



# Data for Governance Alliance Policy Brief No. 49

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Africans struggle with interethnic trust  
but embrace coexistence

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## Summary

In Africa, ethnic identity is more than just a personal affiliation – it plays a pivotal role in shaping social, economic, and political dynamics. But it is also fluid, and may be influenced by education, occupation, and other factors (Bannon, Miguel, & Posner, 2004) while also being subject to political influence or even manipulation (Eifert, Miguel, & Posner, 2007).

Ethnic affiliation is often viewed as a threat to national unity and stability. Ethnic divisions can lead to the unequal distribution of power and resources, leaving some groups marginalised and fuelling political tensions that can spiral into conflict (Peltier, 2024; Wilhelm Otieno, 2024). Ethnicity and ethnic allegiances can become intertwined with historical grievances and political exclusion (Posner, 2004), which may continue to limit economic opportunities and perpetuate cycles of poverty (Alesina, Michalopoulos, & Papaioannou, 2012).

But while it is often seen as a source of tension, ethnic identity can also foster cultural pride and a sense of community, particularly as African societies become increasingly diverse and interconnected. Ethnicity, in this sense, might not only separate but also unite, contributing to a sense of shared purpose (African Union, 2021). Ethnic diversity and ethnic identity might therefore be regarded as a resource for, rather than an impediment to, development (Guterres, 2021). Given this duality, how do Africans themselves perceive their ethnic identities and the importance of ethnicity in their social and political lives?

Recent data from Afrobarometer offer insights into these questions. Results from 33 countries surveyed during Round 9 (2021/2023) reveal that Africans are likely to prioritise their national identity over their ethnic one, or to feel allegiance to both equally; only a small minority put their ethnic identity first. There has, however, been a modest shift away from preference for national identity and toward ethnic identity (or “both”) over the past decade.

When we turn to questions of how Africans view people of other ethnicities, however, the findings seem almost contradictory. On the one hand, we find relatively low levels of trust in people from other ethnic groups – as well as people from other religions and others outside the networks of family and community – creating barriers to full social integration. And increasing numbers report that their ethnic group faces ethnically based discrimination at the hands of government.

At the same time, the findings reveal widespread openness toward not just integration and coexistence, but even toward cohabitation – as neighbours or married-in family members – with people of other ethnicities. These contradictions suggest that ethnic diversity can be both a challenge and an opportunity for fostering unity and inclusivity.

The results presented below show how Africans perceive and navigate their ethnic and national identities, and the extent to which ethnic identity influences social trust and experiences of discrimination.

## Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This 33-country analysis is based on 46,269 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, each country is weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).



This paper focuses on a set of questions about ethnic identity, several of which have been included in Afrobarometer surveys for many rounds.

The series begins with a question about ethnic identity, asking respondents “What is your ethnic community or cultural group?” We will not report extensively here on the results of this question but instead focus on several questions that followed about respondents’ attitudes and experiences vis-à-vis their ethnic identity. We therefore begin with a few details about how and where the question about ethnic identity was asked.

Round 9 surveys took place in 39 countries. However, this question was not asked in Seychelles, Sudan, and Tunisia, so they are not part of this analysis. In addition, in São Tome and Príncipe and in Cabo Verde, respondents did not identify ethnic groups in response to this question but instead referred to regions or affiliations based on age, gender, occupation, or political leanings. For the purposes of this analysis focused on ethnicity, these two countries were also excluded. Finally, in Eswatini, 99% of respondents did not offer an ethnic identity but instead gave a response indicating that they only recognise their national identity or do not think of themselves in ethnic terms. The follow-up questions were not addressed to those who did not identify an ethnic identity, so Eswatini is also excluded from the rest of this analysis.

Across the remaining 33 countries that are the focus of the discussion that follows, respondents identified more than 500 ethnic groups. We note that a small number (1.3%) of respondents in these 33 countries also did not identify a group but, like the majority of Mswati respondents, said they saw themselves only in terms of their national identity. Fewer than 1% refused to answer or said they did not know. These respondents were not asked the follow-up questions about their ethnic identity and are also excluded from the rest of this analysis. In most countries, the proportion of respondents excluded was marginal, but in a few, it was a more significant share, including 13% in Angola (7% who say only national identity and 6% who “don’t know”); 10% in Congo-Brazzaville (7% national identity only, 2% refused, and 1% “don’t know”); and 8% in Mauritania (all saying national identity only).

Finally, we note that in Lesotho, and to a lesser extent in Botswana, the “ethnic” identities offered by respondents mostly constitute what are commonly considered sub-clans of the Sotho and Tswana ethnic groups, respectively. Findings from these two countries should be interpreted accordingly.



## Key findings

- On average across 33 countries, 41% of Africans feel more connected to their national than their ethnic identity, compared to just 14% who prioritise their ethnic over their national identity; 45% are equally attached to both.
  - Over the past decade, across 25 countries, attachment to national identity has decreased by 12 percentage points while preference for ethnic identity has gained 4 points. The share of citizens who value both identities equally has increased by 8 points.
  - Prioritisation of national identity declined in most surveyed countries, including huge drops in South Africa (-52 percentage points), Lesotho (-27 points), Tanzania (-23 points), Ghana (-22 points), Kenya (-20 points), and Sierra Leone (-20 points).
- Four in 10 Africans (41%) report that members of their ethnic group are “sometimes,” “often,” or “always” treated unfairly by their government because of their ethnicity. Across 25 countries, perceptions of ethnic discrimination have increased by 8 percentage points since 2016/2018.
- About one in five Africans (21%) say they trust people from other ethnic groups “a lot,” while 36% trust them “somewhat.”
- In contrast, nine out of 10 Africans have no objection to living next door to people from different ethnic backgrounds (90%) and are open to interethnic marriages within their own families (89%).
- And most (85%) indicate a sense of inclusion, saying that other citizens “think of me as a citizen just like them.”
- Interethnic trust and tolerance are weaker, and perceptions of unfair treatment more common, among people who feel more attached to their ethnic than their national identity.

## National vs. ethnic identity

After self-identifying their ethnic group, respondents were asked to compare their attachment to their national vs. their ethnic identity. On average across 33 countries, four in 10 Africans (41%) feel more closely attached to their national identity, while a plurality (45%) say they are equally attached to both (Figure 1). Just 14% report closer allegiance to their ethnic identity.

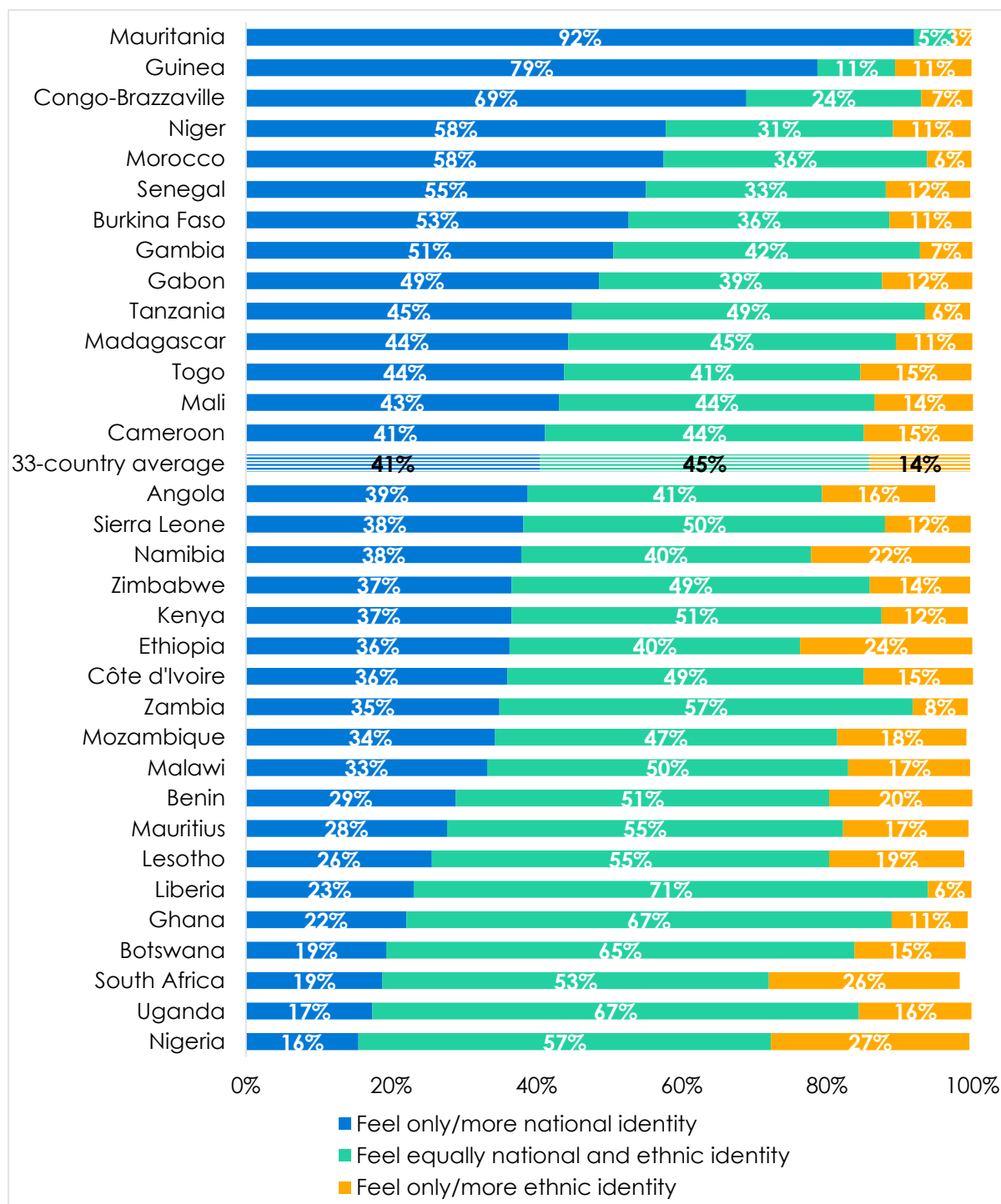
An overwhelming majority (92%) of Mauritians feel primarily connected to their national identity, followed by 79% in Guinea and 69% in Congo-Brazzaville. A majority take this position in eight countries.

Majorities are equally attached to both identities in 11 countries, led by Liberians (71%), Ghanaians (67%), Ugandans (67%), and Batswana (65%).

Expressing primary allegiance to one's ethnic identity is a small minority position in all countries, reaching a high of about one in four respondents in just three: Nigeria (27%), South Africa (26%), and Ethiopia (24%).



**Figure 1: Allegiance to national vs. ethnic identity | 33 countries | 2021/2023**



**Respondents were asked:** Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?

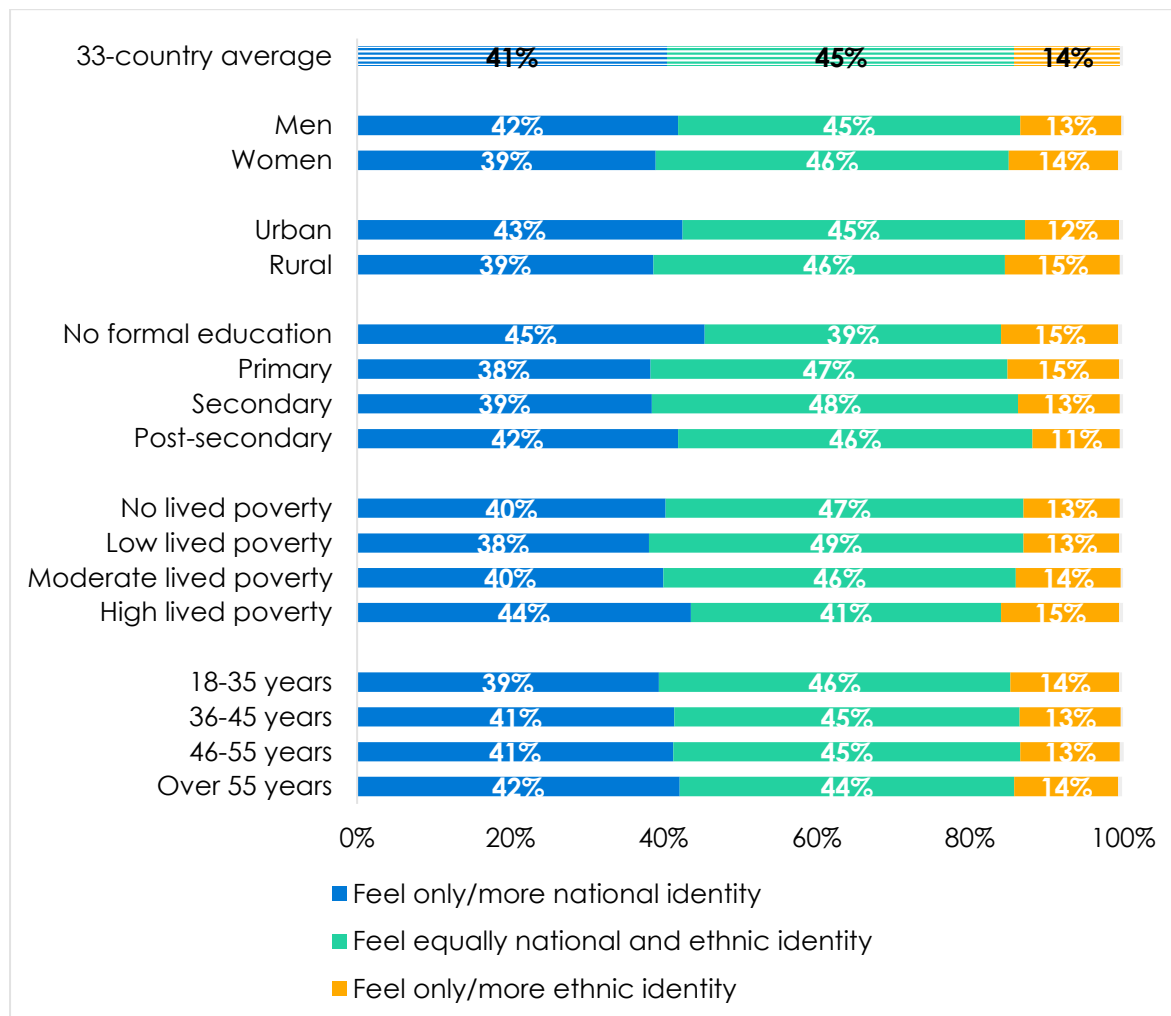
- I feel only [national identity].
- I feel more [national identity] than [ethnic group].
- I feel equally [national identity] and [ethnic group].
- I feel more [ethnic group] than [national identity].
- I feel only [ethnic group].

Differences in the prioritisation of national vs. ethnic identities across demographic groups are modest (Figure 2). Those with no formal education, as well as those who face the



greatest economic hardship<sup>1</sup>, tend to have somewhat higher levels of attachment to national over ethnic identity than those who are more educated and wealthier. But all groups show similarly low levels of primary preference for their ethnic identity.

**Figure 2: Allegiance to national vs. ethnic identity** | by demographic group  
| 33 countries | 2021/2023



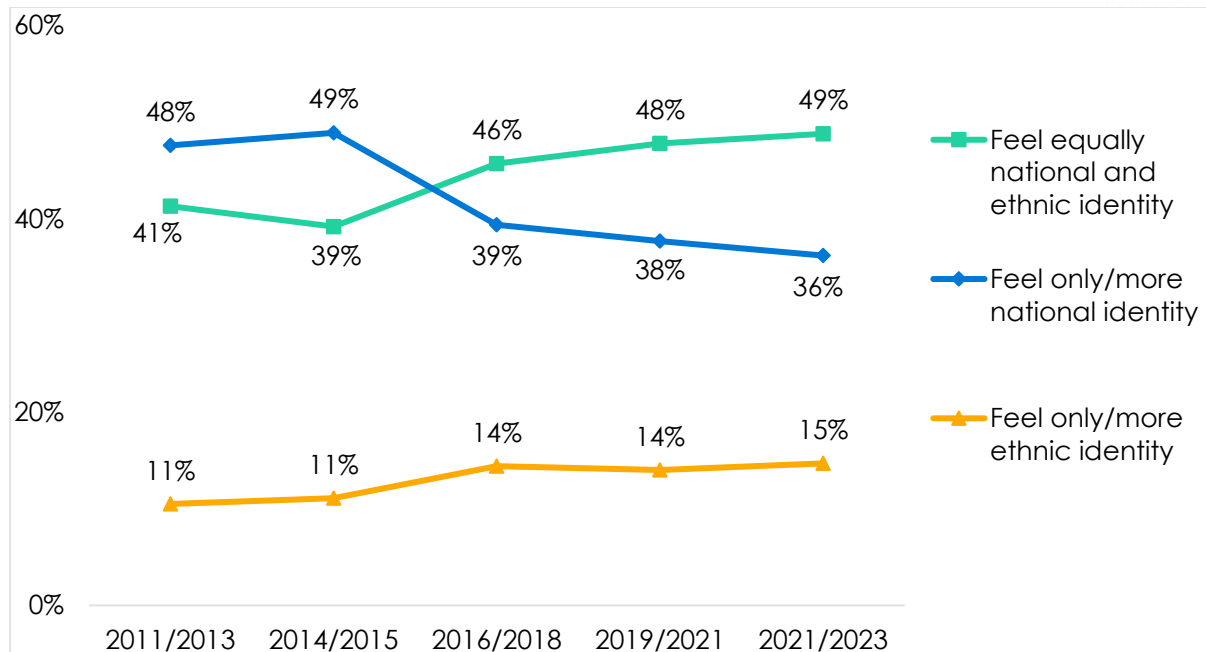
**Respondents were asked:** Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?

Across 25 countries where we have asked this question since Round 5 (2011/2013), we observe some notable shifts in attachment to national vs. ethnic identity (Figure 3). In aggregate, there has been a 12-percentage-point decrease in those primarily attached to their national identity, alongside an 8-point increase in those who identify equally with both identities. There has also been a modest increase – by 4 points – in preference for ethnic identity, although it remains a small minority position.

<sup>1</sup> Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).



**Figure 3: Trends in allegiance to national vs. ethnic identity | 25 countries**  
| 2011-2023



**Respondents were asked:** *Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?*

But the patterns of change become even more distinctive when we disaggregate them by country (Table 1; detailed findings for each country can be found in Appendix 2).

Just three countries – Nigeria, Senegal, and Zambia – show only minor changes, with shifts in preferences remaining under 5 percentage points. Guinea is the sole country that shows a modest gain (+5 points) in preference for national identity.

In most other countries, however, we see declines in preference for national identity. South Africa leads with a remarkable 52-point drop, followed by Lesotho (-27 points), Tanzania (-23 points), Ghana (-22 points), Kenya (-20 points), and Sierra Leone (-20 points). In nine countries with a decline of at least 5 points, the losses in national identity are offset primarily by increases in the “feel both identities equally” category. Tanzania, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, for example, show increases of 20, 16, and 15 points, respectively, in the “both equally” category, while preferences for ethnic identity remain stable.

In contrast, the last group of countries in Table 1 shows a mix of declining national identity preferences and significant increases in ethnic identity preferences. The preference for ethnic identity grew most substantially in Lesotho and Namibia (11 points each) and especially in South Africa, with a notable 19-point rise.

It is beyond the scope of this report to assess the drivers of these shifts in identity preferences or their implications for national unity. While stronger ethnic identification might suggest growing societal divisions, it could also signal positive trends, such as greater tolerance for diversity or rising cultural pride. In fact, previous Afrobarometer findings show that 68% of respondents across 34 countries see diverse communities as stronger than homogeneous ones, and 65% believe there is more that unites their country than divides it (Logan & Torsu, 2022). While this report does not seek to draw causal conclusions, some of the findings presented in subsequent sections may provide further insights into these dynamics and their implications for national unity.





**Table 1: Changes in allegiance to national vs. ethnic identity, by country**  
| 25 countries | 2011-2023

	Change in "national ID" first	Change in "both equally"	Change in "ethnic ID" first
<b>Minor/Modest changes only (&lt;5 points)</b>			
Nigeria	1	-3	2
Senegal	2	1	-2
Zambia	1	-3	1
<b>Increase in national ID</b>			
Guinea	5	-3	-2
<b>Significant shift from "national" to "both"</b>			
Benin	1	5	3
Liberia	-5	5	0
Togo	-11	8	3
Mali	-8	10	-2
Niger	-13	12	1
Mozambique	-14	12	3
Burkina Faso	-13	14	-1
Zimbabwe	-17	15	1
Kenya	-20	16	3
Tanzania	-23	20	3
<b>Significant shift toward "ethnic"</b>			
Botswana	-4	-1	4
Malawi	-8	5	4
Uganda	-3	-2	5
Côte d'Ivoire	-12	8	5
Ghana	-22	17	7
Mauritius	-3	-5	8
Sierra Leone	-20	13	8
Cameroon	-4	-2	8
Lesotho	-27	17	11
Namibia	-6	-5	11
South Africa	-52	32	19
<b>25-country average</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Legend:</b>			
<b>+5 to 9 points</b>	<b>-5 to 9 points</b>		
<b>+10 to 14 points</b>	<b>-10 to 14 points</b>		
<b>+15 to 19 points</b>	<b>-15 to 19 points</b>		
<b>+20 points or more</b>	<b>-20 points or more</b>		

Numbers show percentage-point change between Round 5 (2011/2013) and Round 9 (2021/2023).

### The salience of ethnicity: Unfair treatment by government

One key indicator of the health of relationships among ethnic groups within a country is the extent to which individuals feel that their own ethnicity may be a cause for discrimination against them. We begin by noting previously reported Afrobarometer findings from Round 8 (Logan & Torsu, 2022) that on average, discrimination is more frequently associated with economic status than ethnicity. Nonetheless, across 34 Round 8 countries, one in three



respondents (33%) reported experiencing discrimination at the hands of their government based on ethnicity.

We examine current experiences of ethnic discrimination by asking respondents how often (if ever) the government treats their ethnic group unfairly.

Across 33 countries, a majority (56%) say their group is never treated unfairly by the government, led by Madagascar (92%), Tanzania (85%), Mali (79%), Zambia (77%), Senegal (77%), and Niger (76%) (Figure 4). These results suggest a general sense of ethnic inclusivity or satisfaction with government treatment in these contexts.

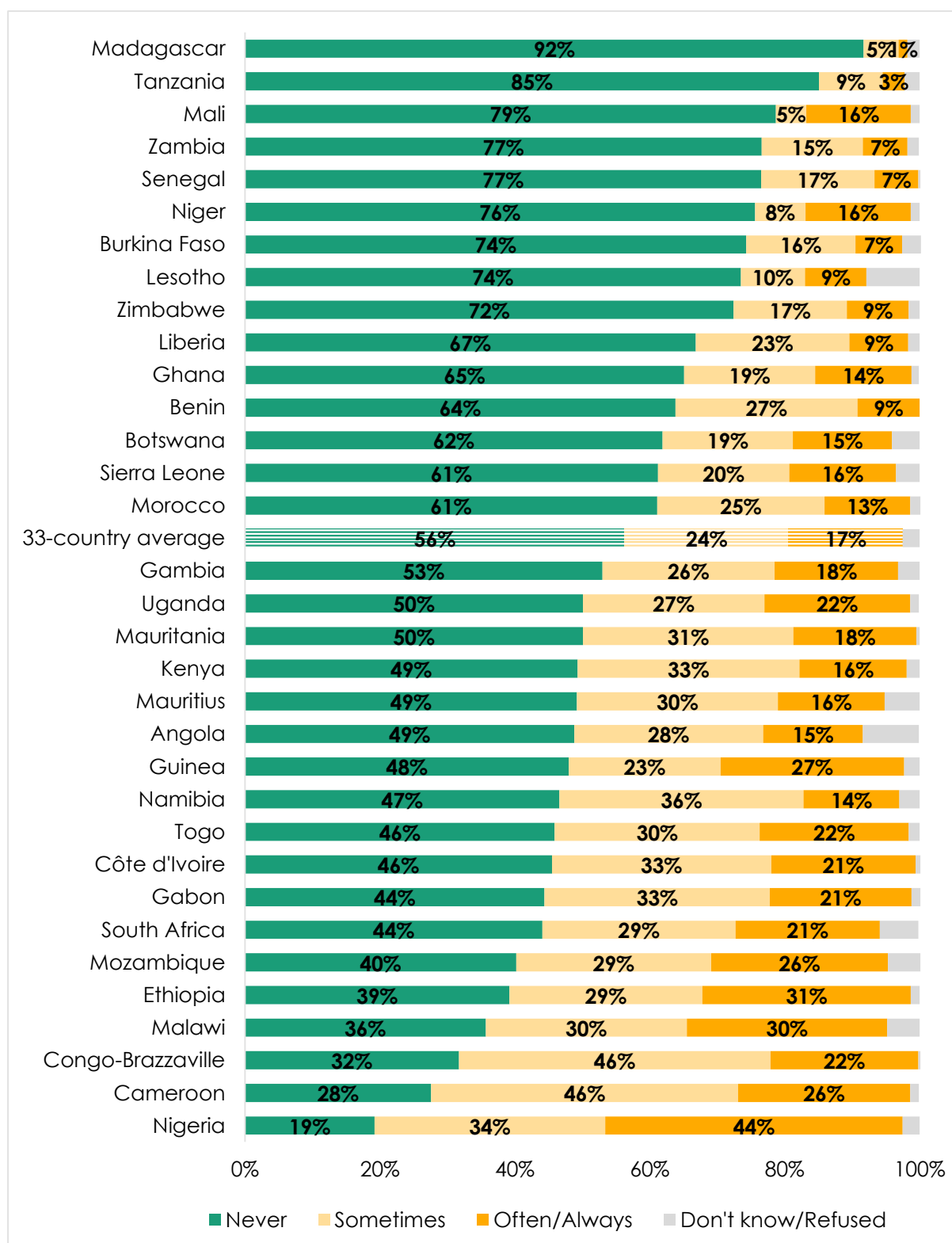
However, across all countries, one in four (24%) say ethnicity-based discrimination occurs "sometimes," and 17% say it occurs "often" or "always," with pluralities or majorities reporting these problems in 12 countries. More than one in four say ethnicity-based discrimination is frequent in Mozambique (26%), Cameroon (26%), Guinea (27%), Malawi (30%), and Ethiopia (31%), and in Nigeria a remarkable 44% say the same.

Across demographic groups, some disparities are evident based on lived poverty and education (Figure 5). Most notably, respondents with the highest levels of poverty are much more likely to report at least occasional unfair treatment than those who are well off (49% vs. 33%). Gender and age groups, on the other hand, show only modest differences.

Across 25 countries where we have asked this question since Round 5 (2011/2013), we identify some cause for concern. There were initially modest declines in the proportions saying their ethnic group experienced discrimination at the hands of the government between Round 5 (2011/2013) (36%) and Round 7 (2016/2018) (32%) (Figure 6). But there has been a more substantial increase since then, with 40% reporting discrimination in Round 9 (2021/2023).



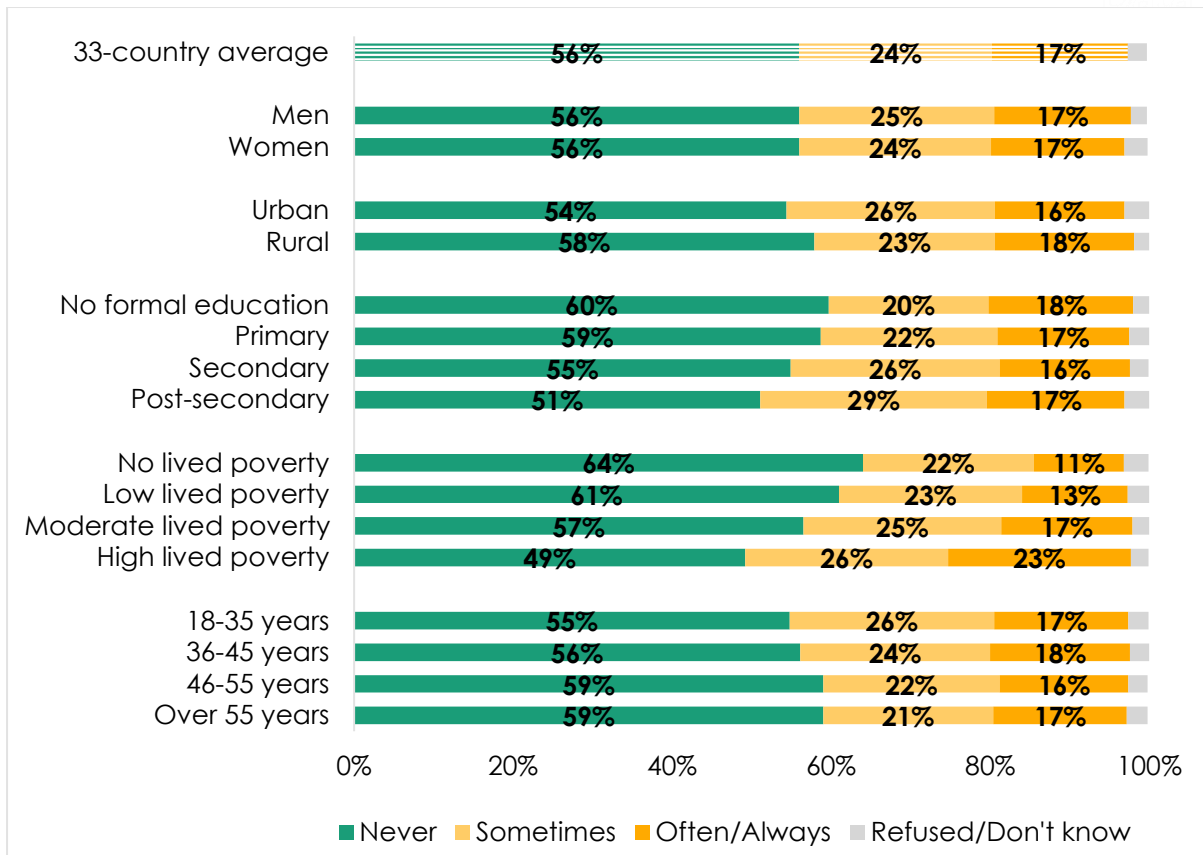
**Figure 4: Unfair treatment of ethnic group by government** | 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** How often, if ever, are [members of the respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?

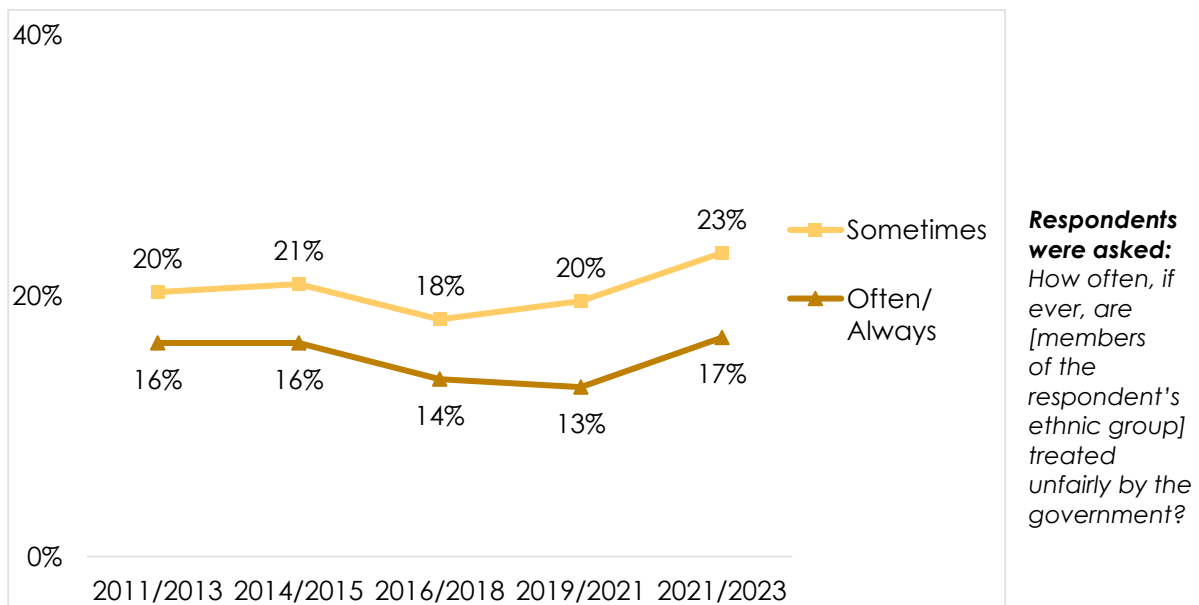


**Figure 5: Unfair treatment of ethnic group by government | by demographic group**  
| 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** How often, if ever, are [members of the respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?

**Figure 6: Trends in unfair treatment of ethnic group by government | 25 countries**  
| 2011-2023

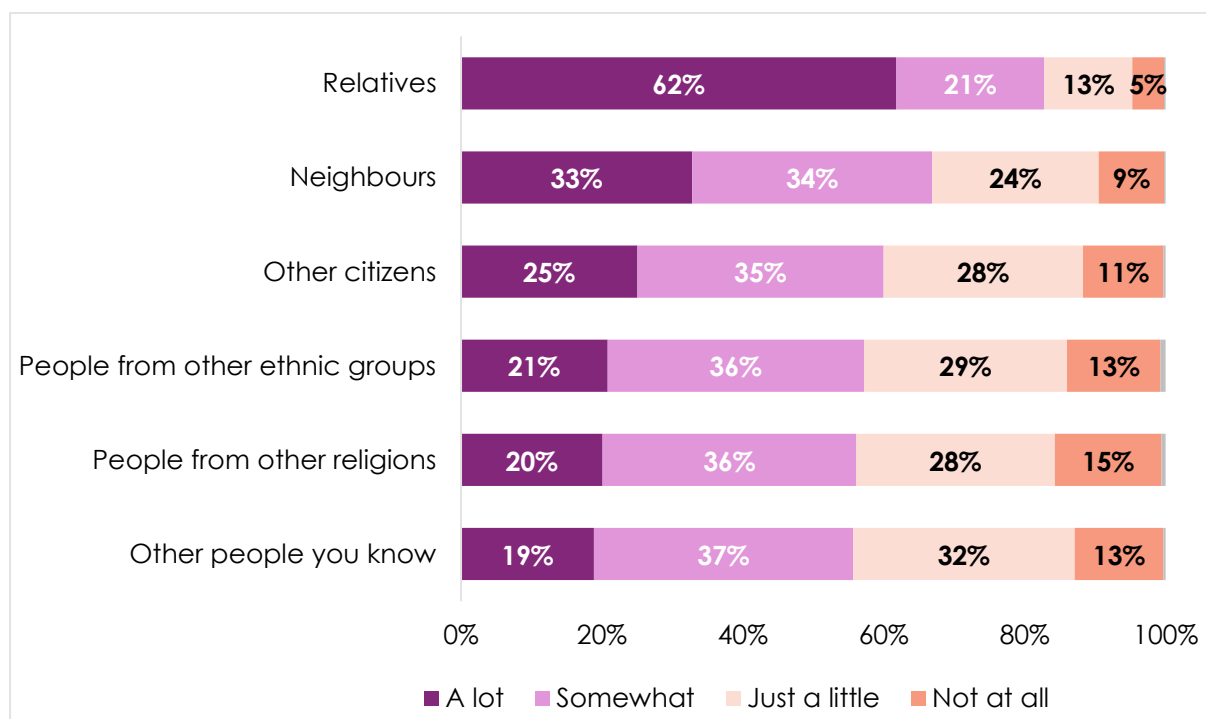




## Trust in other ethnic groups

Another core indicator of ethnic salience and healthy interethnic relations is trust among ethnic groups. We begin by considering how interethnic trust compares to other aspects of inter-group trust. Afrobarometer asks respondents about how much they trust people ranging from relatives through neighbours to “other people you know.” Trust within families is high: 83% trust their relatives “somewhat” (21%) or “a lot” (62%) (Figure 7). But trust falls off rapidly after this. Only one in three trust their neighbours “a lot” (33%), and just one in five express high levels of trust in “people from other ethnic groups” (21%), “people from other religions” (20%), and “other people you know” (19%). Across all three of these groups, more than four in 10 say they trust these groups either “just a little” or “not at all.” Overall, this indicates that deficits in social trust, while substantial, do not adhere specifically to ethnicity, but instead reflect a more general attitude of limited trust toward people outside of an individual’s immediate family and community.

**Figure 7: Trust in others** | 33 countries | 2021/2023



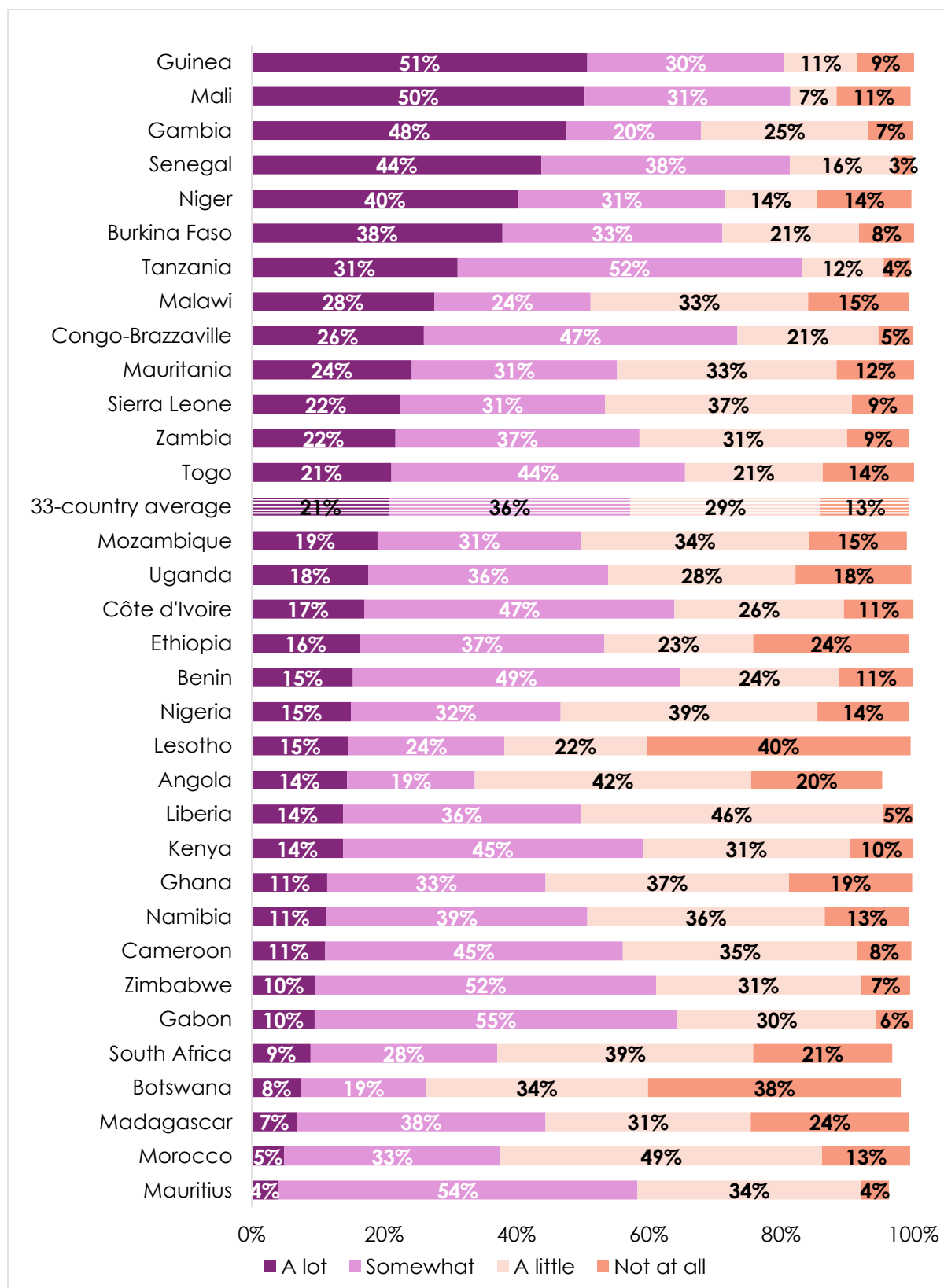
**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following types of people?

Turning specifically to interethnic trust, we observe considerable variation across countries (Figure 8). In Guinea (51%), Mali (50%), and the Gambia (48%), about half of citizens express high levels of trust in individuals from other ethnic groups, compared to a mere 4% in Mauritius and 5% in Morocco. In all but eight countries, half or more say they trust people of other ethnicities at least “somewhat.” However, about four in 10 respondents in Lesotho (40%) and Botswana (38%) say they do not trust people from other ethnic groups at all.

Respondents who are rural, less educated, facing higher levels of poverty, and older are more likely than others to report high levels of trust in people from other ethnic groups (Figure 9).



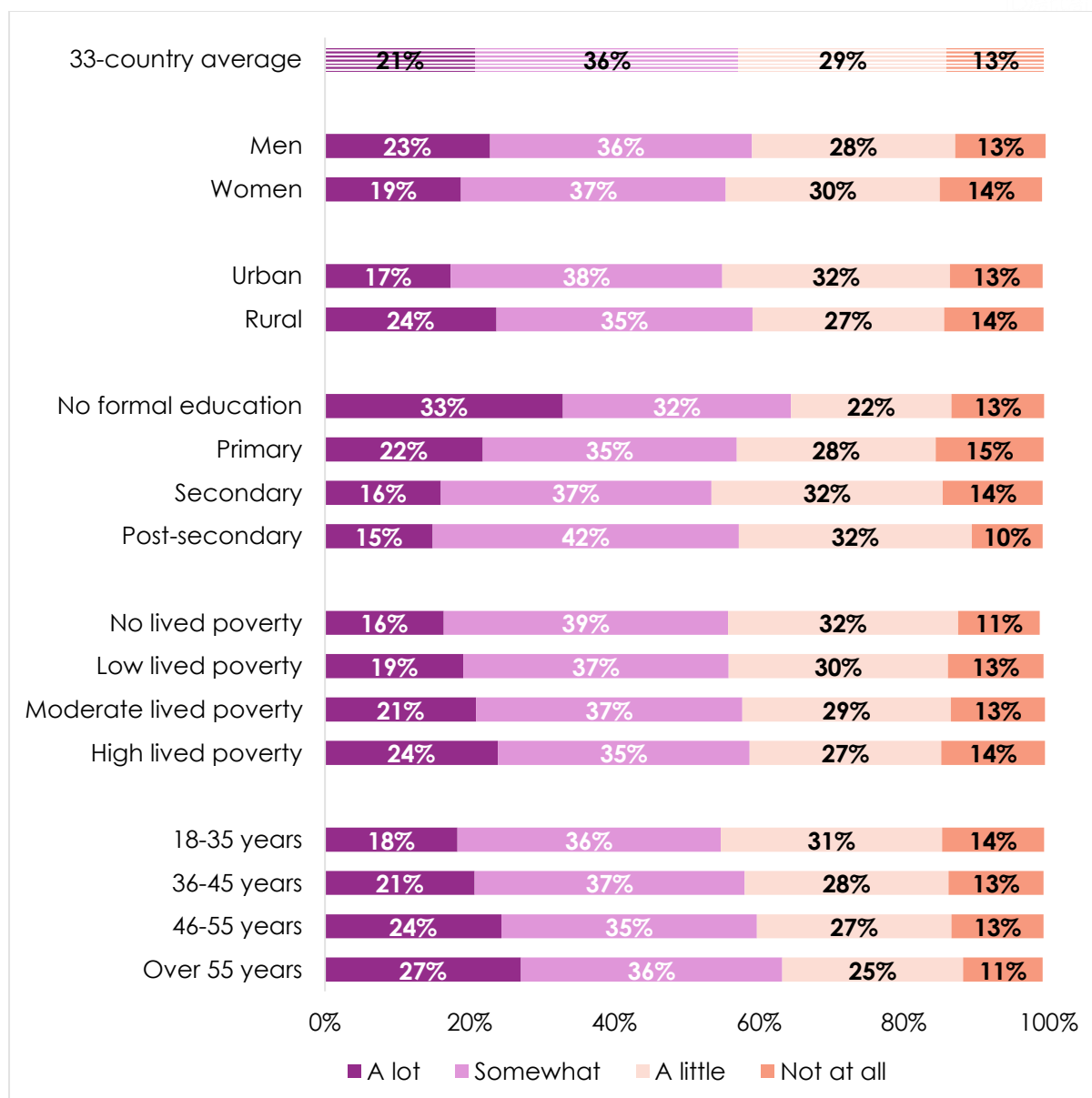
**Figure 8: Trust in people from other ethnic groups** | 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following types of people: People from other ethnic groups?



**Figure 9: Trust in people from other ethnic groups** | by demographic group  
| 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following types of people? People from other ethnic groups?

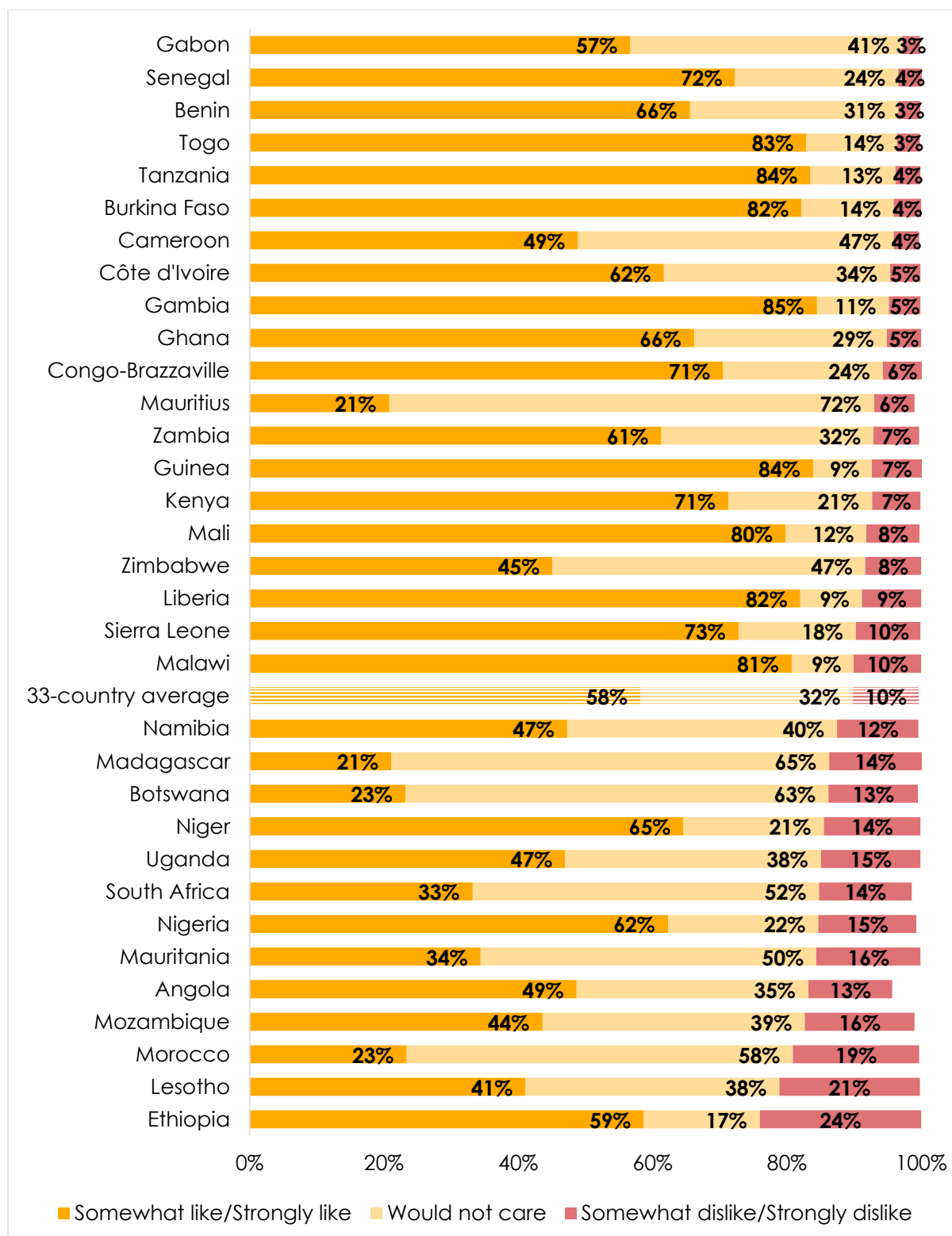
### Neighbours from other ethnic groups

While the observed levels of interethnic trust might suggest that relationships across ethnic groups are often quite strained, several other indicators cast a much different light. They instead suggest that many Africans are quite open to ethnic diversity, inclusion, and engagement within their families and communities.

Nearly six in 10 Africans (58%) say they would welcome having individuals from other ethnic groups as neighbours, and another 32% say they would not care. In short, nine out of 10 (90%) are comfortable living alongside people from other ethnic groups (Figure 10). Just 10% reject this option.



**Figure 10: Openness to neighbours from other ethnic groups** | 33 countries  
| 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People from other ethnic groups?

In eight countries – the Gambia (85%), Guinea (84%), Tanzania (84%), Togo (83%), Burkina Faso (82%), Liberia (82%), Malawi (81%), and Mali (80%) – more than eight out of 10

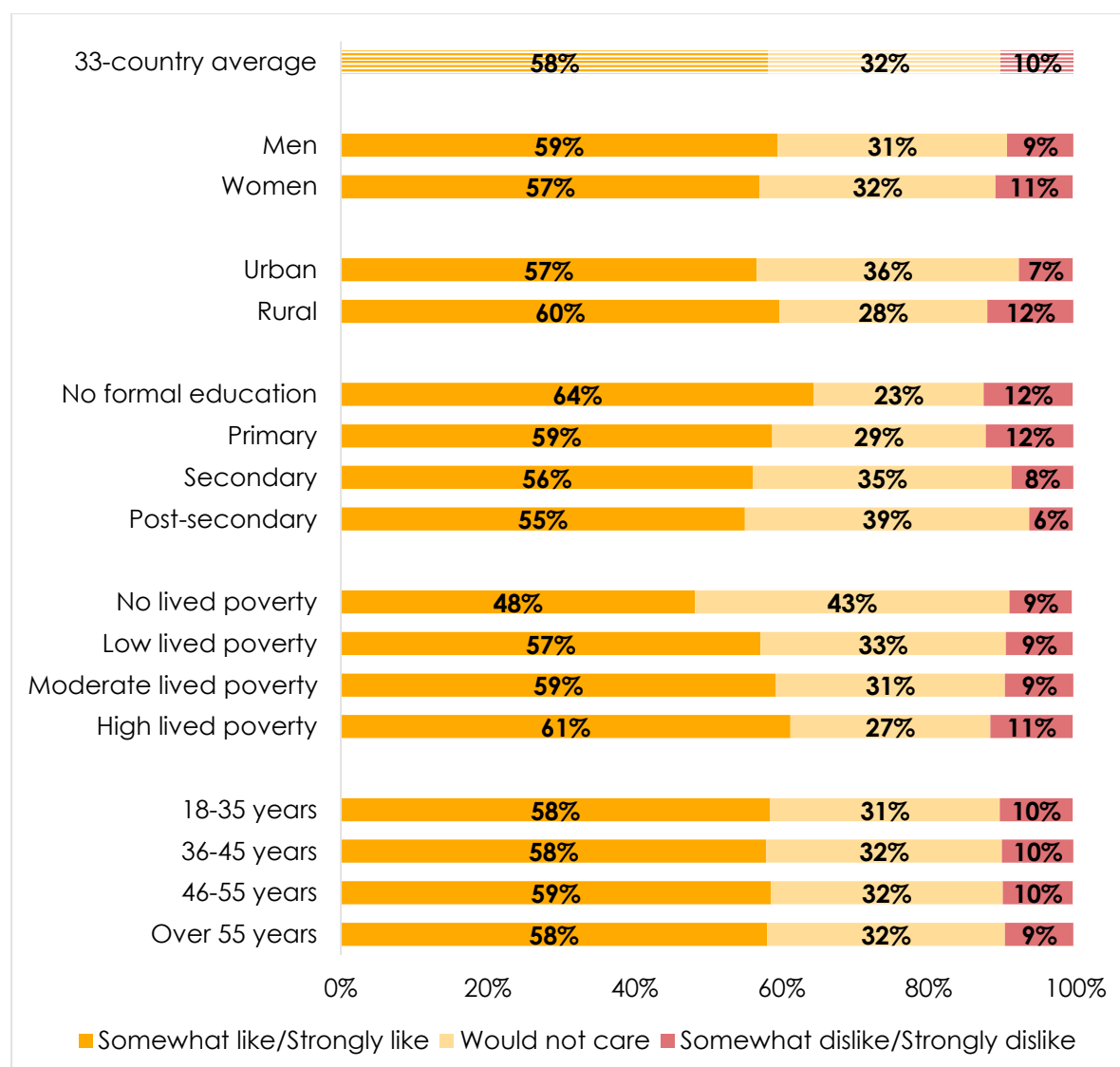




respondents would actively welcome having neighbours from different ethnic groups. And willingness to live alongside non-coethnics tops 80% in all but two countries. In Ethiopia, 24% would rather not, and in Lesotho, 21% say the same. A few countries – Mauritius, Madagascar, Botswana, and Morocco – stand out for having far fewer respondents who say they would “like” having non-coethnic neighbours, while still expressing high levels of overall acceptance of such a situation.

Across different socio-demographic groups, the differences on this question are quite modest. While those with the least education and higher levels of poverty are more likely to say they would welcome living alongside non-coethnics, overall, all groups are very open to living in ethnically mixed communities (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Openness to neighbours from other ethnic groups** | by demographic group | 33 countries | 2021/2023



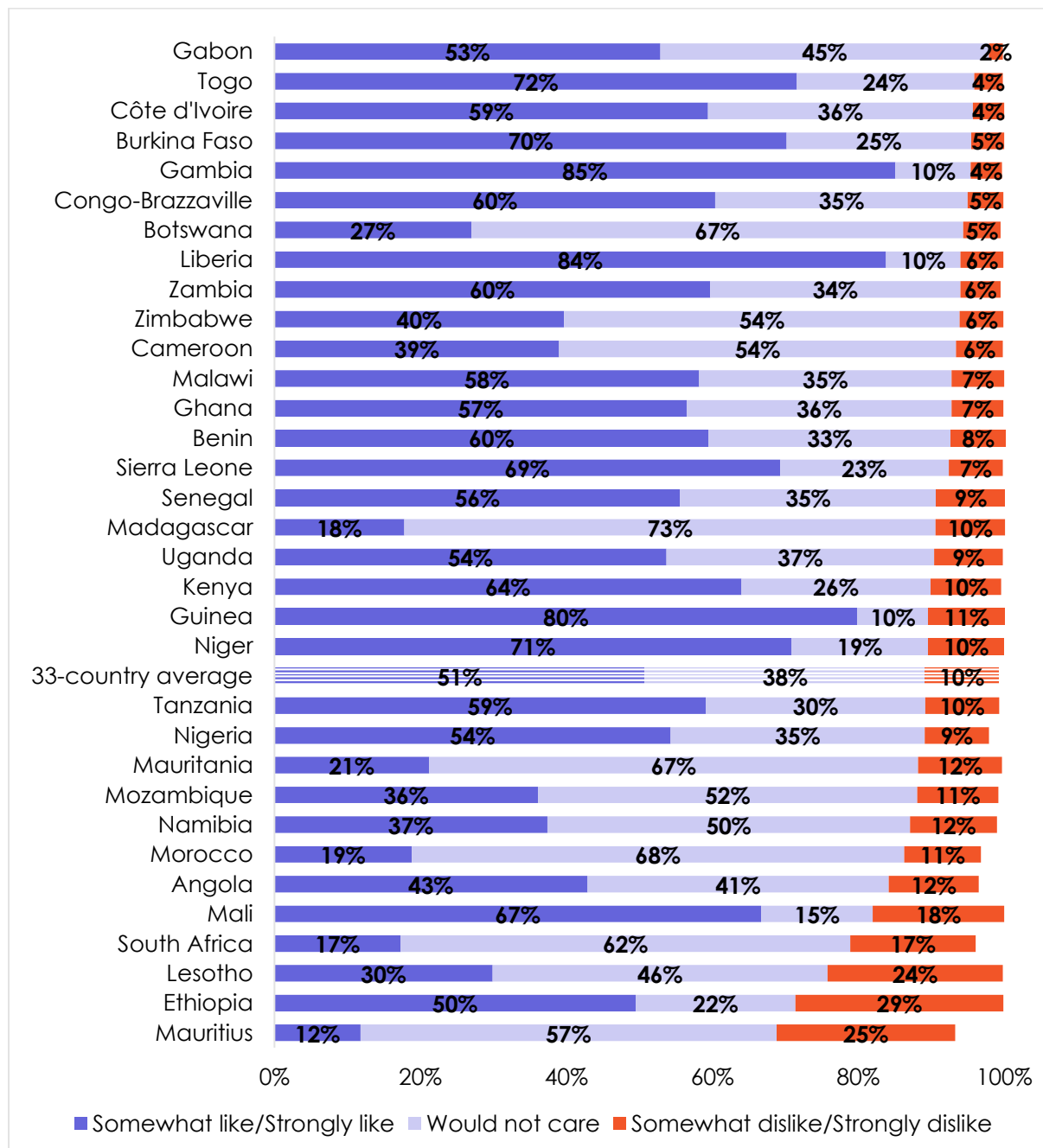
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People from other ethnic groups?



## Marriage across ethnic groups

An even higher bar than having a non-coethnic as a neighbour is having one as a married-in member of the family. We see equally high levels of openness to this kind of ethnic interchange. Across 33 countries, a majority of 51% say they would welcome having their own family member marry someone from a different ethnic group, and another 38% say they would not mind. Nine in 10 are thus comfortable with interethnic marriages within their own family (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Attitudes toward interethnic marriage** | 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me whether you would like having a family member marry a person from a different ethnic group, dislike it, or not care?

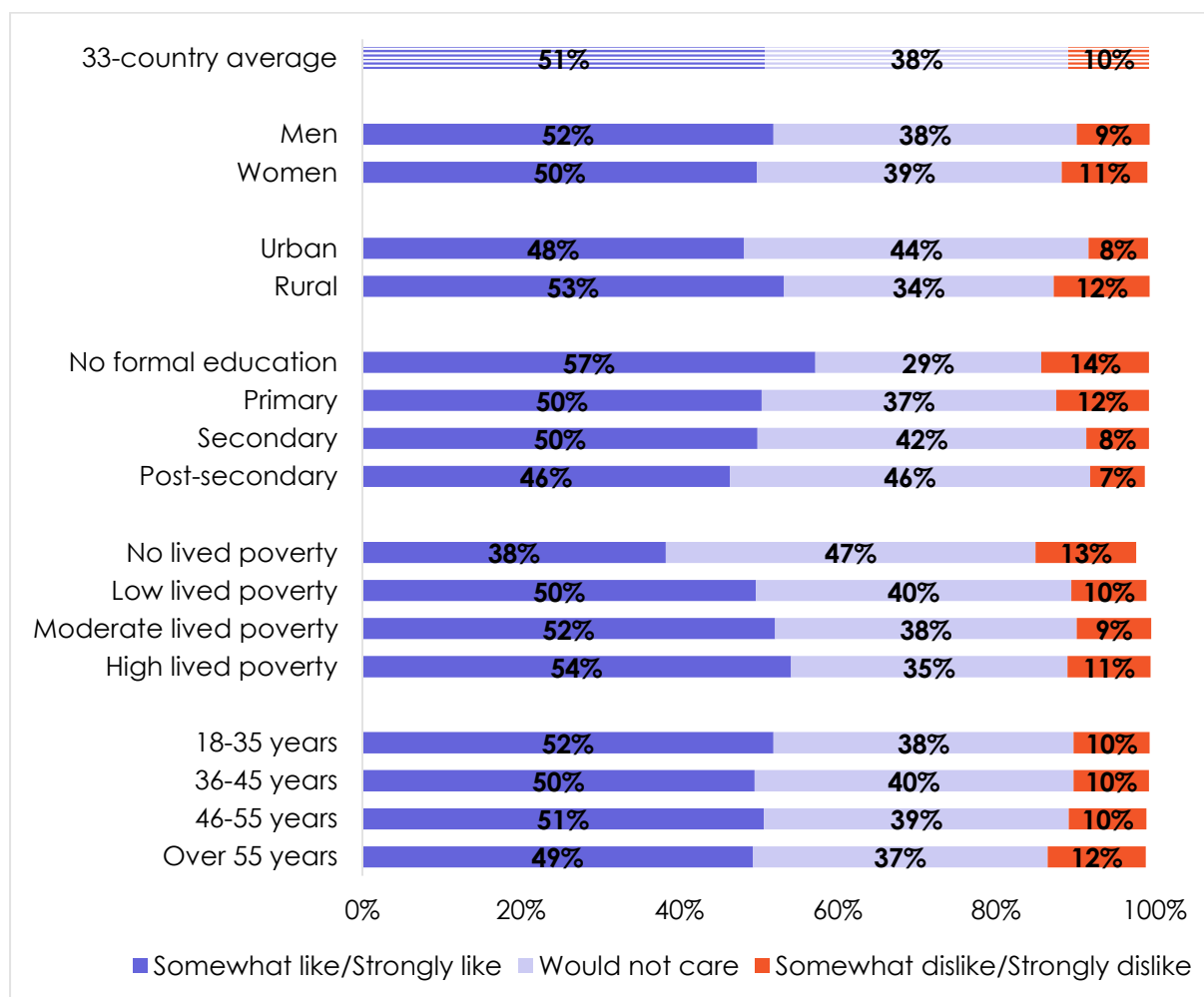
In the Gambia, Liberia, and Guinea, overwhelmingly positive attitudes are clear, with 85%, 84%, and 80% of respondents, respectively, stating they would like the idea of a family



member marrying someone from a different ethnic group. And in Togo, Niger, and Burkina Faso, at least 70% of respondents express support. Eighty percent or more are open to intermarriage in all but four countries: South Africa (79%), Lesotho (76%), Ethiopia (71%), and Mauritius (69%). Only in these last three do more than one in five say they would dislike having an ethnically mixed marriage in their family. Several countries, including Mauritius, Madagascar, Mauritania, Morocco, and South Africa, again stand out as having far fewer respondents who would actively welcome interethnic marriage in their families, but sizeable majorities in all five nonetheless indicate tolerance for this outcome when they say that they “would not care.”

Across socio-demographic groups, the differences on this question are again quite modest (Figure 13). While actively welcoming interethnic marriage is more common among rural residents (by 5 percentage points), citizens who have less education (by 11 points), and those experiencing higher levels of poverty (by 16 points) than among urbanites, the most educated, and the best-off respondents, more than 85% across all groups are at least tolerant of this form of ethnic integration.

**Figure 13: Attitudes toward interethnic marriage** | by demographic group  
| 33 countries | 2021/2023



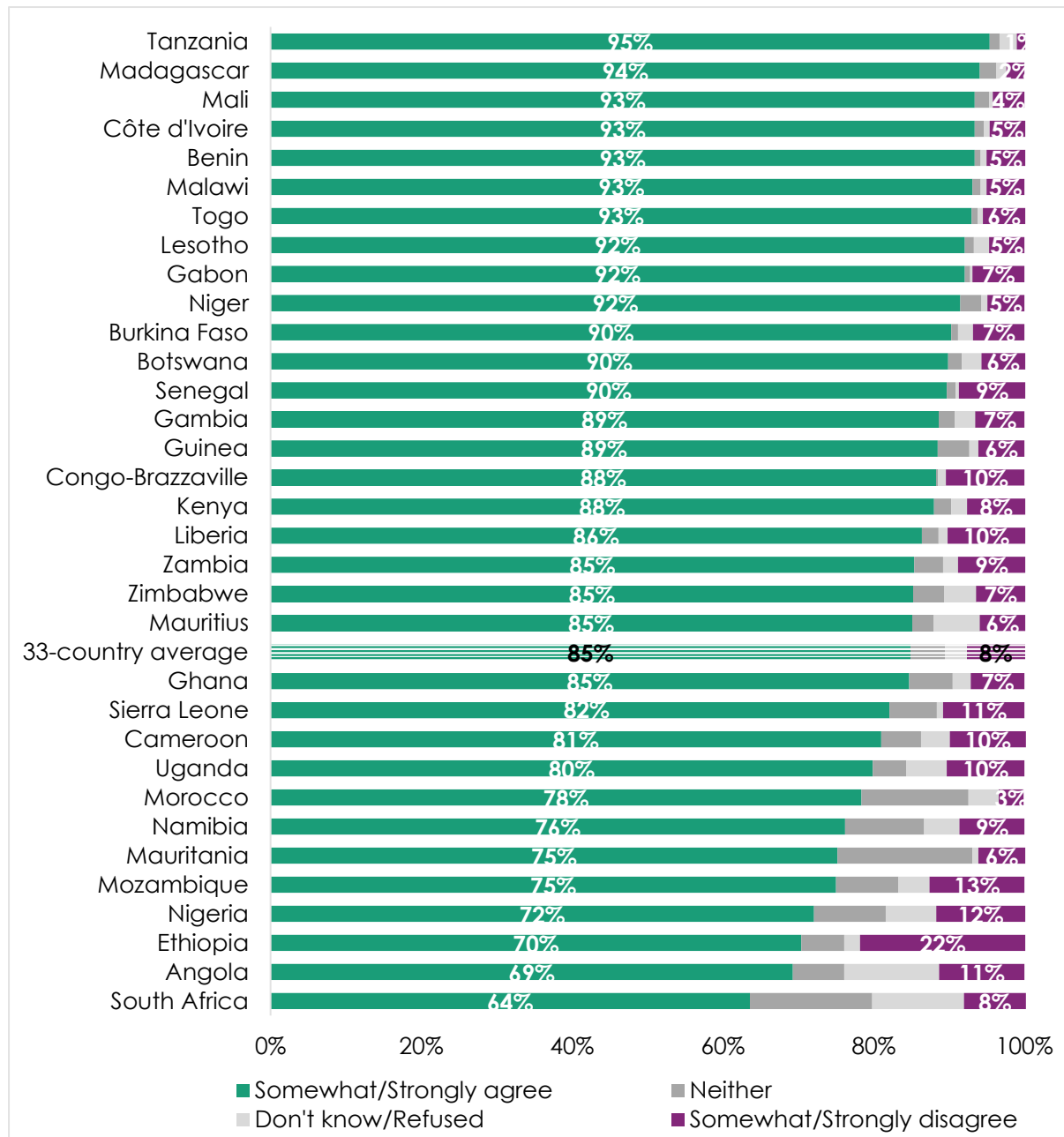
**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me whether you would like having a family member marry a person from a different ethnic group, dislike it, or not care?



## Inclusion of all citizens

Turning the tables, we ask respondents about how accepting others are of them. Do their fellow citizens treat them as equals? Overall, the news is quite positive. Across 33 countries, an overwhelming majority (85%) say others “think of me as a citizen just like them” (Figure 14). This includes sizeable majorities in every country. Thirteen countries register agreement of 90% or more. Conversely, South Africans (64%), Angolans (69%), and Ethiopians (70%) have the lowest confidence that others perceive them as equal citizens (albeit still with sizeable majorities). Ethiopia is notable as having the most substantial portion (22%) who explicitly disagree with this statement, likely a reflection of the country’s recent internal conflicts.

**Figure 14: Others see you as a citizen just like them** | 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Other citizens think of me as a citizen just like them?



## Implications of national vs. ethnic identification

How do varying allegiances to national or ethnic identities shape individuals' attitudes and perceptions about ethnicity? We compared responses on each of the questions discussed above – about ethnic discrimination, interethnic trust, neighbourliness, marriage, and acceptance – between those who prefer their national identity, those who feel more attached to their ethnic identity, and those who feel equally attached to both. The results are shown in figures 15-18.

Two key patterns are evident across these comparisons.

First, there is consistently very little difference between those who feel stronger attachment to their national identity and those who feel equally attached to both identities.

But second, among the 14% who say they feel most attached to their ethnic identity, there is a consistent pattern of feeling significantly more aggrieved about their treatment by the government and other citizens, and significantly less trusting and welcoming of people of other ethnicities.

For example, among those who feel more attached to their ethnic identity, a majority (57%) think their ethnic group faces discrimination by the government, compared to 38%-39% for others (Figure 15). Similarly, a majority (52%) express limited or no trust in people of other ethnicities, a margin of 8-15 points above the other two groups (Figure 16).

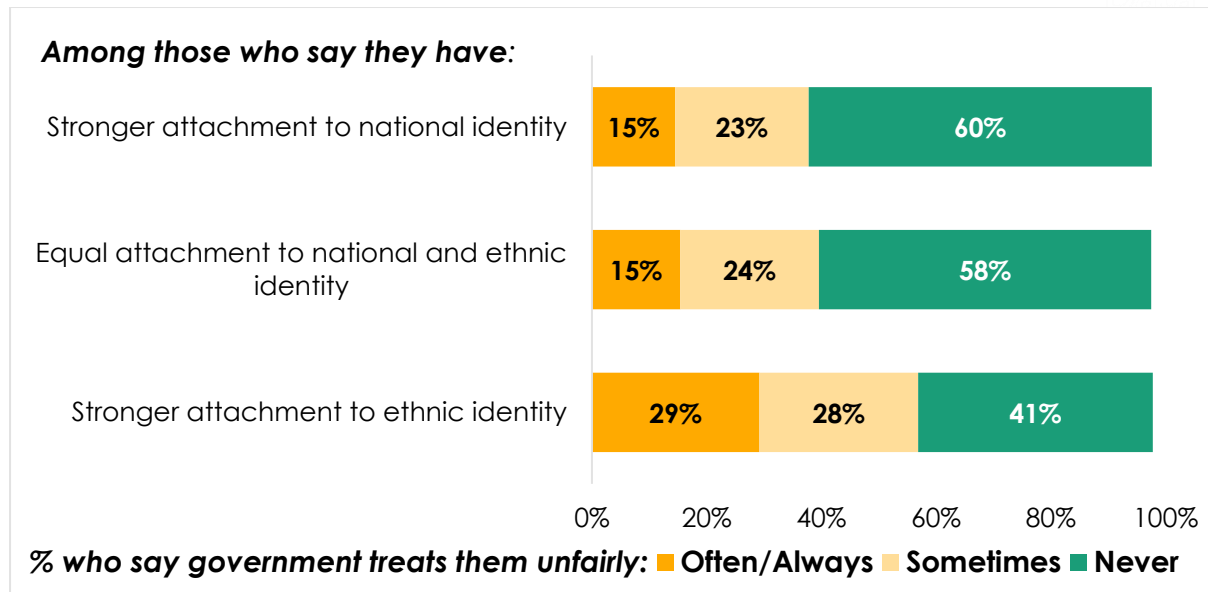
While people who prioritise their ethnic identity are widely accepting of neighbours and married-in family members of other ethnicities, we nonetheless note that nearly twice as many would dislike these outcomes as among the other two groups (Figure 17). Similarly, although a sizeable majority across all groups feel they are accepted as equal citizens by others, those who prioritise their ethnic identities are about twice as likely to disagree compared to the other two groups (Figure 18).

Returning to the question of whether observed shifts in identity preferences represent a positive acceptance and strengthening of cultural identity or a negative increase in societal divisions, the answer suggested here seems to be "some of both." First, for the group of countries in Table 1 that show a net shift from preference for national identity to preference for both identities equally, there seem to be no evident negatives in this shift, as both groups report very similar attitudes and experiences. This suggests the possibility that a move toward *equally* embracing one's ethnic identity alongside one's national identity reflects primarily a move toward positive valuing of diversity.

In contrast, for those countries (the last group in Table 1) where preference for ethnic identity over national identity has increased, the evidence here suggests that this shift may be associated (whether as cause or effect) with a modest increase in people's sense of ethnic division. But we do not want to overstate the seriousness or significance of these findings. While those who lean toward their ethnic identity are somewhat less trusting of others and are significantly more likely to feel they face discrimination, large majorities among them are still open to neighbours of other ethnicities and interethnic marriages within their own families. In short, the differences in their levels of acceptance of others are important, but far from overwhelming.



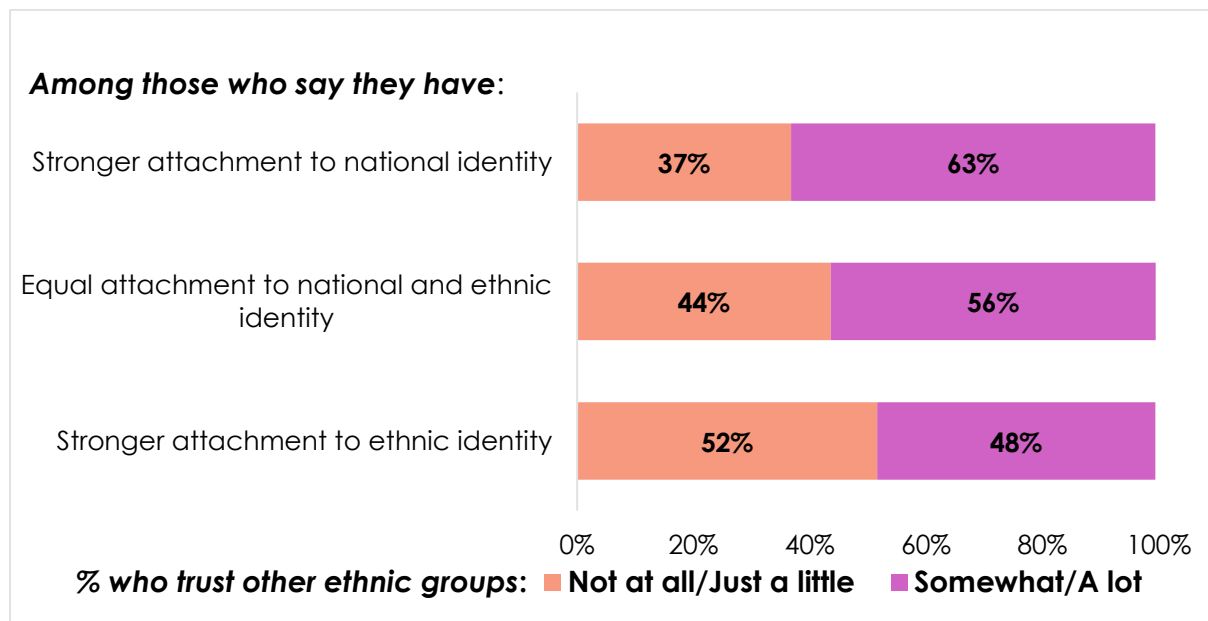
**Figure 15: Treated unfairly by government** | by identity preference | 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:**

Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?  
 How often, if ever, are [members of the respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?

**Figure 16: Trust in other ethnic groups** | by identity preference | 33 countries | 2021/2023

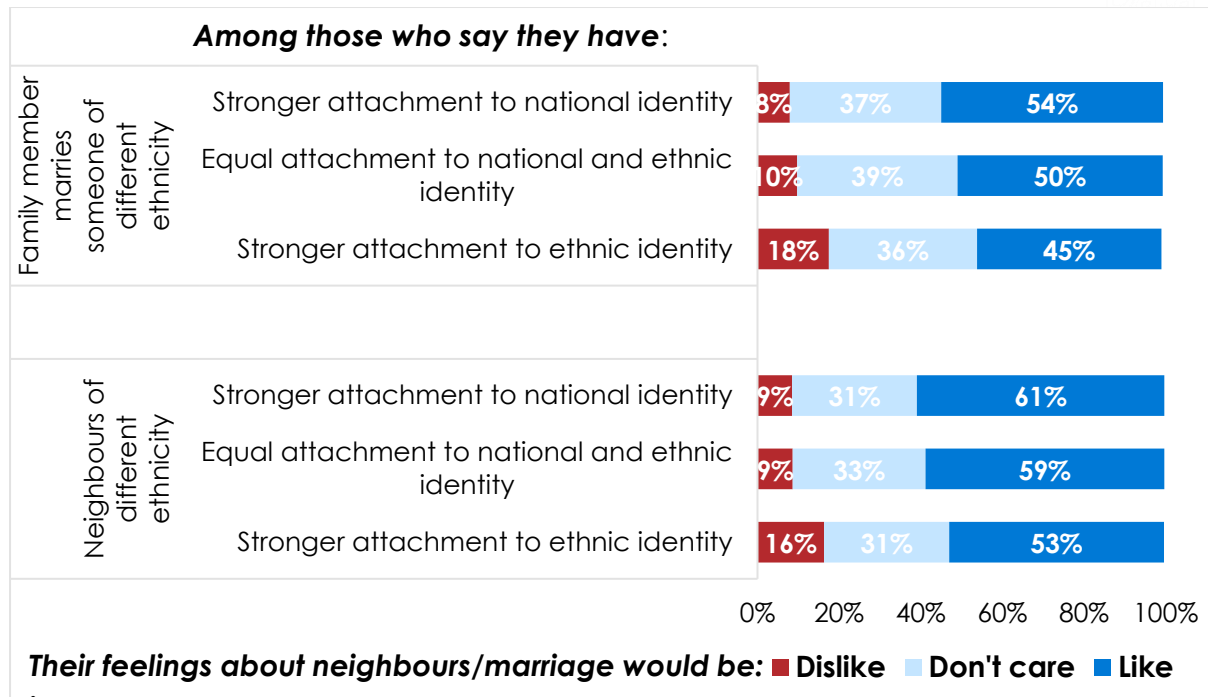


**Respondents were asked:**

Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?  
 How much do you trust each of the following types of people: People from other ethnic groups?



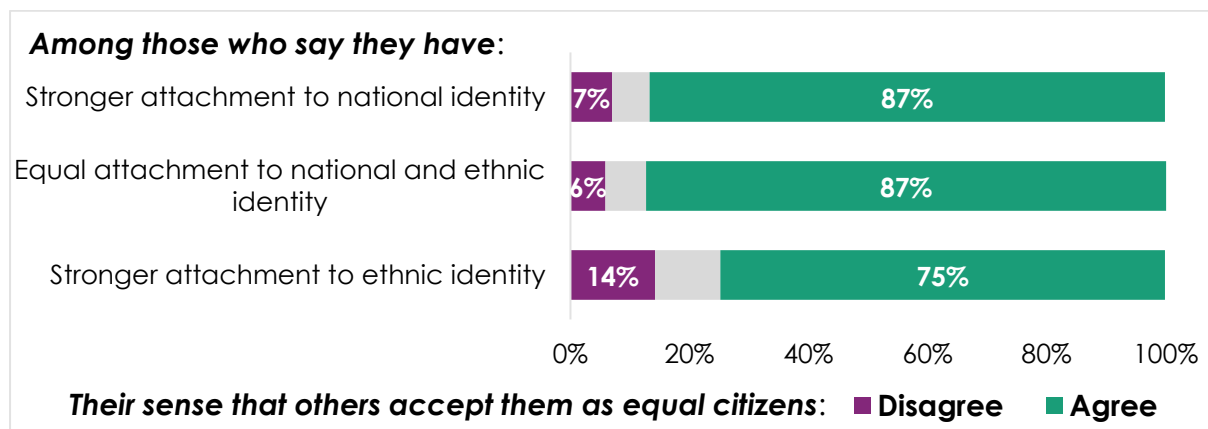
**Figure 17: Openness to interethnic engagement** | by identity preference  
| 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:**

Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?  
For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: People from other ethnic groups?  
Please tell me whether you would like having a family member marry a person from a different ethnic group, dislike it, or not care?

**Figure 18: Others see you as a citizen just like them** | by identity preference  
| 33 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:**

Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?  
Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Other citizens think of me as a citizen just like them?



## Conclusion

Ethnicity and ethnic identity are complex, malleable, and multifaceted. The findings presented here make it clear that there are no easy answers to questions of whether and how ethnicity matters across Africa. We see both positives and negatives with respect to how individuals experience their ethnicity, reporting both discrimination by their governments and widespread acceptance by their fellow citizens. Similarly, how they relate to people of other ethnicities reveals struggles with interethnic trust while they are perfectly willing to accept, or even embrace, ethnic coexistence in their communities and their homes.

Overall, the findings suggest coexistence rather than conflict between national and ethnic identities, reflecting the way many Africans navigate and reconcile these spheres in their daily lives. While ethnic identity can divide, it can also foster cultural pride and community cohesion. The challenge remains to promote inclusivity and equity, ensuring that ethnic identity strengthens national unity rather than undermining it.





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## Appendix 1

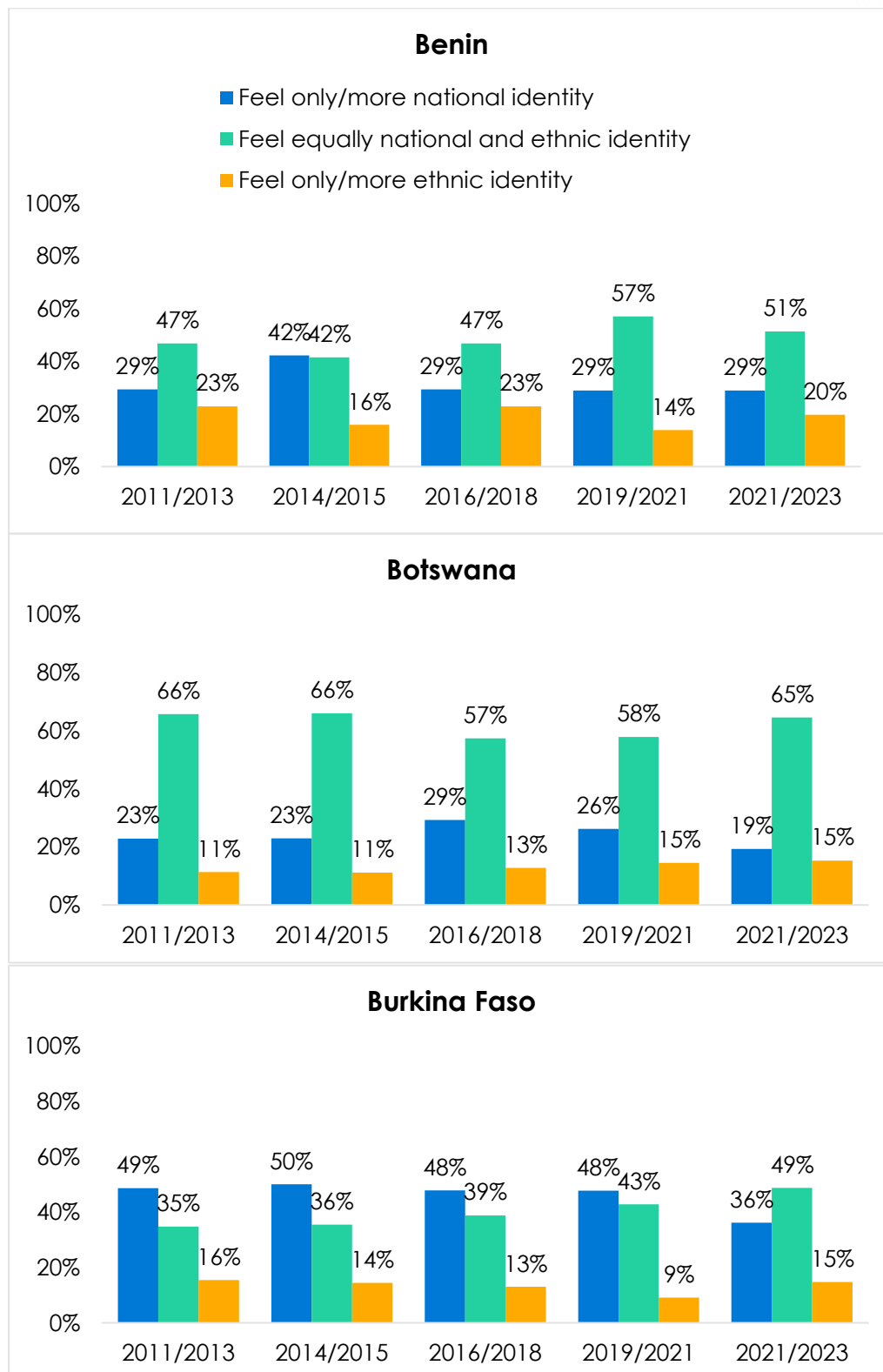
**Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds**

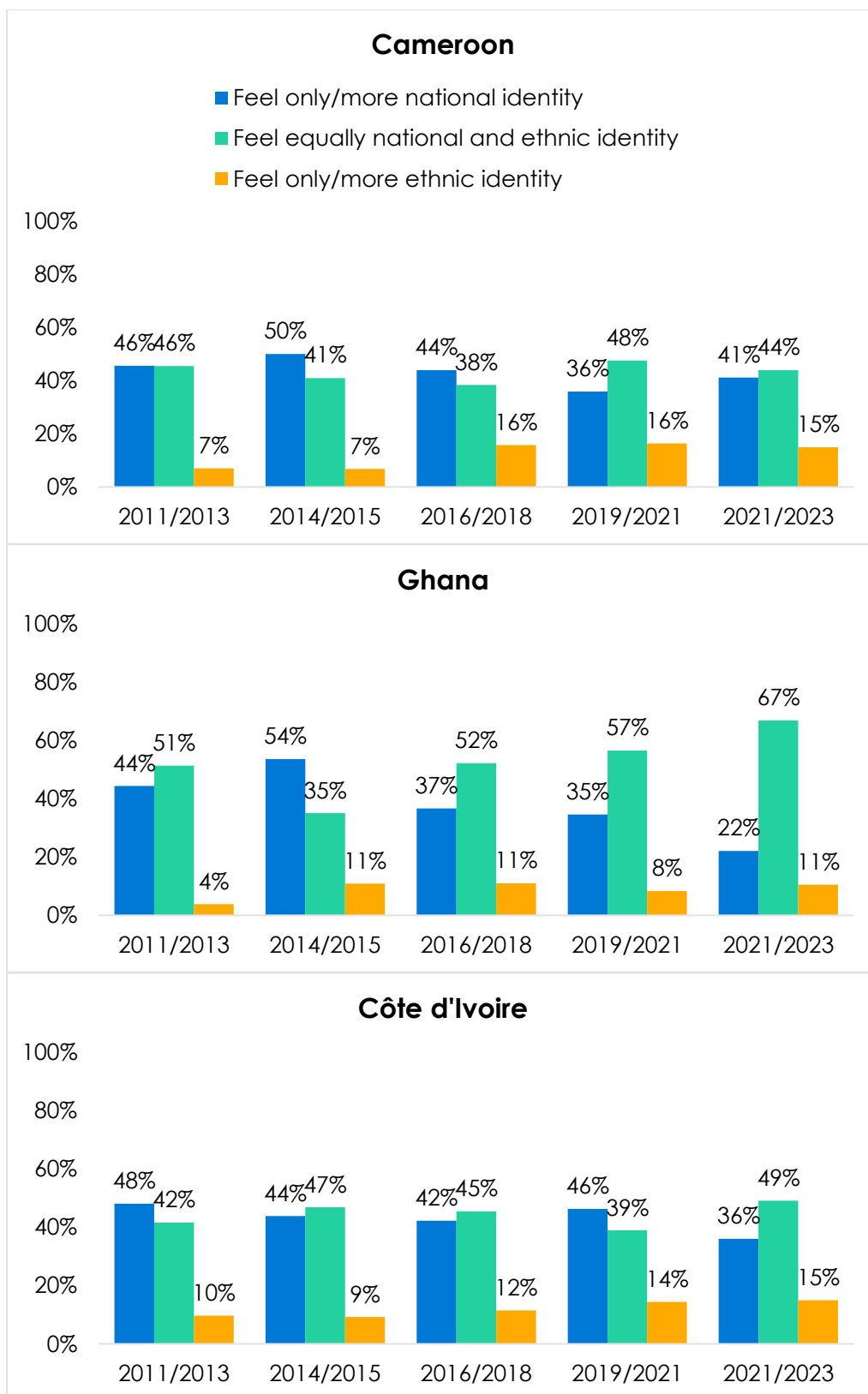
Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Feb.-March 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Kenya	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	Oct.-Nov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021
Sudan	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Togo	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021

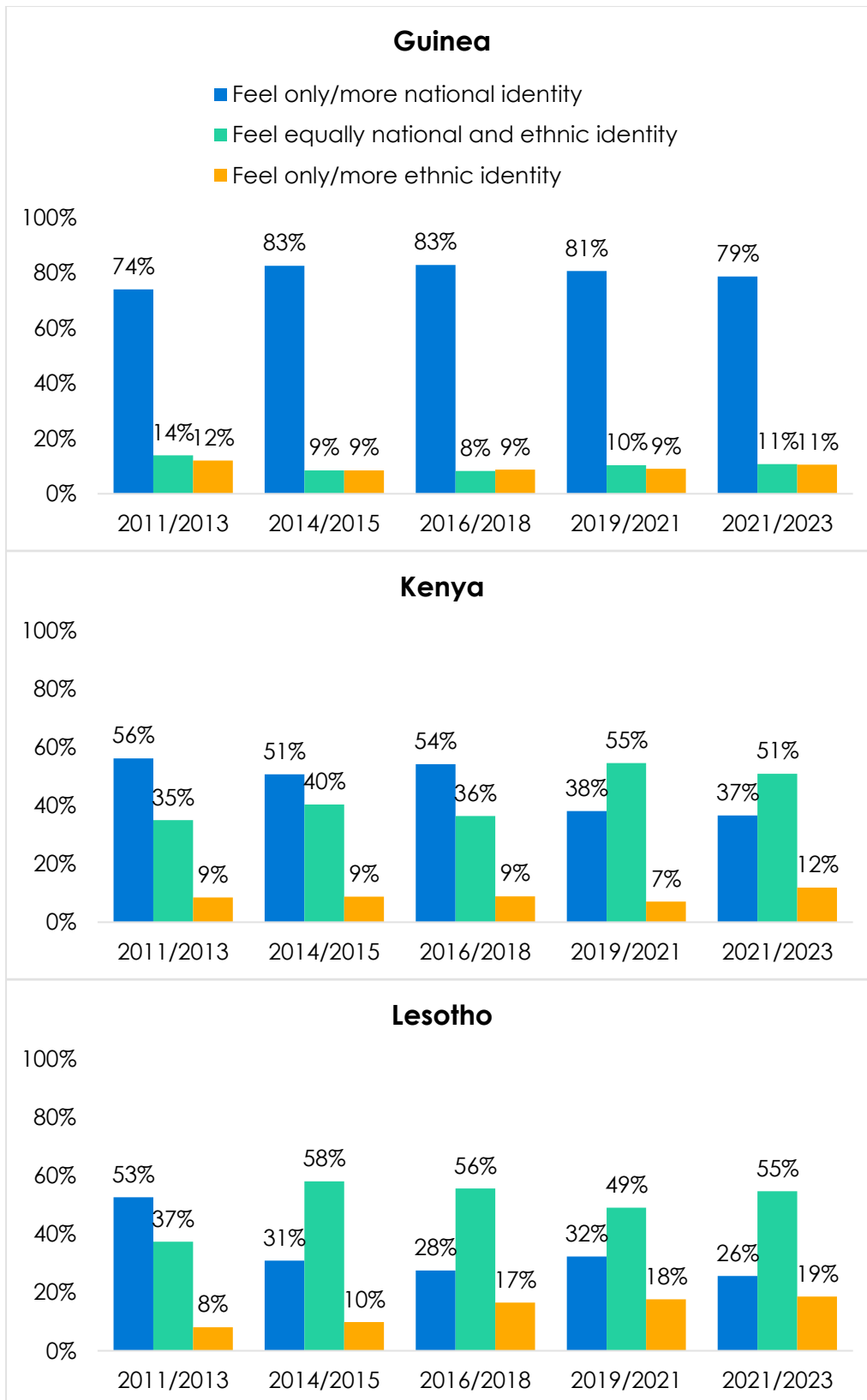


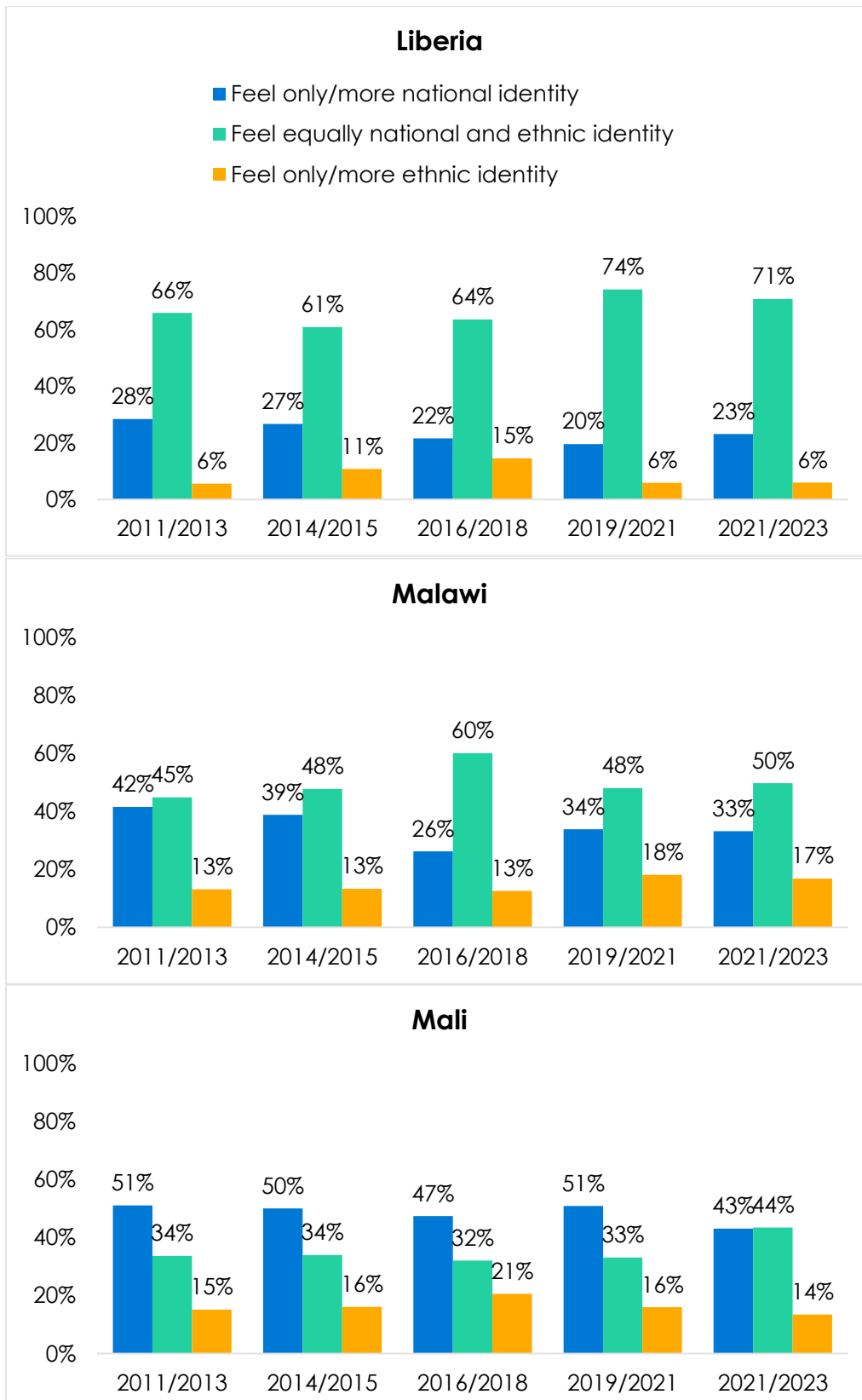
## Appendix 2

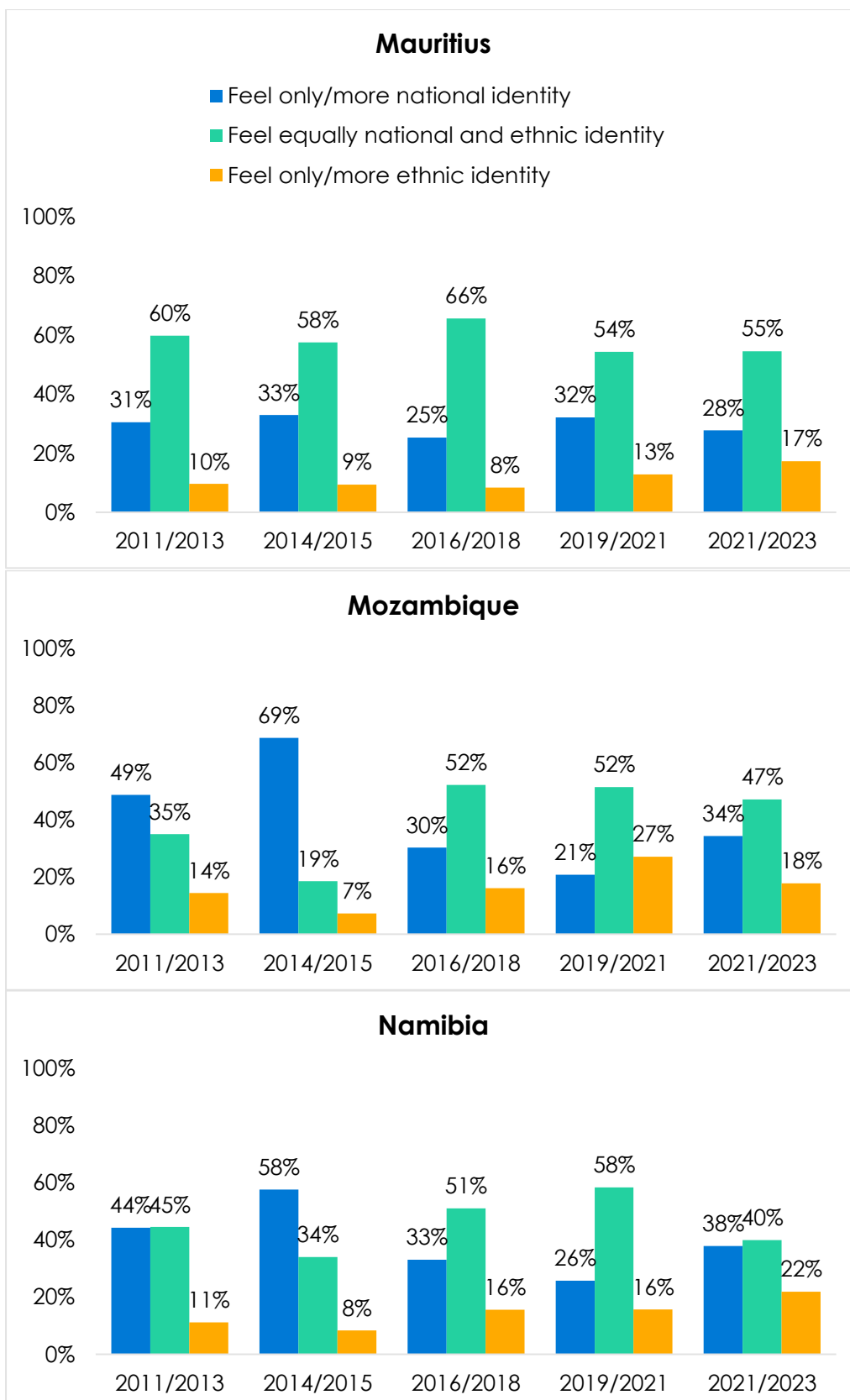
### Country trends in allegiance to national vs. ethnic identity, 2011-2023

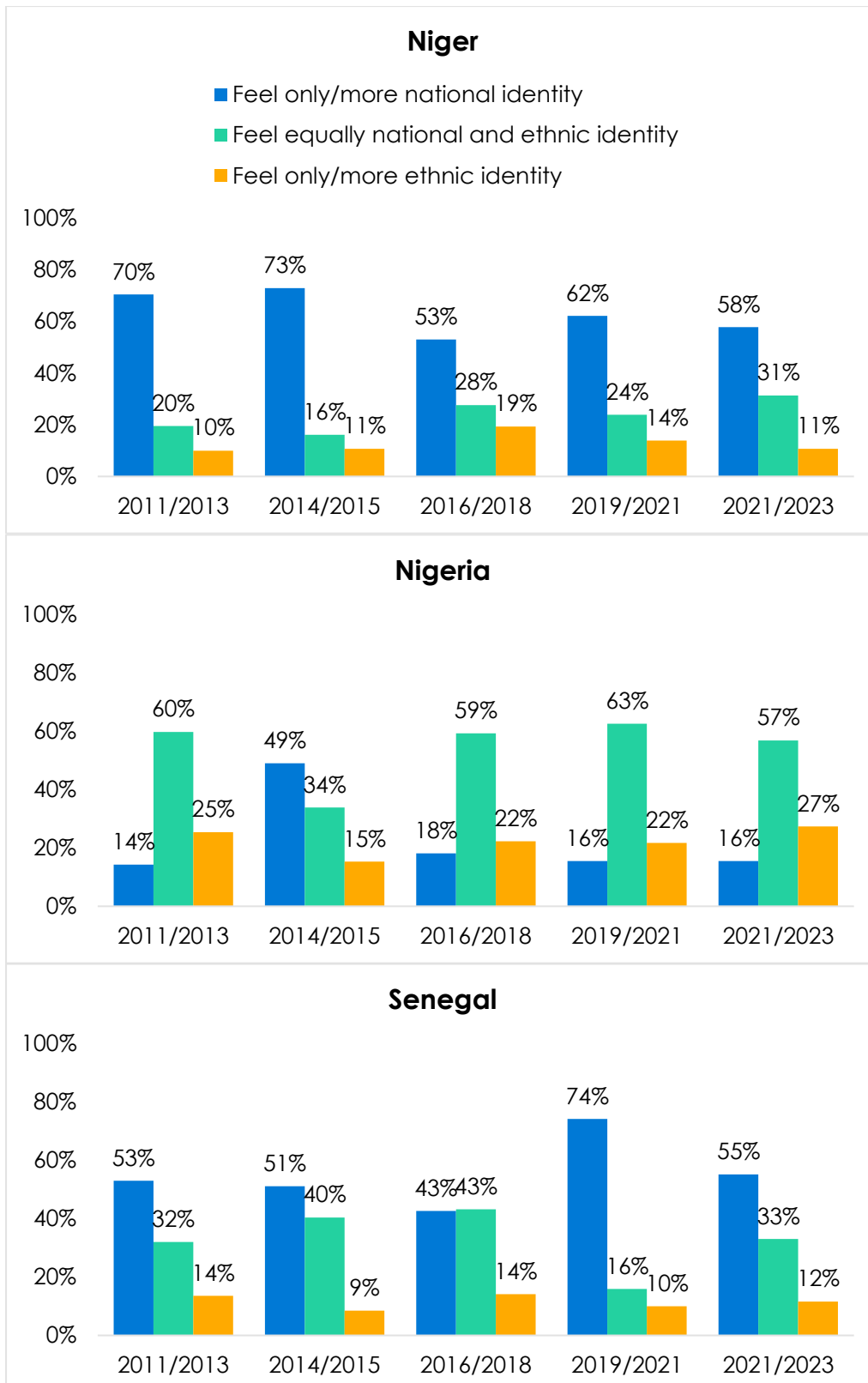




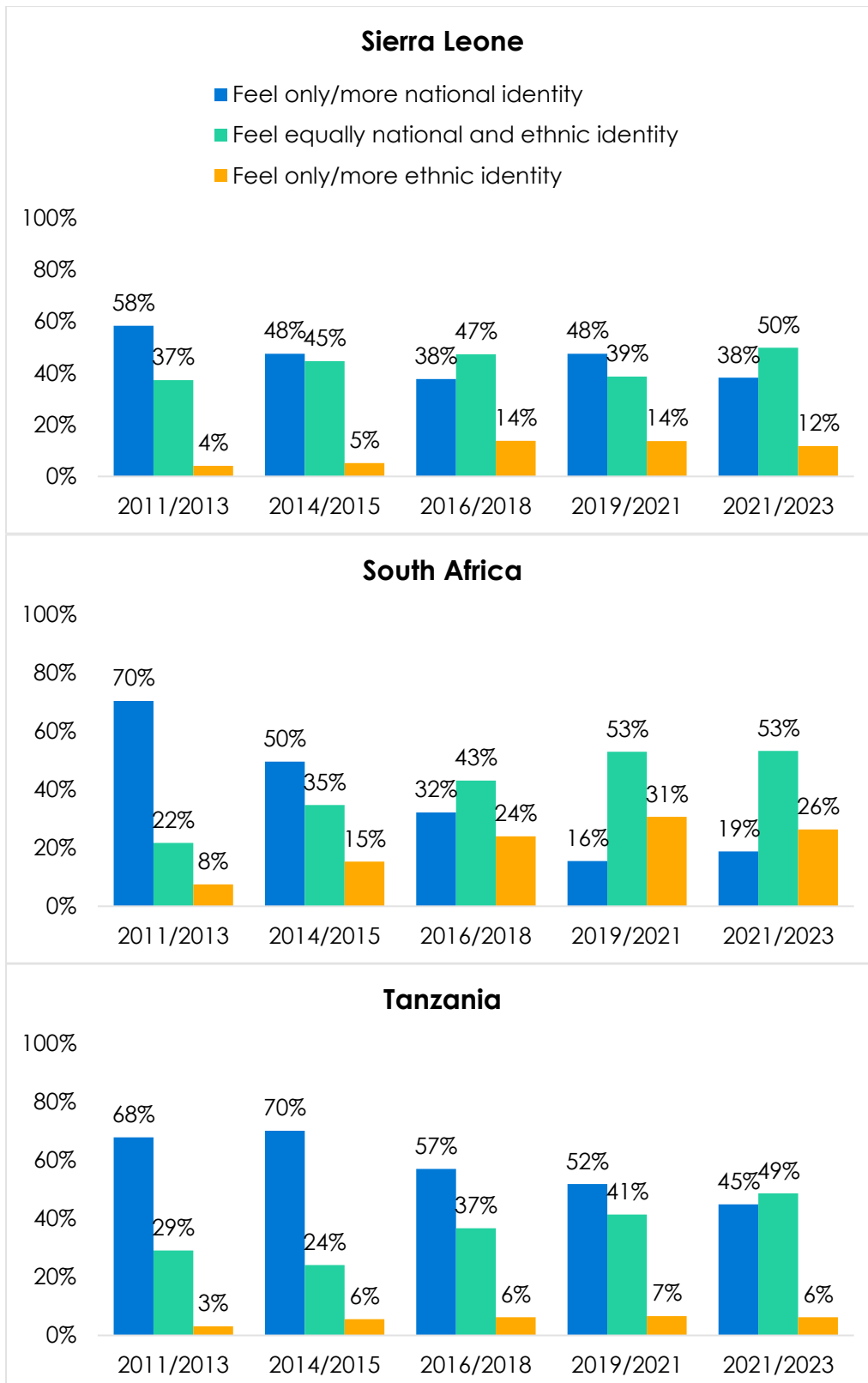


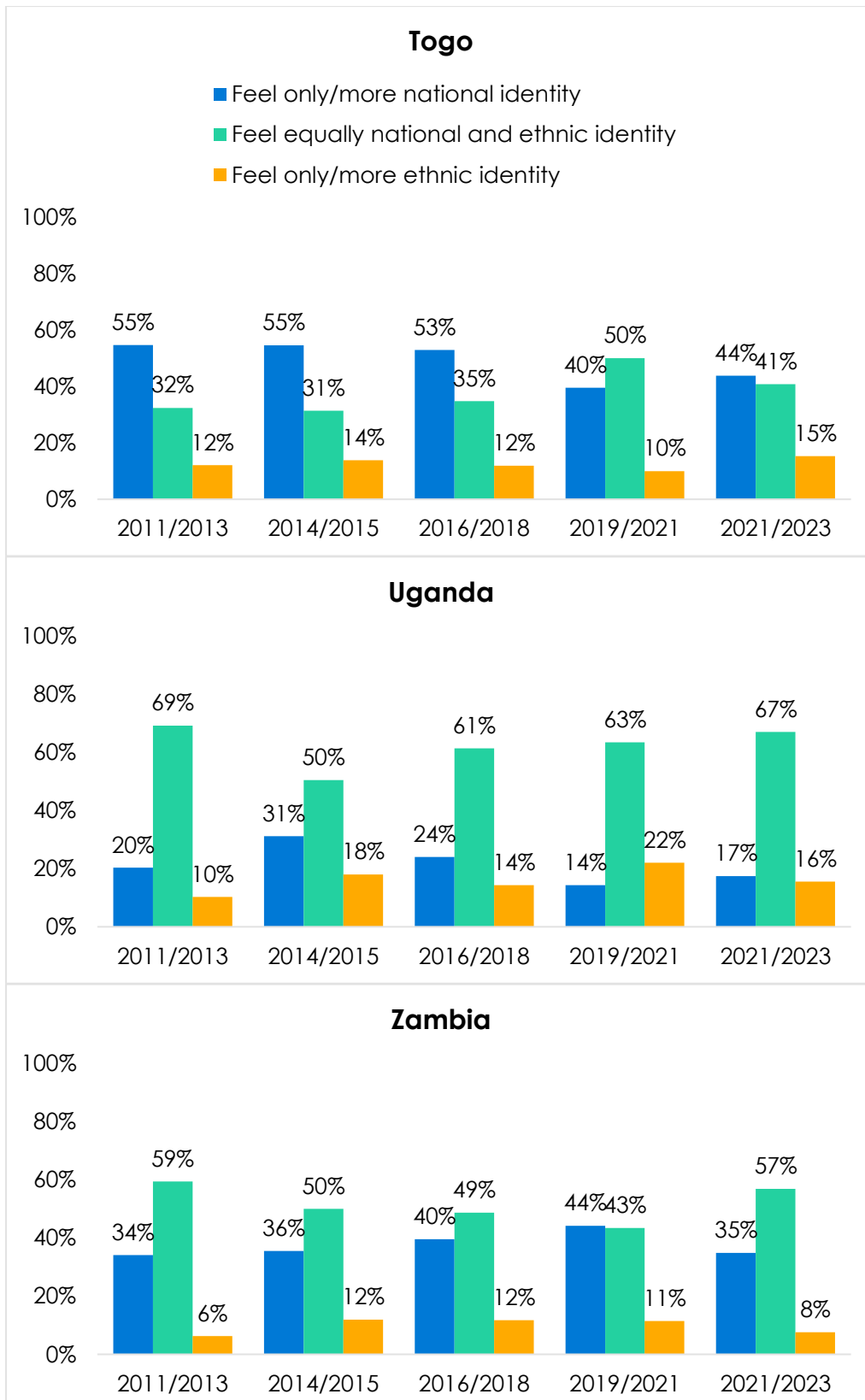


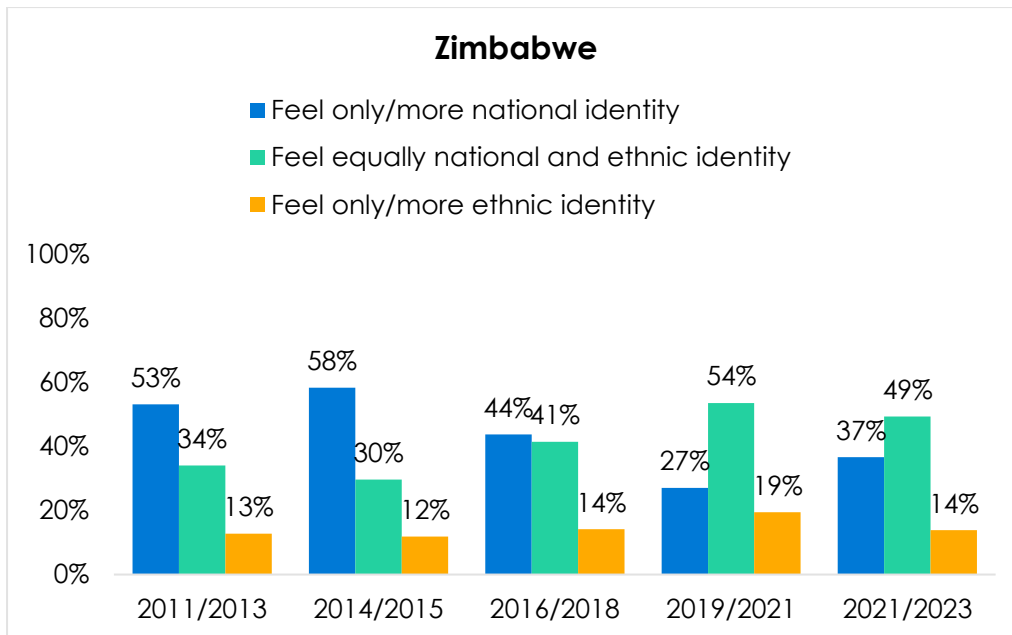












**Respondents were asked:** Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [citizen of the respondent's country] and being a [member of the respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?

- I feel only [national identity].*
- I feel more [national identity] than [ethnic group].*
- I feel equally [national identity] and [ethnic group].*
- I feel more [ethnic group] than [national identity].*
- I feel only [ethnic group].*



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## **About Data for Governance Alliance**

The Data for Governance Alliance is a four-year project that promotes data-based advocacy and engagement between pan African civil society organisations (CSOs) and African Union organs. The project is led by Afrobarometer with partners, including CDD Ghana, the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Laws.Africa. The project is funded by the European Union.



## Data for Governance Alliance

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