Parliamentary Attrition & Electoral Turnover in Uganda's 12th Parliament

Overview

This factsheet examines Political Party Attrition and Election–Return Attrition in Uganda's 12th Parliament. It highlights patterns of incumbent defeat, party switching, and regional dynamics to support evidence-based governance programming and parliamentary strengthening.

Uganda's 12th Parliament convenes at a moment of profound political uncertainty. After nearly four decades of President Museveni's rule, succession politics, generational change, and citizen activism are reshaping the political landscape. Electoral attrition is therefore not only a measure of competitiveness but also a lens into accountability, party cohesion, and the future of parliamentary independence.

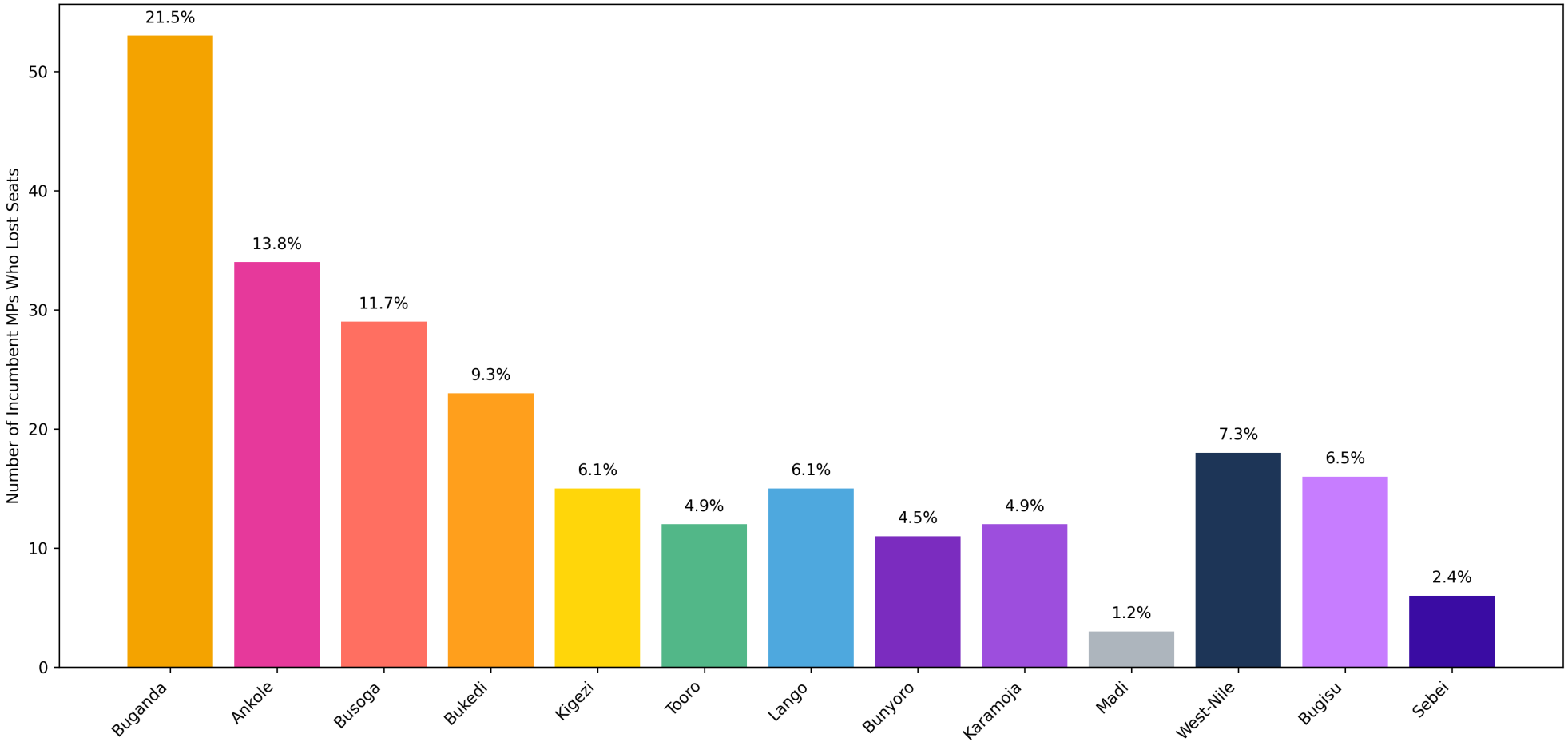
Insight 1: Parliamentary turnover is exceptionally high

Nearly **60%** of incumbent Members of Parliament failed to return to Parliament. This reflects heightened electoral competitiveness and strong voter demand for accountability. While such turnover can renew representation, it also disrupts legislative continuity and weakens institutional memory.

The generational shift is striking: over **60% of MPs** are under 45, making this Uganda's youngest legislature in history. While this offers hope for renewal, youth alone does not guarantee reform. Many younger MPs emerge from patronage-driven politics, raising concerns about whether turnover translates into substantive change.

Figure 1: Defeated Incumbent MPs by Sub-region

Key: The bar graph represent the number of incumbent MPs who lost their seats in each sub-region.



Insight 2: Buganda is the epicentre of competitive politics

Buganda recorded the highest number of defeated incumbents, underlining intense electoral competition, higher urban voter mobilization, and stronger opposition challenges. The region demonstrates how demographic change and political pluralism weaken traditional incumbency advantages.

This trend reflects broader citizen expectations: surveys show **72% of Ugandans** want MPs to prioritize service delivery, while digital activism such as the #ParliamentExhibition has amplified scrutiny of incumbents. Buganda's urban constituencies, with more digitally connected voters, have become focal points of accountability politics.

Insight 3: Political party loyalty is weakening

Party switching and disputed primaries significantly shaped electoral outcomes. Many incumbents lost party tickets or crossed to alternative platforms, fragmenting voter bases and eroding party cohesion. This trend signals declining party institutionalization and the rise of candidate-centered politics.

Factional struggles within the ruling NRM - between veteran cadres, Muhoozi supporters, and technocrats, mirror this weakening of loyalty. Internal party democracy remains fragile, and contested primaries often fuel attrition by displacing incumbents before voters even cast their ballots. This same narrative also applies to the National Unity Platform (NUP) that birthed the Democratic Front, the Forum for Democratic Change that led to the formation of People`s Front for Freedom (PFF), among others.

Insight 4: Election–return attrition reflects accountability pressures

Election–return attrition shows that incumbency alone no longer guarantees political survival. Voters increasingly evaluate MPs on service delivery, visibility, and responsiveness. The resulting Parliament includes many first-time legislators, increasing the demand for structured induction.

This dynamic reflects Uganda's digitally connected citizenry. Movements like #ParliamentExhibition have exposed corruption in real time, while surveys reveal growing disillusionment with MPs perceived as out of touch. Attrition therefore signals both accountability pressures and the risks of performative populism among new entrants.

Policy and Governance Implications

- High attrition strengthens democratic accountability but undermines legislative continuity.
- Comprehensive induction and mentorship programmes are essential for new MPs.
- Political parties must reform internal democracy and candidate selection processes.
- Development partners should prioritize parliamentary capacity building and party system reform.

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Source: Parliamentary election outcomes and media analysis.