

## The Decline and Aftermath of BDP Partisanship in Botswana

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### Abstract

The collapse in the popular vote for the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in the 2024 elections resulted from short-, medium- and long-term factors. Over the long term, there had been a dramatic decline in the proportion of the electorate who identified with the party. As recently as the early 2000s, Afrobarometer found that about one half of surveyed Botswana said that they felt close to the BDP. This share dropped to about one-fifth by the 2020s. A small part of this was due to generational replacement, as the earlier (and more loyal) generation counted for a smaller and smaller share of the electorate. Most of the decline in BDP partisanship was due to diminishing support within older generations. Some aspects of social and economic change – including urbanisation and the declining significance of agriculture – may have contributed to this. Most of the decline in identification with the BDP was due, however, to worsening assessments of the performance of the party and its leaders. The decline of BDP partisanship means that election outcomes have come to be determined by the votes of non-partisan or independent voters, i.e. voters who do not feel close to the BDP or any of the (then) opposition parties. In the 2020s, few of these non-partisans are swayed by regional, ethnic, or other ‘sociological’ factors. Voting intentions among the rising number of non-partisans correlate with these voters’ assessments of the performance of the president and government and how much they trust the BDP and opposition parties, i.e. with medium-term factors. With reasonable assumptions about short-term effects on turnout and voting preferences, we can simulate the actual 2024 election results.

**Keywords:** partisan identification, Botswana Democratic Party, generational replacement, dealignment, independent voters, turnout

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## **Introduction**

Botswana rejected the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in 2024 because of a mix of short-, medium-, and long-term factors. Short-term factors included the effects of the candidates' and parties' campaigns, primarily on turnout. Medium-term factors included negative retrospective and prospective assessments of the BDP and its leader since 2018, President Mokgweetsi Masisi. In the longer term, the proportion of voters who identified with the BDP had declined steadily over time. This paper examines this long-time decline in partisan identification with the BDP (or what we call 'BDP partisanship') and the factors that replaced this in determining the outcomes of the 2024 elections.

In the first half of this paper, we use data from the 10 countrywide surveys conducted by Afrobarometer from 1999 to 2024 to examine long-term changes in the electorate. We examine the pattern of partisan 'dealignment', and show that this cannot be explained primarily by 'generational replacement'. We briefly consider the effects of social and demographic changes in the electorate. Then we examine the patterns and possible causes of dealignment. In the second half of this paper, we use data from the two most recent Afrobarometer surveys – conducted after the 2019 elections and prior to the 2024 elections – to examine likely influences on the voting preferences of 'independent' voters, i.e. voters who did not identify with (i.e. did not feel close to) any of the country's parties. Finally, we briefly consider how differential turnout probably contributed to the final outcome of the 2024 elections.

It is important to clarify what this paper does not cover. Our focus is on identification with the BDP among voters and, in the aftermath of its decline, the choices of independent voters. We are not concerned with parliamentary representation per se. How votes converted into parliamentary seats depended on, firstly, the design of the electoral system (with the first-past-the-post system benefiting the BDP up to and including 2019 (see Molomo 2006) and, secondly, the multiparty system. Given that opposition parties were rarely united, the multiparty system divided the opposition vote and allowed BDP members of Parliament (MPs) to be elected without an overall majority. This is discussed in the introduction to this volume. Nor are we able to assess the significance of all of the factors that are said to have influenced voters' attitudes towards the BDP. Our analysis is limited by the available data.

## **Partisan Dealignment From the BDP**

The concept of partisanship – or, more precisely, partisan or party identification – has long been central to the study of voting in many

contexts. The concept originated in the work of Campbell *et al.* (1960) in the USA to describe the enduring psychological attachments of American voters to one of the two big American political parties; such attachments were developed by many Americans in childhood or adolescence, and were framed by momentous events such as the Great Depression and Roosevelt's 'New Deal'. American voters sometimes deviated from their long-term loyalties (for example, 'Reagan Democrats' voting for the Republican Reagan)<sup>1</sup> and might even realign in response to a new momentous event (the outstanding example being the realignment of Southern Democrats to the Republican Party in the wake of civil rights reforms; Green *et al.* 2002). In general, however, American voters tend to cast their votes for the candidates standing for 'their party' without close consideration of each individual candidate.

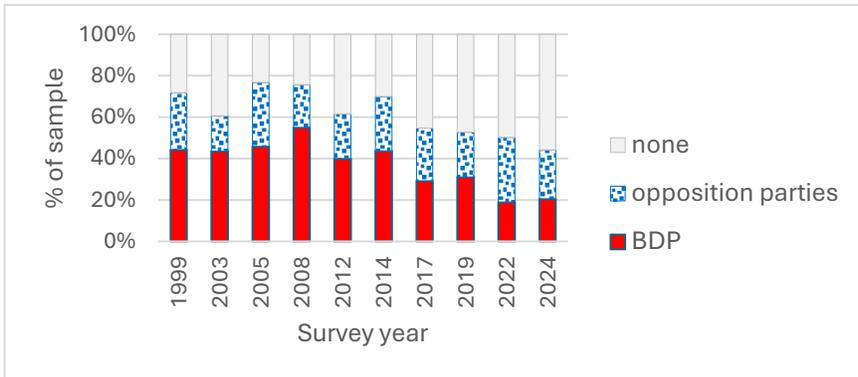
In African countries, there are arguments for and against the relevance of the concept of partisanship (Mattes and Krönke 2020; see also Ishiyama and Fox 2006; Kuenzi and Lambright 2011; Seekings 2020; Jöst *et al.* 2024). Botswana stands out as one country where the concept appears to be very relevant. Most of the parties have long histories and discrete brands. Their activists and supporters have clear partisan identities (with BDP activists and supporters referring to themselves as 'Democrats'). Afrobarometer data suggest that Botswana has one of the highest rates of partisanship in Africa (Kuenzi and Lambright 2011; Mattes and Krönke 2020).

As recently as 2008, more than half of surveyed Botswana said that they felt 'close' to the BDP (see Figure 1), which underpinned the party's comfortable election victory one year later. By 2017, this proportion had dropped to less than one-third. By 2022, survey data suggested that fewer than one in five Botswana were BDP partisans. Figure 1 also shows that reported BDP partisanship was higher prior to an election (i.e. in 2008, 2014, 2019, and 2024) than at other times, but the trend of falling BDP partisanship is clear for both the pre-election surveys (from 2008 to 2014 to 2019 to 2024) and surveys not conducted in the run-up to an election (2005 to 2012 to 2017 to 2022). Partisan identification with opposition parties did not show any clear long-term trend. This, combined with the decline in BDP partisanship, meant that, in 2022, for the first time, more respondents said that they identified with an opposition party than said that they identified with the BDP. Overall, dealignment (i.e. as former BDP partisans became 'independent') was more widespread than realignment

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<sup>1</sup> Christian John Makgala reports that the popular Botswana National Front (BNF) MP for Mochudi East (1994–99, 2004–14), Isaac Mabiletsa, used to claim that 'Madomkraga aga Mabiletsa' (Mabiletsa's Democrats) voted for him.

(i.e. voters becoming opposition partisans). This contributed to considerable instability and uncertainty in elections, as became evident in both 2019 and 2024.



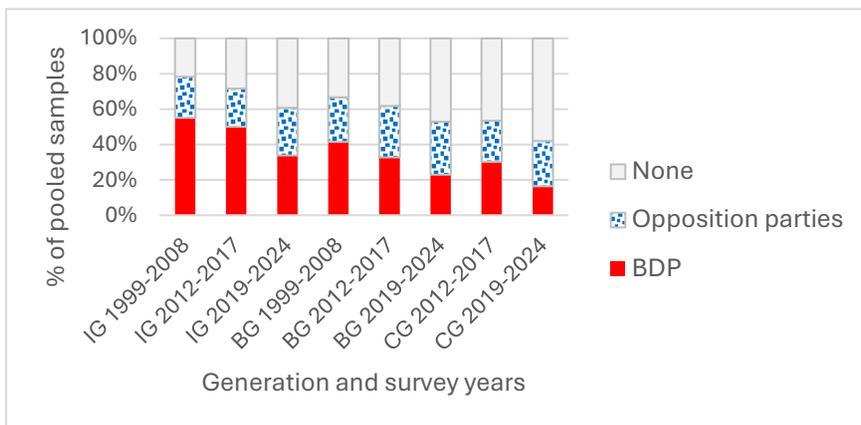
**Figure 1: Partisanship, 1999–2024**

**Respondents were asked:** Do you feel close to a political party? If so, which party?

As is well-documented in the literature on the USA, changes in partisanship can be driven by ‘generational replacement’, as earlier generations shrink over time, and are replaced in the electorate by later generations (Campbell *et al.* 1960; Miller 1992; Dalton 2002). Generational replacement is clearly part of the story in Botswana. Unfortunately, we do not have survey data prior to 1999. Since 1999, identification with the BDP has consistently been highest within the ‘Independence Generation’ (IG), i.e. Batswana born before Independence and socialised then or in the first years thereafter. Identification with the BDP is lower within the ‘Boom Generation’ (BG), who were born between 1967 and 1990 and thus socialised during Botswana’s long economic boom. It is lowest within the ‘Crisis Generation’ (CG), i.e. Batswana born after 1990 and socialised during the period of slower economic growth and political turmoil. Batswana in the Crisis Generation were old enough to vote only from the 2012 survey onwards.

This dealignment (and limited realignment) is shown in Figure 2, which combines the ten rounds of Afrobarometer survey data into three composite periods (1999–2008, 2012–2017, and 2019–2024). The first three columns show dealignment from BDP among the IG across these three periods. The fourth, fifth and sixth columns show dealignment among the BG. The final two columns show dealignment among the CG in the two periods during which Batswana in this generation were old enough to vote. Whilst identification with the BDP declines over time in all three

generations, successive generations start off from lower initial levels of BDP partisanship. By 2019–2024, opposition partisans outnumbered BDP partisans within the Boom and Crisis Generations but not the Independence Generation (see further, Grahl and Seekings 2025).



**Figure 2: Partisanship over time for Independence Generation (IG), Boom Generation (BG), and Crisis Generation (CG)**

Regressing identification with the BDP on generation, age, and survey year (see Table A1 in the Appendix) confirms that the age of the respondent is not significant when we also include generation in the model (i.e. we ‘control’ for generation). Generation has clear effects: Members of the BG were 13–14 per cent less likely, and members of the CG were 18–19 per cent less likely to identify with the BDP than members of the IG. From the 2010s, respondents were less likely to identify with the BDP (controlling for generation and age).

The overall decline in BDP partisanship over two decades (from almost one-half in 1999–2008 to less than one-quarter in 2019–2024)<sup>2</sup> was the consequence of three trends:

1. Generational replacement, as the more BDP-partisan IG accounted for a smaller and smaller share of the electorate (with the BG staying much the same and the CG growing rapidly from 2012),
2. Declining partisanship within the IG (from an average of 55 per cent to 35 per cent in 2019–2024, i.e. 20 percentage points), and
3. Declining partisanship within the BG (from an average of 42 per cent to 24 per cent).

<sup>2</sup> The use of these periods might underestimate the decline given that the final period included two surveys conducted shortly before elections, in 2019 and 2024.

Simple modelling reveals the modest contribution of generational replacement. In the first period, the IG comprised 40 per cent of the electorate and the BG comprised 60 per cent of the electorate. By the most recent period, these generations comprised less than 20 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. Had there been no generational replacement, then BDP partisanship in the 2019–2024 period would have stood at 28 per cent.<sup>3</sup> In reality, the shrinkage of the more partisan IG and the somewhat partisan BG and the growth of the less partisan CG meant that actual BDP partisanship (as measured in Afrobarometer surveys) declined to 24 per cent. Generational replacement accounted for just 4 percentage points of the overall 28 percentage point decline in BDP partisanship, i.e. only about one-seventh.

Most of the overall decline in BDP partisanship over the past 25 years was the result of declining partisanship within the Independence and Boom Generations, not generational replacement. Over these two decades, identification with the BDP declined by 20 percentage points among the IG and by almost this much among the BG. Because the BG was larger than the IG across the 25 years of Afrobarometer surveys, it was declining partisanship within the former that explained more of the overall drop than declining partisanship within the latter (by about 11 percentage points compared to 8 percentage points)<sup>4</sup>.

One would expect BDP partisanship to be stronger, i.e. to increase, among the Boom Generation because the members of this generation grew up and became adults during Botswana's long economic boom, which allowed BDP governments to spend heavily on welfare programmes as well as infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> But the peak of Botswana's economic windfall coincided with chronic factionalism as well as rising corruption scandals that rocked the Masire administration, particularly in the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

If we want to understand the 2024 elections specifically, it is clearly important to understand why fewer members of the CG identified with the BDP. To understand the *changing* electorate, however, the key trend was

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<sup>3</sup> That is:  $(0.4 \times 35) + (0.6 \times 24)$ .

<sup>4</sup> That is:  $(0.6 \times 18)$  compared with  $(0.4 \times 20)$ .

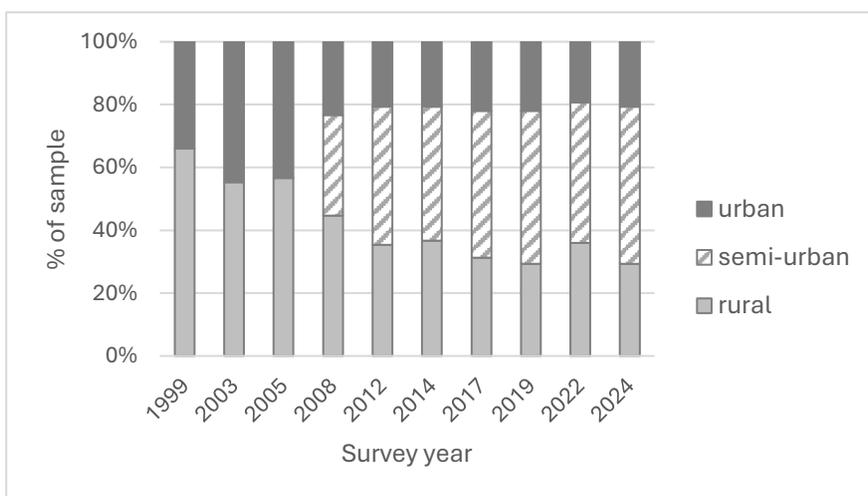
<sup>5</sup> Magang (2008: 475) describes Masire as a 'Santa Claus' of 'free throw away money'. Through a range of new developmental agencies and programmes, 'all you had to do was visit [the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning or Agriculture] and you would come back with a trunk full of seed capital'.

<sup>6</sup> 'Between 1991 and 1994, resulting directly from this high growth, a series of corruption scandals were revealed in key ministries and agencies, and top party and government leaders were seen to have been exploiting their responsibilities' (Good 2017: 115).

declining identification within the older generations, i.e. within the generations that had historically been much more loyal to the BDP and had provided the bedrock of its support.

### Social and Economic Change in the Electorate

In some respects, the electorate changed significantly over the 25 years between 1999 and 2024. Most obviously, the population of Botswana urbanised steadily (Green 2014). The precise levels of urbanisation depend on the definition used. The World Bank reports that the share of the population in urban areas rose from one-half to three-quarters over this period. The rural population was stagnant whilst the urban population doubled from less than one million to close to two million people.<sup>7</sup> The population of the wider Gaborone metropolitan area grew to more than half a million people, primarily through population growth in former villages such as Tlokweng and Mogoditshane (Mphoeng 2021). Fully one half of the national population lives within 100 km of Gaborone. These trends of urbanisation and regional shifts are reflected in Afrobarometer’s samples (see Figure 3).<sup>8</sup> By 2024, less than one-third of its sample was rural and more than two-thirds was urban or semi-urban.



**Figure 3: Composition of survey samples**

<sup>7</sup> World Development Indicators variables SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS and SP.URB.TOTL.

<sup>8</sup> The 1999 sample reportedly comprised 66% rural and 34% urban (see Lekorwe *et al.* 2001), but the dataset codes everyone as urban. Afrobarometer only distinguished ‘semi-urban’ from 2008.

The electorate changed also in terms of education. Adult literacy rates improved significantly from 34 per cent in 1991 to 88.6 per cent in 2014 (Statistics Botswana 2016). In 1999, fewer than one in four of Afrobarometer's respondents had completed (or gone beyond) secondary school. By 2024, this proportion had risen to more than one half. In 1999, one in three respondents had not completed primary school. By 2024 this proportion had fallen to one in eight. BDP governments have over the years invested heavily in education thereby ensuring high enrolment levels in primary and higher education.

Urbanisation – as well as the government's practice of deploying its employees around the country – might explain the modest salience of ethnicity. In Afrobarometer's surveys, most Batswana say that their ethnic and national identities are equally important to them. Very few complain that their ethnics group is discriminated against by the government. As of 2022, a large minority of people reported that their ethnicity was different to that of their mother or father. Afrobarometer surveys suggest that almost no one cares about having neighbours from different ethnic groups.

Attitudes on some issues appear to have changed. For example, Batswana voice strong support for women having equal rights to work and to own land. There is also wide agreement that girls and women now enjoy broadly equal opportunities.

Attitudes on some other issues have not changed. There is a striking continuity in support for *dikgosi* (chiefs or traditional leaders). There was also very little support for abolishing *bogosi* (chieftainship), although very few Afrobarometer respondents wanted traditional leaders to have more power. Most respondents said that they trusted traditional leaders 'a lot' or 'somewhat', with an unchanging minority saying that they did so 'not at all' or 'only a little'. There was also steady and strong support for the *kgotla* system (i.e. village assemblies presided over by the chief or headman). Batswana also remain religious. More than half attend services or practice religion at least once per week.

Batswana showed a consistently high level of political engagement. In 1999, very few respondents could name the Minister of Finance, but three-quarters correctly named their MP and one half correctly named their ward councillor. The proportion who correctly named their MP remained the same in 2005 and 2008. In 2008, one half named correctly the Minister of Finance. The proportion of Batswana who discuss political matters with friends and family has declined very slightly, but as of 2024 about one in five said that they did so frequently, two in five replied 'occasionally' and two in five said that they never did so.

There was a striking shift in where people got news. Fewer people get the news from the radio or newspapers, and more people get the news

from social media and the internet. By 2024, people got the news more often from social media than from the radio, whilst very few people got the news from newspapers. This is consistent with Masilo and Seabo's (2015) findings regarding the increasing use of social media by Batswana.

### **Who Has Ceased Identifying with the BDP?**

Over the 25 years for which the data are available, the profile of BDP partisans has shifted significantly. The historic heartland of the BDP was Central District (the colonial 'Ngwato Reserve' or Gammangwato), especially among Bangwato.<sup>9</sup> In the period 1999–2008, more than half of Afrobarometer's respondents in Central District were BDP partisans (see Table 1). In the same period, more than half of respondents who self-identified as Bangwato were BDP partisans. Some of the other ethnic groups in or on the periphery of Central District were also significantly more likely to be BDP partisans than the average Motswana. For example, 53 per cent of Bakalanga and 60 per cent of Batswapong were BDP partisans.<sup>10</sup> By the 2019–2024 period, the proportion of BDP partisans had dropped dramatically to 22 per cent in Central District (or the former Central District after 2022), 18 per cent among Bangwato, and only slightly more among Bakalanga and Batswapong. The proportions identifying with one or other opposition party did rise. In every category shown in Table 1 (i.e. Bangwato, Bakalanga, Batswapong, and Central District), opposition party partisans outnumbered BDP partisans in the period 2019–24. But most of the increase was among non-partisans.

Table 1 suggests that the timetable of declining BDP partisanship might have varied. The decline among Bakalanga and Batswapong was rapid from the first to the second and third periods. Among Bangwato, there was some decline by 2012–2017 but the decline was much more rapid thereafter (i.e. by 2019–2024). Whilst there was some dealignment from the BDP under Ian Khama's presidency (i.e. between the first and second periods), it was far more rapid among Bangwato and in Central District under Masisi (i.e. between the second and third periods).

Given the importance of generation in partisanship, it is unsurprising that the mean age of a BDP partisan was consistently higher than the mean ages of either opposition partisans or non-partisans. In terms of sex and location, women were more likely to identify with the BDP than

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<sup>9</sup> Not all Bangwato lived in the then Central District. In Afrobarometer's surveys in aggregate, one-third of Bangwato lived outside the District.

<sup>10</sup> In Afrobarometer's surveys, in aggregate, one-third of Batswapong and one half of Bakalanga lived outside the Central District.

men, and rural residents were more likely to do so than people in urban areas.

These patterns are broadly confirmed by regression analysis. Table A2 (in the Appendix) reports the results of multivariate probit regression models (reporting marginal effects) comparing BDP partisans with opposition partisans and non-partisans, for each of the three periods considered above. The results show that being in the Boom and (particularly) Crisis Generations reduced the probability of being a BDP partisan in every period (noting again that the CG was too young to be included in the first period). Both living in a rural area and trusting traditional leaders had consistently positive effects on the probability of BDP partisanship. Observers point to the near total identification of the rural Tswana majority with the BDP in the early years as the source of the party's strength (Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe 2013). Being a Mongwato or a Mokalanga had a positive effect in the first period but not the middle period; being a Mongwato had a borderline significant negative effect on BDP partisanship in the third period, presumably reflecting Ian Khama's opposition to Masisi's BDP (Ookeditse 2021; Seabo and Nyenhuis 2021; Seabo and Gaobolae 2024). Controlling for these other variables, living in the Central District did not have a statistically significant effect in two of the three periods. Being male ceased to have a statistically significant effect in the third period. Lived poverty had a borderline significant and positive effect on BDP partisanship in the middle period only.

The shifting relationship between being a Mongwato and identifying with the BDP is consistent with the explanation that a chunk of BDP partisans defected when Khama broke with Masisi and formed the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF) in 2019. The Afrobarometer surveys in 2022 and 2024 suggest, however, that few of these voters became BPF partisans, i.e. they did not report that they were close to the new party. It seems likely that Khama's disaffection and then defection served to accelerate dealignment from the BDP, but the BPF did not immediately establish strong loyalties among Bangwato voters. This is broadly consistent with the analysis elsewhere in this volume of the BPF (Seekings 2025).

Perhaps most importantly, these models explained very little of the variation in the dependent variable, i.e. these sociological variables had very modest if any effects on the probability of being a BDP partisan. This is a striking contrast with models of partisanship and voting preferences in countries such as Zambia, where region and ethnicity are important (Seekings 2020).

**Table 1: Partisanship in Central District and selected ethnic groups**

Period	Partisanship	Ethnic group			
		Ngwato	Kalanga	Tswapong	Central District
1999–2008	<b>BDP partisan (%)</b>	55	53	60	53
	<b>Opposition partisan (%)</b>	21	24	17	22
	<b>Non-partisan (%)</b>	24	23	22	25
	<b>Total (%)</b>	100	100	100	100
2012–2017	<b>BDP partisan (%)</b>	44	39	38	46
	<b>Opposition partisan (%)</b>	23	24	26	22
	<b>Non-partisan (%)</b>	34	37	36	32
	<b>Total (%)</b>	100	100	100	100
2019–2024	<b>BDP partisan (%)</b>	18	23	22	22
	<b>Opposition partisan (%)</b>	29	25	30	27
	<b>Non-partisan (%)</b>	54	52	48	51
	<b>Total (%)</b>	100	100	100	100

*Source:* Afrobarometer surveys and the authors’ analysis.

### **Why Have Voters Ceased to Identify with the BDP?**

The reasons for declining BDP partisanship appear to include both structural factors (most obviously, the effects of urbanisation on political socialisation) and changing assessments of the performance of the BDP and its leaders (Seabo and Molebatsi 2017; Seabo and Nyenhuis 2021; Makgala 2025). Understanding the causes of partisanship – or its decline – using cross-sectional survey data is notoriously difficult given the uncertainty over the direction of causation. For example, if partisans assess positively the performance of their party’s leader, is this why they identify with the party or might it be because long-term partisans are automatically well-disposed towards their party’s leader? It is important to bear this uncertainty in mind when we consider changing correlations between BDP partisanship and other variables measured by Afrobarometer.

In this section we consider correlations over time between voters’ assessments of the performance of the government and president, and BDP partisanship. We focus on three variables: how well the government has performed in managing the economy, how well it has performed in terms

of job creation, and how well the president has performed. All three variables are measured using an index with possible values from -2 to +2.

There are other factors that are likely to have affected identification with the BDP. These include factionalism (culminating in splits and the formation of new parties in both 2010 and 2019) and corruption (Seabo and Molefe 2024). The history of BDP factionalism has been researched extensively by other scholars (including Molomo 2000; Sebudubudu and Osei-Hwedie 2010; Maundeni and Lotshwao 2012; Poteete 2012; Maundeni and Seabo 2013; Ookeditse 2021; and Lotshwao and Tumedisso 2024). The 2010 split might have been a factor in the decline in identification with the BDP between 2008 and 2012 (see Figure 1). The 2019 split contributed significantly to the decline in identification from early 2019 (also see Figure 1 and see further below). Unfortunately, there were no data that allow for identifying precisely what role perceived factionalism played in the decline in BDP partisanship over time. The Khama government's perceived abuse of power was a factor in the 2019 elections (Seabo and Nyenhuis 2021) and it is likely that perceived abuses by the Masisi government were a factor in 2024. How precisely these factors contributed to the decline in BDP partisanship and the voting choices of independent voters is not evident in the available data.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on performance assessments by different categories of voters in each of three periods. The data suggest that there is a consistent correlation between partisanship and assessments of performance. Non-partisans are consistently less approving than BDP partisans, and opposition partisans are the most disapproving. Table 2 shows also that even BDP partisans became less approving of performance by the 2020s. In other words, assessments of performance continued to separate BDP partisans from other voters at the same time as assessments became less positive or more negative across the board.

The relationship between assessments of performance and partisanship can be reported in another way. Of the respondents who approved of the BDP's performance on economic management in the first period, one half were BDP partisans. By the third period, this proportion had dropped to less than one third. The trend was similar for approval of performance on job creation and presidential performance. Unemployment rates rose during the Masisi administration whilst allegations of corruption implicated the president and his close family relatives.<sup>11</sup> These are likely to account for the drop in BDP partisanship.

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<sup>11</sup> Corruption implicating Masisi's family was revealed in a court battle between members of his extended family, over the procurement and sharing of a government tender worth millions of pula (Mathala 2024).

**Table 2: Assessments of government performance and partisanship over time**

Assesment	1999–2008				2012–2017				2019–2024			
	BDP partisans	Non-partisans	Opposition partisans	total	BDP partisans	Non-partisans	Opposition partisans	total	BDP partisans	Non-partisans	Opposition partisans	total
Economic management	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.3	-0.1	0.3	0.3	-0.2	-0.5	-0.2
Job creation	-0.4	-0.6	-0.8	-0.5	-0.2	-0.5	-0.9	-0.5	-0.6	-1.1	-1.3	-1.0
Presidential performance	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.8	1.3	0.6	0.3	0.8	0.4	-0.3	-0.9	-0.3

Note: Independent variables measured on a scale from -2 (very negative) to +2 (very positive).

Source: Afrobarometer surveys and the authors' analysis.

**Table 3: Trust and partisanship over time**

Trust in ...	1999–2008				2012–2017				2019–2024			
	BDP partisans	Non-partisans	Opposition partisans	total	BDP partisans	Non-partisans	Opposition partisans	total	BDP partisans	Non-partisans	Opposition partisans	total
President	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.6	1.3	0.5	0.1	0.7	0.3	-0.5	-0.9	-0.4
BDP	0.9	-0.1	-0.5	0.3	1.1	-0.1	-0.5	0.3	0.4	-0.7	-1.2	-0.6
Opposition parties	-0.9	-1.0	0.1	-0.7	-0.8	-0.6	0.2	-0.5	-1.0	-0.8	0.1	-0.6
Traditional leaders	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.5

Note: Independent variables measured on a scale from -2 (very negative) to +2 (very positive).

Source: Afrobarometer surveys and the authors' analysis.

Afrobarometer also asks respondents whether they trust the president, the ruling party (i.e. the BDP) and opposition parties. This can be thought of as a proxy for prospective assessments, i.e. of how voters assess the future performance of the president and party. These variables are also measured using a scale with a minimum value of -2 and a maximum value of +2. We would expect that these assessments would track partisanship closely. Table 3 shows that there is a close correlation between BDP partisanship and trust in the president, trust in the BDP, trust in traditional leaders and (inversely) trust in opposition parties. Worryingly for the BDP, even its own partisans became less trusting of the president and the party in the third period. This negativity was not evident with respect to traditional leaders. The table also shows low levels of trust in the opposition parties, especially among BDP partisans (unsurprisingly) and non-partisans but also (surprisingly) among opposition party partisans, perhaps because the opposition parties were grouped together.

**Table 4: Correlates of BDP partisanship**

Variable	1999–2008	2012–2017	2019–2024
Presidential performance	0.03 (0.01)*	0.07 (0.01)***	0.02 (<0.01)**
Performance on managing the economy	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Performance on job creation	0.02 (<0.01)^	0.02 (<0.01)*	0.02 (<0.01)*
Trust president	0.03 (0.01)**	Not significant	Not significant
Trust BDP	0.1 (<0.01)***	0.09 (<0.01)***	0.07 (<0.01)***
Trust opposition parties	-0.06 (<0.01)***	-0.04 (<0.01)***	-0.05 (<0.01)***
Trust traditional leaders	Not significant	-0.02 (<0.01)*	0.01 (<0.01)*
n	1986	2072	2765
controls	yes	yes	yes
Controls included for gender (male), ethnic identity, location (Central District and rural), and generation. Probit regression reporting marginal effects (with standard errors). *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, ^ borderline significance p < 0.065.			

Source: Afrobarometer surveys and the authors' analysis.

Table 4 reports the results of a probit regression model, regressing BDP partisanship on variables measuring the candidate's and party's past performance and the prospective performance of the various contestants. The models are broadly consistent: Assessments of past and future performance correlate with BDP partisanship, i.e. Batswana who assess positively the past and future performance of the BDP are more likely to be BDP partisans. The decline in BDP partisanship was because voters' assessments of its performance became more and more negative. Loyalty to the BDP was steadily eroded by perceptions of its poor performance. Distrust in opposition parties, however, is consistently an inverse correlate of BDP partisanship.

These models – in contrast to the models including only sociological variables – explain a significant portion of the variation in partisanship.

The diminished appeal of the BDP is reflected in falling partisanship, as more and more members of the Independence and Boom Generations cease to identify closely with the BDP. Discontent is evident in the post-2019 period even among BDP partisans, which raises the likelihood that even BDP partisans might 'defect' and vote for the candidate of another party. Afrobarometer data on such voter defections suggest that they became a significant factor in the most recent period. In the first period, 95 per cent of BDP partisans said that they would vote for the BDP if an election was held 'tomorrow'. This proportion fell slightly to 92 per cent in the middle period. In the most recent period, however, only 84 per cent of BDP partisans said that they would vote for the party's candidate. Seven per cent said that they would not vote, and nine per cent said that they would vote for one or other of the opposition parties. In total, one in six BDP partisans indicated that they would not vote for the party. Whilst the effect of this is small in relation to the dealignment from the BDP, it is a significant factor in the party's diminished performance.

### **The Post-Partisan Electorate**

What replaces partisanship in the post-partisan era? Do independents matter in Botswana's electoral outcomes? In this section, we turn to analyse factors that influence the voting decisions of non-partisans. The electorate in the early 2020s comprised five categories of voters:

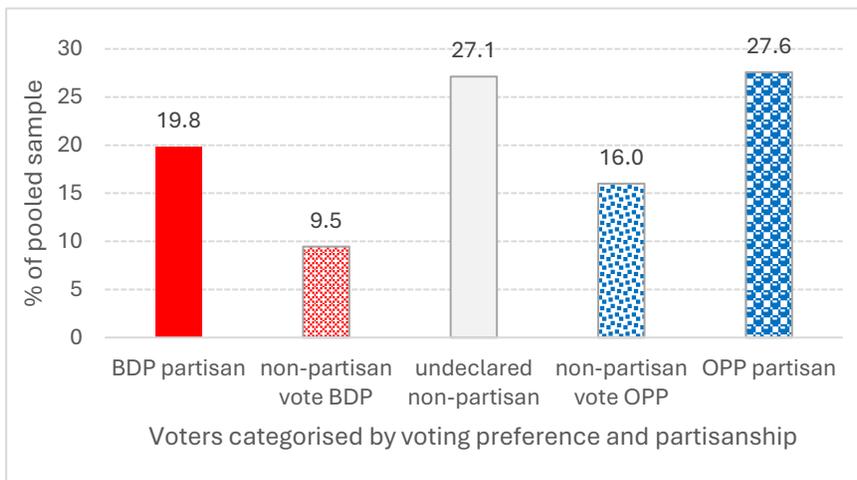
1. BDP partisans, who say that they feel 'close' to the BDP, although some of them might 'defect' temporarily from the BDP to other parties or might not vote,

2. non-partisans who indicated that they would vote for the BDP if elections were held tomorrow,
3. ‘undeclared’ non-partisans who said that they would not vote or did not know for whom they would vote or refused to say who they would vote for,
4. non-partisans who indicated that they would vote for one of the opposition parties if elections were held tomorrow, and
5. partisans for one or other of the opposition parties, who were very likely to vote given the real prospect of a change of government; this is a heterogeneous category, including older and traditionalist Bangwato who follow their *kgosikgolo* (paramount chief), and younger and progressive urban voters who support the Botswana People’s Party or Alliance for Progressives (i.e. the two smaller parties within the Umbrella for Democratic Change).

In most past elections, the high proportion of BDP partisans in the electorate almost guaranteed victory for the BDP. The decline in the proportion of voters who were BDP partisans was accompanied by an increase in the proportion of voters who were partisans of one or other opposition party, but the increase was only a little over one quarter of the electorate. By 2019, both the BDP and the opposition parties (combined) needed to win over non-partisans – i.e. the ‘independent’ voters who identified with none of the parties – if they were to win the elections (Seabo and Nyenhuis 2021). This meant that election outcomes became much more uncertain, with more potential for volatility, as was evident in both the 2019 and 2024 elections. To understand election outcomes, we therefore need to understand how non-partisans view the choices facing them. In this section of the paper, we examine the factors that appear to influence these non-partisan voters. Specifically, we examine why non-partisan voters might vote for the BDP rather than vote for one of the opposition parties or not vote.

The analysis in this section pools data from the Afrobarometer surveys conducted in mid-2022 and mid-2024, i.e. between the 2019 and 2024 elections. This pooling increases the sample size and dilutes any round-specific effect. In the models reported below, we always control for survey round. In the pooled sample from these two rounds, just under half of the respondents were partisans (of either the BDP or one or other of the then opposition parties) and just over half were non-partisans. About one half of the non-partisans expressed an intention to vote for one or other party. The other half of non-partisan respondents – i.e. one quarter of the total pooled sample – were ‘undeclared’ in that they said they would not

vote or that they did not know how they would vote, or they refused to say how they would vote (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Partisanship and voting preference, 2022 and 2024**

Note: OPP denotes any opposition party.

This section focuses on understanding the differences between the 9.5 per cent of respondents who were non-partisan but said that they would vote for the BDP and the 43 per cent of respondents who were also non-partisan but either said that they would vote for one or other opposition party or said that they would not vote or did not know, or they refused to disclose. First, we consider sociological factors, which we find to have limited effects on the preferences of non-partisans. We then consider non-partisan voters' assessments of the past and future performance of the BDP (using the trust variables to measure the latter). We find that there are strong correlations between these and their voting preferences.

### *Sociological Factors*

Sociological factors are important in shaping voters' preferences across much of Africa. Citizens vote along regional and/or ethnic lines in many African countries such as Zambia (Seekings 2020; generally, see Norris and Mattes 2003; Boone 2024). We saw above that there were modest regional effects as well as generational effects on partisanship in Botswana. What effects do sociological factors have on the preferences of non-partisans in Botswana?

**Table 5: Voting intention by sociological category, 2022 and 2024**

Variable		BDP partisans (%)	Non-partisans			Opposition partisans (%)	Total (%)
			vote BDP (%)	undeclared (%)	vote for opposition		
Generation	Independence Generation	28	20	18	10	20	19
	Boom Generation	47	41	41	38	47	43
	Crisis Generation	25	39	41	53	33	37
	Total	100	100	100	101	100	99
Gender	Female	52	49	56	48	43	50
	Male	48	51	44	52	57	50
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Education	Little education	22	19	14	10	18	17
	More education	41	36	26	29	36	33
	Further education	37	45	60	61	46	50
	total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Rural/urban location	Rural	40	41	24	27	36	33
	Semi-urban or urban	61	59	76	73	64	67
	Total	101	100	100	100	100	100
Region	Central	26	23	25	28	31	27
	GKK	33	39	39	36	31	35
	FSP	8	8	13	10	10	10
	North	11	5	9	8	11	9
	Other	23	24	15	18	18	19
	Total	101	99	101	100	101	100
Ethnicity	Ngwato	9	7	13	11	12	11
	Other	91	93	87	89	88	89
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Lived poverty index (mean score)		6.7	5.6	5.7	5.9	7.1	6.3

Note: Some totals do not equal 100% due to rounding off.

Sources: Data from the pooled sample from Afrobarometer's 2022 and 2024 surveys; our analysis.

We ran a series of probit regression models of non-partisan voters in the pooled (two-round) sample to identify the correlates of non-partisans voting for the BDP as opposed to undeclared non-partisans and/or opposition-voting non-partisans. We tested for generation, gender, poverty

(using the Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index, which measures how often respondents experience poverty along five dimensions), ethnicity (self-identified), rural (as opposed to urban and semi-urban) location, and region. For region, we grouped respondents into five regions: Central District; Francistown, North-East, and Selebi Phikwe (labelled FSP below); Gaborone and environs (including Kgatleng and Kweneng, labelled GKK below); the North (comprising North-West, Chobe, and Ngamiland); and 'other' (the west and south of the country). Table 5 shows the sociological composition of each of the five categories of voters identified above. Here, we are primarily interested in the three middle columns showing the sociological composition of the categories of non-partisans: BDP-preferring non-partisans, undeclared non-partisans and opposition-voting non-partisans (bearing in mind that the latter is a particularly heterogeneous category because of the diversity of opposition parties). Table 5 shows only one ethnicity (Ngwato) because none of the other ethnicities was significant. Gender was not significant and is not reported. We have shaded the cells containing data that we consider particularly important.

Undeclared non-partisans were disproportionately female, younger, urban or semi-urban, and better educated. With the exception of gender, these characteristics were associated more with voting for one or other opposition party than with voting for the BDP. These correlations are broadly confirmed in the probit regression models reported in Table A3 in the Appendix. Non-partisans are less likely to vote for the BDP if they are educated, living in an urban (rather than a rural) area, or are living in the north of Botswana. These models including only sociological factors explain some but not much of the variance in the likelihood of voting for the BDP.

### *Performance Variables*

Assessments of the retrospective performance and trustworthiness (or prospective performance) of the political parties (and the president) are far more important correlates of voting intention among non-partisans. Table 6 reports the mean values of the variables for performance assessment and trust. As in previous sections of this paper, these variables have been recoded with values ranging from -2 (for the most negative assessments) to +2 (for the most positive assessments). The government performance variable is a composite of government performance over five economic fields (including job creation and controlling inflation).

**Table 6: Mean scores among different categories of voters, 2022 and 2024**

Variable	BDP partisans	Non-partisans			Opposition partisans	Total
		Vote BDP	Undeclared	Vote opposition		
Presidential performance	0.1	0.3	-0.7	-1.1	-1.1	-0.6
Government performance (composite of five variables)	-0.4	-0.3	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-0.8
Trust BDP	0.2	0.0	-1.0	-1.3	-1.3	-0.8
Trust opposition parties	-1.0	-1.0	-0.8	-0.5	0.0	-0.6

Sources: Data from the pooled sample from Afrobarometer's 2022 and 2024 surveys; authors' analysis.

These data did not favour the BDP. Even its own partisans and non-partisan voters assessed President Masisi's performance as mediocre and the government's performance on economic management as poor. The BDP's own supporters did not appear to have much trust in the BDP. Opposition partisans and non-partisan who would vote for an opposition party were unsurprisingly very negative about the BDP. Undeclared non-partisans were also negative. The only positive aspect for the BDP was that undeclared non-partisans were almost as distrusting of the opposition parties as they were of the BDP.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst this might not mean that they were distrustful of every opposition party, it is likely that undeclared non-partisans were undeclared precisely because they did not view any of the parties positively. The data in Table 6 suggest that undeclared non-partisans were more likely to vote for an opposition party than for the BDP, if they voted.

Including these variables in a multivariate probit regression model generates the expected results (see Table A4 in the Appendix): The intention of non-partisans to vote for the BDP is positively correlated with

<sup>1</sup> There certainly has been distrust between the largest opposition parties, i.e. the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and Botswana National Front (BNF; Whande 2024). At the height of the Umbrella for Democratic Change's (UDC)'s internal struggle before the 2024 elections, the BCP president, Saleshando, claimed that the BNF president, Duma Boko, had described the BNF as the natural leader of the UDC (*ibid*). Saleshando further questioned how the UDC claims to stand for democratic change yet builds anti-democratic values (*ibid*).

positive assessments of the performance of the president and government and with trust in the BDP, and is negatively correlated with trust in the opposition parties. These models fit the data far better than the models including only sociological factors.

The analysis of respondents' assessments of performance and the parties suggests three key findings. Firstly, these assessments appear to be far more important than sociological factors in shaping the voting preferences of non-partisans. Secondly, the undeclared non-partisans appear to hold views much closer to opposition supporters than to BDP supporters. Thirdly, as already discussed above, even BDP partisans and non-partisan BDP supporters appeared to be less than enthusiastic about their president and the BDP, which suggests that some of these people might defect and vote for other parties or might simply not bother to vote.

**Table 7: Modelling non-partisan voting for BDP, 2022 and 2024**

Variable	Compared to undeclared non-partisans	Compared to non-partisans intending to vote for opposition	Compared to all other non-partisans
Independence Generation #	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
Boom Generation #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Crisis Generation #	Not significant	-0.2 (0.09) *	Not significant
Rural #	0.07 (0.03) **	Not significant	0.11 (0.05) **
Central region #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
GKK region #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
FSP region #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
North region #	-0.11 (0.02) **	-0.23 (0.07) *	-0.17 (0.04) **
Presidential performance	0.03 (0.01) ***	0.08 (0.02) ***	0.04 (0.02) **
Government performance	0.04 (0.01) **	0.06 (0.03) ^	0.07 (0.02) **
Trust BDP	0.05 (0.01) ***	0.12 (0.02) ***	0.06 (0.01) ***
Trust opposition parties	-0.05 (0.01) ***	-0.1 (0.02) ***	-0.06 (0.01) ***
n	977	488	668
Controls included for survey round, gender, education, lived poverty, rural/urban location, and ethnicity. # dummy variable.			
Probit regression reporting marginal effects (with standard errors).			
*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, ^ borderline significance p < 0.07.			

*Sources:* Data from the pooled sample from Afrobarometer's 2022 and 2024 surveys; authors' analysis.

### *Integrated Models*

When sociological factors and performance and trust assessments are included in composite models, the performance and trust assessments prove more important. Table 7 reports the key results from these full models. The results for variables that are not significant in any model (such as gender) are not reported.

This confirms the key finding above: Sociological factors might not be irrelevant, but assessments of performance and trustworthiness of the parties are far more important conditional correlates of the voting preferences of non-partisan voters, as Seabo (2023) showed for earlier years. Of the sociological factors, rural location is conditionally correlated with a preference for the BDP, and living in the North region of Botswana, which has become a stronghold of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), reduces the conditional likelihood of preferring the BDP.

### **Differential Turnout and the Actual Election Result**

Discontent with the incumbent president or government, whether because of sociological factors or assessments of performance or trustworthiness, can fuel either support for opposition parties or voter apathy (Lynge and Coma 2022).<sup>2</sup> When citizens do not register or vote, turnout can have a major effect on election results – as candidates know very well and therefore invest considerable effort and resources into boosting turnout among their supporters. If supporters' turnout rates differ between the various parties, then these rates can have a significant effect on the election results.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) reports that, out of the 1,038,275 voters registered for the 2024 elections, 845,318 voters participated in the elections (IEC 2024: 38). It stated during its registration campaign that there were 1.7 million eligible voters. This gives overall turnout as a proportion of the eligible population (i.e. not of only those citizens who registered) of a whisker under 50 per cent. Put simply, one half of the citizens of Botswana who were eligible to vote did not do so in 2024.

We have no data on precisely who did or did not vote. The IEC has data on who voted by area, gender and age, but, given that how someone voted is secret, there is no way of matching the data on turnout with the

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<sup>2</sup> Lynge and Coma show that economic growth has a positive effect on voter turnout, which is consistent with the 'withdrawal' hypothesis. Hirschman (1970) posits that, when people are discontent, they can either 'voice' their discontent or 'exit' (for example from the electoral arena).

election result. Even if we had a post-election survey asking Batswana whether they voted in 2024, we know from previous Afrobarometer surveys that the proportion of respondents who said that they had voted is much higher than the actual turnout that is reported by the IEC. Given this, we can only guess at differential turnout rates in order to map the preferences reflected in Afrobarometer's surveys from 2022 and mid-2024 onto actual election results.

The IEC data suggest that turnout (as a percentage of the eligible voting population, EVP, not simply as a percentage of registered voters) was just under 50 per cent. This means that, of the EVP, 15 per cent voted for the BDP and 35 per cent for the opposition parties. This is the result that we want to reproduce through modelling voting preferences and differential turnout.

We must also acknowledge that Afrobarometer surveys, like almost any such survey, never get an entirely representative sample of the population. There are always some people who are very unlikely to be included in the sample. It is reasonable to assume that turnout in elections within this group is very low. In Table 8 we assume (arbitrarily but, we think, plausibly) that this category comprises 10 per cent of the eligible voting population.

The simulation reported in Table 8 is consistent with the actual 2024 election outcome and seems to us to be plausible. In summary:

- BDP partisans make up 20 per cent of the pooled Afrobarometer sample and 18 per cent of the EVP: Our simulation suggests that 70 per cent might have voted for the BDP, 5 per cent might have voted for opposition parties and 25 per cent did not vote.
- BDP-voting non-partisans make up just under 10 per cent of the pooled Afrobarometer sample and just under 9 per cent of the EVP: Our simulation suggests that 35 per cent might have voted for the BDP, 5 per cent might have voted for opposition parties and 60 per cent did not vote.
- Undeclared non-partisans make up 27 per cent of the pooled Afrobarometer sample and 24 per cent of the EVP: Our simulation suggests that 15 per cent might have voted for opposition parties and 85 per cent did not vote.
- Opposition-voting non-partisans make up 16 per cent of the pooled Afrobarometer sample and 14 per cent of the EVP: Our simulation suggests that 60 per cent might have voted for opposition parties and 40 per cent did not vote.
- Opposition partisans make up 28 per cent of the pooled Afrobarometer sample and 25 per cent of the EVP: Our simulation suggests that 85 per cent might have voted for opposition parties and 15 per cent did not vote.

**Table 8: Simulating the 2024 election outcome**

Partisanship	Adjusting the share of Eligible Voting Population (EVP)			Voting in row as % of row				Votes as % of EVP			
	Share of EVP (%)	Share of Afrobarometer sample (%)	Adjusted share of EVP (%)	Vote for BDP	Vote for Opposition	Not vote	Total	Vote for BDP	Vote for opposition	Not vote	Total
	1	2	3=1*2	4	5	6	7	8=3*4	9=3*5	10=3*6	11=8+9+10
Unsampled	10	0	10	0	0	100	100	0	0	10	10
BDP partisans	90	19.8	17.82	70	5	25	100	12.5	0.9	4.5	17.8
Pro-BDP non-partisans		9.5	8.55	35	5	60	100	3.0	0.4	5.1	8.6
Undeclared non-partisans		27.1	24.39	0	15	85	100	0	3.7	20.7	24.4
Pro-opposition non-partisans		16	14.4	0	60	40	100	0	8.6	5.8	14.4
Opposition partisans		27.6	24.84	0	85	15	100	0	21.1	3.7	24.8
Total in simulation	100	100	100					15.5	34.7	49.8	100
Total in reality								15	35	50	100

We must emphasise that this is a simulation. The purpose is to reveal the probable importance of differential turnout as well as the distribution of vote preferences. The BDP's 30 per cent of the vote can only be explained if turnout among its own supporters (including even its partisans) was much lower than turnout among opposition supporters.

### **Conclusion**

This paper locates the defeat of the BDP in the 2024 general election in the longer history of declining voter identification with the party. As recently as the early 2000s, Afrobarometer found that about one half of surveyed Batswana said that they felt close to the BDP. This share had dropped to about one-fifth by the 2020s. A small part of this was due to generational replacement. The generation born prior to or at the time of Independence (who were more loyal to the BDP) comprised a shrinking share of the electorate whilst the generation born after 1990 (who had no such loyalty) comprised a growing share. But most of the decline in BDP partisanship was due to diminishing support within the generations born before 1990. Some aspects of social and economic change – including urbanisation and the declining significance of agriculture – may have contributed to this. Most was due, however, to worsening assessments of the performance of the party and its leaders. Survey data allow us to show the effects of voters' assessments of BDP governments' management of the economy and voters' assessments of successive BDP presidents. The data do not allow us to identify the effects of perceived factionalism or corruption or conflict within the BDP. The sharpest decline in BDP partisanship, however, followed the split between Khama and Masisi, so it is likely that this played an important role.

The decline of BDP partisanship means that election outcomes have come to be determined by the votes of non-partisan voters, i.e. voters who do not feel close to the BDP or any of the (then) opposition parties. In the 2019 elections, many of these swung behind Masisi and the BDP in protest against Khama. In the 2020s, some of these non-partisans were swayed by regional, ethnic, or other sociological factors, but voting intentions among the rising number of non-partisans correlate much more closely with these voters' retrospective assessments of the performance of the president and government and how much they trust the BDP and opposition parties (which might be viewed as a form of prospective assessment). If the 2019 elections were a referendum on Khama, then the 2024 elections became a referendum on Masisi and his government's performance.

The lack of comparable longitudinal analysis of voters elsewhere in Africa makes it difficult to assess whether the case of the BDP in Botswana

is unique, unusual, or typical. The fact that Botswana had a generally stable party system from the 1960s until the late 2010s suggests that partisan identification might have been unusually pronounced and widespread for an unusually long time after Independence. Partisan dealignment was driven in significant part by the tumult in the BDP under and after the Ian Khama presidency and the ensuing collapse of support for the BDP in the Central District. By the 2020s, neither ethnicity nor region have had as much significance in Botswana as they do in many other African countries. Voters in Botswana, wherever they live and however they self-identify, appear to vote primarily according to their retrospective and prospective assessments of the political parties. That said, the BCP and BPF appear to be in the process of becoming institutionalised as primarily regional parties. It is unclear whether the elections of 2024 marks a stable new multiparty system or whether it was a moment in an ongoing period of instability and flux.

Dealignment is reflected in differential turnout. With reasonable assumptions about turnout and voting preferences, we simulated the actual 2024 election results, showing how differential turnout (and limited defections) combined with voters' preferences to shape the overall results. Overall, the BDP's defeat in the 2024 elections can be attributed to its shrinking base of loyal (partisan) supporters, rising discontent over its performance, and campaign effects, particularly on turnout.

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**Appendix: Supplementary Tables**

**Table A1: Multivariate probit regression of identification with the BDP on generation, age, and survey year**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient (dF/dx)</b>	<b>Standard error</b>	<b>P &gt;  z </b>
Independence Generation	omitted		
Boom Generation	-0.14	0.01	0.000
Crisis Generation	-0.19	0.01	0.000
Age	-0.00	0.00	0.563
Surveys 1999–2008	omitted		
Surveys 2012–2017	-0.06	0.01	0.000
Surveys 2019–2024	-0.19	0.01	0.000
Probit regression, reporting marginal effects; n = 11,998; pseudo r <sup>2</sup> = 0.05			

Table A2 reports the results of multivariate probit regression models (reporting marginal effects) comparing BDP partisans with opposition partisans and non-partisans, for each of the three periods 1999–2008, 2012–2017, and 2019–2024. The model also includes a variable that measures trust in traditional leaders. This variable has values from a possible minimum of -2 (don't trust them at all) to a possible maximum of +2 (trust them a lot). The models also include the Afrobarometer variable LPI for 'Lived Poverty Index'. This is a measure of respondents' experience of poverty in terms of access to health care, cash income, and so on. A high score on the LPI suggests a high level of poverty.

**Table A2: Correlates of BDP partisanship over time**

Variable	1999–2008	2012–2017	2019–2024
Independence Generation #	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
Boom Generation #	-0.14 (0.02) ***	-0.13 (0.02) ***	-0.09 (0.02) ***
Crisis Generation #		-0.12 (0.03) ***	-0.14 (0.02) ***
Male #	-0.06 (0.02) **	-0.11 (0.02) ***	Not significant
Central District #	Not significant	0.09 (0.02) ***	Not significant
Rural #	0.04 (0.02) ^	0.11 (0.02) ***	0.05 (0.02) **
Ngwato #	0.13 (0.04) **	Not significant	-0.05 (0.02) ^
Kalanga #	0.12 (0.04) **	Not significant	Not significant
Tswapong #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Trust traditional leaders	0.03 (0.01) ***	0.03 (0.01) ***	0.03 (0.00) ***
Lived Poverty Index	Not significant	<0.01 (<0.01) ^	Not significant
n	2,323	2,325	3,465
Probit regression reporting marginal effects (with standard errors) *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, ^ borderline significance p < 0.065 # binary variable			

**Table A3: Sociological factors and intention to vote for BDP among non-partisans**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Compared to undeclared non-partisans</b>	<b>Compared to non-partisans intending to vote for opposition</b>	<b>Compared to all other non-partisans</b>
Independence Generation #	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
Boom Generation #	Not significant	-0.12 (0.06) ^	Not significant
Crisis Generation #	Not significant	-0.2 (0.07) **	Not significant
Female #	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
Male #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Little education #	Dropped	Dropped	Dropped
More education #	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
Further education #	-0.09 (0.04) *	-0.13 (0.07) ^	-0.12 (0.05) *
Lived poverty index	-0.01 (0.00) *	-0.01 (0.00) *	Not significant
Rural	0.1 (0.03) ***	0.15 (0.05) **	0.14 (0.04) ***
Central region	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
GKK region	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
FSP region	Not significant	Not significant	-0.11 (0.04) *
North region	-0.11 (0.03) **	Not significant	-0.16 (0.04) **
Ngwato ethnicity	Not significant	Not significant	Not significant
n	1,259	610	875
Controls included for survey round. # dummy variable Probit regression reporting marginal effects (with standard errors) *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, ^ borderline significance p < 0.07			

**Table A4: Correlates of intention to vote for BDP among non-partisans**

Variable	Compared to undeclared non-partisans	Compared to non-partisans intending to vote for opposition	Compared to all other non-partisans
Presidential performance	0.03 (0.01) **	0.08 (0.02) ***	0.04 (0.01) *
Government performance	0.05 (0.01) ***	0.07 (0.03) *	0.09 (0.02) ***
Trust BDP	0.05 (0.01) ***	0.13 (0.02) ***	0.06 (0.01) ***
Trust opposition parties	-0.06 (0.01) ***	-0.11 (0.2) ***	-0.07 (0.01) ***
n	979	489	670
Pseudo r-squared	0.19	0.29	0.17
Controls included for survey round			
Probit regression reporting marginal effects (with standard errors)			
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05			