

# **No Pipes, Big Problem: Water Scarcity and Political Participation in Africa**

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## **Abstract**

In this project, I analyze the effect of water scarcity and the presence of water infrastructure on political participation in 34 African states using data from Round 7 of the Afrobarometer survey collected between 2016 and 2018. The project uses mean comparisons and regression models to address three important questions: What is the impact of water scarcity on political participation? What is the impact of water infrastructure? Is the presence of water infrastructure, a proxy for the expectation of water service delivery, necessary for water scarcity to be a catalyst for higher levels of political action? Participation is measured using a range of dependent variables beyond voting, including participation in protests or community meetings, communication with local or religious leaders, and participating in campaign rallies. I find evidence that the experience of water scarcity is related to higher levels of political participation. Analysis further finds that the absence of water infrastructure is positively related to higher levels of participation. However, the project does not find evidence to support the idea that an expectation of service delivery is necessary to make water scarcity politically salient. In fact, I find the greatest levels of participation among those who lack water infrastructure and also experience actual water scarcity.