



**ATTITUDES TOWARD DEMOCRACY AND MARKETS
IN NIGERIA:
REPORT OF A NATIONAL OPINION SURVEY
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A national sample survey on “Attitudes Toward Democracy and Markets” was conducted in Nigeria in January-February 2000. The survey was conducted to provide empirical data on Nigerians’ perceptions of current political and economic trends. In addition, this survey is intended to supply USAID/Nigeria with baseline data on key indicators it has developed for monitoring the contributions of USAID programs to democratic progress in Nigeria.

With regard to general attitudes to democracy, the survey showed that citizens:

- ? **Strongly support democracy.** An overwhelming majority (80.9 percent) think that “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government.”
- ? **See democracy in liberal terms.** The most common definitions include “government by the people” (38.0 percent), political rights and elections (14.0 percent) or civil liberties (13.8 percent).
- ? **Accept democratic values.** A clear majority believe in freedom of expression (75.3 percent), universal voting rights (73.1 percent), and constitutional principle (67.3 percent), while 79.2 percent reject the use of violence for political ends.
- ? **Reject non-democratic alternatives.** 90 percent of Nigerians reject the proposition that “the army should come in to govern the country,” and similar majorities decline the notion of single party rule or government by a personal strongman.

Considering democratic performance, Nigerians:

- ? **Are satisfied with the state of Nigerian democracy.** More than 80 percent express relative satisfaction with the workings of democracy in Nigeria today, and over 95 percent believe that Nigeria qualifies as a democracy, despite its problems.
- ? **Expect both political and economic benefits from democracy.** Nigerians highly prize many basic political rights and freedoms associated with democracy, yet they equally value economic goods such as poverty reduction and the delivery of social services.
- ? **See significant improvements in their political conditions under democracy.** Compared with the former military regime, a majority perceive a better environment for freedom of speech (88.9 percent), freedom of political affiliation (85.4 percent), and open electoral choice (86.4 percent).
- ? **Have confidence in institutions and elected officials.** More than 60 percent of citizens express trust for the electoral commission (INEC), and 76.4 percent believe that the presidential election was conducted honestly. Clear majorities favorably assess the performance of local governments, state governors, state assemblies and the National Assembly.

- ? **Approve of the current government's performance** : 82 percent rate the Obasanjo government's performance positively.

Concerning popular expectations, the survey indicates that people:

- ? **Have high expectations of the current regime** . Nearly 87 percent of Nigerians expect to be more satisfied with their lives in a year's time, and 71 percent expect the government to fulfill its promises within four years.
- ? **Nonetheless show patience with democracy**. Four out of five respondents believe that democracy can handle the nation's problems even if it takes time; only 16.4 percent would contemplate another form of government if democracy doesn't produce results soon.

Turning to attitudes on the economy, Nigerians:

- ? **Support a significant role for government in the economy** : 55.5 percent believe that government, rather than individuals, should mainly be responsible for popular welfare, and a similar majority support government provision of jobs. A majority of Nigerians are inclined against public sector retrenchment or privatization.
- ? **Also value entrepreneurship and initiative**. Four out of five believe in starting businesses even in the face of risk, and a majority feel a sense of competence in their personal efforts.
- ? **See an important role for markets and the private sector**. A majority of respondents endorse the ideas of free markets for land, open pricing in consumer markets, user fees for better quality social services, and foreign investment in Nigeria's economy.

Regarding economic reform, citizens:

- ? **Have limited knowledge of reform policies**. Only 40.3 percent of Nigerians can identify the Structural Adjustment Program by name. Even fewer can describe its purpose.
- ? **Are dissatisfied with the performance of the SAP**. Two-thirds express relative dissatisfaction with the reform program, and 60 percent believe that the program has benefitted only a narrow group in society while harming average Nigerians.
- ? **Nonetheless approve of government's handling of the economy**. A majority of respondents approve the Obasanjo government's management of inflation, employment, social services, food security, and (especially) corruption.
- ? **View inequality as a continuing problem**. Only 39.5 percent approve of the government's efforts to reduce income gaps. And a majority believe that major policies have been inequitable.

Considering the relationship between political and economic reform:

- ? **There is no clear association between political and economic liberalism.** While a majority of Nigerians support democracy, they hold more diverse opinions on the economy, and strong democrats are not necessarily free marketeers. Overall, the proportion of Nigerians committed to democracy is greater than the proportion favoring a strong economic role for government.
- ? **Nigerians are far less satisfied with the economy than with democracy.** While satisfaction with democracy is over 84 percent, only 44.9 percent are relatively satisfied with the state of the economy. Even among those least satisfied with the economy, however, support for democracy remains high.
- ? **The public wants change, but is inclined to be patient.** Whereas only 16.4 percent of survey respondents want “to try another form of government” (if democracy doesn’t deliver results), fully 49.1 percent think that the government should “change its economic policies (now)”.

In the area of the rule of law, Nigerians:

- ? **See pervasive corruption.** Fully 94.0 percent of those interviewed perceive some corruption, including 52.8 percent who reply that people “always” bribe officials. Almost three-fourths of respondents disagree with the statement that “Bribery is not common among public officials in Nigeria.”
- ? **See improvements under the new government.** A large majority (82.6) percent agree that “Corruption was a worse problem under the old military government than these days.”
- ? **Are concerned about crime, but feel things are getting better.** Around 40 percent of those interviewed say they know someone else who has been a crime victim within the past two years. Most Nigerians sense improvements in recent years, as 58.3 percent say they feel safer today than they did five years ago.
- ? **Have limited trust for law enforcement authorities.** 51.7 of respondents percent express no trust “at all” for the police, and another 18.4 percent profess some distrust. By comparison, courts of law evoke greater confidence, as 53.0 percent express a degree of trust.

Regarding civil society and social capital:

- ? **Nigerians show high levels of civic membership:** 86.2 percent of respondents report that they are members in some type of association (mainly religious ones), including 23.6 percent who claim leadership positions in these organizations.

- ? **Citizens also display varying degrees of social trust.** A little more than half of respondents profess trust for other ethnic groups, while two-thirds trust their own ethnic group, and 85 percent trust their kin.
- ? **There is significant public trust in many civic institutions,** including churches (73.4 percent), unions (67.5 percent) and nongovernmental organizations (68.1 percent).

The survey also probed questions of identity; among the findings:

- ? **Ethnicity is the strongest type of identity among Nigerians.** Almost half of all Nigerians (48.2 percent) choose to tag themselves with an “ethnic” identity, compared to almost one-third (28.4 percent) who opt for “class” or occupational identities. The next most common category is a religious identity, chosen by 21.0 percent.
- ? **There are regional variations in group identity,** as northern Muslims more frequently identify themselves in religious terms, while southern residents often choose ethnic or occupational categories.
- ? **Group feelings are strongly held:** Overwhelming proportions of Nigerians agree that they “feel proud” to belong to their group (96.8 percent) and assert that they would “want their children to think of themselves” with the same identity (89.5 percent).
- ? **National identity is also strong.** Fully 97.2 percent of respondents agree that they are “proud to call themselves Nigerian”, and they feel just as strongly about this national identity as about their sub-national, group identity.
- ? **General feelings of group deprivation are limited.** Overall, relatively few Nigerians (11.7 percent) feel that the economic conditions of their group are “worse than the economic conditions of other groups in the country”. For some groups, however, such as the Ijaw of the Niger Delta, feelings of relative deprivation are more pronounced (32 percent).

The survey also found significant regional variations in attitudes:

- ? **There are modest regional differences in economic attitudes.** While northern and southern citizens show few differences in attitudes to the SAP, those in the north are somewhat more supportive of government ownership and more wary of foreign investment. Southerners stress government employment, but also entrepreneurship.
- ? **Some regional variations in political attitudes are evident.** Southerners place high value on democratic ideals, yet they are relatively more critical of democracy in practice, and more likely to be disaffected from government. Those in the north, while strongly supporting democracy, are relatively more inclined to defer to authority and support the government of the day.

INTRODUCTION

The Political and Economic Setting

Nigeria's recent political transition opens a new chapter in the nation's quest for democratic governance. During the past three decades Nigeria has been ruled chiefly by the military, with only a brief civilian hiatus during the Second Republic (1979-83). Throughout a turbulent political history, Nigerians have repeatedly affirmed their commitment to democracy as the ideal system for governing the country. Nearly every military leader has espoused an intention to restore democracy, and several have arranged elaborate programs of political transition. Throughout the cycles of civilian and military governance, a vibrant press has served as a forum for the expression of political values and aspirations. The academic community, professional groupings, and a range of popular associations have also nourished democratic desires. As a principle, democracy has a firm foundation in the national conscience.

Two previous constitutional regimes were unable to endure, however, as they succumbed to the rivalries of elites, the deficiencies of key institutions, and flagging popular legitimacy. The First Republic, the parliamentary system that governed from independence until 1966, fell victim to ethnic and regional contention, and ensuing political violence. The Second Republic, a presidential system inaugurated through a deliberative transition, was ruined by prodigious corruption, partisan stalemate, and rampant electoral misconduct. In each instance, the eventual intercession of the military was welcomed by many Nigerians, although the public nurtured hopes that a more viable democracy would soon be restored.

The coup d'etat of 1983 gave way to a protracted period of military control, as a succession of governments ruled until 1999. The country entered a lengthy period of political tension and instability when the democratic reforms promised by General Ibrahim Babangida were abrogated by the annulment of the presidential election in June 1993. General Sani Abacha, who succeeded Babangida soon after the annulment, declared his own transition program, yet his government restricted political competition and engaged in large-scale abuses of human rights. Abacha's apparent efforts to succeed himself as a civilian president ended with his sudden death in June 1998. Within a year his successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, presided over a phased transition to civilian government. After years of autocratic rule, prodigious official corruption, and growing social strains, many Nigerians welcomed the advent of democracy as an opportunity to move forward on a path of political development.

The democratic regime inaugurated on May 29, 1999, headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo, confronts a daunting array of challenges. The establishment of new institutions, the development of effective political procedures, and the resolution of numerous policy problems present urgent issues in the consolidation of democratic rule. Among the more pressing concerns faced by the new government, the country's frail economy commands attention. A combination of sagging global markets, chronic mismanagement, and endemic corruption have fostered an extended economic malaise, and much of the Nigerian public anticipates that better governance should be reflected in improved economic conditions. Yet there are different popular visions of the paths that the Nigerian economy should follow.

The oil boom of the 1970s transformed the scale and composition of Nigeria's economy. In the preceding decade, Nigeria exported a range of agricultural and mineral commodities, as the government pursued modest intervention in the economy. With the arrival of abundant petroleum revenues Nigeria shifted toward an oil "monoculture", as energy exports became the principal source of revenue and foreign exchange. The abrupt rise in government resources also prompted a growth of the state and an expansive program of public investment, regulation, subsidies, and social services. The concentration of revenues and programs was encouraged by military rulers who sought to bolster the authority of the central state.

The boom era collapsed abruptly in the early 1980s when global oil markets slumped and mounting external debt created severe fiscal problems. By mid-decade, the Babangida regime introduced the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), a reform package back by the IMF and the World Bank, directed toward reconfiguring and reviving the Nigerian economy. Economic reform proved elusive, however; the program was inconsistent and irregular, and economic management was soon overshadowed by political discord. Many of the reforms associated with the SAP drew public criticism, drawing Nigerians into animated debate about the proper roles of markets and the state in the nation's economy.

In an important sense, then, Nigeria's political transition is not only a challenge for the consolidation of democracy, but also a potential opening for economic revitalization. The paths of political and economic reform, and the relations between these processes, form essential questions about the country's future. This survey seeks a better understanding of these concerns.

Public Opinion in Nigeria

If democracy is "government by the people", then a reliable means is needed to know what "the people" want. Elections perform this function, but only if freely and fairly conducted and then only once every several years. In the interim, political elites can all too easily claim to speak on behalf of "the people", while governing mainly in their own interest.

Though often overlooked, public opinion is an important aspect of democracy. It can either endorse official power, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of rulers, or counterbalance it, by holding leaders to account. Public opinion consists of the values, attitudes, evaluations, and preferences of ordinary citizens. Together with political behaviors, these attributes summarize a country's political culture. At minimum, the consolidation of democracy requires a means for tracking political and economic attitudes and reporting their profile widely and openly. At best, the expressed preferences of an active citizenry can help make decision-makers more responsive.

Public opinion is commonly measured by sample surveys. If scientifically designed and administered in a culturally sensitive manner, sample surveys are a powerful tool for revealing, among other things, the level of popular support for democracy and the citizens' estimates of the performance of the government of the day. Surveys can also report on differences of opinion on these topics among people of different gender, ethnicity and class. For activists in civil society, the results of public attitude surveys are an essential starting point for programs of policy advocacy and civic education.

For various reasons, public opinion has been a neglected force in Nigerian politics. Most obviously, military governments have stifled the free expression of political views and trampled on the rights of the media. As a result, many Nigerian citizens have either been afraid to speak out or have deferred to, even sometimes internalized, the attitudes and values of military masters. Under these circumstances people commonly resort to exit or to loyalty, rather than to voice. Indeed, the conventional wisdom from the qualitative social science research in Nigeria is that the psyche of citizens – indeed civil society itself – has been thoroughly “militarized”.

Against this pessimistic scenario, isolated efforts to measure political and economic attitudes in Nigeria in a more rigorous and systematic fashion point to a more pluralistic universe that contains a resilient democratic culture. Several studies over the past several decades reveal a stubborn attachment to basic democratic values among key public constituencies.

The pioneering work of Margaret Peil, published in 1976 as *Nigerian Politics: The People's View*, established a baseline. It was written in the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war and in the context of a transition from military to civilian rule planned by the then Head of State, General Gowon. In the early 1970s, Nigerians were evenly split on whether a military government (38 percent) or a civilian government (35 percent) was “more helpful to ordinary people”, though a clear plurality (38 versus 12 percent, but with 50 percent undecided) favored a return to multiparty civilian democracy by 1976. Moreover, a decisive majority (76 percent) thought that military governments should include civilians in their ruling coalition. By then, Nigerians already disapproved of the unacceptable levels of violence in society (which they associated with military rule) and official corruption (which they linked at that time to civilian rule).

A later study revealed an evolution in public opinion over time. A comparison of the attitudes of Nigerian university students between 1973 and 1995 found “a shift in opinion toward democracy” (Beckett and Alli, 1998, 37). In both years, a sample of students was asked, “which is the most valuable or important: economic development or a democratic form of government?”. Whereas a clear majority of respondents opted for economic development in 1973 (61.8 percent), the figure had reversed by 1995, with 61.3 percent opting for democracy. Interestingly, though, the students’ conception of democracy remained consistent across time, at both times emphasizing good governance (“honest government in the interests of the people”) rather than multiparty competition (“competing politicians and political parties”).

Take a third example. Nigeria, along with South Africa, was one of the two African cases included in the 42-nation World Values Survey in 1993 (Abramson and Inglehart, 1995). Based on a sample of just over 1000 urban residents, the WVS survey revealed strong dissatisfaction with the way the country was being governed and a strong yearning for greater leadership transparency: fully 78 percent thought that “the country is being run by a few big interests looking out for themselves”; only 26.1 percent said that they could “trust the government in Abuja to do what is right all or most of the time”; and an overwhelming, almost universal, majority of 93.9 percent agreed that “our government should be made much more open to the public”.

Finally, a private survey research firm in Nigeria associated with Gallup International has launched an innovative effort to track public opinion over time on a few key questions. The Niger-Bus, a syndicated omnibus survey conducted every two months by Research and Marketing Services, asks over 5000 respondents in all 36 states what they think about the pressing policy issues of the day and the performance of the President of Nigeria. In April 1998, for instance, Nigerians listed the country's most critical problems in the following order: fuel scarcity (30 percent), unemployment (28 percent), corruption (26 percent), poverty (25 percent) and "political impasse" (25 percent).

Perhaps the most interesting facet of the RMS tracking poll is the standard item on the President's job performance, an item that is used in polls in most mature democracies. In April 1998, only 39 percent approved of General Abacha's performance (including at the time his plans for self succession). As for General Abubakar, his positive performance rating peaked in December 1998 at 82 percent, dropping precipitously to 50 percent by February 1999. President Obasanjo's performance rating has risen steadily over time, from 53 percent considering it "good" in June 1999 to 84 percent in December of the same year. Interestingly, approval of Obasanjo's tenure became identical in the West and the North, lagging only slightly in the East.

Much more work remains to be done on the subject of public opinion in Nigeria, not least to distinguish between approval of the president (i.e. the government of the day) and support for democracy (as a regime of constitutional governance). To fully appreciate the nature of the Nigerian political culture, we also need more information on citizen knowledge of democratic rights and institutions, their trust in fellow citizens and particular state agencies, and appraisals of elected representatives other than the President. This study seeks to fill some of these gaps at a moment when the country has just returned to civilian democracy after experiencing the most corrupt and repressive military dictatorship in its history.

The Objectives and Design of the Survey

The purpose of the present study is to find out what ordinary Nigerians think about these recent political and economic developments. It explores public attitudes at the individual, "micro" level toward political and economic changes at the national, "macro" level. As a guiding theme, we asked : "Do Nigerians support democracy and markets?" Empirical answers to this question can promote thoughtful discussion on the progress of Nigerian democracy, and can provide USAID/Nigeria with baseline data relevant to its programmatic efforts in democracy and governance.

The study was designed as a national sample survey, meaning that we posed the same schedule of questions to a small sub-set of the population who were selected to represent the adult population of Nigeria as a whole.

The research instrument was a questionnaire containing 100 items (mostly closed-ended and some with multiple parts) that addressed several areas of interest. First, a section of the questionnaire on the social background of the respondent asked conventional questions about gender, age, language, education, religion, and participation in the organs of civil society. A second section on economic conditions asked about occupation, subsistence strategies, relative

perceptions of respondents' well-being, and evaluations of government performance in managing the economy. A third section on political attitudes and behaviors probed how Nigerians regarded, and interacted with, their political leaders, the institutions of government, and the country's new regime of democracy. A fourth section explored the degree of trust Nigerians hold for their fellow citizens, leading institutions, and prominent officials and civic figures. A fifth section asked about the economic attitudes of the respondent, including the respondent's views with regard to market-oriented policy reforms and whether he or she thought and acted like an entrepreneur. A sixth section examined political participation and citizens' assessments of political performance. Seventh, we investigated the rule of law by asking about citizen attitudes to crime and corruption. Finally, we explored the question of social identity in a series of questions about self-identification and attitudes toward others.

The questionnaire replicated several items that had been asked in previous surveys in Nigeria and in selected studies in other countries in Africa and abroad. Standard items were included for purposes of comparison. We wanted to assess whether change was occurring within Nigeria over time and to locate Nigerian attitudes in relation to those of citizens elsewhere in the world. Indeed, the contents of the questionnaire were modeled on a series of "Afrobarometer" surveys now underway or planned in at least twelve other African countries.¹

To adapt the questionnaire to local conditions, we pre-tested all items in 50 trial interviews in urban areas of Nigeria and translated the English version into six local languages: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Kanuri, Tiv, and Ijaw. All interviews were administered in the language of the respondent's choice.

For a full list of questions, and the exact wording of each, see Appendix 2.

The target population for the survey was citizens of Nigeria, namely persons who were 18 years old or older on the day of the survey in January-February 2000 and therefore eligible to vote. To draw a representative cross-section of the voting age population, a random sample was designed using a multi-stage, stratified, area cluster approach. The objective of the sample was to give every eligible adult in the country an equal chance of being chosen for an interview. To ensure this, random procedures were used at every stage of the sample, including the selection of primary sampling units, households and respondents.

For a precise account of the sampling methodology, see Appendix 1.

A total of 3,603 persons were interviewed. A random sample of this size allows a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of plus or minus 2 percent. In other words, we are sure that, 19 times out of 20, the figures reported from the sample differ by no more than 2 percentage points in either direction from the results that would have been obtained had we interviewed every adult Nigerian.

The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) conducted the survey in collaboration with Management Systems International (MSI). A Nigerian survey research firm, Research and Marketing Services (RMS), conducted the fieldwork, assisted with sampling methods, and processed questionnaire data. Drs. Peter Lewis and Michael Bratton directed

survey design, oversaw implementation, and analyzed survey results. The survey covered all six informal geopolitical regions of the country, including 22 of the 36 states, with the number of interviews in each region being proportional to the region's population size (see Appendix 1). Eight field teams, composed of a supervisor, a quality control manager, and six enumerators, were trained in a three-day intensive workshops at the RMS home office in Lagos and at six regional locations. Teams were deployed to the field for up to fourteen days starting on January 21, 2000. Data was entered at RMS and analyzed at American University and Michigan State University.

The Social and Economic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample of 3603 survey respondents was divided evenly by gender: 1803 males (50.0 percent) and 1800 (50.0 percent) females. This exact division was a function of the survey's method for sampling respondents, which required enumerators to alternate interviews with men and women. As a result, the gender distribution in the sample closely resembles that in the population of Nigeria as a whole which, according to United Nations estimates, is composed of 49 percent males and 51 percent females (UNDP, Human Development Report, 1994, p.147).

The sample included a wide range of age groups, from newly-enfranchised 18 year-olds (179 respondents) to an 87 year-old man in Lagos (See Appendix 4, Question 1). The mean age of the survey respondents was 32.5 years and, because the sample (again following the contours of the Nigerian population) was skewed on the young side, the median age was 29 years. In the analysis that follows, we sometimes refer to "youth" (or "younger people"), by which we mean persons aged 18 to 30, and to "older people", by which we mean people 31 years and above. The break-point for distinguishing age groups was set midway between the mean and median ages of the sample. It accords closely with the median age of Nigeria's over-18 population (31 years) as reported in the most recent official census (National Population Commission, 1994).

The average size of respondent households was 6.5 persons, of which 2.8 were children below the age of 18. The most common type of household (median size = 6) contained two parents, two children over 18, and two children under 18. But the range of household types was wide: at the extremes, 5.3 percent of the households contained only one person (usually unmarried or widowed individuals) and 11.6 percent contained 10 or more (often where a polygamous male had multiple wives or where clans of siblings or cousins cohabited). Smaller households were more common in Lagos and other Southern regions and larger households were more common in the various Northern regions.²

Reflecting the residential patterns of the Nigerian population, we interviewed more rural than urban respondents. Rural residents comprised 57.3 percent of the total sample, while urban residents made up the remaining 42.7 percent. Once more, this breakdown closely mirrors the best estimates of the current urban-rural distribution of the Nigerian population (see Appendix 1, p.4). The rural sub-sample was further split into two approximately equal parts between those who lived within or outside rural population centers (28.5 and 28.8 percent of the total sample respectively). Rural population centers were defined as settlements of 10,000 to 35,000 persons. While budget and logistical constraints prevented coverage of the most remote rural reaches of the country, we are confident of the accuracy of the national sample for this study. In our

opinion, it is more inclusive and more representative of the rural population than any other previous national attitude survey in Nigeria of which we are aware.

When asked which local language Nigerians spoke most often, the respondents mentioned fully 85 different languages or dialects. But a few languages predominated: almost one-third of the sample (31.5 percent) named Hausa as their primary tongue, followed by Yoruba (25.5 percent) and Igbo (16.7 percent). The three major languages thus account for almost three-fourths (73.7 percent) of the languages commonly spoken in Nigeria, a figure somewhat larger than previous estimates of the size of these three ethnic communities (Diamond, 1995). Because these major tongues are often prevalent among minority groups in the different regions, language use may extend beyond the core ethnic community. The only other consequential languages (i.e. spoken as a primary tongue by more than 1 percent of the population) were, in order of importance: Edo, Kanuri, Tiv, Ibibio-Efik, Ikwerre, Urhobo and Ijaw.

More than two out of three respondents (69.1 percent) said that they could understand spoken English, with a slightly smaller proportion (64.3 percent) claiming that they could read and write in this official language of Nigeria.

According to the survey, the median Nigerian had received some post-primary schooling but had not completed secondary school. Education was distributed as follows: one-quarter (25.3 percent) of respondents had received no formal schooling; 17.0 percent had completed only primary school; 37.0 percent had completed secondary school; and the remainder (20.7 percent) had obtained some kind of post-secondary qualification. Education was clearly a function of age, with later generations benefitting from expanded educational opportunities: for example, more than twice as many “younger people” had completed secondary school (34.5 percent) than “older people” (16.5 percent).³ Even more strikingly, education was a function of religion: whereas only 6.8 percent of Christians reported no formal schooling, almost half of all Muslims (47.5 percent) did so.⁴ Accordingly, there was also a marked North-South discrepancy in access to education.⁵

The most frequently cited occupation among survey respondents was “informal marketer”(18.6), followed by “student” (15.3 percent), “farmer/fisherman” (13.4 percent), and “housewife” (12.8 percent). Together, these four occupations accounted for the daily activities of more than half of the Nigerian population. Relatively fewer people described their occupations as “artisan” (10.5), “business person”(6.2 percent), or “government employee” (5.6 percent). While only one in twenty persons (5.9 percent) described themselves as “unemployed” at the time of the survey, fully one out of three (35.4 percent) said that they had been out of work for a period of at least one month during the past year. Thus, even employed Nigerians face considerable job uncertainty.

In African countries, a person’s formal occupation is an unreliable guide to their actual livelihood strategy. Like other Africans, Nigerians undertake a diversified portfolio of economic activities in order to ensure subsistence and to make money. Substantial proportions of respondents reported engaging in private trade (“buying and selling goods”) (45.6 percent) or moonlighting at other jobs (“selling skills and services”) (34.2 percent). Almost one in five

(18.9 percent) employed other people to help them, either in their main occupations or in their subsidiary enterprises.

To obtain a rough estimate of household income, the survey asked how much money the respondent and his or her spouse together earned in a month. The responses ranged from zero to over 50,000 naira (\$500). Those who said they had no earnings (14.6 percent) were either dependent on others (like students supported by their families) or effectively outside the cash economy (like self-provisioning farmers). But almost three quarters of all Nigerian households (72.4 percent) apparently subsist on less than 5,000 naira (\$50) per month. A mere 2 percent of households make more than 30,000 naira (\$300 per month). As elsewhere in the world, the education level of breadwinners was an excellent predictor of household income.⁶

The survey assessed the adequacy of household income by asking about the household's financial situation. Are Nigerians able to save money? Alternatively, do they "break even" by spending all their income? Or are they forced to borrow and incur debt? About half of those interviewed (52.1 percent) said that they essentially break even, while another 22.1 percent have to dip into savings or borrow in order to make ends meet.⁷ A few people (4.3 percent) even have to do *both*, that is to run down savings as well as borrow. Overall, only one out of five (21.1 percent) reported that they are able to save money.

Not surprisingly, personal financial circumstances vary considerably by income.⁸ At lower income levels (less than 5,000 naira or \$50 per month) only 17.1 percent of people saved money; at higher income levels (more than 5,000 naira or \$50 per month), 31.6 percent of persons did so. Higher income earners (and savers) were also very much more likely to operate a bank account,⁹ a practice followed by 23.8 percent of Nigerians overall.

Housing conditions provide another indication of living standards. Among those surveyed, 89.3 percent had a permanent roof (metal, tin, zinc, asbestos, shingle or tile) and the remainder had temporary materials like thatch (10.0 percent) or plastic sheeting (1.0 percent). Compared with Southern Africa, where up to one-third of households live in dwellings with temporary roofing materials (mostly thatch), Nigerians are relatively well-housed.

The survey asked directly about several basic needs including food, water, education and health care. We learned, with some concern, that two out of five Nigerians (41.3 percent) sometimes have a problem in securing enough food to feed their families; moreover, 5.6 percent report facing food shortages "frequently" and 1.3 percent said "always". Water for domestic use was in even shorter supply: 59.5 percent reported at least occasional shortages, with 15.6 percent and 9.0 percent saying this problem arose "frequently" or "always". By contrast, shortages of education and health care were reported much less often.¹⁰

Access to certain basic services is determined partly by income, but much more powerfully by place of residence. For example, whereas 76.2 percent of urban dwellers report reliable access to schooling for their children, only 64.0 percent of rural dwellers do so. And, whereas 71.5 of urbanites can reliably gain access to a hospital, only 56.2 of rural folk say that they "never" experience shortages of health care for their families. But, because the denizens of

the countryside have opportunities to provide themselves with basic goods, they more closely resemble urban dwellers in terms of water supply and food security.

PART ONE: ATTITUDES TOWARD DEMOCRACY

Support for Democracy

One point of departure for understanding citizens' attitudes is to gauge their estimation for democracy as an ideal system of governance. This basic political value provides perspective on other assessments of democratic performance, and the effectiveness of leaders or institutions.

Nigerians generally show a pronounced commitment to democracy (See Fig. 1, Appendix 4). An overwhelming majority (80.9 percent) of those interviewed agree that "Democracy is preferable to any other form of government," while much smaller proportions believe that "In certain situations, a non-democratic government can be preferable" (9.2 percent) or "To people like me, it doesn't matter what form of government we have" (9.6 percent). Citizens display a clear commitment to democratic government, forgoing non-democratic alternatives or expressions of apathy.

Comparatively, this suggests that democratic commitments currently run higher in Nigeria than in many other new democracies (in Africa and elsewhere). In January 2000, Nigerians agreed with the statement that 'democracy is preferable' at higher rates than in recent surveys in Ghana in 1999 (74 percent), Zambia in 1996 (63 percent) and South Africa in 1997 (56 percent). Democratic preferences in Nigeria also exceeds those of such countries as Brazil (41 percent) and the Czech Republic (77 percent). Only southern European countries such as Greece (90 percent) exceed the magnitude of the Nigerian response (Bratton and Mattes, 1999).

This attachment to democracy is affirmed by Nigerians' comparative evaluations of alternative political regimes (See Fig. 2). Respondents were asked to "grade" different systems of government on a scale from 1 (least favorable) to 10 (most favorable). Here too, Nigerians display a strong preference for democracy and high expectations about future governance. The present system of government ("with free elections and many parties") earned a mean score of 7.53. About a fifth of respondents awarded democracy a 10, and 55.5 percent scored it above 8.

The former military system, by contrast, earned a mean score of 2.53. More than half of those interviewed (51 percent) gave military rule the lowest score of 1, while 78 percent scored it 3 or below. Two historical systems were rated somewhat higher than military rule, but still well below the current democratic system. Colonial rule earned a mean score of 4.10 while the "old system of government by traditional rulers" was comparable, with a mean score of 4.03. In addition, Nigerians were asked to speculate about governance in five years time, and they displayed considerable optimism, providing an impressive mean score of 8.95. A substantial majority (58.7 percent) assigned a high score of 10 to the government they expect five years from now. Thus, there is a marked contrast between the harsh assessments of preceding military governments and the high hopes invested in the new system.

Nigerians generally view democracy in conventional liberal terms, and they hold mainly positive connotations (See Fig. 3). When asked to express their understanding of democracy, nearly two-thirds of respondents offered definitions that emphasized political freedoms and procedures, including "government by the people" (38 percent), political rights and elections

(14 percent) or civil liberties (13.8 percent). A significant proportion defined democracy in more neutral terms as ‘civilian politics’ (16.8 percent), while about 10 percent provided substantive values such as peace, social and economic development, or equality and justice. Fewer than 1 percent of those interviewed associated democracy with such negative terms as corruption, conflict and confusion, economic hardship, or government of the rich. Thus, much of the public holds a very positive view of democracy, and sees it as a system of liberties, laws, or popular voice. Moreover, Nigerians are evidently comfortable with the idea of democracy, as only 6.2 percent were unable to provide a meaning, answering “don’t know.”

Conditional Support for Democracy

While general assessments of democracy can provide some indication of popular attitudes, the depth and strength of these commitments can still vary widely, as studies of political culture have emphasized (Almond and Verba, 1963; Putnam, 1993). How deeply are Nigerians attached to the values of democracy, and how substantial is their resolve to defend these new institutions? If there is weak commitment to core features of democratic politics, or considerable tolerance for non-democratic alternatives, then a fledgling democracy might be more vulnerable to “illiberal” pressures or even reversal (Zakaria, 1997; Rose et al, 1998).

Overall, in Nigeria there appear to be clear and consistent preferences for democratic values and behavior. For instance, nearly three-fourths of respondents support freedom of expression for people with different views, and reject the idea that diverse opinions are “dangerous and confusing.” A similar majority (73.1 percent) believe in full voting rights for all citizens, regardless of education. Although Nigeria has frequently been troubled by political violence, those interviewed voice a sound rejection (79.2 percent) of violence as a means toward political goals. Moreover, there is a strong belief in constitutionalism, as 78.8 percent agree (67.3 percent strongly) that “the President should obey the Constitution,” and should not have leeway to change the Constitution at will.

These affirmations of democratic values are complemented by a clear dismissal of various non-democratic directions in politics. Fully 90 percent of respondents percent disagreed (70 percent strongly) that “The army should come in to govern the country.” This response was complemented by expressions of suspicion toward the army as an institution. When asked about their relative trust of the army, only 36.9 percent of respondents were somewhat trustful, while 62.1 percent expressed relative mistrust, and fully 39 percent did not trust the army “at all.” This confirms the perception that protracted army rule, and the attendant abuses and malfeasance under recent dictatorships, have tarnished the reputation of the military.

There was also an objection (88.4 percent) to the possibility of single party rule, or the notion that elections should be scrapped so that “a strong leader can decide everything” (83.5 percent disagreed). In one area, however, Nigerians appear willing to defer to those in authority, as 58.8 percent registered some agreement that “The most important decisions, for example on the economy, should be left to experts.” This suggests that in some areas of governance, especially technical areas such as macro-economic reform, citizens do not feel a sense of efficacy and are willing to delegate authority to elites.

In view of past limitations on political and civil rights in Nigeria, citizens were asked how they might react to future infringements of basic liberties. Options ranged from doing nothing, to supporting the government, contacting an elected representative, or taking stronger actions such as joining an opposition party or participating in protests or boycotts. In this area, responses were less resolute or consistent. If the government were to shut down adversarial newspapers, 44.8 percent said they would actively oppose this action, yet a similar proportion (44.5 percent) said they would do nothing. Similarly, if the government dismissed judges on political grounds, 41.7 percent promised to act, while 46.4 percent replied passively. Even more telling, if the government suspended the legislature and canceled elections, 45.6 percent say they would respond forcefully, yet an equal number would acquiesce (44.4 percent) or actually support the government (1.8 percent).

In other areas, however, the protection of personal liberties showed greater resolve. Should the government attempt to limit freedom of travel, more than two-thirds of respondents promised some form of opposition, with 50.9 percent saying they would actively protest. Most significantly, when asked how they would react “if the government told you which religion you had to follow,” 58 percent vowed to protest, and another 19.4 percent affirmed they would join an opposition party; less than ten percent said they would be indifferent. Thus, defense of religious freedoms evoked the strongest response among Nigerians, who are apparently more ready to actively protect their spiritual faiths than to rise to the defense of democracy.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Apart from measuring abstract commitments to democratic values, it is also important to gauge citizens’ contentment with the workings of the democratic system. In the months following the political transition, Nigerians express considerable satisfaction with “the way democracy works”(See Fig. 4). This popular vote of confidence is qualified with a strong note of caution, however, with many more Nigerians saying they are “somewhat satisfied” (58.1 percent) rather than “very satisfied”(25.5 percent).

The satisfied majority (83.6 percent) is an even higher proportion than those expressing a general preference for democratic government (80.9 percent). This balance of opinion is distinctive, as in many other new democracies around the world, satisfaction with the workings of democracy is typically lower than overall preferences for a democratic regime (Rose et al, 1998; Bratton and Mattes, 1999). Nigerians may reflect exceptional enthusiasm in the early moments of Nigeria’s new regime, in which case we might expect to see some decline in satisfaction with democracy over time.

When asked “how much of a democracy is Nigeria today?” more than 96 percent find the country to be democratic (See Fig. 5): 45.6 percent view it as a democracy with “major problems,” while the rest perceive minor problems (33.4 percent) or a “full democracy” (17.2 percent). In line with other responses, a majority agree (86.7 percent) that “Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government.” Not surprisingly, in view of these opinions and the unsettling legacy of military rule, 92.5 percent of respondents affirm that the transition to democracy has been good for the country.

Performance of Democracy and the Government

Citizens use various criteria when evaluating government performance. The popularity of democratic regimes is often affected by economic performance or the delivery of material benefits, but there are also a range of “political goods,” i.e. basic liberties and the performance of institutions, that influence relative satisfaction with democracy (Przeworski et al, 1995; Diamond, 1999). The survey asked Nigerians to weigh the importance of various political and economic attributes that might be associated with a democratic regime. While essential political rights and benefits are clearly valued, respondents give equal (or somewhat higher) weight to economic outcomes.

The questionnaire asked “In order for a society to be called democratic, how important is each of these?” (See Fig. 6) This allowed respondents to offer independent assessments of different factors, along a range of responses from “not at all important” to “very important.” There is a substantial valuation of basic democratic prerogatives and institutions, as 82.5 percent believe it is important to be able to criticize government, and 85.5 percent affirm the importance of majority rule (in each instance, slightly less than 50 percent rated them very important). In addition, respondents stress the importance of multiparty competition (89 percent, with 53.1 percent answering very important), and somewhat less strongly, regular elections (79.5 percent, 45.4 percent very important).

A range of economic benefits, however, elicited even stronger responses. Universal access to basic necessities like shelter, food, and water is considered important by 93.3 percent of those interviewed, including 70.1 percent who consider this very important. Indeed, the goals of full employment (94.5 percent important, and 73.3 percent very important) and universal education (94.9 percent important, and 74.1 percent very important) prompted the strongest opinions. Income equality was also valued highly, though not as highly as other economic goals: 81.9 percent deemed it important, 57.1 percent highly important.

At face value, these responses suggest that Nigerians expect democratic governance to provide both economic and political goods and that, at least in the near term, they are especially concerned with basic amenities and social services. The problem of income inequality is also an important consideration in Nigerians’ evaluation of democratic performance. Politically, there appears to be a somewhat greater concern with basic liberties and multiparty competition than with procedures such as elections.

One frame of reference for evaluating democratic performance is to compare current conditions with those under preceding military regimes. Nigerians perceive a marked difference between their present circumstances and those under former rulers. When asked whether conditions were relatively better, worse or the same under the current system, a large majority noted improvements in freedom of speech (88.9 percent), freedom of political affiliation (85.4 percent), and open electoral choice (86.4 percent). Substantial, though lesser majorities believe that citizens now have greater influence on the government (65.9 percent), that the current government treats citizens more fairly and equitably (65.1 percent), and that people have more adequate living standards than under authoritarian rule (59.3 percent). In general, Nigerians

are encouraged by improvements in political and economic conditions under the new democratic government, and these answers show discernment among different dimensions of performance.

The performance of key democratic institutions is obviously a touchstone for assessing the new regime. The founding elections of 1998-99 attracted criticism from domestic and international observers, yet Nigerians generally seem content with the integrity of the polls. When asked about the conduct of elections (given a spectrum of choices ranging from “very dishonestly” to “very honestly”), a majority of respondents nationwide believe in the relative honesty of the presidential poll (76.4 percent) and the state elections (76.9 percent). Another question asked about relative trust in public institutions (again, ranging from no trust to ‘a lot’ of trust), and 61.8 percent of those interviewed expressed some degree of trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). It would seem, then, that the new democratic government does not suffer a general deficit in legitimacy arising from the founding elections, notwithstanding the serious flaws in those polls.

Other democratic institutions also garner significant approval. A majority of Nigerians (63.8 percent) show some satisfaction with the performance of political parties, though citizens are clearly ambivalent about these new associations, with 50.8 percent expressing relative trust for parties and 47.3 percent relative distrust. Nigerians show a greater degree of trust for the National Assembly (57.5 percent) and the Local Governments (57.1 percent). They are not acutely concerned about partisan contention, as most disagree (70.3 percent) with the proposition, “Democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling.”

Of course, it is important to distinguish between the democratic system and the current government. While citizens may be favorably disposed toward democracy as a regime, they can hold different views toward elected officials or the majority party. Early in its term of office, the new Nigerian government attracts substantial levels of popular approval, generally equivalent to public favor for democracy. When asked for an overall assessment of the government’s performance, nearly 82 percent of respondents stated “good” or “very good”; only 11 percent were neutral, and a little more than 5 percent offered negative ratings. This response is affirmed by separate ratings of elected officials. Nigerians generally express satisfaction with their National Assembly representative (58.1 percent) and their state representative (57.8 percent), and even higher ratings for governors (71.8 percent) and Local Government chairs (66.9 percent). These responses suggest that perceptions of performance are affected by proximity: the more distant representatives in Abuja earn less approval than local officials or the visible and influential state executive. This may also reflect the highly publicized scandals and controversies in the National Assembly in recent months. In an important exception to this pattern, the presidency appears to instill a high level of public confidence. Four out of five Nigerians express relative trust for President Obasanjo, with nearly a third affirming they trust him “a lot.”

Patience with Democracy

Expectations about the future, and patience with the political process, influence the consolidation of democracy. The hopes that accompany a major change in government can be construed as an asset or a hazard. Optimism among the public can be an important advantage for

government, providing a “cushion” of legitimacy for leaders in difficult times. Yet high expectations may also give way to disillusionment, raising the possibility that discouraged citizens could be more inclined to consider alternatives to a democratic system.

Nigerians clearly have high expectations of democratic government, and considerable optimism about their future. When asked about their own life’s prospects, 86.6 percent anticipate being more satisfied in a year, with 58.9 percent expecting to be “much more satisfied.” Regarding official performance, 70.8 percent expect the government to fulfill its promises within four years, i.e. a single term of office. And, as reported earlier, citizens give very high marks to the government they expect in five years’ time – 58.7 percent assigned the highest grade of 10.

Nigerians currently feel a sense of efficacy in politics, as 80.9 percent agree (59.1 percent strongly) that “We can use our power as voters to choose leaders who will help us improve our lives,” while only 16.2 percent are inclined toward a contrary view, “No matter who we vote for, things will not get any better in the future.” Moreover, there is a sense of patience among citizens as 79.5 percent agree that “Our present system of elected government will be able to deal with inherited problems, even if this takes time.” Once again a small proportion (16.4 percent) accept the alternative proposition that “If democracy can’t produce results soon, we should try another form of government.” Nonetheless, there is some equivocation on the values of governance: although 49.8 percent of respondents believe that “The best form of government is a government elected by the people,” an equivalent proportion (48.8 percent) agree that “The best form of government is a government that get things done.” While Nigerians display a preference for democratic values, they also expect a modicum of performance from their leaders.

Summary

The responses to the survey in January-February 2000 reveal a remarkably strong commitment to democracy among Nigerians. Their overall preference for democratic governance is among the highest of the new democracies around the world. Their reported satisfaction with the current democratic regime is even greater than their preference for a democratic system, displaying a unique balance of opinion. Moreover, their democratic preferences appear consistent and robust. Nigerians independently define democracy in conventional liberal terms, they affirm a commitment to various aspects of the democratic process, and they largely reject non-democratic values, behaviors, or alternative political arrangements.

Citizens express high expectations of the democratic system and the current government, and they register favorable assessments of new institutions, elected officials, and general government performance. Much of the public also appears to be optimistic about democratic governance, and patient about the challenges of political change. Nigerians consider economic factors to be an important element in the performance of democracy, but they look to the democratic regime for a range of political functions as well as economic benefits.

The apparent intensity of these attitudes invite an explanation. Nigeria currently appears to be a paragon of democratic values, both in Africa and internationally. Moreover, the current government enjoys high legitimacy and favorable performance ratings, notwithstanding the many acute problems evident in Nigeria’s political and social landscape. Two distinct

interpretations may help to account for these patterns. One possibility lies in the dimension of political culture. Observers of Nigerian politics have discerned an enduring, deep-seated commitment to democratic ideals, despite the country's extended interludes of authoritarian rule (Peil, 1976; Diamond, 1995; Beckett and Alli, 1998). As Nigeria embarks on its newest democratic transition, these innate preferences are evident in public opinion.

Another explanation focuses on the nature of the current transition. Nigerians have reflected a degree of post-authoritarian trauma as the country emerged from an extended period of political crisis, autocracy, and economic malaise under recent military regimes. The peaceful, timely change of government has opened the way to a transition euphoria, as freedoms are regained and a new sense of national possibility has emerged. In the current mood, many Nigerians have temporarily set aside their critical faculties regarding government performance, and their social or economic conditions.

There is evidence in the survey data for both lines of explanation. The depth and consistency of democratic attitudes and values cannot be dismissed as a transient outburst, or an expression of "rote" ideas learned during the transition period. Nigerians evidently hold some enduring and fundamental attachments to democratic governance, and they have a relatively sophisticated understanding of political institutions and processes. At the same time, the almost uniformly high evaluations of government performance, and the lofty expectations of rapid progress in governance and the economy, bespeak a degree of acclamation that is not entirely realistic. It is very likely that the public will resume a more critical stance as the transitory enthusiasm wears off and many intractable problems persist. We would then expect to see assessments of performance (of both the democratic system and the incumbent government) decline markedly in subsequent surveys. If the presumption of an underlying democratic culture is correct, however, then declining satisfaction with democracy will not necessarily be mirrored by diminished commitment to democratic governance.

PART TWO: ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ECONOMY

Support for Market Values

General attitudes toward the market (or a “market regime”) frame a range of views toward economic policy and reform. Nigerians were surveyed on an array of questions pertaining to the relative role of markets and government in the economy. Generally, the public displays eclectic perspectives on these issues. In some respects Nigerians have a high regard for entrepreneurship and individual initiative, and they look toward the private sector for the provision of many essential goods and services. At the same time, there is a substantial preference for government involvement in crucial areas of the economy, as Nigerians expect the state to secure employment and welfare and to regulate certain markets.

Nigerians are inclined toward a reliance on government for general economic welfare, as 55.5 percent accept that the government “should bear the main responsibility for ensuring the well-being of people,” while 43 percent stress personal autonomy, agreeing that “People should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life.” (See Fig. 7) In this regard, Nigerians differ from Ghanaians, whose preferences reverse these values: in Ghana, 55.5 percent opt for self-reliance in personal welfare, with 44.5 percent preferring to depend on government. We speculate that this contrast in attitudes is a reflection of the different paths of the two economies in recent decades. The Ghanaian economy, including much of the state sector, largely collapsed in the early 1980s, and the country has since experienced seventeen years of relatively consistent market-oriented reforms. Nigeria’s economy, while battered by low oil prices and mismanagement, nonetheless sustained many government services, subsidies and institutions. Market reforms have been erratic and uneven in their impact. Nigerians, in consequence, have comparatively less confidence in markets and a greater attachment to the perquisites of the state.

Similarly, many Nigerians express a penchant for government provision of jobs, as 56.1 percent lean toward the view that “The government should provide employment for everyone who wants to work,” while 42.8 percent agree that “The best way to create jobs is to encourage people to start their own businesses.” There is, however, considerable regard for the benefits of individual initiative, as 55.1 percent agree that people “should be free to earn as much as they can, even if this leads to differences in income,” while another 39.2 percent take the alternative view that “The government should place limits on how much the rich can earn, even if this discourages some people from working hard.”

Most Nigerians appear to hold a sense of personal efficacy, as two-thirds agree that “I always try to plan ahead because I feel I can make my plans work,” while slightly less than a third believe that “It is not wise to plan too far ahead, because many things turn out to be a matter of luck.” With regard to entrepreneurship, 81.2 percent accept the notion of risk, agreeing that “If a person has a good idea for a business, they should invest their own savings or borrow money to try to make it succeed,” and only 16.7 percent allow that “There is no sense in trying to start a new business because many enterprises lose money.”

There is also evidence of significant trust in some market institutions. Surprisingly, in view of recent problems in the banking industry, 75.9 percent of respondents express relative trust for banks. Overall, 70.8 percent have some trust of businesses. A large majority of Nigerians (73.5 percent) are also tolerant of foreign investment, agreeing that “In order to create jobs, the government should encourage foreign companies to invest in our country.” Conversely, 24.6 percent are more skeptical, believing the government “should be wary of foreign investors because they may gain control of our national wealth.”

In order to gauge relative preferences for government and markets, the survey asked people to name the best provider for key goods and services: is it the government, private businesses, individuals, or some combination of these? When asked who should be responsible for protecting the nation’s borders, respondents readily agree (by a margin of 90.9 percent) that the government should mainly be responsible. When it comes to building homes, however, 65.9 percent believe that individuals should be responsible, with only 10.5 percent designating government, and another 15.4 percent choosing individuals and government combined. These responses “anchored” the outer points of the range of possible views between government and individual provision.

Other economic goods were deemed to fall between these extremes. With regard to social services, most Nigerians expect government to be the main provider: 68.6 percent believe that government should be the main source of schools and clinics, while 10.9 percent choose government and individuals, and a nearly equal group believe all three should have a role. In the area of employment, the responses affirm expectations toward the public sector, as 66.9 percent believe that government should be the main source of creating jobs, while fewer than 1 percent chose either individuals or private companies.

Much of the public favors a state role in other important areas of the economy. A majority of respondents believe that government should be primarily responsible for producing oil (55.1 percent, with another 23 percent preferring government with businesses) (See Fig. 8), and providing agricultural credit (60.9 percent selected government, and 20.3 percent government and businesses).

In other aspects of the economy, however, there is greater emphasis on market mechanisms. Considering property rights, more than three-fourths of respondents believe that rural land should be freely owned and traded, while only 23.3 percent prefer communal land tenure under the control of traditional rulers. Markets for consumer goods are also an area where Nigerians accept greater private activity, as only 20.5 percent selected government as the main provider, while a little more than 48 percent chose private sources divided among individuals (30.5 percent), businesses and individuals together (14 percent) or private companies (3.7 percent). Another 23 percent prefer various combinations of public and private providers.

When asked about specific policies that affect the balance of government and markets, there are clearly diverse views among the population. A majority of people accept open markets and free pricing for everyday items, agreeing (55.7 percent) that it is preferable “to have goods in the market, even if prices are high,” while only a third prefer “low prices, even if there are shortages of goods.” A substantial majority are willing to accept user fees for education, if it is

linked to higher standards (68.6 percent endorsed this option, with 49.2 percent agreeing strongly), while 26.3 percent choose “free schooling for our children, even if the quality of education is low.”

While Nigerians show some flexibility on price-related issues, they also hold strong preferences for government employment and ownership of enterprises. There is considerable opposition to retrenchment in the public sector, as 73.1 percent agree (44.8 percent strongly) that “All civil servants should keep their jobs, even if paying salaries is costly to the country.” Less than a fifth concur that “The government cannot afford so many public employees and should lay some of them off.” Nigerians are also inclined against privatization, as 60.8 percent agree that the “government should retain ownership of its factories, businesses and farms,” while 34.8 percent believe that “It is better for the government to sell its businesses to private companies and individuals.”

Attitudes Toward Economic Reform and Performance

The policies discussed in the preceding section are important elements of the reform package introduced by the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986. Although the formal program launched by the Babangida regime has lapsed, many of its key features have continued and the SAP has become synonymous with an agenda of economic liberalization. The program is also frequently associated with policy conditionality from the multilateral financial institutions, the IMF and the World Bank. The SAP is a reference point for debates about economic reform in Nigeria.

Nigerians were asked about their familiarity with, and evaluation of the Structural Adjustment Program. Overall, there is limited knowledge about the program, as only 40.3 percent of respondents were familiar with the SAP by name (See Fig. 9). Far fewer Nigerians could therefore attach a meaning to “adjustment” than to “democracy”. And far fewer could name the Minister of Finance (15.7 percent) than other officials like their State governor (87.4 percent) or the national Vice-President (56.0 percent). These findings, and the ones that follow, suggest low levels of economic awareness in Nigeria, a condition that is common in other African countries as well.

The survey probed the knowledge of the Structural Adjustment Program from among those who could identify the package (See Fig. 10). When asked to explain the purpose of the SAP, nearly half of that group replied it was to ‘improve the economy’ (21.4 percent) or ‘improve living conditions’ (24.9 percent). Others mentioned more specific economic goals, including stabilization and fiscal balance (7 percent), increasing jobs and/or productivity (3.2 percent), reforming economic institutions (7.6 percent), making goods available (5.9 percent), or reducing inflation (3.6 percent). Some answers had a general focus such as “self reliance” (7 percent), “hard work” (0.6 percent), or “bring the country together” (0.1 percent). In light of the controversial nature of the SAP, it is interesting to note that fewer than 1 percent provided such negative definitions as “bringing hardship and difficulty,” “benefitting the rich,” or “corruption and looting.” Contrary to the conventional wisdom that “the people” view adjustment in a negative light, most knowledgeable Nigerians seem to associate structural adjustment policies with positive economic objectives.

Whether these objectives have been realized, of course, is another matter. When asked about their relative satisfaction with the SAP (based upon a range from “very unsatisfied,” through “neutral,” to “very satisfied”), two-thirds of respondents expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with the program, and only 14.1 percent displayed relative satisfaction (See Fig. 11). When the full national sample was asked more generally about reform policies, they were ambivalent; while 49.1 percent agreed that “The costs of reforming the economy are too high; the government should therefore change its policies,” another 44.7 percent accepted that “In order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now.”

There is a clear perception that public policies have failed to alleviate social inequalities, and have even aggravated such imbalances. With regard to the reform program, 60 percent of respondents agree that government policies have “hurt most people and only benefitted a few,” while slightly more than a third believe that these policies “have helped most people; only a few have suffered.” Who are the perceived beneficiaries? Among those who believe the benefits have been narrowly distributed, 84 percent identify “people close to the government,” while the remainder identify a number of groups including people in “selected regions” of Nigeria (2.2 percent), foreign businesses (2.5 percent), or “the rich” (2.6 percent). Specific ethnic or regional groups are cited by few, and less than 1 percent mention elites such as politicians or the military.

When asked who is responsible for economic conditions in Nigeria, respondents focused chiefly on domestic factors (See Fig. 12): 67.6 percent cited the previous military government, and another 14.8 percent pointed to the current government. Nearly 10 percent responded that the Nigerian people themselves were mainly responsible. Fewer than 1 percent identified the IMF/World Bank, the SAP, or “international economic forces.” Nigerians clearly locate accountability for the economy within their own government and society.

The survey asked for evaluations of government performance on a range of economic issues (See Fig. 13). The present government earns generally favorable assessments, as a majority of respondents believe that newly elected leaders are doing well at handling jobs (54.6 percent), controlling inflation (58.3 percent), providing for education (61.4 percent) and health (63.7 percent), assuring food security (54.5 percent), and fighting crime (61.9 percent). Notably, the government is rated highest for its handling corruption (64.2 percent). President Obasanjo’s initiatives to dismiss selected cronies associated with the former government and to recover their ill-gotten gains have apparently met with a measure of popular support.

In the area of income inequality, however, the government receives more negative assessments, with only 39.5 percent of respondents feeling that leaders are doing well in narrowing the gap between rich and poor. This accords with other opinions regarding economic and social disparities, including the perception (by a majority of 60 percent) that the SAP has been largely detrimental, and benefits have accrued only to a narrow group. Moreover, Nigerians show significant discontent with general economic conditions, as 55.1 percent are relatively dissatisfied with the current state of the nation’s economy.

Relationships Between Political and Economic Reform

Nigeria's democratic experiment is unfolding against the background of a weak economy and irregular efforts at economic liberalization. The relationship between these political and economic processes is an important dimension of the nation's transition. Some observers see an integral link between economic performance and the consolidation of democracy. If citizens have high expectations of economic betterment under a democratic system, they may question the value of the new regime if benefits are not forthcoming quickly enough. Alternatively, it is possible that the public does not evaluate democracy purely along instrumental lines, but looks instead for a variety of political goods from the government (like order, freedom, justice and equality) alongside the satisfaction of more material needs (Bratton and Mattes, 1999; Diamond, 1999).

One line of inquiry is whether political and economic liberalism are related, i.e. if democratic preferences are closely associated with preferences for a market economy. Some inferences can be drawn by matching attitudes toward democratic governance with key questions about states and markets, including relative preferences for government provision of welfare, attitudes toward public employment and ownership, or opinions of reform policies.

In Nigeria, there is generally a weak and insignificant association between these views, and the relationship does not point in one direction. For instance, people who believe more strongly in government provision of welfare actually show slightly stronger preferences for democracy (and lower tolerance for non-democratic alternatives) than respondents stressing personal autonomy in economic matters. In this sense, the economic "statists" are somewhat stronger democrats.¹¹ On another dimension, there seems to be almost no relationship. Those supporting public employment are almost indistinguishable in their democratic preferences from those who favor public sector layoffs.¹² The same holds true among those who support or oppose privatization—their democratic commitments are essentially the same in either case.¹³ Finally, with regard to government policies, the association points in a different direction: Nigerians who favor changes in adjustment policies display somewhat weaker democratic preferences than those who believe in sustaining the reform program.¹⁴ On this question, the economic reformers seem to be more committed to democracy. Overall, it appears that Nigerians hold fairly consistent views on politics, yet they have more diverse opinions on the economy, and these values do not seem to cluster in a regular fashion.

Evaluations of the impact of economic reform appear to influence assessments of the democratic regime, though they do not shift general preferences. Among respondents who say they are very dissatisfied with the Structural Adjustment Program, slightly more than 80 percent still express relative satisfaction with democracy, while 19.3 percent are relatively dissatisfied with democratic performance. By comparison, among those who are very satisfied with the SAP, nearly 92 percent register relative satisfaction with democracy, a statistically significant difference.¹⁵ Seen from another direction, the people most satisfied with democracy still report dissatisfaction with the adjustment program (62.1 percent), while those least satisfied with democracy are only somewhat more dissatisfied with these policies (67.6 percent). Thus, disappointment with adjustment would seem to attenuate enthusiasm for the political regime, though it does not undermine Nigerians' remarkably strong approval for democratic governance.

This same characterization holds true when we match preferences for democracy against general evaluations of the Nigerian economy. Among people who are most satisfied with the state of the economy, almost 84 percent express a preference for democracy over any other system, while 8.5 percent would consider a non-democratic alternative. Those least satisfied with the economy show slightly reduced democratic preferences (78 percent) and somewhat greater willingness to tolerate non-democratic options (11.4 percent). Nonetheless, for all groups there is a strong attachment to democracy, and the relationship is not statistically significant.¹⁶

Taking into account citizens' satisfaction with their personal economic conditions, a similar pattern is evident. The respondents most satisfied with their own circumstances strongly prefer democracy (78.6 percent), but those who are "not at all satisfied" with their conditions also display solid democratic commitment (75.7 percent). Among the least satisfied, 13.3 percent would consider an alternative to democracy, compared with 11.2 percent among the most satisfied. In these instances, the differences are not statistically significant, and they point to a strong and consistent attachment to democracy *regardless* of individual economic satisfaction.¹⁷

Although economic factors do not currently appear to have a strong effect on attitudes toward democracy, popular perceptions of economic well-being could be consequential over time. Nigerians' relative patience about their economic and political conditions are especially relevant in trying to assess these relationships. One approach is to match appraisals of future well-being with attitudes toward democratic performance. The questionnaire asked people to speculate on their welfare, asking "How long do you think it will take before your own living standards meet your expectations?" The responses included the following range: within two years; within four years; within eight years; more than eight years; or, never. More than half of those interviewed expected to meet their expectations within two years, and a little more than three-fourths anticipated their ideal conditions within four years.

The most optimistic respondents expect to achieve their desired living standard within two years; among this group, a large majority (81.3 percent) tend to agree that democratic government can "deal with inherited problems, even if this takes time," while only 16.4 percent accept the view that if "democracy can't produce results soon, we should try another form of government." Among the more pessimistic segment, those who believe they will never meet their personal material goals, 73.3 percent concur that democratic government can eventually deal with problems, while 23.3 percent would look for alternatives if democracy doesn't deliver change. While there are significant differences among those who perceive different personal prospects, there is still a generally strong sense of forbearance toward the democratic regime.

Also on this theme, the questionnaire asked for relative agreement or disagreement with the statement "In a democracy, the economic system runs badly." Overall, a majority of Nigerians (81.3 percent) disagreed with the statement, including 36.2 percent who disagreed strongly. And, as noted earlier, respondents were evenly divided among their preferences for elected or effectual government. This division does not vary according to views on economic competence: among those who believe that democracies can successfully manage the economy (i.e., who disagree strongly that the economy 'runs badly' in a democracy), 42.4 percent strongly agree that electoral government is most desirable, and the same proportion favors a government

that “gets things done.” Thus, while many Nigerians value government efficacy more highly than democratic procedure, their views are not driven by economic concerns.

Thus, the Nigerian public is forming separate and largely unconnected perceptions of political and economic reform. In a nutshell, Nigerians are much more committed to democracy than to economic adjustment, and most attendant liberalization policies. This is clearly evidenced by the willingness of survey respondents to countenance change in political versus economic regimes. Whereas only 16.4 percent of survey respondents want “to try another form of government (soon)”, fully 49.1 percent think that the government should “change its economic policies (now)”.

PART THREE: THE RULE OF LAW

Establishing a rule of law is among the fundamental challenges for many new democracies, and the problem is manifest in Nigeria. Two aspects are especially salient: the prevalence of corruption, and high levels of crime, especially in the major urban areas. Beginning with the oil boom of the 1970s, Nigeria experienced an enormous increase in official corruption, as well as a variety of fraudulent and illicit practices in the private sector. The boom era also witnessed an explosive growth of urbanization and increased social inequalities, both of which fostered a rise in crime. Since that time, corruption and crime have been among the most vexing obstacles to effective governance and economic growth, and they have persisted through both military and civilian rule. There is also a widespread perception that these problems, especially the malady of corruption, have worsened under recent military regimes. The efforts by a democratic leadership to deal with these issues can significantly affect public perceptions of the government's legitimacy and effectiveness.

Official Corruption

The issue of corruption is a perennial concern among Nigerians. When asked how often they believe their fellow citizens offer bribes to public officials, 94.0 percent of those interviewed perceived some corruption, including 52.8 percent who replied that people "always" bribe officials. Almost three-fourths of respondents disagreed with the statement that "Bribery is not common among public officials in Nigeria."

All told, those who admitted being solicited for bribes named more than fifty different agencies or departments as the source. There was substantial concentration among this list however, as more than half named the police or law enforcement agencies as the main source, while a substantial group cited NEPA (the National Electric Power Authority, 11.7 percent) or local government authorities (12.4 percent) (See Fig. 14). Interestingly, about 10 percent of bribes were paid to various educational institutions or instructors, yet relatively few people reported illicit payments to the courts (0.9 percent), or political institutions such as the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission, 0.1 percent). Large national organizations such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) apparently do not elicit much "petty" corruption among average citizens, as only 0.2 percent report corrupt dealings with the company, notwithstanding its reputation as a center of malfeasance.

The salience of corruption in the public eye obviously carries substantial weight in citizens' evaluations of their government. Overall, Nigerians are divided in their opinions of public officials, as about half (49.9 percent) are inclined to agree with the proposition "Politicians and civil servants are trying their best to look after the interests of people like me," while another 46.5 percent register some disagreement with that statement. This suggests that, despite the prevalence of bribery, Nigerians do not see their elected leaders and bureaucrats as totally self-aggrandizing. Many people also acknowledge that cultivating influence can be effective, as nearly two-thirds (63.3 percent) agree that "The best way to get ahead in this life is to have contacts with important people in high places." Given the realities of power and inequality in the society, there would seem to be considerable acceptance of the need to gain favor with people of status and means.

In this area, Nigerians perceive a significant improvement under the new regime, as fully 82.6 percent agree (51.7 percent strongly) that “Corruption was a worse problem under the old military government than these days.” Although the new democratic administration had been in office for less than 9 months at the time of this survey, President Obasanjo had already undertaken some steps to curb official corruption, including the revocation of high-level oil licenses and land grants, a panel to review government contracts, and anti-corruption legislation introduced into the National Assembly. The public evidently credits the present leadership for its anti-corruption efforts, as three-fourths (76.1 percent) agreed that “Rather than protecting his friends, the President will fight corruption wherever he finds it.”

Corruption is closely related to issues of equity, as it can foster special preferences that unduly favor some groups and disadvantage others. Nigerians are generally ambivalent on the issue of government favoritism. An impressive majority (77.0 percent) believe that “the government represents the interests of all Nigerians,” rather than favoring just a few groups (14.9 percent) or a single group (3.8 percent) (See Fig. 15). Still, nearly 54 percent of Nigerians believe that their self-identified group (ethnic, religious, class, or individual) is treated unfairly by government to some degree. In response to another proposition, 38.1 percent agree that “The President’s region of the country gets more government services than any other,” while 53 percent differ with that view. In light of the short tenure of the Obasanjo government, however, the perception that his region (the South West) is favored in the provision of public services more likely reflects the historical disparities in regional development, rather than deliberate bias on the part of the new administration.

Law and Order

Crime is another problem that affects government legitimacy as well as the everyday quality of life. The responses to the survey suggest that, while crime is prevalent, it may be less acute than the conventional wisdom suggests. A little over 60 percent of respondents report that they do not know anyone who has been the victim of an attack or robbery within the past two years, and a virtually equal proportion have had no brush with burglaries. About 6 percent report being victims of violent crime personally, and about 7 percent have had their own homes robbed. Around 40 percent of those interviewed said they knew someone else who had been a crime victim within the past two years (See Fig. 16). Most Nigerians sense improvements in recent years, as 58.3 percent say they feel safer today than they did five years ago.

The differences in perceptions among urban and rural residents are significant, though perhaps not as wide as might be expected. While 60.5 percent of rural residents feel more secure than they did five years ago, 57.7 percent of urban residents also sense improved safety. On the other hand, 21.5 percent of urbanites say they are less assured of their safety, nearly twice the proportion of rural dwellers (11.8 percent).

The strategies that Nigerians use to respond to crime says much about their relative confidence in state institutions as well as the quality of social capital. The survey asked people what they would do if they felt unsafe in their surroundings. Nearly half said they would never report a crime to the police, a response that is echoed by citizens’ relative distrust of law enforcement: 51.7 percent express no trust “at all” for the police, and another 18.4 percent

profess some distrust. By comparison, courts of law evoke greater trust, as 53.0 percent express a degree of trust, while only 44.8 percent are inclined to distrust these institutions.

Nigerians are not strongly inclined to turn to other citizens for protection against crime. While a little more than a third of respondents said they might seek protection by going out in public with companions, only a quarter would form a citizens' group to combat crime. The relative sparseness of collective responses does not imply a preference for "self-help": fewer than one in five respondents would consider carrying a weapon to protect themselves against crime.

In order to estimate public perceptions of legality, we asked Nigerians how often they thought their fellow citizens broke various laws. Generally speaking, Nigerians see themselves as a fairly unruly society. A large majority (82.7 percent) said that other Nigerians throw rubbish in public places, either "always" or "most of the time." Smaller, though substantial majorities considered that their fellow citizens usually ignored traffic signs (72.8 percent), engaged in petty trading without a license (72 percent), and evaded income taxes (67.2 percent).

Although many new democracies around the world have experienced dramatic increases in crime (e.g. South Africa, Russia, and Indonesia), Nigerians do not believe that their democratic system is handicapped in responding to this problem. In spite of their concerns about personal security, 71.6 percent of those interviewed disagreed with the proposition that "Democracies aren't good at maintaining order." Citizens clearly hold leaders accountable in this area, as two-thirds believe that government should have the main responsibility for combating crime. A nearly equal proportion (61.9 percent) gave favorable assessments of the current government's performance in reducing crime. In the months following the transition to democratic rule, Nigerians appear comparatively satisfied with the performance of the new regime in addressing issues of law and order.

To summarize: Nigerians and outside observers have often commented on weaknesses in the rule of law in the country. Endemic corruption, weak law enforcement agencies, and a beleaguered judiciary have all created an environment in which the operations of laws and institutions are irregular and often arbitrary. The legacy of "rule by decree" under a succession of military regimes has also eroded the development of an effective legal and institutional culture. While there is little expectation that these problems will be remedied quickly, the advent of democracy has naturally raised expectations. Nigerians clearly perceive problems of corruption, crime, and low compliance with the law in their society, yet they also note some significant improvements under the new regime. The government has garnered credit for its anti-corruption efforts, and much of the public approves of official efforts to curb crime. Moreover, Nigerians retain a modicum of trust in the courts and public officials.

PART FOUR: CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Another set of factors crucial to the development of democracy are the relative strength of civil society – the broad realm of private intermediate associations – and the quality of social capital, i.e. interpersonal trust and the density of participation in associational life. Where citizens are engaged in organizations devoted to their interests and concerns, such activity can play important roles in promoting political competence, improving the representation of interests, and placing limits on the arbitrary use of power by rulers. More recent studies have pointed to the character of social capital as an important element in political participation, institutional performance, and government accountability (Putnam, 1993).

Civic Engagement

Nigeria has historically reflected a lively realm of associations. Several areas of activity have become more visible in recent years, including organizations concerned with human rights, democracy, the environment, women, business, and labor. Yet the adversities of political repression and a distressed economy have also limited the scope and reach of many civic groups. In addition, pervasive communal tensions and conflict have the potential to hamper social trust, thus tempering the quality of citizens' interactions and their relations with government.

Generally speaking, associational membership appears to be high in Nigeria, as 86.2 percent of respondents report that they are members in some type of association, including 23.6 percent who claim leadership positions in these organizations. By far the most prevalent form of membership is in religious organizations: nearly four out of five Nigerians belong to religious associations, including 50.7 percent who say they are “active” members and another 27.8 percent who profess “inactive” membership. No other type of organization comes close to this level of participation (See Fig. 17). Smaller proportions of the citizenry report active membership in associations devoted to sports (8.8 percent), art or education (8 percent), trade unions or farmers' groups (9.6 percent), professional and business concerns (5.8 percent), development (6.0 percent), women's issues (5.8 percent), democratic advocacy (2.4 percent), the environment (3.2 percent), or charitable work (3.9 percent). Thus, apart from religious affiliations, Nigerians are most likely to belong to organizations reflecting recreational or educational activities, occupational interests, or gender concerns.

The most “politicized” organizations in the Nigerian setting (focusing on democracy and the environment) embody small though significant participation. Although they claim a limited proportion of membership, this should be viewed in perspective. If 2.4 percent of Nigeria's adult population are active in pro-democracy organizations, this amounts to well over a million people, an impressive groundwork of democratic commitments.

In other respects Nigerians appear to be active in civic affairs, as 45.2 percent report they have attended a community meeting within the past five years, and 54.1 percent have gotten together with others to raise an issue of concern. Only 7.2 percent have attended a demonstration, however, indicating that more forceful activism is pursued only by a minority.

Social Capital

Equally revealing measures of civic organization and social capital can be inferred from the subsistence strategies of Nigerians. In our discussion of social and economic characteristics, we noted that people reported at least occasional difficulty in obtaining food (41.3 percent), water for domestic use (59.6 percent), schooling (29.8 percent), and healthcare (36.1 percent). When formal channels are insufficient to provide for necessities, people must search for alternative options: they may look to family members or other social contacts, seek help from their local community or civic organizations, petition (or bribe) government officials, or use market outlets. The relative use and availability of these different channels are important indicators of the extent of social capital, the quality of associational relationships, and the capacity of the market to compensate for inadequate public goods.

When asked whom they turn to for help in providing basic necessities, Nigerians revealed diversified strategies. For a significant proportion of the population, there is no recourse when they face shortages. For instance, 22.0 percent of those with difficulty obtaining food said they turned to “no one” for help. For those having trouble with access to schooling, 26.9 percent had nowhere to turn, and 17.0 percent of those in need of health care did not have alternative strategies. They simply did without. Securing water is evidently less difficult, as only 7.8 reported no options.

For those who do have alternatives, people commonly turn to kin for assistance, or they directly secure market sources. In making up food deficits, Nigerians turn almost equally to relatives (35.3 percent) and the market (34.7 percent), as is the case with schooling (29.7 percent private, 29 percent kin) (See Fig. 18). For healthcare, private provision (33.6 percent) is slightly more common than help from extended family (26.5 percent). With regard to all these needs, there is a relatively low recourse to government (ranging from 1.3 percent for food to 13.7 percent for health), and even less reliance on community groups, as fewer than 10 percent turn to their communities for these goods.

A very different pattern is evident in the case of water supply (See Fig. 19). The deficiency of piped water in much of the country has prompted a great deal of self-help, as markets, villages, and neighborhoods often arrange for their own boreholes or other supply arrangements. Moreover, the lack of public supplies has given rise to a lively private market in most areas. When facing water shortages, 53.1 percent of respondents said they turned to the market, and another 20.9 percent looked to community groups – a higher reliance on the community than for any other basic need. Relatively few people turn to government (9.5 percent) or kin (7.6 percent). Interestingly, fewer than 1 percent of those interviewed admitted “illicit” provision of any basic goods (i.e. bribery or other irregular arrangements).

In Nigerian society, where the influence of the extended family is far-reaching, we would expect to find considerable recourse to kin in securing basic necessities. Alongside this line of defense, however, many people rely on market solutions to compensate for important goods and services. In at least one area – water supply – there is substantial evidence of civic organization to compensate for a lack of public provision. It is interesting to compare these subsistence strategies with those found in Ghana. While Ghanaians turn to kin about as frequently as

Nigerians, the latter utilize the market about twice as much as their neighbors to the west. Nigerians also report a somewhat higher access to community outlets for important goods and services.

The dimension of social trust is another important aspect of civic life. From one perspective, Nigerians generally appear to be a relatively mistrustful society, as only 15.2 percent agree with the sentiment that “most people can be trusted,” while 83.6 percent believe that “you must be very careful in dealing with people.” On the other hand, people express greater levels of trust with regard to specific people, groups and institutions. Interpersonal trust is high among kin, as 85 percent of respondents trust their relatives, including 44.2 percent who feel “a lot” of trust. Trust declines with social distance (See Fig. 20), as 73.6 percent express relative trust for neighbors, and slightly less than two-thirds have some trust for other members of their own ethnic group (with only 17.3 percent saying they trust them a lot). Overall, a scant majority (51.3 percent) profess relative trust for other ethnic groups, and only 11 percent are highly trustful.

Attitudes toward important societal institutions also provide a window onto civic life. Nigerians show substantial trust for religious institutions, as 73.4 percent express relative trust of churches, and 66.9 percent are relatively trustful of mosques. Civic organizations also evoke confidence: respondents are inclined to trust trade unions and farmers’ associations (67.5 percent) and non-governmental organizations (68.1 percent). Traditional rulers occupy an intermediate position between society and the state, since many have a semi-official status though they are also deeply embedded in the lives and cultures of their communities. This ambiguity is possibly reflected in lower levels of confidence, as 58.1 percent of citizens express relative trust for chiefs.

The survey also asked how often (within the last five years) people have turned to various people for help in solving a problem. About half have turned to religious leaders, including 43.1 percent who have done so more than once. Virtually equal proportions have contacted “some other influential person”, like a businessperson or a teacher, for assistance. Yet only 17.6 percent have ever contacted a traditional ruler, and only 1 percent have turned “often” to these notables.

In summary, a great majority of Nigerians belong to some form of association, though they are much more likely to hold religious affiliations than any other type of membership. Nearly a quarter of adults also hold some leadership position in their organization, reflecting a relatively high level of “activism” among the population. Civic associations provide limited assistance in meeting the basic needs of most Nigerians, although in some areas (e.g. water supply) community organizations are important providers. While most Nigerians show a degree of caution toward strangers, they evince higher levels of trust toward family, neighbors, and members of their ethnic group. Nigerians also have high levels of trust for religious institutions, and they often turn to religious leaders (as well as notables) for assistance with everyday problems. There is also considerable trust for unions and for NGOs more generally. These findings suggest a substantial foundation of civic life as Nigeria pursues the development of democracy.

PART FIVE: THE SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ATTITUDES

So far, this report has discussed the attitudes of survey respondents as if Nigeria formed an homogenous whole. Yet Nigeria is one of the most complex societies in Africa, with multiple lines of cleavage dividing its citizens into distinct sub-communities. It would be surprising if these myriad differences were not manifest in distinctive attitudes to democracy and markets. The purpose of this concluding section is to explore the social distribution of attitudes with a view, not only to displaying variations across sub-groups, but also to determine which social characteristics – gender, age, identity, education, region – seem to be the most important to the construction of civic culture.

Political and Economic Identities

How do Nigerians see themselves? We assume that public attitudes and practices derive in good part from citizens' self-ascribed identities. For example, people who see themselves as members of an ethnic group may be prone to judge political reforms in terms of their implications for the status of their home community. Similarly, persons who identify themselves as poor, or a worker, or a professional may evaluate economic reforms in terms of what they deliver to various social classes.

To tap personal and group identities, the survey asked respondents the following question: “besides being a Nigerian, which specific group do you feel you belong to first and foremost?”. The distribution of responses was revealing (See Fig. 21): almost half of all Nigerians (48.2 percent) chose to tag themselves with an “ethnic” identity, compared to almost one-third (28.4 percent) who opted for “class” identities. The next most common category was a religious identity of some kind, chosen by 21.0 percent. The small group of remaining respondents (2.4 percent) eschewed all group labels and loyalties, usually defining themselves, invariably favorably, in individualistic terms (e.g. “an honest person”, “a good samaritan”).

At minimum, these figures confirm that group identities are important to Nigerians and that communalism has not been displaced by individualism. At face value, the figures also seem to suggest that Nigerians tend to cluster more readily around the cultural solidarities of kin than the class solidarities of the workplace.

For purposes of analysis, we adopted broad definitions of ethnicity and class. “Ethnicity” included, in order of importance, identities named in terms of a cultural group, a language or dialect, a hometown, or a region (e.g. “northerner” or “southerner”). “Class” included, again in rank order, identities associated with occupations (farmer, marketeer, artisan) or standard social class categories (e.g. “poor”, “working-class”, “middle-class”, “professional”, “intellectual”). Religious identities covered the full gamut of common faith groups (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim) as well as several minority sects and factions (e.g. Jehovah’s Witness, “Eckist” etc.).

Not surprisingly, members of cultural minorities were most likely to define their identities in ethnic terms.¹⁸ For example, 79.2 percent of Ijaw-speakers, and 71.6 percent of Tiv- and Igbo-speakers saw themselves primarily as representatives of cultural sub-

communities. And among the two largest ethnic groupings, Yorubas were considerably more prone to define themselves ethnically (45.5 percent) than were Hausa-Fulanis (29.9 percent), who rather opted for a religious identity (i.e. Muslim). On this point, Muslims were much more likely to evince a religious identity than were Christians.¹⁹ Whereas 35.5 percent of Muslims depicted themselves as part of a community of faith, fewer than one in ten Catholics, Protestants and African Independent church members did so. Among Christians, however, evangelicals were somewhat more likely to express an identity based on their religion. Finally, class identity was a function of education (but not income).²⁰ For example, persons with post-graduate education were most likely to identify themselves in class terms, often as professionals or “middle-class”.

Evidently, these group identities are strongly felt. Overwhelming proportions of Nigerians agree that they “feel proud” to belong to their group (96.8 percent) and assert that they would “want their children to think of themselves” with the same identity (89.5 percent) (See Fig. 22). They also believe that their group is the “best” (80.5 percent) and that their group ties are “stronger than to other Nigerians” (88.4 percent).

While the potential for group chauvinism is thus high, it is offset by an equally strong commitment to national identity. Fully 97.2 percent of respondents agreed that they were “proud to call themselves Nigerian”, and they felt just as strongly about this national identity as about their sub-national, group identity. They also want their children to think of themselves as Nigerian (97.4 percent) and for all native-born Nigerians to be treated equally (94.4 percent). Nigerians are somewhat more divided when faced with the prospect of extending citizenship rights to people who were born outside the country (only 73.0 percent agree). All told, though, Nigerians apparently feel no contradiction between group and national identities; they profess firm commitments to both.

But, are some group identities more intensely held than others? The results suggest that religious and ethnic identities are more fully formed, more holistic, and more strongly felt than class identities. Take just two examples. Whereas those who identify with religious and ethnic communities are almost universally “proud” of their group identities (a stunning 99.5 and 99.0 percent respectively), those who see themselves as members of a social class are somewhat more equivocal about their pride (80.5 percent).²¹ This probably reflects the aspirations for upward mobility of people who see themselves as part of a poor underclass or a reserve army of the unemployed. Similarly, those who identify themselves in terms of communities of religious faith almost always want their children to follow in their footsteps (98.1 percent). But those who see themselves in class terms are much less certain on this score (74.2 percent), usually wanting the next generation to do better in life.²²

We wondered whether intensely held group identities inflame political conflict and undermine the smooth operation of civil society. While not compelling, the evidence suggests that this is true for ethnic identity but not for religious identity. Take the issue of interpersonal trust. As noted earlier, Nigerians are generally cautious about strangers, with the proportion agreeing “you must be very careful in dealing with people” (83.6 percent) according closely with levels of distrust found in Botswana and Zimbabwe. Whereas religious identity ameliorates distrust in Nigeria (80.8 percent), ethnic identity reinforces it (87.7 percent).²³ In similar vein,

religious identity tends to increase “trust (for) other tribes” but ethnic identity predictably tends to reduce it.²⁴

Does group identity lead to feelings of discrimination? Much depends on the way the question is asked. Overall, relatively few Nigerians (11.7 percent) feel that the economic conditions of their group are “worse than the economic conditions of other groups in the country”. Almost twice as many respondents were willing to agree that their group is “always (or) to a large extent...treated unfairly by the government” (20.3 percent). And a middling proportion (18.7 percent) felt that the government overlooks the interests of “all Nigerians” in order to represent “just a few groups or the interests of one group only” (18.7 percent). When this latter sub-sample was asked to name the minority groups that usually benefit from official favoritism, they cited in order of importance: “people close to government”, “the rich upper-class”, and “Hausa people/northerners”. Thus, in this case, perceptions of class conflict came to the fore, with social class being constructed in the minds of respondents primarily in political terms, that is, through access to the corridors of state power.

One might therefore expect that Nigerians who regard their own identity in class terms would feel particularly aggrieved. The data bear this hypothesis out. Those who identify with a religion are least likely to feel “worse off” than others (4.9 percent); “ethnics” are twice as likely to feel so deprived (10.3 percent); and those who feel conscious of their social class are most likely to feel a sense of relative deprivation vis a vis other groups in Nigerian society (20.5 percent).²⁵ The same pattern holds, but even more strongly, with regard to perceptions of government responsiveness. Ethnic followers are more likely than religious followers to think that the government treats their group unfairly (17.4 percent versus 10.7 percent). And members of “classes-for-themselves” (36.0 percent) are twice as likely to perceive unequal treatment as are adherents of ethnic groups.²⁶

Nevertheless, since ethnicity is demonstrably the most conspicuous group identity in Nigeria, it is worth exploring whether some ethnic groups harbor a deeper sense of grievance than others. In this regard, the survey results reflected the outrage felt by certain minority groups at the exploitation of oil resources in the Niger Delta, the neglect of development in South-South zone, and the despoilation of the natural environment there. For example, Ijaw-speakers were almost twice as likely as Hausa-speakers to feel that their group was treated unfairly by government (32.0 percent versus 17.9 percent) and almost three times as likely to consider their group to be worse off than other groups in Nigeria (28.3 percent versus 10.3 percent).²⁷

As it happens, group identity has few major impacts on attitudes to political and economic reform. It is unrelated to support for democracy. It is only weakly related to satisfaction with democracy, with class-conscious individuals being somewhat less satisfied than people who define their identities in other ways. Those who see the world through religious lenses are the least likely of all groups (76.3 percent) to have heard of the structural adjustment program. But class-consciousness does not make Nigerians any more or less likely to be satisfied with the government’s economic reform program.

We therefore conclude that strong group identities, while endowing Nigeria with volatile politics, are not in and of themselves inimical to political or economic reform. We find no

evidence that strong constituencies -- either for or against reform -- have formed along religious, ethnic, or even class lines.

Demography and Attitudes

Perhaps demographic factors can better predict the attitudes of Nigerians towards democracy and markets. We examine below the effects of gender, age, urbanization and religion.

The survey reveals that women in Nigeria feel less informed about political life than men, being twice as likely to say that they “don’t know” what democracy means (8.8 percent versus 3.6 percent).²⁸ Their preferences for different types of political regimes are also less fully composed, with women being somewhat more likely to say that “to people like me, it doesn’t matter what form of government we have” (11.8 versus 7.4 percent).²⁹ Hence Nigerian women are a bit less supportive of democracy than their menfolk, and less strongly opposed than men to “get(ting) rid of elections so that a strong leader can decide everything”. Overall, however, gender differences are slight and they occur in the context of widespread popular support for democracy.

Gender differences are somewhat more marked with regard to economic attitudes. For example, women say they possess even less information about economic reform than about democracy. Whereas half of all men (49.9 percent) have heard about the structural adjustment program, barely one third of women (30.7 percent) have done so.³⁰ And women are significantly more likely than men to conceive the purpose of the SAP in terms of “improving living conditions” for ordinary people than “improving the (growth of) the (macro-)economy”.³¹

The gender gap is widest when it comes to political participation. As in other African countries like Zambia where surveys of the present type have been conducted, men are consistently more active in politics than women (See Fig. 23). In Nigeria, men are more likely to say that they are registered as voters, that they voted in the 1999 Presidential election, and that they have made personal contact with elected local government leaders. In an interesting contrast with female activism at the local level in Zambia, however, men in Nigeria are also more likely than women to say that they have attended community meetings (54.7 percent versus 35.8 percent).³² We will explore later whether such gender differences are attributable to religion, or education, or some other confounding factor.

While one might expect age to play a role in shaping attitudes to democracy and markets, we find almost no such evidence. Young people, perhaps because they have received more formal education than their parents, may be more capable of quoting Lincoln’s dictum about democracy being government by, for and of the people (40.1 percent versus 35.1 percent).³³ But we doubt that this small difference has any meaningful effect on commitment to, or behavior in support of, democracy.

Nevertheless, political and economic attitudes do seem to depend on where Nigerians live. Rural dwellers are less likely than their urban counterparts to have heard about democracy, to be able to offer a definition of it, and to have an opinion about whether Nigeria is democratic.

And, while rural and urban dwellers are equally supportive of democracy as a preferred form of governance, Nigerians who live in the towns are more dissatisfied with the way democracy actually works in practice (19.3 percent versus 10.6 percent).³⁴ This tendency is graphically illustrated when Lagos State, which is 94 percent urban, is compared with the rest of the country. Although 70.3 percent of respondents showed some degree of satisfaction with democracy in Lagos, 29.2 percent were dissatisfied, higher than in any other state or city. This suggests that, if disillusionment with democracy sets in, it will start, like previous political trends in the country, in Nigeria's main urban center.

On the economy, urbanites are markedly better informed than rural dwellers, being twice as likely to have heard about the SAP (56.6 percent versus 28.1 percent) (See Fig. 24).³⁵ Urban dwellers are also more willing to pay fees for improvements in services like education, whereas rural dwellers are more willing to accept low educational standards, as long as schooling is free.³⁶ The SAP was supposed to adjust agricultural prices and the urban-rural terms of trade in favor of agriculturalists, thus benefitting rural areas. In marked contrast to Ghana, however, rural dwellers in Nigeria do not display greater satisfaction with structural adjustment than urban dwellers. If anything, the city folk of Nigeria are somewhat more likely to support economic reforms than their country cousins.³⁷

Religion also appears to have strong effects on mass attitudes. For example, Muslims are much more likely than Christians to entertain the possibility of alternatives to democracy: 21.6 percent of Muslims agree that "if democracy can't produce results soon, we should try another form of government" (versus 12.0 percent for Christians).³⁸ Islamic groups seem particularly willing to countenance rule by a strongman, even one who suspends elections. While a majority of Christians (61.7 percent) strongly reject the strongman option, only a minority of Muslims (39.0 percent) does so (See Fig. 25).³⁹

On the economic front, Muslims were only half as knowledgeable as Christians about the SAP (25.8 percent versus 52.3 percent).⁴⁰ They were also twice as likely to accept free education, even if the quality is low (35.1 percent versus 18.3 percent).⁴¹

The question arises as to which of these – or other – demographic factors offers the most compelling explanation of attitudes to democracy and markets. It is difficult at first glance to see which factor is most determinative of an individual's orientations. For example, are the lower levels of commitment to democracy among rural, Muslim females a function of their gender, their religion, or their residential location?

Alternatively, are all these factors driven by other demographic catalysts not yet considered? In the next section, we argue that the most influential factors in attitude formation in Nigeria are *education* (that is, level of formal schooling, from none to post-graduate) and *region* (defined either as seven official geopolitical zones or a simple North-South distinction). In a multi-variate analysis⁴², these two "super-factors" tend to override and displace all the demographic factors just considered. In other words, since rural, Muslim women tend to be less well educated and reside in the North, their gender, religion and residential location are conveniently subsumed and represented by education and (especially) region. In our view, the

geopolitics of region (and to a lesser degree the influence of education) are the keys to unlocking the social distribution of political and economic attitudes in Nigeria.

The Effects of Education and Region on Attitudes to the Economy

We naturally expect that education levels would influence citizens' views towards markets and economic reform, since education is a strong predictor of income, class position, and understanding of economic affairs. There is also considerable evidence that Nigerians from different regions hold varying perspectives on economic affairs. The longstanding regional disparities in economic growth, diversification, and entrepreneurship are partly rooted in differential colonial policies and the nation's geography. Also, the petroleum boom prompted extensive state intervention the economy, though with uneven effects in different parts of the country. Since regional differences cluster strongly with education, it is important to consider both as sources of economic attitudes. For purposes of analytical clarity, in this section we have grouped the regions further into North and South.

Not surprisingly, education determines knowledge about the economy (See Fig. 26). Only 7.4 percent of Nigerians with no formal schooling could identify the Structural Adjustment Program, compared with more than a quarter of those who had completed primary school, and nearly two-thirds of those with a secondary certificate. Nine out of ten people with post-secondary education could identify the reform program.⁴³

Opinions about entrepreneurship and equality are also shaped by educational endowments, although the differences are more modest.⁴⁴ Those with post-secondary schooling tend to agree (54.6 percent) that people should be able to "earn as much as they can, even if this leads to differences in income", while almost 40 percent believe that "The government should place limits on how much the rich should earn, even if this discourages people from working hard." Nigerians with no formal schooling show somewhat greater preference for income equality (46.1 percent), and they are correspondingly less attracted to unfettered personal accumulation (47.8 percent). But this does not depict a wide gap in values. When we consider regional opinions, however, a greater disparity is evident.⁴⁵ A little more than 60 percent of southerners agree that people should be able to earn whatever they can, while less than half of those in the north endorse this view. Conversely, 46 percent of northern respondents approve of government limits on income, compared with fewer than a third of those in the south.

A regional divide is evident on a number of other important economic questions, although the differences vary across issues. For instance, 60 percent of respondents in the northern states believe that the government should be primarily responsible for producing oil, while less than half of those in the south support this (See Fig. 27).⁴⁶ Southerners are more likely than those in the north to accept partnerships between the government and business or individuals. With regard to foreign investment, northern Nigerians are far more apprehensive than their southern countrymen (See Fig. 28).⁴⁷ Four out of five southern respondents would welcome government promotion of foreign investment, while more than a third of those in the north believe the government should be wary of outside control of the economy. Views on rural land tenure also differ substantially, as nearly a third of northerners support communal

ownership under the control of traditional rulers, while 85 percent of southerners advocate free markets for land.⁴⁸

These responses would seem to point to a stronger embrace of market forces in the southern areas of the country, and a preference for state tutelage in the north. Such views are not sweeping, however, as opinions on public employment make clear.⁴⁹ A little over a quarter of those interviewed in the north believe that some government layoffs are in order; this is double the proportion found among southerners, the majority of whom (77.1 percent) support maintaining the public payroll (See Fig. 29).

Regional perspectives on the Structural Adjustment Program show virtually no variation: in each section of the country, about two-thirds of respondents were relatively dissatisfied with the SAP, and about 14 percent expressed relative satisfaction.⁵⁰ Northerners lean somewhat toward the view that the government should change its economic policies, while southerners are slightly more inclined to accept current hardship in hopes of future improvements.⁵¹ It would seem, then, that there is considerable national uniformity in opinions toward the SAP and the direction of government policies.

While education clearly drives some economic attitudes, there is considerable variation among sections of the country on a variety of economic concerns. By and large, these regional differences conform to historical disparities in economic structure and development. The northern areas do not produce oil, and state control over petroleum activities has provided the crucial source of revenue for this part of the country over the last three decades. Southerners have had greater interaction with international business than their northern countrymen, and the bulk of foreign investment in Nigeria has been concentrated in the southern states, especially Lagos and the southeast. In the north, a relatively consistent and stable land tenure system has operated historically under the emirates, while the south reflects much more fragmented and varied tenure systems, as well as greater commercialization. Prior to the recent transfer of functions to Abuja, the Federal Government and most public enterprises were headquartered in Lagos and other southern states, creating prolific public employment in the southern region. Attitudes thus closely follow regional interests with regard to economic affairs.

Regional Variations in Political Attitudes

This is even truer when it comes to politics. Nigeria's broad regional diversity has been explored by many observers of the country's politics. The distinctions among northern and southern regions in political organization, ideology, behavior, and attitudes have been frequent themes in studies of Nigerian public affairs (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963; Dudley, 1968; Whitaker, 1970; Paden, 1973; Lubeck 1986; Joseph, 1987; Diamond, 1988; Osaghae, 1999). This survey provides an opportunity to explore these questions further since it is possible to separate out attitudes by geopolitical region, and to observe meaningful comparisons and contrasts. In recent years, it has become increasingly common in Nigerian political discourse to classify the 36 states into six separate "zones" (which we call "regions"), capturing major ethnic and linguistic groupings.⁵² We have adopted this classification, with the modification that Lagos is included as a separate region in view of its size and its unique position in national political and economic affairs.

In framing the interregional comparison, we consider four dimensions of political life: political engagement, political values, democratic preferences, and assessments of democratic performance.

The analysis reveals strong and significant variations among the seven regions on range of political attitudes. By and large, the broadest variations are found among Lagos and the Northwest region – confirming a widespread perception that Lagos and Kano define a central line of cleavage in the nation’s politics. On some issues, however, other regions represent the boundaries of opinion, notably the Southeast and the Northeast. It should also be noted that Lagos is commonly an anomaly in the opinions of the south, and that the neighboring Southwestern states do not move in lock-step with opinions in the premier city. The South West often shows more in common with other regions in the south (or a broader national mainstream), and this suggests caution in drawing assumptions about “southern” attitudes from a reading of opinions in Lagos.

There is a clear regional divergence in civic participation. More than 90 percent of South Westerners claim membership in civic groups including churches, more than half belong to non-religious associations (See Fig. 30), and nearly a third hold some civic leadership position. Together these figures reflect the highest level of civic activism in the country. The North West, by contrast, displays the lowest levels of association membership (74.6 percent) while only 13.6 percent identify themselves as civic leaders. Indeed the “far northern” zones (North East and North West), with non-religious associational membership below 41 percent and leadership levels below 20 percent, show a degree of civic activism that is about 10 percentage points below the southern regions or the Middle Belt (North Central).⁵³

Yet, surprisingly, civic engagement fails to predict an individual’s interest in political affairs. When asked “How interested are you in politics and government?” a little over 70 percent of respondents in the North West expressed interest, with 35 percent saying they were very interested. This was the highest level of political interest expressed in any region. Here again, the main contrast is with Lagos, where 46.4% asserted they were “not interested” in political affairs, and only 20.3 percent were very interested. On this dimension of engagement, Lagos is the lowest of the regions.

This response is generally affirmed by answers to the question, ‘How often do you discuss politics and government with others?’ Here again, Lagos appears to be the least active area, with 40.6 percent responding “never.” Yet Lagos also reflects the highest proportion of people who discuss politics “often” (19.4 percent). Political discussion is generally most prevalent in the South-South region, where nearly three-fourths of respondents say they engage in some exchanges over politics. But it is followed closely by the North East (69.6 percent) and the North West (67.2 percent).⁵⁴

How can these apparent discrepancies be explained? We suggest that this reflects significant levels of political disaffection, especially in Lagos and the South West. These areas have traditionally felt excluded from national government, and they were embittered by the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election and the jailing (and death) of Chief M.K.O. Abiola. In Lagos, however, apathy and cynicism are accompanied by a high concentration of political

activism and engagement in public affairs, reflected in the prevalence of frequent political discussion. In the South-South, despite widespread feelings of political marginality, there is considerable political mobilization, and in the northern areas citizens perceive a greater stake in political institutions and processes.

This interpretation is confirmed by other measures of political efficacy. The survey asked respondents to choose between the statements “The way the government operates sometimes seems so complicated that I cannot really understand what is going on,” or “I can usually understand the way the government works.” Overall, Nigerians display some diffidence about government affairs, as more than two thirds express confusion, while 27.5 percent feel they have a grasp on these questions.⁵⁵ There is an evident disparity in regional perceptions, as southerners profess the least competence in comprehending government, while those in the far north are the most confident of their understanding. More than two-thirds of the respondents in Lagos agree that the workings of government elude them (including 50 percent who agree strongly), and in the South-South nearly four out of five tend toward this view. Marking the other end of the spectrum, slightly more than a third of those in the North East agree that they understand public affairs, and 31.1 percent in the North West do so. Not surprisingly, the regions that are the strongest centers of dissidence feel comparatively alienated from central government.

When citizens are asked whether they have a voice in government, a similar disparity of opinion is evident. People in the northern regions are more likely to agree that “As a community, we are generally able to make our elected representatives listen to our problems,” while those in the southern regions are inclined toward the view, “We are usually unable to make our elected representatives listen to us.”⁵⁶ Nearly 60 percent of Lagos respondents feel this way (45.3 percent strongly), and about half the respondents in the South-South concur. In the North East, by contrast, almost 57 percent believe they are heard by politicians, along with 48 percent in the North West. Once again, in those regions where there are strong perceptions of political exclusion, disaffection from government is quite prevalent.

Sectional differences are also evident in the expression of broader political values. One of the most fundamental of these is the disposition toward authority. Nigerians generally tend to think that “We Nigerians should be more active in questioning the authority of our leaders” (69.7 percent register some agreement), while relatively fewer accept the proposition that “In Nigeria today, there is not enough respect for authority” (27.8 percent agree).⁵⁷ The southern regions are more strongly disposed toward a critical stance. The statement ‘we should be more active in questioning authority’ attracts strongest agreement in Lagos (78.9 percent, with 65 percent agreeing strongly), the Southwest (79.9 percent, 57.8 percent strongly) and the South-South (75 percent, 45.1 percent strongly). Respondents in the North West are more inclined toward regard for authority, as 38.4 percent concur that ‘there is not enough respect’ (24 percent strongly) while 59.1 percent believe that questioning authority is best. Thus, while Nigerians in all regions tend to believe in active citizenship, those in the south are more skeptical of authority and those in the north more deferential.

As we reported earlier, Nigerians strongly endorse freedom of expression and political tolerance. Nationwide, nearly three-fourths agree that “If people have different views than I do,

they should be allowed to express them.”⁵⁸ The most emphatic agreement is found in Lagos, where more than nine out of ten people concur, 82 percent strongly. The most equivocal response derives from the North West, where 37.1 percent lean toward the view that “It is dangerous and confusing to allow the expression of too many different points of view.” There is also relatively more concurrence with this view in the other northern regions (and in the South-South states, possibly reflecting the concerns of political violence in the area). Overall, while Nigerians accept freedom of speech, those in the north are more cautious about the hazards of open expression.

As for approval of the head of state’s performance, we observe varying levels of trust for President Obasanjo (See Fig. 31). The President’s candidacy was controversial in his southwestern ethnic heartland, and since taking office he has experienced friction with communities in the Niger Delta, as well as the northern states that are attempting to introduce *Shari’a* law. Nonetheless, the president evokes the highest levels of confidence in the north, as 86.4 percent of those in the North West and 84.3 percent in the North East express relative trust. By contrast, the areas with the greatest degree of mistrust are Lagos (30.3) percent and the South-South (30.1 percent). In the southwestern states around Lagos, President Obasanjo earns greater regard, as four out of five respondents say they trust him. Note that these overall and regional distributions of presidential approval closely mirror the December 1999 findings of the RMS Niger-Bus survey cited in the introduction. It would seem that the President has a solid presence in his home region, and has also gained the confidence of many in the far north. In the more contentious political atmosphere of Lagos and the dissident communities of the Niger Delta, however, there is a larger measure of suspicion toward the nation’s leader.

Levels of satisfaction with democracy are also varied, though here it is southerners and Middle Belt groups who are most critical (see Fig. 32). While a substantial majority of citizens in all regions say they are satisfied with the workings of the current system, 28.2 percent of those in Lagos express relative dissatisfaction, as do 19.4 percent in the North Central states, and 14.4 percent in the South-South. These are the highest rates of disapproval among the regions. As stated earlier, Lagosians also reflect the lowest levels of satisfaction with democracy, although more than 70 percent report relative satisfaction with the regime. In nearly all other regions, satisfaction levels are 80 percent or higher, yet the highest levels of “very satisfied” respondents are found in the North West (36.3 percent) and the North East (34.5 percent).

If southerners seem more inclined to take a critical stance toward the democratic regime, they are also more patient about the political process. When asked whether the present system “will be able to deal with inherited problems, even if this takes time,” or “if democracy can’t produce results soon, we should try another form of government,” southerners endorse the first sentiment, in impressive numbers. Only 3.8 percent of those in the South West, and 10.5 percent in Lagos, would be willing to contemplate an alternative. The northern states also reveal considerable forbearance with democracy, although a greater proportion would look for non-democratic alternatives, particularly in the North West (27.5 percent) and the North East (21.8 percent).⁵⁹ It would seem that southerners are more optimistic about the ability of a democratic system to serve their basic interests over the long term.

Finally, support for democracy as a system of governance is the most important dimension of political attitudes considered here. There are significant variations among regions in the choices between the following standard statements: “Democracy is preferable to any other form of government,” “In certain situations, a non-democratic government can be preferable,” and “To people like me, it doesn’t matter what form of government we have.”(See Fig. 33)⁶⁰ People in the South West affirm the highest level of preference for democracy (89.2 percent), while those in the North West evince the greatest willingness to consider non-democratic alternatives (15.6 percent) and respondents in the South-South are least likely to consider this option (3.3 percent). The North Central (or Middle Belt) states reflect the greatest concentration of apathy, as 18.9 percent express indifference to their form of government (compared with only 2.3 percent in the South West). While southerners appear to hold emphatic commitments to democracy as a system, the northern states, despite substantial democratic inclinations, appear to be relatively more ambivalent.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we offer some interpretation of these complex juxtapositions of attitudes. The responses to the survey suggest that citizens in the southern regions of Nigeria hold stronger *intrinsic* commitments to democracy. In other words, they are more devoted to democracy as an ideal system of governance and a set of political values. They also hold very high expectations of the democratic system. They evidently look to the new regime for a range of political benefits such as freedom, representation, justice, and equality; and they also seek economic goods including enhanced welfare and social equity.

At the same time, many communities in the south – notably the Yoruba, the Niger Delta minorities, and the Igbos – have felt excluded from national government and alienated from central rulers and institutions. Democratization has raised hopes among these communities for greater political inclusion, but they remain cautious. Despite their emphatic political values and confirmed optimism, southerners turn a critical eye on the democratic system, and they are inclined to be suspicious of politicians and parties. Segments of these communities are also estranged from participation in mainstream politics.

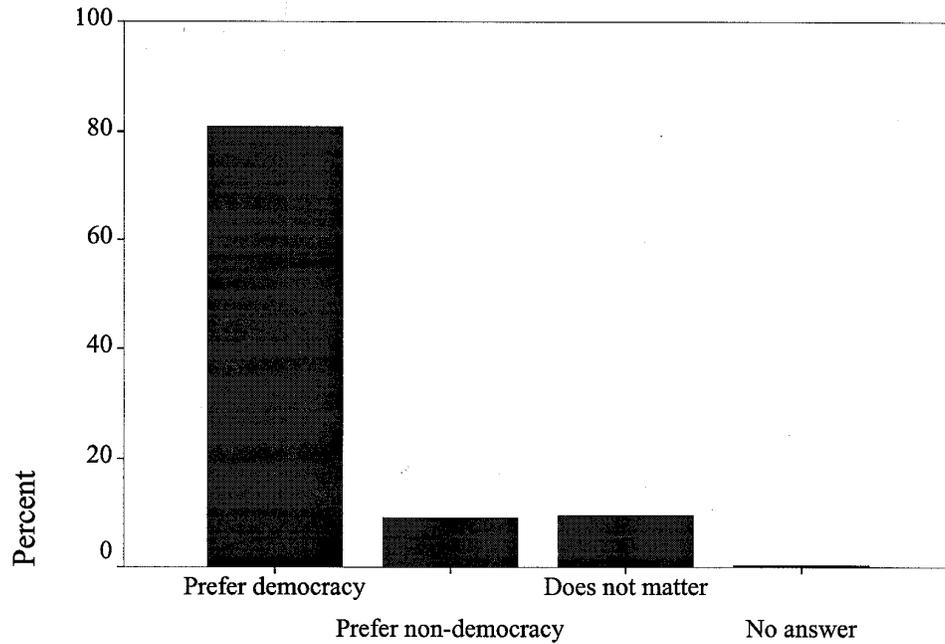
By comparison, citizens in the north are more restrained, pragmatic and *instrumental* in their political attitudes. It is worth emphasizing that democratic commitments are strong in the northern states. Indeed their levels of support for democracy (averaging over 70 percent) are high by international standards. Yet compared with southern Nigeria, there is a less pronounced attachment to democracy as an abstract ideal, and a more reserved acceptance of democratic values. Along with their fellow citizens in the south, northerners expect democracy to deliver both political and economic benefits, but they are relatively less effusive in their expectations of the new regime, and relatively more willing to consider alternative forms of governance should the system prove seriously deficient. Moreover, people in this region show a greater deference to authority and a willingness to abide the government in power. Citizens in the north express relatively less political disaffection or mistrust of their leaders.

A final comment should be offered. As we have noted, the survey reveals fervent attachments to democratic values in Nigeria, as well as remarkably high assessments of the

performance of the new regime, strong evaluations of elected officials and political institutions, and a heady optimism about the benefits of democracy. These popular attitudes may seem irreconcilable with the more sober realities evident on the streets, in the media, and in public discourse. Nigeria confronts profound challenges in consolidating new institutions, crafting effective leadership, achieving social stability and reconstructing the economy. As daunting as these problems are, however, many Nigerians find their present circumstances far less onerous than those under preceding authoritarian governments. Many observers of the recent transition have remarked on public acceptance of a rapid and sometimes flawed process. An overriding national concern with ending military rule caused many Nigerians to abide the shortcomings of the transition period. We conclude that this is still the temper of the country. In the “miracle of the moment”, expectations are likely to outshine judgement and citizens are less likely to be critical of the flaws in everyday governance. As the slow, difficult realities of political and economic change become more apparent, we might expect to see dramatic decreases in political satisfaction and confidence. The views of average citizens provide a foundation for the political life of democratic government, and to all those concerned with Nigeria’s future, it will be important to keep listening to the popular voice.

Appendix 4

Figure 1: Support for Democracy



Support for democracy

Figure 2:

Democracy Compared to Alternative Regimes

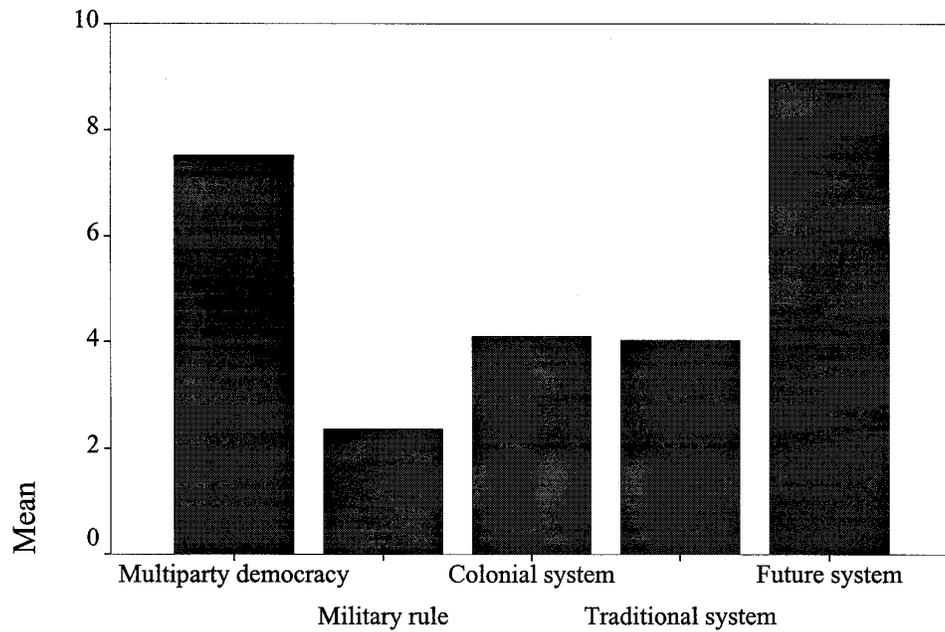


Figure 3: The Meaning of Democracy

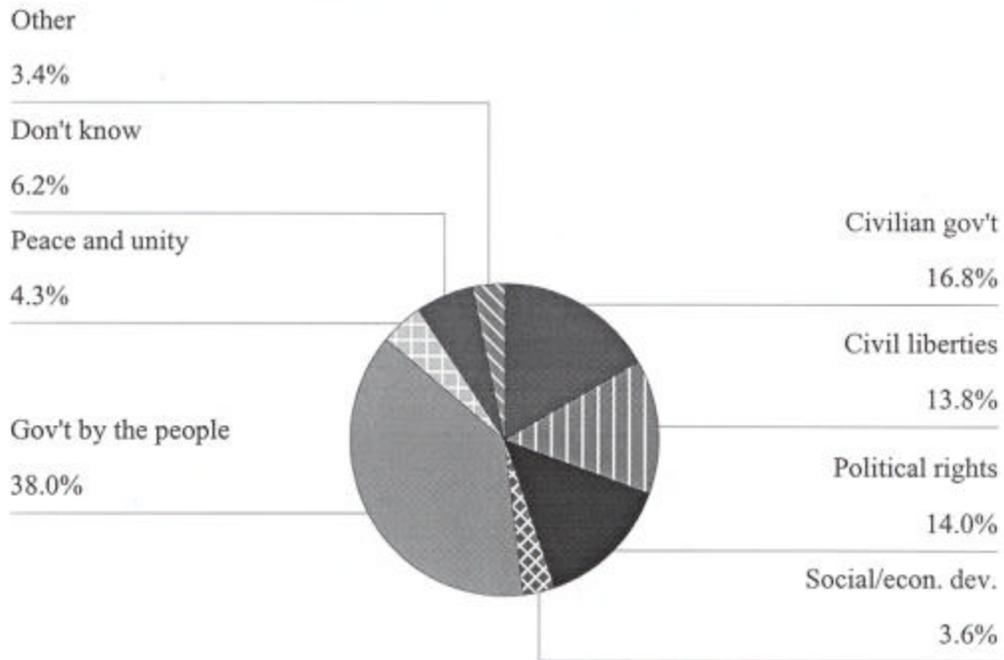
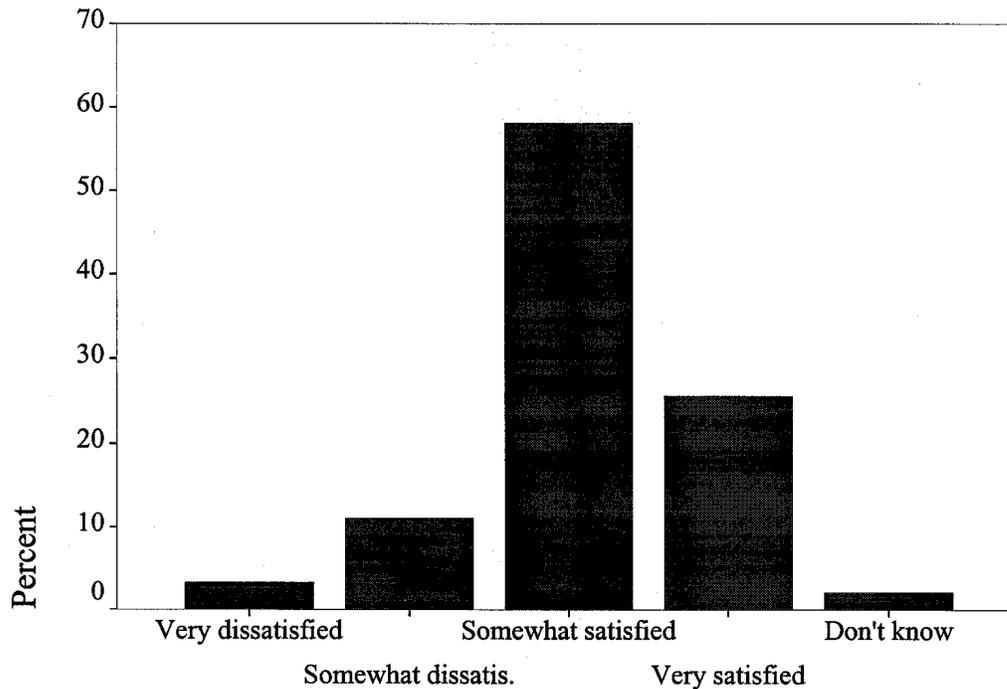
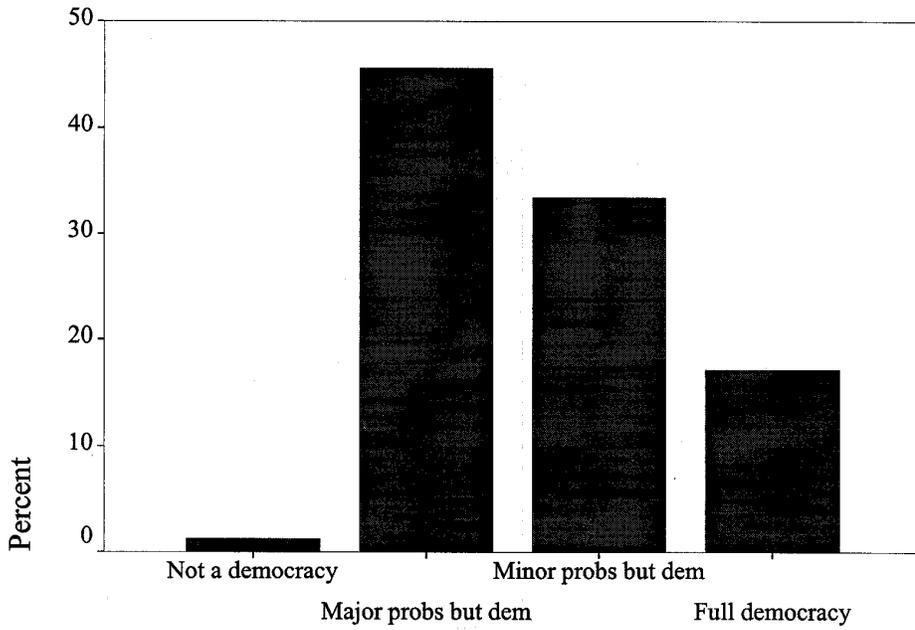


Figure 4: Satisfaction with Democracy



Satisfied with democracy

Figure 5: Democracy in Nigeria Today



How much of a democracy is Nigeria today?

Figure 6: Features of Democracy

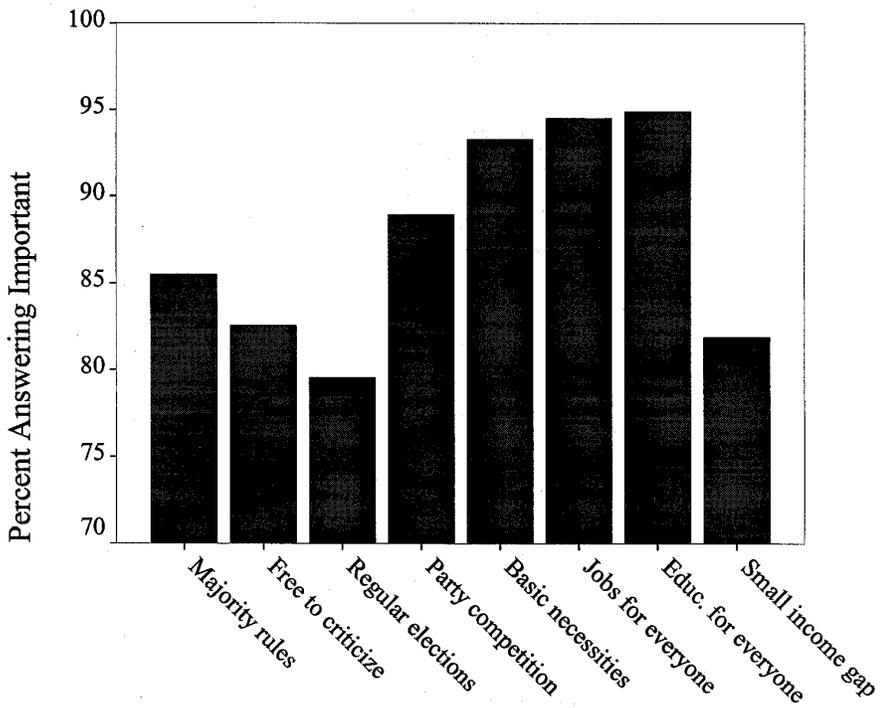
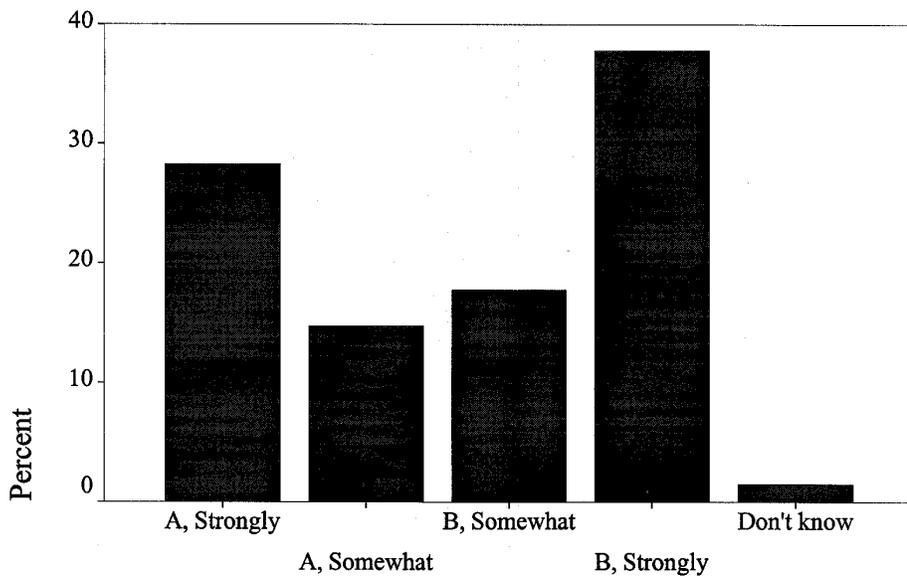


Figure 7: Responsibility for Personal Welfare



Statement A: People should look after themselves.

Statement B: Gov't should bear main responsibility for ensuring welfare.

Figure 8: Responsibility for Provision of Goods

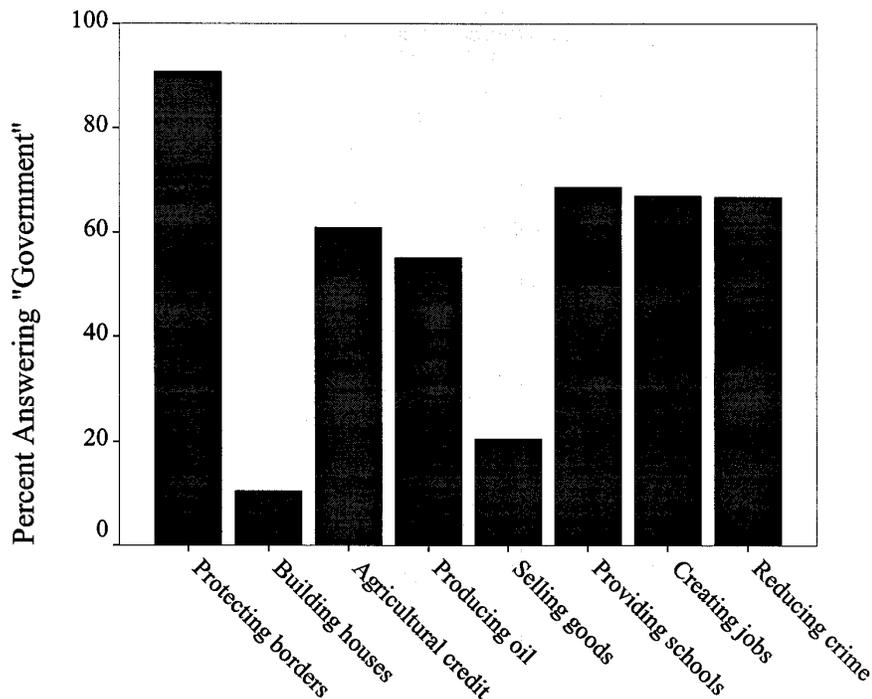


Figure 9: Awareness of SAP

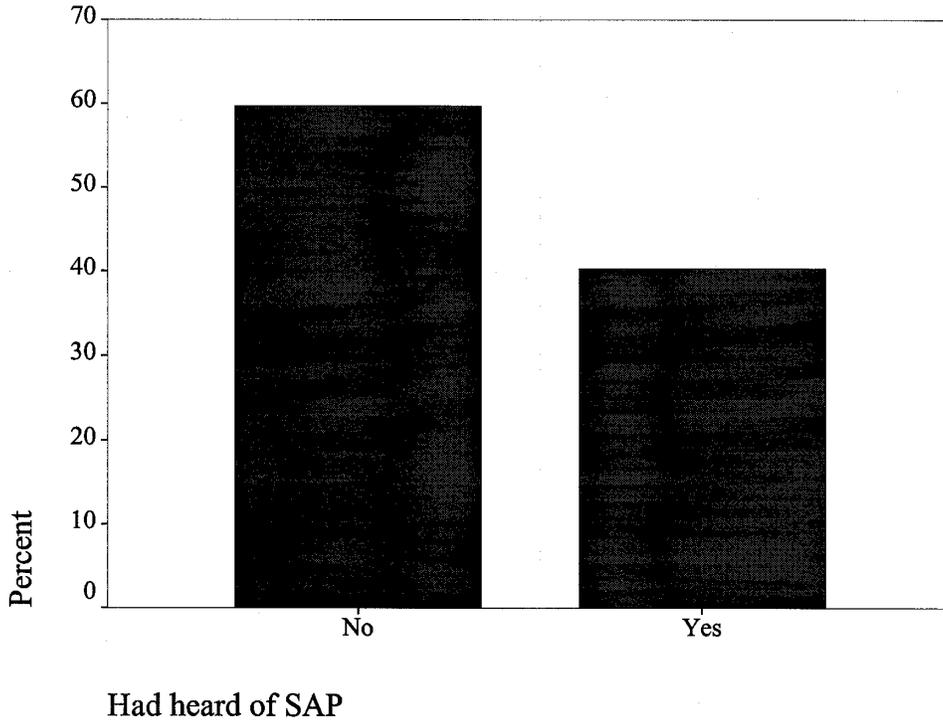


Figure 10: Purpose of SAP

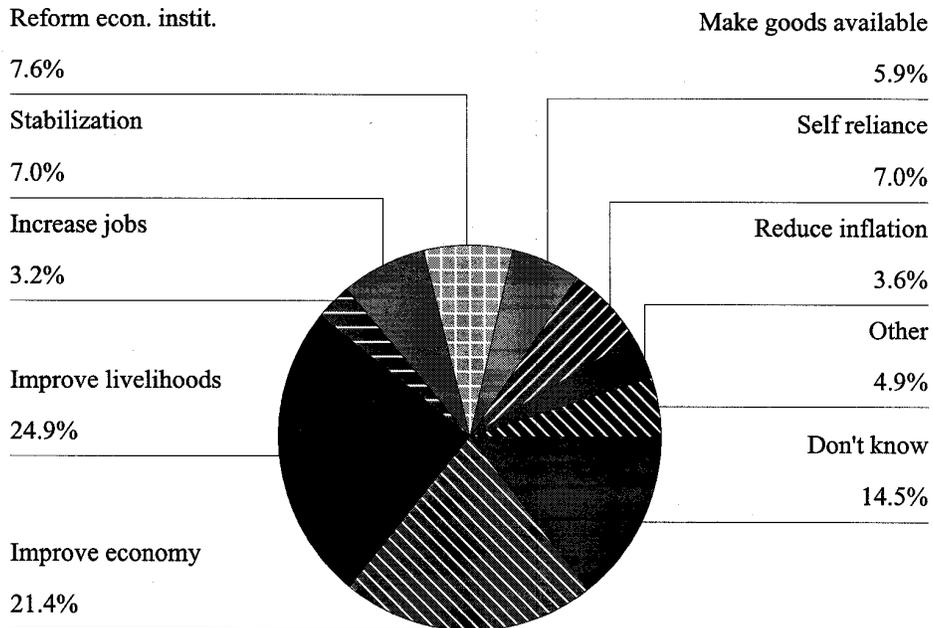
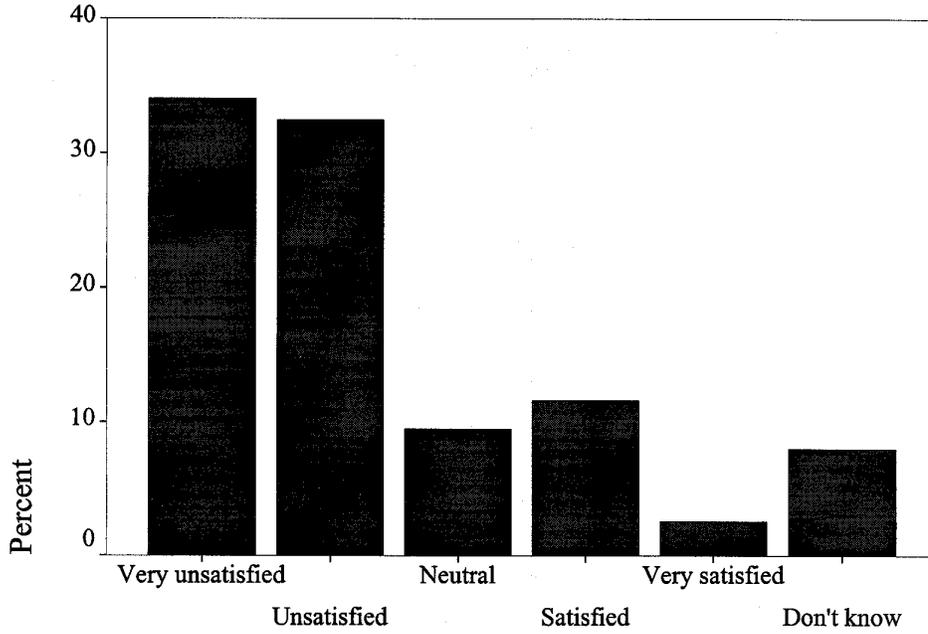
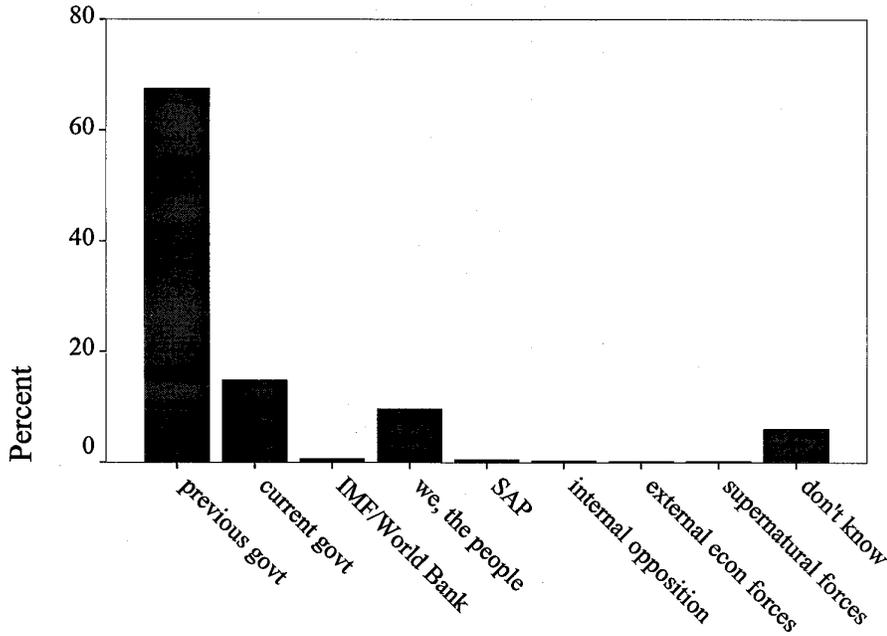


Figure 11: Satisfaction with SAP



Satisfied SAP

Figure 12: Responsibility for Economic Conditions



Opinions on who is responsible for economic conditions

Figure 13: Government Performance: Various Policies

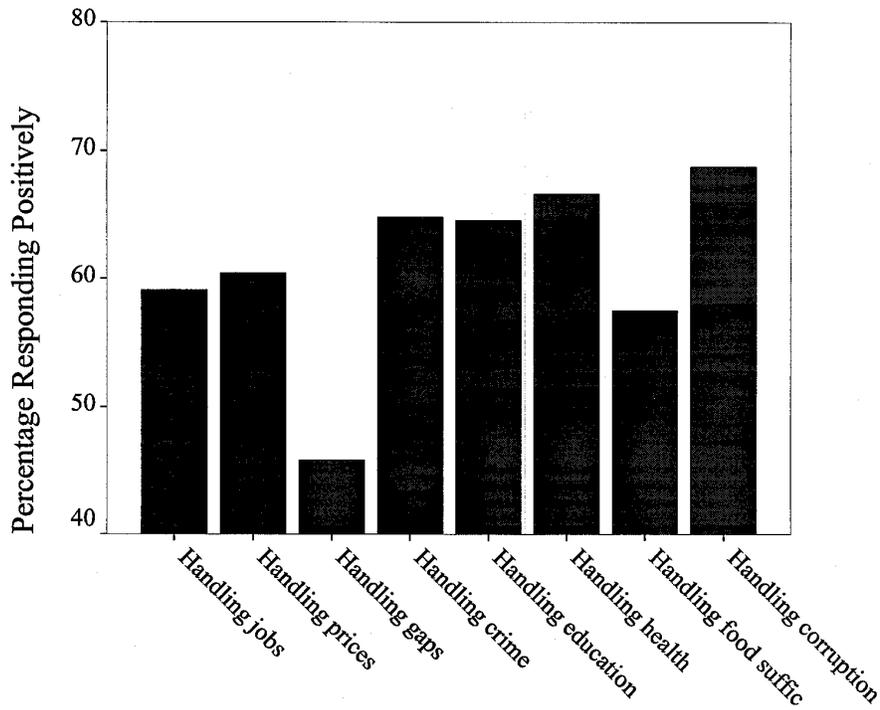
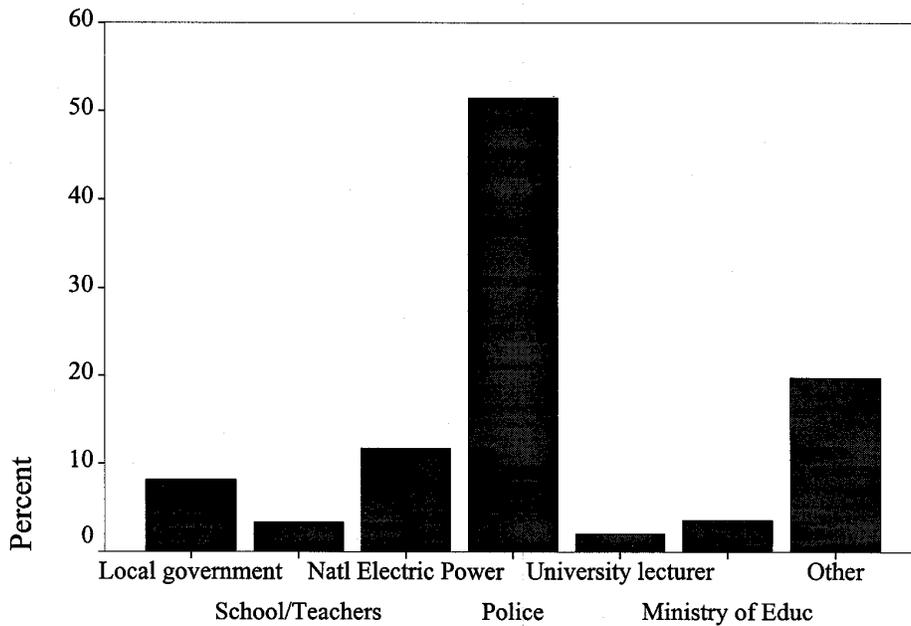
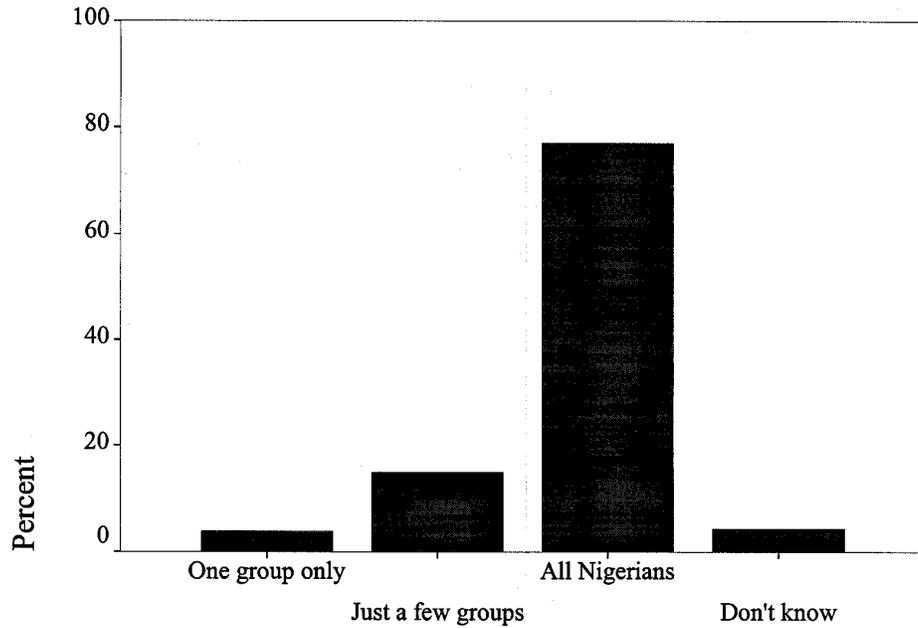


Figure 14: Agencies Named as Sources of Bribes



Agencies named as sources of bribes

Figure 15: Equity in Government Representation



Govt represents interests of all Nigerians?

Figure 16:

Levels of Crime (Attacks and Robberies)

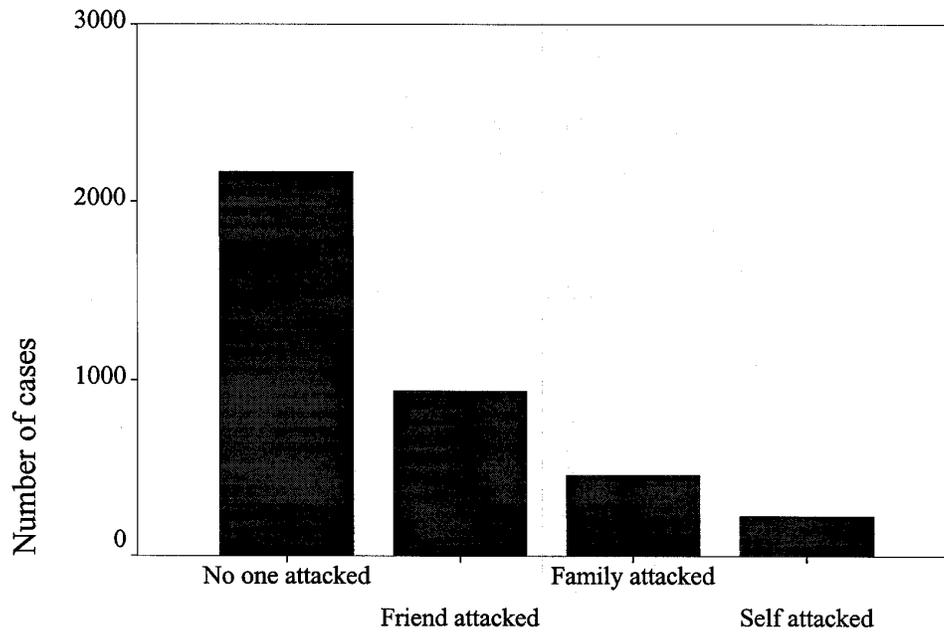


Figure 17: Membership in Voluntary Organizations

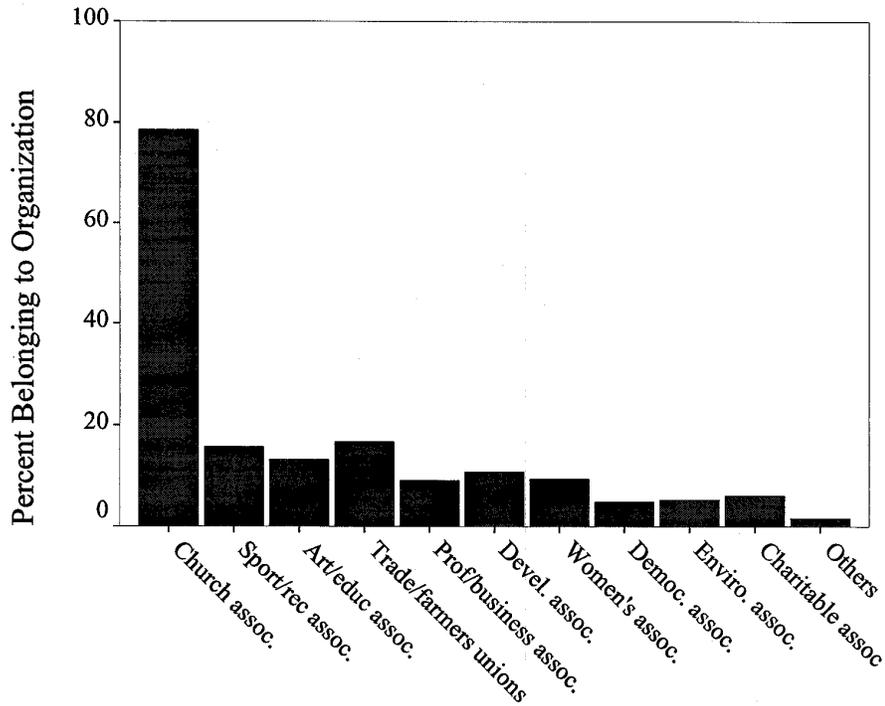


Figure 18: Alternative Providers of Food

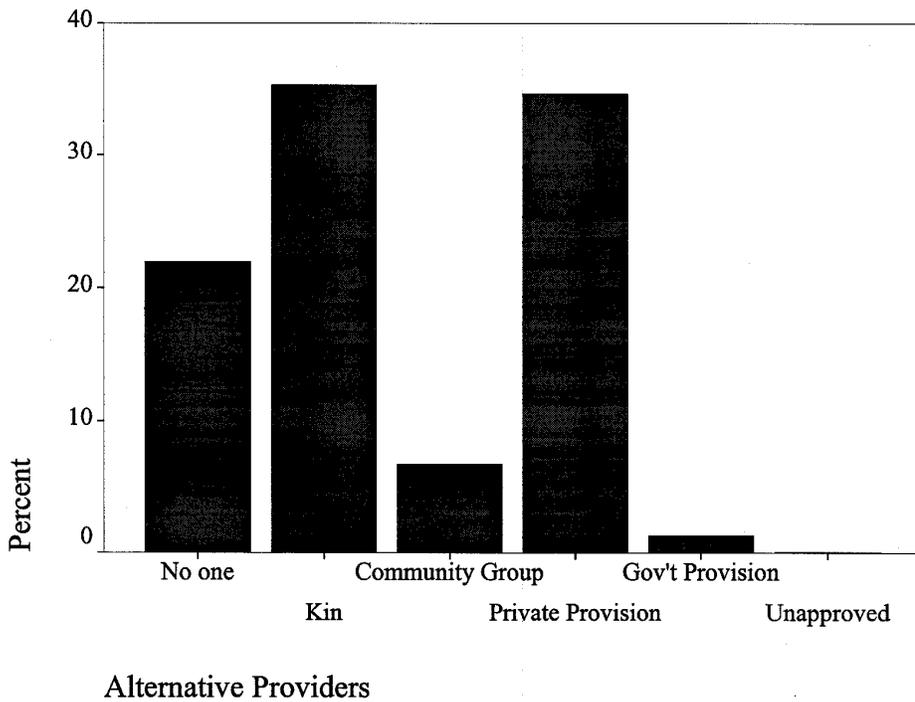


Figure 19: Alternative Providers of Water

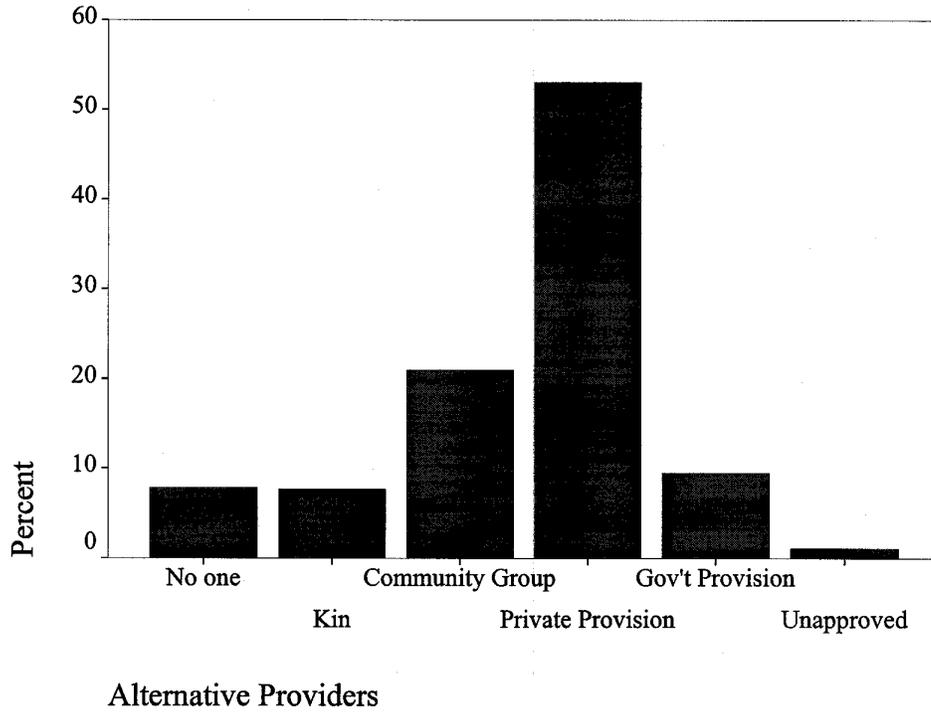


Figure 20: Interpersonal Trust

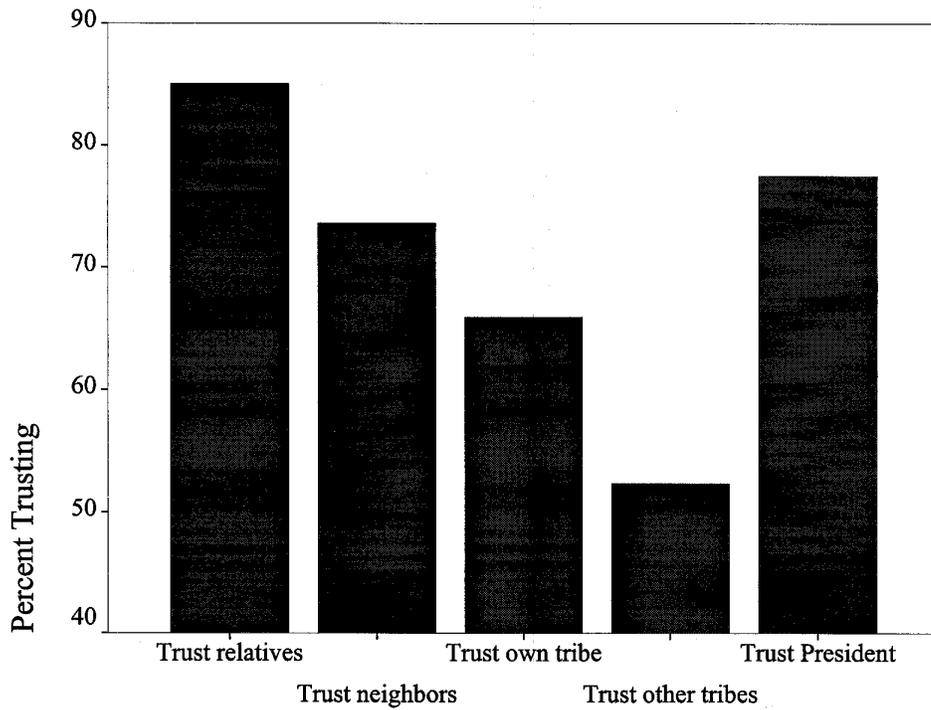


Figure 21: Self-Defined Social Identity

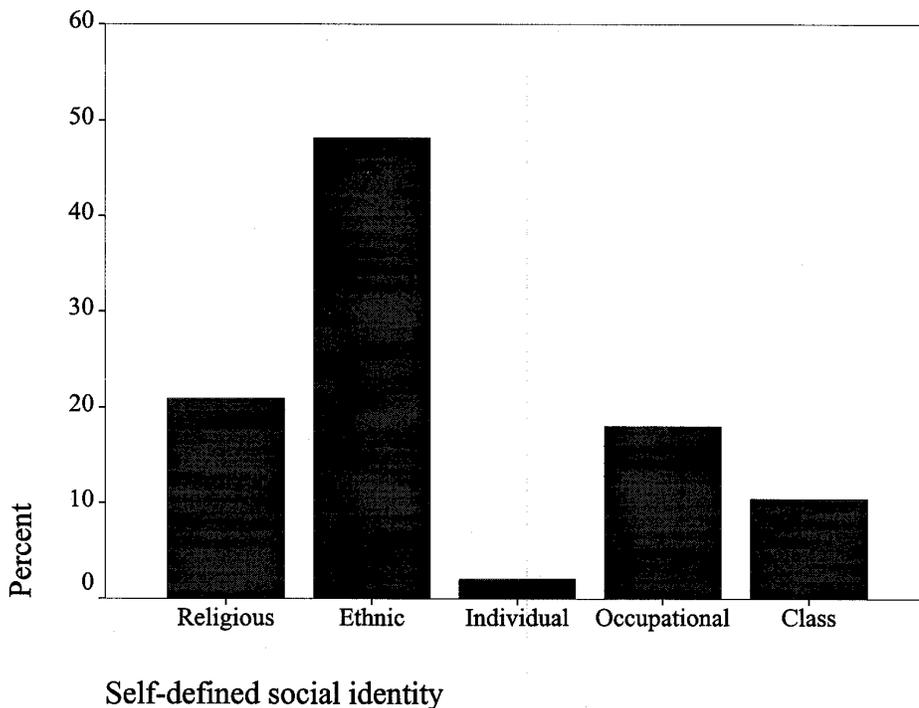


Figure 22: Strength of Identity

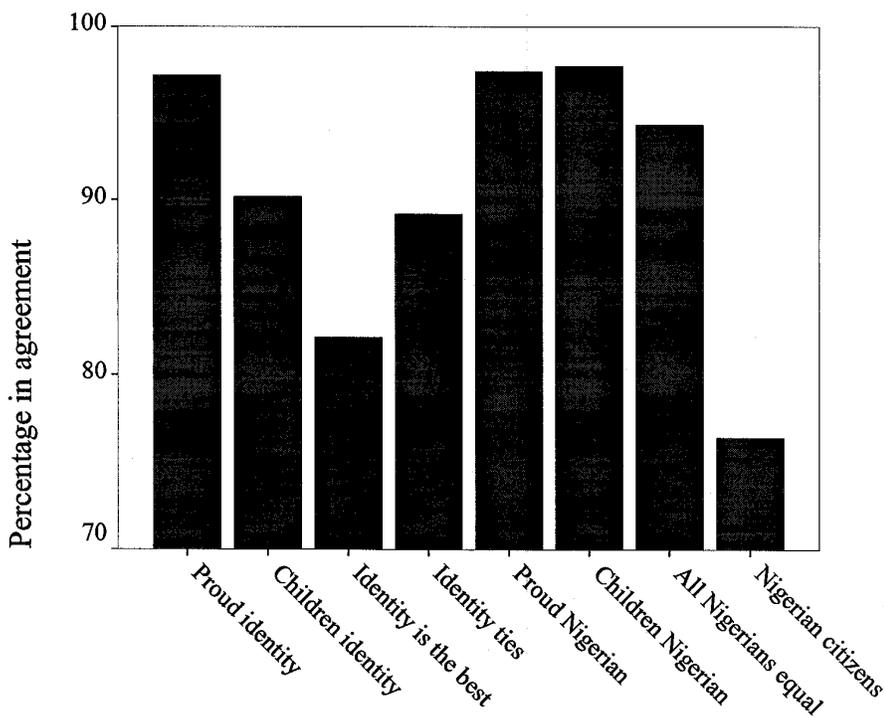


Figure 23: Political Participation by Gender

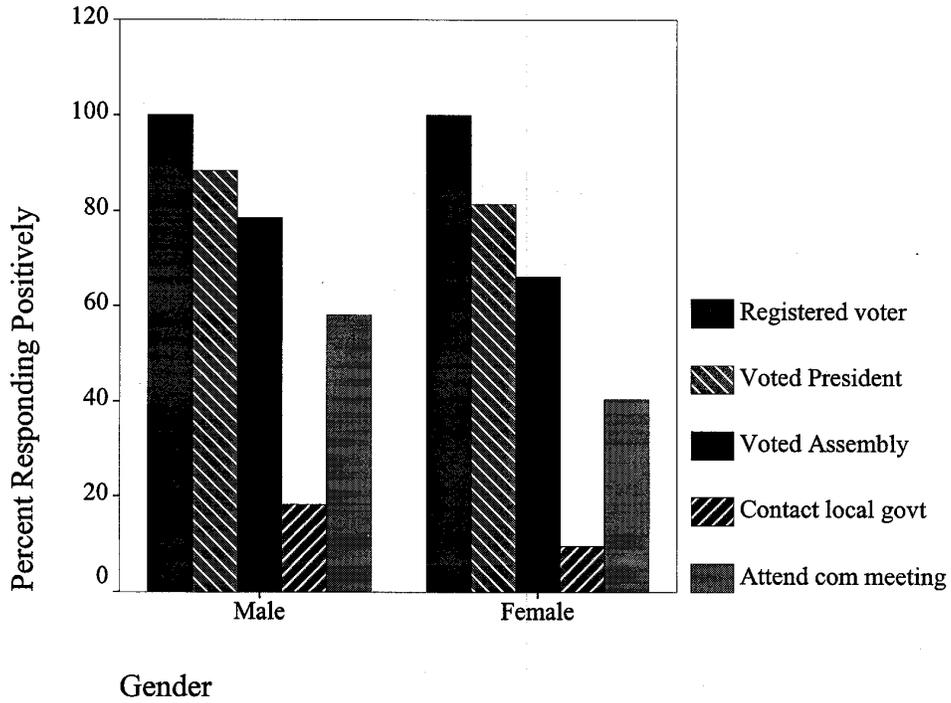


Figure 24: Awareness of SAP by Urban/Rural

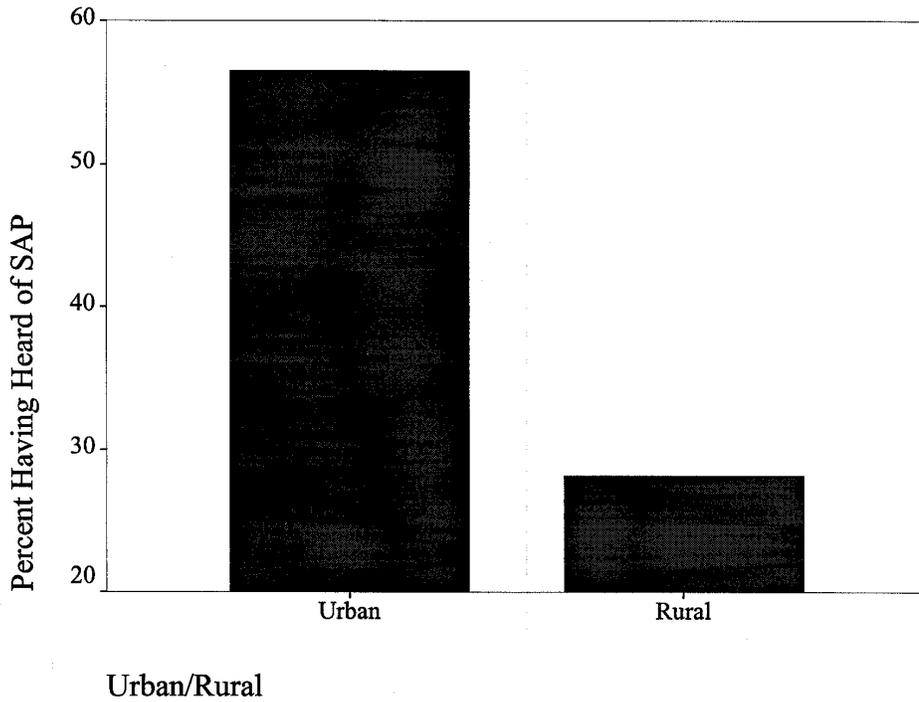


Figure 25: Alternatives to Democracy by Religio

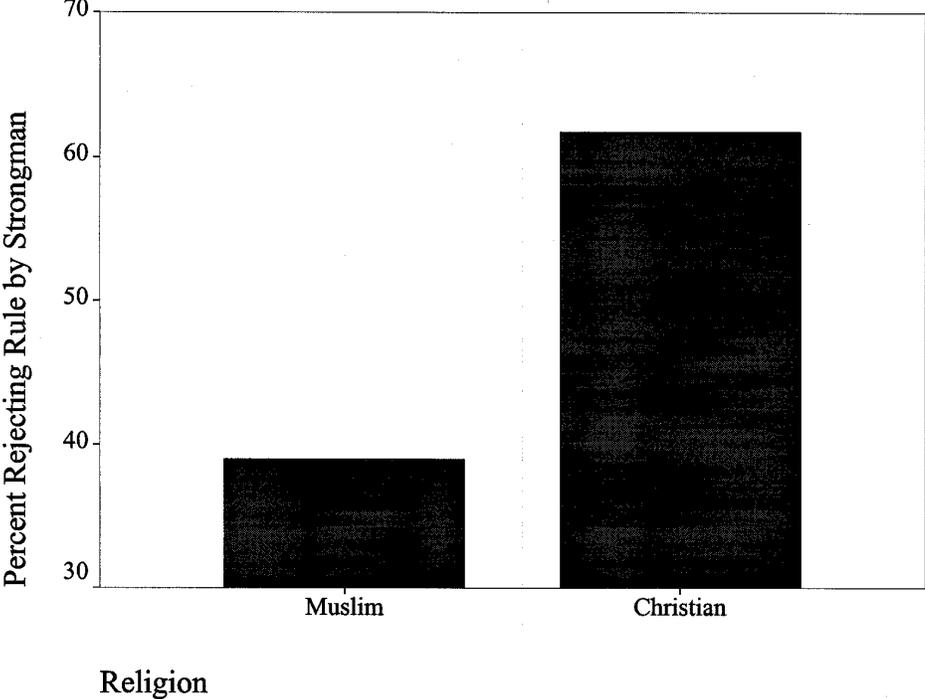


Figure 26: Awareness of SAP by Education

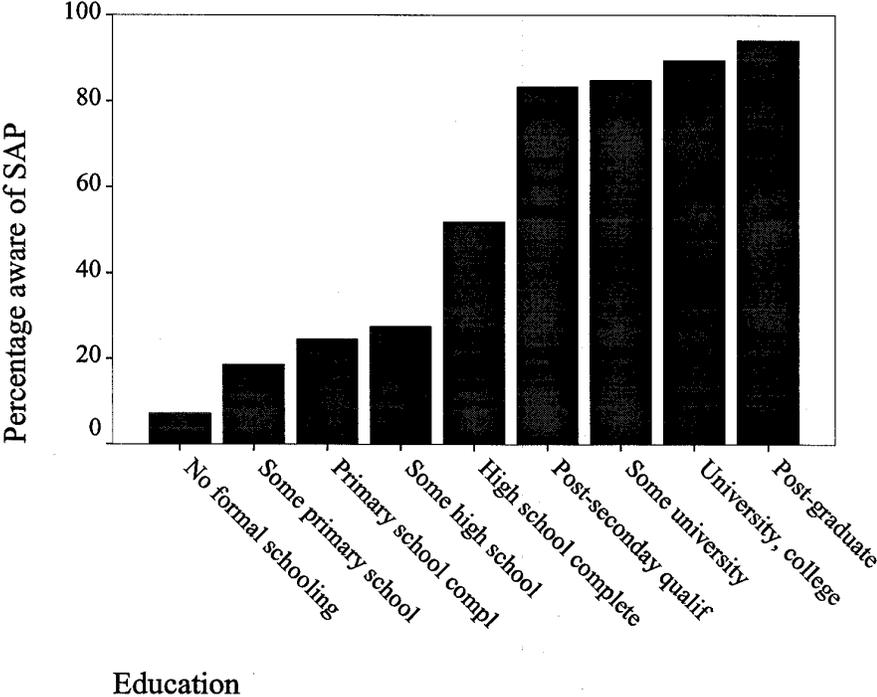


Figure 27:

Government Role in Oil Production by Region

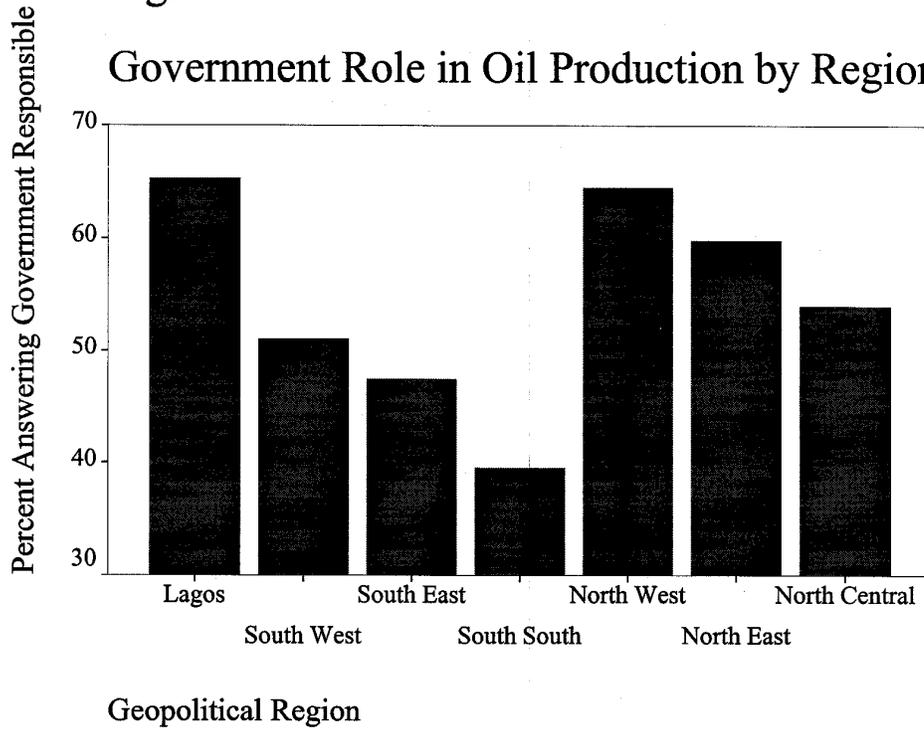


Figure 28:

Attitudes to Foreign Investment by Region

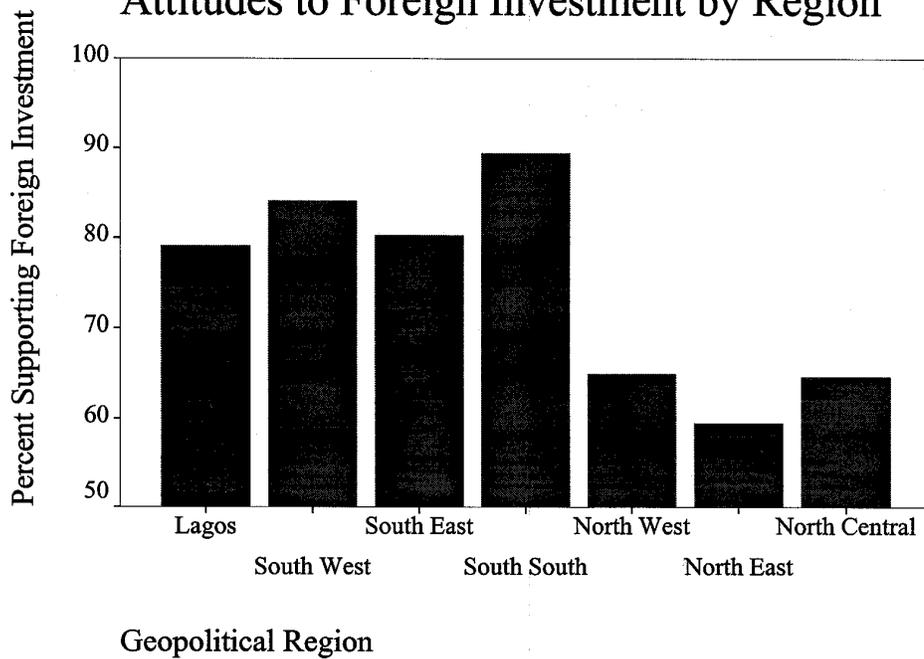


Figure 29:

Attitudes to Public Sector Retrenchment

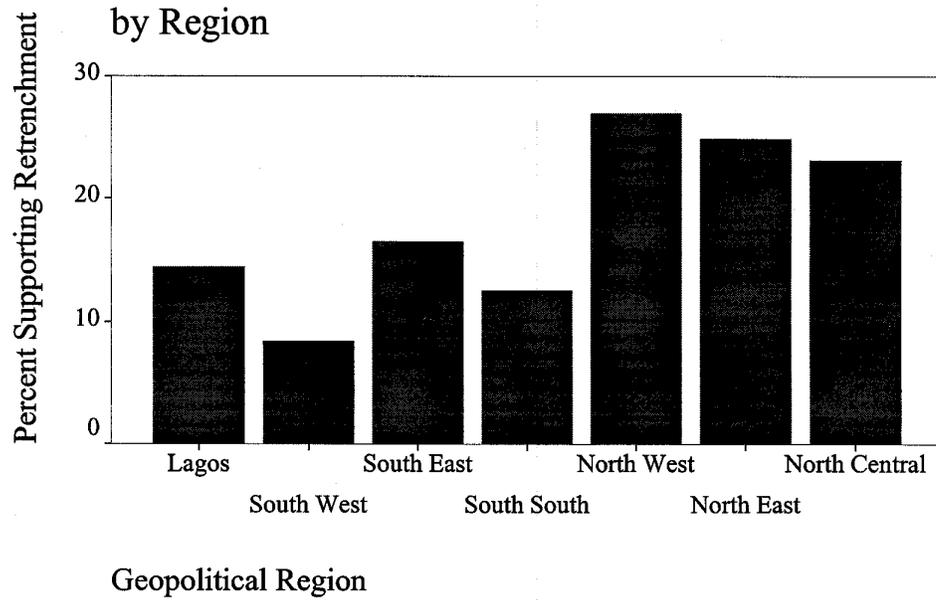


Figure 30: Civic Participation by Region

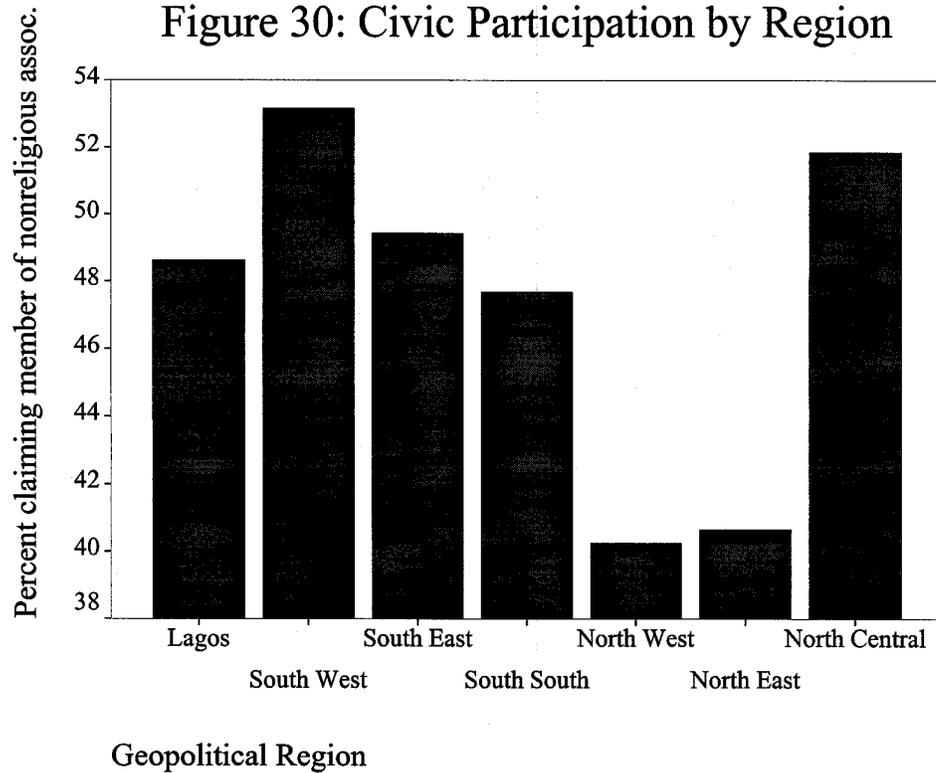


Figure 31:

Trust for President Obasanjo by Region

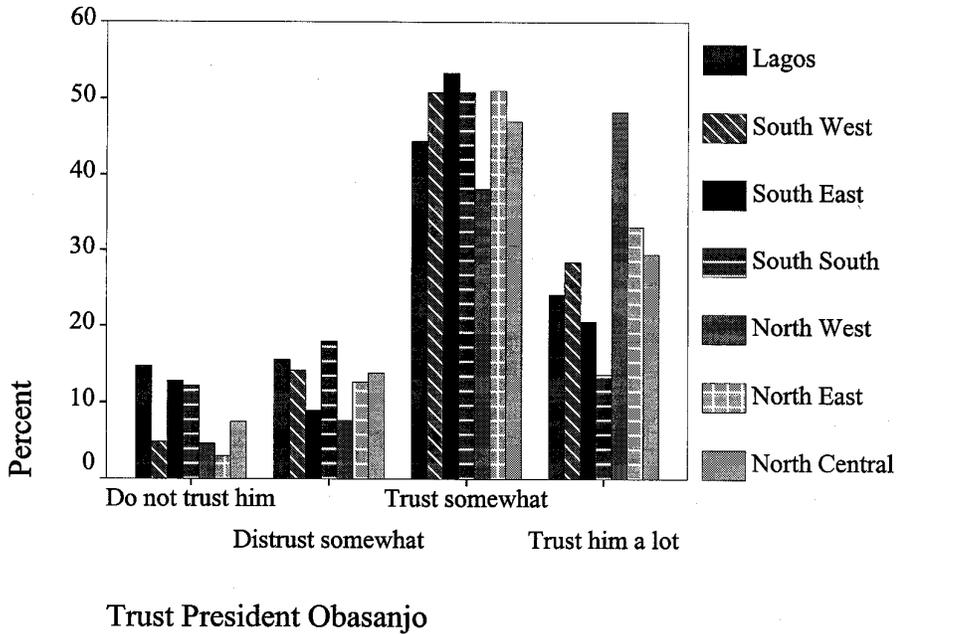


Figure 32:

Satisfaction with Democracy by Region

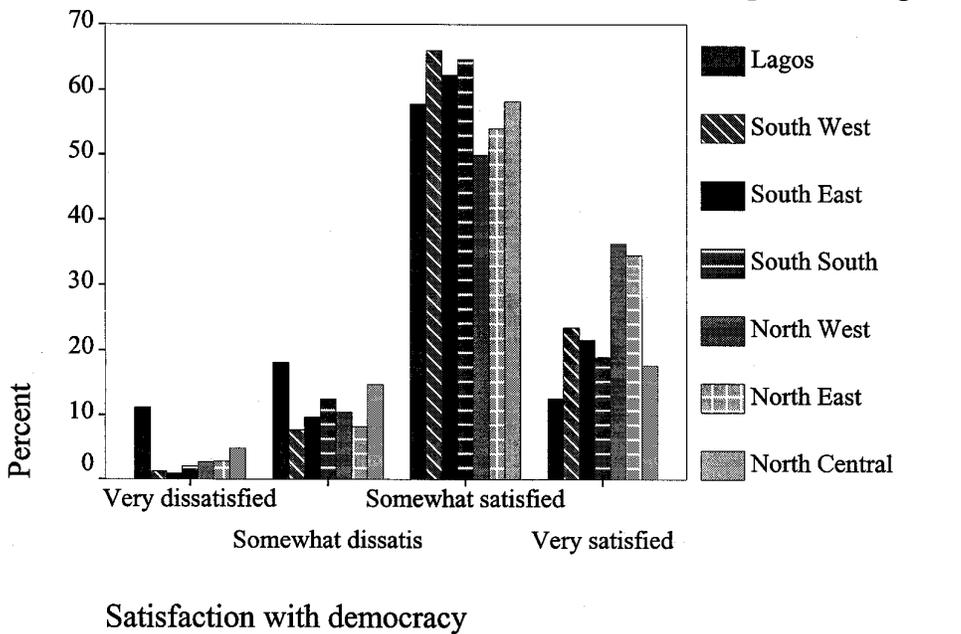
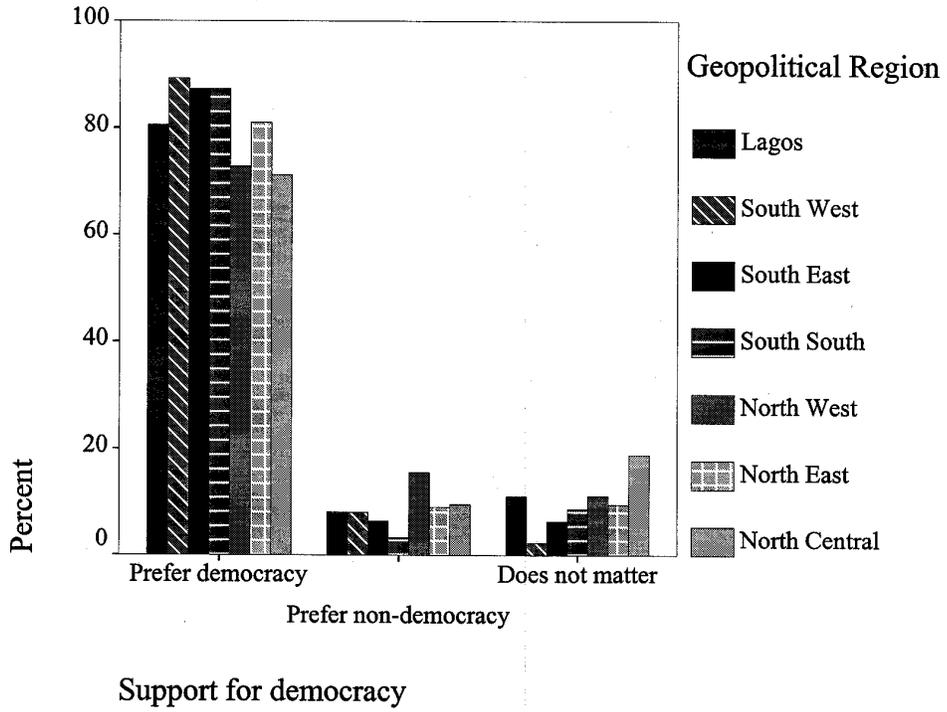


Figure 33: Support for Democracy by Region



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ENDNOTES

1 The Afrobarometer is a joint enterprise of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, Ghana) and Michigan State University (MSU). The countries are: South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Benin, Ghana, Mali, Uganda and Tanzania. Information on the Afrobarometer and survey results for selected countries can be obtained from any of the above partner institutions.

2 Eta = .245, sig. = .000

3 Contingency coefficient = .332, sig. = .000

4 Contingency coefficient = .449, sig. = .000

5 Contingency coefficient = .404, sig. = .000

6 Contingency coefficient = .429, sig. = .000

7 The proportion who say they borrow (7.9 percent) was confirmed by the very similar proportion who reported in response to a separate question that they owe money (8.5 percent).

8 Contingency coefficient = .171, sig. = .000

9 Contingency coefficient = .321, sig. = .000

10 29.8 percent and 36.1 percent respectively.

11 Contingency coefficient = .090, sig. = .000

12 Contingency coefficient = .120, sig. = .000

13 Contingency coefficient = .135, sig. = .000

14 Contingency coefficient = .139, sig. = .000

15 Contingency coefficient = .229, sig. = .000

16 Contingency coefficient = .062, sig. = .132

17 Contingency coefficient = .073, sig. = .021

18 Contingency coefficient = .379, sig. = .000

19 Contingency coefficient = .396, sig. = .000

20 Contingency coefficient = .355, sig. = .000

21 Contingency coefficient = .288, sig. = .000

22 Contingency coefficient = .416, sig. = .000

23 Contingency coefficient = .122, sig. = .000

24 Contingency coefficient = .153, sig. = .000

25 Contingency coefficient = .212, sig. = .000

26 Contingency coefficient = .296, sig. = .000

27 Contingency coefficients = .311 and .260, sig. = .000

28 Contingency coefficient = .160, sig. = .000

29 Contingency coefficient = .076, sig. = .000

30 Contingency coefficient = .192, sig. = .000

-
- 31 Contingency coefficient = .136, sig. = .000
- 32 Contingency coefficient = .199, sig. = .000
- 33 Contingency coefficient = .083, sig. = .000
- 34 Contingency coefficient = .149, sig. = .000
- 35 Contingency coefficient = .276, sig. = .000
- 36 Contingency coefficient = .145, sig. = .000
- 37 Contingency coefficient = .105, sig. = .000
- 38 Contingency coefficient = .132, sig. = .000
- 39 Contingency coefficient = .251, sig. = .000
- 40 Contingency coefficient = .260, sig. = .000
- 41 Contingency coefficient = .206, sig. = .000
- 42 Using ordinary least squares linear regression statistics. Due to space and readability considerations, the results of these analyses are not reported in this paper. But they are available from the authors on request.
- 43 Contingency coefficient = .483, sig. = .000
- 44 Contingency coefficient = .122, sig. = .000
- 45 Contingency coefficient = .167, sig. = .000
- 46 Contingency coefficient = .152, sig. = .000
- 47 Contingency coefficient = .239, sig. = .000
- 48 Contingency coefficient = .227, sig. = .000
- 49 Contingency coefficient = .177, sig. = .000
- 50 Contingency coefficient = .171, sig. = .000
- 51 Contingency coefficient = .140, sig. = .000
- 52 The zones (regions) are defined as follows: Lagos; South West (Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Oyo); South East (Abia, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Anambra); South-South (Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa-Ibom); North West (Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Jigawa); North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Taraba, Borno); North Central (Kogi, Kwara, Benue, Niger, Plateau, Abuja/FCT).
- 53 Contingency coefficient = .262, sig. = .000
- 54 Contingency coefficient = .134, sig. = .000
- 55 Contingency coefficient = .227, sig. = .000
- 56 Contingency coefficient = .228, sig. = .000
- 57 Contingency coefficient = .251, sig. = .000
- 58 Contingency coefficient = .348, sig. = .000
- 59 Contingency coefficient = .326, sig. = .000
- 60 Contingency coefficient = .202, sig. = .000