Data for Governance Alliance Policy Brief No. 24

As Africans enter busy political year, Scepticism marks weakening support for elections

Hervé Akinocho

1 February 2024

As Africans enter busy political year, scepticism marks weakening support for elections

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 761 | **Hervé Akinocho**

Summary

The year 2024 promises a bumper crop of elections in Africa. National contests are planned in 23 African countries, from Comoros' presidential election in January to Ghana's in December (EISA, 2024; Chemam, 2024).

Even smooth elections are times of high stakes and tension that can put democratic processes to the test. And Africa's elections haven't always been showcases of smooth organisation, free and fair playing fields, and universally accepted outcomes (Gueye, 2009; M'Cormack-Hale & Dome, 2022). The past decade has seen a multitude of challenges to democratic norms in the pursuit of power, from incumbents manipulating constitutions to stay in power, repression of legitimate campaign activities, and pre- and post-election violence to electoral fraud and coups d'etat. Just since 2020, the continent has seen nine successful coups, six of them in West Africa and eight in French-speaking countries (AJLabs, 2023; Africanews, 2023; Adekoya, 2021; Freedom House, 2019; Mbulle-Nziege & Cheeseman, 2022; Institute for Security Studies, 2023; Zounmenou & Adam, 2021; Darracq & Magnani, 2011).

Such irregularities and abuses continue despite attempts by regional organisations to reinforce democratic processes. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (2001) Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance provides that any constitutional or election-law reforms within six months of an election should require consensus by all sides, but political players often bypass this provision.

While elections are just one aspect of democracy (Lindberg, 2006), they draw immense public attention, and poorly managed, unfair, or contentious elections may undermine citizens' trust in elections and the workings of democracy (Afrobarometer, 2023; M'Cormack-Hale & Dome, 2022a, b; Bratton & Bhoojedhur, 2019; Penar, Aiko, Bentley, & Han, 2016; Penar, 2016; Darracq & Magnani 2011; Zounmenou & Adam, 2021).

Efforts by the political class and electoral bodies to shore up public confidence in elections often involve complex and costly control systems, such as electronic voting in Nigeria, that have pushed the per-capita cost of African elections to more than double the global average without ensuring elections that are widely seen as legitimate (Sawyer, 2022).

As citizens across the continent enter a busy electoral season, how do they perceive the quality and efficacy of their elections?

Findings from Afrobarometer's Round 9 surveys in 39 African countries show that while most Africans endorse elections as the best method for choosing their leaders, this preference has weakened over the past decade. Most feel free to vote as they choose, and they assess

their most recent election as largely free and fair, but fewer than half think voting ensures representative, accountable governance. And public trust in national electoral-management bodies is weak in most countries.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This analysis is based on 53,444 interviews in 39 countries. Over-time comparisons focus on 30 countries included in all rounds of Afrobarometer from Round 5 through Round 9 (or 31 countries from Round 6 through Round 9), but not all questions were asked in every country in every round. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Key findings

Support for elections and multiparty competition

■ Three-fourths (75%) of Africans support fair, open, and honest elections as the best way to choose their leaders, including 50% who "strongly agree" with this view (Figure 1).

    ○ More than six in 10 citizens support elections in all surveyed countries except Lesotho, where a majority (54%) favour other methods for choosing leaders. Support for elections ranges up to about nine out of 10 citizens in Liberia (92%) and Sierra Leone (89%) (Figure 2).

    ○ Support for electing leaders increases with age, ranging from 73% among 18- to 35-year-olds to 78% among those over age 55. It is notably stronger in East Africa (83%) and West Africa (79%) than in other regions (69%-71%) (Figure 3).

■ However, while support for choosing leaders via elections remains robust, it has declined significantly over the past decade (Figure 4). On average across 29 countries where this question was asked in both 2011/2013 and 2021/2023, this support has dropped by 8 percentage points, including massive declines in Tunisia (-24 percentage points), Burkina Faso (-19 points), and Lesotho (-19 points). Sierra Leone is the only surveyed country that records significantly increased support for elections (+13 points).

■ Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Africans support multiparty competition to ensure that voters have real choices in who governs them, while 34% think political parties foster division and confusion and their country doesn't need many of them (Figure 5).

    ○ Demand for a multiparty system exceeds three-fourths of adults in nine countries, led by Congo-Brazzaville (81%), Botswana (80%), and Seychelles (80%) (Figure 6). But fewer than half of citizens want party competition in Tunisia (32%), Lesotho (34%), Sudan (38%), Burkina Faso (39%), Mali (40%), São Tomé and Príncipe (41%),

and Guinea (43%) – in many cases countries that have experienced crises, attempted or successful coups d'état, or even civil war.

- o On average across 30 countries surveyed consistently since 2011/2013, support for multiparty competition has been stable around about two-thirds (62%-64%) of the population. But country-level changes have been striking, including double-digit increases in support in Eswatini (+31 percentage points), Botswana (+18), Kenya (+17), and Senegal (+17). In contrast, support for party competition has declined sharply in Lesotho (-36 points), Niger (-20), Mali (-18), Burkina Faso (-17), and Guinea (-14) (Figure 7).

- o The desire for a multiparty system is somewhat weaker among older citizens (-7 percentage points), much weaker among less educated citizens (-16 points), and particularly weak in North Africa (44%, vs. 79% in Central Africa) (Figure 8).

- Almost three-fourths (73%) of citizens say that after losing an election, the opposition should cooperate with the government to help develop the country, rather than monitor and criticise the government to hold it accountable. This is the majority view in all surveyed countries, ranging from 55% in Mauritania to 84% in Cabo Verde (Figure 9).

Participation in elections

- Almost matching support for elections, self-reported voter turnout in their country's most recent national election approaches three-fourths of adults (72%) (Figure 10). Participation rates are particularly high in Seychelles (91%), Sierra Leone (89%), and Liberia (89%), while fewer than half of citizens say they voted in Morocco (49%), Gabon (48%), Sudan (42%), Côte d'Ivoire (41%), and Cameroon (41%).

- o The youngest adults (63% of 18- to 35-year-olds) are far less likely to say they voted than older cohorts (78%-84%). Reported voting rates are also relatively low among women, urban residents, and the most educated respondents, and are far lower in North Africa and Central Africa (both 51%) than in other regions (72%-79%) (Figure 11).

How well elections work

- Fewer than half (42%) of Africans believe that their country's elections ensure that members of Parliament (MPs) represent the views of voters. A similar minority (45%) say their elections enable voters to remove leaders from office who fail to align with the desires of the people (Figure 12).

- o These assessments have remained fairly stable over the past eight years (Figure 13).

- Tanzania (64%) and Ghana (62%) register the highest levels of confidence that elections ensure representation, while fewer than one in five citizens in Gabon (17%) and Eswatini (18%) agree (Figure 14). Interestingly, some countries often recognised for high levels of democratisation record below-average levels of confidence in the efficacy of elections in ensuring representation, including Botswana (25%), Cabo Verde (34%), Mauritius (36%), and Seychelles (39%).

- Confidence that elections enable voters to replace non-performing leaders is strikingly low in Gabon (14%), where the Bongo family succession lasted 55 years before being terminated by a coup d'état in August 2023, and in Eswatini (15%), where a constitutional monarchy has resisted demands for political reform. Even

though Mauritius and Botswana are touted as democratic models, only one-third of their citizens (34% each) see their elections as empowering voters to unseat incumbents. In contrast, the strongest faith in this function of elections is expressed in Ghana (80%), which has witnessed multiple changes in both head of state and ruling party, and the Gambia (72%), where 22 years of dictatorship ended with electoral defeat and exile for Yahya Jammeh (Al Jazeera, 2017).

- o Perceptions that elections guarantee representation are particularly weak among the most educated citizens (37%) and citizens in Central African countries (30%) (Figure 15). The pattern is almost identical with regard to the view that elections enable voters to remove non-performing leaders.

**Quality and legitimacy of elections**

- Africans overwhelmingly say they feel "completely free" (65%) or "somewhat free" (20%) to vote for the candidate of their choice without feeling pressured. Only 14% indicate that they feel pressured or constrained (Figure 16).
  - o This sense of freedom is almost universal (97% "completely" or "somewhat" free) in the Gambia, Zambia, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. It is far less widespread in Ethiopia and Eswatini, where only 28% and 35%, respectively, feel "completely free" (Figure 17).
  - o West Africans are most likely to say they feel somewhat/completely free to vote as they wish (90%), while Central Africans feel least free (75%) (Figure 18).

- Six out of 10 Africans say their most recent national elections were "completely free and fair" (37%) or "free and fair with minor problems" (23%). However, one-third (34%) of respondents report that their elections were "not free and fair" or "free and fair with major problems" (Figure 19).
  - o These assessments vary by more than 60 percentage points across countries, ranging from just one-fourth of Gabonese (24%) and Sudanese (25%) to almost nine out of 10 Tanzanians (87%) and Liberians (85%) who say their elections were generally free and fair (Figure 20).
  - o Perceptions that elections have been free and fair are far less common in Central and North Africa (37% and 40%, respectively) than in other regions (59%-66%). Rural residents, older citizens, and less educated respondents are more likely to see their elections as free and fair than urbanites, younger, and more educated respondents (Figure 21).
  - o On average across 31 countries surveyed consistently since 2014/2015, the perception of elections as generally free and fair has declined from 64% to 58% (Figure 22).

- On two other indicators of the election environment – ballot secrecy and personal safety – a majority of Africans see little cause for concern. Still, significant minorities think it's possible for powerful people to find out how they voted (30%) and report experiencing "some" or "a lot" of fear of intimidation or violence during their most recent election (21%) (Figure 23).
  - o Doubts about ballot secrecy are especially high in Sudan (53%) and Cameroon (52%), while fewer than one in six respondents share this concern in Sierra Leone (16%), Zambia (15%), Gambia (15%), and Tanzania (13%) (Table 1).

- Close to half of respondents in Guinea and Uganda (47% each) report fearing intimidation or violence during their last election – about 10 times as many as in Mauritius (5%), Morocco (5%), and Madagascar (4%).

- Moreover, public trust in the agency charged with organising and managing elections is fairly weak in most countries (Figure 24). On average, only four in 10 citizens (39%) say they trust their national electoral commission "somewhat" or "a lot," while 57% express little or no trust. Tanzania is an outlier, with 79% of citizens expressing trust in the electoral commission. Fewer than one in four respondents say the same in Gabon (16%), Angola (21%), Eswatini (22%), Congo-Brazzaville (23%), and Nigeria (23%).

  - Trust in the electoral commission is particularly low among urban residents (35%), young people (37%), citizens with secondary or post-secondary education (35%), and Central Africans (24%) (Figure 25).

  - On average across 27 countries where this question was asked consistently since 2011/2013, trust in the electoral commission has dropped by 10 percentage points, from 51% to 41% (Figure 26).

Charts

Support for elections and multiparty competition

Figure 1: Support for elections | 39 countries | 2021/2023
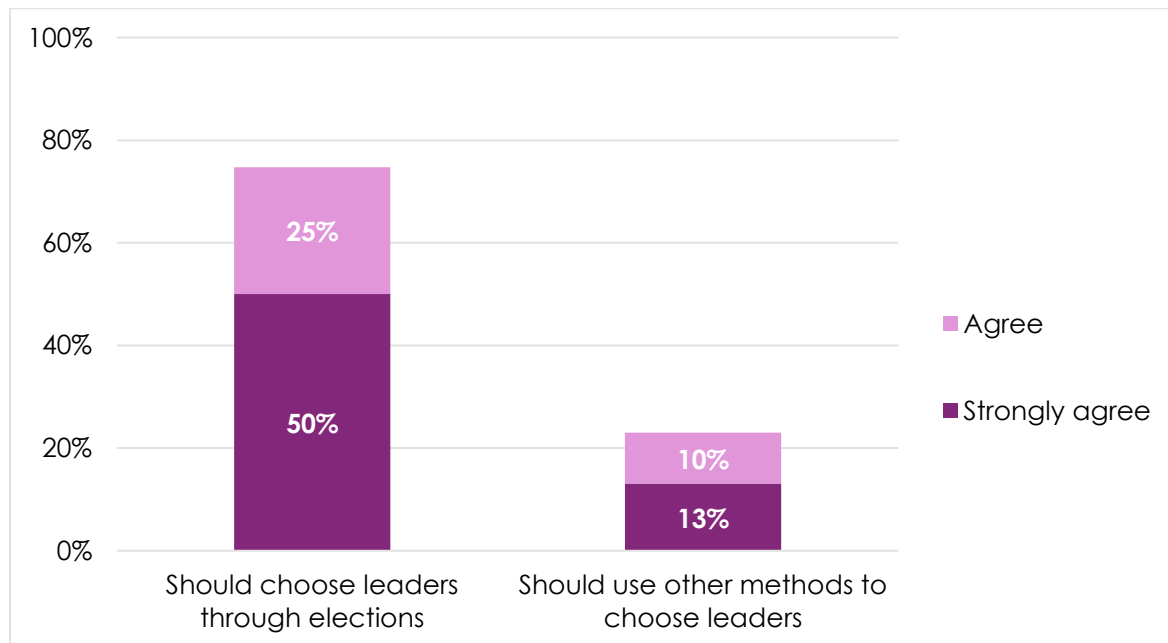
Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.
Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.

Figure 2: Support for elections | 39 countries | 2021/2023
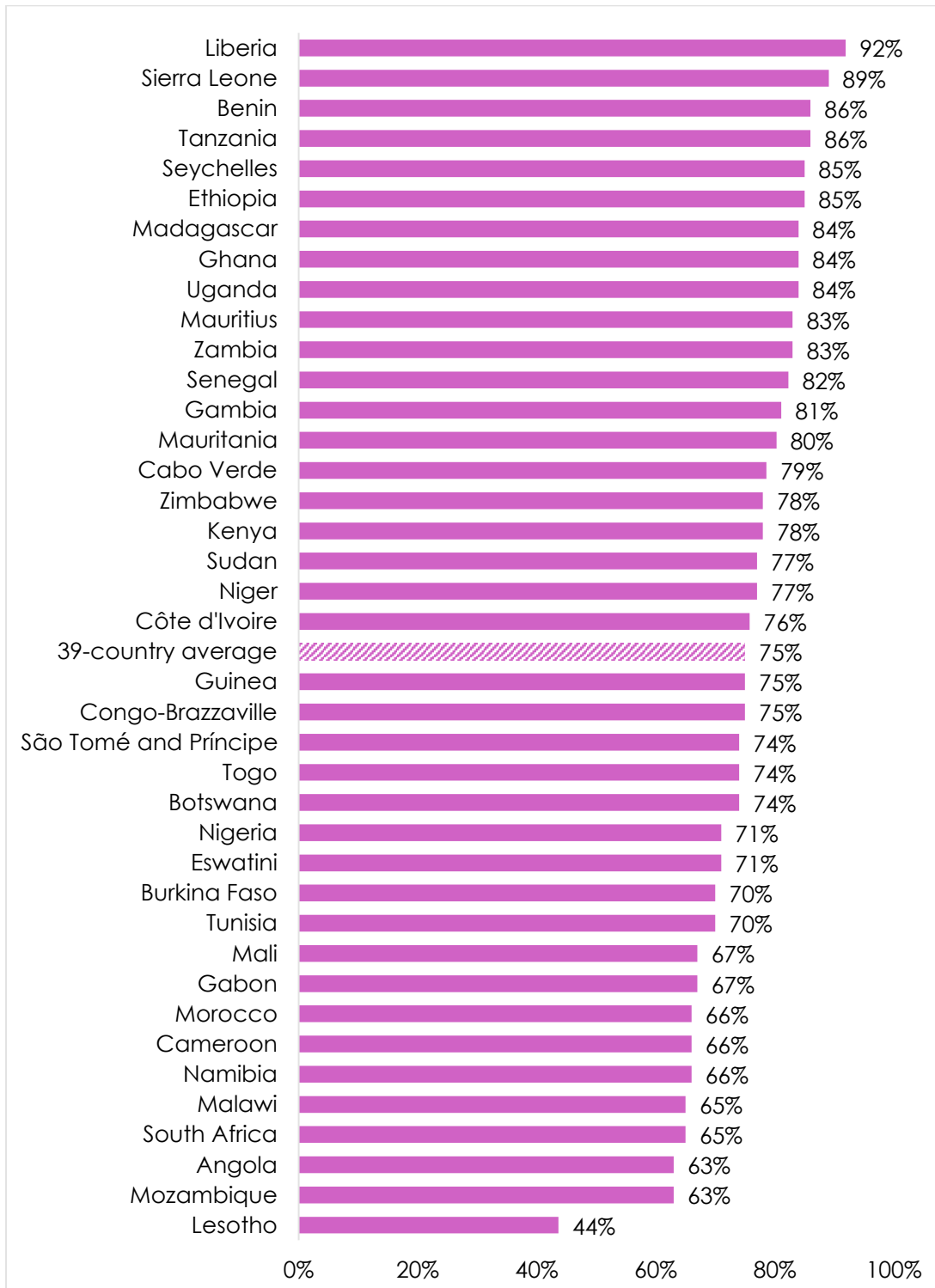
Country	%
Liberia	92%
Sierra Leone	89%
Benin	86%
Tanzania	86%
Seychelles	85%
Ethiopia	85%
Madagascar	84%
Ghana	84%
Uganda	84%
Mauritius	83%
Zambia	83%
Senegal	82%
Gambia	81%
Mauritania	80%
Cabo Verde	79%
Zimbabwe	78%
Kenya	78%
Sudan	77%
Niger	77%
Côte d'Ivoire	76%
39-country average	75%
Guinea	75%
Congo-Brazzaville	75%
São Tomé and Príncipe	74%
Togo	74%
Botswana	74%
Nigeria	71%
Eswatini	71%
Burkina Faso	70%
Tunisia	70%
Mali	67%
Gabon	67%
Morocco	66%
Cameroon	66%
Namibia	66%
Malawi	65%
South Africa	65%
Angola	63%
Mozambique	63%
Lesotho	44%

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.
Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" that leaders should be chosen through elections)

Figure 3: Support for elections | by demographic group[1] | 39 countries | 2021/2023
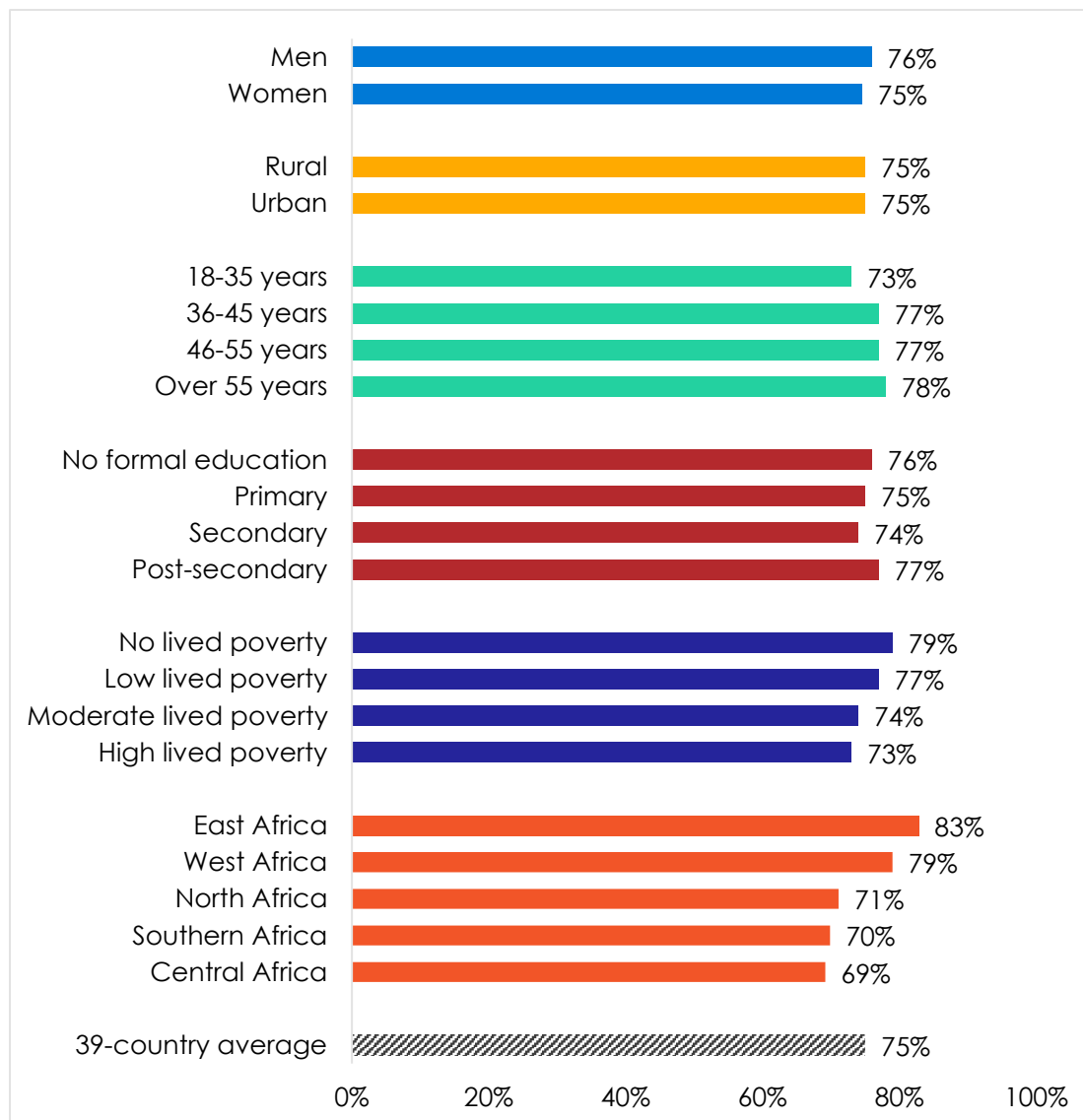

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.
Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with Statement 1)

---

[1] Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

Regions: North Africa (Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia), Central Africa (Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe), Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe), East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda), West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

Figure 4: Change in support for elections | 29 countries* | 2011-2023

Country	Value
Sierra Leone	13
Tanzania	2
Liberia	-1
Kenya	-4
Eswatini	-4
Uganda	-4
Benin	-4
Sudan	-6
Guinea	-7
Zambia	-7
Malawi	-7
Mauritius	-7
Niger	-8
Togo	-8
29-country average	-8
Cabo Verde	-8
Nigeria	-9
Ghana	-9
Zimbabwe	-9
South Africa	-10
Botswana	-11
Côte d'Ivoire	-11
Senegal	-11
Mozambique	-12
Namibia	-13
Cameroon	-15
Mali	-15
Lesotho	-19
Burkina Faso	-19
Tunisia	-24
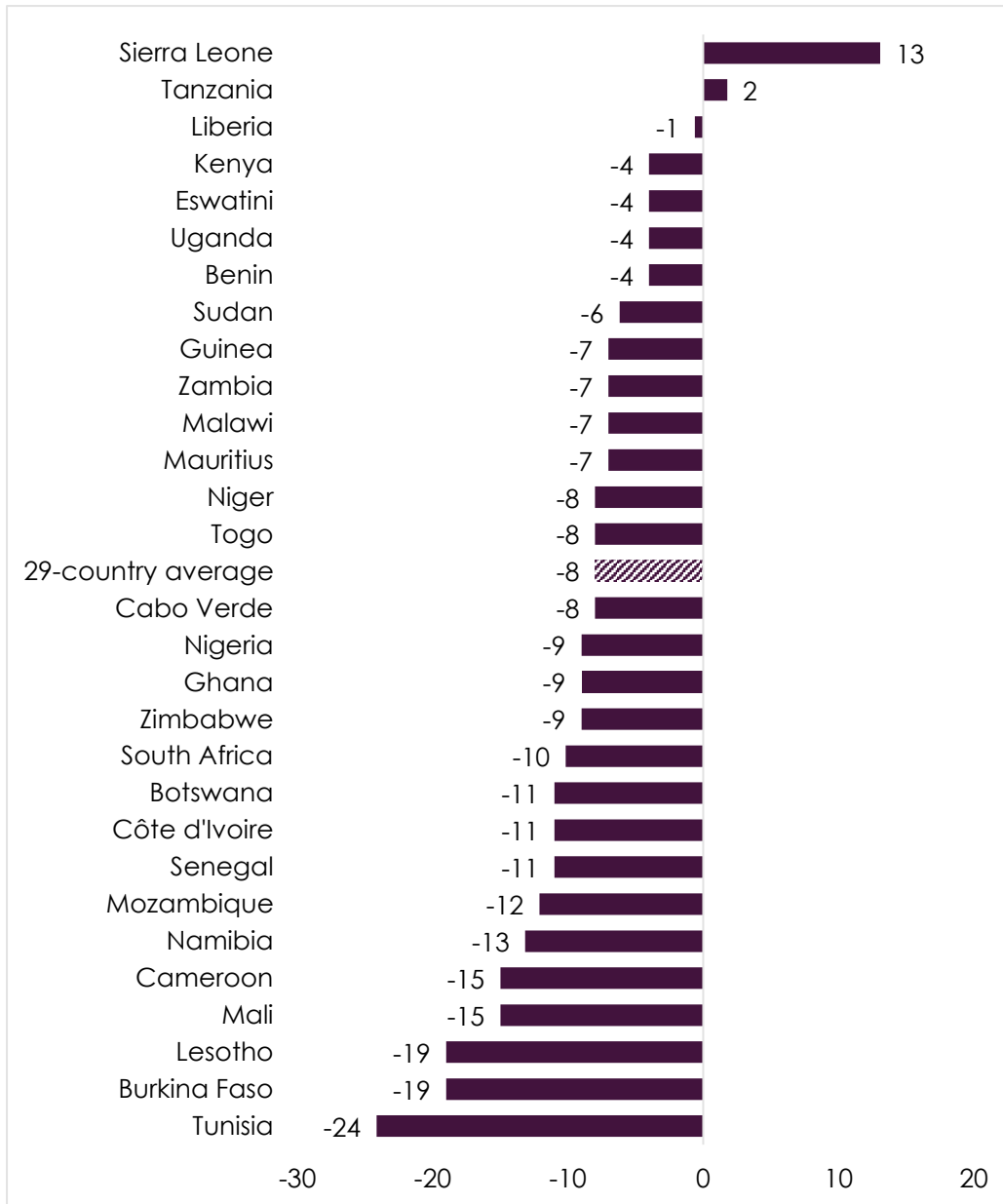
Figure shows change, in percentage points, between survey rounds in 2011/2013 and 2021/2023 in the proportion of respondents who "agree" or "strongly agree" that leaders should be chosen through elections.

* Question was not asked in Morocco in 2011/2013.

Figure 5: Support for multiparty competition | 39 countries | 2021/2023
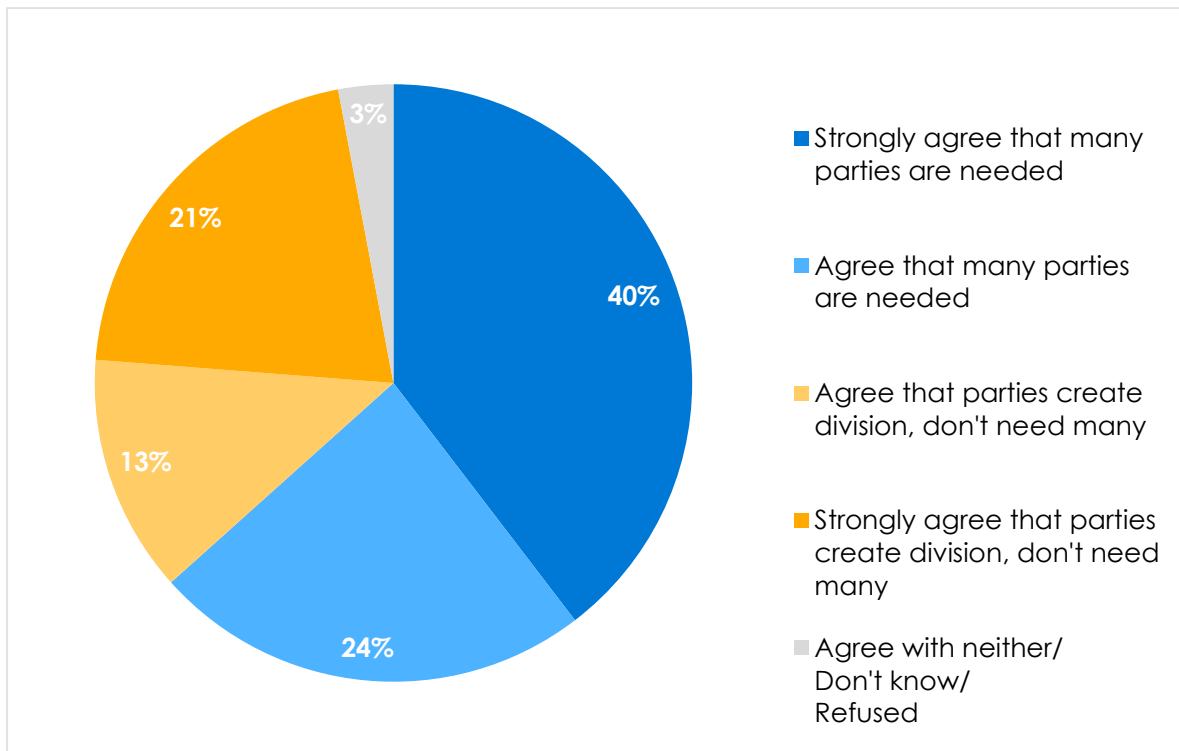
- ■ Strongly agree that many parties are needed
- ■ Agree that many parties are needed
- ■ Agree that parties create division, don't need many
- ■ Strongly agree that parties create division, don't need many
- ■ Agree with neither/ Don't know/ Refused

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [this country].
Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

Figure 6: Support for multiparty competition | 39 countries | 2021/2023
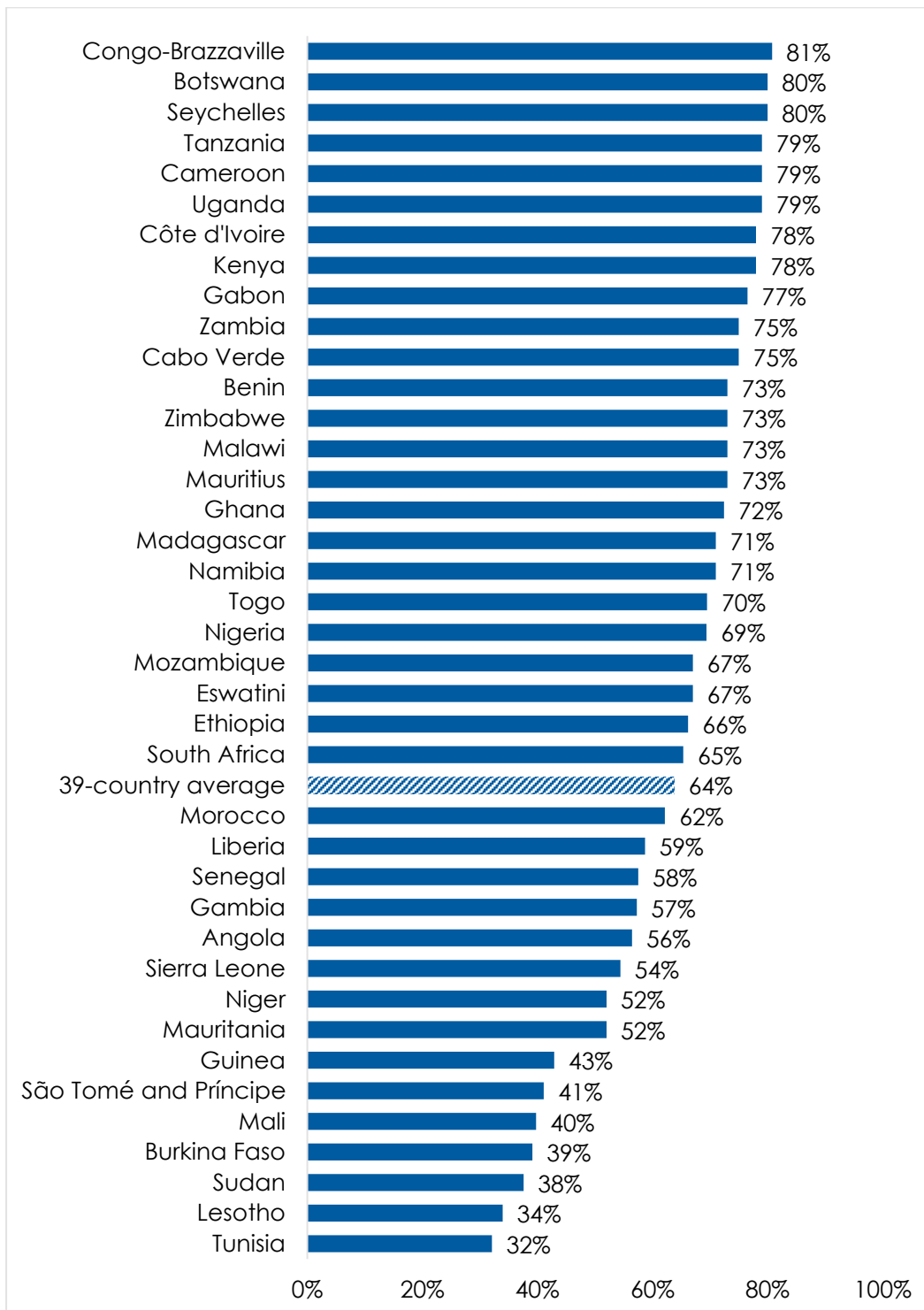
Country	%
Congo-Brazzaville	81%
Botswana	80%
Seychelles	80%
Tanzania	79%
Cameroon	79%
Uganda	79%
Côte d'Ivoire	78%
Kenya	78%
Gabon	77%
Zambia	75%
Cabo Verde	75%
Benin	73%
Zimbabwe	73%
Malawi	73%
Mauritius	73%
Ghana	72%
Madagascar	71%
Namibia	71%
Togo	70%
Nigeria	69%
Mozambique	67%
Eswatini	67%
Ethiopia	66%
South Africa	65%
39-country average	64%
Morocco	62%
Liberia	59%
Senegal	58%
Gambia	57%
Angola	56%
Sierra Leone	54%
Niger	52%
Mauritania	52%
Guinea	43%
São Tomé and Príncipe	41%
Mali	40%
Burkina Faso	39%
Sudan	38%
Lesotho	34%
Tunisia	32%

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [this country].
Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" that many political parties are needed to make sure that citizens have real choices in who governs them)

Figure 7: Support for multiparty competition | biggest gainers and losers | 30 countries | 2011-2021
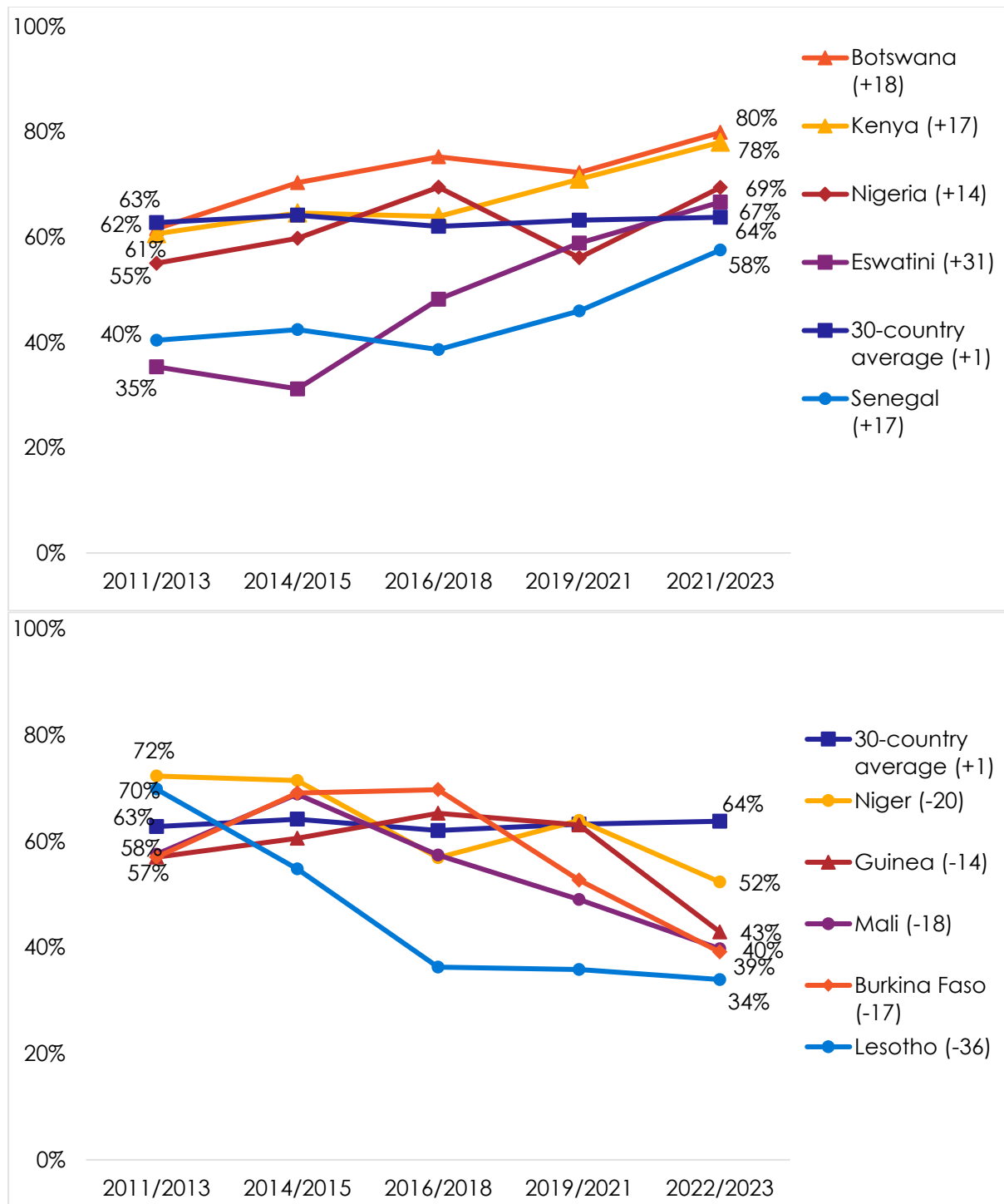
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [this country].
Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" that many political parties are needed to make sure that citizens have real choices in who governs them)

Figure 8: Support for multiparty competition | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [this country].

Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.
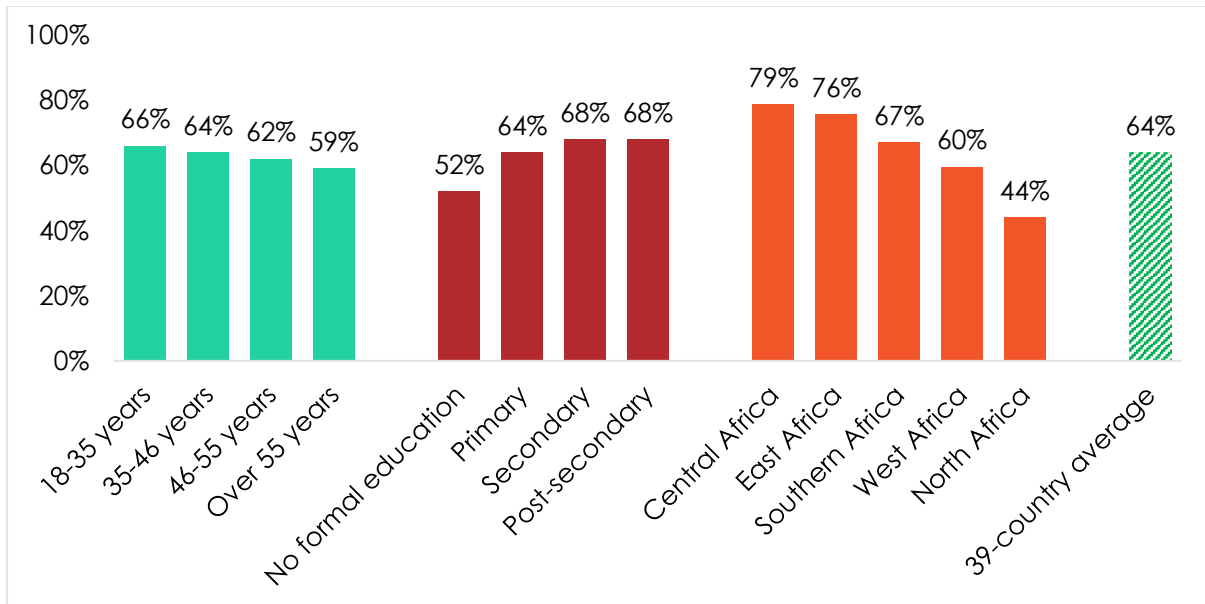
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" that many political parties are needed to make sure that citizens have real choices in who governs them)

Figure 9: After losing an election: Monitor government or cooperate? | 38 countries* | 2021/2023

Cabo Verde	84%
Côte d'Ivoire	83%
Tanzania	82%
Sierra Leone	82%
Guinea	82%
Botswana	81%
Zambia	81%
São Tomé and Príncipe	81%
Zimbabwe	81%
Tunisia	80%
Cameroon	79%
Nigeria	78%
Ethiopia	78%
Liberia	78%
Benin	77%
Uganda	77%
Burkina Faso	77%
Mali	77%
Togo	76%
Mozambique	75%
38-country average	73%
Madagascar	72%
Senegal	72%
Lesotho	72%
South Africa	72%
Malawi	71%
Gabon	69%
Sudan	69%
Angola	69%
Morocco	66%
Gambia	66%
Namibia	65%
Niger	64%
Kenya	62%
Congo-Brazzaville	62%
Seychelles	59%
Mauritius	59%
Ghana	57%
Mauritania	55%

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
Statement 1: After losing an election, opposition parties should monitor and criticize the government in order to hold it accountable.
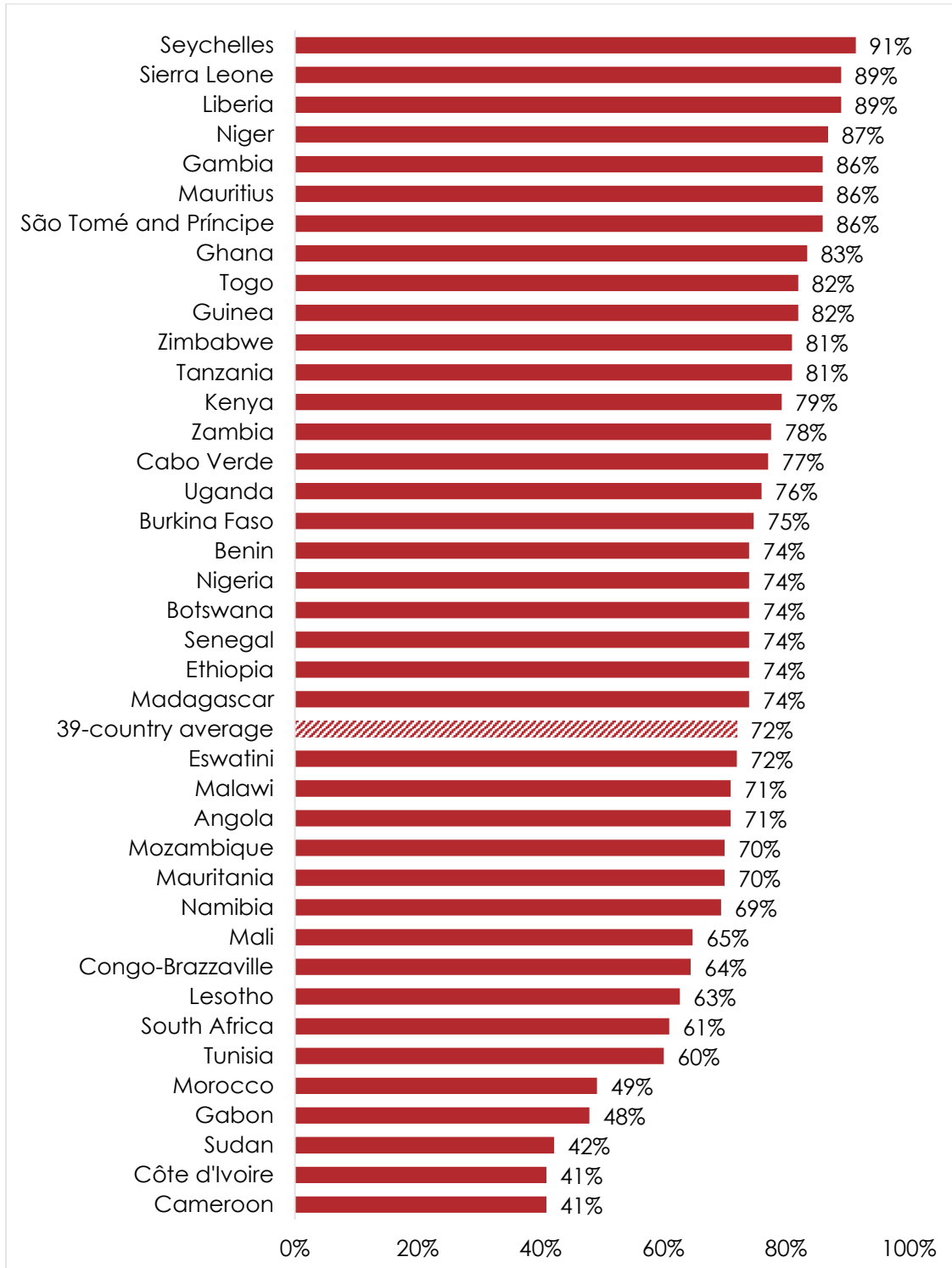*Statement 2: Once an election is over, opposition parties and politicians should accept defeat and cooperate with government to help it develop the country.*
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with Statement 2)
** Question was not asked in Eswatini.*

Participation in elections

Figure 10: Voted in the most recent national election | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Country	Percentage
Seychelles	91%
Sierra Leone	89%
Liberia	89%
Niger	87%
Gambia	86%
Mauritius	86%
São Tomé and Príncipe	86%
Ghana	83%
Togo	82%
Guinea	82%
Zimbabwe	81%
Tanzania	81%
Kenya	79%
Zambia	78%
Cabo Verde	77%
Uganda	76%
Burkina Faso	75%
Benin	74%
Nigeria	74%
Botswana	74%
Senegal	74%
Ethiopia	74%
Madagascar	74%
39-country average	72%
Eswatini	72%
Malawi	71%
Angola	71%
Mozambique	70%
Mauritania	70%
Namibia	69%
Mali	65%
Congo-Brazzaville	64%
Lesotho	63%
South Africa	61%
Tunisia	60%
Morocco	49%
Gabon	48%
Sudan	42%
Côte d'Ivoire	41%
Cameroon	41%

Respondents were asked: In the last national election, held in [20XX], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (% who say they voted) (Respondents who were too young to vote in the last national election are excluded.)

Figure 11: Voted in the most recent national election | by demographic group
| 39 countries | 2021/2023
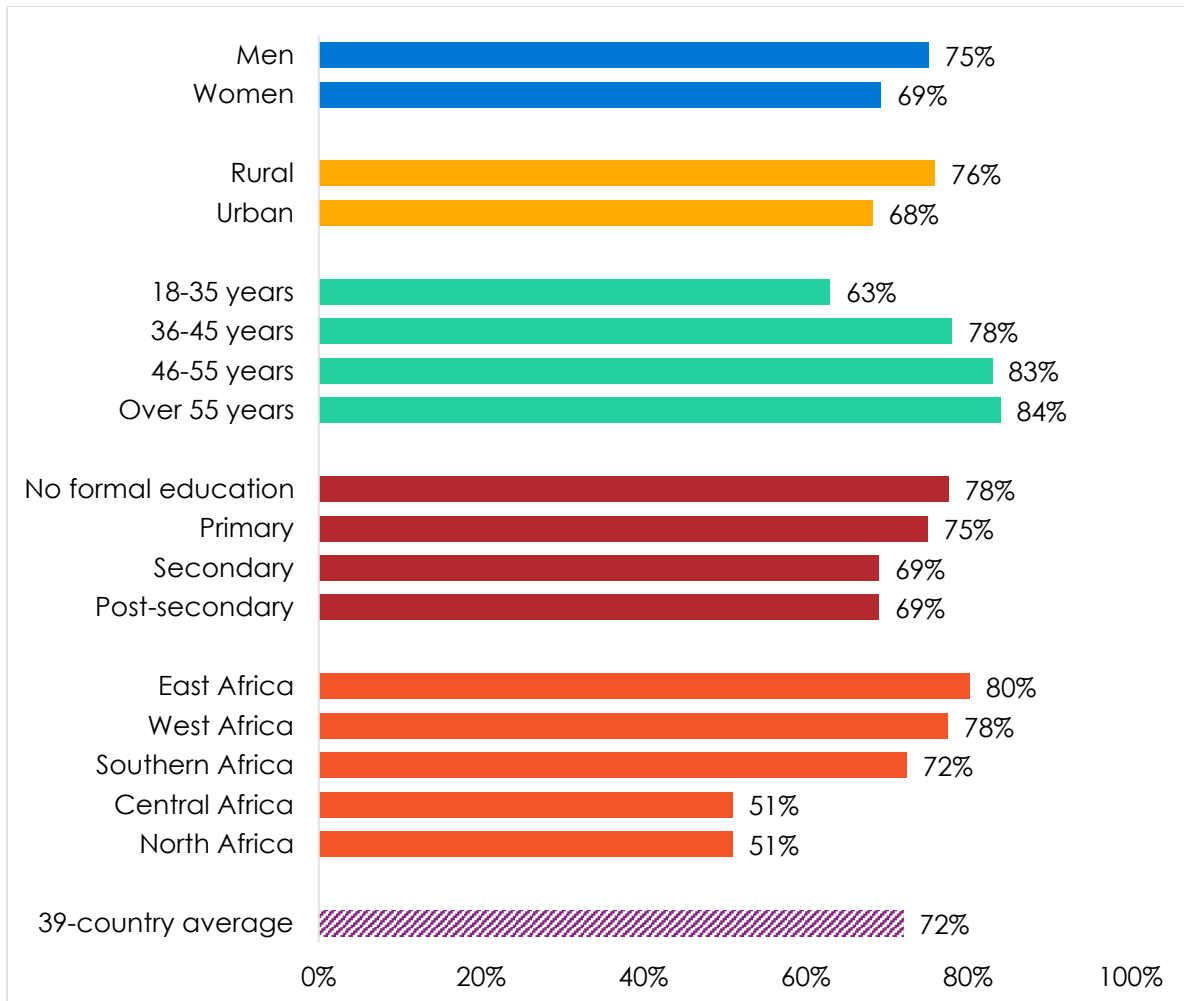
Respondents were asked: *In the last national election, held in [20XX], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (% who say they voted) (Respondents who were too young to vote in the last national election are excluded.)*
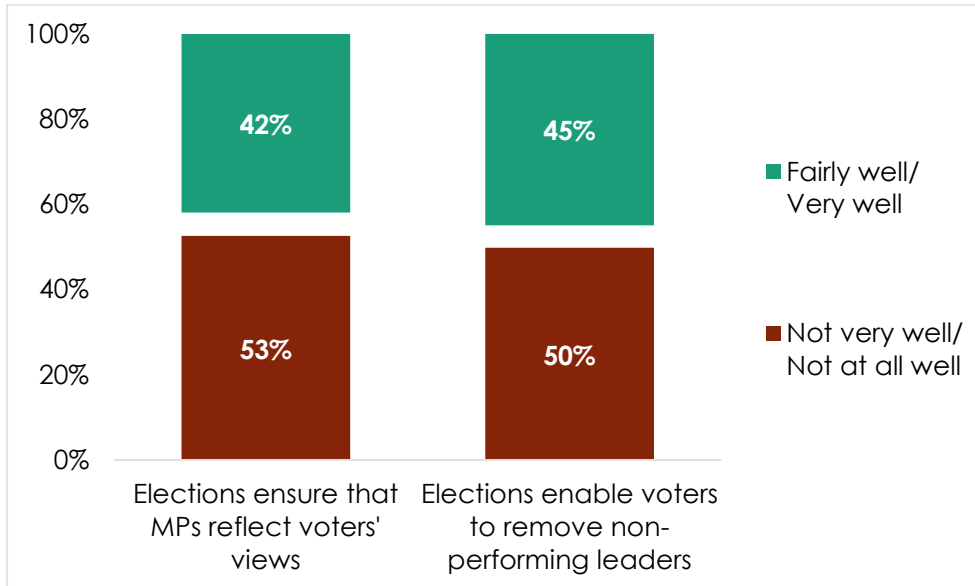
How well elections work

Figure 12: Efficacy of elections | 39 countries* | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
    Ensure that representatives to Parliament reflect the views of voters?
    Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want?
* Results for the question about MPs do not include Burkina Faso, where this question was not posed to the full sample.

Figure 13: Efficacy of elections | 31 countries* | 2014-2023
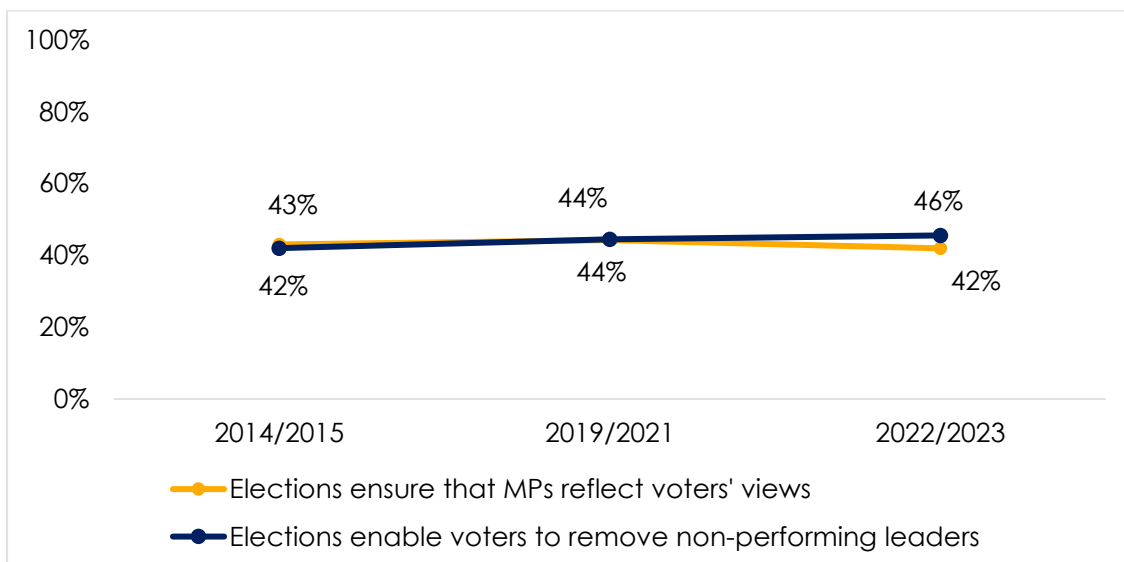

Respondents were asked: Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
    Ensure that representatives to Parliament reflect the views of voters?
Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want?
(% who say "fairly well" or "very well")
* Results for the question about MPs do not include Burkina Faso, where this question was not posed to the full sample.

Figure 14: Efficacy of elections | 39 countries* | 2021/2023

Country	Elections ensure that MPs represent voters' views	Elections enable voters to remove non-performing leaders
Ghana	62%	80%
Gambia	57%	72%
Zambia	56%	70%
Uganda	58%	69%
Tanzania	64%	61%
Sierra Leone	48%	60%
Zimbabwe	53%	59%
Kenya	37%	55%
Liberia	38%	55%
Senegal	52%	54%
Cabo Verde	34%	54%
Malawi	25%	52%
Niger	56%	52%
Mauritania	58%	51%
Ethiopia	57%	50%
Seychelles	39%	49%
Madagascar	47%	49%
Morocco	39%	45%
39-country average	42%	45%
Togo	51%	44%
Burkina Faso		43%
Lesotho	28%	43%
Mozambique	57%	43%
Tunisia	36%	43%
Benin	50%	42%
São Tomé and Príncipe	40%	42%
Namibia	43%	42%
Mali	42%	41%
Côte d'Ivoire	44%	38%
Angola	35%	36%
Botswana	25%	34%
Mauritius	36%	34%
Cameroon	45%	34%
Sudan	31%	30%
South Africa	31%	28%
Guinea	31%	27%
Congo- Brazzavile	27%	22%
Nigeria	28%	20%
Eswatini	18%	15%
Gabon	17%	14%

■ Elections ensure that MPs represent voters' views
■ Elections enable voters to remove non-performing leaders

Respondents were asked: Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
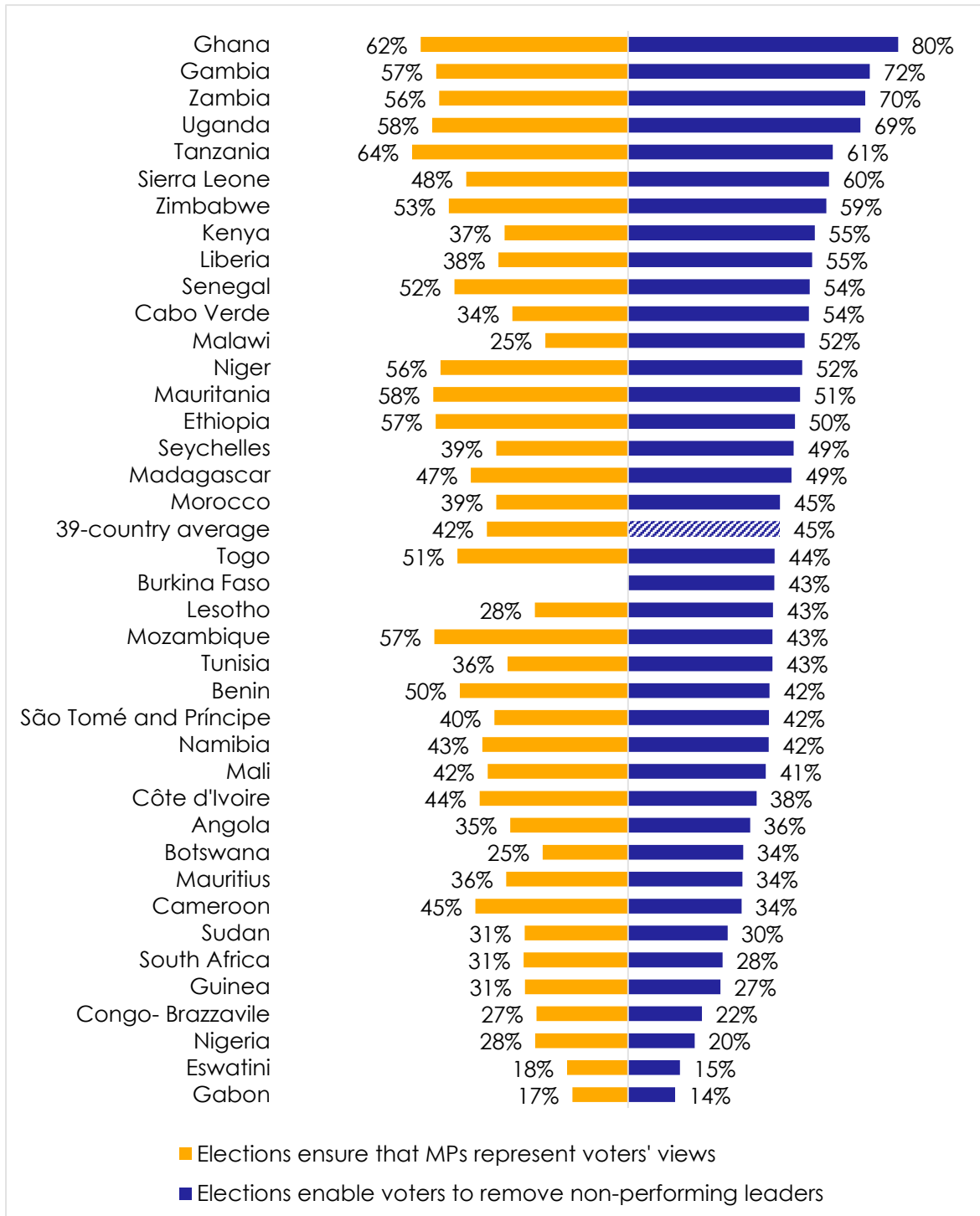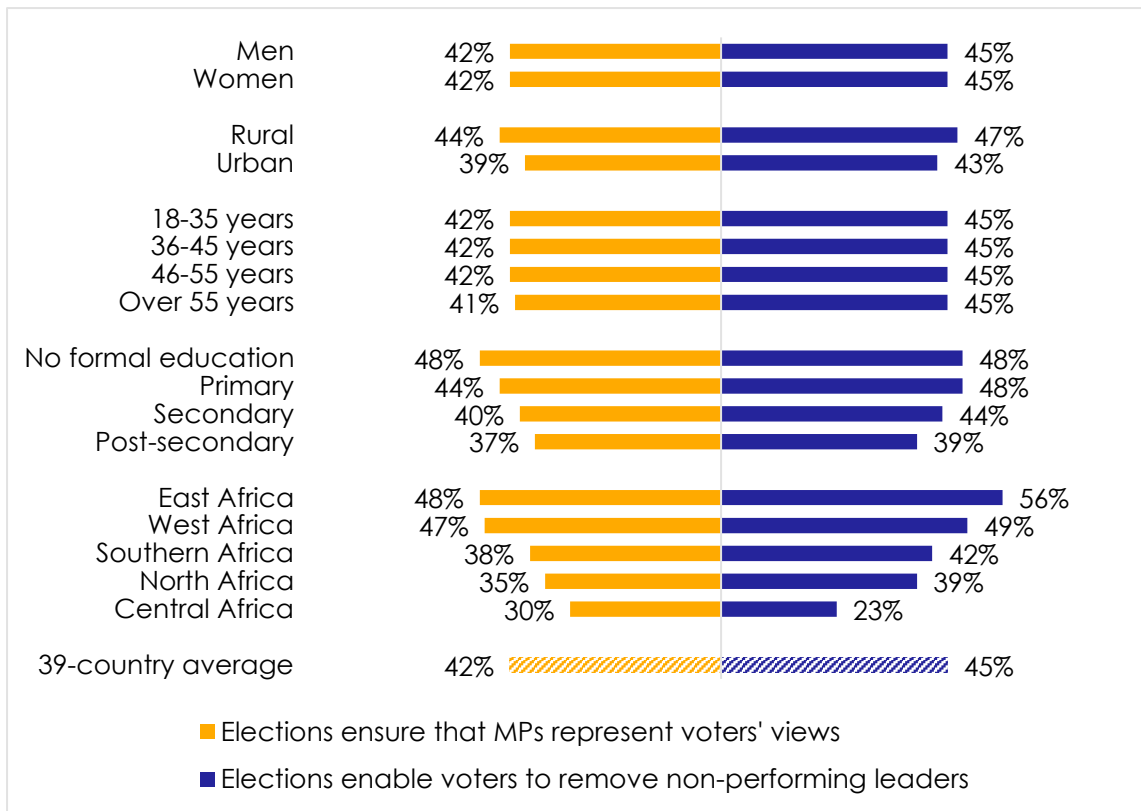
Ensure that representatives to Parliament reflect the views of voters?

Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want?

(% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

* Results for the question about MPs do not include Burkina Faso, where this question was not posed to the full sample.

Figure 15: Efficacy of elections | by demographic group | 39 countries* | 2021/2023

	Elections ensure that MPs represent voters' views	Elections enable voters to remove non-performing leaders
Men	42%	45%
Women	42%	45%
Rural	44%	47%
Urban	39%	43%
18-35 years	42%	45%
36-45 years	42%	45%
46-55 years	42%	45%
Over 55 years	41%	45%
No formal education	48%	48%
Primary	44%	48%
Secondary	40%	44%
Post-secondary	37%	39%
East Africa	48%	56%
West Africa	47%	49%
Southern Africa	38%	42%
North Africa	35%	39%
Central Africa	30%	23%
39-country average	42%	45%

■ Elections ensure that MPs represent voters' views
■ Elections enable voters to remove non-performing leaders

Respondents were asked: Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections:
  Ensure that representatives to Parliament reflect the views of voters?
  Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want?
(% who say "fairly well" or "very well")
* Results for the question about MPs do not include Burkina Faso, where this question was not posed to the full sample.

Quality and legitimacy of elections

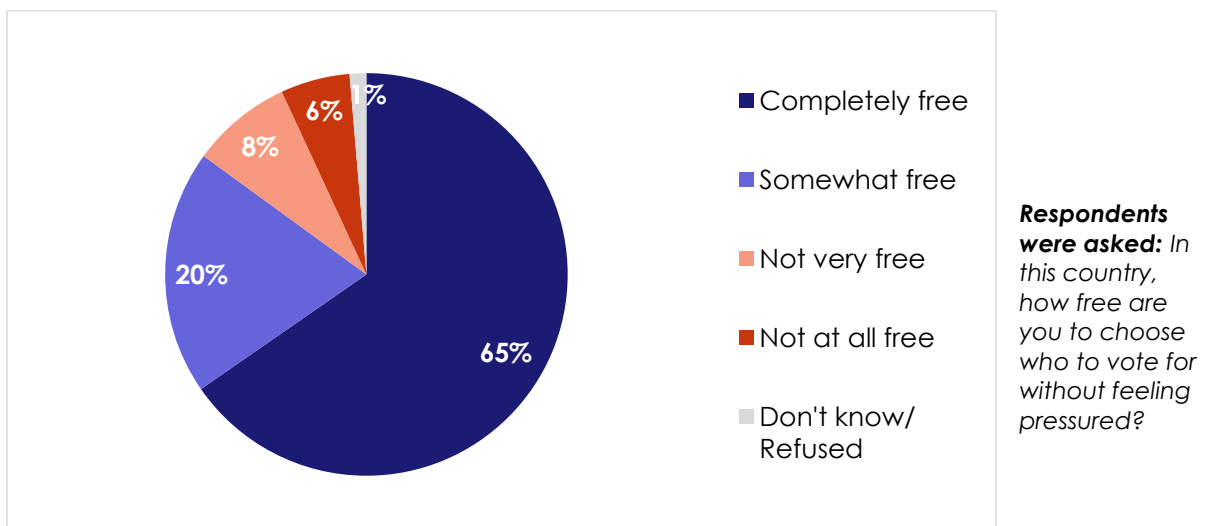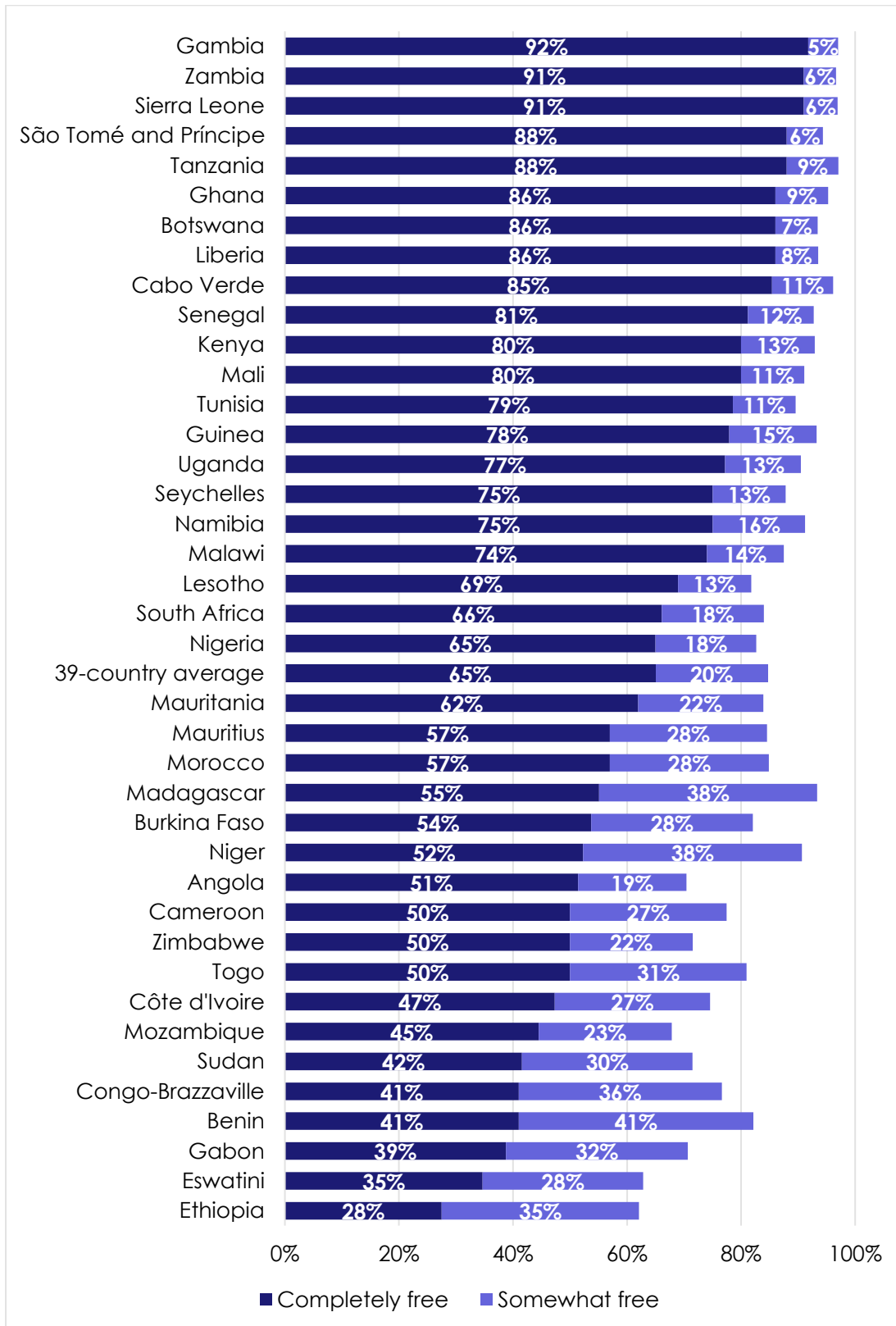**Figure 16: Free to vote without pressure** | 39 countries | 2021/2023

- Completely free — 65%
- Somewhat free — 20%
- Not very free — 8%
- Not at all free — 6%
- Don't know/ Refused — 1%

Respondents were asked: In this country, how free are you to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?

Figure 17: Free to vote without pressure | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Country	Completely free	Somewhat free
Gambia	92%	5%
Zambia	91%	6%
Sierra Leone	91%	6%
São Tomé and Príncipe	88%	6%
Tanzania	88%	9%
Ghana	86%	9%
Botswana	86%	7%
Liberia	86%	8%
Cabo Verde	85%	11%
Senegal	81%	12%
Kenya	80%	13%
Mali	80%	11%
Tunisia	79%	11%
Guinea	78%	15%
Uganda	77%	13%
Seychelles	75%	13%
Namibia	75%	16%
Malawi	74%	14%
Lesotho	69%	13%
South Africa	66%	18%
Nigeria	65%	18%
39-country average	65%	20%
Mauritania	62%	22%
Mauritius	57%	28%
Morocco	57%	28%
Madagascar	55%	38%
Burkina Faso	54%	28%
Niger	52%	38%
Angola	51%	19%
Cameroon	50%	27%
Zimbabwe	50%	22%
Togo	50%	31%
Côte d'Ivoire	47%	27%
Mozambique	45%	23%
Sudan	42%	30%
Congo-Brazzaville	41%	36%
Benin	41%	41%
Gabon	39%	32%
Eswatini	35%	28%
Ethiopia	28%	35%

■ Completely free ■ Somewhat free

Respondents were asked: *In this country, how free are you to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?*

Figure 18: Free to vote without pressure | by region | 39 countries | 2021/2023
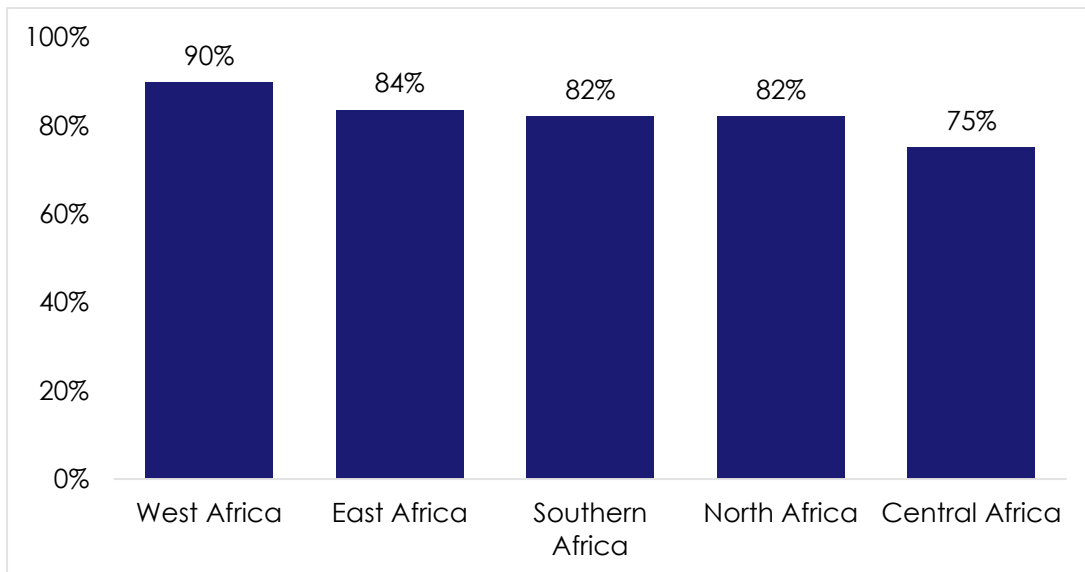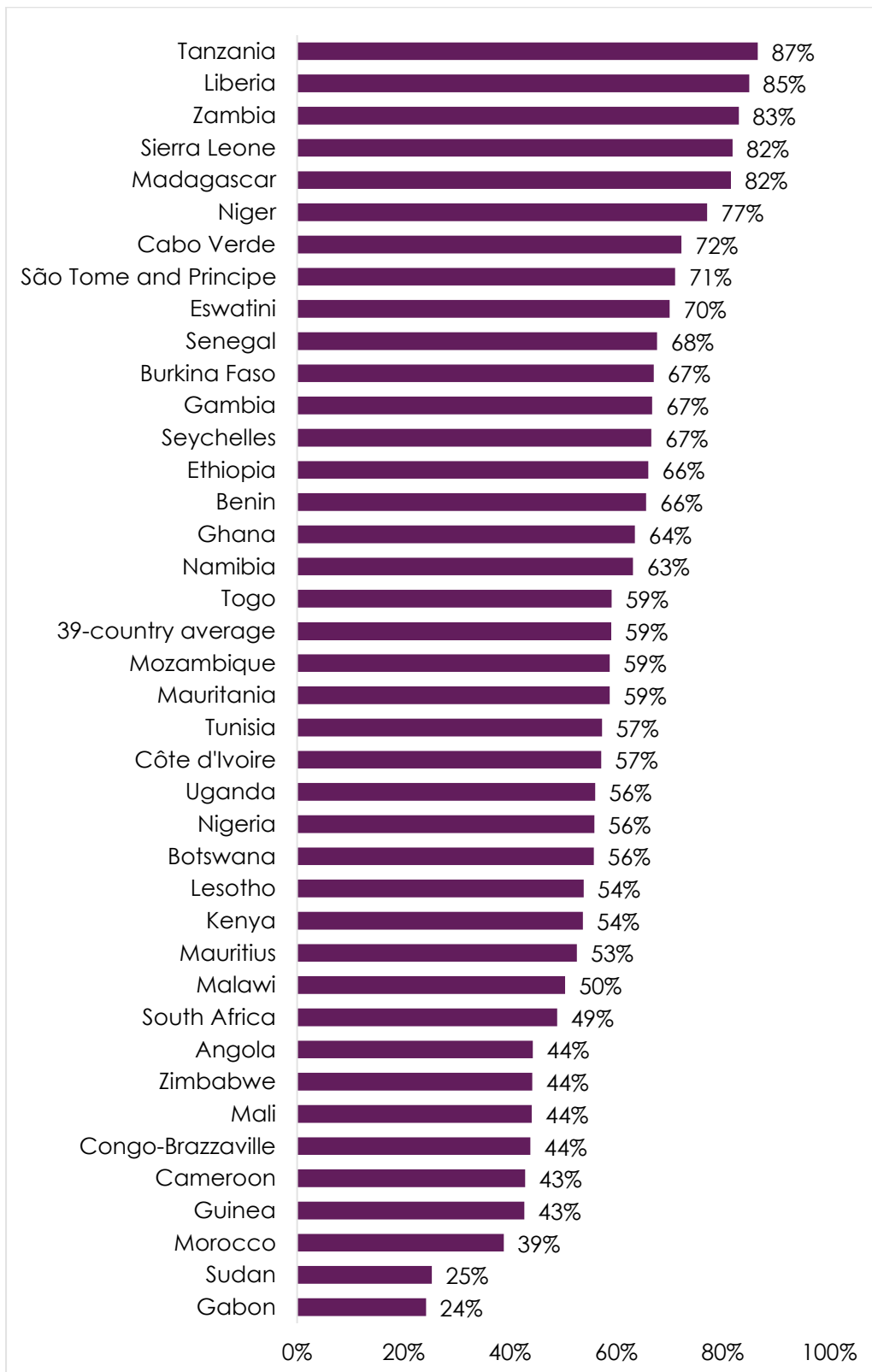

Respondents were asked: In this country, how free are you to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured? (% who say "somewhat free" or "completely free")

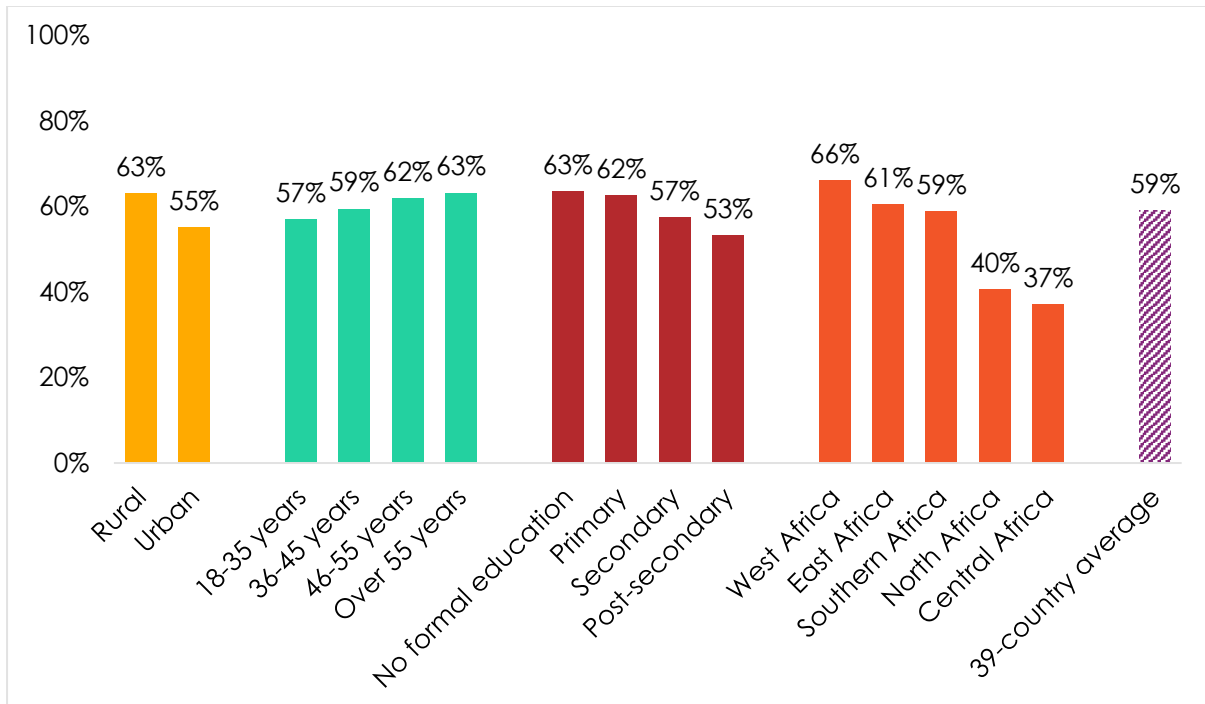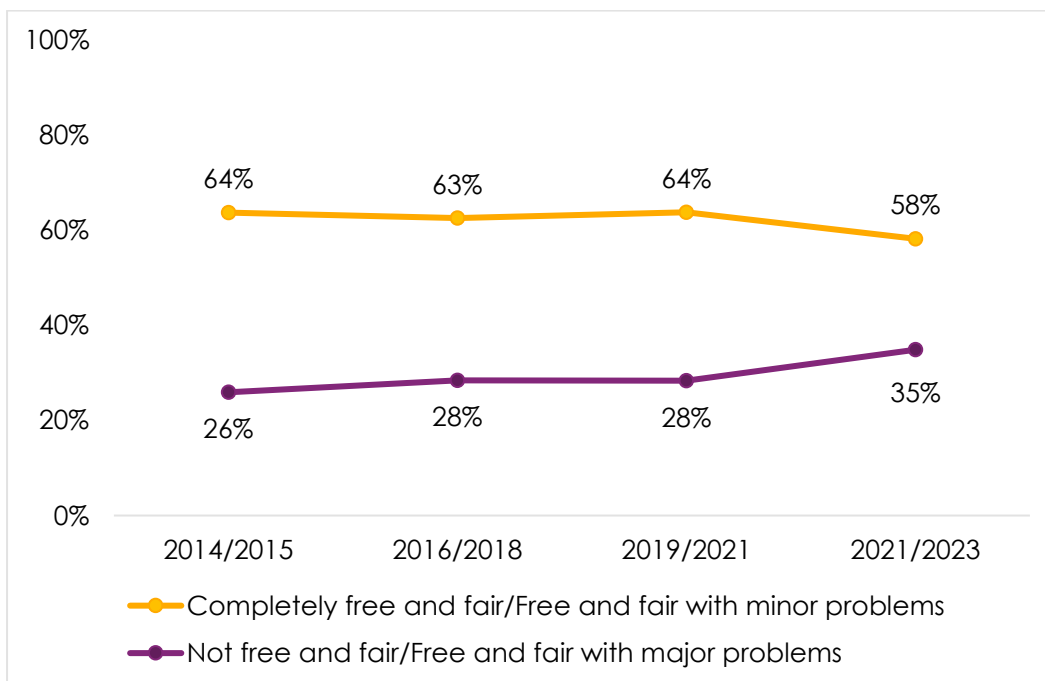**Figure 19: How free and fair was the most recent election?** | 39 countries | 2021/2023
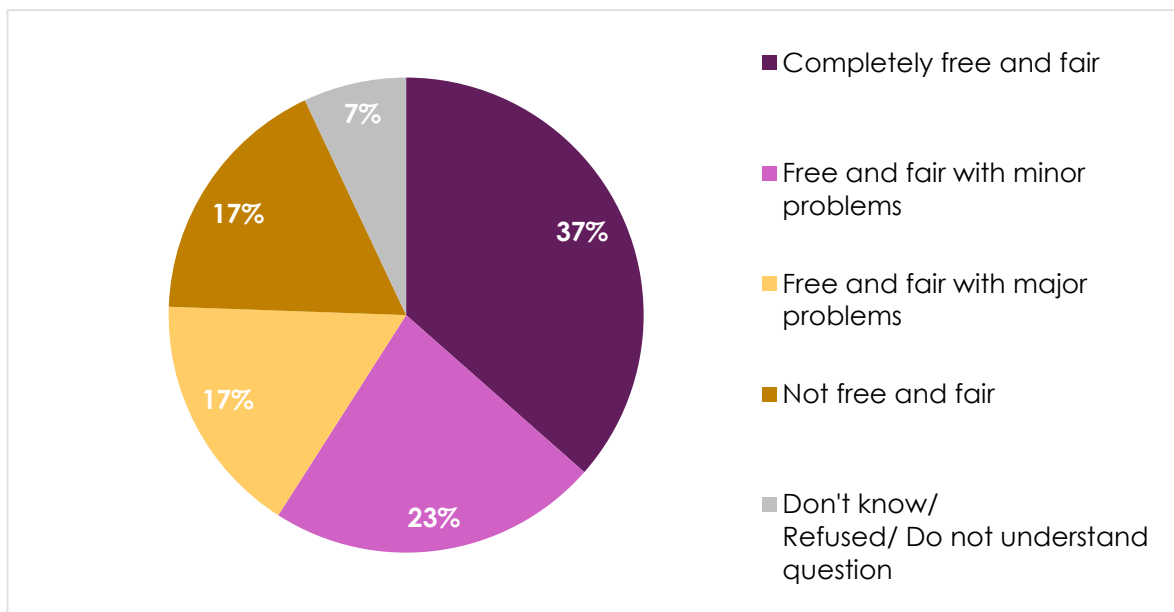
Respondents were asked: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]?

Figure 20: Most recent election was free and fair | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Country	%
Tanzania	87%
Liberia	85%
Zambia	83%
Sierra Leone	82%
Madagascar	82%
Niger	77%
Cabo Verde	72%
São Tome and Principe	71%
Eswatini	70%
Senegal	68%
Burkina Faso	67%
Gambia	67%
Seychelles	67%
Ethiopia	66%
Benin	66%
Ghana	64%
Namibia	63%
Togo	59%
39-country average	59%
Mozambique	59%
Mauritania	59%
Tunisia	57%
Côte d'Ivoire	57%
Uganda	56%
Nigeria	56%
Botswana	56%
Lesotho	54%
Kenya	54%
Mauritius	53%
Malawi	50%
South Africa	49%
Angola	44%
Zimbabwe	44%
Mali	44%
Congo-Brazzaville	44%
Cameroon	43%
Guinea	43%
Morocco	39%
Sudan	25%
Gabon	24%

Respondents were asked: *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]? (% who say "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems")*

Copyright ©Afrobarometer 2024

21

Figure 21: Most recent election was generally free and fair | by demographic group
| 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]? (% who say "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems")

Figure 22: Most recent election was generally free and fair | 31 countries
| 2014-2023

Respondents were asked: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]?

Figure 23: Election quality: Ballot secrecy and fear of violence | 39 countries | 2021/2023
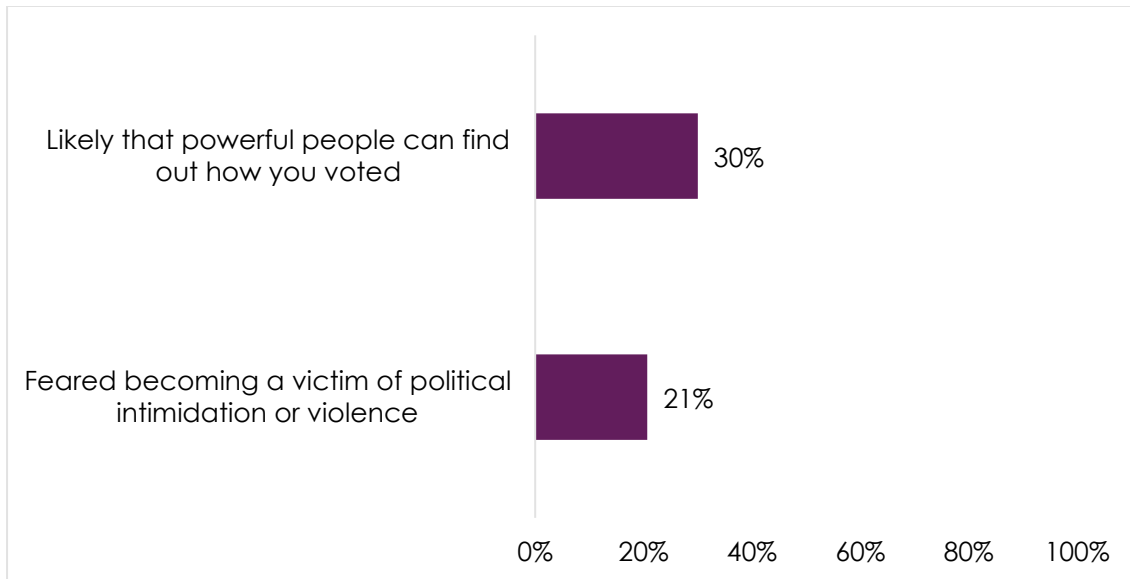
Respondents were asked:
How likely do you think it is that powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")
During the last national election, in [20XX], how much did you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

Table 1: Ballot secrecy and fear of violence | 39 countries | 2021/2023

	Somewhat/Very likely that powerful people can find out how you voted	Feared intimidation or violence somewhat/a lot during last election
Sudan	53%	10%
Cameroon	52%	24%
Tunisia	48%	11%
Mauritius	47%	5%
Mozambique	46%	34%
South Africa	43%	16%
Congo-Brazzaville	41%	28%
Côte d'Ivoire	40%	30%
Gabon	40%	23%
Ethiopia	39%	15%
Seychelles	37%	8%
Nigeria	37%	32%
Eswatini	36%	16%
Niger	36%	18%
Botswana	34%	9%
Angola	34%	17%
Morocco	33%	5%
Kenya	30%	38%
Mali	29%	18%
Guinea	29%	47%
Namibia	29%	15%
Benin	27%	23%
Mauritania	27%	18%
Liberia	25%	21%
Malawi	24%	34%
Cabo Verde	23%	7%
Senegal	21%	23%
Burkina Faso	21%	17%
Togo	21%	31%
Lesotho	21%	11%
Uganda	21%	47%
São Tomé and Príncipe	18%	10%
Ghana	18%	17%
Zimbabwe	17%	33%
Madagascar	17%	4%
Sierra Leone	16%	21%
Zambia	15%	37%
Gambia	15%	23%
Tanzania	13%	12%
39-country average	30%	21%
Key	<20%	21%-30
	31%-40%	41%-50%
	>50%	

Figure 24: Trust in the electoral commission | 38 countries* | 2021/2023

Country	Somewhat/A lot	Just a little/Not at all
Tanzania	79%	18%
Cabo Verde	61%	36%
Zambia	56%	40%
Niger	54%	43%
Sierra Leone	53%	47%
Morocco	51%	48%
Mozambique	47%	47%
Zimbabwe	47%	47%
Ethiopia	46%	51%
Burkina Faso	46%	50%
Kenya	45%	53%
Namibia	44%	52%
Togo	44%	56%
Mauritania	42%	57%
Uganda	42%	56%
Malawi	41%	56%
Benin	41%	59%
Gambia	40%	57%
Senegal	39%	58%
38-country average	39%	57%
Mali	38%	56%
Mauritius	38%	53%
Seychelles	37%	46%
Lesotho	37%	58%
Liberia	34%	65%
Cameroon	34%	66%
Ghana	33%	67%
Côte d'Ivoire	32%	67%
Madagascar	31%	63%
Botswana	31%	63%
South Africa	28%	64%
Tunisia	28%	63%
São Tomé and Príncipe	27%	69%
Sudan	26%	67%
Nigeria	23%	76%
Congo-Brazzaville	23%	77%
Eswatini	22%	69%
Angola	21%	66%
Gabon	16%	84%

■ Somewhat/A lot   ■ Don't know/Refused   ■ Just a little/Not at all

Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The [national electoral commission]?
* Question was not asked in Guinea.

Figure 25: Trust in the electoral commission | 38 countries* | 2021/2023
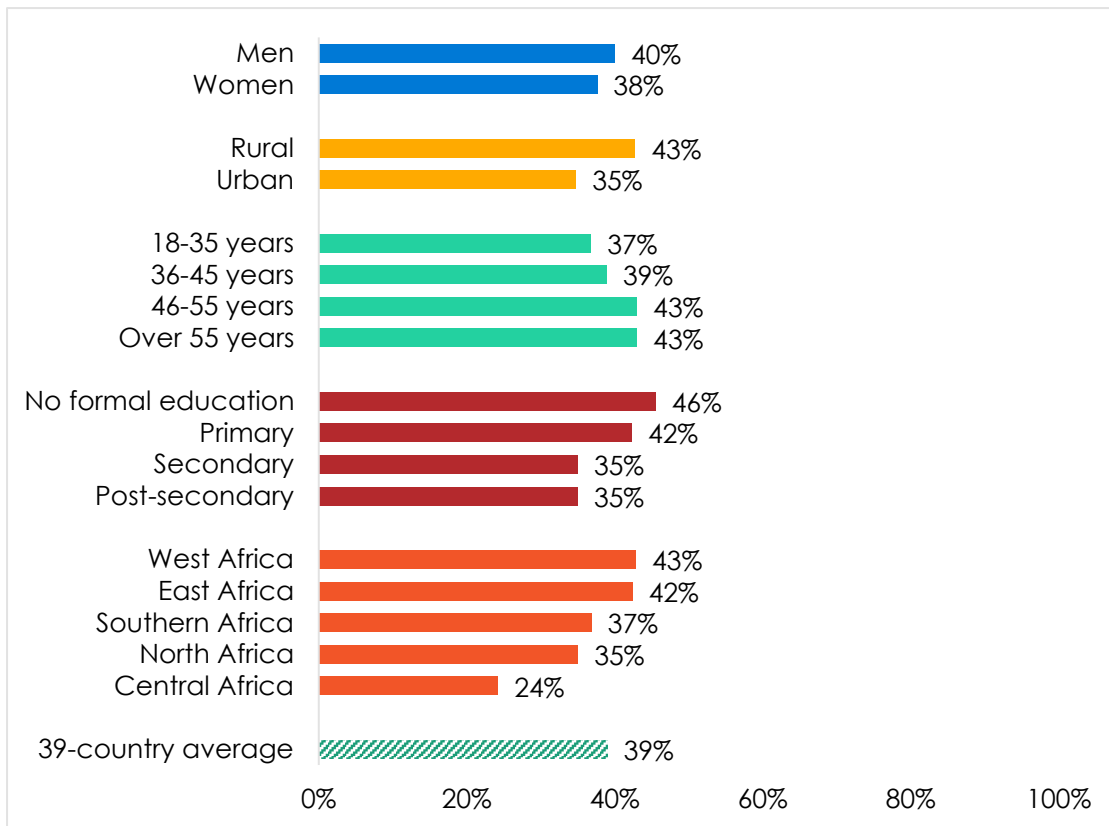
Men	40%
Women	38%
Rural	43%
Urban	35%
18-35 years	37%
36-45 years	39%
46-55 years	43%
Over 55 years	43%
No formal education	46%
Primary	42%
Secondary	35%
Post-secondary	35%
West Africa	43%
East Africa	42%
Southern Africa	37%
North Africa	35%
Central Africa	24%
39-country average	39%

Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The [national electoral commission]? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")
* Question was not asked in Guinea.

Figure 26: Trust in the electoral commission | 27 countries* | 2011-2023
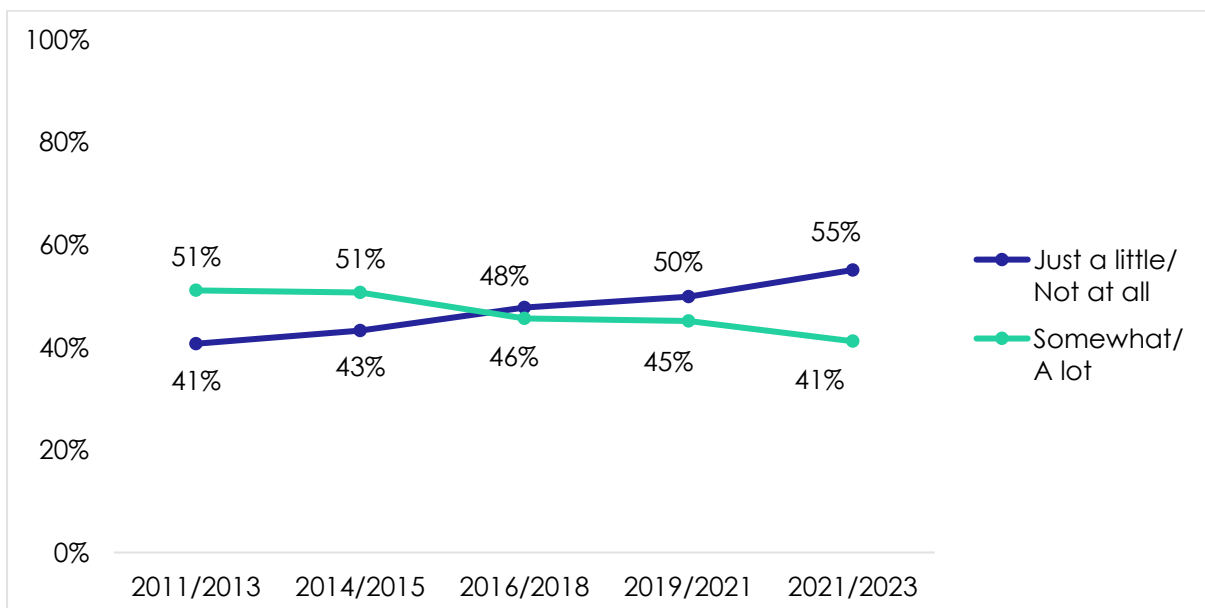
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The [national electoral commission]?
* Excludes Guinea, Morocco, and Tunisia, where the question was not asked in every survey round.

References

Adekoya, R. (2021). Why are coups making a comeback in Africa? CNN. 13 September.

Africanews. (2023). Africa: the 7 military coups over the last three years. 30 August.

Afrobarometer. (2023). Africans want more democracy, but their leaders still aren't listening. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 85.

AJLabs. (2023). Mapping Africa's coups d'etat across the years. Al Jazeera. 30 August.

Al Jazeera. (2017). Gambia crisis ends as Yahya Jammeh leaves for exile

Bratton, M., & Bhoojedhur, S. (2019). Africans want open elections – especially if they bring change. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 58.

Chemam, M. (2024). Year of elections has Africa poised for political shake-up in 2024. RFI. 3 January.

Darracq, V., & Magnani, V. (2011). Les élections en Afrique : Un mirage démocratique ? *Politique Etrangère, 4*(Hiver), 839-850.

Economic Community of West African States. (2001). Protocole a/sp1/12/01 sur la démocratie et la bonne gouvernance additionnel au protocole relatif au mécanisme de prévention, de gestion, de règlement des conflits, de maintien de la paix et de la sécurité.

EISA (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa.). (2024). EISA African election calendar 2024.

Freedom House. (2019). Democracy in retreat.

Gueye, B. (2009). La démocratie en Afrique : Succès et résistances. *Pouvoirs, 2*(129), 5-26.

Institute for Security Studies. (2023). The evolution of coups in Africa. PSC Report.

M'Cormack-Hale, F., & Dome, M. Z. (2022a). Support for elections weakens among Africans; many see them as ineffective in holding leaders accountable. Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 551.

M'Cormack-Hale, F., & Dome, M. Z. (2022b). Africans want elections, but fewer believe they work. Washington Post Monkey Cage. 12 February.

Mattes, R., & Patel, J. (2022). Lived poverty resurgent. Afrobarometer Policy Paper 84.

Mbulle-Nziege, L., & Cheeseman, N. (2022). Coups in Africa: Why they don't spell the end of democracy. BBC. 7 February.

Penar, P. (2016). African citizens have very low levels of trust in how elections are run. Conversation. 6 October.

Penar, P. H., Aiko, R., Bentley, T., & Han, K. (2016). Election quality, public trust are central issues for Africa's upcoming contests. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 35.

Sawyer, K. (2022). Can't buy me trust: Why are Africa's elections so costly yet contested? African Arguments.

Zounmenou, D., & Adam, N. (2021). Les « réformes électorales » étouffent la démocratie en Afrique de l'Ouest. Institute for Security Studies.

Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Feb.-March 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Kenya	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	Oct.-Nov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021
Sudan	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Togo	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021