

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

28 July 2026

Boniface Dulani and Nyasha McBride Mpani

Afrobarometer

What is Afrobarometer

- Pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.
- Goal: To give African publics a voice in policy and decision making.
- Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999.
- Round 11 surveys were launched in 2026 and are expected to run to 2027.



Where Afrobarometer works

First survey in

- Round 1 (1999/2001)
- Round 2 (2002/2003)
- Round 3 (2005/2006)
- Round 4 (2008/2009)
- Round 5 (2011/2013)
- Round 6 (2014/2015)
- Round 7 (2016/2018)
- Round 8 (2019/2021)
- Round 9 (2021/2023)
- Round 10 (2024/2025)
- Not yet surveyed



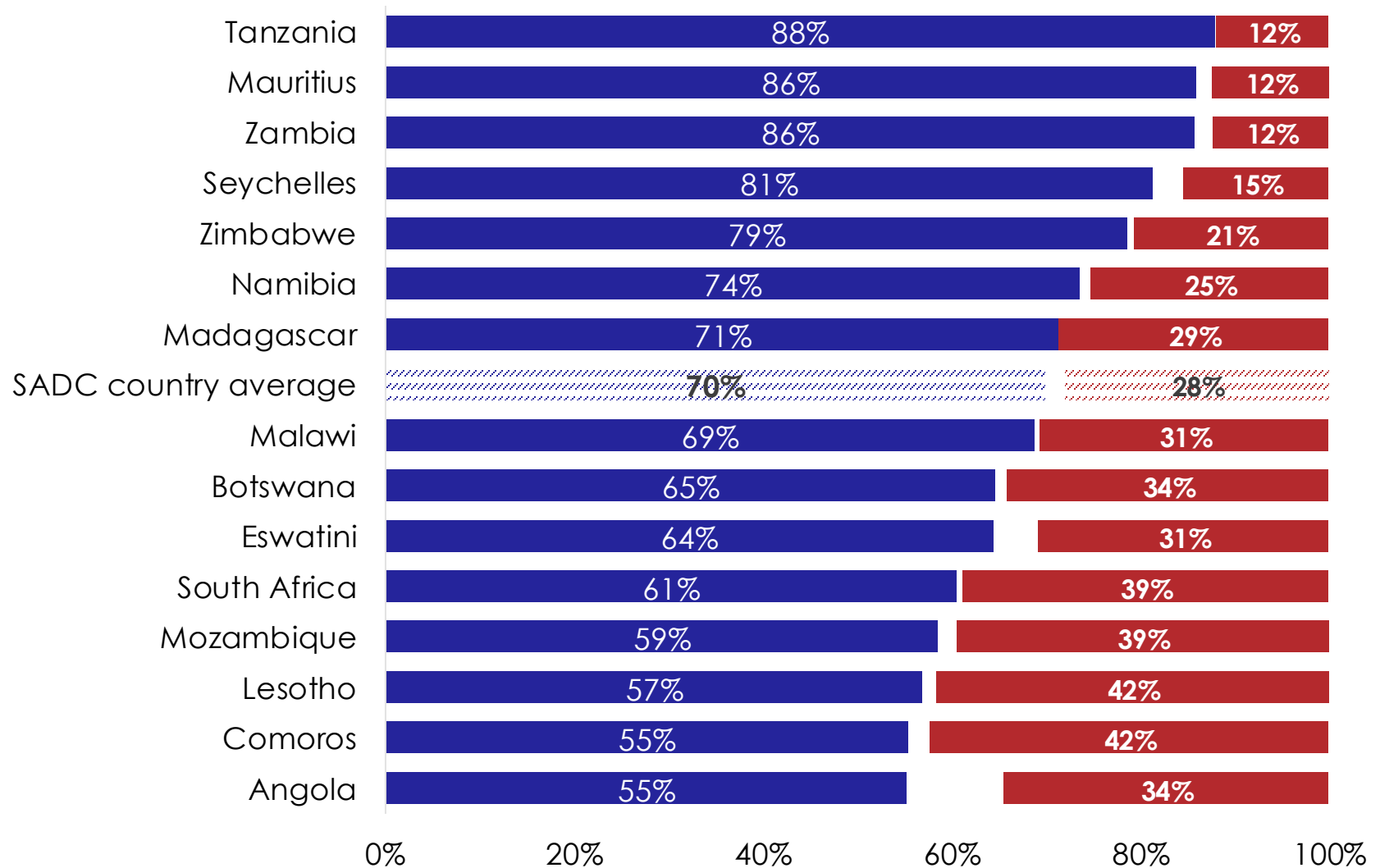
At a glance

- On average across 38 countries, **about three-quarters (74%) of Africans support choosing their leaders through regular, open, and honest elections** compared to **70% of citizens in SADC region**
- Within the SADC region, support for election is very high in Tanzania (88%), Mauritius (86%) and Zambia (86%) but lowest in Angola (55%), Comoros (55%) and Lesotho (56%)
- **Young Africans** are less likely to support elections compared to old adults. The **poor** are also less likely to support elections than the rich
- Two-thirds (66%) of SADC residents support multiparty competition to ensure that voters have real choices in who governs them, while 31% think political parties foster division and confusion and their country doesn't need many of them
- More educated citizens are more supportive of multiparty competition than the less educated

Support for elections in Africa



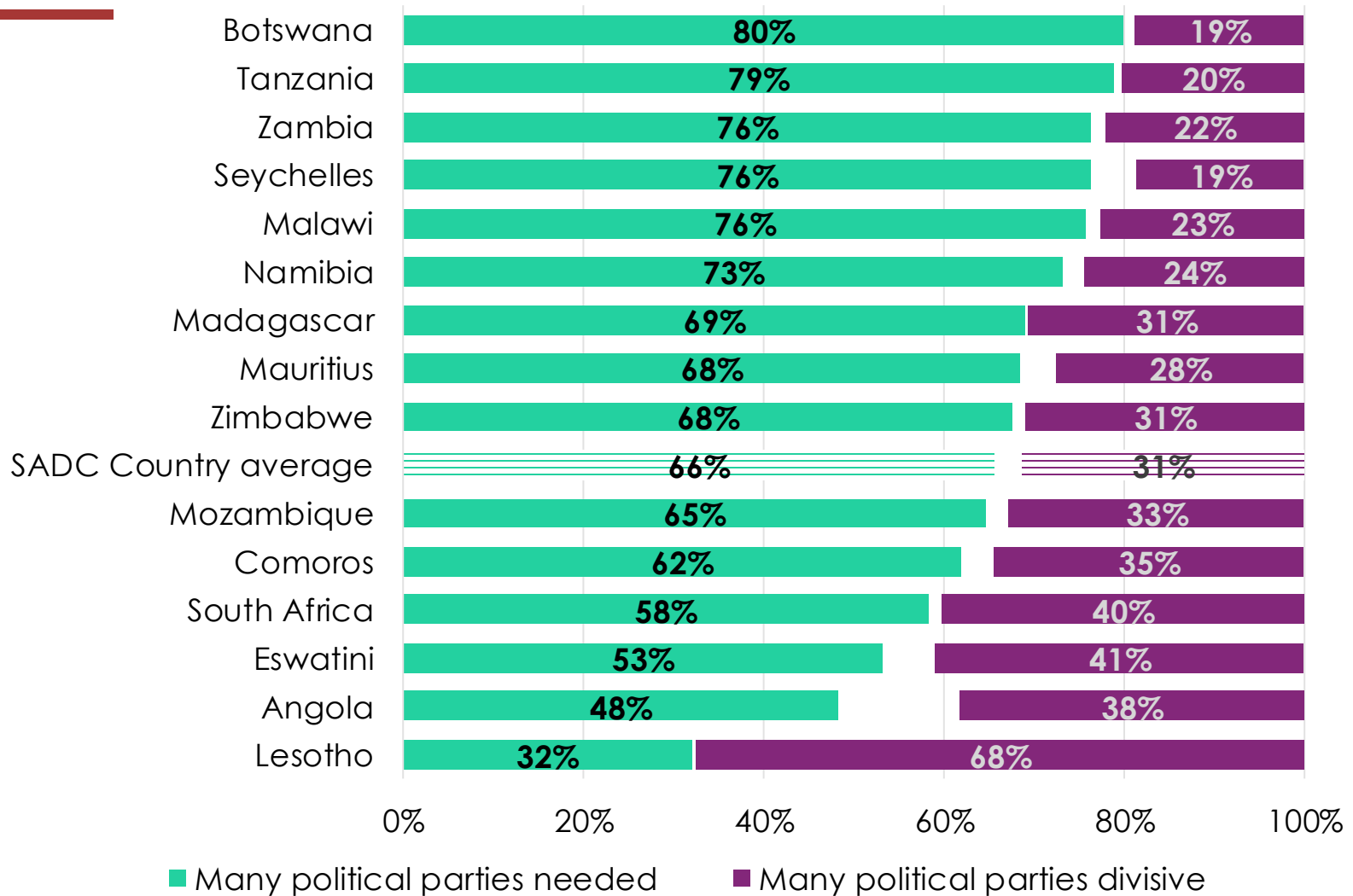
Support for elections | 15 SADC countries | 2024/2025



Support for multiparty competition



Support for multiparty competition | 15 SADC countries | 2024/2025

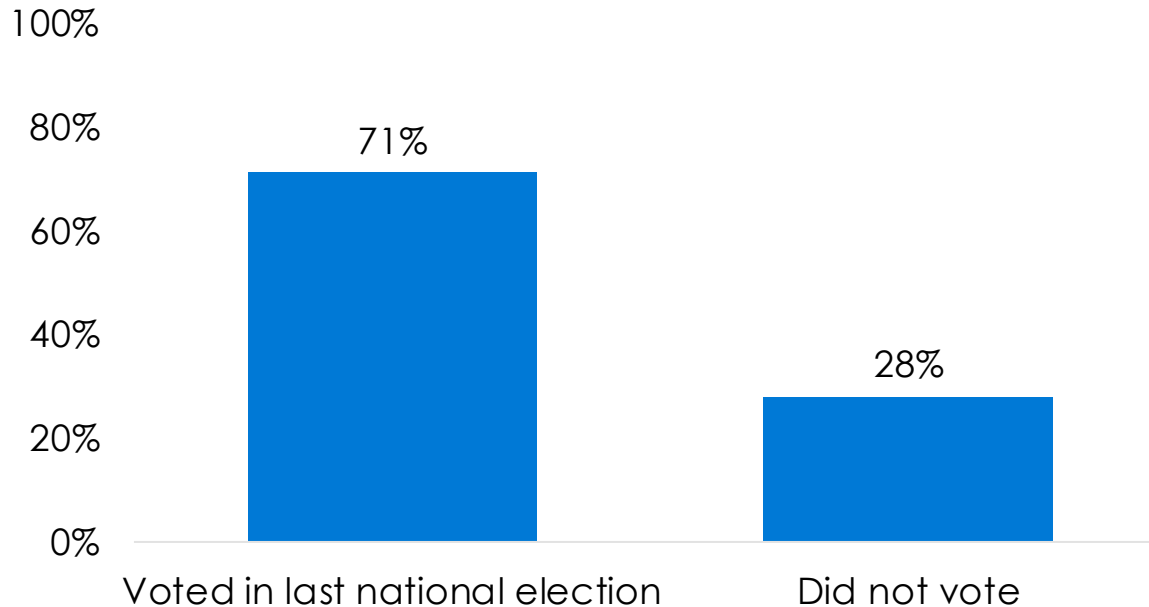


Participation in elections



Voted in last national election | 38 countries

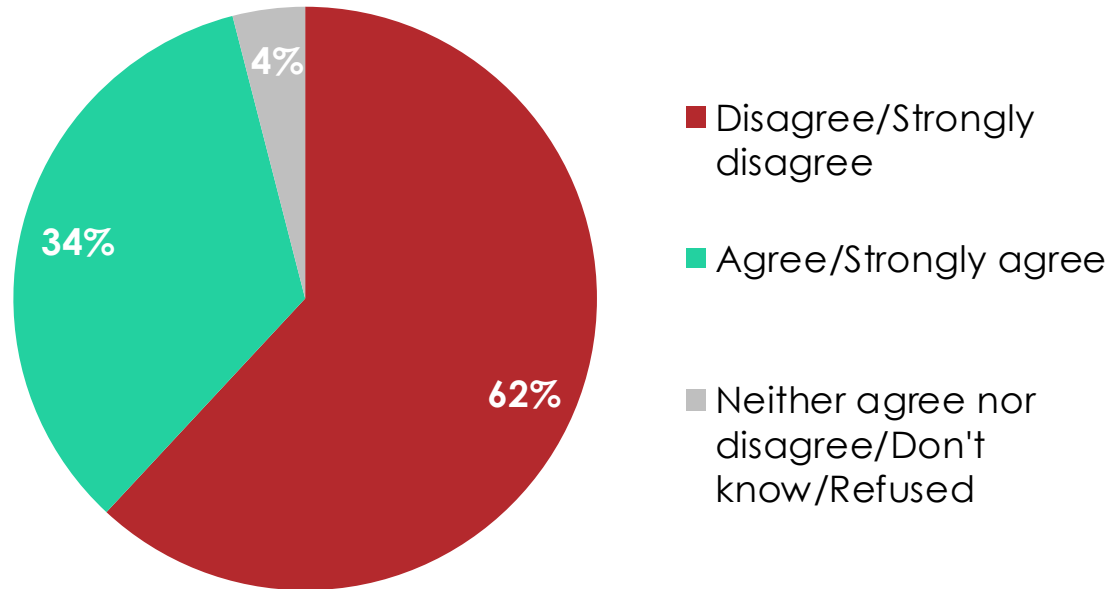
| 2024/2025



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.)

Should the voting age be lowered? | 38 countries

| 2024/2025

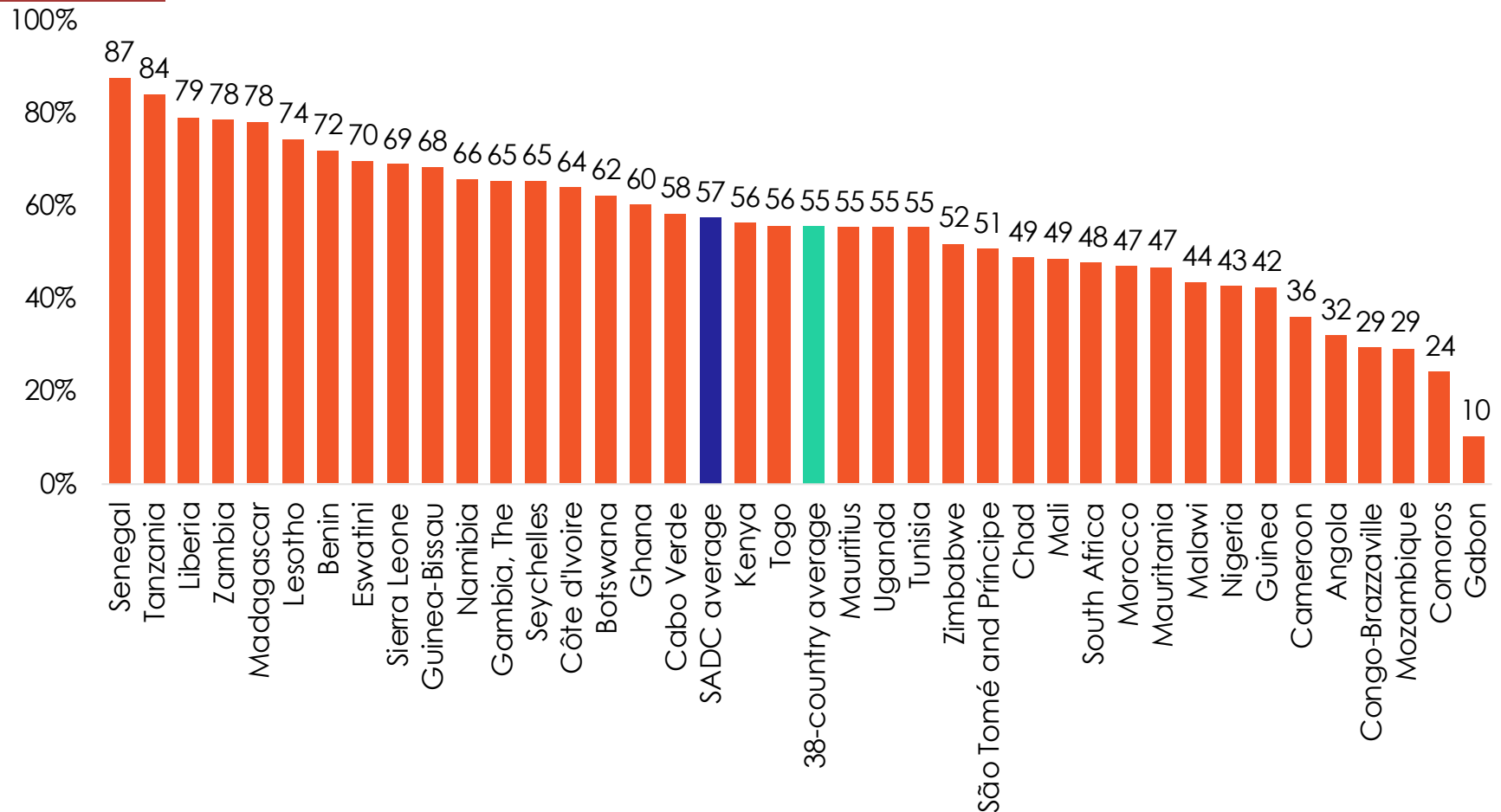


Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The minimum age for voting in national elections in this country should be reduced from [age] to 16 years.

Quality of elections and political freedoms

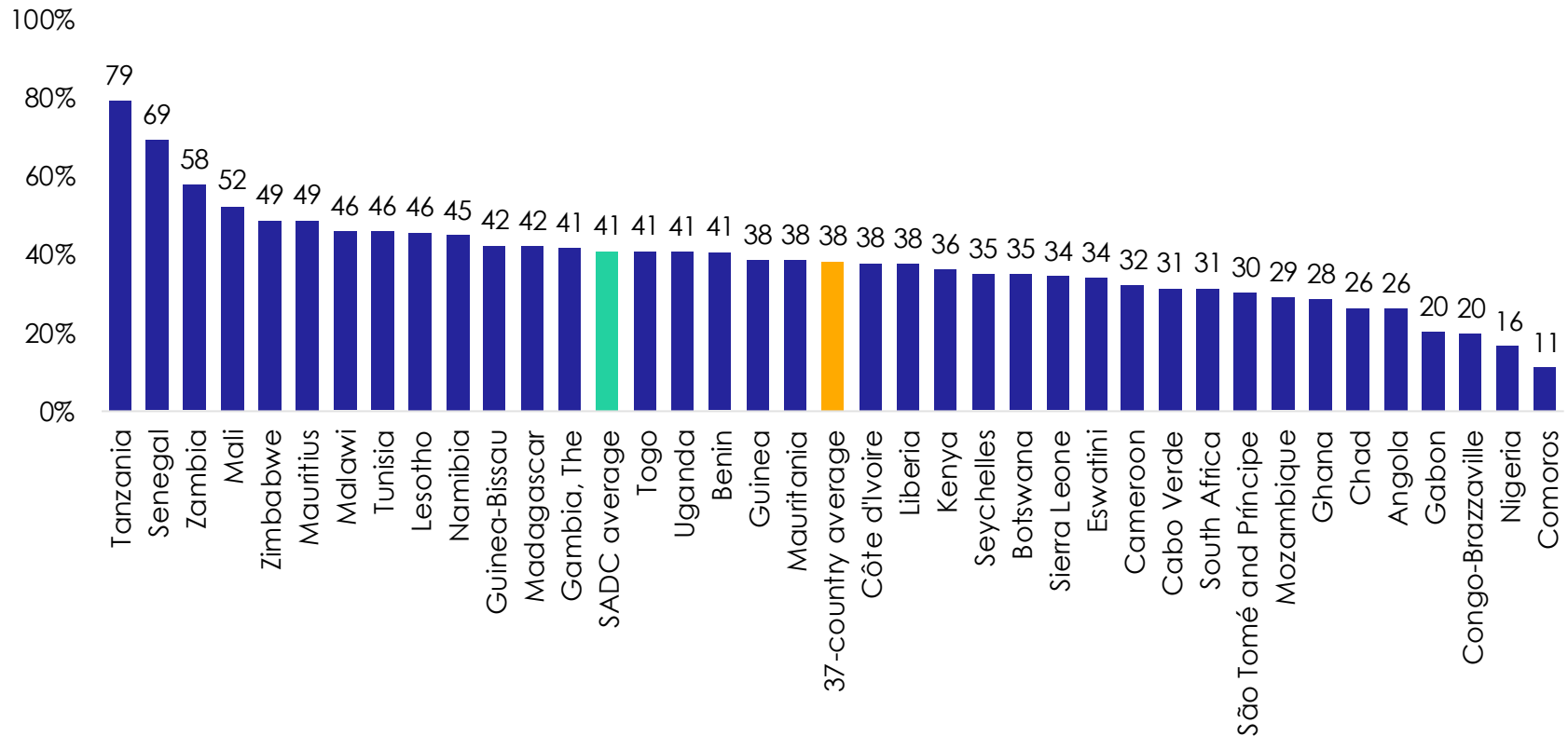


Most recent election was free and fair | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: Overall, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]? (% who say “completely free and fair” or “free and fair with minor problems”)

Trust in the electoral commission | 37 countries* | 2024/2025

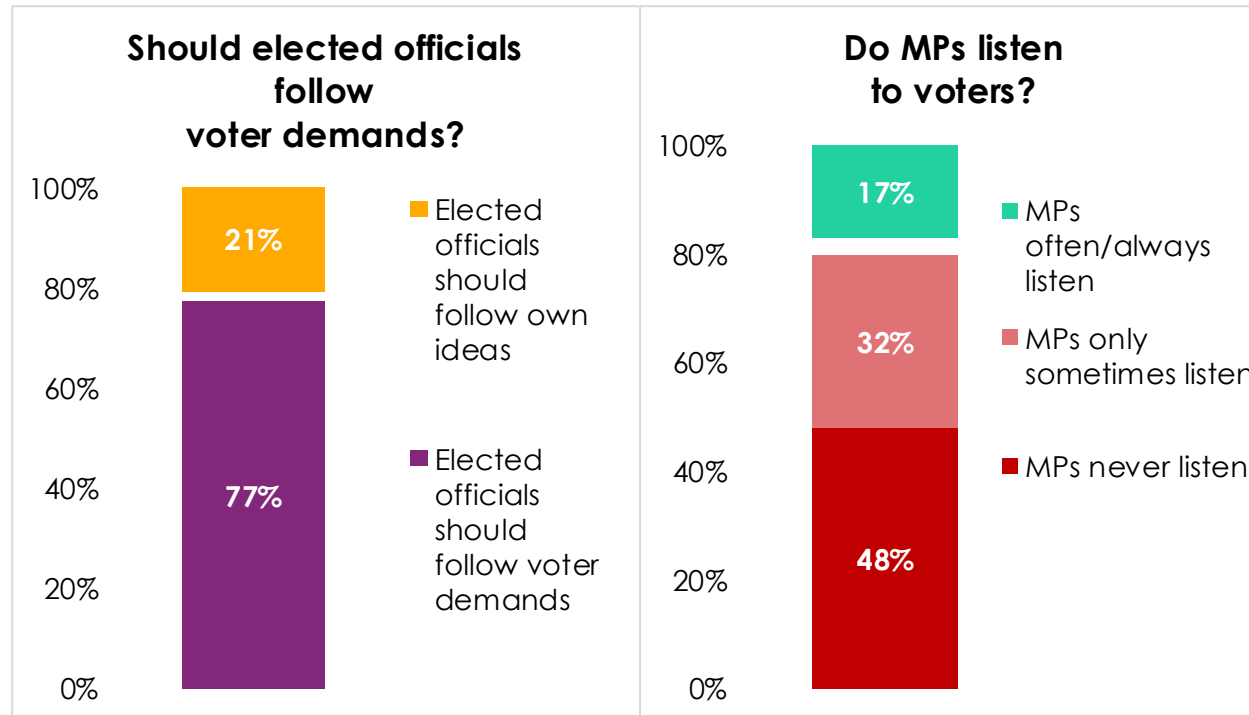


Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The [national electoral commission]? (% who trust somewhat/ a lot)

Election efficacy



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?

Conclusion

- Elections remain the preferred method for choosing leaders in Africa, but public perceptions differ significantly across countries.
- Support for multiparty competition is generally strong, yet it has weakened in several countries, particularly in West Africa, where many citizens feel that numerous political parties contribute to political division.
- Most Africans value their freedom to vote but concerns about declining electoral integrity and reduced trust in election-management bodies have grown over the past decade.
- These trends pose risks to democratic stability, reflected in the recent surge of coups in parts of West Africa.
- The findings underscore the urgency of rebuilding trust in elections, through greater transparency, stronger electoral institutions, and a firm commitment to free and fair processes.

Thank you

www.afrobarometer.org

#VoicesAfrica on Twitter, Facebook,
LinkedIn, Instagram.

Do your own data analysis – on any
question, for any country and survey
round.

It's easy and free at
[www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-
analysis](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).

