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Press Release

For further information or to arrange an interview with Afrobarometer's investigators, please contact Sam Balongo, 254 733 424 906 ; 254 710 690 000.

Afrobarometer Finds Correlations between Freedom to Speak and Good Governance

Citizens' freedom of expression is strongly correlated with effective governments, according to data collected in face-to-face interviews with more than 51,000 Africans in 34 countries during Round 5 of the Afrobarometer (2011-13). Where people feel that they are free to say what they want, they also report that their leaders are more trustworthy and less corrupt than do their peers, the survey shows. Freedom of expression is also consistently linked to better ratings of government performance, especially with respect to government effectiveness in fighting corruption, but also in other sectors such as maintaining roads and managing the economy.

The findings are detailed in Afrobarometer's new report, "The Partnership of Free Speech and Good Governance in Africa," released today from the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. Written by Winnie Mitullah and Paul Kamau from IDS, the report also documents the relationship between freedom of expression and the media's effectiveness as a government watchdog.

Figure 1: Freedom of expression & perceptions of governments' ability to fight corruption

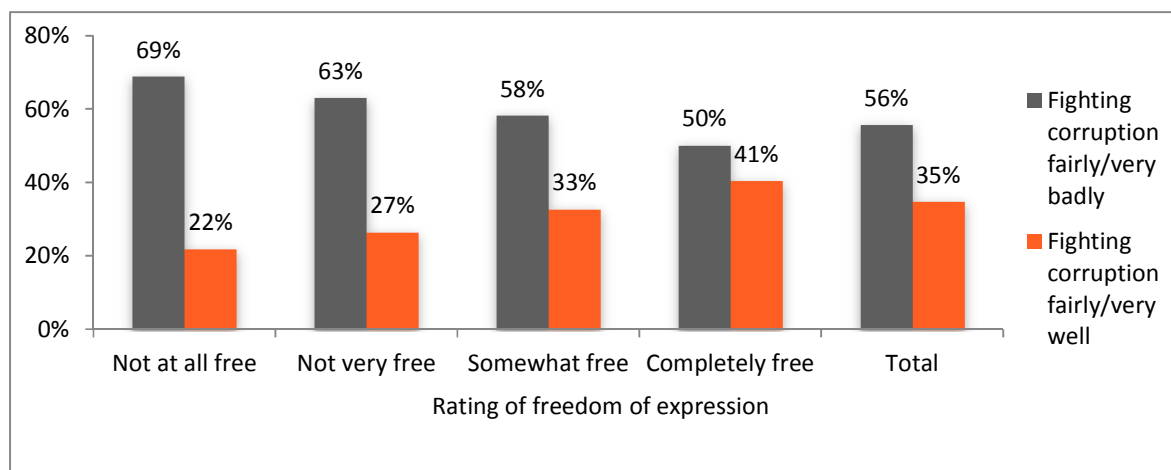


Chart compares responses to the question: 'In this country, how free are you to say what you think?' with responses to the question: 'How well or badly do you think the government is handling the following matters: fighting corruption in government?'



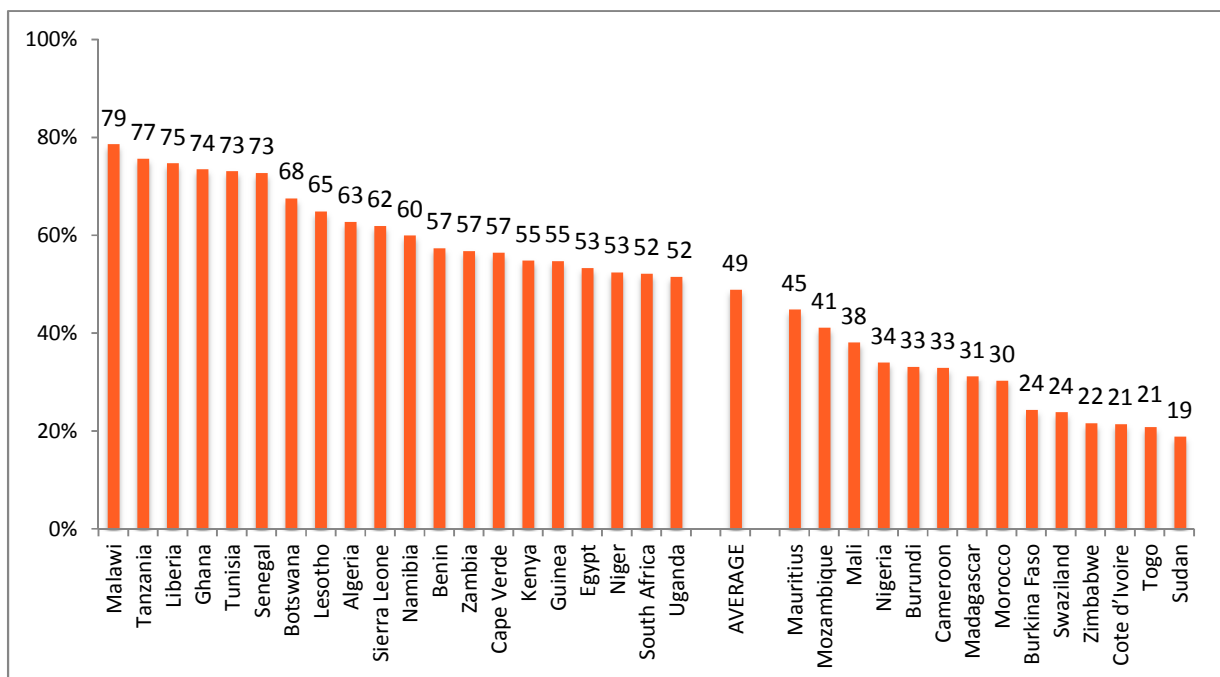
Key Findings

- Just half of Africans surveyed (49%) across 34 countries say that they are ‘completely free’ to say what they think, while another quarter (26%) say they are at least ‘somewhat free’.
- Open countries like Malawi, Tanzania and Liberia – where at least three-quarters of citizens feel completely free to express themselves – contrast sharply with countries like Burkina Faso, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Cote d’Ivoire, Togo and Sudan, where only about one in four perceive unrestricted opportunities for free speech.
- Popular demand for media freedom is solid, with 57% endorsing an unfettered right to publish; the proportions range from 52% in West Africa to 72% among East Africans.
- Citizens give high marks to their national media for effectiveness in revealing government mistakes and corruption; an average of 71% say the media in their country is either ‘somewhat’ or ‘very effective’. But this average masks wide differences, from 40% in Madagascar and 43% in Zimbabwe, to 80% or more among Malawians and Egyptians. East Africans are much more likely (81%) to rate their media as effective watchdogs compared to all other regions.
- Individual freedom of speech and media effectiveness go hand in hand; the two are strongly and positively correlated.
- Freedom of speech is also strongly linked to citizens’ ratings of their leaders: greater freedom is associated with higher levels of trust in leaders and lower reported levels of corruption.
- Freedom of speech is also associated with higher ratings of government performance across all sectors, especially with respect to fighting corruption.



Charts

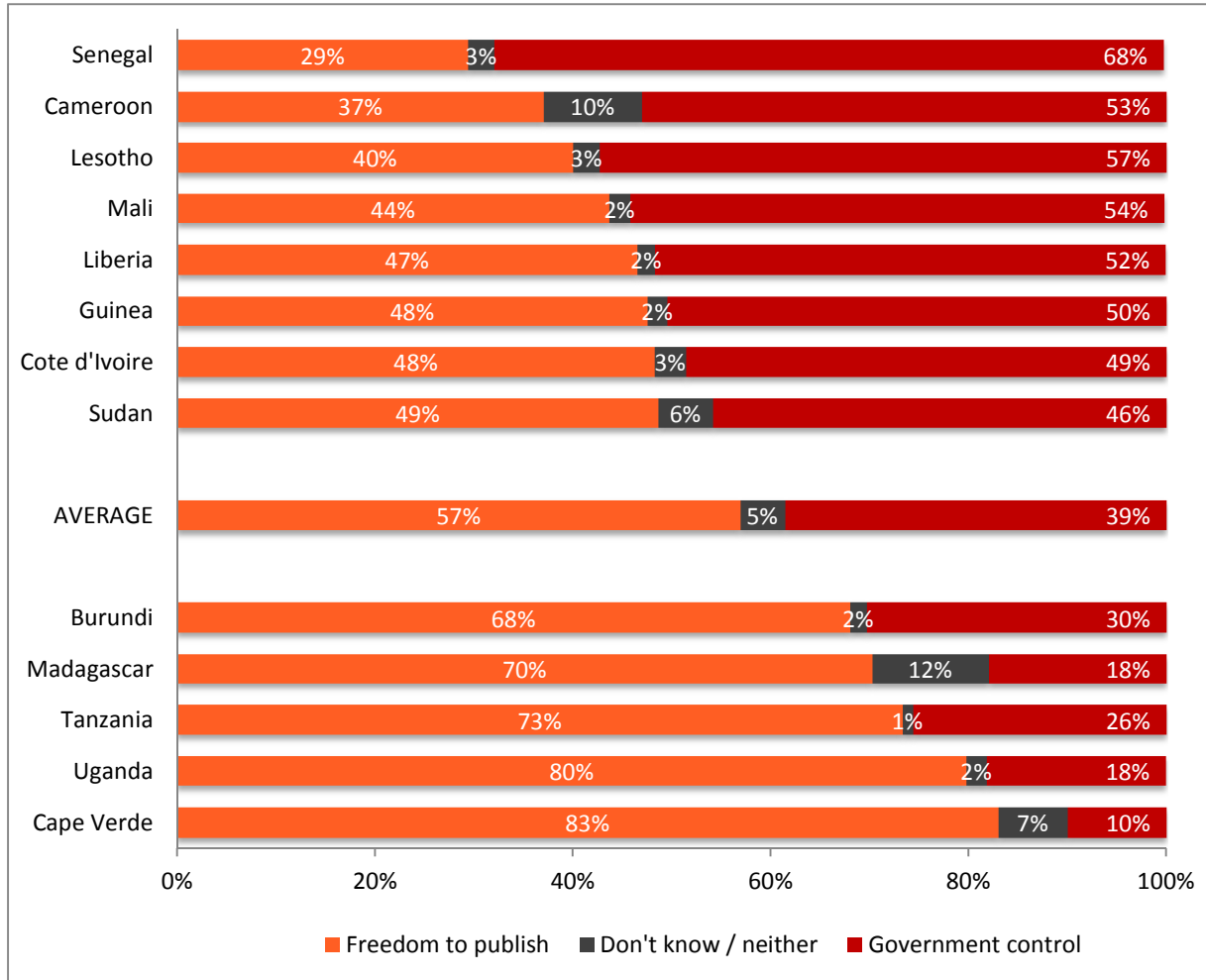
Figure 2: Freedom of expression in 34 African states



Participants were asked: 'In this country, how free are you to say what you think?' (% who say completely free)



Figure 3: Demand for media freedom in 34 countries 2011-2013

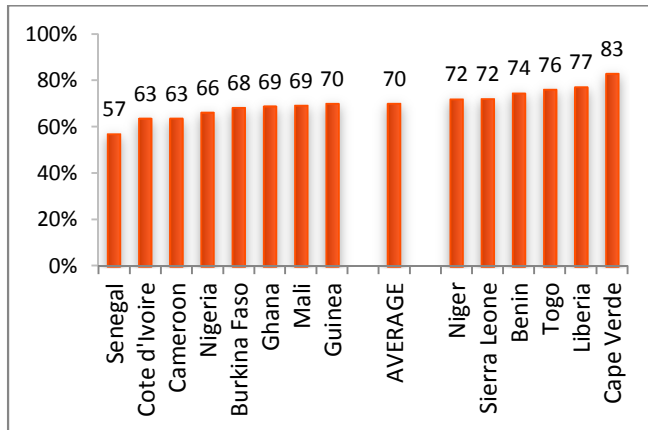


Participants were asked: 'Which of these statements is closest to your view? Choose statement 1 or statement 2:
 Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.
 Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.'

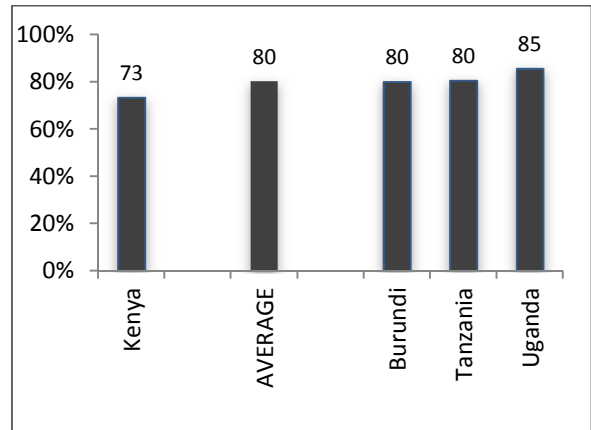


Figure 4: Support for media role in monitoring government, 34 countries, 2011-2013

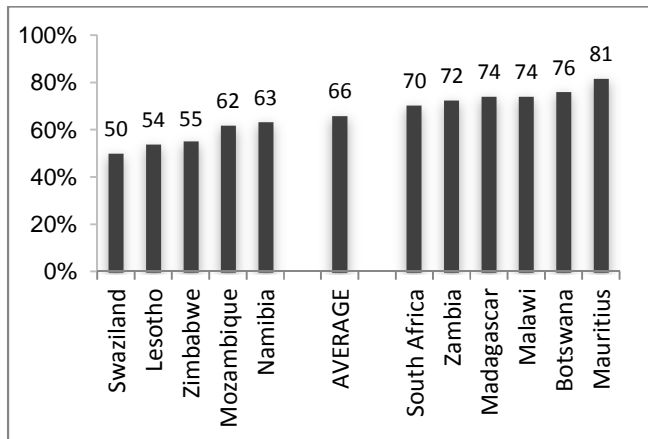
West Africa



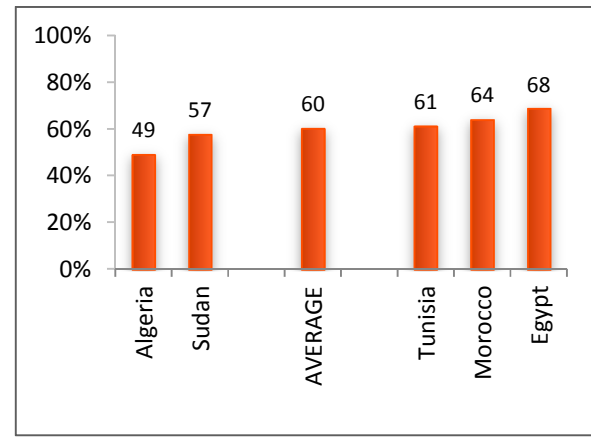
East Africa



South Africa



North Africa



Participants were asked: 'Which of these statements is closest to your view? Choose statement 1 or statement 2:

Statement 1: The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.

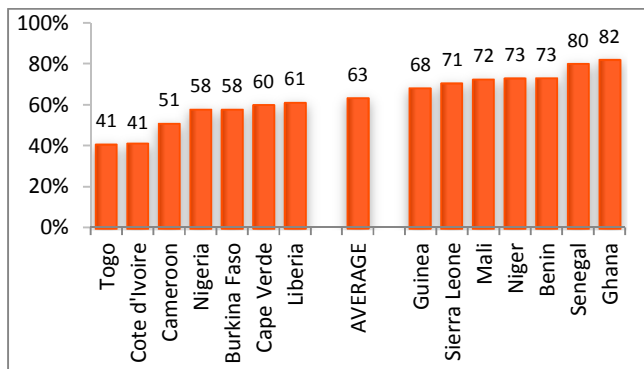
Statement 2: Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.'

(% who 'agree' or 'agree very strongly' with Statement 1)

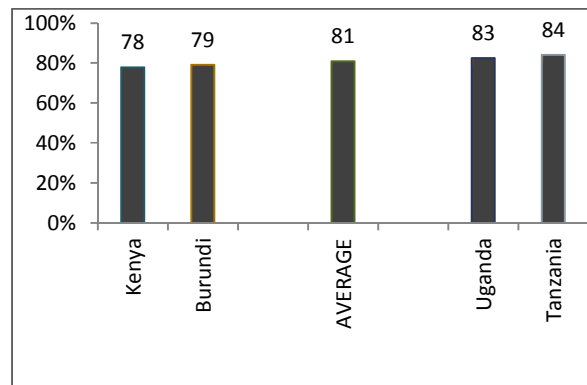


Figure 5: Effectiveness of news media in monitoring government, 34 countries, 2011-2013

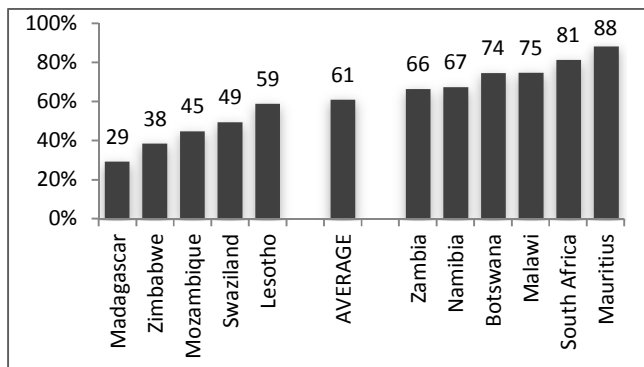
West Africa



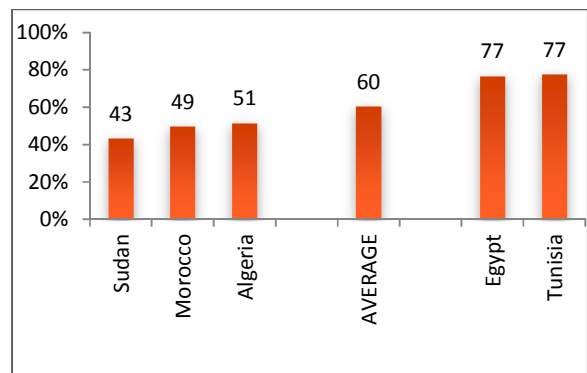
East Africa



Southern Africa



North Africa



Participants were asked: *In this country, how effective is the news media in revealing government mistakes and corruption? (% who say 'somewhat effective' or 'very effective')*



Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer (AB) conducts public opinion surveys that measure citizens' attitudes toward democracy, governance, the economy, leadership, identity, and other related issues. The AB is an independent, non-partisan, African-based network of researchers. The organization aims to give the public a *voice* in policy making by providing high-quality public opinion data to policymakers, civil society organizations, academics, media, donors and investors, and ordinary Africans.

Afrobarometer surveys are based on nationally representative samples. These 34-country results therefore represent the views of approximately three-quarters (76%) of the continent's population. Results from a 35th country, Ethiopia, will be available shortly. The total number of respondents in the 34 countries was 51,605.

Afrobarometer's economic management findings were released in Johannesburg, at the first of seven Afrobarometer release events in seven cities. Survey results on freedom of speech, as well as cell phone access and internet, usage will be released in Nairobi on Oct. 16; data on government services and natural resource management will be presented in Accra on Oct. 30; results on corruption will be released in Dakar on Nov. 13; taxation data will be released in Lagos on Nov. 27; gender findings will be released in Addis Ababa on Dec. 4. Our signature democracy figures will be presented in Bamako on Dec. 12.

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