

No more two-thirds

An internal ANC survey predicts the ruling party can kiss the Western Cape goodbye

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An internal ANC survey has shown that the ruling party will lose its two-thirds majority and the Western Cape in next month's general election. But although it finds the party will suffer a marginal loss in support overall it will retain power in the other eight provinces.

ANC members with access to the survey told the *Mail & Guardian* it found that the ANC had lost 5% of its national support — from the 2004 figure of 69% to 64%.

This is a smaller decline than was initially expected when the ANC split and the rival Congress of the People (Cope) was formed. The survey is also in marked contrast to a Human Sciences Research Council survey, released this week, which found that the party will win the coming elections with a much reduced majority of 47%.

A senior Eastern Cape ANC leader, who attended the presentation of the results of the internal survey two weeks ago, said the decline in support was mainly because of poor service delivery, corruption and party infighting.

He said the sacking of former president Thabo Mbeki, the negative publicity around the current ANC leadership and the alliance attack on the judiciary had also contributed.

According to the survey, provinces that have registered a drop in support include Limpopo, down 14% from 89% in 2004; North West, down 10% from 80%; and the Western Cape, down 10% from 48%.

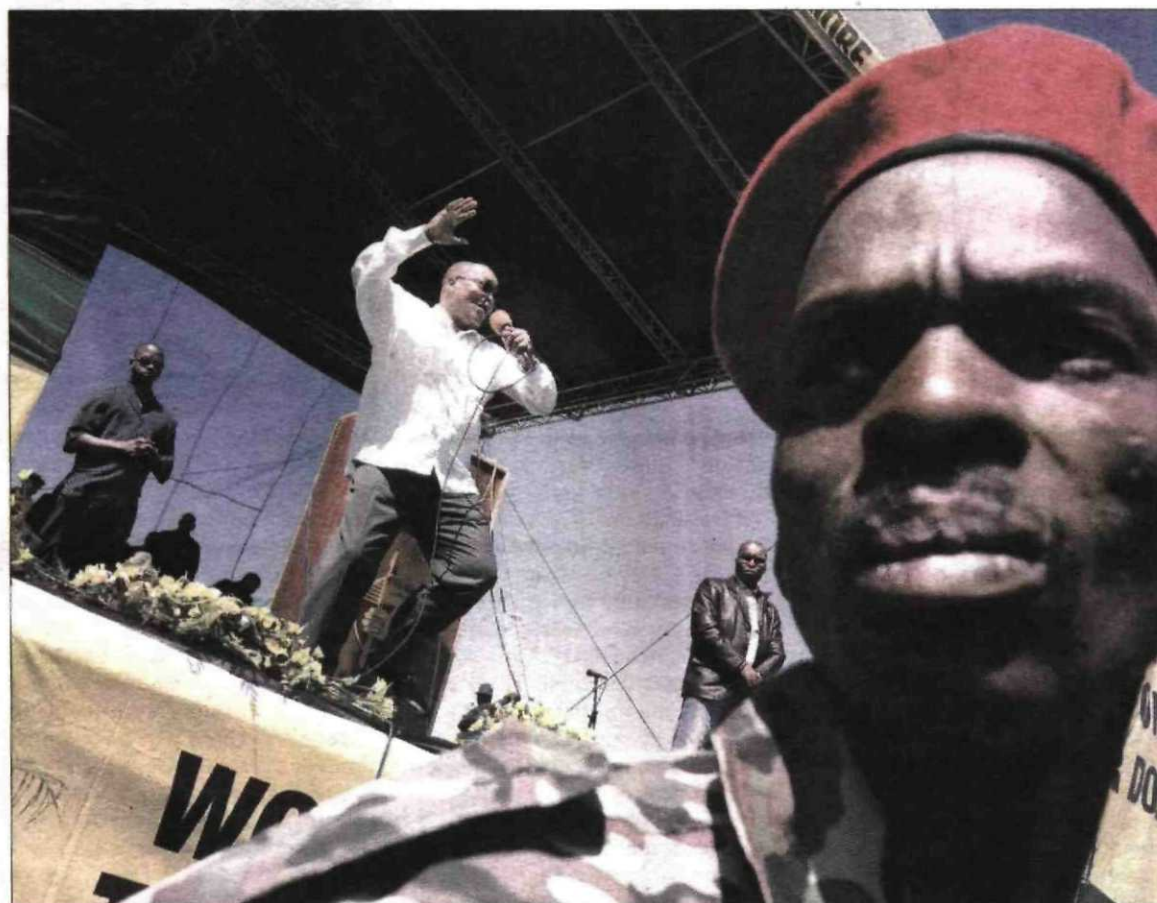
Surprisingly, the survey indicates that the ruling party has lost only 5% of the 79% vote it polled in the Eastern Cape in 2004. The province was initially seen as a Cope stronghold.

The ANC survey indicates that in Gauteng, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga the party will increase its support by between 2% and 4%.

An ANC national working committee member said party leaders are concerned about the possibility that the party might not achieve a two-thirds majority.

He blamed the decline in Limpopo on the provincial leadership's lack of commitment.

"Structures [in Limpopo] are complacent; people take opposition for granted. Fortunately, the opposition is



President pop star: Jacob Zuma, guarded by heavies, wows the crowd with a little jig at the ANC's manifesto launch at Khayelitsha Sports Stadium last month. Photo: David Harrison

not that aggressive in the province."

The ANC leader blamed the North West decline on infighting. The survey found 40% of ANC members in North West were undecided about whether to vote for the ANC.

An executive committee member in the province said the survey finding was no surprise, saying "there is anger, despondency, frustration and anxiety caused by the NEC's attitude towards the North West after the Polokwane conference".

Given campaigners' anger and demoralisation, it would be difficult to achieve a 70% vote.

But ANC representatives in Limpopo, North West and Gauteng said opinion polls do not reflect the real situation on the ground.

Limpopo ANC chairperson Cassel Mathale said his province is working tirelessly to regain lost support.

The ANC's North West chairperson, Nono Maloyi, said that although provincial leaders cannot ignore surveys, they will not be sidetracked by the findings. "In terms of our own



work, people are eager to vote for the ANC. We think we're going to exceed 70%."

Analysts predict Gauteng will be a contested province, but ANC provincial spokesperson Nkenke Kekana said the party is confident of winning the province with ease. "The mood in the province is positive — the opposition is not visible at all."

But he conceded that some voters are complaining about service delivery and poor communication. "The biggest challenge we face is informal settlements, where people are saying: 'You don't communicate with us,'" he said. "We do have plans, but we're not communicating them well."

An Eastern Cape leader said Cope "could have been a serious challenge for us", but that the new party's campaign blunders has allowed the ANC to stem major support loss.

"They focused too much on morality issues and weren't coherent in their campaign. Especially after the by-elections [where the ANC won all the wards where ANC councillors had defected to Cope] people are now coming back."

In the Western Cape a previous ANC survey indicated that 59% of voters are hostile to the ANC.

But a member of the provincial election task team said Luthuli House's intervention to resolve leadership disputes, stripping provincial leaders of power, has revived ANC support.

"The resolution of tension has been destabilising, but now things have started settling down," he said.

Declining support in the ANC's traditional strongholds has prompted party president Jacob Zuma to step up campaign efforts, putting more emphasis on provinces where the opposition threatens the ANC majority. Zuma visited North West and Limpopo this week and will return to North West again next week.