

# The Tools of Voter Suppression: Racial Disenfranchisement in the Cape of Good Hope\*

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April 18, 2023

## Abstract

History is replete with racially targeted voter suppression, yet empirical evidence on the consequences of specific efforts is rare. We study electoral reforms introduced by Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes and others in the Cape Colony (South Africa) at the turn of the 20th century. Using the complete voter roll for 1903 we estimate that over the preceding decade these reforms disenfranchised between 10,320 and 15,610 mostly Black and mixed-race voters, likely compounding into the future. Without suppression the electorate in 1903 would have been 7.6 to 11.5% larger, with the number of voters of colour 50 to 75% higher, magnitudes that we show could have altered election outcomes. Using unique features of the roll we quantify three tools – a socioeconomic lever, a spatial lever, and a discretion lever – that constituted the basic architecture of large-scale racially targeted voter suppression, culminating in mass racial disenfranchisement under apartheid. [149 words]

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\*We are indebted to: Nancy Gordon, Angèle David-Guillou, Kara Dimitruk, Beaurel Visser, Albie Sachs, Johan Fourie, Cailin McRae, Tom Keywood, Ed Kerby, Richard Keenan, Yai Boutsabar, Phabphada Dok-bouathong, Lauren Coetzee, Paul Horsler, J. Andrew Harris, Neil Stewart, Amy Newsam, Melissa Sands, Aline Wehner Moriseau, and Daniel Urquijo. This study was supported by the the Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines (STICERD) and the Research Infrastructure and Investment Fund (RIIF) of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and by research start-up funds from UC Merced. We are particularly grateful to Johan Fourie at the Laboratory for the Economics of Africa's Past (LEAP) at Stellenbosch University for facilitating access to the voter rolls of the Cape of Good Hope and collaborating in their digitisation. Earlier versions of this work were presented at LSE and Stellenbosch University.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Elites often target electoral restrictions in ways that effectively disenfranchise specific groups without explicitly prohibiting their participation (e.g. Behrens et al., 2003; Keele et al., 2021; Kousser, 1974). In the United States such efforts generally target Black voters, and have taken many forms over the past two centuries – “literacy” tests, poll taxes, property qualifications, requirements for identity documents<sup>1</sup>, felon disenfranchisement, and voting station resourcing, amongst others (Berman, 2015; Keyssar, 2009; Pettigrew, 2017; Waldman, 2016; White, 2019, 2022). Yet these manipulations are not unique to the United States. Legal and statutory contestation of the franchise is a common and important theme in the history of many modern democracies (Beckman, 2008; Blais et al., 2001; Paxton et al., 2003; Teele, 2018). Broad political inclusion is a fundamental pillar of contemporary democratic theory (Dahl, 1971), but beyond this the composition of the electorate is important because it has consequences for representation (Berlinski and Dewan, 2011; Schuit and Rogowski, 2017; Uggen and Manza, 2002), public finances (Aidt and Mooney, 2014; Vernby, 2013), the provision of essential services (Kroth et al., 2016), and ultimately the life chances of those who rely on them (Fujiwara, 2015; Miller, 2008; Naidu, 2012).

While voting rights have generally expanded over time globally (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000; Przeworski, 2009), a growing body of research shows that the expansion of the franchise often follows non-linear trajectories with frequent setbacks (Bateman, 2018; Keyssar, 2009; Kuo, 2020). We study a significant but understudied case of targeted voter suppression: the Cape Colony (modern day South Africa) at the turn of the 20th century. In 1853 the Cape Parliament was established with a qualified but formally non-racial franchise enshrined in its constitution. All men aged 21 or older were eligible to vote so long as they occupied property of a certain value or earned a certain salary (McCracken, 1967; Trapido, 1964). In 1887, a first legislative effort to restrict the franchise for Black people curtailed their number, but Black participation in politics actively continued. During the 1890s, initially under the leadership of Cecil John Rhodes, the Cape Parliament approved three acts – the Franchise and Ballot Act of 1892, the Glen Grey Act of 1894, and the Registration of Parliamentary Voters’ Amendment Act of 1899 – with the intent of ensuring and expanding the electoral dominance of white voters (Nyika and Fourie, 2020; Plaut, 2016; Visser, 2021).

These acts used three distinct tools to target voters other than white men for disenfranchisement: a socioeconomic lever, a spatial lever, and a discretion lever. The socioeconomic lever at the heart of the

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<sup>1</sup>There is an active empirical debate around the consequences of voter ID laws in the United States (see Hajnal et al. (2017) and Grimmer et al. (2018) for example). However, it is commonly held that these laws create disproportionately higher burdens for Black voters, and may create opportunities for discrimination (Keele et al., 2021).

Franchise and Ballot Act of 1892 sought to change the formal qualifications required to vote in ways that were disproportionately likely to negatively affect specifically Black and mixed-race men, as compared to white men.<sup>2</sup> The spatial lever, delivered via the Glen Grey Act of 1894, introduced geographically limited legal changes to property rights so as to curtail the franchise – those areas targeted were those that had high concentrations of Black voters. Finally, the Registration of Parliamentary Voters' Amendment Act of 1899 which governed the registration of voters gave substantial discretion to local officials in adding or removing individuals from the roll with minimal oversight, powers that could be deployed to target specific groups.

To study the effects of these broad voter suppression efforts, what we refer to collectively as the “1890s reforms,” and of each specific tool in turn, we analyse the entire voter roll of the Cape Colony from 1903. Existing quantitative studies of voter suppression typically rely on aggregate data (e.g. Alt, 1995; Behrens et al., 2003; Naidu, 2012), in part because the “race” of voters is rarely recorded on electoral rolls, meaning it must either be inferred or imputed (Harris, 2015; Imai and Khanna, 2016), or analysed through some ecological inference methodology.<sup>3</sup> A recent historical study by Keele et al. (2021) of voter suppression in Louisiana at the turn of the 20th century uses official information on the race of registered voters, but with data aggregated to the state and parish levels.

Using archival records for all 46 electoral divisions in the Cape Colony, we digitized the original roll of all 135,457 individual voters registered in 1903, along with historical census data and archival maps that we use to interpret, deepen, and present our findings. Critically, the 1903 roll was the first to include, in addition to other rich information, the “race distinction” of each voter (see also Christopher, 2009). Further, the 1903 roll also indicates whether each voter was registered before the voter suppression reforms of the 1890s took effect, or after, offering us a “legacy sample” of registered voters from 1891, that we contrast against those who were newly registered (or re-registered) in 1903. We discuss these and other unique features of the roll in further detail in Section 3.

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<sup>2</sup>A note on race category terminology. For clarity of exposition we use the terms Black, mixed-race, white, Indian, Malay, and Chinese throughout this paper to refer to the race groups captured in the 1903 voter roll. This is a slight deviation from the roll itself, where the “Black” population is divided into four groups denoted by the letters B, F, H, and K. In addition, we use the term “mixed-race” to refer to the group labeled Other Coloured Persons (O) on the roll, indicating roughly speaking the mixed-race ethnicity that would become “Coloured” under apartheid law, and “white” to refer to the group labeled European (E). The remaining terms, Indian (I), Malay (M), and Chinese (C) come directly from the voter roll. We refer to all those who were not classified as white either by their specific population group name as introduced here, or collectively as “voters of colour” or “people of colour.” We discuss this in more detail in Section 3 and in Appendix B; see further Khalfani and Zuberi (2001) and Christopher (2009).

<sup>3</sup>For example, registration in only seven American states entails voters indicating their race or ethnicity (in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) and two other states (Pennsylvania and Tennessee) give the option of recording race (Imai and Khanna, 2016, 264).

Our main contributions are threefold. First, we provide over-arching evidence that legislative voter suppression tactics work to achieve racial disenfranchisement: the 1890s reforms increased political inequality between population groups in favour of white men. The magnitude of these effects is striking – we estimate that, all told, between 10,320 and 15,610 mostly Black and mixed-race voters were disenfranchised via these measures between 1891 and 1903.<sup>4</sup> We estimate that without suppression the entire electorate in 1903 would have been 7.6 to 11.5% larger, with the number of voters of colour roughly 50 to 75% higher. By design these effects would only compound over time. We further show that, in the 1904 election for which the 1903 roll was prepared, the number of disenfranchised voters of colour was likely large enough to have been pivotal in 14 (almost 42%) of the 33 electoral divisions with contested elections that year. These findings contribute to ongoing debates – both academic and public, and both within South Africa and beyond – about the legacy of Rhodes and the extent of racial disenfranchisement during this period, including recent claims that the 1892 Act “scarcely affected” Black voters (Nyika and Fourie, 2020, 466). Yet the implications of our work are much broader than the specific case. Voter suppression is a global phenomenon, both historically and in modern times, and by laying bare the consequences of these racially targeted laws we highlight the dangers such efforts continue to pose to democracy.

Second, we document and quantify the effects of three distinct voter suppression tools that political elites may use to generate racial disenfranchisement: a socioeconomic lever, a spatial lever, and a discretion lever. Given contemporary controversies around the politicisation of election administration in a wide range of contexts, unpacking the logic and effects of these tools provides important evidence about the fragility of the franchise to specific voter suppression tactics. Elites face a trade-off across these different tools – we show that spatial and discretion levers are highly effective at disenfranchising specific groups of voters, but are also constrained in scope, either geographically or in terms of the administrative capacity for discretion. Socioeconomic levers are broader in scope as they affect everyone, but are by implication more difficult to precisely target at any particular group. By analyzing granular voter registration data, we are able to study each tool separately, and quantify the relative danger they pose to the franchise.

Finally, our study underscores the need for an explicitly comparative analysis of voter suppression, and our concluding discussion sets out steps to guide this emerging research agenda. The case of the Cape Colony has striking historical parallels to Black disenfranchisement in the American South during the post-

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<sup>4</sup>Throughout the paper we use the term “disenfranchised” to mean “were deprived of the voting rights they would have been entitled to prior to reform (in this case, the legislative reforms of the 1890s).” It should be emphasised that in this period all women and the vast majority of Black and mixed-race people – as well as many others classified as non-Europeans, notably Malay, Indian, and Chinese people – were excluded from the franchise.

Reconstruction era – in fact, the two processes occurred contemporaneously. In the South African case, the tools of suppression that we document constituted the basic architecture of large-scale suppression of Black and mixed-race voters, culminating in their eventual removal from the common roll in 1936, followed by the removal of mixed-race, Chinese, Indian, and Malay voters in 1956 (Plaut, 2016). The 1890s reforms laid the foundations of the apartheid state, which legislatively reserved full citizenship and political rights for people it classified as “white,” until it was formally dismantled in 1991. In the United States, the sustained legislative assault on the non-racial franchise after the end of slavery helped lay the groundwork for similar institutionalised racism in the South that would only formally end in the 1960s (Keyssar, 2009). Of course, the legacies of these institutions live on into the modern era (e.g., Berman, 2015; Waldman, 2016).

## 2. VOTER SUPPRESSION IN THE CAPE COLONY

In the perception of many the history of South African democracy begins with the 1994 election that ended white minority rule and brought to power the country’s first Black President, Nelson Mandela (Mandela and Langa, 2017). Under apartheid, a racist system of state segregation, dispossession, and displacement, the majority of South Africans were systematically deprived of citizenship rights and suffered tremendous political, social, and economic deprivation (Biko, 2015; Dubow, 2014; Simpson, 2021). Long before apartheid formally began in 1948, the rights of people of colour were heavily circumscribed by various colonial governments. Yet South Africa’s early history is replete with little known variation in the franchise (Fry, 2011).

In the mid-to-late 1800s and early 1900s the Cape Qualified Franchise enabled multi-racial electoral participation at a scale that was unique not only in the context of South Africa, but the wider region and the African continent (South African Native Affairs Commission, 1905, 66-67). Prior to the 1910 Union of South Africa (of the Cape, Transvaal, Natal, and Orange River colonies) and the subsequent apartheid regime, the Cape of Good Hope, then a self-governing British colony, held elections under a formally non-racial franchise (Trapido, 1964). As early as 1836, with the creation of municipal boards at the Cape, men of property and income obtained the right to vote, irrespective of their race. In 1853, the British granted representative government and established the Cape Parliament. The Constitution Ordinance of 1853 stipulated a non-racial franchise allowing men aged 21 or older to vote based on two potential qualifications. First, the “occupancy” qualification allowed men to register to vote if they occupied, for twelve months, property valued at £25 or greater. Second, the “salary” qualification allowed men to register to vote if they earned an annual salary (or wages) of £50 or greater, or a salary of £25 if board and lodging was provided.

For more than half a century, and despite several modifications, the Cape franchise allowed active electoral

participation by Black, mixed-race, and other non-European voters (McCracken, 1967; Odendaal, 2013). In 1891, census officials estimated people of colour constituted 24.2% of the electorate, and the support of Black voters was potentially decisive in several constituencies (Trapido, 1968). In Cape Town, Adullah Abdurahman, a Glasgow-trained medical doctor, became the first person of colour to be elected to the City Council in 1904, before the journalist Walter Rubusana became the first Black person elected to the Cape Council in 1910 (Plaut, 2016, 62, 160). By this time, however, the non-racial franchise had come under sustained attack, reflecting competition between Dutch and English-speaking settlers over which voters should hold the balance of power, but also shared racism that cut across this divide (Edgecombe, 1978, 30-31).

These debates took place against a background of significant demographic change. As the Cape Colony expanded eastwards (into what would become the modern day Eastern Cape province of South Africa), the Black population increased rapidly. The 1865 Census recorded a total population of almost half a million in the Cape, including 182,000 white people (37%). By the time of the 1891 Census, the white population had grown to 377,000 yet their share in the population of more than 1.5 million had declined to roughly 25%. Over this period, multiple Cape governments came to rely on the support of the Afrikaner Bond, a political party representing predominantly Dutch-speaking nationalists (Davenport, 1966). Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, the Bond's effective parliamentary leader, was concerned about these demographic shifts and argued that if “the [electoral] register in the Transkei and in the Frontier districts reached the same ratio [of voters per 100 of the population] as in other parts of the Colony, the white population there would be utterly swamped” (Hofmeyr, 1913, 432). Yet the Cape remained under British rule, and despite political pressure from the Bond and elsewhere to limit the electoral participation of people of colour – and specifically Black voters – its governments could not formally violate the non-racial franchise without risking British intervention (Trapido, 1964). Any attacks on the non-racial franchise had to target voters of colour without directly violating the constitution’s provisions.

Prime Minister Gordon Sprigg oversaw the first such measure. Passed in 1887, the Parliamentary Voters’ Registration Act excluded communal or tribal lands or buildings from the occupancy qualification. The intent was to limit the franchise for Black people in the newly incorporated eastern reaches, while also targeting those living on mission stations in other parts of the colony who had historically actively participated in elections (Parkinson, 2018, 78). Those who were the target of this legislative assault were under no illusions about the goal: Mbeki (1964, 24) notes that around 1887, “*Imvo*, the African paper of the day, wrote an editorial on this largescale disfranchisement of the African people: ‘They [the Africans] are aware that the

object [of the government] is, by means of defranchisement, to pave the way to doing what it likes with the rights and privileges of Natives, especially with rights to land'."

The impact of the 1887 Act is contested. McCracken (1967, 93) and Odendaal (2013, 126) use an observed drop in voter registration totals to argue it disenfranchised 20,000 mostly Black voters between 1886 and 1887. Nyika and Fourie (2020, 466) note claims of up to 30,000 disenfranchised Black voters by Mbeki (1964), Magubane (1996), and others, before using a partial transcription of voter rolls to argue the "correct number is probably closer to 3,000." Whatever the precise impact, the racial composition of the franchise remained politically salient, and renewed efforts at voter suppression soon followed.

Initially under the leadership of Cecil John Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896, the Cape Parliament passed three pieces of legislation that, like the 1887 Act that preceded them, did not directly violate the constitution but were crafted to suppress the electoral participation of voters other than white men: The 1892 Cape Franchise and Ballot Act, which increased the property qualification and introduced a literacy test; the 1894 Glen Grey Act, which devised a geographically defined pattern of landholding for the Black population that did not count towards the property qualification; and finally the 1899 Registration of Parliamentary Voters' Amendment Act, which strengthened the discretion of local officials when preparing lists of voters ahead of elections (see Appendix A for a fuller description of the relevant legal provisions). It is this period, between 1891 and 1903, and these tools – socioeconomic, spatial, and discretion levers – that we study, and throughout we refer to these acts collectively as the "1890s reforms."

### 3. DATA

To study the effects of the 1890s reforms we digitize and make machine readable the complete voter roll of the Cape Colony for 1903. The 1903 roll is uniquely rich in detail, allowing us to not only study the effects of the 1890s reforms but also to document and quantify the effects of the various tools that were used to racially target voter suppression efforts. For each registrant, the roll includes their name and profession, their official race classification, the basis upon which they qualified to vote, the electoral division in which they were registered, their address (such as it was), and further details about their employer (if they qualified for the franchise on the basis of salary) or the nature of their occupancy (if they qualified on the basis of occupancy). Beyond this information, quirks of the roll also indicate whether each voter was registered in 1891 and retained on the roll (registered in the "pre-reform" period) or registered later (in the "post-reform" period), and whether they were registered ordinarily or were inserted into the roll at the discretion of a local

official. Appendix C gives an overview of the structure of and information included in the roll. In total, the roll includes 135,457 individual records. In Figure 1 we present the geographic distribution of these voters across the 46 electoral divisions of the Cape.

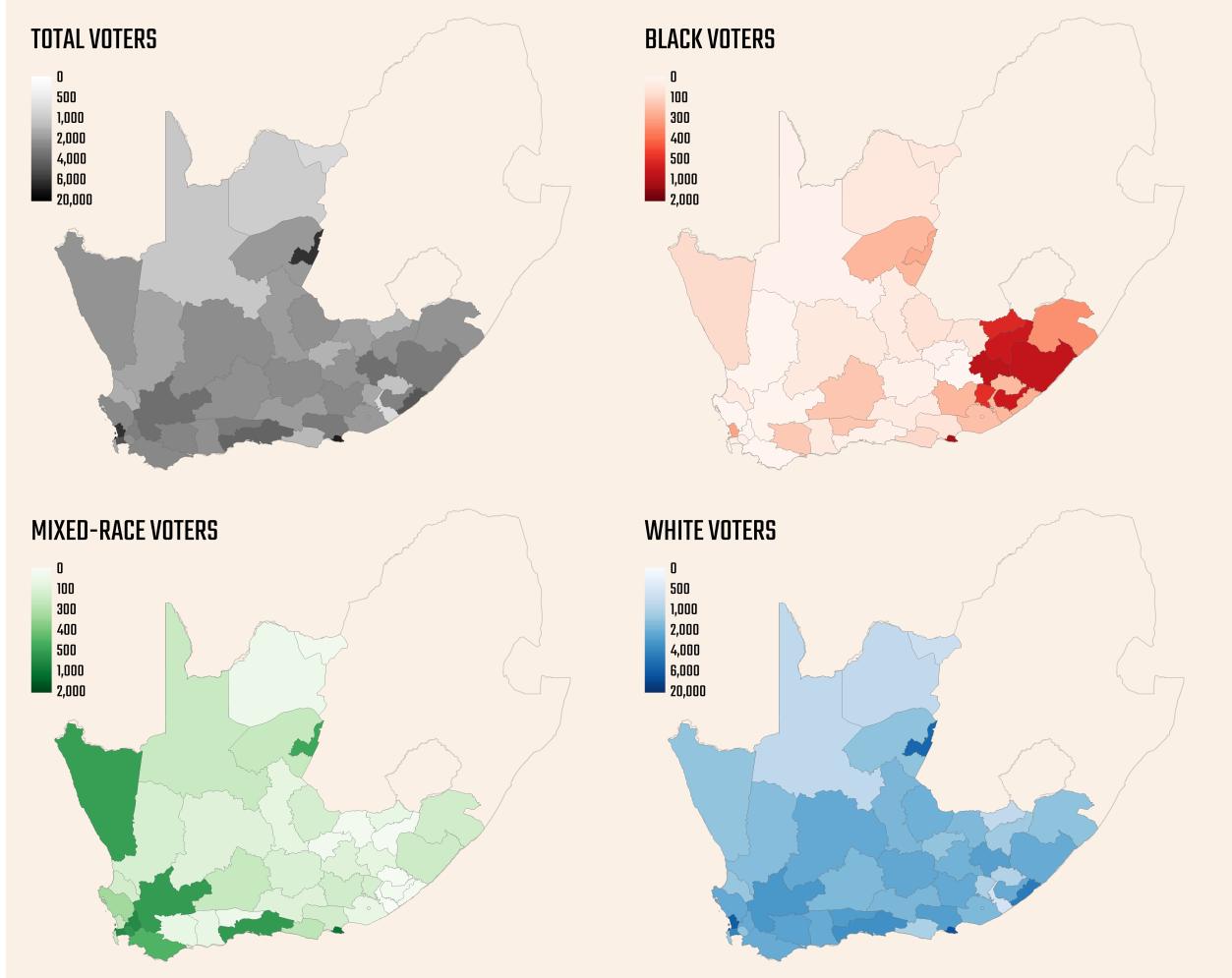


Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Voters, By Major Race Group, in the Cape Colony’s Electoral Divisions  
*Note:* These four maps show the electoral divisions of the Cape Colony. The geography comes from a scanned and digitized map originally produced in 1908. The rest of (what would become) South Africa – Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange River Colony – is included for context. Each panel shows the number of voters – in the top left all voters, in the remaining three panels for the three major race groups – per electoral district, in 1903. We do not separately visualise the distribution of Chinese, Indian, and Malay voters, but they are included in the top left panel. One reported electoral division entry included in the roll, Barkly East, is not shown – all 34 voters in this district are included in Wodehouse, the district into which the town of Barkly East falls. We assume this was a data capture error in 1903 as Barkly East was not an electoral division at the time.

We discuss here in detail two features of the roll that underpin most of our analyses: the race classification and the indication of whether the voter was retained from 1891. We provide details about the other features

of the roll in later sections, where relevant. As required by the 1899 Registration of Parliamentary Voters' Amendment Act, the 1903 roll for the first time captured the formal race classification of each individual voter (see Appendix A). The racial categories used (see Appendix B) allow us to distinguish the three major racial groups at the time: Black voters (subdivided into four groups signified in the roll by the letters B, F, H, and K), mixed-race voters (denoted as Other Coloured Persons (O) on the roll, indicating roughly speaking the mixed-race ethnicity that would become "Coloured" under apartheid law), and white voters (denoted as European (E) on the roll). In addition, a small number of voters (<1%) are classified as Indian (I), Malay (M), or Chinese (C). We do not focus much on the fates of the latter three categories of voters, not because they are unimportant, but rather because they are too few in the data to allow us to make any strong inferences about how the reforms affected them as specific groups. As the racial state continued to expand its logic over the course of the 20th century, these three groups would eventually be included in the "Coloured" category in the 1950s, and were formally removed from the common voter roll in 1956 (Christopher, 2011).

The roll also shows whether each individual had been retained as registered under Section 3 of the 1892 Franchise and Ballot Act (see Appendix A), which allowed individuals who had been previously registered to remain on the roll so long as they had not moved division. The names of these individuals are printed in the roll in italics (see Note 1 at the start of the list of persons registered as voters, shown in Appendix C). Of all registered voters in 1903 just over 20% were retained under this provision, representing almost exactly one-third of the entire electorate in 1891, with the remainder being newly registered (or newly re-registered after moving between divisions). Appendix D provides an example from the District of Mount Fletcher in the electoral division of Griqualand East. In this extract, 16 names are printed in italics. Of these 16, 14 are classified as Black people in the final column of the roll, for example Mothlomi Lebenya (no. 1358), a chief, and Johannes Nakin (no. 1376), a minister. In general, this feature allows us to compare the characteristics of this "legacy sample" of voters who were registered before the 1890s reforms against those who were registered after the reforms took force. Our key assumption is that the legacy sample is a (reasonably) representative snapshot of the pre-reform electorate, a point that we engage in Section 4.

#### 4. THE EFFECT OF THE 1890S REFORMS ON THE RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE ELECTORATE

While racial data were not included in the voter rolls until 1903, in 1891 the Under Colonial Secretary and Director of the Census Henry de Smidt conducted a forensic analysis of the demographic composition of registered voters using census data disaggregated to census districts (the exact methodology used is unclear).

His analysis, published as Table XII, Part XI of the 1891 Census general report, suggests that in 1891, prior to the 1890s reforms, approximately 75.8% of registered voters were white, the remainder being labeled “Other than European or White.”

Considering that white people accounted for only 24.6% of the total population in this period, this represents a profound distortion of racial demographics in the registered population.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, de Smidt reports that around 18.24% of all white people were registered voters (including women and those who were under the legal voting age), while just 1.91% of all those classified as “Other than European or White” were registered voters. Given the role of economic qualifications in determining who could vote, this gross political inequality is also reflective of gross economic inequalities across population groups.

Population Group	Race Recorded	Race Inferred	Total Count	% Share
Black	9105	124	9229	6.81
Mixed-Race	10117	412	10529	7.77
White	108924	5587	114511	84.54
Indian	383	27	410	0.30
Malay	626	80	706	0.52
Chinese	64	2	66	0.05
Unidentified	1	5	6	0.00
Total	129220	6237	135457	100.00

Table 1: Racial Representation on the 1903 Voter Roll

*Note:* This table shows the demographic composition of voters registered in 1903. We have collapsed four Black categories (F, K, H, and B) into one group, for ease of interpretation. This analysis includes 6238 voters whose race was missing or is unidentified.

We present the racial demographics of the franchise in 1903 in Table 1. By 1903, we estimate that roughly 84.5% of all registered voters were white. If we take de Smidt’s calculations from the 1891 Census at face value, this implies that the white share of the registered voting population had increased by 9 percentage points over the intervening 12 years, with the total share of the other population groups decreasing by a corresponding amount in all.

Was this shift caused by the 1890s reforms? The primary threat to a causal interpretation of this change is that demographic or economic shifts were also taking place in this period, differentially changing the number of eligible registrants from each population group. If, for example, the share of people of colour in the population had decreased between 1891 and 1903 then perhaps the share of new registrants from those groups would have also decreased as a result of those demographic shifts. Census data from 1891 and 1904 provide a definitive rejection of this alternative hypothesis. The demographic share of the two

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<sup>5</sup>Authors’ calculations from Table XII, Part XI of the 1891 Census.

reported population groups (“White European” and those “Other than European or White”) was almost entirely stable between 1891 and 1904, with people of colour comprising 75.4% of the total population in 1891, increasing marginally to 75.9% in 1904.<sup>6</sup>

Two additional threats to a causal interpretation are as follows. First, white men may have experienced a larger degree of income inflation (and thus income qualification) over the period than did specifically Black and mixed-race men. Second, the share of white men who were literate (and thus potentially qualified) may have increased at a faster rate than the share of specifically Black and mixed-race men. We return to these two points in Section 5.1, and argue that these potential alternative explanations are unlikely to account our findings.

#### 4.1. DECOMPOSING THE EFFECTS BY SPECIFIC RACE GROUPS

We use two features of the 1903 voter roll to more comprehensively assess the demographic effects of the 1890s reforms. As noted in Section 3, the 1903 roll provides an indicator for whether the individual had been retained as registered under Section 3 of the 1892 Act (see Appendix A). Using this legacy sample we separately estimate the racial composition of 1903 voters who were already registered in 1891 (pre-reform) and the corresponding composition of those who were newly registered or re-registered in 1903 (post-reform).

Population Group	Pre-#	Post-#	Pre-%	Post-%	Difference pp	T-stat
Black	3132	6097	9.98	5.86	-4.12	22.38
Mixed-Race	3308	7221	10.54	6.94	-3.60	18.92
White	24651	89860	78.55	86.35	7.79	-30.54
Indian	33	377	0.10	0.36	0.26	-9.85
Malay	255	451	0.81	0.43	-0.38	6.94
Chinese	2	64	0.01	0.06	0.06	-6.19
Total	31381	104070	100.00	100.00		

Table 2: Racial Representation on the 1903 Voter Roll, Decomposed by Pre- and Post-Reform Registrants  
*Note:* This table compares the demographic composition of those registered prior to the 1890s reforms (pre) and those registered after (post). We include a t-statistic for the difference-in-means between the two periods. We have collapsed four Black categories (F, K, H, and B) into one group, for ease of interpretation. This data includes 6232 voters whose race was inferred using name matching (details in Appendix G). We exclude the 6 voters whose race is unidentified. These choices do not materially affect our conclusions (see Appendix F).

This analysis is presented in Table 2, with the “pre” columns refer to legacy voters who were retained from 1891, and the “post” columns refer to newly registered or re-registered voters. The shifts from 1891 to

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<sup>6</sup>See Part 1, Table 18 in the 1904 Census.

1903 are summarised in the final two columns, as the difference in percentage points between the pre-% and the post-%, and the t-statistic from a t-test of this difference against the null hypothesis of no difference. We find that the voter suppression efforts of the 1890s displaced mostly Black and mixed-race voters with white voters, at a rate close to one-to-one. This represented a 7.8 percentage point swing toward white people among the newly registered, a 3.6 percentage point decrease for mixed-race people, and a 4.1 percentage point decrease for Black people. Representation of Indian people on the roll appears to have marginally increased, while representation of Malay people decreased by a similar amount, though these changes may be accounted for by immigration.

Note that our legacy sample suggests that 78.55% of all voters were white in 1891 (pre-% in the table), a 2.5 percentage point increase on de Smidt's estimate of 75.8%. It could thus be the case that our legacy sample is slightly biased in favour of white people. If so, our estimates of racial disenfranchisement are if anything underestimates of the effect of the 1890s reforms. On the other hand, census officials in 1904 thought de Smidt's count of non-European voters perhaps too high, in which case our estimates are likely more accurate. Which estimate is more accurate is impossible to verify due to the loss of detailed census records from 1891 (see Appendix B). Yet the closeness of these two independent estimates of the composition of the electorate suggest that our figures for the magnitude of disenfranchisement are likely close to the truth.

#### 4.2. CALCULATING THE MAGNITUDE OF DISENFRANCHISEMENT

By 1903, how many people of colour had been disenfranchised via the 1890s reforms? We calculate  $N_{dis}^g$  for any group  $g$  to determine how many additional voters of that group would be required in 1903 for the share of that group in the total electorate to have remained constant from 1891 to 1903:

$$N_{dis}^g = \frac{\left( Share_{1891}^g \times \sum_g^G N_{1903}^g \right) - N_{1903}^g}{1 - Share_{1891}^g} \quad (1)$$

where  $Share_{1891}^g$  is the (estimated) pre-reform (1891) proportion of total voters from group  $g$ , and  $N_{1903}^g$  is the (observed) number of post-reform (1903) voters from group  $g$ .

Based on this approach, in Figure 2 we offer two assessments of the magnitude of disenfranchisement. We begin by making (principled) assumptions about the relative shares of the two population groups in the 1891 electorate (which informs  $Share_{1891}^g$  in the equation above). The left panel of Figure 2 uses de Smidt's estimates to inform the 1891 share. Based on this assumption we estimate that 15,610 voters of colour were disenfranchised between 1891 and 1903, a rate of disenfranchisement of about 43%.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of

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<sup>7</sup>Note that throughout the paper we round estimates of the number of disenfranchised voters to the

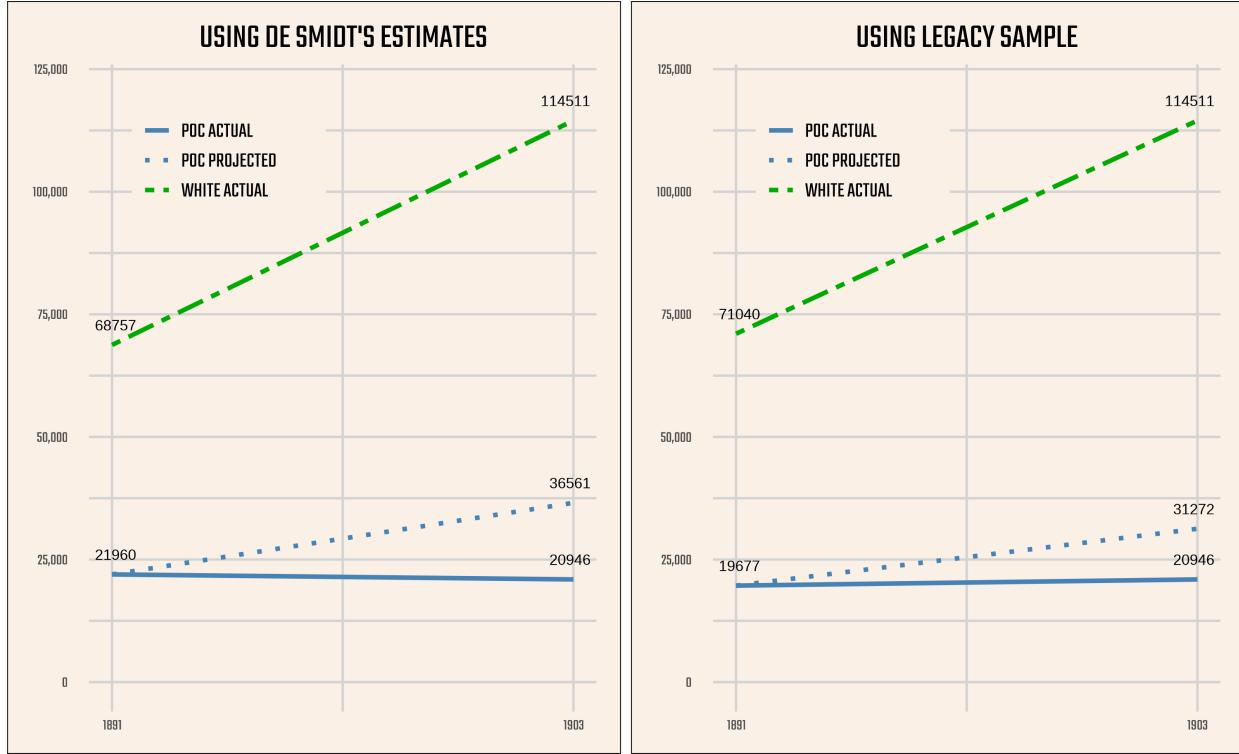


Figure 2: Counterfactual Projections of the Disenfranchised

*Note:* These two figures present counterfactual projections of the absolute number of disenfranchised voters of colour. The left panel shows the projections based on de Smidt's estimates of the racial composition of the 1891 enfranchised electorate. The right panel shows the projections based on the estimated racial composition of the 1891 enfranchised electorate using the legacy sample from the 1903 roll.

these would have been Black and mixed-race people, in roughly equal share. Had the 1890s reforms not come to pass, the number of voters of colour in the electorate would have been almost 75% higher. In the right panel we use our legacy sample of the 1891 electorate to inform the 1891 share. Based on this assumption we estimate that 10,320 voters of colour were disenfranchised, again mostly Black and mixed-race people, at a rate of about 33%. Had the 1890s reforms not come to pass, the number of voters of colour in the electorate would have been about 50% higher.

Our estimated range of 10,320 to 15,610 disenfranchised voters of colour is likely conservative, for two reasons. First, our calculations assume white voters were not also disenfranchised during this period – that is, we assume the number of white voters in 1903 was unaffected by the reforms. Yet some poorer white voters were likely also disenfranchised by the 1890s reforms, albeit not to the same degree. This implies an underestimate of the counterfactual number of total voters in 1903, in the absence of the reforms, and nearest 10.

thus an underestimate of the number of disenfranchised voters of colour.<sup>8</sup> Second, the 1903 roll excludes (mostly white) Cape rebels temporarily disenfranchised for having fought the British in the South African War (1899-1902) between Great Britain and the Boer Republics in the Transvaal and Orange Free State.<sup>9</sup> Smith (1980, 64) cites figures for six electoral divisions indicating 6,150 Cape rebels were disenfranchised. A general amnesty in 1905 ended prosecutions for high treason and the rebels regained voting rights in 1906. Hence, the number of white voters specifically on the 1903 roll is temporarily lower than it otherwise would be, which is also noted in the 1904 census (see Appendix B). Again this biases downwards our projections for the number of voters of colour in 1903.

Finally, it is worth noting that the absolute number of disenfranchised voters would have compounded over time as both the population and incomes grew, and voters who qualified prior to the 1892 Act died or moved. Indeed, using registration shares from the 1911 Census as reported in Christopher (2011), we project that by that year, the number of voters of colour disenfranchised by the reforms had risen to between 11,270 and 17,070.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the further out we project, the stronger our assumptions become. Indeed, by 1911, people of colour represented almost 77.5% of the population, an increase of around 1.5 - 2 percentage points from 1903 and 1891, suggesting again that these are likely underestimates.

## 5. THE TOOLS OF VOTER SUPPRESSION

Having demonstrated that the 1890s reforms largely achieved their goal of differentially disenfranchising voters of colour – mostly Black and mixed-race people – we now turn to documenting and quantifying the effects of the three key tools of voter suppression used in the Cape.

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<sup>8</sup>One could thus interpret our estimates instead as the “net” number of disenfranchised voters of colour, once the (not estimated) number of disenfranchised white voters is subtracted off.

<sup>9</sup>Cape rebels other than their leaders and who surrendered and pleaded guilty of high treason on the basis of Proclamation 100 of 1902 were punished with disenfranchisement for five years. Shearing (2005) counts 16,198 Cape rebels who joined the armed fight against the British – higher than the official tally of 12,205 – and notes that 3,442 surrendered under these provisions alone. Using a digitized list of 12,792 rebels from the Cape Rebels online database of the Anglo-Boer War Museum in Bloemfontein (<https://wmbr.org.za>), provided to us by Johan Fourie, our surname-race classification method (using only exact matching) against the voter roll gives an estimate of around 97% of all Cape rebels being white.

<sup>10</sup>Christopher (2011) reports that in the 1911 Census, the first census of the Union of South Africa, a table offers voter registration numbers by race for each province. In the Cape of Good Hope, he reports (no doubt rounding) a total of 148,500 registered voters, 23,000 of whom were recorded as “Other than White.” Using these numbers we re-calculate the number of disenfranchised voters of colour in 1911. While we have digitised the 1911 Census, the volume that includes this table was unfortunately missing at source.

### 5.1. SOCIOECONOMIC SUPPRESSION: THE 1892 CAPE FRANCHISE AND BALLOT ACT

Rhodes' first major legislative effort to suppress voters of colour was the 1892 Cape Franchise and Ballot Act. His government relied on the support of the nationalist Afrikaner Bond, whose leader Jan Hendrik Hofmeyer had agitated for drastic measures to curtail the number of specifically Black voters. The Act targeted the occupancy qualification, raising the required property value from £25 to £75 and removed the possibility to qualify with a salary of £25 if board and lodging was provided.<sup>11</sup> In addition, it introduced a literacy test (labelled an “education test” in the legislation) by requiring voters to sign their name and to write their address and occupation.

While formally “colour-blind,” the intent of the 1892 Act was to shape the racial demographics of the electorate by exploiting racial inequalities in the Cape economy (Rotberg, 1988, 360-369). Specifically, Black and mixed-race people were typically paid lower salaries and wages than white people, and thus tended to rely more heavily on the occupancy qualification. By raising the required property value, Black and mixed-race people were thus more likely to be disenfranchised than were white people.

We are able to study this more closely using the qualifications field in the voter roll. Each voter's basis for qualification was recorded, and in Table 3 we decompose the changes from pre- and post-reform by qualification using the legacy registrars as before, and then further decompose those changes by population group. Unsurprisingly, we find that the share of Black and mixed-race voters who qualified via salary or wages was not reduced by the change – in fact, many more Black voters qualified through their incomes than in the pre-reform period. The primary effect of the reforms was to undercut dramatically voters who qualified through occupancy – householding, landholding, or tenancy. This occurred regardless of voters' race: the share of white people qualifying through occupancy also declined substantially, but by a smaller rate (less than a third) than for Black and mixed-race voters (more than half). Further, the total share of white voters who newly qualified on the basis of income was almost double the share of those no longer qualifying through property. By contrast, for Black and mixed-race voters, the increase in voters qualifying through income was less than half the total share lost to the increased property qualification.

Our analysis challenges earlier ones. According to a footnote without a detailed source in Hofmeyr (1913, 437), “[t]he immediate effect of the measure is shown by the fact, that in spite of the provision protecting the rights of previously registered voters, at the registration of 1893 there was found to be a decrease of 3,348

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<sup>11</sup>Rhodes made sure there was an exemption qualifying (white) miners with a license to dig for diamonds in Griqualand West, who he described as “educated men... of great intelligence” – and who also happened to vote in his constituency (Rotberg, 1988, 366).

Population Group	Qualification	Pre-#	Post-#	Pre-%	Post-%	Difference pp	T-stat
All Voters	Occupancy	25642	55303	85.74	56.72	-29.02	112.90
	Salary	4266	42206	14.26	43.28	29.02	-112.90
Total		29908	97509	100.00	100.00		
Black	Occupancy	2247	2686	7.51	2.75	-4.76	29.52
	Salary	290	2843	0.97	2.92	1.95	-24.89
Mixed-Race	Occupancy	2610	3853	8.73	3.95	-4.78	27.33
	Salary	632	2995	2.11	3.07	0.96	-9.60
White	Occupancy	20596	48180	68.86	49.41	-19.45	242.30
	Salary	3260	36152	10.90	37.08	26.18	-110.22
Indian, Malay, Chinese	Occupancy	189	584	0.63	0.60	-0.03	0.63
	Salary	84	216	0.28	0.22	-0.06	1.74
Total		29908	97509	100.00	100.00		

Table 3: Economic Qualifications on the 1903 Voter Roll, Decomposed by Pre- and Post-Reform Registrants, and Race

*Note:* This table compares the qualifications of those registered prior to the 1890s reforms (pre) and those registered after (post). The first part of the table conducts this analysis for all population groups, and the second part for each population group. We have collapsed four categories (F, K, H, and B) into one group which we call Black, and Indian, Malay, and Chinese voters into one group, for ease of interpretation. Here we exclude all voters who were added by local discretion, as well as all voters in the areas affected (treated) by the Glen Grey Act, so as to better understand how the socioeconomic reforms shaped the electorate. We also exclude a very small number of voters whose race is unidentified, or whose qualification is missing. These exclusions remove a total of 8040 voters from the analysis.

coloured [non-European] voters as against an increase of 4,506 Europeans.” McCracken (1967, 95) cites this passage and uses similar language, while Rotberg (1988, 368) claims the consequences “were less than... feared” as “[o]nly” 3,000 Black and mixed-race voters dropped off the roll. In the most recent analysis, Nyika and Fourie (2020, 466) use partial transcriptions of the rolls in this period and classify Black voters based on their surnames, judging Hofmeyr’s figure as “reasonably accurate.”

These estimates all ignore the cumulative effects of the 1892 Act over time. The stock of voters who qualified under the old qualifications declined when they moved or died, whilst the flow of new voters added under the revised qualifications differed fundamentally in its racial composition. To understand how many voters were likely disenfranchised through these changes to the occupancy qualification, we use a modified version of Equation 1: instead of defining group  $g$  by race, we define  $g$  by race-qualification pairs.

These calculations suggests that between 3,100 and 5,010 Black, and between 4,150 and 5,110 mixed-race, voters were disenfranchised through just the changes to the occupancy qualification. We offer an upper and lower range because while the share of total voters qualifying by occupancy declined for both Black and

mixed-race voters, the share of total voters qualifying via salary increased for both groups. This increase could be driven by qualification substitution – voters who previously qualified via occupancy switching to salary – or by income inflation in the intervening period. The lower estimate we offer assumes that any increase in salary qualifications is driven entirely by substitution, and the upper estimates assumes that no substitution occurs.<sup>12</sup> The estimated disenfranchisement of between 7,250 and 10,120 Black and mixed-race voters via the socioeconomic lever thus explains the majority of the 10,320 to 15,610 voters of colour we estimate were disenfranchised by 1903.<sup>13</sup>

We have focused here on one part of the 1892 Act – the change to the occupancy qualification – yet it also imposed stricter literacy requirements on voters. While we cannot test the effect of this change directly, census data from 1891 and 1904 indicate that the number of Black and mixed-race (as well as Malay, Indian, Chinese, though their numbers are small) men able to read and write actually grew at a faster rate ( $2.3\times$ ) over this period than did the number of white men able to read and write ( $1.8\times$ ).<sup>14</sup> These underlying trends are suggestive of a smaller role for literacy as a tool (or explanation) of racial disenfranchisement in the Cape at this particular time. However, due to the time lag separating schooling from adulthood, the potential harm of this mechanism should be understood in a wider context. In particular, the introduction of the literacy requirement coincided, from 1893 onward, with a shift in education policy from a more inclusive approach towards one that channelled resources to schools for poor white children, based on the racial classification of pupils (Soudien, 2019, 27). The literacy requirement for the franchise thus reflects, and emphasises the political incentives for, the increasing racial segregation of schools. The latter was formally institutionalized by the 1905 School Board Act which made primary schooling compulsory for white children only, as well as the systematic under-provision of education to specifically Black and mixed-race people, which culminated in the 1953 Bantu Education Act (Fedderke et al., 2000).

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<sup>12</sup>For example, for Black voters, we estimate that 5,010 people were “lost” through the occupancy qualification, while 1,920 were “gained” through the salary qualification. Thus our upper estimate is 5,010 (assuming that none of the 1,920 were substitutors), and our lower estimate is (with rounding) 3,100 (5,012 - 1,916, assuming all those gained were substitutors).

<sup>13</sup>Note that these projections rely on the legacy sample to inform our 1891 assumptions, as no other race-qualification decompositions exist of the 1891 roll. If our sample of legacy voters is slightly over-representative of white voters – as de Smidt’s figures suggest – then our estimates of the effect of the socioeconomic lever are likely downward biased.

<sup>14</sup>Calculations by authors, based on 1891 Census Part 08 Tables XXXIX and XL, and 1904 Census Part 11, Tables XL and XLI.

## 5.2. SPATIAL DISENFRANCHISEMENT: THE 1894 GLEN GREY ACT

Rhodes' second major legislative assault on specifically Black voting rights was a provision in the Glen Grey Act, passed in 1894, which revived the spatially targeted mechanism introduced by Sprigg in 1887 (Odendaal, 2013, 129-130). The Act was so called as it initially targeted only an area called Glen Grey, the site of a large "Native reserve." With this complex legislation, which we cannot discuss in detail here, Rhodes responded to a range of issues including labour shortages, population movements, and Black electoral participation (Rotberg, 1988, 467-476). Amongst others, the Act replaced communal tenure with individual allotments, introduced a labor tax to force Black men without allotted land into paid employment, and created location boards and a district council with limited powers and representation for the Black population. Crucially, in the context of our analysis, individual allotments in areas subject to the Glen Grey Act were deemed to be held in communal tenure for the purpose of the franchise and thus would not qualify under the altered occupancy restrictions introduced by Sprigg in 1887. This prevented Black people in Glen Grey from qualifying to vote with land allotted under the Act.

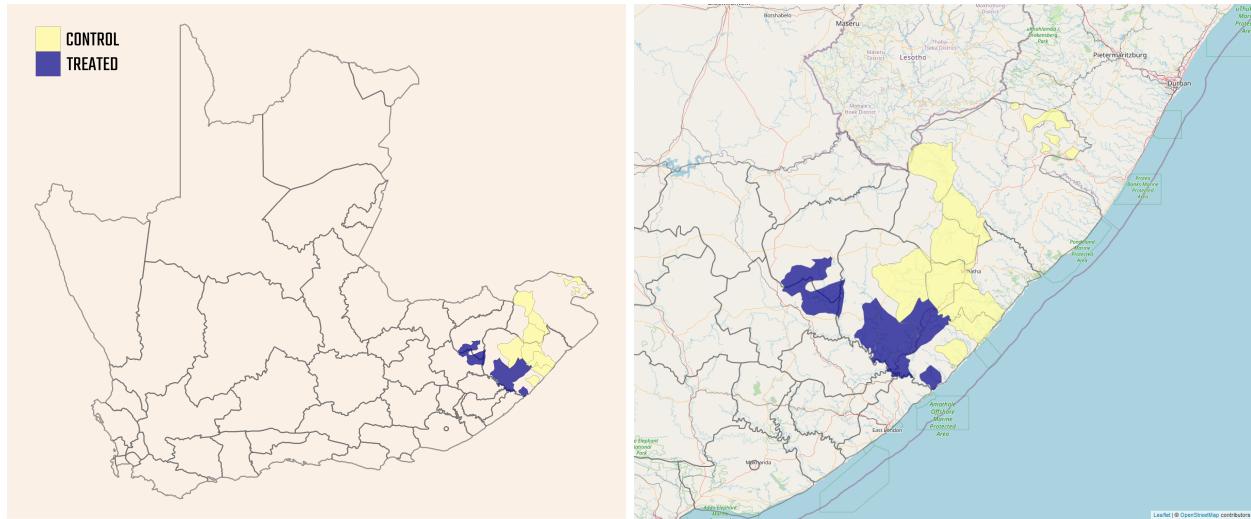


Figure 3: The Geographic Extent of the Glen Grey Act by 1904

*Note:* These two maps show the geographic extent of the Glen Grey Act by 1904. The geography comes from a scanned and digitized map originally produced in 1905. The left panel shows the areas overlayed atop the electoral divisions of the Cape. To provide further context, the right panel shows the areas overlayed atop a modern basemap of the Eastern Cape and southern KwaZulu-Natal. In blue we show the "treated" areas, those being areas in which the Act was in force prior to February 1903, when the roll was finalised. In yellow we show the "control" areas, those that were brought under the provisions of the Act through proclamations shortly after, in 1903 and 1904, but too late to affect the roll.

Rhodes envisaged the legislation as a governance blueprint far beyond the boundaries of Glen Grey, describing it as "a Native Bill for Africa" (Rotberg, 1988, 469). To facilitate its wider application, the Act

could be extended by proclamation to other parts of the colony. By 1911, nine proclamations had extended the provisions of the Glen Grey Act to 18 other districts (see Appendix A for details of these proclamations). However, by the time the 1903 roll was finalised in February 1903, these extensions covered only five further districts – Butterworth, Idutywa, Nqamakwe, Tsomo, and Kentani – in addition to Glen Grey. A further nine districts – Elliotdale, Encgobo, Mount Fletcher, Mqanduli, Qumbu, Tsolo, Umtata, Umzimkulu, and Willowvale – were brought under the provisions of the Act through proclamations shortly after, in 1903 and 1904, but too late to affect the 1903 roll.

We are thus able to assess the pre-reform-period to post-reform-period change in voter demographics (by comparing the legacy sample to newly-registered voters, as before) in the six areas impacted by the Glen Grey Act in 1903 (the “treated”), compared to those nine soon-to-be proclaimed areas (the “control”). This difference-in-differences analysis provides an estimate of the effect of the Glen Grey Act, net of the 1892 legislation (as this Cape-wide legislation affected both the treated and control). Note that though the geography at which the Glen Grey Act was applied – the district – does not precisely correspond to the electoral division geography, the roll also includes the field cornetcy of each voter, a much smaller geography, from which we are able to accurately infer whether a voter lived in a treated or control area (or whether they lived in an area not targeted by the Glen Grey Act in this period).

Glen Grey Act	Population Group	Pre-#	Post-#	Diff-#	Pre-%	Post-%	Diff-pp	T-stat
Control	Black	48	161	113	22.75	18.81	-3.94	1.24
	White	155	675	520	73.46	78.86	5.40	-1.61
Treated	Black	589	448	-141	79.59	43.12	-36.48	17.08
	White	141	576	435	19.05	55.44	36.38	-17.21

Table 4: The Effect of the Glen Grey Act on the Racial Composition of the Electorate

*Note:* This table compares the relative population shares of Black and White voters before the reform period (pre) and after the reform period (post), in areas affected by the Glen Grey Act prior to 1903 (“treated”) and areas affected by the Glen Grey Act shortly after 1903 (“control”). We focus only on Black and White voters as they comprise the vast majority (> 95%) of the population in the affected areas. We exclude all voters added at the discretion of the field cornet, though in this case that number is 0. The analysis includes a total of 2846 voters.

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4, and the findings are stark. In control areas, shifts in registration dynamics between newly-registered (post-reform) registrants and legacy (pre-reform) registrants are very similar in magnitude to the effects shown in Table 1 in Section 4. In percentage point terms, the share of Black voters in these control areas decreases by 3.9 percentage points, while the share of white

voters increased by 5.4 percentage points. Yet in the treated areas, where the Glen Grey Act was in force, the share of Black voters in the newly-registered electorate is almost half that of the legacy electorate from 1891, a decrease of 36.5 percentage points, while the share of white voters has tripled, increasing by 36.4 percentage points.

This conclusion looks no different if we focus instead on the difference in the number of voters registered – in both the treated and control areas the number of white voters increases from the legacy sample to the newly registered or re-registered, while it is exclusively in the treated areas that the number of Black voters declines between these groups. This is particularly striking in that the number of legacy voters on the 1903 roll is one-third of the total number of voters in 1891, so the estimated change in the total number of voters is almost mechanically a gross underestimate. At the same time, the pre- and post-reform counts of white voters are remarkably similar across treatment and control groups, indicating similar demographic changes in treated and control areas.

The difference-in-differences estimate of  $-32.54$  ( $= -36.48 - (-3.94)$ ) percentage points indicates a sharp decline in the number of Black voters in the Glen Grey treated areas, compared to what their numbers would have been without the Act. Given the number of Black voters in the affected areas in 1903 was 1037, we estimate that roughly 337 Black voters were disenfranchised by the Glen Grey Act by this time. We would argue that this absolute figure vastly understates the future significance of the Glen Grey Act as a tool of disenfranchisement. First, as noted above, the Act was subsequently extended to many more areas of the Cape, greatly widening its influence. Second, it devised a system of governance based on spatial segregation that foreshadowed the 1913 Natives' Land Act (Plaatje, 1916), and ultimately apartheid's nominally independent "homelands" where Black people ostensibly self-governed, whilst being deprived of their citizenship in the Republic of South Africa (Christopher, 1994).<sup>15</sup>

### 5.3. DISCRETION: THE 1899 REGISTRATION OF PARLIAMENTARY VOTERS' AMENDMENT ACT

As White et al. (2015) and Keele et al. (2021) highlight, electoral provisions that give local officials discretion with minimal oversight can facilitate discrimination. In the Cape, local officials called field cornets had a variety of functions related to administration and law enforcement, including the role of registering officers for elections to the Cape Parliament (Parkinson, 2018). The latter entailed responsibility for compiling provisional lists of voters. Registering officers also received and processed claims for inclusion of omitted

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<sup>15</sup>For discussions of these links, see Odendaal (2013, 130), Rotberg (1988, 475-476), and de Kadt and Larreguy (2018).

individuals, or objections to included names, before transmitting the information to a civil commissioner – the revising officer – for review, dispute resolution, and finalisation of the list of voters for their division.<sup>16</sup>

Concerns about the role of field cornets were not unusual. Some were apparently “scarcely literate,” active supporters of the Afrikaner Bond, and deemed “prejudicial to African voters” (Edgecombe, 1978, 28). They had a history of abusing their power to manipulate voter registration, as Visser (2021, 75-85) illustrates with multiple examples.<sup>17</sup> Section 7 of the 1899 Act allowed a field cornet to remove from the provisional list those who “to the best of his knowledge and belief” were dead or otherwise ineligible, and to add persons “who, the Registering Officer is satisfied, possess the necessary qualifications.” In one of his final parliamentary interventions, Rhodes – at this point no longer Prime Minister – argued that the legislation would enable “a hostile registering officer” to remove Black voters from the roll, which leads Rotberg (1988, 618) to comment: “Rhodes declared as a momentarily reborn champion of the Africans and as one who knew how to discern the real intentions of bills designed to harm Africans...” Indeed, Rhodes himself had overseen the abuse of local discretion in exactly this way.<sup>18</sup>

While we do not know the identity of those deliberately removed from the roll by registering officers, names inserted on the basis of Section 7 of the 1899 Act are identifiable in the 1903 roll, as the forms used for this purpose lacked some of the information required of those who were entered onto the roll ordinarily (see Appendix C). We identify 6084 voters inserted in this fashion. This allows us to examine whether and to what extent this element of local discretion exacerbated racial inequality on the roll by increasing the number of voters of certain population groups. Unfortunately, one implication of the way these individuals were added to the roll is that their population group is by definition missing from the data (for an example, see Appendix E). To classify these cases we match the names of those with no race classification to those with a race classification, using surnames (last names). With the approximately 129,000 individuals for whom we have race classifications we generate a table of race proportions per unique surname. For many surnames we see only a single race associated with the surname. For other names we often find multiple different races per

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<sup>16</sup>For more detail on the specific steps in this process, readers should refer to Sections 10 to 27 of the 1892 Cape Franchise and Ballot Act and Sections 6 to 19 of the 1899 Registration of Parliamentary Voters’ Amendment Act.

<sup>17</sup>Parkinson (2018, 79-88) documents a striking early case. In 1859, the mission stations of Genadendal and Elim together accounted for 759 out of 1291 registered voters in their constituency. Following the defeat of Henry Vigne in elections that year, the field cornet of Caledon, who was Vigne’s brother in law, refused to register new Genadendal voters and removed many others from the roll by claiming the value of their property did not meet the required threshold. The matter ultimately came before a registration court at Caledon in 1861, which reinstated Genadendal’s voters.

<sup>18</sup>Rotberg (1988, 366) cites evidence that in 1891, Rhodes instigated the removal of 180 Black voters from the roll in Kimberley, thereby reducing their number to 20, through a process that an official reporting to him described as “knocking natives off.”

surname. In these cases we take the most common (modal) race. We then use both exact string matching and, for those cases where there is no exact match, fuzzy string matching to infer the most likely race for the missing cases (Appendix G provides further details, a validation exercise, and robustness tests).

Population Group	% Shares by Method of Registration:	
	Ordinary	Discretion
Black	7.04	1.96
Mixed-Race	7.82	6.69
White	84.3	89.53
Indian	0.3	0.41
Malay	0.48	1.3
Chinese	0.05	0.03
Unidentified	0	0.08
Total	100	100

Table 5: Racial Representation on the 1903 Voter Roll, Decomposed by Method of Registration

*Note:* This table presents the demographic composition of all 135,457 voters, decomposed by whether they were registered ordinarily (129373 voters) or through local discretion (6084 voters).

With these classifications complete, we present in Table 5 the racial composition of those inserted by registering officers (right column), contrasted with the racial composition of those registered through ordinary claims (left column). We find that, relative to ordinary claims, white people are over-represented and Black people under-represented among insertions, in an almost one-to-one ratio, totalling about 5 percentage points. We find less evidence of insertions being used for discrimination targeted towards mixed-race voters, who suffer a roughly 1 percentage point penalty between the two methods. This may simply be measurement error from our race imputations, but it is also consistent with the claim by Edgecombe (1978, 28) that registering officers in this era had a particularly strong bias against Black voters during the compilation of the provisional lists.

To estimate the number disenfranchised by discretion, we again use a modified version of Equation 1: instead of using  $Share_{1891}^g$  we use  $Share_{ordinary}^g$ , the share of voters registered through ordinary claims in 1903. This gives an estimate of how many more Black and mixed-race voters should have been registered by discretion than really were, for there to be demographic parity between the two methods of registration.

Though the scale of discretionary insertions was relatively small (<5% of the roll), we assess that roughly 433 Black and mixed-race voters were disenfranchised in this fashion. As far as we know, this is the first estimate of the disenfranchising effect of this particular type of biased discretion under Section 7 of this Act, though it is almost certainly a lower bound estimate of the effect of racial bias during voter registration, in

particular as we cannot observe names registering officers removed from their lists. Moreover, our analysis excludes other stages in the compilation of the roll, such as appeals and reviews by civil commissioners. If these followed a similar pattern, the overall impact of biased administrative behavior was likely larger.

## 6. ELECTORAL CONSEQUENCES

The substantial disenfranchising effect of voter suppression we document assumes wider significance when considered in historical context. We consider here the broader consequences of the 1890s reforms against the backdrop of a critical juncture in the region’s political development. In 1896, following an ill-fated attempt to foment an uprising in the Transvaal – the so-called Jameson Raid, which contributed to the South African War (sometimes referred to as the Second Boer War) from 1899 to 1902 – Rhodes resigned as Prime Minister (Rotberg, 1988, 515-550). The Raid ended the alliance between Rhodes and the Bond, and led to the emergence of a two-party system along English-Afrikaner lines, pitting the South African League (later the Progressive Party) against the Bond (Smith, 1980). Several liberal “friends of the natives” who supported the non-racial franchise cooperated with the Bond in what developed into the South African Party (SAP).

The 1903 voter roll was compiled for the first two elections after the end of the South African War, the 1903 election for the Cape Legislative Council (the upper house, comprising 26 representatives from nine electoral provinces), and the 1904 election for the Cape House of Assembly (the lower house, comprising 95 members from 46 electoral divisions, with between one and five elected members per division).<sup>19</sup> It was to the House of Assembly that governments were accountable, and the 1904 election was contested primarily between candidates of the pro-imperialist Progressive Party and the SAP with aligned independents. Among the latter were several liberal supporters of the non-racial franchise, including John X. Merriman (in Wodehouse), J. W. Sauer (Aliwal North), and William Schreiner (Caledon). The Progressives emerged with a narrow victory, holding 50 seats in the Assembly, a five-seat margin between it and its unified opponents, led by the SAP with 42 seats. Merriman, Sauer, and Schreiner were among those who lost their seats, some by narrow margins. In Aliwal North, with two seats available, Sauer fell just 31 votes short of the second placed candidate, a Progressive (Smith, 1980, 207). Given the scale of disenfranchisement we estimate, and the narrow margin that brought the Progressives to power, it seems plausible that the 1890s reforms may not just have achieved their first order goal of voter suppression, but also a second order electoral impact.

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<sup>19</sup>The electoral divisions and electoral provinces are both sometimes referred to as “constituencies,” despite having very different geographies (the provinces were much larger and subsumed multiple divisions). In this section we prefer not to use that term to avoid any ambiguity.

We examine this possibility systematically by aggregating individuals on the roll into their electoral divisions and estimating the number of disenfranchised voters of colour for each division (using the method in Equation 1). We combine this data with two measures derived from electoral division election returns that we digitize from Smith (1980). First, given that most electoral divisions were multi-member districts, we consider the margin of victory between the elected candidate with the lowest number of votes and the unsuccessful candidate with the highest number of votes, in the 1904 Assembly election. Voters had as many votes as there were seats for their electoral division, were not obliged to cast all of them, but could cast no more than one vote per candidate without invalidating their ballot (Trapido, 1968, 95).<sup>20</sup> Thus, if the number of disenfranchised voters in an electoral division exceeds this margin of victory in that same electoral division, then the disenfranchised group can be said to have been “potentially pivotal” in deciding at least one seat in that division. Second, we consider estimates generated by Smith (1980) of the difference in the number of voters aligned with the Progressives and anti-Progressives, for each electoral division. While the first metric is useful as a direct measure of the “closeness” of 1904 election outcomes, this second metric synthesizes the key partisan cleavage of the time. Moreover, elections in this era were often uncontested, and in 1904 this was true of 13 of the 46 electoral divisions, meaning the first metric cannot always be used. Smith (1980) uses data from the 1903 Legislative Council elections disaggregated to the electoral division (data that we unfortunately do not have) to “fill in” these missing cases.<sup>21</sup>

In Figure 4 we plot these two variables against our estimates of the number of disenfranchised voters of colour. A striking pattern emerges: those areas that were most aggressively affected by the 1890s reforms are almost all areas where margins are extremely low. The reforms tended to target (or produce) highly competitive electoral divisions. Focusing on our first variable of interest, we find that in 14 (almost 42%) of the 33 electoral divisions with contested elections in 1904 our estimate of racial disenfranchisement exceeds the margin of victory, often handily. These races may have proved politically crucial – in 9 of the 14 cases the winning candidate was a Progressive while the losing candidate was an anti-Progressive. Focusing on

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<sup>20</sup>In elections to the Legislative Council it was possible to “plump” several votes for a single candidate. This had also been the case previously for the Assembly. In 1894, Ahmed Effendi, a Malay, stood as an Assembly candidate in Cape Town, “it being practically certain, that the plumping system would secure his election” (Hofmeyr, 1913, 451). Parliament “speedily” abolished the cumulative vote to “put an end to the Effendi’s chances of election” (McCracken, 1967, 75). This was unnecessary for the Legislative Council, the Cape’s equivalent of the British House of Lords, which always had an “exceptionally high” membership qualification, ensuring that it comprised only wealthy white property owners (Trapido, 1964, 50).

<sup>21</sup>For a detailed discussion of these estimates, see Chapter 5 in Smith (1980). Suffice it to say, he uses election returns from both 1904 and 1903, candidate party codings based on newspapers and media reports, and various calculation methods designed to deal with multi-candidate divisions, to generate his estimates. We take them at face value for this exercise.

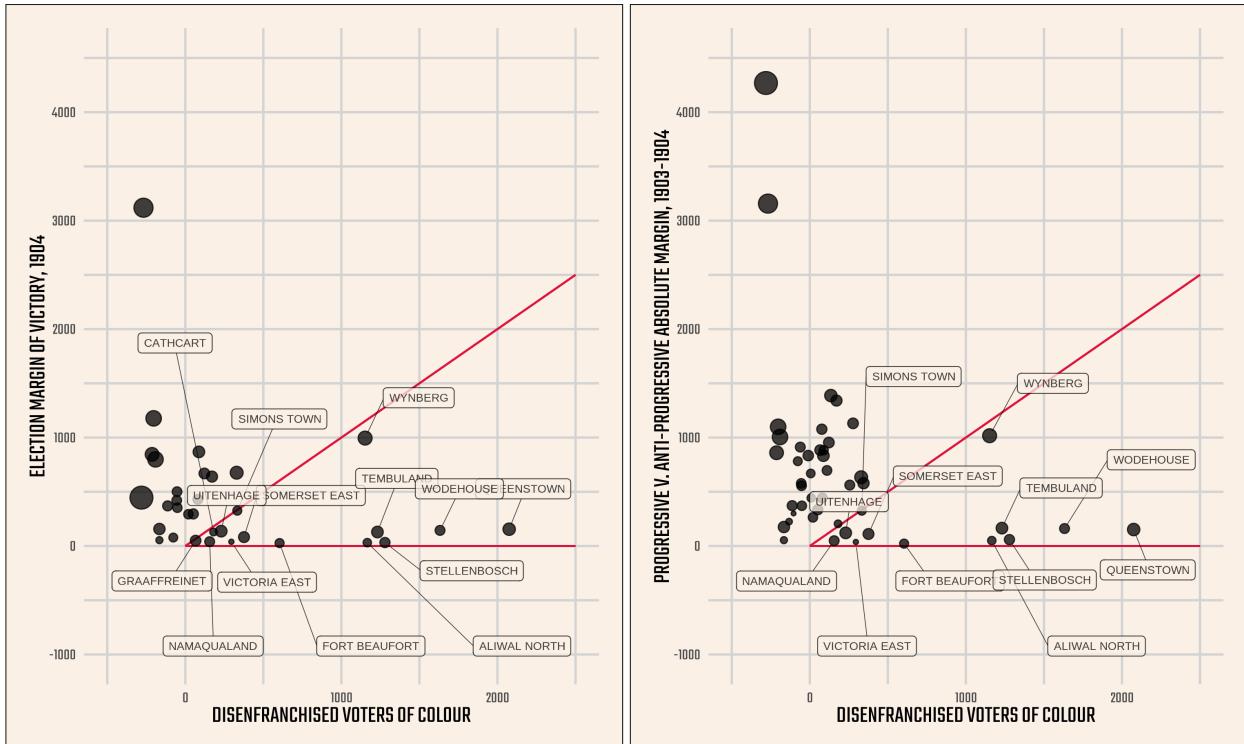


Figure 4: Electoral Margins and Estimated Disenfranchised Voters, by Electoral Division

*Note:* These two figures present data aggregated to the electoral division ( $n = 46$ ), with the size of the point representing the total registered population (min = 769, max = 17126). The left panel shows our first metric, the margin of victory between the lowest elected candidate and the highest unelected candidate in the 1904 Cape Assembly Elections, against our estimates of the number of disenfranchised voters of colour by 1903. The right panel shows our second metric, the estimated absolute margin in Progressive - anti-Progressive voters in the 1903-1904 period. These estimates are made by Smith (1980), and include returns from both the 1904 Assembly and 1903 Legislative Council elections. The red lines indicate the “cone of pivotality” – any points falling in this cone are electoral divisions in which enough voters of colour were disenfranchised to overturn the margin. Labels give the names of electoral divisions inside the cone of pivotality.

this salient political dimension – our second variable of interest – 12 (26%) of the 46 electoral divisions experienced Black and mixed-race disenfranchisement greater than the estimated absolute margin between Progressive and anti-Progressive voters, and the margin was usually favoured the Progressives.

Our calculations help to clarify the factors that shaped Cape electoral politics at this time. Smith (1980, 65) emphasizes the decisive role of the temporary disenfranchisement of the Cape rebels, noting their likely support for the Bond implied that “[a]s many as 6150 potential SAP voters had been disenfranchised” across six electoral divisions where the Progressive Party won all eleven seats in 1904. Our analysis shows that the 1890s reforms reduced the number of voters of colour across a full 30 divisions, often by much larger magnitudes (for full details, see Appendix H). The electoral relevance of rebel disenfranchisement, which affected far fewer divisions and was reversed shortly after the 1904 elections, is dwarfed by racial

disenfranchisement due to the 1890s reforms, which disenfranchised twice as many voters and was never reversed.

The results suggest that the 1890s reforms may have had direct consequences for the 1904 elections. While Black voters in particular did not neatly align with the division between the Progressive Party and the SAP (Odendaal, 2013, 149-151), liberal politicians such as Merriman benefited from their support (Trapido, 1968). Without the 1890s reforms, it thus seems plausible that the imperialist Leander Starr Jameson would not have enjoyed the Progressive majority required to become Prime Minister in 1904. It is beyond the scope of this paper to speculate whether and how an SAP-led government at this time might have affected the course of South African history as it moved towards unification of the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange River colonies in 1910, and the ultimate demise of the non-racial franchise (Plaut, 2016). Yet it perhaps should not come as a surprise that large-scale racially targeted disenfranchisement has potentially profound electoral consequences.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Studying the Cape of Good Hope at the turn of the 20th century, we have shown the substantial impact of a trio of legislative reforms on the racial composition of the Cape's constitutionally protected non-racial franchise. Our estimates, based on the complete voter roll for 1903, suggest that by that year between 10,320 and 15,610 mostly Black and mixed-race voters were eliminated from the roll. Without these reforms the entire electorate in 1903 would likely have been 7.6 to 11.5% larger, with the number of voters of colour roughly 50 to 75% higher. Together, these voter suppression efforts likely impacted the outcome of the 1904 election. Almost 40% of the contested races that year had at least one seat with a winning margin narrower than the estimated number of disenfranchised voters of colour in the relevant division.

Our unique microdata allow us separately to examine specific targeted manipulations. Considering each piece of legislation in turn, we document and quantify the effects of three distinct tools wielded by white elites in their efforts to generate racial disenfranchisement: a socioeconomic lever, a spatial lever, and a discretion lever. We find that both spatial and discretion levers can be highly effective at disenfranchising specific groups of voters. The Glen Grey Act, for example, dramatically reduced the number of specifically Black registrars in the affected areas without affecting white registrars. Likewise, Black people were almost entirely excluded from registration on the basis of local officials' discretion, with other population groups preferred. Yet in terms of the total magnitude of disenfranchisement these tools are also limited because they must either target discrete geographies, or depend upon administrative capacity for discretion. By

contrast, we find that the colony-wide socioeconomic lever affected far more people, accounting for the vast majority of disenfranchisement. Yet it was more difficult to precisely target, meaning white men of lower socioeconomic status were likely also disenfranchised, albeit at lower relative rates.

Our findings clarify two key points in South African history. First, they fundamentally challenge earlier claims about the magnitude of disenfranchisement due to specifically the 1892 Act. Several historians claim the act suppressed about 3350 Black and mixed-race voters, based on a footnote in Hofmeyr (1913, 437), a finding that has been recently reaffirmed by economic historians who state that the 1892 Act “scarcely affected” Black voters and “did not affect... coloured voters substantially” (Nyika and Fourie, 2020, 467-8). Our estimates of the 1892 Act’s impact are up to three times the figure given by Hofmeyr and improve upon these earlier accounts in two ways. We consider a time horizon that better captures the slowly-unfolding nature of these restrictions. After all, the 1892 Act explicitly allowed previously-registered voters who had not moved to remain on the roll. As these voters moved or died, they would not be “replaced” at the same rate. Indeed, as noted earlier, projecting forward our overall estimate of the impact of the 1890s reforms to 1911 suggests that by this date between 11,270 and 17,070 voters of colour may have been disenfranchised, most of them due to the 1892 Act. Moreover, unlike prior work, our estimates are based on a counterfactual mode of reasoning. Earlier approximations based on the number of Black and mixed-race voters immediately before and after the 1892 Act fail to account for (rapid) population and income growth which increased the number of potential registrants over time. By studying the racial composition of the entire electorate, rather than simply the number of Black voters registered, we properly specify, and estimate, this counterfactual.

Second, we produce the first detailed estimates of disenfranchisement due to the Glen Grey Act, and due to the abuse of discretion by registering officers, though our results almost certainly understate their full impact. The subsequent extension of the Glen Grey Act to many more areas facilitated “virtually a permanent disqualification of the majority of tribal Natives” (Brookes cited in Rotberg, 1988, 475) and created a blueprint for spatial segregation on a much larger and systematic scale. Our assessment of discretion considers only one element (insertions, but not deletions) and only for a single year. Therefore, while our analysis of disenfranchisement due to the 1890s reforms is the most comprehensive to date, the full effect of voter suppression in the Cape Colony is likely even larger, and potentially by a substantial margin.

The broader impact of the 1890s reforms on South Africa’s political history is arguably hard to overstate. They likely altered the outcome of the 1904 election, strengthened the electoral prospects of the nationalist forces, and laid the groundwork for the formal establishment of a whites-only franchise. At the same time, they contributed to growing political activism among the non-white population, including the formation

of what later became the African National Congress (Odendaal, 2013). This early experience of political participation and of disenfranchisement thus contributed to Black political mobilisation in a unified South Africa. We note that three founders and inaugural principal office holders of the South African Native National Congress (what would become the ANC) – John Dube (its President), Walter Rubusana (Deputy President), and Sol Plaatje (Secretary-General) – can be found on the 1903 roll. We leave a deeper exploration of how these early experiences are linked to elite formation, and the structure of local political elites and electoral patterns in modern day South Africa, to future work.

Our study highlights the need for more truly comparative work on (racial) disenfranchisement to analyze how ideas travelled across different contexts. For good reason, scholarship has focused on the contestation of the franchise in the United States (e.g., Berman, 2015; Kousser, 1974). In the 1890s, “Democrats chose to solidify their hold on the South by modifying the voting laws in ways that would exclude African Americans without overtly violating the Fifteenth Amendment” of the constitution (Keyssar, 2009, 88). They did so using tools including property requirements and literacy tests. The parallels with the Cape Colony are striking yet largely overlooked (Giliomee, 1995). Acting in the same period, Cape politicians also faced constitutional constraints and resorted to similar tools. They drew inspiration from American debates (e.g. Nyika and Fourie, 2020, 462). Introducing the Franchise and Ballot Bill in 1892, Rhodes expanded on the history of suffrage in the United States and Europe, and according to Rotberg (1988, 365) “alarmed” parliamentarians by recounting how in Jamaica the liberalization of voting rights was followed by a rebellion. At the same time, those on the receiving end of voter suppression, too, engaged in international discourse. Dozens studied abroad, including at American colleges such as Wilberforce, Hampton, Lincoln, and Tuskegee, where they encountered intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois (Odendaal, 2013, 251). We hope that our study and dataset help to bring the South African case into comparative work that systematically examines these parallels and influences.

Despite a constitutionally ordained non-racial franchise, racially targeted voter suppression in the Cape resulted in large-scale disenfranchisement with potentially profound and long-lasting electoral and political consequences, ultimately culminating in the majority of the population being stripped of their rights as citizens under apartheid. Over a century later, this history sounds a warning call for modern democracies where the franchise remains contested and elites pursue ostensibly legal voter suppression tactics, often through socioeconomic, spatial, and discretionary levers, not unlike those we document here. Legal guarantees themselves are insufficient for protecting the right to vote. The franchise is a fragile institution, and like democracy itself, it must be jealously, actively, and consciously guarded.

#### A. LEGAL PROVISIONS

1853: The Constitution Ordinance established the Cape Parliament, with a non-racial franchise allowing “every male person” aged 21 or older to vote if they occupied, for twelve months, property valued at £25 or earned a salary of £50, or a salary of £25 if board and lodging was provided (Section 8).

1887: The Parliamentary Voters’ Registration Act extended the vote to newly incorporated territories in the Eastern Cape. Any “communal or tribal occupation of lands or buildings” was excluded from the property qualification. Only when an individual occupied a “house or other building” on such land or elsewhere could this count towards the property qualification (Section 17).

1892: The Cape Franchise and Ballot Act raised the property qualification from £25 to £75 and deleted the possibility to qualify with a salary of £25 if board and lodging was provided (Section 4). It also introduced an “education test” requiring voters to sign their name and to write their address and occupation (Section 6). These changes did not apply to those already registered unless they moved to another fiscal division (Section 3). The blind were exempted from the education test (Section 46). In the former Province of Griqualand West, those with a licence to dig and search for diamonds were entitled to be registered to vote (Section 5). The Act set out fines and imprisonment for voter impersonation (Section 32). Civil commissioners were required to preserve a printed copy of the list of voters on January 1, 1893, to enforce Section 3 of the Act (Section 33). Registering officers were required to underline the names of persons registered to vote under the provisions of Sections 3 or 5 of the Act (Section 34). The Act also required a secret ballot (Section 44).

1894: The Glen Grey Act altered the pattern of landholding in Cape African reserves. Initially targeted at the district of Glen Grey, straddling the electoral divisions of Queenstown and Wodehouse, the provisions of the Act could be extended by proclamation to other parts of the colony “in which the inhabitants are mainly aboriginal natives” (Section 1). The Act excluded individual property ownership on the basis of this Act as a voting qualification, treating it as “communal” for the purpose of Section 17 of the 1887 Parliamentary Voters’ Registration Act (Section 26).

For the period 1894 to 1911, we found nine proclamations that extended the provisions of the Glen Grey Act to 18 other districts, and one that temporarily suspended an extension. Only the first two were in force at

the time the 1903 voter registration was undertaken, which had to occur by the end of February that year (as required by Section 5 of the Registration of Parliamentary Voters' Amendment Act; see below). The relevant proclamations and districts to which they applied are listed below:

- (a) 352 of 1894: Butterworth, Idutywa, Nqamakwe, and Tsomo.
- (b) 319 of 1898: Kentani.
- (c) 152 of 1903: Engcobo, Mount Fletcher, Mount Frere, Mqanduli, Qumbu, Tsolo, Umtata, and Umzimkulu.
- (d) 166 of 1903: Application to Mount Frere suspended.
- (e) 394 of 1903: Willowvale.
- (f) 114 of 1904: Elliotdale.
- (g) 69 of 1907: Mount Ayliff.
- (h) 83 of 1909: St Marks.
- (i) 8 of 1910: Mount Frere.
- (j) 95 of 1911: Matatiele.

1899: The Registration of Parliamentary Voters' Amendment Act, for the first time, required Civil Commissioners to record the “race distinction” of registered voters (Section 19 and schedule B). Civil Commissioners were also required to continue to preserve the January 1, 1893 list of voters as set out in Section 33 of the 1892 Cape Franchise and Ballot Act. Section 7 of the Registration of Parliamentary Voters' Amendment Act allowed registering officers to remove names of deceased or otherwise ineligible persons, and to add those the officer was satisfied qualified. Names added in this way are visible on the 1903 voter roll as the relevant entries lack some information, including the “race distinction.”

1910: Creation of the Union of South Africa joining the Cape Colony, the Natal Colony, the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. The Cape's franchise was maintained, for the time being, but only white men could stand for Parliament.

Sources:

1. Alfred Newth Macfadyen, Ed. (1907). *Statutes, Proclamations, and Government Notices in Force in the Native Territories of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope on the 30th June, 1907*. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers.

2. O'Malley Archive, Racial Legislation 1806-1947.
3. Martin Plaut (2016). *Promise and Despair: The First Struggle for a Non-racial South Africa*. Auckland Park, Jacana. The appendix lists relevant legislation.
4. South African Native Affairs Commission (1905). *Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905*. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited. Annexure 8A contains a map showing the areas "under the influence of the Glen Grey Act".
5. H. Tennant and E. M. Jackson (1906). *Statutes of the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1905*. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers.
6. Stanley Trapido (1964). "The Origins of the Cape Franchise Qualifications of 1853." *Journal of African History* 5(1): 37-54.

## B. CENSUS ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATION

The “General Reports” on the 1891 and 1904 censuses contain Sections discussing the “representation of the people” that analyze the distribution of the population and of voters across different geographies. These discussions are accompanied by related statistical tables. Here, we summarize some pertinent details.

In 1891, the Under Colonial Secretary and Director of the Census, Henry de Smidt, undertook an especially forensic analysis of the composition of registered voters. In his general report (p. xxvi), he lamented that voter registration laws “unfortunately make no provision for any race distinction”, which prompted him to prepare a “very interesting Table” (Table XII, Part XI) that anticipated franchise restrictions legislated in 1892. In this analysis, despite the “race” of voters not being officially recorded on the electoral roll, the 1891 census attempted to break down voters into those that are “European or White” and those that are not. Moreover, de Smidt compared these numbers against figures from the census for the adult male population and those being able to read and write.

De Smidt noted that the number of white voters (68,757) was considerably below the number of white men who were able to read and write (88,081). On the other hand, for people of colour, he calculated that the number of registered voters (21,960) almost perfectly matched the census total for those men being able to read and write (21,998). He went on to analyze registered voters across the 70 fiscal divisions or census districts and concluded that few illiterate white men were among them. However, according to his calculations, the number of registered people of colour was up to six times larger (in Willowmore) than those able to read and write, leading him to conclude that “a large number of [male people of colour] who can neither read nor write are registered” (p. xxvi).

In his report on the 1904 census, the Under Colonial Secretary and Director of the Census, Noel Janisch, also commented on the composition of registered voters. In this case, he was able to draw on the newly required “race distinction” entered on the 1903 voter roll, which distinguished “Europeans”, “Kafirs and Bechuana”, “Fingoes”, “Hottentots”, “Malays”, “Indians”, “Chinese”, and “Other Coloured Persons” (p. xlix). He counted 114,450 white voters (against 165,727 adults who were able to read and write) and 20,727 non-white voters (50,582 able to read and write).

Referring to the above 1891 calculations, Janisch noted declines in the proportions of registered voters, against those classified in the census as able to read and write, from 78.1 to 69.1 percent for white people, and from 99.8 to 41.0 percent for people of colour (p. lii). For the former, he attributed this to significant temporary disenfranchisement due to the offence of High Treason during the recent Anglo-Boer War (1899

to 1902), in particular in the districts of Aliwal North, Barkly East, Colesberg, Hay, Herbert, Kenhardt, and Wodehouse. In Middelburg, he noted, the number of British troops without voting rights distorted the calculation. In the Cape division, he deemed the same problem occurred due to the number of aliens ineligible to vote.

Janisch also pointed out that the number of “Coloured voters” (here used as a term to capture all voters not classified as “European” in the above eight-fold classification) was 1000 higher in the 1891 census than in 1904. Instead of attributing this to the franchise restrictions in the previous decade, this lead him “to doubt the absolute reliability of the figures for the former year, which, indeed, were only submitted in the Report on the Census of 1891, with considerable reservations” (p. lii). In this census round, he only found six census districts with “excess” voters – where the total registered was greater than the census estimate of the number of adults able to read and write. In Glen Grey (317), Namaqualand (69), Stockenstrom (42), and Beaufort West (2), he found an “excess” of “Coloured” voters; in Port Elizabeth (159) and Herschel (1) one of “Europeans”.

In his “Preliminary Report” that preceded the “General Report” on the 1904 census, Janisch commented on the difficulties in making comparisons with 1891. He noted “the regrettable loss” of documentation due to a fire that destroyed the offices of the Registrar-General of Statistics in March 1900, as well as redistricting and boundary adjustments (p. xviii). But he nonetheless appeared satisfied with the results of his calculations, which he deemed “if not absolutely true, at any rate so near an approximation to the truth as to afford a perfectly safe basis of comparison, both as regards population and voters.”

#### Sources:

1. Cape of Good Hope (1892). Results of a Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, as on the Night of Sunday, the 5th April, 1891. Cape Town: W. A. Richards & Sons, Government Printers.
2. Cape of Good Hope (1904). Preliminary Report of the Director of the Census with Detailed Returns of Population and Buildings. Population Enumerated 17th April, 1904. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers.
3. Cape of Good Hope (1905). Results of a Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, as on the Night of Sunday, the 17th April, 1904. Cape Town: Cape Times Limited, Government Printers.

### C. INFORMATION IN THE VOTER ROLL

NOTE:-1. The names of Voters whose Surnames **ARE** printed in italic are inserted under the provisions of the third section of "The Franchise and Ballot Act 1892."  
2. The names of Voters in respect of which no particulars are given in the ultimate and penultimate columns of this List, have been inserted under the provisions of the seventh section of Act No. 48 of 1899, and therefore information in regard to these particulars was not available.

**REGISTRATION OF VOTERS.**

Revising Officer's List of Persons registered as Voters under Section XIX of Act 48 of 1899.

ELECTORAL DIVISION OF WOODSTOCK.

Electoral Roll of Persons qualified to vote for the election of Members of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly for the Electoral Division of Woodstock, of which I am the Revising Officer.

J. W. H. RUSSOUW,  
Revising Officer.

Dated this 25th day of June, 1903.

ELECTORAL DIVISION OF WOODSTOCK: FIELD-CORNETCY OF PAPENDORG (excluding CAMPS BAY PORTION.)

No.	Surname in full.	Christian Name (if any) in full.	Profession, Trade, or other description.	Qualification.	Situation of Property in respect of which qualifi- cation exists, and present address if qualification be not in respect of Property.	(a) Name and Address of Employer in case of Salary or Wages qualification. (b) When qualification is in respect of <i>Occupation</i> state whether occupancy is as owner, tenant or otherwise; and if a tenant, whether as sole or joint tenant.	Race distinction.
1	Akhorakeep	Emaan Henry	Chief Priest Labourer	Occupier Wages	85 Fenton Road Salt River Works	Tenant Sole Cape Government Railways	M
2	Ables						O

Figure A1: Notes at the top explain the italics and missing information

D. EXAMPLE OF VOTERS REGISTERED BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFORMS

ELECTORAL DIVISION OF GRIQUALAND EAST : DISTRICT OF MOUNT FLETCHER : F.C. OF MOUNT FLETCHER.

No.	Surname in full	Christian Names (if any) in full	Profession, Trade, or other description.	Qualification	Situation of Property in respect of which qualification is held, & present address if qualification be not in respect of property.	(a) Name and Address of Employer in case of Salary or Wages qualification (b) When qualification is in respect of Occupation state whether occupancy is as owner, tenant, or otherwise ; and if as tenant, whether as sole or joint tenant.	Race distinction
1349 Havidie	Thomas Smith		Speculator	Householder	Far View	Owner	E
1349 Hedding	Fralphus		Storekeeper	"	Mount Fletcher		E
1350 Hofmeyer	Percy George		Clerk	Salary	"	G. E. Seymour, Mount Fletcher	E
1351 <i>Holder</i>	Joseph		Farmer	Householder	Whiterock	Owner	E
1352 Holmes	Melville		Clerk	Salary	Mount Fletcher	J. Phillips, Mount Fletcher	E
1353-Johnson	Henry J.		"	"	"		
1354-Jones	Leslie M.		"	"	"	J. Macdonald, Far View	E
1355-Kraai	John		Blacksmith	Householder	Lehana's Ward	Owner	H
1356-Lehana	Scanlon		Chief	Salary	"	Colonial Government	K
1357-Lenesse	Africs		Peasant	Householder	"	Owner	K
1358- <i>Lebenya</i>	Mothlomi		Chief	"	Lebenya's Ward	"	K
1359-Lequa	Moses		Interpreter	Salary	Mount Fletcher	Colonial Government	K
1360-Medamo	William		Clerk	"	Setalatuba	W. F. Nelson, Mount Fletcher	E
1361-Medamo			Peasant <sup>2</sup>	Householder	Lehana's Ward	Owner	K
1362-Mofale	David		"	"	Mahikela		K
1363-Motsoaneane			"	"	Kokstad		K
1364-Mofe	Makeng		"	"	Lehana's Ward	"	K
1365-McDonald	James		Clerk	Salary	Zibi's Ward	Zibi's Ward	K
					Paballong	J. Macdonald, Far View	E
1366-McDonald	Donald		Carpenter	Wages	Mount Fletcher	H. Thurman, Mount Fletcher	E
1367-Masua	Isaac		Peasant	Householder	Lebenya's Ward	Owner	K
1368-Morai	Gideon		Teacher	"	"	"	K
1369-Mothlomi	Joseph		Peasant	"	Zibi's Ward	"	K
1370-Mishengu	Pant		"	"	Zibi's Ward	"	K
1371-Newman	John		Storekeeper	"	Mount Fletcher	Joint Owner	E
1372-Newman	Oscar		Clerk	Salary	Mahikela	J. Phillips, Mount Fletcher	E
1373-Nelwala	Walter Frewer		Storekeeper	"	Mount Fletcher	Owner	E
1374-Nketu			Peasant	"	Lehana's Ward	"	K
1375-Vho			"	"	"	"	K
1376-Vo	Johannes		Minister	"	Lebenya's Ward	"	H
1377-Nakin	Dirk		Peasant	"	"	"	H
1378-Nakin	John		"	"	Zibi's Ward	"	K
1379-Nomvete	John		Minister	Salary	Fletcherville	Wesleyan Mission Society	K
1380-Rachell	James H. W.		Storekeeper	Householder	Mount Fletcher	Joint Owner	E
1381-Rachell	Joseph		Peasant	"	Lebenya's Ward	Owner	K
1382-Rayner	William		Farrier	Wages	"	A. F. Payn, Kokstad	H
1383-Sadie	Ezekias		Teacher	Householder	Lebenya's Ward	Owner	K
1384-Sadie			Peasant	"	"	"	K
1385- <i>Sedane</i>	Zibi		Chief	Salary	Zibi's Ward	Colonial Government	K
1386-Sidmane	Johannes		Peasant	Householder	"	Owner	K
1387-Sidney	Philip		Pesant	"	"	"	K
1388-Sidney	George Estcourt		Attorney	Salary	Mount Fletcher	E. W. Daines, Matatiele	E
1389-Teku	Seata		Peasant	Householder	Lebenya's Ward	Owner	K
1390-Tewiki	John		"	"	"	"	K
1391-Turton	William		Clerk	Salary	Good Hope	J. Macdonald, Far View	E
1392-Turton	Charles		"	"	Far View	"	E
1393-Whittle	James Mortimer		Storekeeper	Householder	Kenira	Owner	E
1394-Whittle	Joseph L.		Clerk	Wages	"	J. Whittle, Kenira	E

Figure A2: Names shown in italics were on the roll prior to the 1892 reforms

E. EXAMPLE OF INSERTED NAMES

ELECTORAL DIVISION OF CAPE TOWN: DISTRICT No. 3

No.	Surname in full.	Christian Name (if any) in full	Profession, Trade, or other description.	Qualification.	Situation of Property in re- spect of which qualification exists, or present address if qualification be not in respect of Property.	(e) Name and Address of Employer in case of <i>Salary or Wages</i> qualification. (f) When qualification is in respect of Property, state whether as owner, tenant, or otherwise; and if as tenant, whether as sole or joint tenant.	* Residence.
6	Abrahams	Charles	Driver	Salary	45, Buitengracht street		
7	Abrahams	Dofa	Wagonbuild'r	Householder	1, Bryant street	John Jenkinson, C.T.	E
8	Abrahams	Henry Carl	W.M.Chi'st	Salary	10, Bloem street	Sole Tenant	O
9	Abrahams	Ismail	Mason	Ocemptier	61, Long street		
10	Abrahams	William	Gardener	Salary	64, Dorp street		
11	Abrams	Hadjji Johan	Taylor	"	21, Leeuwen street		
12	Absalon	David	Packer	"	Govt. Stationery Office	Colonial Government	M
13	Adam	Cassan	Salesman		9, Keerom street		
14	Adams	Cassien	Hatter	Ocemptier	Dorp street	Joint Tenant	I
15	Adams	James	Grocer	Salary	126, Long street	Pfahl Bros.	E
16	Adams	Matthew	Groom	Wages	16, Bryant street	T.B.H. Board	E
17	Adams	William	Taylor	Salary	80, Adderley street	Bruce & Co., Adderley street	E
18	Adamson	Charles	Mason	"	16, Pepper street		
19	Adamson	Charles	Cork	"	A.B.C. Corporation	African Banking Corporation Ltd.	E
20	Addinall	John	Call Owner	Householder	100, Longmarket street		
21	Addinall	Richard	Printsp	Salary	52, St. George's street		
22	Adler	William	Taylor	"	80, Adderley street	Bruce & Co., Adderley street	E
23	Adonis	Petrus	Well maker	"	72, Loop street	G. Toucher, 72, Loop street	O
24	Agg	Frank George	Insur'suptn	"	133, Longmarket street		
25	Agron	Louis Francois	Bookbinder	Salary	Longmarket street	Argus Printing Company	E
26	Aimes	George Andrew	Messenger	"	16, Wale street	Walker & Jacobson	E
27	Aimes	James	Cabinet M'k'r	"	105, Longmarket street		
28	Ainsworth	Caleb Alstead	Printer	"	"Cape Times" Office	Cape Times, Ltd.	E
29	Ainsworth	Thomas	Caretaker	"	2, Wale street	Board of Executors	E
30	Aitchison	Alexander	Accountant	Ocemptier	St. George's street	Joint Tenant	E
31	Aitken	Marshall					
32	Aitken	John Fraser	Clerk	Salary	98, Loop street		
33	Aitkens	Louis Edward	"	"	133, Longmarket street	Fairbridge, Arderne & Lawton	E
34	Allred	James Henry	Grocer	"	c/o R. Wilson & Co., Loop street	R. Wilson & Co., Loop street	E
35	Aleck	Alfred	Porter	"	63, Bree street		
36	Alexander	Frank	Cycle Depot	"	2, Wale street		
37	Alexander	Morris	Advocate	Ocemptier	S.A. Chambers,	Joint Tenant	E
38	Allen	John	Constable	Salary	St. George's street		
39	Allen	John William	Clerk	"	Police station Wale street	Colonial Government	E
40	Allen	Joseph Charles	Bookbinder	"	Town House, Cape Town	Town Council	E
41	Allie	Orvel Ellis	Bookseller	"	57, Loop street		
42	Allister	Samuel	Genar. Dealer	Ocemptier	36, Adderley street.		
43	Allwright	Henry Albert	Comstable	Salary	188, Loop street	Joint Tenant	I
44	Allsop	Francis Leigh	Composer	"	Police station Wale street		
45	Alman	Malek Rasool	Hawker	"	74, Loop street		
46	Ambrose	Louis Joseph	Householder	"	148, St. George's street	London & Lancashire Fire Insur.	E
47	Ambrose	Andrea	Occupier		9, Keerom street		
48	Amverali	Castinali	Carpenter	Wages	82, Bree street	Joint Tenant	E
49	Anderson	Alexander	Genar. Dealer	Occupier	Oriental Hotel, Leuwenst.	A. R. Reid & Co. Strand & Rossets.	E
			M'g'r for Mer.	Salary	64, Dorp street	Joint Tenant	I
					98, Adderley street		

Figure A3: Inserted names lack information in the final two columns

#### F. PRE-POST ANALYSES WITHOUT IMPUTED RACES

To demonstrate that our principle conclusions around disenfranchisement are not driven by the imputation of race groups for those whose race was missing, we replicate our pre-post racial analyses excluding those voters. As can be seen in Table A1, the conclusions are extremely similar to those presented in the paper.

Population Group	Pre-#	Post-#	Pre-%	Post-%	Difference pp	T-stat
Black	3127	5978	10.20	6.07	-4.14	21.90
Mixed-Race	3253	6864	10.61	6.96	-3.65	18.84
White	23999	84925	78.30	86.16	7.86	-30.26
Indian	28	355	0.09	0.36	0.27	-10.45
Malay	243	383	0.79	0.39	-0.40	7.43
Chinese	2	62	0.01	0.06	0.06	-6.11
Total	30652	98567	100.00	100.00		

Table A1: Racial Representation on the 1903 Voter Roll, Decomposed by Pre- and Post-Reform Registrants, Excluded Those with Inferred Race Groups

*Note:* This table compares the demographic composition of those registered prior to the 1890s reforms (pre) and those registered after (post). We include a t-statistic for the difference-in-means between the two periods. We have collapsed four Black categories (F, K, H, and B) into one group, for ease of interpretation. This data excludes 6238 voters whose race was missing or unidentified.

## G. IMPUTATION OF MISSING RACE CLASSIFICATIONS

We use a simple library method of imputation for missing race classifications. Our classifications proceed as follows:

1. Segment the full roll into those with recorded race ( $n = 129220$ ) and those with missing race group ( $m = 6237$ ). Those with a missing race group are our “target data.”
2. Focusing just on those with recorded race, we generate a “reference table” of all unique surnames ( $n_{unique} = 31127$ ) and their modal race group, including the frequency of that modal race group.
3. With this reference table of surname-race classifications in hand, we exactly string match the unique surnames ( $m_{unique} = 3601$ ) of those in the missing race group with the reference table. This yields 5004 matches, or 81.7% of the missing race categories.
4. For the remaining 1116 people with an as-yet unclassified race group, we conduct fuzzy string matching between surnames in R using `stringdist::amatch` with `method = 'osa'` and `maxDist = 5`.

While this is a transparent and straightforward approach, it is also imperfect for a number of reasons. Most acutely, because we observe more white people than people of colour in the reference table, it is likely that we will be better able to match (and thus classify) white people in the target data. We would note, however, that this issue is slightly less acute than it first appears, because even though white people make up 84.54% of the 1903 voter roll, focusing on unique surnames reduces that over-representation in the reference table to 68.34% (many white people have the same surname, because large families are often registered).

To assess how sensitive our conclusions are to this issue, we conduct a validation exercise using only those voters for whom we actually know their race classification (i.e., those whose race was included in the roll). We conduct 500 simulations in which we randomly sample 3,000 observations from the 129,220 voters with race classifications present, remove those 3,000 from the reference set, and classify their race (as-if it were missing). We then compare how the inferred races compare to the true races, calculating both the true positive rate (TPR) and false positive rate (FPR). Here the TPR can be understood as the percentage of all people for whom we correctly impute the race, while the FPR can be understood as the percentage of all people whom we have imputed as a particular group where we have made an incorrect imputation.

In general, as shown in Table A2, the method performs reasonably well, with the overall TPR being 91%. However, as expected from the discussion above, the TPR is better for white names (98% TPR) than for Black names (73% TPR), and the method performs particularly poorly for mixed-race (Coloured) names

TPR	TPR (B)	TPR (M-R)	TPR (W)	FPR	FPR (B)	FPR (M-R)	FPR (W)
0.91	0.73	0.40	0.98	0.09	0.18	0.41	0.06

Table A2: Performance of Racial Classification Method

*Note:* This table shows the mean true positive rate (TPR) and false positive rate (FPR) over 500 runs of a validation exercise, in which we sample 3000 voters whose race is known, and classify them.

(40% TPR). The same pattern is true for the FPR – the method is reasonably specific in general (9% FPR), highly so for white names (6% FPR), less so for Black names (18% FPR), and is again much worse for mixed-race names (41% FPR).

We can use these estimated properties of the method to “correct” our main estimates, by up-weighting for any group the % classified by the TPR, and down-weighting by the FPR. Doing this yields extremely similar results to our main conclusions. Taking the % share for Black people from Table 5, which is 1.96%, a “corrected” estimate would be around 2.09%, which is very similar. Of course, the estimates for mixed-race people should be interpreted with extreme caution. We also take some confidence from the fact that our general conclusions are not altered (in fact, they remain almost exactly the same) when making our matching rules stricter, methods which typically decrease the TPR (which is not ideal) but also the FPR, suggesting high FPRs are probably not driving our results.

Population Group	% Shares by Method of Registration:	
	Ordinary	Discretion
Black	7.04	0.72
Mixed-Race	7.82	6.47
White	84.3	91.5
Indian	0.3	0.25
Malay	0.48	1.07
Chinese	0.05	
Unidentified	0	
Total	100	100

Table A3: Racial Representation on the 1903 Voter Roll, Decomposed by Method of Registration – Stricter Sample

*Note:* This table presents the demographic composition of all voters excluding those that were only fuzzy-matched, decomposed by whether they were registered ordinarily (129349 voters) or through local discretion (4870 voters).

A second issue is that there are many surnames that are ambiguous with regard to racial classification. The two primary sources of ambiguity in our approach come from steps (2) and (4) above. In step (4)

we inject potential errors by using fuzzy string matching to find the most likely matching surname in the reference table. A failure to find an exact match is often related to variation or errors in spelling in either the target data or the reference table. However, given we have a non-exhaustive reference table, it is possible we are simply mis-assigning race groups based on bad fuzzy joins.

Population Group	% Shares by Method of Registration:	
	Ordinary	Discretion
Black	7.04	0.47
Mixed-Race	7.82	1.85
White	84.31	96.74
Indian	0.3	0.16
Malay	0.48	0.78
Chinese	0.05	
Unidentified	0	
Total	100	100

Table A4: Racial Representation on the 1903 Voter Roll, Decomposed by Method of Registration – Strictest Sample

*Note:* This table presents the demographic composition of all voters excluding those that were only fuzzy-matched and surnames for which a single race is not at least 90% prevalent. Voters are then decomposed by whether they were registered ordinarily (129325 voters) or through local discretion (3829 voters).

In step (2) we deliberately smooth over variation in race-surnames pairs by taking the modal race group for any given surname in our reference. But this may include cases for which we are not confident in the classification. For example, it could include cases where the modal race group is only 40% prevalent in the data, while the remaining 60% is made up of other race groups.

We include here two replications of the analysis in the main paper using stricter samples of those included via discretion. Essentially, we progressively exclude voters about whom we are more uncertain of their race. In Table A3 we exclude those 1116 people whose surnames were not exactly matched in the reference table, i.e., those for whom we rely on fuzzy string matching. These results are extremely similar to the main results presented in the paper, and if anything suggestive of even greater bias against Black voters.

Our second, even stricter, sample excludes both those 1116 voters for whom we cannot find an exact match, and an additional 1187 voters whose surname, while exactly matched in the reference table, has a modal race group frequency of .9 (90%) or lower – in other words, those for whom we are not particularly confident in our imputation. The results for the remaining 3,939 voters are presented in Table A4. In this case, the results for Black voters are again extremely similar to the main results presented in the paper, if anything suggestive of even greater bias. For mixed-race voters, we now find an equivalent gap (approximately

7pp) between ordinarily registered voters and those inserted. While we would not read too much into this as mixed-race names are often very similar to white names in the South African context, it may be evidence that the field cornets themselves relied on names when injecting racial bias into the registration process. Indeed, once we focus on only mixed-race voters about whom we are highly confident (see Appendix G), the group's share of inserted names drops precipitously.

## H. ELECTORAL DIVISION ESTIMATES

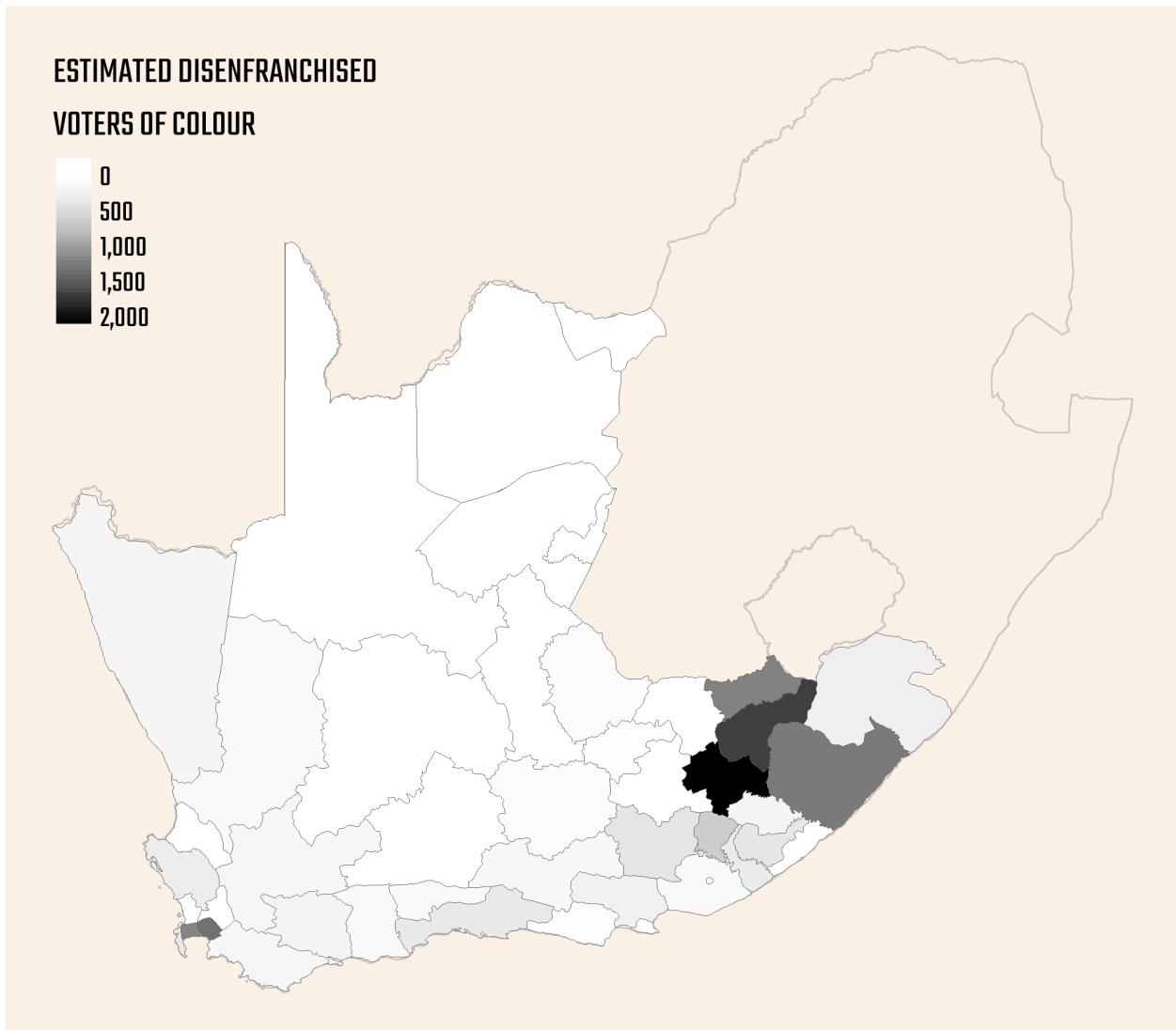


Figure A4: Estimated Disenfranchised Voters of Colour, by Electoral Division.

*Note:* This map shows the estimated number of disenfranchised voters of colour, by the 46 electoral divisions of the Cape.

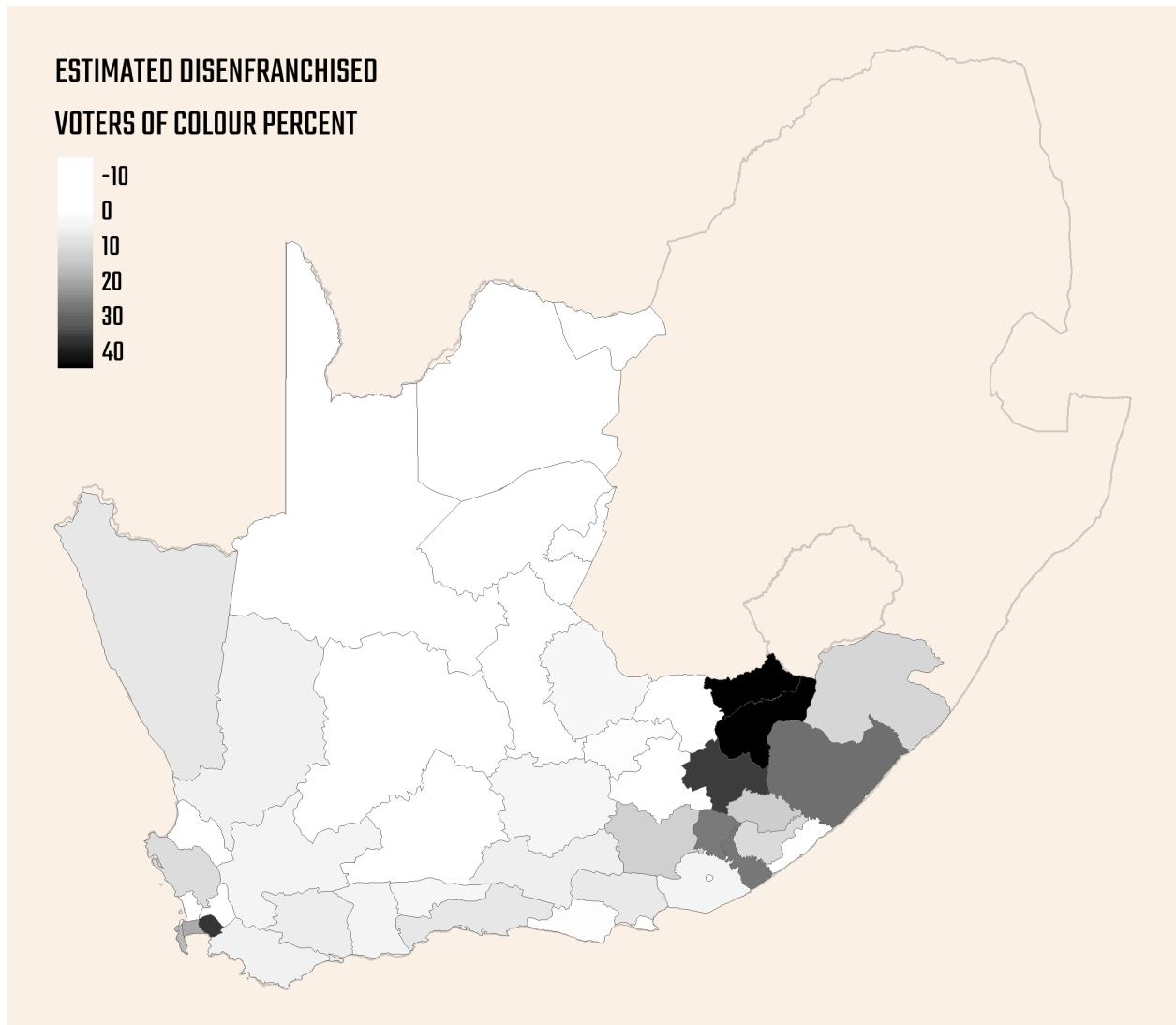


Figure A5: Estimated Disenfranchised Voters of Colour as Percent of Total Registered Voters, by Electoral Division.

*Note:* This map shows the estimated disenfranchised voters of colour as a percent of the total number of counterfactual registered voters (= total in 1903 + disenfranchised estimate), in 1903, by the 46 electoral divisions of the Cape.

Electoral Division	Seats	<u>Disenfranchised:</u>		<u>Margin:</u>		<u>1904 Election Parties:</u>	
		Racial	Rebels	1904	Prog.	Elected	Unelected
Albany	2	80		430	443	Progressive	SAP
Albert	2	-51		353	-371	SAP	Progressive
Aliwal North	2	1166	800	31	50	Progressive	SAP
Barkly West	2	-53	1693	501	556	Progressive	Independent
Beaufort West	2	-113		370	-372	SAP	Progressive
Caledon	2	122		669	-954	SAP	Independent
Cape Town	5	-281		446	4269	Progressive	Independent-Progressive
Cathcart	1	181		129	205	Progressive	Progressive
Clanwilliam	2	89			-883		
Colesberg	2	51		296	-335	SAP	Progressive
Cradock	2	-61			-912		
East London	2	-213		845	860	Progressive	Independent
Fort Beaufort	2	604		27	22	Independent	Progressive
George	3	329		676	-634	SAP	Progressive
Graaffreinet	2	66		50	-884	SAP	SAP
Grahamstown	2	20		293	264	Progressive	Independent
Griqualand East	2	256			562		
Humansdorp	1	9			-443		
Jansenville	2	110			-697		
Kimberley	4	-191		799	1005	Progressive	Independent
King Williams Town	2	344			579		
Mafeking	1	-104			300		
Malmesbury	2	277			-1131		
Middelburg	1	6			-669		
Namaqualand	2	156	271	40	49	Progressive	SAP
Oudtshoorn	2	87		868	-833	SAP	Progressive
Paarl	2	-166		157	-175	SAP	Progressive
Piquetberg	2	-77		78	-782	Independent-Sap	SAP
Port Elizabeth	4	-268		3119	3157	Progressive	Labour
Prieska	1	-166	1027	54	54	Progressive	SAP
Queenstown	2	2075		155	152	Progressive	SAP
Richmond	2	-55		421	-577	SAP	Independent
Riversdale	2	77			-1077		
Simons Town	1	333		326	326	Progressive	Independent
Somerset East	2	376		82	-111	SAP	Progressive
Stellenbosch	2	1279		32	-59	SAP	Progressive
Swellendam	2	171		640	-1341	SAP	SAP
Tembuland	2	1231		129	165	Progressive	Independent
Uitenhage	2	230		137	121	Progressive	SAP
Victoria East	2	295		39	37	Progressive	Independent
Victoria West	2	-10			-834		
Vryburg	2	-133	721		225		
Wodehouse	2	1632	1638	144	161	Progressive	SAP
Woodstock	2	-203		1177	1099	Progressive	Independent
Worcester	3	135			-1387		
Wynberg	2	1152		995	1017	Progressive	Independent

Table A5: Estimated Disenfranchised and Electoral Returns, by Electoral Division

Note: This table shows, for each Electoral Division, our estimate of the number of disenfranchised Black and mixed-race people, the estimated number of disenfranchised Cape Rebels (from Smith (1980, 66)), and both the electoral margin from 1904 and the estimated Progressive vs. Anti-Progressive margin (from Smith (1980, Appendix D, Part 7)).

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