AFRO BAROMETER

A comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa.

AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

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WHERE IS AFRICA GOING?
VIEWS FROM BELOW

by the Afrobarometer Network

compiled by Michael Bratton
and Wonbin Cho

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AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

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Where is Africa Going? Views From Below
A Compendium of Trends in Public Opinion in 12 African Countries, 1999-2006

Abstract

Where is Africa going? This compendium summarizes both continental trends and divergent country directions. It is based on three rounds of Afrobarometer public opinion surveys, 1999-2006. Among the many original results are the following: Even though Africans increasingly worry about unemployment and food insecurity, they are politically patient; they are not ready to reject democracy simply because it may fail at economic delivery. And even though Africans consistently consider the economic present to be worse then the economic past, they see better times ahead. Hope persists, perhaps propelled in part by the freedoms and opportunities provided by democracy.

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Where is Africa Going? Views From Below

INTRODUCTION

Where is Africa Going?

Where is Africa going? One can hardly imagine a more important question for the freedom and well being of some of the world's most underprivileged people. Yet rarely have the opinions of ordinary Africans – who experience the realities of daily life on the continent at first hand – been sought or heard. Instead, political leaders, the mass media, and the international donor community have usually shaped and controlled the ways in which Africa's image and prospects are portrayed.

The optimists among such experts point to recent encouraging breakthroughs in democratic elections or to pockets of economic growth and recent peace settlements in Africa. The Afro-pessimists – more numerous in number – point to the survival of autocratic rule, ongoing ethnic strife, and the persistence – even deepening – of poverty. To a considerable extent, both camps are correct. Sub-Saharan Africa is hardly homogenous. Instead, its countries are embarked on divergent paths of political and economic development.

This publication seeks to modify the record by showing both common **continental trends** and instances where African countries are pulling in **divergent directions**. There is general evidence, for example, that hunger is seen to be spreading and that popular demand for democracy, while high, is falling. But, for every country that is making gains in terms of free and fair elections or increasing national income per capita, there are others that are moving away from these goals. And still other societies struggle simply to escape political or economic stasis.

Moreover, our viewpoint on Africa's pathway is distinctive. We present a vision from below that features the **opinions of everyday people**. We summarize their attitudes by means of the Afrobarometer, a comparative series of public attitude surveys on democracy, markets, and civil society that now covers 18 African countries. As of today, the Afrobarometer is able to report trends in the public mood across 12 of these countries as it has settled or shifted from 1999 to 2006.

To our knowledge, directional trends in African public opinion have never before been measured on a comparable, multi-country basis. Researchers, journalists, and policy actors have never before possessed an empirical database of more than 56,000 interviews with African citizens spread over three moments in time. Together, the contents of this report paint an original and practical picture of **popular views about Africa's past, present and future**.

Summary of Trends

Before reviewing the principal trends observed, it is important to note that the 12 African countries included here are not fully representative of Africa as a whole. Having undergone a measure of political and economic reform, they are among the continent's most open regimes. However, the inclusion of countries with serious internal conflicts – like Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe – helps to make the country sample somewhat representative of the sub-continent. But considerable caution is nonetheless warranted when projecting Afrobarometer results to all "Africans."

With this caution in mind, the principal results are:

On the Economy

- Whether in 2000, 2002 or 2005, in none of our three surveys have more than one-third rated their economies positively.

- Over time, Afrobarometer survey respondents express gradually falling assessments of their personal living standards.

- On average, poverty is probably increasing, at least with respect to reported shortages of basic human needs like food, water and cash income.

- Nevertheless, more people say they are willing to accept the hardships associated with economic reform in 2005 than in 2000.

On Democracy

- Although popular support remains high for the principle of democracy – and autocratic alternatives are always roundly rejected – we find a gradual, but steady decline in demand for democracy.

- On the supply side, popular satisfaction with the practice and availability of democracy is declining sharply, and it is falling especially fast in Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

- The Africans we interviewed think they are freer than they used to be under old autocratic regimes. And while the pace of improvement may be declining after the sudden marked gains realized at the onset of democratic rule, sizeable majorities continue to report that their enjoyment of civil liberties has improved in the last few years.

- Counteracting these trends, Africans are getting used to the idea of political competition; increasing majorities in numerous countries prefer multiple parties and real electoral choice.

On the State

- Popular trust in state institutions, including government broadcasters, is quite high and steady; trust in national presidents is actually growing.

- Somewhat surprisingly, in contrast to the common wisdom, survey respondents say they perceive less official corruption today than six years previously.

- Whereas a majority of citizens disapproves of government performance at economic management (especially job creation), a majority approves of government performance in social sectors (especially combating HIV/AIDS).

- On average, only one-half approves the performance of elected legislators. This may be one reason why people consistently turn to informal leaders for help in solving problems far more frequently than their elected leaders.

Overall

- Even though Africans increasingly worry about unemployment and food insecurity, they report rising levels of electoral and inter-electoral participation.

- Even though they are economically anxious, Africans are still politically patient; they are not yet ready to reject democracy because it may fail at socioeconomic delivery.

- Even though Africans consistently consider the economic present to be worse than the economic past, they see better times ahead. Hope persists, perhaps propelled in part by the freedoms and opportunities provided by democracy.

Caveats

But **how valid and reliable** are the subjective views of ordinary citizens? On a continent where most people continue to live in rural areas and where a good education is hard to find, people may not be well enough informed to offer dependable opinions. Or so goes the argument. While education clearly improves a respondent's comprehension of survey questions and adds sophistication to answers, we nevertheless resist concluding that non-literate or parochial respondents lack the capacity to form opinions about livelihood and well being. On the contrary, we have found that, as long as questions are stated plainly and concretely (all question wordings are provided in the text and tables that follow), Africans can express clear opinions about economic survival and political authority.

The reader will notice that public opinion often confirms, but sometimes contradicts, empirical observations of a more objective sort. For example, both Mali and Namibia earn a combined score of 4 on the Freedom House indices of political rights and civil liberties, earning both of them a designation as "free."[1] Yet when we ask respondents in the two countries to rate the extent of their own democracy, confident Namibians give themselves the highest ranking among the 12 countries, with 73% rating the country as either a full democracy or a democracy with only minor problems, compared to just 57% of Malians who give their country a similarly positive review. Under these circumstances, how far can we trust public opinion?

We argue that, in the realms of society, politics and the economy, **perceptions matter just as much – if not more – than reality**. That which people think to be true – including judgments about present conditions or past performance and expectations for the future – is a central motivation for behavior. Perceptions are paramount in the interest-driven realm of the marketplace and the ideological realm of politics. Whether or not attitudes exactly mirror exterior circumstances, an individual's interior perspective forms the basis of any calculus for action. And, consistent with our instinct that all people, whatever their material circumstances, are capable of acute observation and rational thought, we find that, more often than not, trends in public opinion reinforce rather than undercut the thrust of official aggregate statistics.

Survey data, however, have multiple advantages. They allow us to see where the general public is dissatisfied, thus calling into question the suitability of existing policies and suggesting alternatives. They offer opportunities to break down official aggregates in order to discover who supports the *status quo* and who does not. Moreover, survey data provide new openings for testing and explaining observed differences across countries and time periods.

The purpose of this compendium, and its companion piece on Afrobarometer Round 3, is to present "**just the facts**." The figures and tables that follow report simple descriptive statistics that summarize key public attitudes, both by country and for a mean of 12 Afrobarometer countries, usually across three moments in time. The text does little more than draw the reader's

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[1] See www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/pdf/Charts2006.pdf.

attention to the most salient summary trends. As such, this handbook aims to create a record of emerging movements in mass attitudes over time. We have intentionally kept interpretation of results to a bare minimum. The explanation of the reasons underlying observed trends in public opinion in Africa is left largely to the reader, to other researchers, and to the members of the Afrobarometer Network who are already embarked on additional analysis.

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Technical Notes

 To comprehend and correctly interpret the text and tables of this report, the reader should bear in mind the following considerations:

Sampling and Inference

- We attempt to measure trends in public opinion only if we possess data over time from three observations on identical or equivalent survey items. We infer a trend in public opinion only if successive measurements yield a consistent, or secular, direction (e.g., up, down, or flat). Inconsistent or multidirectional data sequences are held to be trend-less.

- Round 1 Afrobarometer surveys took place between July 1999 and March 2001; Round 2 surveys occurred between May 2002 and September 2003; and Round 3 surveys were in the field from March 2005 to March 2006. For ease of reference we identify Round 1 as "circa 2000," Round 2 as "circa 2002," and Round 3 as "circa 2005." The exact dates for each survey in each round are presented in Appendix 1.

- Three rounds of Afrobarometer surveys have been conducted in Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These 12 countries are covered in this report. For other countries now included in the project – Benin, Cape Verde, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Senegal – we have yet to accumulate three sets of survey observations.

- In each country, the Afrobarometer covers a representative sample of the adult population (i.e., those over 18 years old and eligible to vote). Survey respondents are selected using a multistage, stratified, clustered area design that is randomized at every stage with probability proportional to population size. For fuller details see www.afrobarometer.org/sampling.html.

- The minimum sample size in any country in any round is 1200,[2] which is sufficient to yield a confidence interval of plus or minus 3 percentage points (actually 2.8 percentage points) at a confidence level of 95 percent.   Thus, to infer a trend within any given country or in the 12-country "Afro" mean (see below), observations must be separated by a minimum difference of at least 6 percentage points between the first and last observations (calculated as a 3 percent margin of error on either side of the point estimate).

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[2] The exception is the Round 3 sample in Zimbabwe. Due to disruptions of the survey by unruly political elements affiliated with the ruling party, fieldwork was terminated early, and the sample falls slightly short, totaling 1048 respondents.

Descriptive Statistics

- Percentages reported in the tables reflect valid responses. Unless otherwise noted, "don't know" responses are included, even if they are not shown. But missing data, refusals to answer, and cases where a question was not applicable are excluded from the calculations. Except where noted, the share of missing data is small and does not significantly change the sample size or confidence interval.

- All percentages have been rounded to whole numbers. This occasionally introduces small anomalies in which the sum of total reported responses does not equal 100 percent. An empty cell signifies that a particular question was not asked in given country in a given year.

- In many cases, we have combined response categories. For example, "satisfied" and "very satisfied" responses are added together and reported as a single figure. Rounding was applied only after response categories were aggregated.

- Generally, country samples are self-weighting. In some countries in some rounds, however, statistical weights were used to adjust for purposive over-sampling of minorities or to correct for inadvertent deviations from the planned sample during fieldwork. The frequency distributions reported in the tables reflect these within-country weights.

- The 12 country data sets are pooled into overall Afrobarometer data sets for each Round (n = 21,531 in Round 1, n = 16, 931 in Round 2, n = 17,917 in Round 3). We report 12-country ("Afro") mean statistics in the last row of each table. These means include the within-country weights described above, plus an across-country weight to standardize the size of each national sample to n = 1200 respondents. That is, each country carries equal weight in the calculation of Afrobarometer means, regardless of its sample size or total population.

- Given a partial lack of questionnaire standardization in Round 1, as well as lessons learned from fieldwork about optimal question wording, there are unavoidable differences between the survey instruments, especially between Rounds 1 and 2. It is therefore not always easy or accurate to make exact comparisons between Round 1 and Round 2 results. Accordingly, we indicate where trends over time must be interpreted cautiously.

The results that follow cover a selection of 67 variables out of a total of 237 items asked of respondents in Round 3. The respondent's demographic characteristics are excluded, as are items about the interview and its context recorded by the interviewer (which increase the total number of Round 3 items to over 300). For coverage of many of these other items circa 2005, readers are directed to the companion compendium, released simultaneously with this report, entitled **"Citizens and the State in Africa: New Results from Afrobarometer Round 3**" (Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 61).

PART ONE: TRENDS IN THE ECONOMY

1.1. Macroeconomic Conditions

Most of the Africans we interviewed have a gloomy, but realistic, opinion of the macroeconomic situation in which they find themselves. The key indicator is the public's assessment of the "**present economic conditions in this country**."

Figure 1.1 shows that, on average, **no more than one in three adult Africans has rated the macroeconomy as being in "good" condition** (i.e., "fairly good" or "very good") in any of our surveys. This low level of popular satisfaction has remained reasonably stable across the six-year period covered by Afrobarometer surveys: it started at 29 percent circa 2000, rose to 33 percent circa 2002, but dropped back to 29 percent circa 2005. It is also important to note the consistency in this interrelated set of attitudes. Retrospective economic evaluations are a good predictor of present economic assessments; both opinions attain similar levels and follow the same uneven, but ultimately flat, trajectory.

In addition, overall differences in evaluations of past and present conditions are not statistically – and thus substantively – meaningful. The gap between first and last observations is never more than 3 percentage points, which falls within the confidence interval for two surveys. In other words, differences over time in these opinions could be due to sampling error alone.

Meaningful differences emerge only when we break opinions down by country (see Table 1.1). At the positive end of the scale, **economic opinion in South Africa has surged upward**. In 2000, a mere 15 percent of South Africans offered positive assessments of the economy, which was barely half of the "Afro" mean at the time. By 2002, South Africans looked more like other Africans, one-third of whom saw good conditions. But by 2006, in a consistent and accelerating trend, one-half of all South African adults had come to see the condition of the economy as "fairly good" or "very good." Their neighbors in Namibia also perceive a positive economic trajectory. But Namibians started from a higher base (42 percent thought the economy was in "good" shape in 1999); their six-year increase has been about half that of the South Africans (17 points versus 35 points). Nevertheless, Namibia and South Africa are the only countries studied in 2005 where more than half of all adults are satisfied with current economic conditions.

At the negative end of the scale, **public opinion on the economy in Nigeria and Mali has slumped.** Economic opinion in Nigeria started from a higher base than Mali, but it has fallen equally far in both countries over the past six years (by 19 percentage points). There was also a sharp decline in Uganda: in 2000, Ugandans agreed with the World Bank experts that their country was a model economic reformer and that economic recovery was underway; but by 2002, doubts had set in and public opinion stabilized at a much lower level (18 points lower by 2005).

Against the odds, however, many Africans remain optimistic. Notwithstanding the negative view of current economic conditions, **many Africans think that future economic conditions are destined to get "better."** Across the 12 countries, people think that the year ahead looks more promising than the current year by margins of 8 to 16 percentage points (not shown). On average, almost half saw a brighter economic future circa 2002, and expectations were up by a 7-point margin between 2000 and 2005. This **bias toward optimism** – which challenges the outlook of many Afro-pessimist experts – is repeated in every survey and **is widening with time**. And it is reinforced by economic patience, or a willingness to wait for the good times to arrive (see Section 1.4 below). In sum, among ordinary people and regardless of an often grim economic reality, hope persists.

Figure 1.1. Macroeconomic Conditions *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval / better)*
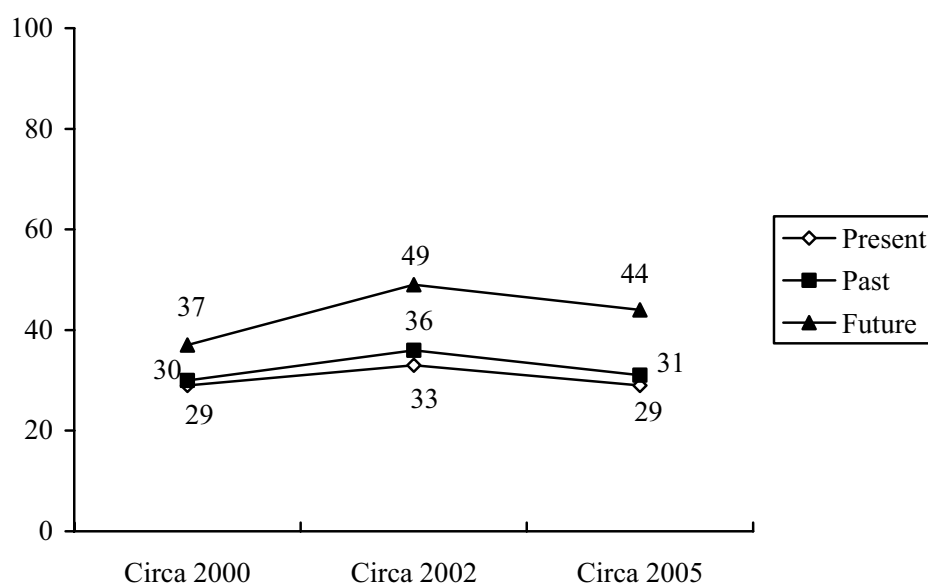
Table 1.1. Present Macroeconomic Conditions *(percent fairly good / very good)*

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	32	45	33	+1
Ghana	34	31	26	-8
Lesotho	12	11	19	+7
Malawi	26	19	16	-10
Mali	34	25	15	-19
Namibia	42	57	59	+17
Nigeria	45	32	26	-19
South Africa	15	30	51	+36
Tanzania	22	33	30	+8
Uganda	64	45	46	-18
Zambia	19	32	19	0
Zimbabwe	3	31	4	+1
Afro mean	**29**	**33**	**29**	**0**

Question Wording (Round 3):

Present: In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? (percent fairly good / very good)

Past: Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to twelve months ago? Economic conditions in this country? (percent better / much better)

Future: Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse? Economic conditions in this country in twelve months time? (percent better / much better)

1.2. Personal Living Conditions

The Afrobarometer survey instrument asks respondents to distinguish between a "sociotropic" perspective on the economy as a whole and an "egocentric" view of **"your own living conditions."** The reader should note that the scope of the latter inquiry is wide: the question asks about "living" standards, a term that embraces economic conditions, but also refers to broader concerns about social well being.

Yet Figure 1.2 shows a similar pattern of responses to Figure 1.1. As with macroeconomic conditions, average popular **assessments of personal living conditions are very negative circa 2000,** and remain relatively flat over time. In an important departure from these patterns, however, views of **"present living conditions" follow a gradual but steady downward curve**: they fall in secular fashion from 31 percent circa 2000, to 30 percent circa 2002, to 27 percent circa 2005. In other words, there is no transitory increase in this attitude in the middle period. But the overall gap between the first and last observations is just 4 percentage points, which does not allow us to discount sampling error as a possible cause of the apparent trend. Instead, it would be safer to conclude that low assessments of personal living conditions have not changed over time. But, if any change has occurred, then assessments of personal living conditions are more likely to have fallen than to have risen.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that, between 1999 and 2006, people saw personal living conditions **decline in eight Afrobarometer countries and rise in only four countries**. On the upside, South Africa again leads the way, but the gains in Namibia are now meager and within the margin of sampling error. The same countries as before registered steep drops, though perceived personal living conditions in Nigeria and Uganda seem to have stabilized by 2005. Continuous, directional declines can be seen in Ghana, Mali, and Malawi, all against a background of perceived macroeconomic deterioration.

Tanzania is an interesting exception. Its citizens report a 7-point decline in their personal quality of life. Yet this trend unfolded against a background of perceived macroeconomic improvement (plus 8 points, see Table 1.1). These cross-cutting results strongly imply that Tanzanians draw a sharp egocentric-sociotropic distinction: they see themselves as individual "losers" even as the reforming Tanzanian economy is collectively a "winner." In other words, while citizens acknowledge that the economy is expanding at the aggregate level, **growth has not been widely distributed**.

To explicitly address perceptions of relative deprivation, we asked people to "rate your living conditions compared to those of other people." Unlike for Tanzania, there was no apparent trend for all 12 Afrobarometer countries: the same small average proportion (25 percent) saw themselves as relatively "better off" than their fellow citizens in both 2000 and 2005. But we reconfirm that "Afro" means conceal divergent trends between countries like South Africa, where perceptions of relative deprivation are falling, and Tanzania, where such perceptions are rising (not shown).

As for retrospective (past) and prospective (future) assessments of personal living conditions, we possess only two observations to date. So it would not be appropriate to infer trends. But it is worth noting that, between 2002 and 2005, both indicators were declining. At minimum, therefore, these data do not contradict our conclusions that: a) Africans are increasingly confident in the *macroeconomy's* future, but b) their confidence about the future of their *individual* economic circumstances is waning.

Figure 1.2. Personal Living Conditions (12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval / better)
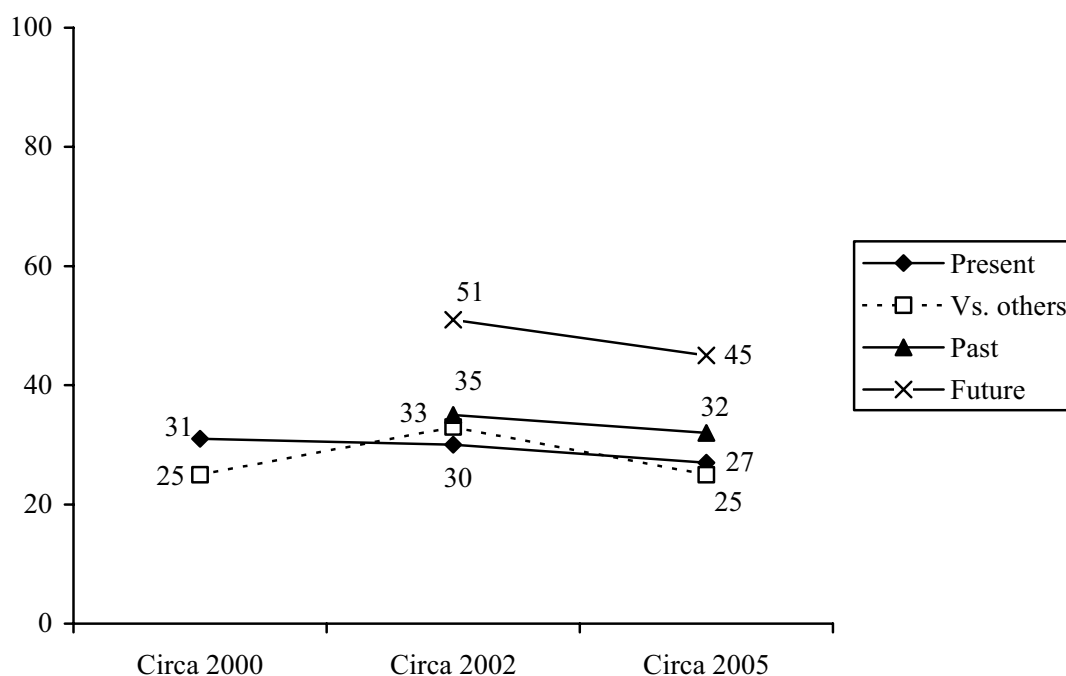
Table 1.2. Present Personal Living Conditions (percent fairly good / very good)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	26	25	20	-6
Ghana	39	27	25	-14
Lesotho	20	8	16	-4
Malawi	24	19	17	-7
Mali	29	24	16	-13
Namibia	42	40	43	+1
Nigeria	68	45	45	-23
South Africa	15	37	47	+32
Tanzania	29	25	22	-7
Uganda	54	35	35	-19
Zambia	19	33	26	+7
Zimbabwe	3	27	7	+4
Afro mean	**31**	**30**	**27**	**-4**

Question Wording (Round 3):

Present: In general, how would you describe: Your own present living conditions? (percent fairly good / very good)

Vs. others: In general, how do you rate your living conditions compared to those of other people? (percent better / much better)

Past: Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to twelve months ago? Your living conditions? (percent better / much better)

Future: Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse? Your living conditions in twelve months time? (percent better / much better)

1.3. The Experience of Poverty

Is **life therefore getting harder, not easier**, for most Africans? To address this question, one can use components in the Afrobarometer's **Index of Lived Poverty**. These indicators record the frequency with which survey respondents report shortages of basic human needs like food, water, medical care, and a cash income.

Figure 1.3 plots the 12-country average of the proportion of respondents who say they encountered such shortages at least once during the previous year. In every survey, **the most commonly reported shortage was cash income**, which always affected three-quarters or more of all Africans interviewed. This aspect of poverty was followed by shortages of medical care, food, and clean water for household use, consistently in that order. As such, **the structure of poverty has not changed** over the last six years. And, by 2005, at least half of all respondents reported that their household lacked at least one of these vital commodities or services.

But are any trends discernible in the experience of poverty over time? In most cases, **shortages of basic human needs were somewhat more frequent** circa 2005 than circa 2000. Medical care shortages showed no change during this period. But food and income shortages rose by 3 points, and water shortages by 6 points. Thus, we are on safe ground in projecting a continental trend of increasing poverty in relation to access to clean water supplies. For all other aspects of poverty, we can only confirm that average levels are probably holding steady. But, if poverty is changing at all, it is more likely to be rising than falling.

As usual, however, overall "Afro" means conceal important variations across countries. Table 1.3 shows changes in reported food shortages by country over time. We focus on this key dimension of poverty because **Africans define poverty primarily as a lack of food** and only secondarily as a lack of money (46 percent versus 36 percent of respondents in Round 2). By 2005 people reported more food poverty in half of the Afrobarometer countries; in the other six countries they reported less poverty.

The largest decrease in food poverty, well beyond the margin of sampling error, was reported in Lesotho (down 16 percentage points over six years), where the gross domestic product grew steadily after 2000. Lesotho's economic conditions were undoubtedly helped by reintegration into Southern Africa trade circuits following political and economic crises of 1998. **Hunger is least common in Ghana** where, by 2005, 35 percent reported experiencing a food shortage. By contrast, food poverty rose sharply in Malawi and Nigeria (up 14 points or more) due to a combination of seasonal droughts and the mismanagement of food supplies. In Zimbabwe (where food poverty was up by 17 points), these factors were exacerbated by policy-induced food shortages, rampant food price inflation, and the government's denial of food relief supplies to its political opponents. By 2002, more than eight in ten Zimbabweans reported that they or their family members had experienced a shortage of food in the previous year; and by 2005, **Zimbabweans said they experienced more hunger** than the citizens of any other country surveyed.

In sum, the incidence of poverty in the African countries surveyed is more likely to be increasing than decreasing. People report that reliable supplies of cash income, food, and clean water are increasingly hard to secure. Beyond this general picture, however, Africa remains a diverse continent, revealing pockets of *both* lessening poverty *and* deepening deprivation.

Figure 1.3. Experience of Poverty *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent going without at least once)*
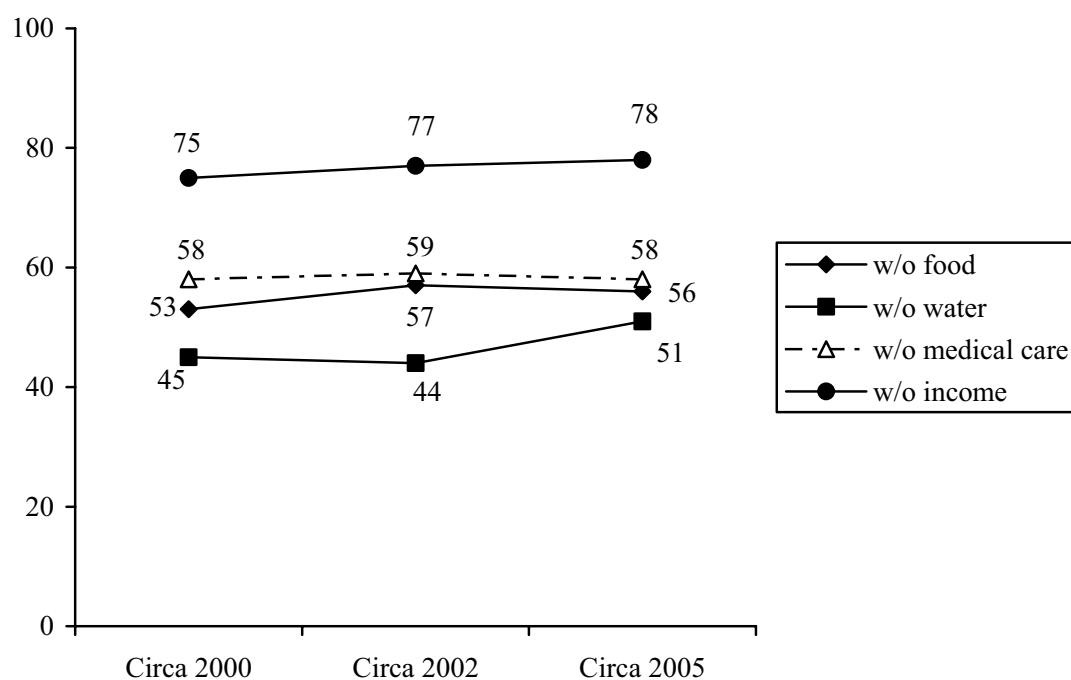
Table 1.3. Without Food *(percent going without at least once)*

	Circa 2000	**Circa 2002**	**Circa 2005**	**Change**
Botswana	49	51	48	-1
Ghana	33	40	35	+2
Lesotho	72	80	56	-16
Malawi	57	83	71	+14
Mali	43	53	42	-1
Namibia	66	43	53	-13
Nigeria	41	45	58	+17
South Africa	53	37	40	-13
Tanzania	48	44	53	+5
Uganda		52	57	+5
Zambia	74	78	72	-2
Zimbabwe	65	82	82	+17
Afro mean	**53**	**57**	**56**	**+3**

Question Wording (Round 3):
Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: 1). Enough food to eat?; 2) Enough clean water for home use?; 3) Medicines or medical treatment?; 4) A cash income? (percent just once or twice / several times / many times / always)

1.4. Attitudes to Economic Reform

Turning from economic problems to intended solutions, we now examine mass attitudes toward **economic policies, including anti-poverty policies**. International financial institutions continue to recommend an orthodox package of market-oriented reforms to African governments. In recent years, however, the policy blend has broadened to include measures to raise incomes and provide services among the poor. How do ordinary Africans appraise these policies and programs?

In the past, popular attitudes toward economic reform were mixed: people supported some policies in the structural adjustment package, but rejected others. For five countries circa 2000, for example, a clear majority of Africans interviewed (62 percent) were willing to pay school fees as long as they received high-quality education in return. At the same time, however, people came out squarely against civil service retrenchment (only 32 percent supported this policy circa 2000), in good part because jobs outside the public sector were hard to find.

By 2005, however, support for the specifics of economic reform had eroded considerably (see Figure 1.4). Only half (53 percent) registered willingness to pay for schooling, reflecting a decline in support for user fees of 9 percentage points. This real shift in public opinion may well have been influenced by the policy decisions of some African governments, for example in Malawi and Uganda, to introduce universal free admission at the primary level, though it may also reflect growing disappointment with the quality of private education. In a context of rising unemployment (see Section 4.1 below), support for streamlining the civil service dwindled still further to just 23 percent, reflecting a meaningful decline in support for this deeply unpopular policy of 9 percentage points. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that strict market reforms are losing what little popular support they ever enjoyed.

Yet there is also evidence of a **countervailing trend**. The Africans we interviewed indicate that, as orthodox policies are offset by measures to protect the poor, they are generally more willing to tolerate an overall program of economic liberalization. The survey asked respondents to choose between two statements: either "the costs of reforming the economy are too high; the government should therefore abandon its current economic policies," or "in order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now." **In the largest secular upsurge observed so far, economic patience** ("accept hardships") increased from a minority position (46 percent) to a majority opinion (57 percent) over the past six years. For the five countries where we have three observations, economic patience was even more strongly ascendant (averaging 60 percent), being up in four countries (Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda) and flat only in the fifth (Tanzania).

One possible interpretation is that both elites and masses are engaged in **policy learning**. International policy elites are learning that raw market reforms are premature in countries where the private sector is weak and most people are poor. Investments to build a healthy and educated population are necessary components of the policy reform package. For their part, African citizens are learning that market stimulus is necessary to get dormant economies moving again and that painful personal adjustments are required, including reducing personal dependence on the state in favor of informal private enterprise.

But the pace of adjustment cannot be forced. Afrobarometer survey respondents continue to remind us that everyone, including political leaders, must share the hardships of economic transition. In both 2000 and 2005, less than one-third of Africans interviewed felt that the government's economic policies "helped most people" and that "only a few have suffered." These **perceptions of unequal burdens** remain the Achilles Heel of attempted economic reform.

Figure 1.4. Attitudes to Economic Reform *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent favor / agree)*
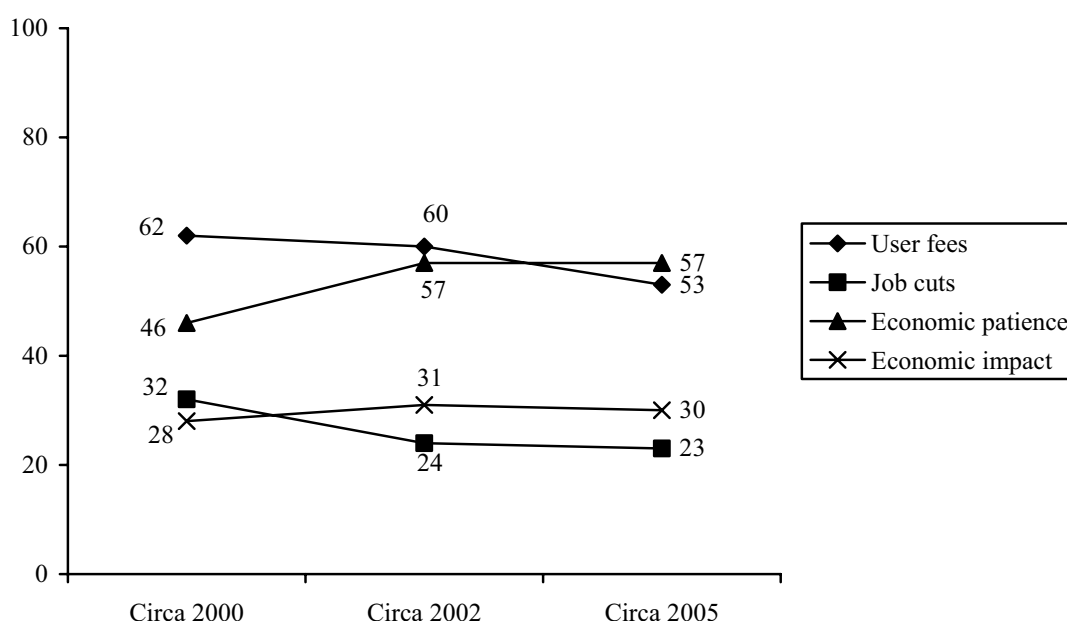*Note that Round 1 includes only five countries: Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda*

Table 1.4. Economic Patience *(percent agree / agree very strongly that "In order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now.")*

	Circa 2000	Circa 20002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana		72	55	
Ghana	38	72	65	+27
Lesotho		56	67	
Malawi		40	61	
Mali	49	57	67	+18
Namibia		60	52	
Nigeria	45	53	59	+14
South Africa		45	56	
Tanzania	53	58	53	0
Uganda	47	59	55	+8
Zambia		50	49	
Zimbabwe		56	57	
Afro mean	**46**	**57**	**57**	**+11**

Question Wording (Round 3):

User fees: It is better to raise educational standards, even if we have to pay school fees (percent agree/agree very strongly).

Job cuts: The government cannot afford so many public employees and should lay some of them off (pecent agree/agree very strongly).

Economic patience: In order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now (percent agree/agree very strongly).

Economic impact: The government's economic policies have helped most people; only a few have suffered (percent agree/agree very strongly).

PART TWO: TRENDS IN DEMOCRACY

2.1. The Meaning of Democracy

The debate about the suitability of democracy for Africa hinges on a critical question: **How do Africans understand democracy?** If ordinary people lack democratic values or have never experienced democratic institutions and processes, they are likely to know little about democracy's content or to be deeply committed to this regime's survival. They are prone to settle for some other political arrangement – usually some semi-authoritarian hybrid – mistakenly taking it for "the real thing."

Moreover, the social scientific enterprise of comparing public attitudes to political regimes – across countries, social groups, and individuals, as well as over time – is likely to be a fool's errand if Africans do not have common and stable definitions of democracy. It is often asserted, for example, that Africans understand democracy in culturally specific and strictly parochial terms. If popular conceptions of democracy differ, then analysts run the risk of comparing millet and manioc.

In search of a solution to this conundrum, we begin by asking people, "**what, if anything, does 'democracy' mean to you?**" Respondents are invited to give up to three responses in their own words, which are recorded verbatim and then assigned to broader categories for analysis. The question has only been asked twice, circa 2000 and circa 2005.

Figure 2.1 confirms that **democracy is a complex, multidimensional concept** that is readily understood in a variety of ways. In Africa, the most common response is "civil liberties," which includes freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, and freedom generally. Following "don't know," the next most common response taps popular participation and political representation as captured by the stock phrase "government by the people." Equally important are responses relating to "elections and voting." Finally, Africans associate democracy with "peace and unity," especially in countries (like Namibia) where democratization followed an extended and violent conflict.

It is noteworthy that all of these unprompted responses refer to political qualities, rather than economic outcomes. This may suggest that Africans value democracy intrinsically, as an end in itself, rather than instrumentally, as a means to economic ends (or, if they do see it instrumentally, that they see it as a means to *political* ends, such as freedom and peace). If so, new African democracies may be less vulnerable to governmental failures of socioeconomic delivery than is commonly thought. When respondents were specifically asked about the possible economic benefits of democracy in Round 1, however, it becomes apparent that instrumental views of democracy cannot be dismissed entirely (see Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 11, 2002, Section 1-2, available at www.afrobarometer.org).

It may also be a surprise to discover that Africans, like people in other parts of the world, **see democracy in liberal and procedural terms**. Africans clearly put the protection of civil liberties uppermost in their definition of democracy both **across time and across space**. Figure 2.1 shows a remarkable stability over time in the ways that Africans define democracy, which gives us confidence in the reliability of our results on this question. Table 2.1 shows that Africans rank civil liberties as the primary meaning of democracy in 10 out of 12 countries in 2005. And, where they do not rank freedom first, they increasingly rank it second. This result helps to validate a shared content to African understandings of the "d-word" and, thereby, to justify the validity of the findings that follow on popular demand for, and the perceived supply of, democracy.

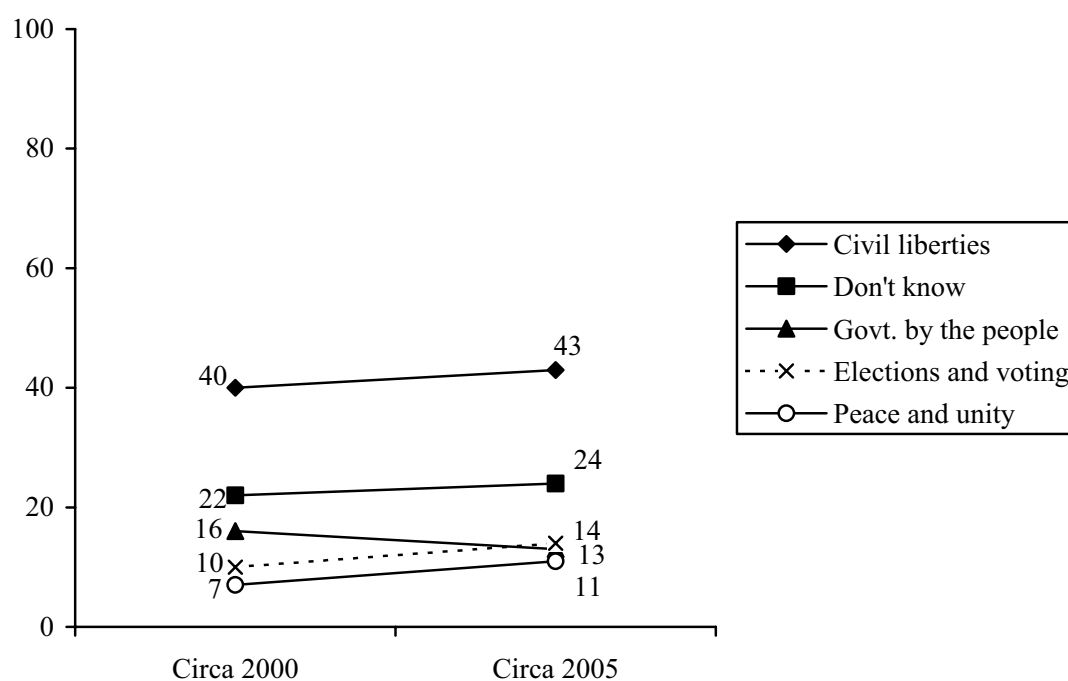**Figure 2.1. The Meaning of Democracy** (*12-country "Afro" mean: percent offering response*)

Table 2.1. Civil Liberties (*percent of respondents who give this response; figures in parentheses are rank of civil liberties among all responses.*)

	Circa 2000		Circa 2005	
	First Response	Multiple Response	First Response	Multiple Response
Botswana	19	29 (2)	28	37 (1)
Ghana	28	29 (1)	43	60 (1)
Lesotho	14	17 (3)	21	25 (1)
Malawi	56	79 (1)	52	63 (1)
Mali	18	22 (2)	25	44(1)
Namibia	42	67 (1)	31	50 (1)
Nigeria	14	14 (3)	23	44 (1)
South Africa	43	70 (1)	33	60 (1)
Tanzania	37	45 (1)	19	21 (2)
Uganda	19	21 (2)	23	34 (1)
Zambia	51	62 (1)	33	49 (1)
Zimbabwe	22	30 (1)	19	32 (2)
Afro mean	**30**	**40**	**29**	**43**

Question wording (Round 3):
What, if anything, does "democracy" mean to you? Anything else? (Accept up to three answers; percent offering response as one of three responses is reported)

2.2. Demand for Democracy

The patience that Africans increasingly show with economic reform (see Section 1.4, above) may be part of a "democratic dividend." In other words, Africans may more readily accept tough economic policies from a legitimately elected government than from a dictator. To provide data for testing such ideas, we turn from economics to politics. From the outset, democracy has been a signature theme of the Afrobarometer. We have always reported, and repeat again here, that most Africans say they want a democratic political regime.

By way of qualification, however, we now find **a gradual, but steady, decline in popular support for democracy** in our 12 African countries. On average, popular support for democracy was 8 percentage points lower circa 2005 than circa 2000. Larger declines than this average were registered in Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Botswana, Zambia, and Malawi. Tanzanians and Ugandans are seemingly uncertain about what democracy means in one-party dominant systems (increasingly, many "don't know"). And Nigerians, Zambians and Malawians doubt the honesty of elections and elected leaders. Even the citizens of Botswana – long regarded as a model African polity – are seemingly beginning to wonder whether democracy is preferable if it never results in an alternation of ruling parties.

To a certain extent, a drop-off in popular support for democracy is predictable in the aftermath of often-tumultuous political transitions. Political expectations were certainly unsustainably high in Nigeria and Tanzania circa 2000. And declines in democratic support in most countries are **offset by increases** in others. Electoral reforms and alternations surely boosted support for democracy in Lesotho (up 10 points) and Mali (up 8), and the political stability associated with democracy has been reassuring to people of all races in South Africa (up 5). It must also be noted that **six in ten Africans still finds democracy "preferable** to any other form of government."

Has support for democracy been supplanted by other regime preferences? The answer is clearly "no." In 2005, eight in ten Africans rejected one-man rule and seven in ten rejected one party rule. Moreover, these mass rebukes to autocracy, which confirm and deepen popular demand for democracy, remain steady over time. The general public's resistance to authoritarianism has recently weakened only with respect to military rule, whose rejection rate fell by nine percentage points over six years (from a very high 82 percent to a still high 73 percent). As such, while demand for democracy may have dimmed somewhat, **no other regime alternative has yet won more than minority support**.

Thus Africans may be learning from Winston Churchill's dictum that "democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." They are beginning to see democracy in a realistic light – warts and all – and are concluding that it is still better than other alternatives they have known.

This result is only reinforced by our findings about **growing political patience**. We asked respondents to choose: either "our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems," or "if our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government." One might expect that, as new African democracies struggle to deliver desired goods and services, political patience would wane. On the contrary, three rounds of the Afrobarometer demonstrate that political patience has actually increased, up 10 points from a minority position circa 2000 (46 percent) to a majority position circa 2003 and 2005 (56 percent).

Figure 2.2. Demand for Democracy *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval (democracy) or reject (other systems))*
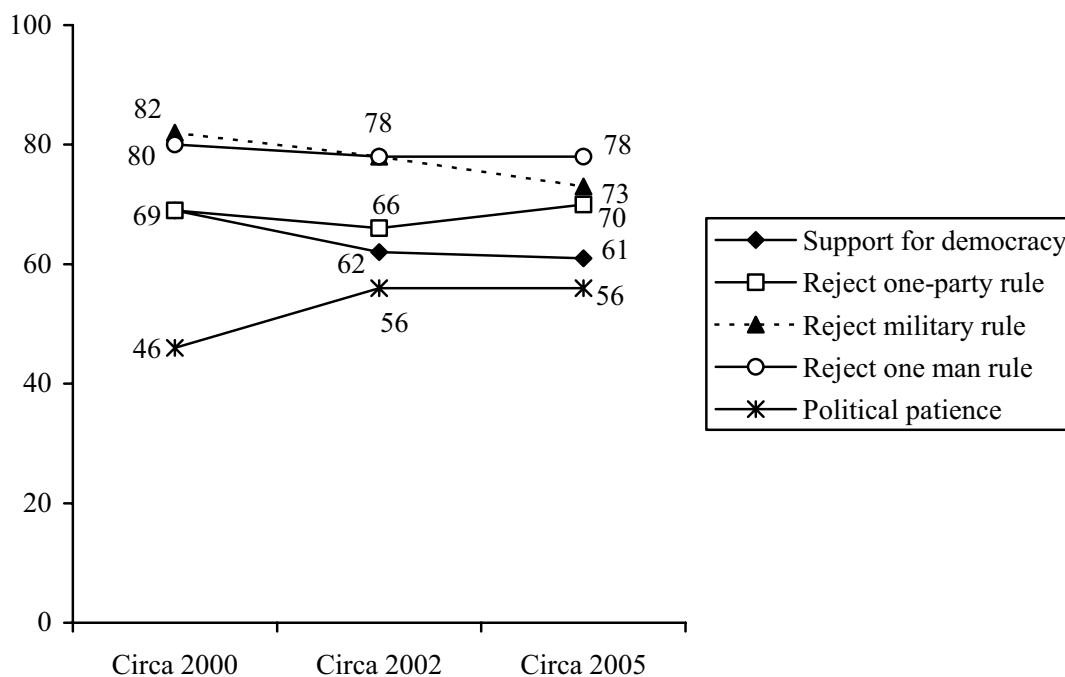

Table 2.2. Support for Democracy *(percent saying "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.")*

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	85	75	69	-16
Ghana	77	82	75	-2
Lesotho	40	50	50	+10
Malawi	65	64	56	-9
Mali	60	71	68	+8
Namibia	58	54	57	-1
Nigeria	81	68	65	-16
South Africa	60	57	65	+5
Tanzania	84	65	38	-46
Uganda	80	75	61	-19
Zambia	75	70	64	-11
Zimbabwe	71	48	66	-5
Afro mean	**69**	**62**	**61**	**-8**

Question Wording (Round 3):
Support for democracy: percent saying "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government."
Reject one-party rule: Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office (percent disapprove / strongly disapprove).
Reject military rule: The army comes in to govern the country (percent disapprove / strongly disapprove).
Reject one man rule: Elections and the Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything (percent disapprove / strongly disapprove).
Political patience: Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems (percent agree /agree very strongly).

2.3. Supply of Democracy

Because many Africans seem to think that democratic regimes have not performed well, it is surprising that popular support for democracy has not fallen further. In most countries, overt mass demand for democracy usually exceeds the supply of democracy delivered by political elites. In short, most Africans do not get as much democracy as they say they expect.

Take one common, but partial, indicator of democratic supply: public satisfaction with "the way democracy works in your country." This concrete measure often (though not always) registers below the level of popular support for the democratic ideal. In aggregate, satisfaction circa 2000 was 11 points lower than support; and in 2005, it was 16 points lower. More importantly, satisfaction also described a sharp secular decline over time. On average, **satisfaction with democracy slumped** by 13 percentage points, which is the largest downward shift in public opinion so far observed. Satisfied respondents fell from a majority 58 percent to minority 45 percent between the first and third surveys, which we regard as a consequential trend.

Democratic satisfaction is in free fall in Nigeria, having declined from a euphoric 84 percent a few months after regime transition to a disgruntled 26 percent in the waning months of President Obasanjo's second term. Of all the results reported here, no country trend is more dramatic. Because Nigeria is such an outlier, one might choose to exclude it when calculating average "continental" trends. But, even without Nigeria, satisfaction is still down by an average eight points in the other 11 countries. And, since every fourth African is a Nigerian, the country should not be excluded from any overview. Instead, we should note that popular satisfaction with democracy is rising in Ghana and South Africa, but falling in most other places, especially sharply so in Zambia and Malawi.

A likely reason for waning popular satisfaction with democracy was a perceived **slippage in the quality of elections**. We have only two observations – circa 2000 and circa 2005 – of the proportion of the populace who see elections as being "free and fair." But the 5-point drop over the period in question leads us to believe that there has been a meaningful slide in the honesty of elections, at least in the popular imagination. Since international observers cover African elections less frequently than during the heady days of regime transition, we must now place greater reliance on these popular judgments. While only about four in ten Africans are satisfied with their democracies, however, some six in ten remain satisfied with the quality of their elections, and eight in ten are committed to elections as the best means for choosing a government (see Section 2.4).

To complete our review of the supply of democracy, it is useful to refer to an indicator we call **"the extent of democracy."** It asks respondents: "In your opinion, how much of a democracy is your country today?" On average, Africans have always been **deeply divided** on this question, with about half seeing a "full democracy" or "a democracy with minor problems" and the other half seeing " a democracy with major problems" or "no democracy at all." The average proportion who think that democracy has been fully or largely attained varies only slightly across surveys: from 50 percent circa 2000 to 48 percent circa 2005, and does not exceed the variation that could be expected from sampling error alone.

But it is nonetheless noteworthy that **any latent trend in the extent of democracy is steadily downward**. And the countries where the extent of democracy is low and evidently falling fast (not shown) – as in Malawi (-34 points), Zambia (-32), Nigeria (-22) and Zimbabwe (-13) – are the same countries where satisfaction with democracy is in sharp decline. These are the places in the Afrobarometer sample where democracy is in greatest danger.

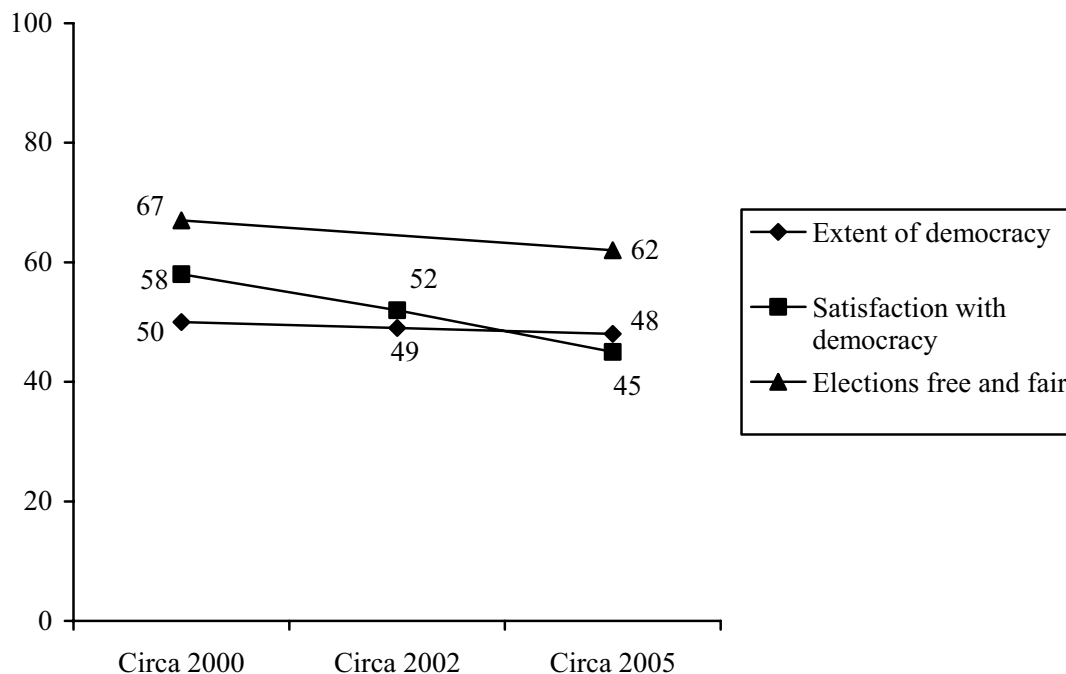*Figure 2.3. Supply of Democracy (12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval)*

Table 2.3. Satisfaction with Democracy (percent fairly satisfied / very satisfied)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	75	66	59	-16
Ghana	54	71	70	+16
Lesotho	38	48	40	+2
Malawi	57	47	26	-31
Mali	60	63	57	-3
Namibia	64	69	69	+5
Nigeria	84	35	26	-58
South Africa	52	44	63	+11
Tanzania	63	63	37	-26
Uganda	62	50	51	-11
Zambia	59	54	26	-33
Zimbabwe	18	37	14	-4
Afro mean	**58**	**52**	**45**	**-13**

Question Wording (Round 3):

Extent of democracy: In your opinion how much of a democracy is [your country] today? (percent a full democracy / a democracy, but with minor problems).

Satisfaction with democracy: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [your country]? Are you: (percent fairly satisfied / very satisfied).

Elections free and fair: On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election held in [2001]. Was it: (percent completely free and fair / free and fair, but with minor problem).

2.4. Support for Democratic Institutions

As a way of deepening our understanding of support for a democratic regime, the Afrobarometer asks about specific democratic institutions and processes. To discourage easy acquiescence to socially approved norms, the word "democracy" is never explicitly used. Instead we ask about regular elections, legislative independence, and multiparty competition. Although, to date, we have collected only two observations on each of these items, we have reason to believe that **support for particular democratic institutions is slowly on the rise**.

For example, large and growing majorities of Africans think that, "**we should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections**." An average of some 79 percent held this view circa 2002, climbing to 81 percent circa 2005. Elections are consistently favored by all nationalities, currently ranging from 62 percent of Malawians (down 16 points since 2003) to 90 percent of Ghanaians (up 3 points from 2002). A small and declining number of people hold the alternate opinion that "since elections can sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders."

The average Afrobarometer respondent also increasingly considers that the legislature should be independent of the executive branch of government. He or she is ever more likely to concur that the **national assembly "should make laws for this country**." Some 62 percent held this opinion circa 2002, compared to 66 percent circa 2005. Accordingly, fewer and fewer Africans adhere to the notion that the president "should pass laws without worrying what parliament thinks," a view entirely consistent with their steady rejection of one-man rule.

While public opinion on institutions and processes seems to be swinging in a pro-democratic direction, these temporal changes could still be an artifact of sampling error. We are therefore reassured to discover at least one statistically significant shift in attitudes of support for democratic institutions. Whereas, in 2002, 55 percent thought that, "**many political parties are needed** to make sure (citizens) have real choices in who governs them," this average jumped to 63 percent by 2005. Beyond marking an average 8-point advance, this change also marked shrinkage in an opposite view, namely that political parties are "unnecessary" because they "create division and confusion." In short, as Africans gain experience with multiparty competition, they appear to become gradually more comfortable with plural party institutions and spirited electoral processes.

A culture of support for multiparty competition can emerge under very diverse circumstances. In **Lesotho**, recent increases in support for multiple parties (up 28 percent over the last three years) can be traced to the introduction in 2002 of a more proportional electoral system that, for the first time, enabled opposition parties to win seats in parliament. By contrast, recent increases in support for multiple parties in **Zimbabwe** are a reaction to state repression. Between the two latest Afrobarometer surveys, Zimbabweans experienced a rigged parliamentary election and a vicious campaign to stamp out informal trade. Far from being a positive response to a liberalizing electoral reform, as in Lesotho, rising support for multiple parties in Zimbabwe (up 21 percent in just eighteen months) was a backlash against an official crackdown.

To be sure, there are some African countries where public opinion bucks the continental trend favoring competitive political processes. Tanzania, Namibia and South Africa all harbor growing contingents of citizens who endorse the strictures of a one-party dominant system. But these cases are exceptions to an emerging rule of growing popular support for democratic institutions.

Figure 2.4. Support for Democratic Institutions (12-country "Afro" mean: percent agree)
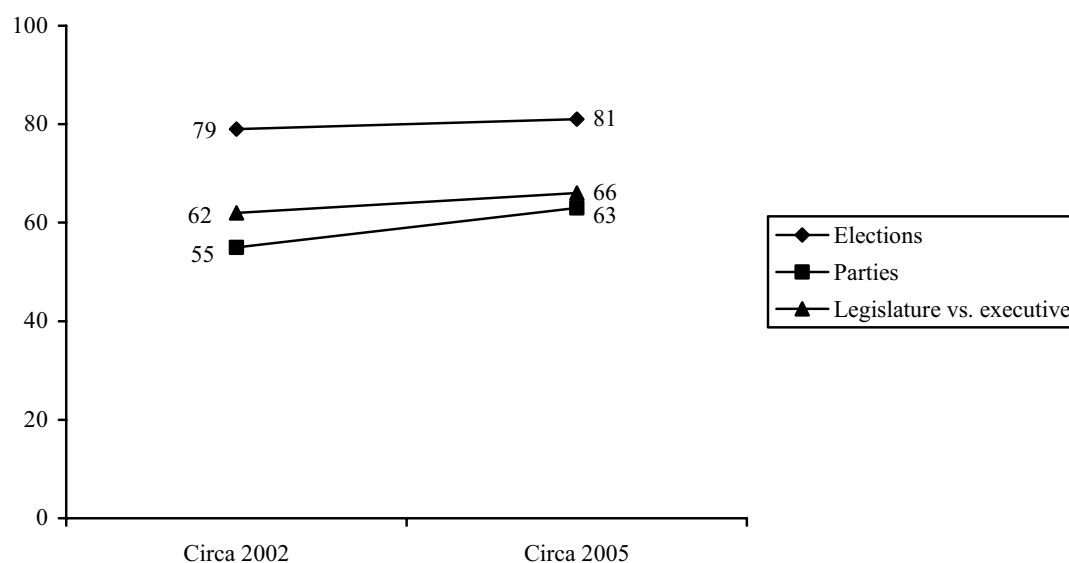

Table 2.4. Support for Multiple Political Parties (percent agree/ agree very strongly that "Many political parties are needed to make sure that [citizens of this country] have real choices in who governs them.")

	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	59	74	+15
Ghana	56	69	+13
Lesotho	31	59	+28
Malawi	64	68	+4
Mali	55	59	+4
Namibia	62	57	-5
Nigeria	59	67	+8
South Africa	67	62	-5
Tanzania	67	52	-15
Uganda	41	54	+13
Zambia	52	63	+11
Zimbabwe	55	76	+21
Afro mean	**55**	**63**	**+8**

Question Wording (Round 3):
Which of the following statements is closest to your view, A or B?
Elections: A. We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections; B. Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders. (percent agree/ agree very strongly with A)
Parties: A. Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in this country; B. Many political parties are needed to make sure that [citizens of this country] have real choices in who governs them. (percent agree/ agree very strongly with B)
Legislature vs. executive: A. The members of Parliament (MPs) represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree; B. Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the Parliament thinks. (percent agree/ agree very strongly with A)

2.5. Political Freedoms

Underlying trends in mass attitudes to democracy are changing opinions about the availability of political freedoms. There is little doubt that, over all countries and from a long-term perspective, **the Africans we interviewed think they are freer than they used to be**. By 2005, about two-thirds of Afrobarometer respondents thought that they had more freedom of speech (63 percent), more freedom of association (68 percent), and more freedom to vote for the candidate of their choice (68 percent), than they enjoyed " few years ago."

Six years before, when we asked respondents to compare the freedoms they were enjoying to those under the previous, non-democratic regime, an even higher three-quarters felt that things were better than they had been. Given the change in question wording and the consequent uncertainty about the exact point of reference respondents were using when thinking of "a few years ago" in the most recent survey, it is necessary to be cautious in interpreting these results over time. But overall, it appears that while **the pace of improvements in respecting political freedoms may be declining**, **substantial majorities nonetheless continue to believe that progress is being made**. And this decline is to be expected. The initial transition to democracy is often accompanied by a relatively sudden and momentous improvement in political freedoms. But once citizens have won basic protections, it is impossible to continue increasing political freedom at the same heady pace. And once a relatively high level of political freedom has been achieved, the issue becomes less one of increasing rights still further, and more a question of ensuring that the gains already realized are secured, and preventing backtracking. From the perspective of a sizeable majority in these 12 countries, no such reversal is evident.

Differences across these 12 countries are, however, substantial. As Africa's political regimes mature, mutate, and consolidate, they settle into various forms, ranging from liberal democracy to competitive autocracy, with various hybrid arrangements in between. In our sample, the country that is clearly losing ground is Zimbabwe; two-thirds to three-quarters say they have less freedom of speech, association, and voting than they did a few years ago. Warning flags are also raised in Nigeria, where one-quarter to one-third of respondents also see a decline. But even in Nigeria, a plurality continues to report improving, not declining, enjoyment of political freedoms, and in all other countries, majorities continue to report improvements (not shown).

But while great gains have been made, there nonetheless remains considerable room for further improvement. **Freedom of speech** is an especially important right since it is central to African conceptions of democracy. Recall that, in Rounds 1 and 3 of the Afrobarometer, respondents cited civil liberties as the most common popular understanding of democracy (see Section 2.1 above). Indeed freedom of speech in African countries has always been, and remains, conditional. Because politics is a sphere of conflict, the celebration of expressive liberty has always been offset by political fear. Circa 2005, **a majority of citizens** in 11 out of 12 countries admitted that – "sometimes," "often," or "always" – **one has to be "careful of what you say about politics."** The only exception was Malawi, where, in a remarkable and sustained break from a dark political past, a clear majority (74 percent in 2005, up 15 points) said that people "never" or "rarely" feel constrained about saying what they think.

By 2005, political fear was reportedly most prevalent in Tanzania, Mali, and Zimbabwe, though presumably for different reasons. In Tanzania, people fear expressing politically incorrect opinions that diverge from the widespread official ideology of the dominant party. In Mali, where a party-state has not penetrated every village, people seek to align themselves with the social consensus on which small group harmony depends. Only in Zimbabwe, where a mere 12 percent think that people feel free to talk openly about politics, is political fear a function of a serious threat of state-sponsored violence.

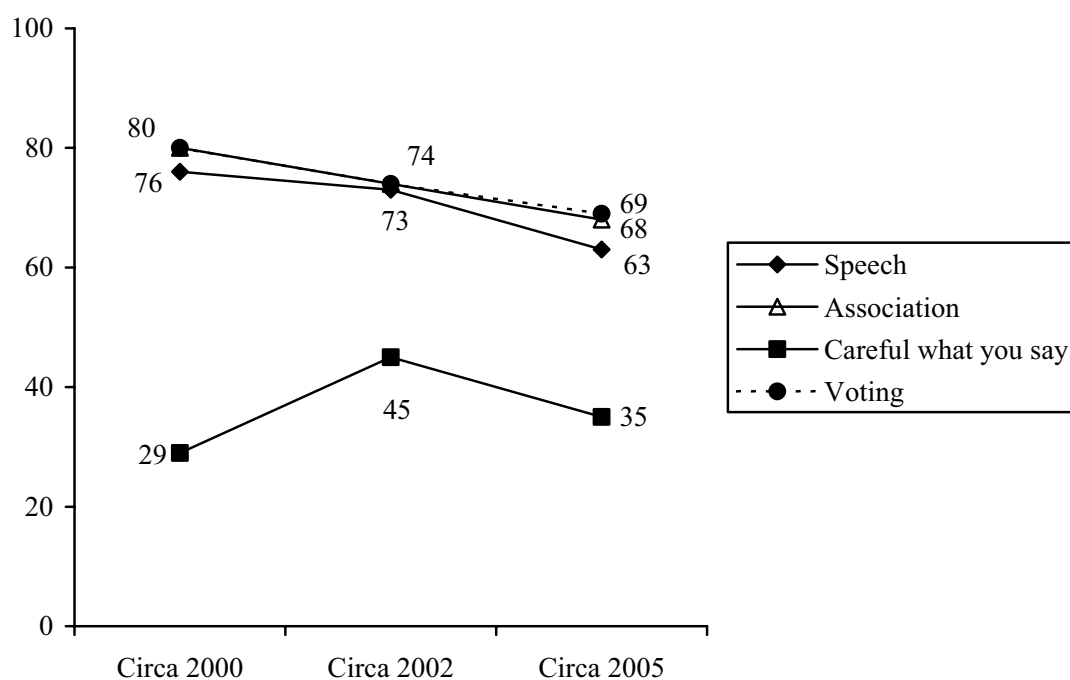**Figure 2.5. Political Freedoms** *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent better)*

Table 2.5. Careful of What You Say About Politics *(percent saying "never" or "rarely")*

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	31	12	32	+1
Ghana		56	42	-6
Lesotho	14	62	46	+32
Malawi	59	70	74	+15
Mali	22	23	14	-8
Namibia	31	56	38	+7
Nigeria		39	29	-10
South Africa	29	60	50	+21
Tanzania	9	39	22	+13
Uganda		52	34	-18
Zambia	38	47	24	-14
Zimbabwe	18	12	12	-6
Afro mean	**29**	**45**	**35**	**+6**

Question Wording (Round 3):
Political Freedoms: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same? 1) Freedom to say what you think; 2) Freedom to join any political organization you want; 3) Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured. (percent better / much better).
Political Fear: In this country, how often: Do people have to be careful of what they say about politics? (percent never / rarely).

PART THREE: TRENDS IN STATE LEGITIMACY

3.1. Trust in Political Institutions

Are Africans ready to grant voluntary compliance to the state? Do they think that the commands of state agents should be obeyed? The concept of state legitimacy is not easy to capture, but it is an important quality, especially for weak states that lack material and coercive resources. Moreover, **legitimacy is a quality that citizens dispense**, which makes it – at least in principle – susceptible to measurement in mass attitude surveys.

The Afrobarometer measures state legitimacy in various ways, not all of which have been repeated in every round of surveys. But there are two irreducible components of state legitimacy – trust in state institutions and the perceived corruption of state officials – that we have measured on three occasions over time. This section summarizes these results.

First, trust. We initially asked whether people trust state institutions "to do what is right," though this qualifying clause was dropped in Rounds 2 and 3. But we always refer to the same list of institutions ranging from the state president (or prime minister) to the government's broadcasting corporation.

With one exception, discussed below, **the trust data are generally trend-less**. Circa 2000, institutional trust was relatively dispersed from a high (68 percent) for the national assembly and public broadcaster to a low for the police (47 percent). Trust then seemed to dip for all institutions circa 2002. Then trust apparently rose again, converging for all institutions in a range from 58 to 66 percent of adults who saw them as trustworthy. While public broadcasters continue to top the list, the national assembly has now settled at the bottom.

Several **unexpected conclusions** can be gleaned from these data. First, contrary to the wisdom of urban elites, who tend to dismiss government-controlled broadcasts as propaganda, most Africans interviewed consistently see official TV and radio stations as reliable dispensers of honest information. Second, while a clear majority of Africans interviewed do not want the military to govern, they regularly regard the army as an honorable institution, presumably with respect to its constitutional role of protecting the country from external attack.   Third, although the police and the courts are often regarded as thoroughly corrupt, rising majorities have confidence in these institutions, perhaps because people have nowhere else to turn when they are victimized by lawlessness. Finally, the volatile reputation of parliaments – which first sags deeply, then partially recovers – cannot be easily read; one can interpret it as either an endorsement of free elections or as another indicator of dissatisfaction with democracy.

To correctly interpret trends in institutional trust, it is therefore advisable to disaggregate results by country and by institution. Only then will diverse tendencies and explanations begin to reveal themselves.

In this regard, we risk only one generalization. **Trust in state presidents rose** between 1999 and 2006. While not describing a straight line, public confidence in the political chief executive increased by 10 points between the first and last observation. And this indicator went up in 11 of the 12 countries surveyed. The main beneficiary was Prime Minister Mosisili in Lesotho (+38 points), though Presidents Mbeki of South Africa (+26) and Mogae of Botswana (+22) did well too. The only exception was President Obasanjo in Nigeria, whose trust rating was down more than fifty points. The fact that only 26 percent of his fellow citizens trusted him in December 2005 augured badly for his bid to legitimately secure a third presidential term.

Figure 3.1. Trust in Political Institutions (12-country "Afro" mean: percent trust)
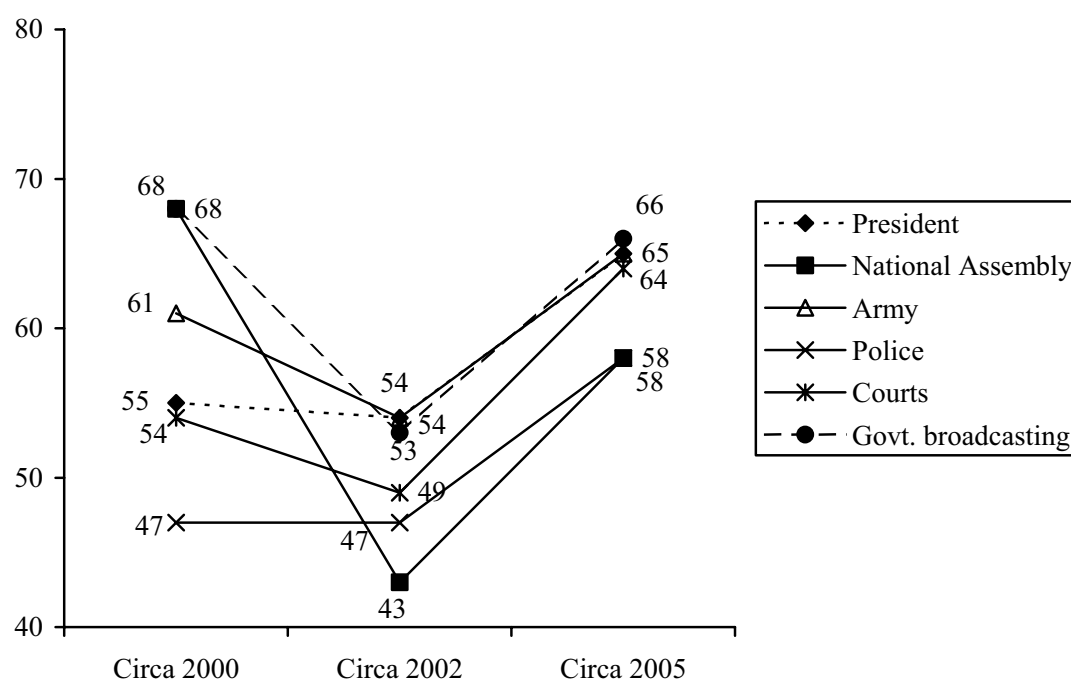

Table 3.1. Trust in President (percent somewhat / a lot)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	44	44	66	+22
Ghana		65	75	+10
Lesotho	41	58	79	+38
Malawi	50	48	60	+10
Mali	72	71	81	+9
Namibia	73	76	80	+7
Nigeria	77	18	26	-51
South Africa	41	37	70	+29
Tanzania	90	79	94	+4
Uganda		61	78	+17
Zambia	38	46	39	+1
Zimbabwe	20	46	32	+12
Afro mean	**55**	**54**	**65**	**+10**

Question wording (Round 3):
How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? 1)
President; 2) Parliament; 3) Army; 4) Police; 5) Courts of Law; 6) Government broadcasting service
(percent somewhat / a lot).

3.2. Official Corruption

Previous and ongoing Afrobarometer research shows a strong – and negative – connection between trust in state institutions and perceived levels of official corruption. Not surprisingly, citizens appear to use judgments about the probity of leaders to estimate whether institutions are trustworthy. Where they suspect extensive corruption, state legitimacy is consequently low. And, for citizens, broad perceptions of corruption matter more than whether an individual has ever personally encountered a state official who demanded a bribe.

We report here results of the survey question that reads: "**How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption**, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" The question refers to a list of officials including members of parliament, officials in the national government, and local government officials. We are interested in the proportions of respondents saying that "all" or "most of them" (as opposed to "some" or "none of them") are corrupt.

Perhaps unexpectedly, we find that, according to the general public, recent **perceptions of official corruption are sharply down**. For each type of official, the proportion of survey respondents seeing widespread official graft is lower circa 2005 than circa 2000: for national government officials by 19 points, for local government officials by 15 points, and for MP's (or Assembly Deputies) by 13 points (see Figure 3.2).

With reference to national government officials, this pattern is reproduced in 11 out of 12 Afrobarometer countries (see Table 3.2) (although the changes between circa 2000 and circa 2005 in the East and West African countries should be treated somewhat cautiously given differences in the question wording in these countries in Round 1[3]). Only Namibia registers an increase in perceived corruption over time, and Botswana stays steady at a relatively low level. Otherwise, there is an apparent reduction in perceived corruption in all other countries.

This result runs counter to the popular wisdom that corruption in Africa is entrenched and worsening. One possible reason is that, as a group, the countries in the Afrobarometer have undergone more extensive political and economic reform than most African countries. As such, they have taken more steps toward good governance than a more inclusive review of African states would reveal.

But puzzles remain. We would have expected a large and consistent decline in perceived corruption to be accompanied by clearer positive trends in institutional trust. Yet, as reported above, there is no overall secular direction to institutional trust. Improvements in corruption coincide with upward trends in trust only for the state presidency, the police force, and the courts of law. Nonetheless, these partial and incremental steps provide trace evidence in some African countries that state legitimacy may be gradually building.

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[3] The last qualifying clause, "or haven't you heard enough to say," was not included for the five East and West African countries (Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda) in Round 1. In addition, the question was worded differently. Respondents in Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Tanzania were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "Bribery is not common among public officials" (with percent disagree / strongly disagree reported). Both differences may have inflated the apparent positive (i.e., high levels of corruption) responses relative to those observed in response to the question used in Rounds 2 and 3, thus exaggerating the decline that is evident between Rounds 1 and 3.

Figure 3.2. Official Corruption (12-country "Afro" mean: percent most / all corrupt)
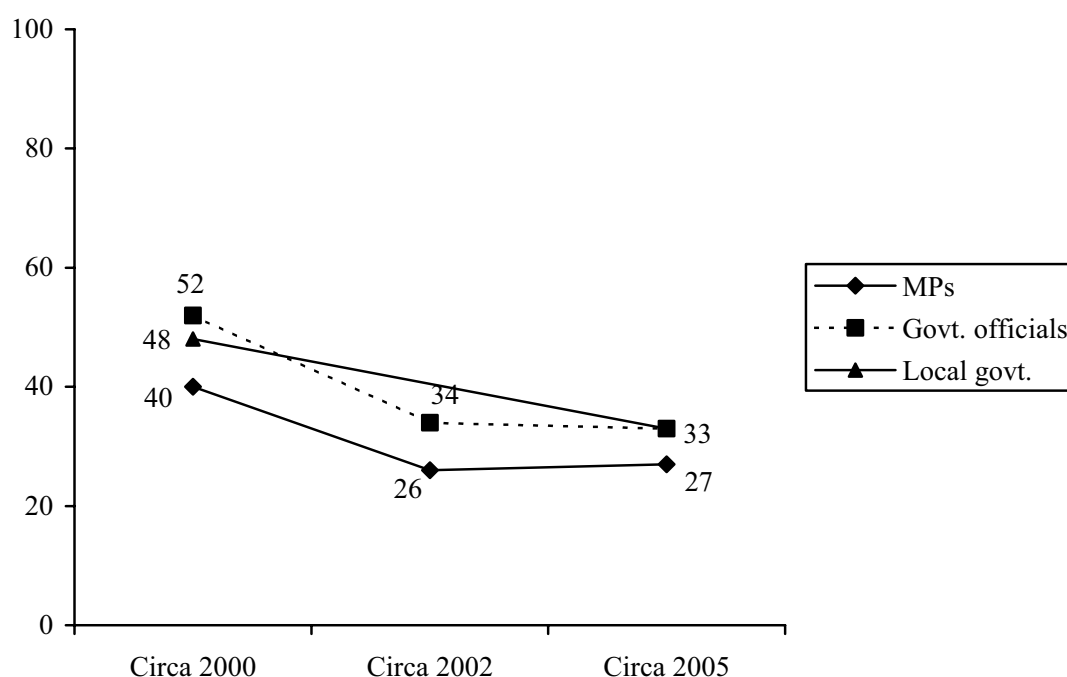

Table 3.2. Perceived Corruption Among National Government Officials (percent most of them / all of them)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change (R3-R1)
Botswana	33	25	29	-4
Ghana	85	23	26	-59
Lesotho	28	27	19	-9
Malawi	43	45	25	-18
Mali	44	47	35	-9
Namibia	25	30	35	+10
Nigeria	73	55	59	-14
South Africa	50	27	36	-14
Tanzania	69	23	9	-60
Uganda	51	47	36	-15
Zambia	52	28	36	-16
Zimbabwe	70	36	49	-21
Afro mean	**52**	**34**	**33**	**-19**

Question Wording (Round 3):
How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? 1) Members of Parliament; 2) National Government Officials; 3) Local Government Officials (percent most of them / all of them).

PART FOUR: TRENDS IN GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

4.1. Most Important Problems

A regular feature of the Afrobarometer is the **People's Agenda**, which enumerates public opinion on "the most important problems facing this country that the government should address." This instrument lists the enduring preoccupations of ordinary Africans, as well as any evolution in their priorities for national development.

The question about "most important problems" is asked in an open-ended format so that respondents can say whatever they want in their own words. They are invited to offer up to three responses. We then took respondents' verbatim answers and assigned them to broader categories for analysis.

To date, Africans have always identified **unemployment as the primary problem** facing their nations. And this tendency has increased since 2000. Circa 2000, 34 percent of all respondents mentioned unemployment, escalating to 46 percent circa 2002 and 40 percent circa 2005. Worries about job creation are growing in every country for which we have three observations over time, especially among the denizens of Botswana, Namibia and Zambia.

A rising concern about the availability of jobs is hardly surprising in a context where three-quarters of all respondents report annual shortages of cash income (see Section 1.3 above). We interpret the employment imperative to mean that subsistence increasingly contains a cash component, which requires individuals to secure a wage, a salary, a remission from a relative, or a return from self-employment. But, even as Africans clamor to draw attention to the continent's crisis of mass unemployment, they express diminishing faith that governments can do anything about it (see Section 4.2 below).

The **next most pressing issue on the public agenda is health care**, including control of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Health-related issues ranked second overall in the first two surveys and are rising in the public consciousness: partly due to growing AIDS awareness, the 17 percent of respondents who cited health circa 2000 had grown to 27 percent circa 2005.

Although the conventional wisdom has long held that Africans place highest emphasis on education, it is noteworthy that health always **outranks education** as a popular priority. If past estimations of the importance of education were correct (they may not have been), this represents a generational shift. It may arise from that fact that the spread of disease has brought new concerns to the fore, at the same time that the persistence of unemployment, now even among educated youngsters, has cast doubt on the assumption that a school certificate is a passport to a guaranteed job.

The Africans we interviewed regard **poverty and hunger as the continent's fastest rising problems**. On the popular development agenda, poverty is up 18 points over the past six years, and hunger is up 20 points. The similar trajectory of these trends confirms our earlier observation that poverty in Africa has a core nutritional component (see section 1.3). And the upward trend in both poverty and hunger reinforces our previous speculation that poverty "is more likely to be up than down." Indeed, because "food shortages" rose from fifth to second place on the people's agenda, we are now confident in stating that **Africans see food security as the continent's most rapidly escalating problem**.

Figure 4.1. Most Important Problems *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent of respondents)**
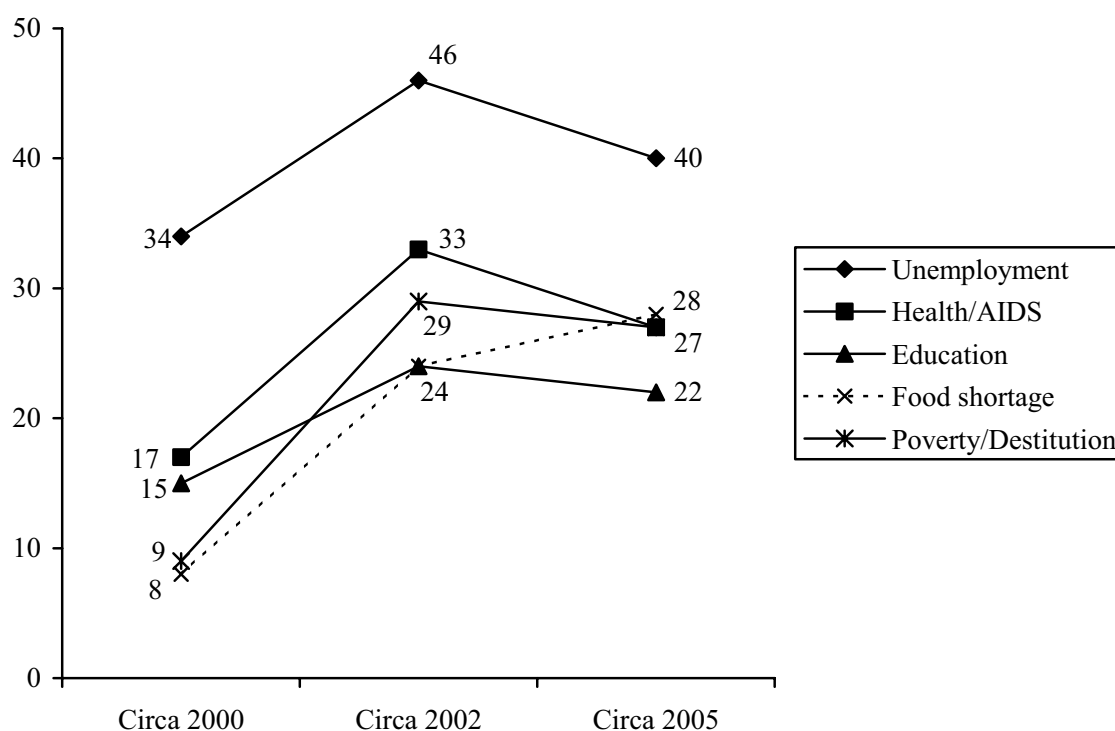
* Round 1 excludes 2 countries (Ghana and Nigeria) and covers only two problems.

Table 4.1. Unemployment *(percent of respondents)*

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	52	62	66	+14
Ghana		51	40	-11
Lesotho	58	74	65	+7
Malawi	8	20	9	+1
Mali	8	17	14	+6
Namibia	48	72	65	+17
Nigeria	63*	56	49	-14
South Africa	63	83	63	0
Tanzania	9	25	10	+1
Uganda	7	27	17	+10
Zambia	22	33	49	+27
Zimbabwe	31	30	35	+4
Afro mean	**34**	**46**	**40**	**+6**

* The figure for Nigeria is from Round 1.5, August – September 2001.

Question Wording (Round 3):
In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Accept up to three answers).

4.2. Government's Economic Policy Performance

Generally speaking, the people we interviewed have little – and declining – confidence in the ability of African governments to manage national economies. Thus, even as the public sees macroeconomic conditions stabilizing at low levels (see Section 1.1, above), their qualms continue to deepen about official capacity to engineer economic recovery.

We asked one generic question and three specific policy probes. Regarding the former, Africans are split on "how well or badly the current government is managing the economy." About half say "well" and about half say "badly." However, we concede that many respondents may not have a clear understanding or an informed opinion on the esoteric subject of macroeconomic management. Moreover, we possess only two observations, so the 4-point downward trend portrayed in Figure 4.2 must be regarded as provisional at best.

But a **downward trend in approval of government policy performance** is confirmed by responses to questions about particular policies. People quite easily form opinions about governmental performance at creating jobs, keeping prices stable, and narrowing income gaps between rich and the poor. As evidence, there are very few "don't know" responses to these items. And, once faced with a concrete object of evaluation, people offer harsh judgments. At any moment in time, barely one-third (often just one-quarter) of all adults interviewed said that their governments performed well at these economic policy tasks. On average, they were consistently most critical about the government's inability to prevent the emergence of economic inequalities.

Over time, and **on every economic policy**, public opinion runs downhill. People give governments most credit for keeping inflation in check, but even here, average approval slips by 2 percentage points over six years (to 30 percent). This very gradual descent conceals sharp differences across countries, for example between South Africa (up 20 points to 37 percent by 2006) and Zimbabwe (down 11 points to only 3 percent in 2005!) (not shown). Notably, on the mismanagement of the rich-poor gap, the average cross-national decline in approval cannot be attributed to sampling error alone (down 7 points over six years).

Consistent with previous results, government performance at **job creation induces the steepest weakening** in public opinion. Down 11 points over six years, approval is granted by just one out of four Africans circa 2005. As Table 4.2 shows, opinion fell in twice as many places (8 countries) as where it rose (4 countries). The most public concern about failure in employment policy was expressed in Nigeria (where approval was down 39 points), but approval ratings also fell sharply in Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Uganda. Only in South Africa (up 15 points after a cautious start) did approval of the government's job creation performance increase more than the margin of sampling error, though approval was also probably up in Tanzania and Mali.

The Afrobarometer results on policy performance therefore accurately mirror the evolution of the people's agenda. As unemployment goes up as an expressed national development priority, satisfaction with official policy performance at job creation goes down. As food security rises sharply as a problem in the public consciousness, satisfaction with the government's performance at controlling prices (including, centrally, for food items) and ameliorating inequality (including between those who "eat" and those who don't), go down.

Figure 4.2. Government's Economic Policy Performance (12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval)
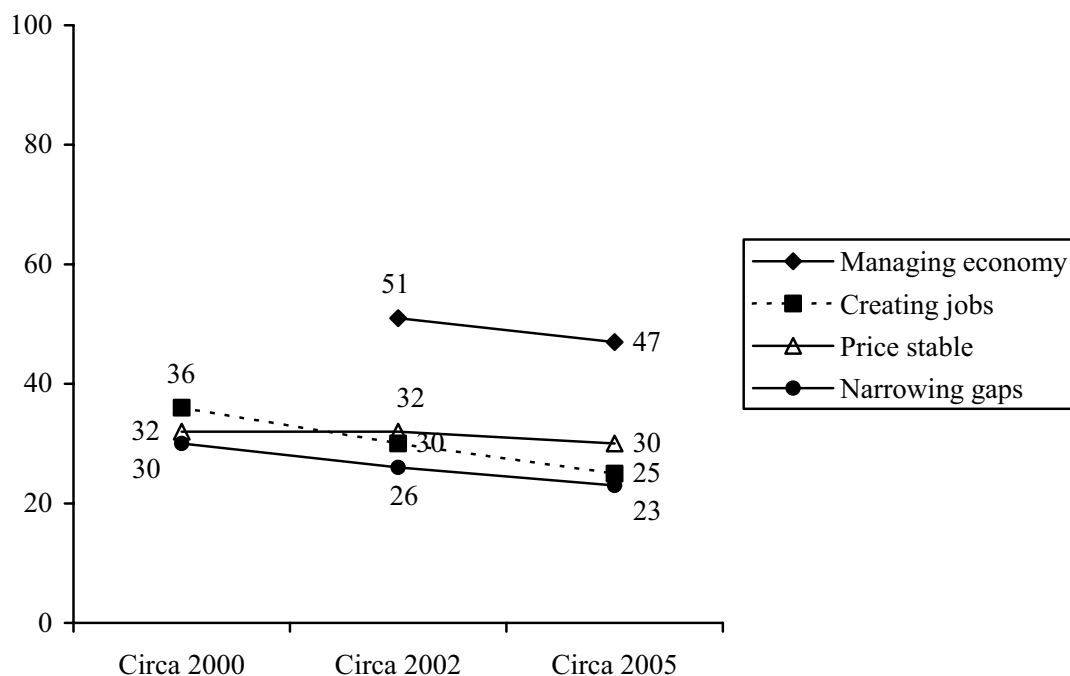

Table 4.2. Creating Jobs (percent fairly well / very well)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	52	30	30	-22
Ghana	38	45	39	+1
Lesotho	38	28	14	-24
Malawi	31	16	19	-12
Mali	36	51	39	+3
Namibia	47	46	43	-4
Nigeria	55	23	16	-39
South Africa	10	9	25	+15
Tanzania	29	39	35	+6
Uganda	49	29	33	-16
Zambia	26	19	8	-18
Zimbabwe	20	23	3	-17
Afro mean	**36**	**30**	**25**	**-11**

Question Wording (Round 3):
How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? 1) Managing the economy; 2) Creating jobs; 3) Keeping prices stable; 4) Narrowing gaps between rich and poor. (percent fairly well/very well).

4.3. Government's Social Policy Performance

African citizens paint a **more positive picture of government performance** in the social policy sectors. By 2005, majorities approve of government performance in all sectors but one; moreover, approval ratings generally trend upwards over time by meaningful margins. Let us consider each sector in turn.

The spread of HIV/AIDS is the most serious social crisis currently facing the continent. But ordinary people seem to think that their governments have matters well in hand. On average, two-thirds of all adults approve of government performance in this sector; they give **governments better grades for HIV/AIDS management than for any other social policy** (70 percent circa 2005); and these grades rose steadily, up by 8 points over the last six years. In this respect, public opinion does not match the reality that only three African countries – Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe – have actually managed to reduce HIV prevalence rates. Everywhere else, sero-positivity continues to rise. Thus, public opinion on this subject may be misinformed, due to the relatively low rates of HIV infection in West Africa, the recent introduction of anti-retrovirals for some (but not all) communities in Southern Africa, and the persistence of social taboos, including among policy makers, against admitting the full scope of the AIDS crisis.

Moreover, as noted in other Afrobarometer publications, poor people in all countries and all people in poor countries regard HIV/AIDS as a less pressing social issue than other daily concerns like food security or access to medical services for cholera, tuberculosis, and malaria (see *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper* No.12, 2004 at www.afrobarometer.org).

En masse, Africans also think that **governments are doing well at delivering basic education services**. Again, these high and rising evaluations (up 8 points to 67 percent by 2005) surely reflect the introduction of policies of free primary education in several countries. And the measurements were taken before the negative impact of swelling class sizes and falling educational quality has registered with parents.

The trend in public opinion about basic health services is also upward, though a plateau may have been reached (an average 63 percent circa 2002 and circa 2005).

People see their governments doing less well at combating crime and corruption. Admittedly, popular evaluations of government performance at crime control do go up (by 6 points), though a majority came to approve of crime control efforts only in the past couple of years. The cross-country breakdown, however, reveals nine countries with positive trends and just three with negative ones (see Table 4.3). South Africa and Nigeria face the largest and most intractable crime problems on the continent, including from organized syndicates. Yet the governments of these two leading regional powers experienced contrasting trends: whereas citizen approval for crime control doubled in South Africa over the past six years (though it is still low at 36 percent), this same rate was halved in Nigeria (from 62 percent down to just 33 percent).

Finally, popular evaluations of government performance at "fighting corruption in government" are essentially constant over the period of Afrobarometer surveys. The size of the satisfied minority (45 percent) does not change between 2000 and 2005. Thus, although perceptions about the extent of corruption are declining (see Section 3.2 above), the public does not seem to be giving the credit for any improvements witnessed to their governments' anti-corruption efforts.

Figure 4.3. Government's Social Policy Performance (12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval)
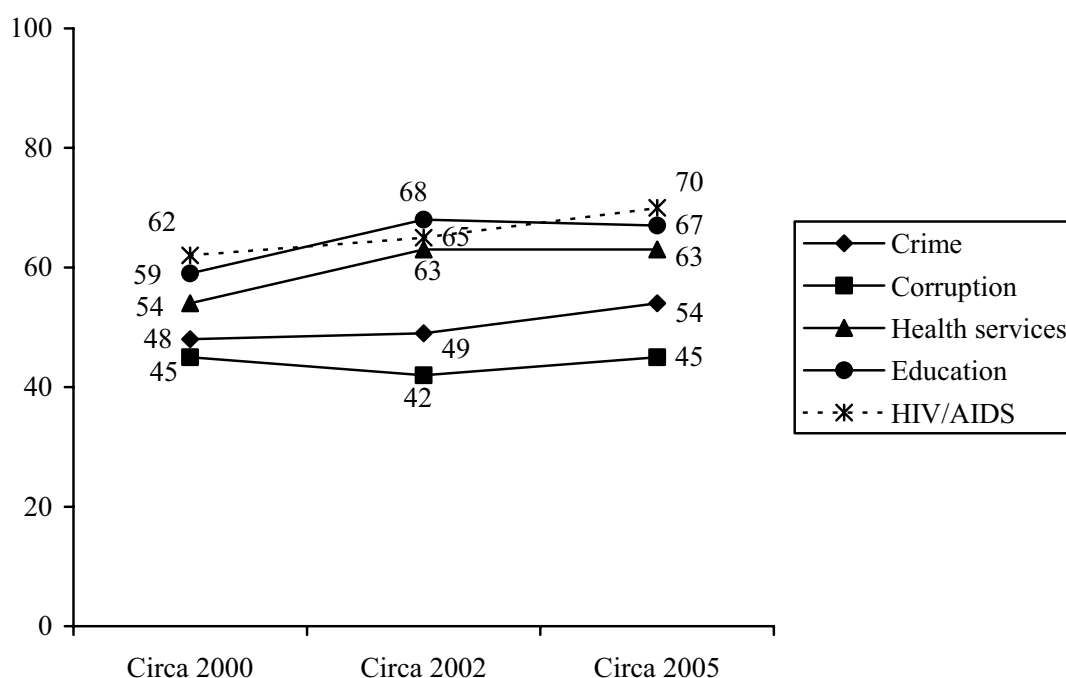

Table 4.3. Handling Crime (percent fairly well / very well)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	64	49	71	+7
Ghana	56	65	71	+15
Lesotho	44	50	53	+9
Malawi	22	22	49	+27
Mali	48	52	61	+13
Namibia	47	62	49	+2
Nigeria	62	38	33	-29
South Africa	18	23	36	+18
Tanzania	64	57	69	+5
Uganda	84	72	75	-9
Zambia	35	53	47	+12
Zimbabwe	31	49	30	-1
Afro mean	**48**	**49**	**54**	**+6**

Question Wording (Round 3):
How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? 1) Reducing crime; 2) Improving basic health services; 3) Addressing educational needs; 4) Fighting corruption in government; 5) Combating HIV/AIDS. (percent fairly well / very well).

4.4. Performance of Leaders

When we asked African survey respondents about the performance of elected leaders, we observed **somewhat favorable responses and flat trends over time**.

To a seemingly substantial degree, and with some measure of deference and loyalty to the big man in the top office, **the general public generally approves of the performance of African presidents**. On average, some two-thirds of respondents give their national presidents positive marks (see Figure 4.4). This favorable distribution of aggregate opinion held steady across three observations: 65 percent approved circa 2000, 69 percent circa 2002, and 66 percent circa 2005.

As usual though, cross-national averages obscure national variations (see Table 4.4). The job performance of some state presidents – like Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, Hifekepunye Pohamba of Namibia, and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda – is endorsed by more than 80 percent of citizens in 2005. Leaders in established democracies approach such high approval only during national emergencies. One must assume, however, that astronomical ratings are due, at least in part, to some combination of party dominance, press control, and uncritical citizenship.

As for temporal trends, some premiers – like President Mbeki in South Africa and Prime Minister Mosisili in Lesotho – receive markedly higher grades with the passage of time. Other big men – like Olesugun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Levi Mwanawasa of Zambia – are seen to be less competent, sometimes dramatically so, as their tenure unfolds. And the slightly positive, six-year trend for Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe should not obscure the fact that his performance rating slid by more than 30 percentage points over the past three years.

Pending in-depth analysis, we suppose that **leadership performance is connected to trends in the macroeconomy and national polity**. Thus Mbeki and Pohamba benefit from the public's perception of improving economic conditions in South Africa and Namibia (see section 1.1). And Obasanjo and Mwanawasa suffer from the mass belief that the supply of democracy is slumping in Nigeria and Zambia (see Section 2.2). We also suspect that positive assessments of anti-AIDS policy performance help to offset negative views about job creation, for example in places like Botswana, where citizens give President Festus Mogae an improved performance score over time.

Other elected leaders are rated less highly than national presidents. About half of all adults interviewed approve of the performance of their legislative and local government representatives. And these ratings hardly budge over time. However, more people say they are less well informed about their Member of Parliament, National Assembly Deputy or local government councilor (11 percent in 2005) than about the national president (6 percent in 2005). If these "don't know" responses are excluded, then people actually view these leaders marginally more positively than negatively.

As such, there is a satisfaction with the performance of political leaders at all levels that has not been entirely eroded by perceived corruption. This political legitimacy is a resource for the African governments that choose to tackle the most important problems on the popular agenda.

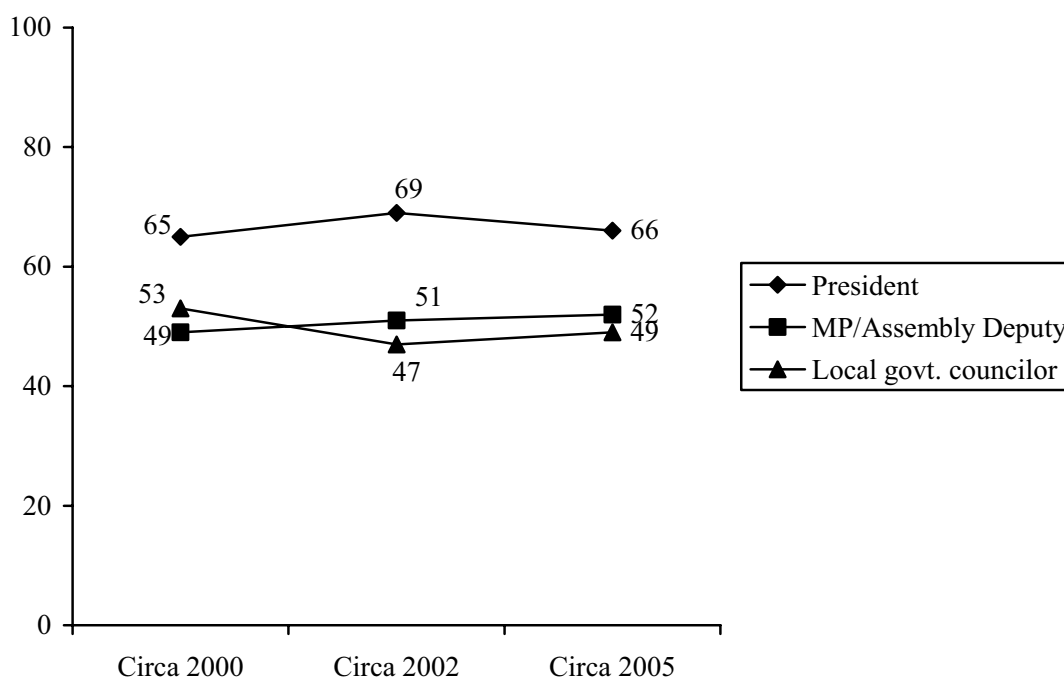*Figure 4.4. Performance of Leaders (12-country "Afro" mean: percent approval)*

Table 4.4. Performance of the President (percent approve / strongly approve)

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change (R3-R1)
Botswana	57	64	70	+13
Ghana		74	76	+2
Lesotho	50	68	78	+28
Malawi	63	65	56	-7
Mali	73	82	73	0
Namibia	79	91	90	+11
Nigeria	72*	39	32	-40
South Africa	50	51	77	+27
Tanzania	90	85	94	+4
Uganda	93	81	81	-12
Zambia	64	71	41	-23
Zimbabwe	21	58	27	+6
Afro mean	**65**	**69**	**66**	**+1**

* The figure for Nigeria is from Round 1.5, August – September 2001.

Question Wording (Round 3):
Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't heard enough about them to say? 1) President; 2) Your Member of Parliament; 3) Your Elected Local Government Councilor. (percent approve / strongly approve)

PART FIVE: TRENDS IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

5.1. Voting and Collective Action

So far, we have reviewed an array of popular political and economic attitudes. But **actions speak louder than words**. Are Africans participating in politics and thereby using opportunities for democratic representation to secure the social and economic policies they desire?

From the limited evidence available, ordinary people in Africa appear to **embrace the chance to vote in competitive elections**. A large majority, up from 71 percent circa 2000 to 75 percent circa 2005, claims to have voted in recent national presidential or legislative contests. The Afrobarometer evidence on voter turnout should be treated with caution, however, and checked against other sources. The reasons are as follows: we possess only two observations of self-reported voting behavior, so any increase could be due to sampling error. In addition, absolute levels tend to be inflated by over-reporting. But, at minimum, over-reporting signifies that voting has become a socially desirable and politically correct norm.

When it comes to **community meetings, we detect a more reliable upward trend** in political participation. These events include informal gatherings by self-help groups, local government forums, development drives sponsored by NGOs, central government information campaigns, and election rallies organized by political parties. As Figure 5.1 indicates, the news about collective action is decidedly upbeat. Whereas only one-half of ordinary Africans said they attended a community meeting circa 2000, some two-thirds claimed to do so by 2005 (a 21-point increase). This trend of mass political mobilization was echoed in 10 out of 12 countries studied. And, in *every* country, at least half of the adult population was involved in meetings at the community level in both 2002 and 2005.

The content of political mobilization varies from place to place. In Botswana (up 48 points), it surely includes *kgotla* gatherings called by traditional leaders. In Lesotho (up 59 points), it undoubtedly reflects electoral mobilization around the 2002 elections. And in Zimbabwe (up 35 points), community meetings are sponsored by government and opposition alike. The former may be all night, slogan-chanting *pungwes* forced upon the rural populace by the ruling party, while the latter may be opposition "stayaways" and other work stoppages supported by a disgruntled urban protesters. But whatever the source and content, Africans report expanded political participation between elections, at least in the 12 countries we have surveyed.

Additional evidence for this trend can be found in the increased proportion (up an average of 8 percentage points) that now reports, "getting together with others to raise an issue." The targeting of these proto-lobbying efforts on various leaders is analyzed in the next section.

Finally, we note that political protest is the road least traveled. Overall, fewer than **one-seventh of the adult population joined a march or demonstration** since the turn of the century, a low proportion that has remained essentially flat. Protest activity may be frequent in urbanized South Africa (23 percent) – for example, over local government boundaries and service delivery – but is rare among Mali's scattered and predominantly rural populations (6 percent) (not shown). Instead, the Africans we interviewed generally prefer to express their political preferences by building consensus – for example at community meetings – rather than by provoking confrontation.

Figure 5.1. Political Participation (12-country "Afro" mean: percent at least once)
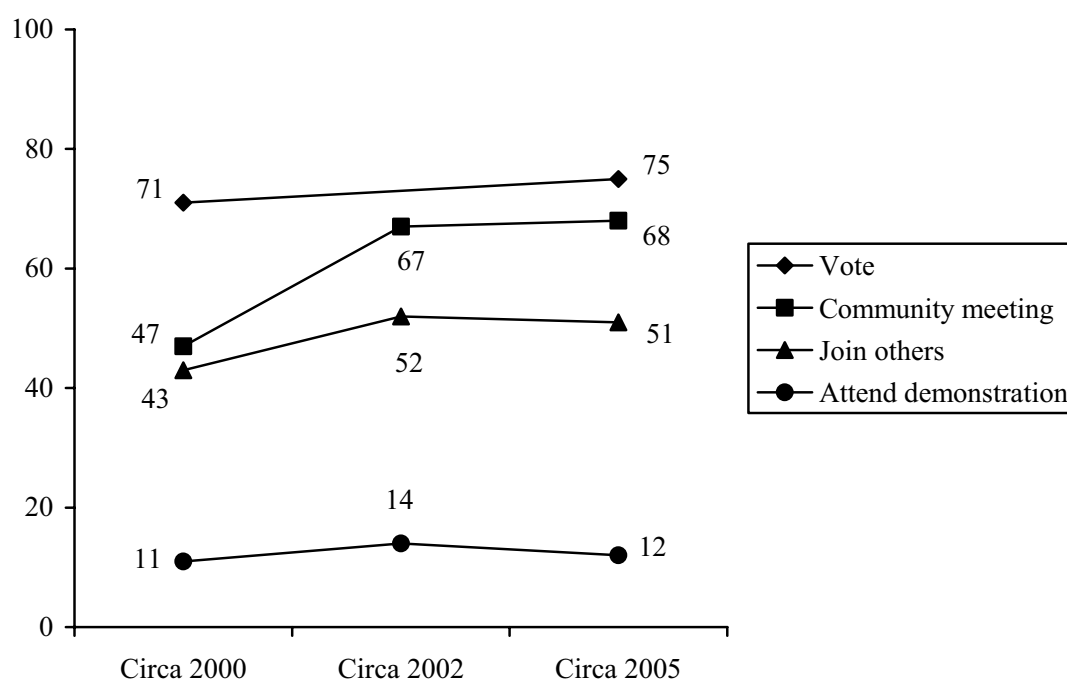

Table 5: Attended a Community Meeting (percent once or twice / several times / often))

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	23	64	71	+48
Ghana	63	57	56	-7
Lesotho	24	83	83	+59
Malawi	36	80	80	+44
Mali	52	40	62	+10
Namibia	50	62	58	+8
Nigeria	45	57	50	+5
South Africa	40	58	60	+20
Tanzania	75	83	81	+6
Uganda	81	89	79	-2
Zambia	31	63	64	+33
Zimbabwe	32	74	67	+35
Afro mean	**47**	**67**	**68**	**+21**

Question Wording (Round 3):

Vote: With regard to the most recent national elections, which statement is true for you? (percent saying "You voted in the elections").

Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. 1) Attend a community meeting; 2) Got together with other to raise an issue; 3) Attend a demonstration or protest march. (percent once or twice / several times / often).

5.2. Contacting Leaders

When ordinary people encounter a problem that requires a political solution, **to whom do they turn**? Do they contact the formal political leaders of official state institutions? Or do they approach informal political leaders in the broader society?   The relations between citizen and state are introduced briefly in this concluding section and explored more fully in the companion volume to this compendium.

African citizens have limited contacts with officials of the central state, including elected officials. For example, **very few people interacted with their legislative representatives** (MP, Assembly Deputy) in the year prior to each survey: just 6 percent in circa 2000, rising to 12 percent circa 2005. Citizen contacts with MPs are growing fastest in Botswana, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe, though all started from quite a low base. Much the same applies to civil servants in central state ministries ("government officials"), who are consistently remote and inaccessible, especially to rural dwellers.

More people contacted local government councilors, who usually live in the locality and whose social status reflects the surrounding society. Just one out of three citizens approached councilors circa 2000, but this climbed to about one-quarter circa 2005, a statistically significant trend. This is an encouraging sign in an era when international donors and African governments are seeking to revive local government as a cornerstone of democratization.

Instead, **people turn to religious leaders**. In all three surveys, and each time by a large margin, respondents say they are most likely to approach priests, pastors, imams or spirit mediums in search of advice and representation. In the most recent survey, four in ten Africans initiated this sort of contact, usually with an appeal on a personal or family matter rather than to raise a collective, community-wide issue. These data suggest that, even after 50 years of African independence, organized religion looms much larger in the life of ordinary Africans than does the apparatus of the state.

Similarly, by 2005, one in four respondents made use of chiefs, headmen and elders. This relatively high frequency of contact confirms that, far from withering away, traditional institutions have survived, at least in part, or are being revived and reinvented in new forms. Almost as many people (one in five) contacted other influential notables in the locality, like businesspeople, schoolteachers, or party agents.

All told, the Africans we interviewed were much more prone to contact an informal leader than a state official. We take this as evidence of the existence of a widespread "**informal polity**" that is the political analogue of the well-known "informal economy." By choice and necessity, ordinary people are representing their political interests via the casual, vernacular channels of this parallel political world.

Temporal trends in informal contacting are generally rising. Reported contacts with religious leaders, traditional leaders, and local government councilors all increased by statistically significant margins, confirming a trend of increased engagement among citizens. This may in part be an outcome of slight differences in the question wording in Southern Africa in Round 1 that may have led to fewer affirmative responses. But the consistency of the increasing pattern across all types of leader except "other influential leaders" suggests that African citizens are enjoying greater opportunities – formal and informal – to have their voices heard. In combination with the patterns of increasing political participation noted above (Section 5.1), we see an early indicator that, at the grassroots and between elections, the **participatory ethos of democracy is beginning to take root among ordinary Africans**.

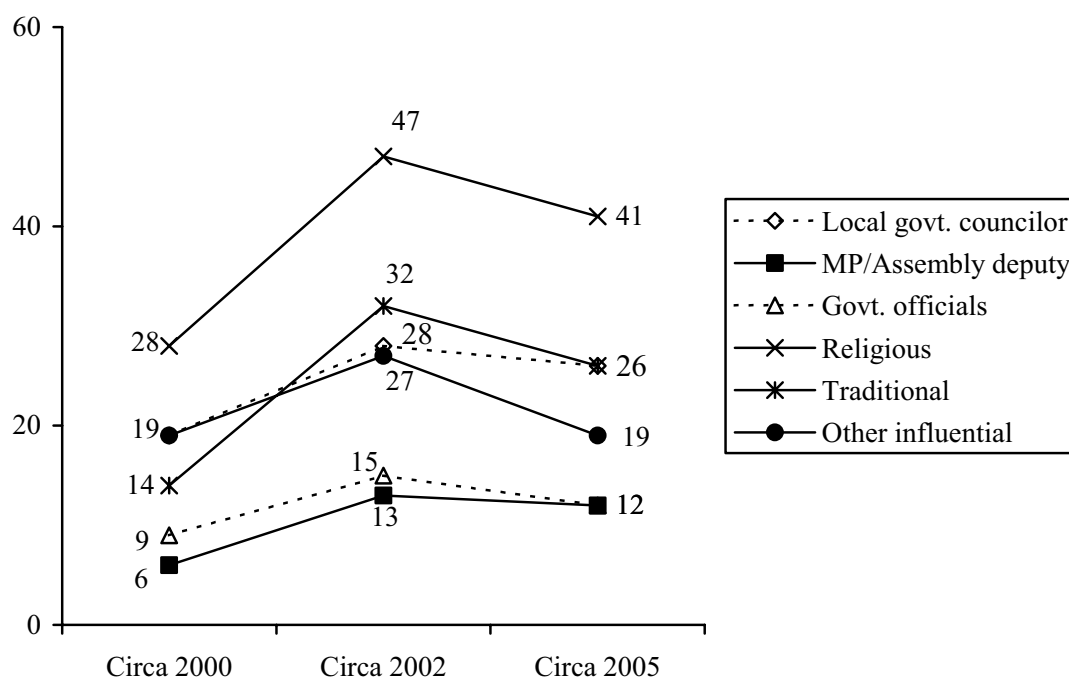**Figure 5.2. Contacting Leaders** *(12-country "Afro" mean: percent at least once)*

Table 5.2. Contacting MP *(percent only once / a few times / often)*

	Circa 2000	Circa 2002	Circa 2005	Change
Botswana	2	14	12	+10
Ghana	12	12	16	+4
Lesotho	5	11	15	+10
Malawi	5	17	12	+7
Mali	5	8	9	+4
Namibia	1	5	9	+8
Nigeria	2	6	8	+6
South Africa	<1	4	5	+5
Tanzania	12	19	17	+5
Uganda	16	16	13	-3
Zambia	7	18	12	+5
Zimbabwe	7	19	N/A	(+12)
Afro mean	**6**	**13**	**12**	**+6**

Question Wording (Round 3):
During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your view? 1) A Local Government councilor; 2) Member of Parliament; 3) An official of a government ministry; 4) A religious leader; 5) A traditional ruler; 6) Some other influential person (percent only once / a few times / often).

Appendix 1

Dates of Fieldwork

	Round 1 (circa 2000)	Round 2 (circa 2002)	Round 3 (circa 2005)
Botswana	Nov-Dec 1999	Jun-Jul 2003	May-June 2005
Ghana	Jul-Aug 1999	Aug-Sep 2002	March 2005
Lesotho	Apr-Jun 2000	Feb-Apr 2003	July-Aug 2005
Malawi	Nov-Dec 1999	Apr-May 2003	June-July 2005
Mali	Jan-Feb 2001	Oct-Nov 2002	June-July 2005
Namibia	Sep-Oct 1999	Aug-Sep 2003	Feb-Mar 2006
Nigeria	Jan-Feb 2000	Sep-Oct 2003	Aug-Dec 2005
South Africa	Jul-Aug 2000	Sep-Oct 2002	February 2006
Tanzania	Mar-Sep 2001	Jul-Aug 2003	July-Aug 2005
Uganda	May-Jun 2000	Aug-Sep 2002	Apr-May 2005
Zambia	Oct-Nov 1999	Jun-Jul 2003	July-Aug 2005
Zimbabwe	Sep-Oct 1999	Apr-May 2004	October 2005

Publications List

AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

No.60   The Afrobarometer Network. "Where is Africa going? Views From Below: A Compendium of Trends in Public Opinion in 12 African Countries, 1999-2006." 2006.

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