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News release

Most Ugandans favour proposed reforms to improve elections and Parliament, new Afrobarometer survey shows

Ugandans overwhelmingly support proposed reforms aimed at improving Parliament and elections, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

Almost all adult Ugandans support a call to improve electoral transparency, especially during vote tallying, transmission, and declaration. Similarly, huge majorities favour a national dialogue to resolve the political impasse following the 2016 elections, a reduction in the size of Parliament to save taxpayers money, and a tightening of laws on campaign financing and accountability.

These findings contrast with what critics call the government's foot-dragging that may take the country to the next national election cycle without needed reforms.

Key findings

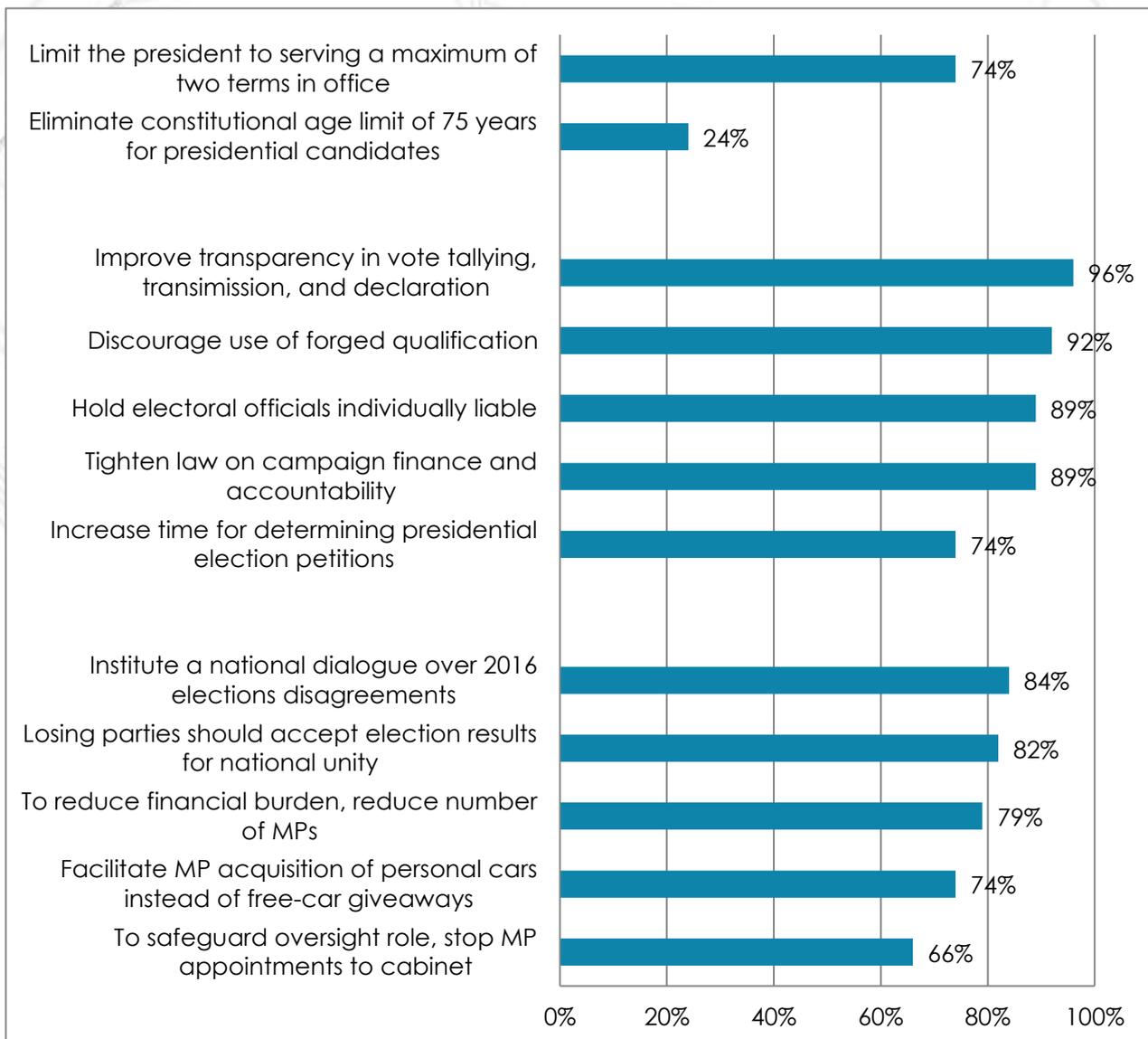
- Nearly all survey respondents (96%) support a proposal to improve transparency in elections, especially in the tallying, transmission, and declaration of results. Nine in 10 (89%) also support proposals to hold electoral officials and security agents individually liable for any offences committed under their watch and to tighten laws on campaign financing and accountability for all political parties (Figure 1).
- Nine of 10 survey respondents (92%) support enactment of a law to discourage people who use forged qualifications from standing for elections, and three-fourths (74%) support a Supreme Court proposal to increase the time within which to file, hear, and determine presidential election petitions.
- Eight in 10 Ugandans (84%) support the proposal to institute a national dialogue to resolve disagreements between the opposition and government over the 2016 election results. A similar proportion (82%) say that in the interest of national unity, political parties that lose elections should accept the result even if they disagree with the outcomes.
- More than three-fourths (79%) support reducing the number of members of Parliament (MPs) to lessen the financial burden to the taxpayer, and two-thirds (66%) believe that to safeguard their oversight function, MPs should not be appointed to cabinet positions. A large majority (74%) also say MPs should no longer receive free cars from the state but should instead be facilitated to acquire personal vehicles.
- Only one in fourth respondents (24%) support eliminating the constitutional limit of 75 years of age for presidential candidates should be maintained. But three-fourths (74%) favour limiting the president to a maximum of two terms in office.
- Public support for reform proposals is high, with 62% supporting at least 10 of the 12 proposals studied (Figure 2).

Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 African countries between 1999 and 2016, and Round 7 surveys (2016/2017) are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples. The Afrobarometer team in Uganda, led by Hatchile Consult, interviewed 1,200 adult Ugandans between 26 December 2016 and 8 January 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Uganda in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, and 2015.

Charts

Figure 1: Support for proposals to improve Parliament and elections | Uganda | 2017



Respondents were asked:

1. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.
Statement 1: The constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office.
Statement 2: There should be no constitutional limit on how long the president can serve.
(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 1)

2. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.
Statement 1: The electoral law stopping any person older than 75 years from running as president in this country should be maintained.
Statement 2: Preventing persons older than 75 years from standing for election as president is a form of discrimination and should not be allowed.
(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 1)

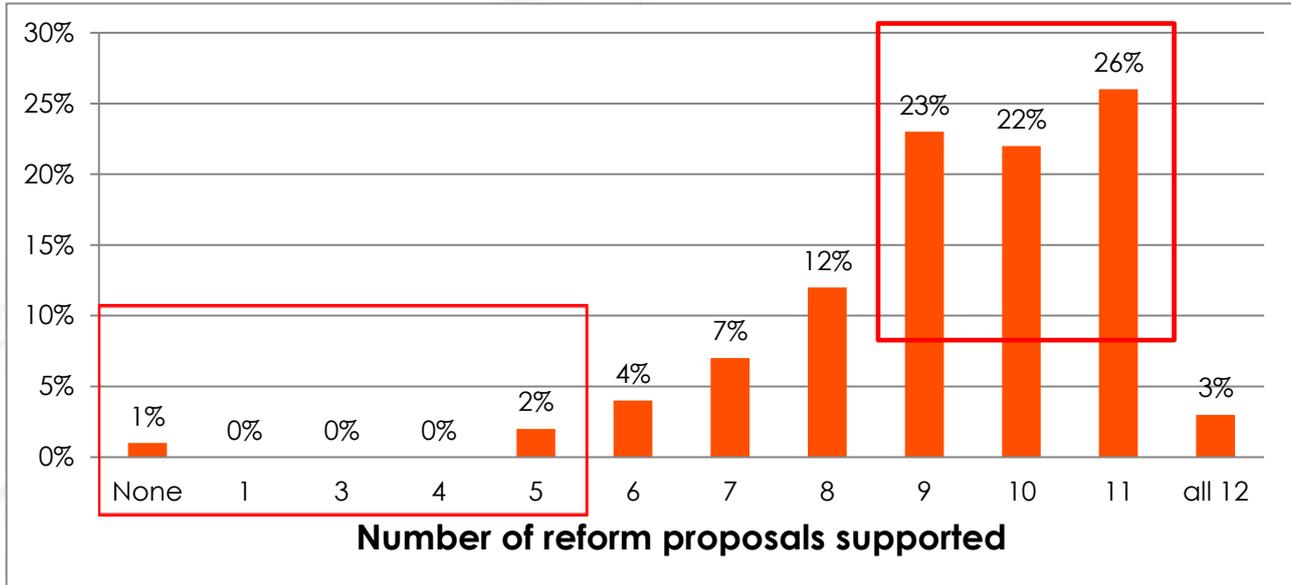
The quality of Uganda's elections have been described by many stakeholders including the opposition, ruling party, civil society, media, and voters, as poor due to allegations of election irregularities and mismanagement. I am going to read from a list of proposals aimed at improving the quality of Uganda's elections. For each of the following proposals, please tell me whether you disagree or agree?

3. Improve on transparency during tallying, transmission and declaration of election results?
4. Enact a law to discourage people who use forged qualifications from standing for elections?
5. Hold electoral officials and security agents individually liable for all offences committed under their watch?
6. Tighten the law on campaign financing and accountability for all political parties?
7. Increase the time within which to complete the hearing of and ruling on presidential election petitions from 30 to 60 days as proposed by court?
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

8. Disagreements between opposition and government over 2016 election results highlight the need for national dialogue for the country.
9. In the interest of national unity, losing political parties should accept election results even if they disagree with the outcomes.
10. Uganda should reduce the number of MPs in order to reduce the financial burden on the taxpayer.
11. Members of Parliament should cease to receive free cars from the state, rather be facilitated to acquire own personal vehicles.
12. Members of Parliament should not be appointed to cabinet positions as this undermines their oversight role.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Figure 2: Support for 0-12 reform proposals | Uganda | 2017



Respondents were asked: Graph shows % of respondents who agree with 0, 1, 2, 3 ... or all 12 proposals to improve Parliament and elections in Uganda.

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