

**Citizens of the World?  
Africans, Media and Telecommunications**

Democracies are assumed to rely on an informed and active citizenry. Freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and access to a variety of independent media sources are therefore considered essential elements of democratic societies. The Afrobarometer<sup>1</sup> has been asking respondents since 1999 how often they get news from various sources, including radio, television and newspapers. But in many parts of the world people increasingly gather news and communicate via mobile phones and the internet. In its most recent fourth round of surveys, conducted in 19 countries during 2008, we also began asking about the frequency of access to these tools for gathering and sharing information.

Why does it matter how often someone uses a cell phone or the internet, or whether they frequently turn to traditional media sources for information? Governments, civil society organisations and development agencies can use this information to better communicate with the public. Media houses and advertisers want to understand it as well, so that they can deliver content appropriately to African audiences. But beyond this, as we try to assess the progress of the democratic enterprise in Africa, for example, it is useful to understand not only the extent these connections in Africa, but also whether “cosmopolitanism” – i.e., the degree of connectedness one has to the outside world – has an influence on how individuals think and act as citizens and, possibly, as democrats.

Globalisation theorists have explored cosmopolitanism as a socially-defined construct that influences attitudes and behaviour as individuals interact with the world. Cosmopolitans are less influenced by the biases of their local culture, and tend to appreciate influences outside their own culture or locality. Hannerz (1990)<sup>2</sup> distinguishes cosmopolitans from locals, who are content with the familiar and parochial ways of life to which they are accustomed. Cosmopolitans may actively seek to engage with elements of foreign culture, or they may simply be more inclined to accept diversity. Some have used a taxonomy that contrasts cosmopolitans with locals who are parochial and eschew foreign or global influences. Moderate cosmopolitans may be open to external influences but retain some of their local predilections, while extreme cosmopolitans eschew local ideas and practices while embracing global influences.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Afrobarometer is a joint enterprise of the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP, Benin). Fieldwork, data entry, preliminary analysis, and the dissemination of survey results are conducted by National Partner organizations in each African country. Michigan State University and the University of Cape Town provide technical and advisory support services.

<sup>2</sup> Hannerz, U. (1990). “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture.” *Theory, Culture and Society*. 7 (June). 237-51.

<sup>3</sup> Cannon, H.M. and Yaprak, A. (2002). “Will the Real World Citizen Please Stand Up: The Many Faces of Cosmopolitan Consumer Behaviour.” *Journal of International Marketing*. 10 (4). 30-52.

In this brief, we begin by focusing on three main indicators to determine the extent to which Africans are cosmopolitan “citizens of the world.” First, access to media enables individuals to engage with practices and ideas that are outside their immediate geographic and cultural space.<sup>4</sup> Second, use of telecommunications technology, particularly the internet, facilitates connections with global ideas and behaviour. Third, connections to transnational migrants likewise permit many people to experience life in other parts of the world vicariously through contact with friends or relatives living abroad. From these indicators, we can develop an “index of cosmopolitanism.” We then go on to consider how individual scores on this index are related to key social and political attitudes.

We explore these issues using data from four rounds of Afrobarometer surveys.<sup>5</sup> The most recent data on cosmopolitanism comes from public attitude surveys conducted by the Afrobarometer in 19 countries during 2008. We can also assess trends in these indicators for 11 countries that have been surveyed regularly from 1999-2008.

### **Media and Telecommunications Consumption in Africa**

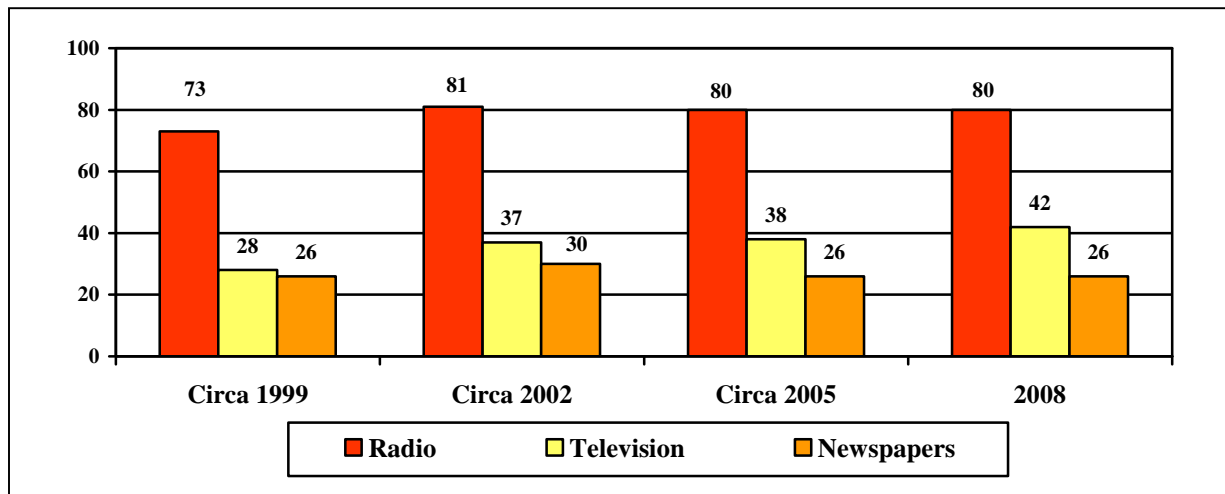
Figure 1 depicts access to traditional media outlets over time, between Round 1 (circa 1999) and 2008, across the 11 countries that have been included in all four rounds of the Afrobarometer (Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). From 1999 to 2002, there was an increase in the regular usage of all three types of media. Since then, regular radio listenership, already relatively pervasive, has remained quite stable, but there has been a steady increase in regular television viewership, which is a full 14 points higher in 2008 than in 1999. Regular readership of newspapers initially increased as well, but has declined since 2002.

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<sup>4</sup> Hannerz, U. 2007. “Foreign Correspondents and the Varieties of Cosmopolitanism,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 33(2). 299-311..

<sup>5</sup> Round 1 covered 12 countries between 1999 and 2001 (Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe). Round 2 surveys, conducted in 2002-3, also included Cape Verde, Kenya, Mozambique and Senegal. Round 3 in 2005-6 covered 18 countries with the inclusion of Benin and Madagascar. Burkina Faso and Liberia were added in Round 4. Fieldwork for Round 4 Afrobarometer surveys was conducted in 19 African countries between March and December 2008. Due to state-sponsored violence, a Round 4 survey could not be conducted in Zimbabwe during 2008. Note that all findings from Zambia 2008 should still be considered provisional; final results will be released in mid-2009. For this reason, while the scores for Zambia are included in the 19-country means, we do not report individual results for the country.

**Figure 1: News Sources over Time, 11-country means, 1999-2008**  
 (% a few times per week or everyday)



“How often do you get news from the following sources: a) radio; b) television; c) newspapers?”

Table 1 contains detailed information on media access in 2008 for all 19 countries surveyed. It also reports results for new questions relating to computer, internet and mobile phone usage. The following points are noteworthy:

- Radio is clearly the most accessible medium – the vast majority of respondents in all countries get news from this source frequently. Lesotho and Malawi are the only countries where less than 70 percent of the population gets news from radio at least once a week.
- Television viewership is most pervasive and frequent in South Africa and Cape Verde. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of South Africans and more than half (56 percent) of Cape Verdians get news from television every day. This compares to a mere 11 percent of Liberians and 13 percent of Malawians who access this source every few days or more.
- Newspaper readership is also highest in South Africa, where over half (54 percent) of the adult population reads one regularly, followed by Namibia (44 percent) and Botswana (42 percent).
- South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, and Namibia are the only countries where more than 70 percent use a mobile phone at least a few times a week. Only half as many have regular access in Burkina Faso, Malawi and Mali.
- Computer usage is relatively low across all countries. Botswana, Cape Verde, Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa are the only countries where more than 20 percent of adults use a computer at least once a month.
- Cape Verde is the only country where more than 20 percent use the internet at least once a month, although Nigeria and South Africa come close.

Overall, the usage of computers and the internet is relatively low across the 19 countries. Only about one in ten individuals use them regularly. Malawi, Mali, and Tanzania lag far behind the others on this key indicator of cosmopolitan engagement.

**Table 1: Regular Usage of Media and Telecommunications, 18 countries, 2008**

	How often do you get news from the following sources?			How often do you use each of the following?		
	% a few times per week or everyday			% a few times per week or every day	% a few times a month, a few times per week or every day	
	Radio	Television	Newspapers	Mobile Phone	Computer	Internet
Benin	78	38	5	46	8	8
Botswana	71	51	42	73	22	17
Burkina Faso	69	29	9	38	7	7
Cape Verde	75	80	29	57	33	29
Ghana	84	51	20	53	11	7
Kenya	90	43	30	76	18	15
Lesotho	64	18	12	46	8	5
Liberia	71	11	14	46	7	7
Madagascar	72	40	22	41	9	5
Malawi	65	13	11	35	4	3
Mali	75	36	5	37	4	3
Mozambique	71	38	13	52	13	7
Namibia	88	44	40	76	23	16
Nigeria	85	59	25	69	23	18
Senegal	87	66	20	67	13	12
South Africa	87	85	54	82	26	19
Tanzania	82	30	23	48	4	4
Uganda	87	20	20	60	12	9
<b>Mean</b>	79	44	24	58	15	12

“How often do you get news from the following sources: a) radio; b) television; c) newspapers?”

“How often do you use: a) a mobile phone; b) a computer; c) the internet?”

As might be expected urban dwellers are much more likely to do things like accessing television news than rural inhabitants. Table 2 provides the breakdown of the entire sample by urban-rural location. The same table makes the point that access to a television is critical to frequency of use – very few people watch occasionally. It is either not at all, or relatively frequently. A very similar pattern can be detected with respect to cell phone use.

**Table 2: Television Usage by Urban/Rural Location, 19 countries, 2008 (%)**

	Urban	Rural	Total
Never	18	57	43
Less than once a month	3	7	5
A few times a month	6	8	7
A few times a week	18	12	14
Every day	55	17	30
Don't know	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100

Table 3 depicts the frequency of internet usage by age. It is evident that younger people aged 18-24 are considerably more likely to use the internet than those who are older. However, other factors such as income or standard of living may also affect access to the internet.

**Table 3: Internet Usage by Age, 19 countries, 2008 (%)**

	Age		
	18-24	25-35	36+
Never	77	81	90
Less than once a month	5	4	3
A few times a month	7	5	2
A few times a week	7	6	3
Every day	3	3	2
Don't know	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100

In order to determine if there is an association between living standards and access to telecommunications and media we have compared internet usage with the shortage of a cash income (Table 4). Those who do not experience shortages of cash income are more likely to use the internet on a regular basis.

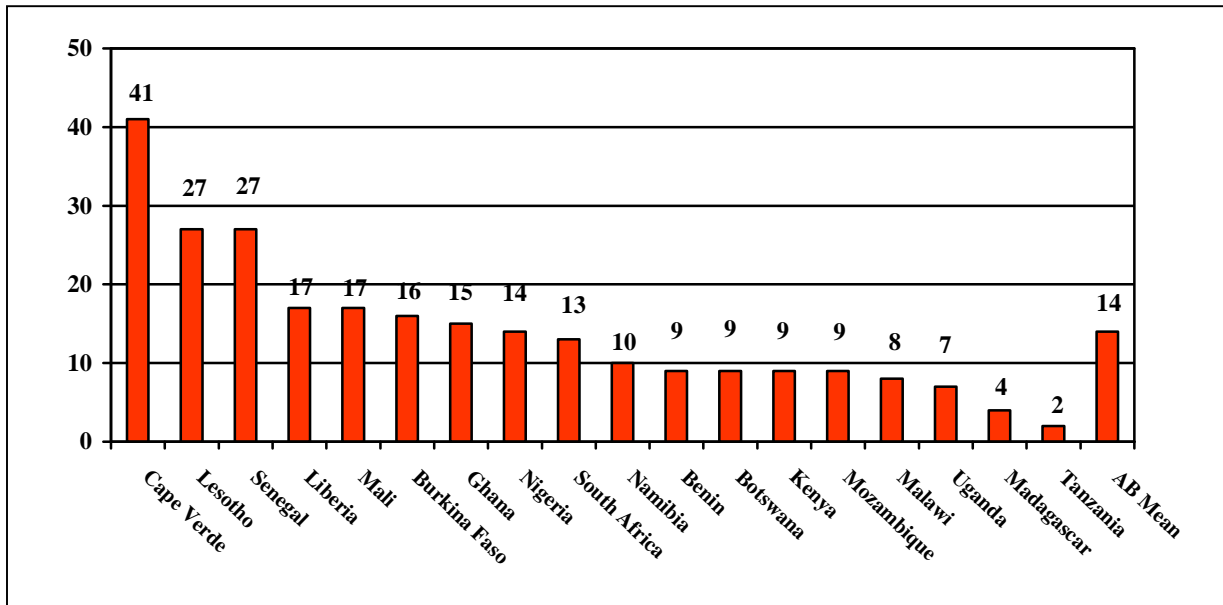
**Table 4: Internet Usage by Shortage of Cash Income, 19 countries, 2008 (%)**

Frequency of Internet Use	Shortage of Cash Income				
	Never	Once/twice	Several times	Many times	Always
Never	72	78	85	91	92
Less than once a month	5	5	4	3	2
A few times a month	7	6	4	2	2
A few times a week	9	7	4	2	2
Every day	7	3	2	1	1
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

In summary, the analysis provides evidence to confirm a commonsense view that frequent access to media and telecommunications is more likely for Africans who are urban, younger and have a higher standard of living.

Finally, we turn to one other useful indicator of the extent to which people in Africa are regularly connected with the rest of the world: receipt of remittances from friends or relatives outside the country. Remittance transfer and communication systems are remarkably efficient and organized, often in ways that favour less formal and more culturally integrated communication systems. More than 20 percent receive remittances at least once a year in Cape Verde (41 percent), Lesotho and Senegal (both 27 percent), and about one in six respondents do in another six countries. In contrast, Tanzanians are again left behind on this indicator of integration, as are Malagasy.

**Figure 2: Receipt of Remittances, 18 countries, 2008**  
 (% at least once a year)



*How often, if at all, do you receive money remittances from friends or relatives outside of the country?*

### Measuring Cosmopolitanism

The indicators discussed above – media access and use of telecommunications technology, along with receipt of remittances – can be combined to develop an “Index of Cosmopolitanism.”<sup>6</sup> This index reflects the extent to which Africans have access to elements of global culture purveyed by the mass media, the internet, and migrants. The index is created by standardizing the media usage, telecommunications usage, and remittances variables and creating an average from these variables. Scores range along a five-point scale that runs from 0 (which reflects no access to media or telecommunications, and minimum cosmopolitanism) to 4 (which would reflect constant usage of all media and telecommunications technologies, as well as regular receipt of remittances). Across 19 countries, the mean value of the index is 1.35, and the median value is 1.14, indicating that overall cosmopolitanism is relatively low in the 19 countries included in the study.<sup>7</sup>

Having an index enables us to compare levels of cosmopolitanism across the 19 countries, and to use the index to think about present attitudes and possible future developments in these countries.

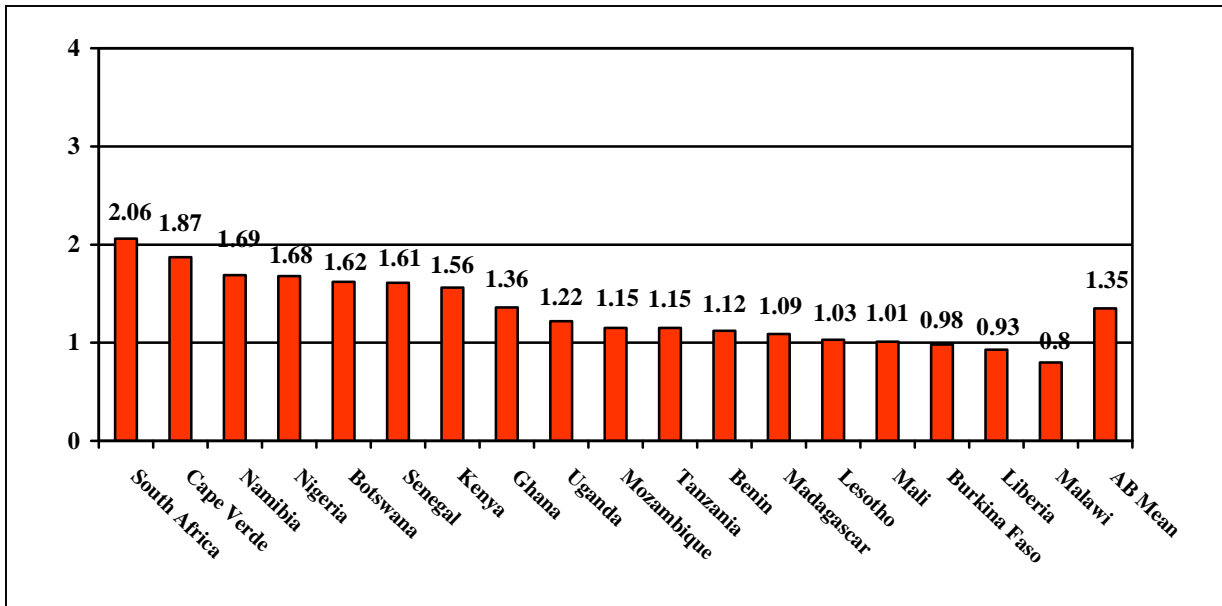
Figure 3 shows the average values of cosmopolitanism for each country in the survey. South Africa and Cape Verde have the highest scores, while Malawi has the lowest. Botswana has

<sup>6</sup> Some indexes of cosmopolitanism include the number of languages spoken. However initial investigation suggests that in Africa, rural, and hence more local, people often speak more rather than fewer languages. It may be possible through further analysis to extract those who speak one or more international languages, and especially those not used as a lingua franca in their own country. But in this analysis, including the number of languages spoken did add to the reliability of the index, so it was left out.

<sup>7</sup> Reliability testing revealed that the scale is reliable. The scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.76.

fairly high cosmopolitanism, but the data indicates that cosmopolitanism attributes are very unevenly distributed in this country, rather than spread evenly through the society.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 3: Index of Cosmopolitanism, by Country, 18 countries, 2008 (0-2 point scale)**



### Cosmopolitanism and Individual Attitudes

In order to look at whether cosmopolitanism has an impact on people’s attitudes, we look at three issues – interest in public affairs, discussion of politics, and views of opposition parties.

As shown in Table 5, we find a clear and positive link between interest in public affairs and cosmopolitanism: interest increases as cosmopolitanism increases. “Cosmopolitans” are also more likely to engage in political discussion (Table 6). Statistical tests confirm that it is in fact people’s level of cosmopolitanism that drives this interest, rather than the other way around.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 5: Cosmopolitanism and Interest in Politics, 19 countries, 2008**

How interested would you say you are in public affairs?	Mean Index of Cosmopolitanism
Not at all interested	1.12
Not very interested	1.33
Somewhat interested	1.41
Very Interested	1.44

<sup>8</sup> The high standard deviation of 0.93 indicates that cosmopolitanism is uneven in Botswana.

<sup>9</sup> ANOVA post hoc tests were used and tables will be available for those interested in the statistical approach.

**Table 6: Cosmopolitanism and Discussion of Politics, 19 countries, 2008**

When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters:	Mean Index of Cosmopolitanism
Never	1.08
Occasionally	1.43
Frequently	1.58

We are also interested in whether cosmopolitanism might have a relationship to democratic attitudes. While we will not explore this topic in detail here, we will take a brief look at one indicator: attitudes about the role of opposition parties in domestic politics. In most established democracies, opposition parties are seen as playing a critical role in examining and challenging the government in power. However, in general this view finds relatively weak support in Africa. When we ask respondents whether “Opposition parties should regularly examine and criticize government policies and actions,” or whether instead they believe that “Opposition parties should concentrate on cooperating with government and helping it develop the country,” 59 percent chose the latter statement, compared to only 36 percent who support a more active and challenging role for the opposition.

But does their interconnected and exposure to a broader array of news and ideas make cosmopolitans more accepting an active role for opposition parties in domestic politics? The data provides some support for this hypothesis: cosmopolitans are more likely to agree that parties should criticize government rather than cooperate. This finding may go some way towards indicating that debates about the role and function of opposition parties will not be easily resolved in our present unequal and not very cosmopolitan societies.

Finally, the Afrobarometer asks a bank of questions about the helpfulness of international actors in development and their levels of influence over countries. On face value, cosmopolitans are assumed to be more likely to have friendly attitudes towards other states, international organisations, and development partners, and to be better informed about them (i.e., less likely to respond “don’t know” when asked about the role of these states and institutions).

## Conclusion

While in some respects – particularly through their radios – Africans are very connected to the outside world, our findings suggests that the majority continue to be local rather than world citizens. However, this initial work on cosmopolitanism suggests that as their world becomes larger through both traditional and new forms of media and telecommunications, we can expect greater levels of political debate, increased willingness to accept political opposition, and growing and realism about the outside world.

This Briefing Paper was prepared by Zenobia Ismail ([zismail@idasa.org.za](mailto:zismail@idasa.org.za)) and Paul Graham of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa).

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