

## Amid perceived escalating corruption, Botswana demand officials account and declare assets

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Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 19 | Mpho Molomo, Wilford Molefe, and Batlang Seabo

### Summary

Transparency and accountability are hallmarks of democracy and good governance. They are the centrepiece of the Open Government Partnership, an initiative that was launched in 2011 by eight countries and has since grown to 65 countries. The Open Government Partnership is an international platform for domestic reformers committed to ensuring that their governments are open, accountable, and responsive to the needs of their citizens.

Although Botswana has not joined South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, and other African countries as signatories to this initiative, the country has been lauded for its democratic credentials and rated highly in good-governance indices, including No. 3 in Africa on the latest Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Botswana is rated the least corrupt country in Africa by the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2014.

Despite these accolades, a recent spate of corruption scandals implicating senior government officials and the director general of the Directorate of Intelligence Services has resurrected debates on the adoption of a law on declaration of assets and liabilities in Parliament.

The latest Afrobarometer survey shows that Botswana perceive high – and increasing – levels of corruption amongst politicians and state institutions. As measures of transparency and accountability, large majorities of Botswana favour laws requiring the president to appear before Parliament to justify his policies and procedures as well as public disclosure of assets and liabilities by senior government officials.

### Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Botswana, led by Star Awards (Pty) Ltd, interviewed 1,200 adult Botswana in June and July 2014. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Botswana in 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2012.

### Key findings

- Eight of 10 Botswana (81%) believe that government officials are involved in corruption, and half (51%) say that the level of corruption has increased over the past year.
- Most Botswana (84%) want the president to appear before Parliament to justify his policies and procedures.

- Three-fourths (75%) of citizens support a law requiring senior government officials, ministers, members of Parliament (MPs), and the president to publicly declare their assets and liabilities.

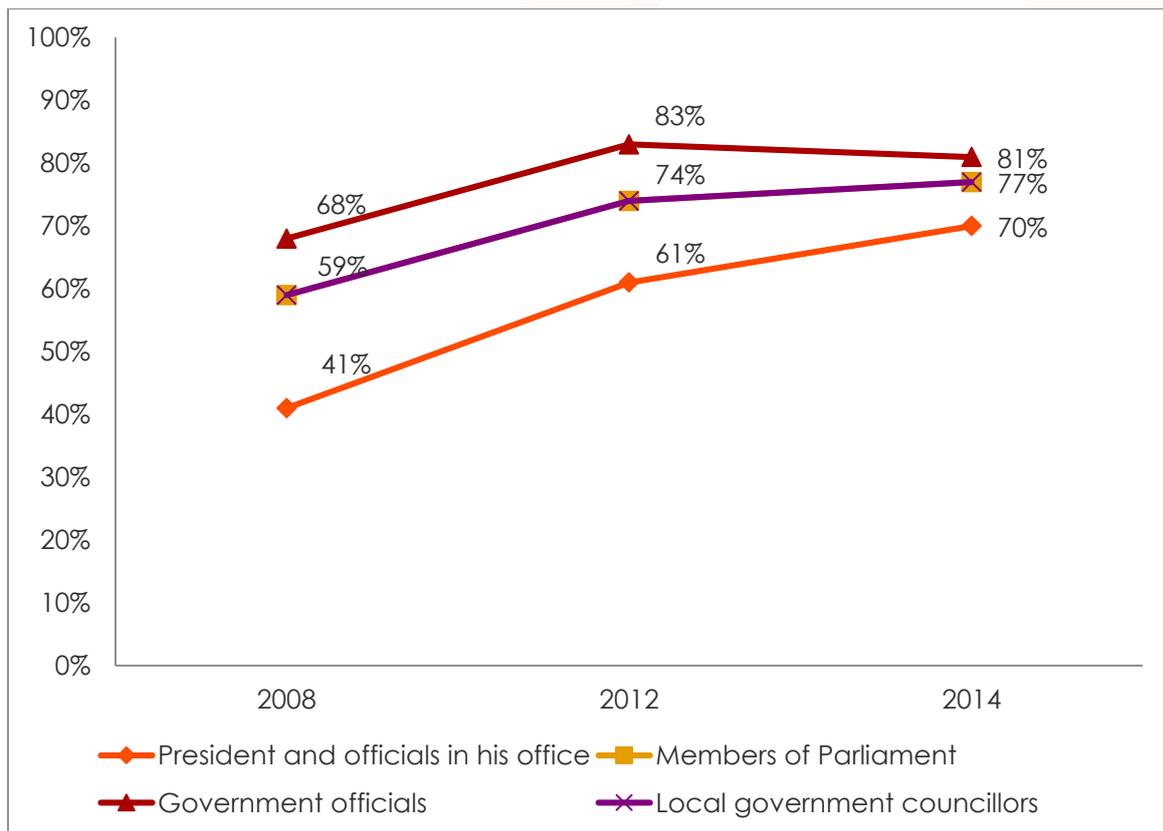
### Perceptions of corruption

Most Batswana believe that political institutions are involved in corruption, and over time this perception has increased (Figure 1). Four-fifths (81%) of Batswana say that “some,” “most,” or “all” government officials are involved in corruption, followed by 77% with regard to MPs and local government councillors and 70% with regard to the president and officials in his office.

Increases in perceived corruption are most striking with regard to the office of the president, rising by 29 percentage points (from 41% to 70%) between 2008 and 2014. An increase of 18 percentage points is observed with regard to MPs and local government councillors between 2008 and 2014, while perceived corruption among government officials rose by 13 percentage points.

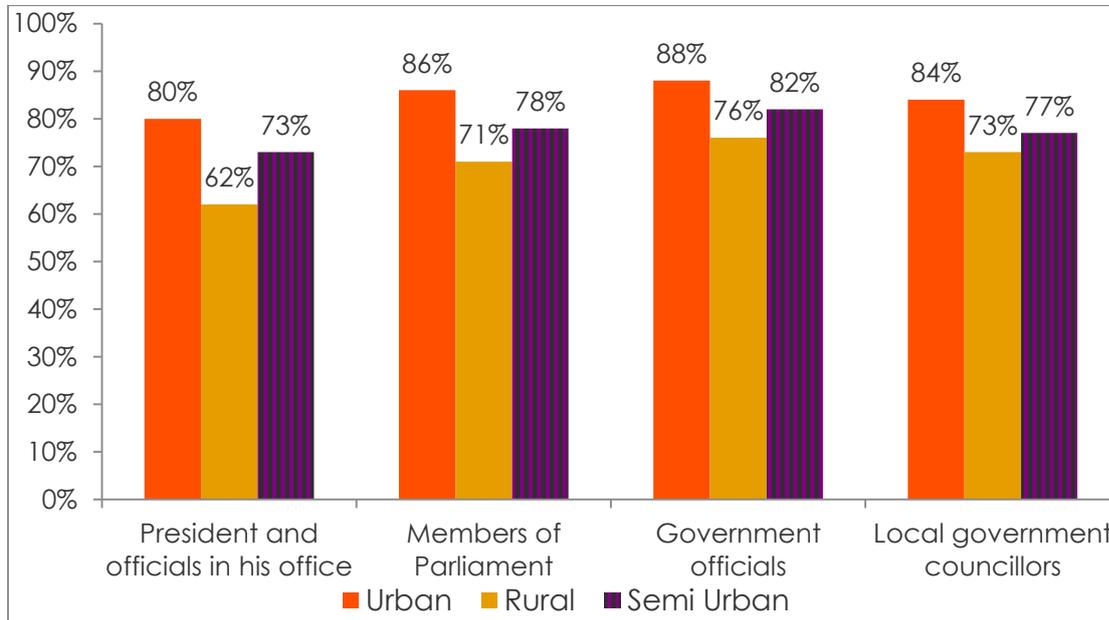
The level of perceived corruption across all political institutions is higher among urban residents than among semi-urban and rural dwellers (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Perceived corruption in political institutions | Botswana | 2008-2014**



**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say “some,” “most,” or “all” of them)

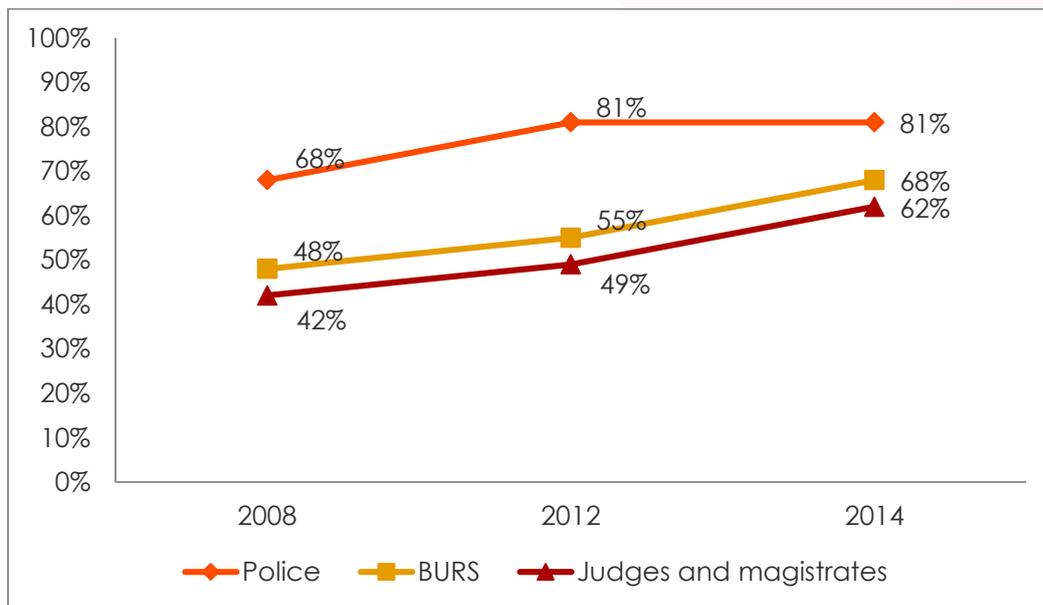
**Figure 2: Perceived corruption in political institutions | by respondent location | Botswana | 2014**



(% who say "some," "most," or "all" of them)

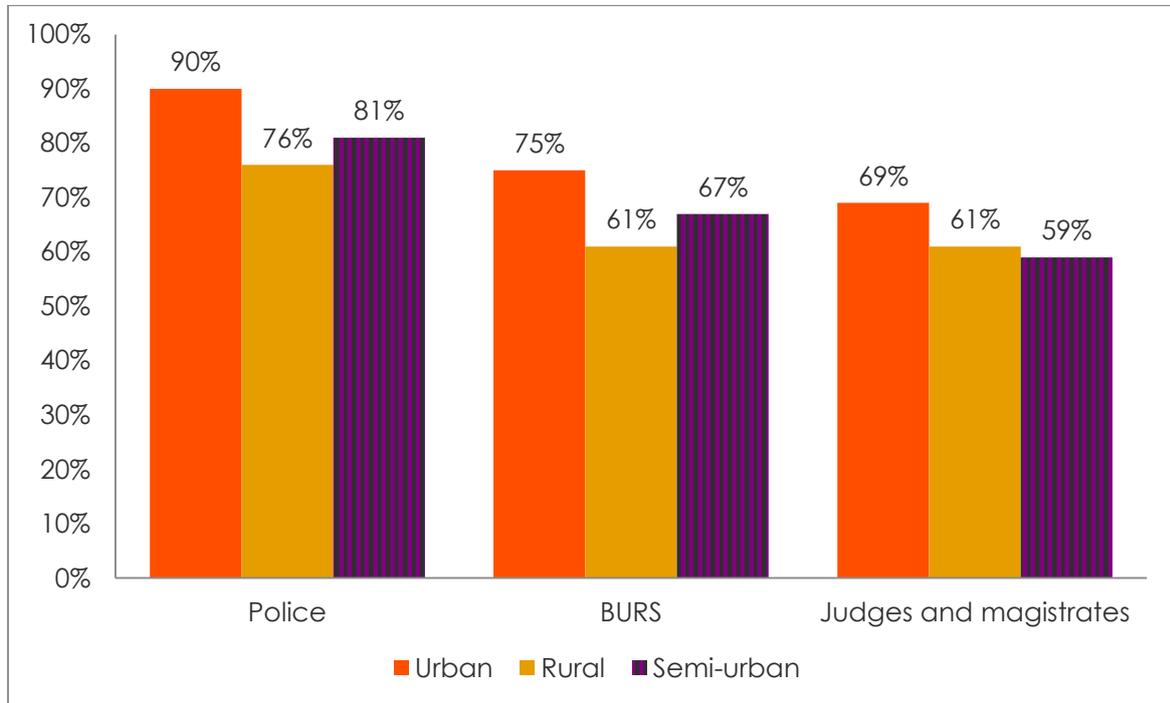
Similarly, majorities of Botswana believe that state institutions are involved in corruption (Figure 3). Perceived corruption is highest with regard to the police, possibly because public contact with the police is more frequent than with other state institutions: 81% of respondents say that "some," "most," or "all" of the police are corrupt. Two-thirds (68%) say that the Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) is corrupt, and 62% perceive corruption among judges and magistrates. Public perceptions of corruption among state institutions have been increasing since 2008, recording 20-percentage-point jumps with regard to the BURS and the judiciary. Perceived corruption in state institutions is highest among urban residents (Figure 4).

**Figure 3: Perceived corruption in state institutions | Botswana | 2008-2014**



(% who say "some," "most," or "all" of them)

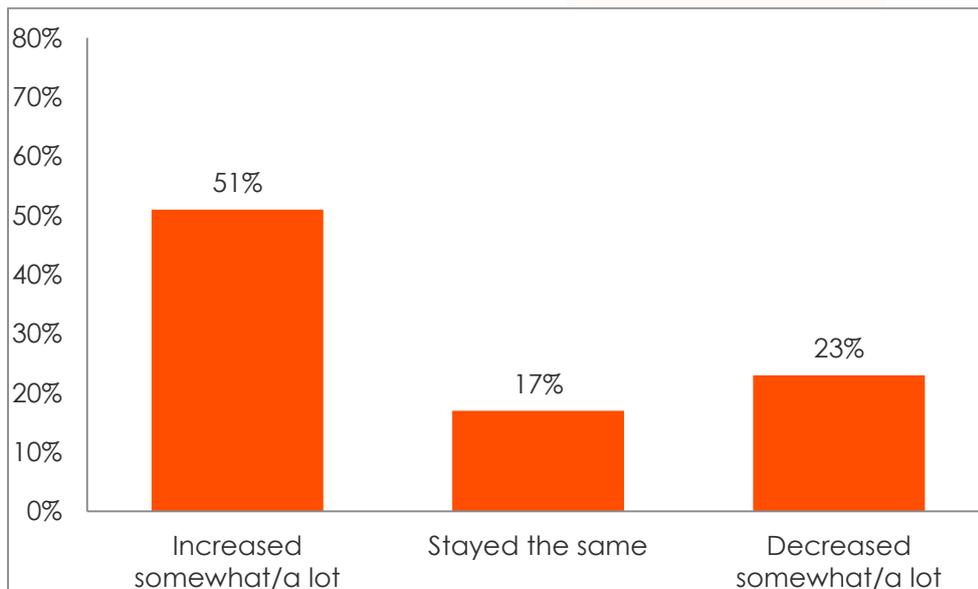
**Figure 4: Perceived corruption in state institutions** | by respondent location  
 | Botswana | 2014



(% who say "some," "most," or "all" of them)

Half (51%) of Botswana say that the level of corruption has increased "a lot" or "somewhat" over the past year, while 23% say that it has decreased and 14% say it has stayed the same (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Change in perceived level of corruption** | Botswana | 2014



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

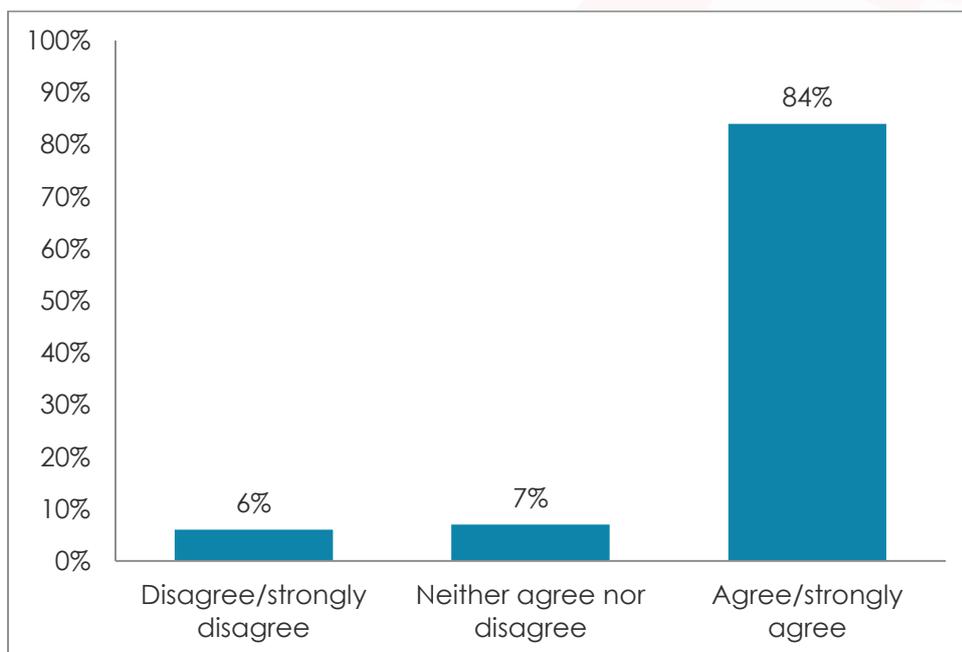
## Accountability and transparency

Accountability and transparency are pillars of a functioning democracy, requiring officials to be open and responsible for their actions. In Botswana, the president is a member of the National Assembly, entitled to speak and vote in Parliament. The Constitution of Botswana vests sweeping executive powers in the presidency, amongst others the power to make key appointments and take certain decisions without consultation, but it is silent on whether the president should appear before Parliament to justify his policies. On some occasions the president absents himself from parliamentary proceedings, sparking debate over whether he undermines the institution of Parliament and suggestions that he should answer questions from MPs, as is done in other democracies (e.g. in South Africa, where the president is required by law to answer questions in the National Assembly at least four times a year).

### Accountability to Parliament

Most Batswana (84%) want the president to justify his policies and procedures to Parliament, while a mere 6% disagree with the idea (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Views on whether president should account to Parliament | Botswana | 2014**

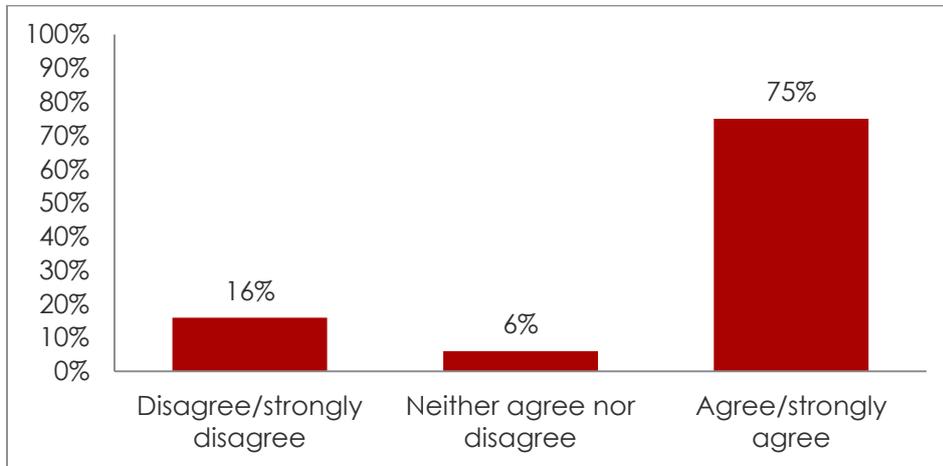


**Respondents were asked:** Recently, there have been a number of suggestions to change some laws in order to improve government accountability. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The law should require the president to regularly appear before Parliament to answer questions from MPs?

### Declaration of assets and liabilities

In terms of support for requiring ministers, MPs, and other senior government officials to publicly declare their assets and liabilities, three-fourths (75%) of Batswana “agree” or “strongly agree” with the introduction of such a law (Figure 7). Only 16% oppose such a law.

**Figure 7: Declaration of assets and liabilities** | Botswana | 2014

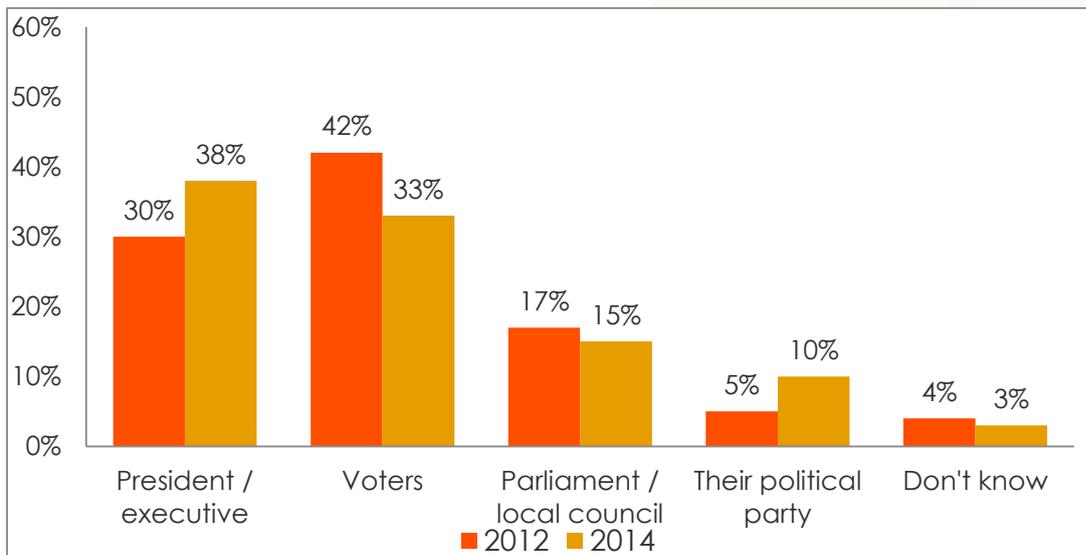


**Respondents were asked:** Recently, there have been a number of suggestions to change some laws in order to improve government accountability. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The law should require ministers, members of Parliament, and other senior government officers to declare their assets and liabilities upon assuming office?

*Holding public officials accountable for job performance*

In a representative democracy like Botswana, “vertical accountability” gives voters the power to hold elected officials accountable for the performance of their jobs. In contrast, “horizontal accountability” ensures that leaders/institutions hold one another accountable. In an ideal democratic set-up, voters should have the power to recall incompetent leaders. In Botswana, this power is limited to elections, when voters can replace incompetent leaders, although mediocre leaders may still return to office by winning elections or through presidential special election dispensation. Only one-third (33%) of Botswana see it as the responsibility of voters to ensure that, once elected, MPs do their jobs (Figure 8). This is a decrease of 9 percentage points from 2012. A larger proportion (38%) assign this responsibility to the president.

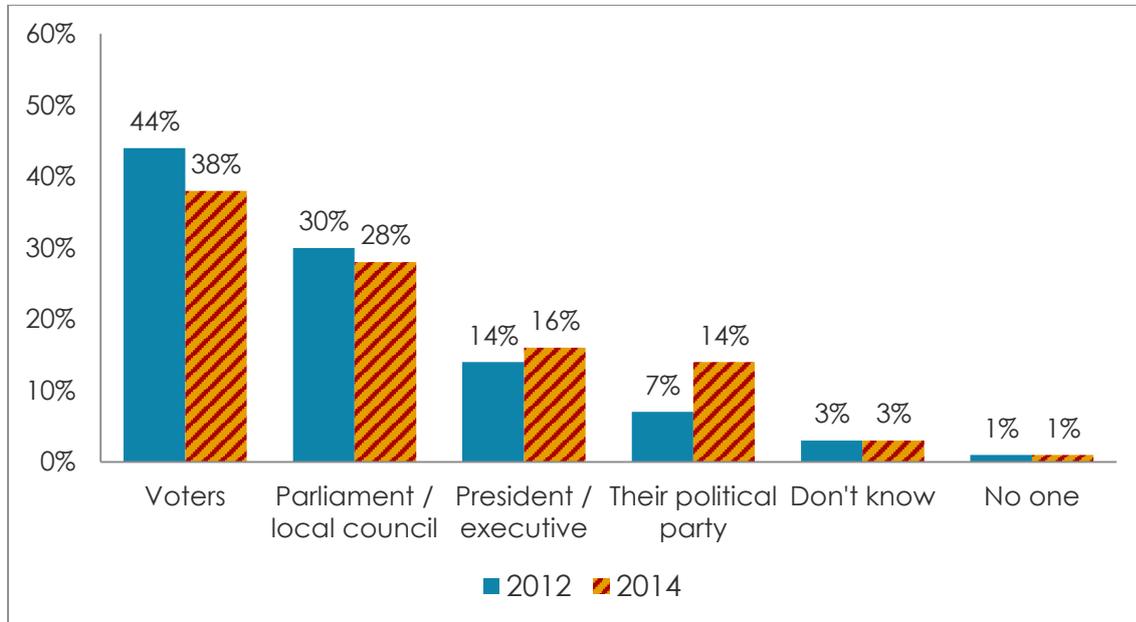
**Figure 8: Responsibility for holding MPs accountable** | Botswana | 2014



**Respondents were asked:** Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, members of Parliament do their jobs?

Similarly, the proportion of respondents who say that it's voters' responsibility to ensure that local councillors do their jobs declined from 44% in 2012 to 38% (Figure 9).

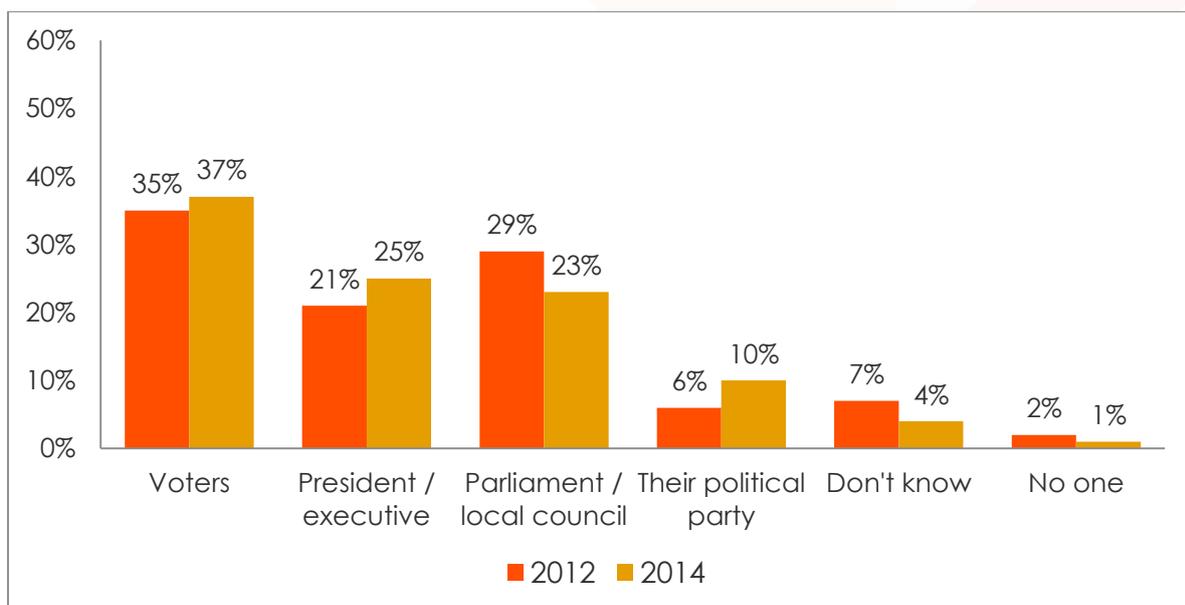
**Figure 9: Responsibility for holding councillors accountable | Botswana | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, local government councillors do their jobs?

With regard to the president, 37% of Botswana say it's the voters' responsibility to ensure that the chief executive does his job (Figure 10). About one-fourth of respondents apportion the responsibility to Parliament and local councils (23%) or to the president himself (25%).

**Figure 10: Responsibility for holding the president accountable | Botswana | 2014**



**Respondents were asked:** Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, the president does his job?

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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