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PUBLIC OPINION AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY IN NAMIBIA

by Christiaan Keulder

**A comparative series of national public
attitude surveys on democracy, markets
and civil society in Africa.**



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by Christiaan Keulder*

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Abstract

A 1999 survey of public attitudes suggests that Namibia's democracy faces serious challenges. While most Namibians believe they are benefiting from democracy, some evidence – such as the sizeable number who would support civilian authoritarianism in the form of a strong president – also suggests that while support for democracy is widespread, it is not deep. Although there are no clearly definable social groupings that can be labeled “anti-democratic” or “non-democratic,” two important factors account for much of the variation in opinions and attitudes: the urban-rural divide, and partisanship. The urban-rural divide captures many of the socioeconomic inequalities present in the country and has a significant influence on almost all variables. A clear divide also emerges between supporters of the ruling party and those who back the opposition. Namibia still appears to be a country with serious political divisions. This reality, coupled with the lack of depth in the support for democracy, presents a potentially serious obstacle to democratic consolidation. But Namibia also exhibits a number of elements conducive to the consolidation of democracy, including high levels of legitimacy, high levels of trust in representatives, and a strong belief that the system is responsive to the needs of the citizenry.

BACKGROUND

Namibia, Africa's last colony, obtained independence in 1989. Since then the country has often been described as one of the most stable multiparty democracies on the continent. It has one of the most liberal constitutions with an entrenched bill of rights, an independent judiciary, a functioning three-tier system of government, a fairly well institutionalized party system, and an economy that is growing, albeit slowly.

In recent years a few incidents have raised concern about Namibia's prospects for achieving democratic consolidation. First, the constitution was amended to allow the incumbent President, Sam Nujoma, a third term in office. Second, in the Caprivi region a small group of secessionists challenged the territorial integrity of the country, and in the short confrontation to subdue the group, the Namibian security forces committed a substantial number of human rights violations, some of which are still subject to investigation. Thirdly, several senior officials in the government and the ruling party, including the President himself, have launched scathing verbal attacks on segments of Namibian society and the international community that have not only raised questions about the status of the policy of national reconciliation, but also bordered on hate speech. Together with a number of assaults on opposition supporters during the 1999 presidential and national assembly elections, this is perhaps the clearest indication that Namibia lacks a democratic value system.

Neither the colonial forces nor the liberation movement had as their main objective the development of a democratic culture. Hence, by the time Namibia became independent it had few citizens that could be described as "democrats," and a political culture that was far from supportive of democracy. In this sense the country had to start from scratch.

This survey looks into the progress made toward the consolidation of democracy in the eleven years after independence. It focuses specifically on the development of a political culture that would be supportive of the existing democratic institutions and processes. It asks questions about Namibians' preference for and support of democracy, their attitudes and opinions about state and government, as well as their perceptions about past and current economic and political performance. The analysis here uses basic descriptive statistical techniques to provide a broad overview of the survey data and highlights the important trends.

Political, Economic and Social Context

Namibia has a small population spread over a large geographical area. In 1998 the country had an estimated population of 1.71 million (UNDP 1999:79) spread over a surface area of 824,268 km.²

The country achieved independence in 1990 after more than a century of colonial rule, first by Germany, and after 1914 by South Africa. Independence was preceded by an armed liberation struggle that lasted for almost five decades. The South West African Peoples Organisation (now SWAPO-Party) led the liberation struggle from exile until a United Nations supervised transition facilitated the return of exiled leaders and marked the beginning of the formal transition to

constitutional rule.¹

The Namibian constitution, hailed by many as one of the most liberal ever adopted in Africa, was drafted and accepted in record time by a popularly elected Constituent Assembly consisting of representatives of all parties that were awarded seats under the closed-list proportional representation (PR) electoral system. Of the ten parties that contested the 1989 elections, seven gained representation.² In 1999, only four parties were represented in the National Assembly.

Namibia has an executive president and a parliament consisting of two houses: the National Assembly (lower house) and the National Council (upper house or house of review). The constitution provides for the separation of powers and, hence, an independent judiciary, and contains an entrenched bill of rights that guarantees individual rights and freedoms. The President is limited to two consecutive terms³ in office, and presidential and assembly terms run concurrently. The President is directly elected by means of a 50 percent plus one vote provision, and members to the National Assembly by means of a closed-list PR system with a Hare quota and provision for largest remainders. Members to the National Council are elected from the ranks of the regional councils (2 members for each of the 13 administrative regions). Regional council members are elected through a first-past-the-post system, whilst local authority councilors are elected through a PR system similar to that used for national assembly elections.

SWAPO-Party gained electoral superiority in the first democratic elections with 57.3 percent of the vote and 56.9 percent of the assembly's 72 voting seats.⁴ The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) of Namibia established itself as the main opposition party with 28.5 percent of the votes and 29.1 percent of the seats. The remaining ten seats were shared between five small opposition parties. SWAPO-Party's dominant position was strengthened during the 1994 and 1999 presidential and national assembly elections, and currently the party holds 76.3 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. The DTA remained the main opposition party until 1999, when it lost approximately half of its votes to the newly established Congress of Democrats (CoD). Currently the CoD and the DTA hold seven seats each in the National Assembly.

SWAPO-Party's electoral dominance extends well beyond the national level. It has achieved electoral majorities during each regional and local election held since independence. In 1998, SWAPO-Party received 60.3 percent of all votes cast during local authority elections and 67.9 percent during the regional council elections.

For all practical purposes, Namibia is a single-party dominant system with approximately one-and-a-half effective parties. The party system is well institutionalized,⁵ and the various parties' shares of votes are usually fairly stable from one election to the next. Parties are centralized and control the process of candidate selection. Party loyalty and identification is strong, and the dominant party has strong links with organized groups in the Namibian society, especially organized labor.

Between 1993 and 2000 the Namibian economy grew by an average of 4.4 percent per year. In 2000, gross domestic product (GDP) stood at Namibian dollars (N\$) 24.1 billion (US\$3.5bn), implying an average income of around N\$12,967 (US\$1900) per person. This places Namibia in

the lower middle-income group of countries according to the World Bank. However, the most recent estimate of income distribution made using data from 1993/94 indicates that Namibia has one of the most skewed distributions in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 0.70.

Namibia's economy relies heavily on international trade with imports and exports each totaling more than half of GDP in value. Major exports include beef, meat products, diamonds, uranium, a wide variety of fish products, and beer. Namibia is the world's fifth largest diamond producer by value. The country also has a significant tourism industry based around its magnificent wildlife and landscapes.

Table 1: Key Economic Indicators

GDP (2000)	N\$24.1bn (US\$3.5bn)
GDP per capita (2000)	N\$12,967 (US\$1900)
GDP growth per annum (1993-2000)	4.4%
Imports as a percentage of GDP (2000)	46.9%
Exports as a percentage of GDP (2000)	41.8%
Average annual inflation rate (2000)	10.4%
Exchange rate N\$:US\$ (28 May 2001)	N\$7.89
Prime lending rate (May 2001)	15.5%
Government revenue as a percentage of GDP (2000/01)	36.4%
Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP (2000/01)	40.0%
Government budget deficit as a percentage of GDP (2000/01)	3.6%
Population growth rate (1991)	3.3%
Number of economically active (1991)	547,000
Central government employment (March 2001)	77,191
Unemployment as percentage of economically active (1997 estimate)	35%
Number infected with HIV per 1,000 sexually active	200
Communal land area as percentage of total land area	41%
Commercial land area as percentage of total land area	44%
Poor households (1998)	38%

Namibia is a member of the Common Monetary Area (CMA) with South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland. This means that Namibia's monetary system is closely linked to that of South Africa, an economy some 40 times larger. Namibia's currency, the Namibia dollar, circulates on par with the South African Rand, which is also legal tender. With certain exceptions, money flows freely between the two economies and common exchange controls are maintained with the rest of the world. Namibia also belongs to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) with South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana. Goods and services can be traded freely within this area and a common external tariff applies to imports from outside. Namibia is also a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), as well as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

METHODOLOGY

The Namibian component of the Afrobarometer survey was conducted from September through October 1999.⁶ The sample was a nationally representative, multi-stage, stratified sample of 1200 Namibians. All 13 administrative regions in the country were included. Interviews were allocated in proportion to each region's contribution to the country's rural and urban population. In total, 150 sample locations were randomly selected in 150 randomly selected Enumerator Areas (EAs) across the country, and eight face-to-face interviews were conducted in each sample location.

The questionnaire was translated by means of the double-blind method in a number of local languages, including Afrikaans, Oshiwambo and Otjiherero. Teams traveling to remote rural areas used global positioning system (GPS) technology to determine the exact location of each sampling point, thereby eliminating all possible risk of unknowingly crossing EA boundaries or missing the selected sampling points. Each team consisted of five individuals: four interviewers and one coordinator. For more detail on survey methodology, see Appendix A.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

After more than a century of colonial rule, Namibia has now completed its first decade under democratic rule. After a short period of transition from colonial to democratic rule, the issue of consolidation of democracy has to be put at the center of analysis. However, the exact point at which a new democracy can be considered consolidated is not particularly clear. Some analysts support the notion of having to go through a peaceful transfer of power at least twice (see Huntington, 1991), whereas others believe that democracy has to become "the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan 1997:15). Linz and Stepan identify a number of aspects to the notion of a consolidated democracy: a behavioral aspect, an attitudinal aspect and a constitutional aspect (1997:15-16).

- *Behaviorally*, democracy is consolidated if no significant political group aspires to or attempts to bring an end to democratic rule or instigate violence to overthrow the democratic government or secede from the existing (democratic) state. Thus the behavior of the ruling elites is no longer dominated by the question of how to avoid the breakdown of democracy.
- *Attitudinally*, democracy is consolidated when, even in the face of severe crises, the overwhelming majority of people believe that democracy "is still best" and that political changes should emerge from within the parameters of the democratic regime.
- *Constitutionally*, democracy becomes the only game in town when all the actors in the polity accept and become habituated to the fact that political conflict will be resolved according to established norms and that violations of these norms are both ineffective and costly. Both governmental and non-governmental actors subject themselves to and accept the bounds of specific (democratic) institutions, procedures and laws.

In a similar vein, Rose, *et al.* (1998:5) describe democratic consolidation as a state of political hegemony: "there is no popular demand for transforming the system of government and politicians would commit electoral suicide if they campaigned for office advocating a change to

an undemocratic regime.” Democratic consolidation is a long process, and the outcome is not always certain: “What happens to a new democracy is the outcome of a continuing process between what elites supply and what the populace demands.” (Rose, *et al.*, 1998:12)

Both popular loyalty to democracy and a continuing demand for democracy are crucial if new democracies are to become consolidated democracies. In this respect the relationship between citizens and their state and regime is an important focus of investigation. Our point of departure for this study is relatively simple: it is not enough to simply have democratic institutions and a democratic regime (as contained in a constitution). For democracy to become consolidated, a political culture supportive of the regime and the institutions is also needed.⁷ We thus focus on what Linz and Stepan (1997) have called the *attitudinal* aspect of consolidation.

Firstly, given Namibians’ short experience with democracy, one has to establish what is commonly understood by the concept “democracy.” Whether or not Namibians share a common understanding of the concept (if they have any understanding at all) is crucial for gauging the extent to which the concept has become embedded in the country’s political life and discourse. It will also provide an idea as to what Namibians expect from democracy.

Secondly, one has to assess ordinary citizens’ commitment to and support for democracy. It is here that it is easiest to tell whether or not democracy has become “the only game in town.” Given the country’s colonial past and the varying degree to which certain Namibians benefited or suffered at the hands of the colonial authorities, one cannot expect all Namibians to respond to democracy and majority rule in the same way. It is more likely that their responses will be shaped significantly by their past and current experiences, their socialization, and the social structures that they belong to. In our assessment, we follow the example of Rose, *et al.* (1998), who measures public support for and/or rejection of both democratic and non-democratic regimes.

Finally, one has to establish whether or not ordinary citizens are satisfied with their democracy. One can safely assume that after more than a decade of colonial rule, Namibians will expect democracy to “perform.” But exactly what they expect from democracy has to be established before we can determine just how satisfied they are at this point in time. Furthermore, the issue of who is satisfied and who is not is key for understanding the consolidation process and the future of democracy.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEMOCRACY

Scholars have identified two broad interpretations of the concept of democracy (see for example Pzeworski, 1997:42; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997:12). The first is a more *political* or *procedural* understanding, and emphasizes procedures, rules and norms. This is a definition that describes democracy as “government or rule *by* the people.” The second is a more economic or instrumental understanding that emphasizes the substance of the results of democratic rule. Democracy is depicted as a distributive socio-economic order and among its substantive benefits are economic growth, socio-economic equity, and the provision of public services. This

definition describes democracy as “government or rule *for* the people.”

Namibians’ understandings of the concept of democracy were first assessed by means of an open-ended question: “*What, if anything do you understand by the word “democracy”? What comes to mind when you hear the word?*”

Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the responses provided to this question.

Approximately 21 percent of respondents, or about one in five, cannot define democracy. But by far the largest number (about 44 percent) provides “freedom-based” definitions such as freedom of speech or movement. “Rights-based” definitions, including equal rights for all and the right to vote or to join any political party, constitute the third largest category (19 percent). Overall, most Namibians ascribe a positive meaning to democracy; that is, they define it as something that can be interpreted to add value to their quality of life.

Given Namibians’ experience with colonial rule, and the fact they were treated as subjects (and not citizens) without basic liberties and rights until 1990, it is not surprising that freedoms and rights are given such high priority. These definitions are ostensibly procedural definitions of democracy. They have a clear political (as opposed to economic) content, which perhaps bodes well for the Namibian state, given that it may be much less costly to provide the political aspects of democracy than the economic ones.

Table 2: Meanings of Democracy

Meanings	percent
Don't know	21
Freedom in general	12
Freedom of speech	19
Freedom of movement	9
Freedom in everything except crime	3
Freedom of worship	<1
Equal rights	6
Right to vote	5
Right to join any political party	3
The right to everything	3
Be able to criticize government	1
Human rights	1
When country is run by the people	2
To be independent	4
One constitution for the country	<1
Development	<1
Improve living conditions	1
Employment	<1
To own property/land	<1
Free education	3
Reduce crime	<1
Police protection	<1
Free medical treatment	<1
Peace	3
Justice	1
Unity	2
Different groups must have different rights	<1
Too afraid to give opinion	<1
Colonialism	<1

N = 1111

A second, closed-ended question required respondents to rate the importance of several features that are commonly associated with democracy. The list contained both procedural (political) and substantive (socio-economic) features. In contrast to the above findings, it is clear from Table 3 that the socio-economic dimensions are emphasized more than the political ones. Among the political dimensions, majority rule and regular elections are given the greatest emphasis, while having at least two parties competing with each other receives the lowest rating. Among the socio-economic dimensions, all attract agreement from more than nine out of every ten respondents except having a small income gap between rich and poor.

A worrying aspect of these opinions is that almost 39 percent of respondents feel that it is not important or not important at all to have the freedom to criticize the government, and almost 31 percent feel the same way about having at least two parties.

Table 3: Understandings of Democracy

	percent “absolutely essential” or “important”
Majority rule	83
Complete freedom for anyone to criticize the government	67
Regular elections	84
At least two political parties competing with each other	62
Basic necessities like shelter, food and water for everyone	92
Jobs for everyone	93
Equality in education	93
Small income gap between rich and poor	65

People associate democracy with many diverse meanings such as the ones I will mention now. In order for a society to be called democratic is each of these . . . ?

A form of statistical analysis known as factor analysis demonstrates that these responses are linked or correlated in two separate groups. There are consistent differences across respondents in their views about the four political components on the one hand, and about the four economic components on the other. In other words, respondents tend to react to each of the four political components as if they were variations on one common theme rather than completely separate items, or as if they tap the same underlying point of view, and the same holds true for the set of economic components. However, while the ways people respond to each of these categories are distinct, they are also positively related to each other.⁸ This means that respondents tend to emphasize both categories simultaneously, rather than one at the expense of the other.

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

We took two approaches to measuring commitment to or support for democracy. We first investigated the stated preference for a democratic regime, and then considered the level of support for or rejection of non-democratic alternatives.

Preference for Democracy

We asked respondents whether or not they prefer democracy at all times, or whether there might be some circumstances in which non-democratic rule would be preferable. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Preference for Democracy

	percent
Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	57
In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable to democratic government.	12
For someone like me, a democratic or non-democratic regime makes no difference.	12
Don't know	19

With which one of these statements are you most in agreement?

A preference for democracy index was constructed based on a 3-point scale on which “democracy is always preferable” scores 3 and “non-democratic government can be preferable” scores 1 (midpoint of 2). In this and all similarly constructed indices discussed in this report, “don't knows” were omitted. This scale was then used to test for possible bivariate correlations between socio-biographical variables and preference for democracy. The following is a summary of the results:

- The correlation between level of education and preference for democracy is significant.⁹
- There is no significant correlation between respondent's gender, age or rural/urban habitation and their preference for democracy.

Evaluating the distribution of these scaled responses across all thirteen regions of the country, we find that the preference for democracy is not equally strong everywhere. Two southern regions, Hardap and Karas, show the highest preference for democracy (2.95 and 2.98, respectively), while Ohangwena rates the lowest level of support (2.12), but all regions score above the midpoint on the scale.

To further assess this issue, we also considered respondents preference for democracy relative to their support for the various political parties. However, given the small support base for some of the opposition parties and the fact that some respondents refused to answer or were uncertain of which party to support, we collapsed some of the categories to differentiate primarily between those that support the ruling party, those that support opposition parties, those that refuse to answer, and those that did not show a preference for any specific party.

Table 5 shows that there are no real distinctions between the supporters of various parties and their preference for democracy. Opposition supporters are only slightly stronger in their preference. In general, those that reveal their partisanship are slightly more inclined to prefer democracy than those that did not.

Table 5: Preference for Democracy Index, by Party Affiliation

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SWAPO-Party	2.58	498	.730
Opposition Parties	2.64	132	.678
No Party	2.50	266	.749
Refuse to say	2.53	47	.804
Total	2.57	943	.733

Support for Non-Democratic Alternatives

A second question concerning commitment to democracy measures preference for democracy compared to preference for a strong leader that does not have to bother with elections.

Table 6: Democracy versus a Strong Leader

	percent
Sometimes need a strong leader with no elections. (agree strongly)	28
Sometimes need a strong leader with no elections. (agree)	22
Democracy is always best. (agree)	9
Democracy is always best. (agree strongly)	34

Sometimes democracy does not work. When this happens, some people say that we need a strong leader who does not have to bother with elections. Others say that even when things don't work, democracy is always best. What do you think?

Roughly, one in every two respondents feels that a strong leader is at times acceptable. This shows perhaps that a regime based on personalized power could still command a lot of support ten years after democracy was implemented. But who would accept a strong president that does not have to bother with elections?

- The correlation between age and preference for democracy is significant but weak. Tolerance for a strong leader is more likely to increase with an increase in age.¹⁰
- There is no significant correlation between gender and preference for democracy.
- There is a significant positive correlation between level of education and preference for democracy.¹¹

Three additional trends are significant. First, rural inhabitants are far more likely to show tolerance for a strong leader (58 percent) than their urban counterparts (31 percent), who believe that democracy is always best by more than a two-to-one margin (69 percent agree or strongly agree that democracy is always best).

Secondly, preferences for democracy versus a strong leader are also influenced by partisanship. Table 7 shows that supporters of the ruling party are more likely to support a strong leader than supporters of opposition parties. Those without clear party preferences are equally divided in their preferences, whilst those that did not want to reveal their party preferences are more

inclined to prefer democracy.

Table 7: Democracy versus a Strong Leader, by Party Affiliation

	Strong Leader	Democracy Always Best
SWAPO-Party	62	38
Opposition Parties	38	62
No Party	50	50
Refuse to Say	33	67

A third indicator of how widespread the tolerance for a strong president is becomes clear once the data is disaggregated by region. Table 8 shows that the acceptance of the need for a strong president is much higher in a small number of regions, all of which are traditionally SWAPO-Party strongholds. In particular, four regions stand out for their tolerance for a strong president that does not have to bother with elections: Ohangwena (91 percent), Kavango (68 percent), Omusati (86 percent) and Oshana (83 percent). These four regions are also almost unanimous in their support for SWAPO-Party. In the 1999 presidential and national assembly elections, the ruling party achieved their biggest victories in these regions. SWAPO-Party won 98.7 percent of the vote in Ohangwena, 98.1 percent in Omusati, 92.1 percent in Oshana and 72 percent in Kavango. These regions are also predominantly rural.

These findings suggest that there could be pockets of support for a strong president as an alternative to a democratic regime. However, the crucial question is whether or not this acceptance of a strong leader over democracy is in any meaningful way linked to a specific leader (such as the current incumbent, President Nujoma), or simply applies to a strong leader in general. In a later section we show that President Nujoma is extremely popular and held in high esteem by the Namibian population, and it is therefore quite possible that it is his personal qualities that inspire the preference for a strong leader. If this is true, it may mean that not just any president will do; it will have to be a leader who commands strong popular support and trust, and that performs well. He or she may also have to represent the “right” party (SWAPO-Party) and possibly come from the right regional and ethnic background.

Table 8: Democracy versus a Strong Leader, by Region

	Strong Leader	Democracy Always Best
Erongo	33	67
Hardap	16	84
Karas	6	94
Khomas	24	76
Kunene	28	72
Ohangwena	91	9
Kavango	68	32
Omaheke	40	60
Omusati	86	14
Oshana	83	17
Oshikoto	32	68
Otjozondjupa	44	56
Caprivi	43	58

Factor analysis of three presidential support variables discussed further below (trust, responsiveness, and performance) suggests that the three are all closely related and build on a single underlying attitude, which is confirmed by reliability analysis. The three variables can therefore be collapsed into a single presidential support index ranging from a low score of 1 to a high score of 4, with a midpoint of 2.5. This presidential index can then be analyzed with respect to the preference for democracy versus a strong leader (also recoded on a scale that ranges from 1 for strong support for a strong leader to 4 for strong support for democracy). A weak negative correlation was found.¹² This implies that on an overall level, those Namibians that are more strongly in favor of and satisfied with President Nujoma are slightly more likely to support the option of a strong president.

At a more specific level, each of the three components of the presidential support performed as follows:

- The correlation between whether or not President Nujoma is interested in what happens to ordinary Namibians and support for a strong leader is significant but weak.¹³
- The correlation between whether the current President can be trusted to do what is right and support for a strong leader is also significant but weak.¹⁴
- The correlation between the performance of the current President and support for a strong leader is, however, not significant.¹⁵

This suggests then that belief and trust in the current President is slightly more important than his actual performance when support for a strong leader over a democratic regime is formulated and expressed. More importantly, it also suggests that Namibians' views on presidential dictatorship versus democracy during times of stress are not simply reflections of their views on the current President.

To investigate these issues further, we asked respondents to express their preferences for or against a general set of non-democratic alternatives, including presidential authoritarianism.

Table 9 shows that Namibians reject most of the non-democratic alternatives, including the option of presidential authoritarianism.

Table 9: Support for Non-Democratic Alternatives

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Neither Approve nor Disapprove	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
One-party state	6	20	7	31	37
Traditional leadership	7	16	19	31	27
Military rule	9	16	12	28	34
Presidential dictatorship	8	19	12	28	34
Technocratic rule	8	26	20	28	18
Return to the old regime	3	7	9	21	61

Our current system of governing with regular elections and more than one political party is not the only one Namibia has ever had. Some people say that we would be better off if we had a different system of government. How much would you disapprove, neither disapprove nor approve, or approve of the following alternatives to our current system of government with at least two political parties and regular elections?

Namibians have had experience with two of the options listed above: traditional leadership and colonialism (the “old regime”). Given the brutal nature of colonial oppression, it is no surprise that they show no signs of “authoritarian nostalgia.” A second interesting trend is the fact that technocratic rule is seen in a more positive light than all the other alternatives. Factor analysis confirms that Namibians respond differently to technocratic rule, a trend that was also observed by Rose, *et al.* (1998) in formerly communist Eastern Europe. The fact that Namibians respond to the remaining alternatives in a common way confirms that, despite distinctions between the various individual alternatives, all are viewed in essentially the same, negative, light. No significant correlations with the presidential variables exist here. Hence, personal attitudes toward the incumbent President do not influence approval or disapproval of these non-democratic alternatives (evaluated as a cluster, not individually).

SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY

Two questions were used to determine the extent to which Namibians feel that their system actually is democratic. The first concerns the freeness and fairness of their last national election in 1994,¹⁶ and the second the extent to which Namibians feel their system has developed into a full democracy. We will then continue to evaluate satisfaction with democracy by drawing some comparisons between political life under the present and past regimes, and by asking about satisfaction directly.

The Extent of Democracy

Table 10 shows that most respondents believe that their elections are free and fair. Approximately half saw the elections as completely free and fair, while a further 28 percent saw them as free and fair with minor problems. Only 11 percent hold strongly negative views of the elections.

Table 10: Ratings of the Last Elections

	percent
Completely free and fair	49
Free and fair with minor problems	28
Free and fair with major problems	8
Not free and fair	3
Don't know	11

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 1994?

Table 11 shows that there are significant differences in the view of the elections across the regions. In three regions - Hardap, Karas and Khomas – the views are more qualified than in the rest of the country, as more than half the population holds the view that elections were free and fair with minor problems. In five regions – Caprivi, Oshikoto, Oshana, Kavango and Omusati – an outright majority of Namibians holds the view that elections were completely free and fair. These regions are all in the northern parts of the country, regions in which the ruling party has a strong outright electoral majority (with the exception of Caprivi).

Table 11: Ratings of the Last Election, by Region

	Completely free and fair	Free and fair with minor problems	Free and fair with major problems	Not free and fair	Don't know
Erongo	44	29	15	2	10
Hardap	19	57	17	0	6
Karas	23	59	9	2	7
Khomas	22	56	7	9	7
Kunene	33	35	15	13	6
Ohangwena	47	26	15	2	11
Kavango	57	30	5	4	4
Omaheke	35	29	9	7	20
Omusati	76	10	1	1	12
Oshana	80	5	4	0	12
Oshikoto	56	17	6	3	18
Otjozondjupa	42	31	6	1	20
Caprivi	59	26	7	1	7

Opposition parties have frequently complained that the ruling party abuses its dominant position during election times. During the build up to the 1999 elections, ruling party supporters targeted CoD election workers during a campaign that saw several instances of physical abuse. One

would therefore expect the views of ruling party and opposition party supporters to be quite different, and Table 12 confirms this.

Table 12: Ratings of the Last Elections, by Party Affiliation

	Completely free and fair	Free and fair with minor problems	Free and fair with major problems	Not free and fair	Don't know
SWAPO-Party	60	26	5	2	7
Opposition	37	35	13	6	8
No Party	40	29	9	6	17
Refuse to say	35	29	14	2	21
Total	50	28	8	3	11

In response to a second question probing for the overall evaluation of the democratic content of the political system, a substantial majority (70 percent) of respondents say that they view the country as either completely democratic or a democracy with only minor problems. Fifteen percent see it as a democracy with some major problems, while less than 3 percent believe the country is not democratic at all.

Table 13: Extent of Democracy

	percent
Completely democratic	29
Democratic with minor problems	41
Democratic with major problems	15
Not a democracy	3
Didn't understand question	4
Don't know	8

On the whole, is the way Namibia is governed:

There is a significant correlation between respondents' views about the freeness and fairness of their last election and their views of whether the country is a democracy or not.¹⁷ The two variables have thus been combined into a single extent of democracy index, ranging from a score of 0 (not at all democratic or not free and fair) to 3 (completely democratic or completely free and fair), with a midpoint of 1.5. We then looked for the possible impacts of social structures and other socio-biographical variables on this index. Table 14 shows the regional breakdown of the index.

As with other variables, Namibia's regions show important differences in their opinions on the extent of democracy in the country. The following are important:

- Regions that are almost unified in their support for the ruling party (SWAPO-Party) score highest on the index (all close to or above 2.5 out of 3).
- The four regions with the lowest scores (Karas, Kunene, Khomas and Omaheke) are all multi-party regions, i.e., regions in which SWAPO-Party does not have an electoral monopoly.

Table 14: Extent of Democracy Index, by Region

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	2.14	42	.608
Hardap	2.02	44	.570
Karas	1.99	46	.532
Khomas	1.92	118	.574
Kunene	1.94	43	.709
Ohangwena	2.22	115	.649
Kavango	2.20	75	.604
Omaheke	1.82	39	.730
Omusati	2.63	132	.426
Oshana	2.73	87	.450
Oshikoto	2.45	75	.674
Otjozondjupa	2.31	59	.573
Caprivi	2.14	68	.579
Total	2.25	943	.641

A comparison of the mean scores of men and women shows no real difference in views (2.24 for men and 2.26 for women), while urban areas are slightly less positive on the extent of democracy than rural areas (2.09 versus 2.34). In addition, level of education correlates negatively with the view that Namibia is a complete democracy.¹⁸ Namibians with higher levels of education tend to be more critical in their evaluation of the current extent of democracy than their lesser-educated counterparts. Black Namibians are also less critical of the current state of democracy than those of other races, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Extent of Democracy Index, by Race

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Black/African	2.28	780	0.631
White/European	1.77	45	.654
Coloured	1.93	38	.718
Indian	2.38	4	.479
Total	2.24	867	.648

As with previous examples, supporters of the ruling party are far more positive about the current state of affairs than their counterparts who support the opposition (Table 16).

Table 16: Extent of Democracy Index, by Party Affiliation

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SWAPO-Party	2.41	524	.559
Opposition	2.00	125	.627
No Party	2.06	243	.722
Refuse to say	2.15	42	.629
Total	2.25	934	.642

Delivery of Economic and Political Rights

Our next step is to assess the extent to which both economic and political rights have improved under the current Namibian government as compared to the situation under colonial rule. Table 17 provides an overview of the positive responses.

Respondents' feelings that economic and political life today is better or much better than under colonial rule are perhaps to be expected. Colonial rule was by its very nature exploitative and oppressive, and it excluded the majority of Namibians from most, if not all, civil and economic rights and privileges. In this respect, the end of colonial rule brought immediate relief and improvement. However, for most Namibians political rights have improved more than economic ones, as demonstrated by the substantially higher scores in the "much better" category for political rights. In a sense, political rights are much easier and cheaper to deliver than economic ones, so they can be delivered with greater speed and with immediately tangible impact.

Table 17: Improvements In Political and Economic Rights Since Independence

	percent "better"	percent "much better"
Anyone can say what he or she thinks.	43	37
People can join any political organization they choose.	45	40
People can live without fear of the police if they have done nothing wrong.	41	37
Each person can freely choose who to vote for without feeling forced by others.	41	44
Everybody is treated equally and fairly by government.	42	22
People are safe from crime and violence.	36	16
People have an adequate standard of living.	43	14
People have access to basic necessities like water and food.	41	19
Namibians are equal to one another.	43	23

Some people say that today under our current system of government, our political and overall life is better than it was under South African rule. Others say that things are no better or even worse. For each of the following matters, would you say things today are:

Overall, the respondents seem happy with the performance of Namibia's democracy. To assess whether or not levels of satisfaction with democracy are similar among all sub-groups of Namibians, indices were constructed for economic and political rights. The first four items listed in Table 17 are used to construct the political rights index (PRI), and the remaining five

constitute the economic rights index (ERI). These indexes can range from 1 (much worse) to 5 (much better), with a midpoint of 3 (the same). Nationally, the PRI is 4.20, and the ERI 3.63.

Gains on political rights consistently outscore the gains on economic rights throughout all regions in the country. When gender and race are introduced as variables, the same overall trends are confirmed with no real meaningful variations among the groups. However, younger Namibians are slightly more likely to emphasize gains on political rights than older Namibians,¹⁹ whereas Namibians with lower levels of education are slightly more likely to emphasize improvements in economic rights than their better-educated counterparts.²⁰ However, the two indices are positively related to each other,²¹ meaning that those who are satisfied with the achievements with respect to political rights are also likely to be satisfied with gains in the realm of economic rights.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Regardless of the perceived extent of democracy in the current system, how satisfied are Namibians with democracy? Secondly, are all Namibians equally satisfied with this system, or are there any significant and clearly distinguishable groups in Namibian society that are dissatisfied? Answers to these questions will help us, among other things, to assess whether there are any potential pockets of discontent that might provide for future challenges to the current regime.

Most respondents (63 percent) are fairly or very satisfied with democracy. About 20 percent, or one in every five, are not very satisfied, while only 6 percent are not at all satisfied. Less than one percent of respondents do not believe that Namibia is a democracy.

Table 18: Satisfaction With Democracy

	percent
Very satisfied	28
Fairly satisfied	35
Not very satisfied	19
Not at all satisfied	6
Namibia is not a democracy	1
Don't know	10

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Namibia?

Table 19 records the distribution of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with democracy across the thirteen regions of the country (recoded on a 5-point scale where 0 = Namibia is not a democracy, 4 = very satisfied with democracy, midpoint is 2.5). It shows that while satisfaction is relatively high throughout the country, it is not equally strong everywhere. However, there seems to be no clear pattern in the distribution of satisfaction with democracy across the regions. Regions in which opposition parties are strong (e.g., Karas, Hardap and Erongo) show satisfaction levels similar to regions in which they are weak (e.g., Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto).

Table 19: Satisfaction With Democracy Index, by Region

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	3.09	46	.725
Hardap	3.00	45	.769
Karas	3.30	53	.668
Khomas	2.90	130	1.063
Kunene	2.74	47	1.010
Ohangwena	2.88	120	.826
Kavango	2.61	74	1.045
Omaheke	2.52	50	.886
Omusati	3.17	140	.645
Oshana	3.07	100	.977
Oshikoto	3.27	91	.844
Otjozondjupa	2.93	82	.953
Caprivi	2.63	72	.999
Total	2.95	1050	.916

Breaking down the results according to socio-biographical variables, however, produces very little change in the overall pattern. Neither gender, race, age nor education show any significant correlation with satisfaction. Rural and urban dwellers also share the same levels of satisfaction. The only variable that introduces some variation is party support; ruling party supporters are generally more satisfied with democracy (3.11) than those that support opposition parties (2.69) or no party (2.80). The overall pattern suggests that Namibians are fairly happy with their democracy; there are no clearly defined significant pockets of dissatisfaction among major social groupings or areas of the country.

ATTITUDES TOWARD STATE AND GOVERNMENT

We continue by assessing respondents' opinions about the legitimacy of the Namibian government, followed by an investigation of issues of trust and governance, including experience with corruption. We then asked respondents to compare the present government with the colonial regime.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy makes for stability, as it enables governments to make and enforce decisions without having to resort to violence or coercion to obtain compliance from citizens. It is both a normative and empirical concept (Robertson 1993:279). At the normative level, legitimacy refers to whether or not a state is entitled to the obedience of its citizens. This aspect of legitimacy concerns the legal foundations of state, and the political obligations vested in its citizens. At the empirical level, legitimacy derives from the extent to which a government is perceived by its citizens as rightfully entitled to make binding, enforceable decisions. It is this latter aspect of legitimacy that is under investigation here.

Under a democratic regime, regular, free and fair elections are a main source of legitimacy, but how office bearers exercise their powers is also important. We also consider whether the rules and norms that govern relations between the state and society and among the various institutions of the state, as contained in the nation’s constitution, are accepted by most Namibians. Finally, we explore Namibians’ views about the government’s right to make binding decisions on behalf of all citizens. Table 20 presents the responses to questions about each of these aspects of legitimacy.

Table 20: Legitimacy of the Namibian Government – Four Components

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don’t know
Government was elected by accepted procedures.	2	7	8	50	28	5
Government exercises power in acceptable way.	2	10	13	46	25	5
Constitution expresses values and aspirations of all Namibians.	2	7	16	44	23	9
Government has right to make decisions that bind all citizens.	14	22	15	27	14	9

Here are some things people often say about our current system. For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree, neither disagree nor agree, or agree?

Three of these four aspects of legitimacy show very favorable scores, with two-thirds or more in effect agreeing that the government is, by the given measure, legitimate. A considerably lower number, however, translate these perceptions of legitimacy into the belief that the government can make decisions that are binding on all Namibians. Just 41 percent agree, while 36 percent disagree and 24 percent either don’t know or express ambivalence. Factor analysis shows that the responses to all four components are linked, arising from a common underlying point of view, but the last component is most weakly related to this dimension.

These four components were next used to construct a legitimacy index. The index ranges from 1 (strongly disagree, i.e., government is illegitimate) to 5 (strongly agree, i.e., government is legitimate), with a midpoint of 3. The national mean is 3.72. A regional breakdown of the legitimacy index indicates that while there is some variance among the regions, no clear pattern emerges. There are also no clear patterns related to gender, age or educational level. Although, both urban and rural dwellers afford government high levels of legitimacy, urban dwellers on average score slightly lower than their rural counterparts. Black Namibians afford the government slightly more legitimacy than others (legitimacy index of 3.76, compared to 3.31 for whites and 3.46 for coloureds), but the relatively high marks from all racial groups suggest none of them sees the government as illegitimate. SWAPO-Party supporters also show the highest scores on the legitimacy index as compared to others, but again, the range was not large.

Table 21: Government Legitimacy Index, by Party Affiliation

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SWAPO-Party	3.88	527	.712
Opposition Parties	3.48	132	.738
No Party	3.56	260	.677
Refuse To Say	3.64	47	.711
Total	3.72	966	.725

This evidence suggests that the Namibian government is seen as at least fairly legitimate by all sectors of society. This is a very positive finding that bodes well for the consolidation of democracy in the country.

Trust in State and Government

Political trust relates to a general feeling that the political system is designed to serve the public good, and that the actors within it are focused on attaining what is best for society as a whole. Where a system has no trust, citizens may become cynical and most likely will disengage from the political realm. High levels of trust do not, however, necessarily cause high levels of participation. In fact, trust can actually lead to lower levels of participation when people are confident that political leaders will make decisions in support of the common good. Trust is related to legitimacy, but it is not always clear which comes first or even how and when one translates into the other. It is, however, accepted that trust is an important ingredient for successful democratic consolidation.

Table 22 shows that there are considerable differences in the levels of trust respondents afford to the different institutions of state and government. Among the institutions that command the highest levels of trust are the President (48 percent always trust), the army (42 percent), and the Namibian Broadcast Corporation (55 percent). The two institutions that command the lowest levels of trust are Parliament (21 percent always trust) and local government (20 percent of those who live in areas with local authorities). It is interesting to note that the two least trusted institutions are both directly elected by the public, while two of the three most trusted institutions are not elected. Overall, with the exception of local government, the majority of respondents trust their institutions either always or most of the time. Hence, most Namibian institutions do not currently face a crisis of trust.

Table 22: Trust in State and Government Institutions

	Never	Sometimes	Most Times	Always	Have Not Heard Enough	Not Applicable
President	4	19	24	48	5	
Parliament	5	27	30	21	17	
Local Government	5	30	24	18	13	10
Army	6	19	24	42	8	
Police	4	25	34	35	2	
Courts of law	5	21	32	32	11	
Electoral Commission	4	18	32	35	11	
Namibian Broadcasting Corporation	2	10	30	55	3	
Newspapers	4	17	28	35	16	

For each of the following: How much of the time can you trust __ to do what is right?

Factor analysis indicates that these responses can be grouped according to two separate themes. Respondents appear to react in a common way to non-elected state institutions (NBC, army, police, electoral commission and courts of law), and in a common, but distinct, way to elected government institutions (president, parliament and local government).

Based on this, three trust indexes were constructed. The first index measures overall trust and is comprised from measures of trust in all of the state institutions (i.e., excluding only the independent press). The state trust index is then composed only from ratings for non-elected state institutions (NBC, army, police, electoral commission and courts of law), and the government trust index is constructed from the three elected institutions (president, parliament and local government). Each index ranges from 1 (never trust) to 4 (always trust) with a midpoint of 2.5. Nationally, the overall trust index scores 2.76, while the state trust index achieves a slightly higher 2.92, and the government trust index rates a slightly lower 2.55.

A regional breakdown of these mean scores shows no clear patterns in the distribution of trust across the thirteen regions. With the possible exception of Omaheke region, all regions show significant levels of trust on the overall trust index. However, in four regions, Kunene, Khomas, Omaheke and Ohangwena, the government trust index is below the midpoint, suggesting that trust in elected institutions in these regions is quite low. Breakdown of the indices based on race, gender, party support and urban/rural domicile does not reveal significant variations related to any of these factors except that black Namibians afford generally more trust to both state and government than other racial groups, and SWAPO-Party supporters afford more trust to both

state and government institutions than supporters of opposition parties.

Table 23: Correlations between Trust, Age and Education

	Overall Trust Index	State Trust Index	Government Trust Index
Age	-0.13**	-0.13**	-0.07*
Education Level	0.08**	0.07*	0.02

**Pearson’s r, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

***Pearson’s r, significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Perhaps surprisingly, age shows a significant negative correlation with all three measures of trust: younger Namibians have more trust in state and government than older Namibians. One possible explanation is that older Namibians have more experience with the system and the actors within it and are hence more cynical about them. The relationship between education and trust is positive, but weaker – better educated members of the society show slightly more trust in the system than their less well-educated counterparts.

There is a correlation between trust in state institutions and trust in government institutions; those that trust the state also trust the government, and visa-versa.²² Overall trust also correlates with legitimacy,²³ although it is not possible to determine a causal relationship in either direction based on the existing data.

Democratic Governance

In this section we assess respondents’ opinions on three key areas of democratic performance or good governance: whether or not the system is responsive; whether or not the system is perceived to engage in corruption; and finally, whether or not Namibians have personally experienced corruption.

Responsiveness

Respondents were asked about the responsiveness of the President, Parliament and local authorities to their needs and opinions. The results are presented in Table 24. Respondents generally rate their political system as responsive. However, contrary to common wisdom, local authorities are seen as the least responsive. While nearly 80 percent of respondents think that the President is either interested or very interested in their well being, only about half believe that this is true of their local councilor.

Table 24: Government Responsiveness

	President	Parliament	Local Councilor
Not at all interested	6	5	8
Not very interested	11	18	20
Interested	29	41	29
Very interested	50	18	20
Haven't heard enough to know	5	18	14
Not Applicable			9

How interested do you think _____ is in what happens to you or hearing what people like you think?

Factor analysis confirms that views about each of these three are linked to a common underlying perspective. A responsiveness index could therefore be constructed consisting of all three items, ranging from 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (very interested). As shown in Table 25, there is considerable regional variation in evaluations of responsiveness. Omaheke region scores lowest at 2.3, falling below the mid-point (2.5), while Khomas and Kunene score on the mid-point, and all other regions score above. Regions in which the ruling party enjoys electoral hegemony (Oshikoto, Oshana and Omusati) score among the highest, but some multi-party regions such as Hardap and Karas also do well.

Table 25: Government Responsiveness Index, by Region

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	3.07	39	.573
Hardap	3.17	35	.751
Karas	3.24	35	.597
Khomas	2.51	103	.730
Kunene	2.58	40	.765
Ohangwena	2.96	64	.623
Kavango	2.82	82	.602
Omaheke	2.36	30	.643
Omusati	3.34	93	.535
Oshana	3.22	69	.565
Oshikoto	3.33	66	.571
Otjozondjupa	3.05	56	.743
Caprivi	2.76	70	.532
Total	2.96	782	.698

In addition, rural areas (3.1) see the system as slightly more responsive than urban areas (2.8) and black Namibians (3.0) believe that the system is more responsive than whites (2.5), but men and women rate responsiveness equally. A significant negative correlation exists between education and perceptions of responsiveness, as respondents with higher levels of educations are more likely to give the government lower ratings for responsiveness than their less educated counterparts.²⁴

Analysis of the relationship between responsiveness, trust and legitimacy determined that the three variables are indeed inter-related, as shown in Table 33.

Table 26: Correlations between Responsiveness, Legitimacy and Trust

	Responsiveness	Trust	Legitimacy
Responsiveness	1.000		
Trust	0.616**	1.000	
Legitimacy	0.440**	0.446**	1.000

***Pearson's r, significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Corruption

The true extent of corruption in any given society is difficult to measure. Unbiased, data is hard to obtain and is often subject to questions of validity (Lambsdorff, 1999:2). But levels of corruption can be an important indicator of the quality of governance and democratic performance. For example, in general those countries that did best on the Freedom House democracy index and market economy index (such as Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, etc.) also scored lowest on the corruption index. Moreover, those countries that are perceived as least corrupt recorded much higher foreign direct investment (FDI) per capita than the rest of the countries in the sample, so perceptions of corruption certainly matter. We therefore asked respondents both about their own perceptions of the levels of corruption in Namibia, and about their personal experience of this problem.

In the survey, corruption was defined to mean, “where those in government and the civil service take money or gifts from people and use it for themselves, or expect people to pay them extra money or a gift to do their job.” This definition excludes “corruption-related” activities such as nepotism and has a strong focus on administrative corruption. Respondents were asked about the number of civil servants, parliamentarians and officials of local and national government they think are engaged in corruption, although not about the frequency or scale of these acts.

Table 27 shows that respondents do not perceive corruption to be very extensive.²⁵ Roughly one-fifth believe that most officials in each of the four categories are engaged in corruption, while around half believe that few or none participate in this practice. These perceptions appear to be relatively consistent across race, gender, party affiliation, age, and education. Some small regional variations do appear. Khomas and Omaheke report the highest perceptions of levels of corruption, and Erongo and Hardap the lowest.

Table 27: Perceptions of Government Corruption

	Government	Parliament	Civil Service	Local Government
Almost all	6	4	4	3
Most	18	15	21	14
A few, Some	37	38	39	27
Almost none, None	17	16	16	20
Don't know enough about it	22	27	21	25
Not Applicable				11

What about corruption? (Corruption is where those in government and the civil service take money or gifts from the people and use it for themselves, or expect people to pay them extra money or a gift to do their job.) How many officials in ___ do you think are involved in corruption?

Correlations between perceptions of corruption on the one hand and trust, responsiveness and legitimacy on the other are significant and in the expected directions, i.e., the lower the perception of the level of corruption, the greater the level of reported trust, responsiveness and legitimacy.

How do these perceptions compare to people's actual experiences with corruption? Table 28 indicates that the number of respondents who have actually experienced official corruption is far less than the number who perceive government to be corrupt. This suggests that perceptions of corruption are not based on or linked to personal experiences. In fact, there is no correlation between perceptions of corruption and actual experiences.²⁶

Table 28: Personal Experience with Corruption

	Job	Government Maintenance Payment, Pension or Loan	Electricity or Water	Housing or Land
Never	96	94	92	90
Once or twice	1	2	2	4
A few times	1	2	2	2
Often	<1	1	3	3
Don't know	2	1	1	2

In the past year, have you or anyone in your family had to pay money to government officials (besides paying rates or taxes), give them a gift, or do them a favor, in order to get the following?

The survey also afforded respondents the opportunity to express their opinions on the government's job performance. The first set of questions solicited general impressions of how well the President, Parliament and local authorities have performed their jobs over the past year. Table 29 records the responses to these questions.

In each case, a sizeable majority of respondents either approve or strongly approve of the performance of these individuals or institutions. The President scores the highest (79 percent), followed by Parliament (65 percent) and local authorities (62 percent of those who live in areas

with local government).

Table 29: General Government Performance

	President Nujoma	Parliament	Local Government
Strongly Disapprove	5	3	5
Disapprove	9	11	14
Approve	32	45	38
Strongly Approve	47	20	17
Don't know	7	21	16
Not Applicable			11

What about the way _____ has performed his /their job over the past twelve months?

A government performance index ranging from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 4 (strongly approve) was constructed from these three items. This index is used to assess the distribution of satisfaction with performance throughout the country. Erongo, Hardap, Omusati and Oshana are the four regions that score highest, and Ohangwena, Kunene and Omaheke the ones that score lowest on the government performance index.

When a number of socio-biographical variables are introduced into the analysis, the following trends emerge:

- There is no real difference in the way male and female Namibians view the performance of government.
- Black Namibians are somewhat more positive about the government's performance than white Namibians (2.65 vs. 2.39).
- SWAPO-Party supporters are generally more positive about the government's performance than opposition supporters and those that support no party (2.81 vs. 2.42 and 2.36 respectively).
- Urban dwellers score slightly higher than their rural counterparts (2.76 vs. 2.65).

Perceptions of the performance of government are related to the other perceptions of trust, responsiveness and legitimacy. In short, those that believe political institutions perform well are also likely to trust the system, see it as responsive, and believe that it is legitimate, although the analysis does not reveal causal directions.

Table 30: Correlations between Government Performance, Responsiveness, Trust and Legitimacy

	Responsiveness	Trust	Legitimacy
Performance	0.592**	0.567**	0.278**

***Pearson's r, significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Patience and the Pace of Change

In societies that have recently emerged from colonial or authoritarian rule, the past remains

politically important. This is true in part because the social, economic and political inequalities of the past will form the basis for post-colonial reform. In addition, rulers often use the past as a justification for slow progress made after independence, while citizens use the past as a yardstick to determine whether or not matters have improved with the advent of democracy. It is important to understand how much patience citizens will have as they assess the performance of the new regime.

Table 31 shows that respondents are somewhat split on the question of whether or not they can expect rapid progress in dealing with past problems: 48 percent expect the government to deal with these problems now, while 41 percent expect it to take a long time. Thus, the Namibian government should be cautious about relying on public tolerance if progress is indeed slow.

Table 31: Dealing With the Problems of the Past

	percent
It will take years to deal with problems. (strongly agree)	17
It will take years to deal with problems. (agree)	24
The government ought to deal with problems now. (agree)	15
The government ought to deal with problems now. (strongly agree)	33
Don't know	10

Please tell me whether you agree more with Statement A or B? Statement A: It will take years for our system of government to deal with the problems inherited from the South Africans. Statement B: Our system of government ought to be able to deal with problems right now regardless of who caused them.

Responses were recoded from 1 (strongly agree government ought to deal with problems now) to 4 (strongly agree that it will take years to deal with problems), with a midpoint of 2.5. Table 41 shows that, based on mean scores, opinions vary significantly across the thirteen regions of Namibia. Two regions in which the ruling party has electoral hegemony, Oshana and Omusati, rate as the most patient (3.28 and 3.21), while Karas, Kavango and Hardap are the least willing to wait (1.50, 1.58 and 1.69).

Table 32: Dealing With Problems of the Past Index, by Region

	<i>Mean</i>	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	1.78	41	.99
Hardap	1.69	45	1.02
Karas	1.50	46	.78
Khomas	2.25	130	1.34
Kunene	1.88	50	1.10
Ohangwena	2.45	108	1.04
Kavango	1.58	91	.92
Omaheke	2.22	50	1.07
Omusati	3.21	146	.61
Oshana	3.28	102	.60
Oshikoto	1.84	95	1.01
Otjozondjupa	2.01	83	1.09
Caprivi	2.08	73	1.14
Total	2.28	1060	1.15

When we break down responses according to various social groupings and structures, the following trends are observed.

- Gender does not account for any meaningful differences in patience.
- Black Namibians (2.33) are generally more patient than their white counterparts (1.85).
- Inhabitants of rural areas (2.32) are only slightly more patient than their urban counterparts (2.16).
- There is no significant correlation between respondents' age and the degree of patience.
- Although the correlation between respondents' education level and the level of patience is significant²⁷ it is not very strong. Hence, patience declines only slightly with increases in education.
- Partisanship appears to be most strongly linked to variations in the level of patience. SWAPO-Party supporters score 2.48, while opposition supporters score just 2.06, and those with no party affiliation just 2.03.

The Most Serious Problems: The People's Agenda

What do Namibians regard as the most serious problems facing their country? What do they want the government to attend to? In an open-ended question, we asked respondents to identify up to three problems they regard as being among the most important for the government to address.

The most important problems identified are generally socio-economic in nature. They include:

- *Unemployment/job creation*: This is regarded as the most serious of all problems. More than 50 percent of respondents identify it as a major problem.
- *Crime*: Almost one-in every four identify crime related issues as among the most important.

- *Water/Electricity*: Almost 20 percent of Namibians identify provision of these services as a priority.
- *Education*: This is identified by 18 percent of respondents.
- *HIV/AIDS*: Fourteen percent feel that the HIV/AIDS pandemic requires serious attention from government.

Other problems that were identified include:

- *Poverty* (7 percent)
- *Drought* (6 percent)
- *Health* (9 percent)
- *Economic improvements* (5 percent).

Unemployment, crime, and HIV/AIDS were identified by more urban than rural respondents, while the need for water, electricity and health care was identified more frequently among rural respondents.

ECONOMIC REFORM AND PERFORMANCE

Management of the economy is one of the key functions of modern governments. But scholars are divided on the question of which type of government is better at producing and delivering economic goods such as growth and redistribution. In addition, scholars also debate the impact that success or failure in managing the economy will have on a government, particularly on the consolidation of a new and struggling democracy.

Schmitter and Karl (1996:59) argue that democracies are not necessarily more efficient economically than non-democracies, and their rates of aggregate growth, savings and investment may be no better than those in their authoritarian counterparts. However, others argue that democracy will produce better public decisions (the so-called Dahl-theorem) because contested elections with widespread participation and a degree of political rights and liberties are supposed to force governments to be accountable to the public. In democracies, elected rulers are presumably anticipating the retrospective judgments of voters and hence, they trade at the margin of the private benefits they extract from holding office during the current term and the probability of losing office if they displease the voters (Cheibub and Przeworski, 1997:120).

In order to evaluate Dahl's theorem, Cheibub and Pzeworski assessed the statistical impact of economic performance on the marginal probability that the incumbent head of government (prime ministers and presidents) would survive in office. They found that:

. . . only the rate of growth of the labour force affects survival and only under parliamentary democracies. In turn, the probability of survival is independent of the rate of growth of per capita income and of per capita consumption, of the rate of inflation and of the share of government consumption expenditures in GDP. And if political leaders are not sanctioned for the economic performance they generate, then

they do not need to anticipate these sanctions when they make decisions concerning the size of the public sector. (cited in Cheibub and Pzeworski, 1997:121)

This seems to suggest that economic performance counts for very little when it comes to the survival of governments and politicians.

Haggard and Kaufman (1995:16), on the other hand, argue that the consolidation of democracy and the consolidation of economic reform are closely related, but that they have different political foundations. They contend that democracy will struggle to become consolidated when and if the broad assumptions underlying the management of the economy are subject to regular challenge or lack widespread support.

To probe how economic issues might affect the consolidation of democracy in Namibia, we began by asking respondents about current, past, and expected future economic conditions in the country. We will then explore the question of who citizens blame if they are unhappy about the economy – government and its policies, or the market and its agents – and we will then consider the impact on the process of consolidating democracy. The results to the first set of questions are recorded in Tables 33 through 35.

Table 33: Satisfaction with Current Economic Conditions

	percent
Very dissatisfied	7
Dissatisfied	23
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16
Satisfied	34
Very satisfied	7
Don't know	9
Missing	4

At the moment, are you dissatisfied, neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, or satisfied with economic conditions in Namibia?

Table 33 shows that 41 percent of respondents are either satisfied or very satisfied with the current economic conditions in the country, while fully 30 percent, or nearly one in three, are somewhat or very dissatisfied. This level of dissatisfaction could be cause for serious concern for a government, but the trends recorded in Table 34 alleviate this somewhat. It shows that just 19 percent feel that economic conditions now are worse or much worse than one year ago, while 25 percent feel that things have remained pretty much the same, and fully 40 percent think that economic conditions have improved.

Table 34: Economic Conditions Now Compared to One Year Ago

	percent
Much worse	4
Worse	15
About the same	25
Better	33
Much better	7
Don't know	11
Missing	5

How do economic conditions in Namibia now compare to one year ago?

Furthermore, as shown in Table 35, 44 percent of respondents believe that economic conditions will improve over the next twelve months. Some 18 percent think that things will remain the same, while 16 percent expect that conditions will worsen.

Table 35: Expectations of Future Economic Conditions

	percent
Much worse	3
Worse	13
About the same	18
Better	31
Much better	13
Don't know	17
Missing	4

What about in twelve months time? Do you expect economic conditions in Namibia to be worse, the same or better than they are now?

Once again, responses were recoded using a five-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied or much worse, and 5 = very satisfied or much better, with a midpoint of 3). Analysis of mean scores shows that the trends in results apparent in the three tables above appear to hold across region, gender, race, age, education and party affiliation. Black respondents are slightly more positive on all three accounts than their white counterparts, and the same holds true for SWAPO-Party supporters, and for rural as opposed to urban dwellers. But the trends follow the same patterns, and the overall differences are not large.

We continue by evaluating whether these responses are correlated to each other and/or to other variables measuring “affection” for the political system. We would expect to find that the three variables are related because they measure opinions about the same construct: the economy. Factor analysis confirms this, and bivariate correlation analysis confirms significant correlations between all three variables. Thus, those that are satisfied with current economic conditions are also likely to think that matters have improved over the past year,²⁸ and that they will improve still further over the next year.²⁹ Similarly, there is also a direct correlation between those who believe matters have improved in the last year and those who believe they will improve over the coming year.³⁰

Table 36 shows that views on economic conditions correlate with a number of variables that depict affection for the political system, including performance, responsiveness, trust and legitimacy.³¹

Table 36: Correlations between Economic Conditions and Other Variables

	Performance	Corruption	Responsive-ness	Trust	Legitimacy
Current economic conditions	0.28*	-0.07	0.33**	0.35**	0.26**
Past economic conditions	0.21**	-0.14**	0.34**	0.30**	0.20**
Future economic conditions	0.20*	-0.03	0.25**	0.29**	0.22**

*Pearson's *r*, significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Pearson's *r*, significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These Pearson's correlation coefficients suggest that those Namibians that have positive views of economic conditions are also likely to trust the system, view it as legitimate, and feel the system is responsive and that it performs well.

CITIZENSHIP

Citizens of a democracy can add value to their day-to-day lives if they use the opportunities that are provided by their political system. For this they need to be informed. They need to be informed about the workings of the system, the actors that make up the system, and the agendas that are set or avoided. They need to know about the policies and strategies that are set to guide their well being and the day-to-day public issues which they, the government and the country are faced with. There would be no need for a free press, for example, if there were no need for information. Having said that, however, one has to admit that not all citizens are equally interested in what happens in the public sphere. Interest in politics is an important determinant of whether or not citizens will look for information. This means that those citizens (or subjects as Mamdani (1996) calls them) that are apathetic or fatalistic about politics and life in general are less inclined to show political interest and search for information than those that believe in their own efficacy.

Political Interest

We asked two questions to determine the level of political interest among citizens. The first question concerned the frequency with which citizens talk about politics, and the second the frequency with which they follow the politics of the day.

Table 37 shows that most Namibians engage in political discussions only either occasionally or not at all (78 percent). Just 20 percent engage in frequent political discussions.

Table 37: Frequency of Political Discussion

	percent
Frequently	20
Occasionally	41
Never	37
Don't know	2

When you get together with your friends, would you say you discuss political matters ... ?

Table 38 likewise shows that only 18 percent of Namibians follow government and public affairs on a regular basis (always or most of the time). Overall, Namibians seem more inclined to follow politics on an irregular basis than to engage in political discussions.

Table 38: Interest in Government and Public Affairs

	percent
Always, most of the time	18
Some of the time	48
Now and then	14
Hardly at all	12
Don't know	7

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?

In addition to finding that there are significant variations among the country's regions in response to both questions, further trends include:

- Black Namibians tend to be more interested in politics than their white counterparts on both accounts.
- Women are slightly more interested in politics than men on both accounts.
- Rural Namibians are more interested than urbanites, especially because they follow government and public affairs more closely.

The two variables are closely related; those Namibians who are likely to discuss politics are also more likely to follow what is going on in the government and public affairs.³² Also, access to information (see Table 43 below) correlates positively with interest in politics on both accounts.³³ This means that those with more access to information are also more likely to be interested in politics. Age as an independent variable has little impact.³⁴ Older people are slightly more inclined to discuss politics than their younger counterparts, but no correlation of any kind exists between age and the frequency with which government and public affairs are followed. Education has a far stronger impact than age: its correlation with both interest in politics variables is significant and positive.³⁵ This means that better-educated Namibians are more interested in politics than their lesser-educated counterparts.

Political Knowledge

Political scientists and theorists have been concerned about the levels of political knowledge among citizens for a long time. One school of thought expects the level of knowledge among citizens in a democracy to be low, but concludes that this is not detrimental to democratic efficiency or legitimacy. Joseph Schumpeter argued that genuine political information and knowledge is likely to be randomly distributed among citizens and that it has a tenuous link with political action, while a second school of thought holds the opposite view (Frazer and Macdonald 2001:1). Survey data has shown that variations in knowledge and information converge with important social structures in some societies. Variations were stratified by age, sex and social class, leading to the conclusion that the distribution of knowledge and information is systematic and not random. This second school of thought also maintains that actions are inspired by relevant political information.

But what is political knowledge? Factual knowledge about political actors, parties, policies and constitutional rules constitutes one dimension of political knowledge. Another dimension covers citizens' understanding of key notions and concepts such as rights, liberty and justice.

The survey questions directed at evaluating political knowledge asked respondents to name a number of prominent individuals in their political system: the deputy head-of-state (the Prime Minister), the Minister of Finance (as the key economic decision-maker), regional councilors, and local councilors.

As shown in Table 39, a majority of respondents (67 percent) could name the Prime Minister, but only 31 percent could identify the Minister of Finance, 23 percent their regional councilor, and just 3 percent could name a local authority councilor (7 percent if excluding those who have no local councilor).

There are several interesting aspects to these results. First, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance are not directly elected representatives³⁶ but outscore those that are directly elected (regional and local authority councilors). Likewise, national-level office holders are much more recognizable than those at the sub-national level. Finally, although the data suggests that substantial sections of respondents do not know their office holders, we should keep in mind that it is possible that they do know the individuals, but do not associate them with their specific positions or offices.

Table 39: Knowledge of Office Holders

	Prime Minister	Finance Minister	Regional Councilor	Local Councilor
Right answer	67	31	23	3
Wrong answer	2	4	6	<1
Don't know	22	39	48	33
Know but can't remember	4	11	21	16
Could not determine	5	16	3	2
Not applicable				6
Missing data				40

First of all let us speak about the political system in this country. Can you tell me who presently holds the following offices?

Factor analysis reveals that the four sets of responses are not linked in any consistent way, suggesting that they do not arise from a common underlying perspective. Therefore, a single index of political knowledge cannot be constructed or used for further analysis.

Table 40 shows the responses by region.

Table 40: Knowledge of Office Holders, by Region

	Prime Minister	Minister of Finance	Regional Councilor	Local Councilor
Erongo	98	69	9	13
Hardap	87	19	10	6
Karas	88	29	27	2
Khomas	88	53	11	0
Kunene	91	31	61	0
Ohangwena	38	19	7	10
Kavango	50	12	19	0
Omaheke	61	14	20	21
Omusati	58	28	34	0
Oshana	58	29	35	1
Oshikoto	78	46	43	2
Otjozondjupa	84	31	9	0
Caprivi	58	25	17	0

Percent giving right answer.

The Prime Minister is best known in regions where SWAPO-Party does not have an electoral hegemony (Erongo, Hardap, Karas, Khomas, Kunene and Otjozondjupa). Oshikoto is the only exception to this trend. However, SWAPO-Party strongholds are also predominantly rural, which may be a factor in the distribution of political knowledge.

If we introduce party support into the analysis, we find that opposition party supporters generally have a better knowledge of national office bearers than SWAPO-Party supporters or those with no party affiliation, although this does not hold true in the case of regional and local authority councilors.

Table 41: Knowledge of Office Holders, by Party Support

	Prime Minister	Minister of Finance	Regional Councilor	Local Councilor
SWAPO-Party	62	31	28	4
Opposition Parties	85	36	19	5
No Party	66	26	14	2
Refuse to say	83	47	29	2

Percent giving right answer.

Does this mean that respondents' level of knowledge is the product of the party they support? That is, is it possible that some parties do more to educate and inform their supporters and that this is reflected in a better knowledge of office bearers? Or is it possible that some other variable better explains the variances in responses, but that its real impact is shielded by party support?

In fact, we find that rural respondents are less knowledgeable about office bearers than urban respondents. For example, 92 percent of urban respondents could name the Prime Minister, while only 62 percent of rural respondents could do so. Similarly, 56 percent could correctly name the Minister of Finance in urban areas, while just 21 percent in rural locations could name him. However, rural and urban dwellers are roughly comparable in their ability to name regional and local councilors.

Could this perhaps mean that location is more important in explaining levels of knowledge about office bearers than party support? If we break down results by both party support and rural or urban domicile, we see that the influence of location is indeed far stronger than that of party support. Table 42 shows that, in general, all parties' rural supporters know less about office bearers than their urban counterparts; they provide more "don't knows" and fewer correct answers. The only exception is in the case of regional councilors. Since SWAPO-Party has far more rural supporters than the opposition parties, its supporters appear less informed.

Table 42: Knowledge of Office Holders, by Party Support and Urban/Rural Location

		Prime Minister	Minister of Finance	Regional Councilor	Local Councilor
Urban	SWAPO-Party	94	68	39	3
	Opposition	96	56	16	7
	No Party	86	42	10	2
Rural	SWAPO-Party	58	22	29	1
	Opposition	74	15	24	4
	No Party	63	21	21	3

Percent giving right answer.

The following trends are also detected:

- Women are generally less informed about office bearers than men.

- Younger people are better informed than older people.
- White Namibians appear better informed than their black counterparts, but this may again be because the population residing in rural areas is predominantly black.

One would expect access to information to be an important divider in the distribution of political knowledge. An information index was constructed from three components: the frequency of getting news from newspapers, radio, and television respectively (where 5 corresponds to daily access, and 1 to no access at all). The analysis thus far suggests that there is a significant knowledge gap between residents in rural and urban areas. Average scores on this information index confirm that rural areas are information deprived compared to urban areas (see Table 43).

Table 43: Access to Information Index, by Urban/Rural Location

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Urban	3.38	324	.883
Rural	1.69	661	.978
Total	2.24	985	1.239

Political Efficacy

One aspect of political efficacy involves an individual’s perceived ability to participate meaningfully in political activities. This perception will form an important part of his or her overall attitude toward political life and institutions. A sense of individual political efficacy is in part a function of the individual’s innate ability, social conditioning and social circumstances, but it is also likely to be linked to other political variables such as legitimacy and participation.

The survey investigated three measures of political efficacy, based on respondents’ perceptions about access to sufficient information about politics, the complexity of government and political affairs, and the freedom to say and do what they want politically. Table 44 presents the findings.

One-in-every two Namibians either agrees or strongly agrees that they do not have sufficient information about political life and government, and roughly the same proportion indicate that they find political and government affairs too complicated to understand. A nearly equal number feel that they must be careful about what they say and do about politics. On the other hand, only between 26 and 34 percent either disagree or strongly disagree with each of these statements. This suggests that a majority of Namibians feel their own political efficacy is relatively limited.

Table 44: Political Efficacy

	You think that you don't have enough information about political life and the actions of government.	Sometimes political and government affairs seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on.	In this country, you must be very careful of what you say and do with regard to politics.
Strongly agree	11	11	11
Agree	40	44	37
Neither agree nor disagree	11	14	14
Disagree	25	18	22
Strongly disagree	9	8	10
Don't know	4	5	6

Do you disagree, neither disagree nor agree, or agree with the following statements?

Factor analysis suggests that the three sets of responses build on a single underlying point of view, and reliability analysis confirms the reliability of the scale.³⁷ A political efficacy index comprising these three items was therefore constructed for further analysis using a five-point scale (where 1 represents strongly agree or very low efficacy, and 5 is strongly disagree, or very high efficacy, with a mid-point of 3). Table 45 shows the distribution of political efficacy across the thirteen regions of the country.

There are significant variations across the regions. Only three regions, Karas, Hardap and Kunene, score at or above the scale mid-point of 3.00. Kavango and Oshana score lowest, with average scores of only slightly above 2. There is, however, no clear pattern to the regional distribution.

Table 45: Political Efficacy Index, by Region

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	2.85	45	0.53
Hardap	3.86	44	0.63
Karas	3.72	46	1.25
Khomas	2.62	126	0.90
Kunene	3.05	50	0.95
Ohangwena	2.61	115	0.71
Kavango	2.48	88	0.62
Omaheke	2.87	46	1.01
Omusati	2.62	159	0.80
Oshana	2.48	104	0.66
Oshikoto	2.71	94	0.94
Otjozondjupa	2.84	74	0.86
Caprivi	2.56	73	1.27
Total	2.75	1064	0.92

Additional findings include:

- Only slight differences in reported levels of efficacy are associated with gender, rural or urban habitation, party affiliation and race.
- Efficacy correlates positively with legitimacy: Namibians with a higher sense of political efficacy are also more likely to view the system as legitimate.³⁸
- Efficacy correlates positively with education.³⁹
- Efficacy correlates positively, but weakly, with access to information⁴⁰ and with the belief that the political system is responsive.⁴¹
- Efficacy correlates negatively but weakly with the perception that the system is corrupt.⁴²
- There is no significant correlation between efficacy and trust or system performance.

These trends suggest that it is quite difficult to explain efficacy by looking at the influence of social structures and socio-biographical variables.

The survey also enquired about the effectiveness of voting and elections. One would expect ratings of efficacy to be high in countries where the electoral process is regarded as legitimate and free and fair, and where there is a reasonable chance for more than one party to gain representation.

The latter point is quite important and is in part related to the type of electoral system in use. Plurality systems tend to promote two-party systems because they favor large parties and under-represent small parties. Voting for smaller parties is discouraged because of the high probability that they will be under-represented, so while some voters might choose to vote strategically for second-choice parties, other will abstain from voting altogether, with the psychological effect of discouraging voters and producing negative evaluations of the political system.⁴³ Namibia uses a closed-list system of proportional representation for national assembly elections and should, in theory, be able to avoid these psychological effects of plurality systems. However, the fact that

Namibia's ruling party has achieved such overwhelming electoral dominance reduces the effectiveness of opposition parties, which could create the same psychological effect among supporters of opposition parties.

Table 46 shows that most Namibians (55 percent) believe that voting can improve things, while 37 percent disagree. An even greater number (62 percent) believe that who holds power does make a difference.

Table 46: Voting and Elections Efficacy

Voting Efficacy	percent
Voting won't improve things. (strongly agree)	18
Voting won't improve things. (agree)	19
Voting can improve things. (agree)	12
Voting can improve things. (strongly agree)	43
Don't know.	6
Don't agree with either.	1
Importance of Who is in Power	
Who is in power is important. (strongly agree)	40
Who is in power is important. (agree)	22
Who is in power isn't important. (agree)	8
Who is in power isn't important. (strongly agree)	13
Don't know.	10
Don't agree with either.	5

Please tell me whether you agree more with Statement A or Statement B?

Statement A: No matter how you vote, it won't make things any better in the future. Statement B: The way you vote could make things better in the future.

Statement A: It is important who is in power because it can make a difference to what happens. Statement B: It doesn't really matter who is in power, because in the end things go on much the same?

Perhaps surprisingly, responses to these two questions do not correlate in any significant way.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the correlations between each of these two responses and the political efficacy index are significant, but quite weak.⁴⁵ It thus appears that perceptions of personal political efficacy translate only weakly into belief in the importance of voting or in the importance of who holds power.

Correlations with indices of various aspects of affection for the political system are shown in Table 47. Overall the importance of who is in power seems to be more strongly linked to these indices of support for the political system than voting efficacy.

Table 47: Correlations between Voting and Elections Efficacy and System Affection

	Voting Efficacy	Importance of Who is in Power
<i>Performance Index</i>	0.06*	0.10**
<i>Responsiveness Index</i>	0.09*	0.21**
<i>Trust Index</i>	0.09**	0.18**
<i>Legitimacy Index</i>	0.05	0.20**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Civic Participation

Civic participation is measured by means of a set of questions determining the frequency with which respondents attend meetings of public institutions such as church groups, cooperatives and self-help organizations, groups concerned with local matters such as schools, housing or rates and taxes, local commercial organizations such as business groups and farmers associations, groups that do things for the community, and trade unions. Table 48 provides an overview of the findings.

The frequency with which Namibians participate in these community-based activities varies quite substantially. Meetings of groups concerned with local matters such as schools and housing are the most frequently attended (21 percent attend often), followed by church group meetings (19 percent). Participation in the meetings of local commercial organizations, self-help associations, and trade unions is, however, quite low, with only 4 to 6 percent attending often.

Table 48: Civic Participation

	Never	Once Or Twice	A Few Times	Often	Don't Know
Church group	38	19	24	19	<1
Co-operative/self-help association.	61	14	18	6	1
School/housing/rates groups	34	22	23	21	1
Local commercial organizations	71	10	11	6	1
Group that does things for the community	49	21	17	13	1
Trade union	83	6	4	4	4

Over the past year, how often have you attended meetings of a ____?

Given the low rate of civic participation overall, one might expect to find substantial variation among the various biographical and social groups. Factor analysis shows that responses in all the categories are linked, and can therefore be combined into a reliable index of civic participation that ranges from 1 (never participate) to 4 (participate often), with a midpoint of 2.5.

None of the regions scores above the midpoint, although the three regions with the highest scores, Erongo, Kunene and Caprivi, all have mean scores above 2.0. The two southern regions of Karas and Hardap score lowest.

Table 49: Civic Participation Index, by Region

Region	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	2.19	42	0.606
Hardap	1.36	47	0.354
Karas	1.26	56	0.398
Khomas	1.80	129	0.652
Kunene	2.05	48	0.629
Ohangwena	1.75	110	0.694
Kavango	1.82	87	0.663
Omaheke	1.57	49	0.594
Omusati	1.87	152	0.505
Oshana	1.95	108	0.532
Oshikoto	1.63	96	0.564
Otjozondjupa	1.70	81	0.680
Caprivi	2.39	67	0.769
Total	1.80	1072	0.650

Further analysis shows that:

- There is no significant difference in participation levels between urban and rural areas or between men and women.
- Participation levels do not vary much between SWAPO-Party supporters and opposition party supporters, but those with no party affiliation score lower.
- Whites are slightly less active than their black counterparts.
- Age does not correlate in any significant way with levels of civic participation.

There is a weak but significant positive correlation between the level of civic participation and access to information.⁴⁶ This is perhaps to be expected since many of the organizations would use the media to publicize their activities and gatherings.

Political Participation

Citizens' participation in politics is not confined to voting only. They have several other options through which to assert their preferences. These include attending election rallies, working for political candidates or parties, teaming up with others to address important problems faced by the nation or community, and submitting their opinions to the press. The survey not only enquired about whether or not respondents had participated in these activities in the past, but also about whether or not they would do so if they were given the opportunity. The latter dimension was added because of the unequal distribution of opportunities that is typical of countries like Namibia. The results are presented in Table 50.

A majority of Namibians has participated both by joining with others to address important issues and by attending election rallies. However, only 17 percent have worked for candidates or parties, and just 10 percent have ever written a letter to the newspaper. Many more respondents indicate that they would participate if they have the opportunity, especially by working for a candidate or party or by writing a letter to a newspaper. Having said that, however, roughly half of respondents indicate that they would never engage in either of these activities.

Table 50: Political Participation

	Would never do it.	Would if I had the chance.	Have done it.
Participate with others to address an important issue affecting the community or nation (other than an election)	25	23	52
Attend an election rally	23	21	56
Work for political candidate or party	48	36	17
Write a letter to a newspaper	50	40	10

Here is a list of things that people sometimes do as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you have engaged in this activity or not?

A 5-point political participation index was constructed from these four items after factor analysis and reliability analysis indicated that such an index is valid and reliable. Values range from 1 (would never do) to 5 (have done it often).⁴⁷ Table 51 shows the regional breakdown of the political participation index.

Table 51: Political Participation Index, by Region

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Erongo	1.97	48	.59
Hardap	1.90	41	.75
Karas	1.81	44	.85
Khomas	2.22	126	1.01
Kunene	2.58	44	.75
Ohangwena	2.14	143	.95
Kavango	2.59	89	.78
Omaheke	2.48	49	.88
Omusati	2.40	158	.83
Oshana	2.31	110	.73
Oshikoto	2.15	96	.85
Otjozondjupa	1.96	78	.80
Caprivi	2.58	70	.90
Total	2.26	1096	.87

The overall level of political participation is well below the scale mid-point (3). Five regions, Kunene, Kavango, Caprivi, Omaheke and Omusati are closest to the midpoint and hence have the highest levels of political participation. Karas and Hardap regions show the lowest participation levels.

Additional analysis of the mean scores shows that:

- There is no significant difference between the levels of rural and urban participation, or between men's and women's participation.
- Ruling party supporters score only slightly higher than opposition parties' supporters (2.38 vs. 2.24).
- Black Namibians are more politically active than their white counterparts (2.3 vs. 1.8).

Political participation can also be linked to other factors. The following correlations were found:

- Political participation correlates positively with civic participation.⁴⁸
- Political participation, like civic participation, correlates positively with access to information.⁴⁹
- Political participation also correlates positively with legitimacy,⁵⁰ with perceptions of government performance,⁵¹ and with trust in government.⁵²

CONCLUSION

This report is by no means an exhaustive exploration of the theme of democratic consolidation in Namibia. It reports on the progress the country has made toward consolidating democracy in the ten years since independence. The analysis is focused on ordinary citizens and their attitudes. It does not account for elite behavior or institutional developments.

The data presented above suggest that Namibia has made significant progress toward consolidating democracy at the attitudinal level. Although democracy is not yet the “only game in town,” support and preference for democracy is strong among the majority of Namibians. By far the majority of respondents reject non-democratic alternatives to democracy. There are at this point in time no clearly defined segments of Namibian society that put forward strong demands for non-democratic forms of rule.

The relationship between citizens and their state is also positive. Most respondents regard the current government as legitimate. They also believe the system is responsive to their needs and they trust the government. These are valuable commodities for any government that assumes power after a prolonged period of authoritarian rule. There is no clearly identifiable group of Namibians that express strongly negative attitudes toward the current government. The system is also regarded as relatively free from corruption, and actual personal experiences with corruption are minimal.

Most respondents are happy with the performance of democracy thus far. Although some of them see minor problems, few regard the system as non-democratic. Elections are generally regarded as free and fair, and where problems are identified, these are regarded as minor. Furthermore, most acknowledge that democracy has brought an improvement in both economic and political rights. Respondents are generally satisfied with current economic conditions and remain hopeful about the future.

The more negative aspects of the consolidation process thus far relate to Namibians’ willingness to contribute to the workings of democracy. Political interest and participation levels are low, as are levels of political knowledge and ratings of political efficacy. This means that there is little evidence of increasing demand for democracy. Factors that influence the development of a civic culture are the fact that many Namibians live in rural areas that are not only remote and deprived of information, but also unorganized as far as their immediate interests are concerned.

Social structures shape opinions in various ways and to varying degrees. Age and education have an impact on most attitudes, although the relationship is not always a strong one. The two variables that account most powerfully for variance in perceptions and responses, however, are partisanship and rural versus urban location. The impact of partisanship is a reminder of just how important the political divisions of the past still are today. The impact of the rural-urban divide encapsulates many of the socio-economic and political differentiations in Namibian society. These include differences in access to information, contact with policy makers, income, employment, food security, access to cash, and a range of other variables that will continue to shape attitudes for some time to come.

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Appendix A: Survey Methodology

The random selection of the relevant Enumerator Areas (EAs) in each region constituted the first stage of sampling. This was done from the 1991 Population and Housing Census Sample Frame, the only one available to this date in Namibia. Firstly, a random starting point was drawn and that was used to identify the first EA. Thereafter, the remaining EAs were selected using a fixed sample interval calculated from the total urban and rural populations from each region. These EAs were listed with sample-frame numbers and their exact locations were recorded using a GIS-map of the country and its EAs. These locations were then imported into GPS equipment and issued to the relevant teams. Each team received a number of additional EA locations that could be used for substitutions if and when needed.

The second stage of the sampling required selection of appropriate households for the interviews. For rural areas where no clearly demarcated residential areas exist, a GIS-map was used to identify settlement patterns. From this, prominent features such as water points, churches or schools were selected as starting points. The locations of these starting points were entered into the teams' GPS databanks and were used to determine the exact points from where interviewers had to start their walking patterns. From each starting point interviewers had to embark on a walking pattern according to the four main compass points. After scanning the area and drawing rough maps of household locations in the area, interviewers used a random starting point and a fixed household interval to select households for interviews.

The third and final stage of sample selection required the selection of respondents. Once all qualified household members' details were recorded on a household matrix, the birthday method was used to select the respondent. Alternate interviews were conducted with male and female respondents to balance the sample for gender.

Endnotes

- ¹ For a detailed description of the transition period see Cliffe (1994) and Weiland (1994)
- ² The short time frame prevented the Constituent Assembly from testing the constitution against public opinion. Evidence from the Minutes of the Constituent Assembly (1989) highlight the fact that all parties willingly made trade-offs to adhere to the time frame for independence. In the end, the final document had to meet the requirements set out in UN Resolution 435. All this means that elites rather than the Namibian people played the crucial role in the transition to democratic rule and in the process of drafting the constitution.
- ³ Prior to the 1999 presidential and national assembly elections the constitution was amended to allocate a further term to President Nujoma.
- ⁴ The National Assembly includes 72 elected members and 6 non-voting members nominated by the president.
- ⁵ For an overview of institutionalized party systems, see Mainwaring and Scully (1995).
- ⁶ The survey was supported by a grant from Southern African Democracy Fund (SARDF) of the United States Agency for International Development, Regional Center for Southern Africa (USAID/RCSA) to the Institute for Democracy In South Africa (Idasa). Idasa coordinated a seven-country (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) cross-national survey called the Southern African Democracy Barometer in 1999-2000; the SARDF grant from USAID/RCSA supported surveys in six of these countries. The Southern African Democracy Barometer has since joined forces with similar survey projects in West and East Africa, and the project is now known collectively as the Afrobarometer.
- ⁷ In the words of Rose, et al. (1998), “Democracy is the cultural norm.”
- ⁸ Pearson’s $r = 0.43$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ⁹ Pearson’s $r = 0.83$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹⁰ The correlation is based on a 4-point scale where strong support for a strong leader scores 1 and strong support for democracy scores 4. The age scale ranges from 18-25 years (score=1) to 56+ (score=5). Pearson’s $r = -0.10$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹¹ Pearson’s $r = 0.21$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹² Pearson’s $r = -0.06$, significant at the 0.05 level.
- ¹³ Pearson’s $r = -0.09$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹⁴ Pearson’s $r = -0.09$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹⁵ Pearson’s $r = 0.02$, insignificant.
- ¹⁶ The survey was conducted before the 1999 presidential and national assembly elections.
- ¹⁷ Pearson’s $r = 0.34$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹⁸ Pearson’s $r = -0.16$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ¹⁹ Pearson’s $r = -0.08$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²⁰ Pearson’s $r = -0.09$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²¹ Pearson’s $r = 0.40$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²² Pearson’s $r = 0.35$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²³ Pearson’s $r = 0.45$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²⁴ Pearson’s $r = -0.13$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²⁵ Compared to the other countries in the Afrobarometer sample, Namibia is perceived to be relatively free of corruption (see Mattes, et al., 2000: 36). In addition, Namibia scored reasonably well on Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI). In 2000, Namibia was placed thirtieth globally, and second (after Botswana) in Sub-Saharan Africa (Lambsdorff 2000).
- ²⁶ Pearson’s $r = -0.01$, insignificant.
- ²⁷ Pearson’s $r = -0.09$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²⁸ Pearson’s $r = 0.53$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ²⁹ Pearson’s $r = 0.46$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ³⁰ Pearson’s $r = 0.50$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ³¹ For the analysis the indices developed in earlier sections of this report were applied.
- ³² Pearson’s $r = 0.24$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ³³ For the first variable: Pearson’s $r = 0.146$, significant at the 0.01 level. For the second variable: Pearson’s $r = 0.12$, significant at the 0.01 level.
- ³⁴ Pearson’s $r = 0.06$, significant at the 0.05 level.

³⁵ For first variable: Pearson's $r = 0.15$, significant at the 0.01 level. For the second variable: Pearson's $r = 0.16$, significant at the 0.01 level.

³⁶ Both of these officials are, however, elected from the ruling party's National Assembly closed list. Local authority councilors are also elected from closed lists. Regional councilors are elected by means of a simple plurality system with clearly defined single-member constituencies.

³⁷ Alpha = 0.67.

³⁸ Pearson's $r = 0.15$, significant at the 0.01 level.

³⁹ Pearson's $r = 0.11$, significant at the 0.01 level

⁴⁰ Pearson's $r = 0.08$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁴¹ Pearson's $r = 0.09$, significant at the 0.05 level.

⁴² Pearson's $r = -0.08$, significant at the 0.05 level.

⁴³ See for example Taagepera and Shugart (1989).

⁴⁴ Pearson's $r = -0.01$.

⁴⁵ Voting efficacy and the political efficacy index: Pearson's $r = 0.09$, significant at the 0.01 level. Importance of who is in power and the political efficacy index: Pearson's $r = 0.10$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁴⁶ Pearson's $r = 0.16$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁴⁷ In the results reported in Table 50, the five response options for this question (often, a few times, once or twice, would do if I had the chance, would never do) were collapsed into three categories, but all five categories are used to construct the index.

⁴⁸ Pearson's $r = 0.49$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁴⁹ Pearson's $r = 0.15$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁵⁰ Pearson's $r = 0.11$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁵¹ Pearson's $r = 0.18$, significant at the 0.01 level.

⁵² Pearson's $r = 0.19$, significant at the 0.01 level.