



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

**Party footprints in Africa:  
measuring local party presence across  
the continent**

Matthias Krönke  
Sarah J. Lockwood  
Robert Mattes

CSSR Working Paper No. 459

October 2020



**institute for democracy,  
citizenship and public policy in  
Africa**

Published by the Centre for Social Science Research  
University of Cape Town  
2020

<http://www.cssr.uct.ac.za>

This Working Paper can be downloaded from:

<http://cssr.uct.ac.za/pub/wp/459>

ISBN: 978-1-77011-446-3

© Centre for Social Science Research, UCT, 2020

#### About the authors:

Matthias Krönke is a PhD candidate, Department of Political Studies, and a researcher, Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa, University of Cape Town. [mkroenke@afrobarometer.org](mailto:mkroenke@afrobarometer.org)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8387-9193>

Sarah J. Lockwood is a post-doctoral research scholar and lecturer, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, and a research affiliate, Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa, University of Cape Town. [sjl2149@columbia.edu](mailto:sjl2149@columbia.edu)

Robert Mattes is professor of government and public policy, University of Strathclyde, and honorary professor, Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town. [robert.mattes@strath.ac.uk](mailto:robert.mattes@strath.ac.uk)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0567-9385>

## Acknowledgements:

The authors are grateful to Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, to attendees of the “Political Parties in Africa” conference at the University of Cape Town (2018), and to participants in the "Party Behavior in Africa" panel at the 2019 APSA Annual Meeting for their invaluable comments on earlier versions of this paper. Matthias Krönke would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa (University of Cape Town).

Financial support for Afrobarometer Round 8 (2019/2020) has been provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace.

## Core partners:



**Center for Democratic  
Development  
(CDD-Ghana)**  
Accra, Ghana  
[www.cddghana.org](http://www.cddghana.org)



**Institute for Development Studies (IDS),  
University of Nairobi**  
Nairobi, Kenya  
[www.ids.uonbi.ac.ke](http://www.ids.uonbi.ac.ke)



**Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR)**  
Cape Town, South Africa  
[www.ijr.org.za](http://www.ijr.org.za)

## Support units:

**MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Michigan State University (MSU)**  
**Department of Political Science**  
East Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A.  
[www.polisci.msu.edu](http://www.polisci.msu.edu)



**University of Cape Town (UCT)**  
**Institute for Democracy, Citizenship  
and Public Policy in Africa**  
Cape Town, South Africa  
[www.idcppa.uct.ac.za/](http://www.idcppa.uct.ac.za/)

# Party footprints in Africa: measuring local party presence across the continent

## Abstract

*The conventional view holds that most of Africa's political parties are organizationally weak, with little grassroots presence. Yet few studies are based on systematically collected data about more than a handful of parties or countries at any given point. In this paper, we focus on one crucial aspect of party organization – the local presence that enables political parties to engage with and mobilize voters – and use Afrobarometer data to develop the Party Presence Index, the first systematic, cross-national measure of local party presence in Africa. We then apply the index to a series of substantive questions, confirming its value and demonstrating its potential to add significantly to our understanding of grassroots party organization.*

## 1. Introduction

Political parties are a vital element in the quality of representative democracy. By providing a vehicle for disperse but like-minded voters to voice their concerns, well-organized political parties help to overcome collective action problems and encourage political participation (Gunther & Diamond, 2003; Key, 1964). Effective and responsive parties also enhance both vertical and horizontal accountability (Auerbach, 2016; Wegner, 2016), while the presence of multiple independent parties provides individual voters with meaningful choices of who governs them and creates a degree of electoral competition (Randall & Svåsand, 2002a).

While organizationally strong, competitive, and effective parties are widely acknowledged to play an important role in democratic governance, parties in Africa are typically seen as anything but (Erdmann, 2004). Indeed, the conventional view is that Africa's political parties are organizationally weak, with little grassroots presence and thus limited capacity to engage and mobilize citizens (Erdmann, 2004; Rakner & van de Walle, 2009; Randall & Svåsand, 2002b; Storm, 2013; van de Walle & Butler, 1999). Despite the prevalence of

these claims, however, the reality is that we actually know little about the organization of political parties at the local level in Africa, in large part because we lack the sort of systematic, cross-national data that would allow us to evaluate this in any sort of rigorous way. Too often, the cost and difficulty of obtaining data on the ground mean that research is based on single-case or small-N country studies, often with a strong urban bias, from which we can make only limited generalizations about the quality of parties, their organizational strength, or their effects on the quality of democracy (e.g. Riedl, 2014; Elischer, 2013; Arriola, 2013; LeBas, 2011; Osei, 2013; Southall, 2016; Giliomee & Simkins, 1999; Kalua, 2011).

Better data are therefore needed, and in this paper we contribute to remedying this situation by focusing on one crucial aspect of party organization – the local presence that enables parties to engage with and mobilize citizens – and developing a new, survey-based measure that allows us to compare this aspect of party organization across the continent in a systematic and rigorous way.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. After briefly review the existing literature on party organization in Africa, we introduce our new measure of party presence – the Party Presence Index (PPI) – and discuss the data used to construct it. Following this, we draw on a variety of supporting data to show that the index is both valid and reliable and – crucially – that it provides a good approximation of party presence at a local level. The penultimate section explores three substantive implications of the new measure, highlighting ways in which it can improve our understanding of political institutions and political behavior in Africa. First, we present results that challenge the conventional wisdom regarding the extent of the incumbent advantage by showing that opposition parties have a wider presence than typically assumed in the literature. Second, we use the newly developed PPI to push the literature on voter mobilization in Africa forward by testing, for the first time, the relationship between local party presence and voter turnout. And third, we test the effect of local party presence on citizens' evaluations of the democratic political system and find a number of new connections that appear to be important for the endurance of democracy. The final section concludes and suggests avenues for further research.

## **2. Party organization in Africa**

Scholars of African politics often make a number of claims about the continent's political parties, almost all of them negative. With some few exceptions (see below), the common starting point is the assumption that Africa's parties fail to aggregate interests (van de Walle, 2003) and are starved of resources, organizationally weak, and ephemeral (Erdmann, 2004; Rakner & van de Walle, 2009; van de Walle & Butler, 1999). Political power is often seen as revolving

almost entirely around the presidency in most African countries, with pervasive clientelism structuring the relationship between state and citizenry, rather than the formal party structures more common elsewhere (van de Walle, 2003). Lacking any real organization at the grassroots level, moreover, those political parties that do exist are generally said to depend on discontinuous local structures, which are (re)activated for election campaigns solely to win votes, and/or on local brokers who mobilize support without necessarily having any allegiance to the party (Erdmann, 2004; Kelly, 2020; Koter, 2016; LeBas, 2011; Rakner, 2011; Uddhammar, Green, & Söderström, 2011). As a result, parties are often seen as no more than personalist vehicles, with few internal mechanisms to hold elected officials accountable, and with election campaigns based on clientelist rather than programmatic appeals.

Exceptions to this dominant view do exist. For example, a small number of studies find that some incumbent parties can create nationwide organizations (Wahman, 2017), while others note that a few established democracies, such as Ghana, see relatively high levels of party organization across the board (Osei, 2016). Even these authors, however, tend to assume that high levels of organization are anomalous, are characteristic of a handful of ruling parties (but not opposition parties), or exist in a small number of exceptional countries (but not elsewhere).

It should be noted, of course, that the level and extent of party organization is seen slightly differently by a small set of scholars who focus on the long-enduring dominant ruling parties of Southern and East Africa (e.g. TANU/CCM in Tanzania, SWAPO in Namibia, FRELIMO in Mozambique, ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe, and the ANC in South Africa). In these cases, political parties have been built on the backs of predecessor liberation movement structures and are often seen as characterized by relatively high levels of administrative development, local presence, and organizational discipline (e.g. Southall, 2016; Butler, 2015; Giliomee & Simkins, 1999; Pitcher, 2012). Even for these scholars, however, the underlying assumption is typically that well-developed parties are the exception, not the norm, with local-level party organization generally limited to the dominant liberation movement within a country and opposition parties seen as more fragmented and weaker (Pitcher, 2012).

There are at least two problems with the dominant characterization of Africa's political parties, however. First, while scholars describe African parties as fragmented and organizationally weak, they often simultaneously assert their ability to distribute patronage effectively (Randall & Svåsand, 2002b). One is left wondering whether the latter is possible if the former is true. Second, most of these accounts rely solely on illustrative evidence, or provide detailed empirical and comparative data, but only for small-N comparisons examining a small number of parties in a small number of countries (Basedau & Stroh, 2008; Riedl,

2014; Elischer, 2013; Arriola, 2013; LeBas, 2011; Mac Giollabhui, 2011; Kalua, 2011; Southall, 2016; Giliomee & Simkins, 1999; Wahman, 2014). This seriously limits our ability to understand party organizational strength on the continent, or to test its effects on the quality of democracy in any sort of rigorous way.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. A new measure of party organization

In order to understand better the state of Africa’s political parties, as well as their capacity to support or inhibit democratic governance, we propose a new measure of local party organization – the Party Presence Index (PPI). This index uses survey data to measure levels of engagement between citizens and political parties, both during and between election campaigns. While citizens’ self-reported engagement with parties is not a perfect measure of party presence, we argue that it provides a good approximation, significantly improving existing data options and allowing us – for the first time – to compare local-level party organization across the continent in a systematic way.

Our logic proceeds as follows. Perhaps the most basic function of a political party in a multiparty system is to recruit candidates to stand for election to legislative and executive office under its label, provide them with at least some common rationale for winning office (often expressed in a party manifesto), and coordinate the stances and actions of winning candidates once in office. These are all things that can be provided by a relatively small party organization located in the national capital and large urban centers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Two possible exceptions are the data collection efforts by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project and the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP). V-Dem uses a set of questions answered by expert coders to develop a Party Institutionalization Index and several sub-indices for more than 170 countries across the world (Bizzarro, Hicken, & Self, 2017; Coppedge et al., 2017). Within this index, one measure (“Branches”) appears at first blush to measure something similar to local-level party presence. Further examination, however, shows that the measure is too coarse to capture the variation of interest here, with experts simply asked to indicate the proportion of a country’s parties that have permanent local party branches, with the answer options being: 0: None; 1: Fewer than half; 2: Half; 3: More than half; 4: All. As can be seen from the question, this measure simply provides a rough sense of the extent to which permanent party branches are *believed to exist* across parties, rather than the actual extent of party presence at a local level. Similarly, DALP is an expert survey that covered 17 African countries in its 2008/2009 iteration (Kitschelt, 2013). Although it included three specific questions about parties’ organizational structure and their linkages to citizens, this project suffers from similar shortcomings to those of V-Dem. It is an expert survey that assesses party organizational structure as it is *believed to exist*, and only provides a single score per party and country.

A second crucial function of parties, however, is to win votes by divining and representing voter preferences, advertising party and candidate attributes and positions, helping voters get to the polls, and – between elections – providing a place and person to which voters may take their questions, problems, or policy concerns. This function of parties typically involves direct engagement between parties and citizens, necessitating a more extensive and complex structure at the local level and requiring parties to expand both vertically (organizing downward to regional and local levels) and horizontally (organizing outward across larger sections of the country, especially outside of cities).

Of course, engagement between parties and citizens at the local level also depends, at least to some extent, on the micro-motivations and cognitive and material capacities of citizens, as well as the organizational capacity of parties. But without the presence of offices and events organized by parties and/or their candidates, this engagement would be impossible. In other words, we assume that “where there is smoke, there is fire.” That is, where we observe relatively high levels of contact between individuals and parties, we assume there has to be at least some local party organization. And where we see low levels of party-citizen engagement, we draw the inference that – regardless of how well-organized party headquarters may appear to be in the capital city – parties are organizationally weak at the local level.<sup>2</sup>

### **3.1 The Party Presence Index**

To construct the Party Presence Index, we combine information on party-citizen engagement both during and between elections. The data come from Afrobarometer Round (2014/2015), though as we will show, a significant advantage of our new measure is that it can also be constructed from other reliable survey data where similar questions are asked.<sup>3</sup> Data for Afrobarometer Round were collected in 36 African countries, although we remove eSwatini from our

---

<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, possible that a party might have a significant organizational presence in some areas but confront an indifferent or hostile local electorate unwilling to engage with it, and thus not be captured by our measure. However, this is highly unlikely. Party officials (in Africa or elsewhere) will not waste finite resources on offices and campaign events with which few people will engage, at least beyond a single election cycle.

<sup>3</sup> As we demonstrate later in this paper, one of the benefits of the PPI is that it can be constructed using different rounds of Afrobarometer, as well as data from other survey projects. For our main analysis, however, we rely on Round 6 Afrobarometer data, because it contains the greatest number of relevant variables, for the widest set of countries. For more information on the availability of questions, aggregation rules, and reliability of the results over time, please see the sub-section “A common, stable dimension?” below, as well as Appendix B.



data set because one of the key questions about citizen-party engagement (about contacting a political party official) was not asked.

### **3.1.1 Party presence during election campaigns**

To measure the presence and organizational capacity of political parties *during* election campaigns, we use the following questions:

*Thinking about the last national election in [year], did you:*

*Attend a campaign rally?*

*Attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff?*

*Work for a candidate or party?*

These questions allow us to tap three different types of local party activity. First, campaign rallies are often held outdoors, sometimes in sporting grounds, with large numbers of people who come to hear candidates' speeches. This requires parties or their nominated candidates to have at least some minimal capacity in a community in order to reserve and organize public spaces; advertise events; arrange transportation, entertainment, and food for attendees; and organize and deliver speeches or other messages.

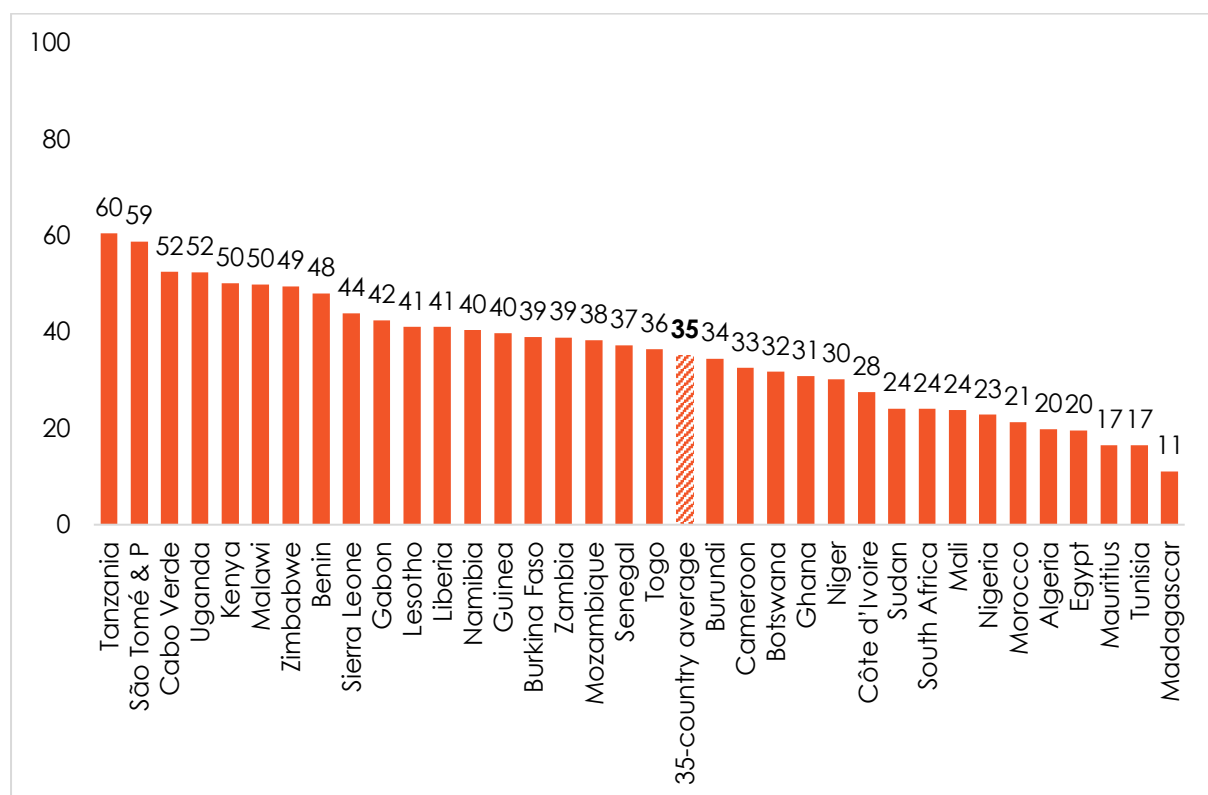
Campaign meetings, in contrast, are typically far smaller affairs, where candidates or party representatives meet with specific groups of people to listen and respond to their concerns. This requires parties or candidates to arrange venues and identify appropriate people with whom to meet.

Finally, election campaigns at the grassroots level often revolve around the candidate, a relatively small number of full-time party officials, and a larger contingent of local-level temporary workers and volunteers (distinct from professional campaign staff or external consultants who might work at regional or national party headquarters). These workers and volunteers may answer telephones, provide administrative support in a ward or branch office, pass out printed materials, distribute T-shirts and food, canvass voters, make sure people turn out to vote, or monitor polling places (Brierley & Kramon, forthcoming). While these campaign workers and volunteers act as a form of local party presence directly, the ability of parties to utilize them at all also suggests that they have at least some sort of local coordinating presence, as well as the ability to identify appropriate individuals to represent the party during the election period. All three of these activities (rallies, meetings, and the employment of campaign workers and volunteers), therefore, involve at least some sort of party organization and capacity at the local level, providing a useful measure of local party presence during election periods.

Looking at the responses to the questions we use to measure party presence during elections, we can see that more than one-third of all respondents (35% across all

country surveys) reported that they had attended at least one campaign rally during the most recent election (Figure 1), while about one-quarter (27%) said they had attended a campaign meeting in the same period (Figure 2). The country variation is substantial, with 49- and 51-percentage-point differences between the highest and lowest levels of attendance at rallies and meetings, respectively. In both cases, respondents from São Tomé and Príncipe and Tanzania reported being particularly active, while those from Madagascar, Tunisia, and Egypt were among the least likely to report having engaged in either activity.<sup>4</sup>

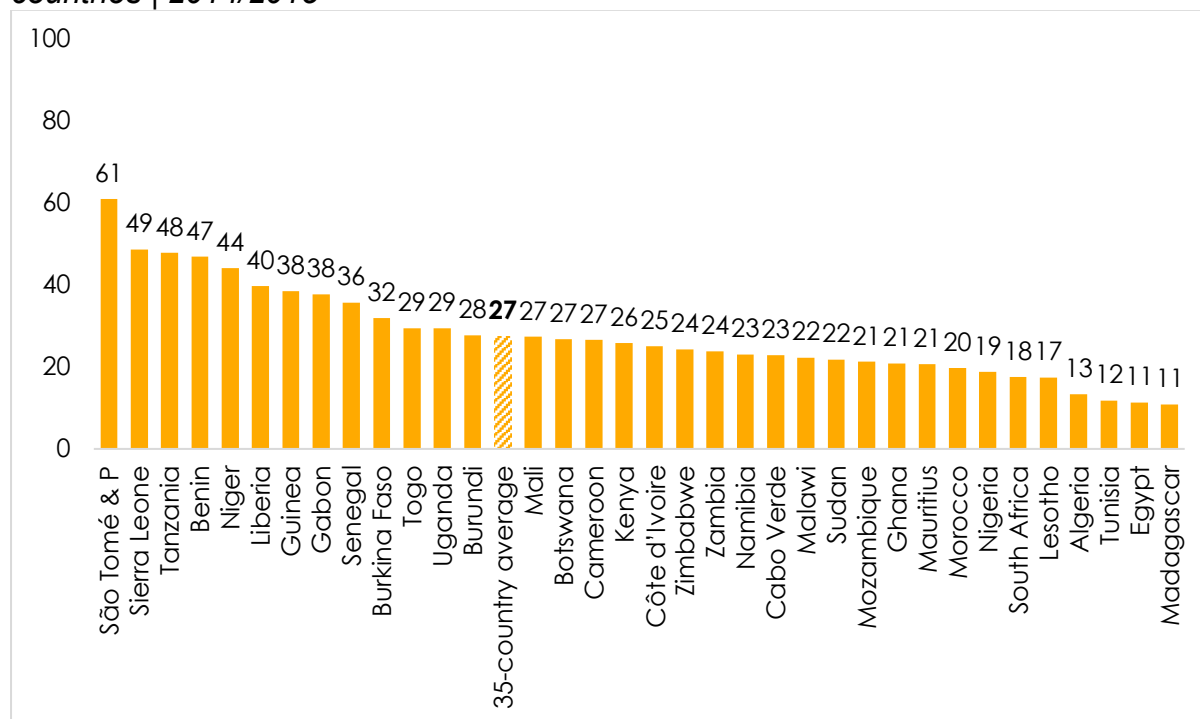
**Figure 1: Attendance at campaign rallies (%) | 35 countries | 2014/2015**



**Respondents were asked:** Thinking about the last national election in [year], did you attend a campaign rally? (% who said “yes”)

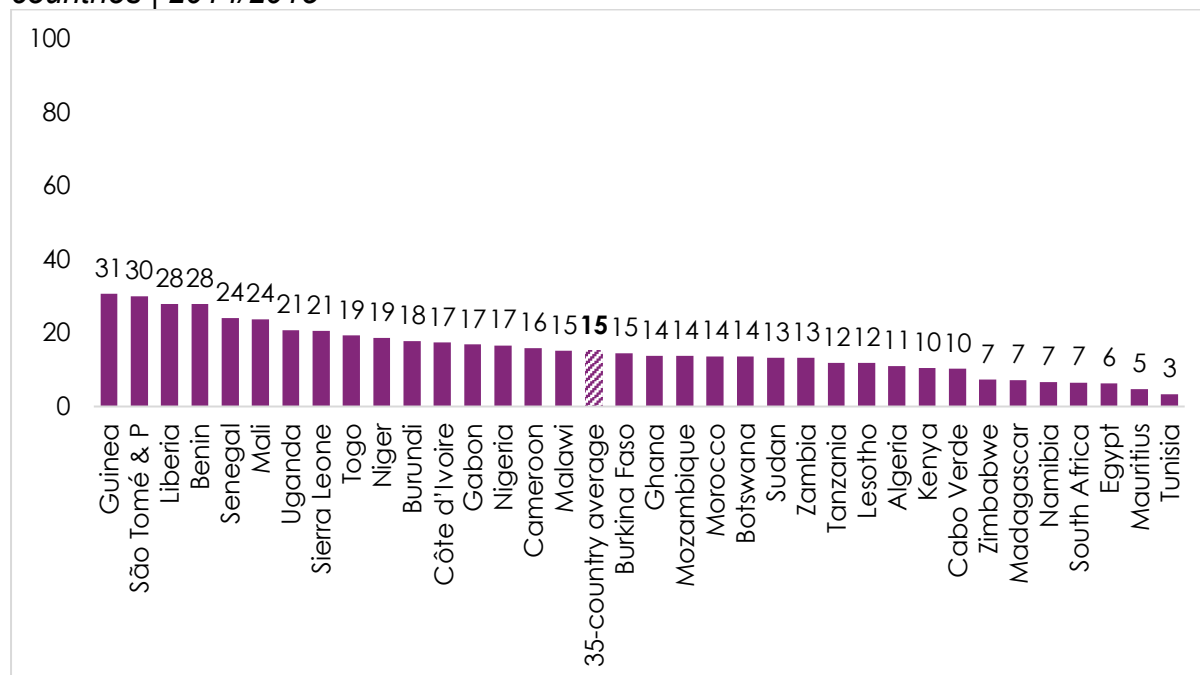
<sup>4</sup> It is possible that all of these survey questions capture some over-reporting due to a social desirability bias. However, we are confident that this does not substantively change the overall results. For more information, please see Appendix A.

**Figure 2: Attendance at meetings with candidates and staff (%) | 35 countries | 2014/2015**



**Respondents were asked:** Thinking about the last national election in [year], did you attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff? (% who said “yes”)

**Figure 3: Working for candidates or parties during campaigns (%) | 35 countries | 2014/2015**



**Respondents were asked:** Thinking about the last national election in [year], did you work for a candidate or party? (% who said “yes”)

As might be expected, given the higher level of commitment involved, far fewer respondents (about one in seven, or 15%) reported that they had performed some form of work for a candidate or party campaign (Figure 3). Again there is significant variation at the country level. Residents of São Tomé and Príncipe and Tanzania once again proved to be particularly active in this regard, but on this measure they were joined by Guineans (31%), while at the other end of the scale, only one in 30 Tunisians (3%) did so.

### 3.1.2 Party presence between elections

Of course, it could be the case, as is often alleged, that political parties in Africa simply come to town like a traveling circus during elections, unfolding their campaign tent and then leaving as soon as the votes are counted. To have a true local organizational presence, however, parties also need to maintain at least some form of regular, if not constant, presence between elections. To capture this, we use the following question:

*During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A political party official?*

The logic here is simple: In order for individuals to contact a party official, there needs to be a party representative – and therefore at least some sort of party presence – in the area.<sup>5</sup> Because this item is preceded by questions about contact with members of Parliament and local councillors, we are confident that the responses do not refer to an elected official. This question, therefore, allows us to include a measure of party organizational presence outside of election periods, and because Afrobarometer policy is to avoid conducting its regular surveys in the periods before and after planned elections, we are confident that for most countries, the question was not simply picking up campaign-related contact.<sup>6</sup>

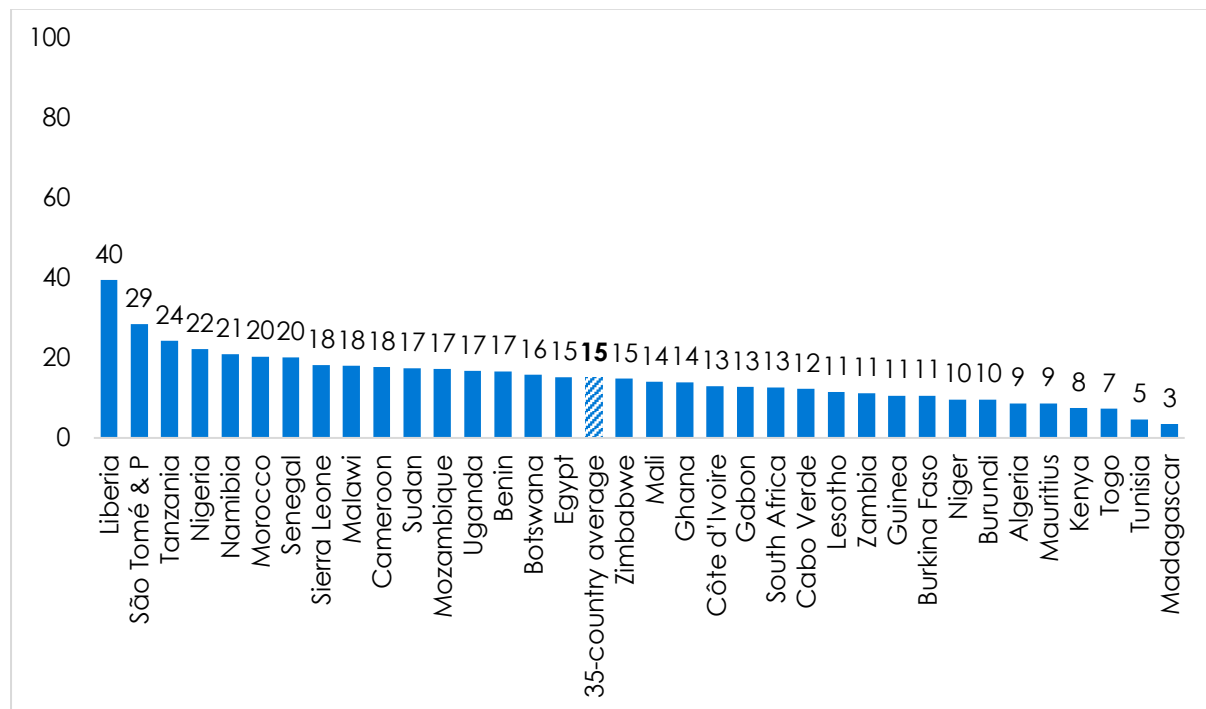
Looking at the raw data again, we see that 15% of respondents said they had contacted a political party official at least once in the previous 12 months (Figure 4). This is similar to the number who reported engaging in campaign-related work, and again we see São Tomé and Príncipe and Tanzania near the top and Madagascar and Tunisia at the bottom.

---

<sup>5</sup> Some people might travel long distances to contact party officials, but this number is likely to be small.

<sup>6</sup> Afrobarometer does conduct off-cycle surveys that are explicitly designed to capture public opinion around specific elections (e.g. Zimbabwe in 2018), but we do not include data from these surveys here.

**Figure 4: Contacting political party officials between elections (%) | 35 countries | 2014/2015**



**Respondents were asked:** *During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A political party official?*

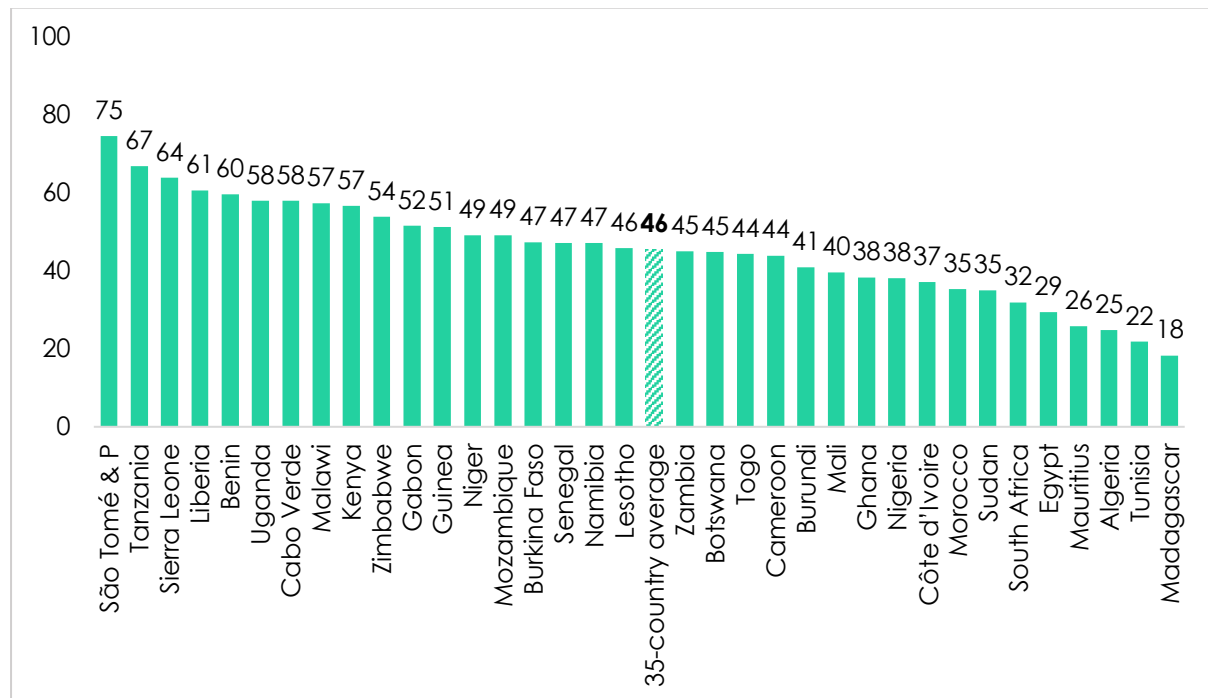
### 3.1.3 Calculating the Party Presence Index

To calculate the Party Presence Index (PPI), we combine the responses to these four questions to create a composite variable that counts the number of respondents who engaged with a political party in *any one of the four ways* described above and then aggregates them to the country level (Figure 5). Because the index is made up of three campaign-related items and one non-campaign-related item, it is possible that our index is biased in favor of parties that are more effective in campaign mode. To check this, we ran a series of robustness checks by combining the two categories of variables in different ways. First, we reduced the ratio of campaign-related to non-campaign-related variables to 2:1 (similar to our R5 and R7 indices, see Appendix B). And second, we treated the non-campaign-related item as equally important to the three campaign-related items (a ratio of 1:1). Despite the different aggregation rules, the absolute scores and country rank orders remained highly consistent for all versions across a 35-country sample. For a comparison of the mean values of each index, as well as the Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients, see Appendix B.

As suggested by the responses to the constituent items, the PPI shows that across the 35 countries in our sample, a person is most likely to engage with some aspect

of local political party organization in São Tomé and Príncipe. The scale discriminates our sample of countries quite effectively, with a range of 57 points, from 75% in São Tomé and Príncipe to just 18% in Madagascar. The results also reveal significant regional variation, with local party organizational presence highest in countries in Central (57%) and East Africa (56%) and lowest, by far, in North Africa (30%).<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 5: Party Presence Index (%) | 35 countries | 2014/2015**



While we will explore some of the substantive implications of this new measure in greater detail later in this paper, it is perhaps worth noting at this point that these country scores immediately generate a number of new insights into the presence and organization of African political parties. As far as we are aware, for instance, no previous work has demonstrated the high levels of party presence that appear to exist in São Tomé and Príncipe. Yet this finding is in many ways unsurprising given the country’s longstanding record as a liberal democracy, as well as its compact geography, which we would expect to facilitate more frequent interaction between citizens and party structures. Additionally, while the

<sup>7</sup> Central Africa: Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tomé and Príncipe; East Africa: Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda; North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia; Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe; West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire , Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

literature tends to see all former liberation movements as well-organized at the local level, our index suggests that at least one – South Africa’s ANC – has a far more limited local presence than might otherwise be expected, raising questions about the mediating role of post-liberation incentives to maintain extensive grassroots networks.<sup>8</sup>

Before we explore insights generated by the PPI more fully, we anticipate and respond to three potential criticisms related to its validity and reliability. First, do the individual responses to the survey questions tap a common, underlying macro-level dimension of local party presence, and do so in a stable fashion? Second, does the latent dimension really reflect cross-national, macro-level differences in organizational presence (as we assert), or does it simply mirror national variation in individual, micro-level willingness to get involved in party politics? And third, even if the index taps organizational presence, rather than simply individual initiative, might it just reflect the presence of ad hoc arrangements with local brokers or the independent activities of entrepreneurial, self-funded candidates, rather than formal party organization?

### **3.1.4 Index validity and reliability**

#### **3.1.4.1. A common, stable dimension?**

In terms of whether the PPI taps a single valid and reliable dimension, factor and reliability analysis of the data finds that it does.<sup>9</sup> With regard to over-time stability, unfortunately, one of our four questions (the item on campaign meetings) was only asked by Afrobarometer in Round 6. The remaining three questions, however, were asked in both Round 5 (2011/2013) and Round 7 (2016/2018), enabling us to measure over-time stability using a truncated three-item version of the index for the 30 countries included in all three survey rounds.<sup>10</sup> While we find important differences (defined here as a difference of 10

---

<sup>8</sup> South Africa’s low score might be, for example, a logical consequence of the country’s electoral system (large-list proportional representation), which tends to emphasize a small number of national candidates and reduces the incentive to run discrete campaigns across the breadth of the country.

<sup>9</sup> Factor analysis extracted a single valid, unrotated dimension with an Eigenvalue of 2.58 that explains 55% of the common variance, with a Cronbach’s alpha = .792, N=35.

<sup>10</sup> The 30 countries that were included in all three rounds are Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Though eSwatini was surveyed in all rounds, we drop it from our analysis because not all questionnaire items were available.

percentage points or greater) in the reported *level* of party organization in some countries over time,<sup>11</sup> the rank order of reported levels of party organization remains very consistent, and the between-round correlations are high, confirming the relative stability of the index over time.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1.4.2 Party presence or individual willingness to engage?

While these results provide confidence that the PPI taps a common underlying dimension, some might still ask whether this dimension actually reflects cross-national differences in individual motivation and ability to engage with political parties, rather than differences in party organizational presence, which we claim. To explore this possibility, we conduct two separate tests.

First, we exploit local-level data on branch locations in South Africa to show the strong correlation that exists between the PPI and the locations of local party branches in this context. The South African case is a particularly useful one for our purposes, because reasonably accurate data on the number of branches per province are available for the ruling African National Congress Party (ANC), a relative rarity in Africa. These data are drawn from the ANC's 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference Report, which lists the number of branch delegates who were entitled to attend the party's 2017 national conference from each province (African National Congress, 2017a). ANC branches are a direct form of local party presence, typically involving a physical office, with each branch covering a specific geographic area.<sup>13</sup> Because the number of branch delegates roughly

---

<sup>11</sup> Between R5 and R6 the difference is more than 10 percentage points for Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Between R6 and R7 the difference is above 10 percentage points for Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, and South Africa.

<sup>12</sup> Pearson correlation coefficient (2-tailed): for rounds 5 and 6,  $r=.904$ ,  $p<.001$ ; for rounds 6 and 7,  $r=.830$ ,  $p<.001$ ; and for rounds 5 and 7,  $r=.876$ ,  $p<.001$ . Kendall's tau-b coefficient: for rounds 5 and 6,  $r=.729$ ,  $p<.001$ ; for rounds 6 and 7,  $r=.628$ ,  $p<.001$ ; and for rounds 5 and 7,  $r=.715$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=30$  for all dyads. Some of the differences can be accounted for by the fact that the election-related items refer to different elections. Thus, rather than representing measurement error, such country differences across rounds are likely to pick up real change.

<sup>13</sup> According to the ANC Branch Manual (African National Congress, 2010), "Every member of the ANC must belong to a branch. Branches are formed in every ward in the country and must have at least 100 members. (In exceptional circumstances the PEC [Provincial Executive Committee] may give a branch official status even though there are less than 100 members.) Big branches may be divided into sub-units." Additionally, the ANC constitution (African National Congress, 2017b) outlines the branch structure and voting power as follows: "Branches may be grouped together in zones and may, for the purposes of coordination, be subdivided into smaller units such as street committees, voting districts and zones may be



reflects the number of local branches,<sup>14</sup> we are able to develop a reasonably accurate measure of local branch density in each of the country's nine provinces (number of delegates per 10,000 residents of a given province).

Afrobarometer Round 6 data unfortunately do not allow us to distinguish party activity by party, so to create an ANC-specific PPI, we use data from the 2019 South African National Election Study (SANES).<sup>15</sup> Like Afrobarometer, the South African National Election Study asked respondents a series of questions about their campaign engagement with political parties. Importantly, the survey also asked explicitly whether respondents had attended an ANC-specific party meeting or rally during the 2019 election campaign.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the same level of specificity was not included in a question on working for a political party ("Did you work for any party or candidate during the election campaign?"), so for this question we counted only respondents who identified as feeling "close to" the ANC, as we feel reasonably confident that respondents in this category are most likely to be talking about the dominant ANC when reporting partisan election work.

As can be seen in Figure 6, the correlation between the Party Presence Index (in this case, aggregated to the provincial level) and the number of branches per province is strong, and in the expected direction: Provinces with a higher ANC-delegate-to-province-population ratio (and thus, a denser organizational network) also have higher scores on the ANC-specific PPI ( $r=.821$ ,  $p=.007$ ,  $N=9$ ). The Western Cape, the only province in which the ANC is not the majority party, scores lowest on both indices, while the Northern Cape and Free State, traditional ANC strongholds, score high on both.<sup>17</sup> While the correlation is not perfect, suggesting that other factors – such as willingness to engage – may also be

---

grouped into sub regions. Any Sub-Branch so established shall have the same voting powers as a Branch."

<sup>14</sup> According to ANC regulations, "The number of delegates per branch shall be in proportion to its paid up membership, provided that each branch in good standing shall be entitled to at least one delegate."

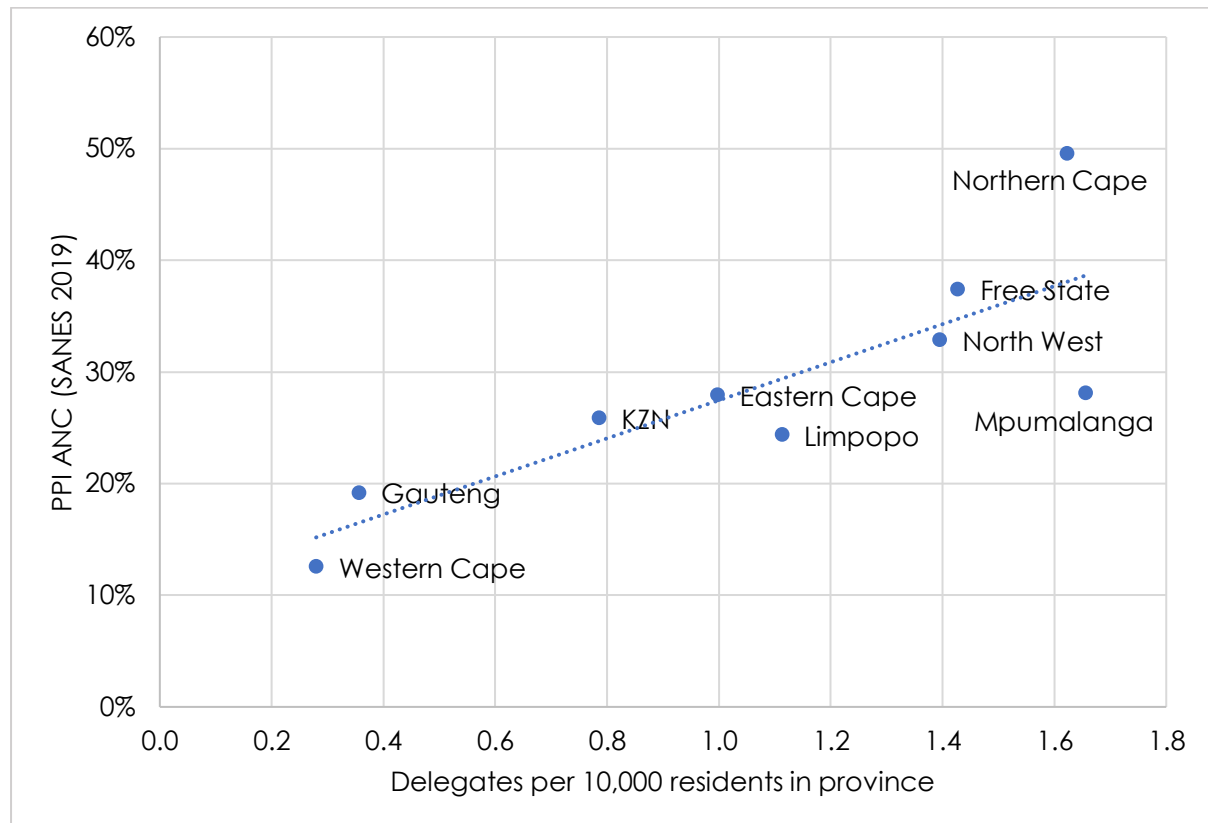
<sup>15</sup> <https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/SANES>

<sup>16</sup> "Did you attend any party meetings or rallies during the 2019 election campaign? If Yes, which ones? [African National Congress]"

<sup>17</sup> The same general relationship can also be observed between the PPI calculated from the SANES January 2015 post-election survey and the 2017 branch density measure (delegates per 10,000 residents in province) ( $r=.645$ ,  $p=.061$ ). In addition, the Afrobarometer and the SANES survey-based measures, aggregated to the level of province, are also strongly correlated ( $r=.807$ ,  $p=.009$ ;  $N=9$ ), suggesting that the shift in the data set is not driving the results.

important, the clear correlation between the two variables supports our central contention that the PPI provides a reasonable measure of local party presence. In addition, this test showcases an important benefit of our new measure – the relative ease with which it can be created from a wide variety of pre-existing survey data, allowing scholars to exploit existing data sets to cast new light on the local-level presence of parties around the world.

**Figure 6: ANC branch delegates (2017) and SANES measures of ANC PPI (2019), by province**



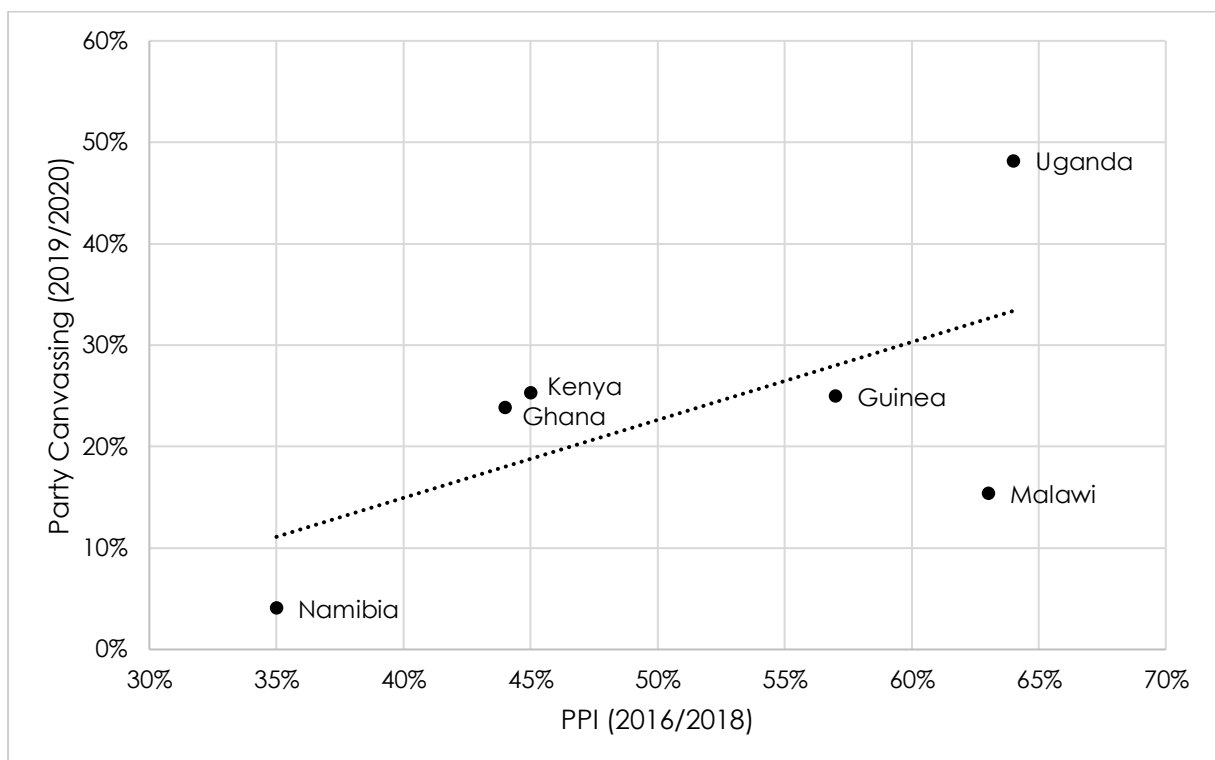
**Sources:** South African National Election Study (2019), Stats SA (2019), and African National Congress (2017). The Pearson correlation coefficient is  $r=.821$ ,  $p=.007$ .

However, because this test only focuses on one party in one country, it could be the case that the South African context is unique in this regard, and that our argument is less convincing in other locations. To address this concern, we conduct a second test in which we ask whether the PPI (this time constructed using Afrobarometer data) predicts an essential activity of local political parties – canvassing potential voters. A question on canvassing<sup>18</sup> was included for the

<sup>18</sup> “Thinking about the last national election in [year], did any representative of a political party contact you during the campaign?”

first time in Afrobarometer Round 8 (2019/2020), and is particularly useful for our purposes because it provides an example of a party activity that is clearly initiated by party organizations, and thus highly unlikely to be a function of individual motivation. While this analysis is based on a smaller number of countries – Round 8 data collection has not yet been completed – we find that the two measures (reports of canvassing in Round 8 and the PPI calculated from Round 7) are positively correlated across the six countries for which data are currently available ( $r=.613$ ,  $p=.045$ ) (Figure 7).<sup>19</sup> This once again supports our claim that the PPI truly taps the organizational presence of political parties at the local level and does not simply reflect the micro-level motivation of individuals.

**Figure 7: PPI (2016/2018) and party canvassing (2019/2020)**



*Note: This uses the truncated three-item version of the PPI based on Round 7 data. R8 data do not exclude “Don’t know” responses. The Pearson correlation coefficient is  $r=.620$ ,  $p=0.189$ .*

<sup>19</sup> The correlation between reports of canvassing and the PPI is very similar ( $r=.59$ ,  $p=0.217$ ) when both are calculated from Round 8 data. We use the Round 7 PPI here to further guard against potential criticism of individual-level motivation and attributes being the drivers of this correlation. Data collection has also been completed for an additional country (Botswana), but fieldwork in Botswana was conducted during the campaign for the 2019 election, which is unusual for Afrobarometer surveys. Moreover, the question wording referred to the preceding 2014 election, which we feel might have attracted responses referring to both election periods. As a result, we excluded it from this analysis.

## 3.2 Ad hoc relationships vs. formal party organization

Finally, some might object that positive responses to questions about engagement with political parties conflate the existence of formal party organization with the work of informal, disinterested, and self-serving brokers who sell their organizational and networking services to the highest bidder or with the independent efforts of self-funded, entrepreneurial candidates who use the party label solely to gain access to the ballot. We argue, however, that this distinction is not meaningful for our purposes. By identifying and contracting brokers to carry out local activities, or by identifying and nominating independently wealthy candidates, political parties are grappling with ways to overcome existing financial and organizational deficits. As long as campaign events occur and people feel that parties have local representatives to whom they can take their problems, the relevant party function is fulfilled and the party, for all intents and purposes, has a local organizational presence.<sup>20</sup> If this presence exists only during election times – as is often claimed to be the case with parties that rely on brokers – this fact is captured by the index and does not affect the validity of the measure.

In sum, we have thus far introduced a new measure of party presence (the PPI) and shown that it reflects a single valid and reliable dimension at the macro level. We have further shown that country-level scores for this index are consistent across several survey rounds and have provided evidence that the measure reflects local-level party presence and not simply individual willingness to engage. In other words, there is good reason to believe our opening statement that where there is smoke there is fire, and that the Party Presence Index provides a valuable measure of local party presence across the continent. Additionally, we have demonstrated that our measure can be easily constructed from a wide variety of survey data. Questions on citizen engagement with political parties are widely asked in surveys around the world, so the ability to use these items as a proxy for local party presence in this way opens up significant new lines of research, especially in regions – like Africa – where the cost of obtaining the actual data at any sort of scale is often prohibitively high.

---

<sup>20</sup> An analogy might be a customer who sees her “insurance agent” as a representative of a specific company, even though the person works as an independent broker who sells a wide array of insurance products.

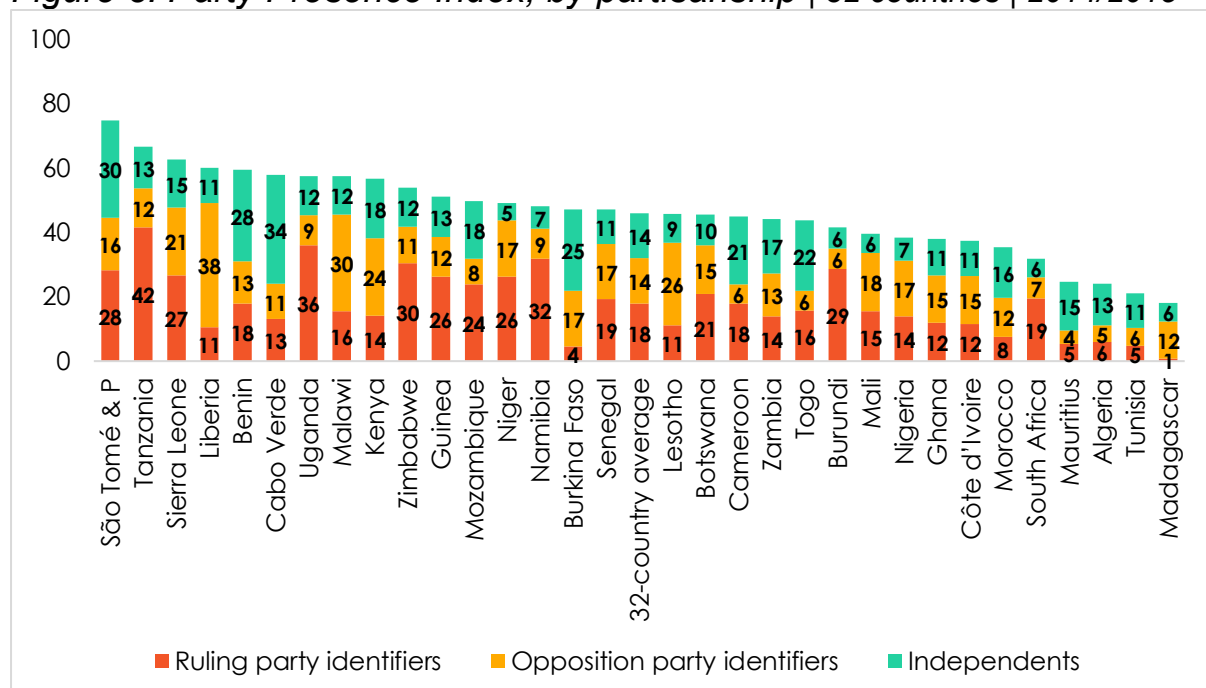
## 4. Consequences and implications for future research

Having demonstrated the validity and reliability of our new index, we now use it to explore three substantive consequences of party presence and demonstrate the potential of the PPI to contribute to our understanding of important linkages between political institutions, citizens, and democracy.

### 4.1 Incumbent advantages and citizen engagement

In the existing literature on political parties in Africa, opposition parties are often described as resource-poor, organizationally weak, and lacking the local presence that would enable them to engage potential voters (Bleck & van de Walle, 2018; Doorenspleet & Nijzink, 2013; Gyimah-Boadi, 2007). If the literature is correct, one would expect that the PPI scores overwhelmingly tap the incumbency advantages of governing parties (especially in dominant-party systems such as Tanzania). While the Afrobarometer questionnaire in Round 6 surveys did not ask respondents *which* party organized the rallies or meetings they attended, *which* party they worked for, or *which* party official they contacted, it did ask respondents whether they identified with (“feel close to”) any political party, and if so, which one. Assuming that identifiers with a given party are most likely to engage with that party (an assumption we will interrogate further shortly), we re-examine the PPI scores, segmenting them according to whether the respondent identified with the ruling party or an opposition party or was an independent or non-partisan (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Party Presence Index, by partisanship | 32 countries | 2014/2015



The results demonstrate – in line with the existing literature – that it is indeed the supporters of the ruling party who are most likely to be engaged or mobilized by local party organizations, suggesting that ruling parties are typically better organized at the local level. Importantly, however, the data also reveal that large numbers of people who support opposition parties, collectively, also come into contact with a political party, even in historically one-party-dominant systems such as Tanzania (for corroborating evidence, see Paget, 2019). In fact, it is opposition supporters who are most likely to be engaged by local party organizations in Liberia, Malawi, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Morocco, and Madagascar, fully one-third of the countries surveyed by Afrobarometer in 2014-2015. Moreover, Africa’s parties also engage large proportions of non-partisans (those who identify with no party) in each country.

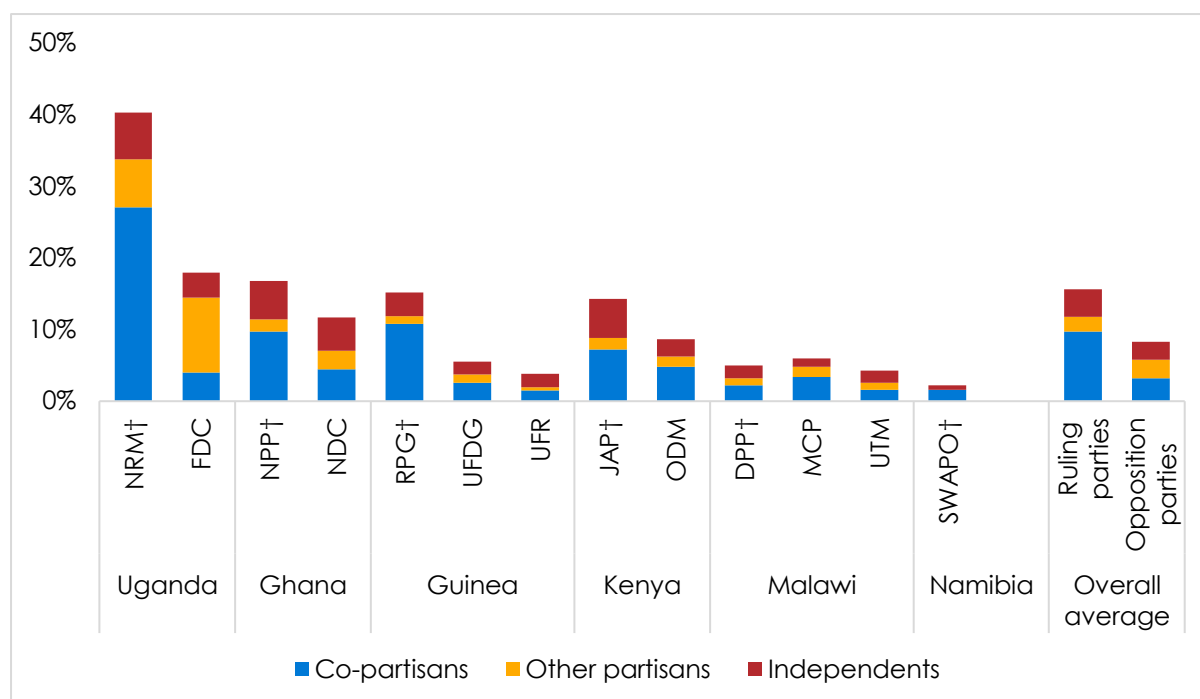
While this suggests that opposition parties have a wider presence than typically assumed, it is entirely possible that it is actually ruling parties, not opposition parties, that are attracting opposition supporters and independent voters to their campaign events with offers of free food, T-shirts, or entertainment, or that are canvassing them at home, in order to broaden their electoral dominance. Thus, to understand which types of parties contact which types of voters, we again take advantage of the question on party canvassing that was included in Round 8 of the Afrobarometer survey. Focusing only on respondents who report being contacted by a specific party in the most recent election, we segment these respondents according to their partisan affiliation. While Uganda seems to fit the model expected by the wider literature (where the ruling National Resistance Movement has a far more extensive local presence than the opposition), the incumbent advantage is far less visible in Guinea, Ghana, and Kenya, and does not exist at all in Malawi.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, while both incumbent and opposition parties engage non-co-partisans, ruling parties target co-partisans at a higher rate (Figure 9).

Thus, the ability to compare systematic measures of local party presence across the continent for the first time reveals a much more nuanced picture of party activity and citizen engagement than traditionally assumed in the literature, casting doubt on a number of our assumptions about African parties. It also promises to open up exciting new areas of inquiry with respect to the connections between party presence, party campaign strategies, and their consequences.

---

<sup>21</sup> The survey results as well as the electoral success of the National Democratic Congress in Ghana, and (more recently) the Malawi Congress Party, support Riedl’s (2018) claim that authoritarian successor parties with a high level of social incorporation may be the ones most likely to overcome resource and power imbalances and become viable democratic players.

Figure 9: Party canvassing by partisanship | 6 countries | 2019/2020



† = Ruling party

## 4.2 Voter mobilization

One obvious potential consequence of local party presence concerns its impact on voter mobilization. While cross-national differences in voter turnout are shaped by a range of factors, including the level of development, the type of electoral system, the nature of partisan cleavages, and the level of partisan competition (Norris, 2002), there are good reasons to believe that local party organizational capacity will also play an important role. Indeed, a significant literature already focuses on precisely this relationship in the global context (see Frendreis, Gibson, & Vertz, 1990; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1992; Karp & Banducci, 2007; Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2008; and Larreguy, Marshall, & Queribín, 2016), although once again cross-national examination in the African context has so far been extremely limited. Employing the new PPI allows us to push this literature forward by testing the relationship between local party presence and voter mobilization at scale in Africa for the first time.

As can be seen in Figure 10, the relationship between national-level PPI scores and voter turnout in legislative elections (as a percentage of the voting-age population, based on data from International IDEA, 2020) across 32 countries is both significant and in the expected direction ( $r=.391$ ,  $p=.027$ ). One possible reason that the apparent impact of party organizations is not stronger is the prevalence of countries that elect legislators in single-member districts (represented in Figure 10 by the unshaded or hollow data points), where

candidates with popular personalities may compensate for weak party organization. Indeed, there is a much stronger link between party organization and turnout among the 12 countries that elect legislators from party lists in multi-member electoral districts ( $r=.631$ ,  $p=.028$ ). In this case, the effect of weak local-level party structures is especially telling when no particular candidate has an incentive to build a “personal vote.” This suggests that Africans cannot simply be marched to the polls on Election Day. To paraphrase an African proverb, it takes a party. And it takes a party with the local presence and organization to allow it to engage voters and facilitate their access to the voting booth. In this respect, the PPI not only opens new lines of research regarding the relationship between party presence and voter mobilization in Africa, but also suggests new questions regarding the role of party activists, individual candidates, and members of Parliament in building local party structures.

Of course, local party structures may also affect voter turnout in other ways besides direct physical mobilization. For example, effective party organization might indirectly contribute to higher levels of participation by engendering positive feelings toward parties among citizens. Beginning with the work of Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960), research has consistently shown that the most important individual-level attitude that shapes voter turnout is partisan identification. Africans are no different. People who have a partisan identification are more likely to vote, and to vote for the party with which they identify (Mattes & Krönke, 2020).

To test the relationship between party presence and party identification, we devise a multi-level model to examine whether respondents who live in areas with higher levels of party presence (aggregated to the provincial or regional level)<sup>22</sup> are more likely to identify with any political party, controlling both for a range of national-level characteristics (gross domestic product per capita (purchasing power parity), ethnic heterogeneity, democratic history, type of electoral system), individual-level demographic characteristics (age, gender, location, lived poverty, employment, occupation), levels of political sophistication (education, cognitive engagement, news media use), and frequency of community-level participation (active membership in community and religious groups, attending community meetings, and joining with others to address community problems).<sup>23</sup> As shown in Table 1 (Model A) below, we find that, controlling for this large range of national- and individual-level characteristics, provincial levels of PPI are strongly and significantly correlated with levels of individual partisanship. That

---

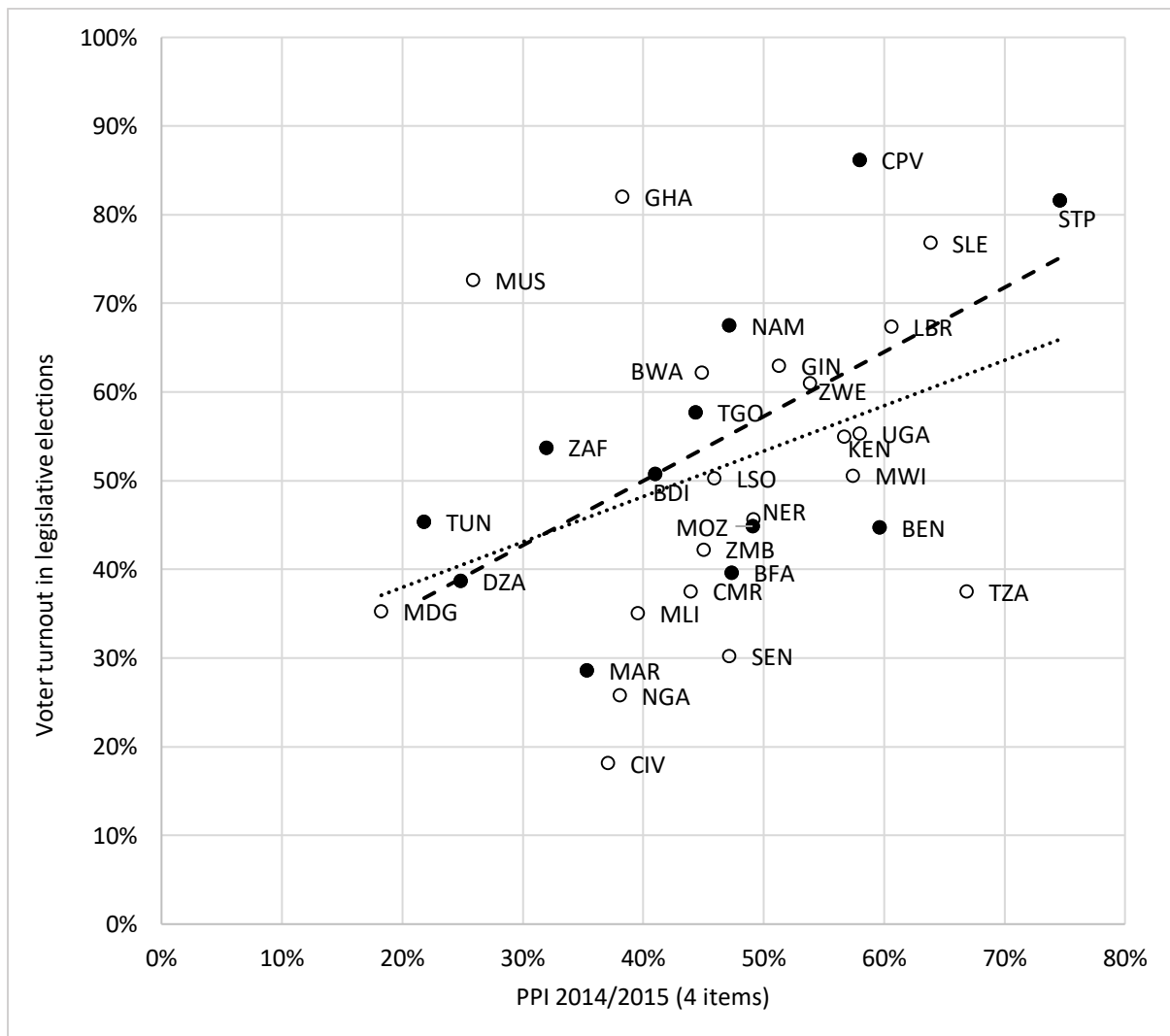
<sup>22</sup> N=400, after excluding 52 provinces or regions in which fewer than 30 interviews were conducted.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the coding of these variables, please see Appendix C.



is, Afrobarometer respondents who live in regions with higher levels of local party organization are significantly more likely to identify with a political party.

**Figure 10: PPI and voter turnout (as % of voting-age population), 2009-2015 | 32 countries**



Notes: Black circles = proportional-representation (PR) countries; hollow circles = non-PR countries. Dotted line = trend line for 32-country sample; dashed line = trend line for PR countries only. The Pearson correlation coefficients for the 32-country sample is  $r=.391$ ,  $p=.027$ ; for the reduced 12-country sample of PR countries it is  $r=.631$ ,  $p=.028$ . The voter turnout data are drawn from International IDEA (2020) and refer to the most recent legislative election prior to Afrobarometer Round 6 fieldwork, except for Zimbabwe, where data were not available and were substituted with turnout data from the presidential election that took place simultaneously.

Table 1: PPI and citizen attitudes | 35 countries | 2014/2015

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D	Model E
Dependent variable	Partisan	Perceived responsiveness of LCs & MPs	Trust ruling party	Trust opposition parties	Perceived supply of democracy
Intercept	-0.173 (1.107)	0.721*** (.068)	-0.211** (.075)	1.868*** (.428)	0.441*** (.083)
<i>National level</i>					
National wealth (logged)	-0.237† (.124)	n.s.	n.s.	-0.091† (.052)	n.s.
Ethno-linguistic heterogeneity	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Years democracy (total)	n.s.	0.009*** (.003)	0.007* (.003)	0.008† (.004)	0.010* (.004)
Single-member district electoral system	0.654*** (.190)	n.s.	0.156* (.073)	n.s.	0.236* (.100)
Large-list electoral system	0.585† (.351)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<i>Provincial/regional level</i>					
Provincial party presence	<b>1.756*** (.224)</b>	<b>0.355** (.119)</b>	<b>0.529*** (.104)</b>	<b>0.368** (.137)</b>	<b>0.425*** (.100)</b>
Provincial lived poverty	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<i>Individual level</i>					
Age (years)	0.007*** (.002)	0.001*** (.000)	0.001* (.000)	0.002*** (.000)	n.s.
Rural	0.199*** (.036)	0.061*** (.013)	0.058*** (.014)	n.s.	0.045*** (.011)
Female	-0.117** (.040)	n.s.	0.043*** (.011)	-0.045*** (.013)	n.s.
Education (level completed)	n.s.	-0.018*** (.003)	-0.028*** (.003)	-0.009* (.004)	-0.012*** (.002)
Employed	0.054** (.019)	n.s.	n.s.	-0.019* (.008)	n.s.
Middle-class occupation	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

	<b>Model A</b>	<b>Model B</b>	<b>Model C</b>	<b>Model D</b>	<b>Model E</b>
<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Partisan</b>	<b>Perceived responsiveness of LCs &amp; MPs</b>	<b>Trust ruling party</b>	<b>Trust opposition parties</b>	<b>Perceived supply of democracy</b>
Lived poverty	n.s.	-.084*** (.007)	-0.021** (.007)	-0.049*** (.008)	-0.079*** (.006)
Cognitive engagement	0.478*** (.028)	0.025*** (.006)	0.020** (.006)	0.040*** (.007)	0.032*** (.005)
News media use	n.s.	0.014* (.006)	-0.030*** (.006)	n.s.	n.s.
Community-level participation	0.065*** (.100)	0.031*** (.002)	0.005* (.002)	n.s.	n.s.
Partisan	--	0.052*** (.011)	--	--	--
Identify with ruling/opposition party	--	--	0.292*** (.013)	0.409*** (.016)	0.150*** (.011)
Approve/trust president	--	--	0.660*** (.005)	0.085*** (.006)	0.201*** (.004)
Evaluations of national economic conditions	--	--	0.120*** (.007)	-0.025** (.008)	0.199*** (.006)
Free and fair elections	--	--	--	--	0.154*** (.004)
Level 1 R <sup>2</sup>	N.A.	0.014	0.360	0.017	0.193
Level 2 R <sup>2</sup>	0.142	0.130	0.779	-0.003	0.590
Level 3 R <sup>2</sup>	0.382	0.477	0.819	0.405	0.546
Countries	35	32	33	34	35
Provinces/regions	378	349	350	365	378
Respondents	49,776	43,987	46,183	47,381	47,598

Notes: Cells report unstandardized regression coefficients and standard deviation (in brackets).

*n.s.* = not significant, dropped from final model; \*\*\* $p <= 0.001$ ; \*\* $p <= 0.01$ ; \* $p <= 0.05$ ; †  $p <= .10$ .

Additional information on the variables included in the models can be found in Appendix C.

Due to missing data on one or more variables, Egypt, Malawi, and Mozambique are excluded from Model B; Burkina Faso and Egypt are excluded from Model C; and Burkina Faso is excluded from Model D.

### **4.3 Popular attitudes toward democracy**

Finally, if local party presence contributes to individual identification with political parties, might it not also lead to more positive attitudes toward parties in general, elected representatives, and even the democratic system as a whole? Local party presence might accomplish this by more effectively “linking” citizens to the larger political system, offering voters electoral choices, representing voters’ views upward, and disseminating information about public policies downward to voters (Webb, Scarrow, & Poguntke, 2019). To the extent that they fulfill this role effectively, we hypothesize that extensive party organization should have a positive effect on citizens’ evaluations of the democratic political system.

To test this, we use the same multi-level model described above to examine whether local-level party organization (aggregated at the provincial or regional level) shapes citizens’ attitudes toward key aspects of the larger democratic system. We now also control for the potential confounding effects of co-partisanship (whether respondents identify with the ruling party), presidential loyalties (whether they approve of and trust the president), economic evaluations (an index of views on past, current, and future economic trends), and perceptions of the freeness and fairness of the most recent election.

We find significant and strong relationships in each case (Table 1). Africans living in regions with higher levels of local party organizational presence are substantially more likely to say that elected local councillors (LCs) and members of Parliament (MPs) are interested in their opinions (Model B), to trust both governing (Model C) and opposition parties (Model D), and to feel that they are being supplied with democracy (a construct of respondents’ evaluations of the level of democracy and their satisfaction with the way democracy works) (Model E). These findings, of course, require more interrogation and extension, but even this brief analysis demonstrates the potential value of the PPI, and the ways in which this new cross-national measure of party presence opens important new lines of research.

## **5. Conclusion**

While the social scientific study of African politics contains many standard assertions about African political parties, few are based on systematically collected data about more than a handful of parties or countries at any given point. We have attempted to remedy this situation by focusing on one crucial aspect of party organization – the local presence that enables political parties to engage with and mobilize voters during and between elections – and developing a new measure that uses readily available survey data to measure the extent of this

presence. We have shown that this measure is both valid and reliable, and that the estimates are stable across three waves of data collection. We have also shown that they positively correlate with other available data on party branches, giving us confidence that the measure is truly picking up the dimension of interest. Finally, we have briefly examined some of the implications of this new measure, using it to explore substantive questions in relation to the consequences of party activity. Specifically, we have demonstrated that our measure can provide new evidence and insight into ongoing debates about the relative strength of ruling and opposition parties, their ability to mobilize voters, and their contributions to the legitimacy of democracy more broadly.

This paper makes a number of contributions to the literature. First, it provides the first systematic cross-national measure of local party presence across the continent. While other cross-national measures assessing the organizational strength of African parties do exist (for example, V-Dem and DALP), all the measures of which we are aware are focused on the existence of formal party branches at the local level. As a result, they do not capture the realities of local party presence in the same way. Additionally, because these measures rely on expert opinions rather than survey data, they measure the extent to which formal party branches are believed to exist, rather than their actual existence on the ground. The PPI also enables a clearer, more accurate understanding of grassroots party activity and allows the examination of subnational as well as cross-national variation.

Second, this paper shows that a clearer understanding of local party presence can substantially improve our understanding of party behavior more broadly, opening up new lines of research and casting new light on existing debates around issues ranging from the strength of opposition parties to the contributions of political parties to democracy.

Finally, while we recognize that our reliance on survey data raises the usual concerns around social desirability bias and question availability, we argue that the benefits of a cross-national measure of local party presence in a region where it is difficult and costly to gather information in other ways still make this an important tool for scholars of African political parties, with the potential to add significantly to our understanding of grassroots party organization around the world.

## References

- Adida, C. L., Ferree, K. E., Posner, D. N., & Robinson, A. L. (2016). Who's asking? Interviewer coethnicity effects in African survey data. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49(12), 1630-1660.
- African National Congress. (2010). ANC branch manual: CU short version. Accessed 7 June 2020.
- African National Congress. (2017a). ANC 54th national conference report and resolutions. Accessed 7 June 2020.
- African National Congress. (2017b). ANC constitution as amended and adopted at the 54th national conference, Nasrec, Johannesburg 2017. Accessed 7 June 2020.
- Afrobarometer. (2020). Data from 36 countries, rounds 5-8, 2011-2020.
- Alesina, A., Devleeschauwer, A., Easterly, W., Kurlat, S., & Wacziarg, R. (2003). Fractionalization. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 8(2), 155-194.
- Arriola, L. (2013). Capital and opposition in Africa: Coalition building in multiethnic societies. *World Politics*, 65(02), 233-272.
- Auerbach, A. (2016). Clients and communities: The political economy of party network organization and development in India's urban slums. *World Politics*, 68(1), 111-148. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887115000313>.
- Basedau, M., & Stroh, A. (2008). Measuring party institutionalization in developing countries: A new research instrument applied to 28 African political parties. German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) Working Paper 69. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1119203](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1119203)
- Bizzarro, F., Hicken, A., & Self, D. (2017). The V-Dem party institutionalization index: A new global indicator (1900-2015). V-Dem Working Paper 2017:48.
- Bleck, J., & van de Walle, N. (2018). *Electoral politics in Africa since 1990: Continuity in change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Brierley, S., & Kramon, E. (forthcoming). Party campaign strategies: Rallies, canvassing and handouts in Ghana. *African Affairs*.
- Butler, A. (2015). The politics of numbers: National membership growth and subnational power competition in the African National Congress. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 87(1), 13-31.

Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., & Stokes, D. (1960). *The American voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Lindberg, S. I., Skaaning, S.-E., Teorell, J., Altman, D., Wilson, S. (2017). *V-Dem (country-year/country-date) dataset v7.1*. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project.

Doorenspleet, R., & Nijzink, L. (Eds.). (2013). *One party dominance in African democracies*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Elischer, S. (2013). *Political parties in Africa: Ethnicity and party formation*. Cambridge University Press.

Erdmann, G. (2004). Party research: Western European bias and the ‘African labyrinth.’ *Democratization*, 11(3), 63-87.

Freedom House. (2020). Freedom in the world. Accessed 7 June 2020.

Frendreis, J., Gibson, J., & Vertz, L. (1990). The electoral relevance of local party organizations. *American Political Science Review*, 84(1), 225-235.

Giliomee, H., & Simkins, C. (1999). *The awkward embrace: One-party domination and democracy*. Taylor & Francis.

Gunther, R., & Diamond, L. (2003). Species of political parties: A new typology. *Party Politics*, 9(2), 167-199.

Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2007). Political parties, elections and patronage: Random thoughts on neo-patrimonialism and African democratization. In M. Basedau, G. Erdmann, & A. Mehler (Eds.), *Votes, Money and Violence: Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 21–33). University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Huckfeldt, R., & Sprague, J. (1992). Political parties and electoral mobilization: Political structure, social structure, and the party canvass. *American Political Science Review*, 86(1), 70-86.

International IDEA. (2020). Voter turnout database.

Kalua, P. (2011). The extent of political party institutionalization in Malawi: The case of United Democratic Front (UDF) and Malawi Congress Party (MCP). *Forum for Development Studies*, 38(1), 43-63.

Karp, J., & Banducci, S. (2007). Party mobilization and political participation in new and old democracies. *Party Politics*, 13(2), 217-234.

Karp, J., Banducci, S., & Bowler, S. (2008). Getting out the vote: Party mobilization in a comparative perspective. *British Journal of Political Science*, 38(1), 91-112.

Kelly, C. L. (2020). *Party proliferation and political contestation in Africa: Senegal in comparative perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Key, V. O. (1964). *Politics, parties, and pressure groups*. Thomas Y. Crowell Co.

Kitschelt, H. (2013). *Democratic accountability and linkages project*. Durham, NC: Duke University.

Koter, D. (2016). *Beyond ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

Larreguy, H., Marshall, J., & Queribín, P. (2016). Parties, brokers, and voter mobilization: How turnout buying depends upon the party's capacity to monitor brokers. *American Political Science Association*, 110(1), 160-179.

LeBas, A. (2011). *From protest to parties: Party-building and democratization in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mac Giollabhuí, S. (2013). How things fall apart: Candidate selection and the cohesion of dominant parties in South Africa and Namibia. *Party Politics*, 19(4), 577-600.

Mattes, R., & Krönke, M. (2020). The consequences of partisanship in Africa. In H. Oscarsson & S. Holmberg (Eds.), *Research Handbook on Political Partisanship* (pp. 368-380). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic phoenix: Reinventing political activism*. Cambridge University Press.

Osei, A. (2013). Political parties in Ghana: Agents of democracy? *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 31(4), 543-563.

Osei, A. (2016). Formal party organisation and informal relations in African parties: Evidence from Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 54(01), 37-66.

Paget, D. (2019). The rally-intensive campaign: A distinct form of electioneering in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 1940161219847952.

Pitcher, M. A. (2012). *Party politics and economic reform in Africa's democracies*. Cambridge University Press.



- Rakner, L. (2011). Institutionalizing the pro-democracy movements: The case of Zambia's Movement for Multiparty Democracy. *Democratization*, 18(5), 1106-1124.
- Rakner, L., & van de Walle, N. (2009). Democratization by elections? Opposition weakness in Africa. *Journal of Democracy*, 20(3), 108-121.
- Randall, V., & Svåsand, L. (2002a). Party institutionalization in new democracies. *Party Politics*, 8(1), 5-29.
- Randall, V., & Svåsand, L. (2002b). Political parties and democratic consolidation in Africa. *Democratization*, 9(3), 30-52.
- Riedl, R. B. (2014). *Authoritarian origins of democratic party systems in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Riedl, R. B. (2018). Authoritarian successor parties in sub-Saharan Africa: Into the wilderness and back again? In J. Loxton & S. Mainwaring (Eds.), *Life After Dictatorship* (pp. 175-205). Cambridge University Press.
- Southall, R. (2016). *Liberation movements in power: Party and state in southern Africa*. James Currey.
- South African National Election Study. (2019). South African Election 2019. Available at: <https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/SANES> (accessed 7 June 2020).
- Stats SA. (2019). Statistical release P0318 general household survey 2018.
- Storm, L. (2013). *Party politics and the prospects for democracy in North Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Uddhammar, E., Green, E., & Söderström, J. (2011). Political opposition and democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. *Democratization*, 18(5), 1057-1066.
- Van de Walle, N. (2003). Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(2), 297-321.
- Van de Walle, N., & Butler, K. S. (1999). Political parties and party systems in Africa's illiberal democracies. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 13(1), 14-28.
- Wahman, M. (2014). Electoral coordination in anglophone Africa. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 52(2), 187-211.

Wahman, M. (2017). Nationalized incumbents and regional challengers: Opposition- and incumbent-party nationalization in Africa. *Party Politics*, 23(3), 309-322.

Webb, P., Scarrow, S., & Poguntke, P. (2019). Party organization and satisfaction with democracy: Inside the blackbox of linkage. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*.

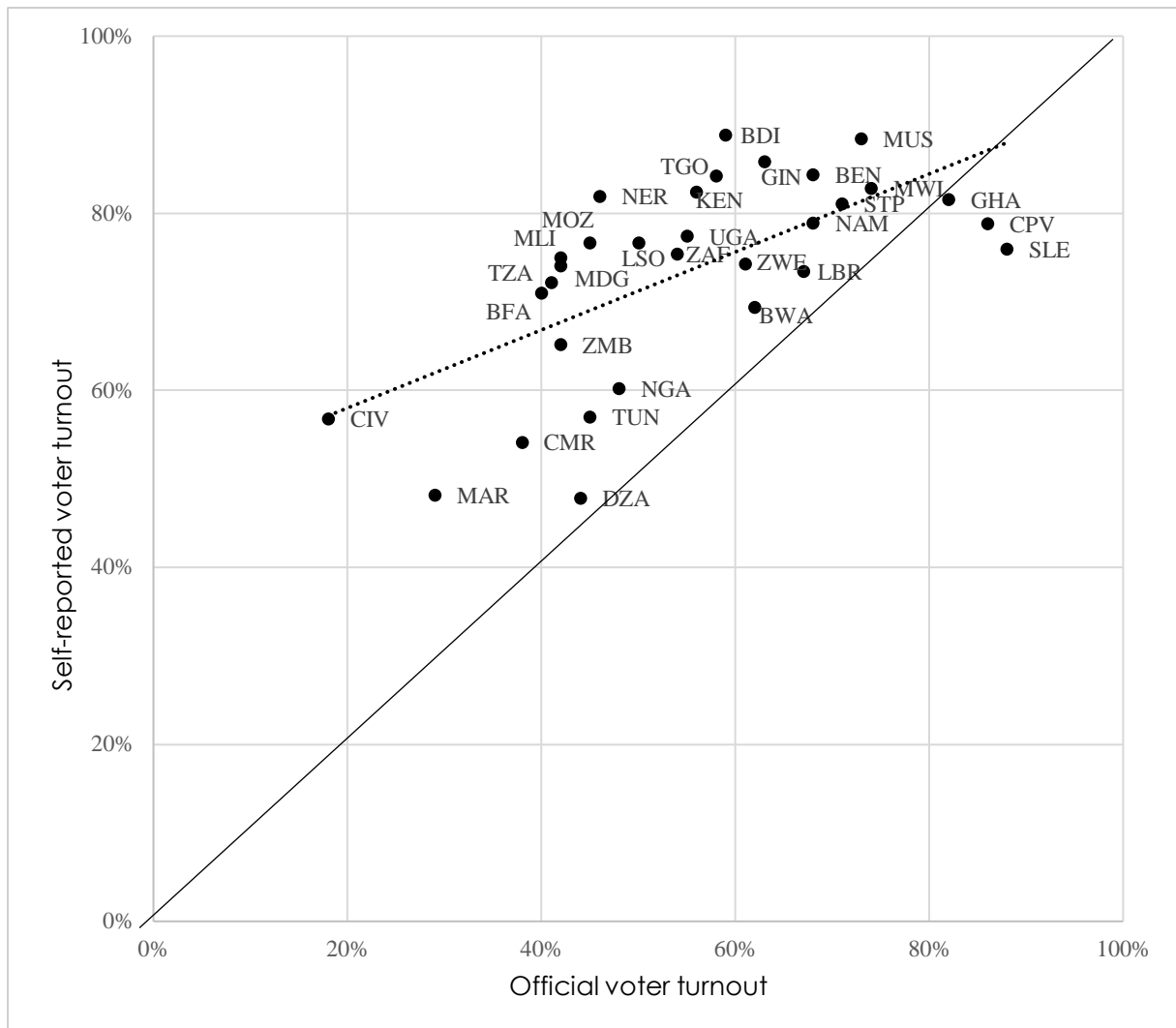
Wegner, E. (2016). Local-level accountability in a dominant party system. *Government and Opposition*, 1-25.

World Bank Group. (2020). World development indicators. Accessed 7 June 2020.

## Appendix A: Social desirability bias

Survey responses are known to be influenced by various types of social desirability, particularly when people are asked about acts of citizenship, whether it is in response to perceived expectations projected by the interviewer (e.g. see Adida, Ferree, Posner, & Robinson, 2016) or the broader community. We assume that the responses about citizen engagement with the political process that we report here are no different. But while social desirability may influence validity (inflating levels of reported engagement), it does not necessarily threaten reliability. For instance, while we know that Afrobarometer reports of having voted in the previous national election are usually much higher than available data on turnout as a proportion of voting-age population, the two measures are strongly correlated at the country level (Figure A.1), whether in terms of the product moment ( $r=.643$ ,  $p<.001$ ) or rank order (Tau  $b=.489$ ,  $p=.001$ ). While we do not make use of self-reported voting in this paper, we do report evidence that the data that comprise the PPI are strongly correlated with the existence of political party branches in South Africa. Moreover, while the timing of surveys is likely to impact levels of social desirability, it is Afrobarometer policy to not conduct surveys close to a national election, thus reducing the effect of social desirability.

Figure A.1: Voter turnout and social desirability bias | 31 countries



Note: Official voter turnout data are drawn from International IDEA and matched with the corresponding election that Afrobarometer asked about in its Round 6 survey. When presidential and parliamentary elections were held simultaneously, the election with higher official turnout was selected. Senegal is excluded because Afrobarometer asked about the most recent local (not national) election. Dotted line = trend line; solid line = matching official and self-reported voter turnout.

## Appendix B: Robustness checks of the Party Presence Index

The Party Presence Index (PPI) is made up of three campaign-related items and one non-campaign-related item (3:1). However, it is possible that our index is biased toward parties that are more effective in campaign mode. To check this, we ran a series of robustness checks by combining the two categories of variables in different ways. First, we reduced the ratio of campaign-related to non-campaign-related variables to 2:1. While this still favors parties that perform well during the crucial campaign season, it also increases the importance of local party presence between elections. And second, we treated the non-campaign-related item, and thus the time between elections, as equally important to the three campaign-related items (a ratio of 1:1). Despite the different aggregation rules, the absolute scores and country rank orders remained highly consistent for all versions across a 35-country sample.

Table B.1 shows the mean values of each index for each country. The Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients for the three versions of the index are shown in Tables B.2 and B.3.

*Table B.1: PPI (Round 6) with various aggregation rules*

	<b>PPI 4 items (3:1)</b>	<b>PPI 4 items (2:1)</b>	<b>PPI 4 items (1:1)</b>
Algeria	0.51	0.37	0.23
Benin	1.39	0.98	0.57
Botswana	0.87	0.63	0.40
Burkina Faso	0.96	0.67	0.39
Burundi	0.89	0.63	0.36
Cabo Verde	0.97	0.69	0.41
Cameroon	0.92	0.67	0.42
Côte d'Ivoire	0.83	0.60	0.36
Egypt	0.52	0.39	0.27
Gabon	1.10	0.77	0.45
Ghana	0.79	0.57	0.36
Guinea	1.19	0.83	0.47
Kenya	0.94	0.65	0.36
Lesotho	0.82	0.58	0.35
Liberia	1.47	1.11	0.75
Madagascar	0.32	0.23	0.13
Malawi	1.05	0.76	0.47
Mali	0.89	0.64	0.39

	<b>PPI 4 items (3:1)</b>	<b>PPI 4 items (2:1)</b>	<b>PPI 4 items (1:1)</b>
Mauritius	0.51	0.37	0.23
Morocco	0.75	0.57	0.38
Mozambique	0.89	0.65	0.41
Namibia	0.91	0.68	0.44
Niger	1.02	0.72	0.41
Nigeria	0.80	0.61	0.41
São Tomé and Príncipe	1.77	1.27	0.78
Senegal	1.17	0.85	0.52
Sierra Leone	1.30	0.93	0.55
South Africa	0.61	0.45	0.29
Sudan	0.76	0.56	0.36
Tanzania	1.44	1.04	0.64
Togo	0.92	0.64	0.36
Tunisia	0.36	0.26	0.15
Uganda	1.19	0.85	0.51
Zambia	0.87	0.62	0.36
Zimbabwe	0.96	0.69	0.42

*Table B.2: Pearson correlation coefficients for various versions of the PPI (Round 6)*

	<b>PPI (3:1)</b>	<b>PPI (2:1)</b>	<b>PPI (1:1)</b>
PPI (3:1)	1		
PPI (2:1)	.997	1	
PPI (1:1)	.969	.985	1

*Note: All correlations are statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .*

*Table B.3: Spearman correlation coefficients for various versions of the PPI (Round 6)*

	<b>PPI (3:1)</b>	<b>PPI (2:1)</b>	<b>PPI (1:1)</b>
PPI (3:1)	1		
PPI (2:1)	.990	1	
PPI (1:1)	.898	.938	1

*Note: All correlations are statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .*

# Appendix C: Codebook

Table C.1: Codebook

	Variable type	Item wording/description	Source
<b>Party presence and organization</b>			
<i>Party Presence Index (AB)</i>			
Attend campaign rally	Item	Thinking about the last national election in [20XX], did you attend a campaign rally? (Q23A, R6)	AB R5/6/7
Attend meeting with candidate/campaign staff	Item	Thinking about the last national election in [20XX], did you attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff? (Q23B)	AB R6
Work for candidate/party	Item	Thinking about the last national election in [20XX], did you work for a candidate or party? (Q23D, R6)	AB R5/6/7
Contact party official	Item	During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: A political party official? (Q24D)	AB R5/6/7
Close to party	Item	Do you feel close to any particular political party? (Q90A, R6)	AB R6/8
Which party	Item	Which party is that? (Q90B, R6)	AB R6/8
<i>ANC party presence</i>			
Attend campaign rally	Item	Did you attend any party meetings or rallies during the 2019 election campaign? If yes, which ones? A) ANC (Q58)	SANES 2019
Work for candidate/ party	Item	Did you work for any party or candidate during the election campaign? (Q59)	SANES 2019
Close to party	Item	Many people feel close to a particular political party over a long period of time, although they may occasionally vote for a different party. What about you? Do you usually think of yourself as close to a particular party? (Q16)	SANES 2019
Which party	Item	Which party is that? (Q18)	SANES 2019
Delegates/10,000 residents in province	Item	Number of delegates invited to the 57 <sup>th</sup> ANC conference; province population is drawn from 2017 estimates of Stats SA	ANC & Stats SA

	Variable type	Item wording/description	Source
<i>Party canvassing (AB)</i>			
Party canvassing	Item	Thinking about the last national election in [20XX], did any representative of a political party contact you during the campaign? (Q15C)	AB R8
Canvassed by which party	Item	If someone from a political party contacted you, which party were they from? (Q15D)	AB R8
<b>Consequences of party presence</b>			
<i>Macro level</i>			
National wealth (logged)	Item	GDP/capita (logged) for 2014	World Bank
Ethno-linguistic heterogeneity	Item	Alesina, 2003	
Years democracy (total)	Item	Total number of years (as of year of survey) with an average Freedom House score (political rights and civil liberties) score $\leq 2.5$	Freedom House
Electoral system (SMD)	Item	Countries that elect legislators from single-member districts across the entire territory (can also include top-up seats distributed on basis of proportionality)	Author's calculation
Electoral system	Item	Countries that elect legislators from large regional or national party lists (average district magnitude $> 7.0$ )	Author's calculation
<i>Micro level</i>			
Voter turnout	Item	Understanding that some people were unable to vote in the most recent national election in [20XX], which of the following statements is true for you? (Q21)	AB R6
Local councillor and MP responsive	Index	How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say? A) Members of Parliament? B) Local government councillors? (Q59 A+B) Average score of the two items	AB R6
Trust governing party	Item	How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The ruling party? (Q52F)	AB R6
Trust opposition parties	Item	How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Opposition political parties? (Q52G)	AB R6
Perceived supply of democracy	Construct	In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [country] today? (Q40) Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? (Q41)	AB R6



	<b>Variable type</b>	<b>Item wording/description</b>	<b>Source</b>
Age	Item	How old are you? (Q1)	AB R6
Location	Item	Urban or rural primary sampling unit (URBRUR)	AB R6
Gender	Item	Respondent's gender (Q101)	AB R6
Education	Item	What is your highest level of education? (Q97)	AB R6
Employment	Item	Do you have a job that pays a cash income? If yes, is it full-time or part-time? If no, are you presently looking for a job? (Q95)	AB R6
Middle-class occupation	Construct	What is your main occupation? (Q96A) Do you work for yourself, for someone else in the private sector or the non-governmental sector, or for government? (Q96B) If work for self + shop owner, supervisor, mid-level professional, or upper-level professional)	AB R6
Lived Poverty Index	Index	Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: A) Enough food to eat? B) Enough clean water for home use? C) Medicines or medical treatment? D) Enough fuel to cook your food? E) A cash income? (Q8A-E) Single unrotated factor (Eigenvalue = 2.76) explains 55.27% of common variance. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .795.	AB R6
Cognitive engagement	Construct	How interested would you say you are in public affairs? (Q13) When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters? (Q14) The two items are correlated (Pearson's r) at .556. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) =.714.	AB R6
News media use	Index	How often do you get news from the following sources: A) Radio? B) Television? C) Newspaper? (Q12A-C) Single unrotated factor (Eigenvalue = 1.66) explains 55.48% of common variance. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) = .586.	AB R6

	<b>Variable type</b>	<b>Item wording/description</b>	<b>Source</b>
Community-level participation	Index	For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member: A) A religious group that meets outside of regular worship services? B) Some other voluntary association or community group? (Q19A-B) Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance? A) Attended a community meeting? B) Got together with others to raise an issue? (Q20A-B) Single unrotated factor (Eigenvalue = 2.17) explains 54.28% of common variance. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .715.	AB R6
Approve/trust president	Construct	Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: President /Prime minister ____? (Q68A) How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The president/prime minister (Q52A) The two items are correlated (Pearson's r = .624). Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) = .766.	AB R6
Evaluation of national economic conditions	Index	In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country? (Q4A) Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago? Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time? Single unrotated factor (Eigenvalue = 1.80) explains 60.0% of common variance. Reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .665.	AB R6
Free and fair elections	Item	On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in [20XX]? (Q22)	AB R6