



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

13 August 2009

This document provides a summary of popular attitudes regarding the demand for and supply of democracy in Namibia as revealed over the course of five Afrobarometer surveys conducted between 1999 and 2008 (Sept.-Oct. 1999, N=1183; March-June 2002, N=1200; Aug.-Sept. 2003, N=1199; Feb.-Mar. 2006, N=1200; Oct.-Dec. 2008, N=1200). 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 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).

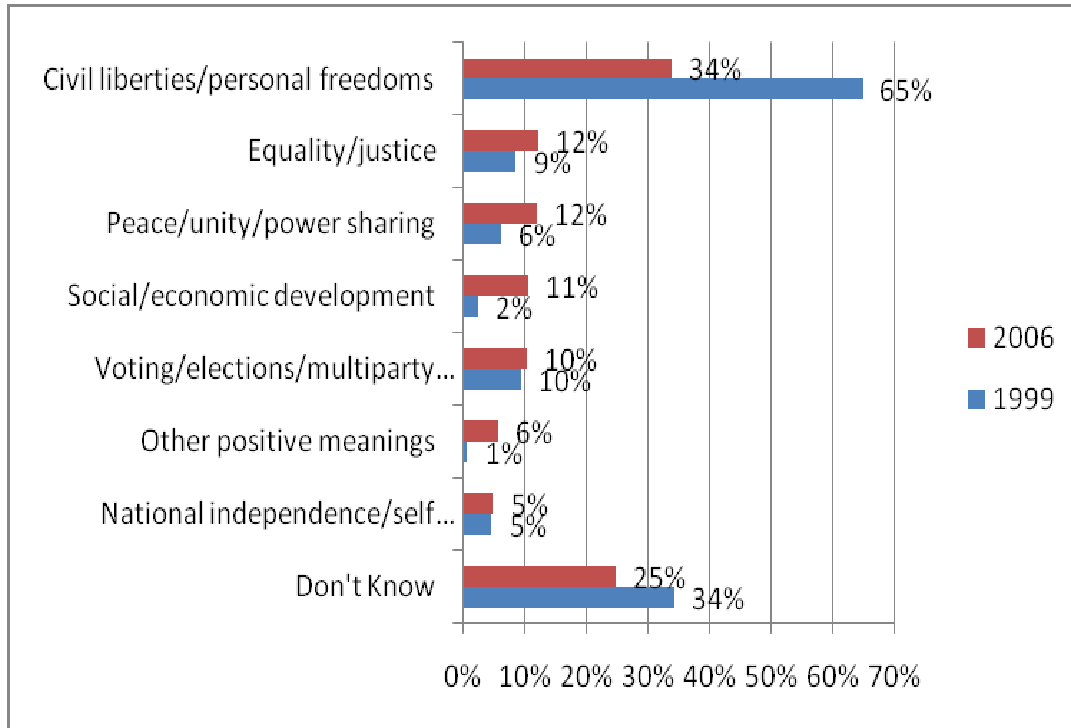
Points of Interest

- There is no obvious trend in support for democracy. It has fluctuated roughly around 60 percent across all five surveys (2.1).
- The percentage of respondents who reject military and one-man rule has fluctuated more widely, dropping to less than half in 2006, but rebounding sharply to a solid majority in 2008 (2.2 and 2.4). Rejection of one-party rule has also fluctuated, but not quite as widely (2.3).
- Patience with democracy has dropped sharply since 2003 (2.5).
- Commitment to elections as the best means for selecting leaders declined by nearly 30 percent between 2002 and 2008 (3.1). Support for term limits has been steadier (3.2).
- Although it is still a majority position, support for multi-party competition has declined noticeably, in contrast to the trend in many other countries (3.3).
- The public appears to support a relatively strong presidency; in 2008 there was plurality support for the president to take the lead in passing laws rather than the legislature (3.4), and fully four out of ten believe the president should not be bound by the country's laws and courts (3.5). There also is only minority support for parliament to play a role in monitoring the presidency (3.6).
- Namibians consistently (with the exception of a drop in 2003) report relatively high levels of democracy in their country (4.1), and high levels of satisfaction with democracy (4.2), although satisfaction is down from a peak in 2002.
- Ratings of election quality are consistently very high (4.3).

MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

1.1 Variable: Meaning of democracy

Question: What if anything does democracy mean to you?



** In 2006 respondents could offer up to three meanings. Figures shown are the percentage of all substantive responses offered.*

DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY

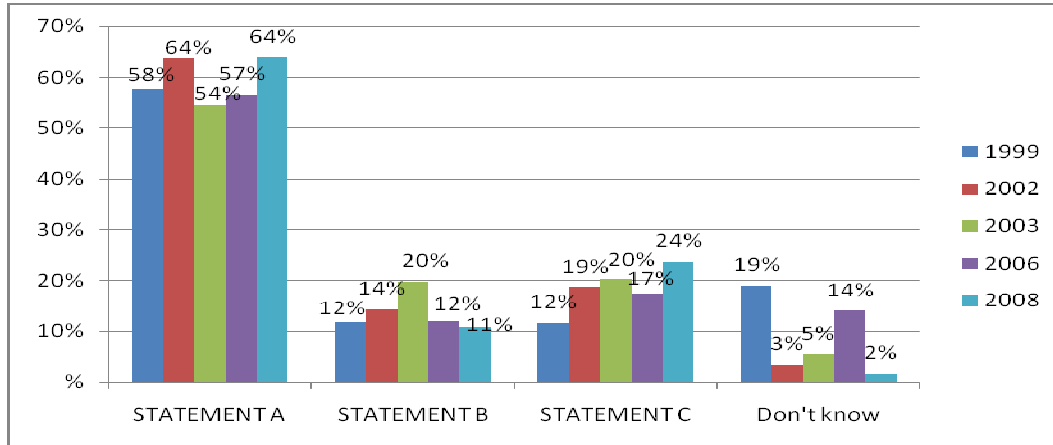
2.1 Variable: Support for democracy

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.



2.2 Variable: Reject military rule

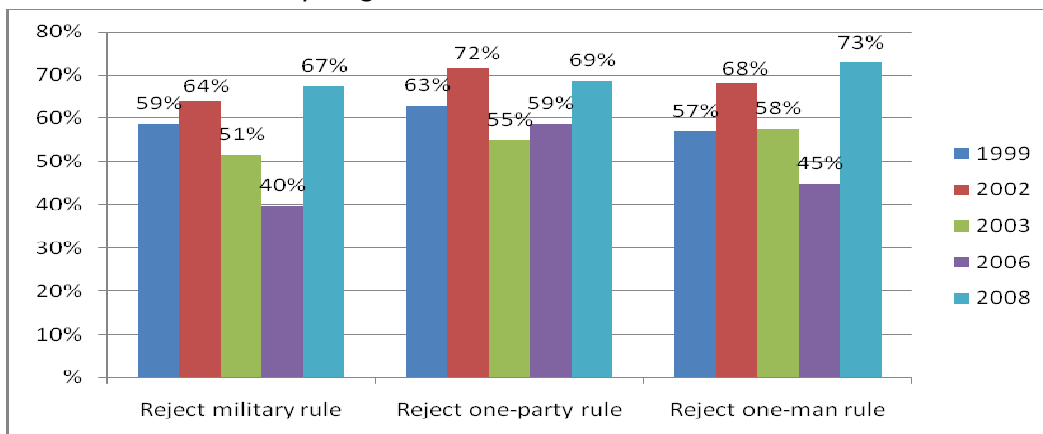
Question: There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: The army comes in to govern the country?

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?



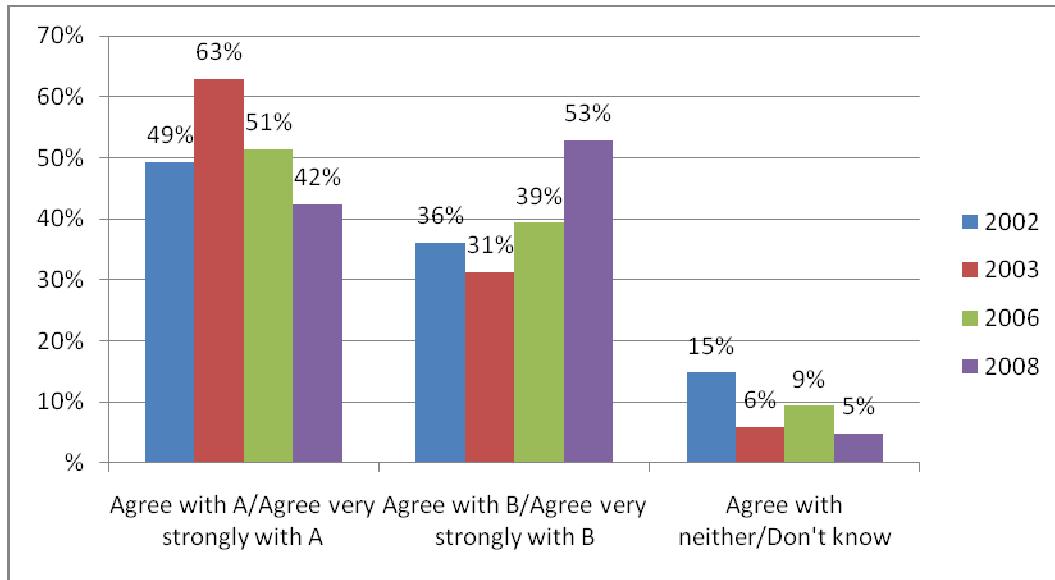
(Percent who disapprove/strongly disapprove of military rule, one-party rule and one-man rule)

2.5 Variable: Patience with democracy

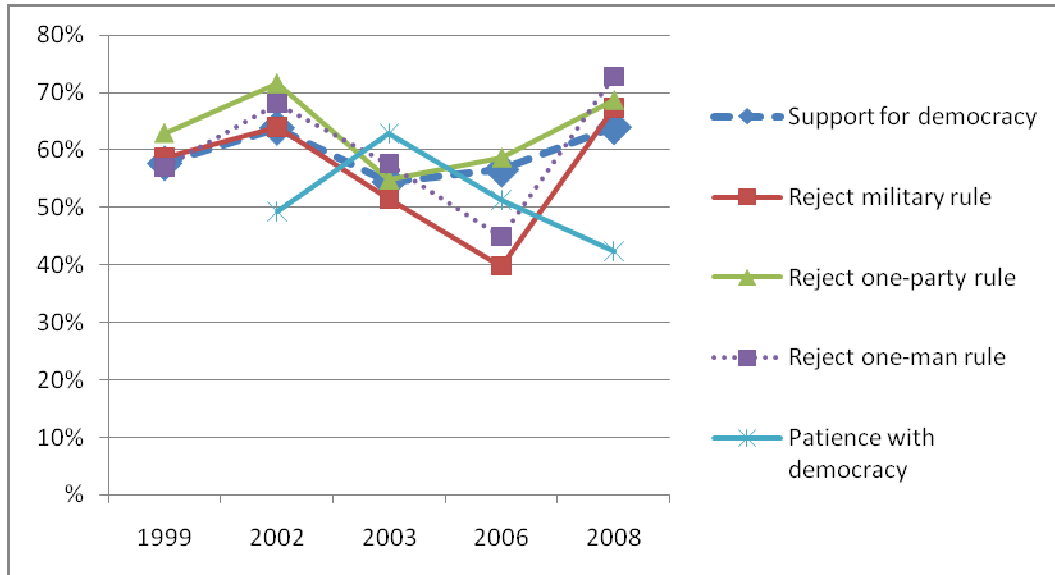
Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

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



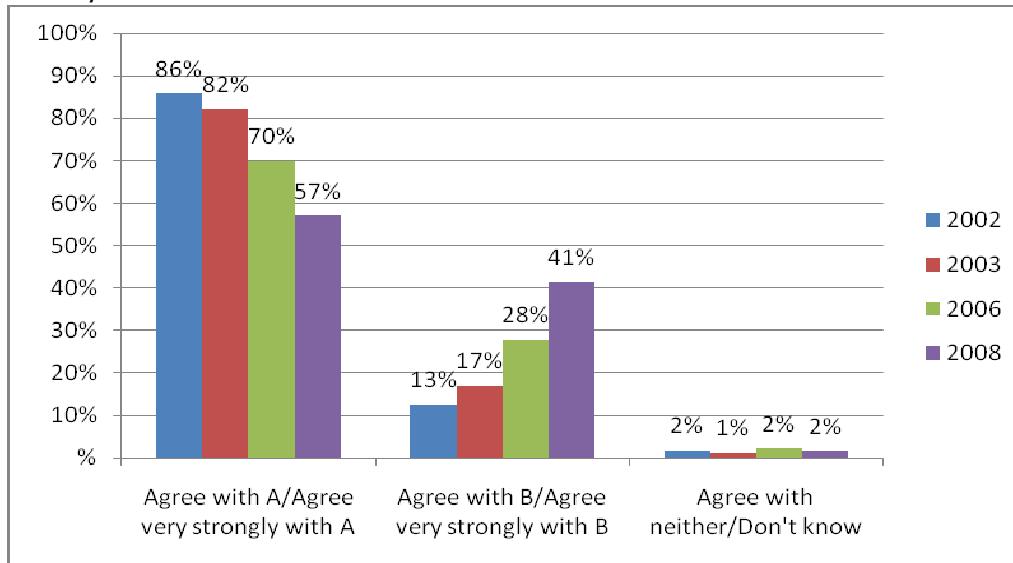
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

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.

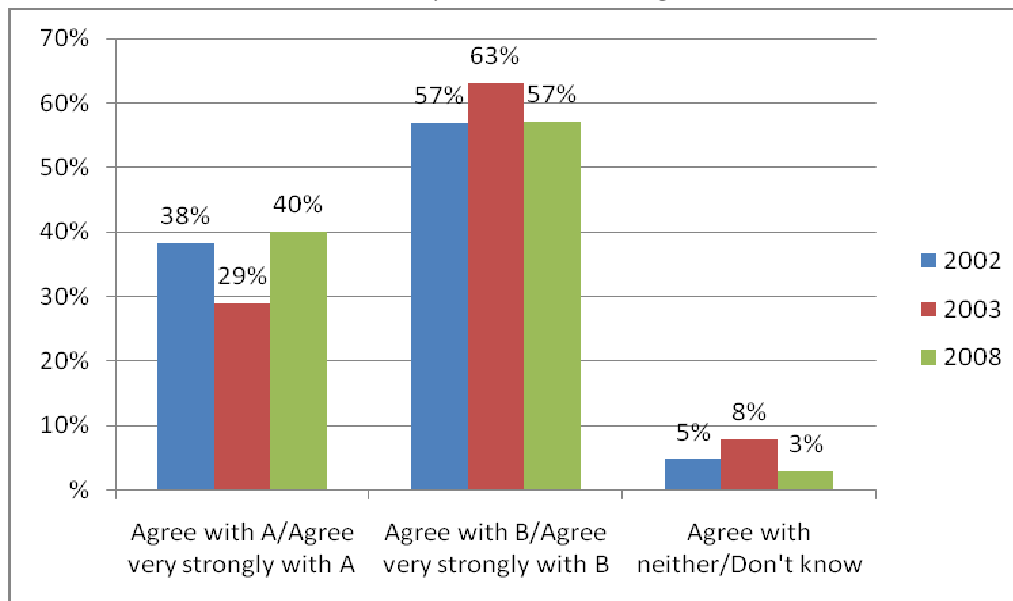


3.2 Variable: No term limits for the president vs. two terms only

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.

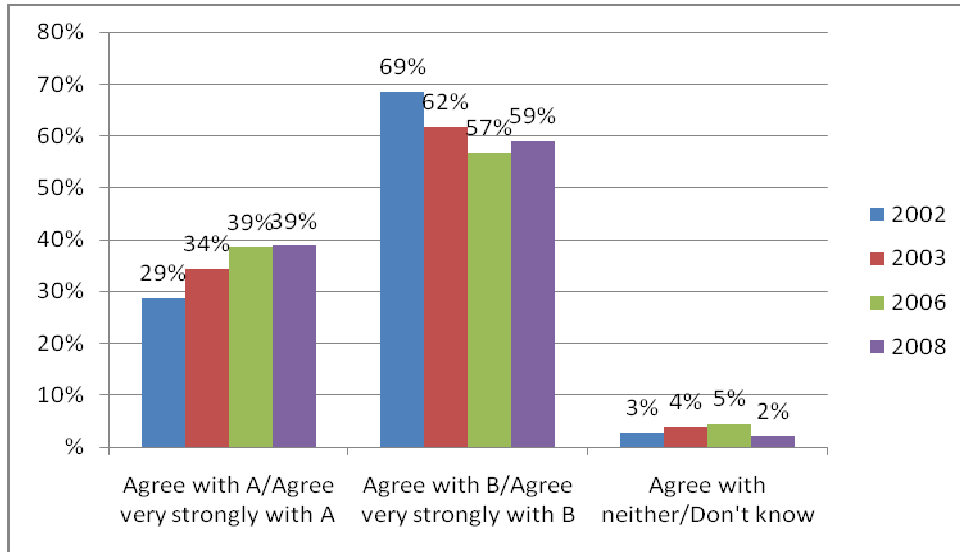


3.3 Variable: Political parties divisive vs. many parties needed

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 Namibia.

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

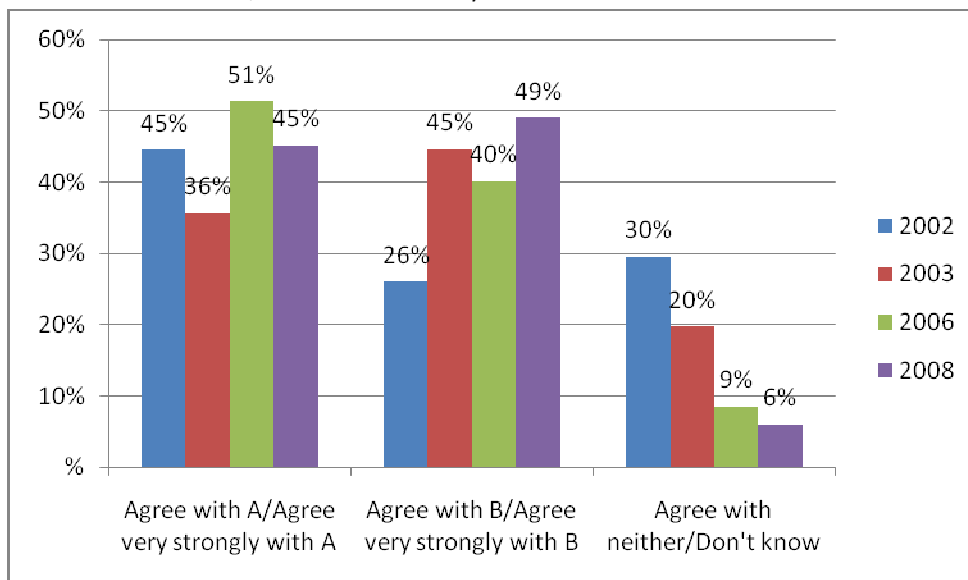


3.4 Variable: Parliament makes laws vs. President does

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.

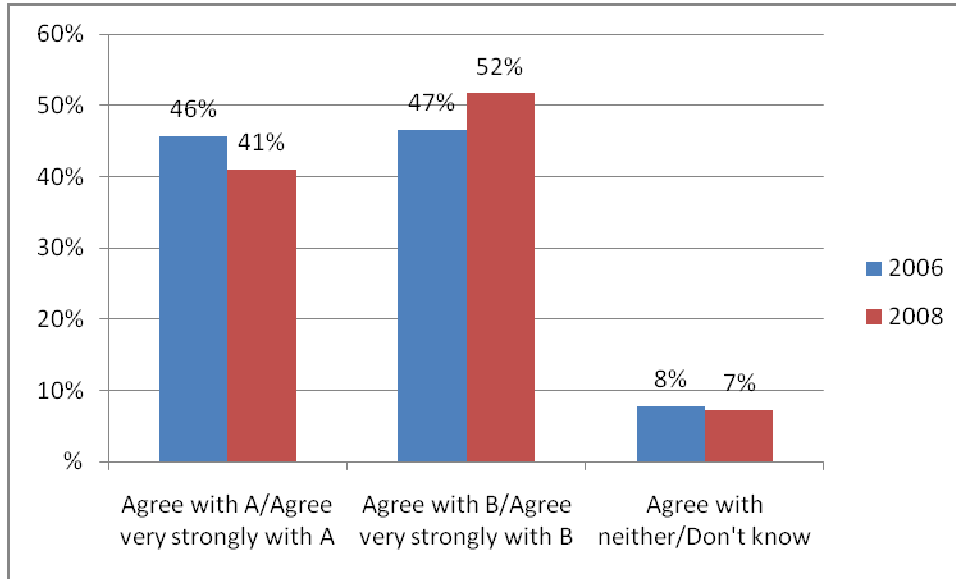


3.5 Variable: President free to act vs. obey the laws and courts

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.

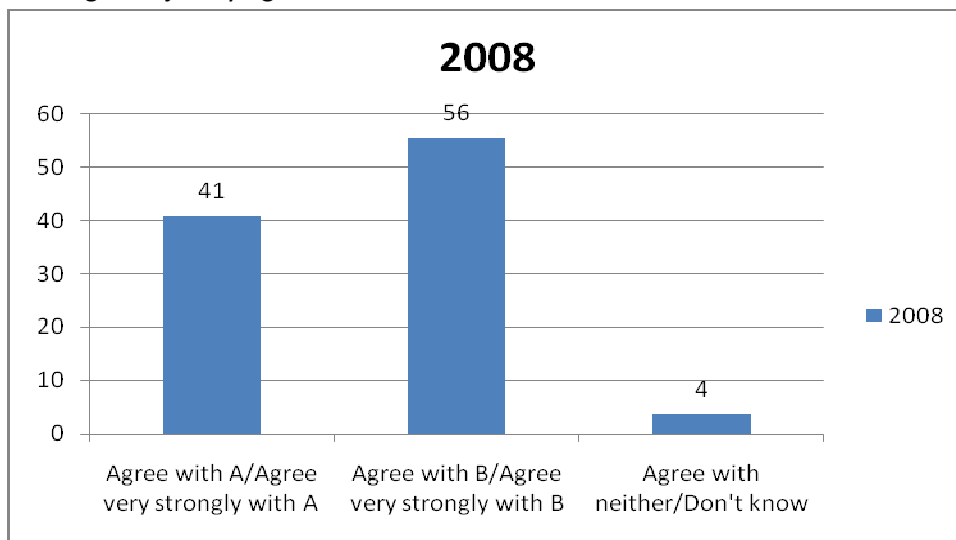


3.6 Variable: Parliament monitors President vs. cooperate

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.

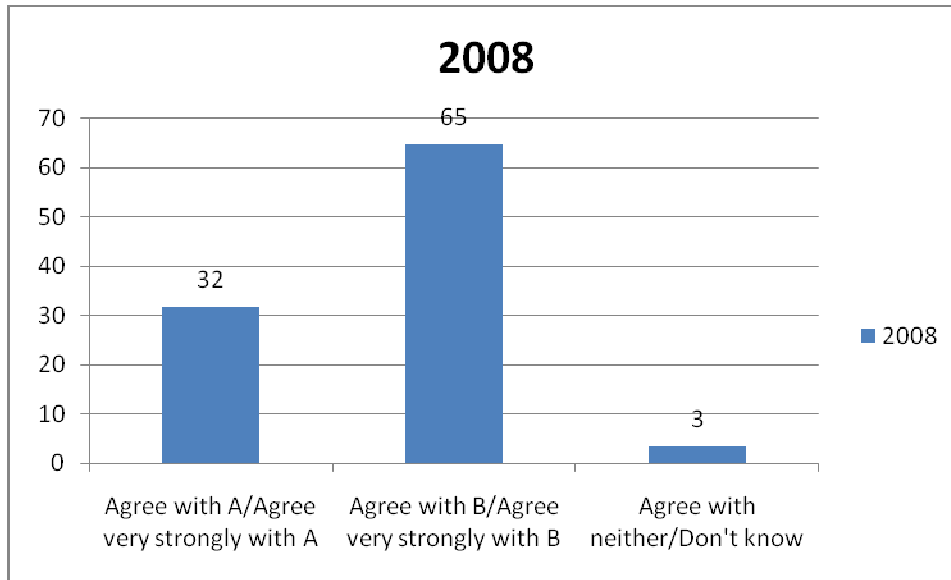


3.7 Variable: Opposition parties examine government vs. cooperate

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.

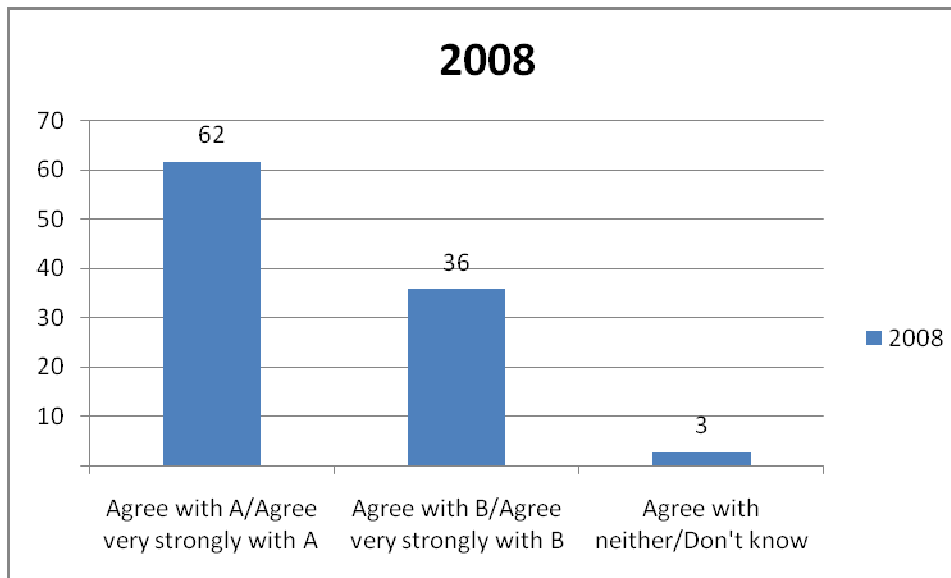


3.8 Variable: Media examines government vs. cooperate

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.

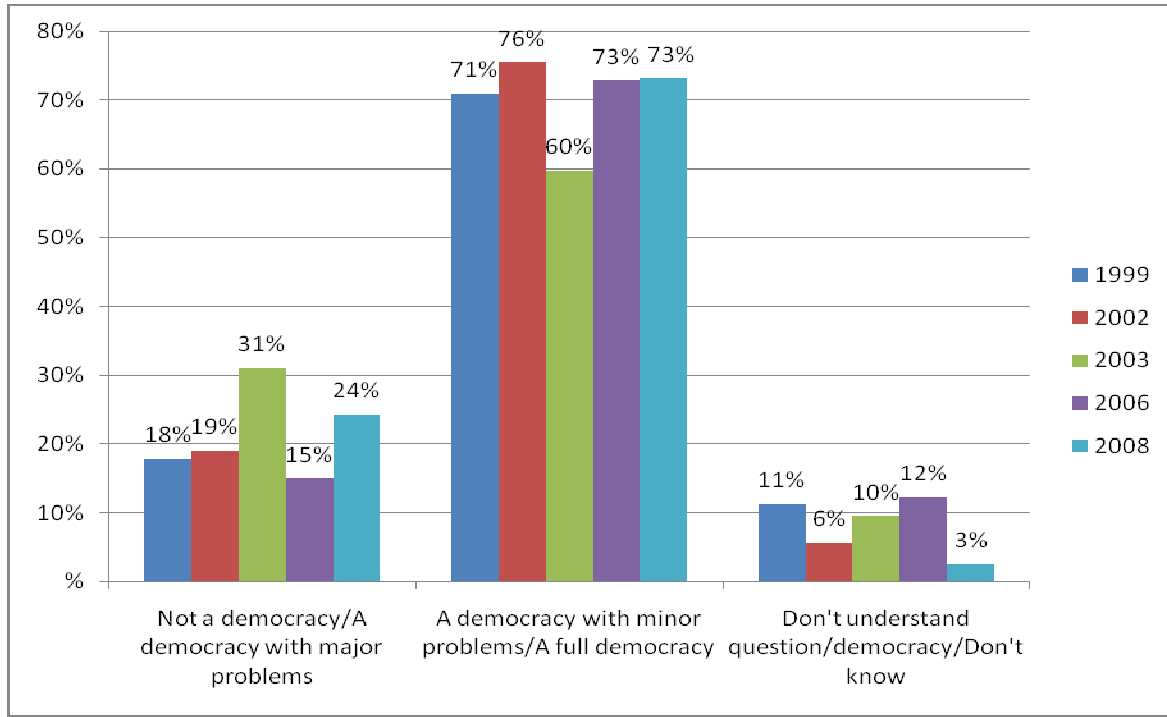
B: Too much reporting on negative events, like corruption, only harms the country.



SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY

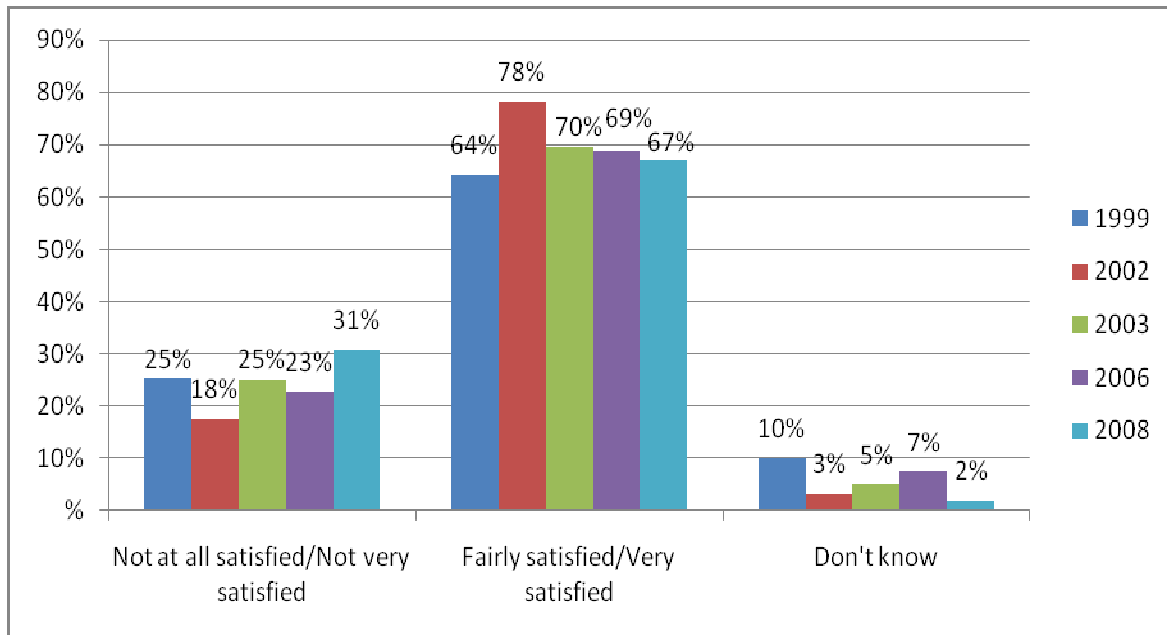
4.1 Variable: Extent of Democracy

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



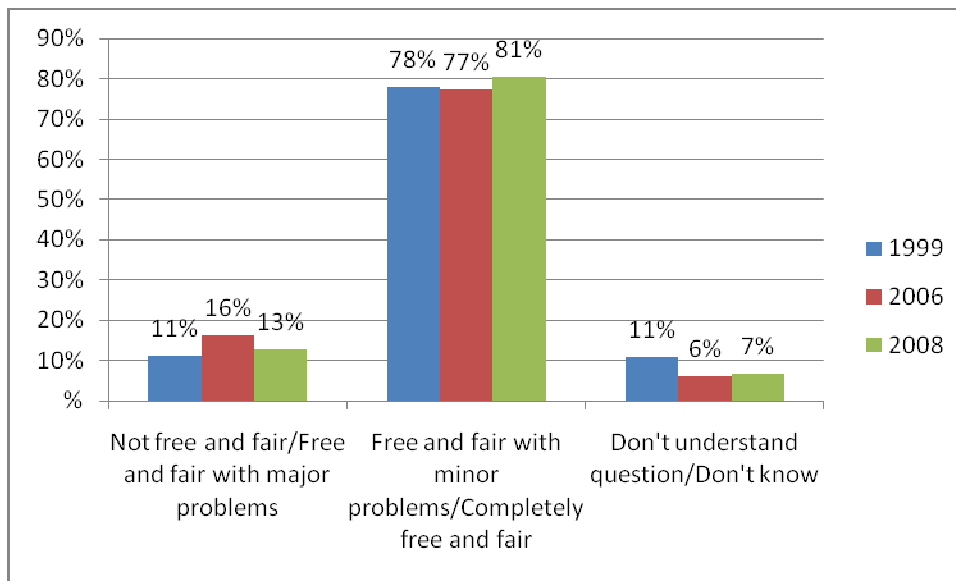
4.2 Variable: Satisfaction with democracy

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



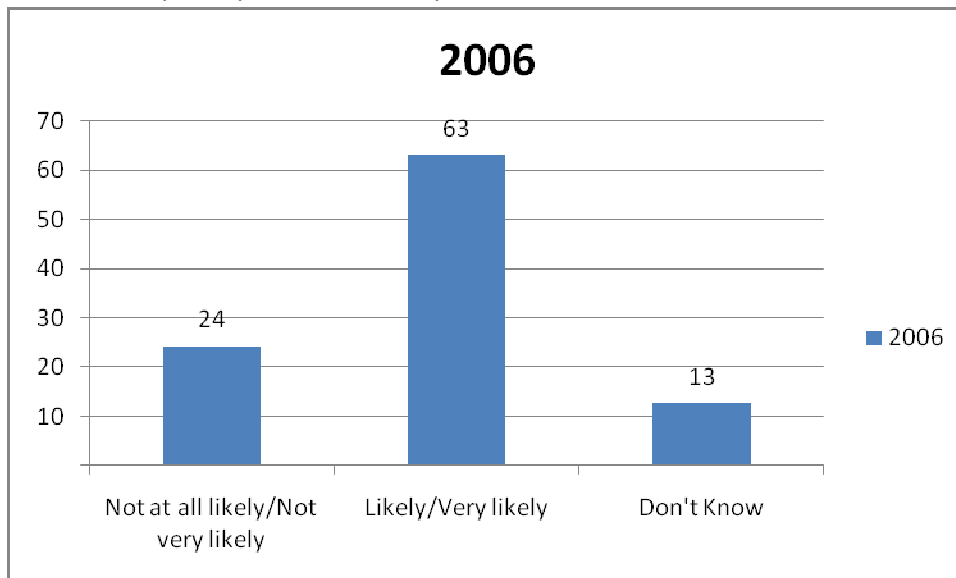
4.3 Variable: Elections free and fair

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



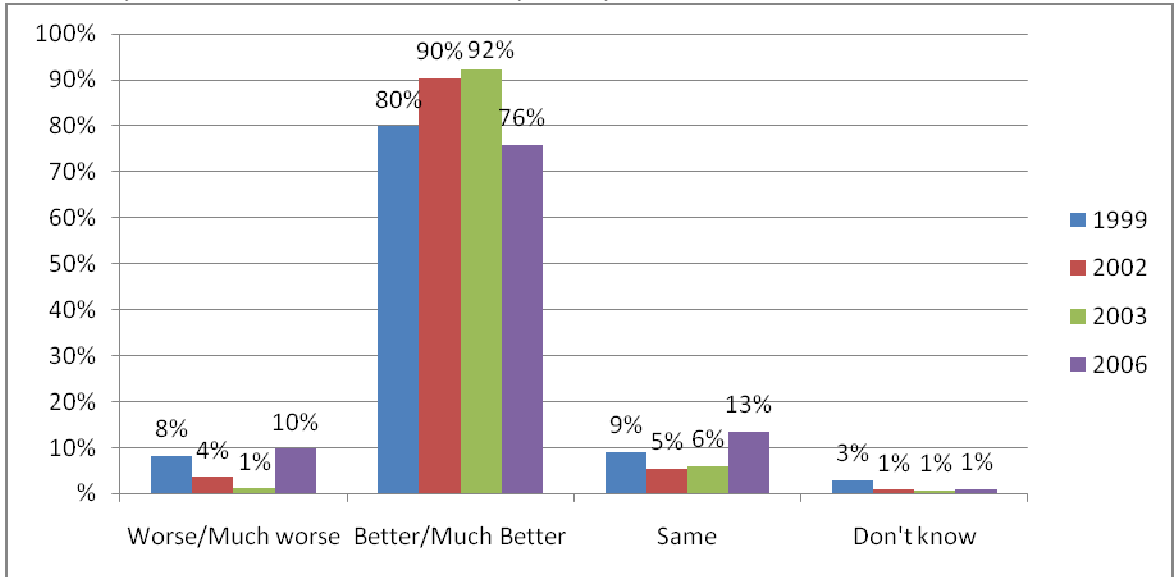
4.4 Variable: Future of democracy

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



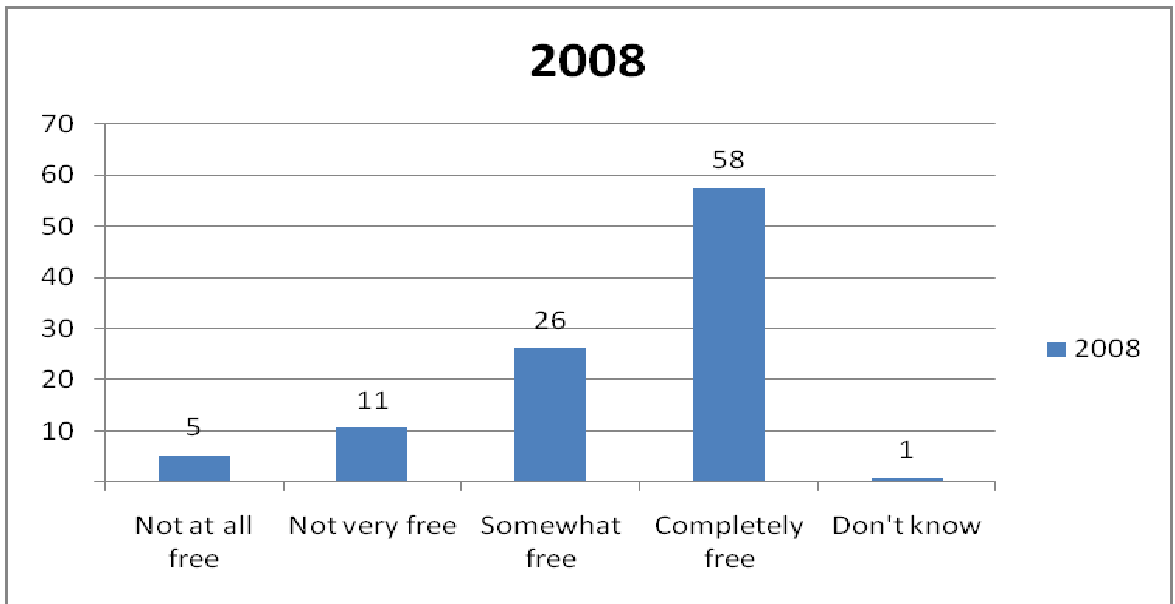
4.5 Variable: Freedom of speech (1999-2006)

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?



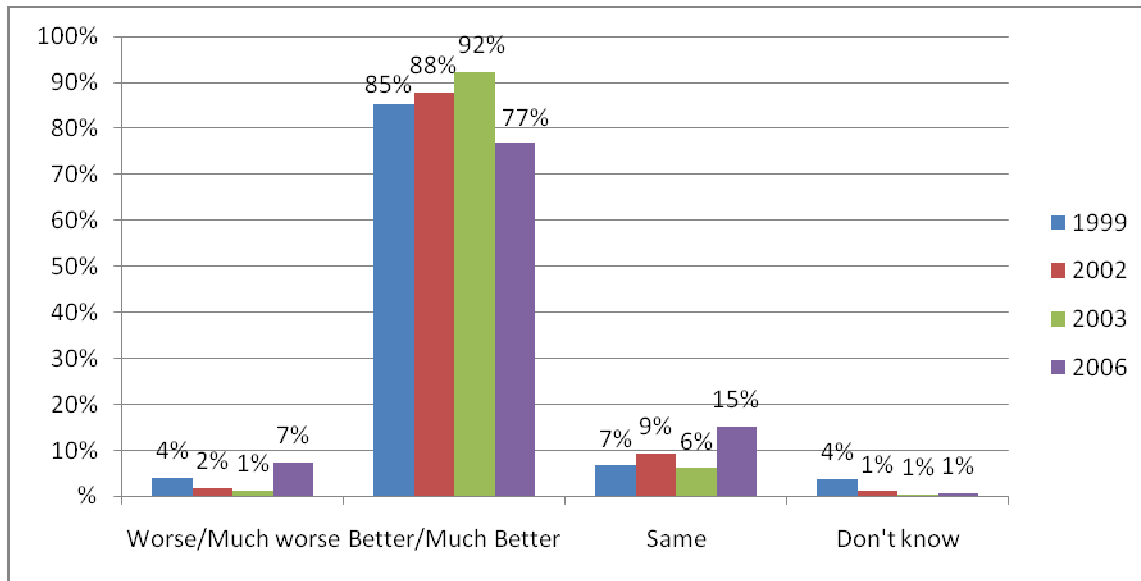
4.6 Variable: Freedom of speech (2008)

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



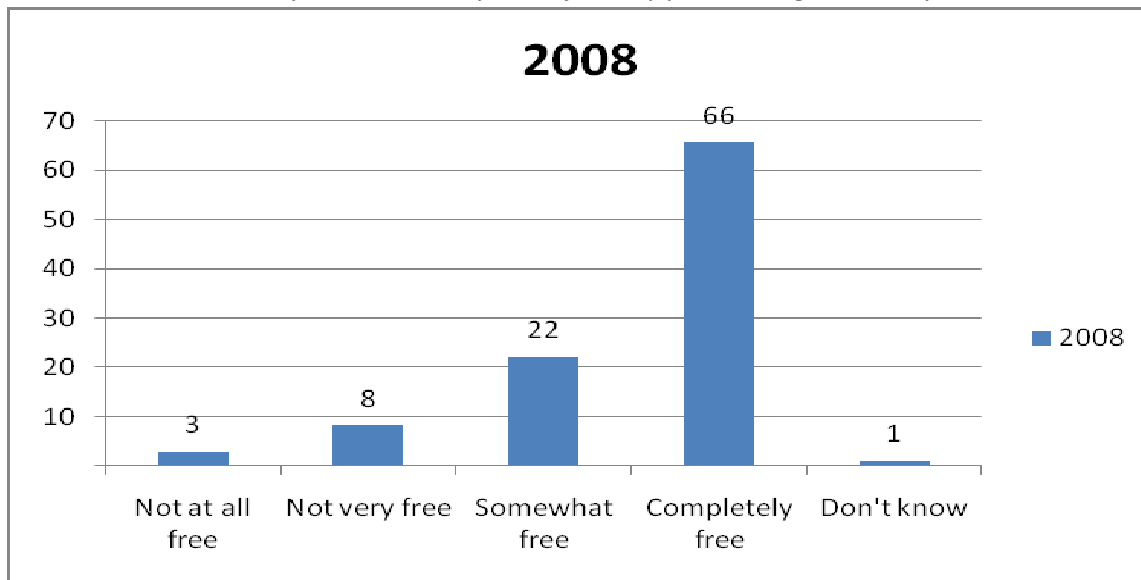
4.7 Variable: Freedom of association (1999-2006)

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?



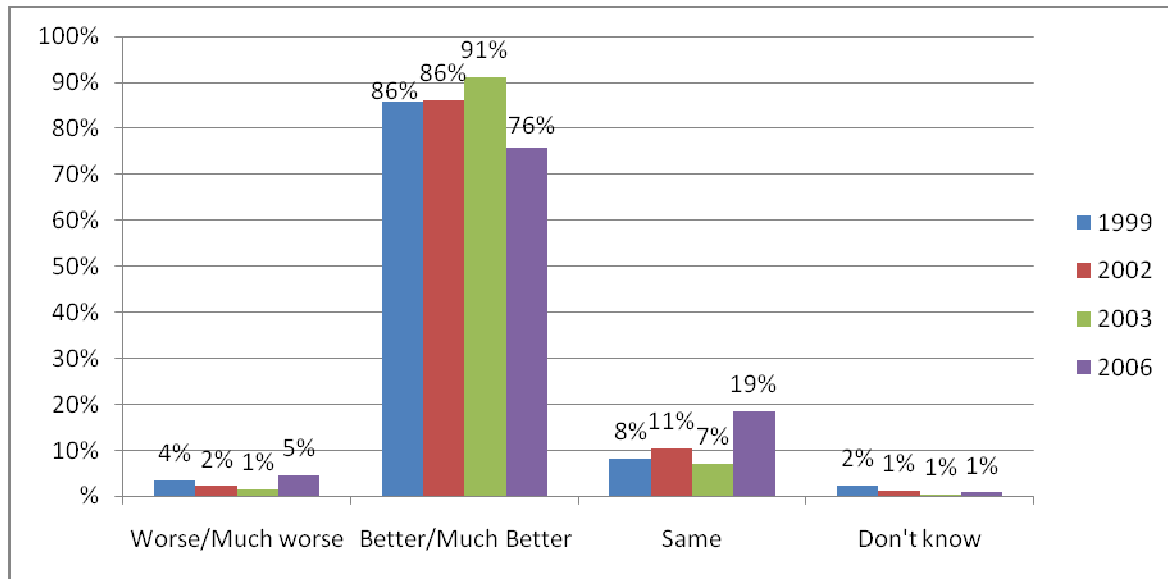
4.8 Variable: Freedom of association (2008)

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



4.9 Variable: Voting freedom (1999-2006)

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?

