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Voting preferences among Zambian voters ahead of the August 2021 elections

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Abstract

Afrobarometer survey data collected at the end of 2020 suggest that there has been some erosion of support for incumbent President Edgar Lungu and the governing Patriotic Front since the 2016 elections and the previous Afrobarometer survey, conducted in April 2017. This erosion of support seems to be widespread, among both urban and rural voters. A large minority of voters – much larger than in previous surveys – declined to declare who they would vote for if elections were held. Most of these 'undeclared' voters are dissatisfied with the country's economic performance under the present government. In the absence of a shift in voters' attitudes and preferences during the election campaign, it seems likely that Lungu and the Patriotic Front will perform much more weakly in the elections scheduled for August 2021 than in preceding elections. In 2016 the government sought to tilt the election results in its favour. If the incumbent and his governing party are defeated, and they leave office, this will mark the third turnover in government in Zambia, following previous turnovers in 1991 and 2011.

Introduction

Zambian voters are expected to go to the polls on 12 August 2021 to elect a president, MPs and local councillors. There will be two significant presidential candidates: The incumbent, Edgar Lungu, of the Patriotic Front (PF) and Hakainde Hichilema of the opposition United Party for National Development (UPND). In both the 2015 presidential by-election and the 2016 presidential election, Lungu narrowly defeated Hichilema. Since 2016 the economy has slid into a recession, public finances are a mess and the government has resorted to a series of stratagems to harass or constrain the opposition.

Afrobarometer surveyed voters in Zambia in late November and December 2020, with a total of 1200 interviews completed in 109 (out of the total of 156) parliamentary constituencies across all ten provinces. The results point to continuing dissatisfaction with the government's economic management and suggest that there has been some erosion of support for the governing PF since

the 2016 elections and the previous Afrobarometer survey, conducted in April 2017. This erosion of support seems to be widespread, among both urban and rural voters. This decline seems to have been driven by dissatisfaction with the country's economic performance.

This Working Paper examines the Afrobarometer survey data from late 2020. It comprises three sections. The first section (by Jeremy Seekings) examines the national picture. The second section (also by Jeremy Seekings) examines the picture in the four largely rural provinces in the north and east of the country that were strongholds of the governing party in the last election. The final section (by Hangala Siachiwena) examines the picture in the urban areas (Lusaka and the Copperbelt), where the incumbent PF also won strongly in 2016.

Part 1: The National Picture

Afrobarometer asks two sets of questions about partisan preferences. The questions 'Do you feel close to any particular political party?' (Q91A) and (if so) 'which party is that?' (Q91B) are widely understood as tapping into some form of enduring 'partisan identification', although precisely what this means is not clear. At the very end of the interview, respondents are asked, 'If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?' (Q99). In the 2020 Afrobarometer survey almost no voters named any party besides the governing PF and the opposition UPND. The two sets of questions therefore allow us to identify five categories of voters:
- voters who identify with the PF;
- voters who do not identify with the PF but say that they would vote for it;
- voters who identify with the UPND;
- voters who do not identify with the UPND but say that they will vote for it;
- all other 'undeclared' voters (including voters who say they don't know or who refuse to answer either question).

Figure 1.1 shows the proportions of voters in various provinces in each of the above five categories, for the 2017 and 2020 Afrobarometer surveys. Figure 1.1 also reports the results of the 2016 elections (as proportions of the valid votes cast, i.e. ignoring non-voters). The provinces are clustered into four groups: the four predominantly rural provinces that were PF strongholds in 2016 (i.e. Luapula, Northern, Muchinga and Eastern Provinces, or 'LNME' provinces); the two heavily urban provinces (Lusaka and the Copperbelt, or LCb); the three largely rural provinces that were UPND strongholds in 2016 (i.e. Southern, Western and North-Western Provinces, or SWNW); and Central Province, which was the most evenly balanced province in 2016. Figure 1.1 also shows the proportions for Zambia as a whole.

Figure 1.1 shows that a substantial proportion of PF identifiers and voters from 2017 have shifted by 2020 into reporting that they are no longer close to any party and either refuse to report their voting intention or declare that they don't know who they would vote for. This apparently dramatic decline in support for the PF is evident in its former rural strongholds (the LNME provinces), urban strongholds (the LCb provinces) and Central Province. It is not evident in the UPND's strongholds (the SWNW provinces), where support for the PF was very low in the 2016 elections and both subsequent surveys.

Figure 1.1: Partisan preference by provincial cluster: 2016 election, 2017 survey and 2020 survey (%)
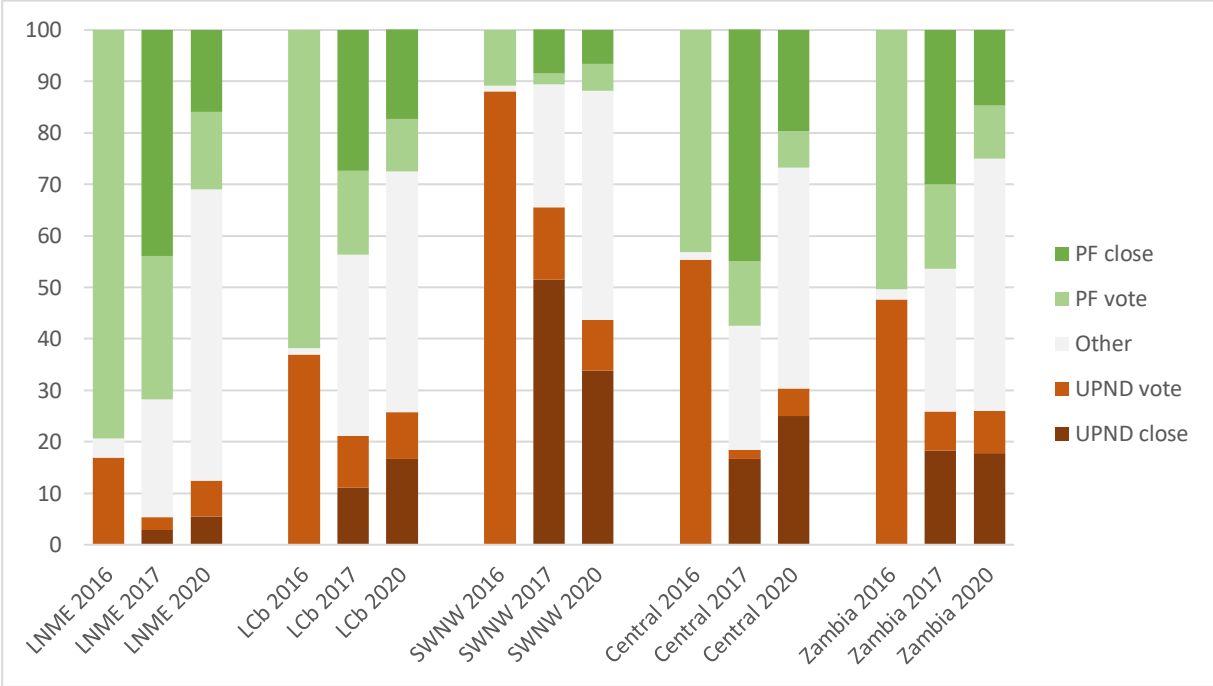
At the same time, the survey provides only limited evidence of a swing from the PF to the UPND. Support for the UPND does seem to have grown somewhat between 2017 and 2020 in the PF's rural and urban strongholds as well as in Central. In its own strongholds, however, stated support for the UPND declined between 2017 and 2020, with the result that stated support for the UPND across the country as a whole has not changed.

These data appear to suggest that former PF voters have become undeclared voters, without declared attachments to either party. This could be because they have grown disaffected from the governing party, without embracing the UPND, or that they are reluctant to declare their continued support for the PF, or that they have swung to the UPND but are reluctant to admit this.

1.1 Fear and anxiety

The December 2020 Afrobarometer survey recorded an unprecedented proportion of respondents refusing to declare their voting intention. More than one in three voters (38%) refused, compared to just 12% in 2017. This was a massive increase. As previously, voters were more likely to refuse to say who they would vote for if the interviewer was a woman or was young, but interviewer effects did not explain the increase in refusing to reveal a partisan preference.

Few Zambian voters say that they will not vote. Afrobarometer asked two questions pertaining to this. Respondents were first asked whether they intended to vote in the 2021 elections. A massive 83% replied 'definitely yes' with another 6% replying 'probably yes'. Only 5% said definitely not and another 2% said probably not.[1] Respondents were later asked who they would vote for if an election was held tomorrow. Only 5% said that they would not vote (although another 7% said they did not know and 38% refused to answer).[2]

But Zambians report that the last elections were marred by violence and intimidation. Half of the sample said that they feared violence in the last elections, with one in five (19%) saying they feared it a lot.[3] Voters' past experiences fuel scepticism about the next elections. Asked whether they expected that the elections would be free and fair, 34% answered 'completely free and fair'. Only 8% said that it would not be free and fair, but one in four respondents (24%) expected the elections to be 'free and fair with minor problems' and 22% expected 'major problems'.[4]

In a number of African countries the supporters of opposition parties may be reluctant to admit their partisan preferences. Asked who was behind the survey, respondents often say 'the government'. The 2020 Afrobarometer data from UPND-supporting regions is certainly consistent with this pattern, with a drop in reported support for the UPND between 2017 and 2020. Is this related to fear and anxiety? Might voters be intimidated or coerced into voting for the governing party (or not turning out to vote for the opposition)?

As many as 41% of Zambian respondents identified 'the government' as the sponsor of the survey, with the proportion in UPND-supporting provinces reaching 50%. But there is no clear relationship between identifying the government and refusing to reveal a partisan preference. Moreover, reported intention to vote was highest in the UPND's strongholds and lowest in Lusaka,

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[1] Q78E_ZAM.
[2] Q99.
[3] Q17D.
[4] Q78F_ZAM.

the Copperbelt and Central Province. Fear of violence in the past was also highest in Lusaka and the Copperbelt, as was concern that the 2021 elections would not be free and fair.

If we are to understand better the hidden partisan preferences of undeclared voters, we need to examine not their anxiety about the election, but their views on the incumbent government's performance.

1.2 Assessments of the government's performance

Voters are strongly critical of the government's performance in economic management. Figure 1.2 shows that more than half assess the government's performance as 'very bad' with a further 20% saying 'fairly bad'. Supporters of the UPND are especially likely to be critical, but there are even supporters of the PF who are very critical of the PF government's performance.

Figure 1.2: Evaluations of the government's management of the economy, 2020
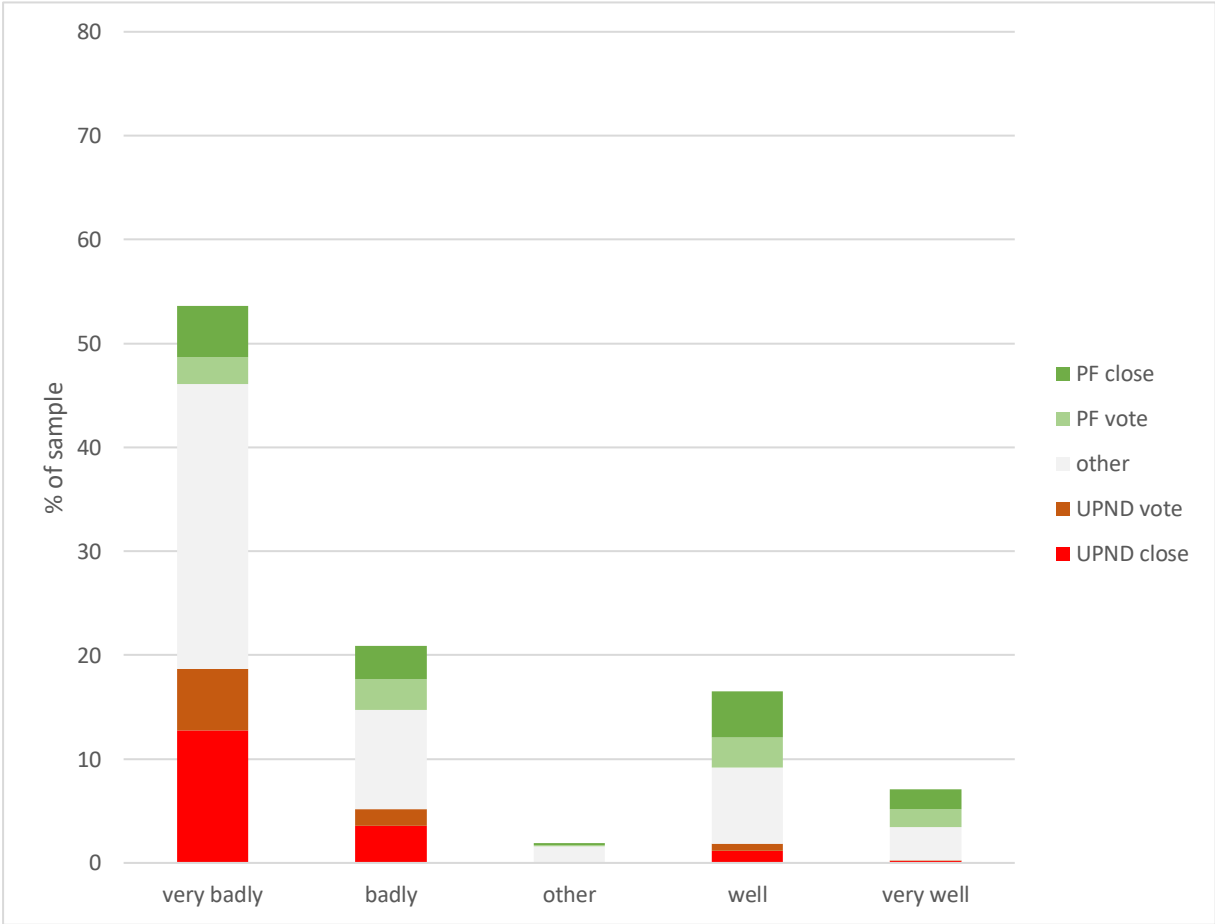
Voters are similarly critical of the government's performance in the provision of electricity and the reduction of poverty and inequality. They are slightly more

critical of the government's performance with respect to job creation and they are even more critical of the government's handling of prices.

The deteriorating economy seems to be the primary reason why more and more voters say that the country was moving in the wrong direction. Between the 2017 and 2020 surveys, the proportion rose from 65% to 77%. Economic problems also dominated respondents' lists of the most important problems facing the country.

Respondents were more positive about the government's performance on some other issues. On infrastructure (roads and bridges) and services (health care, education, water), respondents were almost evenly split between positive and negative assessments. On the government's handling of COVID-19, respondents were generally positive. The government's handling of corruption was viewed negatively, however, with almost five times as many respondents assessing it negatively than assess it positively.

On almost every one of these issues, the government's performance was rated worse in 2020 than it had been in 2017. Table 1.1 reports the mean scores in 2017 and 2020 for a set of issues, using a scale that extends from -2 (very bad) to +2 (very good). On all six of the issues included in Table 1.1, including even infrastructural maintenance, the mean evaluation of the government's performance fell between 2017 and 2020. On one issue – the provision of reliable electricity supply – the mean assessment of the government's performance plummeted from only just below neutrality (neither good nor bad) to close to universal condemnation as 'very bad'.

Table 1.1: Assessments of government performance

Performance in managing ...	Mean score 2017	Mean score 2020
The economy	-0.6	-1.0
Prices	-1.2	-1.7
Job creation	-1.1	-1.3
Maintaining roads and bridges	-0.1	-0.2
Corruption in government	-0.9	-1.1
The reliable provision of electricity	-0.3	-1.7
Note: Scores are on a scale from a minimum of -2 (very bad) to +2 (very good)		

The deteriorating economy was reflected in respondents' assessment of their living conditions, how they had changed over the past year and how they were expected to change over the coming year (see Table 1.2). Respondents were more negative about their present living conditions in 2020 than in 2017, they were much more likely to say that economic conditions had worsened during the

previous year, and they were slightly more pessimistic about future improvements.

Table 1.2: Assessments of economic conditions

	Mean score 2017	**Mean score 2020**
Respondent's present living conditions	-0.2	-0.6
Zambia's economic condition compared to 12 months ago	-0.3	-1.0
Zambia's economic condition in 12 months time	-0.2	-0.3
Note: Scores are on a scale from a minimum of -2 (very bad) to +2 (very good)		

Given all of the above, it is not surprising that voters' evaluations of President Lungu had also become more negative. On the same 5-point scale (from -2 to +2), respondents' mean trust in Lungu declined from 0.5 in 2017 to less than 0.2 in 2020, whilst evaluations of his performance declined from 0.3 to -0.1.

1.3 Explaining voter preferences

Much of the variation in Zambian respondents' voting intentions can be explained in terms of a combination of the variables discussed above and voters' ethno-linguistic identities.

First, we construct an index out of the nine variables shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. In 2020, the mean score across Zambia was an aggregate -9 on this index. Among UPND supporters, it was worse than -11. Among PF supporters it was still negative, but only at -5. Among undeclared voters, it was -9. Figure 1.3 divides the sample of respondents according to their score on this index:

- respondents whose score on the index was more negative than the mean UPND supporters' score (of -11.5)
- respondents with scores between the mean scores for UPND supporters (-11.5) and all respondents (-8.8)
- respondents with scores between the mean scores for all respondents (-8.8) and PF supporters (-5.4) and
- respondents whose score was more positive than the mean PF supporters' score (of -5.4)

These categories might be thought of as 'most dissatisfied', 'very dissatisfied', 'somewhat dissatisfied' and 'least dissatisfied'.

Figure 1.3 shows the distribution of respondents according to these categories and their stated partisan preference. Both the PF and UPND have some support across all four columns. Unsurprisingly, however, declared PF support is concentrated in the third and fourth columns, whilst declared UPND support is concentrated in the first two columns.

Figure 1.3: Distribution of partisan support by discontent, 2020
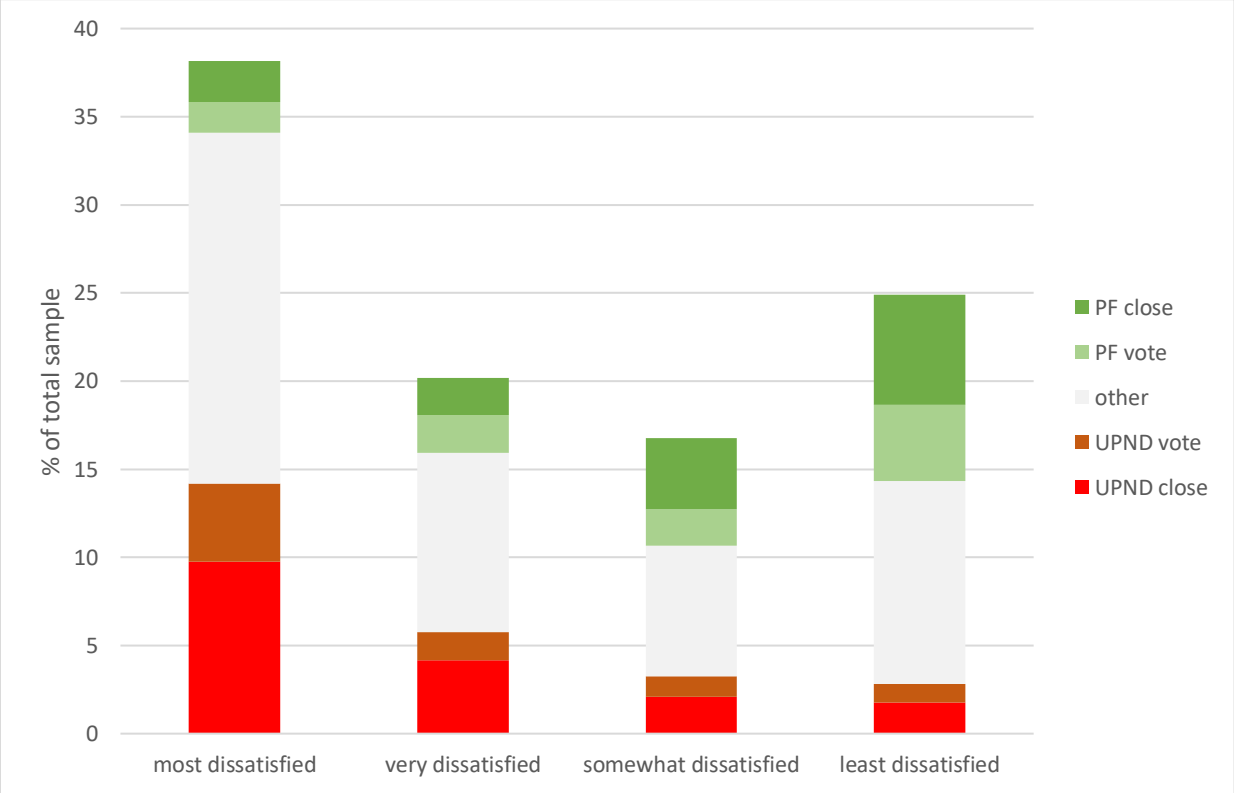
Undeclared voters are spread across all four columns, but there are many more in the first two columns than in the second pair of columns. On the face of it, this suggests that the undeclared voters might be more inclined towards the UPND – or not voting at all – rather than to the PF.

1.4 Personal and ethnic loyalty

Voters are not motivated only by their assessment of economic conditions and the performance of the government. Previous work on Zambian voters shows that ethnicity is important. Both parties benefit from the support of 'ethnic loyalists', who vote along ethnic lines despite their contrary assessment of economic conditions and the performance of the government. This helps to explain why there are PF supporters in the first column and UPND supporters in the fourth column.

Personal allegiance may also be important. Afrobarometer asks respondents how much they trust the president and how they assess his performance.

Using data on ethnicity, trust in the president and assessment of presidential performance, with significant (but arbitrary) weights, we can construct a second index, and divide respondents into four categories as for Figure 1.3 (with adjusted values for the mean index scores). Figure 1.4 shows that the overall distribution of respondents does not differ greatly from Figure 1.3. It reinforces the impression given by Figure 1.3 that most undeclared voters are more like UPND supporters than they are like PF supporters.

Figure 1.4: Distribution of partisan support by discontent, ethnicity and presidential loyalty, 2020
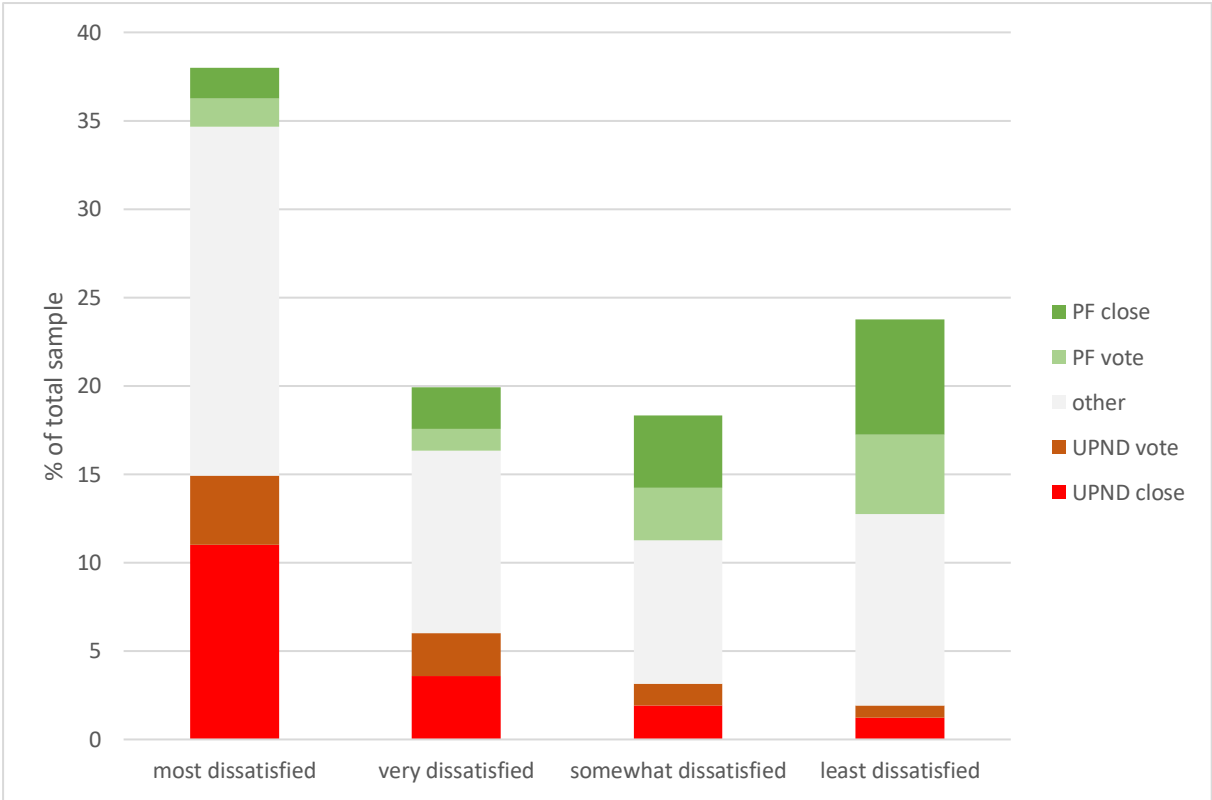
This analysis can be reproduced using multivariate regression models. Seven variables appear to be especially important in predicting whether a respondent would declare him- or herself to be a PF supporter: evaluations of government performance in managing the economy and corruption; expectations of future improvement in the national economy; trust in and evaluation of the president; ethnicity and the age of the interviewer.

1.5 Conclusion to Part 1

The Afrobarometer survey conducted at the end of 2020 suggests a dramatic decline in declared support for the incumbent PF, together with a modest decline in declared support for the opposition UPND in its strongholds and a modest increase in declared support for the opposition UPND elsewhere. The big shift

between the previous Afrobarometer survey (in 2017) and the end-2020 survey is the big increase in the proportion of voters who refuse to declare their partisan preference.

The shift from PF supporters to undeclared voters is surely linked to the deterioration of economic conditions and the perceived responsibility for this of the PF government. On every economic issue, most voters condemn the government's performance. Even in its former urban and rural strongholds there is deep dissatisfaction. Voters are also critical of the government's performance with respect to corruption.

The attitudinal profile of undeclared voters suggests that most of these voters are more similar to UPND supporters than to PF supporters. This might imply that they are inclined towards the UPND. These voters might be constrained by the widespread anxiety about the election.

On the other hand, it is possible that many of these voters will remain loyal to Lungu and the PF. Even in 2017, Lungu and the PF retained the support of many voters who were dissatisfied with its performance.

It is impossible to say with any certainty how these undeclared voters will vote. What we can say, however, is that dissatisfaction has deepened since 2017, and Lungu and the PF will find it much harder to win votes in 2021 than in the previous election in 2016.

Part 2: Softening support for the Patriotic Front in its rural strongholds: How and why?

The preceding section used data from Afrobarometer surveys in 2017 and the end of 2020 to examine patterns and trends in the partisan preferences of Zambian voters ahead of the elections scheduled for August 2021. We showed that the proportion of respondents who refuse to declare their partisan preference (or, to a much lesser extent, say that they don't know) rose sharply between 2017 and 2020. The rising proportion of undeclared voters appears to have been primarily at the expense of declared support for the PF and its leader, incumbent President Edgar Lungu. Declared support for the opposition UPND seems to have risen slightly (at least outside of its strongholds in Southern, Western and North-Western provinces).

At the national level the rise in undeclared voters appears to be linked to deepening dissatisfaction with the economy and with the government's performance, not only with regard to the economy but on other issues also

(especially corruption). The data on attitudes suggest that undeclared voters across Zambia as a whole are more likely to share attitudes with declared UPND supporters than with declared PF supporters. On the face of it, PF support has shrunk dramatically, or at least become much softer.

This section examines in more detail patterns and trends in the PF's former rural strongholds, i.e. Luapula, Northern, Muchinga and Eastern Provinces (i.e. the 'LNME' provinces), in order to understand whether, how and why support for the PF has at the least softened in these provinces.

In the 2016 elections, Lungu of the PF won 79% of the total vote in these four provinces. Hakainde Hichilema (widely known as 'HH'), the UPND's candidate, won only 17% of the total vote (despite having a Bemba-speaking vice-presidential running mate from Northern Province). The PF won 48 of the 55 parliamentary seats in these four provinces. Independent candidates won five seats and minor parties won two seats. The UPND won none.

Figure 2.1 shows the proportions of voters in the LNME provinces in each of the five categories used in the preceding section, for 2017 and 2020, as well as the results of the 2016 elections (as proportions of the valid votes cast, i.e. ignoring non-voters). The five categories are constructed using data from a question about identification with parties and a second question about voting intention ('if an election were held tomorrow'). They comprise: voters who identify with the PF, voters who do not identify with the PF but say that they would vote for it, undeclared voters, voters who do not identify with the UPND but say that they will vote for it, and, finally, voters who identify with the UPND. The undeclared category includes voters who refuse to answer both questions (about identification and voting intention) as well as voters who say they don't know to both questions.

Note that the samples in the individual provinces are small so the disaggregated data should be viewed with caution. The 2020 data provide evidence of a modest swing from the PF to the UPND. Much more striking is the shift from declared support for the PF in 2017 to being undeclared by the end of 2020. In each of Muchinga and Eastern Provinces, two out of three voters were undeclared in 2020. The proportion of undeclared voters was smaller in Luapula and especially Northern Province, but even in these provinces there was a dramatic decline in declared support for the PF.

Figure 2.1: Partisan preference by province: 2016 election, 2017 survey and 2020 survey (%)
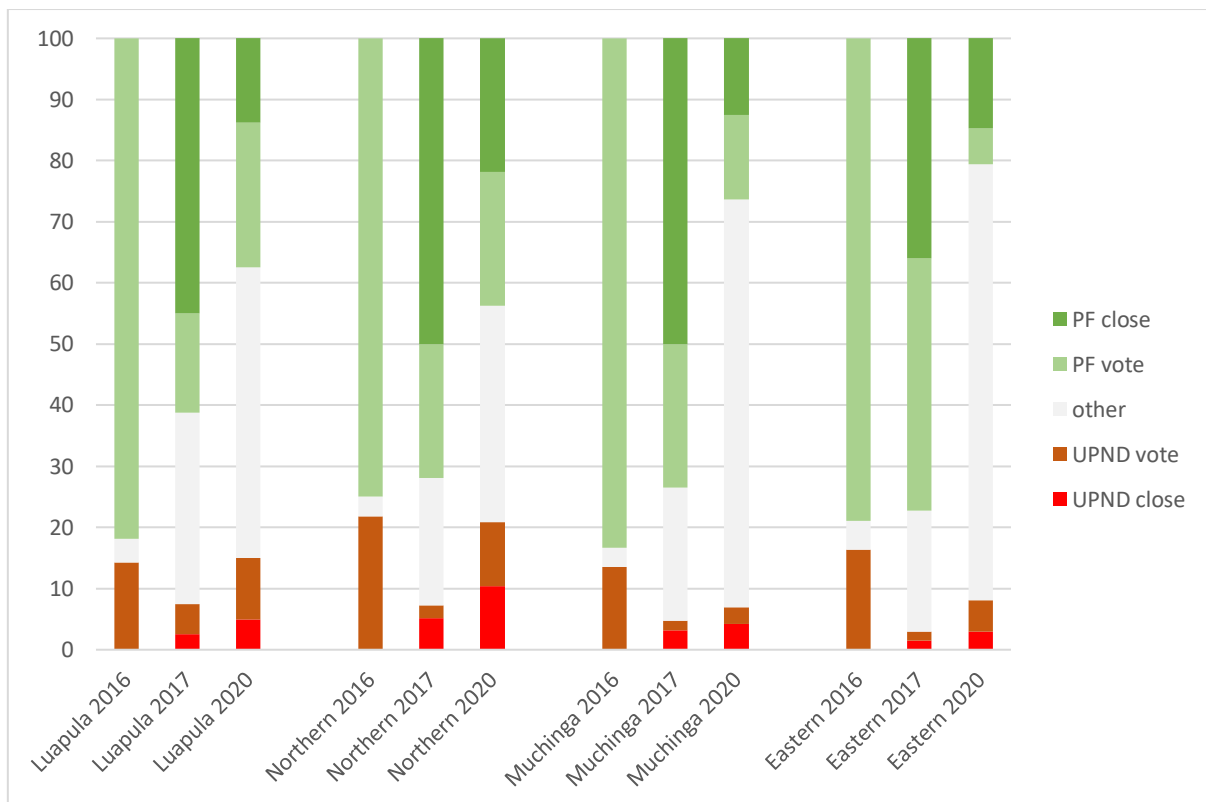
These data appear to suggest that many former PF voters – especially in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces – have become undeclared voters, without declared attachments to either party. This could be because they have grown disaffected from the governing party, without embracing the UPND. Or that they are reluctant to declare their continued support for the PF. Or that they have swung to the UPND but are reluctant to admit this.

The rest of this section examines the evidence on how many of these undeclared voters remain inclined towards the PF, how many seem to be deeply undecided and how many are inclined towards the UPND.

2.1 Why do so many voters in these provinces not disclose their preference?

The December 2020 Afrobarometer survey recorded an unprecedented proportion of respondents refusing to declare their voting intention. Nationally, more than one in three voters (38%) refused, compared to just 12% in 2017. In the PF's former rural strongholds – i.e. the four LNME provinces – almost half of the Afrobarometer's respondents refused to disclose their partisan preference in 2020, compared to just 10% in 2017. In Eastern Province, the proportion in 2020 was a massive 65%.

Across Zambia as a whole, voters were more likely to refuse to say who they would vote for if the interviewer was a woman or was young. This was not the case in the LNME provinces. In these provinces, refusal rates were higher if the interviewer's home language was different to the respondent's, but such interviewer effects explained only a small part of either the high refusal rate in 2020 or the increase since 2017.

The high rate of refusal to declare a partisan preference is not related to ambivalence about voting or any other obvious measure of fear or anxiety. Voters in the LNME provinces are more likely than voters elsewhere to say that will expect to vote in the 2021 elections, are less likely to say that the last elections were marred by violence and intimidation and are less likely to say that the 2021 elections will not be free and fair.

The softening of support for the PF is more likely to be related to dissatisfaction with the PF government's performance, especially with regard to the economy. In the LNME provinces, about two out of three voters are critical of the government's performance in economic management, with about one in three saying that the government had performed well. This was marginally less negative than in the country as a whole. Voters in Eastern Province were by far the most critical, with negative assessments outnumbering positive ones by five to one. Voters in Muchinga was almost as negative. Voters in Luapula and Northern Provinces were evenly balanced between negative and positive assessments.

Figure 2.2 shows the distribution of partisan preferences and assessments of the government's performance in managing the economy. Unsurprisingly, support for the UPND was strongest among voters who were very critical of the government's performance, whilst support for the PF was strongest among voters with positive assessments. Well over half of all undeclared voters – and one in three of all voters – assessed the government's performance as 'very bad', i.e. they were in the middle of the first column in Figure 2.2. Eastern Province voters predominate in this category. Similar patterns are evident with respect to the government's performance on other economic issues. The deteriorating economy seems to be the primary reason why more and more voters in these provinces say that the country was moving in the wrong direction. Economic problems also dominated respondents' lists of the most important problems facing the country.

Figure 2.2: Evaluations of the government's management of the economy, PF rural strongholds, 2020
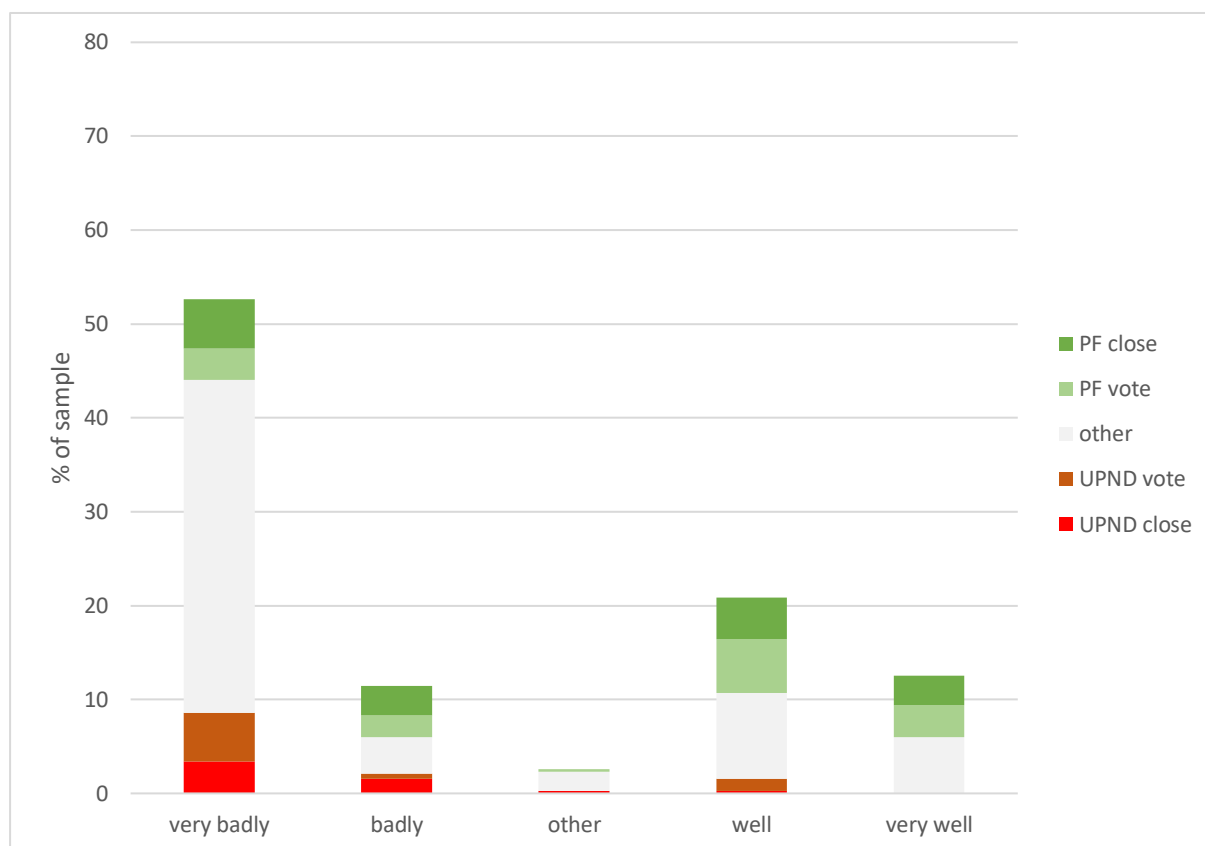
Respondents were less negative in 2020 about the government's performance on infrastructure (roads and bridges) and services (health care, education, water), and were generally positive on the government's handling of COVID-19. The government's handling of corruption was viewed negatively, however, even in its former rural strongholds.

Assessments of government performance in these provinces were more positive or less negative than assessments among Zambians elsewhere in the country, in both 2017 and 2020. But in these provinces, as well as nationally, voters' assessments of government performance became more negative between the two surveys. On every one of the issues, the government's performance was rated worse in 2020 than it had been in 2017. Table 2.1 reports the mean scores in 2017 and 2020 for a set of issues, using a scale that extends from -2 (very bad) to +2 (very good). On all six of the issues included in Table 2.1, including even infrastructural maintenance, the mean evaluation of the government's performance fell between 2017 and 2020 in the LNME provinces as well as nationally.

Table 2.1: Assessments of government performance

Performance in managing ...	Zambia mean score 2017	Zambia mean score 2020	LNME mean score 2017	LNME mean score 2020
The economy	-0.6	-1.0	-0.1	-0.7
Prices	-1.2	-1.7	-0.8	-1.6
Job creation	-1.1	-1.3	-0.5	-1.1
Maintaining roads and bridges	-0.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.8
Corruption in government	-0.9	-1.1	-0.5	-0.9
The reliable provision of electricity	-0.3	-1.7	-0.7	-1.6
Note: Scores are on a scale from a minimum of -2 (very bad) to +2 (very good)				

The deteriorating economy was reflected in respondents' assessment of their living conditions, how they had changed over the past year and how they were expected to change over the coming year (see Table 2.2). Respondents in LNME provinces were less negative than voters elsewhere, but they were more negative in 2020 than they had been in 2017.

Table 2.2: Assessments of economic conditions

	Zambia mean score 2017	Zambia mean score 2020	LNME mean score 2017	LNME mean score 2020
Respondent's present living conditions	-0.2	-0.6	0	-0.5
Zambia's economic condition compared to 12 months ago	-0.3	-1.0	-0.1	-0.9
Zambia's economic condition in 12 months time	-0.2	-0.3	0.1	-0.2
Note: Scores are on a scale from a minimum of -2 (very bad) to +2 (very good)				

2.2 Explaining voter preferences

In the first section (on the national picture), we constructed two indices out of diverse variables to predict voters' propensity to vote for the UPND or PF. The first index comprised assessments of government performance in the nine areas

shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. The second index also included attitudes towards the incumbent president, Lungu, and voters' ethno-linguistic identities. We repeat this analysis here, for voters in the LNME provinces. As in the first section, we can illustrate these by dividing voters according to their score on these indices. We distinguish between four categories of respondents: the most dissatisfied voters, whose score on the index were more negative than the mean UPND supporters' score and who we might imagine would be likely UPND voters; very dissatisfied voters, with scores between the mean scores for UPND supporters and all respondents, who we might imagine are leaning towards the UPND; somewhat dissatisfied voters, with scores between the mean scores for all respondents and PF supporters, who we might imagine are leaning towards the PF); and the least dissatisfied voters, whose scores were more positive than the mean PF supporters' score and who we might imagine are likely PF supporters.

Figures 2.3 through 2.6 show the distribution of respondents in the LNME provinces according to these categories, using the second index, and respondents' stated partisan preferences. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the distribution for respondents in Luapula and Northern Provinces, in 2017 and 2020. Figures 2.5 and 2.6 show the distribution for respondents in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces, in 2017 and 2020.

The PF has some support across all four columns in both pairs of provinces. Some non-Bemba-speaking voters continue to declare support for the PF despite being very critical of its performance and leader. Declared PF support is concentrated, however, in the third and fourth columns, i.e. among voters who are less dissatisfied, more positive about President Lungu and more likely to be Bemba-speakers.

Figures 2.3 and 2.5 are similar. Afrobameter's 2017 survey confirmed that these provinces were PF strongholds in 2017 (as in the 2016 elections). Most respondents declared themselves to be supporters of the PF. Most undeclared voters shared the characteristics of PF supporters.

By 2020, however, the picture had changed. Figure 2.4 shows that the 2020 Afrobarometer data suggests modest change in Luapula and Northern Provinces: Declared support for the PF had shrunk, declared support for the UPND had grown somewhat, and the proportion of undeclared voters had grown. Moreover, the distribution of voters shifted leftwards, i.e. the proportion of respondents in these provinces who were satisfied with the government's performance and positive about the president had shrunk, even though many of these voters were Bemba speakers. The fourth column had shrunk. Nonetheless, the largest block of undeclared voters in these two provinces was in this fourth column. These voters constitute an obvious pool of support for the PF.

Figure 2.3: Distribution of partisan support by discontent, ethnicity and presidential loyalty, Luapula and Northern Provinces, 2017
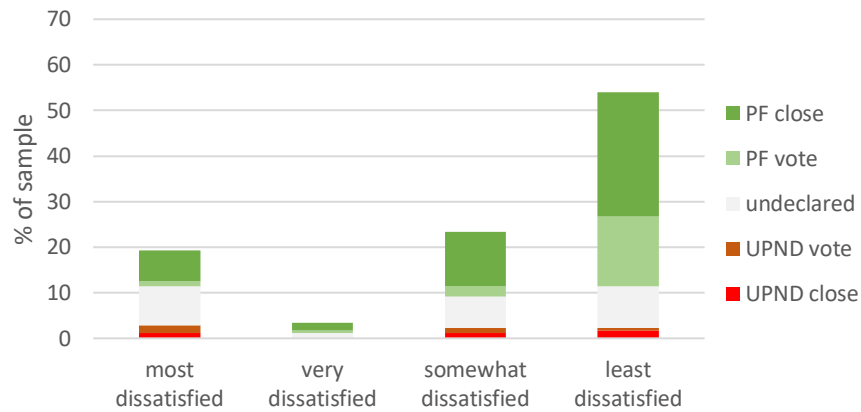

Figure 2.4: Distribution of partisan support by discontent, ethnicity and presidential loyalty, Luapula and Northern Provinces, 2020
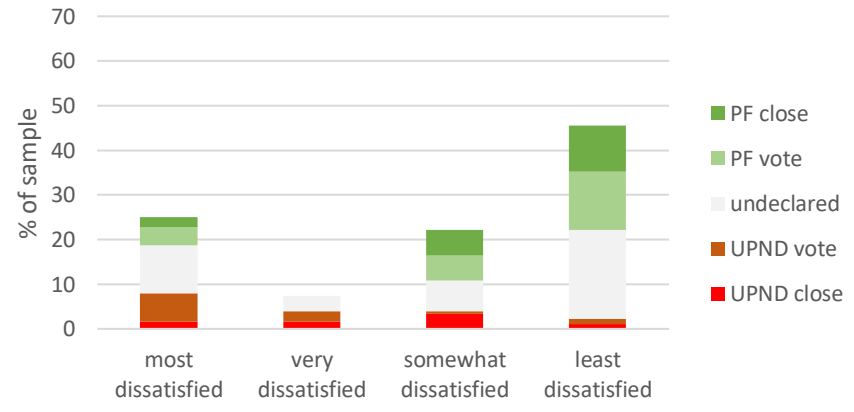

Figure 2.5: Distribution of partisan support by discontent, ethnicity and presidential loyalty, Muchinga and Eastern Provinces, 2017
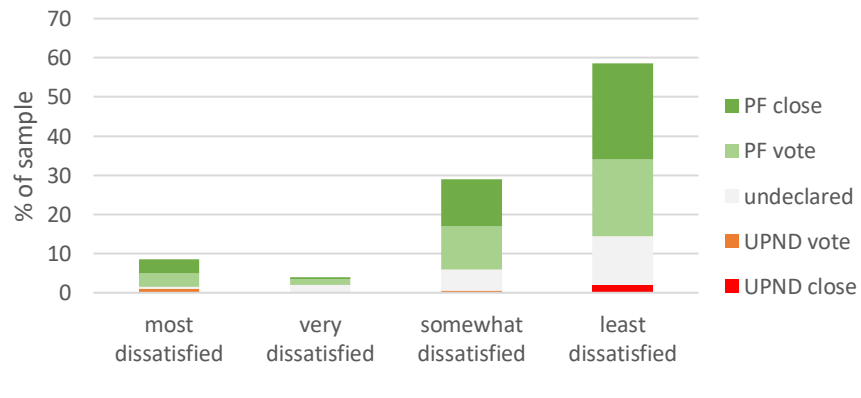

Figure 2.6: Distribution of partisan support by discontent, ethnicity and presidential loyalty, Muchinga and Eastern Provinces, 2020
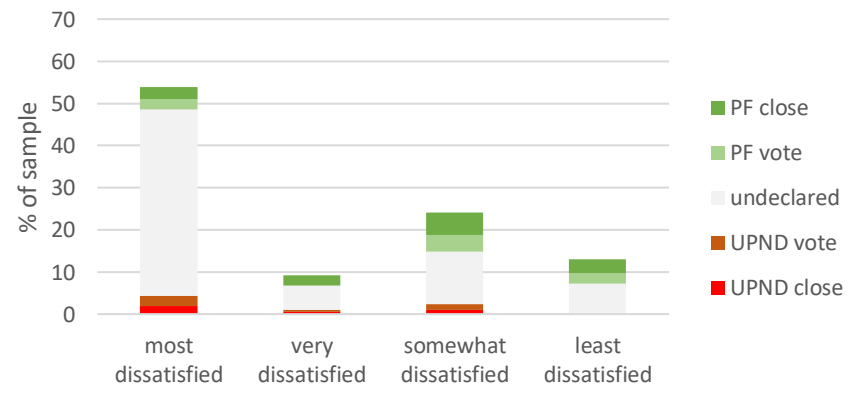
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Figure 2.6 (showing the distribution of voters in 2020 in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces) shows a marked contrast to both Figure 2.5 (the distribution in these provinces three years previously) and Figure 2.4 (the distribution in 2020 in Luapula and Northern Provinces). Between 2017 and 2020, voters in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces appear to have swung from affinity with the PF – with positive assessments of government performance and the president, despite there being few Bemba-speakers in these provinces – to deep dissatisfaction. Whilst there is little evidence of a swing to the UPND, by far the largest block of voters in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces are the undeclared voters who are extremely dissatisfied with the governing PF and president and/or are not Bemba-speakers (i.e. are in the first column of Figure 2.6).

In Muchinga and Eastern Province, the PF's support has softened most dramatically (see Figure 2.1) and undeclared voters are most negative about the PF. It seems likely that there is a causal relationship here. The implication is that the PF will have to work much harder during the election campaign to win the support of these voters. Whereas Luapula and Northern Provinces appear to remain PF strongholds despite some softening of the PF's previously strong support there, the PF looks distinctly vulnerable in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces.

2.3 Modelling voter behaviour

The apparent softening of support for the PF invites analysis of the correlates of declaring support for the PF relative to being undeclared. Given that few voters in these provinces declare that they support the UPND, these voters can be excluded from the following analysis. Table 2.3 reports the results of three multivariate regression models. In each, the dependent variable is declared support for the PF.

The first model includes variables measuring selected characteristics of the respondent (as well as the most likely interviewer effect): Education, religion, gender and ethnicity. Having a secondary education, being Roman Catholic and identifying as a Bemba-speaker increases the likelihood of supporting the PF. Being Pentecostal or having some tertiary education reduces the likelihood of supporting the PF. Some interviewer effects were significant in this model. This model explains about one-tenth of the variance in declared support for the PF.

Table 2.3: Modelling support for the PF

	Model A	Model B	Model C
Government performed well on managing the economy		0.04 **	Not sig
Government performed well on handling corruption in the government		Not sig	0.04 *
Expect economy to improve		0.04 **	0.06 **
Trust the president a lot #		0.04 *	Not sig
Approve of the performance of the president #		0.05 **	0.04 **
UPND-supporting ethnicity #	Not sig		-0.30 *
Bemba-speaking #	0.1 *		Not sig
Roman Catholic #	0.16 **		0.15 **
Pentecostal #	-0.16 **		-0.13 *
Secondary education #	0.15 **		0.18 ***
Tertiary education #	-0.17 *		Not sig
Male #	Not sig		Not sig
Interviewer effect: Interviewer was young #	0.16 **		Not sig
Muchinga or Eastern Province #			-0.21 **
Pseudo r-squared	0.10	0.12	0.21
N	336	336	336

Note: Significance reported at * 10%, ** 5% and *** 1%.

Dummy variables indicated by #. Other variables are a 5-point scale from -2 to +2.

Coefficients are marginal effects for a probit regression (using dprobit in stata).

Model B includes selected variables assessing attitudes towards the economy, government performance and the president. Positive assessments of the government's economic management and the president's performance, trust in the president and optimism with regard to future economic recovery all correlate significantly with support for the PF. The government's performance on corruption does not correlate significantly with support for the PF, conditional on the other variables in the model. This model also explains about one-tenth of the variance in declared support for the PF.

Model C combines the first two models and adds a variable for whether the respondent was in Muchinga or Eastern Provinces rather than Luapula or Northern Provinces. This model has more explanatory power than either of the first two models, explaining about one-fifth of the variance in support for the PF. Religion and education continue to stand out, as does economic optimism and assessment of President Lungu. Living in Muchinga or Eastern Province is also significant, suggesting that there is some aspect of respondents in these provinces that is not being captured by other variables in the model. Interviewer effects were not significant in this model.

2.4 Trends over time

Figures 2.7 and 2.8 show declared support for the PF in Northern and Eastern Provinces over time, according to successive Afrobarometer surveys. Figure 2.7 shows that declared support for the PF in Northern Province was consistently strong in 2013, 2014 and 2017, before softening somewhat in 2020. Nonetheless, support in 2020 was slightly stronger than it had been in 2009, just before the PF's election victory in 2011.

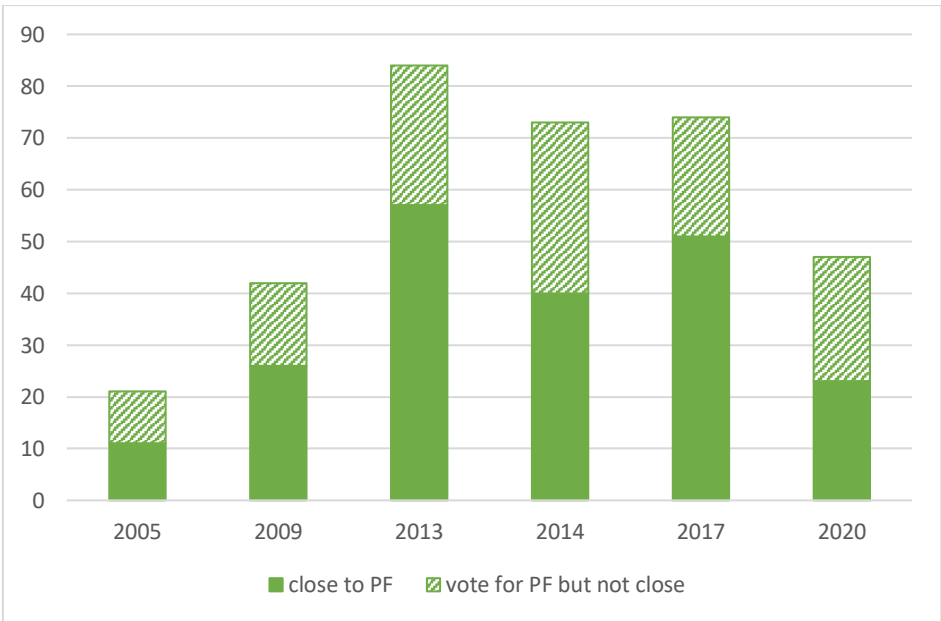*Figure 2.7: Support for PF, Northern Province, 2005-20 (%)*

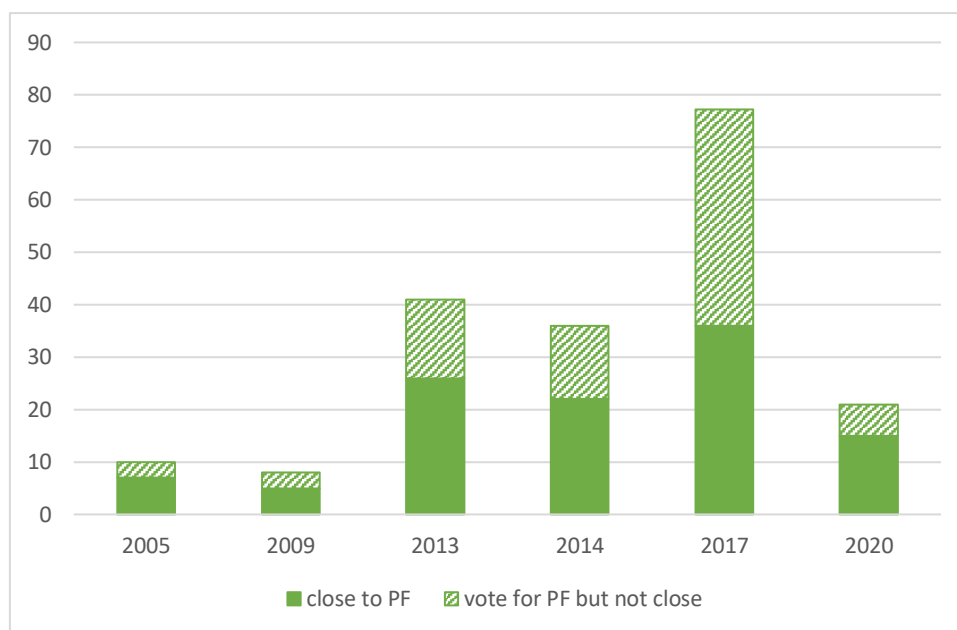*Figure 2.8: Support for PF, Eastern Province, 2005-2020 (%)*

Figure 2.8 shows a rather different trend in support for the PF in Eastern Province. In 2013 and 2014, the PF enjoyed the declared support of only a minority – albeit a large minority – of voters. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) – which had governed Zambia until defeat in the 2011 election – continued to enjoy strong support in Eastern province, and the UPND and its allies enjoyed some support. Afrobarometer's survey in 2017 was the first and only one of its surveys to show much stronger support for the PF, at close to the level in Northern Province (see Figure 2.7). Viewed across time, the dramatic decline in declared support for the PF in the 2020 survey suggests that the PF failed to consolidate the apparently ephemeral support demonstrated in the 2016 election and 2017 survey. It might be the 2016/17 spike in support for the PF which requires explanation more than the 2020 reversion to lower levels of support.

2.5 Conclusion to Part 2

The Afrobarometer survey conducted at the end of 2020 found that declared support for the incumbent PF dropped in its rural strongholds as former supporters became undeclared voters, refusing to declare their preferences or apparently unsure of them. Analysis of responses on other questions suggests that support for the PF in its former rural strongholds has softened, moderately in Luapula and Northern Provinces and dramatically in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces. This has been driven primarily by deteriorating economic conditions and dissatisfaction with the government's performance. The PF retains the support of some dissatisfied voters, perhaps because of ethnic loyalty or allegiance to the president.

It is impossible to say with any certainty how these undeclared voters will vote. It is very likely that some or many of these undeclared voters will end up voting for the PF. More voters will support the PF in the 2021 elections than were willing to declare their support for the PF when interviewed in December 2020. But the PF will have to overcome deep discontent and is unlikely to win over many if not some of the undeclared and dissatisfied voters. This is most likely to be the case in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces.

The Afrobarometer survey data suggest that voters in the east of the country threaten to swing the election away from the PF in 2021, just as they played the decisive role in the victories of the (now-defunct) MMD in the elections of 2006 and 2008. Given that President Lungu both benefits from incumbency and is a Nyanja-speaker (although he himself comes from and represented a constituency on the Copperbelt), this would be a striking outcome.

# Part 3: Decline in declared support for the Patriotic Front among urban voters

This section examines the patterns and trends in support for PF among urban voters. Hitherto, the two predominantly urban provinces, Lusaka and Copperbelt, have been PF strongholds. In the 2016 presidential elections, the two provinces accounted for 32% of valid votes, about a third of all voters in Zambia. In the elections, the PF presidential candidate, Lungu, obtained 60% of the valid vote in Lusaka and 63% in Copperbelt. His main rival, Hichilema, obtained 35% of the valid vote in Copperbelt and 39% in Lusaka province. At the parliamentary level, the PF won 19 of the 22 Copperbelt seats (including all 18 urban seats and one rural constituency) while the UPND won three seats (all of them rural). The pattern was similar in Lusaka Province. The PF won eight of the 14 Lusaka parliamentary seats (including all seven urban constituencies and one peri-urban seat). The UPND won four peri-urban or rural seats. Two rural seats were won by independent candidates.

Figure 3.1 shows the partisan identification of voters in 2017 and 2020. Afrobarometer asks, 'Do you feel close to a political party?' and includes a follow up question, 'which party is that?' Based on the follow-up question (which party is that?), four categories are constructed to measure partisan identification:
- Close to PF
- Other
- Not applicable (including those who do not feel close to any political party, as well as those who would not vote, refused to answer, or do not know).
- Close to UPND

*Figure 3.1: Partisan identification, 2017 and 2020 surveys (%)*
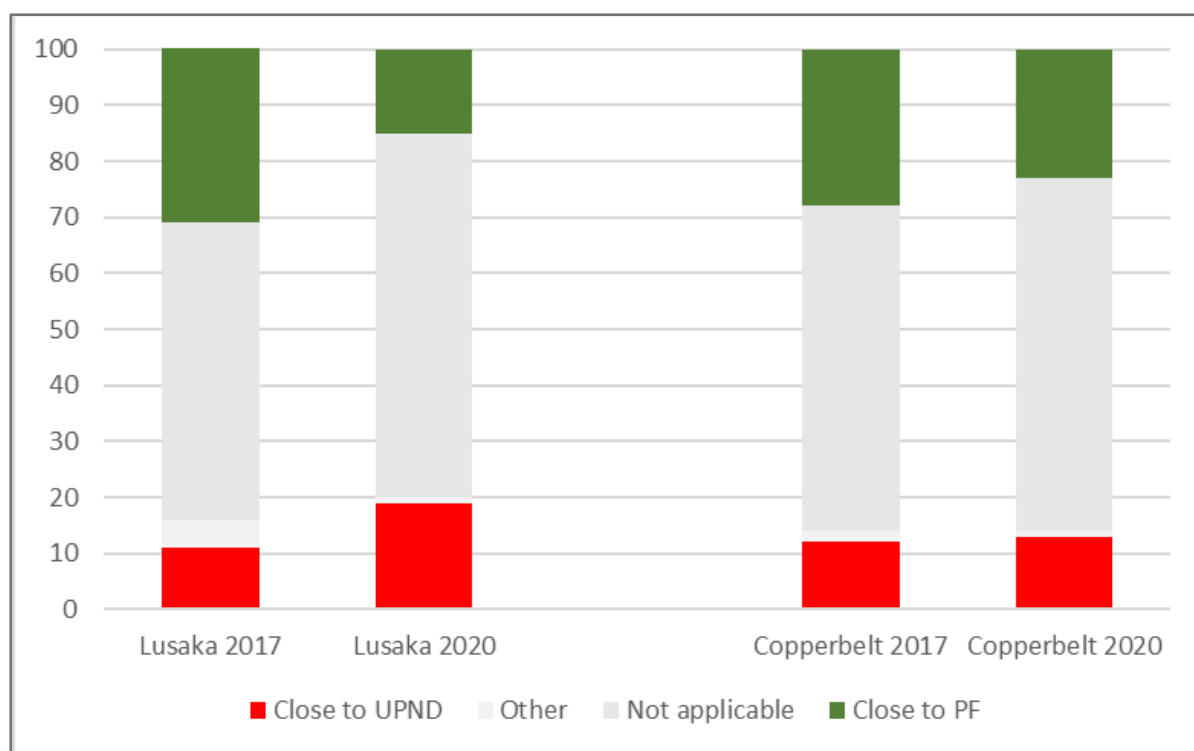
There are at least three patterns that emerge from these data. First, in Lusaka Province, identification with the PF reduced by more than half between 2017 and 2020, while identification with the UPND almost doubled (from 11% to 19%) during the same period. Second, in Copperbelt Province, identification with PF reduced moderately (from 28% to 23%), while that with UPND remained relatively unchanged. Thirdly, the proportion of voters who did not feel close to any political party or who were close to a party but did not declare which party, increased by 12% in Lusaka and 5% in Copperbelt. This increase appears to have been at the expense of the PF which had a reduction of voters identifying with it by 17 percentage points in Lusaka and 5 percentage points in Copperbelt Province.

The 2017 and 2020 Afrobarometer surveys also asked the question, 'If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party candidate would you vote for?' Four categories are constructed to measure voting preferences:
- Vote PF
- Other
- Undeclared (comprising those who will not vote, who refused to provide a response or do not know who they would vote for)
- Vote UPND

*Figure 3.2: Voting preferences, 2017 and 2020 surveys (%)*
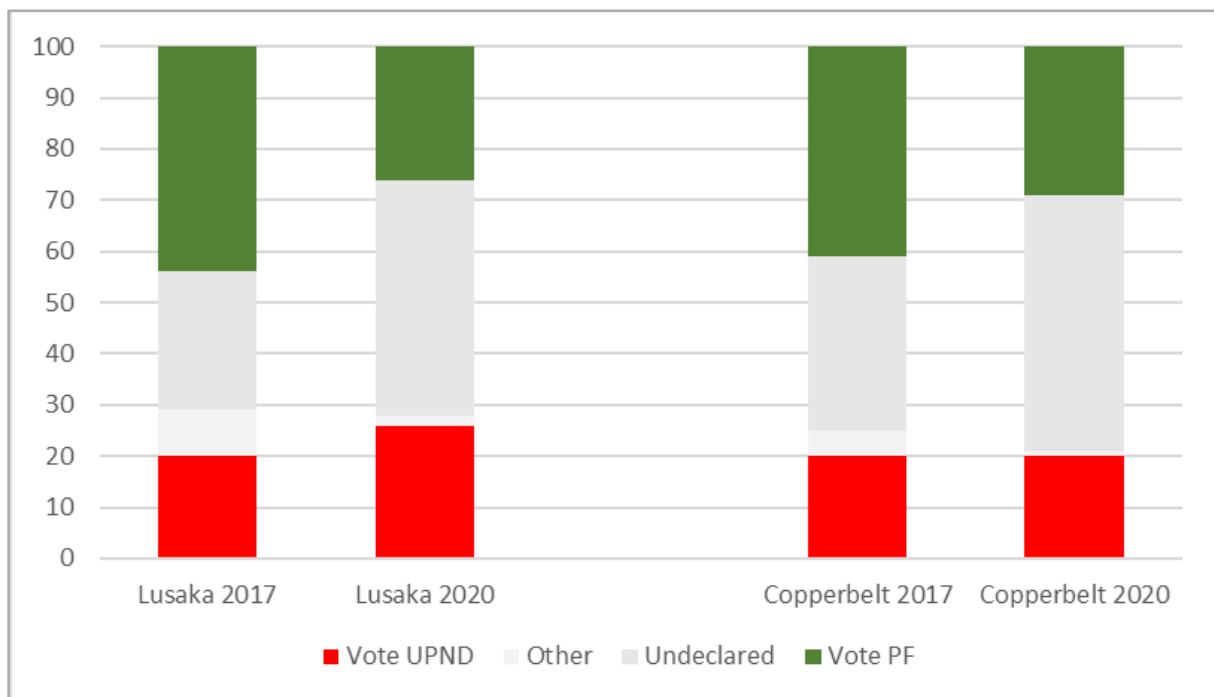
The data suggest that many more voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt are refusing to declare their voting preferences. The proportion not declaring their preferences increased by 19 percentage points in Lusaka and 16 percentage points in Copperbelt, between 2017 and 2020. This coincided with a sharp drop in declared preferences for the PF in both provinces, by 18 percentage points in Lusaka and 12 percentage points in Copperbelt. Meanwhile, support for UPND amongst voters increased by 6 percentage points in Lusaka but remained unchanged in Copperbelt Province.

The analysis of partisan affiliation and voting preferences suggest that support for the PF has declined in the urban provinces. The decline appears to be much steeper in Lusaka than in Copperbelt. Moreover, the UNPD appears to have grown its support in Lusaka and, at the very least, maintained the same level of support in Copperbelt Province between 2017 and 2020. Importantly, UPND seems to have slightly more support than PF in Lusaka. At the same time, the ruling party appears to have more support than the main opposition in Copperbelt. Nonetheless, the increase in voters not identifying with any political party and refusing to declare their voting preferences suggests that these results are not sufficient to make definitive conclusions about urban voters' attitudes towards the 2021 elections.

In order to explain these trends we examine first whether respondents intend to vote in the 2021 elections[5] and whether they have interest in the 2021 presidential election.[6] Figure 3.3 shows that the proportion of respondents who reported 'definitely yes' in response to whether they intended to vote in the 2021 elections was 76% in Lusaka and 77% in Copperbelt. This shows that although two-thirds of urban voters did not feel close to a party and nearly half did not declare their voting intentions, more than three-quarters of voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt said that they would definitely vote.

Figure 3.3: Intentions to vote in the 2021 elections (%)
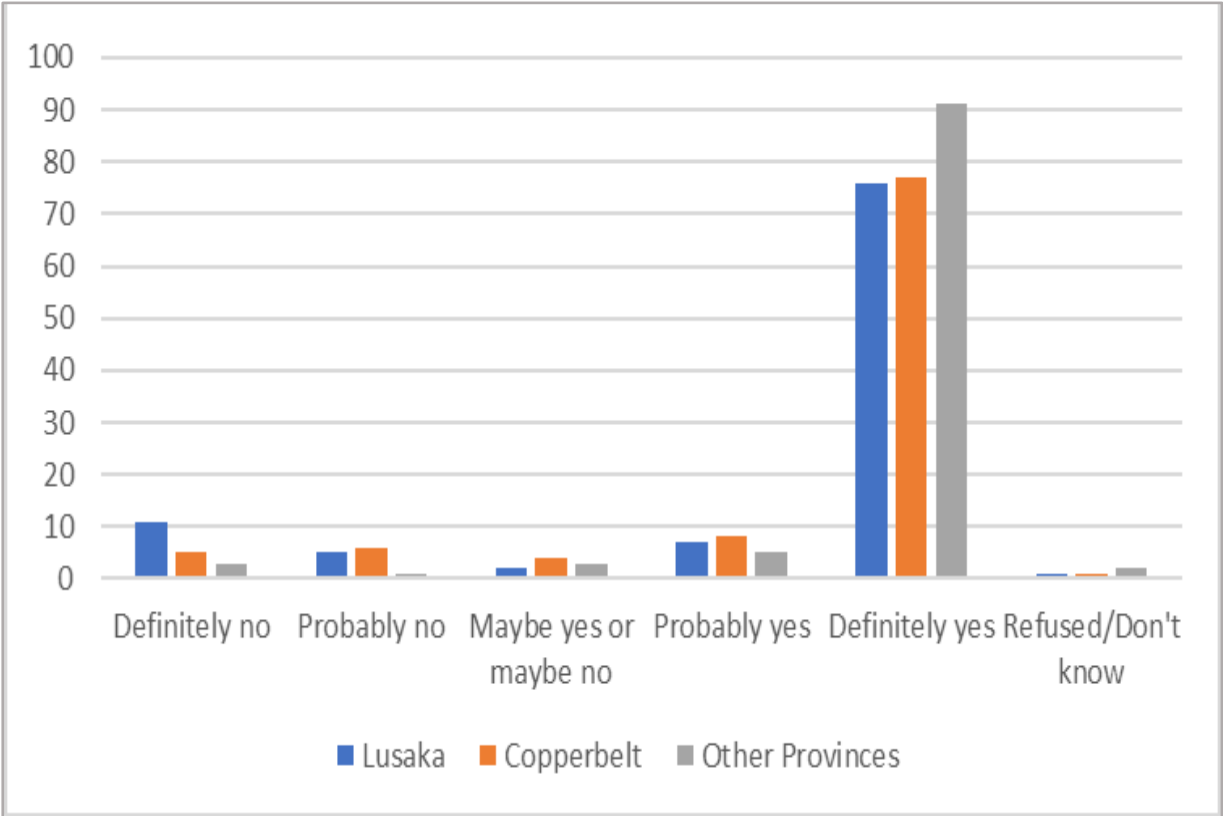
The intentions to vote in the 2021 elections increase to 83% in Lusaka and 85% in Copperbelt when the proportion of respondents that reported 'probaly yes' are added to those that reported 'definitely yes' to the question. The data in Figure 3.3 also show that 91% of repsondents in the remaining 8 provinces reported 'definitely yes' regarding intentions to vote. This suggests that urban respondents are less likely to vote than their rural counterparts.

The 2020 Afrobarometer survey also aksed repondents if they were specifically interested in the 2021 presidential election. Figure 3.4 shows that 20% of responents in Lusaka were fairly interested in the presidential vote, while 53%

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[5] Q78e-zam.
[6] Q77a-zam.

were very interested. In Copperbelt Province, 11% were fairly interested while 69% were very interested. This shows that 73% of respondents in Lusaka and 80% in Copperbelt, were interested in the presidential election. However, the proportion of respondents interetsed in the presidnetial election was higher in the remaining (mostly rural) provinces. Nearly 9 in every 10 respondents (88%) were either fairly interested or very interested in the presidnetial election in the other provinces.

Figure 3.4: Interest in 2021 presidential election (%)
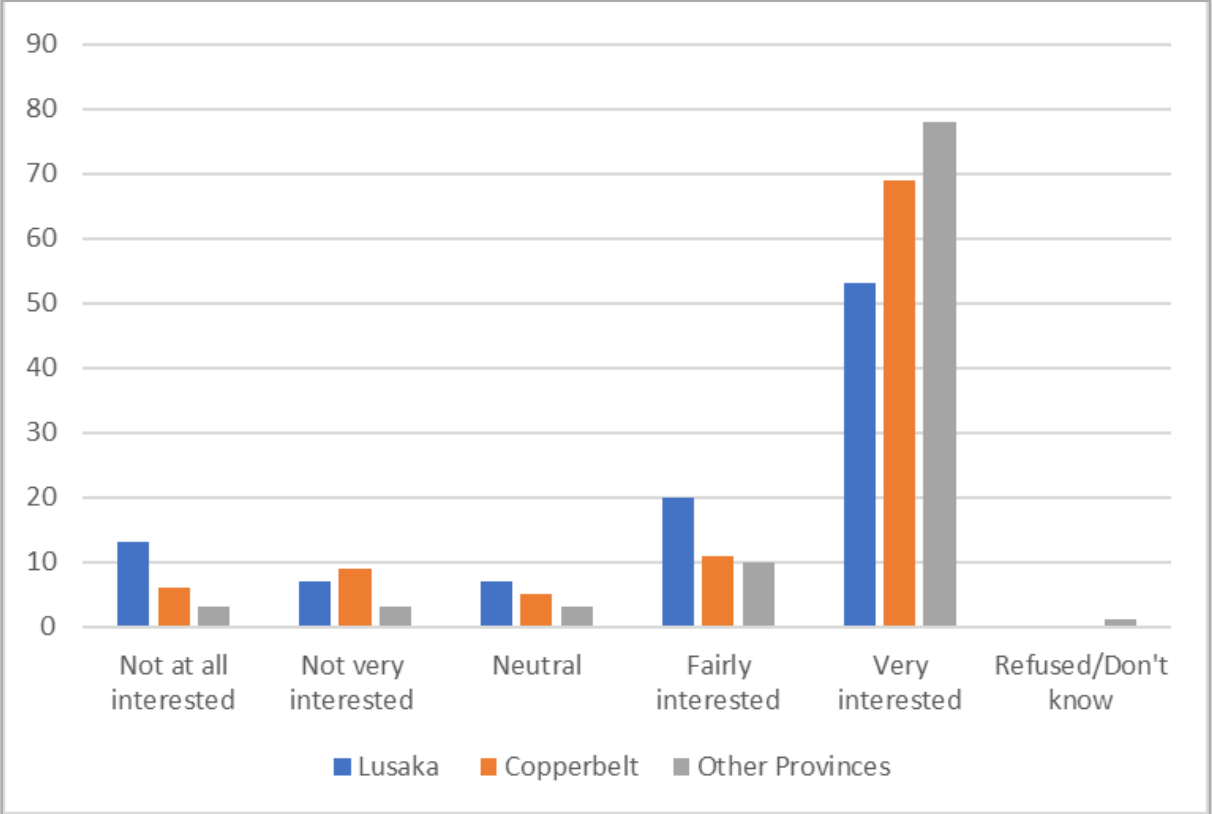
The data examined thus far shows that urban voters were less likely to feel close to a party in December 2020 than they were in 2017. They were also less likely to declare which presidential candidate they would vote for in the 2021 election, despite reporting high levels of interest in voting and in the 2021 presidential election. Moreover, urban respondents showed slightly lower levels of interest in voting and in the 2021 presidential elections than respondents in other provinces. The rest of this section considers the characteristics of voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt and considers how similar or different they are from voters in other provinces.

3.1 Characteristics of urban voters

In the December 2020 Afrobarometer survey, nearly half of urban voters refused to declare their voting intentions i.e., 46% in Lusaka and 50% in Copperbelt. Despite the increase in the refusal to declare voting intentions between 2017 and

2020, the two urban provinces reported lower rates of refusal than some former rural PF strongholds, such as Eastern Province, where the refusal to declare was 65%.

The increase among urban voters refusing to declare their voting intentions does not appear to be linked to expectations about the freeness and fairness of the 2021 elections. Nearly two-thirds of voters in Lusaka and in Copperbelt expect the 2021 elections to be either free and fair with minor problems or to be completely free and fair.

It is possible, however, that threats of political violence may be associated with the increase in voters refusing to declare their voting intentions. The 2017 Afrobarometer survey asked respondents: 'during election campaigns, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?' Table 3.1 shows that in Lusaka, half of all respondents feared being victims of political violence 'a lot'. The fear of political violence in Lusaka was much higher (by 15 percentage points) than in Copperbelt Province and the other provinces of the country (by 21 percentage points).

Table 3.1: Fear of Violence

	Lusaka	**Copperbelt**	**Other**
Feared violence during election campaigns 'a lot' (%)	50	35	29
Party competition leads to conflict 'always' (%)	46	32	30

Furthermore, the December 2020 survey asked respondents whether party competition leads to conflict. Table 3.1 shows that nearly half of respondents in Lusaka fear party competition leads to conflict 'always' compared to only 32% in Copperbelt Province and 30% in the remaining province. These data suggest that political violence and party conflict are concerns among more urban voters, and particularly so in Lusaka, than other voters.

It is likely that voters may also be influenced by the government's performance and economic conditions. The surveys provide data showing assessments of the government's performance. Afrobarometer asks: 'How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?' Table 3.2 shows the percentages of respondents in Lusaka, Copperbelt, and other provinces, who reported that the government was handling each of the six matters listed well (i.e., either 'fairly well' or 'very well') in the 2017 and 2020 surveys.

The data show that respondents in Lusaka and Copperbelt have very positive assessments of the government's performance in maintaining roads and bridges. The assessments also increased between 2017 and 2020. Yet, in the remaining predominantly rural provinces, only a third of respondents (35%) rated the government's performance in maintaining roads and bridges positively but these assessments had declined slightly in 2020.

Table 3.2: Assessments of government performance

Performance in managing ...	Lusaka 2017	Lusaka 2020	Copperbelt 2017	Copperbelt 2020	Other 2017	Other 2020
The economy (%)	40	18	36	28	33	23
Prices (%)	20	6	14	4	18	9
Job creation (%)	20	15	14	12	22	15
Maintaining roads and bridges (%)	80	82	59	76	35	29
Corruption in government (%)	27	16	20	21	24	14
The reliable provision of electricity (%)	71	36	65	23	28	22

It is clear from the data that there has been a drop amongst respondents in Lusaka and Copperbelt on various issues related to the government's economic performance. Amongst respondents in Lusaka, there was a 22 percentage point decline in positive evaluations of the government's handling of the economy but a much smaller decline in Copperbelt (8 percentage points) and in the other provinces (10 percentage points). While the majority of respondents in the two urban provinces believed the government was providing a reliable electricity supply well in 2017, these assessments had dropped by 35 percentage points in Lusaka and 42 percentage points in Copperbelt, by 2020. Amongst the rural provinces, assessments of the government's performance in providing reliable electric supply were always very low. The data also show that most respondents believe that the PF government was not performing well when it came to keeping prices stable. Only 4% of respondents in Copperbelt Province and 6% in Lusaka believe the government is performing well in keeping prices stable.

The data in Table 3.2 suggest that between 2017 and 2020, Zambians in Lusaka and Copperbelt have become more disillusioned with the government's economic performance. Although respondents in other provinces were also generally dissatisfied with the government's economic performance in 2020, their assessments were already low in 2017. These data help to explain why declared support for the PF in urban areas has declined sharply between 2017 and 2020.

The 2017 and 2020 Afrobarometer surveys also provide data on how Zambians assess economic conditions. This section analyses three questions measuring attitudes amongst respondents in Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces, towards economic conditions. The first question focused on the present living conditions of respondents. Afrobarometer asks: 'In general how would you describe: Your own present living conditions?' Table 3.3 shows that respondents in Lusaka were slightly more positive in their evaluation of their present living conditions in 2017 (i.e., they described their conditions as 'fairly good' or 'very good') than respondents in Copperbelt Province. Yet, the evaluations of present living conditions dropped by 11 percentage points in Lusaka between 2017 and 2020 and by 7 percentage points in Copperbelt during the same period.

Table 3.3: Assessments of economic conditions

	Lusaka 2017	**Lusaka 2020**	**Copperbelt 2017**	**Copperbelt 2020**
Respondent's present living conditions are fairly or very good (%)	43	32	39	32
Zambia's economic condition is better than 12 months ago (%)	27	11	17	12
Zambia's economic condition will be better in 12 months' time (%)	39	36	29	45

The second question focused on Zambia's economic conditions compared to 12 months ago. Afrobarometer asks: 'Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to twelve months ago?' Table 3.3 reports the percentage of respondents in Lusaka and Copperbelt who believed that economic conditions were better (i.e., 'better' or 'much better') than 12 months ago in both 2017 and 2020. Respondents in Lusaka were more positive in their assessments of economic conditions of Zambia compared to 12 months before in 2017 than respondents in Copperbelt Province. The data show that by 2020, only 11% of respondents in Lusaka believed that Zambia's economic conditions were better or much better than 12 months earlier. This represented a 16 percentage point drop

from the 2017 levels. In Copperbelt Province, only 17% of respondents reported that economic conditions were better in 2017 than they were a year earlier. By 2020, these evaluations had dropped by 5 percentage points. The results also show that by 2020, respondents in Copperbelt Province were 1 percentage point more positive about economic conditions compared to respondents in Lusaka. The results further demonstrate that respondents in Lusaka experienced a much sharper decline in their economic conditions between 2017 and 2020.

The third question asked about economic conditions in 12 months' time. Afrobarometer asks: 'Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in twelve months' time?' Table 3.3 shows that in 2017, the proportion of respondents in Lusaka who believed that economic conditions would be better in 12 months' time was 10 percentage points higher than the proportion of Copperbelt respondents who had similar assessments. However, by 2020, more Copperbelt respondents were optimistic about Zambia's conditions in 12 months' time than Lusaka respondents. Nearly half of Copperbelt respondents (45%) were confident that economic conditions would be better in 12 months' time compared to only 36% in Lusaka. The differences in assessments about the country's future economic conditions in the two provinces help to explain why support for PF appears to be relatively stronger in Copperbelt and Lusaka. It also helps to explain why support for UPND has grown marginally in Lusaka but remained relatively the same in Copperbelt. It is possible that the PF may have done better at addressing the concerns of voters on the Copperbelt – who are more dependent on the mining sector – than they have been at addressing concerns of voters in Lusaka.

To examine factors that may have contributed to the decline in support for PF in urban areas, we now consider whether undeclared voters in the 2020 Afrobarometer survey are similar or different to declared PF or UPND voters.

3.2 Are undeclared voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt similar or different to PF and UPND voters?

This section used the 2020 Afrobarometer survey to determine what proportion of urban voters (i.e., in Lusaka and Copperbelt) agreed with four statements asking about the performance of the president, the government's handling of the economy, trust in the ruling party, and trust in the opposition. Table 3.4 reports the proportion of voters who indicated that they would either vote for PF, UPND or did not declare, that agreed with each of the four statements, in the two provinces. Only 2% of respondents in Lusaka and Copperbelt indicated that they would vote for political parties other than PF and UPND. Given the negligible size of the 'Vote Other' category, the category is excluded in the analysis reported in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Urban PF, UPND, and Undeclared voters' attitudes

	Vote PF	**Vote UPND**	**Undeclared**
Approve performance of the president (%)	74	27	52
Government is handling the economy well (%)	40	12	18
Trust the ruling party a lot (%)	45	5	24
Trust the opposition a lot (%)	17	22	16

Among respondents in Lusaka and Copperbelt who indicated that they would vote PF, about three-quarters approved the performance of the president (i.e., they approve or strongly approve). Two-fifths of PF voters believe that the government was handling the economy well, while nearly half trust the ruling party a lot. Not surprisingly, less than one in five PF voters trusted opposition parties a lot. These results also show that the proportion of PF voters who had positive assessments of the government was higher than the proportions among both UPND and undeclared voters.

Table 3.4 also shows that among UPND voters, only 27% approved the performance of the president. UPND voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt were even more negative when it came to their evaluations of the government's handling of the economy, with only one in ten reporting that the government was handling the economy well. Further, only 5% of UPND voters reported that they trust the ruling party a lot. Yet only two in ten UPND voters trusted opposition parties a lot. Nonetheless, the proportion of UPND voters who trusted the opposition a lot was higher than the proportions of PF voters and undeclared voters who indicated that they trusted the opposition a lot.

This section is especially concerned with understanding how undeclared voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt compare to PF and UPND voters. Among undeclared voters, just over half (52%) approved the performance of President Lungu. While this proportion was twice as much the proportion of UPND voters who approve of the president's performance, it was 22% lower than the proportion of PF voters who approved of Lungu's performance. The proportion of undeclared voters who believe that the government is handling managing the economy well was 6% higher than the proportion of UPND voters, but 22% lower than that of PF voters. Regarding trust in the ruling party, the proportion of undeclared voters who trusted the PF a lot was 19% higher than the proportion of UPND voters and 21% lower than PF voters. Table 3.4 further shows that the proportion of undeclared

voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt who trusted the opposition a lot was lower by eight percentage points than the proportion that trusted the ruling party a lot.

While these data do not provide a clear picture of who undeclared voters may vote for in the 2021 presidential election, they suggest that undeclared voters were more positive than UPND voters in their assessments of the president's performance, the government's handling of the economy, and trust in the ruling party. At the same time, undeclared voters appeared to be much less positive in their evaluations than PF voters. These data also suggest that undeclared voters in Lusaka and Copperbelt are very likely not a homogenous group. Rather, undeclared voters appear to be comprised of at least two groups. One group includes PF supporters who are now disillusioned with the ruling party because of the poor performance of the economy but are not fully persuaded to vote for the opposition. The second group includes PF supporters who are also disillusioned with the ruling party's poor economic performance and are persuaded to vote for the opposition.

3.3 Conclusion to Part 3

The results of the December 2020 Afrobarometer survey show that declared support for PF has reduced in the two predominantly urban provinces, Lusaka and Copperbelt. There has also been an increase in the proportion of voters not declaring their voting intentions which appears to be at the expense of the PF. At the same time, support for the UPND has grown marginally in Lusaka and remained stable in Copperbelt Province.

The decline in support for the ruling party appears to have been driven by its poor economic performance and a decline in the living conditions of Zambians. While the PF has performed well in maintaining roads and bridges, the survey results show that urban respondents believe that it has done very poorly at keeping prices stable, creating jobs, and handling corruption. In the 2016 presidential elections, the PF won the most votes in Lusaka and Copperbelt. The PF would have to win both provinces in the 2021 presidential elections to be certain of victory, in addition to retaining support in its rural strongholds. The 2020 Afrobarometer results suggest that support for PF is precarious in urban areas and the ruling party could face an uphill battle to retain urban voters, particularly in Lusaka. It is very likely that PF leaders are aware of their vulnerability in Lusaka, which could partly explain the increased likelihood of political party conflict in the province.

It is impossible to predict with certainty who undeclared voters will support in the 2021 presidential election. It is clear, however, that most Zambians in Lusaka and Copperbelt are dissatisfied with the PF's economic management. This also appears to be responsible for a decline in support for the ruling party, especially in Lusaka. Nevertheless, the data suggest that some undeclared voters could still

vote PF while others will very likely vote for the UPND. Support for the UPND has certainly grown in Lusaka and remains stable in the Copperbelt Province but it remains to be seen if urban voters would swing to the UPND or if the PF would win the most votes in the two provinces, albeit with reduced margins.

Conclusion

This Working Paper used data from the December 2020 Afrobarometer survey to examine patterns (and trends in comparison with previous surveys) in the partisan preferences of Zambian voters less than one year prior to the elections scheduled for August 2021. We showed that there was a marked increase in the proportion of voters refusing to declare their voting intentions, seemingly at the expense of support for the ruling PF. Much of the decline in declared support was linked to dissatisfaction with both the economy and the government's economic performance. The second section examined in detail the patterns and trends in the PF's rural strongholds i.e., Luapula, Northern, Muchinga and Eastern Provinces (or the LNME Provinces). The section showed that support for the PF softened moderately in Luapula and Northern Provinces and dramatically in Muchinga and Eastern Provinces. This decline was primarily driven by deteriorating economic conditions and dissatisfaction with the government's economic performance. The final section examined in detail the patterns and trends in the two urban provinces – Lusaka and Copperbelt – which had been PF strongholds for several consecutive elections. In Lusaka, especially, support for the PF appears to have softened. Voters in Lusaka appear particularly anxious about security during the elections. They are also unhappy with economic trends under the PF government.

Survey data from nine months prior to the election cannot be regarded as a firm guide to the election results in August. There is always a small margin of error around the results when using survey data. More importantly, voters can change their minds during the election campaign itself. And, of course, incumbent governments are sometimes able to manipulate the election results in their favour.

In the case of the Afrobarometer survey in Zambia, a substantial proportion of respondents declined to declare their voting intention (although almost all of these voters said that they definitely or probably would vote). This Working Paper has examined these voters in order to assess whether they appear more similar to declared PF voters or declared opposition UPND voters. In Afrobarometer surveys it is not uncommon for supporters of the opposition to be reluctant to declare their support. In this Zambian case, most undeclared voters appear to share more of the critical sentiments of declared opposition voters than they do the attitudes of declared PF voters. Some of these undeclared voters – especially in the UPND's southern and western strongholds – may well be reluctant to admit their preferences, for fear of some kind of retribution. It is possible also that some

voters in formerly PF-supporting provinces might be reluctant to admit their preferences. But in some of the key provinces - Lusaka, Eastern and Muchinga – it is very possible that many of the undeclared voters had defected from the PF but without yet swinging behind the UPND. These voters might remain open to re-recruitment by the PF or recruitment by the UPND. The PF might face an uphill struggle in persuading dissatisfied voters to support it, again, but there is little evidence that these voters would first need to be 'detached' from the UPND.