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## News release

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# Two decades of gauging public opinion: Looking back at Afrobarometer's remarkable journey

Bratton, Gyimah-Boadi, & Mattes. It sounds like a law firm. No, it's a group of eminent professors and thought leaders driven by a vision of making African voices a key pillar of policy- and decision-making. Their journey to ensure African voices are heard began with a decision to merge three independent research survey projects in 1999. Afrobarometer was born.

### Moving the needle on the data front, one survey at a time

The pan-African, non-partisan survey research network headquartered in Ghana has relentlessly pursued its vision of a world in which citizens' realities and aspirations inform Africa's public discourse. With determination and extraordinary resilience, Afrobarometer has pursued its mission to take the pulse of African citizens on democracy, governance, and quality of life, starting in 12 countries in 1999 and expanding to cover up to 39 countries over the next two decades.

*"Looking back, we are exceptionally proud of what we've achieved together. We were operating in a very different world when we launched the bold Afrobarometer project two decades ago to ensure African citizens have a front-row seat in the decisions and public policies that affect them. Thanks to our impeccable reputation and consistency in producing data on what Africans are thinking, we are today a global reference for high-quality data and analysis on African democracy, governance, economy, and society."*



**Professor Gyimah-Boadi, co-founder and board chair of Afrobarometer**

Building the research capacities of 30+ national partners, Afrobarometer draws on technical support from Michigan State University and the University of Cape Town as well as regional coordination provided by its three core partners, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

In each two-year survey round, the vast undertaking gauges countries' progress on gender equality, public service delivery, economic well-being, and a multitude of other issues. How many Kenyans have running water? Are South Africans tolerant? Do Malians want

democracy? Are countries on track to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals? Afrobarometer is the go-to source for answers.

### Awards and recognition

Five short years after its inception, Afrobarometer bagged the "Best Data Set Award 2004" from the American Political Science Association. Two Afrobarometer books have been published: **Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa** in 2004 and **Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa** in 2013. In 2021, *New African Magazine* named Afrobarometer co-founder and Board Chair Gyimah-Boadi one of the "100 Most Influential Africans" of the year, recognising his lasting contribution to "empower coming generations of African researchers and policymakers to make decisions based on data."



Fast-forward to 2022: Through eight completed survey rounds, Afrobarometer has established itself as a trusted source of high-quality data, analysis, and valuable insights on what Africans are thinking. With an unmatched track record of 350,000+ interviews in 39 countries, representing the views of 80% of the African population, Afrobarometer is leading the charge to bridge the continent's data gap. Working with a network of 30+ national partners, its field teams continue to brave mountains and floods, slums and gated estates, even volatile and post-conflict areas, to ensure that no voice is left unheard.

### World-class methodology and sampling for high-quality data

Afrobarometer's gold-standard methodology is based on three pillars. One, interviews are conducted with randomly selected, nationally representative samples of adult citizens in each country. Two, our interviews are carried out face to face in national and local languages. Three, our random sampling protocols align with best field practices, using sample sizes of 1,200 to 2,400 per country. To move with speed and scale, Afrobarometer uses tablets to capture and review data electronically, and is piloting telephone surveys to complement its standard face-to-face methodology.

## The road ahead

Round 9 surveys target 39 countries by late 2022, with new survey questions focusing on climate change and environmental governance, COVID-19, child welfare, police professionalism, gender equality and gender-based violence, and the provision of social services. Taking the baton after Gyimah-Boadi retired as CEO in April 2021, Joseph Asunka has laid out a roadmap that prioritizes shifting resources to institutions on the continent. He sees the Global South and Global North as partners who should leverage each other's strengths. For Asunka, the people on the ground should lead the work and define the agendas. On the timely issues measured in Afrobarometer's surveys, Asunka urges governments and development partners to listen and include the voices of the people in the decisions that affect them.

*"When we compare indicators of democratic demand and supply, we see that African governments are not meeting their citizens' aspirations to live in democratic, effective, and accountable societies."*

**Joseph Asunka, Afrobarometer CEO**



As a forward-thinking research institution, Afrobarometer is helping bring stakeholders into the digital-first era. Leading four partners in the Data for Governance Alliance, supported by the European Union, Afrobarometer is rolling out capacity-building workshops for pan-African CSOs to strengthen democracy and governance by building their digital skills in data use and data-based advocacy. Afrobarometer's [online data analysis portal](#) is another cutting-edge platform that empowers African citizens to carry out their own analysis.

As we look back at Afrobarometer's journey, we are reminded of Nelson Mandela's words of wisdom: "Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead."

## To new heights!

### Timely surveys on current issues

- Democracy, freedom, and citizen engagement
- Economy, development, and poverty
- Energy and infrastructure
- Environment and climate change
- Health, education, and social services.
- Gender, society, and identity
- Governance, institutions, and leadership

## Funding partners



Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the European Union, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Mastercard Foundation, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the University of California San Diego, the Global Centre for Pluralism, the World Bank Group, Freedom House, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, GIZ, and Humanity United.

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