

Libreville, Gabon  
1 September 2016

## News release

---

### **In Gabon, overwhelming public distrust of CENAP and election quality forms backdrop for presidential vote dispute**

Gabon's presidential election dispute is playing out against a background of overwhelming public distrust of the national election commission (CENAP) and strikingly negative assessments of the country's election environment in advance of the August 2016 vote, a new analysis by Afrobarometer shows.

Among 36 African countries surveyed in 2014/2015, Gabon ranks at or near the bottom on every indicator of election quality and fairness, according to citizen responses collected in September and October 2015.

Gabon ranks dead last in public trust in the election commission: A majority (51%) of citizens said they do not trust the CENAP "at all," and only 8% said they trust the commission "a lot."

Gabon also ranks among the worst in citizens' perceptions of the fairness of the vote count, the freeness and fairness of its previous national election (2011), fear of voter intimidation or violence, fair treatment of opposition candidates, and the prevalence of voter bribery. Overall, Gabon citizens held the most negative perceptions of how well elections function to ensure that voters' views are represented and to enable voters to remove leaders who don't do what the people want.

The Gabon findings are part of a new Afrobarometer report, to be released 6 September 2016, on citizens' perceptions of electoral management institutions and the quality of elections. It is based on almost 54,000 interviews in 36 African countries.

The new report, titled "Election quality, public trust are central issues as African nations look toward next contests," will be available at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

#### **Key findings for Gabon**

- A majority (51%) of Gabonese respondents said in late 2015 that they do not trust the CENAP "at all," with 17% who trust it "somewhat," 24% "a little bit," and only 8% "a lot" (Figure 1). Among 36 African countries surveyed in 2014/2015, Gabon ranks last in public trust in the election commission (Figure 2).
- Only 37% of citizens saw their 2011 election as having been "completely free and fair" or "free and fair, but with minor problems." A majority said the 2011 election was "not free and fair" (31%) or "free and fair, with major problems" (24%) (Figure 3).
- On perceptions of the election environment (Figure 4), seven in 10 Gabonese citizens (71%) said that votes are "never" or only "sometimes" counted fairly. Only 15% said the vote count is "always" fair.
- Almost two-thirds (64%) of Gabonese said they fear campaign-related intimidation or violence at least "a little bit," including almost one-fourth (23%) who expressed "a lot" of fear. One-third (32%) said voters are "often" or "always" threatened with violence at the polls.

- A majority (56%) of citizens said that opposition candidates are at least “sometimes” prevented from running for office. One in five (22%) said this happens “often” or “always.”
- Three-fourths (77%) of Gabonese said the news media “never” or only “sometimes” provides fair coverage of all candidates – the worst rating among the 36 surveyed countries.
- Seven in 10 citizens (71%) said that voters are “often” or “always” bribed during Gabon’s elections – far above the 36-country average of 43%.
- Gabon ranks worst among 36 African countries in citizens’ perceptions of how well elections work. More than three-fourths of Gabonese say elections perform “not very well” or “not at all well” to ensure that elected officials reflect the views of voters (76%) or to enable voters to remove underperforming leaders from office (79%).

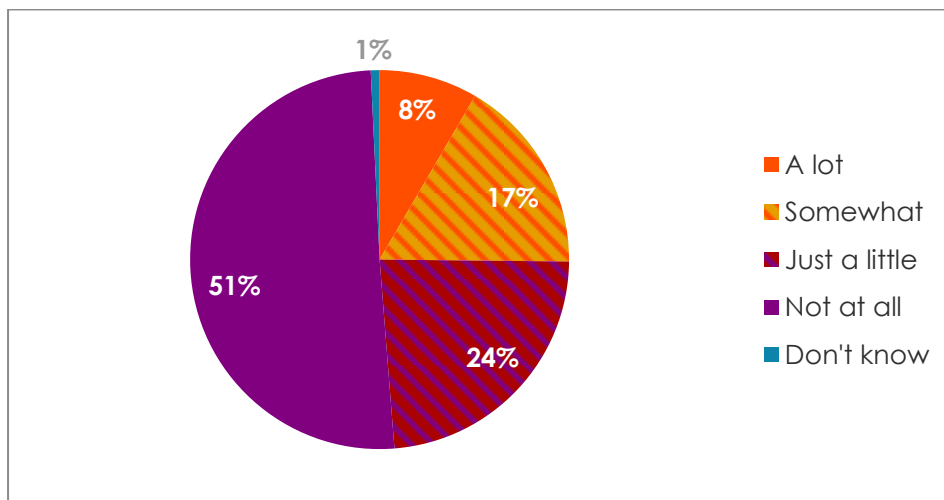
### Afrobarometer

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 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.

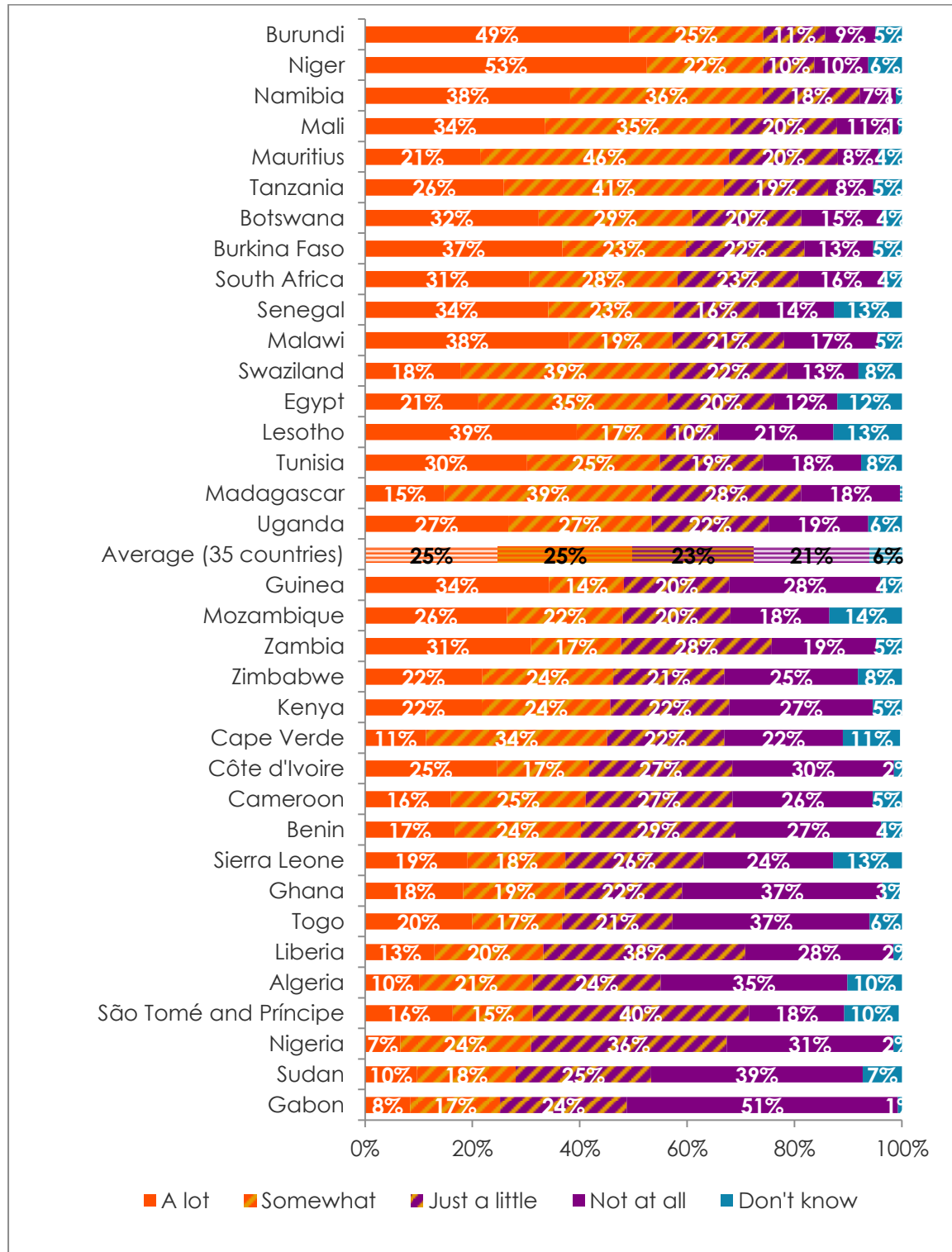
### Figures

**Figure 1: Trust in national electoral commission | Gabon | 2015**



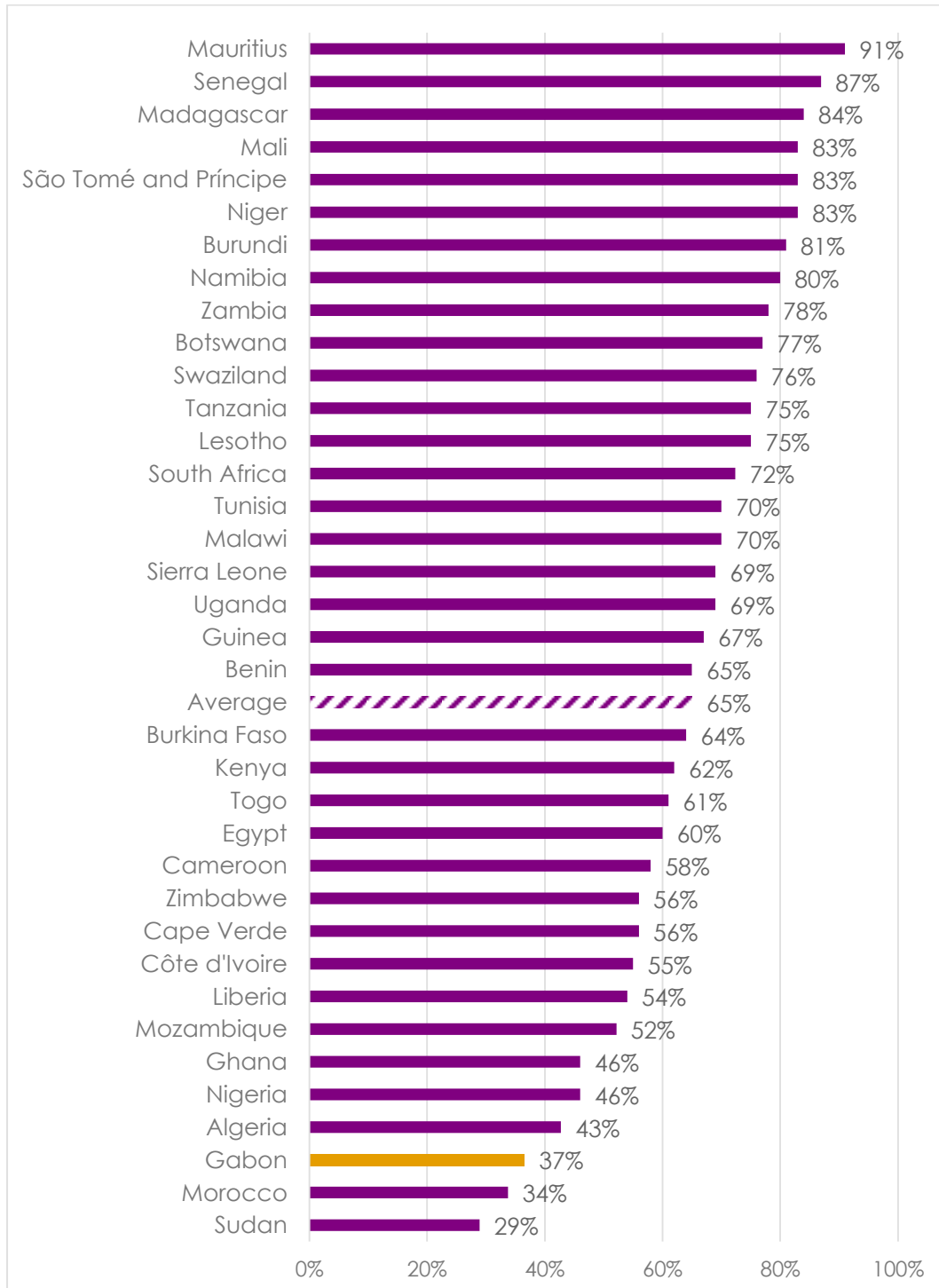
**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: National Electoral Commission?  
 (Note: Due to rounding, categories may not total 100%.)

Figure 2: Trust in national electoral commissions | 35 countries\* | 2014/2015



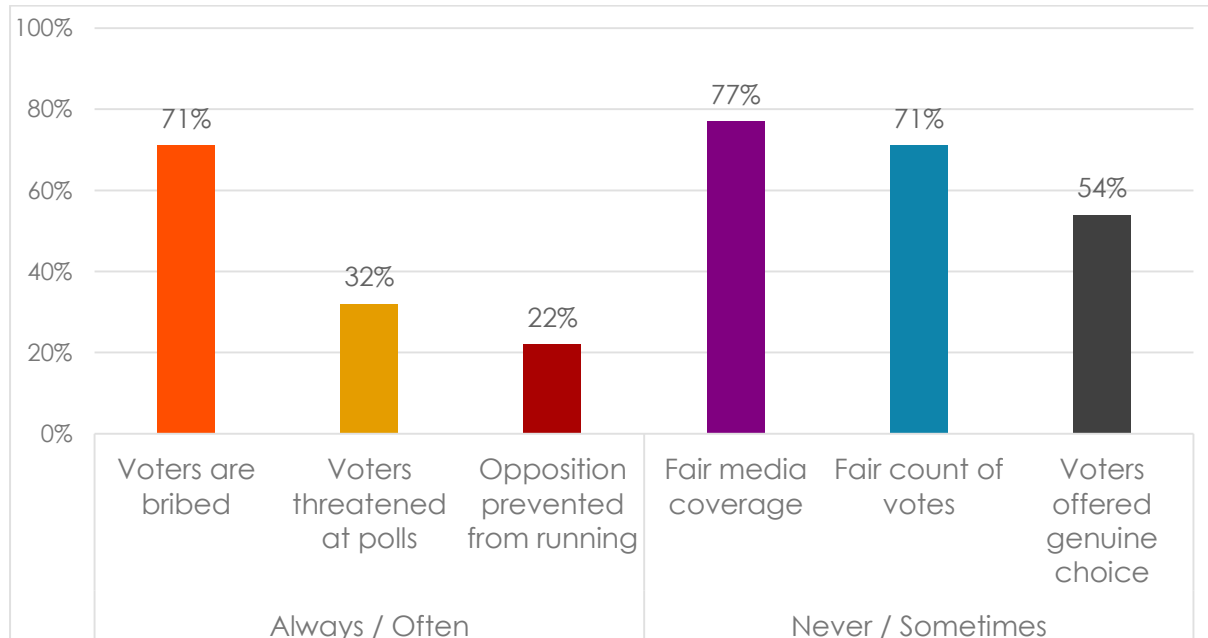
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: National Electoral Commission? (\* Question was not asked in Morocco.)

**Figure 3: Freeness and fairness of elections** | 36 countries | 2014/2015



**Respondents were asked:** *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20xx]?*  
 (% who say "free and fair, but with minor problems" or "completely free and fair")

**Figure 4: Perceptions of the election environment | Gabon | 2015**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections:*

*Voters are bribed?*

*Voters are threatened with violence at the polls?*

*Opposition candidates are prevented from running for office?*

*The media provides fair coverage of all candidates?*

*Votes are counted fairly?*

*Voters are offered a genuine choice in the elections?*

**For more information, please contact:**

Christian Wali Wali

CERGEPE

Telephone: +241 07 06 17 01/ + 241 06 36 83 58

Email: cwalwal@yahoo.fr; cergepgeo@gmail.com

Brian Howard

Afrobarometer

Telephone: +1 713-624-0373

Email: bhoward@afrobarometer.org

Visit us online at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter @Afrobarometer.

Follow our global release updates on #VoicesAfrica on Twitter and Facebook.

**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](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).**