

THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE – INSIGHTS FROM THE AFROBAROMETER SURVEY

One of the exciting things about multiparty democracies is the formation of political parties and the important role they come to play in such spaces. One of the key steps during Ghana’s transition to the 4th Republic was the lifting of the ban on political parties and their activities. With the benefit of data from the Afrobarometer Survey, including the recently released full summary of round nine, I examine how Ghanaians feel about political parties.

Attachment To Political Parties

When asked “do you feel close to any particular political party?” on average, about six out of ten Ghanaians say ‘yes’. However, from a high of sixty-seven percent (67%) in Round 1, 1999, there has been a consistent drop, by twelve percentage points since Round 6, 2014.

Table 1 – Percentage of Ghanaians who say they feel close to a political party

Year	Overall	Men	Women
1999	67%	70%	64%
2002	62%	62%	63%
2005	66%	70%	63%
2008	61%	65%	57%
2012	59%	63%	54%
2014	60%	63%	58%
2017	57%	59%	55%
2019	51%	54%	48%
2022	48%	50%	46%

Our political parties have women wings. They also have a national women’s organizer position. Over the life of the 4th Republic, women have played important roles, although not in substantial numbers, in political parties. Structurally therefore, avenues have been created that at least attempt to foster the cultivation of ties between women and political parties. From the results of the Afrobarometer survey, women have consistently lagged behind men when it comes to feeling close to political parties. On average, 62% of men say they feel close to political parties compared to 56% of women. The gap between the two genders has generally ranged between four and nine percentage points. Over time, the percentage of women who say they feel close to political parties has declined by eighteen percentage points and by twenty percentage points for men.

TRUST IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Table 2 – Percentage of Ghanaians who say they trust political parties “a lot”

	Trust the ruling party	Trust opposition political parties
2002	35%	23%
2005	41%	26%
2008	42%	22%
2012	22%	22%
2014	18%	22%
2017	33%	13%
2019	24%	12%
2022	9%	7%

Generally, Ghanaians have very low levels of trust in political parties per the findings from the survey. Since 2017, trust in the ruling party has declined significantly by as much as twenty-four percentage points. It must be noted however that, trust in ruling parties improved between 2002 and 2008 and between 2014 and 2017. With opposition political parties, trust levels have always been low with no periods of significant improvement. Overall, with a few exceptions, ruling parties tend to be trusted significantly more than opposition political parties.

Demand For Political Parties

Table 3 – Percentage of Ghanaians who say more political parties are needed

2002	57%
2005	69%
2008	71%
2012	81%
2014	70%
2017	70%
2019	71%
2022	72%

The years between 2002 and 2012 witnessed a period of strong demand for more political parties, growing by as much as twenty-four percentage points. Although the demand still remains high, it decreased by nine percentage points between 2012 and 2022. With the NDC-NPP hold on the political system very strong, I wonder if the demand for more political parties will materialize

to the point where a third force will emerge as a strong viable alternative to the duopoly. I have often said I doubt, and I still do.

Voting Intentions

If Presidential elections were held tomorrow, which candidate’s party would you vote for?

Table 4 – Voter Intentions

	NDC	NPP	Other	Refused to answer	Don’t know	Won't vote
2005	22%	52%	4%	0%	0%	22%
2008	24%	45%	4%	12%	11%	5%
2012	30%	37%	4%	17%	8%	5%
2014	23%	36%	6%	21%	9%	8%
2017	22%	49%	3%	13%	9%	5%
2019	22%	34%	2%	21%	13%	11%
2022	29%	22%	3%	23%	7%	23%

Since this question was first asked in Round 3, 2005 more Ghanaians regularly said that they would vote for the NPP through Round 8, 2019. In Round 9 (2022), more Ghanaians said that they would vote for the NDC. I must point out that, although more Ghanaians tend to often say they intend to vote for the NPP, our election outcomes have shown that voting intentions do not always mirror voting outcomes. What also makes the most recent round (2022) very intriguing is that it is the first time that Ghanaians are signaling in the Afrobarometer, their intention to vote for the NDC.

The political landscape reveals mixed feelings towards political parties. While partisan attachments have softened, Ghanaians still demand more political parties even as they say they do not trust ruling or opposition political parties. Quite a paradox!



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