

Voters, But Not Yet Citizens: The Low Effective Demand for Accountability in Africa

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Introduction

The advent of competitive, multiparty politics has been welcomed by Africans.

But why has democratization failed to secure better governance?

My partial answer:

Africans have yet to claim political rights, including by demanding accountability from elected leaders.

Accountability

A cornerstone of a well-functioning democracy:

- * helps checks arbitrary rule
- * helps ensure effective, efficient and equitable governance

Types of accountability:

- * horizontal
- * vertical
- * oblique

On vertical accountability:

- * the limitations of periodic elections
- * the low effectiveness of popular demand

Types of Democracy

Guillermo O'Donnell, *Journal of Democracy*, 5, 1, 1994, 55-69

Delegative democracy

“Delegative democracies rest on the premise that whoever wins the election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit”

Representative democracy

“Representation entails accountability: representatives are held responsible for their actions by those they claim to speak for”

The Afrobarometer

A comparative series of public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society.

Run by CDD (Ghana), Idasa (South Africa), and IREEP (Benin), plus national partners. Supported by MSU and UCT. Based on:

- * national probability samples (1200-3600) representing all adult citizens
- * margin of sampling error of +/- 3% at 95 % confidence
- * face-to-face interviews by trained interviewers in language of choice
- * response rates averaging above 80%
- * standard questionnaire with identical or functionally equivalent items

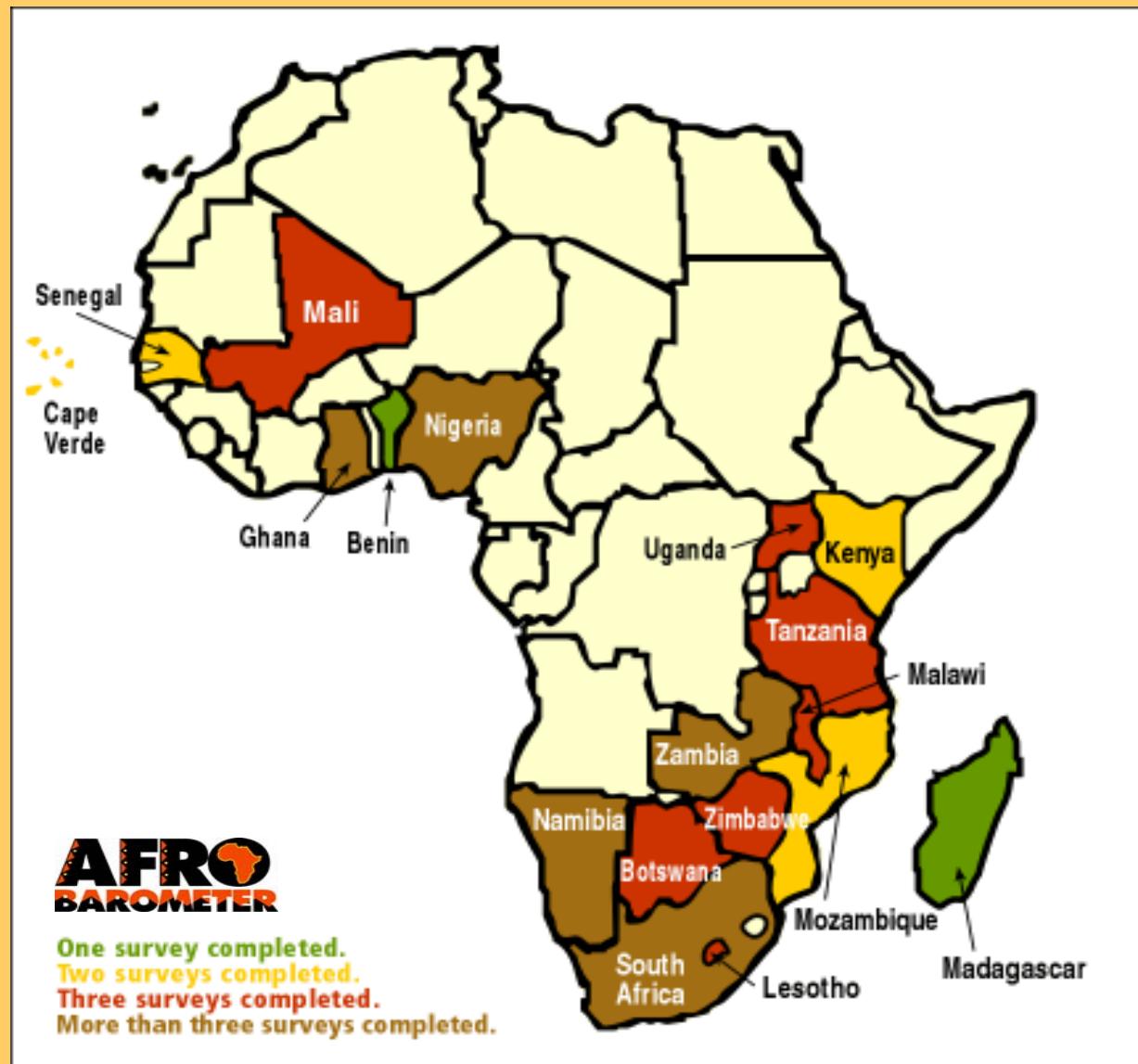
Data

Comparisons of observed values across countries, and over time, between:

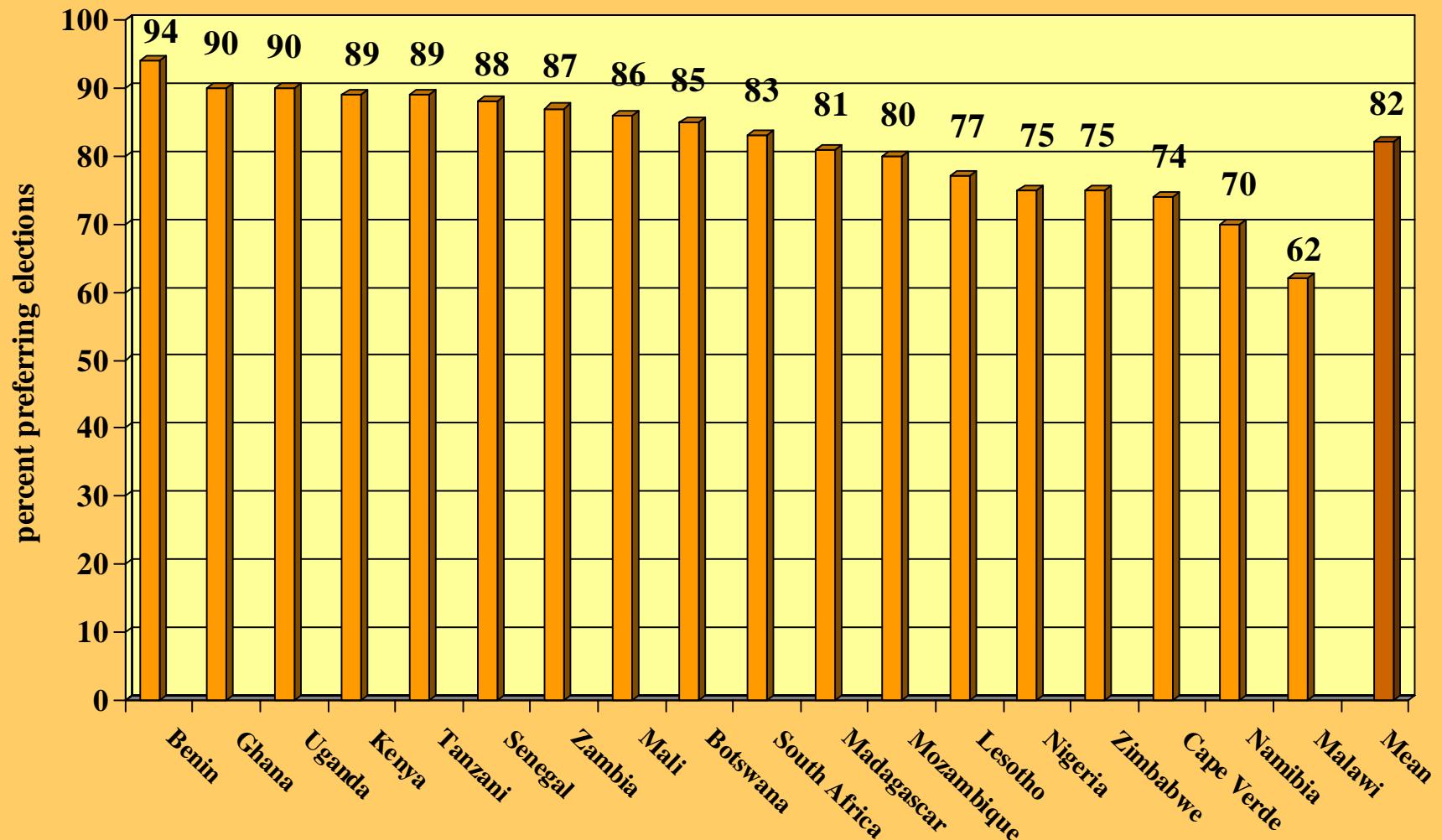
- * Afrobarometer Round 1 (12 countries), 1999-2001 (21,000+ cases)
- * Afrobarometer Round 2 (15 countries), 2002-2003 (23,000+ cases)
- * Afrobarometer Round 3 (18 countries), 2005-2006 (25,000+ cases)**



Coverage of Afrobarometer Surveys, 1999-2006



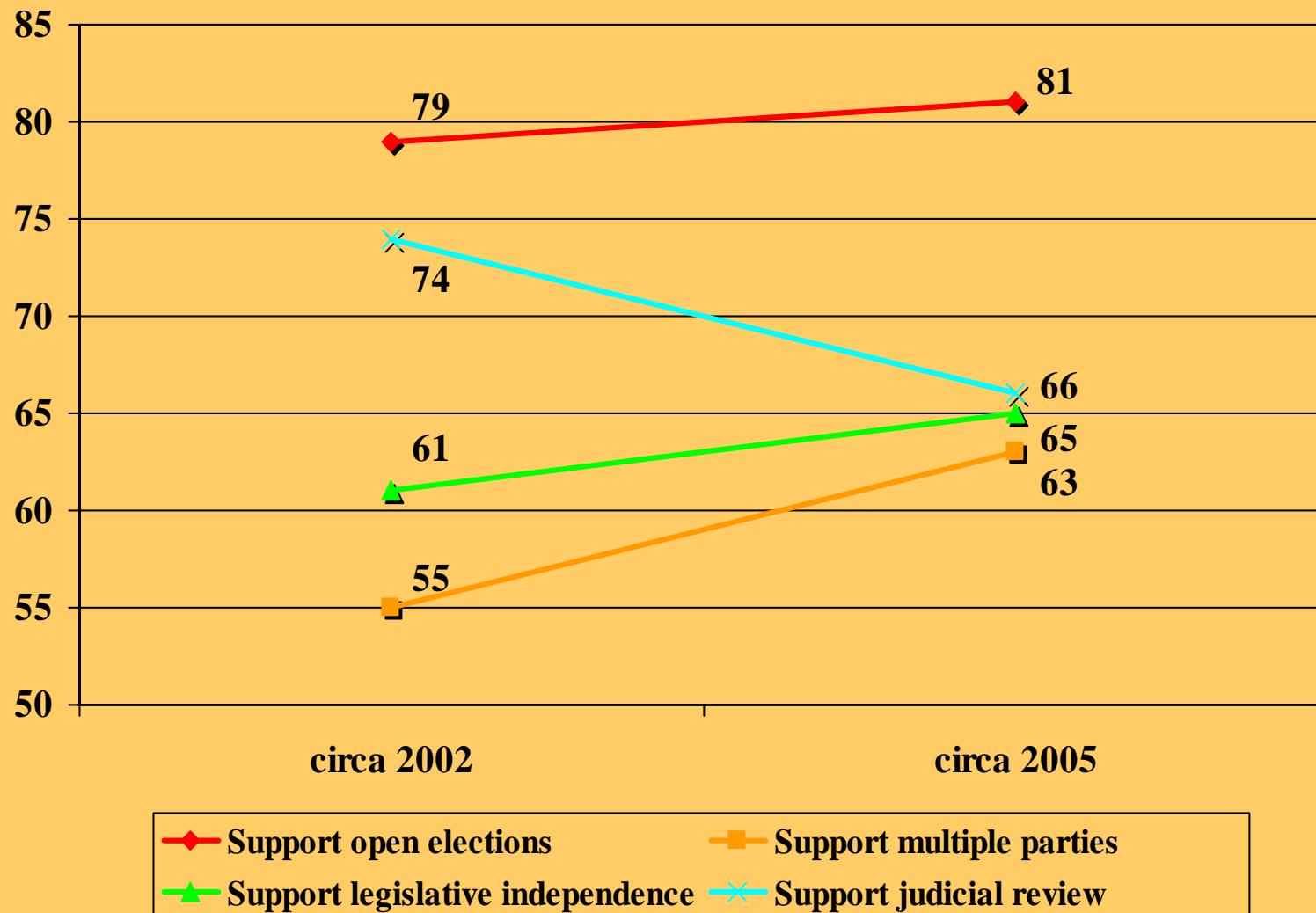
Preference for Elections, 18 Countries, 2005



"Choose A or B:

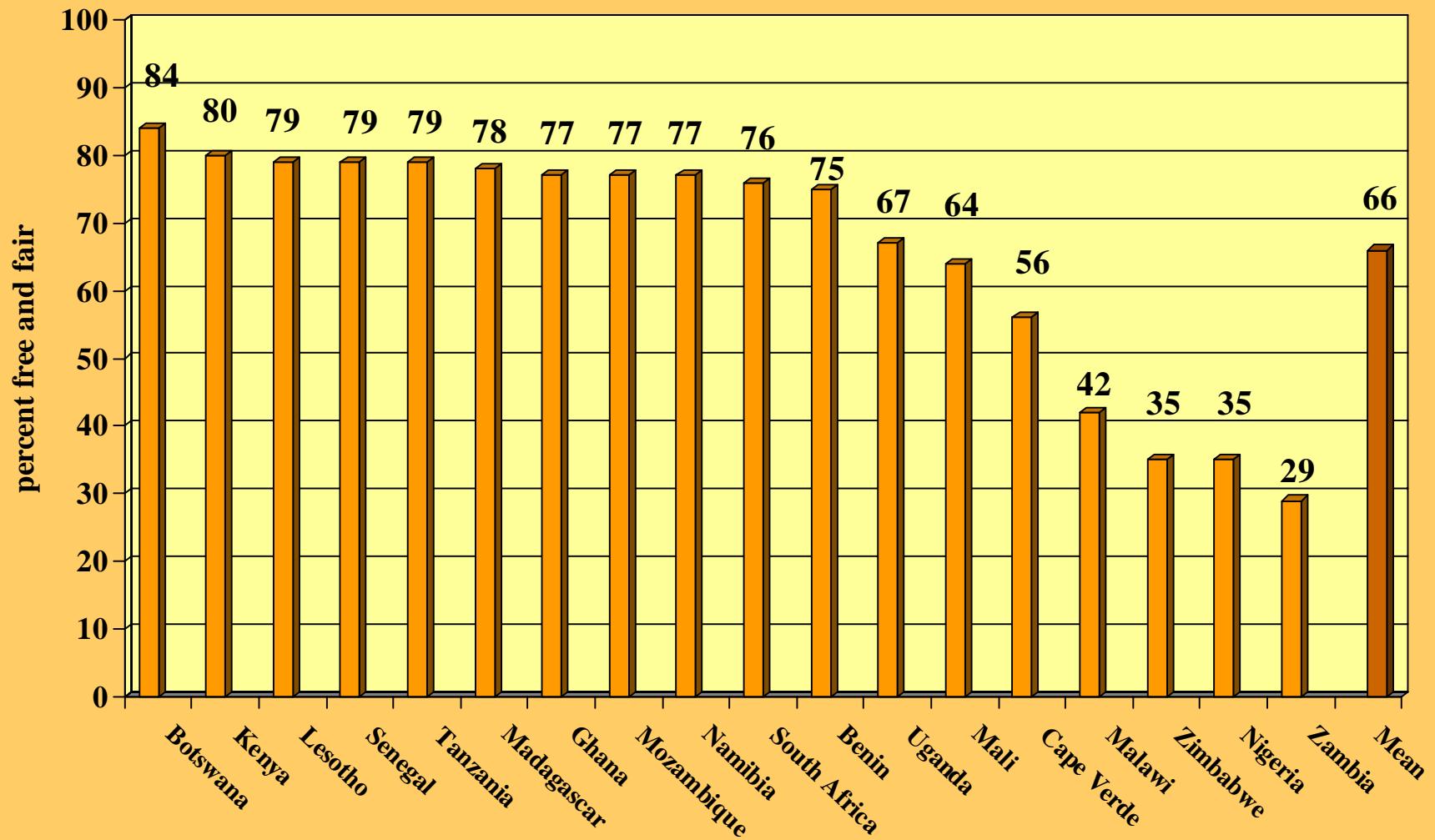
- A. We should choose our leaders in this country through regular open and honest elections
- B. Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing leaders""

**Figure 16: Support for Democratic Institutions:
Average Trends, 16 African Countries, 2002-2005**



Percentage approving democratic side of forced choice statements (see text for wordings)

Perceived Quality of Elections, 18 Countries, 2005



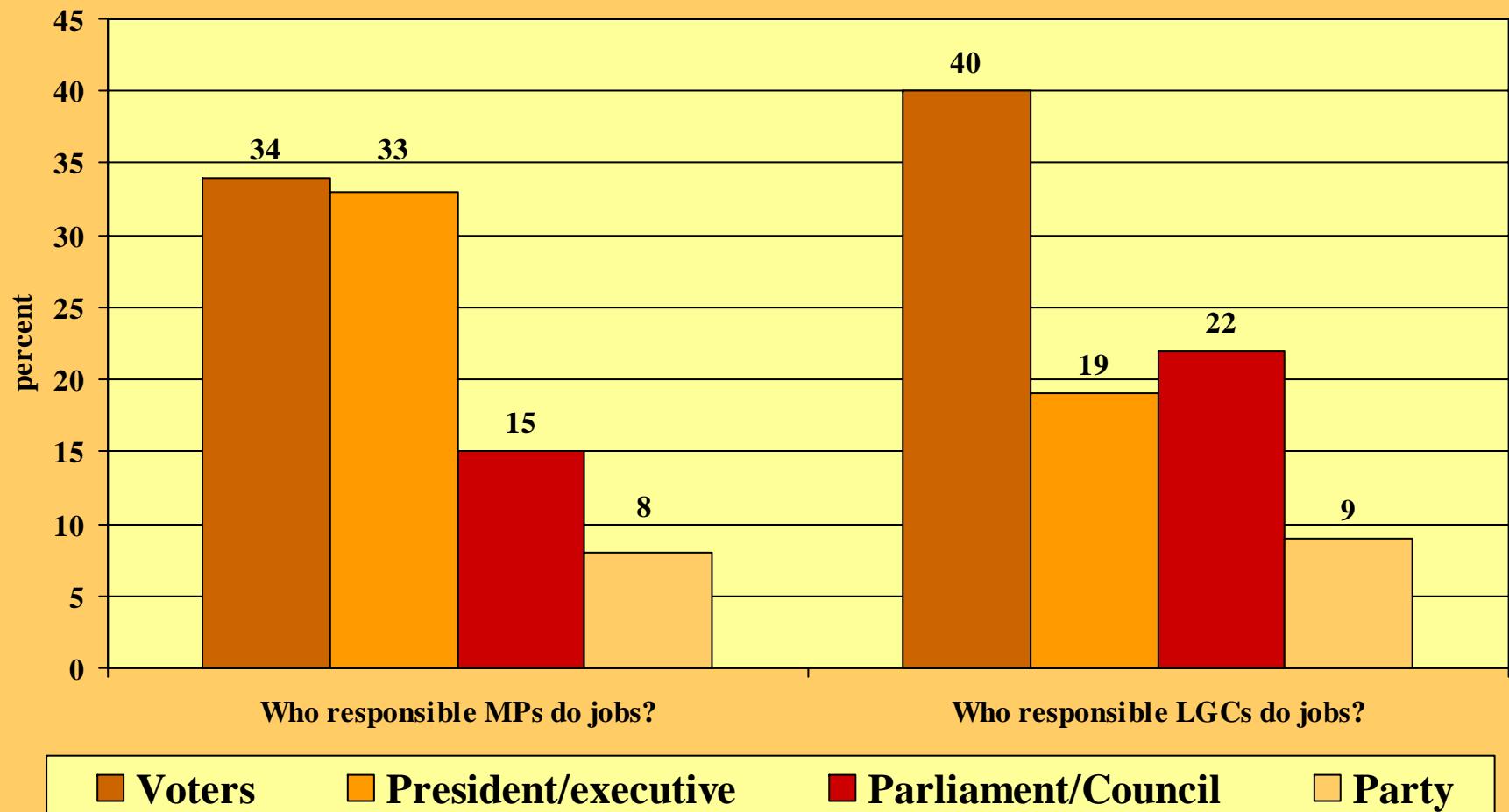
"On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election:..

Was it: Completely free and fair / free and fair but with minor problems / free and fair but with major problems / Not free and fair?"

But African elections remain imperfect:

- 17% of citizens were offered an “incentive” for their vote
- Only 47% think elections allow voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want
- Only 46% think elections ensure elected representatives reflect the views of voters

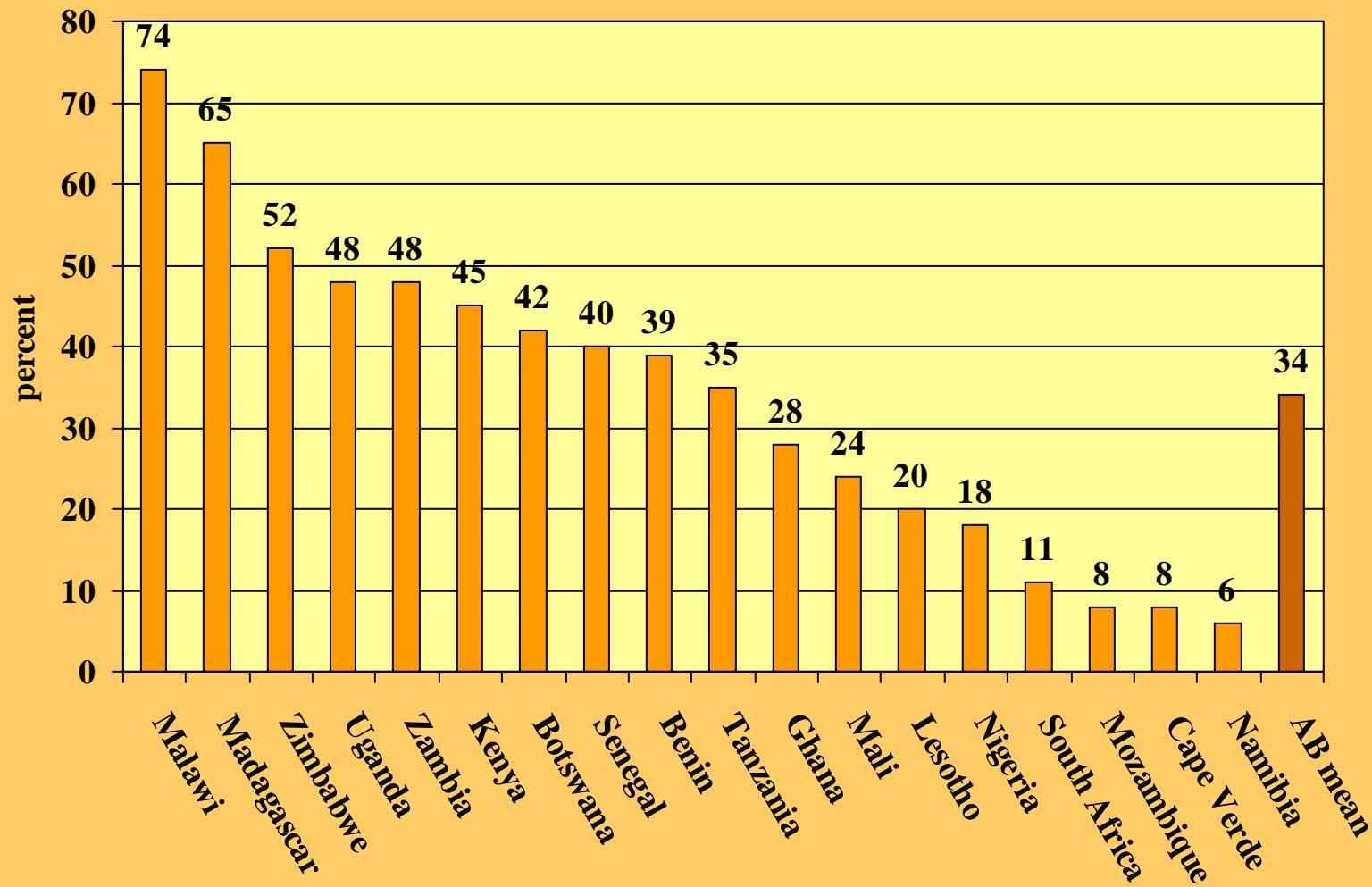
Popular Demand for Accountability



“Who should be responsible for:

- Making sure that, once elected, Members of Parliament do their jobs?
- Making sure that, once elected, Local Government Councilors do their jobs?”

Popular Demand for Accountability, by Country Members of Parliament



“Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, Members of Parliament do their jobs?

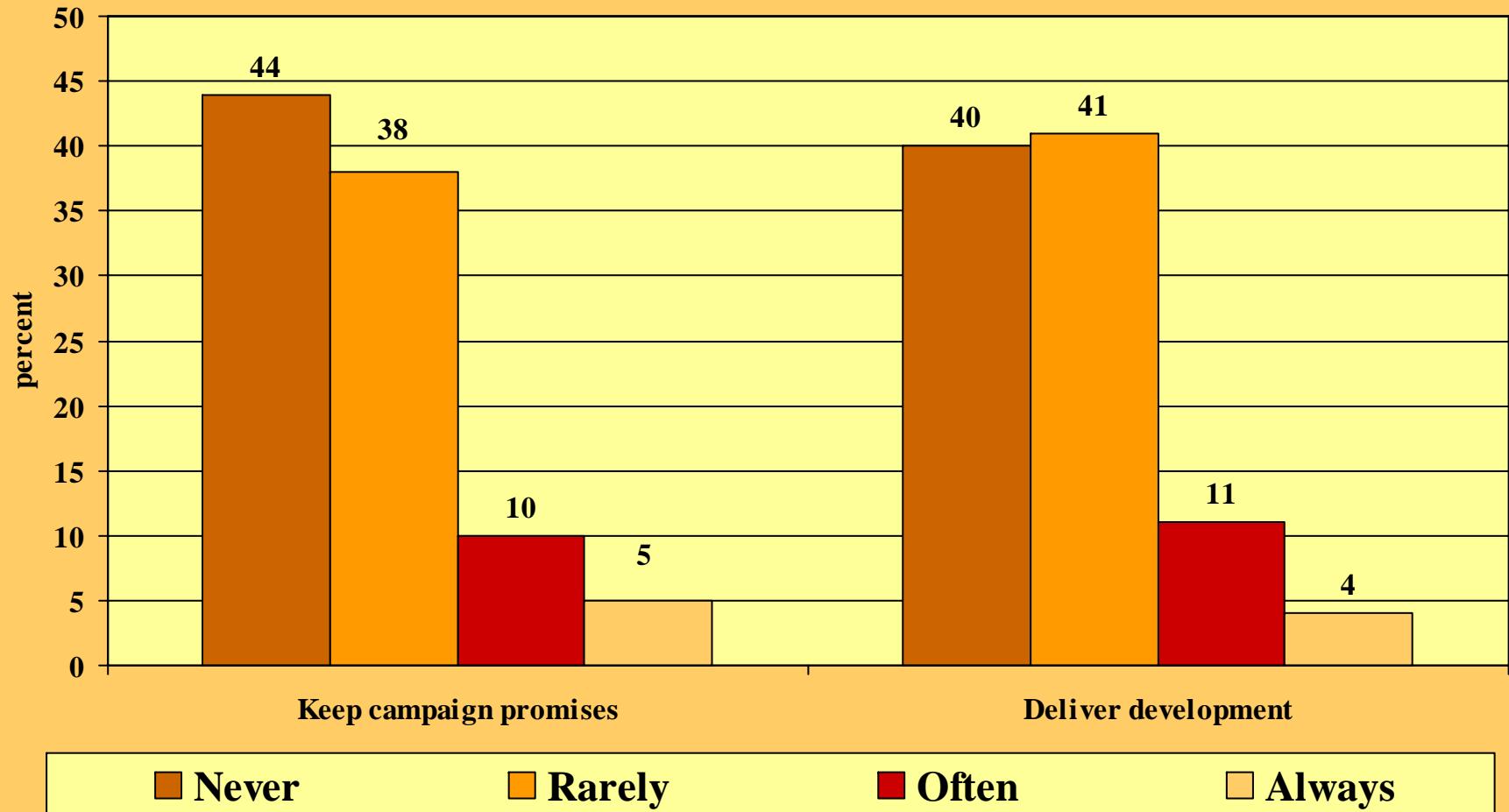
Explaining Popular Demand for Accountability

(Think Voters Should Monitor MPs)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	(1.852)	(1.657)	(1.995)	(1.326)
Social Characteristics				
Rural	.071	.055		
Wealth	.075	.038	.042	.044
Political Attitudes				
Know Political Leaders		.144	.042	.068
Know Term Limits		.026	.042	
Reject One-Man Rule		.096	.036	.050
Perceive Corruption		.044	.031	.030
Country Contexts				
Namibia			-.163	
Mozambique			-.162	
South Africa			-.143	
Nigeria			-.127	
Cape Verde			-.126	
Lesotho			-.125	
Ghana			-.059	
Mali			-.052	
Malawi			.133	
Madagascar			.112	
Benin			.036	
Institutional Legacies				
Years of Independence				.123
Liberation Movement				-.031
Past Presidential Rule				-.073
Plurality Electoral System				.126
Adjusted R square	.008	.045	.167	.085

Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Only significant relationships (p<.001) shown. Tanzania is the excluded dummy

The Perceived Supply of Accountability

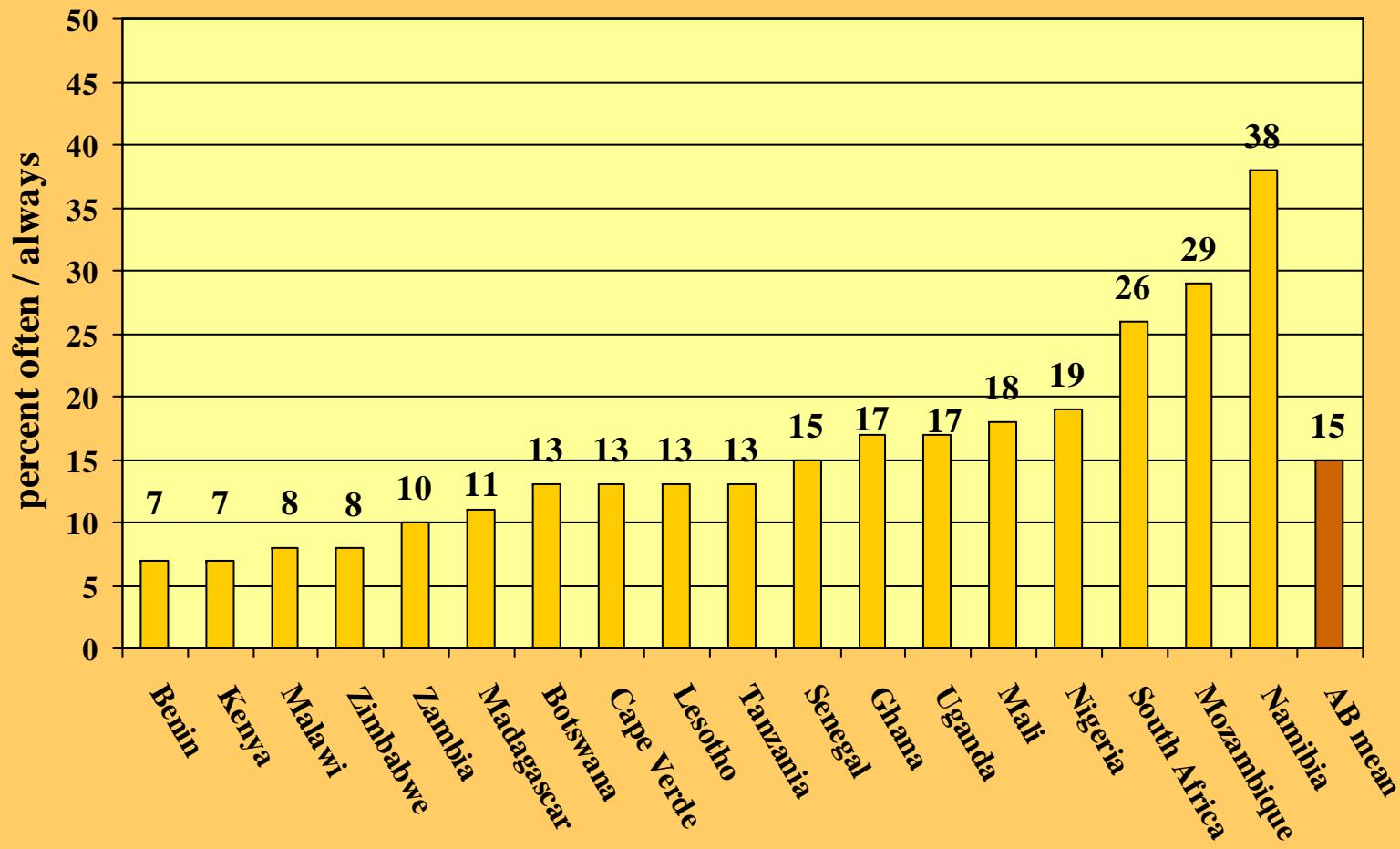


"In your opinion, how often do politicians do each of the following:

- Keep their campaign promises after elections?
- Do their best to deliver development after elections?"

Perceived Supply of Accountability, by Country

Delivering Development



“In your opinion, how often do politicians do each of the following: do their best to deliver development after elections?”

Explaining the Perceived Supply Accountability

(Think Politicians Deliver Development)

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Constant	(.661)	(.548)	(.891)
Political Attitudes			
Elected Leaders Listen	.138	.132	.134
Impunity Gap (Rule of Law)	-.137	-.102	-.124
Think Elections Work	.116	.109	.107
Representation Gap (MP Visiting)	-.106	-.077	-.103
Perceive Corruption	-.047	-.063	-.049
Trust Representative Institutions	.042	.063	.049
Country Contexts			
Namibia		.149	
Nigeria		.116	
Mozambique		.088	
South Africa		.080	
Zambia		.051	
Malawi		-.073	
Institutional Legacies			
Years of Independence			-.092
Proportional Electoral System			.055
Adjusted R square	.112	.160	.130

Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Only significant relationships (p<.001) are shown. Senegal is the excluded dummy

Conclusions

- O'Donnell's model of delegative democracy travels quite well from Latin America to Africa. Key indicator: in Afrobarometer surveys, one third of Africans delegate authority to the national president to hold legislators accountable.
- But some adjustments to the model are necessary:
 - One third (more in local government) see a role for voters
 - Large majorities oppose one-man rule in every country
 - Two-thirds think that the legislature and courts should limit executive power (i.e. want horizontal accountability)
- Future research: expand the scope of studies of vertical accountability:
 - Shift focus to the periods between elections
 - Analyze the effectiveness of popular demand for accountability
 - Explore whether ordinary Africans understand and claim their democratic right to monitor leaders.

Policy Implications

- On the demand side, country effects dominate. We can't derive general recommendations, but must look at the country level.
- On the supply side, however, there are openings. Evidence suggests:
 - Start locally
 - Build on elections
 - Provide access to information
 - Help representatives listen
 - Pursue anti-corruption agenda



www.afrobarometer.org