



African voices on African issues: Findings from Round 8 (2019/21)

Presented at the USAID Summit on Democracy
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2 February 2022

Democracy in Africa

- Wide variation in the state of democracy
 - Promising democratic cases— citizen commitment to democracy and leaders abiding by democratic norms
 - But also authoritarian leaders who incorporate some aspects of democracy to paint a picture that they are “democratic”
 - Cases of democratic backsliding, even military coups, in some cases celebrated by the public
- Afrobarometer’s conceptualization of demand and supply of democracy sheds light at the relationship between the mode of governance (democracy) that citizens want and what they are actually getting.



Measuring demand for democracy



- 1) **Support for Democracy** – “Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion”:
 - A. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
 - B. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.
 - C. For someone like me, it doesn’t matter what form of government we have.

- 2-4) **Rejection of Authoritarian Alternatives** – “There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?”
 - i. The army comes in to govern the country.
 - ii. Only one party is allowed to stand for elections and hold office.
 - iii. Elections and the parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything

Support for democracy

| 34 countries

| 2019/2021

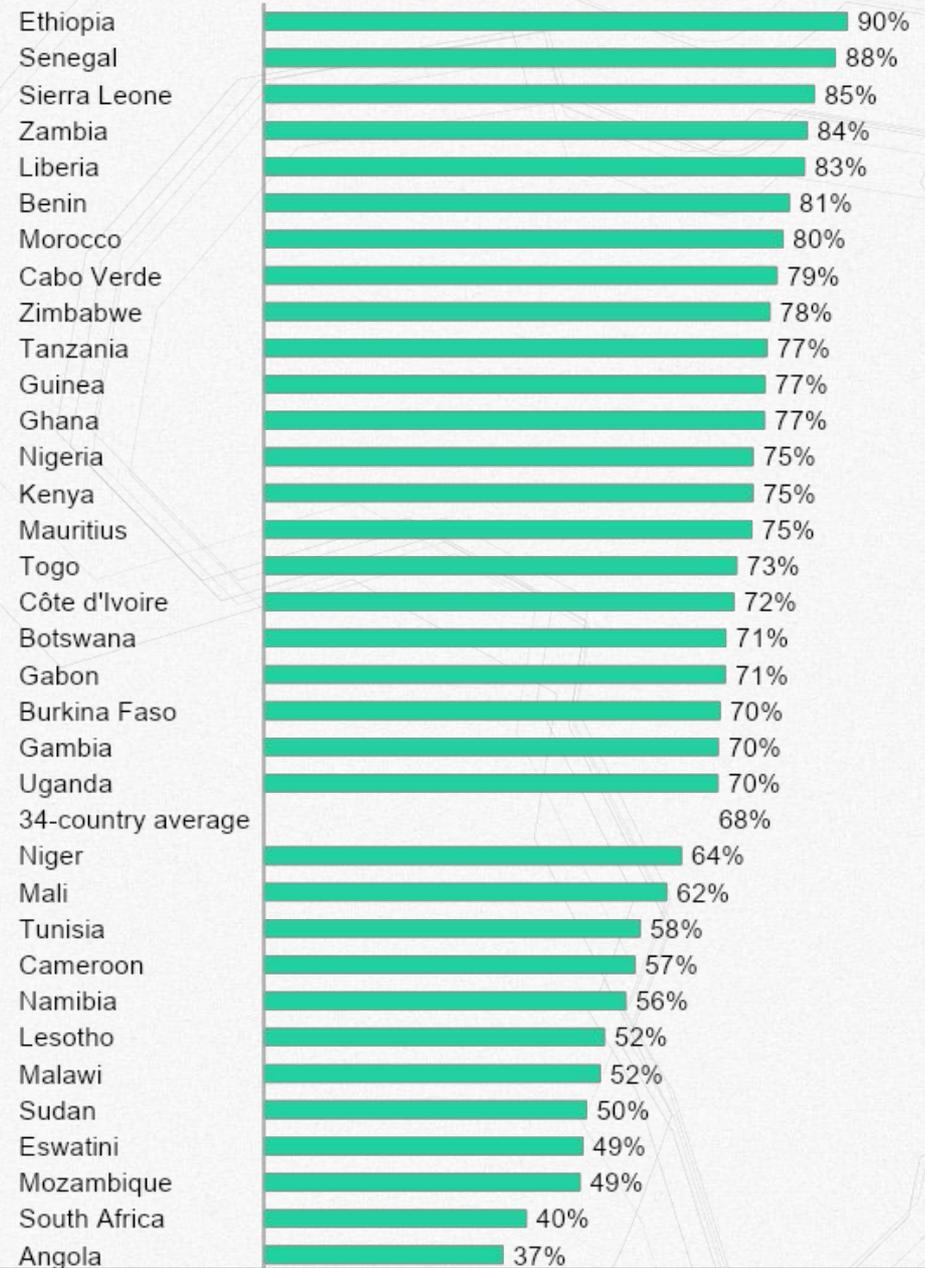
Respondents were asked: Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

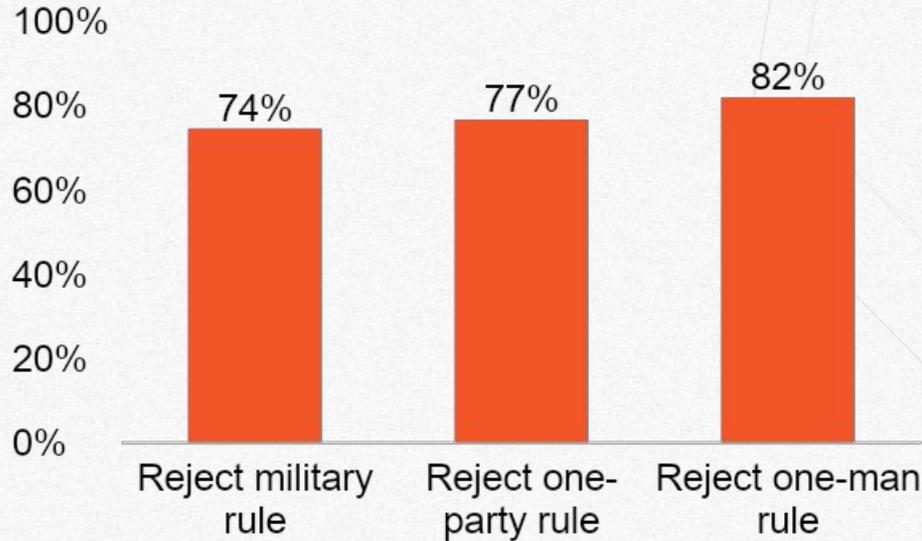
Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

(% who say democracy is preferable to any other kind of government)



Rejection of authoritarian alternatives

| 34 countries
| 2019/2021



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

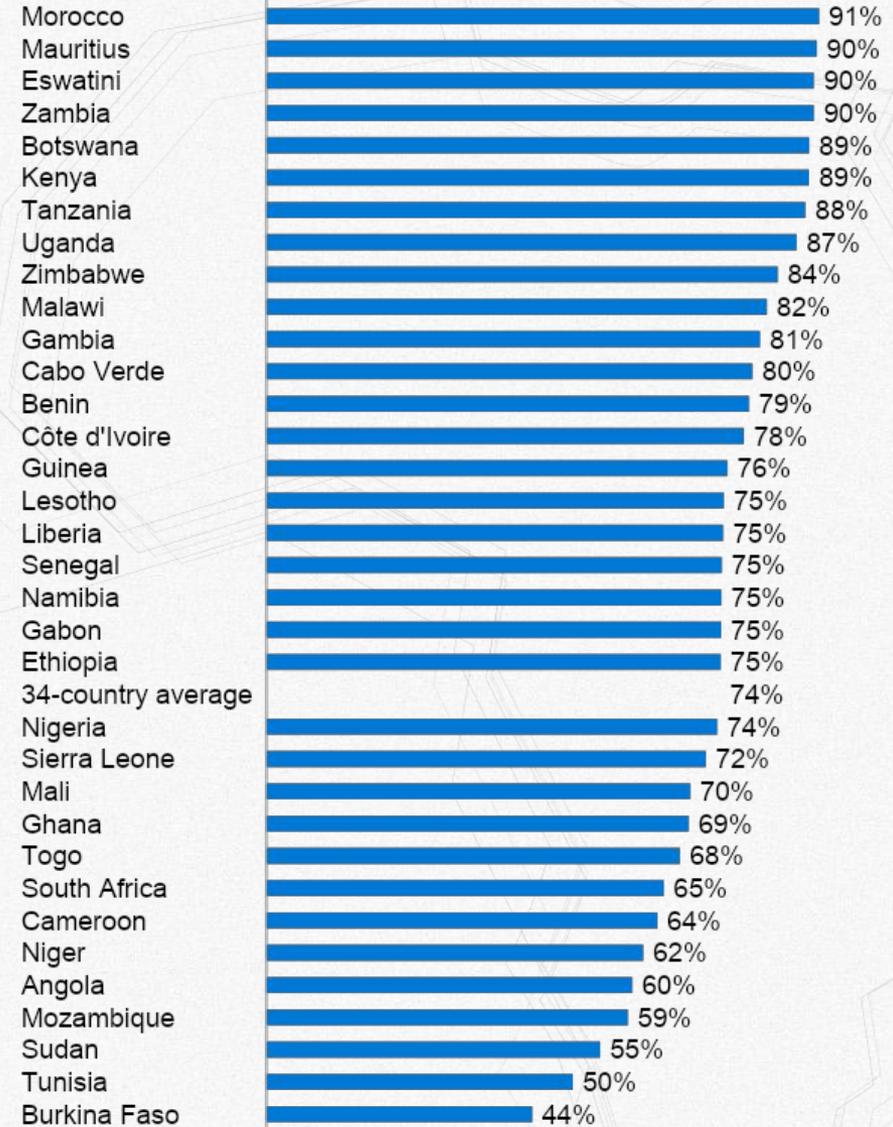
Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.

The army comes in to govern the country.

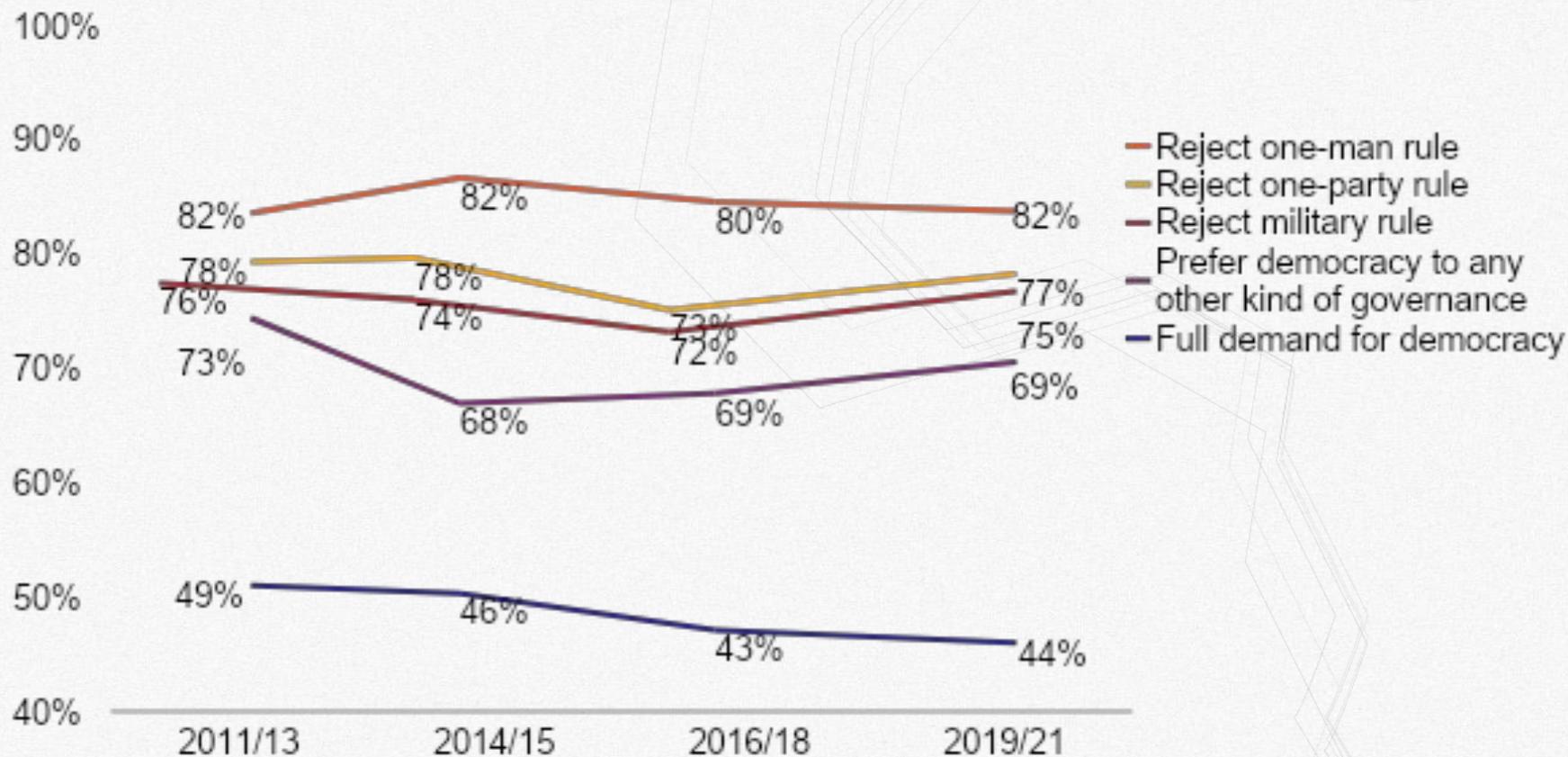
Elections and the National Legislature are abolished so that the President can decide everything.

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

Rejection of military rule



Preference for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives | 30* countries | 2011-2021



% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove" of each of the authoritarian alternatives.

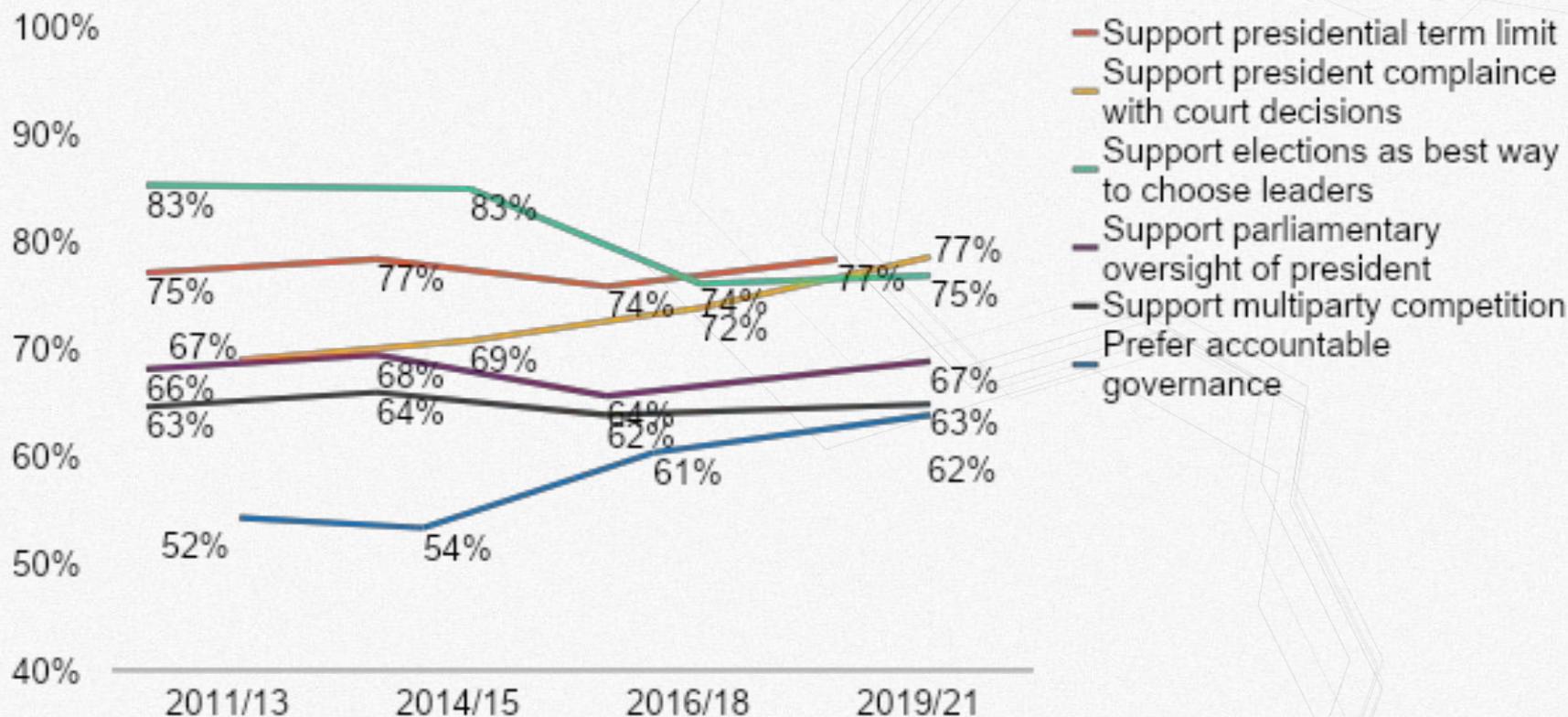
% who say democracy is preferable to any other kind of governance.

% who prefer democracy and disapprove of each of the authoritarian alternatives

*"Reject one-man rule" and "Full demand for democracy" include 29 countries, question not asked in Eswatini

Support for democratic norms

| 30* countries | 2011-2021



% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that the Constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office.

% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with that the president must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.

% who "agree" or "strongly agree" that we should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.

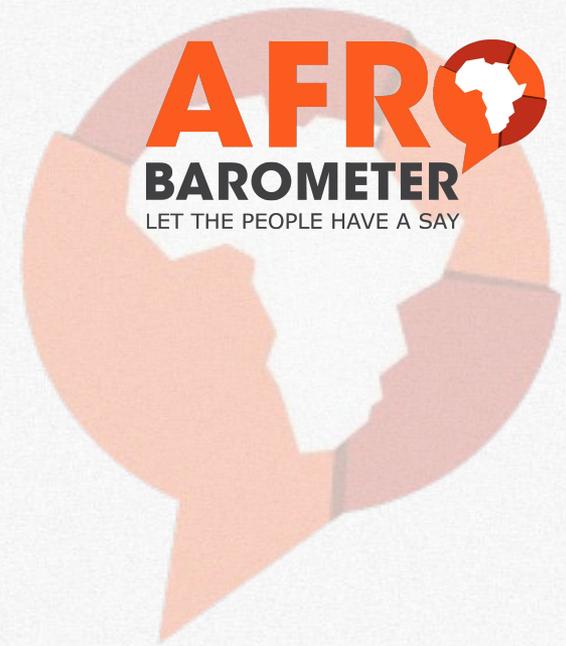
% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that Parliament should ensure that the president explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money.

% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that many political parties are needed to make sure that [citizens] have real choices in who governs them.

% who "agree" or "strongly agree" that it is more important for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, even if that means it makes decisions more slowly.

*Compliance with court decisions includes 28 countries. Support elections to choose leaders and support parliamentary oversight include 29 countries.

Measuring supply of democracy



1) Extent of democracy

- *In your opinion, how much of a democracy is (your country) today?*
 - *A full democracy*
 - *A democracy, but with minor problems*
 - *A democracy, with major problems*
 - *Not a democracy*

2) Satisfaction with democracy

- *Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in (your country)?*



Extent of and satisfaction with democracy

| 34 countries

| 2019/2021

Respondents were asked:

In your opinion, how much of a democracy is

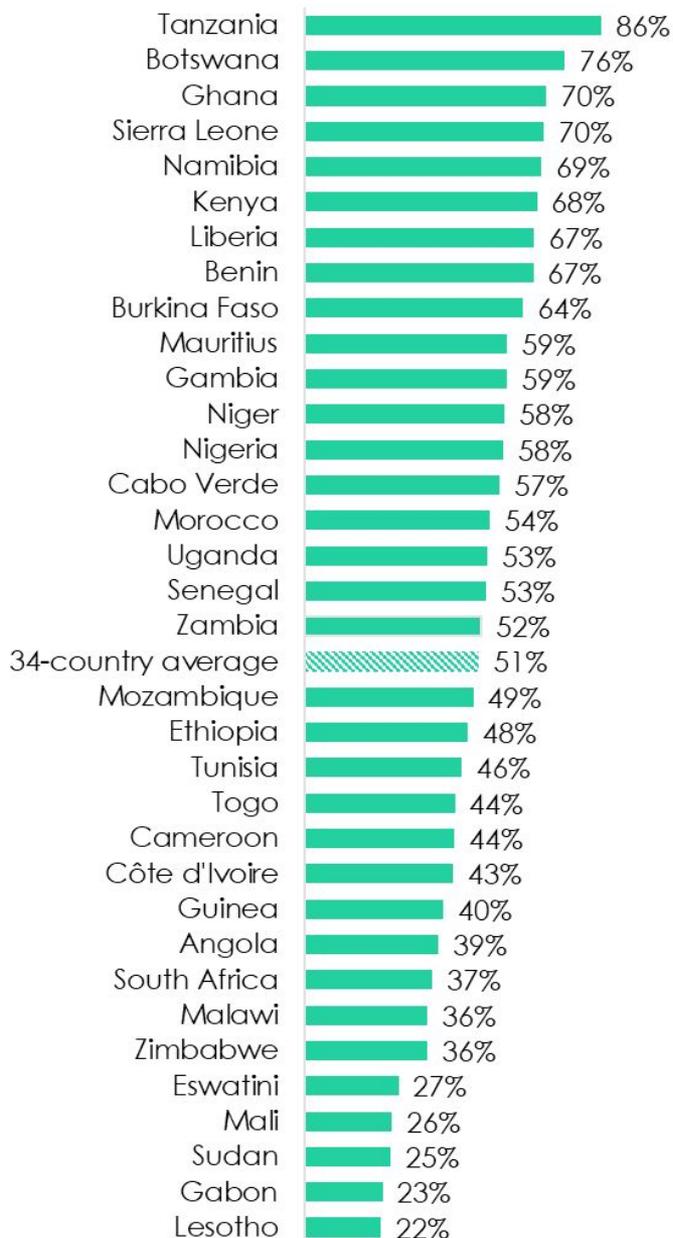
[country] today?

(% who say “a full democracy” or “a democracy but with minor problems”)

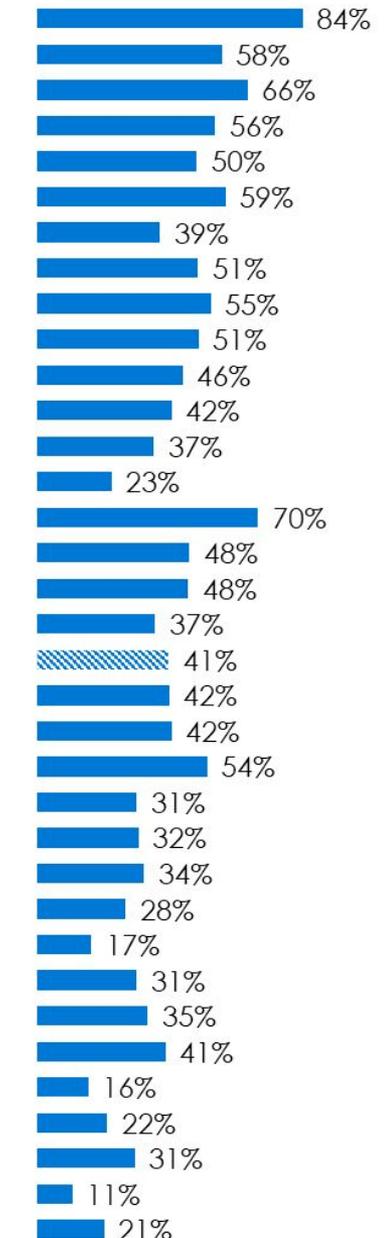
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country] ?

(% who say “fairly satisfied” or “very satisfied”)

Country is a democracy or democracy with minor problems

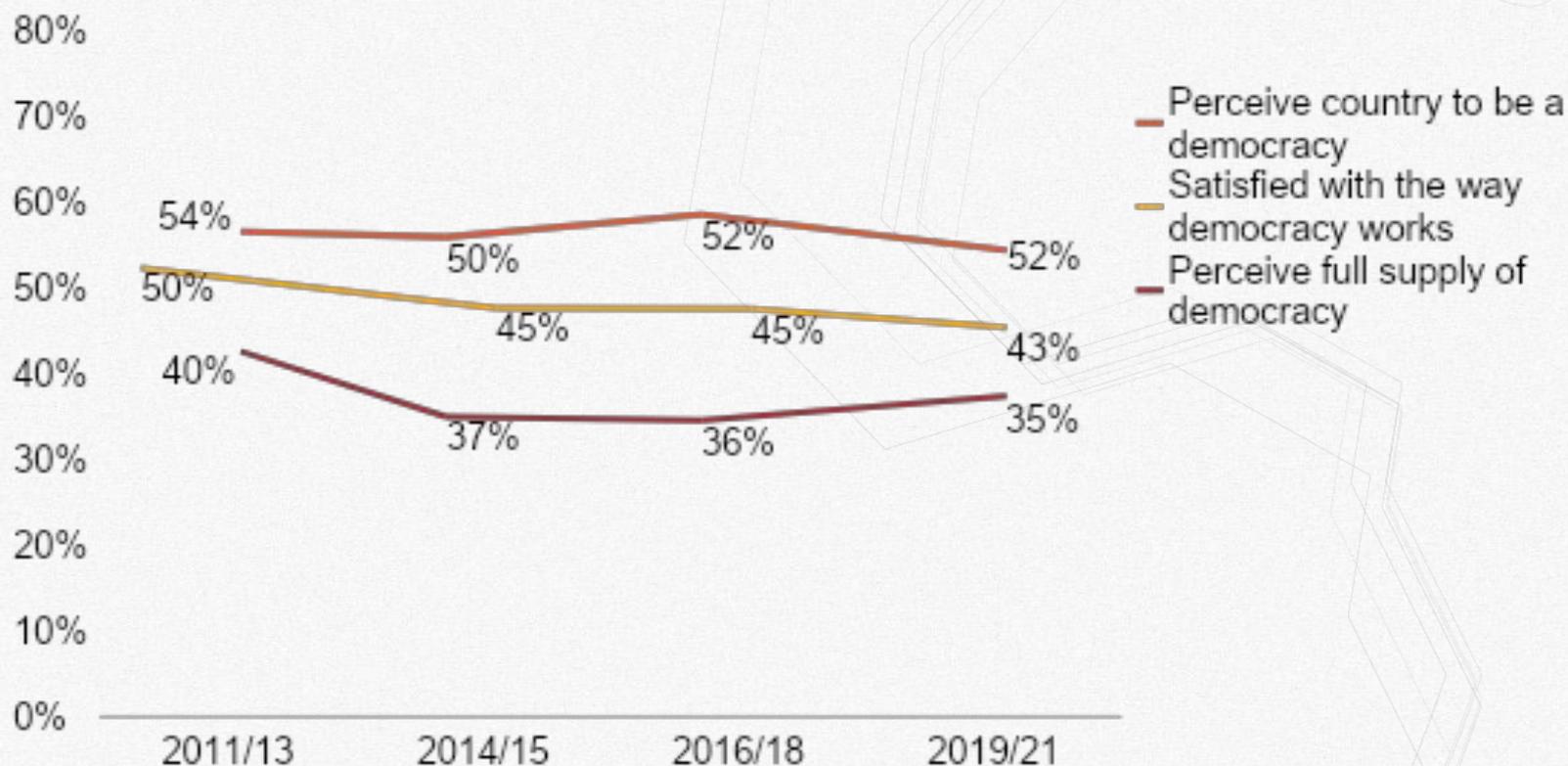


Satisfied with the way democracy works



Perceived supply of democracy

| 30 countries | 2011-2021

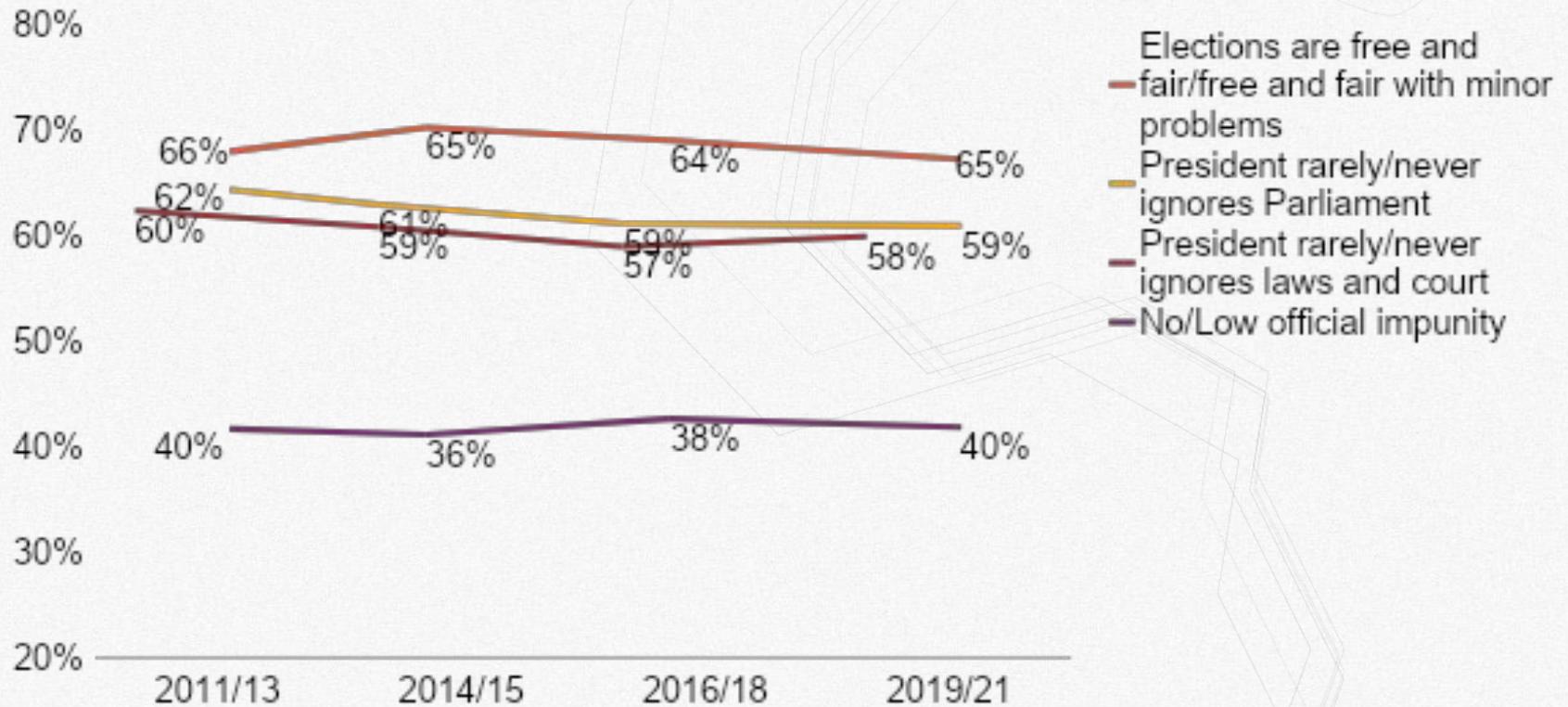


Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [country] today?
(% who say “a full democracy” or “a democracy but with minor problems”)

Respondents were asked: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?
(% who say “fairly satisfied” or “very satisfied”)

Perceived supply of democratic institutions

| 30* countries | 2011-2021



% who say the recent elections were "free and fair" or "free and fair with minor problems"

% who say the President "rarely" or "never" ignores Parliament

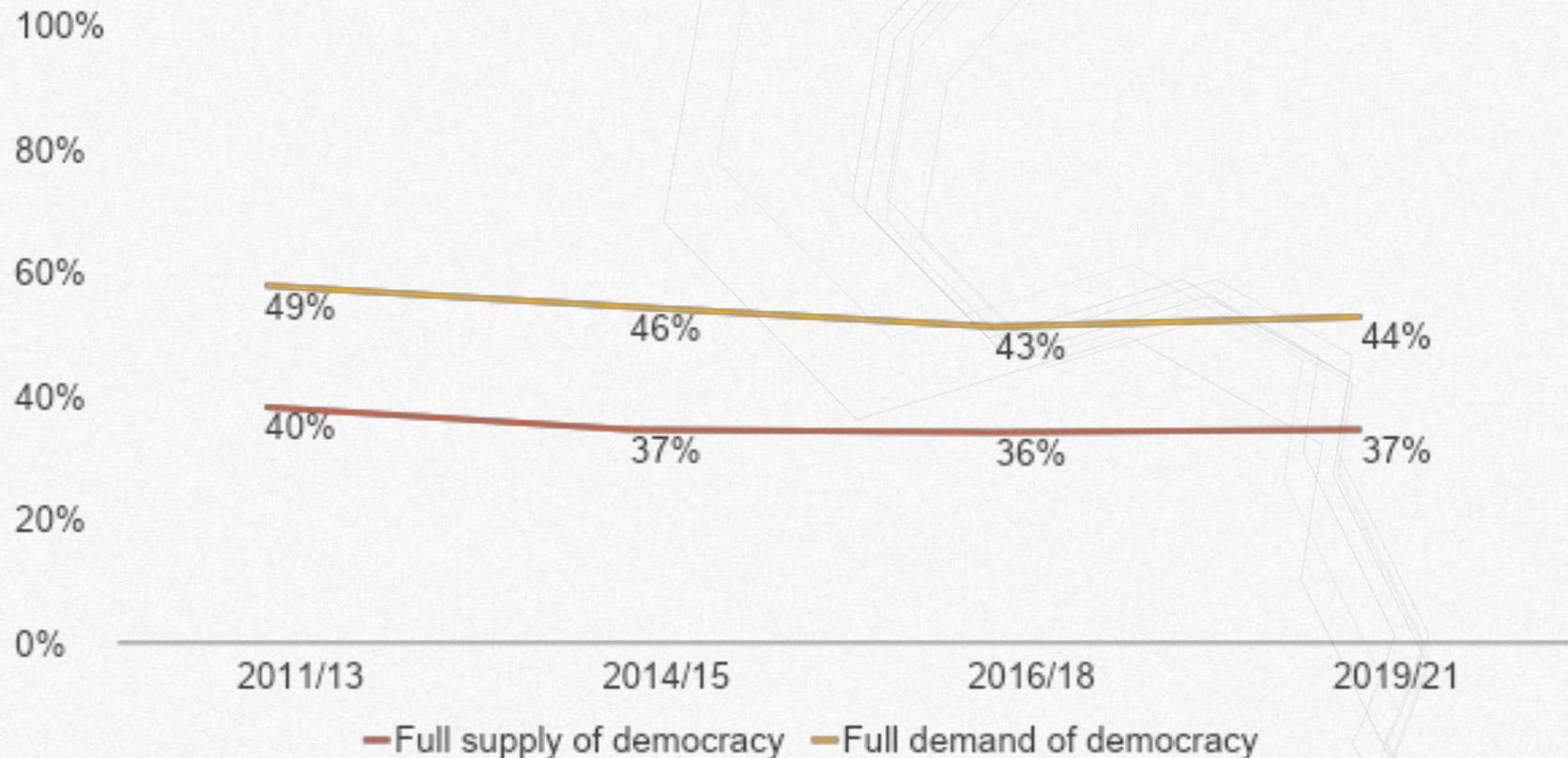
% who say the President "rarely" or "never" ignores the laws and court

% who say officials who commit crimes "rarely" or "never" go unpunished

*President rarely/never ignores parliament and laws and court includes 29 countries, not asked in Sudan

Demand and the supply deficit

| 29 countries | 2011-2021



% who prefer democracy and reject all authoritarian alternatives

% who describe their country as a “full democracy” or a “democracy with minor problems” and are “fairly satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the way democracy works

*29 countries, Eswatini excluded

Hopeful signals in an era of democratic backsliding?

We witness efforts of courageous, creative individuals, especially among youth, determined to push the boundaries of democracy and freedom outward, even as some autocrats try to impose restraints:

- Malawi and Kenya: nullification of compromised elections
- Zambia leadership transition
- Sudan and eSwatini: Pro-democracy protests
- Nigeria: #bring back our girls; #endSARS
- Uganda: Bobbi Wine; Stella Nyanzi
- Political cartoonists/lampoonists: East and Central Africa's Gado (from Tanzania); South Africa Mail & Guardian's Zapiro

But also... several recent coups and other challenges or restrictions of democratic norms in Tunisia, Tanzania and elsewhere.



Reflections on key AB findings



- Resilient citizen demand for democracy
 - Growing popular demand for accountability, rule of law, checks and balances
 - Public commitment to terms limits and other checks on power
 - But flagging supply, increasing dissatisfaction with democracy
 - Supply continues to lag behind demand
 - Strong commitment to elections, but mixed quality
 - Wide country variation: It is important to track individual country trajectories, avoid over-generalizing
- African citizens want democracy, and will often fight for it, but in many countries, political elites continue to resist or look for ways to overpower or circumvent popular demands

Thank you

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If Africa had 100 citizens...

17 facts you didn't know about Africans – in 2 minutes.

[Click here to watch.](#)

About Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in more than 35 countries in Africa.

Spotlight

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