

Trends in Voting in South Africa, 2003-2015

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Issues and Expectations

This study analyses vote intent and party preferences in South Africa. Party vote is determined by turnout and by party choice. Since the end of apartheid in 1994 Africans have participated enthusiastically in the political system, while non-Africans have been more sceptical. The African National Congress (ANC) has dominated elections, supported by almost all Africans; non-Africans have increasingly supported the main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA).

People wonder what will weaken African ANC allegiance.

- There has been speculation that the allegiance of better educated Africans to the ANC has weakened.
- As more people who spent little of their lives under apartheid reached voting age, young African ANC support might be weaker than of older Africans.
- With protests in African areas about service delivery, many think that African dissatisfaction with service delivery has increased, leading to greater African dissatisfaction with the ANC.
- Many think increased concern with corruption has drawn voter support away from the ANC including among Africans.

Data

Data are from the HSRC 2003-15 annual South Africa Social Attitude Surveys. They are nationally representative of those age 16+ and include about 1800 Africans and 1200 non-Africans each year. In election years whether the respondent voted and party chosen are asked. Every year it is asked if an election were held tomorrow whether the person would vote and the party chosen. This study analyses vote intentions of those age 18+. Young persons are age 18-35; Older persons are age 36+. In 2011, 52% of those 18+ were 18-35. In 2011, Africans were 79% of the population.

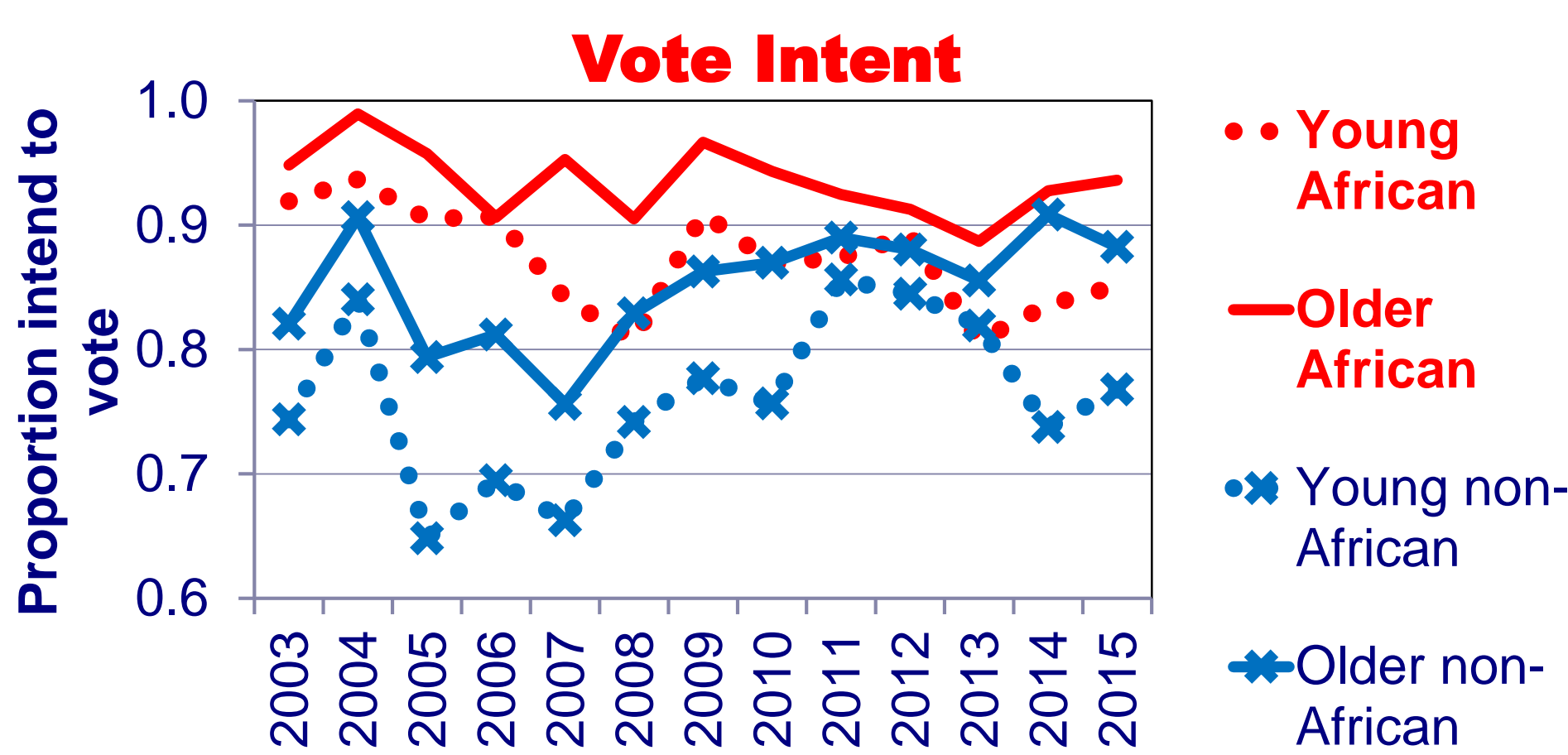


Figure 1. Vote Intent by Age and Race

Table 1. Logistic Regression Analysis of Vote Intent

	2004	2009	2015	All	All
Education	-.106	.167*	.144	-.001	.000
Votematter	.980**	.434**	.344**	.488**	.482**
African	.863**	1.259**	.775**	.754**	148.580**
Age	.043**	.035**	.031**	.024**	.024**
Year				-.015**	.037**
African*Year					-.074**
Constant	-2.11	-1.50	-1.03	30.06	-75.67
X ²	237.27**	153.11**	116.85**	1665.78**	1701.82**

*p<.05, **p<.01 two-tailed tests

Results for Vote Intent

- As elsewhere, older people are **more likely** to intend to vote than younger people.
- Unlike other places, education is **not** important for vote intent.
- Africans are **more likely** than non-Africans to intend to vote, but the racial gap has narrowed over time.
- Thinking your vote matters is very important.

African Satisfaction with Service Delivery

Despite many service delivery protests in African areas reported in recent years, there are **no** significant trends in African satisfaction/dissatisfaction with water and sanitation or with electricity provision.

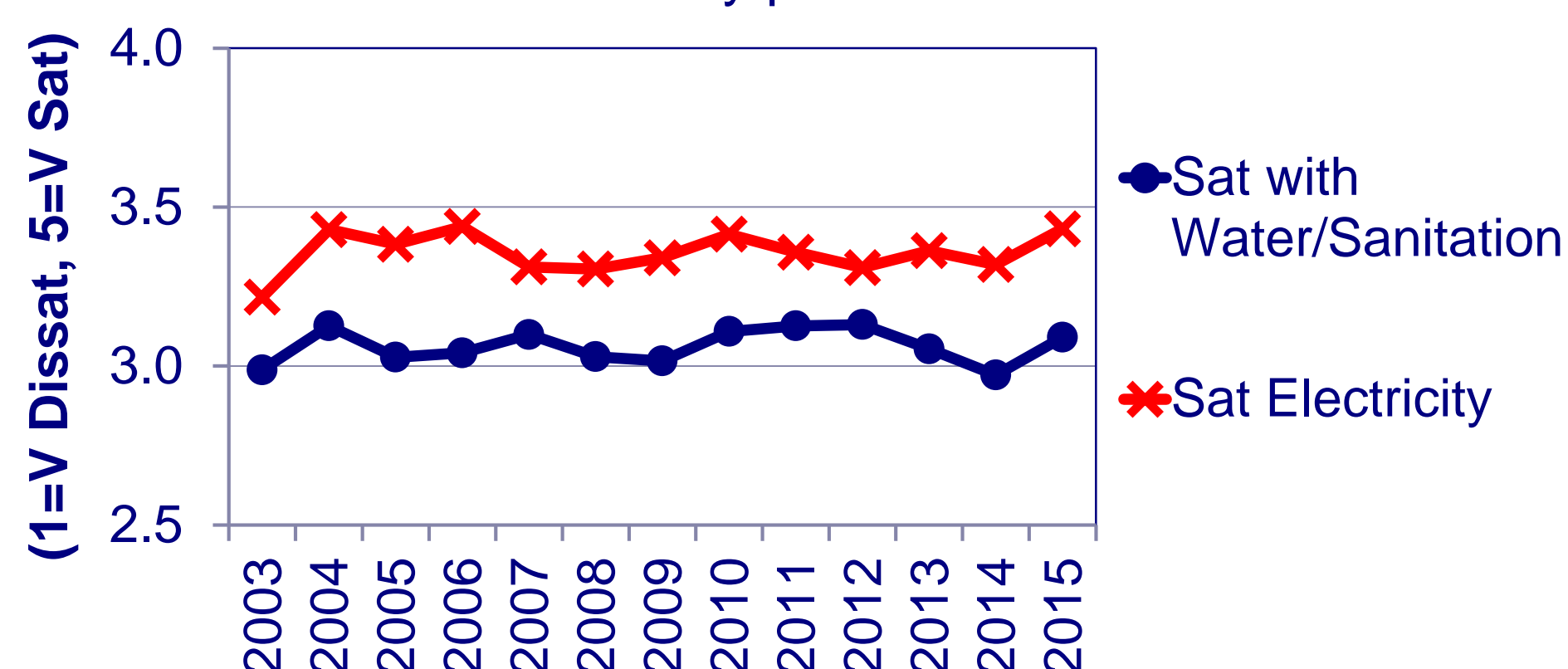
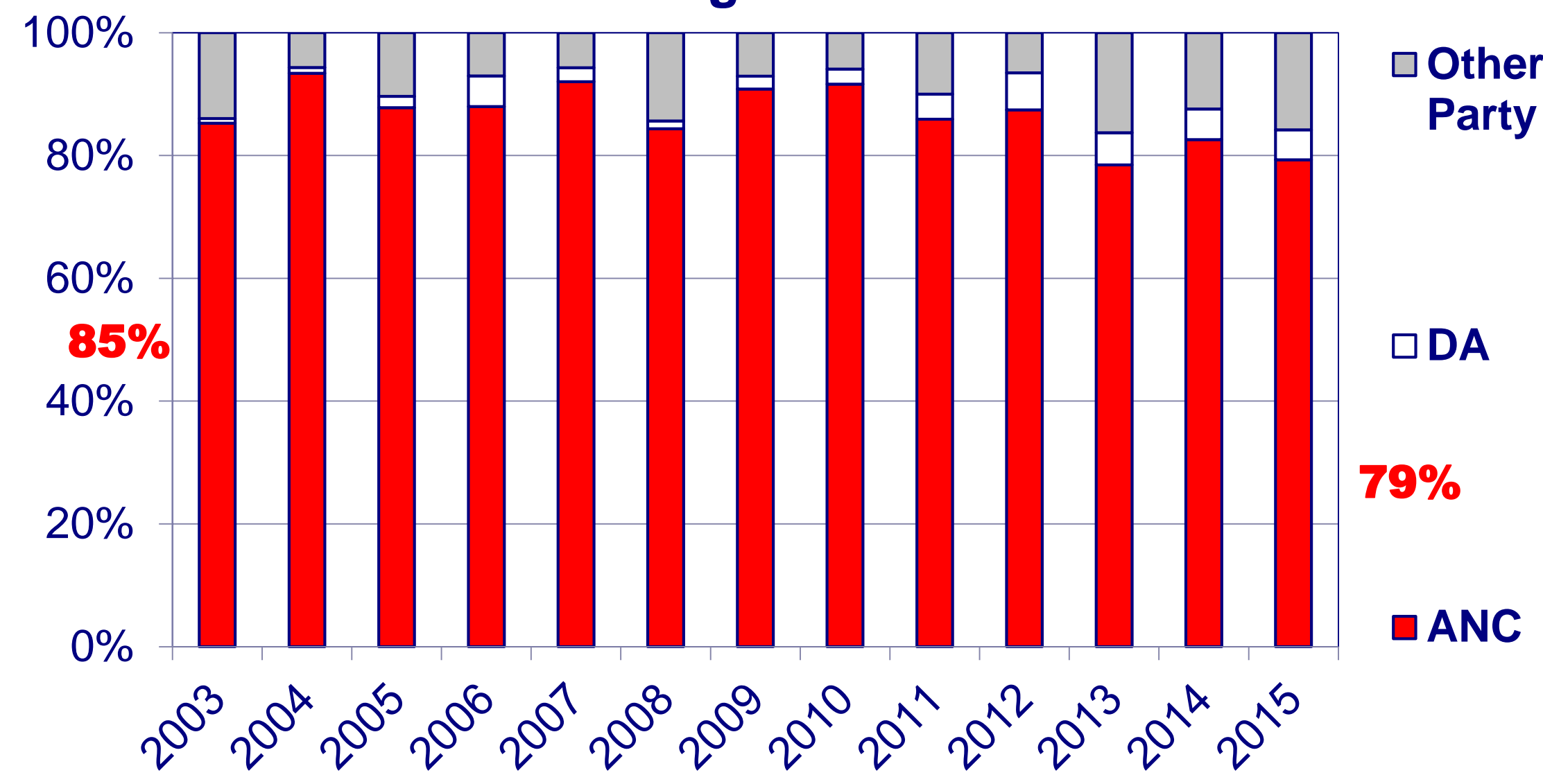
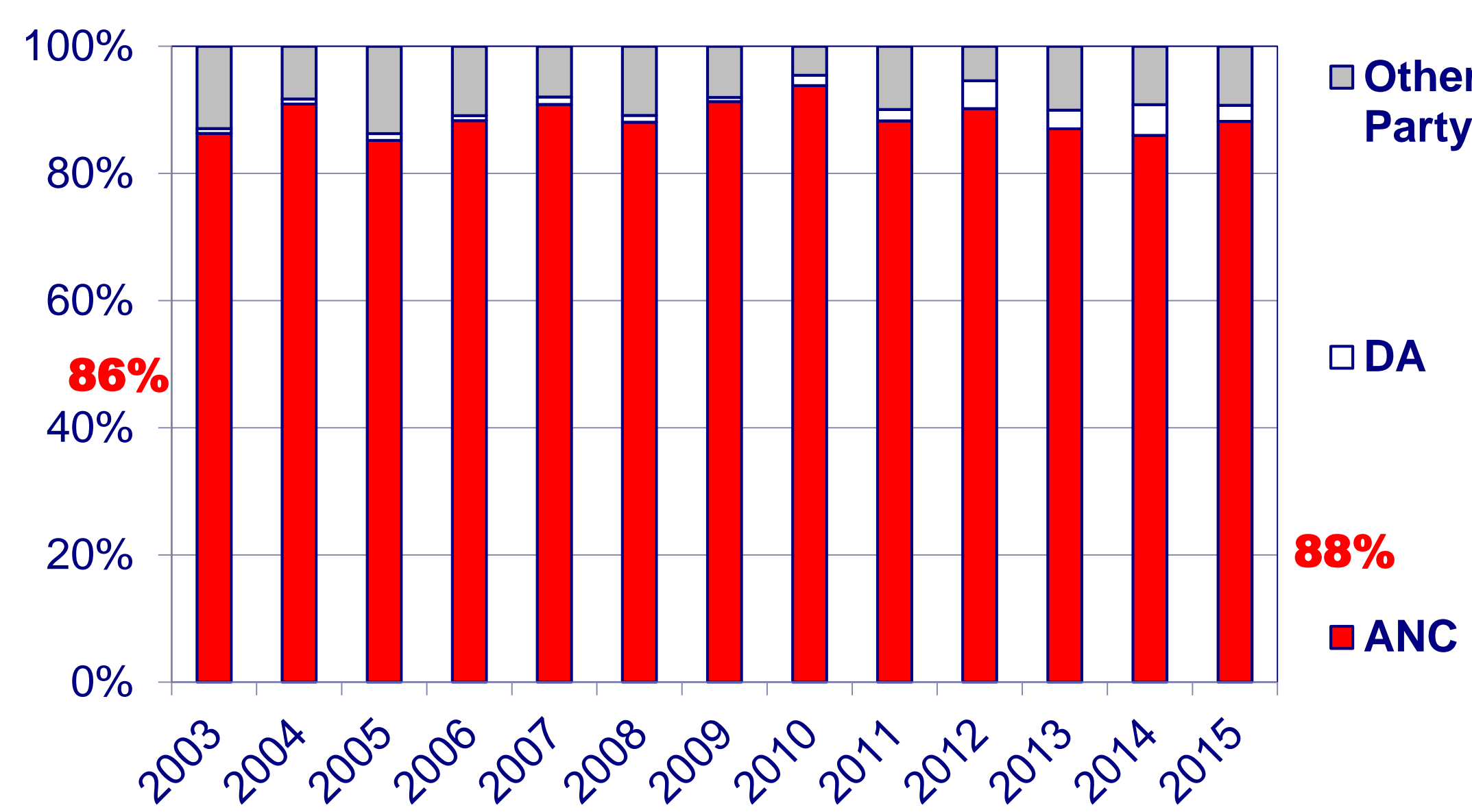


Figure 2. African Satisfaction with Service Delivery

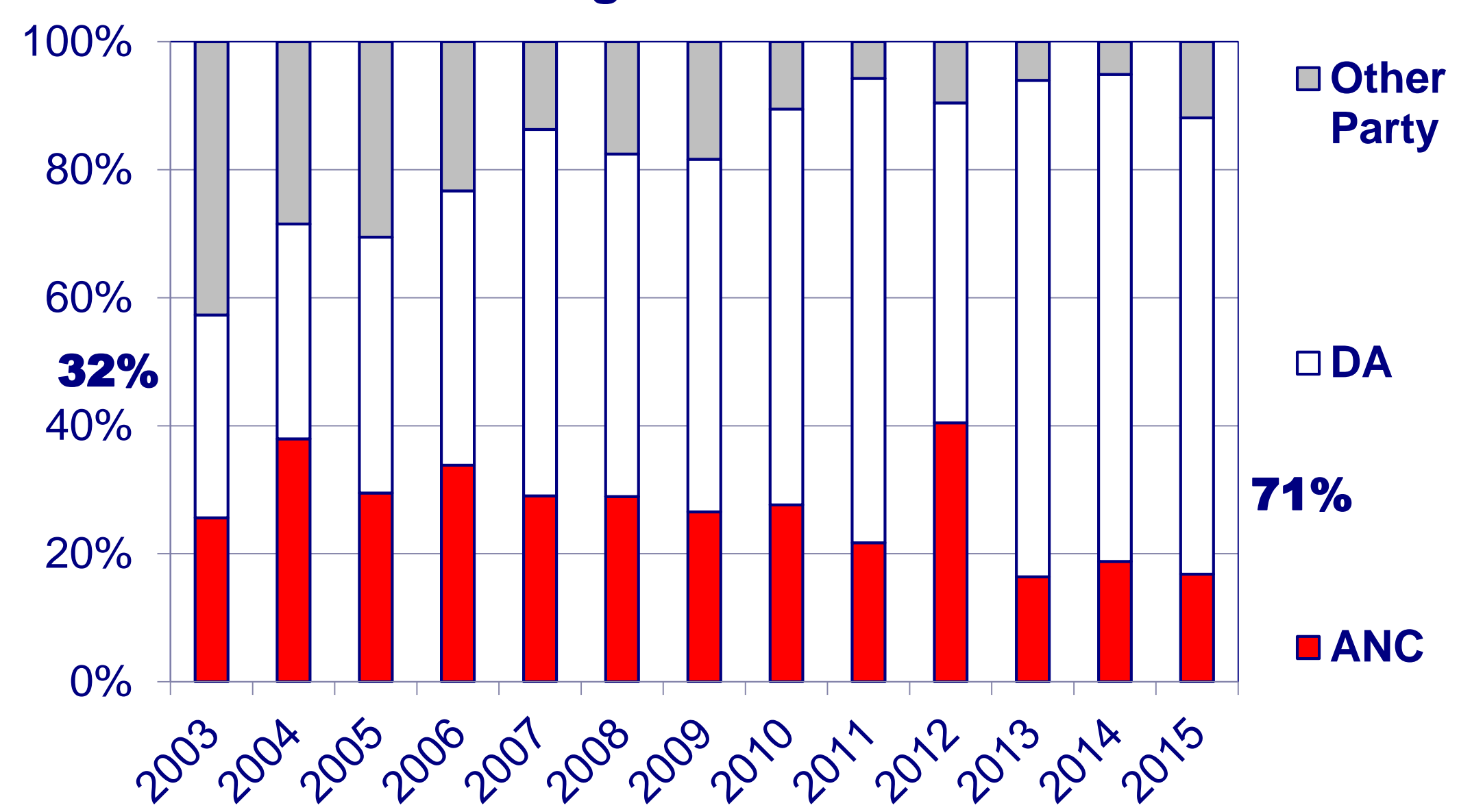
Young African



Older African



Young non-African



Older non-African

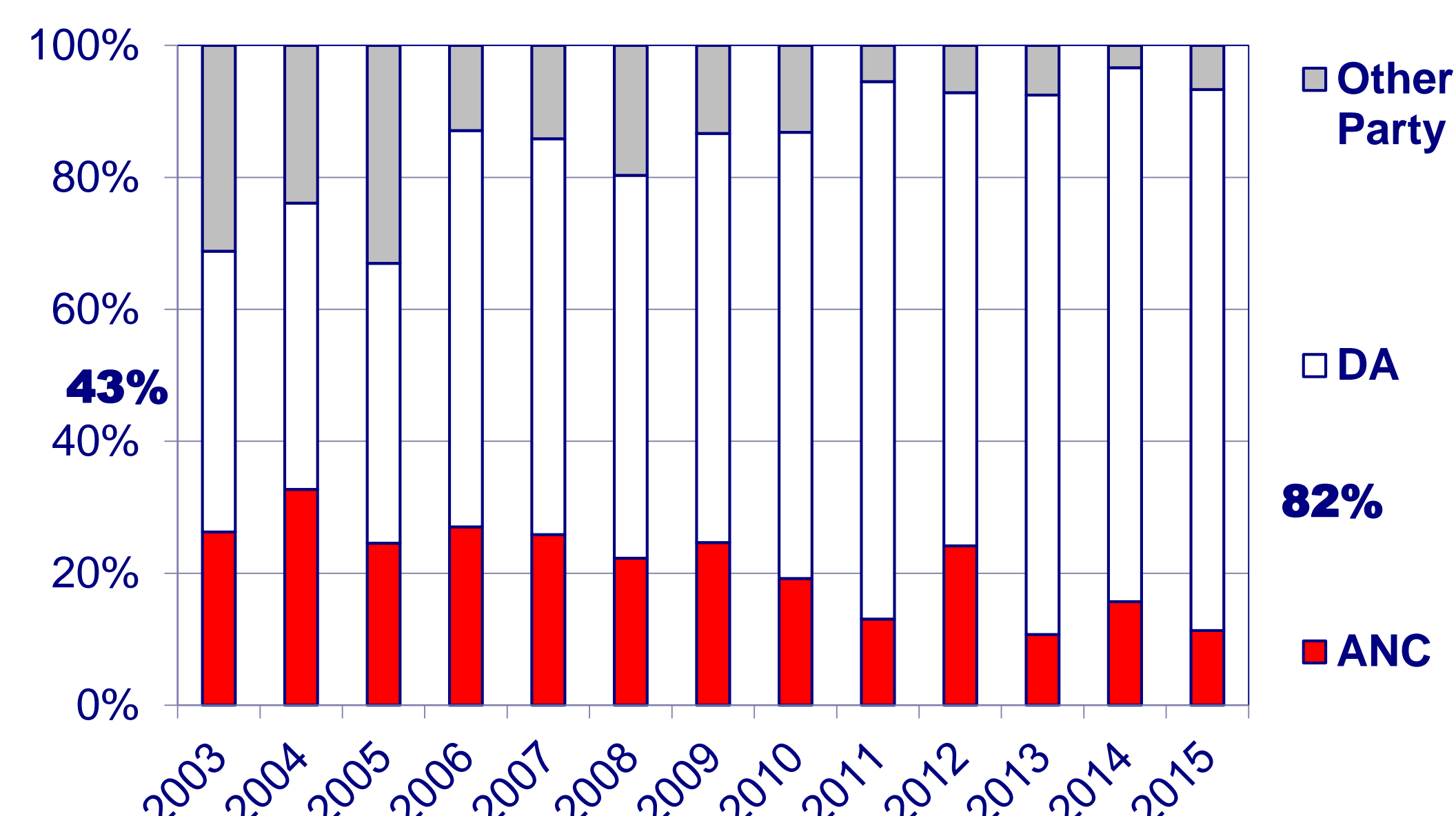


Figure 3. Party Choice by Age and Race Among Those Intending to Vote

Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis of Party Choice Among Those Intending to Vote

	Young African	Older African	Young non-African	Older non-African
Support ANC				
Education	-.096**	-.025	-.753**	-.613**
Trustnatgov	.291**	.248**	.553**	.520**
Lifelimprove	.158**	.212**	.312**	.501**
CorruptProb	.201*	.020	-.182	-.461**
Year	-.054**	.027**	-.002	-.029
Constant	109.74	-54.42	2.18	55.21
X ²	297.47**	122.36**	258.40**	612.91**
n	7929	8089	2226	5537
Support DA				
Education	.433**	.561**	.729**	.433**
Trustnatgov	-.360**	-.401**	-.419**	-.346**
Lifelimprove	-.098	-.203**	-.176*	-.377**
CorruptProb	.154	.293	.219	.303**
Year	.096**	.082**	.122**	.128**
Constant	-197.00	-168.46	-244.63	-256.53
X ²	181.73**	147.76**	303.16**	600.23**
n	7929	8089	2226	5537

*p<.05, **p<.01 two-tailed tests

Results for Party Choice

- In every year the vast majority of Young and of Older Africans support the ANC.
- Among Young and Older non-Africans, DA support has increased over time. Since 2007 the majority of Young non-Africans support the DA. Since 2006 the majority of Older non-Africans support the DA.
- **Educational Attainment** is **positively** related to DA support overall for all groups and is **negatively** related to ANC support for all non-Africans and for Young Africans.
- **Views of South Africa:** Trusting in National Government and Seeing Life as Improving are **positively** related to supporting the ANC and **negatively** related to supporting the DA.
- **Concern with Corruption:** All groups are increasingly concerned with corruption, but the only group for whom concern with corruption is **negatively** related to ANC support and **positively** related to DA support is Older non-Africans. Concern with corruption is **positively** related to ANC support for Young Africans.
- **Time Trends:** Among all groups DA support has **increased** over time. Among Young Africans ANC support has **decreased** over time; among Older Africans ANC support has **increased** over time.
- **Age:** Young Africans are **LESS** likely to support the ANC than Older Africans, and Young non-Africans are **LESS** likely to support the DA than Older non-Africans. Thus Young people of both groups are **less likely** to support the party their group has usually supported than are Older people.

Concluding Comments

Contrary to expectations, there is **no trend** in African dissatisfaction with water and sanitation and electricity provision. Also, concern with corruption was only related to **less** ANC support and **more** DA support among Older non-Africans.

The analysis **supports** many of the other expectations. There has been an **increasing** trend in DA support among Africans, education is **positively** related to this trend, and DA support is **greater** among Young than Older Africans.

There are signs both supporting and refuting a view of increased South African national unity.

- On the one hand intent to vote among non-Africans has **increased**, and race has become **less important** for vote intention over time.
- On the other hand, party choice has become more bifurcated by race.

Young Africans and Young non-Africans are **less** tied to the party their racial group has usually supported than are Older members of their racial group.

South Africa might be slowly moving toward the time when the ANC, the party of the anti-apartheid struggle, will cease to hold power at the national level. However, movement away from the usual party supported by members of a person's race has been slow.

- In 2015, 79% of Young Africans and 88% of Older Africans who intended to vote supported the ANC; 71% of Young non-Africans and 82% of Older non-Africans who intended to vote supported the DA. A statistically significant trend toward DA support shown in Table 2 must be considered in light of persistent, large differences by race in party support shown in Figure 3.
- Despite the significant increase in DA support among all groups, in 2015 only 5% of Young Africans and 3% of Older Africans who intended to vote supported the DA.
- The Congress Party, active in Indian independence, was in power continuously 1948-78 (30 years). The ANC has only been in power 1994-2017 (23 years).

A time when race does not matter for party choice in South Africa seems very far in the future.