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News release

Violent extremism from a 'grassroots' perspective: Evidence from North Africa, Lake Chad, Sahel, and the Horn (Afrobarometer)

Two new reports from Afrobarometer explore citizens' perceptions of violent extremism and counter-extremism efforts in "hotspot" regions of Africa.

Based on nationally representative public-opinion surveys, the reports focus on the perceived threat of extremist groups, public trust in security forces, assessments of government counter-extremist efforts, motivations for people to join extremist groups, and strategies for strengthening counter-extremist efforts in the Lake Chad region (Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria), the Sahel (Mali), the Horn of Africa (Kenya and Uganda), and North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia).

The reports, which are being released on 9 June 2016 and are available at www.afrobarometer.org, are:

- Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 32: Violent extremism in Africa: Public opinion from the Sahel, Lake Chad, and the Horn
- Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 100: Threat of violent extremism from a 'grassroots' perspective: Evidence from North Africa

While reflecting exploratory analyses in a rapidly changing field, survey findings suggest the value of tracking citizens' perceptions and attitudes to inform counter-extremism policies.

Key findings

- In countries that had experienced high levels of violent extremist activity, citizens considered security-related issues a top-level problem. Security was a higher priority for additional government spending in Tunisia (cited by 45% of respondents), Nigeria (43%), Kenya (34%), Egypt (22%), Algeria (22%), Cameroon (22%), Mali (21%), and Niger (19%) than on average across 36 surveyed countries (17%) (Figure 1).
- Public approval of government counter-extremist efforts was high in Mali, Cameroon, Niger, and Uganda but lower in Nigeria and Kenya (Figures 2 and 3).
- Across 36 countries, only half (51%) of respondents said they trust the police "somewhat" or "a lot," while 64% said they trust the army. Trust levels were high in Niger (86% police, 92% army) and Tunisia (68% police, 94% army) and low in Nigeria (21% police, 40% army).
- Support for strengthening military responses and capabilities was high in all countries where the question was asked. Increased regional and international cooperation ranked fairly low.
- Perceptions of what motivates people to support violent extremist groups ranged from personal gain (cited frequently in the Lake Chad region (Figure 4)) to poverty and religious beliefs (commonly cited in North Africa).

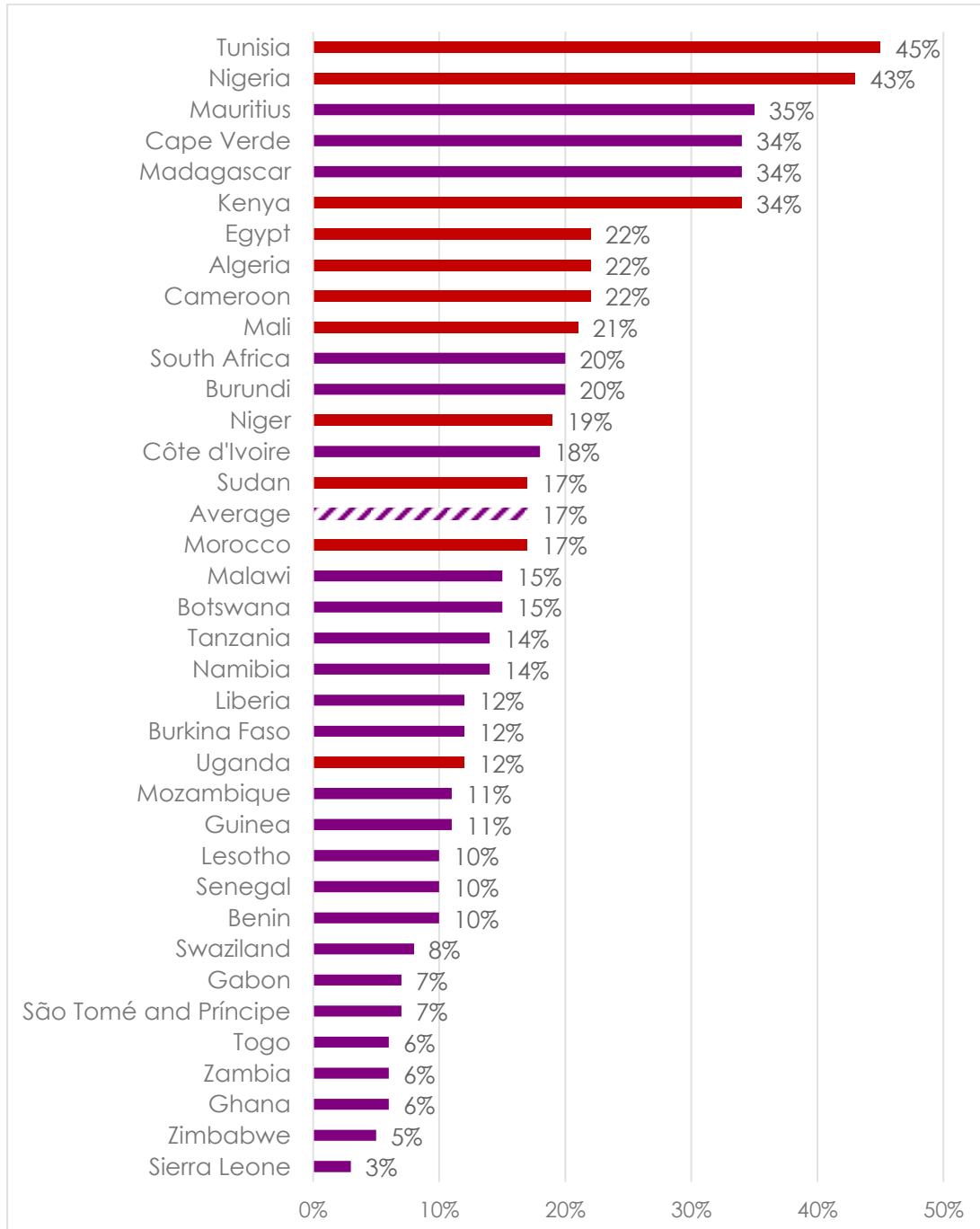
- In North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia):
 - Security was a far higher priority for Tunisians than for other citizens in the region.
 - Tunisians and Egyptians were considerably more likely to see ISIL and AQIM as active in their country and as threats to their national security than Algerians, Moroccans, and Sudanese (Figure 5). These perceptions do not always correspond to objective measures of the number and severity of past extremist attacks.
- In the Lake Chad region:
 - Nigerians were more likely to believe that there was local and international support for extremist groups such as Boko Haram (33% on average across a range of potential sources) than their counterparts in Cameroon (11%) and Niger (12%).
 - Nigerians were far more critical of government counter-extremist efforts (during former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration) than Cameroonians and Nigeriens.
 - Bolstering the military response to armed extremism was significantly more popular in Niger (73%) and Cameroon (58%) than in Nigeria (40%).
- In the Sahel (Mali):
 - As of December 2014, three-quarters (75%) of Malians said that negotiation between the government and armed groups was the best way of addressing the crisis in the North of the country.
 - The proportion of citizens who said that prosecuting suspected extremists was the best option for lasting peace and reconciliation dropped by about half between 2013 (70%) and 2014 (36%).
- In the Horn (Kenya and Uganda):
 - Public approval of the government's response to extremism was considerably lower among Kenyans (44%) than among Ugandans (83%).
 - Although two-thirds (66%) of Kenyans said that the country's intervention in Somalia had been worth the extremist reprisals, only 43% would oppose a military withdrawal.

Afrobarometer

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. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and findings from Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2% (for samples of 2,400) or +/-3% (for samples of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level.

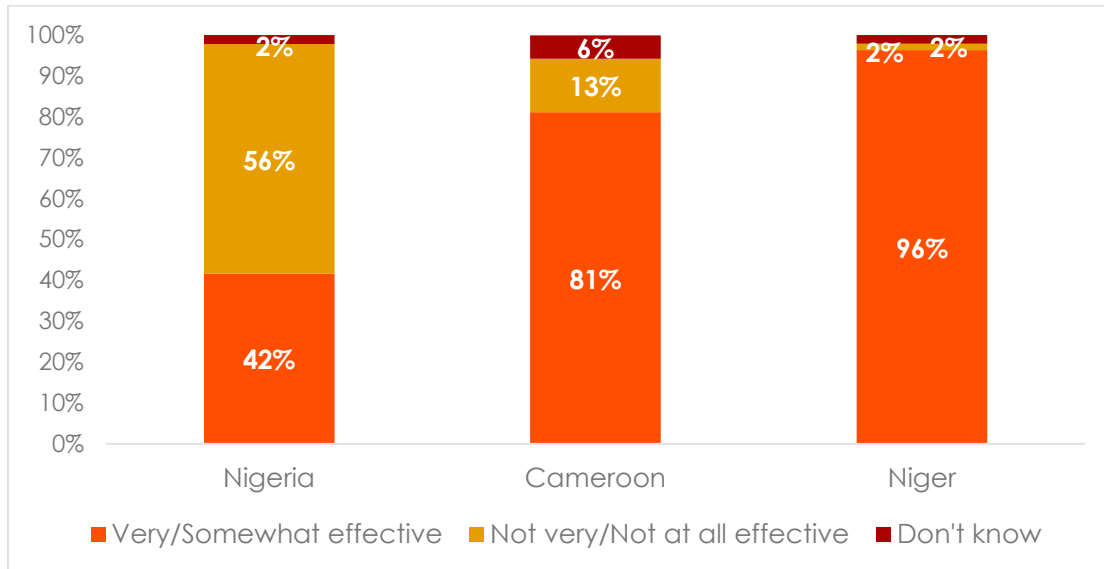
Charts

Figure 1: Security as a priority for additional government spending | 36 countries
 | 2014/2015



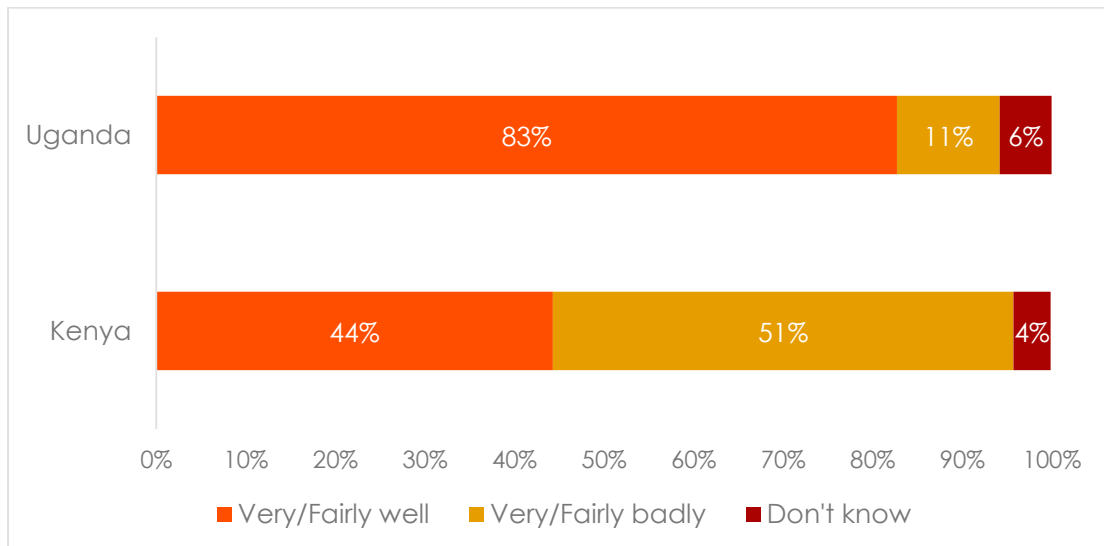
Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? And which would be your second priority? (% who cited security as one of their two priorities)*

Figure 2: Evaluations of counter-extremist efforts | Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger | 2014/2015



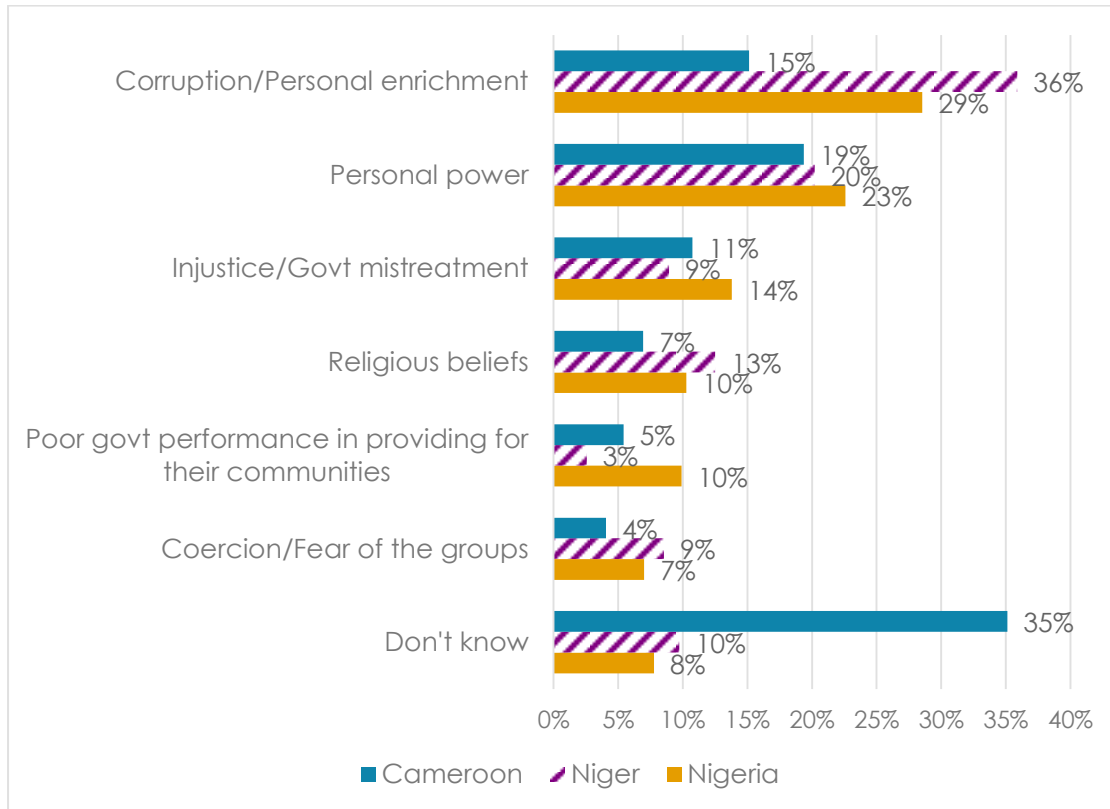
Respondents were asked: How effective do you think the [country] government has been in its efforts to address the problem of armed extremists in this country?

Figure 3: Evaluations of counter-terrorism efforts | Kenya and Uganda | 2014/2015



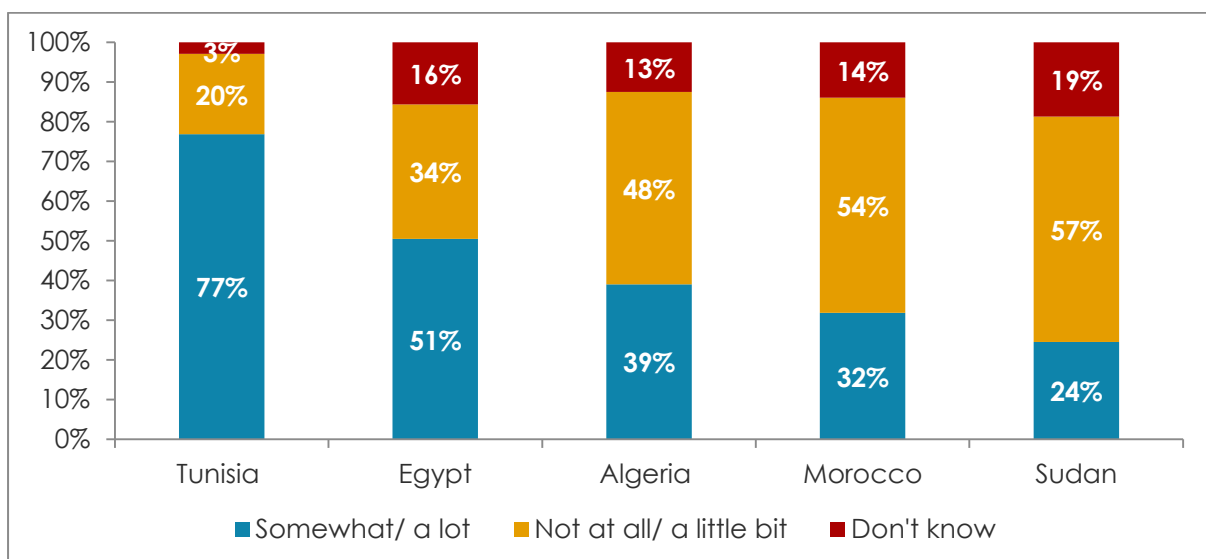
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Fighting terrorism in [country]?

Figure 4: Motivations for supporting extremist groups | Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger
 | 2014/2015



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what is the main reason why some people in [country] support and assist these armed extremist groups?*

Figure 5: Extent of threat posed by ISIL and AQIM | 5 North African countries | 2015



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, to what extent do ISIL or AQIM pose a threat to [your country's] security?*



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