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South Africa’s Municipal Vote: The ANC’s Slide to One-Third

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Africa’s governing ANC has fallen to about one-third of the vote in early returns from the November 4, 2026 municipal elections, with the Electoral Commission reporting roughly 32 percent against 31 percent for the Democratic Alliance and independent projections pointing to a final ANC share near 31 percent. Turnout surged to an estimated 54.5 percent, up from 45.8 percent in 2021, as voters punished the party over failing services, crime and corruption. This study measures the scale of the slide, the participation surge, and the coalition arithmetic now facing the big cities.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS & STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

Executive Summary JOHANNESBURG South Africa’s governing African National Congress has fallen to about one-third of the municipal vote in early returns from the November 4 local elections, according to figures from the Electoral Commission. With roughly a fifth of ballots counted by Thursday morning, the ANC held about 32 percent, narrowly ahead of the Democratic Alliance on about 31 percent. Independent projections put the ANC’s final share at roughly 31 to 32 percent. If confirmed when final results are declared on Sunday, the result would extend a two-decade slide from close to 70 percent of the national vote in 2004 to below a third at local level. It would also leave no party able to govern most big cities alone, forcing coalition talks within two weeks of the declaration. Turnout, meanwhile, jumped to an estimated 54.5 percent, the strongest municipal showing since 2016. Methodology This study rests on figures published by the Electoral Commission of South Africa and reported by Reuters, the public broadcaster SABC and the TimesLIVE live results service, cross-checked against the Commission’s own turnout briefings. Every figure is labelled as counted, projected or historical, and all counts are preliminary: at the time of writing, only about a quarter of ballots had been tallied, and early returns skew toward smaller rural districts. Projections come from two independent models: the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, which bases its estimate on declared voting districts, and the SABC’s early projection. Historical comparisons use the Commission’s certified 2021 municipal results and the 2024 national election outcome. The method mirrors our earlier data study of record early voting in the United States , which separated counted ballots from projections before drawing

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