
Afrobarometer Round 6

**New data from
across Africa**



Accra, Ghana
6 September 2016

News release

Election quality, public trust are central issues as African nations look toward next contests (Afrobarometer findings)

Only half of Africans trust their national electoral commissions, and many fear violence and unfair practices during election campaigns, according to a new report by Afrobarometer.

With at least 25 African countries conducting national elections in 2016-2017, citizens' perceptions paint a troubling picture of electoral management institutions and the quality of elections. While public assessments vary widely by country, on average more than four in 10 Africans express serious concerns about the fairness of vote counts, corruption during elections, and the safety of voters. Half of Africans say elections don't work well to ensure that voters' views are represented or that elected officials can be held accountable.

The new report (Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 35) is available at <http://globalreleases.afrobarometer.org>.

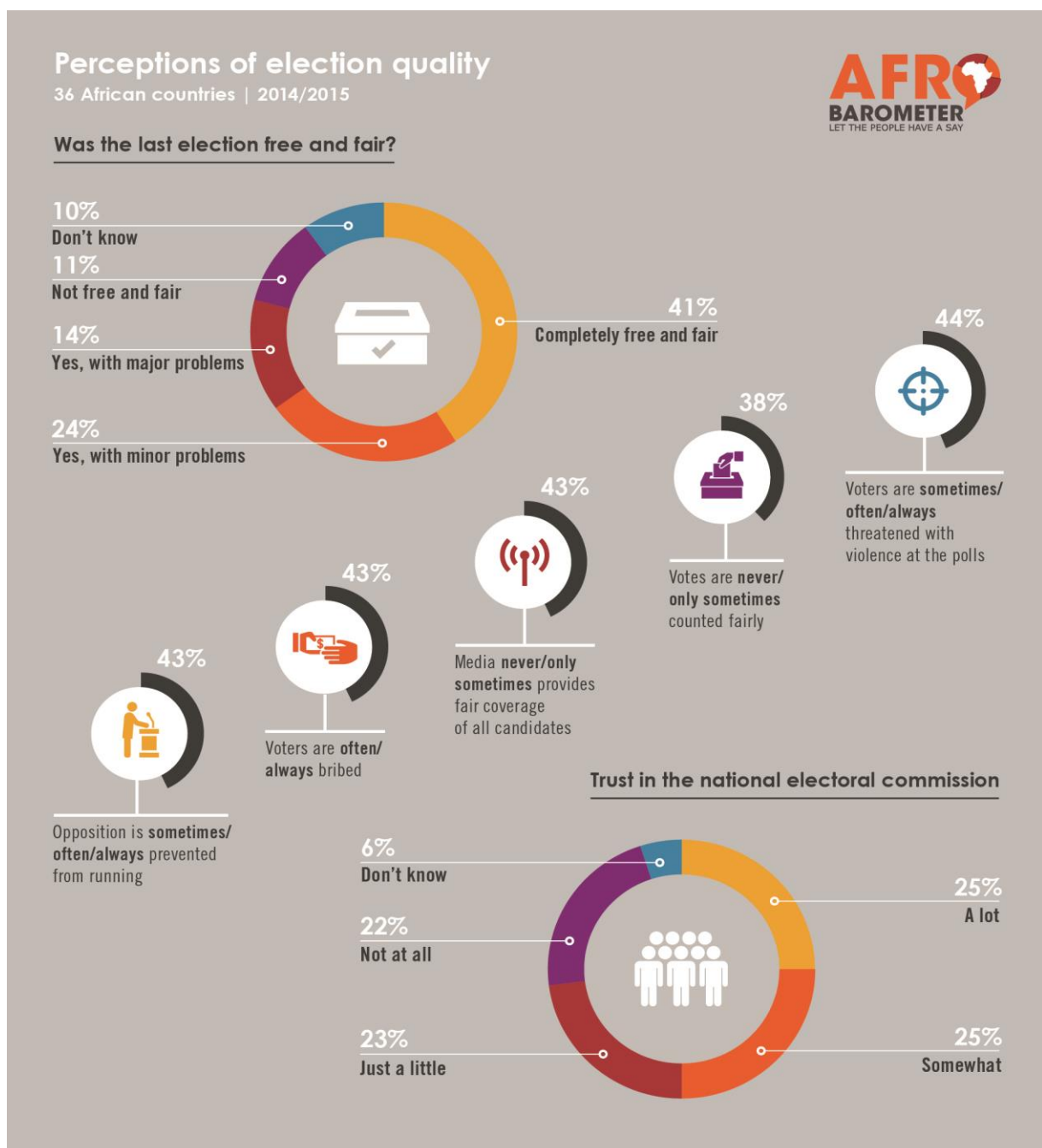
Key findings

- On average across 36 surveyed countries, just half (50%) of respondents say they trust their electoral commission "somewhat" (25%) or "a lot" (25%). Some of the lowest levels of trust are expressed in countries with closely contested elections in 2016, including Gabon (25%), São Tomé and Príncipe (31%), and Ghana (37%) (Figure 1 and Figure 2).
- Two-thirds of Africans rate their most recent election as "completely free and fair" (41%) or "free and fair, but with minor problems" (24%) (Figure 3). Citizens' views on election quality are generally consistent with assessments by international experts.
- But substantial proportions of the population are skeptical about the quality of their elections. More than four in 10 Africans say that voters are at least "sometimes" threatened with violence at the polls (44%) (Figure 4); that opposition parties and candidates are at least "sometimes" prevented from running (43%); that the news media "never" or only "sometimes" provides fair coverage of all candidates (43%); and that voters are "often" or "always" bribed (43%).
- Only one-third (34%) of Africans think that votes are "always" counted fairly. Several countries with a history of election-related violence express low levels of confidence in the vote count, including Kenya (26%), Zimbabwe (22%), and Nigeria (6%) (Figure 5).
- Fully half of Africans say that elections do not work well as mechanisms to ensure that people's views are represented (50%) (Figure 6) or that voters are able to remove non-performing leaders from office (51%). Countries with the highest levels of dissatisfaction with the representation and accountability performance of elections include Gabon, Morocco, Sudan, Nigeria, Swaziland, and Madagascar.

Afrobarometer

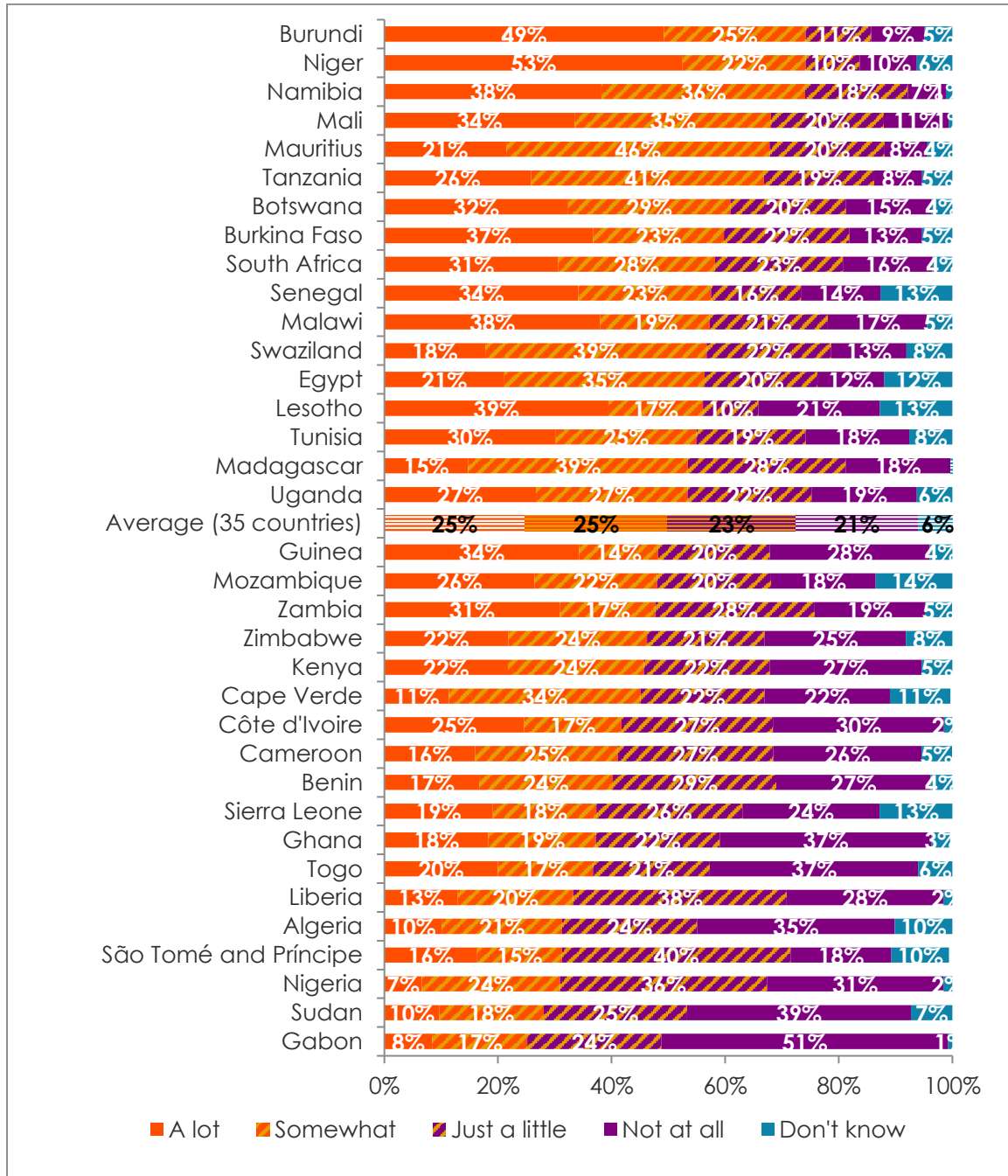
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and findings from Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2% (for samples of 2,400) or +/3% (for samples of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level.

Interested readers should visit www.afrobarometer.org for previous and upcoming releases.



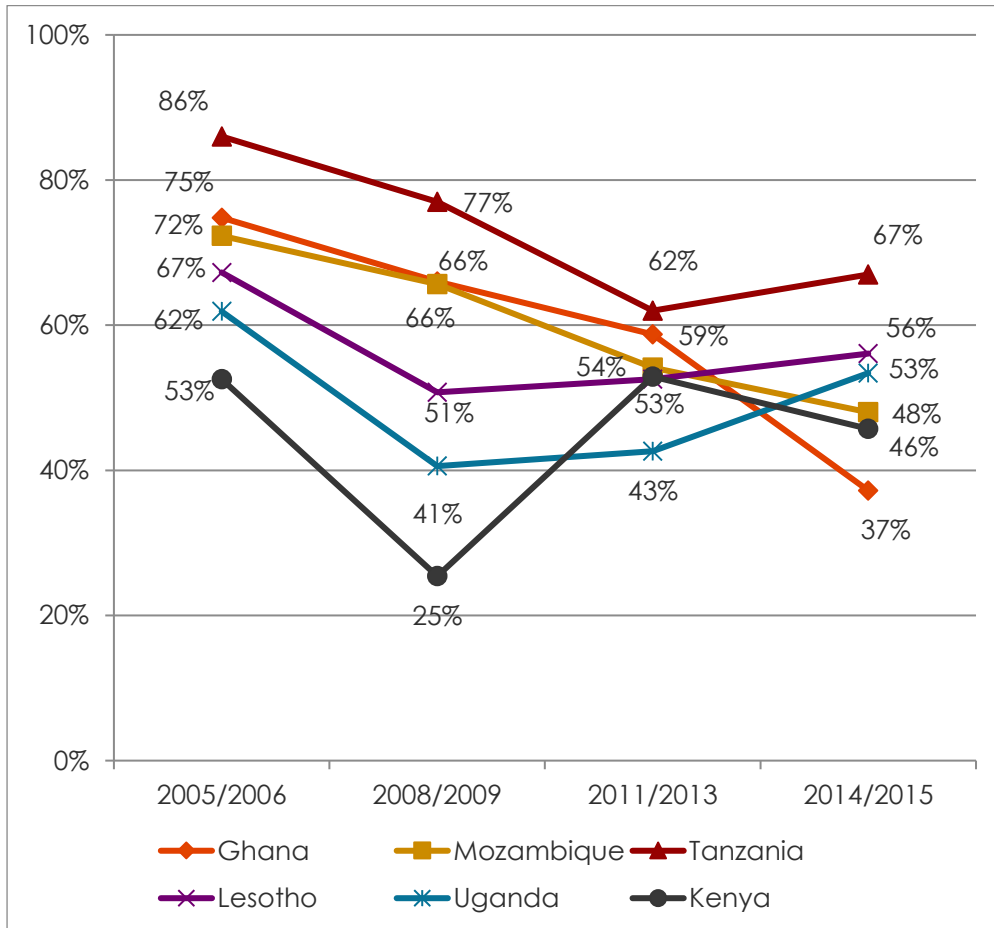
Figures

Figure 1: Trust in national electoral commissions | 35 countries* | 2014/2015



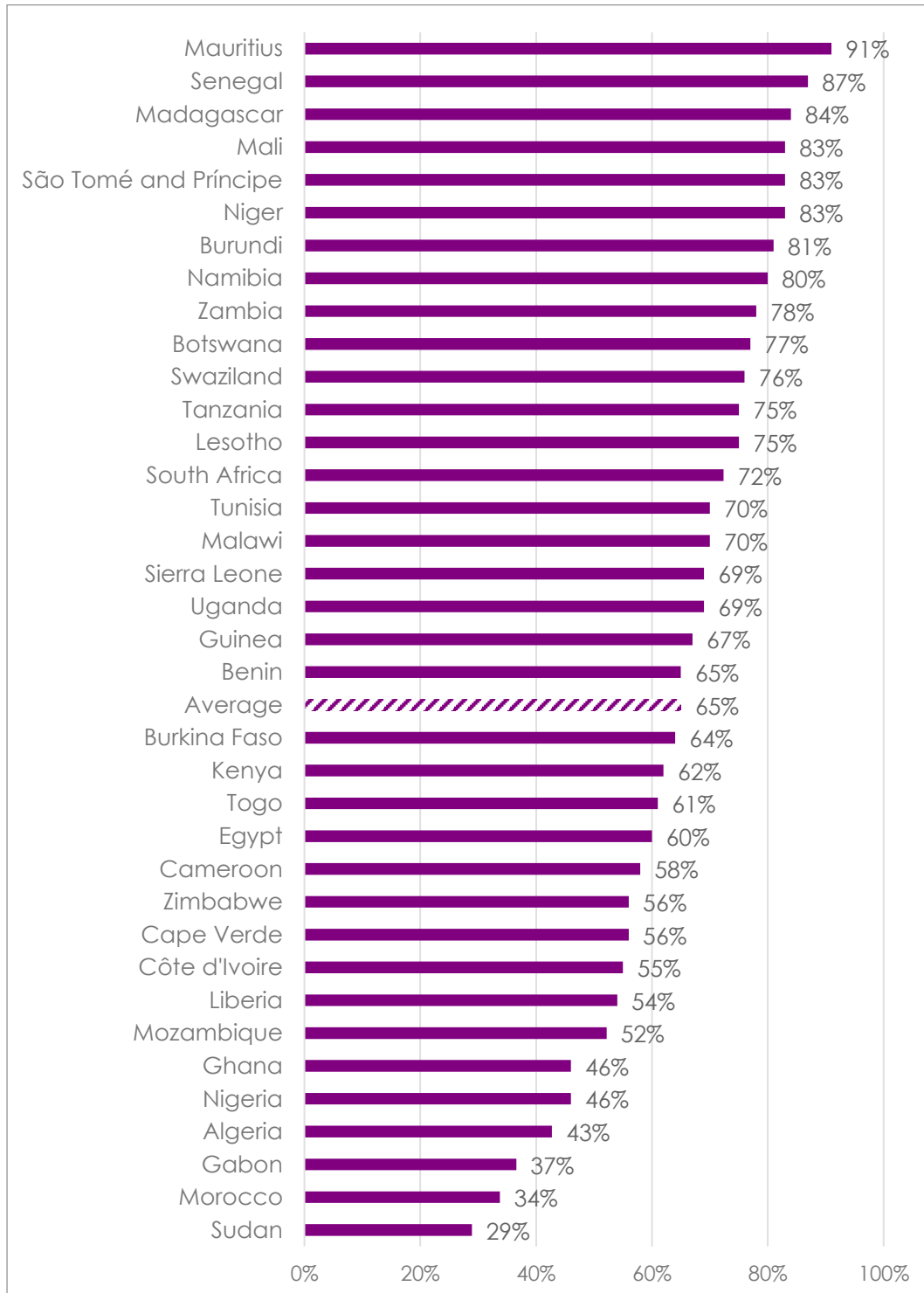
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: National Electoral Commission? (* Question was not asked in Morocco.)

Figure 2: Changes in public trust in national electoral commissions | countries with largest decreases | 2005-2015



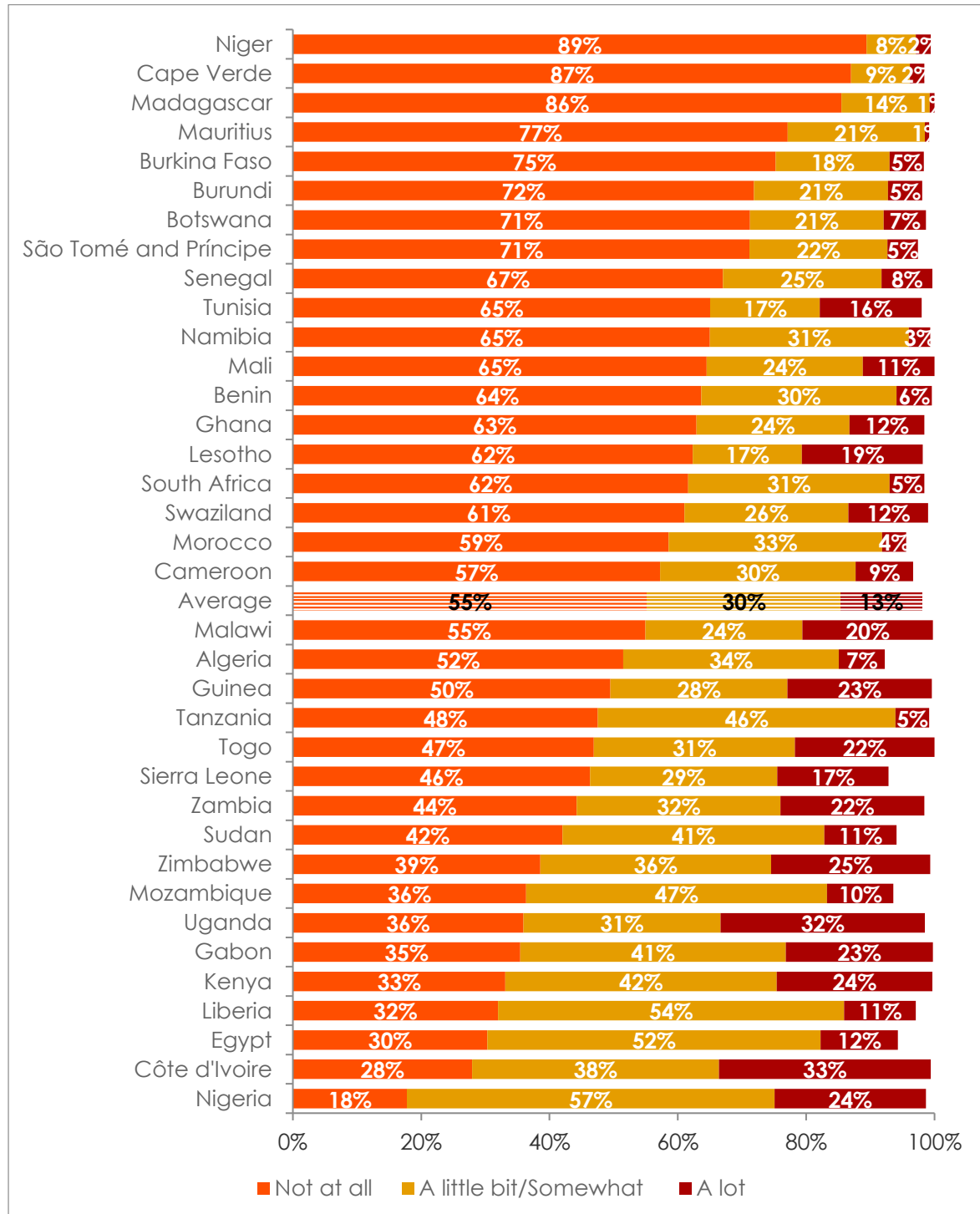
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: National Electoral Commission?
 (% who say "somewhat or "a lot")

Figure 3: Freeness and fairness of elections | 36 countries | 2014/2015



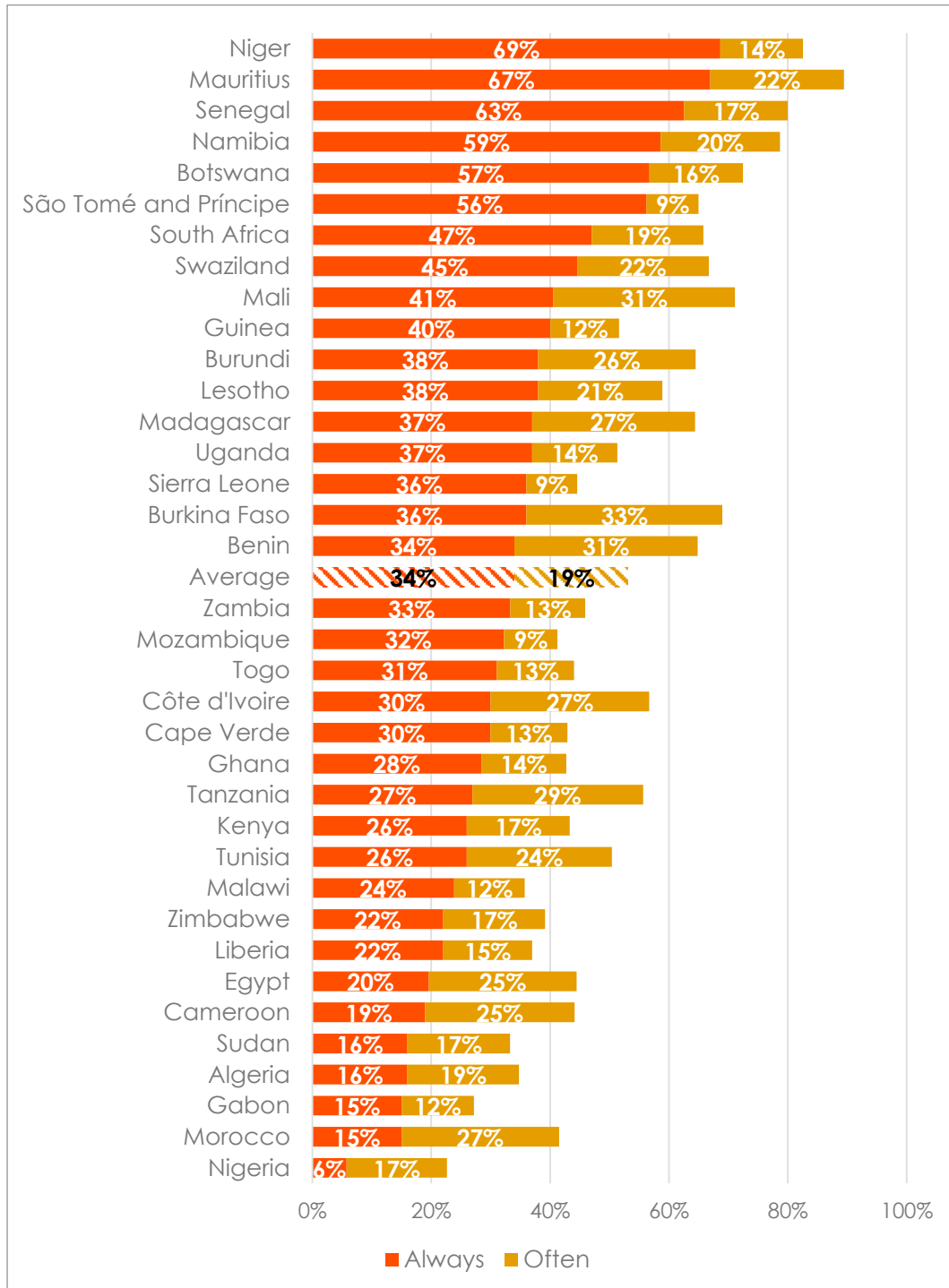
Respondents were asked: *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20xx]?*
 (% who say "free and fair, but with minor problems" or "completely free and fair")

Figure 4: Fear during election campaigns | 36 countries | 2014/2015



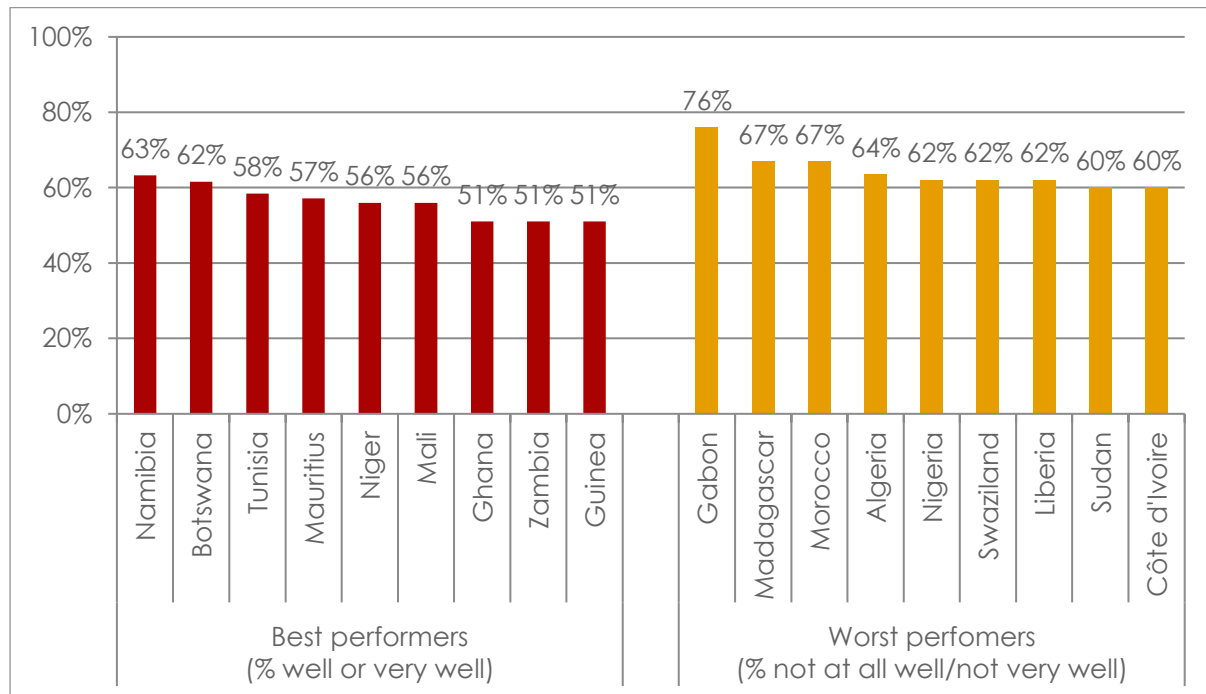
Respondents were asked: During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?

Figure 5: Fairness of the vote count | 36 countries | 2014/2015



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections: Votes are counted fairly?*

Figure 6: Do elections ensure that voters' views are represented? | best- and worst-performing countries | 2014/2015



Respondents were asked: Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections ensure that members of Parliament/National Assembly representatives reflect the views of voters?

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