

IFP



Founded:	1975
Leader:	Velinkosini Hlabisa
Political position:	Centre right to right-wing
Ideology:	Zulu conservatism

History

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) was formed by Zulu royal prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi in 1975 as a Zulu cultural organisation. Although Buthelezi was once an ANC Youth League member, it is difficult to consider the IFP as an ANC offshoot. Buthelezi also served as the Apartheid era homeland leader of KwaZulu and the IFP was only formally launched as a political party in the 1990s amid high levels of bloodshed and violence between the IFP and the ANC in the run up to the first democratic elections of 1994. The Zulu Royal is still synonymous with the party despite him stepping down as leader in 2019 for Velinkosini Hlabisa.

In its constitution, the IFP ascribes to the values of African humanism, cultural pluralism, and political libertarianism in pursuit of federal governance and social and economic justice (20). The party styles itself as a competent political party with an accomplished track-record; having governed KwaZulu-Natal in the 1990s, currently leading several municipalities in the province as well as forming part of several municipal coalition governments nationally.

However, it must be noted that the IFP is still largely regarded as a regional party having only a handful of elected officials at provincial or municipal level outside Gauteng or KwaZulu-Natal.

After seeing its support slide from over 10 per cent in 1994 to just 2.4 per cent in 2014, the IFP rebounded in the 2019 election to 3.38 per cent as Zulu voters returned to the party after offering their support to

a Jacob Zuma led ANC and IFP offshoot the National Freedom Party from 2009 to 2019.

Electoral record (21)

- 1994: 10.54%
- 1999: 8.58%
- 2004: 6.97%
- 2009: 4.55%
- 2014: 2.40%
- 2019: 3.38%

Positions

(Source: Email correspondence with party communications director Liezl van der Merwe)

Economic growth and job creation

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The IFP's economic approach is to offer South Africans a hand-up instead of a hand-out by prioritising self-help, self-reliance, and empowering communities, particularly focusing on women, youth, and persons with disabilities. The party would also prioritise the economic wellbeing of South Africans over foreign nationals by implementing the Employment Services Amendment Bill which it introduced as a private member's bill in parliament in 2022. The legislation would regulate foreign nationals' recruitment in the economy, emphasising preference for South Africans. Local economic development is also a core focus for the IFP, addressing infrastructure, water, electricity, roads, and fibre projects. Priorities include localisation, skills enhancement for youth, Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMME) development, and inclusive economic growth. Overall, the IFP champions an inclusive economy to uplift families, reduce inequality, and fulfil national aspirations. The party's

emphasis is on encouraging foreign direct investment, public-private partnerships, and sector-specific development for job creation and economic empowerment.

Safety and security

The IFP's ideology on safety and security emphasises the dual assurance of both perceived and tangible safety for South Africans. Practically, the party proposes investing in community policing forums, establishing additional law enforcement units, and military deployment in crime-prone areas. A comprehensive overhaul of the justice system includes the creation of municipal courts and municipal police services. The IFP proposes professionalising the SAPS and decentralised policing powers. Judicial reforms involve increased minimum sentences with hard labour, judiciary independence, and a national debate on reinstating the death penalty. Border security measures include deploying the South African National Defence Force and empowering traditional leadership in dispute settlements.

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Foreign affairs

The IFP maintains a foreign affairs policy that centres on diplomacy, regional cooperation, and a commitment to enhance the country's international standing. The party advocates for robust diplomatic engagement with neighbouring nations and global partners, emphasising peaceful conflict resolution and a collaborative approach to address shared challenges. The IFP supports South Africa's involvement in regional peacekeeping missions and economic partnerships with neighbouring countries, seeking to bolster regional stability and economic prosperity. Their foreign affairs policy aims to foster positive relationships with other nations, contributing to a peaceful and secure international environment while promoting South Africa's interests on the global stage.

Energy security

The IFP energy policy commits to providing electricity to homes and businesses to secure economic activity. The party identifies the energy crisis as a national emergency and an IFP government would bring together the private sector, civil society, academia, and foreign experts to come up with broad-based, innovative solutions to the country's energy challenges. Initial energy policies advocate for swift deregulation and decentralisation, urging private entities and citizens to embrace self-generation and contribute to the grid. Emphasising South Africa's solar potential, the party proposes converting solar resources into power, promoting solar geysers, and supporting local community energy initiatives. An IFP government would also immediately shift South Africa's reliance on fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, biomass, and small-scale hydroelectric plants.

Education

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The IFP regards education as a tool for empowerment, focusing their policy on registering more Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres, constructing sports fields, providing bursaries for needy learners and students as the cornerstone of their education policies.

In keeping with the IFP's federal approach to governance, the party believes the provision and management of education should be a provincial competence.

The party aims to raise literacy, numeracy, and technical skills while promoting pluralism in education through community initiatives. The IFP advocates provincial competence, with provinces managing schools and colleges, supporting tertiary autonomy. Financing education involves state budgets, private sector contributions, and a redress fund for disadvantaged communities. Teacher quality improvement, discipline promotion, and a shift towards technical and vocational education are key priorities. The IFP supports targeted funding for post-

matric education, multilingual education, and compulsory English as a second language.

Mineral resources

The IFP advocates for responsible mining practices that consider both environmental preservation and equitable wealth distribution. The party would implement revenue-sharing agreements with local communities where mining takes place to ensure that the benefits of industry reach those most affected by its operations. The IFP also wants more beneficiation of mineral resources to take place locally and would enforce the processing and refining of raw materials within the country. The party would also pass stricter environmental regulations to mitigate the adverse impacts of mining on the environment and to safeguard natural resources.

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Youth development

The IFP advocates for comprehensive youth development through skills training, mentorship, and financial support for youth-led businesses to combat high youth unemployment. The party believes in empowering the youth within their structures and have a policy of appointing members of the IFP youth brigade to all decision-making bodies within the party and where they govern. IFP governed municipalities provide bursaries for learners and students to enhance access to education opportunities.

Housing

IFP housing policies prioritise efficient and equitable allocation of quality human settlements. The party focuses on enhancing citizen proximity to workplaces and amenities through better spatial planning, upgrading transport infrastructure, and sustained road maintenance.

They advocate for housing support centres, dignified housing units, and community reinvestment of project profits. To ensure accountability, the IFP emphasises involving youth and women in construction, maintaining quality standards, punishing subpar contractors, and combating corruption in housing waiting lists. The goal is to build integrated community housing, especially in informal settlements and improve access to low-cost subsidised housing.

The environment and climate change

The IFP's official policy approach on the environment reflects an acknowledgment of climate change as a real and pressing issue while advocating for comprehensive legislative and regulatory controls across various sectors to protect the environment. The party endorses international conventions for sustainable development and emphasises the need for a national environmental protection strategy, integrating development and conservation priorities. The IFP calls for well-resourced provincial environmental departments and active promotion of environmental education at all government levels. They stress shared responsibility for environmental safeguarding, particularly at local and provincial levels, emphasising human resource development within traditional structures, local government, and provincial legislatures to ensure effective environmental management.

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Tourism

The IFP would invest in tourism infrastructure and direct the South African Police Services (SAPS) to keep tourists safe while visiting South Africa. The party also emphasises the importance of rural tourism and affordable domestic travel in growing the local tourist market. An IFP government would offer tourism enterprises tax incentives and access to finance. The IFP also advocates collaboration with the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture to lure more major sporting and cultural events to the country.

Immigration and xenophobia

The IFP regards South Africa's immigration challenges as a national crisis and proposes comprehensive reforms, such as bolstering the Department of Home Affairs' (DHA) internal enforcement capacity and urgently restoring border infrastructure. The party highlights the need for a robust immigration inspector force, currently at 700, proposing a tenfold increase to efficiently manage the crisis and the introduction of refugee processing centres at all borders. Additionally, the IFP suggests granting an amnesty period for foreign nationals to regularise their stay and revalidate visas while prioritising the documentation of undocumented individuals. While condemning xenophobia and calling for the upholding of human rights, the party also supports regulating foreign ownership in specific industries and reserving entry-level jobs for South Africans.

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LGBTIQA+ rights

The IFP approaches LGBTIQA+ rights with a vision of promoting inclusivity while respecting cultural and religious values. The party advocates for open dialogue and education campaigns to raise awareness and foster understanding of LGBTIQA+ issues within South Africa. They prioritise the safety of the LGBTIQA+ community through dedicated funding for crime prevention and support for victims of homophobic violence.

South Africa's twelve official languages

The IFP places significant emphasis on the preservation and inclusivity of the country's twelve official languages, recognising that South Africa is a linguistically plural society. An IFP government would increase funding and support for language education programmes that aim to promote linguistic diversity and proficiency among South Africans. The party

would increase funding for multilingualism in government, ensuring that citizens can not only access public services in their preferred languages, but that children should be educated in the language of their first choice.

However, the IFP recognises that South Africa forms part of the global community in which English is widely spoken and would make English a compulsory subject at primary and secondary level. A second language, which is widely spoken in a particular community, region or province would also be made compulsory.

Artificial intelligence

The IFP does not have an official policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI), however, recognises the transformative potential of the digital economy. An IFP government would create free public Wi-Fi hubs to get everyone in the country connected to the Internet.

Sources:

- (20) Constitution of the Inkatha Freedom Party - <https://www.ifp.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Our-Constitution.pdf>
 - (21) Independent Electoral Council 2019 National & Provincial elections - <https://results.elections.org.za/dashboards/npe/app/dashboard.html>
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