



## *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 91*

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### **Kenyans and the Coalition Government: Disappointment in spite of Relative Peace**

#### **Introduction**

Kenya held its fourth multi-party elections in 2007. It turned out to be Kenya's most closely contested election, but also the most poorly managed, since the return to multipartyism in 1992. Although the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) declared the incumbent and Party of National Unity (PNU) candidate Mwai Kibaki the winner, this was immediately disputed by the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), which averred that their presidential candidate, Raila Odinga, was the winner. The resulting dispute led to unprecedented violence, and peace was only restored after mediation by a panel of eminent persons led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The peace deal led to the formation of a coalition government between the PNU and the ODM. Before the deal PNU had earlier incorporated ODM-Kenya, the third largest party during the 2007 election, as a partner in the government. The coalition government thus included all the three main parties during the 2007 elections, and left the country without an official opposition.

The third Afrobarometer survey, conducted in October and November 2008, enables us to evaluate the performance of the coalition government since its inception. The message for the coalition government is mixed. On the one hand, a majority of Kenyans are of the view that creating a coalition government was the best way to resolve the post-2007 election crisis. On the other hand, the coalition government has so far failed to present a united front, a fact that has seen it fail to deliver on the promises of the three parties. The overall verdict from Kenyans is that they are disappointed with the performance of the coalition government thus far.

#### **The Survey**

The latest round (Round 4) of Afrobarometer surveys has been conducted in 20 African countries based on a common methodology and survey instrument. But the instrument also included space for adding selected country-specific questions to enable country teams to explore issues of particular relevance to their respective countries. In Kenya, this space was in part used to explore attitudes toward the formation of a coalition government in response to the violence that broke out following the 2007 election.

The latest survey in Kenya, conducted from 29<sup>th</sup> October to 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008, was the third in a series.<sup>1</sup> The first two were conducted in 2003 and 2005. Like the 2005 survey, the most recent

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<sup>1</sup> Kenya was not included in Round 1 of the Afrobarometer, conducted in 1999-2001.

survey was carried out by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, in collaboration with Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Ghana and Michigan State University (MSU), USA. It was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1200 adult Kenyans of voting age. This sample was drawn based on the latest population projections (2008) of the National Sample Frame obtained from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS).

Given Kenya's estimated population of 36 million people, a sample of this size gives an overall margin of sampling error of +/-3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level<sup>2</sup>. The survey was conducted in all eight provinces and 63 of the country's 71 districts. Each province contributed to the sample based on its share of the national population, with the exception of a deliberate over-sample of North Eastern Province to obtain an analyzable sub-sample<sup>3</sup>, and a targeted sample among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)<sup>4</sup> to help capture the experience of this sub-group following the post-election violence of 2007. Deliberate measures were instituted to help attain fair distribution of respondents on the basis of gender as well as along the rural-urban divide.

### **Continued Support for Elections and Democracy**

The conduct of the 2007 elections was for the most part democratic, with political parties and candidates exercising their right to contest. However, the tallying process especially of the presidential votes was marred by irregularities. What do Kenyans think about democracy and multi-party elections in the aftermath of the resulting election fiasco?

Encouragingly, a large majority (79 percent) still agrees with the statement that, "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government." This was only 1 percent lower than those who favored democracy in the first Afrobarometer survey of 2003 (80 percent), and slightly higher by 4 percent, than the number who preferred democracy in 2005 (75 percent). It therefore appears that the post-election crisis has had no measurable effect on Kenyans' support for a democratic system of government.

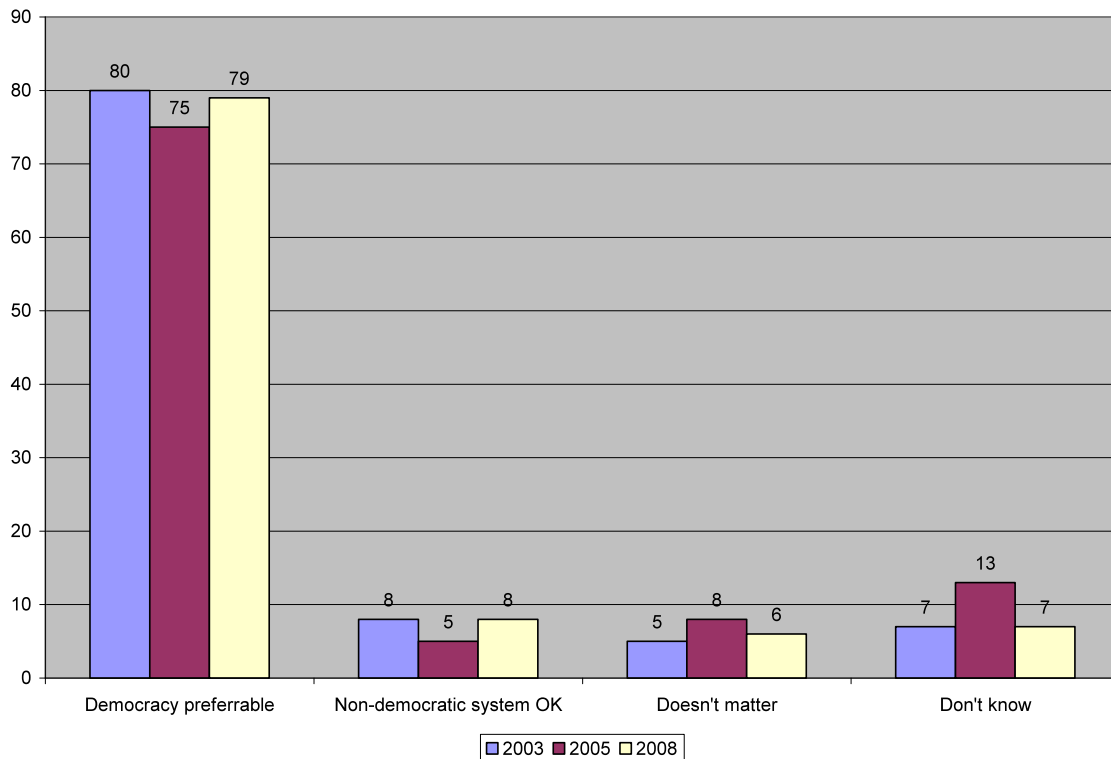
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<sup>2</sup> For instance, a result of 60 percent indicates that there is a 95 percent chance that the actual percentage lies between 57 percent and 63 percent.

<sup>3</sup> The resultant outcome reflected in the report has however been weighted; as such North Eastern Province only contributes in proportion to its actual share in the national population.

<sup>4</sup> Responses from IDPs have not been included in analysis for this bulletin. The dataset is however, available for analysis of IDP-specific issues.

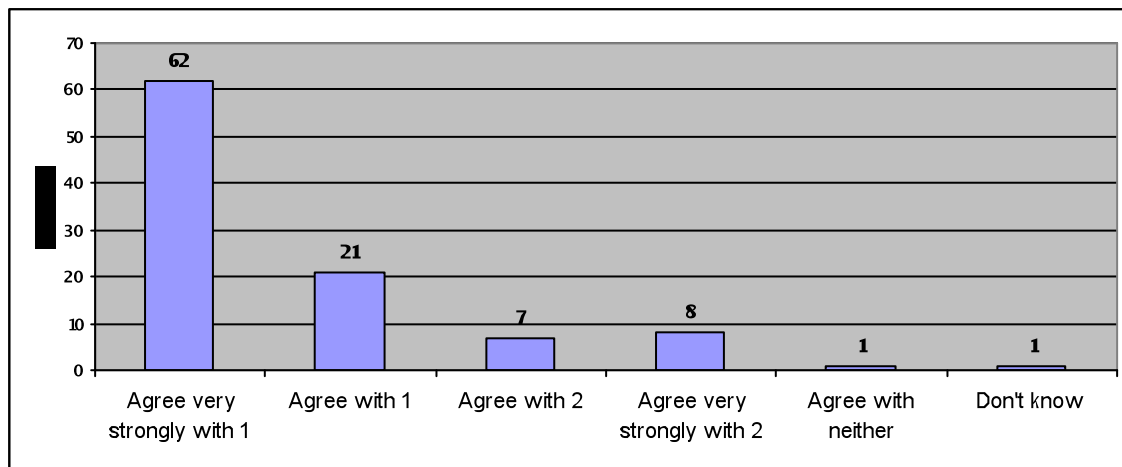
**Figure 1: Support for Democracy**



*Question: Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion? 1) Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. 2) In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable. 3) For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.*

We likewise sought to determine whether people still think elections, especially multiparty elections, are a good idea at all. And here again it is evident that attitudes toward the institutions and processes of a democratic system reflect Kenyan's continued strong support for a democratic system of government. Eight out of ten (83 percent) agree that "We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections," compared to 15 percent who are of the opinion that "Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders." Although support for elections in 2008 was slightly lower compared to 2005 and 2008 (88 and 89 percent, respectively), the differences are small and not statistically significant, confirming that the flawed 2007 elections have not dampened Kenyans' faith in elections as a medium for the practice of democracy.

**Figure 2: Support for Elections**



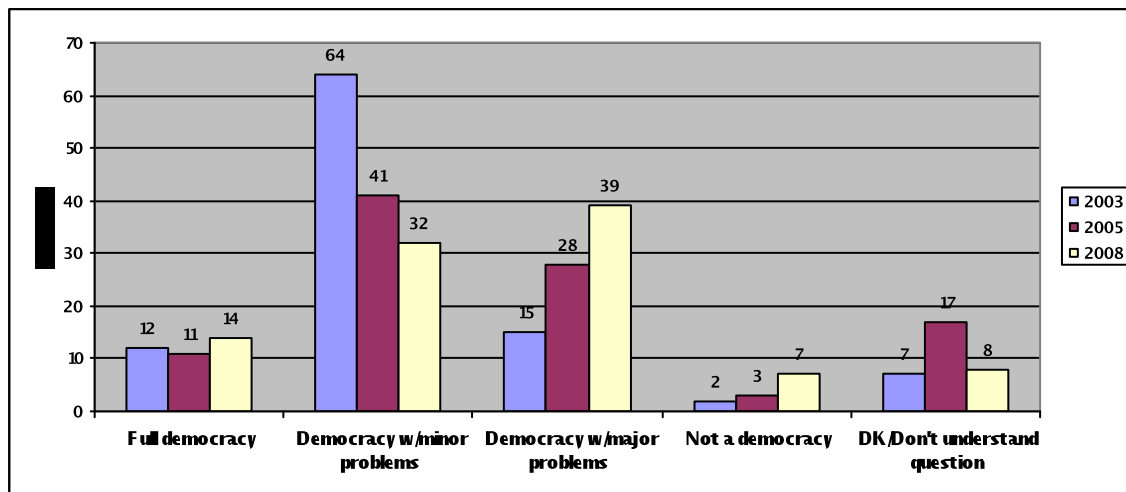
*Question: Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: We should choose our leaders through regular, open and honest elections. Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.*

In the same vein the majority of Kenyans still express commitment to multipartyism. When asked whether they believe that “Many political parties are needed to ensure that Kenyans have real choices in who governs them,” or if instead they think that “Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Kenya,” 63 percent prefer multipartyism. This is however a decline from 70 percent in 2005 and 74 percent in 2003. And the fact that 33 percent believe that many parties are unnecessary, up from 25 percent in 2005 and 23 percent in 2003, suggests that cumulatively there is a growing number of Kenyans that consistently are disenchanted with multiparty politics. The fact that each election year witnesses the creation of new parties and the fact that most parties are not institutionalized but are personal vehicles for individuals or a group of politicians may have contributed to this apathy. The fact that 29 percent of Kenyans currently do not feel close to any political party supports this assertion.

### **Disappointment with the Supply of Democracy**

The strong support for democracy is however not matched by continuing high levels of satisfaction with the supply of democracy. We asked respondents how much of a democracy is Kenya today. And here it was clear that although a majority of Kenyans prefer a democratic government, they feel that Kenya is currently a democracy with problems. Only 46 percent now rate it as a “full democracy” or a “democracy with minor problems,” compared to 53 percent in 2005 and 76 percent in 2003. Meanwhile, the number rating it as a “democracy but with major problems” has been on a steady increase from 15 percent in 2003, to 28 percent in 2005 and fully 39 percent in 2008.

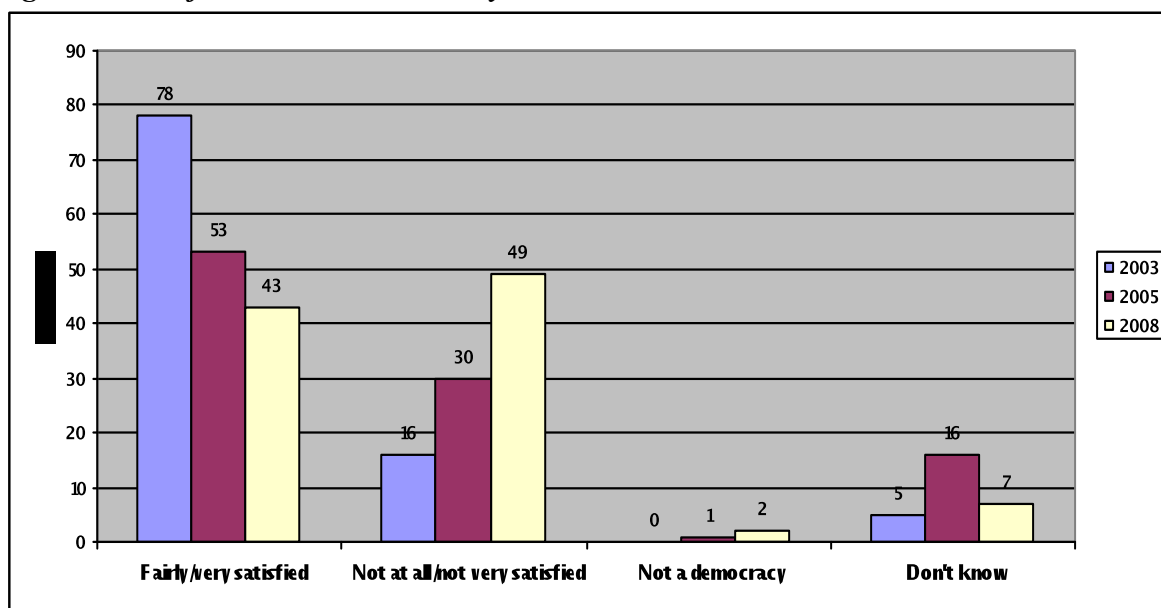
**Figure 3: Extent of Democracy**



Question: In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Kenya today?

A similar pattern was evident when we asked how satisfied Kenyans were with “the way democracy works in Kenya.” Here too there has been a marked decline. In 2003, 78 percent were “fairly” or “very satisfied” with the workings of democracy, but this dropped sharply to 53 percent in 2005, and still further to 43 percent in 2008. The steady decline over the last five years suggests reduced public expectations for democracy in Kenya. While in 2005, the decline could be attributed to the wrangles at the time between what was then the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) partners, the current decline can be attributed to the bickering between the grand coalition partners, Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM).

**Figure 4: Satisfaction with Democracy**

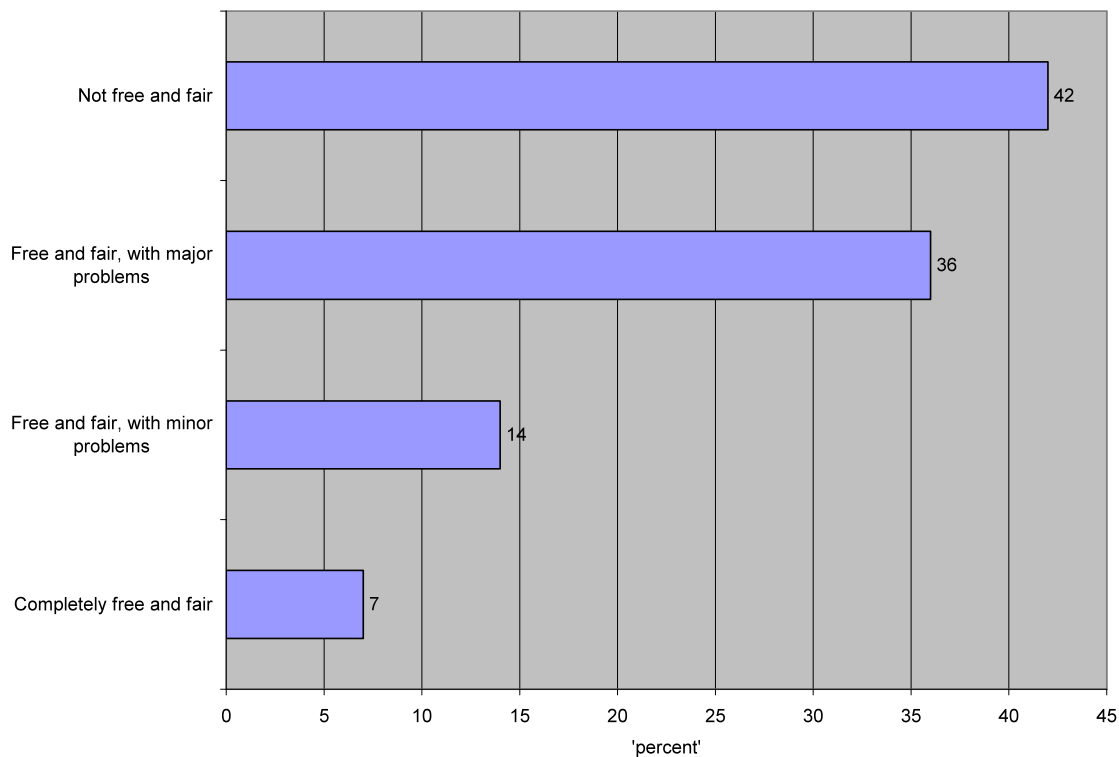


Question: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Kenya?

Kenyans unanimously agree that the 2007 elections were flawed. We asked respondents whether the most recent election was free and fair. The verdict was clear: only 21 percent felt that the election was either completely free and fair, or had only minor problems. In contrast, an overwhelming 78 percent rated the election as either “free and fair with major problems,” or “not free and fair.” This represents a resounding condemnation of the 2007 elections, and contrasts sharply with previous findings from our 2005 survey, when 78 percent rated the 2002 elections as either completely free and fair, or having only minor problems.

This sharp shift in perceptions of election quality were most likely influenced by the irregularities pertaining to the tallying of the presidential results, the utterances by the then Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) chair to the effect that he had no control over his officers on the ground, and likewise his assertion that he was not sure whether Mwai Kibaki had won fairly. In addition, the unanimous verdict from most election observers was that the elections were not free and fair, and the Kriegler commission issued a verdict that the results were irretrievably polluted.

**Figure 5: Freeness and Fairness of the 2007 General Elections**



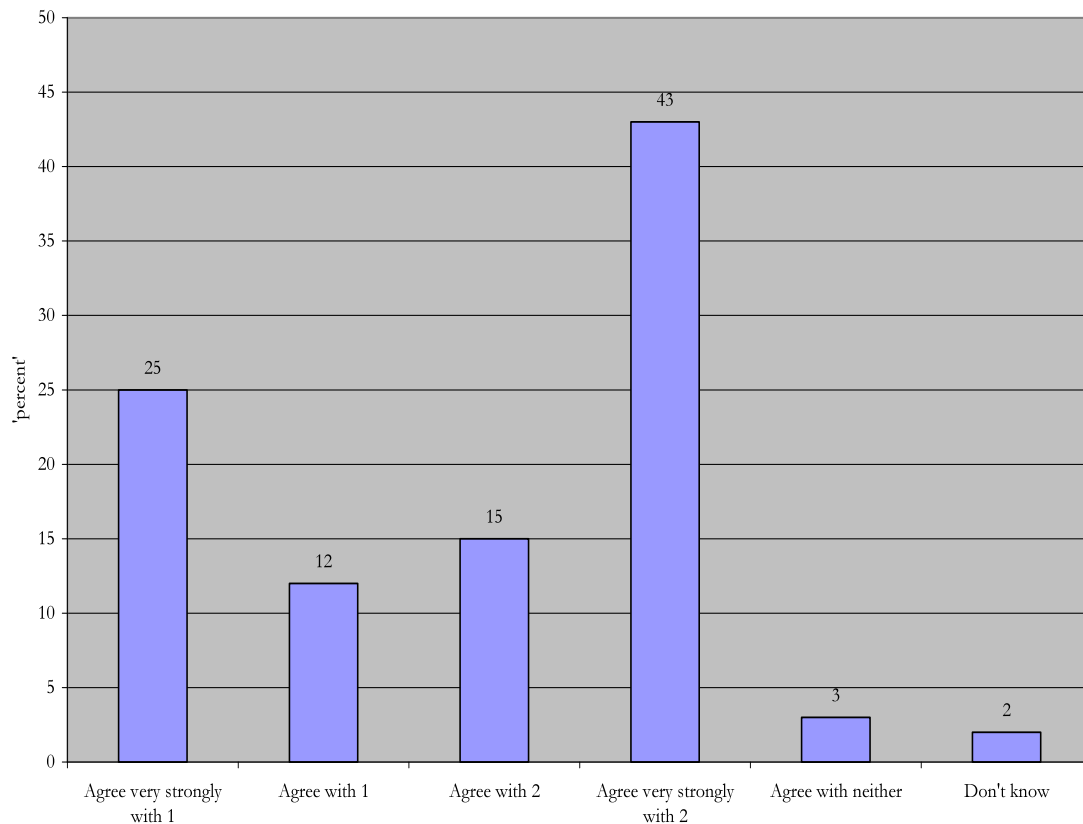
**Amnesty or Prosecution?**

The disputed presidential election led to unprecedented violence in the country in which close to 1200 people lost their lives, while over 350,000 were displaced. More than a year after the violence, the country is still grappling with how to deal with the perpetrators of the post-election violence. We asked respondents whether the culprits should be granted amnesty or whether they should be prosecuted (Figure 6). More than one in three (36 percent) would like to see perpetrators of the violence granted amnesty, but a solid majority (58 percent) disagrees, believing that they should face the consequences of their actions. The verdict of Kenyans on this

matter differs from that of parliamentarians, who recently shot down proposals for a local special tribunal. This opens the possibility that those who bear the greatest responsibility for organizing the violence – and whose names appear in the “Waki envelope” – could be tried at the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague. If this turns out to be the case, then the ordinary individuals who were the actual perpetrators of the violence and human rights violations would not face prosecution for their actions.

Those advocating for the granting of amnesty are most likely influenced by the fact that those who were involved in the violence did so either for or on behalf of the two principles who currently share power. On the other hand, those who are pro-prosecution are most likely influenced by the need to end the culture of impunity that has characterized the Kenyan political terrain since the return to multipartyism in 1992.

**Figure 6: Amnesty versus Prosecution for Human Rights Violators**



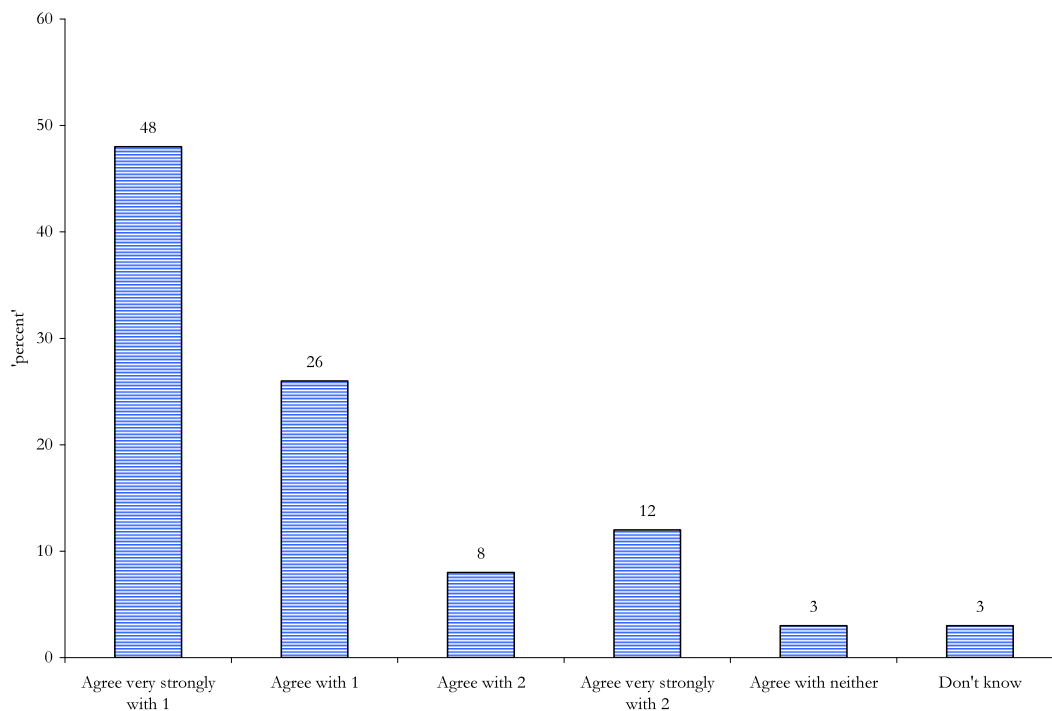
*Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: Those who are responsible for human rights violations committed during recent conflicts should be granted amnesty, which means that they would never be subjected to criminal prosecutions or other consequences for their actions. Statement 2: Those who are responsible for human rights violations should be held accountable and face consequences for what they have done.*

### **Coalition the Best Alternative**

The Afrobarometer results also show that most Kenyans are of the view that the formation of a coalition government was the best way to resolve the post-2007 election crisis (Figure 7). Respondents were asked if they agree with the statement that, “Given the political divisions in Kenya, creating a coalition government was the best way to resolve the recent post election

crisis,” or with statement that “Government by coalition is ineffective; leaders should have found another way to resolve the crisis.” Quite a large majority (74 percent) are of the view that the creation of a coalition government was in fact the best way to resolve the crisis. Only 20 percent instead contend that government by coalition is ineffective and that leaders should have found another way to resolve the crisis. It appears by this verdict that Kenyans are of the view that an inclusive government was the best first step towards healing the country.

**Figure 7: Support for Coalition Government**



*Question: Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: Given the political divisions in Kenya, creating a coalition government was the best way to resolve the recent post election crisis. Statement 2: Government by coalition is ineffective; leaders should have found another way to resolve the crisis.*

### **Performance of the Coalition Government**

While most Kenyans are of the opinion that setting up the coalition government was the best option under the post election circumstances, they have for the most part been disappointed with its performance, despite the relative peace that has been experienced in the country since its formation. Most Kenyans are of the opinion that the coalition government has failed to tackle the challenges they find critical to their well-being.

We sought opinions on how well or badly the current government is handling a number of issues. The coalition government is perceived by most Kenyans to be performing fairly or very badly in managing the economy. Currently more than 7 in 10 (73 percent) Kenyans think the government is doing badly in managing the economy. The government has performed even more dismally in other areas of economic management. More than 9 in 10 think the government is doing badly at keeping prices of commodities down (94 percent) and narrowing income gaps (91 percent).

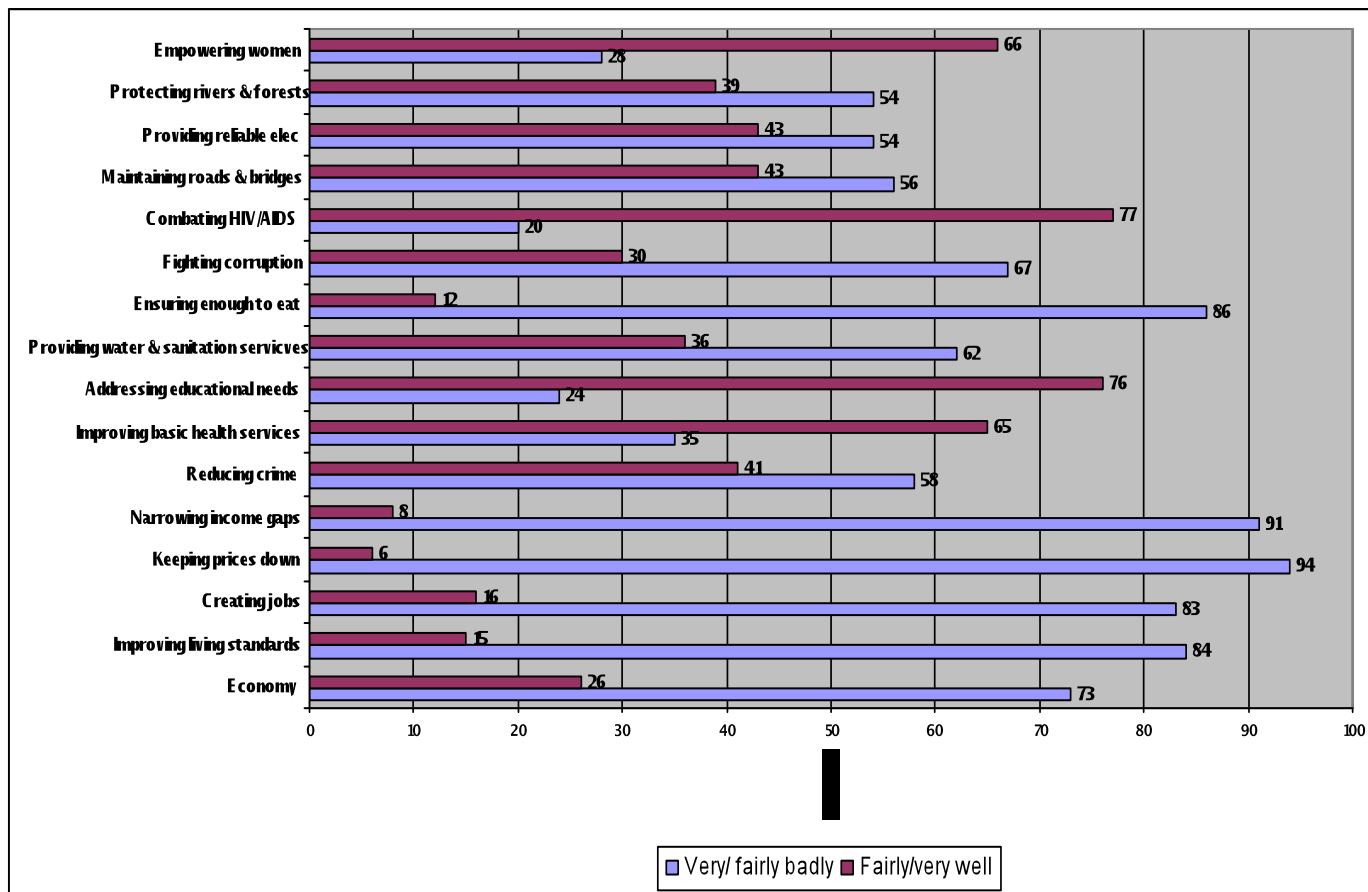


Likewise more than 8 in 10 (84 percent) Kenyans think the government is doing fairly or very badly in improving the living standards of the poor. The Government's response to the famine ravaging the country is also deemed to have failed, as more than 8 in 10 (86 percent) fault the government when asked if it has done enough in ensuring that there is enough to eat for everyone. Job creation also featured as a key failure of the government, with more than 8 in 10 (83 percent) Kenyans saying that the government is doing badly. Other areas in which the government has performed dismally include fighting corruption, where two-thirds (67 percent) believe the government has failed; and reducing crime, where more than half (58 percent) assess the government negatively.

These perceptions are shaped by the general economic recession that has gripped the country. Although the economic downturn in Kenya has also been affected by the international financial crisis, it appears Kenyans feel that the government has not done enough to cushion the poor against the escalating cost of staple foods such as maize flour, nor has it put in place mechanisms to address the biting poverty that afflicts most Kenyans. Furthermore, the alleged scandals in the agricultural and energy sector may also have influenced Kenyans' disillusionment with the coalition government.

There are, however, a number of sectors in which Kenyans seem to view the government in a more positive light, and where they believe the government has delivered on its mandate. The fight against HIV/AIDS has received a significant thumbs up, with more than 7 in 10 (77 percent) expressing satisfaction with the government's efforts. Education is the other sector where Kenyans are especially pleased with the performance of the government. More than three-quarters (76 percent) of Kenyans believe that the government is effectively addressing educational needs. Likewise, more than 6 in 10 Kenyans express satisfaction with the government's efforts to improve basic health services (65 percent), and empower women (64 percent). The overall verdict however appears to be that the coalition government's performance has been wanting in the most critical sectors.

**Figure 8: Assessment of the Coalition Government’s Performance**

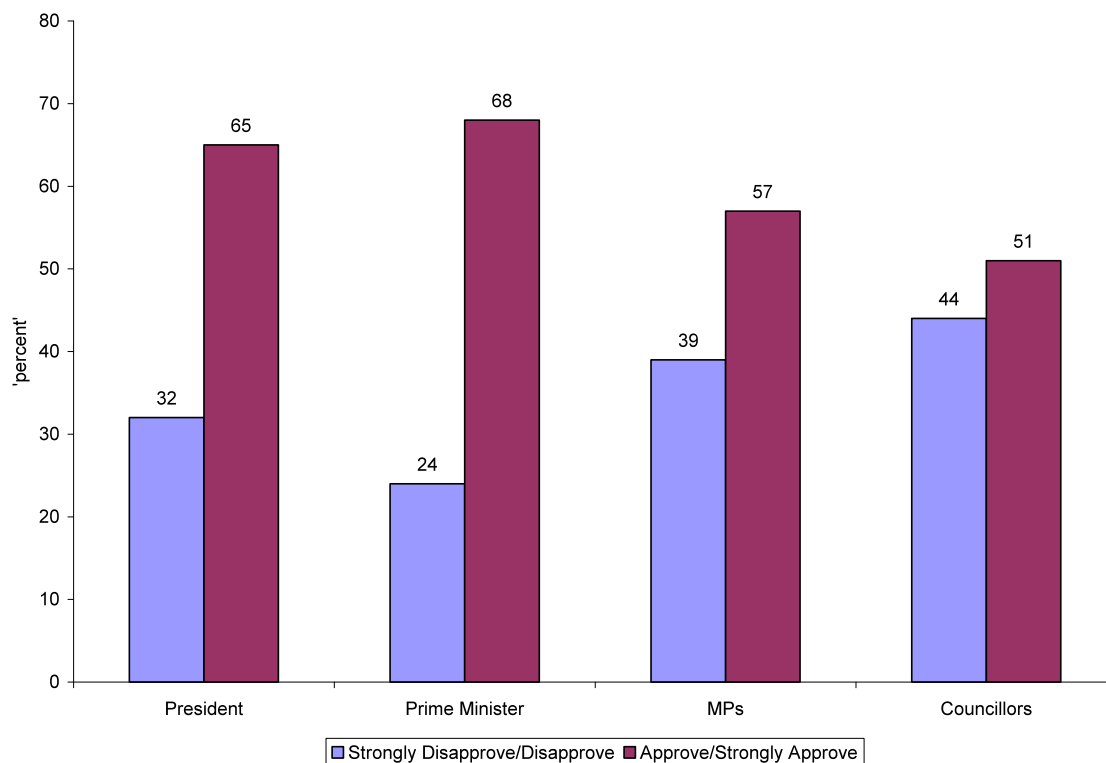


*Question: How well would you say the coalition government is handling the following issues?*

### Performance of Kenya’s Leaders

We also asked respondents whether they approve or disapprove of the way their representatives have performed their jobs since they assumed office. The Prime Minister was ranked first at 68 percent approval, followed closely by the President at 65 percent. Third were Members of Parliament, whose approval rating stood at 57 percent, while councilors had the lowest rating at 41 percent. From these ratings it appears that most Kenyans believe that the two principals are working hard to deliver on their mandate. The same cannot be said of the councilors.

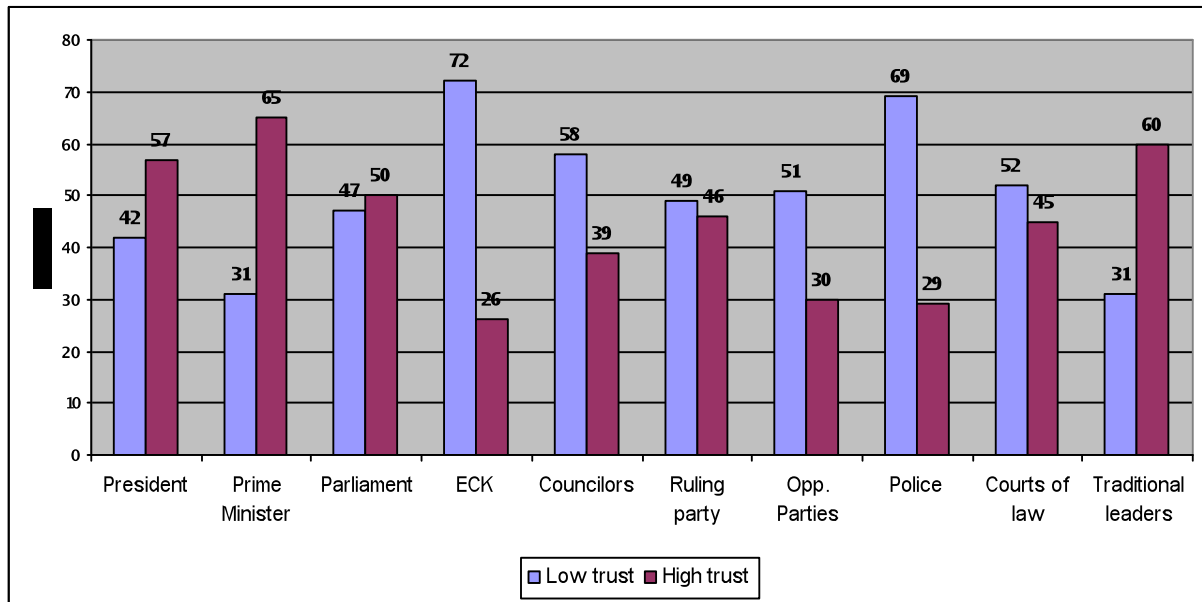
**Figure 9: Approval Ratings for the Country's Representatives**



*Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? And do you approve or disapprove of the way that the Prime Minister Raila Odinga has performed their job since taking office in April, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?*

Respondents were also asked how much trust they have in various public offices and institutions. Once again, the Prime Minister ranked first, with 65 percent of the respondents saying that they had high trust in him. He was followed by traditional leaders at 60 percent, the President at 57 percent, and Parliament at 50 percent. Other public offices registered a level of low trust. These included the courts of law (45 percent), councilors (39 percent) and the police (29 percent). The police have been accused on a wide range of issues, including their role in the post-election violence, laxity in fighting crime, and extra-judicial killings against outlawed groups. However it was the now-disbanded ECK that attracted the lowest level of trust: only 26 percent have significant trust in the ECK, a clear response to its mismanagement of the 2007 general elections.

**Figure 10: Trust in Government Officials and Institutions**



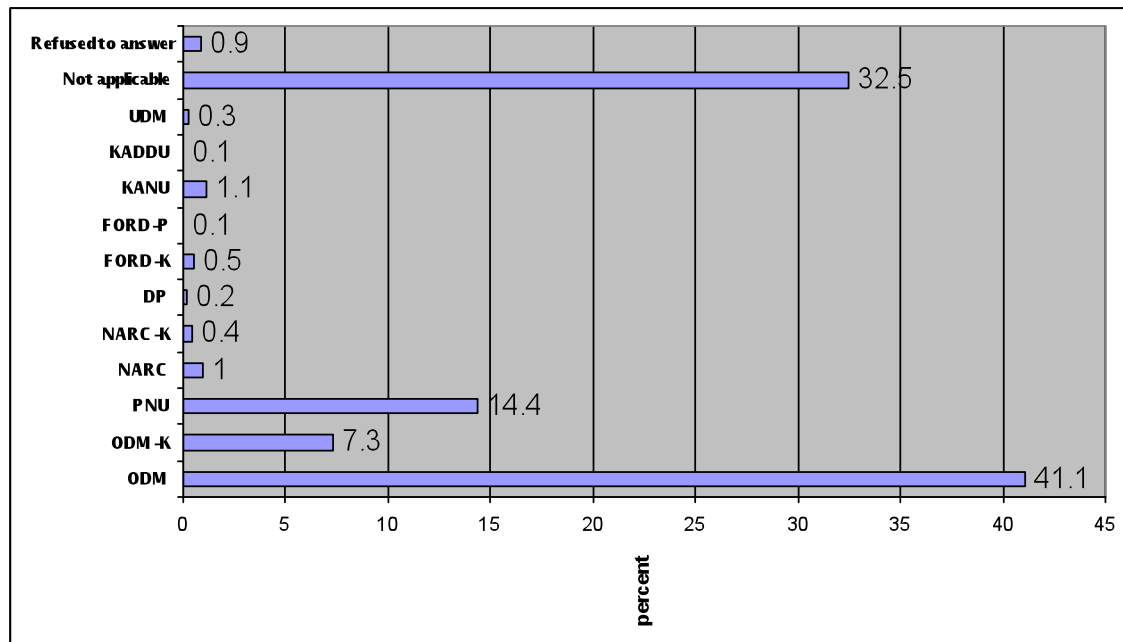
*Question: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

*Note: Low trust combines responses of "not at all" or "a little bit", while high trust combines responses of "somewhat" and "a lot".*

**Party Affiliation in the Aftermath of 2007**

Despite the dismal performance of the coalition government, parties that form the coalition are still the most popular. More than six out of ten Kenyans (62 percent) still closely associate themselves with these three parties, including 41 percent to ODM, 14 percent to the PNU, and 7 percent to ODM-K. However a large number of Kenyans (32 percent) do not feel close to any political party, while a further 1 percent refused to answer and another 2 percent did not know their position on the subject of party affiliation.

**Figure 11: Party Affiliation**



Question: Do you feel close to any particular political party? (If yes) Which party is that?

### Conclusion

The results of the latest Afrobarometer survey show that in spite of the 2007 election fiasco Kenyans still have faith on elections as a medium for institutionalizing a democratic system in the country. The support for democracy as the preferable form of government, and for elections as the best means to choose a government, remain at very high levels. However, Kenyans are clearly disappointed with the supply of democracy, which has experienced a steady decline since the first survey in 2003.

Meanwhile, Kenyans' verdict on the coalition government is mixed. A majority of Kenyans are of the view that an inclusive government as depicted in the coalition government was the best way of healing the country after the post election chaos. They have, however, been largely disappointed with the performance of the coalition government thus far. This being the first time that Kenya is experimenting with a coalition government, the lackluster performance is not a major surprise. The coalition government was put up in a hurry and the first year appears to have been spent more on trying to come to terms with the teething problems that coalition governments the world over usually experience.

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