

Mbabane, Eswatini  
16 December 2021

## News release

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### Support for multiparty democracy continues to grow in Eswatini

In Eswatini, support for multiparty competition has almost doubled since 2015 and is now the majority view, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

A popular preference for democracy over any other political system also strengthened, though more modestly.

A majority of Emaswati say that citizens should be free to join any organization they want, even if the government disapproves of it. Yet while freedom of assembly and association are provided for in the country's constitution, political parties remain banned in Eswatini and play no part in the electoral process. Calls for democratic reform have been at the heart of ongoing protests that began earlier this year.

#### Key findings

- Support for democracy as preferable to all other forms of government increased from 43% of Emaswati in 2018 to 49% in 2021 (Figure 1).
- A majority (59%) of citizens say the country needs many political parties to give voters a real choice in who governs them, a 28-percentage-point increase from 2015 (Figure 2).
- Six in 10 Emaswati (59%) say people should be free to join any organization they want, regardless of whether the government approves of it. Support for freedom of association has increased by 21 percentage points since 2015 (Figure 3).

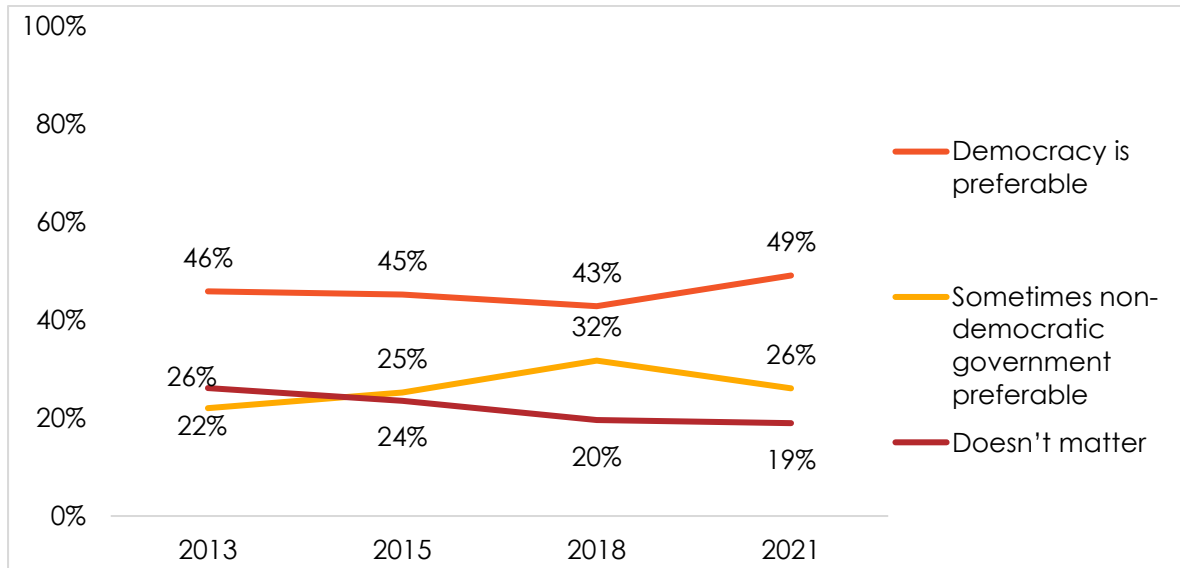
#### Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Eswatini, led by ActivQuest, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Emaswati in March-April 2021. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Eswatini in 2013, 2015, and 2018.

**Charts**

**Figure 1: Support for democracy | Eswatini | 2013-2021**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

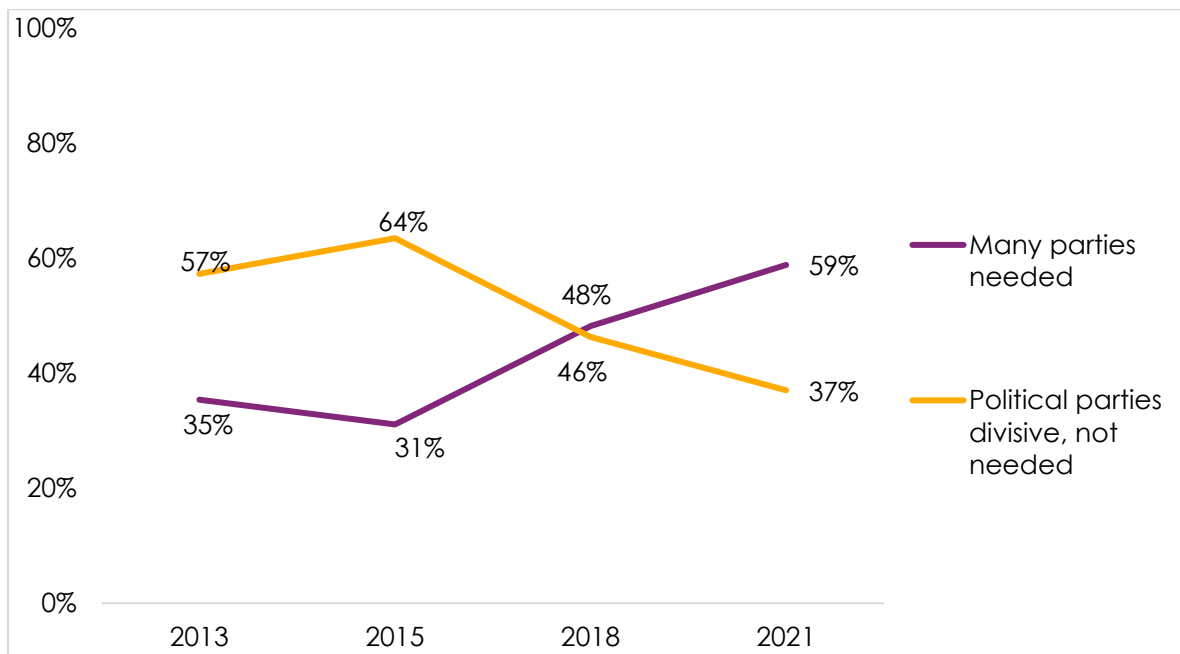
Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

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.

(% who agree with Statement 1)

**Figure 2: Political parties divisive vs. many parties needed | Eswatini | 2013-2021**



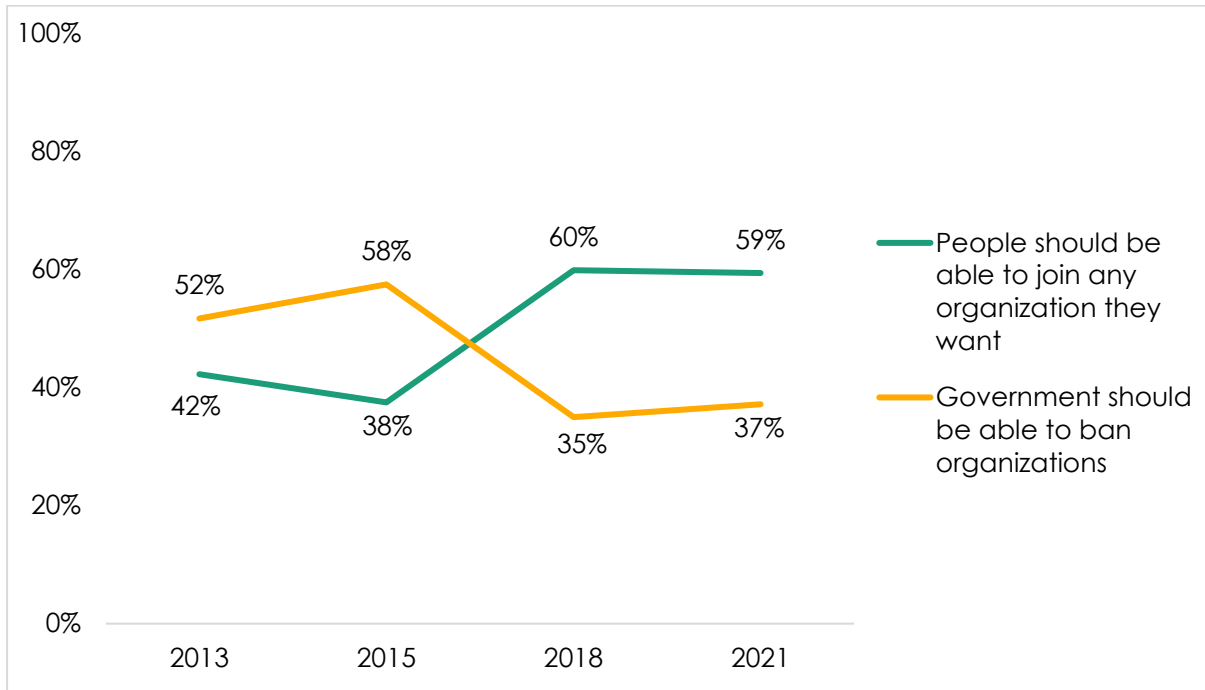
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Eswatini.

Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that Eswatini have real choices in who governs them.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

**Figure 3: Views on freedom of association | Eswatini | 2013-2021**



**Respondents were asked:** Let's talk for a moment about the kind of society you would like to have in this country. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: The government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies.  
 Statement 2: We should be able to join any organization, whether or not the government approves of it.  
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

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