



# Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

## ELECTIONS

# FACT SHEET 22

REVISION 1, 9 APRIL 2019

### What is the role of elections in a constitutional democracy?

- South Africa's Constitution provides for regular, free and fair elections to enable citizens to exercise their right to vote and to choose a political party or public representative of their choice.
- South Africa's Constitution provides for a multi-party system where different political parties have the right to contest elections for the opportunity to be the ruling party or government or rule as part of a coalition government.
- General elections therefore grant voters the power to decide which political party will govern the country at a national and provincial level and which political parties will be the opposition to the ruling party.

### How does South Africa's electoral system work?

- South Africa's Constitution grants every citizen over the age of 18 the right to vote.
- South Africa's national and provincial elections take place every five years.
- South Africa's electoral system is based on a voting system of proportional representation: the number of seats in the national Parliament and the provincial legislatures are allocated in direct proportion to the number of votes a political party receives during the election.
- Voters cast one vote for the party of their choice at national level and one vote for the party of their choice at provincial level.

### How do parties select their list of electoral candidates?

- Before the elections, each political party submits a list of candidates to the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC). These lists are 'closed' and cannot be altered by voters.
- Political party candidate lists are drawn up and candidates are ranked based on internal party preferences and selection criteria. It is common practice for parties to rank their presidential and premier candidates first on their national and provincial lists.
- The Candidate Nomination System (CNS) is used to facilitate the process of candidate nominations.
- At the end of the electoral process, these (ranked) lists are used to fill the seats allocated to each party.

### What is the role of the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC)?

- The IEC is a Chapter 9 institution mandated to oversee and endorse elections of legislative bodies and institutions at national, provincial and municipal level.

- The IEC has four main responsibilities:
  - To manage elections of national, provincial and municipal legislative bodies;
  - To ensure that elections are free and fair;
  - To declare the results of elections; and
  - To compile and maintain the voters' roll.

### **How do I cast my vote?**

- Go to the voting station where you are registered on election day. Every voting station has large, clear signs outside marking it as a voting station and the station is usually open from 07:00 to 21:00.
- A voting officer will validate your ID and check that your name appears on the voters' roll.
- The voting officer will mark your left thumbnail with ink, stamp your identity document and provide you with two ballot papers: one for the national and one for the provincial election. Verify the authenticity of the ballot paper by making sure there is an IEC stamp on the reverse side.
- Proceed to a booth where you will cast your vote by marking each ballot paper with an X next to the political party of your choice.
- After making your mark, drop both ballot papers in the clearly marked ballot boxes.
- If you are physically disabled or visually impaired, ask one of the officials to assist you.
- The IEC also allows for 'special votes' if you are unable to vote at your voting station on election day. A special vote allows you to vote on a predetermined day before election day. You can apply for a special vote if you are physically disabled, pregnant or unable to vote at your designated voting station on election day.

### **What happens after I have cast my vote?**

- Ballot boxes, including the ballot boxes with special votes, are opened in the presence of political-party agents. Ballot papers are verified to ensure that each ballot paper contains the official IEC voting stamp. Ballot papers are then sorted according to votes for each political party that has contested the election and they are thereafter counted.
- Following the counting, the results are captured and audited by external results auditors.
- The IEC declares the results of the elections within seven days and must issue a statement that declares that the elections were credible, free and fair. This statement is based on observations made and feedback given by accredited international and local observer groups that monitor the elections.
- The chairperson of the IEC, in the presence of the President of the country and other key stakeholders, announces the final election results to the nation during a live media broadcast. This media broadcast is held at the official National Results Operations Centre usually based in Pretoria.
- The IEC is also required by law to publish an official report after each election, which is available on the IEC website ([www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za)).
- The Electoral Commission calculates the number of national and provincial seats each party has won using the proportional representation voting system.