

Chapter 9

Politics and voting

Stephen Rule

9.1 Party identification

As in previous surveys, respondents were questioned about their party political loyalties. Fieldworkers said to each respondent “I would like to ask how close or distant you feel towards various political parties and organisations. If you feel close to a party you would support it. If you feel distant you would oppose it.” The responses to this question are particularly interesting in the light of the shifts in political allegiance that occurred in the June 1999 election, five months before the survey was done. Table 9.1 lists the proportions of respondents who indicated closeness, neutrality, distance or uncertainty in respect of each of the 15 political parties.

Table 9.1: Feelings of closeness, neutrality or distance from each political party, November 1999 (percentages)

Political party	Very close	Close	Neutral	Distant	Very distant	Uncertain/ don't know
ACDP	0,8	3,9	10,4	12,6	46,2	26,0
ANC	46,4	18,7	7,9	5,5	16,0	5,5
AEB	0,2	0,6	5,8	12,3	52,4	28,7
Azapo	0,5	3,1	9,7	12,5	52,4	21,8
CP	0,1	1,7	6,7	14,5	54,5	22,3
DP	3,4	9,7	9,5	12,9	46,9	17,7
FA	0,3	1,1	6,0	13,6	53,1	25,9
FF	0,7	1,8	6,3	13,5	54,3	23,3
IFP	2,1	3,5	7,7	13,6	57,3	15,8
MF	0,3	0,9	5,1	11,4	55,8	26,4
NNP	2,5	7,9	9,3	13,9	51,3	15,2
PAC	0,9	5,9	10,8	13,2	51,6	17,8
SACP	1,7	4,9	8,2	12,6	50,4	22,1
UCDP	0,5	2,4	8,7	13,3	50,5	24,7
UDM	1,3	4,2	9,6	13,7	51,2	20,1

The feeling of closeness to a political party may not necessarily imply a deep existential commitment to the party. However, the distribution of respondents who said that they felt “very close” to each political party reflects the same broad pattern of support received by each party that contested the June 1999 election. Almost half (46%) indicated that they felt very close to the ANC. Much smaller proportions of respondents had this feeling about any of the other parties, even the main opposition parties, namely the DP (3%), IFP (2%) and NNP (3%). If those who felt “close” to each party are added to those who felt “very close”, the ANC comes out on top at 65%, followed by the DP (13%), NNP (10%) and IFP (6%). In comparison with the election results, it is apparent that feeling “very close” or “close” to the ANC translates more easily into voting for the ANC than is the case with opposition parties. Larger proportions of respondents indicated closeness to the DP and NNP

than the proportions that actually supported them in the election. In contrast, fewer respondents indicated closeness to the IFP than actually voted for them on 2 June 1999 (Table 9.1).

Of utility to analysts and political party organisers is to determine the demographic characteristics of political support bases.

Table 9.2: Feelings of closeness to each party by population group, November 1999

Political party	Very close or close				
	Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Total
	Percentages				
ACDP	4	8	8	6	5
ANC	80	7	42	21	65
AEB	0	4	0	1	1
Azapo	5	0	1	0	4
CP	1	9	2	1	2
DP	4	54	22	35	13
FA	1	6	0	2	1
FF	1	16	1	0	3
IFP	6	7	1	2	6
MF	1	1	1	12	1
NNP	5	23	33	25	10
PAC	9	0	3	0	7
SACP	9	0	2	0	7
UCDP	2	4	5	1	3
UDM	5	8	7	2	6

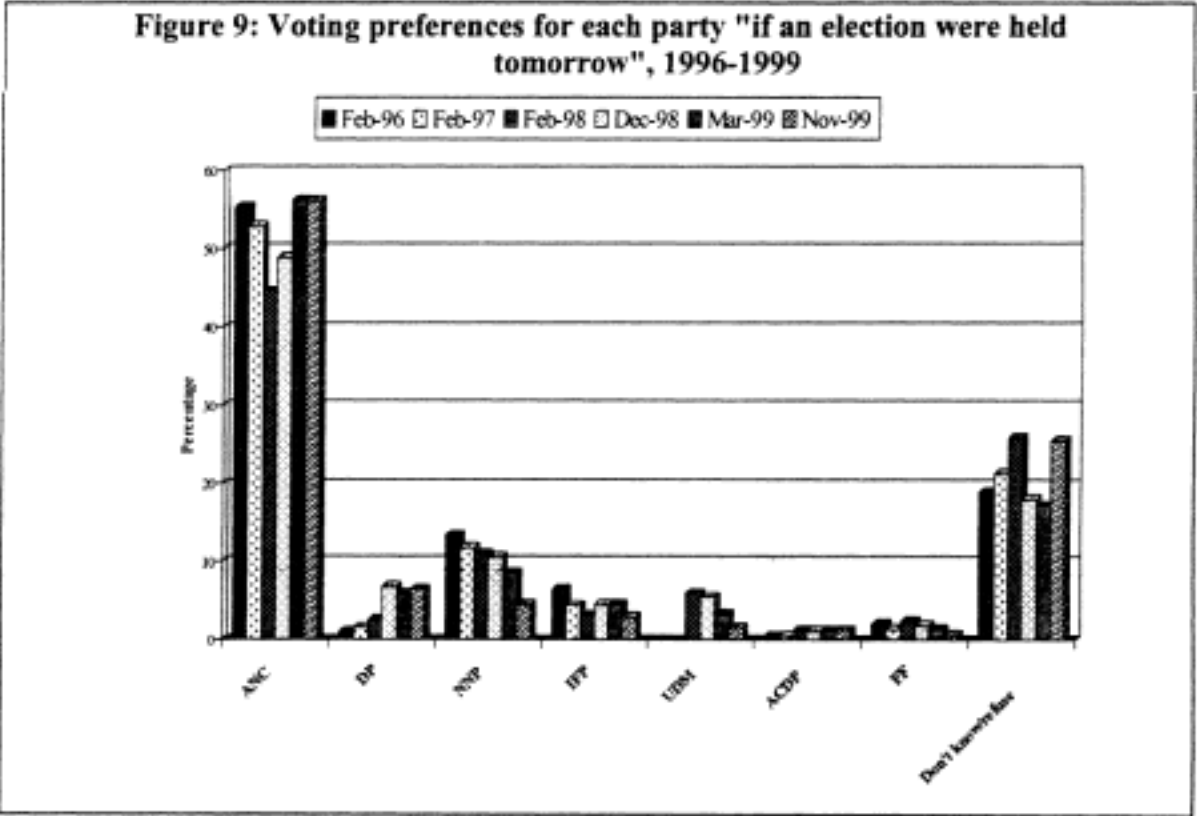
9.2 Voting intention

When asked more directly, “which party would you support if an election were held tomorrow?”, 56% said that the ANC would get their vote. The DP and NNP followed with 6% and 4% respectively and the IFP with 3% (clearly an underestimate given its capture of 8% of votes in June 1999). The UDM would have received the vote of 2% and the ACDP of 1% of the voting population. The proportions that said they would not vote (6%) or that they did not know for which party they would vote (12%) was higher than those in the March 1999 survey. A similar proportion refused to divulge their intentions in both March and November 1999 (8%) (Table 9.3).

Table 9.3: Voting preferences for each party “if an election were held tomorrow”, 1996-1999

Party	Feb 96	Feb 97	Feb 98	Dec 98	Mar 99	Nov 99
ANC	55,3	52,8	44,5	48,8	56,2	56,1
DP	1,0	1,5	2,5	6,7	5,8	6,4
NNP	13,4	11,7	10,9	10,5	8,5	4,4
IFP	6,3	4,3	3,1	4,4	4,4	2,8
UDM	-	-	5,9	5,4	3,2	1,5
ACDP	0,4	0,4	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,2
FF	2,0	1,3	2,3	1,8	1,3	0,6
FA	-	-	-	0,4	0,4	0,3
PAC	0,8	1,8	2,1	1,1	0,9	0,2
CP	1,1	0,4	0,4	1,0	0,3	0,1
Azapo	0,2	0,4	0,2	0,3	0,2	0,1
SACP	0,1	0,6	0,6	0,0	0,0	0,0
Other	0,5	3,5	0,6	0,6	1,1	0,6
Would not vote	6,0*	10,2*	11,0*	10,8	3,6	5,8
Don't know	12,9	11,1	14,8	3,8	5,3	12,2
Refused				3,4	8,3	7,5

● “Would not vote” and “Refused” combined in these surveys.



In order to determine the likely result of an hypothetical election in November 1999 certain assumptions were made:

1. That those who said they would not vote, would not
2. That the feelings of closeness to any party that were expressed by those who were “uncertain” or who said that they “don’t know” or who refused to divulge their voting preference resulted in votes for those parties.
3. That IFP supporters had understated their preference. In surveys before the June election, the IFP vote was consistently understated owing to the reluctance of many of its supporters to express their voting intentions. For this reason, the IFP proportion in this calculation was adjusted upwards by the extent to which the HSRC’s March 1999 survey under-predicted the June 1999 election result.

The overall result of a hypothetical November 1999 election would not have differed significantly from that of the June election as is illustrated in Table 9.4. Interestingly, even though the CP did not participate in the 1999 election, a small proportion of the electorate nevertheless said that they would vote CP.

Table 9.4: Distribution of votes had an election been held in November 1999

Party	% of votes: committed + balance	Party	% of votes: committed + balance
ANC	56,3+10,0=66,3	FF	0,6+0,6=1,2
DP	6,4+3,2=9,6	UCDP	0,3+0,6=0,9
IFP	(2,9+1,3)*1,95=8,1	FA	0,3+0,3=0,6
NNP	4,4+1,8=6,2	AEB	0,1+0,4=0,5
UDM	1,6+0,8=2,4	Azapo	0,1+0,3=0,4
ACDP	1,2+0,6=1,8	CP	0,1+0,3=0,4
PAC	0,2+0,9=1,2	MF	0,1+0,1=0,2

The survey facilitated a breakdown of the characteristics of potential voters for each party. The table that follows indicates the breakdowns by eight ethno-linguistic groupings.

Clearly, the ANC support was very solid amongst non-Zulu blacks. Even amongst isiZulu speakers, almost one in two was a potential ANC voter. It was also strong amongst the coloured group, where almost one in three indicated that they would have voted for the ANC. Amongst whites, the largest groups were those who indicated that they would have voted for the DP. This was a slightly weaker tendency amongst Afrikaans-speaking whites than amongst whites who speak English or other languages, however. For the former group, the NNP also remained a relatively strong option. Amongst coloureds, the NNP competed in a ratio of 2:3 against the ANC. Indians were divided in their loyalties between the DP, the NNP and to a lesser extent, the ANC (Table 9.5).

Table 9.5: Party support by ethno-linguistic grouping, November 1999 (percentages)

Party	Ethno-linguistic group								
	Black Zulu	Black Sotho group	Black Xhosa	Black other	White Afrikaans	White other	Coloured	Indian	Total population
ANC	46,9	83,2	80,3	76,3	0,8	4,6	30,7	8,0	56,1
DP		0,6	0,3	0,6	29,5	46,8	6,6	26,4	6,4
IFP	11,6	0,1	1,0		2,3		0,5	0,8	2,8
NNP		0,2	0,4	1,3	15,8	4,7	19,2	21,3	4,4
UDM	0,1	0,4	5,7	0,6	1,9	1,5	1,5	0,2	1,5
ACDP	0,6	0,1	1,7	1,1	0,9	2,9	2,2	4,0	1,2
FF					6,1	1,8	0,4		0,6
PAC	0,1	0,2	1,2						0,2
CP					0,7	0,6			0,1
FA				0,2	2,6	1,2		0,5	0,3
Azapo				0,6			0,1		0,1
SACP							0,1		0,0
UCDP		0,9	0,2	0,3		0,9			0,3
Other				0,7		0,5	0,7		0,6
Won't vote	7,0	4,9	1,7	8,0	4,8	3,2	7,9	12,0	5,8
Don't know	5,7	4,8	2,5	5,0	10,9	6,1	12,1	8,2	6,0
Uncertain	8,5	1,5	0,8	4,7	13,1	17,6	11,3	5,8	6,2
Refused	19,4	3,1	4,2	0,7	10,6	7,7	6,6	10,2	7,6
Total	20,6				7,8	4,9	9,7	0,7	

9.3 Reasons for voting preferences

It should not be presumed that voters automatically vote for parties that are perceived to represent their particular population, ethnic or linguistic group. The survey indicates that motivations for voting for a particular party were not overtly population or ethnicity related. Respondents were asked, “If you did vote in the 1999 election, for what reason did you choose the party that you did?” (Table 9.6).

Most responses were related to issues of an improved lifestyle (34%) or to a specific policy (e.g. jobs, housing) of the party concerned (36%). Fewer appeared to identify with the party for less tangible reasons (e.g. trust or belief in the party, like for the party, preference for a good opposition) (22%). Significantly, and as was the case in a Namibian election survey,¹ only 4% gave reasons that suggested overt racial identity as being their voting motivation. Nevertheless, given the apartheid history, it would be surprising if population group or ethnicity had not dictated with which parties most South Africans would identify most closely even if this assumed a subliminal role in determining voting behaviour (Table 9.7).

¹ Keulder, C. (1009), *Voting Behaviour in Namibia: Local Authority Elections 1998*, United States Agency for International Development and Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Windhoek.

Table 9.6: Reason for specific party selection by population group, 1999 election (percentages)

Reason		Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Total
Improved lifestyle	For a better life in South Africa	17,8	8,1	22,7	38,0	17,6
	For improvement	15,3	11,6	19,1	8,1	15,0
	To make things right	0,9	0,9	0,5	1,6	0,9
	For stability	0,2	0,4	0,0	0,0	0,2
Specific party policy	More jobs	16,6	1,0	8,8	2,7	13,8
	To get a house	8,1	0,0	3,7	0,5	6,6
	School bursaries	0,1				0,1
	Give me land	0,4				0,3
	Good economic policy	1,3	3,7	1,8	0,0	1,6
	Party policy	0,9	7,5	1,4	0,8	1,7
	Visions/solutions	1,1	2,2	0,8	1,5	1,2
	Most realistic		3,5			0,4
	Personal rights	0,4	0,6	0,6	0,7	0,5
	Good promises	4,5	2,4	6,9	1,2	4,4
	Promises not kept	0,3	2,3	1,3	1,3	0,7
	Stop crime/violence	0,3	1,4	3,3	0,8	1,4
	Safer country	0,9	0,8	0,0	0,2	0,8
	Party is liberal	0,0	0,3	0,0	0,0	0,0
	Increase pension	1,0	0,0	0,6	0,0	0,8
	Party is democratic	1,4	0,5	0,7	0,3	1,2
	Party does not discriminate	0,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,2
Identifies with specific party	Trust or belief	8,9	12,9	9,7	10,4	9,5
	Right thing	1,1	5,0	5,4	3,4	1,9
	Good/only opposition party	1,1	17,2	1,6	7,2	3,2
	Better than other parties	0,6	5,6	2,0	6,9	1,5
	To give government a chance	1,0	0,8	0,7	1,2	0,9
	To give another party a chance	0,8	0,6	0,1	1,4	0,7
	Like the party	2,6	3,9	1,8	4,6	2,7
	Party represents my needs	1,9	2,3	0,9	1,8	1,8
Racial identity	Give blacks a chance to govern	1,3	0,3	0,0	0,0	1,0
	For all blacks	2,3	0,0	0,7	0,0	1,9
	Party for the nation	0,8	0,9	0,0	0,0	0,7
	Party for whites	0,0	2,2	1,1	1,5	0,4
Other	Was forced to vote	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,7	0,0
	For no reason	1,7	0,0	1,0	0,0	1,4
	Don't know	0,0	0,0	0,2	0,0	0,2
	Did not vote	0,4	1,2	1,8	2,5	0,7

Table 9.7: Grouped reasons for party selection by population group, 1999 election (percentages)

Reason category	Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Total
Improved lifestyle	34,2	21,0	42,3	47,7	33,7
Specific party policy	37,5	26,2	29,9	10,0	35,7
Identifies with specific party	18,0	48,3	22,2	36,9	22,2
Racial identity of party	4,4	3,4	1,8	1,5	4,0
Other reasons	1,7	0,0	1,2	0,7	1,6
Did not vote	0,4	1,2	1,8	2,5	0,7