



Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche
en Géosciences Politiques et Prospective
Libreville, Gabon
9 January 2019



News release

Despite overwhelming discontent, Gabonese want democracy and reject military rule, survey shows

Despite massive public dissatisfaction with the status quo, Gabonese citizens strongly support democracy and reject military and one-man rule, Afrobarometer's most recent national survey shows.

Large majorities of the population disapprove of the country's overall direction, the quality of their most recent election, President Ali Bongo's performance, and the way their democracy is working – an overwhelming level of public discontent that may have emboldened military officers who this week attempted a coup.

Yet similarly large majorities of the citizenry want democracy and elections and oppose authoritarian alternatives, the survey shows.

Gabon, an oil-rich country marked by widespread poverty, has been ruled since 1967 by Omar Bongo and, after his death in 2009, his son Ali Bongo, who claimed a second presidential term after a disputed 2016 election followed by violent protests.

Key findings

- Large majorities of Gabonese citizens prefer democracy to any other kind of government (72%) and reject military rule (71%), one-party rule (87%), and one-man rule (90%). But only one in 10 citizens (11%) are satisfied with the way their democracy is working (Figure 1).
- Most Gabonese say their country is going in the wrong direction (87%). Seven in 10 see economic conditions as worsening (70%) and disapprove of President Bongo's job performance (72%) (Figure 2).
- More than two-thirds (68%) of Gabonese say elections are the best way to choose the country's leaders. But fewer than one in five trust the national electoral commission (16%) and consider the 2016 election to have been generally free and fair (18%) (Figure 3).

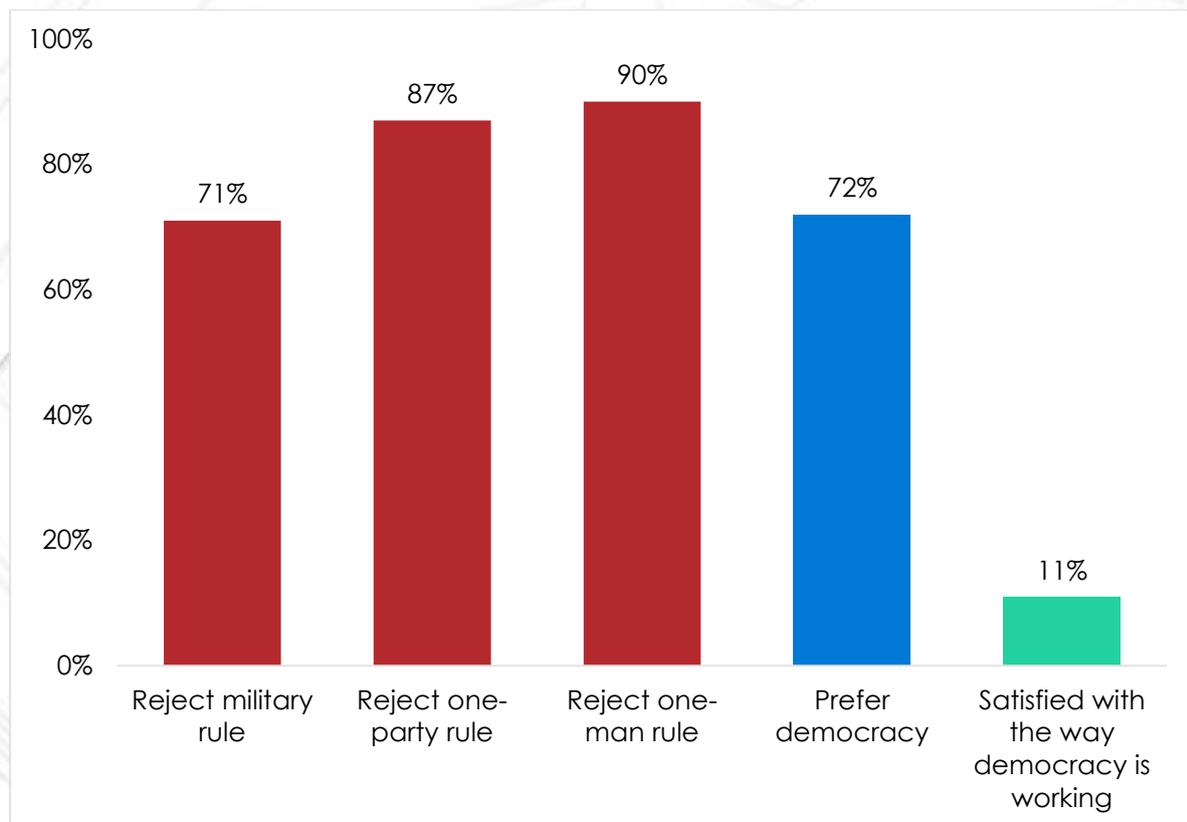
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys were completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Gabon, led by the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche en Géosciences Politiques et Prospective (CERGP), interviewed 1,200 adult citizens in November 2017. A sample of this size produces country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. One previous survey was conducted in Gabon in 2015.

Charts

Figure 1: Citizen attitudes toward democracy | Gabon | 2017



Respondents were asked:

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives:

- Elections and the National Assembly are abolished so that the president can decide everything?
- Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?
- The army comes in to govern the country?

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

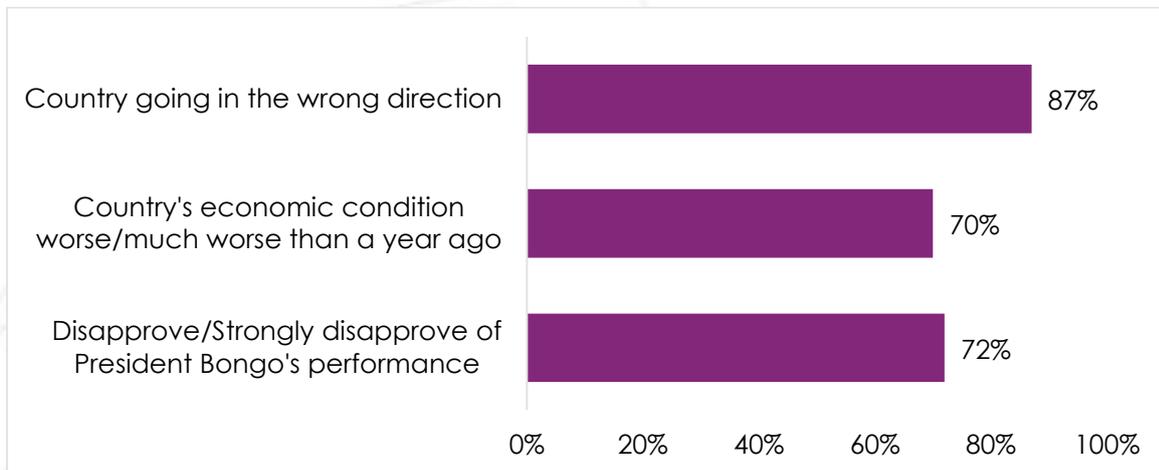
Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Gabon? (% "fairly" or "very" satisfied")

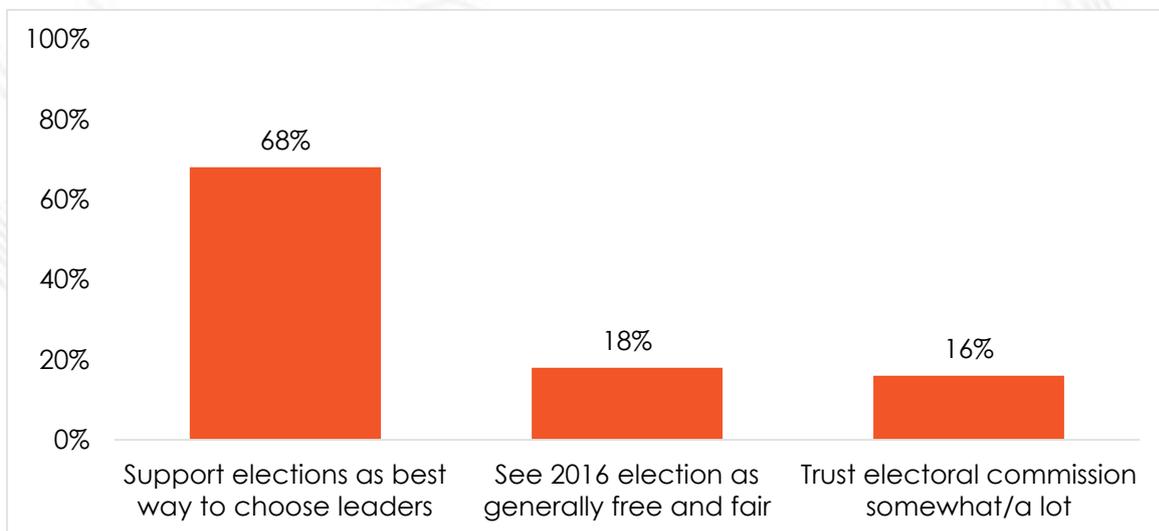
Figure 2: Direction of the country, economic conditions, and president's performance | Gabon | 2017



Respondents were asked:

Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?
 Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?
 Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: President Ali Bongo Ondimba?

Figure 3: Citizen views on elections | Gabon | 2017



Respondents were asked:

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

On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 2016?
 (% who say "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems")

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The National Autonomous and Permanent Electoral Commission?

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