

Press Release

Africa's Willing Taxpayers Thwarted by Opaque Tax Systems, Corruption

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A majority of Africans see tax-generated government revenue as an important national development resource, Afrobarometer's unprecedented survey of 29 countries show. ¹

However, six in ten people say it is difficult to know how much tax they pay and a seven in ten do not know how the government spends the taxes, according to the survey, with a sample of 43,500, representing the views of half the African population.

Perceived corruption also plays a role in people's willingness to pay their taxes. More than one in three say most or all tax officials are corrupt; four in ten say at least some tax officials are. Distrust in tax officials increases tolerance for tax avoidance in principle and reported non-compliance with tax obligations in practice.

Key Findings

- Two-thirds (66%) of the people interviewed say citizens must pay taxes for their countries to develop. A majority (52%) favors paying higher taxes in exchange for better services; just one in three (35%) who would give up services in favor of keeping taxes low.
- Seventy percent say authorities have the right to make people pay taxes. Across 16 countries² tracked since 2002, this figure has increased from 64% to 71%. Half (49%) say it's wrong and punishable for people to avoid paying the taxes they owe government.
- Large majorities report that tax systems remain opaque: 62% say it is difficult to find out what taxes they owe; 76% say it is difficult to find out how governments use tax revenue.
- More than one-third (35%) says that 'most' or 'all' tax officials are corrupt, and another 39% think that at least some of them are. Perceived corruption among tax officials appears to undermine commitment to the integrity of the tax system. Distrust in the

¹ Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. We gratefully acknowledge generous support from the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency. For more information, visit our website (www.afrobarometer.org).

² Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

conduct of tax officials increases tolerance for tax avoidance in principle, and reported non-compliance with tax obligations in practice.

Charts

Figure 1: The tax-for-service trade-off | 29 countries, 2011-2013

Participants were asked: 'Which of the following statements is closest to your view: Statement 1: It is better to pay higher taxes, if it means that there will be more services provided by government. Statement 2: It is better to pay lower taxes, even if it means there will be fewer services provided by government.'

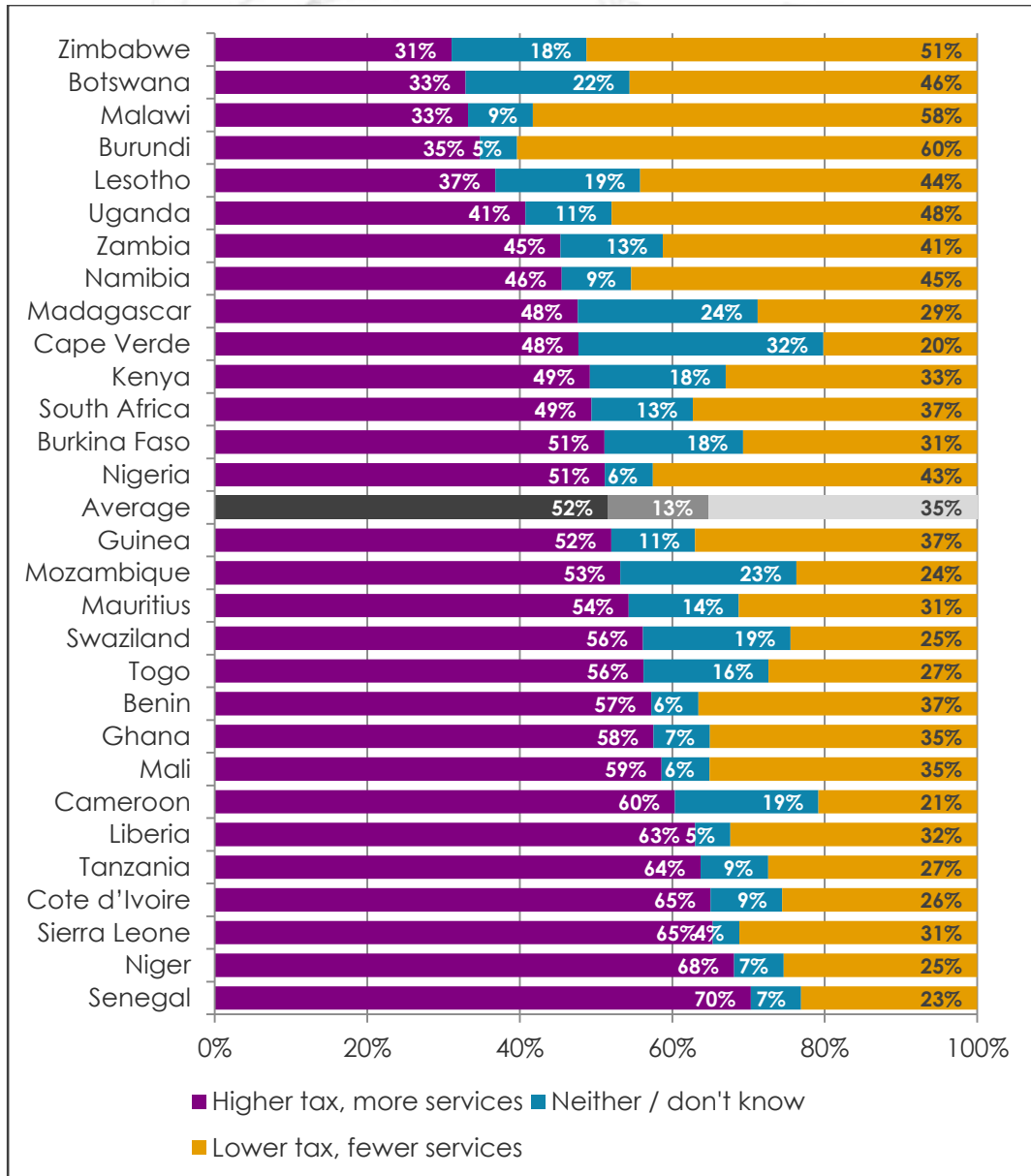


Figure 2: Increasing endorsement of tax authority legitimacy | 16 countries | 2002-2012

Participants were asked: 'Please tell me whether you disagree or agree with the following statement: The tax authorities always have the right to make people pay taxes.' (% 'agree' or 'strongly agree')

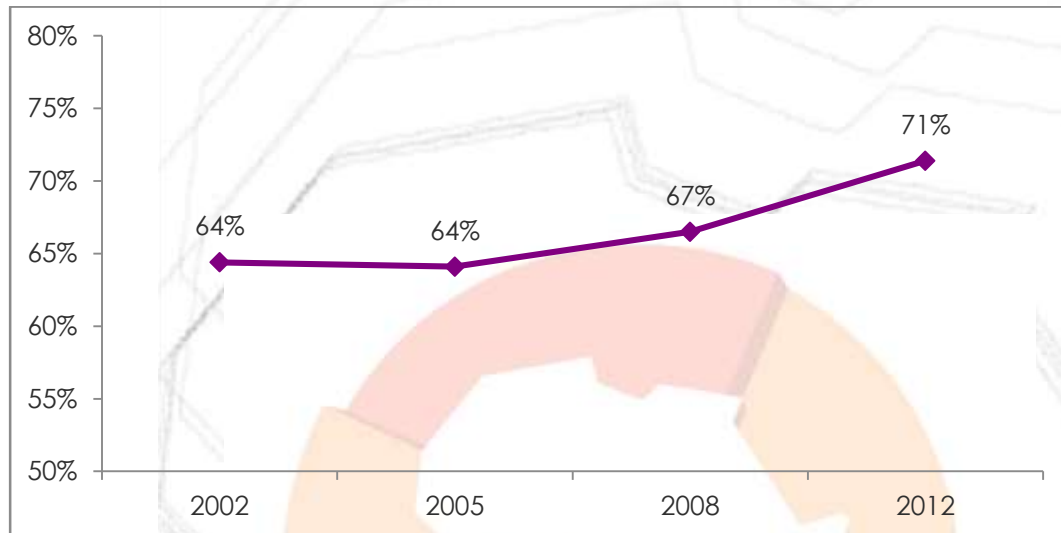


Figure 4: Perceived non-compliance with tax requirements | 29 countries, 2011-2013

Participants were asked: 'In your opinion, how often, in this country: do people avoid paying the taxes that they owe the government?' (% 'often' or 'always')

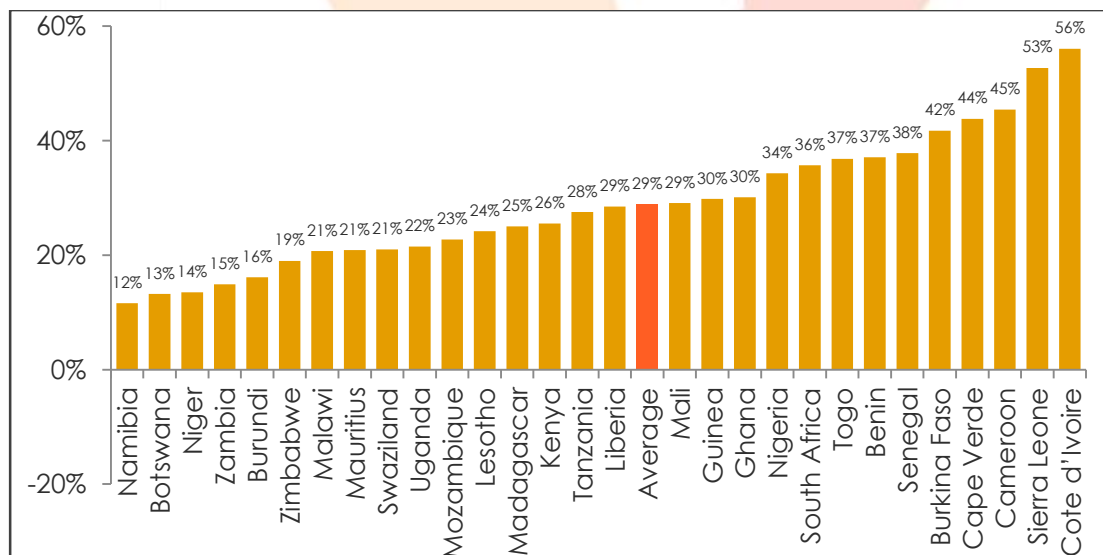


Figure 5: Inaccessibility of tax information | High & low countries, 2011-2013

Participants were asked: 'Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to do each of the following: To find out what taxes and fees you are supposed to pay to the government.' (% 'difficult' or 'very difficult')

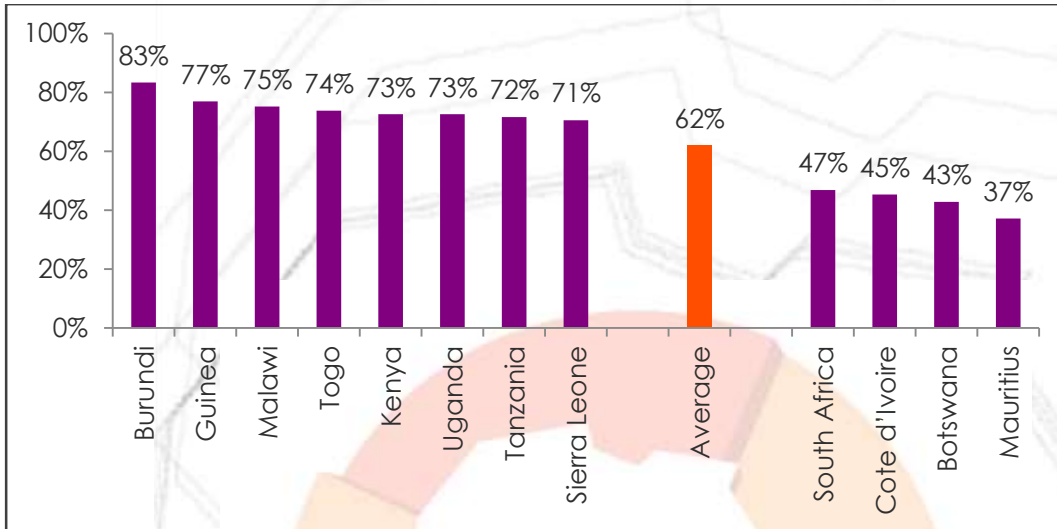


Figure 6: Inaccessibility of information on use of tax revenue

High & low countries, 2011-2013

Participants were asked: 'Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to do each of the following: To find out how government uses the revenues from people's taxes and fees.' (% 'difficult' or 'very difficult')

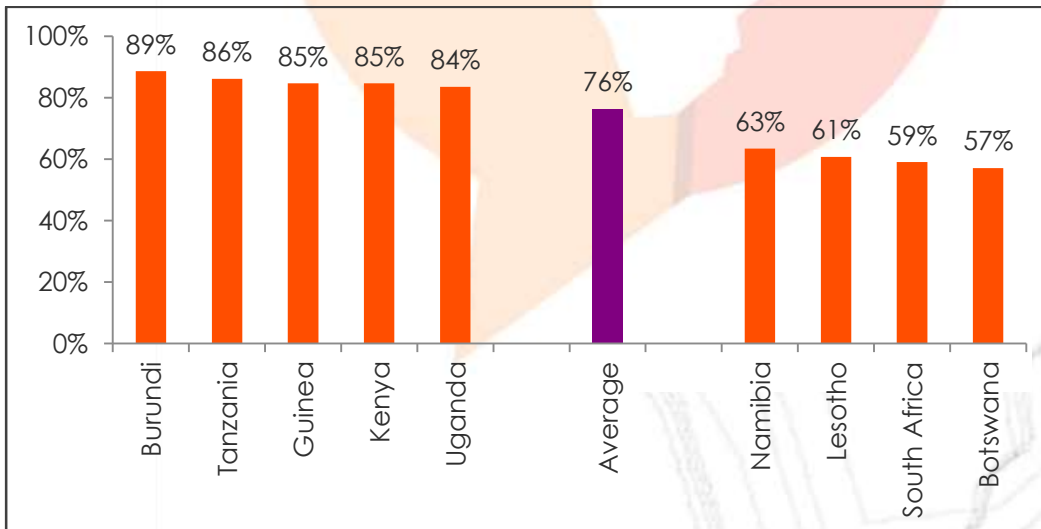


Figure 7: **Perceived corruption among tax authorities**

| **29 countries, 2011-2013**

Participants 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: tax officials, like Ministry of Finance officials or local government tax collectors?'

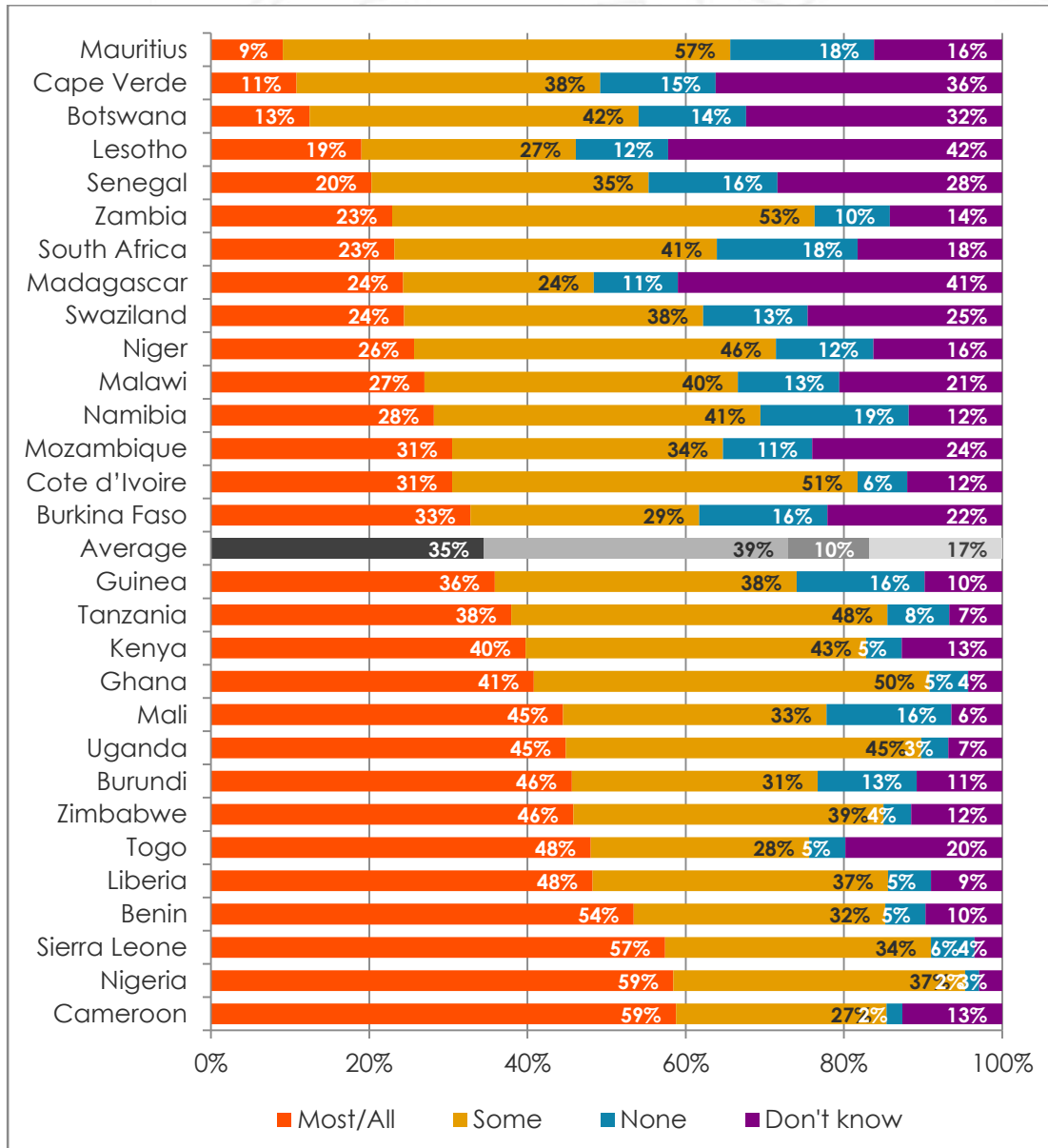


Figure 7: Corruption and tolerance for taxation avoidance | 29 countries, 2011-2013

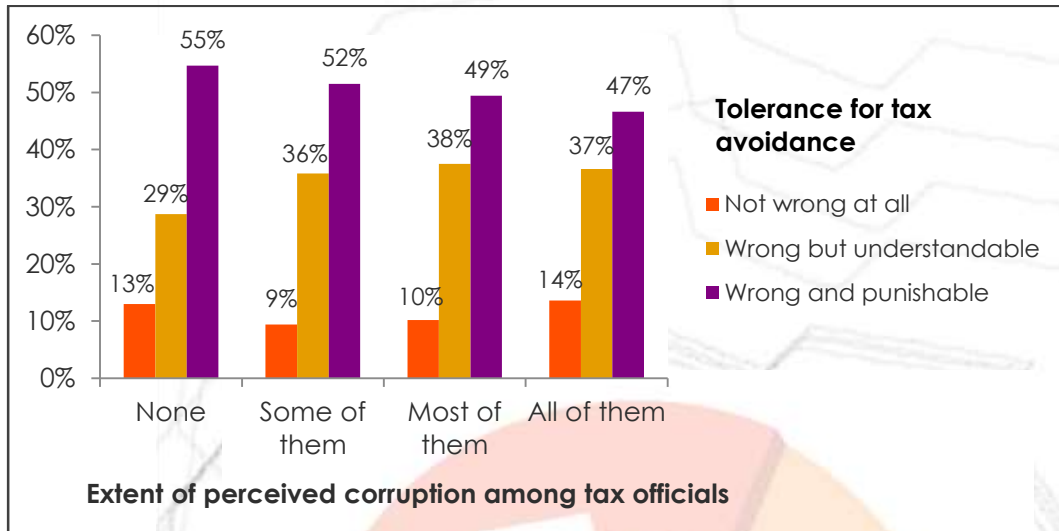


Figure 8: Corruption and Frequency of Tax Avoidance | 29 Countries

