CHAPTER TWO

Political Engagement

Overview

The role of citizens in influencing governance is the central theme of this report. Citizen engagement in government comes in many varieties, including non-political ways in which citizens can participate in service delivery, provide inputs and feedback at the invitation of government officials, and play a role in monitoring the performance of government agencies. This report emphasizes the crucial role of citizens' political engagement, distinguishing it from other non-political forms of citizen engagement.

Political engagement is the participation of citizens in selecting and sanctioning the leaders who wield power in government, including by entering themselves as contenders for leadership. Political engagement includes citizen actions as voters, as actual and potential challengers for leadership positions in government, and in organized groups that pressure elected politicians and appointed public officials through civil society action and public protests.

The leaders who are selected through political engagement, in turn, delegate to public officials and frontline providers the many tasks of delivering public goods and services. These leaders also choose policies for citizen engagement in the business of government.

Some forms engage citizens as "co-producers" of public goods, such as by managing and allocating budgets and delivering services, while other forms try to make public officials and frontline providers more accountable for good performance by engaging citizens to monitor their delivery of public goods. The assumption is that, even without formal powers to select and sanction officials, citizens will be able to exact accountability through

social pressure. Reviews of research on the impact of social accountability initiatives conclude that their benefits are limited in the face of fundamental failures in the political process and low incentives for leaders to respond to citizens (Grandvoinnet, Aslam, and Raha 2015; Mansuri and Rao 2013). Effectiveness of social accountability initiatives will depend on the incentives of leaders to take citizen monitoring, feedback, and complaints seriously and use their formal powers over public officials to ultimately hold them accountable. This point will be supported by the research reviews contained in the latter chapters of this report.

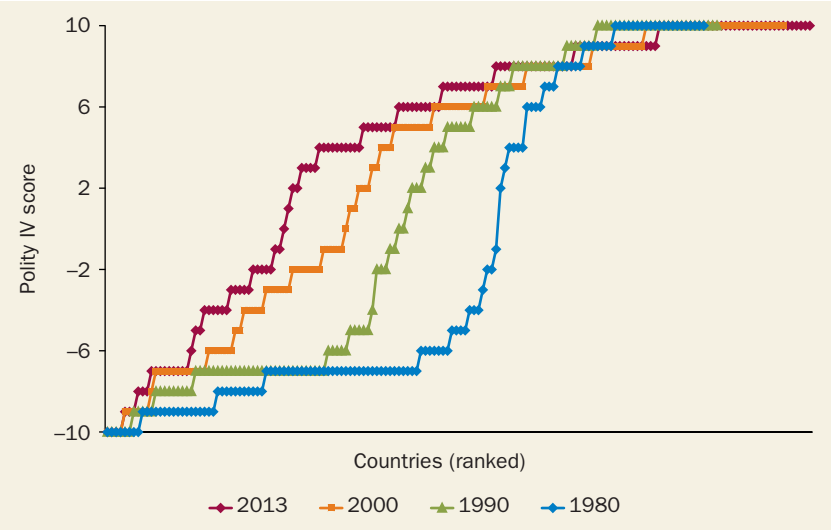
This chapter presents evidence of growing trends in political engagement across and within countries, through electoral institutions, public protests, and civil society organizations.

Political engagement through elections

Political engagement happens in every institutional context, from democracies to autocracies, albeit in different ways. A variety of formal political institutions are found around the world that structure the degree to which the power to select and sanction leaders is diffused across many citizens acting as individual voters versus concentrated among elites or organized groups such as political parties. Even when formal institutions restrict the power of "ordinary" citizens, who hold no public office and are not organized into influential groups, research suggests that leaders are nevertheless constrained by the informal powers of non-elite citizens to engage in protests or revolts. At the same time, formal electoral institutions have spread across and within countries, expanding the power of individuals to select and sanction leaders as voters. Citizen responses to public opinion surveys provide evidence of citizens' perceptions of and participation in elections. Citizens, especially the poor and less educated, report active participation in elections across a variety of institutional contexts. Even where electoral violence and fraud, vote buying, and ethnic conflict are common, citizens nevertheless express their beliefs that elections matter for beneficial change and that through their vote, they can improve their lives.

Figure 2.1 plots the distribution of countries ranked by the Polity IV measure of democracy, with higher values corresponding to greater space for political engagement by citizens.[1] During the past three and a half decades, the overall distribution of political institutions across countries has steadily shifted toward those that allow greater political engagement.

Figure 2.1 Global shift toward democratic institutions for political engagement



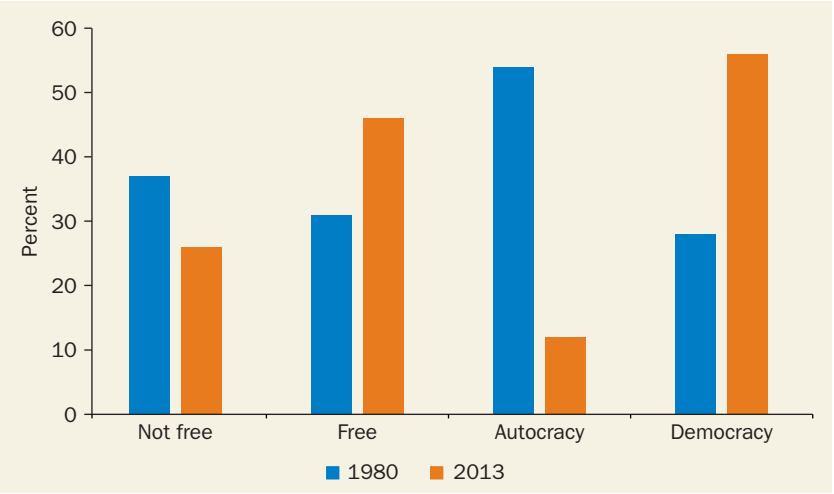
Source: Data from the Polity IV project. The Polity IV Score is a measure of state authority that is widely used in research, varying on a 21-point scale ranging from −10 (which corresponds to hereditary monarchy) to +10 (which corresponds to the Polity IV view of consolidated democracy). Higher values are thus associated with more democratic institutions.

Although some individual countries have experienced reversals to more autocratic institutions or have seen little change, the overall trend has been toward greater opportunities for political engagement.

Figure 2.2 shows that between 1980 and 2013, the fraction of democratic countries measured by Polity IV doubled from 28 percent to 56 percent and the fraction of autocratic countries declined from 54 percent to 12 percent.[2] Another initiative that measures opportunities for political engagement, Freedom House, provides indicators that are consistent with the Polity IV trends. Rather than assessing the characteristics of government institutions, as in the case of Polity IV, Freedom House measures the freedoms enjoyed by individuals. Figure 2.2 also shows that the fraction of countries rated as "free" by Freedom House increased over the same period from 31 percent to 46 percent, while the fraction of "not free" countries declined from 37 percent to 26 percent.[3]

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show a clear trend toward greater space for political engagement by citizens. However, scrutiny of recent years indicates that such trends have plateaued with comparably negligible gains in recent

Figure 2.2 Countries categorized as "free" and "democratic," 1980 and 2013



Source: Based on Freedom House and Polity IV data.
Note: Data representing "not free" and "free" are from Freedom House, while "autocracy" and "democracy" are from Polity IV.

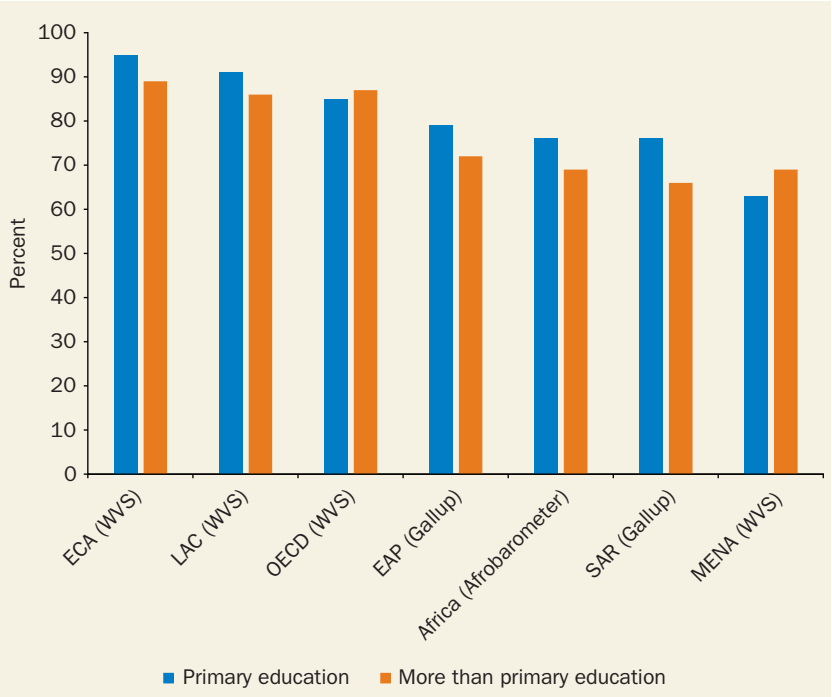
times. Freedom House has documented declines in overall political rights and civil liberties. During 2014, nearly twice as many countries saw downturns as gains in democratic indicators, a trend that was not confined to any geographic area (Puddington 2015).

Self-reported voter turnout and interest in elections

Public opinion surveys—the World Values Survey, the Gallup World Poll, and the Afrobarometer—provide evidence of citizens' perceptions and participation in elections. Citizens report active participation in elections across a variety of institutional contexts (figure 2.3). More than 85 percent of all respondents in the regions of Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, and in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), report voting in the most recent election in their country. In the regions where most of the poorest people live, Africa and South Asia, more than 70 percent of respondents report voting. In these regions, citizens with less than a primary education, and therefore likely to be relatively poor, are *more* likely to report voting. For example, citizens in Africa with less than a primary education report voting 7 percentage points more than others and in South Asia 10 percentage points more than others.

Self-reported voting rates need to be interpreted cautiously due to the well-known problem that reported voting is likely to be greater than actual

Figure 2.3 Self-reported voting rates, by region



Sources: Afrobarometer Survey, Gallup World Poll, and World Values Survey (WVS).
Note: Reported voter turnout rates in national elections by education and region. For each region, the source was chosen based on which one had a larger number of countries represented. EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = the Middle East and North Africa; OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SAR = South Asia.

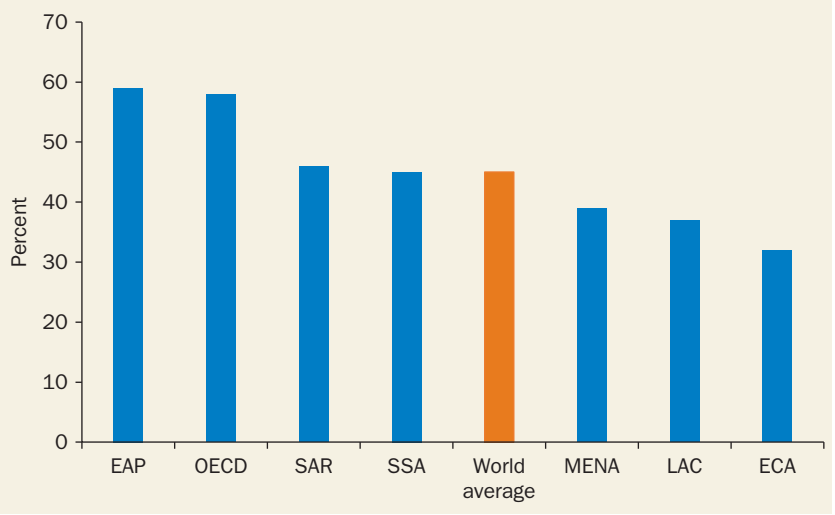
voting. For example, although Afrobarometer survey data show that more than 80 percent of Ugandans report voting in the February 2011 elections, actual turnout reported by the election committee was slightly less than 60 percent. Yet, the pattern reported in figure 2.3 of less-educated citizens voting at higher rates than more educated citizens in some of the poor regions of the world is supported by other research evidence. Pande (2011) estimates that in many developing countries, less-educated and income-poor citizens tend to be more politically active than those with greater education and income. In contrast, in developed countries, the richer and more-educated citizens are clearly more politically active. Evidence also suggests that in autocratic institutional environments, more-educated citizens are likely to "deliberately disengage" from political processes because they are more critical of the legitimacy and effectiveness of those processes (Croke et al. 2015).

Surveys also reveal that citizens question the fairness and integrity of elections. Figure 2.4 shows that according to Gallup, fewer than half of respondents globally said they had confidence in the honesty of elections. Interestingly, reported confidence was lowest in Europe and Central Asia, yet that is the region with the highest reported level of participation in elections.

Other evidence suggests that citizens in the developing world experience widespread problems in political engagement. Responses to several questions asked in Wave 6 (2010–14) of the World Values Survey reveal a high degree of perceived incidence of violence, vote buying, and electoral fraud in developing countries, in sharp contrast to the lack of such problems reported in OECD countries. The four panels in figure 2.5 show the global distribution of responses to the following questions: "In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections: Voters are bribed? Rich people buy elections? Voters are threatened by violence at the polls? Votes are counted fairly?"[4]

Panel a of figure 2.5 shows the extent to which respondents perceive voters as being bribed in their countries. In countries in South Asia and

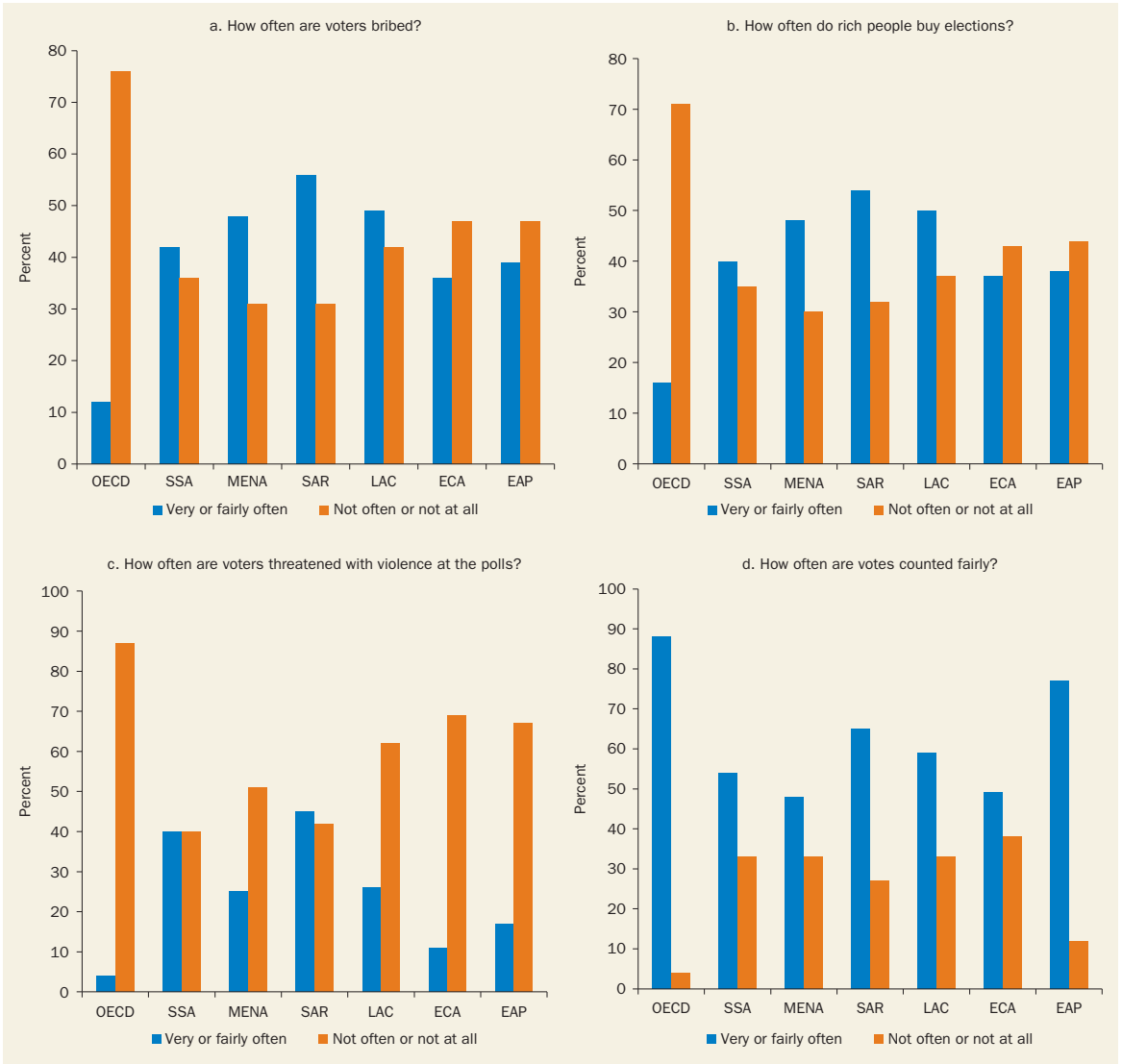
Figure 2.4 Confidence in the honesty of elections, by region



Source: Gallup World Poll 2007–13.
Note: Percent responding "yes" by region to the question, "Do you have confidence in the honesty of elections?" EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = the Middle East and North Africa; OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SAR = South Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa, 56 percent and 42 percent of respondents, respectively, report their view that voters are bribed "very" or "fairly often," compared with only 12 percent in OECD countries. The average in the East Asia and Pacific region, at 39 percent, is lower than that of South

Figure 2.5 Citizens' views on electoral malpractice



Source: World Values Survey (Wave 6 undertaken over 2010–14).
Note: EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = the Middle East and North Africa; OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SAR = South Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa.

Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Consistent with the pattern of responses on the voter-bribing question, respondents in the poorer regions of the world are more likely to believe that the economic elites in their countries can purchase election outcomes for their benefit (figure 2.5, panel b).

Panel c of figure 2.5 shows the prevalence of violence in elections in the developing regions of the world, compared with the OECD countries. Similarly, responses to the questions on whether the government agencies responsible for the conduct of elections perform their functions to support free and fair elections show a pronounced difference between the poor and richer regions of the world (figure 2.5, panel d).

Experience with violence, electoral fraud, vote buying, and ethnic conflict in the developing world has prompted several investigative journalists and commentators to question the value of elections in weakly governed societies and the capacity of poor and uneducated voters to exercise their franchise responsibly. Rodrik and Wacziarg (2005, 50) provide the following quotes in this regard:

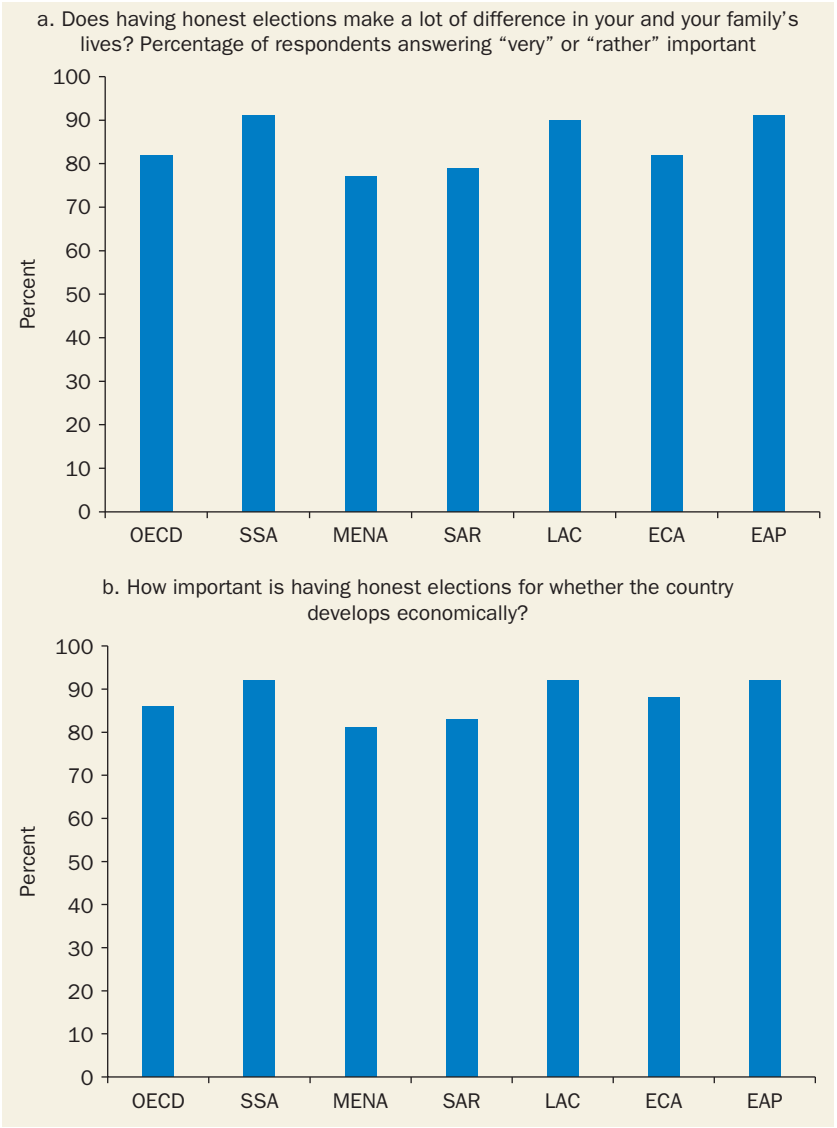
> Robert D. Kaplan (2000 p. 62) states that "If a society is not in reasonable health, democracy can be not only risky but disastrous." Fareed Zakaria (2003, p. 98) points out that "although democracy has in many ways opened up African politics and brought people liberty, it has also produced a degree of chaos and instability that has actually made corruption and lawlessness worse in many countries." Amy Chua (2002, p. 124) argues that: '"... in the numerous countries around the world with a market-dominant minority, adding democracy to markets has been a recipe for instability, upheaval, and ethnic conflagration."

In contrast to the above opinions among external observers of electoral malpractice, citizens still tend to believe that elections matter for beneficial change, that through their votes they can improve their lives. The two panels of figure 2.6 show the share of individuals by region who described elections as being very or rather important on a personal and national level, respectively.

Similar patterns were obtained from two Afrobarometer surveys that were undertaken in Uganda and Nigeria on the eve of their elections in 2011 and 2007, respectively. In these surveys, about 80 percent of respondents in Uganda and 70 percent in Nigeria said that they believed the way they voted could make things better (figure 2.7). Those respondents who

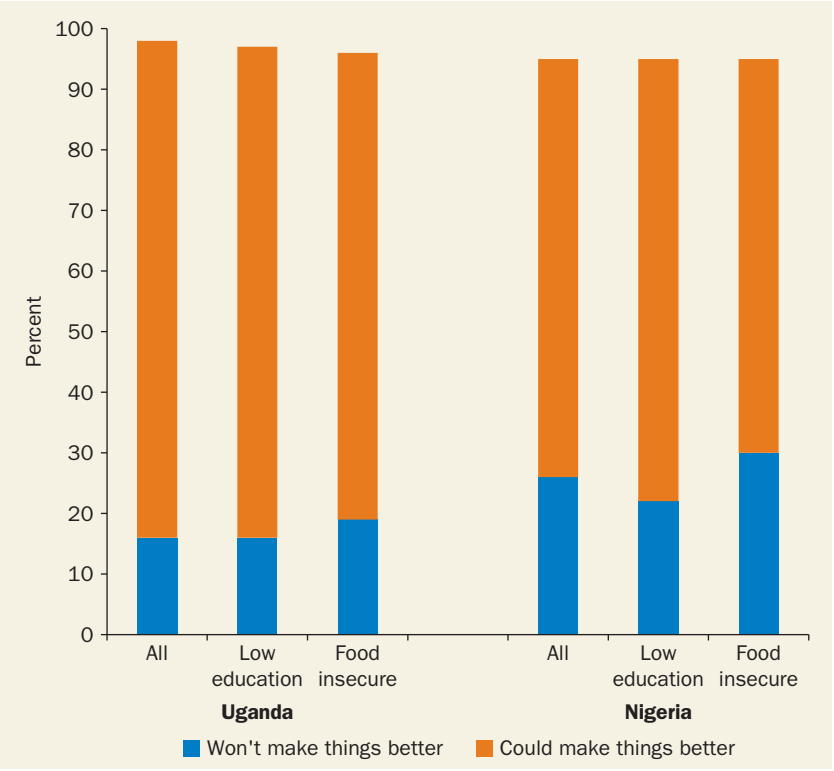
are likely to be poor, with low education, and reporting food insecurity, are just as likely as others to express the belief that the way they vote could make things better.

Figure 2.6 Citizens' views of the importance of elections



Source: World Values Survey (Wave 6 undertaken over 2010–14).
Note: EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = the Middle East and North Africa; OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SAR = South Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 2.7 Citizens' beliefs about whether the way they vote could make things better, Uganda (2011) and Nigeria (2007)



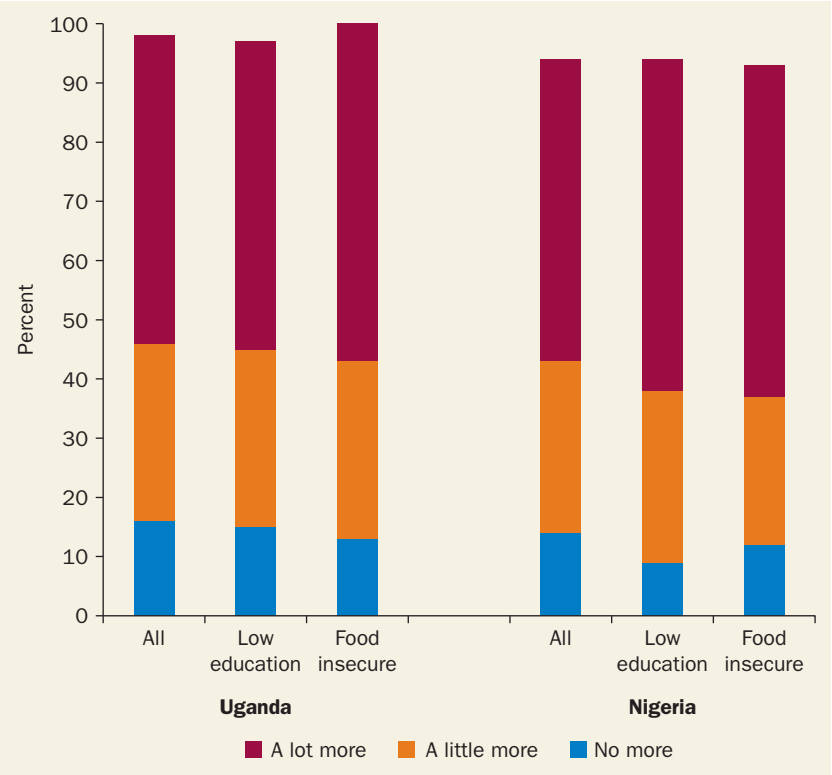
Source: Afrobarometer Round 4.5.2 (Uganda 2011), Round 3.5 (Nigeria 2007).
Note: The survey question is the following: "Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Statement 1: No matter how you vote, it won't make things any better in the future. Statement 2: The way you vote could make things better in the future."

Not only do Ugandan and Nigerian citizens report strong beliefs about the importance of voting and vote at high rates, but they also express interest in receiving information about elections. More than 80 percent of respondents said they wanted a little more or a lot more information ahead of the 2007 elections in Nigeria and the 2011 elections in Uganda (figure 2.8). Again, those with less education and food insecurity are just as interested in receiving more information as others.

Subnational electoral institutions

Evidence also indicates that political engagement is growing within countries, even in countries with low scores on Polity IV. This engagement is

Figure 2.8 How much more information do citizens want in order to decide how to vote, Uganda (2011) and Nigeria (2007)



Source: Afrobarometer Round 4.5.1 (Uganda 2011), Round 3.5 (Nigeria 2007).
Note: The survey question is the following: "In order to decide how to vote in the upcoming elections, how much more information would you like to have?"

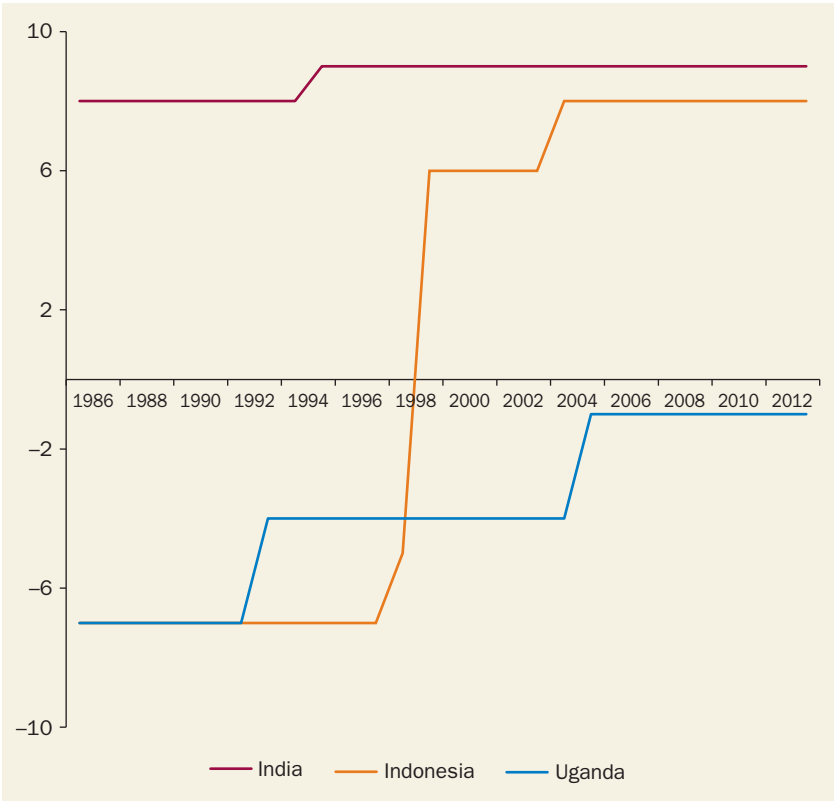
happening through the spread of elections at local levels of government, widespread citizen participation in these elections as voters and as contenders for leadership, and the rise of civil society organizations. Changes in political engagement at the local level could potentially translate into larger changes at the national level, with local levels serving as the training ground for citizens to develop their political beliefs and political behavioral norms (Giuliano and Nunn 2013). The local level can also serve to develop a supply of good leaders who have built reputations for responsible management of public resources (Myerson 2006, 2012).

This section provides case studies of the spread of local electoral competition in three different contexts—India, Indonesia, and Uganda—to illustrate the growth of political engagement within countries with different

national political institutions. During the past three decades, these three countries have had dissimilar trajectories in institutional reform and political change, as reflected in their respective Polity IV trends in figure 2.9. India has maintained functioning representative democratic institutions, reflected in its Polity score of 8 until 1995, and thereafter 9. Meanwhile, Indonesia represents a transitional case, having jumped from –7 to 8 in the time frame of seven years following the end of President Suharto's rule. Finally, Uganda has seen comparatively smaller changes in measures of regime authority, shifting upward from –7 to –1. Each of these country cases, therefore, illustrates a distinct regime at the national level—consistently strongly democratic (at least as measured on Polity IV), rapidly transitional, and slow institutional change out of weak democracy (again, as measured by Polity IV).

Despite such contrasting measures of institutional trends at the national level, political engagement at the subnational level has been growing in all

Figure 2.9 Polity IV trends in India, Indonesia, and Uganda, 1986–2012



Source: Data from Polity IV.

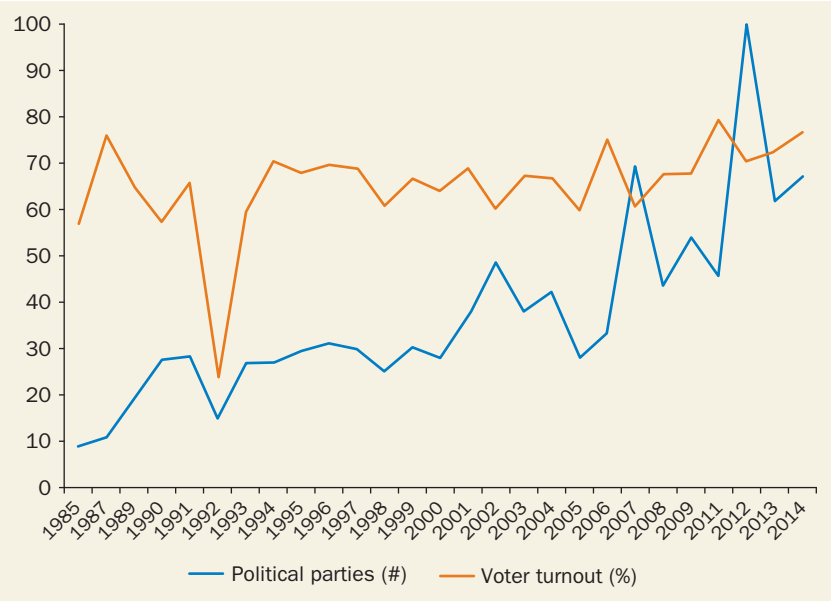
three countries. In Indonesia and Uganda, for example, space for political engagement has grown as the result of proliferation of new subnational political units. And India has seen a marked increase in contending political parties in state elections.

The case of India

Changes in political engagement within India appear to take the form of more citizens engaging as contenders for leadership rather than greater participation as voters. Figure 2.10 shows the rise of political parties in India that contest elections at the state level. This trend is directly linked to a fall in the number of political candidates who are registered as "independents," demonstrating increasing political organization of parties. Figure 2.10 also shows that voter turnout has been relatively stable over time.

At the same time, however, India exhibits substantial volatility in the vote shares accruing to different political parties. Electoral volatility

Figure 2.10 Number of contending political parties and voter turnout in Indian states, 1985–2014



Source: Election Commission of India (http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html).
Note: Number of parties and turnout are each averaged over the following 14 states of India: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

in India is orders of magnitude higher than in any other country that experiences regular and contested elections (Nooruddin and Chhibber 2008).

All together, the patterns for India, the largest and poorest democracy in the developing world, suggest vigorous political competition resulting from political engagement by citizens. Citizens contribute to competition for leadership in government by engaging as critical voters who shift their votes across multiple political parties and as contesting candidates.

The case of Indonesia

Indonesia's "big bang" decentralization in 2001 substantially increased the number of jurisdictions in which citizens can engage to select and sanction the leaders who manage those jurisdictions (table 2.1). The number of districts increased from 336 in 2001, to 477 in 2010 (Skoufias et al. 2014).

Table 2.1 Large number of jurisdictions for political engagement in Indonesia

National level	
People's Representative Council (DPR) – 560 seats	Regional Representative Council (DPD) – 132 seats
Provincial level	
Provincial Legislative Assembly (DPRD) – one in 33 provinces (35-100 members)	Head: Governor
District level (consists of 398 regencies and 98 municipalities)	
House of Representatives (20-50 members)	Head: Regent (*bupati*) and Mayor (*walikota*)
Subdistricts (6,093 *kedamatans*)	
Head: *Camat*, appointed by Regent or Mayor	
Administrative village	
Kelurahan (7,878 within municipalities) – head *lurah* appointed by subdistrict head	*Desa* (65,189 within regencies) – civilian head *kepla desa* directly elected by villagers every 6 years

Source: Data on number of jurisdictions from Fitrani, Hofman, and Kaiser (2005).

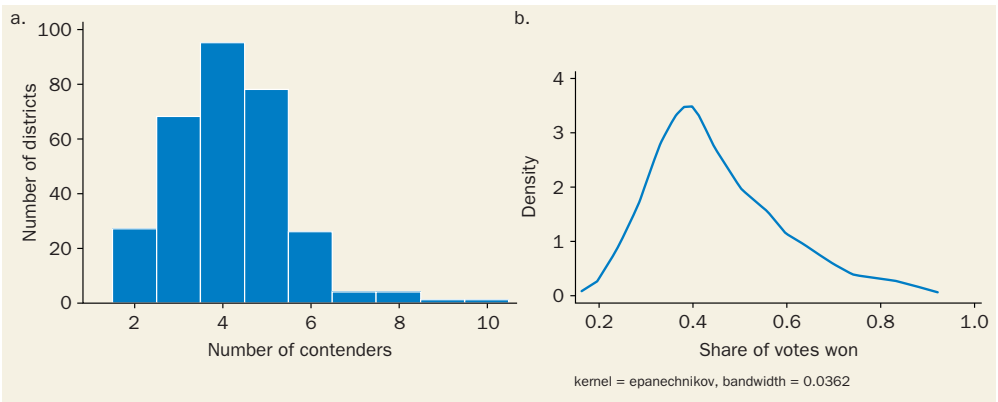
A significant element of decentralization was the introduction of regional autonomy and the proliferation of local governments at the district level, with the avowed intent of improving public service delivery and government effectiveness.

Beginning in 2001, local governments in Indonesia were able to lobby the central government to split their districts. Pierskalla and Sacks (2014) consider the underlying motivations behind this district proliferation. More important than efficiency in public goods provision, Pierskalla and Sacks (2014) argue that ethnic homogeneity is a chief reason for district growth. Beyond ethnic considerations, this study also indicates that local elites' political capacity to lobby for new districts is an important determinant of local government growth. These findings update research by Fitrani, Hofman, and Kaiser (2005), who consider a similar question in a more limited time period, 1999–2004. They identify three determinants of district growth in Indonesia: geographic considerations, ethnic clustering, and relative size of government.

The decentralization reforms in Indonesia included a provision requiring members of the local legislature to be elected by popular vote rather than be appointed. In 2005, parliamentary elections for district heads were replaced by direct elections, known as *pilkada*.[5]

Figure 2.11 panel a illustrates the striking fact that no district in the first local election was uncontested, and, on average, four candidates contested each district. Figure 2.11 panel b shows the distribution of the share of votes received by the winner. The modal winning vote share was

Figure 2.11 Number of candidates running and share of votes won by the winner, per district, in the first local election, Indonesia



Source: Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) (http://www.kpu.go.id/).

roughly 40 percent, indicating that elections were competitive with few overwhelming margins of victory.

The proliferation of local jurisdictions in which leaders can be elected is significant because it provides space for citizens to engage not only as voters but also as contenders for leadership. Competition at this level can serve as an incubator for candidates at the national level. For example, Indonesian President Joko Widodo served as mayor of Surakarta, a city of 520,000 in Central Java Province, and then as governor of Jakarta, a city of more than 8 million, before becoming president of the country. President Widodo's trajectory from the local to the national level reflects this broadening of the political arena.

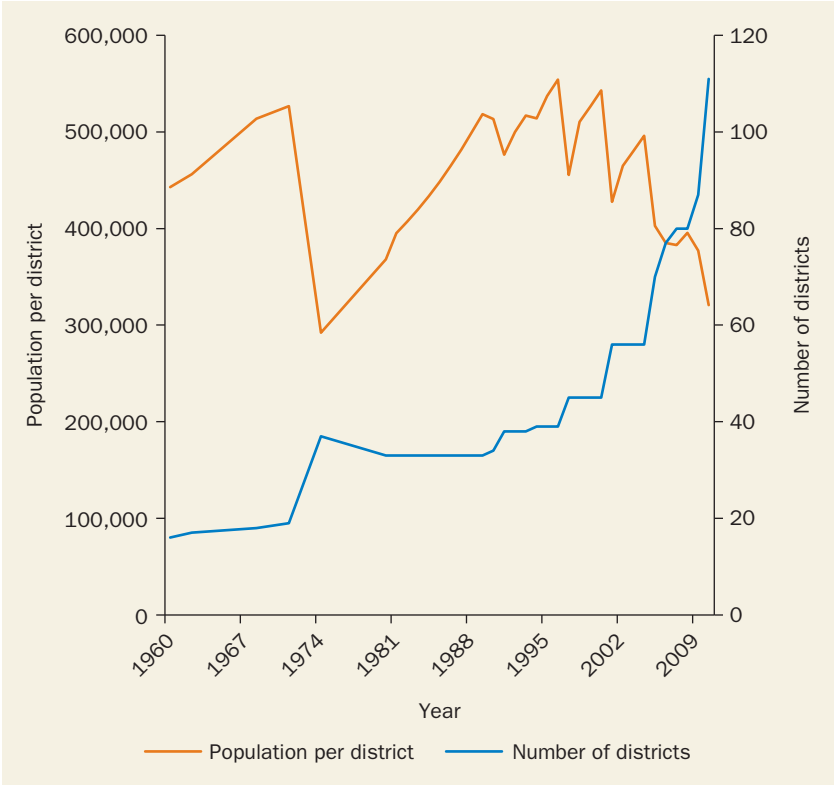
Competition is a feature of elections in Indonesia at all levels. Indonesia's 2014 legislative elections occurred on a strikingly large scale. Seats contested in the legislative elections, including the national, provincial, and district levels, numbered 19,699, for which there were 235,637 candidates or, an average, nearly 12 contestants per seat. Some 6,608 candidates competed for 560 seats in the lower house of the national assembly, again corresponding to roughly 12 contestants per seat (Rachman 2014).

The case of Uganda

In Uganda, the rise of the National Resistance Movement in the 1980s led to the implementation of decentralization reforms. Direct popular elections were mandated at all levels of local government, and the Local Government Act of 1997 increased the powers of local councils, such as power over the recruitment and firing of local civil servants (Green 2010). There are five tiers of local authority. The primary unit of local government is the district council, which contains within its boundaries between one and five second-tier county and municipal councils. These, in turn, contain third-tier subcounty and town councils, which are subdivided into fourth-tier parish councils. At the lowest, fifth-tier level of local government are village (rural) or ward (urban) councils. Districts are responsible for managing transfers from the central government and are able to impose taxes and legislate bylaws. Following decentralization reforms, the number of districts in Uganda increased from 39 in 1995, to 70 in 2005, to 112 in 2011 (figure 2.12).

As in Indonesia's 2014 legislative elections, Uganda's 2011 elections saw the country's largest number of electoral seats being contested:

Figure 2.12 District growth and average district population, Uganda, 1960–2009



Sources: Data on a number of districts are from the Electoral Commission of Uganda (http://www.ec.or.ug/). Population data are from the World Development Indicators.

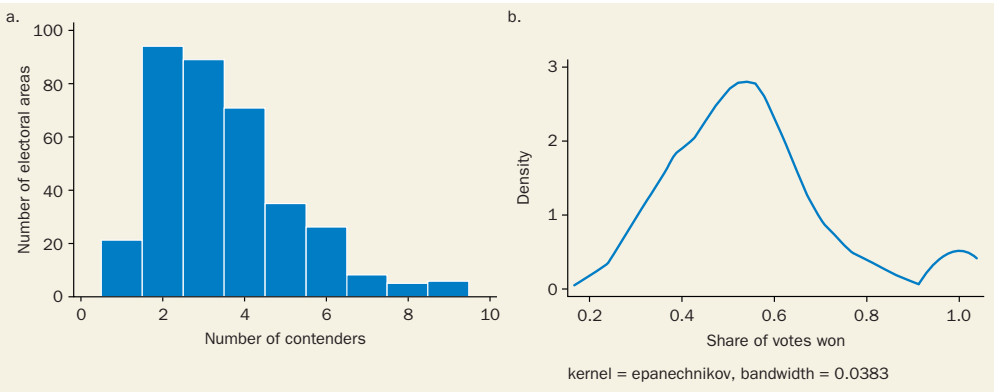
375 members of parliament; 112 district chairpersons and their 2,817 district councilors; 27 municipality or city division chairpersons and 3,586 councilors; and 1,327 subcounty, town, or municipal division chairpersons and 20,524 councilors (Uganda Electoral Commission). The number of electoral areas in Uganda increased markedly between 2001 and 2011. For example, table 2.2 shows that the number of district chairpersons doubled, while the number of directly elected district councilors increased nearly 40 percent. Between Uganda's 2006 and 2011 elections, an additional 14 counties and 9 municipalities were created, which became new parliamentary constituencies. Figure 2.13 shows that there was an average of 3.5 contenders for each position and only 21 district councilors ran uncontested, out of 355 positions. Meanwhile, the average share of votes won by the winning district councilor was 54 percent.

Table 2.2 Change in number of electoral areas, Uganda, 2001/02 to 2010/11

Category of electoral area	Number of electoral areas (2001/02)	Number of electoral areas (2010/11)	Percent change (2001 to 2011)
President	1	1	0
Parliamentary, directly elected	214	238	11
District chairpersons	56	112	100
District directly elected councilors	967	1,339	38
Municipality or city division mayors	18	27	50
Municipality or city division directly elected councilors	254	385	52
Subcounty, town, or municipal division chairpersons	956	1,321	38
Subcounty, town, or municipal division directly elected councilors	5,206	7,332	41
Parliamentary district women representatives	56	112	100
District women councilors	607	921	52
Municipality or city division women councilors	166	249	50
Subcounty, town, or municipal division women councilors	4,741	6,600	39

Source: Electoral Commission of Uganda (http://www.ec.or.ug/).

Figure 2.13 Number of candidates running for district councilor and share of votes received by the winner, Uganda, 2011



Source: Electoral Commission of Uganda (http://www.ec.or.ug/).

The creation of new local governments and rising competition for legislative positions raise questions about the causes behind the formation of new districts, which could influence the nature of electoral contestation in these new jurisdictions. The spread of local direct elections does not guarantee a commensurate increase in accountability or lowering of barriers to entry for new leaders. In fact, decentralization of political and administrative authority might increase capture of local government and raise barriers to entry if local interest groups collude. The net impact of local government proliferation on regional development and fragmentation is not evident (Mookherjee 2015).

Similar to findings in Indonesia, Grossman and Lewis (2014) show that counties in Uganda are more likely to secede and form a new district when they are underrepresented in district committees that oversee the allocation of intra-district resources. Moreover, in counties where the largest ethnic group differs from that of the district, the county is more likely to secede. From a national perspective, elevating a county to the level of a district is associated with greater political support in that county for the national ruling party. Green (2010) argues that as reforms have dried up national-level channels of patronage, new districts have provided alternate channels. For example, in the 2005 presidential election, the vote share in favor of the national ruling party in newly created districts was 74 percent in comparison with the national Ugandan average of 60 percent (Green 2010). These patterns in the data on district creation in Uganda are consistent with the theoretical arguments in Khemani (2015) about how creation of local political jurisdictions can enable leaders to maintain clientelist relationships of vote buying and patronage. While the motivation behind the spread of local electoral institutions might not be encouraging about the prospects of healthy political competition, nevertheless, these three case studies show that space has grown at the local level for citizens to engage in political processes both as voters and as contenders for leadership. This spread of electoral institutions at the local level provides a fertile context to apply the lessons distilled in the following chapters of the report on leveraging transparency to improve the quality of local political engagement.

Political engagement by civil society

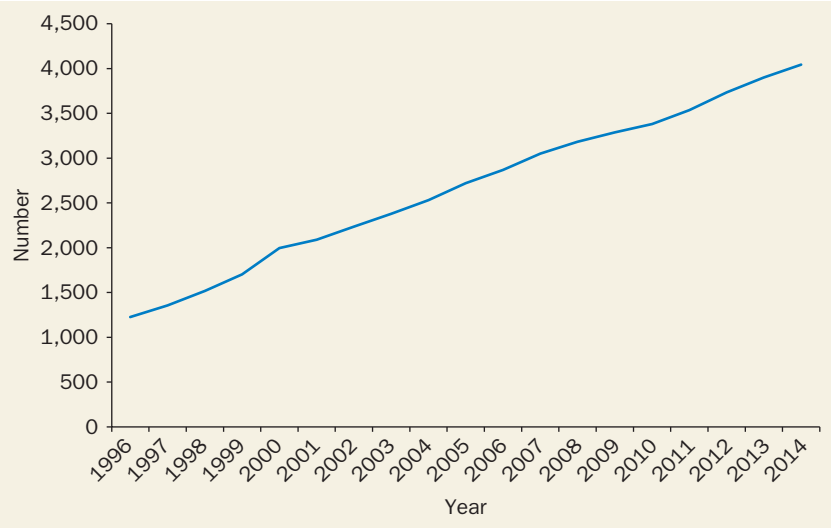
Political engagement happens not only through individual citizen's actions in elections alone, but also through the activities of organized groups in civil society across different national political systems. For example,

Ortiz et al. (2013) report that nonelectoral forms of political engagement such as public protests are growing over time. In the social accountability literature, political engagement by civil society groups outside of elections has been regarded as part of "social" accountability.[6] Civil society organizations carry out a diverse repertoire of activities that seek to pressure public officials through, for example, participatory monitoring and feedback, public complaint and grievance redress mechanisms, and participation in resource allocation decisions (Fox 2014; Malena, Forster, and Singh 2004).[7] Social accountability scholars have acknowledged, however, that there is little substantive distinction from political engagement, as defined in this report, when civil society activities are directed toward seeking accountability from leaders who wield power in government. McGee and Gaventa (2011, 8), for example, write, "The fact that these transparency and accountability initiatives are 'social' and 'citizen-led' rather than political or bureaucratic in nature should not eclipse the deeply political nature of the stakes." Claasen and Alpín-Lardiés state that social accountability "is about how citizens demand and enforce accountability from those in power" (2010, 3).

There are few sources of reliable data available to examine growth in citizen organizations. Part of the data gathering challenge lies in how citizen organizations are defined. An extensive literature in sociology makes a distinction between "civil society organizations" and "nongovernmental organizations" (CSOs and NGOs), with NGOs being typically associated with foreign-aid financed delivery of services and development programs (Lewis and Kanji 2007; Mercer 2002; Pearce 2000). While NGOs may be engaged first and foremost for the purpose of service delivery, under contract with international donors and government ministries, they can be a latent force for political engagement should they choose to extend their organizational capabilities to making demands upon and sanction leaders in government.

The United Nations (UN) provides data on the number of organizations that are registered with their national governments as NGOs, and as having an official headquarters, a democratically adopted constitution, and a transparent accounting system. These organizations have official consultative status with the UN. The UN data show a steady rise of these NGOs with consultative status, from 1,226 in 1996, to 4,045 in 2014 (figure 2.14). The numbers appear to be conservative compared with other estimates of the numbers of CSOs operating in countries, but without official status with the UN. According to data on CSOs compiled by the Quality of Government (QOG) initiative at the University of Gothenburg, Africa has 5,811, Latin America 3,504, South Asia 2,281, and East Asia

Figure 2.14 Growth in citizen organizations, 1996–2014



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, csonet.org.

1,516 CSOs, as of 2014.[8] However, the QOG data are only available for a cross-section of countries rather than over time.

Using a broader definition of citizen organization, the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society has gathered data on nonprofit NGOs. In their estimates, using data for 22 countries, the NGO sector is worth $1.1 trillion and employs more than 19 million people (Salamon et al. 1999). In other words, if the nonprofit sector in these countries were a separate national economy, it would be the eighth largest economy in the world, ahead of Brazil, the Russian Federation, Canada, and Spain. In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 79,000 national NGOs are in operation and are growing at a rate of 12 percent annually. There are approximately 54,000 national NGOs in South Asia and 68,000 in the Middle East and North Africa (both growing at 8 percent annually).[9]

Scholarship in sociology has highlighted the role of civil society in "deepening democracy" and influencing politics (Fox 1994; Heller 2009). First, it is argued that, "*civil society can facilitate the mobilization of under-represented groups, who despite enjoying formal rights of citizenship, cannot process their claims through institutionalized channels. New collective actors in civil society can help to break through the self-reinforcing equilibrium of representative democracy in which those who have privilege (in terms of formal rights or heightened capacity to use those rights) can use politics to*

reinforce that privilege" (Baiocchi, Heller, and Kunrath Silva 2011, 142). Second, the literature argues that a vibrant civil society can generate better societal preferences, through collectively thinking about issues, to reach new understandings of what society should value. Thus, they argue that associations are crucial complements to political parties because they are potentially more responsive to the inherent diversity of societal interests (Fox 1994). As defined in Baiocchi, Heller, and Kunrath Silva (2011, 20), "*in its ideal typical democratic incarnation, civil society is characterized by voluntary forms of association that are constituted by and protective of communicative power and seek to exert their influence by specifically engaging with and seeking support in the public sphere.*"[10] However, some of the available evidence, reviewed in chapter 5, suggests that in practice, civil society can also be captured by political and elite interests (Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014; Satyanath, Voigtlaender, and Voth 2013).

Civil society organizations around the world are undertaking actions to directly influence political engagement through electoral institutions. In Nigeria, Action Aid campaigned against political violence in 12 villages before the 2007 elections, effectively increasing voter turnout and reducing the incidence of electoral violence. Action Aid's country office in Nigeria partnered with other state-level local CSOs, carrying out town meetings and public theaters, and distributing informational posters to reduce politicians' ability to intimidate voters (Collier and Vicente 2013).

Similarly, in Mozambique, a national CSO consortium, *Observatorio Eleitoral*, together with a free newspaper company, @Verdade, provided citizens with similar information through a newspaper, mobile phones, and leaflets, and established a mobile phone hotline for reporting problems (Aker, Collier, and Vicente 2013). In Uganda, the Africa Leadership Institute, a Kampala-based CSO, partnered with Columbia and Stanford universities to compile information about the legislative performance of political leaders. A parliamentary scorecard was developed to influence how citizens assess the performance of members of parliament (Humphreys and Weinstein 2012). In the Philippines, the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting distributed information to voters about the existence of a major spending program and the mayor's promises just ahead of the 2013 mayoral elections (Cruz, Keefer, and Labonne 2015).

CSOs have also organized themselves into political parties to contest elections on the basis of platforms of good governance. India's Aam Aadmi Party, which won the Delhi state elections by a landslide, was born out of an anticorruption movement in 2011. Registered only in late 2012, the

party was created by a group of civil society leaders who felt that political formation was needed to reinforce their ideas of fighting corruption (Palshikar 2013). The Middle East similarly witnessed a rise of several Islamist parties such as the Justice and Development Party in Turkey, Hamas in Gaza, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab Republic of Egypt, all of which have organized as civil society actors under conditions of political repression. Cammett and Luong (2014) argue that it is primarily their "reputation for good governance" that wins them political support rather than popular explanations such as social service provision, organizational capacity, or ideological hegemony.

In sum, the trends discussed in this chapter suggest that political engagement by citizens, as voters, as candidates for public office, and through civil society groups, is gaining strength around the world, across a variety of institutional contexts. The next chapter presents evidence of trends in transparency that goes together with political engagement in large parts of the world.

Notes

1. Details about the Polity IV measures are available at their website: http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html. These measures, along with another from Freedom House (discussed in this chapter), are widely used in the economics research literature on the role of political institutions in economic development. Acemoglu et al. (2014) and Besley and Kudamatsu (2008) are important examples and provide a review of how measures of democracy compiled by Polity IV and Freedom House are used as such in research.
2. Not all countries are included in each year of the Polity IV index. There were 144 countries in 1980, 147 in 1990, 163 in 2000, and 167 in 2013. These figures include countries with scores of –66, –77, or –88.
3. Countries' Freedom House status (free, partially free, or not free) is the average of scores for two indicators: political rights, including measures of electoral processes, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government; and civil liberties, including measures of freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, personal autonomy, and individual rights.
4. These are question numbers V228A–I in Wave 6 of the World Values Survey.
5. Direct elections were repealed in September 2014, in a bill passed in the final days of the outgoing Indonesian Parliament, but were reinstituted in early 2015.

6. The following discussion on the rise of civil society organizations and their role in political engagement draws on background research prepared by Thapa (2012).
7. The social accountability literature makes the point that the "social" mechanisms of exacting accountability differ from (1) political mechanisms (for example, constitutional constraints, separation of powers, the legislature, and legislative investigative commissions); (2) fiscal mechanisms (for example, formal systems of auditing and financial accounting); (3) administrative mechanisms (for example, hierarchical reporting, norms of public sector probity, public service codes of conduct, rules and procedures regarding transparency, and public oversight); and (4) legal mechanisms (for example, corruption control agencies, ombudsmen, and the judiciary), in that it takes place through direct citizen engagement with state bureaucrats (McNeil and Malena 2010).
8. For more information, see http://www.qog.pol.gu.se.
9. These data were obtained from the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society.
10. For Habermas (1984), who coined the term, it is in the *public sphere* that citizens argue and debate common problems keeping in mind the goals of collective welfare.

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