

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white ballot paper, poised to insert it into a ballot box. The background is blurred, showing other people and lights, suggesting a public voting station.

2024 SADC Elections in Review

**An Analysis of
Electoral Trends and
Governance Shifts
in Southern Africa**

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2024 SADC Elections in Review: An Analysis of Electoral Trends and Governance Shifts in Southern Africa

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INTRODUCTION

In 2024, five Southern African countries; Botswana, Mozambique, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa held national and provincial elections. These states, as signatories to the African Charter on Democracy¹ and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Treaty,² are legally obligated to conduct regular elections. They are also required to promote shared political values and democratic principles through legitimate and effective institutions.³

The 2024 electoral cycle unfolded amid growing public dissatisfaction with governance, persistent economic instability and mounting demands for political accountability.⁴ These elections therefore offered a critical moment for assessing the state of democracy, political contestation and institutional trust across the region. Remarkably, these regional elections occurred in a year when 17 African countries were having elections⁵ and over 50 per cent of the world's population was voting in various national elections, making 2024 a defining year for global democratic renewal or retreat.⁶

This report presents a comparative analysis of the 2024 elections in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa. While Mauritius also held elections, the scope of this report does not include an analysis on Mauritius. The report

assesses the legal and political frameworks governing the electoral process in these four countries, paying special attention to the management and administration of the election. It also looks at the role and performance of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), the credibility of election outcomes and post-election developments.

It also explores the implications of these elections for South Africa's upcoming Local Government Elections, with a focus on campaign strategies under the emerging Government of National Unity (GNU) and the repositioning of political parties in anticipation of shifting electoral dynamics after the ANC's recent experience of a decline in support.⁷

Findings from the 2024 electoral cycle reveal stark contrasts across the region. Countries such as Botswana and South Africa⁸ experienced relatively peaceful elections, demonstrating slight democratic maturity and a higher level of institutional stability. In contrast, Mozambique faced incidents of electoral violence and widespread concerns over the independence and integrity of its EMB, leading to a noticeable decline in public trust. A recurring theme across all four countries is the persistent gap between well-established legal frameworks and their practical implementation, particularly in ensuring inclusive political participation. Notably, despite regional commitments to gender and youth inclusion, voter turnout among women and young people remained disproportionately low, pointing to systemic barriers that continue to undermine democratic inclusivity. In Namibia, SADC witnessed a woman being elected through the ballot box which is a progressive step.⁹

Methodology employed in this report is a comparative analysis of international, regional, and national legal instruments governing elections across the SADC region, with particular emphasis on countries that held general elections. This is complemented by an evaluation of electoral

1 African Union *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance* (2007).

2 Southern African Development Community, Treaty of the Southern African Development Community (1992).

3 *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance* (n 1).

4 M Lewis 'South Africa's watershed election' (2024) *Journal of Democracy* <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exclusive/south-africas-watershed-election/> (accessed 29 July 2025), Electoral Commission of South Africa 'Results Dashboard' (2024) <https://results.elections.org.za/dashboards/npe/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

5 Yiaga Africa '2024 elections in Africa' <https://yiaga.org/2024-elections-in-africa/> (Yiaga Africa, accessed 17 July 2025).

6 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) 'The 2024 global elections supercycle' (2024) available at <https://www.idea.int/initiatives/the-2024-global-elections-supercycle> (accessed 16 July 2025).

7 J Netshitenzhe 'A Strategic Overview of Election 2024' in S Booysen (ed) *MISTRA South Africa Report* (Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection, 2024).

8 S Booysen 'Trends in South Africa's 2024 Elections and post-election coalitions: A conflicted new political world arises' in Booysen (n 7).

9 Electoral Commission of Namibia 'Welcome to the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN)' (2025) available at <https://www.ecn.na/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

management, administration, outcomes and trends in political participation.

Moreover, the analysis incorporates insights from SADC Election Observation Missions, civil society reports and national observer groups to provide a grounded understanding of the region's electoral landscape.

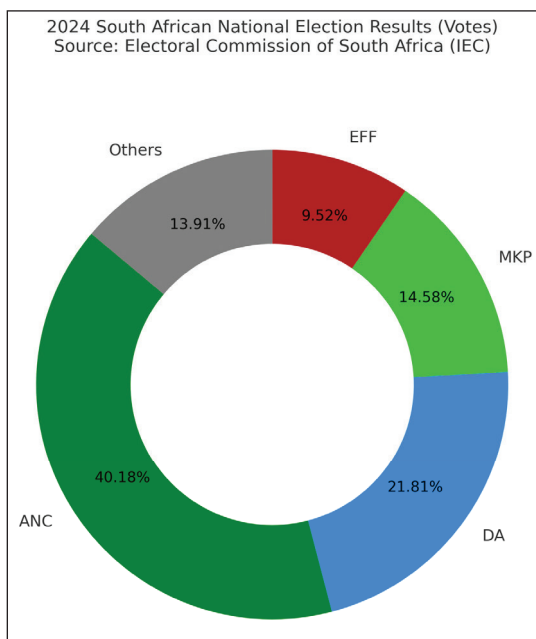
In sum, this report provides a critical narrative of the 2024 national elections, offering insights into the broader trajectory of governance and democracy in Southern Africa. By highlighting both progress and persistent challenges, it aims to contribute to informed policy-making, electoral reform and more inclusive democratic practices across the region.

1. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ANALYSES OF 2024 ELECTIONS IN SADC MEMBER STATES

The following section presents a detailed, country-specific analysis of each of the aforementioned states, focusing on their respective electoral environments, legal, institutional frameworks and the broader political dynamics that shaped their 2024 elections.



SOUTH AFRICA



Overview of the 2024 General Elections in South Africa

The seventh national democratic elections of South Africa were held on 29 May 2024. For the first time since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) lost its parliamentary majority, securing only 40.18 per cent of the national vote. The Democratic

Alliance (DA) followed with 21.81 per cent, while the newly formed Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) party garnered 14.58 per cent.¹⁰ The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) received 9.52 per cent, with the remaining 13.91 per cent of the votes divided among smaller parties. This election marked a turning point in South Africa's political trajectory, with the emergence of a multiparty government.¹¹

Following the election results, the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) appointed a task team to negotiate with other parliamentary parties.¹² On 22 June 2024, the ANC announced the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) comprising 10 political parties, including the ANC, DA, PA, IFP, GOOD, PAC, FF+, UDM, Rise Mzansi, and Al Jama-ah. Collectively, these parties represent 70 per cent of the national vote. As signatories to the Statement of Intent (SOI),

10 Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) '2024 National and Provincial Elections Results Dashboard' (2024) available at <https://results.elections.org.za/dashboards/npe/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

11 Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom 'ANC loses majority after 30 years' (2024) available at <https://www.freiheit.org/liberal-workshop-south-africa/anc-loses-majority-after-30-years> (accessed 16 July 2025).

12 Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 'Press releases: National Assembly elects Cyril Ramaphosa as President-elect' 14 June 2024 <https://www.parliament.gov.za/press-releases/national-assembly-elects-cyril-ramaphosa-president-elect> (accessed 16 July 2025).

all GNU members committed to prioritising the national interest over partisan objectives.¹³

On 14 June 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa was re-elected by the National Assembly for a second term under section 86 of the Constitution. Members of GNU parties were appointed to key parliamentary and administrative roles, with a mandate to balance governance and oversight responsibilities.¹⁴

Electoral Legal Framework

The 2024 elections were governed by a series of legal instruments including the Constitution of South Africa,¹⁵ the Electoral Act as amended,¹⁶ and the Electoral Commission Act.¹⁷ The amended EAA, passed in response to a Constitutional Court ruling, introduced a mixed electoral system whereby half of the National Assembly seats were allocated through regional constituencies open to parties and independent candidates.¹⁸ While South Africa's electoral legal framework is robust and constitutionally grounded, its strength was put to the test during the 2024 elections as high-profile disputes emerged, challenging the system's capacity for impartial adjudication.

Electoral Dynamics and emerging challenges

Pre-Electoral Landscape

The pre-election period was marked by heightened political competition, legal disputes, and questions over electoral readiness.¹⁹ The inclusion of independent candidates enabled for the first time by the Electoral Amendment Act created confusion among voters due to the complexity of the new triple-ballot system. Political pluralism expanded, with 70 parties and 11 independent candidates contesting the elections, yet voter education on the new system

remained limited.²⁰ The emergence of new parties such as MK, Action SA, Rise Mzansi, and BOSA alongside traditional ones like the ANC and DA, reshaped South Africa's political landscape. While the ANC, EFF and DA maintained national reach, parties like MK and PA gained traction in specific regions, especially among Zulu-speaking communities and Coloured voters.²¹

Digital Safeguards and Anti-Disinformation Measures

To address misinformation, the IEC partnered with Meta, Google, and Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) to launch the Real411 platform, a tool for flagging disinformation, hate speech, and incitement to violence.²² Though non-binding, Real411 offered a mechanism for public accountability, overseen by retired Justice Zak Yacoob. These digital safeguards were part of a broader strategy to build electoral resilience in a volatile political climate.

Judicial Oversight and Constitutional Safeguards

The most notable dispute involved the MK Party and former President Jacob Zuma.²³ The IEC disqualified Zuma based on Section 47(1) (e) of the Constitution, which bars individuals sentenced to over 12 months in prison from standing for Parliament. Although the Electoral Court overturned this decision, the Constitutional Court reinstated it, confirming that Zuma's 15-month contempt sentence disqualified him from candidacy. This legal battle underscored the judiciary's pivotal role in upholding constitutional principles and safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process. The Constitutional Court's intervention reinforced the supremacy of constitutional norms over political expediency.

13 Electoral Commission of Namibia (n 9).

14 Electoral Commission of Namibia (n 9).

15 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996.

16 Electoral Act 73 of 1998 as amended by Electoral Amendment Act 1 of 2023.

17 Electoral Commission Act 51 of 1996.

18 Electoral Act 73 (n 16).

19 South African Government 'Electoral Commission on progress made in preparation for 2024 National Elections' 16 April 2024, <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/electoral-commission-progress-made-preparation-2024-national-and-provincial> (accessed 16 July 2025).

20 Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 'Explainer: The three ballot system and amendment of S24A of the Electoral Act' 3 May 2024, <https://www.eisa.org/the-three-ballot-system-and-amendment-of-section-24a-of-the-electoral-act/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

21 Booysen (n 8).

22 Electoral Commission of South Africa 'Electoral Commission partners with social media giants to combat disinformation in 2024 National and Provincial Elections' Electoral Commission (South Africa), 22 May 2024, <https://www.elections.org.za/content/About-Us/News/Electoral-Commission-partners-with-social-media-giants-to-combat-disinformation-in-2024-National-and-Provincial-Elections/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

23 *Umkhonto WeSizwe Political Party and Another v Electoral Commission of South Africa and Others* (0015/24EC) [2024] ZAEC 5 (Electoral Court, 26 April 2024).

and bolstered public trust in the independence and credibility of both the courts and the IEC. Though the judiciary's handling of these disputes affirmed the rule of law, public perceptions of fairness and trust in the electoral system remain uneven, particularly in light of voter turnout, party fragmentation, and post-election power-sharing.

The judiciary played a critical role in shaping the legal framework leading up to the 2024 elections.²⁴ Most notably, the Constitutional Court's decision to uphold the IEC's disqualification of Jacob Zuma reaffirmed the primacy of constitutional principles over political interests.²⁵ These timely judicial interventions provided legal certainty in a politically charged environment and bolstered the credibility of the IEC's decisions. In doing so, the courts reinforced public trust in the independence and integrity of South Africa's electoral institutions.²⁶

Election Day Dynamics

The IEC managed the elections in line with its constitutional and statutory mandates. All contesting parties and independents signed the Electoral Code of Conduct, committing to peaceful and transparent elections. Although the IEC conducted nationwide awareness campaigns, observers noted that its voter education efforts were insufficient in preparing the electorate for the new system.²⁷

Access to polling stations was generally unhindered, but operational challenges emerged due to malfunctioning Voter Management Devices (VMDs), leading to delays and long queues in several areas. These issues highlighted the need

for enhanced digital infrastructure and public trust in electoral technologies.²⁸

Despite logistical difficulties, the IEC maintained transparency in vote counting and results aggregation. The commission adhered to both ACDEG standards and international electoral norms. Observers noted improvements in open data practices and timely result publication. However, the triple-ballot system strained administrative resources and confused voters, especially in rural areas.²⁹

Voter Turnout and Participation

Out of 27,782,081 registered voters, overall turnout was approximately 58.6 per cent, a decline from 66 per cent in 2019. This decline illustrates increasing voter apathy and disengagement. Women made up 55.25 per cent of registered voters. However, youth participation remained low, with only 27.1 per cent of 18–19-year-olds and 48.6 per cent of 20–29-year-olds registered, compared to 93.4 per cent for 50–59-year-olds. Disparities were also seen across racial groups, with white voter turnout 16 per cent higher than in black-majority areas. Voter turnout in the 2024 South African general elections was approximately 58.6 per cent, marking a decline from the 66 per cent turnout recorded in 2019. This decrease reflects growing voter apathy and disengagement, particularly among younger demographics³⁰

Women's Participation and Representation

Although women constituted the majority of registered voters in 2024 accounting for 55.25 per cent of the electoral roll their high participation did not translate into equitable representation. This disconnect between women's voting power and their presence in political leadership reflects persistent structural barriers. International IDEA's 2024 Africa Women's Political Participation Barometer warns that without robust enforcement of gender quotas, symbolic participation may continue to mask systemic exclusion.³¹ Research also highlights that

24 African Union Election Observation 'Final report of the AUEOM mission to the 29 May 2024 general election in South Africa' June 2024 https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44062-doc-Final_Report_General_Elections_-_South_Africa_2024.pdf 12.

25 *Electoral Commission of South Africa v Umkhonto Wesizwe Political Party and Others* BCLR 869 (CC)

26 Booysen (n 8).

27 Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC countries 'Preliminary statement of the Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC countries (ECF-SADC) on the national and provincial elections of the Republic of South Africa held on 29 May 2024' 31 May 2024 <https://www.ecfsadc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ECF-SADC-EOM-Preliminary-Statement-RSA-2024-final.pdf> 4.

28 African Union Election Observation 'Preliminary statement of the AUEOM mission to the 29 May 2024 general elections' 31 May 2024 <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-aeom-sa-preliminary-statement-2024-31-may-2024-1.pdf> 9 (accessed 16 July 2025).

29 Electoral Commission Act 51 (n 17).

30 Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) '2024 National and Provincial Elections: Final Turnout Report'.

31 International IDEA (2024). *Africa Women's*

internal party dynamics often disadvantage female candidates through male-dominated candidate selection processes, inadequate campaign financing, and entrenched patriarchal norms.³² South Africa's proportional representation system, though favourable to gender inclusion in theory, depends heavily on party commitment to gender equity an area where many parties continue to fall short.

Results Management and Transparency

The IEC ensured transparency in managing results. Real-time updates, media access, and civil society monitoring bolstered confidence in the outcome. Nonetheless, technical glitches and legal ambiguities surrounding independent candidates exposed systemic

Public Trust and Institutional Credibility

Public confidence in the IEC remained generally high, besides controversies such as the MK party case challenging perceptions of institutional impartiality.³³ The IEC's proactive communication and transparency efforts were widely praised, yet voter registration and awareness gaps persisted, particularly among the youth.³⁴

Post Election Developments: Governance and Political Landscape

Formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU)

The 2024 national elections marked a departure from single-party dominance, with the increased representation of both old and new parties and a more competitive political environment. While South Africa, under ANC led governance has operated as a multiparty democracy under a constitutional system for three decades, Afrobarometer surveys reveal that 70 per cent of citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with how democracy functions in the country.³⁵ Declining

voter participation and rising populism, suggesting that voters are seeking alternatives.³⁶

The GNU has been described as an inclusive government incorporating a diverse range of political parties, ideologies, and perspectives, to bring together parties that are willing to cooperate in governance and share power, even beyond their individual electoral prospects.³⁷ Whilst prior research indicates that increased political representation when coupled with meaningful civic engagement enhances accountability mechanisms for both government and its entities, South Africa's GNU now approaches its first year of operation, with mixed results.³⁸ Although there has been some improvement in service delivery, the coalition has experienced significant fragmentation due to conflicting interests and ideologies.³⁹

The formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) marked the beginning of a new era of inclusive governance. However, ideological differences and policy disagreements have already tested the cohesion of the coalition. In some cases, voters continue to support the ANC not necessarily for its current policies, but out of a historical and sentimental attachment, viewing it as the party that led the struggle against apartheid.⁴⁰ Afrobarometer surveys⁴¹ suggest that while political representation has diversified, public satisfaction with democracy remains low, signalling the need for reforms in governance and service delivery.⁴²

Political Participation Barometer 2024.

32 International IDEA (2021). *The Role of Political Parties in Promoting Women's Political Participation in Africa*.

33 <https://sanef.org.za/iec-political-funding-symposium-flags-public-trust-crisis-in-sa/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

34 P Kariuki, I Khambule, LO Ofusori & M Mkhize, 'Youth Participation in Electoral Politics in South Africa Trends Patterns and Patterns' (2021) *ResearchGate*.

35 Afrobarometer 'South Africa' (2000-2021) <https://>

www.afrobarometer.org/countries/south-africa/ (accessed 16 July 2025).

36 S Booysen 'Accountability and representation in South Africa's 2024 elections, a reshaping of the political landscape' (2024) 2 *Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa*.

37 Booysen (n 36) 1.

38 Booysen (n 36) 3.

39 African National Congress 'Press Statement: ANC welcomes political parties to the government of national unity' <https://www.anc1912.org.za/anc-welcomes-political-parties-to-the-government-of-national-unity/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

40 B Makgale 'Limpopo Nuanced Opposition Changes Amid Gradual Attrition of Party Dominance' in S Booysen (ed) *MISTRA South Africa Report* Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection 2024.

41 Afrobarometer (n 35).

42 Electoral Commission Act 51 (n 17).

Gender Representation under the GNU

Despite progress in gender equality, women's representation declined slightly under the GNU, from 46 per cent in 2020 to 43 per cent. Only 31 out of 77 ministerial roles are currently held by women. According to International IDEA, the GMU framework contributed to a slight erosion of diverse representation in Parliament. The ANC (53 per cent) and EFF (54 per cent) surpassed gender parity in Parliament, whereas the DA (32 per cent), MK (35 per cent), and IFP (29 per cent) fell behind. These figures highlight uneven commitment to gender inclusion and underscore the potential value of legal quotas. According to the International IDEA report, the Government of National Unity (GNU) electoral model in 2024 slightly hindered political diversity by limiting smaller parties' visibility and constraining gender parity efforts. This was evident in the uneven representation of women and underperformance of minor parties in the National Assembly.⁴³ ⁴⁴ As such, the decline in women's representation under the GNU raises urgent questions about the sufficiency of voluntary quotas and the need for enforceable legislative mechanisms to achieve genuine gender parity.

Looking forward: 2026 Local Government Elections (LGEs)

The 2026 LGEs in South Africa will be a key indicator of the nation's evolving political landscape. Given the diverse ideologies within the GNU, the approach to campaigning in the 2026 LGEs presents unique challenges.⁴⁵ While the GNU operates on shared governance principles, collective campaigning may prove difficult due to differing party ideologies and constituencies. As a result each political party is likely to maintain its distinct identity to appeal to its base. Parties may opt to campaign individually but enter into pre-election agreements, particularly in metros where no single party expects a majority. This strategy

allows parties to retain their identity while preparing for potential coalition governance.

Historical data from the 2016 and 2021 local elections reveal an emerging pattern of coalition governments in major metropolitan area.⁴⁶ Both the Johannesburg and Tshwane metros experienced coalition governments due to no party achieving an outright majority.⁴⁷ This necessitated alliances, often leading to unstable governance.⁴⁸ Similarly in Ekurhuleni coalition arrangements were required, highlighting the fragmented political support in urban centers.⁴⁹ The 2026 LGE is likely to continue this trend, with parties negotiating coalitions to secure governance in key metros.

Political parties have already begun campaigning for the upcoming LGEs, with available data indicating a split between collective and individual campaigning strategies. The Progressive Caucus comprising the EFF, MK, ATM, NCC, and UAT was formed in 2024 and established the Progressive Caucus Charter (PCC).⁵⁰ This charter outlines a shared agenda for the 7th Parliament, emphasizing collaboration with progressive organizations to advance working-class interests.⁵¹ However, the cohesion of the Progressive Caucus remains uncertain. The MK Party and ATM have committed to joint political, community, and parliamentary initiatives (per a joint statement).⁵² Forum 4 Service Delivery (F4SD) formed a coalition partnership with ActionSA.⁵³ F4SD has chosen to hold a dual-membership and will campaign under the ActionSA banner for the local elections.⁵⁴ Given these dynamics, some degree of collective campaigning or at least coordinated strategies appears likely in the LGEs, even if full unity remains elusive.

43 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 'South Africa: Electoral System and Representation Analysis, 2024,' International IDEA Report, May 2025, <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/south-africa-electoral-system-and-representation-2024> (accessed 16 July 2025).

44 AM Tripp *omen and power in Africa: Norms, representation, and the state* (2023) Cambridge University Press.

45 Yiaga Africa (n 5).

46 M Pholoma and others 'The influence of unstable coalition governments in Gauteng metropolitan municipalities' (2024) *Journal of Local Government Research and Innovation*.

47 Pholoma and others (n 46).

48 As above.

49 As above.

50 Political Web 'The Charter of the Progressive Caucus' 18 July 2024 <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/the-charter-of-the-progressive-caucus> (accessed 16 July 2025).

51 As above.

52 *Politics Web* 'MKP and ATM agree to work together' 6 March 2025 <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/mkp-and-atm-agre-to-work-together> (accessed 16 July 2025).

53 *Mail and Guardian* 'ActionSA forms alliance with F4SD for 2026 local government elections'.

54 As above.

The MMA advocates for the IEC to adopt an Electoral Code to give full effect to the *Real411* framework, ahead of the 2026 LGEs. It is essential that the Electoral Code be developed urgently, especially given that campaigns are already in full swing and the current political climate is increasingly volatile, with a concerning rise in disinformation campaigns targeting migrants and refugees, who remain among the most vulnerable groups and lack political representation.⁵⁵

Lessons from Senegal

The 2024 formation of Senegal's F24 Movement of Vital Forces a coalition of 120 opposition parties and civil society organisations (CSOs) demonstrated the strength of strategic political unity in a fractured electoral landscape.⁵⁶ Mobilising against President Macky Sall's third-term bid, the F24 unified disillusioned citizens around clear grievances such as arbitrary arrests and democratic backsliding, successfully galvanising street-level resistance and coordinated political messaging.⁵⁷ By consolidating votes and presenting a cohesive alternative, the coalition proved the effectiveness of collective action. This model offers useful insights for South Africa, where the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGEs) may hinge on the ability of opposition forces to unite and offer credible alternatives to the ANC-led GNU.

MOZAMBIQUE

Overview of the 2024 General Elections in Mozambique

Mozambique, having gained independence from Portugal in 1975, has undergone significant political transformation from a single-party system

to a multi-party democracy.⁵⁸ The 2024 general elections, held on 9 October, marked the country's eighth general election since independence and the seventh under the multi-party system introduced in 1994 following the end of the civil war. These elections were conducted against a backdrop of mounting political tension and diminishing public trust in electoral institutions.⁵⁹

Voters were called to elect the President of the Republic, all 250 members of the Assembly of the Republic, as well as representatives for the ten provincial assemblies.⁶⁰ Four key political parties dominated the electoral landscape. The ruling party, FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), which has governed since independence, sought to retain power amid growing opposition. RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance), the former rebel movement turned political contender, and MDM (Movimento Democrático de Moçambique), a breakaway party from RENAMO formed in 2009, both challenged FRELIMO's dominance. A newer political force, PODEMOS (Optimist Party for the Development of Mozambique), also joined the race, rallying behind presidential candidate Venâncio Mondlane.⁶¹

Electoral Legal Framework

Mozambique's electoral process is shaped by both domestic legislation and international commitments. Domestically, the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique establishes the foundation for democratic governance, affirming that political power derives from the people.⁶²

55 South African Human Rights Commission *Report on Migration and Civil and Political Rights 2022–2023* (2023) <https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/SAHRC%20Migration%20and%20Civil%20and%20Political%20Rights%20-%202022-2023.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2025).

56 Africa News 'opponents form coalition in Senegal against Macky Sall's third term' 13 August 2024 <https://www.africanews.com/2023/04/17/opponents-form-coalition-in-senegal-against-macky-salls-of-third-term/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

57 As above.

58 Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung 'Mozambique's tortuous path to democracy' (2024) available at <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/52668/mozambiques-tortuous-path-to-democracy> (accessed 16 July 2025).

59 African Union *Preliminary Statement of the African Union Election Observation Mission to the 9 October 2024 General Elections in Mozambique* (2024) available at <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/2024mozambiqueelections> (accessed 21 June 2025).

60 Comissão Nacional de Eleições (CNE) 'Portal da Comissão Nacional de Eleições de Moçambique' (2025) available at <https://www.stae.org.mz/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

61 Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) *Mozambique: 2024 General Elections* (2024) available at <https://www.eisa.org/mz2024/> (accessed 16 July 2025).

62 Articles 1, 2, and 31.



Key electoral laws include the Electoral Law⁶³ governing presidential, parliamentary, and local elections; the Law on Political Parties,⁶⁴ the Law on Electoral Administration⁶⁵ which defines the roles of the National Election Commission (CNE) and electoral bodies; the Law on Local Elections (Law No. 3/2019); the Law on Voter Registration (Law No. 1/2013); and the Electoral Code of Conduct, which guides campaign ethics and prohibits fraud.

Internationally, Mozambique is a signatory to the ICCPR, the latter signed on 27 May 2010, ratified on 24 April 2018, and deposited on 9 May 2018.⁶⁶ It is also bound by the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (adopted in 2004), which commit member states to transparent, credible, and participatory elections. Additionally, Mozambique ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on 27 September 1993, affirming her commitment to uphold civil liberties, including the right to vote and participate in public affairs.

Electoral Dynamics and Emerging Challenges

Pre-Electoral Landscape

The pre-election period was marked by growing distrust in electoral institutions, opposition suppression, and public disillusionment. Despite the legal framework, opposition parties and civil society voiced concern over voter intimidation, unequal media access, and a lack of electoral reforms. The political environment was tense, with growing frustration over socioeconomic issues and government accountability.

Election Day Dynamics

The 2024 elections were marred by serious administrative and logistical deficiencies. The uneven distribution of polling stations, particularly in remote and opposition-supporting areas, limited voter access. In Zambezia Province, for example, 51 polling stations in Gile district opened late or remained closed for much of the day due to the non-delivery of essential voting materials. Similar disruptions occurred in Maganja da Costa, where six polling stations failed to open.

Observers noted that logistical failures were disproportionately concentrated in opposition strongholds, undermining perceptions of fairness and impartiality. Despite these setbacks, the elections proceeded in most areas under tense but controlled conditions.

Voter Turnout and Participation

Voter turnout in the 2024 elections was approximately 43.5 per cent, down from 51.8 per

⁶³ Electoral Law No. 7/2014 (2014).

⁶⁴ Law on Political Parties (Law No. 7/2013) (2013).

⁶⁵ Law No. 14/2014 (2014).

⁶⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (1966) & African Union *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance* (2007).

cent in 2019.⁶⁷ This marked decline is a reflection of deepening public disengagement. Factors contributing to low participation included electoral irregularities, voter intimidation (particularly in northern provinces), disinformation, and poor communication about legal reforms. Seasonal rains also hindered youth participation in many rural areas.

Election Management and Administration

The 2024 electoral process in Mozambique was marked by notable administrative and logistical deficiencies that adversely affected voter access and participation.⁶⁸ European Union Observation Mission (EU EOM) Observers pointed to an uneven distribution of polling stations, particularly in remote and opposition-leaning regions, limiting accessibility for significant portions of the electorate.⁶⁹ In addition, credible reports of voter intimidation especially in areas traditionally supportive of opposition parties further undermined the integrity of the process. These combined factors may have led to the de facto disenfranchisement of certain voter groups, raising serious concerns about equality of access and the inclusiveness of the election.⁷⁰

A salient example was observed in Zambezia Province, where logistical failures severely disrupted the voting process.⁷¹ In Gile district, 51 polling stations remained inoperative well into the afternoon due to the non-delivery of essential voting materials, including ballot boxes and papers.

Similarly, in Maganja da Costa district, only three out of nine polling stations were operational, with the remainder forced to suspend activities due to missing supplies. These disruptions were concentrated in regions identified as opposition strongholds, intensifying concerns over the impartiality and effectiveness of Mozambique's electoral management bodies in ensuring equitable electoral participation.⁷²

Public Trust and Institutional Credibility

The perceived mishandling of the elections by the EMBs significantly eroded public trust in Mozambique's electoral institutions.⁷³ Allegations of ballot manipulation, opaque result transmission, and lack of responsiveness to complaints undermined citizens' confidence in the legitimacy of both the electoral outcome and the institutions responsible for upholding democratic processes. Civil society organizations and opposition parties called for independent audits and reforms, citing a growing public perception that electoral processes are increasingly skewed in favour of the ruling party.⁷⁴

Technological Innovations and Implementation Challenges

The Mozambique Electoral Commission⁷⁵ in 2024 expanded use of electoral technology, including biometric voter registration, aimed at enhancing electoral integrity. However, technical glitches, limited voter education, and the uneven application of these technologies raised doubts about their effectiveness.

Political Landscape and Competitive Imbalances

Mozambique's political arena during the 2024 elections was defined by the continued dominance of FRELIMO, which secured both the presidency and a legislative majority.⁷⁶ Opposition parties,

67 Comissão Nacional de Eleições (CNE) 'Página oficial da CNE' <https://www.cne.pt/> (accessed 17 July 2025).

68 European Union Election Observation Mission *Mozambique 2024 General Elections: Final Report* (2025) <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025/EU%20EOM%20Mozambique%202024%20Final%20Report%20ENG.pdf> (accessed 17 July 2025).

69 As above.

70 T Gromes 'Mozambique after the Elections: Civil Protests and the Risk of Escalation' (2024) SWP Comment 43 available at <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/mta-spot43-mozambique-after-the-elections-civil-protests-and-the-risk-of-escalation> (accessed 16 July 2025).

71 Open University Mozambique, 'Election Bulletin 308: Zambezia Problems Include Lost Ballot Papers' (9 October 2024) https://university.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique/sites/www.open.ac.uk.technology.mozambique/files/files/Election-Bulletin-308_9Oct24_Zambezia-problems-include-lost-ballot-papers.pdf (accessed 4 May 2025).

72 As above.

73 As above.

74 Human Rights Watch, *Mozambique: World Report 2025*, released 16 January 2025, Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/mozambique> (accessed 17 July 2025).

75 Mozambique Electoral Commission (CNE), *Comissão Nacional de Eleições* (Mozambique Electoral Commission 2024).

76 Amani Africa, *Emergency Session on the Postelection Violence in Mozambique*, published circa November 2024, Amani Africa — Media & Research Services, <https://amaniafricaet.org/emergency-session-on-the-post-election->

including RENAMO and the emerging Podemos party, struggled to mount a unified challenge, often fragmenting the opposition vote. Although independent candidate Venâncio Mondlane gained notable support, the opposition remained hampered by limited access to resources, media coverage, and protection from political violence. The electoral environment remained asymmetrical, favouring the ruling party and inhibiting pluralistic political competition.⁷⁷

Declining Voter Participation and Democratic Engagement

The notably low voter turnout in Mozambique's 2024 elections raises broader concerns about the legitimacy and responsiveness of the democratic process. With less than half of eligible citizens casting their vote, questions emerge around political disenchantment, the effectiveness of civic education, and the ability of electoral institutions to foster meaningful participation. Contributing factors likely included widespread allegations of electoral irregularities such as ballot stuffing, voter intimidation in northern provinces, and discrepancies in results transmission as well as limited public awareness of recent legal reforms enacted shortly before the election. The proliferation of misinformation on social media platforms further undermined public confidence in the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. In addition, seasonal rains hampered voter mobility in several regions, particularly affecting youth turnout.⁷⁸

Women and Youth Participation in the 2024 General Elections in Mozambique

The 2024 general elections in Mozambique reflected both advancements and enduring disparities in women's political participation. On the voting day, it EF-SDC observed that women came to vote in majority compared to men and youths.⁷⁹ While women voters turnout was satisfactory, Women secured 39.2 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly, with 98 female

Members of Parliament out of 250 a testament to Mozambique's regional leadership in legislative gender representation. A significant milestone was the election of Margarida Adamugy Talapa as Speaker of Parliament in January 2025, signalling a continued institutional commitment to inclusive governance at the parliamentary level.⁸⁰

However, female political engagement at the executive level remained limited. No women contested the presidency in the 2024 elections, underscoring persistent gender gaps in high-level political leadership. Nonetheless, women played visible roles in party structures, campaign mobilization, and civic advocacy. Notably, candidates like Rute Manjate of PODEMOS championed issues of gender equality, transparency and equitable development. She, along with other female activists, also spoke out against the heightened risks women face in political life, including harassment and gender-based political violence.⁸¹ These dynamics highlight the need for stronger protections and deliberate strategies to promote women's full and equal participation in all aspects of political life in Mozambique.

According to Friedrich Naumann Foundation, youth Participation in Mozambique elections of 2024 were not well represented.⁸² Though the number of youths participated was unavailable during preparation of this report, social and economic challenges facing the country's youth hinders them from active political participation despite representing a significant demographic majority.

Election results management

In the presidential race, Daniel Chapo of the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) secured a decisive victory, receiving 70.7 percent of the vote, as reported by the National Election

violence-in-mozambique (accessed 17 July 2025).

77 CSIS 'Mozambique General Elections Point to Changing Political Dynamics' (30 January 2024) <https://www.csis.org/analysis/mozambique-general-elections-point-changing-political-dynamics> (accessed 15 May 2025).

78 https://www.ecfsadc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ECF-SADC-Preliminary-statement-to-Mozambique-Elections-2024_EN.pdf (accessed 17 July 2025).

79 As above.

80 Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Mozambique: Assembly of the Republic – Data on Women' (2025) <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/MZ/MZ-LC01/data-on-women> (accessed 4 May 2025).

81 R Burke 'Fighting for change: Why road to parliament is still rocky for women in Africa' *The Guardian* (31 December 2024) <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/dec/31/fighting-for-change-why-road-to-parliament-is-still-rocky-for-women-in-africa> (accessed 15 May 2025).

82 FNF 'A tale of continued disillusionment: Youth participation in Sub-Saharan Africa' (12 June 2024) <https://www.freiheit.org/sub-saharan-africa/tale-continued-disillusionment-youth> (accessed 17 July 2025).

Commission. The 2024 presidential and legislative elections were marked by FRELIMO's increasingly entrenched sense of political entitlement and impunity.⁸³ This outcome extended Frelimo's uninterrupted rule since independence, now spanning 49 years. Independent candidate Venâncio Mondlane followed with 20.3 percent, while Ossufo Momade of the primary opposition party, Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), received 5.8 percent. Lutero Simango of the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) finished fourth with 3.21 percent of the vote.⁸⁴

The opposition Optimist Party for the Development of Mozambique (Podemos), aligned with Mondlane, obtained 31 seats. Renamo won 20 seats, and MDM secured the remaining 4.⁸⁵ Independent election observers raised concerns regarding irregularities in the tabulation process, and opposition parties alleged widespread electoral fraud. Subsequent protests have resulted in violent confrontations with security forces, leading to fatalities. While the legal framework provided a strong procedural base, implementation challenges gave rise to several electoral disputes

Election Disputes and Post-Election Environment

The election in Mozambique started by peace when voting,⁸⁶ however it was followed by significant electoral disputes and widespread political unrest. Opposition parties, particularly the Partido Otimista pelo Desenvolvimento de Moçambique (PODEMOS), formally contested the election results, citing extensive irregularities

such as ballot stuffing, inflated voter rolls, voter intimidation and the disqualification of eligible voters. These legal challenges were brought before the Constitutional Council, Mozambique's highest electoral adjudicative body. However, the Council reportedly dismissed approximately 95 per cent of the petitions submitted, prompting public dissatisfaction and raising concerns about the perceived impartiality and accessibility of electoral justice mechanisms.⁸⁷

In response, opposition leaders including Venâncio Mondlane rejected the legitimacy of the announced results and called for nationwide protests and international scrutiny. These calls catalyzed a series of demonstrations across major urban centers, including Maputo, Beira and Nampula. The ensuing unrest was met with a heavy handed response by state security forces, resulting in numerous casualties and reports of excessive use of force.⁸⁸ Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, condemned these actions and called for independent investigations into the conduct of law enforcement during the post-election period.⁸⁹

The Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC (ECF-SADC), in its preliminary observation report, expressed concern over several structural weaknesses in the electoral process. These included the last-minute enactment of amendments to the electoral law, procedural opacity, and the disqualification of voters without sufficient justification. The report also questioned the neutrality of the National Election Commission, citing allegations of bias in favor of the ruling party, FRELIMO. Collectively, these deficiencies significantly undermined the credibility of the Electoral Management Body and contributed to a post-electoral climate marked by instability, distrust, and contested legitimacy.⁹⁰ These unresolved disputes and the perceived lack of recourse had a measurable impact on citizens' trust in the electoral process

83 Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook *Africa's 2024 Elections: Challenges and Opportunities to Regain Democratic Momentum* (17 January 2024, updated 4 November 2024) <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/africas-2024-elections-challenges-and-opportunities-to-regain-democratic-momentum/> (accessed 15 May 2025).

84 Journal of Democracy 'Election Results – October through December 2024' (2024) *Journal of Democracy* <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/elections/election-results-october-through-december-2024/> (accessed 4 May 2025).

85 As above.

86 African Union Election Observation Mission 'Preliminary Statement: African Union Election Observation Mission to the 9 October 2024 General Elections in the Republic of Mozambique' (11 October 2024) <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/preliminary-statement-african-union-election-observation-mission-9-october-2024-general-elections-in-the-republic-of-mozambique> (accessed 15 May 2025).

87 As above.

88 Reuters 'Mozambicans flee to neighbouring Malawi amid post-election unrest' (27 December 2024) <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/mozambicans-flee-neighbouring-malawi-amid-post-election-unrest-2024-12-27/> (accessed 15 May 2025).

89 Amnesty International *Protest Under Attack: Human Rights Violations During Mozambique's Post-2024 Election Crackdown* (2025) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr41/9225/2025/en/> (accessed 15 May 2025).

90 As above, ESF SADC report.

The role of opposition parties during the post-election violence

During Mozambique's 2024 post-election crisis, opposition parties, especially PODEMOS under Venâncio Mondlane played a central role by rejecting the official results, proposing a Government of National Unity and calling for peaceful protests.⁹¹ They condemned state violence and sought international support to challenge the election outcome. However, internal divisions, lack of institutional power, and state repression including the targeting and killing of opposition figures undermined their efforts.⁹² Despite these challenges, the opposition remained politically energized, successfully sustaining the discourse on electoral legitimacy at both national and international levels.

The role of the Courts post-election violence

The Mozambican courts, particularly the Constitutional Council, played a legitimizing role for the ruling party post-election by validating contested results and rejecting opposition challenges.⁹³ In doing so, they failed to act as a check on executive power or as a forum for impartial dispute resolution. This reinforced perceptions of judicial bias and significantly undermined the rule of law and democratic accountability during a critical moment of political crisis.⁹⁴

Conclusion

The 2024 general elections in Mozambique highlighted both progress and persistent challenges within the country's democratic journey.

While the legal frameworks and institutional commitments to free and fair elections remain in place, significant obstacles such as logistical inefficiencies, electoral irregularities, and political violence have undermined public confidence and voter participation. Women's substantial representation in the legislature stands as a positive milestone, yet disparities in executive leadership and candidacy reveal the need for ongoing reforms to achieve true gender equality in politics. The post-election unrest and contested results underscore the urgency of strengthening electoral institutions and dispute resolution mechanisms to foster inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. Moving forward, Mozambique's democratic consolidation will depend on addressing these structural weaknesses and promoting broader civic engagement to ensure elections reflect the genuine will of its people.

BOTSWANA

Overview of the 2024 General Elections in Botswana

On 30 October 2024, Botswana held its 13th general elections since attaining independence in 1966, marking a pivotal moment in the nation's democratic journey.⁹⁵ The elections were conducted in a politically charged atmosphere, with heightened public interest and widespread engagement across the country. A total of at least seven political parties contested the elections, reflecting a vibrant and competitive political environment.⁹⁶

Key participants included the long-standing Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), and the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF). They were joined by smaller parties

91 E Columbo 'Implications of the 2024 Presidential Election in Mozambique: Insights from Emilia Columbo' (17 April 2025) *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2025/04/17/implications-of-the-2024-presidential-election-in-mozambique-insights-from-emilia-columbo/> (accessed 17 July 2025).

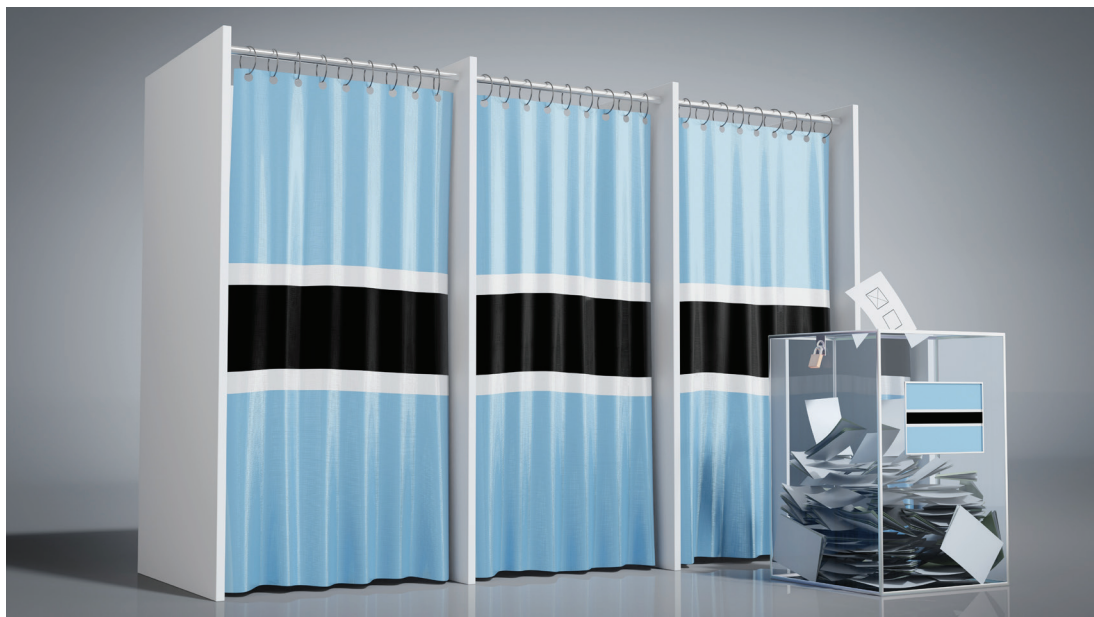
92 The Guardian 'Mozambique Opposition Figures Killed in Protest over Disputed Election and Rise of Podemos' (19 October 2024) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/19/mozambique-opposition-figures-killed-protest-disputed-election-podemos> (accessed 17 July 2025).

93 Al Jazeera 'Mozambique Top Court Confirms Ruling Party's Win in Disputed Election' (23 December 2024) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/23/mozambique-top-court-confirms-ruling-partys-win-in-disputed-election> (accessed 17 July 2025).

94 As above.

95 Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) Botswana available at <https://www.iec.gov.bw/> (accessed 17 July 2025).

96 Southern African Development Community Electoral Observation Mission (SADCSEOM) *Preliminary Statement on the 30 October 2024 General Elections in the Republic of Botswana* (2024) available at <https://www.sadc.int/latest-news/preliminary-statement-sadc-electoral-observation-mission-general-elections-republic> (accessed 21 June 2025).



such as the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD), the Botswana Republican Party (BRP), and the Real Alternative Party (RAP), along with several independent candidates. The broad spectrum of political actors signalled an evolving democratic space and increasing political pluralism in Botswana.⁹⁷

Electoral Legal Framework

Botswana's electoral processes are governed by a combination of constitutional provisions and statutory laws. The Constitution of Botswana establishes the framework for democratic governance and the conduct of elections. The Electoral Act⁹⁸ provides detailed regulations on the administration of elections, including voter registration, nomination of candidates, and the voting process. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), established under the Electoral Act, is mandated to oversee and ensure the integrity of electoral processes. Despite this framework, concerns have been raised regarding certain aspects, such as the absence of fixed election dates and the need for finalizing constitutional review processes to enhance electoral stability.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ As above.

⁹⁸ Electoral Act (Act No. 38 of 1968) (Botswana).

⁹⁹ University of Pretoria 'UP Expert Opinion: UP Expert Assesses Botswana's State of Readiness for 2024 Elections' (18 March 2024) [https://www.up.ac.za/news/post_3252222-up-expert-opinion-up-expert-assesses-botswanas-state-of-readiness-](https://www.up.ac.za/news/post_3252222-up-expert-opinion-up-expert-assesses-botswanas-state-of-readiness-for-2024-elections)

Internationally, Botswana has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on September 8, 2000. However, Botswana has not ratified the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG).

Electoral Dynamics and Emerging Challenges

Pre-Electoral Landscape

The pre-election period was characterized by heightened political tensions and public dissatisfaction with the incumbent government's performance.¹⁰⁰ Economic challenges, notably a downturn in diamond revenues and rising unemployment, particularly among the youth, fuelled calls for political change.

Election Day Dynamics

The Botswana Electoral Commission (IEC) undertook measures to facilitate voter access, including the establishment of polling stations across various districts.¹⁰¹ However, challenges

for-2024-elections (accessed 17 July 2025).

¹⁰⁰ Al Jazeera 'Botswana election: Who is in the running and what's at stake?' (30 October 2024) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/30/botswana-election-who-is-in-the-running-and-whats-at-stake> (accessed 17 July 2025).

¹⁰¹ Government of Botswana 'Establishment of Polling Districts' available at <https://www.gov.bw/>

were reported, such as delays in opening polling stations and long queues, which may have impeded voter participation. In some areas, logistical issues led to voter frustration and raised concerns about the efficiency of election management.¹⁰²

Election Management and Administration

The administration of the 2024 elections was generally deemed credible, with the IEC overseeing the process. Nonetheless, criticisms emerged regarding the preparedness of the electoral body, including inadequate voter education and logistical shortcomings.¹⁰³ While the elections were conducted peacefully, improvements in administrative efficiency and transparency are necessary to bolster public confidence in future electoral processes.

Public Trust and Institutional Credibility

Public confidence in the electoral process was mixed.¹⁰⁴ While the peaceful transition of power was lauded as a testament to Botswana's democratic maturity, pre-election concerns about economic management and governance issues had already diminished trust in the ruling party.¹⁰⁵ The electorate's decisive vote for change indicated a desire for renewed leadership and accountability.

Technological Innovations and Implementation Challenges

The 2024 elections saw increased utilization of digital platforms for campaigning, with parties leveraging social media to engage voters and disseminate their messages.¹⁰⁶ However, the

adoption of advanced electoral technologies, such as biometric verification, remained limited.

Political Participation and Voter Turnout

Voter turnout in the 2024 elections was satisfactory, with citizens actively engaging in the democratic process driven by a collective aspiration for political change and improved governance. Approximately 81 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots, reflecting a strong public interest in Botswana's democratic processes and widespread desire for renewal.¹⁰⁷ Youth participation was particularly notable, as young people comprise more than 60 per cent of the population. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) registered over one million young voters, underscoring their significant involvement. Although overall turnout declined slightly from 84 per cent in 2019 to 79 per cent, voter engagement remained robust across age groups. The peaceful conduct of the elections and the subsequent transfer of power further underscored the strength of Botswana's democratic institutions and the populace's enduring commitment to participatory governance.¹⁰⁸

Election Results Management

The 2024 elections marked a historic shift in Botswana's political landscape. The opposition coalition, Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), led by President Duma Boko, secured 36 of the 61 directly elected seats in the National Assembly. The ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which had been in power since independence in 1966, suffered a significant defeat, winning only four seats. The Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF) secured 15 and five seats, respectively, while one seat was won by an independent candidate.¹⁰⁹

voting/establishment-polling-districts (accessed 17 July 2025).

102 Southern African Development Community (SADC) 'Botswana SEOM Preliminary Statement – 30 October 2024' available at <https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2024-11/Botswana%20SEOM%20-%20Preliminary%20Statement%20-%2030%20October%202024.pdf> (accessed 17 July 2025).

103 Mo Ibrahim Foundation 'Guest Blog | NGN Expert Perspectives: Africa's 2024 Election Year' (5 January 2024) <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2024/guest-blog-ngn-expert-perspectives-africas-2024-election-year> (accessed 17 July 2025).

104 Bertelsmann Stiftung *BTI 2024 Country Report – Botswana* (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2024) <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/BWA> (accessed 17 July 2025).

105 <https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/south-africa/> (accessed 17 July 2025).

106 As above.

107 European Union External Action Service 'Botswana: Statement by the High Representative on elections in the country' (1 November 2024) https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/446819_fr (accessed 15 May 2025).

108 Make Every Woman Count 'Botswana: Parliamentary Elections 2024' (29 December 2024) available at <https://www.mewc.org/index.php/tools/political-participation-a-election-monitoring/2024-elections-monitoring/12395-botswana-parliamentary-elections-2024> (accessed 4 May 2025).

109 International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (10 July 2024) <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/womens-political->

Election Disputes and Legal Oversight

There were minimal legal challenges following the elections. Outgoing President Mokgweetsi Masisi conceded defeat and ensured a peaceful transfer of power. The absence of significant litigation underscored the legitimacy of the electoral process and the credibility of Botswana's democratic institutions.¹¹⁰ The 2024 elections marked a historic shift, as the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) lost power for the first time since independence in 1966. Following the election, there were minimal legal challenges. Outgoing President Mokgweetsi Masisi conceded defeat, facilitating a peaceful transfer of power. The absence of significant litigation underscored the legitimacy of the electoral process and reinforced the credibility of Botswana's democratic institutions.

Post-Election Analysis

Despite women constituting 54 per cent of registered voters, their representation in the National Assembly remained disproportionately low according to the African Union Election Observation Mission.¹¹¹ In the 2024 elections, only 28 women contested parliamentary seats, representing 10.85 per cent of the total candidates. Ultimately, only three women secured seats, accounting for 4.92 per cent of the 61 directly elected positions, a decline from the 5.26 per cent representation in 2019. Several factors contribute to this underrepresentation, including limited financial resources for campaigning, societal norms that discourage female political participation, and inadequate media coverage of female candidates. Moreover, the absence of legislative measures such as gender quotas further hampers efforts to achieve gender parity in political representation.¹¹²

The African Union Election Observation Mission noted persistent gender disparities in political representation, observing that despite women constituting over half of registered voters, their presence in elected office remains minimal. UN Women emphasizes that structural barriers such as financial constraints and sociocultural norms continue to hinder women's political participation and leadership opportunities.¹¹³

The transition of power was marked by a peaceful and orderly process.¹¹⁴ President Duma Boko was inaugurated on 1 November 2024, with a public ceremony held on 8 November, attended by thousands of citizens and dignitaries. In his inaugural address, President Boko emphasized national unity and pledged to address pressing issues such as unemployment and economic diversification.

Conclusion

The 2024 general elections in Botswana underscored both the strengths and challenges of a well-established democratic system. High voter turnout and a peaceful transfer of power demonstrated the resilience and maturity of Botswana's electoral institutions. However, persistent issues such as the underrepresentation of women, limited youth political engagement beyond registration, and gaps in electoral technology highlight areas needing attention to deepen inclusivity and electoral integrity. Addressing legal ambiguities, particularly the absence of fixed election dates, alongside enhancing public confidence through improved transparency and voter education, will be vital for sustaining democratic progress. Overall, Botswana's 2024 elections reflect a vibrant political landscape poised for continued evolution, with a clear mandate for responsive governance and equitable representation.

participation-africa-barometer-2024 (accessed 4 May 2025).

110 International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) 'ElectionGuide: Botswana 2024 General Election' available at <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/4357/> (accessed 17 July 2025).

111 African Union Election Observation Mission *Report of the African Union Election Observation Mission to the 23 October 2019 General Elections in the Republic of Botswana* (2019) https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38699-doc-report_of_the_african_union_election_observation_mission_to_the_23_october_2019_general_elections_in_the_republic_of_botswana.pdf (accessed 15 May 2025).

112 As above.

113 UN Women, *Women's Political Participation and Leadership*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation> (accessed 17 July 2025).

114 Rachel Savage, 'Botswana President Concedes Defeat in Election After Party's Six-Decade Rule' (1 November 2024) *The Guardian*.



NAMIBIA

The Constitution of Namibia, which was adopted in 1990 marked a crucial point in the country's shift from colonial rule and apartheid to a democratic, free, and sovereign nation. The constitution laid the foundation for the country's governance, whose focal point was on human rights, democracy, and the principles of justice. In the words of H Melber, it is a '*mirror reflecting the national soul, the identification of ideals and aspirations of a nation, the articulation of the values bonding its people and disciplining its Constitutional democracy in Namibia government*'.¹¹⁵ He further opines that the Namibian Constitution codifies the essential value and norms embodied in the Namibian Constitution are the principles of regular, free, fair and credible elections. The 2024 general elections in Namibia marked a pivotal moment in the nation's democratic journey, characterized by both historic achievements and notable challenges.

Legal framework

Namibia's elections are guided by its 1990 Constitution, which enshrines democratic

principles, human rights, and the conduct of regular, free, and fair elections. The Electoral Act governs election procedures, including voter registration, polling operations, and vote tabulation. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) is the independent body responsible for election oversight¹¹⁶ is very explicit on a number of issues related to elections. Apart from the Constitution, Namibia has various pieces of electoral legislation.¹¹⁷

Namibia's electoral process is primarily governed by the Electoral Act¹¹⁸, which outlines the procedures for conducting elections, including voter registration, polling, and result tabulation. The Act establishes the Electoral Commission of Namibia¹¹⁹ (ECN) as the independent body responsible for overseeing elections and ensuring their integrity. Internationally Namibia subscribes to a number of international norms governing democratic elections such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Democracy. Namibia, as a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is bound by the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.¹²⁰

115 H Melber 'The impact of the constitution on state- and nation-building' in A Bösl, N Horn & A du Pisani (eds) *Constitutional democracy in Namibia: A critical analysis after two decades* (Macmillan Education Namibia 2010) 35.

116 *The Constitution of Namibia*.

117 The Regional Councils Act of 1992; the Local Authorities Act of 1992 and the Electoral Act 5 of 2014.

118 Electoral Act 5 of 2014.

119 Section 2 of The Electoral Act 5 of 2014.

120 SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (2021).

Electoral Dynamics and Emerging Challenges

Pre-Electoral Landscape

Election Management and Public Trust

The pre-election period was marked by relative stability, although public confidence in the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) had noticeably declined since 2019. This was largely due to concerns about administrative preparedness and impartiality. Political parties questioned the accuracy of the voter roll and the transparency of the ECN's logistical planning.¹²¹

Issue-Based Politics

Campaign discourse across several countries in the region remained largely personality-driven, with limited emphasis on substantive policy issues. Social media platforms were widely used during the campaign period but were often dominated by candidate branding and populist messaging. This trend hindered the electorate's ability to engage meaningfully with political platforms, policy alternatives, and long-term development agendas. The lack of issue-based political communication deprived voters of the opportunity to make informed choices grounded in public policy priorities.¹²² Campaigns in Namibia largely remained personality-driven, with limited focus on substantive policy debates. This trend undermines voters' ability to make informed choices grounded in issue-based politics, potentially fostering political apathy and disengagement. Greater emphasis on transparent policy platforms and issue-centered communication is essential to deepen democratic participation and accountability.

Election Day Dynamics

Polling Station Logistics and Legal Responses

On election day, serious logistical failures affected the timely opening and adequate functioning of many polling stations. Delayed delivery of voting materials and ballot paper shortages forced some voters to leave without casting their ballots or return later in the day. These issues

disproportionately affected urban constituencies where opposition support is strong, raising equity concerns about voter access.¹²³ To address these disruptions, the government issued Proclamation No. 34 of 2024, which extended the voting period. While the Supreme Court later upheld the legality of the extension, it highlighted deficiencies in the Electoral Act, particularly the absence of explicit provisions allowing emergency extensions due to logistical breakdowns.¹²⁴

Political Participation and Voter Turn-out

Despite these challenges, voter turnout remained relatively high. The ECN successfully registered over one million voters, with a final turnout rate of 79 per cent, only slightly lower than the 84 per cent recorded in 2019. This reflects both the resilience of Namibia's electoral culture and growing concerns about the effectiveness of electoral institutions.¹²⁵ The high level of participation reflected public engagement in the democratic process, even amid growing concerns about electoral integrity.

Youth participation was particularly robust in urban areas, reflecting both demographic trends and a desire for political renewal among younger Namibians. However, challenges such as economic exclusion and political scepticism continue to hinder more consistent youth engagement across the country.

Public Trust and Institutional Credibility

Public confidence in the electoral process was consequently undermined. A majority of citizens viewed the ECN's logistical failures, particularly in opposition-leaning areas, as either negligence or intentional bias.¹²⁶ The judiciary also attracted criticism. In dismissing election challenges, such as that brought by the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM), the Supreme Court focused narrowly on procedural technicalities and declined to engage substantively with allegations of voter

121 Commonwealth Observer Group *Namibia National and Presidential Elections Final Report 2024* (Commonwealth Secretariat 2024).

122 N Cheeseman & B Klaas *How to Rig an Election* (2018) Yale University Press.

123 Government of Namibia, 'Proclamation No. 34 of 2024,' Official Gazette, October 2024.

124 Namibia Supreme Court, 'Judgment on Proclamation No. 34,' Case No. SC 2024/07, November 2024.

125 Electoral Commission of Namibia, *Home – Electoral Commission of Namibia* <https://www.ecn.na/> (accessed 17 July 2025).

126 Afrobarometer *Dispatch No 876 Namibians Express Confidence in Elections, but Weakening Trust in the Electoral Commission* (Afrobarometer 9 October 2024) PDF report.

roll discrepancies and operational irregularities. This approach reinforced perceptions of judicial reluctance to address politically sensitive matters, thereby weakening public trust in the courts.

Technological Innovations and Implementation Challenges

Technological innovations introduced in the 2024 elections were aimed at enhancing transparency and credibility. Biometric voter registration systems, in particular, were intended to reduce instances of fraud and improve voter verification. However, technical malfunctions and inconsistent implementation in some regions undermined public confidence in the integrity of the electoral process. These shortcomings point to the need for more robust technological infrastructure and contingency planning.¹²⁷ Biometric voter verification devices malfunctioned due to overheating, and ultraviolet light torches used to verify ink marks ran out of battery power.¹²⁸ These technical failures created delays and confusion at polling stations, in some cases leading to disenfranchisement.

Post-Election Developments and Democratic Resilience

Women and Youth Participation and representation

A landmark outcome of the 2024 elections was the election of Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah as Namibia's first female president a historic moment in a political context long dominated by male leadership. This event underscores a significant advance in gender representation at the highest level. However, broader gender representation in the legislature remains modest: women now occupy 40.6 per cent of the National Assembly's elected seats (39 out of 96).¹²⁹ In terms of participation, overall voter turnout was robust 76.9 per cent for the presidential vote and 75.7 per cent for the legislative contests, both up from approximately 60.8 per cent and 60.4 per cent in 2019. Unfortunately, gender-disaggregated turnout data was not publicly reported, making it

difficult to assess women's voting rates relative to men. Nonetheless, without that granular data, the participation contribution of women cannot be fully evaluated.. Youth participation was notably strong, especially in urban centres, highlighting both the demographic dominance and growing political engagement of Namibia's younger population, which makes up over 60 per cent of the country's citizens.¹³⁰

While women constituted a substantial proportion of registered voters and showed strong participation rates, their representation as candidates and elected officials remains disproportionately low. According to the African Union and the SADC Gender Protocol, structural barriers such as socio-cultural norms, limited access to campaign financing, and insufficient media coverage continue to impede women's full political participation. To address these persistent gaps, systemic reforms including the implementation of legal gender quotas and enhanced support mechanisms for female candidates are necessary to promote gender parity in political leadership.

Election Results Management

The management of election results was conducted promptly, but questions about credibility persisted due to the procedural and logistical failures that characterized the voting process. The legal extension of the voting period helped to mitigate disenfranchisement but also revealed weaknesses in the electoral legal framework. These gaps must be addressed through reform to avoid similar controversies in future elections.

Election Disputes

Legal challenges quickly emerged after the elections, with the PDM filing a petition citing irregularities in voter registration and logistical biases. However, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition without thorough examination, which further eroded public trust. While the judiciary plays a crucial role in ensuring electoral justice, the courts' reluctance to address the substantive issues of electoral disputes undermines perceptions of institutional accountability.

Post-Election Environment

The post-election environment in Namibia remained largely calm and peaceful, in line with regional and continental standards for democratic elections.¹³¹ Nevertheless, the events of the 2024

127 Cheeseman (n 122).

128 As above.

129 Associated Press (2024). Namibia elects its first female president as Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah wins decisive victory. [online] Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/namibia-presidential-election-early-count-e7f3cbb5538a837798c2a3368e177f96> (accessed 17 July 2025).

130 ECN.

131 African Union Election Observation Mission to the

elections left behind a residue of public mistrust in the ECN and the judiciary. The peaceful conduct of the elections was commendable, but it could not entirely offset the damage caused by administrative inefficiencies and legal ambiguities.

Conclusion

The 2024 general elections in Namibia demonstrated the nation's enduring commitment to democratic principles amidst significant challenges. While voter turnout remained robust, reflecting a vibrant electoral culture, administrative inefficiencies and legal ambiguities underscored persistent institutional vulnerabilities. The historic election of Namibia's first female president marks a milestone for gender representation, yet broader structural barriers continue to limit women's political participation. Youth engagement, although promising in urban areas, requires sustained attention to overcome socioeconomic and political obstacles. The electoral process revealed a critical need for legislative reforms, enhanced technological infrastructure, and greater transparency to strengthen public confidence and uphold electoral integrity. As Namibia moves forward, addressing these gaps will be essential to consolidating democratic gains and fostering inclusive, credible elections in future cycles.

2. ANALYSIS OF DEMOCRATIC TRENDS IN THE SADC REGION

The 2024 general elections across four Southern African countries: South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, and Botswana reflected both commendable democratic progress and persistent systemic weaknesses. While these states possess formal legal and institutional frameworks largely aligned with international democratic standards, implementation remains uneven. This gap between normative commitments and practical realities undermines electoral integrity and public trust in democratic processes.

A growing concern across the region is the decline in voter turnout, particularly among youth. Despite representing a demographic majority, young people remain underrepresented both in political participation and elected office. The

reasons extend beyond lack of civic education to include economic exclusion, disillusionment with political elites, and perceptions that voting has little impact on governance outcomes. These dynamics signal a broader dissatisfaction with the quality of democracy.

Gender inequality also persists. Although Namibia's election of its first female president is a regional milestone, overall political representation for women remains uneven. Structural barriers including sociocultural norms, lack of campaign resources, and weak legal mandates such as quotas continue to impede women's access to political leadership roles.

In several countries, ruling parties leveraged state resources and institutional incumbency to entrench their dominance. Electoral commissions, though legally independent, often struggled with logistical preparedness, transparency, and impartiality. Likewise, the judiciary in some instances failed to adequately adjudicate electoral disputes, instead opting for procedural technicalities over substantive justice. These trends erode public confidence in electoral institutions.

Post-election conflict resolution mechanisms were frequently inadequate. Mozambique, in particular, illustrated how unresolved grievances and the lack of effective legal remedies can trigger public unrest. In such contexts, peaceful protest is often met with state repression, exacerbating tensions and undermining democratic consolidation.

Collectively, these trends highlight the need for bold democratic reforms. SADC member states must prioritize the full implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) and establish more robust accountability mechanisms for electoral integrity. Reforms should also focus on deepening political inclusion, particularly for women and youth, and enhancing the credibility and operational independence of electoral bodies and the judiciary.

While the 2024 elections did not represent a wholesale democratic backslide, they exposed fragilities that threaten the quality and legitimacy of democratic governance. With the upcoming 2026 Local Government Elections in South Africa and other electoral cycles across the region, there is an urgent need to strengthen institutions, ensure inclusive participation, and reinforce public trust in democratic processes.

Republic of Namibia: Preliminary Statement on the 27 November 2024 General Elections (Peace and Security Department, African Union, Windhoek, 29 November 2024).

3. TOWARD DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING: THE WAY FORWARD

The 2024 electoral cycle in Southern Africa exposed both the resilience and vulnerability of democratic governance in the region. While formal adherence to democratic norms remains strong, persistent implementation gaps, institutional weaknesses, and exclusionary practices demand urgent and comprehensive reform. This section outlines strategic recommendations to strengthen democratic practice in the region.

Implementation of Regional Normative Frameworks

SADC member states must accelerate the domestication and implementation of regional and continental frameworks, particularly the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). Legal harmonisation should be accompanied by periodic reviews and robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance and foster democratic accountability.

Fostering Political Pluralism

Sustaining a competitive political environment requires legal protections that ensure fair access to political processes for all parties. Electoral laws must guard against the misuse of state resources and create a level playing field for opposition actors. Institutional safeguards should be introduced to protect dissent and political plurality.

Inclusion of Youth and Women in Political Processes

Youth and women remain disproportionately underrepresented. While they are often mobilised as voters and campaigners, their presence in leadership remains limited. Enforceable measures such as gender quotas and youth representation thresholds should be adopted alongside targeted investments in leadership development and inclusive civic education.

Integration of Electoral Technology

Electoral technology can enhance efficiency, transparency, and credibility if implemented appropriately. Governments should invest in secure, accessible systems such as biometric registration and electronic result transmission,

accompanied by robust data privacy protections. Digital platforms should also be used to expand voter education.

Strengthening Regional and Continental Oversight Mechanisms

Institutions such as SADC and the African Union (AU), must adopt a more assertive posture in defending democratic governance. This includes deploying impartial observation missions, publishing credible reports, and issuing binding recommendations with follow-up enforcement procedures.

Protecting Media Freedom

A free and pluralistic media environment is essential for democratic accountability. Governments must protect journalists from harassment and censorship, while media actors must uphold professional standards, foster inclusive representation, and combat disinformation. Independent public broadcasters should be strengthened to ensure balanced electoral coverage.

Safeguarding Judicial Independence

Judiciaries must act as impartial guardians of constitutional order and electoral fairness. This requires not only legal independence from the executive but also adequate resources and institutional capacity. In countries where judicial appointments are heavily influenced by the executive, constitutional amendments may be necessary to ensure impartiality and public trust.

4. CONCLUSION

The 2024 general elections in Southern Africa revealed a region navigating a complex democratic landscape characterised by both progress and persistent challenges. While electoral processes remain largely peaceful and institutional frameworks broadly aligned with international standards, a disconnect between legal commitments and implementation continues to erode public confidence.

Voter apathy, especially among youth, reflects growing political disillusionment and a sense that elections do not translate into meaningful change. Women, though active as voters and campaigners, remain underrepresented in leadership roles,

a reality shaped by structural, economic, and cultural barriers.

The continued dominance of liberation-era parties, bolstered by state resources and institutional incumbency, raises concerns about the fairness of electoral competition. In several contexts, the judiciary has been perceived as prioritising technical procedures over substantive justice, weakening its role as a neutral arbiter of democratic disputes.

To address these issues, the report calls for the full implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, support for multiparty competition, and the institutionalisation of inclusive political participation. Regional and continental bodies must enhance their oversight roles, while civil society and the media should be empowered to educate, inform, and mobilise citizens.

The upcoming 2026 Local Government Elections in South Africa offer a strategic opportunity to reinvigorate democratic practice. It is imperative that electoral reforms be advanced, institutional integrity strengthened, and the political inclusion of marginalised groups actively pursued. Only through such collective and sustained efforts can the promise of democratic governance in Southern Africa be fully realised.

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