

Ghana Center for Democratic Development
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News release

Popular support for media freedom in Ghana bounces back to majority view, but few see the country's media as free

Popular support for media freedom in Ghana has increased sharply, bouncing back to the majority view after a drastic decline recorded in 2017, recent Afrobarometer survey data show.

The survey also shows that a large majority of Ghanaians want the media to constantly investigate and report on government mistakes, but very few believe the media is actually free to report news without government interference. Comparing preliminary 2019 data from eight African countries, Ghana records the largest increase in support for media freedom and the second-lowest perceived supply of media freedom.

Amid concerns about aggression and intolerance toward the media, Ghana ranked 30th in the recently released *World Press Freedom Index 2020*, falling seven places from 23rd position in 2018, and dropping from Africa's No. 1 spot to third.

Key findings

- Two-thirds of Ghanaians (65%) say the media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government restrictions, a 29-percentage-point increase after a sharp dip to 36% in the 2017 survey. Three in 10 respondents (30%) say the government should have the right to prevent publications it disapproves of (Figure 1).
- Comparing preliminary data from Afrobarometer Round 8 surveys in 2019 in eight African countries, Ghana records the largest increase in support for media freedom (Figure 2).
- Support for media freedom is widespread among all key socio-demographic groups and increases significantly with education (76% among those with post-secondary education vs. 59% among those with no formal education). Young adults (66% among those aged 18-35 years), men (69%), and urban residents (69%) are more likely to favour media freedom than older, female, and rural respondents (Figure 3).
- Support for the media's watchdog role remains high. Eight in 10 Ghanaians (82%) say the media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption, a 7-percentage-point increase compared to 2014 (Figure 4).
- Seven in 10 Ghanaians (72%) say the media is "not very free" or "not at all free" to report or comment on news without government censorship or interference. Only two in 10 (19%) think the media is "somewhat free" or "completely free" to do so, the second-lowest perception of media freedom among eight countries surveyed in 2019 (Figure 5).

Afrobarometer surveys

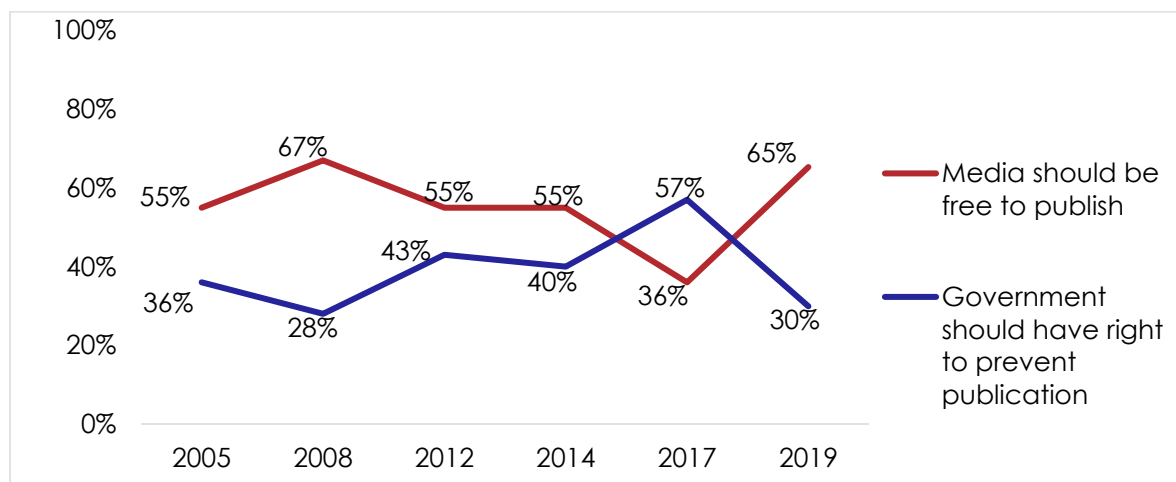
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2020 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Ghana, led by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), interviewed 2,400 adult Ghanaians between 16 September and 3 October 2019. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Ghana in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

Charts

Figure 1: Support for media freedom | Ghana | 2005-2019



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it disapproves of.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

(**Note:** The question wording has been revised slightly over time, including a change in Statement 2 from "prevent the media from publishing things it considers harmful to society" in 2017 to "prevent the media from publishing things that it disapproves of" in 2019.)

Figure 2: Changes in support for media freedom (percentage points) | 8 countries | 2016-2019

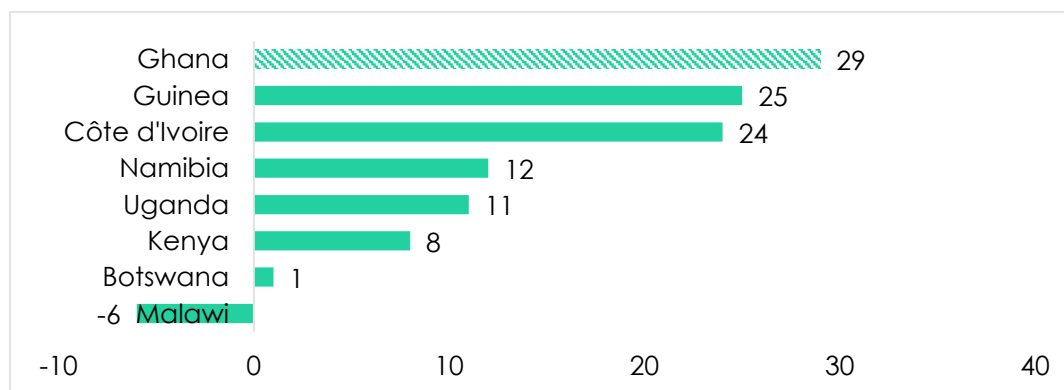
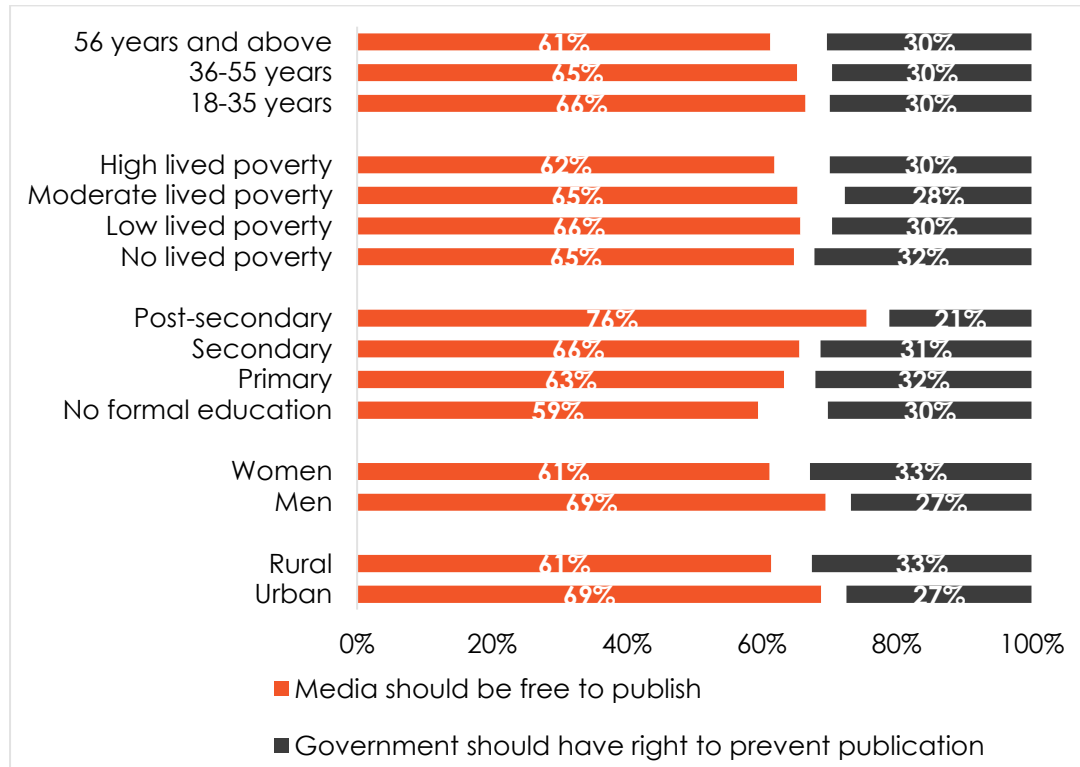


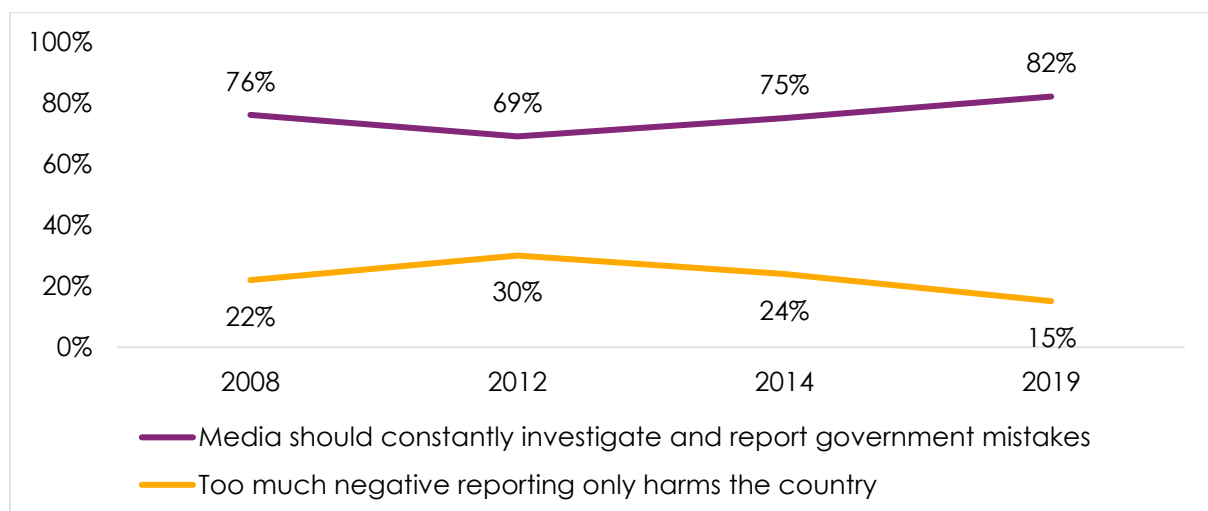
Figure shows the change, in percentage points, between Round 7 (2016/2018) and Round 8 (2019) surveys in the proportion of respondents who “agree” or “agree very strongly” that the media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

Figure 3: Support for media freedom | by socio-demographic group | Ghana | 2019



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.
 Statement 2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.
 (% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

Figure 4: Support for media’s watchdog role | Ghana | 2008-2019



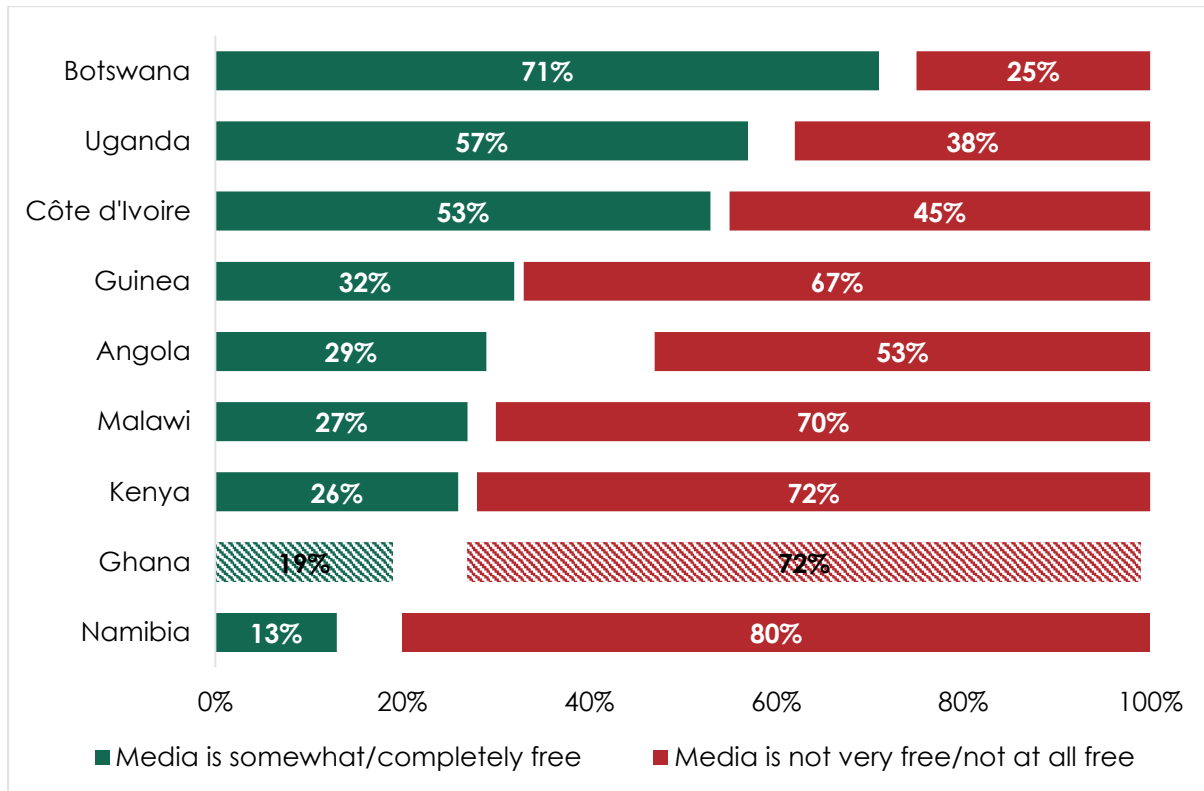
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The news media should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption.

Statement 2: Too much reporting on negative events, like government mistakes and corruption, only harms the country.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 5: Perceived supply of media freedom | 8 countries | 2019



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how free is the news media in this country to report and comment on the news without censorship or interference by the government?

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