

Kampala, Uganda
17 March 2021

News release

Most Ugandans said losing side should accept election results and move on, but many considered protests justified

For Ugandans who disagreed with the official results of the 2021 election, the response that most of their compatriots considered justified was to accept the results and move on, Afrobarometer survey findings show.

But close to half of Ugandans said protesting would be a justifiable response as well.

The survey, conducted in the weeks leading up to January's election, shows that large majorities of Ugandans expected that the losing side would not accept official results and that there would be violence following the announcement of results.

Citizens' views on justified reactions in the event of disputed election results align with previously reported findings that fewer than half of citizens expected the 2021 general election to be free and fair and that only one-third expected the vote count to be accurate at the national tally center.

Like several previous elections in Uganda, the 2021 election was marked by violence, suppression of dissent, and charges of fraud. Most of the electoral law reforms that the Supreme Court ordered after the disputed 2016 general election appear to have been sidelined, as have civil-society efforts to organize a national dialogue to address the country's political differences.

Key findings

- Eight in 10 Ugandans (80%) anticipated that losers of the 2021 general election would not accept results, and a similar majority (76%) expected post-election violence (Figure 1).
- Among potential actions by the losing side in the election, accepting the results and moving on was most widely seen as justified (by 75% of respondents), followed by challenging the results in court (57%). But many Ugandans also considered it justified to engage in peaceful protest (44%) or violent protest (21%) (Figure 2).

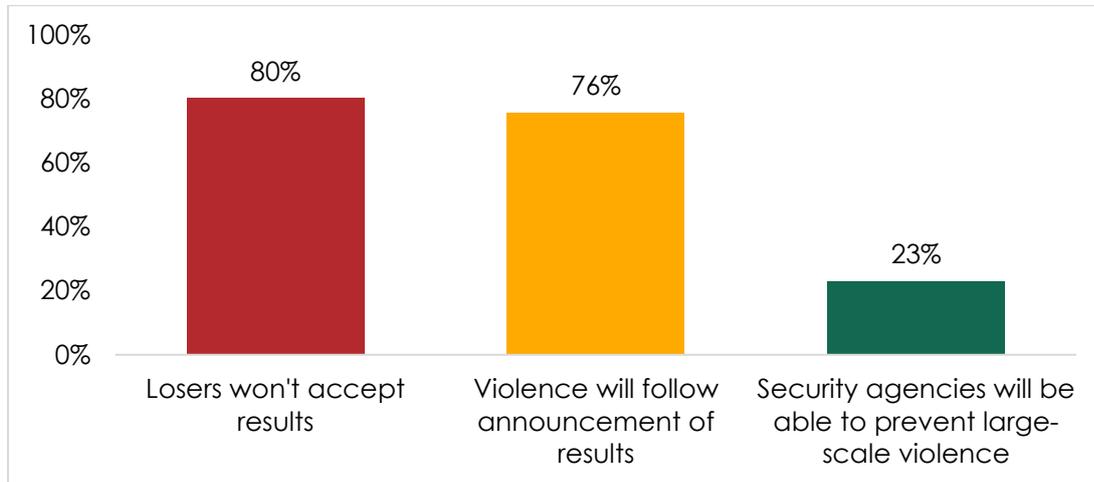
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that has provided reliable data on experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life in 38 African countries since 1999. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

With financial support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, the Afrobarometer team in Uganda, led by Hatchile Consult Ltd., interviewed 2,400 adult Ugandans between 22 December 2020 and 7 January 2021 in 300 enumeration areas across 110 districts. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. This was the 11th Afrobarometer survey in Uganda since 1999.

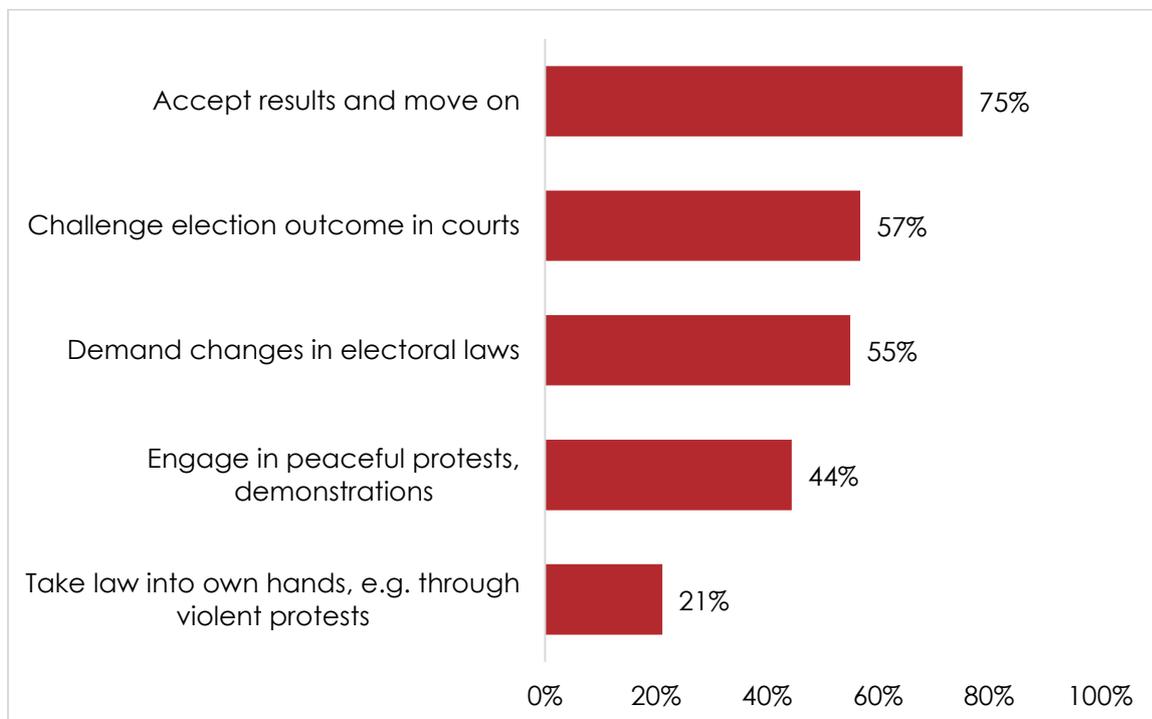
Charts

Figure 1: Post-election concerns | Uganda | 2021



Respondents were asked: *In your view, how likely is it that:*
The losers of the elections will refuse to accept the official election results?
There will be violence after the announcement of election results.
Uganda's security agencies will be able to prevent large-scale outbreaks of violence?
 (% who said "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

Figure 2: Suggested actions to resolve disagreements over election results | Uganda | 2021



Respondents were asked: *Following the conclusion of voting and the announcement of the results, some Ugandans may not accept the results because they do not think they accurately reflect the will of the voters. For those who do not accept the results, would you disagree or agree that each of the following actions would be justified? (% who "agreed" or "strongly agreed")*

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