AFRO BAROMETER
LET THE PEOPLE HAVE A SAY

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Abstract

Five rounds of Afrobarometer surveys in up to 35 African countries show that ordinary African citizens tend to reach the same conclusions about the extent of democracy in their country as international expert rating systems. But the 2013 survey in Ethiopia produces a puzzling anomaly: While no expert assessment comes close to calling Ethiopia a democracy, 81% of Ethiopians consider their country either a complete democracy or a democracy with only minor problems. The best explanation for this anomaly is Ethiopians' highly positive assessment of political and economic developments in their country. However, these opinions are marked by a syndrome of "uncritical citizenship" and a distinctively instrumental and paternalistic understanding of "democracy." Other contributing factors include the country's low level of development, especially with respect to education and communications; its long-standing one-party dominance and low levels of political freedom; and significant political fear and suspicion of the interview environment. Because of the idiosyncratic way in which Ethiopians understand democracy, extreme caution must be exercised in attempting to compare any responses to democracy questions from Ethiopia with those from other African countries. Analysts are advised to use the Ethiopia data set only in a stand-alone setting or to limit their comparative analysis to items that do not use the "d-word."

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Executive summary

The results of five rounds of Afrobarometer surveys in up to 35 African countries demonstrate clearly that ordinary African citizens tend to reach the same conclusions about the extent of democracy in their country as international expert rating systems devised by political scientists. Yet the 2013 Afrobarometer survey in Ethiopia produces a puzzling anomaly. While no expert assessment comes close to calling Ethiopia a democracy, 81% of Ethiopian respondents told Afrobarometer interviewers that the country was either a complete democracy or a democracy with only minor problems. This paper seeks to solve this puzzle.

The best explanation of why Ethiopians think their country is a democracy is their very positive assessment of political and economic developments. Of respondents who offered an opinion, the overwhelming balance said that the most recent election was free and fair, that the executive respects the Constitution and Legislature, and that very few officials are corrupt. They also said the country was headed in the right direction, saw the economy improving, and considered that the government had managed the economy well. Ethiopians who held these opinions were likely to say the country is democratic.

However, we have located a syndrome of "uncritical citizenship" that affects the way Ethiopians form these opinions. That is, Ethiopians were consistently among the most likely respondents across Afrobarometer surveys in 35 countries to say they "don't know" – sometimes one-third or more of respondents said this – when asked to evaluate economic and political performance. And among those who did offer substantive responses, Ethiopians ranked as the least likely people to offer explicitly critical replies.

An important part of the explanation of Ethiopians' uncritical assessments of the democratic character and performance of the regime is their distinctive understanding of the concept "democracy." To begin with, Ethiopians attach a very positive connotation to the word "democracy." Yet they display a poor grasp of what the concept actually entails. Many are willing to accept clearly undemocratic alternative regime types. While they understand democracy as a system of elected government, they have little appreciation of the importance of multi-party competition or the roles played by rights, laws, courts, legislatures, opposition parties, or the news media in restraining government and limiting the role of the executive.

In addition, Ethiopians define democracy more instrumentally (that is, in terms of the provision of material welfare or effective governance) than intrinsically (that is, as the protection of individual freedoms or the observance of political procedures such as competitive elections and institutional checks and balances). By wide margins, Ethiopians also see political authority in paternalistic terms (as a "parent" rather than an "employee") and prefer a government that "gets things done" to one that follows proper procedures. All of these (mis)understandings of democracy lead Ethiopians to overrate – by a wide margin – the extent and quality of democracy in their own country.

Throughout this report, we also focus on the impact of the country's extremely low level of development and modernization, especially with respect to education and communications. Ethiopia has one of the highest proportions of rural-based citizens amongst the 35 countries surveyed during Afrobarometer Round 5 (2011/2013). The Ethiopian electorate is also characterized by the lowest level of formal education amongst Afrobarometer countries, the lowest level of news media use, and one of the lowest levels of political discussion. In particular, the penetration of news media in rural Ethiopia is extremely limited. An astonishingly low 2% of rural dwellers read newspapers on at least a weekly basis, and only 3% of rural residents own a television.

Finally, we have probed the possibility that, given the country's long-standing one-party dominance and low levels of political freedom, at least some survey respondents censored themselves and did not reveal their true evaluations and preferences. We located significant levels of political fear, as indicated by perceived insecurity in the ability to join associations, to vote without pressure, and particularly to speak freely about politics. Significant minorities also worried about electoral intimidation and violence. We also found that Ethiopians exhibit

a high degree of political suspicion of the survey environment. They expressed the highest levels of suspicion of the neutrality of Afrobarometer fieldworkers in Africa: Two-thirds of respondents told interviewers that they thought they were really from some part of the Ethiopian state. In turn, Afrobarometer interviewers observed relatively high proportions of respondents who were ill at ease in the course of the interview.

While neither ignorance (with the exception of news media use) nor political suspicion has a direct impact on Ethiopians' anomalous assessment of the quality of democracy, they both play important indirect roles. The small proportion of respondents who are well educated, who use the news media frequently, and who engage in frequent political discussion were much more likely to offer negative evaluations, and were also far more likely to offer opinions about political performance. These factors are also strongly connected to the inability to answer questions about democratic norms that do not actually use the word "democracy." In turn, the vast majority of Ethiopians who infrequently or never use news media offered more rose-coloured assessments of the country's democracy than those who use news media frequently.

Perhaps more importantly, we found that respondent trust in the fieldworker and comfort with the survey interview environment play key roles and interact with levels of political fear. Respondents who were both fearful of political intimidation and suspicious of the interview environment were more likely to offer positive views of economic and political governance and the performance of leaders and institutions, as well as more likely to decline to answer these questions.

Going beyond the survey results, this paper interprets the tendency of Ethiopians to overrate the extent and quality of their country's democracy as a consequence of an institutional legacy of feudal monarchy and Leninist one-party rule. Never having experienced an interlude of democracy, citizens have instead imbibed a top-down ideology of guardianship by which a paternalistic elite promises to provide material welfare in lieu of guarantees of political liberty. In other words, Ethiopians do not only have limited knowledge about what democracy means; rather, the concept has been redefined for them. And by buying into the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front's definition of "revolutionary democracy," Ethiopians remain subjects rather than citizens.

Finally, because of the idiosyncratic way in which Ethiopians apparently understand democracy, extreme caution must be exercised in attempting to compare any responses to "d-word" (i.e. democracy) questions from Ethiopia with those from other African countries. Indeed, because of the evident cross-country incomparability of this set of responses, Afrobarometer has refrained from integrating data from Ethiopia into the merged Afrobarometer Round 5 data set. Analysts who wish to explore public opinion in Ethiopia are strongly cautioned against taking cross-national comparisons between Ethiopia and other countries at face value, especially on items that use the "d-word." In general, analysts are advised to use the Ethiopia data set only in a stand-alone setting or to limit their comparative analysis to items that do not use the "d-word."

African views of democracy and the Ethiopian anomaly

Previous analyses of public opinion data collected by Afrobarometer have demonstrated that Africans are good judges of the quality of democracy in their country (Bratton et al., 2005; Bratton & Houessou, 2014). That is, ordinary citizens across the continent tend to reach the same conclusions about the extent of democracy in their own country as do various international expert rating systems devised by political scientists. In those countries that experts rate as democracies, such as Mauritius or Botswana, large proportions of people say the country is a full democracy. But where scholars find abundant evidence of repression and violations of human rights, survey respondents tend to say the country is either not a democracy or one of low quality.

But while no expert assessment comes close to calling Ethiopia a democracy, 81% of Ethiopian respondents told Afrobarometer interviewers in a 2013 survey that their country was

either a full democracy or one with minor problems. They also tended to provide effusive evaluations of many other parts of their political system. In no other African country is the divergence between international expert and local mass estimates greater. Thus, Ethiopians stand out from other Africans by insisting – contra international opinion – that they live in a democracy. This paper seeks to understand this anomalous finding by testing whether Ethiopians' unexpected views of democracy and governance are due to fear, ignorance, or a shared (mis)understanding of democracy.

Context

Ethiopia presents the analyst with a distinctive history of autocracy as well as extremely low levels of socioeconomic development. Ethiopians have a long and unique experience with autocratic government. After 2,000 years of monarchic rule, the last sovereign, Emperor Haile Selassie I, was overthrown in 1974, after 44 years on the throne. However, the popular uprising against Selassie was followed by a repressive military dictatorship, marked by a devastating civil war, that lasted for 17 years under the Marxist Derg of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Mengistu was in turn ousted by a coalition of ethnically based rebel groups that, as the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), formed a transitional government in May 1991.[1]

Ethiopians were first exposed to democracy in 1994 when a new ethnically based federal constitution provided for multiparty elections and a parliamentary system at the national level, with a division of powers between the central and regional governments. In almost all other instances of transitions away from autocratic rule in Africa since 1989, the society in question had some prior experience with multiparty elections and representative government in the early post-independence period, or even with limited referenda and elected legislative councils in the late colonial period. By contrast, a direct transition from monarchy to Marxist-Leninist one-party rule precluded Ethiopians from any experience with, or opportunity to learn about, democracy.

Moreover, EPRDF ideologists have promoted an official doctrine of "revolutionary democracy" ("*abyotawi* democracy" in the Amharic language). This doctrine redefines democracy to emphasize mass participation and group consensus while minimizing the importance of individual freedom and choice. Deriving from the experience of armed struggle, the official version of democracy rejects most core liberal principles such as free speech, open elections, and the rule of law. Instead, the operating principle is democratic centralism, whereby decisions made at higher levels of a vanguard party are transmitted downward to disciplined mass organizations. As such, to an extent possibly exceeded in any other African country, Ethiopian citizens are indoctrinated in an interpretation of democracy that is "the exact opposite of liberalism. … The doctrine remains powerful as a fighting tool to exclude internal and external 'enemies' " (Bach, 2011, p. 657; see also Tronvoll, 2009). Indeed, by essentially denying the possibility of alternation of rulers by election, the official ideology of "revolutionary democracy" helps to underwrite the resilience of authoritarian rule.

While the country has now held five multiparty elections, the ruling EPRDF has become increasingly dominant. Since the first election in May 1995, which made Meles Zenawi prime minister, the *de facto* one-party regime has won four successive election victories. Opposition parties managed to secure 105 of 547 House of Peoples' Representatives seats in the 2005 federal election, but they called the integrity of the vote into question and rejected the results. Post-election protests degenerated into violence and a major government crackdown in which civilians were killed and opposition leaders, human rights activists, and journalists were imprisoned on treason charges. In 2010, the opposition was almost eliminated electorally, winning only one constituency and a single legislative seat. The EPRDF's electoral

[1] The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is a coalition of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM).

dominance is facilitated by the well-known disproportionality of popular votes to seats created by the country's first-past-the-post electoral system (Ishiyama, 2009). Most recently, in 2015, the EPRDF and its coalition allies managed to consolidate their monopolistic hold over representative institutions at the federal center by sweeping each and every parliamentary seat, which turned an already compliant legislature into a moribund one.

The well-organized ruling party has captured other institutions of the state as well. The EPRDF relies on extensive control of the public bureaucracy to distribute patronage resources to loyal followers. The party-state network extends from federal to regional to *wereda* (district) and *kebelle* (lowest administrative unit) levels. Through this network, party appointees mobilize rural voters and "monitor and control local communities" (International Crisis Group, 2009).A community surveillance regime known as the "5:1 system" gathers information on the day-to-day activities of households and individuals (Human Rights Watch, 2014 and 2010), a practice that "has contributed to a climate of mutual distrust (especially) in central parts of the country" (International Crisis Group, 2009, p. 19).

A largely dysfunctional civil society has been crippled by draconian legislation enacted in 2009 that has forced a number of organisations working on issues of human rights, governance, and democracy to close or curtail their activities. Political dominance is also supported by state control of most television and radio stations and state ownership of most newspapers. Private news media are nascent and confined mostly to print media, with FM radio stations in a handful of urban areas. Yet even private media self-censor their coverage of politically sensitive issues for fear of facing prosecution for defamation, excessive fines, and even closure (Ross, 2010).

Not only are most news media outlets controlled by the state, they also have limited reach. According to the Welfare Monitoring Survey in 2011, just 38% of households owned a radio, 10% a television, and 25% a mobile phone (Central Statistical Agency, 2011). This underlines another important characteristic of Ethiopian politics: extremely low levels of development and modernization, particularly in the areas of communications infrastructure and education.

Political discourse is dominated by the idea of the "developmental state," which, as defined by the incumbent party, is a system that requires the state to play a substantial role in the economy and mobilize the population toward a single overriding objective: the eradication of poverty. Indeed, under the EPRDF, Ethiopia has registered consistent and rapid economic growth, averaging between 7% and 8% gross domestic product growth per annum for the past 10 years.[2]

Recent assessments by the International Monetary Fund (2012, pp. 16-17; 2013, pp. 4-23) called this growth "robust," "pro-poor," and "inclusive." The government has made massive investments in infrastructure and social services such as health care and education. As a result, the country was poised to meet two of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals for 2015 in education and health. Child and maternal mortality rates have been reduced by nearly one-third by mobilizing 35,000 health workers in rural areas. Ethiopia has achieved a gross primary school enrolment rate of 95% (World Bank, 2013), and the literacy rate has increased to 46.9% in the population aged 10 years and older (Central Statistical Agency, 2011). According to the World Bank, the country's economic growth has lifted 2.5 million people out of poverty and reduced the poverty rate from 39% in 2005 to 30% in 2011 (World Bank, 2012). All of this has allowed the ruling party to focus attention on economic performance rather than civil and political issues.

In sum, Ethiopians are ruled by a former rebel movement that espouses a notion of "revolutionary democracy" based on top-down principles of democratic centralism. It has won a series of elections, several of them disputed, and is accused of high levels of repression of news media. At the same time, the EPRDF party-state has managed to achieve rapid advances in infrastructure, education, and poverty reduction.

[2] Estimates from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Economic Reform).

The anomaly: Ethiopians' assessments of democracy

It was against this backdrop that Afrobarometer, as part of a major expansion in country coverage across the African continent during Round 5 (2011-2013), carried out its first survey in Ethiopia in August 2013.[3] We begin by focusing on responses to a signature Afrobarometer question that asks respondents, "In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today?" Respondents could answer that it is "a full democracy," "a democracy, but with minor problems," "a democracy with major problems," or "not a democracy" (in addition to the standard "don't know/don't understand the question" option). Given the political history sketched out above, the responses were surprising. Four in 10 respondents (42%) answered that Ethiopia was an unblemished "full democracy." This response outpaced every other society among the 35 Round 5 country surveys. An additional 39% responded that it was a "democracy, but with minor problems" (Table 1). The normal Afrobarometer practice is to combine these responses as a broad indicator of the public sense that the country meets basic standards of democracy. If we follow this practice in Ethiopia, 81% indicate that they think the country is a full, or mostly democratic; again, this was the highest result recorded in 35 Round 5 surveys (Figure 1).

Table 1: Perceived extent of democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	%
A full democracy	42
A democracy, but with minor problems	39
A democracy with major problems	6
Not a democracy	2
Don't know	9
Don't understand question/democracy)	1

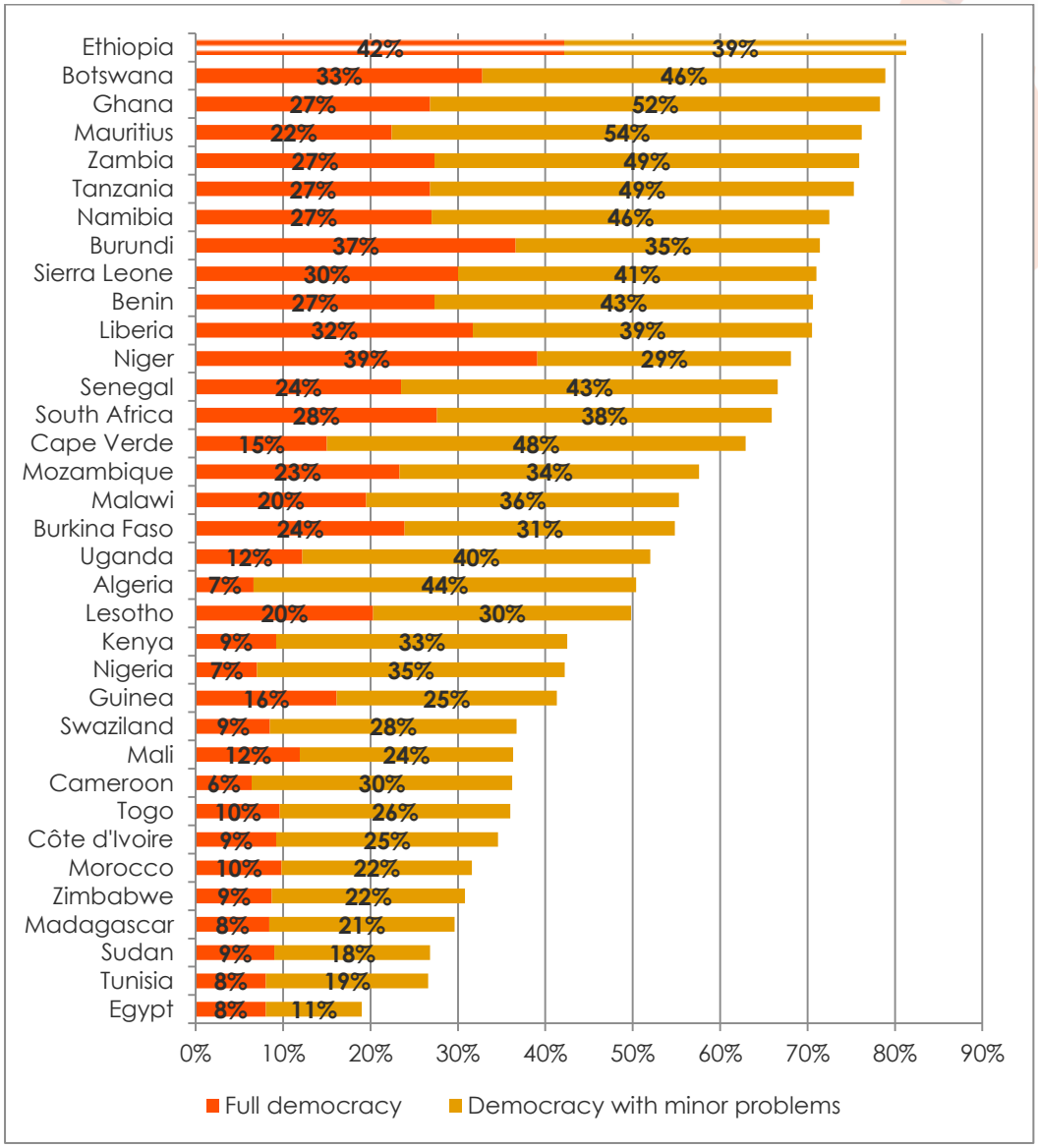
Respondents were asked: *How much of a democracy is Ethiopia today?*

The perception of the unblemished democratic quality of Ethiopia's government is far higher in the countryside (46% of rural respondents say the country is "a full democracy") than in the cities (27%). This is important, since almost eight in 10 Ethiopians live in the countryside (79%). Only Uganda (86%), Burundi (83%), and Malawi (81%) have larger proportions of their adult populations residing in rural areas. This perception is also far higher among respondents who said they "feel close" to the ruling party (46% said "a full democracy") than among those who supported an opposition party (33%). Yet only 31% said they "feel close" to any political party, the lowest level among all continental sub-Saharan countries. Moreover, the lion's share of these identifiers said they feel close to the ruling EPRDF (27%), leaving just 4% willing to openly affiliate with any opposition party.

Yet Ethiopians do not simply label any regime democratic; there is evidence that they discriminate levels of democracy across differing regimes. In response to a differently framed set of questions, the median Ethiopian gave the current government a score of 8 on a scale of 0 (""completely undemocratic") to 10 ("completely democratic"), corroborating the effusive responses discussed earlier regarding the quality of the country's current democracy. But when asked about the level of democracy 10 years previous, in 2003, when the EPRDF was also the ruling party, the median Ethiopian gave a score of just 5. Moreover, they provided extremely critical views of the Derg regime (Mengistu's military government), for which the median score was 1 (Table 2).

[3] Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples. The Afrobarometer team in Ethiopia, led by the Survey Research Unit at ABCON Plc Consulting House, interviewed 2,400 adult Ethiopians in August 2013. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level.

Figure 1: Perceived extent of democracy | 35 countries | 2011/2013



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today?*

Table 2: Ratings of democracy across differing political regimes, 10-point scale | Ethiopia | 2013

	Previous non-democratic regime	Government of 10 years ago	Government today	Government in 10 years' time
0 to 1	53%	6%	2%	1%
2 to 4	9%	20%	5%	1%
5	4%	18%	15%	1%
6 to 8	1%	21%	34%	8%
9 to 10	2%	9%	29%	72%
Don't know	32%	26%	16%	18%
Mean	1.0	5.3	7.4	9.5
Median	0	5	8	10.0

Respondents were asked: *On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means completely undemocratic and 10 means completely democratic, where would you place each of the following, or haven't heard enough to say? ("Don't know" responses were excluded when calculating means.)*

Returning to the current political regime, a separate question, widely used around the world by comparative survey research projects, found that 39% proclaimed themselves to be "very satisfied" with "the way democracy works" in Ethiopia – again the highest positive response recorded across all 35 African countries (not shown). In total, 81% were either "fairly" or "very satisfied" (Table 3). As with the extent of democracy, rural Ethiopians are far more satisfied (42% say "very satisfied") than urban dwellers (28%).

Table 3: Satisfaction with democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	%
Very satisfied	39
Fairly satisfied	42
Not very satisfied	6
Not at all satisfied	4
Don't know	9

Respondents were asked: *Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Ethiopia?*

Afrobarometer asks these questions on the extent of democracy and satisfaction with democracy because we believe that citizens' evaluations of the supply of democracy are likely to be more relevant to actual political developments within the country than the expert ratings produced by organisations such as Polity, Freedom House, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, World Bank, and Bertelsmann Foundation (Mattes & Bratton, 2007). Moreover, in the words of John Stuart Mill, citizens may be more likely than experts, especially those at a distance, to know when and where the "democratic shoe pinches." That is, they may be more likely to observe political practices at grass-roots levels that are simply beyond the purview of political scientists. Any divergences between expert and mass evaluations may suggest that citizens are privy to political phenomena missed or under-weighted by expert judgments.[4]

At the same time, we have found over the years that ordinary Africans tend, broadly, to reach the very same conclusions as the experts about the levels of democracy in surveyed countries. Where experts rank a country high on their scales as a full democracy, large proportions of Afrobarometer respondents also do so. Likewise, where few survey respondents say countries are democracies, experts tend to rate them as only partial democracies, or autocracies.

Ethiopia, however, is different. In contrast to the extremely positive assessments provided by ordinary Ethiopians, expert rating organisations come to very different conclusions. In its 2013 survey, for example, Freedom House gave Ethiopia scores of 6 for civil liberties and 6 for political freedom (on a scale that runs from 1 to 7, 7 being the worst), which gives it an overall freedom status of "not free." In 2013, Polity scored Ethiopia at -2.5 on an autocracy/democracy scale that runs from -10 to +10, categorizing it as a "closed anocracy."According to political scientist Tatu Vanhanen, who measures democracy as a combination of voter turnout (participation) and the combined vote share won by opposition parties (contestation), Ethiopia is not a democracy, receiving a combined index score of 3 (with 5 being the cut-off point for democracy on a scale of 0 to 50). Ethiopia obtains similarly low scores on the relevant dimensions of the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators measure of Voice and Accountability (which places it at the 12th percentile across more than 200 countries), as well as from the Mo Ibrahim Index of African

[4] None of this is to suggest that we should take the position of C.B. MacPherson (1966), who argued in the years following decolonization and at the height of the Cold War that democracy means different things to different people, and that First World (bourgeois democracy), Second World (people's democracy), and Third World (developmental democracy) countries were simply differently democratic. We reject this as a relativistic approach.

Governance (36.7 out of 100 on its Scale of Participation and Human Rights, putting it at 42nd out of 52 African countries). Thus, even though these organisations and analysts proceed from significantly different definitions of what democracy is, and use very different types of data (Bernhagen, 2009; Norris, 2008), none of them come close to rating Ethiopia as a functioning democracy.

As we can see in Figure 2, Ethiopia is the only country, among those surveyed by Afrobarometer between 2011 and 2013, in which we see such a sharp divergence between mass and expert assessment. As illustrated in the four panels, whether one correlates mass assessments of the extent of democracy with Freedom House or any of the other expert ratings, Ethiopia is a distant outlier. To be sure, there are other instances of national publics providing significantly more positive scores of the extent of democracy than the expert ratings would warrant, such as Burundians (compared to the Freedom House, World Bank, and IIAG scores) and Tanzanians (compared to the Polity scores). However, Ethiopia is a consistent and far more distant outlier.

Explaining Ethiopia's views of democracy

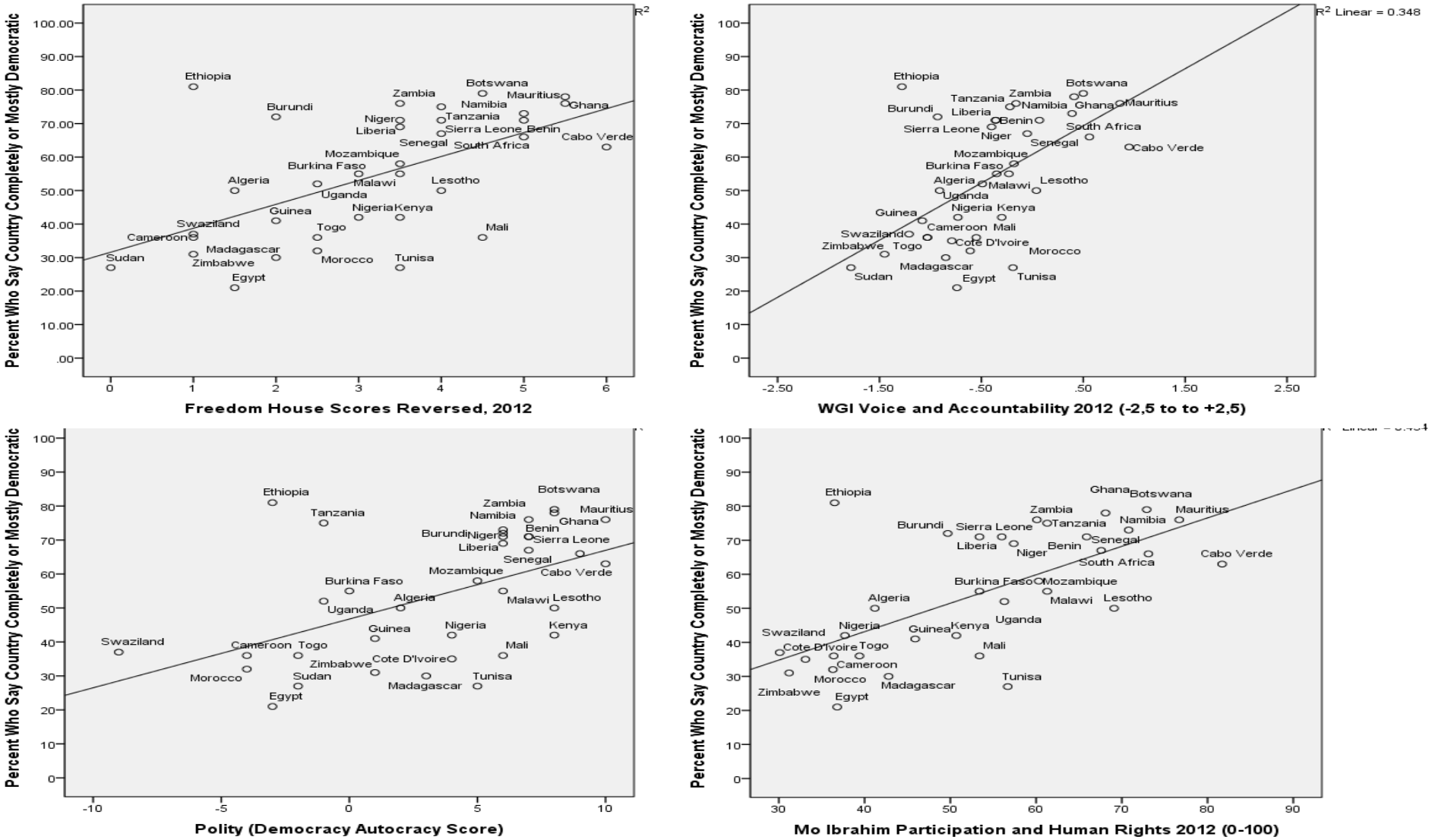
Why are Ethiopians' assessments of democracy such an anomaly in terms of how they correlate with expert ratings? At least four possible explanations present themselves. One answer, based in rational choice theory, would assume that Ethiopians' verdict on the state of their democracy must flow logically from their *positive evaluations of the economic and political performance of government*. In other words, people would not tell pollsters that the country is democratic if they did not feel that the current government responded to their preferences and interests. It would take note of the fact, for example, that the Ethiopian government has recently taken important strides in reducing illiteracy and poverty.

A second possible answer would point to levels of state control of the news media, as well as low levels of news media use and formal education amongst the electorate, and argue that ordinary Ethiopians simply lack sufficient access to independent information about political and economic conditions and trends in their country to offer valid opinions. *Ignorance* of basic facts about leaders and policies may mean that Ethiopians are unable to develop the critical skills with which people can identify flaws or deficiencies in the political process. When combined with widely shared cultural norms of acquiescence and acceptance, a paternalist view of political authority may lead to a type of uncritical citizenship.

A third explanation of Ethiopians' survey responses would focus on *fear* and *suspicion*. Given levels of news media censorship and community surveillance, what Ethiopians tell survey fieldworkers may vary from elite judgements simply because respondents feel constrained against giving their real opinions. Or they may distrust the confidentiality of the survey or the neutrality of the survey organisation, fearing official retribution against them or their community if their true opinions were revealed to those in positions of authority.

A fourth and final answer might point to the way ordinary Ethiopians *understand the word "democracy."* It may be that Ethiopians proceed from a qualitatively different understanding of what the word means than other Africans. Given their exceptionally long history of monarchic rule, the influence of Marxist-Leninist thinking over the past four decades, and the campaign of EPRDF propagandists to promote a "revolutionary" version of democracy, the concept may be popularly understood in terms of a "guardianship" notion of democracy that features a paternalistic provision of material welfare but requires collectivism, subservience, and discipline. With reference to China, Lu and Shi (2014) argue that a guardianship discourse is deliberately cultivated by authoritarian leaders "to shape people's democratic conceptions, disguise the regime's authoritarian nature, and lower the pressure for democratic transition" (p. 17).

Figure 2: Public ratings of extent of democracy and selected expert indicators | 35 countries | 2011/2013



The rest of this paper will review the evidence for each of these propositions. The evidence will come from the responses of ordinary Ethiopians to Afrobarometer questions, the correlations of those answers with their views on the extent of democracy in Ethiopia, and cross-country comparisons between aggregate responses in Ethiopia and other African countries. Since Ethiopia lies at the extreme of Afrobarometer responses in assessments of democracy, the goal here is to identify other areas in which Ethiopia lies at the extremities of the distribution. Comparative politics proceeds from the premise that similar country characteristics explain similar outcomes, and different country characteristics explain different outcomes (Coppedge, 2012). To this we would add, for purposes of this analysis, extreme country characteristics explain extreme outcomes.

Political performance evaluations

Are Ethiopians' extremely positive evaluations of the democratic content of the regime matched by equally positive performance evaluations of the political system? Because free and fair elections are a necessary condition for any democracy, Afrobarometer asks respondents to rate the quality of their most recent election. As with popular assessments of democracy, previous research has demonstrated that Africans tend to reach the same conclusions as election observer missions and other expert assessments (Greenberg & Mattes, 2013; Mattes, 2014).

Opposition parties managed to win only one legislative seat in Ethiopia's 2010 parliamentary elections – and none in 2015 – and the election process was criticized by European Union and U.S. observers. Thus, the fact that six in 10 Ethiopians (60%) say the 2010 election was "completely free and fair" is surprising. An additional 15% considered it "free and fair, but with minor problems." Only 1% of respondents stated that the election was "not free or fair." Significantly, 20% of respondents said they did not know (Table 4). Of the one-quarter of the electorate who identify with the EPRDF, 69% said the election was completely free and fair, compared to 58% of those who feel close to no political party and 44% of those who identify with an opposition party.

Table 4: Freeness and fairness of the most recent national election | Ethiopia | 2013

	%
Completely free and fair	60
Free and fair, but with minor problems	15
Free and fair, with major problems	3
Not free and fair	1
Don't know	20

Respondents were asked: *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election held in 2010?*

Besides high-quality elections, modern representative democracy is also based on the premise that elected officials will listen to and represent citizens' views in national and local legislative bodies between elections. In order to tap how well Ethiopians think their representatives perform this task, Afrobarometer asked respondents how often they think elected officials try to listen to people's opinions.

Compared to the 82% who said that the country is democratic, or the 75% who said the 2010 election was free and fair, far fewer respondents thought their elected officials were responsive to public opinion. Just 14% felt that members of Parliament[5] (MPs) were "often" or "always" interested, while 23% said this about their local councillors (Table 5). Significant

[5] Parliament is used to refer to the lower House of Peoples' Representatives, whose members are directly elected to five-year terms.

proportions of respondents said their national and local legislators "never" listen to what people have to say (37% and 29%, respectively). Finally, it is important to note that almost one in three people were unable to offer an assessment of their MPs (31%), and were one in four with regard to their local councillors (23%).

Table 5: Evaluation of the responsiveness of elected officials | Ethiopia | 2013

	Never	Only sometimes	Often	Always	Don't know
Members of Parliament	37%	19%	7%	7%	31%
Local councillors	28%	26%	12%	11%	23%

Respondents were asked: *How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say?*

While the questions about elections and elected representatives get at vertical accountability – the relationship between voters and government – democracy is also based on the idea of horizontal accountability that counterbalances the executive through other institutions of countervailing power, such as the legislature and the courts. To what extent do Ethiopians feel that government is held accountable by other institutions?

Compared to their overall description of the level of democracy, significantly fewer people offered positive answers about these issues (Table 6). Six in 10 respondents (62%) said that government officials who commit crimes "rarely" or "never" go unpunished. However, less than half of all people said that the prime minister "rarely" or "never" ignores the courts (47%) or Parliament (42%), or that opposition parties are "rarely" or "never" silenced by the government (43%). And just one in four said the news media plays a "somewhat" or "very" effective role in publicizing government errors and corruption (27%).

Hardly any respondents offered negative views of their leaders, especially the prime minister. Many Ethiopians said "don't know" to questions that explicitly refer to the prime minister or to government oppression of the opposition, where half of all respondents declined to give an opinion.

Table 6: Evaluation of government accountability | Ethiopia | 2013

In your opinion, how often, in this country:	Always	Often	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Does the prime minister ignore the courts and laws of this country?	1%	2%	15%	32%	50%
Does the prime minister ignore Parliament and just do what he wants?	1%	2%	13%	29%	54%
Are opposition parties or their supporters silenced by the government?	3%	5%	21%	22%	49%
Do officials who commit crimes go unpunished?	4%	10%	30%	32%	24%
	Not at all effective	**Not very effective**	**Some-what effective**	**Very effective**	**Don't know**
How effective is the news media in revealing government mistakes and corruption?	21%	34%	6%	21%	35%

On the issue of government corruption, a slightly larger number of Ethiopians were willing to give a negative rating to political institutions (Table 7). Between one-fifth and one-sixth of respondents said that "all" or "most" tax officials (20%), judges (19%), police (17%), local councillors (17%), and government officials (16%) are involved in corrupt activities.

However, the numbers drop sharply when the questions turn to MPs and the Office of the Prime Minister. These results place Ethiopia higher than any other Afrobarometer country except Cape Verde and Mauritius in terms of perceptions of clean governance.

Table 7: Perceptions of corruption | Ethiopia | 2013

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	None of them	Don't know
Prime Minister's Office	1%	6%	18%	24%	51%
Members of House of Peoples' Representatives	1%	7%	18%	19%	54%
Members of regional state councils	1%	9%	21%	17%	51%
Government officials	3%	13%	24%	14%	46%
Elected local government councils	3%	14%	25%	16%	42%
Police	4%	13%	27%	17%	38%
Federal, regional, and local tax collectors	5%	15%	20%	14%	46%
Judges and magistrates	4%	14%	24%	16%	42%

Respondents were asked: *How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?*

Again, however, levels of "don't know" are extremely high. Both the frequency of "don't know" responses and the low levels of corruption perceptions are surprising, if only because of the prevalence of corruption in public discourse and the widespread coverage given to it by state news media and senior government officials. In his last parliamentary address, for example, former Prime Minister Meles in 2012 described the intensity of corruption and complained that the country was plagued by "a coalition of thieves within the government and robbers within the people" (Alebachew, 2012). Indeed, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IAAG) places Ethiopia 25th out of 52 African states in terms of accountability (which includes several measures of official corruption), and the World Bank places it at the 36th percentile internationally.

Given this elite discourse, the extremely infrequent reports of individual experiences paying bribes is also surprising (Table 8). Just 1% to 3% of respondents told interviewers that they had been victimized by corrupt bureaucrats. This is one of the lowest levels reported in surveyed countries (matched only by Mauritius, Botswana, Cape Verde, and Namibia, four countries that regularly receive international recognition for their success in combating corruption).

Table 8: Personal experiences with corruption | Ethiopia | 2013

In the past year, how often, if ever, have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to government officials in order to. …?	Often	A few times	Once or twice	Never	No experience in past year	Don't know
Get a document or a permit?	<1%	1%	1%	64%	30%	4%
Get water or sanitation services?	<1%	<1%	1%	67%	28%	3%
Get treatment at a local health clinic or hospital?	0%	1%	1%	73%	24%	2%
Avoid a problem with the police, like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest?	<1%	1%	1%	69%	26%	2%
Get a place in a primary school for a child?	<1%	<1%	1%	73%	24%	2%
And during the last election in 2010, how often, if ever, did a candidate or someone from a political party offer you something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote?	<1%	<1%	1%	94%	--	5%

Next we examine how Ethiopians rate the job performance of their political leaders (Table 9). Three striking facts emerge. First, positive ratings of incumbent leaders are not especially high. In 2013, 57% of Ethiopians approved of the job performance of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, 46% approved of the performance of their MPs, and 52% were satisfied with the performance of their local councils. None of these numbers represent an overwhelming endorsement of any of these incumbents. Second, levels of *dis*approval are strikingly low. Just one in 10 respondents told interviewers that they "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove" of the job performance of these leaders. And finally, we find extremely high levels of "don't know" responses, ranging from 43% for MPs to 34% for local councillors.

Table 9: Evaluations of political leaders | Ethiopia | 2013

	Strongly disapprove	Disapprove	Approve	Strongly approve	Don't know
Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn	2%	6%	39%	18%	36%
Member of House of Peoples' Representatives	2%	7%	39%	9%	43%
Elected local councillor	2%	11%	43%	9%	34%

Respondents were asked: *Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?*

When it comes to evaluations of government performance in specific policy areas, Ethiopians said they were very pleased. More than eight in 10 respondents said the government was handling its job "fairly well" or "very well" with regard to fighting crime (86%), resolving conflicts (83%), and empowering women (86%), and six in 10 approved of its efforts to fight corruption (61%) (Table 10). No more than 15% gave a negative rating on any of these policies. While people were willing to offer opinions on these issues, one in five were unable to give an evaluation with regard to corruption (21%). When we create a single index that taps the average response across all four questions, we find that Ethiopians gave their government the highest level of positive responses of all countries surveyed by Afrobarometer (not shown).

Table 10: Evaluations of government performance: Crime and corruption | Ethiopia | 2013

	Very badly	Fairly badly	Fairly well	Very well	Don't know
Reducing crime	2%	7%	51%	35%	6%
Resolving violent conflict between communities	2%	6%	55%	28%	9%
Empowering women	1%	5%	48%	38%	8%
Fighting corruption in government	4%	14%	47%	14%	21%

Respondents were asked: *How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

Finally, Afrobarometer asks respondents about the amount of "trust" they place in various institutions (Table 11). Once again, we find that Ethiopians' opinions were, on balance, quite positive. Absolute levels of distrust tended to be higher than levels of performance disapproval but lower than perceptions of corruption. One-fifth to one-sixth of respondents expressed no trust or low levels of trust in the Ethiopian Revenue and Tax Authority (19%), police (18%), their local council (17%), and the National Electoral Board (15%). Distrust was far lower for the governing EPRDF (10%) and the army and prime minister (8% each). The generally passive acceptance of political institutions and bodies reversed itself with great clarity when interviewers asked about "opposition parties." In response to this prompt, 42% said they distrust opposition parties, with 29% saying they trust them "not at all." And again, we see extremely high levels of "don't know" responses across all institutions.

Table 11: Political trust | Ethiopia | 2013

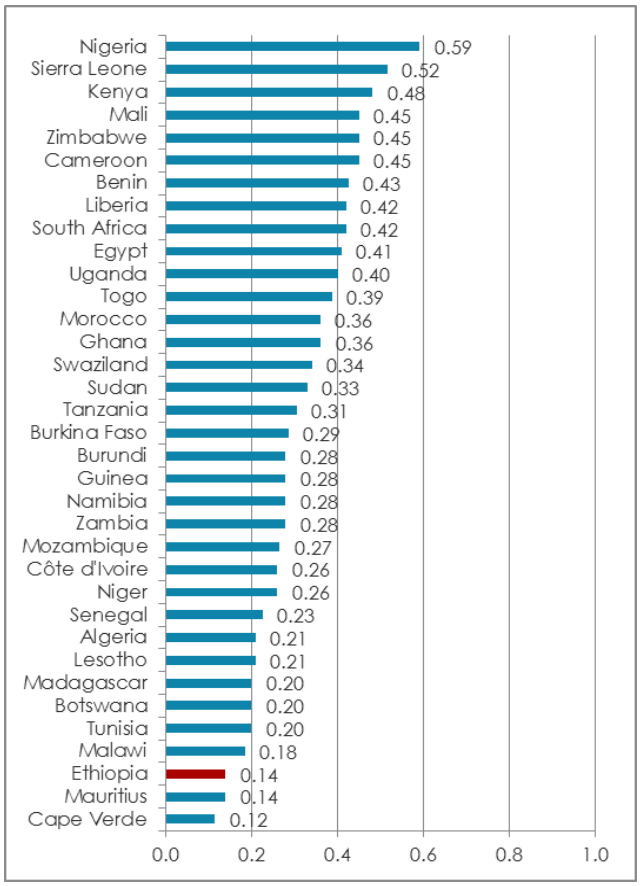
How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?	Not at all	Just a little	Some-what	A lot	Don't know
Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn	2%	6%	21%	51%	19%
House of Peoples' Representatives	2%	9%	29%	29%	31%
Regional state council	3%	9%	31%	28%	29%
Ethiopian National Electoral Board	5%	10%	27%	27%	31%
Ethiopian Revenue and Tax Authority	8%	11%	24%	20%	38%
Local council	5%	12%	34%	29%	20%
Ruling party (EPRDF)	4%	6%	25%	47%	18%
Opposition political parties	29%	13%	17%	9%	32%
Police	6%	12%	32%	38%	12%
Army	2%	6%	21%	53%	17%
Courts of law	3%	10%	33%	36%	18%

Thus, while Ethiopians do not produce glowing assessments of their political leaders, they seem unable or unwilling to produce critical evaluations. Given the very high levels of "don't know," we create average indices of explicit negative evaluations with regard to *corruption* perceptions, *reported extortion* at the hands of bureaucrats, *dis*approval of elected incumbents, and *dis*trust of political institutions. Across all included items, all reports of victimization and negative perceptions or evaluations are coded as 1, and all other responses, including "don't know," are coded as 0. The result demonstrates that Ethiopians are at the low end of each measure of negative evaluations across 35 countries[6] (Figure 3).

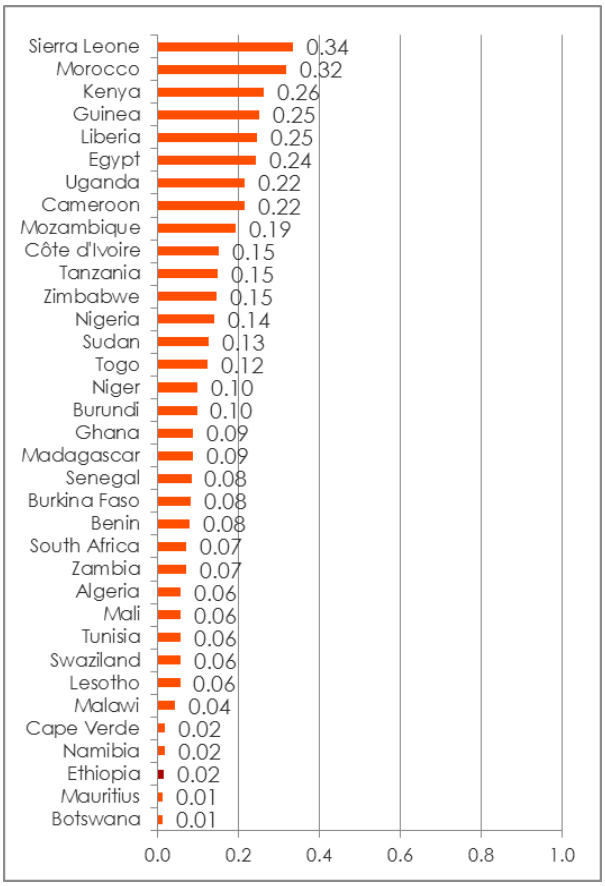
[6] In cases where some component questions of indices were not asked in all countries, figures may show 33 or 34 countries.

Figure 3: Four indices of explicitly negative political evaluations | 35 countries | 2011/2013

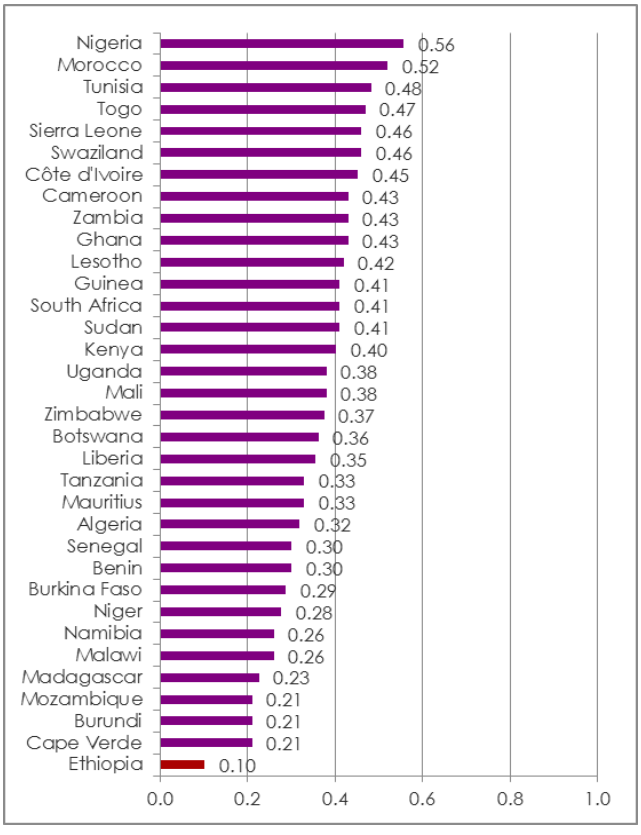
Corruption perceptions



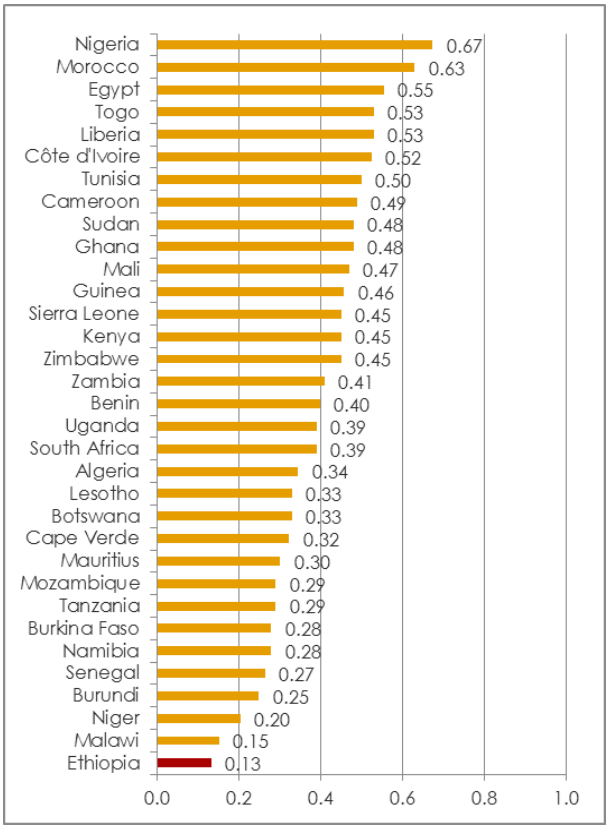
Bribes paid



Disapproval of incumbent performance



Distrust of political institutions



Economic evaluations

Now we turn to examine how Ethiopians evaluate the economic performance of their government. Economic assessments might be a strong influence on political attitudes, especially if respondents see democracy instrumentally through a substantive lens, as we will explore below. We look first at respondents' evaluations of the economy, which are extremely positive. As of August 2013, eight in 10 respondents said the country was going in the "right direction" (81%), and half reported that the national economy had improved (51%) in the previous 12 months (Table 12). In both instances, Ethiopians' assessments were the most positive expressed across 35 African countries (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

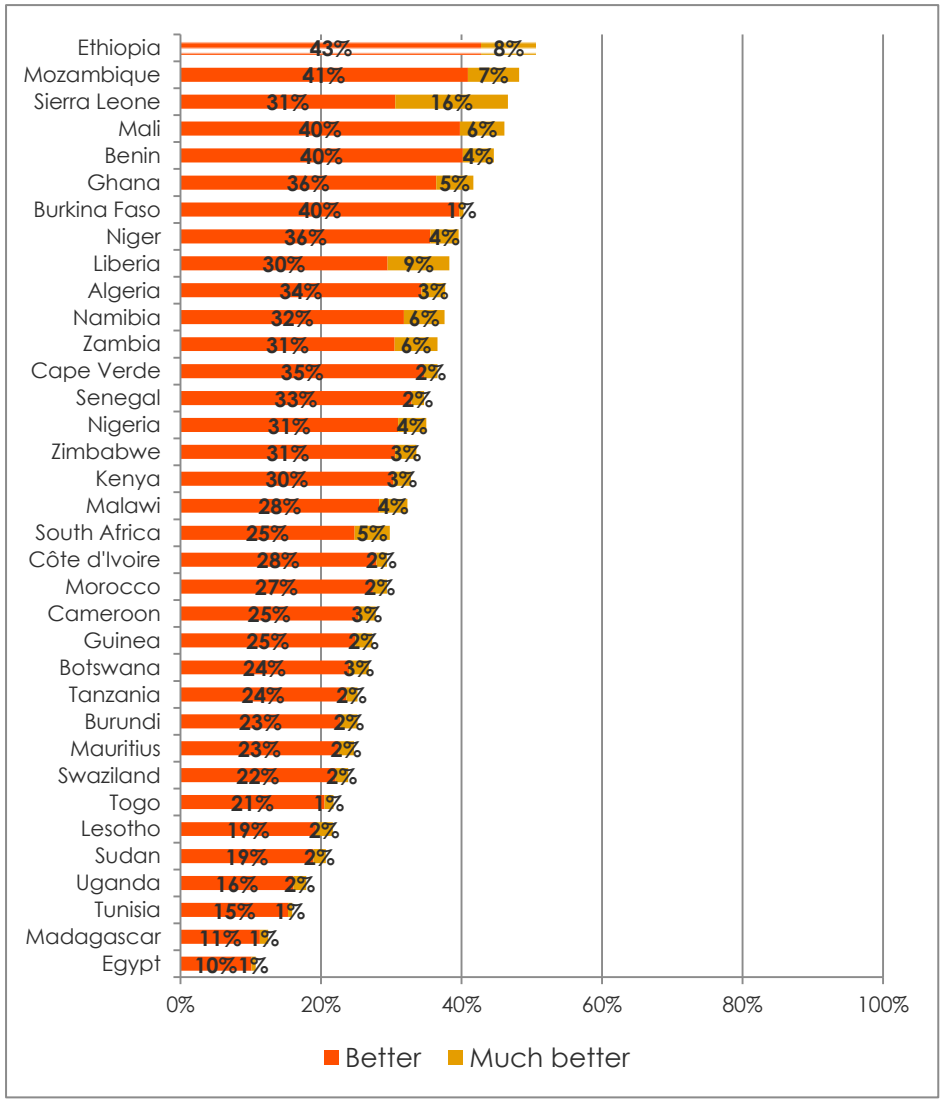
In this case, the high levels of optimism are not unwarranted. In the year prior to the survey, Ethiopia had one of the highest GDP growth rates of all 35 Afrobarometer countries, and thus these evaluations make sense, as is illustrated in Figure 6. The same logic applies to Ethiopians' retrospective evaluations of personal living conditions, which are some of the most positive in Afrobarometer (not shown).

Table 12: Evaluations of economic conditions | Ethiopia | 2013

	Much worse	Worse	Same	Better	Much better	Don't know
Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to 12 months ago: The present economic condition of this country?	2%	15%	28%	43%	8%	5%
Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to 12 months ago: Your living conditions?	2%	15%	34%	43%	5%	1%
	Very bad	**Bad**	**Neither good nor bad**	**Good**	**Very good**	**Don't know**
In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?	3%	10%	13%	56%	13%	5%
In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?	4%	12%	18%	58%	7%	<1%
	Much worse	**Worse**	**Same**	**Better**	**Much better**	**Don't know**
Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse: Economic conditions in this country in 12 months' time?	2%	5%	11%	51%	18%	13%
Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse: Your living conditions in 12 months' time?	1%	6%	16%	53%	15%	9%
	Wrong direction			**Right direction**		**Don't know**
What about the overall direction of the country? Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?	9%			81%		10%

Figure 4: Views of recent and future economic trends | 35 countries | 2011/2013

National economic trends, past 12 months



National economic trends, next 12 months

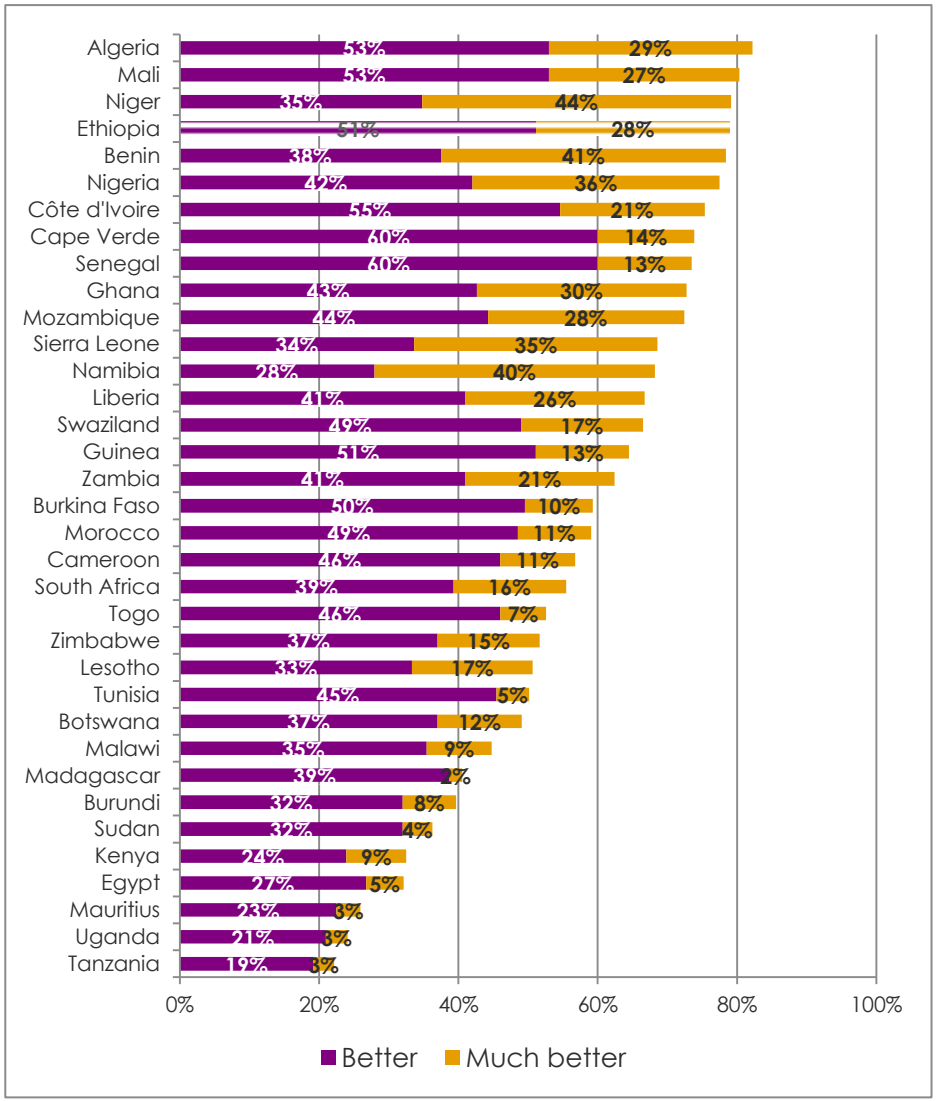


Figure 5: Country headed in right direction | 35 countries | 2011/2013

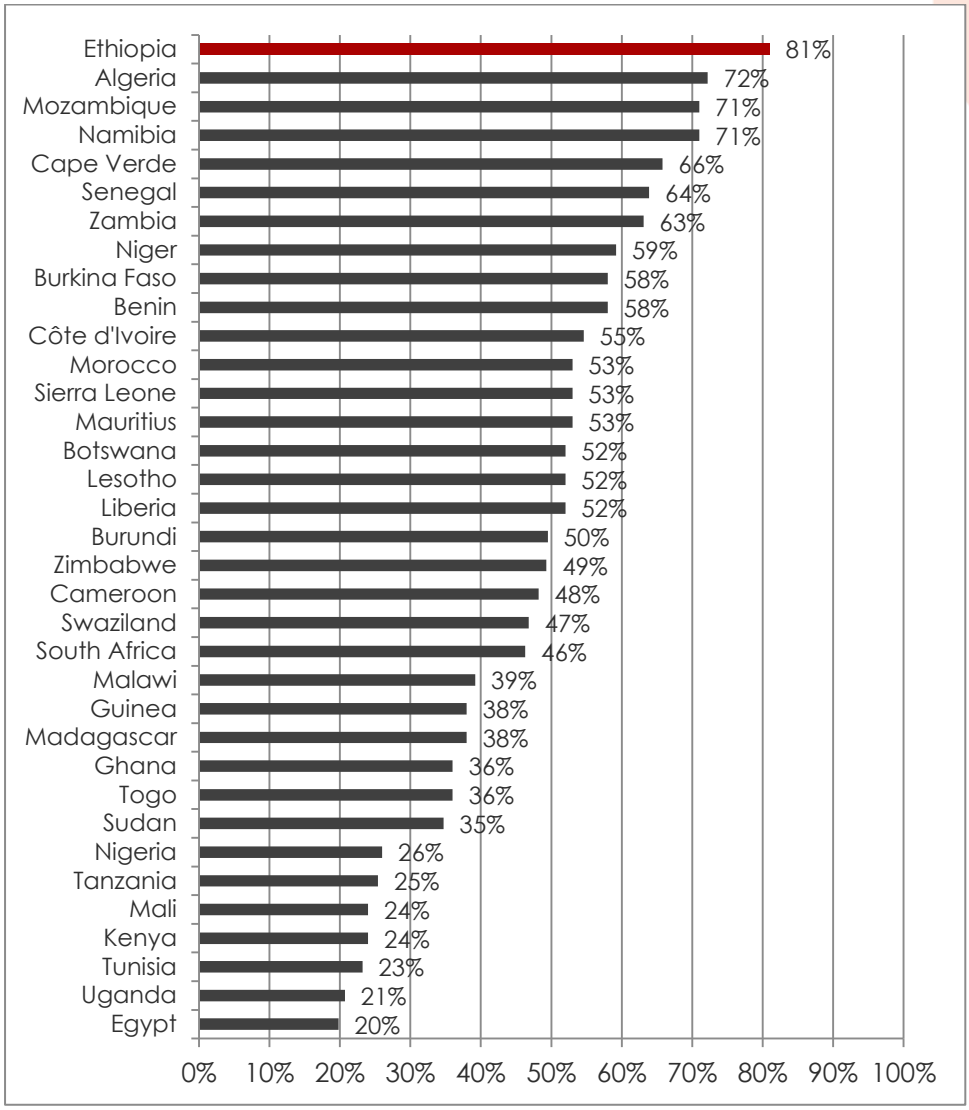
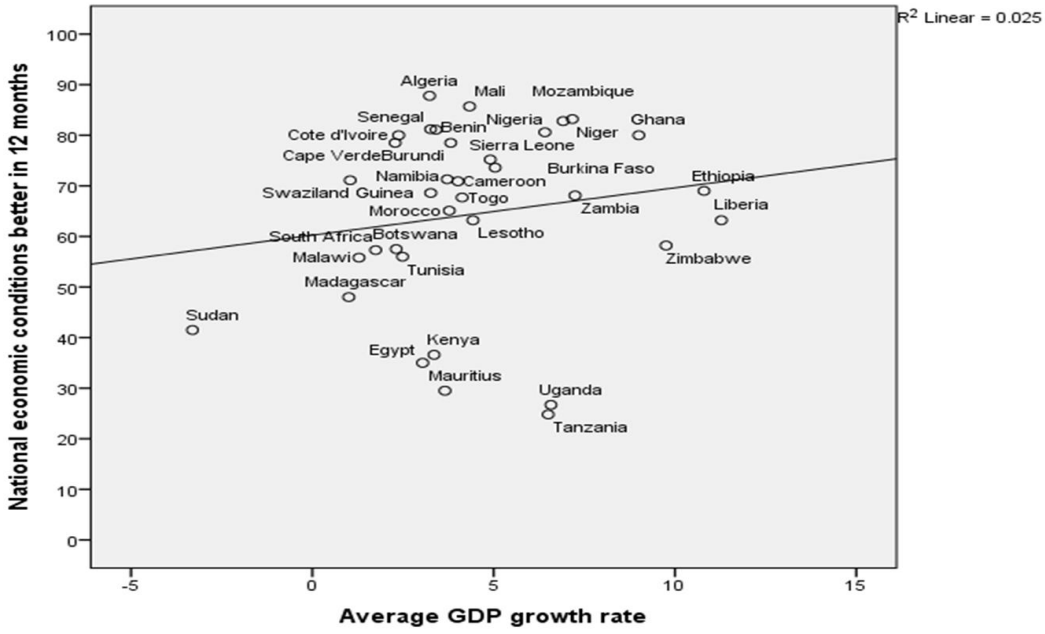


Figure 6: Prospective evaluations and GDP growth | 35 countries | 2011/2013



Not only do Ethiopians perceive positive economic trends, but they also give most of the credit for these trends to government. The national government received very positive marks for economic performance (Table 13), with almost eight in 10 saying it was doing "fairly well" or "very well" with regard to economic management (78%) and job creation (64%). Opinions were more divided with regard to controlling inflation and narrowing income gaps. When we create an index of respondents' average responses across all elements of government macroeconomic performance, Ethiopians' levels of positive responses emerge as the highest across all surveyed countries (not shown).

Table 13: Evaluations of government performance: Macroeconomics | Ethiopia | 2013

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?	Very badly	Fairly badly	Fairly well	Very well	Don't know
Managing the economy	2%	10%	59%	19%	11%
Creating jobs	4%	17%	53%	13%	12%
Narrowing gaps between rich and poor	10%	26%	42%	9%	13%
Keeping prices down	11%	28%	42%	8%	12%

Positive evaluations are even stronger when it comes to issues of public service delivery (Table 14). Eight in 10 respondents offered positive ratings of government handling of HIV/AIDS (85%), education (89%), and health services (85%). At the same time, the government encountered significant elements of dissatisfaction in areas of electrification (40% said "fairly badly" or "very badly"), water and sanitation (36%), and food distribution (33%). Yet even after taking these negative marks into consideration, Ethiopians' average ratings of government performance in delivering public services join those of Batswana as the highest in Afrobarometer surveys (not shown).

Table 14: Evaluations of government performance: Microeconomics | Ethiopia | 2013

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?	Very badly	Fairly badly	Fairly well	Very well	Don't know
Combating HIV/AIDS	2%	4%	43%	42%	10%
Addressing educational needs	2%	5%	50%	39%	4%
Improving basic health services	2%	9%	52%	33%	4%
Maintaining roads and bridges	6%	16%	50%	22%	6%
Providing water and sanitation services	9%	27%	43%	17%	5%
Improving the living standards of the poor	3%	18%	57%	14%	8%
Providing a reliable supply of electricity	13%	27%	39%	12%	8%
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	6%	27%	47%	8%	11%

Ethiopians' understanding of democracy and political authority

Another possible explanation of the puzzle is that Ethiopians' understanding of what democracy *is* may differ significantly from that of other Africans. As argued earlier, this may be due to their long history of autocratic rule with no previous democratic interlude, taken together with ongoing political domination by a political party with roots in Leninist ideology.

What do Ethiopians mean when they say the country is democratic? We can gain some purchase on this issue by examining responses to another standard Afrobarometer question that asks people about their support for democracy. In this question, and throughout the

questionnaire, the word "democracy" was offered in English and translated into an Ethiopian language only if the respondent was unable to understand the English version. The results strongly suggest that Ethiopians recognize the term and attach a very positive connotation to the word, as three-quarters (76%) chose the statement "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government" as being closest to their own views (Table 15). Just 3% said that a non-democratic government might be preferable in some situations. One in 10 said the issue did not matter to them (9%), and another one in 10 said they did not know (12%).

Table 15: Support for democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	%
Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	76
In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	3
For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	9
Don't know	12

Respondents were asked: *Which of these three statements comes closest to your own opinion?*

But once we tap public commitment to democracy without using the "d-word," the level of support drops and the number of "don't know" responses increases significantly. While just 3% said a "non-democratic" government could be preferable in certain situations, significantly larger proportions explicitly *approved* of a series of clearly autocratic alternatives to democracy (Table 16). Between one-sixth and one-fifth of all respondents said they would approve of an executive dictatorship (16%), a one-party state (17%), and military rule (20%). Viewed in another way, while three-quarters said "democracy is always preferable," just six in 10 disapproved of allowing only one party to stand candidates (60%), abandoning elections and Parliament to allow the executive to decide everything (59%), and abandoning civilian rule to let the military take control (57%). Combining those who said they "don't' know" with those who said they "neither approve nor disapprove," approximately one-quarter of respondents were unable to express an opinion about these fundamental issues.

Table 16: Rejection of authoritarian alternatives | Ethiopia | 2013

	Approve/ Strongly approve	Neither	Disapprove/ Strongly disapprove	Don't know
Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.	17%	3%	60%	20%
Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the prime minister can decide everything.	16%	3%	59%	23%
The army comes in to govern the country.	20%	3%	57%	21%

Respondents were asked: *There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?*

Afrobarometer Round 5 asked a module of questions designed in concert with colleagues from the Global Barometer Surveys consortium, comprising Latino Barometer, Asia Barometer, and Eurasia Barometer. The aim was to encourage respondents to weigh differing interpretations of democracy against each other. But we were also concerned that forced-choice responses are often shaped by the precise wording of various responses, how differing responses are framed, and the peculiar juxtaposition of different wordings and framings in the same question. Our solution was to ask the same question four separate times, with conceptually equivalent though differently worded responses to each question.

The basic question reads: "*Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. If you have to choose only one of the things that I am going to*

read, which one would you choose as the most essential characteristic of democracy?" To each item we provided four responses tapping (1) a *socioeconomic* interpretation that emphasizes material equality, full employment, and provision of basic necessities or state welfare; a (2) a *governance*-oriented interpretation that focuses on law and order, transparency, and efficiency; (3) a *freedom*-oriented interpretation that emphasizes political rights such as speech, association, and protest; and (4) a *procedural* interpretation that features elections, political parties, legislatures, and courts. In this way, we expected that if, say, a proceduralist was attracted by a strongly worded freedom-oriented response on one item, he or she would tend to give a proceduralist response to the other three questions.

The responses to these questions reveal that while Ethiopians' understandings of democracy were diverse, they were most likely to say that democracy is defined as the delivery of socioeconomic welfare, or efficient governance. We also observe that between one-tenth and one-fifth of respondents were unable to answer each question (Table 17), and that 8% were unable to answer *any* of the four questions.

Table 17: Understandings of democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

Question 1	%
Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor. (ECON)	30
People choose government leaders in free and fair elections. (PROC)	26
People are free to express their political views openly. (FREE)	18
Government does not waste any public money. (GOV)	12
None of these	2
Don't know	12
Question 2	**%**
Government ensures law and order. (GOV)	34
Government ensures job opportunities for all. (ECON)	31
Multiple parties compete fairly in elections. (PROC)	15
Media is free to criticize the things government does. (FREE)	8
None of these	1
Don't know	12
Question 3	**%**
Government provides basic necessities for everyone. (ECON))	26
Public services work well and do not break down. (GOV)	21
The legislatures closely monitor the actions of the prime minister. (PROC)	20
People are free to form organisations to influence government. (FREE)	15
Don't know	20
Question 4	**%**
Politics is clean and free of corruption. (GOV)	28
People are free to take part in demonstrations and protests. (FREE)	24
People receive aid from government when they are in need. (ECON)	20
The court protects ordinary people if government mistreats them. (PROC)	13
None of these	1
Don't know	14

Respondents were asked: *Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. If you have to choose only one of the things that I am going to read, which one would you choose as the most essential characteristic of democracy?*

From these responses, we created an index that measures how often across the four questions a respondent selected a response from each thematic area (Table 18). Again, this index demonstrates that socioeconomic outcomes (such as material equality) or good-governance outcomes (such as transparency and efficiency) are much more likely to make up Ethiopians' conception of democracy than classic liberal issues of rights or procedures. Across the four question items, half of the sample *never* chose a response related to freedom and rights (52%) or procedures (48%) as part of the meaning of democracy.

Table 18: Understandings of democracy (by frequency of citation) | Ethiopia | 2013

	0 items	1 item	2 items	3 items	4 items
Governance	36%	39%	20%	5%	<1%
Socioeconomic	38%	33%	18%	8%	4%
Freedom	52%	34%	12%	2%	<1%
Procedural	48%	35%	14%	3%	<1%
None of these / Don't know	76%	8%	6%	2%	8%

Since the governance and socioeconomic responses are primarily concerned with the outcomes of economic and political policy performance, we created a combined scale of *instrumental* understandings of democracy. We also combined freedom- and procedure-oriented answers into a scale of *intrinsic* understandings of democracy. Compared to the other surveyed countries, Ethiopians fall approximately in the middle of the 35-country variation in terms of their likelihood of adopting an instrumental view of democracy. When it comes to intrinsic understandings, however, Ethiopians are amongst the least likely citizens to understand democracy in terms of political procedures, rights, or freedoms (see Figure 7 below). They are also some of the *most* likely respondents to give "don't know" replies: Across all four question items, an average of 15% said "don't know." Only Mozambicans (19%) and Malagasy (24%) were more likely to give "don't know" responses (not shown).

Ethiopians' grasp of the meaning of democracy appears even more precarious when we look to a different set of questions that tap agreement or disagreement with specific procedural arrangements related to multiparty elections, the institutional balance of power, and independent oversight of government. "Regular, open, and honest elections" were widely supported (82%), and few were persuaded by the argument that "Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders" (9%). Just 9% had no opinion when the question was phrased in this way. They were far less likely, however, to appreciate the role of intra-party difference and debate in the electoral process. Almost one-third agreed with the old argument, frequently advanced by would-be dictators, that "Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties" (32%). Just half of respondents agreed that "Many political parties are needed to make sure that Ethiopians have real choices in who governs them." Again, one in five either responded "don't know" or agreed with neither statement (19%) (Table 19).

This pattern recurs in responses to several other questions that tap, broadly, people's attitudes toward the separation of powers, oversight, and term limits. Six in 10 agreed that the legislature should make laws, even when the executive disagrees (59%), while one in seventh instead accepted that the executive should be able to make laws by decree (14%), and one-quarter had no opinion (25%). Only 55% said the executive has to obey the law and the courts, while 26% said the prime minister should not be so bound if he thinks the laws are wrong. Again, 18% had no opinion. Just four in 10 respondents agreed that the Constitution should limit the executive to serving two terms (40%), while a similar proportion preferred no constitutional limit on how long the prime minister can serve (42%) (Table 20).

Table 19: Attitudes toward elections and multipartyism | Ethiopia | 2013

Popular elections	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.	82%
Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.	9%
Agree with neither	<1%
Don't know	9%
Multiparty elections	**Agree/Strongly agree**
Many political parties are needed to make sure that Ethiopians have real choices in who governs them.	50%
Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Ethiopia.	32%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	18%

Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*

Table 20: Attitudes toward separation of powers | Ethiopia | 2013

Legislative independence	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
Members of Parliament represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the prime minister does not agree.	59%
Since the prime minister represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what Parliament thinks.	14%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	25%
Judicial independence	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
The prime minister must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.	55%
Since the prime minister was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.	26%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	18%
Executive term limits	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
The Constitution should limit the prime minister to serving a maximum of two terms in office.	40%
There should be no constitutional limit on how long the prime minister can serve.	42%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	17%

Six in 10 (60%) said the news media should "constantly investigate and report on government mistakes," but 16%said negative reporting "harms the country," and 23% said they "don't know." Just half agreed that the executive should be held to account by the legislature (51%), while one-fifth agreed that forcing the executive to justify its actions is a waste of time (22%), and one-quarter had no opinion (26%). And only one-third of Ethiopians said that opposition parties should "regularly examine and criticize" government actions; most people thought the opposition should rather cooperate with government for the greater good of development (44%), and 18% had no opinion (Table 21).

Ethiopians' instrumental acceptance of a top-down "guardianship" version of democracy can be seen in their broad views of political authority. Seven in 10 respondents (71%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that *"The government is like a parent; it should decide what is good for us."* By contrast, just one in five (22%) agreed that *"The government is like our employee; we are the bosses and should tell government what to do."* Moreover, just 6% of all respondents were unable to answer this question. In response to a separate question, two-thirds (65%) said *"It is more important to have a government that can get things done, even if we have less influence over what it does,"* while just one in six said *"It is more important for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, even if that means it makes decisions more slowly."* In other words, Ethiopians hold an extremely paternalist view of authority that cedes authority to incumbent political elites and that judges government in instrumental rather than intrinsic terms (Table 22).

Importantly, Ethiopians are the *most* likely respondents in Africa to see the state as a parent and to prioritize government effectiveness over public accountability (not shown).

Table 21: Attitudes toward oversight | Ethiopia | 2013

News media oversight	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.	60%
Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.	16%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	23%
Legislative oversight	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
Parliament should ensure that the prime minister explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money.	51%
The prime minister should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.	22%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	26%
Opposition oversight	**Agree/ Strongly agree**
Opposition parties should regularly examine and criticize government policies and actions.	36%
Opposition parties should concentrate on cooperating with government and helping it develop the country.	44%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	18%

Table 22: Paternalist views of political authority | Ethiopia | 2013

	Agree/Strongly agree
The government is like a parent; it should decide what is good for us.	71%
The government is like our employee; we are the bosses and should tell government what to do.	22%
Agree with neither	1%
Don't know	6%
	Agree/Strongly agree
It is more important to have a government that can get things done, even if we have no influence over what it does.	65%
It is more important for citizens to be able to hold government accountable, even if that means it makes decisions more slowly.	16%
Agree with neither	<1%
Don't know	18%

In addition, we created a valid and reliable index that summarizes respondents' support for restraining the power of the state. Respondents who score high on this scale believe that the people should control government and hold it accountable, that opposition parties are necessary, that the prime minister should obey the law and be restrained by term limits, and that opposition parties should oversee the government. Ethiopians score lowest on this scale among surveyed countries (Figure 7).

To repeat, Ethiopia has never experienced a transition to democracy as commonly understood, that is, as a multiparty electoral regime embedded in a matrix of civil liberties and rule of law. Instead, the sum total of the country's political experience is an exceptionally long period of monarcho-feudal rule topped off with four decades of Marxist-Leninist ideology and one-party government. Under these circumstances, ordinary people seem to understand democracy in terms of guardianship, namely a form of government in which a paternalistic elite looks out for its people by providing physical and material security in return for unthinking loyalty and political passivity. In short, people have come to see themselves not as citizens but as subjects.

Uncritical citizenship?

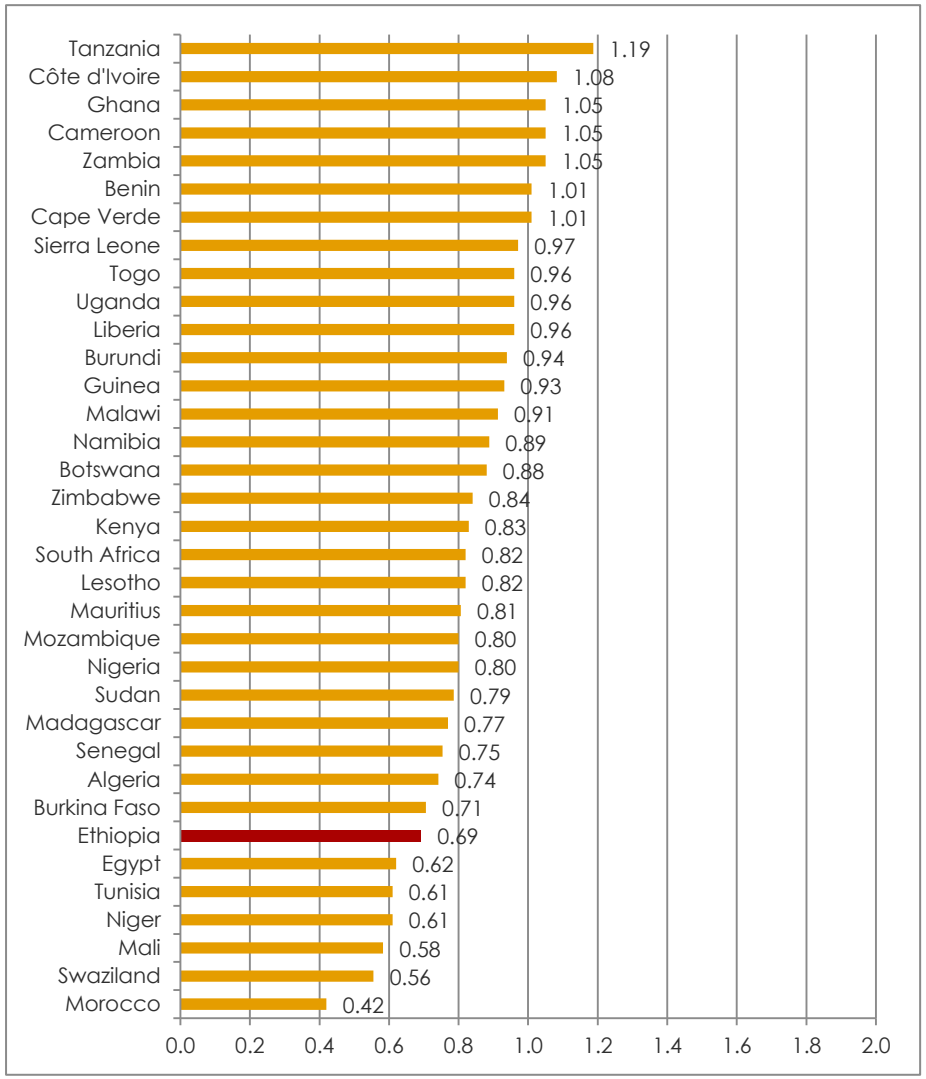
Even so, one might be tempted to conclude that Ethiopians' evaluations of democracy are perfectly rational. They say that they see their elections as free and fair and that they perceive significant levels of political accountability and low levels of corruption. They also recognize significant improvements in the economy and give the government credit in terms of its economic stewardship.

At the same time, Ethiopians exhibit a strongly instrumental understanding of democracy as the delivery of substantive outcomes rather than the operation of political procedures. They also display a weak grasp of the importance and role of law and institutions in constraining the incumbent government and leaders. We also see a clear pattern of what we have elsewhere called "uncritical citizenship" (Chaligha, Mattes, Bratton, & Davids, 2002; Mattes & Shenga, 2013). This syndrome combines the frequent response of "don't know" or "haven't heard enough" to questions about various areas of government performance with a clear reluctance to offer negative opinions about leaders and institutions.

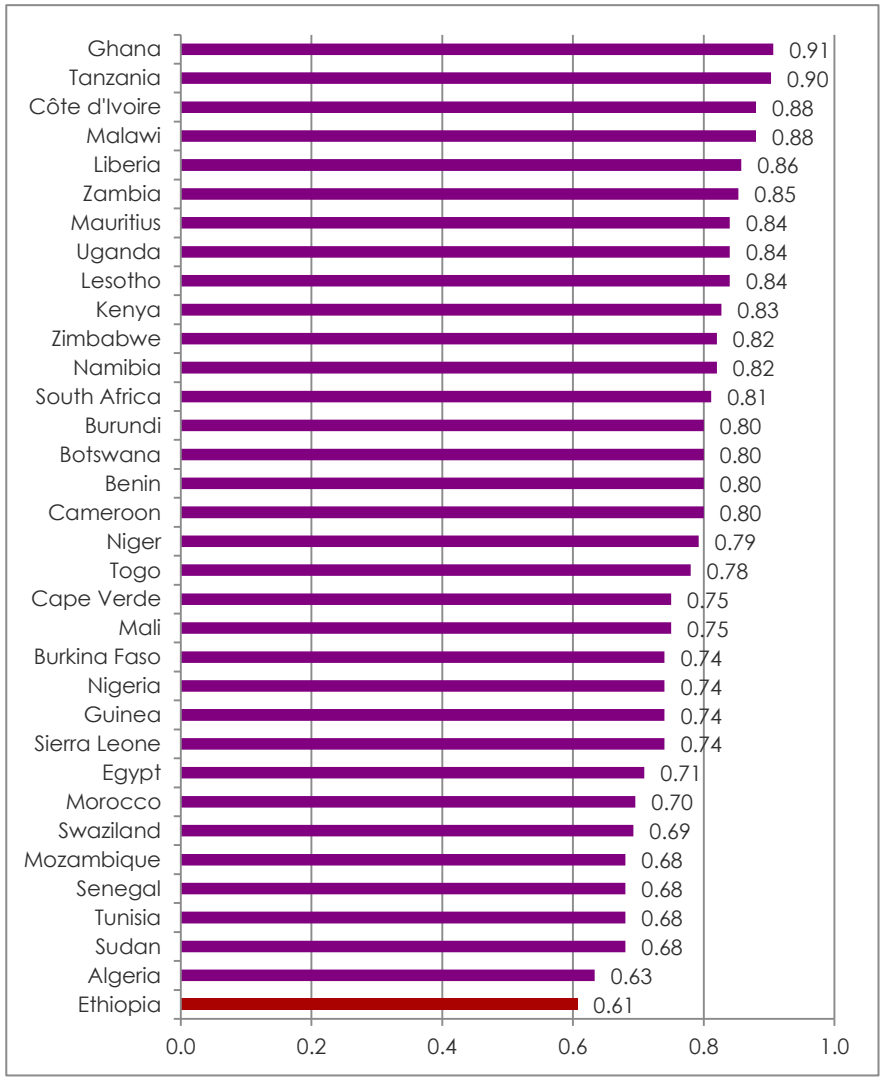
Given the developmental and political background of the country discussed at the start of this report, there are two obvious factors that might explain this profile of "uncritical citizenship." First, Ethiopians may be *unwilling* to offer opinions, especially negative opinions about the performance of government. Such unwillingness might arise from a general fear of

Figure 7: (Mis)Understanding democracy | 35 countries | 2011/2013

Intrinsic views of democracy



Support for constrained government



speaking one's mind about politics in public due to potential reprisals from police or government. Or it might arise from a suspicion of the identity of the survey fieldworker. Second, Ethiopians might be *unable* to offer opinions on specific areas of governance because they lack the necessary cognitive skills and access to independent information (or any information) about political and economic policy and performance. We explore these two possible accounts in the next two sections.

Political fear

Political fear arises from the perception that it is not safe to express one's political beliefs, whether in public (for example at a village market), in discussion with acquaintances, or even through the ballot box. As one approach to measuring political fear, a battery of Afrobarometer questions asks respondents "how free" they are to carry out three basic rights of citizenship. While the great majority of Ethiopians said they are free to do these things, one in 10 said they are "not very free" or "not at all free." The rights in question are "to choose who to vote for without being pressured" (7% said "not very" or "not at all" free), "to say what you think" (9%), and "to join any political organisation" (14%).

Similar proportions perceive political intimidation. One in 10 said that during election campaigns, they fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence "somewhat" (7%) or "a lot" (4%). One in six said it is "somewhat likely" (10%) or "very likely" (6%) that "powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country." And one in 10 said that party competition "always" (2%) or "often" (6%) leads to political conflict (Table 23).

Survey responses reveal higher levels of fear, however, when we reframe questions to refer to self-censorship. Almost half of all respondents said they "always" (33%) or "often" (15%) "have to be careful of what they say about politics."

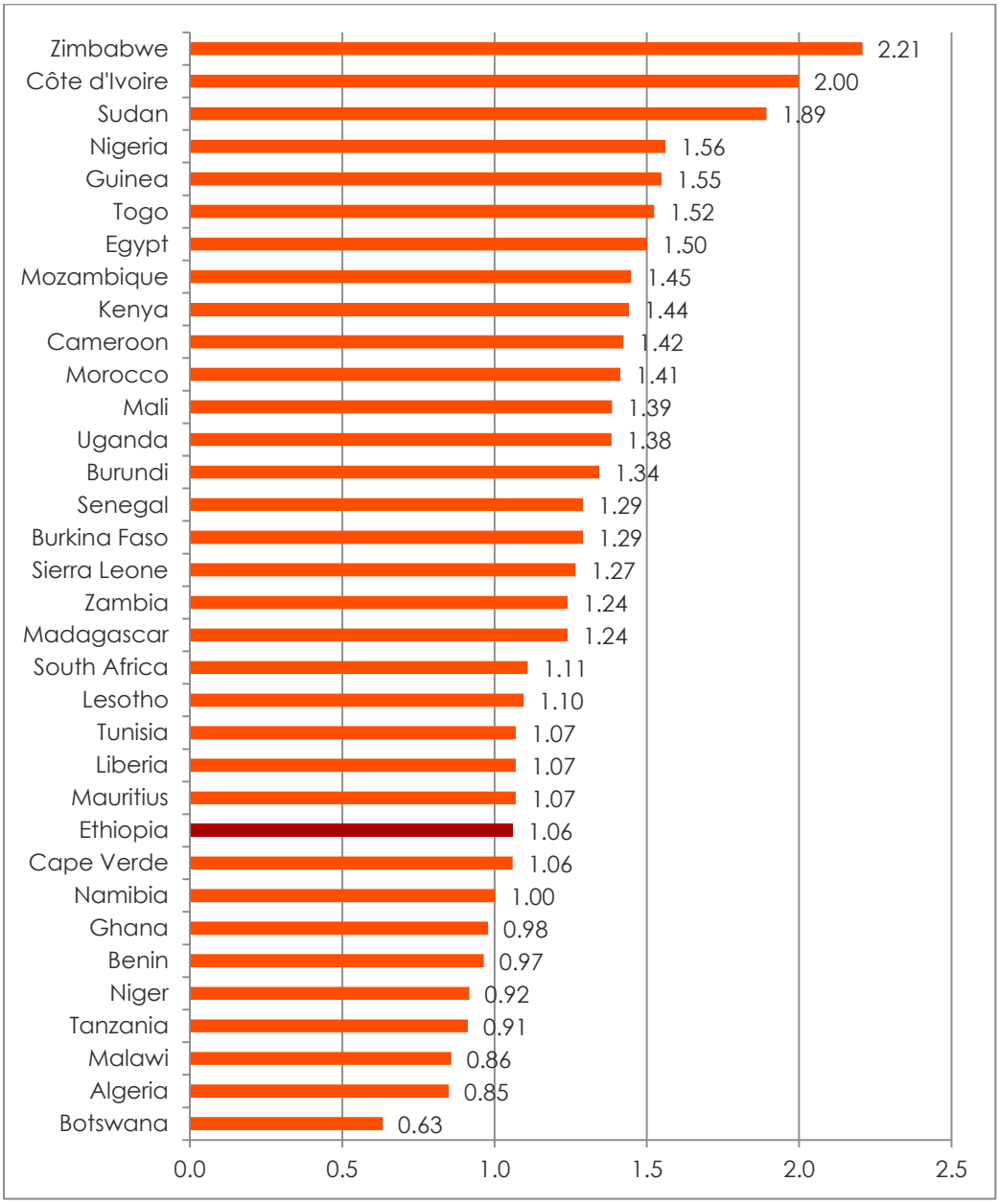
Yet while there are detectable levels of fear in the country, Ethiopians do not stand out as unusual. When we aggregate all the above responses into a scale of political fear, we find that Ethiopians actually fall *below* the Afrobarometer average, meaning they express significantly *less* fear than the mean Afrobarometer respondent (Figure 8). Even on the most explicit individual question – the extent to which people can speak openly about politics – Ethiopia lies at the middle of the Afrobarometer data set (not shown).

Table 23: Political fear | Ethiopia | 2013

	Not at all free	Not very free	Somewhat free	Completely free	Don't know
In this country, how free are you to say what you think?	4%	5%	28%	61%	3%
In this country, how free are you to join any political organisation you want?	6%	8%	26%	46%	14%
In this country, how free are you to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?	3%	4%	21%	64%	7%
	Always	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**	**Don't know**
In your opinion, how often, in this country, do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?	33%	15%	26%	14%	12%
In your opinion, how often, in this country, does competition between political parties lead to violent conflict?	2%	6%	39%	14%	39%

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Don't know
How likely do you think it is that powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country?	6%	10%	6%	64%	13%
	A lot	**Somewhat**	**A little bit**	**Not at all**	**Don't know**
During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?	4%	7%	11%	72%	6%

Figure 8: Index of political fear | 34 countries* | 2011/2013



** Figure excludes Swaziland because some component questions of the index were not asked there.*

Political suspicion

If respondents are fearful of speaking their mind in public, they may conceivably take advantage of the confidentiality of the survey environment to state opinions and preferences they feel they cannot otherwise reveal. This will only happen, however, if they accept the political neutrality of the interviewer and his or her promise of confidentiality. This is why Afrobarometer interviewers take special precautions to ensure that respondents know the identity of the independent research organisation they represent and, more importantly, that they do not represent any state agency or political party. However, we run a check to see if respondents fully accept this assurance by asking, in the very last question before we close the interview, "*Who do you think sent us do to this interview?*"

Across Africa, despite the disclaimer, we find that many respondents still think that Afrobarometer interviewers represent the state in some way. In Ethiopia, fully 69% of all respondents said they thought the interviewer was sent by government in general; by the federal, regional, or local government; or by the Prime Minister's Office (Table 24). Ethiopians, along with South Africans and Beninese, are the most likely respondents in Afrobarometer Round 5 surveys to suspect the interviewer's assurances of neutrality (Figure 9).

Table 24: Perceived identity of Afrobarometer interviewer | Ethiopia | 2013

	%
Government (general)	56
Federal government	7
Prime Minister's Office	1
House of Peoples' Representatives	1
Regional state government	2
Local government	2
Research company	10
Nongovernmental organisation	8
Political party	1
Private company	1
International organisation	1
Other	1
Don't know	8

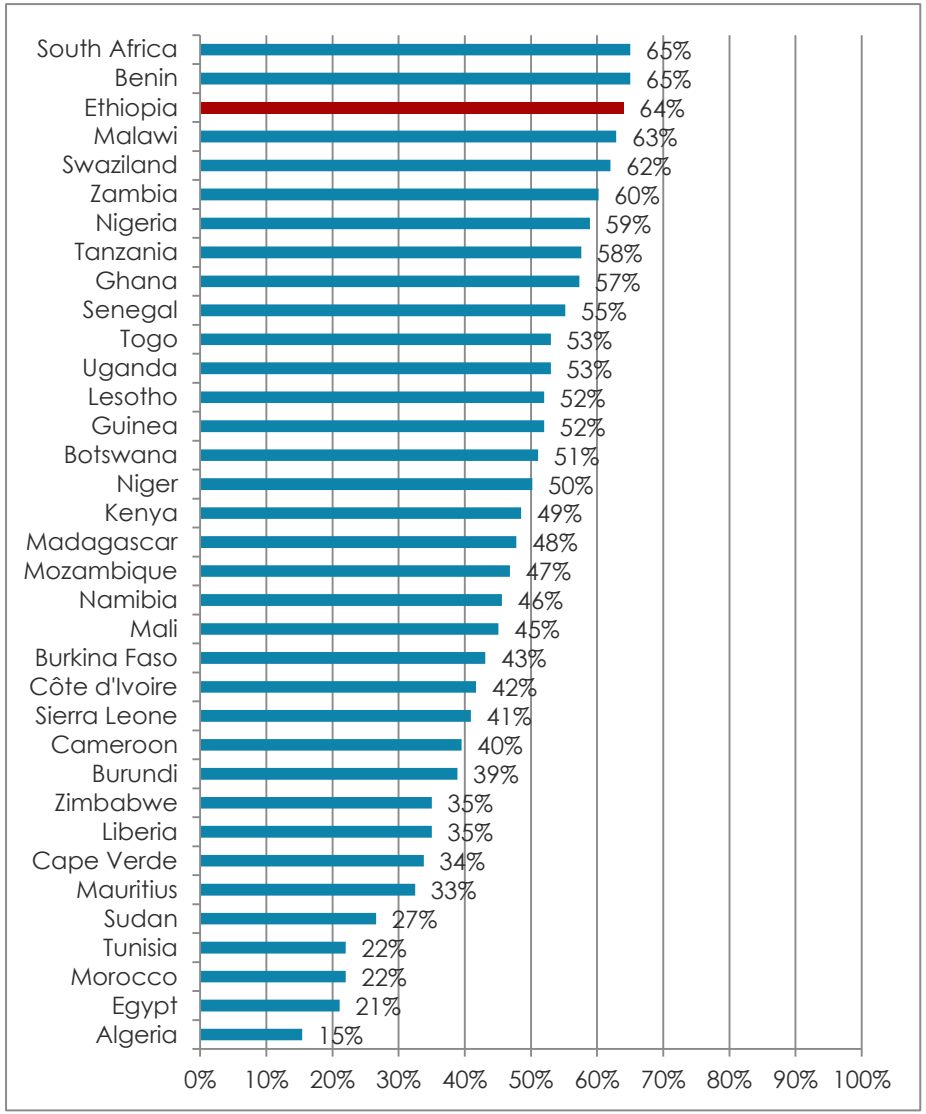
Respondents were asked: *Who do you think sent us to do this interview?*

Additional evidence about respondent suspicion is available from Afrobarometer fieldworkers' post-interview observations about various aspects of the interview, including the respondent's disposition. In one in every three Ethiopian interviews, fieldworkers observed that the respondent was ill at ease (31%) or suspicious (5%).[7] Afrobarometer fieldworkers rated Ethiopians as some of the most uneasy or suspicious respondents in the 35-country study (Figure 9). Yet interviewers in several other countries reported even higher levels of unease, including Zimbabwe, where similarly high levels of respondent suspicion did not prevent respondents from providing highly critical views on the state of democracy in their country.

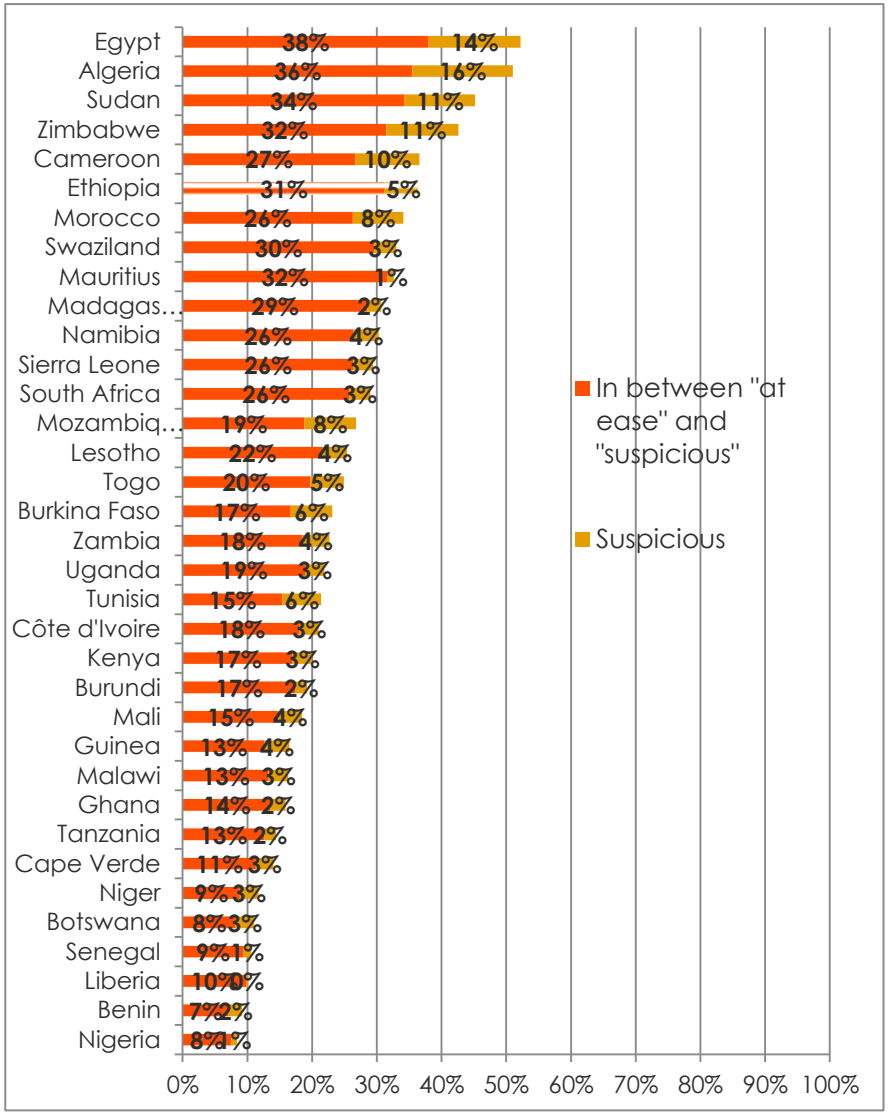
[7] The full responses were as follows: At ease (64%), in between (31%), suspicious (5%).

Figure 9: Political suspicion | 35 countries | 2011/2013

Respondent thinks interviewer is from state



Interviewer says respondent not at ease/suspicious



On a final note, it might seem obvious that respondents who think the interviewer is from a state entity are the ones who interviewers think are ill at ease or suspicious. In fact, there is no statistically significant relationship between the two. Levels of observed respondent unease are equally high among those who think the interviewer is from the state and those who accept the interviewer's neutrality. Moreover, while it might seem logical to expect that respondents with doubts about the bona fides of the survey interviewer would censor their reports of political fear, the actual situation is far more complex. Those respondents who thought the interviewer was really from a state entity were indeed less likely to say they feared speaking their minds about politics, but the relationship was weak.[8] Yet respondents who were ill at ease were slightly more likely to report political fear than those who were observed to be at ease.[9] For these reasons, the analyses below will examine the independent effects of respondent beliefs about the interviewer, interviewer observations of the respondent disposition, and respondent reports of political fear.

Political ignorance

In this section, we explore the possibility that ignorance of basic facts about leaders and policies may preclude Ethiopians from engaging the political system as active democratic citizens. They may lack sufficient information to understand existing flaws or deficiencies of the electoral process, recognize the centralization of political power, or be aware of the denial of human rights. At the most basic level, people with no other competing information may simply answer the survey question about democracy by referring to the official name of the country: the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Let us begin with education. Adult Ethiopians have some of the lowest, though not *the* lowest, levels of formal education across all Afrobarometer countries (Figure 10). Almost half of all people aged 18 and over have no formal schooling (Table 25). In total, seven in 10 adults never completed primary school. Education varies sharply along the country's urban-rural divide: 81% of rural Ethiopians have not completed primary school, compared to 35% of city dwellers.

Table 25: Formal education | Ethiopia | 2013

	%
No formal schooling	47
Some primary schooling	24
Primary schooling completed	8
Some secondary schooling	7
Secondary school completed	7
Post-secondary qualifications, not university	5
Some university	1
University completed	1
Post-graduate	<1
Don't know	<1

Respondents were asked: *What is the highest level of education you have completed?*

[8] Kendall's Tau c = -.095, p=.001.

[9] Kendall's Tau c = .056, p =.001.

Where Ethiopia differs most, and most consistently, from the other surveyed countries is in access to and use of news media. Large numbers of Ethiopians simply do not possess the basic necessities for consuming news. As of 2013, just 47% owned a radio (the lowest level in Afrobarometer), and 15% owned a television (lower than any other surveyed country save Malawi and Burundi). Both numbers vary widely depending on where people live. While two-thirds of city dwellers owned a radio (66%) and/or television (62%), the proportions in rural areas dropped to 42% for radio and just 3% for television.

More than eight in 10 Ethiopians never get news from a newspaper (85%) or the Internet (87%), and two-thirds never get news from television (65%) (Table 26). While access to and use of these news media are uneven across Africa, radio news normally provides almost universal access. Not so in Ethiopia, where four in 10 said they never get news from radio (39%). Again, the rural-urban divides are stark: While 56% of urban respondents reported watching television news broadcasts on a daily basis, 79% of those in the countryside never watch television news. Only Egypt has lower levels of radio news listenership, and only Burundi and Niger have lower levels of newspaper readership. When we construct an average index combining listenership, viewership, and readership, Ethiopia places dead last (Figure 10).

Table 26: News media use | Ethiopia | 2013

	Never	Less than once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Every day	Don't know
Radio news	39%	6%	8%	22%	24%	1%
Television news	65%	5%	6%	8%	14%	2%
Newspaper	85%	4%	4%	4%	1%	3%
Internet news	87%	11%	1%	2%	2%	7%

Respondents were asked: *How often do you get news from the following sources?*

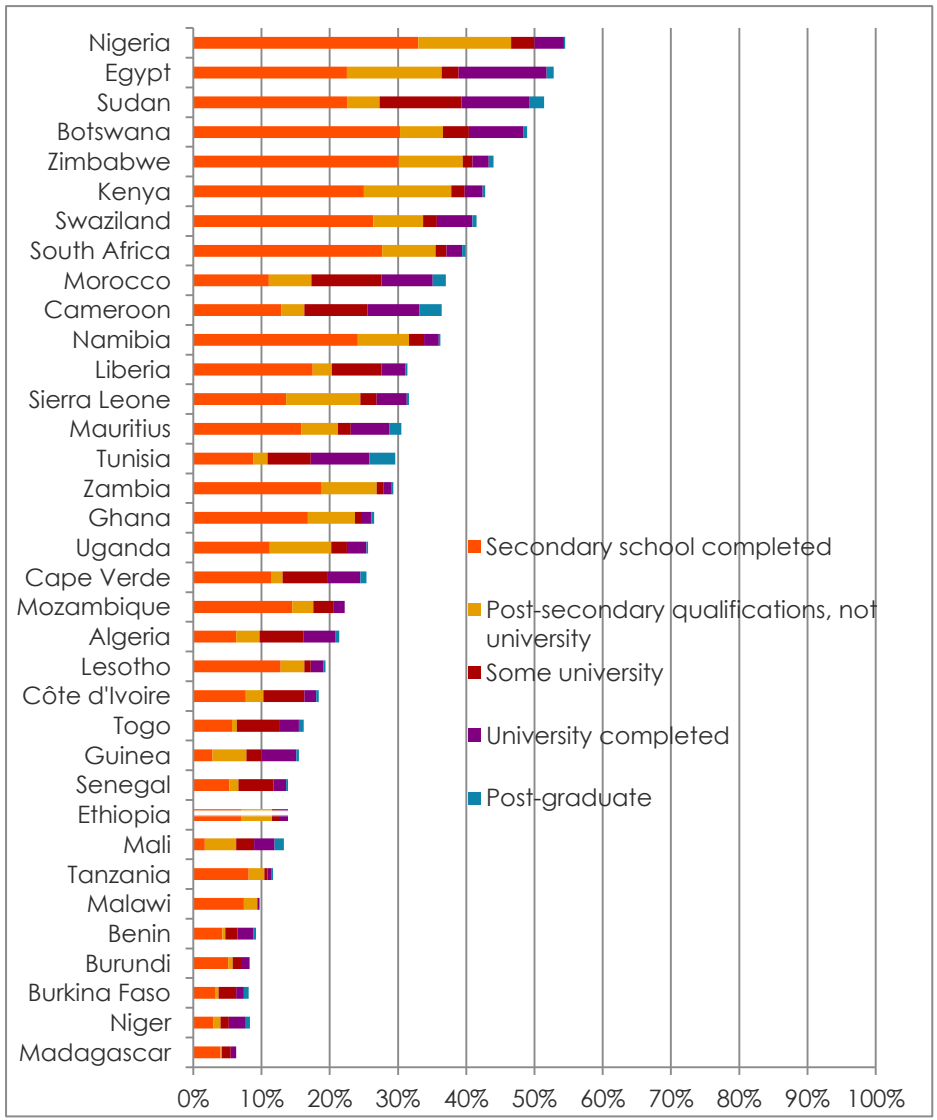
Walter Lippmann (1922) once noted that engaged citizenship requires that people possess a "picture in the head" of who their leaders are, whether they are trustworthy, and what goes on in the capital city. Absence of vicarious experiences of government leaders through video on television, pictures in newspapers, or speeches and interviews on radio could present Ethiopians with a major obstacle to political citizenship. Yet news media use is not a necessary condition for people to form an opinion about government policy and its impacts. Samuel Popkin (1994) has observed that people can use "low information reasoning" to draw inferences from everyday observations of consumer goods prices, the number of unemployed people on street corners, and housing and infrastructural construction. But "low information reasoning" is facilitated by the extent to which people talk to one another about politics and public affairs and take an active interest in them. Almost half of all respondents in Ethiopia said they "never" discuss politics (47%) (Table 27). This is one of the highest levels in Afrobarometer (surpassed only by Liberia, Burundi, and Madagascar) (Figure 11).

Table 27: Political discussion | Ethiopia | 2013

When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters. …?	**%**
Frequently	11
Occasionally	39
Never	47
Don't know	3

Figure 10: Indicators of information | 35 countries | 2011/2013

Formal education (completed high school)



News media use

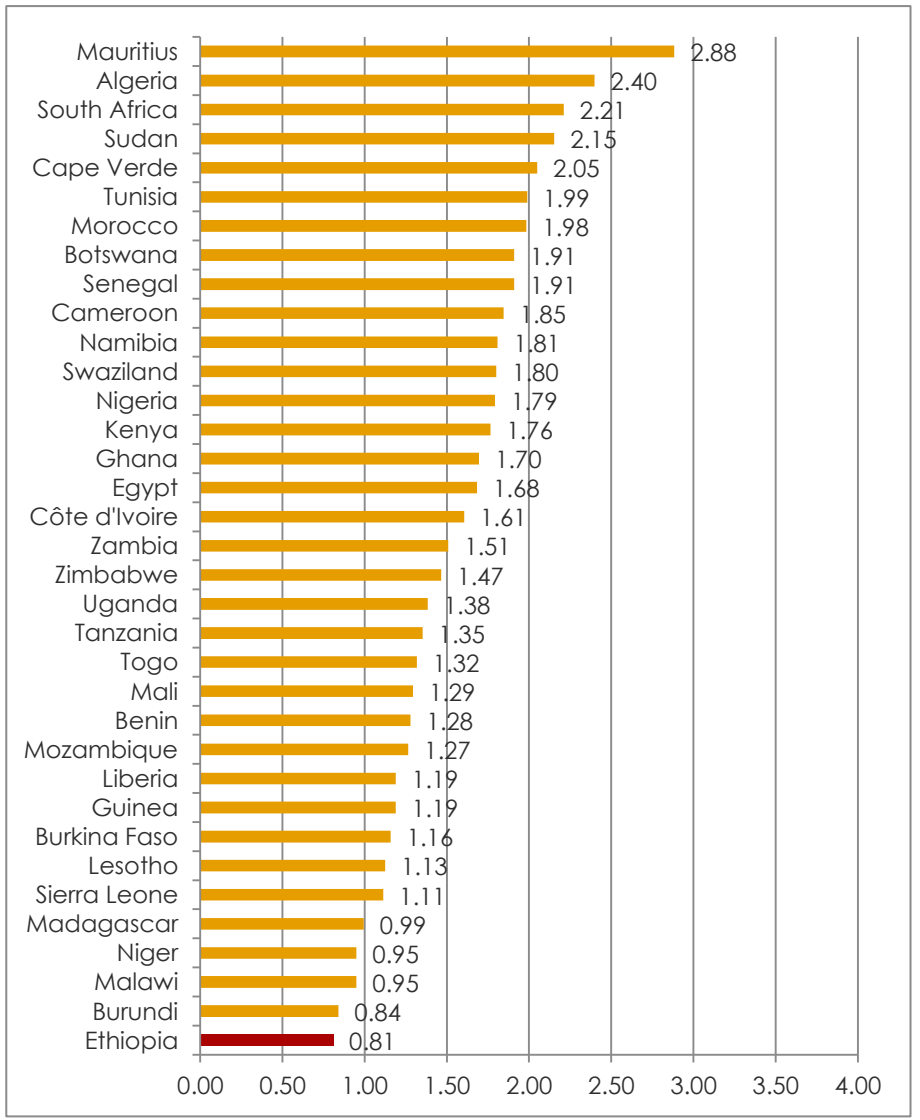
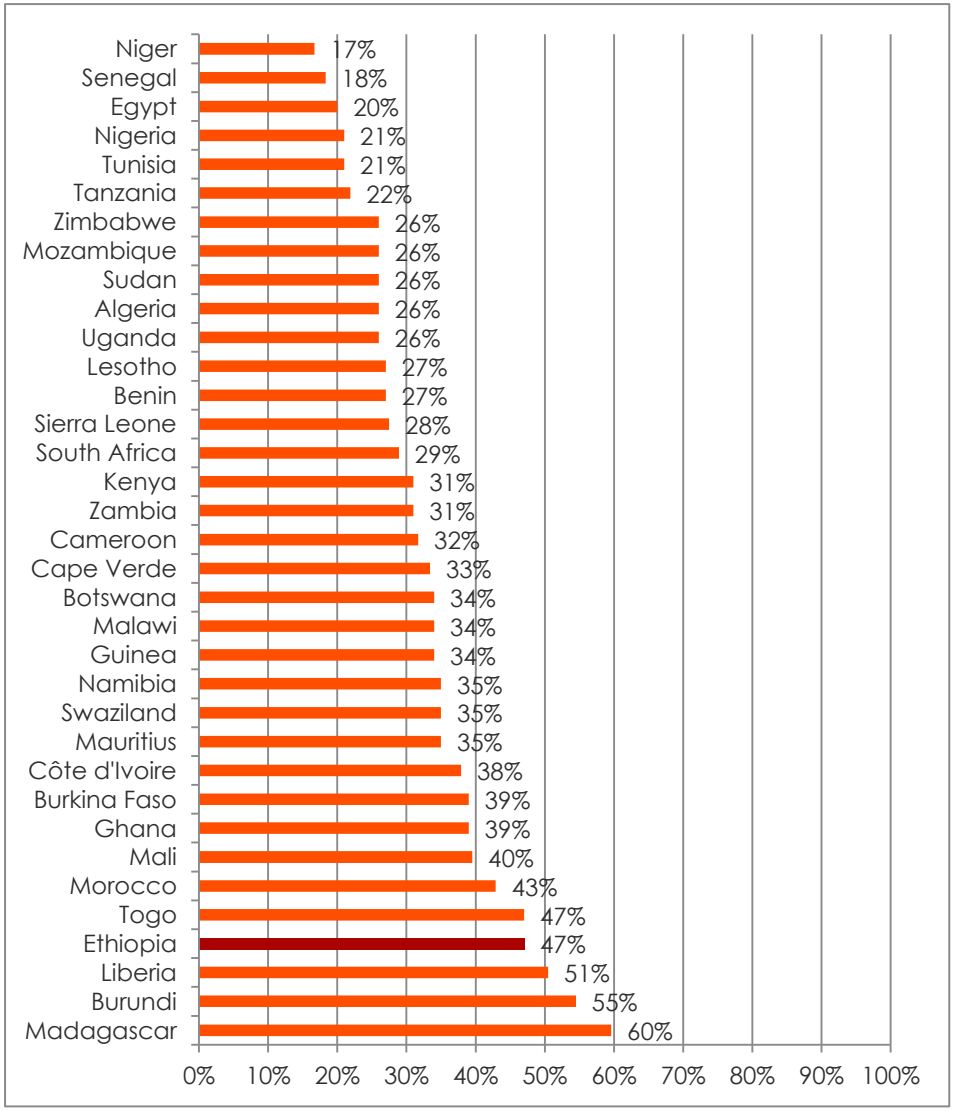
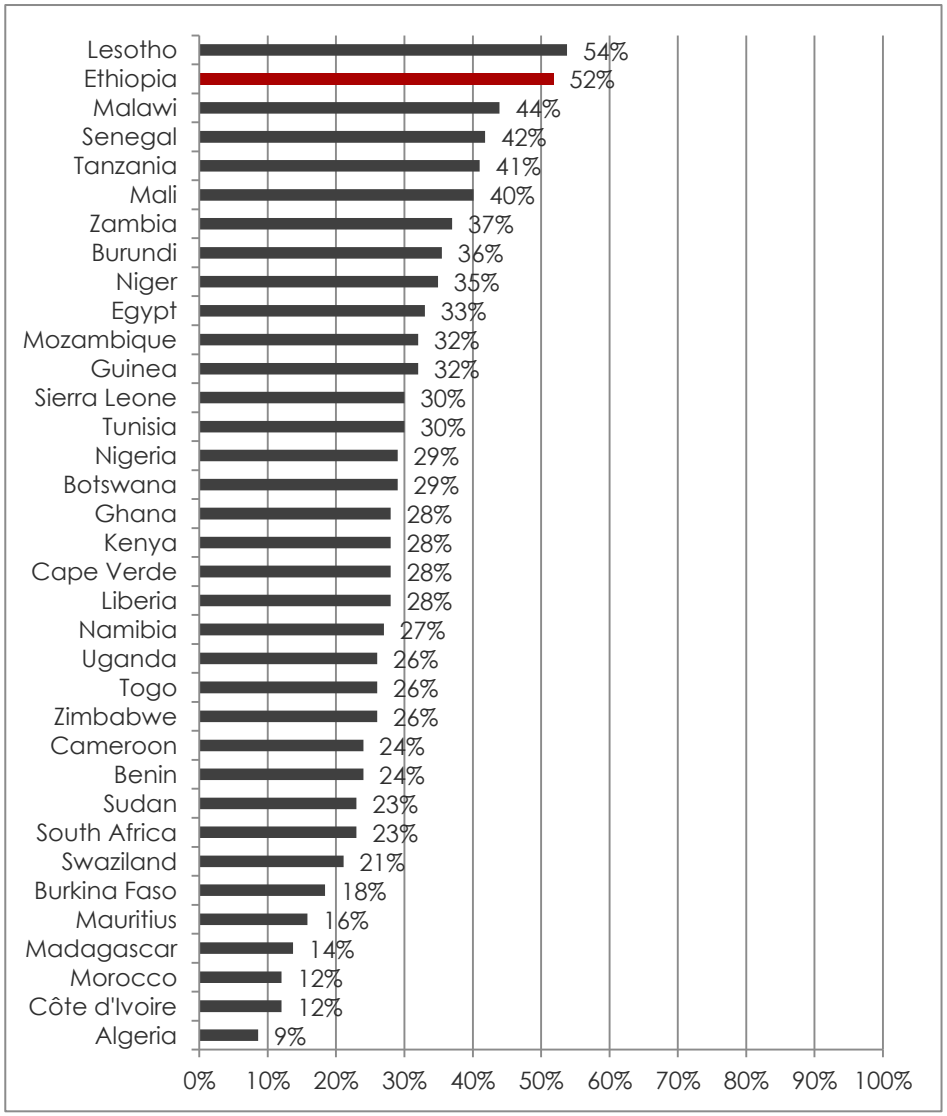


Figure 11: Indicators of cognitive engagement | 35 countries | 2011/2013

Never discuss politics



Very interested in politics



Is this low level of political discussion due to the fact that Ethiopians are apolitical and uninterested in politics? On the face of it, the answer is "no." While 47% "never" talk about politics, 84% claimed they are "very" or "somewhat" interested in politics (Table 28). In an astonishing *volte face* to political discussion – where Ethiopians rank among the lowest in Africa – they display the highest levels of interest in politics in Africa (along with citizens in Lesotho, which was embroiled in major electoral controversies) (Figure 11).

Table 28: Interest in politics | Ethiopia | 2013

How interested would you say you are in public affairs?	**%**
Very interested	52
Somewhat interested	32
Not very interested	7
Not at all interested	7
Don't know	2

A lack of critical skills gained through education combined with low access to information about everyday political events may constitute an important part of the explanation for the high levels of "don't know" responses to questions reviewed above. To better analyse this, we create two indices that calculate the probability that a respondent says "don't know" in response to (1) a series of 21 question items about political performance and (2) a series of 12 questions about political and democratic values. We find an average "don't know" rate of 36% for the performance questions and an average of 19% for the value questions. Again, these are the highest levels found anywhere in Afrobarometer, by a large margin (Figure 12).

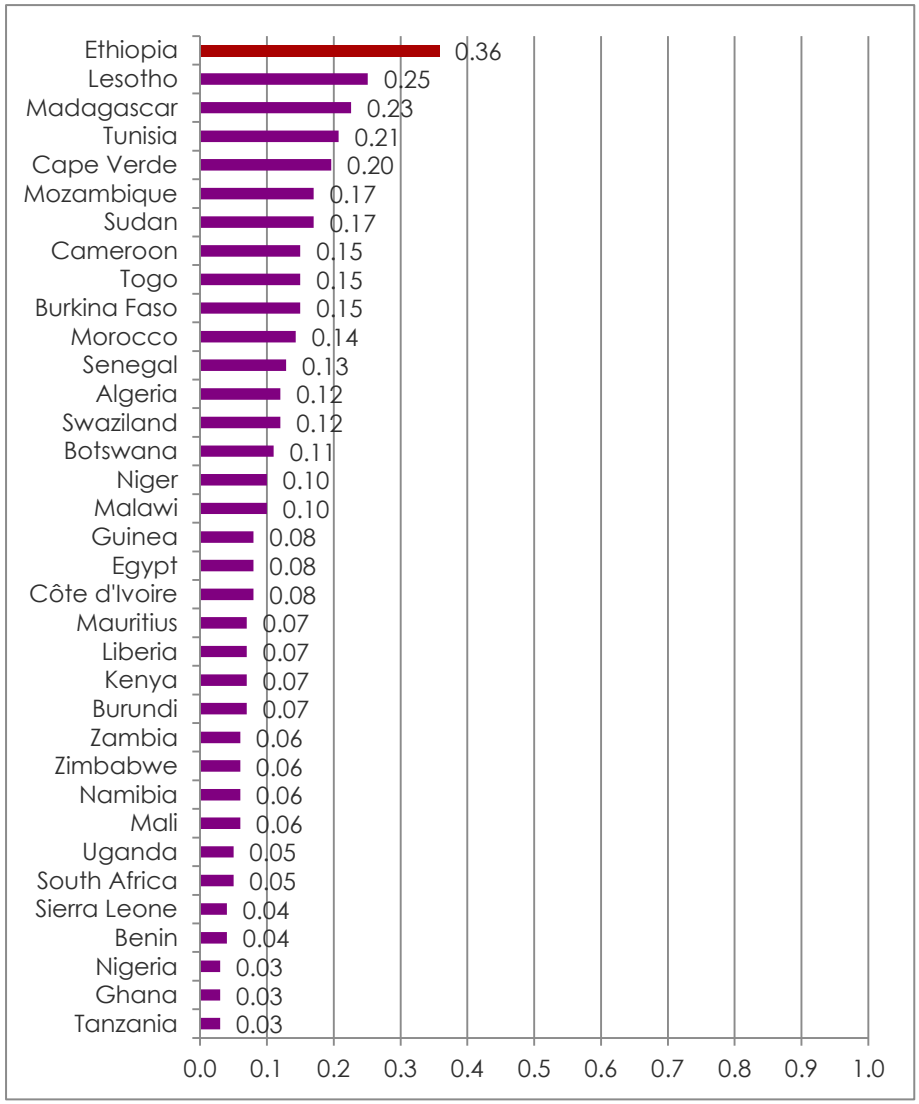
The differences in "don't know" rates between performance and value items are consistent with previous analyses of Afrobarometer results in countries that exhibited strong tendencies of "uncritical citizenship," such as Tanzania (Chaligha, Mattes, Bratton, & Davids, 2002) and Mozambique (Mattes & Shenga, 2013). "Don't know" responses are prevalent on questions that require some form of factual knowledge, but substantially lower for value preferences.

On the other hand, we find important differences by type of evaluation question. Even with very low levels of schooling and news media use, Ethiopians offer very few "don't know" responses on questions that allow them to use "low information reasoning" and draw inferences from events and trends in their immediate environment, e.g. about how well the government is handling basic services and living standards (less than 10% "don't know"). They even register moderately low levels of "don't know" when they draw larger inferences to things such as government economic management (10%-20%). At the other end of the spectrum, however, when they are asked to comment on national leaders and national political institutions, or the relationships between those institutions – issues that require at least some basic factual knowledge – "don't know" levels rise steeply (more than 30%).

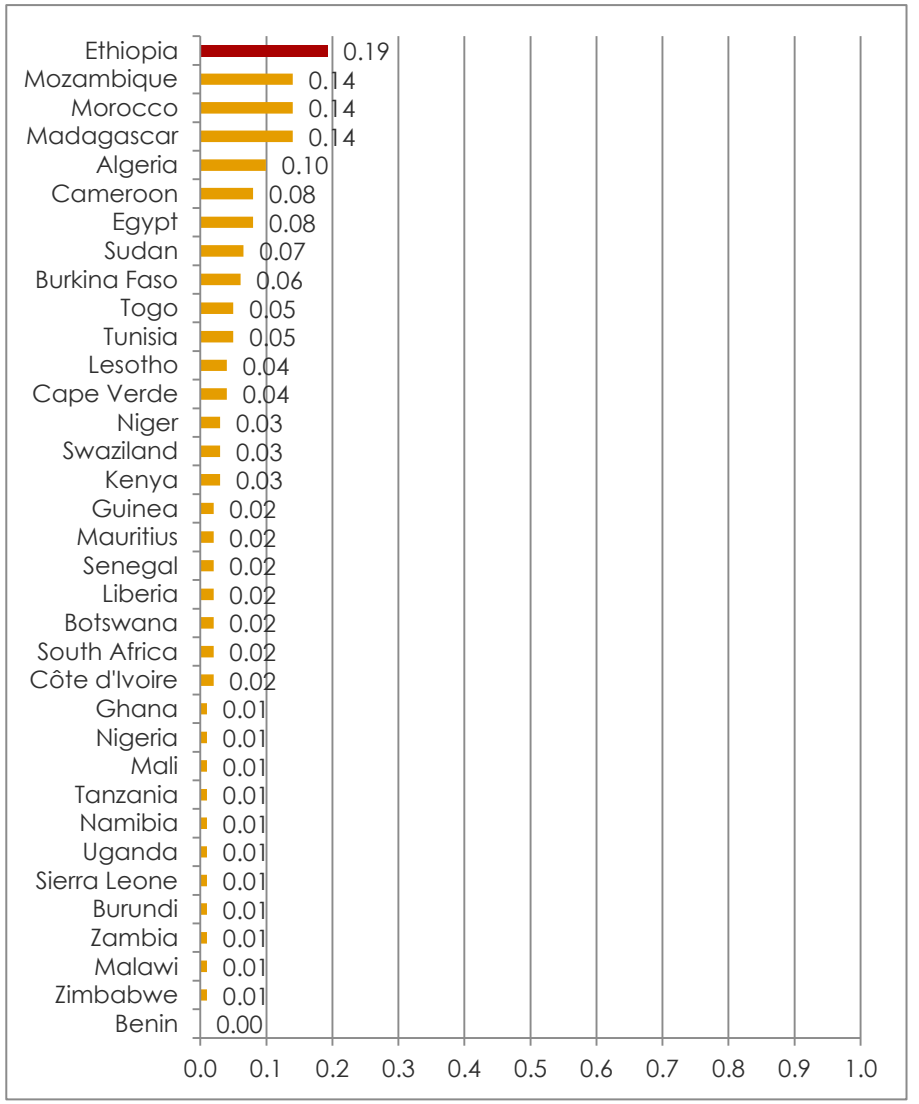
And with regard to democratic values, we see that most Ethiopians are able to offer substantive responses to questions about democracy that explicitly use the "d-word." However, they are far more likely, and consistently most likely of all Afrobarometer respondents, to give "don't know" responses to a range of other questions about democracy that do not use the word "democracy". So, for example, without the word "democracy" to guide them, one in five respondents don't know where they stand on the issues of one-party rule and big-man rule. They are also most likely of all Afrobarometer countries – and sometimes by wide margins – to give "don't know" responses to questions about multipartyism, parliamentary control of law-making, whether the prime minister should obey the law, and whether the prime minister should be monitored by Parliament, opposition parties, and the news media.

Figure 12: Inability to offer opinions | 35 countries | 2011/2013

Political performance questions



Value questions



The effects of fear, suspicion, and ignorance

To what extent do political fear, suspicion of the interviewer, or ignorance shape the levels of uncritical citizenship that were expressed during the Ethiopia Afrobarometer survey? We address this question with a series of multiple regression analyses using a range of evaluations and preferences as dependent variables. In the first instance, we test the effect of respondent perceptions of political fear, the belief that the interviewer is from the state, and interviewer observations of the respondent's disposition. We also construct two interaction terms that assess the impact of being both fearful *and* suspicious. In the second instance, we test the effect of a range of indicators of information and cognitive skills (including level of education, news media use, frequency of political discussion, interest in politics, internal efficacy (the perception that politics are too complicated to understand), and urban-rural residence) on each of the selected dependent variables (tables 29-32).

On the face of it, we might expect that respondents who say it is not safe to speak one's mind, who doubt ballot secrecy, or who suspect that the survey fieldworker is a state agent would be more likely to censor their true views and provide *more* optimistic assessments of the state of democracy.

Yet in at least one earlier analysis of survey responses in a similarly politically restrictive situation, analysts found that fear did not have the anticipated effects. In their analysis of the Afrobarometer 2004 survey in Zimbabwe, which found surprisingly positive evaluations of the performance of President Robert Mugabe, they concluded that "remarkably, it pulls in a direction opposite to what we would have predicted. People who feel fearful are twice as likely to give a negative rating to the president. In other words, despite their fear, people are willing to take the risk of speaking truth to power" (Chikwanha, Sithole, & Bratton, 2004, p. 24). At the same time, Zimbabweans who suspected that the interviewer was from the state were more than twice as likely to say they approved of the performance of Mugabe.

We find similar dynamics in Ethiopia. To recall, our index of political fear is a composite measure that sums respondents' views of their ability to speak their minds, join associations, avoid partisan violence and intimidation, and vote without pressure and in secret. We find that Ethiopians who score highly on this index – i.e. who are more fearful – are *more* likely to say they are dissatisfied with government economic performance (Table 29), disapprove of their leaders, see them as corrupt, distrust institutions, and call the last election unfree (Table 30).

But in contrast to the findings in Zimbabwe, we find little or no evidence that suspicious respondents were more likely to give positive replies. Rather, this happens only when suspicion combines with fear. Fearful respondents who suspected that the interviewer was from the state were more likely to say Ethiopia was headed in the right direction, express satisfaction with the economy, and give government strong marks in terms of economic stewardship (Table 29). And fearful respondents who were ill at ease or showed suspicion during the interview were also significantly less likely to express a range of negative evaluations of leaders, institutions, or elections (Table 30).

Table 29: Correlations of indicators of fear/suspicion and ratings of economy | Ethiopia | 2013

	Country headed in right direction	Index of evaluations of national econ trends	Index of govt handling of macroecon	Index of govt handling of public services
Constant	1.97	3.62	2.67	2.49
Index of political fear	-.338***	-.243***	-.283***	-.195***
Respondent thinks interviewer from state	NS	NS	NS	NS
Respondent uneasy	NS	NS	NS	NS
Interviewer from state x fear	.139***	.101*	.119**	NS
Unease x fear	.121**	NS	NS	NS
Adjusted R^2	.066	.037	.060	.043
N	2,351	2,346	2,346	2,339

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =<.05*

Table 30: Correlations of indicators of fear/suspicion and ratings of leaders and institutions | Ethiopia | 2013

	Disapprove of elected leaders	Institutions are corrupt	Index of govt handling of crime/ corruption	Distrust institutions	Election unfree/ unfair
Constant	0.12	0.09	3.02	0.07	-0.05
Index of political fear	.200***	.173***	-.197***	.280***	.299***
Respondent thinks interviewer from state	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Respondent uneasy	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Interviewer from state x fear	-.094*	NS	NS	NS	NS
Unease x fear	-.112**	-.131**	NS	-.106*	-.162***
Adjusted R^2	.030	.037	.044	.061	.063
N	2,348	2,336	2,346	2,344	2,349

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =<.05*

While levels of information or cognitive skills have little impact on respondents' evaluations of the economy (Table 31), they have important effects on ratings of leaders and institutions (Table 32). Educated respondents were consistently more likely to offer negative opinions, as were those who frequently engage in political discussion or use news media.

Table 31: Correlations of indicators of information and ratings of economy | Ethiopia | 2013

	Country headed in right direction	Index of evaluations of national econ trends	Index of govt handling of macroecon	Index of govt handling of public services
Constant	1.51	2.56	1.96	2.25
Education	NS	NS	NS	NS
Index of news media use	NS	.055*	.060*	.111***
Political discussion	NS	.045*	NS	.051**
Political interest	.067**	.094***	.095***	.083***
Internal efficacy	NS	NS	NS	NS
Rural	.074**	.153***	.104***	-.067**
Adjusted R^2	.007	.030	.024	.034
N	2,378	2,373	2,373	2,368

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

Table 32: Correlations of indicators of information and ratings of leaders and institutions | Ethiopia | 2013

	Disapprove of elected leaders	Institutions are corrupt	Index of govt handling of crime/corruption	Distrust institutions	Election unfree/unfair
Constant	0.11	0.10	2.61	0.14	0.04
Education	.153***	.150***	NS	.164***	.112***
Index of news media use	.087***	NS	.075**	NS	NS
Political discussion	NS	.092***	NS	.098***	.042*
Political interest	NS	NS	.077***	NS	NS
Internal efficacy	-.049*	NS	NS	-.060**	NS
Rural	NS	-.047*	NS	-.089***	NS
Adjusted R^2	.059	.052	.007	.081	.015
N	2,374	2,361	2,373	2,369	2,376

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

We then repeat the same exercise, but substitute the indices of "don't know" responses reported earlier as the dependent variable. Here we find different dynamics. First, in sharp contrast to the previous discussion, political fear makes respondents *less* likely to offer evaluations of various areas of political performance, or to express values about democracy and governance. Second, respondents who were uneasy during the interview were also more likely to avoid offering any opinion. Similarly, those who both thought the fieldworker worked for the government and feared political intimidation were less likely to express their political values (Table 33).

Table 33: Correlations of indicators of fear/suspicion and "don't know" responses | Ethiopia | 2013

	Index of "don't know" evaluations	Index of "don't know" values
Constant	0.24	.068
Index of political fear	.152***	.164***
Respondent thinks interviewer from state	NS	NS
Respondent uneasy	.128***	NS
Interviewer from state x fear	NS	NS
Unease x fear	NS	.100*
Adjusted R^2	.060	.066
N	2,351	2,351

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

However, information and cognitive skills have at least three times as much influence on the rate of "don't know" responses as suspicion and fear (see the Adjusted R^2 statistic). Educated respondents who make frequent use of news media, talk to others about politics, and take an active interest in politics were substantially less likely than the average Ethiopian to refrain from offering opinions or values (Table 34).

Table 34: Correlations of indicators of information and "don't know" responses | Ethiopia | 2013

	Index of "don't know" evaluations	Index of "don't know" values
Constant	0.63	-0.47
Education	-.230***	-.233***
Index of news media use	-.159***	-.180***
Political discussion	-.228***	-.191***
Political interest	-.133***	-.198***
Internal efficacy	NS	.063***
Rural	NS	NS
Adjusted R^2	.249	.273
N	2,378	2,378

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

Finally, we use the same models to examine the link between fear, suspicion, and ignorance on respondent ratings of democracy. Here we find yet again a different pattern. As with other substantive performance evaluations, respondents who perceive a high level of political fear in Ethiopia were substantially less likely to say the country is a democracy. But we find no corresponding impact of suspicion (Table 35).

Table 35: Correlations of indicators of fear/suspicion and supply of democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	Perceived extent of democracy (Ethiopia)	Perceived extent of democracy (rest of Afrobarometer)
Constant	3.62	2.869
Index of political fear	-.369***	-.302***
Respondent thinks interviewer from state	NS	.048***
Respondent uneasy	NS	-.039***
Interviewer from state x fear	NS	.026**
Unease x fear	NS	NS
Adjusted R^2	.119	.093
N	2,349	50,127

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =<.05*

Levels of information also play a direct role in ratings of democracy, though they make a smaller impact than does fear. Educated respondents and frequent consumers of news were less likely to say the country is democratic. However, the frequency of political discussion plays no role, and those Ethiopians who said they are interested in politics (an area in which Ethiopia leads all other Afrobarometer countries) were actually more likely to rate the regime positively. And those who were unable to offer opinions on political values were also less likely to say the country is democratic (Table 36).

Table 36: Correlations of indicators of information and supply of democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	Perceived extent of democracy (Ethiopia)	Perceived extent of democracy (rest of Afrobarometer)
Constant	2.86	2.35
Education	-.098***	-.119***
Index of news media use	-.070**	NS
Political discussion	NS	-.039***
Political interest	.113***	.070***
Internal efficacy	.058**	.023***
"Don't know" evaluations	NS	-.029***
"Don't know" values	-.087**	-.019***
Rural	.096***	.013**
Adjusted R2	.056	.01
N	2,376	51,512

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

Finally, we examine the consequences of how Ethiopians understand democracy. We earlier observed that Ethiopians were far more likely to see democracy in terms of economic or governance outcomes than as a set of political procedures and human freedoms. The present analysis confirms that respondents with such an instrumental understanding of democracy were substantially more likely to call Ethiopia a democracy. Respondents who were unable to offer a meaning of democracy (about one in 10) were less likely to see the country as democratic. It is also noteworthy that people who support democracy (as measured by the question that explicitly uses the "d-word") were more likely to say that the country is, in fact, democratic. However, rejection of non-democratic alternatives has no significant impact. Moreover, the small minority of respondents who believe in the necessity of limiting the power of government in general, and the executive in particular, were much less likely to think the country is democratic (Table 37). This suggests to us that many Ethiopians simply have a reflexively positive connotation of the word, without any substantive knowledge of what it really entails.

Table 37: Correlations of support for dimensions of democracy and perceived extent of democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	Perceived extent of democracy (Ethiopia)	Perceived extent of democracy (rest of Afrobarometer)
Constant	3.13	2.14
Instrumentalist understanding of democracy	.132***	NS
Don't know what democracy means	-.095***	NS
Support for democracy	.131***	.093***
Index of rejection of authoritarian alternatives	NS	NS
Index of support for limited government	-.184***	-.055***
Adjusted R2	.087	.010
N	2,365	47,876

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

Accounting for Ethiopians' assessments of democracy

We conclude by attempting to understand Ethiopians' effusive, anomalous appraisal of the status of democracy in their country. While the preceding analyses have examined the separate effects of suspicion and fear, information and cognitive skills, understandings of democracy, and performance evaluations, we now examine their combined effect. Multiple regression enables us to assess these linkages while taking the simultaneous impact of other variables into account. While we began this paper by examining Ethiopians' evaluations of economic and political performance, we construct our multivariate model in reverse order, beginning with suspicion and fear and ending with economic and political performance. Across all models, we hold constant for three demographic factors: age, gender, and whether or not the respondent identifies with the ruling party.

Model 1 in Table 38 replicates the analysis we have already seen in Table 35 with the addition of the control variables. In contrast to previous analyses showing that the interaction of political suspicion and political fear shapes answers to questions about aspects of economic and political governance, respondent estimates of the extent of democracy are inflated by suspicion and deflated by fear, and the interaction effects have no statistically significant impact. Taken together, these variables explain 13% of the variation in evaluations of democracy.

Table 38: Regression estimates of predictors of perceived extent of democracy | Ethiopia | 2013

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Constant	3.13	3.28	3.04	1.30	0.95
Respondent thinks interviewer is from state	.042*	NS	NS	NS	NS
Respondent not at ease	.059***	.044*	.048**	.047**	.038*
Index of political fear	-.325***	-.327***	-.294***	-.146***	-.132***
Education		-.094***	-.075**	NS	NS
News media use		-.075**	-.057*	-.071**	-.080***
Political interest		.110***	.094***	.051**	.046*
Able to understand politics		.041*	.047*	NS	NS
Instrumentalist understanding of democracy			.110***	-.097***	.098***
Support democracy			.124***	.094***	.088***
Support for limited government			-.114***	-.097***	-.089***
Election free and fair				.235***	.223***
Elected representatives are responsive				.083***	.084***
Index of supply of horizontal accountability				.084***	.081***
Index of extortion victimization				-.071***	-.068***
Index of government handling of crime and corruption				.085***	.057**
Incumbent job approval				.110***	.086***
Country headed in right direction					.084***
Index of national economic conditions					.045*
Age	NS	-.050*	-.041*	.110***	-.050**
Rural	.130***	.051*	.051*	.070***	.062**
Female	.044*	.041*	.047*	-.060***	.046*
Identify with EPRDF	.072***	.072***	.062***	NS	NS
Adjusted R^2	.145	.164	.202	.305	.319
N	2,314	2,307	2,290	2,268	2,255

*Cell entries are standardized beta regression coefficients. *** p =<.00; ** p=<.01; * p =.05*

The addition of variables related to information and cognitive skills increases the explanatory power of the model to 16% (Model 2). But their addition also removes the impact of respondent doubts about the identity of the interviewer. Formal education and news media use produce more sceptical evaluations of the state of democracy, but interest in politics leads to more favourable assessments.

The strength of the explanatory model increases to 21% with the addition of Ethiopians' understandings of democracy (Model 3). As we saw earlier, those who see democracy as a set of economic and governance outcomes and who say they prefer democracy are more likely to say they are living in a democracy. However, rejection of non-democratic alternatives has no effect. And those who support various limitations on government and executive power are substantially less likely to say Ethiopia is democratic.

Political performance evaluations make a substantial addition to the model, increasing explained variance to 31% (Model 4). The perception that the 2010 election was free and fair, that government is held accountable, that elected representatives are responsive, and that incumbent leaders are doing their jobs well (both in general and in controlling crime and corruption specifically) all lead to positive assessments of democracy. Personal experience with official extortion, on the other hand, leads to more negative assessments.

Model 5 attempts to add a wide range of economic performance evaluations, but most turn out to be statistically insignificant. Positive assessments of economic trends and the belief that the country is headed in the right direction are important, but they add only incrementally to the contribution of political performance evaluations.

Conclusion

The results of five rounds of Afrobarometer surveys in up to 35 African countries demonstrate clearly that ordinary African citizens tend to reach the same conclusions about the extent of democracy in their own country as international expert rating systems devised by political scientists. Yet the 2013 Afrobarometer survey in Ethiopia produces a clear anomaly. While no expert assessment comes close to calling Ethiopia a democracy, 81% of Ethiopian respondents told Afrobarometer interviewers that the country is either a complete democracy or one with only minor problems. This paper has sought to solve this puzzle.

The best explanation of why Ethiopians think their country is a democracy is their very positive assessment of political and economic developments. Of those who offered an opinion, the overwhelming majority said that the most recent election was free and fair, that the executive respects the Constitution and legislature, and that very few officials are corrupt. They also said the country was headed in the right direction, saw the economy as improving, and considered that the government had managed the economy well. Ethiopians who held these opinions were far more likely to say the country is democratic.

However, we have also located a clear syndrome of "uncritical citizenship" that affects the way Ethiopians form these opinions. That is, Ethiopians are consistently among the most likely respondents across 35 Afrobarometer surveys to say they "don't know" – sometimes more than one-third of respondents said this – when asked to evaluate economic and political performance. And based on those who did give substantive responses, Ethiopians rank as the least likely people to offer explicitly critical replies.

An important part of the explanation of Ethiopians' uncritical assessments of the democratic character and performance of the regime is their distinctive understanding of the concept "democracy." Ethiopians attach a highly positive connotation to the word "democracy." Yet they display a poor grasp of what the concept actually entails. Many are willing to accept clearly undemocratic alternative regime types. While they understand it as a system of elected government, they have little appreciation of the importance of multiparty competition or the roles played by rights, laws, courts, legislatures, opposition parties, or the news media in restraining government and limiting the role of the executive.

In addition, Ethiopians tend to define democracy instrumentally (that is, in terms of the provision of material welfare or effective governance) rather than intrinsically (that is, as the protection of individual freedoms or the observance of political procedures such as competitive elections and institutional checks and balances). By wide margins, Ethiopians see political authority in paternalist terms (as a "parent" rather than an "employee") and prefer a government that "gets things done" to one that follows proper procedures. All of these (mis)understandings of democracy lead Ethiopians to overrate – by a wide margin – the extent and quality of democracy in their country.

Going beyond the survey results, this paper interprets this tendency as a consequence of an institutional legacy of feudal monarchy and Leninist one-party rule. Never having experienced an interlude of democracy, citizens have instead imbibed a top-down ideology of guardianship by which a paternalistic elite promises to provide material welfare in lieu of guarantees of political liberties. In other words, Ethiopians not only suffer limited knowledge about what democracy means; rather, the concept has been redefined for them. And by buying into the EPRDF's definition of "revolutionary democracy," Ethiopians remain subjects rather than citizens.

Throughout this report, we have also focussed on the impact of the country's extremely low levels of development and modernization, especially with respect to education and communications. Ethiopia has one of the highest proportions of rural-based citizens amongst the 35 Afrobarometer countries. The Ethiopian electorate is also characterized by some of the lowest levels of formal education, the lowest level of news media use, and one of the lowest levels of political discussion. In particular, the penetration of news media in rural Ethiopia is extremely limited. An astonishingly low 2% of rural dwellers read newspapers on at least a weekly basis, and only 3% of rural dwellers own a television.

Finally, we have also probed the possibility that, given the country's long-standing one-party dominance and low levels of political freedom, at least some survey respondents censored themselves and did not reveal their true evaluations and preferences. We located significant levels of political fear, as indicated by perceived insecurity in their ability to join associations, to vote without pressure, and particularly to speak freely about politics. Significant minorities also worried about electoral intimidation and violence. We also found that Ethiopians exhibited a high degree of political suspicion of the survey environment. They expressed the highest levels of suspicion of the neutrality of Afrobarometer fieldworkers in Africa: Two-thirds of respondents told interviewers at the conclusion of the interview that they thought they were really from some part of the Ethiopian state. In turn, Afrobarometer interviewers observed relatively high proportions of respondents who seemed ill at ease or suspicious in the course of the interview.

While neither ignorance (with the exception of news media use) nor political suspicion has a direct impact on Ethiopians' anomalous assessment of the quality of democracy, they both play important indirect roles. The small proportion of respondents who are well educated, who use the news media frequently, and who engage in frequent political discussion were much more likely to offer negative evaluations, and were also far more likely to offer opinions about political performance. These factors are also strongly connected to the inability to answer questions about democratic norms that do not actually use the word "democracy." In turn, the vast majority of Ethiopians who infrequently or never use news media offered more rose-coloured assessments of the country's democracy than those who use news media frequently.

Perhaps more importantly, we found that respondent trust in the fieldworker and comfort with the survey interview environment play key roles and interact with levels of political fear. Respondents who were *both* fearful of political intimidation *and* suspicious of the interview environment were more likely to offer positive views of economic and political governance and the performance of leaders and institutions, as well as more likely to decline to answer these questions. Alternatively, those who experienced political fear but trusted the interviewer and were comfortable with the survey environment used the survey to criticize

government and the state of democracy. To put it another way, as long as the interviewer earned the respondent's trust, the survey empowered fearful Ethiopians to express things that they otherwise would feel unsafe saying publicly in the village marketplace (or privately on the telephone or Internet) and thereby "speak truth to power."

This has important implications for survey researchers who work in electoral authoritarian regimes in Africa and elsewhere. In liberal democracies such as South Africa or Benin, the perception that the interviewer works for the state may stem from an awareness that state agencies regularly send researchers to local communities to measure employment, economic activity, or public health, and may have a benign effect. In countries like Ethiopia, however, with palpable levels of political fear, this perception may lead a significant number of respondents to censor themselves, either by declining to answer questions or by offering more positive answers than they would otherwise. This may not be a problem for census-takers or surveyors of employment, income, or health status. However, it poses significant challenges to researchers who want to measure contentious issues where respondents may perceive a socially desirable or politically correct answer, such as sexual behaviour, values about gender or democracy, or people's evaluations of economic and political performance. This may be especially true when interviews are conducted with rural or less informed respondents. In these cases, researchers may need to go beyond standard protocols of obtaining informed consent and take extraordinary measures to convince respondents of the neutrality of the survey organisation and the confidentiality of their answers.

Finally, because of the idiosyncratic way in which Ethiopians apparently understand democracy, extreme caution must be exercised in attempting to compare any responses to "d-word" questions from Ethiopia with those from other African countries. Indeed, because of the evident cross-country incomparability of this set of responses, Afrobarometer has refrained from integrating data from Ethiopia into the merged Afrobarometer Round 5 data set. Analysts who wish to explore public opinion in Ethiopia should use the Ethiopia data set in a stand-alone setting or limit their comparative analysis to items that do not use the "d-word."

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