



Mass Public Opinion Institute  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
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## News release

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### **Fewer than half of Zimbabweans consider their news media free, Afrobarometer surveys show**

A majority of Zimbabweans want a free news media, but fewer than half think that's what they have, an analysis of Afrobarometer survey data shows.

In nationally representative surveys completed in 2017 and 2018, only four in 10 Zimbabwean citizens see their news media as “completely free” or “partly free with minor problems.”. In contrast, a majority of citizens believe that the media should have the right to publish any views or ideas without government control.

When it comes to private communications, more than three-fourths of Zimbabweans say the government should not have the right to monitor what is said.

Concerns regarding the country's media freedom were thrown into high relief following the assault and detention of at least three journalists by army officers in the aftermath of last year's general election and the shutdown of the Internet and social media during protests against fuel-price hikes in January. Activists have highlighted a need to change restrictive laws in order to secure media freedom in Zimbabwe.

#### **Key findings**

- About four in 10 Zimbabweans say the news media is “completely free” (18%) or “partly free with minor problems” (21%). About the same proportion consider the media “not free” (22%) or “partly free with major problems” (18%). The rest say they “don't know” or refused to answer the question (Figure 1).
- A majority (53%) of Zimbabweans say the media should have the right to publish any views or ideas without government control, while 40% believe the government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society (Figure 2).
- More than three-fourths (78%) of Zimbabweans say the government should not have the right to monitor private communications, including 61% who feel “very strongly” about this issue (Figure 3).

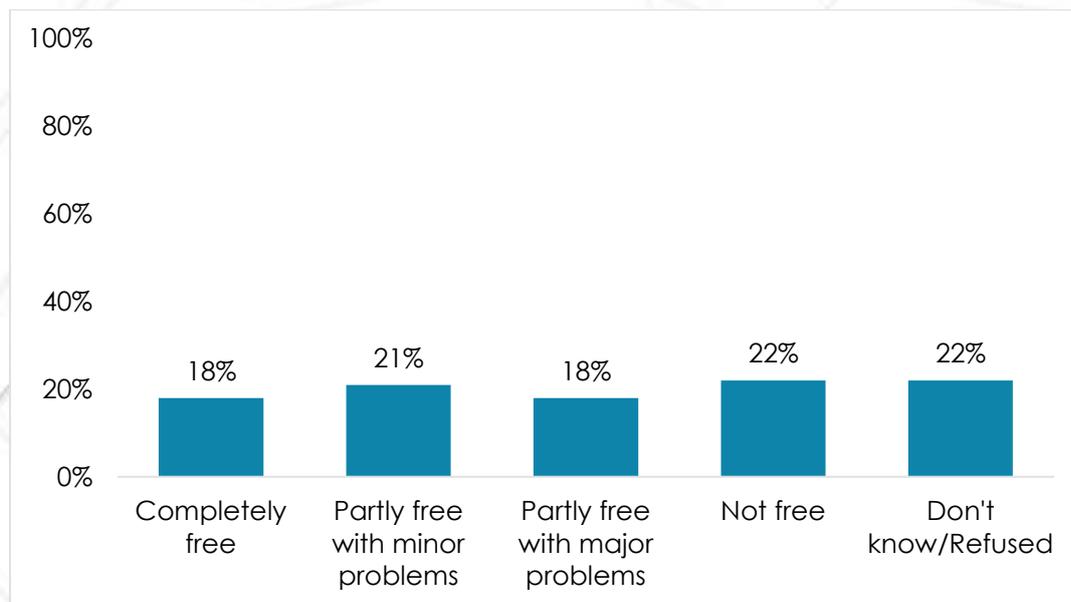
#### **Afrobarometer surveys**

Afrobarometer, a pan-African, non-partisan research network, has conducted public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in Zimbabwe and other African countries since 1999. Afrobarometer employs face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples. The Afrobarometer team in Zimbabwe, led by Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI), interviewed 1,200 adult Zimbabweans between 28 January and 10 February 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

In 2018, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Afrobarometer's core partner for Southern Africa, commissioned two pre-election surveys in Zimbabwe. MPOI conducted the fieldwork (28 April-13 May 2018 and 25 June-6 July 2018). Each survey interviewed 2,400 adult citizens, yielding results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

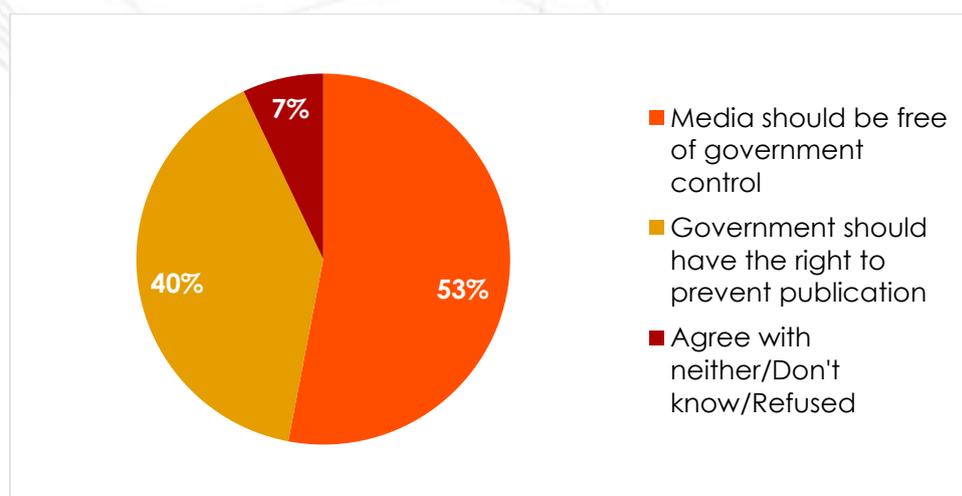
**Charts**

**Figure 1: Is the media free? | Zimbabwe | 2018**



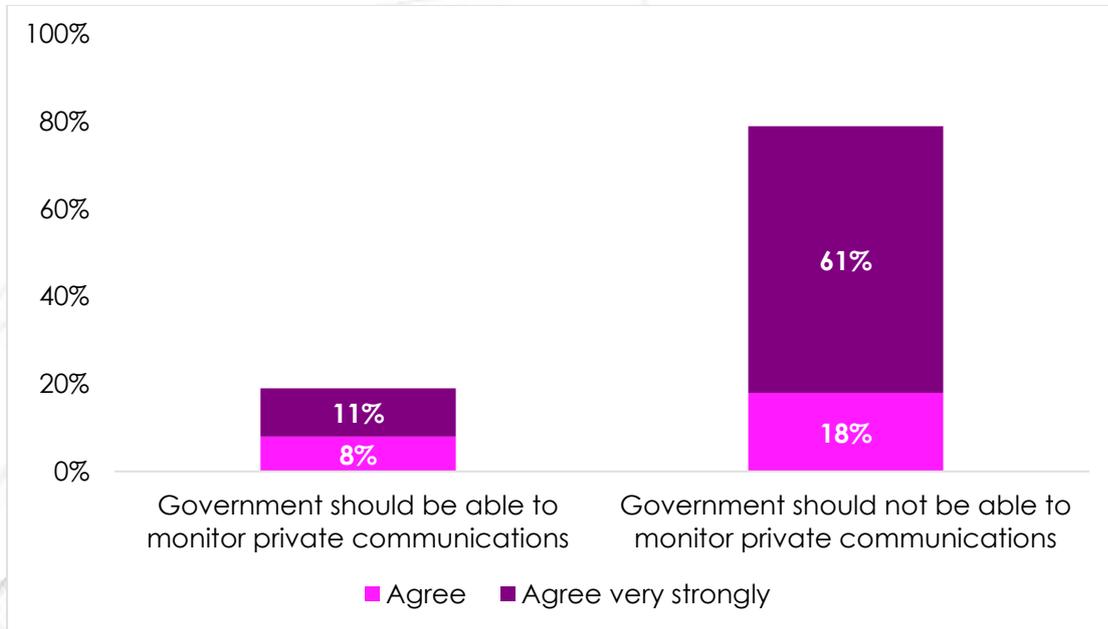
**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how much of a free and uncensored news media does Zimbabwe have today?*

**Figure 2: Should the news media be free? | Zimbabwe | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*  
 Statement 1: *The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.*  
 Statement 2: *The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.*  
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

**Figure 3: Should government be allowed to monitor private communications?**  
 | Zimbabwe | 2018



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
*Statement 1: Government should be able to monitor private communications, for example on mobile phones, to make sure that people are not plotting violence.*  
*Statement 2: People should have the right to communicate in private without a government agency reading or listening to what they are saying.*

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[www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)

