

Abuja, Nigeria
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News release

Nigerians want competitive elections but don't trust the electoral commission

A majority of Nigerians believe that elections are the best method to choose their leaders, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey. But as they approach their presidential election in February, fewer than one-fourth of citizens say they trust the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Large majorities of survey respondents say that multiple political parties are needed to provide voters a genuine choice and that once elections are over, the losing side should accept defeat and work with the government to help the nation flourish.

While a majority of citizens believe that the last national election in 2019 was generally free and fair, popular trust in the INEC – the institution responsible for ensuring a free and fair election – is declining.

Key findings

- Most Nigerians (71%) support elections as the best way to choose their leaders (Figure 1).
- A similarly clear majority (69%) say Nigeria needs many political parties to ensure that voters have a real choice, a 13-percentage-point rebound from 2020 (Figure 2).
- More than three-fourths (78%) of respondents say that once an election is over, the losing side should accept defeat and cooperate with the government to help it develop the country, rather than monitoring and criticising it (Figure 3).
- A majority (56%) of respondents say the last national election, in 2019, was generally free and fair, but almost four in 10 (38%) believe otherwise (Figure 4).
- Only 23% of Nigerians say they trust the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) “somewhat” or “a lot,” while more than three-fourths (78%) express “just a little” or no trust at all in the election-management body (Figure 5).
 - Trust in the INEC has declined by 12 percentage points since 2017 (Figure 6).

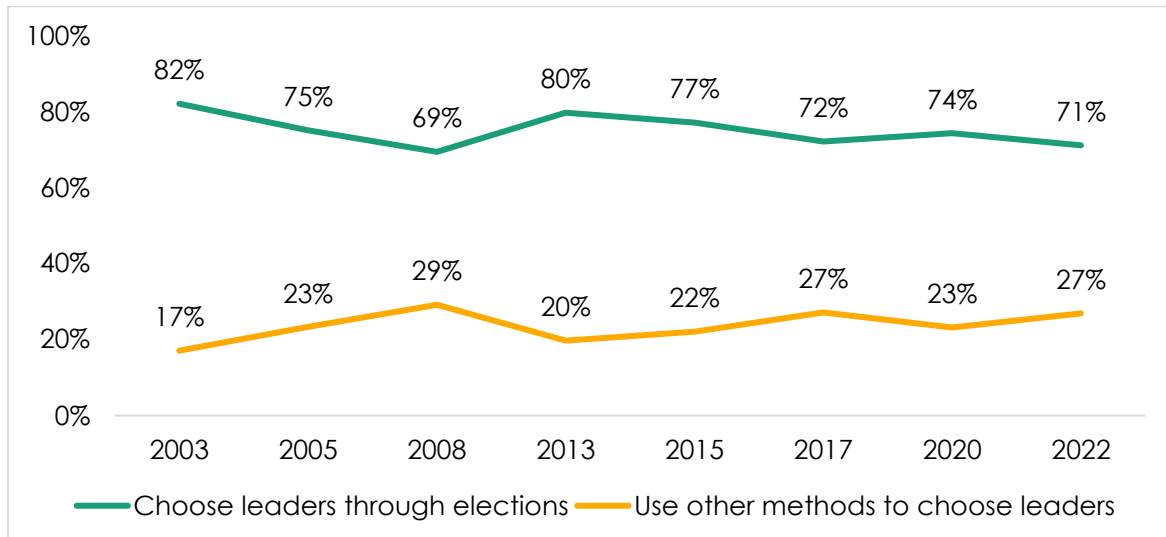
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2022) are currently underway. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Nigeria, led by NOIPolls, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,600 adult citizens in March 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Nigeria in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2020.

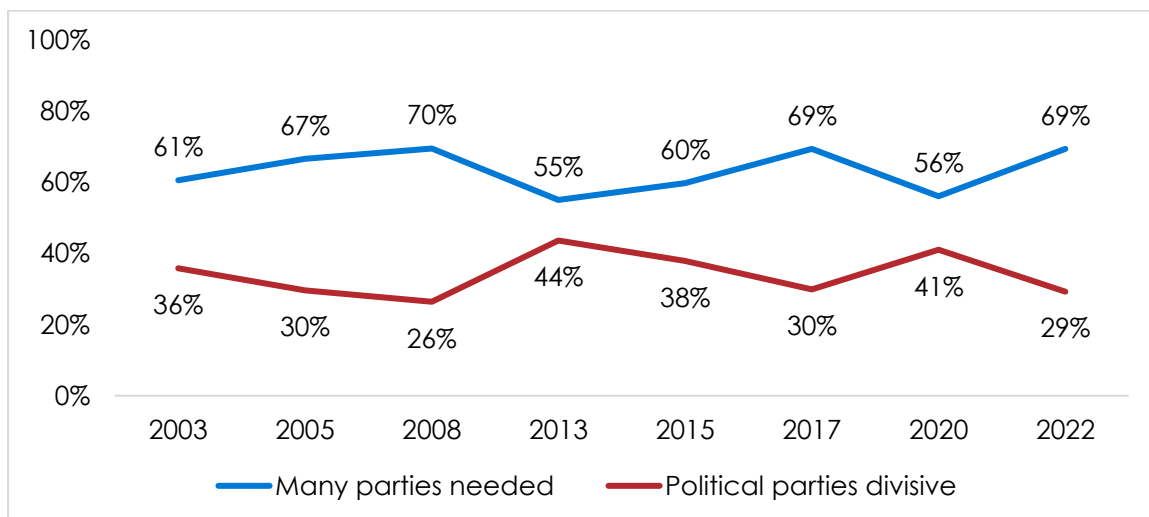
Charts

Figure 1: Support for elections as the best way to choose leaders | Nigeria | 2003-2022



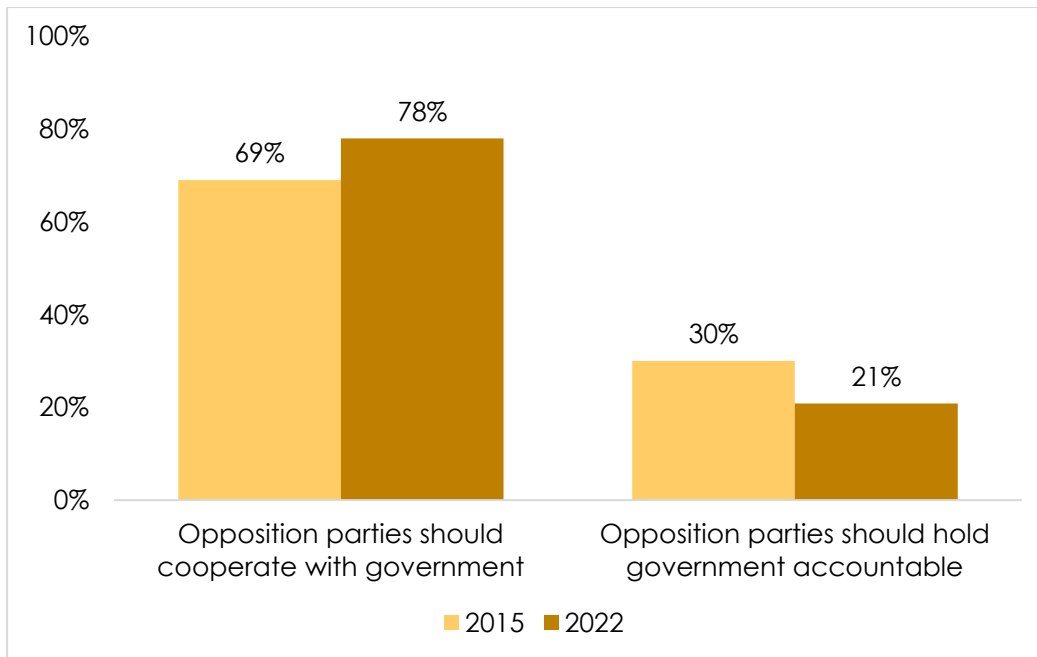
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.
 Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Figure 2: Support for multiparty competition | Nigeria | 2003-2022



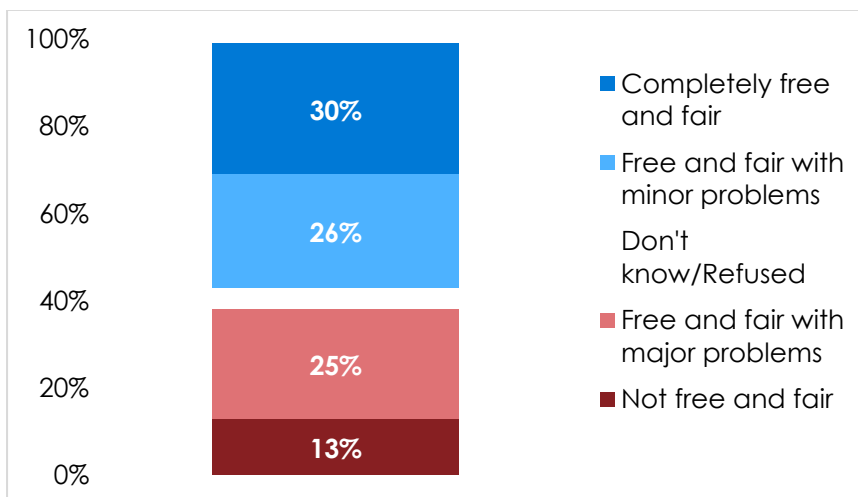
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Nigeria.
 Statement 2: Many political parties are needed to make sure that Nigerians have real choices in who governs them.
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Figure 3: Role of opposition parties after elections | Nigeria | 2015-2022



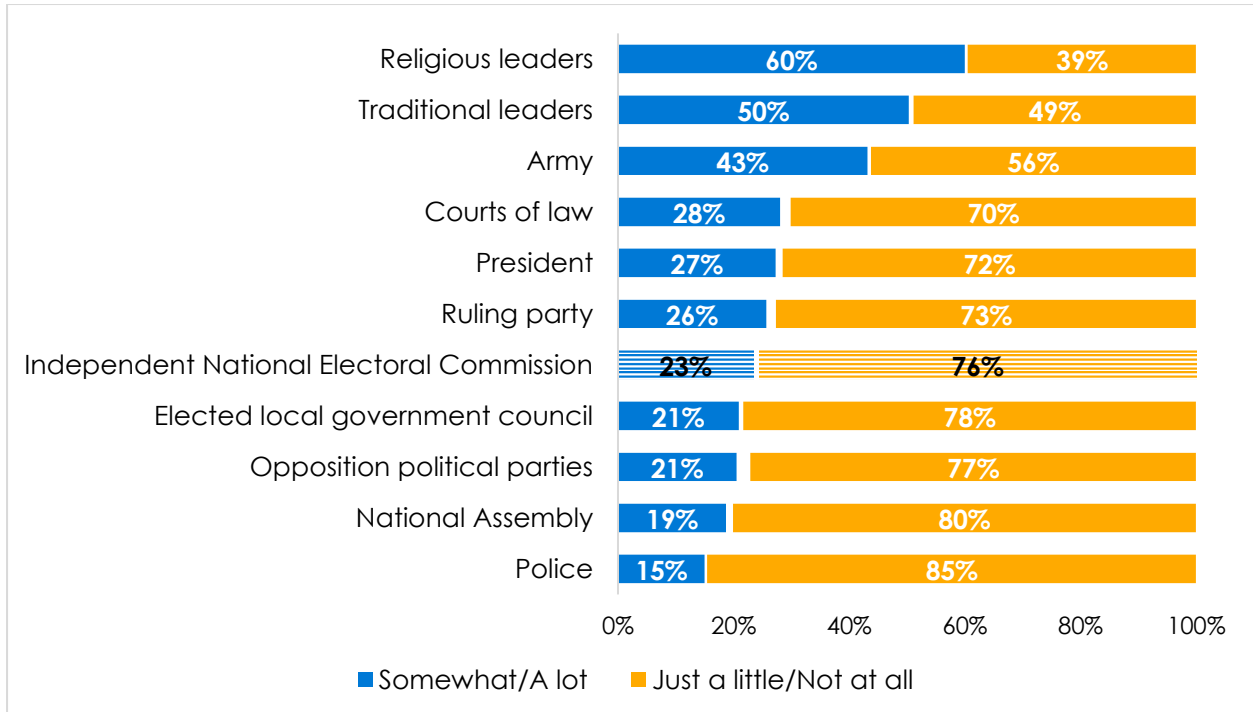
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: After losing an election, opposition parties should monitor and criticise the government in order to hold it accountable.
 Statement 2: Once an election is over, opposition parties and politicians should accept defeat and cooperate with government to help it develop the country.
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Figure 4: Freeness and fairness of 2019 election | Nigeria | 2022



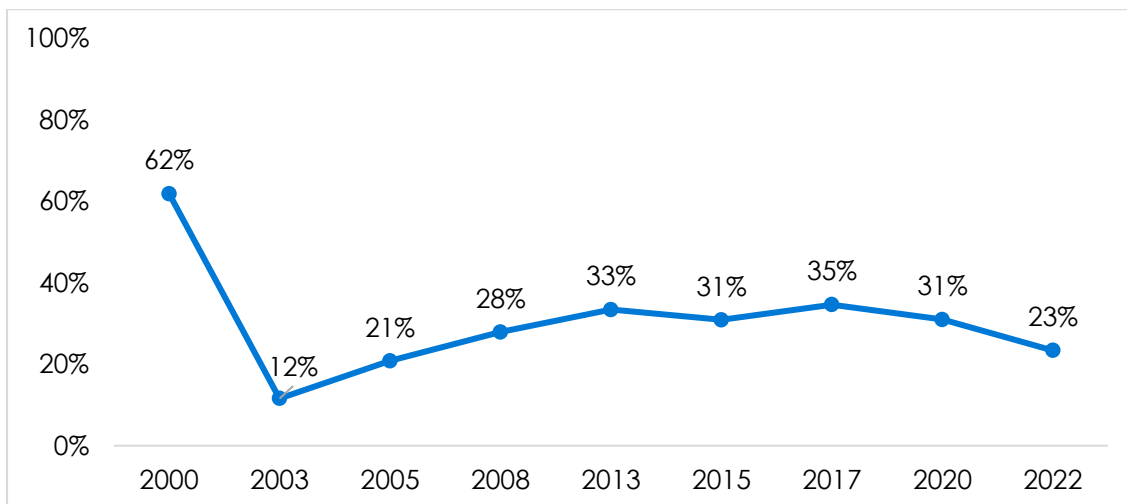
Respondents were asked: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 2019?

Figure 5: Popular trust in the electoral commission and other state institutions
 | Nigeria | 2022



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Figure 6: Trust the electoral commission somewhat/a lot | Nigeria | 2000-2022



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

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