

Afrobarometer Round 6

New data from
across Africa



Accra, Ghana
3 May 2016

News release

World Press Freedom Day: Strong public support for 'watchdog' role backs African news media under attack (Afrobarometer)

Amid growing concerns about government restrictions on media freedom, Africans overwhelmingly support an independent media that holds government accountable, according to new survey findings from Afrobarometer.

The findings, which are being released on World Press Freedom Day (May 3), show that a majority of African citizens support the media's "watchdog" role, see the media as effective in revealing government mistakes and corruption, and affirm that journalists "rarely" or "never" abuse their freedom by publishing lies.

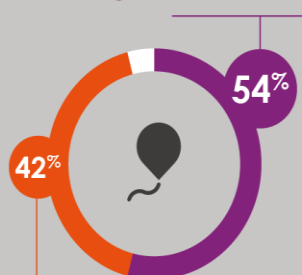
But views on the media's role and performance vary widely by country and demographic group, and substantial proportions of the continent's population believe that governments should have the right to restrict "harmful" reporting and that the media "often" or "always" abuses its freedom by publishing lies.

The report also tracks trends in Africans' main sources of news, showing modest declines for radio and newspapers, gains for television and the Internet, and a substantial role for social media.

Titled "Strong public support for 'watchdog' role backs African news media under attack," the report is based on nearly 54,000 interviews in 36 African countries in 2014/2015. It is available in English and French at <http://globalreleases.afrobarometer.org>.

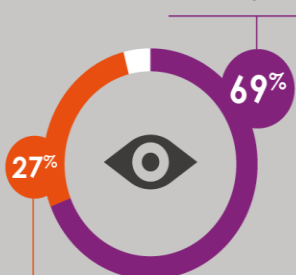
Africans say the news media...

... should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control



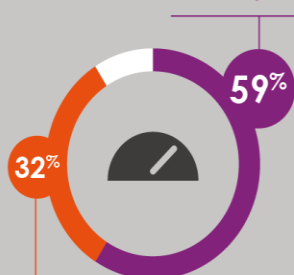
Government right to prevent "harmful" publications

... should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption



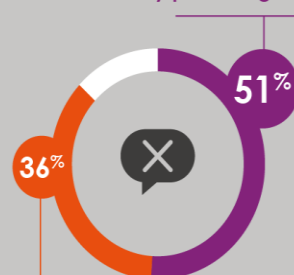
Too much negative reporting only harms the country

... is somewhat/very effective in revealing government mistakes and corruption



Media is not effective

... rarely/never abuses its freedom by publishing lies



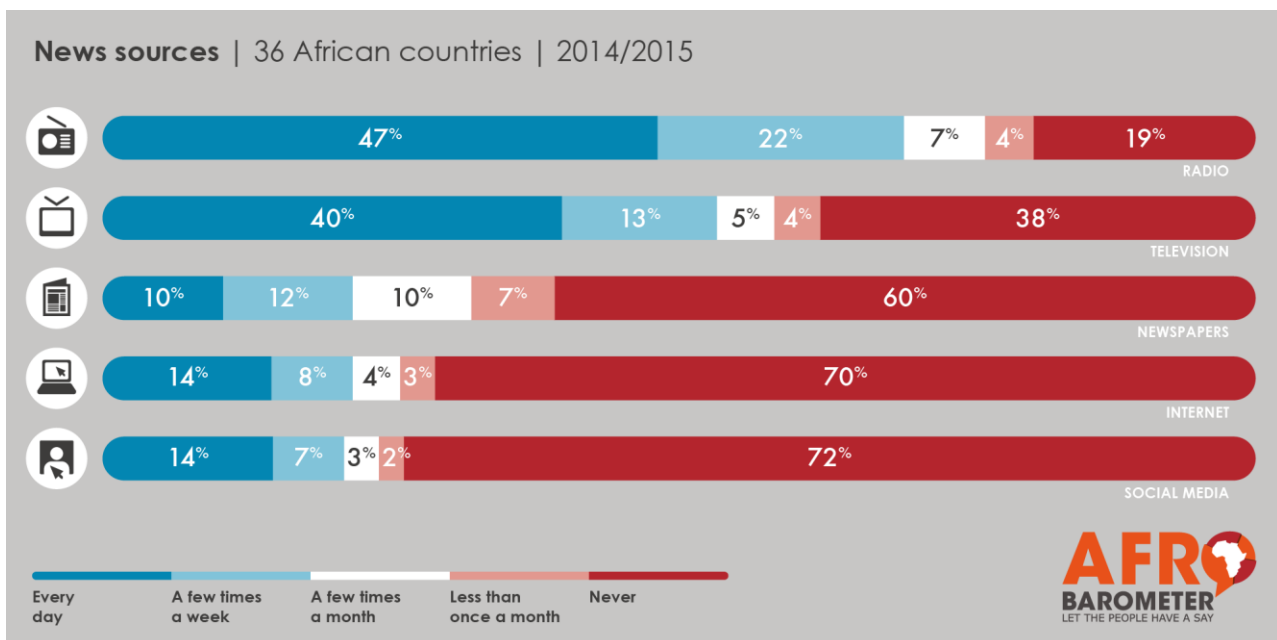
Media often/always publishes lies

Role and performance of the news media
36 African countries | 2014/2015



Key findings

- A majority of Africans (54%) across 36 countries say the news media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control (Figure 1), while 42% say government should have the right to prevent publications that it “considers harmful to society.” Across the 34 countries where this question was asked in both Round 5 (2011/2013) and Round 6, support for media freedom is down 3 percentage points.
- More than two-thirds (69%) of Africans say the news media should “constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.” This is the majority view in every surveyed country except Egypt (where 46% agree) (Figure 2).
- A majority (59%) of respondents say the news media is “somewhat” or “very effective” in revealing government mistakes and corruption. Across 34 countries tracked since 2011/2013, the proportion of citizens who say the media is “not very effective” or “not at all effective” increased from 26% in 2011/2013 to 30%.
- A slim majority (51%) say the media “rarely” or “never” abuses its freedom by publishing lies, but more than one-third (36%) of Africans – and in some countries more than two-thirds – say it does so “often” or “always.”



- Radio remains the most common news source, accessed by seven in 10 Africans either daily (47%) or “a few times a week” (22%) (Figure 3). But radio and newspapers are slowly losing ground, while TV and the Internet are gaining (Figure 4). One in five Africans (21%) now regularly get their news from social media, and among youth and citizens with post-secondary education, the Internet and social media are more popular sources of news than newspapers.

Afrobarometer

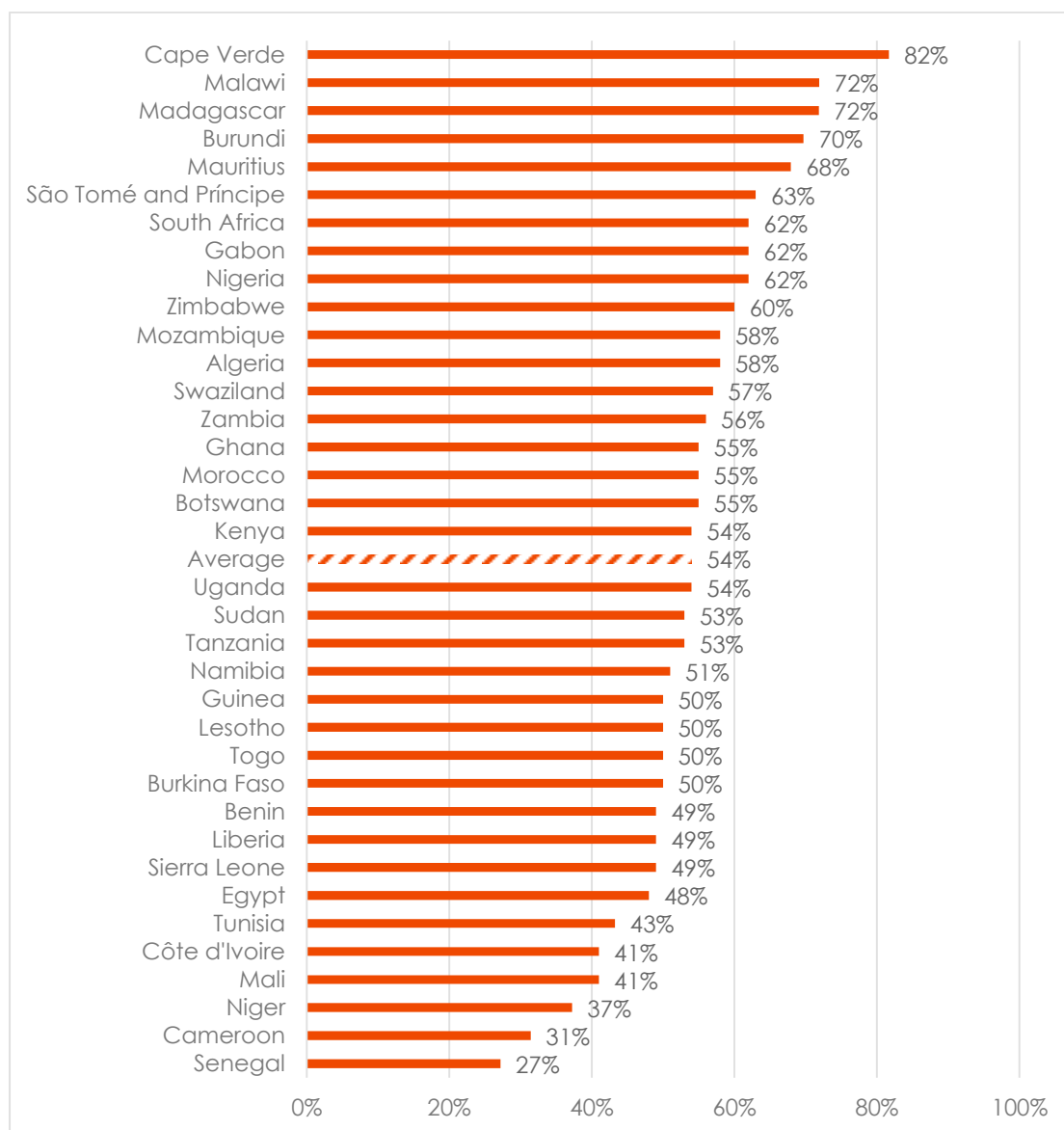
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more

than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and findings from Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2% (for samples of 2,400) or +/-3% (for samples of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level.

Interested readers should visit <http://globalreleases.afrobarometer.org> for previous Round 6 releases and watch for additional releases over the coming months.

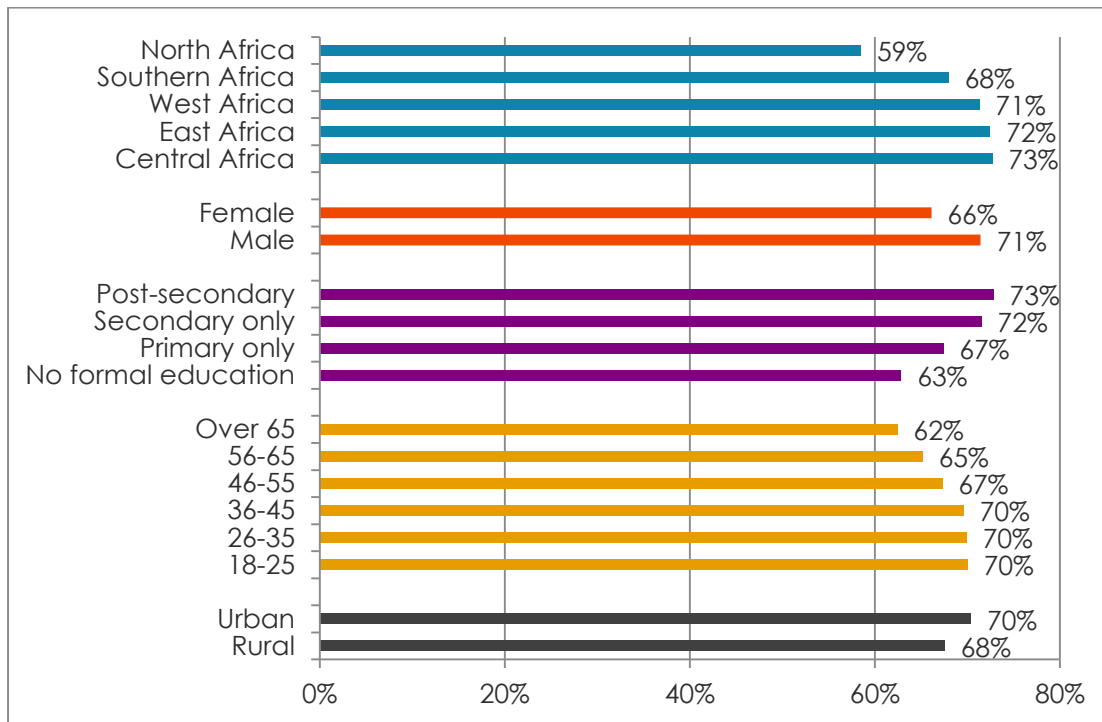
Charts

Figure 1: Support for a free media | 36 countries | 2014/2015



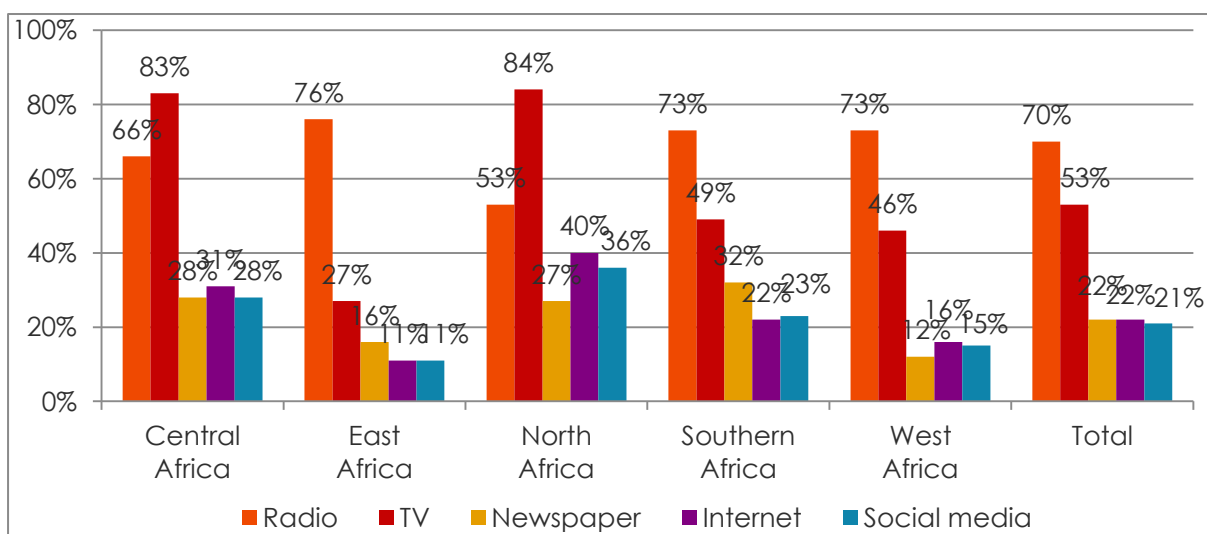
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control. Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society. (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 1)

Figure 2: Support for media's watchdog role | by region, gender, education, age, and urban-rural location | 36 countries | 2014/2015



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. 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 “agree very strongly” that the media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption)

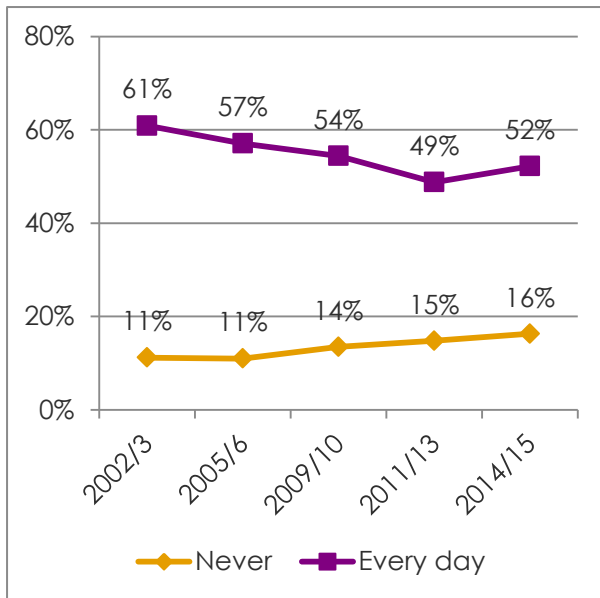
Figure 3: Media use “a few times a week” or “every day” | by region | 36 countries | 2014/2015



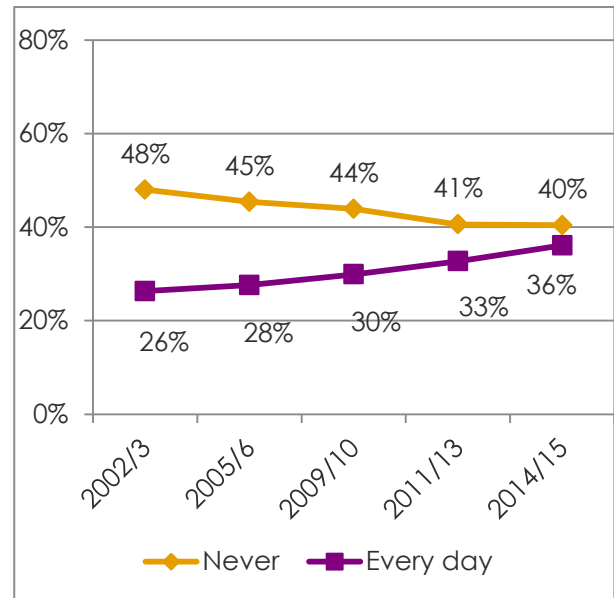
Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources: Radio? TV? Newspapers? The Internet? Social media such as Facebook and Twitter? (% who say “a few times a week” or “every day”)

Figure 4: Media usage “every day” and “never” | 16 countries | 2002-2015

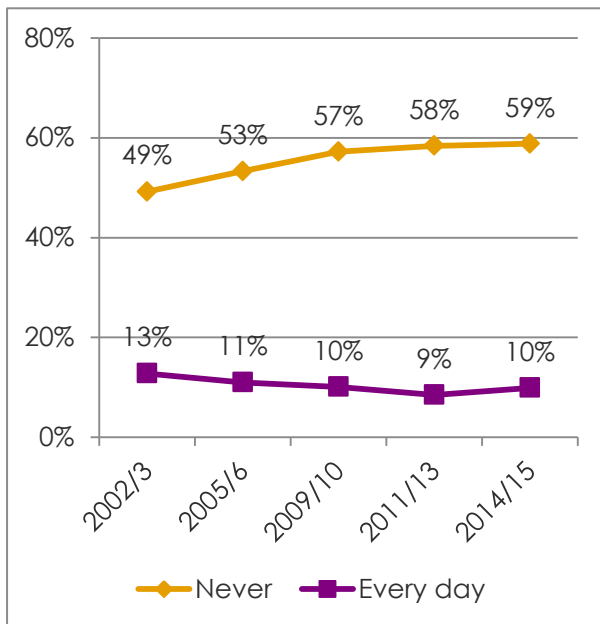
Radio



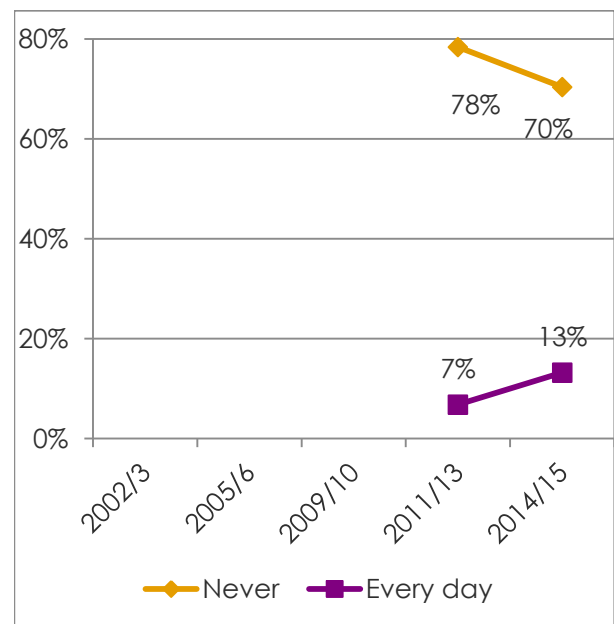
Television



Newspaper



Internet



Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources: Radio? TV? Newspapers? The Internet?



For more information, please contact:

Brian Howard
Afrobarometer
Telephone: 001-713-624-0373
Email: bhoward@afrobarometer.org

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