

## Ties that bind? Evidence of both unity and division in 18 African countries

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 412 | Carolyn Logan, Aminatou Seydou, and Luyando Mutale Katenda**

### Summary

In this year of COVID-19, the ability of societies to work collectively to respond to challenges has taken center stage. In fact, early public support for and adherence to public health measures has been cited as one factor explaining Africa's far lower per-capita infection and death rates compared to other global regions (BBC, 2020).

Analysts study social bonds and social divisions precisely because they believe that societies that are more cohesive, i.e. that have stronger, more positive relationships across social groups, and between social groups and the government, will be more capable of solving shared problems and promoting greater well-being and development.

How strong or weak are social bonds in Africa? The continent has often been portrayed as conflict-ridden and characterized by divisions, especially divisions based on ethnicity. What is the reality? Do citizens of African countries share a sense of common identity and national purpose that can bring them together to serve collective goals, as some of the recent experiences fighting the coronavirus pandemic would suggest? Or are they, as the stereotypes suggest, riven by cleavages and distrust that thwart the pursuit of the public good?

Extensive research, built around concepts such as social capital, social cohesion, and pluralism, has explored how people identify themselves, where social cleavages are deepest, and how relationships develop horizontally across identity groups and vertically between these groups and the state (see for example Chan, To, & Chan, 2006; Jenson, 2019; Lockwood, 1999).

Both identities and relationships are complex and multi-dimensional. While it is often taken for granted, for example, that ethnicity is the most salient identity – and source of cleavage – in many African countries, even a first look beyond ethnicity suggests that gender, religion, race, wealth, education, nationality, and partisanship are all potentially critical sources of identity and cleavage, at least in some countries and at some times. And understanding the presence or absence of overarching national or pan-African identities that may counter-balance or even override sub-national identities and cleavages is essential as well.

Relationships may also be multi-layered. Analysts of social capital and social cohesion often focus on “trust” – among and between individuals, identity groups, and the state. But “trust” may be a fairly high bar in many societies (see for example Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011), and other aspects of relationships – tolerance, acceptance, or mutual respect on the one hand, and rejection, bias, and discrimination on the other – may be equally relevant, as is understanding whether individuals and societies value diversity as a source of social strength.

Recent data from Afrobarometer shed new light on some of these identities and relationships. During its current Round 8 (2019/2021) surveys, Afrobarometer has focused on three key sources of identity and potential cleavage – ethnicity, religion, and economic status – while also examining the pull of collective national identity. In terms of relationships, in

In addition to measuring trust, Afrobarometer explores tolerance as well as identity-based discrimination.

Findings reveal the complexity of social cohesion. Generalized trust is exceedingly low – seemingly quite a bad sign for African societies – and the experience of discrimination, especially unfair treatment based on economic status, is relatively widespread. But at the same time, there is clear evidence of popular appreciation for diversity, as well as powerful adherence to overarching national identities.

In short, there is no simple answer to the question of how cohesive, or not, African societies are. But the findings presented here suggest some new and perhaps more nuanced directions for understanding multi-dimensional social bonds and cleavages.

### **Afrobarometer surveys**

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys, completed in 18 countries before being interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, will continue in at least 17 more countries in late 2020 and 2021. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This dispatch draws on data from 26,777 interviews completed in the first 18 Round 8 countries between July 2019 and April 2020 (see Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates). The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country findings such as regional or Africa-wide averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

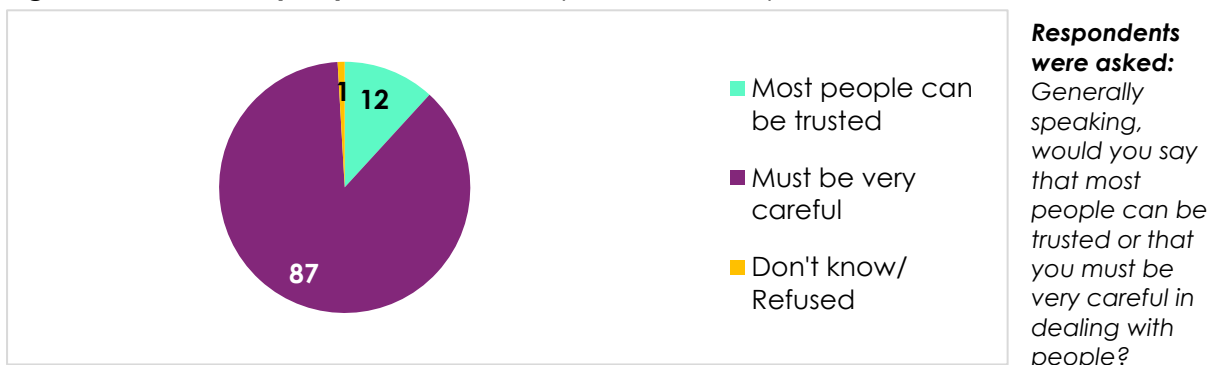
### **Key findings**

- Across 18 countries, generalized trust is extremely low: Just 12% of respondents believe that “most people can be trusted.”
- At the same time, Africans value diversity and are quite tolerant of some types of people who are different from them. Two-thirds (67%) believe that diverse communities are stronger than homogeneous ones. Majorities would like having people from other ethnicities, religions, political parties, and countries as neighbors.
- They also have a strong sense of national unity. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say there is more that unites everyone in their country as one people than divides them. And on average across 17 countries, only 15% are more strongly attached to their ethnic than their national identity.
- Discrimination is, however, a widespread problem. Economic status, rather than ethnicity or religion, is the most common basis of discrimination. Reported levels of unfair treatment are generally higher at the hands of government than at the hands of fellow citizens.
- Poorer citizens report facing discrimination at much higher rates than their wealthier counterparts – sometimes nearly twice as high. This is true not only of discrimination based on economic status, but also when it is based on ethnicity or religion.
- Measured across six categories, Nigerians report the most widespread problems of discrimination, followed by Malawians, Angolans, Ethiopians, Gabonese, Kenyans, Namibians, and Ugandans. Societies with the least discrimination include Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.

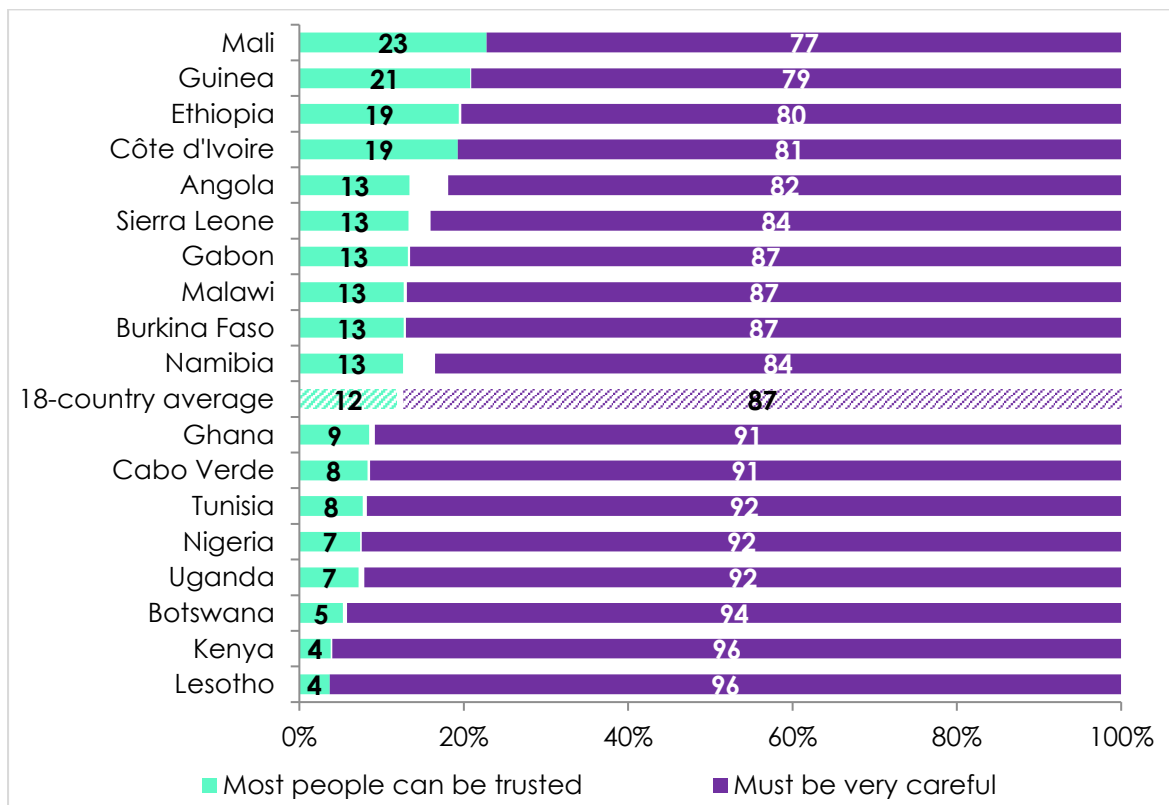
## Rejecting trust while embracing diversity and tolerance

Levels of trust within society are sometimes taken as a key baseline indicator of levels of social cohesion (Jenson, 2019). If this is indeed an effective indicator, then the news for much of Africa is not good. When asked simply to say whether “most people can be trusted” or “you must be very careful in dealing with people,” a mere 12% express generalized trust, while 87% recommend caution in dealing with others (Figure 1). Across 15 countries where this question was also asked in Round 5 (2011/2013), generalized trust has declined from 17% to 11%. Only two countries, Mali (23%) and Guinea (21%), register more than one in five citizens who are generally trusting, while just one in 20 say most people can be trusted in Botswana (5%), Lesotho (4%), and Kenya (4%) (Figure 2). It is notable that the three countries with the lowest levels of trust include two of the most ethnically homogeneous countries on the continent (Botswana and Lesotho) but also one of the most ethnically diverse (Kenya).

**Figure 1: Can most people be trusted?** | 18 countries | 2019/2020



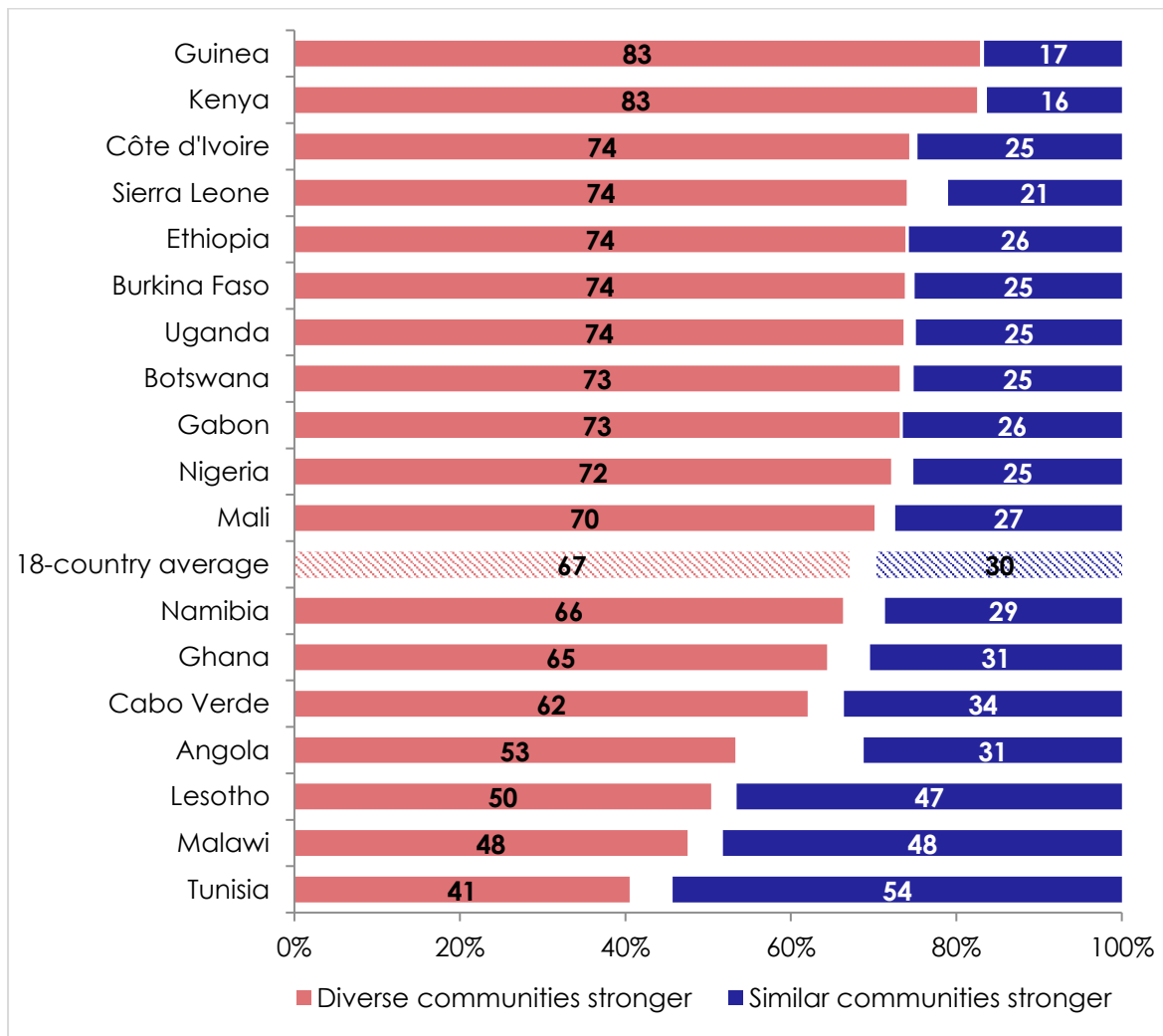
**Figure 2: Can most people be trusted?** | 18 countries | 2019/2020



However, other indicators paint a significantly different picture of interpersonal and inter-group relations. Despite low levels of interpersonal trust, Africans appear to embrace diversity both in the abstract and in their own neighborhoods.

When asked whether communities are stronger when they are diverse or when they are homogeneous, two-thirds (67%) of respondents across 18 countries identify diversity as a source of strength, including majorities in all but two countries. More than eight in 10 Guineans (83%) and Kenyans (83%) agree (Figure 3). The exceptions are Malawi, where people are evenly split on the question (48% each), and Tunisia, the only country where a majority (54%) prefer less, rather than more, diversity.

**Figure 3: Does diversity make communities stronger?** | 18 countries | 2019/2020

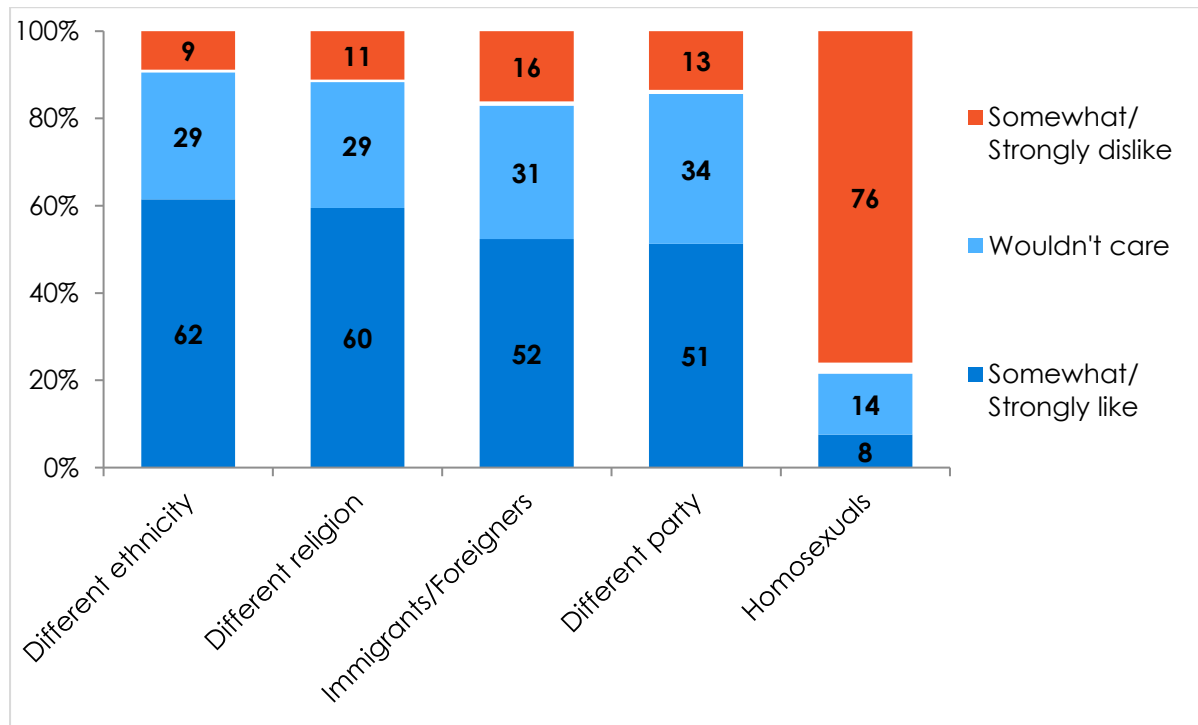


**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Communities are stronger when they are made up of people from different ethnic groups, races, or religions.  
 Statement 2: Communities are stronger when they are made up of people who are similar to each other, that is, people from the same ethnic group, race, or religion.  
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Many also report a personal willingness, or even desire, to live alongside people who are different from themselves. Majorities say they would welcome having people of different ethnicities (62%), religions (60%), nationalities (52%), and political allegiances (51%) as

neighbors, and another three in 10 say they would not care one way or the other (Figure 4). The notable exception concerns homosexuals, who continue to face high levels of intolerance in many countries (Howard, 2020; Dulani, Sambo, & Dionne, 2016).

**Figure 4: Tolerance for others | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbors, dislike it, or not care:

- People of a different religion?
- People from other ethnic groups?
- Homosexuals?
- Immigrants or foreign workers?
- People who support a different political party?

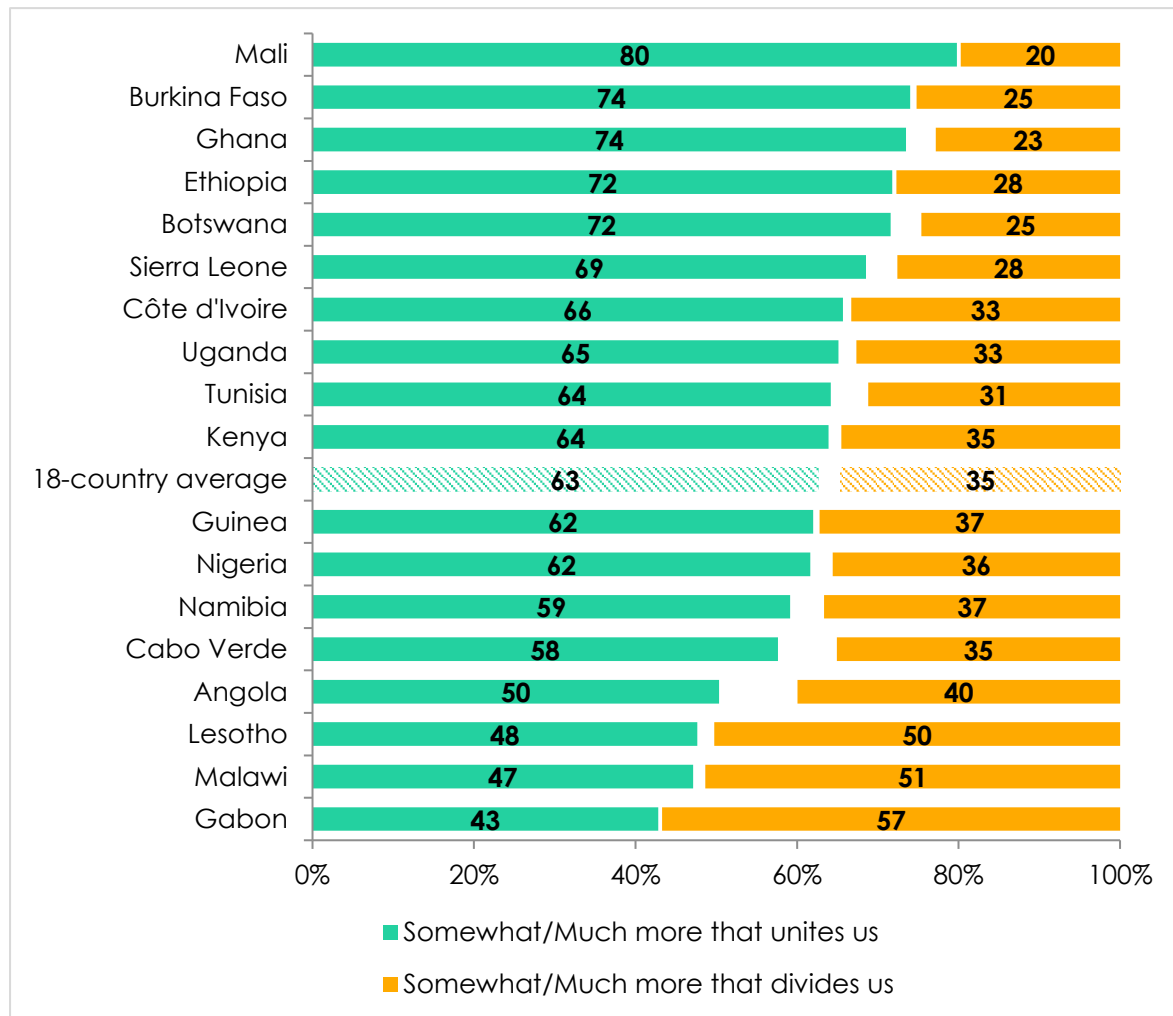
### A sense of belonging?

In addition to considering how trusting and welcoming Africans are toward “others” in their communities and societies, how welcomed and connected do they feel themselves? Do they feel part of a national collective, accepted in their own societies?

The evidence suggests that most do. Asked whether “there is more that unites all [citizens of your country] as one people, or more that divides them,” nearly two-thirds (63%) see their societies as more united, including majorities in 15 of 18 countries (Figure 5). Just 35% think that divides of religion, ethnicity, politics, or economic status overwhelm unifying factors. Despite their country’s political struggles over the past decade, Malians have the most widespread sense of unity (80%), followed by Burkinabe (74%), Ghanaians (74%), Ethiopians (72%), and Batswana (72%). In contrast, majorities believe that more divides citizens than unites them in Gabon (57%), Malawi (51%), and Lesotho (50%).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Round 8 surveys preceded the re-running of the presidential election in Malawi in June 2020, the August 2020 coup in Mali, and the November 2020 internal crisis in Ethiopia.

**Figure 5: More that unites or more that divides?** | 18 countries | 2019/2020



**Respondents were asked:** *[Citizens of this country] are very diverse. They come from different religions, ethnic groups, political parties, and economic and social backgrounds. Overall, would you say that there is more that unites all [citizens of this country] as one people, or more that divides them?*

Ethnicity is often identified as a key social and political cleavage in African societies. The ethnic or regional affiliations of major political parties, for example, are often regarded as more salient than their economic or social platforms (Berman, Eyoh, & Kymlicka, 2004; Norris & Mattes, 2003). But are Africans more at home with their separate ethnic identities or their shared national identities?

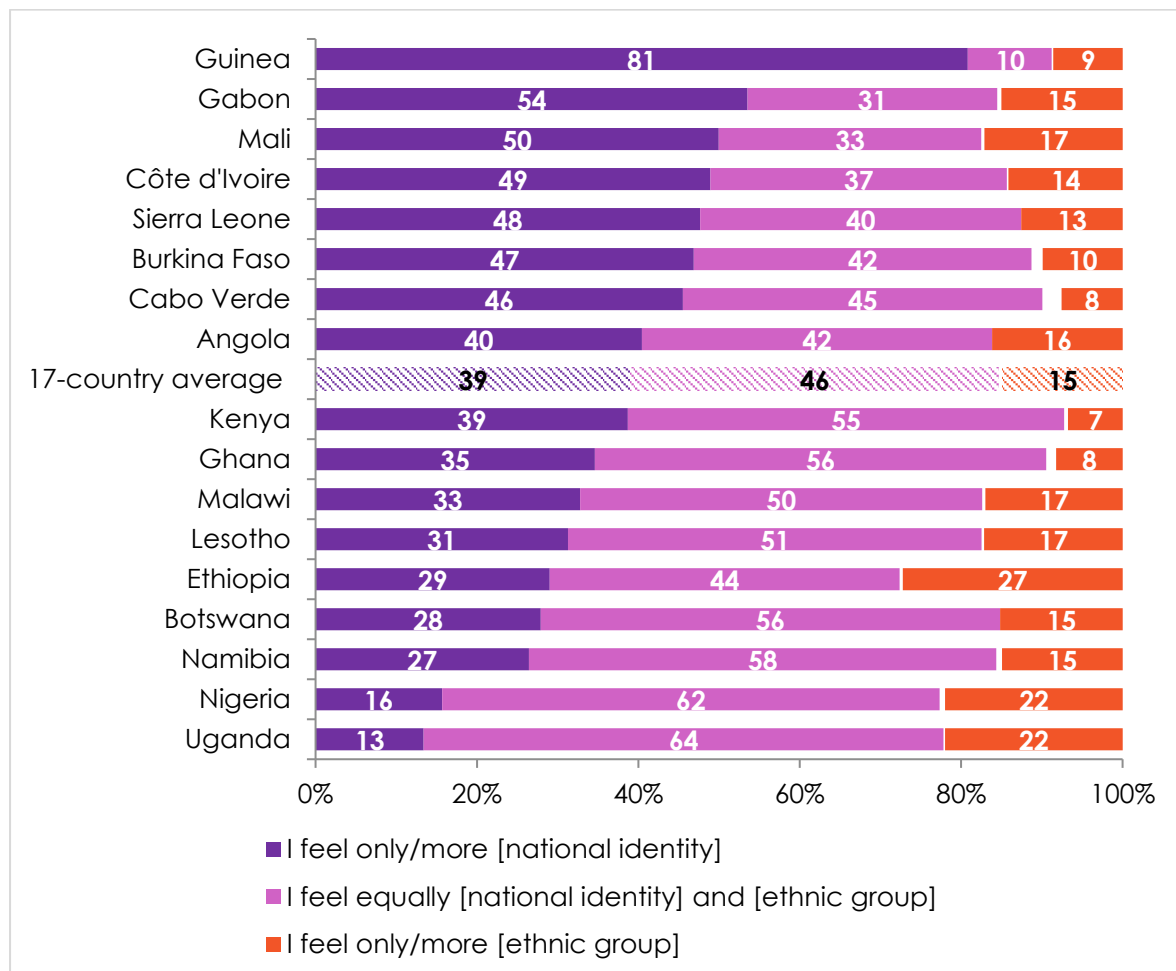
In fact, their preference is to inhabit both identities equally. When asked whether they felt more attached to their national or their ethnic identity, a plurality (46%) across 17 countries<sup>2</sup> say they feel equally attached to both. Another 39% say their national identity matters more to them than their ethnic identity, compared to just 15% who lean more strongly toward their ethnic identity (Figure 6).

There is considerable cross-country variation in preferences for “both identities” vs. “only national identity.” For example, nearly two-thirds of Ugandans (64%) and Nigerians (62%)

<sup>2</sup> Questions about ethnicity were not asked in Tunisia.

value both identities equally, in contrast to just 10% of Guineans, who strongly prefer their national identity (81%). Majorities also focus on national identity in Gabon (54%) and Mali (50%). The preference for ethnic identity, on the other hand, rises above one in four only in Ethiopia (27%), while fewer than one in 10 prioritize their ethnicity in highly diverse Kenya (7%) and Ghana (8%), as well as in Cabo Verde (8%).

**Figure 6: National vs. ethnic identity | 17 countries\* | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:** Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of this country] and being a [member of respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?

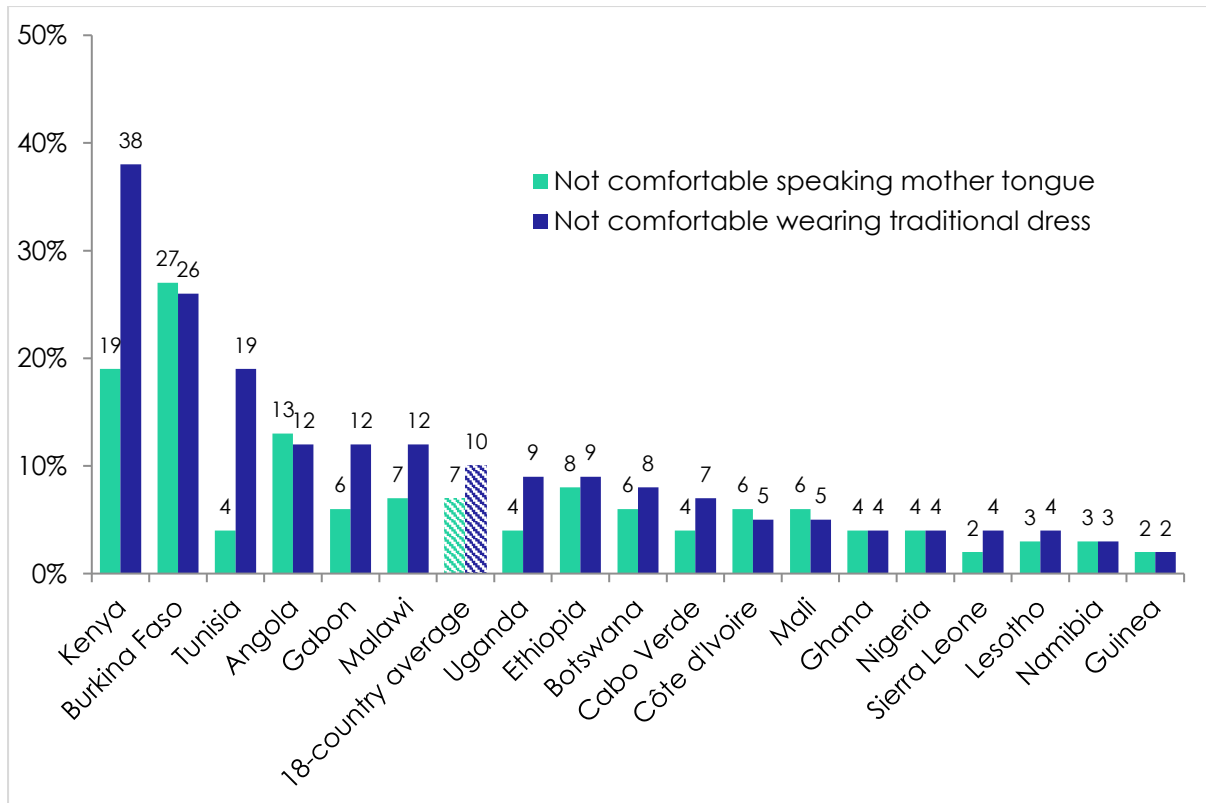
\*This question was not asked in Tunisia.

For the most part, people are also quite comfortable expressing their separate ethnic and cultural identities, for example by speaking their mother tongue or wearing customary dress in public. On average, only one in 10 respondents (10%) report being uncomfortable wearing traditional clothing in public, and even fewer (7%) indicate any reluctance to openly speak their mother tongue. In 12 of the 18 countries, fewer than one in 10 citizens express discomfort with either of these practices (Figure 7). However, there are a few notable exceptions. Nearly one in five Tunisians (19%) are not comfortable wearing traditional dress. In Burkina Faso, roughly one-quarter are reluctant to speak or dress according to their ethnic or cultural roots. Most starkly, in ethnically diverse Kenya, nearly four in 10 (38%) are reluctant to wear traditional clothing in public, and half that number (19%) feel uncomfortable speaking their mother tongue publicly.



Kenya thus presents something of a conundrum. It is an ethnically diverse country where ethnicity has been widely regarded as a highly salient factor in politics and social life – political parties, for example, have strong ethnic affiliations (see Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008). Discomfort around ethnic and cultural expression is also relatively high. At the same time, very few Kenyans express a preference for their ethnic identity over their national one (just 7%, Figure 6), and Kenyans are among the most likely to say they value diverse communities (83%, Figure 3).

**Figure 7: Uncomfortable with expressing ethnicity | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:** Do you feel comfortable: Speaking your mother tongue in public? Wearing your traditional or cultural dress in public?

### Experience of discrimination

Beyond people's sense of belonging to a larger national community, we explore whether they have personally experienced discrimination at the hands of fellow citizens and whether "people like you" typically experience discrimination by the government. Afrobarometer asked about unfair treatment based on three key social identities: ethnicity, religion, and economic status.

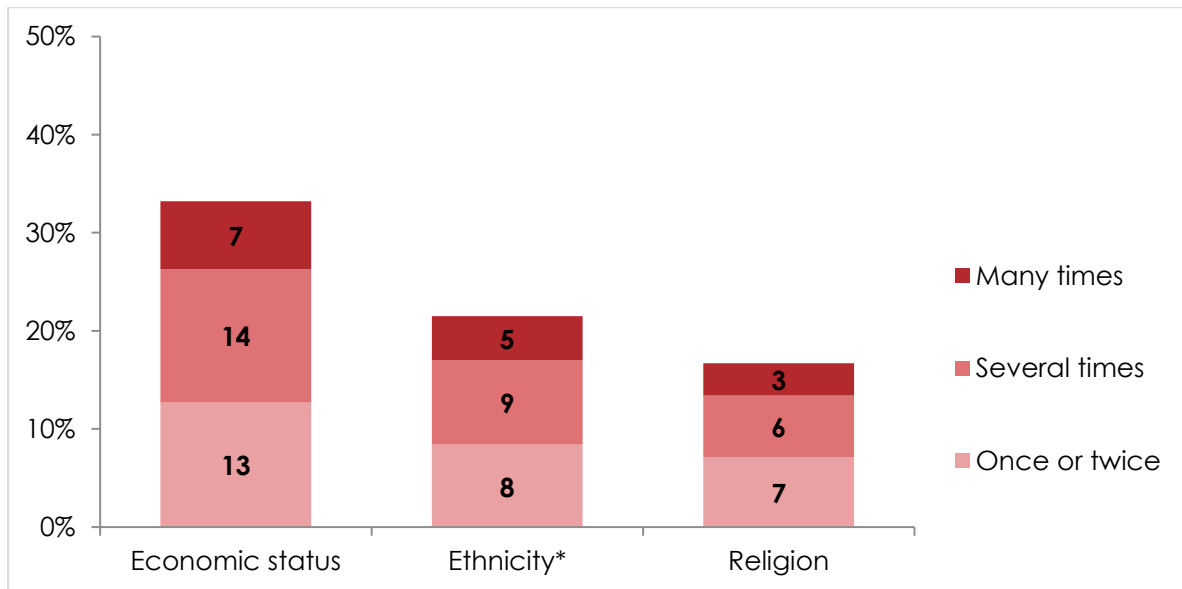
Contrary to conventional wisdom that tends to focus on ethnicity as the most critical cleavage in many African societies, these findings reveal that economic status is the key locus of both horizontal discrimination (by fellow citizens) and vertical discrimination (by the government). One in three respondents (34%) report being treated unfairly by fellow citizens based on their economic status within the past year, while 22% and 16%, respectively, experienced unfair treatment due to their ethnicity and their religion (Figure 8).

The numbers for government mistreatment are even higher, though this may in part reflect the fact that this set of questions asked about the general experiences of the respondent's group, rather than their personal experience, and did not specify a time frame. One in three



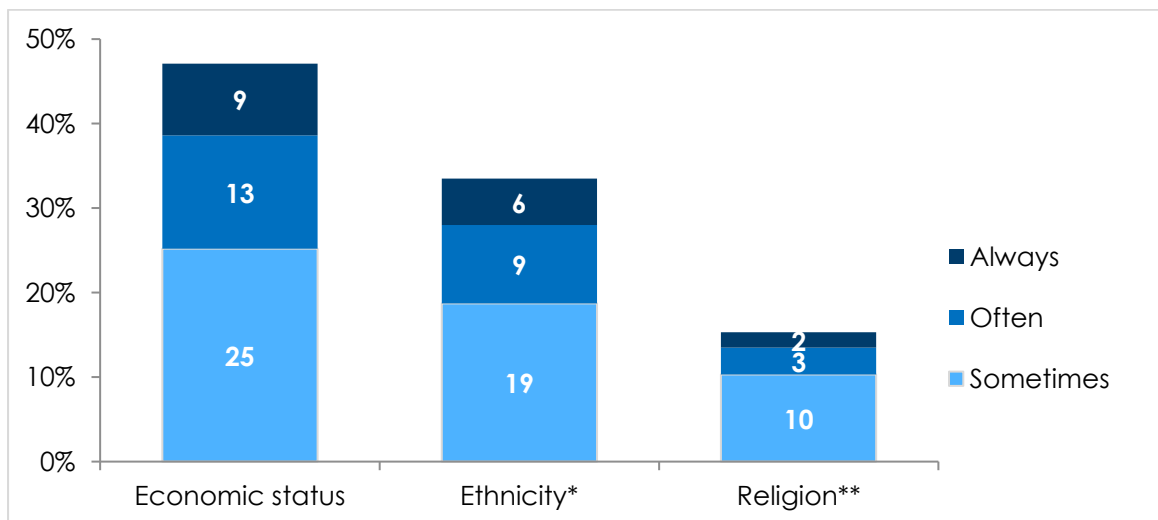
(34%) say their ethnic group experiences unfair treatment by the government, and nearly half (47%) say the government treats “people like them” unfairly due to their economic status (Figure 9).

**Figure 8: Unfair treatment by fellow citizens | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:** In the past year, how often, if ever, have you personally been treated unfairly by other [citizens] based on: Your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? Your religion? Your ethnicity? (\*The question about ethnicity was not asked in Tunisia.)

**Figure 9: Unfair treatment by government | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:**

How often, if ever, are people like you treated unfairly by the government based on your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are?

How often, if ever, are [members of respondent's ethnic group/religious group] treated unfairly by the government?

\*The question about ethnicity was not asked in Tunisia. In other countries, respondents who identified only with their national identity and not an ethnic group (4% of all respondents) were not asked this question.

\*\*Respondents who did not identify any religion (i.e. the 6% of all respondents who answered “none,” “refused,” or “don’t know”) were not asked this question.

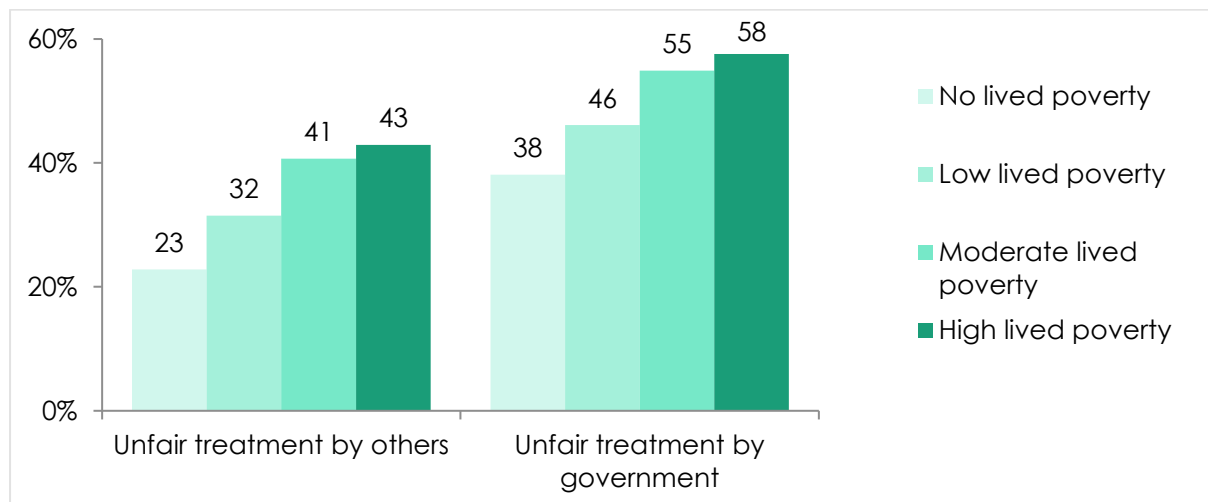
As we might expect, poorer citizens are substantially more likely to feel that they are mistreated based on economic status. Those who experience the highest levels of lived poverty<sup>3</sup> are nearly twice as likely to feel that their fellow citizens mistreat them based on their economic status (43%) compared to those with no lived poverty (23%) (Figure 10). And a solid majority (58%) of the poorest feel that the government treats them unfairly, fully 20 percentage points higher than the number of wealthier citizens who feel this way (38%).

But poorer citizens are also significantly more likely to face unfair treatment based on their ethnicity and religion, although the gaps with wealthier citizens are not always as wide (Figure 11). The poorest report 10-percentage-point higher levels of unfair treatment by fellow citizens based on their ethnicity compared to the wealthiest (27% vs. 17%), and the margin is 8 percentage points for religion (21% vs. 13%). The margins for government mistreatment are 15 points for ethnicity (41% among the poorest vs. 26% among the wealthiest) and 6 points for religion (19% vs. 13%).

Keeping in mind that the measures are similar but not exactly comparable, Figure 12 shows reports of unfair treatment based on economic status by both fellow citizens and the government. More than two-thirds of Nigerians (72%) and Malawians (69%) believe their governments treat them unfairly, a startling condemnation. Even in the best-performing countries, Sierra Leone and Guinea, more than one in four (28%) say their governments treat them unfairly.

Fellow citizens are less discriminatory, but still, a majority of respondents in Malawi (52%) feel that other Malawians discriminate against them based on economic status, followed closely by Uganda (48%) and Nigeria (47%).

**Figure 10: Unfair treatment based on economic status** | by economic status  
 | 18 countries | 2019/2020



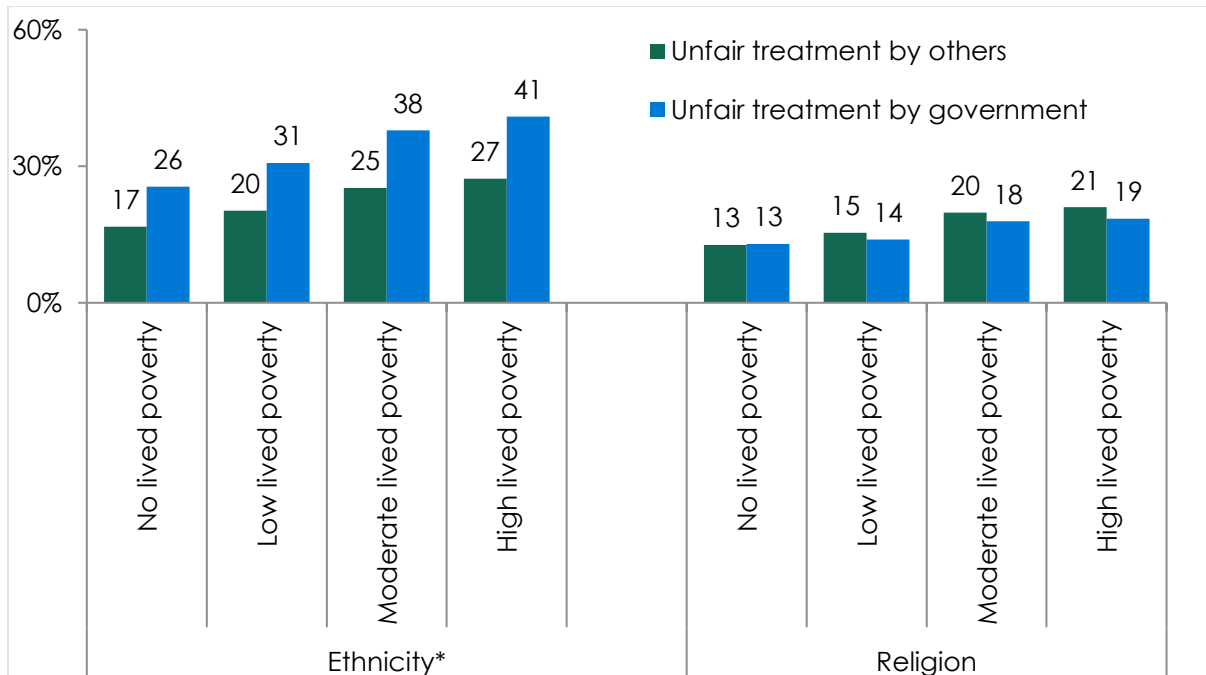
**Respondents were asked:**

*In the past year, how often, if ever, have you personally been treated unfairly by other [citizens] based on your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "many times")*

*How often, if ever, are people like you treated unfairly by the government based on your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? (% who say "sometimes," "often," or "always")*

<sup>3</sup> Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes (2020).

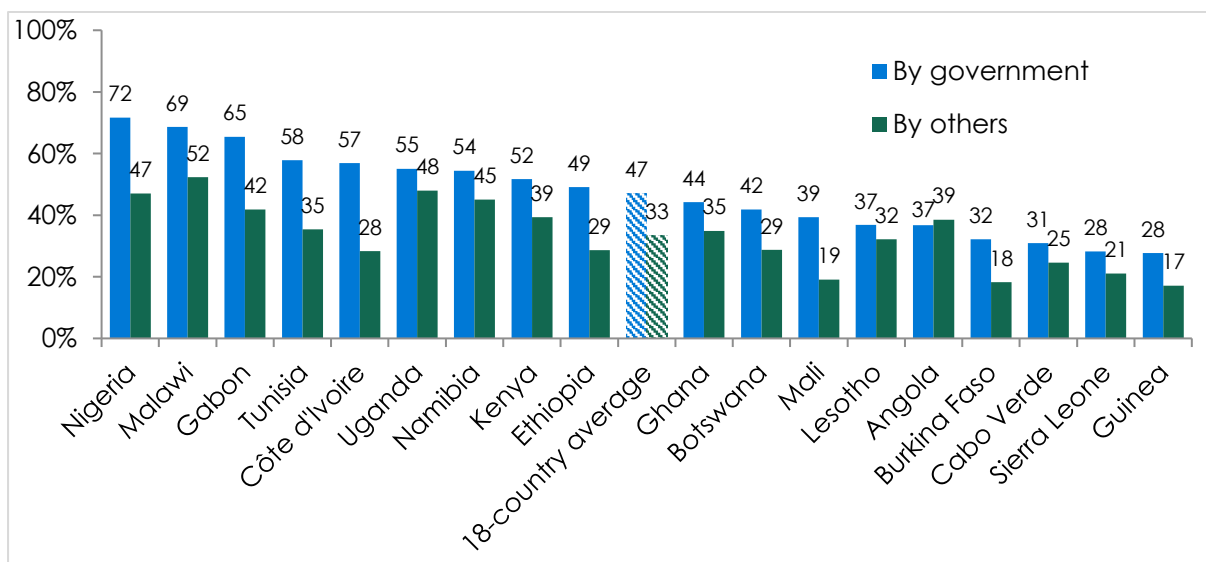
**Figure 11: Unfair treatment based on ethnicity and religion | by economic status**  
| 18 countries | 2019/2020



**Respondents were asked:**

*In the past year, how often, if ever, have you personally been treated unfairly by other [citizens] based on: Your religion? Your ethnicity? (\*The question about ethnicity was not asked in Tunisia.) (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "many times")*  
*How often, if ever, are [members of respondent's ethnic group/religious group] treated unfairly by the government? (% who say "sometimes," "often," or "always")*

**Figure 12: Unfair treatment based on economic status | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:**

*In the past year, how often, if ever, have you personally been treated unfairly by other [citizens] based on your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "many times")*  
*How often, if ever, are people like you treated unfairly by the government based on your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? (% who say "sometimes," "often," or "always")*

Table 1 summarizes the reported prevalence of unfair treatment by country across the six indicators that have been discussed. The cells are color-coded, with darker shades indicating higher levels of unfair treatment.

Nigerians report the most widespread problems with discrimination, with high or moderate-to-high levels of unfair treatment reported across all six indicators. Malawians report remarkably high levels of economic discrimination at the hands of both the government and other citizens, and strike at least moderate levels across all indicators, as do Angola, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Namibia, and Uganda.

**Table 1: Experience of unfair treatment | 18 countries | 2019/2020**

	Unfair treatment by others (% "once or twice," "several times," or "many times")			Unfair treatment by government (% "sometimes," "often," or "always")		
	Economic status	Ethnicity	Religion	Economic status	Ethnicity	Religion
Angola	39%	32%	32%	37%	30%	20%
Botswana	29%	18%	15%	42%	27%	10%
Burkina Faso	18%	10%	10%	32%	12%	9%
Cabo Verde	25%	11%	11%	31%	18%	4%
Côte d'Ivoire	28%	18%	12%	57%	39%	13%
Ethiopia	29%	30%	18%	49%	52%	20%
Gabon	42%	32%	19%	65%	55%	29%
Ghana	35%	20%	18%	44%	26%	13%
Guinea	17%	10%	4%	28%	29%	2%
Kenya	39%	30%	20%	52%	48%	15%
Lesotho	32%	6%	17%	37%	9%	7%
Malawi	52%	24%	23%	69%	51%	26%
Mali	19%	12%	8%	39%	25%	10%
Namibia	45%	32%	27%	54%	40%	15%
Nigeria	47%	34%	31%	72%	50%	34%
Sierra Leone	21%	12%	6%	28%	12%	2%
Tunisia*	35%		9%	58%		26%
Uganda	48%	33%	22%	55%	43%	18%
<b>18-country average</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>15%</b>
	<15%	Low		15%-25%	Moderate	
	26%-35%	Moderate to high		>35%	High	

**Respondents were asked:**

*In the past year, how often, if ever, have you personally been treated unfairly by other [citizens] based on: Your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are? Your religion? Your ethnicity?*

*How often, if ever, are people like you treated unfairly by the government based on your economic status, that is, how rich or poor you are?*

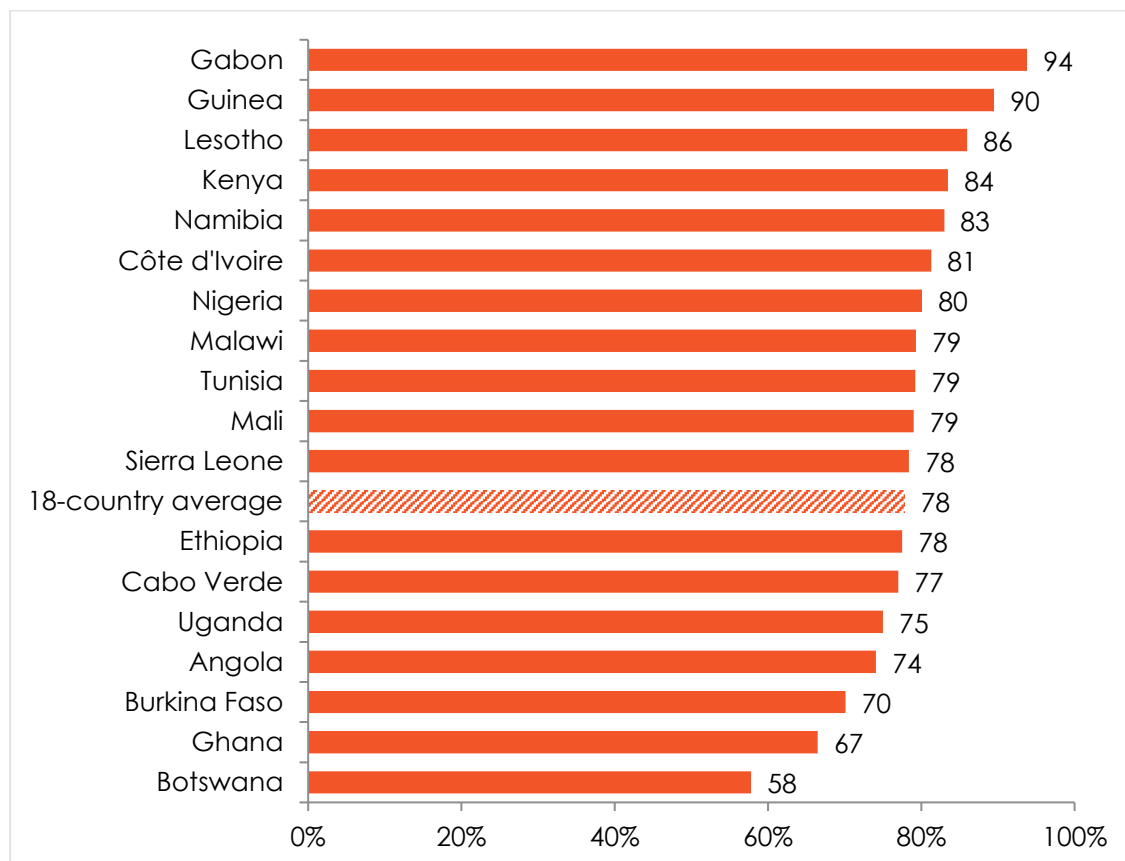
*How often, if ever, are [members of the respondent's ethnic group/religious group] treated unfairly by the government?*

\*Questions about ethnicity were not asked in Tunisia.

In contrast, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Guinea, and Sierra Leone stand out as countries where discrimination is much less prevalent, although it clearly still occurs. But it is worth noting that although some countries register only marginal levels of discrimination based on religion (especially Cabo Verde, Guinea, and Sierra Leone) or even ethnicity (Lesotho), there is no country that does not score “high” or “moderate to high” on discrimination based on economic status. And Ethiopia is the only country where discrimination based on economic status is matched by discrimination based on ethnicity.

In short, economic inequality and the poor treatment that many citizens experience because of it appears to be a critical element undermining unity and social cohesion. While the more traditionally recognized cleavages of religion and ethnicity are the basis for some popular grievance, economic inequality is a far more significant source of perceived maltreatment. Yet more than three-quarters (78%) of respondents say their governments are doing “fairly badly” or “very badly” at narrowing gaps between rich and poor, including large majorities in every country (Figure 13). This suggests that governments need to address economic inequality more directly and aggressively, as it is a critical, and in some countries growing, source of potential cleavage (Chancel, Cogneau, Gethin, & Myczkowski, 2019).

**Figure 13: Poor government performance on inequality | 18 countries | 2019/2020**



**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Narrowing gaps between rich and poor? (% who say “fairly badly” or “very badly”)

### Social bonds and pro-social outcomes

The key reason that analysts are interested in factors such as social capital and social cohesion is their anticipated impact on outcomes. In general, the expectation is that more

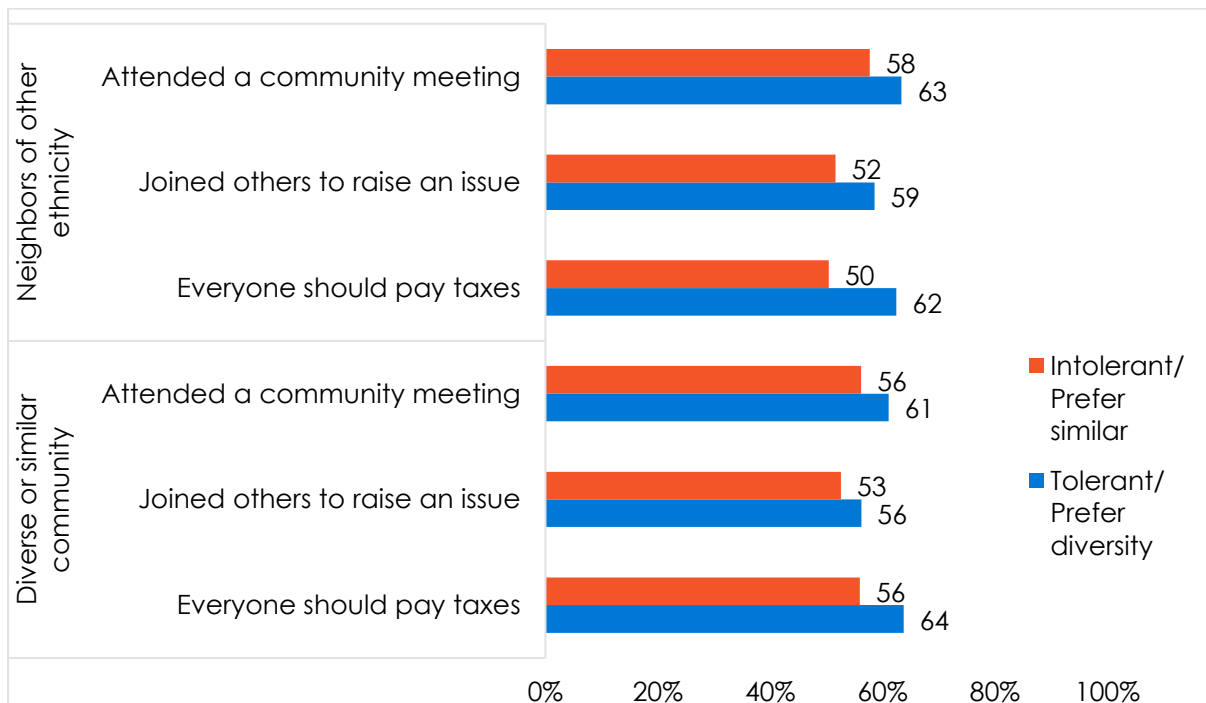
cohesive societies will also be more effective in acting collectively to solve problems and achieve core development goals.

It is beyond the scope of this assessment to evaluate the impacts of different types of social bonds and social cleavages on outcomes such as community collaboration or commitment to the common good. But a few preliminary findings suggest at least a modest link worth further exploration.

We first examine the relationship between attitudes that favor diversity – tolerance for diverse neighbors and the belief that diverse communities are stronger – and several key outcomes. In terms of behavioral outcomes, we consider two actions that can be key components of collective problem solving: attendance at community meetings and joining with others to raise issues. In terms of attitudinal outcomes, we consider whether individuals agree that the state has the right to collect taxes, an attitude that suggests a commitment to the common good.

In all cases, we find that commitment to tolerance and diversity is associated with higher levels of pro-social behaviors and attitudes (Figure 14). Some difference between those with pro-diversity/tolerance attitudes and those who reject tolerance or diversity are quite modest. But in others – for example the pro-social attitude that people must pay taxes – the gap (12 percentage points) is quite substantial. We cannot say whether pro-diversity attitudes are a cause or a consequence of factors such as engaging with others; there is likely some degree of causality in both directions (Jenson, 2019). But these findings clearly suggest that further exploration of how various degrees of social bonding affect desired social outcomes is an essential next step.

**Figure 14: Pro-diversity attitudes and pro-social outcomes** | 18 countries | 2019/2020



**Respondents were asked:**

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: Attended a community meeting? Got together with others to raise an issue? (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "often")

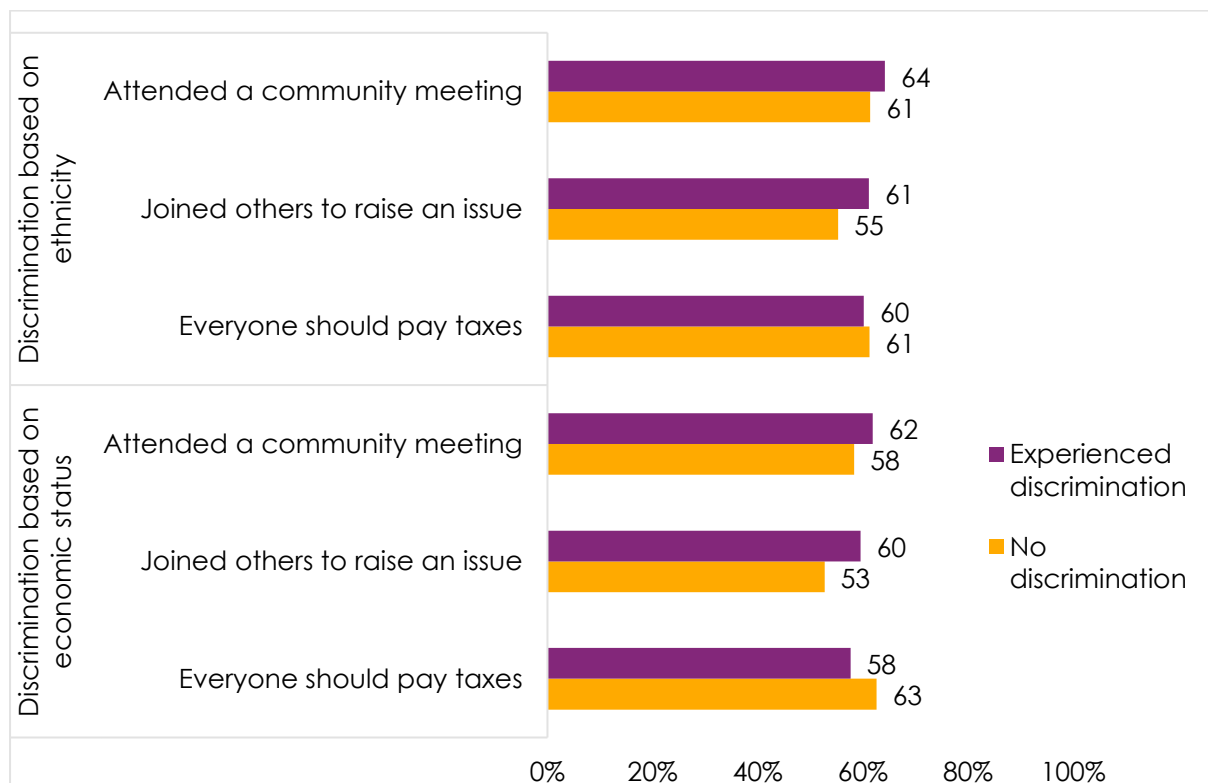
For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: The tax authorities always have the right to make people pay taxes? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

When we flip the script and consider how negative experiences – in particular the experience of discrimination based on ethnicity or economic status – are related to pro-social outcomes, we observe an interesting divergence. As we might expect, respondents who experienced discrimination are less likely to express pro-social attitudes such as commitment to paying taxes (although in the case of discrimination based on ethnicity, the difference is marginal and not significant) (Figure 15).

However, we also find that those who have directly experienced discrimination at the hands of fellow citizens are somewhat more likely, rather than less likely, to engage in collective activities and actions. At first blush this might seem like an unexpected finding. But we recall that we earlier saw that the economically disadvantaged are the most likely to experience discrimination (Figure 10 and Figure 11). Earlier Afrobarometer findings (Logan, Sanny, & Han, 2020) have shown that the poorest members of society are actually the most likely to engage in voluntary civic behavior such as community meetings and joining with others to raise issues.

In short, it appears that those experiencing the greatest poverty and the most discrimination may actually be incentivized to *take action* to improve their situations, while at the same time disengaging from “mandatory” demands that an unequal state or society places on them, such as tax payment. However, we note again that these findings are very preliminary and warrant further exploration.

**Figure 15: Experience of discrimination and pro-social outcomes** | 18 countries  
 | 2019/2020



**Respondents were asked:**

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: Attended a community meeting? Got together with others to raise an issue? (% who say “once or twice,” “several times,” or “often”)

For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: The tax authorities always have the right to make people pay taxes? (% who “agree” or “strongly agree”)



## Conclusion

Understanding the balance between social cohesion and social dissolution (Lockwood, 1999) experienced in African societies is still a work in progress. The new findings from Afrobarometer Round 8 presented here suggest that we need to question our traditional assumptions about which identities and cleavages matter most in any given society, as well as our assumptions about the best ways to measure “cohesion.”

In all 18 countries covered here, levels of generalized trust are extremely low, yet commitment to diversity and tolerance and acceptance of differences (on most issues) is high. We also see quite high levels of commitment to the nation, alongside significant levels of discrimination. Much work remains to be done to understand what these complex and varied indicators mean for the measurement of social cohesion and, most importantly, for social and developmental outcomes.

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Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It’s easy and free at [www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).

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## Appendix

**Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 8 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds**

Country	Months when Round 8 fieldwork was conducted	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Nov-Dec 2019	N/A
Botswana	July-Aug 2019	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Burkina Faso	Dec 2019	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017
Cabo Verde	Dec 2019	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov 2019	2013, 2014, 2017
Ethiopia	Dec 2019-Jan 2020	2013
Gabon	Feb 2020	2015, 2017
Ghana	Sept-Oct 2019	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Guinea	Nov-Dec 2019	2013, 2015, 2017
Kenya	Aug-Sept 2019	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016
Lesotho	Feb-March 2020	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Malawi	Nov-Dec 2019	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Mali	March-April 2020	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017
Namibia	Aug 2019	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017
Nigeria	Jan-Feb 2020	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017
Sierra Leone	March 2020	2012, 2015, 2018
Tunisia	Feb-March 2020	2013, 2015, 2018
Uganda	Sept-Oct 2019	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017

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Afrobarometer, a non-profit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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