

Libreville, Gabon
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News release

Behind Gabon's election dispute, citizens strongly support multiparty democracy, reject autocratic alternatives

Behind Gabon's eruption in post-election conflict, its citizens are among the strongest in Africa in their support for multiparty democracy and their rejection of non-democratic alternatives, a new analysis by Afrobarometer shows.

Among 36 African countries surveyed in 2014/2015, Gabon ranks near the top in favouring multiparty competition and term limits on presidents, as well as in disapproving of one-party and one-man rule, according to citizen responses collected in September and October 2015.

Large majorities also expressed support for democracy in general and for elections as the best way to choose leaders, although on these issues Gabon ranks only average or below. Gabon's less enthusiastic endorsement of elections aligns with citizens' strikingly negative views on the national electoral commission (CENAP) and the fairness of the country's elections (see press release titled "In Gabon, overwhelming public distrust of CENAP and election quality forms backdrop for presidential vote dispute" at www.afrobarometer.org).

Findings on citizens' perceptions of electoral management institutions and the quality of elections in Gabon and 35 other African countries will be released in a new Afrobarometer report on 6 September 2016.

Key findings for Gabon

- In interviews in September-October 2015, two-thirds (68%) of Gabonese citizens said democracy is preferable to any other political system, matching average support for democracy among 36 African surveyed in 2014/2015 (67%).
- Gabonese overwhelmingly rejected autocratic alternatives to democracy. Nine in 10 citizens disapproved of one-party rule (91%) and one-man rule (89%), including majorities who "strongly" disapproved (Figure 1). These assessments place Gabon near the top among surveyed countries. Seven in 10 Gabonese (70%) rejected military rule.
- Three-fourths (76%) said regular, open, and honest elections are the best way to choose leaders, compared to 82% across all surveyed countries (Figure 2).
- In their support for multiparty competition (80%) (Figure 3), Gabonese are second only to Ivoirians (82%) and far above average (63%).
- Nine in 10 Gabonese (92%) supported limiting presidents to two terms in office (Figure 4). Gabon's support for term limits is second only to Benin's (93%) and well above the 36-country average (75%).

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

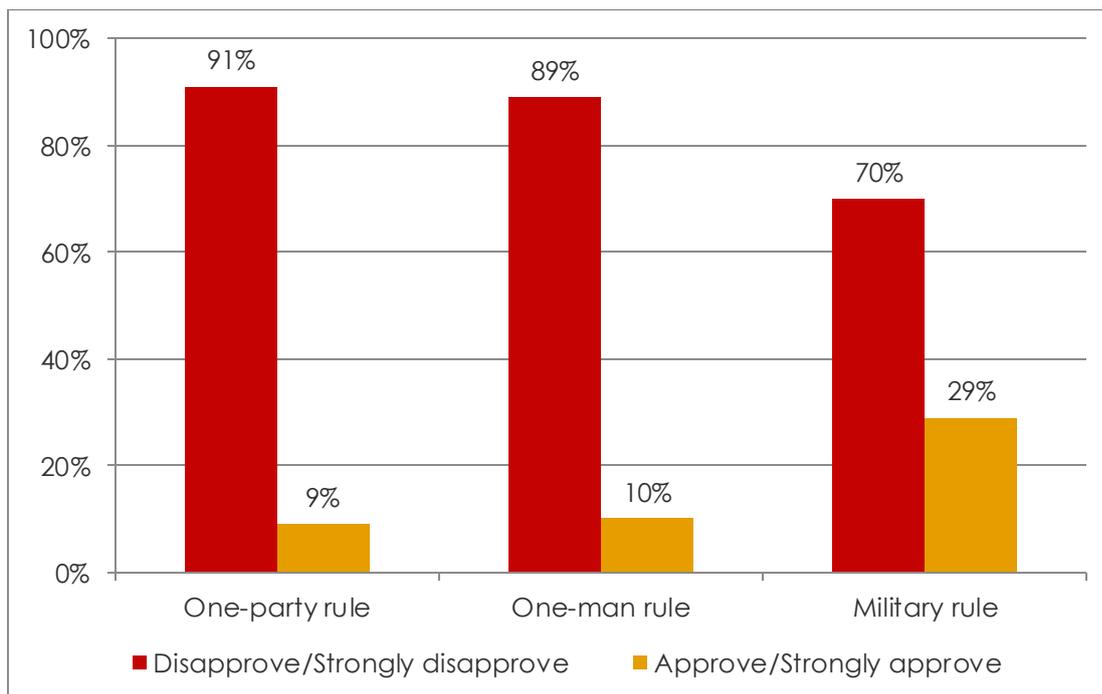
Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It’s easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

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.

The Afrobarometer team in Gabon, led by the Centre de Recherche en Géoscience Politique et Prospective (CERGEP), interviewed 1,200 adult Gabonese citizens in September and October 2015. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. This was the first Afrobarometer survey in Gabon.

Figures

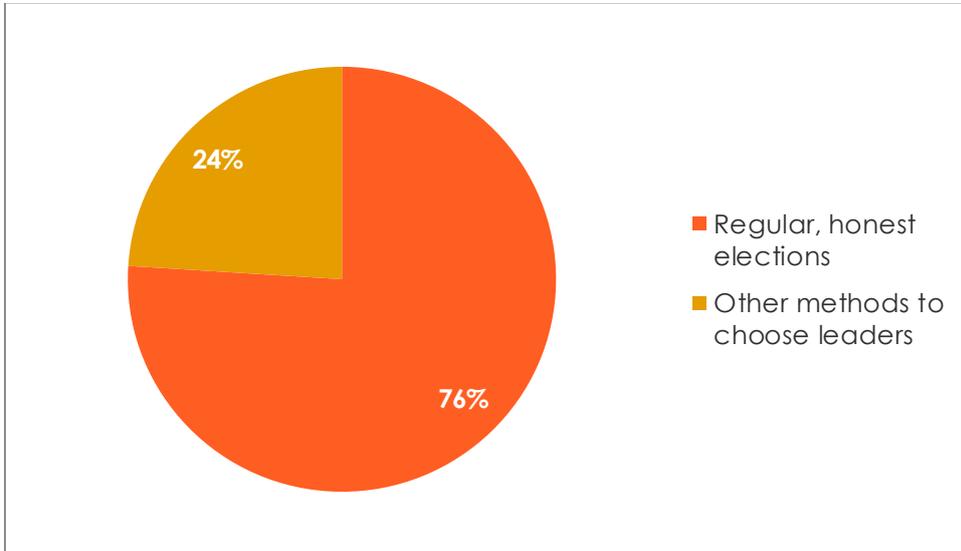
Figure 1: Rejection of non-democratic political systems | Gabon | 2015



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

- A. Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.
- B. The army comes in to govern the country.
- C. Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything.

Figure 2: Elections best method for choosing leaders | Gabon | 2015

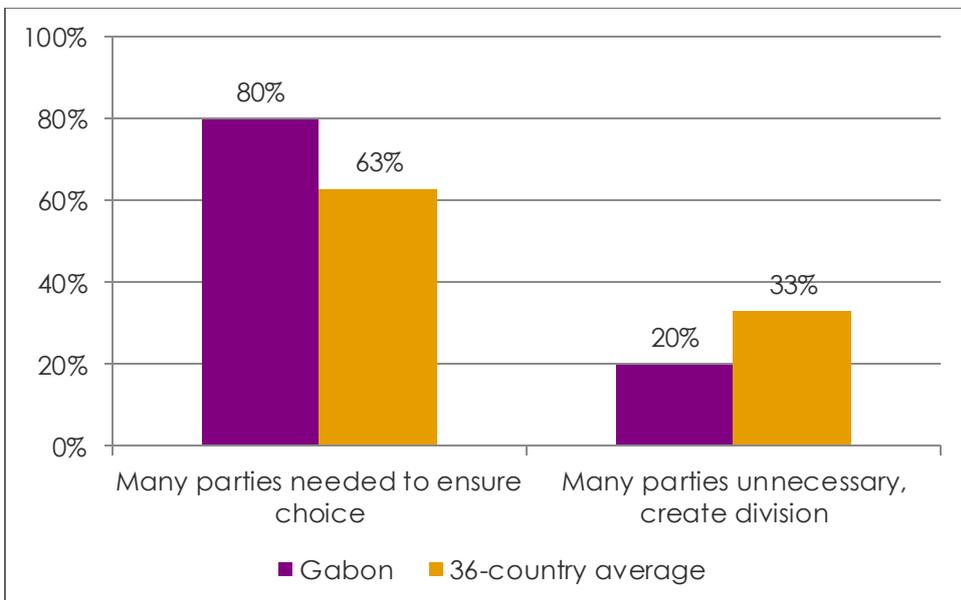


Respondents were asked: Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion?

- Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country 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.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 3: Support for multiparty competition | Gabon vs. 36-country average | 2014/2015



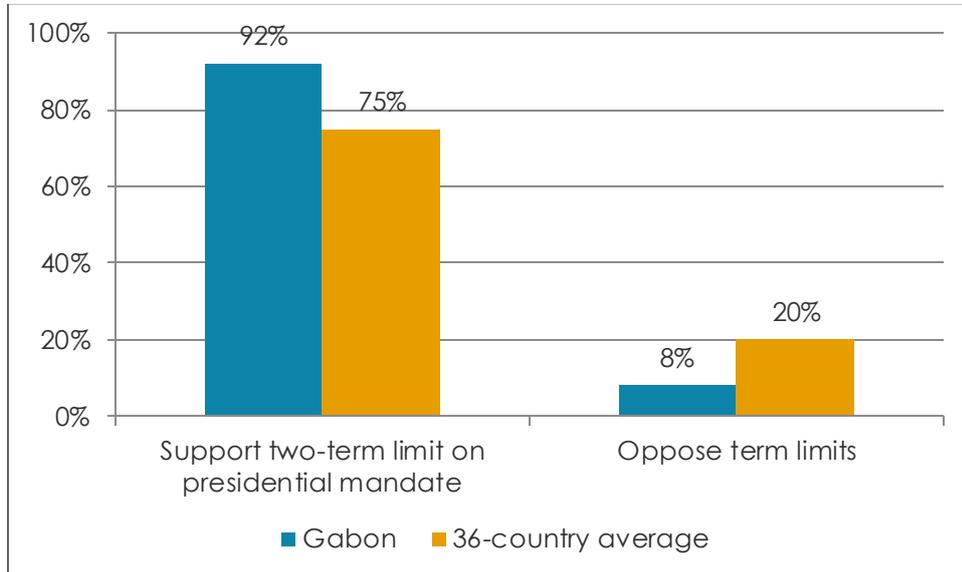
Respondents were asked: Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Ghana.

Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that Ghanaians have real choices in who governs them.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 4: Support for presidential term limits | Gabon vs. 36-country average
 | 2014/2015



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

- Statement 1: The Constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office.
- Statement 2: There should be no constitutional limit on how long the president can serve.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

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