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2024/ 2025 LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING REPORT



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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This is a monitoring report on the implementation of Use of Official Languages Act (Act No. 12 of 2012) (UOLA) and various provincial language legislation based on an analysis of annual language reports submitted to PanSALB by national organs of state in terms of Section 9 of the UOLA, and the following provincial legislation:

- **Western Cape Provincial Languages Act (Act No. 13 of 1998)** regulates and monitors the use of the three provincial official languages (Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa) by the Western Cape government and establishes the Western Cape Language Committee.
- **Gauteng Provincial Languages Act (Act No. 3 of 2016)** designates all official spoken languages of the country as official languages for the province and provides for the establishment of provincial language units and internal language policies across provincial organs of state, including local government.
- **Eastern Cape Use of Official Languages Act (Act No. 8 of 2016)** stipulates that isiXhosa, Afrikaans, English, and Sesotho are the official languages of the province and provides a comprehensive framework for language use, monitoring, provincial language units, and departmental language policies.
- **Free State Use of Official Languages Act (Act No. 4 of 2017)** does not declare specific official languages. Still, it transfers that obligation to the Free State Language Policy, which lists the provincial official languages of the Free State as Sesotho, Afrikaans, Setswana, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and English.
- **Northern Province (Limpopo) Languages Act (Act No. 7 of 2000)** determines the official languages as Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi), Afrikaans, English, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, and isiNdebele for government and legislative purposes and establishes the Limpopo Province Language Committee.
- **Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Act (Act No. 4 of 2014)** provides for designated provincial languages that is Siswati, isiNdebele, Afrikaans, and English, and establishes provincial language units and monitoring mechanisms.
- **North West Provincial Languages Act (Act No. 4 of 2017)** establishes the framework for language use in its provincial government and public participation mechanisms. It designates Setswana, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English, and Sesotho as official languages of the provinces.
- **Northern Cape Provincial Languages Act (Act No. 20 of 2021)** provides that Afrikaans, Setswana, isiXhosa and English are the official languages of the province, regulate language use, and promote indigenous and historically diminished languages.
- **KwaZulu-Natal Language Policy, 2008**, provides for isiZulu, isiXhosa, English, and Afrikaans as provincial official languages.

The monitoring and evaluation undertaken in this report is based on section 8(1)(j) of the **Pan South African Language Board (Act 59 of 1995)** (PanSALB Act) which requires that the Board monitor the observance of constitutional provisions regarding the use of language and the contents of any existing and new legislation, practice, and policy dealing directly or indirectly with language matters at any level of government. It further stipulates that the Board assist with and monitor the formulation of programmes and policies aimed at fostering the equal use of and respect for official languages, while taking steps to ensure that communities have the opportunity to use their languages in appropriate circumstances.

Section 8(2) of the PanSALB Act mandates the Board to initiate studies and research that advance linguistic equality and social cohesion in South Africa by promoting respect for the official languages and their equal use and enjoyment, supporting the development of previously marginalised languages, safeguarding existing language rights and the status of languages, fostering multilingualism, optimising the use of the country's language resources, and preventing the use of language as a tool for exploitation, domination, or division.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024/25 Language Policy Implementation Monitoring Report presents PanSALB's assessment of compliance with the UOLA and relevant provincial language legislation, as well as applicable constitutional provisions across national, provincial, and local spheres of government. The report is based on the analysis of annual language compliance reports submitted by organs of state, supplemented by structured digital surveys and document reviews.

Overall, the findings reveal that formal policy adoption has progressed, particularly at national and provincial levels, but that implementation, institutionalization, and accountability remain weak and uneven. Compliance continues to be procedural rather than functional, with many institutions demonstrating the existence of policies without the supporting structures, plans, budgets, or monitoring systems necessary to give effect to multilingual service delivery.

At a national level, participation remains low. Only 21% of national departments, 10% of national public entities, and 52% of national public enterprises submitted language compliance reports for the 2024/25 cycle. While a high proportion of responding national departments have approved language policies aligned with constitutional and UOLA requirements, implementation is constrained by the absence of functional language units, limited budgets, and inconsistent multilingual practice. English remains the dominant language for both internal and external communication, reinforcing functional unilingualism despite formal commitments to multilingualism.

At a provincial level, compliance patterns are inconsistent and largely influenced by institutional capacity and leadership prioritization. Submission rates generally range between 10% and 40%, with several provinces experiencing declining participation compared to previous reporting cycles, reflecting weak adherence to statutory reporting obligations. Even where policies exist, many provinces lack operational implementation plans, functional language units, and consequence-management mechanisms. Public entities and municipalities across most provinces demonstrate critically low levels of compliance, with several provinces recording no submissions at all from these sectors.

Across all spheres of government, the review identifies systemic challenges, including:

- The widespread absence of annual language policy implementation plans;
- The lack of or under-resourcing of language units, despite legislative requirements;
- The marginal positioning of language matters within organisational hierarchies;
- Inadequate or non-existent budget allocations for language services;
- Weak public awareness and ineffective complaint-handling mechanisms;
- Continued dominance of English in public communication, signage, websites, and internal government operations; and
- Uneven and inconsistent preparation for the implementation of South African Sign Language (SASL) following the **Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Act (Act No. 3 of 2023)**.

While pockets of good practice were identified—particularly in departments responsible for arts, culture, and education—these remain isolated and have not translated into system-wide change. The report thus concludes that the primary challenge is no longer policy formulation, but sustained implementation, enforcement, and institutional accountability.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**1. Background**

The UOLA was enacted to ensure the equitable use of South Africa's 12 official languages. The Act aims to promote equitable treatment of all official languages and ensure that national government institutions adhere to inclusive multilingualism in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The Constitution mandates the provincial government institutions, public entities, and public enterprises to develop and implement language policies that promote multilingualism. The UOLA requires institutions to establish language units, implement language policies, and submit annual reports on their language-related activities to the Minister responsible for languages and PanSALB.

PanSALB, established under Section 6(5) of the Constitution, is responsible for overseeing the promotion, development, and use of official languages and ensuring respect for languages recognized by the Constitution as languages used for heritage, cultural, and religious purposes.

Provincial legislation on languages, derived from UOLA requirements, provides for provincial and local governments to promote, develop, and use official languages in their contexts of their operations. Provincial legislation must be read in conjunction with Chapter 4 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), which establishes the legal framework for community participation in the local government sphere.

Section 16 of the Systems Act provides that municipalities must encourage the local community to participate in the preparation of regular Integrated Development Plans (IDP), budgets, and performance management systems. Municipalities must account for the needs of disadvantaged groups, including people who cannot read or write, people with disabilities, and women. Section 18 of the same act stipulates that municipalities must inform their communities about their language rights and duties, as well as the available mechanisms for participation in local governance. Section 20 requires that municipal council and committee meetings must be generally open to the public and the media, especially when discussing by-laws, budgets, or IDPs. They must publish official notifications in local newspapers or broadcast on the radio in languages determined by the council in terms of section 21 of the Systems Act.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this report are:

- 2.1. to assess compliance with the UOLA and the other related provincial and local government legislation during the 2024/25 financial year for the national, provincial, and local government spheres with a focus on language unit activities, policy implementation, complaint handling, challenges, and SASL implementation (as measure of the state's readiness to implement the Constitution Eighteenth Amendment).
- 2.2. to provide findings on the state of overall national compliance with language-related legislation, including the Constitution.
- 2.3. to make recommendations on how to improve compliance by all organs of state.
- 2.4. to propose language audit measures to improve language policy implementation compliance by all organs of state.

3. Framework for language policy implementation

The implementation of language policies in South Africa is guided by the provisions of the Constitution, the PanSALB Act, the UOLA, and the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, which jointly require national, provincial, and local governments and their public entities and enterprises to comply with key requirements of section 6 and chapter 2 of the Constitution.

National and provincial government institutions must adopt language policies identifying at least three official languages in terms of section 4(3) of the UOLA, and must be compliant with section 6(2) of the Constitution for the

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development of indigenous African languages (previously marginalised languages).

Local government institutions are required to promote the development and use of various official local languages. For instance, municipalities in the Western Cape must use the three official languages adopted by the provincial government, compared to Gauteng, which recognises eleven official languages as per its provincial legislation. However, the Gauteng Provincial Official Languages Act does allow municipalities to adopt fewer than eleven official languages depending on their regional circumstances and residents' needs. Additionally, organs of state are required to have effective complaint mechanisms for language-related issues.

PanSALB's oversight framework includes annual reporting to ensure compliance with the UOLA, focusing on four interconnected pillars of language policy implementation: status planning, corpus planning, acquisition planning, and prestige planning. This integrated approach is essential for fostering a cohesive linguistic environment and promoting linguistic equity, preserving diversity, and ensuring social cohesion in response to the government imperatives of participatory democracy.

4. Methodology

The methodology for this monitoring report is anchored in an analysis of official reports submitted by national and provincial departments, their public entities, and public enterprises, focusing on evaluating the implementation of the UOLA and provincial legislation. The report further provides a synopsis on the implementation of Chapter 4 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act to examine progress made in the promotion of multilingualism at local government level.

The report is an empirical monitoring evaluation based on annual language reports received by PanSALB from the national and provincial organs of state that responded to the request for these reports in terms of their specific legislation. The units of analysis include language unit activities, the implementation of language policies, and the management of language-related complaints by organs of state that submitted their annual language reports.

Data collection methods involved sending emails to institutions regarding the submission of their annual reports on the use of official languages, alongside gathering information on legislative, executive, and administrative measures pertinent to language policy implementation, especially concerning preparations for the adoption of SASL.

The data collection mechanism was a digital form on Microsoft Forms, for which a link and QR code were disseminated to all national departments, as well as provincial and local governments. An in-house software system for language implementation policy evaluation was produced, including a link and a QR code, which was also deployed.

A document analysis was conducted by analysing results received on both systems to evaluate the extent of compliance and the effectiveness of language policy implementation across the various institutions in all three spheres of government.

5. Scope and application

PanSALB is established in terms of section 6(5) of the Constitution to promote and create conditions for the development and use of all official languages, as well as the Khoe and San languages. The Board must promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa and other languages used for religious purposes. In terms of the PanSALB Act, the Board is accountable to Parliament and shall perform its powers and duties subject only to the Constitution and the PanSALB Act. The Act further implores that all organs of state shall afford the Board such assistance as may reasonably be required for the protection of the Board's independence, impartiality, dignity, and effectiveness in the exercise, carrying out, and performance of the Board's powers, duties, and functions.

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The UOLA and its provincial-related legislation apply to almost 44 national departments and around 110 provincial departments. In terms of the list of PFMA institutions, there are around 191 national public entities and national public enterprises, and around 130 provincial public entities and provincial enterprises. These 321 organs of state range from state-owned companies, development corporations, gambling and liquor authorities, tourism, parks, heritage, research agencies, and regulatory bodies. There are 257 municipalities in South Africa required to comply with Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act. In terms of section 8(1)(c) of the PanSALB Act, the Board is required to request around 732 organs of state, distributed nationwide at all spheres of government, to supply it with any legislative, executive, or administrative measures adopted by the organs of state relating to language policy and language practice.

6. Limitations

This review may have the following limitations:

- 6.1. This review does not include specific domains such as education, crime and justice, health, business, and so forth, even though the evaluation approach adopted all four pillars of language policy and language practice.
- 6.2. This review concentrates on the status planning and prestige planning to demonstrate non-compliance and state language practices skewed toward unilingualism.
- 6.3. The data collection techniques deployed may be inadequate because some organs of state may claim not to have received enquiry forms. Nevertheless, that does not abdicate them of their legislative obligation to voluntarily submit the information under their respective pieces of legislation. Thus, the monitoring review is reduced to an empirical study, not a language audit by PanSALB. However, the available datasets provide sufficient information to paint a picture of language policy implementation and language practices in South Africa during the period under review.

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CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION OF NATIONAL ORGANS OF STATE IN COMPLIANCE WITH UOLA**1. National departments**

1.1. Out of 44 national departments, only nine (9) submitted their language compliance reports for the 2024/25 reporting cycle, reflecting a 21% submission rate compared to the previous reporting period (2023/24 financial year), during which at least 24% (10) national departments submitted their annual language reports in terms of Section 9(2) of the UOLA. The consistently compliant national departments include:

- a) the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI),
- b) National Treasury (NT),
- c) the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC),
- d) the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE),
- e) the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), and
- f) the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

1.2. Almost 70% of national departments reported approved language policies. However, several indicated that they did not have functional language units, which limited effective implementation and monitoring as required in terms of section 8 of the UOLA.

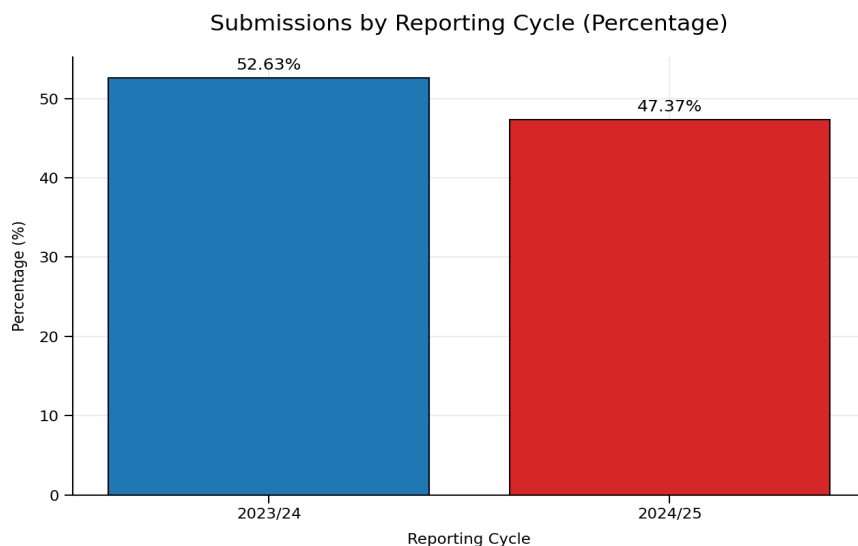
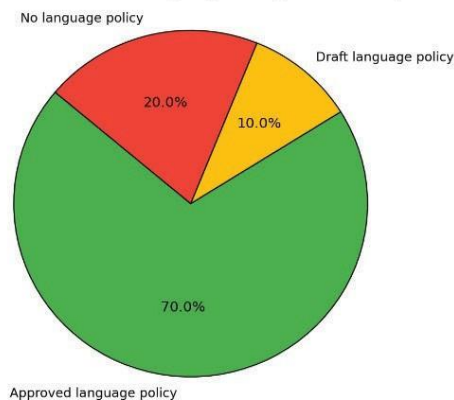


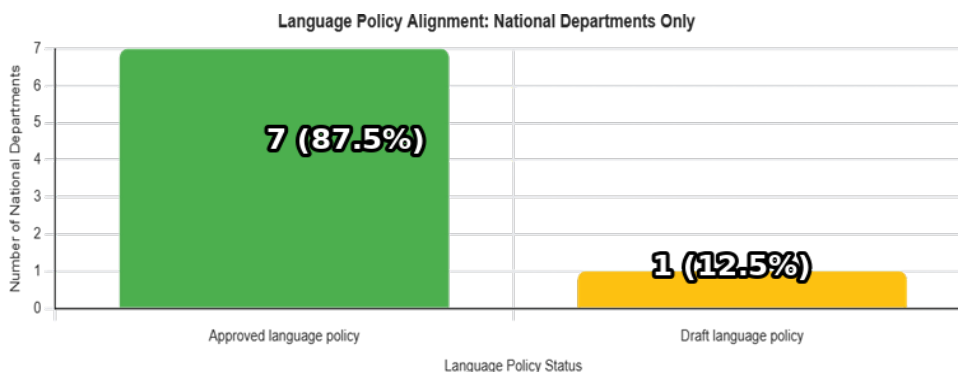
Chart 1: National departments' participation

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Percentage Distribution of Language Policy Status (Departments)

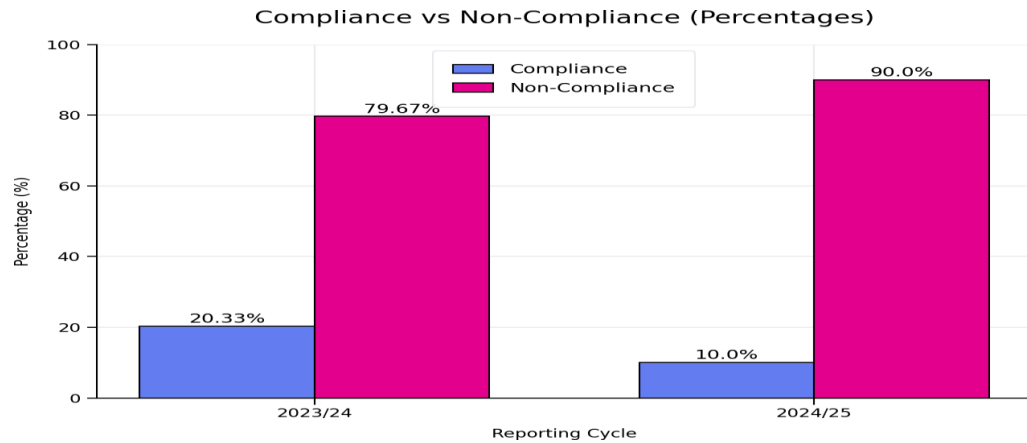
*Graph 1: National departments' language policy status*

- 1.3. While DSAC and DFFE reported reliance on the UOLA for official communication, NT and DIRCO, reported reliance primarily or exclusively on English, illustrating an erratic implementation of multilingualism.

*Chart 2: National departments' language policy alignment with the Constitution & UOLA*

- 1.4. Almost 88% of the national departments' language policies were compliant with both the two official languages requirement of the Constitution and the three official languages requirement of the UOLA.
- 2. National public entities**
- 2.1. Out of 191 national public entities, only 19 submitted their required reports for the 2024/25 reporting cycle, reflecting a 10% submission rate compared to the previous reporting period (2023/24 financial year), during which at least 20.33% (39) national public entities submitted their annual language reports.

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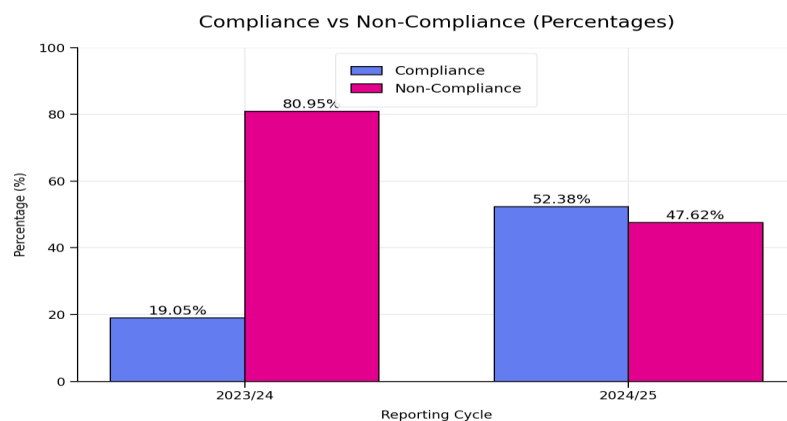
*Chart 3: National public entities' compliance*

2.2. The large number of non-compliant entities highlights a considerable gap in compliance that needs addressing to ensure all entities fulfil their language policy obligations. This disparity underscores the importance of improving compliance rates to achieve better accountability and transparency across all national public entities.

2.3. While several of these public entities reported having approved language policies supported by functional language units, a significant number indicated that they did not have language policies or language units and relied predominantly on English for official communication. In some cases, public entities reported the use of multiple official languages without approved language policies, reflecting fragmented and non-institutionalized implementation.

3. National public enterprises

3.1. Out of 21 national public enterprises, only 11, which totals 52%, submitted their required report during the 2024/25 reporting cycles, leaving 10 (48%) enterprises that did not comply. This is an improvement from the previous financial year (2023/24), where only 19% (4) of public enterprises submitted a report.

*Chart 4: National public enterprises' compliance*

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4. National language policy analysis

- 4.1. Overall, national participation by both departments and public entities demonstrates partial compliance with language legislative prescripts. Although policy development is evident among several institutions, the absence of functional language units, inconsistent multilingual practices, and continued reliance on English undermine the objectives of the UOLA and section 6 of the Constitution.

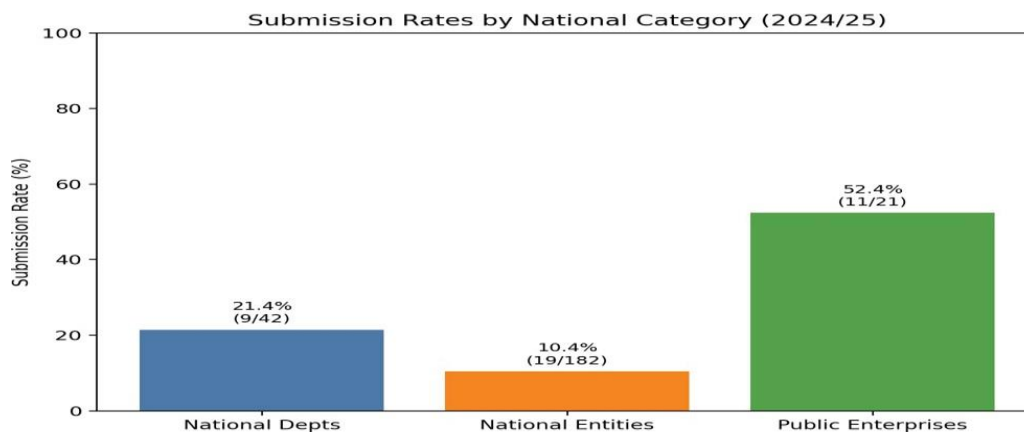


Chart 5: National government submission rates

- 4.2. Strengthened oversight, mandatory reporting, and consequence management remain essential to ensure uniform and effective implementation of language governance obligations across the national sphere of government.
- 4.3. The assessment of national institutions indicates a strong level of policy compliance and institutional commitment to language governance within the national sphere. The overwhelming majority of national departments included in the review have adopted approved language policies, reflecting clear alignment with the constitutional obligations under section 6 of the Constitution and the requirements of the UOLA. With 87.5% of the assessed national departments possessing approved language policies and the remaining 12.5% at an advanced draft stage, there is no evidence of outright non-compliance among national departments in this dataset.
- 4.4. While policy adoption at a national level is largely complete, the evaluation highlights that policy existence does not always equate to full or uniform implementation. Challenges such as limited dedicated budgets, the absence of standalone language units in some departments, and reliance on shared or outsourced language services continue to affect effective execution.
- 4.5. Nonetheless, these issues are operational rather than structural and are capable of being addressed through targeted interventions, improved interdepartmental coordination, and strengthened oversight mechanisms with consequence management.
- 4.6. Overall, national institutions demonstrate a solid foundation for multilingual governance, with only marginal gaps remaining. Consolidating progress now requires a shift from policy development to consistent implementation, monitoring, and resourcing, ensuring that approved language policies translate into measurable service delivery outcomes and meaningful linguistic access for the public.

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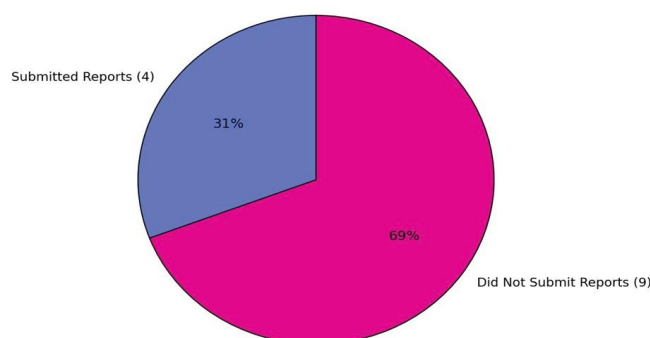
CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION OF PROVINCIAL-LEVEL COMPLIANCE**1. Provincial overview**

- 1.1 The provincial dataset shows that most provincial departments have formally adopted language policies, indicating broad compliance with their respective provincial language Acts.
- 1.2 However, a considerable number of provincial departments still operate with either draft policies or no policy at all, reflecting uneven progress across provinces. This disparity demonstrates that while legislative frameworks exist, institutional follow-through remains inconsistent, particularly in provinces facing capacity and resource constraints.
- 1.3 Although many provincial departments report having approved language policies, alignment data highlights that policy adoption does not always translate into effective implementation. Partial alignment is frequently attributed to a lack of operational plans, monitoring indicators, or regular reporting and consequence management.
- 1.4 Provincial institutions that reported “unaligned” status are typically those without approved policies, confirming that alignment strongly correlates with policy maturity. This suggests that implementation oversight, rather than legislative drafting, is now the principal challenge at a provincial level. The specific provincial breakdowns are provided below.

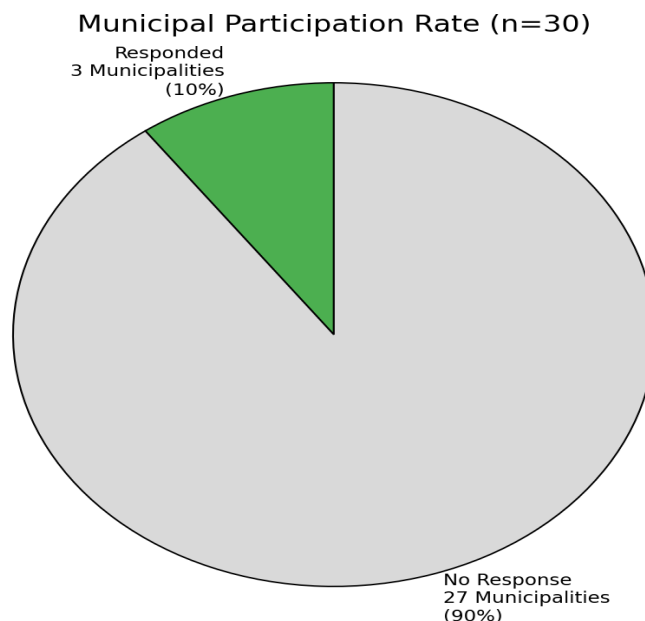
2. Western Cape

- 2.1 Only four (4) of 13 provincial departments submitted language compliance reports, representing a 31% participation rate, indicating limited adherence to language reporting requirements.

Provincial Departments: Language Compliance Report Submissions

*Graph 2: Western Cape provincial department participation*

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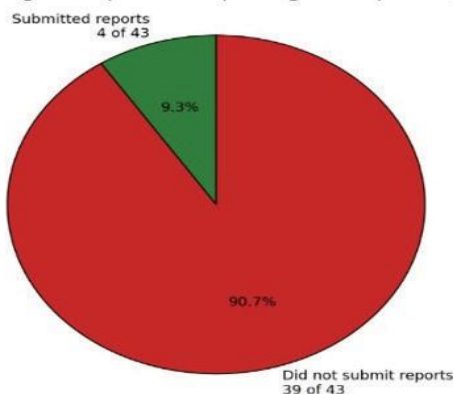
Graph 3: Western Cape local government participation

- 2.2 The Department of Education and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport reported approved language policies and functional language units. Education uses isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English, while Cultural Affairs and Sport uses isiXhosa, Afrikaans, English, and SASL. The Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety has an approved language policy but no language unit, and uses isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English.
- 2.3 At a municipal level, only three (3) of 30 municipalities responded, representing a 10% participation rate. George Local Municipality reported relatively stronger compliance, with an approved language policy, a functional language unit, and the use of isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English. Witzenberg and Cederberg Local Municipalities reported approved language policies, but no language units; they use English, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans.
- 2.4 The extremely low participation by public entities reflects significant gaps in compliance with the Western Cape Languages Act.

3. KwaZulu-Natal

- 3.1 Only four (4) of 43 district and local municipalities submitted language compliance reports, representing a 9.3% participation rate. This very low response rate indicates limited engagement with language monitoring and reporting requirements

**KwaZulu-Natal District and Local Municipalities
Language Compliance Reporting Participation (%)**



Graph 4: KwaZulu-Natal local government participation

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3.2 Msunduzi Local Municipality has an approved language policy but no language unit and uses isiZulu and English. Maphumulo Local Municipality has no language policy but has a language unit and uses isiZulu and English. Ndwedwe Local Municipality has neither a language policy nor a language unit and failed to indicate the languages used. King Cetshwayo District Municipality reported a draft language policy, no language unit, and the use of isiZulu, Afrikaans, and English.

3.3 Only one public entity, the KZN Growth Fund, submitted a report. It does not have a language policy nor a language unit and uses isiZulu and English.

3.4 Overall, reporting by both municipalities and public entities in KwaZulu-Natal remains critically low.

4. Gauteng

4.1 Only four (4) of the 15 Gauteng provincial departments submitted language compliance reports, representing a 26.7% participation rate. This reflects a significant decline from the 2023/24 reporting period, during which 47% of departments complied with the request to submit a report.

4.2 The low response rate indicates weakening institutional commitment to language compliance and monitoring obligations.

4.3 The Department of Health has an approved language policy but lacks a functional language unit and utilises five official languages, namely isiZulu, Afrikaans, English, Sesotho, and SASL. Gauteng Treasury has an approved language policy but no language unit and uses five languages: isiZulu, Afrikaans, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, and SASL. The Department of Sport, Arts, Culture, and Recreation reported a draft language policy, a functional language unit, and the use of all official languages.

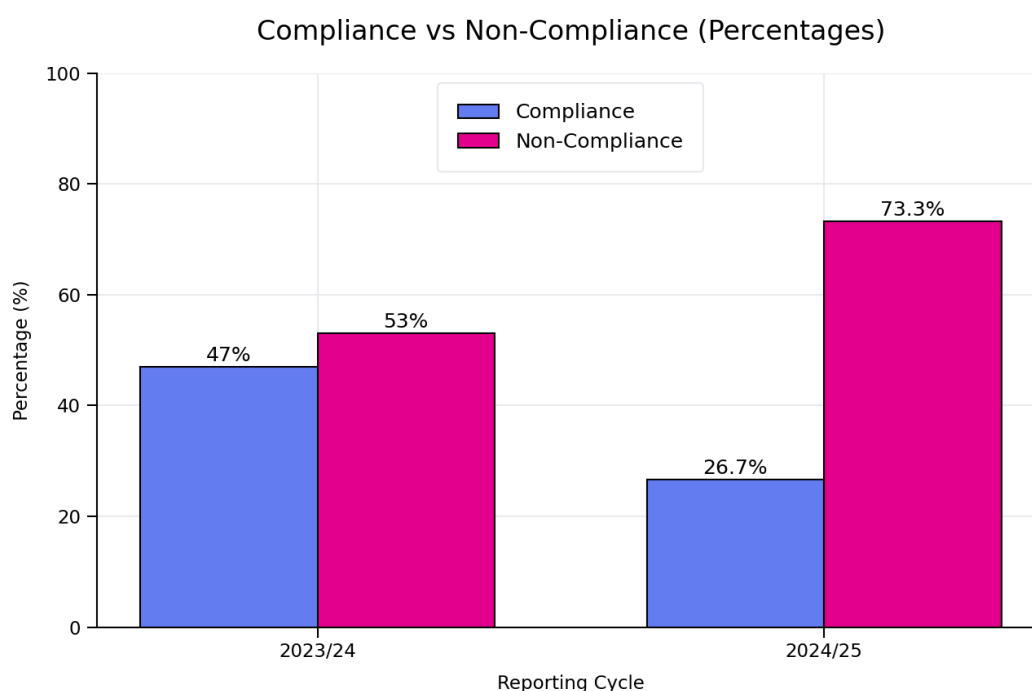


Chart 6: Gauteng provincial department compliance

4.4 At a local government level, only two (2) of nine (9) municipalities submitted reports, representing a 22.2% participation rate. Although this reflects a marginal improvement from a 11.1% participation rate in 2023/24, overall compliance remains weak.

4.5 The City of Ekurhuleni has an approved language policy but no language unit and uses Afrikaans, English, Sesotho, and isiZulu. Emfuleni Local Municipality has a draft language policy, no language unit, and uses Afrikaans, Sesotho, SASL, English, and isiZulu. The persistently low response rate highlights ongoing governance and implementation challenges within Gauteng municipalities.

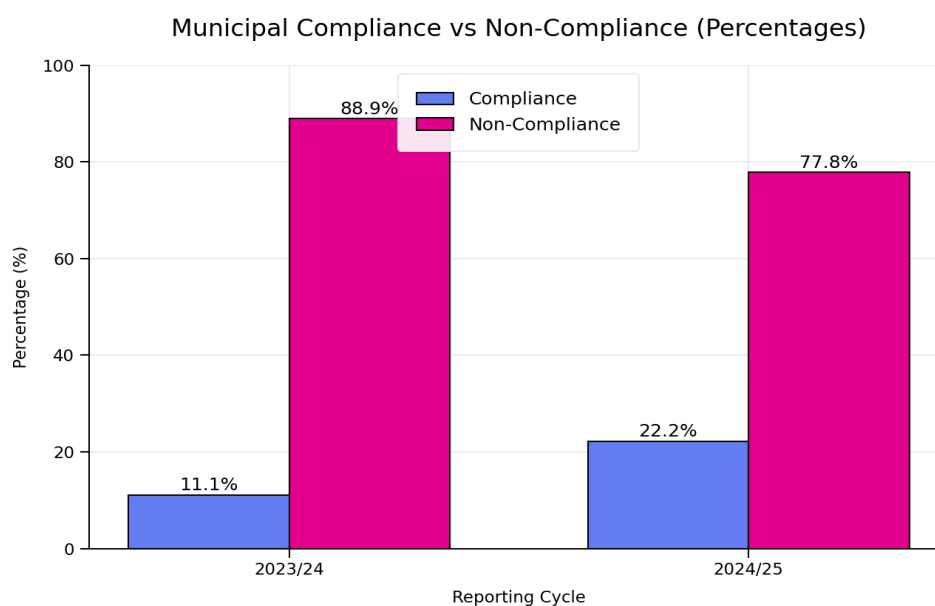
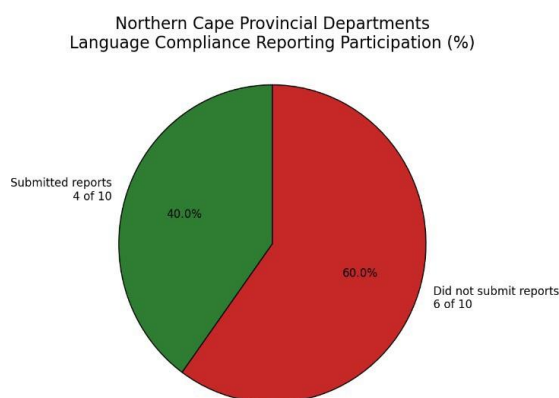


Chart 7: Gauteng local government compliance

5. Northern Cape

5.1 Four (4) of ten (10) provincial departments submitted language compliance reports, representing a 40% participation rate. While higher than in several other provinces, the data reveal significant gaps in implementation.



Graph 5: Northern Cape provincial department compliance

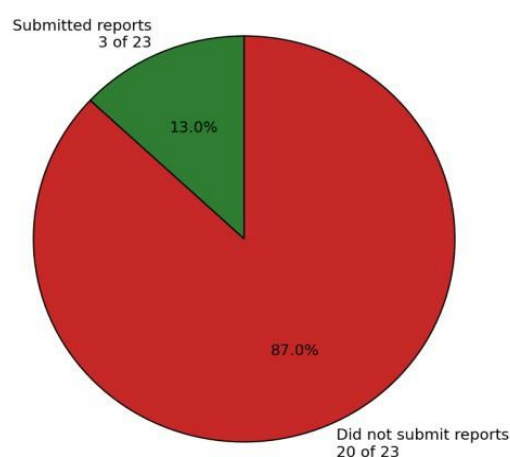
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- 5.2 The Department of Transport, Safety, and Liaison has no language policy but has a language unit and uses six official languages. The Department of Roads and Public Works and the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture reported approved and draft language policies, respectively, with mixed availability of language units. The Department of Health reported no language policy but had a language unit and used four official languages.
- 5.3 None of the eight (8) public entities in the province submitted compliance reports. This complete lack of reporting reflects a serious failure to implement the Northern Cape Languages Act and undermines equitable multilingual service delivery.

6. North West

- 6.1 No responses were received from provincial departments or public entities, reflecting a complete lack of participation. This widespread non-compliance undermines the objectives of the North West Languages Act and poses a serious risk to the promotion of multilingualism and equitable service delivery.
- 6.2 Only three (3) of 23 municipalities submitted language compliance reports, representing a 13% participation rate. Tswaing, Ratlou, and Moses Kotane Local Municipalities reported having no language policies or language units, despite using between two and three official languages for communication.

North West District and Local Municipalities
Language Compliance Reporting Participation (%)



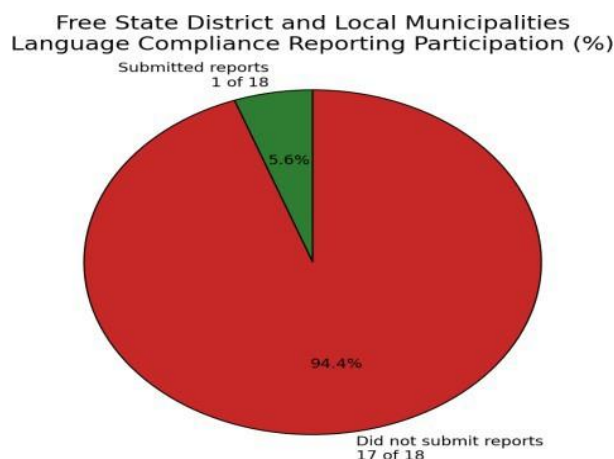
Graph 6: North West local government compliance

7. Free State

- 7.1 In this province, only the Department of Human Settlements responded, producing a 10% participation rate. The department reported a draft language policy, no language unit, and that it uses Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, Sesotho, and SASL for public communication.
- 7.2 Only one (1) of 18 municipalities submitted a language compliance report, representing a 5.6% participation rate. Tswelopele Local Municipality reported an approved language policy but no language unit, and uses isiXhosa, Afrikaans, English, Setswana, and Sesotho.

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7.3 Overall, compliance in the Free State remains critically low. The absence of functional language units and the limited adoption of approved language policies significantly weaken the implementation of the Free State Languages Act and negatively affect multilingual access to services.



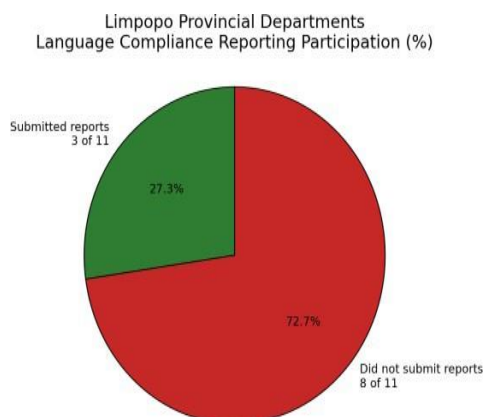
Graph 7: Free State local government compliance

8. Limpopo

8.1 Out of 11 provincial departments in Limpopo, only three (3) departments submitted language compliance reports, representing a 27.3% departmental participation rate. This low level of reporting indicates limited compliance with statutory language monitoring and reporting obligations as prescribed by the Northern Province (Limpopo) Languages Act.

8.2 The Limpopo Provincial Treasury reported that it had a draft language policy, but did not have a language unit. It uses English, Xitsonga, Sesotho sa Leboa, Tshivenda, and Afrikaans for official communication

8.3 The Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure reported that it did not have a language policy or language unit, and uses Xitsonga, Sesotho sa Leboa, English, Tshivenga, and Afrikaans for official communication.

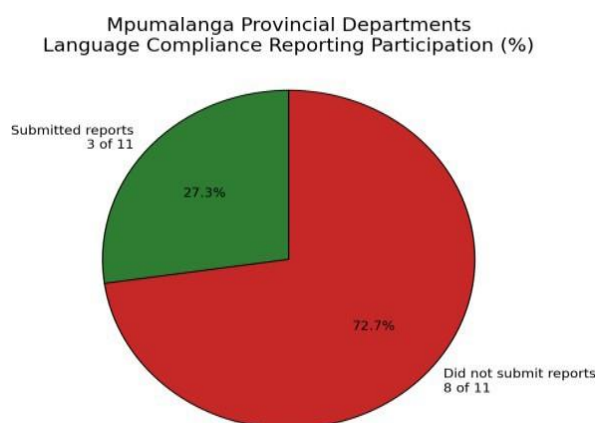


Graph 8: Limpopo provincial department compliance

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- 8.4 The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture reported that it had an approved language policy, a functional language unit, and uses Xitsonga, Sesotho sa Leboa, Tshivenga, isiNdebele, and Afrikaans for official communication.
- 8.5 Concerning public entities and municipalities, none submitted a language compliance report. This complete lack of reporting reflects poor compliance with the Northern Province (Limpopo) Languages Act and highlights significant gaps in the implementation of language governance frameworks within the public entity sector and local governance.

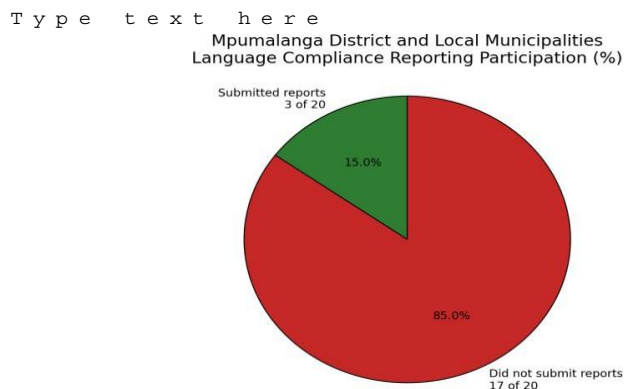
9. Mpumalanga



Graph 9: Mpumalanga provincial department compliance

- 9.1 Out of 11 provincial departments in Mpumalanga, only three (3) departments submitted language compliance reports, representing a 27.3% provincial departmental participation rate. This level of reporting reflects limited compliance with the Mpumalanga Languages Act, particularly regarding the establishment of language units and the adoption of language policies.
- 9.2 The Mpumalanga Provincial Treasury reported that they did not have a language policy or language unit, and uses English, isiNdebele, Siswati, and Afrikaans for official communication.
- 9.3 The Department of Economic Development and Tourism reported that it did not have a language policy or language unit, and uses all official languages except SASL for official communication.
- 9.4 The Department of Social Development reported that it did not have a language policy or language unit, and uses English, isiNdebele, Xitsonga, and Siswati for official communication.
- 9.5 Out of 20 municipalities in Mpumalanga, only three (3) municipalities submitted language compliance reports, representing a 15% participation rate by local and district governments. This low response rate indicates weak engagement with statutory language governance and reporting obligations.
- 9.6 The Gert Sibande District Municipality reported that it did not have a language policy or language unit, and uses only English for official communication.
- 9.7 The Msukaligwa Local Municipality reported that it had a draft language policy, did not have a language unit, and uses English, Afrikaans, and isiZulu for official communication.

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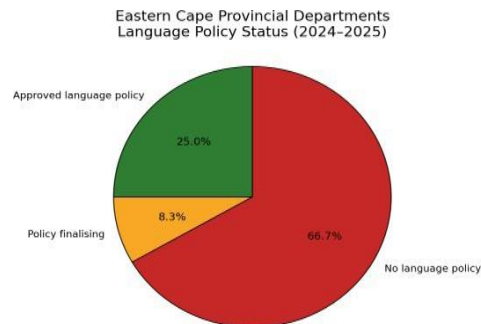
Graph 10: Mpumalanga local government participation

- 9.8 The Nkangala District Municipality reported that it had an approved language policy but no language unit, and uses Siswati, isiNdebele, English, Sesotho sa Leboa, and Afrikaans for official communication.
- 9.9 No public entity in Mpumalanga submitted a language compliance report. This complete absence of reporting reflects non-compliance with the Mpumalanga Provincial Languages Act, which is the only language legislation that has punitive measures for non-compliance, with section 23 stipulating that “Any person who contravenes or fails to comply with any provision of this Act is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 24 months, or to both such fine and imprisonment.”
- 9.10 In the context of Mpumalanga, non-compliance may be attributed to the ineffectiveness of both the Mpumalanga Provincial Language Committee and the Mpumalanga Legislature in enforcing the legislation in terms of sections 10 and 22 of the Act, respectively.

10. Eastern Cape

- 10.1 The Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC), as the coordinating department for language matters in the province, reported uneven compliance with the Eastern Cape Use of Official Languages Act.
- 10.2 Only four (4) provincial departments had approved language policies, namely the Departments of Education, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA); and Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC), and the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature. The Office of the Premier was in the process of finalising its language policy, which was currently housed within its Strategy Unit.
- 10.3 The majority of provincial departments—Public Works and Infrastructure, Provincial Treasury, Agriculture, Community Safety, Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Transport, Health, and Human Settlements—did not have language policies in place, and many also did not respond to calls for language compliance reporting.
- 10.4 In terms of institutional capacity, only a few of the provincial departments had functional language units, being the DSRAC, Education, the Office of the Premier (although with limited capacity), and the Eastern Cape Legislature. All other departments lacked dedicated language units, citing budget constraints, staff shortages, and limited prioritisation of language matters as key impediments.

10.5 Despite these challenges, the report highlights notable good practices, especially in the DSACR and Education, including the translation of strategic documents, the use of previously marginalised languages (isiXhosa and Sesotho), MTBBE implementation, and province-wide multilingual education initiatives. No formal language complaints were recorded during the reporting period.



Graph 11: Eastern Cape provincial department compliance

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CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE PRACTICE ACROSS GOVERNMENT SPHERES**1. Introduction**

1.1 In terms of section 5 of the UOLA, national organs of state must establish language units:

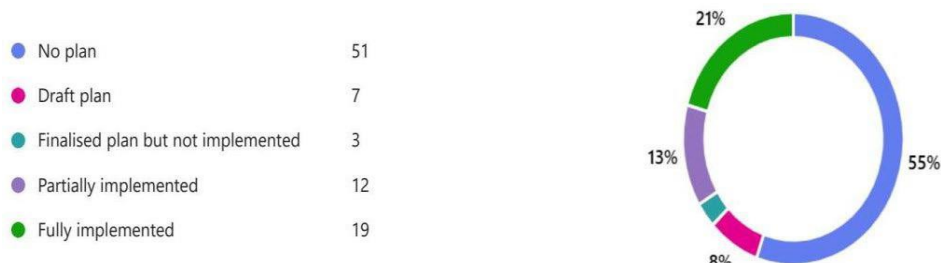
- a) to regulate and monitor the use of official languages by the national government for government purposes;
- b) to promote parity of esteem for and equitable treatment of the official languages of the Republic;
- c) to facilitate equitable access to government services; and
- d) to promote good language management.

1.2 The South African Language Practitioners Council Act (Act No. 8 of 2014) defines a language practitioner as a paid occupation that includes translators, interpreters, language planners, terminologists, lexicographers, text editors, or any other person conducting language-related work.

1.3 In this review, PanSALB requested information in accordance with constitutional prescripts and legislative obligations as provided in section 8(1)(j) of the PanSALB Act, which compels the Board to monitor the observance of the constitutional provisions regarding the use of languages and the contents and formulation of legislation, policies, and language programmes fostering the equal use of languages. The graphs below illustrate responses for specific questions and are from all spheres of government. Therefore, these responses paint a national picture regarding language practice.

2. Annual Language Policy Implementation Plan

2.1 Organs of state were asked whether they develop an Annual Language Policy Implementation Plan based on their institutional language policies.



Graph 12: Annual Language Policy Implementation Plans

2.2 The chart 12 illustrates the implementation status of plans across organs of state and reveals a predominantly low level of implementation maturity. A clear majority, 55%, reported having no implementation plan at all, indicating that more than half of the institutions have not yet initiated structured planning towards compliance or operationalisation. This represents a significant systemic gap and suggests limited institutional readiness or prioritisation. Only 8% of institutions are at a draft plan stage, reflecting an intent to comply but with no formal commitment or execution. Similarly, 3% have finalised plans that are not yet implemented, pointing to delays between planning and actual execution, which may be linked to capacity, resources, or governance challenges.

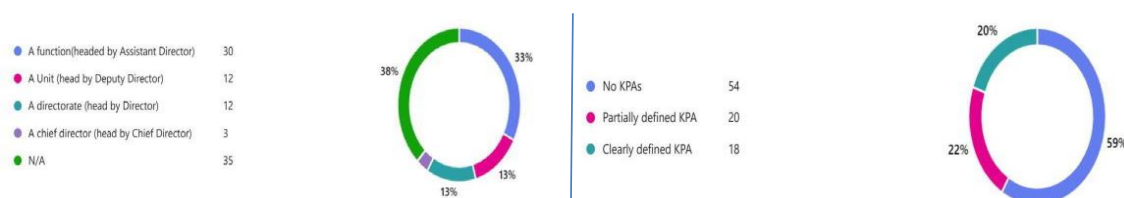
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3. Language Units

3.1 We asked the institutions whether they had a language unit. As illustrated in the chart below, there is a systematic compliance gap, where nearly two-thirds of institutions do not have a language unit, even though it is a legislative requirement. This language practice may point to widespread challenges of limited institutional capacity, lack of prioritisation, insufficient guidance, or resource constraints. It also underscores the need for targeted interventions and strengthened oversight by PanSALB to ensure focused support for policy implementation, clearer accountability mechanisms, and consistent monitoring to shift organs of state from non-compliance toward improved and sustained performance.

*Graph 13: Language units***4. Positioning of language matters in the organs of state**

4.1 To test the level of seniority where language matters are considered in government, we asked organs of state to indicate the job level of appointed language practitioners and whether language targets formed part of institutional key performance indicators.

*Graph 14: Positioning of language matters in the organs of state*

4.2 Taken together, these two graphs provide a coherent picture of structural weakness and limited institutionalisation of language functions across government. They demonstrate a strong correlation between weak structural placement of language functions and poor integration of performance management. They demonstrate that language functions are predominantly located at lower organisational levels or not formally constituted at all. Only 13% of institutions indicated that language units were at a directorate level and just 3% at a chief directorate level. This distribution indicates that language functions are largely treated as operational or ancillary responsibilities, rather than as strategic governance functions embedded in senior management structures. The second chart reinforces this finding by showing that performance management frameworks do not adequately support language functions.

4.3 The absence of KPAs in most institutions significantly undermines accountability, monitoring, and consistent

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implementation, as language responsibilities are not formally planned, measured or enforced. Where language functions lack senior positioning, it is also unlikely to be accompanied by clearly defined KPAs. This combined pattern explains persistent challenges in implementation, coordination, and compliance. It highlights the need for elevating language functions within organisational hierarchies and embedding it within formal performance management systems to achieve sustainable and effective language governance, language policy implementation, and the furtherance of multilingualism in government.

5. Budget allocations for language policy implementation

5.1 Linked to the level of consideration of language matters in government is budget allocation. The chart below indicates that government funding for language matters is largely inadequate and inconsistent, with most institutions reporting either no budget or insufficient budget allocation. It demonstrates that the promotion of multilingualism and language management is not yet mainstreamed into institutional strategic and financial planning. The lack of dedicated funding severely limits the ability of institutions to implement language policies, establish language units, or provide essential services such as translation, interpreting, and public language access, therefore infringing citizens' language rights to access state information in their preferred languages as guaranteed by the Constitution.



Graph 15: Budget allocation for language policy Implementation

5.2 Overall, the responses reveal a strong correlation between weak budget allocation and ongoing challenges in language policy implementation in South Africa. Without dedicated and adequate funding, compliance with constitutional and legislative language obligations remains difficult to achieve. The findings point to the urgent need for a ring-fenced budget, stronger financial oversight, and explicit recognition of language services as core public service delivery functions, rather than optional or peripheral activities. The underfunding of language matters creates a cycle of low prioritisation, weak implementation, and ongoing non-compliance. The cumulative effect is the erosion of multilingualism, moving towards unilingualism, with the hegemony of English in the public service and the diminished realisation of language rights and status of previously marginalised languages.

6. Official languages in organs of state

6.1 PanSALB requested organs of state to indicate their selection of official languages in their language policies. The responses in chart 8 below reflect a highly uneven selection of official languages by organs of state, revealing both progress and persistent imbalances in the realisation of multilingualism. English is by far the most frequently chosen language, underscoring its continued dominance as the primary language of administration and communication across government. While this reflects practical considerations such as

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administrative convenience, it also highlights the ongoing centralisation of state communication around English, often at the expense of broader linguistic inclusion, diversity, social cohesion, and nation-building.

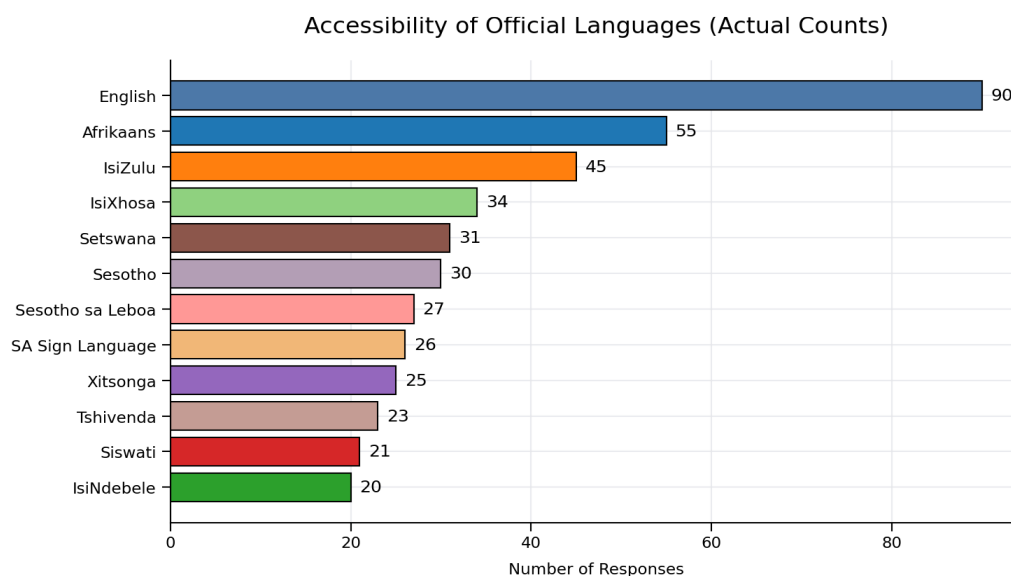


Chart 8: Official languages selection by organs of state

- 6.2 The selection of Afrikaans, isiXhosa, and isiZulu may indicate sustained institutional recognition of their demographic reach and historical administrative use. Their standing suggests that organs of state are more responsive to languages with established infrastructure, standardisation, and perceived operational readiness. For Setswana and Sesotho, it may also reflect regional responsiveness where these languages dominate.
- 6.3 However, the chart also exposes significant underrepresentation of several official languages, such as isiNdebele, Siswati, and Xitsonga, despite their status as official languages and the presence of substantial speaker communities. This pattern points to the uneven implementation of constitutional multilingualism and suggests that language selection is often driven by capacity, cost, and institutional convenience, rather than by an equitable, rights-based assessment of linguistic needs.
- 6.4 The inclusion of SASL is an important positive signal, indicating growing awareness of linguistic accessibility and the communication rights of the Deaf community. Nonetheless, its relatively modest selection rate shows that accessible language services remain inconsistently prioritised, often dependent on budget availability rather than systematic planning.
- 6.5 Overall, the chart demonstrates that while organs of state formally recognise multiple official languages, actual language choices remain concentrated around a small subset of languages, particularly English. This reinforces existing linguistic hierarchies and perpetuates marginalising speakers of less frequently selected languages. The findings highlight the need for stronger regulatory guidance and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the selection of official languages by organs of state is more balanced, context-sensitive, and aligned with the constitutional imperative to advance all official languages equitably.

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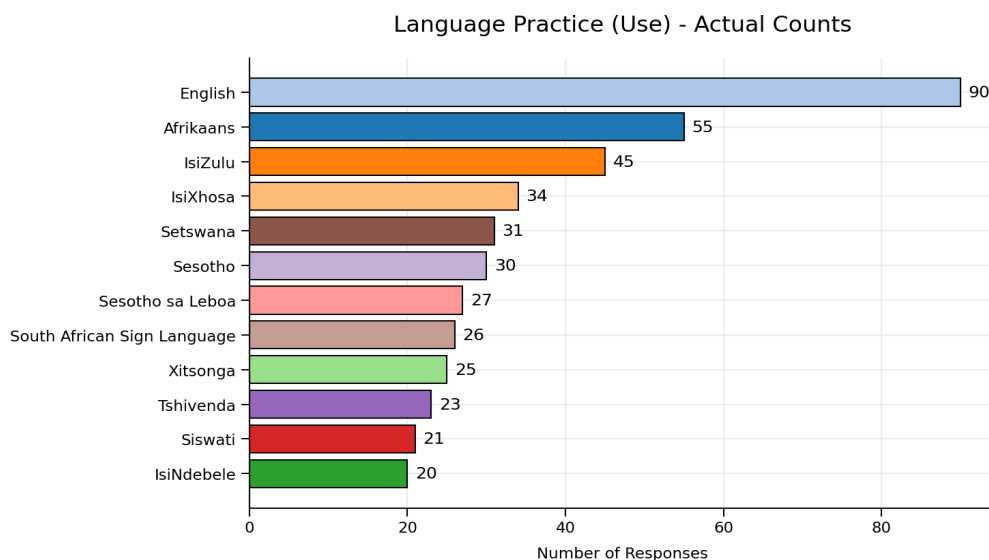


Chart 9: Official languages for external (public) communication by government

7. Official languages in external (public) communication by the government

7.1 The chart 9 above of the official languages for external communication reveals a continued pattern of uneven multilingual practice by organs of state, with communication to the public largely dominated by English, which remains the primary language used for engaging the public, issuing notices, publishing information, and conducting broader outreach. This reflects an administrative preference for a single lingua franca, driven by perceived efficiency and reach. Nevertheless, it also reinforces linguisticism and linguicism.

7.2 While some indigenous African languages and Afrikaans are selected for external communication, their use is not evenly distributed and appears largely context-dependent, often limited to specific regions, programmes, or events. This suggests that language choice for public communication is frequently shaped by capacity, cost considerations, and operational convenience, rather than by a systematic assessment of the linguistic profile and needs of intended audiences. The relatively limited use of several official languages in external communication raises concerns about equitable access to government information and services.

7.3 Members of the public who are not proficient in English face barriers to understanding their rights, obligations, and available services, particularly where information is not proactively provided in locally dominant or previously marginalised languages. This undermines the constitutional objective of promoting all official languages and ensuring meaningful public participation.

8. Official languages in internal communication by the government

8.1 Organs of state were requested to indicate the official languages that they use for internal communication. The dominance of English as the internal working language may indicate that English functions as the de facto lingua franca within government institutions for day-to-day internal operations, coordination, reporting, and management communication.

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8.2 While this may be regarded as administratively efficient, this dominance reflects a centralised and convenience-driven language choice, rather than promoting a multilingual operational culture within the state. It further makes other languages supplementary to English, not coequal internal languages of governance. This is despite constitutional recognition; indigenous African languages are largely excluded from internal government communication, reinforcing linguistic inequality within the public service. State internal communication prioritises operational convenience over linguistic equity, capacity building, and transformation.

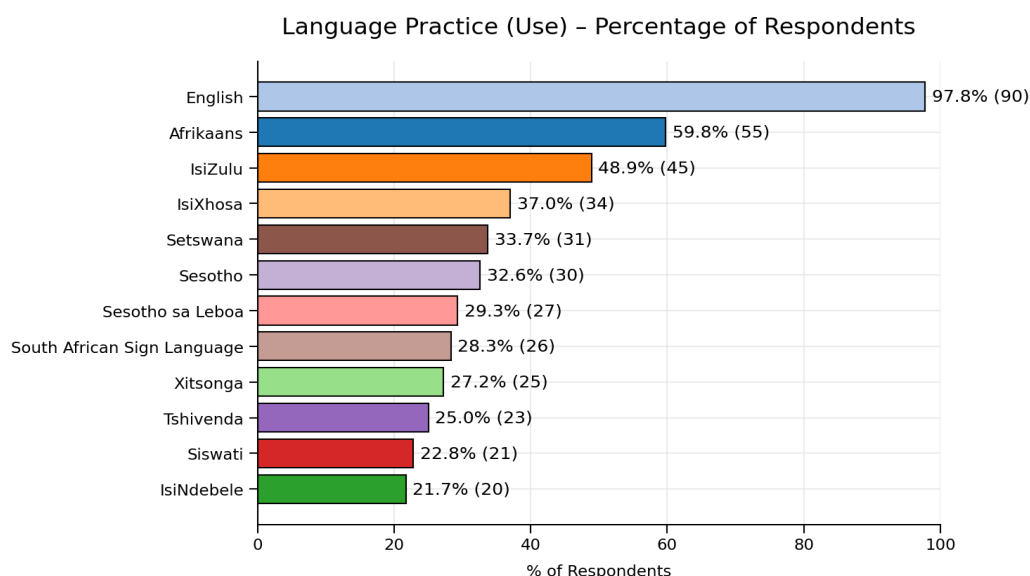


Chart 10: Official languages for internal communications by the government

9. Official languages for public (government) signage

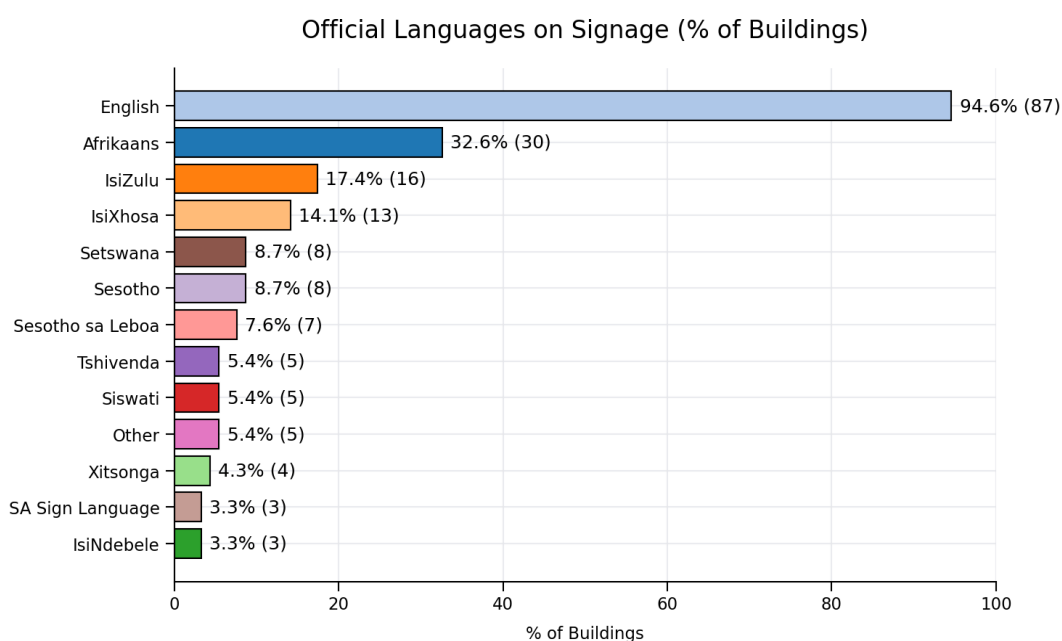


Chart 11: Official language on public (government) signage/buildings

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9.1 PanSALB requested organs of state to indicate which official language or languages were used in signage on or in their buildings. Again, English dominates public building signage, which makes it the primary visual and informational language for public-facing communication. Some may regard the predominant use of English in public buildings as a method for maximum reach and administrative convenience, but this practice effectively positions it as the default national signage language, contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and the principle of multilingualism.

9.2 Afrikaans continues to have institutional visibility, especially compared to most indigenous African languages. This is again despite these languages being official languages. Most indigenous African languages are largely invisible on public signage, especially in national and multi-provincial government or public spaces. Public building signage in South Africa overwhelmingly prioritises English, with Afrikaans playing a secondary role, and indigenous African languages receiving limited and uneven representation. This reflects a gap between constitutional commitments to multilingualism and actual visual language practices in public spaces, with significant implications for inclusion, accessibility, and linguistic equity.

10. Official languages on government websites

10.1 Chart 12 below shows a strong concentration of English use on government websites. It is regarded as the primary and often sole digital language of the South African state. This suggests that government websites are designed primarily for administrative efficiency and broad reach, rather than for comprehensive linguistic inclusion. Afrikaans is the only other language with notable visibility, indicating that some departments—often in specific provinces or legacy institutions—provide limited bilingual website content.

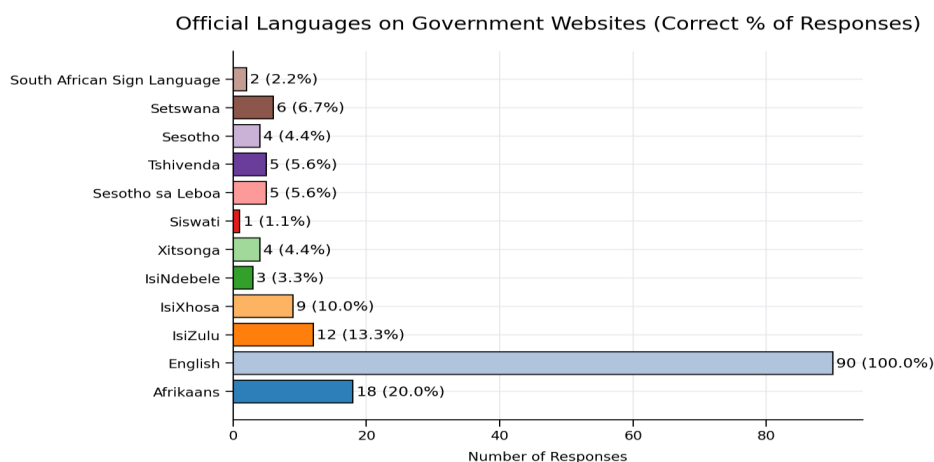


Chart 12: Official languages on government websites

10.2 The Nguni languages, especially isiZulu and isiXhosa, appear only marginally, while the remaining indigenous African languages register very low usage levels. This indicates that multilingual content for African languages on government websites is sporadic, selective, and not systematic. The absence of SASL highlights an ongoing digital accessibility gap for Deaf communities. This data demonstrates that inclusive digital design is not yet mainstreamed across government platforms. The pattern reflects a significant gap between constitutional multilingual ideals and actual digital communication practices, raising concerns about equitable access to information, inclusivity, and compliance with the UOLA.

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11. Official languages for government translations

11.1 Chart 13 below shows that document production in government is done in English. This indicates that most translations are performed to or from English, confirming its role as the central administrative and source language in government translation workflows. The implication of this is that translation and document production are primarily a one-directional process centred on English, rather than a multilingual exchange between official languages. It demonstrates that accessibility-driven translation (especially for more than 90% of the population) remains under-prioritised, even when broader translation is considered.

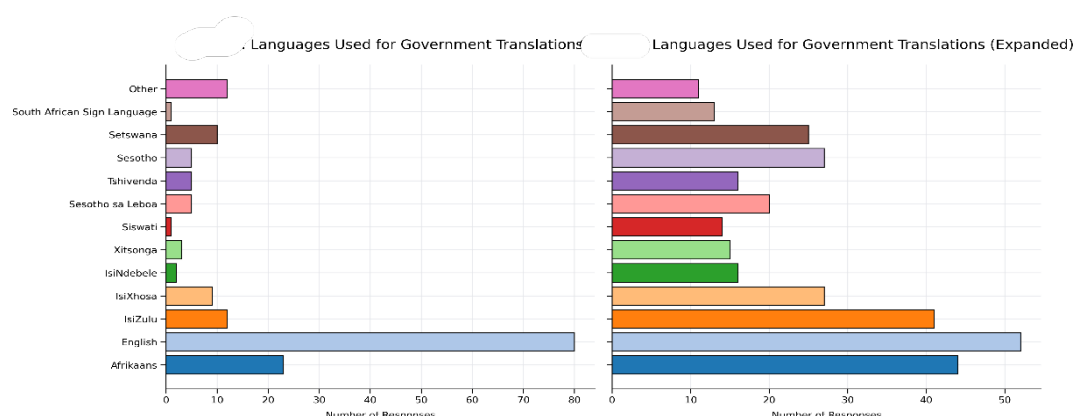


Chart 13: Official languages for government translations

11.2 Indigenous African languages are mainly considered for target texts, demonstrating that other linguistic and cultural manifestations are undermined by this latent multilingual demand in government translation that is not fully matched by operational practice. That means indigenous African languages are underutilised in this language practice, revealing a gap between multilingual policy intent and operational implementation. Translation in government is therefore largely functional and selective, rather than fully inclusive and transformative.

12. Official languages for interpreting

12.1 The results in chart 14 below indicate that government interpretation services are unevenly distributed across official languages, with a strong concentration on a limited number of dominant languages such as English, Afrikaans, and isiZulu. However, as with translations, interpretation services are largely structured around English as either the source or target language. This suggests that interpretation provisioning is influenced by institutional legacy, regional language demographics, and demand-driven considerations. These languages receive relatively consistent interpreting support compared to other official languages but on a selective and situational basis, rather than as part of a comprehensive multilingual strategy. This points to persistent inequalities in language service provision.

12.2 Notably, SASL shows a stronger presence compared to signage and websites, reflecting some recognition of accessibility needs. However, its level of provision remains lower than that of spoken languages, suggesting that interpreting services for Deaf users are acknowledged but not yet fully institutionalised. The results demonstrate that government interpreting services are largely demand-driven and concentrated on English, with secondary support for Afrikaans and isiZulu.

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12.3 While some indigenous African languages are accommodated, provision remains uneven and limited, and accessibility-oriented interpreting, particularly with SASL, requires stronger and more systematic integration. The results further reflect partial compliance with multilingual and accessibility obligations rather than a fully inclusive interpreting framework.

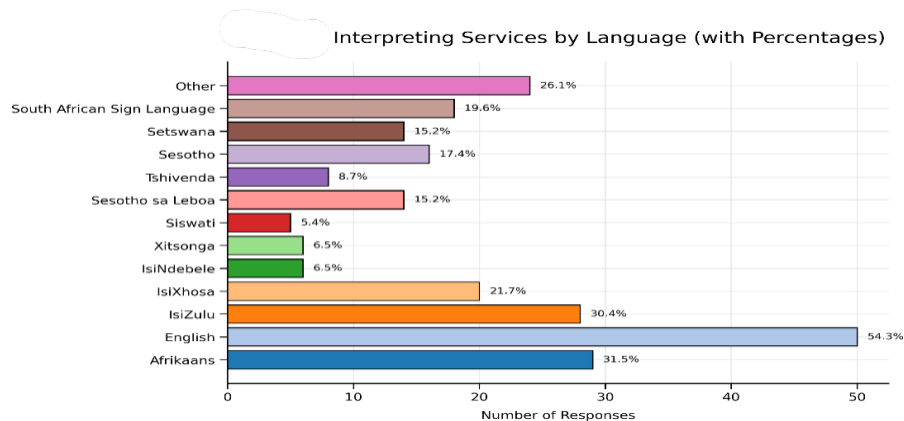


Chart 14: Official languages for interpreting

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The broad findings of this empirical review indicate that most organs of state have made some progress in establishing language management instruments, but implementation and alignment remain uneven. Most respondents reported having an approved language policy, indicating formal compliance with the UOLA. However, several institutions still operate with draft policies or no language policy at all, demonstrating partial or non-compliance. Even where policies exist, alignment with the constitution's two-language requirement and UOLA's prescribed use of three official languages for government purposes is inconsistent. Thus, operational language plans are not implemented or do not exist, revealing a gap between policy adoption and execution. This demonstrates that language policy and language practice in government are largely procedural rather than functional, raising concerns about the effective institutionalisation of multilingualism.

There is a systemic shortage of dedicated language capacity across organs of state, which undermines the sustainability and quality of language services and weakens compliance monitoring. Many institutions reported small or non-existent language units, with several indicating that language services were managed as a function within communication directorates rather than as specialised units. A significant number of institutions reported no dedicated staff, vacancies, or reliance on outsourced language services. This is caused by the fact that language matters do not feature as key performance areas and key performance indicators in most government institutions, putting multilingualism outside strategic importance, causing them to be undefined, unmeasured, and unfunded. Translation and interpreting services are frequently procured on an ad hoc basis, rather than through structured, long-term planning.

With these language practices, the government endorses functional unilingualism, with anecdotes of multilingualism applied selectively and inconsistently. The results demonstrate weak public engagement on language rights due to a lack of public awareness campaigns, non-existent, inefficient, or informal feedback mechanisms for language-related complaints. This lack limits robust accountability and public participation in government and governance of the country. The findings indicate a persistent gap between legislative intent and operational reality, pointing to the need for strengthened institutional capacity, funding, planning, and oversight to realise meaningful multilingualism in government.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

This review can put forward the following key recommendations:

1. The PanSALB Act should be amended to strengthen legislative and regulatory enforcement. The Board should be empowered to apply punitive or remedial measures where organs of state repeatedly fail to comply with language obligations. This will move monitoring from an advisory oversight activity to effective compliance enforcement, addressing persistent non-submission and non-implementation.
2. The UOLA should be amended to clarify accountability: the UOLA should streamline reporting lines by removing duplicative ministerial oversight, and provide clarity on who receives, evaluates, and enforces annual language reports. This will reduce multiple accountability disorder and fragmentation as well as improve reporting compliance.
3. Provincial Language Committees should be strengthened by amending provincial language legislation to give Provincial Language Committees independent monitoring and enforcement authority, particularly over provincial departments and municipalities. This will decentralise oversight and improve responsiveness at provincial and local levels.
4. Language management structures should be institutionalised. This will mandate the establishment of functional language units, in line with the UOLA and provincial legislation, rather than treating language services as secondary communication functions. Language units should be staffed with suitably qualified practitioners, not just for quality assurance but also to create job opportunities and develop a thriving value chain.
5. Language functions should be elevated to senior management levels of government institutions, such as directorate or chief directorate levels, not at junior or ad-hoc levels. This elevation will ensure strategic integration of language management into decision-making and planning processes.
6. Language responsibilities should be integrated into performance management by introducing Key Performance Areas (KPA's) and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for senior managers linked to language policy implementation. Performance reviews should explicitly measure compliance with multilingual service delivery obligations.
7. Planning, budgeting, and sustainability can be improved by making Annual Language Policy Implementation Plans mandatory for every organ of state. Organs of state must develop and implement a costed Annual Language Policy Implementation Plan, aligned to strategic and annual performance plans. Plans should specify timelines, services (translation, interpreting, signage, digital platforms), and monitoring indicators, including ring-fenced budget allocations. National Treasury and provincial treasuries should be requested to dedicate and ring-fence budgets for language policy implementation. Language services must be recognised as core service delivery functions, not discretionary communication costs.

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8. Translation and interpreting services should be procured through planned, long-term arrangements, prioritising institutional capacity over reactive outsourcing. This will end the ad-hoc procurement of language services.
9. To reduce functional unilingualism, reliance on English as the default language should be reduced through implementing context-responsive (functional) multilingualism, based on demographic, regional, and service-user needs. Language selection for programmes and projects must reflect constitutional equity, not operational convenience, in compliance with sections 6(3) and 6(4) of the Constitution.
10. The visibility of indigenous African languages should be expanded by ensuring that public signage, websites, publications, and service points include locally dominant indigenous languages, not only English and Afrikaans. Visual multilingualism should be a minimal compliance standard, especially in public-facing environments. This is in line with section 6(2) of the Constitution.
11. Translation and interpreting services should be strengthened by adopting a multilingual translation model that should move from English-centred, one-directional workflows to broader multilingual exchanges among official languages. Translation priorities should be informed by service-user language needs rather than institutional habit.
12. Interpreting services should be systemised through planned and institutionalised approaches rather than being demand-driven and event-based.
13. The implementation of the Constitution Eighteenth Amendment has been recently proclaimed to accelerate the use of SASL through adequate budget allocation, and not just for SASL interpretation, across language management.
14. The full operationalisation of SALPC should be fast-tracked to professionalise translators, interpreters, and language practitioners, standardise qualifications, and improve the quality and accountability of language services, including through the provision of continuous training and skills development.
15. Monitoring, reporting, and accountability should be enhanced by establishing a centralised digital monitoring system to track policy adoption, implementation plans, activities of language units, and budget allocations to language practice across all spheres of government.
16. Collaboration with oversight bodies such as the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA), the South African Human Rights Commission, CRL Commission, and others should be strengthened to integrate language compliance into broader governance and audit processes.
17. Public awareness and public complaint mechanisms should be improved by ensuring that organs of state implement public awareness campaigns on language rights.
18. PanSALB should ensure that complaints are resolved timeously and visibly, reinforcing public confidence.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

This monitoring review demonstrates that South Africa has established a robust legislative framework for multilingual governance, yet continues to struggle with translating constitutional language rights into consistent, lived public service practice. The recurring pattern across all spheres of government is partial compliance, characterised by formal policy presence without commensurate operational follow-through.

The persistently low levels of reporting, weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, and absence of consequence management collectively undermine the constitutional objective of advancing multilingualism, promoting equitable access to services, and restoring the status of previously marginalised languages. Left unaddressed, these gaps risk entrenching functional unilingualism, particularly the hegemony of English, contrary to the letter and spirit of Section 6 of the Constitution.

The findings of this report point decisively toward the need for a shift from advisory oversight to enforceable compliance. Strengthened legislative authority, clearer accountability frameworks, properly resourced language units, and the integration of language obligations into performance and budgeting systems are no longer optional—they are essential for meaningful transformation. Equally critical is the urgent acceleration of SASL implementation, supported by adequate resources and institutional readiness.

PanSALB remains committed to fulfilling its constitutional mandate to promote, monitor, and create conditions for the use and development of official languages, as well as the Khoe and San languages, through advancing language rights in South Africa. However, the realisation of equitable multilingual governance ultimately depends on political will, institutional leadership, and co-ordinated action across all spheres of government. Only through sustained commitment, effective enforcement, and deliberate investment in language governance can the state ensure that linguistic diversity becomes a practical instrument of inclusion, human dignity, democratic participation, and transformation rather than a symbolic ideal.

END

2024/2025 LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING REPORT

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