

Accra, Ghana
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News release

In Senegal, context for postponed election is strong popular support for democracy, growing dissatisfaction with its workings

President Macky Sall's move to postpone Senegal's presidential election comes within the context of solid popular support for democracy but increasing dissatisfaction with the way the country's democracy is working, Afrobarometer surveys show.

Sall announced Saturday that he has postponed the 25 February election indefinitely.

Afrobarometer survey findings show that most Senegalese endorse elections as the best way to choose their leaders. They also favour limiting their presidents to two terms, a limitation that Sall has promised to respect. Across 39 countries surveyed in 2021/2023, Senegal records the third-largest proportion of citizens who prefer democracy to any other political system.

But fewer than half of Senegalese say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in the country, a significant decline compared to 2014, and a majority think the country is less democratic than it was five years ago.

While most citizens say their president must always obey the country's laws and courts, a growing share say their president ignores them.

Key findings

- More than eight in 10 Senegalese say they prefer democracy over any other political system (84%) and endorse fair, open, and honest elections as the best way to choose their leaders (82%) (Figure 1).
 - A similar majority (79%) want the president to be limited to a maximum of two terms in office.
- Across 39 African countries surveyed in 2021/2023, Senegal registers the third-strongest support for democracy (84%), well above the continental average of 66% (Figure 2).
- However, the proportion of Senegalese who say they are "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the way democracy works in the country has declined sharply, from 64% in 2014 to 48% (Figure 3).
- More than half (53%) of citizens say the country is less democratic now than it was five years ago (Figure 4).
- Three-fourths (76%) of Senegalese say their president must always obey the country's laws and courts, even if he thinks they are wrong. But a majority (57%) say that in fact the president "often" or "always" ignores the laws and courts – more than quadruple the proportion who thought so in 2013 (13%) (Figure 5).

Afrobarometer surveys

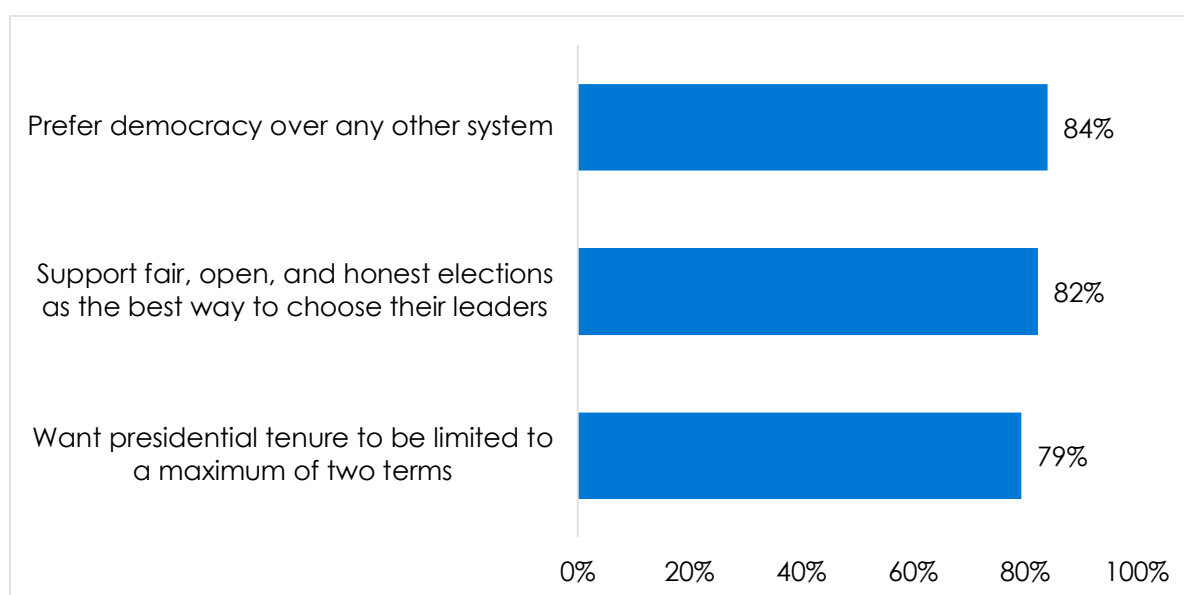
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries.

The Afrobarometer team in Senegal, led by Consortium pour la Recherche Economique et Sociale (CRES), interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Senegalese in May and June 2022. 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 Senegal in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2021.

Charts

Figure 1: Support for democratic norms | Senegal | 2022



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 government we have.

(% who agree with Statement 1)

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.

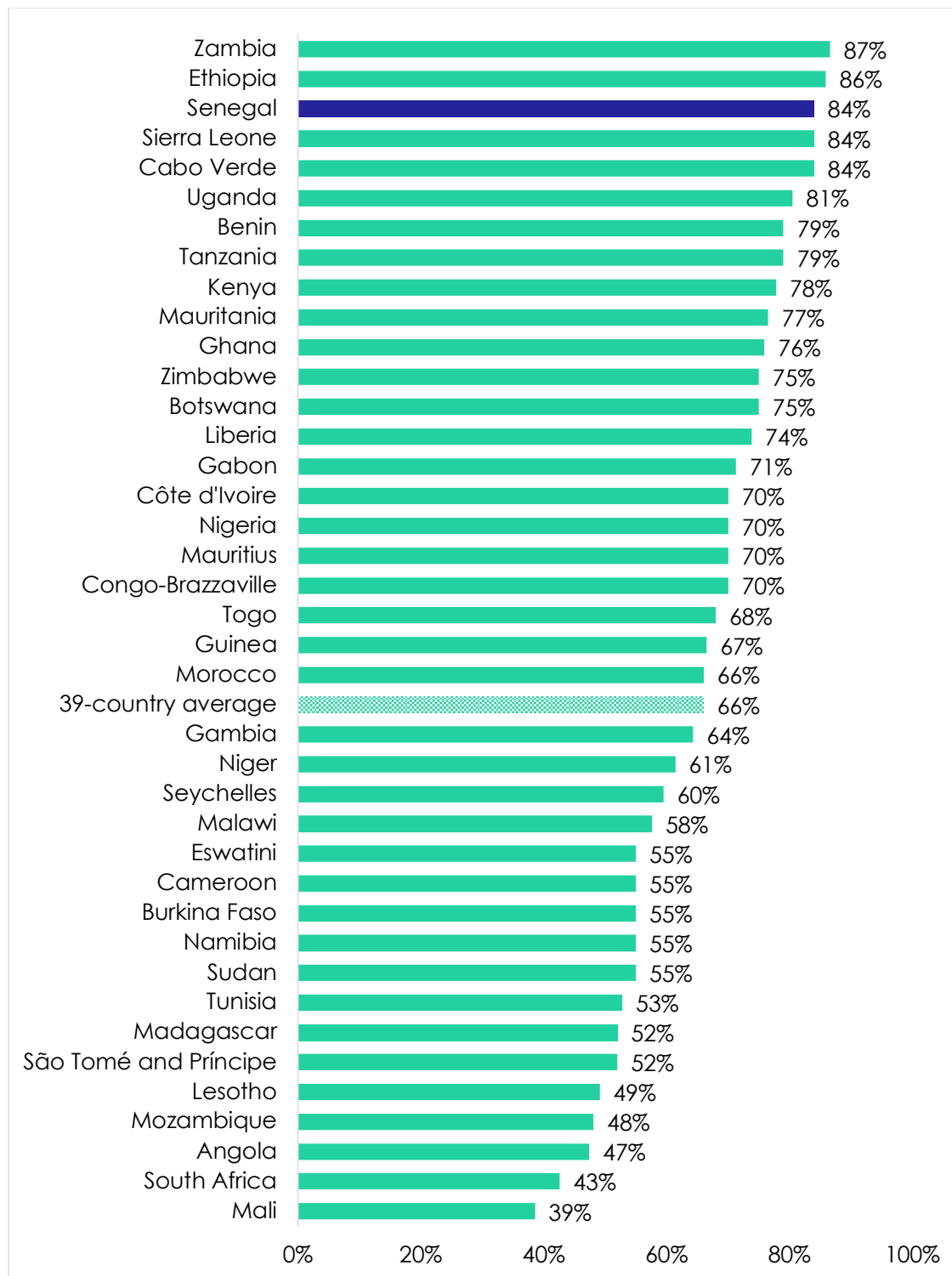
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with Statement 1)

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

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.

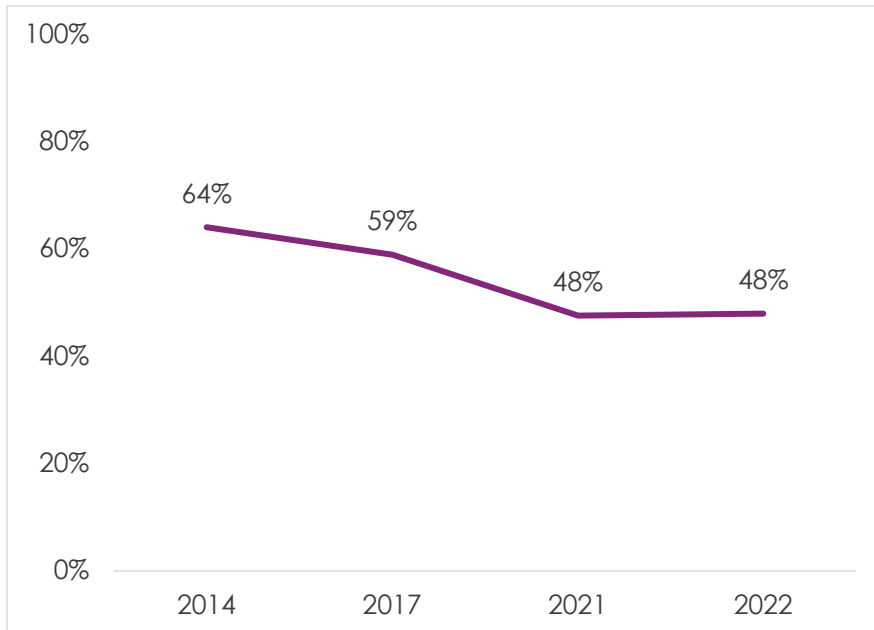
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with Statement 1)

Figure 2: Prefer democracy to any other authoritarian alternative | 39 countries
 | 2021/2023



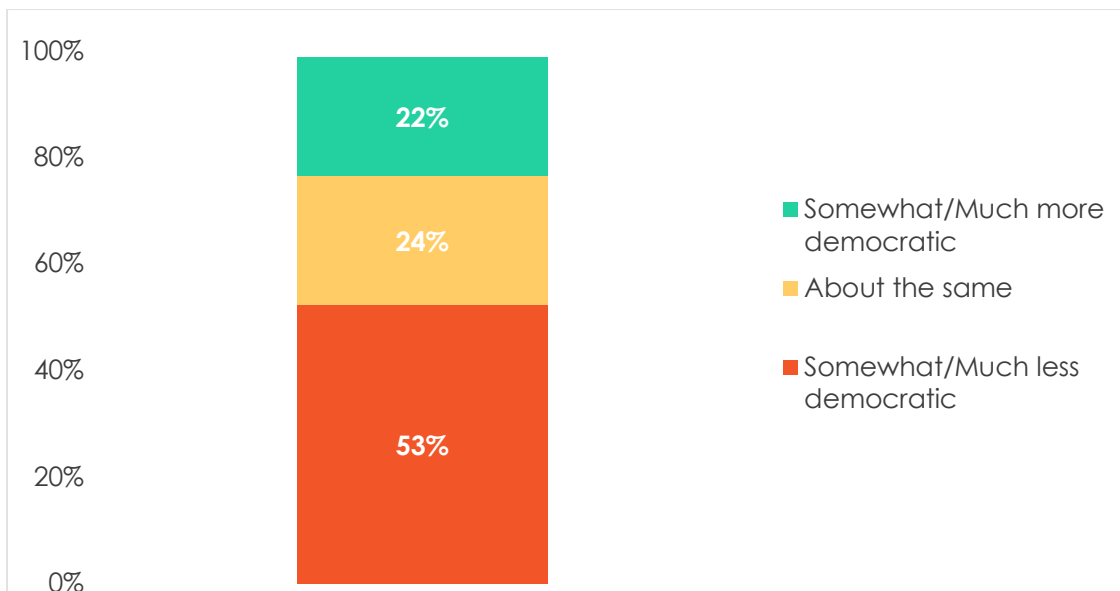
Respondents were asked: Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?
 Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
 Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.
 Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.
 (% who say democracy is preferable)

Figure 3: Satisfaction with democracy | Senegal | 2014-2022



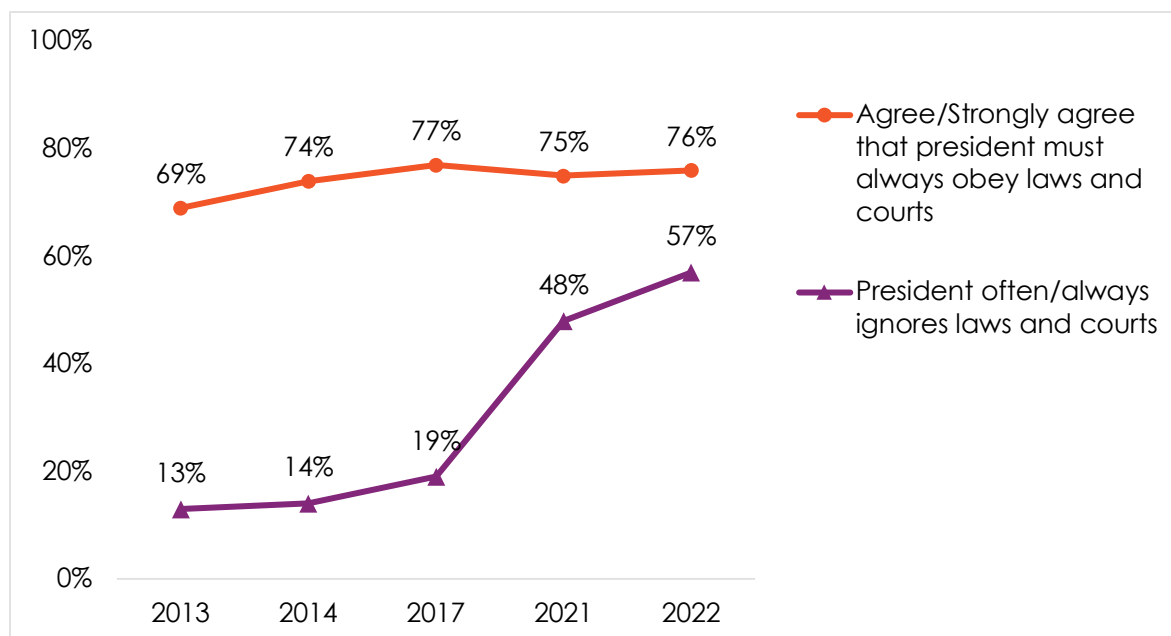
Respondents were asked: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Senegal? (% who say "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied")

Figure 4: Is Senegal more or less democratic than it was five ago? | Senegal | 2022



Respondents were asked: Do you think that this country is more democratic, less democratic, or about the same as it was five years ago?

Figure 5: Views on presidential respect for laws and courts | Senegal | 2013-2022



Respondents were asked:

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Since the president was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong. Statement 2: The president must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.

In your opinion, how often, in this country, does the president ignore the courts and laws of this country?

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