



## Commission for Gender Equality

A society free from gender oppression and inequality



# BALANCING THE SCALES

Reviewing developments in women's representation  
in Politics and Government between the  
**2014** and **2019** Elections



# **BALANCING THE SCALES**

Reviewing developments in women's representation in Politics  
and Government between the 2014 and 2019 Elections

---

## **Commission for Gender Equality (CGE)**

Copyrights: 2019 Commission for Gender Equality. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, photocopied, or transmitted in any form, nor part thereof be distributed for profit making purposes, without prior written permission of the Commission for Gender Equality.

Publisher: Commission for Gender Equality.

**ISBN: 978-1-920308-79-7**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 4**
- ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS ..... 5**
- 1. INTRODUCTION ..... 6**
  - 1.1 BRIEF NOTES ON METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH ..... 7
  - 1.2 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY ..... 8
- 2. STATE OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION – REVIEW AND ANALYSIS ..... 9**
  - 2.1 REPRESENTATION AND GENDER BALANCE AT NATIONAL LEVEL ..... 9
    - 2.1.1 Gender Composition of the National Assembly ..... 9
    - 2.1.2 Political Party Parliamentary Membership & Gender Balance ..... 11
    - 2.1.3 Gender Composition of the National Council of Provinces ..... 12
    - 2.1.4 Gender Composition of the National Cabinet ..... 13
    - 2.1.5 Women's Representation in Party Top Leadership Structures ..... 14
  - 2.2 REPRESENTATION AND GENDER BALANCE AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL ..... 15
    - 2.2.1 Gender Composition of Provincial Legislatures ..... 15
    - 2.2.2 Gender Composition of Provincial Cabinet ..... 16
    - 2.2.3 Gender Profiles of Provincial Legislature Office Bearers ..... 17
    - 2.2.4 Gender Composition of Provincial Premiership Positions ..... 19
- 3. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS ..... 20**
- 4. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ..... 22**

## FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was compiled not only as a background, 'state of affairs' review of progress in terms of achievements or setbacks experienced in women's representation and participation as indicators of gender mainstreaming in politics and government in South Africa. The report is also intended to provide background material to be used for purposes of analysis and historical comparison in the final comprehensive project report that will contain the findings of the study from the three phases of the elections process (i.e. pre-election phase, election day phase and post-election phase).

The data and analysis contained in this report will be valuable in terms of providing comparative insights and therefore informing the analysis of the study based on the data obtained from the election results for the memberships of the different elective institutions, as well as the political parties selected for this study.

The Research Department is grateful for the assistance and cooperation received from the different political parties regarding information requested on internal party structures. We are also grateful to all the other institutions that assisted with information needed to carry out the analysis contained in this background report. In particular, we also wish to thank the various provincial legislatures, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) for the cooperation and assistance received with information on the lists of members of these institutions, including other related information. Finally, we also wish to acknowledge, with appreciation, the assistance rendered by the CGE's own internal Audit Unit, especially Cedric Seaba, who assisted with the design and development of some of the graphs containing the figures and statistics on women's representation and participation in politics and government in South Africa.

As this project is still continuing until after the 2019 elections, we are hoping for continued cooperation and assistance from institutions and individuals mentioned above.

This report was compiled by the following team of researchers from the CGE Research Department, led by Thabo Rapoo, Director of the Research Department:

- Naledi Selebano
- Thubelihle Zitha
- Lieketseng Mohlakoana-Motopi
- Mojalefa Dipholo
- Arthur Baloyi (Deceased)

Note: The Research Department was saddened by the loss of one of the members of this Research Team, Arthur Baloyi, who passed away on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019. We are grateful for the valuable contributions Arthur made to this work and wish to express our gratitude in this regard.

## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>CGE</b>	Commission for Gender Equality
<b>COPE</b>	Congress of the People
<b>DA</b>	Democratic Alliance
<b>EFF</b>	Economic Freedom Fighters
<b>FF+</b>	Freedom Front Plus
<b>IFP</b>	Inkatha Freedom Party
<b>MEC</b>	Member of the Executive Council
<b>NA</b>	National Assembly
<b>NCOP</b>	National Council of Provinces
<b>NFP</b>	National Freedom Party
<b>UDM</b>	United Democratic Movement

# 1. INTRODUCTION

During the 2019 State of the National Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared that the country would hold its 6<sup>th</sup> democratic National and Provincial Elections on 8 May 2019.<sup>1</sup>

This means that eligible registered voters among the country's citizens will have the opportunity to elect public representatives for the two National Houses of Parliament (i.e. the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP)), and the nine provincial legislatures.

In the South African political system, particularly for the national and provincial elections, elected public representatives usually comprise of men and women leaders selected by their respective political parties and put forward, accompanied by the proposed manifestoes of these political parties, as choices for citizens to vote into office for a period of five years. Once elected, these men and women will serve as legitimate members of the National and Provincial Parliaments, with the party or party coalition that won the majority support, executing a set of policy and legislative programmes aimed at improving the lives of citizens.

From a gender rights perspective, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) would be keen to ensure that the elections processes are conducted in a manner that observes and upholds the right of all South Africa to gender equality, particularly the right of both men and women to equal treatment during all the different aspects and phases of the electoral process. The CGE has a mandate, derived from the country's Constitution<sup>2</sup> and outlined in the Commission for Gender Equality Act 1996, to promote, protect and advance gender equality, as well as monitor and evaluate the activities, policies and programmes of State and non-state institutions to ensure respect for gender equality and transformation. The commission will therefore monitor and evaluate the various phases and aspects of the forthcoming national and provincial elections in line with its mandate to promote, protect and advance gender equality and transformation. The aim of this project will be to assess the proposed lists of party candidates, proposed party policies (i.e. party manifestoes) and related activities, as well as the election day proceedings and the outcome of the elections, in order to assess the extent to which gender equality and transformation are embraced.

For this report, the purpose was to carry out a review of the current state of gender equality through the representation and participation of women and men in the various institutions of government at national and provincial level, as well as within the senior leadership structures of six major political parties currently represented in the National Assembly. This, therefore, is largely a desktop-based review of the current numbers of women's and men's representation in various institutions of government and in the six political parties, to assess progress achieved in the state of gender equality in representation and participation by men and women, four years since the 2014 National and Provincial Elections, and less than a year before the next National and Provincial Elections are held on 8 May 2019.

The premise of this exercise is that since the 2014 National and Provincial Elections nearly five years ago, a lot has changed regarding the gender composition of the various elective institutions whose memberships were shaped by the outcomes of the 2014 elections. Over a period of four to five years, various factors usually contribute to these changes in the compositions and gender profiles of these institutions. For instance, factors such as the numerous presidential Cabinet reshuffles since 2014, member resignations, retirements, deaths, dismissals, promotions to office-bearer positions and demotions, as well party elective conferences tend to have a marked effect and contribute to changes on the gender profiles of institutions such as the National and Provincial Parliaments, National and Provincial Cabinets, among others.

<sup>1</sup> Ra'eesa Pather, Election Date Announced, Mail & Guardian online, 07/02/2019 (<https://mg.co.za/article/2019-02-07-election-date-announced>)

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Section 187.

Based on the figures collected, reviewed and analysed for this exercise, there is evidence of significant improvements in various areas of participation and representation, both at national and provincial level, from a gender mainstreaming perspective. In other words, the figures collected, analysed and presented in the various sections of this report will show notable improvements in the representation and participation of women not only in the National Cabinet, but also in the National and Provincial Parliaments, including the number of female provincial Premiers. However, the figures also reveal a notable lack of progress in the representation and participation of women in the senior leadership structures of the six major political parties selected for close examination in this project. As already indicated, this document is a background status report on the gender balance among public representatives in various public institutions, as well as six major political parties. This is therefore not meant for publication. However, the information, analysis and insights contained in this report will inform and be incorporated into the final comprehensive elections report to be compiled and published in the new financial year (2019/20) after the 2019 National and Provincial Elections.

## 1.1 BRIEF NOTES ON METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Since the CGE began its Elections Monitoring Programme in 2011, it sought to utilise both primary and secondary data, collected through various methods including desktop analysis of secondary data, as well as primary fieldwork data collection such as observations of the election process on election day, using an election observation template. As indicated already, for this background report on the current state of gender representation, data were obtained through secondary published sources, including the official websites of the various Houses of National and Provincial Parliaments and the six major political parties.

In cases where information from the websites was missing, or incomplete or outdated, the most up-to-date information was obtained directly through official written requests from the institutions concerned (i.e. National Assembly, NCOP, provincial legislatures and political parties). Much of the information in this regard was therefore obtained from official sources, both government and non-governmental, including independent sources, as well as the CGE's own published report for the 2014 National and Provincial Elections.<sup>3</sup> Where necessary and where relevant data were available, particularly on the numbers and gender profiles of public representatives, historical comparisons were also carried out going back to previous national and provincial elections. The purpose of this was to determine the levels of progress, or lack thereof, in terms of gender balance in the representation and participation of men and women in the various public institutions. Given that much of the information utilised in this review was obtained from official and approved secondary published sources, the team is therefore confident of its reliability and accuracy.

Data were collected for the numbers and gender profiles of elected public representatives in the National Assembly, NCOP and the nine provincial legislatures. Figures were collected relating to ordinary members of these institutions, office-bearers (i.e. Speakers, Deputy Speakers and chief whips), as well as the positions of Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers and provincial Premiers for the current electoral period or term of office (2014 – 2019). In addition, current data were collected on the gender profiles of senior party leadership structures of the six major political parties currently represented in the National Assembly. In determining the major political parties to be selected for this study, we used a minimum of four or more public representatives in the National Assembly. Based on this selection criterion, the following political parties were selected:

<sup>3</sup> CGE (2014), From Rhetoric to Gender Reality: Women's participation & representation in South Africa (CGE, Research Report).

Table 1: Political Parties Selected for the Study

Political Party	Official Status	Number of Seats & % Share in the National Assembly
• African National Congress (ANC)	Governing Party	249 (62.25%)
• Democratic Alliance (DA)	Official Opposition Party	89 (22.23%)
• Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)	Opposition Party	25 (6.25%)
• Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	Opposition Party	10 (2.50%)
• National Freedom Party <sup>1</sup> (NFP)	Opposition Party	6 (1.57%)
• United Democratic Movement (UDM)	Opposition Party	4 (1%)
• Freedom Front Plus (FF+)	Opposition Party	4 (1%)

However, the National Freedom Party (NFP)<sup>4</sup> was excluded from the study due to a lack of cooperation by the party's leadership structures in providing information on its internal structures, gender profile of its leaders and public representatives, as well as other related aspects of its operations.

## 1.2 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This exercise was a desktop review of existing data/figures and details of the numbers of public representatives in the national Parliament (which includes the National Assembly and the NCOP), the nine provincial legislatures and the six major political parties.

Firstly, with regard to the number of political parties in this study, the list was limited to only the six major parties out of the total of 13 currently represented in the National Assembly. Therefore, not all the political parties in the National Assembly were covered in this study.

Secondly, this the subject matter of this report is limited to a review of the numerical representation and gender balance based on the details obtained of the gender profiles of both men and women serving as representatives in the National and Provincial Parliaments, office-bearers, Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers, provincial Premiers and members of the senior leadership structures of the six political parties selected for this study. In other words, the scope of the study is limited on to the review and analysis of numerical data/figures on the representation and gender profiles of the members of the institutions and organisations identified above.

Thirdly, while the National Freedom Party met the selection criterion for inclusion in this study, it was excluded due to a lack of cooperation and failure to respond to requests for information on the numbers and gender profile of its leadership structures as well other related information on the party.

Finally, not all the information from official sources is categorised and disaggregated based on gender. Some of the information obtained for this study was limited in terms of details on gender profiles. In some cases, some historical data were either missing or incomplete with respect to crucial details regarding gender profiles. Where necessary and possible, in cases where information is incomplete or missing, these will be indicated in the report or data tables presented throughout the document.

<sup>4</sup> The National Freedom Party (NFP) was excluded from this study due to a lack of cooperation by the party and its senior leadership structures.

## 2. STATE OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION – REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

### 2.1 REPRESENTATION AND GENDER BALANCE AT NATIONAL LEVEL

#### 2.1.1 Gender Composition of the National Assembly

South Africa has a bicameral Parliament comprising two Houses: The National Assembly and the NCOP. The National Assembly is the highest law-making body of the country and consists of 400 elected public representatives. It is the senior of the two Houses. It is elected directly by voters for a period of five years and political parties are allocated seats based on the proportion determined by their electoral strength. Currently, 13 political parties are represented in the National Assembly.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union argues that the participation of women in democratic parliamentary processes tends to have a valuable impact. When more women are represented in parliament, the quality and nature of social policy processes tend to reflect this and the processes of policymaking that focus on improving the quality of life, advancing women's rights and those of ethnic and racial minorities also increase.<sup>5</sup> This is in the light of the slow progress made by countries around the world in terms of improving women's representation and participation in politics, policy and decision-making processes. For instance, by 2018, only three countries in the world (Rwanda 61,3%, Cuba 53,2% and Bolivia 53,1%) had reached or exceeded the desired 50% threshold of women's representation in parliaments. South Africa (43%) was ranked tenth on the global list, while it came second to Namibia (46,2%) in the SADC region.<sup>6</sup>

This report provides an assessment and overview of progress in women's representation and participation in various areas of politics, governance and decision-making in South Africa at national and provincial levels. These figures, obtained through desktop research, were examined and analysed to determine the level of progress made or regression suffered by the drive to improve women's representation and participation in politics, governance and decision-making in South Africa since the 2014 National and Provincial Elections.

Figure 1 below illustrates the representation of women in the South African National Assembly between 1994 and 2018 (one year before the 2019 general elections).

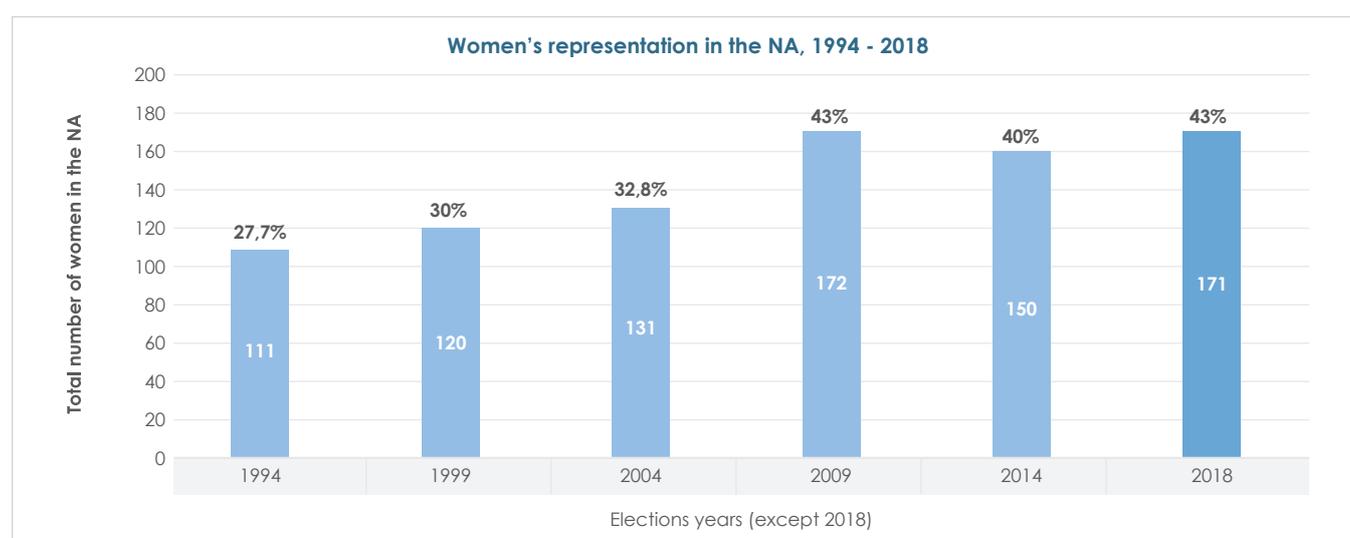


Figure 1: Women's Representation in the National Assembly, 1994-2018

Source: National Assembly

<sup>5</sup> Inter-parliamentary Union (2018)., The Value of Women's Participation in Parliament Enhancing the Evidence Base: A research project.

<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum, These countries have the most women in parliament, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/chart-of-the-day-these-countries-have-the-most-women-in-parliament/> (January 2019).

Based on the figures above, women's representation in the National Assembly has historically been on a steady increase since 1994, until a 3% drop in 2014 from 43% in 2009 to 40% in 2014. However, the latest data obtained in 2018 show that the 3% loss has subsequently been recovered in the period after the 2014 elections, thereby placing the representation of women back at an all-time high of 43%. This increase suggests that male candidates were increasingly being replaced by females in the National Assembly. Usually these opportunities arise as a result of deaths, resignations, dismissals, Cabinet reshuffles, retirements of members of Parliament and a variety of other factors.

Evidently women received greater priority in the appointment of replacements for vacated Parliamentary seats, as well as during the numerous Cabinet reshuffles by the former president Jacob Zuma, as well as the current President of the country, Cyril Ramaphosa. Also, during the current term of office of Parliament, issues of gender equality, transformation and women's empowerment have been subjects of vocal public debates and protest actions, including highly publicised campaigns against gender-based violence in South Africa and globally. It is assumed that these public events have had a positive impact in terms of placing the issues of gender transformation, women's empowerment and the right to gender equality on the public agenda, assisted by greater media reporting on these issues, as well as pressure from civil society organisations, including the CGE, in South Africa. It is also assumed that this resulted in greater pressure on political decision-makers for more emphasis and priority on gender considerations when making new appointments not only to the National Assembly but also in the other areas as illustrated in the rest of this report.

While 43% is still below the target of 50% representation of women, the strides made over the years (from 27.7% in 1994 to 43% in 2018, totalling an overall increase of 15.3% since the advent of democracy) are significant. Also, given that the latest figures show an improvement to the situation that prevailed in the wake of the 2014 elections, the challenge is whether the 2019 elections will sustain the momentum that has clearly gathered pace over the past five years.

## 2.1.2 Political Party Parliamentary Membership & Gender Balance

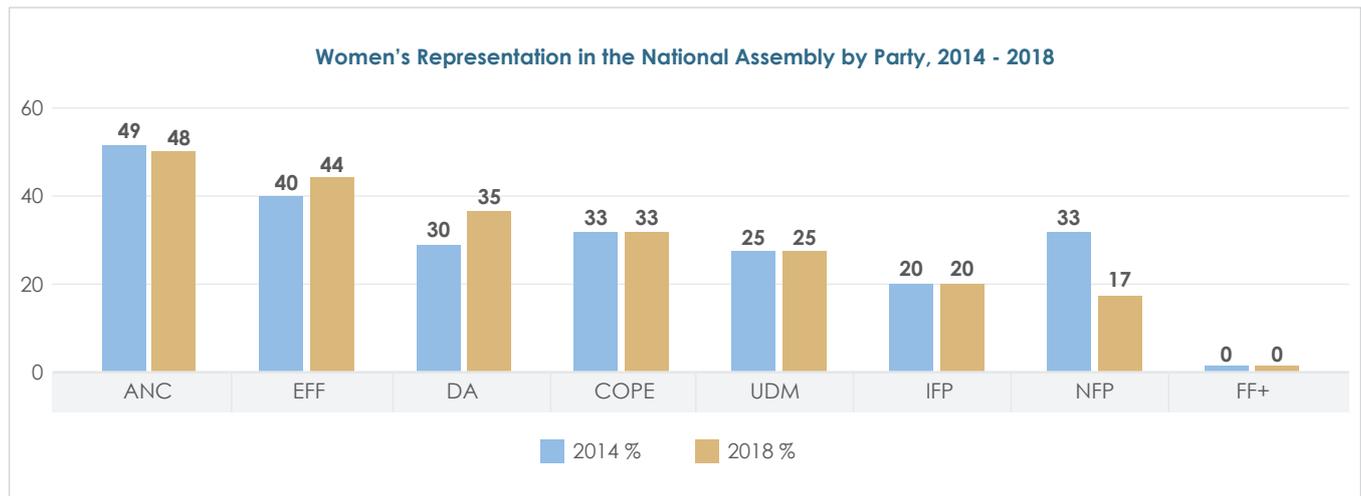


Figure 2: Women's Representation in the National Assembly by Party, 2014-2018

Source: National Assembly

Figure 2 above reveals that for the following major political parties, i.e. DA, EFF, IFP, UDM, COPE and the FF+, currently represented in the National Assembly, the representation of women has either stayed the same or improved. For instance, increases in women's representation occurred in the DA (from 30% in 2014 to 35% in 2018) and the EFF (from 40% in 2014 to 44% in 2018), while in COPE (33%), IFP (20%), UDM (25%) and the FF+ (0%) women's representation stayed the same. Ironically, most of these parties, except in the EFF, did not have any internal policies or strategies to promote gender equality.

Both the ANC and NFP have experienced minor drops of one person each in their women's representation in the National Assembly over this period. The FF+ is the only political party amongst the top parties that has not had women representatives in the National Assembly since 2014, and this remained the same in 2018. Unlike the other political parties, the ANC has over the years applied a clear internal policy of ensuring gender equality and women's participation in politics, through its voluntary 50/50 quota policy, as well as its 'Zebra-stripe' candidate placement strategy that ensures that men and women are given equal chances of being elected.

Despite its minor drop in women's representation in the National Assembly based on the latest 2018 figures, the ANC remains the party with the largest number of women representatives in the National Assembly and contributes the largest proportion of women public representatives in the country's elective institutions. It is the only political party that has come close to reaching the 50/50 target in the National Assembly in 2014 and of the latest 2018 figures. In fact, the ANC, as the only party that has not only adopted but vigorously applies its 50/50 quota policy, tends to contribute the largest proportion of the number of female public representatives in the country. It can be concluded that when the party suffers electoral decline, this translates into an overall decline in the total number of women's representation in the country. It means that the ANC plays a very large and crucial role in advancing the course of women's representation and participation in the country's political system.

### 2.1.3 Gender Composition of the National Council of Provinces

The NCOP has a total of 90 delegates from the nine provinces in South Africa. Each province is entitled to send a delegation of ten to the NCOP, led by the provincial Premier. Amongst the ten delegates for each province, four are called Special Delegates, whose composition changes regularly. The Premier is one of the Special Delegates. The primary purpose of the NCOP is to represent the interests of the provinces at national level, especially during periods when the national Parliament considers policies and legislations with implications for provincial affairs and interests. The NCOP also allows organised local government in South Africa representation to ensure that the interests and concerns of local government are represented at the national policy and decision-making processes. Figure 3 below shows women's representation<sup>7</sup> in the NCOP from 2009 to 2018

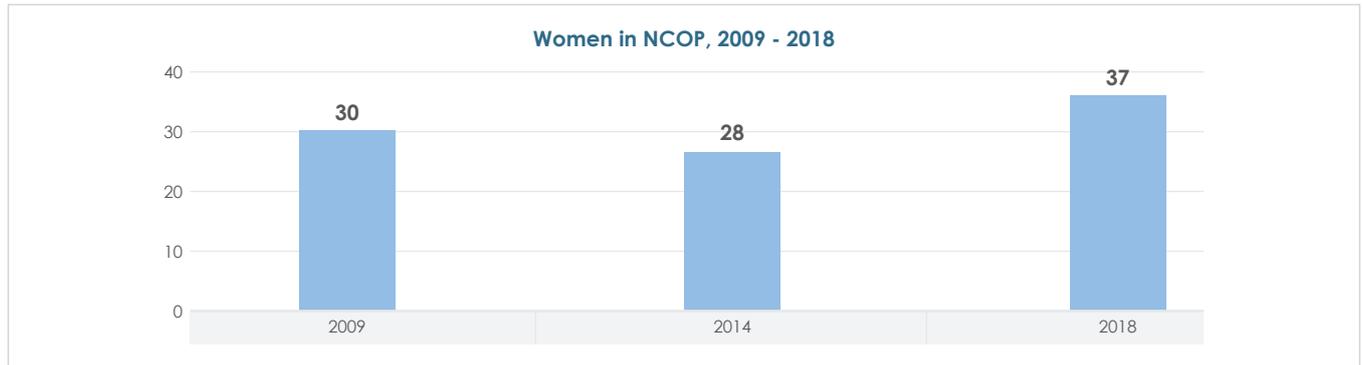


Figure 3: Women in the NCOP, 2009-2018

Source: Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

The figures above show that in general, women's representation in the NCOP was below 40% for the two election years for which complete information was available for this exercise. There was a small decline (2%) in the membership of women in the NCOP in 2014 from 30% in 2009. It should be noted that the 2014 decline was part of a wide/general pattern that occurred across the board in the wake of the 2014 elections, including in the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures. Yet the latest figures obtained for this report appear to show a significant recovery and growth in the number of women represented and participating as members of the NCOP in the past five years after the 2014 elections. The figures show a growth of 9% since the 2014 elections. Given that the provincial legislatures are responsible for the composition of their NCOP delegations, it therefore would seem reasonable to assume that provincial legislative leaderships have also increasingly prioritised gender considerations in assigning public representatives and delegates to the NCOP. In addition, the fact that both Houses of the National Assembly are chaired by women could be an important factor that places the issue of women's representation and empowerment on the agenda of both Houses of Parliament, and therefore on the broader public political agenda. However, this recovery and growth in the NCOP women's representation are also part of a broader growth noticeable across the board since the 2014 elections. The challenge remains as to whether this recovery will be sustained after the 2019 elections.

<sup>7</sup> The figures on the gender profile/composition of the NCOP for other years prior to 2009 were unavailable.

## 2.1.4 Gender Composition of the National Cabinet

The Cabinet of South Africa is the most senior level decision-making structure in the country's system of government – it is the executive branch of government. It consists of the President, the Deputy President and the Ministers heading various departments.<sup>8</sup> In its 2014 elections report, the CGE noted that during the early years of the country's democracy, (i.e. mainly during the first ten years of South Africa's democracy) there was a clear gender division of labour in the Cabinet. There was a clear and notable pattern of large numbers of women being appointed as Deputy Ministers compared to the majority of males who were being appointed as Cabinet Ministers.<sup>9</sup> Only 11% of women were appointed as Ministers and 25% were appointed as Deputy Ministers after the first democratic elections in 1994. Interestingly, during the second decade of democracy, a steady increase was noted in women's representation in the national Cabinet and more balance in the appointment of both males and females as Deputy Ministers, respectively (between 1999 and 2004). As the figures below show, the 2004 general elections saw women making up 43% of the national Cabinet, followed by a small decline of 2% in 2009 and another minor 1% decline in the 2014 elections.

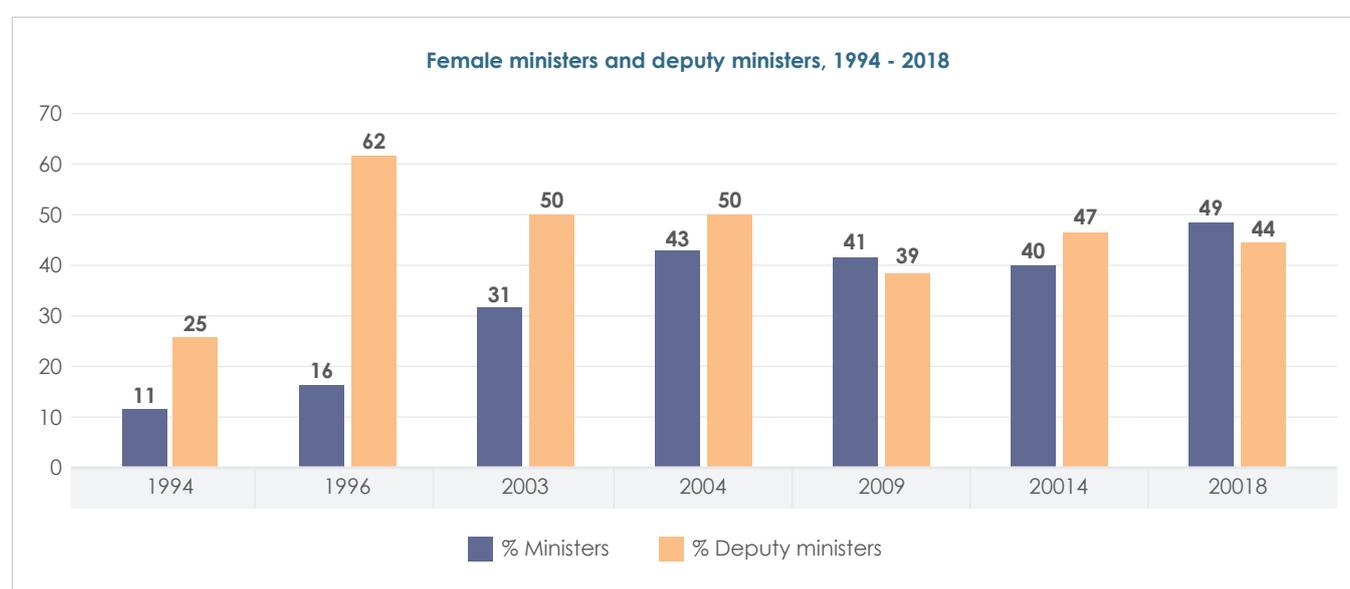


Figure 4: Female Ministers and Deputy Ministers, 1994-2018

Source: National Assembly

Major political events occurred in the country since the 2014 elections, precipitating some of the notable changes as reflected in the latest 2018 figures. For instance, several major and minor Cabinet reshuffles were carried out by former president Jacob Zuma during his term of office. A change in the leadership of the ANC in 2017, leading to a subsequent change in the presidency of the country, also created another opportunity for changes in the national Cabinet introduced by the new President, Cyril Ramaphosa. The number of women in the national Cabinet has therefore shown significant growth since the 1994 elections. In fact, the latest 2018 figures show that the number of women in the national Cabinet is the highest ever since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Currently, women make up 49% as Ministers. This growth in the number of women Ministers has been accompanied by a general decrease of women's appointments in positions of Deputy Ministers. The numbers of female Deputy Ministers have generally fluctuated between 40% and 44% in the past 15 years, whereas before that, the numbers were generally higher than 50% except for the first democratic elections in 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Commission for Gender Equality (2014), From Rhetoric to Gender Reality: Women's Participation & Representation in South Africa's 2014 Elections (CGE Research Report).

## 2.1.5 Women's Representation in Party Top Leadership Structures

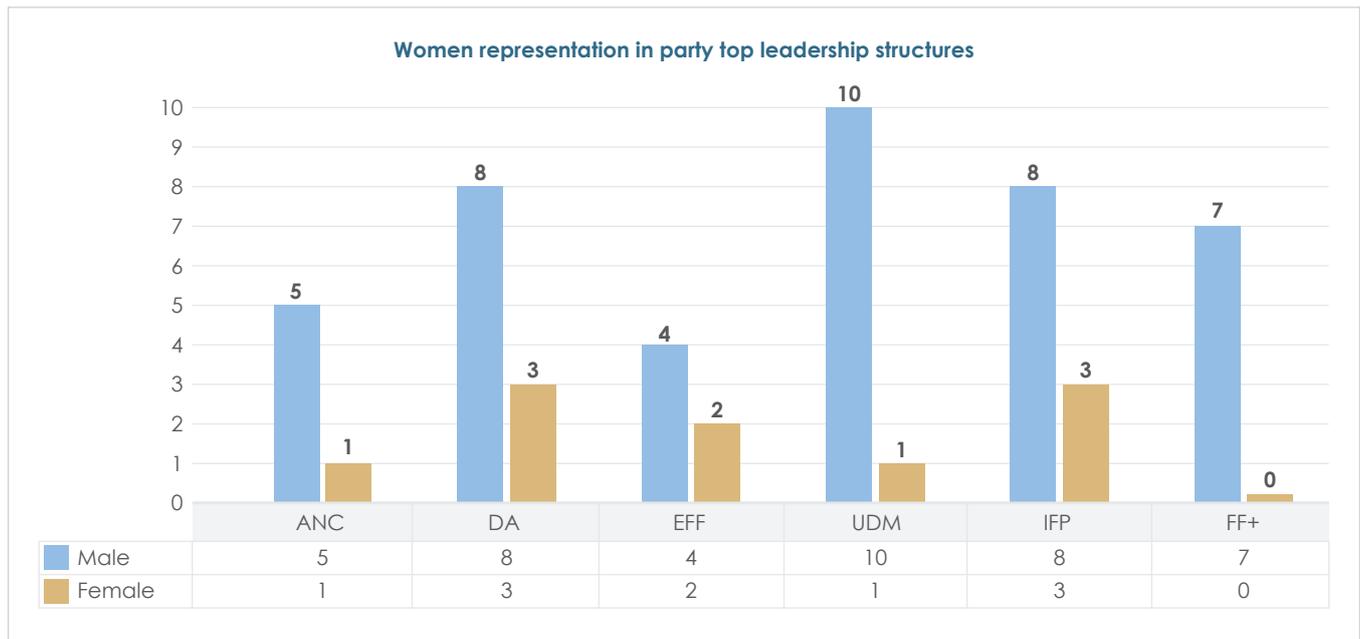


Figure 5: Women's representation in party top leadership structures

Source: National Assembly

Party leadership structures continue to reflect the historical and traditional male political domination of party politics and governance in South Africa. The latest 2018 figures on women's representation and participation in top party leadership structures show overall under-representation of women across all six major political parties represented in the National Assembly. Figure 5 above shows that except for the EFF, women's representation is less than half of the memberships of top leadership structures of the major political parties selected for this study (i.e. ANC, DA, NFP, UDM, IFP & FF+). The irony in the case of the ANC is that its adoption of the 50/50 gender parity policy appears less applicable at senior top party leadership level. Such inconsistency in the application of the ANC's 50/50 voluntary quota policy has been notable over the past few elections, including in the controversial appointment of seven of the party's eight provincial Premiers after the 2014 elections. The FF+ is the only party among the selected parties without any women in its top leadership structure.

The poor level of women's representation in top leadership structures among the six major political parties selected for this study is part of a broader pattern reflected within the National Assembly. Currently, a total of 13 political parties are represented in the National Assembly, and the overwhelming majority of these parties is led by males. It would appear that at the time of compiling the latest 2018 figures on party leaderships only one out of the 13 political parties currently represented in the National Assembly (i.e. NFP) is still officially led by a woman. This is an indication and reflection of the dominance of masculinity in party politics and political leadership in South Africa.

## 2.2 REPRESENTATION AND GENDER BALANCE AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL

### 2.2.1 Gender Composition of Provincial Legislatures

Available figures, as presented in Figure 6 below, show that the period between 1994 and 2009 represented growth and an overall increase in the number of women represented at provincial legislature level in South Africa, from 24% in 1994 to 41% in 2009. This was, however, followed by a 4% drop from 41% to 37% after the 2014 elections. As indicated already, the 2014 elections appeared to be a watershed election, with generalised/widespread decline in the representation figures for women across many institutions.

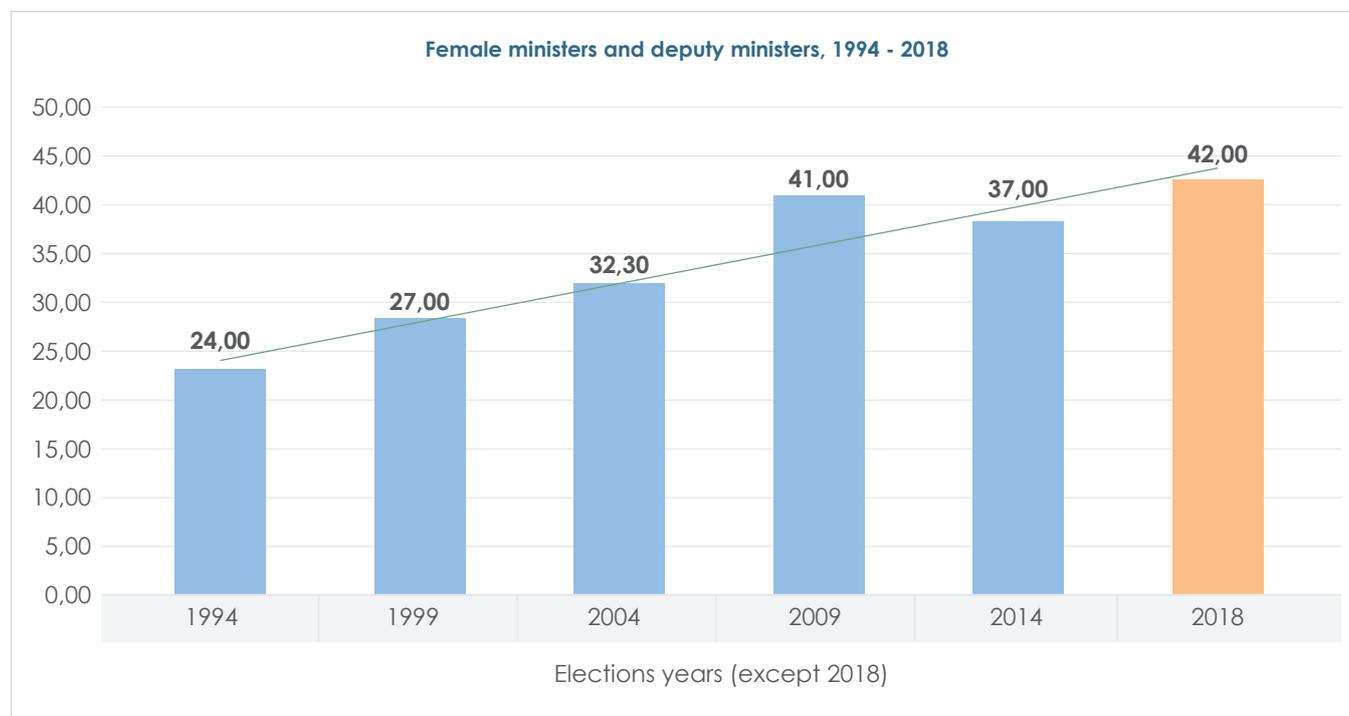


Figure 6: Women's Representation in Provincial Legislatures, 1994-2018

However, the latest data/information obtained for the year 2018 show a marked recovery and improvement in the level of women's representation at provincial legislature level, from 37% to 42.2% (just over 5% increase). This is also in line with marked improvements in the figures for other institutions.

The trends and patterns reflected in the numbers in Figure 7 also show a generally upward trend and therefore overall improvements in women's representation in the majority of the provincial legislatures, especially since the 2014 National and Provincial Elections. For instance, six of the nine provincial legislatures have experienced an increase in the number of women since 2014. These are the Eastern Cape (6%), Limpopo (6%), KwaZulu-Natal (7%), Western Cape (7%), Free State (10%) and Northern Cape (13%).

The Northern Cape saw the highest increase, while the Eastern Cape and Limpopo experienced the lowest increases. Interesting to note also is that among the provincial legislatures that experienced an increase in the number of women's representation in the past five years, the provinces with the largest legislatures<sup>10</sup> (i.e. KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Limpopo) were outperformed by the provinces with smaller-sized legislatures (i.e. Northern Cape & Free State).

<sup>10</sup> Each of these Provincial Legislatures have memberships of more than 40.

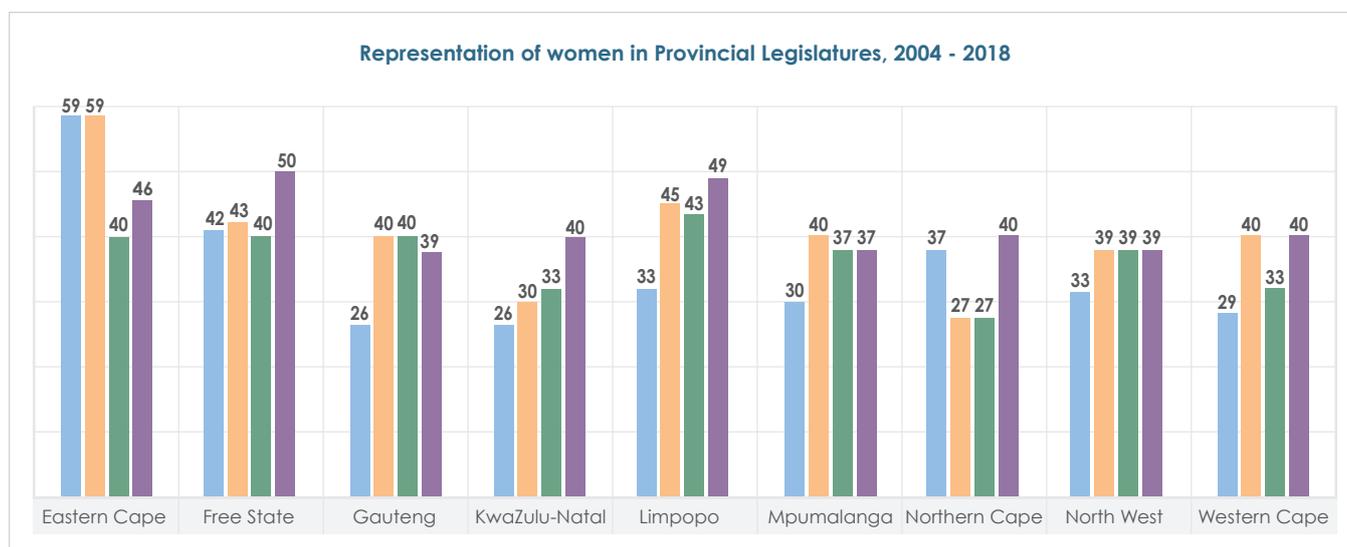


Figure 7: Representation of women in provincial legislatures, 2004-2018

Source: National Assembly & Provincial Legislatures

The Gauteng province, one of the provinces with a large-sized legislature, experienced a minor decline of 1% in the past five years since the 2014 elections, while the North West and Mpumalanga (both with small-sized legislatures) experienced no decline or increase. In other words, based on the latest 2018 data collected for this study, none of the small-sized provincial legislatures has experienced a decline in the number of women's representation since the 2014 elections. Such progress is clearly not a random occurrence, and no doubt the factors responsible for this overall improvement are many and varied. In 2017, Parliament's Multi-party Women's Caucus added its voice with a call for greater women's representation in the legislative sector.<sup>11</sup> In terms of progress towards the voluntary 50% gender parity target, the latest 2018 figures show that the Free State (and virtually Limpopo) had reached the target, while the Eastern Cape (46%) was close. The majority of the provincial legislatures was significantly far below target, at 40% or less.

## 2.2.2 Gender Composition of Provincial Cabinet

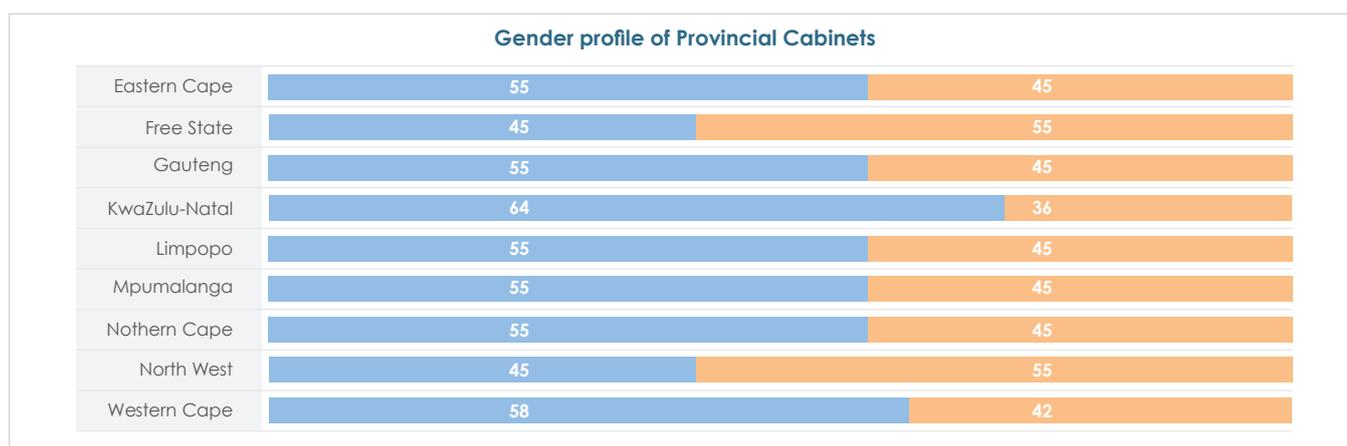


Figure 8: Provincial Cabinets (Premiers & MECs)

Source: National Assembly & Provincial Legislatures

Figure 8 presents the numbers for the representation of women and men in provincial executive committees (or provincial Cabinets) based on data collected for 2018. In general, the overall picture seems to show a more balanced than unbalanced gender representation across the nine provincial Cabinets.

<sup>11</sup> S. Khetheng. 2017. "Call for Gender Equality in Legislative Sector". [HTTPS://WWW.PARLIAMENT.GOV.ZA/NEWS/CALL-GENDER-EQUALITY-LEGISLATIVE-SECTOR](https://www.parliament.gov.za/news/call-gender-equality-legislative-sector)

For instance, the majority (i.e. seven out of nine) of the provincial Cabinets has achieved 45% or more levels of female representation. Only two provincial Cabinets achieved levels below 45%, with KwaZulu-Natal achieving the lowest at 36%, and Western Cape at 42%. KwaZulu-Natal performed the worst of all the provincial Cabinets, while the Free State and North West achieved the highest representation of women at 55%. The Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape were all tied at 45% female representation.

Given that the majority of the provinces is ruled by the ANC, there is clear evidence that the party has increasingly prioritised gender considerations when making appointments to provincial Cabinet posts during the period following the 2014 elections. This has resulted in greater levels of gender balance in the compositions and profiles of provincial executive councils.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.2.3 Gender Profiles of Provincial Legislature Office Bearers

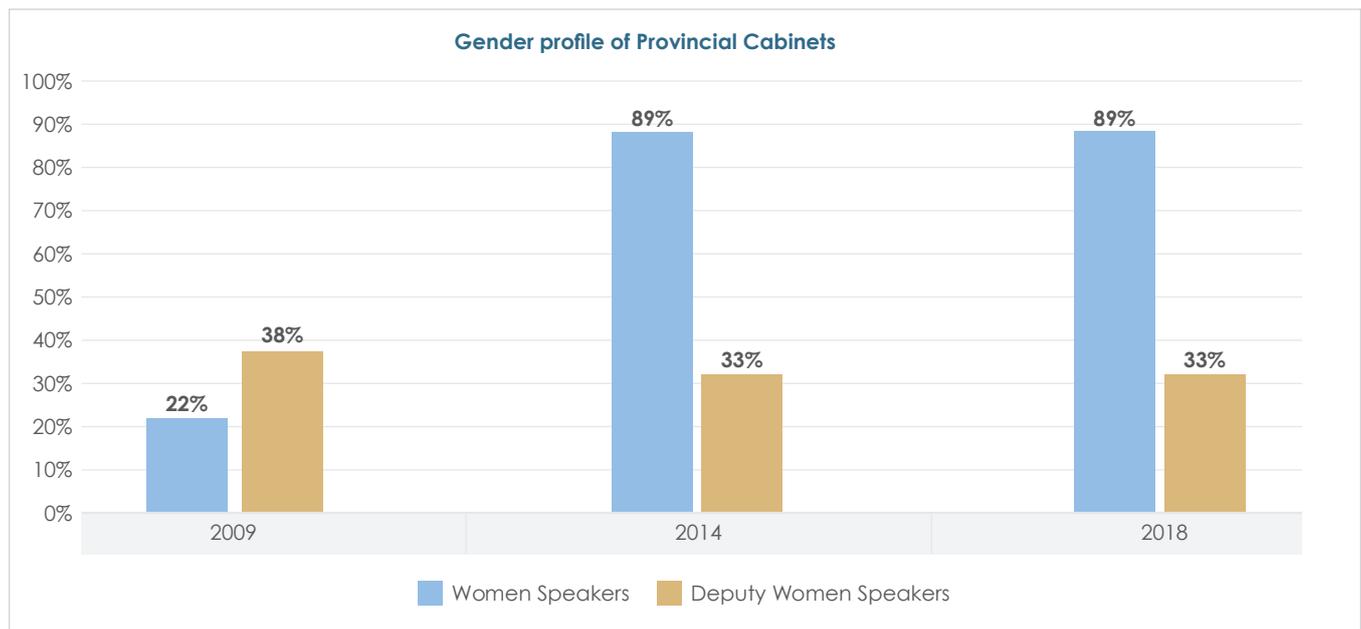


Figure 9: Female Speakers & Deputy Speakers, 2009-2018

Source: National Assembly & Provincial Legislatures

The numbers for provincial Speakers and Deputy Speakers in Figure 9 show a dramatic increase for female Speakers, especially after the 2014 elections. These figures show that initially there were low numbers of both female Speakers (38%) and Deputy Speakers (22%) after the 2009 elections, before a dramatic increase in the wake of the 2014 elections occurred. After the 2014 elections, the number of women Speakers increased to 89%, and this has not changed in the latest 2018 figures. The number of female Deputy Speakers declined slightly from 38% in 2009 to 33% after 2014, and has also remained the same in the latest 2018 figures.

The reason for the dramatic rise in the number of female Speakers has its origin in ANC party politics, especially when the party controversially appointed only one female Premier and seven male Premiers to run the eight provinces that the party had won in the 2014 provincial elections. The controversy caused by that decision led to severe and widespread public criticisms not only from gender activists and women's organisations across the country, but also from inside the ANC's own Women's League.

<sup>12</sup> Data were not available for previous years to enable comparative analysis of trends prior to 2014.

In response, the ANC leadership made a public pledge and commitment, which the party has subsequently and undoubtedly delivered on, that more women would be appointed to senior leadership positions within the provincial legislatures and the National Parliament, thus resulting in more women Speakers at provincial and national levels.

Therefore, as the figures currently stand, there are more female than male Speakers in South Africa at provincial level. All provincial legislatures, except the Northern Cape, have appointed female Speakers. So, at provincial level, male Speakers make up only 11% of the total. In addition, as shown in Table 2 below, the two national Houses of Parliament (i.e. NCOP & National Assembly) are also both led by female Speakers, which increases the level of number of representation of women as Speakers across all Parliaments at national and provincial levels to an overwhelming majority of 91%. It is not clear if this situation will persist after the 2019 National and Provincial Elections, depending on developments in ANC internal politics, including its electoral fortunes, given that the party is the main contributor to women's representation figures in many institutions across the country.

Table 2: The Numbers and Gender Profile of Officer-bearers in Provincial Legislatures

Province	Chief Whip		Speaker		Deputy Speaker	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
• E. Cape		1		1		1
• Free State	1			1	1	
• Gauteng	1			1	1	
• KZN		1		1	1	
• Limpopo	1			1	1	
• Mpumalanga	1			1	1	
• N. Cape		1	1			1
• N. West	1			1		1
• W. Cape	1			1	1	
• N. Assembly	1			1	1	
• NCOP	1			1	1	
<b>Total</b>	8	3	1	10	8	3
	(72,7%)	(36,3%)	(9%)	(91%)	(72,7%)	(36,3%)

Source: National Assembly & Provincial Legislatures

In terms of the numbers for chief whips as another category of office-bearers, the picture changes slightly to reflect male dominance. If all the chief whip positions at provincial legislature and National Parliament level are added up, the figures in Table 2 show that a large majority of 72.7% of these positions is held by men compared to only 36.3% held by female chief whips. The positions of chief whip have historically and traditionally been a male sphere of dominance. It would appear therefore that while women are making inroads into this category of office-bearer, the progress remains slow and limited.

## 2.2.4 Gender Composition of Provincial Premiership Positions

Table 3: Gender Composition of Provincial Premiership Positions

Province	Premiers	
	Male	Female
• Eastern Cape	1	
• Free State		1
• Gauteng	1	
• KwaZulu-Natal	1	
• Limpopo	1	
• Mpumalanga		1
• North West	1	
• Northern Cape		1
• Western Cape		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>

Source: National Assembly & Provincial Legislatures.

Regarding the position of provincial Premiers, the 2004 elections saw female Premiers in the country making up 44% of the total, before the number went up to 55% after the 2009 elections. After the 2014 national and provincial elections, the number sharply declined to 22%, mainly due to the ANC appointing more male than female Premiers in the wake of the 2014 elections as already discussed above. This meant that after the 2014 elections, the country had only two female Premiers, one from the ANC-ruled Northern Cape and the other from the DA-controlled Western Cape province.

The latest/updated information (Table 3) for 2018 now shows a dramatic improvement in terms of gender balance and women's representation. The overall picture is no longer completely gender-skewed in favour of male Premiers. As at August/September 2018, there were five male Premiers and four female Premiers in the country. During the past five years, some major developments in the country's politics and government took place, accounting for some of the changes. For instance, the ANC held its elective conference in December 2017 at the Nasrec Expo Centre in Johannesburg. During that party conference, former Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza, was elected Deputy President of the ANC, and subsequently Deputy President of the country. Also, former Free State Premier, Ace Magashule, was elected party Secretary-General. Both these male provincial Premiers had to vacate their positions and were replaced by female Premiers.

This means that the number of female-led provinces has increased from two (i.e. DA-led Western Cape, under Premier Helen Zille, and the ANC-led Northern Cape under Premier Silvia Lucas) to four, which now include Free State led by Premier Sisi Ntombela, and Mpumalanga led by Refilwe Mtsweni.

### 3. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

The discussion and analysis of the data on the representation of women and men in politics and government in South Africa since the 2014 National and Provincial Elections, as presented in this report, point to key positive developments and trends. In general, the analysis shows that significant developments, particularly improvements, have occurred in terms of gender balance in the representation of women in various institutions of government in South Africa, at provincial and national levels.

Firstly, at national level, the overall figures show that the situation has improved for the two Houses of the National Assembly, as well as the National Cabinet. After the decline (from 43% to 40%) in women's representation that occurred in the National Assembly in the wake of the 2014 elections, the latest updated figures show that the level has picked up, back to 43% in 2018. Similarly, the figures for the NCOP show an improvement in women's representation from 28% recorded in 2014, to 37% in the latest 2018 figures. Similarly, the situation for women's representation in the National Cabinet has improved significantly, with women now constituting a 49% share of the National Cabinet in terms of the latest 2018 figures, compared to 40% soon after the 2014 elections. A related observation is that whereas in the past, especially during the early period (in the first decade of the country's democracy) women were likely to be appointed as Deputy Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Speakers, the situation appears to have changed dramatically, with women increasingly entering those categories of leadership in government and politics traditionally and historically reserved for male political leaders.

While the reasons for these trends and improvements observed over the past five years since the 2014 elections are complex and varied, they appear to largely point to a continuation of the upwards trend that has been occurring in the past decade, until the declines that occurred in the 2014 elections. It appears that the 2014 electoral decline in the electoral fortunes of the ANC was the key factor contributing to the general decline in the levels of women's representation in various spheres of politics and government in South Africa. Therefore, the positive changes that have been occurring since the 2014 elections appear to show a structural and consistent recovery rather than a random occurrence, mainly due to the fact that the improvements are widespread and cover various areas of leadership and representation, both at national and provincial levels.

The reasons for the positive development noted over the past five years since the 2014 elections are varied and complex. However, key contributing factors have already been identified elsewhere in this report, particularly the numerous presidential Cabinet reshuffles which led to many women being appointed as Cabinet Ministers; resignations; dismissals; retirements; promotions and demotions, changes in party memberships and party leadership conferences. In addition, the greater attention and vocal activism from gender groups and women's organisations, including greater public concern and attention to issues of gender inequality during the past five years have also arguably contributed to greater awareness among political leaders for the need to respond by improving opportunities for women.

It can however be stated with a certain level of confidence that many political parties have not changed or introduced any notable internal policy changes regarding gender equality, transformation and women's empowerment. For instance, with the exception of the ANC, other political parties have not formally and publicly embraced numerical gender quota systems or 'Zebra-stripe'-type of candidate placement systems to improve women's representation in their internal party structures, as well as in their lists of party candidates for various elective institutions at national and provincial levels.

In spite of the progress and positive developments in South Africa in the past five years in terms of equal opportunities and rights for women and men to participate in politics and government, the figures nonetheless reveal a persisting low level of women's representation and participation in senior level decision-making processes inside the political parties. In addition, the overall under-representation of women is not merely confined to the top leadership structures of the six major political parties selected for this study. The situation is widespread, affecting almost all thirteen political parties currently represented in the National Assembly. For instance, out of all the thirteen political parties only one (the NFP) is officially led by a woman. The rest is all led by men, with overwhelmingly male-dominated senior leadership structures.

The latest figures have also shown a significant upward trend in women's representation at provincial level since the 2014 elections. The updated 2018 figures show that after the drop (to 37%) in representation of women experienced in the 2014 elections, the overall level of women in the provincial legislatures has improved by 5% to 42% in the latest 2018 figures. In addition, the majority of the provincial legislatures (six out of nine) has experienced an increase in female representation. The latest figures also show an overall increase in females among provincial Premiers, especially after the controversy in 2014 when the ruling party appointed only one female Premier and seven male Premiers to run the provinces ruled by the party. The latest figures now show almost a gender balance between male and female Premiers, while the figures for female Speakers remain overwhelmingly high. Similarly, women are better represented in provincial Cabinets as MECs than previously, suggesting a concerted effort particularly on the part of the ruling ANC as the main contributor to these trends over the past five years in redressing some of the glaring imbalances in the representation and participation of women in politics and government in South Africa.

However, it should be borne in mind that these developments occurred during the past five years to recover from the regressions that were experienced in the wake of the 2014 elections. As the country once again moves closer to the next National and Provincial Elections, there are real possibilities that regressions could occur again. It therefore remains a challenge for institutions such as the CGE, women organisations, gender activists and other related civil society organisations, to remain vigilant and ready to raise issues of concern when such regression recurs.

## 4. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The data presented and analysed in this report lead to a number of key concluding remarks regarding gender balance and women's representation in politics and South Africa.

Firstly, improvements in gender representation, particularly in the numbers of women represented, were experienced during the period after the 2014 National and Provincial Elections.

Secondly, we conclude that the improvements were not merely random, but widespread and consistent across various institutions (i.e. the NCOP, National Assembly, National Cabinet, provincial legislatures, provincial Cabinets and Speaker positions).

Thirdly, we conclude that the positive changes and development in women's representation over the past five years were due to various and complex factors such as the numerous Presidential Cabinet reshuffles since 2014, member resignations, retirements, deaths, dismissals, promotions to office-bearer positions, demotions as well party elective conferences.

Fourthly, we conclude that while these positive developments and improvements are to be applauded, promoting gender equality and transformation remains a voluntary activity among many political parties in South Africa. These political parties remain unwilling to adopt numerical quota systems to ensure that gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are governed by clear and committed policy commitments with clear targets, rather than be subjects of the vagaries of internal party politics which explain why many of the senior leadership structures of these parties are still overwhelmingly male-dominated despite the significant improvements noted in other areas over the past five years since the 2014 elections.



**Commission for Gender Equality**  
A society free from gender oppression and inequality

# CONTACT DETAILS

---

## GAUTENG

### Johannesburg (Head Office)

2 Kotze Street  
Women's Jail, East Wing  
Constitution Hill  
Braamfontein, 2017  
Tel: +27 11 403 7182  
Fax: +27 11 403 7188

### Pretoria (Provincial Office)

267 Lillian Ngoyi Street  
Pretor Forum  
Pretoria, 0001  
Tel: +27 12 341 6090  
Fax: +27 12 341 4689

## EASTERN CAPE

### East London

3-33 Phillip Frame Road  
Waverly Office Park  
Chiselhurst  
East London, 5247  
Tel: +27 43 722 3489  
Fax: +27 43 722 3474

## FREE STATE

### Bloemfontein

49 Charlotte Maxeke Street  
Fedsure Building, 2nd Floor  
Bloemfontein, 9300  
Tel: +27 51 430 9348  
Fax: +27 51 430 7372

## KWAZULU-NATAL

### Durban

40 Dr A.B Xuma Road  
Commercial City, Suite 1219  
Durban, 4000  
Tel: +27 31 305 2105  
Fax: +27 31 307 7435

## MPUMALANGA

### Nelspruit

32 Bell Street, Office 212-230  
Nelspruit, 1200  
Tel: +27 13 755 2428  
Fax: +27 13 755 2991

## NORTHERN CAPE

### Kimberley

143 Du Toitspan Road  
NPO Building  
Kimberley, 8300  
Tel: +27 53 832 0477  
Fax: +27 53 832 1278

## LIMPOPO

### Polokwane

Cnr Grabler & Schoeman Street  
106 Library Gardens Square, 1st  
Floor Polokwane, 0700  
Tel: +27 15 291 3070  
Fax: +27 15 291 5797

## NORTH WEST

### Mafikeng

38 Molopo Road  
Mafikeng, 2745  
Tel: +27 18 381 1505  
Fax: +27 18 381 1377

## WESTERN CAPE

### Cape Town

132 Adderley Street  
ABSA Building, 5th Floor  
Cape Town, 8000  
Tel: +27 21 426 4080  
Fax: +27 21 424 0549

 Toll Free: 0800 007 709

 [cgeinfo@cge.org.za](mailto:cgeinfo@cge.org.za)

 [www.cge.org.za](http://www.cge.org.za)

 [@CGE\\_ZA](https://twitter.com/CGE_ZA)

 Gender Commission of South Africa

ISBN: 978-1-920308-79-7

