



Star Awards Pty Ltd
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News release

More Batswana are turning to social media – for better and for worse

Social-media use in Botswana has doubled over the past five years despite considerable misgivings about some of its possible negative effects, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

More than a third of Batswana now use Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or other social media every day as sources of news. Most citizens praise social media as helping make them better informed, more effective citizens, but most also believe it makes people more susceptible to false news and intolerance.

Overall, Batswana are divided as to whether social media is good or bad for society. But a majority favour protecting unrestricted access.

Key findings

- More than one-third (34%) of Batswana say they use social media every day to get news, almost twice as many as five years ago (18%) (Figure 1).
- Daily use of social media for news is significantly higher amongst citizens with post-secondary education (65%), the youngest respondents (53% of those aged 18-26), and urban residents (50%) (Figure 2). Six out of 10 rural residents never use it.
- Amongst the 73% of Batswana who say they have heard of social media, most say it makes people more informed about current events (91%) and helps them have more impact on political processes (77%). At the same time, large majorities believe that social media makes users more likely to believe false news (81%) and more intolerant of people with different political opinions (65%) (Figure 3).
- Overall, Batswana are almost evenly divided as to whether social media is good (35%) or bad (30%) for society (Figure 4).
- But people who say unrestricted access to social media should be protected outnumber, by 52% to 38%, those who say it should be regulated because it's dividing Botswana (Figure 5).

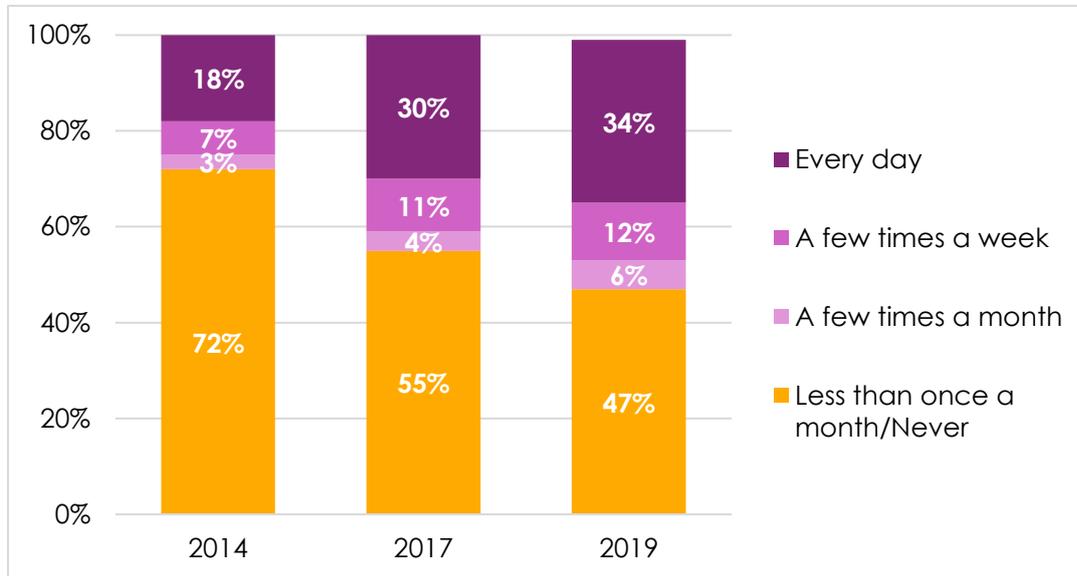
Afrobarometer surveys

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, and Round 8 surveys are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer national partner in Botswana, Star Awards Ltd., interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Batswana in July-August 2019. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Botswana in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

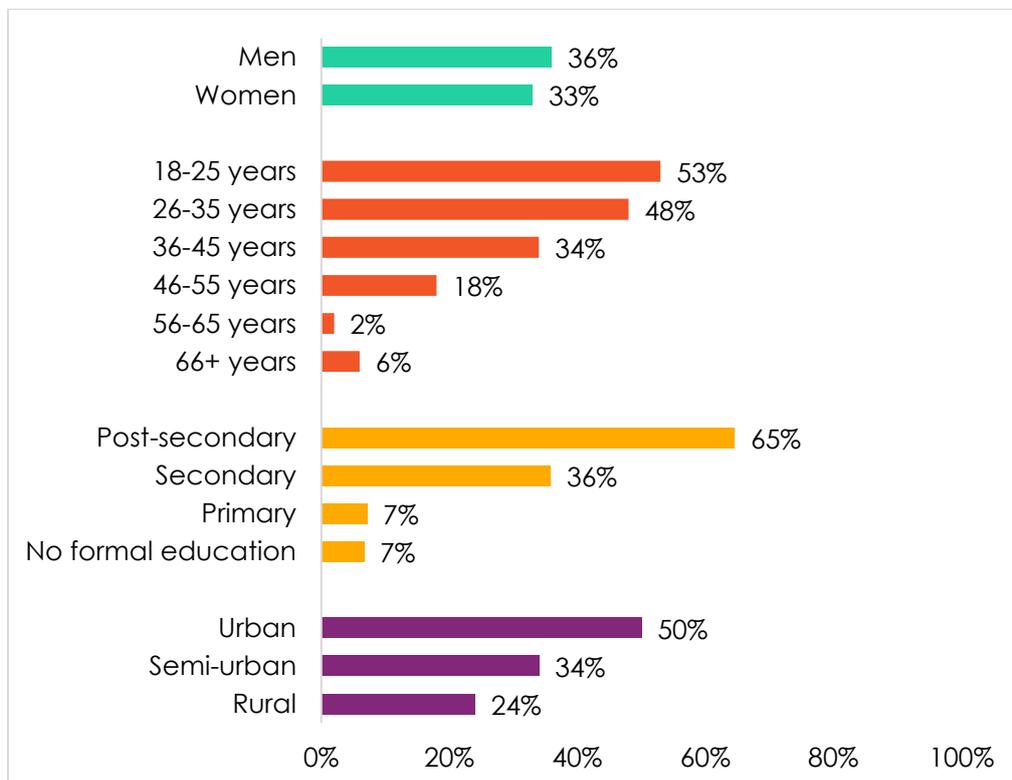
Charts

Figure 1: Use of social media as source of news | Botswana | 2014-2019



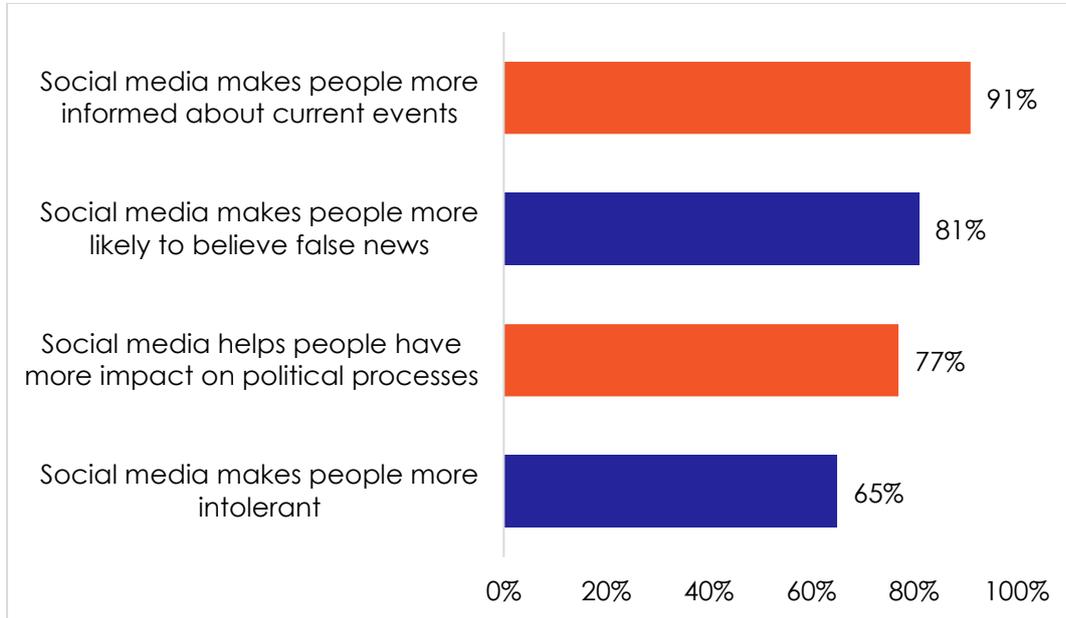
Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources: Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or others?

Figure 2: Daily use of social media as source of news | by socio-demographic group | Botswana | 2019



Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or others? (% who say "every day")

Figure 3: Views on the impact of social media | Botswana | 2019



Respondents were asked: Regardless of whether you personally use social media yourself, please tell me whether you agree or disagree that social media :

Makes people more informed about current events?

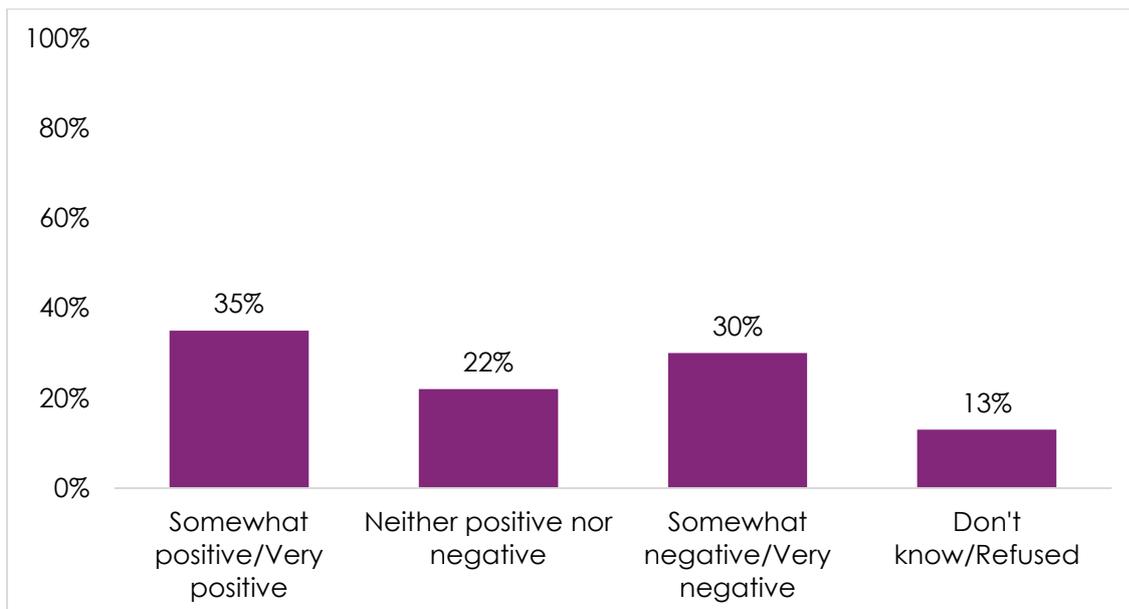
Makes people more likely to believe false news?

Helps people have more impact on political processes?

Makes people more intolerant of those who have different political opinions?

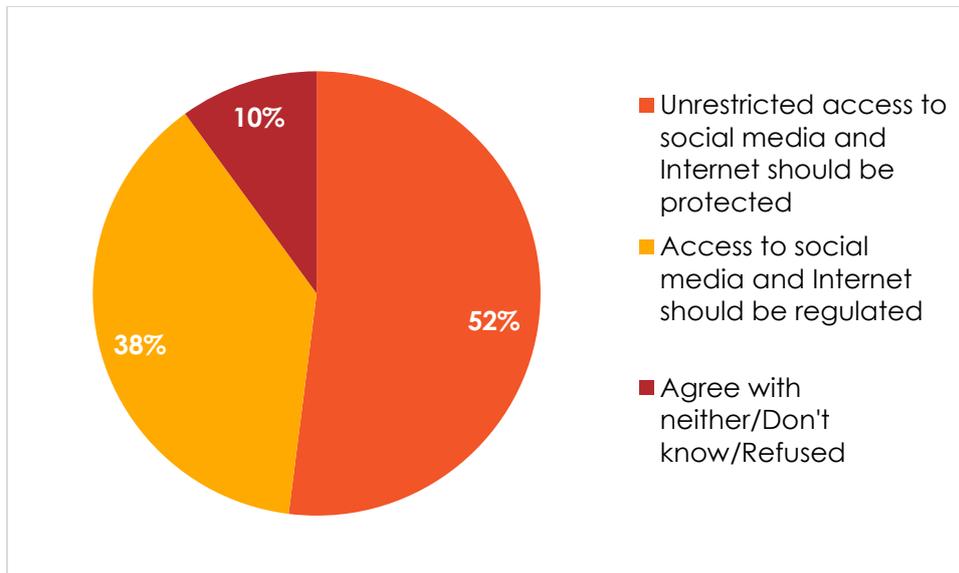
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Figure 4: Is social media good or bad for society? | Botswana | 2019



Respondents were asked: Overall, do you think that the effects of social media on society are mostly positive, mostly negative, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 5: Should access to social media be protected or regulated? | Botswana
 | 2019



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

Statement 1: Unrestricted access to the Internet and social media helps people to be more informed and active citizens, and should be protected.

Statement 2: Information shared on the Internet and social media is dividing [Botswana], so access should be regulated by government.

For more information, please contact:

Star Awards Pty Ltd
 Prof. Mogopodi H. Lekorwe
 Telephone: 355 2741/7131 2942
 Email: lekorwem@mopipi.ub.bw/lekorwem@gmail.com

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