

TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE POLL FINDINGS

Introduction

Plus 94 Research conducted a public opinion survey to establish the relative strengths of SACP and COSATU within the Tripartite Alliance among the general public, and what it would cost the ANC from a ballot point of view if it extricated itself from this Alliance. The survey, conducted in June 2006, was based on a nationally representative sample of 2000 respondents. It came very hot on the heels of COSATU and the SACP applying unprecedented pressure on the ANC leadership in terms of reflecting the broad interests of the Tripartite Alliance. Sometimes the sentiments echoed by the Tripartite Alliance partners have been so unsettling for the ANC and the country that one could be excused for mistaking them for ANC opposition, and for doing a better job at that than the opposition.

In screening the respondents, intention to vote in the next election was elicited. A total of 81% of South Africans intend to vote in the next parliamentary elections in 2009. This is unsurprising, as the number of people who voted in 2004 was 98.4% of those who had registered to vote, although in fact fewer people were registered to vote in 2004. As a result those who voted were about 56% of the eligible adult population, compared to 86% in 1994 and 64% in 1999. In addressing the apparent voter apathy in South Africa there is cause to be concerned about the actual ease of registration perhaps more so than the interest in voting, because more people do intend to vote (81%) and those that are registered ultimately vote (98% in 2004).

| Year | Total Vote | Registration | Vote / Reg | Invalid | Pop. Size | VAP | Vote / VAP | PR | CL | Status |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|------------|---------|------------|------------|------------|----|----|-------------|
| 1994 ¹ | 19,726,579 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 40,436,000 | 23,063,910 | 85.5% | 2 | 3 | Partly Free |
| 1999 | 16,228,462 | 18,177,000 | 89.3% | 1.5 % | 42,424,823 | 25,411,573 | 63.9% | 1 | 2 | Free |
| 2004 | 15,612,671 | 15,863,558 | 98.4% | 1.6 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 1 | 2 | Free |

1. No voter registration took place in South Africa in 1994

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Main Results

More than one in three voters (34%) think that there is a rift within the ANC-COSATU-SACP Alliance. Although just over half of the voters do not perceive a rift there is still a sizeable proportion that is uncertain of what is going on.

The ANC commands a majority of the vote with 66% intending to vote for it in the 2009 election. If the Tripartite Alliance broke down for whatever reason and COSATU and SACP formed a combined political party or separate parties, this would serve to make 3% of voters uncertain or to cross to other parties apart from SACP and/ or COSATU. The two combined would wrestle away 2% of the voters from the ANC, or 1% each. Therefore as can be clearly seen, the ANC needs the Alliance partners more for ideological and/ or political reasons, BUT not for grassroots support at the polls. 61% of South Africans would still vote for the ANC even if COSATU and SACP broke away. It is therefore interesting to see how much of the perceived internal pressure within the Tripartite Alliance the ANC is willing to put up with, especially given that the strengths of the ANC among voters do not draw much from its Alliance partners.

If students at the tertiary level of education did register to vote and participated in elections this could increase the number voting for COSATU by another 1%, as students were more sympathetic towards the cause of the trade union movement. Overall, there was a feeling that the ANC Youth League was making a positive contribution towards the ANC by 54% of voters. Interestingly some 32% were uncertain if the ANC Youth League was making a positive or negative contribution, while the remaining 14% felt that the Youth League was doing more harm than good to its parent body.

While the ANC continues to command the confidence of the South African voters, it faces many challenges, the more pulverizing ones to its cause seeming to emanate from within than without. As things currently stand, the ANC has sufficient clout to deal with these issues decisively and still retain majority grassroots support in South Africa.