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## **Citizens Perception on Migration in South Africa**

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### **Background**

The Afrobarometer has been tracking public attitudes towards foreigners resident in South Africa since 2008 because of a vigorous public debate on immigration controls, attacks on foreigners from other African states and accusations of xenophobia.<sup>1</sup> This bulletin reports response to the questions asked in Afrobarometer Round 5 which explores these attitudes as well as drawing public perception on this issue from the 2008 survey for comparison purposes.

Insights into how South Africans feel about migrants, the extent to which they might resist the entrance of migrants into their work and living spaces, and the extent to which they welcome migrants as potential new citizens are presented.

### **The Survey**

During Round 5, the Afrobarometer surveys will be conducted in up to 35 countries in Africa, using a common survey instrument and methodology. The findings reported here draw from a recent survey in South Africa conducted between October and November 2011. This is the sixth Afrobarometer survey conducted in South Africa (others were conducted in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008). The survey was based on a nationally representative random sample of 2400 adult South Africans drawn from all nine provinces of the country. The findings reported here have a margin of sampling error of +/- 2% at a 95% confidence level.<sup>2</sup> Fieldwork was conducted by Citizens Surveys Ltd, with technical support from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA).

All the figures presented below are rounded off percentages (%) so may not necessarily equal 100% when totalled.

### **Attitudes towards Migration (2008)**

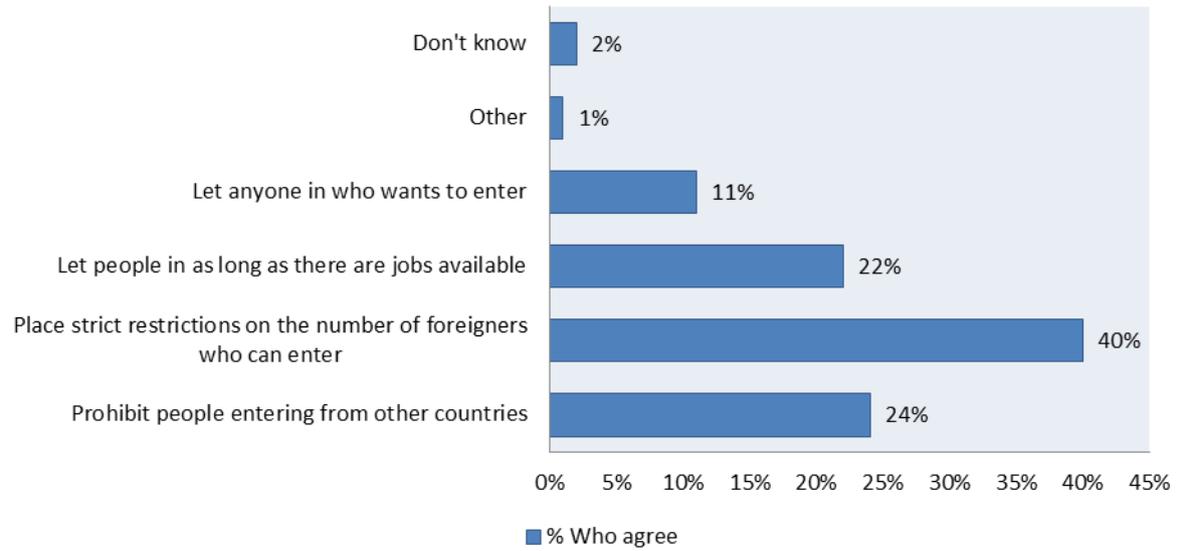
In 2008 the Afrobarometer asked South Africans whether the government should place restrictions on foreigners. This question was not repeated in 2011 but provides a starting point for analysis of the recent results. Figure 1 records that 40% of respondents reported that there should be strict restrictions placed on foreigners seeking to enter the country and 24% of South Africans felt that foreigners should be completely prohibited from entering South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Mattes, R., Taylor D.M., McDonald, D.D., Poore, A., and Richmond, W., 1999. *Still Waiting for the Barbarians. SA Attitudes towards Immigrants and Immigration*. Migration Policy Series No. 14., 1.

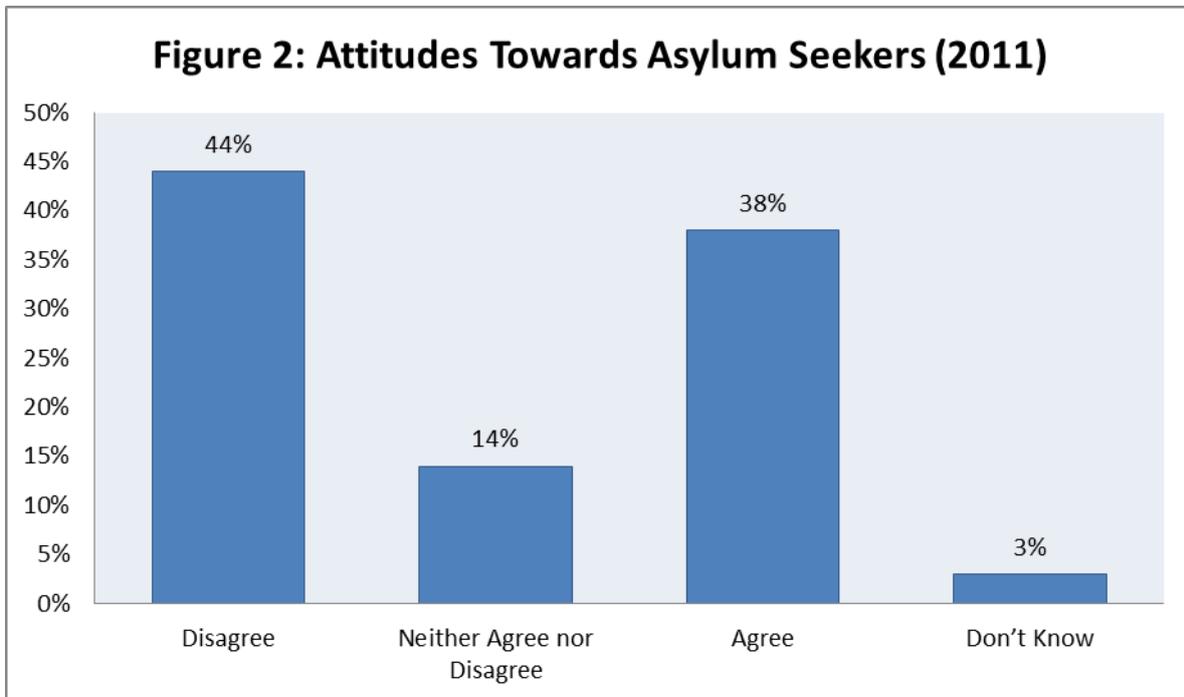
<sup>2</sup> The margin of error decreases as the sample size increases. All analyses of migration characteristics are on a small sub-sample. But, all differences highlighted herein are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level (or higher) unless otherwise noted.

**Figure 1: Attitudes Towards Migration (2008)**



*How about people from other countries coming to South Africa? Which of the following do you think the government should do?*

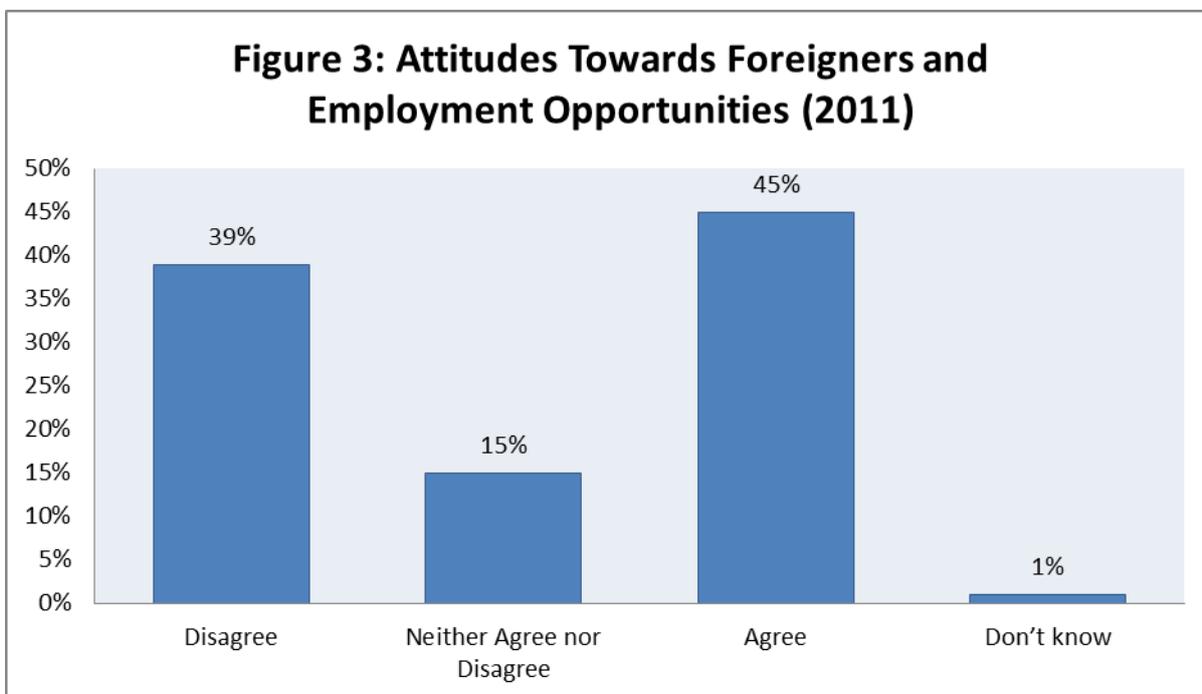
Despite the fact that South Africa has agreed to international protocols on the reception and protection of asylum seekers, ordinary South Africans are divided on the issue of whether foreigners should be protected in South Africa.



*For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree?  
 People who are persecuted for political reasons in their own countries deserve protection in South Africa.*

Figure 2 shows that more South Africans (44%) disagree with the idea of providing protection to asylum seekers in South Africa against 38% who feel that foreigners who are persecuted in their home countries should be allowed to seek protection in South Africa.

Afrobarometer also asked a series of questions about foreigners more generally – i.e., not just asylum seekers and refugees, but all types of potential immigrants to the country



*For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree?  
 Foreigners should not be allowed to live in South Africa because they take jobs and benefits away from South Africans*

Figure 3 above shows 45% of respondents who agree that foreigners should not be allowed to live in South Africa as they take away jobs and benefits and this leads to job competition between them and South African citizens. This stands against 39% who believe that they be allowed to live in South Africa.

#### **Action Taken Against Foreigners (2008-2011)**

Whilst in 2008 the survey offered four possible scenarios in which South Africans may make contact with foreigners and asked for their reaction to these scenarios, in 2011 the same question was asked with only two scenarios. Figure 4 below lists 2 of those scenarios. While the majority of South Africans would accept foreigners, almost a third of people suggested they might take action to prevent them from living and operating a business in their areas.

Previous research under the auspices of the Southern Africa Migration Project (SAMP) (in which Idasa is a partner) indicates that the attitudes of South Africans towards foreigners are not necessarily derived from personal experience but rather from the belief that immigrants weaken society and threaten the nation's health and are unable to assimilate into the South African nation.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 4: Action Taken Against Foreigners (2008-2011)**

<b>How likely is it that you would take part in action to prevent people who have come here from other countries in Africa from doing the following?</b>		<b>% Likely to Take Action</b>	<b>% Not Likely to Take Action</b>
Moving Into Your Neighbourhood	2008	34%	59%
	2011	32%	66%
Operating a Business In Your Neighbourhood	2008	36%	58%
	2011	36%	62%

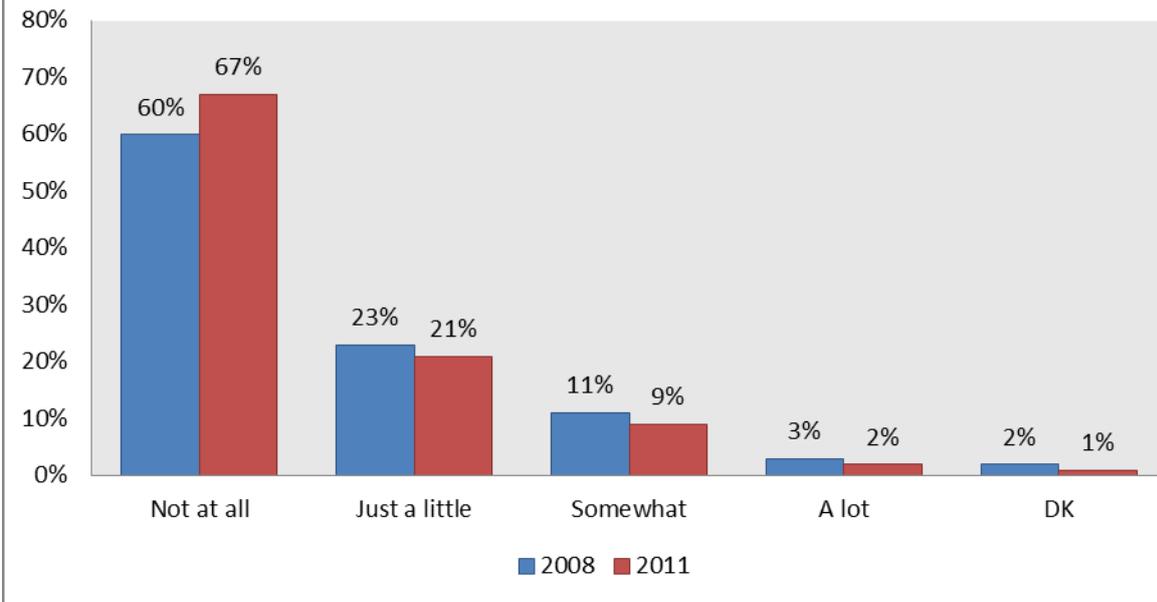
Despite the above findings of decreasing trust in immigrants, we also find that tolerance for living and working alongside them appears to have increased as well. In 2011, 66% would not prevent foreigners from moving into their neighbourhood, compared to 59% in 2008; similarly, 62% would not stop foreigners from operating businesses in 2011, compared to 58% in 2008. A third of the surveyed respondents would however be willing to take action to prevent these from happening which remains essentially unchanged from 2008. In both 2008 and 2011 Afrobarometer specifically asked about migrants from other African countries because evidence from other sources suggests that negative attitudes towards African migrants are held particularly strongly.

#### **Trust of Foreigners (2008-2011)**

The Round 4 results of the Afrobarometer survey in 2008 found that 60% of respondents stated that they have no trust in foreigners at all. In the most recent results from Round 5, trust in foreigners has decreased still further, with two-thirds of South African reporting no trust at all in foreigners.

<sup>3</sup> Mattes, R., Taylor D.M., McDonald, D.D., Poore, A., and Richmond, W., 1999. *Still Waiting for the Barbarians. SA Attitudes towards Immigrants and Immigration*. Migration Policy Series No. 14., 1.

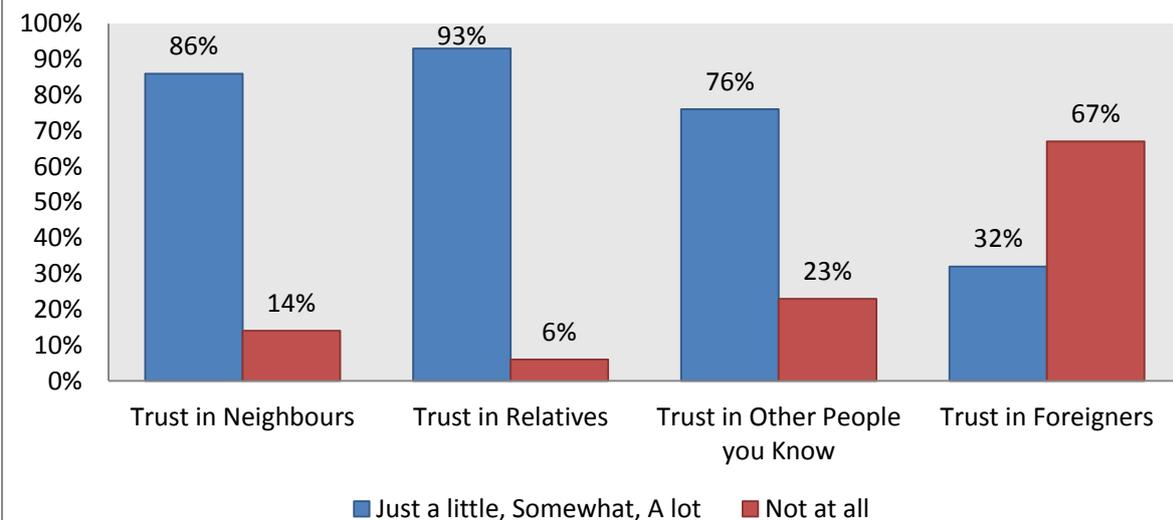
**Figure 5: Trust of Foreigners (2008-2011)**



*How much do you trust each of the following types of people? And what about foreigners living here in South Africa*

Since this was asked as part of a series of questions on trust in relatives, neighbours and other “people you know”, the findings above clearly indicates high levels of distrust in foreigners when compared to the level of distrust South Africans have in other people they know. As popular expectations would reveal, large majorities of South Africans (93%) report that they trust their relatives against 6% of the surveyed respondents, see Figure 5a. Similarly, high levels of trust were also reported on neighbours with close to nine in ten (86%) reporting their trust and even three quarters (76%) reported trust in other people they know. However, distinctively, foreigners are less trusted with only 32% of South Africans trusting people from outside their borders.

**Figure 5a (2011)**



**Migration and Citizenship**

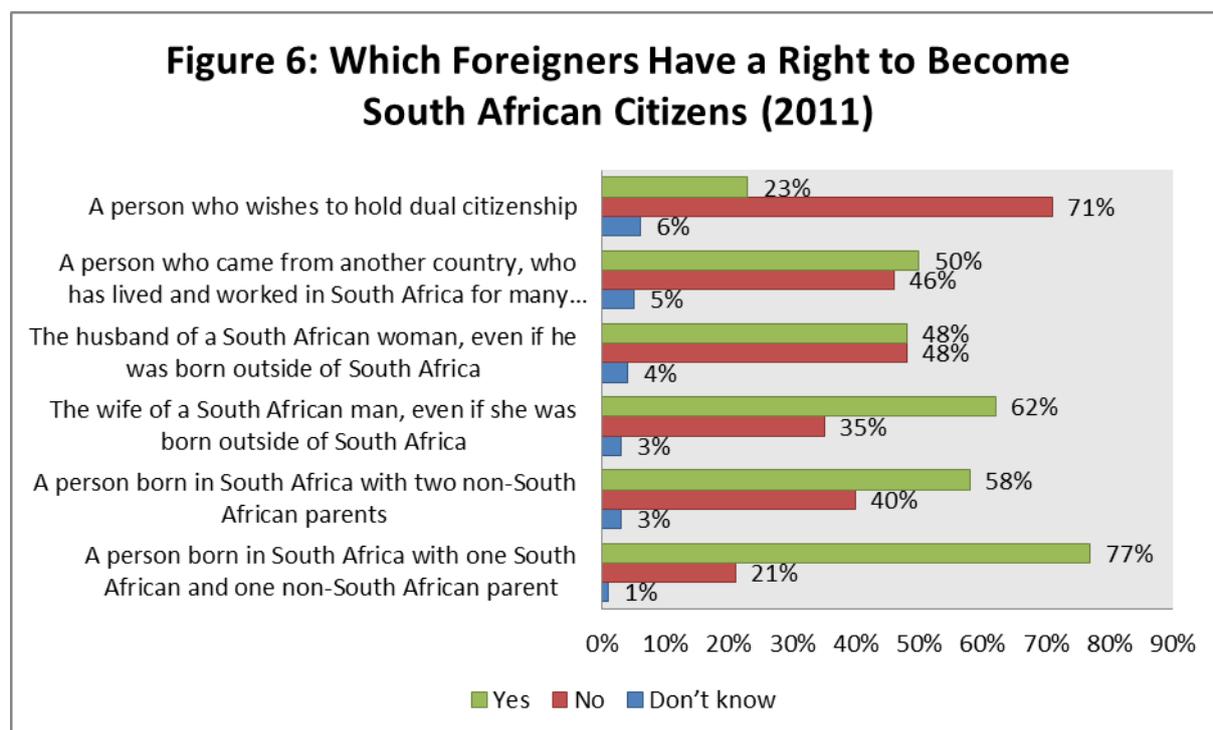
In Round 5, Afrobarometer also probed citizen attitudes toward immigrants in a series of questions about citizenship and naturalisation. Attitudes on this topic are very mixed. Whilst 77% believe that if a person born in South Africa and has one South African parent and one non-south African parent should have the right to become a citizen of the country, 21% disagreed with this perception.

58% believe that if a person is born in South Africa and from two non-citizen parents, they should nonetheless do have a right to become a citizen themselves.

An even higher 62% believe that if a woman has a husband who is a citizen, then she should also be entitled to become a South African citizen. But the same does not hold for the foreign husbands of South African women as 48% hold the same view to the question of whether a man should be entitled to South African citizenship if his wife is a citizen.

The survey reveals a narrow margin on perception of citizenship for persons that will have lived and worked in South Africa, i.e. 50% for citizenship and 46% against it.

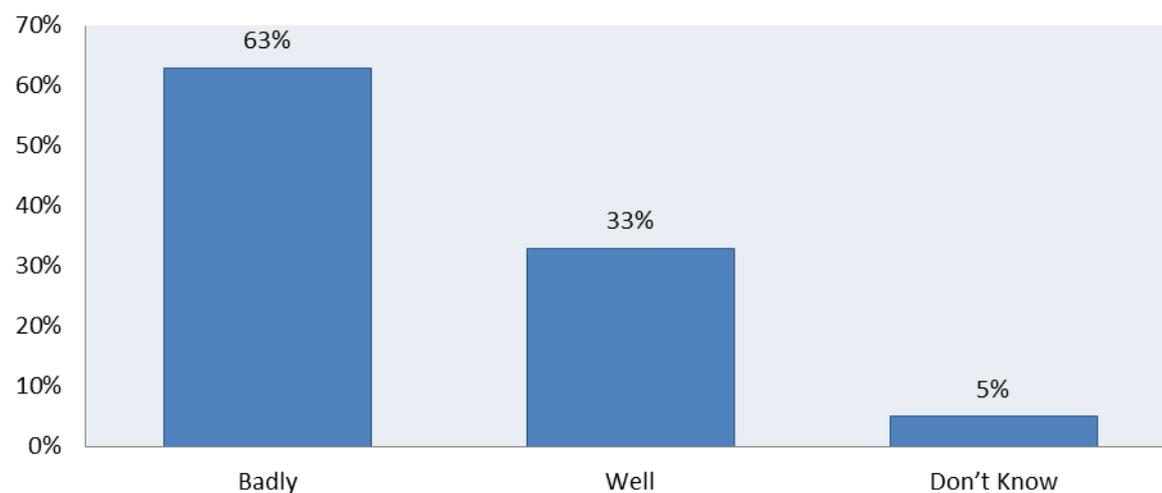
Finally, there are strong feelings that a person should not have the right to hold dual citizenship as reported by 71% of the surveyed respondents. Dual citizenship would mean that such a person would have the right to hold a South African passport and be eligible to vote if they are above 18 years of age not only in their home country but also in South Africa.



*In your opinion, which of the following people have a right to be a citizen of South Africa? A citizen would have the right to get a South African passport and to vote in South African elections if they are at least 18 years old.*

The survey also assessed the South African government’s performance on handling migration. The government scored poorly on managing migration with close to two thirds (63%) reporting that the government had failed to manage migration well, against one third (33%) who thinks otherwise.

**Figure 7: Perceptions of the Government Handling Migration (2011)**



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

This rating, together with the strong feelings expressed in relation to foreigners, may suggest some motivation for attacks on foreigners as local people take the law into their own hands. The results outlined in this bulletin suggest that South Africa remains fertile ground for those who would use xenophobia to mobilise popular political support or local riots for commercial gain.

The **Afrobarometer** is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Survey implementation in Uganda, including preparations, data collection and management and overall project coordination, was undertaken by Wilsken Agencies, Ltd. We gratefully acknowledge generous support from the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for support on Afrobarometer Round 5. For more information and further requests for analysis please visit Afrobarometer website: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org) or contact Anyway Chingwete, AB Project Manager, [achingwete@idasa.org.za](mailto:achingwete@idasa.org.za).