



## Popular Attitudes toward Democracy in Ghana: A Summary of Afrobarometer Indicators, 1999-2008

6 May 2009

In 1957, Ghana became the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain its independence. It held its first multiparty election in 1960, but democratic politics soon gave way to a series of mostly authoritarian regimes that held power throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s. It was not until the early 1990's that the country would transition back to a lasting system of multiparty rule, initially under the leadership of former military ruler Lt. Jerry Rawlings. Since then, Ghana has held five multi-party elections (in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008). Both the 2000 and the 2008 elections resulted in electoral turnovers, and Ghana has consistently ranked high on Freedom House's indices of political rights and civil liberties. The country currently rates a score of 1 on political rights and 2 on civil liberties.

This document provides a summary of popular attitudes regarding the demand for and supply of democracy in Ghana as revealed over the course of four Afrobarometer surveys conducted between 1999 and 2008. Data for the first round were collected from July to August of 1999 (n=2004). The second round of data were collected from in August-September 2003 (n=1200). Data for rounds three and four were collected during March of 2005 (n=1197) and March of 2008 (n=1200) respectively. Samples of this size yield a margin of error of +/- 3 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent.

The charts that follow capture perceptions of:

- The meaning of democracy;
- The demand for democracy (including individual support for democracy, patience with democracy and rejection of military rule, one-party rule, and one-man rule);
- Support for democratic institutions (including attitudes toward elections, term limits, multi-party rule, and checks on presidential powers); and
- The supply of democracy (including satisfaction with democracy and the perceived extent of democracy, quality of elections, and the protection of individual freedoms).

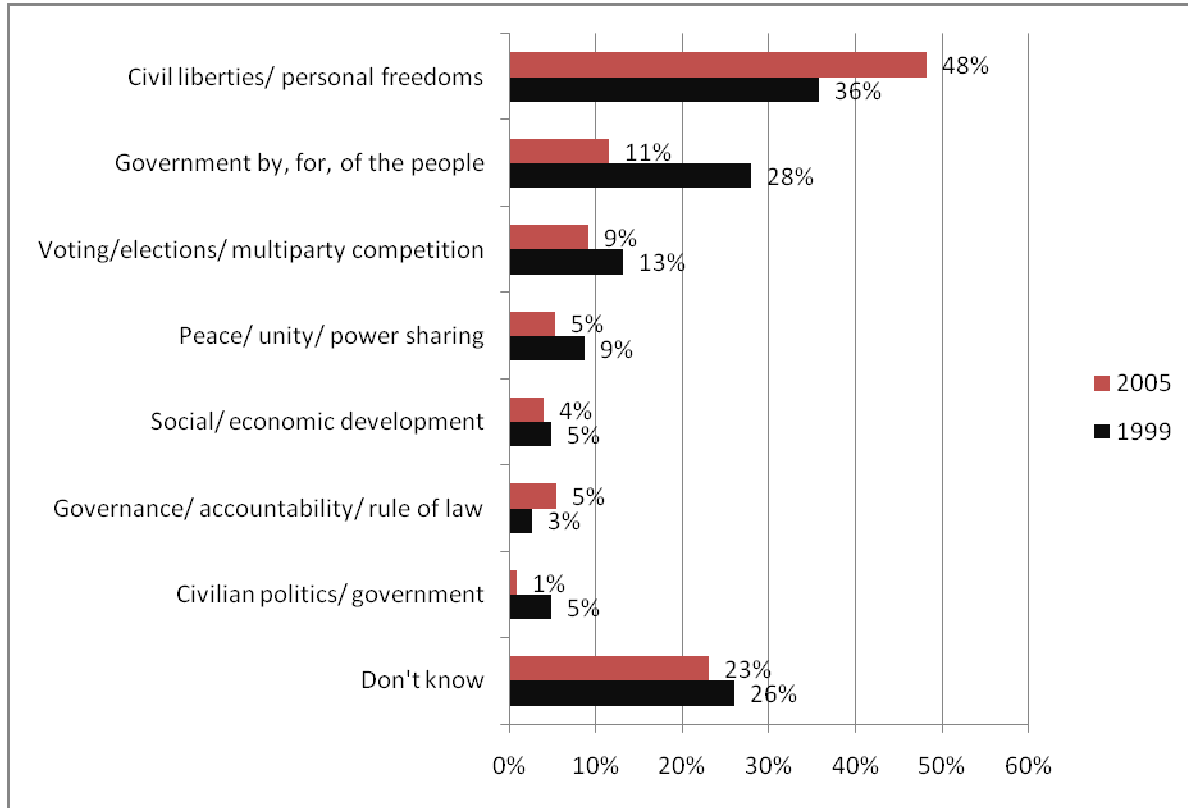
### Points of Interest

- Support for democracy has remained high and relatively steady in Ghana (2.1)
- There has been some decline in rejection of military rule from 1999 to 2008 (2.2)
- Support for multiparty competition has risen substantially between 2003 and 2008 (3.3)
- Satisfaction with democracy has risen more than 25 percent since 1999 (4.2)
- Evaluations of election quality have also climbed sharply (4.3)
- In contrast to other "democracy variables", Ghanaians are noticeably less patient with democracy in 2008 than they were in 2003 and 2005 (2.5)

## MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

### 1.1 Variable: Meaning of democracy

**Question:** What if anything does democracy mean to you?



*\*In 2005 respondents could offer up to three meanings. In 1999, they could offer two. Figures shown are the percentage of all substantive responses offered.*

## DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY

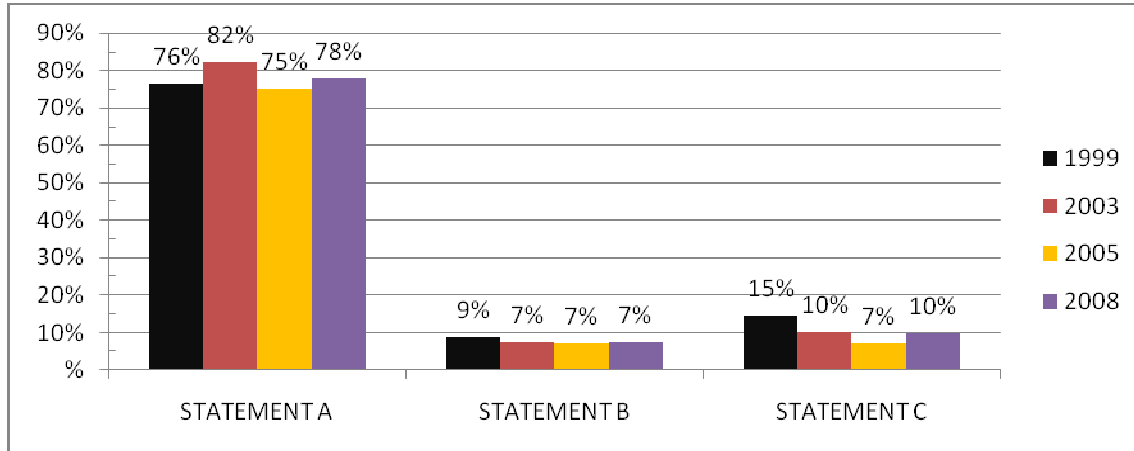
### 2.1 Variable: Support for democracy

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

A: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

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

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



Note: Figures for 2003 are calculated excluding "don't know" responses.

### 2.2 Variable: Reject military rule

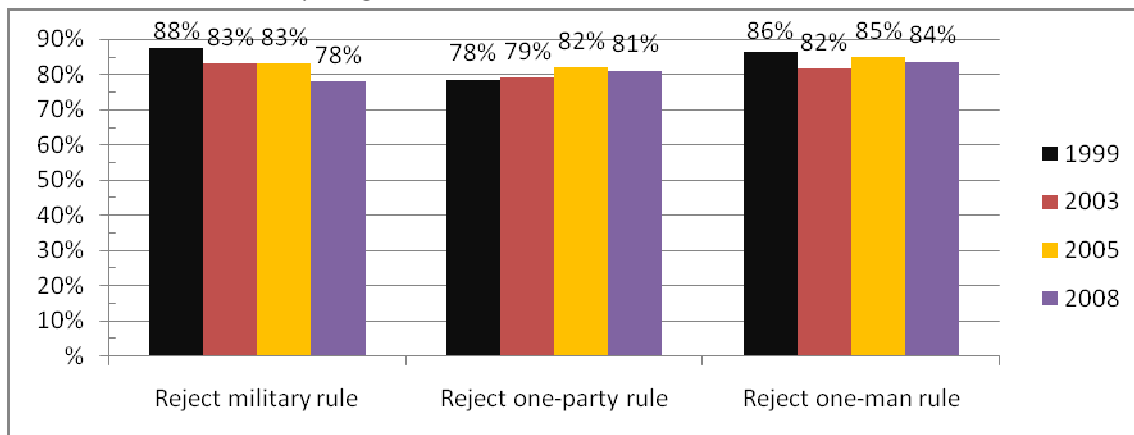
**Question:** There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: The army comes in to govern the country?

### 2.3 Variable: Reject one-party rule

**Question:** There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?

### 2.4 Variable: Reject one-man rule

**Question:** There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Elections and Parliament/National Assembly are abolished so that the President/Prime Minister can decide everything?



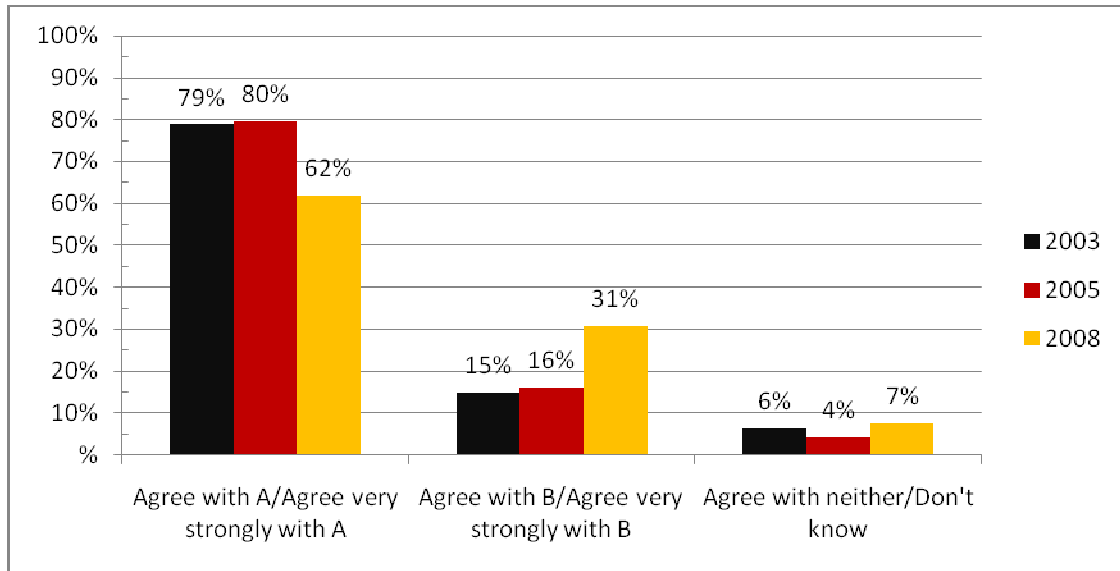
(Percent who disapprove/strongly disapprove of military rule, one-party rule and one-man rule)

**2.5 Variable: Patience with democracy**

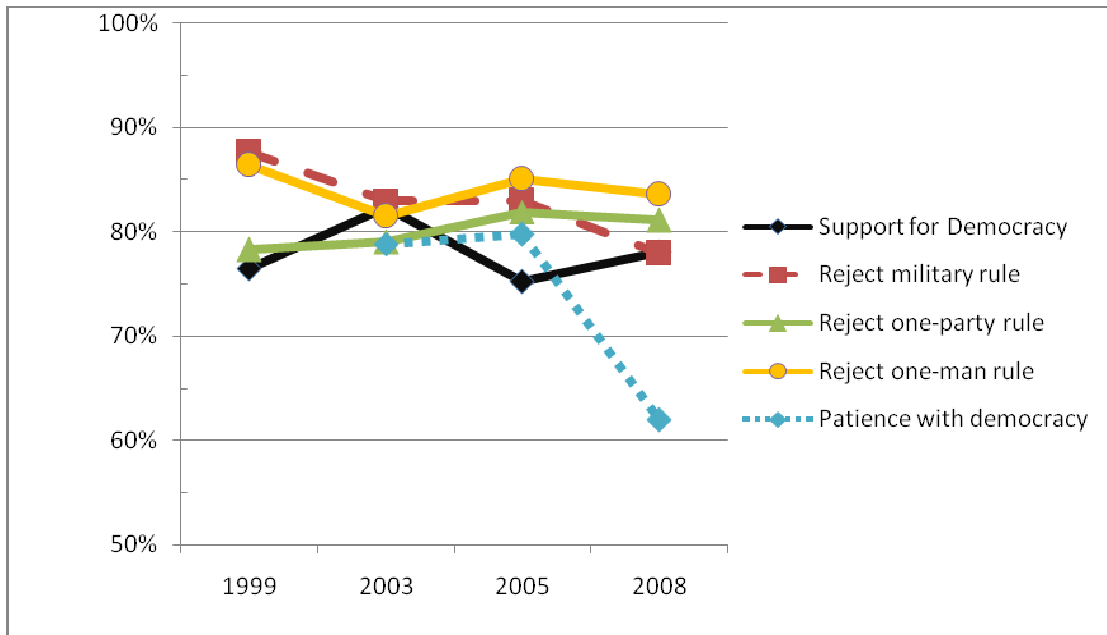
**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems.

B: If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government.



**Summary of Demand for Democracy**



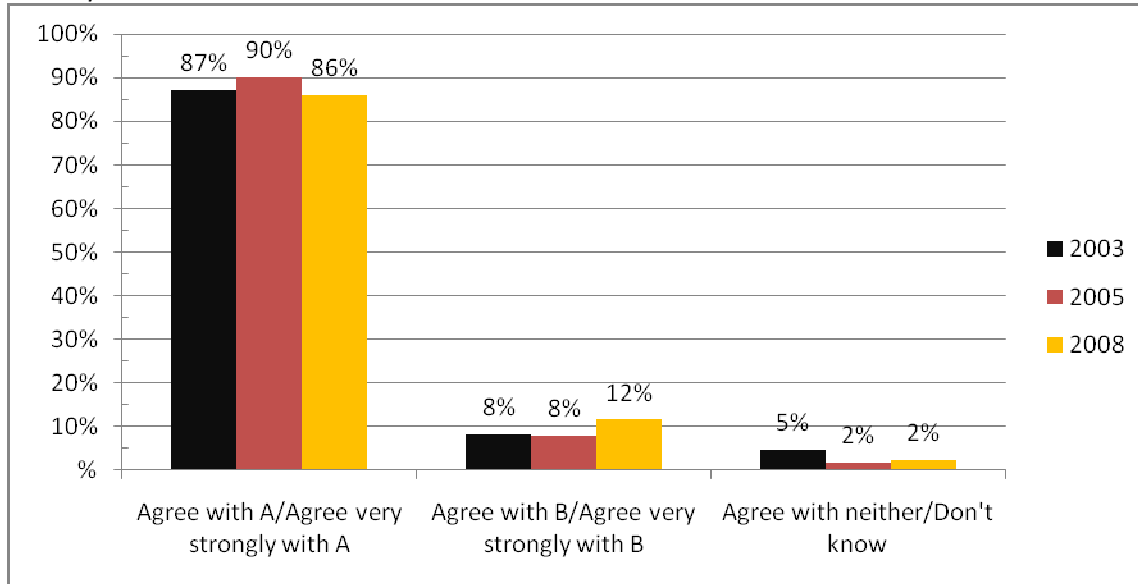
## DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

### 3.1 Variable: Choose leaders through elections vs. try another form

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections.

B: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.

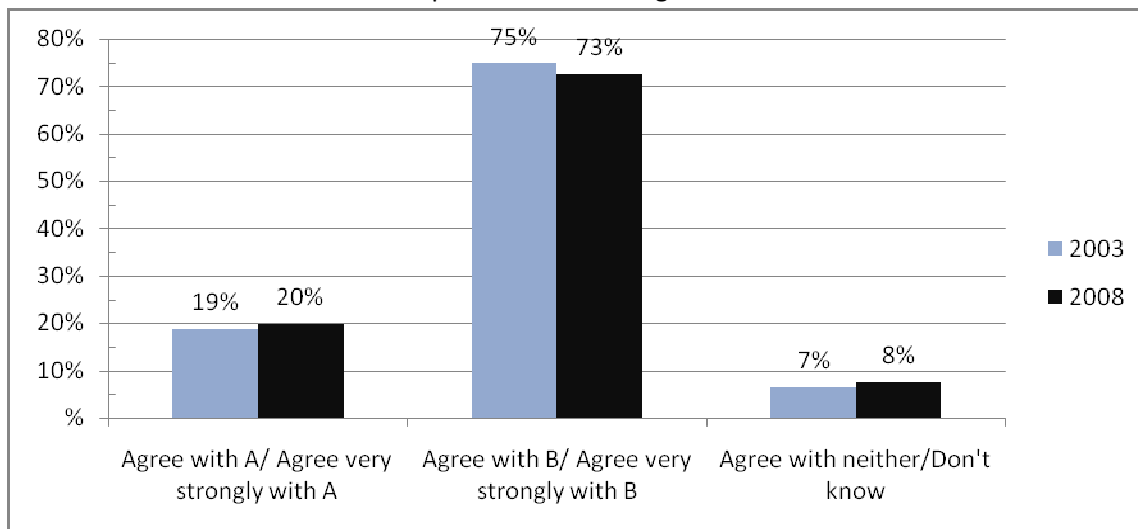


### 3.2 Variable: No term limits for the president vs. two terms only

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: There should be no constitutional limit on how long the president can serve.

B: The constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office.

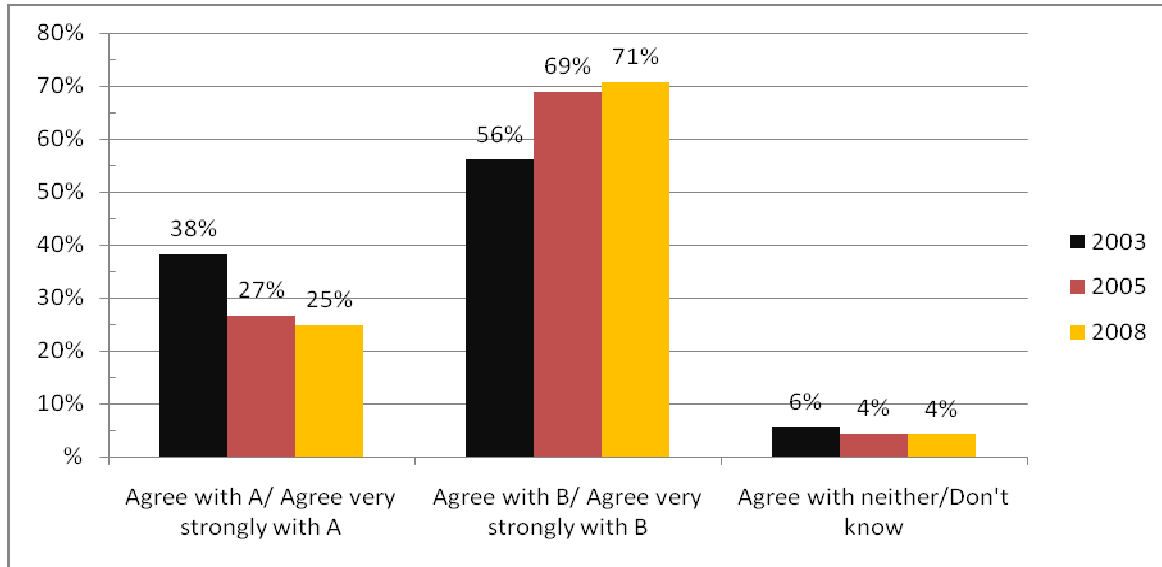


**3.3 Variable: Political parties divisive vs. many parties needed**

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Ghana.

B: Many political parties are needed to make sure that Ghanaians have real choices in who governs them.

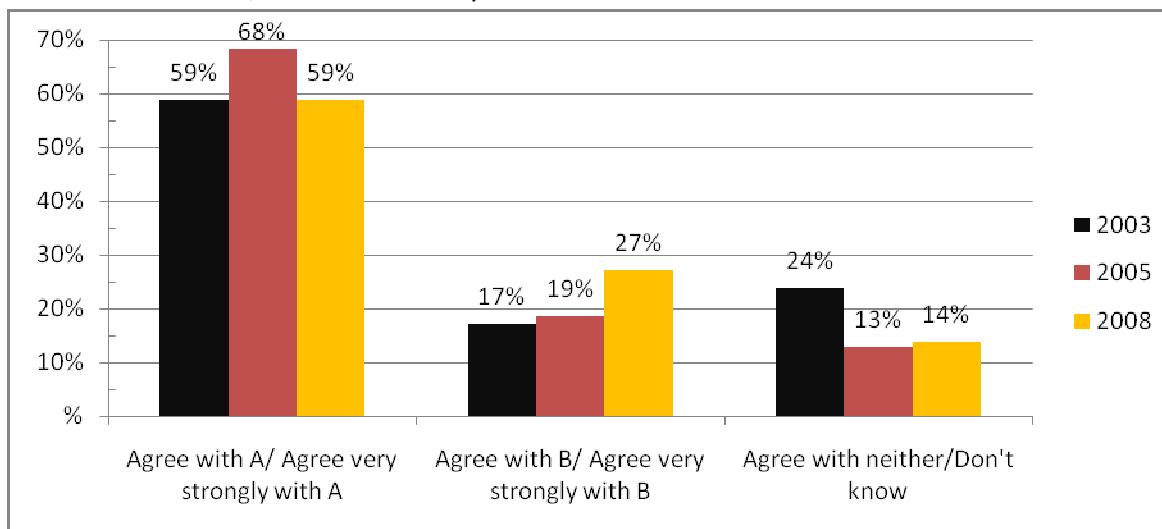


**3.4 Variable: Parliament makes laws vs. President does**

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: The members of Parliament/National Assembly represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President/Prime Minister does not agree.

B: Since the President/Prime Minister represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the Parliament/National Assembly thinks.

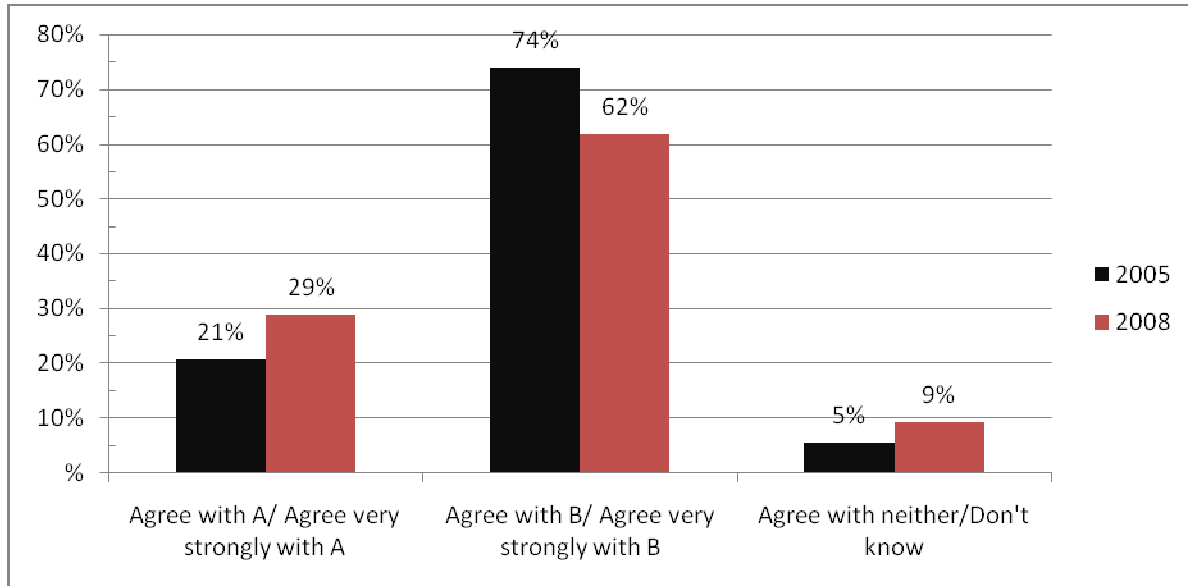


### 3.5 Variable: President free to act vs. obey the laws and courts

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Since the President/Prime Minister was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.

B: The President/Prime Minister must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.

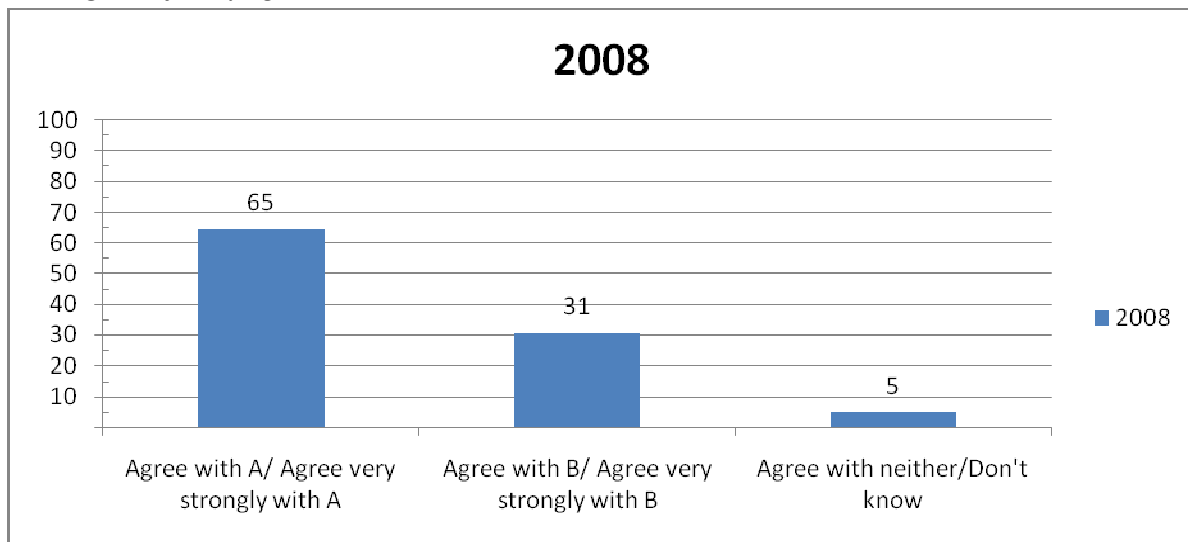


### 3.6 Variable: Parliament monitors President vs. cooperate

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Parliament should ensure that the president explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends the taxpayers' money.

B: The President should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.

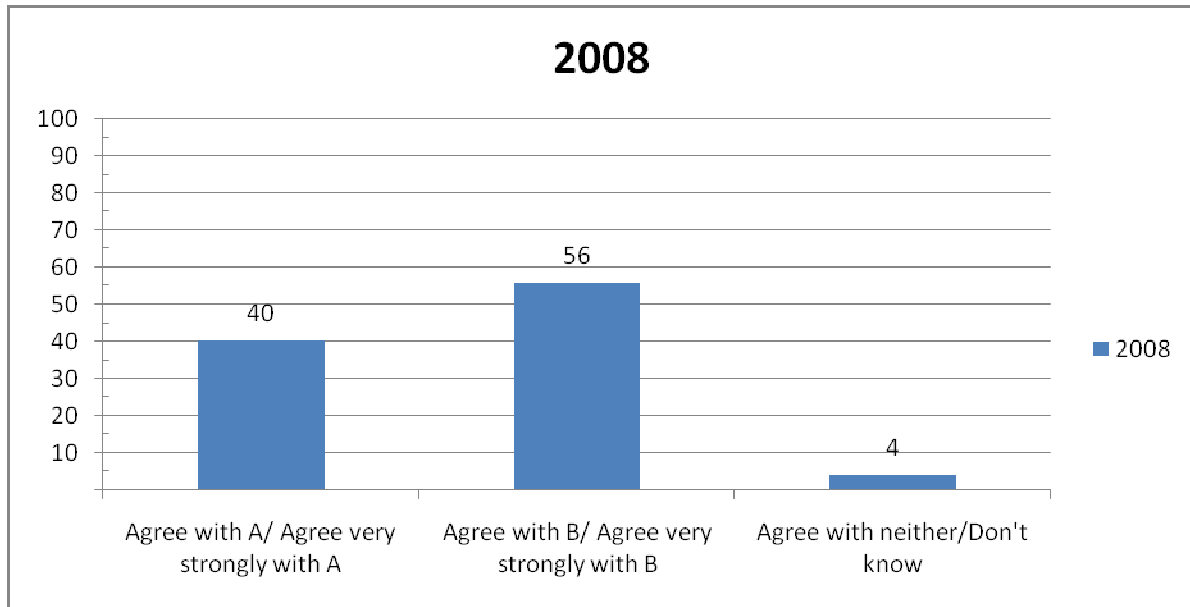


**3.7 Variable: Opposition parties examine government vs. cooperate**

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Opposition parties should regularly examine and criticize government policies and actions.

B: Opposition parties should concentrate on cooperating with government and helping it develop the country.

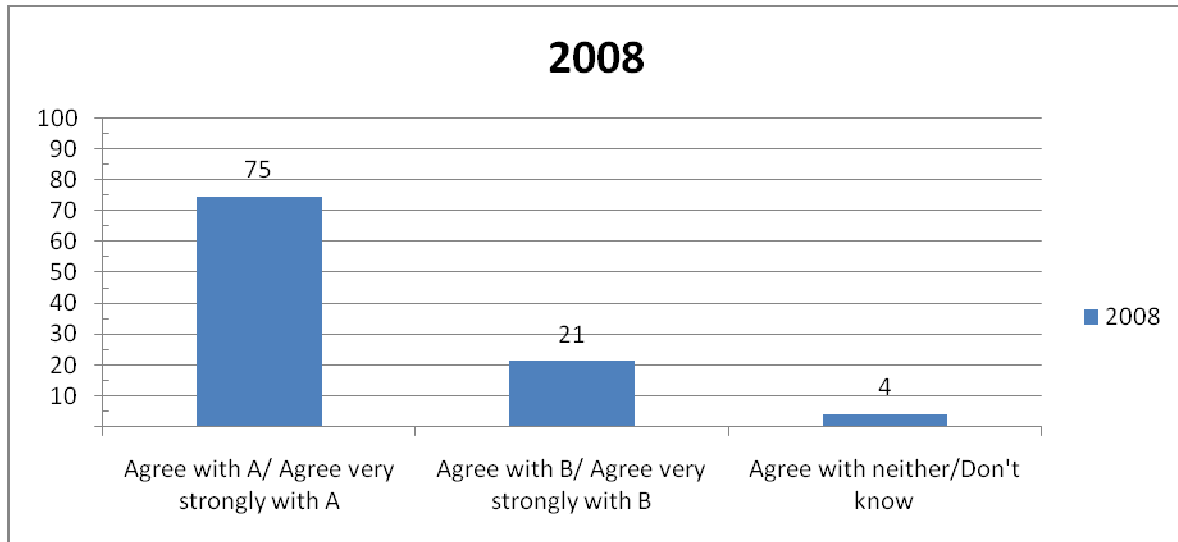


**3.8 Variable: Media examines government vs. cooperate**

**Question:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: The news media should constantly investigate and report on corruption and the mistakes made by the government.

B: Too much reporting on negative events, like corruption, only harms the country.

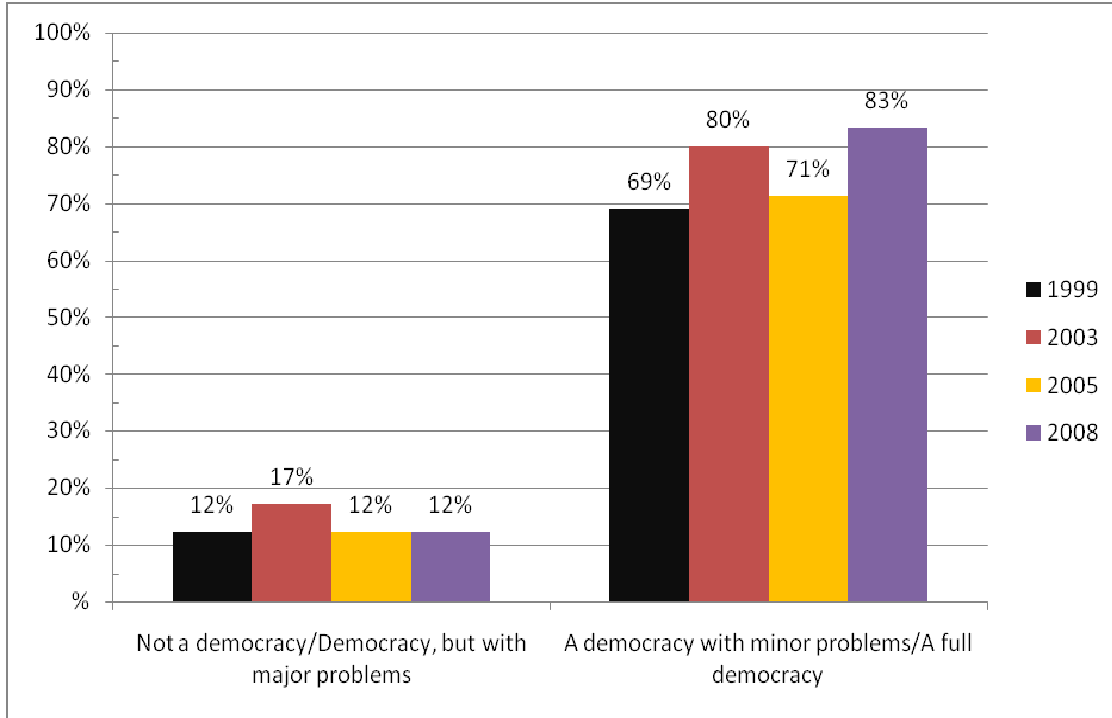




## SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY

### 4.1 Variable: Extent of Democracy

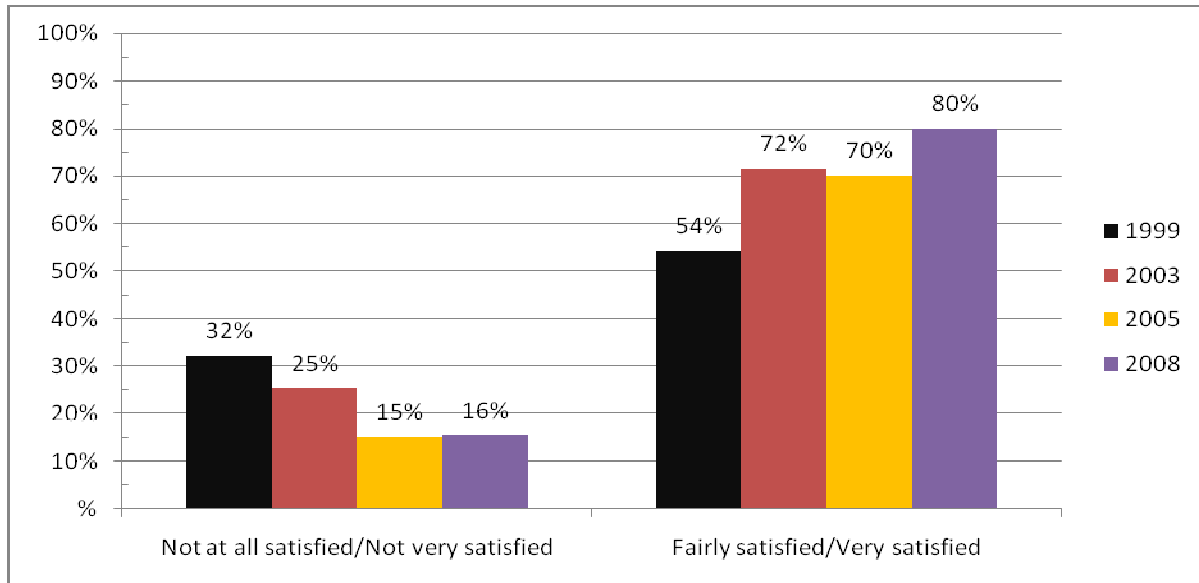
**Questions:** In your opinion how much of a democracy is Ghana today?



*\*The response categories for this question consisted of “yes” and “no” only in 1999. Figures for 2003 are calculated excluding “Don’t know” responses.*

### 4.2 Variable: Satisfaction with democracy

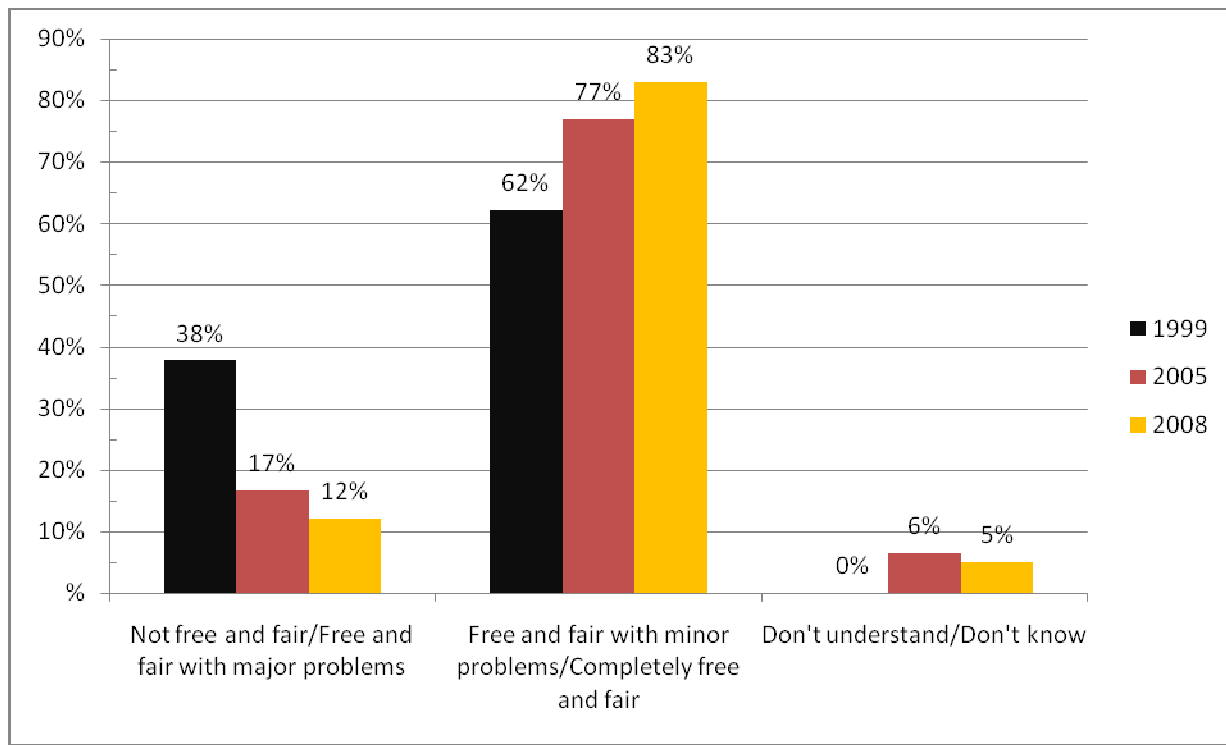
**Question:** Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Ghana?



*Note: Figures for 2003 are calculated excluding “Don’t know” responses.*

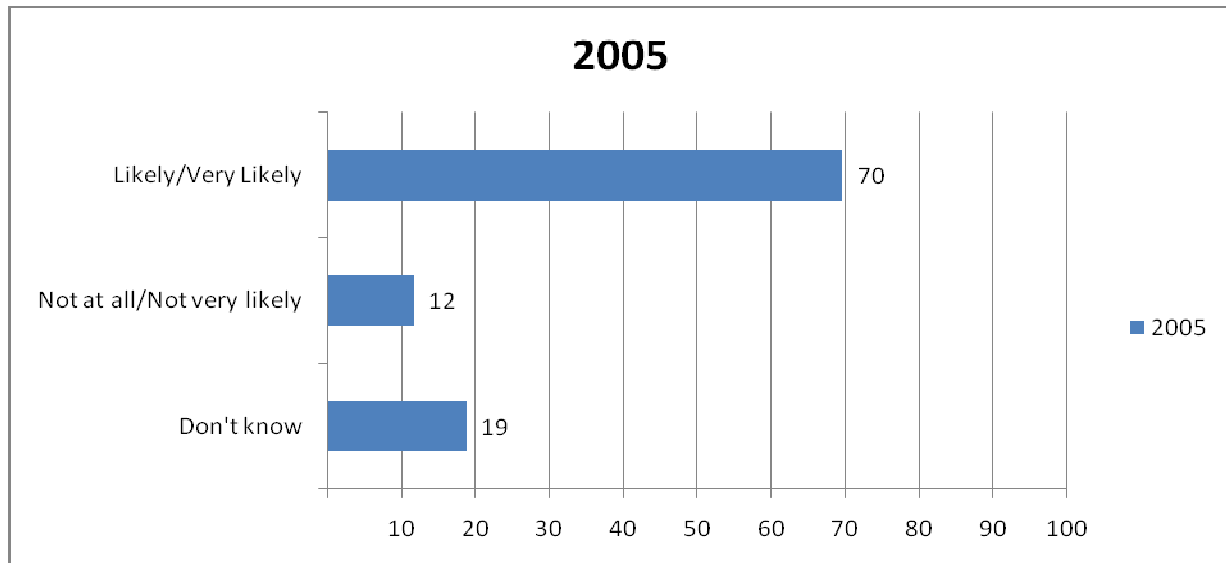
#### 4.3 Variable: Elections free and fair

**Question:** On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20xx]. Was it:



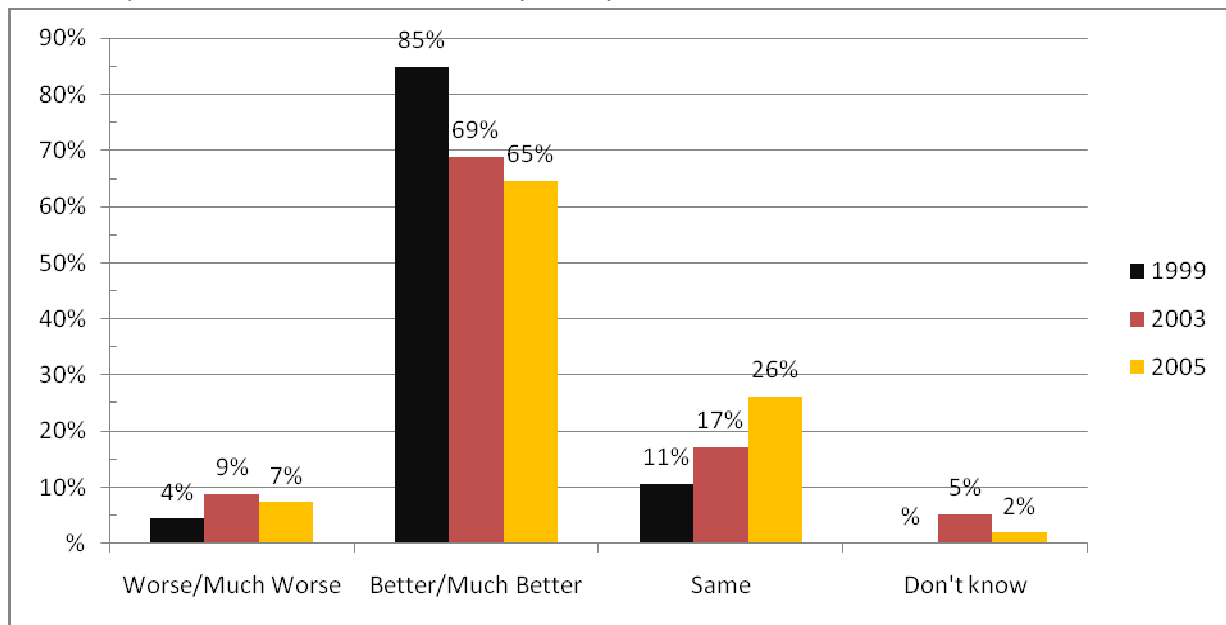
#### 4.4 Variable: Future of democracy

**Question:** In your opinion, how likely is it that Ghana will remain a democratic country?



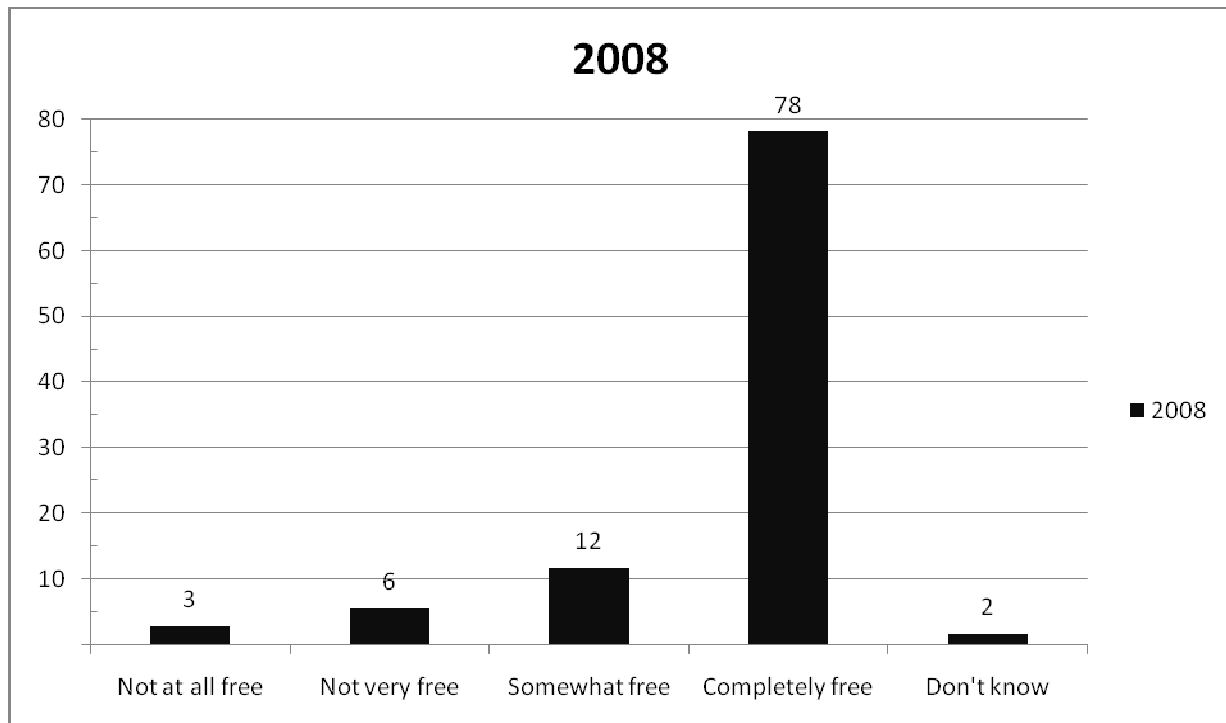
#### 4.5 Variable: Freedom of speech (1999-2005)

**Question:** Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to say what you think?



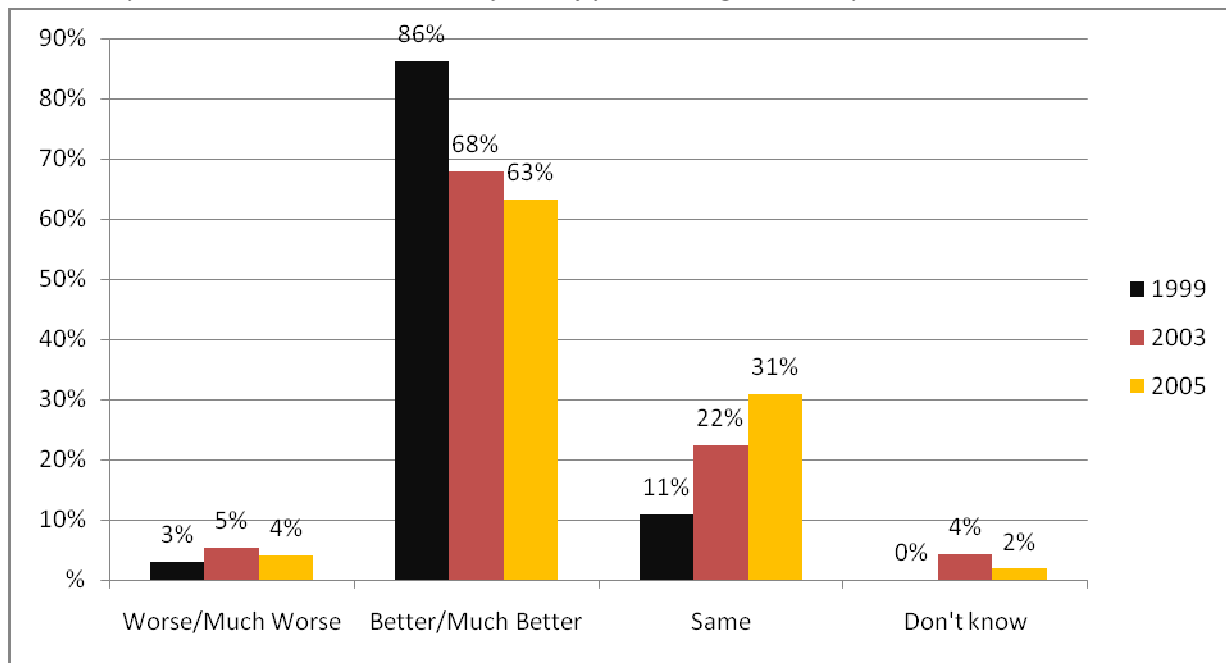
#### 4.6 Variable: Freedom of speech (2008)

**Question:** In this country, how free are you: to say what you think?



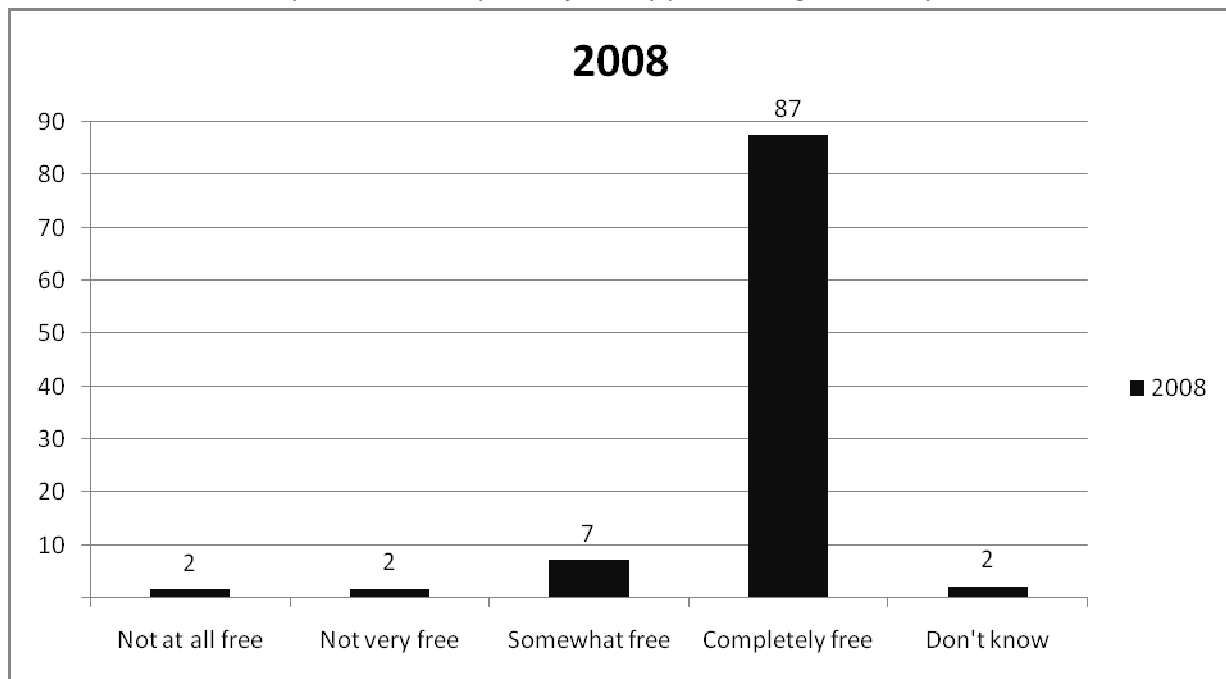
**4.7 Variable: Freedom of association (1999-2005)**

**Question:** Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to join any political organization you want?



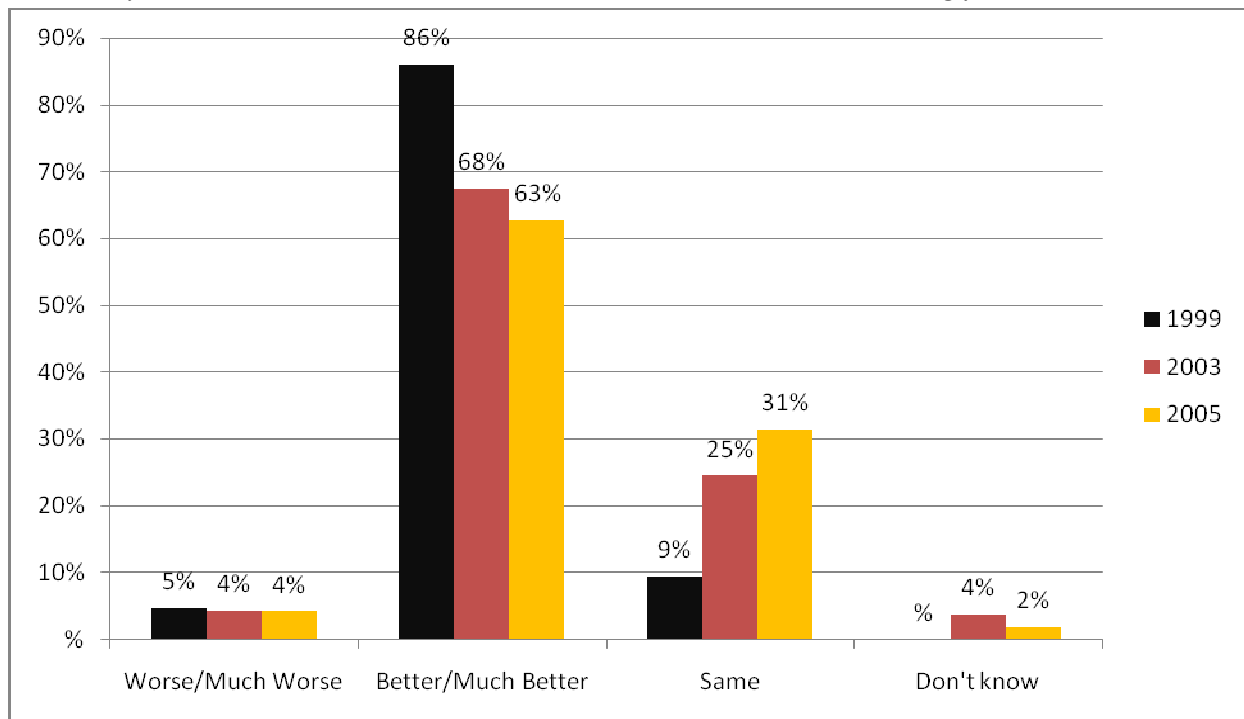
**4.8 Variable: Freedom of association (2008)**

**Question:** In this country, how free are you: to join any political organization you want?



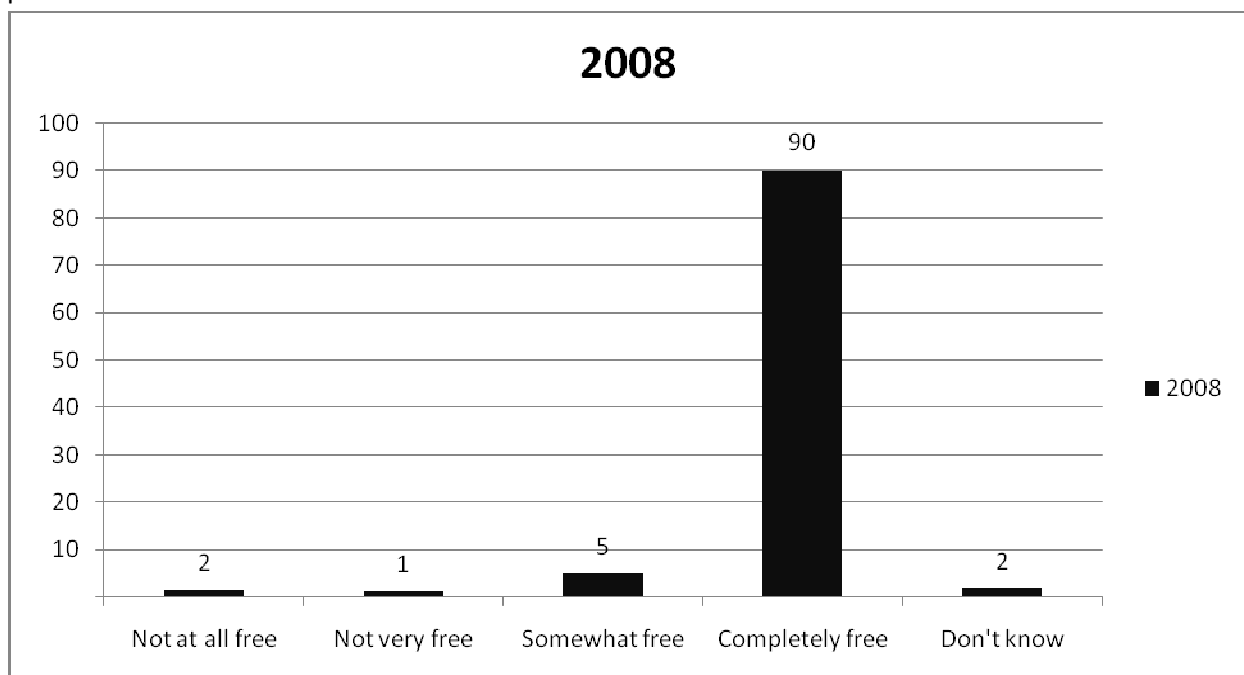
#### 4.9 Variable: Voting freedom (1999-2005)

**Question:** Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?



#### 4.10 Variable: Voting freedom (2008)

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



The Afrobarometer, a cross-national survey research project, is conducted collaboratively by social scientists from 20 African countries. Coordination is provided by three Core Partners: the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), and the Institute for Research in Empirical Political Economy (IREEP, Benin). Michigan State University and the University of Cape Town serve as Support Units to the project. In addition, National Partners in each country directly manage survey fieldwork and data management.

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For more information, see: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)