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News release

Overwhelming majority of Kenyans see corruption in the judiciary, Afrobarometer survey shows

A large majority of Kenyans say at least some of the country's judges and magistrates are corrupt, the most recent Afrobarometer survey shows.

Even though a majority of Kenyans trust the courts, the share who say that most or all judges and magistrates are involved in corruption increased between the years 2016 and 2019. Trust in the courts was weaker among better-educated citizens and urban residents.

At a time when corruption scandals have raised questions about the integrity and trustworthiness of Kenya's judicial system, these findings highlight challenges that the judiciary must confront as it works to implement reforms under the 2010 constitution.

Key findings

- Almost nine out of 10 Kenyans (86%) said at least "some" judges and magistrates are involved in corruption, including more than one-third (35%) who said "most" or "all" of them are corrupt (Figure 1).
- The share of citizens who see most/all judges and magistrates as corrupt increased by 7 percentage points between the years 2016 and 2019 but has been fairly consistent over time, ranging between 28% and 35% since 2003 (Figure 2).
- A majority (57%) of Kenyans said they trust the courts of law "somewhat" or "a lot." This reflects a 5-percentage-point increase compared to the previous survey in 2016 (52%) but remains below its high point of 61% in 2011 (Figure 3).
- Trust in the courts was weaker among better-educated Kenyans, ranging from 66% of those with no formal education to 52% of those with post-secondary qualifications. Urban residents were less likely to express trust in the courts (50%) than their rural counterparts (60%) (Figure 4).

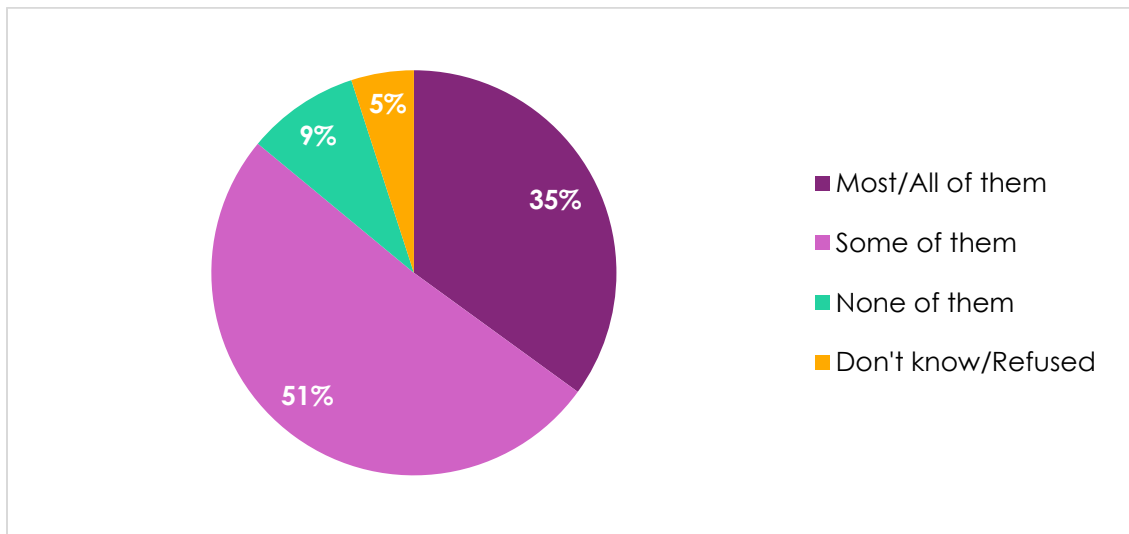
Afrobarometer survey

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. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Kenya, based at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, interviewed 2,400 adult Kenyans in August-September 2019. 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 Kenya in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016.

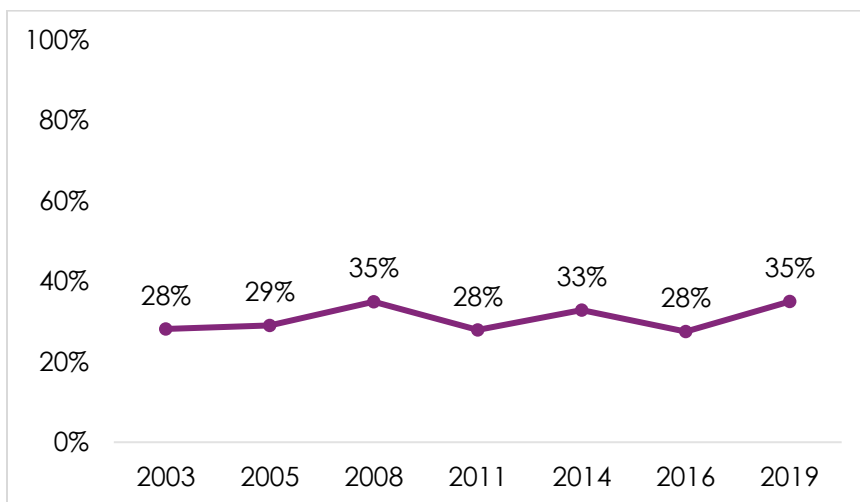
Charts

Figure 1: Perceived corruption among judges and magistrates | Kenya | 2019



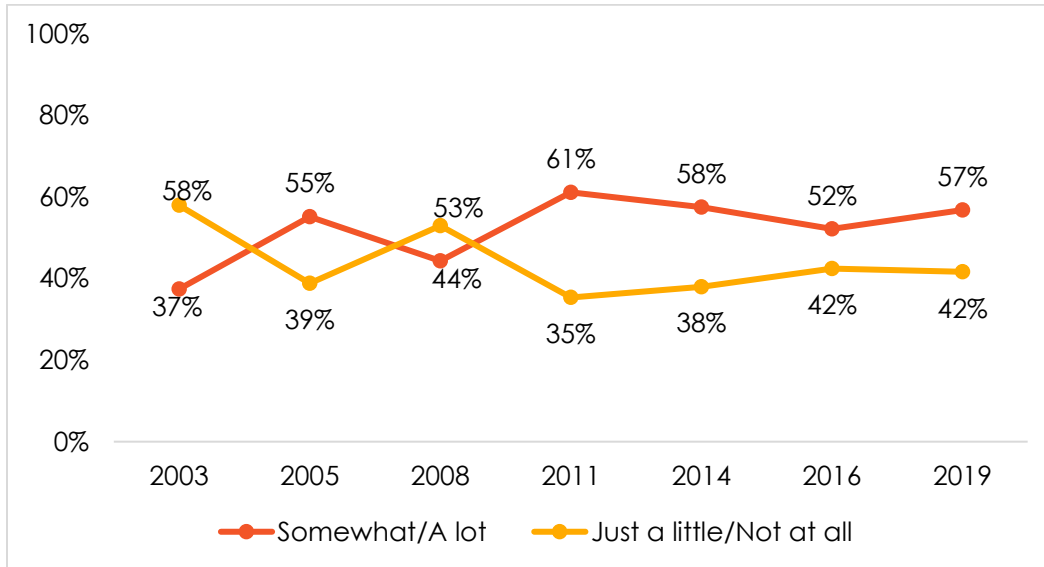
Respondents were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Judges and magistrates?

Figure 2: Perception that most/all judges and magistrates are corrupt | Kenya | 2003-2019



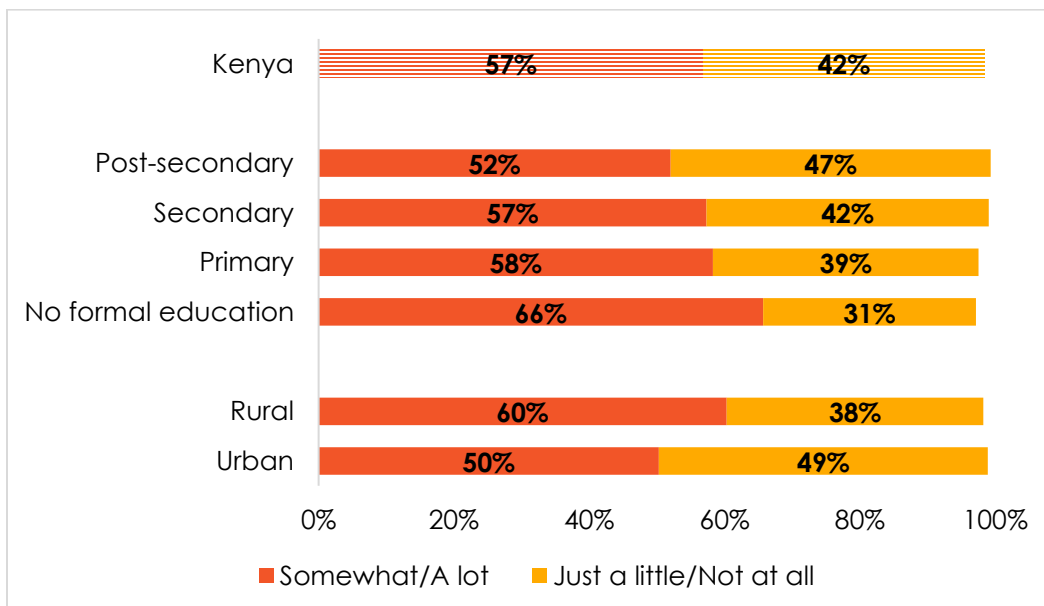
Respondents were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Judges and magistrates? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

Figure 3: Popular trust in courts of law | Kenya | 2003-2019



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Courts of law?

Figure 4: Popular trust in courts of law | by education level and rural-urban residency | Kenya | 2019



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Courts of law?



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