



Freetown, Sierra Leone
26 February 2021

News release

In Sierra Leone, support for democracy remains high, but satisfaction with the way democracy works has dropped

Most Sierra Leoneans support democracy and reject authoritarian alternatives, but satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country has dipped, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Among 18 countries surveyed in late 2019 and 2020, Sierra Leone records the second-highest level of support for democracy. Sierra Leoneans' preference for accountable governance has also increased consistently since 2012.

However, compared to 2018, fewer citizens perceive the country as a functioning democracy and are satisfied with the way democracy works in the country. This follows drastic gains on these measures after a new government assumed office in 2018.

Key findings

- Large majorities of Sierra Leoneans prefer democracy to other forms of government (85%) and reject authoritarian alternatives – one-man rule (91%), one-party-rule (87%), and military rule (72%) (Figure 1).
- Among 18 countries surveyed in late 2019 and 2020, Sierra Leone records the second-highest level of support for democracy, 17 percentage points above the continental average of 68% (Figure 2).
- Seven in 10 citizens (71%) say they prefer an accountable government over one that gets things done but doesn't allow for citizen input. Support for accountability has increased by 28 percentage points since 2012 (43%) (Figure 3).
- Seven in 10 Sierra Leoneans (70%) describe the country as a “full democracy” or a “democracy with minor problems,” a marginal decline compared to 2018 (74%) (Figure 4).
 - The perceived extent of democracy in Sierra Leone has been consistently high except for a major dip in 2015 (38%).
- Compared to 2018, the proportion of citizens who say they are “fairly satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the way democracy works in the country has decreased by 10 percentage points, from 66% to 56%, though it remains well above the 2015 level of 29% (Figure 5).

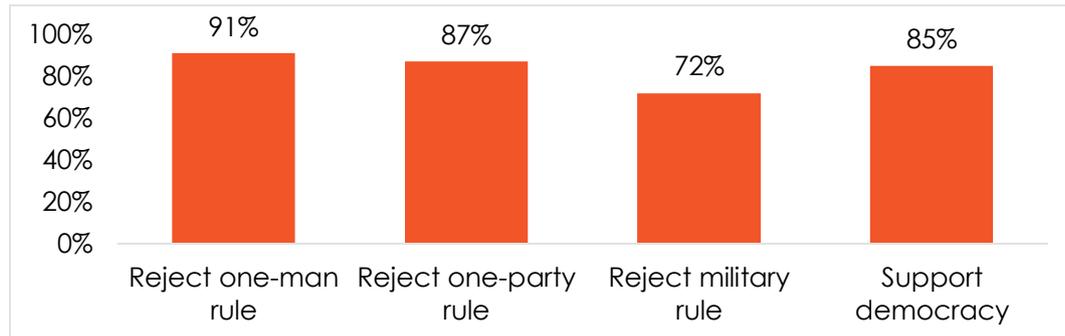
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Sierra Leone, led by the Institute for Governance Reform, interviewed 1,200 adult Sierra Leoneans in March 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Sierra Leone in 2012, 2015, and 2018.

Charts

Figure 1: Demand for democracy | Sierra Leone | 2020



Respondents were asked:

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives:

Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?

Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?

The army comes in to govern the country?

(% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove")

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

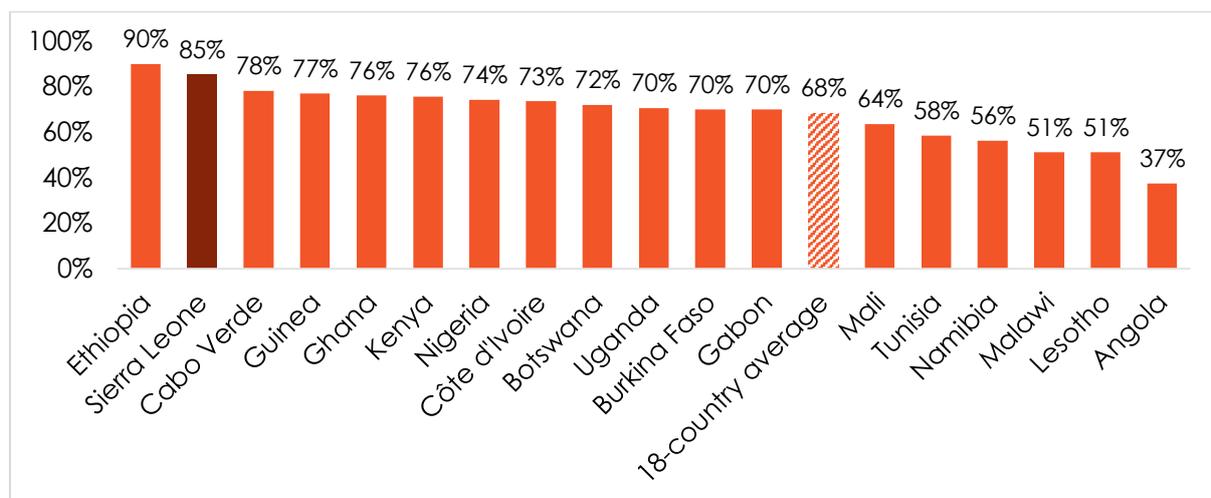
Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances a non-democratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

(% who prefer Statement 1)

Figure 2: Support for democracy | 18 countries | 2019/2020



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

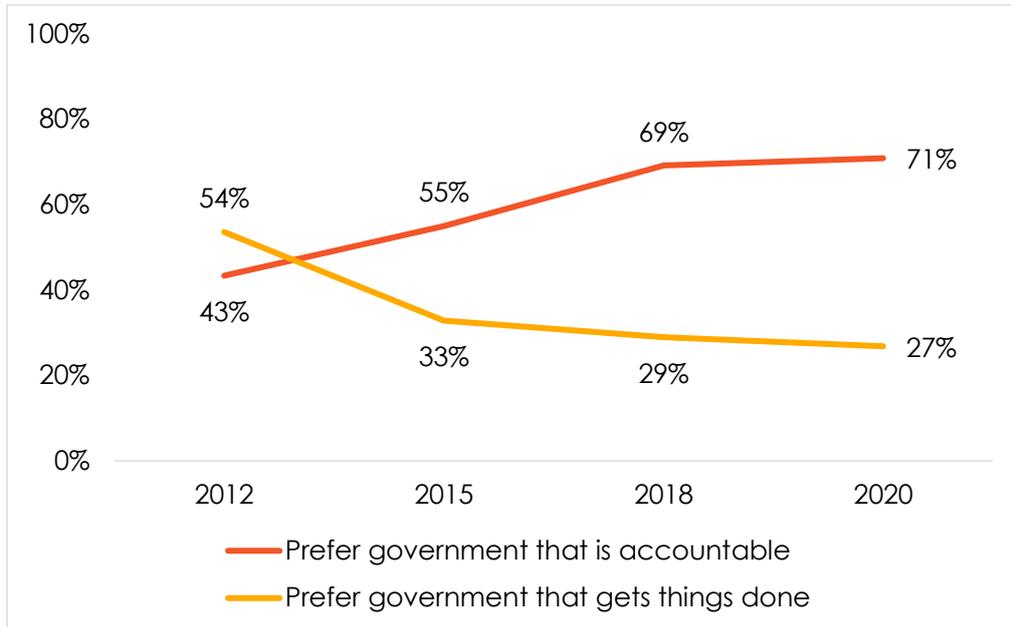
Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

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(% who prefer Statement 1)

Figure 3: Accountable vs. efficient government | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



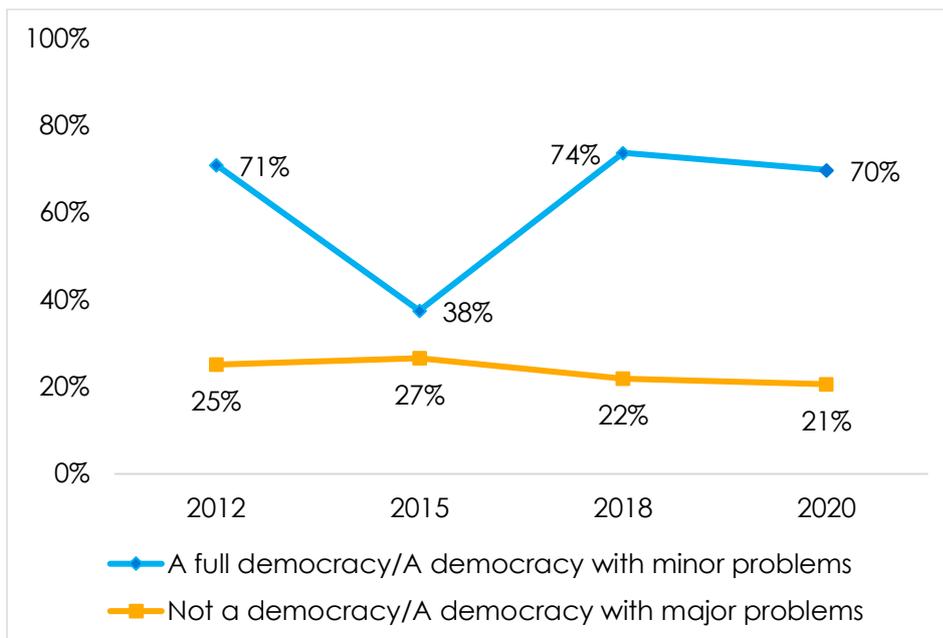
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: It is more important to have a government that can get things done, even if we have no influence over what it does.

Statement 2: It is more important for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, even if that means it makes decisions more slowly.

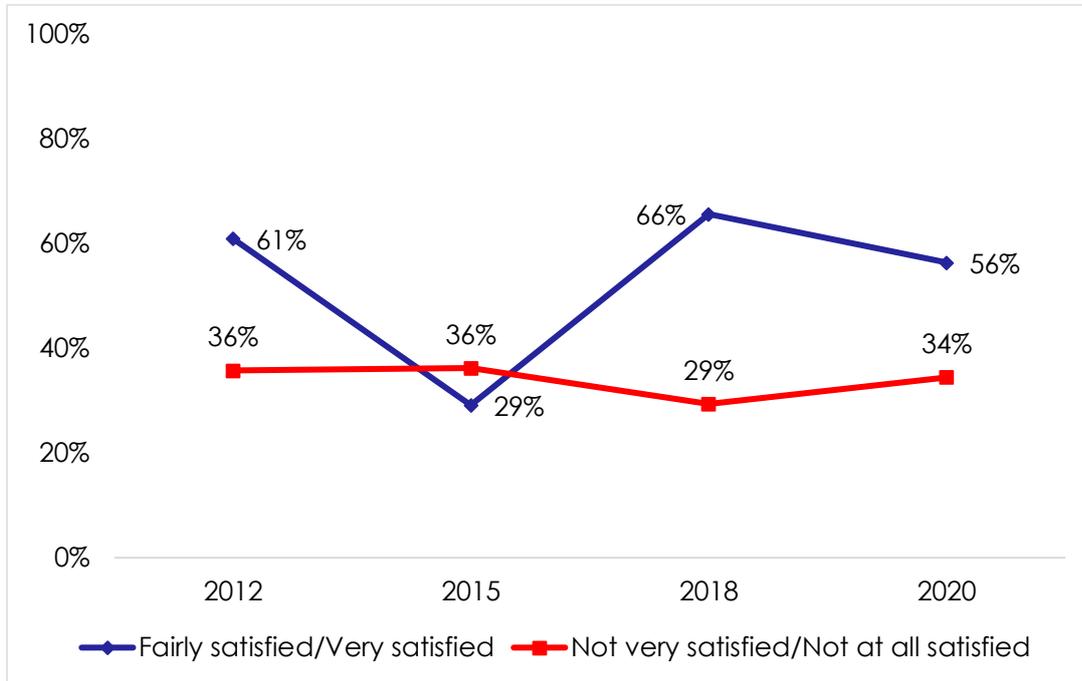
(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 4: Extent of democracy | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



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

Figure 5: Satisfaction with democracy | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



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

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