



**The Status of Democracy, 2005-2006:
Findings from Afrobarometer Round 3
for 18 Countries**

Indicators of popular demand for democracy and mass perceptions of the supply of democracy constitute signature items for the Afrobarometer. We have reported elsewhere trends in these aspects of public opinion for 12 countries across three rounds of surveys, 1999-2006. (see “Where is Africa Going? Views from Below,” *Afrobarometer Working Paper* No. 60, Sections 2.2 to 2.4). This Briefing Paper is intended to supplement these findings by providing more detailed results for the same set of questions (plus two new questions) across *all 18 countries* that now participate in the project. The findings presented here are limited to those collected during the third round of Afrobarometer surveys, conducted in 2005-2006. Figures 1 through 12 present summary statistics for each question with countries in rank order, while Tables 1 through 3 present detailed results for all questions.

Round 3 Afrobarometer surveys were conducted between 10 March 2005 and 7 March 2006 in Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In all, during this round we conducted more than 25,000 interviews with adult men and women selected through a scientific random sampling procedure.¹ Nationally representative samples in each country ranged in size from 1048 respondents in Zimbabwe (where we fell somewhat short of our normal target of 1200 interviews due to political constraints on fieldwork), to roughly 2400 in Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. A standard survey instrument was used in all countries, and after translation into local languages, face-to-face interviews were conducted in the language of the respondent’s choice. The margin of sampling error ranges from +/-3% at a 95% confidence level in countries with a sample size of 1200, to +/-2% in those with a larger sample of 2400. An 18-country mean is calculated with each country weighted equally, rather than according to their widely divergent population sizes.

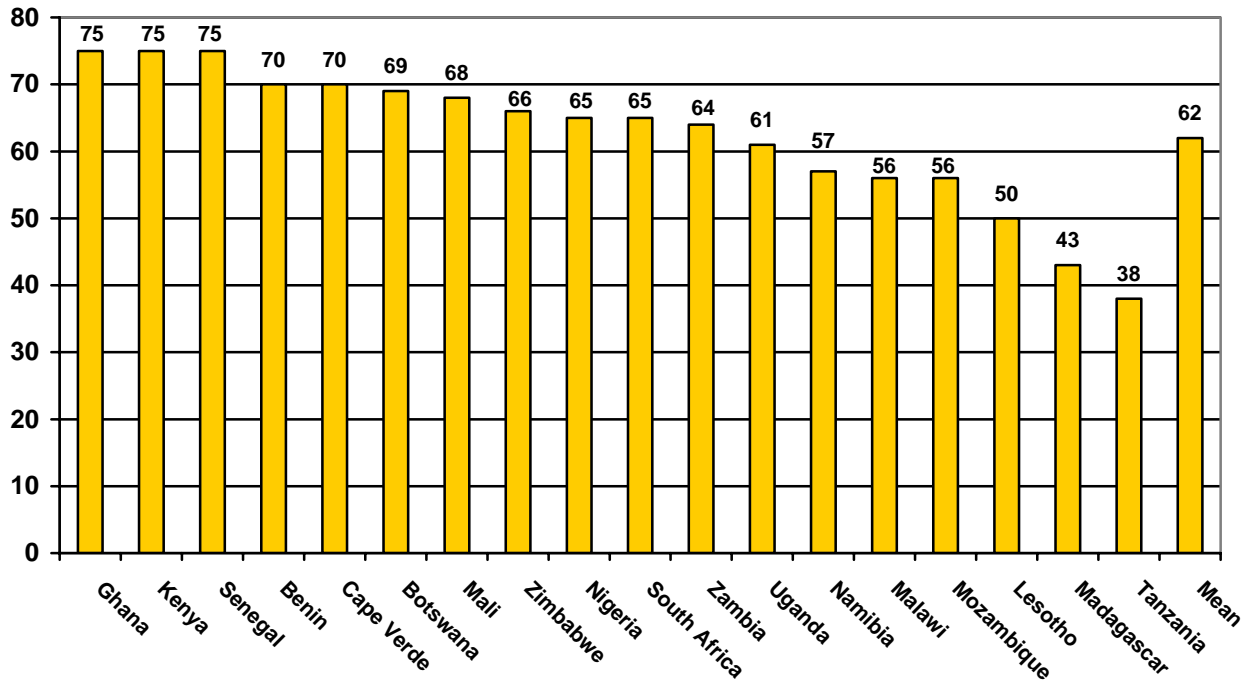
Demand for Democracy

Table 1 presents results for a standard tracking question concerning support for democracy that has been used around the world. As indicated, nearly two-thirds (62%) of respondents agree that “democracy is preferable to any other kind of government,” in contrast to a mere handful (9%) who indicate that non-democratic systems may, in some circumstances, be preferable. However, quite a sizeable minority (28%) indicates that they either don’t know or don’t care about the best form of government.

Support for democracy ranges from highs of 75% in Ghana, Kenya and Senegal, to lows of just 43% in Madagascar and a paltry 38% in Tanzania (Figure 1). The deviation of the latter cases is largely accounted for by the large numbers of people who say that the system of government doesn’t matter (33% in Madagascar), or that they don’t know what system is best (58% in Tanzania, 18% in Madagascar). Importantly, non- (or anti) democrats never number more than 19% in any country (Malawi).

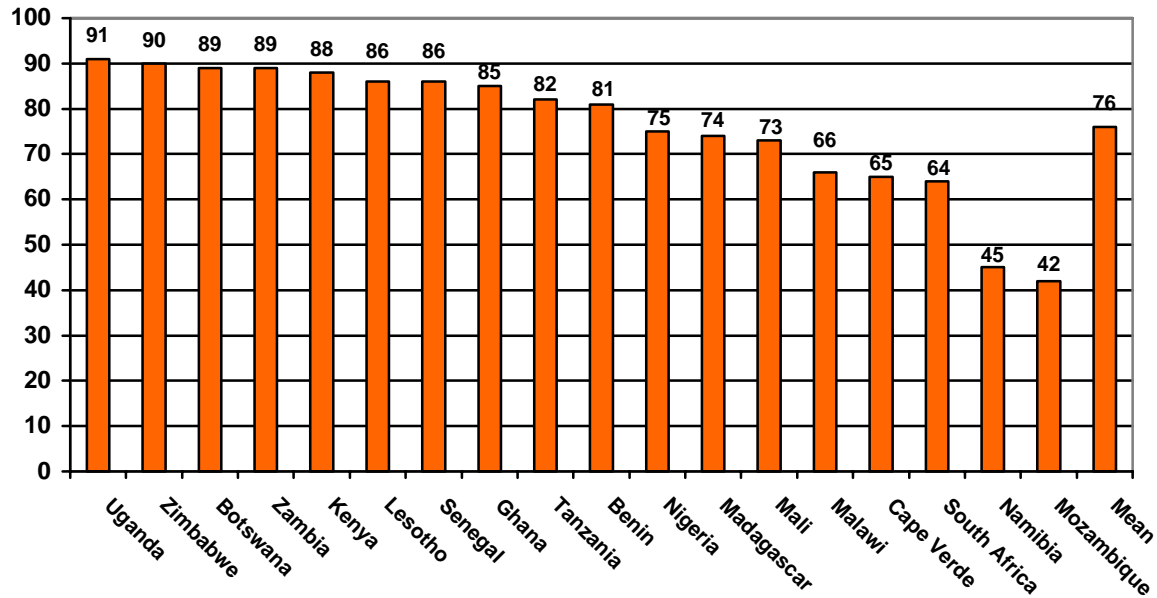
¹ For details on sampling see www.afrobarometer.org/sampling.html.

Figure 1: Support for Democracy, 2005-2006 (percent agree democracy is preferable)



But to assess the public’s overall demand for democracy, we probe a bit deeper, asking not only whether respondents support democracy, but also how readily they reject alternative systems of rule. The Africans we interviewed soundly dismiss all three alternative systems of government that were proposed: presidential dictatorship (or “one-man rule”), military rule, and a one-party state. Three-quarters (76%) reject a one-man rule (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Rejection of One-Man Rule, 2005-2006 (percent disapprove)



These were led by Uganda (91%), not long before parliament abolished a constitutional limit on presidential terms, paving the way for Museveni’s re-election early in 2006. Zimbabwe (90%), Botswana and Zambia (both 89%) follow closely. Mozambicans and Namibians, on the other hand, show considerable tolerance for one-man rule; in both, nearly one in three (30% and 32%, respectively) openly approves of such a system (Table 1).

Nearly three-quarters (73%) also disapprove of military rule (Figure 3). Zambians are particularly averse to such a system (92%), as are Kenyans (89%). Namibians again show the least resistance to non-democratic alternatives, with a mere 40% openly opposing this system, only slightly surpassing the 36% who consider military rule an acceptable option (Table 1).

Figure 3: Rejection of Military Rule, 2005-2006 (percent disapprove)

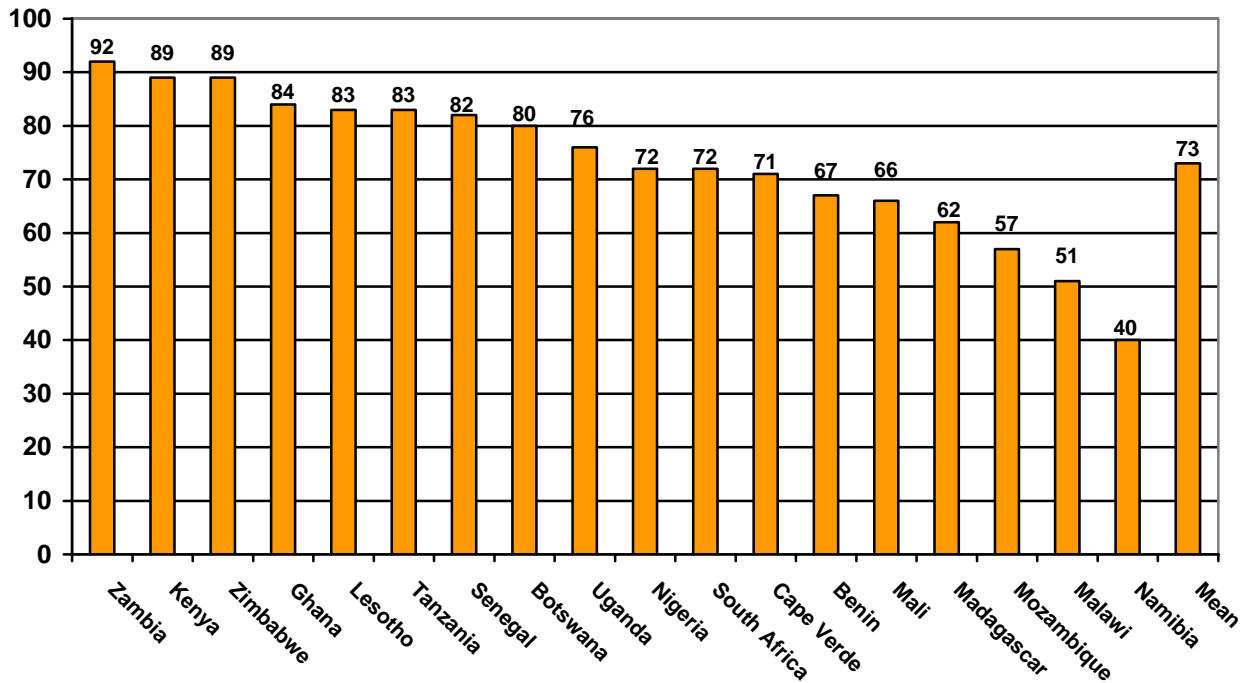
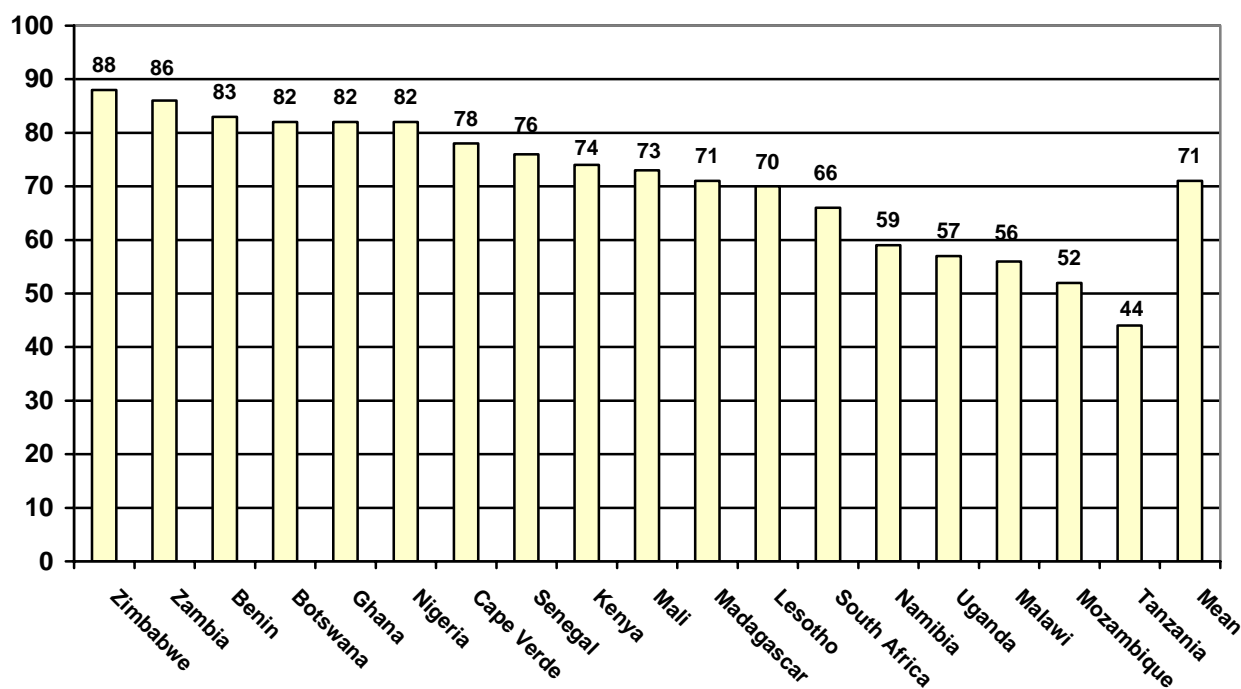


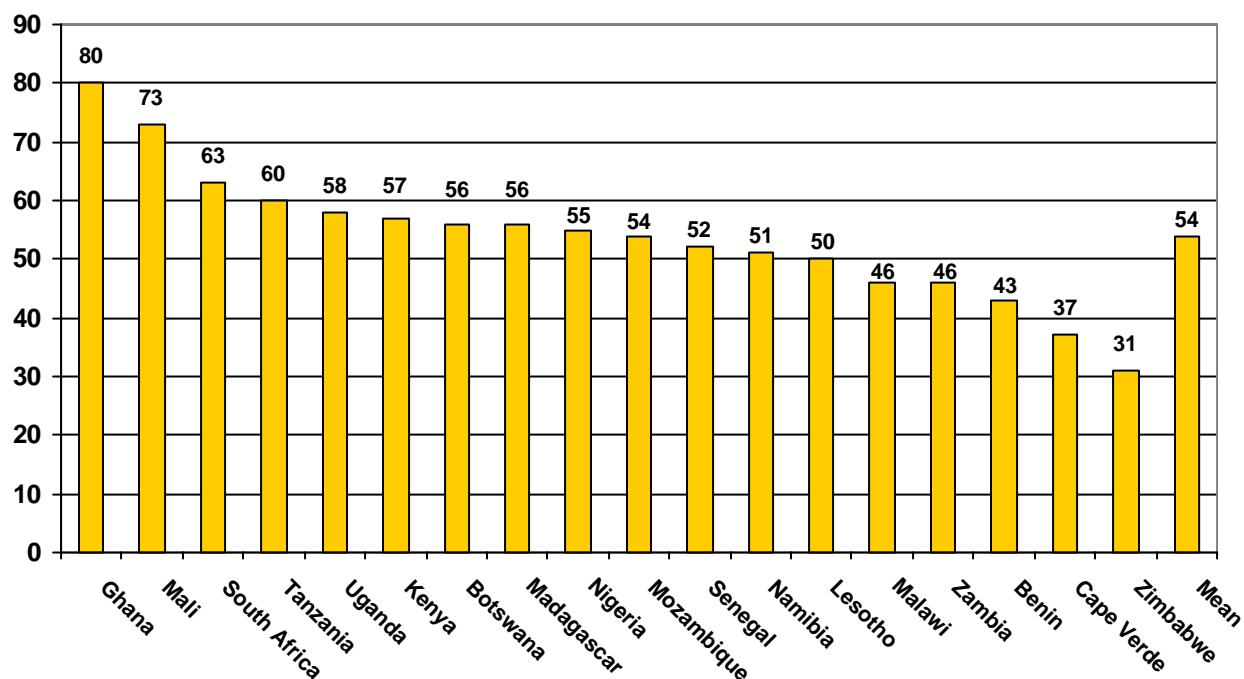
Figure 4: Rejection of One-Party State, 2005-2006 (percent disapprove)



Seventy-one percent reject one-party rule (Figure 4), led by the 88% who disavow such a system in Zimbabwe, followed by 86% in Zambia, and 83% in Benin. Tanzanians, on the other hand, appear to approve of the continuing dominance of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party, which has ruled Tanzania since the country's inception; the share that approves of a one-party system (45%) surpasses the 38% who profess their support for democracy, and is statistically equivalent to the 44% who reject a one-party state. It is also notable that shortly after the survey, Ugandans overwhelmingly passed a referendum replacing the country's "no party" government with a multiparty system, despite the fact that only a relatively narrow majority (57%) rejected a one-party system outright. Despite the solid vote in the referendum, Ugandans may still have mixed views about the value and necessity of multiparty competition in their country.

Finally, it has been evident that many Africans have had high expectations of democracy and the benefits – both political, and potentially economic, as well – that it might produce in their lives. Is their support for democracy conditional, subject to being withdrawn if democracy fails to produce results soon? Or do they choose to stick with this system of government even if it might take longer to grapple with the difficult problems faced in many countries? A relatively narrow majority indicates a willingness to "wait it out," but more than one-third (38%) are willing to jump ship if democracy does not produce concrete results in the near future (Figure 5). Zimbabweans lead the way, with fully 65% expressing willingness to change systems. This raises questions about whether individuals there were responding based on their patience with the (at best) flawed democracy of the present government (see below), rather than on the system of democracy that they might hope to have. Majorities in Benin (51%) and Malawi (50%) are also willing to abandon democracy if it does not produce soon.

Figure 5: Patience with Democracy, 2005-2006 (percent willing to give democracy time to solve problems)



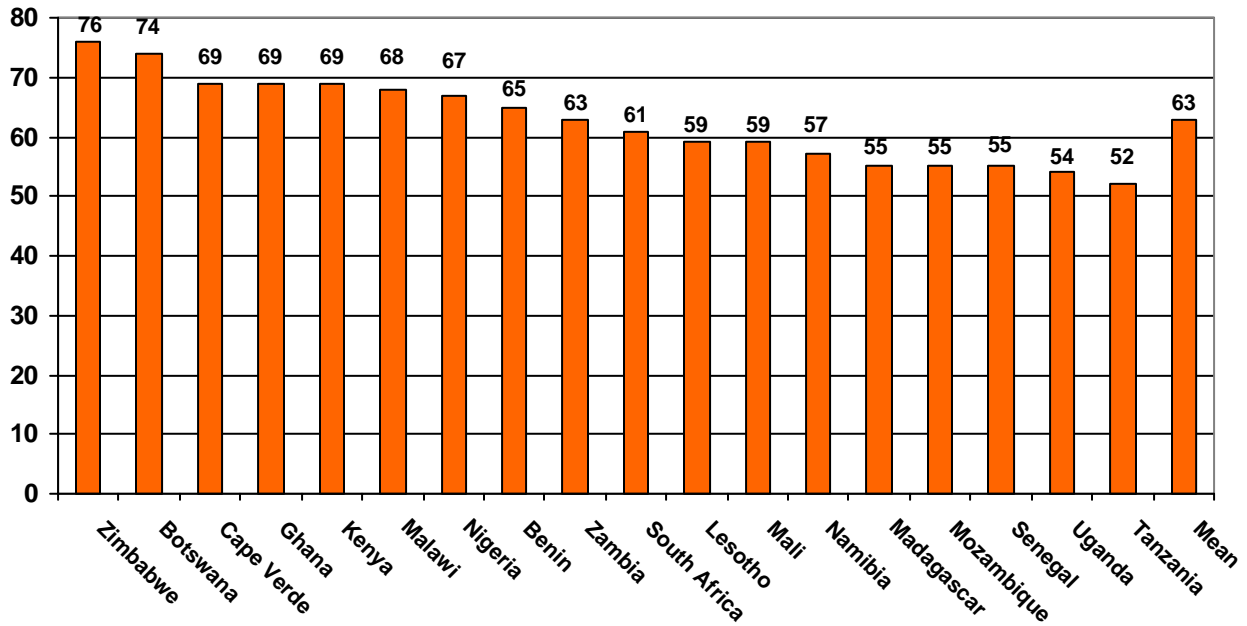
Support for Democratic Institutions

As an alternative to asking about popular support for the whole regime of democracy (and as a way of avoiding the “d-word” entirely), the Afrobarometer also asks about specific institutions and processes (Table 2). We find that support for regular, open and honest elections as a means for selecting leaders is widespread and solid. Across all 18 countries, fully 82% believe that this is the only acceptable way to choose their countries’ leaders, compared to just 16% who would prefer other methods. Support is lowest in Malawi (62%) and Namibia (70%), but even in these countries a solid majority backs elections as the best approach.

Support for multiparty competition is considerably weaker, but nonetheless, for the first time a majority in *every* country agrees that many political parties are needed to make sure that people have real choices about who will lead them (Figure 6). Zimbabweans and Botswana are most committed to this principle (76% and 74%, respectively). The majorities are much slimmer, however, in Tanzania (52%) and Uganda (54%).

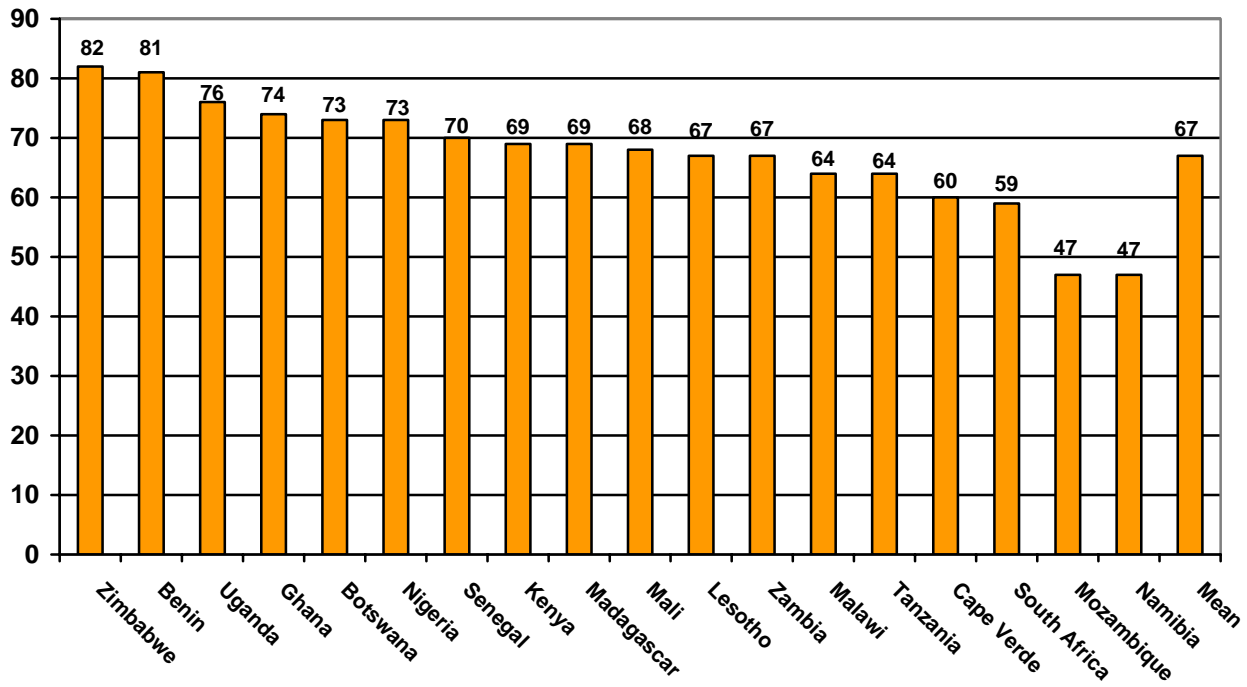
Africans also show solid support for parliament’s prerogative in making laws for the country. Nearly two-thirds (65%) agree that elected assemblies should make laws for the country, even if the president disagrees with them, rather than allowing the president to usurp legislative powers. Ugandans give the strongest backing to the parliament’s independent role (80%), along with Senegalese (78%) and Zimbabweans (77%). In Cape Verde, on the other hand, only 47% think the parliament should be able to act independently of the president, and the majorities backing this position are very slim in Namibia (51%), Madagascar and Malawi (52% each) as well.

Figure 6: Support for Multiparty Competition, 2005-2006 (percent agree many parties needed)



Two-thirds (67%) also believe that the president must be bound by laws or court decisions even when he thinks they are wrong (Figure 7). Zimbabweans (82%) and Beninois (81%) are most determined that even the president must submit to the rule of law. But in Mozambique and Namibia, this is not a majority position: in both, just 47% agree, while sizeable minorities believe it is acceptable for the president to ignore laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong (34% and 46%, respectively).

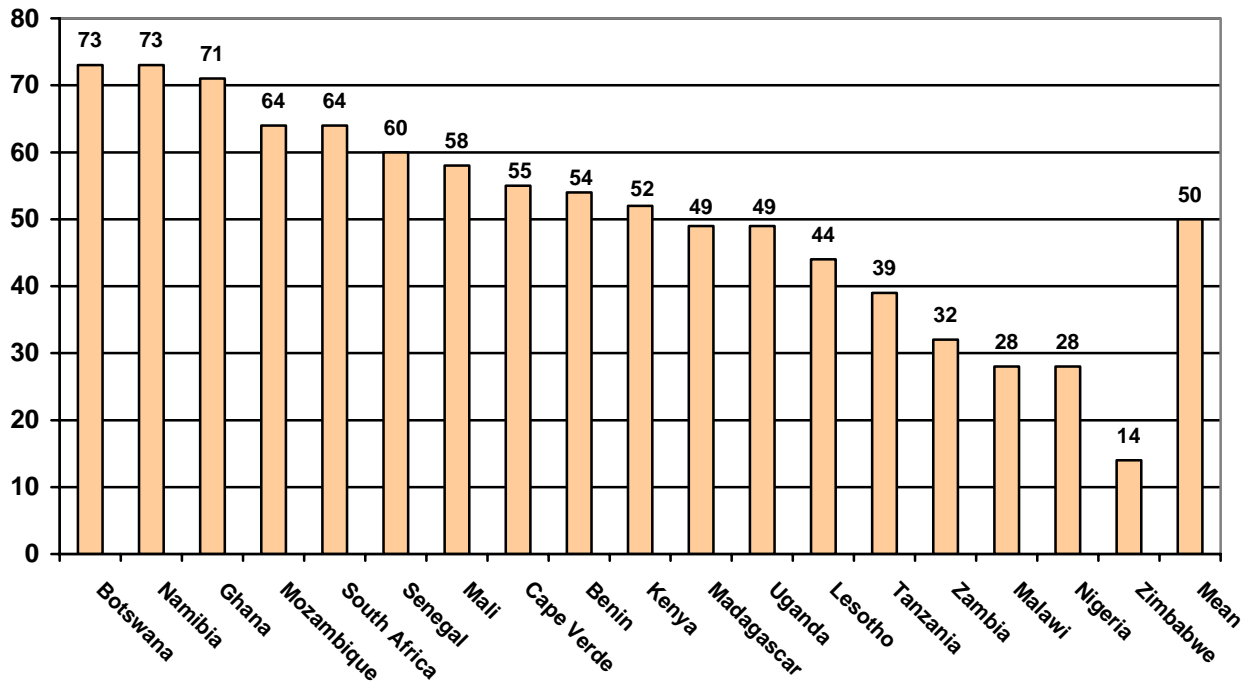
Figure 7: The President vs. the Rule of Law, 2005-2006 (percent agree president must obey law/courts)



Supply of Democracy

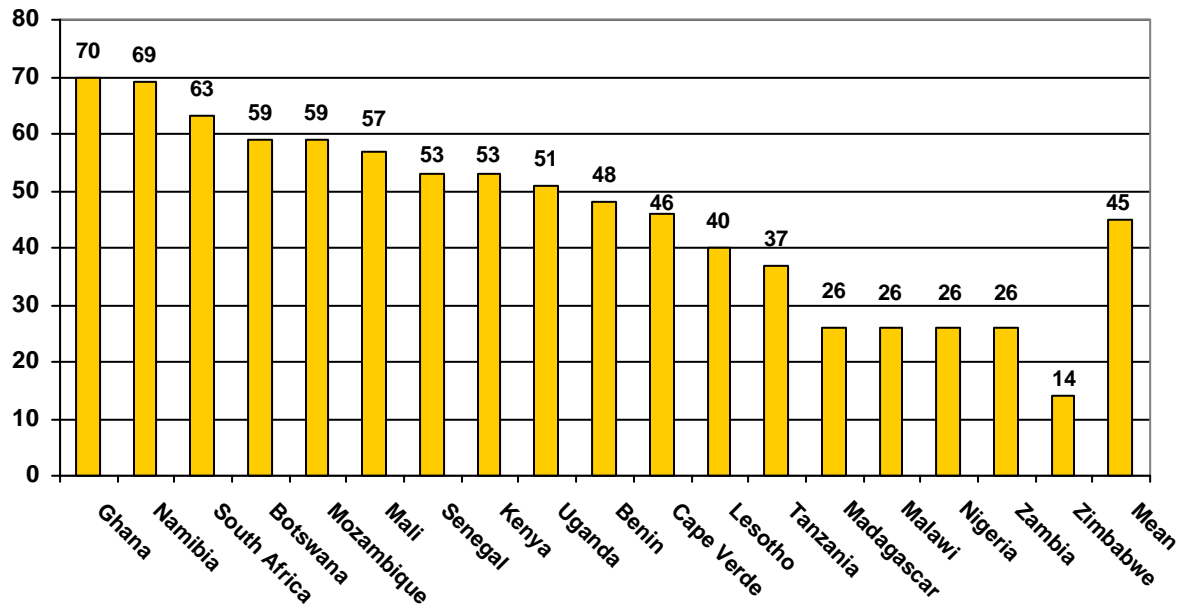
The Afrobarometer offers three indicators of the quality of democracy currently supplied to African publics (Table 3). The first asks respondents to rate the *extent* of democracy in their countries. Across the full sample, precisely 50% rate their countries as largely democratic, i.e., as either full democracies or as democracies with only minor problems (Figure 8). Fully one in five (21%) rate their countries as completely democratic. Another 24% think their countries are indeed democracies, but perhaps barely so, as they face major, rather than minor, problems. Nearly three-quarters of Botswana (73%) and Namibians (73%), as well as 71% of Ghanaians, believe their political systems have attained, or approached, the democratic ideal (fully democratic, or democratic with minor problems). In contrast, Zimbabweans, who reveal slightly higher than average support for democracy (see Table 1), must be deeply disappointed with what they are getting: a mere 14% think the country is actually nearing this goal. Malawi and Nigeria do not fare much better, with just one in four (28%) believing their country is functioning effectively as a democracy. Eighteen percent of Nigerians and more than one-third (35%) of Zimbabweans argue that their country is not a democracy at all.

Figure 8: Extent of Democracy, 2005-2006 (percent “full democracy” or “democracy, but with minor problems”)



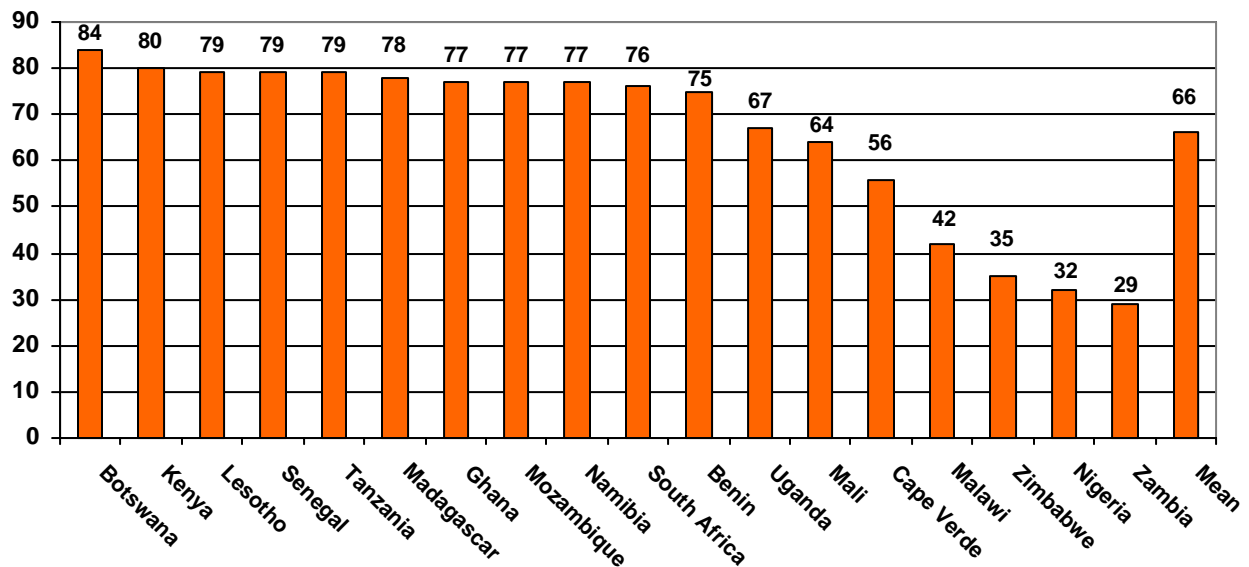
And still fewer Africans (45%) are actually satisfied with the way democracy works in their countries (Figure 9). Ghanaians (70%) and Namibians (69%), followed by South Africans (63%), are either “fairly” or “very satisfied” with the achievements of democracy. But in five countries (Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe), only about one-quarter of the population (26%) or less (just 14% in Zimbabwe) is satisfied with the performance of the system.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with Democracy, 2005-2006 (percent “fairly” or “very satisfied”)



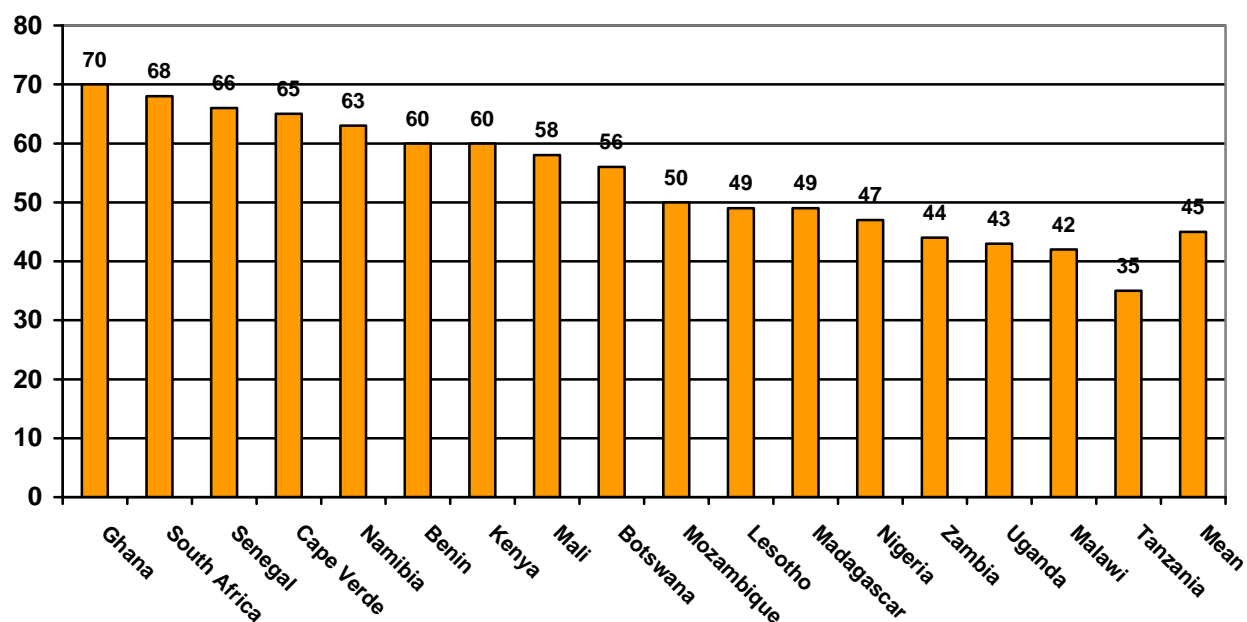
But many of these government do get high marks for the conduct of national elections. Two-thirds of all respondents agree that their country’s most recent election was completely free and fair, or had only minor problems (Figure 10). In 11 of the 18 countries, three-quarters or more take this position – a considerable achievement on the part of these African states. But a sharply different position is adopted by Zimbabweans, Nigerians and Zambians, only about one-third of whom (35%, 32% and 29%, respectively) think their country’s elections were relatively credible – less, in all three cases, than the number who contend that the elections were “not free and fair” (39%, 38% and 34%, respectively).

Figure 10: Quality of Elections, 2005-2006 (percent “completely free and fair” or “free and fair but with minor problems”)



Given these results, what future do Africans see for democracy in their countries? Ghanaians and South Africans exhibit the greatest confidence that democracy is here to stay: more than two-thirds think that it is “likely” or “very likely” that their country will remain democratic (70% and 68%, respectively; see Figure 11). Majorities agree in nine of the 18 countries. On the other hand, only about one-third (35%) of Tanzanians agree, and Zambians, Ugandans and Malawians also lack confidence (44%, 43% and 42%, respectively). But there is an important difference between attitudes in Tanzania and Malawi. Malawians are openly pessimistic. Fully 40% think it is “not very likely” or “not at all likely” that their country will remain a democracy, while the remaining 17% say they don’t know. In Tanzania, on the other hand, a sizeable majority expresses uncertainty about the future (59% “don’t know”), while just 5% are openly pessimistic about democracy’s prospects (see Table 3).

Figure 11: Future of Democracy, 2005-2006* (percent “likely” or “very likely” country will remain a democracy)



*Not asked in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

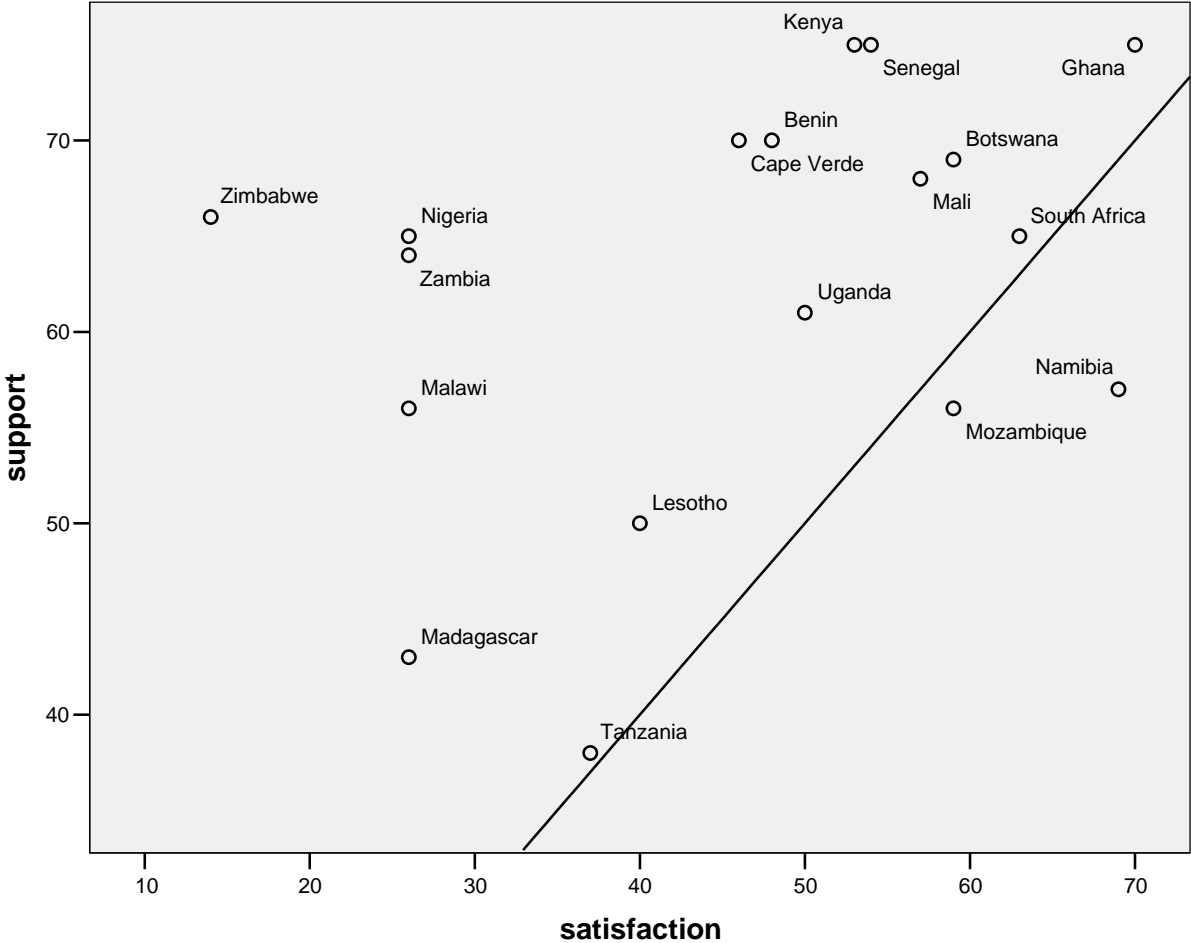
On the whole, then, it appears that the status of democracy in 2005-2007 is quite mixed in the countries covered by the Afrobarometer.

A handful of countries – Ghana and South Africa stand out – may be on the path to successfully consolidating a viable democracy. They achieve a reasonably good balance between expressed support for democracy and satisfaction with democracy at fairly high levels for both (Figure 12).

Several other countries – most notably Mozambique, Namibia and Tanzania – also achieve relative balance between satisfaction (one measure of supply of democracy) and support (one measure of demand for democracy) but at much lower levels. In fact, in the case of Namibia, we see that the satisfaction with democracy actually exceeds support by 12 points. People want less democracy, and they are receiving less. As such, the political regimes that prevail in these places may be consolidating, but in forms that fall short of fully functioning democracies.

Still other countries reveal large gaps between popular support and perceived satisfaction, suggesting that the political systems in these countries have yet to consolidate, and remain unstable. In particular, deeply dissatisfied democrats abound in Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia and Zimbabwe and they may agitate for renewed democratic reform in the years to come.

Figure 12: The Support - Satisfaction Gap (percent)



The **Afrobarometer** is produced collaboratively by social scientists from 18 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Michigan State University. Several donors support the Afrobarometer’s research, capacity-building and outreach activities, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department for International Development (UK), the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For more information, see: www.afrobarometer.org.

Table 1: Demand for Democracy

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?		BEN	BOT	CVE	GHA	KEN	LES	MAD	MWI	MALI	MOZ	NAM	NIG	SEN	SAF	TAN	UGA	ZAM	ZIM	Mean
A. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.		70	69	70	75	75	50	43	56	68	56	57	65	75	65	38	61	64	66	62
B. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.		6	10	5	7	5	16	6	19	18	11	12	17	6	10	2	6	11	2	9
C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.		9	10	9	7	8	27	33	21	12	9	17	13	8	16	2	4	12	4	12
Don't know ²		15	11	17	11	13	7	18	4	2	24	14	5	11	9	59	28	13	27	16
There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?																				
Elections and the parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything.	Disapprove/Strongly disapprove	81	89	65	85	88	86	74	66	73	42	45	75	86	64	82	91	89	90	76
	Neither approve nor disapprove	6	6	5	5	3	2	9	2	10	9	19	13	2	15	6	3	4	5	7
	Approve/Strongly approve	4	4	12	7	5	10	9	23	14	30	32	8	5	15	7	6	4	4	11
	Don't Know	8	1	18	3	4	2	7	9	3	19	4	4	8	6	5	1	3	2	6
The army comes in to govern the country.	Disapprove/Strongly disapprove	67	80	71	83	89	83	62	51	66	57	40	72	81	72	82	76	92	84	73
	Neither approve nor disapprove	11	6	4	3	2	1	16	3	12	8	22	12	4	12	3	3	3	5	7
	Approve/Strongly approve	15	12	14	12	6	14	17	41	19	19	36	14	10	11	10	19	4	9	16
	Don't Know	7	2	11	3	3	2	5	6	3	16	2	2	6	4	5	1	1	2	4
Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.	Disapprove/Strongly disapprove	83	82	78	82	74	70	71	56	73	52	59	82	76	66	44	57	86	88	71
	Neither approve nor disapprove	4	1	3	3	3	2	9	1	6	5	13	7	2	9	7	4	4	3	5
	Approve/Strongly approve	7	15	10	12	21	26	12	40	20	33	26	9	16	22	45	38	9	8	20
	Don't Know	6	1	9	3	2	2	8	3	2	10	2	2	5	4	4	1	1	1	4
Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement A or Statement B (percent agree / strongly agree)																				
A. Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems		43	56	37	80	57	50	56	46	73	54	51	55	52	63	60	58	46	31	54
B. If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government.		51	43	45	16	37	48	31	50	24	29	39	39	30	28	22	38	47	65	38
Do not agree with either		3	1	7	2	4	1	7	1	1	4	6	4	5	5	6	3	5	3	4
Don't know		4	0	11	2	2	1	6	3	2	13	3	2	13	4	12	2	1	2	5

² The Afrobarometer protocol for asking questions about democracy requires that the word “democracy” is stated in an official national language: English, French, Portuguese or Swahili.

Table 2: Support for Democratic Institutions

Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement A or Statement B (percent agree / strongly agree)	BEN	BOT	CVE	GHA	KEN	LES	MAD	MWI	MALI	MOZ	NAM	NIG	SEN	SAF	TAN	UGA	ZAM	ZIM	Mean
A. We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections.	94	85	74	90	88	77	81	62	86	80	70	75	88	83	89	90	87	75	82
B. Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.	4	14	16	8	9	22	14	36	13	14	28	23	8	13	8	10	12	25	16
Do not agree with either	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	3	1	0	1	0	1
Don't know	1	0	9	1	1	0	3	1	0	5	1	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	2
A. Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Tanzania.	28	23	20	27	25	39	36	30	39	33	39	30	38	31	43	42	32	23	32
B. Many political parties are needed to make sure that Tanzanians have real choices in who governs them.	65	74	69	69	69	59	55	68	59	55	57	67	55	61	52	54	63	76	63
Do not agree with either	2	2	3	2	3	1	3	1	1	3	3	3	3	5	2	3	4	1	3
Don't know	5	1	8	2	2	1	6	1	1	9	2	1	5	3	3	1	1	1	3
A. The members of the Parliament represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree.	74	53	47	68	71	61	52	52	74	58	51	73	78	58	70	80	70	77	65
B. Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the Parliament thinks.	11	24	19	19	16	30	24	42	17	21	40	20	8	21	16	18	14	13	21
Do not agree with either	6	21	11	9	10	8	11	4	6	6	5	4	6	12	5	2	13	8	8
Don't know	9	2	23	4	3	2	12	3	2	15	3	3	8	9	9	0	3	2	6
A. Since the President was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.	13	22	19	21	23	29	17	31	30	34	46	23	22	26	24	22	23	15	24
B. The President must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.	81	73	60	74	69	67	69	64	68	47	47	73	70	59	64	76	67	82	67
Do not agree with either	2	3	6	2	5	3	4	3	2	6	4	3	3	9	4	1	8	2	4
Don't know	4	2	15	4	3	1	10	2	1	13	4	2	5	6	8	1	3	1	5

Table 3: Supply of Democracy

		BEN	BOT	CVE	GHA	KEN	LES	MAD	MWI	MALI	MOZ	NAM	NIG	SEN	SAF	TAN	UGA	ZAM	ZIM	Mean
In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today?	Full democracy	20	29	15	33	11	15	25	12	32	35	39	6	30	27	20	15	10	4	21
	A democracy, but with minor problems	34	44	40	38	41	29	24	16	26	29	34	22	30	37	19	34	22	10	29
	A democracy, but with major problems	27	13	25	11	28	33	10	61	29	13	14	48	20	24	2	18	44	21	24
	Not a democracy	1	3	2	2	3	5	7	7	8	3	1	18	5	4	1	5	5	35	6
	Don't know / Don't understand	18	11	19	16	17	19	34	4	6	21	12	6	15	7	58	29	20	29	19
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [your country]?	Very satisfied	17	23	24	38	10	15	6	15	28	31	30	4	25	23	20	16	5	3	18
	Fairly satisfied	31	36	22	32	43	25	20	11	29	28	39	22	29	40	17	34	21	11	27
	Not very satisfied	26	19	29	11	22	24	28	30	19	17	18	32	17	19	3	14	37	22	22
	Not at all satisfied	9	13	12	4	8	18	11	37	20	7	5	38	14	11	2	5	16	29	14
	Not a democracy	0	1	0	1	1	4	3	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	8	2
	Don't know	16	8	13	14	16	13	32	4	4	16	7	3	14	5	58	28	20	27	17
On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [2000]. Was it:	Completely free and fair	45	50	29	47	40	61	59	28	47	57	49	9	63	47	55	37	9	19	42
	Free and fair, but with minor problems	30	34	27	30	40	18	19	14	17	20	28	23	16	29	24	30	20	16	24
	Free and fair, with major problems	16	7	15	8	11	8	6	18	15	9	13	23	6	11	2	17	21	19	12
	Not free and fair	3	4	5	9	4	3	6	33	12	4	3	38	3	7	2	9	34	39	12
	Don't know / Don't understand question	7	6	24	6	6	11	10	6	9	10	6	7	13	7	17	7	16	6	10
In your opinion, how likely is it that [your country] will remain a democratic country?	Likely / Very likely	60	56	65	70	60	49	49	42	58	50	63	47	66	68	35	43	44	-	54
	Not very likely / Not at all likely	18	30	14	12	18	21	13	40	34	21	24	42	15	19	5	23	28	-	22
	Not a democracy	0	1	1	0	0	3	3	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	2	2	-	1
	Don't know	21	13	21	19	22	27	36	17	7	29	13	10	17	12	59	32	26	-	22