



*Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 108*

**Party Identification in South Africa:  
Profiles for the ANC and the DA**

*by Paul Graham*

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Who are the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA)? Together with party membership figures and election results, there is one additional reliable measure—party identification. The Afrobarometer study asks the question: “Do you feel close to a political party?” and, if yes, “Which one?” Six in 10 South Africans do feel close to a political party. This figure has remained more or less constant since the 2008 Round 4 Afrobarometer study. However, for the first time, one in ten people feel close to the DA, providing us with a large enough sample (n=229) to look at the details of those who identify with the party, alongside similar information on the ANC (n=1064).

This brief provides some profile information on the supporters of each party, as the DA emerges from its Congress with new leadership (although with the key figures still in place), and as the ANC moves into its electoral conference, to be held in Mangaung, the city which was the birthplace of the ANC 100 years ago.

### **The Survey**

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys, covering up to 35 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). It measures public attitudes on democracy and its alternatives, evaluations of the quality of governance and economic performance. In addition, the survey assesses the views of the electorate on critical political issues in the surveyed countries. The Afrobarometer’s main goal is to produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in Africa while strengthening institutional capacities for survey research, and research findings to inform policy and practice. The Afrobarometer also provides comparisons over time, as four rounds of surveys have been held from 1999 to 2008 and Round 5 is currently underway.

During Round 5, Afrobarometer surveys will be conducted in up to 35 countries in Africa, using a common survey instrument and methodology. The findings reported here draw from the most recent survey in South Africa conducted between October and November 2011. This is the sixth Afrobarometer survey conducted in South Africa (others were conducted in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008). The survey was based on a nationally representative random sample of 2399 adult South Africans drawn from all nine provinces of the country. The findings reported here have a margin of sampling error of +/- 2 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Fieldwork was conducted by Citizens Surveys Ltd., with technical support from Idasa.

### **Party Demographic Profiles**

Those who identify themselves closely with a party are the potential cadres on which the party will rely for organising branches, getting out the vote and proselytising for their cause. At the end of 2011, 44% of respondents identified themselves with the ANC, and 10% with the DA, the latter up from just

4% in 2008. Other parties, although they are represented in one or other legislature, have very few supporters willing to identify themselves (4% for all other parties combined<sup>1</sup>) and find that they are therefore always struggling to increase their size and reach.

For both the ANC and the DA, the numbers who self-identify as being affiliated with the party are large enough that we can explore in more detail *who* these loyalists are. We can be more confident in the profile of ANC supporters because there were many more of them in the survey sample (margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level); but DA numbers are sufficiently high that we can also provide tentative descriptions, with a somewhat higher margin of error of +/-6.5% at a 95 percent confidence level. This briefing paper will focus on the demographic attributes of supporters of each party. More analysis could also be done to explore levels of political participation or the attitudes espoused by supporters of each party, and the issues which they prioritise. But this research will be saved for a later briefing paper. For each of the two parties, the sections below provide the profile of the party's supporters. The numbers are not comparative levels of support between ANC and DA (e.g., what proportion of residents in Eastern Cape support the DA, and how many support the ANC), but rather, we ask what proportion of the DA's support *is drawn from* Eastern Cape, and what proportion of the ANC's support is based there—in other words, how dependent is each on Eastern Cape, or any other province or demographic group. The numbers shown for each party will in general sum to 100%.

In order to provide these pictures of the two largest parties, we approach each of them separately—so we are not saying that because the ANC have, for example, 14% of their supporters in the Eastern Cape and the DA have 13% of theirs in the same province that they are therefore in a neck and neck battle for the province. The ANC obviously have many more supporters than the DA. What it does indicate is that the DA has a cadre of people in that province on whom they can draw, whereas they might face an uphill organisational battle in the North West where only 1% of their party identifiers are resident. The ANC on the other hand, has a similar problem, although not of the same magnitude, in the Western Cape, where only 7% of their public supporters live.

The DA finds the majority of its strong supporters in three provinces—Gauteng, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape, which make up 80% of their profile. ANC supporters are more evenly spread throughout the country, although Gauteng and Kwazulu Natal make up fully 49% of the party's profile.

The results of this brief analysis suggest that the DA is a fundamentally urban party, with 88% of their party identifiers living in one or other town or city. The ANC too is a majority urban party at the moment—with 55% of their party identifiers living in such circumstances—but 45% of their close identifiers do live in rural areas.

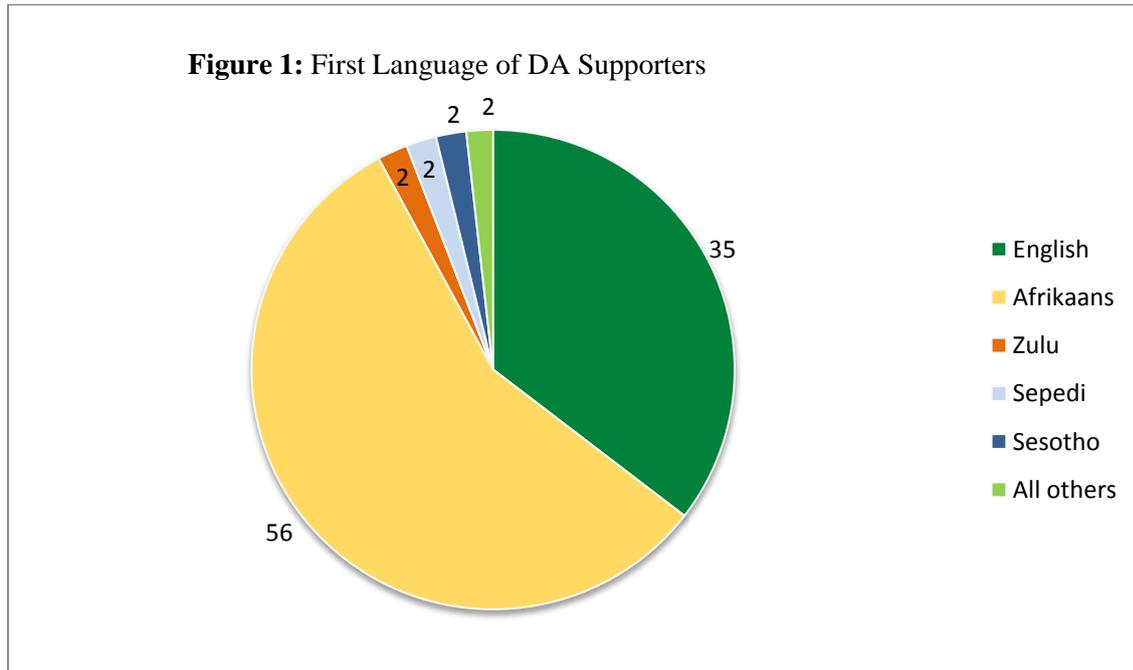
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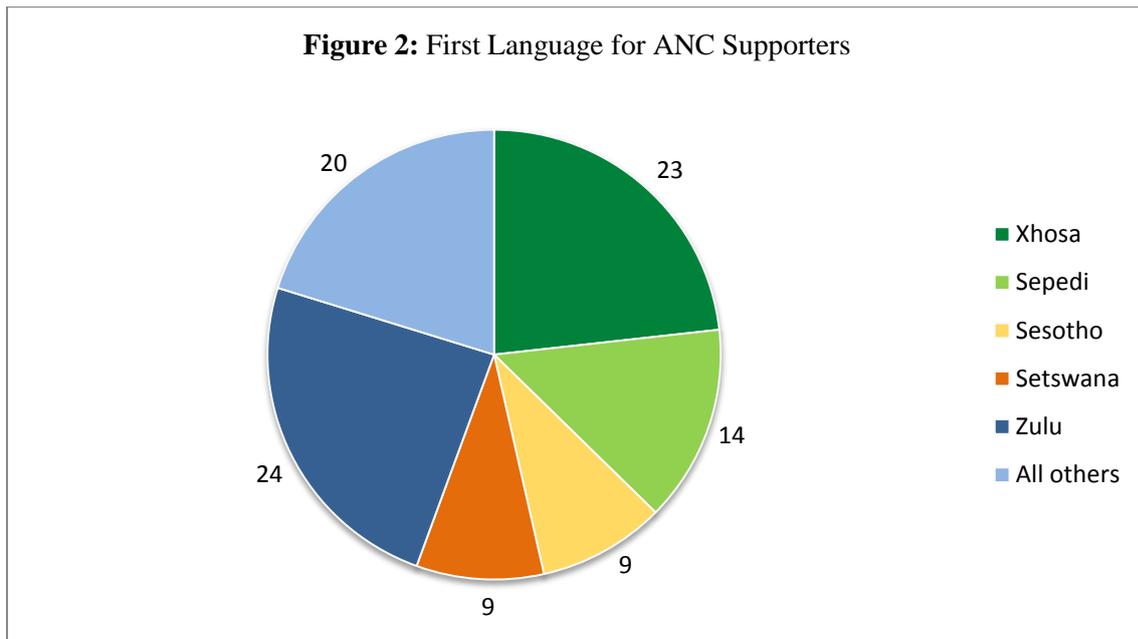
<sup>1</sup> 39% of South Africans do not identify closely with a political party. In preparing this brief, we use the numbers who do identify as a percentage of the entire population. 3% of respondents identify with a party but will not say which party.

**Table 1: Distribution of Party Support Across Provinces**

	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	Kwazulu Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Western Cape
ANC	14	7	21	18	14	10	6	3	7
DA	13	4	35	6	4	4	1	2	32
<i>Census 2011 Population Distribution</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>11</i>

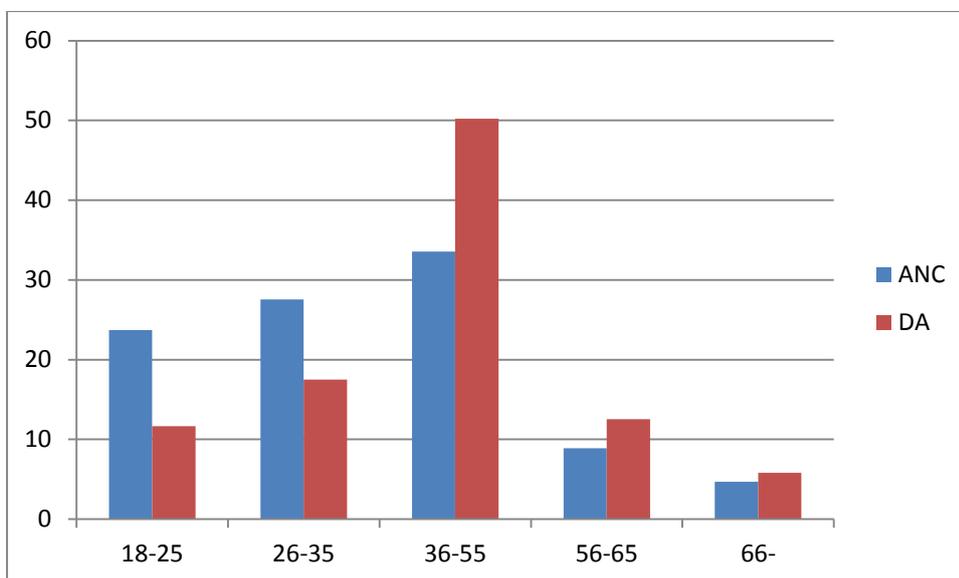
While the Afrobarometer, like many other studies in South Africa, continues to find apartheid racial categories convenient as proxies for reporting on a range of differences, it also allows people to self-identify in other ways. One of these is by primary language. People who feel close to the ANC and the DA have quite different language profiles. Fifty-six percent of the DA profile (Figure 1) speak Afrikaans, and nearly one third (35%) are English speakers. A smattering choose Xhosa, Northern Sotho/Pedi, Sesotho, Venda and Zulu. For the ANC, in contrast, supporters speak all official languages, with Zulu and Xhosa in the majority with 24% and 23% each, followed by SePedi with 14% (Figure 2).





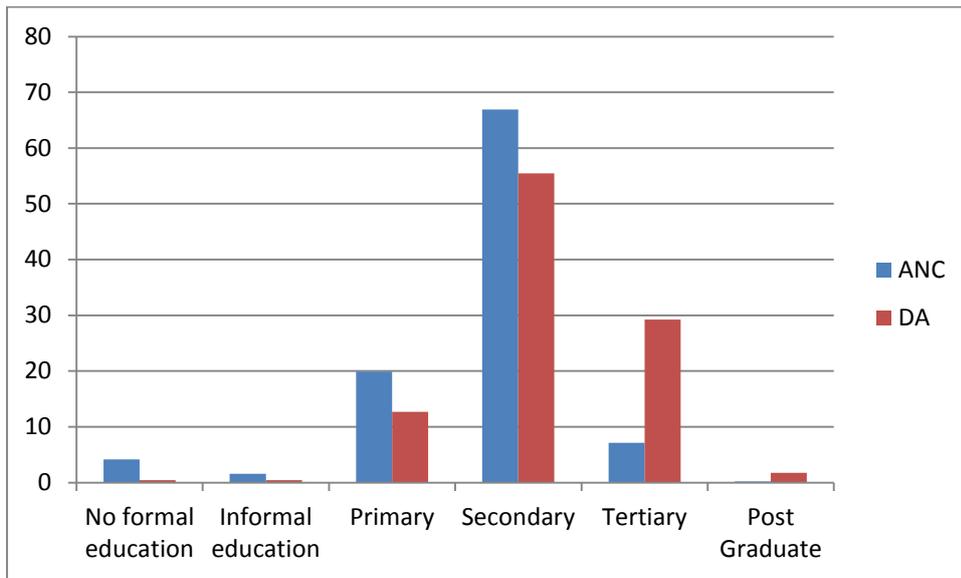
The party profiles differ with respect to age as well (Figure 3). ANC supporters are more youthful, while 50% of the DA support comes from people between the ages of 36 and 55. Retirees provide five to six percent of the support for both parties.

**Figure 3: Age Profile of DA and ANC Supporters**



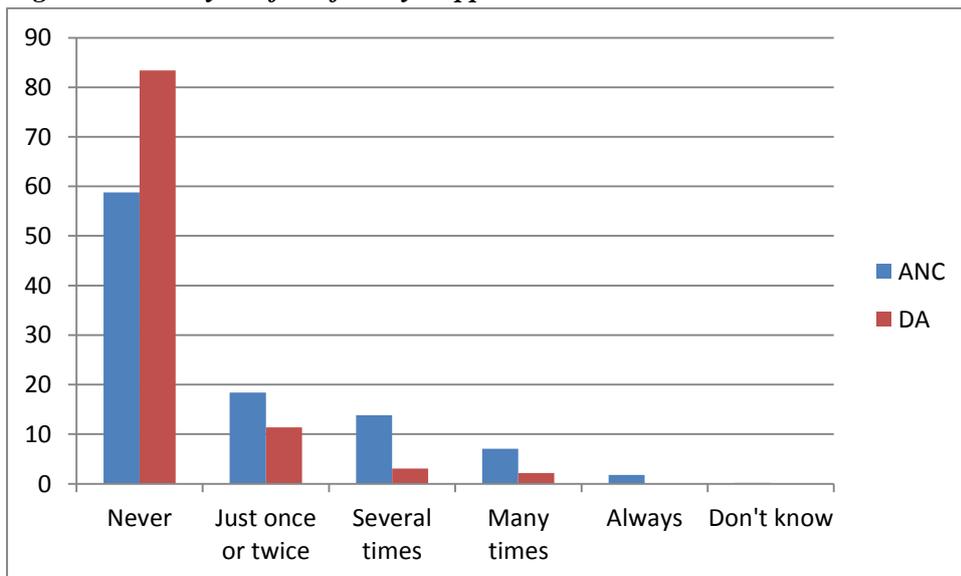
There are also differences in the educational levels of party identifiers, As Figure 4 demonstrates, the majority of public supporters of both parties attained a secondary education. But a significant number (29%) of DA support comes from those who have gone on to post matric studies, while only seven percent of ANC supporters have done likewise. At the other end of the scale, the DA attracts fewer people whose education stopped after primary school, whereas the ANC has 20% of its support from those adults.

**Figure 4: Educational Level of DA and ANC Supporters**



Finally, the Afrobarometer asks a series of livelihood and access to assets questions in order to assist us in developing an understanding of poverty in South Africa. The focus of the survey is not primarily demographic and it does not ask for income levels. However, amongst the questions is one that gets to the heart of poverty. While both rich and poor in South Africa experience shortages of water and electricity—for obviously different reasons—we also ask about whether our respondents have gone without food in the 12 months before the survey (Figure 5). The DA profile reveals that 83% of its supporters have never gone without food. But the DA does have supporters who struggle: 11% have gone without once or twice, three percent several times, and two percent many times. The ANC, on the other hand, also draws a majority of its support from those who are never without—59%. But they have far more supporters who struggle economically: 18% have gone without once or twice, 14% several times, 7% many times, 2% who are always short of food.

**Figure 5: Poverty Profile of Party Support**



**In the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without enough food to eat?**

## Conclusion

South Africa is not a two party country. Its electoral system and constitution encourage a multi-party environment and there are over 140 parties registered with the Independent Electoral Commission. But the majority of these parties are small; some parties inhabit value, geographic or ethnic niches. But two parties contend directly for voters across the country, and two parties have national aspirations. The ANC dominates the landscape and the various sites of government. The DA argues that it is a government-in-waiting, and indeed it already governs at the provincial and municipal level.

While both parties have established themselves as broad churches and espouse programmes which voters often cannot easily differentiate on strictly ideological grounds, they clearly differ in the profile of their closest supporters. Because the absolute number of DA supporters in our sample is still relatively small, our conclusions on this party have to remain tentative, although indicative. With the ANC profile we are confident of the findings. Each of these parties will have to decide whether these profiles are indicative of what they are trying to become. But if they wish to change, change will be constrained by the ability of their key supporters, those who feel close to the party, to transcend the boundaries of their race, geography, language, age and class.

This Briefing Paper was prepared by Paul Graham, Executive Director of Idasa.

The **Afrobarometer** is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. We gratefully acknowledge generous support from the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for support on Afrobarometer Round 5. For more information and further requests for analysis please visit Afrobarometer website: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org) or contact Anyway Chingwete on +27 12 392 0500 or [achingwete@idasa.org.za](mailto:achingwete@idasa.org.za)