



Popular Attitudes toward Democracy in Liberia: A Summary of Afrobarometer Indicators, 2008

20 October 2009

This document provides a summary of popular attitudes regarding the demand for and supply of democracy in Liberia as revealed during one Afrobarometer survey conducted in December 2008 (N=1200). A sample of this size yields a margin of error of +/- 3 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent. The charts that follow capture perceptions of:

- 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 towards 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 key freedoms).

The 2008 survey is the first Afrobarometer survey to be conducted in Liberia, therefore this summary does not reflect trends over time. Rather, it gives a snapshot of the political environment at a single point in time.

Points of Interest

- A solid majority expresses support for democracy (2.1), and even larger numbers reject authoritarian alternatives including military, one-party and especially one-man rule (2.2-2.4). Liberians are also quite willing to be patient with democracy and give it a chance to deal with the country's many inherited problems (2.5).
- Commitment to elections and, to a lesser extent, multiparty competition also appears to be high (3.1 and 3.3). Other democratic institutions and practices, such as term limits (3.2) and subjecting the president to the rule of law (3.5) also receive generally high support. The exception, as in many countries, concerns the role of opposition parties: most people expect them to cooperate with, rather than challenge, the government once elections are over (3.7).
- A solid majority rates the country as a democracy (4.1), but only half of respondents are satisfied with the performance of democracy so far (4.2). But large majorities are satisfied with election quality (4.3) and report that basic freedoms are being effectively protected (4.4-4.6).

DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY

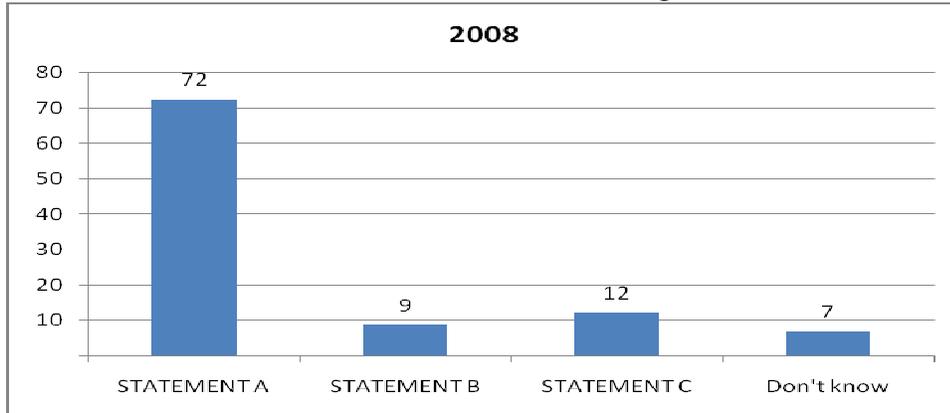
2.1 Variable: Support for democracy

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.



2.2 Variable: Reject military rule

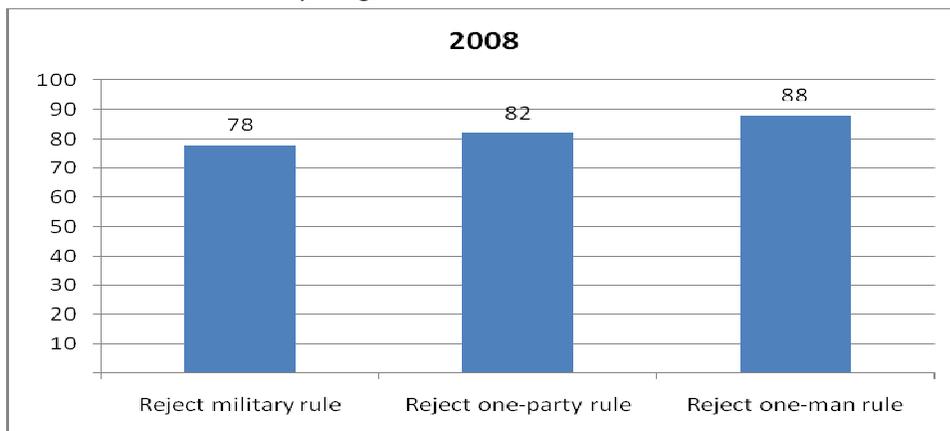
Question: There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: The army comes in to govern the country?

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?



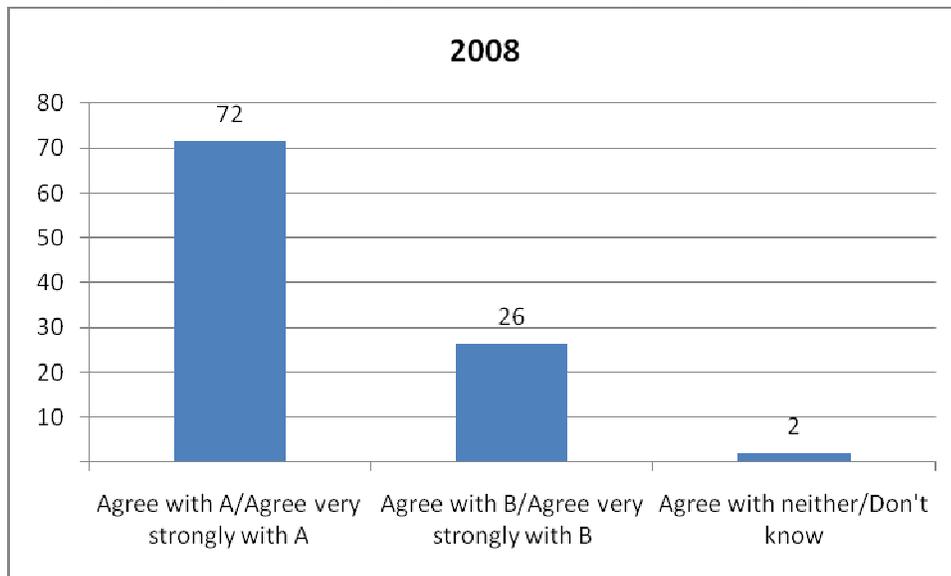
(Percent who disapprove/strongly disapprove of military rule, one-party rule and one-man rule)

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.



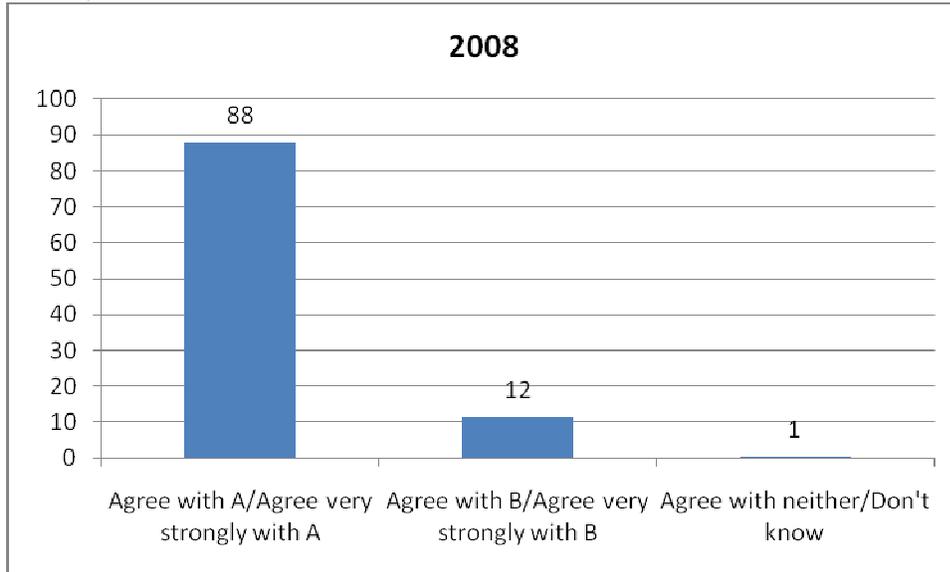
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

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.

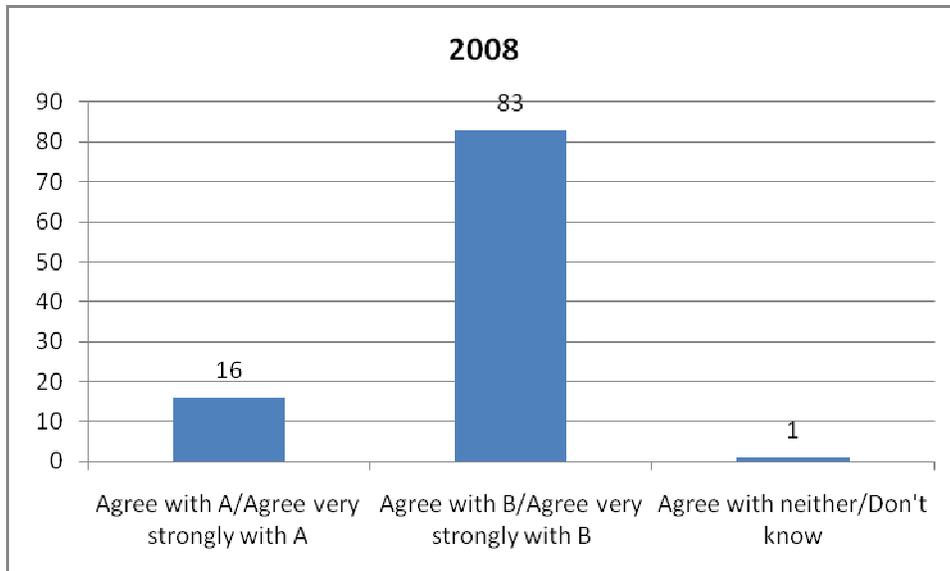


3.2 Variable: No term limits for the president vs. two terms only

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.

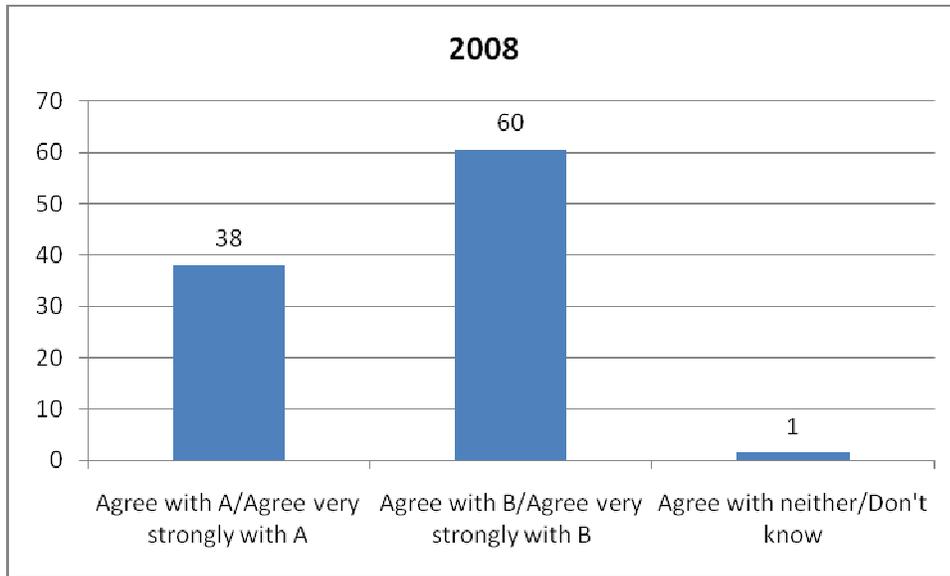


3.3 Variable: Political parties divisive vs. many parties needed

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 Liberia.

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

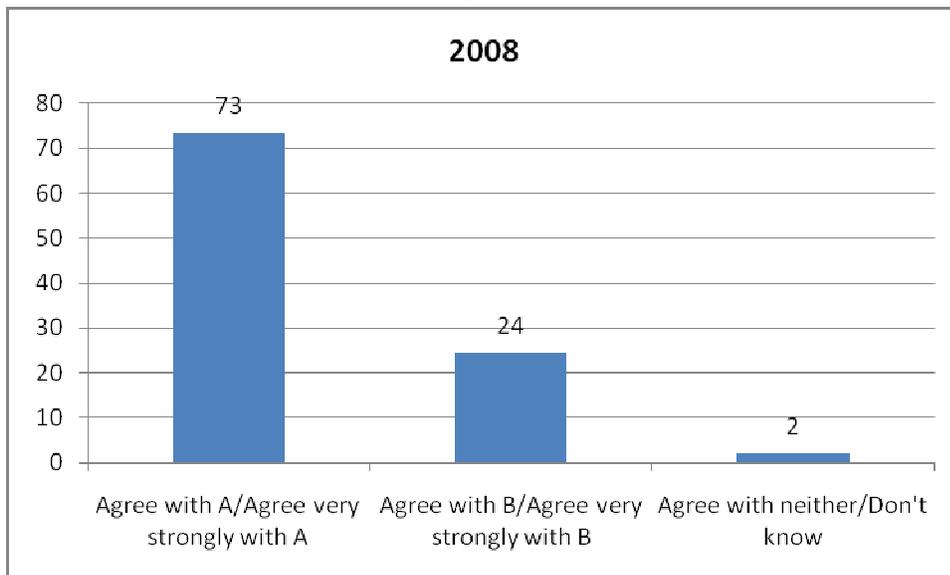


3.4 Variable: Parliament makes laws vs. President does

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.

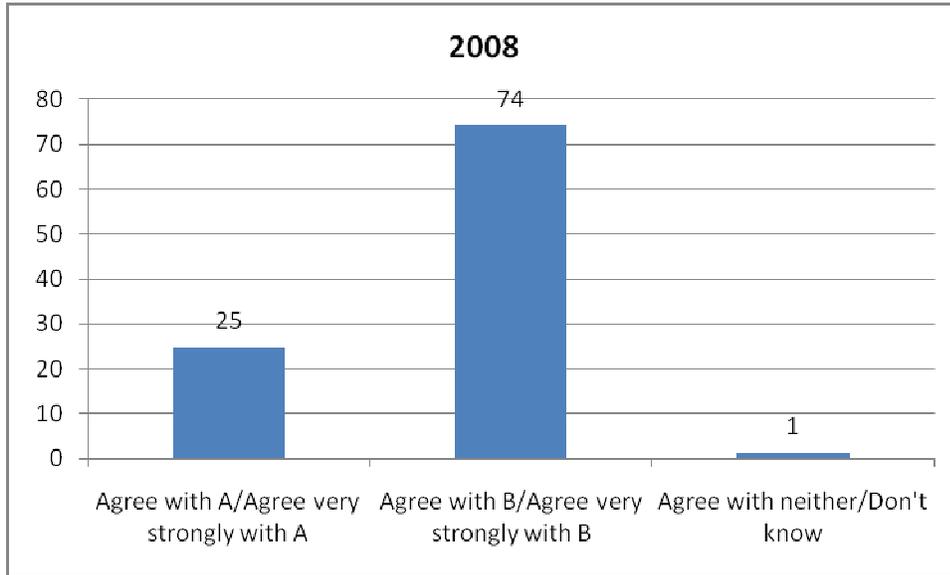


3.5 Variable: President free to act vs. obey the laws and courts

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.

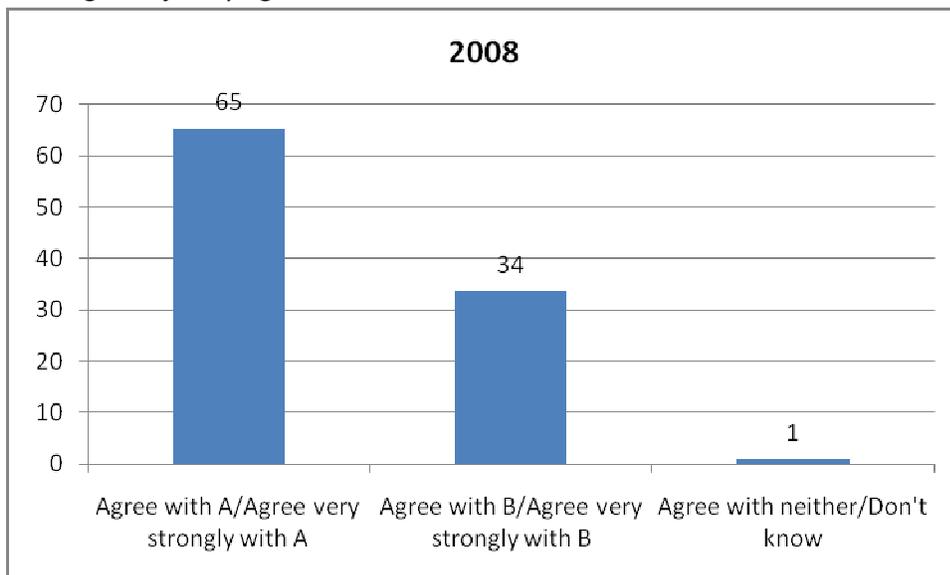


3.6 Variable: Parliament monitors President vs. cooperate

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.

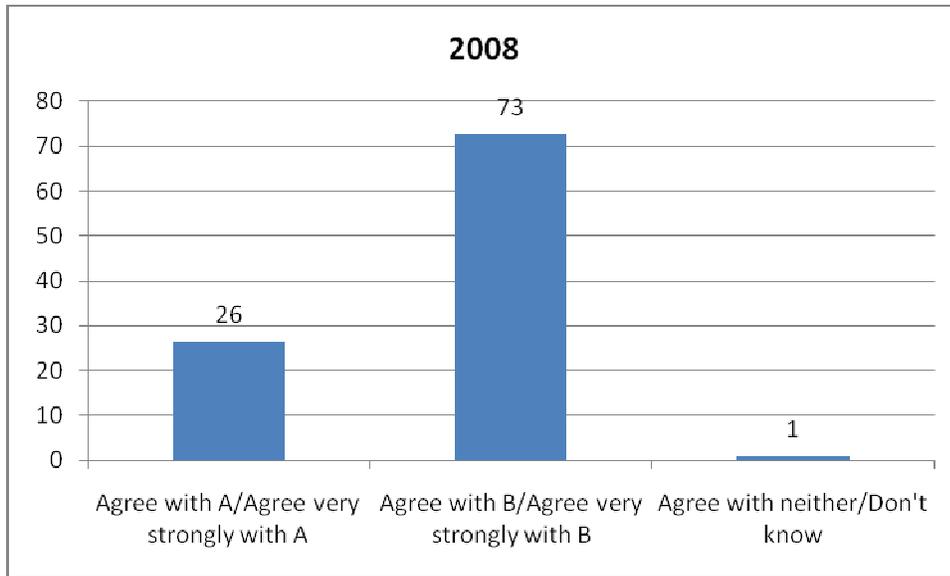


3.7 Variable: Opposition parties examine government vs. cooperate

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.

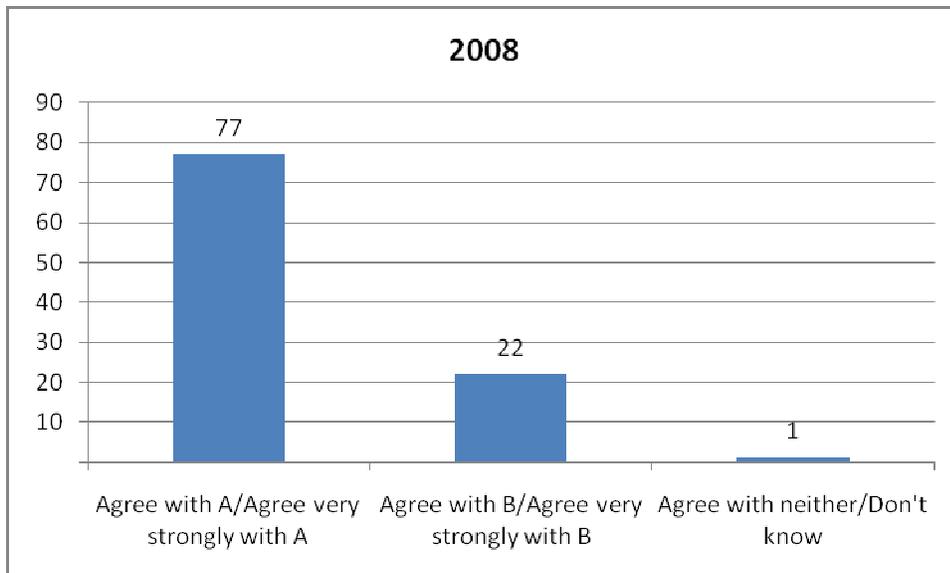


3.8 Variable: Media examines government vs. cooperate

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.

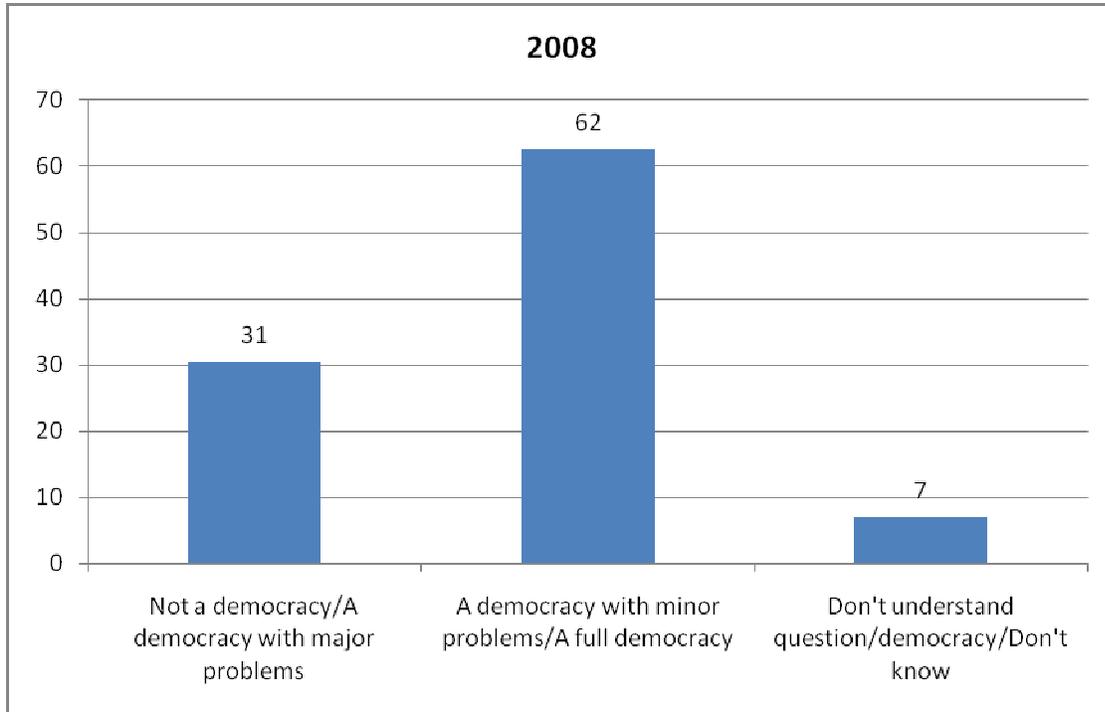
B: Too much reporting on negative events, like corruption, only harms the country.



SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY

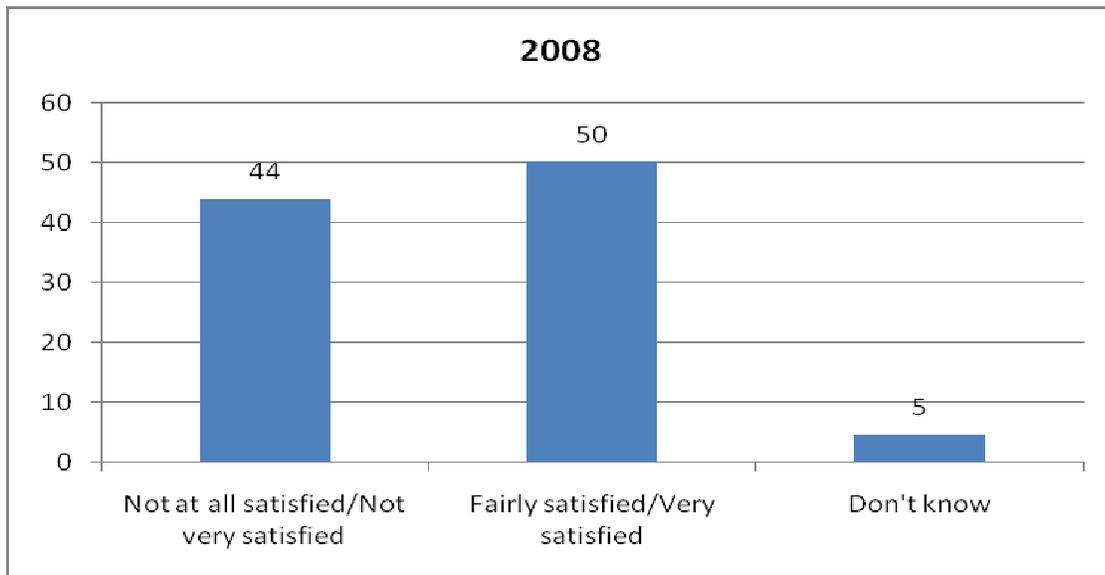
4.1 Variable: Extent of Democracy

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



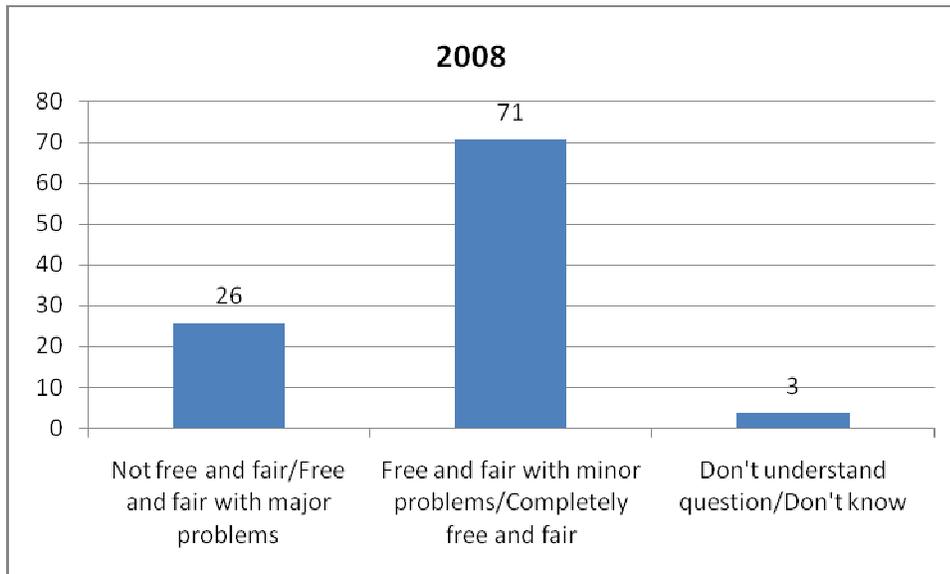
4.2 Variable: Satisfaction with democracy

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



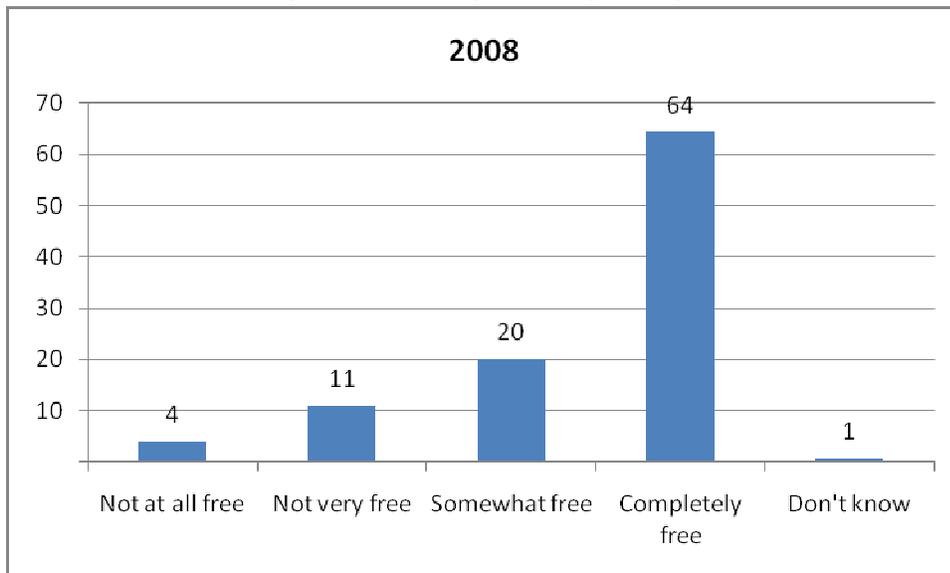
4.3 Variable: Elections free and fair

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



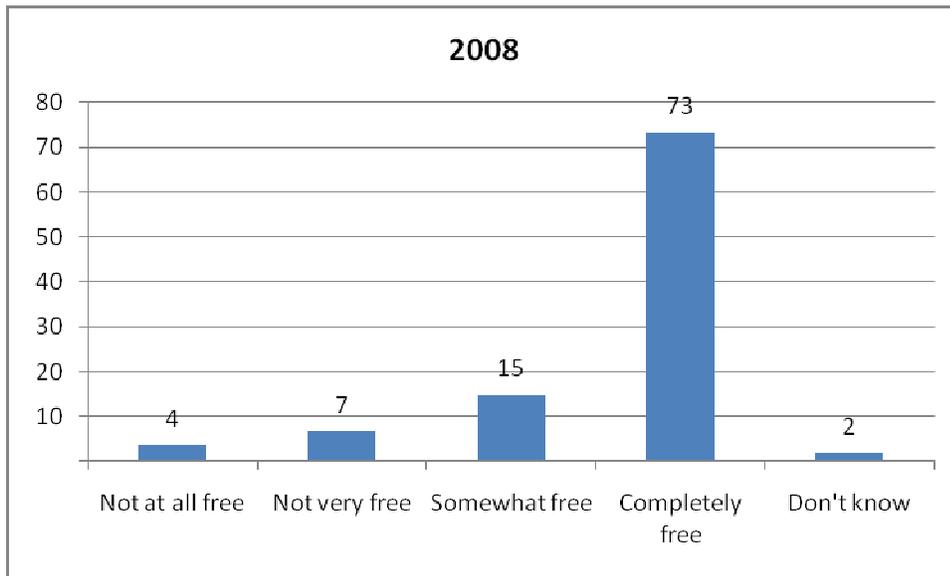
4.4 Variable: Freedom of speech

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



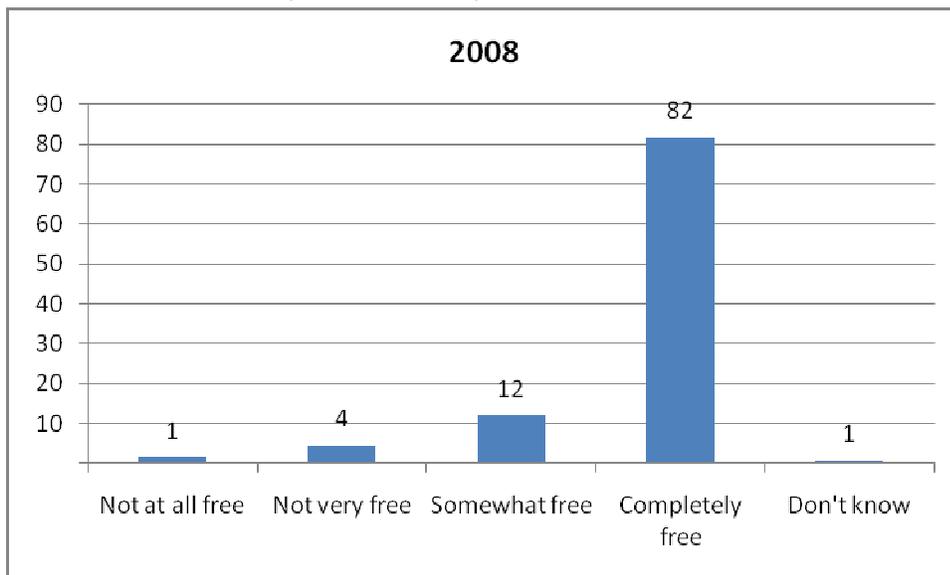
4.5 Variable: Freedom of association

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



4.6 Variable: Voting freedom

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