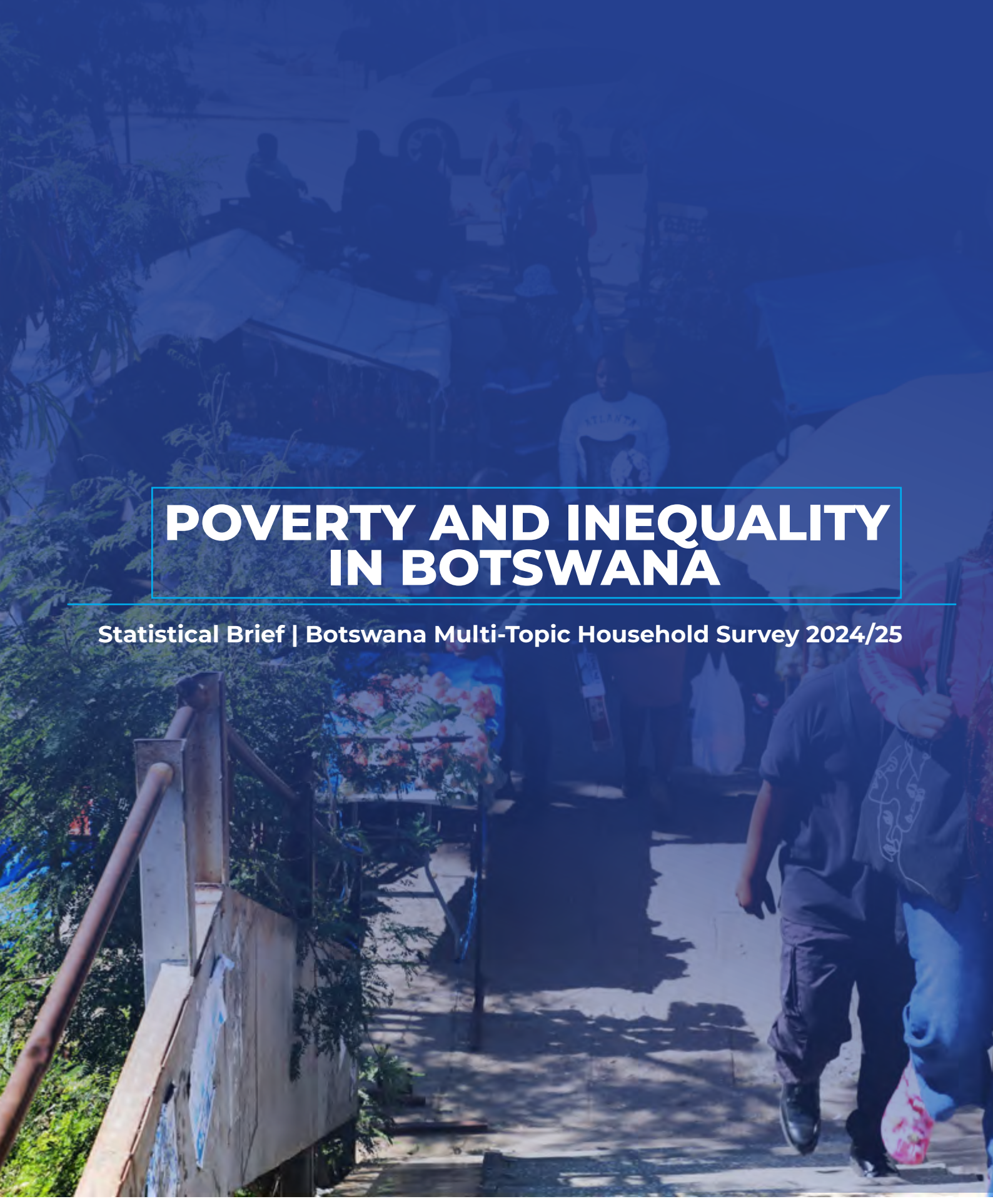
POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN BOTSWANA

Statistical Brief | Botswana Multi-Topic Household Survey 2024/25



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STATISTICS BOTSWANA

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PREFACE

This Statistical Brief presents key poverty and inequality results from the 2024/25 Botswana Multi-Topic Household Survey (BMTHS). It provides estimates of poverty incidence, disaggregated by stratum and district and for employed persons, together with measures of consumption inequality. Taken together, these indicators give an overview of the latest household living standards and of how poverty is distributed across the country.

The release reflects Statistics Botswana's continued commitment to providing timely, reliable and relevant official statistics that support evidence-based policymaking, planning and accountability. The findings inform national development priorities, poverty reduction strategies and social protection programmes. They also support monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 1 on ending poverty and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, alongside Africa's Agenda 2063.

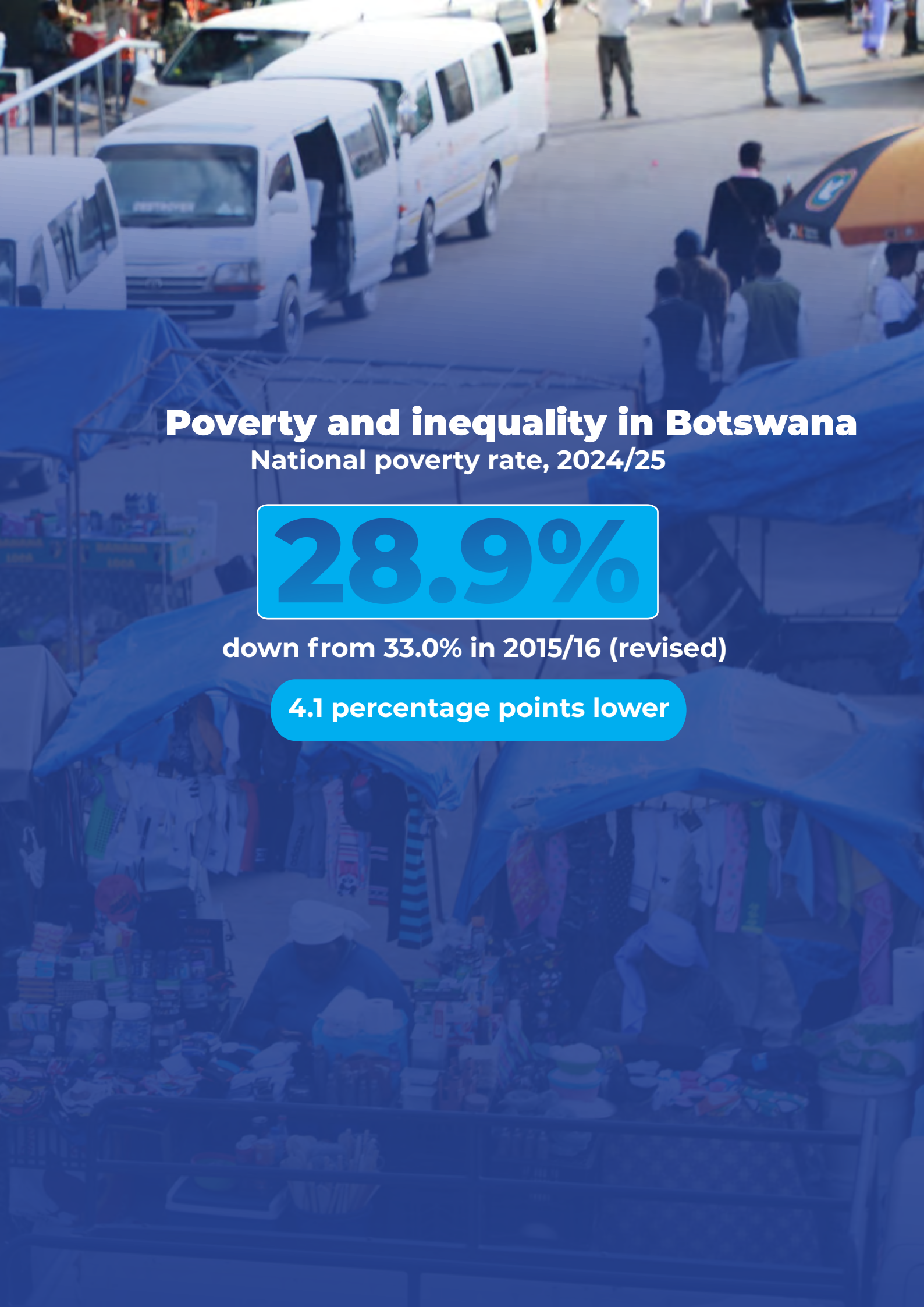
The findings indicate that the poverty rate declined from a revised 33.0 per cent in 2015/16 to 28.9 per cent in 2024/25, a reduction of 4.1 percentage points. Poverty remained most prevalent in rural areas, where 47.2 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line. The national Gini coefficient of consumption was 0.493 in 2024/25, indicating continued disparities in household consumption.

The brief explains the methodological refinements introduced in measuring household consumption and in constructing a new poverty line, and sets out the conclusions that follow from the results and their implications for policy. Comparisons between 2015/16 and 2024/25 use revised 2015/16 estimates calculated under a comparable framework, so that changes in poverty are assessed appropriately.

I extend sincere appreciation to all households that participated in the survey and provided invaluable information. I also acknowledge the dedication of survey personnel and the contributions of stakeholders and technical partners whose support made this work possible.



Dr. Khaufelo R. Lekobane
Statistician General
November 2026



Poverty and inequality in Botswana

National poverty rate, 2024/25

28.9%

down from 33.0% in 2015/16 (revised)

4.1 percentage points lower

1. Introduction

Statistics Botswana conducts household surveys to monitor living conditions and to provide evidence for policymaking, planning and evaluation. The 2024/25 Botswana Multi-Topic Household Survey integrates consumption and expenditure data with broader socioeconomic information in order to update poverty and inequality estimates, identify disadvantaged population groups and areas, and inform poverty-reduction policies and programmes.

This Statistical Brief presents core poverty indicators at national, stratum and district levels, poverty among employed persons, and consumption inequality, comparing 2015/16 with 2024/25. It explains the methodological refinements introduced in measuring household consumption, so as to better align Botswana's poverty and inequality measurement with current international best practices, and the construction of a new poverty line that better reflects current consumption patterns. It sets out the conclusions that follow from the results and their policy implications, and addresses the questions most often raised by users to support accurate interpretation of the findings.

The estimates draw on two comparable, high-quality rounds of the BMTHS. The 2024/25 survey was conducted over twelve monthly rounds between November 2024 and November 2025 and achieved 9,672 completed households, a response rate of 88.3 per cent. The 2015/16 survey achieved 7,060 households, a response rate of 98.2 per cent. Annex A summarises the design of both rounds.

How to read this brief

All poverty and inequality estimates for both periods are produced on a single, consistent framework: the refined consumption measure and the updated poverty line described in Chapter 2. Comparisons in this brief are therefore made between the revised 2015/16 estimate (33.0 per cent) and the 2024/25 estimate (28.9 per cent). The previously published 2015/16 estimate of 16.3 per cent is reported for reference only and is not comparable with either figure.

2. Methodology

Two changes underpin this release: refinements to the construction of the household consumption aggregate, and a new poverty line built on an updated basic-needs basket. Together they establish an updated baseline for future poverty monitoring.

2.1 Measuring household consumption

The construction of the consumption aggregate used to produce these estimates incorporates refinements to both the food and the non-food components, so as to better align measurement with current international best practices. Consumption, rather than income, remains the welfare measure: it is reported more reliably in household surveys in settings where incomes are irregular and seasonally variable, and it reflects what households are actually able to consume.

The aggregate is built from household food and non-food expenditure, consumption of home-produced items, and the use of durable goods, and is expressed per person to allow for differences in household size and composition. The refinements applied in this round affect how the food and non-food components are valued and combined; they are applied identically to both survey rounds, so that the two periods are measured on the same basis.

2.2 The updated poverty line

The poverty line used in this brief is new. The line was motivated by the need to update the underlying consumption basket, which had not been rebased since 2009/10 despite substantial changes in household consumption patterns. The previous line relied on an established basket of basic food and non-food items and updated the cost of that basket using prices to constitute the cost of basic needs. The composition of the basket was not necessarily representative of changing household consumption patterns.

The new line follows the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach. Under this approach the poverty line is the cost of a food basket that reflects the consumption patterns of the poor and provides sufficient caloric intake to meet basic nutritional requirements, 2,100 kilocalories per person per day, plus an allowance for essential non-food needs.

In May 2025 prices, the minimum consumption basket for a typical household of three members was valued at P2,563 per month, equivalent to approximately P854 per person per month. For reference, the comparable consumption basket was valued at P1,485 per month under the previous poverty line, also expressed in May 2025 prices. The new line is closer to those observed in countries at a similar level of economic development.

TABLE 1. The poverty line, previous and updated (May 2025 prices)

Item	Previous line	Updated line
Basket basis	2009/10 basic-needs basket, cost updated for prices	Rebased basic-needs basket reflecting current consumption patterns
Food requirement	2,100 kcal per person per day	2,100 kcal per person per day
Illustrative household	3 members	3 members
Monthly value, three-member household	P1,485	P2,563
Approximate monthly value per person	P495	P854

3. Results

Poverty declined at the national level and in every stratum, and consumption inequality narrowed. The gains were uneven: they were concentrated in rural areas and urban villages, with cities and towns broadly unchanged, and left the absolute number of people living in poverty almost exactly where it was a decade earlier.

3.1 National poverty

The national poverty rate fell from 33.0 per cent in 2015/16 to 28.9 per cent in 2024/25, a statistically significant reduction of 4.1 percentage points. In 2024/25, more than one person in four lived in a household whose consumption per person fell below the poverty line.

Despite this progress, the number of people living in poverty remained approximately 684,000. An estimated 683,634 people were below the updated poverty line in 2024/25, compared with 684,284 in 2015/16 under the revised framework, a decline of about 650 people. Population growth offset the fall in the poverty rate, so that a lower share of a larger population produced almost the same number of poor people.

Figure 1(a): National Poverty Rates - Old Methodology

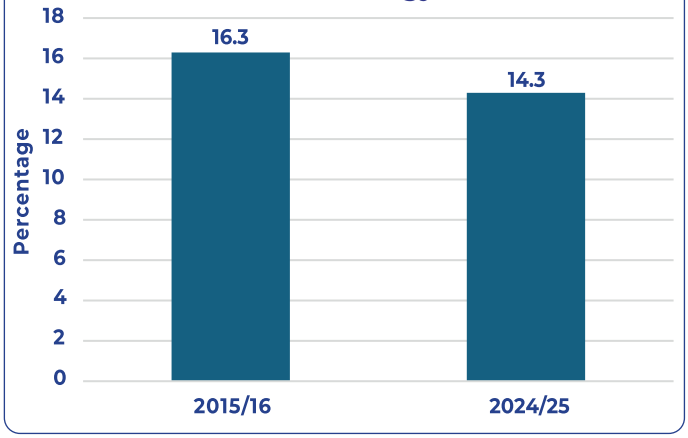
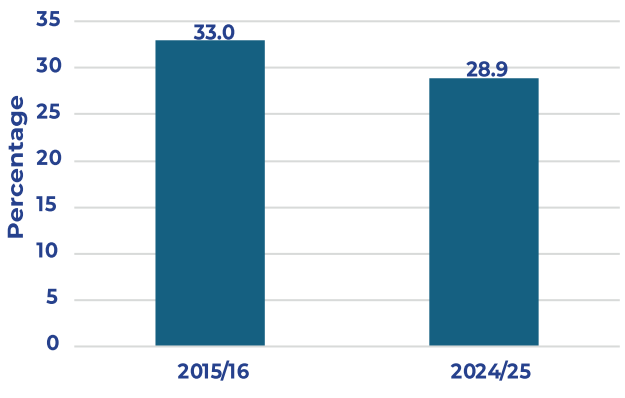


Figure 1(b): National Poverty Rates- New Methodology



The revised methodology gives a higher poverty estimate for 2015/16: 33.0 per cent, compared with the originally published 16.3 per cent. This difference reflects changes in the poverty benchmark and measurement approach, NOT an increase in poverty, since both estimates refer to the same period.

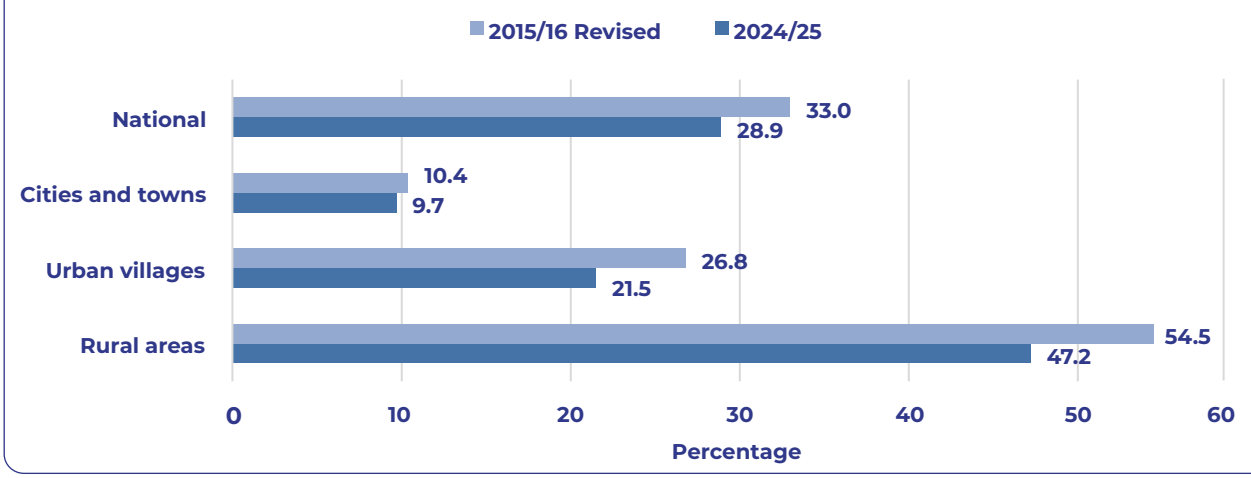
Both measures matter for policy. The poverty rate indicates how widely deprivation is shared across the population, while the headcount indicates how many people require support. A falling rate alongside a static headcount implies that the number of people living in poverty is being replenished as the population grows, and that reaching the SDG 1 target of ending poverty will require the rate to fall faster than population growth.

3.2 Poverty by strata

Poverty declined in all three strata, but at very different speeds. Rural poverty fell from 54.5 to 47.2 per cent, the largest decline at 7.3 percentage points. Urban villages recorded a decline of 5.3 percentage points, from 26.8 to 21.5 per cent. Poverty in cities and towns remained broadly unchanged, moving from 10.4 to 9.7 per cent.

The result is a persistent rural-urban gap. In 2024/25, poverty in rural areas was almost five times the rate in cities and towns, and close to half of the rural population remained below the poverty line. Urban villages occupied an intermediate position, at roughly twice the rate recorded in cities and towns.

Figure 2: Poverty Rates at National and Strata Level



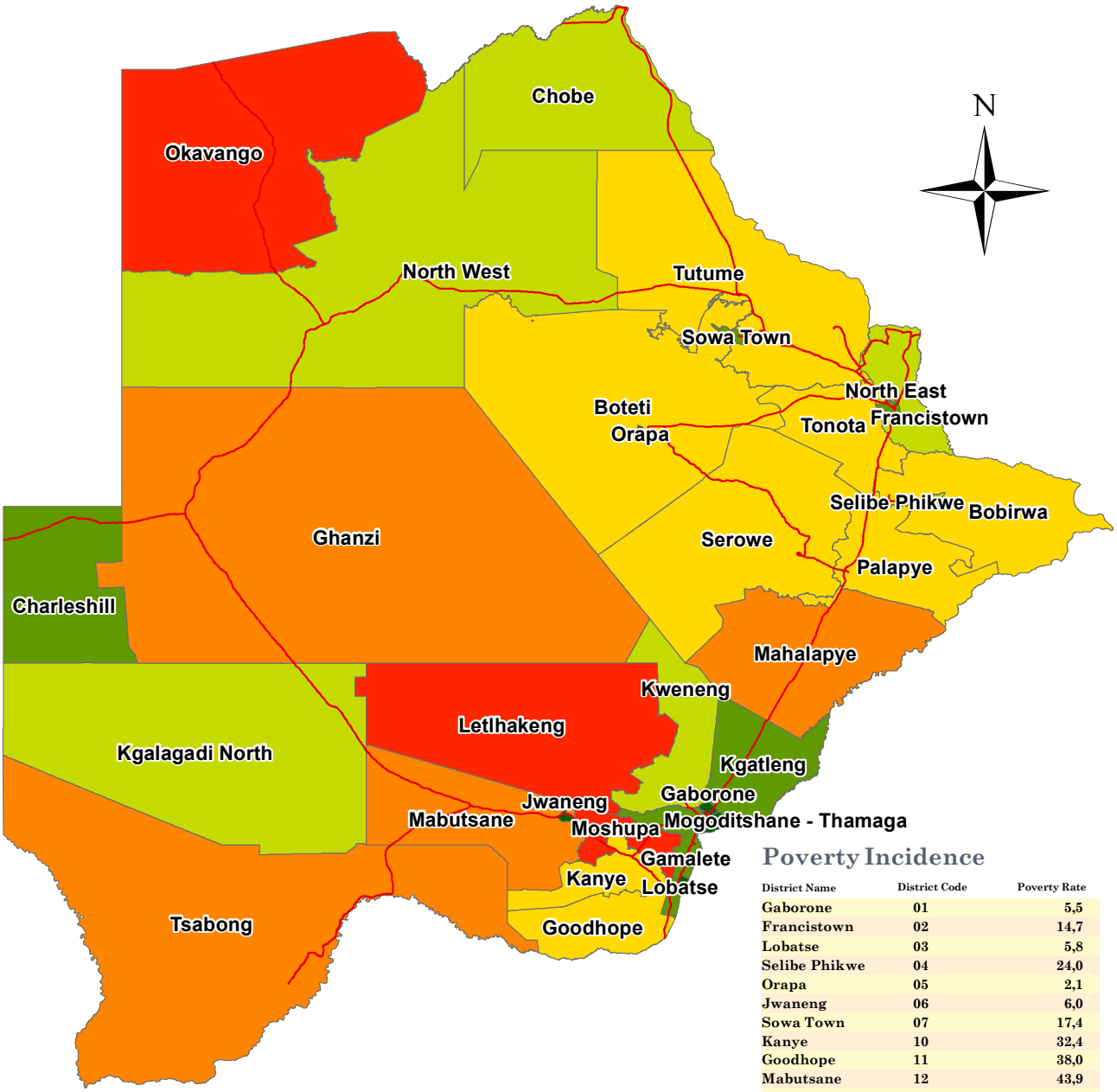
3.3 Poverty by district

Poverty is highly concentrated geographically. In 2024/25, district poverty rates ranged from 2.1 per cent in Orapa to 61.1 per cent in Letlhakeng, a spread of 59 percentage points.

The districts with the highest poverty rates were Letlhakeng at 61.1 per cent, Okavango at 60.8 per cent and Moshupa at 55.0 per cent. Orapa, Tlokweng and Gaborone recorded the lowest poverty rates, at 5.5 per cent or below. Half of the 32 districts recorded a poverty rate above the national average of 28.9 per cent, and most of these are predominantly rural districts.

The pattern in **Figure 3** shows a clear spatial gradient: the highest rates are found in the Kgalagadi, Kweneng and North West areas, while the lowest are in the urban centres of the south-east. Districts in the middle of the distribution, including Kweneng (28.2 per cent), North West (28.1 per cent) and North East (24.9 per cent), sit close to the national average, and small changes in their estimates can move them across it.

Figure 3: 2024/25 POVERTY INCIDENCE MAP AT DISTRICT LEVEL, BOTSWANA



Poverty Incidence

District Name	District Code	Poverty Rate
Gaborone	01	5,5
Francistown	02	14,7
Lobatse	03	5,8
Selibe Phikwe	04	24,0
Orapa	05	2,1
Jwaneng	06	6,0
Sowa Town	07	17,4
Kanye	10	32,4
Goodhope	11	38,0
Mabutsane	12	43,9
Moshupa	13	55,0
Gamalete	20	11,5
Tlokweng	21	2,3
Kweneng	30	28,2
Letlhakeng	31	61,1
Mogoditshane - Thamaga	32	16,9
Kgatleng	40	19,5
Serowe	50	36,2
Mahalapye	51	43,9
Bobirwa	52	39,3
Boteti	53	31,8
Tutume	54	37,4
Tonota	55	37,3
Palapye	56	36,0
North East	60	24,9
North West	70	28,1
Okavango	71	60,8
Chobe	72	22,0
Ghanzi	80	47,6
Charleshill	82	16,1
Tsabong	90	44,5
Kgalagadi North	91	30,3

Compiled and prepared by Statistics Botswana, GIS&Mapping Unit, 2026

3.4 Poverty among the employed-Working Poverty Rate

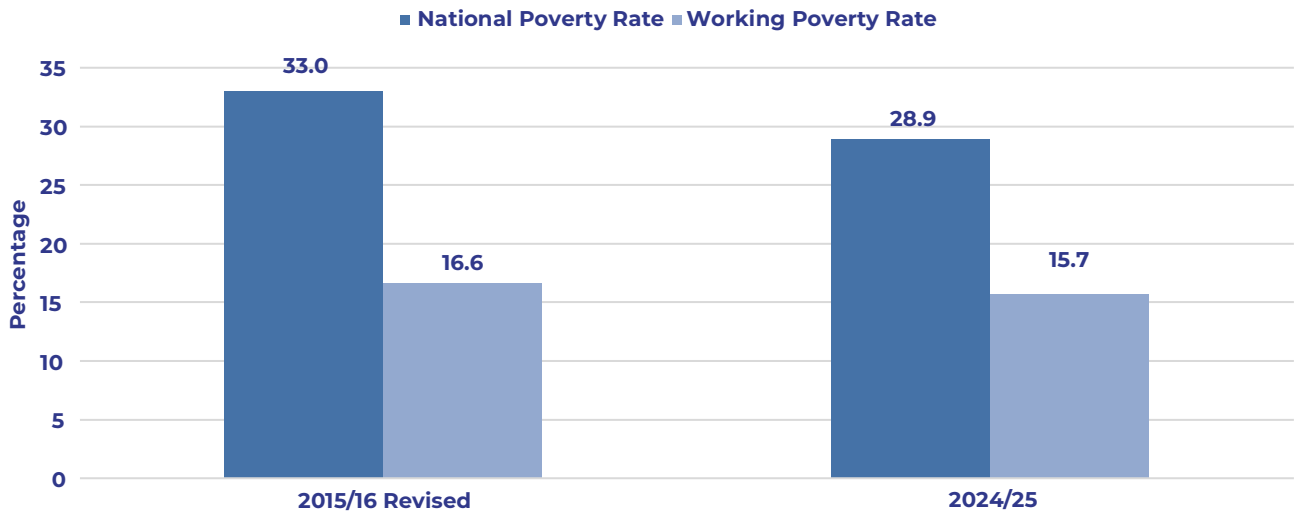
Work substantially reduces the risk of poverty: in 2024/25, 15.7 per cent of employed persons aged 15 years and above lived below the poverty line, against 28.9 per cent of the population as a whole. That advantage, however, has barely improved since 2015/16.

The working poverty rate measures the share of people in employment who live in a household whose consumption per person falls below the poverty line. It is calculated for persons aged 15 years and above who were employed at the time of the survey, and it therefore combines the labour market position of the individual with the consumption position of the household to which they belong.

In 2024/25, 15.7 per cent of employed persons lived in poverty, 13.2 percentage points below the national rate. The gap indicates that employment, and the earnings and household pooling that come with it, remains the principal protection against poverty in Botswana.

The working poverty rate declined by less than 1 percentage point between 2015/16 and 2024/25, even as the national poverty rate fell by 4.1 percentage points. Poverty among workers was therefore close to static over a period in which poverty in the population as a whole declined appreciably. Further analysis is required to establish the factors behind this difference; plausible explanations include changes in the composition of employment and in household size, but these cannot be confirmed from the estimates presented here.

Figure 4: Working Poverty and National Poverty Rates, 2015/16 and 2024/25



3.5 Consumption inequality

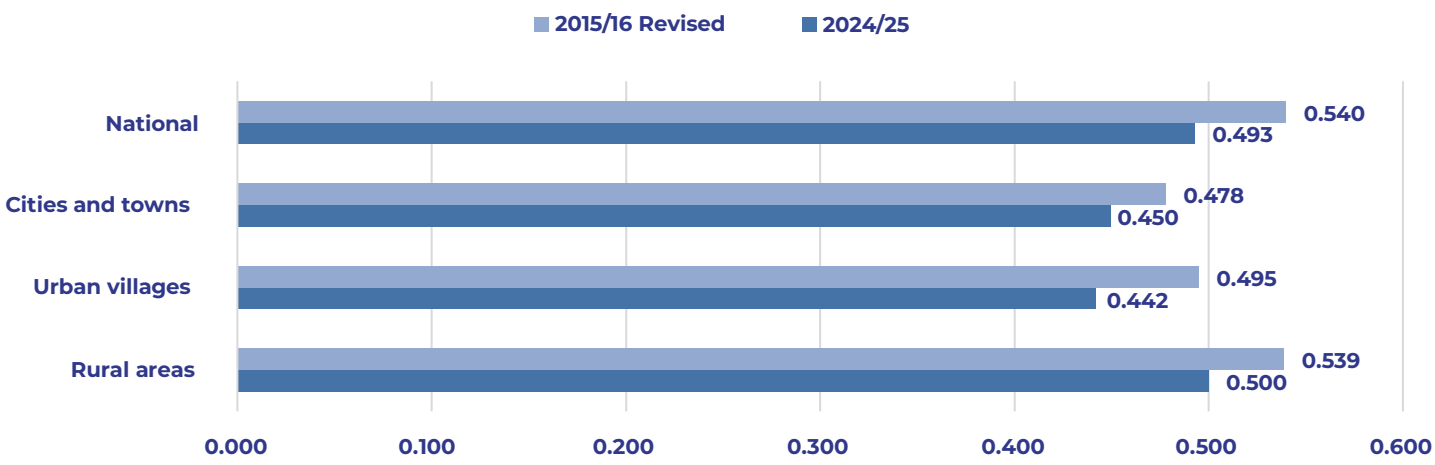
Consumption inequality narrowed between 2015/16 and 2024/25, and the reduction was observed across all strata. The national Gini coefficient fell from 0.540 to 0.493.

The Gini coefficient summarises how unevenly consumption is distributed across the population. It ranges from 0, which represents perfect equality, to 1, which represents complete inequality; values approaching 1 indicate that a small share of the population accounts for a large share of total consumption.

A fall of 0.047 represents a reduction of roughly 9 per cent relative to its 2015/16 level, and it is consistent with the decline in the poverty rate: both point to a distribution in which the lower part has gained ground. In 2024/25 the coefficient was highest in rural areas at 0.500, followed by cities and towns at 0.450 and urban villages at 0.442.

Inequality nonetheless remains substantial. A Gini coefficient of 0.493 means that consumption in Botswana continues to be concentrated at the upper end of the distribution, and the reduction achieved over the decade, while welcome, leaves the country well short of the levels of equality associated with the SDG 10 targets.

Figure 5: Consumption Gini Coefficient



4. Conclusions

The 2024/25 BMTHS confirms that poverty in Botswana has continued to decline, but the pace of that decline is modest and its reach is uneven. Measured on a consistent framework, the national poverty rate fell by 4.1 percentage points over nine years, from 33.0 to 28.9 per cent, which is a little under half a percentage point a year. On this trajectory, poverty would still be close to a quarter of the population by the mid-2030s, well short of the SDG 1 target of ending poverty.

The most important finding in this brief is not the fall in the rate but the behaviour of the headcount. The number of people living below the poverty line was 683,634 in 2024/25 against 684,284 in 2015/16, a difference of about 650 people. Population growth absorbed almost all of the improvement in the rate. This has a direct implication: a target expressed only as a poverty rate can be met while the number of people requiring support barely moves.

Poverty remains a rural phenomenon, and an increasingly localised one. The rural rate of 47.2 per cent is almost five times the 9.7 per cent recorded in cities and towns, and close to half of all rural residents are below the line. At district level the spread is even wider, from 2.1 per cent in Orapa to 61.1 per cent in Letlhakeng, with half of the 32 districts above the national average. The highest rates cluster in the Kgalagadi, Kweneng and North West areas.

Improvement has not reached workers to the same degree as the population at large. The working poverty rate of 15.7 per cent sits well below the national rate, which confirms that employment is protective, but it fell by less than 1 percentage point over the decade while the national rate fell by 4.1. Whatever drove the reduction in poverty did not operate strongly through the earnings of employed persons.

Consumption inequality narrowed, from a Gini coefficient of 0.540 to 0.493, and the reduction was recorded in every stratum. At 0.493 the coefficient nonetheless remains high: consumption remains heavily concentrated at the upper end of the distribution, and rural Botswana is both poorer and more unequal (0.500) than the country as a whole.

Finally, this release establishes a measurement baseline. The revised 2015/16 estimate of 33.0 per cent and the 2024/25 estimate of 28.9 per cent are produced on the same consumption measure and the same poverty line, so that change over time can now be measured on a consistent basis.

Annex A. Survey design

The two survey rounds on which this brief rests were designed to be comparable in scope and periodicity, while reflecting changes in the sampling frame and in data collection technology.

TABLE 2. Summary of the survey design, 2015/16 and 2024/25

Survey feature	2015/16 BMTHS	2024/25 BMTHS
Sampling frame	2011 Population and Housing Census	2022 Population and Housing Census
Planned sample	7,188 households	10,944 households
Achieved sample	7,060 households	9,672 households
Response rate	98.2 per cent	88.3 per cent
Field period	November 2015 – November 2016	November 2024 – November 2025
Rounds	12	12
Data collection	CAFE	CAPI
Food diary	14 days	14 days in rounds 1–9; 7 days in rounds 10–12

The 2024/25 round was larger than its predecessor, with a planned sample of 10,944 households against 7,188 in 2015/16, and it was drawn from the 2022 Population and Housing Census frame. The achieved sample of 9,672 households represents a response rate of 88.3 per cent, lower than the 98.2 per cent achieved in 2015/16. Differential non-response of this kind can affect the representativeness of estimates, and the survey weights used in producing these results are designed to correct for it.

Both survey rounds were conducted over twelve monthly rounds, which allows seasonal variation in consumption to be captured. The reduction of the food diary from 14 days to 7 days in the final three rounds of 2024/25 reflects operational experience with respondent fatigue; the consumption aggregate accounts for the change in diary length across rounds.



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