

Afrobarometer
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News release

Sudanese protests align with democratic aspirations and dissatisfactions of the majority, survey findings show

Mass protests demanding political change in Sudan are consistent with democratic aspirations and dissatisfactions of a majority of the population, Afrobarometer public-opinion survey findings show.

In a survey conducted in mid-2018, Sudanese citizens preferred democracy over non-democratic alternatives by a 3-to-1 margin, and even larger majorities endorsed elections as the best way to choose the country's leaders.

Popular dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Sudan has been consistently high in Afrobarometer surveys in 2013, 2015, and 2018 – long before activists launched massive protests leading to a military coup that ended the 30-year rule of President Omar al-Bashir.

Key findings

- More than six in 10 Sudanese (62%) prefer democracy over any other political system, compared to one in six (17%) who believe that sometimes a non-democratic government can be preferable (Figure 1).
- More than seven in 10 citizens reject one-man rule (72%) and one-party rule (72%). But opposition to military rule is much weaker, at 50%, vs. 41% who “approve” or “strongly approve” of military rule (Figure 2) – the third-highest level of approval among 34 countries surveyed in 2016/2018.
- Only one in four Sudanese (25%) see the country as a functioning democracy, an assessment that has been fairly consistent since 2013. And only three in 10 (30%) are “fairly” or “very” satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, a decline of 8 percentage points since 2013 (Figure 3).
- More than three-fourths (78%) of Sudanese say elections are the best way to choose the country's leaders. But only about one-fourth say they trust the National Elections Commission “somewhat” or “a lot” (22%) and think the most recent national election, in 2015, was generally free and fair (28%) (Figure 4).

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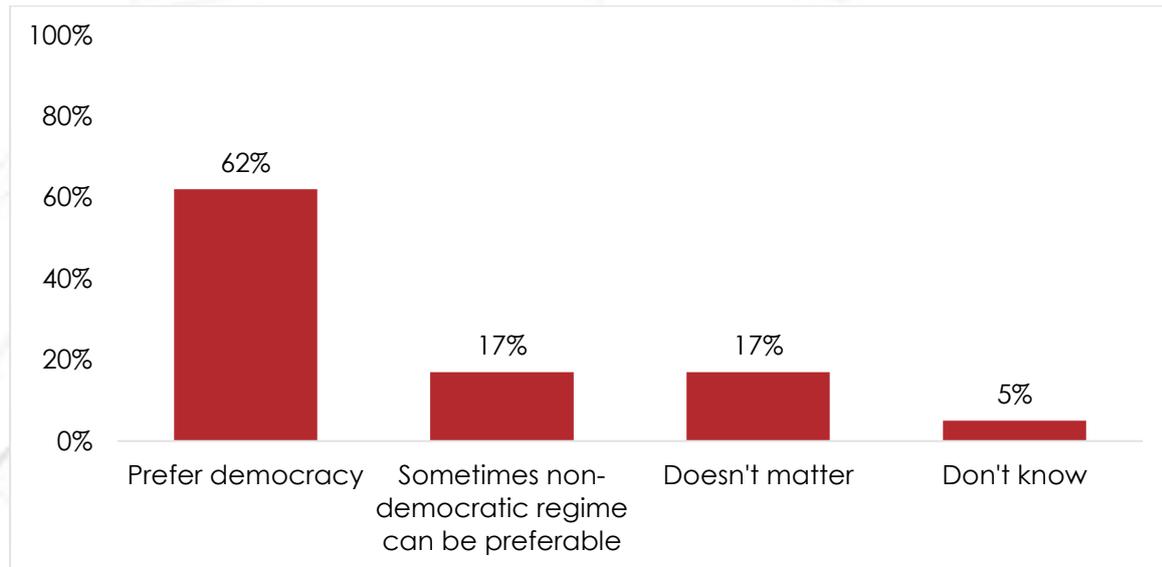
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys were completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Sudan Polling and Statistics Centre interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Sudanese between 22 July and 25 August 2018. A sample of this size yields results
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with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Sudan in 2013 and 2015.

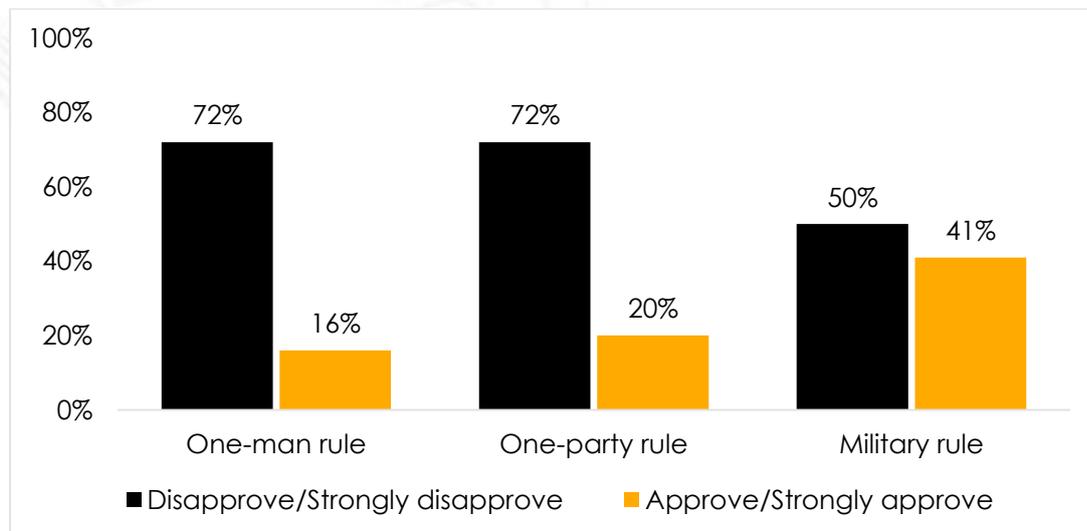
Charts

Figure 1: Popular support for democracy | Sudan | 2018



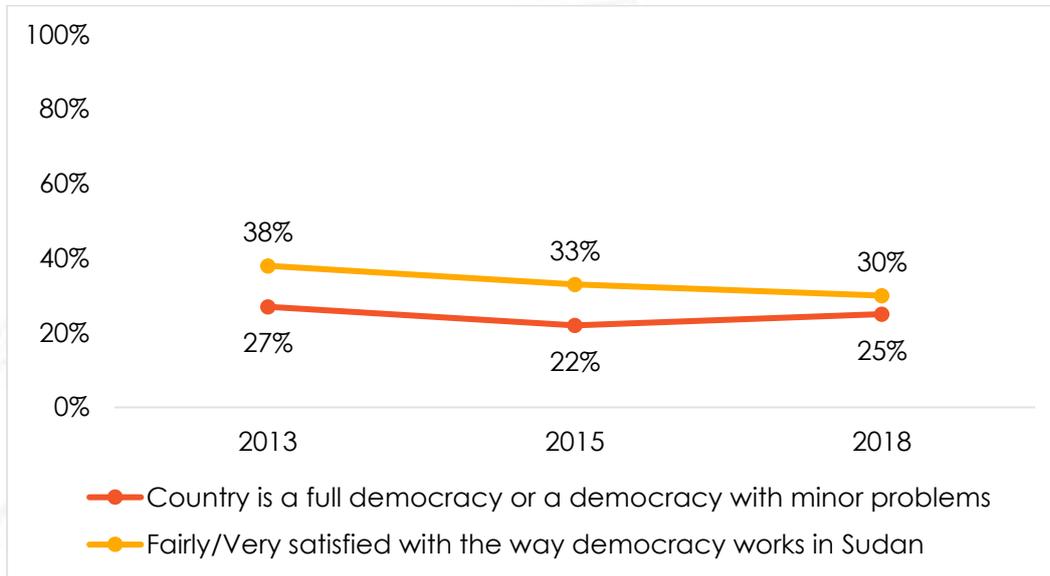
Respondents were asked: Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?
 Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
 Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.
 Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

Figure 2: Views on autocratic alternatives to democracy | Sudan | 2018



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

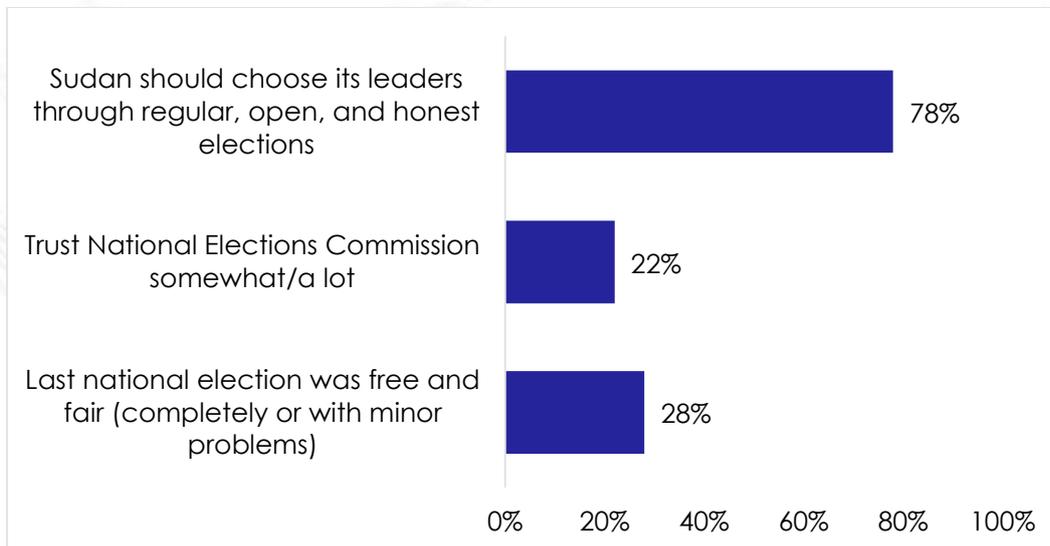
Figure 3: Extent of democracy and satisfaction with democracy | Sudan | 2013-2018



Respondents were asked:

*In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Sudan today?
 Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Sudan?*

Figure 4: Citizen views on elections | Sudan | 2018



Respondents were asked:

*Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 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 Statement 1)
 How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:
 The National Elections Commission?
 On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 2015?*

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