

## Popular Attitudes Towards the South African Electoral System

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This article is based on a survey of popular attitudes towards the pure list system of one national list that is South Africa's proportional representation electoral system. While the reported findings are broadly positive there are some notable exceptions, located disproportionately among racial minorities and also among sizable numbers of black respondents. Pure proportional representation is unlikely to produce the values that the respondents say they most want from a voting system. The significance of the survey's findings is analysed and reasons are advanced for making changes to the electoral system. The government has opted to retain the status quo for the time being but in the longer term this could be negative for South Africa's democracy

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South Africa conducted its first two democratic, non-racial general elections of 1994 and 1999 under a form of proportional representation (PR) that is unique for a country of its size: a pure list system of one national list (for 200 seats) and nine provincial lists (for another 200) with no minimum threshold for parties to gain representation beyond the vote required to win one seat. The choice of this electoral system was an outcome of the negotiation process that produced South Africa's historic democratic settlement, and was dictated by the perceived characteristics of this form of PR.

For the African National Congress (ANC), which confidently forecast itself as the majority party, the idea of proportionality offered the virtue that it would still control parliament while allaying suspicions that it wanted to use the electoral system to favour itself over other parties. For those political parties that forecast themselves in the minority, PR offered maximum representation and encouraged their participation.<sup>1</sup> For all constitutional negotiators, its inclusiveness meant it was more likely than alternative electoral systems to encourage reconciliation and cooperation between competing political parties. That quality was further enhanced in the first parliament by a constitutional requirement requiring a government of national unity consisting of all parties winning a certain minimum number of seats. Finally, the system had the benefit of being simple to use and easy to explain to electorally inexperienced voters.

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In sum, the system was seen to be simple, inclusive, and fair (while not damaging the strategic interests of the most powerful party).<sup>2</sup> But South Africa's electoral system debate took place in a void, focusing mostly on the power positions of the negotiating partners; there was little public input. How has this system been received by ordinary South Africans? Were these apparent virtues important to the voters? Or did they prioritize other aspects of an electoral system, such as accountability, or facilitating government alternation, or strong opposition?<sup>3</sup>

Because South Africa's final constitution dictated that the electoral system would be reviewed (with the proviso that any amended system would also result 'in general' in proportional representation), the Electoral Task Team,<sup>4</sup> as part of its larger enquiry, surveyed the views of a random nationally representative sample of South Africans in 2002, examining these very questions.<sup>5</sup> A total of 2,760 South African citizens of voting age were interviewed between 16 July and 16 August 2002. In general, this supports inferences from the total sample to the national population within approximately plus or minus 1.5 percentage points, at a 95 per cent confidence interval. However, the precise margin will vary according to the size of the estimate (for example, an estimate of 10 per cent has a margin of error of 1.2 points, but an estimate of 50 per cent has a margin of 2.0 points). The precise margins will also vary according to how any estimate varies across the strata of the sample design.

Answers to the questions framing the survey are important not only for South African analysts, but because South Africa's switch from a plurality to a proportional representation system in 1994 has garnered much interest throughout Africa. This applies especially in Anglophone countries which have either experienced electoral turbulence (Lesotho) or where rule by repressive governments has been partially facilitated by official manipulation of 'first past the post' electoral systems (for example arap Moi's Kenya and, currently Mugabe's Zimbabwe).<sup>7</sup>

### **Attitudes Toward the Current Electoral System**

#### *Fairness and Equality*

Because people may have had very different levels of knowledge about the existing system, respondents were informed that

general elections are normally held every five years. In these elections, people vote for a political party. The top people from each party's list of candidates then go into parliament or the provincial assembly according to how many votes each party receives. Once parliament is elected, the Members of Parliament elect the President and the Members of Provincial Legislatures elect the Premiers.

As noted above, South Africa's choice of PR was partially based on the need to find an electoral system that did not appear to advantage one particular party or group of voters. Looking across their answers, it is clear that substantial majorities of South Africans agreed with this proposition, namely that overall, the present system was fair and treated parties and voters equally. Three-quarters of voters agreed that the system is 'fair to all parties' (72 per cent); and approximately two-thirds felt that 'all voters were treated equally' in the 1999 election (68 per cent) and that 'all parties were treated equally' in 1999 (63 per cent). Three quarters said they were 'satisfied' with 'the way we elect our government' (74 per cent).<sup>8</sup>

#### *Inclusiveness and Accountability*

Scholarly proponents of PR forms of electoral systems focus on PR's ability to represent broad swathes of plural societies and do so in a fair manner.<sup>9</sup> However, prominent critics focus on the fact that it does not allow the electorate to hold individual parliamentarians and government officials accountable.<sup>10</sup> What do the voters say? The evidence suggests they agree with both propositions (Table 2).

TABLE 1  
PERCEIVED FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

|   | Yes | Neutral/<br>don't know | No |
|---|-----|------------------------|----|
| Is the voting system fair to all parties?                                       | 72  | 11                     | 17 |
| Do you think that all voters were treated equally in the 1999 general election? | 68  | 14                     | 18 |
| Do you think all parties were treated equally in the 1999 general election?     | 63  | 16                     | 21 |
| Are you satisfied with the way we elect our government in South Africa?         | 74  | 5                      | 21 |

TABLE 2  
PERCEIVED INCLUSIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF  
THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

|   | Yes | Neutral/<br>don't know | No |
|---|-----|------------------------|----|
| Does the voting system ensure that we include many voices in parliament?  | 81  | 8                      | 11 |
| Does the voting system give voters a way to change the party in power?  | 78  | 9                      | 14 |
| Can voters influence parliament?  | 71  | 11                     | 18 |
| Does the voting system give us the best possible government?  | 69  | 9                      | 22 |
| Does the voting system help voters hold the parties accountable for their actions?                              | 68  | 12                     | 20 |
| Does the voting system help voters hold individual representatives of government accountable for their actions? | 60  | 15                     | 25 |

Four-fifths of respondents felt that the system 'ensures that we include many voices in parliament' (81 per cent) and that the system gives voters a chance to 'change the party in power,' (78 per cent). Around seven in ten said the system enables voters to 'influence parliament' (71 per cent), that it produces 'the best possible government' (69 per cent), and that it allows voters to hold political parties 'accountable for their actions' (68 per cent). However, there was a notable fall in agreement when we asked whether the system helps voters 'hold individual representatives of government accountable for their actions': here, just 60 per cent agreed and fully one-quarter (25 per cent) disagreed.<sup>11</sup>

There is one important area of disjuncture between academic and popular opinion, however. Various commentators have categorized the ANC, which won 63 per cent and 67 per cent of the national vote in 1994 and 1999 respectively as a 'dominant' party.<sup>12</sup> Yet in spite of these electoral margins, voters do not necessarily see the governing party as unassailable: most believed that the electoral system enables them to make their voices heard in parliament and ensures that political parties anticipate their reactions at the next election to the actions they take today.<sup>13</sup>

On the whole, however, the results in Tables 1 and 2 display a relatively high level of satisfaction with the existing system. These results suggested that, in the eyes of the voter, the system was far from 'broke'. Accordingly caution ought to be exercised in 'mending it'.<sup>14</sup> Yet it should be noted that fully one-fifth of respondents were dissatisfied with the present system, and around one-third were either dissatisfied or non-committal in their judgement. In other words, support for the current system was less than consensual and significantly sized minorities were dissatisfied. This raises the question of whether support for the fundamentals of the constitutional system (such as national identity, democracy, the constitution itself, and the way South Africans elect their representatives) should enjoy a scope of legitimacy broader than a simple majority? Do electoral systems require what David Easton once called 'diffuse support', meaning a type of support for government that is almost consensual and cuts across all societal cleavages?<sup>15</sup>

#### *Explaining Popular Evaluations of the Electoral System*

What explains these views of the country's electoral system? Do they reflect the structural legacies of apartheid? Or do people like the electoral system simply because it gives them the party they want, with the country's new minority groups (white, coloured and Indian voters) holding less optimistic views than black voters supporting the system as a function of their overwhelming support for the ANC? Or, as institutionalists would argue, have people developed a sense of loyalty to this part of the constitutional

edifice, through the practice of voting? Or, as rational choice theory would have it, are positive views towards the electoral system generated by positive views of the performance of the political system in general? In order to test which factors structure attitudes towards the current electoral system, the survey measured a range of basic demographic characteristics such as age, race, home language, education, household type, employment, province and rural–urban status. It also measured attitudinal and behavioural factors such as respondents' main source of political information, their political knowledge, political interest, and their participation in previous elections and other forms of political activity.

Analysis reveals that, as in so many other areas of public opinion in South Africa, the most important *demographic* structuring characteristic is race. For instance, white, coloured and Indians respondents were considerably less satisfied than black voters with various aspects of the current electoral system. At the same time, overlap was far from complete.<sup>16</sup> Between one third and one half of white voters, and just above one half to 60 per cent of coloured and Indian respondents offered positive assessments of the current system. It is also notable that between 12 to 15 per cent of black respondents registered dissatisfaction with the system. Clearly, many other factors besides race shape the way South African voters think about the political world.

TABLE 3  
FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY OF THE PRESENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM (BY RACE)

|  | Black | White | Coloured | Indian |
|--|-------|-------|----------|--------|
| Satisfied with way we elect our government             | 81    | 51    | 56       | 64     |
| Voting system is fair                                  | 78    | 48    | 55       | 68     |
| Voters were treated equally in 1999 general elections  | 75    | 37    | 55       | 57     |
| Parties were treated equally in 1999 general elections | 70    | 34    | 46       | 52     |

(Per cent agreement)

TABLE 4  
INCLUSIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM  
(BY RACE)

|   | Black | White | Coloured | Indian |
|---|-------|-------|----------|--------|
| The voting system ensures we include many voices in parliament    | 83    | 70    | 77       | 82     |
| The voting system offers a way to change the party in power       | 81    | 53    | 73       | 80     |
| The voting system gives us the best possible government           | 77    | 37    | 55       | 59     |
| The voting system holds parties accountable                       | 73    | 43    | 61       | 66     |
| Voters can influence parliament                                   | 72    | 64    | 70       | 85     |
| The voting system holds representatives of government accountable | 64    | 38    | 57       | 64     |

(Per cent agreement)

There were smaller racial differences in attitudes toward the degree of political accountability produced by the current system.<sup>17</sup> There was broad cross racial agreement that the system allows people to influence parliament and produces as broadly representative a parliament as possible. However, whites, in particular, were considerably less optimistic than other voters that the system enables people to hold individual representatives and political parties accountable or that it produces the best government possible. However, the misgivings of minority voters were also shared by over a fifth of blacks. As will be illustrated below, these queries about accountability were echoed in people's evaluation of alternative electoral systems

Ordinary least squares multiple regression was used to analyse the factors that shape people's view of the electoral system. Tables 5 and 6 display the most important standardized regression coefficients (full results are available from the author). They reveal that race still plays a very strong role. Even when we control for the impact of differences in rural-urban status and educational status, white, coloured and Indian respondents were still considerably more negative in their assessments of the equality and fairness of the system than were blacks. Whites are also significantly less positive about the political accountability of the system than other voters. Moreover, these differences remain even when we control for differences in respondents' approval ratings of elected official. This strongly suggests that racial differences in evaluations of electoral system are not simply a function of their disapproval of the party in government, the ANC. Meanwhile, more educated respondents are more likely to say that the system produces fair and equal results, and those who live in formal housing are less likely to say that it produces accountability. Other demographic factors such as rural-urban distinctions and gender had no impact.

At the same time, it should be noted that job approval ratings of elected officials themselves have a major impact on how people viewed the electoral system. They were the second strongest determinant after race of popular views of the system's equality and fairness, and have the single strongest impact on assessments of its accountability. In other words, controlling for all other factors, the more people approved of the way their elected leaders do their jobs, the more positive they were about the electoral system. Since we know from other research that job approval ratings are heavily shaped by partisan factors, we interpret this to mean that views of the electoral system are also strongly shaped by partisan criteria (independently of the impact of race).

To support this interpretation, we point to the fact that those respondents who identify with a party are much more positive about both aspects of the current electoral system than other voters. Based on the results of other research, we know that the large majority of these identifiers support the

governing party, the ANC.<sup>18</sup> Since the impact of partisanship remains even after we have statistically controlled for the impact of race, this means that the 57 per cent of black respondents who identified with a party (predominantly, the ANC) were far more likely to approve of the existing system than the 43 per cent who were politically 'independent.'

Finally, those respondents who were interested in politics had more positive assessments of both aspects of the current system than those who were not. Interaction with the political system (in the sense of making contact with elected officials, party or community leaders) led to more positive assessments of the system's freeness and fairness, as those who had voted most often since 1994 were more likely to feel that the system produces accountability.

In summary, while public support for the country's electoral system is widespread, these results indicate that much of it, to use Easton's terms, is 'specific' rather than 'diffuse': that it is conditional on public satisfaction with political performance rather than habituated positive affect.

### What do South Africans want out of an Electoral System?

While the broadly positive popular views of the current voting system suggested little pressure for radical reform, could one conclude the voters saw no need for *any* reform? Recall that support for the existing system was far from consensual. Significant pockets of negative and pessimistic

TABLE 5  
DETERMINANTS OF EVALUATIONS OF THE EQUALITY AND  
FAIRNESS OF THE SYSTEM

|  | Standardized coefficients (beta) |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Demographics                                       |                                  |
| White  | -0.42**                          |
| Coloured   | -0.15***                         |
| Indian   | -0.09***                         |
| Education  | 0.05*                            |
| Political attitudes                                |                                  |
| Approves of overall performance of elected leaders | 0.27***                          |
| Interested in politics                             | 0.08***                          |
| Identifies with a political party                  | 0.06**                           |
| Political Behaviour                                |                                  |
| Voting participation since 1994                    | 0.09***                          |
| Makes contact with leaders                         | 0.05*                            |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>                            | 0.38                             |

Dependent variable: Index of Perceived Equality and Fairness of Current Electoral System.

Table displays all variables with a beta weight greater than or equal to 0.05.

\*Significant at 0.05, \*\*significant at 0.01; \*\*\*significant at 0.001.

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TABLE 6

## DETERMINANTS OF EVALUATIONS OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

|  | Standardized coefficients (beta) |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Political attitudes                                      |                                  |
| Approves of overall job performance of elected officials | 0.27***                          |
| Identifies with a political party                        | 0.11***                          |
| Interested in politics                                   | 0.09***                          |
| Demographic factors                                      |                                  |
| White  | -0.25***                         |
| Lives in area with formal housing                        | -0.07**                          |
| Political behaviour                                      |                                  |
| Voting participation since 1994                          | 0.08***                          |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>                                  | 0.28                             |

Dependent variable: Index of Perceived Accountability of Current Electoral System.

Table displays all variables with a beta weight > 0.05

\*Significant at 0.05; \*\*significant at 0.01; \*\*\*significant at 0.001.

opinions existed, located disproportionately among racial minorities but also among sizable proportions of black respondents who were dissatisfied with the performance of elected officials, who did not identify with a political party, and who were less engaged with the political process (cognitively or behaviourally).

Moreover, when voters were asked about what they wanted a voting system to achieve, large proportions and even majorities emphasized features that pure proportional representation has great difficulty producing. These qualities, in order of preference, were a direct connection between local areas and legislators, greater grass-roots control over legislators, a directly elected president, greater freedom for legislators to criticize their own political parties and take own stances on legislation independently of the party line, and the potential for independent candidates. At the same time, most respondents wanted a parliament that is as broadly representative as possible, even at the risk of slowing the legislative process. They also wanted parties to nominate more women, and indeed favour requiring them to do so.

Two types of questions were used to get at these preferences. First of all, respondents were asked an open-ended question to tap what voting meant to them. Second, respondents were given a range of paired statements intended to get them to express preferences on prominent dimensions of electoral choice often identified by analysts of electoral systems.



*The Meaning of Voting*

We turn first to the question of what voting means to South Africans. The responses reveal at least three important lessons (Table 7). First of all, respondents exhibited a high degree of literacy on the subject. Just six per cent were unable to articulate any meaning of voting. This echoes the high turnout rates in the first two democratic general elections.<sup>19</sup> It could reflect at least two different factors. First, the goal of 'one man, one vote' was the overarching theme of the entire liberation movement. Second, international donors, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) have poured substantial resources into voter education since 1993. The evidence seems to support the second option. In testimony to the broad reach of voter education, educated respondents were no more likely to offer some understanding of voting than less educated.<sup>20</sup> The most important demographic difference appears to be age: older voters were significantly more likely to say they 'don't know' when asked what voting means.<sup>21</sup>

Second, there was little sign of cynicism about the act of voting. Just four per cent gave comments that could be described as indifferent or negative views toward voting. Most of these people told interviewers that voting made no difference. But the important point is that this opinion was held by an extremely small percentage of eligible voters. Thus, whatever the differences among South Africans about the efficacy of the present electoral system, there was widespread agreement that the act of voting – universally acknowledged as perhaps the key characteristic of democracy – was important.

Third, voters infused voting with a variety of meanings, many of which can apparently be held simultaneously. Three specific cognitions of voting were mentioned most frequently (respondents being allowed to offer more than one response). Their responses were written down verbatim and coded into broader categories after the fact. The most frequently mentioned meaning was to see voting in procedural terms, as a way to select representatives and government officials or leaders (42 per cent of all respondents). Mentioned just as frequently, and often by the same people who offered a procedural understanding, 42 per cent of respondents attributed an instrumental purpose to voting. That is, they saw it as a tool for securing material improvement in living conditions, many of them paraphrasing the ANC campaign slogan and saying that voting brings 'a better life'. Third, one quarter (26 per cent) said voting has an important symbolic purpose: that is, to vote is an act of participating in a democracy and an expression of citizenship and responsibility to society.<sup>22</sup> Finally, some 10 per cent saw voting as an act of identification with a party or

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person they admire, a figure which is surprisingly low given that 52 per cent of respondents claimed that they felt close to a party. This suggests that South Africans' partisan identification is potentially more fluid than is often assumed.

With a few exceptions, responses showed few important variations according to race. White (37 per cent), coloured (40 per cent) and Indian (37 per cent) respondents were more likely to see democracy in symbolic terms than black respondents (21 per cent). Coloured respondents were far less likely to see democracy in procedural terms (22 per cent) than all others. White respondents were far less likely to see democracy in substantive terms (14 per cent) than all others.

We now turn to examine responses to paired statements designed to force people to express preferences on prominent dimensions of electoral system choice that have been identified by electoral specialists.

TABLE 7  
THE MEANING OF VOTING

|   | Per cent |
|---|----------|
| Voting is about electing representatives  | 42       |
| Voting is about electing persons, leaders, the president  | 16       |
| Voting is about electing someone who will consider our needs and rights                           | 13       |
| Voting is about choosing the right person or party  | 8        |
| Voting is about electing a government   | 5        |
| Voting allows transmission of needs and demands   | 41       |
| Voting is about getting the things we want or need  | 6        |
| Voting is about getting help to obtain pensions, electricity, water, housing                      | 9        |
| Voting is about getting help to get employment  | 8        |
| Voting is about securing a better life  | 13       |
| Voting is about transformation and improving life in the community                                | 5        |
| Voting symbolizes citizenship   | 26       |
| To vote is to vote for our country  | 1        |
| Voting is about being involved in society, being involved in South Africa, it's about taking part | 2        |
| Voting is about making a difference, contributing to society                                      | 2        |
| Voting is about being heard   | 8        |
| Voting is about getting equality/equal treatment for everybody                                    | 3        |
| Voting is about exercising our democratic rights, fighting for our needs                          | 9        |
| Voting is about being recognized as a citizen   | 1        |
| Voting allows identification with charisma  | 10       |
| Voting enables you to choose a person or party you admire   | 10       |
| Other   | 4        |
| Voting does not make a difference   | 4        |
| It makes no difference if you vote or not, voting is a waste of time                              | 3        |
| Other indifference comments   | 1        |
| Don't know  | 6        |

Can you describe what it means to you to vote?

*Individual Candidates versus Political Parties*

Different voting systems can present very different ‘packages’ of choices to voters at election time. These range from, at one extreme, only political parties and their competing policy platforms (for example, South Africa), to a mixture of party platforms as well as individual candidates (Germany), to a more candidate centred system in which party policies play some role (the United States), to the other extreme consisting purely of independent candidates where party affiliation is totally removed (Uganda’s no-party system as well as non-partisan elections in several American states).

While the time and space limitations of the survey did not allow measurement of all these dimensions, responses to the questions that were asked suggest that people want a system that revolves around political parties, though many voters want a system that has a space for independent candidates. More than two-thirds (70 per cent) said they prefer to vote for a party candidate rather than an individual. At the same time, four in ten (42 per cent) said they would like to see independent candidates elected to Parliament in 2004, and one-third (35 per cent) said they would personally consider voting for one.

Indian respondents were slightly more likely to support the inclusion of independent candidates. White voters were particularly likely to prefer voting for an individual personality rather than a party. While black respondents were the most enthusiastic adherents of parties, as many as a quarter of them would be prepared to vote for an individual over a party. But other than these, there was little difference between voters of different racial groups.

*Localized versus Centralized Control of Political Parties*

Different combinations of voting systems and other constitutional arrangements may produce very different environments for political parties. For example, a strong separation of powers between the American President

TABLE 8  
INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES VERSUS POLITICAL PARTIES

|   | Yes | Don't know | No |
|---|-----|------------|----|
| In the next election would you like to see independent candidates, that is, candidates who do not belong to any political party, elected to parliament? | 42  | 12         | 46 |
| Would you consider voting for a candidate who does not belong to any specific political party, that is, an independent candidate, at the next election? | 35  | 10         | 56 |
| Do you prefer to vote for an individual, or do you prefer to vote for a political party?  | 28  | 2          | 70 |

and Congress mixed with a first- past-the-post constituency system works to limit executive control over legislators of the same political party. Moreover, the mixture of strong federalism and state control of election machinery works to weaken severely national party control over state and local parties. Party candidates are chosen in primary elections by members of that party. South Africa may lie at the other end of this continuum. Here the combination of a parliamentary system, very weak federalism, and pure proportional representation (plus the ability of party leaders to expel their own legislators from parliament) produces very high degrees of centralized control. Candidate lists are generated by party branches, but central party committees exercise a strong degree of control over its final composition. Somewhere in the middle, various combinations of electoral rules and political institutions may produce legislators who must support the executive or risk bringing down the government, but have the strength to challenge party leadership in caucuses. Other combinations of rules enable greater decentralized autonomy by allowing for governments to continue even when they lose legislative votes so long as no other party or parties can command greater support.

The survey suggests that South Africans want an electoral system that enables them to select their legislators and legislative candidates more directly, and have more direct access to legislators so they can better represent their interests and opinions. First of all, close to three quarters (71 per cent) said they want to vote for a candidate from the area in which they live; one quarter said they did not (27 per cent). A follow-up, open-ended question then asked people 'Why do you feel this way?' Again, people could offer up to three reasons. Interviewers recorded their verbatim responses that were grouped in categories after the fact. The most frequently cited type of answers had to do with the belief that local candidates would better *represent* people's opinions and interests; 43 per cent of respondents offered this type of response (see Table 10 for specific types of comments). The second most frequent set of replies (23 per cent) were related to the first, but focused on the issues of *proximity*, *familiarity* and *trust*. Issues of *constituency service* were the third most frequently cited (22 per cent). Most of those who had indicated they did not vote for a local candidate either felt that the issue of local versus non-local candidates did not really matter, or were sceptical of the motives or abilities of anyone from their own area.

Two-thirds (64 per cent) agreed with the statement that members of parliament should 'live close to the people they represent' so they can 'express their opinions and promote their interests', (although one third (32 per cent) agreed that 'it does not matter' where MPs live in order for them to represent voters). Finally, a majority (53 per cent) agreed that all party candidates should 'be chosen by members of that party' before the final

TABLE 9  
REASONS WHY PEOPLE WANT/DO NOT WANT LOCAL CANDIDATES

|  | Per cent |
|--|----------|
| Prefer local candidates  |          |
| Better representation  | 42       |
| Person will know what we want/will understand our needs/is familiar                                      | 34       |
| Person will represent us in parliament   | 6        |
| Other familiarity comments   | 2        |
| Proximity/familiarity  | 23       |
| Person will be close enough to contact   | 15       |
| We know/trust/are familiar with them   | 7        |
| Help your own people/people you know   | 1        |
| Better Constituency Service  | 22       |
| Person will satisfy our needs/help us/look after us  | 14       |
| Person will help us with water, roads, employment, housing etc.  | 8        |
| Other  | 5        |
| Prefer someone from my own area  | 5        |
| Prefers outside candidates   | 18       |
| No one in our area is suitable/capable/qualified   | 6        |
| Person is only after personal gain/will only look after himself and his family's needs/don't care for us | 6        |
| Person will forget us after the elections  | 3        |
| Outsider will be fair/work harder/be honest/make a difference  | 2        |
| Other prefer outsider comments   | 1        |
| Does not matter  | 9        |
| It makes no difference who you vote for – there is no change   | 3        |
| As long as the work is done  | 2        |
| Other indifference comments  | 2        |
| As long as the person has necessary skills/leadership  | 1        |
| It makes no difference whether you vote or not   | 1        |
| Other  |          |
| Other miscellaneous comments   | 2        |
| Don't know   | 3        |
| Don't know/can't explain   | 2        |
| No reason/nothing  | 1        |

TABLE 10  
INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY VERSUS INTERNAL PARTY DISCIPLINE

| Autonomy of the MP   | agree | Don't know | agree | Party discipline  |
|--|-------|------------|-------|---|
| Once a person is elected to parliament, they should stay there until the next election | 54    | 8          | 38    | The party leadership should have the right to deploy members of parliament to another job outside parliament            |
| Members of parliament should be able to criticize their own political party            | 51    | 5          | 44    | Members of parliament should always be loyal to their party leaders because they were elected on their party's platform |
| Members of parliament should vote according to their own beliefs                       | 8     | 5          | 44    | Members of parliament should always vote the way their party decides  |

*Which of these statements do you agree with most?*

election rather than by party leaders, something which can be accomplished in party caucuses or more inclusive direct primary elections.

At the same time, respondents' enthusiasm for local control of national or provincial legislators was not fully matched by their assessments of their new ward representatives to local government councils. The reformed local government system, as put into practice in the Local Government Elections of 2000, established a mixed system composed of both types of councillor. While just 38 per cent said that ward councillors represented them best, this figure was almost twice that of those who said the party list councillors were the better representatives (20 per cent). One quarter (24 per cent) saw no difference, and a final 17 per cent did not know.

Again, the racial profiles on this issue were remarkably similar. On the open question about why people preferred local candidates, there were few statistically significant, and no important racial, differences in the propensity to cite reasons of representation or proximity/familiarity. Black and coloured respondents (23 per cent of each) were about twice as likely to cite constituency service than were white or Indians (13 and 14 per cent respectively); but this was a minority viewpoint among all groups. While Indian (24 per cent) and black respondents (19 per cent) were more likely to distrust the motives or capabilities of local candidates than coloured (15 per cent) or white respondents (7 per cent), this was a minority sentiment in all communities. Large majorities of black, white and coloured respondents wanted to vote for a local candidate. Contrary to some expectations, black respondents were most likely to agree that candidates should be selected by grass roots membership rather than party leaders, and that MPs need to live close to those they represent.

#### *Individual Autonomy versus Internal Party Discipline*

Different voting and constitutional systems also produce different capabilities for party leaders to impose programmatic consistency on their members. Systems differ considerably in the autonomy they create for elected legislators, particularly with regard to whether voters directly elect candidates or whether they only vote for candidate lists prepared by parties. Of course, in practice there are multiple ways in which constituency and list systems can be mixed, but the clear tendency is that individual legislators are more likely to exercise autonomy if they are subject to simultaneous pressures from their constituents (from below) and from the party leadership (from above). In contrast, candidates elected simply from a party list tend to be cut off from the voters between elections and hence subject only to the direct pressure of party leader from above. Because the party, rather than the individual 'owns' the legislative seat, party leaders are even able to move legislators in and out of the legislature at will.

The next set of questions addressed the degree of individual autonomy versus loyalty to the party South Africans want an electoral system to produce. The results suggested that respondents believed that an electoral system should work to produce an environment in which the voters, rather than party leaders, elect and remove legislative representatives. While respondents were divided, the balance believed legislators should be able to criticize their party or oppose the party line when voting on legislation.

Fifty-four per cent agreed that elected officials should serve out their terms, as opposed to 38 per cent who agreed that party leaders should have the right to redeploy elected members to other jobs outside parliament. A majority (51 per cent) agreed that elected representatives should have freedom of expression to criticize their own parties, while 44 per cent said that legislators owe their loyalty to their political party. Forty seven per cent said that MPs should be able to vote according to their own beliefs, while 44 per cent said they should always vote according to the party line.

Again, these sentiments were spread fairly even across the racial groups. Black respondents were slightly more likely to favour the 'party' and whites slightly more likely to favour individual autonomy. However, what is probably the most significant finding, because of their demographic majority amongst the electorate, is that 53 per cent of black respondents wanted legislators to have a secure seat that cannot be changed by party leaders and nearly 50 per cent wanted legislators to be able to exercise their own judgement independently of their party.

#### *Representation versus Legislative Efficiency*

Pure proportional representation systems with low vote thresholds (such as South Africa's) tend to produce large numbers of small political parties with

TABLE 11  
INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY VERSUS INTERNAL PARTY DISCIPLINE

| Autonomy of the MP   | agree | Don't know | agree | Party discipline  |
|--|-------|------------|-------|---|
| Once a person is elected to parliament, they should stay there until the next election | 54    | 8          | 38    | The party leadership should have the right to deploy members of parliament to another job outside parliament            |
| Members of parliament should be able to criticize their own political party            | 51    | 5          | 44    | Members of parliament should always be loyal to their party leaders because they were elected on their party's platform |
| Members of parliament should vote according to their own beliefs                       | 8     | 5          | 44    | Members of parliament should always vote the way their party decides  |

Which of these statements do you agree with most?

legislative seats, and may complicate the organization and operation of a legislature. Many of these concerns can be minimized if PR produces a tightly disciplined majority party. However, if there is no single majority party, more effort will be required to bargain over the allocation of committee seats, question time and speaking time, and to the extent that their consent is required, slow the legislative process. At the other end of the spectrum, purely constituency-based systems with single member districts tend to produce two party systems and artificially strong legislative majorities.<sup>23</sup> While this may exclude many voices, scholars argue that it produces efficient and 'responsible' government by reducing the need for bargaining and compromise.<sup>24</sup>

Representation and efficiency are both qualities which are extremely important to the health of any democracy. Yet there is clearly a tension between them (as is demonstrated, for instance, by the existence of the 'guillotine' in various parliaments whereby governments are able to limit the length of debate on particular issues). Where do South Africans situate themselves on this question? When posed with a choice between these two poles, our respondents came down on the end of broad representation. Six of ten (59 per cent) said that the most important purpose of parliament is to represent all parts of society, even if it requires more time for debate; one third (34 per cent) felt that too many voices will paralyze the process, thus necessitating a strong majority. A similar 59 per cent said that parliament should contain as many political parties as necessary, while a third (35 per cent) agreed that too many parties may make parliament unmanageable.

Again, opinion on these issues was relatively evenly spread across the racial groups. The only significant nuance was that – perhaps in contrast to their relatively stronger support for independent candidates and the autonomy of MPs – white respondents gave higher priority to legislative efficiency than other voters.

#### *Direct Election of the President*

One question item simply asked people whether or not they would like to vote for the president directly. At present, South Africa's president is first elected to parliament on a party list before being elected by parliament. In contrast, 63 per cent of the public wanted the president to be directly elected by the voters, not by parliament. Of those who wanted a direct vote, the survey then asked whether they wanted the president to be elected at the same time as parliament: 85 per cent said yes. Yet again, the racial profile on this issue was remarkably similar: direct election of the president was a majority preference amongst every group of voters.

It should be noted that respondents were not asked whether they wanted to strengthen the presidency relative to either parliament or his/her political



TABLE 12  
REPRESENTATION VERSUS LEGISLATIVE EFFICIENCY

| Representation   | Agree<br>most | Don't<br>know | Agree<br>most | Efficiency   |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| The most important thing is for Parliament to represent all parts of society, even if it takes longer to debate and make decisions | 59            | 7             | 34            | A parliament that represents too many opinions will not be able to make decisions easily, so it is important to have a party with a strong majority that can pass laws and get things done |
| Parliament should be able to represent as many parties as possible   | 59            | 7             | 35            | Too many parties may make parliament unmanageable  |

*Which of these statements do you agree with most?*

party (a likely outcome of such a significant constitutional change). Given respondents' fairly strongly expressed views in favour of the relative autonomy of MPs and their support for local candidates, it could be that they would be cautious about any move that might weaken the legislature relative to the executive. On the other hand, they might reckon that a stronger president relative to parliament might represent a shift in favour of stronger checks and balances. This is clearly one aspect of our investigation that requires more research.

#### *Women's Representation*

Finally, the survey posed two issues about women's representation. The South African parliament is now justly famous for having one of the highest proportions of women legislators in the world (30 per cent).<sup>25</sup> Respondents were not reminded of this achievement, nor were they given any information concerning the number of women in either parliament or the provincial legislatures. However, when asked to consider whether the existing gender balance in parliament was sufficient, 43 per cent felt that there were still 'too few' women in parliament, while one quarter (28 per cent) felt the number was sufficient; 11 per cent said there were 'too many'. 18 per cent said they did not know. Furthermore, 63 per cent of respondents agreed that parties should be required to nominate more women as candidates (26 per cent saying 'no').

These views are consistent with the broader desire that South Africa's legislatures should be as broadly representative as possible. However, they might be seen to conflict with respondents' desire for local candidates and localized control over candidate selection. This is because the reason the South African parliament has been able to achieve such a relatively high

proportion of women is because parties have deliberately chosen to nominate women to their party lists (with the ANC, for instance, having insisted that one-third of its lists must be composed of women). The list system has also enabled parties to manipulate the entire demographic profile of the candidates they offer for election. So for instance apart from ensuring a given proportion of women they can also ensure (if they so desire) a given proportion of other demographic minorities (notably white, coloured or Indian candidates). In contrast, parties are far less able to influence the demographic profiles of their candidates in straightforward constituency systems, simply because constituency parties tend to insist on making their own choice of candidate. Electoral systems that mix constituency and list representation, on the other hand, may be able to meet the voters' desire to select and control their own legislators with their desire to ensure that parties nominate more women.

### **The Democratic Consequences of Attitudes towards the Electoral System**

Are people who have more negative views about the current system any more or less likely to have positive views of the democratic process, or to take part in it? In this section, we examine the linkages of public views of the electoral system to three key democratic outcomes. Do people feel that elections matter? Do they think that representative institutions are concerned with public opinion? And, finally, are they willing to vote in future elections?

Two thirds (67 per cent) of our respondents saw elections as consequential and agreed with the statement that 'it is important who is in power because it can make a difference to our lives'. In contrast, three in ten (29 per cent) felt that 'it doesn't really matter who is in power, because in the end things go on much the same'. When it comes to likely future voting behaviour, eight in ten respondents said they wanted to vote in 2004 (33 per cent) or wanted to do so very much (49 per cent).

Yet people were far less sanguine about the performance of the representatives and representative institutions produced by those very elections. This is a matter we shall return to below. For now, we simply note that less than one in five believed that MPs 'try their best to look after the interests of people like you' (19 per cent) or 'listen to what people like you have to say' (19 per cent). Almost the exact responses were recorded when the two questions were asked about elected members of provincial government.<sup>26</sup>

To what extent did these democratic predispositions and evaluations depend on respondents views of the voting system? First of all, we find little

support for the proposition that South Africans base their assessments of the efficacy of democratic elections on their views of the current electoral system. We regressed perceptions of democratic efficacy on the full range of demographic, attitudinal and behavioural measures already used in Tables 5 and 6, including assessments of the freeness and fairness, and political accountability of the current system. The results showed that these variables collectively only accounted for three per cent of the variance. Obviously, whether or not people think democratic elections matter has little to do with how they evaluate the current system.

However, we found much stronger linkages between views of the current system and whether or not people believed provincial and national legislators are responsive to public opinion (see Table 13, full results available from authors). In fact, whether or not people believed the current system produces equal and fair outcomes, or whether it produces political accountability, were the two most important determinants of perceptions of responsiveness. Other key predictors included the rate at which people have participated in elections since 1994, the rate with which they participate in politics between elections, and their interest in politics. Interestingly, no demographic predictors were significant, such as race, age, education or gender. Thus, if representatives wanted to improve their poor public image, a good way to start would be by improving voters' perceptions of the system by which they are elected.

Finally, we found important linkages between views of the current system and future voting behaviour (Table 14, full results available from authors). While respondents' past voting record since 1994 was the most accurate predictor of likely future voting, assessments of the electoral system exercised an independent impact. Interest in politics and identification with a party also proved to be significant predictors of future voting.

What does all this mean? Quite simply, the current system's public image matters. This brings us back to the question we set out early in this article. While strong majorities believed the current voting system produces fair and equal outcomes, and produces political accountability, we also noted that significant minorities disagreed with these assessments and asked whether key fixtures of the democratic system should not enjoy broader and higher levels of public support. Tables 13 and 14 may produce part of the answer. They demonstrate that those sizable minorities who offered negative assessments of the system are indeed more likely to believe that the representatives elected through that system do not care about their opinions or interests, and are also less likely to come out and vote in 2004.

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TABLE 13  
DETERMINANTS OF PERCEIVED RESPONSIVENESS OF LEGISLATORS

|   | Standardized coefficients (beta) |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Attitudes toward current system                                     |                                  |
| Believes current electoral system produces equality and fairness    | 0.19***                          |
| Believes current electoral system produces political accountability | 0.16***                          |
| Political behaviour   |                                  |
| Record of voting participation since 1994                           | 0.06**                           |
| Participates in Political activity between elections                | 0.05*                            |
| Other political attitudes   |                                  |
| Interested in politics  | 0.05*                            |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>   | 0.15                             |

Dependent Variable: Index of perceived responsiveness of elected legislators.

Table displays all variables with a beta weight equal of greater than 0.05

\*Significant at 0.05; \*\*significant at 0.01; \*\*\*significant at 0.001

TABLE 14  
DETERMINANTS OF LIKELY VOTING TURNOUT IN 2004

|   | Standardized coefficients (beta) |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Political Behaviour   |                                  |
| Record of voting participation since 1994                           | 0.25***                          |
| Attitudes Toward Current System                                     |                                  |
| Believes current electoral system produces equal and fair outcomes  | 0.14***                          |
| Believes current electoral system produces political accountability | 0.10***                          |
| Other Political Attitudes   |                                  |
| Interested in Politics  | 0.13***                          |
| Identifies with a political party                                   | 0.07**                           |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>   | 0.20                             |

Dependent Variable: Desire to vote in 2004 election.

Table displays all variables with a beta weight equal of greater than 0.05.

\*Significant at 0.05; \*\*significant at 0.01; \*\*\*significant at 0.001.

## Discussion

Two main findings seemed to be most pertinent to the issue of electoral reform in South Africa. First, South Africans recognized the significant achievements of the current system of proportional representation in producing fair results and treating voters and parties equally, as well as producing legislatures that are broadly representative in both demographic and political terms. Thus there was little demand for a radical shift away from proportional representation. There was only minority preference for the type of candidate-centred, weak party system that a first past the post system can encourage (as in the United States). Indeed, for the most part, people were happy with the present system.

Consequently, if South Africans were generally satisfied with what they had, does this mean that South Africa's electoral engineers should simply opt for the status quo? We feel the evidence provided by the survey answers in the negative. First of all, public satisfaction with the current system was not consensual or widespread. Significantly higher proportions were dissatisfied than was preferable given that a voting system is an integral part of the overall constitutional framework. Furthermore, people who are dissatisfied with the system are more likely to believe their legislators do not care about their opinion and interests, and are more likely to opt of the process in the future.

Second, while South Africans appreciate that the existing system produces proportionality, inclusiveness and fairness, they also emphasize other values that a pure list based version of proportional representation has difficulty producing: values such as independently minded legislators accountable to local grass-roots opinion.

Finally, far from saying 'it ain't broke', other survey results suggest strongly that the system is broke in at least one very important way. As already reported, this survey found that just one in five voters felt that their national or provincial legislators are interested in listening to their opinions or looking after their interests. Left unchecked, such views threaten to turn into a cancer in the body politic that slowly eats away at public confidence in democratic institutions.

While parliament has tried to address the issues of constituency representation and constituency service by assigning putative constituencies to MPs, the results have been dismal. An Afrobarometer survey in July–August 2000 found that just two per cent could even hazard a guess as to the name of their assigned MP. In contrast, 84 per cent of Malawians, 73 per cent of Batswana and 54 per cent of Zimbabweans could provide the correct names of their MPs. In that same survey, just two-tenths of one per cent – that is, four of 2,200 South African respondents, told us that they had

made contact with an MP or gone to parliamentary outreach office in the previous year. This was by far the lowest in Southern Africa.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, the survey results demonstrated a strong regional impact of electoral systems. The two countries with proportional representation, South Africa and Namibia (1 per cent) had the lowest levels of citizen contact with national legislators. By contrast, the figures were far higher in the countries with constituency-based systems: 8 per cent of Zimbabweans, 7 per cent of Zambians, 6 per cent of Basotho and 5 per cent of Malawians had met an MP or gone to a parliamentary outreach office (Botswana was the 'outlier' with a contact rate of just 2 per cent). While all these figures may sound low, there is a huge difference between one out of every ten or 20 people in each community with links to an elected national representative, and one out of every 100 or 200.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, evidence from this and other surveys strongly suggests the need to increase rates of public participation and contact with formal political institutions and procedures other than simply voting in five-yearly elections. In short, it appears that voters would support amending the existing electoral system to augment proportional representation with some form of directly elected, constituency-based representatives in order to provide a stronger link between themselves and their representatives and to give them greater control over those representatives.

The introduction of a constituency system would not, in itself, resolve all the issues surrounding voters' sense that South Africa's legislators are not adequately responsive to their needs. A fuller sense of accountability may be as much a function of the extent to which parties deliberately tailor their policies to the needs and opinions of voters, disclose the sources of their funding, or interact with interest groups and organs of civil society, as it would arise from changes in the electoral system.

None the less, the introduction of some form of constituency representation appears to be a necessary, even if not sufficient step to enhance politicians' accountability by providing for a direct link between voters and politicians. It would provide citizens with a degree of sense of 'ownership' over their representatives and increase the sense of representatives to the voters, especially during the period between elections. The introduction of constituencies would create incentives for legislators to listen to voters if only because of their self interest in winning their constituents' votes at the next election.

The popular attitudes measured by this survey suggested that eligible voters would support the introduction of some form of Mixed Member *Proportional* system (MMP), that is, a system that maintains representivity whilst enhancing prospects for accountability. In the present South African context, a return to single member constituencies, even within a system of

MMP, does not seem practicable (not least because of the problems of demarcation). However, the introduction of multi-member constituencies that enable voters to choose individual candidates from lists of candidates offered by parties for that constituency (alongside national lists of candidates provided by the parties for national elections and perhaps similar provincial lists of candidates provided by parties in provincial elections) would be immediately feasible. That would be especially so if constituencies were geared to existing municipal demarcations.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to stress that the introduction of multi-member constituencies within some form of MMP would in no way detract from the high levels of representivity achieved under the present system, precisely because it would remain *proportional*. Nor, importantly, would it in any way prevent political parties from nominating desired proportions of women or candidates drawn from any other demographic groups (such as racial minorities) to electable positions on national/provincial or constituency lists. In short, an MMP system would ensure the proportional representation of parties, as it does at the moment. The responsibility for ensuring the demographic representativeness of legislators would remain with the political parties themselves. Further thought might then be given to, first, whether a residency requirement would be necessary for candidates standing for election in constituencies, and second, whether political parties should be required to follow procedures which enhance grass-roots participation in selecting constituency candidates. These and similar such measures would further strengthen the bonds between voters and their representatives in the way that this survey indicates that ordinary people desire.

South Africa's adoption of a proportional representation system in 1994 proved a vital step in the establishment of the present democracy. Amendments to the status quo designed to enhance accountability whilst maintaining fairness, inclusiveness and simplicity – key aspirations of the South African electoral system as it stands<sup>30</sup> – would go a significant way towards increasing levels of popular political participation between elections. They would enhance the legitimacy of the electoral system to the nation as a whole.

### **Aftermath**

Following receipt of the results of this survey, and extensive consultation with political and other interested parties, the Electoral Task Team tasked with reviewing electoral reform presented a divided report to government. All members agreed that the introduction of an amended electoral system for the speedily approaching election in 2004 would be unwise. However,

while the majority favoured the introduction of 80 multimember constituencies to elect 75 per cent of MPs (the other 25 per cent being elected from party lists to guarantee overall proportionality) for the projected election in 2009, the minority favoured retention of the present pure list system. In the event, the government chose to postpone the issue: while agreeing to maintain the present electoral system for 2004, it decided that further legislation to consider an electoral system for the long haul should be handled by the parliament elected in 2004. These decisions have been widely greeted as a sign of ANC's reluctance to change a system which serves it so well (and which, in particular, strengthens the dominant former 'exile' faction within the party which has weaker links to the grass-roots than the 'internal' faction). However, the deeper significance of the postponement is not the fortunes of any one particular political party, or any faction within it, but rather to the legitimacy of the system as a whole. The evidence of this survey suggests that if, following the election of 2004, parliament stays with the same voting system, it will be an 'opportunity missed' that could have ominous consequences for South Africa's democracy over the longer term.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### NOTES

1. For analyses of the relationship between South African parties' strategic electoral forecasts and their constitutional negotiating positions, see Robert Mattes, 'The Road to Democracy: From 2 February 1990 to 27 April 1994', *Election '94, South Africa: The Campaigns, Results and Future Prospects*, edited by Andrew Reynolds (New York: St Martin's Press; London: James Currey; Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), pp.1–22 and Timothy Sisk, *Democratization in South Africa: The Elusive Social Contract* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
2. These virtues of PR have been emphasized by Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty Seven Democracies, 1945–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Andrew Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Democratization in Southern Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
3. PR has been criticized on these very grounds: see Joel Barkan, 'Elections in Agrarian Societies', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.6, No.4 (1995), pp.106–16; Courtney Jung and Ian Shapiro, 'South Africa's Negotiated Transition: Democracy, Opposition and the New Constitutional Order', *Politics and Society*, Vol.23, No.3 (1995), pp.269–308. See also the response by Thomas Koeble and Andrew Reynolds, 'Power Sharing Democracy in the New South Africa', *Politics and Society*, Vol.24, No.3 (1996), pp.221–36.
4. The ETT was appointed by the minister of home affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, chaired by Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert and otherwise composed of a mix of academics, lawyers, electoral specialists and senior officials of the Independent Electoral Commission.
5. The survey was designed by the South African Human Sciences Research Council, and the



fieldwork conducted by four prominent South African research survey companies: Markinor, Research Surveys, Markdata, and A.C. Nielson (South Africa).

6. The HSRC designed the sample of the target population with the sampling population defined as all people living in households and hostels (but excluding special institutions such as prisons and hospitals) who could be contacted and interviewed. A list of all Enumerator Areas (EAs) based on the 1996 census was used as a sampling frame. The list contained descriptive data on the number of people and number of households for each EA in the country. The final sample was a random, disproportionate, multi-stage, stratified, cluster sample.

The list of EAs was stratified into nine provincial lists, and then into four population groups within each province, and further into rural and urban lists. To obtain the required sample of 2,760 individuals, 690 EAs were randomly selected from these lists with the probability of selection proportionate to population size. Finally, an implicit stratification by home language was implicitly introduced through a method known as 'controlled selection'. Within each of the selected EAs, four visiting points were randomly selected. At each visiting point, all eligible respondents were enumerated and one respondent was randomly selected. No substitutions were allowed. If the selected respondent was not at home at the time of the first visit (normally made after working hours), two follow up visits were made at agreed times and dates.

In Northern Cape province and amongst the three minority population groups (white, coloured and Indian respondents) strictly proportional selection would have resulted in insufficient numbers of respondents selected to support detailed analysis. Thus, a disproportionate number of EAs was selected among these strata. These cases, however, were subsequently weighted downward so that they would have the proper influence on the final results. Sixty pilot interviews were conducted to test the length of the interview and the formulation of the questions. Questionnaires were administered in the language of the interviewees' choice, with appropriate use of show cards. Interviewers reported that the questionnaire was formulated clearly and was user friendly.

7. For an overview of the African debate on electoral systems, see Roger Southall, 'Africa', in Peter Burnell (ed.), *Democratization Through the Looking-glass* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp.137–52.
8. Factor analysis (using maximum likelihood estimation) and reliability analysis verified that responses to these questions form a valid and reliable factor that explained 63.7 per cent of the common variance (eigenvalue=2.55) with a reliability score (Kronbach's alpha) of 0.80. The item that most strongly defined the scale was equal treatment of all parties (factor loading of 0.82) and the weakest whether the system is fair to all parties (0.58).
9. See Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Democratization*, and Lijphart.
10. Barkan.
11. Factor analysis and reliability analysis indicates that these items form a unique, valid and reliable factor that explains 44.7 per cent of the common variance with a reliability score (Kronbach's alpha) of 0.75. The item that most strongly defined the factor is whether the system holds all parties accountable (0.68) and the weakest whether it enables voters to influence government (0.43).
12. Herman Giliomee and Charles Simkins (eds), *The Awkward Embrace: One-Party Domination and Democracy* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1999); Hermann Giliomee, James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer, 'Dominant Party Rule, Opposition Parties and Minorities in Contemporary South Africa', in Roger Southall (ed.), *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp.161–82.
13. The concept of 'anticipated reactions' is from Carl Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy* (Boston: Ginn, 1950).
14. See Rein Taagpera, 'How Electoral Systems Matter for Democratization', *Democratization*, Vol.5, No.3 (1998), pp.68–91.
15. David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
16. Statistically, the correlations (eta) of race and an index of satisfaction with the fairness of the current system is 0.43 which means that race statistically accounts for 18 per cent of the

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variance in attitudes toward the electoral system. Clearly there are many other things that affect how people think about politics than merely their racial categorization.

17.  $\text{Eta}=0.30$ , significant at 0.001.
18. Unfortunately, we cannot test this interpretation directly since the ETT chose not to ask respondents which political party with which they identified.
19. Turnout in 1994 was estimated at 87 per cent of all eligible voters (there was no voters' list). In 1999, 89 per cent of some 18.2 million registered voters went to the polls. The overall turnout rate, however, differed depending on whether one used the IEC's estimate that 81 per cent of all eligible voters had registered (which puts turnout at 72 per cent) or survey based estimates of 76 per cent (which puts actual turnout at 68 per cent of all eligible voters). Whichever figure is used, the 1999 registration figure compares unfavourably with most established democracies, except the United States. However the actual turnout figure compares favourably to second-generation elections in the rest of Africa but also to elections in established democracies in the West.. See Andrew Reynolds, 'The Results', in his *Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*.
20. Pearson's  $r=0.03$ , significance=0.156.
21. Pearson's  $r=0.13$ , significance=0.000.
22. This meaning accords with the view of South African elections offered by Steven Friedman, 'Who we are: voter participation, rationality and the 1999 election', *Politikon*, Vol.26, No.2 (1999), pp.213–24.
23. W.J.M. Mackenzie, *Free Elections: An Elementary Textbook* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958).
24. APSA, *Towards A More Responsible Two Party System* (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 1950.).
25. Only Norway, Sweden, Iceland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, New Zealand and Mozambique record higher levels of membership of women in their lower houses of parliament. See United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 'Women's Political Participation', pp.239–42.
26. While technically inconsistent with the questions about (national) parliamentarians, we used the term 'members of provincial government' rather than 'provincial assemblies' because pilot tests indicated many people were not familiar with the term 'provincial assembly'.
27. See Robert Mattes, Yid Derek Davids and Cherrel Africa, *Views of Democracy in Southern Africa and the Region: Trends and Comparisons*, Afrobarometer Working Papers, No.10, Idasa (Cape Town), CDD (Accra), Michigan State University (East Lansing), 2000.
28. Robert Mattes, 'Democracy Without the People: Economics, Governance and Representation in South Africa', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.13, No.1 (2002), pp.22–36.
29. Norman Du Plessis, 'An Electoral System for South Africa: Various Options', Electoral Task Team, *South African Electoral System Review Roundtable*, 9–10 September 2002, Cape Town.
30. Wilmot James and Adrian Hadland, 'Shared Aspirations: The Imperative of Accountability in South Africa's Electoral System', Electoral Task Team, *South African Electoral System Review Roundtable*.

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