

CHALLENGES TO THE SINGLE-PARTY DOMINANCE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Lessons from Kwazakhele

Janet Cherry and Gary Prevost

Janet Cherry is professor of Development Studies at Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth

Gary Prevost is professor emeritus of Political Science at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University, and research associate at Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth

ABSTRACT

This article explores the challenges to the African National Congress (ANC) in its traditional stronghold of the Port Elizabeth working-class township of Kwazakhele. The authors argue that this area has been the embodiment of single-party dominance for decades. Using exit polling and a post-election survey, the article details the challenges to the ANC from both reduced voter turnout and rising support for the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). The article concludes that the end of the ANC dominance in Kwazakhele in coming elections is possible but is not a foregone conclusion.

Keywords: South Africa, elections, voting behaviour, single-party dominance, voter turnout

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa's 2019 general elections the vote totals of the African National Congress (ANC) dipped below 60% for the first time. This, according to Joleen Steyn-Kotze and Narnia Bohler-Muller (2019) marked a watershed in South Africa's political landscape and raised the possibility that the one-party dominance the ANC had held since the first democratic election in 1994 was coming to an end.

This article analyses the voting behaviour and political participation in a long-time ANC stronghold, the Kwazakhele township in Port Elizabeth. The authors seek to provide some insight into that question while making no claim that the Kwazakhele results can be declared a national trend.

The study tracks democratic participation in the working-class black township of Kwazakhele in Port Elizabeth, South Africa from 1994 to the present, documenting the challenges faced by the ANC in attempting to maintain its traditional support base and political dominance in the township. In each of the last two national elections, 2014 and 2019, the researchers surveyed approximately 200 residents of Kwazakhele. Half of the respondents had grown up during apartheid and voted for the first time in 1994. The second group was born as apartheid was being abolished, the so-called 'born free' generation. This paper's researchers participated in a University of Johannesburg project that conducted an exit poll in 2019 of voters in poor townships around South Africa, including 215 voters in two selected voting districts in Kwazakhele. The authors also draw on official voting data for Kwazakhele.

The primary research question this article seeks to answer is the political trajectory of the Kwazakhele community after 25 years of democratic elections. To answer this question several secondary questions are pursued: Who have the residents voted for, and why? Has there been any change in support for the ANC between younger and older voters? Are the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), formed in 2013, gaining any traction, especially among younger voters? Has the effort of the Democratic Alliance (DA) to reach out to black voters gained any traction? For those that support the ANC, what is the basis of that support? What is the pattern of participation in the area, the rate of voter turnout over time? Has the traditionally high level of participation by the apartheid-era generation (over 85% voter turnout in national elections) been maintained by the 'born free' generation; and if not, what are the reasons for the decline in voter turnout? Beyond voting, what is the level of political and civil participation and has it remained constant with the current generation?

The data collected in the questionnaires allowed us to examine the significant factors shaping political attitudes, voter choice and party support in the last two elections. This allowed an analysis of whether socio-economic and demographic indicators such as age, gender, home ownership, and employment are significant; or whether the significant indicators are behavioural variables such as political participation, loyalty, civic engagement, and involvement with local government.

Kwazakhele is situated in Nelson Mandela Bay, a metropolitan municipality which has faced devastating levels of corruption and political instability over the past decade. In the context of the allegations of state capture under Jacob Zuma's presidency, the Nelson Mandela Bay metro is an important site of political contestation. Since the 2016 local government election, two important books have been published reflecting on the politics of the Nelson Mandela Metro (Olver 2017; Ndletyana 2020). This article is an in-depth exploration of the political participation in one township of Nelson Mandela Bay.

THE KWAZAKHELE SURVEYS

Research findings in this article are primarily based on two surveys conducted in Kwazakhele in May 2019 following the national and provincial elections. Earlier surveys were conducted by Cherry (2000, 2011, 2017) in the same area following national elections from 1994 forward. In 2019 one survey focused on residents 43 years old and older, that is those who grew up under apartheid and were eligible to vote for the first time in 1994. The second 2019 survey interviewed persons younger than 43, whose adult life has been after the dismantling of the apartheid system, the so-called 'born free' generation. Ninety-seven questionnaires were completed by older adults and 108 by younger adults. Each respondent in the survey completed 36 questions. The questions in the survey first established basic demographics: age, gender, employment status, education level, and spoken home language. It then ascertained whether they had voted in the 2019 election and if so for which party, and why. Researchers also asked whether respondents had voted in the previous two elections (2016 local and 2014 national) and for whom they voted and why. If they did not vote in 2019, we asked the reasons behind their abstention.

The next section of the questionnaire asked about their level of political involvement. Were they party members, did they attend community meetings, did they campaign for a party, and did they participate in public protest activity? The following section explored the question of civic engagement by seeking information about civic organisations in the township and whether they were active in such organisations. A later section of the questionnaire focused on expectations and perceptions of quality of life by asking such questions as: How has South Africa and Kwazakhele changed since 1994? What has changed in your life? Respondents were also asked whether the ANC government had met their expectations, and were asked for concrete examples of expectations met or disappointed. The last question in this section asked what they could do if the government did not meet their expectations.

Interviews were completed by a team of interviewers who conducted 205 interviews in randomly selected households in the seven wards that make up Kwazakhele. The interviewers were residents trained in interviewing techniques by the Transition Township (TT) research project and were isiXhosa-speaking. The map of Kwazakhele was divided into five sections (identified as A, B, C, D, and E) to ensure that respondents were captured in all areas of Kwazakhele. Forty locations in each section were selected using Excel's built-in random function to generate a set of coordinates. A pair of researchers was allocated to each section and they visited the house closest to each of the coordinates on the map of that

section. If no one was available or willing to respond in the first house approached, the next house in the same coordinates was approached. The primary selection criterion was an age requirement, 18–42 for the younger adult survey and 43 and older for the older adult survey. Respondents also had to be Kwazakhele residents, not temporary visitors. The primary language of the area is isiXhosa but the survey was written in English with the interviewers, isiXhosa speakers, able to assist in verbal translation of questions and answers where necessary. All surveys were conducted in the month following the election of 9 May 2019.

This article also draws on additional survey research done in Kwazakhele for the 2019 national elections. The authors and a student research team from Nelson Mandela University conducted exit polling on election day in two selected Kwazakhele voting stations (there are 25 in all in the township). This was in conjunction with a national project of the Centre for Social Change at the University of Johannesburg that polled 28 township voting stations across South Africa. The two Kwazakhele stations were selected to represent the diversity of the township; one was in the old centre while the other was on the edge of the township, including an area of shack dwellers. Ultimately, 215 voters were interviewed with 160 willing to reveal for whom they voted

Election statistics and demographic data are drawn from South African websites for the Independent Electoral Commission and the South African Census 2011. Although the borders of Kwazakhele township do not precisely match the ward boundaries, the data from the seven wards which make up most of Kwazakhele and the voting stations within these wards is used for corroboration of the survey data. These are Wards 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24 and 25 of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. Some survey data are analysed for both surveys together (total 205) while for the purpose of comparison between the older and younger residents' political participation, the data of the two surveys are counted separately.

HISTORY, DEMOGRAPHY AND POLITICS OF KWAZAKHELE

The reason for this study of voter participation and voting patterns to focus on Kwazakhele is because this township has a relatively homogenous population, in many ways typical of black urban working-class communities around South Africa. Unlike the newer townships and informal settlements on the outskirts of the city, whose residents have urbanised in the past two decades, much of Kwazakhele's population has been living in the city for generations. With an established and stable population and a long history of political activism, it is an ideal community in which to document voting trends.

Kwazakhele is a former municipal township, with a population of approximately 100 000. It was established in the late 1950s to accommodate urbanised black residents of Port Elizabeth who were living in the mixed-race area of Korsten. In one of the largest forced removals in apartheid's history, 45 000 people were moved from Korsten to Kwazakhele over a period of three years (Cherry 1988). Most of Kwazakhele still consists of the original municipal houses, known as 'matchbox houses'. The area also contains buildings that were originally barracks-style migrant housing renovated for family living, as well as post-1994 government-built 'RDP' housing. There are still a few pockets of informal dwellings without services, which are in the process of being replaced by RDP houses and formal services.

Many of the older residents of the area have a long political history going back to the days of the 1950s when the liberation movements were legal. Before it was banned in 1960 the ANC had a strong presence in the area and in 1976 the youth of the area pursued a militant path of resistance centered on Kwazakhele High School. In the early 1980s a powerful civic resistance movement was organised under the umbrella of the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organization (PEBCO) leading to a township uprising between 1984 and 1986 that rendered the township 'ungovernable' and apartheid 'unworkable'. The influence of the ANC was present throughout this mobilisation so that when the transition to democracy began in 1990 the hegemony of the ANC was well established and was consolidated in legal ANC branches with high levels of support and participation.

As a result, it is not surprising that the first democratic election, held in April 1994, saw the residents of Kwazakhele participating in great numbers and voting for the ANC. From that election forward turnout remained high, with over 80% of votes going to the ANC. This was only challenged in the 2009 election, when the newly formed Congress of the People (COPE) gained 25% of the vote in the one Kwazakhele ward from previous ANC voters who were dissatisfied with the treatment of former ANC president Thabo Mbeki (Cherry 2009). The subsequent decline of COPE in ensuing elections re-established the dominance of the ANC in the township.

As Kwazakhele is a prime constituency of the ANC, it is not surprising that considerable governmental effort has gone into improving the conditions and developing the township. Houses have been transferred into the ownership of long-term residents, almost all homes are electrified, roads have been tarred, and most homes have proper sewage pipes. Children's playgrounds have been constructed in the area and a modern shopping centre built on the edge of the township. As a result, the ANC retains a strong support base.

In addition to studying party support and the consolidation of electoral democracy, this study is concerned with the depth of political participation and

strength of democracy. The Kwazakhele surveys constitute the only longitudinal study of participation by the South African urban working-class in both formal and informal democratic institutions. Based on the high level of mobilisation in this township during the liberation struggle of the 1980s, it was argued that if democracy requires a high level of participation, if it was going to 'work' anywhere in South Africa, it would be in townships such as Kwazakhele. Participation in civil society structures such as street committees, residents' organisations, and savings clubs or burial societies, and in local government processes such as ward committees and Integrated Development Planning consultations, was surveyed over nearly 30 years.

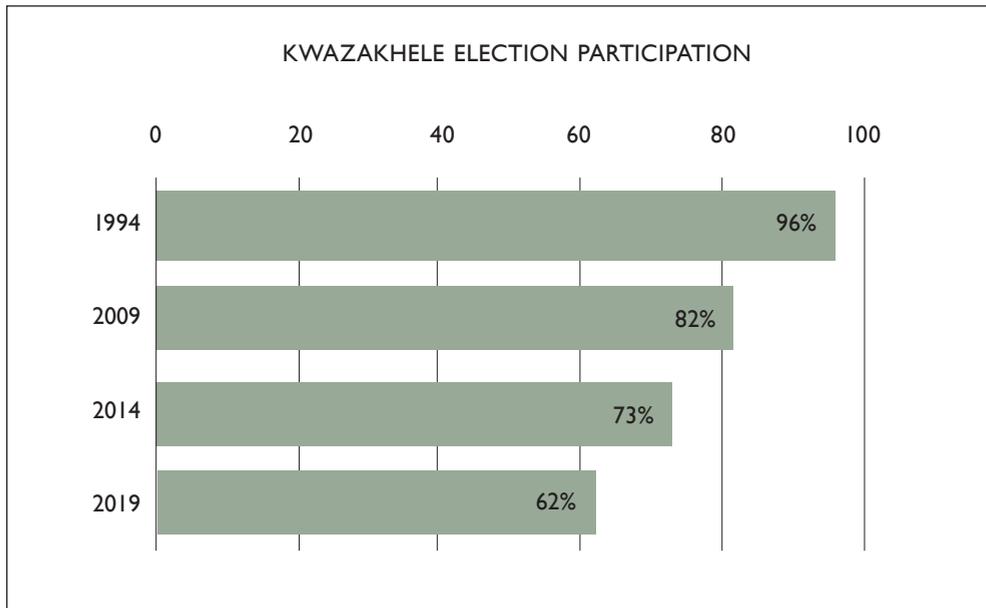
The first survey was conducted in 1992 for the 'civics and civil society' project, and measured participation in the street and area committee structures of the 1980s resistance to apartheid rule; what role such structures served in their neighbourhood; and whether such participation was declining in the transition to democracy. As democracy was consolidated in South Africa in the decades following the 1994 founding election, levels of participation declined. Yet it is argued that the longitudinal study illustrates a citizenry with a remarkably high level of political participation. As levels of frustration with economic exclusion rose in the 2000s, and as networks of patronage and corruption became more entrenched in government at all levels, some residents of Kwazakhele withdrew from such participation. Our previous study following the 2016 local government election (Prevost & Cherry 2017), argued that political pluralism was manifest in the small but significant support gained by new parties, including the EFF. This evidence of pluralism supports the overall argument of the longitudinal study which is that democracy in Kwazakhele has been consolidated and that participation in electoral and other processes is very much part of a democratic political culture.

Does the evidence of the 2019 survey continue to bear this out? The 2019 survey explores the continued dominance of the ANC in Kwazakhele, and interrogates this in relation to the conditions under which dominant parties can be challenged, as well as in relation to arguments about generational changes in voting patterns and growing apathy amongst younger voters.

ANALYSIS OF KWAZAKHELE VOTING TRENDS IN 2019

A review of the 2019 national and provincial voting data for the seven Kwazakhele wards (18–22, 24 & 25) reveals some interesting developments. The ANC remains dominant with 80.5% of the vote compared to 81.1% in 2014. However, this is far from the whole story. The ANC received approximately 6 000 fewer votes as the overall voter turnout in the township fell from 73% in 2014 to just 62% in 2019.

The drop of 11 percentage points, which was consistent with national trends, represented the second consecutive election where turnout in this township had fallen from 82% in 2009 to 73% in 2014.



Source: IEC

Figure 1: Decline in voter participation, 1994 – 2019

In addition to the drop in turnout for registered voters there was also a 3.1% drop in registrations in the seven wards, from 60 492 in 2014 to 58 595 in 2019. The only political party that significantly increased its votes in 2019 was the EFF, which gained 1 100 additional votes and moved from 7.8% in 2014 to 12.6% in 2019. The EFF gain in percentage terms was aided by the collapse of the Congress of the People (COPE) which fell from 1 208 votes in 2014 to just 176 in 2019. The DA had gained minimal traction with black voters in Kwazakhele with modest gains in 2009 and 2014 but lost 170 votes in 2019, sitting at just 2.3%. However, even the DA fared better than other small opposition parties including the United Democratic Movement (UDM) with 1.5% and the newly formed Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) with just 0.6%. The dominance of the ANC remains, but in the context of a significant drop in voter turnout.

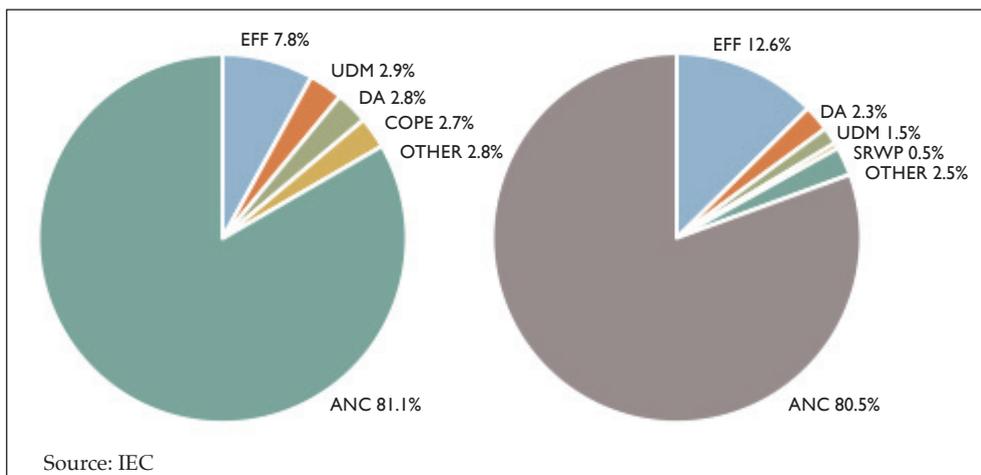


Figure 2: Party support in national elections, 2014 and 2019

Data from 2019 questionnaires of both older and younger adults yielded interesting insights into the voting figures. While the sample slightly overrepresented those who voted, it mirrored closely the vote totals of the competing parties. The survey of voters of 43 years and older showed remarkable continuity with our previous surveys of this cohort which first voted in the 1994 election. They had a high level of voter turnout at 88% which might have been even higher had it not been for bad weather on election day, which seven adults claimed as the reason for their abstention. The 88% is close to the overall Kwazakhele turnout of 96% in 1994. Support for the ANC was also overwhelming in 2019 with 78 of 80 respondents indicating a vote for the ANC and two for the EFF. The remaining voters chose not to reveal for whom they voted. There was little change from the older adult survey in 2014 which had a 95% turnout with 86 ANC voters, one EFF, and the remainder choosing not to reveal their preference.

The survey of the younger adults demonstrated a very different pattern of voter turnout and party preference.¹The older adult participation was 88% but in contrast only 65% of the younger adults in the survey voted. However, that was not the full story because among the younger adults age was a key determinant

1 The Chi-Square test used here is a standard statistical test to determine whether there is an association between two categorical variables, that is, whether the two variables are independent or related. The Chi-square statistic is a result of examining the differences between the observed frequencies in the data and the expected differences. A smaller Chi-square value means that the observed data fits the expected data well, i.e. that there is a relationship. The degrees of freedom in a Chi-square test are the number of levels in the categorical variables; they generally are reported so researchers can understand the number of categories that were examined. P is the probability level; for hypothesis testing, statisticians generally use $p < 0.05$ to infer that a relationship between the two variables is statistically significant.

of turnout. Interestingly, of the 20 respondents aged 18–22 only two persons voted. If that cohort is removed the turnout rises to 77%, much closer to the 88% in the older adult survey. The younger adult survey shows a clear association between age and voting. The older the voter, the more likely he or she is to vote. Another variable that had a clear association was employment status: employed respondents were more likely to vote than those who were unemployed.² Gender was also associated with voting: 76% of the men voted but only 57% of the women voted.³ Three other variables were studied – income, receipt of child support, and receipt of Free Basic Services (ATTP), but no statistically significant associations emerged.⁴

The staunch support for the ANC also diminished among the younger adults, falling to 65% (40 of 62 that reported their choice). Support for the EFF rose to 24%. Four respondents cited support for the DA (6.4%) with one each for the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and there was one spoilt ballot. Respondents indicated how they had voted in 2014 as follows: 22 were too young to vote in the previous national election but among those eligible to vote (86) the abstention rate was only 25% compared to 36.3% in 2019. Voting preference was also strikingly different in 2014 with 54 respondents; 90% of those stating their voting preference was for the ANC and only five (8.3%) backed the EFF. There was one COPE supporter in 2014 and no support for the DA.

Significantly, seven ANC voters from 2014 shifted their allegiance to the EFF five years later. Only one supporter of the EFF in 2014 returned to the ANC, citing the departure of Jacob Zuma, a key demand of the EFF. Four EFF supporters voted for the party in both elections. The EFF picked up the remainder of its gains with two voters each from first time voters and 2014 abstainers. Three of the four DA voters had abstained in 2014 and one crossed over from the ANC.

PROFILE OF ANC VOTERS

Support for the ANC among those in Kwazakhele that had grown up and lived under apartheid, as documented above, has remained extremely high both in party support and in turnout, at least for national elections. This support is primarily because ANC supporters credit ANC-led local and national government with

2 Age was grouped in three categories; employment and voting behaviour were dichotomous. For age, Chi-square=32.0 with 2 degrees of freedom; p=0.000. For employment, Chi-square=5.3 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.20.

3 For gender, Chi-square=4.3 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.04.

4 Income was grouped into three categories. For gender, Chi-square=0.96 with 2 degrees of freedom; p=0.62. Child support and ATTP were dichotomies. For child support, Chi-square=0.97 with 1 degree of freedom; p=1.00. For ATTP, Chi-square=0.80 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.83.

ending apartheid and bringing tangible improvements to Kwazakhele. Statements representative of this outlook include those of a 63-year-old retired nurse, who said: 'RDP houses were built, we also now have running water and geysers. Our children can go to any school they wish and the education is free'. An unemployed 50-year-old woman added: 'We used to live under apartheid where blacks were not allowed to vote but now we are in parliament and elect our own president'.

An understanding of ANC support among those whose first vote was cast in the period from 1999 to 2019 is more complex. Their reasons for loyalty to the ruling party are many and varied and contain some cautionary notes for the ANC. On one level the younger adults, like the older cohort, cite a strong loyalty to the party that is linked to their parents' ANC support, the achievement of democracy, and practical gains in education, health care, housing, and physical infrastructure in their township. Many respondents specifically cited Cyril Ramaphosa's leadership and the need to fight the corruption that they link to the Jacob Zuma era. Statements representative of this cohort include a 34-year-old unemployed woman who said: 'I love the ANC. There are RDP houses and free education but there are no jobs. My expectations have not been met'. An unemployed 31-year-old woman said: 'I voted for the ANC because of my parents. RDP houses were built and roads were tarred. I expected to get a job but there are no jobs'. Two respondents were 2019 ANC voters now leaning towards the EFF. An unemployed 32-year-old woman said: 'The ANC government has organised public works projects and built houses, but I need both a house and a job. In the next election I may give the EFF and Julius Malema a chance'.

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) exit polling project generally dovetails with the findings of our post-election surveys. In their sample of 215 there were 128 who reported a vote for the ANC, and only 30 voters who were younger than 43 – the post-apartheid generation. The median age of the ANC voter was 46. The UJ poll also identifies similar factors motivating a vote for the ANC falling into the categories of achieving political and social rights for the black majority and concrete improvements in township life. However, the challenge to the ANC was embodied in the ten 2019 EFF voters who indicated that they had voted ANC in previous elections. Conversely, no ANC voters had previously supported the EFF; thus it appears that voting preference is in one direction only, from the ANC to EFF.

The commitment of the ANC voters to political participation beyond voting was also significant. In the post-election survey 41% were dues-paying members of an ANC branch, 22% of the voters campaigned for the party in 2019, a full 57% indicated that they had attended a community meeting during the past year, and 14% also indicated that they had engaged in a street protest. When these activities are tested for age there is a positive correlation between age and dues payment, a negative correlation with attendance at community meetings, and no correlation

for campaigning and protesting. These findings would indicate that younger ANC voters are continuing the tradition of political activity beyond voting that had been well established by their elders. There may be fewer ANC voters among the younger adults, but their political participation remains high.

Given the tenuous hold that Ramaphosa may have on the party leadership ahead of the 2021 and 2024 elections and the slow progress of the corruption investigations, the longer-term hold on those Kwazakhele voters by the ANC could be in question. The key issue of concern to the ANC would have to be the economy and jobs. As noted above, while the younger cohort generally gave the ruling party high marks on government performance, many respondents cited the serious lack of progress in job creation. Several respondents noted their personal long-term inability to find stable work in spite of a higher level of education than their parents' generation. These unmet needs may not lead ANC voters to abandon the party in 2021 or 2024 but the ANC cannot be guaranteed their vote at a time when the younger generation of Kwazakhele residents becomes a large percentage of the electorate. The next section will document how some of this younger cohort is gravitating toward of the EFF.

PROFILE OF EFF VOTERS

What is the profile of the Kwazakhele EFF voter based on the survey data? As noted earlier only two of the eighteen EFF voters came from the older adult survey. The median age was 30 compared to the ANC figure of 46, a significant difference. Of these 64% were women and 36% men, roughly matching the balance of the male/female respondents in the two surveys. Further, 53% of the EFF voters were unemployed, and the rest were evenly divided between employed and students. Among all survey respondents 50% were unemployed so the employment profile of the EFF voters was similar to respondents as a whole and the ANC voters in particular.

The reasons for supporting the EFF cited in both the post-election survey and the exit polling can generally be grouped into three categories: a generalised desire for change from the status quo (ANC government), support for the ideology of the party (pro-worker, pro-poor), and agreement with specific policy proposals of the party, primarily on education, land, and jobs.

There was relatively equal weight in more than one category from some EFF supporters. A 32-year-old unemployed woman who had voted for the ANC in both 2014 and 2016 said: 'I had voted for the ANC by habit, but they have not met my expectations. The EFF is led by vibrant young people'. An unemployed 33-year-old man who had previously voted for the ANC said: 'I was tired of voting for the ANC, old people making promises. The EFF is for positive change'. A 21-year-old

female student and first-time voter focused more on policy, saying: 'I am voting for land and free education'. The EFF has also been credited with introducing free tertiary education for first-year students from families that earn less than R350 000 per year through the 'Fees must Fall' campaign of 2016–17. As one 18-year-old Grade 12 pupil said: 'Children have their own rights now; education is free now thanks to the EFF; there is nutrition in our schools for those who are poor; you can choose any school you want to attend'. Another EFF voter, an unemployed 26-year-old man who has always supported the EFF, cited 'fighting corruption' as his primary reason. A 42-year-old, long-standing EFF supporter voted for this party 'to bring about change and fight corruption'.

Not unlike the ANC voters in the 2019 post-election survey, a substantial majority of the EFF voters were political activists over and above just voting. In a survey questioning whether they paid party dues, campaigned for their party, attended community meetings, or participated in protest activities, 67% of EFF voters indicated that they paid party dues and 56% indicated that they campaigned for the party in the 2019 elections. Both numbers show a statistically significant higher proportion compared to ANC voters. Unsurprisingly, given the EFF's reputation for street protest, 28% indicated that they had taken part in a protest in the last year. This number was not statistically significant when compared with ANC voters, but suggested that EFF voters are more likely to protest than their ANC counterparts. Finally, 61% of EFF voters participated in community meetings matching the ANC supporters' 57%.⁵

The UJ exit poll data provided some additional insight into the 2019 EFF voters. Of the 215 voters surveyed there were 26 who indicated a vote for the EFF. Their median age was 29, 17 years younger than the ANC voters at 46, with 13 under the age of 30; 15 reported that they had voted previously for the EFF but 10 of the 26 had voted previously for the ANC. One person was casting a first vote. The reasons for their vote were coded along the lines stated above: change, policy, and ideology, and they broke down in a roughly equal manner with seven citing the need for change, eight citing specific policies, and ten in sync with the ideology of the party.

Overall, both the number of EFF votes – which has almost doubled since the last national election – and their relative youth seem to set the party up for future growth as the traditional ANC electorate ages and passes from the scene. Unlike previous breakaway parties from the ANC such as the UDM and COPE, who peaked in their first election and then began to fade away, the EFF began its

5 Political and civic participation measures were yes/no dichotomies. For party dues, Chi-square=4.4 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.04. For campaigning, Chi-square=9.4 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.007. For street protests, Chi-square=2.2 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.16. For community forums, Chi-square= 0.107 with 1 degree of freedom; p=0.80.

electoral journey with decent support in 2014. It has increased its voter share in Kwazakhele and is likely to be a factor in future elections.

THE ROLE OF SMALLER PARTIES

In the previous analysis of Kwazakhele by Prevost and Cherry (2017) there seemed to be a developing trend toward political pluralism in the township. ANC support in the 2016 local election fell to just 75.3% of the vote with six opposition parties gaining between 0.9% and 9.7%. The latter vote total was for the EFF, up from 7.8% in 2014. However, other parties also showing gains were led by the DA which garnered 4.5%, up from 2.8% in 2014, the UDM with 4.0% and two new parties, the African Independent Congress (AIC) and the United Front of the Eastern Cape (UFEC) gaining 3.0% and 2.6% respectively. COPE, which had 2.7% in 2014, fell sharply but retained 0.9%. However, this pluralistic trend did not sustain itself in the 2019 national elections as every one of the smaller parties except for the EFF lost significant ground. Only the DA stayed (barely) above the 2% level with 2.3%. The UDM lost more than half of its votes, down to 1.5% and SWRP, successor party to the UFEC, fell to 0.6%. With a combined vote total of 93.1% the ANC and the EFF seem to be on the path towards making Kwazakhele a two-party dominated township. In 2014 the EFF and ANC had finished in the two top positions but with a combined vote total of 88.9%. The only caution regarding this assessment is that the 2021 local elections could produce a more pluralistic dynamic reflecting the proportional representation system employed in local elections.

PROFILE OF NON-VOTERS

Equally important to an analysis of the preferences of those who voted is a review of the data on those who did not vote, given the trend of greater abstention in Kwazakhele. To do this analysis it is necessary to look at the two surveys separately. A review of the turnout pattern of the older adult survey for 2019 reveals that in all probability only bad weather on election day prevented a turnout of close to 95% (as it was 88% voted), a remarkable commitment to the democratic process by Kwazakhele's apartheid-era population. Even though there may have been some disappointment in their material lives, the importance of the vote as a previously-denied democratic right remains paramount. However, it is the analysis of the non-voter in the younger adult survey that is more interesting. Of the young adults surveyed 37 indicated that they did not vote, an abstention rate of 34.7%. Interestingly, of the 20 respondents aged 18–22 only two persons voted. If that cohort is removed the abstention rate falls to 22% but even that number is higher than the 12% rate among older adults. How is the higher abstention

rate to be explained? Looking first at the 22 years and under cohort, most of the group indicated that they did not vote because they were not registered, including one person turned away at the polls. This respondent and four others indicated that they would register and vote in the 2021 local elections. None gave specific reasons why they did not register in 2019. There were highly visible registration campaigns carried out in the township by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the political parties ahead of the election. One student indicated support for the DA but gave no reason for not voting. Beyond the cohort described above who may well become voters in the next election, there was no clear pattern in the remainder. Some offered no reason for not voting, only two expressed clear disappointment with the system and a lack of desire to get involved in politics. It may well be that their non-voting was most emblematic of their young age and that from age 23 forward they will probably join the ranks of the voting public in the 70+% range, similar to the 23- to 42-year-olds in our survey who voted at a rate of 78%. Follow-up research will be necessary to ascertain if this judgment is correct.

This somewhat positive data on the voting patterns of younger adults does not seem to reveal either widespread alienation or apathy in the younger population in Kwazakhele. In our previous work (Prevost & Cherry 2017) we identified that, based on our 2014 national election surveying, there was a definite trend of a lower level turnout among younger adults compared to those that first voted in 1994. Our 2019 survey work seems to indicate that while there remains a significant gap in turnout between the two groups, the gap has not grown wider. The older part of the younger adult population has retained a level of participation that is reasonable (in the 70% arena) though lower overall registration levels make that number less impressive. We also cannot be sure that very low level of voter participation in the 18- to 22-year-olds will be reversed as they grow older. We could have been more definite about their reasons for not voting had that cohort's sample size been larger.

Of the 37 respondents who did not vote in 2019, 12 were previous ANC voters, emblematic of the 6 000 fewer votes that the ANC received in Kwazakhele in the last election compared to 2014. The reasons for walking away from the ANC included unfulfilled promises, nepotism in the ruling party, lack of job creation (cited by four respondents), and projects benefiting a limited number of people. Ironically, many of those defecting from the ANC stated that overall life in their township was continuing to improve. More 2014 ANC voters abstained in 2019 than switched their vote to another party, as only four 2014 ANC voters crossed over to the EFF in 2019. The overall political dominance of the ANC in Kwazakhele remains in place (80.5%). However, the combination of growing abstentions and defections to the EFF complicates the ability of the ANC to win back control of the

Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM) in 2021 with a better performance for proportional representation (PR) seats. The ANC's shock at losing control of the NMB Council in 2016 was due in part to its lack of understanding of the calculation of PR seats; its overwhelming support in townships such as Kwazakhele led it to assume incorrectly that it would retain control over the Council. The subsequent instability in the NMB Council has been a result of this mixed election result and has had serious consequences for good governance in the Metro. Rampant corruption and ongoing factional struggles within the ANC (Ndletyana 2020; Steyn-Kotze 2018; Olver 2017) have contributed to further disillusionment since 2016 and may result in an even higher level of voter abstention in 2021.

One of the remaining abstainers voted for COPE in 2014, while the other 16 are more typical abstainers that have never voted: 13 expressed no interest in politics while three expressed discouragement that the political system could ever deliver for them. Of 37 non-voters 26 were women indicating a 57% voter turnout compared to 76% for men. The size of the sample does not permit declaring statistical significance, but it is strongly suggestive that at least among the younger adults where there is a significant abstention rate, men are more likely to vote. Among the non-voters, two persons were employed (5.5%), 8 were students (21.6%), and 27 were unemployed (69.9%). For the overall survey, 75% of the respondents were unemployed, 10% were students, and 15% were employed. The overrepresentation of students among the non-voters can be partly explained by the fact that they are concentrated in the 18–22-year-old age group, which as previously explained abstained at a much higher rate.

MEASURING SINGLE-PARTY DOMINANCE

In their October 2019 article in the *Journal of Comparative Politics*, Mary Tudor and Adam Ziegfeld explored the circumstances under which a single party dominant system breaks down. They drew on lessons from India where the once-dominant Indian Congress Party – a party with some similarity to the ANC – eventually lost its dominant position. They define a dominant party as one governing for at least 20 consecutive years over multiple elections that are judged to be free and fair. They define the end of dominance once achieved to have truly ended when an opposition party serves at least one full term in office. Tudor and Ziegler argue that single-party dominance often persists because the opposition consists of multiple ideologically different parties, and they examine the circumstances under which opposition parties overcome that challenge and unite to take power. They argue further that single-party dominance is less likely to occur when one of the opposition parties possesses a long-standing and robust party organisation and there is a single social cleavage dividing the political class into two main cleavage

groups. If these conditions are present the opposition can unite behind a single large party and end the single-party dominance.

We use the lenses of Tudor and Ziegler to evaluate whether single-party dominance may be under challenge in Kwazakhele township, while making no claim that it may be generalised to apply to South Africa as a whole. Up to the present time the dominant social cleavage in South Africa has been race, with nearly 80% of the population identifying as black. Up until the 2019 elections the DA has been the official opposition, capturing the overwhelming majority of white votes and a substantial majority of votes from the coloured community. In recent elections the party reached out to black voters as the ANC laboured under the flawed leadership of Jacob Zuma. The DA gained some traction, leading to 22% of the national vote in 2014 and a small but potentially important increase in votes in Kwazakhele in both 2014 and 2016 (Prevost & Cherry 2017). However, DA hopes for further inroads into the black community were dashed in 2019, as clearly demonstrated in Kwazakhele where their support remained below three percent. The DA, as a classic liberal party with strong party organisation, has staked out an ideological position clearly to the right of the ANC but that has not resonated successfully within the black community which sees the DA primarily as a 'white party'.

That leads to the question of whether the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) are positioning themselves to become that challenger to the ANC that could end their single party dominance in Kwazakhele. To answer that question, it is necessary to look at both the ANC and EFF and their potential trajectories. As our research over time in Kwazakhele has shown, the ANC, in spite of its internal and leadership issues, retains a strong level of support in black working-class communities. That support is most powerful in the apartheid generation and while that group is growing older it will remain a key part of the electorate for many years to come.

As our surveys demonstrate, ANC support in the post-apartheid generation lags behind that of its elders in level of support, but it is still strong at over 60%. The basis of that support among all ages is tangible and based on both real and perceived improvements in their daily lives that are ascribed to the ANC government. As noted earlier in the article the ANC faces real challenges in convincing the electorate that the problems of corruption and mismanagement that plagued the Zuma era are being rectified and will not be repeated in the future.

Whether or not the EFF can be the party that engineers the end of single-party ANC dominance is not yet clear. With only one-fifth of the votes of the ANC the EFF has a long way to go to become that party. Using Tudor and Ziegfeld's criteria, how do we assess their chances? The party may seem to some to be

simply a vehicle for the personal ambitions of its leader Julius Malema, but there is evidence from our survey that the party is building the necessary party structures to increase its voting totals in the future. As we described in the voter profile section, EFF voters fared very well in their level of political participation beyond voting, with high levels of dues-paying membership, participation in protest activities, campaigning for the party, and attendance at community meetings. In so doing it ranked better than its ANC counterparts in all four categories.

The second criterion on which the EFF would need to succeed would be to exploit a social cleavage to grow their vote totals. For the EFF that would need to be social class, as their appeal in the Kwazakhele context is aimed at the same racial constituency as the ANC, the black majority. The EFF is positioning itself clearly to the left of the ANC, arguing that the ANC has abandoned its radical roots and become in practice a neoliberal party (Mbetse 2015). As demonstrated in our surveys most ANC voters do not see the ANC in that light, but the EFF is appealing to both those ANC voters who have become discouraged by the failure of the ANC to deliver on its progressive promises, and also to first-time voters who see a need for radical change. Our surveys and the exit polling bear out this appeal of the EFF. Some EFF voters simply favour them to bring about change in a generic sense, but the majority cite the specific radical proposals of the EFF on land and other issues or explicitly support the socialist, pro-poor ideology of the party.

The EFF is the first serious challenge to the ANC from the left, as previous challengers like COPE had no ideological position clearly different from the ruling party, and the labour-aligned UF has been unable as yet to translate the support of the black working-class in the motor industry into electoral support. The growing class polarisation within South Africa's black population offers the potential for a party like the EFF with its pro-poor ideology to grow and challenge the political dominance of the ANC. The growing support among younger South Africans witnessed in our surveys gives the EFF the most hope for future success, which is defined in the short term as forcing a still dominant ANC into coalition governments.

The instability in Nelson Mandela Bay creates a strong possibility that parties on the left will hold the balance of power after the 2021 local government elections, as the ANC loses further township support and the DA is unable to gain a clear majority. However, a new contender has emerged at the time of writing, to contest the local government elections from an ideologically neutral, anti-corruption and pro-good governance discourse. This party, led by the charismatic businessman Mkhuseleli Jack, may well challenge the left as well as the ANC and could end up holding the balance of power in the Council.

It is too early to know if Steyn-Kotze and Bohler-Muller are right about the possible end of ANC dominance, and our conclusions about Kwazakhele cannot be generalised to South Africa as a whole. Detailed research similar to ours is needed in similar townships across South Africa if any such judgments are to be made.

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