Title: Are data collected by NSOs biased? A comparison of Governance, Peace and Security and Afrobarometer surveys in Africa

The need to collect data on governance related issues has been growing since the 2010s. African countries under the African Union Commission’s scope as part of the Strategy for the Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) and through National Statistical Offices’ (NSO) experience appear now as leaders to collect governance, peace and security related household data. Yet, sensitive survey data as governance indicators collected by government dependent institutions have been recently pointed out as potentially biased due to self-censorship from respondents. This paper studies this potential response bias from sensitive surveys, here governance-related surveys, collected by public organisations. We combine first-hand and harmonized Governance, Peace and Security (GPS-SHaSA) survey data, integrated in representative traditional household surveys conducted by the NSOs, and Afrobarometer survey data, a very well established organisation claimed as independent. Estimating ordered logit, we compare responses from more than twenty similarly worded questions. No systematic bias can be evidenced when the respondent is interviewed by a NSO agent or a declared independent agent regarding democratic related issues, trust in institutions and perceived levels of corruption. The results hold for the eight countries where the GPS-SHaSA data are available. The absence of self-censorship is further exposed through the analysis of responses using respondents’ perception of the survey sponsor identity in Afrobarometer. Selection issues explain the few existing differences between responses according to the perceived survey sponsor. Through the estimation of propensity scores, matching respondents who wrongly believe that the government is behind the Afrobarometer survey to other respondents; we robustly show that individuals share no different assessment. The results provide evidence on the capacity of government-related bodies to collect data on matters of national interest as long as rigorous frameworks are implemented. The bigger broadcast capacity of public organisations would allow even higher appropriation of surveyed issues by the population.