

ANC, DA dominant: research

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A RECENT Media Tenor election tracker shows that with only two days remaining for political candidates to convince undecided voters to make a cross behind their preferred candidate, the main focus of the election, compared with 2006, has clearly shifted to Gauteng as the main battleground.

Media Tenor was founded in 1993 and is the world's leading provider of international media content analysis.

According to the organisation's election tracker, in 2006, 41% of election coverage focused on the Western Cape, but that number was now drastically reduced to 28%. "A comparison with local elections in 2006 reveals interesting insights into the changing patterns of campaigning, as reported on by the media - with the ANC and the DA dominating the media discourse," the election tracker revealed.

"In 2006, the ANC had a share of 54% of total coverage, followed by the DA with 18%, the IFP with 6% and the ID with 5%."

In addition, the tracker indicates that for this year's local elections, also a week prior to the elections, the ANC has recorded

a share of 60% and the DA 20%, an indication of the increased focus on the leading party and the official opposition. "While Cope (not contesting in the 2006 election) has a share of 6%, this is largely due to the media's focus on the potential failure of the party, rather than its success.

"The IFP dropped to 3% and the ID are no longer a focus of dedicated coverage."

The election tracker indicates that for the DA, the increased focus has led to increased criticism. Not the same threat to the leading party as in 2006, the share of critical voices in the media has increased, as the ANC is ramping up the attack on the opposition party, particularly with the DA's emphasis on their success in the Western Cape.

"Gauteng, on the other hand, increased from 13% to 29%, an indication that the ANC might have given up on the Western Cape and is instead focusing on ensuring victory in Gauteng, particularly the DA-led Midvaal," Media Tenor said.

"It also seems that the ANC has withdrawn some of the focus from KwaZulu-Natal as compared with 2006 with a focus of almost 20% of the coverage in the media, but now things have changed with



SWINGING AFFAIR: DA leader Helen Zille gets in the mood at a party rally.

PICTURE: GALLO IMAGES

merely 10% of the total coverage of the party's campaign in the province."

Media Tenor further demonstrated that the Eastern Cape remained - at least according to national media coverage - largely uncontested by the major parties, with only Cope, the UDM and the PAC focusing on the province.

"While the DA has maintained their share of policy coverage from 2006 (a drop by 1% to 28% of total coverage), the ANC has

improved by 4% points to 18%."

The research shows that small parties, without the budgets for expensive campaigns and rallies, were receiving a higher share of policy coverage, but were unlikely to make much of an impact on the potential voter. Research by the University of Cape Town and Media Tenor on the 2004 and 2009 elections indicates that only a few voters made up their minds about the party candidates in the last few days of campaigning.