



Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about Afrobarometer's pre-election telephone survey in South Africa

o What is Afrobarometer?

Afrobarometer is an independent pan-African research network that provides data and analysis on African citizens' values, evaluations, and experiences. **With a 25-year track record, Afrobarometer is the global reference for high-quality evidence and insights on African democracy, governance, economy, and society.**

Afrobarometer's principal objective is to give ordinary Africans a voice in policy making. Guided by our vision African societies thrive when African voices count in public policy and development, we scientifically and systematically capture citizens' preferences and perspectives and widely disseminate the findings to policy makers, policy advocates, civil society organisations, academics, news media, funders, investors, and ordinary Africans at the national, regional, continental, and global levels.

o Afrobarometer is known for face-to-face surveys. Why have you begun conducting telephone surveys?

Afrobarometer conducts its standard face-to-face surveys on a roughly two-year cycle, and is preparing for its standard Round 10 survey in South Africa. In addition, we are exploring and refining methods for conducting more limited surveys, especially on emerging or time-sensitive topics, between standard survey rounds. Though not a substitute for full face-to-face surveys, telephone surveys provide an additional option for rapidly collecting data at times when a full face-to-face survey is not feasible.

o What was the methodology and sample size for the telephone survey?

The South African pre- and post-election survey is a telephonic panel survey, meaning that the same respondents will be interviewed before and after the elections. The sample consists of approximately 1,800 South Africans aged 18 and older. Respondents were selected from a database of more than 14 million cell phone numbers. Using a randomised sampling technique, a sample of cell phone numbers was selected based on potential respondents' demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, race, urban vs. rural location, province) and their proportional share in the population. Respondents were selected in a way that aims to ensure that they are representative of the South African population.

- o **How does the methodology differ from Afrobarometer's face-to-face surveys?**

The telephone survey draws from a pool of available telephone numbers in South Africa. Our face-to-face surveys, on the other hand, use a sample frame based on the projected adult population using the most recent census data. In South Africa, the most recent census was conducted in 2022. The sampling approach employed in our face-to-face surveys means that each and every adult South African citizen has an equal and known chance of taking part in the survey. By contrast, participation in the telephone survey is limited to those South Africans who own a mobile phone. Given that South Africa has more than 99% mobile phone coverage, this Afrobarometer survey will allow us to test differences between the two methodologies.

- o **Are findings from the telephone surveys nationally representative?**

Yes, the findings of the South African pre- and post-election telephonic panel survey are nationally representative. All survey data are weighted so that conclusions can be drawn about the entire national population, using the variables of gender, race, age, province, and urban/rural location.

- o **How were the phone numbers obtained?**

The phone numbers were sourced from a company called Data Discovery (Pty) Ltd., which generated telephone numbers from a database of all available mobile telephone numbers based on the profile requirements of the survey design. Data Discovery works within the guidelines of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). Consistent with traditional survey requirements, survey respondents were given the option to decline to participate and opt out of any further contact.

- o **What is the target population for the telephone survey?**

South Africans aged 18 years and above.

- o **Which languages were used in the survey?**

The survey was conducted in Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Setswana, Sepedi, and Sesotho.

- o **Can I access the data and related findings of the telephone survey?**

While we report our survey findings as quickly as possible, we typically place a one-year embargo on the public release of our raw survey data. Since we are still refining our phone-survey methodologies, it may take longer for the data to be released publicly.

- o **Are there any limitations or caveats to consider when interpreting telephone survey results?**

While Afrobarometer has followed standard quality-control protocols during data collection to ensure the data collected through the telephone survey is of the highest quality, the results of the telephone surveys might not be directly comparable with those obtained through face-to-face surveys. For example, prospective respondents who meet eligibility criteria but do not have mobile phones, a group that tends to be disproportionately poor, are excluded from the survey.

Additionally, respondents whose mobile phones could not be reached during several attempts were usually substituted. Phone surveys typically have much higher substitution rates than face-to-face surveys.

- o **How is the data from telephone surveys verified and cleaned to ensure reliability and validity?**

Interview data were monitored and checked on a daily basis for the duration of the data collection period. A minimum of 20% verification back-checks were conducted. Quality-control measures were implemented at all stages of the survey, from research design to interviewer training, piloting, sample selection, and data processing. Weighting was then applied to the final, clean data set.

- o **Are the findings from telephone surveys considered the same as those from the face-to-face surveys?**

Because of the different sampling protocols, face-to-face and telephonic survey data sets cannot be considered to be identical.

- o **Have the telephone surveys come to replace Afrobarometer's face-to-face surveys?**

Afrobarometer considers telephone surveys a complement to, not a substitute for, face-to-face surveys. **That is, telephone and face-to-face surveys can work together to give us important information about public opinion in Africa.**

- o **Can I use the telephone survey findings for research or advocacy purposes?**

Yes, **but be mindful** of the information above regarding the way in which telephone survey findings might differ from those obtained through face-to-face surveys.