

VOTER REGISTRATION – UMLAZI TOWNHALL DEBATE

There are more than a million voters registered in KwaZulu-Natal have no addresses and about 300 000 of them are from the eThekweni region.

The three municipalities with the highest number of voters with no addresses are eThekweni Metro Municipality (291 005), uMgungundlovu District Municipality (40 950) and Zululand District Municipality (34 566).

During the last voter registration weekend (March 2018), our statistics in eThekweni shows that about 76 000 people registered, and 103 000 corrected their addresses.

South Africa citizens aged 16 and older and who are in possession of a barcoded ID book, smartcard ID or a temporary ID certificate can register as voters.

Those registering for the first time need to complete a registration form with their present address to enable the IEC to place them in the correct voting district.

The IEC has reiterated that proof of residence is not required.

A credible and up-to-date voter's role is a vital instrument to ensure free and fair elections.

It is vital that the correct addresses are captured so that the credibility of the voter's role is beyond reproach. We must ensure that people vote in the districts where they reside.

Over 22 000 voting stations will be open nationwide so that voters can check, update and confirm their address details. You are eligible to register to vote if you are:

- A South African citizen and are registered to vote;
- At least 18 years old; and
- In possession of a green bar-coded ID book, smart ID card or temporary identity certificate.

Our Democracy remains strong and vibrant due to the following reasons:

- We have had regular, credible and free and fair national and local elections since 1994.
- The IEC is an independent body established to promote and safeguard our democracy.
- It has a solid reputation and a positive track record of conducting elections.
- Close to 26 million South Africans are registered to vote

We all have a role to play in advancing this democracy:

- In 1994 millions of South Africans made their voice heard for the first time.
- In 2019 millions of South Africans will once again cast their vote to strengthen and renew our democracy.
- Make sure that your voice is heard in 2019 by registering and confirming your voting address.
- It is in our hands to ensure an electoral system that remains credible and fair.
- Our democracy is at risk if we don't have a credible voter's role.
- It is important that citizens along with candidates have faith in the process.
- We can all play our part by registering to vote and making sure that our correct address is captured.

Youth Vote

In an attempt to paint a clear picture of youth participation, a sketching of the voter participation statistics of the last three elections, with a particular focus on the youth (ages 18 – 29) is necessary. In most post-election analyses, reports and publications it seems to be a general finding that young voters are predisposed to lower turnout rates compared to older age groups.

The 2011 local government elections reflect the following:

- A total of 23 654 347 people registered to vote.
- A total number of 13 592 856 votes were cast (57.5% of registered voters).

Out of this, the youth participation looks as follows:

- 8.3 million of the registered voters were youth voters.
- 4.2 million of the youth turned out to vote.
- Thus, 50.6% of registered youth actually voted; clearly, a much lower percentage of eligible young people actually voted.

According to the Institute for Security Studies, the outline of the numbers in the 2014 general election reflects the following:

- A total of 25 388 082 voters registered.
- 18 654 771 of these voters turned out (73.4%).

Out of this, the youth participation looks as follows:

- 10.9 million people between 18 and 29 were eligible to register.
- Out of that number only 6.4 million of them actually registered (58%).
- The figure of actual voters among youth is not known, but it could not have been higher than 58% and was almost certainly much lower.

If the pattern followed 2011, as few as 30% of eligible youth might have voted in 2014.

Figures for the 2016 election bear this out:

- The eligible youth voting population was 11.8 million.
- Only 6.3 million registered (53%).
- The final number of actual youth voters is again not known, but it could not have exceeded 53%, and was probably much lower.

There could be a number of reasonable and valid explanations for these low turnouts of young voters.

The youth have been accused time and again of not valuing democracy because they did not have to sacrifice anything to attain it. Their perceived low turnout has been attributed to this ungrateful attitude, associated with an entitled youth.

With over a million eligible youth voters having abstained from voting in 2016, it is evident that youth activism and engagement with the state does not guarantee electoral agency. It might be that the issues that the youth face are, at one point or the other, addressed by the parties, but the youth might still feel that there is no party fit enough to handle them to their satisfaction.