



# Citizen views on the election environment for the 2021 general elections in Uganda

Findings from 2020/2021 Afrobarometer survey in Uganda

# At a glance

- **Readiness for 2021 elections:** A majority of Ugandans think the Electoral Commission is well prepared for the 2021 elections, but fewer trust that the commission will deliver a free, fair, and credible election.
- **COVID-19 impacts on 2021 election:** Many Ugandans say COVID-19 is impacting the ability of individuals and institutions to participate, campaign, and monitor the 2021 elections.
- **Election campaign environment:** Fewer than half of all respondents feel that the election campaign environment has been free and fair for all candidates.
- **Vote choice:** President Yoweri Museveni holds a nearly 3-to-1 lead over his main challenger among registered voters willing to declare their voting intentions, but many respondents would not say how they intended to vote.



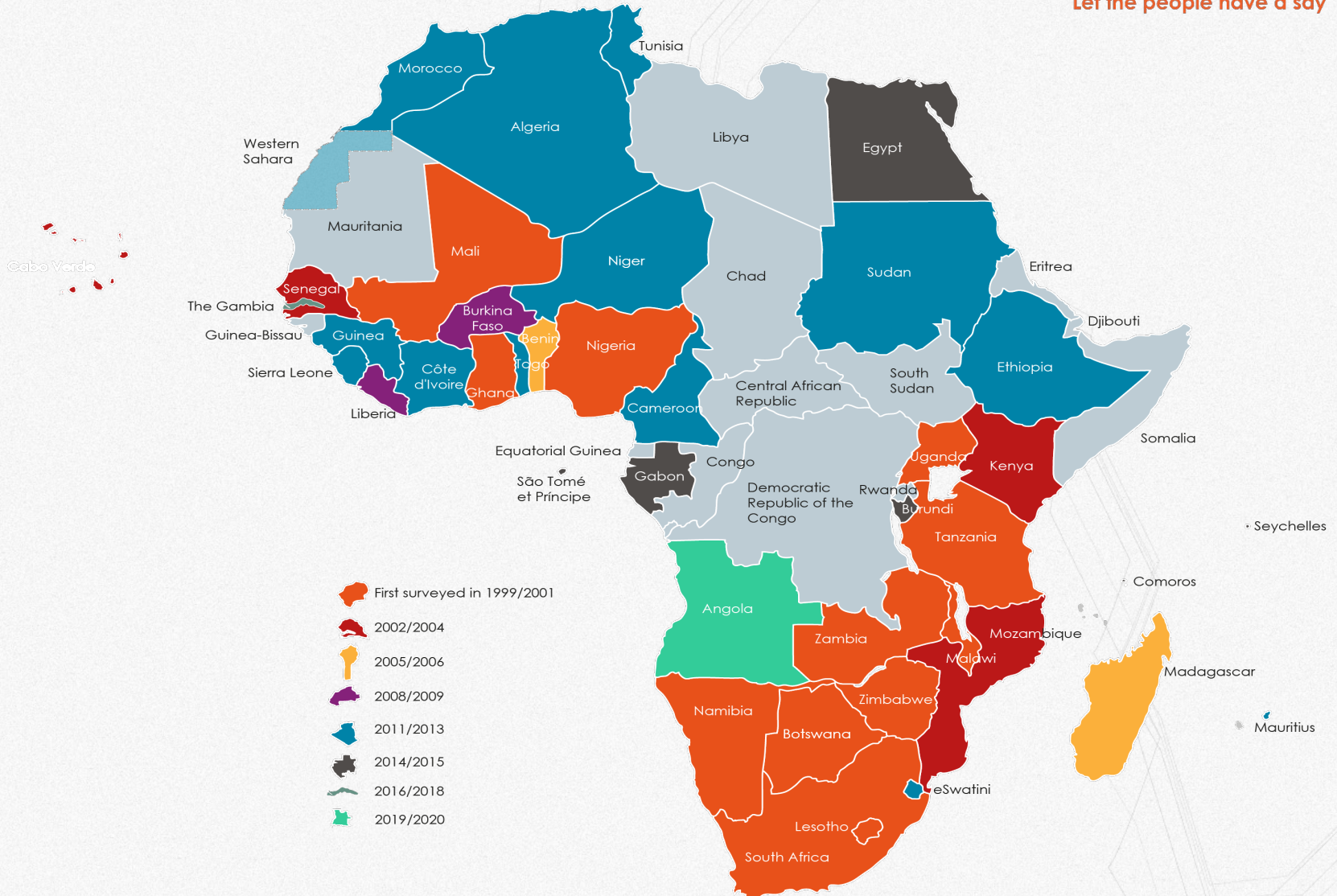
# What is Afrobarometer?



- A pan-African, non-partisan survey research project that measures **citizen attitudes on democracy and governance**, the economy, civil society, and other topics.
- **Core objectives:**
  - To produce scientifically reliable data and analysis on public opinion in Africa;
  - To strengthen the capacity of African institutions for democratic governance survey research and analysis; and
  - To broadly disseminate and apply democratic governance survey results
- Leading source of reliable data on **what Africans think, their experiences and political behaviors**; all data is made publicly available
- **Goal: To give the public a voice in policy making** by providing high-quality public opinion data to policymakers, policy advocates, civil society, academics, news media, donors and investors, and ordinary Africans.
- A **national partner** in each country conducts the survey. In Uganda, Afrobarometer Round 8.5 survey was conducted by Hatchile Consult.



# Where Afrobarometer works





# Methodology



- **Nationally representative** sample of adult citizens
  - All respondents are **randomly** selected.
  - Sample is distributed across [regions/states/provinces] and urban/rural areas in **proportion** to their share in the national population.
  - Every adult citizen has an **equal chance** of being selected.
- **Face-to-face interviews** In the **language of the respondent's choice**.
- **Standard questionnaire** allows comparisons across countries and over time.
- **Sample sizes** of 2,400 adult citizens for this survey yields margins of sampling error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level.
- Fieldwork for Round 8.5 in Uganda was conducted between **22 December 2020 and 7 January 2021** in 300 enumeration areas across 110 districts.



[illegible]

A man in a white shirt with a bold yellow and black pattern sits on a dark metal bench in the foreground, looking down at a smartphone in his hands. He is wearing a gold watch on his left wrist. In the background, a woman sits on the dry, dusty ground, holding a young child in her arms. The scene is set outdoors under the shade of large trees, with a dirt path leading into the distance.

# Survey demographics

Gender	%
Women	49%
Men	51%
Residence	
Rural	69%
Urban	31%
Education	
Primary school	42%
Secondary school	34%
Post-secondary qualifications	14%
No formal schooling	9%
Employment	
Not employed, not looking	28%
Not employed, looking	29%
Employed, part time	19%
Employed, full time	24%

Region	%
Northern	20%
Eastern	24%
Central	24%
Western	26%
Kampala	6%
Subregion	
Buganda	24%
Eastern	15%
Busoga	10%
Ankore	9%
Tooro	7%
West Nile	7%
Bunyoro	6%
Kampala	6%
Lango	6%
Acholi	4%
Kigezi	4%
Karamoja	2%



# National context for the 2021 election



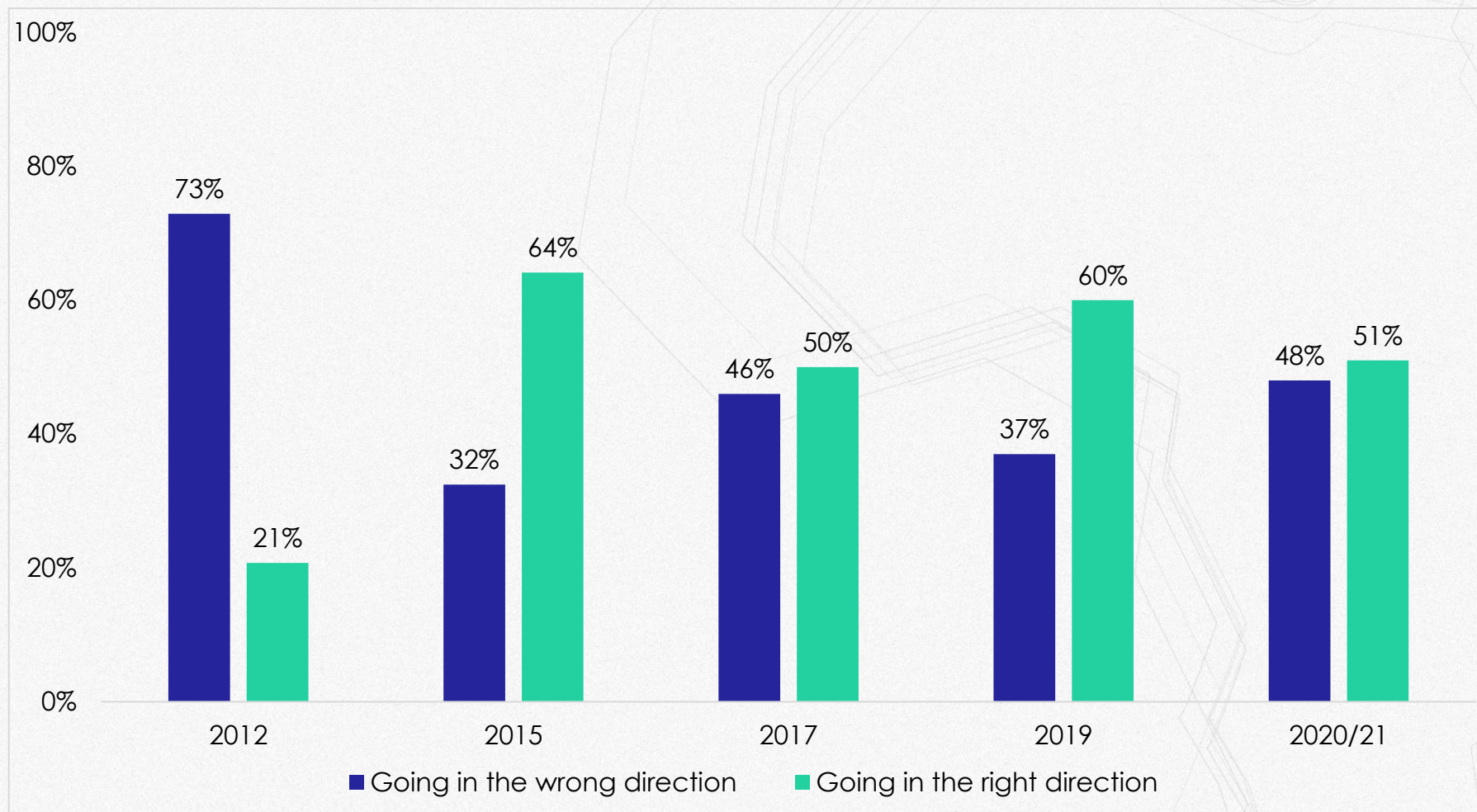
# Key findings



- **Direction in which the country is headed:** Only half (51%) of respondents feel the country is headed in the right direction, a drop from 64% recorded in 2015.
- **Economic and living conditions:** Only about one-third of Ugandans describe the country's economic condition (30%) and their personal living conditions (35%) as "fairly good" or "very good," a decline from 2019.
- **Election campaigns:** Three-fourths (76%) of respondents say they have followed the 2021 election campaigns "fairly" or "very" closely.



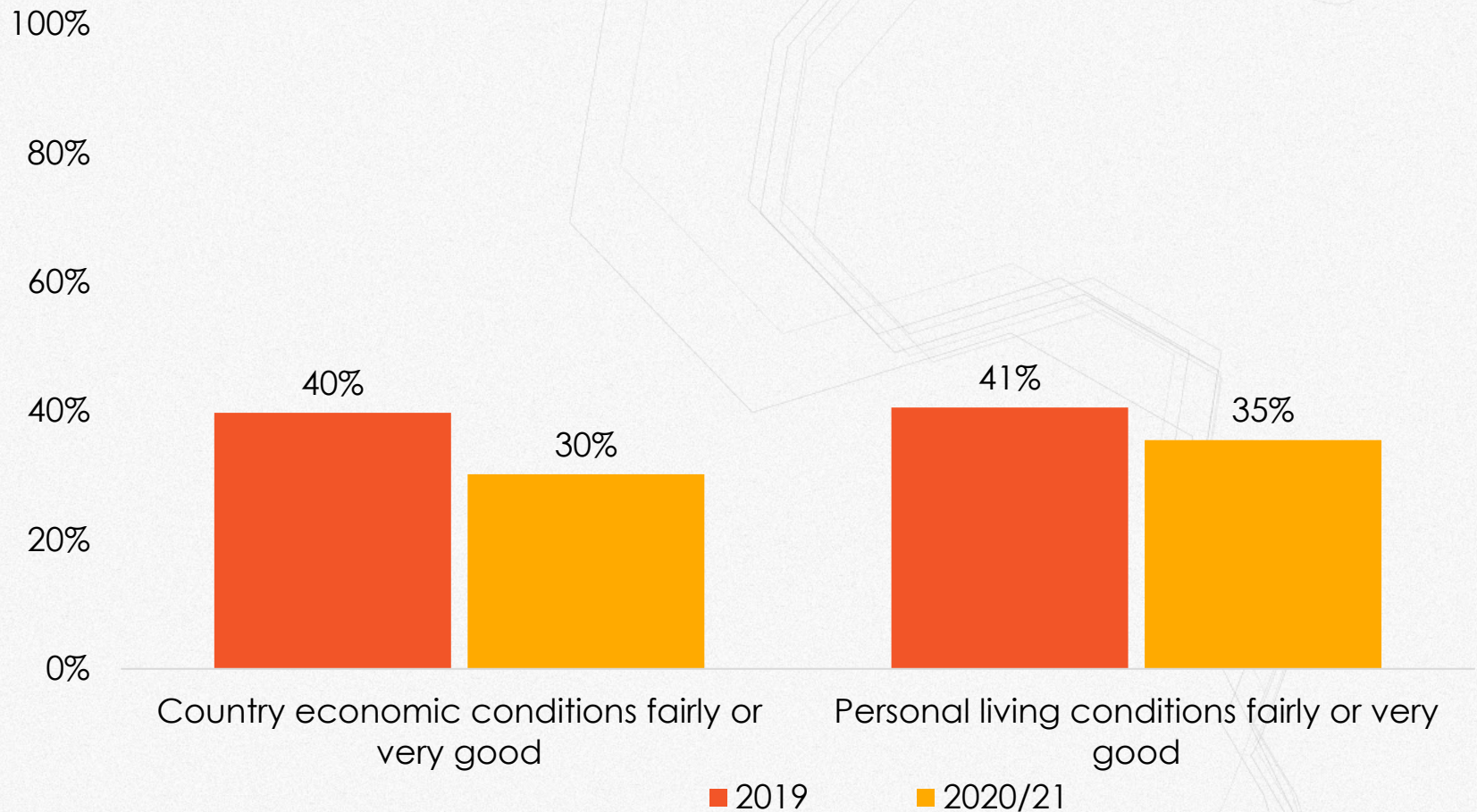
# Direction of the country | 2012-2021



**Respondents were asked:** Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?



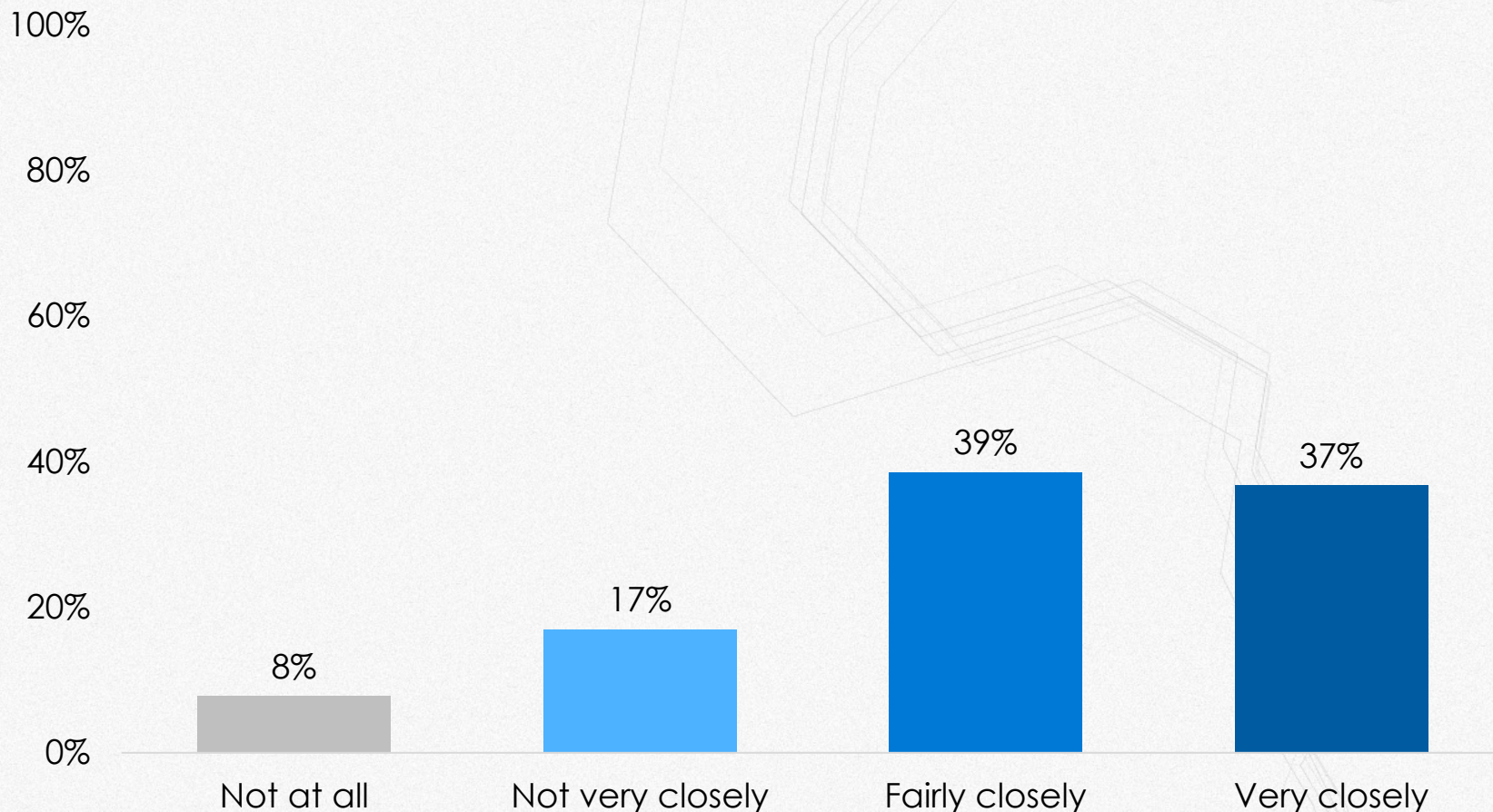
# Country's economic condition and personal living conditions | Uganda | 2019-2021



**Respondents were asked:** In general, how would you describe: **A)** The present economic condition of this country? **B)** Your own present living conditions? (% who say "fairly" or "very" good)

# How closely following 2021 election campaigns

## | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** How closely are you following the campaigning for the 2021 general elections?



*Electoral context*

**Commitment to democracy,  
multipartyism, and elections**

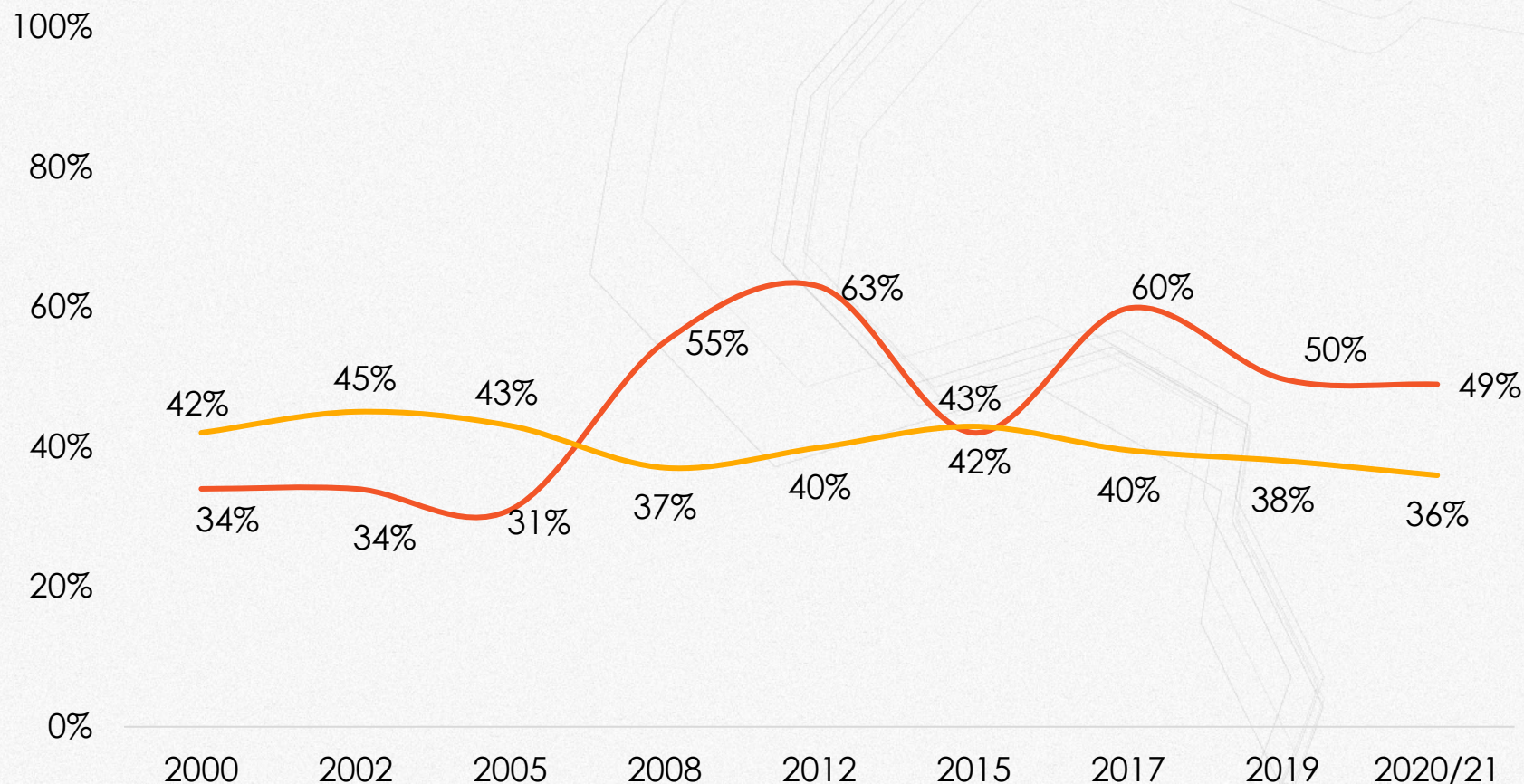
# Key findings



- **Demand for and supply of democracy:** Both demand for democracy and supply of democracy have declined compared to 2017.
- **Support for multiparty elections:** About three-fourths of Ugandans say that elections are the best way to choose their leaders (78%, a 10-percentage-point decrease since 2011) and that many political parties are needed to ensure real choices at the ballot box (74%, a 6-point increase).



# Demand for and supply of democracy | Uganda | 2000-2021

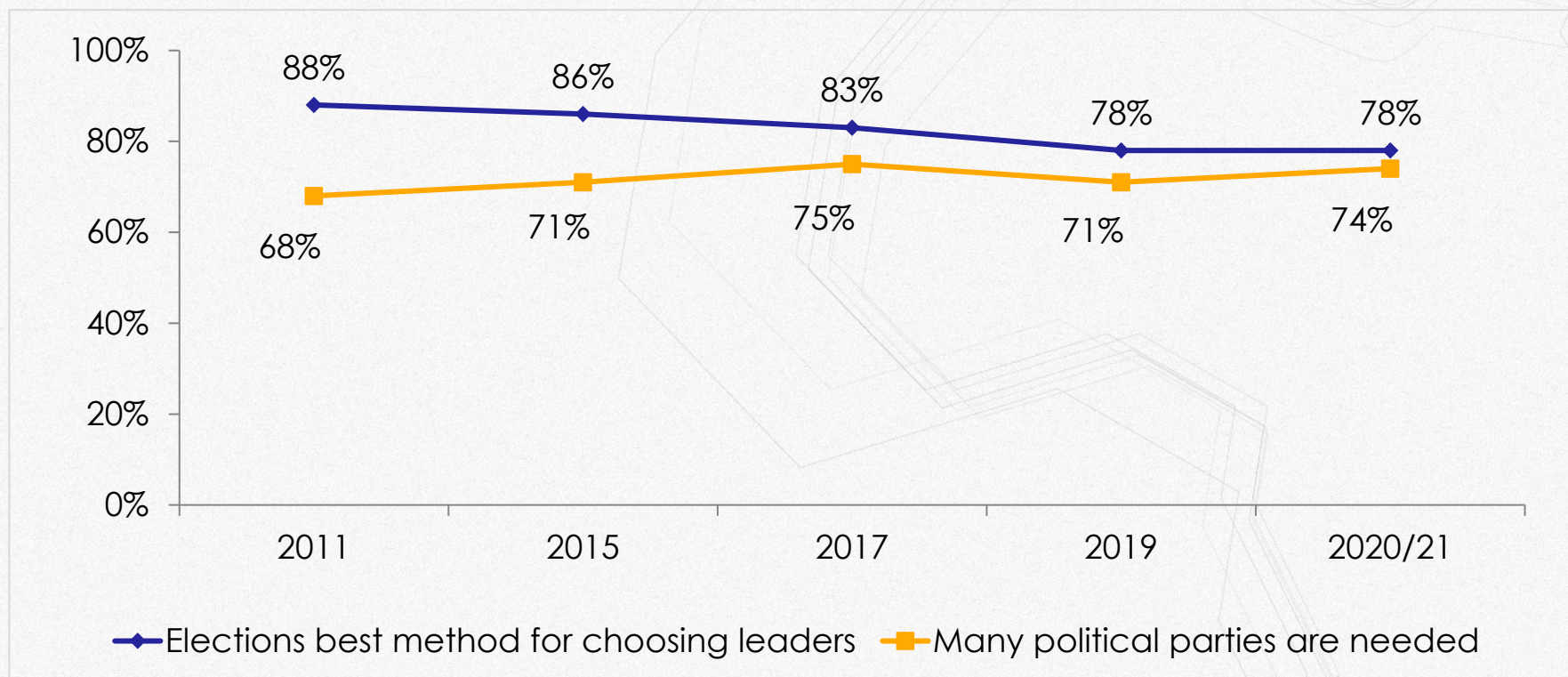


**Graph shows two indices:** — Demand for democracy — Supply of democracy

- Demand for democracy: % who prefer democracy AND reject one-man, military, and one-party rule.
- Supply of democracy: % who say the country is “a full democracy” or “a democracy with minor problems” AND are “fairly” or “very” satisfied with the way democracy works in their country.



# Support for multipartyism and elections | Uganda | 2011-2021



## Respondents were asked:

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

- Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.  
Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders. (**% choosing Statement 1**)
- Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Uganda. Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that Ugandans have real choices in who governs them. (**% choosing Statement 2**)



*Managing the election*

# Electoral Commission and other actors

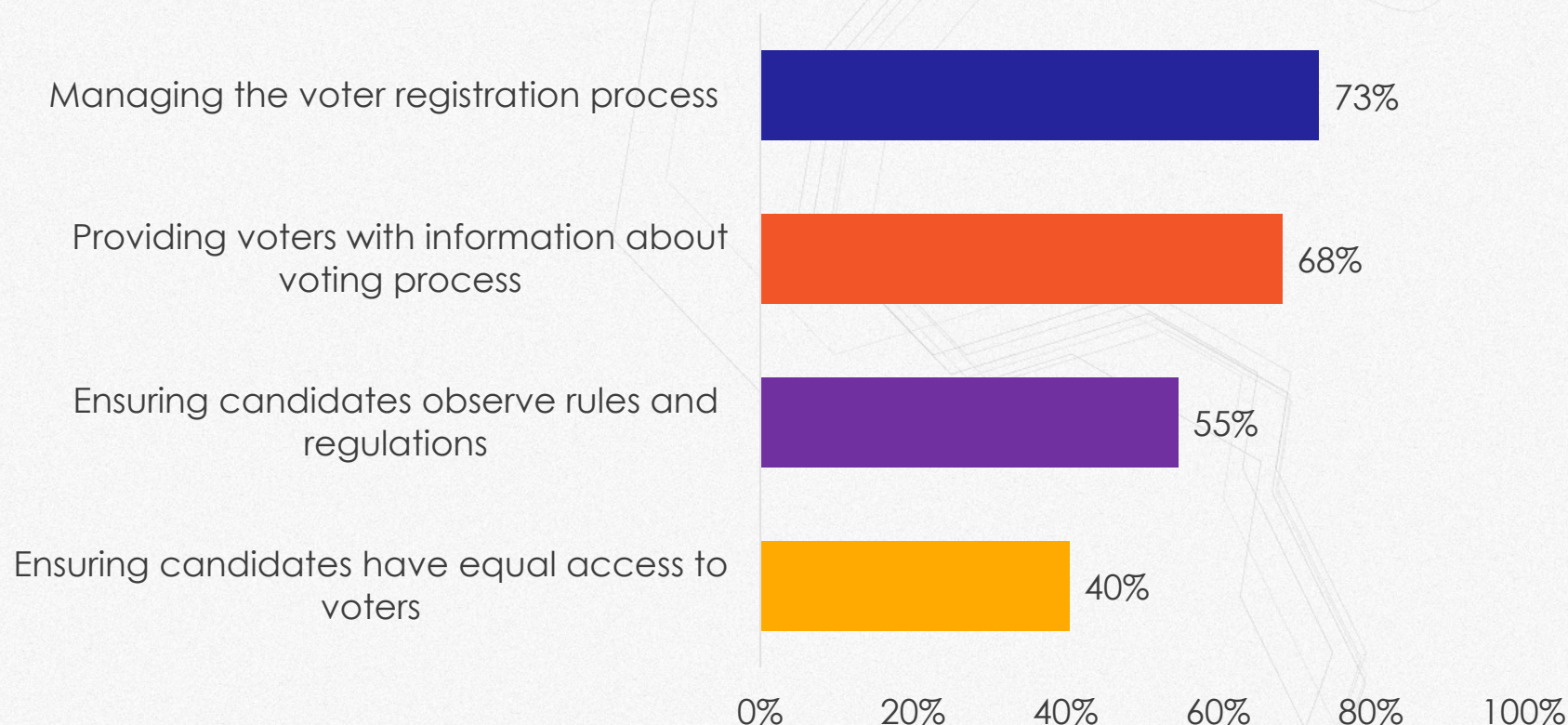
# Key findings

- **Effectiveness of Electoral Commission:** The Electoral Commission gets high marks for management of the registration process and providing information, but lower marks for ensuring a level playing field and adherence to electoral rules.
- **Readiness of EC to deliver free and fair elections:** A majority feel the Electoral Commission is well prepared, but fewer have confidence that the Electoral Commission can deliver a free, fair, and credible election in 2021.
- **Trust in institutions managing elections:** Fewer than half of Ugandans trust political parties, security agencies, courts of law, and the Presidency to do their best to ensure that 2021 elections are free, fair, and credible.



# Effectiveness of the Electoral Commission | Uganda

## | 2020/2021

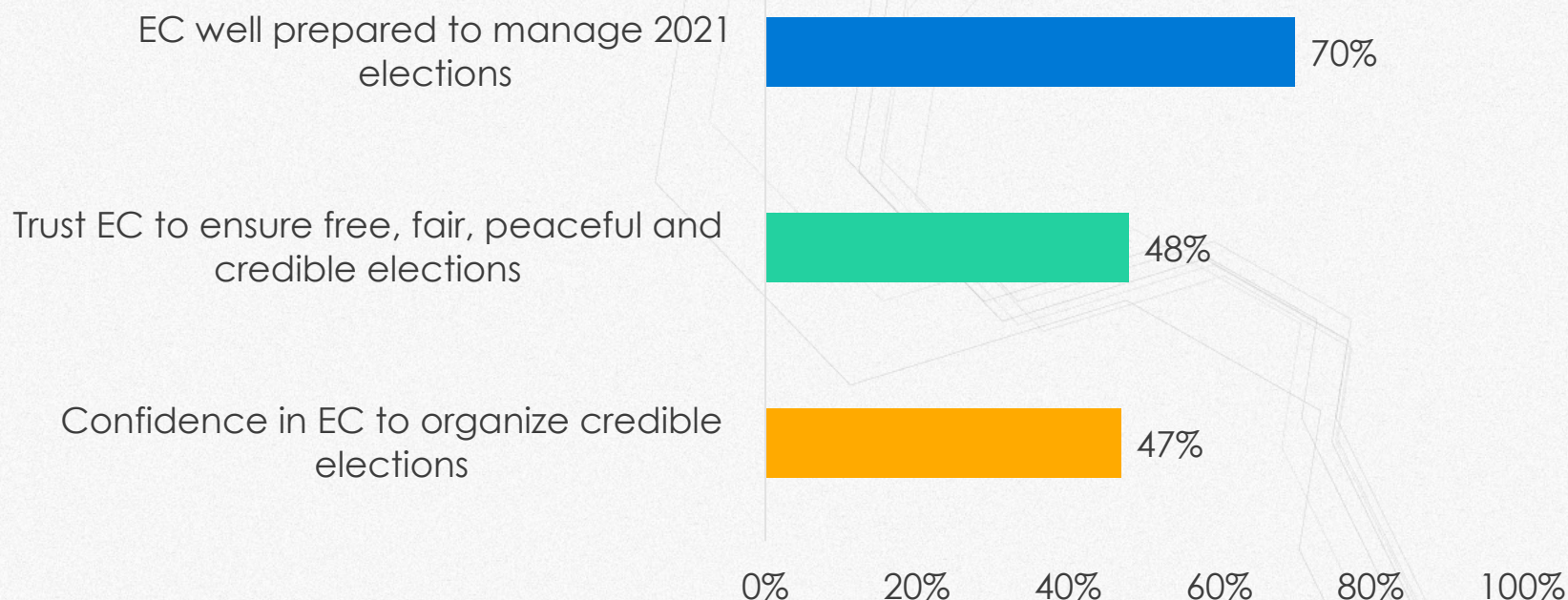


**Respondents were asked:** How effective do you think the Electoral Commission of Uganda has been in fulfilling each of the following responsibilities in preparation for the 2021 general election: A. Managing the voter registration process? B. Providing voters with necessary information, for example about how to register, and when, where and how to vote? C. Ensuring that all candidates and parties observe rules and regulations regarding campaigning? D. Ensuring that all candidates and parties have equal opportunity to meet with their supporters and conduct their campaigns? (% who say “somewhat effective” or “very effective”)



# Readiness of EC to deliver free and fair elections

## | Uganda | 2020/2021



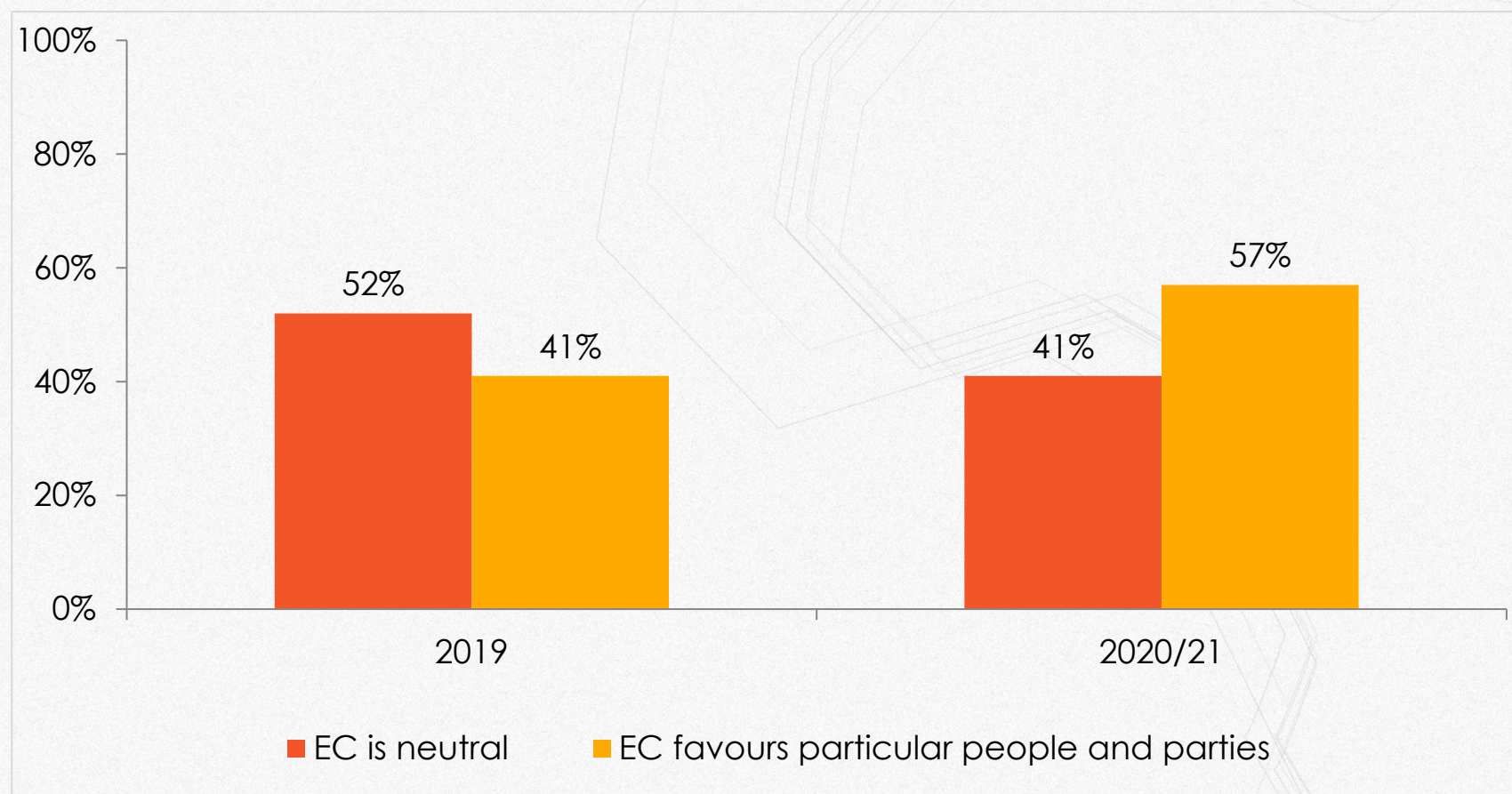
### Respondents were asked:

1. In your opinion, how well prepared do you think the Electoral Commission or EC is to effectively manage the 2021 election? (% who say "somewhat" or "very" well prepared)
2. How much confidence do you have in the ability of the Electoral Commission or EC to organize credible elections? (% who say "some confidence" or "a lot of confidence")
3. With respect to the upcoming 2021 general elections, how much do you trust each of the following institutions to do their best to ensure that the elections are free, fair, credible, and peaceful: The Electoral Commission of Uganda? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")



# Is Electoral Commission neutral or partisan? | Uganda

## | 2019-2021



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

Statement 1: The Electoral Commission of Uganda performs its duties as a neutral body guided by law.

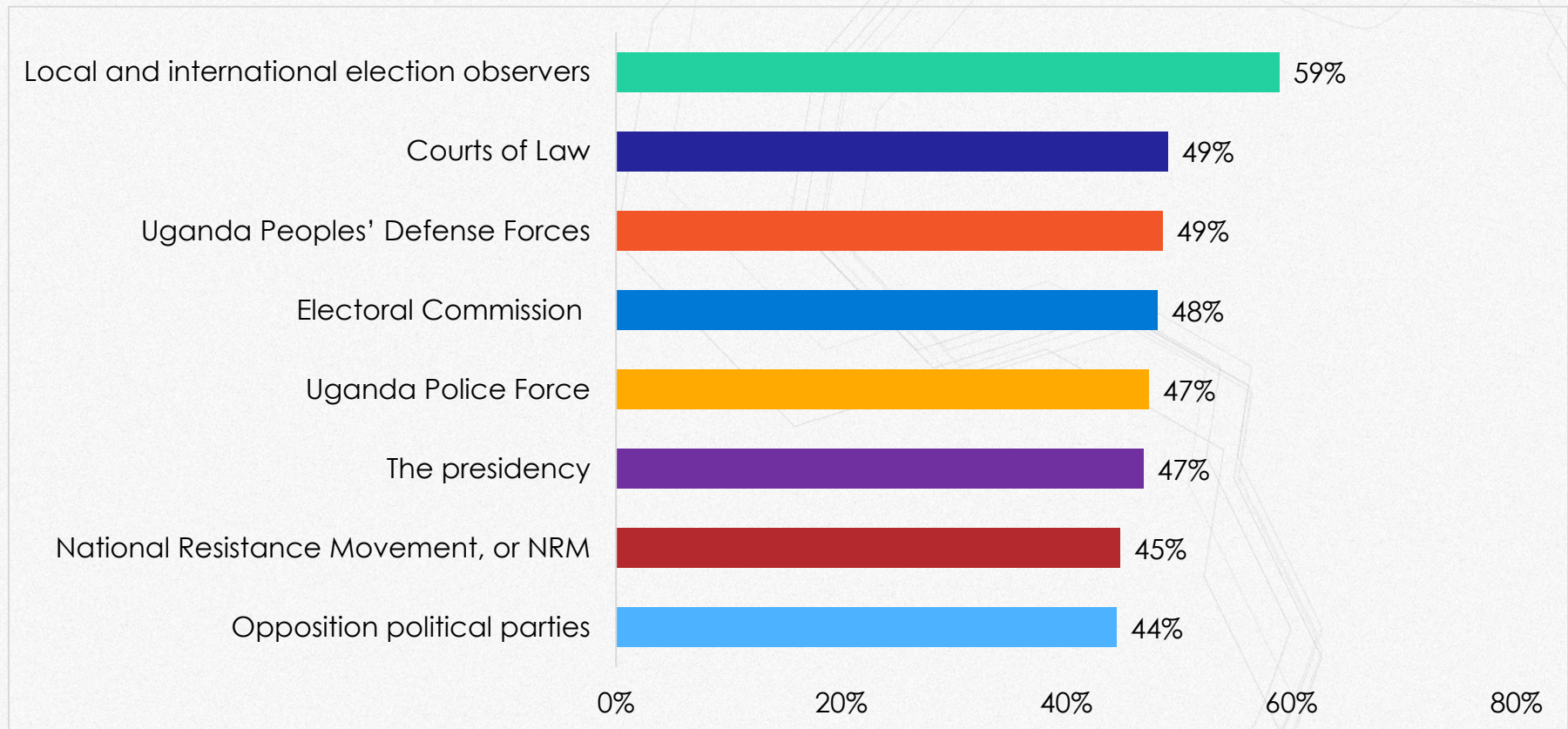
Statement 2: The Electoral Commission of Uganda makes decisions that favour particular people, parties or interests.

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



# Trust in institutions managing 2021 elections | Uganda

## | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** With respect to the upcoming 2021 general elections, how much do you trust each of the following institutions to do their best to ensure that the elections are free, fair, credible, and peaceful: The Presidency? The Electoral Commission of Uganda? Uganda Police Force? Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces? The NRM party? Opposition political parties? Courts of law? Local and international election observers?

(% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")



*Citizen readiness to vote*

# Candidate awareness and registration status

# Key findings

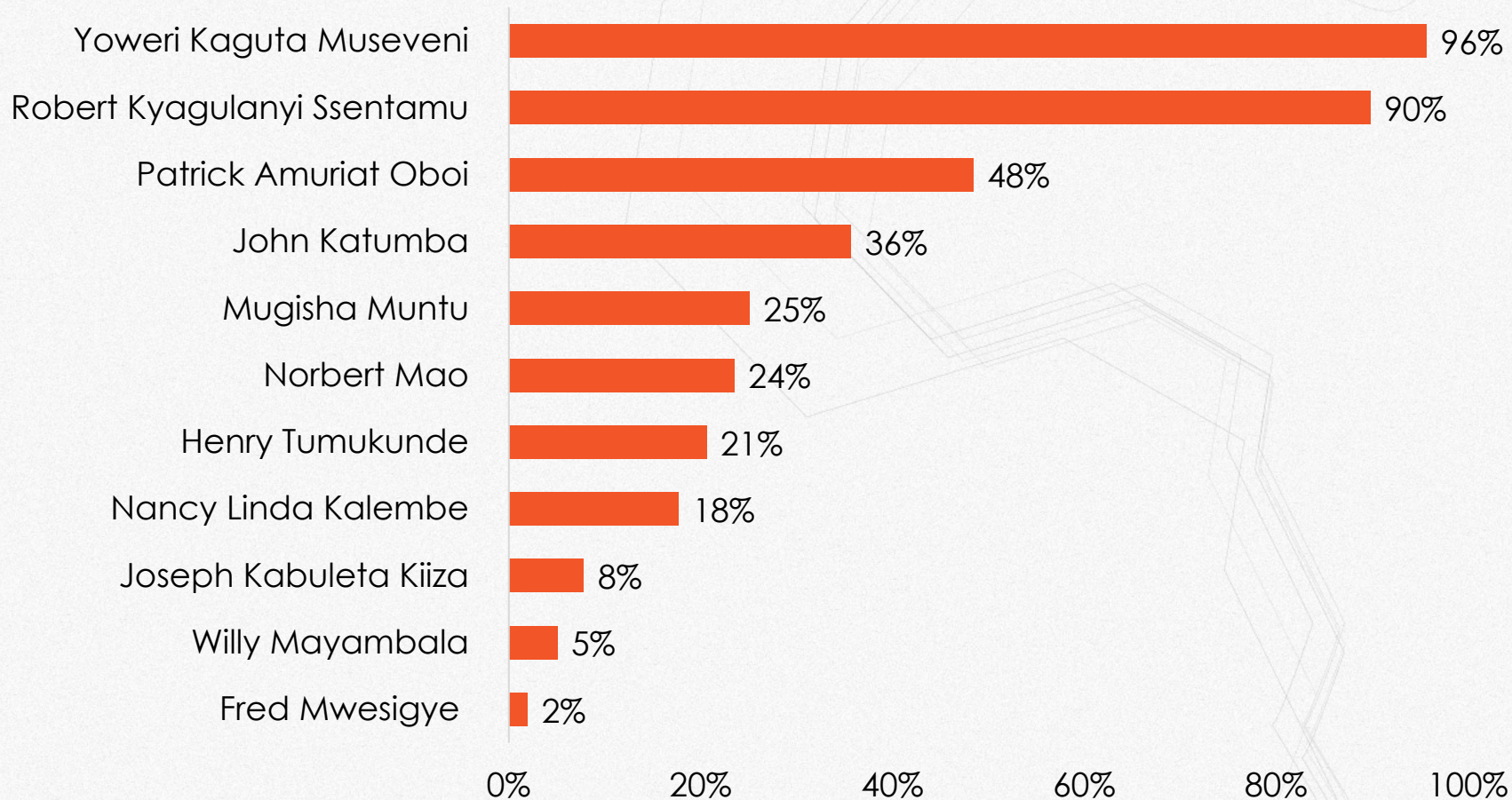


- **Readiness to vote:** Large majorities of respondents say they have National ID Cards (85%), are registered to vote (84%), have confirmed the name and location of their polling station (77%), and have verified their voter registration status (74%).
  - Among respondents who say they obtained a National ID Card, three in 10 (30%) say it was difficult to do. Fewer report difficulties completing the other tasks.



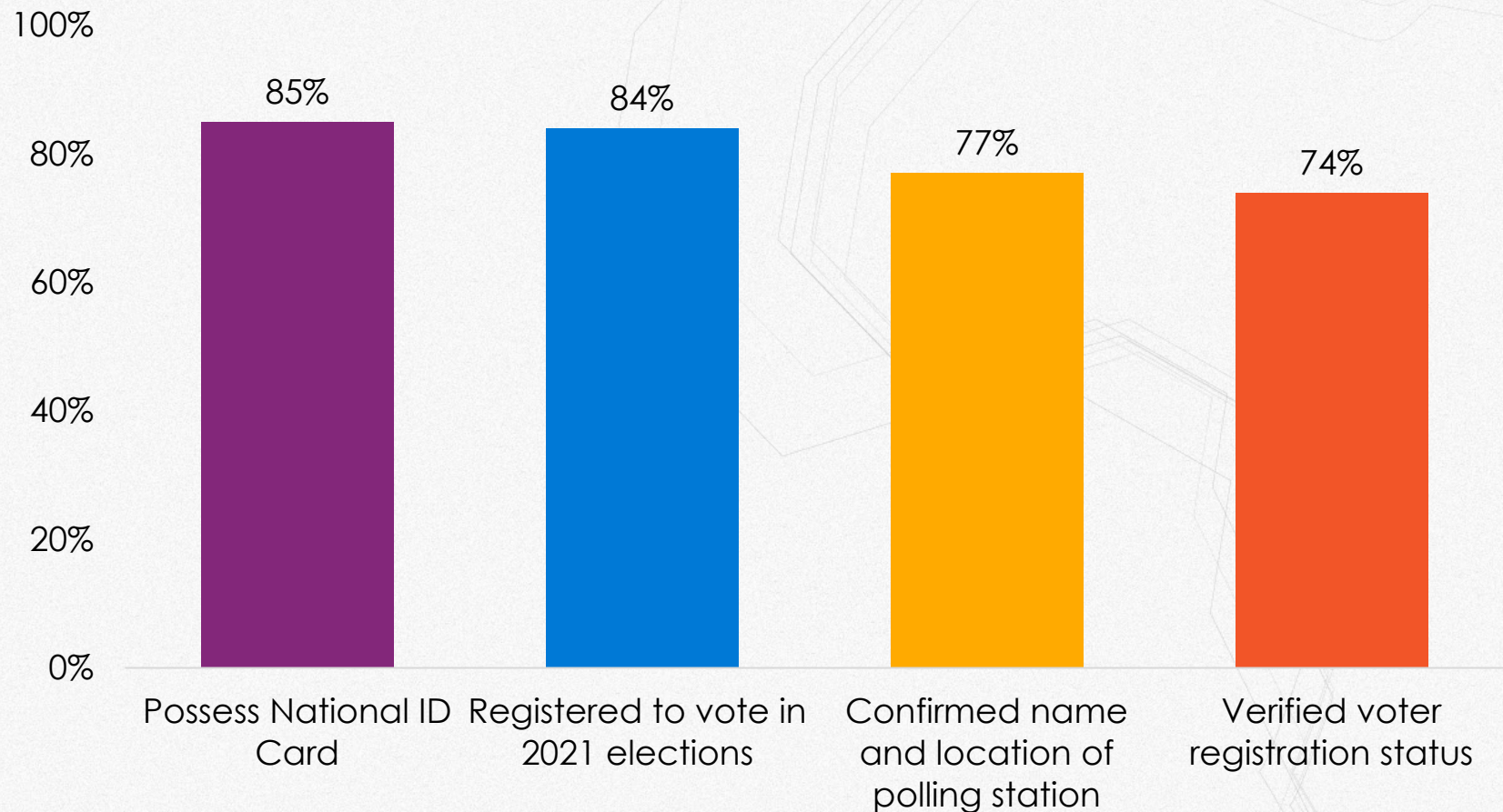
# Knowledge of presidential candidates | Uganda

## | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** Can you tell me the names of all of the candidates who are running for president in the upcoming 2021 general elections that you can remember? (Figure shows % of respondents who mentioned each candidate)

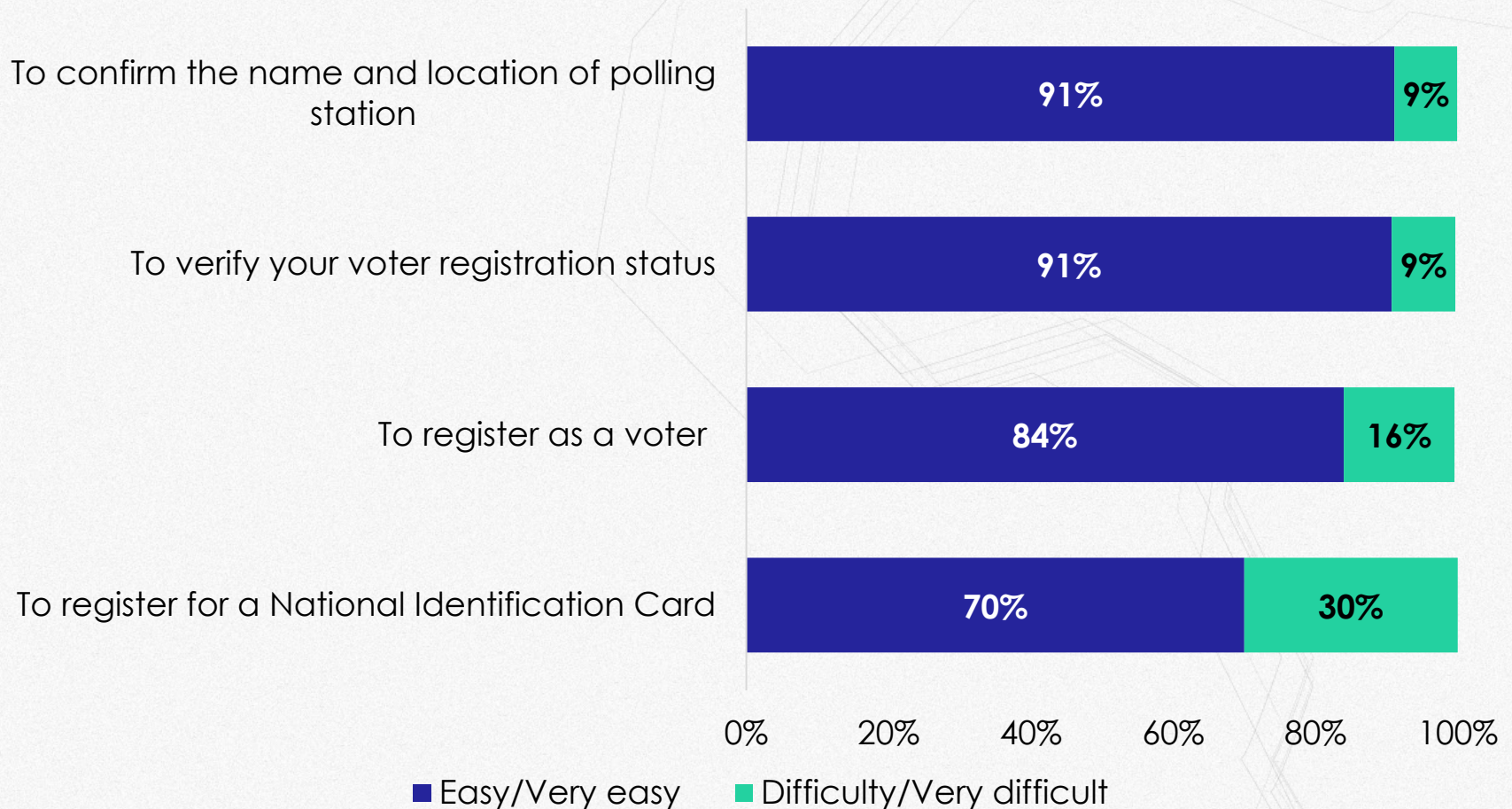
# Registration and verification | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** With respect to participation in the ongoing electoral process for the 2021 general elections, please tell me: A) Are you registered to vote in the coming 2021 general elections? B) Do you have a National Identification Card or National ID? C) Have you verified your voter registration status in your parish? D) Have you confirmed the name and location of your polling station? (% who say “yes”)



# Ease of preparing to vote | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents who said they had completed these tasks were asked:** How easy or difficult was it to do each of the following: A) To register as a voter? B) To register for a National Identification Card? C) To verify your voter registration status? D) To confirm the name and location of polling station?

*The campaign environment*

**Free and fair for all candidates?**



# Key findings

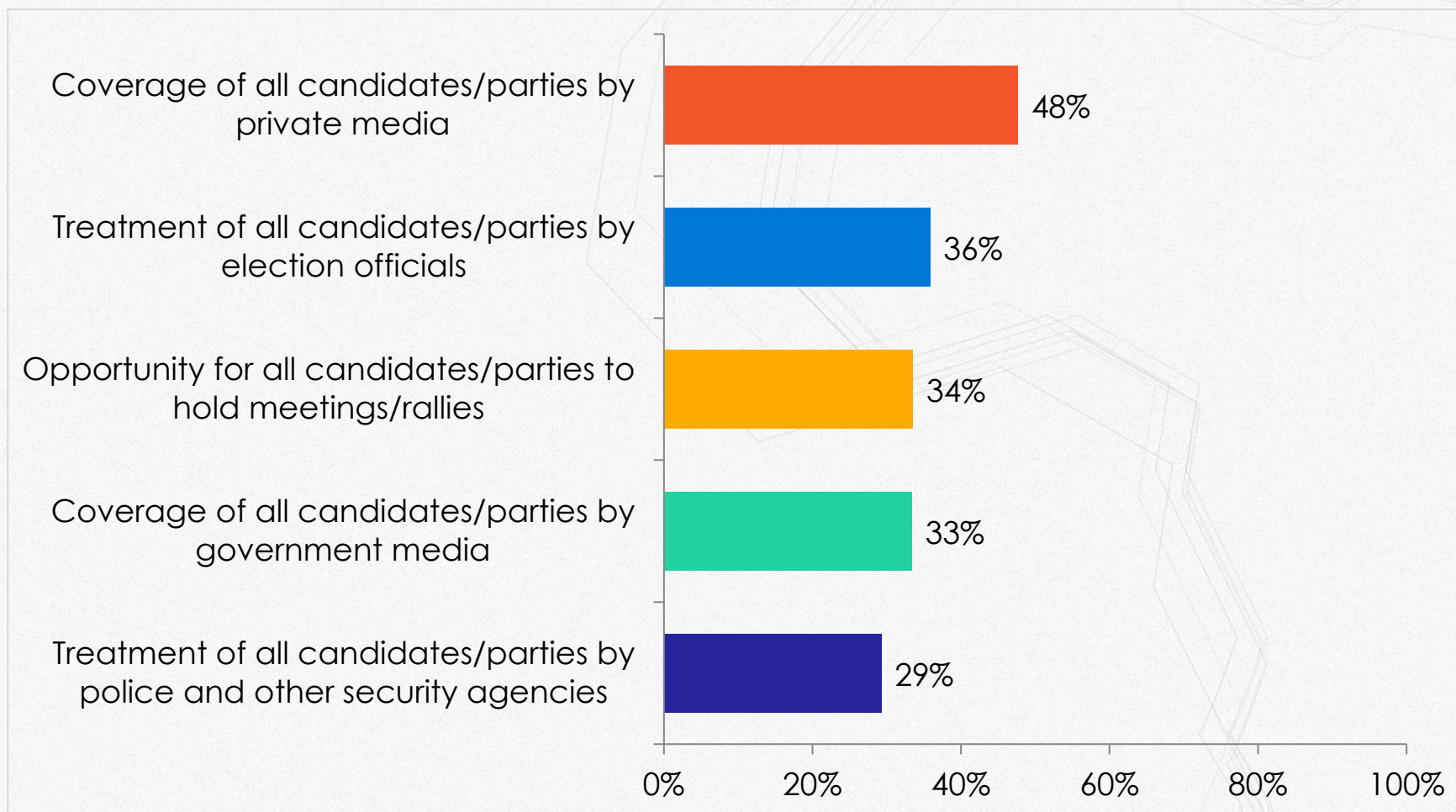


- **Election campaign environment:** Fewer than half of respondents feel that the election campaign environment has been free and fair for all candidates.
- **Opposition silenced by government:** The proportion of Ugandans who say the opposition and its supporters are “often” or “always” silenced by government has almost doubled compared to 2015, to 61%.
- **Fear:** Fear of political intimidation or violence during elections has increased compared to 2011.



# Free and fair campaign environment | Uganda

## | 2020/2021

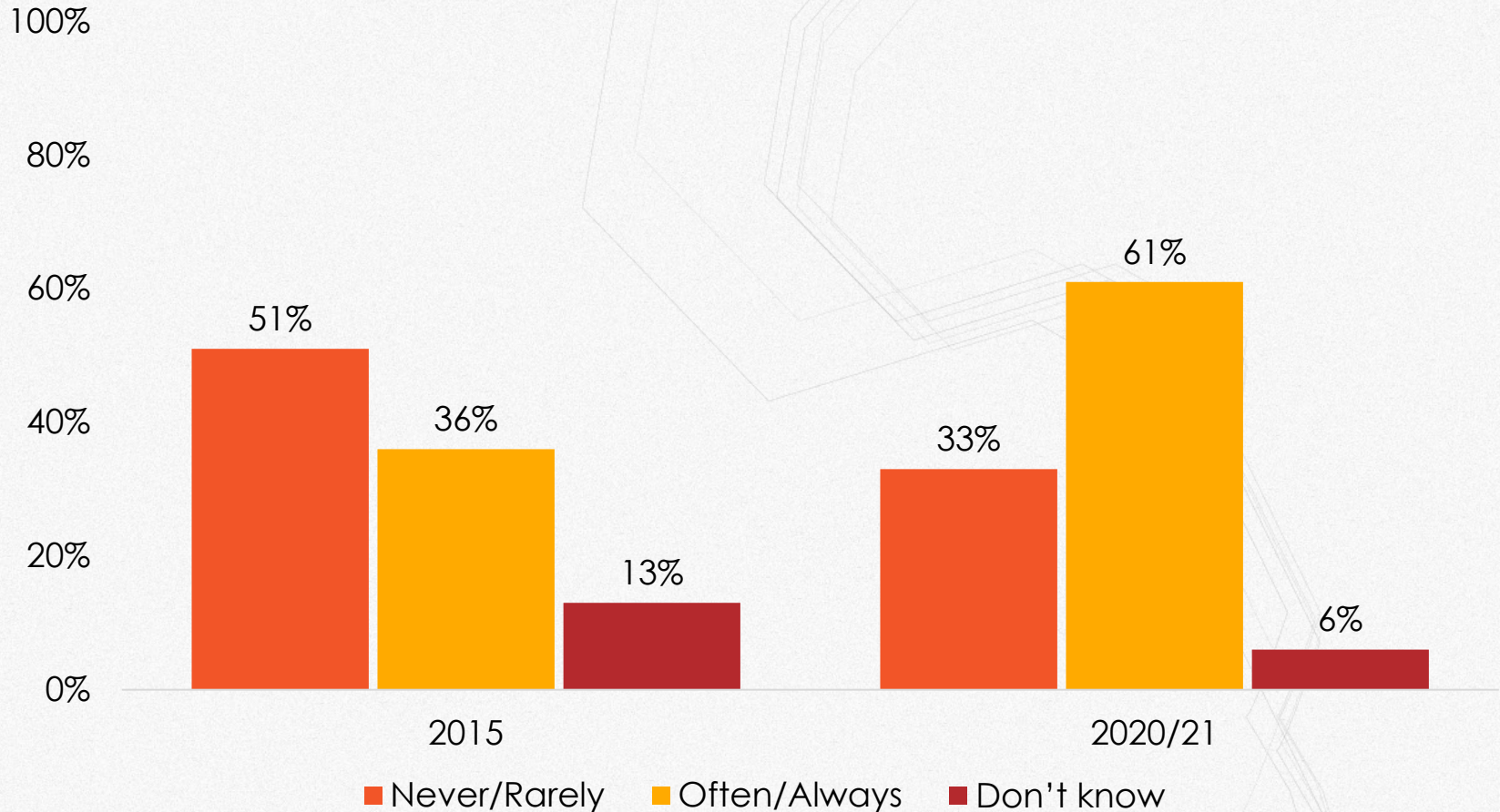


**Respondents were asked:** How free and fair do you think the campaign environment has been with regard to each of the following? (% who say “completely free and fair” or “free and fair with minor problems”)



# Opposition silenced by government | Uganda

## | 2015-2021

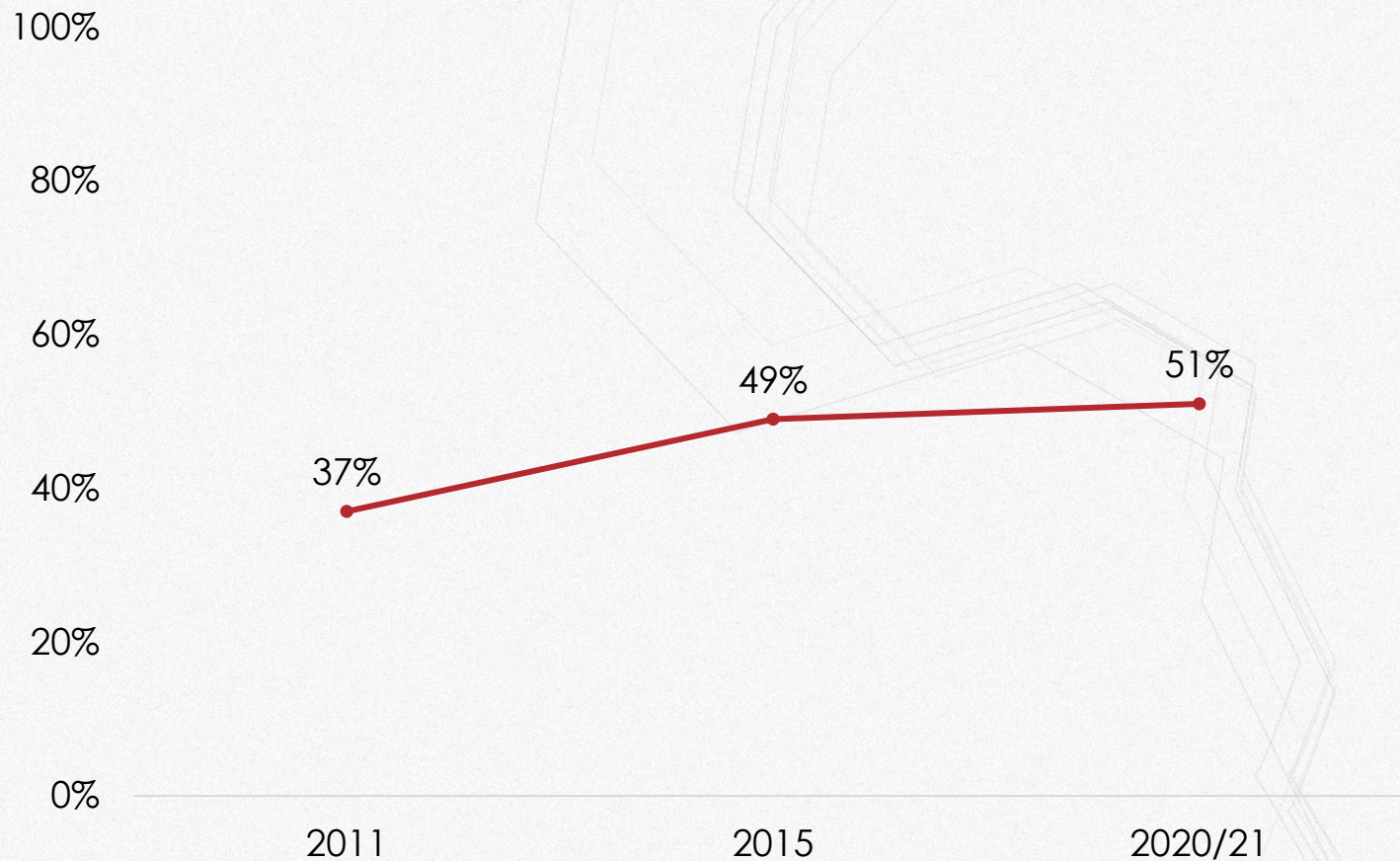


**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how often, in this country, are opposition parties or their supporters silenced by the government?



# Fear political intimidation or violence | Uganda

## | 2011-2021



**Respondents were asked:** During the current election campaign, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence? (% “somewhat” or “a lot”)



*Likely impacts*

# COVID-19 and 2021 general elections

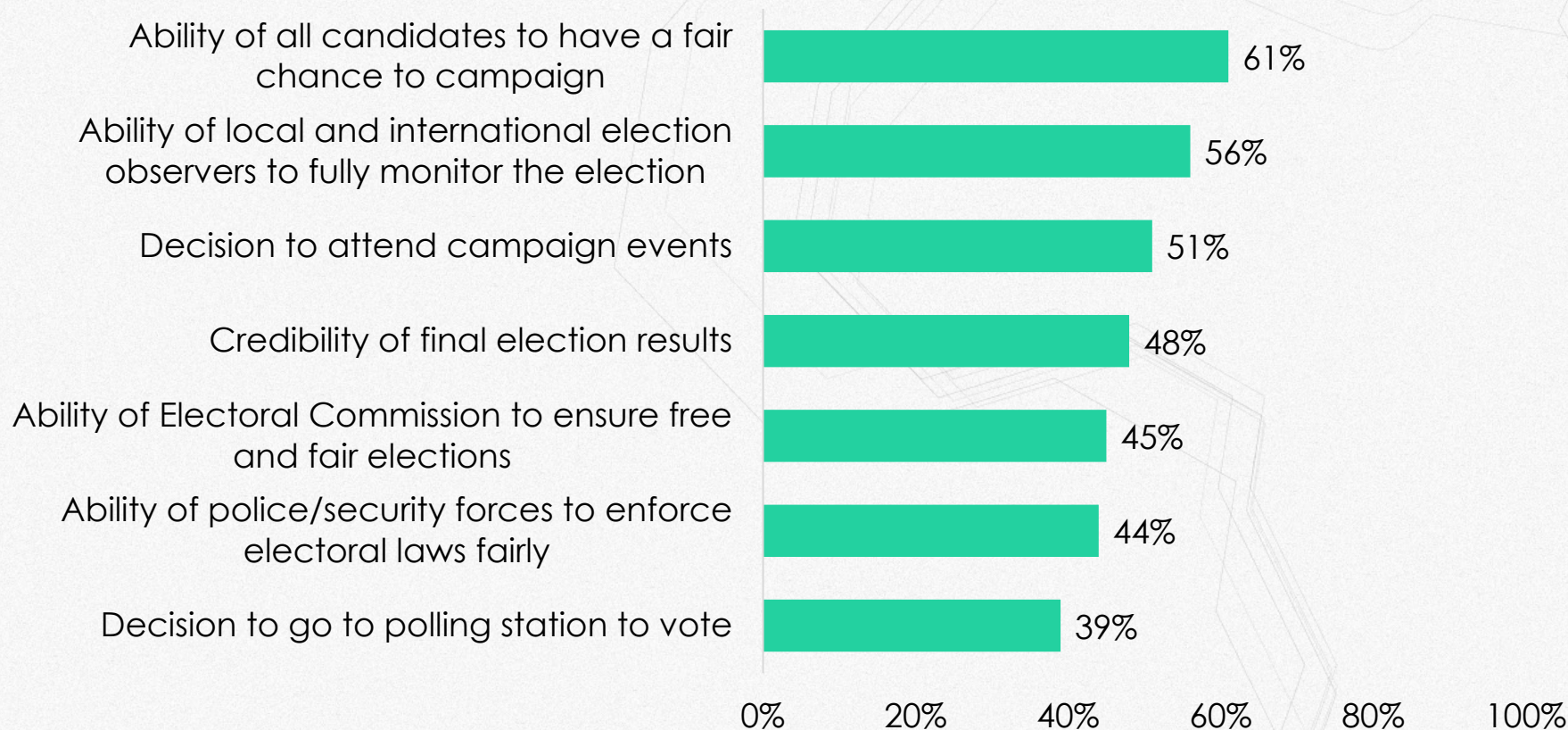
# Key findings



- **COVID-19 impacts on 2021 election:** Many Ugandans believe that COVID-19 is having “some” or “a lot of” impact on the ability of individuals and institutions to participate, campaign, and monitor the 2021 elections.
- **Enforcing COVID-19 regulations:** A majority say that to help ensure free, fair, and credible 2021 elections, the police and security agencies should relax their enforcement of COVID-19 regulations.
- **Election impacts on the COVID-19 pandemic:** More than seven in 10 Ugandans (72%) consider it likely that COVID-19 infections will spread as a result of people gathering to vote.



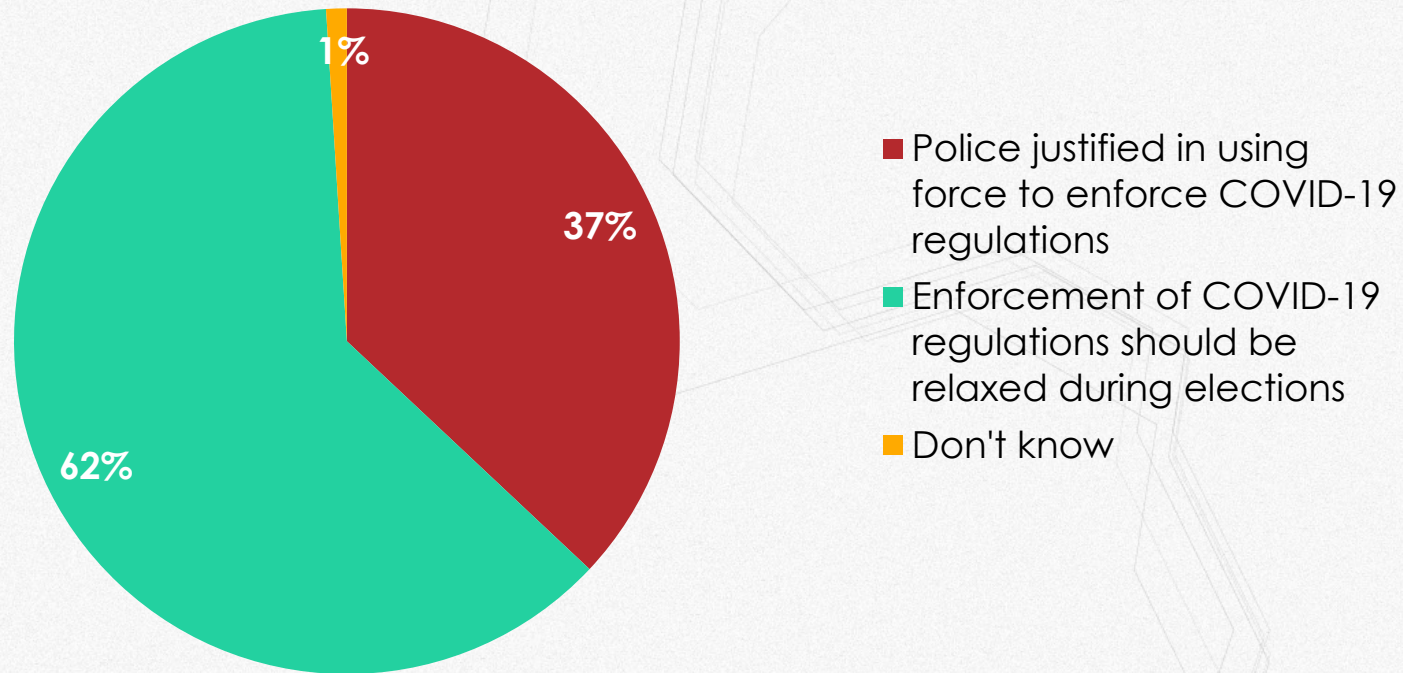
# COVID-19 impact on 2021 elections | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how much impact do you expect the COVID-19 pandemic to have on each of the following aspects of the 2021 general elections: **A)** Your decision to go to a polling station to vote in person? **B)** Your decision to attend in-person campaign meetings or rallies? **C)** The ability of the Electoral Commission of Uganda to ensure that the election is free and fair? **D)** The ability of the police and security agencies to fairly enforce electoral laws? **E)** The ability of all candidates to have an equal and fair chance to campaign and communicate with voters? **F)** The ability of local and international election observers to fully monitor the elections? **G)** The credibility of the final result of the general elections? (% who say "some impact" or "a lot of impact")



# Views on enforcing COVID-19 regulations during the election campaign | Uganda | 2020/2021



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

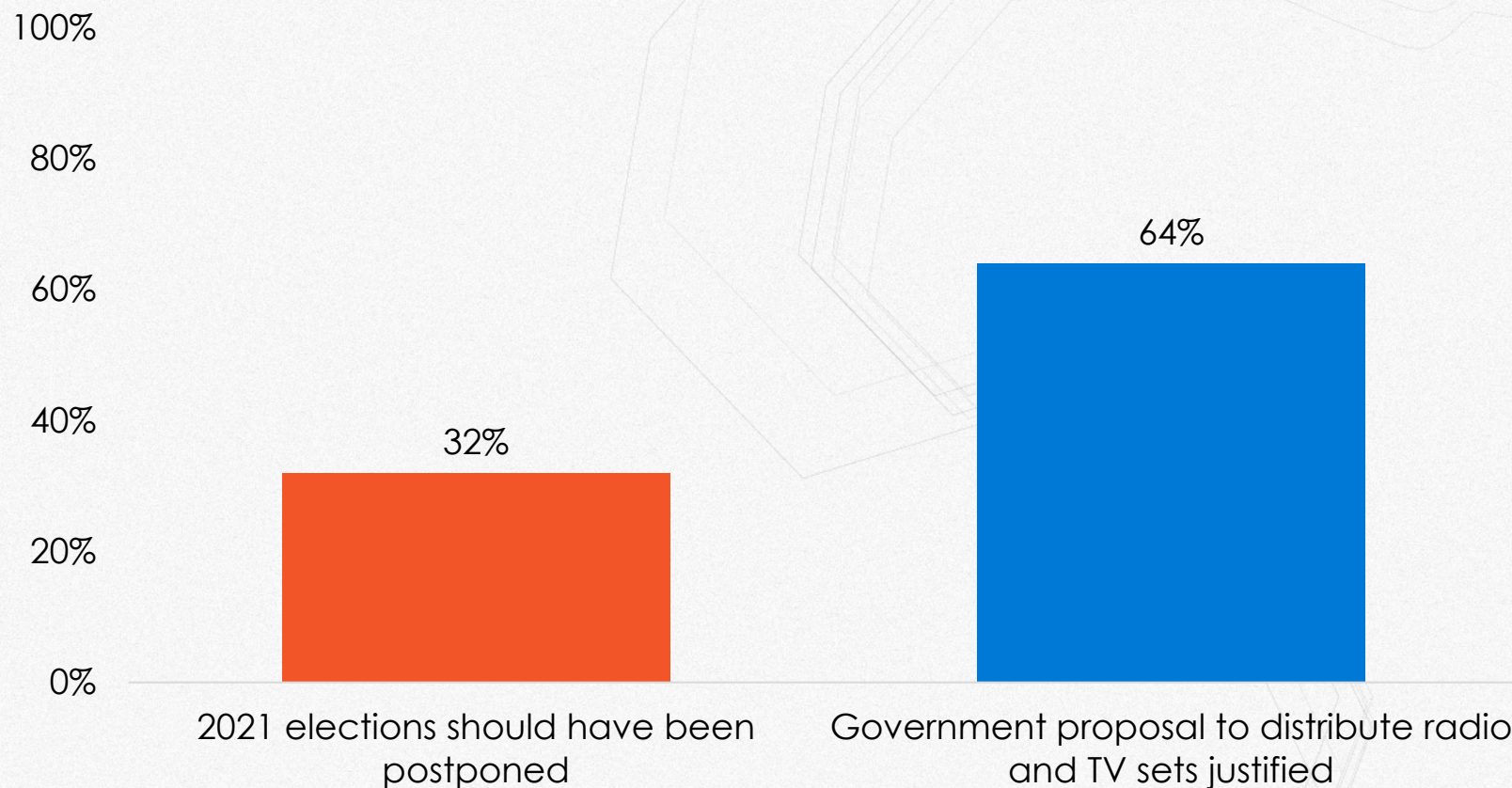
**Statement 1:** Knowing the health and economic dangers COVID-19 can cause to Uganda, the police are justified to use extreme force to enforce COVID-19 regulations during the election campaign.

**Statement 2:** For the sake of having a free, fair, and credible election, the police should relax their enforcement of COVID-19 regulations.

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



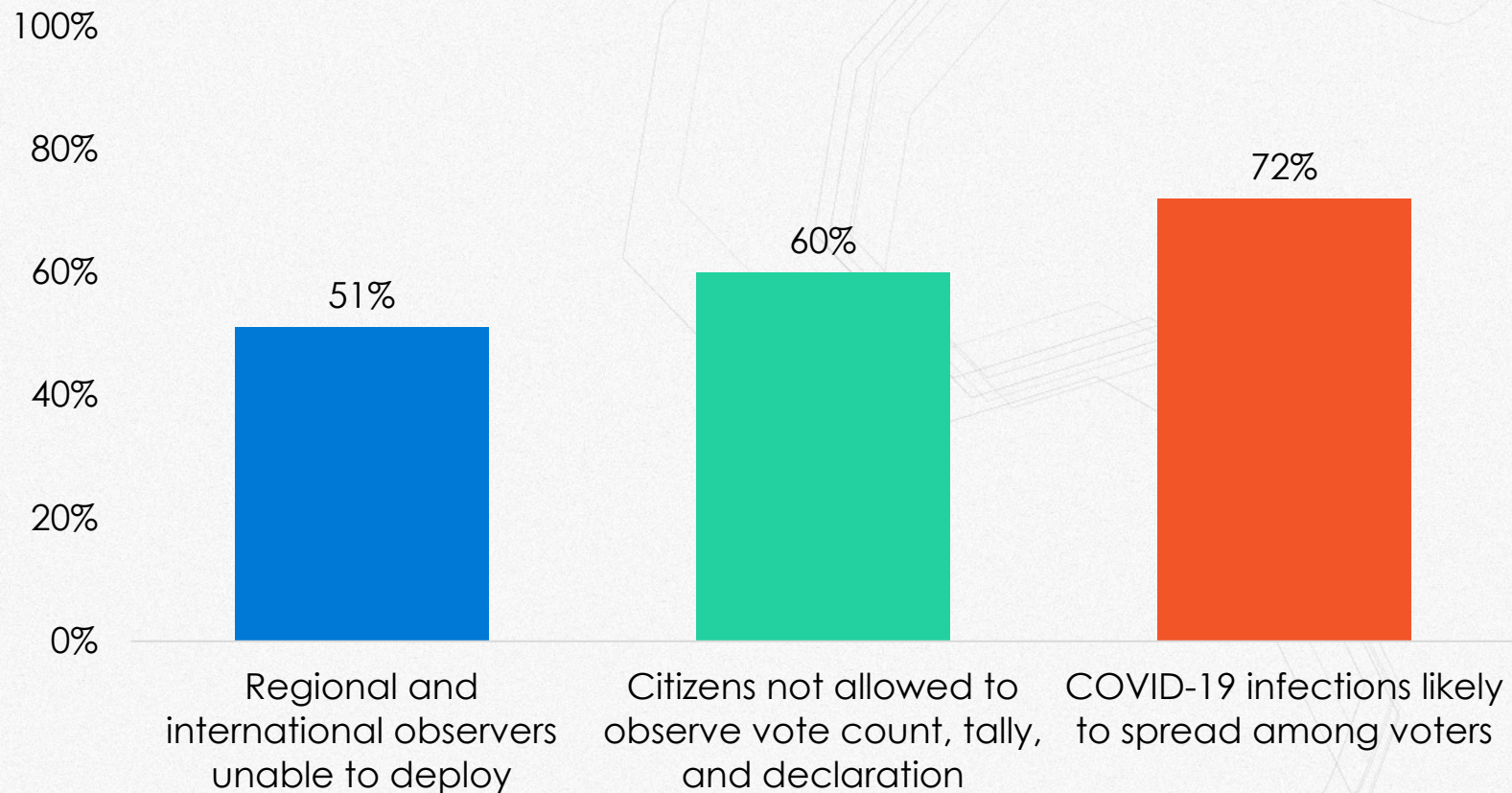
# COVID-19 impacts on the election campaigns | 2020/21



**Respondents were asked:** In view of the threat of COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda and government's decision to move most election campaigns over to the media, please tell me whether you disagree or agree with each of the following statements? **A)** The 2021 general elections should have been postponed until it becomes safe for all voters to participate. **B)** Government's proposal to provide free radio sets to all Ugandan households and TV sets to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic is justified.  
(% who "agree" or "agree strongly" with each statement)



# COVID-19 impacts on Election Day | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** How likely do you think it is that each of the following problems could arise on Election Day due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or haven't you heard enough to say: **A)** Citizens will not be allowed to observe vote counting, tabulation, or declaration at polling station? **B)** Regional and international election observers will not able to deploy in-country? **C)** COVID-19 infections will spread as a result of people gathering to vote in the election? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")



*Vote buying*

# Attitudes, perceptions, and practices

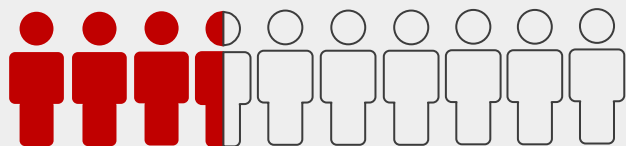
# Key findings



- **Vote buying:** More than one-third (35%) of all respondents say they have been offered incentives in return for their votes in the 2021 election, mostly in monetary terms.
- **Response to vote buying:** Most Ugandans say that if offered money or a gift in exchange for their vote, they would accept it and vote for the candidate of their own choice.
- **Wrong to give or accept vote incentives?** The proportion of Ugandans who feel it is “wrong and punishable” to give or to accept vote incentives has declined over the past decade.



# Experiences with vote buying | Uganda | 2020/2021



35%

say they were  
offered something in  
return for their vote

65%

of offers were  
monetary



67%

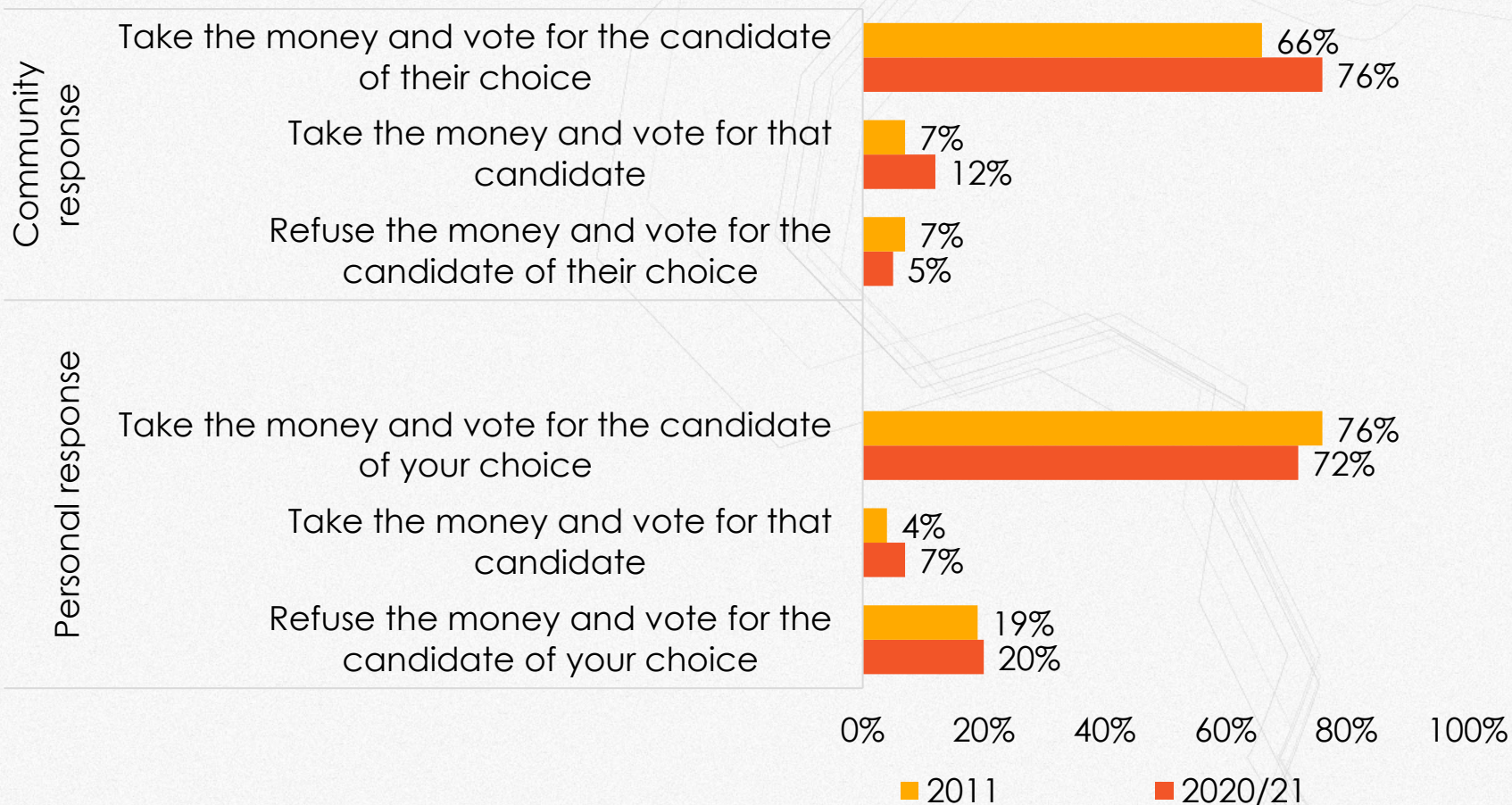
of offers  
came  
from NRM

33%

of offers came  
from the  
opposition

**Respondents were asked:** During the campaign for the 2021 elections, how often, if ever, has a candidate or someone from a political party offered you something in return for your vote? [If “once or twice,” “a few times,” or “often”.] What did they offer you? Which candidate or party made these offers?

# Response to vote buying | Uganda | 2011-2021



## Respondents were asked:

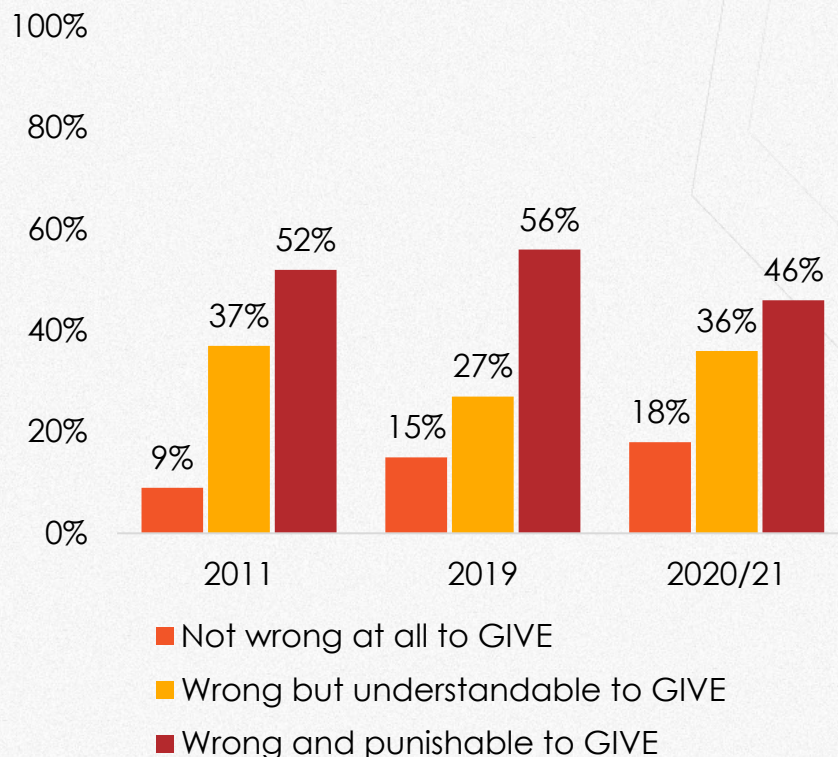
*If a candidate or party official offered you money or a gift in exchange for your vote, would you... ?  
And in your opinion, what would most other people in your community do if a candidate or party official offered them money or a gift in exchange for their vote? Would they... ?*



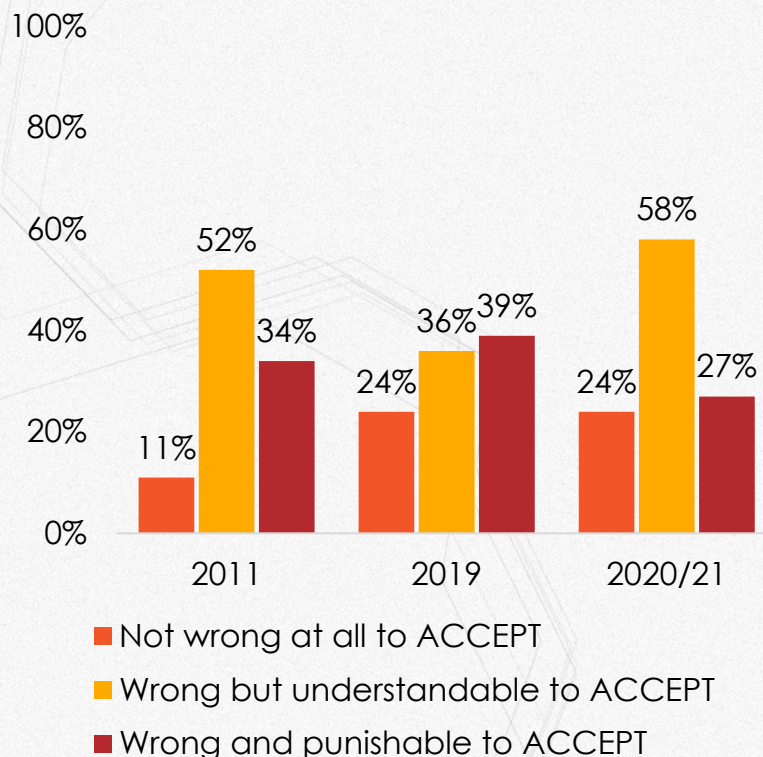
# Views on giving and receiving vote incentives | Uganda

## | 2011-2021

### Views on giving



### Views on accepting



#### Respondents were asked:

*In your opinion, when a candidate or political party offers voters money or gifts in exchange for their votes, is this not wrong at all, wrong but understandable, or wrong and punishable?*

*In your opinion, if a voter accepts money or gifts in exchange for his or her vote, is this not wrong at all, wrong but understandable, or wrong and punishable?*

*Election expectations*

**Free, fair, and accurate**



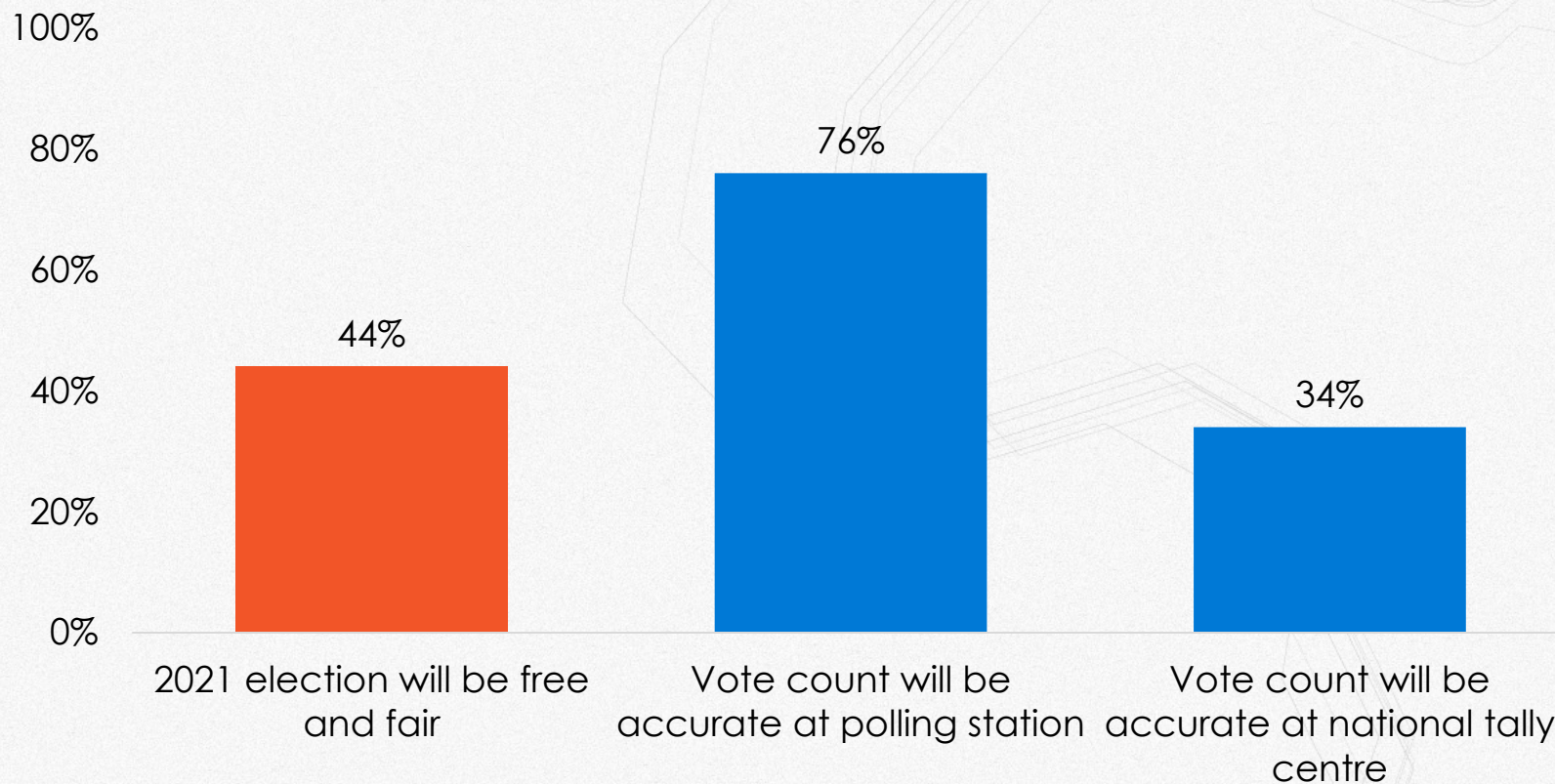
# Key findings



- **Expectations of election quality:** Fewer than half of Ugandans believe that the 2021 general elections will be free and fair.
  - More citizens trust the vote count at their polling station than at the national tally centre.
- **Election malpractices:** Large majorities expect that the losing side will not accept the election results (80%) but believe that security agencies will be able to prevent large-scale violence (73%).
- **Voting intentions:** Among the 84% of survey respondents who said they were registered to vote, more than half (53%) indicated they would vote for President Yoweri Museveni, while 18% said they would cast their ballots for challenger Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu (better known as Bobi Wine).
  - However, about one in four registered voters refused to answer the question (22%) or said they did not know how they would vote (2%).



# Expectations of election quality | Uganda | 2020/2021



## Respondents were asked:

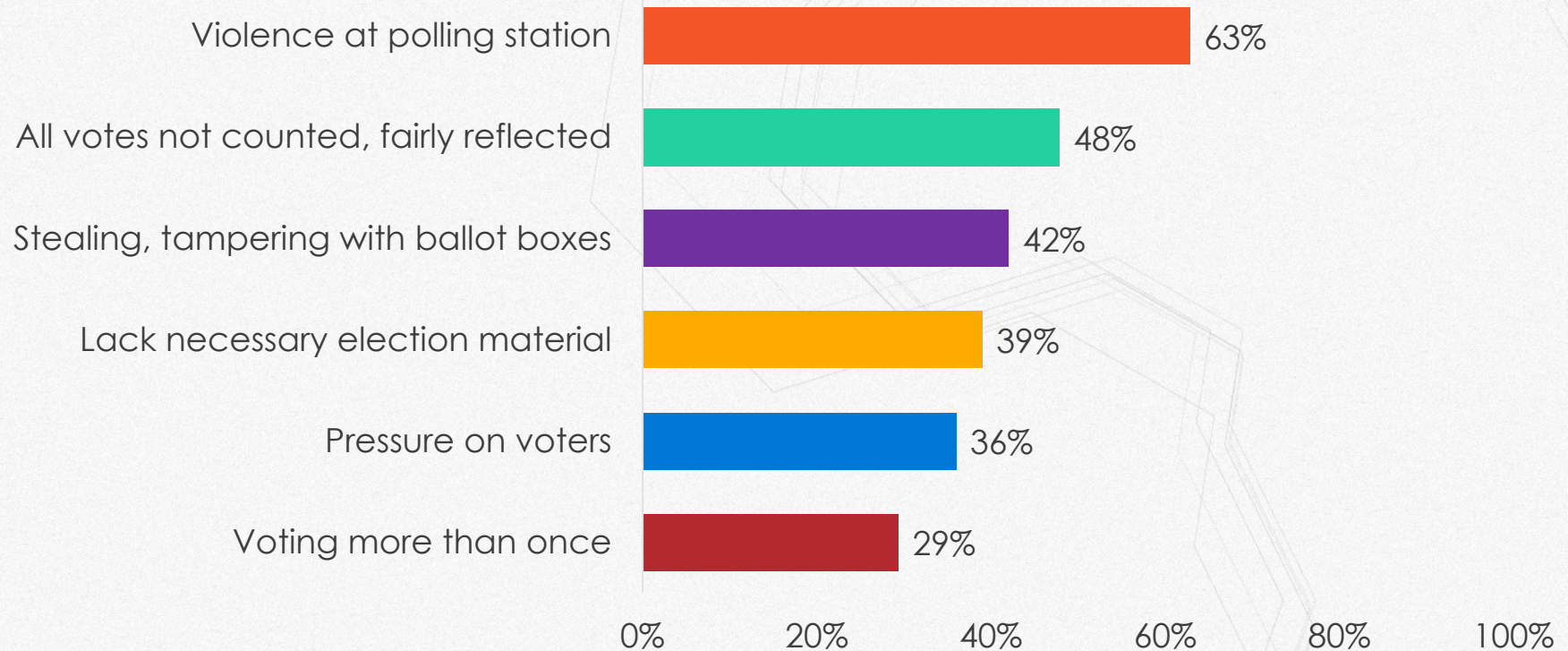
*On the whole, how free or fair do you expect the forthcoming 2021 general elections to be? (% who say "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems")*

*How accurate or inaccurate do you expect the following counting and tallying of election results in the 2021 general elections to be at: Your own polling station? The national tally centre in Kampala? (% who say "fairly accurate" or "very accurate")*



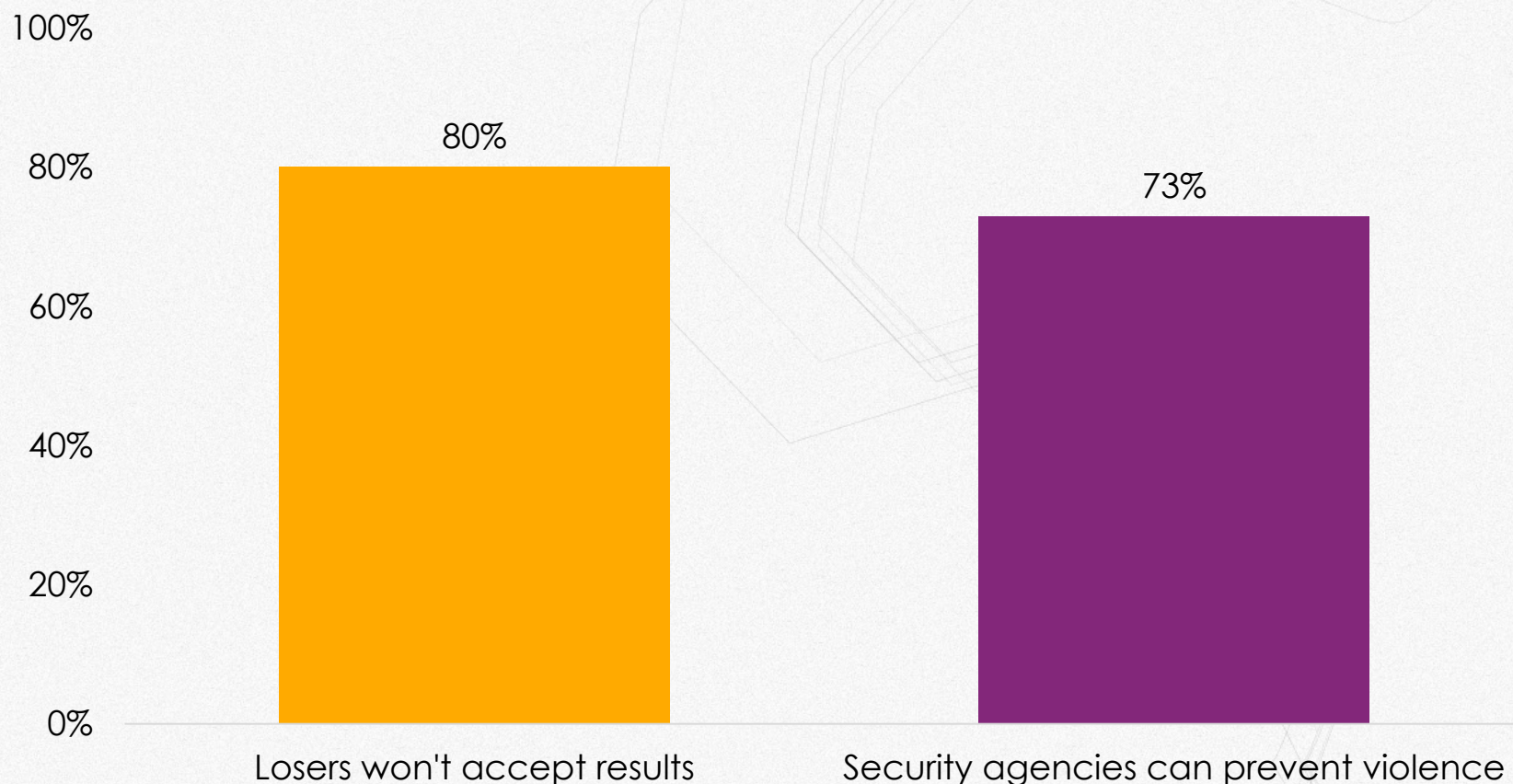
# Likelihood of problems on Election Day | Uganda

## | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** How likely do you think it is that the following things could happen at your polling station on election day, or haven't you heard enough to say: A) Not having all necessary election materials? B) All votes may not be accurately counted or fairly reflected in the results? C) People stealing or tampering with ballot boxes? D) Voters being pressured to vote a certain way at or near the polling station? E) Some people may vote more than once? F) There could be violence due to disagreements about the results? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

# Expectations for Election Day | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** In your view, how likely is it:

That the losers of the elections will refuse to accept the official election results?

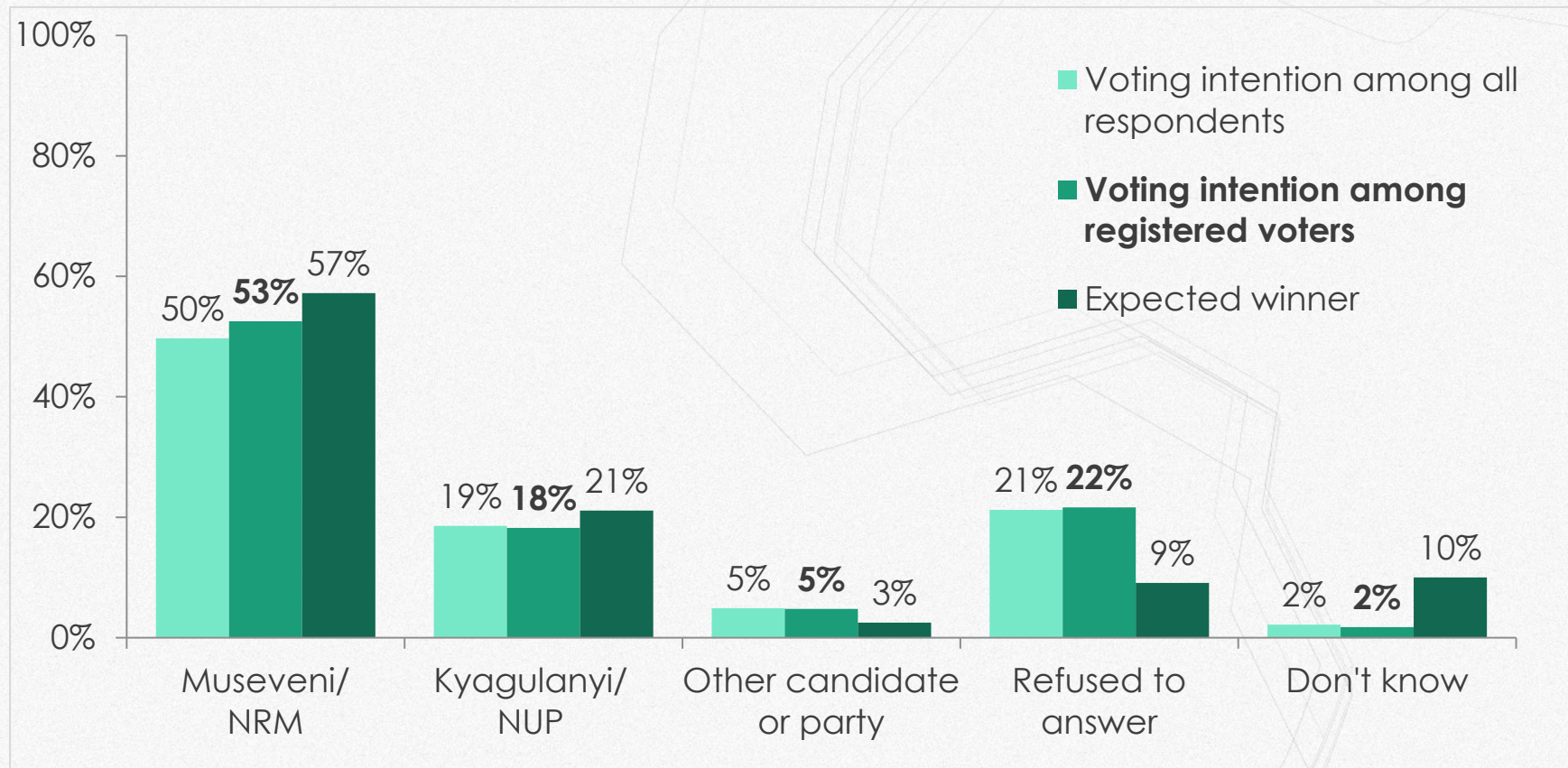
That Uganda's security agencies will be able to prevent large-scale outbreaks of violence?

(% who say "somewhat" or "very" likely)



# Voting intentions and expected winner for president

## | Uganda | 2020/2021



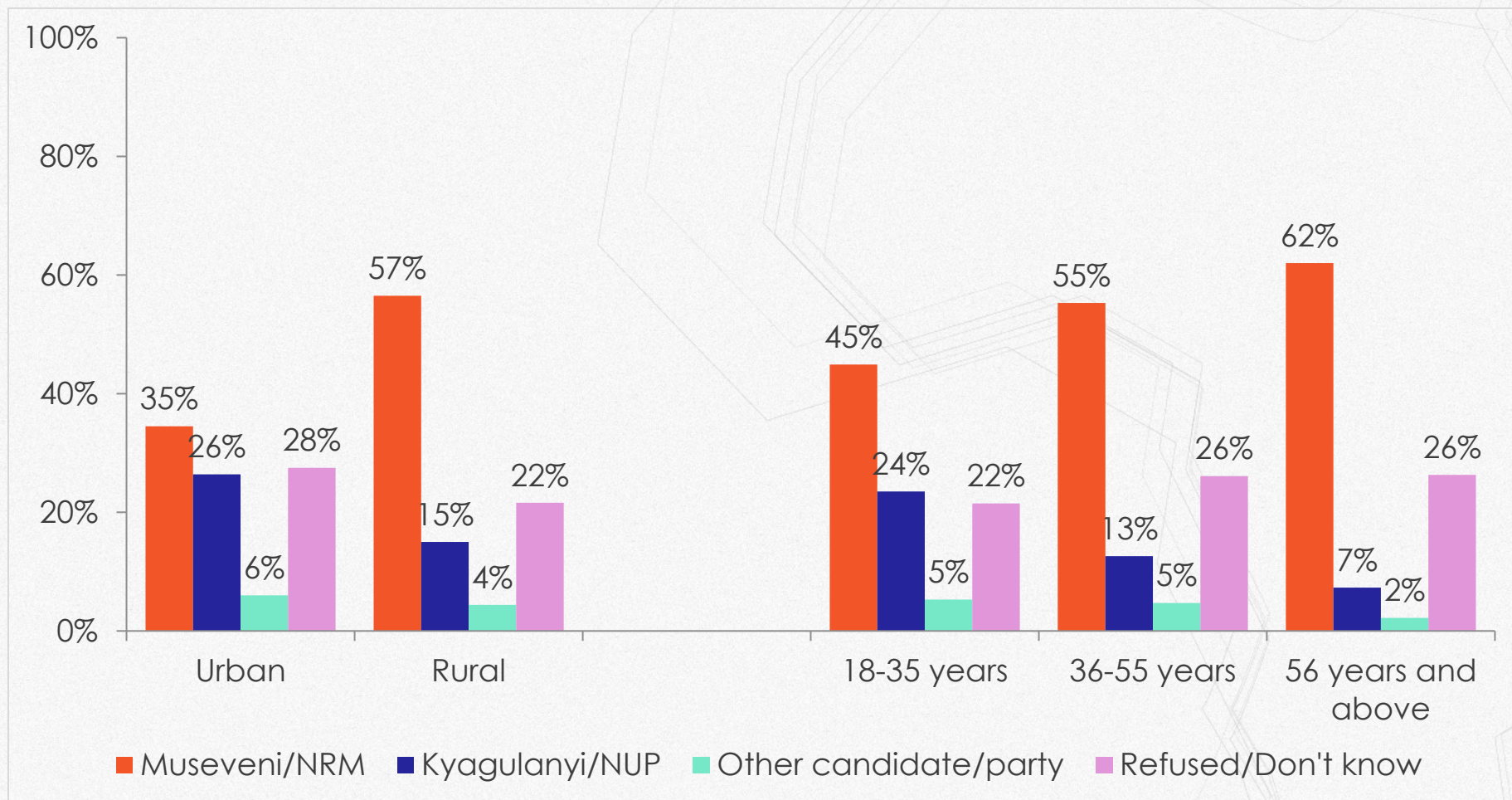
### Respondents were asked:

*If an election were held tomorrow, which party or candidate would you vote for in the presidential election?*

*Regardless of who you will vote for or whether or not you will vote, which candidate or party do you expect will win the 2021 presidential election?*



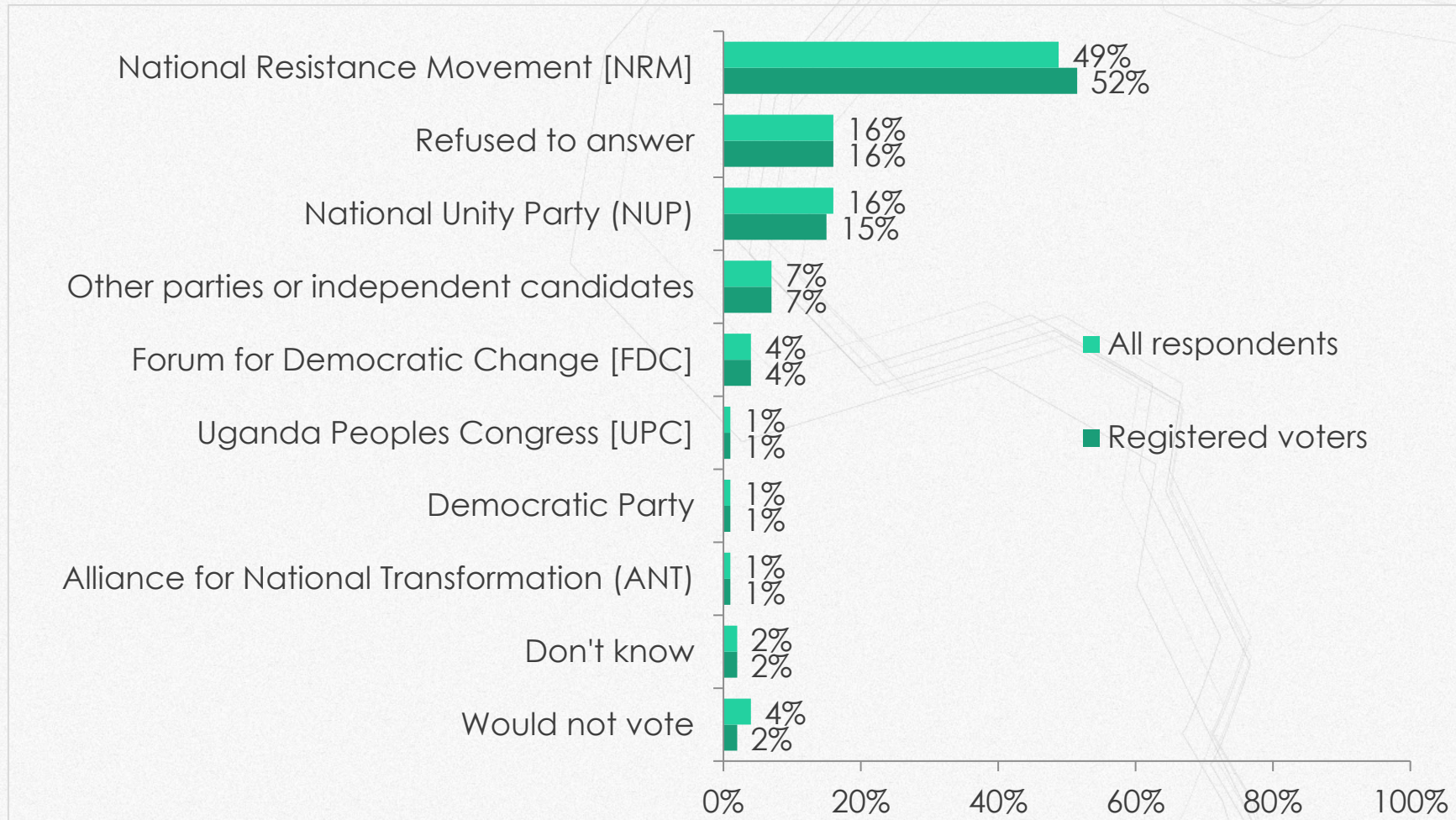
# Voting intentions | by age and location | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** *If an election were held tomorrow, which party or candidate would you vote for in the presidential election? (% of all respondents)*



# Voting intentions for Parliament | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** *If an election were held tomorrow, which candidate or party's candidate would you vote for in the parliamentary election?*

# Conclusions



- **COVID-19 impacts on 2021 election:** Many Ugandans see the pandemic as negatively impacting the 2021 elections – and expect the election to worsen the pandemic.
- **Citizens' expectations on credibility of 2021 elections:** Although a majority of Ugandans are prepared to vote and see the Electoral Commission as well prepared, fewer trust that the 2021 elections will be free, fair, and credible.
- **Vote choice:** President Museveni holds a clear lead, but many respondents would not say how they intended to vote, so the final outcome may be much closer. The nation could also be headed toward electing a more closely divided Parliament.





**Thank you**

**Follow our releases  
on #VoicesAfrica on  
Twitter and  
Facebook.**

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer  
data – on any question, for any country  
and survey round. It's easy and free at  
[www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).