

# AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 32

**THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN  
LESOTHO: A REPORT ON THE 2003  
AFROBAROMETER SURVEY**

by John Gay and Robert Mattes

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



The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)  
6 Spin Street, Church Square  
Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
27 21 461 2559 • fax: 27 21 461 2589  
Mattes (bob@idasact.org.za)

Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)  
14 West Airport Residential Area  
P.O. Box 404, Legon-Accra, Ghana  
233 21 776 142 • fax: 233 21 763 028  
Gyimah-Boadi (cdd@ghana.com)

Michigan State University (MSU)  
Department of Political Science  
East Lansing, Michigan 48824  
517 353 3377 • fax: 517 432 1091  
Bratton (mbratton@msu.edu)

[afrobarometer.org](http://afrobarometer.org)

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SURVEY**

by John Gay and Robert Mattes

**March 2004**

John Gay is a retired associate of Lesotho's Sechaba Consultants now living in the USA.

Robert Mattes is Co-Director of the Afrobarometer and Associate Professor in the Department of Political Studies and the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town.

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## AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

Editors: Michael Bratton, E. Gyimah-Boadi, and Robert Mattes

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6 Spin Street, Church Square  
Cape Town 8001 SOUTH AFRICA  
(phone: 27 21 461 5229, fax: 27 21 461 2589, e-mail: [tanya@idasact.org.za](mailto:tanya@idasact.org.za))

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## Publications List

### AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

- No.32 Gay, John and Robert Mattes, "The State of Democracy in Lesotho," 2004.
- No.31 Mattes, Robert, and Michael Bratton. "Learning about Democracy in Africa: Awareness, Performance, and Experience," 2003
- No.30 Pereira, Joao, Ines Raimundo, Annie Chikwanha, Alda Saute, and Robert Mattes. "Eight Years of Multiparty Democracy in Mozambique: The Public's View." 2003
- No.29 Gay, John. "Development as Freedom: A Virtuous Circle?" 2003.
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- No.12 Chikwanha-Dzenga, Annie Barbara, Eldred Masunungure, and Nyasha Madingira, "Democracy and National Governance in Zimbabwe: A Country Survey Report." 2001.
- No. 11 The Afrobarometer Network. "Afrobarometer Round I: Compendium of Comparative Data from a Twelve-Nation Survey." 2002.
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# **The State of Democracy in Lesotho: A Report on the 2003 Afrobarometer Survey**

## **Executive Summary**

In 2002, after decades of discontent and oppression, Lesotho went to the polls to elect a government acceptable to the great majority of its citizens. The fears of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (that the opposition would stir up more trouble) and of the opposition (that their voices would never again be heard) were quieted by the election and installation of a new and much more balanced parliament. Eighty members (78 at the time of the election, and two later following the deaths of candidates) won a plurality of votes in their constituencies, while another 40 were elected under a complex system of proportional representation. While the final distribution of seats for each party did not exactly match their shares of the national vote, it came close enough to satisfy most people.

This is reflected in the strongly upbeat attitudes expressed in a 2003 Afrobarometer survey of 1200 adult Basotho. This survey, conducted between 24 February and 7 April 2003, was part of Round 2 of the Afrobarometer. During Round 2, the same questions were put to respondents in 15 African countries, ranging from the Cape Verde and Senegal in the west, to Kenya in the east, and South Africa and Lesotho on the southern tip of the continent. This is the second in a series of Afrobarometer surveys of attitudes toward democracy and politics across Africa; Round 1 was conducted between 1999 and 2001 in 12 African countries, including Lesotho (in 2000).

The principal results of the 2003 survey can be summarized as follows:

### **Democracy and Governance**

- The views of Basotho regarding the extent and quality of their democracy have improved markedly since 2000. While in 2000, just over one-third (36 percent) felt the country was largely or wholly democratic, almost half (48 percent) believe this now. And while just 39 percent were fairly or very satisfied with the way democracy was working in 2000, almost one-half (48 percent) are satisfied in 2003.
- Basotho see real increases in their political freedoms since the advent of multiparty democracy in 1994. Three-quarters believe there is more freedom of association (78 percent) and voting (77 percent), two-thirds say there is more freedom of speech (68 percent), and three-fifths think people are now safer from unjust arrest (62 percent).
- Accordingly, popular demand for democracy has also increased. Popular rejection of military rule as a way of running the country has increased from 70 percent to 84 percent, while rejection of one-party rule has risen from 51 percent to 61 percent, and an un-elected strongman leader is now rejected by 82 percent, compared to 69 percent in 2000. One-half (50 percent) now says that democracy is always the best form of government for Lesotho, up from 41 percent in 2000.
- However, a disturbing 34 percent (unchanged from 33 percent in 2000) approve of one-party rule and an even greater 43 percent (28 percent in 2000) approve of rule by chiefs or elders. On the other hand, only 11 percent (down from 18 percent in 2000) approve of military rule and 12 percent (down from 19 percent in 2000) of strongman rule.

- However, significant schisms are still evident in the perceptions of loyalists of different political parties. For example, 57 percent of the ruling party's supporters say Lesotho is largely democratic, while only 37 percent of respondents who are affiliated to opposition parties or who express no party affiliation believe this is so.
- The perceived legitimacy of different components of the political system varies considerably. Three-quarters believe the constitution expresses their values (74 percent) and that the police have the right to enforce the law (75 percent). But only three-fifths say the courts have the right to make decisions that they have to abide by (63 percent), and less than a majority agrees that the tax office has the right to make people pay taxes (42 percent).
- Nearly 6 in 10 (58 percent) trust the Prime Minister, up considerably from 41 percent in 2000, while 49 percent trust Parliament, a more modest increase over the 40 percent registered in 2000. No institution enjoys very high levels of trust; even traditional leaders are trusted only by 59 percent.
- Fully half (52 percent) believe that at least some government officials are corrupt, and another one-quarter (27 percent) believe that most or all are; just 12 percent believe none of their government officials are corrupt.
- An encouraging 68 percent approve of the performance of the Prime Minister, and 50 percent the Parliament, compared to 50 percent and 38 percent respectively in 2000.
- Respondents give the government good marks for performance in some areas, yet are highly critical in others. The government gets positive ratings from 77 percent for its handling of providing basic education, but positive reviews decline to 56 percent for improving health care, 50 percent for reducing crime, 49 percent for managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, 40 percent for managing the economy, 35 percent for reducing corruption, 32 percent for ensuring adequate food for all citizens, 28 percent for creating jobs, and 18 percent for stabilizing prices. The low scores on prices, jobs and food reflect the real economic difficulties faced by the high proportion – perhaps as high as half – of the adult population that cannot find work. Performance ratings have improved for education (56 percent positive ratings in 2000), health (50 percent), crime (44 percent), and economic management (36 percent), but are down for job creation (38 percent in 2000) and price stabilization (20 percent).
- There is a growing consensus that multiparty democracy is providing more effective governance. Two-thirds (69 percent) believe the government is now more effective in enforcing the law, and a similar number (67 percent) report improvements in delivery of services (compared to just 34 percent who perceived improvements in 2000). Similarly, 65 percent now rate the government as more trustworthy than its undemocratic predecessor (compared to 36 percent in 2000), and 46 percent perceive improvements in controlling corruption, up from just 26 percent three years earlier.

### **Economic Management**

- It is quite disturbing that 86 percent rate their own personal living conditions as either bad or very bad, and the same proportion rate national economic conditions this way as well. One-half (46 percent) say that national conditions have worsened over the previous year, and fully 84 percent believe Lesotho is worse off than its neighbors.
- Most people think that things have gotten worse as Lesotho has liberalized its economy to attract foreign investment in response to both internal and external pressure. Amidst efforts to privatize

parastatals and provide easy terms for Chinese textile industries, 82 percent say that living standards have decreased over the past few years, 88 percent that there are fewer job opportunities, 72 percent that goods are less available, and 76 percent that the gap between rich and poor has widened.

- Three-quarters (74 percent) of respondents identify unemployment as one of the country's three most important problems. About half list food or food shortages (49 percent) and one-quarter mention problems of agriculture and farming (24 percent).

### **Citizenship**

- In 2003, 59 percent say they discuss politics with others, compared to just 40 percent in 2000, reflecting a more open and active civil society. Even more striking is the 83 percent who have attended a community meeting in the last year, as opposed to 25 percent in 2000, and the 76 percent who have joined others to raise an issue, up from 46 percent in 2000. On the other hand, fully 79 percent say they would never join a demonstration or protest march in 2003, compared to 69 percent who expressed that view in 2000.
- Two-thirds (65 percent) listen to radio news at least weekly, but only 14 percent read newspapers and 13 percent watch television news, reflecting little change in access to news sources since 2000.
- One in three (29 percent) are active in religious groups, and 15 percent participate in community development groups.
- More than half (54 percent) have contacted traditional leaders in the past year to address a personal or public issue, while 37 percent have sought out religious leaders, and 20 percent have gone to village development councilors. Just 8 percent contacted their Member of Parliament to request assistance or offer an opinion.

### **Lesotho and the World**

- Nearly four in ten Basotho (37 percent) have a family member working in South Africa, while 26 percent have a relative living there, and 21 percent have sought medical care across the border. Nearly one in five (18 percent) has South African identity documents.
- One-third (30 percent) think Lesotho and South Africa should become one country, about the same as in 2000 (29 percent), but much lower than in 1997 (41 percent). [what is the source of the 1997 data?]
- Three-quarters (74 percent) believe that the textile industry operating in the country is helpful rather than harmful, while 57 percent say the same about the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

In short, the respondents in 2003 have a hopeful view of what is happening in their country, despite the serious economic obstacles they face. They recognize that there is a long distance still to go, but they believe they and their country are on the right path to progress. It is up to the government and foreign investment now to help the economic sphere catch up with the political sphere. It might be said that the respondents are demonstrating the priority of politics over economics, but it is not likely that priority will remain firm if the economy remains sluggish and unemployment remains high.



## INTRODUCTION

In 2002, after decades of discontent and oppression, Lesotho went to the polls to elect a government acceptable to the great majority of its citizens. The fears of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy (that the opposition would stir up more trouble) and of opposition parties (that their voices would never again be heard) were quieted by the election and installation of a new and much more balanced parliament. Eighty members (78 at the time of the election, and 2 later, following the deaths of candidates) [this change in total number due to “deaths of candidates” doesn’t really make sense] were elected by winning a simple plurality of the votes in geographically-defined single-member constituencies. Another 40 members were elected under a more complex system of proportional representation. While the final distribution of seats for each party did not exactly match their shares of the national vote, it came close enough to satisfy most people.

This was a far cry from the situation following the 1998 election. Even though those elections were probably free and fair, the outcome was not in the minds of many Basotho. At that time, support for the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) was spread almost uniformly across the nation. As a result, 79 of the 80 constituencies – and hence of the seats in parliament – went to the LCD, even though only slightly over half of the country supported it. The election, therefore, was a case where the “first past the post” system resulted in a manifest injustice to the minority parties and their supporters.

The grossly disproportionate victory of the LCD led to growing discontent voiced by opposition parties, the army and by certain churches that had historically been allied with the opposition. A winter of protests in front of the King’s palace led to an attempted coup by the army and three days of serious rioting in September 1998. Military forces from South Africa and Botswana intervened to restore the elected government, but in the process, serious damage was inflicted by rioters and looters in Maseru and three other lowland towns. Rebuilding still continues, but it appears likely that some burned and damaged sites will take very long to be restored.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) set up a panel of presumably disinterested observers to study the situation. They concluded that the elections had in fact been free and fair, but they also encouraged Lesotho to find internal ways to resolve the problem of the actual injustice that resulted from a fair election. An Interim Political Authority was established, with two members each from the political parties that had contested the 1998 election. Two years of discussion led to a compromise electoral decision, whereby elections would be moved up a year from the constitutional date of 2003, and voters would cast two ballots, one on a winner-take-all basis, and the other on a proportional basis. Had the election been held in the same manner as in 1998, the opposition would have again won only one seat; but under the proportional system, the ruling LCD won 77 seats, while an additional 41 seats were allocated to the opposition parties. The LCD won 54.8 percent of the vote.

The consequences of this election are reflected in the considerably more upbeat attitudes expressed in the recent 2003 Lesotho Afrobarometer survey compared to the first survey conducted in 2000. The 2003 survey is part of Round 2 of the Afrobarometer,<sup>1</sup> conducted from

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<sup>1</sup> The Afrobarometer consists of research partners in 16 African countries, and is coordinated by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the Centre for Democratic Development in Ghana, and the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. Researchers and scholars from these countries developed a standardized questionnaire which was administered in each country, allowing both within country analysis and cross-country comparisons.

June 2002 to October 2003 in 15 African countries, ranging from Senegal and Mali in West Africa, to Kenya in the East, and South Africa on the southern tip of the continent.<sup>2</sup> This is the second in a series of Afrobarometer surveys of attitudes toward democracy and politics across Africa; Round 1 was conducted between 1999 and 2001 in 12 African countries, including Lesotho.

A nationally representative sample of 1200 Basotho, 18 years of age or older, was interviewed between 24 February and 7 April 2003. Half male and half female, these respondents were chosen at random from 150 Enumeration Areas (EAs) across the country. These EAs were selected randomly from a list of all EAs that had been stratified into urban and rural lists, with a probability of selection proportional to share of the population. Population figures were based on an updated version of the 1996 census that takes into account the impact of HIV/AIDS. A similar survey was conducted between 29 March and 7 June 2000, when 1177 individuals were interviewed, once again on a random basis (details of the sampling procedure are given in Annex 1).

While the 2000 survey clearly reflected the disquiet felt by many Basotho after the turmoil that followed the 1998 elections (Gay and Green, 2001), the 2003 survey shows a strong shift toward optimism and increasing confidence in government. In short, the respondents in 2003 have a more hopeful view of what is happening in their country, despite the serious economic obstacles they still face. They recognize that there is a long distance still to go, but they believe they and their country are on the right path to progress. It is likely that the change is in large measure due to the successful resolution of the political impasse resulting from the 1998 election disaster.

It is now up to the government and foreign investment to help the economic sphere catch up with the political sphere. It might be said that the respondents are demonstrating the priority of politics over economics, but it is not likely that priority will remain firm if the economy remains sluggish and unemployment remains high. Stability and security may yet again be put in jeopardy if the desperate economic situation – particularly the lack of jobs and social services – and the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic are not addressed.

## **THE SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY IN LESOTHO**

Democracy can be thought of as a commodity that the Constitution, political institutions, and incumbent leaders provide to citizens as consumers. From this perspective, the Afrobarometer assessed consumer satisfaction with Lesotho's young multiparty regime in several ways. On the whole, citizen satisfaction with the supply of multiparty democracy is mixed, though there are several indications that it has increased sharply since the last survey in 2000.

### **Political Freedom**

One of the key requisites of a democracy is a wide matrix of political freedoms. In order to assess the actual supply of these freedoms, the Afrobarometer asked respondents about the degree to which political rights and liberties had improved or worsened since the end of military rule and the introduction of multiparty rule. In every case, Basotho say that they are freer, many saying substantially so (Table 1). Three-quarters see gains in freedom of association (78 percent), and freedom to vote (77 percent). Two thirds see gains in freedom of speech (68 percent) and

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<sup>2</sup> Round 2 surveys were conducted in Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

freedom from arbitrary arrest (62 percent). Yet substantially lower proportions say that multiparty democracy has produced increases in the influence ordinary people have over government (53 percent) or the extent that they are treated equally and fairly by government (42 percent). One half say they are freer from crime and violence (51 percent).

**Table 1: Gains in Political Freedom in Lesotho**

	<b>Much worse</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Much better</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Freedom to join any political organization	1	10	7	49	29	4
Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured	1	12	6	47	30	4
Freedom to say what you think	2	19	9	45	23	5
Freedom from being arrested even when you are innocent	3	19	9	46	16	8
Ability of ordinary people to influence what government does	3	15	12	42	11	17
Safety from crime and violence	10	22	12	41	10	6
Equal and fair treatment for all people by government	10	24	16	36	6	8

*We are going to compare our present system of government with the former military government. Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they used to be, or about the same:*

Perhaps as important, Basotho are now decidedly more optimistic on several of these key dimensions than they were in 2000. The belief that multiparty democracy has resulted in greater freedom has increased markedly with regard to freedom of association, voting, speech, as well as crime and violence. The most obvious intervening political event between the 2000 and 2003 surveys to which we can attribute these results was the successful election of 2002. Interestingly, perceptions of fair and equal treatment have retreated somewhat.

**Table 2: Gains in Political Freedom, 2000 - 2003**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>
Freedom of Association	63	78
Freedom to Vote	66	77
Freedom of Speech	56	68
Safety from unjust arrest	59	62
Safety from crime / violence	40	51
Equal and fair treatment	47	42

*Percent "Better / Much Better"*

One key factor that shaped perceptions of political freedoms was whether or not the respondent knew someone who had died of AIDS. 18 percent of respondents said they knew of someone who had died of AIDS (up sharply from the 11 percent who said they knew someone in the 2000

survey).<sup>3</sup> Of the 18 percent who know a person who died of AIDS, perceived improvements in political freedoms are significantly lower than amongst those who did not.<sup>4</sup> This difference exists even though those who have with contact with an AIDS death are more likely to be well-educated, young, employed, healthy and to have a good income. Thus it appears that personal exposure to the horrors of the epidemic depresses one’s optimism about any political gains that may have come about as a result of the multiparty dispensation.

Basotho do not provide substantially different answers to those in other Afrobarometer surveys where data is now available (Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda). They fall in the middle of the group on all aspects of gains in personal freedom.

**The Rule of Law**

Another requisite of a democratic system is the rule of law. Democracy, above all, is a system of rules and procedures by which groups and parties compete for power, by which free and equal people elect representatives as leaders, and by which leaders exercise political power within the bounds of a legal framework. Thus, among other things, citizens must be free to express their preferences, political parties must compete peacefully, leaders must govern within the bounds of the law, and people must receive equal treatment under the law.

Not surprisingly, given the country’s recent history, one half of respondents say that party competition “always” or “often” leads to conflict (55 percent). There is certainly a sense in which people are tired of party-based conflict, since party disputes have often been responsible for violence, beginning with the elections of 1965 and 1970.

And regardless of the fact that respondents think that things are better with regard to freedom of speech and equal treatment, one-half say that people are still treated unequally on a frequent basis (50 percent), and one-third say they have to be careful of what they say about politics (33 percent). Just one fifth say that the Prime Minister often ignores the constitution (22 percent). It is doubtless a relief to Basotho that they have moved on from the days of harsh, dictatorial, erratic and out of touch leadership.

*Table 3: The Extent of Rule of Law in Lesotho*

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always	Don’t know
Does competition between political parties lead to conflict	16	22	23	32	7
Are people treated unequally under the law	19	17	18	32	14
Do people have to be careful of what they say about politics	45	17	14	19	6

<sup>3</sup> In Round 1, responses to this question, across seven countries, correlated strongly with UNAIDS estimates of AIDS deaths derived from infection data from anti-natal clinic surveys (Whiteside, Mattes, Willan & Manning, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> For Ability to Influence Government, Kendall’s Tau B rank order coefficient = -.213 and significance = .000; for Freedom of Speech, Tau B = -.153, and significance = .000; for Freedom to Vote, Tau B = -.127, and significance = .000; for Freedom from Arrest, Tau B = -.144, and significance = .000; and for Safety From Crime and Violence, Tau B = -.057, and significance = .028. With regard to Fair Treatment, the relationship is statistically insignificant.

Does the Prime Minister ignore the constitution	24	13	10	12	41
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*In this country, how often:*

Party loyalty has always been a major factor in Lesotho, leading people to perceive situations very differently depending on their affiliation. This was acutely true in the troubles of winter 1998, when towns across the country went up in flames and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was called in to quell the riots. The people who held a vigil at the King's Palace from July to September were primarily from the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), who felt aggrieved due to their lack of representation in the Parliament elected in May 1998.

In order to assess the impact of party loyalty, or what political scientists call partisan identification, on people's opinions, we first had to measure which party, if any, people identified with. As of mid 2003, 55 percent of respondents said they "felt close to" the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), 10 percent felt close to the BNP, and 2 percent to the BCP. The support levels for the BNP and BCP were largely unchanged from 2000, but declared closeness to the LCD increased by one half since 2000, (accounted for by a decrease in those who said they felt close to no party in 2000). It is likely that the success of the LCD in two successive elections has encouraged many to declare their loyalty to a successful ruling party, rather than remaining either neutral or closet supporters of one of the parties.

**Table 4: Partisan Identification**

	2000	2003
Lesotho Congress for Democracy	34	55
Basotho National Party	11	10
Basutoland Congress Party	5	2
Other	1	5
None / Refused	49	28

*Do you feel close to any particular political party? If so, which party is that?*

Perceptions of the rule of law are shaped to some degree by the respondent's political party affiliation. We can see clear links between, for example, respondent's position on a scale that measures whether they support the governing party, no party, or an opposition party, and whether they see frequent violations of the rule of law.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 5: Extent of Rule of Law, by Partisan Identification**

	Lesotho Congress Party	Independent/ Unaffiliated	Opposition
Prime Minister Ignores Constitution (Always / Often)	17	25	38
Party Competition Leads to Conflict (Always / Often)	53	61	58
People Treated Unequally	44	57	60

<sup>5</sup> For President Ignores the Constitution, Tau B = -.209, and significance = .000; for People Treated Unequally, Tau B = .137 and significance = .000; and for Party Competition Leads to Conflict, Tau B = .076 and significance = .002. For Freedom of Speech, the relationship is statistically insignificant.

(Always / Often)			
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### The Extent of Democracy

Finally, we simply asked people for their overall assessment of the state of democracy in Lesotho. First we asked them how democratic the country is, and second, we asked them how satisfied they were with the way democracy works in Lesotho.

Since 2000, there has been a clear increase in the belief that Lesotho is either a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems (37 percent to 48 percent), as well as a clear drop in the proportion of those who say they do not know. Similarly the proportion of people satisfied with the state of democracy in Lesotho has increased from 38 to 48 percent. At the same time, this still means that one-half of the society does not see the system as very democratic and is also dissatisfied with the way democracy works. It seems the ideal is still far from being reached.

Again, it would appear that the successful elections of 2002 most likely contributed to the result. The reason for the successful elections was mainly because Lesotho chose to use a mixed system, partly first-past-the-post and partly proportional representation, to allow minority parties more accurate representation in Parliament. While opposition MP's are no more able than before to influence policy, at least their voices are being heard and their salaries are being paid.

**Table 6: The Extent of Democracy In Lesotho**

	2000	2003
A full democracy	24	19
A democracy, but with minor problems	13	29
A democracy, but with major problems	13	28
Not a democracy	17	5
Don't Know / don't understand	33	18

*In your opinion how much of a democracy is Lesotho today?*

**Table 7: Satisfaction With Democracy in Lesotho?**

	2000	2003
Very satisfied	24	21
Fairly Satisfied	14	27
Not very satisfied	9	14
Not at all satisfied	22	21
Not a democracy	4	2
Don't know / don't understand	27	15

*Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Lesotho?*

Public assessments of the supply of democracy in Lesotho parallel results from South Africa and Ghana, but are much lower than in Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda. Both in Mali and Mozambique, for example, two-thirds (66 percent) believe that the nation is either a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems, compared to less than half of Basotho.

Again party loyalties play an important role in shaping perceptions of democracy. 57 percent of LCD supporters say the country is wholly or largely democratic and 58 percent are satisfied with the way democracy works, compared to 37 percent and 38 percent of Opposition supporters

respectively.<sup>6</sup> Yet there are important signs of convergence between the views of different partisan camps as result of the 2002 election. In 2000, there were 33 point gaps between the proportions of LCD and Opposition supporters who thought the country was democratic and who were satisfied; by 2003, these gaps had decreased to 20 points in each case.

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<sup>6</sup> For the Extent of Democracy, Tau B = .223 and significance = .000; for Satisfaction With Democracy, Tau B = .183 and significance = .000.

**Table 8: The Supply of Democracy, by Partisan Identification, 2000-2003**

	Lesotho Fully or Mostly Democratic		Satisfied With Democracy	
	2000	2003	2000	2003
LCD	53	57	56	58
Independent	43	37	46	36
Opposition	20	37	23	38

At the same time, those who do not support the governing party are still significantly more pessimistic about democracy in Lesotho. Underlying this may be the concern that the cards are still stacked against opposition parties even though they are now represented more nearly in proportion to their share of the vote. As one opposition leader has complained: “the virtual two-thirds majority that the ruling power enjoys in parliament effectively does not allow the existence and effective operation of an opposition” (Transformation Resource Centre, *Work for Justice*, September 2003).

Yet Basotho are not simply acting out their party loyalties when they assess democracy, but also base their views on a range of factors, such as whether or not they think their leaders follow or obey the rule of law. Almost two-thirds of those who think the Prime Minister always ignores the Constitution give negative assessments of the state of democracy in Lesotho (12 percent say it is not a democracy and 52 percent say it is one, but with major problems). In contrast, two-thirds of those who say the Prime Minister never violates the Constitution give optimistic assessments of democracy (40 percent say it is a full democracy and 28 percent say there are minor problems).<sup>7</sup>

Finally, respondents were asked to rate themselves on a 10-point scale (where 0 is “poor” and 10 is “wealthy”). We found that the higher people rate themselves, the more likely they are to think that Lesotho is either largely or wholly democratic.

## **DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY IN LESOTHO**

We have seen that assessments of the supply of democracy have improved over the past three years. But to what extent do Basotho actually want democracy? The Afrobarometer measured this in three different ways. First, we assess the extent to which people reject non-democratic alternatives as a way of governing the country. Second, we examine popular support for the broad notion of democracy. And third, we measure popular support for key procedural elements of democracy. In general, while support for democracy is neither widespread nor very deep, it has increased sharply since 2000.

### **Non-Democratic Alternatives to Democracy?**

One way to assess popular demand for democracy is to measure the degree to which people are willing to reject its alternatives. The Afrobarometer asked people for their attitudes to the following alternatives to a system of government with regular elections and many political parties. We asked about one party rule, rule by traditional leaders, military rule, and rule by a strong un-elected leader.

<sup>7</sup> The relationship is relatively strong (Pearson’s  $r = .27$ ) and statistically significant with a probability of .001.



Four in five oppose any return to military rule (84 percent) or rule by a strong un-elected leaders (82 percent). This reflects the fact that neither Leabua Jonathan (who ruled the country from 1970 to 1986) nor the military regime (that ruled from 1986 to 1992) are remembered with any degree of affection. Both are resented and there is no desire to return to these forms of government. A lower proportion of three in five reject a one-party state (61 percent), while about one in three (34 percent) approve of this type of regime. One-party rule may be seen as somewhat more attractive because of the very negative consequences many Basotho have experienced as a result of incessant inter-party conflict. Finally, just one-half reject rule by traditional leaders (50 percent), while fully 43 percent approve of this as a way of running the country. This higher respect for traditional rule may reflect nostalgia for the “good old days,” when chiefs at all levels mediated conflicts and made decisions after listening to all options. In fact, chiefs still play a very important role in managing village affairs and have by no means been replaced by the Village Development Councils. Those who have worked in rural as well as peri-urban Lesotho can testify to the important role still played by local and regional chiefs. Furthermore the royal family remains very popular.

**Table 9: Rejection of Non-Democratic Alternatives**

	<b>Strongly Approve</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Strongly Disapprove</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The army comes in to govern the country	3	8	2	34	50	3
Elections and the National Assembly are abolished so that the Prime Minister can decide everything.	3	9	2	38	44	3
Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office	13	21	3	31	30	2
All decisions are made by a council of chiefs or elders	15	29	4	31	19	3

*There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?*

Popular opposition to non-democratic alternatives has grown since 2000 in all options except that of chiefly rule (support for which has actually grown). In particular, support for the military and a strongman leader has declined strikingly, as the rescue efforts put in place by the mixed proportional representation system appear to have taken root.

**Table 10: Rejection of Non-Democratic Alternatives, 2000-2003**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>
Military rule	70	84
Strong man rule	69	82
One-party rule	51	61
Traditional rule	58	50

*Percent “Disapprove”/”Strongly disapprove”*

Support for one-man rule and military rule are disproportionately concentrated amongst younger people who have not lived under civilian or military dictatorship.<sup>8</sup> Support for rule by chiefs comes from less well-educated persons and rural persons.<sup>9</sup>

Public opinion in Lesotho falls in the middle of the range of early Afrobarometer Round 2 surveys with regard to rejection of a one-party state. And only Uganda is more firmly opposed to “strong man” rule. Of the countries for which we have data, Basotho are the most opposed to the return of military rule. However, Basotho are far more likely than those in most other countries to support traditional rule, outpaced only by Mali, Senegal and Uganda.

### Support for Democracy

The second way in which we measure the demand for democracy is by asking people which of the following three statements is closest to their view: “(A) Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; (B) In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable; (C) For someone like me, it doesn’t matter what kind of government we have.” The proportion who see democracy as preferable to all other regimes now stands at 50 percent, up 9 percentage points since 2000.

**Table 11: Support for Democracy, 2000 - 2003**

	2000	2003
Democracy preferable	41	50
Non-democratic government preferable in certain situations	11	22
Does not matter	24	13
Don’t know	25	16

*Which of these statements is closest to your opinion?*

Yet while support for democracy in Lesotho has increased, a comparative look reminds us that Basotho still lag behind all other Afrobarometer countries in this regard. In addition, expressed willingness to tolerate non-democratic alternatives has doubled, from 11 to 22 percent.

Support for democracy rises sharply as education increases; from 42 percent amongst those with no formal schooling, to 62 percent amongst those who have completed high school, and 71 percent amongst those who have completed university.<sup>10</sup> Support for democracy also increases sharply with people’s quality of life. The better off people deem themselves (as measured by self placement on the 0 to 10 scale) the more likely they are to favor democracy.<sup>11</sup>

And while party support still differentiates views on democracy, its impact is less in 2003 than in 2000. In 2000, there was a 30 point difference between support for democracy amongst LCD supporters (68 percent) and opposition supporters (38 percent). By 2003, that gap had shrunk to 12 points, with 56 percent of LCD supporters always preferring democracy, compared to 44 percent of opposition supporters.

<sup>8</sup> Significant at the .003 level.

<sup>9</sup> These are all significant at the .000 level.

<sup>10</sup> Tau B = .123, significance = .000.

<sup>11</sup> Tau B = .154, significance = .000.

## Support for Democratic Processes

In a new set of questions not asked in the Round 1 survey, we measured people’s commitments to key components of democracy by asking them to select which of two statements they most agree with. For example, people were offered a choice between the statement that “We should choose leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections,” or the statement that “Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country’s leaders.” . Similarly, respondents were offered choices over whether it is unnecessary to have multiple political parties since they often sow division, versus many parties are necessary to offer real choices), whether the Prime Minister should be able to stay in office as long as he likes (or be subject to Constitutional term limits); and whether the Prime Minister should pass laws without regard to Parliament since he represents the country (versus Parliament making the laws, even if the Prime Minister does not agree).

While four in five favor term limitations on the Executive (85 percent), a significantly smaller two thirds support using elections to choose leaders (66 percent). Just over one half support parliamentary control of the legislative process (56 percent). Just one third agree that multiple political parties are necessary to provide voters with choice; in fact, 63 percent say they are unnecessary.

Once again, we see signs that while Basotho reject authoritarianism, and support restrictions on the exercise of political power, they are far from convinced about the merits of competitive elections and representative democracy – owing largely to their experience of the negative consequences of multiparty competition.

**Table 12: Support for Democratic Processes**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	
Prime Minister serve as many terms as he likes	5	6	4	27	58	Prime Minister subject to term limitations
Select leaders without elections	14	16	5	33	33	Select leaders through elections
Prime Minister should make laws	20	7	7	29	27	Parliament should make laws
Multiple parties unnecessary	36	27	5	12	20	Many parties necessary for choice

Finally, we tested the steadfastness of Basotho commitment to democracy by offering two statements. One half (51 percent) agreed that “Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems” but four in ten (42 percent) agreed with the statement that “If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government.”

## EVALUATIONS OF GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

### How Legitimate Is the State?

How legitimate is the state in the eyes of Basotho? That is, do they think that it represents their fundamental values and aspirations, and therefore has the right to make binding decisions, decisions that people must obey regardless of whether they agree or disagree with them? The Afrobarometer uses four questions to assess the legitimacy of basic government structures, including the Constitution, the Courts, the Police and the tax collection agencies.

The Constitution enjoys a high level of legitimacy, as do the Courts and the Police. Three quarters think the Constitution expresses their values and beliefs (74 percent). Basotho appear to value the presence of a Constitution after the dark years of dictatorship when the Constitution was suspended. Three quarters also accept the right of the police to enforce the law (75 percent), and almost two thirds (63 percent) believe Courts have the right to make binding decisions. Perhaps inevitably, the right of government to tax people enjoys less acceptance.

**Table 13: Legitimacy of the State**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
The police always have the right to make people obey the law.	9	11	3	48	27	3
Our constitution expresses the values and aspirations of the Basotho people.	2	11	1	42	32	12
The courts have the right to make decisions that people always have to abide by.	13	17	2	45	18	5
The tax department always has the right to make people pay taxes.	22	22	4	32	10	10

For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree.

It is important to note that the sense of legitimacy is not significantly related to political affiliation, nor is it related to how the respondent assesses the quality of Lesotho's democracy. A sense of legitimacy (expressed by the belief that the Constitution represents peoples' values) contributes to support for democracy. Those who believe the constitution expresses their values believe that democracy is preferable to non-democratic forms of government. On the other hand, those who believe that the constitution does not express their values are more likely to believe that another form of government may be better.

**Table 14: Support for Democracy, by Legitimacy of the State**

	<b>Constitution expresses values</b>	<b>Neutral/ Don't know</b>	<b>Constitution doesn't express values</b>
Democracy preferable	66	43	38
Sometimes non-	20	36	41

democratic preferable			
Doesn't matter	14	21	20

Basotho, far more than respondents in other Afrobarometer countries believe their Constitution expresses their values. And yet Basotho are below all others (except for South Africa) in terms the legitimacy of the Courts and Police, and far below all the other countries in the legitimacy of state taxation.

### **Enforcement Capability**

Many political scientists argue that legitimacy originates in the perceived ability of the state to enforce its actions. Once this has been demonstrated, so the argument goes, people are more likely to feel that they should obey decisions because it is the right thing to do. While law enforcement agencies in Lesotho appear to enjoy widespread perceptions that they are able to enforce the law, significant proportions of people seem to think that they could get away with various offences. One in ten say it is unlikely that the authorities would enforce the law if they committed a serious crime (11 percent), and one in five seem to think they could get household services without paying (19 percent) and one in four feel they could get away with not paying tax on some income (24 percent).

**Table 15: Government Enforcement Capability**

	<b>Very likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Very unlikely</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Committed a serious crime	35	52	7	4	2
Did not pay a tax on some of the income they earned?	25	41	18	6	10
Obtained household services without paying	26	39	14	5	16

How likely do you think it would be that the authorities could enforce the law if a person like yourself:

It is interesting to note that there are no important differences in these responses by levels of wealth or political party support. Compared to other countries, Basotho attitudes have less confidence in the state's ability to enforce the law than respondents in Cape Verde, Ghana, Senegal and Uganda.

### **Who Can Be Trusted?**

One underlying aspect of government legitimacy is whether people can trust elected representatives and state officials. Thus the Afrobarometer asks a series of questions to measure the degree of trust people have in their political and social institutions. We find that trust in all government structures has risen since 2000. This is a sign of greater stability in the country, as is the increasing support for most other major public and private institutions. In 2003, between 50 percent and 60 percent of respondents said they trusted the Prime Minister (58 percent), the courts of law (58 percent), the ruling LCD (54 percent), the police (52 percent), the government broadcasting system (51 percent), and the army (50 percent). The increases (see Table 17) suggest that government is seen to have risen above the conflicts and suppression of dissent of previous years.

Yet traditional leaders (59 percent) enjoy as much trust as any of the formal political structures. At the other end of the spectrum, the least trusted structure we found were opposition parties (19 percent): 51 percent say they do not trust them at all. Not surprisingly, 58 percent of the BNP supporters trust opposition parties, but only 42 percent trust the ruling LCD. Also significant are the low levels of trust for traders and small businesses. This corresponds with the finding of Sechaba Consultants in its report on poverty in 1999 (Gay and Hall 2000) that people associate small businesses and traders with quasi-legal and illegal activities in the informal sector.

**Table 16: Trust in Institutions**

	Not at all	A little bit	A lot	A very great deal	Can't say
Traditional Leaders	18	20	40	19	4
Prime Minister	16	18	37	21	9
Courts Of Law	15	22	46	12	5
Ruling Party	20	19	35	19	6
Police	23	23	42	10	3
Government Broadcasting	13	19	37	14	17
Army	26	19	40	10	5
National Assembly	20	20	35	14	10
Village Development Council	18	20	36	13	14
Electoral Commission	21	20	34	12	12
District Development Council	17	20	30	7	27
Independent Broadcasting	14	15	24	9	38
Government Newspapers	12	17	24	6	42
Independent Newspapers	14	16	23	7	40
Traders In Local Markets	27	26	28	5	14
Small Businesses	27	24	29	7	14
Private Corporations	13	15	31	9	32
Public Corporations	21	15	30	9	25
Opposition Parties	51	22	15	4	8

How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?]

**Table 17: Trust, 2000 - 2003**

	2000	2003
Traditional Leaders	48	59
Prime Minister	41	58
Courts Of Law	40	58
Police	41	52
Government Broadcasting	53	51
Army	39	50
National Assembly	30	49
Electoral Commission	31	46
Government Newspapers	37	30
Independent Newspapers	32	30

(% "A very great deal / A Lot")

Except for Senegal, which has a higher level of trust in almost all institutions, the rest of the countries show roughly comparable trust scores to those of Lesotho for the ruling party, national assembly, law courts, traditional leaders, army, electoral commission, police, local government

and public corporations. However, Basotho respondents have relatively low levels of trust in newspapers and broadcasting services, as well as opposition parties, paralleled only by similarly low levels in Mozambique.

The responses about the level of trust in these 19 institutions can be averaged to form a scale.<sup>12</sup> Overall, men, supporters of the ruling party, those with better views of economic trends, and those who contact political leaders score higher on the scale of trust than their counterparts.<sup>13</sup>

### **Government Honesty and Corruption**

Another factor that underpins a sense of legitimacy is honesty in government. The Afrobarometer asks respondents how many officials they believe are involved in corruption. Perceived corruption is highest among border officials, with 30 percent saying “most” or “all” are involved in corruption, followed by police (28 percent) and government officials (27 percent). Religious leaders (10 percent) and the Prime Minister’s office (11 percent) enjoy the most optimistic perceptions.

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<sup>12</sup> The scale has a reliability (Kronbach’s Alpha) of .89.

<sup>13</sup> All significant at the .001 level.

**Table 18: Perceived Corruption in Government and Civil Society**

	None	Some	Most	All	Don't Know Enough to Say
<b>Official/Civil Society Leader</b>					
Border Officials	10	36	20	10	24
Police	11	44	22	6	17
Government Officials	12	40	22	5	20
Foreign Business People	13	34	15	8	30
Local Business People	14	42	14	3	28
Judges And Magistrates	14	41	13	2	30
Elected Leaders	19	30	11	3	36
NGO Leaders	17	41	11	2	29
Teachers And Administrators	23	46	11	1	19
Prime Minister's Office	23	27	8	3	39
Religious Leaders	29	44	8	2	18

How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Only two of these institutions were in both 2000 and 2003 surveys. Perceptions of corruption amongst elected leaders decreased from 28 to 14 percent,<sup>14</sup> but increased for government officials (from 20 to 25 percent).<sup>15</sup>

We created a scale of corruption across all these institutions. Respondents with higher income, the better educated, those in better health, and those who know someone who has died of AIDS are all significantly more likely to see corruption in public institutions.<sup>16</sup> Opposition supporters are also more likely to see corruption in public institutions than are LCD supporters; however once it comes to civil society institutions, the difference disappears.

### **Government Responsiveness**

A third factor that should underpin the legitimacy of the state, at least with respect to a democratic state, is the sense that leaders are interested in and responsive to public opinion. Just 17 percent feel that elected leaders usually look after their interests, and 18 percent think that they usually listen to their opinions. These proportions do grow if we include those who say elected leaders do these things "some of the time."

**Table 19: Does government look after my interest and listen to me?**

	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always	Don't know
Government looks after my interests	30	46	11	6	7
Government listens to	43	29	13	5	10

<sup>14</sup> The question asked about "Parliamentarians" in 2000.

<sup>15</sup> The question asked about "civil servants" in 2000.

<sup>16</sup> These differences are all significant at the .000 level.



people like me					
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How much of the time do you think elected leaders, like parliamentarians or local councilors, try their best to do the following?

As usual, supporters of the ruling party have a significantly more favorable view of the government, but even a slight majority of the opposition believe the government looks after their interests, at least some of the time. Responses in Lesotho rank near the middle of Afrobarometer countries with regard to whether government looks after people's interests, but lags near the bottom on the question of whether government listens.

### **Incumbent Job Performance**

Legitimacy has to do with whether or not people will obey the decisions of government regardless of whether they support the current incumbent, or regardless of whether they agree with that decision. We now turn to examine the extent to which Basotho actually do support government incumbents and agree with its policies.

Two main conclusions emerge from questions about approval of overall incumbent job performance. First, popular satisfaction with the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament has increased sharply since 2000. These increases may reflect increase feelings of security across the nation now that people are sure the country is returning to normal and that there will be no return to the violence of 1998. Furthermore, opposition supporters are feeling better about the situation because their voices are at least being heard in Parliament.

Second, and perhaps most striking, are the high levels of ignorance about political leaders once we move away from the main national institutions. Nearly half (41 percent) admit that they do not know enough about their District Secretary to have an opinion on their performance, and almost three-quarters (74 percent) say the same thing about their Local Councilor.

**Table 20: Approval of Incumbent Job Performance**

	<b>Strongly disapprove</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Strongly approve</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Prime Minister	7	17	32	36	8
Member of Parliament	14	20	27	23	16
District Secretary	8	17	21	14	41
Local Councilor	5	6	9	6	74

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

**Table 21: Incumbent Job Performance, 2000 - 2003**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>
Prime Minister	49	68
Member of Parliament (parliamentarians in 2000)	38	50

Not surprisingly the level of support for all four offices is significantly higher among members of the ruling party. Compared to results from other Afrobarometer surveys, Basotho ratings of the

Prime Minister and Parliament are in the middle of the range. However, assessments of District and Local officials are far below that of the other countries.

### Government Policy Performance

In order to get below the surface of overall assessments, the Afrobarometer also asks respondents to rate government performance across a dozen specific policy areas. Approval ratings range from a high of 77 percent for education to a low of 32 percent for price stability. Even though most people offer general approval of incumbent performance, the wide variation among these results shows that respondents are able and willing to discriminate between the areas where government is doing well and where it is doing poorly. While improving basic health care is the second most popular area of performance (56 percent), all other areas are at 50 percent or below.

**Table 22: Government Policy Performance**

	Very Badly	Fairly Badly	Fairly Well	Very Well	Don't Know Enough to Have An Opinion
Addressing educational needs	3	17	47	30	3
Improving basic health services	8	33	44	12	3
Reducing crime	17	31	39	11	2
Combating HIV/AIDS	8	18	31	18	26
Delivering household water	14	37	36	11	2
Resolving conflicts between communities	8	30	38	9	14
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	24	42	25	7	2
Managing the economy	10	36	31	9	14
Fighting corruption in government	14	32	28	7	19
Creating jobs	26	41	23	5	4
Narrowing gaps between rich and poor	20	53	18	2	8
Keeping prices stable	22	50	15	3	10

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Public approval has jumped markedly since 2000 in four areas (education, health, crime, water, and managing the economy), but decreased significantly in the area of job creation. The very low ratings for its job in keeping prices stable remains the same as it was in 2000. The biggest improvement, in the assessment of education, is doubtless due to the policy instituted in 2000 of free primary schooling starting with Standard 1 and adding another standard or grade each year. The low ratings of government performance with regard to jobs and prices reflect Basotho's continuing difficulties in being able to afford basic necessities, such as maize meal.

**Table 23: Government Policy Performance, 2000 – 2003**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>
Education	56	77
Health	50	56
Crime	43	50
Water	35	47
Economy	36	40
Jobs	38	28
Prices	19	18

As with virtually all other questions, supporters of the ruling party have a significantly more optimistic views of the way the government is doing its job across all the categories listed above. Basotho respondents do not disagree materially with respondents from other countries on these categories. Their view on the government role in education surpasses that in other countries, but their view on AIDS, prices and the income gap are generally lower than those of other respondents.

### **The People's Agenda**

What are the key issues that people want their government to focus on? The Afrobarometer asks people "What are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?" They can offer up to three problems. The issues highlighted by Basotho reflected a society beset by massive economic problems. Unemployment (74 percent), food shortages (49 percent) and farming (24 percent) are at the top of the list (almost the same order in which people define "poverty" -- see below at Table 24). With few exceptions, almost all the other problems also relate to problems of livelihood or securing basic necessities.

In the face of the mounting HIV/AIDS epidemic, it is remarkable that health issues (12 percent) are relatively infrequently mentioned. This could reflect the fact that the use of health services is decreasing though health needs are increasing, which is a consequence of attempts to recover costs through increasing medical fees. In addition, mission hospitals have been forced to curtail services, because of lack of government subsidies. HIV or AIDS, specifically, is mentioned by only 5 percent, even though the HIV/AIDS pandemic is now rife in Lesotho.

When people are specifically asked about AIDS, 57 percent agree that the government should devote more resources to combating the disease. Those who know someone who has died of AIDS are more likely to support putting resources into the fight against AIDS (54 percent as opposed to 46 percent). Stigmatization of people living with AIDS continues, and the publicity campaigns trying to help people protect themselves are still not being taken sufficiently seriously. The government is being criticized for not taking a strong initiative against the spread of the disease.

The ranking of these problems is remarkably consistent from 2000 to 2003. Only farming has moved strongly upward in the list, probably reflecting bad weather and a consequent bad harvest in 2002. The level of security seems to have improved greatly, as has transportation, perhaps due to an improvement in rural roads. Politics is a less important problem now than it was in 2000, most likely reflecting the successful outcome of the 2002 elections. Health has gone up in the list, most likely because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which was not even discussed in 2000.

**Table 24: Most Important Problems in Lesotho, by Income Group**

	Income < M500	Income > M500	Total	Rank In 2000
Unemployment	76	70	74	1
Food shortage	50	42	49	3
Farming	26	16	24	11
Poverty and destitution	19	20	19	5
Crime and security	18	16	18	2
Transportation	18	19	18	4
Education	12	23	15	9
Water supply	14	10	13	8
Health	12	14	12	7
Management of economy	7	8	7	12
Political issues	6	11	7	6
Services	5	9	6	10
AIDS	4	6	5	-
Infrastructure and roads	5	3	4	-
Income and taxes	3	7	4	-
Housing	1	3	2	-

In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?

### **Comparing the Performance of Government to the Old Regime**

In earlier questions, we asked people whether they are freer now than under the old military regime Lesotho had prior to 1992. Now we ask people to compare the performance of democratic government to the military government.

In 2000 the picture was very mixed, with only around one third saying the government which won the 1998 election performed better than the old military government. In 2003, people have a much more optimistic view of the superiority of democratic government. Over three quarter say government is now better able to enforce the law than the military government (69 percent), and the same number say it is more effective in delivering services (up from just 34 percent who thought so in 2000). Two thirds also now say the democratic government is more trustworthy (65 percent, up from 36 percent in 2000). Once again, the most likely explanation of these sharply changing views is that Basotho have now witnessed a peaceful election which produces an effective government. However, there has also been an increase in perceptions that democratic government is more corrupt. In 2000, 36 percent felt government was less corrupt than before; that figure has now declined to just 14 percent.

**Table 25: Improvements in government effectiveness**

	Much less	Less	Same	More	Much more	Don't know
Able to enforce the law	4	10	8	50	19	8
Effective in delivery of services	5	14	10	50	19	4

Corrupt	4	10	14	33	13	27
Trustworthy	6	11	9	47	18	9

Comparing the current government with the former administration, would you say that the one we have now is more or less:

With one or two exceptions, Basotho are more optimistic about the improvement in their government’s ability to enforce the law, deliver services, eliminate corruption and be trustworthy than any of the other seven countries. This is consistent with the findings elsewhere in the survey that show a great increase in confidence and political stability since the election of 2002.

## **BASOTHO’S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL VALUES**

We have seen repeatedly that political allegiance is an important fact that shapes political opinion in Lesotho. On one hand, this may be the result of people who have developed loyalties to various leaders and groups on the basis of personality and patronage who then evaluate the government based on whether those leaders are in or out of power. On the other hand, this could also reflect the basis of a maturing democracy in which people align themselves with political parties on the basis of political values and ideas.

The Afrobarometer poses a series of statements to which people could agree or disagree that explore economic and political values, particularly in relation to government intervention in economic affairs. The responses are presented here so that those on the left represent support for non-market methods for providing welfare and those on the right represent support for market oriented mechanisms. The results indicate that Basotho hold very mixed views on how much control they wish the government to exercise over their lives.

On some matters they come down strongly on reliance on the government or other non-market forces. For example, large majorities favor government control of production of goods and services (76 percent), or a return to a more self-reliant, subsistence based form of production where local communities rely on the land and provide for their own needs (76 percent). Furthermore a majority prefer looking to local wealthy elites, or patrons to provide for their communities (60 percent). This probably reflects the fact that there has never been a welfare state as such in Lesotho, and only government civil servants and a few fortunate individuals in the private sector receive pensions. Evidence from various poverty studies (see Gay and Hall 1994 and 2000) show that family and non-family networks of patronage extend across Lesotho and are the principal support of the poor. They are slightly in favor of having the economy managed by experts rather than allowing the market to move freely (51 percent).

And in response to a different, more directly put question, 55 percent agree that “a government-run economy is preferable to a free market economy” while just one quarter (26 percent) say that “a free market economy is preferable” (another 11 percent say “it doesn’t matter” for people like them).

Yet large majorities also want individuals to decide for themselves what to buy and sell (78 percent). This produces an apparent contradiction between support for government control of production and a firm insistence that people should decide for themselves what to produce and sell. In short it appears that people want to have the best of both worlds. They want help from government when it is needed, but do not want government to control their individual behavior. They are willing to accept economic controls in the abstract, but in concrete, day-to-day life want

to be left alone. It is interesting to note that this echoes a hallmark of traditional form of chiefly government: ordinary people were left alone unless they disturbed the public order or were seriously in need of support.

**Table 26: Economic Values**

	<b>Strong Non Market Response</b>	<b>Non Market Response</b>	<b>Neutral/ Don't know</b>	<b>Market Response</b>	<b>Strong Market Support</b>
People go back to the land and provide mainly for their own needs as a community (Market = Disagree)	33	43	8	13	4
Government plans the production and distribution of all goods and services (Market = Disagree)	25	41	9	16	9
Wealthy Basotho provide for the needs of their own communities (Market = Disagree)	27	33	7	23	10
Economic experts (including foreign donors and investors) make the most important decisions about our economy (Market = Disagree)	18	33	10	24	16
Individuals decide for themselves what to produce and what to buy and sell (Market = Agree)	3	13	7	45	33

Another set of questions posed in a different format also tap this philosophical divide, but also measure public responses to much more specific alternative government economic policies, many of them often associated with structural reform policies favored by international monetary organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

Almost unanimously, Basotho want an egalitarian job market, presumably through government maintaining a low minimum wage. An astonishing 94 percent would prefer government to provide as many jobs as possible, even at the risk of low wages. Almost eight in ten want to maintain a large civil service force rather than economizing to use national financial resources more efficiently (79 percent).

Strong majorities also prefer free schooling even if it means accepting lower quality education (58 percent), and prefer that government buys and sells crops rather than private traders (58 percent). A slight majority also wishes to keep tariffs high in order to protect local business (53 percent). At the other end of the spectrum, almost no one (8 percent) is willing to have government seize private property without compensation, even if it would help national development.

Given this strong balance of values in favor of government management of the economy, it is perhaps surprising that opinion is more evenly divided on the impact of recent government economic reforms. Over the past few years, for example, Lesotho has retrenched civil servants and privatized parastatal industries such as water and sewage, the national airline, flour milling and telecommunications. While 55 percent say they are dissatisfied with the way the government's policy of reducing its role in the economy "works" and just 25 percent say they are

satisfied (measured in a separate question), less than half say that these reforms have hurt most people and only benefited a few (47 percent), and a strong minority (41 percent) say that these reforms have helped most people, and only a few have suffered. Furthermore, just one third (33 percent) want government to abandon the reform process and a majority (56 percent) say it is necessary to accept some short term hardships for future gains. This suggests that a substantial majority are willing to accept structural reforms in the economy even though hardships might result, possibly due to a long-standing sense that the government is not competent to manage such activities.

**Table 27: Support for Economic Reform**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither/Don't Know</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	
It is better for everyone to have a job even if this means that average wages are low	70	24	1	2	3	It is better to have higher wages, even if this means some people go without a job
All civil servants should keep their jobs, even if paying their salaries is costly to the country.	50	29	5	9	6	The govt cannot afford so many public employees and should lay some of them off.
It is better to have free schooling, even if the quality of education is low.	37	21	3	11	29	It is better to raise educational standards, even if we have to pay school fees
It is better for government to buy and sell crops, even if some farmers are served late	31	27	10	22	10	It is better for private traders to handle agricultural marketing even if some farmers get left out
We must protect producers within our country by imposing tariffs that make imported goods more expensive.	28	25	9	26	13	It is a good idea to import affordable goods from other countries, even if some of our producers are forced out of business
The government's economic policies have hurt most people and only benefited a few	23	24	12	23	18	The government's economic policies have helped most people; only a few have suffered.
The costs of reforming the country are too high; the govt should therefore abandon its current economic policies	12	21	12	31	25	In order for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary for us to accept some hardships now
In order to develop the country, the govt should have the power to seize property without compensation.	1	7	3	32	57	The government must abide by the law in acquiring property, including paying the owner.



But within this set of apparent contradictions lies a genuine and consistent difference in the profile of values held by the supporters of the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy and those who feel close to no party or support the opposition. Ruling party supporters are more likely to favor policies that lean towards government control or anti-market positions than opposition supporters. Admittedly these differences are small, but they suggest that there are other bases for party support than simply personality, family and patronage. They suggest that political opinions may be maturing so that politics in the future may be based more on ideas and policies than at present.

**Table 28: Various Economic Values, by Partisan Identification**

	<b>LCD</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Opposition</b>
Prefers government-run economy	61	51	46
Approves of government planning production and distribution of goods and services	73	58	59
Prefers free schooling, even if quality is low	64	50	51
Prefers government buying and selling crops, even if inefficient	64	52	51
Government's economic policies have hurt most people	44	47	55
Disapproves of individuals deciding for themselves what to produce, buy or sell	19	12	9
Approves of economic experts making the important decisions about economy	55	45	45
Agrees that costs of reform are too high and government should abandon policies	31	30	39
Agrees that government can seize property without compensation	11	6	6

Further analysis indicates that those who favor a more “liberal” market oriented philosophy tend to have greater household income, experience fewer household shortages, have higher levels of education, have more public facilities in their neighborhood, belong to a greater number of civic groups, believe that public institutions are corrupt, have less trust in government officials, and have more contact with government officials, but also have greater confidence that government can enforce the law. In short, those who hold the more “liberal” philosophy are both likely to oppose the government but more likely to be better off, more active in civil society, confident that the system overall is working, but not at all confident in those who occupy the seats of power.

It will be very healthy for Lesotho if the opposition consolidates itself into a party committed to a more economically right-wing position, as it appears may already be happening. Certainly the Basotho National Party has a long record of support for conservative, monarchist, capitalist positions, while the Lesotho Congress for Democracy has inherited the socialist, relatively left-wing philosophy of the parties which eventually formed the Basutoland Congress Party.

## **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN LESOTHO**

### **How Well Off Are Basotho?**

Despite the fact that the majority of people are at least somewhat satisfied with the state of democracy and the performance of government in Lesotho, they are living under difficult social and economic conditions. A disturbing 84 percent say that the country's present economic conditions are bad or very bad, and 86 percent that their own economic conditions are bad or very bad.

In another question, alluded to earlier, we asked people to rate themselves on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “poor” and 10 is “rich.” Most Basotho see themselves as poor: the average (mean) self placement is 2.7 and one in four (24 percent) place themselves at 0. Respondents who are better educated, younger and healthier have significantly higher well-being scores than the poorly educated, older and less healthy persons.

**Table 29: Evaluation of Economic Conditions**

	<b>Very bad</b>	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Economic condition of this country	36	48	6	10	1
Own present living conditions	29	57	6	7	1

In general, how would you describe:

The country’s economic problems stem mainly from unemployment: estimates range from a minimum of about 15 to 50 percent of the workforce, depending on how it is defined. But whatever definition is used, the situation is bad. Only 12 percent of the people we interviewed were employed full time, and another 13 percent were employed part-time. While the textile industry has recently expanded as a result of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA), and may start to provide more jobs, they will generally be at a lower wage than the jobs of the past in the mining sector. In our survey, more than three-quarters of respondents have monthly incomes of less than M500, which is below the M502 per month minimum wage as set by the Lesotho government in 2001; fully half of this group report no income whatever. In short the situation is just as the respondents say, namely, bad.

**How Do Basotho Compare Themselves?**

While eight in ten say their economic conditions are bad, almost two thirds (61 percent) think they are worse off than other Basotho. Similarly, while eight in ten say the country’s economic conditions are bad, an identical number (84 percent) say Lesotho is doing worse than neighboring countries. Most Basotho look across their borders to a South Africa with far more social services.

**Table 30: Comparisons of Economic Conditions**

	<b>Much Worse</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Much better</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Own living conditions compared to other Basotho	12	49	26	11	1	1
Economic conditions in this country compared to neighboring countries	31	53	3	7	2	5

**Has Life Gotten Better or Worse?**

Almost half think the national economy (46 percent) and their personal conditions (46 percent) have got worse in the past year. When we expand the period of comparison, most people think that their parents – while also poor – were better off than they are today (a mean score of 3.7 compared to their own assessments of 2.7).

**Table 31: Recent Economic Trends**

	<b>Much Worse</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Much better</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
National economic conditions	14	32	29	19	2	3
Own living conditions	8	38	34	17	1	2

Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to twelve months ago?

**Do Basotho Expect Things to Get Better or Worse?**

Public expectations for the next year are more optimistic, but very divided. One quarter expect the national economy to get better (25 percent), but one third expect things to get worse (34 percent). Expanding the time perspective, most people expect their children to be better off than they are now in ten years time (4.0 compared to 2.7 for their current conditions). Thus, Basotho look back to a previous time which was better than the present (though by no means prosperous), and also look forward to a better future.

**Table 32: Economic Prospects**

	<b>Much Worse</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Much better</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
National economic conditions in 12 months	12	22	16	20	5	25
Own living conditions in 12 months	9	23	21	18	4	25

Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse?

Evaluations of national and personal economic conditions remain largely unchanged since 2000, though there is an important trend that significant proportions have become less pessimistic (moving from the very bad, or much worse responses to bad, or worse).

It is important to note that partisan loyalties have no impact on these evaluations. Rather, the well-being of the respondent is the major influence; the younger, the healthy, the employed, and those earning more than M500 a month have brighter view about economic affairs than their opposites. Basotho respondents are much more pessimistic about economic conditions (past, present, or future, than any other country for which the Afrobarometer has surveyed.

### **Have Basotho Benefited From Economic Reform?**

After a series of questions about economic reform policies, the Afrobarometer asks respondents to compare the present economic system with that of a few years ago. Overwhelmingly, Basotho see few advantages from the economic liberalization process the country has undergone over this time, such as privatization of key parastatals and increasing focus on cost recovery in the provision of public services. For instance, the national airline closed after being privatized throwing the entire staff out of work. The Agric Bank and Lesotho Bank suffered the same fate after privatization, which put them in the hands of foreign banks which were not willing to lend for agriculture and other small businesses.

Once again the picture displayed by these statistics is bleak and pessimistic. Compared to a few years ago, people see less goods on the shelves, fewer job opportunities, lower standards of living, and a widening gap between the rich and poor. Only the question of security of property is positive, but probably because so many people couldn't answer the question. The only real differences that arise are due to the level of well-being of the respondent.

**Table 33: The Consequences of Economic Reform**

	<b>Much worse</b>	<b>Worse</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Much better</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Availability of job opportunities	49	39	4	6	1	1
People's standard of living	32	50	9	8	1	1
Availability of goods	24	52	8	11	1	4
Gap between the rich and poor	32	44	14	5	1	4
Security of property from seizure by government	10	28	14	17	2	29

We are now going to compare our present economic system with the economic system a few years ago. Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they used to be, or about the same:

### **What Do People Understand As Poverty?**

As we have seen, most Basotho think of themselves as poor. But what do they mean by this? The Afrobarometer has asked a new question that allows people to tell us what they understand as "poor" (the percentages in the columns add to more than 100 because people were asked to give up to three different answers).

The most common understandings of being poor are lack of food (44 percent), unemployment (29 percent), and lack of livestock (25 percent) (for traditional Mosotho, particularly in the rural area, livestock are the basic mark of wealth, with land not far behind). In particular, shortage of livestock has become a serious problem, due to the rapid increase in recent years of stock theft (see Gay and Hall 2000). It is interesting that so few people mention powerlessness, insecurity and laziness. It is also instructive that those earning less and more than M500 per month have few major differences, perhaps with the exception of "livestock" (mentioned by 28 percent of those earning less than M500 per month compared to 14 percent of those over this line). The meaning of poverty has not significantly changed for Basotho over the years: it compares closely with a list of meanings of poverty obtained by interviews by Sechaba Consultants in 1989 which put food at the top, followed by clothing, money, livestock, shelter, agricultural needs, employment, good health, water supply, education and community cooperation (See Gay et al 1990, p. 7).

**Table 34: Meanings of Poverty, by Income Group**

Meaning of poverty	Income < M500	Income > M500	Total
Lack of food	43	50	44
Lack of employment	30	27	29
Lack of livestock	28	14	25
Lack of clothing	19	16	19
Lack of money	17	21	18
Lack of land	19	10	17
Low living standards	16	18	17
Lack of shelter	10	16	12
Lack of everything	11	13	11
Poor family situation	6	7	6
Poverty and destitution	3	6	4
Agriculture problems	4	2	3
Poor health	2	3	2
Lack of social amenities	1	3	2
Lack of education and skills	1	3	2
Powerless and insecurity	1	3	2
Laziness	1	2	1

In your opinion, what does it mean to be “poor”?

### **Lived Poverty**

Another set of questions assess poverty from a different perspective. Rather than using money metric measures of formal income to determine poverty, we simply ask people to tell us how often people go without basic necessities of life. Analysis of results from Round 1 tell us that people’s responses correspond extremely closely with money metric measures such as Gross National Income per capita, or average household income as measured by Household Living Standards surveys (see Mattes, Bratton and Davids, 2003).

The average (median) Basotho was most likely to go without electricity over the past year (77 percent say they “always” went without). The average person went without a cash income “many times” (42 percent). The median person went without food and medicine “several times” through the year. Clean water and cooking fuel were the items most plentiful in supply as the average person only went without “once or twice” in the previous twelve months. This reflects the fact that the government has now extended the rural water supply system to much of the nation. Yet, as time passes, water systems are deteriorating and not being repaired or replaced. Hospitals too are not being maintained, and the quality of services is declining.

**Table 35: Lived Poverty Index**

	Never	Once or twice	Several times	Many times	Always
Electricity for home	18	2	1	1	<b>77</b>
Cash income	8	8	21	<b>42</b>	20
Food to eat	20	9	<b>27</b>	40	4
Medicines or care	21	15	<b>36</b>	25	4
Fuel for cooking	37	15	<b>28</b>	18	3
Clean water for home	49	<b>11</b>	19	18	3

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

As might be expected, respondents with lower incomes are significantly more likely to go without food, medical care, electricity, fuel and cash income as are those from rural areas, who are less educated, and have less access to public amenities in their neighborhood.

### How Do People Survive?

Who do people turn to when they experience shortages? What is striking is the extent to which people call on family or members of their community for help when in trouble: it is the modal strategy of people when they are short of cash (44 percent) and food (43 percent). The market, which reflects commerce-based strategies, is the modal response to obtain medicine when there is a shortage. Few people call on government, except in the area of medical care (13 percent).

**Table 36: Survival Strategies for Respondents Who Experience Shortages**

	No one	Kin	Community	Market	Government	Does not apply
Cash income	11	<b>44</b>	23	12	1	8
Food to eat	5	<b>43</b>	26	5	1	20
Medicines or care	8	13	11	<b>35</b>	13	21
Fuel for cooking	14	10	<b>27</b>	11	0	37
Clean water	12	3	<b>31</b>	4	1	49
Electricity in home	3	1	1	2	0	92

To whom do you usually turn when you are unable to get enough:

The Afrobarometer also asks respondents how they use their time in the average day (on a scale ranging from no time up at all to five hours or more). We find that the more shortages a person experiences, the more time they spend growing their own food, doing household work, caring for children in the family, caring for orphans, and caring for sick household members, including oneself.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, working to earn money has a different pattern of responses. In this case, those who go without rarely or never spend more time working for money than those in the next two groups. However, those who always go without spend far more time working to earn money than any of the other groups. The implication seems to be that those with intermediate levels of

<sup>17</sup> These differences are significant at the .000 level.

shortages are still able to survive in what they do at home, perhaps in the informal sector, perhaps through gardening, perhaps through dependence on remittances. However, those in the bottom group, who experience shortages in every category, must go out to work in any way they can, often in the informal sector and often, as experience has shown, in illegal activities. Even personal safety is closely related to poverty. The more often a person goes without basic necessities, the more often they fear crime, have their houses broken into, are physically attacked, and have their livestock stolen.

Even some of the most basic services which should be available to all citizens are less accessible for persons experiencing shortages. Those who “never” go without find it easier to obtain identity documents, places in primary school for children, voter registration cards and household services. Thus it seems that “making it” in a competitive world is hard for those who begin with the odds stacked against them. Those who have get more benefits and services, and those who are destitute are left to make it any way they can: those who have will get more, and those who have not will see even what they have taken from them by a harsh and uncaring system. It is perhaps no wonder that some people choose to leave Lesotho for South Africa if they can find a way.

## **WHAT TYPE OF SOCIETY DO PEOPLE WANT?**

We have earlier discussed the question of economic values; this section examines people’s values regarding the role of citizens. Table 37 presents responses to ten statements about whether people prefer society to maximize individual autonomy (on the left) or on community solidity or well being (on the right).

Large majorities embrace the type of individualism that underlay democracy at its most basic level. For example, eight in ten prefer leaders to treat all citizens equally rather than favoring their own family or group (84 percent), and prefer to allow all people to vote regardless of their level of political knowledge (80 percent). Three quarters prefer to have ordinary people as leaders (76 percent) and feel that citizens should become more active in questioning their leaders (75 percent).

However, opinion becomes more divided when the question turns to individual versus community welfare and interest. Six in ten say that individuals should be responsible for looking after their well being (63 percent), but 44 percent feel that government should bear the main responsible for looking after people’s well being. Just over one half say that large gaps between rich and poor are acceptable (54 percent) but 43 percent want to avoid these gaps to minimize jealousy and conflict. There is almost equal division between the one half who agree that everyone should be free to pursue what is best for themselves (51 percent), and those who say that people should put the well being of the community first (47 percent).

Moving further away from the individualist end of the spectrum, just four in ten say we should learn to tolerate individual differences in opinion (43 percent) whereas 55 percent prefer to extend discussion with the aim of reaching community consensus. These two elements clearly resonate with Basotho tradition where the *pitso*, or gathering would talk until it reached consensus, after which the chief would sum matters up and decide for the group. Public support for consensus decision making has probably decreased since the *pitso* has now become more of a forum for government to present its views to the public than a means for government to listen to the people.



And while large majorities accept the basic equality that underpins democracy, they appear to lag in developing the assertiveness and critical outlook that characterizes a democratic citizen: 42 percent say people should be the boss and control the government, whereas 45 percent agree that people are like children and government like parents who take care of them. Finally, increased women's rights are favored by only a bare majority: 53 percent favor greater rights and equality for women, while 45 percent say they should remain subject to customary law.

**Table 37: Style of Government: Individual vs. Communal [check ordering – is it A/B or has he re-ordered?]**

Statement A	Strongly Agree with A	Agree with A	Neutral	Agree with B	Strongly Agree with B	Statement B
Since everyone is equal under the law, leaders should not favor their own family or group	58	26	2	9	5	Once in office, leaders are obliged to help their own family or group
Everyone should be permitted to vote, even if they do not fully understand all the issues in an election	49	31	10	6	3	Only those who are sufficiently well educated should be allowed to choose our leaders
It is better to have ordinary people as leaders because they understand our needs	30	46	3	12	10	It is better to have wealthy people as leaders because they can help provide for the community
As citizens, we should be more active in questioning the actions of our leaders	50	25	3	13	8	In our country these days, we should show more respect for authority
People should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life	37	26	3	13	21	Govt. should bear the main responsibility for the well being of people
It is alright to have large differences of wealth because those who work hard deserve to be rewarded	24	30	3	18	25	We should avoid large gaps between the rich and the poor because they create jealousy and conflict
In our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment as men do	19	34	1	16	29	Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs and should remain so
Everybody should be free to pursue what is best for themselves as individuals	27	24	3	21	26	Each person should put the well being of the community ahead of their own
Government is an employee; the people should be the bosses who control the government	20	22	3	22	33	People are like children; the government should take care of them like a parent
Since we will never agree on everything, we must learn to accept differences of opinion within our community	24	19	3	28	27	In order to make decisions in our community, we should talk until everyone agrees

### How Politically Active Are Basotho?

Are Basotho interested in trying to make a better world for themselves by participating in the political process?

We begin by examining the degree of people’s mental engagement with the political process, which consists of their interest in politics and how often they actually discuss politics with friends and neighbors. An astounding 74 percents told our interviewers that they were “very interested” in public affairs. And six in ten (61 percent) said they frequently discussed politics with friends and neighbors; 41 percent “never” did so. Both questions were asked in different ways in 2000, making direct comparisons difficult, but it appears that there have been increases in both areas since 2000 where 31 percent said they “always” “follow what’s going on in government and public affairs” and another 17 percent said they did so “some of the time”; and 59 percent said the “never” discuss politics with friends.

Men, and supporters of the ruling party are more likely to be interested than their opposite numbers. Perhaps surprising is that people who experience higher levels of poverty are more likely to be interested in public affairs than those who are better off. It might be that having what one needs in life is a disincentive to being involved in the political process. For example, it was widely reported that the young men who were most active in the protests of 1998 and who were most involved in looting shops were from the poor, unemployed, uneducated urban sector. Supporters of the ruling party, and the better educated are also more likely to discuss politics.

Besides mental engagement, another key factor that underpins political activity is the amount of political information people possess. One key sources of this information is the news media. The Afrobarometer regularly asks respondents how often they obtain news from radio, television or newspapers.

Clearly radio is the most popular source of news, followed by newspapers and television. Two thirds of Basotho get news from the radio on a frequent basis (65 percent say every day or a few times a week) compared to just one in ten from television (13 percent) and newspapers (14 percent). This low level of readership is not simply a result of lack of newspapers as there are many active dailies and weeklies in Lesotho with South African papers also receiving limited circulation. However, the distribution of newspapers is very poor, especially in mountain and rural areas. Television is available, but many people in mountain and rural areas cannot receive signals (especially those distant from the South Africa border) limiting viewership to those wealthy enough to afford satellite dishes.

**Table 38: Sources of News**

	Never	Less than once a month	A few times a month	A few times a week	Every day	Don’t know
Radio	20	4	11	22	43	0
Television	80	2	5	7	6	1
Newspapers	65	5	14	11	3	1

How often do you get news from the following sources?

Radio coverage appears to have expanded significantly. In 2000, 55 percent said they never got news from radio and 24 percent used it regularly (figures which now stand at 20 percent and 65 percent). However, television and newspaper use are virtually the same as they were in 2000.

**Table 39: Sources of News, 2000 – 2003**

	2000		2003	
	No Use	Frequent Use	No Use	Frequent Use
Radio	24	55	20	65

Television	78	11	80	13
Newspapers	68	10	65	14

All three media are used most frequently by supporters of opposition parties, those from urban areas, men, those who face the lowest levels of poverty, and those with higher levels of income and at least some primary education. It is interesting to note that the female respondents in this sample are significantly better educated than the male respondents (59 percent have finished at least primary school, as opposed to only 45 percent of men) and yet women are less likely to read newspapers. This fits with the fact that significantly fewer women than men say are interested in political affairs. Perhaps the right question is: what benefit is there in politics for women?

Lesotho has a lower level of radio and television use to get news than any of the other Afrobarometer surveys. However, it outpaces Mali, Mozambique and Senegal in terms of reading newspapers, but falls behind South Africa, Cape Verde, Ghana and Uganda.

Few people take part in politics primarily as individuals. More often than not, things like meetings, rallies, and protests are organized by political parties or civic associations. Thus the Afrobarometer asks respondents if they are members of a range of associations. As in many other parts of Africa, people are most likely to join religious associations. Six in ten (58 percent) Basotho say they belong to one, but with fully half of these saying they are inactive members. One quarter belong to a community development association (24 percent), one in five have joined a farmers group or trade union (19 percent) and one in twenty belong to a professional association (6 percent).

**Table 40: Membership In Groups**

	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Active member</b>	<b>Inactive member</b>	<b>Not a member</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Religious group	2	27	29	42	0
Community development group	2	13	9	74	2
Trade union or farmers association	1	10	8	80	1
Professional association	0	3	3	91	3

Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member?

Women, supporters of opposition parties, and those with at least primary education are most likely to join religious associations. Lesotho is in the middle of the range of results from other Afrobarometer surveys in terms of membership in religious groups, trade unions and development associations. However, Basotho lag far behind in terms of membership in professional or business associations.

But do Basotho feel they are able to turn political interest, and the types of information gleaned from radio broadcasts into action?

We asked people what types of political activity they had taken part in over the past twelve months. Almost three quarters said they had attended community meetings on at least several occasions (73 percent). Two thirds said they had joined with others to raise an issue on several

occasions (66 percent). One in ten said they had participated in demonstrations in the past year (9 percent) and just one in twenty admitted to having taken part in political violence (6 percent)

**Table 41: Level of Political Activity**

	Never	Might some day	Once or twice	Several times	Often	Don't know
Attended a community meeting	10	7	3	27	46	0
Got together with others to raise an issue	18	6	10	27	39	0
Attended a demonstration or protest march	80	12	4	4	1	1
Used force or violence for a political cause	93	3	3	1	1	0

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:

Ruling party supporters and those who endure the highest levels of poverty are most likely to attend community meetings. Those who endure the highest levels of lived poverty are also more likely to have taken part in a demonstration or used political violence than their better off counterparts.<sup>18</sup> It is the people with the least to lose who have the most to gain by political activism.

The level of normally acceptable political activity, including discussing politics and raising issues, has gone up since 2000. Likewise, the level of normally unacceptable activity, including protests and violence, has gone down. This is a sign that the elections of 2002 have had a strong effect in cooling social protest. The only significant protests over the past few years have been strikes and marches called by labor unions in protest against poor working conditions in the textile factories.

Basotho respondents are as active in attending community meetings as respondents in Cape Verde, Ghana, Mozambique, Senegal and South Africa, but more active than Malians but much less than Ugandans. They have attended demonstrations and resorted to violence at about the same level as respondents in other countries. However, they have come together to raise issues at a much higher level than in any other country.

Another form of political activity is to contact elected leaders and other representatives to give them your opinion about some issue or ask them for assistance. The Afrobarometer asks respondents which leaders they may have contact in the past year, and how often.

Clearly few people have been in touch with any national-level officials. Political contact takes place mainly at the local level. Six in ten (62 percent) said they had contacted a traditional leader (62 percent); one half had contacted some other “influential” person in the community (47 percent) and four in ten had contacted a religious leader (43 percent). Compared to these actors, the state plays a relatively limited role in people’s lives and is not the place where people expect to find help, though one in four made contact with a village councilor (25 percent) almost one in five say they made contact with a party official (17 percent). Village councilors suffer from a negative image gained during previous government when Village Development Councils were

<sup>18</sup> This relationship is significant at the .000 level.

used to impose central authority on village democracy. One in ten said they had met a District Development Councilor (10 percent) and 11 percent with a Member of Parliament.

**Table 42: Contacting Officials**

	Never	Only once	A few times	Often	Don't know
Traditional chief	38	8	20	34	1
Other influential person	49	11	18	18	4
Religious leader	56	6	15	22	1
Village Development Councilor	73	5	11	9	2
Political party official	83	5	7	5	1
District Development Councilor	86	3	5	2	4
Representative in Parliament	87	3	5	3	1
Official in government ministry	87	4	5	3	1

During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views?

In the case of all four national-level officials, men are more likely to make contact. At the local level, men, those from rural areas, and those who endure the highest levels of poverty are more likely to make contact with councilors. Reflecting their relatively high levels of support for traditional rule, Basotho have far more contact with traditional leaders and other influential individuals than respondents in other Afrobarometer surveys. Contact with other leaders is at roughly the same level as the other countries.

## WHAT IS LESOTHO'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD?

### What Is Lesotho's Relation To South Africa?

Finally, we examine a special set of questions specific to Lesotho and dealing with its relationship to the broader world. First, we asked respondents what proportion of family members are in South Africa for one reason or another. More than a third of households have a family member who works in South Africa (37 percent) and another quarter have someone who lives there (26 percent). One in five have someone who receives medical care there, probably through their job (21 percent), and one in ten have someone who studies there (14 percent).

**Table 43: Family Involvement in South Africa**

	Many	Few	None	Don't
Work in South Africa	5	32	63	1
Live in South Africa	5	21	75	0
Medical care in South Africa	4	17	78	1
Have South African IDs	3	15	80	2
Study in South Africa	3	11	86	0

Please tell me how many members of your family:

Far more urban respondents have family members living, studying, seeking medical care or working in South Africa than rural. Not surprisingly families who face higher levels of poverty are less likely to study in South Africa, since education across the border is very expensive. It is families with higher incomes who, again not surprisingly, are more likely to have more members working in South Africa and South African identity documents. This reflects the decline in the mining industry, whose jobs used to be taken predominantly by rural, uneducated people.

The suggestion that Lesotho and South Africa should become one country has been discussed widely for many years by Basotho, South Africans and foreign observers. It received its main impetus in the mid 1990s when James Motlatsi, a citizen of Lesotho who headed the South African National Union of Mineworkers, publicly advocated the union of the two countries. A survey conducted by Sechaba Consultants in 1997 showed that 41 percent of all respondents wanted the two countries to be unified. The 2000 Afrobarometer survey found 29 percent support for unity, a drop of 12 points. We now measure it at 30 percent, essentially unchanged from 2000. South Africa’s botched military intervention following the riots of September 1998, which resulted in massive destruction in Maseru and elsewhere, is likely to be a main reason for this sharp decrease in support for union. Supporters of the ruling LCD are significantly more willing to see Lesotho and South Africa join (33 percent) than those allied with opposition parties or no party (25 percent).

A closely related question concerns border controls between Lesotho and South Africa. The Afrobarometer found that opinion is almost evenly divided between support for tighter controls (38 percent) and looser controls (38 percent) with 23 percent undecided or without an opinion. There is a strong and significant tendency for those in poverty to favor tighter control while the better off support loosening restrictions at the border. This is a result of experience where those who are well off travel often and are faced with draconian border controls and delays while the less off travel less and encounter border problem less.

**What Is Lesotho’s Place In A Global World?**

Lesotho is integrated into the global economic system in many ways, but the two most recently important ones are the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the rapidly expanding textile industry in Maseru, Maputsoe and other towns. By mid-2003, more than 50,000 Basotho, mostly women, were working in largely Asian-owned textile factories in Lesotho’s western towns. These have created jobs and have to some extent made up for the loss of mining jobs in South Africa, at least in if not quality.

Both activities are strongly supported, with slightly more respondents in favor of the textile industry than the Highlands Water Project. The water project enjoys greater support from supporter of the ruling party and those who tend to be free of poverty. Similarly, the textile factories are strongly supported by ruling party supporters (reflecting the strong support given by leading LCD officials to the industry) as well as those with higher income and who face fewer shortages.

**Table 44: Attitude to Global Integration Projects**

	<b>Very Harmful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Very Helpful</b>	<b>Don’t know</b>
Highlands Water Project	6	16	8	34	23	14
Textile factories	4	8	6	42	32	8

Please tell me what has been the effect of the following projects in Lesotho.

Finally, the Afrobarometer asked respondents to rate international organizations on a scale of 0-10, where zero is least effective and ten most effective. Probably the most important finding is how few Basotho can actually recognize any of these institutions. The highest level of recognition for any of the organizations was for the Southern African Development Community (SADC), for which 35 percent could offer a score. All other organizations, including the Organization of African Unity, now called the African Union were recognized by 15 percent or less. With perhaps the exception of SADC, there are very few low scores given to these groups. If the people know them, they generally approve of them. Poorer and wealthier respondents offer roughly the same scores, but the poorer are far less able to recognize these organizations.

**Table 45: Support for and Recognition of International Organizations**

	All Respondents		<M500pm		> M500pm	
	Rating	Percent Recognition	Rating	Percent recognition	Rating	Percent recognition
World Bank	7.8	17	7.6	12	6.8	33
International Monetary Fund	7.4	13	7.3	9	7.5	28
World Trade Organization	7.3	11	7.1	8	7.6	23
United Nations	7.2	20	7.3	15	7.0	38
European Union	6.9	12	6.4	9	7.4	24
Organization of African Unity	6.7	15	6.9	11	6.4	28
SADC	6.5	35	6.6	30	6.4	54

Giving marks out of ten, where 0 is very badly and 10 is very well, how well do you think the following institutions do their jobs? Of haven't you heard enough about the institution to have an opinion?



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## **Annex 1: Details of Sampling Procedures**

The method for choosing villages was to list all the villages in all the enumeration areas in descending order of population. The number of villages was chosen in each of the ten districts of Lesotho in proportion to the populations of the districts, so that the total number of villages would be 150. The total population of the villages in a district was divided by the number  $n$  of villages to be chosen for that district to obtain a number  $N$  for that district. The populations for the villages were added successively until the number  $N$  was reached, and the village at that point was chosen. The process was repeated until the  $n$  villages in that district were identified. The process was repeated for all 10 districts.

Within a given village a central location was identified. The four interviewers assigned to that village would start from that point, each moving in one of the four cardinal directions. They would select a household a certain distance away from the central point according to a pre-determined code. That household would be chosen for the interview. If no one was present or the household refused or there was no one of the proper gender to allow alternating male and female respondents, then the next household to the right would be chosen.