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# Voters, parties and elections in Zambia

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# Voters, parties and elections in Zambia


## Abstract

*Data on the attitudes of Zambian voters from seven Afrobarometer surveys between 1999 and 2017 confirms the big shifts in partisan and electoral politics in Zambia over this period. Shifts in voters' assessments of the president and political parties correspond to the trends shown in actual election results, with the decline of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), the rise of the Patriotic Front (PF) and the resurgence of the United Party for National Development (UPND). Ethnicity plays an important role in partisan preferences. Part of this might simply be due to variation in voters' evaluations of the performance of the political parties and president, but ethnicity is not a simple proxy for these evaluations. As of 2017, both the PF and UPND appear to have a core ethnic support base comprising about 30 percent of the electorate each. The PF seems to retain the support of most of its core (Bemba-speaking) support base despite significant dissatisfaction with the PF government's performance. The UPND seems to have failed to build support among dissatisfied voters outside of its core ethnic support base (among Lozi, Tonga and allied groups). Ethnicity appears to have become more important over time. Afrobarometer survey data do not reveal, however, precisely how ethnicity 'works' politically.*


'Ordinary people … are conventionally portrayed in the literature on African politics as mere bit players in supporting roles to centralized institutions or influential "big men"', writes Bratton in his introduction to Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa (Bratton, 2013:1). The history since 1990 of Zambia – as of many other African countries – shows how the literature on African politics lags behind reality. Kenneth Kaunda, his United National Independence Party (UNIP) and the one-party state were rejected in the streets and then through the ballot box in 1990-91. Ten years later, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) narrowly avoided losing power following the 2001 elections, and ten years later again was ousted after electoral defeat by the Patriotic Front (PF). The PF itself avoided defeat (according to the official result) in both 2015 and 2016 by very slim margins. In Zambia,

ordinary people matter, including and increasingly through their exercise of choice in competitive elections.

The fullest evidence on the political attitudes of ordinary people in Zambia comes from the series of seven countrywide sample surveys conducted since 1999 by Afrobarometer.[1] Afrobarometer's Zambian surveys bracketed four parliamentary and presidential elections (in December 2001, September 2006, September 2011 and August 2016) and the two additional presidential by-elections held in October 2008 and January 2015 (following the deaths of incumbent presidents Mwanawasa and Sata). The survey data, collected over almost two decades, reveal the huge shifts that have taken place in Zambian electoral politics. In 1999, when the first Afrobarometer survey in Zambia was conducted, just over one in three citizens reported that they felt close to a political party. Of these, almost all identified the governing MMD as the party to which they felt close. Very few citizens reported feeling close to any of the various opposition parties – i.e. UNIP or the various small parties established by defectors from the MMD. Ten years later, in 2009, the proportion of the citizenry identifying with the MMD had fallen to 22 percent. A larger proportion reported that they felt close to one or other of two opposition parties that had been formed in or after 1999: The PF and the United Party for National Development (UPND). Given this trend of shifting support from the MMD to the PF and UPND, it was not surprising that PF leader won the 2011 presidential election. By 2013, very few citizens said that they felt close to the MMD.

The Afrobarometer surveys were designed primarily to examine attitudes towards democracy and economic reforms. The Zambian data on these attitudes have been analysed elsewhere (Simutanyi, 2002; Bratton and Lolojih, 2009; Afrobarometer, 2009, 2010; Mujenja, 2014). The most recent survey (in 2017) shed important light on the extent to which voters might defend democracy against an incumbent president exhibiting authoritarian tendencies (Bratton, Dulani and Nkomo, 2017).[2] The surveys were *not* designed with the objective of understanding citizens' behaviour as voters, but the survey data provide evidence that can contribute to the analysis of voting behaviour. Whilst the election results themselves provide the best available data on how support for the various parties (and candidates) varied between constituencies and over time, the survey data provide insights into how voters

[1] The surveys were conducted in October/November 1999, May/June 2003, July/August 2005, June 2009, January/February 2013, October 2014 and April 2017.

[2] UPND leader Hakainde Hichilema ('HH') was arrested whilst the survey was in the field, in April 2017; fieldwork was completed *prior* to his prosecution, the suspension of opposition MPs from the National Assembly and the imposition of a State of Emergency.

perceived the issues and the parties, and hence how and why they chose how to use their votes.

This paper uses Afrobarometer data to understand better the big shifts in electoral politics in Zambia, from a system in which one party (the MMD) seemed hegemonic to a three-party system in the 2000s (as the MMD faced deepening competition from the newly-formed PF and UPND) to what appears to be a two-party system in the 2010s, following the collapse of the MMD. The paper first considers how Zambians engage with politics, then turns to their reported assessment over time of successively incumbent parties and presidents. Many Zambians vote along ethnic or regional lines. The third section of the paper examines the role of ethnicity in relation to voters' assessments of political parties and candidates. The paper examines how ethnicity and assessment combined in the contest between the UPND and PF in the 2000s (in terms of mobilizing voters opposed to the incumbent MMD) and the 2010s (when the PF was the incumbent and the UPND its powerful opposition). The paper concludes with a consideration of whether the evidence on voters suggests that Zambia has become a two-party system.

# Introducing Zambian voters

Zambian voters engage cautiously and critically with the country's politics, are reasonably well-informed, and have clear views of both the country's political institutions and the challenges facing the country. They are strong supporters of democracy in principle, and are critical of the erosion of democracy, but they are also critical of the flawed democracy that exists in Zambia.

A majority of Zambians consistently tell Afrobarometer that they are interested in and discuss politics. Only about one in six do so frequently, but most report that they discuss politics occasionally (see Figure 1). At the same time, a majority warn that you must be careful what you say. In early 2017, the proportion of the sample who said that you must 'always' be careful of what you say rose to an unprecedented 50 percent, with another 22 percent saying you must be careful 'often'. Close to half of the 2017 sample said that they had less freedom of speech than they had previously.

This raises the obvious question of whether the Afrobarometer data can be taken at face value. Might citizens' caution about discussing politics extend to answering survey questions? The strongest evidence for this is that far fewer respondents in the surveys admitted to preferring the UPND than actually voted for the party, especially

in the mid-2010s. In the 2016 election, the UPND's presidential candidate (officially) won almost 48 percent of the vote. In the 2017 survey, however, only 24 percent of respondents said that they would vote for the UPND if an election was held tomorrow. Afrobarometer surveys seem to understate support for the UPND, i.e. some UPND supporters are unwilling to disclose this to our fieldworkers. This is not true of the incumbent party.

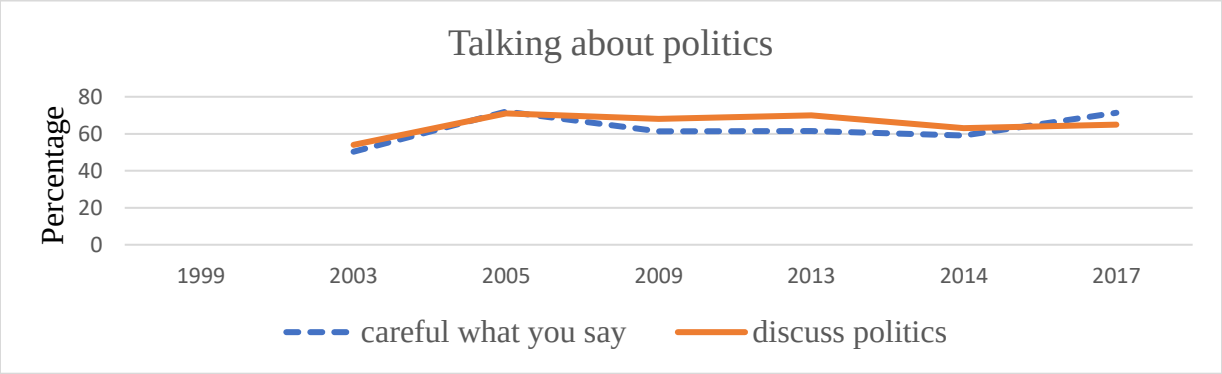


*Figure 1: Talking about politics*

Many Zambian voters are knowledgeable about politics. In 1999, most said that they could understand government. More than half could name correctly the vice-president. But only 32 percent could name correctly their Member of Parliament (MP), and even fewer could name correctly the Finance Minister. Later surveys suggested that political knowledge had improved. In 2005, 76 percent of respondents named correctly the vice-president and 63 percent named correctly their MP. Most also knew how many terms the president could serve and opposed strongly the removal of term limits. In 2009, people endorsed strongly reforms to hold MPs more accountable but were divided over the removal of a clause that require presidential candidates to have two Zambian-born parents. When asked questions about the president, the governing party or specific political institutions, few respondents in any survey answered that they did not know.

*Table 1: Most important problems identified by voters, 1999-2017*

| | Oct/Nov 1999 (%) | May/June 2003 (%) | July/ Aug 2005 (%) | June 2009 (%) | Jan/Feb 2013 (%) | Oct 2014 (%) | April 2017 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health | 33 | | | | | 22 | 18 |
| Job creation / unemployment | 22 | 29 | 42 | 23 | 28 | 22 | 27 |
| Education | 24 | | | | | 23 | |
| Poverty and destitution | | 28 | 36 | 22 | | | 18 |
| Farming and food | | 55 | 37 | 43 | 25 | 27 | |
| Infrastructure and roads | | | | | 27 | | |
| Note: This table reports the three issues identified most often as either the first or second most important problems facing the country. In 2014, two issues tied for the third spot, so both are shown here. | | | | | | | |

Citizens are also able to identify clearly what they consider to be the most important problems facing the country. Table 1 reports the three issues identified in each survey by most respondents as either the most or the second most important problems. Job creation and unemployment have consistently been a major (if not the primary) concern. Farming and food were by far the most important issues in 2003, as much of Zambia began to recover from a terrible drought, and again in 2009. Poverty and destitution were a regular concern, although less so over time. Public services – including health, education and infrastructure – were regularly of concern to some voters, and sometimes featured in the list of the three most prevalent concerns. With the exception of farming and food in the aftermath of drought, no problem clearly predominated. Rather, votes identify an array of problems, concerning both poverty and its causes (unemployment, drought) and public services.

Zambians also articulate clear, critical and diverse views on economic conditions. In 1999, most respondents were critical of the structural adjustment programme. In 2003, opinions were divided over the reduced role of government in the economy. In 2009, almost all respondents concurred that economic reforms had resulted in hardship for many people – but respondents were divided over whether the government should abandon or persist with its reforms.

Overall, Zambians hold apparently paradoxical beliefs about democracy. From the first (1999) to the most recent (2017) Afrobarometer surveys, Zambians have been consistently and strongly opposed to both one-party rule and military rule and strongly committed to democracy, elections, freedom of the press and free speech (Simutanyi, 2001; Bratton, Dulani and Nkomo, 2017). At the same time, they have been unusually sceptical about the prospects of democracy making things better, perhaps because corruption is seen to be very widespread (Simutanyi, 2001). Turnout in elections has often been low, and political participation in general has been limited. In short, Zambian voters see Zambian democracy as flawed.

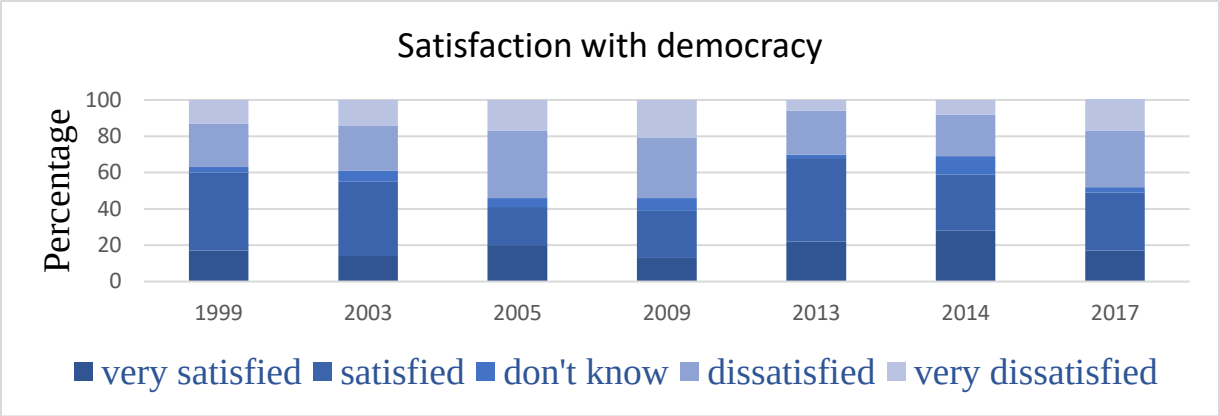


*Figure 2: Satisfaction with democracy*

Asked how satisfied they were with democracy, more than half said that they were somewhat or very satisfied in the 1999 and 2003 surveys (see Figure 2). Satisfaction declined in 2005 and 2009, before rising sharply by 2013, following the 2011 electoral defeat of the MMD. In 2013, 68 percent of respondents said that they were satisfied. This proved to be the peak of satisfaction with democracy. The 2014 and 2017 surveys showed a steady decline in satisfaction with democracy, although not to the very low level of 2005. The 2017 Afrobarometer survey – in the middle of which, UPND leader Hakainde Hichilema was arrested and then detained – revealed deepened concern among many Zambians over the further erosion of democracy (Bratton, Dulani and Nkomo, 2017).

# Voters' evaluations of the incumbent president and party

Afrobarometer data indicate clearly that many Zambians are prepared to be critical of the political leaders and their performance. The data reveal a strong current of discontent with the MMD in the 2000s, an upsurge of enthusiasm for the government after the election of Sata and the PF in 2011, and then a somewhat muted resurgence of discontent in the 2010s, reflected in support for the UPND. Figures 3 and 4 report perceptions of the president and parties over the period for which there are data (only from 2003, in Figure 4). These figures show that the MMD's election defeat in 2011 was not a surprise. Nor, taking the data at face value, is the PF's continued hold on power surprising, given many voters' ambivalence about the opposition in the 2010s.

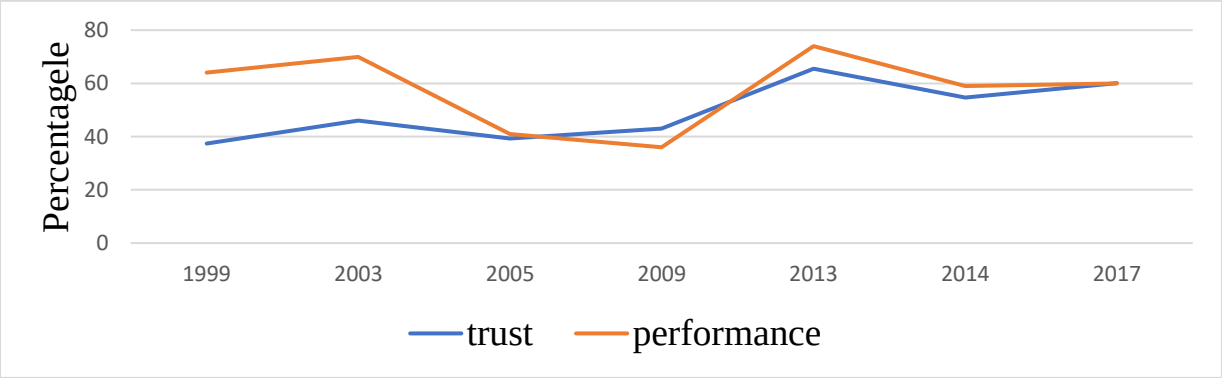


*Figure 3: Perceptions of the president*

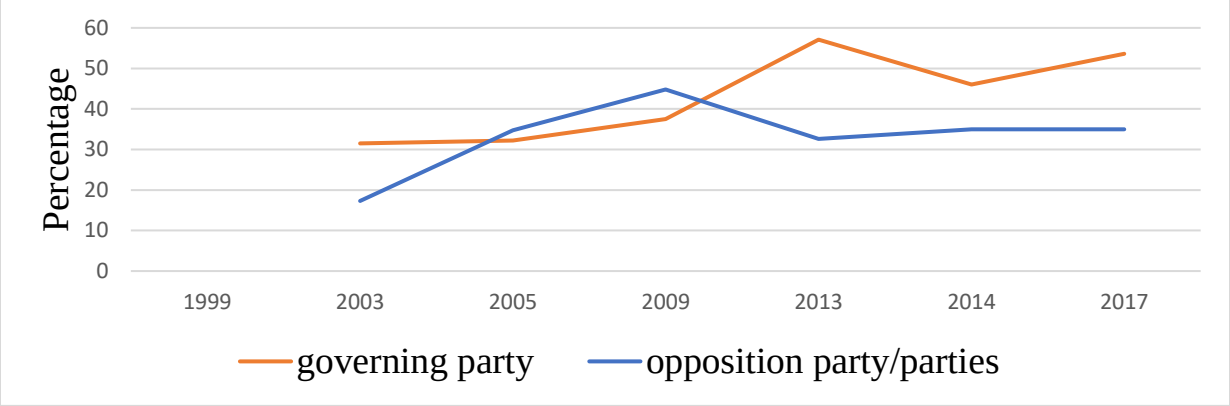


*Figure 4: Trust parties more than a little*

Most Zambians were critical of their presidents and the governing party from 1999 to 2009, when the MMD was the incumbent party. In 1999, Frederick Chiluba was still president, nearing the end of his second term and considering an amendment to

the constitution to allow him a third term. Chiluba enjoyed lukewarm support among the citizens. Almost 80 percent of voters said that they trusted him a little or a lot, but half of these only trusted him 'a little'. One in five voters said that they did not trust him at all. His performance, however, was viewed more favourably, with 64 percent of respondents reporting that they approved of it.

Two surveys were conducted whilst Levy Mwanawasa was president. Despite being elected in 2001 with less than 30 percent of the vote, Mwanawasa seems to have picked up some support. By 2003, voters trusted him very slightly more than they had Chiluba in 1999, and 70 percent approved of his performance. The MMD enjoyed more reported trust than the opposition parties. By 2005, however, approval of his performance had dropped to 41 percent – almost the same level as reported trust in him. More voters reported trusting the opposition parties than reported trusting the ruling MMD. Mwanawasa was re-elected in 2006, with almost exactly this share of the vote. Rupiah Banda was elected president in 2008. In the 2009 Afrobarometer survey, voters expressed much the same trust in him as they had in Mwanawasa, but approval of his performance had dropped relative even to the 2005 survey. The gap between trust in opposition parties and trust in the MMD had widened further – pointing to the likelihood of a turnover in the 2011 elections. In 2011, the PF's Michael Sata was indeed elected president, with 42 percent of the vote, whilst Banda won 35 percent for the MMD and the UPND's candidate won 18 percent.

Voters' evaluations of the president rose sharply after Sata's election. In the 2013 survey, the proportion of voters who said that they did not trust the president dropped to below 10 percent, whilst two out of three voters said that they trusted him a lot or a very great deal. Three out of four voters approved of his performance, against only one quarter who disapproved. The trust gap between the PF and the opposition parties had widened further, to almost 25 percentage points.

The 2014 Afrobarometer survey was conducted whilst Sata was dying (in a hospital in London). Citizens voiced lower levels of trust in Sata and were more critical of his performance than in 2013, but he retained stronger support than the MMD presidents in the preceding decade. After his death, and the ensuing election of Edgar Lungu as president, reported trust in and assessments of the performance of the president stagnated, albeit at a high level compared with the previous decade. Reported trust in the PF remained higher than reported trust in the opposition, although the gap was narrower than it had been in 2013.

Table 2 reports data from early 2017 on the attitudes of PF supporters and UPND supporters on various issues, whilst Table 3 shows their respective evaluation of the performance of the PF government. On some questions, almost all UPND supporters were critical of the conditions or the performance of the government. On others (including public education and health services), criticism was somewhat muted. Some PF supporters were also critical of the government's performance on some issues (especially economic issues). But on almost every issue the proportion of UPND supporters who expressed criticism was twenty or thirty percentage points higher than the proportion of PF supporters who did likewise. These tables show clearly that there was a large gap in attitude between UPND and PF supporters.

*Table 2: Attitudes of UPND and PF supporters on selected issues, 2017*

| | UPND supporters (%) | PF supporters (%) |
|---|---|---|
| The country is going in the wrong direction | 82 | 53 |
| Economic conditions in Zambia are worse or much worse than 12 months ago | 62 | 43 |
| Your present living conditions are bad or very bad | 62 | 39 |
| Your living conditions are worse or much worse than others' | 62 | 34 |
| 2016 elections were not free and fair or had major problems | 62 | 20 |
| Trust the president: not at all or just a little | 66 | 23 |
| Trust the ruling party: not at all or just a little | 77 | 24 |
| Disapprove of the performance of the president | 70 | 19 |

In 2014, voters were asked about the main difference between the ruling party (i.e. the PF) and opposition parties (i.e. UPND and MMD). Seven out of ten pointed to a difference, whilst three in ten replied that there was no difference or that they did not know. The most cited difference was the parties' economic and development policies. Other oft-cited differences included their leaders' honesty, integrity and experience. There were almost no differences between PF and opposition supporters.

*Table 3: Attitudes of UPND and PF supporters on government performance, 2017*

| **Government performance is very bad on …** | **UPND supporters (%)** | **PF supporters (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Managing the economy | 69 | 26 |
| Improving living standards of the poor | 71 | 30 |
| Creating jobs | 77 | 43 |
| Keeping prices stable | 77 | 46 |
| Narrowing income gaps | 79 | 41 |
| Reducing crime | 47 | 18 |
| Improving basic health services | 44 | 14 |
| Addressing educational needs | 44 | 11 |
| Providing water and sanitation services | 60 | 28 |
| Ensuring enough to eat | 69 | 33 |
| Fighting corruption | 71 | 34 |
| Maintaining roads and bridges | 55 | 27 |
| Providing reliable electricity supply | 56 | 30 |
| Preventing election violence | 50 | 15 |
| Preventing or resolving violent community conflict | 36 | 11 |
| Promoting equal rights/opportunities for women | 27 | 11 |
| Addressing needs of youth | 56 | 28 |
| Protecting rights, promoting opportunities for disabled people | 46 | 20 |

# The role of ethnicity in voters' choices

Afrobarometer data indicate that many, perhaps most Zambian voters have clear views on the competing parties and their performance when in office. There is a strong correlation between voters' evaluations of the government and their partisan preference, with critics of the government preferring opposition parties and voters with more favourable assessments preferring the incumbent party. As maps of the geographical distribution of party support in elections make very clear, however, the parties' support bases are regionally concentrated – and this reflects ethnic loyalties. What is the role of ethnicity in the choices made by Zambian voters?

Election results reveal strong regional patterns in support for the political parties and their presidential candidates. In 2016, the UPND won decisively three provinces (Southern, Western and North-western) and the PF won decisively four provinces (Northern, Luapula, Muchinga and Eastern). Only the Copperbelt, Central and Lusaka provinces were closely contested. If one draws a line from the Copperbelt through Lusaka to Lake Kariba, the UPND dominates the west and south while the PF dominates the north and east. Given the geographical distribution of ethnic groups, the two parties have clear ethnic as well as regional support bases. Table 4 shows the party preferences for selected ethnic groups in 2017, using Afrobarometer data. Bemba-speaking voters were strongly pro-PF, whilst Tonga and Lozi voters were overwhelmingly pro-UPND. The 2017 survey data show that the UPND was the strongly preferred party among respondents who identified themselves as Tonga, Lozi, Kaonde, Luvale, Lumda or Lamba (or as members of some smaller ethnic groups[3]). Members of these UPND-supporting ethnic groups were twenty times more likely to prefer the UPND over the PF than members of all other ethnic groups.[4]

*Table 4: Partisan preferences for selected ethnic groups, 2017*

| | Bemba (%) | Tonga (%) | Lozi (%) | Pro-UPND* groups (%) | Not pro-UPND groups (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UPND | 11 | 65 | 64 | 59 | 11 |
| PF | 60 | 14 | 10 | 16 | 60 |
| Other/none/DK/refuse | 29 | 22 | 26 | 26 | 28 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| *N* | *330* | *144* | *90* | *372* | *828* |
| Source: Afrobarometer 2017 survey.<br>* Pro-UPND groups: Tonga, Lozi, Kaonde, Luvale, Lumda, Chokwe, Mbunda, Lamba and Tokoleya. | | | | | |

In a descriptive sense, therefore, elections in Zambia have some features of an ethnic headcount. As Table 4 suggests, voters tend to vote along the same lines as their co-ethnics, although even in 2017 the Afrobarometer sample included some PF-supporting Tonga and Lozi voters and some UPND-supporting Bemba-speaking voters.

[3] Chokwe, Mbunda, Tokoleya.

[4] Logistic regression, limited to respondents who preferred UPND or PF; p=0.000, and the pseudo $r^2$=0.3.

A correlation between ethnicity (or region) and party preference tells us nothing however, about why there is such a correlation, and therefore what a party or candidate must do to bring groups of voters into its support base. Voters might vote along ethnic lines because this voting is an assertion of ethnic identity, whether of solidarity with coethnics or of hostility to out-group members. Voters might be following the lead of ethnic or regional leaders. For example, a Tonga voter might see her vote for the UPND as an expression of her Tonga-ness, or because she is swayed by the UPND as a 'Tonga' party under the leadership of coethnic Tonga politicians, or simply because all of her kin, friends and neighbours vote for the UPND. Voters might be voting along ethnic lines for other reasons, however. Ethnic voting might be strategic, in that voters expect ethnic-based patronage. For example, Chewa voters in Eastern Province might vote for the PF because they see that provincial leaders joined the PF coalition and therefore expect that more patronage will flow to the Eastern Province if the PF wins the election. Voters might also vote along regional or ethnic lines because they share common policy preferences or assessments of government performance. For example, Tonga voters might vote for the UPND because they favour the UPND's policies of market liberalization and reduced state regulation.

The existing literature on voting behaviour across Africa suggests that all of these explanations are pertinent, although their relative importance varies. Norris and Mattes (2013) examined the role of ethnicity in twelve African countries, using data from the first round of Afrobarometer (1999-2001). They modelled partisan preferences in terms of ethnicity, other measures of social background (including class) and selected political attitudes, and found that ethnicity mattered, especially in the more ethnically diverse countries. Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2013) analysed data on sixteen African countries from the 2005-06 Afrobarometer surveys and found evidence of both ethnicity and economic factors (retrospective and prospective) in voters' preferences. In a case-study of Ghana, Hoffman and Long (2013) explicitly asked whether elections were 'ethnic headcounts, or do beliefs about parties shape vote choice in far more complex ways than ethnic group membership?' Using data from a 2008 national exit poll, they found that 'ethnicity was relevant for some voters' and the two dominant political parties had ethnically homogeneous support bases. But 'evaluations and perceptions of parties were far more important determinants of vote choice'. Voters held 'strong beliefs' about the parties and their performance. These perceived attributes of the party, which Hoffman and Long found to be independent of a respondent's ethnicity, correlated closely with voters' choice. Hoffman and Long concluded that their data 'demonstrate that Ghana's election was not an ethnic headcount' (Hoffman and Long, 2013:127-8). All of these

studies use multivariate regression models to examine the relative effects of ethnicity and party attributes.

Several studies have begun to examine the role of ethnicity and party attributes in Zambia. Erdmann (2007) used data from a private survey conducted in six provinces in early 2004 to probe the role of ethnicity in driving partisan preferences. Although his data showed that voters themselves pointed to the parties' programmes and policies as the primary reason for their choice, few voters could identify programmatic differences between the parties, and regression analysis suggested that ethnicity had strong effects on voter choice. Erdmann's regression model, however, did not control for evaluations of the parties' performance or programmes.

The rise of the PF prompted Resnick (2012, 2014) to examine political choices among the urban poor, who provided strong support for the PF. Resnick conducted a mini-survey in Lusaka markets in early 2009 to model the reported voting choice of poor urban voters in the presidential by-election held the previous year. The MMD's Banda had won the by-election, but a majority of Resnick's Lusaka sample reported having voted for Sata (PF). Resnick reports a series of regression models. Her first model showed that none of a set of social or demographic variables – including ethno-linguistic identity – had statistically significant relationships with presidential preference. In her second model, Resnick added a variable for whether (according to the respondent) the PF (or other opposition parties) had tried to buy votes in the neighbourhood. This variable was significantly and negatively correlated with support for the MMD candidate. In a third model, Resnick also added variables measuring 'service delivery' (specifically, whether the respondent had access to water in his or her house) and evaluations of the incumbent MMD Government's performance on job creation and urban poverty reduction. These variables had strong effects on presidential preference. Moreover, the effect of vote-buying fell away when these additional variables were included in the model. Resnick also found that voters' evaluations of the incumbent government's overall economic performance were not significantly correlated with presidential preference. Resnick also asked why voters supported one opposition party over the others. She found that the most important reasons given were their positions on social and economic issues and the personalities of the parties' leaders.

Hern (forthcoming) used her own survey data and in-depth interviews,[5] as well as the 2014 Afrobarometer survey data, to examine voter choice. Controlling for region and ethnicity, Hern found that evaluations of government performance were modestly but significantly correlated with the likelihood of supporting the ruling party (the PF). Her in-depth interviews suggest that this is a causal relationship. She concluded that politics in Zambia is 'incompletely ethnicized'. Whilst there is little clear programmatic difference between the competing parties, 'the most important issue for most Zambians is basic service delivery'. Voters are interested in the outcome, she suggests, not the policies generating outcomes, so parties campaign "around 'development' with little policy content". Voters judge incumbents on a combination of their past performance with respect to service delivery and their ethno-regional identities, both of which inform expectations of future service delivery to 'their community'.

Both Resnick and Hern provide compelling evidence of the salience of non-ethnic factors, but neither addresses directly the question of the relative importance of ethnic and non-ethnic factors in the country as a whole. Resnick's study of Lusaka's urban poor is informative about the support for the PF, but tells us nothing about the choices made by the large majority of voters in rural areas. Hern, in her regression models, controls for region and ethnicity (through fixed effects models) and does not report their relative importance.

# Modelling voter choice in 2017

Since 2005, Afrobarometer surveys have asked samples of Zambians 'If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?' Respondents are not given a list. More than two-thirds of each sample identified a party (or candidate) (see Appendix table A1). The survey finds less support for the UPND in the mid-2010s than was evident in the actual election results, perhaps because respondents were nervous about voicing support for the opposition in an increasingly repressive climate. The regional breakdown of voting preferences in the 2017 survey suggest that it greatly underestimated support for the UPND in Central Province, and underestimated it somewhat in Northern and Eastern Provinces, whilst it underestimated somewhat PF support in Western Province. Overall, however, the

[5] Hern conducted a survey (n=1500) between October 2013 and February 2014 in four districts (one each in North-Western and Central Provinces, and two in Southern Province). In July 2016, she conducted 172 in-depth interviews in all four sites.

Afrobarometer data seem to provide a reasonably accurate picture of MMD and PF voters over time, but may be less reliable with respect to UPND voters.

Table 5 reports the results of a series of probit regression models in which voting preferences are regressed on a variety of independent variables, using the 2017 Afrobarometer data. The dependent variable in each of the models is reported support for the UPND. The different models regress support for the UPND on different combinations of variables.

The first model (Model A) shows that ethnicity goes a long way to explaining who supported the UPND in 2017. In this model, support for the UPND is regressed on a dummy variable that indicates whether a respondent reports being a member of one of the ethnic groups that, overall, had a statistically significant relationship with support for the UPND in the 2017 survey. Being a member of a pro-UPND ethnic group increases the likelihood of preferring the UPND by 47 percentage points. This bivariate model explains 21 percent of the variance in voting preference.

The second model (Model B) shows that support for the UPND is also related to assessments of the PF government's performance. This model discards the ethnicity variable, and regresses support for the UPND on three variables related to evaluations of the performance of the PF government. Bivariate regressions showed that these three variables were more strongly correlated with partisan preference than some other variables related to the performance of the government. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between negative evaluation of government performance and support for the UPND. The model explains only 13 percent of the variance in partisan preference, however.

Model C adds the ethnicity variable, which again has a significant and strong effect on partisan preference. The R-squared rises to 26 percent, one of the evaluation variables ceases to be significant, and the size of the effects of the other two declines. In other words, evaluation of government performance is less important when we control for ethnicity, although it remains important.

Model D regresses support for the UPND on three measures of poverty: Whether a respondent reports his or her living conditions to be bad, whether he or she reports that they are worse than other people's, and the lived poverty index (i.e. a composite measure developed by Afrobarometer, based on whether respondents said that they had gone without a set of basic necessities such as food and water over the past year). These do have a statistically significant but modest effect on support for the UPND, but the model has an R-squared of only 5 percent. Models E and F add in the ethnicity

variable and the evaluations of government performance. Whilst ethnicity retains a powerful effect, and evaluations of government performance a weaker one, these models show that poverty makes little or no difference to support for the opposition party when ethnicity and evaluations are taken into account.

Model G regresses support for the UPND on variables measuring trust in the president (Lungu, at the time of the survey) and evaluations of the president's performance. Distrust of the president and negative evaluations of his performance are correlated with support for the opposition UPND. The effect remains when ethnicity is added into the model (Model H) and when variables measuring evaluation of government performance and poverty are added (Model I). The final model (Model I) explains 30 percent of the variance in support for the UPND. Ethnicity remains important in every model in which it is included, i.e. its importance does not disappear when we control for party attributes, poverty or presidential attributes.

*Table 5: Modelling support for UPND, 2017*

| | Model A | Model B | Model C | Model D | Model E | Model F | Model G | Model H | Model I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pro-UPND ethnic groups | 0.47 *** | | 0.40 *** | | 0.45 *** | 0.40 *** | | 0.38 *** | 0.36 *** |
| Government performed badly on job creation | | 0.07 *** | 0.04 | | | | | | |
| Government performed badly on managing the economy | | 0.21 *** | 0.15 *** | | | 0.15 *** | | | 0.10 *** |
| Government performed badly on education | | 0.15 *** | 0.10 *** | | | 0.10 *** | | | |
| Your present living conditions are bad or very bad | | | | 0.11 *** | 0.06 ** | 0.03 | | | |
| Your living conditions are worse or much worse than others' | | | | 0.06 ** | 0.02 | | | | |
| Lived poverty index | | | | 0.06 *** | 0.07 *** | 0.04 ** | | | 0.04 ** |
| Trust the president: not at all or just a little | | | | | | | 0.16 *** | 0.10 *** | 0.08 ** |
| Disapprove of the performance of the president | | | | | | | 0.30 *** | 0.23 *** | 0.19 *** |
| Pseudo R-squared | 0.21 | 0.13 | 0.26 | 0.05 | 0.23 | 0.27 | 0.17 | 0.29 | 0.30 |

Dependent variable is close to or vote for UPND (dummy variable).
All independent variables are dummy variables except for the lived poverty index, which scores from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 4.
Coefficients are marginal effects on a probit regression.

Table A2 (in the Appendix) reports similar modelling for support for the PF in 2009, when it was the major opposition party challenging the then incumbent MMD. The results of the model are very similar to the results for the UPND in 2017. Across Zambia as a whole, ethnicity is a powerful predictor of support for opposition parties, even when controlling for party or presidential attributes, living conditions and so on. This finding might not apply to voters in Lusaka, studied by Resnick, but it seems that voters in Lusaka are not representative of voters across Zambia as a whole. The regression models reported in Tables 5 and A2 contrast with those reported by Hoffman and Long (2013), who found that in Ghana, the effects of ethnicity largely disappeared when variables were included measuring party attributes. This is not the case in Zambia.

These regression models indicate that ethnicity is not simply a proxy for evaluations of government (or the president). On their own, however, they do not allow us to distinguish whether the correlation between ethnicity and partisan preference is due to ethnic identity per se or (for example) expectations of patronage. Afrobarometer surveys do include a variable that allows us to measure ethnic injustice. Every respondent is asked whether he or she considers that his or her ethnic group is treated fairly. As early as 2005 it was clear that Tonga and Lozi voters – who were disproportionately UPND supporters – considered that the economic condition of their ethnic group was much worse than for other ethnic groups, that their ethnic group had much less political influence than others, and that the government discriminated against them. Support for the UPND was higher among Tonga and Lozi voters who identified this ethnic injustice than among Tonga and Lozi voters who did not, but the effect was not very large. Even before 2011, PF-supporting Bemba-speaking voters did not share this sense of being ethnic outsiders.

Given evidence that both ethnicity and party (and presidential) attributes matter, to some extent separately, we can distinguish the support bases for the UPND and PF in terms of four categories of voters. For the UPND, supporters may be part of the UPND's ethnic coalition (as of 2017) and be critical of the performance of the PF government and president; they might be part of the ethnic coalition but not critical of the government and president (these might be called 'ethnic loyalists', in that they remain loyal to the party despite not sharing its criticisms of the government); they might be critical of the government and president, but not part of the UPND's ethnic coalition; and they might hypothetically be neither critical of the PF nor part of the UPND's ethnic coalition (perhaps because they expect better patronage if the UPND is elected despite not being dissatisfied with the PF). Table 6 shows the composition of the UPND's support base in 2017, divided into these four categories. Dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the PF government performance is measured

using the variable for performance managing the economy. Table 7 presents similar data for the PF in 2017, using Bemba ethnicity as a measure of the PF's ethnic support base and satisfaction (rather than dissatisfaction) with government performance. Tables 6 and 7 also report (within parentheses) the proportion of the total number of voters in this category who report a preference for the party (in italics) and the proportion of the total electorate in this cell (in bold).[6]

*Table 6: UPND support base, 2017*

| | Part of UPND ethnic coalition | Outside of UPND ethnic coalition | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dissatisfied with PF performance | 64% (*66%*, **25%**) | 23% (*15%*, **38%**) | 87% (*36%*, **63%**) |
| Not dissatisfied with PF performance | 6% (*25%*, **6%**) | 6% (*6%*, **31%**) | 12% (*9%*, **37%**) |
| Total | 70% (*59%*, **31%**) | 30% (*11%*, **69%**) | 100% (*26%*, **100%**) |

*Table 7: PF support base, 2017*

| | Part of PF ethnic base | Outside of PF ethnic base | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfied with PF performance | 18% (*75%*, **11%**) | 31% (*63%*, **23%**) | 49% (*67%*, **34%**) |
| Not satisfied with PF performance | 18% (*50%*, **16%**) | 33% (*31%*, **49%**) | 51% (*36%*, **66%**) |
| Total | 36% (*60%*, **28%**) | 64% (*41%*, **72%**) | 100% (*46%*, **100%**) |

Both parties have a core ethnic support base comprising about 30 percent of the electorate. Tables 6 and 7 seem to suggest that the PF mobilises its core ethnic

[66] Note that the category 'dissatisfied' in Table 7 is not identical to 'not satisfied' in Table 8. Not satisfied in Table 8 includes people who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. These people are included under 'not dissatisfied' in Table 7.

support base more effectively than the UPND does its base. The proportion of satisfied Bemba-speaking voters who declare a preference for the PF is larger (at 75%) than the share of dissatisfied members of the Tonga, Lozi and related ethnic groups who declare a preference for the UPND. This difference is probably a result of the understatement of support for the UPND in the survey. In all likelihood, the PF and UPND are similarly effective at mobilizing their core ethnic bases. Given that there is much more dissatisfaction with the government's performance among Bemba-speaking voters than there is satisfaction among Tonga, Lozi and related voters, this is a success for the PF. The PF succeeds in retaining the support of many dissatisfied Bemba-speaking voters, i.e. it relies more heavily on ethnic loyalists who remain loyal despite dissatisfaction.

The parties differ in their success among members of other ethnic groups. Two-thirds of the PF's declared support (in the survey) comes from outside of its core ethnic base, but only one-third of the UPND's (declared) support comes from outside its core, ethnic base. The UPND support base comprises almost entirely people who report that they are dissatisfied with the PF government's performance; most of these are members of pro-UPND ethnic groups, but some are not. The PF support base, in contrast, comprises both people who are satisfied with the government's performance and people who are not, among diverse ethnic groups as well as among its core Bemba-speaking support base. Many of the PF's supporters were very critical of the PF government's performance, with more than half saying also that it had performed badly in terms of job creation, providing water and sanitation, and ensuring that everyone had enough to eat.

These data reveal the challenges facing the two parties in terms of retaining or expanding their support. To win at least half of the vote, a party needs to expand its support beyond its core ethnic constituencies. The PF has done this, in part by gaining and then retaining the support of urban voters on the Copperbelt (many of whom are Bemba-speaking) and Lusaka. The PF has done well in retaining support even among voters dissatisfied with its performance. The UPND, by comparison, has failed to make sufficient inroads into the key category of voters who are dissatisfied with the government but outside of either party's core ethnic base. Outside of its ethnic base, the UPND has failed to convert dissatisfaction with the PF government into support for the opposition UPND.

# Changes over time

The Afrobarometer surveys also provide data on changes in voters' preferences over time. These are longitudinal data on the electorate as a whole, not on individual voters. A full analysis of voters would require a panel study, i.e. a survey that collected data over time from a fixed sample (or panel) of voters. This would enable us to track when individual voters defect from one party to another and then to explain why voters defect, in terms of either what voters themselves say or the factors that correlate with such shifts. There are no panel data on voters in Zambia (or in any part of Africa).

Survey data since 1999 tracks broadly the trends in voting behaviour revealed in actual election results. Support for the MMD declined and then collapsed in the face of the rise of the UPND and PF as effective opposition parties. The PF succeeded in marginalizing the older UPND in the early 2000s, but in the 2010s the UPND expanded its support as the opposition in what had become a two-party system. By the end of 2014, as the presidential by-election showed, support for the UPND and PF was running neck-and-neck.

The 2000s were a crucial period of realignment in Zambian politics, with the rise of the PF and its eclipse of the UPND (Larmer and Fraser, 2007; Cheeseman and Hinfelaar, 2009; Resnick, 2014). In Afrobarometer surveys, preference for the PF surged in 2005 and 2009 to 2013, whilst support for the UPND stagnated or even declined (see Table A1 in the Appendix). Table 8 reports the results of models of support for the PF and UPND using data from the 2005 and 2009 surveys. In both 2005 and 2009, Tonga voters were much more likely to support the UPND (although this was not true of other ethnic groups which later became part of the UPND's core ethnic constituency). The correlation between distrusting the president and preferring the UPND remained unchanged between the two surveys. The effect on partisan preference of being critical of the government's performance in economic management changed, however, between these two surveys. In 2005, dissatisfaction with the government's performance fed into support for the UPND. By 2009, this was no longer the case. The 2005 model of UPND support explains 26 percent of the variance, but the R-squared drops to 13 percent in the 2009 model. In contrast, the model for support for the PF improves dramatically over this same time period. In 2005, none of the independent variables were very strong predictors of support for the PF. By 2009, however, the effects of speaking Bemba, being dissatisfied with the government's economic management and being distrustful of the president were all significant and strong. In short, Table 8 confirms that the PF eclipsed the UPND as the opposition by, first, consolidating its Bemba constituency, and secondly

capturing the support of voters who were discontented with the government (at least, those who were outside of the UPND's core ethnic constituency).

*Table 8: Summary models of support for the UPND and PF, 2005 and 2009*

| | UPND 2005 | PF 2005 | UPND 2009 | PF 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tonga | 0.39 *** | | 0.40 *** | |
| Bemba | | 0.12 *** | | 0.37 *** |
| Agree that the government mismanaged the economy | 0.09 ** | Not significant | Not significant | 0.15 *** |
| Living conditions | Not significant | -0.04 * | Not significant | Not significant |
| Not trust the president | 0.11 ** | 0.06 ** | 0.09 *** | 0.18 *** |
| Pseudo R-squared | 0.26 | 0.05 | 0.13 | 0.18 |

Table 8 combined with Tables 4 and 5 show that the basis of the PF's rise and enduring support has been both its success in mobilizing and retaining the support of Bemba-speaking voters and its success in mobilizing the support of other voters who were discontented with the MMD government and then holding onto much of this support even when the PF became the party of government and its performance failed to satisfy many of its erstwhile supporters.

What is not clear from Tables 4 and 8 is the achievement of a resurgent UPND in expanding its support base after its eclipse by the PF, most clearly in the 2011 elections (see Beardsworth, forthcoming). Not all of the ethnic groups that were clearly pro-UPND in 2017 had always been clearly pro-UPND. The Afrobarometer samples are not large enough to infer with great confidence any clear patterns, but it seems likely that voters in some ethnic groups swung between parties over time. The survey data suggest, for example, that support for the UPND in 2009 may have been lower among Lozi, Kaonde and Lunda voters, because these voters defected from the UPND before later returning to it. As Gadjanova (2017) shows, the PF appealed to Lozi voters with vague promises of addressing the status of the Lozi (or Barotse).

Afrobarometer data from 2009 suggest that Lozi MMD supporters initially defected to the UPND and then swung behind the PF. Conversely, Chewa voters (mostly in the Eastern Province) show up as strongly pro-MMD in Afrobarometer surveys up to 2013, then pro-UPND in 2014, but by 2017 had swung behind the PF. The successes of the UPND in expanding its support and the PF in retaining its, was due in part to their success in constructing multi-ethnic support bases, drawing groups of supporters away from the MMD.

As of 2017, it might seem that Zambia has settled into a competitive but stable two-party system, with few voters expressing much interest in any party besides the PF and UPND. This interpretation seems to be supported by data from the Afrobarometer surveys on 'partisan identification'. As in many multi-party democracies with relatively stable party systems, many Zambian voters say that they feel 'close' to one or other party as well as having a preference for it. In all seven Afrobarometer surveys in Zambia, respondents were asked 'Do you feel close to any particular political party?' This question is widely used to measure 'partisan identification', i.e. the existence of strong and enduring ties or loyalty to a particular party. Overall, the proportion of respondents admitting to feeling close to one or other party rose from less than 40 percent in 1999 and 2003 to about 50 percent in the subsequent five surveys. The rising proportion probably reflects the rise of strong opposition parties and the ensuing competitiveness of elections. In 1999, Afrobarometer found almost no respondents who reported being close to any party other than the MMD. In the 2003 and 2005 surveys, growing numbers of voters declared that they felt close to the UPND. In 2009, the proportion reporting closeness to the PF rose dramatically, overtaking the UPND, and almost catching up with the MMD. By 2013, the proportion of voters feeling close to the MMD had collapsed, whilst the PF seemed to have become hegemonic. The 2014 and 2017 surveys showed a resurgence in feeling close to the UPND (see Table A3 in the Appendix), and it is likely that the scale of the resurgence is understated in the surveys.

It is not clear, however, what partisan identification means in the context of a country like Zambia. The concept of partisan identification was born in the USA in the 1950s and then travelled to other advanced capitalist democracies in order to explain the stability over time in voters' choices. Partisan identification referred to deep-rooted loyalties to political parties, typically formed in childhood through socialization in the home. American voters tend to have long-term, stable identities as Democrats or Republicans, and will generally vote for their party's candidate in any election. Voters will sometimes be swayed by individual candidates or issues, and defect from their party, but such defections will generally be temporary. Very rarely, the electorate will realign as a result of some major political shift, as in the USA in the

1930s (around the New Deal) and in the American South from the 1960s (when white voters swung from the Democrats to the Republicans) (Green, Palmquist and Schickler, 2002). In some African countries there is strong evidence of similar partisanship. For example, in South Africa the struggle for democracy marked a critical conjuncture during which many voters developed a deep loyalty to the African National Congress that endured despite discontent with individual leaders (Mattes, Taylor and Africa, 1999; Mattes, 2014). Norris and Mattes (2013) use partisan identification (i.e. closeness to a party) as their dependent variable in their analysis of ethnic voting in Africa.

In Zambia, however, it is far from clear that there is any comparably *enduring* loyalty to political parties. The abrupt collapse of loyalty to the MMD and rapid rise in 'closeness' to the PF might suggest an underlying realignment, but it is more likely that the Afrobarometer questions about 'closeness' were closer to the concept of *support* than to any enduring or deep-rooted loyalty.[7] Measured closeness to the UPND is more likely to reflect a deeper loyalty, in that the party's support base survived the transition from one leader to another (from founder Anderson Mazoka to Hakainde Hichilema in 2006) and has endured despite repeated electoral defeats. In addition, the UPND probably draws on a history of distinctive partisanship in Southern Province, dating back to the nationalist movement of the 1950s and specifically the leadership of Harry Nkumbula (Macola, 2010).

In both 2013 and 2017, almost one in three respondents reported feeling close to the PF. This was the same proportion as had reported feeling close to the MMD in 1999. Just as the MMD's support collapsed in the 2000s, so the PF's support is likely to be fragile rather than deep-rooted. In the 2000s, MMD leaders defected to the PF (and UPND), and were often re-elected under their new party banner. Just like the MMD in the 2000s, the PF bears the burden of widespread dissatisfaction with government policies. It seems that the PF preserves its support base in part through the deployment of patronage, primarily to provincial and local elites. The PF seems more like a coalition than a party. Without a charismatic leader (as was Sata), the PF remains vulnerable to defection by its erstwhile provincial and local leaders and by voters.

[7] Very few respondents (only 30 out of 1200 in 2017) reported being close to one party but voting for another.

# Conclusion: What we know, and what we don't know

The survey data suggest that ethnicity remains important in shaping voting behaviour and has perhaps become more important over time. The UPND draws support from members of its core ethnic constituency even when they say that they are not dissatisfied with the PF government's performance, whilst the PF draws support from members of its core ethnic constituency even when they express discontent with the PF government's performance. The models of voting behaviour reveal that ethnicity is important in the Zambian case to a greater extent than in Ghana, for example. Non-ethnic factors are far from irrelevant in Zambia, however. Support for the UPND is stronger and support for the PF is weaker among voters of all ethnic groups who are dissatisfied with the PF government. Precisely how ethnic and non-ethnic factors combine, and how and why ethnicity 'works', is hard to discern from the survey data.

In other respects, also, there are limits to what we can learn from attitude surveys, especially when they do not ask all the questions to which we would like answers. Afrobarometer surveys provide important insights into voters' attitudes, and how these have changed since the first survey in 1999. But the surveys do not probe in detail voters' perceptions of the various parties and their leaders, and what sways voters when they make their choices. Most importantly, the surveys tell us very little about the ways that voters' relationship with political parties and presidential candidates is mediated through provincial and local political elites. In countries where voters expect that their representatives will deliver investment and services to their constituents (see e.g. Cheeseman, 2016, on Kenya), their loyalties might lie with their local leaders rather than any particular political party. The fact that MPs who defect to another party are often re-elected might indicate that they are adept at following their voters, but it might also mean that voters follow their local leaders. Further research is required, especially at the provincial level, to explain how and why voters seem to swing from one party to another. For example, why did MMD voters in Western Province defect first to UPND, then back to MMD in 2006, then to PF in 2011, then back to the UPND? How and why did MMD voters in Eastern Province defect to the PF in the 2010s? How did former MMD voters in North Western choose between the PF and UPND?

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# Appendix

*Table A1: Reported partisan preference, 2003-2017*

| | July/Aug 2005 (%) | June 2009 (%) | Jan/Feb 2013 (%) | Oct 2014 (%) | April 2017 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MMD | **26** | **24** | 6 | 8 | <1 |
| PF | 13 | 27 | **47** | **35** | **45** |
| UPND | 21 | 17 | 9 | 19 | 24 |
| UNIP | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | <1 |
| FDD | 3 | <1 | <1 | <13 | 2 |
| NAREP | - | - | 2 | 2 | <1 |
| Other | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| None/refused/don't know | 32 | 29 | 32 | 32 | 26 |
| Total | | | | | |
| N | 1200 | 1200 | 1200 | 1194 | 1200 |

If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?
Source: Afrobarometer: 2005 Q99, 2009 Q97, 2013 Q99, 2014 Q99, 2017: Q99. This was not asked in 1999 or 2003. Support for the incumbent party is shown in **bold**.

*Table A2: Modelling support for PF, 2009*

| | Model A | Model B | Model C | Model D | Model E | Model F | Model G | Model H | Model I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bemba | 0.38 *** | | 0.38 *** | | 0.38 *** | 0.38 *** | | 0.34 *** | 0.35 *** |
| Government performed badly on job creation | | 0.11 * | Not significant | | | | | | |
| Government performed badly on managing the economy | | 0.15 * | 0.16 *** | | | 0.17 *** | | | 0.11 ** |
| Government performed badly on education | | 0.09 * | 0.1 *** | | | 0.1 *** | | | |
| Your present living conditions are bad or very bad | | | | 0.06 * | | Not significant | | | |
| Your living conditions are worse or much worse than others' | | | | Not significant | Not significant | Not significant | | | |
| Lived poverty index | | | | -0.04 * | Not significant | Not significant | | | |
| Trust the president: not at all or just a little | | | | | | | 0.16 *** | 0.16 *** | 0.14 *** |
| Disapprove of the performance of the president | | | | | | | 0.2 *** | 0.17 *** | 0.14 *** |
| Pseudo R-squared | 0.11 | 0.05 | 0.16 | <0.01 | 0.12 | 0.16 | 0.1 | 0.18 | 0.19 |
| Dependent variable is close to or vote for PF (dummy variable).<br>All independent variables are dummy variables except for the lived poverty index, which scores from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 4.<br>Coefficients are marginal effects on a probit regression. | | | | | | | | | |

*Table A3: Reported partisan identification, 1999-2017*

| | Oct/Nov 1999 (%) | May/June 2003 (%) | July/ Aug 2005 (%) | June 2009 (%) | Jan/Feb 2013 (%) | Oct 2014 (%) | April 2017 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MMD | **31** | **25** | **20** | **22** | 5 | 6 | <1 |
| PF | - | 1 | 7 | 19 | **32** | **26** | **31** |
| UPND | 1 | 7 | 18 | 12 | 7 | 14 | 18 |
| Other | 4 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <2 |
| None/refused/don't know | 64 | 61 | 49 | 46 | 54 | 51 | 49 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| *N* | *1198* | *1198* | *1200* | *1199* | *1200* | *1194* | *1200* |
| Do you feel close to any particular political party?<br>Source: Afrobarometer, 1999 (pidcls, pidwin), 2003 (Q87a), 2005 (Q86), 2009 (Q85), 2013 (Q89A/B), 2014 (Q90a/b), 2017 (Q88a/b).<br>Identification with the incumbent party is shown in **bold**. | | | | | | | |