

Maseru, Lesotho  
9 October 2020

## News release

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### **Few Basotho support government regulation of access to Internet and social media, Afrobarometer survey shows**

Only about one-third of Basotho support government regulation of access to the Internet and social media, according to a recent Afrobarometer survey.

A slim majority favour unrestricted access, which they believe helps users become more informed and active citizens.

The Lesotho Communications Authority has proposed new rules requiring social-media users to obtain an Internet broadcasting allowance if they have 100 or more followers or post material accessible to at least 100 Internet users in the country. Critics have slammed the proposed rules as a government attempt to regulate online speech.

Among Basotho who have heard of social media, a majority say the platform has both good and bad effects, though its overall impact is more widely seen as positive than negative.

#### **Key findings**

- More than half (51%) of Basotho “agree” or “strongly agree” that access to the Internet and social media helps people to be more informed and active citizens, and should be unrestricted. About one-third (35%) support regulation of access by the government (Figure 1).
- A majority (55%) of Basotho say they have heard about social media. Awareness of social media is high in cities (73%), among younger citizens (80% of those aged 18-25), and among those with a secondary (75%) or post-secondary (85%) education (Figure 2).
- Among respondents who have heard of social media:
  - Large majorities say it makes people more informed about current events (87%) and enables them to have more impact on political processes (70%). But similar proportions say social media makes users more likely to believe false news (70%) and more intolerant of people with different political opinions (71%) (Figure 3).
  - Overall, a plurality (47%) see social media as having a positive effect on society, while 29% see its overall effect as negative (Figure 4).

#### **Afrobarometer surveys**

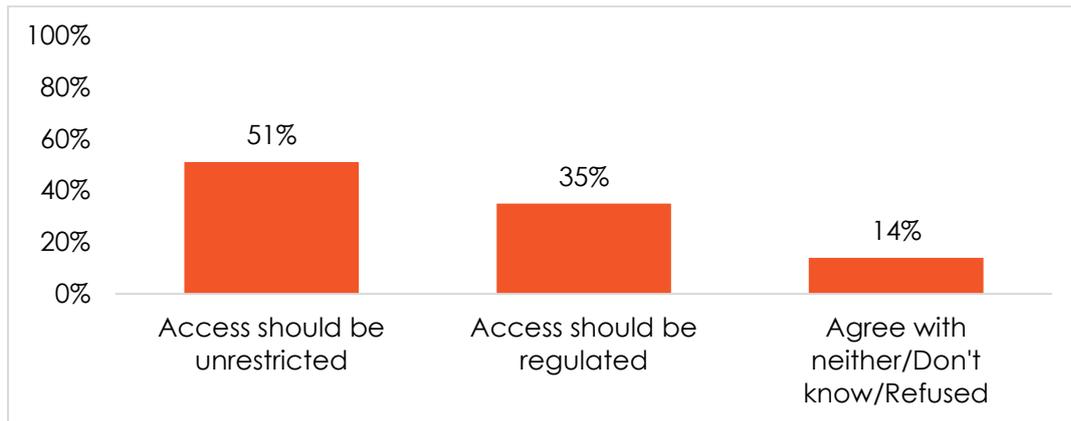
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 are planned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

The Afrobarometer team in Lesotho, led by Advision Lesotho, interviewed 1,200 adult Basotho in February-March 2020. 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 Lesotho in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

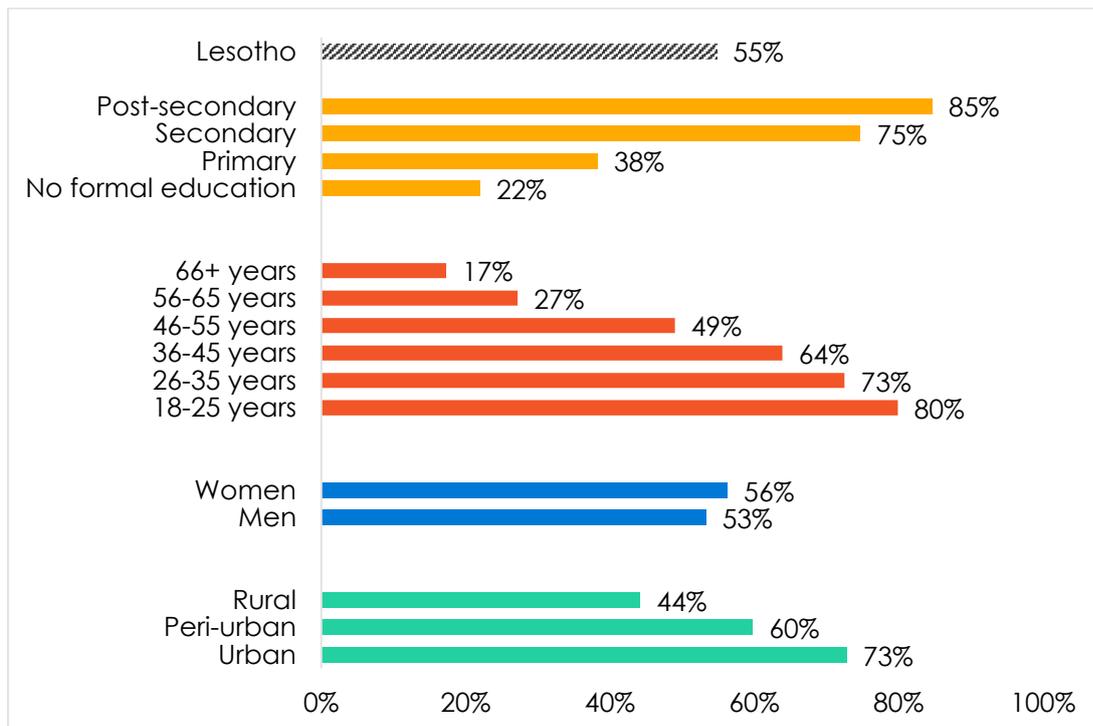
**Charts**

**Figure 1: Unrestricted vs. regulated access to Internet and social media | Lesotho | 2020**



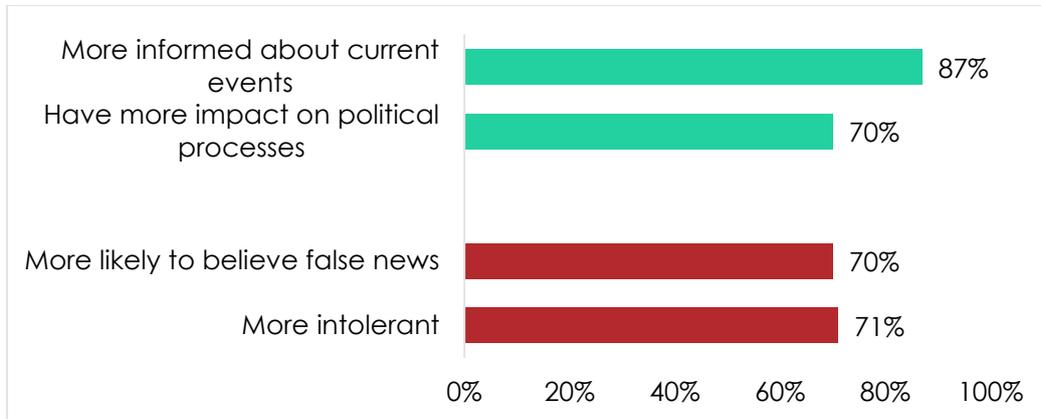
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Unrestricted access to the Internet and social media helps people to be more informed and active citizens, and should be protected.  
 Statement 2: Information shared on the Internet and social media is dividing Basotho, so access should be regulated by government.  
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

**Figure 2: Heard about social media | by socio-demographic group | Lesotho | 2020**



**Respondents were asked:** Have you heard about social media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp? (% "yes")

**Figure 3: Effects of social media** | Lesotho | 2020

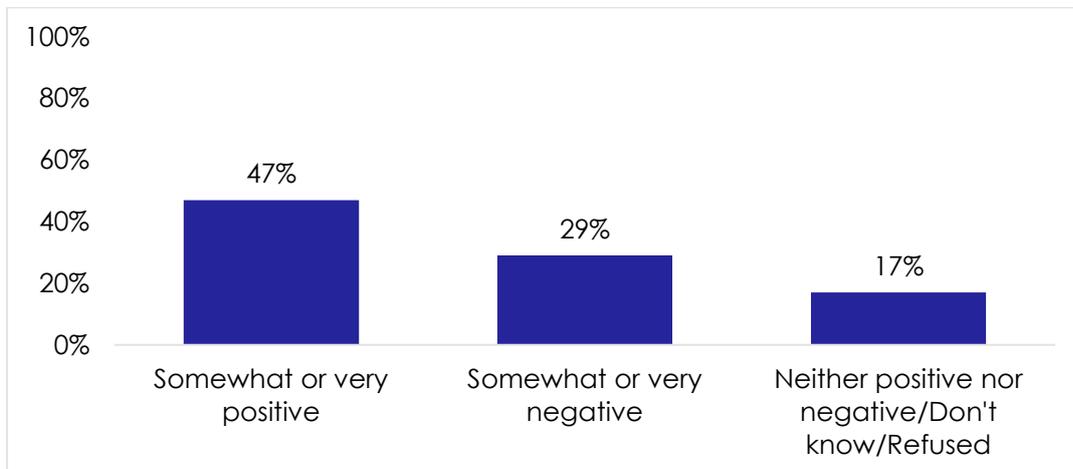


**Respondents were asked:** Regardless of whether you personally use social media yourself, please tell me whether you agree or disagree that social media:

- 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?

(% of those who "agree" or "strongly agree")

**Figure 4: Social media: Positive or negative effect on society** | Lesotho | 2020



**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?

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