

AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 51

**WHO VOTES IN AFRICA? AN
EXAMINATION OF ELECTORAL
TURNOUT IN 10 AFRICAN
COUNTRIES**

by Michelle Kuenzi and Gina Lambright

**A comparative series of national public
attitude surveys on democracy, markets
and civil society in Africa.**



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Abstract

The question “Who votes in the United States?” has been largely answered by the political science scholarship devoted to this subject. In contrast, the question “Who votes in Africa?” has yet to receive significant attention. This paper focuses on electoral participation in 10 sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Afrobarometer survey data is used to assess the determinants of voting for over 17,000 voting age adults in 10 SSA countries. We find that variables associated with several approaches help explain who votes in Africa. Agencies of mobilization play an important role in determining who votes in Africa. In particular, there is a strong positive relationship between affiliating with a political party and voting in the countries of study. Certain attitudes, such as political interest, also influence individuals’ decisions of whether to vote as does level of media exposure. Among the demographic variables, age consistently registers a significant, positive relationship with voting. In addition, we find that the institutional and socio-economic context also influences individuals’ propensities to vote.

Introduction

The question “Who votes in the United States?” has been largely answered by the political science scholarship devoted to this subject. In contrast, the question “Who votes in Africa?” has yet to receive significant attention. Several studies have examined political participation within a single country (e.g. Bratton 1999), but there has been little cross-national research to explore the nature of electoral participation across Africa’s multiparty regimes. Now that the vast majority of African states have at least the formal features of democracy, such as multiparty elections, it is important to see whether the norms and behavior of the citizenry support these democratic institutions. This paper seeks to identify the factors associated with electoral participation in sub-Saharan African countries. Do the individual level models that explain electoral participation in the United States and other advanced industrial democracies also explain electoral participation in Africa? Are different factors associated with turning out to vote in Africa?

This paper focuses on electoral participation in 10 sub-Saharan African countries. Elections are the foundation of modern democracy. Although holding relatively free and fair elections on a regular basis might not be sufficient for the existence of democracy, it is certainly necessary. If turnout rates in an emerging democracy are excessively low, it might indicate that people do not see them as a central part of political life. Thus, understanding the factors that affect electoral participation is critical. Numerous cross-national studies have pointed to the importance of political institutions in determining voter turnout rates (e.g. Powell 1980; Jackman 1987; Fornos et al. 2004; Kuenzi and Lambright 2005). In this paper, we concentrate on the factors that affect an individual’s propensity to vote. However, like Leighley and Nagler (1992) and other scholars, we also try to assess the effects of the context, including the socio-economic environment and institutional environment, on individuals. As Leighley and Nagler (1992) point out in their study of voting in the United States, being in an environment where, for example, socio-economic development is high may have a separate effect on an individual from his/her own socio-economic development level. Indeed, we might expect what La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) refer to as “politically relevant social capital” to be more prevalent in milieus with higher literacy rates.

We use Afrobarometer Round 1 survey data to test the relationships of interest for over 17,000 voting age adults in 10 SSA countries.¹ We find that variables associated with several approaches help explain who votes in Africa. Agencies of mobilization play an important role determining who votes in Africa. In particular, there is a strong positive relationship between affiliating with a political party and voting in our countries of study. Certain attitudes, such as political interest, also influence individuals’ decisions of whether to vote as does level of media exposure. Among the demographic variables, age consistently registers a significant, positive relationship with voting. In addition, we find that the institutional and socio-economic context also influences individuals’ propensities to vote.

Theory

A plethora of studies have pointed to the importance of demographic factors in predicting electoral participation. Socioeconomic status and education more specifically have consistently been found to be the most important predictors of voting in the United States (Teixeira 1987; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). According to the

resource model of political participation as delineated by Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995), those with the most resources, both social and financial, will be most likely to participate politically. As Norris (2002) observes, other studies have found that socioeconomic status has a greater effect on electoral participation in the United States than in other countries. Nonetheless, based on the pooled survey data from the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) 1996 Role of Government III study of 22 countries, Norris (2002) finds that both education and income have significant positive effects on voting. On the other hand, when Norris tests these relationships for the individual countries, she finds that education does not have a significant effect on voting in over half of the countries, including most of the countries of Western Europe. The situation is somewhat similar for income (2002, 92-5). Bratton (1999) also finds no support for the SES model in his study of political participation in Zambia. In his study of 69 villages and 2,000 individuals in two north Indian states, at the individual level, Krishna (2002) did not find a relationship between political activity and wealth, age, or religion. He did, however, find a significant positive relationship between education and political activity. In short, the effects of socioeconomic status appear to be at least somewhat context specific.

Since the characteristics of elections and political parties in the political systems of SSA differ substantially from those in the advanced industrial democracies, we might expect the factors associated with political participation to differ as well. Electoral participation and civic participation are far from identical in SSA. Citizens often pursue narrow, short-term interests through electoral participation as opposed to more generalized, long-term interests. Wantchekon's (2003) extraordinary field experiment in Benin reveals that, with regard to the political messages delivered by presidential candidates, clientelist appeals are much more effective than programmatic appeals. In the United States, education is strongly associated with turning out to vote. As numerous scholars point out, education helps endow individuals with the skills they need to grapple with the logistical demands of voting. Higher levels of education are also associated with higher levels of interest in politics. In addition, those with high levels of education are likely to come from homes with educated, politically aware parents (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). If, as Bratton (1999) argues, political parties function more as agents of mobilization as opposed to representation in the African context, then we might not expect to see such a strong relationship between education and political participation in our countries of study.

The relationship between gender and political participation appears to have changed in the advanced industrial democracies. As Inglehart and Norris (2000) note, "Studies carried out in many countries in the previous decades found that women were more conservative than men and less likely to participate in politics" (441). Now, we can see that in some contexts, women are more likely to vote than men. For example, Leighley and Nagler (1992) find that women were more likely to vote in the 1984 U.S. election than men, whereas that did not appear to be the case in the 1972 election. Bratton (1999) finds there to be a significant negative relationship between being a woman and voting in Zambia. In the context of India, Krishna (2002) also finds a significant negative relationship between being a woman and political activity. Given the way men dominate the political spheres in most African countries, we might expect to find that women are less likely to turn out to vote than men in our countries of study.

Attitudes, it is theorized, also affect individuals' decisions of whether to vote. One stream of the literature on voter turnout focuses on social cohesion and social capital. The more people trust

those around them, it is theorized, the more likely people are to vote. Based on 1992 U.S. NES data, Knack and Kropf (1998) find that living in counties with “cooperative norms” increases the probability that one will turn out to vote. In addition, they find a positive relationship between social trust and the likelihood of voting. Krishna (2002) finds social capital to have a significant positive effect on the average village political participation rates. We might therefore expect to find a positive relationship between social trust and voting in the African countries of study. Those who have more trust in government institutions, it is thought, will also be more likely to vote. Indeed, Cox (2003) finds that institutional trust has a positive, significant relationship with turning out to vote in the European Parliamentary elections. Based on the 1996 ISSP survey data, Norris (2002) reports a positive relationship between political trust and turning out to vote, but the variable used to capture political trust seems closer to a measure of group political efficacy. We might therefore expect that those citizens in our countries of study who have higher levels of political trust and more positive affects toward the government to be more likely to vote than those with lower levels of trust. At the aggregate level, some have hypothesized that poor government performance depresses turnout in developed countries but stimulates turnout in developing countries (Radcliff 1992; Kostadinova 2003). We might therefore expect negative evaluations of government performance to increase the likelihood of voting in our countries of study.

Connected to the social capital literature is the notion that the more engaged people are in their communities, the more likely they are to vote. Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) find that participation in voluntary organizations and activities increases people’s civic skills, which leads people to have a greater propensity to participate politically. In addition, civil society groups are likely to be linked to political parties, which then link citizens to the political sphere. That is, civil society organizations can serve as a force of political mobilization. Indeed, Norris (2002) finds a significant, positive relationship between membership in voluntary organizations and affiliating with a political party based on data for 59 nations. The linkages between civil society organizations and political parties have deep roots in Africa. Historically within Africa’s one-party regimes, the only civil society organizations sanctioned were those aligned to the ruling political party. But even with the transition to multiparty politics in Africa, these linkages still exist as newly formed political parties struggle to establish links with civil society organizations seen as powerful or politically important, as has been the case with Kenya’s political parties and the Maendeleo women’s organization. Bratton (1999) finds that membership in certain types of civil society groups has a significant, positive relationship with voting in the Zambia. On the other hand, Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) do not find a relationship between associational membership and voting in their study of political participation across 12 countries in the Afrobarometer.

Last, but definitely not least, political parties have long been seen to play a key role in promoting electoral participation. Political parties are the primary link between citizens and government. As Wattenberg notes, “In sum, the saga of electoral participation in advanced industrial countries is one in which the state of political parties, and the party system more generally, has played a critical role” (2002, 64). Indeed, Wattenberg (2002) and others attribute the decline in electoral participation in advanced industrial democracies to the weakening of political parties and party systems in these countries. Bratton (1999) finds that identifying with a political party is one of the most important predictors of voting in Zambia and Norris (2002) finds the same with the

regard to the 22 countries covered in the 1996 ISSP study. The political parties and party systems of SSA are known for their weakness and lack of institutionalization (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001). Nonetheless, we would expect identifying with a political party to have a positive relationship with voting in our countries of study. In SSA, those affiliating with a political party are likely to be the targets of mobilization efforts and more connected to the political system than those with no party affiliation. Both voluntary organizations and political parties constitute what Norris (2002) calls “mobilizing agencies.”

Conceptualization and Operationalization

Selection of Countries

The availability of the Afrobarometer data for twelve sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries enables us to examine voting behavior using individual level data from ten different countries.² Given the selection of variables needed to examine the explanatory power of different explanations for voter participation, cases from Uganda and Ghana, although included in the Afrobarometer’s cross-national dataset, are excluded from our analysis. Thus, the analysis presented below covers the following ten SSA countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The total number of cases for these ten countries is 17,256.³

Dependent variable: Voting

The focus of our study is electoral participation in Africa. Our measure of voting for the ten SSA countries is based on a single question about whether the respondent voted in the most recent round of national elections. We recoded responses to create a dichotomous measure of who voted among the voting age population: 1 = yes, voted; 0 = no, did not vote.⁴ The question wording and response categories varied between the seven southern African countries included in the Southern African Barometer⁵ and the three remaining countries: Mali, Nigeria and Tanzania. (Please see the Appendix for detailed information about question wording across these ten countries.) The questions about voting included in surveys in Mali, Tanzania and Nigeria were dichotomous already, including only two response options—yes or no. The response categories for the original voting questions in the seven southern African countries are: I did not vote; I decided not to vote; I was unable to vote; I voted; no election in my area; can’t remember; and missing data. To create a dichotomous measure we combined the following four categories into a single category for those respondents who reported that they did not participate in the election: I did not vote; I decided not to vote; I was unable to vote; and no election in my area. Because it is difficult to know how precisely respondents and survey enumerators interpreted the distinctions between the items in this response set and because these categories are not mutually exclusive, we combine these four indications of nonparticipation into a single category. Nevertheless because these categories may distinguish individuals who were restricted from voting because of logistical problems with the conduct of the election or perhaps as a result of intimidation or violence, we also present results of analysis using an alternative coding of voting. In the alternative coding of the variable, we exclude those respondents who said they were unable to vote or there was no election in their area.⁶

Table 1: Voting Behavior in Africa

| | Yes | No ¹ | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 African countries (n=16946)² | | | |
| Voted in last elections? | 11986 (70.7) | 4978 ³ (29.3) | |
| | Official Turnout ⁴ (Percent of registered voters) | Official Turnout (Percent of voting age population) | Percent report voting in most recent election ⁵ |
| Botswana | 77.1 (1999) | 42.0 | 55.1 (1999) |
| Lesotho | 71.8 (1998) | 61.7 | 69.7 (1998) |
| Malawi | 92.3 (1999) | 105.9 | 90.0 (1999) |
| Mali | 21.6 (1997) | 21.5 | 70.4 (2001) |
| Namibia | 62.8 (1999) | 61.7 | 66.5 (1999) |
| Nigeria | 84.8 (1999) | 93.1 | 66.2 (2000) |
| South Africa | 89.3 (1999) | 63.9 | 82.9 (2000) |
| Tanzania | 72.8 (2000) | 45.7 | 87.4 (2001) |
| Zambia | 78.6 (1996) | 39.8 | 51.3 (1999) |
| Zimbabwe | 30.8 (1995) | 26.0 | 49.1 (1999) |

¹ In the merged ten country dataset, the following responses are combined into a single category, 0 = no, did not vote: did not vote (n=2115), decided not to vote (n=1118), unable to vote (n=1584), and no election in my area (n=161). See Appendix for details about question wording and categories for different countries.

² This figure (n=16946) excludes 292 cases—responses of “can’t remember” or missing data.

³ Distribution of responses is as follows: did not vote (n=2115), decided not to vote (n=1118), unable to vote (n=1584), and no election in my area (n=161).

⁴ Year of election listed in parentheses below official turnout. Source of official turnout was International Institute for Democracy and Election Assistance: www.idea.int.

⁵ Year of Afrobarometer survey listed in parentheses below percent of survey respondents who reported they voted in the most recent election.

Table 1 reports the rates of electoral participation in the ten SSA countries. In the first column are the official turnout rates among registered voters, in the second column are the official turnout rates among the voting age populations, and in the third are the percent of Afrobarometer survey respondents who reported participating in the last election in each of the respective countries. As seen in the table, reported rates of participation in national elections are fairly high in all of our cases. There is, however, quite a bit of variation in voting rates across these ten countries. For example, only 51.3 percent of survey respondents in Zambia in 1999 reported participating in the 1996 elections compared to 90 percent of Malawians surveyed in 1999 about their participation in the election of the same year. There is similar variation when one compares reported rates of voting participation with official turnout statistics. As is evident in Table 1, significant differences exist between these two figures for many of these countries, especially Mali, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.⁷ For example, official reports of participation in Mali's 1997 election fall dramatically below participation rates reported by Malian survey respondents.⁸ The tendency of survey data to inflate voting participation rates is well known (for example, see Bratton 1999; Norris 2002). In their path-breaking book on public opinion and democracy in Africa, Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi attribute this pattern—in which reported rates of participation exceed official statistics—to the strong desire of Africans “to associate themselves with the act of voting” (2005, 146). On the other hand, in certain cases, the official statistics suggest higher rates of participation than those actually reported by survey respondents. In both Zambia and Botswana, reported rates of participation fall short of official reports of voter participation. Official turnout statistics that exceed reported rates of participation may point to election malpractice or flaws.

Independent variables

In our analysis, we examine most of the factors identified in the literature as influencing voter participation, including demographic variables (gender, age, income, education, and rural/urban status), political attitudes (efficacy, social and political trust, support for freedom of speech, political interest, and views on the state of the national economy, personal economic conditions, and the performance of political institutions), and agents of mobilization (party affiliation and membership in voluntary associations). Questions about ethnic identity were not included in all of the Afrobarometer surveys, so we are unable to examine the impact of ethnicity on electoral participation. In addition, we include several important measures of the broader national context in which elections are conducted.

Demographic factors

The Afrobarometer surveys include standard survey items for respondents' gender, level of education, age and rural/urban status. Higher values on education and age measures correspond to higher ages and levels of education. We recoded the measure of gender so that men are coded as 0 and women coded as 1. For the measure of urban/rural status, rural areas are coded as 0 and urban areas are coded as 1. To measure income, we use the following question about access to food as a proxy: “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you gone without food for your family?” (Afrobarometer 2004, 26). We recoded this variable so that higher values correspond to less frequent hunger. Respondents who report that their family “always” goes without food receive a score of 1, while those who report “never” going without food receive a score of 4.

Political Attitudes: Social Capital

We measure trust in a couple of different ways. First, we use a standard survey item that captures levels of generalized trust. For our analysis, the response “most people can be trusted” is coded as 1, while the opposite response, “you must be very careful” is coded as 0 (see Afrobarometer 2004, 44). In addition, we created an index of political trust that captures levels of trust in political institutions. The Afrobarometer Round 1 merged cross-national dataset does not always include data on trust in several political institutions, such as parliament, local governments or political parties. Therefore, the index of political trust used in our analysis, only captures levels of trust in three political institutions: the police, courts, and the army. Higher values reflect higher levels of trust in these institutions.⁹

Other Political Attitudes

We also include measures of political efficacy, political interest, and support for freedom of speech, a critical component of democracy in most scholarly definitions, in our analysis. We measure political efficacy using a single question that asks respondents about their ability to understand politics. Higher values on this measure correspond to greater feelings of efficacy as demonstrated by a positive response to the question about ability to understand government. Political interest is measured using a survey question that asks respondents about their interest in politics and government. Higher values correspond to higher levels of interest. To measure support for freedom of speech, we use survey responses to a question that asks respondents how important the freedom to criticize the government is in order for a society to be called democratic. Higher scores correspond to responses that the freedom to criticize the government is “important” or “very important” for a society to be democratic.

To capture the importance of economic conditions as a motivation to vote, we include a measure of respondents’ evaluations of economic conditions. In particular, we use a measure of how respondents evaluate of the state of the national economy. This variable is coded so that respondents who reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the state of the economy receive higher scores.

We also include a measure of how respondents evaluate the performance of parliamentary representatives. The question wording varied slightly across some of the ten countries included in the cross-national dataset so that in some cases respondents evaluated the performance of their elected member of parliament (MP) and in other cases were asked about the performance of parliament generally. This slight difference is not all that important given that elected representatives generally serve as symbols of the larger political institution, especially in rural Africa, where an MP provides the only link between a rural area and the national parliament. We use this measure as opposed to a question that probes feelings about general government performance or questions about the performance of the president because it is available for all ten countries included in our analysis.

Mobilizing Agencies

We also include several variables to help us gauge the impact of mobilizing agencies on voter participation in these ten African countries. Identification with a political party is captured with a survey question that asks respondents if they are close to any political party. In order to

measure participation in voluntary organizations, we created an index of organizational memberships based on responses to questions about membership in four different types of voluntary associations, including religious organizations, development associations, business organizations, and trade unions. Higher values correspond to reported higher number of memberships.

Table 2: Party Identification in Africa

| | Percent report feeling close to a political party | Percent report feeling close to ruling party ¹ |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 African countries | 55.9 | 70.7 |
| Botswana | 75.3 | 60.5 |
| Lesotho | 57.4 | 66.3 |
| Malawi | 82.2 | 56.8 |
| Mali | 57.7 | 72.4 |
| Namibia | 71.1 | 80.1 |
| Nigeria | 36.8 | 64.3 |
| South Africa | 44.7 | 75.5 |
| Tanzania | 79.2 | 78.7 |
| Zambia | 36.8 | 70.6 |
| Zimbabwe | 45.3 | 70.7 |

Contextual variables

As noted above, we also include six measures of the social, economic and institutional context in which voters are making decisions about voting. We measure the state of the national economy with average per capita GDP. We also include a measure of the size of the overall urban population. To measure of the impact of the overall level of education within each country on individuals' likelihood of voting, we include the adult literacy rate. We include three additional measures that tell us something about the political and institutional context: Freedom House scores from the year in which the election was held; whether elections are conducted under majoritarian electoral formula; and whether legislative and presidential elections are held concurrently.

Results

What factors influence the likelihood that individuals will vote? Since our measure of electoral participation is dichotomous, we use logit (logistical regression) to estimate the effects of the explanatory variables on voting in the ten SSA countries included in the cross-national dataset. Table 3 presents several models estimating voter participation in these ten African countries. Model 1 estimates the effects of the variables of interest on voting. As noted earlier, we also wanted to see if excluding those who responded that they could not vote changed the results of the analysis. Thus, in Model 2, those who said that they could not vote are excluded from the analysis. In Model 3, the contextual variables are added to the equation so that we can evaluate the separate effects of context on individuals' propensities to vote (the voting variable is

¹ Percentage based on those who reported feeling close to a political party in previous question.

operationalized as it is in Model 1 with those who said they couldn't vote included in the "didn't vote" category).

**Table 3: Estimates of Electoral Participation (Logit)
Dependent Variable: Vote in Last Election?**

| Model Variable | Model 1 10 African countries ¹ | Model 2 10 African countries Excludes those unable to vote | Model 3 10 African countries With 6 Contextual Variables |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| X ₁ Gender (1=female) | -.065 (.047) | -.135** (.054) | -.060 (.048) |
| X ₂ Age | .035*** (.002) | .031*** (.002) | .035*** (.002) |
| X ₃ Urban/rural status (1=urban) | -.104** (.050) | -.205*** (.058) | -.173*** (.052) |
| X ₄ Level of education (9=post-graduate) | .040 (.028) | .194*** (.032) | .111*** (.031) |
| X ₅ Income or How often does your family go hungry? (4=never) | -.027 (.032) | -.167*** (.038) | -.070** (.034) |
| X ₆ Generalized trust (1=generally most people can be trusted) | .018 (.063) | .218*** (.078) | -.025 (.066) |
| X ₈ Political Trust | -.004 (.009) | .033*** (.011) | .004 (.010) |
| X ₉ Understand government | .019 (.023) | -.010 (.026) | .013 (.023) |
| X ₁₀ Support freedom to criticize (4=very important) | .0003 (.026) | -.015 (.030) | .051** (.026) |
| X ₁₁ Satisfaction with natl economic conditions (4=very satisfied) | -.026 (.019) | -.058*** (.021) | -.043** (.019) |
| X ₁₂ Evaluation of performance of Parliament (4=strongly approve) | .165*** (.026) | .212*** (.030) | .160*** (.027) |
| X ₁₃ How frequently listen to radio news? (5=everyday) | .070*** (.014) | .090*** (.016) | .072*** (.015) |
| X ₁₄ Political interest | .087*** (.021) | .072*** (.016) | .089*** (.022) |
| X ₁₅ Membership in voluntary organizations | .116*** (.024) | .094*** (.028) | .125*** (.025) |
| X ₁₆ Close to a political party? (1=yes) | 1.09*** (.048) | 1.32*** (.057) | 1.17*** (.051) |
| Whether electoral system is majoritarian system? (1=yes) | | | -.849*** (.086) |
| Whether exec. & leg. elections are held concurrently? (1=yes) | | | .253** (.119) |
| Freedom House scores (3= free, 11=not free) | | | -.326*** (.022) |
| GDP per capita | | | -.001*** (.0001) |

¹ We exclude cases with missing data on any of the included variables, which results in only 11397 cases included in our analysis rather than the 17,256 possible cases in the complete merged dataset for the ten countries. The analysis includes the following number of cases for each country: Botswana (n=569); Lesotho (n=486); Malawi (n=854); Mali (n=1377); Namibia (n=476); Nigeria (n=3050); South Africa (n=1431); Tanzania (n=1888); Zambia (n=687); and Zimbabwe (n=579)

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Percent of national adult population literate | | | .009*** (.003) |
| Percent of national population that is urban | | | -.777*** (.005) |
| <i>Number of cases</i> | 11397 | 10509 | 11397 |
| <i>Pseudo R²/Adjusted R²</i> | .1039 | .1301 | .1370 |
| <i>LR chi²/F</i> | 1361.54 | 1366.54 | 1796.37 |
| <i>Prob > chi²/F</i> | .0000 | .0000 | .0000 |

Although we, like Bratton (1999), do not find much support for the SES model based on our analysis of voting in ten African countries, we do find that some demographic variables matter. Age has the predicted significant, positive relationship with turning out to vote in each of the three models presented in Table 3. That is, older people are more likely to vote in African countries, just as they are elsewhere in the world. This finding is in line with the findings based on studies in the advanced industrial democracies as well as Bratton's (1999) finding in Zambia and Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi's (2005) finding with regard to the African countries included in the merged data set. Norris (2002) finds that, among the demographic variables, age is the strongest predictor of who will turn out to vote with those respondents falling in the youngest age category being the least likely to vote.¹⁰

Our expectation that women would be less likely to vote in Africa is only partially supported by the analysis. In Model 1 (see Table 3), we can see that the coefficient for gender is indeed negative, as expected, but not significant. When those who said that they could not vote are excluded from the analysis, the coefficient for gender is negative and significant at the .05 level, as can be seen Model 2. In Model 3, the contextual variables are added to the analysis. The coefficient for gender is again negative but not significant. The general impression one gleans from the results displayed in Table 3 is that men are more likely to vote than women in Africa. Further analysis, however, indicates that the apparent gender gap in participation may not be uniform across the SSA countries of study and suggests that the relationship between gender and voting may be shaped by context. Although the sign of the coefficient for gender is negative in each of the models in Table 3, when Nigeria is excluded from the analysis, gender is not significantly related to voting in the remaining nine SSA countries and the sign of the coefficient even becomes positive (see Model 4 in Table 4). When the model is run for individual countries only, we find that the sign of the coefficient is positive for five of the countries and negative for the other five countries (results not shown). The coefficients are significant in five cases, and in three countries - Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Botswana - women are significantly more likely to vote than men.

Based on modernization theory we would expect urban residents to be more likely to vote than rural residents. The results displayed in Table 3 do not support this expectation. In each model presented in Table 3, the coefficient for urban is negative and significant at the .05 level. These findings suggest an interesting phenomenon in which those in rural areas may actually have a higher probability of voting in Africa, which is consistent with the idea of political parties as agents of mobilization. As in the case of Senegal's former ruling party, the PS, Africa's governing parties often receive the bulk of their support in rural areas and have historically focused their mobilization efforts outside the urban areas. In fact, this is a pattern that can be observed across the ten SSA countries. Only 30 percent of urban respondents in these ten countries report feeling close to the ruling party compared to 47 percent of rural respondents.¹¹

Moreover, only 48 percent of urban respondents report feeling close to any political party at all compared to 64 percent of rural respondents. In all ten of the countries studied, rural respondents were more likely to report feeling close to a political party than their urban counterparts. In several countries, such as Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mali, the reported party identification for rural residents is over ten percent higher than that reported for urban residents. The ability of parties in Africa to mobilize voters may be far easier in rural Africa where the threat of sanctions for not voting may be more effective and resource scarcity increases the impact of party efforts to buy votes. Rural Africans greater likelihood of identifying or feeling close to a political party may be an indication of parties' efforts to mobilize voters in rural areas or, alternatively, may facilitate party mobilization efforts in these areas.

Modernization theory, the resource model of voting, and considerable research on voting in different democracies, particularly the United States, suggest that citizens with higher incomes and higher levels of education are more likely to turn out to vote than their counterparts of lower socioeconomic status. Our results do not support this general finding. Our analysis indicates that income is not related to voting in the theoretically expected way in Africa. The proxy measure we use for income in our analysis of voting in the ten countries is, in fact, negatively related to voting across each model and statistically significant in Models 2 and 3. These results indicate that respondents who reported frequently going without food are more likely to vote in these countries than voters who did not frequently face situations of hunger. One way to interpret this finding is to examine the geographic distribution of hunger in these countries. For these ten countries, there is a significant bivariate relationship between this measure and urban-rural status.¹² People living in rural areas are more likely to have reported that their household frequently lacks sufficient food. One interpretation of this finding is that members of the rural poor may be more likely to vote in hopes they may be able to affect change. Another interpretation is that members of the rural poor may be more susceptible to the promises of patronage from political parties and candidates due to their precarious economic situation. They may also, therefore, be targeted by the mobilization efforts of political parties already working in rural areas.

The results presented in Table 3 do, however, provide some support for the expectation that education has a positive relationship with electoral participation. In each model, education is positively related to voting and the coefficient for education is significant in Models 2 and 3. When we include the entire sample in the analysis, the coefficient for education is positive but not significant, as we can see in Model 1. When we exclude those who said they could not vote from the analysis in Model 2, the coefficient is again positive but this time significant at the 0.01 level. This result makes intuitive sense. It could be case that those who are more educated are more predisposed to vote for the reasons enumerated yet are at times simply unable to do so in some African countries. If this group is included with the rest of the sample, we are then less likely to see a relationship between education and voting. In Model 3, we can see that when the contextual variables are added to the analysis, the coefficient for education is also positive and significant at the 0.01 level. Moreover, being in a more highly literate environment appears to encourage voting. Yet, further analysis raises doubts about the applicability of this finding across the countries of study. In Model 4, when Nigeria is excluded from the analysis and the model is run for the remaining nine countries (see Table 4), the sign for the coefficient for education is no longer positive but negative, although it does not reach statistical significance.

When we run our analysis separately for the other nine countries individually, the coefficients for education never reach statistical significance and the sign is positive for six countries and negative for three countries (Malawi, Namibia, and Zimbabwe). Thus the evidence relating education to voting is mixed. Again, it appears that the effect of education on voting might be context specific.

Table 4: Estimates of Electoral Participation (Logit)
Dependent Variable: Vote in Last Election?

| Model Variable | | Model 4 Excludes Nigeria | Model 5 Restricted Model |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| X ₁ | Gender (1=female) | .040 (.055) | -.036 (.043) |
| X ₂ | Age | .037*** (.002) | .035*** (.002) |
| X ₃ | Urban/rural status (1=urban) | -.176*** (.058) | -.096** (.045) |
| X ₄ | Level of education (9=post-graduate) | -.034 (.036) | .034 (.026) |
| X ₅ | Income or How often does your family go hungry? (4=never) | -.004 (.038) | -.006 (.029) |
| X ₆ | Generalized trust (1=generally most people can be trusted) | .107 (.073) | -.040 (.057) |
| X ₈ | Political Trust | .012 (.012) | |
| X ₉ | Understand government | .050* (.028) | |
| X ₁₀ | Support freedom to criticize (4=very important) | -.028 (.029) | |
| X ₁₁ | Satisfaction with natl economic conditions (4=very satisfied) | -.014 (.023) | -.026 (.017) |
| X ₁₂ | Evaluation of performance of Parliament (4=strongly approve) | .130*** (.031) | .156*** (.023) |
| X ₁₃ | How frequently listen to radio news? (5=everyday) | .061*** (.017) | .068*** (.013) |
| X ₁₄ | Political interest | .097*** (.026) | .108*** (.019) |
| X ₁₅ | Membership in voluntary organizations | .098*** (.027) | .112*** (.022) |
| X ₁₆ | Close to a political party? (1=yes) | .991*** (.056) | 1.05*** (.043) |
| | <i>Number of cases</i> | 8347 | 13288 |
| | <i>Pseudo R²/Adjusted R²</i> | .0981 | .1020 |
| | <i>LR chi²/F</i> | 916.12 | 1576.45 |
| | <i>Prob > chi²/F</i> | .0000 | .0000 |

Interestingly, for the ten countries in the merged dataset the average level of education of those who report being close to a political party is lower than that for respondents who did not report being close to or identifying with a political party. For example, among survey respondents in Botswana the average level of education for those close to a political party and those who did not report feeling close to a particular party is 4.23 and 4.70, respectively.¹³ A score of 4

corresponds to “some secondary school” while a score of 5 corresponds to “secondary school completed.” The difference is greater when one compares the level of education across those who identify with Botswana’s ruling BDP and those who do not. In this case the average level of education for BDP supporters is 3.95 compared to 4.78 for non-BDP supporters. This situation might help illuminate why education does not consistently seem to have a positive effect on voting across African countries. If political parties are often instruments of mobilization rather than representation in Africa, as Bratton (1999) observes, then those who are not as educated are probably more likely to let political parties guide their behavior than those with more education.

Bratton (1999) generally finds that, with the exception of political interest and attitudes toward traditional authority, attitudes make very little contribution to explaining political participation in Zambia. Likewise, we find that only a few of the attitudinal variables, including political interest, consistently register significant relationships with voting across the different model specifications. The results are mixed when one examines the impact of political trust on voting across different models in Table 3. The coefficient for political trust is negative and insignificant in Model 1. The coefficient is positive in Model 2 when those who said they could not vote are excluded from the analysis, but there is not a straightforward interpretation as to why this would be the case. When the contextual variables are added in Model 3 the coefficient is positive but does not reach significance. Similarly, generalized trust does not appear to be systematically related to electoral participation in Africa. The measure of generalized trust is positive in Models 1 and 2 and negative in Model 3. Again, the coefficient is significant in Model 2, which excludes those who said they “could not” vote from the category of did not vote.

Many of the other attitudinal factors demonstrate similar variability. For example, the measure of internal political efficacy (an individual’s ability to understand government) is not significantly related to voting in any of the models we present below. The sign of the coefficient is actually negative in Model 2. The fact that the expressed ability to understand government does not register a significant or consistent relationship with voting in Africa might seem surprising as the ability to understand political affairs is a commonly used measure of efficacy and political efficacy is regularly linked to political participation. If voting is largely driven by patronage considerations and mobilization agents, however, this result is understandable. Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi similarly find that voters in Africa are no more likely to be informed about political issues than nonvoters (2005, 298).

The relationship between support for freedom of speech, a critical measure of democratic values, and voting in Africa is also not consistent across the models. For example, the coefficient is positive in Models 1 and 3, while negative in Model 2 (Table 3). Once again this positive relationship that appears in several models and is even statistically significant in Model 3 may be driven partly by the relationship between this important political attitude and voting in Nigeria. The coefficient is negative, although not significant, in Model 4 with Nigeria excluded. Support for freedom of speech exhibits an interesting relationship with voting in Nigeria. When analysis is conducted using data from Nigeria only, the relationship is consistently positive (results not shown). Nigerians who responded that the freedom to criticize the government is important to a democratic society were also more likely to vote. The relationship between support for freedom of speech and voting in Nigeria may be affected by the timing of the political transition and Nigeria’s brief experience with democracy at the time the survey was conducted, closely

following the country's first multiparty elections after decades of military rule. Interestingly, when asked to define democracy, the majority of Nigerians surveyed by the Afrobarometer (approximately 40 percent of those that offered a definition) cite "government by the people." Only 15 percent cited civil liberties or other personal freedoms in their definition of democracy compared to almost 27 percent of Botswanan and 44 percent of Tanzanian respondents. Nevertheless, the relationship between the support for freedom of speech and voting in Nigeria may provide some indication of the language used by political activists and even civic educators to demand for and justify the transition to democracy and the introduction of multiparty politics.

Unlike the limited, or at least inconsistent, impact of trust, efficacy, or support for freedom of speech, on voting in Africa, citizens' evaluation of government performance appears to be a robust predictor of voting in Africa. We find that those who have more favorable evaluations of parliament's performance are significantly more likely to vote than those with less favorable evaluations. The coefficients for parliamentary performance are significant and positive in all of the models. On the other hand, evaluations of national economic conditions appear generally negatively related to voting in Africa. The coefficients for this measure are negatively related to voting for the ten countries across all of the models in Tables 3 and 4, yet are significant only in two of the models presented. However, the sign of the coefficient for perceptions of national economic conditions is consistently negative, which suggests that Africans who expressed feeling dissatisfied with the state of the economy were also more likely to vote, much like their counterparts in other parts of the developing world.

On the one hand, those with more positive appraisals of parliamentary performance are more likely to vote than those with more negative appraisals of parliamentary performance. On the other hand, those with more positive appraisals of the national economic situation are less likely to vote than those with negative appraisals of the economy. If we see both of these variables as measures of government performance, then this situation seems puzzling. However, it seems likely that parliamentary performance captures people's affection toward the government. On the other hand, peoples' assessment of the economic situation might be related to how they themselves are faring in the economy.

The results displayed in Tables 3 and 4 show that political interest, like parliamentary performance, manifests a consistent, significant positive relationship with voting across all of the different models. Not surprisingly, those Africans who express interest in politics are also more likely to vote.

Voting in Africa also appears to be influenced by memberships in voluntary organizations. Like political interest, our measure of memberships in voluntary associations is consistently and positively related to voting in these ten African countries. That is, individuals who report being members of voluntary associations are also more likely to vote. This is not surprising given that our measures of membership in voluntary associations and political interest are highly correlated for these ten SSA countries. In fact, in Africa, as in many other parts of the world, more politically interested persons are also more likely to be members of voluntary associations, report feeling close to a political party, and report voting in national elections.¹⁴ Although they use the Afrobarometer dataset for the first round surveys in 12 African countries, Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) do not report similar results with regard to the effect of organizational

membership. This difference in findings likely results from some differences in the operationalization of variables, specifications of models and methods employed between the two studies. As discussed above, we created an index that counts the total number of memberships individuals reported that they held, while Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) look at the impact of memberships in separate organizations, such as religious organizations. Also, as noted earlier, our voting variables are coded differently and our analysis does not cover cases from Ghana and Uganda.

Media exposure, specifically regular listening to radio news programs, is also an important predictor of voting in these African countries. The sign of the coefficient for radio news is positive and significant across all of the different model specifications. This is not surprising for several reasons. First, radio news programs are an extremely important source of information in Africa, especially rural Africa, because of the difficulties of intrastate travel and low levels of literacy in many African countries. Second, potential voters are likely to receive important information about the issues and candidates in upcoming elections and also valuable information about the logistics of national elections, such when and/or where to vote, from radio news programs. This information may make voting easier and therefore a more likely activity for radio listeners.

Finally, like Bratton (1999) and Norris (2002), we find affiliation with a political party to be one of the most important predictors of voting. The coefficient for having a party affiliation is positive and highly significant in all of the models. This finding also supports the thesis about political parties as mobilization agents. In fact, examination of marginal probabilities reveals that having an affiliation with a party increases the probability of voting by about 17 percent, all else being equal. With reference to the 22 countries covered in the ISSP survey, Norris finds “Eighty-seven percent of those who could name a party affiliation voted, compared to 56 percent who could not” (97, 2002). With regard to the 10 African countries under study in this paper, we find that 83 percent of those who report feeling close to a political party also report voting, compared to 62 percent who report that they do not feel close to a political party. Although Norris finds a somewhat larger gap than we do, the proportions of respondents in the respective categories are surprisingly similar, given the very different sets of countries covered in each study.

The political parties of Africa are known for organizational weakness, and the party systems of Africa are known for lack of institutionalization. How, then, can political parties be critical forces in mobilizing the vote on the African political scene? Their weakness does not prevent parties from being excellent mobilization agents. Rates of political party affiliation are much higher in African countries than in countries of many other areas of the world, including countries with strong parties and institutionalized party systems.¹⁵ Based on World Values Survey data for the early 1990s, Norris reports that the average proportion of people belonging to a party in the Western democracies in the early 1990s was 7.2 percent. In contrast, the average percentage of respondents reporting they felt close to a political party across the ten African countries of study is 58.7 percent (see Table 2). Despite these high levels of party affiliation, electoral volatility in Africa is extremely high (see Kuenzi and Lambright 2001; Kuenzi and Lambright 2004). Neopatrimonialism is still the dominant political arrangement across African countries (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Ideology means little when it comes to party

attachments, and attachments to political parties are obviously very shallow in nature. In contrast to situations in which people must actually pay dues to acquire membership status, those feeling close to political parties in Africa often expect to receive some type of personal reward for their support. Since attachments to political parties are usually not deeply felt, political parties are often able to mobilize people to vote with relative ease, given the right patronage resources. In countries such as Senegal, a massive realignment of party loyalty from the PS to the PDS occurred once the PS was defeated by the PDS led coalition in the executive election of 2000.

We also include a number of variables to evaluate the impact of the social, political and economic context on electoral participation, such as Freedom House scores to measure the level of democracy within the country and GDP per capita. As seen in Table 3 (Model 3), each of these contextual variables registers a significant relationship with voting in Africa and in most cases the direction of the relationship is in the expected direction. As expected, respondents are more likely to report voting where elections are held concurrently and where elections are conducted under more proportional electoral formulae, such as proportional representation. Similarly, the results indicate that respondents are more likely to have reported voting in countries that are more democratic.¹⁶ The results displayed in Model 3 are consistent with our findings. GDP per capita actually registers a significant negative relationship with reported turnout. On the other hand, people are more likely to vote in countries with higher literacy rates. We also find that reported participation is higher in countries with smaller urban populations, which is consistent with our finding that rural residents are more likely to vote than urban residents.

Finally, as noted earlier, many cases are dropped from the analyses because data are missing for one of the explanatory variables. In Model 5, those explanatory variables for which there are many missing cases and that do not register a significant relationship with voting are dropped from the model. As can be seen in the restricted model in Table 4, dropping these variables does not substantially change the results in any way.

Conclusion

Agencies of mobilization clearly help determine who votes in Africa. In particular, our findings point to the important role political parties play in inducing citizens to vote. The relationship between affiliating with a political party and voting is positive and highly significant in all of the voting models. Despite their putative weakness, political parties clearly play a critical role in linking citizens to the electoral process in Africa. Understanding more about the parties and party systems in Africa is therefore of great importance. Some attitudes, such as political interest and evaluations of government performance and the national economy, also appear to help determine who votes in Africa. Those who listen to news on the radio are more likely to vote in Africa. In addition, the results reported in this paper support the contention that certain institutional arrangements influence individuals' decisions of whether to vote.

On the other hand, the socio-economic variables that exert such a powerful influence on electoral participation in the United States and many other democracies appear to have relatively little influence in Africa. In many cases, these factors appear to function in an opposite manner as

would be expected, based on modernization theory and the experiences of other democracies. For example, those in urban areas are less likely to vote than those in rural areas. The analysis of the effects of the contextual variables on voting supports these findings.

Our findings also highlight that the relationships we see between different demographic variables and electoral participation are not necessarily fixed. The demographic variable age does help explain who votes in Africa. Like elsewhere in the world, those who are older in Africa are more likely to vote than those who are younger. Other relationships did not manifest such consistency. Scholars have begun to question the temporal stability of certain relationships involving voting. For example, Leighley and Nagler (1992) find that the magnitude of the relationships between race and gender and voting changed between the 1972 and the 1984 U.S. presidential elections. Our results regarding the relationship between gender and voting demonstrate variability across countries, supporting the notion that the effects of some variables on voting are very much shaped by the context. In this study, we test the external validity of many of the results involving electoral participation and find that some are not applicable in the African context while others are. It is important to continue to study the factors that bear upon electoral participation as the electoral regimes of Africa become more institutionalized.

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Appendix

Voting Behavior

Voting in ten SSA countries

Values range from 0 to 1

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

With regard to the most recent, national elections, which statement is true for you?

0=I did not vote; 1=I decided not to vote; 2=I was not able to vote; 3=I voted in the elections;

4=Election not held in my area; 5=Cannot remember; 98=Refused; 99=Missing data

Recoded into dichotomous variable:

Responses 3 transferred into single category—voted (code=1)

Responses 0, 1, 2 and 4 combined into single category—did not vote (code=0)

Responses 5, 98 and 99 combined into single category—missing data (code=99)

Excluded from analysis

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Understanding that some [*Nigerians*] choose not to vote, let me ask you. Did you vote:

In the presidential election of [*Date*]?

No (code=0)

Yes (code=1)

Demographics

Gender

Coded by interviewer

Recoded: male (code=0) and female (code=1)

Age

How old were you at your last birthday?

Value corresponds to actual age of respondent

Urban/rural status

Coded by interviewer

Recoded: rural (code=0) and urban (code=1)

Level of Education

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

What was the highest grade, standard or form you completed?

9=Other post matric qualifications other than university

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

How much education have you had?

9=Post-graduate

Income

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

In the last twelve months, how often have you or your family: gone without enough food to eat?

Recoded: 4=Never

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you gone without: food for your family?

Recoded: 4=Never

Political Attitudes: Social Capital

Generalized trust

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people

Recoded 1=Most people can be trusted

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?

Recoded 1=Most people can be trusted

Political trust

Values range from 3 to 12

Combines three questions about trust in courts, army, and police.

Trust in Courts:

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

How much of the time can you trust them to do what is right? Courts of law?

4=Just about always

For Nigeria:

Do you trust the following institutions: Courts of law?

4=I trust them a lot

For Tanzania and Mali:

How much do you trust the following institution: Courts of law?

4=I trust them a lot

Trust in Army:

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

How much of the time can you trust South African Defense Forces to do what is right?

4=Just about always

For Nigeria:

Do you trust the following institutions: Army?

4=I trust them a lot

For Tanzania and Mali:

How much do you trust the following institution: The Army?

4=I trust them a lot

Trust in Police:

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

How much of the time can you trust them to do what is right? Police service?

4=Just about always

For Nigeria:

Do you trust the following institutions: The police?

4=I trust them a lot

For Tanzania and Mali:

How much do you trust the following institution: The police?

4=I trust them a lot

Other Political Attitudes

Understand government

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Do you agree, neither agree or disagree, or disagree with the following statement(s):

Sometimes political and government affairs seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on.

5=Strongly disagree

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

I am going to give you several pairs of statements. Please tell me which one you agree with most. Choose Statement A or Statement B.

A. The way the government operates sometimes seems so complicated that I cannot really understand what is going on.

B. I can usually understand the way that government works.

4=Statement B, Agree Strongly

Support freedom of speech

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

People associate democracy with many diverse meanings such as the ones that I will mention now. In order for a society to be called democratic, is each of these: Complete freedom for anyone to criticize the government?

Recoded 4=Absolutely essential

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

People associate democracy with many different meanings such as the ones that I will mention now. In order for a society to be called democratic, how important is each of these: Anyone is free to criticize the government?

Recoded 4=Very important

Evaluation of Economic Conditions and Government Performance

National economic conditions

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

At the moment, are you dissatisfied, neither dissatisfied nor satisfied or satisfied with economic conditions in [*Botswana*]?

5=Very satisfied

For Nigeria:

How satisfied are you with the general state of the Nigerian economy today?

4=Very satisfied

For Tanzania and Mali:

How satisfied are you with: the condition of the [*Tanzanian*] economy today?

4=Very satisfied

Performance of parliament

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

What about the way parliament has performed its job over the past twelve months?
4=Strongly approve

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali

Since the last election, how satisfied have you been with the performance of:
Nigeria: your Representative to the national/state assembly?
Tanzania: your Member of Parliament?
Mali: your Deputy in the national assembly?
4=Very satisfied

Political Engagement

Radio news

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

How often do you get news from the following sources: radio?
Recoded 5=Everyday

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

How often do you get news from: the radio?
5=Everyday

Political interest

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs:
Recoded: 4=always/most of the time

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

How interested are you in politics and government?
2=very interested

Institutional Factors

Party identification

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?
Recoded 1=Yes

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Do you feel close to any political party?

1=Yes

Voluntary organizations

Values range from 0 to 4

Combines four questions about membership in a religious organization, a development association, a business organization and a trade union/labor organization

Membership of religious organization

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Over the past year, how often have you attended meetings of a church group (other than religious services)?

1=Ever attend

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Now I am going to read a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? A religious organization e.g. church or mosque?

1=Yes, member

Member of development association

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Over the past year, how often have you attended meetings of a local self help association (such as a stokvel, burial association or neighborhood watch)?

1=Ever attend

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Now I am going to read a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? Community development association?

[Nigeria: Development association?]

1=Yes, member

Member of business organization

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Over the past year, how often have you attended meetings of a local commercial organization (such as a business group or farmers' association)?

1=Ever attend

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Now I am going to read a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? Professional or business association?

1=Yes, member

Member of trade union/labor organization

For Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe:

Over the past year, how often have you attended meetings of a trade union?

1=Ever attend

For Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mali:

Now I am going to read a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? Trade union/farmers' association?

1=Yes, member

Endnotes

¹ The Afrobarometer Round 1 Merged Dataset provides data for 12 countries. Ghana and Uganda are not included in our analysis because questions important to our analysis were not included in the surveys in these two countries. The Afrobarometer Round 1 survey for Ghana does not include the questions on generalized trust, support for freedom of speech, or the membership in voluntary associations. The Afrobarometer survey for Uganda does not include questions on the support for freedom of speech, political trust, and access to food. The total number of possible cases for the 10 remaining countries is 17,256.

² According to the web site, <http://www.afrobarometer.org/sampling-2.pdf>, the Afrobarometer used a “clustered, stratified, multi-stage probability” sampling design in order to obtain “a representative cross-section of all citizens of voting age” in the countries of study. Please see this web site for additional sampling information.

³ The 17,256 total cases is distributed across the ten countries as follows: Botswana (n=1200); Lesotho (n=1177); Malawi (n=1208); Mali (n=2089); Namibia (n=1183); Nigeria (n=3603); South Africa (n=2200); Tanzania (n=2198); Zambia (n=1198); Zimbabwe (n=1200).

⁴ We exclude from our analysis those responses coded as “can’t remember” and missing data.

⁵ These countries include: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁶ Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) recode the data so that “voting is measured on a three-point scale: I voted, I wanted to vote but was unable to do so, and I chose not to vote” (p. 448).

⁷ Malawi’s reported turnout rate as percent of voting age population of 105.9 may reflect the fact that the census estimates of the size of the eligible voting population are flawed or out of date and do not reflect the actual number of eligible voters.

⁸ See Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005, 146) for an explanation of this especially large gap.

⁹ The measures of trust for these three political institutions are highly correlated. In fact, the average correlation between the three measures of trust is .627 ($p < .01$).

¹⁰ The relationship between age and voting is known to be curvilinear with the probability of voting increasing through middle-age but then declining as people become elderly and less mobile. In fact, Norris (2002) finds a curvilinear relationship of this sort.

¹¹ The correlation between urban status (1=urban) and support for governing party is -.127 ($p < .01$).

¹² The correlation between our proxy measure of income (frequency of hunger) and urban status is .157 ($p < .01$).

¹³ The correlation between education and feeling close to a political party (1=yes) is -.086 ($p < .01$) for Botswana. The correlation between these two variables for all ten SSA countries is -.087 ($p < .01$).

¹⁴ The correlations between interest and membership in voluntary associations, feeling close to a political party, and voting are .128, .199, and .124 ($p < .01$), respectively.

¹⁵ Norris (2002) notes this phenomenon based on the data from the WVS in 1980s and 1990s, which covers the cases of Nigeria and South Africa. Norris observes; “Where official membership is only loosely defined – for example, in newer parties in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia which have not developed a formal bureaucratic organization and official rule book – many people may associate ‘party members’ with ‘party supporters’ or even ‘party loyalists’” (2002, 112). Clearly, our measure of party identification captures support for a party as opposed to formal membership.

¹⁶ Lower Freedom House scores correspond to higher levels of democracy.