

Advice Lesotho  
Maseru, Lesotho  
5 February 2021

## News release

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### **Citizens endorse the role of traditional leadership in contemporary Lesotho, Afrobarometer survey finds**

Traditional leaders continue to enjoy popular support in Lesotho, Afrobarometer survey findings show.

Traditional leaders are more widely trusted and seen as less prone to corruption than elected leaders. Indeed, a majority of Basotho would favour an even stronger role for traditional leaders, who they say look out for the interests of their communities and work in cooperation, rather than competition, with elected leaders.

In line with studies showing that traditional leaders have remained relevant in many African societies embracing democratic institutions of governance, these survey findings suggest that in Lesotho, traditional and modern systems can work in concert for the benefit of ordinary citizens.

#### **Key findings**

- Two-thirds (64%) of Basotho approve of the job their traditional leaders are doing, a far better performance rating than they give their community councillors, members of Parliament (MPs), or then-Prime Minister Thomas Thabane (Figure 1).
- Traditional leaders are considerably more widely trusted (57%) (Figure 2) and less commonly seen as corrupt (16%) than elected officials (Figure 3).
- Most Basotho see traditional leaders as highly influential in resolving disputes and governing their local community, but few say they carry much weight in affecting how people vote in elections (Figure 4).
- Six in 10 Basotho (61%) support an increased level of influence for traditional leaders in the governing of local communities.
- Basotho say traditional authorities are better than community councillors and MPs about listening to ordinary people, and two-thirds (66%) believe traditional leaders look out for the interests of the people in their communities (Figure 5).

#### **Afrobarometer surveys**

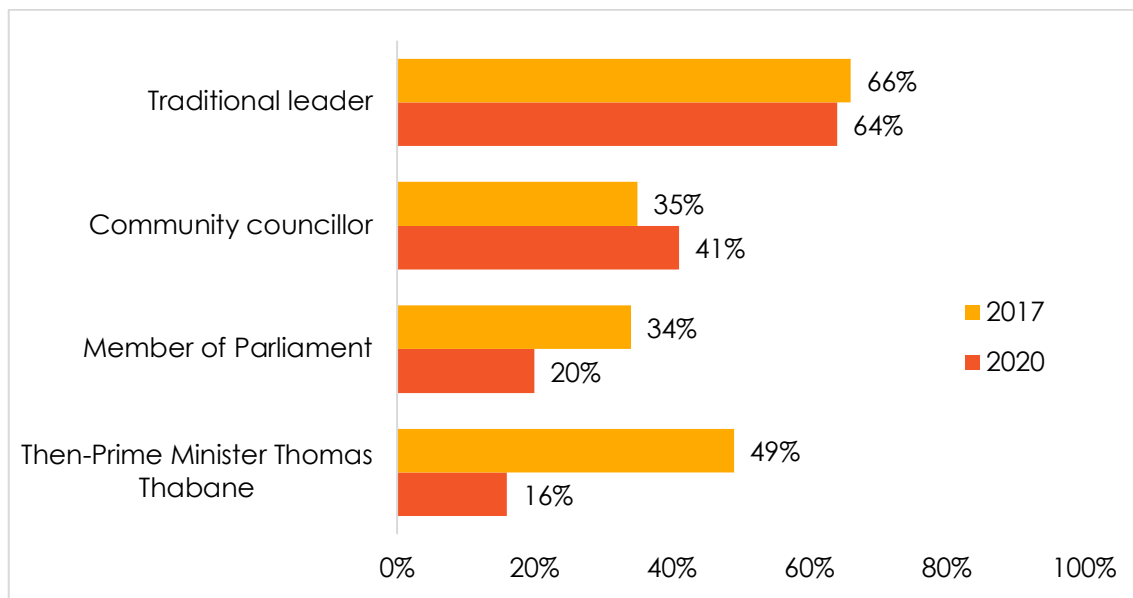
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys are planned in at least 35 countries in 2019/2020. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Lesotho, led by Advice Lesotho, interviewed 1,200 adult Basotho in February-March 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error

of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Lesotho in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

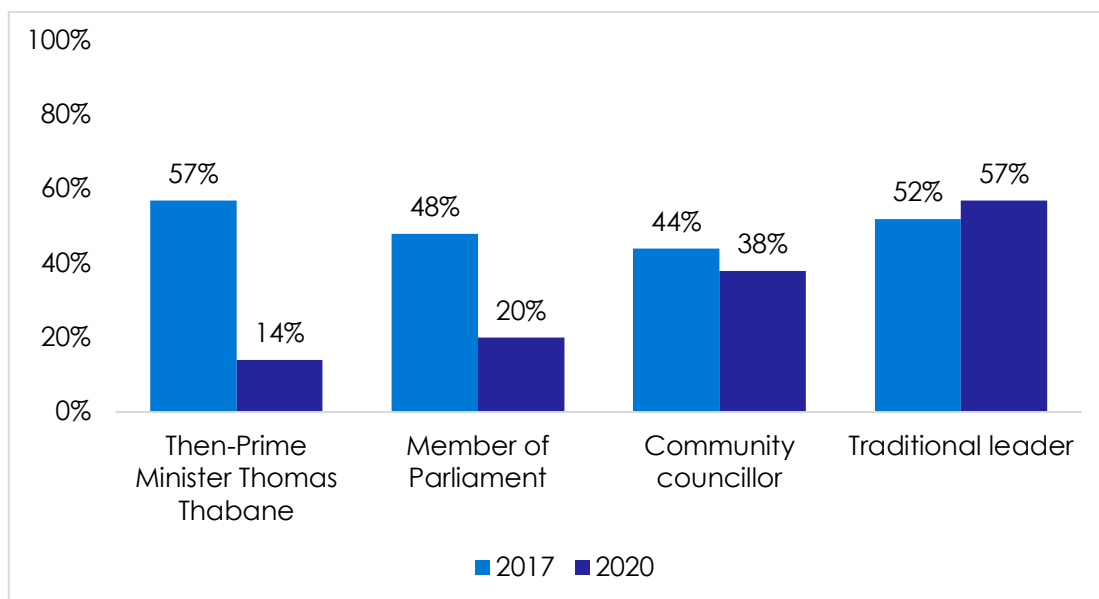
**Charts**

**Figure 1: Approval of leaders' job performance | Lesotho | 2017-2020**



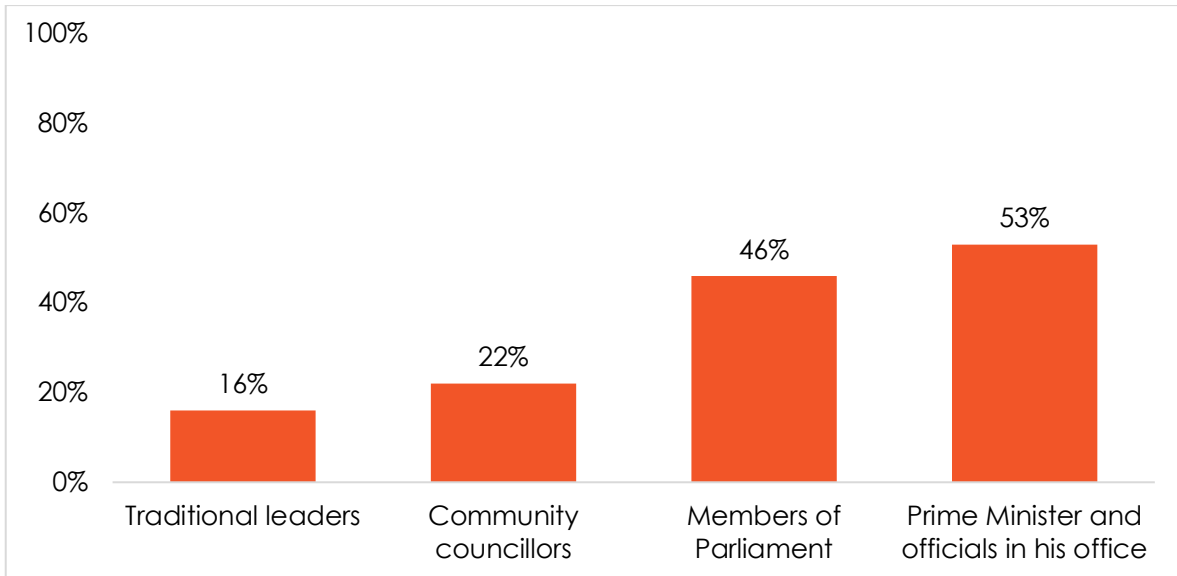
**Respondents were asked:** Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Prime Minister Thomas Thabane? Your member of Parliament? Your community councillor? Your traditional leader? (% who "approve" or "strongly approve")

**Figure 2: Popular trust in leaders | Lesotho | 2017-2020**



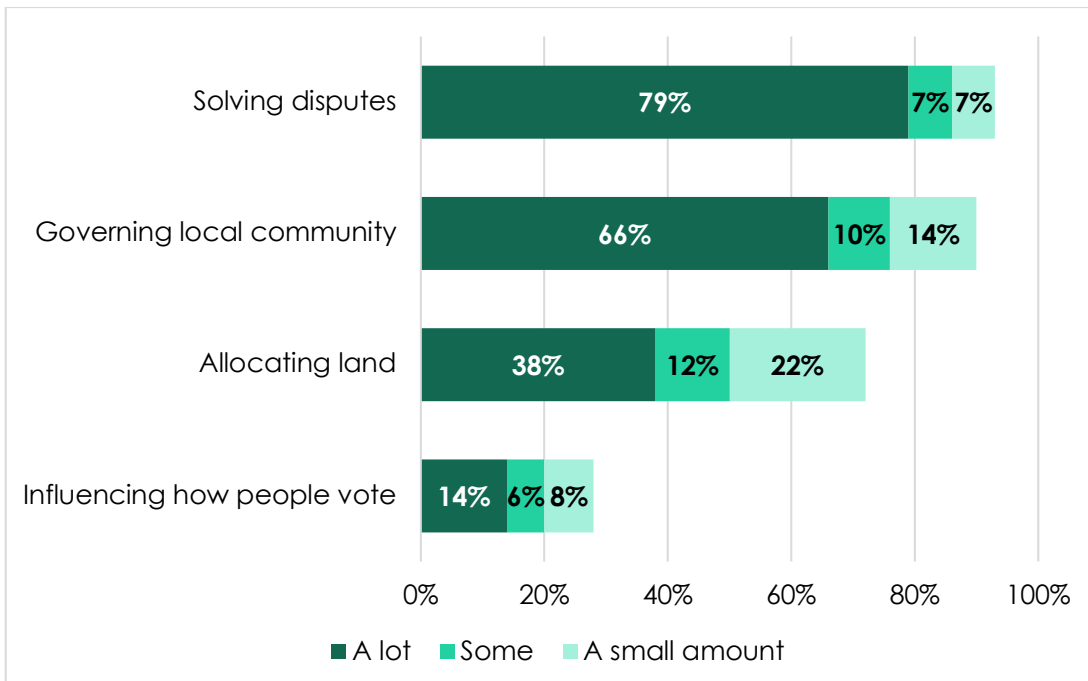
**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Prime Minister Thomas Thabane? Members of Parliament? Community councillors? Traditional leaders? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

**Figure 3: Perception of corruption among leaders | Lesotho | 2020**



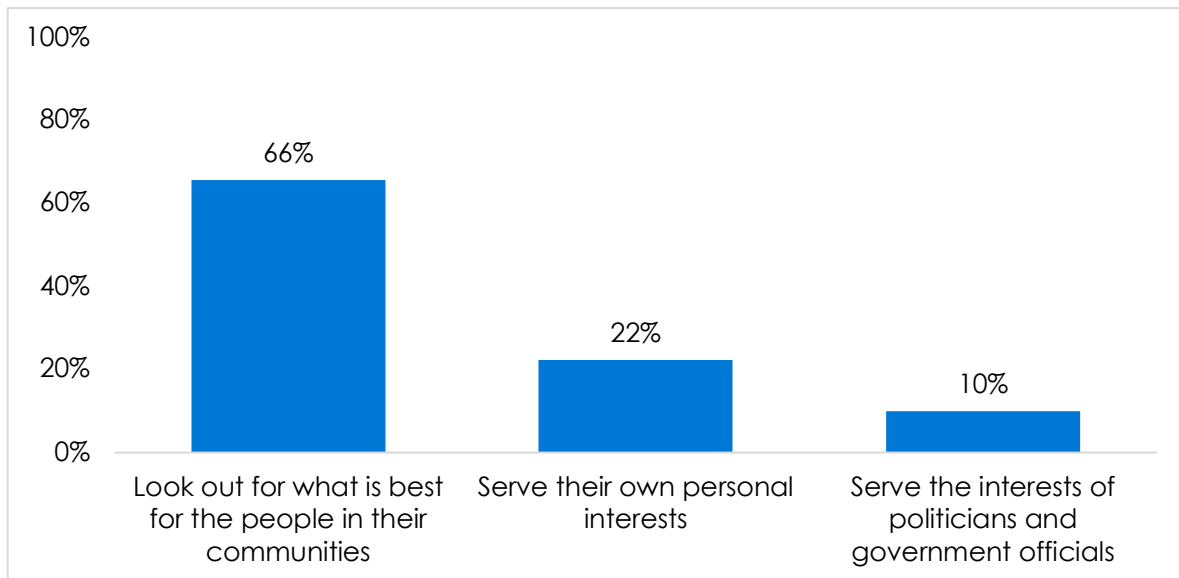
**Respondents were asked:** How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The prime minister and officials in his office? Members of Parliament? Members of your community council? Traditional leaders? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

**Figure 4: Influence of traditional leaders in local governance | Lesotho | 2020**



**Respondents were asked:** How much influence do traditional leaders currently have in each of the following areas: Solving disputes? Governing your local community? Allocating land? Influencing how people in their communities vote?

**Figure 5: Perceptions of whose interests traditional leaders serve | Lesotho | 2020**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?  
 Statement 1: Traditional leaders mostly look out for what is best for the people in their communities.  
 Statement 2: Traditional leaders mostly serve the interests of politicians and government officials.  
 Statement 3: Traditional leaders mostly look out for their own personal interests

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