



Dispatch No. 808 | 29 May 2024

Ghanaians oppose state support for political parties during election campaigns

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 808 | Gildfred Boateng Asiamah and Mavis Zupork Dome

Summary

A majority of African countries provide assistance to political parties and candidates to support their administration or election campaigns (International IDEA, 2024; Elin, Samuel, & Magnus, 2014). State support to political parties can take the form of money, free or subsidised goods and services, or tax relief, among others. In Ghana, the state supports political parties and candidates through equal allocation of free airtime on state-owned media during election years. In the past, the Electoral Commission of Ghana provided vehicles to support political parties that met certain requirements (Ghanaweb, 2008).

The adequacy of state support to political parties and candidates has been a long-standing topic of debate in Ghana. After a strong call for more public funding for political parties in the lead-up to Ghana's 2000 general elections, the Electoral Commission led a nationwide consultation in 2003 and made proposals for additional public funding. But the proposals were never implemented (Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 2005).

More recently, the sharply increasing costs of election campaigns has reignited calls for reforms, including public funding of political parties. A study by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (2018) found that the average campaign expenditure for parliamentary elections increased by 59% between the 2012 and 2016 election cycles. In 2016, party primary and parliamentary elections cost GHC 389,803 (U.S. \$85,000), on average; 2020 presidential and parliamentary campaigns in Ghana averaged GHC 4 million (U.S. \$693,000) (Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 2021).

In March 2023, at a public lecture and launch of a fundraising platform for his 2024 election campaign, former President and current presidential candidate John Dramani Mahama argued for public funding of political parties when Ghana's economic conditions allow such a reform (Annang, 2023).

Findings from the latest Afrobarometer survey show that a majority of Ghanaians oppose government support for political parties during election campaigns. Even among the few who favour government support, most are not willing to pay a special levy or tax to fund support for political parties.

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.

The Afrobarometer team in Ghana, led by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2,400 adult Ghanaians in April 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points

at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Ghana in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019.

Key findings

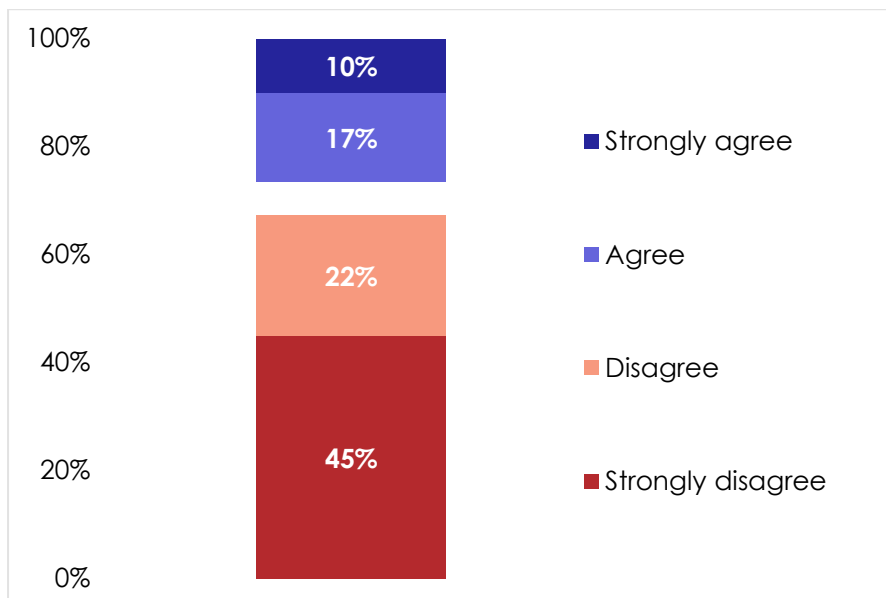
- Two-thirds (67%) of Ghanaians think the government should not directly support political parties during election campaigns.
 - Opposition to state support for political parties is particularly strong among citizens who say they don't trust the ruling and opposition parties.
- If the government provides support for political parties, the most popular form of support is free advertising on state media (20%), followed by direct financial support (17%), resources such as vehicles and office equipment (13%), and payment of leaders' salaries (5%).
- Even among citizens who favour state support for political parties, almost two-thirds (64%) say they are not willing to pay a special tax or levy to fund such support.

State support for political parties

In Ghana, two-thirds (67%) of citizens oppose state provision of direct support to political parties during election campaigns, including 45% of "strongly disagree" with the idea (Figure 1). Only about a quarter (27%) want the state to support political parties.

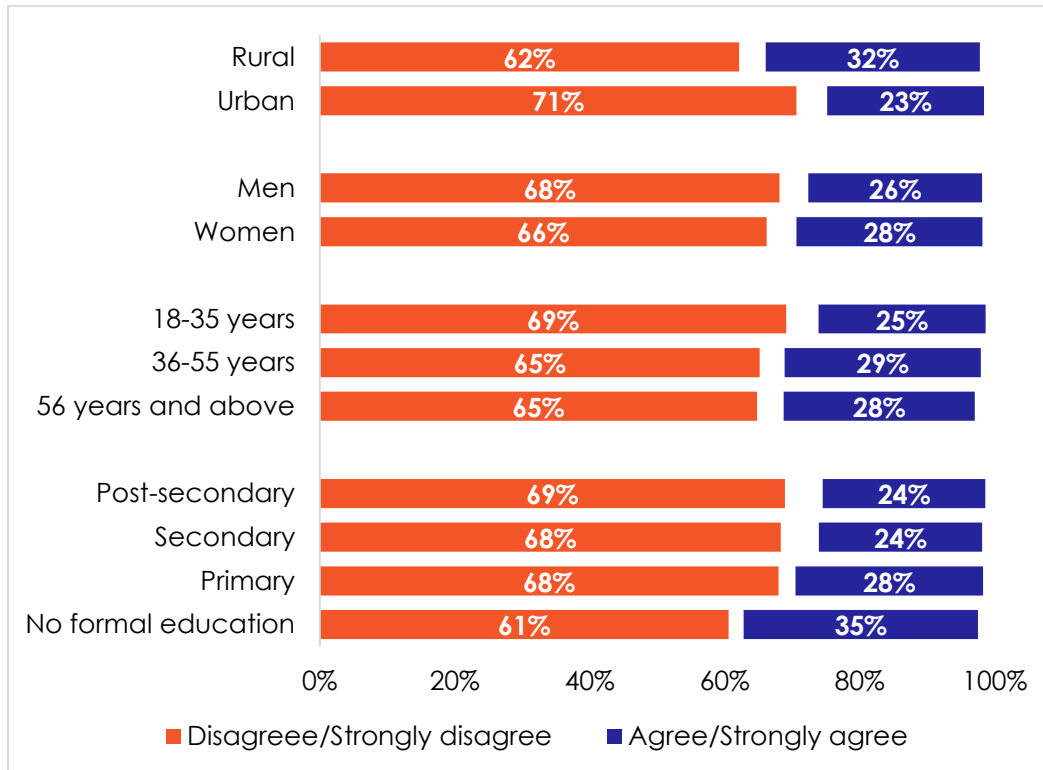
Opposition to state support is fairly consistent across key demographic groups, recording its lowest levels among rural residents (62%) and citizens with no formal education (61%) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Views on state support for political parties | Ghana | 2022



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you disagree or agree with the following statement: To curb the current trend in Ghanaian politics where parties and candidates spend so much money during party primaries and national elections, government should provide direct support to political parties during election campaigns.

Figure 2: Views on state support for political parties | by demographic group
 | Ghana | 2022



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you disagree or agree with the following statement: To curb the current trend in Ghanaian politics where parties and candidates spend so much money during party primaries and national elections, government should provide direct support to political parties during election campaigns.

Popular trust in political parties might influence citizens' willingness to endorse the use of tax monies to support party activities. Political parties in Ghana have a serious trust deficit among the populace. Only 27% of survey respondents say they trust the ruling party

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.

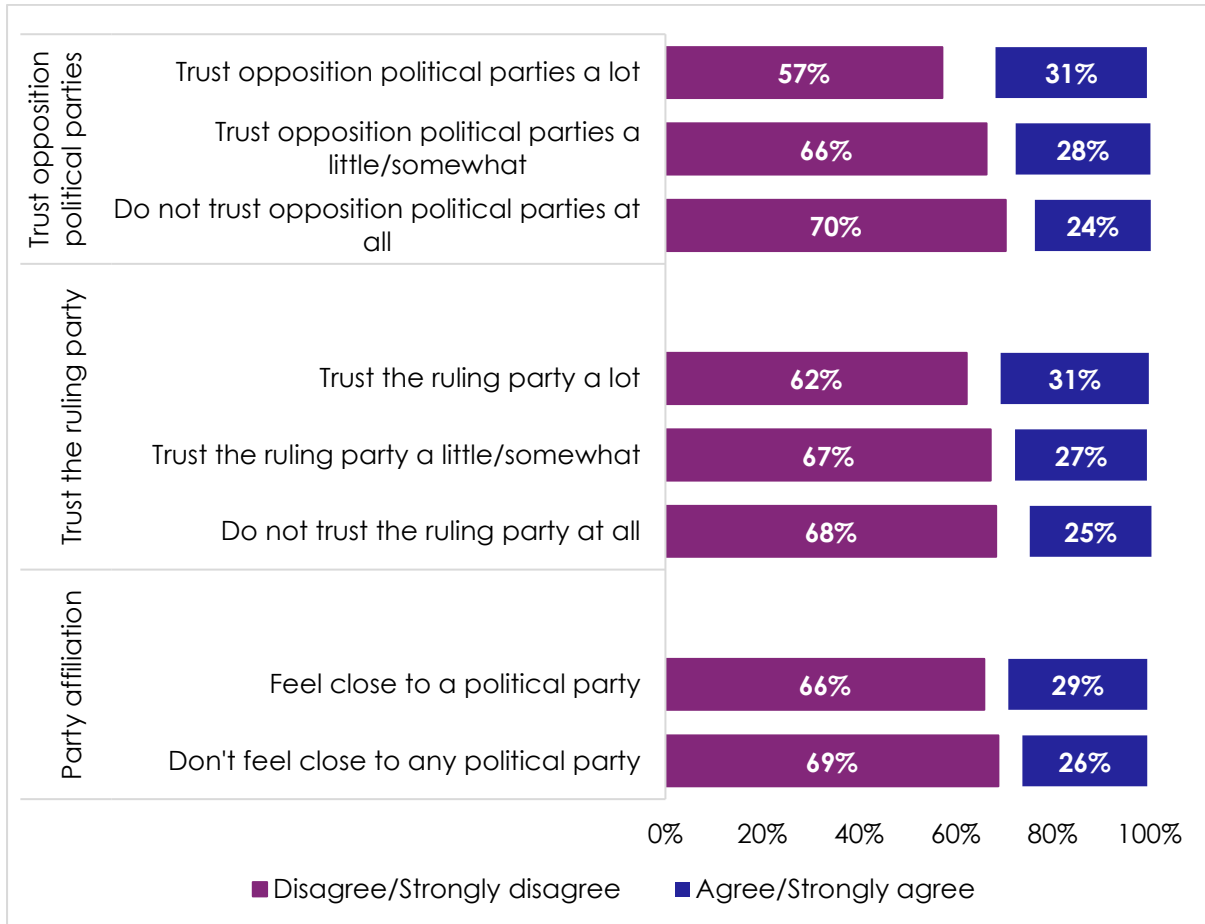
“somewhat” or “a lot,” and 29% express trust in opposition parties. Allegations of corruption and vote buying and public displays of opulence by political elites may well undermine public confidence that state support will be used judiciously.

Indeed, survey findings show that citizens who trust opposition parties “a lot” are less likely to oppose state support for parties than those who don't trust them “at all”

(57% vs. 70%) (Figure 3). The pattern is similar with regard to the ruling party (62% vs. 68%).

Opposition to state support is only slightly weaker among respondents who “feel close to” a political party (66%) than among those who express no party affiliation (69%).

Figure 3: State support for political parties | by trust in political parties and party affiliation | Ghana | 2022



Respondents were asked:

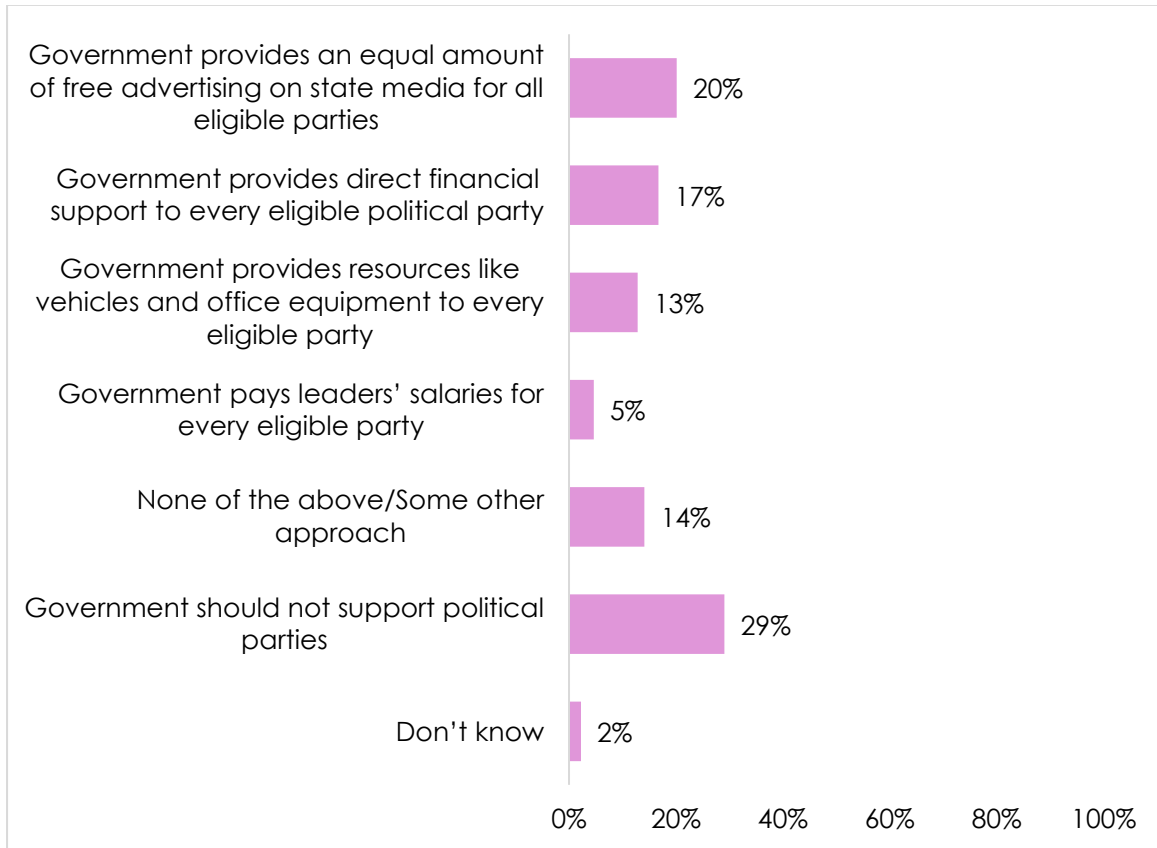
How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say:
 The ruling NPP party? Opposition political parties?
 Do you feel close to any particular political party?
 Please tell me whether you disagree or agree with the following statement: To curb the current trend in Ghanaian politics where parties and candidates spend so much money during party primaries and national elections, government should provide direct support to political parties during election campaigns.

Best approach to government support for political parties

If – despite majority public opposition – the government provides direct support to political parties, the most popular form of support is an equal amount of free advertising on state media for all eligible parties (20%), followed by direct financial support (17%), resources such as vehicles and office equipment (13%), and payment of leaders' salaries (5%). However, 14% think none of these approaches is appropriate, while 29% reiterate their opposition to government support for political parties (Figure 4).

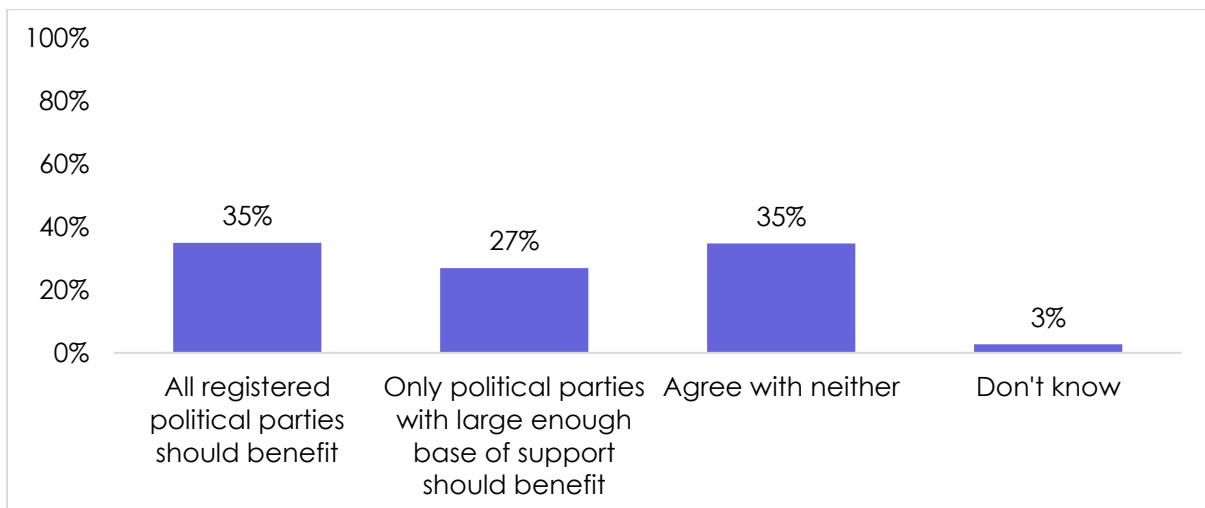
If the government supports political parties, about one-third (35%) of Ghanaians say that such support should benefit all registered political parties, while 27% think that only political parties that meet certain conditions, such as having a large enough base of support, should benefit. About one-third (35%) of citizens agree with neither approach (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Best approach to financing political parties | Ghana | 2022



Respondents were asked: *If the government provides direct support to political parties, which of the following would be the best approach?*

Figure 5: Criteria for state support | Ghana | 2022



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

Statement 1: If government offers direct support to political parties, all registered political parties must benefit from such support.

Statement 2: Only political parties that meet conditions, such as having a large enough base of support, should benefit if government offers direct support to political parties.

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

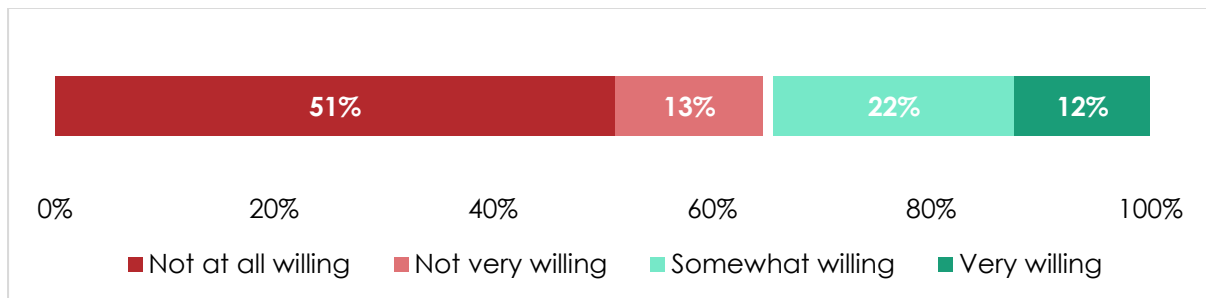
Willingness to pay tax or levy to support political parties

Are Ghanaians who endorse state support for political parties willing to pay new taxes or levies to fund this support?

Among the 27% of citizens who agree to government providing direct support to political parties during election campaigns, almost two-thirds (64%) say they are “not at all willing” (51%) or “not very willing” (13%) to pay a special levy or additional tax to support political parties. Only about one-third (34%) express a willingness to do so (Figure 6).

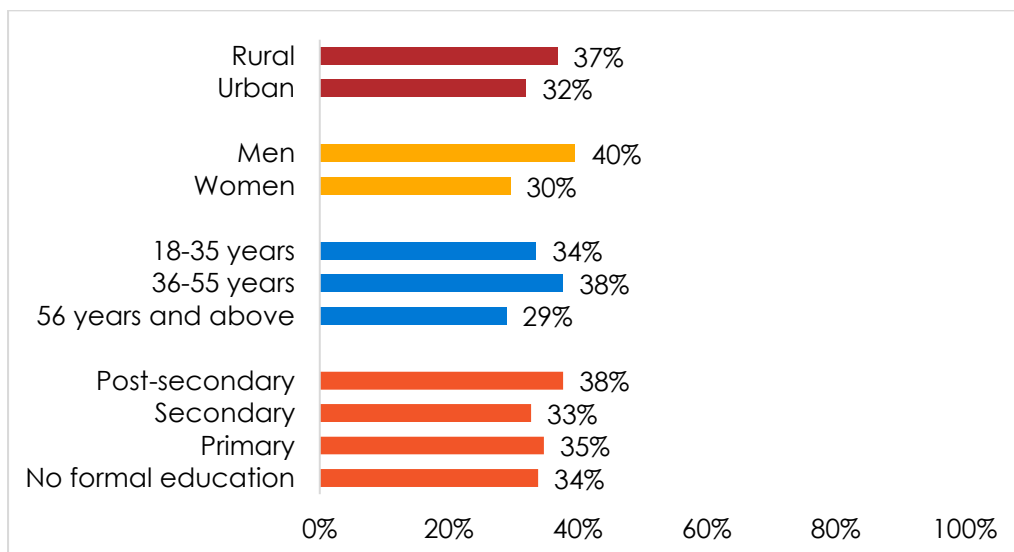
The willingness to pay an extra tax or levy is somewhat higher in rural areas than in cities (37% vs. 32%), among men compared to women (40% vs. 30%), and among those with post-secondary education compared to their counterparts with less schooling (38% vs. 33%-35%) (Figure 7). Older citizens are least likely to endorse such a tax (29% among those over age 55).

Figure 6: Willingness to pay tax | respondents who favour state support to political parties | Ghana | 2022



Respondents who favour state support for political parties were asked: If government decides to provide direct support to political parties, how willing are you to pay a special levy or additional tax for this purpose? (Respondents who do not favour state support for political parties are excluded.)

Figure 7: Willingness to pay tax | respondents who favour state support to political parties | by demographic group | Ghana | 2022



Respondents who favour state support for political parties were asked: If government decides to provide direct support to political parties, how willing are you to pay a special levy or additional tax for this purpose? (Respondents who do not favour state support for political parties are excluded.)

Conclusion

Survey findings show that a majority of Ghanaians oppose government support for political parties during election campaigns. Even among those who endorse state support for political parties, a majority are not willing to pay a special tax or levy to fund such support.

References

- Annang, E. (2023). Ghana needs to adopt a public funding system for viable political parties-Mahama. Pulse.com.gh. 23 March.
- Elin, F., Samuel, J., & Magnus, O. (2014). Funding of political parties and election campaigns: A handbook on political finance. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- Ghana Center for Democratic Development. (2005). Political party financing in Ghana: Policy guidelines. Research Paper No. 13.
- Ghana Center for Democratic Development. (2021). Understanding how dirty money fuels campaign financing in Ghana: An exploratory study.
- Ghanaweb.com. (2008). EC to give 50 vehicles to political parties. 19 November.
- International IDEA. (2024). Are there provisions for direct public funding to political parties?
- Prempeh, H. K., & Asare S. K. (2017). Ghana political parties financing policy (GPPFP). Financial Accountability and Transparency-Africa (FAT-Africa). STAR-Ghana.
- Westminster Foundation for Democracy and Ghana Center for Democratic Development. (2018). The cost of politics in Ghana.

Gildfred Boateng Asiamah is a research analyst, team lead (elections, anti-corruption and rule of law), and internship coordinator at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana). Email: g.asiamah@cddgh.org.

Mavis Zupork Dome is a research coordinator at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development and national investigator for Afrobarometer in Ghana. Email: m.dome@cddgh.org.

Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, nonpartisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University, the University of Cape Town, and the University of Malawi provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer is provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation via the World Bank Think Africa Project, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations - Africa, Luminare, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the European Union Commission, the World Bank Group, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, the Global Centre for Pluralism, and GIZ.

Donations help Afrobarometer give voice to African citizens. Please consider making a donation to Afrobarometer. To make an online donation, kindly follow this [link](#) or this [link](#). To discuss institutional funding, contact Felix Biga (felixbiga@afrobarometer.org) or Runyararo Munetsi (runyararo@afrobarometer.org).

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.



Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 808 | 29 May 2024