

Election 2009 Observation and Comment by Plus 94

Dear colleagues

The results of the election have taken many by surprise, perhaps including the ANC itself. Without being longwinded or defensive of our survey based projection, and bearing in mind that some results are still to come, here are a few important pointers:

- The vote for the smaller parties was fairly well predicted, everything being within the margin of error
- The vote for the DA is spot on
- COPE was predicted as the official opposition in 5 or 6, provinces, this is going to be the case
- The decline of regional parties and smaller parties was accurately predicted

This leaves us with the ANC and COPE headache. We can only conclude the following from the results of the polls and the actual election:

- There is between 74 and 75% of South Africans that would vote for either ANC and/or COPE
- In October/November 2008, when COPE was new, the ANC got most of this cake
- In the subsequent surveys of March and April some 14 to 15% had intentions to vote for cope
- It seems that in the last few days due to late campaigning and the big rally at ellis park, half of those pledging to vote for cope had a last minute change of heart, or simply got cold feet, and swung back to the anc. This happened mainly in Limpopo, Free State and Gauteng.

The sum total of this is that if we take the 7% or so that got cold feet from COPE and add it back to the ANC we end up being good for all the parties within the margin of error. This is probably a more complex social science issue which would explain the difficulties faced in committing to a new party such as cope, after expressing an intention to do so, and contrasting this to the choice of an old and emotionally trusted brand. What makes the issue more wooly is the argument that leaders of cope were in fact leaders of the anc, and therefore swiveling back and forth is not totally surprising. On hindsight the research could have cautioned of this possibility.

However I will continue to observe the other votes as they come in and make a final comment at the end.

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