

The race for the selection of a running mate in the NPP

Introduction

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana has laid a solid foundation for the country's Fourth Republican democracy. So far, it has ushered in a two-party political dispensation in the country's political history, with the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) winning power at different times. In each of these periods when power has been won, the vice-presidential candidate has played a role. It is however abundantly clear that the ability of the NPP to win the 2016 and 2020 general elections could largely be credited to its running mate Dr. Mahamud Bawumia. Article 60 of the 1992 Constitution is clear on matters that relate to the selection of the running mate of any presidential candidate who intends to contest elections. Thus, the importance of selecting a competent and experienced running mate in an election cannot be overstated.

The choice of a running mate in the New Patriotic Party has over the years followed a robust and multifaceted dimension. Often, different interest groups see this as an opportunity and make frantic efforts to lobby decision makers to consider people they perceive to be the most suitable and winnable option. Despite this, the decision to appoint is based on many factors including approval from the National Council, the National Executive Committee of the NPP, and the support by the incumbent President. Other factors, such as the enthusiasm of party members toward a potential running mate, the candidates' contribution to the party's presidential campaign in the previous election, their ethnicity and religious affiliations, as well as the need to unite the party during the selection process are also key to selecting the running mate.

This article presents the outcome of a recent nationwide poll run by Research Trust Ltd on who NPP party executives across all levels (polling station, constituency, regional, and national levels) perceive to be an ideal candidate if the NPP wants to 'break the 8'.

Significance of a running mate in the 2024 general elections

If the NPP intends to 'break the 8' in the 2024 general elections, the choice of a running mate will be crucial. Firstly, the identity of the running mate at the very least symbolizes the unity of the party. The candidate and his number running mate symbolize the combination of experience and the promise of the future. Secondly, the choice of a running mate sends indirect signals to the electorate; it provides the electorate with a potential replacement should anything happen to the presidential candidate while in office. It therefore guarantees against constitutional crisis should the incumbent be incapacitated. It can be used to shore up the electoral weaknesses of the number presidential candidate (#1) by choosing a running mate with strengths not possessed by the number one. It can also be used as a reaction to the ticket of the other party. In essence, the running mate is a potential validator of the conclusions reached by the voters on the presidential candidate.

Methodology

Data for this survey was collected over a two-week period (May 13th to May 26th, 2024) in all sixteen (16) administrative regions of the country. A total of 60 constituencies out of the 275 were sampled for the study, representing about 22% of all constituencies in Ghana. The number of sampled constituencies within a region was proportional to the total number of constituencies in that region. That is, more constituencies were sampled in the Ashanti, Eastern, Greater Accra etc. relative to regions such as the North East and Ahafo regions for example. In each sampled constituency, the survey aimed at interviewing 5 constituency executives, giving a total of 300 constituency level data. In addition, four (4) random polling stations within the constituency were sampled. In each sampled polling station, a total of three NPP polling station executives were randomly selected and interviewed. This gave a total of 720 polling station level interviews. An additional four (4) first-time voters (2 male and 2 female where possible) in each selected polling station were sampled to respond to the questions. That is, data from 960 first-time voters were collected as part of this survey. The total sample for our analysis was 1,980 respondents.

Results

Figure 1 sought to gauge the regional preference of NPP executives for a potential running mate. The results show that, more than nine (9) in ten (10) executives preferred the running mate to come from the Ashanti region (92%).

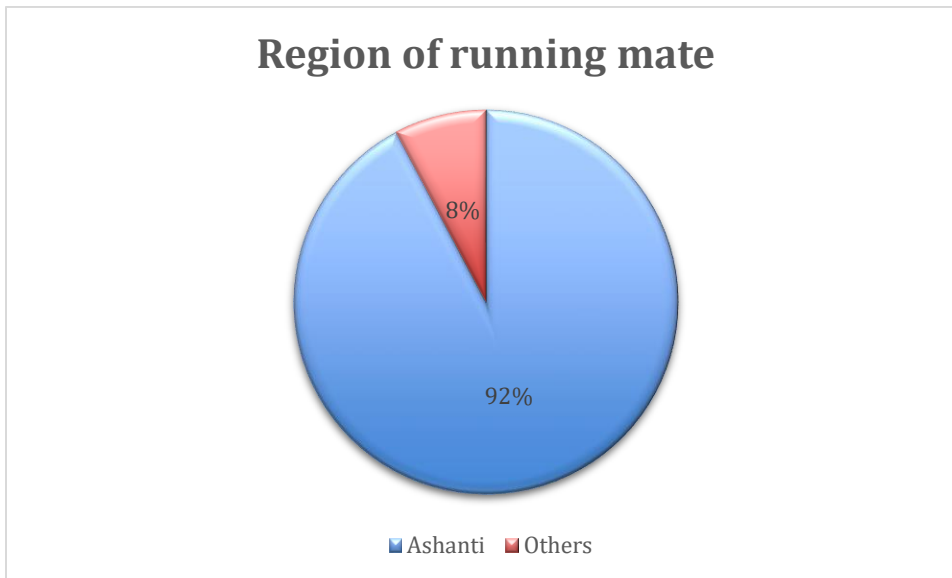
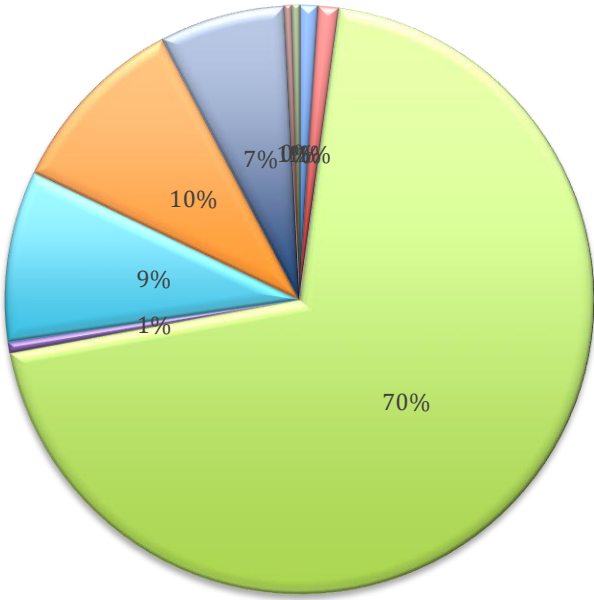


Figure1: NPP executives' regional preference for a running mate

In Figure 2, we sought to understand what the preference of NPP party executives were in the choice of a running mate. The inclusion criteria for the list presented was based on what the media reportage has been on specific individuals regarding the vacant running position. The results on which of the following do you prefer as a running mate going into the 2024 general elections suggest that more than two-thirds of the respondents preferred Hon. Mathew Opoku Prempeh (70%). This was followed by Hon. Frema Osei Opare (10%), Hon. Yaw Osei Adutwum (9%), and Hon. Henry Kwabena Kokofu (7.4%). Others were Hon Byran Acheampong (1.2%), Hon. Naa Toshie Addo (1%), Hon. Joseph Osei Owusu (0.6%), Hon. Asamoah Boateng (0.4%), and Prof. Mrs. Rita Akosua Dickson (0.4%).

The reasons for respondents' choice included the popularity and marketability of the candidate (81%), someone who could face the NDC boot for boot (78%), someone who understands grassroot politics (78%), and a known party faithful (71%). Please see Figure 3.

Preferred candidate for running mate



- Hon. Naa Toshie Addo
- Hon. Brain Acheampong
- Hon. Mathew Opoku Prempeh
- Hon. Joseph Osei Owusu
- Hon. Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum
- Hon. Frema Osei Opere
- Hon. Hon. Henry Kokofu
- Hon. Asamoah Boateng
- Prof. Mrs. Rita Akosua Dickson

Figure 2: NPP executives preferred candidate for running mate

Reason for the choice of a candidate

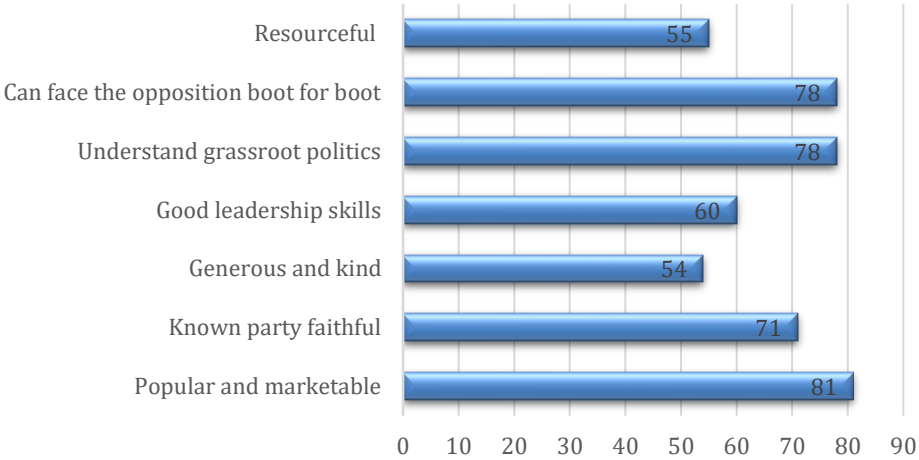


Figure 3: NPP executives preferred candidate for running mate

We also analyzed the question if elections were organized today, who would you vote for? The analysis for this question was based on only first-time voters. This was done to avoid any biases from other respondents. The results as shown in Figure 4 suggest that first time voters were more likely to cast their vote for Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia and the NPP (56%) than they would do for the NDC's Mr. John Mahama (42%).

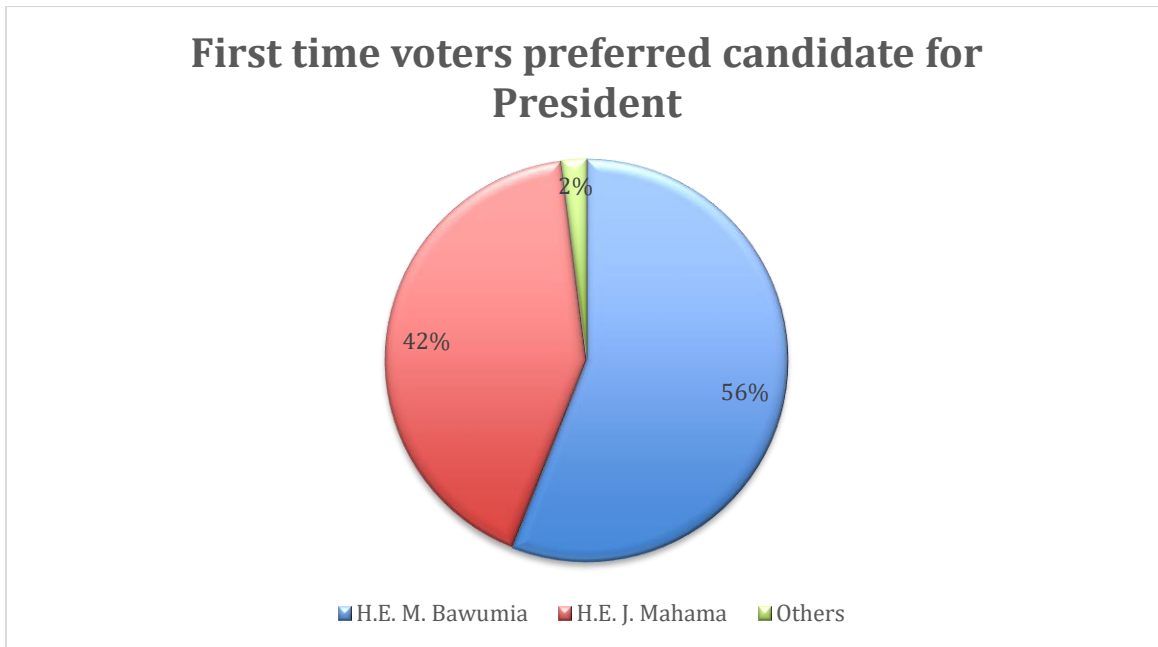


Figure 4: First-time voters preferred candidate for President

Conclusion

The major players in the selection process of the running mate of the NPP are the flagbearer, National Council, Central and Regional Executive Committees, and the party's Parliamentary Caucus. It must however be established that elections are won at the polling stations and the voices of those who will prosecute the party's agenda will have to be taken into consideration in the selection process. If NPP is to break the 8, it is recommended they pay attention to first time voters and consolidate the potential votes that will come from that population.