



Popular Attitudes toward Democracy in Zimbabwe: A Summary of Afrobarometer Indicators, 1999-2009

12 November 2009

This document provides a summary of popular attitudes regarding the demand for and supply of democracy in Zimbabwe as revealed over the course of four Afrobarometer surveys conducted between 1999 and 2009 (Oct.-Dec. 1999, N=1200; April-May 2004, N=1104; Oct. 2005, N=1048; May 2009, N=1200). Samples of this size yield a margin of error of +/- 3 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent. The charts that follow capture perceptions of:

- The meaning of democracy;
- The demand for democracy (including individual support for democracy, patience with democracy and rejection of military rule, one-party rule, and one-man rule);
- Support for democratic institutions (including attitudes towards elections, term limits, multi-party rule, and checks on presidential powers); and
- The supply of democracy (including satisfaction with democracy and the perceived extent of democracy, quality of elections and the protection of key freedoms).

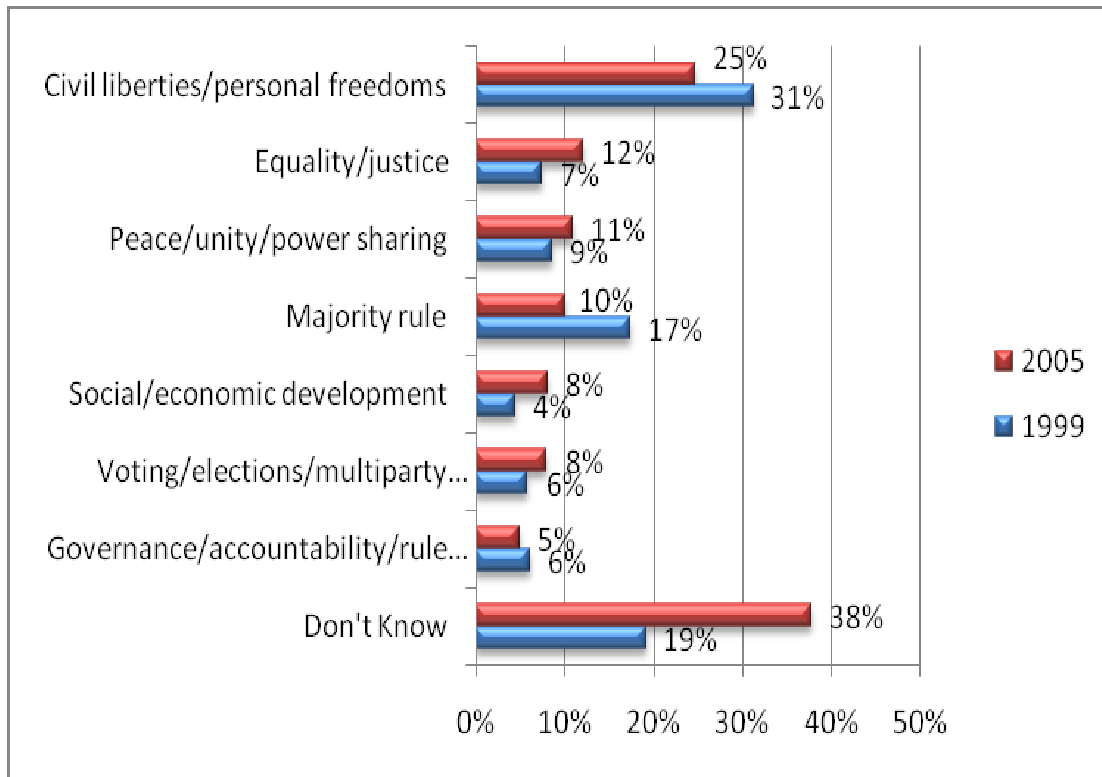
Points of Interest

- With the exception of sharp drop in 2004, support for democracy has remained relatively steady in Zimbabwe, with approximately two-thirds expressing preference for a democratic system of government (2.1).
- Zimbabweans strongly and consistently reject military and one-man rule as legitimate forms of governance (2.2, 2.4). Rejection of one-party rule has wavered over the course of four surveys, but it has always been a solid majority position (2.3).
- Patience with democracy took a sharp dive between 2004 and 2005, but has now risen sharply, reflecting the considerable hopes placed in the formation of the coalition government (2.5).
- Large majorities support elections, term limits, the rule of law, and even multiparty competition despite the violence that has accompanied recent elections (3.1-3.3, 3.5).
- The vast majority of Zimbabweans are supportive of parliament and the media holding the government accountable, yet only a minority feels that opposition parties should do the same (3.6-3.8).
- The perceived supply of democracy is extraordinarily low on every indicator. No more than one in three respondents have ever felt that Zimbabwe was a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems over the past ten years, and even fewer have expressed satisfaction with democracy (4.1-4.2).
- Importantly, fewer than half of Zimbabweans have offered positive ratings of the quality of their elections, although there has been steady improvement on this indicator (4.3).
- Assessments of the extent of freedoms of speech and association are mixed, though Zimbabweans express greater confidence in their freedom to vote as they choose (4.5-4.10).

MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

1.1 Variable: Meaning of democracy

Question: What if anything does democracy mean to you?



**Respondents could offer up to three meanings. Figures shown are the percentage of all substantive responses offered.*

DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY

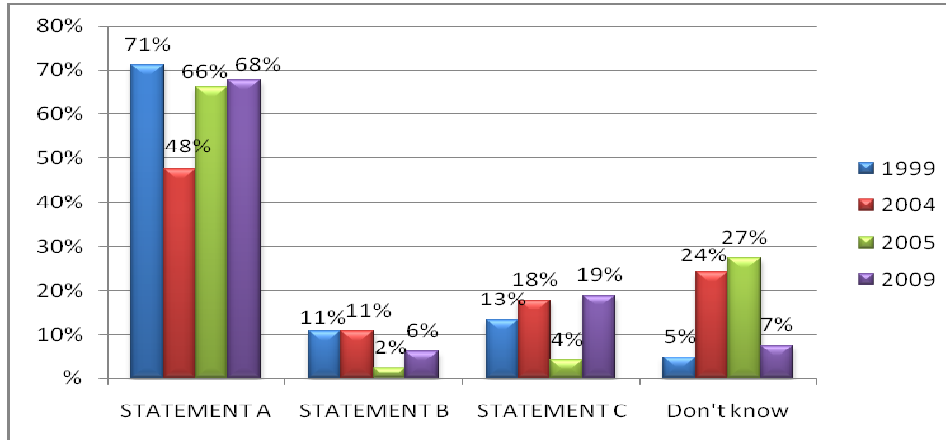
2.1 Variable: Support for democracy

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

A: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

B: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

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



2.2 Variable: Reject military rule

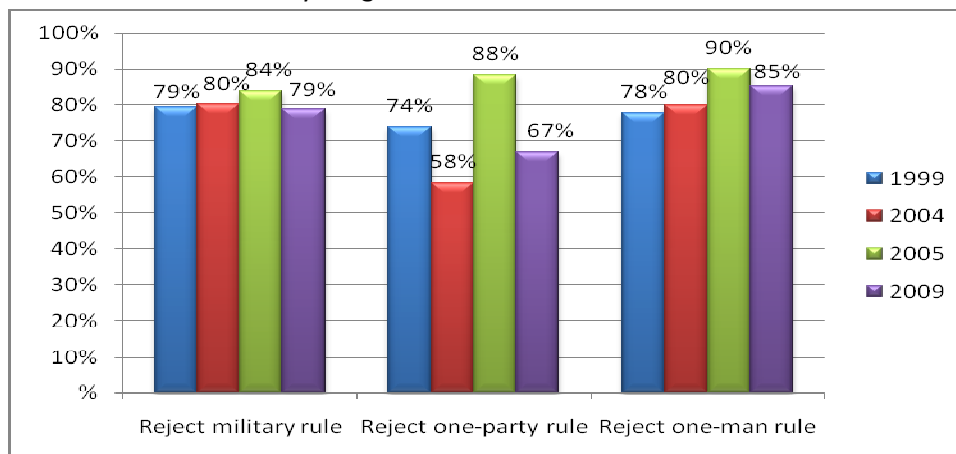
Question: There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: The army comes in to govern the country?

2.3 Variable: Reject one-party rule

Question: There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?

2.4 Variable: Reject one-man rule

Question: There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: Elections and Parliament/National Assembly are abolished so that the President/Prime Minister can decide everything?



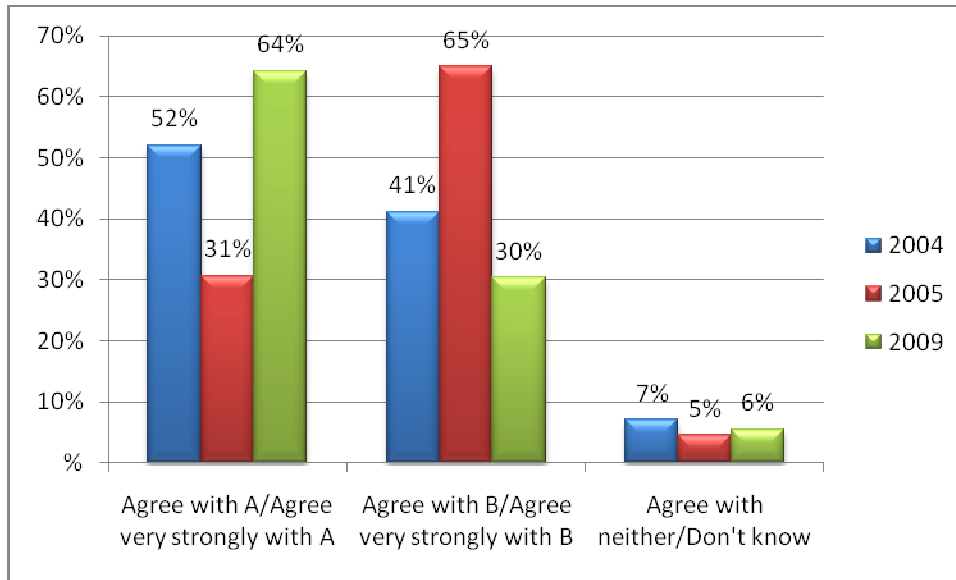
(Percent who disapprove/strongly disapprove of military rule, one-party rule and one-man rule)

2.5 Variable: Patience with democracy

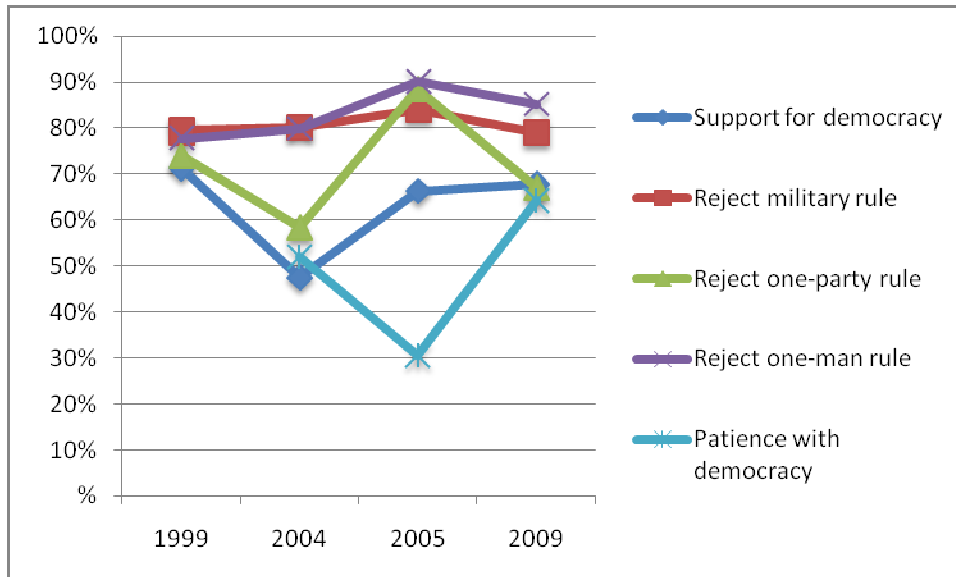
Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems.

B: If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government.



Summary of demand for democracy



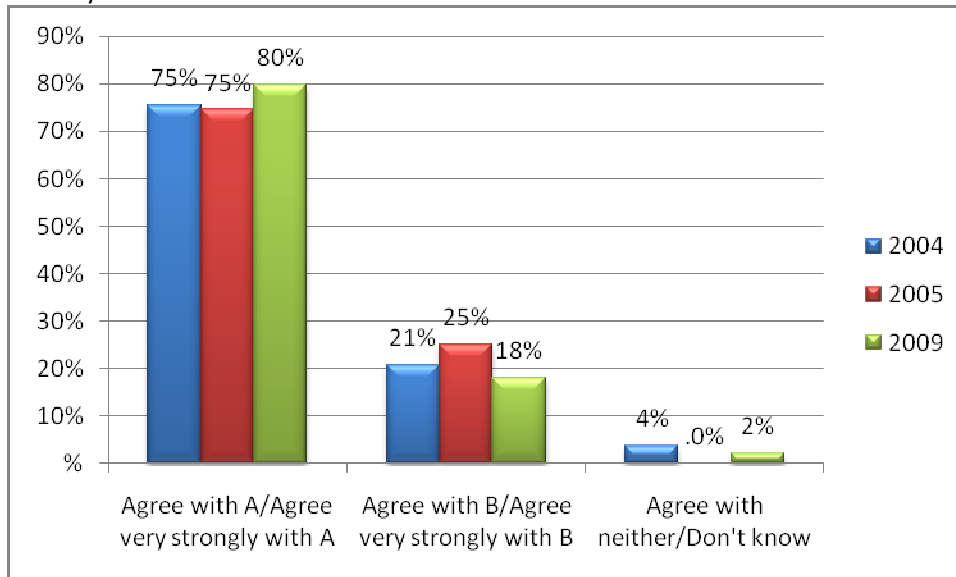
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

3.1 Variable: Choose leaders through elections vs. try another form

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections.

B: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.

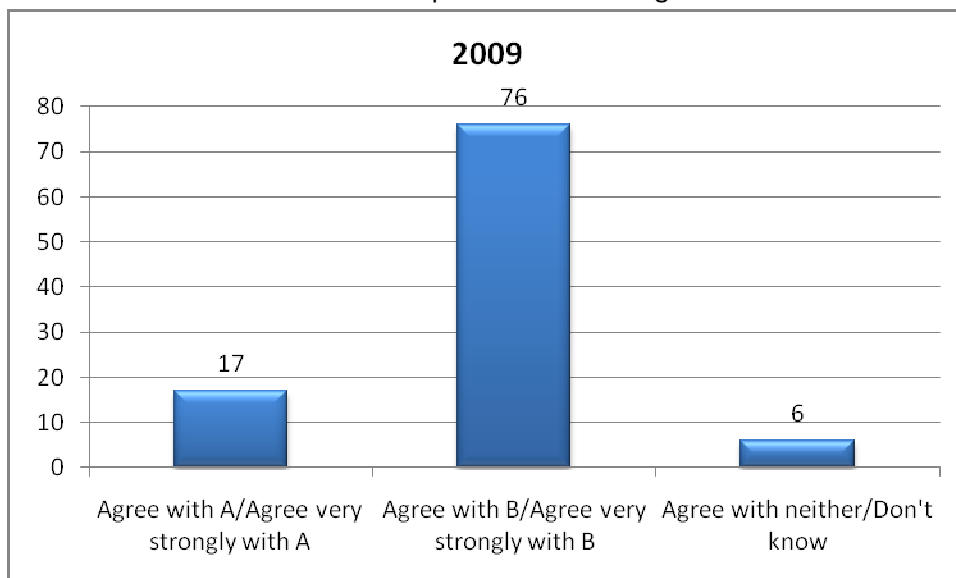


3.2 Variable: No term limits for the president vs. two terms only

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: There should be no constitutional limit on how long the president can serve.

B: The constitution should limit the president to serving a maximum of two terms in office.

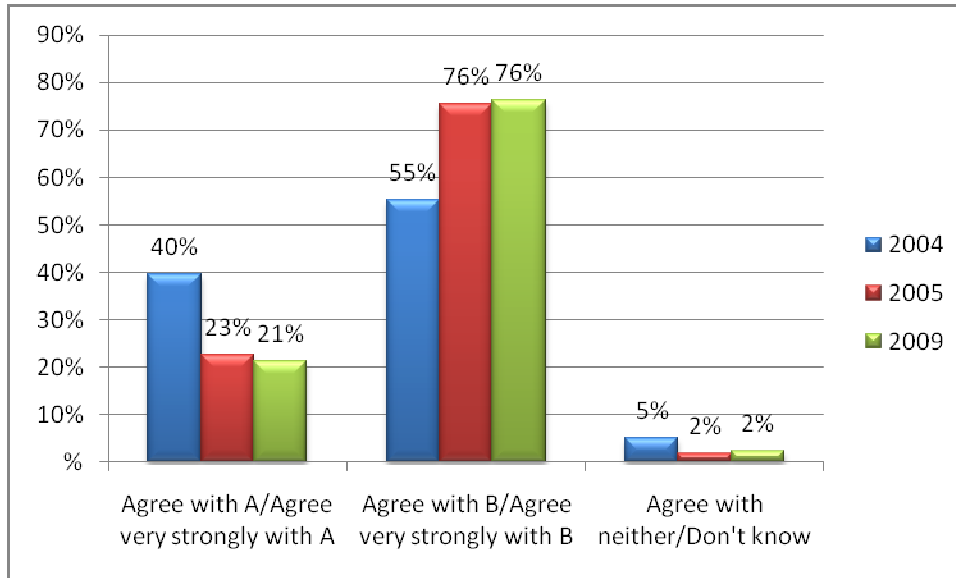


3.3 Variable: Political parties divisive vs. many parties needed

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Zimbabwe.

B: Many political parties are needed to make sure that Zimbabweans have real choices in who governs them.

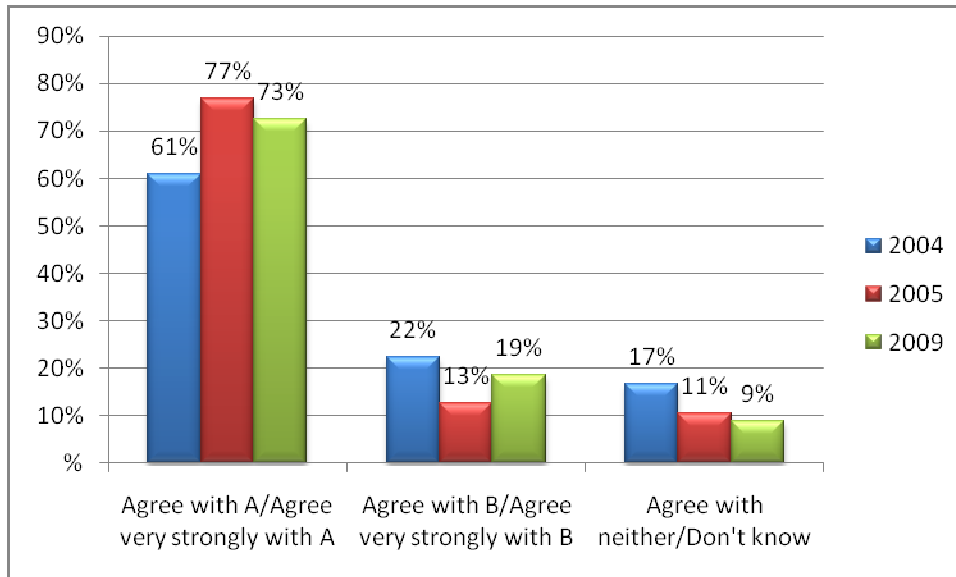


3.4 Variable: Parliament makes laws vs. President does

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: The members of Parliament/National Assembly represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President/Prime Minister does not agree.

B: Since the President/Prime Minister represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the Parliament/National Assembly thinks.

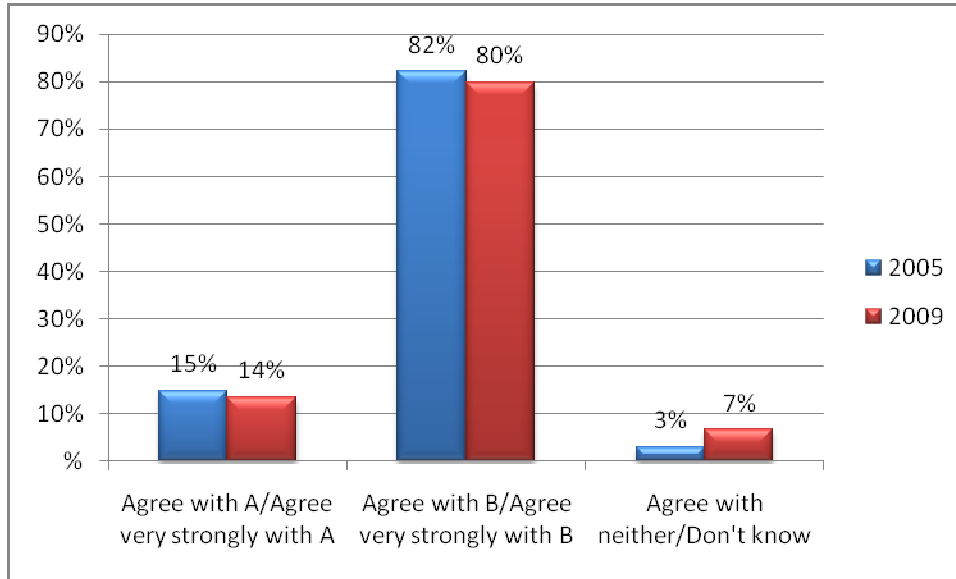


3.5 Variable: President free to act vs. obey the laws and courts

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Since the President/Prime Minister was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.

B: The President/Prime Minister must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.

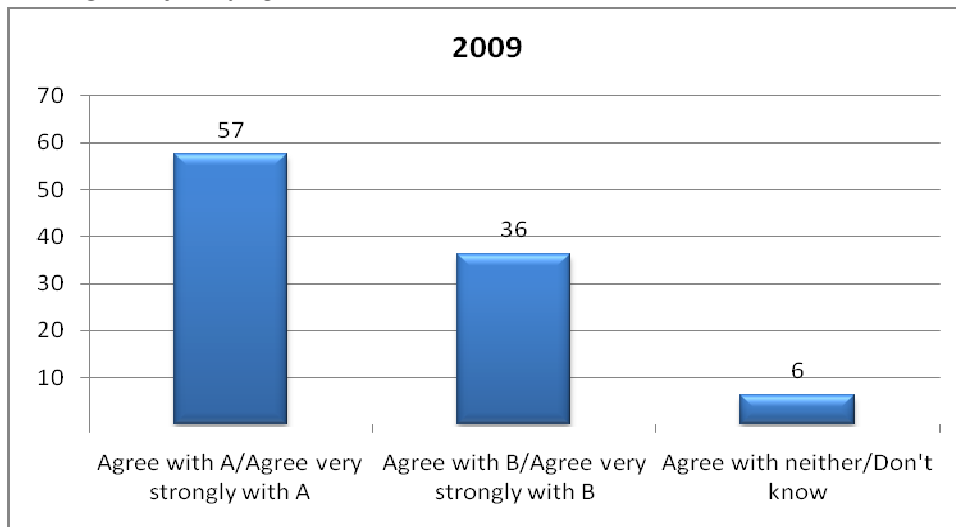


3.6 Variable: Parliament monitors President vs. cooperate

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Parliament should ensure that the president explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends the taxpayers' money.

B: The President should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.

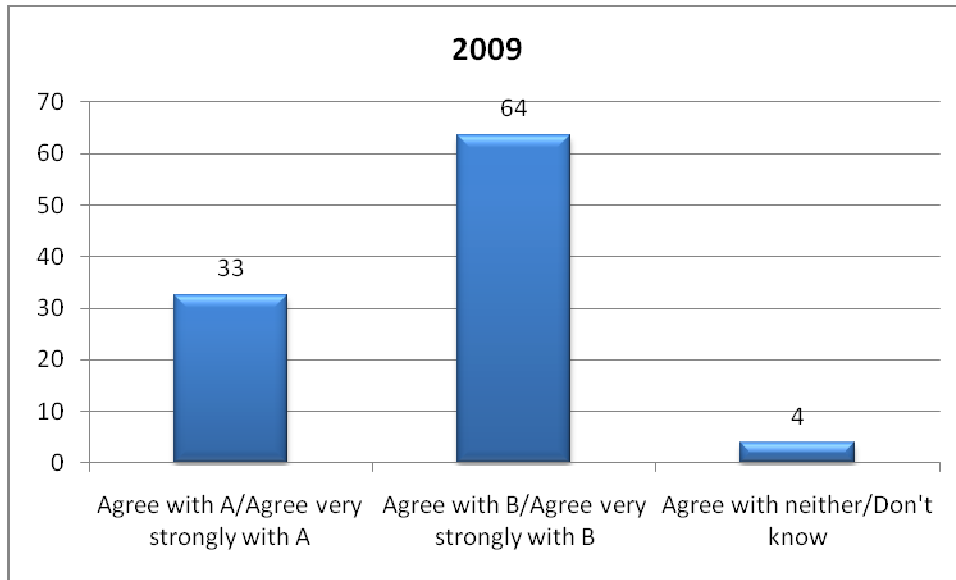


3.7 Variable: Opposition parties examine government vs. cooperate

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: Opposition parties should regularly examine and criticize government policies and actions.

B: Opposition parties should concentrate on cooperating with government and helping it develop the country.

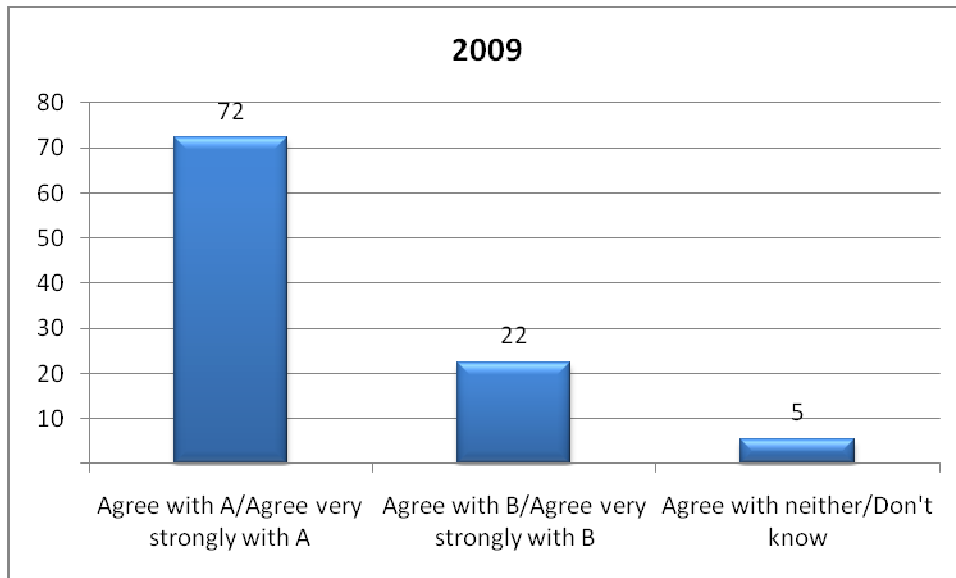


3.8 Variable: Media examines government vs. cooperate

Question: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Statement A or Statement B.

A: The news media should constantly investigate and report on corruption and the mistakes made by the government.

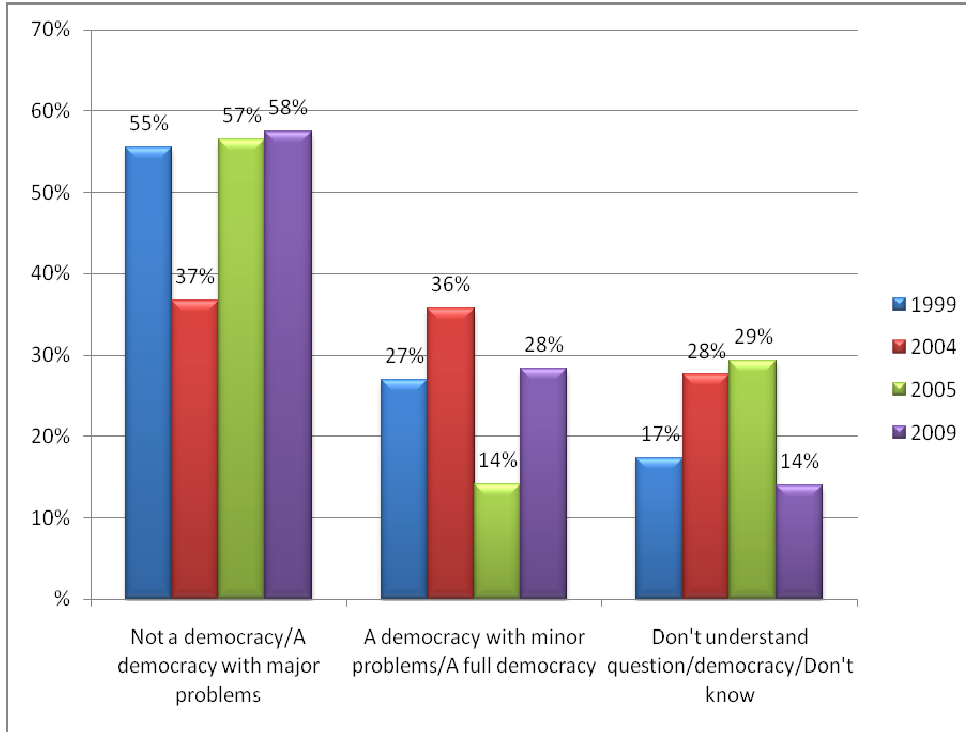
B: Too much reporting on negative events, like corruption, only harms the country.



SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY

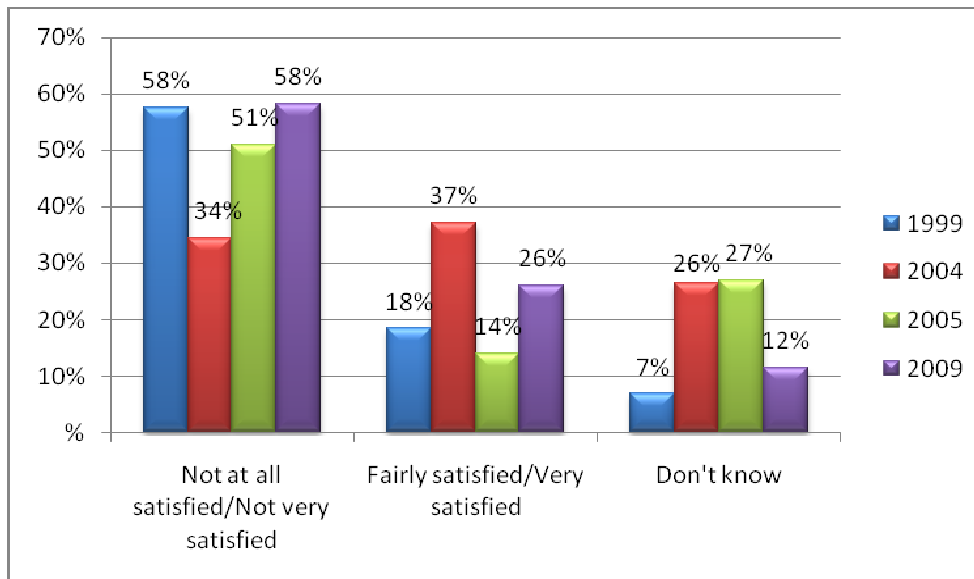
4.1 Variable: Extent of Democracy

Questions: In your opinion how much of a democracy is Zimbabwe today?



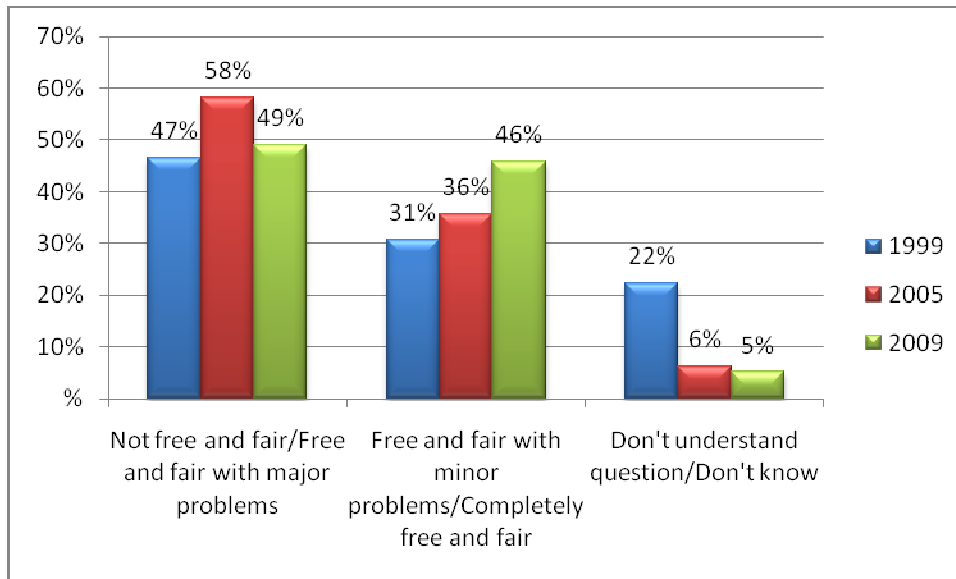
4.2 Variable: Satisfaction with democracy

Question: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Zimbabwe?



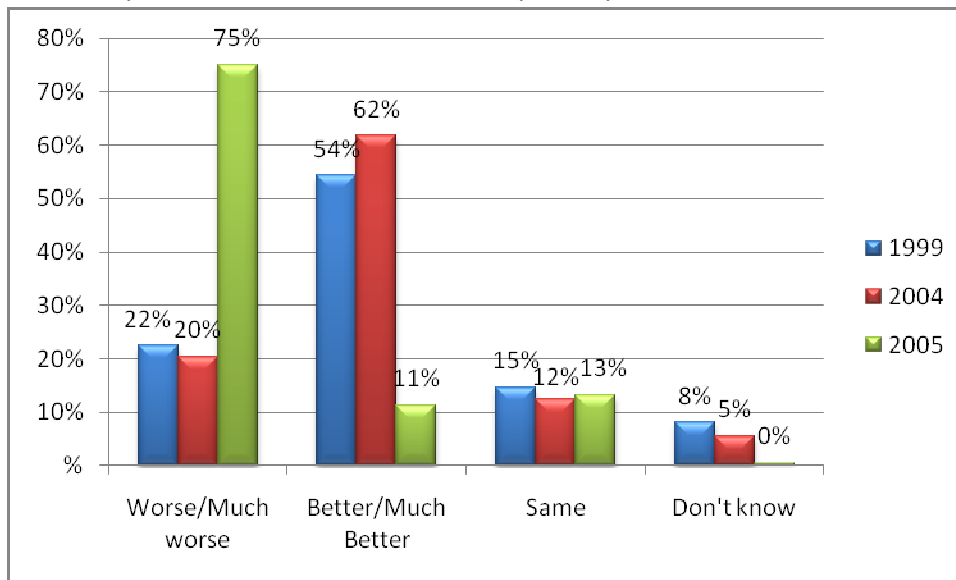
4.3 Variable: Elections free and fair

Question: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20xx]. Was it:



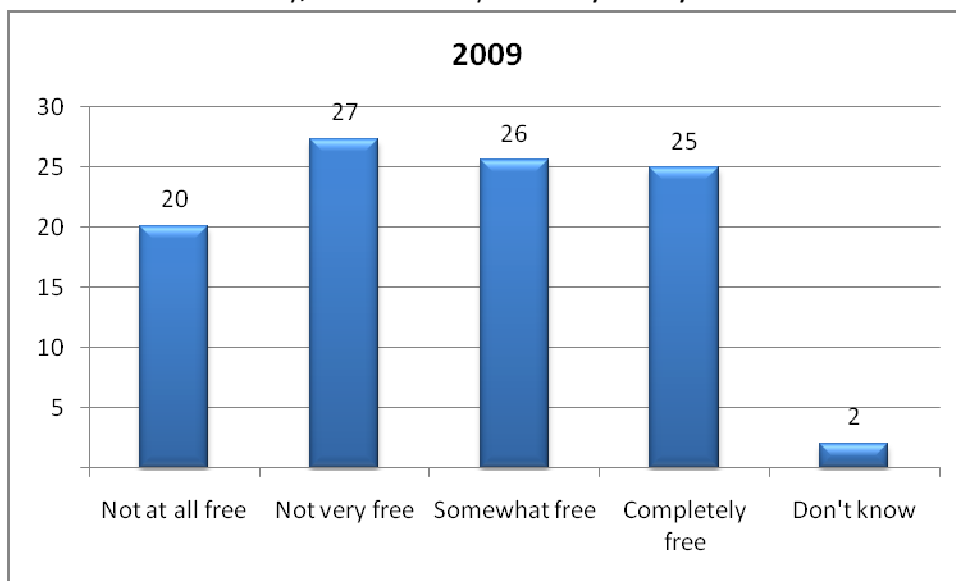
4.5 Variable: Freedom of speech (1999-2005)

Question: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to say what you think?



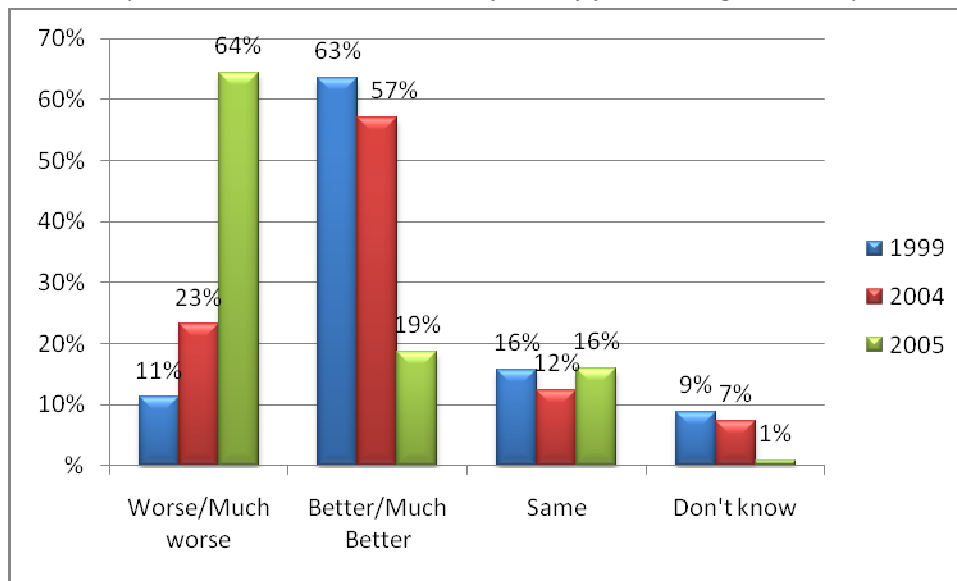
4.6 Variable: Freedom of speech (2009)

Question: In this country, how free are you: to say what you think?



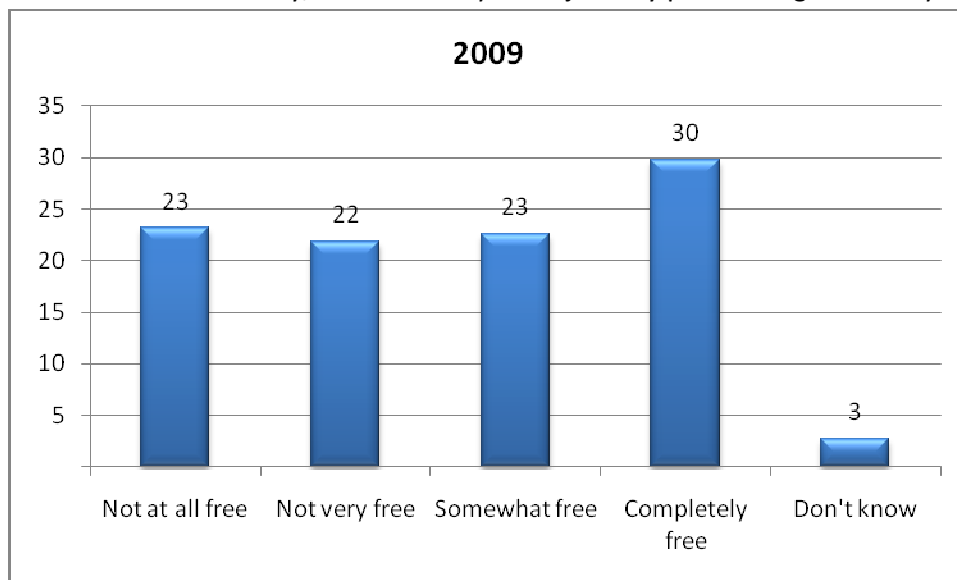
4.7 Variable: Freedom of association (1999-2005)

Question: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to join any political organization you want?



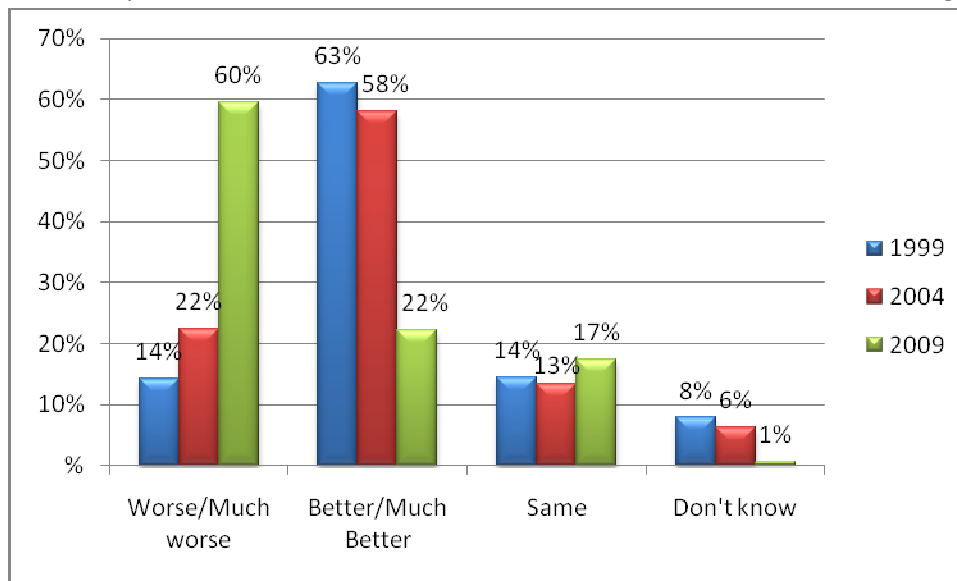
4.8 Variable: Freedom of association (2009)

Question: In this country, how free are you: to join any political organization you want?



4.9 Variable: Voting freedom (1999-2005)

Question: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?



4.10 Variable: Voting freedom (2009)

Question: In this country, how free are you: to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?

