

What Happened to the Whites?

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VOTES from the white community seem to be scattered across the political divide, albeit with a growing sense of voter apathy among them than ever before.

This concern was raised by some political party leaders who say many white voters apparently did not take part in last week's presidential and National Assembly elections because of their don't care attitude in political matters. Estimations are that only 60 percent of the white electorate registered for the elections this year. "There is a large number of white folks who did not register because they are so apathetic towards elections. Some say what is the use of voting anyway, there's no change for the better," said Henk Mudge, president of the Republican Party. He added that young people from this sector of society don't have any knowledge of politics in the country, since they are not interested in reading newspapers or even attending political meetings. Johan de Waal of the DTA laments the fact that the white vote is unpredictable since they don't vote for one specific party due to many opposition parties in the political arena. "This is unlike the Herero-speaking Namibians who initially voted for Nudo or the Damara-speaking sector who chose primarily to vote for the UDF party," said De Waal. The white community of Namibia has "become even more divided than ever before, since they do not vote as a united block", according to retired politician and farmer Dirk Mudge. While some can be found in political parties like the Republican Party, others are likely to be in the Congress of Democrats, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance or a few in Swapo as well. Yet, political parties like Monitor Action Group (MAG) under the leadership of Kosie Pretorius, have benefited immensely from the white vote, since it's their biggest power base of support. MAG has of late also garnered some votes from other ethnic groups in the north of the country, in what Pretorius called "n kop skuif" (Afrikaans for a change of mind). All these votes have "miraculously" contributed to the one seat MAG secured in Parliament, thanks to the proportional representation system. Farmers like Dirk Mudge regard it as a good omen that the white vote is scattered because "why is there a need for them to isolate themselves, we are Namibians and we need to show it by integrating with others." Yet, to remedy the entire situation, the Republican Party is striving to bring the white citizens of Namibia back into the fold of politics. "White people can make a positive contribution to Namibia with their acquired skills, knowledge and expertise. The white vote is missing and we need it for the development of this country," said Henk Mudge. He explained that normally, the white citizens do not want to join an ethnic-based party and that it must be a party that can make a difference through positive contributions socially and economically. According to him, whites vote for a party that addresses their needs and interests in a safe environment where opportunities are given to all citizens of the country. Most political leaders felt that it should not be called the white vote as such, but rather what Pretorius calls "an idea driven principle or vote" where citizens should be more concerned about principles and responsibilities. The Republican Party plans to positively encourage the white citizens of Namibia who did not register to become part and parcel of the political spectrum of Namibia through door-to-door campaign visits beginning next year. (<http://www.newera.com.na/archives.php?id=4468>)