



Re-examining the Citizens' Preferences for the Political Party Systems in Tanzania after 1992

By Hubert Shija

Key Messages

- Despite citizens' affiliation to political parties, the preference of many citizens for the political party system has changed from single party to multipartyism.
- Fears over civil unrest and divisions in society as a result of multipartyism have receded over time, with both the ruling and opposition parties enjoying significant trust among Tanzanians.
- Citizens' preferences for a single-party system are not reflective of the margin of victory in recent elections.

Introduction

The 1992 resumption of multiparty democracy in Tanzania followed an overwhelming rejection of the multiparty system in a national citizen consultation a year earlier. At the time, most Tanzanians did not prefer pluralism because of fears that it would sow divisions within society and cause political violence. Despite this popular opposition, the country re-adopted multi-partyism based on recommendations from a presidential commission that citizens' demands on improving their welfare could only be met under the multiparty system. It was also argued that it was inevitable, and the consequences could be devastating if it were delayed. The late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania, supported the motion to re-introduce multipartyism, but he insisted that political parties should have a national scope to maintain national unity.

In the three and half decades since then, few studies have examined changes, if any, in public opinion on this subject. Notwithstanding the disputed general elections of 2020, results from the previous five electoral cycles indicate increasing accommodation of multipartyism with

declining margins of victory for the ruling party, and gradual increases in the opposition's presence at parliamentary and local council levels. This policy brief presents findings from on the analysis of the change in popular preferences for multiparty democracy using Afrobarometer survey.

Methodology

The analysis used data from nine rounds of Afrobarometer surveys conducted between 2001 and 2022. Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that provides reliable data on African citizens experiences and perceptions on democracy, governance, markets, and quality of life. The surveys have been conducted in up to 42 countries since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) covered 39 countries. The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 2,400 Tanzanian adults in September – October 2022. This sample yields country-level results with a margin of error of ± 2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous

surveys in Tanzania were conducted in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2021.

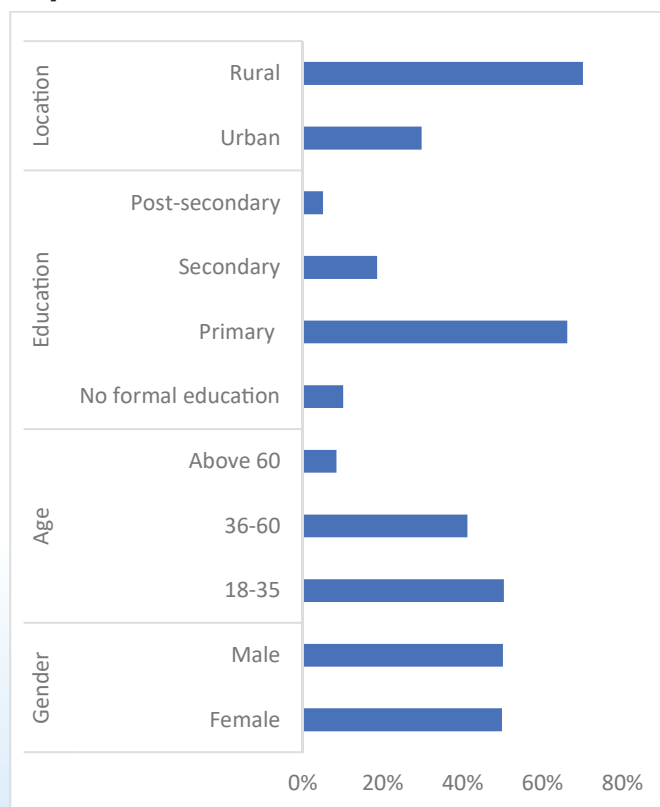
Findings

The results cover respondents' demographic qualities, rate of preference for multipartyism, political violence and divisions, and trust in political parties after the re-adoption of pluralism in 1992.

Sample Features

All nine surveys involved respondents with different demographic qualities (see Figure 1). On average, men and women participated equally in the surveys. Also, youth constituted half of all respondents. Furthermore, most respondents had formal education, but the majority had only primary education. Finally, nearly 70% of respondents lived in the rural area.

Figure 1. Averages of demographic features of respondents of Rounds 1-9



Source: Afrobarometer Data, 2001 - 2022

Preference for Political Party Systems

On average, between 2001 and 2022, 68% of respondents chose multipartyism over a single-party system. Moreover, the trend shows that there was a gradual increase in respondents who chose pluralism. However, in 2005, their proportion fell to 43%, while that of respondents preferring a single-party system rose to 46%. Also, amongst the respondents who were affiliated to CCM, about two-thirds preferred multipartyism. Furthermore, the respondents who were affiliated to the opposition political parties were over two times more likely to choose pluralism than those close to CCM. Likewise, compared to 1991 Nyalali's Presidential Commission results, there was a statistically significant change in those who preferred a single-party system from 77% in 1991 to 32% in 2022 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Difference between results from Nyalali's Commission Survey and Afrobarometer Survey

Year	Current sample %	Difference	χ^2	df	n	p-value
2001	40	37	1936.824	1	2043	<.001
2003	31	46	1578.748	1	1118	<.001
2005	52	25	539.086	1	1151	<.001
2008	36	41	1360.699	1	1166	<.001
2012	23	54	4444.936	1	2282	<.001

Year	Current sample %	Difference	c ²	df	n	p-value
2014	23	54	4446.427	1	2300	<.001
2017	30	47	3483.579	1	2341	<.001
2021	33	44	3103.048	1	2334	<.001
2022	32	45	3219.108	1	2372	<.001

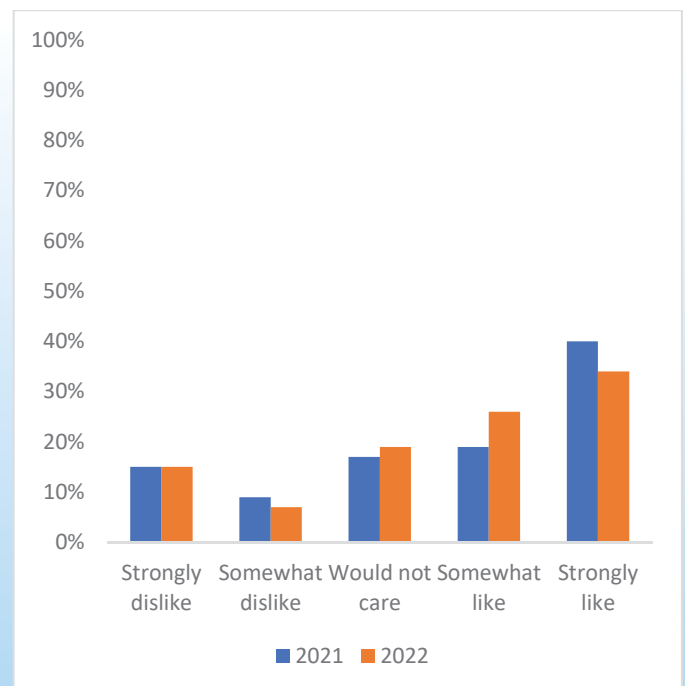
Source: Afrobarometer Data, 2001-2022

Political Violence and Polarisation

On average, results showed that three in four respondents (75%) thought that political party competition leads to violent conflict in varied degrees. Of these, a simple majority of respondents (54%) reported that violent conflicts were rarely happening and compared to other years, the proportion was the highest in 2022 (68%). Also, about one-third of such respondents (39%) reported to have seen conflicts many times, while a handful of them (7%) saying they happens all the time. In 2022, the proportion of respondents who reported to have seen conflicts happen many times and all the time fell slightly. It was perceived to be highest in 2005. In contrast, on average, one in five respondents (22%) viewed that political party competition never leads to any violent conflicts and their proportion slightly fell in 2022.

Similarly, a quarter of respondents (28%) asserted that political parties create division and confusion therefore it is unnecessary to practice pluralism. Such proportions were high in 2005 and 2014, but they were low in 2008, 2012, and 2017. In recent years, as Figure 2 shows, a simple majority of respondents (60%) would be happy to live near people who support different political parties. Additionally, about one in five (18%) respondents would not care about living near such people.

Figure 2. Feelings of respondents about their neighbours supporting a different political party



Source: Afrobarometer Data, 2021 – 2022

Trust in Political Parties

Trust is also related to the re-adoption of the multiparty system in Tanzania, and the results showed that between 2001 and 2022, respondents trusted different political parties to varying degrees. On average, about one-third of respondents (30%) trusted only CCM, while a handful of them (7%) trusted only the opposition. A simple majority of respondents (59%) trusted both CCM and the opposition political parties, while nearly none of the respondents trusted any political parties. Respondents who trusted CCM were one and a half times less likely to choose pluralism, while those who trusted the opposition were over two times more likely to prefer pluralism.

Conclusions and Recommendations

After the re-adoption of multipartyism in Tanzania in 1992, the preference of many adult Tanzanians for the political party system changed from a single-party system to pluralism. However, in 2005, the number of citizens who preferred a single-party system surpassed the number of those who favoured multipartyism. This could have been influenced by the heightened fear of civil strife and violence. Such fears have waned overtime with actual experience, and some Tanzanians have trusted political parties though their trust varied across the parties.

As in Tanzania, pluralism is constitutional, and thus it should be clearly communicated to the public. First, the central government should increase efforts to educate Tanzanians about pluralism through formal education and traditional and modern mass media. Second, the National and Zanzibar Electoral Commissions, and the Local Government Authorities should improve the elections management to avoid irregularities which sometimes lead to violent conflicts. Third, all political parties should refrain from using undue influence on voters, especially during local and general elections.

Bibliography

- Karume, F., & Kilimwiko, L. (2020). Tanzania: Jana, leo, na kesho [Tanzania: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow: The troubled transition to democratic politics]. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
- Mkapa, B. W. P. (2019). My life, my purpose: A Tanzanian President remembers. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd.
- Muchler, B., & Schmidt, C. (2020). Parties in Africa: The case for increased engagement with a neglected issue. *International Reports*, (4), 59–69. Retrieved from <https://www.kas.de/en/web/auslandsinformation/en/ausgaben/issues/-/content/political-parties-challenges-and-perspectives>
- Mwinyi, A. H. (2020). Mzee Rukhsa: Safari ya maisha yangu [A laissezfaire mzee: My life journey]. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd.
- Nyerere, J. K. (1968). Dissolving the independence parliament. In *Freedom and socialism [Uhuru na ujamaa]: A selection from writings and speeches 1965 – 1967* (pp. 35 – 49). London, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- United Republic of Tanzania. (1992). *The Presidential Commission on single party or multiparty system in Tanzania: Report and recommendations of the Commission on the democratic system in Tanzania (Vol. one)*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

REPOA Resource Centre

Our Resource Centre provides a good environment for literature research, quicker, easier access and use of knowledge and information. It has full internet connection for online library to support Master & PhD candidates, researchers and academicians with free access to latest journals, books, reports, webcasts, etc.

Opening Hours

Tuesday to Thursday from 10:00am to 1:00pm, 2:00pm to 05:00pm.

Friday 10:00am - 01:00pm

The online library opens 24 hours



REPOA HQs

157 Migombani/REPOA streets, Regent Estate, PO Box 33223,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Tel: +255 (22) 2700083 Cell: +255 78 455 5655

Website: <https://www.repoa.or.tz>

Email: repoa@repoa.or.tz

Branch Office

2nd Floor Kilimo Kwanza Building
41105 Makole East, Kisasa,
Dodoma, Tanzania

@REPOA 2024

Findings and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of REPOA and any of her partners.