

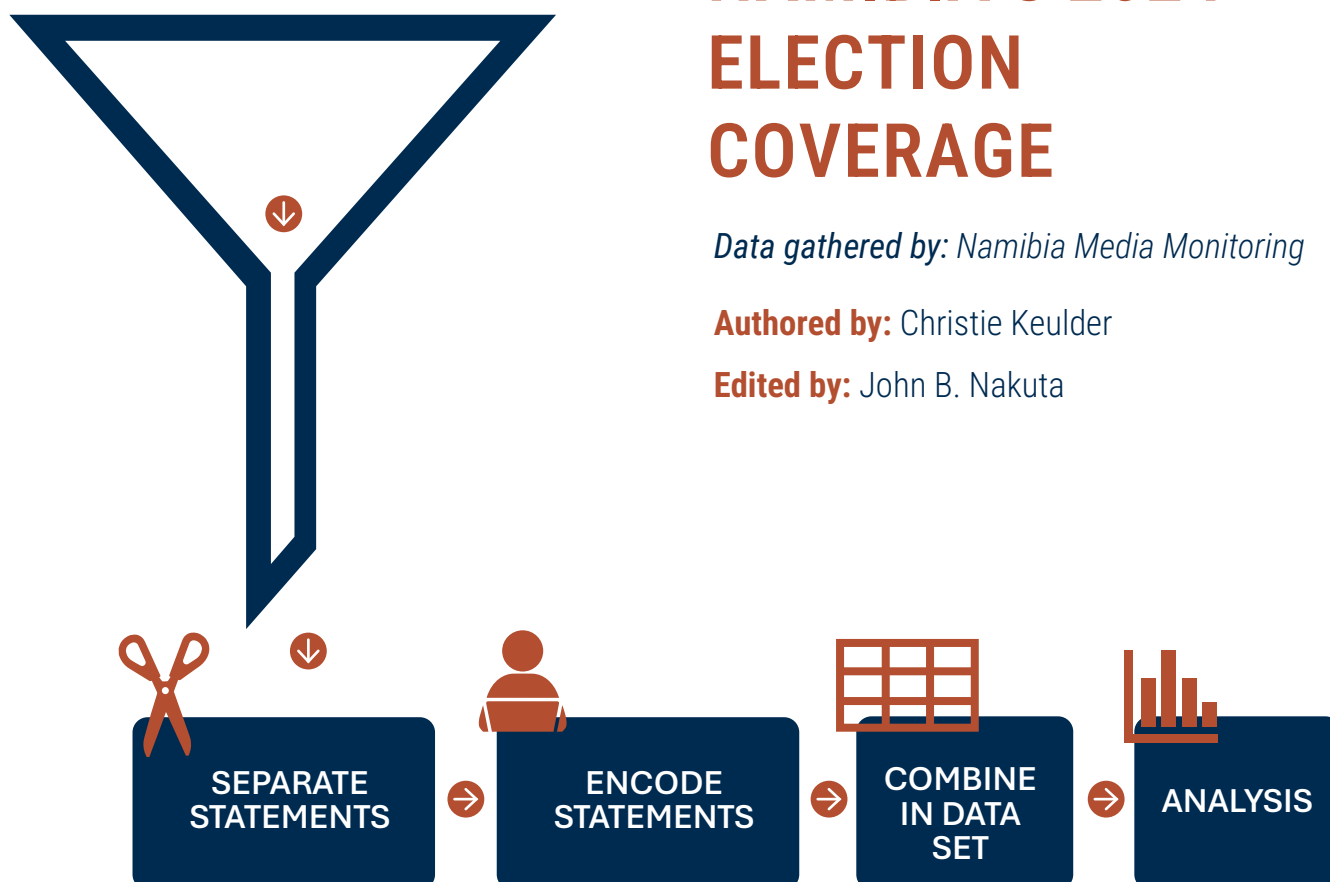


## MEDIA METRICS AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE: INSIGHTS FROM NAMIBIA'S 2024 ELECTION COVERAGE

*Data gathered by: Namibia Media Monitoring*

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## List of Abbreviations

|              |                                                   |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ADM</b>   | Action Democratic Movement Party                  |
| <b>APP</b>   | All People's Party                                |
| <b>AR</b>    | Affirmative Repositioning                         |
| <b>BCP</b>   | Body of Christ Party                              |
| <b>CCI</b>   | Coverage Consistency Index                        |
| <b>CFI</b>   | Coverage Frequency Index                          |
| <b>CoD</b>   | Congress of Democrats                             |
| <b>EFN</b>   | Editors' Forum of Namibia                         |
| <b>EMM</b>   | Election Media Monitoring                         |
| <b>HHI</b>   | Herfindahl-Hirschman Index                        |
| <b>IDI</b>   | Issue Diversity Index                             |
| <b>IPC</b>   | Independent Patriots for Change                   |
| <b>LPM</b>   | Landless People's Movement                        |
| <b>MAG</b>   | Monitor Action Group                              |
| <b>Nampa</b> | Namibian Press Agency                             |
| <b>NBC</b>   | Namibian Broadcasting Corporation                 |
| <b>NDP</b>   | National Democratic Party of Namibia              |
| <b>NEFC</b>  | National Empowerment Fighting Corruption          |
| <b>NEFF</b>  | Namibia Economic Freedom Fighters                 |
| <b>NPF</b>   | National Patriotic Front of Namibia               |
| <b>NTR</b>   | Neutral-to-Total Ratio                            |
| <b>NUDO</b>  | National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia |
| <b>PDM</b>   | Popular Democratic Movement                       |
| <b>PNR</b>   | Positive-to-Negative Ratio                        |
| <b>RDP</b>   | Rally for Democracy and Progress                  |
| <b>RP</b>    | Republican Party of Namibia                       |
| <b>SSR</b>   | Statement-to-Size Ratio                           |
| <b>SWANU</b> | South West Africa National Union                  |
| <b>SWAPO</b> | South West Africa People's Organisation           |
| <b>UDF</b>   | United Democratic Front of Namibia                |
| <b>UPM</b>   | United People's Movement                          |
| <b>WRP</b>   | Workers Revolutionary Party                       |

## Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the Election Media Monitoring (EMM) initiative for the period 20 October to 20 November 2024. Conducted under the mandate of the Media Ombudsman of Namibia, the monitoring project assessed how political parties and presidential candidates were portrayed across state, private, and online media platforms in the lead-up to the national elections.

The data reveals that SWAPO received the highest volume of coverage, with notable bias in its favour on state-owned platforms, particularly the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). While private media offered comparatively more balanced coverage, smaller and emerging parties such as IPC, AR, and LPM struggled to maintain consistent visibility. Sentiment analysis showed fluctuating portrayals across parties, often linked to specific events rather than sustained narratives.

The report employs several key indicators—including the Positive-to-Negative Ratio (PNR), Statement-to-Size Ratio (SSR), Neutral-to-Total Ratio (NTR), and Issue Diversity Index (IDI)—to evaluate the tone, proportionality, and thematic breadth of media coverage. Overall, the findings indicate increased neutral reporting, but a narrowing focus on fewer issues as campaigns progressed. Gender imbalance and digital misinformation emerged as critical challenges, with male voices dominating political discourse and online platforms amplifying unverified or polarising content.

The report concludes with targeted recommendations for media practitioners, political stakeholders, and regulators to foster fair, inclusive, and transparent election coverage, reinforcing the media's vital role in supporting democratic processes.

# 1 Introduction

In Namibia, the media plays a pivotal role in fostering a vibrant democracy by keeping the public informed and engaged. This responsibility is enshrined in the Namibian Constitution, which not only encourages active citizen participation but also guarantees media freedom as a fundamental right. Given the importance of the media in shaping public discourse, Namibian journalists are bound by a Code of Ethics that ensures that they adhere to international standards of accuracy, fairness, independence, and respect for privacy, thereby upholding the integrity of the profession.

To maintain these high standards and provide a mechanism for accountability, the Editors' Forum of Namibia (EFN) instituted the office of the Media Ombudsman, along with a Media Complaints Committee and an Appeals Committee. This self-regulatory system allows the Namibian media to be judged by their peers, ensuring complaints are handled efficiently and with authority, without the need for lengthy and costly court proceedings.

Aligned with its mandate to promote responsible journalism and protect the public's right to accurate and fair information, the Media Ombudsman, Dr John Nakuta undertook a comprehensive media monitoring project focused on the 2024 National Assembly and Presidential elections. This project served as a critical tool in assessing how both legacy and online media covered key issues during the election period. By analysing the content disseminated through various media platforms, the project aimed at ensuring that the media adhered to its ethical obligations of providing the public with reliable and unbiased information necessary for informed participation in the democratic process.

The media monitoring project not only supported the Media Ombudsman's mission to uphold journalistic standards but also contributed to the broader goal of sustaining a healthy democracy in Namibia. Through this initiative, the Media Ombudsman sought to ensure that the media remained a trustworthy pillar of the electoral process, offering a clear, accurate, and fair representation of the events and issues that would shape the future of the nation.

## 2 The Importance of Media Monitoring During Elections

Impartial and comprehensive media analysis is essential for promoting transparency, accountability, and fairness in the electoral process. By critically examining media content and identifying biases, misinformation, and disinformation, stakeholders can safeguard the integrity of elections, combat electoral manipulation, and ensure that voters have access to accurate and relevant information to make informed choices. Through systematic media monitoring, stakeholders can promote a more transparent, inclusive, and democratic electoral process, thereby strengthening public trust and confidence in democratic institutions and values.

In today's digital age, where information flows freely across various media platforms, it is essential to examine the narratives, framing, and dissemination of electoral information to uphold democratic principles and safeguard the integrity of elections. Through thorough media monitoring and analysis, stakeholders can gain valuable insights into how electoral events and issues are portrayed, interpreted, and disseminated to the public.

One of the primary reasons for conducting an impartial and comprehensive media analysis during elections is to identify and mitigate biases that may influence public perceptions and electoral outcomes. Media outlets, intentionally or unintentionally, may exhibit biases in their coverage of elections, favouring certain political parties, candidates, or viewpoints. By examining media content, researchers can uncover subtle biases in framing, language, and selection of sources, enabling stakeholders to address discrepancies and promote fair and balanced coverage of electoral issues.

### 3 The Methodology

Media monitoring is a systematic process of observing, collecting, and analysing various forms of media content to gain insights into prevailing narratives, trends, and perspectives within the media landscape. It encompasses a broad range of media sources, including traditional outlets such as newspapers, television, and radio, and digital platforms like social media, news websites, and online forums. The primary objective of media monitoring is to provide stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of how information is disseminated and interpreted across different channels, thereby informing decision-making processes, shaping public opinion, and influencing policy outcomes.

Implementation of content analysis involves several key steps, including data collection, coding, and analysis. Researchers collect a representative sample of media content relevant to the research objectives, using a combination of sampling techniques to ensure diversity and representativeness. They then systematically code the selected media artefacts according to the predefined coding scheme, recording relevant information and attributes for each unit of analysis. Finally, researchers analyse the coded data to identify patterns, trends, and relationships, using statistical techniques, qualitative interpretation, or a combination of both approaches to draw meaningful conclusions and insights from the media content.

### 4 Key Definitions

**Emoji:** In the context of monitoring and analysing online media, an emoji is a small digital icon or graphic used to express emotions, ideas, or concepts in online communication. Emojis are commonly used in social media posts, comments, messages, and other forms of digital communication to convey sentiments quickly and visually. They can range from simple facial expressions, such as smiling or frowning faces, to more complex images representing objects, activities, or symbols.

Monitoring emojis provides valuable insights into the emotional tone and sentiment of online conversations. By analysing the types and frequencies of emojis used in relation to specific topics, brands, or events, researchers can gauge public sentiment, mood, and reactions. For example, a prevalence of positive emojis (like smiling faces or thumbs-ups) might indicate favourable public opinion, while negative emojis (such as angry faces or thumbs-downs) could suggest dissatisfaction or criticism. Additionally, certain emojis may be used in specific contexts or communities, providing insights into cultural or social trends.

**Hashtags (#):** In the context of monitoring online media, a hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by the pound or hash symbol (#). It is used on social media platforms to categorise content and make it easily searchable. Hashtags help group posts or discussions under a specific topic, theme, or event, allowing users to find and participate in conversations relevant to their interests.

Monitoring hashtags in online media provides valuable insights into the popularity and trends of specific topics, the level of audience engagement, and the overall sentiment around a discussion. By tracking hashtags, organisations can identify key influencers and communities, understand geographical trends, and gauge the effectiveness of campaigns. Hashtags also allow real-time event tracking, enabling immediate feedback and engagement. In essence, hashtags are a powerful tool to analyse and understand the dynamics of online conversations and public interest.

**Impression:** An impression refers to the number of times a piece of content, such as an advertisement, article, or social media post, is displayed or viewed on a user's screen. Each time the content appears on a user's device, it counts as one impression, regardless of whether the user interacts with it (e.g., clicks, likes, or shares). Impressions are a key metric in digital marketing and media analysis as they help measure the potential reach and visibility of the content. High impression numbers indicate that the content has been widely shown to audiences, although it does not necessarily mean that the audience is engaged with the content.

**Mention:** A mention refers to any instance where a specific keyword, phrase, brand, person, or topic is referenced or discussed across digital platforms. This can include social media posts, blogs, news articles, forums, or any other online content. Mentions are tracked to assess the volume of discussion and the context in which the subject is being talked about.

**Statement:** A statement is a discrete unit of information, opinion, or commentary presented within a media piece. It typically consists of a complete sentence or a brief segment of text or speech that conveys a specific idea, claim, or viewpoint. Statements are used as the basic elements of analysis, allowing researchers to quantify and assess the frequency, tone, and context in which particular topics, issues, or opinions are expressed within a given media outlet or across multiple outlets.

**Unique Author:** In the context of online media monitoring and analysis, "unique authors" refers to the distinct individuals or entities who create or publish content that includes mention of a specific topic, brand, or keyword. Each unique author is counted only once, regardless of how many times they have mentioned the topic in their content. Tracking unique authors helps measure the breadth of conversation and the diversity of voices contributing to the discussion. This metric is important for understanding the reach and influence of content across different platforms and identifying key influencers and contributors in a particular online conversation.

## 5 Media Bias

The concept of media bias has been central to the study of mass communication and journalism since the mid-20th century. Media bias refers to the perceived or actual partiality in news coverage, where particular perspectives, ideologies, or narratives are given prominence over others. As media institutions play a key role in shaping public opinion and understanding, identifying bias in media reporting particularly in elections, is crucial for a functioning democracy. At the same time, it is a complex concept that is often misunderstood.

Media bias can manifest through selective omission, word choice, framing, slating and the ascription of credibility to different sources. Media bias can either be deliberate and intentional or unintentional and unconscious.

In the context of this study, media bias is defined as *a conscious act or choice that is sustained over time*. This perspective highlights the importance of intention, arguing that bias is not merely about an isolated instance of one-sided reporting but involves a systematic tendency to present news in a skewed manner. Moreover, the bias must have influence—it must affect public perceptions, opinions, or behaviours to be relevant. In other words, its impact is moot if the bias is not volitional and sustained.

Media bias is often categorised into two high-level types: ideology and spin. *Ideological bias* reflects a media outlet's desire to influence readers' opinions in a particular ideological direction. For example, specific media organisations may consistently present stories that align with one particular political viewpoint, framing events to support that ideology. In the context of election coverage, ideological bias can manifest in the selective coverage of specific candidates, the portrayal of political parties, or the emphasis on issues that align with the media outlet's preferred ideological stance.

Unlike ideological bias, *spin bias* is less about advancing a political agenda and more about crafting a compelling or memorable story. Spin can involve sensationalising certain elements of a story to attract audience attention, often at the expense of nuanced, balanced reporting. While spin bias might not overtly promote one political view, it can shape the audience's perception by emphasising certain angles or details that make the story more dramatic or engaging.

While bias is often assumed to be deliberate, there is increasing recognition that it can also be unintentional. *Unconscious biases* can emerge from journalists, editors, and media executives' backgrounds, experiences, and assumptions. For example, the cultural or social background of reporters may shape the questions they ask, the sources they trust, or the way they frame a story, even if they do not consciously intend to present a biased perspective.

*Unintentional bias* can also arise from institutional factors, such as the media's need to attract audiences or to comply with market pressures. In this case, media outlets may unintentionally slant their coverage towards more sensational or emotional stories, which tend to draw more attention and engagement, even if they do not consciously aim to influence public opinion.

There are several mechanisms through which media bias manifests in reporting. First, media bias can be expressed by omitting critical facts or perspectives from a news story. Simply by choosing what to report and what to leave out, media outlets can shape the audience's understanding of events.

Second, how a story is framed or the context in which it is presented can also introduce bias. A news outlet may choose to frame an event in terms of conflict, morality, or economics, which can influence how the audience interprets the story.

Third, source credibility is another mechanism responsible for bias. Here, varying degrees of credibility are ascribed to different sources. By privileging certain voices while marginalising others, the media can tilt the balance of a story towards a particular perspective.

Media bias is a nuanced and multi-dimensional concept beyond the mere volume of coverage that political parties or candidates receive. Especially during elections, media coverage can significantly influence public opinion and electoral outcomes, making it essential to analyse how different parties are portrayed in the media. For the study on media coverage of the 2024 National Assembly and Presidential elections in Namibia, several key metrics were used to comprehensively understand party coverage. These metrics—such as the statement-to-size ratio, the positive-to-negative coverage ratio, and the neutral-to-total ratio—allow for a more nuanced analysis of the media’s role in shaping the electoral landscape.

## 6 Key Metrics

The study introduced and explained the essential quantitative tools used to dissect and understand the nuances of media coverage of political parties and candidates. This was pivotal because it laid the foundation for how the data was collected, measured and interpreted ensuring the analysis was both rigorous and insightful.

Firstly, the Statement-to-Size Ratio, which helped assess the proportionality of media coverage relative to the actual size or influence of a political entity, was used. This ratio was crucial for identifying any discrepancies that might suggest media bias or disproportionate attention, thereby allowing for a more balanced interpretation of media coverage.

Two slanting ratios, the Positive-to-Negative Ratio (PNR) and the Negative-to-Total Ratio (NTR) were also used. These metrics were essential for gauging the tone of the media coverage. The PNR examined the balance between positive and negative mentions, providing insight into the overall sentiment bias in the coverage of a party or candidate. Conversely, the NTR measured the extent of neutral coverage relative to total mentions, offering a clear picture of the unslanted content a party or candidate faced in the media.

Lastly, the Issue Diversity Index (IDI) measured the range of different issues associated with each political party or candidate covered in the media. This index was essential for understanding whether the media coverage was broad and varied or narrowly focused on a limited set of topics. A higher IDI indicated a more diverse coverage, suggesting that the party or candidate was being discussed in multiple contexts, which could enhance public understanding and engagement.

### 6.1 Statement-to-Size Ratio (SSR)

A common misconception in the analysis of media bias is that the amount of coverage a party or candidate receives directly correlates with bias. However, this approach overlooks an important factor: party size. Larger political parties tend to naturally receive more media attention due to their prominence in the political landscape. Simply tracking the volume of coverage would not provide an accurate picture of media bias because smaller parties are inherently less likely to receive the same level of attention as larger, more established parties.

To address this, the statement-to-size ratio (SSR) is introduced as a key metric. The formula is:

$$SSR = \frac{C_i}{S_i}$$

Where  $C_i$  represents the volume of coverage for party  $i$  (e.g., number of statements, articles, or mentions) and  $S_i$  is the relative size of party  $i$  (e.g., the proportion of seats or percentage of vote share).

This ratio adjusts the volume of coverage based on the relative size of the political party, accounting for the fact that larger parties would typically generate more news due to their organisational and electoral presence. By weighting the volume of coverage against party size, the statement-to-size ratio ensures that disproportionate coverage of smaller parties is not overlooked and excessive focus on larger parties is adjusted for. A high score indicates that a party is receiving more media coverage relative to its size, potentially signalling disproportionate attention. In contrast, a low score means that a party is getting less coverage than expected based on its size, which may suggest underrepresentation.

Finally, it was converted to percentages to make the SSR more interpretable and relatable. Using percentages could help in quickly gauging the proportionality of media coverage relative to the size of the voting base, making comparisons across different parties more straightforward and intuitive. For example, a 0.02 ratio converted to 2% could be easily understood as two statements per 100 votes, which could be more intuitively grasped than explaining what a 0.02 ratio signifies. Furthermore, using percentages allowed for a standardised comparison across all parties, regardless of their total votes or statement counts. There was one caveat: the SSR ratio was impossible to calculate for new parties like the IPC and AR that did not contest the 2019 elections and, therefore, did not feature in the discussion of the SSR.

## 6.2 Positive to Negative Coverage Ratio (PNR)

Another critical aspect of media bias was the slant or tone of coverage. Media outlets could report on political parties and candidates in ways that influenced public perceptions positively or negatively. However, understanding bias could not be reduced to a simple count of positive or negative statements. The context leading to these ratings, and the sustained nature of positive or negative portrayals, mattered significantly.

The study used the positive-to-negative coverage ratio to capture this dynamic. This ratio assessed the balance of positive and negative reporting for each political party and calculated a net score, providing insight into whether a party was predominantly portrayed in a positive or negative light. The formula is:

$$PNR = \frac{P_i}{N_i}$$

Where  $P_i$  is the number of positive mentions or coverage of party  $i$  and  $N_i$  is the number of negative mentions or coverage of party  $i$ .

A high ratio suggested that a party was portrayed predominantly positively, indicating favourable media coverage. In contrast, a low ratio indicated that the party mainly received negative coverage, signalling unfavourable or critical reporting. This ratio offered a way to quantify and track these trends over the election period, shedding light on whether certain parties were disproportionately praised or criticised.

### 6.3 Neutral to Total Coverage Ratio (NTR)

While positive and negative coverage is important in understanding bias, a significant portion of media reporting might be presented in a neutral tone. Neutral coverage is essential to journalistic integrity, as it allows the media to inform the public without overtly influencing their opinions. However, a lack of neutral reporting could signal media bias, particularly if parties are frequently reported on with an overtly positive or negative slant.

$$NTR = \frac{N_i}{T_i}$$

Where  $N_i$  is the number of neutral mentions or articles about party  $i$  and  $T_i$  is the total volume of coverage for party  $i$  (i.e., the sum of positive, negative, and neutral coverage).

The neutral-to-total coverage ratio helped track the extent to which parties were reported on in an impartial, unbiased manner. This metric calculated the proportion of neutral coverage relative to the total amount of coverage a party received, providing a measure of how often media outlets adhered to objective reporting standards. A high neutral-to-total ratio suggested that the media offered balanced, fact-based reporting, while a low ratio indicated a tendency towards slanted or opinionated coverage.

The neutral-to-total ratio was particularly useful when combined with the positive-to-negative coverage ratio, as it helped researchers understand whether parties were receiving largely neutral coverage or if media outlets were consistently framing them in a positive or negative light. For example, a party that had a low neutral-to-total ratio, but a high positive-to-negative ratio might have been the beneficiary of favourable media bias. In contrast, a low neutral-to-total ratio coupled with negative coverage could indicate that a party was being unfairly targeted.

### 6.4 Issue Diversity Index (IDI)

As stated above, media coverage of elections plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, influencing how voters perceive the key issues at stake. During elections, media outlets may focus on a wide range of topics, such as the economy, healthcare, education, and corruption. However, this coverage can either be highly diversified, giving attention to a broad array of issues, or concentrated, focusing narrowly on a few select topics. To measure this, the Issue Diversity Index (IDI) provides a robust tool for quantifying the diversity or concentration of election issues reported by the media.

The IDI is adapted from the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), which is typically used to assess market concentration. In the context of media coverage, the IDI measures how evenly media outlets distribute their focus across different election issues. The index is calculated using the following formula:

$$IDI = 1 - \sum (S_i^2)$$

Where  $S_i$  is the proportion of coverage allocated to issue  $i$  relative to the total coverage of all issues.

The IDI ranges from 0 to 1, where a value closer to 1 indicates high diversity in issue coverage, and a value closer to 0 signifies greater concentration. A high IDI score indicates diverse media coverage, meaning that election issues were presented across a broad range of topics.

This diversity allowed voters to engage with multiple facets of the political landscape, making more informed decisions at the polls. For example, if the media equally covered economic policy, education reform, healthcare, and corruption, the IDI would yield a high score, reflecting a healthy balance in coverage. Such diversity is critical in elections because it exposes voters to different policy discussions, which in turn broadens the electorate's understanding of key issues.

In contrast, a low IDI score signals that media coverage is concentrated on a few issues, potentially skewing public perception. For instance, if the media focused predominantly on one issue, such as the economy, while largely ignoring others, like education or healthcare, the IDI would be low, indicating concentrated coverage. This narrow focus could shape public discourse by reinforcing certain narratives while marginalising others, which could lead to an imbalanced electoral debate. Voters might miss out on important issues that are underreported, ultimately affecting their decision-making process at the polls.

## 6.5 Tracking Trends Over Time

When analysing media coverage, identifying trends is crucial for understanding how the portrayal of political parties or candidates evolves. A trend refers to a consistent pattern or direction in data over a given period rather than isolated or random fluctuations. At least three data points are typically required to determine a reliable trend. However, for a more robust and meaningful analysis, it is preferable to have a longer series of data points (such as this project's monthly observations throughout the election period) to ensure that any observed changes are part of a sustained pattern, not merely short-term noise.

One of the strengths of these metrics is their ability to track changes in media coverage patterns over time. Political parties' coverage in media is rarely static; it can evolve depending on external factors such as shifts in public opinion, changes in political strategy, or the emergence of new electoral issues. By employing metrics like the statement-to-size ratio, the positive-to-negative coverage ratio, and the neutral-to-total ratio, the study can monitor how media coverage develops throughout the election campaign.

For instance, a more minor party might initially receive minimal coverage, but as the election approaches and its campaign gains traction, the statement-to-size ratio may rise. Similarly, a party that starts off with neutral or positive coverage might see a shift towards more negative reporting as public opinion changes or controversies arise. By analysing these trends, the study provides a more dynamic and comprehensive picture of media bias, accounting for tone, volume, and neutrality shifts throughout the electoral process.

When examining trends using the **statement-to-size ratio**, a rising trend over time suggests that a smaller party is receiving increasing attention in the media, perhaps due to gaining political traction or visibility. Conversely, a declining trend indicates that the media is gradually focusing less on a party relative to its size. Readers should interpret these trends by considering the political context—whether a shift in media attention aligns with campaign events, public interest, or changes in the party's strategy.

A rising trend in the **positive-to-negative coverage ratio** suggests that a party is increasingly being portrayed in a positive light, which could boost its public image as the election approaches. A downward trend, on the other hand, signals a shift towards more critical or negative coverage, potentially harming the party's public standing. Readers should consider whether these trends coincide with significant political events, controversies, or policy announcements, as these often influence the tone of media reporting.

A stable or increasing trend in the **neutral-to-total ratio** reflects consistent, balanced reporting over time, indicating that the media is maintaining impartiality in its coverage. However, if the neutral-to-total ratio decreases, it suggests that the media is becoming more opinionated, with fewer neutral reports and more slanted coverage. Readers should pay attention to these shifts, as a decline in neutral coverage may indicate that media outlets are increasingly engaging in biased reporting, whether positive or negative.

The Issue Diversity Index is particularly useful for understanding how media coverage evolves over the course of an election campaign. By tracking the IDI over time, researchers can monitor whether the media's focus has shifted or remained concentrated on specific issues. For example, a campaign might start with a diverse range of issues being discussed. Still, as the election draws nearer, media coverage might concentrate on a specific topic, such as a scandal or a significant policy debate. The IDI can capture these shifts, allowing researchers to analyse how the media's agenda-setting influenced the public conversation.

## 7 How To Use This Report

### 7.1 The Media

Content analysis, as demonstrated in this detailed examination of media coverage across Namibian political parties, offers invaluable insights that media outlets can leverage to refine their reporting practices and editorial strategies. By systematically assessing the breadth and depth of their content, media organisations can achieve a more balanced and nuanced portrayal of political entities, which is crucial for fostering a well-informed public.

Firstly, content analysis allows media organisations to identify biases or gaps in their reporting. By quantifying the diversity of issues covered (as indicated by the Issue Diversity Index) and assessing the sentiment and neutrality of coverage (through ratios like the Positive to Negative Ratio and Neutral to Total Ratio), media can critically evaluate whether their coverage is skewed or overly concentrated on certain topics. This introspection can prompt adjustments in editorial focus, ensuring a broader and more equitable representation of political perspectives, which is especially important in diverse political landscapes.

Additionally, content analysis can guide media outlets in enhancing the quality of political reporting. By understanding which issues receive more attention and which are neglected, editors can allocate resources more effectively, promoting comprehensive coverage that spans a broader array of subjects. This balanced approach will not only enrich the public discourse but also strengthen the media's role as a pillar of democracy by providing the electorate with the comprehensive information needed to make informed decisions.

Moreover, the metrics derived from content analysis, such as the IDI and sentiment ratios, provide benchmarks for journalistic standards. Media outlets can use these benchmarks to maintain or improve their standards of fairness and objectivity. Regular monitoring against these benchmarks can help publications and broadcasters maintain public trust and credibility, which are paramount in retaining audience engagement and loyalty.

Content analysis also serves as a foundation for developing internal training and development for journalists and editors. With insights from content analysis, media organisations can tailor training programmes that address identified shortcomings in coverage, enhance understanding of media bias, and foster skills for balanced reporting. These training programmes can empower media professionals to approach political reporting with a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved, promoting ethical journalism practices.

Content analysis should, therefore, not be seen as a tool for critique but as a strategic asset that media outlets can use to elevate the quality and impact of their reporting. By embracing the detailed insights offered by content analysis, media organisations can only improve their own editorial outputs and contribute positively to the broader political ecosystem, ensuring that their influence on public opinion and democracy is both constructive and balanced.

## **7.2 Political Parties**

Content analysis of media coverage provides a wealth of insights that political parties can harness to fine-tune their communication strategies, understand public perception, and ultimately enhance their electoral appeal. By systematically evaluating how different issues related to their party are covered, political entities can make informed decisions that could significantly impact their public image and effectiveness in engaging with the electorate.

Firstly, content analysis helps political parties identify which of their policies or themes are gaining traction in the media and which are not. This can inform parties about the effectiveness of their messaging and the resonance of their policy proposals with the public. For instance, if certain key policies are not receiving sufficient media attention, a party might choose to amplify these topics in their direct communications or public appearances to ensure they are part of the public discourse. Conversely, if negative themes are predominating, it provides an opportunity for parties to reassess their strategies or clarify misconceptions.

Furthermore, by understanding the diversity of issues covered (as measured by the Issue Diversity Index), political parties can gauge whether their intended messages are being diluted. A high diversity index, while indicative of broad coverage, may also suggest that the party's core message is getting lost amid numerous less central issues. Parties can use this insight to sharpen their focus on key strategic issues that will help consolidate their identity and appeal to their base and swing voters.

The sentiment ratios provided by content analysis, such as the Positive to Negative Ratio and Neutral to Total Ratio, are especially valuable. These ratios can reveal how favourably or unfavourably a party is viewed in media portrayals. Armed with this knowledge, parties can undertake targeted reputation management efforts, design campaigns to counteract negative sentiments or strengthen positive narratives in the media. This kind of proactive management can be crucial in shaping public perception ahead of elections.

Additionally, content analysis can aid political parties in understanding their comparative media positioning against competitors. This benchmarking can drive competitive strategies, helping parties to capitalise on their strengths or exploit opponents' weaknesses in media coverage. Parties can innovate and differentiate themselves in ways most likely to capture media and public interest.

Parties can also use content analysis to inform their internal training and development. Insights derived from how different issues are covered can guide the development of spokesperson training, ensuring that party representatives are better equipped to handle media interactions, focus on strategic issues, and navigate away from potentially harmful topics.

In conclusion, content analysis is an invaluable tool for political parties aiming to navigate the complex media landscape effectively. It not only mirrors how they are currently perceived in relation to their strategic intentions but also provides a roadmap for adjusting communication tactics. By embracing the detailed insights offered by analysis such as is provided by this project, political parties can enhance their public communication strategies, achieve greater resonance with voters, and ultimately improve their performance in the electoral arena.

## 8 Key Issues Shaping Media Coverage

The October/November period saw Namibia's political landscape dominated by key events and narratives that underscored the nation's evolving democratic engagement, and the increasing challenge posed to SWAPO by emerging parties. Dr Panduleni Itula's rise with the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) was particularly significant, signalling a groundswell of discontent with the ruling SWAPO party and a broader desire for political accountability and reform. Itula's emphasis on grassroots democracy and anti-corruption resonated with voters frustrated by perceived stagnation and governance challenges, reflecting a shift in public sentiment toward alternative voices in Namibia's political discourse. Alongside IPC, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) movement and the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) capitalised on this demand for change, presenting themselves as credible alternatives and diversifying the political landscape.

The vibrancy of Namibia's democracy was further highlighted by heated debates and competitive campaigning, particularly among SWAPO, IPC, and AR. This period was marked by an energetic electoral environment where parties actively engaged with voters on pressing issues such as governance, corruption, and the trajectory of Namibia's development. SWAPO, while leveraging its historical role in the nation's independence and development, found itself in a defensive position as opposition parties scrutinised its track record. This dynamic, with a growing electorate expressing affiliations and participating in discussions, showcased a maturing democracy, where political competition and citizen involvement were front and centre.

Positive narratives during this time also pointed to a broader sense of national progress and regional solidarity. President Nangolo Mbumba's congratulatory message to Botswana's newly elected president, Duma Boko, underscored Namibia's commitment to peaceful transitions and regional stability. Meanwhile, SWAPO's legacy remained a focal point in discussions, particularly in the northern regions, where its contributions to Namibia's development were celebrated. These affirming moments highlighted the enduring strength of Namibia's democratic fabric and its capacity for both reflection on its past and engagement with its future. The active involvement of citizens in political debates and their varied affiliations signalled a healthy, albeit contested, democratic process.

However, this period was not without significant challenges. SWAPO faced mounting criticism over issues of corruption and governance, with opposition parties such as IPC and AR amplifying calls for greater accountability. These criticisms, coupled with accusations that the IPC was receiving foreign funding, revealed deep divisions within the electorate and underscored the polarising nature of Namibia's political discourse. AR's focus on reform and transparency further amplified these debates, pushing issues of governance to the forefront of public conversation. Together, these developments underscored both the opportunities and tensions within Namibia's political evolution, as the country grappled with balancing its historical legacy with an increasingly diverse and vocal opposition.

## **9 Party Coverage**

In the complex interplay of politics and media, understanding how political parties are portrayed is crucial. This section of the report offers a detailed analysis of this dynamic, exploring several key themes that highlighted both the quantity and quality of media attention parties received.

It begins with the **Volume of Coverage** and **Share of Coverage**, which reveal the amount and proportion of media attention each party commanded. These metrics are vital in assessing the visibility and prominence of parties within the media landscape. Moving beyond mere quantities, the analysis delves into **Sentiment Ratios**, examining the tone of coverage—positive, negative, or neutral—shedding light on how parties are perceived by the public.

The **Statement-to-Size Ratio** compares media coverage to a party's actual size or influence, offering insights into potential media biases or focal points. Additionally, the **Issue Diversity Index** measures the range of topics associated with each party, indicating whether coverage is broad or narrow in scope. Finally, **Time in Media** considers the duration and consistency of coverage, which is essential for understanding ongoing media engagement.

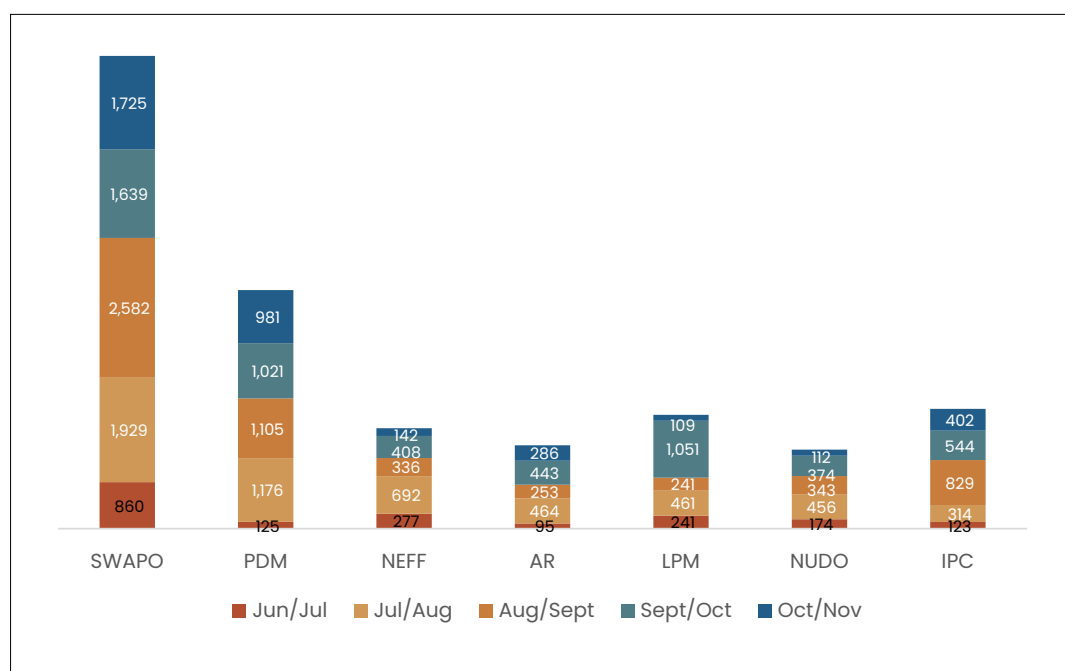
### **9.1 Volume of Coverage by Party**

Figure 1 offers an overview of the number of statements made about various political parties over five consecutive periods, spanning June to November. This data provides insights into how different parties featured in the media landscape during this critical election period, highlighting the dynamics of media attention allocation.

SWAPO consistently received the most significant volume of coverage across all periods, with a notable peak of 2,582 statements in August/September. This dominance suggested that SWAPO, as the ruling party, likely commanded the media's attention due to its central role in shaping political discourse. The coverage trends, however, showed a decline after August/September, with 1,639 statements in September/October and 1,725 in October/November, reflecting a possible waning of media focus or a stabilisation of coverage. In contrast, PDM experienced a sharp increase in July/August, with 1,176 statements compared to 125 in June/July, followed by a steady decline to 981 statements by October/November. This suggested that PDM gained initial momentum, possibly due to events or announcements, but struggled to sustain that level of attention in later months.

The smaller opposition parties—NEFF, AR, LPM, and NUDO—exhibited varying trends. NEFF's media attention was highest in July/August (692 statements), but it declined sharply to just 142 statements by October/November. Similarly, AR and NUDO saw fluctuations, with significant drops in later months. LPM, however, experienced a dramatic spike in September/October, with 1,051 statements, up from 241 in August/September. This surge likely reflected an event or controversy that drew media interest. Nevertheless, LPM's coverage dropped significantly to 109 statements by October/November, underscoring the transient nature of media attention.

Figure 1: Volume of Coverage by Political Party



IPC's trajectory is particularly interesting, with modest figures in the early periods (123 in June/July and 314 in July/August), followed by a significant rise to 829 statements in August/September. However, this growth was not sustained, as the volume decreased to 544 in September/October and 402 in October/November. This pattern indicated that while IPC gained attention mid-period, it could not maintain the heightened focus over time.

Overall, the data highlighted the unequal distribution of media coverage, with SWAPO dominating the narrative and the smaller opposition parties struggling to achieve consistent or significant media presence. The fluctuations in coverage for certain parties suggested that media attention was often event-driven, rather than indicative of sustained political engagement or strategy. This uneven distribution of coverage raised critical questions about the media's role in shaping public perceptions of political competition during elections.

## 9.2 Share of Coverage by Party

Figure 2 reveals significant disparities in the share of media coverage allocated to SWAPO, the ruling party, compared to opposition parties. These disparities provided valuable insights into the media's focus and its potential impact on public perceptions during the election period.

SWAPO consistently garnered the largest share of coverage across the observed periods, with notable fluctuations. In June/July, SWAPO commanded 40.5% of the media's attention, but this dropped to 31.5% in July/August before rebounding to 40.0% in August/September. A sharp decline to 24.3% in September/October indicated a temporary shift in media focus, potentially towards other political events or players. By October/November, however, SWAPO's share increased again to 36.95%, reaffirming its dominance in the media narrative. This sustained high coverage highlighted SWAPO's central role in Namibian politics and suggested the media's continued focus on the activities and policies of the ruling party.

In contrast, opposition parties exhibited lower and more varied shares of coverage. PDM emerged as the second most-covered party, with its share peaking at 21.02% in October/November. This upward trend suggested growing media interest, likely linked to PDM's campaign activities or leadership presence. IPC also saw a significant increase, particularly in August/September (12.8%), but its share dropped to 8.1% in September/October before stabilising at 8.61% in October/November. This pattern indicated episodic surges in media attention, possibly tied to specific events or announcements.

Other opposition parties, including NEFF, AR, LPM, and NUDO, struggled to maintain consistent or significant shares of coverage. NEFF's share dropped from 13.0% in June/July to just 3.04% in October/November, reflecting diminishing media interest. Similarly, AR and LPM experienced declines after initial surges, with AR stabilising at 6.13% in the final period and LPM falling dramatically to 2.34%. NUDO followed a similar trajectory, declining from 8.2% in June/July to 2.40% in October/November. These trends underscored the challenges faced by smaller opposition parties in sustaining media visibility over time.

The disparity between SWAPO's dominance and the fragmented coverage of opposition parties underscored the media's role in shaping the political landscape. SWAPO's consistent prominence might have reinforced its centrality in voters' minds, while the variability in opposition coverage reflected both the challenges and opportunities for smaller parties to capture public attention. These dynamics highlighted the importance of strategic media engagement for opposition parties aiming to counterbalance the ruling party's media dominance.

*Figure 2: Share of Coverage by Party (%)*

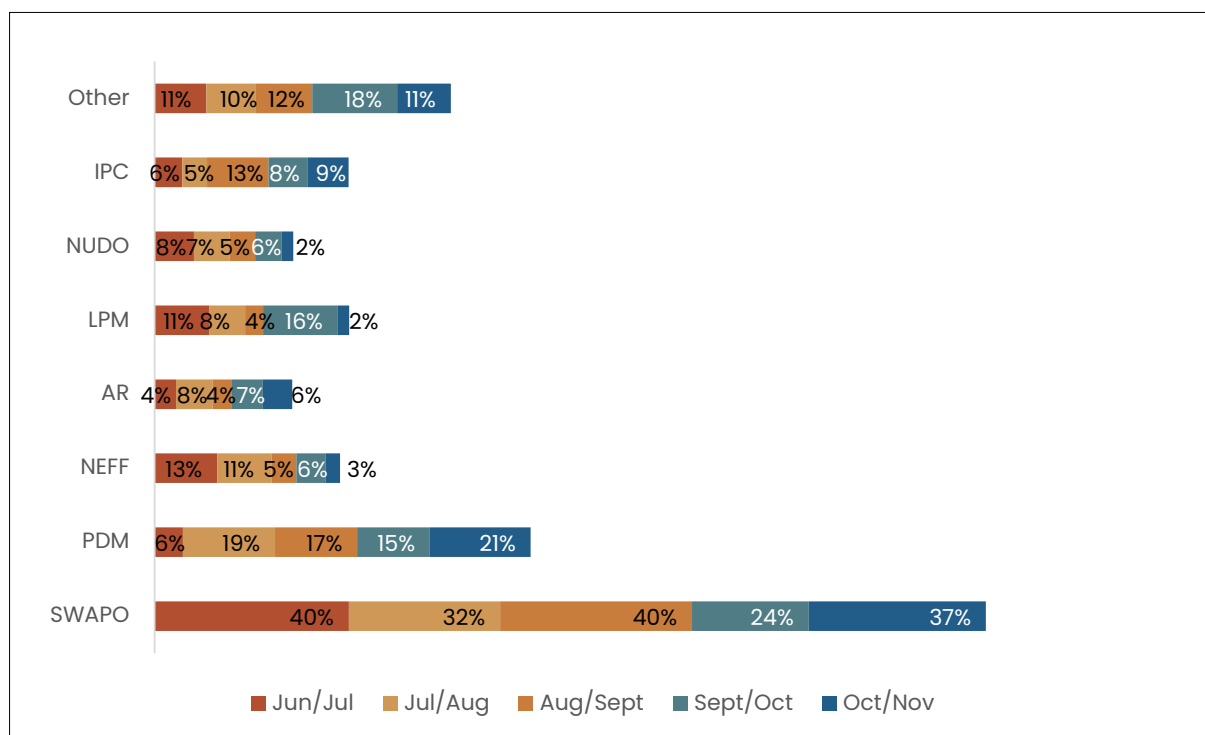


Figure 2 contains at least clear patterns or trends emerging from party coverage. First, SWAPO, as the ruling party, consistently maintained a commanding share of media coverage throughout the observed months, with percentages ranging between 24.3% and 40.5%. While the party experienced fluctuations, particularly a notable dip in September/October (24.3%), its coverage rebounded to 36.95% in October/November.

This dominance reflected SWAPO's entrenched position in the Namibian political narrative, as it continued to draw significant attention from both the media and the public. Such sustained visibility likely reinforced its centrality in voters' consciousness, providing the party with an inherent advantage in shaping the electoral discourse.

Second, in contrast, opposition parties experienced less consistent and often lower levels of media attention, with significant variability across months. The PDM emerged as the most prominent opposition party in terms of coverage, achieving a substantial peak of 21.02% in October/November. This suggested growing relevance in the political arena, potentially tied to strategic campaign efforts. However, other parties like IPC saw episodic spikes, particularly in August/September (12.8%), which subsequently tapered off, indicating challenges in sustaining media momentum. Smaller parties such as NEFF, LPM, and NUDO struggled further, with their shares declining over time to below 3.5% in the final months, reflecting diminishing media interest.

Third, the fluctuations in party coverage suggested that the media's focus was event-driven rather than uniformly distributed. For instance, spikes in coverage for opposition parties, such as IPC and PDM, could correlate with major campaign activities, leadership announcements, or controversies. Meanwhile, SWAPO's more consistent presence indicated its dominance in both routine political activities and high-profile events, perpetuating its media prominence.

These trends underscored the uneven media landscape, where ruling parties naturally enjoy greater visibility due to their incumbency, while opposition parties rely on strategic interventions to secure attention. This fragmented visibility poses challenges for smaller parties, as limited media coverage could hinder their ability to communicate their policies, reach voters, and influence public opinion.

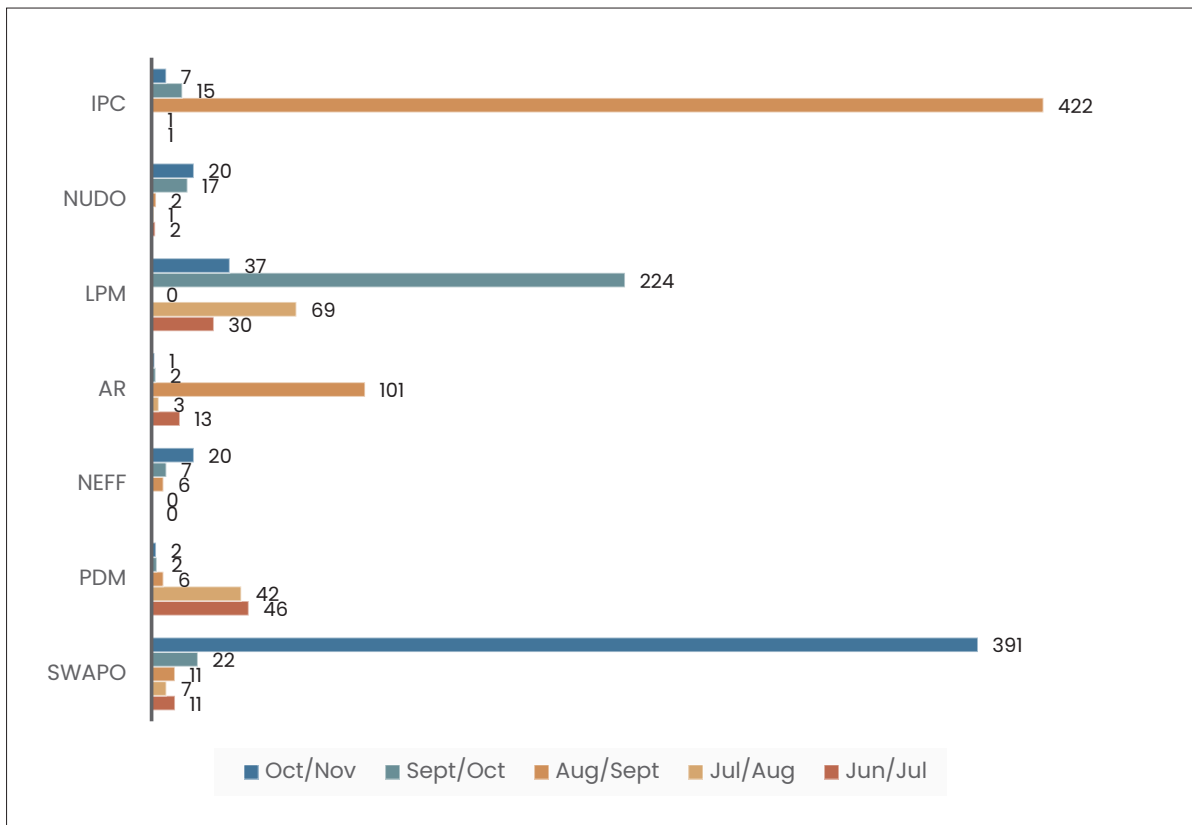
## **9.3 Sentiment Ratios**

In political media analysis, sentiment plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of political parties. Sentiment ratios subsection delves into the nuances of this sentiment by examining two critical metrics: the Positive-to-Negative Ratio (PNR) and the Negative-to-Total Ratio (NTR). These ratios provide valuable insights into the overall tone of media coverage—PNR assesses the balance between positive and negative mentions. At the same time, NTR gauges the prevalence of negative sentiment within the total coverage. This focused analysis helps to decode the emotional undercurrents of media portrayals, offering stakeholders a deeper understanding of the media's influence on public sentiment and political dynamics.

### **9.3.1 Positive- to-Negative Ratio (PNR)**

The Positive-to-Negative Ratio (PNR) presented in Figure 3 serves as a critical measure of how political parties are portrayed in the media. For SWAPO, the ruling party, the PNR displayed significant variation over time. Starting with a modest PNR of 11 in June/July, SWAPO's ratio declined slightly to 7 in July/August before recovering to 11 in August/September. The ratio then increased sharply to 22 in September/October and surged to an impressive 391 in October/November. This notable improvement in October/November reflected a concentrated period of favourable media coverage, potentially tied to strategic campaign efforts or key political developments. The trend underscored SWAPO's ability to capitalise on media platforms to shape its image positively, which could enhance voter perception in a critical electoral period.

Figure 3: Positive-to-Negative Ratio (PNR) by Party



For the PDM, the leading opposition party, the PNR trajectory contrasted sharply with SWAPO's. Starting at a robust 46 in June/July and 42 in July/August, the ratio dropped dramatically to 6 in August/September, then plummeted further to 2 in both September/October and October/November. This decline suggested a significant erosion in the positive media portrayal of the PDM, possibly driven by waning political activity or increased scrutiny. The inability to sustain a high PNR raised concerns about the party's capacity to leverage media coverage effectively, a factor that might have limited its appeal to undecided voters.

NEFF and AR exhibited intriguing PNR dynamics. NEFF began with no recorded PNR in the early months but experienced incremental growth, with a PNR of 6 in August/September and 7 in September/October, culminating in 20 by October/November. This upward trajectory indicated increasing positive media attention, likely tied to successful advocacy or visibility during key political events. Conversely, AR's PNR peaked dramatically at 101 in August/September, reflecting concentrated favourable coverage, possibly linked to a specific event or campaign milestone. However, the ratio plummeted to 2 in September/October and 1 in October/November, illustrating a sharp decline in positive coverage and raising questions about the sustainability of its media strategy.

PNR trends varied significantly for opposition parties such as LPM, NUDO, and IPC. LPM demonstrated erratic changes, peaking at 69 in July/August before dropping to 0 in August/September, then a sharp rise to 224 in September/October and a subsequent decline to 37 in October/November. NUDO's PNR, while relatively modest, improved steadily, starting at 2 in June/July and growing to 20 by October/November. IPC, on the other hand, experienced a dramatic spike in August/September with a PNR of 422, far surpassing all other parties. However, this peak was not sustained, as the ratio declined to 15 in September/October and 7 in October/November. These patterns suggested that these parties faced challenges maintaining positive media narratives over time, which could hinder their overall visibility and impact.

### 9.3.2 Neutral-to-Total Ratio (NTR)

The Neutral-to-Total Ratio (NTR) is a valuable metric for assessing the proportion of neutral statements relative to the total media coverage a political party receives. It provides insights into the balance or impartiality of media portrayals, highlighting the extent to which coverage avoids overtly positive or negative slanting. A high NTR indicates a preponderance of neutral coverage, offering an opportunity for parties to appeal to voters without the potential bias of sentiment-driven reporting. Conversely, a low NTR might suggest a polarising media narrative, which could either bolster or harm the party depending on the sentiment.

Figure 4 shows that for SWAPO, the NTR displayed consistent growth over the five months, starting at 0.57 in June/July and increasing steadily to 0.77 by October/November. This trend indicated an increasing share of neutral coverage over time, reflecting the media's growing focus on balanced reporting for the ruling party. The jump from 0.56 in August/September to 0.7 in September/October is particularly noteworthy, possibly reflecting a shift in how SWAPO managed its messaging or responded to media scrutiny. By October/November, SWAPO had achieved one of the highest NTR scores, suggesting it had successfully navigated media narratives to secure impartial portrayals.

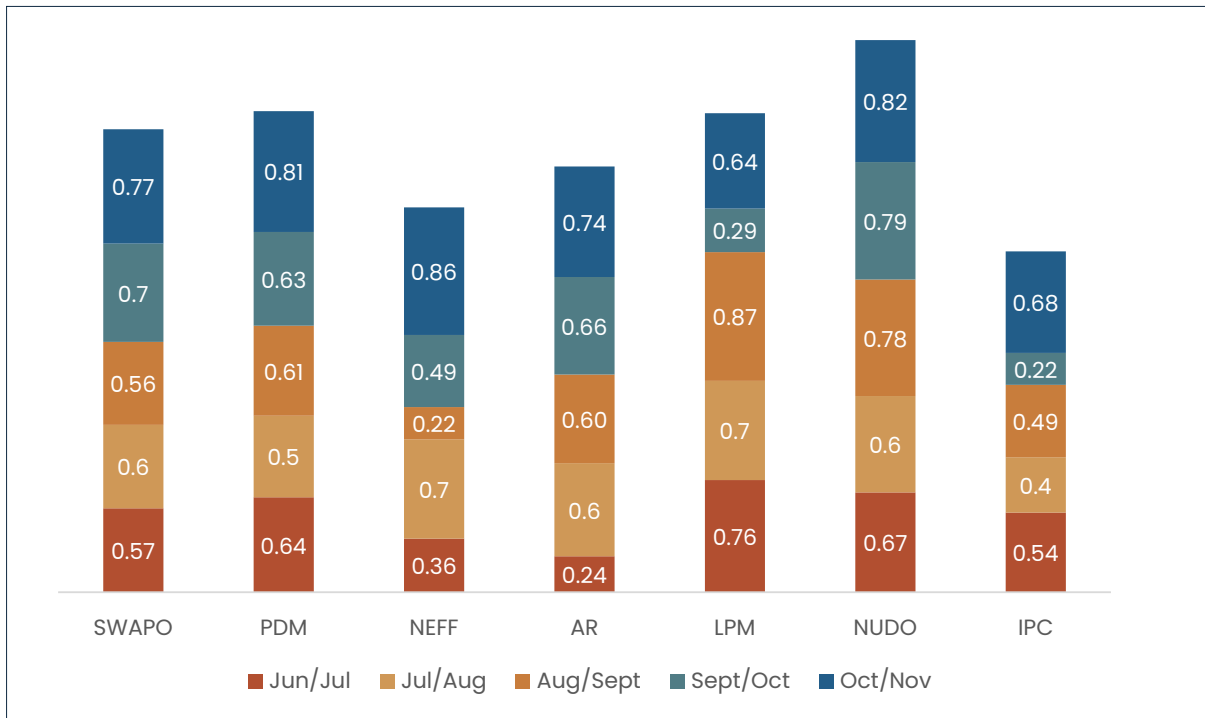
The PDM, Namibia's leading opposition party, demonstrated a similar upward trajectory. Starting with an NTR of 0.64 in June/July, the ratio dipped to 0.5 in July/August before recovering to 0.61 in August/September. From September/October onwards, the NTR climbed significantly, reaching 0.81 in October/November, the highest of all the parties in the table. This progression suggested that PDM gradually garnered more balanced media attention, potentially as the party fine-tuned its campaign strategy and messaging to resonate with both the media and the electorate.

The NEFF exhibited the most dramatic changes in its NTR over the period. It started with a relatively low score of 0.36 in June/July, peaked at 0.7 in July/August, then plummeted to 0.22 in August/September—a striking decline. This variability could point to fluctuating media attention tied to specific controversies or events that led to more sentiment-driven coverage. However, NEFF rebounded impressively in the latter months, achieving an NTR of 0.86 in October/November, the highest score in that period. This turnaround reflected a significant shift toward neutral media coverage, potentially signalling a stabilisation in how the party was perceived.

The AR displayed a gradual and consistent increase in its NTR from 0.24 in June/July to 0.74 in October/November. This steady rise suggested that the party moved from being the subject of sentiment-heavy reporting to achieving more balanced media representation. The upward trend indicated AR's efforts to engage the media in a manner that fostered impartiality, particularly in the latter stages of the campaign.

The LPM, on the other hand, experienced significant volatility in its NTR. Starting at a strong 0.76 in June/July and peaking at 0.87 in August/September, the ratio then dropped sharply to 0.29 in September/October before rebounding to 0.64 in October/November. These fluctuations suggested that LPM faced challenges in maintaining consistent media narratives, likely influenced by high-profile events or contentious issues during the September/October period.

Figure 4: Neutral-to-Total Ratio (NTR) for the largest Parties



NUDO maintained consistently high NTR scores across the five months, beginning at 0.67 in June/July and ending at 0.82 in October/November. The steady rise indicated that NUDO consistently received balanced coverage, a favourable condition for presenting its platform without bias. Similarly, IPC experienced a more modest trajectory, starting at 0.54 in June/July, dipping to 0.22 in September/October, and recovering to 0.68 in October/November. While the drop during September/October suggested a period of increased polarisation, the recovery in October/November indicated a return to more neutral portrayals.

Combining sentiment ratios with media coverage volumes provides a deeper understanding of how political parties and candidates are portrayed in the media and the potential impact on public perception. When analysed together, these metrics reveal the nuances of a party's or candidate's media presence, which cannot be discerned from either metric in isolation.

When a party achieves high coverage volumes coupled with a high Positive-to-Negative Ratio (PNR), it indicates favourable media representation on a broad scale. This combination is highly advantageous, as it reflects widespread attention that casts the party in a good light, potentially bolstering voter confidence and support. For example, a party like SWAPO, which historically enjoys significant media attention, may leverage positive sentiment at scale to reinforce its dominant position. High volumes of positive coverage amplify the party's ability to shape the narrative and mobilise its voter base.

High Neutral-to-Total Ratios (NTR) combined with substantial coverage volumes, such as those seen with SWAPO or PDM in certain months, suggested a balanced media environment. This neutrality provided an opportunity for these parties to communicate their platforms without significant polarisation. This combination could be persuasive for undecided voters, as neutral and objective reporting is often perceived as credible. However, the challenge for these parties lay in converting neutral coverage into a compelling narrative that actively engages the electorate.

High coverage volumes coupled with low PNR scores (indicating more negative coverage) reflect a potential vulnerability. Such coverage may stem from scandals, controversies, or opposition narratives, as seen with smaller parties like NEFF during periods of fluctuating sentiment. While high volumes keep the party visible, sustained negative sentiment can erode public trust and alienate potential supporters. This highlights the need for parties to actively manage negative narratives and redirect media attention toward more favourable topics.

A low volume of coverage paired with a high PNR suggests missed opportunities for parties to capitalise on positive media attention. For smaller parties such as IPC and NUDO, which often achieved favourable sentiment ratios but struggled with low coverage volumes, the challenge lay in amplifying their media presence. Without sufficient visibility, even positive portrayals failed to translate into meaningful public engagement or electoral gains.

The combination of low volumes and negative sentiment posed the most significant threat to smaller parties. It not only diminished their visibility but also created a damaging narrative that was hard to counteract, given the lack of media attention. Such parties must invest in proactive media strategies to change the conversation and increase their presence in the media landscape.

## **9.4 Statement-to-Size Ratio (SSR)**

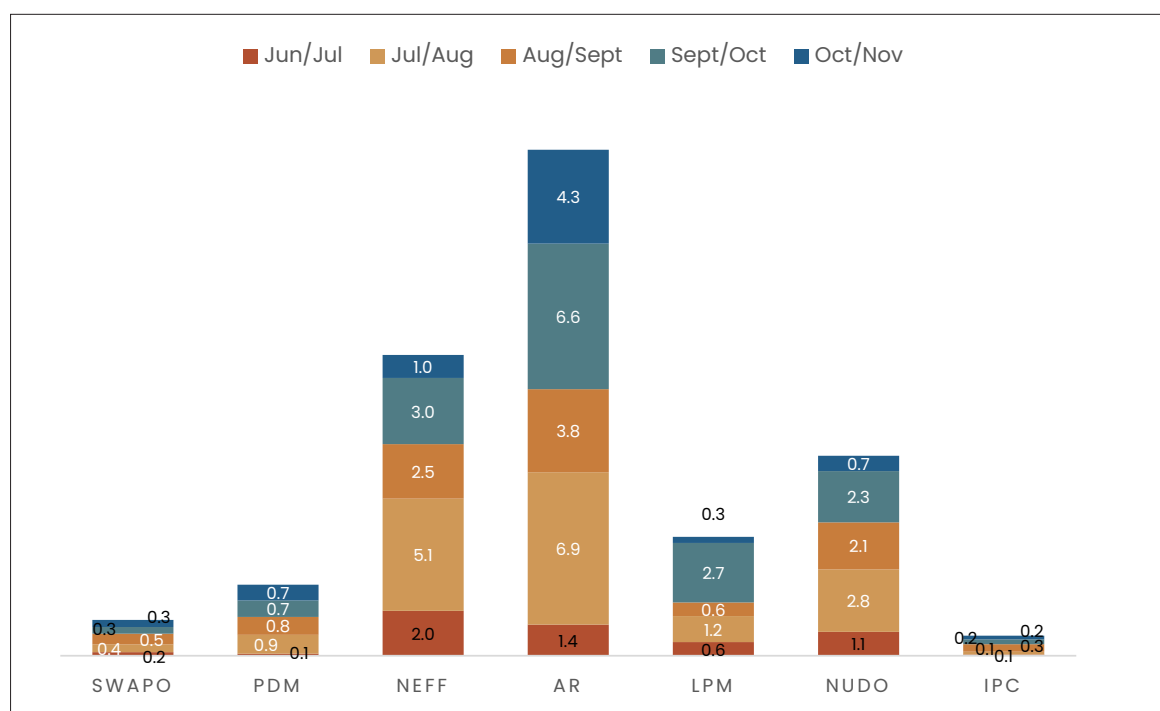
The statement-to-size ratio is a metric that measures the intensity of media coverage relative to the electoral weight of political parties, expressed as the number of statements per 100 votes received in the 2019 elections. This ratio provides insights into the disproportionate representation or underrepresentation of parties in media coverage, shedding light on potential biases or shifts in media attention. By analysing the data for the past five months, several notable trends emerged, reflecting the dynamics of media coverage and political engagement during the election period.

For larger parties such as SWAPO and the PDM, the Statement-to-Size Ratio remained relatively low throughout the period. SWAPO, which historically commands significant voter support, maintained a ratio that peaked at 0.5 in August/September before declining to 0.3 in subsequent months. This low ratio suggested that SWAPO's extensive electoral base was not proportionally reflected in its media coverage. Although the party's sheer volume of statements was high, its ratio indicated that its media visibility was diluted by its vast electoral weight, which aligned with its status as a ruling party and its focus on governance over campaign-related activities.

Similarly, the PDM, Namibia's main opposition party, recorded modest ratios peaking at 0.9 in July/August and declining slightly to 0.7 by October/November. This pattern reflected consistent but subdued media engagement relative to its electoral weight. The slight dip suggested that while the PDM remained active in the media landscape, it did not significantly amplify its campaign or policy messaging to exceed its baseline coverage.

In contrast, smaller parties such as the NEFF and AR exhibited significantly higher statement-to-size ratios, highlighting a disproportionate level of media attention relative to their electoral base. The NEFF's ratio peaked at 5.1 in July/August, indicating a surge in media focus, possibly driven by the party's vocal stance on issues or controversies that captured public interest. However, this ratio declined steadily to 1.0 by October/November, suggesting waning media interest or the party's inability to sustain momentum.

Figure 5: Statement-to-Size Ratio (SSR) by Political Party



Similarly, the AR recorded a striking ratio of 6.9 in July/August, reflecting heightened media engagement during this period. This peak likely corresponded to the AR's high-profile activities or policy proposals that resonated in the media. Although the ratio declined to 4.3 in October/November, it remained substantially higher than that of larger parties, underscoring the AR's success in leveraging its media presence to amplify its voice despite its smaller electoral base.

Parties like the LPM, NUDO, and IPC exhibited varying patterns in their statement-to-size ratios. The LPM's ratio peaked at 2.7 in September/October, reflecting a burst of media attention during that period, likely tied to campaign activities or policy pronouncements. However, this ratio dropped significantly to 0.3 in October/November, indicating a sharp decline in visibility. Similarly, NUDO saw a peak of 2.8 in July/August before tapering to 0.7 in October/November. These fluctuations suggested episodic engagement with the media, potentially tied to specific events or campaign milestones.

The IPC, despite its notable electoral support, consistently recorded the lowest statement-to-size ratios among smaller parties, peaking at only 0.3 in August/September. This consistently low ratio suggested that the IPC was not capitalising on its electoral weight to generate sustained media attention, highlighting a potential weakness in its media strategy.

The statement-to-size ratio data captured in Figure 5 provides insights into the dynamics of media representation during the election period. Larger parties like SWAPO and PDM faced the challenge of translating their broad electoral base into proportional media coverage, potentially limiting their ability to dominate public discourse. Smaller parties, by contrast, leveraged their media presence disproportionately, suggesting that media attention was not always aligned with electoral weight but could instead reflect the parties' ability to generate newsworthy content or engage in high-profile activities. For medium-sized parties, the variability in their ratios highlighted the episodic nature of their media engagement, which might not have sustained voter interest over time. Overall, the statement-to-size ratio underscored the strategic importance of media management in shaping public perception, particularly for parties seeking to bridge the gap between electoral support and media visibility.

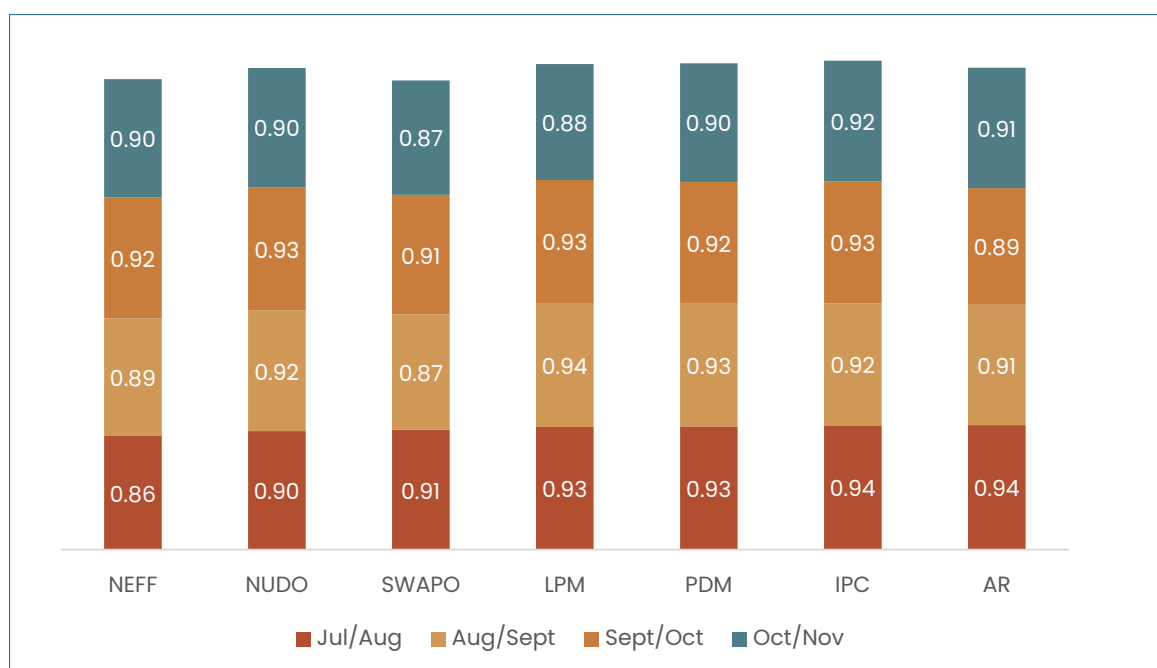
## 9.5 The Issue-Diversity-Index (IDI)

The Issue Diversity Index (IDI) is a statistical measure used to quantify the diversity of topics or issues covered in media representations of political parties or candidates. It evaluates the spread and concentration of media attention across different issues for each party, providing insights into whether the coverage is broadly distributed or focused on a few key areas.

Figure 6, displaying the Issue Diversity Index (IDI) scores for various political parties over three consecutive months, offers insight into the diversity of issues each party is associated with within Namibia's political discourse. The IDI scores, ranging from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating a greater diversity of issue coverage, reflected how each party's political agenda and public engagement evolved over time.

With regard to the NEFF, Figure 6 shows that the IDI increased from 0.86 in July/August to 0.92 in September/October before slightly dropping to 0.90 in October/November. This pattern suggested that media coverage of NEFF became more diverse during the peak of the election period, incorporating a broader range of topics. The slight decline in October/November indicated that the media began focusing on fewer, more pressing issues as election day neared, or it reflected a shift in the party's public messaging.

Figure 6: IDI by Party



NUDO consistently maintained a high IDI, ranging between 0.90 and 0.93 over the four months. The stability of these scores highlighted balanced and diverse media coverage. The slight dip in the final month to 0.90 indicated that the diversity of coverage narrowed slightly, potentially reflecting a focus on key election-related topics as the campaign entered its final stretch.

SWAPO, experienced fluctuations in its IDI, starting at 0.91 in July/August, dropping to 0.87 in August/September, recovering to 0.91 in September/October, and falling again to 0.87 in October/November. These shifts suggested SWAPO's media coverage alternated between periods of broad issue diversity and more concentrated narratives. The declines in August/September and October/November indicated phases where the media focused more intensely on a few key issues, likely linked to the party's electoral strategies or external events shaping the narrative.

LPM consistently had high IDI scores, peaking at 0.94 in August/September before declining to 0.88 in October/November. The initial high diversity suggested robust media engagement across various issues during the campaign's peak. However, the decline in the final month signalled a strategic narrowing of focus, with media and the party itself emphasising critical themes as the election approached.

PDM demonstrated stable diversity in its coverage, with IDI scores ranging narrowly between 0.92 and 0.93, before dipping slightly to 0.90 in October/November. This consistency reflected PDM's ability to sustain broad media attention across various issues, though the slight dip in the final period might have reflected a more targeted approach to its messaging or media coverage prioritising key election issues.

For IPC, the IDI remained relatively stable between 0.92 and 0.94, suggesting that the party successfully maintained broad media attention throughout the election period. The lack of significant variation indicated that IPC's media coverage consistently spanned a wide range of topics, potentially reflecting a deliberate strategy to appeal to diverse voter interests.

Lastly, AR displayed a gradual decline in IDI, from 0.94 in July/August to 0.89 in September/October, before recovering to 0.91 in October/November. The initial broad diversity in coverage narrowed slightly during the peak campaign period, perhaps reflecting a focus on core campaign messages. The recovery in October/November suggested renewed engagement with a broader range of issues, possibly in response to shifting voter concerns or strategic adjustments.

Overall, the IDI scores in Figure 6 revealed that most parties experienced high issue diversity in their media coverage, particularly during the earlier phases of the election period. However, as the elections drew closer, some parties, notably SWAPO and LPM, exhibited declines in diversity, indicating a shift toward concentrating on a smaller set of key issues. Conversely, parties like IPC and NUDO maintained consistently high diversity, suggesting a broader approach to issue engagement. These variations underscored the interplay between media focus, party strategies, and voter concerns during critical periods of an election campaign.

## **9.6 Time in Media**

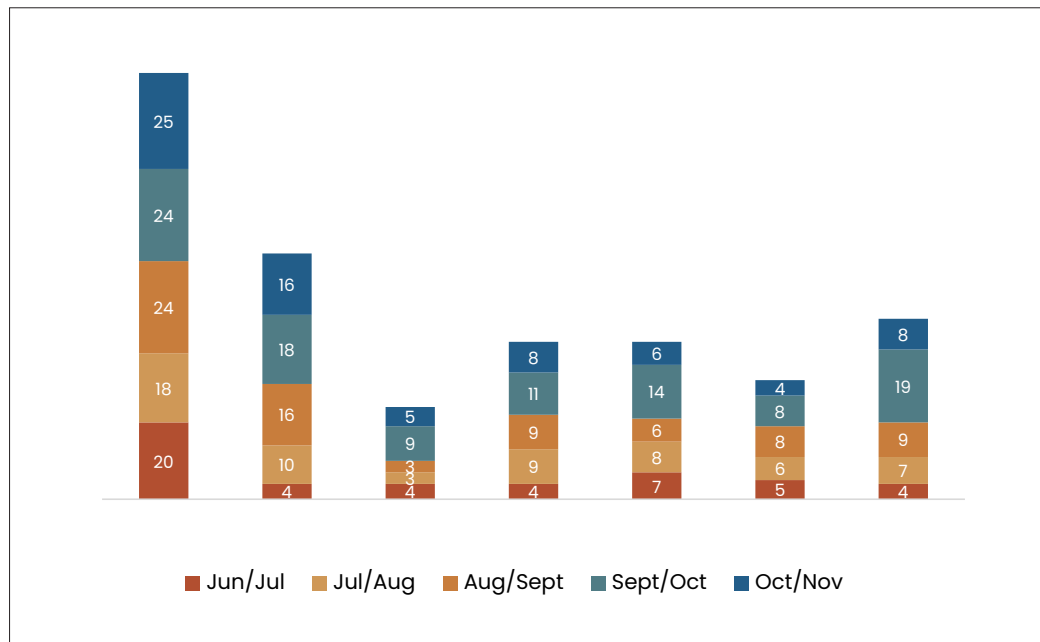
This subsection offers a focused exploration of the temporal aspects of political media coverage. This analysis is structured around three key metrics: the number of days with media coverage, the number of statements per coverage day, and the Coverage Frequency Index (CFI). Together, these indicators provide a comprehensive view of not only how frequently parties are mentioned over time but also the intensity and consistency of their media presence. The number of days with coverage highlights the persistence of media attention, while the statements per coverage day measure the depth of engagement within those days. The CFI further quantifies the regularity of coverage, offering insights into how consistently a party remains in the media spotlight. This subsection helps researchers to understand how sustained media visibility impacts public perception and political influence, which is crucial for understanding the dynamics of electoral competitiveness and party strategy.

### **9.6.1 Days with Media Coverage**

The analysis of the number of days with media coverage for various political parties in Namibia across four months provided significant insights into the media presence of these parties as they prepared for the upcoming elections (Figure 7). This measure highlighted how often a party was actively featured in media narratives, reflecting its ability to maintain public attention and influence the political agenda. Frequent appearances in the media can shape public perception, reinforce party branding, and enhance electoral competitiveness.

By analysing this metric, we gain insights into the relative prominence and media strategies of different parties within the political landscape.

*Figure 7: Number of Days with Media Coverage*



The data in Figure 7 shows that SWAPO maintained the highest consistency in media coverage across all periods, with near-daily appearances from August to November. This dominant presence underscored SWAPO's entrenched position in Namibia's political discourse, likely due to its status as the ruling party and extensive organisational capacity. The stability of its coverage over time suggested a deliberate effort to sustain its visibility and narrative control, especially during critical election periods.

In contrast, other parties demonstrated varying levels of media presence, with noticeable fluctuations. The Popular Democratic Movement showed a gradual increase in media coverage from June through October, peaking at 18 days of coverage in September/October before slightly declining to 16 days in October/November. This pattern indicated a strategic push for visibility, although the party's media presence remained far behind SWAPO's.

Emerging parties such as the IPC and AR displayed mixed results. The IPC achieved a significant surge in media coverage, appearing on 19 days in September/October, suggesting a concerted media campaign during this period. However, this momentum was not sustained, as coverage dropped to 8 days in October/November. Similarly, AR showed a consistent presence, with 9 to 11 days of coverage between July and October, but this declined to 8 days in the latest period. These trends highlighted challenges for smaller parties in maintaining consistent media engagement, possibly due to resource constraints or shifting media priorities.

The remaining parties, including NEFF, LPM, and NUDO, experienced sporadic coverage, with most struggling to appear in the media on more than half of the monitored days. LPM showed a temporary spike in coverage in September/October, which was 14 days, likely linked to a specific event or campaign, but this was not sustained. NEFF and NUDO, on the other hand, demonstrated minimal media presence, limiting their ability to influence the broader political narrative. This disparity in media coverage highlighted the challenges smaller or less-resourced parties faced in competing for attention within a crowded political and media environment.

### 9.6.2 Number of Statements Per Coverage Day

The indicator, Number of Statements per Coverage Day, in Figure 8, is an important metric for analysing the intensity of media coverage each political party received. It measures the average number of times a party is mentioned in the media per day of coverage, providing insights into the depth and prominence of the coverage. This metric is important for understanding not just the frequency of media appearance but also the concentration and potential impact of media exposure on public perception and awareness.

Figure 8: Statements by Coverage Day

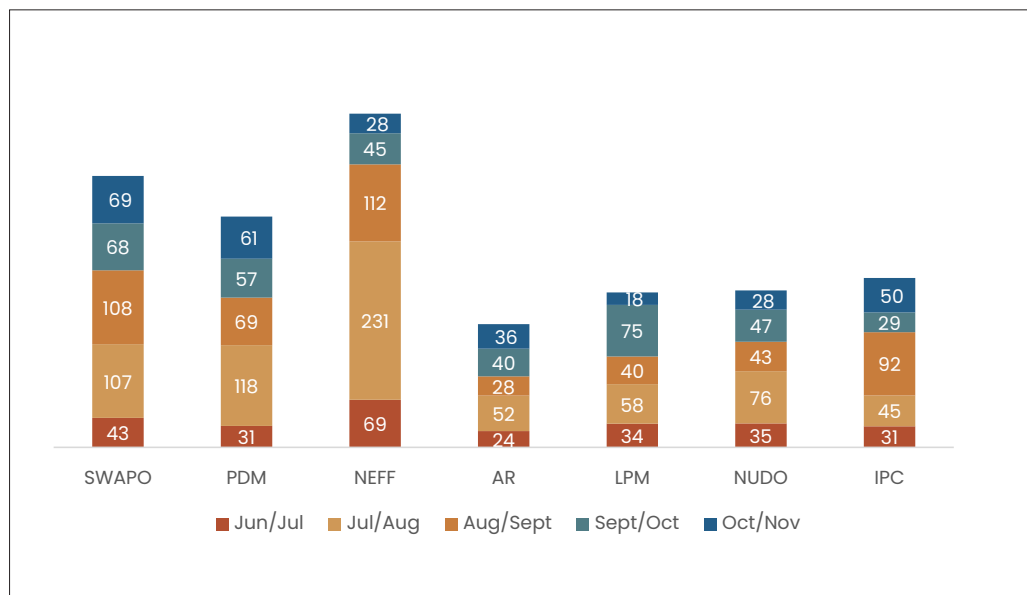


Figure 8 shows SWAPO consistently exhibited high levels of statements per coverage day, with peaks in July/August (107 statements/day) and August/September (108 statements/day). These figures reflected the party's ability to secure extensive and detailed media attention during these months, potentially aligning with campaign announcements or major events. However, the slight decline to 68 statements/day in September/October and 69 statements/day in October/November may indicate either a reduction in the intensity of its campaigns or increased competition from other parties. Despite this, SWAPO remained the dominant party in terms of sustained and intensive coverage, which reinforced its historical position as a central player in Namibian politics.

PDM experienced a significant peak in July/August (118 statements/day), indicating an aggressive media strategy during this period. However, the decline to 69 statements/day in August/September and further decreases in subsequent months suggested diminishing intensity in media coverage. The steady but moderate figures in October/November (61 statements/day) indicated that while PDM remained visible, it lacked the intensity needed to dominate the political narrative. This was a missed opportunity for the party to assert its presence closer to election day.

NEFF demonstrated notable intensity during July/August (231 statements/day) and August/September (112 statements/day). The spikes suggested that NEFF successfully capitalised on key events or controversies during these months. However, the sharp decline to 45 statements/day in September/October and 28 statements/day in October/November indicated a significant drop in media prominence. This pattern reflected the party's challenges in maintaining media relevance or a lack of strategic events to sustain coverage intensity.

AR's media intensity remained relatively low throughout the period, with a slight peak in July/August (52 statements/day) and a subsequent decline to 28 statements/day in August/September. The modest recovery to 40 statements/day in September/October and 36 statements/day in October/November reflected consistent, albeit low, coverage intensity. This pattern suggested that while AR had a steady media presence, it struggled to generate high-impact stories or events that could significantly increase the intensity of its coverage.

LPM's coverage intensity fluctuated considerably, peaking in September/October (75 statements/day), likely reflecting a strategic media push or a major event. However, the drastic drop to 18 statements/day in October/November highlighted the party's inability to sustain this momentum. This volatility suggested that while LPM could generate media attention during specific periods, it faced challenges in maintaining consistent coverage intensity.

NUDO's media intensity followed a similar pattern to LPM, with moderate peaks in July/August (76 statements/day) and September/October (47 statements/day), followed by a decline to 28 statements/day in October/November. This trajectory indicated that NUDO struggled to maintain high-intensity coverage over an extended period, potentially limiting its visibility and influence in the broader political discourse.

IPC displayed a notable increase in intensity during August/September (92 statements/day), possibly reflecting strategic campaign efforts. However, the drop to 29 statements/day in September/October, followed by a modest recovery to 50 statements/day in October/November, indicated fluctuating media prominence. While IPC demonstrated potential for impactful coverage, its inability to sustain higher levels of intensity could weaken its overall media strategy. The Statements per Coverage Day metric in Figure 8 revealed clear disparities in how political parties are covered in the media. SWAPO consistently secured high-intensity coverage, reflecting its dominant position and robust media strategy. In contrast, opposition parties such as PDM, NEFF, and LPM exhibited significant fluctuations, with peaks that were often short-lived. This suggested that while these parties could capture media attention during specific events, they lacked the sustained intensity needed to challenge SWAPO's dominance effectively. For some opposition parties like AR, NUDO, and IPC, the low and inconsistent intensity underscored the need for more strategic and impactful media engagement to enhance their visibility and influence in the electoral landscape.

### **9.6.3 Coverage Frequency Index (CFI)**

The Coverage Frequency Index (CFI) is a vital metric that reflects the percentage of total days a political party received media coverage in a given period. It offers insights into the consistency of a party's media presence, highlighting its ability to maintain visibility across time. This metric is particularly important in the context of elections, as it reveals which parties can maintain visibility across extended periods, a factor that strongly influences public awareness and voter perception. By analysing the proportion of total days with media coverage, the CFI highlights disparities in how parties manage to stay relevant and engage the media consistently.

Figure 9 reveals significant disparities among the parties. SWAPO demonstrated unparalleled consistency in media coverage throughout the observed period, with its CFI increasing steadily from 65% in June/July to 81% in October/November. This persistent and growing media presence reflected SWAPO's central role in the Namibian political landscape and its ability to command attention across multiple news cycles. The high and sustained coverage suggested a strategic approach to media engagement, ensuring that SWAPO remains a constant part of the political discourse, even as competition intensified closer to the elections.

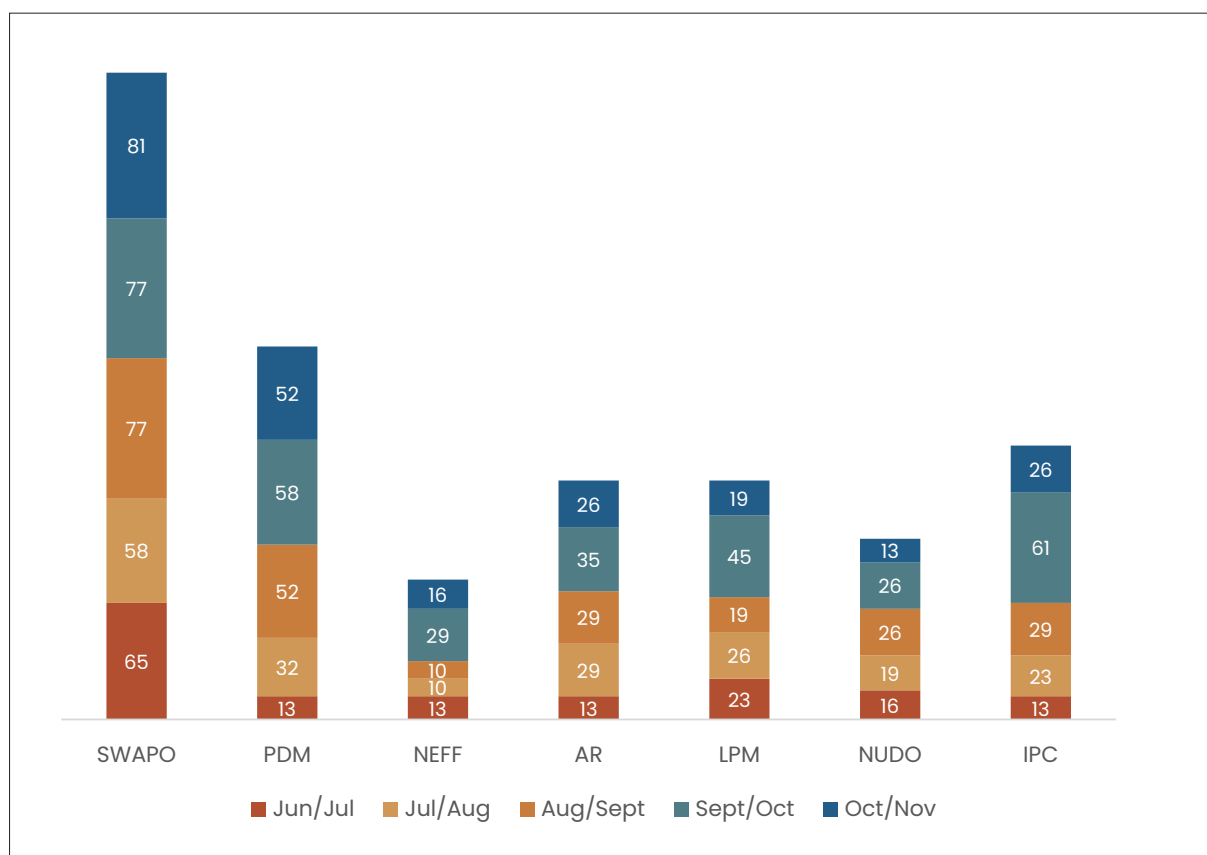
The PDM on the other hand, showed an upward trajectory in its CFI during the earlier months, increasing from 13% in June/July to 58% in September/October. However, it plateaued at 52% in October/November, indicating that while the party had achieved significant media presence, it struggled to maintain the momentum needed to rival SWAPO's dominance. The consistent coverage above 50% in later months suggested PDM remained a key player in the opposition landscape but could not reach the same level of sustained visibility as SWAPO.

NEFF's media presence was characterised by significant fluctuations, with a CFI of 13% in June/July, dropping to 10% in August/September, and recovering to 29% in September/October before declining again to 16% in October/November. This inconsistent pattern suggested that NEFF struggled to maintain a steady media presence, likely due to its reliance on sporadic events or controversies to capture attention. The limited CFI underscored challenges in sustaining relevance, which could hinder its ability to influence the broader political narrative effectively.

AR maintained a relatively stable but modest CFI, ranging from 13% in June/July to a peak of 35% in September/October, before declining slightly to 26% in October/November. While this consistency indicated a steady media presence, AR's inability to break past the 35% mark highlighted challenges in expanding its influence and gaining a foothold in the broader media landscape. The party's coverage appeared to be event-driven rather than reflective of a strategic, sustained media engagement plan.

LPM exhibited significant variability in its CFI, starting at 23% in June/July, peaking at 45% in September/October, and dropping sharply to 19% in October/November. This erratic pattern reflected the party's difficulty in maintaining a continuous media presence, which could undermine its visibility and influence among voters. The dramatic decline in the final month is particularly concerning, as it coincided with a critical period leading up to the elections.

Figure 9: Coverage Frequency Index (%)



NUDO consistently registered low CFIs across the observed period, ranging from 16% in June/July to a peak of 26% in August/September and September/October, before dropping to 13% in October/November. This marginal presence highlighted the party's limited media engagement and visibility, raising questions about its ability to compete effectively in an increasingly crowded political arena.

IPC's media presence improved significantly over time, with its CFI increasing from 13% in June/July to 61% in September/October, before declining slightly to 26% in October/November. The spike in September/October suggested a strategic push to gain media attention during a crucial pre-election period. However, the subsequent drop indicates that IPC struggled to sustain this momentum, which could affect its overall impact on the electoral discourse.

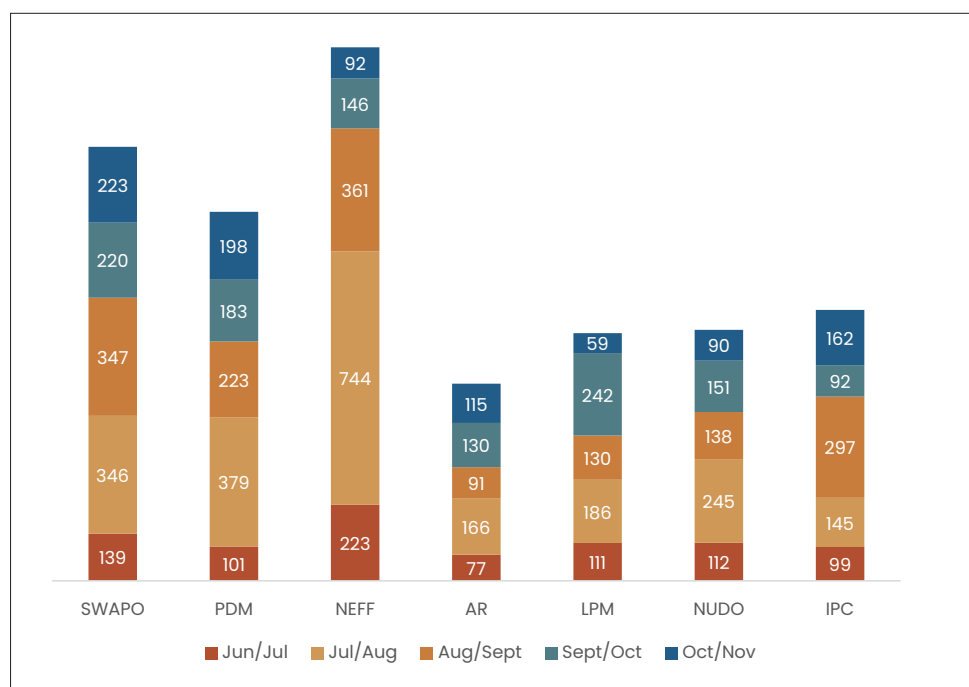
To sum up: the CFI analysis revealed significant disparities in how political parties engaged with the media over time. SWAPO's consistent and increasing coverage underscored its dominance and strategic media management, while the opposition parties exhibited varying degrees of success in maintaining visibility. PDM emerged as a relatively consistent contender, while NEFF, AR, and LPM demonstrated fluctuating and often limited presence. IPC's late surge highlighted its potential to challenge the status quo, but its inability to sustain high coverage raised concerns about its long-term media strategy. Overall, the findings underscored the importance of consistent media engagement in shaping public perceptions and electoral outcomes. Parties that failed to maintain a steady media presence risked being overshadowed by more strategically positioned competitors.

#### **9.6.4 Coverage Consistency Index (CCI)**

The Coverage Consistency Index (CCI) serves as an essential measure for assessing the frequency and intensity of media coverage each political party receives over a given period. This index is typically calculated to understand how consistently and prominently a party appears in the media, which can significantly influence public perception, visibility, and the party's ability to communicate its messages effectively. A high CCI indicates robust media presence and sustained interest from both the media and the public, potentially reflecting ongoing activities, controversies, or significant political engagement.

According to Figure 10, SWAPO demonstrated relatively stable coverage over the analysed periods, with its CCI peaking at 347 in August/September and maintaining a consistent level with 223 in October/November. This stability underscored SWAPO's strong foothold in the media landscape, likely reflecting its position as the ruling party and its ability to generate continuous media interest through its political activities and electoral strategies. However, the slight decline in the latter months suggested potential challenges in sustaining higher levels of engagement as other parties increase their visibility.

Figure 10: Coverage Consistency Index (CCI)



PDM showed a significant surge in media coverage in July/August with a CCI of 379, the highest recorded for the party across the periods. This surge reflected heightened activity or interest, possibly tied to key events or strategic initiatives during that time. However, the CCI declined moderately to 198 in October/November, indicating that while PDM remained a prominent player, it struggled to sustain the intensity of its earlier coverage as other narratives competed for attention.

NEFF exhibited dramatic fluctuations in its CCI, peaking at an impressive 744 in July/August before declining steadily to 92 in October/November. This sharp decrease pointed to a reliance on episodic events or controversies to drive media attention instead of a sustained and strategic media engagement strategy. The decline reflected diminishing public and media interest, which might have impact the party's visibility and influence during the election period.

AR maintained a modest level of coverage throughout the period, with a CCI ranging from 77 in June/July to a peak of 166 in July/August, before stabilising at 115 in October/November. This consistency suggested that AR had established a steady media presence, albeit at a lower level than the dominant parties. The lack of significant peaks or troughs indicated a focused but limited ability to generate widespread media attention.

LPM experienced variability in its CCI, with a noticeable peak at 242 in September/October, followed by a sharp decline to 59 in October/November. The peak likely corresponded to heightened activity or coverage of significant events, while the decline signalled challenges in maintaining consistent media interest. This pattern highlighted the importance of sustaining visibility, especially during critical electoral periods.

NUDO's CCI followed a similar pattern to LPM's, with moderate levels of coverage peaking at 245 in July/August, followed by a decline to 90 in October/November. The party's ability to maintain a consistent media presence appeared limited, which might have hindered its capacity to effectively communicate its platform and engage with voters.

IPC displayed a unique trajectory, with its CCI peaking at 297 in August/September and recovering to 162 in October/November after a dip in September/October. This late-stage recovery suggested a renewed push for media attention, tied to intensified campaigning or strategic initiatives as the elections approached. However, the party's inconsistent CCI highlighted the challenges of maintaining continuous engagement.

The CCI analysis in Figure 10 reveals that while SWAPO enjoyed the most consistent media presence, while opposition parties like PDM and NEFF experienced significant surges and declines, reflecting uneven media strategies. AR and IPC demonstrated moderate but consistent engagements, which enabled them to maintain visibility despite limited peaks. The findings underscored the importance of sustained media engagement for maintaining relevance and influence, especially in a competitive electoral environment. Parties with fluctuating or declining CCIs risked being overshadowed by those with more stable and strategic media visibility.

## 10 State vs. Private Media

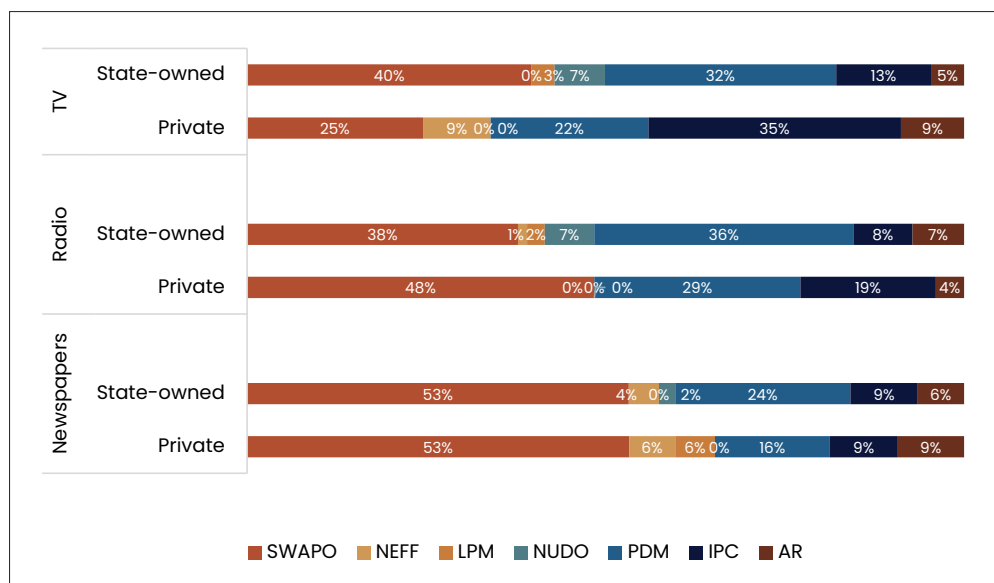
Analysing the distribution of media coverage between state-owned and privately-owned outlets is crucial for understanding the dynamics of media representation in election periods. In contexts like Namibia, where state and private media often serve different constituencies and follow distinct editorial priorities, this analysis sheds light on potential biases, access to media platforms, and the diversity of narratives available to the electorate. Coverage by state-owned media can reflect government priorities or alignment with ruling party narratives, while private media may emphasise a broader range of political voices or adopt more critical perspectives. This breakdown is essential for assessing whether political parties enjoy equitable access to media coverage, an important factor in ensuring free and fair elections.

For newspaper coverage, SWAPO received equal representation from private (53%) and state-owned (53%) outlets, indicating balanced attention across these two sectors. However, other parties, such as NEFF, LPM, and NUDO, had minimal or no representation in state-owned newspapers, highlighting a potential exclusion from state-centric narratives. Notably, PDM received 24% of its newspaper coverage from state-owned outlets, more than most opposition parties, while IPC and AR had equivalent shares of state (9%) and private media (9%) coverage.

On **radio**, SWAPO again dominated, securing 48% of private radio coverage and 38% on state-owned radio. PDM followed, with notable coverage from both private (29%) and state-owned radio (36%). IPC garnered 19% of private radio coverage but only 8% on state-owned platforms, suggesting uneven representation. NEFF, LPM, and AR were underrepresented, with almost negligible coverage across state and private radio, except for marginal state-owned radio attention for LPM (2%) and AR (7%).

SWAPO maintained a leading share in television, with 25% of private TV coverage and 40% of state-owned TV. IPC emerged as a key player in private television coverage, securing 35%—the highest among opposition parties—while receiving only 13% on state TV. PDM, similarly, enjoyed a strong presence on state TV (32%) but slightly less on private outlets (22%). NEFF, LPM, and AR had minimal TV coverage, with their shares largely concentrated in private media. NUDO's small share of state TV coverage (7%) and absence from private TV highlights its marginalisation on this platform.

Figure 11: Party Coverage by State- and Privately Owned Media (October/November)



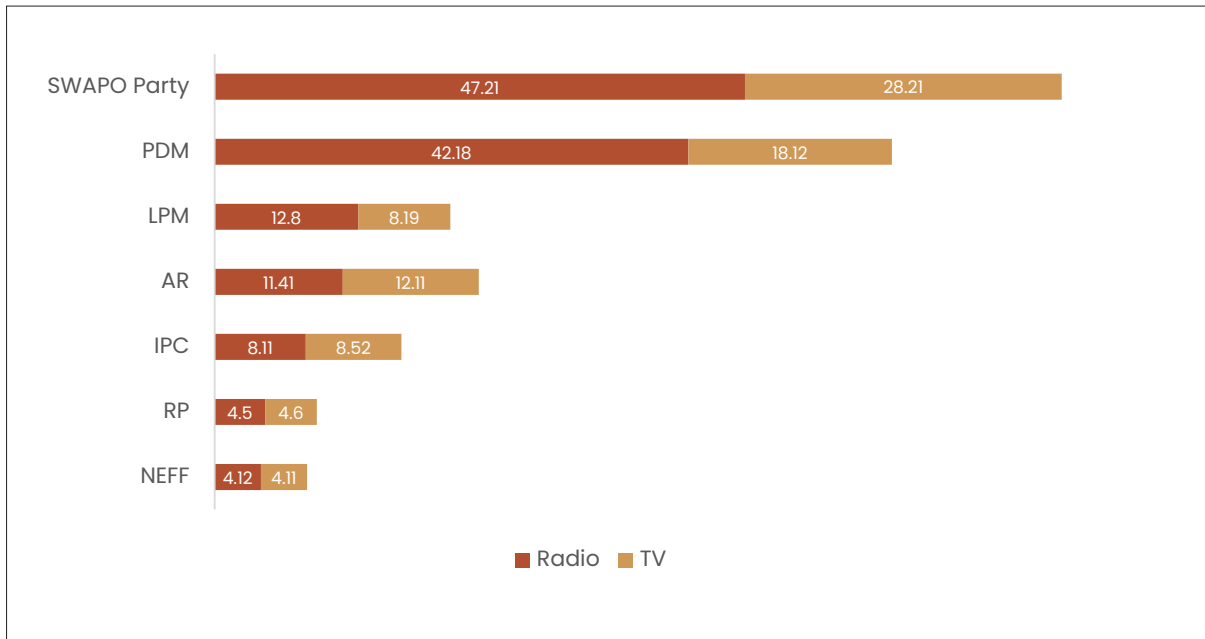
The findings in Figure 11 reveal significant disparities in the representation of political parties across state and private media. As the ruling party, SWAPO consistently dominated both state and private outlets, underscoring its entrenched media presence. While parties like PDM and IPC achieved notable shares in private and state media, others like NEFF, LPM, and AR faced substantial underrepresentation, especially on state-owned platforms. These disparities raised critical questions about media access and impartiality during elections, as equitable media coverage is vital for providing voters with a comprehensive understanding of all parties and candidates. For opposition parties, especially those with limited state media exposure, private media served as their primary platform for engaging voters. The uneven distribution of coverage suggested that some parties could face structural disadvantages in reaching diverse audiences, potentially impacting voter perceptions and electoral outcomes.

## 11 Dedicated Radio and TV Time

The time dedicated to political parties by radio and television offered an important measure of their media visibility and ability to engage with the public through broadcast channels. This metric was especially significant in Namibia, where (especially) radio remained a vital platform for disseminating information to diverse audiences across urban and rural areas. The data for August/September and September/October revealed notable differences in broadcast coverage among the largest political parties, highlighting trends and disparities in media allocation.

The data in Figure 12 shows SWAPO stood out as the dominant recipient of radio and TV coverage across all three months, reflecting its strong media presence. In August/September, SWAPO commanded an overwhelming 91 minutes and 33 seconds of coverage, dwarfing all other parties. While its share decreased to 44 minutes and 47 seconds in September/October, and then slightly increased to 47 minutes and 21 seconds in October/November, SWAPO consistently maintained its leading position. This level of exposure underscored SWAPO's media influence, likely due to its status as the ruling party and its ability to generate consistent newsworthy activities.

Figure 12: Radio and TV Time by Party (minutes: seconds) (October/November)



The PDM demonstrated notable visibility on radio and TV, holding the second-highest share of coverage in all three months. Its coverage rose from 31 minutes and 42 seconds in August/September to 48 minutes and 23 seconds in September/October, before slightly declining to 42 minutes and 18 seconds in October/November. This consistent presence, while not as substantial as SWAPO's, indicated a strong media strategy or interest in the party's activities during the campaign period.

The IPC, AR, and LPM displayed fluctuating coverage levels across the three months. IPC started with 16 minutes and 37 seconds in August/September but saw a sharp decline to 2 minutes and 14 seconds in September/October, before recovering to 8 minutes and 11 seconds in October/November. Similarly, AR's coverage rose from a low of 2 minutes and 17 seconds in August/September to a peak of 13 minutes and 33 seconds in September/October, followed by a slight decline in October/November. LPM exhibited a steady increase, growing from 4 minutes and 17 seconds to 11 minutes and 11 seconds, and then to 12 minutes and 8 seconds, reflecting its growing media traction toward the later months.

Figure 12 also shows that NEFF and RP, as smaller parties, received minimal broadcast media attention. NEFF's coverage declined from 5 minutes and 23 seconds in August/September to a mere 1 minute in September/October, before rebounding to 4 minutes and 12 seconds in October/November. RP saw a notable increase from no coverage in August/September to 7 minutes and 11 seconds in September/October, dropping slightly to 4 minutes and 5 seconds in October/November. These fluctuations highlight the challenges smaller parties face in maintaining a consistent media presence.

## 12 Coverage of Presidential Candidates

Presidential candidates are pivotal in shaping their respective parties' public image and political momentum during election campaigns. These candidates often serve as the face of their parties, embodying the values, policies, and leadership qualities that the parties seek to communicate to voters. The level and nature of media coverage afforded to these individuals can significantly influence voter perceptions, particularly in elections where leadership is a central issue. In short, the visibility of presidential candidates is critical for both establishing credibility and mobilising electoral support; for themselves and for their parties.

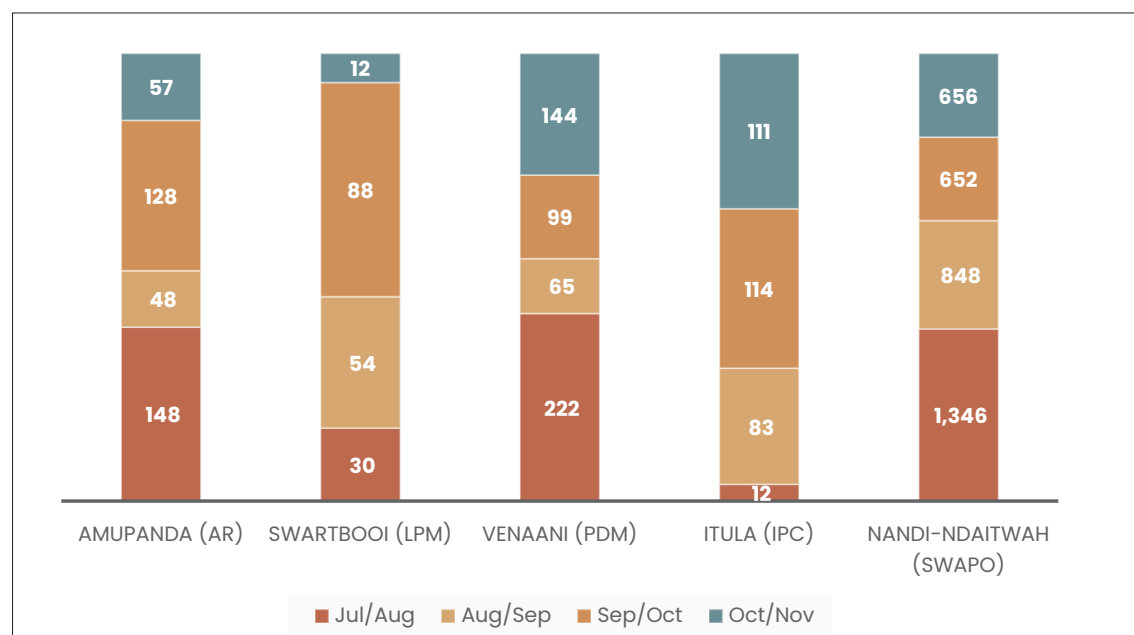
### 12.1 Volume of Coverage

The data in Figure 13 shows that Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the presidential candidate for SWAPO, stood out as the most covered candidate across all months. Her coverage peaked in July/August with 1,346 mentions before steadily declining to 848 in August/September, 652 in September/October, and stabilising at 656 in October/November. This consistent and dominant coverage aligned with SWAPO's position as the ruling party and suggested a substantial media focus on her campaign activities, policy announcements, and public engagements. The high volume of mentions could significantly amplify her visibility and reinforce her connection with voters.

McHenry Venaani of the PDM consistently received the second-highest volume of coverage but with significant fluctuations. His mentions dropped from 222 in July/August to 65 in August/September before recovering to 99 in September/October and peaking at 144 in October/November. The resurgence in coverage during October/November may have indicated strategic media engagement or increased public interest in his campaign as the election date approached.

Panduleni Itula, representing the IPC, exhibited a rising trajectory in media mentions from 12 in July/August to a peak of 114 in September/October, followed by a slight decrease to 111 in October/November. This steady growth reflected his campaign ability to attract media attention, possibly due to focused messaging or strategic public appearances. While his coverage remained below Nandi-Ndaitwah and Venaani's, the upward trend underscored increasing relevance in the media narrative.

Figure 13: Volume of Coverage by Candidate



Amupanda (AR) and Swartbooï (LPM) experienced the most inconsistent and generally declining coverage of all the presidential candidates. Amupanda's mentions dropped sharply from 148 in July/August to 48 in August/September, followed by a brief increase to 128 in September/October and a significant decline to 57 in October/November. Swartbooï's coverage followed a similar trend, peaking at 88 in September/October before plummeting to just 12 mentions in October/November. These patterns suggested challenges in sustaining media visibility and relevance, which may have hindered their ability to reach and influence a broader electorate.

The disparities in media coverage volumes among the candidates highlighted the influence of incumbency, party resources, and strategic media engagement on shaping the electoral narrative. Nandi-Ndaitwah's dominance underscored the advantage of being the ruling party's candidate, offering her greater public exposure and a platform to communicate her message effectively. In contrast, the lower and more inconsistent coverage of opposition candidates like Amupanda and Swartbooï pointed to the structural challenges faced by smaller parties in competing for media attention. For Venaani and Itula, the ability to sustain or grow their media presence over time indicated strategic gains, but their coverage levels remained significantly lower than SWAPO's candidate, reflecting the inherent imbalance in media dynamics during elections. These findings underscored the critical role of media in shaping public perceptions and the electoral landscape.

Studying the volume of coverage for each party (Figure 1) together with the volume of coverage for their presidential candidates in the form of a correlation analysis, examines the relationship between the volume of media statements dedicated to each political party and the corresponding coverage of their presidential candidates. The strength and significance of these correlations provide insights into the alignment between party and candidate media coverage, which can have implications for the consistency of political messaging and the overall effectiveness of campaigns.

The findings revealed significant variation in these relationships across the parties, offering insights into how integrated or decoupled their media strategies were.

SWAPO demonstrated a very weak positive correlation between the party's media coverage and its candidate, Nandi-Ndaitwah, with a coefficient of 0.219. The p-value of 0.781, far exceeding the standard significance threshold of 0.05, indicated that this relationship was statistically insignificant. This result suggested that media coverage of SWAPO as a party was not closely tied to the coverage of its candidate. This decoupling might have stemmed from SWAPO's focus on institutional rather than candidate-centred narratives.

For SWAPO, the weak correlation meant that Nandi-Ndaitwah was not fully benefiting from the party's dominant media presence. A greater emphasis on aligning the party's messaging with the candidate's profile might have enhanced her visibility and electoral appeal.

The PDM exhibited a moderate positive correlation of 0.436 between party and candidate coverage, with a p-value of 0.564, which was also not statistically significant. This suggested that while there was some alignment between the party's and Venaani's media presence, the connection was not strong or consistent. The moderate correlation indicated that Venaani's media coverage at times diverged from the party's. For PDM, efforts to tightly integrate the media's narratives of the party and Venaani might yield better results, particularly in leveraging his leadership to boost the party's overall visibility.

AR showed an exceptionally strong positive correlation of 0.995, with a highly significant p-value of 0.005. This result indicated that media coverage of the party was almost perfectly aligned with the coverage of its candidate, Amupanda. Such a high level of alignment suggested a tightly coordinated media strategy, where Amupanda was the central figure driving the party's narrative. The strong correlation for AR reflected a candidate-centred approach, where Amupanda's media presence effectively served as the party's primary platform. This alignment likely benefitted AR in building a cohesive and focused campaign, provided Amupanda's profile resonated positively with voters.

The LPM demonstrated a strong positive correlation of 0.852 between party and candidate coverage, although the p-value of 0.148 renders this relationship statistically insignificant. Despite the lack of significance, the high coefficient suggested that coverage of the party and Swartbooi were generally aligned, though not as tightly as seen with AR. While the alignment between LPM and Swartbooi was promising, the lack of statistical significance suggested variability in the strength of this relationship over time. Strengthening and consistently integrating the party and candidate narratives further enhanced LPM's media strategy.

IPC exhibited a weak positive correlation of 0.377, with a p-value of 0.623, indicating that the relationship between party and candidate coverage was neither strong nor statistically significant. This suggested that Itula's media coverage was relatively independent of the party's, potentially highlighting a more decentralised or issue-based approach to media engagement. The weak correlation for IPC highlighted the need for better integration between the party and Itula's media strategies. IPC could strengthen its overall media impact and electoral positioning by aligning the two more closely.

## 12.2 Sentiment

The slanting data for the presidential candidates provides an in-depth view of how media coverage varies in tone over time, revealing both consistencies and shifts in narrative emphasis for the top political figures in the 2024 Namibian elections. This analysis highlights the balance of positive, neutral, and negative coverage allocated to each candidate, offering insights into how their public personas were shaped and presented.

Figure 14 presents the sentiment distribution of media coverage for the leading presidential candidates across two months, analysing the proportions of negative, neutral, and positive statements. The findings shed light on the media's treatment of these candidates and its potential influence on public perception.

Nandi-Ndaitwah received the highest volume of coverage in both months, with 652 total statements in September/October and 656 in October/November, maintaining a consistently balanced distribution of neutral and positive coverage. In September/October, neutral coverage comprised 43% (281 out of 652), while positive coverage was 54% (354). Negative coverage was minimal at 3%. In October/November, the proportions remained similar, with neutral statements at 42%, positive at 56%, and negative reduced to 2% (14 out of 656).

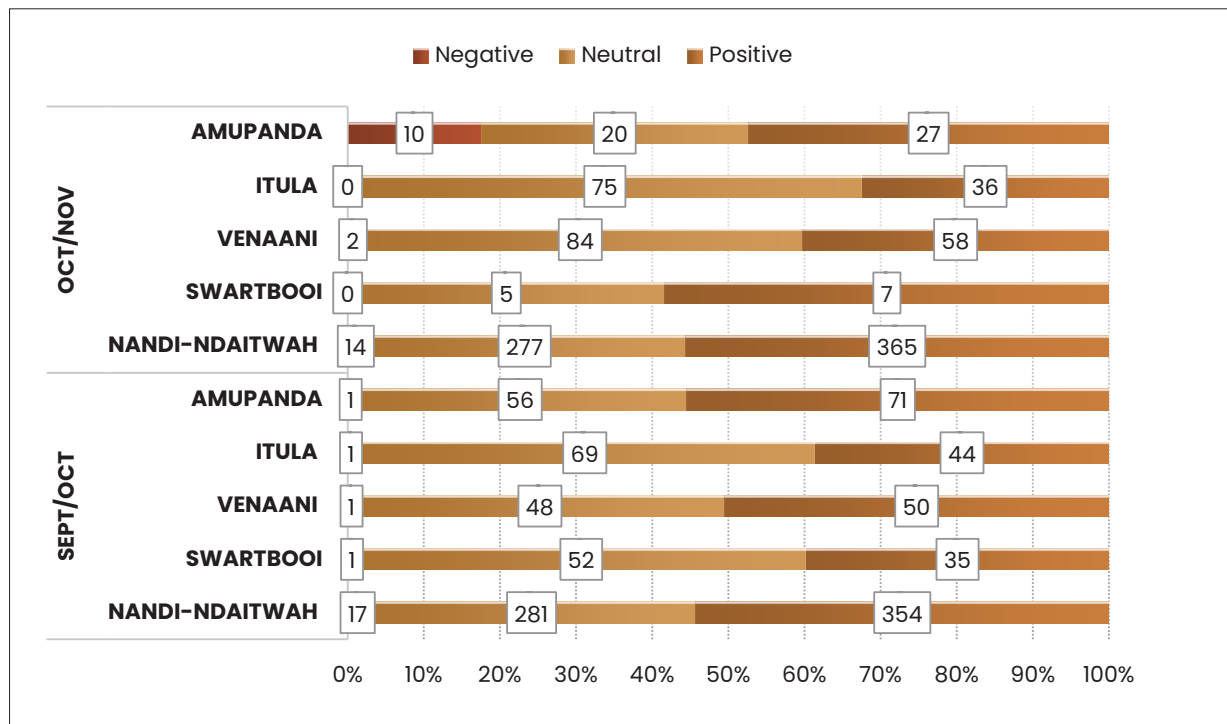
Nandi-Ndaitwah's predominance in both volume and favourable sentiment suggested that SWAPO's media strategy succeeded in securing broad visibility and maintaining a favourable tone. The consistent neutral-to-positive slant indicated an effort to present her as a steady and reliable candidate, which could reinforce her credibility with voters.

LPM's Swartbooï saw a significant drop in media coverage from 88 statements in September/October to 12 in October/November, with most coverage being neutral or positive. In September/October, neutral statements comprised 59% (52 out of 88), and positive coverage accounted for 40% (35). Negative statements were almost absent, at 1%. However, in October/November, his media presence diminished sharply, with only 42% neutral coverage, 58% positive, and no negative statements. The reduced coverage of Swartbooï in October/November raised concerns about the LPM's declining visibility in the critical final month of the campaign. Despite the generally favourable tone, this decline might have limited his ability to reach and influence undecided voters.

The PDM candidate, McHenry Venaani's coverage was more consistent than Swartbooï's, increasing from 99 statements in September/October to 144 in October/November. In September/October, 48% of his coverage was neutral, 50% positive, and only 1% negative. In October/November, while neutral coverage rose to 58%, positive statements decreased to 40%, and negative statements slightly increased to 2%. The slight increase in negative coverage and reduction in positive sentiment during October/November reflected heightened scrutiny of Venaani in the final stretch of the campaign. However, the overall balance of sentiment suggested that the PDM succeeded in maintaining a relatively favourable media narrative for their candidate.

Panduleni Itula (IPC) experienced a slight reduction in total coverage from 114 statements in September/October to 111 in October/November, with a decline in positive sentiment. In September/October, 61% of his coverage was neutral, 39% positive, and negative statements were negligible. In October/November, the proportion of positive coverage dropped to 32%, while neutral statements increased to 68%, with no negative coverage. The absence of negative statements in October/November highlighted a controlled media strategy for Itula, emphasising neutrality. However, the decline in positive sentiment indicated a missed opportunity to amplify his appeal in the campaign's final stages.

Figure 14: Sentiment by Candidate



Job Amupanda's (AR) coverage fluctuated significantly, with 128 statements in September/October and a sharp decline to 57 in October/November. In September/October, 44% of coverage was positive, 44% neutral, and 1% negative. In October/November, the tone shifted, with 35% positive, 35% neutral, and a notable increase in negative coverage to 18% (10 out of 57). The increase in negative coverage during October/November and the overall reduction in visibility might have undermined Amupanda's efforts to position himself as a key contender. The AR needed to reassess its media strategy to mitigate unfavourable narratives and sustain a consistent presence.

## 13 Political Parties Online

This section delves deeply into the digital representation of political entities, offering a nuanced look at the dynamics of political engagement online. It starts with an exploration of Mentions and Unique Authors, where we quantify the discussion frequency and diversity of voices engaging with political parties, providing insight into the breadth of political discourse across online platforms.

We then assess the volume of coverage to determine the extent of online visibility and prominence each party enjoys. This is complemented by an examination of sentiment, which evaluates the emotional tone of coverage—whether positive, negative, or neutral—and sheds light on public sentiments and potential media biases in digital conversations.

The investigation extends to volumes from various platforms, comparing how different social media and online news channels vary in their treatment of political parties. This aspect highlights each platform's unique user interactions and content preferences, revealing how they shape the political narrative.

Finally, the research analyses the strategic use of Hashtags in political messaging, looking at how these digital tools help to organise, amplify, and spread political content, thereby influencing its reach and impact.

### 13.1 Mentions and Unique Authors

The online volume of coverage refers to the total number of mentions of political parties across online platforms within a specific period. This metric helps to measure the extent of media attention a topic or entity garners over time. A higher volume indicates more frequent discussions or mentions, reflecting heightened public or media interest.

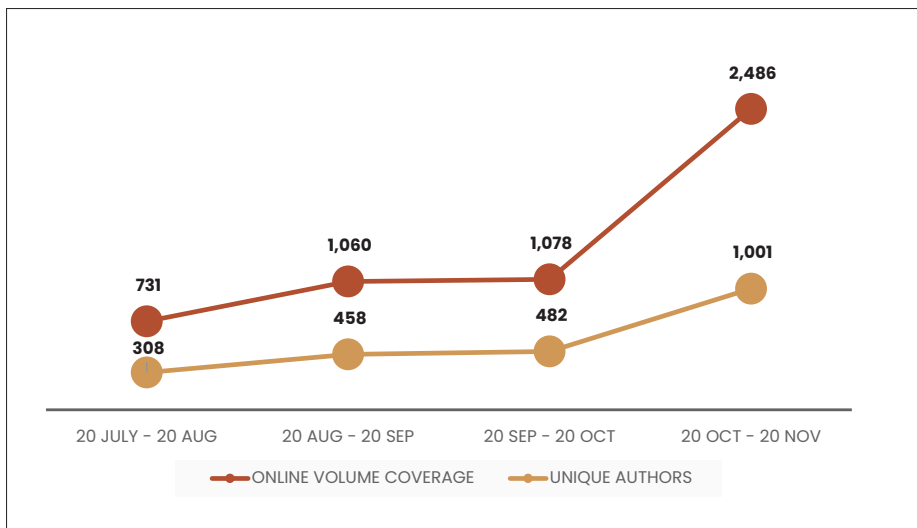
The unique authors metric, on the other hand, refers to the number of individual contributors (journalists, bloggers, commentators) or distinct accounts generating this content. This is a measure of the diversity of contributors discussing the topic, signalling how widely the conversation is distributed among content creators. A high number of unique authors suggests a broad engagement across different platforms and audiences, while a lower number indicates concentrated or limited discourse.

Figure 15 shows that between 20 July to 20 August, some three months prior to the election, there were 731 online mentions generated by 308 unique authors. This relatively modest volume and diversity reflected a quieter period in the electoral campaign, where only a limited number of events or controversies captured widespread online attention. The engagement level suggested that discussions were more localised driven by fewer authors.

In the subsequent period, 20 August to 20 September, the online volume rose to 1,060, with 458 unique authors contributing. This marked increase indicated a surge in both the intensity and diversity of online discourse. Likely triggered by campaign activities, political debates, or key events, this period showed heightened public interest and involvement across more contributors.

The period 20 September to 20 October saw a slight further increase in volume to 1,078 mentions, and unique authors expanded to 482. This stable yet incremental growth suggested sustained public interest as the electoral campaigns progressed, potentially reflecting ongoing debates or controversies maintaining attention.

*Figure 15: Political Parties - Total Mentions and Unique Authors*



Finally, during the period immediately preceding the elections (20 October to 20 November), online coverage surged dramatically to 2,486 mentions, with an impressive 1,001 unique authors. This exponential increase indicated a peak in the electoral discourse, likely coinciding with intensified campaigning, final rallies, and media coverage as the elections neared. The large number of unique authors reflected a broad and diverse online engagement, suggesting that the elections had become a dominant topic in the digital media landscape.

The data in Figure 15 illustrates the evolution of online engagement with political parties over four months, highlighting how media coverage and public discourse grew as the elections approached. The dramatic rise in both volume and diversity of contributors in the final period signified the culmination of the electoral process, where public interest and participation reached their peak.

The increase in unique authors suggested that the conversation expanded beyond traditional or central actors (e.g., major media outlets) to include a more diverse array of voices, such as independent commentators, citizens, and alternative media. This shift had implications for how political narratives were shaped and disseminated, pointing to a democratisation of electoral discourse online.

Overall, these trends highlight the critical role of digital platforms in shaping electoral discussions and influencing public opinion. The substantial engagement in the final stages of the election cycle underscored the importance of strategic online campaigns and the necessity for parties to monitor and respond to the dynamics of online coverage effectively.

## 13.2 Volume of Coverage

The distribution of online coverage among political parties in Namibia over five months highlighted trends in media attention, revealing how party visibility fluctuated throughout the election period. This analysis provided valuable insights into the dynamics of political communication in the digital space and its potential influence on public perceptions.

Figure 16 shows SWAPO consistently dominated online coverage, peaking at 1,822 mentions in October/November, a significant increase from 580 in June/July. This trend reflected the party's ability to sustain visibility, leveraging its position as the ruling party. The proportional jump in SWAPO's coverage during the final stretch of the election campaign underscored its strategic efforts to dominate the online narrative. This high volume of coverage suggested an effective mobilisation of media resources or heightened scrutiny due to its incumbent status.

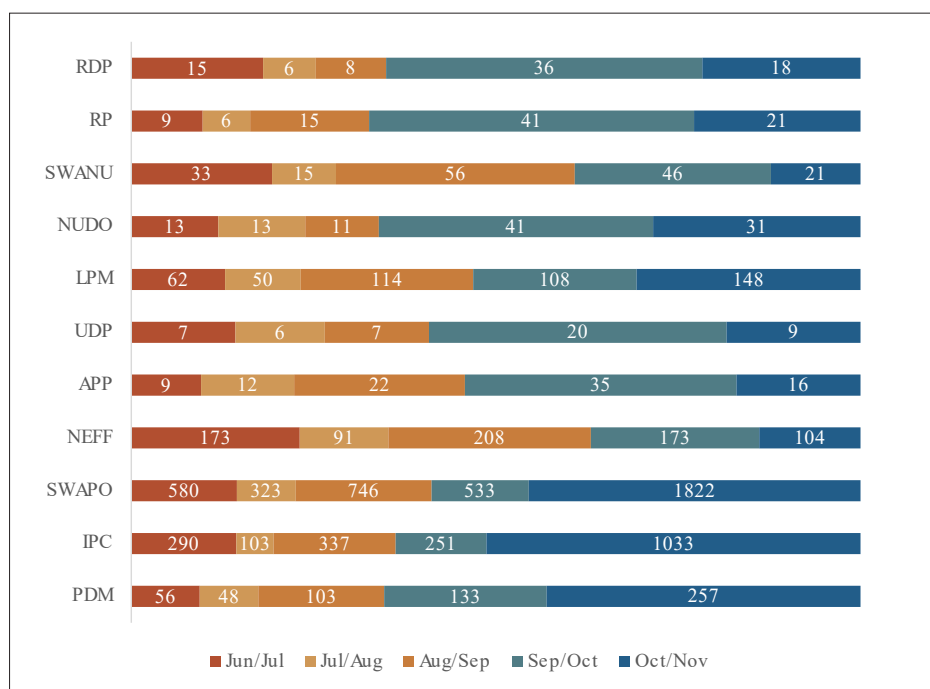
In contrast, the IPC experienced a substantial surge in visibility, from just 290 mentions in June/July to 1,033 mentions in October/November, marking the most significant increase among opposition parties. This spike signalled a growing relevance of the IPC in the political discourse, possibly reflecting its efforts to position itself as a major challenger to the ruling party. The steady growth in mentions during the intermediate months indicated a well-coordinated digital strategy, although its final visibility remained below that of SWAPO.

Other opposition parties such as NEFF, LPM, and NUDO faced challenges in maintaining consistent coverage. While NEFF had a strong start in June/July with 173 mentions, its coverage declined steadily, reaching only 104 mentions in October/November. This pattern suggested an initial burst of activity, possibly tied to specific events, followed by a decline in sustained engagement or media interest.

Similarly, LPM demonstrated uneven coverage, with a notable spike in October/November at 148 mentions, following months of moderate visibility. NUDO, on the other hand, struggled to achieve significant visibility throughout the period, peaking at only 41 mentions in September/October and dropping back to 31 in the final month. These fluctuations highlighted the difficulty smaller parties faced in maintaining a foothold in the online media landscape, where resources and strategic outreach played crucial roles.

The data in Figure 16 also reveals significant volatility in the coverage of certain parties. The APP, UDP, SWANU, RP, and RDP collectively experienced limited coverage, with mentions rarely exceeding double digits across all months. This persistent underrepresentation in online discourse highlights the stark divide between larger, more established parties and smaller or less-resourced political entities. It suggested that these smaller parties could not effectively leverage online platforms or needed more resonance with media outlets necessary to drive higher coverage volumes.

*Figure 16: Volume of Online Coverage by Party*



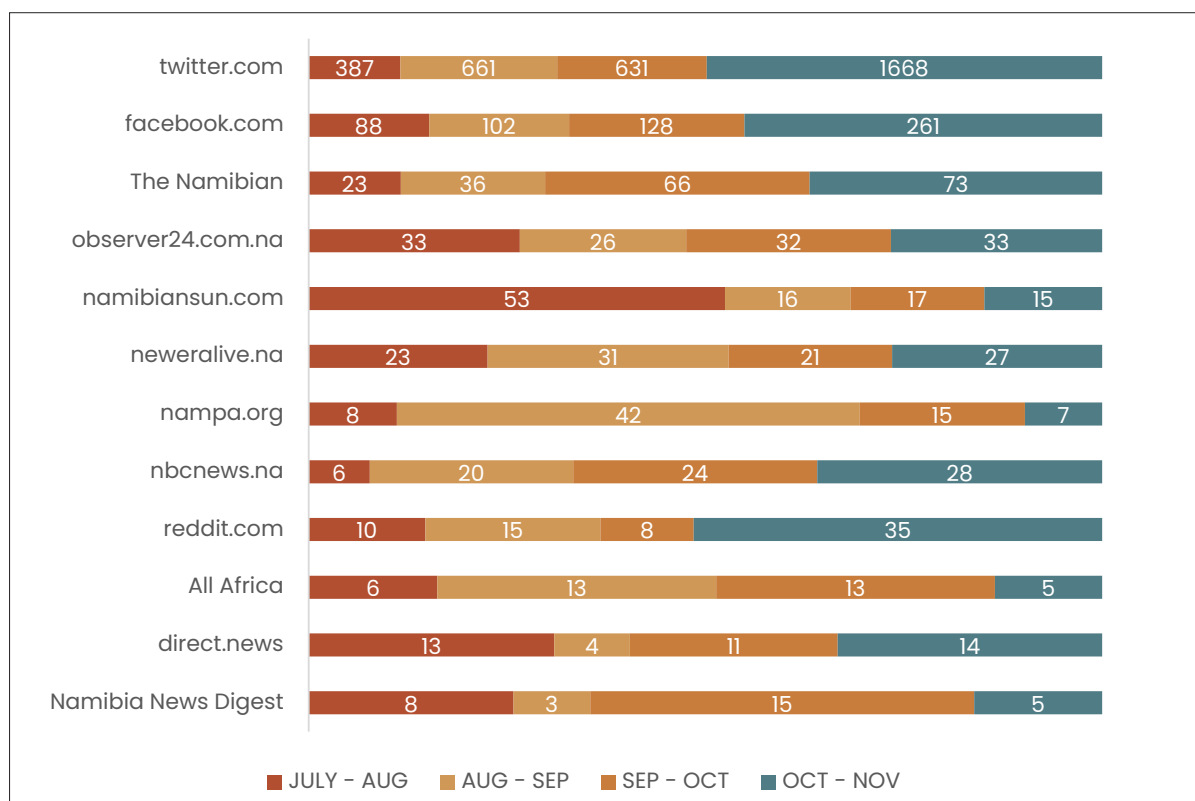
The data in Figure 16 also underscores the importance of online media as a battleground for visibility in modern elections. For larger parties like SWAPO and the IPC, their dominance in online coverage likely translated into greater public awareness and influence, reinforcing their positions as key players in the electoral contest. However, smaller parties' struggled to secure sustained coverage underscoring their relative disadvantage in competing for public attention and voter support. This disparity reflected broader challenges in Namibia's political communication landscape, where access to resources and strategic planning often determine online success.

In conclusion, the distribution of online coverage during this period highlighted the central role of media visibility in shaping electoral outcomes. While larger parties effectively harnessed online platforms to maintain relevance, smaller parties struggled to break through the noise. These findings underlined the need for opposition parties to develop more robust digital strategies to compete effectively in the evolving media environment. For voters, the disparity in coverage emphasised the importance of seeking diverse sources of information to form a more balanced view of the political landscape.

### 13.3 Party Coverage by Online Platform

The analysis of online coverage dedicated to political parties across various platforms provides a snapshot of how digital spaces facilitate political discourse in Namibia. Figure 18 shows that local news websites, such as Namibia News Digest, NBC News, Nampa, *New Era*, *Namibian Sun*, and *The Namibian*, showed a steady yet moderate level of engagement. For instance, NBC News consistently grew its coverage from 6 mentions in July/August to 28 in October/November, indicating its relevance as a source for election-related content. Similarly, *The Namibian* saw significant growth, increasing from 23 mentions in July/August to 73 mentions in October/November, reflecting its growing importance during the peak electoral season.

Figure 17: Party Coverage by Online Platform



However, there were variations in the trends across local platforms. Namibia News Digest and Nampa.org, for example, displayed a decrease in mentions during the October/November period. This decline suggested that certain local outlets could not sustain the same level of political engagement compared to others that ramped up their coverage closer to election day.

These findings emphasised that while local platforms played an important role in shaping national discourse, their impact varied, with some outlets playing a more consistent and significant role than others. Local platforms provided crucial coverage tailored to a Namibian audience, ensuring that election-related content remained relevant to the national context.

International platforms such as All Africa and Reddit showed more variable patterns of engagement. All Africa maintained relatively steady coverage, while Reddit displayed a surge in mentions, particularly in the October/November period, where it jumped from 8 mentions in September/October to 35. The sporadic increase suggested that international interest in Namibian elections were tied to specific events or controversies that garnered global attention.

While these platforms provided an avenue for Namibian issues to gain international visibility, their influence remained secondary to local platforms and social media.

Figure 18 shows that social media platforms—Facebook and Twitter—dominated the online discourse, particularly during the October/November period. Twitter, in particular, skyrocketed from 631 mentions in September/October to 1,668 mentions in October/November. Similarly, Facebook saw a notable increase from 128 mentions to 261. These figures underscore the pivotal role of social media in amplifying political discussions, reflecting its capacity to engage a broad and diverse audience.

The significant growth on social media platforms suggested that political parties and candidates increasingly relied on these platforms to communicate directly with the electorate. The sharp increase also reflected the interactive nature of social media, where users contributed to the conversation through retweets, shares, and comments, further fuelling the coverage.

Overall, Figure 18 reveals a dual dynamic: while local platforms ensured the Namibian political coverage was contextually grounded, social media platforms, particularly Twitter, dominated as the primary space for public discourse. The disparity in engagement between local platforms and social media suggested that political actors must prioritise their digital strategies to reach and influence voters effectively.

Additionally, the growing role of Twitter and Facebook highlighted the potential for misinformation or unregulated discourse, emphasising the need for monitoring and fact-checking during critical electoral periods. On the other hand, the international platforms' relatively modest engagement underscored the need for Namibian political issues to gain more visibility on the global stage.

## Appendix 1: Media Sources Coded and Analysed

Figure 18: Media Sources

| RADIO            | TV                   | ONLINE                    | PRINT                     |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| NBC English      | NBC News             | Namibia Economist Online  | <i>Allgemeine Zeitung</i> |
| NBC Oshiwambo    | Good Morning Namibia | Erongo Online             | Market Watch              |
| NBC Funkhaus     | Talk of the Nation   | Windhoek Express Online   | <i>The Namibian</i>       |
| NBC Damara       | Business Today       | Informanté Online         | <i>New Era</i>            |
| NBC Ngwany FM    | One Africa           | My Zone online            | <i>Republikein</i>        |
| NBC Hartklop FM  |                      | OMUTUMWA Online           | Sport Wrap                |
| NBC Otjiherero   |                      | Business Express Online   | The Zone                  |
| Eagle FM         |                      | Windhoek Observer Online  | <i>Namibian Sun</i>       |
| Radio Wave       |                      | The Brief Online          | Business 7                |
| Omulunga         |                      | Namibia Daily News Online | <i>Confidante</i>         |
| Fresh FM         |                      | UnWrap Online             | Careers, Erongo           |
| Touch FM         |                      |                           | <i>Namib Times</i>        |
| Radio Energy     |                      |                           | Ewi Iyaanooli             |
| Kosmos           |                      |                           | The Focus                 |
| Kanaal 7         |                      |                           | My Zone                   |
| Informanté Radio |                      |                           | Agriforum                 |

Figure 19: Online media monitored through Brandwatch

| Social Media Platform |
|-----------------------|
| 4_chan                |
| Blogs                 |
| Broadcast             |
| Facebook              |
| Facebook Public       |
| Forums                |
| Instagram             |
| Legacy Instagram      |
| LinkedIn              |
| Online News           |
| Print                 |
| QQ                    |
| Reddit                |
| Review                |
| Tumblr                |
| VK                    |
| X                     |
| YouTube               |

## Appendix 2: Registered Political Parties

Figure 20: Registered Political Parties 2024

| Party                                             | Abbreviation | Votes % 2019 | Seats 2019 |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Action Democratic Movement Party                  | ADM          | New          | 0          |
| Affirmative Repositioning                         | AR           | New          | 0          |
| All People's Party                                | APP          | 1.79%        | 2          |
| Body of Christ Party                              | BCP          | New          | 0          |
| Congress of Democrats                             | CoD          | 0.57%        | 0          |
| Independent Patriots For Change                   | IPC          | New          | 0          |
| Landless People's Movement                        | LPM          | 4.75%        | 4          |
| Monitor Action Group                              | MAG          | -            | -          |
| National Democratic Party of Namibia              | NDP          | 0.56%        | 0          |
| National Empowerment Fighting Corruption          | NEFC         | -            | -          |
| National Patriotic Front of Namibia               | NPF          | 0.22%        | 0          |
| National Unity Democratic Organisation of Namibia | NUDO         | 0.51%        | 0          |
| Popular Democratic Movement                       | PDM          | 16.65%       | 16         |
| Rally For Democracy and Progress                  | RDP          | 1.09%        | 1          |
| Republican Party of Namibia                       | RP           | 0.56%        | 2          |
| Swanu of Namibia                                  | SWANU        | 0.65%        | 1          |
| SWAPO Party of Namibia                            | SWAPO        | 65.45%       | 63         |
| United Democratic Front of Namibia                | UDF          | 1.79%        | 2          |
| United People's Movement                          | UPM          | -            | -          |
| Workers Revolutionary Party                       | WRP          | 0.39%        | 0          |



