

SA youth's poll apathy

STUDY: 4.5 MILLION UNREGISTERED VOTERS HAVE NO INTEREST IN ELECTION

»→ **A significant portion of those who won't register are aged between 18 and 34 years.**

Eric Naki

Although President Cyril Ramaphosa has described the scheduled May elections as the most important – even more significant than the landmark 1994 democratic poll – a large number of eligible voters with a huge youth segment may not vote because they are not planning to register.

While voter apathy became a living phenomenon in the last several elections due to various reasons, the latest data released by SA Citizen Surveys (Sacs) came as a shock.

The bad news comes on the eve of the first registration round this weekend in preparation for the 2019 national elections.

“When looking at those unregistered voters, accounting for 11.2 million South Africans, in more detail, 40% or 4.5-million of them say they do not intend to register to vote.

“Worryingly, a significant proportion of these people are young South Africans, with about one-third aged between 18 and 24 years, and one-third aged between 25 and 34 years,” a state-

ment accompanying the Sacs study said.

Political analyst Daniel Silke attributed the lack of interest in registering or voting to frustration towards all political parties, and especially the numerous allegations of corruption against senior government officials and politicians.

He said the study result indicated disgruntlement at the country's leadership not being able to provide jobs, social services and education, among others.

“They are frustrated at all parties because I don't see anyone benefiting from the registration and voting process. The political party leaders underestimate the fact that the people are *gatvol* and that they have lost confidence in

the political party system. There is a sense of hopelessness and despair,” Silke said.

He said there was a strange phenomenon in South Africa where instead of expressing their frustration by voting and participating in the political system, people tended to boycott the polls.

The study showed that the highest proportion are from the lower income groups (63%), with just under one-half (48%) residing in the major metropolitan areas.

Of the provinces, Gauteng has the largest number of people who don't intend to register, at 30%.

The number of voters who cast votes had been dropping since the first non-racial elections in 1994, the survey noted.

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