

Africans want elections but don't trust electoral management bodies to ensure they're free and fair

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1128 | Libuseng Malephane, Bernice Appiah, and Sophie Sunderland

Summary

Elections are widely accepted as a cornerstone of democracy, providing citizens with a peaceful means to choose their leaders and hold them accountable. Across Africa, voters turned out in almost 40 countries in 2024 and 2025, reflecting enduring citizen commitment to participate in democratic governance, and another 17 countries are expected to vote in 2026 (Gerenge, 2025; EISA, 2026).



But the value of elections depends not only on whether they occur. Do they meet basic standards of fairness, transparency, and competitiveness? Do citizens enjoy fundamental political freedoms to organise and to vote without pressure? Can they participate without fear? Can their votes lead to real change?

African elections have produced a notable series of peaceful transfers of power in recent years, as in Botswana, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritius, and Senegal (Brown, 2025). But other contests have highlighted the fragility of election integrity, as in heavily manipulated contests in Cameroon and Guinea in late 2025 (Wojtanik, 2026). Opposition leaders were jailed in Tanzania amid reports of widespread manipulation, intimidation, and violence, as well as in Uganda, where President Yoweri Museveni's seventh term has renewed debates about whether elections in countries with long-entrenched regimes still serve as genuine mechanisms of democratic choice (Wambi, 2025; Mwaniki, 2026; Gavin, 2025; Impact International, 2025).

Finally, elections matter not only because they select leaders, but because they are expected to produce responsive governance. Electoral efficacy – the belief that voting leads to representation and accountability – shapes whether citizens view elections as meaningful (Banducci & Karp, 2009). When elected officials are perceived as unresponsive or unaccountable, public confidence in elections erodes.

Weakening support for democracy and growing tolerance for military rule in some African countries (Afrobarometer, 2024) underscore the importance of understanding how Africans see their elections, political freedoms, and electoral efficacy.

Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 10 survey in 38 African countries show that most Africans want to choose their leaders through fair elections and report participating in the electoral process. More than half see their most recent election as largely free and fair, though that confidence has weakened. Most feel free to vote without pressure and to join political organisations, but substantial minorities report fearing violence or intimidation during the last election campaign and doubt that their ballots are truly secret. A majority of Africans

distrust the election management body charged with ensuring the fairness and transparency of their country's elections.

And most doubt that elections produce responsive leaders: While the vast majority of citizens say that elected officials should heed voter demands, few think their members of Parliament are listening.

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. Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys (2024/2025) cover 38 countries. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This 38-country analysis is based on 50,961 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Key findings

Support for elections:

- On average across 38 countries, about three-quarters (74%) of Africans support choosing their leaders through regular, open, and honest elections. This is the majority position in every surveyed country, although support for elections has weakened over the past decade.
 - Strong majorities favour multiparty competition (63%) and reject dictatorship (79%) and one-party rule (76%) as alternatives to elections.

Voting in elections:

- Seven in 10 citizens (71%) say they voted in their country's most recent national election.
 - Self-reported voting is highest among older age cohorts (82%), rural residents (75%), men (74%), and citizens without formal education (76%).
 - Regionally, reported voting rates are highest in West Africa (78%) and lowest in North Africa (53%).

Election quality:

- More than half (55%) of Africans rate their most recent national election as largely free and fair (either "completely" or with "minor problems"), but 36% disagree.
 - Across 28 countries surveyed consistently since 2014/2015, the perception of free and fair elections has declined by 7 percentage points.
- But most Africans say they are "somewhat" or "completely" free to join any political organisation of their choice (77%) and to vote for any candidate without feeling pressured (86%).

- About one in five respondents (19%) say they feared political intimidation or violence during their country's most recent campaign period, and almost three in 10 (28%) consider it likely that powerful people could find out how they voted.
- Only about four in 10 Africans (38%) say they trust their country's electoral management body "somewhat" or "a lot."

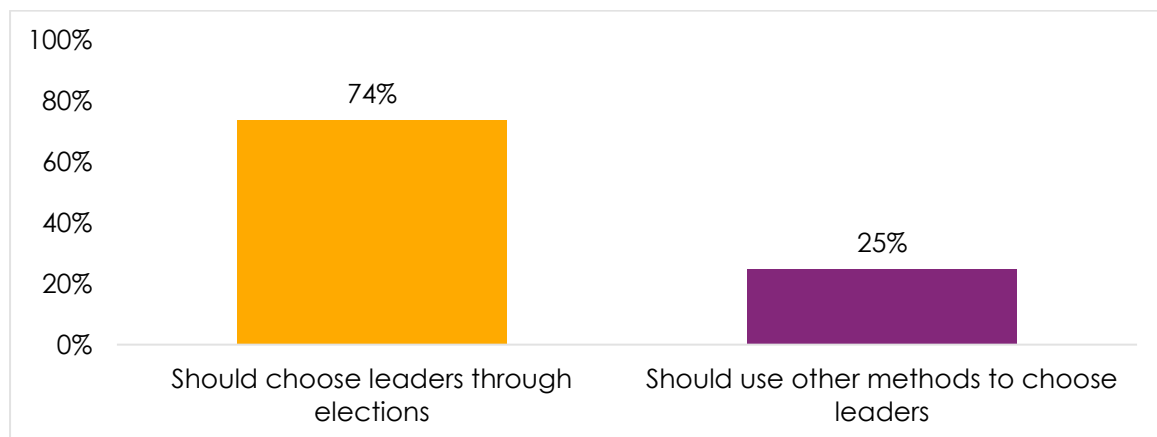
Electoral efficacy:

- More than three-fourths (77%) of citizens say that elected officials should follow voters' demands, rather than their own ideas.
 - But only 17% say their members of Parliament (MPs) "often" or "always" do their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say.

Support for elections in Africa

About three in four Africans (74%) support regular, open, and honest elections as the best way to choose their leaders (Figure 1). It's the majority position in every surveyed country, though the majorities are fairly slim in Angola and Comoros (both 55%) (Figure 2). In 13 countries, support for elections exceeds eight in 10 citizens, led by the Gambia and Tanzania (both 88%).

Figure 1: Support for elections | 38 countries | 2024/2025



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.

But we also find that support for elections has declined over the past decade, perhaps reflecting disillusionment with disputed or violence-prone elections or a growing belief that elections alone are not enough to guarantee accountable governance and improved public services (Afrobarometer, 2024). On average across 29 countries for which we have data from both Round 6 (2014/2015) and Round 10 (2024/2025), support for selecting leaders through elections dropped by 8 percentage points, from 83% to 75%.

Support for elections declined in all surveyed countries except Tanzania (+7 percentage points), Zambia (+5 points), and Liberia (+4 points), including double-digit declines in Eswatini (-23), Mali (-21), Cameroon (-17 points), São Tomé and Príncipe (-17), South Africa (-16 points), Lesotho (-16 points), Botswana (-16 points), Tunisia (-14 points), Senegal (-13 points), Namibia (-13 points), and Madagascar (-11 points).

Figure 2: Support for elections | 38 countries | 2014-2025

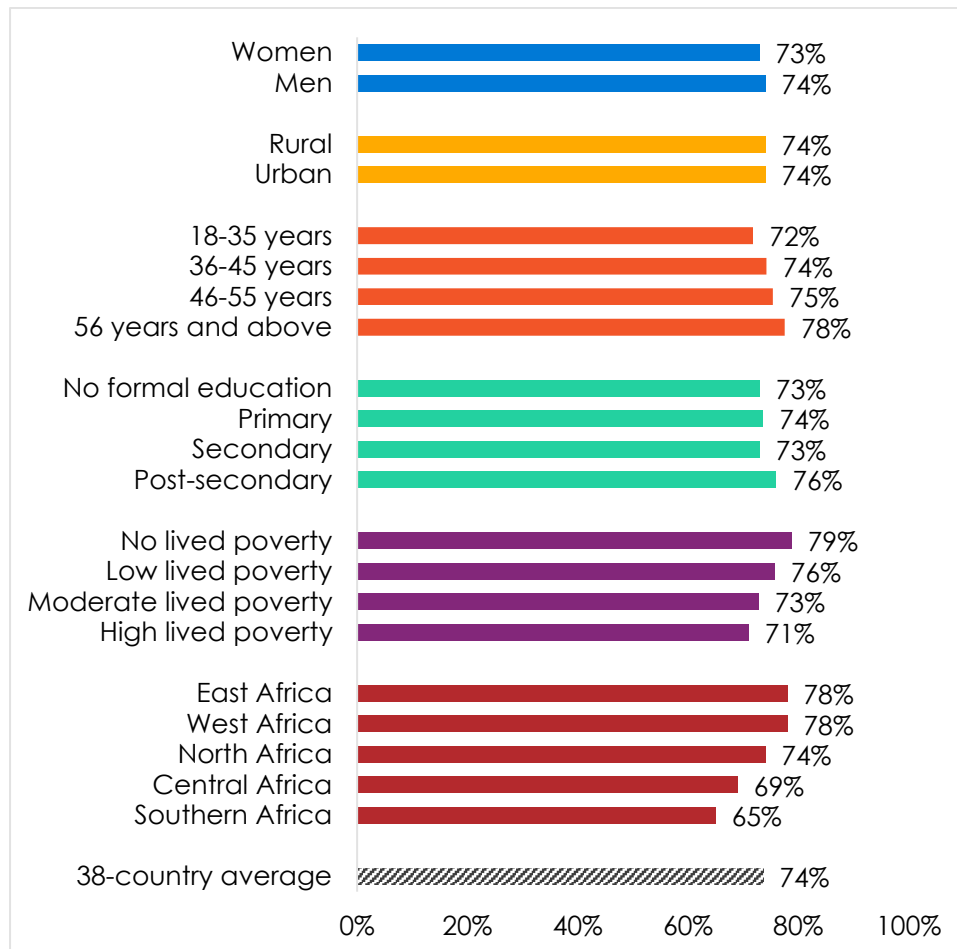


Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.
 Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
 (% who agree with Statement 1)

Support for elections is almost identical among women, men, and rural and urban residents (Figure 3). Older citizens are somewhat more committed to elections, but this preference declines as levels of lived poverty increase, suggesting that economic hardship may weaken confidence in the electoral process.¹

By region,² support for elections is strongest in West and East Africa (both 78%), compared to just 65% in Southern Africa.

Figure 3: Support for elections | by demographic group | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
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 Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
 (% who agree with Statement 1)

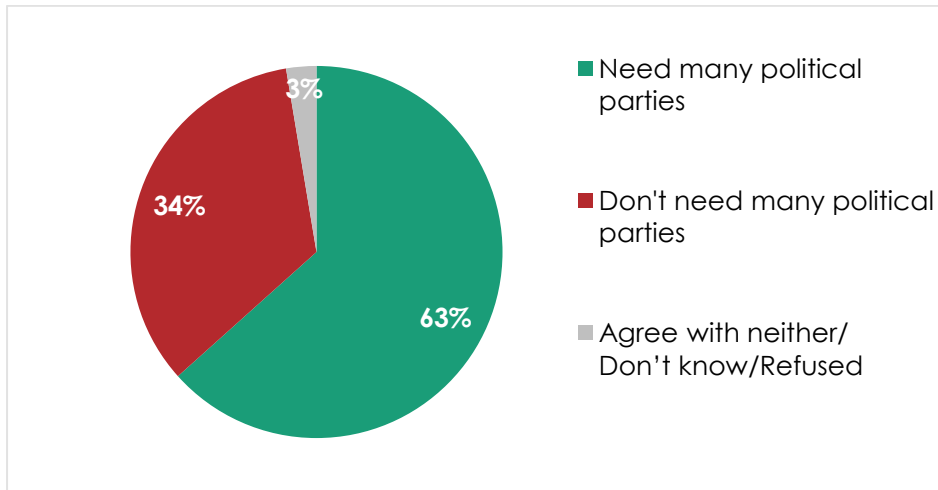
¹ Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Lekalake (2025).

² For Afrobarometer's regional categories, see Appendix Table A.2.

Support for multiparty competition

Beyond elections as an institution, most Africans support multiparty competition to ensure that voters have real choices. On average across 38 countries, more than six in 10 respondents (63%) say their country needs many political parties, while 34% instead say political parties “create division and confusion” and feel there is no need for multiple parties (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Support for having many parties | 38 countries | 2024/2025



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 [this country].

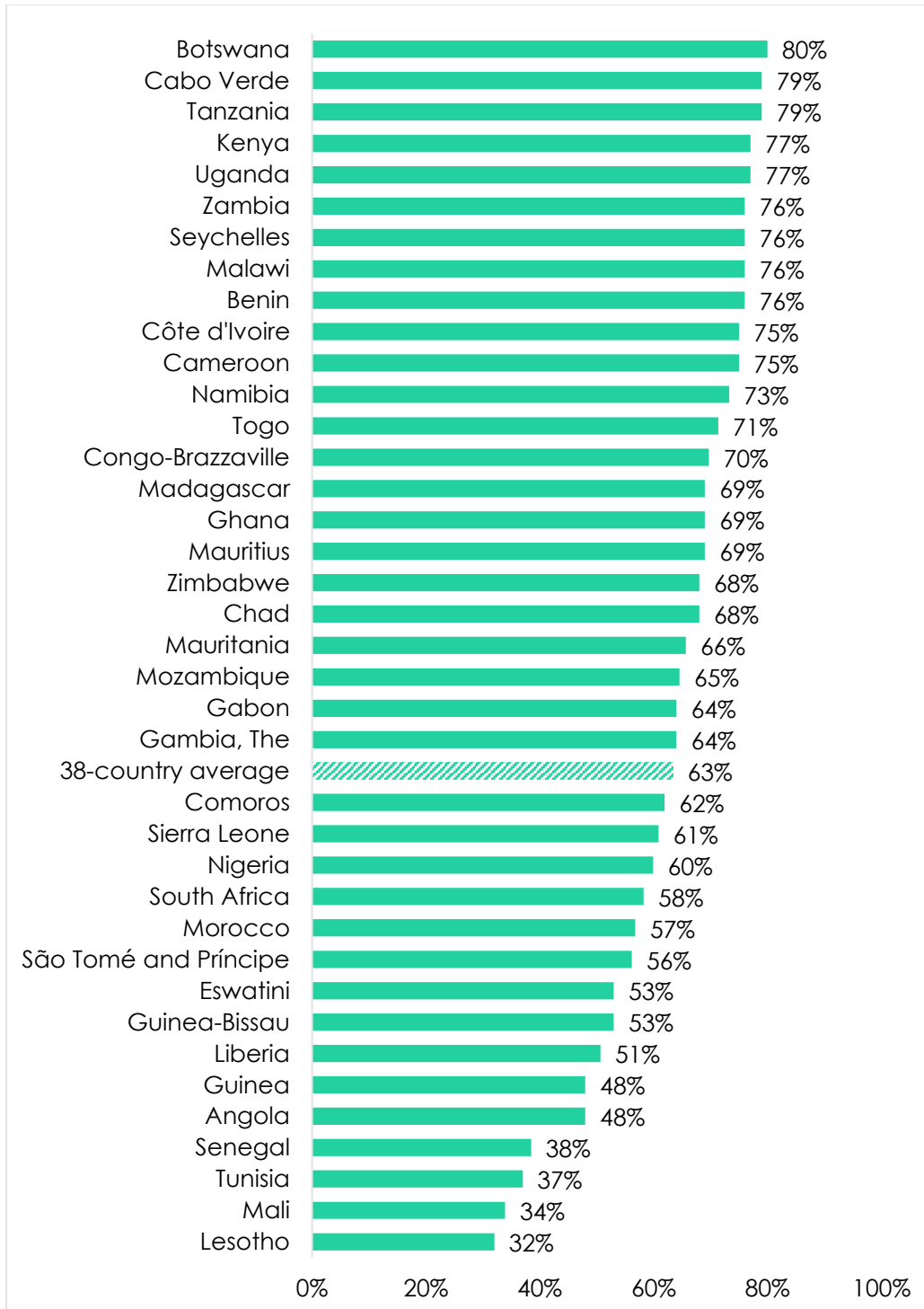
Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.

Majorities in 32 of 38 countries support having multiple political parties (Figure 5). The countries registering the highest levels of support are Botswana (80%),³ Cabo Verde (79%), and Tanzania (79%), all of which have experienced long histories of dominant-party rule, suggesting that citizens are eager for a more inclusive and competitive party system. By contrast, support for multiple parties is lowest in Lesotho (32%), a monarchy, and Mali (34%), which has experienced repeated military coups. In Eswatini, an absolute monarchy where political parties are effectively banned, 53% of citizens say many parties are needed.

Compared to a decade ago, across 28 countries surveyed consistently throughout the period, average support for a multiparty system is unchanged, but some countries have seen major increases or declines (Figure 6). Gains in Tanzania (+16 percentage points) and Botswana (+10 points) stand out, pointing to citizens' rising desire for more competitive elections after dominant-party histories, along with a 22-point increase in the share of Eswatini desiring party competition. Meanwhile, support declined significantly in Mali (-35 points), Gabon (-16 points), and Guinea (-12 points), where recent coups have disrupted regular democratic elections, as well as in Lesotho (-23 points) and South Africa (-11 points).

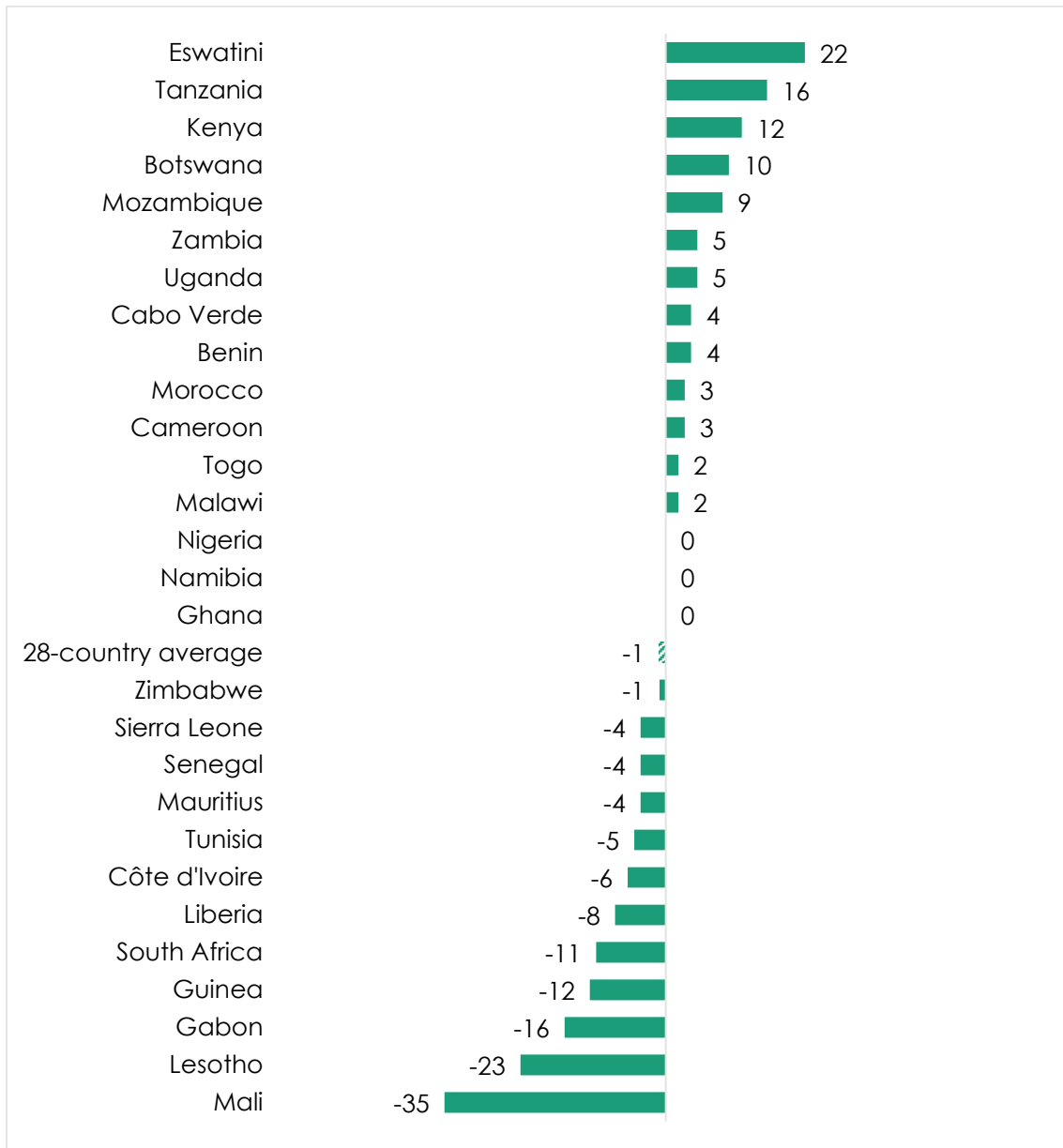
³ Round 10 data collection in Botswana occurred in July 2024, before the historic October 2024 election in which the opposition Umbrella for Democratic Change unseated the long-ruling Botswana Democratic Party.

Figure 5: Support for having many political parties | 38 countries | 2024/2025



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 [this country].
 Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.
 (% who agree with Statement 2)

Figure 6: Change in support for having many political parties | 28 countries
 | 2014-2025

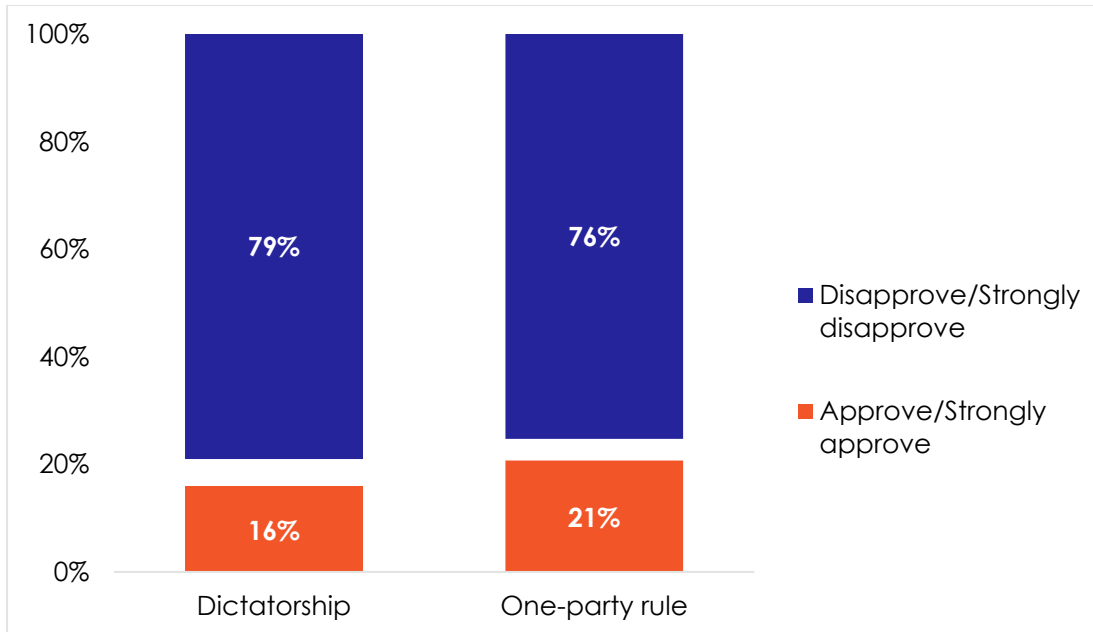


Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in [this country].
 Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that [this country's citizens] have real choices in who governs them.
 (Figure shows change, in percentage points, between survey rounds in 2014/2015 and 2024/2025 in the proportion of respondents who agree with Statement 2)

Views on dictatorship and one-party rule

When asked about alternatives to electoral democracy, nearly eight in 10 Africans reject both dictatorship (79%) and one-party rule (76%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Views on dictatorship and one-party rule | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives:*

- Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?*
- Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?*

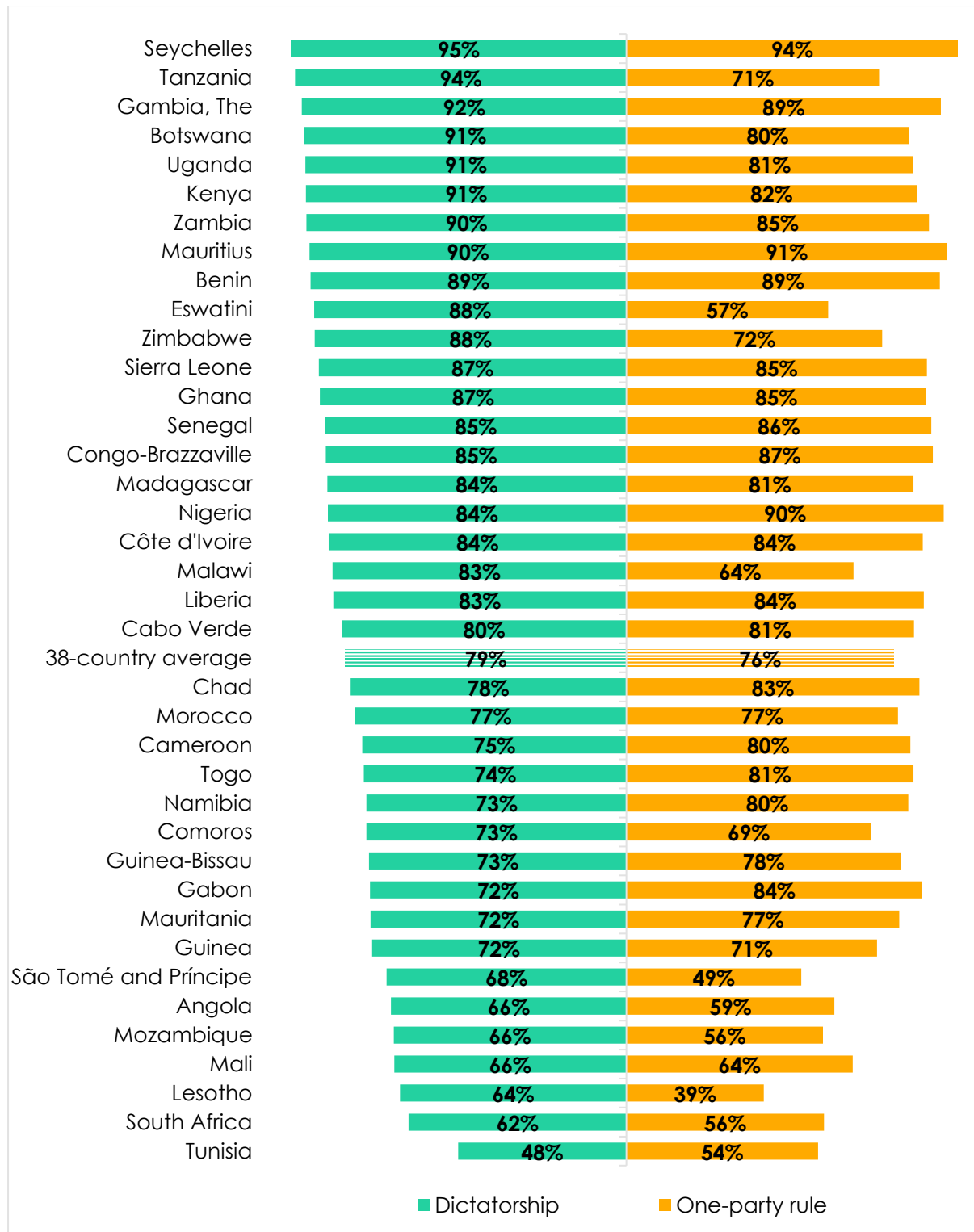
Majorities “disapprove” or “strongly disapprove” of dictatorship in all surveyed countries except Tunisia (48%), with rejection exceeding nine out of 10 citizens in Seychelles (95%), Tanzania (94%), the Gambia (92%), Botswana (91%), Uganda (91%), and Kenya (91%) (Figure 8).

Similarly, one-party rule is opposed by majorities in all countries except Lesotho (39%) and São Tomé and Príncipe (49%).

Even in countries where support for multiple parties has declined, such as Mali, Gabon, Guinea, and South Africa, majorities continue to reject these alternative forms of governance, showing that multiparty elections remain the dominant mechanism for leadership selection.

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 for any country and survey round. It’s easy and free at
www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

Figure 8: Rejection of dictatorship and one-party rule | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives:*

Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?

Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?

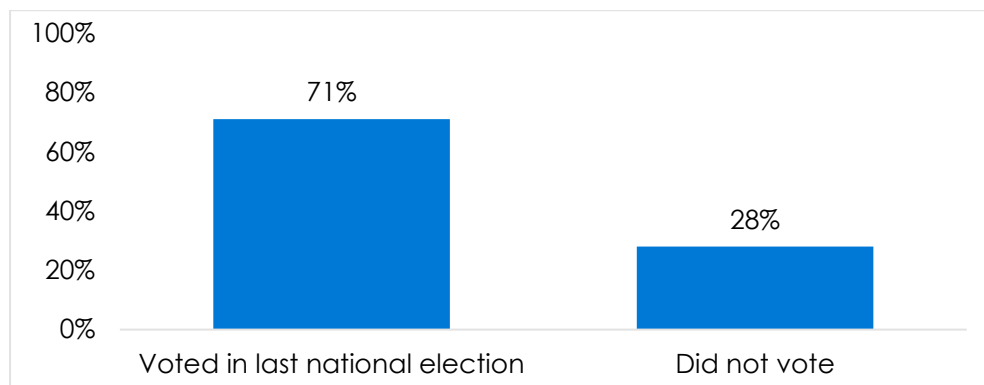
(% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove")

Participation in elections

Meaningful elections require the participation of citizens. When asked about their participation in their country's most recent national elections, about seven in 10 citizens (71%) who were old enough to vote at the time say they did so (Figure 9).

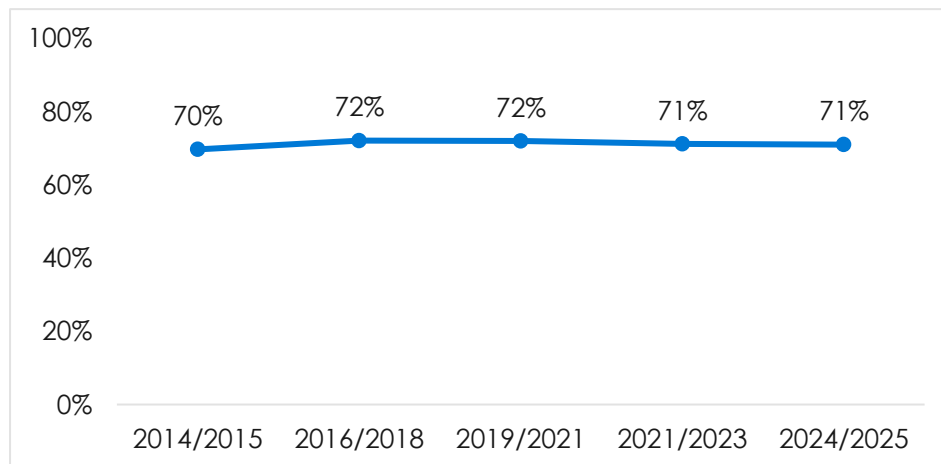
On average across 28 countries surveyed consistently since 2014/2015, the share of respondents who say they voted in their country's last national election has held steady (Figure 10).

Figure 9: Voted in last national election | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: People are not always able to vote in elections, for example, because they weren't registered, they were unable to go, or someone prevented them from voting. How about you? In the last national election, held in [year], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (Respondents who were too young to vote are excluded.)

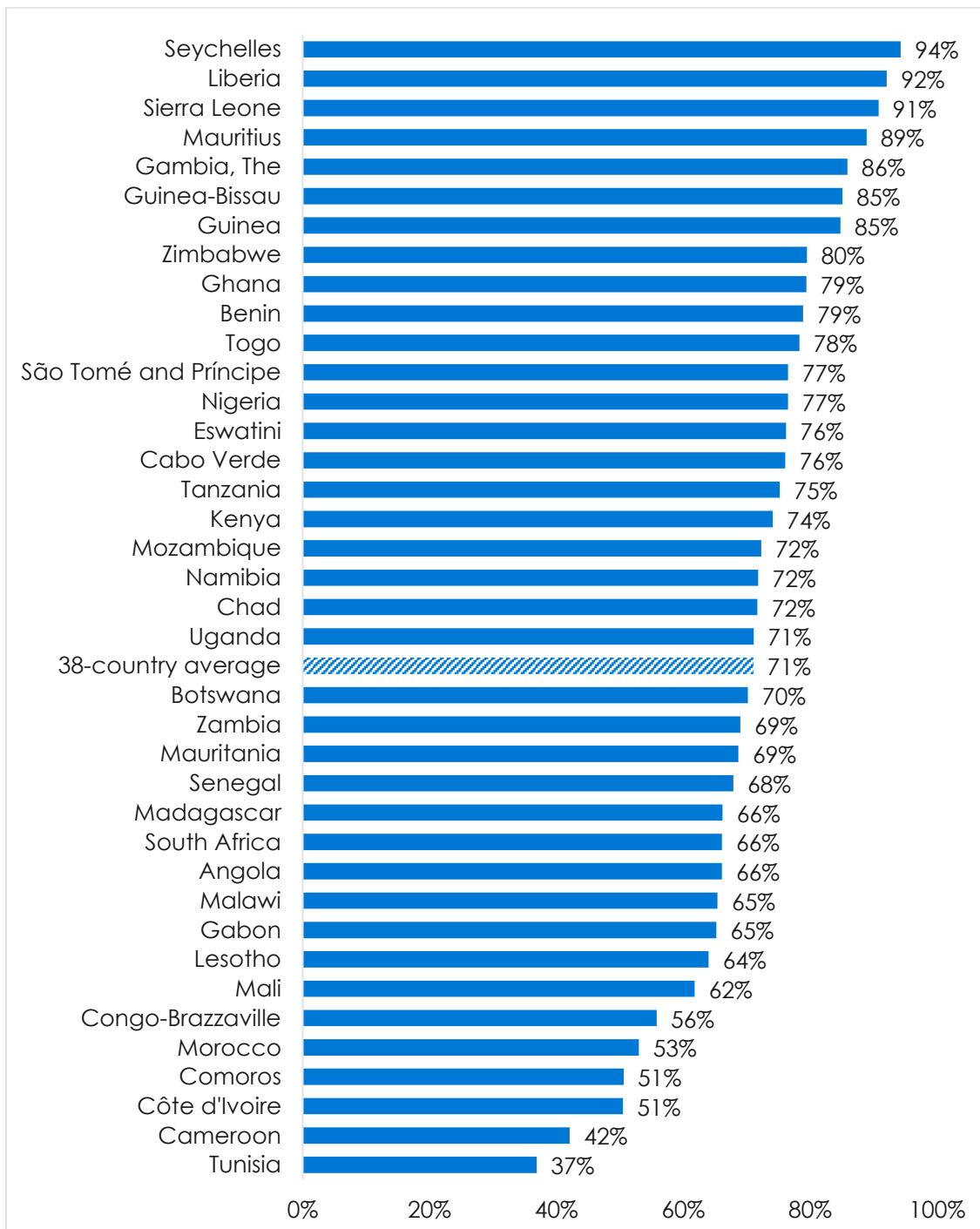
Figure 10: Voted in last national election | 28 countries | 2014-2025



Respondents were asked: In the last national election, held in [year], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? (% who say they voted) (Respondents who were too young to vote are excluded.)

Majorities in 34 countries say they voted in their last national election, including more than nine in 10 Seychellois (94%), Liberians (92%), and Sierra Leoneans (91%) (Figure 11). About half of Comorians (51%) and Ivoirians (51%) say they cast ballots, while only 36% of voting-age adults say they cast ballots in Tunisia, a country where participation in many forms of political activity has been strikingly low in the wake of authoritarian crackdowns and political crises (Afrobarometer, 2025; Luck, 2022; Volkman, 2022).

Figure 11: Voted in last national election | 38 countries | 2024/2025



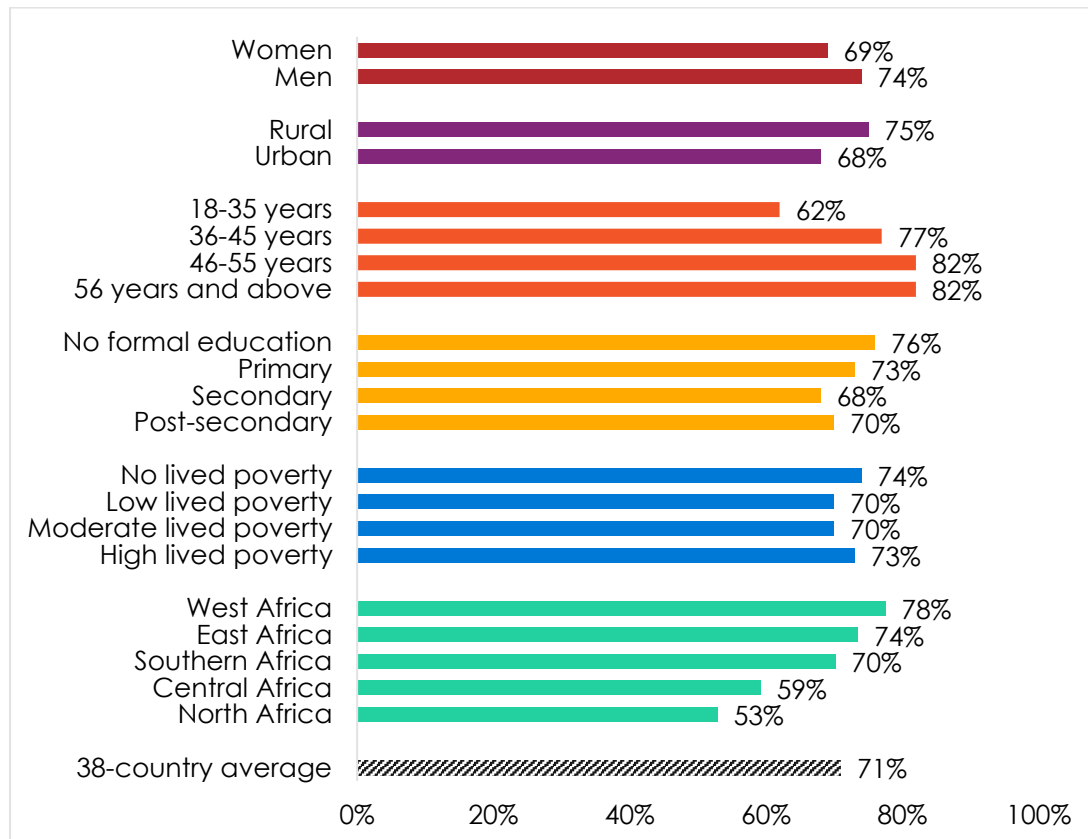
Respondents were asked: People are not always able to vote in elections, for example, because they weren't registered, they were unable to go, or someone prevented them from voting. How about you? In the last national election, did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote (% who said "I voted in the election") (Respondents who were too young vote are excluded.)

Participation in elections also varies across demographic groups and regions (Figure 12). Women are less likely to vote than men (69% vs. 74%), urbanites report lower turnout than rural residents (68% vs. 75%), and youth (62%) are considerably less likely to vote than their

elders (77%-82%). Citizens with no formal schooling (76%) say they vote at higher rates than more educated respondents (68%-73%).

At the regional level, West Africa reports the highest voting rate (78%), while North Africa has the lowest (53%).

Figure 12: Voted in last national election | by demographic group | 38 countries
 | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *In the last national election, held in [year], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (% who say they voted) (Respondents who were too young to vote are excluded.)*

Factors that influence whether citizens participate in elections might include how healthy they consider their democracy and whether they identify with one of the political parties contesting the election.

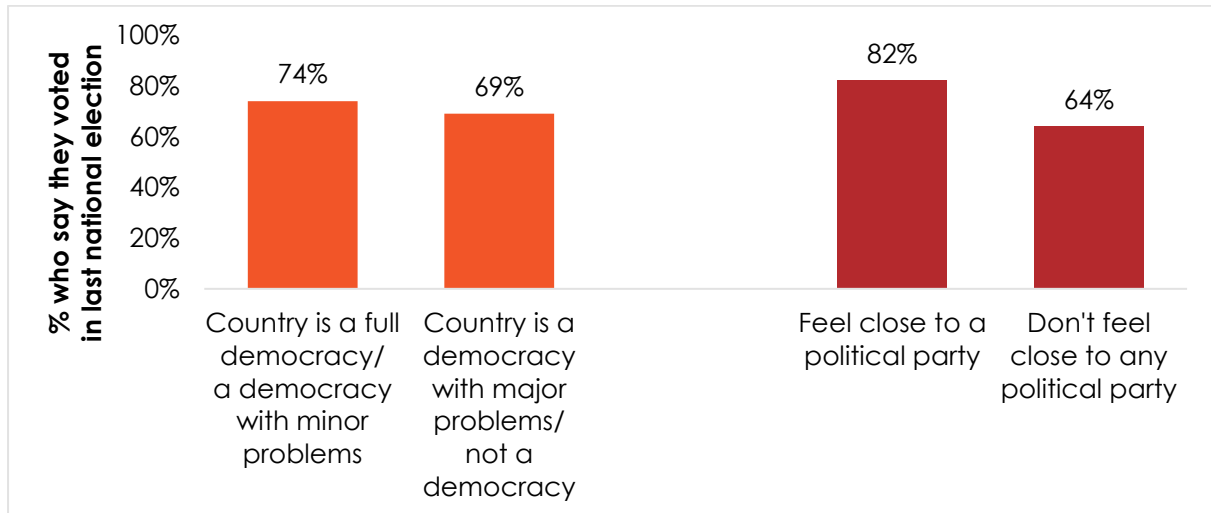
Respondents who see their country as “a full democracy” or “a democracy with minor problems” are in fact somewhat more likely to report that they voted than those who consider their country “a democracy with major problems” or “not a democracy” (74% vs. 69%) (Figure 13).

“Feeling close to” a political party appears to be a greater motivation: 82% of party adherents say they voted, compared to 64% of those who don't identify with a political party.

Among Round 10 respondents who say they did not vote, the most commonly cited reason is not being registered to vote (30%), followed by a lack of interest in politics or voting (18%) and a lack of time on Election Day (14%) (Figure 14). Almost four in 10 offer other explanations, including that they tried to vote but were unable to (7%), that elections don't

make a difference (6%), that they didn't like any of the available choices (4%), that they don't trust the electoral commission or the electoral process (3%), or some other reason (17%).

Figure 13: Voted in last national election | by party affiliation and perceived extent of democracy | 38 countries | 2024/2025



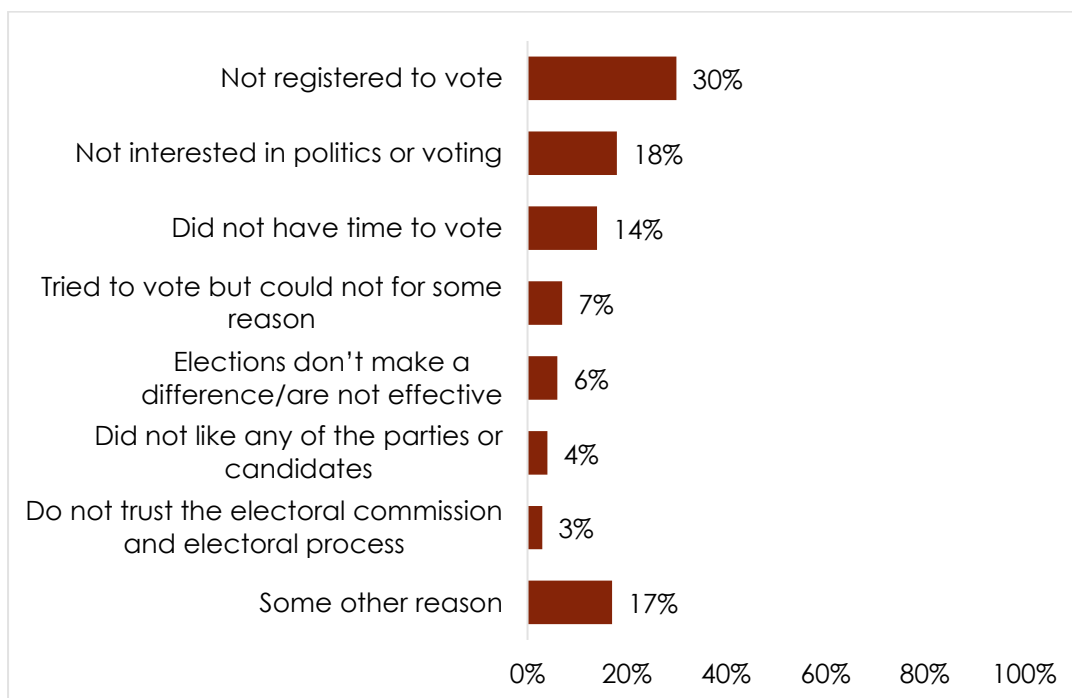
Respondents were asked:

Do you feel close to any particular political party?

In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today?

In the last national election, held in [year], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (% who say they voted) (Respondents who were too young to vote are excluded.)

Figure 14: Reasons for not voting | 38 countries | 2024/2025

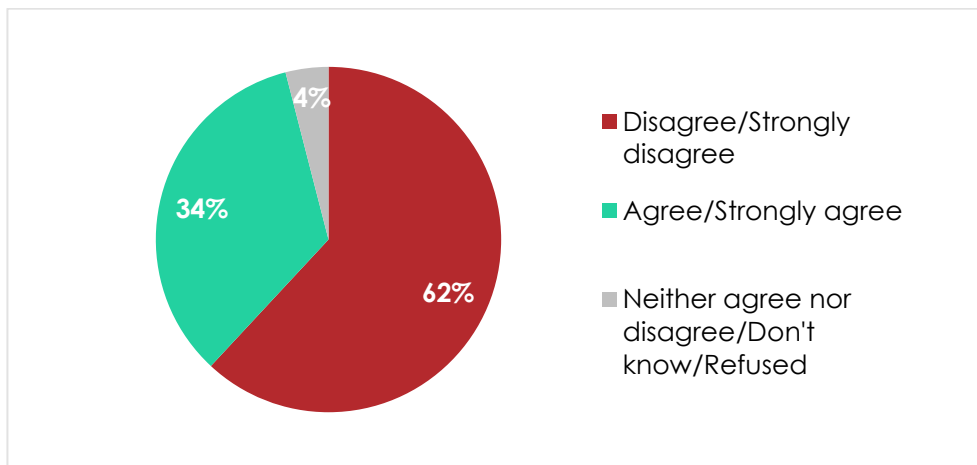


Respondents who say they did not vote were asked: *Why didn't you vote? (Respondents who say they voted or were too young to vote are excluded.)*

Among respondents who were too young to vote last time, about three-quarters (74%) say they intend to vote in the next election (not shown) – well above the 62% reported by the youngest voters in the last election.

But only a minority (34%) of respondents think that lowering the voting age is a good idea. More than six in 10 (62%) oppose reducing the voting age to 16 (Figure 15). Even among 18- to 35-year-olds, 61% reject the idea. Only in three countries do a majority of citizens support enfranchising 16-year-olds: Senegal (62%), Guinea (55%), and Mali (54%) (not shown).

Figure 15: Should the voting age be lowered? | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The minimum age for voting in national elections in this country should be reduced from [age] to 16 years.

Quality of elections

While most Africans want elections and participate in them, how do they judge the quality and effectiveness of the elections that take place?

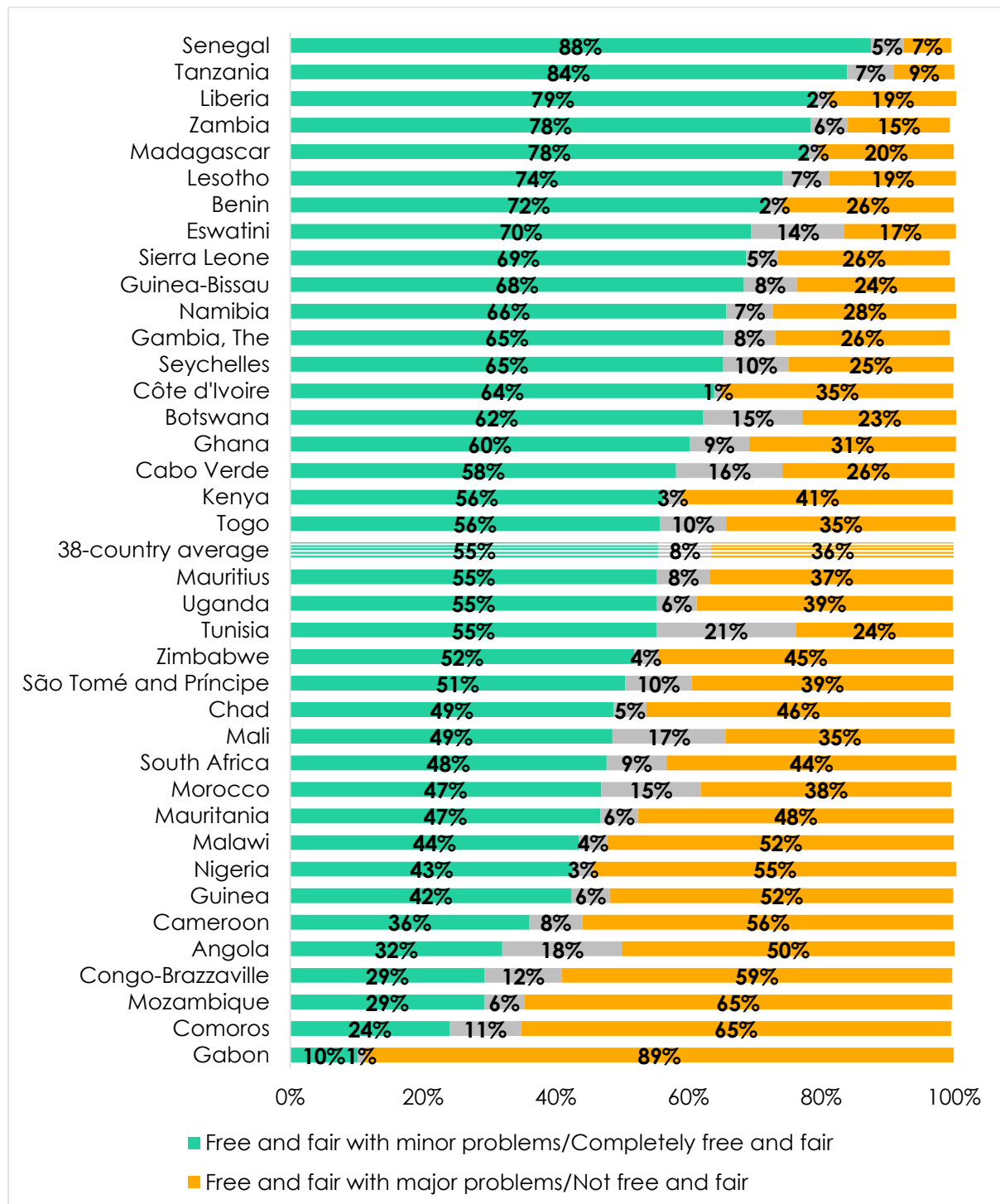
When asked about their last national election,⁴ more than half (55%) of respondents say it was “completely free and fair” (34%) or “free and fair with minor problems” (22%) (Figure 16).⁵ More than one in three (36%) describe it as “not free and fair” or as having “major problems.”

Doubts about the fairness of elections are overwhelming in Gabon (89% not free and fair/major problems), and about two-thirds of respondents agree in Comoros and Mozambique (both 65%). Majorities express confidence in the fairness of elections in 24 countries, led by Senegal (88%), Tanzania (84%), Liberia (79%), Zambia (78%), and Madagascar (78%).

⁴ Note that in some countries, Round 10 data collection occurred before recent elections that might have affected citizens’ views. For example, fieldwork in Tanzania was conducted in August-September 2024, well before the controversial presidential election of October 2025, so survey questions about election quality, fear of violence or intimidation, etc., referred to the 2020 election. In addition to Tanzania, countries that have had elections since Round 10 data collection include Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, Togo, and Tunisia. See Round 10 fieldwork dates in Appendix Table A.1.

⁵ Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. 34% “completely free and fair” and 22% “free and fair with minor problems” sum to 55%).

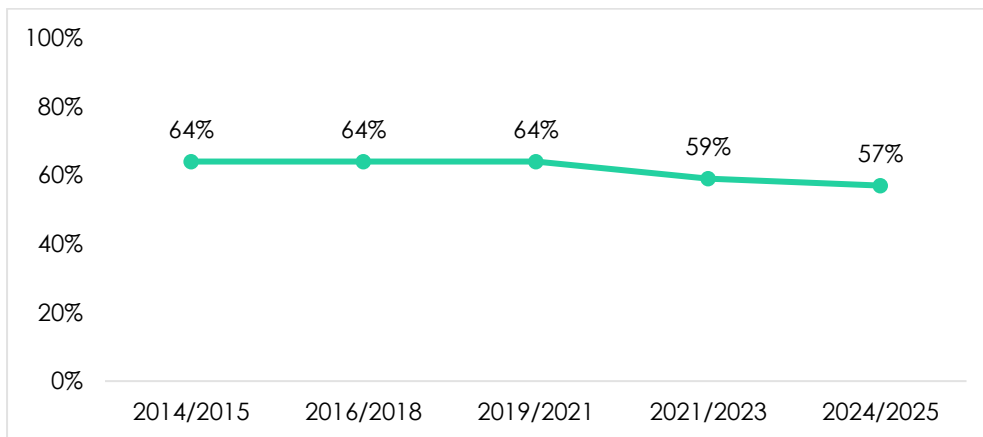
Figure 16: How free and fair are elections? | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [year]?*

The trend over the past decade shows a gradual decline in perceptions of electoral freeness and fairness. Across 28 countries with data from all survey rounds since 2014/2015, the share of citizens who rate their elections as generally free and fair decreased by 7 percentage points (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Election was largely free and fair | 28 countries | 2014-2025



Respondents were asked: *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [year]? (% who say "completely free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems")*

Political freedoms

A free and fair election assumes that citizens are free to participate as they wish, including joining with political organisations and freely choosing among candidates (Bishop & Hoeffler, 2016).

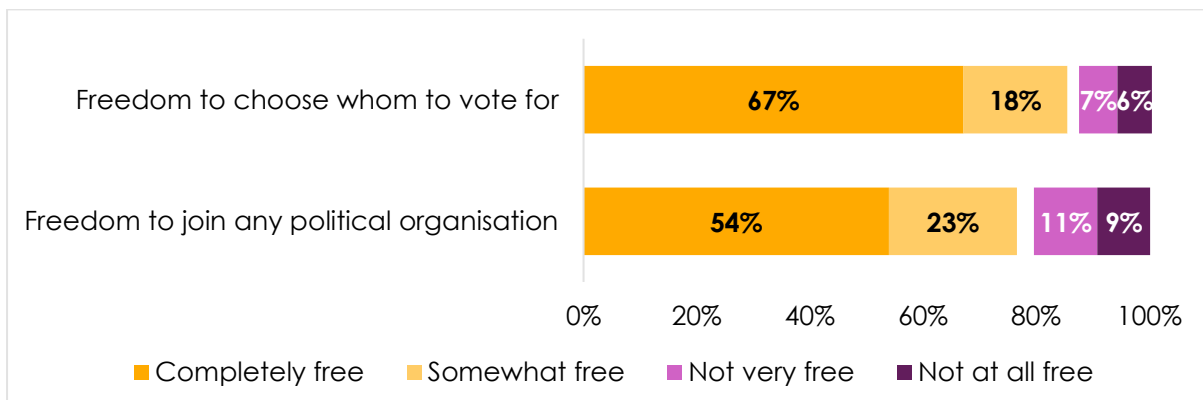
Almost nine in 10 Africans (86%) report that they are "completely free" (67%) or "somewhat free" (18%) to decide whom to vote for without feeling pressured (Figure 18).

And more than three-fourths (77%) say they feel "completely" (54%) or "somewhat" (23%) free to join any political organisation of their choice.

Sierra Leone stands out with the strongest perceptions of freedom on both vote choice (94%) and association (83%), while Senegal, the Gambia, Tanzania, Liberia, and Ghana follow with high scores on both counts (Figure 19). At the other extreme, Congo-Brazzaville and Comoros record proportions of just 20% to 33% who say they enjoy these freedoms.

In every surveyed country, people feel less free to join organisations than to vote, with gaps ranging up to 30 percentage points (in Madagascar).

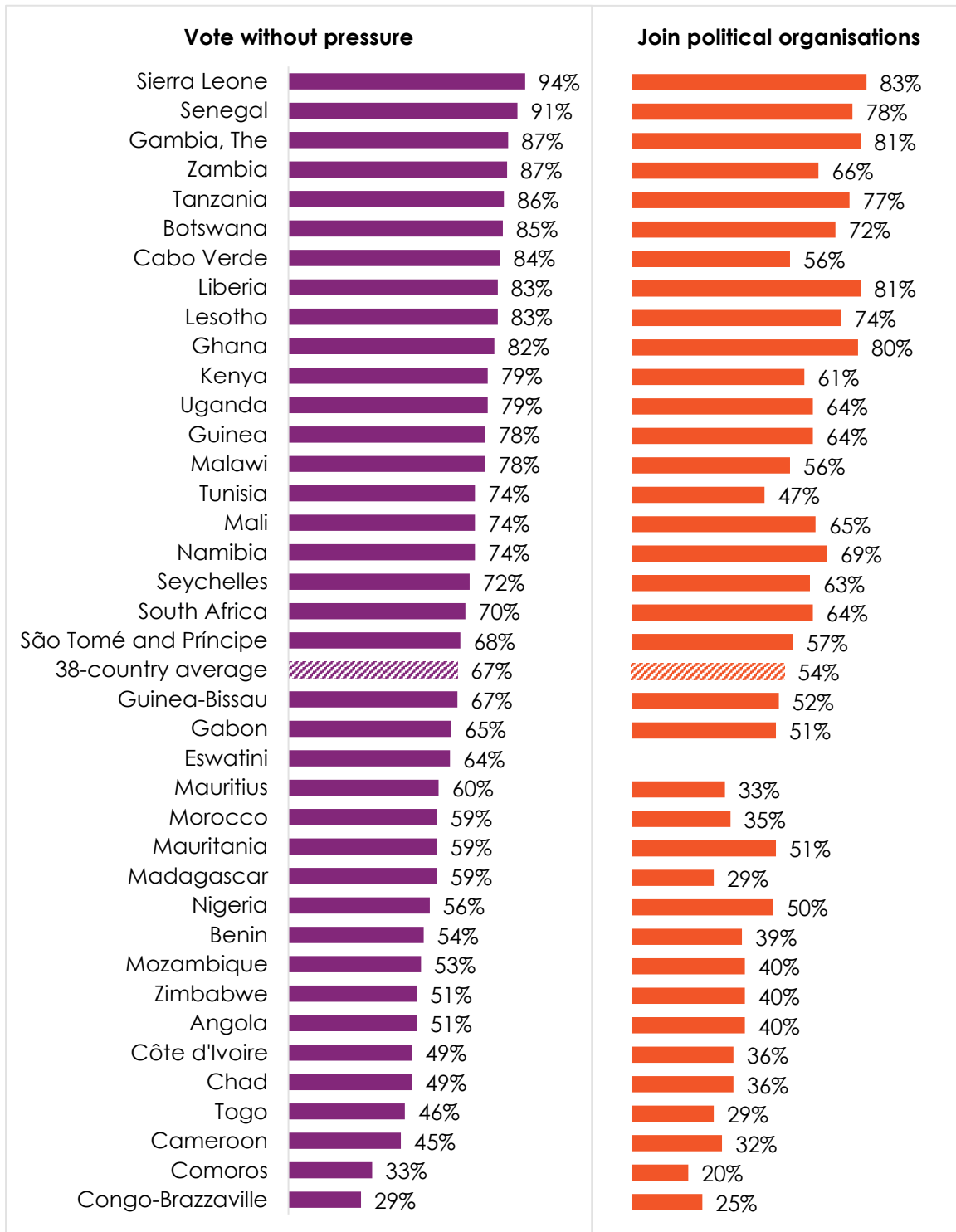
Figure 18: Political freedoms | 38 countries* | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *In this country, how free are you: To join any political organisation you want? To choose whom to vote for without feeling pressured?*

* The question about freedom to join political organisations was not asked in Eswatini.

Figure 19: 'Completely free' to vote and organise | 38 countries* | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: In this country, how free are you: To join any political organisation you want? To choose whom to vote for without feeling pressured?

* The question about freedom to join political organisations was not asked in Eswatini.

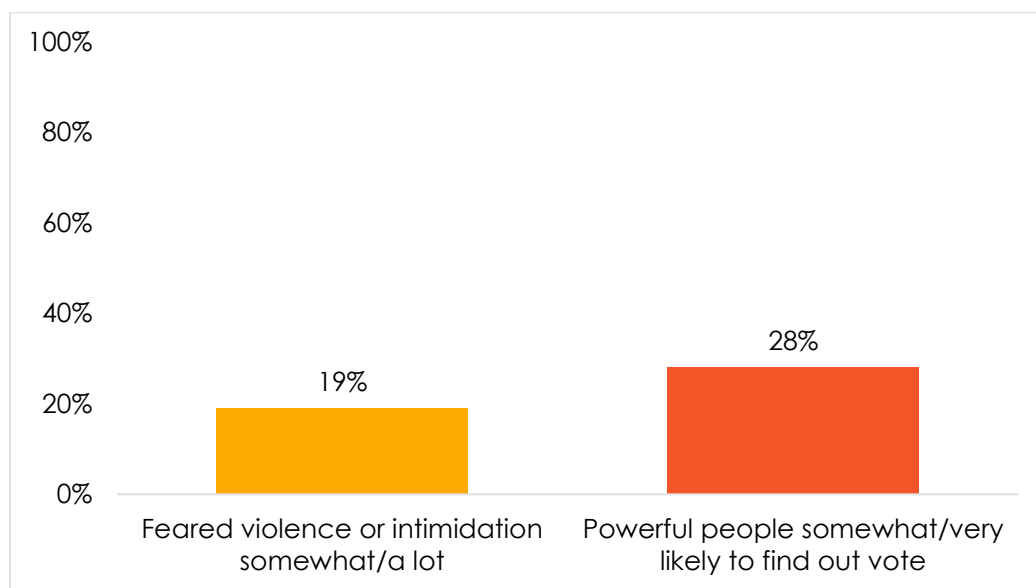
Political intimidation and vote secrecy

Two key tests of election quality are whether voters can participate without fear and can trust that their vote remains secret.

On average across 38 countries, about one in five respondents say they feared political intimidation or violence “somewhat” (9%) or “a lot” (10%) during the most recent campaign period, while 14% report “a little bit” of fear and 65% experienced no fear at all (Figure 20).

Almost three in 10 (28%) consider it “somewhat likely” (16%) or “very likely” (12%) that powerful actors could find out how they voted, even though their ballots are supposed to be secret, while two-thirds (67%) see that as unlikely.

Figure 20: Political intimidation and vote secrecy | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked:

*During the last national election campaign in [year], how much did you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?
 How likely do you think it is that powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country?*

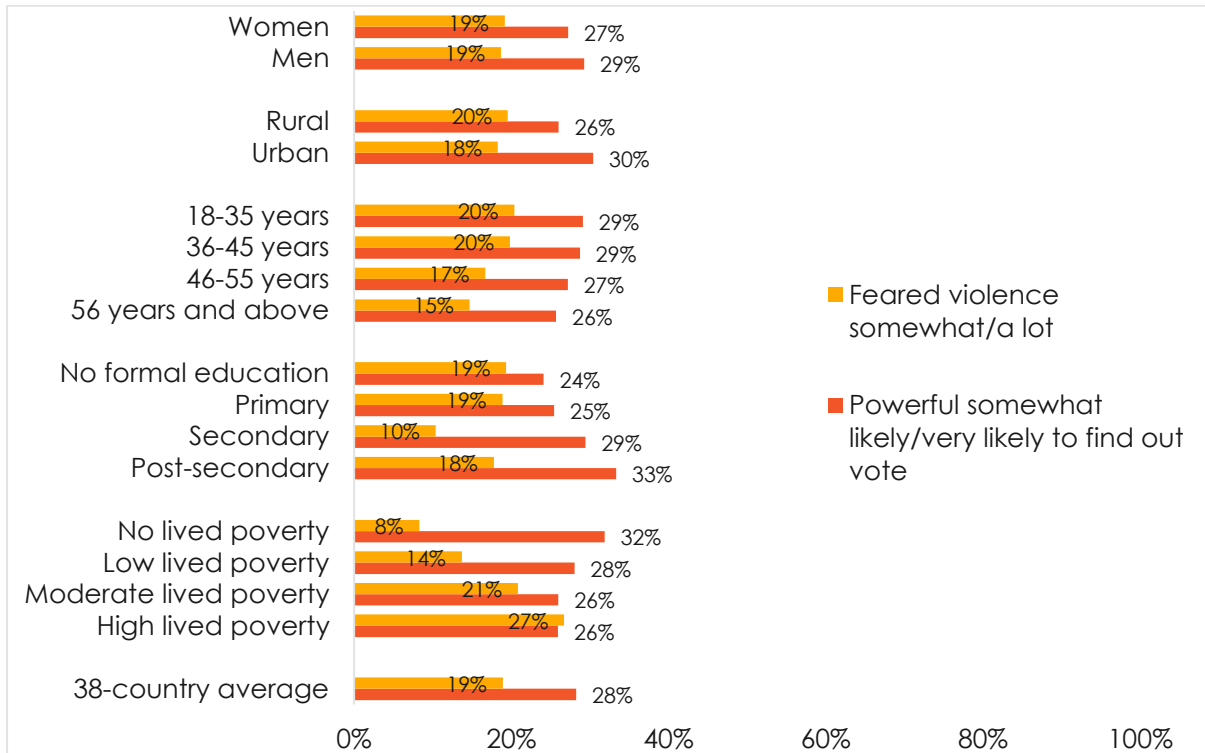
Fear of political intimidation or violence increases sharply with citizens' experience of lived poverty, ranging from 8% of well-off respondents to 27% of the poorest (Figure 21).

The suspicion that the powerful can find out one's vote, in contrast, is more common among well-off citizens (32%) than among those experiencing lived poverty (26%-28%). It also increases with educational attainment, from 24% of those with no formal schooling to 33% of those with post-secondary qualifications, and is somewhat more common in urban than in rural areas (30% vs. 26%)

At the country level, Gabon stands out with relatively large proportions of citizens who feared intimidation or violence (37%) and worry that their ballots might not be secret (48%) (Figure 22 and Figure 23). More than one in three citizens also report fearing intimidation or violence in Guinea (41%), Malawi (38%), Kenya (36%), and Mozambique (35%).

Besides Gabon, countries where a lack of confidence in ballot secrecy is particularly common include South Africa (44%), Cameroon (43%), Nigeria (42%), Tunisia (42%), Congo-Brazzaville (41%), and Comoros (41%).

Figure 21: Fear of violence and concerns about vote secrecy | by demographic group | 38 countries | 2024/2025

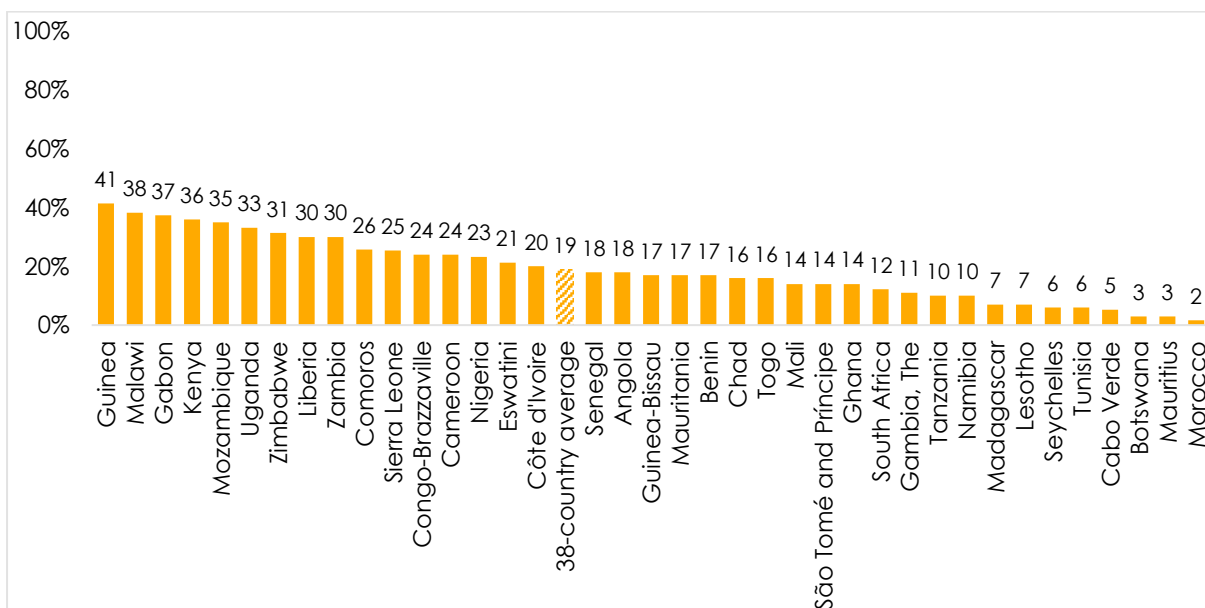


Respondents were asked:

During the last national election campaign in [year], how much did you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

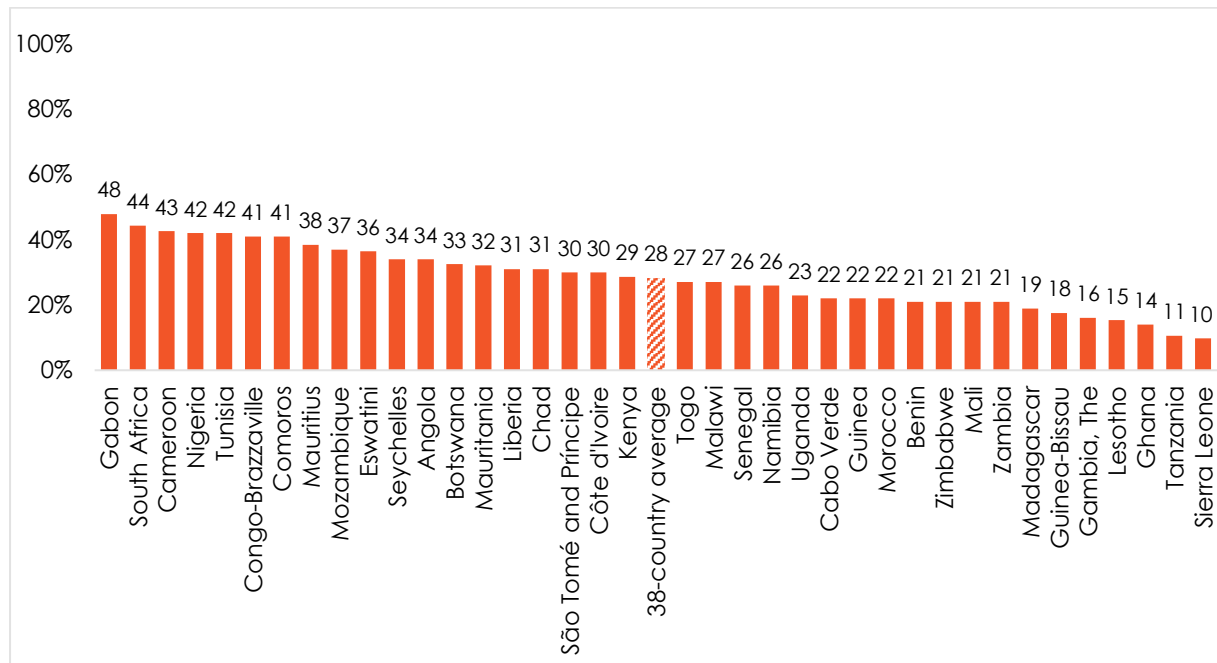
How likely do you think it is that powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

Figure 22: Fear of political intimidation or violence (%) | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: During the last national election campaign, how much did you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?

Figure 23: Powerful people likely to find out vote (%) | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: How likely do you think it is that powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")

Trust in the electoral management body

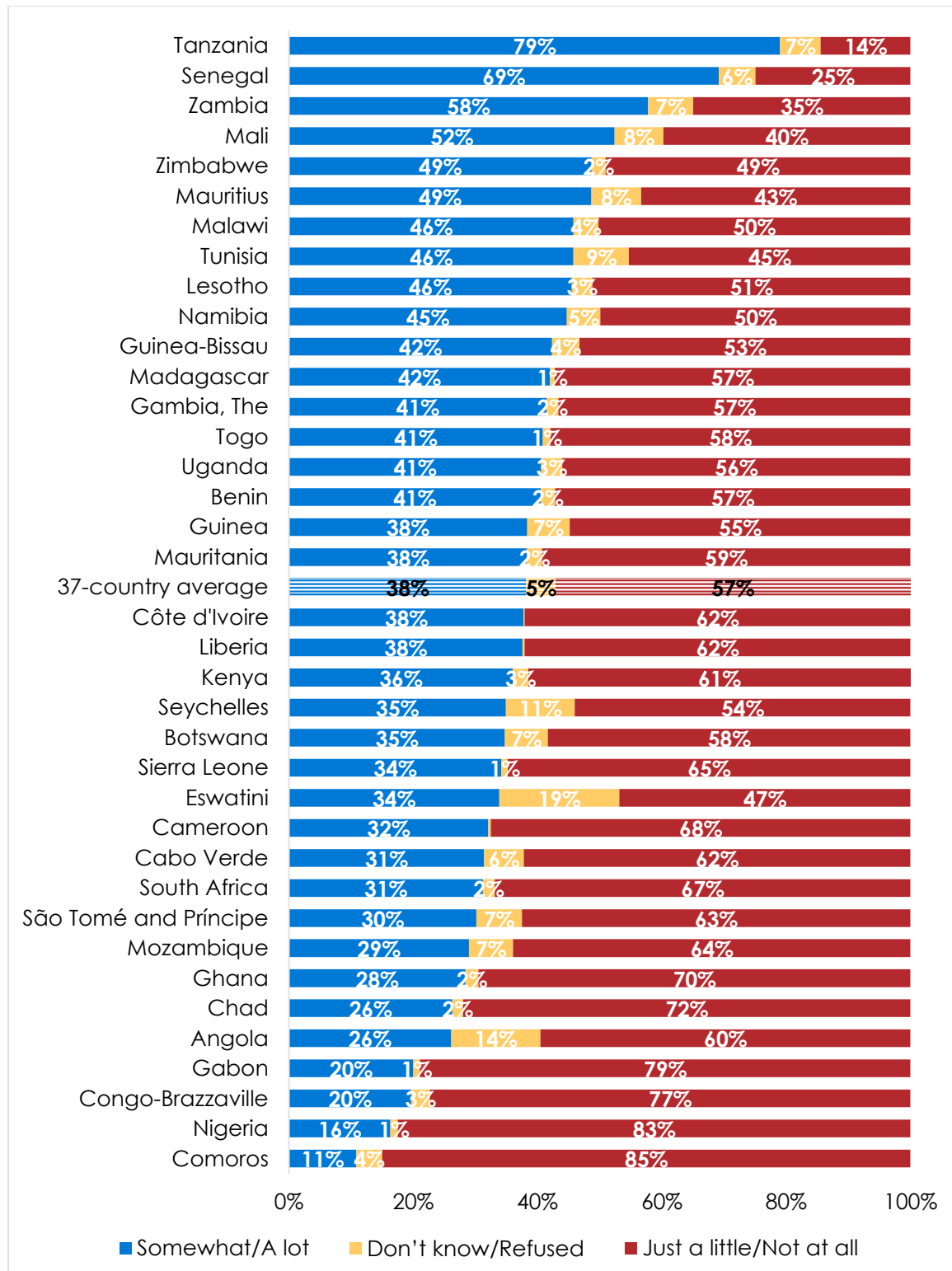
The perceived quality of elections – including their fairness, transparency, and credibility – plays a critical role in shaping public confidence in electoral processes. Central to ensuring high quality is an autonomous election management body (EMB) that administers elections and validates results in an impartial and transparent manner (Lekorwe, 2023).

On average across 37 countries where the question was asked, only 38% of Africans say they trust their national election commission "somewhat" or "a lot," while a majority (57%) express "just a little" or no trust at all (Figure 24).

Trust is exceptionally high in Tanzania (79% as of August-September 2024) and Senegal (69%). But majorities in 27 countries express distrust, exceeding three-fourths of respondents in Comoros (85%), Nigeria (83%), Gabon (79%), and Congo-Brazzaville (77%).

Urbanites express more distrust than rural residents (62% vs. 53%), as do youth (60%) compared to their older counterparts (50%-57%) (Figure 25). Distrust also rises with higher levels of education (from 50% among those with no formal schooling to 63% among degree-holders) and with citizens' experience of lived poverty, from 47% among well-off respondents to 61% among the poorest. Majorities express distrust in the continent's West (58%), Southern (55%), and East (51%) regions, compared to just 25% in Central Africa.

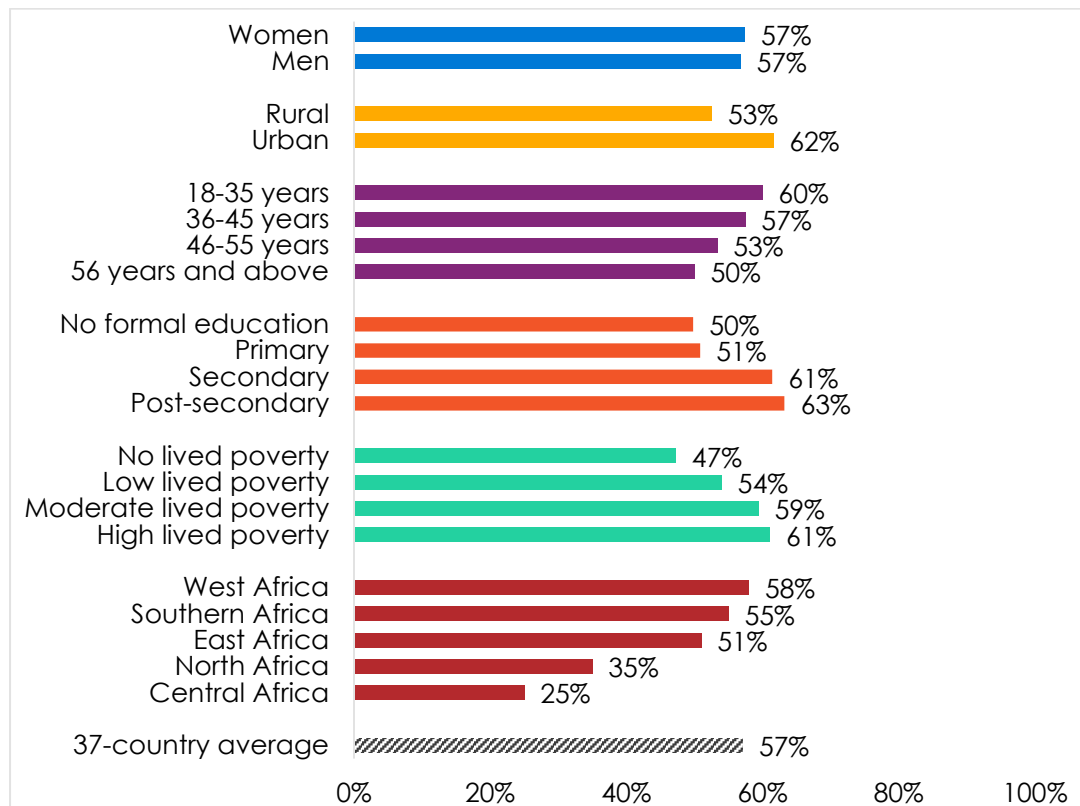
Figure 24: Trust in the electoral management body | 37 countries* | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your electoral management body?

* Question was not asked in Morocco.

Figure 25: Distrust electoral management body | by demographic group
 | 37 countries* | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your electoral management body? (% who say "just a little" or "not at all")
 * Question was not asked in Morocco.

Election efficacy

In a democracy, elections are not only a contest to determine a winner, but also a mechanism through which citizens can shape political outcomes. Through elections, voters install their leaders and are given a mechanism to hold them accountable for their performance. When elections function as intended, they foster electoral efficacy by reinforcing citizens' beliefs that their participation matters and that elected officials are attentive to public preferences, strengthening democratic legitimacy (Gibbins, 2026).

Africans overwhelmingly demand responsiveness from their elected officials: More than three-fourths (77%) say they "should listen to voters' views and do what they demand" rather than "follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the country" (Figure 26).

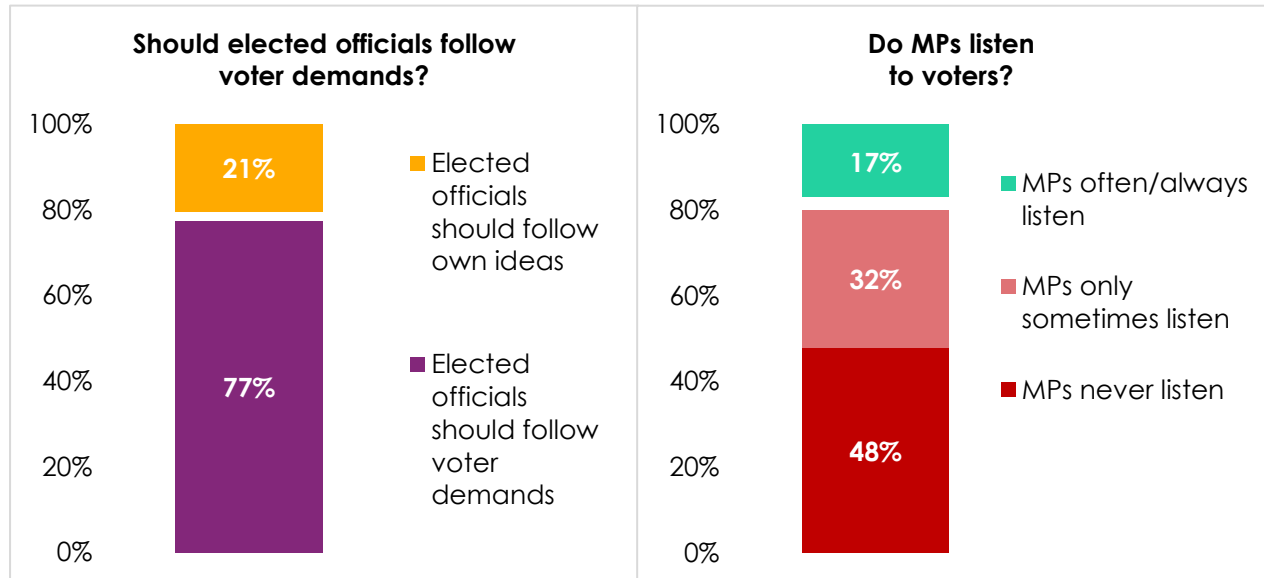
But a similarly strong majority (80%) say that members of Parliament (MPs) "never" (48%) or "only sometimes" (32%) do their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say. Only 17% say they "often" or "always" listen.

Expectations that elected officials listen to and follow voters' demands are the majority position in every surveyed country, ranging up to nine out of 10 respondents in Kenya, Eswatini, and Tanzania (all 91%) (Figure 27).

In these three countries, only about three in 10 respondents say their MPs "never" listen to voters (Figure 28) – some of the least negative assessments, though even fewer say they "often" or "always" listen (25%, 22%, and 16%, respectively). This contrasts sharply with Lesotho and Congo-Brazzaville, where 69% and 68% report that their MPs "never" listen.

These perceptions align with recent Afrobarometer findings that fewer than half of Africans believe elections ensure that MPs represent voters' views (42%) (Afrobarometer, 2024) and highlight persistent doubts about whether participation translates into political voice.

Figure 26: Electoral efficacy | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked:

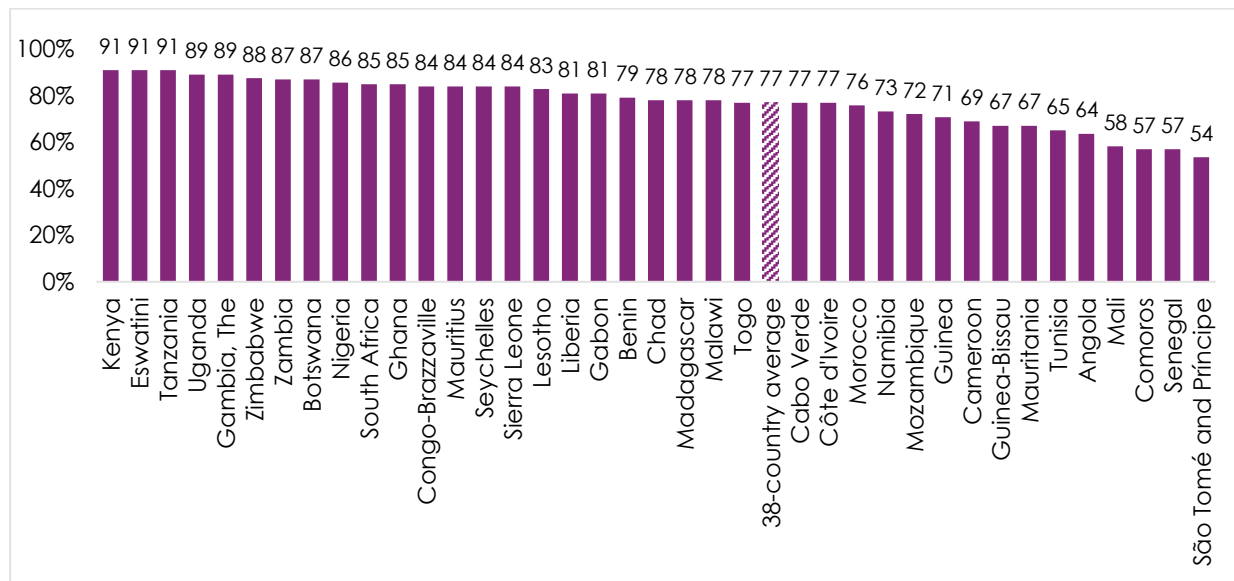
Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Our elected officials should listen to voters' views and do what they demand.

Statement 2: Our elected leaders should follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the country.

How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say: Members of Parliament?

Figure 27: Elected officials should follow voter demands | 38 countries | 2024/2025



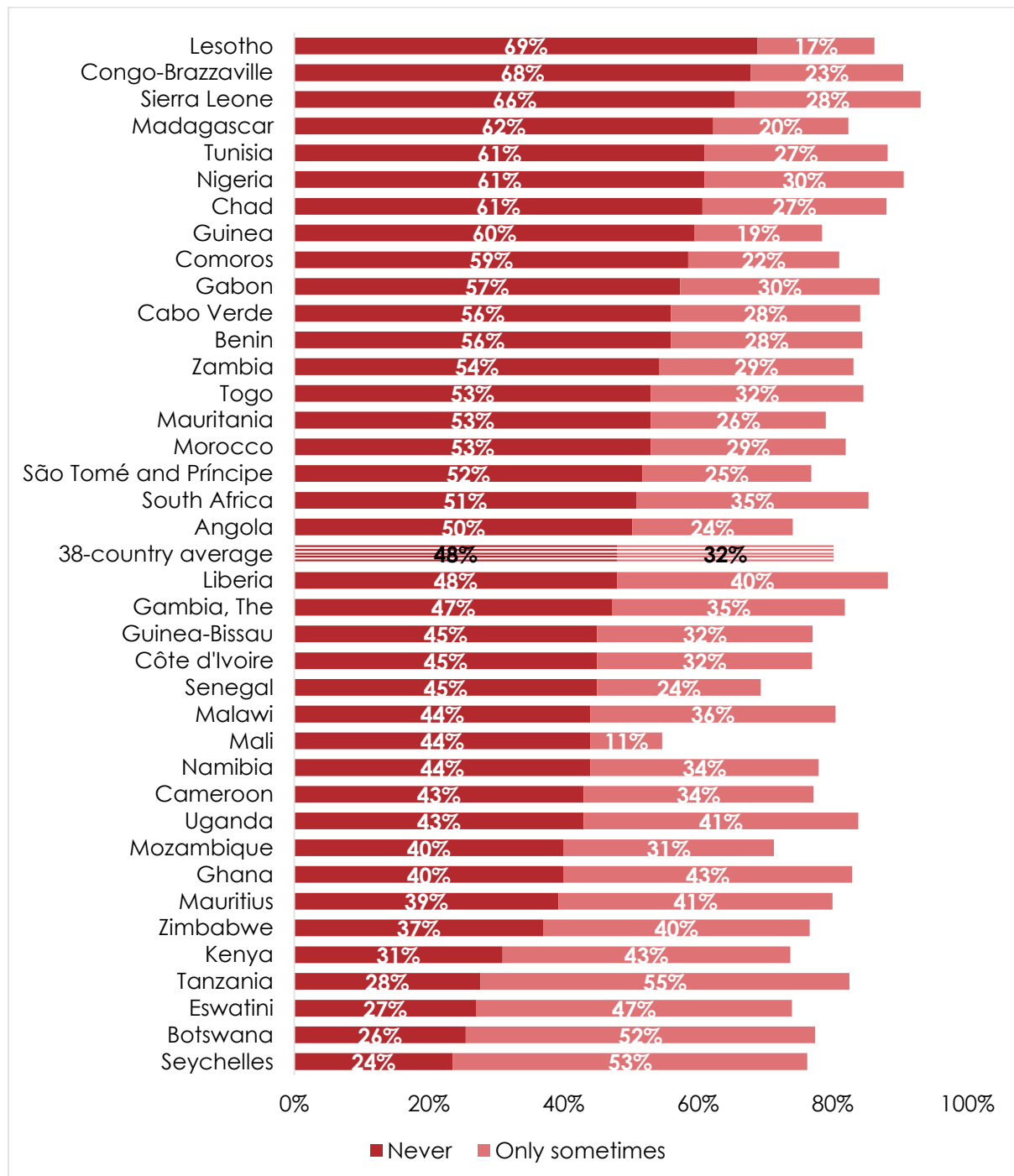
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Our elected officials should listen to voters' views and do what they demand.

Statement 2: Our elected leaders should follow their own ideas in deciding what is best for the country.

(% who say elected officials "should listen to voters' views and do what they demand")

Figure 28: MPs never/only sometimes listen to voters | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what ordinary people have to say: Members of Parliament?

Conclusion

Findings from the latest Afrobarometer surveys provide evidence of Africans' enduring support for multiparty elections along with significant concerns about their implementation.

Most citizens report that key elements of election quality – such as the freedom to join political organisations and vote for the candidate of their choice – are in place. But

weakening trends in support for elections and in perceptions that they are free and fair have not rebounded. And while fear of election-related violence and doubts about the secrecy of the ballot are rare in some countries, they affect more than one in three potential voters in others.

Moreover, distrust of electoral management bodies is the norm in many countries. And while citizens overwhelmingly believe that elections should produce leaders who are responsive to voter demands, in practice this responsiveness is widely seen as lacking.

These findings underscore a critical tension: While citizens remain committed to the principle of elections and largely enjoy the freedoms needed to participate, distrust in electoral institutions and the perceived unresponsiveness of elected officials threaten the effectiveness and legitimacy of the electoral process. Strengthening the credibility of election management bodies, safeguarding political freedoms, and ensuring that elected leaders are responsive and accountable to voters are essential steps to translate public support for elections into meaningful democratic governance.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 10 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 10 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	March-April 2024	2019, 2022
Benin	Jan.-Feb. 2024	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2022
Botswana	July 2024	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2022
Burkina Faso	N/A	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2022
Cabo Verde	Aug.-Sept. 2024	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2022
Cameroon	Feb.-March 2024	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2022
Chad	Feb.-April 2025	N/A
Comoros	May-June 2025	N/A
Congo-Brazzaville	Sept.-Oct. 2024	2023
Côte d'Ivoire	Jan. 2024	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2021
Eswatini	April-May 2025	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2022
Ethiopia	N/A	2013, 2020, 2023
Gabon	April-May 2024	2015, 2017, 2020, 2021
Gambia, The	April-May 2024	2018, 2021, 2022
Ghana	Aug. 2024	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2022
Guinea	May-June 2024	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2022
Guinea-Bissau	July-Sept. 2025	N/A
Kenya	April-May 2024	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2021
Lesotho	March 2024	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2022
Liberia	July-Aug. 2024	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2022
Madagascar	Oct.-Nov. 2024	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018, 2022
Malawi	Aug. 2024	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2022
Mali	Oct.-Nov. 2024	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2022
Mauritania	Dec. 2024-Jan. 2025	2022
Mauritius	April-May 2024	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2022
Morocco	Feb.-March 2024	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2022
Mozambique	July-Sept. 2025	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2022
Namibia	March 2024	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2021
Niger	N/A	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2021
Nigeria	June-July 2024	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020, 2022
São Tomé and Príncipe	Sept.-Nov. 2024	2015, 2018, 2022
Senegal	Feb.-March 2025	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2022
Seychelles	Aug. 2024	2022
Sierra Leone	March-April 2025	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2022
South Africa	June-Aug. 2025	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2022
Sudan	N/A	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2022
Tanzania	June-July 2024	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2022
Togo	July 2024	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2022
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2024	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020, 2022
Uganda	Jan.-Feb. 2024	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2022
Zambia	July 2024	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020, 2022
Zimbabwe	June 2024	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2022

Table A.2: Afrobarometer countries by region

Region	Countries
Central Africa	Cameroon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon
East Africa	Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda
North Africa	Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia
Southern Africa	Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe
West Africa	Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

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