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News release

African democracy update: Democratic satisfaction remains elusive for many

Barely half of citizens in 28 African countries surveyed by Afrobarometer consider their country a “full democracy” or a “democracy with minor problems,” and less than half are satisfied with how their democracy is working, new Afrobarometer findings show.

In observance of International Day of Democracy (September 15), Afrobarometer is releasing a new analysis indicating that the extent to which African countries put democratic ideals into practice varies widely across countries.

On average, citizens' satisfaction with the quality of their democracy has declined since the previous survey round, although some countries have registered major improvements in satisfaction. Free and fair elections and freedoms of speech, association, and electoral choice are far from universal realities, according to survey respondents.

Results of the analysis are detailed in [**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 45**](#), available at www.afrobarometer.org.

Key findings

- On average across 28 countries, a slight majority (52%) of citizens perceive their country to be a full democracy (18%) or a democracy with only minor problems (34%). In 10 of the 28 countries, the more frequently expressed view is that the country is a democracy with major problems or not a democracy at all.
- Compared to the previous round of surveys (Round 5, 2011-2013), satisfaction with democracy declined from 50% to 46% of citizens who say they are “very” or “fairly” satisfied. Satisfaction levels vary substantially across countries, from highs of 72% in Namibia and 68% in Botswana to lows of 26% in Togo and 11% in Madagascar.
- Seven of 10 respondents say their most recent national elections were “completely free and fair” or “free and fair with minor problems.” About nine of 10 citizens in Mauritius (91%) and Senegal (87%) share this view, but only 46% of Ghanaians agree.
- A bare majority (51%) of citizens say they are “completely free” to say what they think. Freedom of speech is perceived as most limited in Swaziland (where only 18% say they are completely free), Togo (26%), and Zimbabwe (27%). Citizens are somewhat more confident in their freedom of political association (61% completely free) and express relatively high confidence in their freedom to vote as they choose (73%).

Afrobarometer

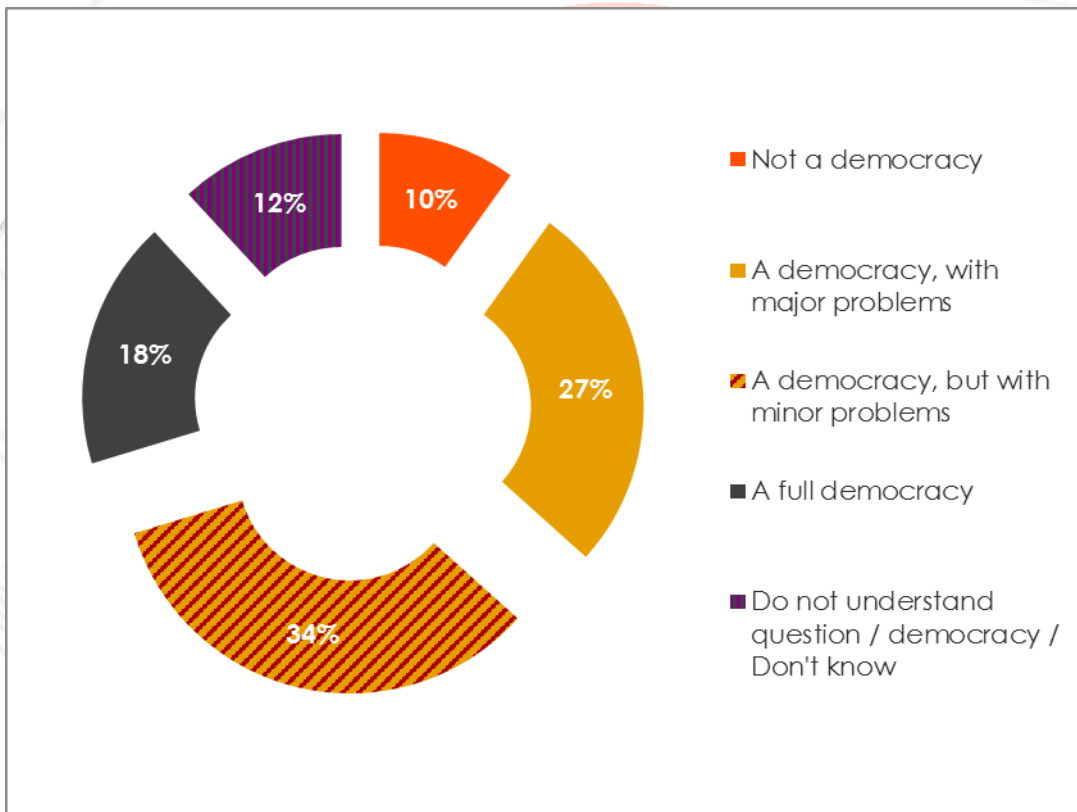
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013,

and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). 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 current analysis presents preliminary findings based on 41,953 interviews completed in 28 countries during Round 6. Interested readers should watch for additional findings on democracy and other topics to be released once Round 6 surveys are completed, starting in October 2015.

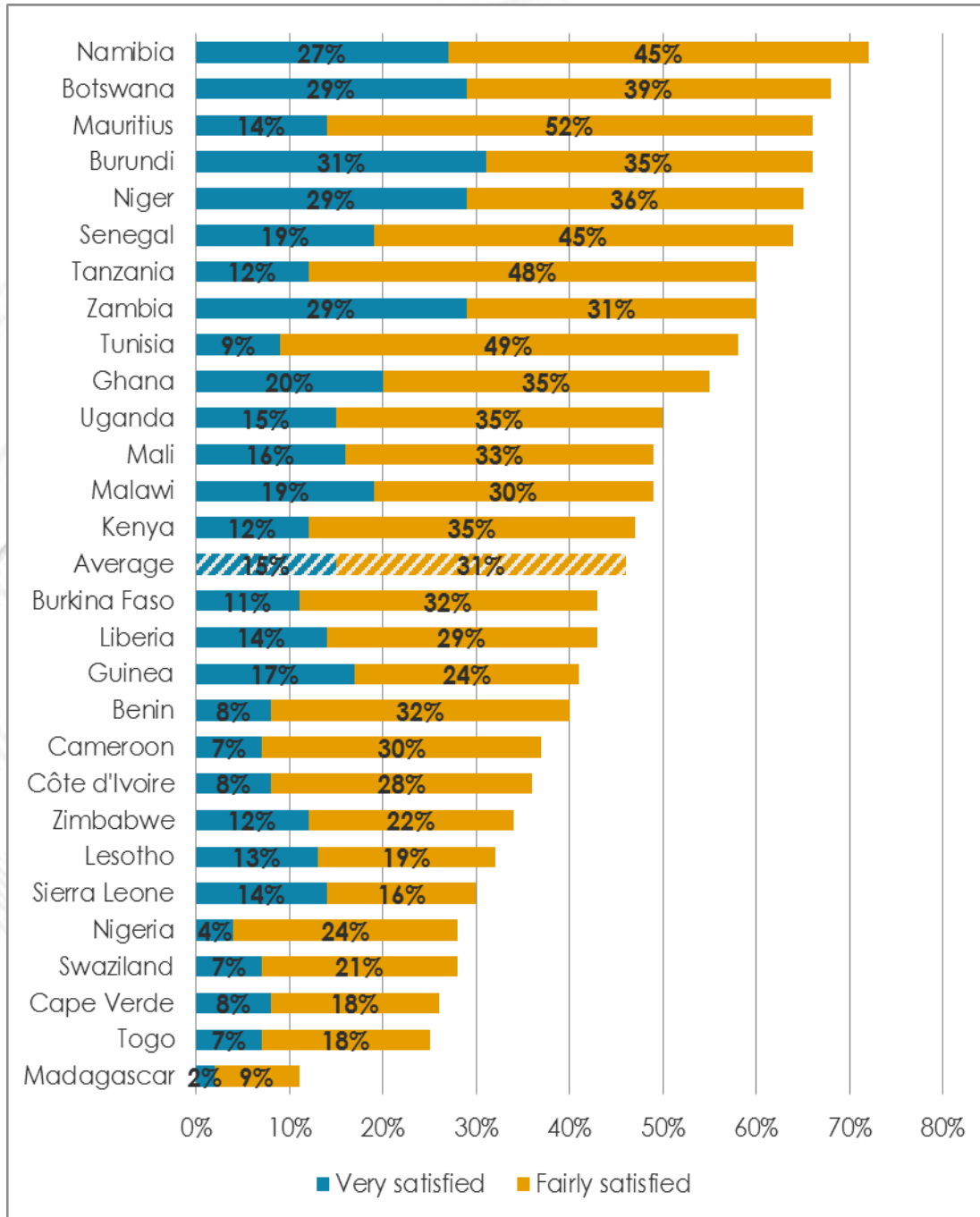
Charts

Figure 1: Extent of democracy | 28 countries | 2014/2015



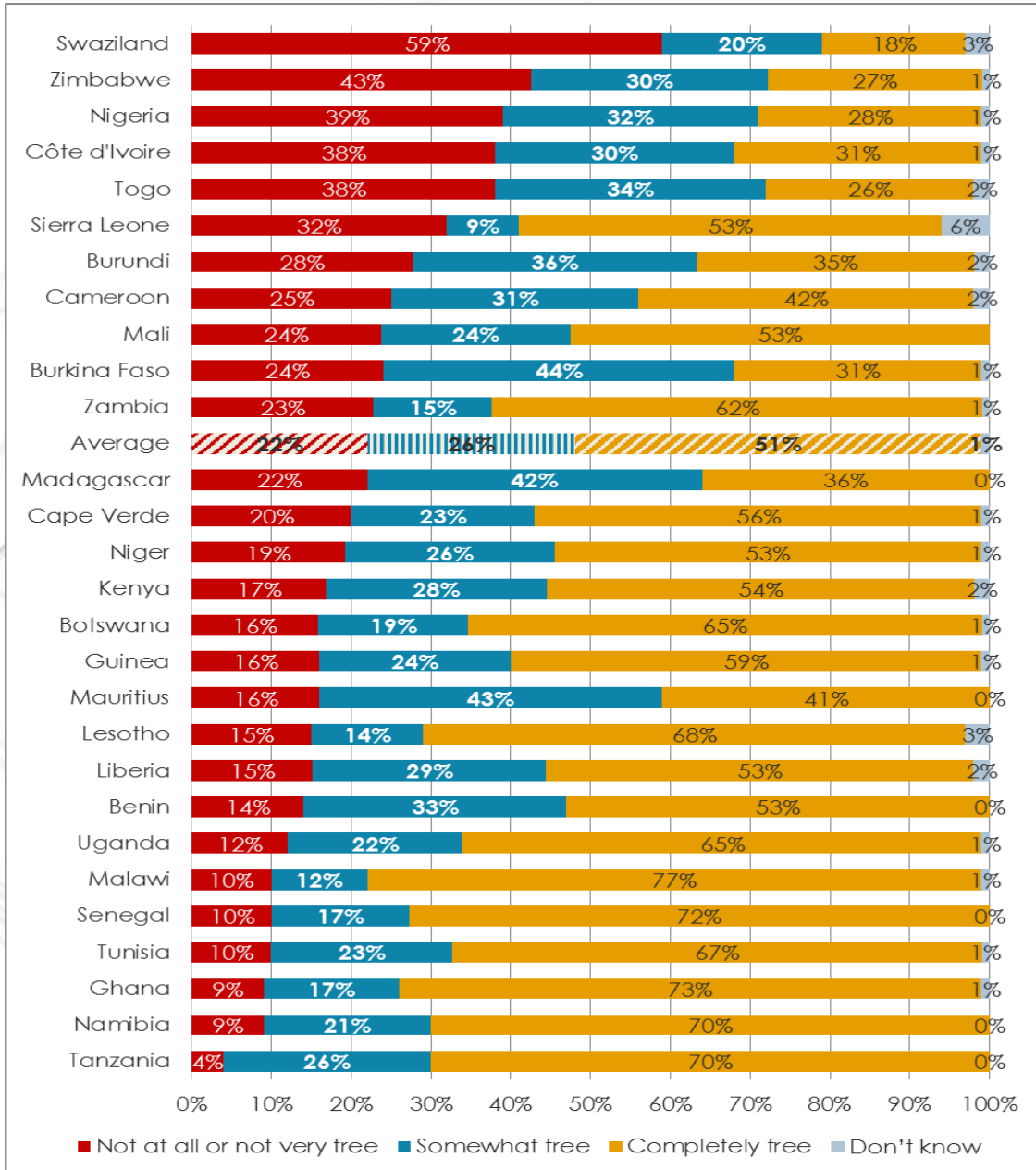
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how much of a democracy is your country today?*

Figure 2: Satisfaction with democracy | 28 countries | 2014/2015



Respondents were asked: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?

Figure 3: Freedom of speech | 28 countries | 2014/2015



Respondents were asked: *In this country, how free are you to say what you think?*

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