



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
25 January 2021

## News release

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### **Ethiopians embrace freedoms, but are also willing to trade certain liberties for the sake of public security, Afrobarometer survey finds**

A large majority of Ethiopians say they feel free to express their thoughts, to join political organizations, and to vote for the candidate of their choice, according to a recent Afrobarometer survey.

But while most citizens think that people should have the right to associate freely, more than half would be willing to accept restrictions on certain freedoms in the name of security. If public safety were under threat, a majority would endorse the government's right to impose curfews and roadblocks, to monitor private communications, and to regulate what is said in places of worship.

#### **Key findings**

- By large majorities, Ethiopians say they feel “somewhat” or “completely” free to say what they think (79%), to join political organizations of their choice (71%), and to choose whom to vote for (76%) (Figure 1).
- Two-thirds (66%) of Ethiopians say people should be able to freely join any organization regardless of whether the government approves of it. Only one-third (34%) think the government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies (Figure 2).
- But a majority of Ethiopians would be willing to give up some of their freedoms in the name of public safety. In particular, if public safety were threatened:
  - 55% say the government should have the right to impose curfews and set up roadblocks to prevent people from moving around (Figure 3).
  - 55% would allow the government to monitor private communications, such as mobile-phone conversations, to make sure that people are not plotting violence (Figure 4). The opposing view, that citizens have a right to communicate in private without government monitoring, is somewhat more popular among men and more educated respondents (Figure 5).
  - 54% would endorse the government's right to regulate what is said in places of worship (Figure 6).

#### **Afrobarometer surveys**

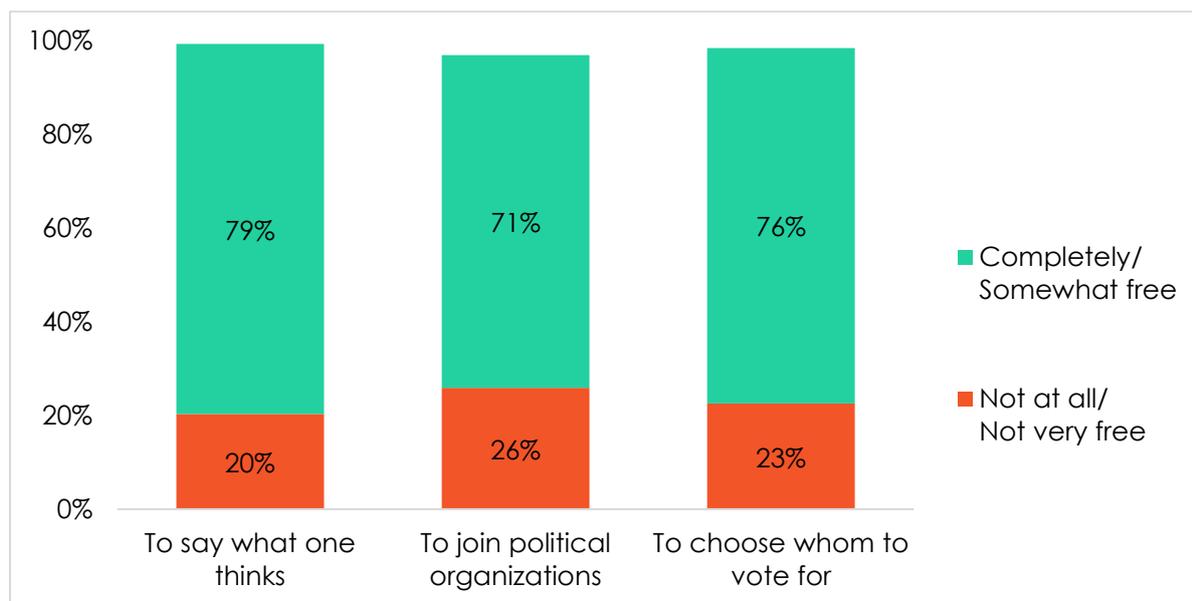
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

These findings are drawn from a survey of 2,400 adult citizens conducted in December 2019-January 2020 by ABCON Research & Consulting with financial support from Freedom House.

A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. A previous survey was conducted in Ethiopia in 2013.

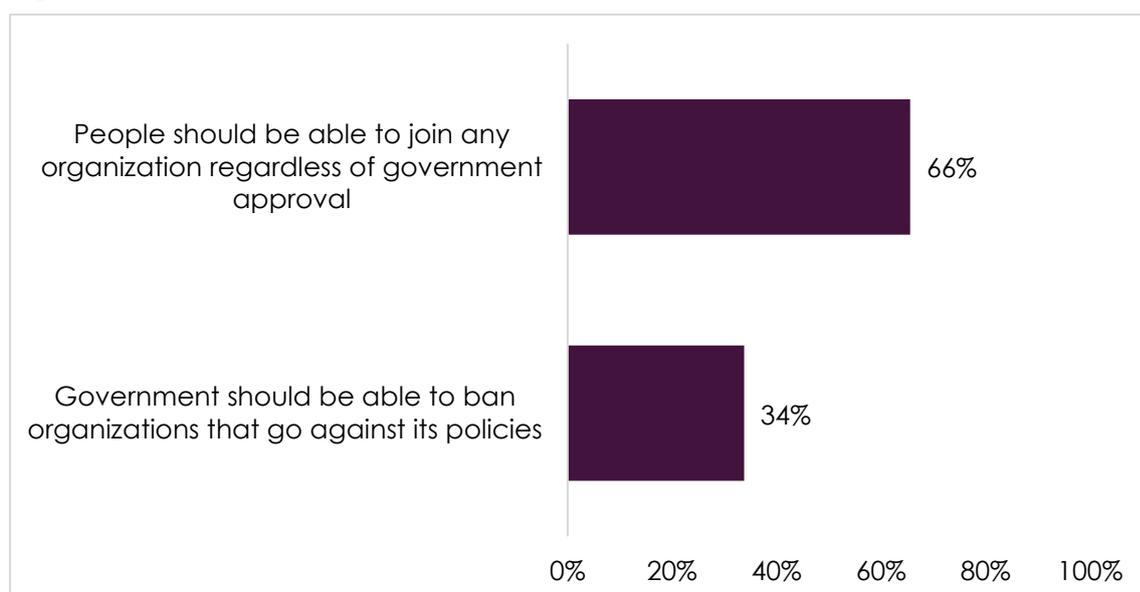
## Charts

**Figure 1: Freedom of expression, political association, and vote choice** | Ethiopia | 2020



**Respondents were asked:** In this country, how free are you to: Say what you think? Join any political organization you want? Choose whom to vote for without feeling pressured?

**Figure 2: Freedom of association** | Ethiopia | 2020



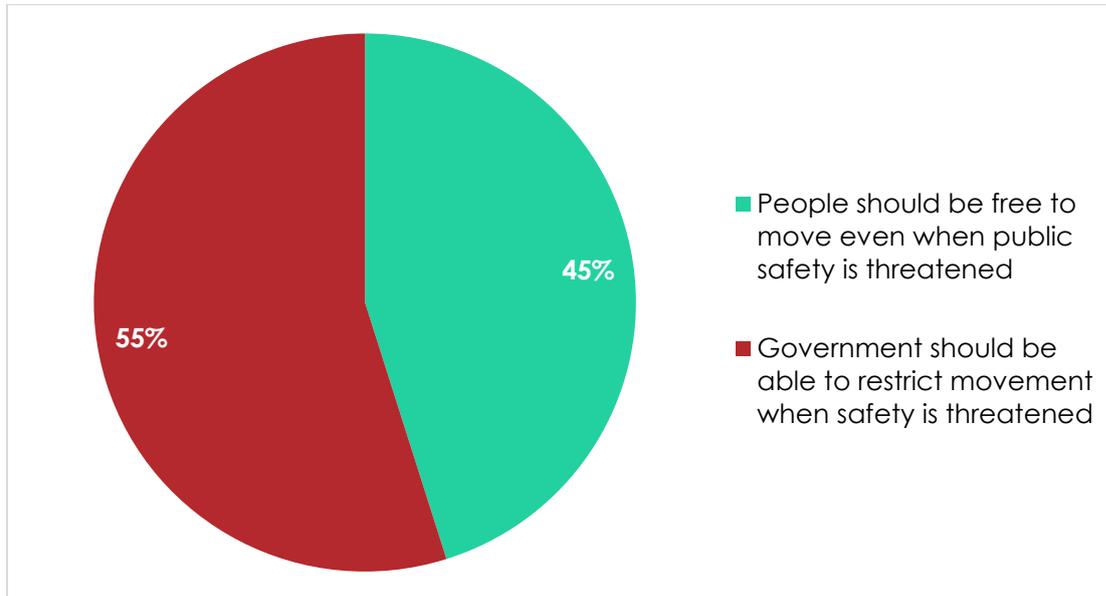
**Respondents were asked:** Let's talk for a moment about the kind of society you would like to have in this country. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The government should be able to ban any organization that goes against its policies.

Statement 2: We should be able to join any organization, whether or not the government approves of it.

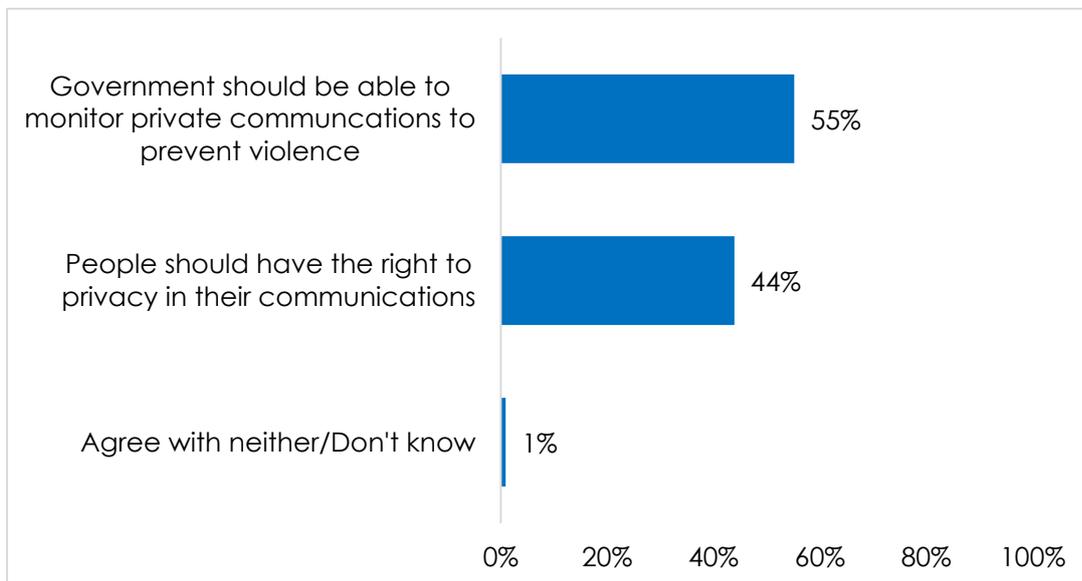
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

**Figure 3: Freedom of movement when public safety is threatened | Ethiopia | 2020**



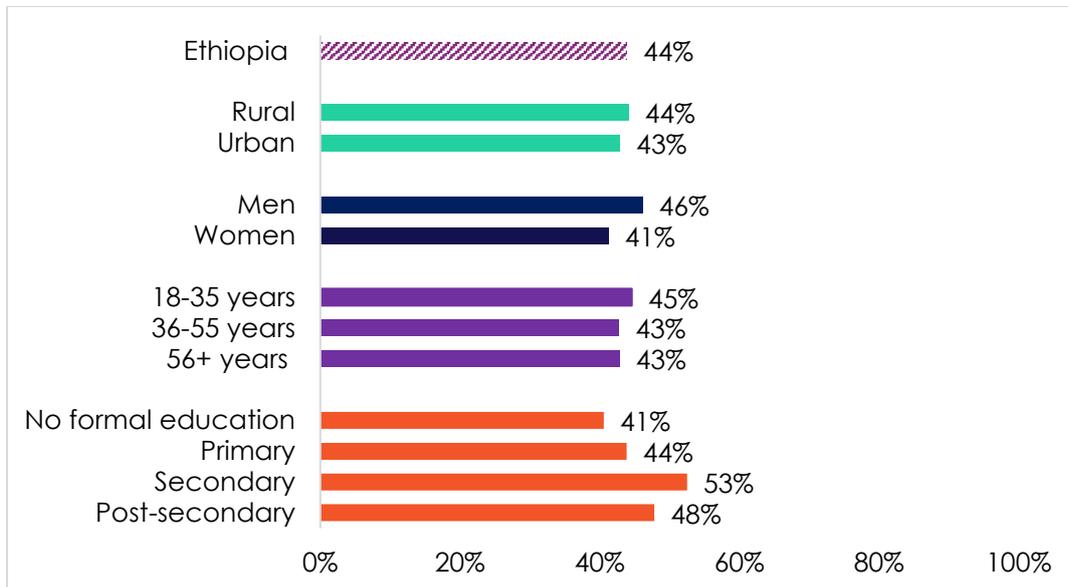
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Even if faced with threats to public security, people should be free to move about the country at any time of day or night.  
 Statement 2: When faced with threats to public security, the government should be able to impose curfews and set up special roadblocks to prevent people from moving around.  
 (% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

**Figure 4: Right to private communication vs. government monitoring | Ethiopia | 2020**



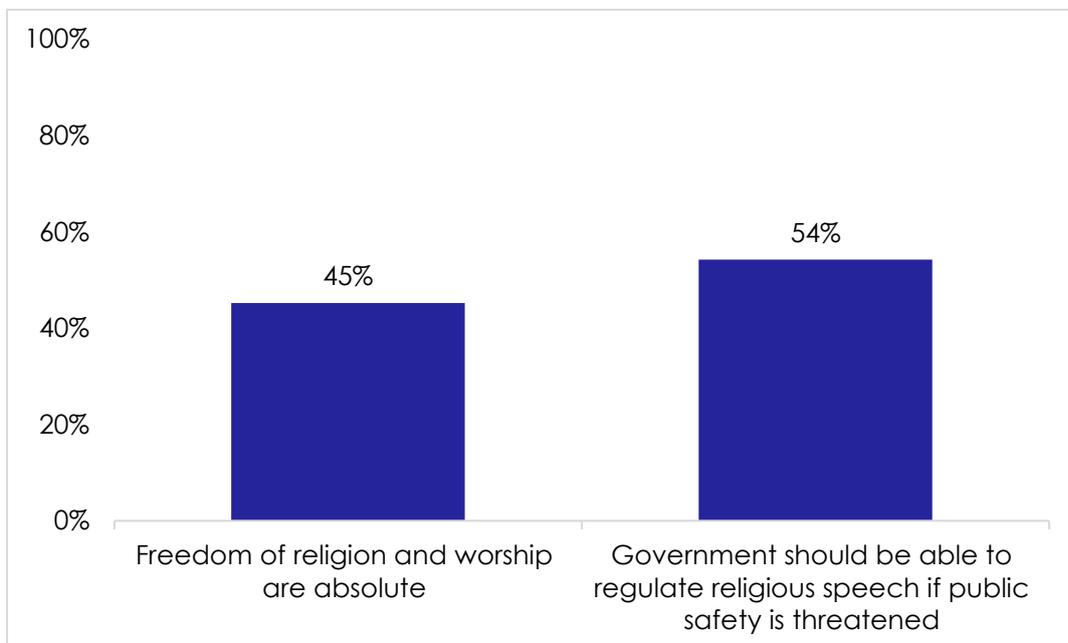
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Government should be able to monitor private communications, for example on mobile phones, to make sure that people are not plotting violence.  
 Statement 2: People should have the right to communicate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

**Figure 5: Right to communicate in private** | by socio-demographic group | Ethiopia | 2020



**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.  
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with Statement 2)

**Figure 6: Freedom of religion vs. government regulation** | Ethiopia | 2020



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Freedom of religion and worship are absolute, meaning that government should never limit what is said in a place of worship.  
 Statement 2: Government should have the power to regulate what is said in places of worship, especially if preachers or congregants threaten public security.  
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

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