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Africa's shifting media landscapes: Digital media use grows, but so do demographic divides

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 800 | Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, Kelechi Amakoh, and Komi Amewunou

Summary

Africa's media landscapes have shifted tremendously in the past 30 years. The end of staterun monopolies in most countries brought thousands of potential sources of news, information, and entertainment to the continent. These outlets in the print, broadcast, and digital sectors vary widely. Some are doggedly independent, while others are known



mouthpieces for partisan actors. Some vet information carefully before dissemination, while others are vehicles for mis-, dis-, and mal-information. And some are parts of large, even multinational, media houses, while others are shoestring community-run efforts.

The latest Afrobarometer data from 39 African countries document important changes in how Africans use media to access news and information. Radio remains the most-accessed medium, although digital

use continues to grow. However, despite significant gains in Internet and social media access in recent years, inequities in access across gender, education, age, urban/rural, and income lines persist, and on some dimensions have actually grown larger than when overall access rates were much lower. Radio, on the other hand, continues to be accessible across demographic groups more evenly.

Africans are generally supportive of media playing important roles in democratic governance. They are overwhelmingly supportive of media reporting on government mistakes and corruption, and a strong majority support media's right to report without government interference. And while there is great variation on this measure, a solid majority see media in their country as mostly free.

These results suggest that, in spite of continued attacks on media freedom in many countries, Africans generally support media helping to hold politicians accountable, even if they feel their governments don't always provide such environments. That said, continuously changing media contexts are bringing both new opportunities for Africans to be informed about important political, economic, social, and health issues and new challenges in the form of false information and divisive language.

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. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)



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

This 39-country analysis is based on 53,444 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Key findings

- Radio remains by far the most common source of news in Africa. On average across 39 surveyed countries, two-thirds (65%) of respondents tune in at least a few times a week.
- Almost half (47%) of Africans say they get news from social networks or the Internet at least a few times a week. Regular access to information via digital media varies from only 14% in Madagascar to 82% in Mauritius, and is growing more slowly than in the past.
 - Urban residents, more educated and better-off citizens, men, and youth are most likely to use digital media. On most of these measures, the digital divide is about as large as – and in some cases larger than – it was almost a decade ago.
 - But the demographic divides that mark differential access to digital media are small to non-existent with regard to radio.
- Africans express broad support for the media's role in fostering government accountability, and majorities support media freedom in all surveyed countries except Mali, Mozambique, Morocco, and Sudan.
- A majority (57%) of Africans consider the media in their country "somewhat free" or "completely free" of government interference, although fewer than one in four citizens in Gabon (14%) and Congo-Brazzaville (21%) agree.

How Africans get news

Radio remains on top

The Afrobarometer survey asked respondents how often they access news from five types of media: radio, television, newspapers, the Internet, and social media. Africans continue to report relying on radio with the greatest regularity, by far. Two-thirds (65%) say they access radio news at least "a few times a week," with 41% tuning in "every day" (Figure 1). A majority (54%) say they gather news from television at least a few times a week, including 39% who do so every day.¹ Digital media still trail broadcast media: 45% say they access social media at least a few times a week (33% daily), while 41% access the Internet at least a few times a week (30% daily).

Regular use of print media is considerably lower: Fewer than one in six respondents (15%) report reading a newspaper at least a few times a week, and only 6% do so every day.

¹ Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. for television, 39% "every day" and 16% "a few times a week" sum to 54%).



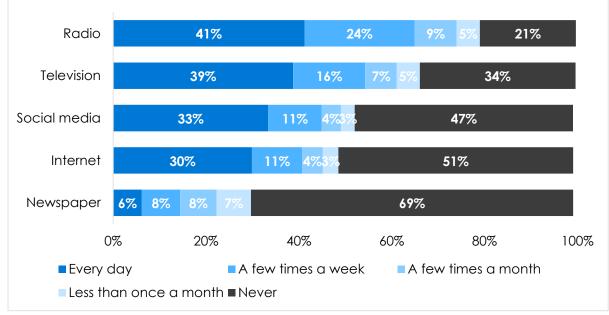


Figure 1: Media news consumption | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources?

What's more, regular reading of newspapers has continued to slip, down by 7 percentage points across 31 countries surveyed consistently since 2014/2015 (Figure 2). Rates of regular television news consumption have remained fairly consistent over the same period.

Digital media and radio bear closer attention, however – the former because of its explosive growth in recent years and the latter because of its widespread utilisation and relative stability in the midst of broader technological changes.

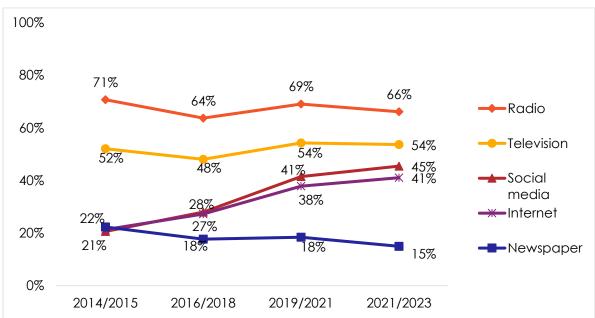


Figure 2: Regular news consumption | 31 countries | 2014-2023

Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say "every day" or "a few times a week")



Digital media grow, but gaps persist

The latest Afrobarometer data indicate continued growth in the use of digital media, although the pace in uptake has slowed somewhat compared to previous survey rounds (Conroy-Krutz & Koné, 2022). Regular use ("every day" or "a few times a week") of social media ticked up 4 percentage points from 2019/2021, while regular use of Internet increased by 3 points. Still, these figures constitute roughly a doubling in less than a decade in the share who report regular use of social media (from 21% to 45%) and the Internet (from 21% to 41%) for news.

Digital media penetration, at least as a news source, varies significantly across the continent (Figure 3). Rates of regularly accessing the Internet or social media or both are highest in Mauritius (82%), Gabon (79%), Morocco (74%), and South Africa (74%), and considerably lower in Malawi (20%), Uganda (19%), Ethiopia (19%), and Madagascar (14%).

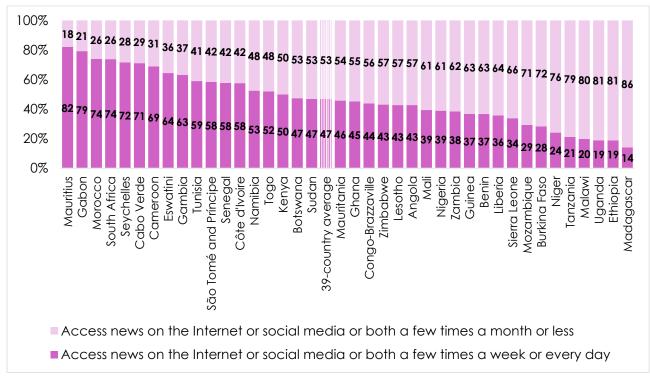


Figure 3: Digital news media use (%) | 39 countries | 2021/2023

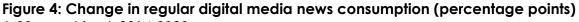
Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources?

Rates of increase in digital media use also vary considerably. Several countries have seen tremendous growth since 2014/2015 (Figure 4). For example, the share of Cameroonians who report regularly using social media for news has increased by 49 percentage points over that period. Gabon (+45 points), Togo (+39 points), Senegal (+38 points), Côte d'Ivoire (+37 points), and Mauritius (+37 points) have also seen huge gains.

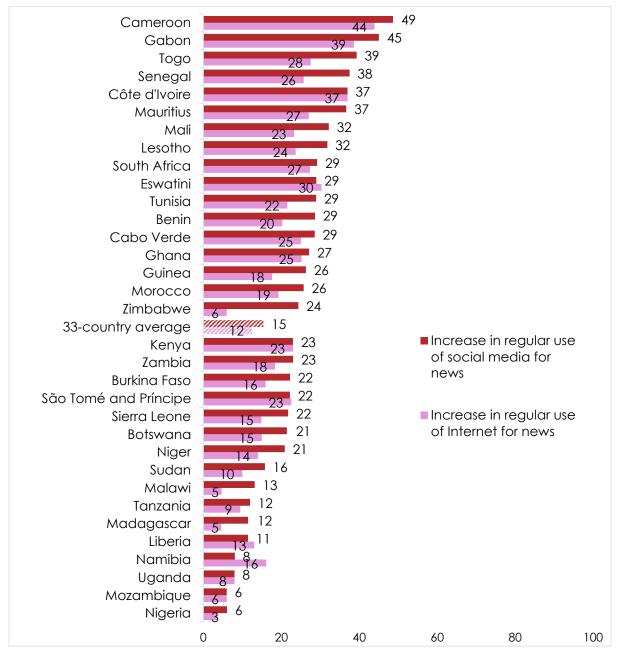
However, across 33 countries surveyed in both rounds, the average change in regular use of social media for news is considerably smaller, at 15 percentage points. And while every country in the sample has seen growth in regular use of both the Internet and social media for news, some increases have been quite modest. In Uganda, both social media and the Internet are up 8 percentage points; in Mozambique, both are up 6 percentage points; and in Nigeria, social media is up 6 points and the Internet 3 points. What's more, these countries'



small gains are not attributable to "ceiling effects"; in other words, they are not generally due to already-high access in 2014/2015, with little room to grow. Of the eight countries with only single-digit growth in at least one of the two forms of digital media measured here, just one – Namibia (53%) – currently has a rate of regular digital media use for news higher than the 39-country average. Countries such as Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda have seen relatively little growth and remain at or near the bottom of surveyed countries in uptake.



| 33 countries | 2014-2023



Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources: Internet? Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or others? (Figure shows the change, in percentage points, between 2014/2015 and 2021/2023 in the proportion of respondents who say "every day" or "a few times a week")



Just as they vary across countries, rates of use of digital media for news vary significantly by demographic group. Men, younger Africans, those experiencing lower levels of lived poverty,² those with higher levels of formal education, and urban residents are significantly more likely to use digital media regularly than women, older Africans, those with higher levels of lived poverty, those with lower levels of formal education, and rural residents (Figure 5 and Figure 6). For example, we see a 27-percentage-point gap in regular Internet usage for news between the youngest (18-35 years) and the oldest (56 years and above), a 35-point gap in Internet and social media use between urban and rural residents, and a 38-point gap in social media use between the highest and lowest levels of lived poverty. An astounding 70-point gap in Internet use separates those with the highest and lowest levels of education: While 81% of those with education levels beyond secondary school report regularly using the Internet for news, only 11% of those without any formal education do.

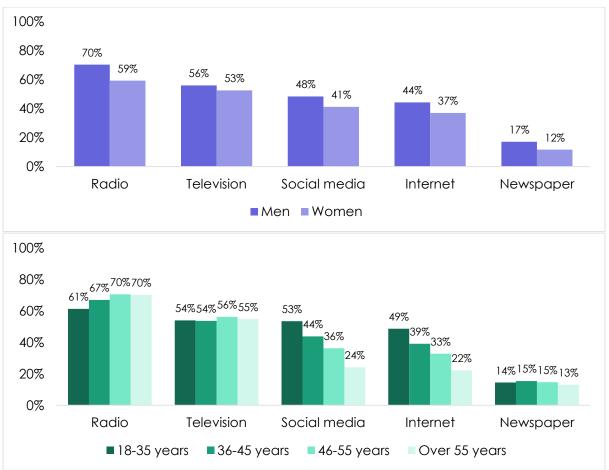


Figure 5: Regular news media consumption | by gender and age | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say "every day" or "a few times a week")

² 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 and Patel (2022).



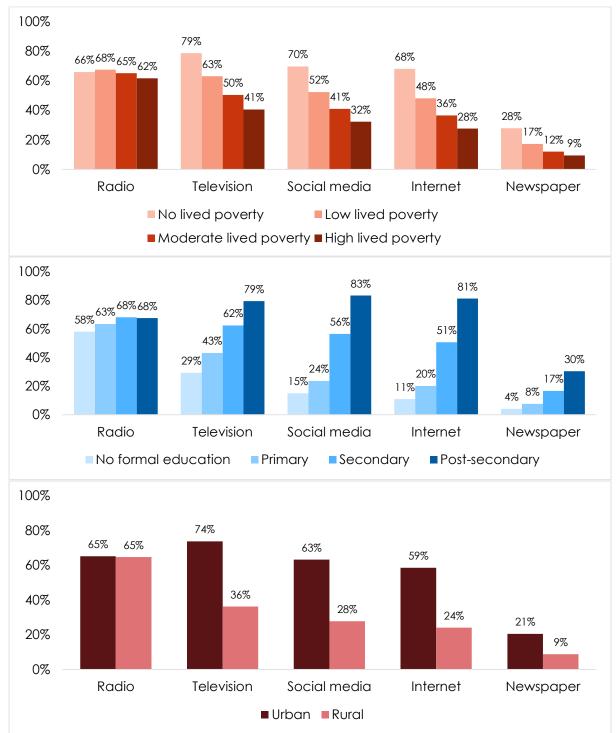


Figure 6: Regular news media consumption | by lived poverty, education, and urban-rural location | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say "every day" or "a few times a week")

As digital media use spreads, an optimistic perspective would hold that increasing availability of these technologies will reduce these demographic gaps. Generally, that does not appear



to be the case (Figure 7). The gender gap, which was 9 percentage points in 2014/2015 (26% for men, 18% for women), remains the same in 2021/2023 (52% for men, 43% for women). However, it should be noted that, although the gender gap in regular use of digital media for news has not changed, women's rate of regular use is significantly higher in 2021/2023 than men's was in 2014/2015.

The age gap also remains virtually unchanged. In 2014/2015, the gap between adults aged 18-35 and those above age 35 in regular digital media use for news stood at 20 percentage points (31% vs. 11%); in 2021/2023, that gap is 18 points (56% vs. 38%). But here again, rates of regular digital media use for those over age 35 are higher in 2021/2023 than rates for the 18-35 group were in 2014/2015.

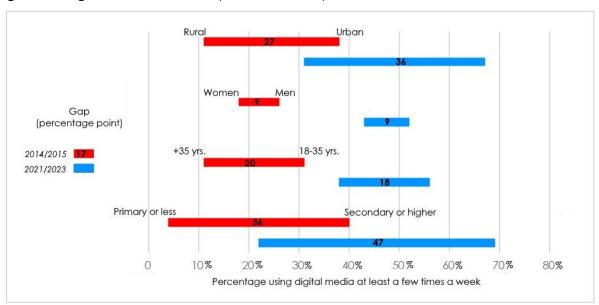


Figure 7: Gaps in regular digital news consumption | by urban-rural location, gender, age, and education | 31 countries | 2014-2023

In other comparisons, the digital divide has only grown as these technologies become more available. In 2014/2015, the urban-rural divide was 27 percentage points; in 2021/2023, it has grown to 36 points. Rural use of digital media is still lower in 2021/2023 (31%) than urban use was in 2014/2015 (38%).

And a 36-point divide in 2014/2015 between those with primary school or less (4%) and those with secondary school or more (40%) has grown into a 47-point gap (22% vs. 69%) in 2021/2023. Rates of digital media use for those in the lower-education group are far lower in 2021/2023 than they were for those in the higher-education group in 2014/2015.

In sum, while there have been gains in digital media use for news across all demographic groups since 2014/2015, inequities in access persist, and on some dimensions have only grown larger. This could have significant implications for outcomes such as political participation and social mobility, and for access to information about health, security, and economic opportunities. These gaps are not likely to decline significantly as long as many of the factors limiting digital media use for news remain, including inequalities in access to electricity and income for devices and data – whose costs continue to be relatively high across much of Africa (Harrisberg & Mensah, 2022) – as well as persistent illiteracy among some population segments, spotty network coverage (Delaporte, 2023), and patriarchal limitations on women's access to technology and information.



Radio as Africa's most democratic medium

Radio contrasts in some important ways with digital media. In terms of access, radio is clearly Africa's most democratic mass medium. Not only does radio continue to enjoy comparatively high rates of access – only about one in five respondents (21%) report "never" using it for news, vs. 34% for television, 47% for social media, 51% for the Internet, and 69% for newspapers (Figure 1) – but the type of demographic divides that characterise other mass media, including digital sources, are much smaller for radio.

Regular use of radio for news has declined slightly since 2014/2015, from 71% to 65%. However, considering that broadcast radio has been characterised as a threatened medium elsewhere (Agence France Presse, 2017; Mayfield, 2021), the still-widespread regular use of radio for news in Africa is notable.

On some dimensions, demographic gaps in reported regular use of radio do exist (Figure 5 and Figure 6). For example, men's use is 11 percentage points higher than women's (70% to 59%) – a larger gap than for television (3 points), social media (7 points), the Internet (7 points), and newspapers (5 points). And with regard to age, the oldest respondents (over 55) are more likely than those in the youngest group (18-35) to report regularly using radio (70% vs. 61%). Rates of television and newspaper use are fairly similar across age groups.

However, on every other dimension, demographic divides on radio are considerably smaller than for other mass media. While there is a 10-point gap in regular radio use for news between those without formal education (58%) and those with post-secondary education (68%), the gap between the same groups is 26 points for newspapers, 50 points for television, 68 points for social media, and 70 points for the Internet. There is a small (4-point) gap in regular radio use between the poorest and best-off respondents; this gap is 19 points for newspapers, 38 points for television and social media, and 40 points for the Internet. Finally, regular use of radio for news among rural and urban dwellers is identical (65% for both), while urban-rural gaps are substantial for newspaper (12 points), television (28 points), social media (35 points), and the Internet (35 points).

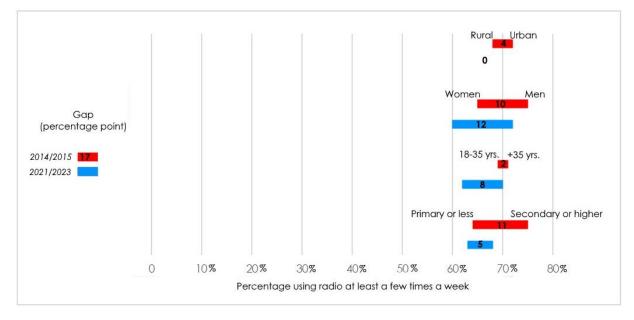
Myriad factors contribute to radio's consistent popularity and its relative accessibility across demographic subgroups. Unlike newspapers and written digital media, radio, like television, does not require formal education to access. Whereas newspaper distribution is limited or non-existent in many rural areas, the predominance of radio stations in regional towns – and even in low-population communities – makes it accessible for most rural dwellers. Radio receivers are considerably less expensive than televisions, computers, mobile devices, and regular purchases of print publications. Further, since many are battery-powered, they are not as disrupted by unreliable or non-accessible grids as other devices, such as televisions. Finally, African communities are often characterised as single-owner, multiple-user (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Individuals frequently hear radio in public transportation or other communal settings. Newspapers may be shared, mobile devices passed around, and televisions played for groups in public or private, but incidental exposure to radio is likely considerably higher.

Finally, while the digital divide is increasing across many subgroup comparisons, gaps for radio have largely stayed the same or even decreased (Figure 8). The percentage-point gap in regularly accessing radio between men and women has increased very slightly, from 10 points in 2014/2015 to 12 points in 2021/2023. There has also been a slight increase in the access gap between older (over age 35) and younger (aged 18-35) respondents, from 2 points to 8 points, although that gap favours older Africans. The gap between rural and urban dwellers has decreased slightly, from 4 points to a tie, while the gap between the lower and higher education groups has dropped from 11 points to 5. In sum, although its use as a source of news is neither universal nor equal among demographic groups, radio remains



the most democratic mass medium on the continent in terms of access and subgroup divides.

Figure 8: Gaps in regular radio news consumption | by urban-rural location, gender, age, and education | 31 countries | 2014-2023



Media and climate-change awareness

What effects does media exposure have on outcomes such as citizen knowledge? It is notoriously hard to determine how self-reports of media exposure impact outcomes, such as vote choice, participation, and knowledge, mainly because people choose how much and what types of media to consume. Individuals who are already more prone to participate in politics or more interested in politics might choose to access news about politics more often; any finding that they are therefore more knowledgeable about politics might be partly explained by their heightened media exposure, but also largely by their greater inclination to seek out such information.

However, as Afrobarometer data suggest, access to media also might be influenced by factors beyond people's direct control, such as their level of lived poverty, their gender, their level of education, and their place of residence. Thus, the amount and type of media that individuals consume might themselves directly impact their knowledge about important topics, in ways not of their own choosing.

One topic of increasing importance, particularly in Africa, is climate change and the extent to which human actions are impacting the global environment. Figure 9 shows self-reported knowledge about climate change, broken down by frequency of self-reported exposure to various types of media. Across all media types, those who say they follow news at least "a few times a week" are more likely than those who follow it less frequently to say that they have heard of climate change. The difference for radio is minuscule (44% to 43%), but the gaps are larger for all other types of media: 16 points for television, 20 points for newspapers, 21 points for social media, and 22 points for the Internet.

Of course, some of these differences might be attributable to the fact that urban dwellers and better-educated Africans are more likely to access all these types of media, and those individuals also might have had a chance to learn about climate change through formal schooling or public information and activism campaigns in urban areas. Thus, we should be



cautious about making a causal claim here that media access increases knowledge about climate change. Additionally, we note that the bar here is quite low. The question does not probe depth of knowledge about climate change or whether the respondent's selfperceived knowledge is accurate; certainly, there is a great deal of mis-, dis-, and malinformation about climate change spread over the media. However, the results here do suggest that campaigners seeking to change human behaviour and encourage citizens to put pressure on policy makers to act could find some success through media-based campaigns.

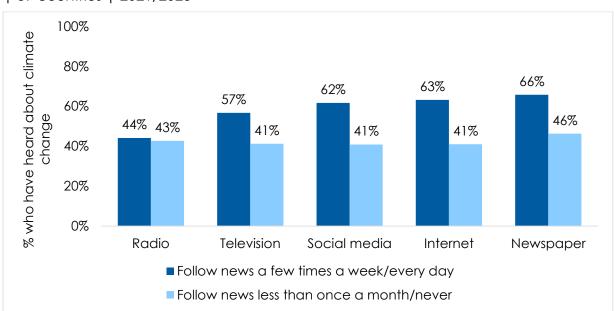


Figure 9: Knowledge of climate change | by frequency of access to information | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked:

How often do you get news from the following sources? Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had a chance to hear about it yet? (% who say "yes")

Media and democracy

As it has since its inception, Afrobarometer asked questions in Round 9 not only about media consumption, but also about attitudes regarding the role that media should play, the role of government in regulating media, and the extent to which media are able to perform their functions.

What role should the media play?

The media serve as watchdogs in a democratic society, expected to hold those in power accountable for their actions. Survey findings underscore broad support among Africans for this role, although there is significant variation across countries. On average, 72% of Africans "agree" or "strongly agree" that the media "should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption." Only 25% instead favour the idea that "too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country."

The media's watchdog role wins majority support in all surveyed countries, though just barely so in Mozambique (50%) and Sudan (55%). This view is most widely shared in Cabo Verde (85%), Nigeria (84%), Mauritius (84%), Ghana (83%), and Uganda (81%) (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Media should check government vs. avoid negative reporting | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Cabo Verde	85%	13%		
Nigeria	84%	15%		
Mauritius	84%	12%		
Ghana	83%	15%		
Uganda	81%	18%		
Seychelles	80%	9%		
Madagascar	79%	21%		
Zambia	78%	19%		
Liberia	78%	22%		
Gabon	78%	22%		
Malawi	78%	21%		
Kenya	77%	21%		
Gambia	77%	18%		
Botswana	76%	21%		
Tanzania	75%	23%		
South Africa	75%	21%		
Guinea	74%	25%		
Sierra Leone	74%	23%		
Mali	74%	25%		
Тодо	73%	26%		
Congo-Brazzaville	73%	27%		
39-country average	72%	25%		
Mauritania	72%	26%		
Ethiopia	71%	27%		
Niger	70%	28%		
Tunisia	69%	27%		
Benin	69%	30%		
Namibia	69%	30%		
Burkina Faso	68%	30%		
Lesotho	67%	31%		
Eswatini	66%	32%		
Côte d'Ivoire	66%	34%		
Morocco	64%	34%		
Angola	62%	26%		
Cameroon Zimbabwe	62% 62%	36% 34%		
São Tomé and Príncipe	6270 60%	34%		
Senegal	57%	42%		
Sudan	55%	41%		
Mozambique	50%	47%		
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09	76 20% 40% 60	0% 80% 100%		
Med	ia should report on government misto	ikes and corruption		
Agre	e with neither/Don't know/Refused			
	much negative reporting only harms t	he country		
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Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.

Statement 2: Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)



Media freedom

To play its watchdog role effectively, the media must be free of governmental control. Media freedom is also necessary for other components of democracy, such as providing information to enable citizens to assess candidates and offering opportunities for the exchange of ideas.

Across Africa, about two-thirds (65%) of citizens endorse the principle that the media "should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control." One-third (32%) of respondents instead assert that governments "should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it disapproves of." Those with a primary education or less are somewhat less supportive of media freedom (61%) than those in the more educated group (68%). However, there are no differences based on age: Youth and their elders are equally supportive of a free media.

Support for media freedom is the majority view in 35 of the 39 surveyed countries, exceeding three-fourths of the citizenry in Seychelles (84%), Mauritius (83%), Gabon (80%), and Congo-Brazzaville (79%) (Figure 11). The exceptions are Mali (where only 43% favour a free media), Mozambique (45%), Morocco (46%), and Sudan (47%).

In practice, a slimmer majority (57%) of Africans say the media in their country is either "completely" or "somewhat" free from government interference (Figure 12). While most Tanzanians (82%), Gambians (79%), Tunisians (77%), and Mauritanians (76%) consider their media largely free, 13 countries record fewer than half of citizens who agree. Gabon (14%), Congo-Brazzaville (21%), and Eswatini (26%) are the most dramatic examples of countries where only a minority see the media as free.

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.



Seychelles				6%		
Mauritius		83%		13%		
Gabon		80%		19%		
Congo-Brazzaville		79%		21%		
Botswana		75%	21%		%	
Cabo Verde		75%	20%)%	
Senegal		75%	22%		%	
Ghana		73%	24%			
Eswatini		73%	25%		7	
South Africa		73%	22%			
Kenya		72 %	26%			
Mauritania		72%	27%			
Gambia		71%	24%			
Uganda 📃		71%	28%			
Nigeria		70%	29%			
Lesotho		70%		28%		
Zimbabwe	69%		28%			
Malawi	68%		30%			
Madagascar	68%		31%			
Benin	68%			30%		
Liberia	66%			34%		
Burkina Faso		66%		32%		
Guinea	66%		33%			
39-country average	65%		32%			
Namibia	63%		35%			
Zambia	62 %		35%			
Côte d'Ivoire	61%		33%			
Тодо	60%		39%			
Tunisia	60%		36%			
Ethiopia	59			38%		
Angola				28%		
Niger	58			40%		
Sierra Leone	<u> </u>		39%			
São Tomé and Príncipe	53%		41%			
Cameroon	<u> </u>		41/2			
Tanzania	E1 07		48%			
Sudan	<u> </u>		48 <i>%</i> 47%			
Morocco	47 /2 46%		52 %			
Mozambique	40% 45%		51%			
Mali	43%			53%		
0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100	
Media shou	uld be free to	oublish				
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Figure 11: Support for media freedom | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it disapproves of.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)



Tanzania	82%			16%	
Gambia		79%		1	7%
Tunisia	77%			22%	
Mauritania	76%			23	%
Mali	72%			26%	,)
Kenya		71%		28%	
Namibia		70%		25%	
Liberia		70%		29%	
Senegal		70%		29 %	
Zambia	70%			27%	
Ghana	70%			29%	
Malawi	6	7%		29%	
Uganda	6	7%		31%	
South Africa	6	5%		29%	
Mauritius	63	%		36%	
Sierra Leone	629	%		36%	
Madagascar	62%			32%	
Cabo Verde	60%			37%	
39-country average	57%			40%	
Niger	57%			38%	
Burkina Faso	57%			42%	
Guinea	57%			43%	
Morocco	54%			45%	
Mozambique	52%			42 %	
Seychelles	52%			42%	
Lesotho	52%			45%	
Ethiopia	51%			44%	
Botswana	49%			46%	
Sudan	49%			47%	
Angola	48%			42 %	
São Tomé and Príncipe	48%			46%	
Benin	46%			54%	
Zimbabwe	46%			47%	
Nigeria	43%			54%	
Тодо	42%		5	7%	
Cameroon	39%		61	61%	
Côte d'Ivoire	37%		63%	76	
Eswatini	26% 71%				
Congo-Brazzaville	21% 79%				
Gabon	14%		86%		
0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
■Somewhat free/0 ■Not very free/No		■ Dor	"t know/Refu	sed	

Figure 12: How free is the media? | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how free is the news media in this country to report and comment on the news without censorship or interference by the government?



Conclusion

Media environments in Africa continue to undergo significant changes, particularly increased access to social media and the Internet in most countries. These changes bring new opportunities as well as new challenges. Digital media may reduce barriers for individuals to access information from a wider range of sources, thereby increasing pluralism and reducing the power of gatekeepers, whose control of capital often means they have outsized control over print and broadcast media. Afrobarometer data support the notion that the use of digital media is exploding across the continent, although rates of uptake may have slowed in recent years.

However, these new media environments also pose challenges. Reduced barriers to access and the decline of gatekeepers can also mean that false information and divisive language, including hate speech and calls to violence, spread more quickly, with fewer opportunities to check facts and squelch harmful speech. In addition, digital divides disadvantaging women, the less educated, the poor, rural residents, and older citizens are not vanishing. In fact, many of these divides are larger today than they were almost a decade ago.

In spite of these changes, one mass medium – radio – continues to dominate most markets on the continent, with only modest declines in use over the past several years. Further, radio is in many ways the most democratic of mass media, as many of the demographic divides that mark access to digital media are small to non-existent. That said, we must be cautious to note that radio presents its own set of problems, including its own issues with false information and divisive language.

Evolving media landscapes mean that African publics face important questions about how they interact with media and how they expect their governments to treat media. Afrobarometer data suggest that Africans overwhelmingly support media playing an important role in holding governments accountable, particularly with regard to the scourge of corruption. Further, strong majorities are supportive of media's right to report as they see fit, free of government interference. And a solid majority see their media as largely free, although assessments vary widely by country.

These attitudes could be quite important in defending African democracies against further backsliding. Public support for media freedom could be a crucial bulwark in the face of state-sponsored attacks (Conroy-Krutz, 2020). In one dramatic example of a public role in defending media, thousands of listeners of Radio Fresh in Ibadan, Nigeria, gathered at the station to protest the bulldozing of its building ordered by the local governor, allegedly to punish the station for critical reporting in 2018 (Atoyebi & Dada, 2018). Of course, most government efforts to limit media are not as dramatic as demolitions or the arson attacks on Burundian radio stations in 2015 (Nkengurutse, 2015), but rather quiet moves involving licensing, fines, and influence on advertising revenues. Publics will need to remain vigilant about these limits on media freedom and, if necessary, push back against them to defend democracy.



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Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	FebMarch 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	SeptOct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	NovDec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	OctNov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	NovDec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	AugSept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Кепуа	NovDec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	FebMarch 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	AugSept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	AugSept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	OctNov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	OctNov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	NovDec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021
Sudan	NovDec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	SeptOct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Тодо	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	FebMarch 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	AugSept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021



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