

Sanef training: 2019 elections and the media – 20 questions

1. How many elections take place on 8 May?

We have National Assembly elections and one election each for the 9 provincial legislatures. Therefore 10 elections, for which the IEC must prepare 10 different ballot papers.

2. When you go to vote on 8 May how many votes will you have?

Two – one for the National Assembly and one for your provincial legislature. If you vote outside your province you only get one vote for the National Assembly. This also applies if you are voting overseas.

3. Who is eligible to vote?

Citizens who are eligible to vote are South Africans who are 18 on the day elections were proclaimed (26 February) and have South African bar-coded ID documents (green books, smart ID cards or a valid temporary identification certificate).

Proclamation day is the day the President gazettes the election date. Our President announced the date in his State of the Nation address on 7 February, but it was only official once it was gazetted on 26 Feb 2019.

4. How many eligible voters?

According to Statistics SA the latest released voting age population (February 2018) was 34 968 120.

5. How many registered voters?

Everybody who appears on the certified voters roll is a registered voter. To register you needed to have gone to a municipal IEC office or visited your voting station on one of the IEC's registration weekends. The number of registered voters on the day of proclamation was 26 766 833. To check the voting age and gender breakdown of registered voters go to: <http://www.elections.org.za/content/Voters-Roll/Registration-statistics/> Registration is now closed.

6. How many registered political parties in SA?

In the South African electoral system parties need to register with the IEC to operate as a political party. Once registered they can contest the elections by paying a deposit to the IEC and by submitting candidate lists for each of the 10 elections they would like to participate in. Most registered parties have never participated in any elections.

It is therefore wrong to say that a party has **registered** to participate in the elections. It is correct to say that a registered party will **contest** the elections once they have paid the deposit and submitted candidate lists.

At the time of compiling this document the IEC listed 300 parties registered on a national level and therefore eligible to contest elections. This number is regularly updated up until the deadline for parties to pay deposits and submit candidate lists to contest elections. The deadline will appear in the elections timetable. Check here for the updated number of registered parties: <http://www.elections.org.za/content/Parties/Political-party-list/>

7. How many candidate lists should parties submit?

In the proportional representation (PR) election system candidates get elected based on party lists. If a party gets 60% of the vote they will get 60% of the available seats and the first 60% of the candidates on their list will represent that party.

The National Assembly has 400 seats. Two hundred of those are filled based on **national lists** submitted by parties. The other 200 seats are proportionally allocated to each of the 9 regions (ie provinces) based on the number of registered voters in the provinces. Smaller provinces will get fewer regional seats than bigger provinces. Parties must submit 9 **regional lists** to contest the 200 regional seats. However, parties have the choice not to submit a national list, in which case all their seats will be allocated from the 9 regional lists.

For the provincial legislatures a party must submit one **provincial list** for each province that they want to contest.

Therefore, if a party wants to contest all 10 elections they must submit 9 regional lists for the National Assembly, they may submit a national list for the National Assembly and must submit one list for each of the provincial legislatures – therefore in total 18 or 19 lists. Candidates' names may appear on multiple lists, and if a candidate gets more than one seat, the party will decide which seat the candidate must occupy and who on the list will fill the other seat/s.

8. How much money does a political party pay to participate in elections?

A party must pay a deposit of R200 000 to participate in the elections for the National Assembly and R45 000 for participation in each of the provincial legislatures – so R605 000 if a party wants to participate in all ten elections. If they win seats in an election the deposit is returned. However, if they don't win any seats they forfeit the deposit. This is a measure to ensure that only serious contenders contest elections.

9. How many seats will be contested on 8 May 2019?

400 seats are contested in the National Assembly.

The provincial legislatures currently have a combined total of 430 seats: Eastern Cape 63, Free State 30, Gauteng 73, KZN 80, Limpopo 49, Mpumalanga 30, Northern Cape 30, North West 33 and Western Cape 42.

Altogether 830 seats were contested.

10. How many voting districts and voting stations?

A voting district is the smallest building block in the elections. Each voting district or VD usually has one voting station – this is where voters register, cast votes, where votes are counted and the results for the voting district are announced. In rural areas where voting districts cover a vast

area a mobile voting station will go from place to place during voting day. In voting districts where there are prisons there will be a voting booth in the prison, but the votes will be counted at the voting station.

For the 2019 elections there will be 22 933 voting districts, up from 22 612 in the 2016 local government elections. On average voting districts have a 1000 to 3000 registered voters. In rural areas this may be less but in high density suburbs this could be thousands more. In big voting districts the voting station may take the form of a voting centre with multiple rooms where voting can take place.

A presiding officer is in charge of a voting station and must oversee the voting and counting process.

Only the presiding officer may deal with the media. To enter a voting station members of the media must present the presiding officer with a valid press card or a letter from their editor, supported by an ID book or passport. Members of the media are allowed to take photos in a voting station with permission from the presiding officer and provided that the secrecy of the ballot is not compromised and with the consent of voters captured in the picture.

Voting stations are open from 7am to 9pm on voting day. At 9pm the outside perimeter (fence surrounding the voting station) will be closed but all voters queueing inside the perimeter will still be allowed to vote. The presiding officer may also decide to extend voting hours if the voting station opened late or if voting was delayed for instance by bad weather conditions.

11. How does the counting process work?

Once all the votes have been cast the voting station will be rearranged for counting purposes. In the presence of party agents and observers, voting station staff will open the ballot boxes and count the votes for each party.

The party agents have the right at any time to inspect a ballot to make sure that it is correctly marked and put on the correct pile of votes for a particular party. The party agents may object and ask for recounts if they feel that the process has not been correctly followed.

The presiding officer should deal with these objections until s/he reaches consensus with the parties or until the presiding officer is sure of the integrity of the vote count.

Once the result sheets for the two elections at each voting station have been completed they must be signed off by the presiding officer and party agents.

Parties may still lodge objections after the voting station results have been released – they have 48 hours from 9pm on voting day to do so, until Friday night 9pm.

12. How many results will be announced after voting day?

At each voting station registered voters will cast their votes for two elections – the National Assembly and for their provincial legislature. This means that there will be two sets of results for each voting station – a total of 45 866 result sets for the 22 933 stations.

The National Assembly and provincial legislature results will be counted at each voting station and posted outside the voting station. The same results will be transmitted electronically to the IEC's municipal office where it will be entered into the IEC's results system. The results are not immediately released. The results will first be audited, taking into account the total number of ballots issued to the presiding officer, the ballots issued to voters, the votes counted for each party, the spoilt votes and unused ballots.

The presiding officer must take the original set of results in person to the IEC's municipal office where it is entered for a second time. If the two sets of results match with no discrepancies the results will be released via the IEC's results system to the public.

The original results released at the voting station will be regarded as the official result for that voting district, unless the audit or the outcome of an objection leads to an adjustment – in which case the official result for the voting district will be updated.

While the IEC has seven days to release the results, the IEC usually releases the final results and seat allocations on the Saturday after the elections.

13. Do I need accreditation for access to the Results Operation Centres?

Yes, you need to apply for accreditation well in advance to the national or provincial IEC offices. Media houses should also indicate the facilities they need: work space, booths, internet access etc.

14. Are there any visuals that are not permitted?

You may not photograph a ballot paper or anything that will comprise the secrecy of the vote.

15. Am I entitled to have access to the results slips?

Yes, they will be made available at the voting station.

16. Can I report on opinion polls?

There are no legal limitations on reporting about opinion polls.

17. Can I report on exit polls?

Exit polls are done when voters leave the voting station after voting. These are conducted by research organisations such as the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and commercial pollsters. Voters can be asked questions linked to their voting experience and who they voted for. The polling results are collated and released as a report. The media may not report on the exit poll results until all voting stations have closed.

18. What role do observers play?

Organisations who would like to observe the elections should in advance of the elections apply to the IEC to be granted observer status. This will allow them to monitor all phases of the election: the run-up, voting and counting. They will be expected to report on the integrity of the process and make pronouncements on the freedom and fairness of the elections.

19. How is the NCOP constituted?

The SA Parliament consists of two houses – the National Assembly whose members will be elected on 8 May and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) consisting of representatives from the provincial legislatures. Once the provincial legislatures have been constituted after the 8 May elections each legislature will appoint 10 delegates to represent them in the NCOP – 4 of these delegates will be permanent NCOP members and 6 will sit in the NCOP on a rotational basis. The delegates from each province need to reflect the party representation in their legislature.

The NCOP is therefore made up of 90 members representing the provinces, plus ten non-voting delegates representing the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

The NCOP is not dissolved before the elections (as is the case with the National Assembly) – it continues to operate until new members take their seats after the elections.

20. What are the key differences between national and provincial elections vs local government elections?

There are three types of elections in the South African electoral system:

- Proportional representation where voters vote for a party and the party decides who will represent them.
- First past the post, where voters vote for a candidate who may represent a party or be an independent. The candidate with the most votes wins the seat.
- A mixed system combining PR and first past the post votes.

The elections for the National Assembly and provincial legislatures use the PR method where voters only vote for parties. In practice this means that both big and small parties can win seats. In the 2014 elections a small party had to receive about 45 000 votes to gain one seat in the National Assembly. This made it possible for small parties to be represented.

The municipal elections use the mixed system: 50% of municipal councilors are elected via a PR vote and the other 50% are made up by ward councilors elected through the first past the post system.

Compiled by Kate Skinner and Izak Minnaar on 3 March 2019.