it, this battle determined how the party was covered by the media. We saw COPE being covered as a party trying to redeem itself after a testing time. The coverage was also centred on issues about who just joined the party and who had left.

For example, on 24 April 2011, *SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News* at 20:30hrs carried a story where COPE was assuring the electorate that it was going to do well in the coming elections. In another story on *SABC 3 English News* on 15 May 2011 at 19:00hrs, COPE was shown saying that it was not disturbed by members leaving the party. In fact, the party argued that it had gained more members in the Western Cape.

Thirdly, concerning the IFP, the media's coverage was more focused on the battles between the party and its splinter party, the NFP. The coverage was more about why the NFP broke away from the IFP, and the impact that had had on the IFP. For instance, on 14 May 2011, the NFP received coverage from *Thobela FM*, with the NFP emphasising that it was not part of the IFP. However, some of the coverage of the IFP was focused on the battles between the IFP and the ANC.

For example, on the 16 April 2011, *Ligwalagwala FM News* at 18:00hrs carried a story where the IFP was saying that it did not want the ANCYL to campaign in the IFP support base. Common to all these examples is that the agenda and focus of the media was not the issues or the people who were most affected by policies of political parties but the political parties themselves and their tit-for-tat battles. Be that as it may, if we split the media according to print, radio and television in terms of political party coverage we notice the following:

Figure 8: Most covered **political parties** in **print media**

Medium	ANC	DA	COPE	IFP	NFP	FF+	ACDP	UDM	SACP	PAC	AZAPO	Total
Business Day	44%	26%	10%	10%	3%	1%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	99%
Cape Argus	46%	34%	8%	2%	1%	1%	4%	0%	2%	0%	0%	100%
City Press	61%	35%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Daily Dispatch	66%	18%	9%	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%	1%	2%	0%	100%
Daily Sun	55%	21%	8%	9%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	98%
Daily Voice	36%	31%	7%	6%	3%	4%	7%	1%	0%	4%	0%	100%
Die Burger	48%	33%	9%	1%	0%	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	99%
Free State Times	56%	22%	14%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	97%
Grocott's Mail	40%	27%	10%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	100%
Mail & Guardian	54%	27%	11%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	100%
Public Eye	44%	18%	9%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	1%	0%	97%
Saturday Dispatch	89%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	100%
Saturday Star	49%	39%	5%	5%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Sowetan	46%	31%	3%	9%	4%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	99%
Sunday Sun	59%	6%	13%	9%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	9%	0%	100%
Sunday Times	54%	30%	4%	5%	1%	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Sunday World	66%	17%	3%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	3%	0%	100%
The Citizen	42%	38%	6%	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	98%
The Herald	42%	31%	19%	3%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	100%
The New Age	49%	23%	9%	6%	3%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	99%
The Star	50%	31%	6%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	100%
The Sunday Independent	55%	24%	9%	2%	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	97%
The Times	49%	26%	11%	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	100%
Volksblad	42%	29%	13%	1%	0%	10%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	99%
Weekend Argus	50%	33%	6%	4%	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Figure 9: Most covered **political parties** on **radio services**

Medium	ANC	DA	COPE	IFP	NFP	FF+	ACDP	UDM	SACP	PAC	AZAPO	Total
Kaya FM	53%	38%	2%	4%	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	99%
Lesedi FM	57%	25%	6%	4%	3%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	98%
Ligwalagwala FM	53%	23%	6%	6%	7%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	98%
Metro FM	54%	24%	7%	9%	3%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	100%
Motsweding FM	53%	27%	6%	5%	4%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	99%
Phalaphala FM	42%	28%	11%	6%	4%	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	99%
RSG	45%	33%	9%	8%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	99%
SAfm	44%	29%	8%	7%	5%	2%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	100%
Talk Radio 702	55%	28%	6%	5%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	99%
Thobela FM	47%	22%	13%	6%	5%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Ukhozi FM	54%	23%	5%	8%	4%	3%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	99%
Umhlobo Wenene FM	58%	19%	3%	8%	6%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	98%

Figure 10: Most covered **political parties** on **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	ANC	DA	COPE	IFP	NFP	FF+	ACDP	UDM	SACP	PAC	AZAPO	Total
eTV English News	52%	32%	3%	9%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 1 Elections Debate	27%	27%	13%	7%	0%	13%	3%	0%	0%	0%	10%	100%
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	45%	18%	9%	10%	4%	3%	4%	2%	1%	1%	2%	99%
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	40%	22%	11%	9%	2%	6%	3%	3%	0%	1%	0%	98%
SABC 2 Sesotho/ Setswana News	43%	21%	11%	9%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	98%
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	34%	20%	17%	10%	5%	5%	3%	1%	0%	0%	1%	98%
SABC 3 English News	47%	19%	10%	7%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	99%

Figures (8, 9 and 10) reveal the amount of coverage given to the different political parties by each media. The results are tabulated according to print, radio and television.⁴⁹ As noted earlier, most coverage was given to the ANC and the DA, with the exception of *Saturday Dispatch* and *Sunday Sun*, which underrepresented the DA. In comparison to other newspapers, the ACDP received sizeable coverage (six percent) from the *Daily Voice*, while FF+ and AZAPO received substantial coverage (10 percent and 13 percent, respectively) from *Grocott's Mail*. The FF+ also received significant coverage (10 percent) from *Volksblad* while the PAC received nine percent coverage from *Sunday Sun*. Perhaps what is interesting to note is that both the ANC and the DA received similar coverage on the Election Debates on *SABC 1*. A plausible explanation for this could be that the broadcaster did not want to be seen as favouring the ruling party (ANC) over the main opposition party (DA). The other interesting observation is that eTV English News covered both the ANC and the DA more than all the other television programmes on SABC services.

The findings reflected above are not surprising as they reveal trends⁵⁰ that we have noticed over the years, that the media tend to focus on the bigger political parties to the detriment of smaller political parties.

Assuming that all political party coverage was positive, it could be argued that the findings highlighted above confirm that media coverage is indeed not the only variable that contributes to political party performance, as some political parties that received more coverage did not perform as much as they were covered. The results reflected above also show that people do not always vote on the basis of the amount of coverage a political party receives. In fact, as Duncan (2009) points out, sometimes the audiences read media against the grain, in oppositional ways or even simply ignore the media entirely. Perhaps the biggest challenge these findings reveal is that not all media can cover all the 120 political parties and all independent candidates.

This in turn begs the question; which media should cover which political parties and how much coverage should those political parties be given?

Social media might make this easier in future, as all parties could disseminate to similar sized audiences, but it is clear that media face a near impossible task in trying to cover all parties comprehensively. Clearly though, the SABC should do all it can to cover as many political parties as possible because of its public remit.

4.1.2 Which geographical areas were covered?

Given that these were Municipal elections, it was anticipated that there would be extensive coverage focused on local issues that affect local communities. In order to ascertain whether the media's coverage focused on local issues, we looked at the origin of election stories. This was determined using two levels, namely, place and relevance. Place referred to the place where

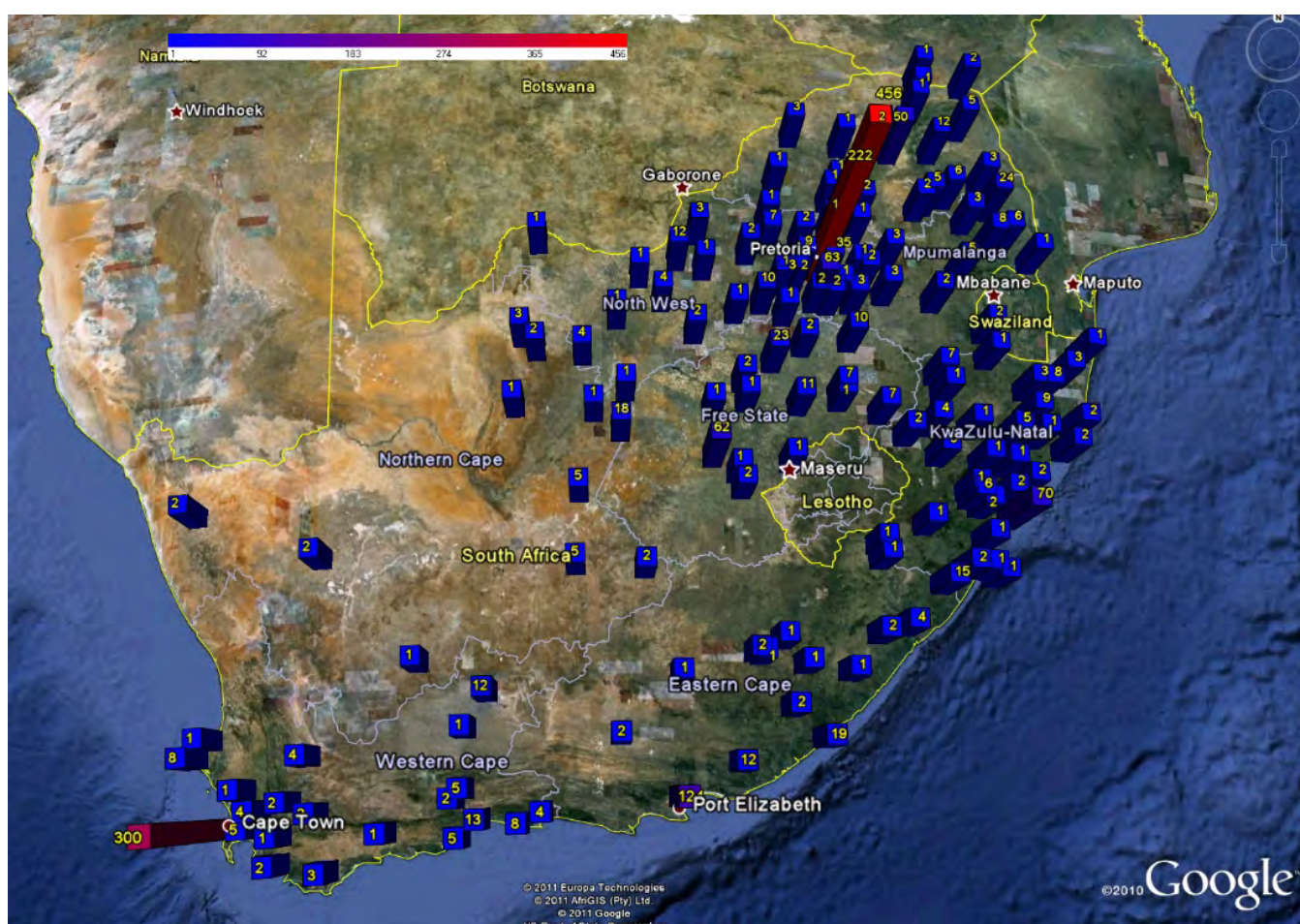
49 Some of the percentages in Figures (8, 9 and 10) do not add up to one hundred because the remaining coverage would have been given to other smaller parties.

50 See Media Monitoring Africa's previous elections reports accessible from the organisation's website (www.w.mediamonitoringafrica.org). These include Media Monitoring Project (1999), (2001), (2004), Fine, Van Houten & Roberts (2007), and Govenden, Duncan & Radu (2009).

the story actually took place or happened. For instance, if the story was about an election speech delivered by a politician at a rally in the City of Johannesburg, or more specifically in Hillbrow, the place was geo-coded as Hillbrow or the ward / municipality under which Hillbrow was demarcated.⁵¹ In an effort to ascertain the reach of the subject matter, it was also necessary to obtain clarity on the geographical relevance of the story. For example, the story might have taken place in Cape Town but was of national relevance hence it was coded as such. In the instances where the story could not be distinguished as relevant to one particular province, it was considered as regional, for categorical purposes only. Determining the origin of election stories in terms of place and relevance was important in helping us show the areas the media gave priority to.

The Figure below shows the place where the election stories actually took place across all the media studied.

Figure 11: **Places** where election stories actually happened across **all media**



It is evident that the election stories that were reported on by the media took place across the country. This, in turn, reveals that the media sought to cover the length and breadth of the country thereby reaching as many people as possible. However, most of the election stories were concentrated in metropolitan areas. There are several reasons for this. The first reason is that most (if not all) of the media studied are based in major metropolitan areas. The other reason could be that metropolitan areas are easily accessible hence it was easy for reporters to navigate through these areas while gathering election stories. Another reason is that metropolitan areas are more densely populated and therefore likely to be covered by the media.

⁵¹ The ward / municipal demarcations were derived from the Municipal Demarcation Board website (http://www.demarcation.org.za/pages/default_new.html).

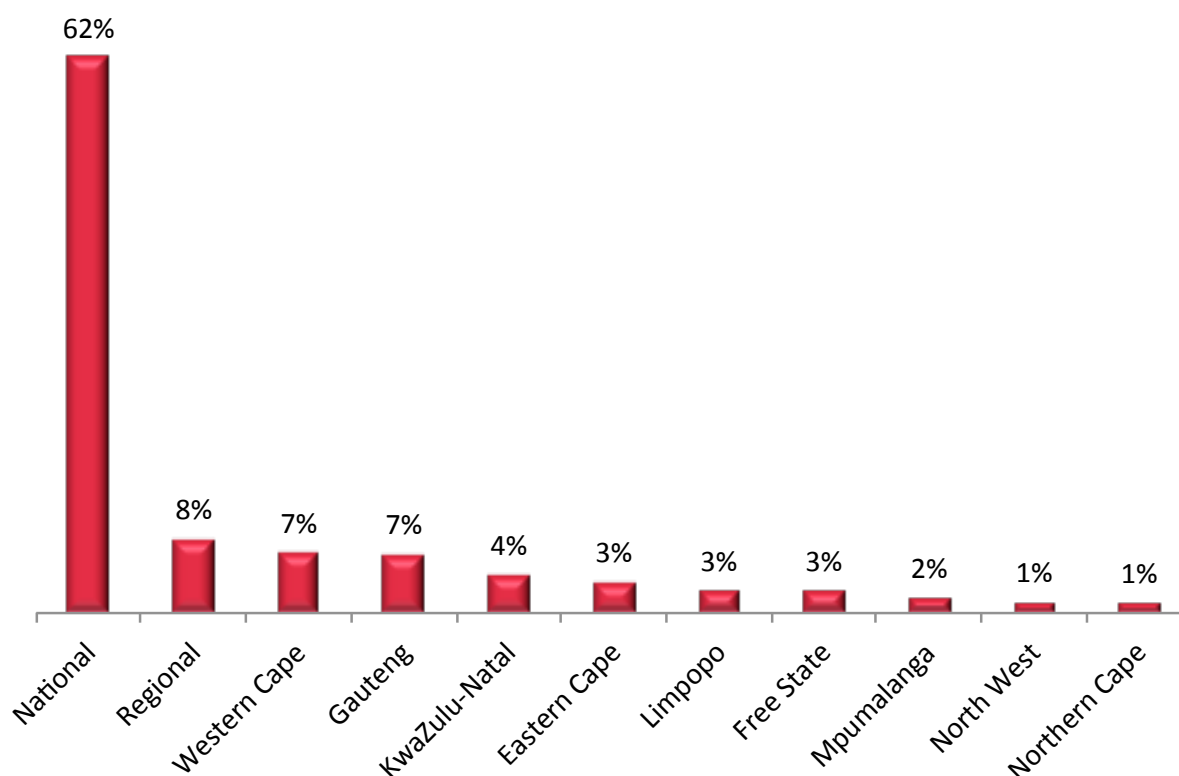
What is clear in Figure 11, however, is that most rural and marginalised areas received less coverage. This feeds into the already existing information divide between rural and urban areas. It is a fact that people in rural communities struggle to get information and in many cases the only form of media they have access to is traditional media.

Therefore the media need to give very serious consideration to their role in Municipal elections in the light of this, and use the opportunity to cover more issues pertaining to local rural communities.

In order to cover South Africa in all its diversity, it is important that the media give equitable coverage to all the country's nine provinces, taking into account the population demographics of these provinces.

According to Statistics South Africa Mid-year Population Estimates (2011: 12), Gauteng has the largest share of the population (22.39 percent) followed by KwaZulu-Natal (21.39 percent), Eastern Cape (13.50 percent), Limpopo (10.98 percent) and Western Cape (10.45 percent).⁵² Approximately 7.23 percent of the country's population lives in Mpumalanga, 6.43 percent in the North West, 5.46 percent in the Free State and 2.17 percent in the Northern Cape.⁵³ In the quest to see whether the media covered all the country's nine provinces in accordance with their population demographics, we examined the relevance of the election stories as shown in the figure below.⁵⁴

Figure 12: **Relevance** of election stories across **all media**



⁵² Accessible from <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/statsdownload.asp?PPN=P0302&SCH=4986>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ The percentages in Figure 12 add up to 101 due to rounding off.

Most election stories (62 percent) were of national relevance.⁵⁵ The most common feature to these stories was parties referring to issues or the elections broadly without any specific focus on the local nature of the election or to any specific local challenge faced by communities.

This is a disappointing finding especially given that these were Municipal elections that were primarily about citizens choosing leaders, who, in the main, would be tasked to deliver services to the people at the local level. Regional stories were those stories that were relevant to more than one province, and could not be categorised under one specific province.

In line with previous findings,⁵⁶ Figure 12 also shows that, when coverage filtered down to local levels, it was primarily relevant to the most populated provinces, which also happens to have the country's biggest metropolises, namely, Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. Interestingly, although KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo have larger populations than the Western Cape, the latter had more election stories relevant to it than the former. This is ostensibly because, as was alluded to earlier in the section on political party coverage, the 2011 Municipal elections were dominated by the 'open toilets' saga. The fact that the Western Cape is the only province that is run by the country's biggest opposition party perhaps also contributes to this finding. There were some exceptions to this, like *Grocott's Mail* for example, which very clearly focused on its local issues and province.⁵⁷ However, this does not mean that other provinces should be overshadowed. Other provinces like Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga have some of the lowest matriculation pass-rates in the country. As such, the media could hold politicians to account on these and other issues, thereby contributing to the diversity of Municipal elections coverage.

Although most municipalities in the country face similar challenges, it could be argued that issues of importance to citizens differ from province to province. It is therefore important that when the media cover such issues, they cover them in their diversity. That is to say, it is important that the media speak to the specific issues that affect local communities instead of focusing on broader national issues.

Not all media performed the same in terms of relevance of election stories. The following Figures (13, 14 and 15) show the relevance of election stories on each of the media whose content was investigated. The media are aggregated by type, just for comparative purposes only.

55 In other words, these were the stories that made reference to the Municipal elections in relation to the entire country and not necessarily focussing on a particular ward / municipality in a specific province.

56 Again, see Media Monitoring Africa's previous elections reports accessible from the organisation's website (www.w.mediamonitoringafrica.org). These include Media Monitoring Project (1999), (2001), (2004), Fine, Van Houten & Roberts (2007), and Govenden, Duncan & Radu (2009).

57 See Figure 13.

Figure 13: **Relevance** of election stories in **print media**

Medium	National	Regional	Western Cape	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Eastern Cape	Limpopo	Free State	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Total
Business Day	65%	2%	11%	5%	7%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	6%	100%
Cape Argus	55%	0%	39%	3%	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%
City Press	90%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Daily Dispatch	98%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Daily Sun	57%	2%	0%	10%	10%	9%	0%	3%	9%	0%	0%	100%
Daily Voice	91%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Die Burger	83%	0%	9%	3%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	100%
Free State Times	44%	56%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Grocott's Mail	37%	0%	0%	0%	0%	63%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Mail & Guardian	84%	0%	1%	4%	3%	1%	0%	1%	0%	4%	1%	100%
Public Eye	89%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	4%	0%	100%
Saturday Dispatch	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Saturday Star	38%	0%	3%	41%	0%	3%	5%	3%	5%	0%	3%	100%
Sowetan	57%	1%	4%	15%	12%	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	0%	100%
Sunday Sun	73%	7%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Sunday Times	38%	49%	4%	2%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Sunday World	78%	11%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
The Citizen	64%	7%	2%	12%	3%	3%	1%	6%	2%	1%	0%	100%
The Herald	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
The New Age	75%	5%	2%	3%	5%	3%	4%	0%	2%	1%	2%	100%
The Star	34%	7%	9%	35%	3%	1%	2%	8%	2%	1%	0%	100%
The Sunday Independent	61%	0%	8%	6%	6%	8%	4%	4%	2%	0%	2%	100%
The Times	49%	7%	8%	14%	7%	4%	0%	6%	0%	4%	2%	100%
Volksblad	90%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%	2%	100%
Weekend Argus	68%	0%	30%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Figure 14: **Relevance** of election stories on **radio services**

Medium	National	Regional	Western Cape	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Eastern Cape	Limpopo	Free State	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Total
Kaya FM	93%	0%	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Lesedi FM	57%	1%	6%	9%	5%	3%	4%	6%	0%	6%	2%	100%
Ligwalagwala FM	34%	20%	13%	8%	4%	7%	1%	1%	10%	1%	0%	100%
Metro FM	47%	8%	9%	12%	10%	8%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	100%
Motsweding FM	41%	3%	10%	13%	4%	4%	4%	5%	2%	10%	4%	100%
Phalaphala FM	41%	1%	9%	9%	6%	7%	19%	5%	1%	2%	0%	100%
RSG	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SAfm	87%	0%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	100%
Talk Radio 702	97%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	100%
Thobela FM	26%	13%	6%	14%	9%	3%	18%	5%	2%	2%	0%	100%
Ukhozi FM	84%	0%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%	0%	2%	1%	1%	100%
Umhlobo Wenene FM	58%	0%	6%	3%	10%	16%	2%	2%	1%	3%	0%	100%

Figure 15: **Relevance** of election stories on **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	National	Regional	Western Cape	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Eastern Cape	Limpopo	Free State	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Total
eTV English News	86%	0%	5%	2%	5%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 1 Elections Debate	79%	11%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 1 IsiZulu/IsiXhosa News	91%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	34%	1%	14%	11%	11%	9%	4%	8%	6%	2%	1%	100%
SABC 2 Sesotho/ Setswana News	37%	62%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	41%	10%	10%	5%	12%	6%	2%	2%	5%	1%	5%	100%
SABC 3 English News	52%	1%	14%	7%	6%	4%	2%	4%	5%	2%	3%	100%

In general, all media (print, radio and television) tended to have a national focus. This could be attributed to what is known as the ‘hotelling’ effect, whereby media tend to imitate one another.⁵⁸ However, some newspapers had a significant amount of stories relevant to the provinces they are based in. These include *Cape Argus* which had 39 percent of its election stories relevant to the Western Cape, *Grocott’s Mail* with 63 percent relevant to the Eastern Cape, *Saturday Star* with 41 percent relevant to Gauteng, *The Star* with 35 percent relevant to Gauteng and the *Weekend Argus* with 30 percent relevant to the Western Cape.

The same could be said for radio, whereby some services had more stories relevant to the provinces where most people who speak the services’ broadcast languages reside in. For example, *Phalaphala FM* and *Thobela FM* had the highest number of stories relevant to the Limpopo province at 19 percent and 18 percent, respectively. *Ligwalagwala FM* also had the highest number of stories relevant to Mpumalanga at 10 percent while *Motsweding FM* had the highest proportion of stories relevant to the North West and Northern Cape at 10 percent and four percent, respectively. *Lesedi FM* catered for the Free State more than any other radio service at six percent and *Umhlobo Wenene FM* also catered for the Eastern Cape more than any other service at 16 percent. Surprisingly though, *Ukhozi FM* was outperformed by most radio services in covering KwaZulu-Natal despite the fact that it broadcasts in IsiZulu.

Be that as it may, provinces with smaller towns such as Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Free State, Mpumalanga, Northwest and Northern Cape tend to feature less in the media’s elections coverage. If these and other provinces featured more, perhaps the media would have presented a diversity of voices and issues that could have helped more citizens make an informed vote.

4.1.3 Which topics were covered?

While it may be expected for there to be a level of coverage afforded to political party campaigns during any election, since these were Municipal elections it was expected that there would be greater coverage given to issues that affect people at the grassroots level. Therefore, we sought to find out the topics covered by the media.

The topic ‘Political Party Campaigns’ was coded as the last resort, only in those circumstances where politicians were reported to be campaigning in a particular region and the focus of the story was on campaigning only, and not speaking to any local issue. ‘Service Delivery’ was also coded in those instances where it was not clear what sort of ‘services’ were being referred to in the stories. Where it was clear services such as Housing, Water, Sanitation, and Education were coded accordingly. Figure 16 shows the topics that received one percent or more coverage across all the media reviewed.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See Atkinson (1999, p.2-3), cited in Duncan (2009).

⁵⁹ The total percentage does not add up to 100 because some of the topics received less than one percent coverage.

Figure 16: **Topics** covered across **all media**

Topic	Coverage
Political Party Campaigns	22%
Party Politics	20%
Election Logistics	17%
Service Delivery	11%
Voter Education	4%
Party Manifestos	3%
Political Violence	3%
Personalities	2%
Opinion Polls	2%
Labour	2%
Party Coalitions	1%
Media	1%
Housing	1%
Demonstrations	1%
Corruption	1%
Two-thirds Majority	1%
Crime	1%
Development	1%
Arts	1%
Gender	1%
Human Rights	1%
Election Fraud	1%
Total of all stories analysed	96%

It is clear that Political Party Campaigns received the most attention at 22 percent. Party Politics and Election Logistics came second and third at 20 percent and 17 percent, respectively. The figures for these top three topics are different from the 2009 National and Provincial elections in that, in 2009, Election Logistics was the most covered at 15 percent followed by Political Party Campaigns at 10 percent and then Party Politics at nine percent.⁶⁰ Although these figures differ

⁶⁰ Govenden, Duncan & Radu (2009, p.29).

from the 2009 National and Provincial election figures, the topics still remain the most covered at 59 percent when combined. What is disappointing though is that Political Party Campaigns received the most coverage despite the fact that the topic was coded only in those instances where politicians were reported to be campaigning in a particular region and not reportedly saying anything valuable other than just campaigning. For example, on the 9 May 2011, SABC 3 English News at 19:00hrs had a story on the key ANC leaders on the campaign trail around Gauteng. President Jacob Zuma was in Johannesburg's Park Station, whilst Kgalema Motlanthe was in Pretoria Central and Baleka Mbete was in the Midvaal. As with other stories covering other political party campaigns, in this clip, the ANC was not taken to task regarding its promises against what it had achieved and hoped to achieve if elected. Such stories were the norm and not the exception.

The problem with stories about Political Party Campaigns and also Party Politics, Political Violence and Personalities is that they do not necessarily add value to voters, or raise or challenge issues. All they do is let people know that politicians are campaigning or fighting for positions, which given the period, is to be expected.

The fact that such stories constituted a significant amount of coverage (47 percent) when combined suggests that politicians set the agenda for the 2011 Municipal elections coverage. This does not mean that politicians should not set the agenda. Neither does it imply that the media should be the sole agenda-setters. It also does not mean that the media should not cover Political Party Campaigns or Party Politics. It simply means that, when such issues are covered, they should not overshadow other more important, relevant issues such as Service Delivery or Voter Education for example.

Sadly, Service Delivery received 11 percent coverage. This is sad primarily for two reasons. One is, it received less than half the coverage dedicated to Political Party Campaigns, yet as highlighted earlier, Municipal elections are principally about citizens choosing leaders, who, in the main, would be tasked to deliver services to the people at the local level. The second reason is that we coded Service Delivery only in those instances where it was not clear what sort of services were being referred to in the stories. The trend in such stories was that they left it to the audience to fill in the blanks regarding the services being referred to – whether they were about Water, Electricity or Housing or all of the above. This meant that specific topics related to Service Delivery such as access to Land, Education and Health received one percent or less coverage.

The problem with grouping all services under one umbrella term like Service Delivery is that the term itself is a very vague concept. It is vague in that the task of finding out what exactly are services is very complex. It serves as shorthand for a far more complicated set of issues. According to the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (1995, p.55), services can mean two things. First, services can be those that are paid for. Secondly, they can be those that are not paid for but are funded by rates.⁶¹ This distinction testifies to the ideologically loaded nature of the concept of 'services' and the problematic usage of Service Delivery as a catch-all term.

⁶¹ Rates are public contributions used by local government to pay for services which include "community facilities such as libraries and community halls, roads and pavements, traffic police and fire protection" (Institute for Democracy, 1995, p.55).

The use of catch-all phrases obscures the issues under discussion and hence the lack of understanding and perhaps an ill-informed understanding of services. In other words, the phrase Service Delivery, like most labels, often camouflages more than it elucidates the issues that matter to people at the local level.

In one of the social media seminars Media Monitoring Africa conducted during the election period, Service Delivery was highlighted as a crucial election issue. It was noted that the South African Constitution states that municipalities have the responsibility to make sure that all citizens are provided with services to satisfy their basic needs.⁶² These include, water supply, sewage collection and disposal, refuse removal, electricity and gas supply, health services, roads and storm water drainage, street lighting, parks and recreation. In order to hold politicians to account and to provide the electorate with more information, it was suggested that journalists / media could ask politicians the following questions:

- How will you prove you will keep your political promises?
- How will you deal with protests on service delivery?
- How will your party give more power to the people?
- What are your plans for transparency and accountability?
- What are your plans for job creation?⁶³

Apart from Service Delivery, Voter Education also received a surprisingly low four percent despite the fact that most people do not understand how Municipal elections are conducted using a mixed or hybrid system which makes use of both the ward system and the proportional representation system.⁶⁴ However, this does not mean that all the media covered the top ten topics in the same manner. Following is a breakdown of how the media covered the top ten topics. Again, they are split according to the type of media, for comparative purposes only.⁶⁵

⁶² See Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution.

⁶³ For more probing questions, see Media Monitoring Africa. (2011). *Service delivery: An election issue? Piercing the promises: Election accountability pack*. Available from http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/ServiceDelivery_Pack_v1.pdf

⁶⁴ For a discussion on how municipal elections are conducted see section 2.1 of this report.

⁶⁵ Some of the total percentages in Figures 17, 18 and 19 do not add up to 100. This is because the remainder would have been dedicated to other topics that fell outside of the top 10.

Figure 17: **Top 10 topics** covered in **print media**

Medium	Political Party Campaigns	Party Politics	Election Logistics	Service Delivery	Voter Education	Party Manifestos	Political Violence	Personalities	Opinion Polls	Labour	Total
Business Day	20%	27%	11%	7%	1%	4%	4%	2%	5%	2%	82%
Cape Argus	21%	17%	15%	14%	2%	8%	2%	3%	4%	1%	86%
City Press	24%	14%	0%	29%	10%	0%	5%	10%	0%	0%	90%
Daily Dispatch	5%	22%	18%	14%	5%	0%	8%	4%	0%	3%	79%
Daily Sun	34%	10%	9%	16%	7%	2%	9%	3%	0%	2%	91%
Daily Voice	5%	9%	2%	19%	14%	2%	5%	7%	12%	2%	77%
Die Burger	20%	23%	11%	9%	3%	1%	3%	11%	0%	2%	83%
Free State Times	0%	33%	2%	37%	0%	0%	2%	0%	16%	0%	91%
Grocott's Mail	15%	15%	17%	12%	0%	5%	0%	2%	2%	2%	71%
Mail & Guardian	11%	36%	4%	21%	0%	1%	1%	5%	1%	1%	82%
Public Eye	26%	37%	0%	4%	0%	7%	4%	0%	0%	0%	78%
Saturday Dispatch	0%	57%	0%	14%	5%	0%	0%	0%	14%	0%	90%
Saturday Star	22%	16%	14%	14%	0%	3%	3%	8%	0%	0%	78%
Sowetan	15%	25%	11%	10%	4%	7%	7%	3%	0%	2%	84%
Sunday Sun	33%	7%	7%	7%	0%	27%	20%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Sunday Times	19%	51%	4%	9%	6%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	91%
Sunday World	44%	22%	0%	11%	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
The Citizen	13%	36%	19%	9%	4%	3%	0%	1%	1%	3%	89%
The Herald	7%	20%	27%	17%	5%	0%	3%	5%	2%	0%	85%
The New Age	28%	21%	16%	7%	3%	0%	6%	3%	1%	3%	88%
The Star	11%	20%	10%	22%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	76%
The Sunday Independent	10%	23%	8%	17%	2%	6%	2%	12%	0%	2%	81%
The Times	14%	26%	7%	23%	5%	1%	2%	0%	3%	1%	81%
Volksblad	13%	27%	15%	13%	4%	1%	1%	4%	0%	4%	83%
Weekend Argus	26%	23%	3%	12%	7%	3%	1%	7%	4%	1%	86%

Figure 18: **Top 10 topics** covered on **radio services**

Medium	Political Party Campaigns	Party Politics	Election Logistics	Service Delivery	Voter Education	Party Manifestos	Political Violence	Personalities	Opinion Polls	Labour	Total
Kaya FM	15%	17%	35%	12%	4%	0%	4%	1%	1%	3%	94%
Lesedi FM	32%	24%	22%	9%	3%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	92%
Ligwalagwala FM	4%	19%	20%	3%	2%	40%	1%	0%	1%	1%	92%
Metro FM	22%	8%	27%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	1%	0%	79%
Motsweding FM	13%	22%	25%	11%	6%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	84%
Phalaphala FM	26%	7%	35%	15%	9%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	94%
RSG	1%	18%	33%	12%	2%	1%	9%	0%	3%	2%	80%
SAfm	24%	12%	20%	9%	4%	0%	4%	1%	1%	3%	77%
Talk Radio 702	22%	9%	38%	8%	3%	1%	5%	1%	1%	3%	91%
Thobela FM	25%	18%	15%	11%	5%	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%	84%
Ukhozi FM	16%	41%	26%	3%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	93%
Umhlobo Wenene FM	29%	19%	22%	8%	3%	0%	7%	0%	1%	1%	89%

Figure 19: **Top 10 topics** covered on **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	Political Party Campaigns	Party Politics	Election Logistics	Service Delivery	Voter Education	Party Manifestos	Political Violence	Personalities	Opinion Polls	Labour	Total
eTV English News	22%	20%	31%	7%	1%	0%	2%	4%	1%	0%	89%
SABC 1 Elections Debate	16%	5%	32%	11%	11%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	84%
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	15%	23%	16%	11%	2%	6%	1%	1%	5%	1%	80%
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	45%	14%	18%	0%	1%	13%	2%	0%	1%	0%	94%
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	44%	20%	12%	5%	5%	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	91%
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	28%	12%	11%	20%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	80%
SABC 3 English News	47%	14%	8%	4%	5%	2%	6%	0%	0%	2%	89%

What can be discerned from Figures 17, 18 and 19 is that *Daily Dispatch*, *Daily Voice*, *Free State Times*, *Saturday Dispatch*, *The Herald*, *Ligwalagwala FM* and *RSG* dedicated little coverage to Political Party Campaigns. Further, *Daily Voice*, *Sunday Sun*, *Metro FM*, *Phalaphala FM*, *Talk Radio 702* and the *SABC 1 Elections Debate* had little coverage on Party Politics. On the other hand, Service Delivery-related topics were mostly covered by *Free State Times* followed by *City Press*, *The Times*, *The Star*, *Mail & Guardian* and the *SABC 2 Special Elections Programme*.

Although *Sunday World* and *Sunday Sun* seemingly stood out in covering Voter Education and Party Manifestos, respectively, it should be noted that they had very few elections stories in comparison to other media.⁶⁶ *Ligwalagwala FM* also stood out in covering Party Manifestos. What is clear from the findings above is that different media covered the top 10 topics differently. The Figures (17, 18 and 19) do indicate clear efforts by some media to focus on service delivery-related issues, and not simply follow political agendas.

4.2 How were the elections covered?

We now turn to how the elections were covered. We start by looking at the prominence of the elections stories and move on to how media performed in covering elections in terms of depth of information as well fairness and / or balance.

4.2.1 Was the elections coverage prominent?

Given the vital role the media play in bringing information to the public during elections, the quantity of elections coverage is obviously important. Thus, we sought to determine the amount of coverage the media dedicated to the Municipal elections as a percentage of all news coverage. The following Figures (20, 21 and 22) show the number of elections stories against the total number of stories published or broadcast by each media across the period. The figures are tabulated according to the type of media for comparative purposes.

⁶⁶ See section 4.2.1 of this report.

Figure 20: **Quantity** of election stories published by **print media**

Medium	Election stories	Total stories	Percentage
The Herald	70	212	33%
Free State Times	45	150	30%
City Press	23	94	24%
Grocott's Mail	43	198	22%
The Sunday Independent	52	239	22%
Daily Dispatch	119	578	21%
Sunday Times	49	238	21%
Saturday Dispatch	23	124	19%
The Times	158	845	19%
Mail & Guardian	77	454	17%
The Star	207	1245	17%
Public Eye	26	192	14%
Saturday Star	40	292	14%
Daily Voice	46	373	12%
The Citizen	109	924	12%
Volksblad	170	1392	12%
Die Burger	219	1931	11%
Sowetan	94	957	10%
Business Day	169	1970	9%
Cape Argus	135	1521	9%
The New Age	217	2352	9%
Sunday World	9	126	7%
Weekend Argus	77	1318	6%
Daily Sun	57	1279	4%
Sunday Sun	17	454	4%
Total	2251	19458	12%

Figure 21: **Quantity** of election stories broadcast by **radio services**

Medium	Election stories	Total stories	Percentage
Phalaphala FM	172	393	44%
Thobela FM	220	579	38%
Motsweding FM	158	446	35%
Ukhozi FM	144	418	34%
Lesedi FM	110	330	33%
Kaya FM	162	523	31%
Ligwalagwala FM	142	471	30%
SAfm	165	644	26%
Talk Radio 702	151	622	24%
Umhlobo Wenene FM	105	456	23%
Metro FM	89	450	20%
RSG	133	654	20%
Total	1751	5986	29%

Figure 22: **Quantity** of election stories on **television news**

Medium / Programme	Election stories	Total stories	Percentage
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	328	614	53%
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	177	367	48%
SABC 3 English News	261	552	47%
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	155	372	42%
eTV English News	83	383	22%
Total	1004	2288	44%

Before we discuss the results reflected in the Figures above (20, 21 and 22), it is important to note that the findings in Figure 22 do not include Election Debates on *SABC 1* and Special Elections Programmes on *SABC 2*. They were excluded because, by their very nature, these programmes were dedicated to election coverage hence they are not helpful in terms of giving us a picture as to how much coverage the programmes gave to the Municipal elections in relation to their total coverage. Secondly, the results above only show media performance in terms of **quantity** and **not necessarily quality** of elections coverage.

Having said that, the average elections coverage for **print** was 12 percent with *The Herald* and *Free State Times* topping the list with over 30 percent while *Daily Sun* and *Sunday Sun* were at the bottom with just four percent each.

The average for **radio** was 29 percent with *Phalaphala FM*, *Thobela FM*, *Motsweding FM*, *Ukhozi FM*, *Lesedi FM*, *Kaya FM* and *Ligwalagwala FM* performing above average.

With regard to **television**, only eTV English News performed less than half the average. However, overall, television news covered more election stories than radio and print since the average number of election stories for television was 201 while radio and print had 146 and 90, respectively. Overall elections coverage across all print, radio and television was 18 percent.

The question to be asked is: how much coverage of elections is acceptable, required and necessary?

The answer to this question needs to be found through consultation with the media, as well as the audiences. However, what is clear is that the answer should be informed by the media's ability to contribute to free and fair elections.

4.2.2 How did media perform in covering the elections?

Looking at the quantity of election stories is only one indication of attention afforded to elections. Hence, we utilised election ratings to draw several indicators together to give indicative results. As alluded to earlier, the overall elections ratings focused on the prominence given to elections as well as whether the media dedicated its coverage to 'bread-and-butter' issues like housing, access to land, health and the environment, poverty and unemployment, crime and safety, etc. In order to compare media on the same scale, using a specially developed weighting system, we analysed all individual stories across each medium. It is from this weighting system that T-scores were generated.

In general, **T-scores** are standardised scores which convert raw scores into a form that can be easily compared with other scores.⁶⁷ A T-score of 50 represents the average.⁶⁸ A difference of 10 from the average indicates a difference of one standard deviation. Therefore, a T-score of 60 is one standard deviation above the average, while a T-score of 30 is two standard deviations below the average.⁶⁹

67 See the University of Chicago library website. <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/maps/t-score.html>

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

Figures 23, 24 and 25 reveal the overall elections ratings for each of the media whose content was investigated. Again, the results are aggregated according to type.

Figure 23: **Overall** elections ratings
for **print media**

Medium	T-Score
Mail & Guardian	62.62
The New Age	62.19
Weekend Argus	59.75
Daily Sun	57.05
The Herald	56.67
Cape Argus	55.82
Business Day	55.21
Daily Dispatch	54.75
The Times	54.63
The Star	53.72
Sowetan	51.50
Daily Voice	50.33
Free State Times	47.24
Saturday Dispatch	46.30
City Press	45.93
The Sunday Independent	45.22
The Citizen	44.46
Public Eye	43.81
Die Burger	43.27
Volksblad	43.00
Grocott's Mail	40.00
Sunday World	38.75
Saturday Star	37.03
Sunday Sun	36.64
Sunday Times	28.24

Figure 24: **Overall** elections ratings
for **radio services**

Medium	T-Score
Lesedi FM	64.60
Thobela FM	64.23
SAfm	58.01
Motsweding FM	57.45
Phalaphala FM	57.25
Talk Radio 702	54.84
Ligwalagwala FM	52.49
Umhlobo Wenene FM	51.89
Kaya FM	50.41
RSG	44.99
Ukhozi FM	38.49
Metro FM	35.52

Figure 25: **Overall** elections ratings
for **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	T-Score
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	66.68
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	64.89
SABC 1 Elections Debate	58.89
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	54.99
eTV English News	50.38
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	36.50
SABC 3 English News	25.36

In terms of overall elections coverage, half the print media whose content was analysed performed above average with the *Mail & Guardian* topping the list. Only three radio services and two television programmes performed below average, namely, *RSG*, *Ukhozi FM*, *Metro FM*, *SABC 2 Afrikaans News* and *SABC 3 English News*. The rest performed above average. While this may sound positive, we should read these findings in line with the fact that ‘bread-and-butter’ issues received one percent or less coverage.⁷⁰

Therefore, the ratings presented here only show how media performed against each other’s performance. Nevertheless, those that did not perform well perhaps need to learn from those that performed better so as to ensure that the elections coverage is not only quantitatively high but also more informative around ‘bread-and-butter’ issues.

4.2.3 What was the quality of the coverage?

Apart from the overall elections coverage, we also looked at the depth of coverage in order to determine the quality of the elections coverage. As highlighted earlier, the depth of coverage rating considered whether the election stories provided a basic context and an in-depth context as well as a citizens’ perspective to the elections. The rating also considered the number of sources per story and the type of stories as these have a bearing on the quality of the coverage. Aside from providing a basic context, that is, the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ about elections, a good quality story should provide an in-depth context by showing how election issues impact society at large. In order to achieve this, the media could access politicians, experts, civil society, and ‘ordinary’ citizens, including vulnerable groups such as children, people living with disabilities, the elderly, etc., who can give context to the election issues affecting their livelihoods and development.

Where necessary, a good quality story should make reference to relevant policies and legislation. Given the impact of election issues on society, a good quality story should also have a clear citizens’ perspective.

In other words, the story should clearly be in the interests of the citizens rather than politicians. Ideally, it should go beyond what politicians say, and offer some analysis. Just like the overall elections rating, all these criteria were assigned scores from which T-scores⁷¹ were generated. The following Figures (26, 27 and 28) show the media performance with regards to the depth of coverage.

⁷⁰ See section 4.1.3 of this report.

⁷¹ For an explanation on T-scores see section 4.2.2 of this report.

Figure 26: **Depth of coverage**
ratings for **print media**

Medium	T-Score
Mail & Guardian	72.55
The Star	70.22
Volksblad	62.88
Saturday Star	61.70
Weekend Argus	57.79
Free State Times	56.96
Business Day	56.12
Cape Argus	55.65
The Times	52.79
The Sunday Independent	52.72
City Press	51.25
Grocott's Mail	50.81
Daily Voice	50.73
Die Burger	50.08
The Herald	49.05
Daily Dispatch	48.51
The New Age	48.35
Saturday Dispatch	46.18
Sowetan	45.92
The Citizen	45.63
Daily Sun	44.96
Sunday Times	44.39
Public Eye	40.98
Sunday World	39.21
Sunday Sun	22.71

Figure 27: **Depth of coverage**
ratings for **radio services**

Medium	T-Score
Motsweding FM	61.81
Lesedi FM	58.75
Thobela FM	51.51
RSG	47.97
Phalaphala FM	47.68
Metro FM	46.63
SAfm	43.98
Umhlobo Wenene FM	42.90
Ukhozi FM	42.84
Talk Radio 702	41.87
Kaya FM	40.81
Ligwalagwala FM	34.40

Figure 28: **Depth of coverage** ratings
for **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	T-Score
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	68.17
SABC 1 Elections Debate	65.54
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	55.63
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	52.56
SABC 3 English News	48.62
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	35.57
eTV English News	34.62

It is evident that more than half the newspaper performed above average in terms of the depth of information they provided about elections. However, despite having the space and perhaps the time to provide nuanced information about elections, newspapers like *The Herald*, *Daily Dispatch*, *The New Age*, *Saturday Dispatch*, *Sowetan*, *The Citizen*, *Daily Sun*, *Sunday Times*, *Public Eye*, *Sunday World* and *Sunday Sun* performed below average. Given that most news on radio is very short, it is understandable that most radio services performed below average in terms of depth and nuance. Only *Motsweding FM*, *Lesedi FM* and *Thobela FM* performed above average. When it comes to television, only *SABC 3 English News*, *SABC 2 Afrikaans News* and *eTV News* performed below coverage.

It could be argued that Special Elections Programmes on *SABC 2* and Elections Debate on *SABC 1* were expected to be in-depth and nuanced because they were specifically focused on the elections.

The challenge for all media though is that the business of breaking news is increasingly being overshadowed by new media. In other words, anyone can break news and post it on Facebook or Twitter. This means that it may no longer be viable for media to justify their existence on the basis of breaking news. Therefore, media is increasingly forced to be nuanced and in-depth otherwise their reason for existence will be undermined.

Since one of the media's roles is to inform, especially during elections, the question is: **why is it that some media performed better than others in terms of depth of coverage?**

Is it style or format of media?

What is it that those media that performed better have which others do not have?

Could it be resources?

The answer to these questions could be revealed through further research and on a case-by-case basis.

At the very least, we should encourage those that performed above average to keep the good work and those that performed below average to emulate the former so that society can be better informed not only about elections but also about the country's democratic system.

4.2.4 Was the coverage fair and/or balanced?

Another aspect that is crucial to elections coverage is fairness and / or balance. While we acknowledge that fairness is relative, we took all reasonable steps to ensure that results were standardised. We also examined fairness comprehensively through looking at:

- The diversity of political coverage the media gave to the different political parties;
- The discrepancy between the political parties that were covered and those that were not covered; and,
- The number of election stories that we considered positive or negative on three levels, that is, language, presentation and omission.⁷²

Scores were allocated to each of the criteria highlighted above from which T-scores⁷³ were generated.

Before we present the findings on fairness overall, it is important to note that one biased item on a television news bulletin for example would not substantially alter the generally fair nature of the rest of the channel's election coverage.

However, substantial and democracy-threatening bias occurs as a pattern – a repeated ideological or discursive bias – which over time, and through repetition creates clear and distinctly unfair coverage. This does not mean that bias need be intentional. In fact, very often a pattern of bias (for example in gender coverage in the media) reveals a lack of intention, as well as the subconscious assumptions evident in societal discourses which influence the selection of news and information and its presentation. Therefore, it is important that the media report on political parties in a consistent and balanced fashion, more so during elections.

Having said that, the Figures (29, 30 and 31) below reveal the fairness ratings for all the media whose content was explored. They are presented according to the type of media.

⁷² As explained earlier, language bias was detected where the language used in the story clearly and distinctly favoured one party over another, or substantially disfavoured or damaged the image of a party or parties. Presentation bias was captured when it was clear that one or more parties were favoured by virtue of how they were reported on in the entire newspaper or the overall news bulletin or the entire elections programme. Bias by omission was spotted where a party was not given the opportunity to respond to substantial allegations or to an issue of substantial importance to that party.

⁷³ For an explanation on T-scores see section 4.2.2 of this report.

Figure 29: **Fairness** ratings
for **print media**

Medium	T-Score
The New Age	61.02
Mail & Guardian	60.38
The Herald	59.53
Daily Dispatch	58.15
Daily Sun	57.99
Cape Argus	55.87
Sowetan	55.13
The Times	53.87
Business Day	53.48
Weekend Argus	51.73
Saturday Dispatch	51.73
The Sunday Independent	49.45
Free State Times	48.77
Sunday Sun	47.76
Public Eye	46.70
City Press	46.69
The Star	46.24
Daily Voice	45.72
The Citizen	45.71
Sunday World	45.50
Die Burger	43.44
Grocott's Mail	41.17
Volksblad	38.14
Saturday Star	35.12
Sunday Times	29.41

Figure 30: **Fairness** ratings
for **radio services**

Medium	T-Score
Lesedi FM	62.73
Thobela FM	60.20
Ligwalagwala FM	59.70
SAfm	59.58
Umhlobo Wenene FM	56.20
Talk Radio 702	55.93
Phalaphala FM	55.67
Motsweding FM	53.11
Kaya FM	50.93
RSG	42.24
Ukhozi FM	40.30
Metro FM	30.52

Figure 31: **Fairness** ratings
for **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	T-Score
SABC 2 Sesotho/Setswana News	65.03
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	59.02
SABC 1 IsiZulu/IsiXhosa News	54.85
eTV English News	51.56
SABC 1 Elections Debate	50.26
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	40.09
SABC 3 English News	16.24

More than half the print media performed below average⁷⁴ in terms of fairness with **Sunday Times** sitting at the bottom. This is not surprising for two reasons. First, as we have established earlier, the coverage was limited to bigger political parties. Secondly, the coverage was dominated by political mudslinging. Interestingly, for radio and television, only **RSG**, **Ukhozi FM**, **Metro FM**, **SABC 2** Afrikaans News and **SABC 3** English News performed below average in terms of balance. In light of this it could be argued that there were more unfair or imbalanced stories in print media than there were on radio and television. This is certainly so because, in terms of quantity, there were more election stories in print (2251) than there were on radio (1751) and television (1004).⁷⁵ Therefore, there were bound to be more imbalanced stories in print. However, in overall, the results indicate that 84 percent of all stories analysed were balanced. This suggests a general commitment to fair media across the board. It is also worth noting the various fairness ratings across the SABC services, some of which serve to challenge perceptions of bias within the SABC, while others would support concerns of fairness in coverage, including **SABC 3** News. Be that as it may, the notion of balance invokes a perceived need to present both sides of the story from an objective point of view to ensure credibility of a report.

However, reducing issues to two opposing views in a fair and/or balanced manner must not replace the ideal of reporting on all perspectives and providing all relevant information. In other words, the practice of juxtaposing opinions in order to be seen as fair or balanced must not substitute depth and nuance because often stories have more than two sides.

4.3 Whose voices were heard in the coverage?

The visibility of any marginalised group is important within the media. It is therefore crucial that the media provide diverse viewpoints and information in order to have an active and participative citizenry; an element crucial to the strength of our democracy. Moreover, a key element of the media's remit is to ensure diverse and equitable sourcing, not only of political parties but also of citizens across gender, race, ethnicity, etc. This part therefore looks at the voices the media amplified or silenced in their coverage of the elections. It also looks at whether the voices of women were heard as well as the race of sources the media accessed for information about elections.

4.3.1 Where were citizens voices in the coverage?

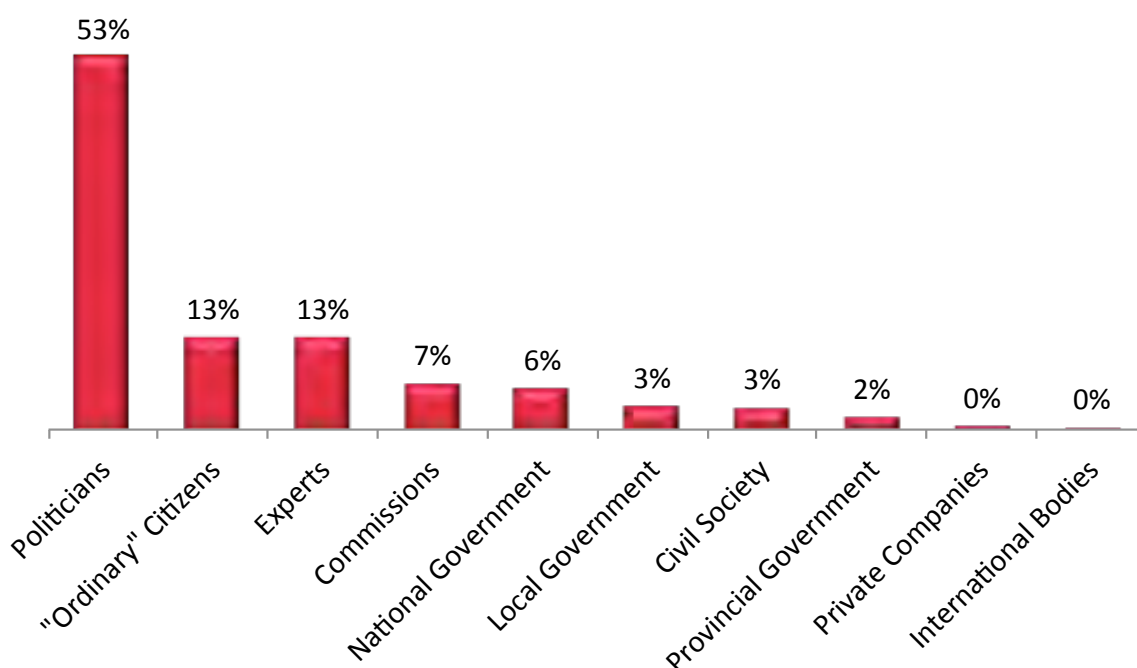
For the purposes of this study, sources were defined as people who were accessed (directly or indirectly), or merely named or mentioned. This was done for two reasons. First, we wanted to ensure that we capture all the sources the media accessed. Secondly, the mere mention of a source in the media increases their visibility. Where clear, further information about the sex, race and the function of the sources were also captured. Sources were categorised into 10 groups, namely, Politicians, 'Ordinary' Citizens, Experts, Commissions, Civil Society, Private Companies, International Bodies, National, Provincial, and Local Government officials. Politicians consisted of sources from the different political parties. 'Ordinary' Citizens were people accessed in their

⁷⁴ It is important to note that while below average, this does not mean media were fundamentally biased, rather that they performed poorly in comparison to their colleagues.

⁷⁵ See section 4.2.1 of this report.

capacity as ‘ordinary’ members of society. Experts composed of sources from professional bodies, academia, media and justice system. Commissions were constituted by independent bodies such as the IEC. Civil Society composed of sources from unions, non-profit organisations, including community-based and faith-based organisations. Sources from Private Companies and International Bodies like the African Union (AU) were categorised as such. People who were sourced in their capacity as employees of National, Provincial and Local government were coded according to their respective level of government. The categories explained above were only used for analysis purposes. Since people often have more than one role, sources were assigned to a category that suited the capacity within which they were accessed in that story. Using these categories we were able to determine whether citizens’ voices were amplified in the media’s elections coverage. The Figure below shows the sources accessed by all the media examined.

Figure 32: **Sources** accessed by **all media**



Politicians were the most sourced at 53 percent. This is not surprising because generally elections are framed as being about politicians and what they promise to deliver if elected. Politicians were followed by ‘ordinary’ members of society and Experts at 13 percent each, while Commissions came fourth at seven percent. National Government constituted six percent whilst Civil Society only made up three percent of the sources. Sources from Private Companies and International Bodies were so insignificant such that they constituted less than one percent. The fact that Local Government sources amounted to only three percent is disappointing especially given that these were Municipal elections. How could local government officials be held accountable if they were not accessed let alone questioned? Instead the most prominent and/or senior politicians were accessed. In addition, these results suggest that politicians rather than media set the agenda for the elections coverage. This is because most sources from National, Provincial and Local Government often belong to various political parties. In that regard, it could be argued that, Politicians constituted 64 percent of all the sources accessed to the detriment of other groups in society. The problem with letting politicians set the agenda is that they may “dominate popular thinking thereby rendering voters blind followers.”⁷⁶ While there can be no doubt that it is important to hear the voices of politicians in an election period, it is crucial that there is a balance of different voices whereby Citizens, Civil Society, Experts and other vulnerable groups in society are given more space to air their views.

⁷⁶ Zulu (2012, p.93).

If the percentages were higher for Citizens, Experts and Civil Society, perhaps it would have reflected that the media ensured that there was a healthy debate and consideration of voting options. If we breakdown the sources accessed by each media we notice some differences. The results are categorised according to type of media.

Figure 33: **Sources** accessed by **print media**

Medium	Politicians	"Ordinary" Citizens	Experts	Commissions	National Government	Local Government	Civil Society	Provincial Government	Private Companies	International Bodies	Total
Business Day	56%	4%	13%	6%	8%	3%	5%	3%	1%	2%	100%
Cape Argus	48%	14%	15%	5%	8%	5%	2%	2%	0%	1%	100%
City Press	32%	17%	30%	8%	4%	4%	1%	3%	0%	0%	100%
Daily Dispatch	38%	22%	21%	5%	3%	5%	2%	2%	1%	2%	100%
Daily Sun	61%	18%	6%	5%	3%	4%	1%	3%	0%	0%	100%
Daily Voice	51%	21%	12%	2%	9%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Die Burger	53%	12%	11%	6%	9%	2%	5%	1%	2%	0%	100%
Free State Times	25%	27%	26%	3%	3%	8%	1%	4%	1%	0%	100%
Grocott's Mail	48%	19%	21%	2%	1%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Mail & Guardian	46%	19%	18%	3%	4%	6%	4%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Public Eye	60%	8%	13%	6%	3%	2%	4%	3%	0%	2%	100%
Saturday Dispatch	32%	21%	30%	1%	4%	8%	1%	2%	1%	0%	100%
Saturday Star	44%	22%	19%	6%	3%	1%	3%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Sowetan	61%	8%	14%	4%	4%	3%	2%	2%	0%	1%	100%
Sunday Sun	84%	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Sunday Times	60%	5%	19%	2%	2%	6%	2%	1%	3%	1%	100%
Sunday World	55%	11%	15%	0%	6%	11%	0%	2%	0%	0%	100%
The Citizen	57%	6%	9%	8%	11%	3%	3%	2%	0%	0%	100%
The Herald	44%	16%	19%	10%	1%	5%	2%	3%	0%	0%	100%
The New Age	57%	10%	11%	7%	5%	4%	4%	2%	0%	0%	100%
The Star	47%	16%	15%	5%	7%	4%	5%	1%	1%	0%	100%
The Sunday Independent	50%	9%	18%	6%	4%	1%	10%	0%	0%	1%	100%
The Times	55%	15%	14%	5%	3%	2%	5%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Volksblad	46%	17%	12%	9%	5%	4%	3%	3%	1%	0%	100%
Weekend Argus	40%	15%	19%	3%	7%	6%	4%	3%	1%	1%	100%

Figure 34: **Sources** accessed on **radio services**

Medium	Politicians	"Ordinary" Citizens	Experts	Commissions	National Government	Local Government	Civil Society	Provincial Government	Private Companies	International Bodies	Total
Kaya FM	46%	6%	18%	15%	6%	2%	6%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Lesedi FM	72%	6%	8%	10%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Ligwalagwala FM	76%	7%	5%	8%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Metro FM	52%	14%	21%	5%	6%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Motsweding FM	64%	6%	11%	9%	3%	2%	3%	1%	0%	0%	100%
Phalaphala FM	71%	6%	5%	12%	4%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	100%
RSG	54%	3%	9%	10%	10%	9%	4%	2%	0%	0%	100%
SAfm	45%	4%	14%	13%	13%	3%	7%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Talk Radio 702	47%	13%	8%	16%	7%	3%	3%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Thobela FM	60%	13%	7%	7%	6%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Ukhozi FM	74%	2%	5%	9%	4%	1%	3%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Umhlobo Wenene FM	71%	13%	2%	8%	4%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Figure 35: **Sources** accessed on **television programmes**

Medium/ Programme	Politicians	"Ordinary" Citizens	Experts	Commissions	National Government	Local Government	Civil Society	Provincial Government	Private Companies	International Bodies	Total
eTV English News	48%	19%	14%	10%	4%	1%	3%	2%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 1 Elections Debate	30%	38%	21%	10%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	61%	8%	12%	5%	8%	1%	3%	1%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	75%	8%	3%	7%	3%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	54%	20%	10%	6%	6%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	39%	29%	16%	5%	4%	3%	1%	2%	0%	0%	100%
SABC 3 English News	62%	15%	6%	6%	6%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	100%

As highlighted earlier, Politicians were the most sourced with *Sunday Sun* having the highest proportion (84 percent) and *Free State Times* having the least proportion (25 percent). In fact, *Free State Times* and the Elections Debate on *SABC 1* are the only media and programme, respectively that had more 'ordinary' members of society as sources than politicians. This was however expected of the Elections Debate as it was specifically targeted at the elections.

Media such as *Business Day*, *Public Eye*, *Sowetan*, *Sunday Sun*, *Sunday Times*, *The Citizen*, *The Sunday Independent*, *Kaya FM*, *Lesedi FM*, *Ligwalagwala FM*, *Motsweding FM*, *Phalaphala FM*, *RSG*, *SAfm*, *Ukhozi FM* and programmes such as *IsiZulu/IsiXhosa News* on *SABC 1* as well as *Afrikaans News* on *SABC 2* had less than 10 percent of their sources being 'ordinary' members of society. Radio services could be exonerated because radio news is usually short and breaking stories.⁷⁷ This means that it may not be possible to capture as many voices from society as possible in a sound bite for example. However, since elections mostly affect citizens it is crucial that the media amplifies citizens' voices and put forward their perspectives.

Figure 33 also reveals that *City Press* and *Saturday Dispatch* had sizeable proportions of expert sources in comparison to other media.

The advantage of sourcing experts is that they can put election issues into perspective by linking them to broader societal issues in a way that a non-expert would otherwise not do.

This then increases nuance and depth, a condition necessary for citizens to make an informed vote. *The Sunday Independent* is the only media that had 10 percent of its sources from Civil Society. Other media had less, some had zero.

Sourcing civil society is critical in that civil society usually deals with people on the ground, which means that there is possibility that they can contextualise election issues, thereby contributing to a better democracy.

These findings pose some challenges; what is equitable or acceptable sourcing? How much of politicians, citizens or civil society should be sourced by the media? Which voices are more important than others? How do we ensure diversity of voices and citizens' perspectives are put forward?

4.3.2 Were gender issues and women's voices amplified in the coverage?

As a key source of information especially during elections, the media ought to cover the key priorities of women and men, girls and boys differently. This is because, as observed during the seminar on gender⁷⁸ as an election issue held by Media Monitoring Africa in the run up to the elections:

⁷⁷ It is usually the case that stories are broken on radio news and then taken up for further analysis in print media.

⁷⁸ Gender is used here to refer to the roles, duties and responsibilities which are culturally or socially ascribed to women and men.

- Women tend to suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners more often than men;
- Women's political participation and representation in decision-making structures lag behind men's;
- Women and men have different economic opportunities;
- Women are over-represented among the poor; and,
- Women and girls make up the majority of people trafficked and involved in the sex trade.⁷⁹

The seminar raised some of the questions the media could ask politicians in order to put and keep gender issues on the elections agenda. Some of the questions are:

- What are the plans for 50 / 50 representation in your party?
- How will you tackle the feminisation of poverty in South Africa?
- How will your party protect women from violence, from their partners and from HIV and AIDS?
- What are your solutions to patriarchal and prejudicial attitudes towards women and girls?
- As men and boys must be part of the solution, what are your plans for positive male engagement?⁸⁰

These and other issues need to be addressed in efforts to promote gender equality.

The media could play a role in remedying these gender disparities by giving a voice to women. In addition, the media could interrogate how election issues affect women and men, boys and girls differently in terms of economic, political, social, legal and cultural factors.

In light of this, we sought to determine how the media performed in covering gender-related issues. As we discovered in section 4.1.3 of this report, Gender as a topic received one percent of the total media coverage. This means that gender coverage was very low. However, in order to determine how the media performed, we looked at how the media covered gender-related issues such as gender parity, gender-based violence (GBV), poverty, unemployment, education, health, service delivery, etc. Scores were allocated to stories that discussed how such issues affected men and women differently. Scores were also allocated to the number of female sources the media accessed per story. T-scores were then generated, which allowed us to rank the media against each other's performance.⁸¹ The Figures below reveal how the media performed on gender coverage.

⁷⁹ See Media Monitoring Africa. (2011). *Gender: An election issue? Piercing the promises: Elections accountability pack*. Available from http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Gender_pack_Final_v2.pdf

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ For an explanation on T-scores see section 4.2.2 of this report.

Figure 36: **Gender** ratings
for **print media**

Medium	T-Score
Daily Voice	68.79
Cape Argus	57.42
Daily Sun	55.68
The Citizen	54.61
The Herald	54.22
The Star	53.05
Daily Dispatch	50.98
City Press	50.24
Grocott's Mail	50.22
Die Burger	48.83
Weekend Argus	48.38
Saturday Dispatch	47.56
Mail & Guardian	47.35
The New Age	47.24
The Times	46.89
Sowetan	45.90
Sunday Times	45.48
Volksblad	44.48
Public Eye	43.50
Free State Times	42.28
Business Day	41.80
Sunday Sun	41.40
Sunday World	38.53
The Sunday Independent	25.37
Saturday Star	23.16

Figure 37: **Gender** ratings
for **radio services**

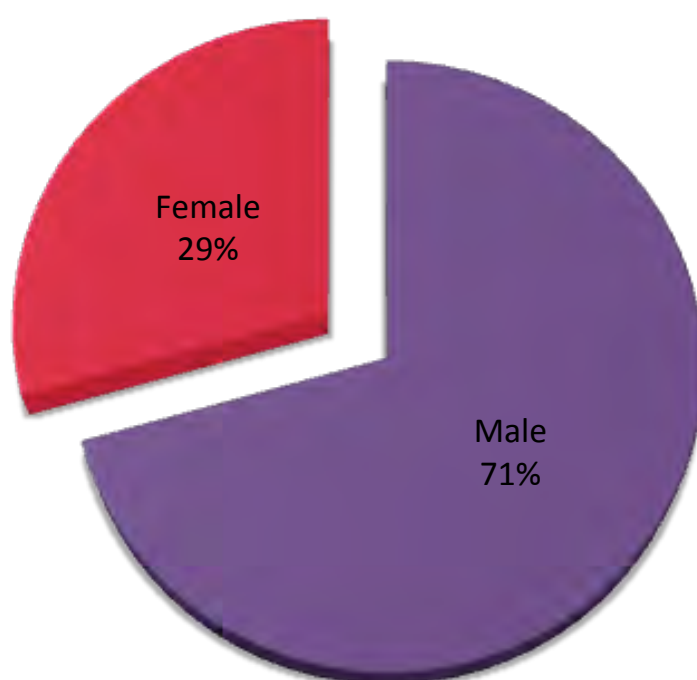
Medium	T-Score
Phalaphala FM	58.25
Metro FM	56.27
Thobela FM	55.55
Kaya FM	52.46
RSG	49.99
Talk Radio 702	49.54
Motsweding FM	49.22
SAfm	48.55
Lesedi FM	47.27
Umhlobo Wenene FM	46.94
Ligwalagwala FM	46.07
Ukhozi FM	43.74

Figure 38: **Gender** ratings
for **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	T-Score
SABC 1 Elections Debate	86.22
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	62.85
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	61.89
eTV English News	59.99
SABC 3 English News	55.57
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	52.13
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	44.17

With regard to gender coverage, most media performed below average. This is not surprising because, as alluded to earlier, Gender as a topic received only one percent coverage. However, *SABC 1 Elections Debate* stands out with a T-score of 86.22. This implies that in its election programming, the *SABC* tried to represent social reality in its diversity, complexity and plurality, and strived to redress gender imbalances when reporting on elections. Be that as it may, “the media should encourage women’s participation as candidates as well as voters by raising public awareness of their importance to the country’s political space through the production of more non-gender stereotypical stories, reports and analysis, using more women as story sources, publicly rejecting all attempts to discriminate against women’s participation in public life and generating more stories that depict women and men working collaboratively rather than depicting relations between the two as always contentious.”⁸² When it comes to using women as story sources, the Figure below shows the sex of sources accessed by all the media evaluated.

Figure 39: **Sex of sources** accessed by **all media**



Of the sources whose sex could be clearly distinguished, only 29 percent were women. This means that the majority of those who were quoted on elections were men. It could therefore be argued that the 2011 Municipal elections were not only about men but they were overwhelmingly seen through men’s lived experiences, which are often different from women’s. Although 29 percent is more than 24 percent recorded in 2009⁸³ and 23 percent global average recorded in 2010,⁸⁴ it is still low. This is because women constitute 52 percent of the South African population⁸⁵ and therefore deserve greater representation. If we consider the sex distribution in the country’s nine provinces we notice that the only province with more men than women is Gauteng,⁸⁶ yet the Figures (40 and 41) below show that the media accessed more men in every province.

⁸² The Democratic Governance for Development Project and The Independent National Commission of Nigeria (n.d., p.19).

⁸³ Govenden, Duncan & Radu (2009, p.87).

⁸⁴ See Macharia, O’Connor & Ndangam (2010).

⁸⁵ Statistics South Africa Mid-year Population Estimates (2011, p.2).

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.14 - 15.

Figure 40: **Distribution of female sources** accessed by **all media**

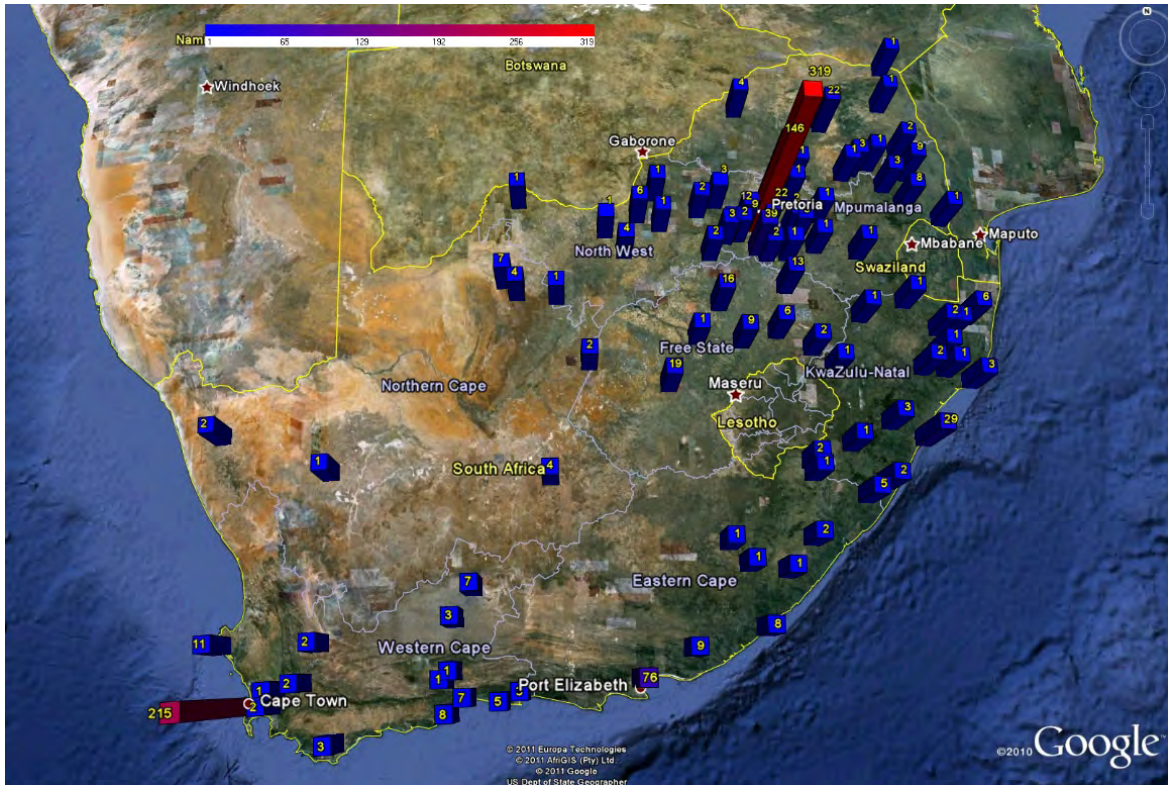
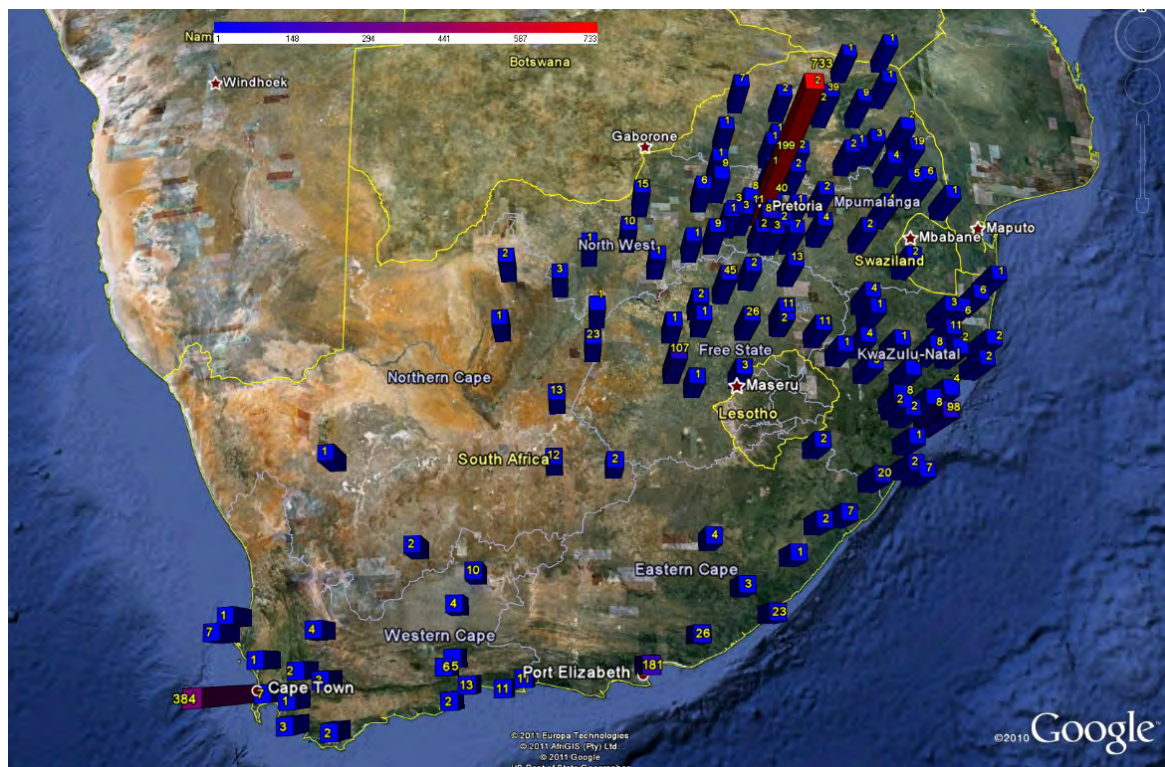


Figure 41: **Distribution of male sources** accessed by **all media**



What is clear from these maps is that men are likely to be accessed more in every province despite the fact that aside from Gauteng, there are more women than men in every other province. While women have their own views and opinions about issues surrounding elections, they were made 'invisible' by the media's omission of their voices and images. The media should therefore make a conscious effort to contact and involve women in their coverage of elections, irrespective

of whether women are sometimes reluctant to speak publicly for reasons ranging from lack of confidence to a lack of trust or experience with the media. In the following Figures (42, 43 and 44) we show the sex of sources accessed by each media whose content was explored. Again, the media are sorted according to type.

Figure 42: **Sex of sources** accessed by **print media**

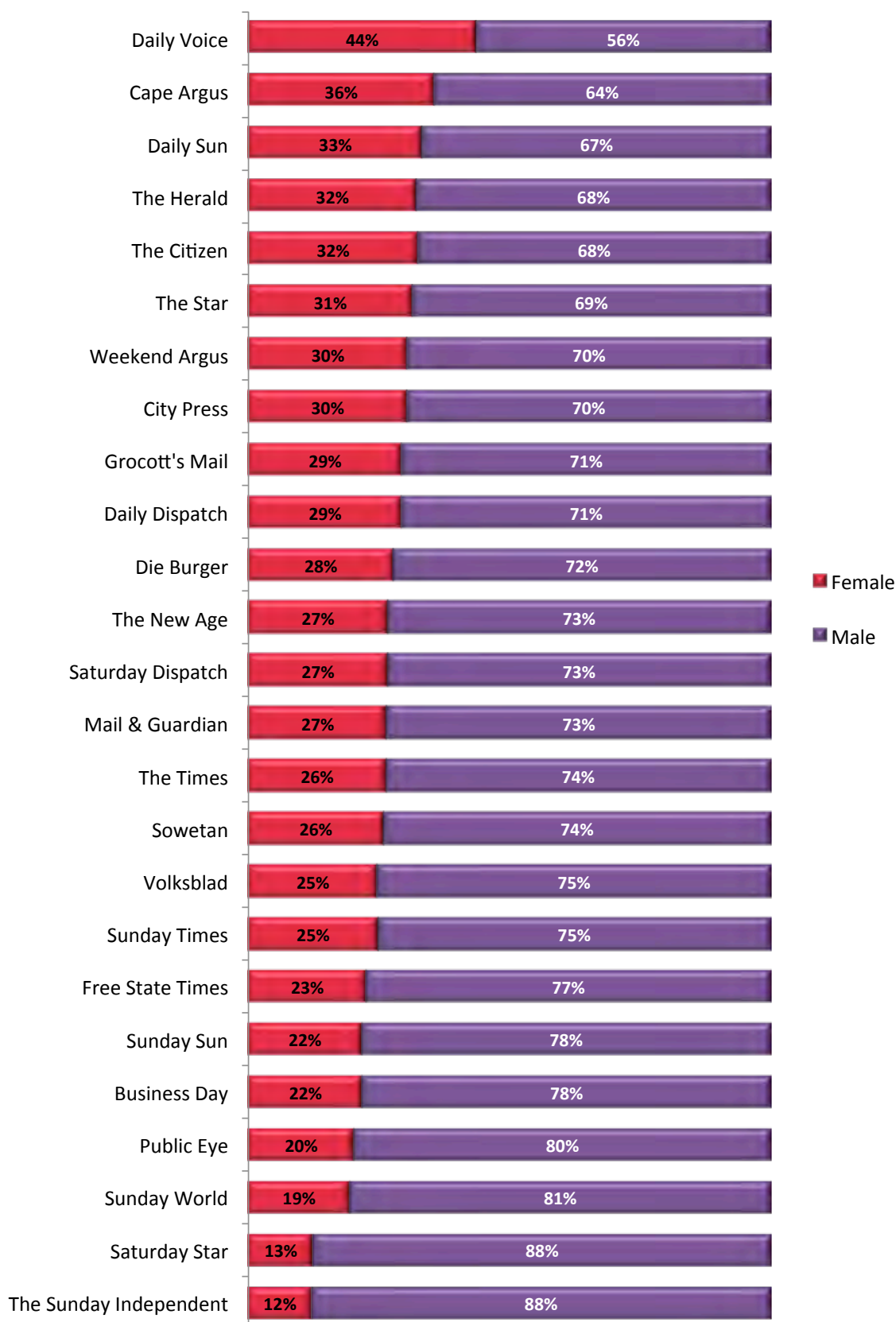


Figure 43: **Sex of sources** accessed on **radio**

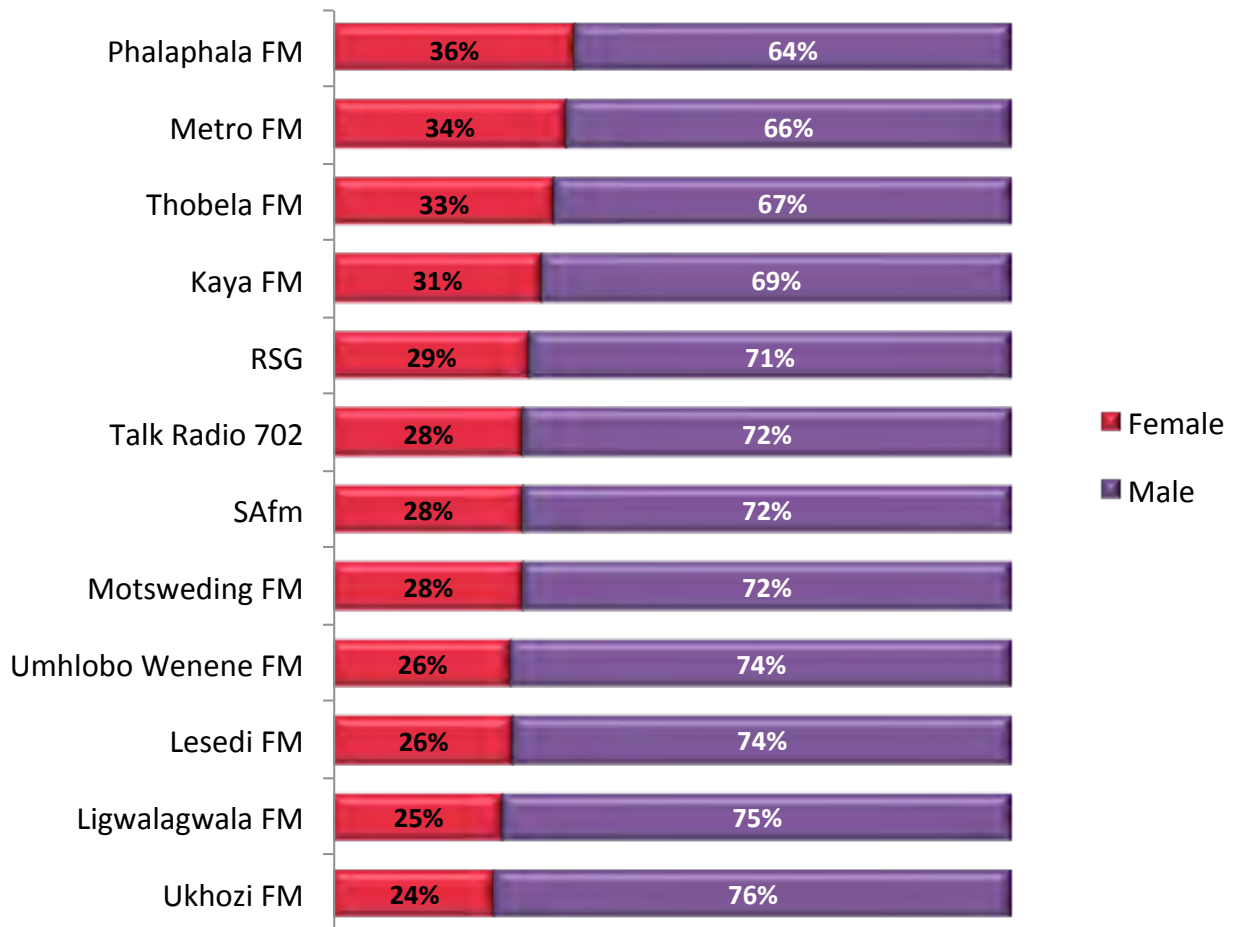
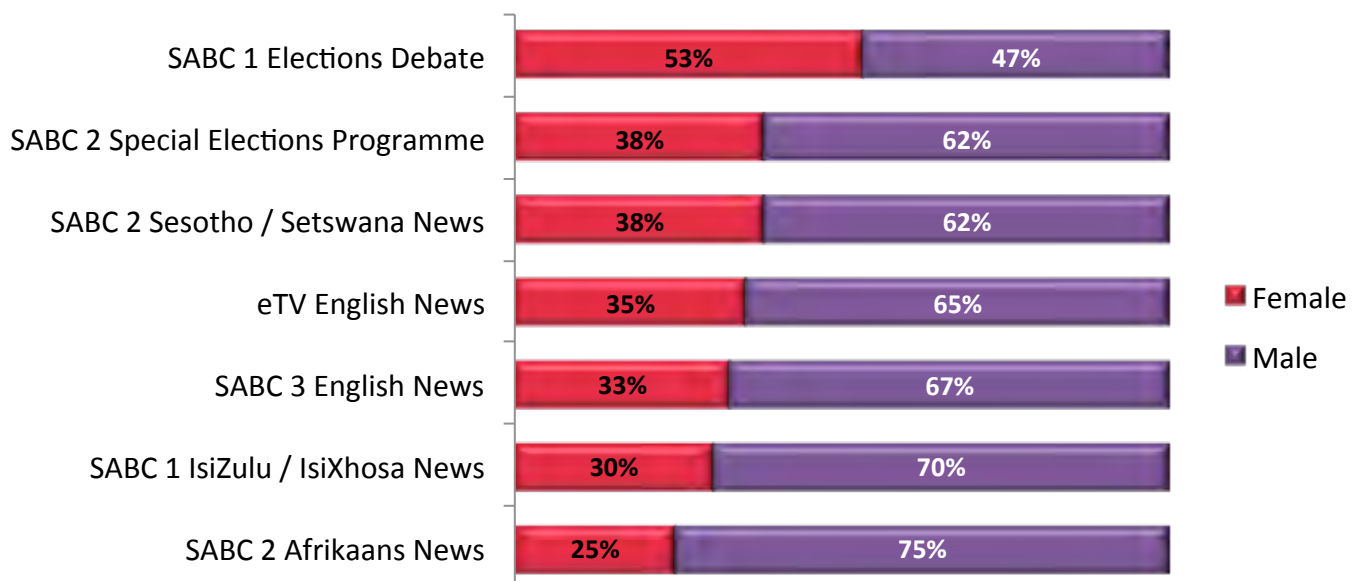


Figure 44: **Sex of sources** accessed on **television programmes**



Most television programmes performed above average in terms of sex of sources, with *SABC 1 Elections Debate* having more female than male sources. In fact, this is the only programme that reflected the country's sex demographics. The rest of the media failed to ensure a balance between the sexes, with *The Sunday Independent* having only 12 percent female sources. Advancing women participation in politics is one of the lofty ideals the media must pursue in their election coverage. The marginalisation of women in politics, like in other spheres of life, has been reinforced by negative beliefs and stereotypes rooted in culture, economy, religion, etc. Hence it is crucial that media refrain from coverage that reinforces the existing prejudices against women.

In other words, the media, therefore, have a role to play in ensuring that these prejudices are challenged in line with a democratic and human rights-based perception of women as equal partners in the political space, through giving women a voice among other things. In doing this, the media will be contributing to the country's achieving the targets set in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, to which South Africa is a signatory.

Clearly though, this does not mean to suggest that there should be a quota on sources, to ensure they are in line with reality. Rather we are suggesting a more inclusive approach that will give expression to the majority of people in the country. While there are many challenges in seeking alternative voices in the media, media can and should encourage women to speak, to ensure they offer diverse voices and help fulfil a basic ethical premise of giving voice to the voiceless. Not only will this ensure better, more diverse coverage, but this will also likely lead to more women consuming news.

4.3.3 Did the coverage reflect the country's race demographics?

According to Zulu, "politics in South Africa is structured mainly along racial lines, which inevitably entrenches ethnic and racial political perceptions and behaviour."⁸⁷ This pattern, he further argues, dates back to 1910 when the British granted the nation's independence and the Union of South Africa was formed. "Under the Union, only two White ethnic groups were eligible to vote, that is, the English and the Afrikaners, while the indigenous Black majority and the Coloured and Indian / Asian minorities became non-citizens."⁸⁸ Since then, "South African politics assumed two polarised positions – the politics of the insiders and that of the outsiders with those inside the political ring shutting gates against the persistent knockings from the outsiders."⁸⁹ He concludes that since the demise of Apartheid, a "perfect overlap between race, political control and material wellbeing has made South African politics distinctively ethnic and racial."⁹⁰

This shows that race is still an issue in South African society. As such, we sought to find out the race of sources the media accessed during these elections and whether the sourcing was in line with the country's race demographics. The Figure below reveals the race of sources accessed by all the media against the country's race demographics.

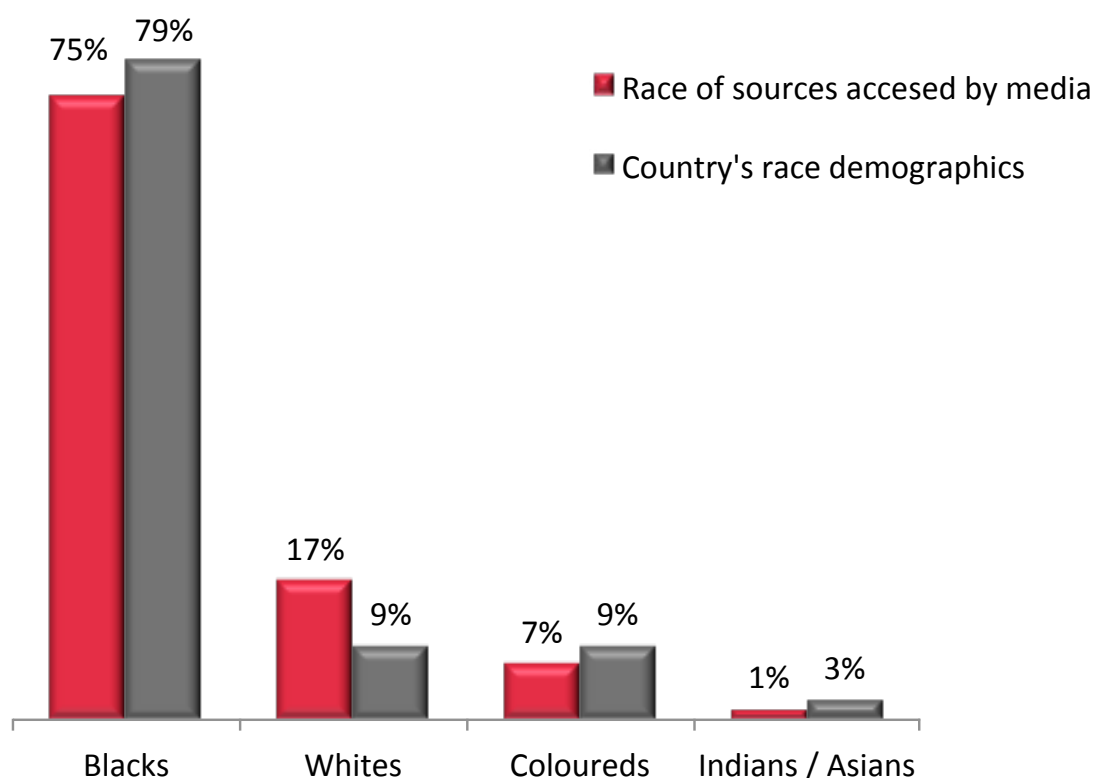
⁸⁷ Zulu (2012, p.84).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid, (p.85).

Figure 45: **Race of sources** accessed by **all media** against the **country's race demographics**



The country's race demographics in Figure 45 were drawn from Statistics South Africa's 2011 Mid-year population estimates.⁹¹ Indians and Asians were grouped together for analytical purposes only and in accordance with Statistics South Africa's categorisation. In addition, only five sources across all the media were of Asian descent so it only made sense to group Indians and Asians together, although they are different. Having said that, of the sources whose race could be clearly determined, the majority were Black – in line with the country's race demographics. In addition, the results show that, overall, White people were overrepresented as sources of information about elections, perhaps to the detriment of other groups such as Coloureds and Indians / Asians. The overrepresentation of White people is not limited to the media. It is a reflection of the power dynamics within South African society economically and socially. While Black people have benefited from economic transformation initiatives such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE),⁹² White people still control the country's economy for example. This means that intentionally or unintentionally, White people are highly likely to be accessed more by the media.

The challenge with accessing more White people is that elections coverage may be seen from their perspective because “while journalists construct stories around their own values and beliefs, they are informed by the contributions of a wide range of information sources who acquire the power to become ‘definers’ of reality.”⁹³ This is not to suggest that White people should not be accessed but that it seems reasonable that they are accessed more in line with the country's race demographics, and not to the detriment of other races. However, not all media overrepresented White people, some overrepresented Black people while others overrepresented Coloureds to the detriment of other races. The Figures (46, 47 and 48) below reveal the race of sources accessed by each media studied. Again, the results are presented according to type of media.

⁹¹ See Statistics South Africa Mid-year Population Estimates (2011, p.3).

⁹² For various reasons these economic initiatives benefited a few and made a few Black minority mega rich.

⁹³ McNair (1998, p.6).

Figure 46: **Race of sources** accessed by **print media**

Medium	Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians / Asians	Total
Business Day	81%	14%	5%	0%	100%
Cape Argus	53%	19%	26%	2%	100%
City Press	77%	13%	2%	8%	100%
Daily Dispatch	79%	17%	2%	1%	100%
Daily Sun	89%	10%	1%	0%	100%
Daily Voice	35%	11%	54%	0%	100%
Die Burger	58%	21%	19%	2%	100%
Free State Times	82%	17%	0%	1%	100%
Grocott's Mail	71%	22%	5%	1%	100%
Mail & Guardian	76%	17%	6%	2%	100%
Public Eye	88%	12%	0%	0%	100%
Saturday Dispatch	88%	11%	1%	0%	100%
Saturday Star	78%	22%	0%	0%	100%
Sowetan	83%	14%	2%	1%	100%
Sunday Sun	96%	4%	0%	0%	100%
Sunday Times	63%	26%	7%	4%	100%
Sunday World	95%	5%	0%	0%	100%
The Citizen	77%	19%	2%	2%	100%
The Herald	66%	19%	11%	4%	100%
The New Age	82%	11%	6%	2%	100%
The Star	80%	18%	2%	1%	100%
The Sunday Independent	82%	17%	1%	0%	100%
The Times	76%	21%	2%	1%	100%
Volksblad	68%	26%	6%	1%	100%
Weekend Argus	60%	23%	17%	1%	100%

Figure 47: **Race of sources** accessed on **radio services**

Medium	Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians / Asians	Total
Kaya FM	80%	15%	5%	0%	100%
Lesedi FM	73%	13%	14%	0%	100%
Ligwalagwala FM	89%	11%	0%	0%	100%
Metro FM	80%	17%	3%	1%	100%
Motsweding FM	82%	11%	5%	2%	100%
Phalaphala FM	74%	20%	6%	0%	100%
RSG	78%	19%	1%	2%	100%
SAfm	71%	15%	10%	5%	100%
Talk Radio 702	72%	15%	10%	2%	100%
Thobela FM	90%	8%	2%	0%	100%
Ukhozi FM	80%	16%	3%	2%	100%
Umhlobo Wenene FM	83%	15%	1%	1%	100%

Figure 48: **Race of sources** accessed on **television programmes**

Medium / Programme	Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians / Asians	Total
eTV English News	63%	15%	17%	4%	100%
SABC 1 Elections Debate	64%	26%	5%	5%	100%
SABC 1 IsiZulu / IsiXhosa News	79%	13%	7%	1%	100%
SABC 2 Afrikaans News	71%	27%	2%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Sesotho / Setswana News	81%	16%	3%	0%	100%
SABC 2 Special Elections Programme	69%	18%	10%	2%	100%
SABC 3 English News	73%	15%	9%	3%	100%

Clearly Black people were the most accessed. However, newspapers like *Cape Argus*, *Daily Voice*, *Die Burger*, *Sunday Times*, *Volksblad* and *Weekend Argus*, and television programmes like eTV English News, SABC 1 Elections Debate and SABC 2 Special Elections Programme underrepresented Black people. On the other hand, *Sunday Sun*, *Sunday World* and *Thobela FM* underrepresented White people. Interestingly, newspapers based in the Western Cape like *Cape Argus*, *Daily Voice*, *Die Burger* and *Weekend Argus* overrepresented Coloured people presumably because that is their target audience. It is to be expected that some media will target particular audiences/readers and possibly race(s). This is not necessarily a negative position, provided that as a whole, media, government and civil society ensure all people and communities are represented by a diversity of media and have access to a diversity of views and perspectives.

4.3.4 Where were children's issues and voices in the coverage?

During a social media seminar held during the run up to the elections, Media Monitoring Africa noted that although children do not vote, they should be on the elections agenda for the following reasons:

- Approximately 40 percent of the South African population are children;
- 2 in 3 children live below the poverty line;
- 1 in 3 children have no running water at home;
- 2 in 5 children don't have proper toilets;
- 1 in 5 children have no electricity at home;
- 1 in 3 teens travel long distances to school;
- 2 in 5 schools don't have adequate sanitation;
- 4 in 5 children only develop basic literacy by Grade 5; and,
- 3 in 5 schools have no libraries.⁹⁴

Media Monitoring Africa also suggested that, in order to keep children's issues on the elections agenda, journalists / media could ask politicians some of these questions:

- How much would you spend on children, for what and what difference will this make?
- Where will children appear in your development plan?
- What are your plans for safe supervised spaces for children to play?
- What do you have in mind for early childhood development?
- What are you going to do for the poorest children? Be specific!⁹⁵

94 See Media Monitoring Africa. (2011). *Children: An election issue? Piercing the promises: Election accountability pack*. Available from http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/images/uploads/Children_Pack_v6.pdf.

95 Ibid.

However, in terms of the media's coverage of the 2011 Municipal elections, only two stories were about children and / or children's issues, with virtually no children's voices being accessed on the elections.

This clearly shows that children's issues were marginalised in the media's coverage of elections. That children were broadly marginalised is not however surprising given that on an election period children only account for 12 percent of all news items.⁹⁶ Given that children be expected to vote in future, to ignore them can only discourage their interest and participation in future elections.

Further, given that the solutions to almost all of the challenges being faced require long-term plans and strategies, and given that children are the ones who will be most adversely affected by failures at the local level, it is crucial that children's issues are firmly addressed in media coverage of elections.

⁹⁶ See Media Monitoring Africa's latest report on the media's coverage of children, written by Poro & Banjac (2012), titled *Reporting on children: Is the coverage getting any better?*



5. Conclusion

In light of the findings presented in section 4, it is perhaps important to conclude by asking whether the coverage adequately equipped the electorate to cast informed votes. This is not to suggest that the electorate only vote on the basis of what they know from media or other sources. In some cases they vote on the basis of what they do not know and perhaps fear of the unknown. Therefore, such a question cannot be fully answered by looking at media coverage alone. It requires that we also engage the audience themselves to find out whether they feel that the media adequately informed them about the elections and the country's democratic system. Since this research was limited to analysing media content, we can only partially conclude that the media did not adequately inform the electorate as much as they could have done. This is because:

- Most coverage was given to bigger political parties, meaning that the electorate did not get to hear about other smaller parties and independent candidates and what they promised;
- The coverage was limited to bigger metropolitan areas, which means that the rural and peri-urban areas did not receive as much relevant information;
- 'Bread-and-butter' issues received less coverage while political party campaigns took centre stage;
- The minority of elections stories focused on local concerns despite these being local elections;
- Overall elections coverage was 18 percent of all news over the period despite the fact that free and fair elections are the pinnacle of our democracy;
- Despite having the space and perhaps the time to provide detailed and nuanced information about elections, some media performed below average in terms of depth of information;
- Politicians set the agenda for the elections thereby offering citizens only information they wanted to disseminate;
- Gender issues and women's voices were limited. This means that issues affecting more than half the country's population were neglected;

- White people were overrepresented as sources of information about elections to the detriment of other races; and,
- Children's issues and voices were virtually non-existent in the coverage despite the fact that children constitute approximately 40 percent of the country's population.

Although this research did not focus on the political economy of the South African media nor the conditions within which journalists covered the elections, it certainly opened up questions for further research. These include:

- How much coverage should political parties and independent candidates receive?
- Given that most media are based in bigger metropolitan areas, which areas should be covered and how much coverage should those areas get?
- Which topics are more important to cover during an election period and how can these be adequately covered?
- How much coverage should be given to elections especially given that other equally important issues will be happening at the same time?
- Should all media now focus on providing in-depth and nuanced information because with the advent of social media anyone can break news through Facebook or Twitter?
- Should politicians set the agenda for elections coverage? Are politicians more important than the citizens who give them the mandate to govern?
- How can 'bread-and-butter' issues, gender issues and women's voices be mainstreamed in the media's coverage of elections?
- Can specific media target specific audience of a particular race, age or sex who speak a particular language and ignore other races or ages in their elections coverage?

These are some of the questions that require further debate and research in order for the media to adequately perform their informative role during elections.

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