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Race and the Democratic Alliance: an analysis of the party's performance in elections with specific reference to the 2011 local government elections

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This thesis aims to determine the impact that race has on voting patterns in South Africa, and whether race is still the most salient factor in determining how South Africans vote. The focus is on local government elections and the performance of the Democratic Alliance (DA), and examines voting patterns and demographic indicators (such as race and income and education levels) in selected wards to ascertain what trends and exist, specifically looking at how important race still is in determining how South Africans vote. Through a thorough review of the existing literature, as well as an examination of selected wards (both those in metropolitan municipalities and those in rural areas) this thesis aims to find an answer to the question of whether South African elections are still little more than racial censuses. This thesis also examines to what degree other social indicators affect how people vote. Although the findings broadly show that the 'racial census' theory of voting patterns in South Africa still broadly holds true, there are indications that this is changing and that South African voters are increasingly becoming 'floating' voters.