



Bi-Weekly Social Listening Updates & Recommendations for Electoral Engagement #3



Where is the Youth?

Overview

- The conversation received over 450,000 mentions between 12 and 29 February 2024. Among the biggest talking points were President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement of election day being 29 May; Various mentions from organisations and individuals encouraging people to register before the voters roll closed; and conversation related to controversy attached to statements made by the MK party and the EFF.
- The top two hashtags in the conversation during the research period were #VoteMK2024 with more than 30,000 mentions and #VoteEFF with around 20,000 mentions.
 - The MK party hashtag was predominantly driven by conversation related to the removal of Western Cape Judge President John Hlope. Andile Mngxitama, of Black First Land First, highlighted this removal as an attack on black professionals while Apartheid-era judges and ministers remained free.
 - Further MK content related to a [video](#) by Former President Jacob Zuma, in which he disparaged the South African Roman-Dutch legal system as an artefact of colonial-era rule.
 - #VoteEFF was predominantly related to the Gauteng launch of the party's election manifesto.
- There is a strong sentiment that South Africa's political progress is being 'delayed' by two groups; older people who continue to vote for the ANC and younger people who do not vote at all. Some individuals have expressed that blame should not be directed towards senior citizens, but young people who do not vote. Posts expressing variations of this sentiment have been observed to receive high engagement online. Examples can be found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).
- While the conversation is dominated by an anti-ANC sentiment, there is an appetite for information on what the other parties are bringing to the table. A high-traction post alerting users of [YohVote](#)¹, an app that matches individuals with a party that best suits them, received more than 300 comments, was reposted more than 3,000 times and liked by 3,000 accounts.
- In a paper analysing voter abstention in the 2021 local government elections, sentiments deemed "performance evaluations" came from users who had expressed that voting would not change anything and those who expressed being disappointed with service delivery². While the online conversation has aligned with the theoretical understanding behind these performance evaluators ([here](#) and [here](#)), a spin to these evaluators has also been noted whereby issues like loadshedding and poor service delivery are being used as motivating factors to mobilise voters: (1) ; (2) ; (3).

Media Landscape & Polarisation

¹For more on the team behind the app, see:

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-10-08-yoh-vote-can-help-you-find-the-political-love-of-your-life/>

²

<https://www.kas.de/en/web/suedafrika/single-title/-/content/analysing-voter-abstention-in-the-2021-local-government-elections>

- The CABC has noted attacks on media houses, focused on News24 and the Daily Maverick.
 - Karyn Maughan, a senior legal journalist at News24, was targeted in a series of posts from the official IOL X account. These posts sought to draw parallels between [Nazi](#) and [Apartheid](#) propaganda and Maughan's work at News24;
 - [Unverified emails](#) and claims of [deleted posts](#) alleged that Koos Bekker, and Naspers by extension, were plotting alongside senior DA and VF+ officials conspiratorially to action cape independence should the ANC garner a majority in the upcoming elections.
 - Stephen Grootes and the Daily Maverick have been accused of being funded by the [CIA](#) - a revival of a 2022 narrative initially started by IOL³. This later resulted in the exposure of a non-existent IOL journalist 'Jamie Roz'⁴.
 - These posts in sum garnered nearly 500,000 views.
- We recommend continued monitoring of attacks and the spread of mis/disinformation targeting media houses. Attacks on journalists, especially female journalists, have been flagged by SANEF and Media Monitoring Africa as a top-level risk ahead of the elections. Claims of collusion and attacks on the independence of free press may form part of a strategy to sow discontent and the seeds of doubt in future reporting on electoral outcomes. This in turn provides fertile ground for accusations targeted at electoral integrity and the facilitation of disputing election results.

Disillusionment

- We noted strong criticism directed at the youth, who are accused of waiting to be told by influencers to register to vote. Some individuals questioned whether youth, in particular, would also rely on influencers to tell them which party to vote for. This came after beauty influencer Khethokuhle Ngonyama, who popularly goes by 'Kay Yarms' used her Instagram platform to encourage her followers to register to vote. Examples of these can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Others shared that registering to vote did not mean that the youth would turn out to voting stations on election day. Questions arose on whether the presence of influencers at voting stations would motivate the youth to show up.
- We previously recommended partnerships between influencers and organisations to encourage individuals, particularly the youth, to vote. Despite registrations being closed, we continue to recommend this collaboration, with the messaging now focused on encouraging people to be physically present to cast their ballot at voting stations on 29 May.

Political alignment

- Posts discouraging the public from voting for the ANC continue to receive high engagement online. Examples of these can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Fuelling this sentiment are complaints about corruption, unemployment, misuse of state resources and loadshedding, among others. Similarly, posts from individuals expressing support for the ANC continue to be criticised and/or attacked online.
- The CABC has noted the proliferation of tools and guides designed to collate information about our democratic processes and assist individuals with identifying political parties that align with their interests. These are valuable channels for individuals who are unsure of which party to vote for. We have listed

³ <https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/analysis/the-battle-for-truth-84671cad-7ecc-4808-bf89-4716684611a1>

⁴ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-09-06-fake-news-fake-publication-next-level-iqbal-surves-iol-makes-up-a-journalist-to-further-attack-truth/>

these tools in no particular order [FuturElect](#)⁵; [Manifesto Meter by Media24](#); [Thoko the Bot by Rivonia Circle](#); [Political Party Manifestos by People's Assembly](#); [Code4Africa's Guidelines to Spotting Electoral Disinformation](#); My Vote Counts Work on Political Party Funding and Legislation (1), (2); and the [Elections Timetable from the Parliamentary Monitoring Group](#)

Mis/Disinformation and Unsubstantiated Allegations

- The CABC has noted attacks against the independence of the IEC from [anonymous accounts](#) based on the MK party not appearing on a [supposed leaked ballot](#). These unfounded allegations are concerning as they conflate the ANC's trademark case against the MK party⁶, with IEC processes and undermine the independence of the IEC.
 - Falling outside our date range - we have further noted incitement to violence on the basis of these claims by members of the [MK party](#), which have since been responded to by the [IEC](#).
- The IEC has been accused of collusion with the ANC through imagery and reference to the ANC-affiliated trade union SADTU as the main recruitment point for electoral officials. These accusations have stemmed from member of parliament, [General Bantu Holomisa](#), as well as general [accounts](#) on X. The IEC has responded to a few of these claims.
 - Furthermore, a post alleged that the IEC had visited the [Zimbabwean electoral commission](#). The account asserts that this was part and parcel of an attempt to capture the elections. The IEC has responded to refute this rumour.
- Continued attacks on the IEC are concerning, however, we are encouraged by the commission's swift response to allegations made against it. We recommend Futurelect, as well as other organisations, to amplify the IEC's responses to online attacks on their various social media platforms, to ensure that it reaches as many individuals as possible. Messaging that amplifies IEC responses to attacks also needs to emphasise the commission's independence and commitment to run free and fair elections in May.

Refinement, Recommendations & Watch List Summary

- The CABC has expanded the list of political party names being tracked
- We recommend and reiterate the need for civil society organisations to work in partnership with one another in the lead-up to the elections, across a wide variety of domains:
 - In amplifying IEC responses to instances of mis and disinformation regarding the commission.
 - In amplifying the variety of tools produced by civil society and media organisations to ensure free and fair information can reach voters.
 - In ideation around the role of civil society and celebrity influencers in disseminating information which encourages the youth to go out and vote.

⁵ Futurelect launches Civic Education Learning Platform. Empower yourself with the knowledge to engage government, and have your say in how decisions get made and democracy happens. Available now on Apple, Google and Huawei app stores. <https://futurelect.org/download-the-futurelect-app/>

⁶ <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/ncs-legal-bid-over-the-umkhonte-we-sizwe-trademark/>

Figures and Tables

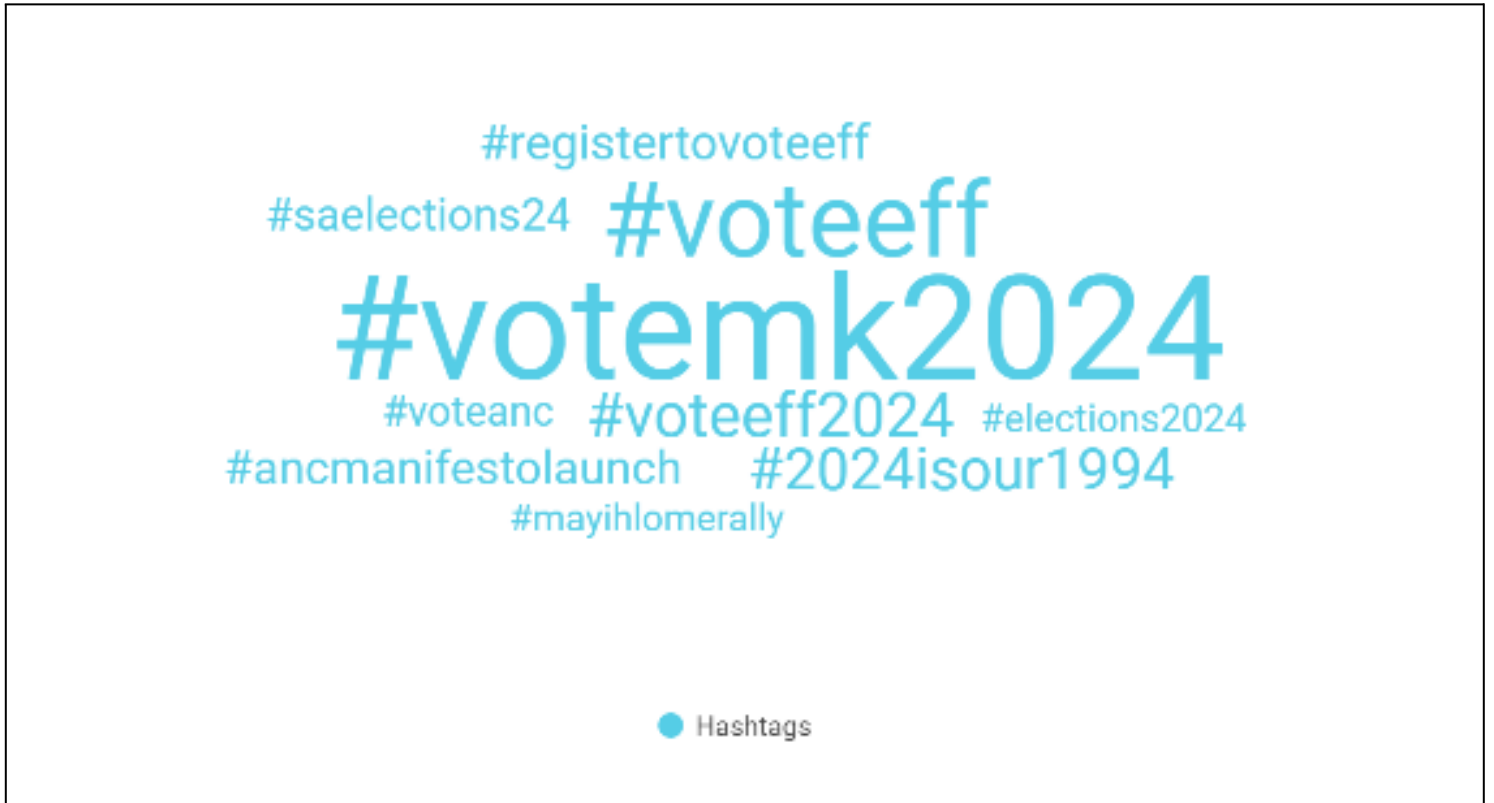


Figure 1: Top 10 hashtags within the elections conversation between 12 and 29 February 2024

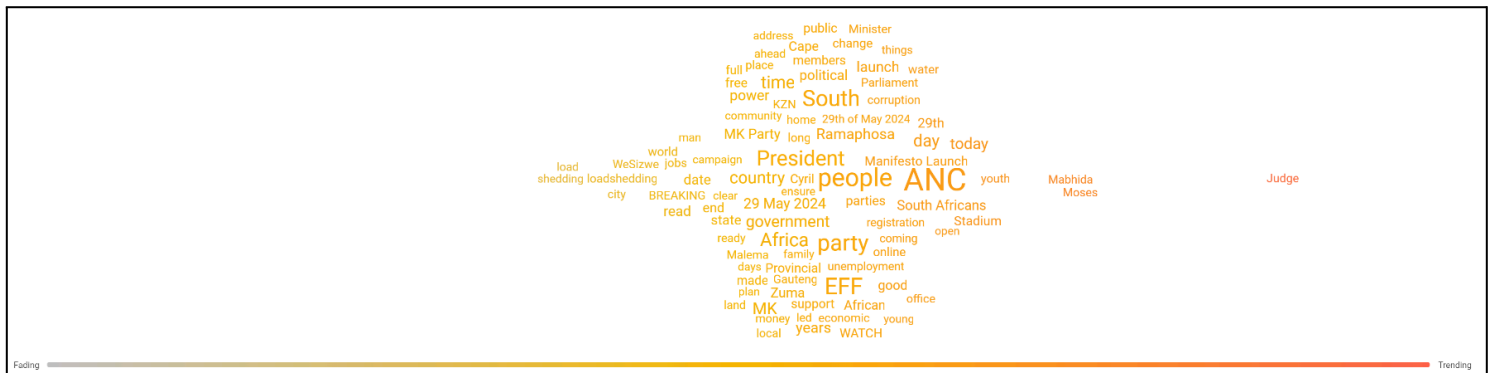


Figure 2: A trend graph which charts high-volume topics which were popular at the beginning of the period (fading) and closer to the end of the reporting period (trending)

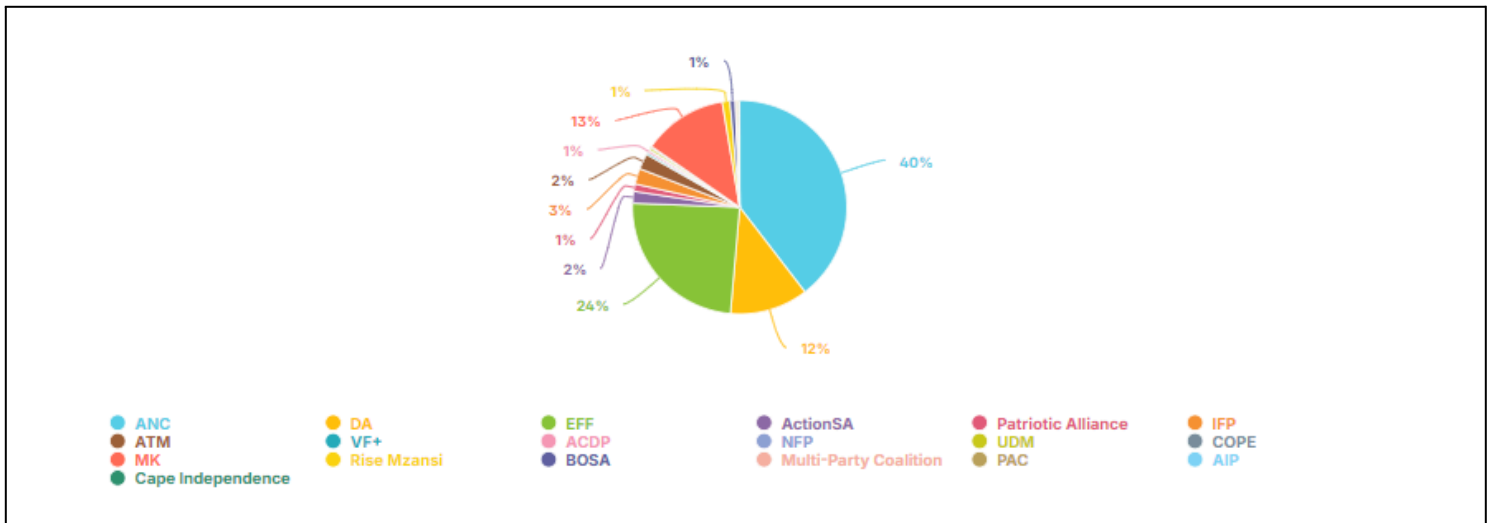


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of mentions containing political party names from 12 February 2024 to 29 February 2024 (211,915 mentions - 40% of the conversation).