

Advison Lesotho
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News release

Basotho lose confidence in ruling coalition and Parliament as perceptions of corruption skyrocket

Lesotho's ruling coalition parties and Parliament have suffered sharp declines in popular trust along with the country's former prime minister, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

Perceptions of official corruption have skyrocketed, and an overwhelming majority of citizens said they distrust and/or disapprove of the performance of the ruling All Basotho Convention (ABC) party and Parliament as well as of former Prime Minister Thomas Thabane.

These negative evaluations came in February-March 2020, before Thabane's resignation in May and just two and a half years after the ABC won 35 constituencies out of 80 in the 2017 election to become the leading party in the coalition government. Asked how they would vote in a hypothetical election, only one in 10 Basotho said they would vote for the ABC.

Key findings:

- Popular trust in members of Parliament and the ruling coalition parties plummeted between 2017 and 2020 (Figure 1). Only one in eight Basotho (12%) said they trust the ruling parties "somewhat" or "a lot," down from 46% three years earlier. For Parliament, trust declined from 48% to 20%. Similarly, only 14% said they trust then-Prime Minister Thabane, down from 57%.
 - Trust in Thabane is by far the lowest among executives in 18 African countries surveyed in 2019/2020, with seven in 10 Batswana (71%) saying they do not trust him "at all" (Figure 2)
- Only one in five Batswana (20%) approve of the way their members of Parliament have done their jobs over the past 12 months, down from 34% in 2017 (Figure 3). Approval ratings dropped even more dramatically for Thabane (from 48% to 15%), giving him the highest disapproval levels among 18 surveyed countries in Africa (Figure 4), while improving for community councillors (from 36% to 41%).
- Perceptions of official corruption increased sharply (Figure 5). Almost half of respondents said that "most" or "all" MPs (45%) and government officials (46%) are corrupt, up from 22% and 28%, respectively, in 2017. And more than half (54%) said the same about then-Prime Minister Thabane and his office, more than twice as many as three years earlier (20%).
- Three-fourths (75%) said the government is performing "fairly badly" or "very badly" in the fight against corruption, a three-fold increase in negative reviews since 2017 (Figure 6).
- Support for the ruling coalition parties declined, mainly for the ABC. In a hypothetical election, only one in 10 respondents (9%) said they would vote for the ABC, compared to 38% in 2017 (Figure 7). This is the ABC's lowest level of support since it came to power as the majority party in a coalition government in 2012.

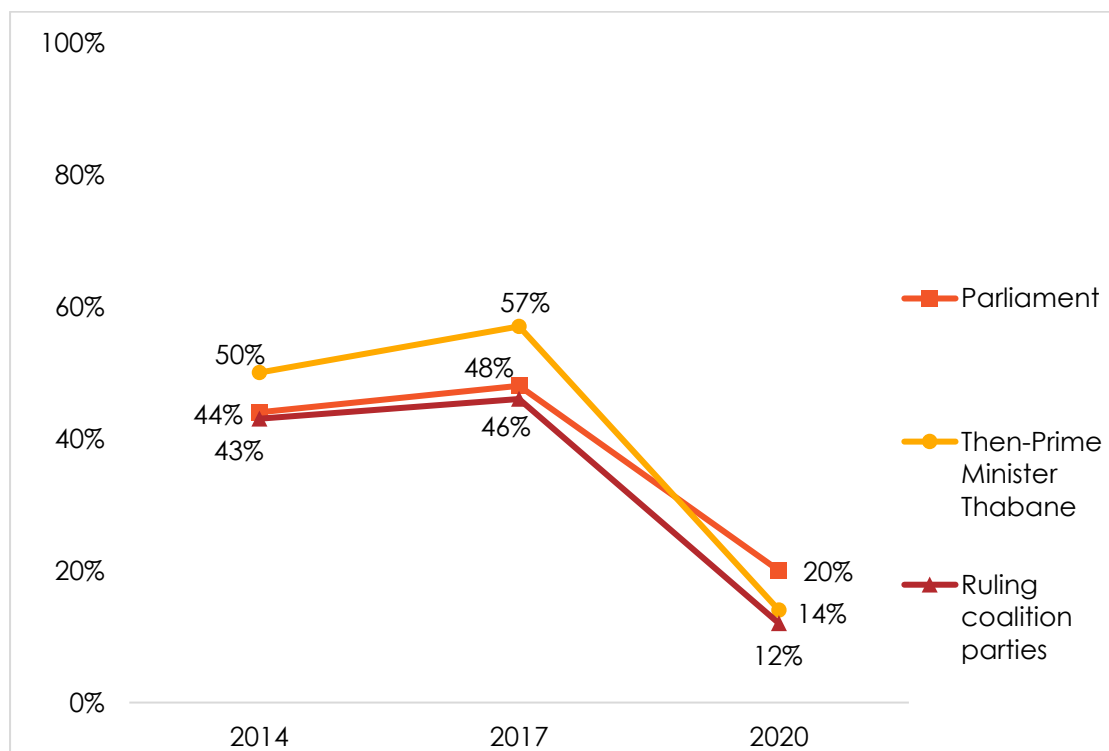
Afrobarometer surveys

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 Advision 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.

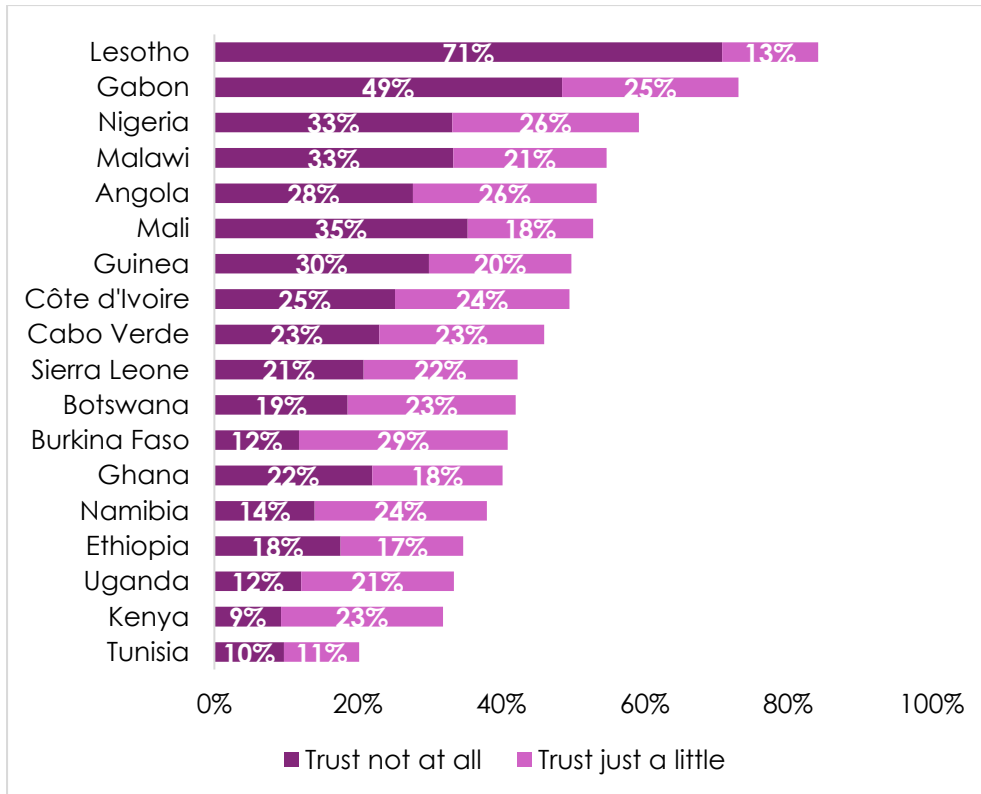
Charts

Figure 1: Decline in popular trust | Lesotho | 2014-2020



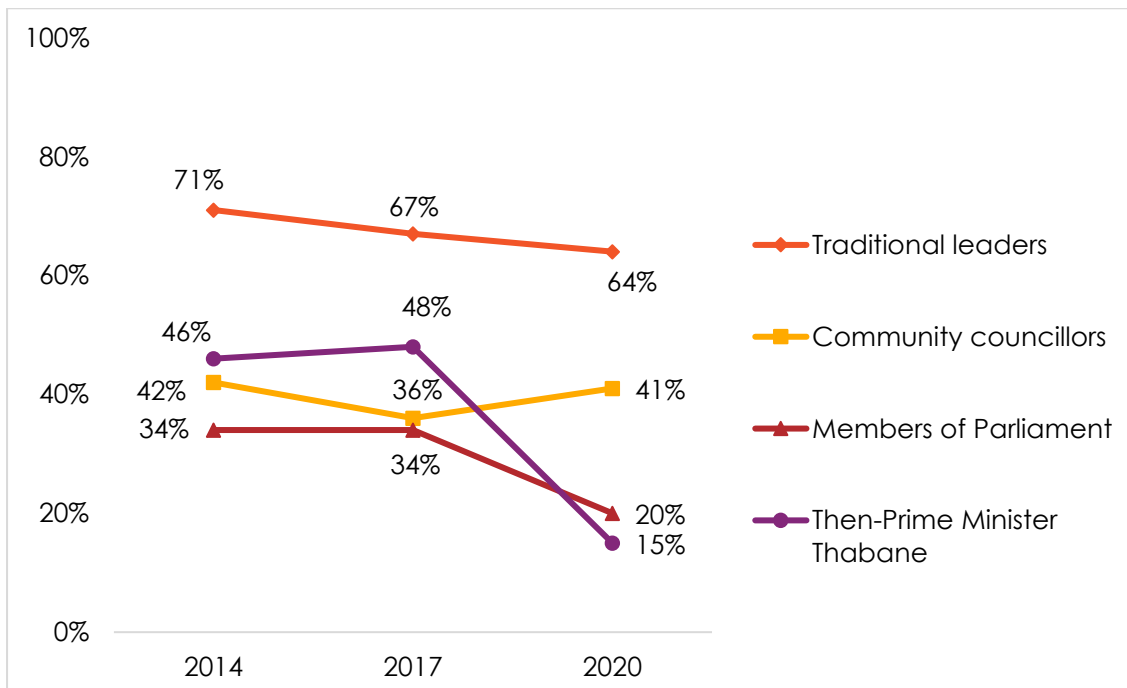
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

Figure 2: Lack of trust in president/prime minister | 18 countries | 2019/2020



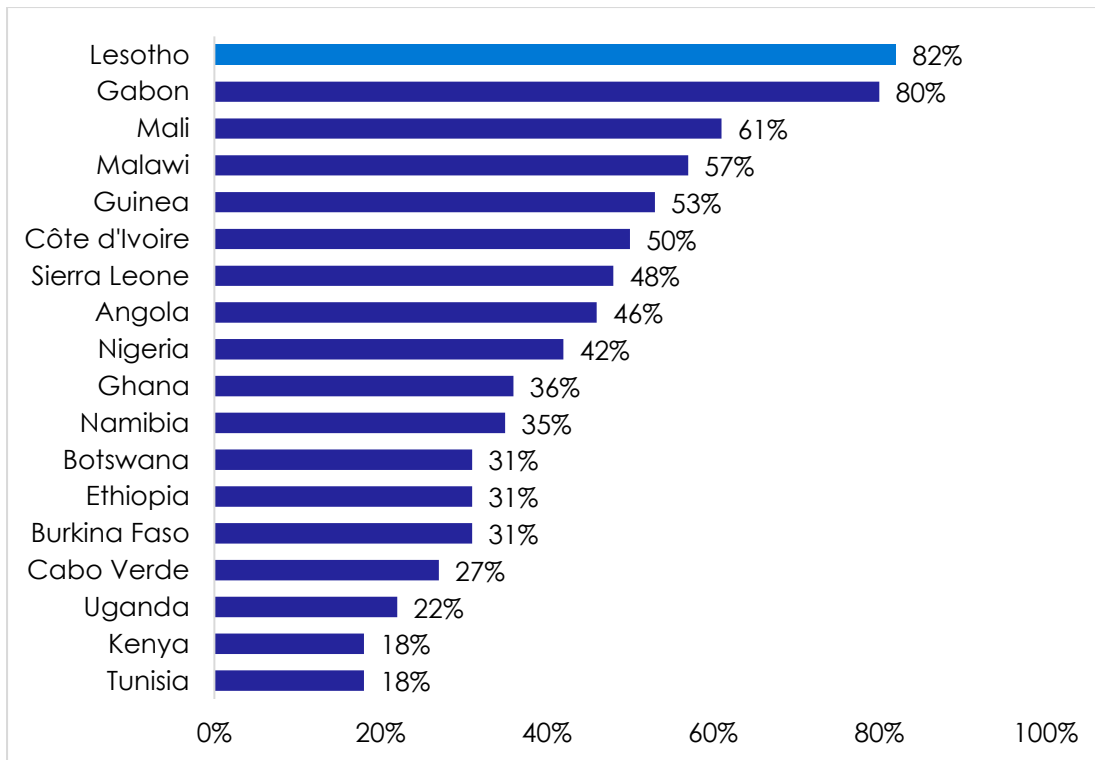
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president/prime minister?

Figure 3: Approval of leader performance | Lesotho | 2014-2020



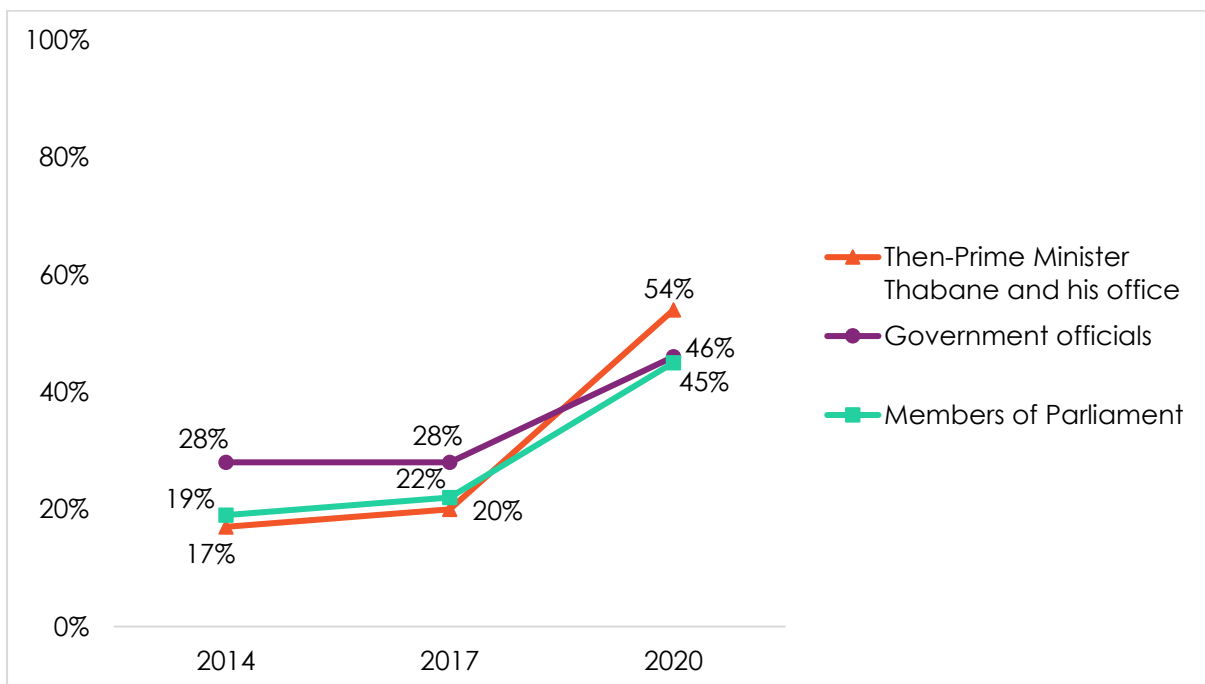
Respondents were asked: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who "approve" or "strongly approve")

Figure 4: Disapproval of president/prime minister performance | 18 countries
 | 2019/2020



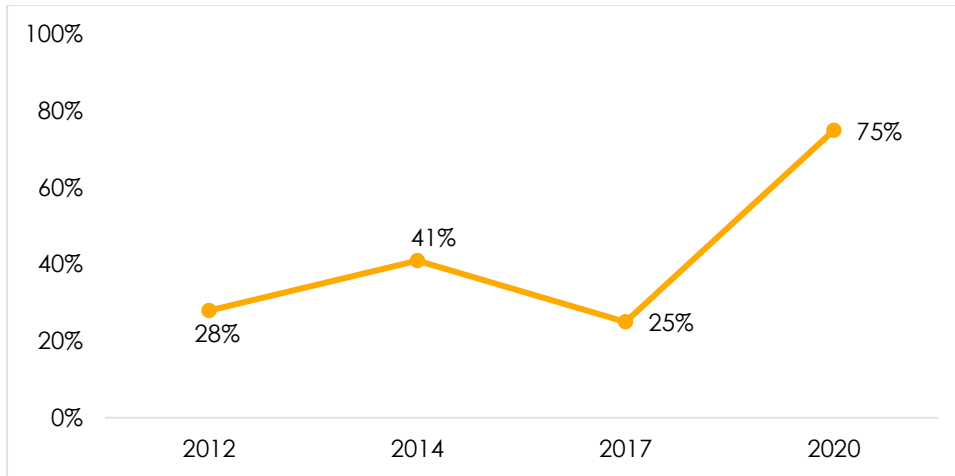
Respondents were asked: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president/prime? (% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove")

Figure 5: Corruption seen as increasing | Lesotho | 2014-2020



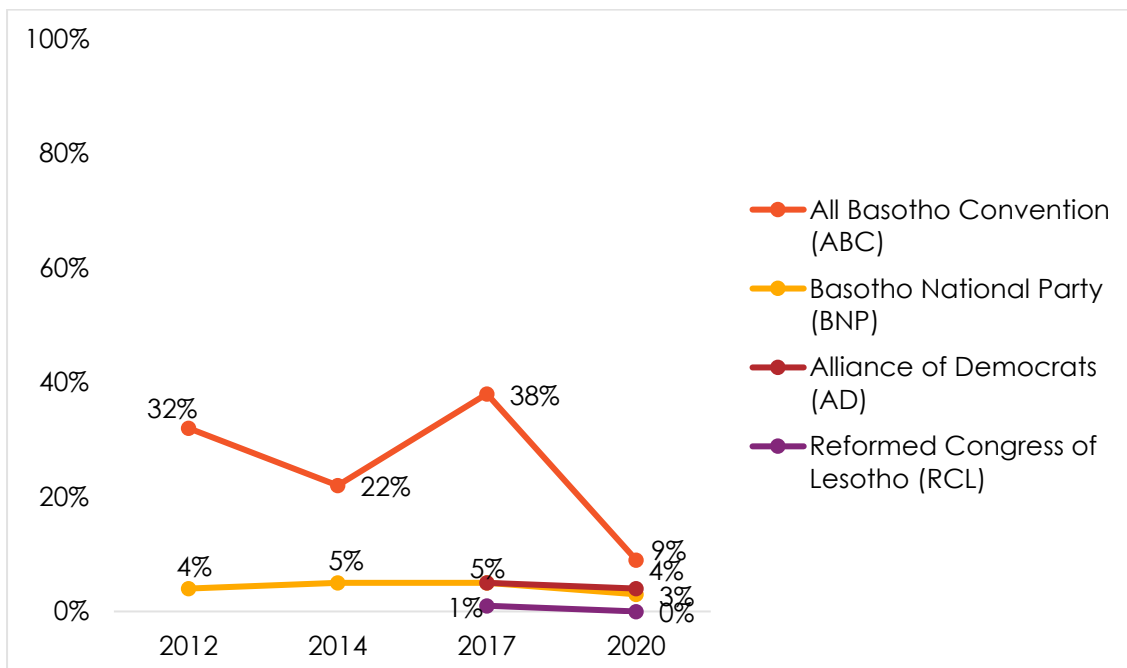
Respondents were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

Figure 6: Poor government performance in fighting corruption | Lesotho | 2012-2020



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: Fighting corruption in government? (% who say "fairly badly" or "very badly")

Figure 7: Support for coalition government parties | Lesotho | 2012-2020



Respondents were asked: If general elections were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?

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