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News release

Amid rising corruption, most Africans say they risk retaliation if they speak up, new Afrobarometer Pan-Africa Profile reveals

A majority of Africans say that corruption in their country is rising, that their government is failing in its efforts to fight it, and that ordinary citizens risk retaliation if they report corruption to the authorities, Afrobarometer's latest Pan-Africa Profile reveals.

Released ahead of International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December), the Afrobarometer report is based on nationally representative surveys in 39 African countries.

Findings show that among key public institutions, the police are most widely perceived as corrupt. In substantial numbers, citizens report having to pay bribes to obtain police assistance or avoid problems with the police, as well as to get government documents and services at health facilities and schools.

Citizens' assessments vary widely across countries, with Gabon, South Africa, Nigeria, Liberia, and Uganda among the worst-performing countries when it comes to perceived corruption in key public institutions, while Seychelles, Cabo Verde, Tanzania, and Mauritius turn in the best performances.

Key findings

- On average across 39 countries, a majority (58%) of Africans say corruption increased "somewhat" or "a lot" in their country during the preceding year (Figure 1).
 - Compared to 2014/2015, 12 countries recorded double-digit increases in perceptions of worsening corruption, including a surge of 39 percentage points in Senegal, while decreases reached a remarkable 61 points in Benin.
 - More than two-thirds (68%) of citizens say "some" or "a lot" of the resources intended to address the COVID-19 pandemic were lost to corruption.
- Almost half (46%) of Africans say that "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt, the worst rating among 11 institutions and leaders the survey asked about. Tax officials, civil servants, and officials in the Presidency tie for second-worst, at 38% (Figure 2).
- Among citizens who sought selected public services during the previous year, substantial proportions say they had to pay a bribe to obtain police assistance (36%), to avoid problems with the police (37%), to get a government document (31%), or to receive services at a public medical facility (20%) or a public school (19%) (Figure 3).
 - Self-reported bribe-paying varies widely across countries. For example, obtaining a government document required a bribe from 68% of applicants in Congo-Brazzaville, compared to 1% in Cabo Verde and Seychelles.

- Two in three Africans (67%) say their government is doing a poor job of fighting corruption (Figure 4).
- Only one in four Africans (26%) say people can report corruption to the authorities without fear of retaliation (Figure 5).

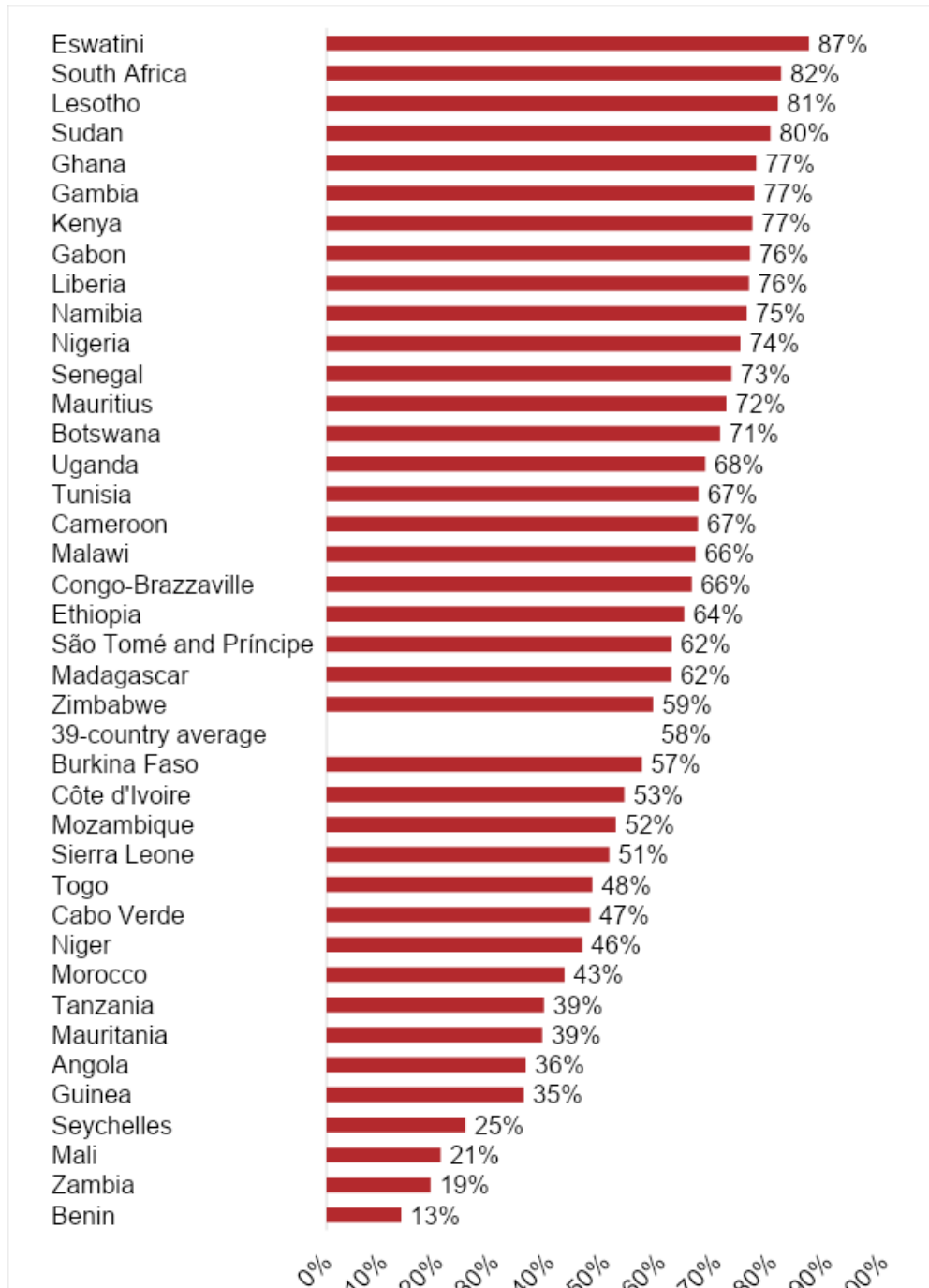
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries.

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with samples of 1,200-2,400 adults that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-3 to +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

Charts

Figure 1: Increased level of corruption | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same? (% who say corruption “increased somewhat” or “increased a lot”)*

Figure 2: Corruption among public institutions and leaders | 39 countries*
 | 2021/2023



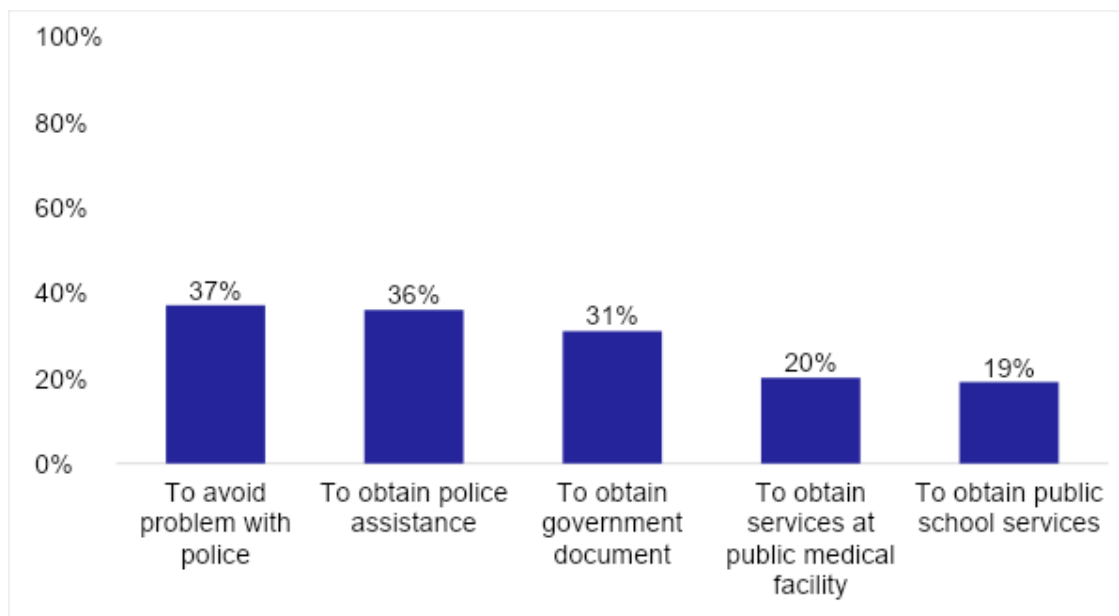
Respondents were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

* The question about MPs was not asked in Guinea, Sudan, and Tunisia.

The question about local government councillors was not asked in Angola and Seychelles.

The question about traditional leaders was not asked in Cabo Verde, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, and Tunisia.

Figure 3: Payment of bribes to access public services | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked:

In the past 12 months, have you had contact with a public school? [If yes:] How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a teacher or school official in order to get the services you needed from the schools?

In the past 12 months, have you had contact with a public clinic or hospital? [If yes:] How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed?

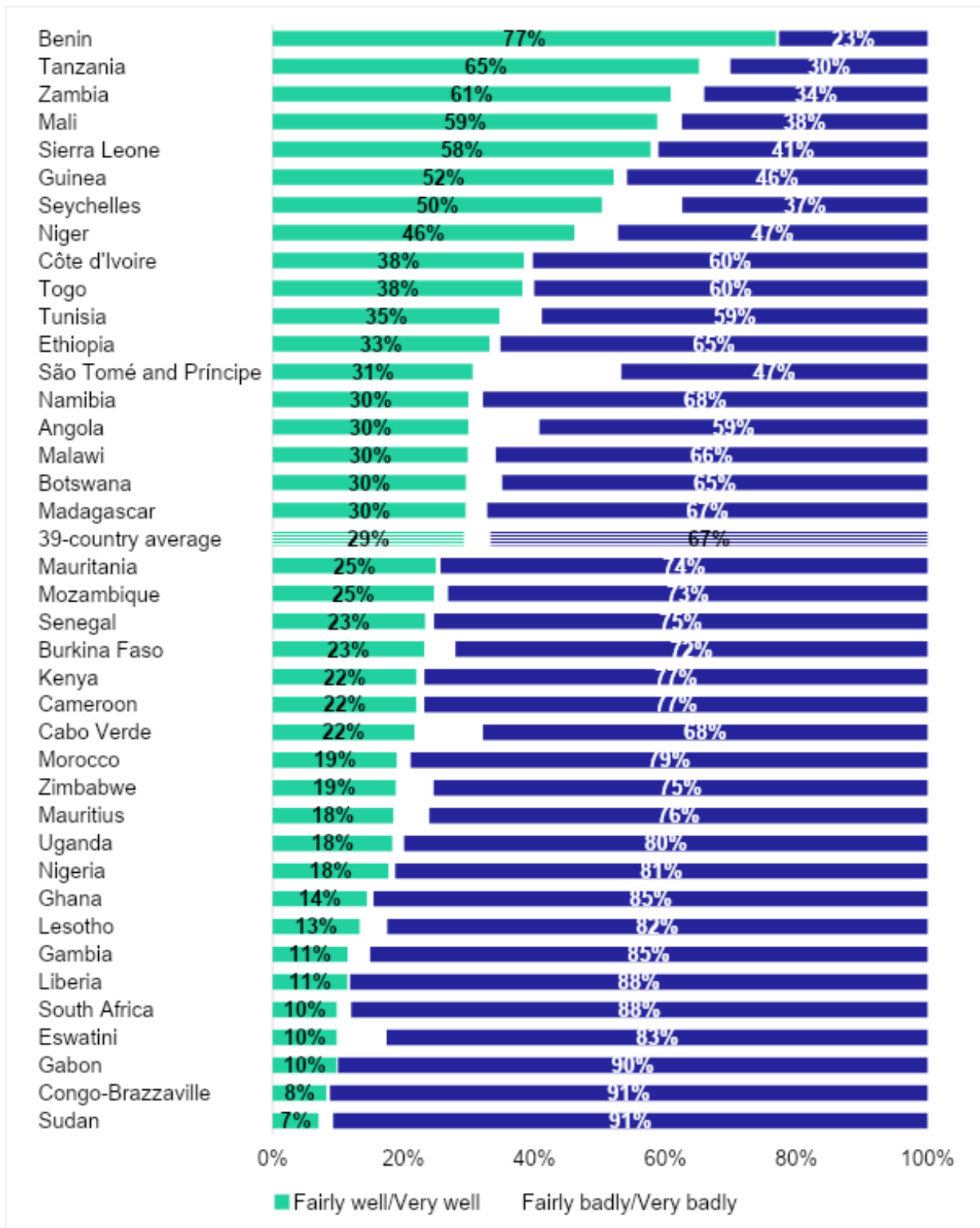
In the past 12 months, have you tried to get an identity document like a birth certificate, driver's license, passport or voter's card, or permit from government? [If yes:] How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a government official in order to get the document you needed?

In the past 12 months, have you requested assistance from the police? [If yes:] How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed?

In the past 12 months, how often have you encountered the police in other situations, like at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation? [If yes:] How often, if ever did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to avoid a problem during one of these encounters?

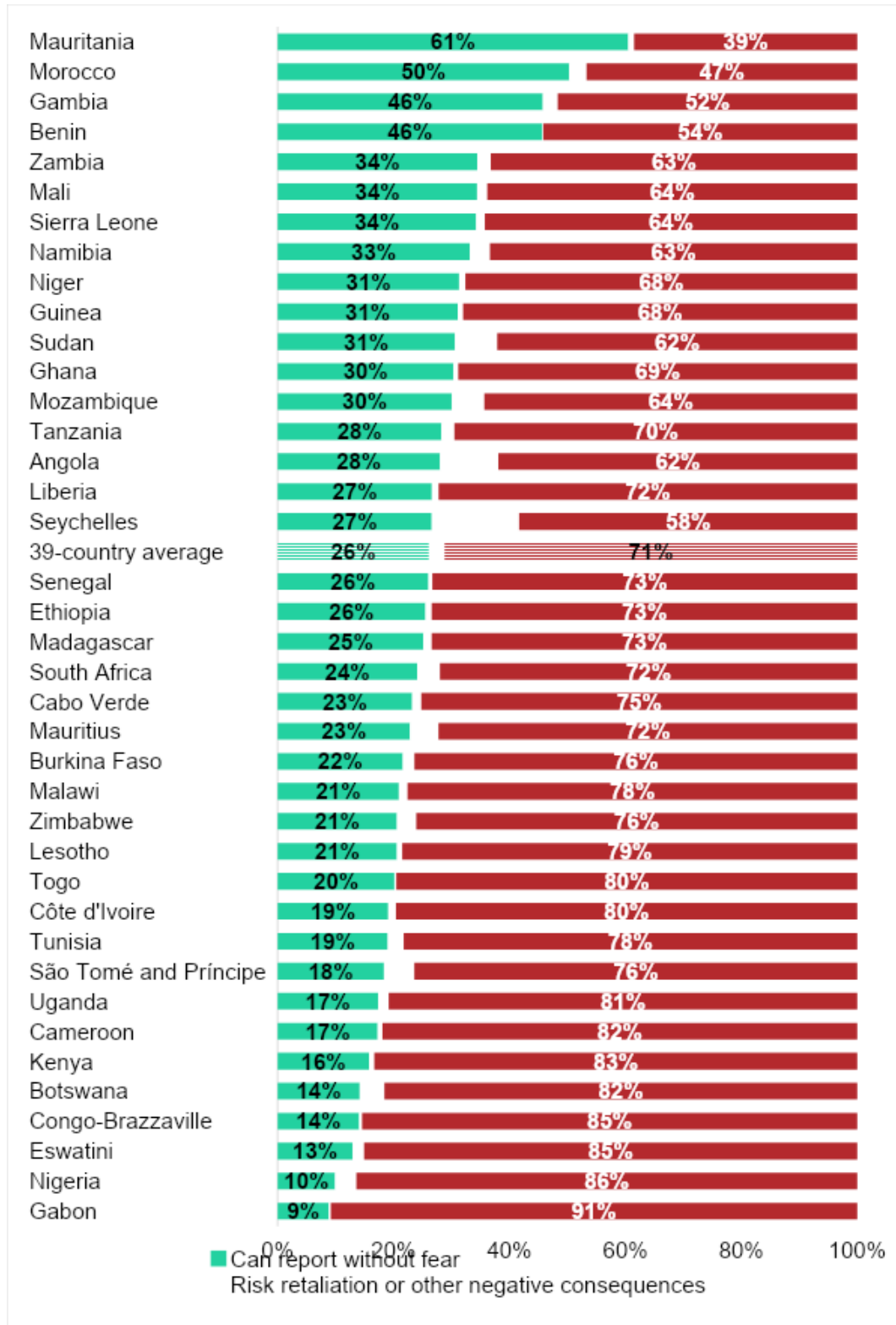
(% who say "once or twice," "a few times," or "often." Respondents who did not have contact with these services are excluded.)

Figure 4: Government performance in fighting corruption | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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?

Figure 5: Can ordinary citizens report corruption without fear? | 39 countries
 | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *In this country, can ordinary people report incidents of corruption without fear, or do they risk retaliation or other negative consequences if they speak out?*

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