ELECTIONS IN A TIME OF TUMULT
KEY FINDINGS
PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

By William Bird

Director - Media Monitoring Africa

22/03/2022

About Media Monitoring Africa (MMA)

- We are an NGO that has been monitoring the media since 1993.
- We aim to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent.
- Through a human rights-based approach, MMA seeks to address media ethics, media quality and media freedom.
- In the last 29 years, we have conducted over 200 different media monitoring projects – all relating to key human rights issues, and media quality.
- Monitored media coverage of every elections since 1994
- Partnered with IEC in 2019 and 2021 on combatting disinformation
- MMA has, and continues to challenge media on different issues promote human rights and democracy through the media.
- We are one of the few civil society organisations that has consistently sought to deepen democracy and hold media accountable through engagement in human rights issues, policy and law-making processes.

MEDIAMONITORING
AFRICA

Presentation structure

- **Monitoring methodology**
- **Findings**
  - Quantity of coverage
  - Topics
  - Affiliations of sources
  - Political party coverage
  - Racial representation of sources
  - Gender representation of sources
  - Provincial coverage
  - Bias in coverage
  - Media performance

  - **Conclusion, recommendations and discussion**

MEDIAMONITORING**AFRICA**

Framing question
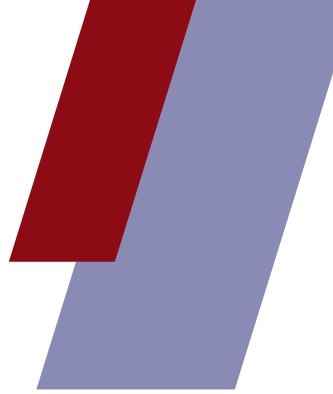
- **What does the electorate know and what do they need to know?**

Why and what we monitored in 2021

- MMA monitors the media to offer an independent, data driven perspective on media coverage.

- MMA monitored media's coverage of 2021 local government elections just as we have done for every local and national election since 1994. We have also monitored international elections

- Monitoring hoped to answer the following;
  - On what did the media focus in their coverage?
  - Who had the loudest voice (citizens, women, politicians?
  - Was coverage fair or biased?
  - How were local issues covered?

MEDIAMONITORING
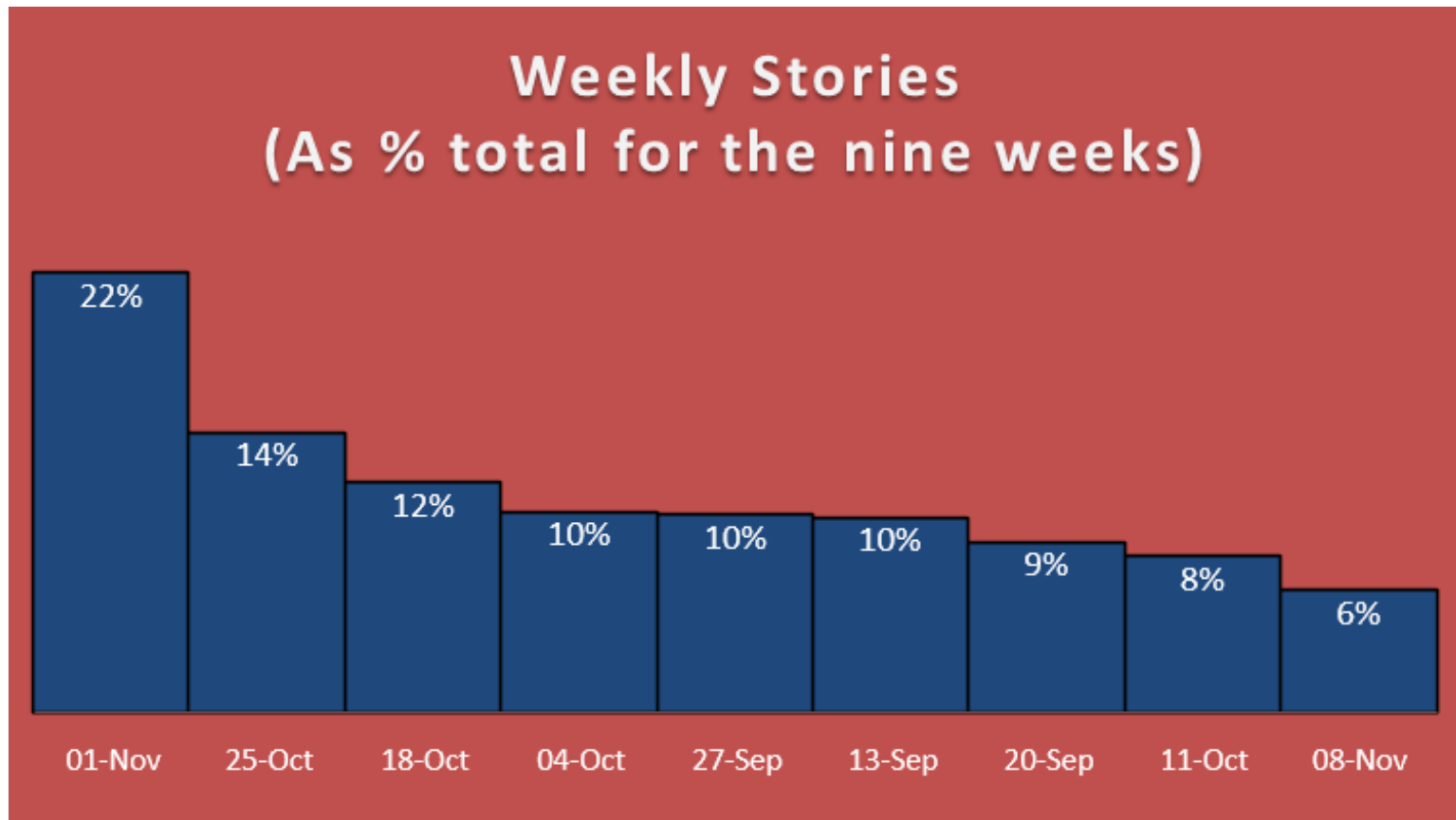**AFRICA**

How we monitored

- Two separate reports were done – SABC News report, News Media report

- The SABC was monitored separately because as a public broadcaster, we needed to determine whether it was fulfilling its mandate to report and also, whether it was reporting the elections equitably and fairly in line with its editorial policies.

- We analysed all news media content on or related to the 2021 local government elections published between 13th of September, 2021 and 13th November, 2021 from selected 39 South African print, online and broadcast media. 10 SABC channels were monitored.

- Content analysed included items that spoke about the 2021 local government elections or elections in general, linked issues such as crime, corruption, unemployment etc to elections and those that were about political parties and candidates.

How we monitored continued

- An in-house monitoring tool called Dexter was used to scrape the websites and collect the content which was stored in a database for analysis. Items from broadcast media were manually inputted into Dexter.

- Dexter uses machine learning to extract important information and this was supplemented by human analysis to include aspects such as topics and groups including political parties and people who spoke in this content. In addition, race and gender dynamics of these sources were monitored.

- **62-day monitoring period, a total of 3, 748 items** were collected and analysed (1, 016 from SABC and 2, 732 from all other media)

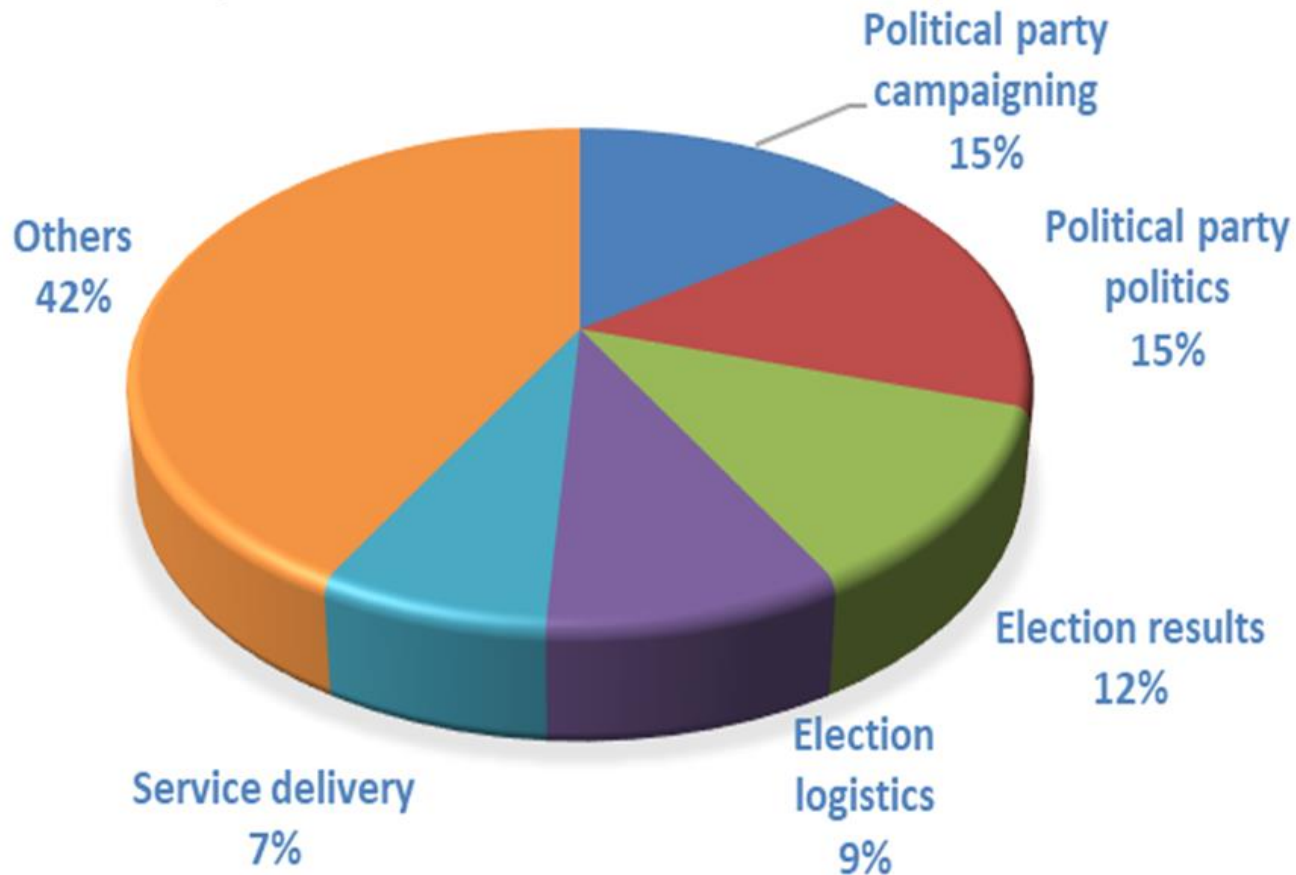# When did the election receive most coverage?

News Media

Weekly Stories
(As % total for the nine weeks)

Date	%
01-Nov	22%
25-Oct	14%
18-Oct	12%
04-Oct	10%
27-Sep	10%
13-Sep	10%
20-Sep	9%
11-Oct	8%
08-Nov	6%

MEDIAMONITORING AFRICA

What were the stories about?

What were the stories about?

SABC News

Top 10 Topics

- Political party campaigning (only when no...): 23%
- Political party manifesto outlines / analyses: 12%
- Election results: 11%
- Political party politics (internal &/or external): 10%
- Service delivery: 8%
- Voter education & registration: 7%
- Election logistics: 6%
- Political party coalitions & co-operation: 5%
- Political violence & intimidation: 4%
- Corruption (govt, political party, private sector): 3%
- Other topics: 11%

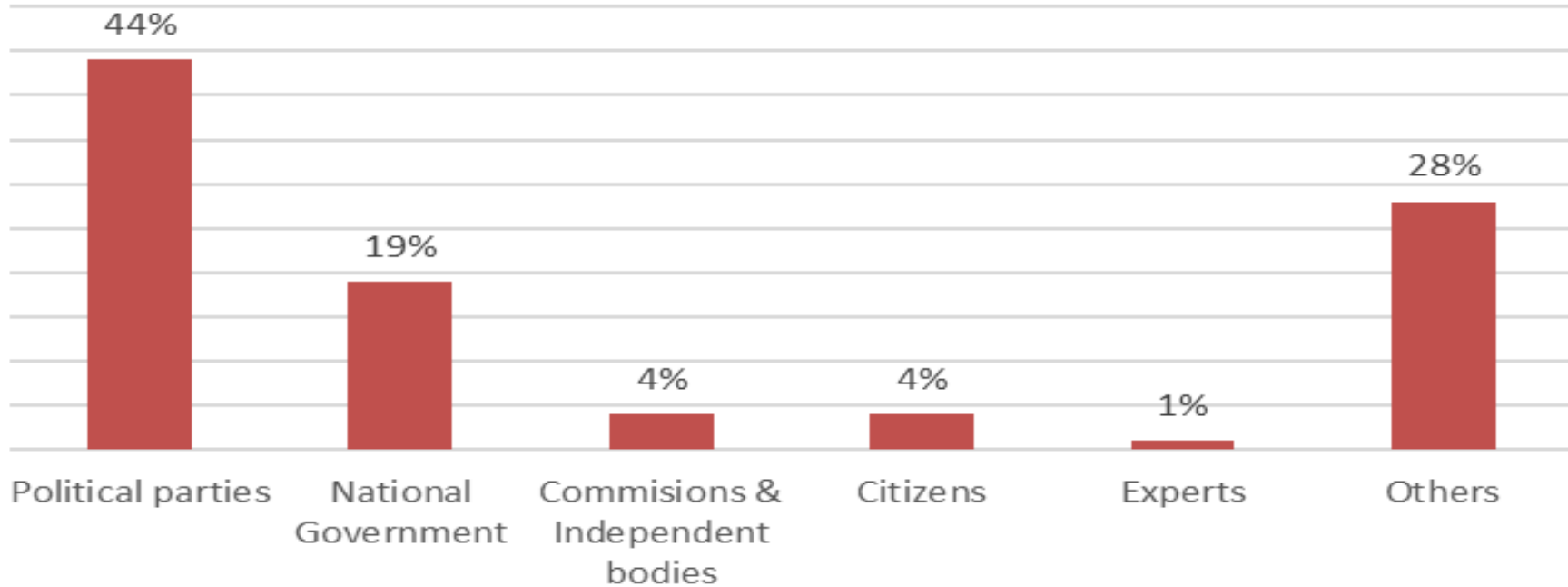# Which groups were accessed?
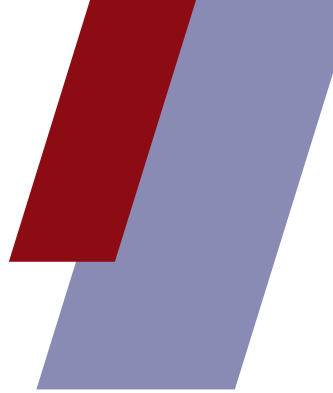
News Media

Affiliations of sources
(Top 5 which is 72% of all coverage)

- Political parties: 44%
- National Government: 19%
- Commisions & Independent bodies: 4%
- Citizens: 4%
- Experts: 1%
- Others: 28%

MEDIAMONITORING AFRICA

Which groups were accessed?

SABC News

Affiliations of sources

Group	Percentage
Political Parties	62%
Governments official	9%
Citizens	5%
Corporations	5%
Commisions/Independent Bodies	3%
Foreign Government	3%
Academics/Experts	2%
International NGO	2%
Business Leaders	1%
Professionals	1%
Others	7%

MEDIAMONITORING **AFRICA**
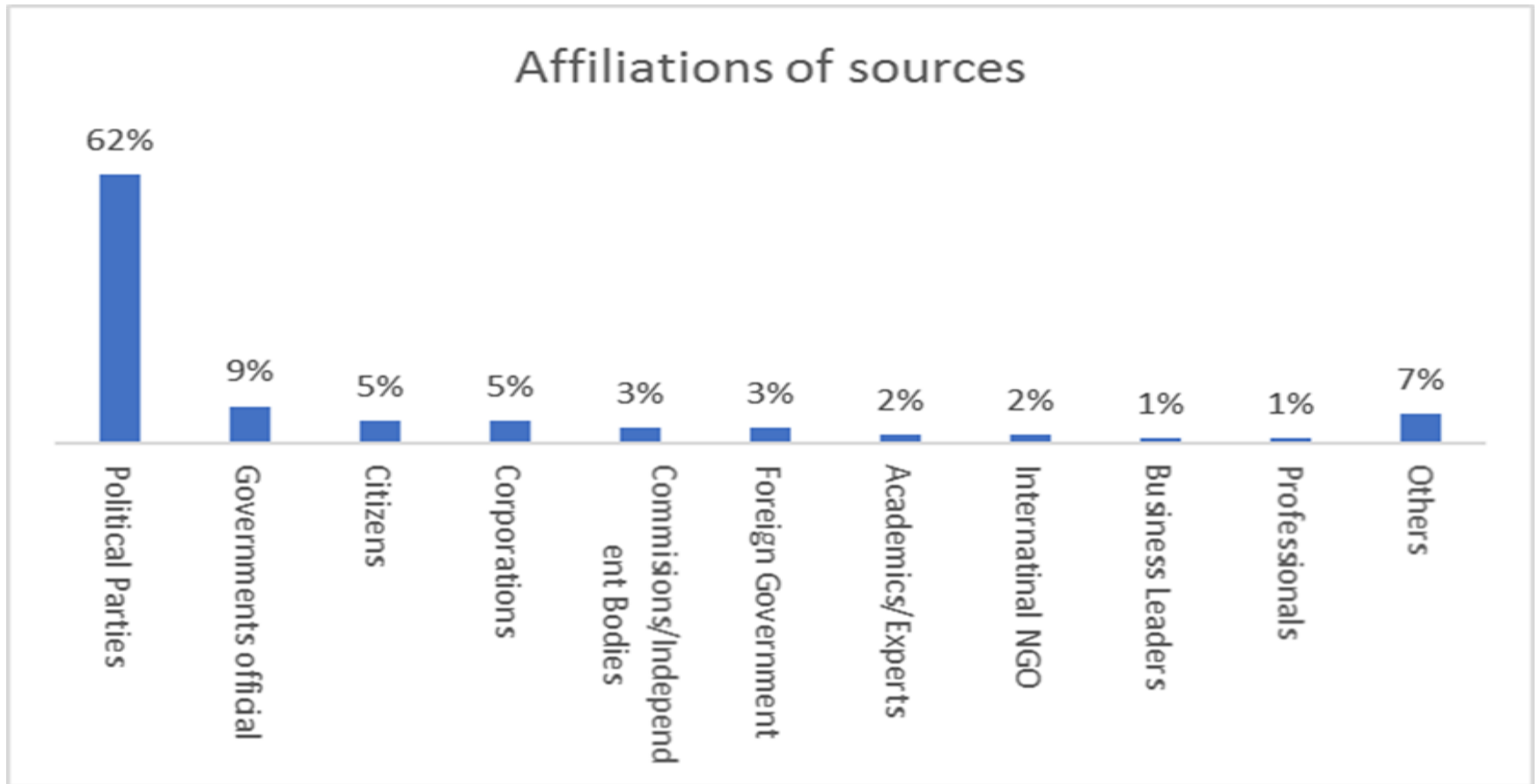
How did political parties fare?

News Media

PERCENTAGE COVERAGE OF TOP 10
POLITICAL PARTIES AGAINST VOTES
RECEIVED

■ Media coverage   ■ Votes received

Party	Media coverage	Votes received
ANC	41%	45.60%
DA	24%	21.66%
EFF	11%	10.31%
ACTIONSA	8%	2.34%
IFP	6%	5.64%
GOOD	3%	
PARTY/FF+	2%	2.34%
NFP	1%	0.50%
PA	1%	0.97%
ATM	1%	0.57%
OTHERS	3%	
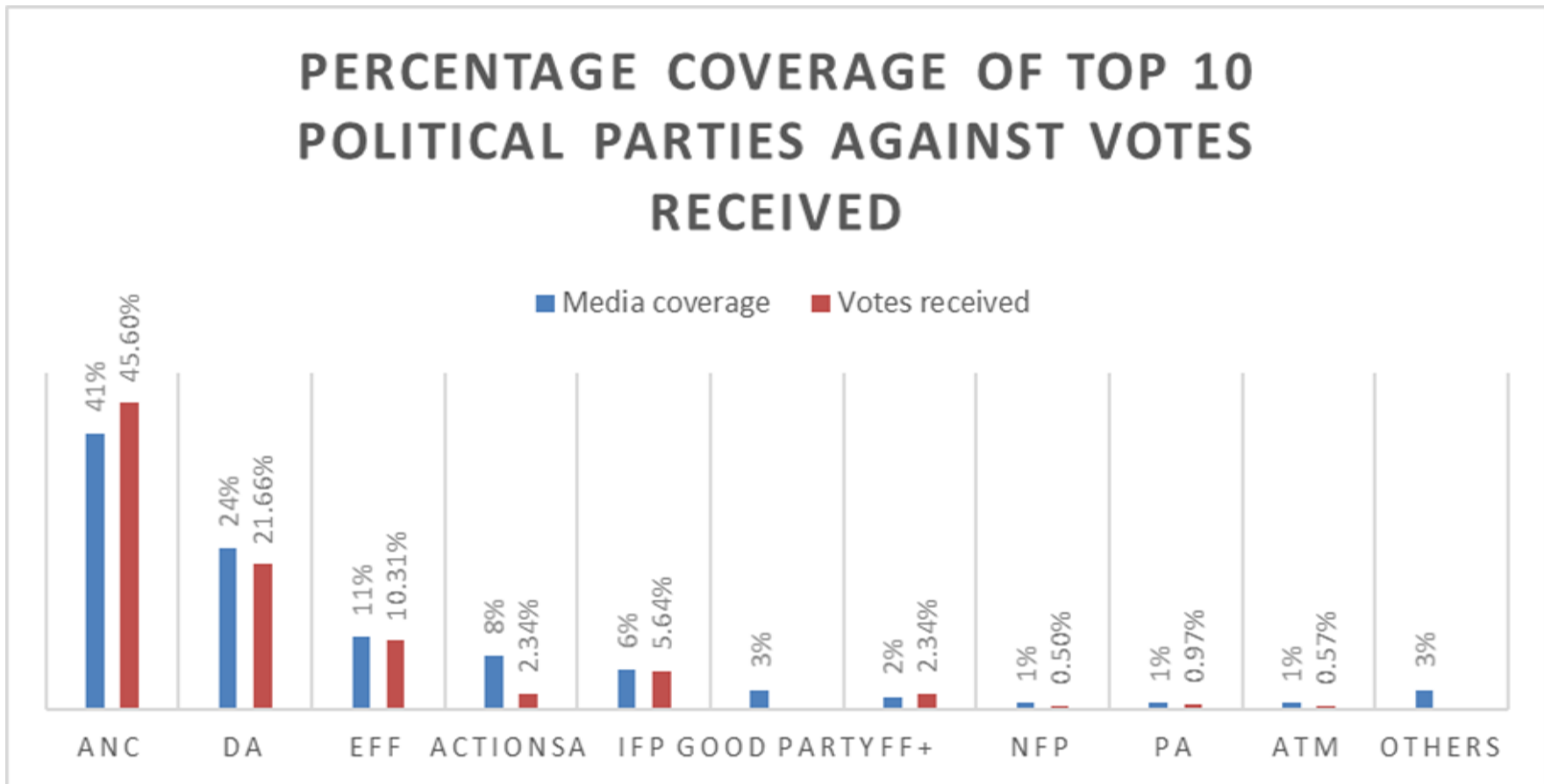
How did political parties fare?

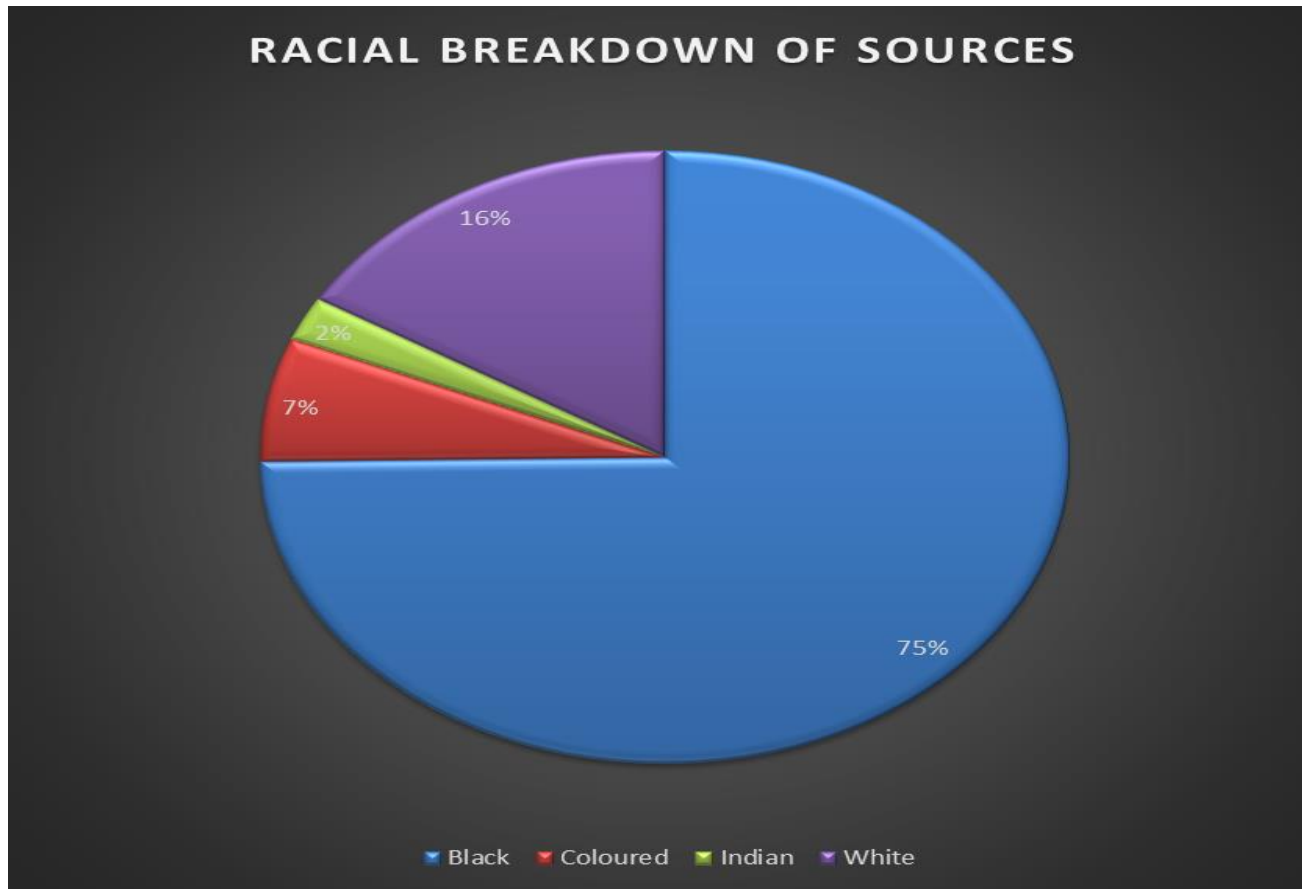## SABC News
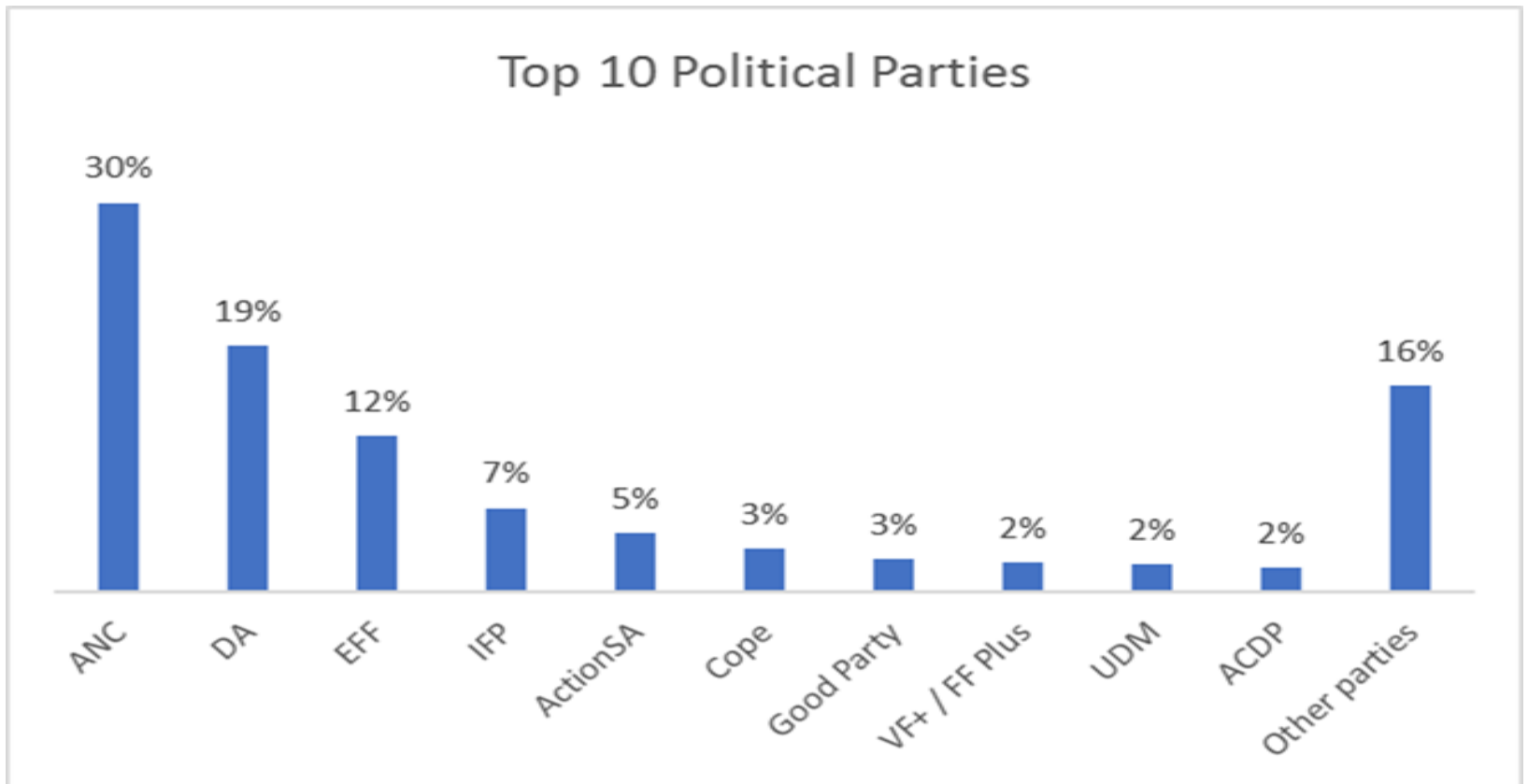
What was the racial breakdown of sources?

News Media
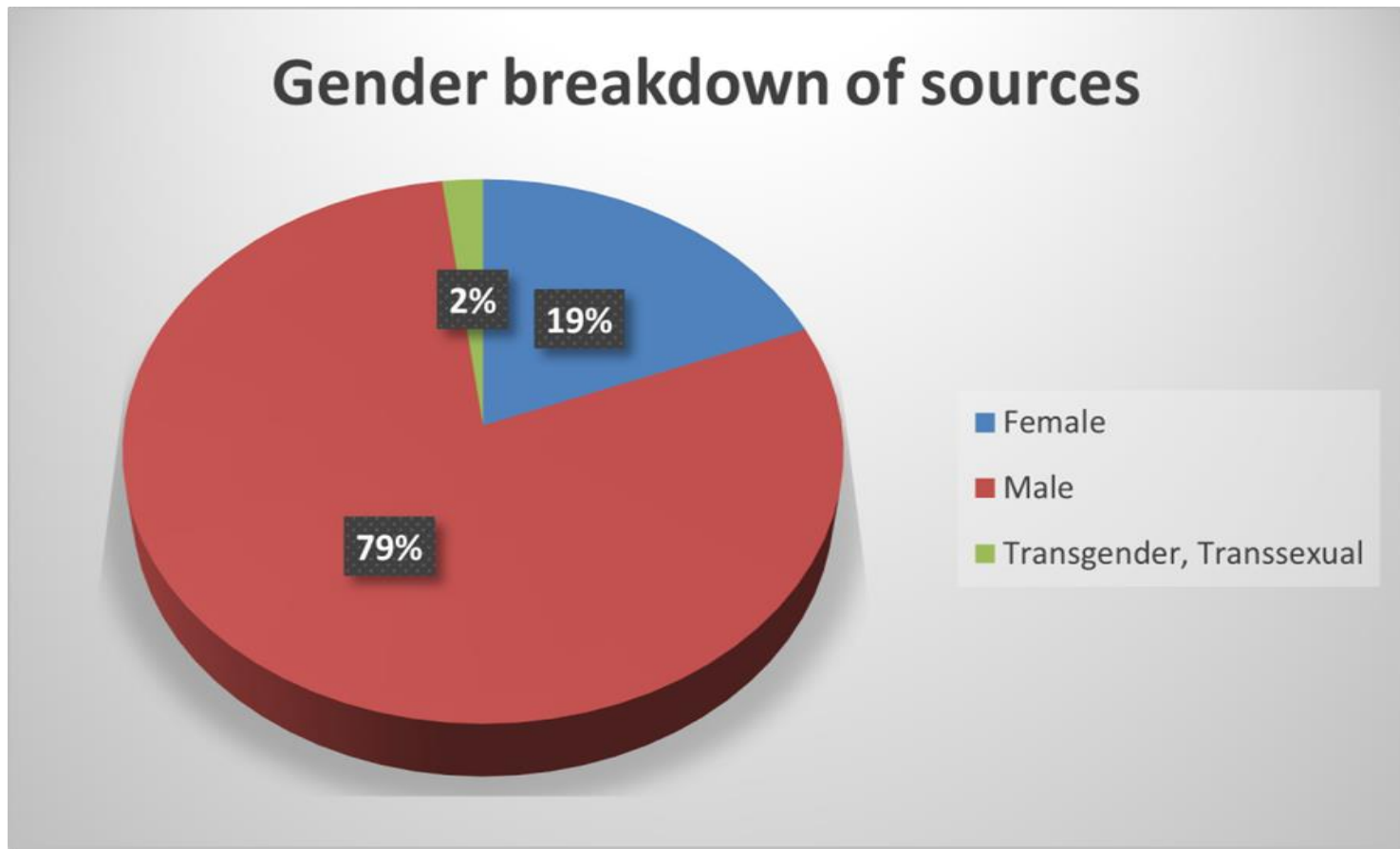
What was the racial breakdown of sources?

SABC News

Race Coverage

- 82% Black
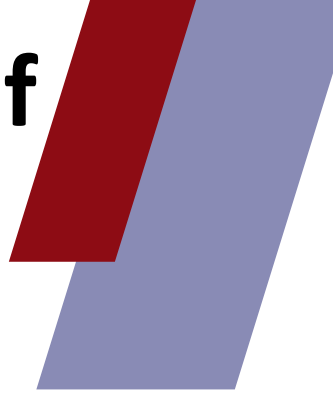- 5% Coloured
- 2% Indian
- 11% White

MEDIAMONITORING AFRICA

What was the gender breakdown of sources?

News Media

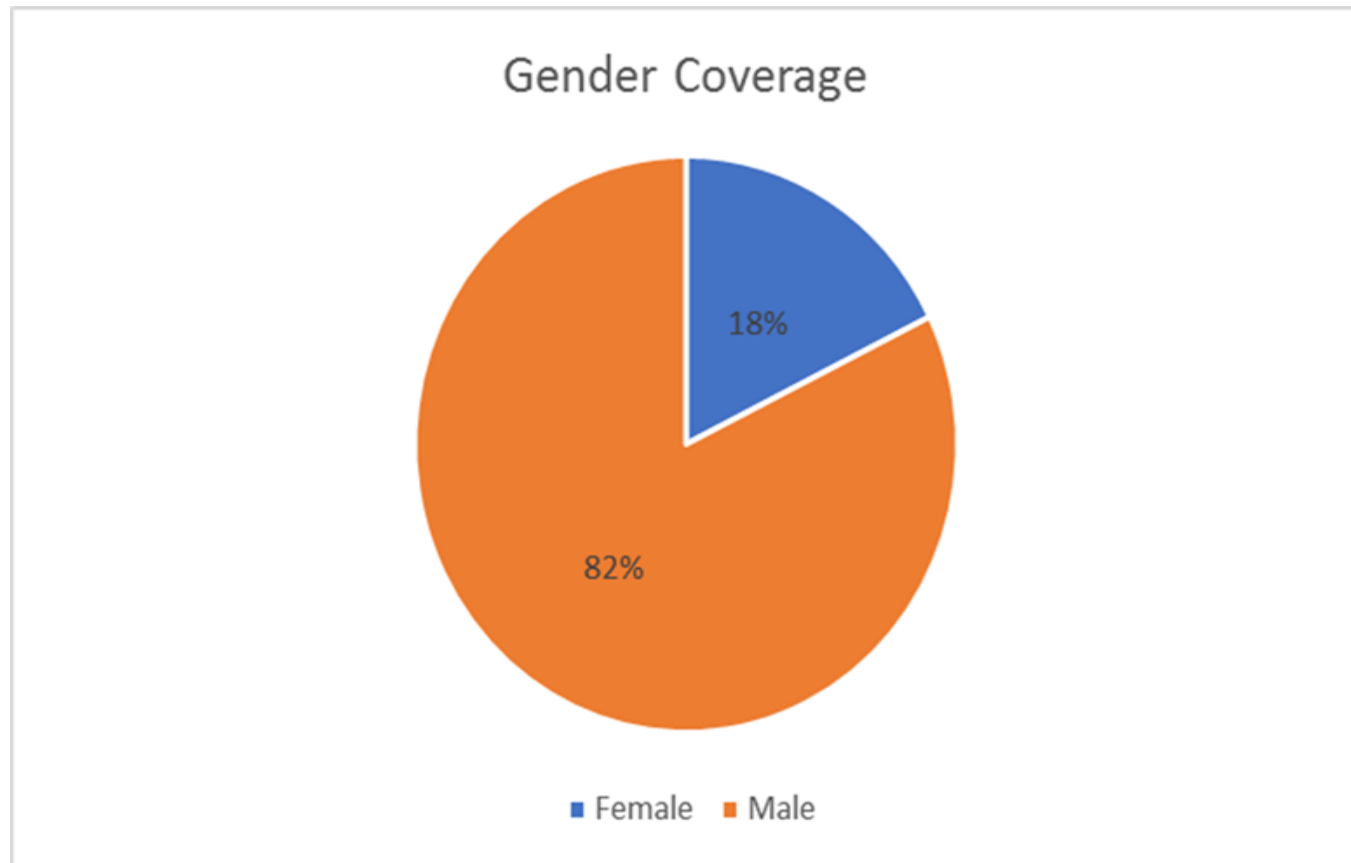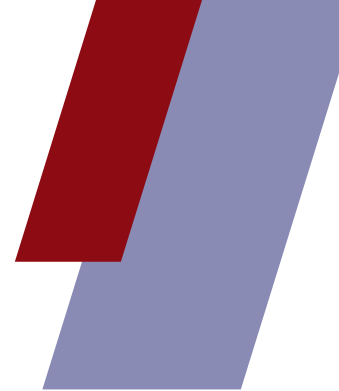Gender breakdown of sources

- Female — 19%
- Male — 79%
- Transgender, Transsexual — 2%

What was the gender breakdown of sources?
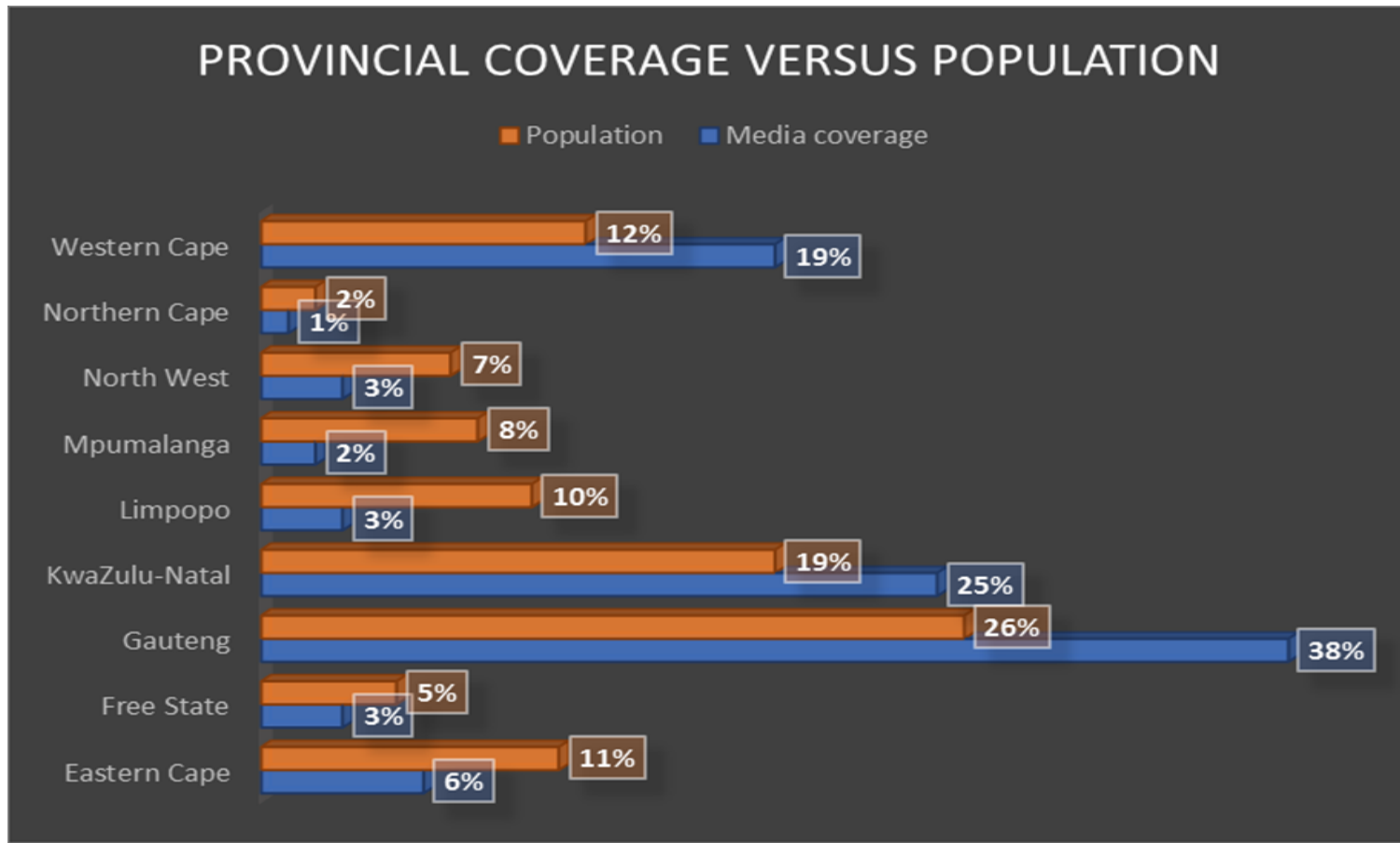
SABC News

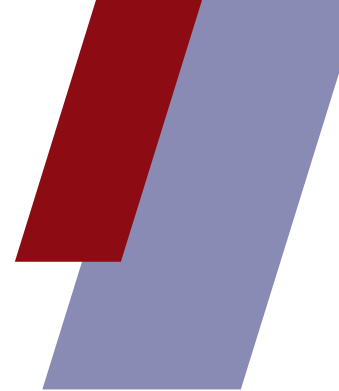
Gender Coverage

- 18% Female
- 82% Male

Was election coverage regionally representative?

News Media

PROVINCIAL COVERAGE VERSUS POPULATION

■ Population ■ Media coverage

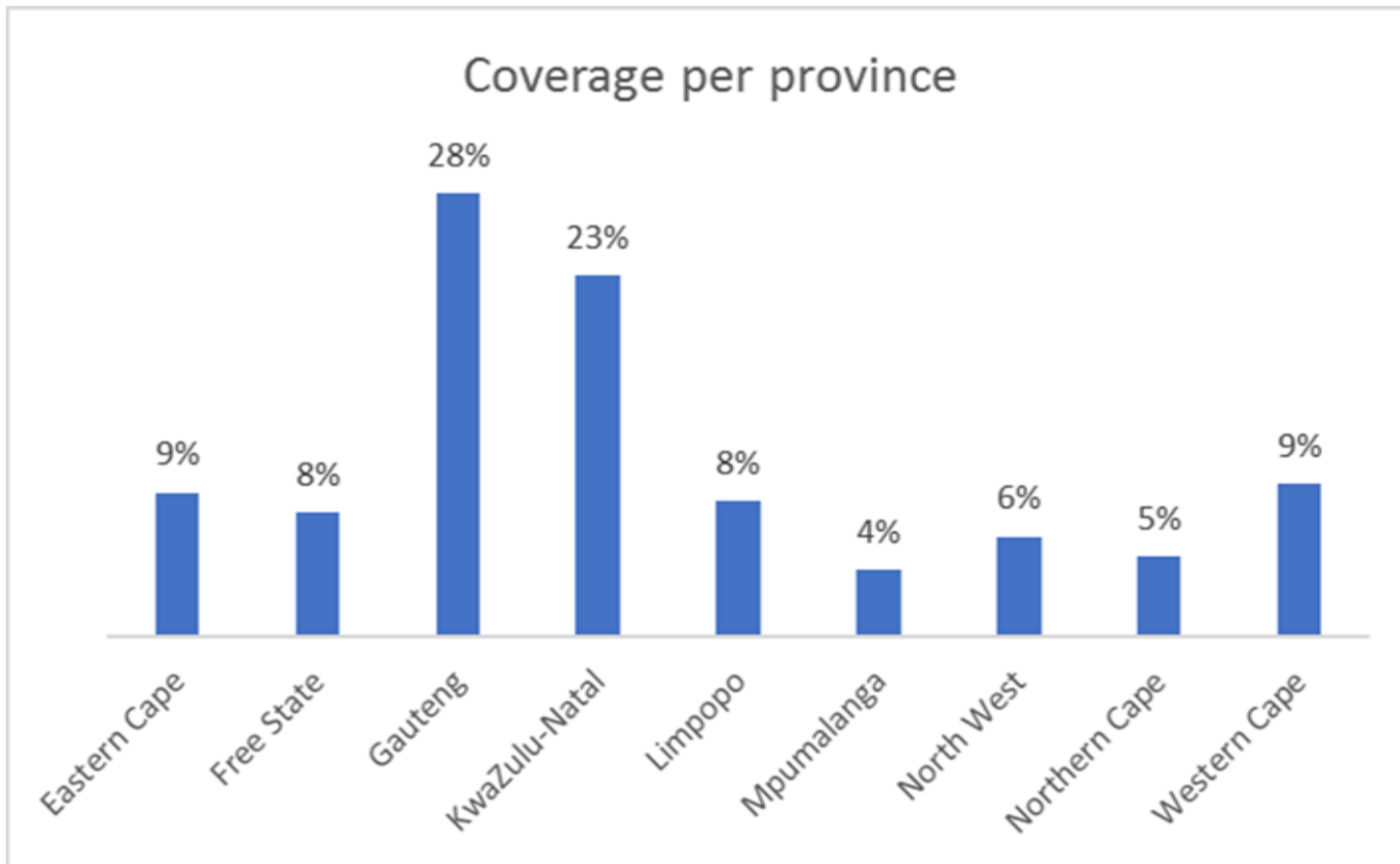| Province	Population	Media coverage
Western Cape	12%	19%
Northern Cape	2%	1%
North West	7%	3%
Mpumalanga	8%	2%
Limpopo	10%	3%
KwaZulu-Natal	19%	25%
Gauteng	26%	38%
Free State	5%	3%
Eastern Cape	11%	6%

MEDIAMONITORING**AFRICA**

Was election coverage regionally representative?

SABC News

Coverage per province

- Eastern Cape: 9%
- Free State: 8%
- Gauteng: 28%
- KwaZulu-Natal: 23%
- Limpopo: 8%
- Mpumalanga: 4%
- North West: 6%
- Northern Cape: 5%
- Western Cape: 9%

MEDIAMONITORING **AFRICA**

How fair was media coverage?

News Media

PERCENTAGE OF COVERAGE THAT WAS FAIR VERSUS BIASED

4%

96%

Fair   Bias

MEDIAMONITORING AFRICA
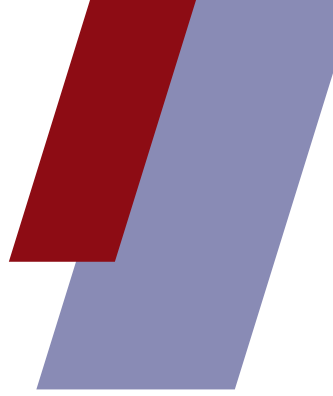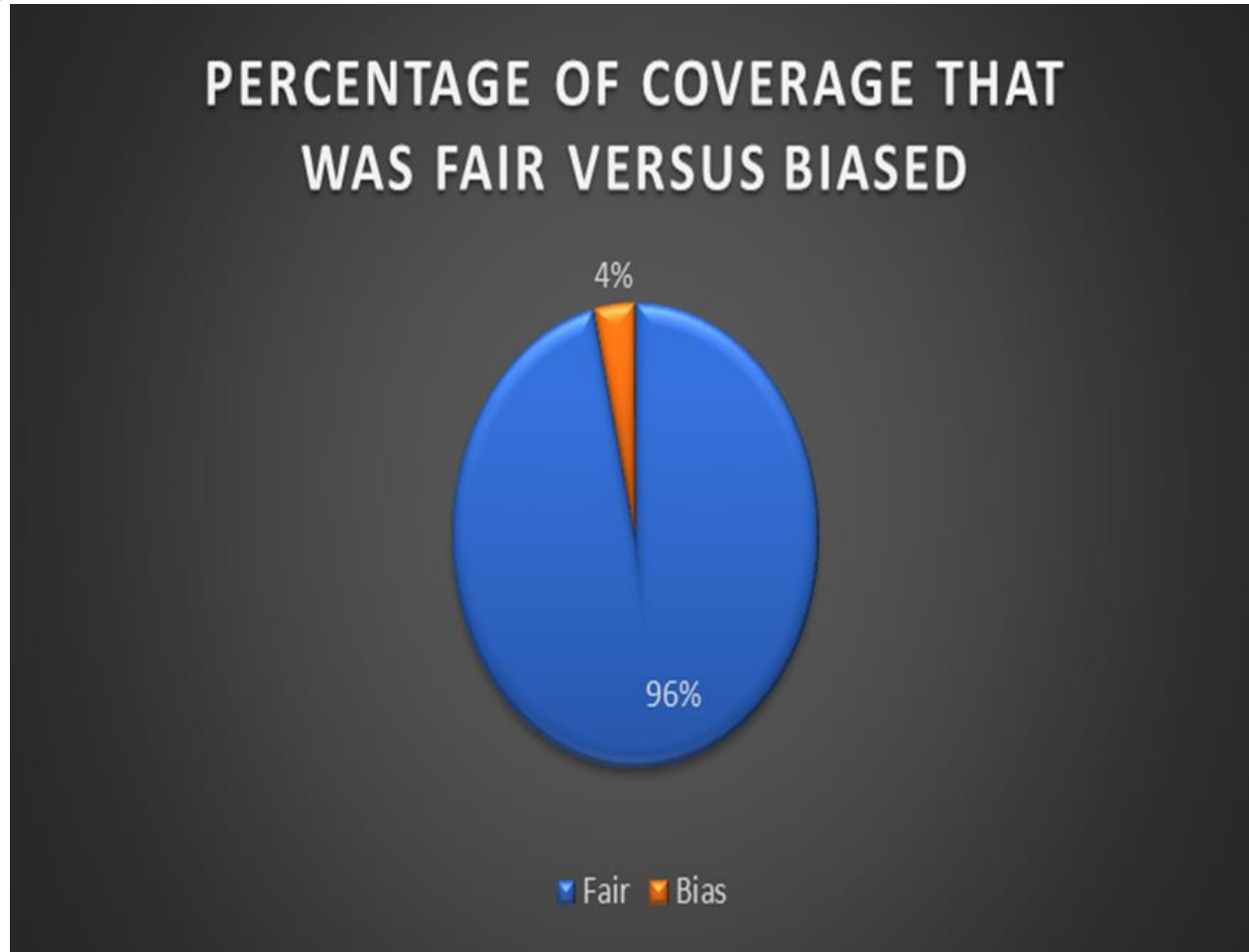
How fair was media coverage?

SABC News

Fairness of Coverage

- 3%
- 97%
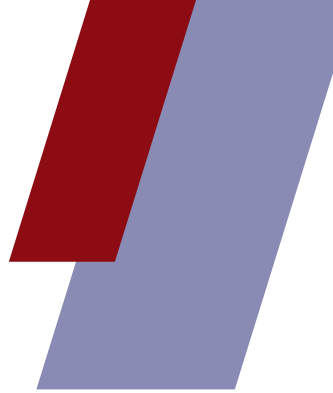
■ Fairness ■ Bias
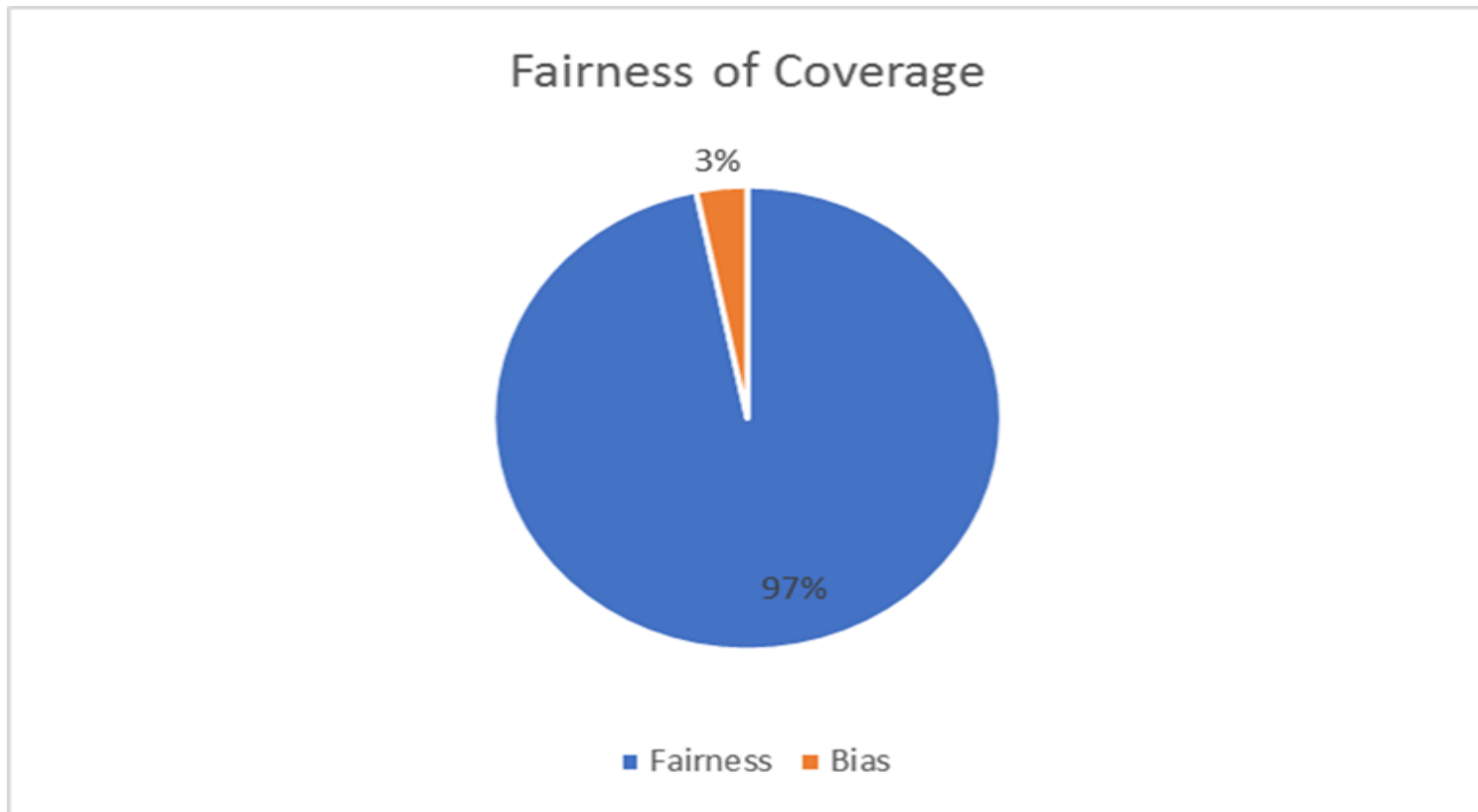
How much election coverage did different media outlets produce?

News Media

Coverage by different News Media (media with 3% coverage and above)

Media Outlet	Coverage
Eyewitness News	12%
News24	11%
IOL	11%
The Citizen	8%
Daily Maverick	6%
Daily Dispatch	6%
Daily Sun	6%
Saturday Star	5%
Sowetan	5%
The Times	5%
eNCA TV News	4%
Power fm	4%
Isolezwe	3%

MEDIAMONITORING**AFRICA**
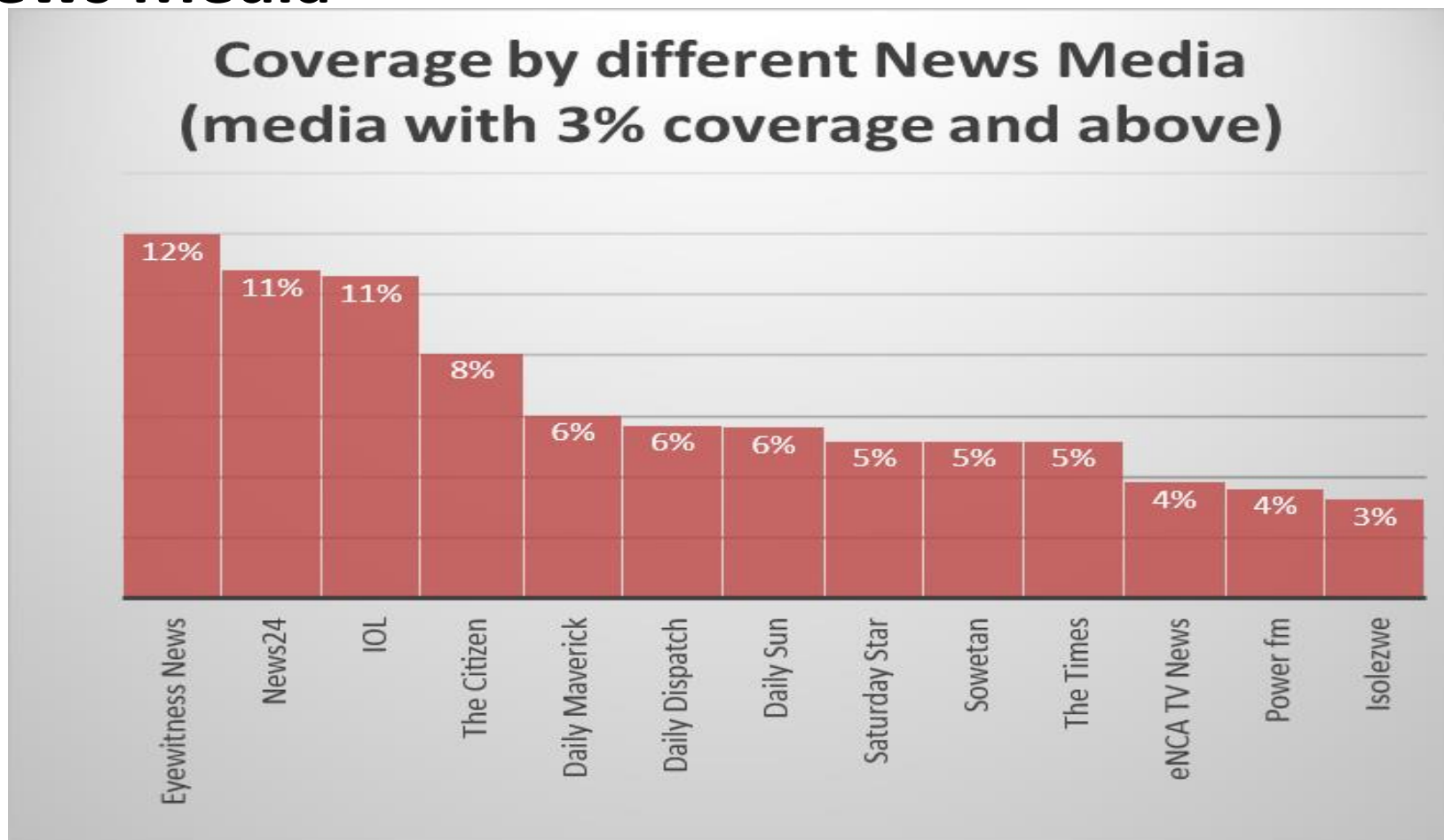
How much election coverage did different media outlets produce?

SABC News

SABC Coverage

- SABC 2 Setswana News: 3%
- SAfm: 4%
- SABC 2 Morning Live: 6%
- SABC 1 Isizulu News: 7%
- Munghana Lonene fm: 7%
- Motsweding fm: 9%
- Phalaphala fm: 10%
- Ukhozi fm: 11%
- SABC 3 English News: 11%
- SABC Online News: 32%

MEDIAMONITORING AFRICA
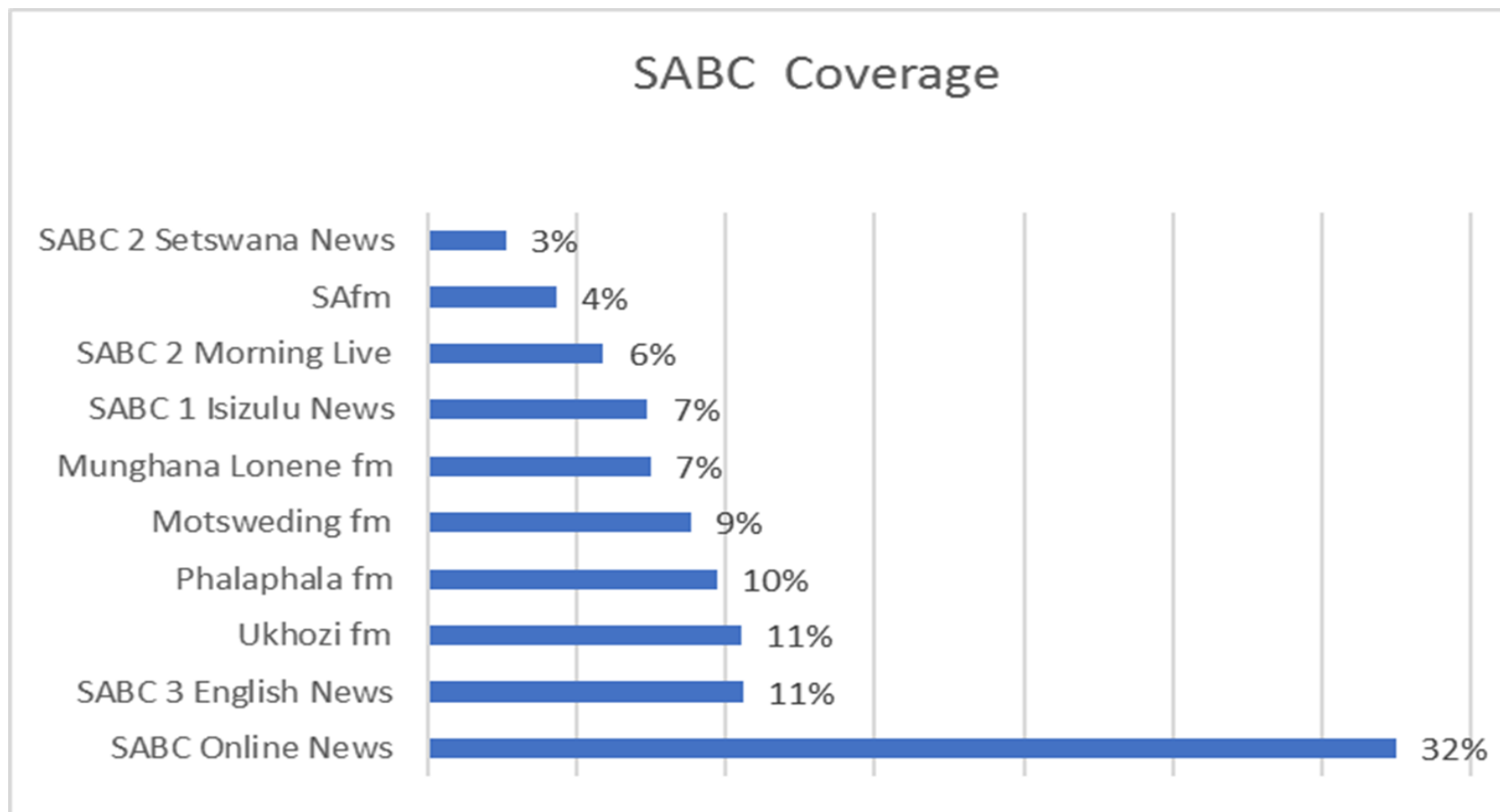
Conclusion and recommendations

- Did South African media sufficiently fulfil its mandate to inform and educate the electorate?

- **In terms of fairness in coverage, YES!**

- This despite the challenges facing the media in 2021 - political unrest in July; the on-going Covid-19 pandemic; and the shrinking of newsroom resources

Conclusion and recommendations

- The media needs to draw distinction between party coverage and local issues.

- More focus on: service delivery, gender-based violence, race and racism, unemployment - local issues

- If key issues are not on the political agenda, the media should interrogate why this is so.

- Amplify and reflect the diverse voices of South Africa's citizens: both by highlighting the important issues that affect their daily lives, and by providing platforms where the electorate can engage politicians and candidates;

Conclusion and recommendations

- Step backwards in terms of gender. Media need a gender-aware approach to election coverage, encompassing greater input from and about women (and women candidates);

- Broaden the existing range of election-related issues, and re-think which issues require particular focus.

- Continue to ensure equitable coverage across the political spectrum. Seeing fracturing of parties

- Ensure geographical areas are more equitably represented, in proportion to the size of their respective populations.

Thank you

For more information on the presentation or about MMA, please contact;

 - William Bird (Director)

williamb@mma.org.za

- Lister Namumba (Programme Manager – Monitoring, Research and Analysis)

listerr@mma.org.za