

Limit Museveni's Reign, Voters Say

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Survey participants say their president's term in office should be restricted.

The vast majority of Ugandans favour presidential term limits, abolished by parliament last year, according to an informal survey by the Ugandan Radio Network.

As President Yoweri Museveni, who has led Uganda for the last 20 years, seeks a third term in upcoming elections, eight out of 10 voters surveyed think there should be restrictions on the amount of time he is allowed to serve as head of state.

Only about two out of ten voters thought term limits were not important.

The survey was based on a random sampling of 516 voters in Kampala, the country's capital, and in the northern districts of Soroti, Gulu, Arua, Masindi and Hoima. The southern districts polled were Fort-Portal, Kabale, Mbarara, and Masaka.

Participants in the poll opposed to presidential terms limits, which were abolished without a public referendum, said that elections were costly and a waste of time. Others said that if the president was good, there was no reason to change him.

By contrast, voters who favoured limits often mentioned the need for changes in political leadership; and some said these would remove the potential for civil strife.

As far as other concerns, the survey revealed strong regional differences between the north and southern regions, including the capital.

Eighty-two per cent of residents in Uganda's war-torn northern districts say they are worried most about the on-going war with the Lord's Resistance Army, LRA.

Also, 80 per cent of voters said that political corruption was a slightly bigger worry for them than the economy. But jobs were very big concern for 78 per cent of those polled.

These attitudes differ sharply with voters in Kampala, which is far from the fighting in the north. In the capital, 93 per cent said jobs and the economy were some of the main challenges facing Uganda.

Only 50 per cent in Kampala said the LRA was a serious problem, while 60 per cent pointed to political corruption as the greater evil.

Similar attitudes were revealed in the south where 74 per cent of those polled said that jobs and the economy were their major worries.

Only 60 per cent of those in the south said the LRA was a principal concern.

Health care and the AIDS epidemic, however, was a much bigger preoccupation for residents outside the capital. More than 60 per cent in the northern and southern districts said AIDS was a concern, compared with 46 per cent in Kampala.

Regional differences were also reflected politically.

President Museveni and his National Resistance Movement, NRM, appear to have the strongest support in the southern and western districts, and the least in the north.

In Kampala, voter support appears to be divided with 30 per cent each for Museveni and the NRM and challenger Kiiza Besigye and his Forum for Democratic Change.

The other political figures, including Maria Obote and her Uganda People's Congress, Sebaana Kizito and his Democratic Party, and independent Dr Abed Bwanika collectively have nearly 40 per cent of Kampala's voter support.

More than four out of ten voters in the districts of Soroti, Gulu, Arua, Masindi and Hoima, say they back Besigye's and the FDC.

About 20 per cent in the north said they support Museveni's NRM party, and more than thirty per cent said they're behind candidates other than either Museveni or Besigye.

In the south, over 40 per cent said they would vote for Museveni and the NRM, while only two out of ten would support Besigye and the FDC.

About 30 per cent of those polled said they support candidates from parties other than the NRM or the FDC.

When asked what personal qualities were most important for a president, nearly half in the northern districts said they want a president who is honest.

This is in contrast to Kampala where more than three out of ten voters said that strong leadership was the most important quality.

Those surveyed were primarily residents of urban areas, as the survey did not reach deep into the rural regions.

Almost 69 per cent were below the age of 35. Male respondents outnumbered females by a margin of two

to one. And more than six out of ten said they were employed.

Over 44 per cent said they had some higher education. Slightly more than three in ten said they had either a primary or senior level education.

The survey was conducted between January 12 and 27.

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