

# FreeFACTS

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## What portents can we see from local by-elections?

**Since last year's local government election (LGE) and the end of July 30 by-elections have been held in various wards across the country. But what is their significance?**

Studying by-elections can give you some insight into electoral trends in the country. They will not give you the same insights as say, a national opinion poll, but can give you some clues. Think of a large representative opinion poll as more of a satellite image of the weather which can give a person a highly accurate picture of what to expect from the weather. By-elections are more like windsocks – they will tell you which way the wind is blowing and a skilled meteorologist will be able to tell you what to expect.

Any electoral analysis in South Africa will, by its nature, focus on the ANC, given its position as the dominant party in this country. However, this is changing, slowly, as the ANC is increasingly having its dominance challenged. And this can be seen in the by-election results.

The ANC has stood in each of the 30 by-elections held. In 23 of those seats it was the incumbent. However, it has lost more than a quarter of those seats, with the party being turfed out in six by-elections. The EFF has been the primary beneficiary, winning three of these seats, and the DA, an independent, and the African United Movement one each.

The ANC has also won a seat off the DA, giving it a net loss of five seats in this cycle of by-elections.

At the same time, if we pool the ANC's vote in these 30 wards where by-elections were held what can we see? In last year's LGE the cumulative ANC proportion of the vote was nearly 50%, in these by-elections it has shrunk to 44%.

So, what can we determine from the by-election windsock?

While ANC support is declining it has not collapsed and many voters still prefer it to other parties. But this situation is changing – the era of national coalition government could be upon us sooner than we think.

— **Marius Roodt**

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The IRR is an advocacy group that fights for your right to make decisions about your life, family and business, free from unnecessary government, political, and bureaucratic interference. FreeFACTS publishes evidence that communities are better off when individuals are free to make decisions about how they want to live, be educated, work, access healthcare, think, speak, own property, and protect their communities. If you agree with the issues we stand for, welcome to the team. There are millions of people just like you who are tired of South African politicians, activists, and commentators attempting to rein in your freedom to decide. Take control and make sure your voice is heard by becoming a friend of the IRR.

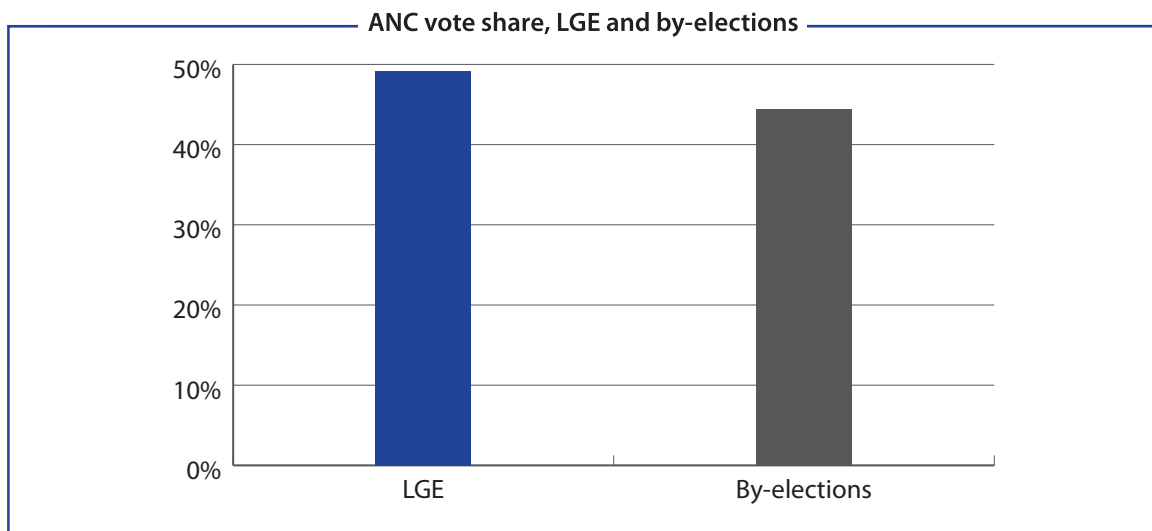
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## Local by-elections

By-elections, net gain and loss				
	Hold	Gain	Loss	Net
ANC	17	1	6	-5
IFP	1	0	1	-1
NFP	1	1	0	1
African United Movement	0	1	0	1
Independent	0	1	0	1
DA	2	2	1	1
EFF	0	3	0	3
PA	0	0	1	-1

*Source:* Independent Electoral Commission

*Note:* Hold refers to the wards successfully defended, gain refers to a ward won off an opponent, and loss refers to a ward which was not successfully defended. For example, the DA has successfully defended two seats, has won two wards in by-elections, and lost another, giving it a net gain of one.



*Source:* Independent Electoral Commission

*Note:* This refers to the cumulative vote in the 30 wards where by-elections have been held since last year's local government elections. In those elections the ANC's vote was just below 50% in the 30 wards, but this shrank to 44% in the 30 by-elections.