

Dispatch No. 259 | 30 November 2018

Cabo Verdeans reject visa waiver for EU passport holders but approve of regionalization

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 259 | Mawusi Yaw Dumenu and Deolinda dos Reis

Summary

For decades, Cabo Verde has faced the challenges of modest economic growth, imbalanced development among its islands, and high unemployment, particularly among youth. To increase economic growth from a projected 4.1% for 2018 to about 7% in 2021, the government has put in motion two major proposals (Nshimyumuremyi, 2018; Monteiro, 2017).

First, the government announced that it would begin to issue free visas to European Union (EU) citizens in a bid to boost tourism, which according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2018) constituted 44.9% of Cabo Verde's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017. A law governing the visa exemption was passed in 2017, but full implementation was postponed to January 2019 (Lusa, 2018).

Second, in 2018 the government proposed transforming the country's 10 islands into 11 regions – with Santiago Island consisting of two regions – with the aim of fostering development by granting the islands greater autonomy (Inforpress, 2018).

Findings from the 2017 Afrobarometer survey show that Cabo Verdeans are keenly aware of their economic vulnerability – only small minorities describe the economic situation as good. Even so, a majority oppose granting visa exemptions to EU passport holders, which many fear will increase crime.

Citizens are more likely to favour than to oppose making regionalization of the islands a priority, although almost half are not adequately informed on the issue.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 35 countries in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys have been completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer national partner in Cabo Verde, Afrosondagem, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Cabo Verdeans between 20 November and 6 December 2017. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Cabo Verde in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2014.

Key findings

- Only small minorities of Cabo Verdeans describe the country's economic condition (13%) and their own personal living conditions (21%) as "fairly good" or "very good."

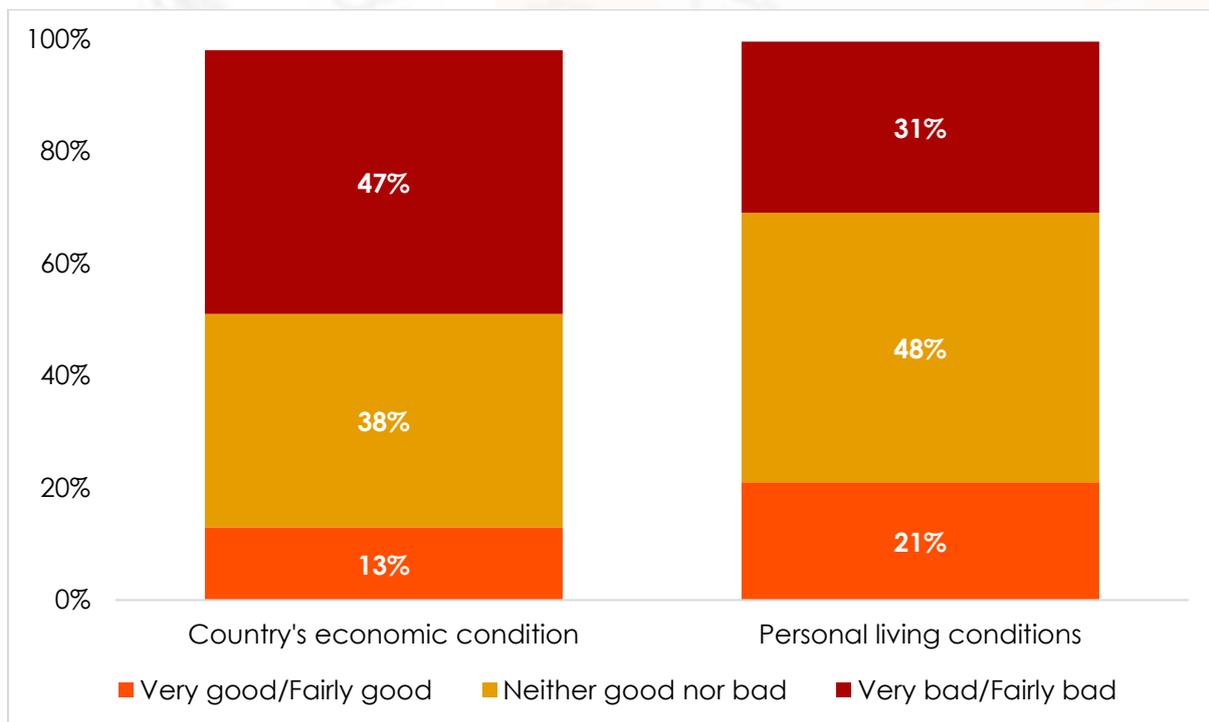
- But more than two-thirds (72%) are optimistic that things will get better in 12 months' time.
- A majority (55%) of Cabo Verdeans "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove" of the government's intention to provide visa exemptions for EU passport holders in order to boost tourism. Many say visa-free travel will increase crime, the threat of terrorism, prostitution, and drug use. Fewer citizens foresee positive effects such as boosting tourism and generating more employment and business opportunities.
- More than one-third (35%) of Cabo Verdeans say the government should prioritize regionalization of the islands, while 24% disagree. Four out of 10 citizens (38%) say they are not informed about regionalization.

Economic conditions

Only one in eight Cabo Verdeans (13%) describe the country's economic condition as "fairly good" or "very good," while almost half (47%) say it is "fairly bad" or "very bad" (Figure 1).

Citizens' assessments of their personal living conditions are only slightly less bleak: Just one in five (21%) say they are fairly/very good.

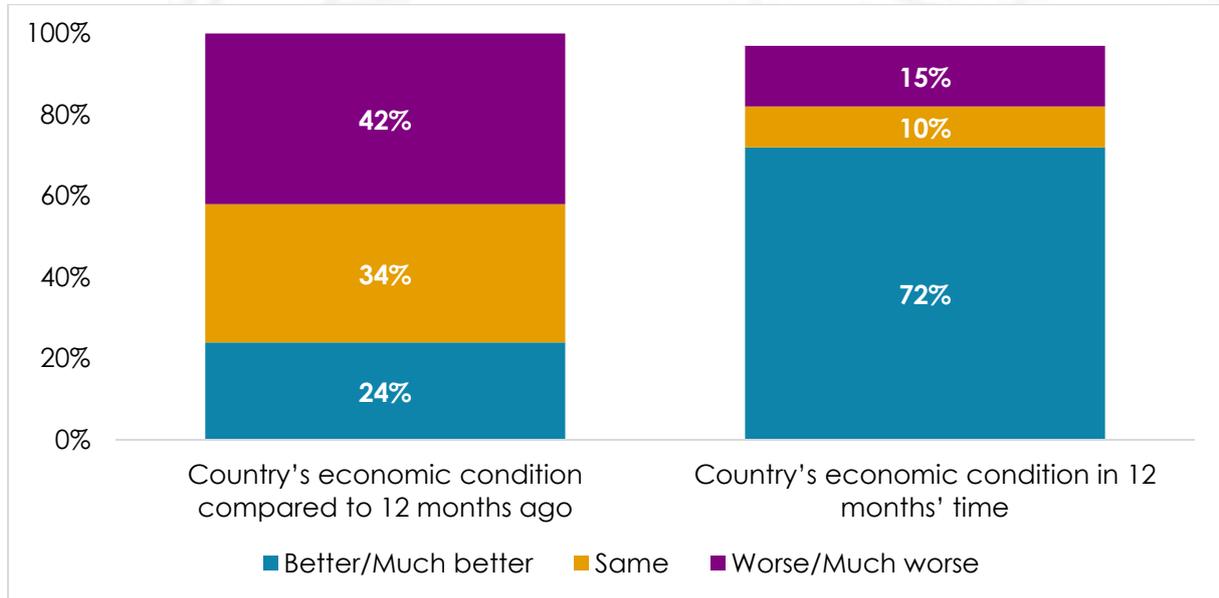
Figure 1: Country's economic condition and personal living conditions | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? Your own present living conditions?

While only a quarter (24%) of citizens say the country's economic condition improved over the year preceding the survey, more than two-thirds (72%) are optimistic that things will be better in 12 months' time (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Country's economic condition: Looking back and ahead | Cabo Verde | 2017



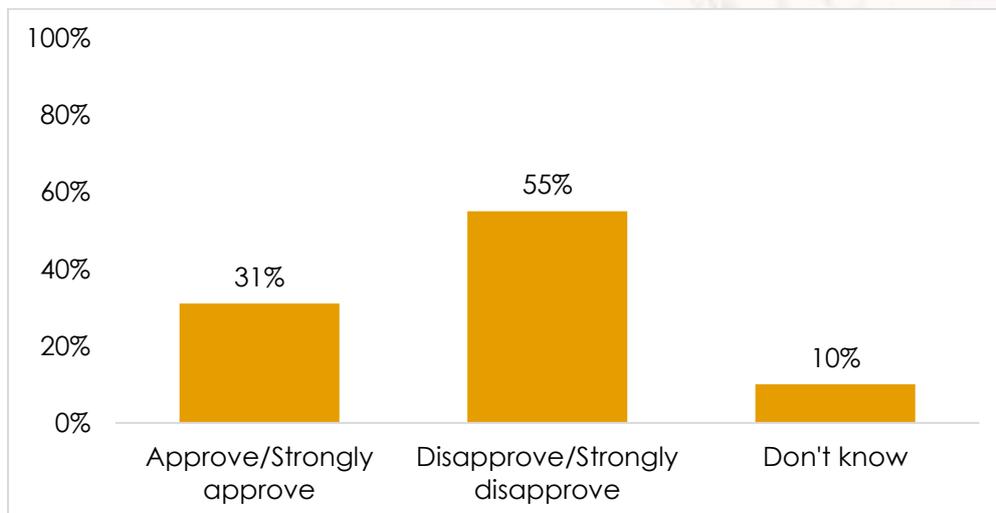
Respondents were asked:

- Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?
- Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?

Cabo Verdeans disapprove of visa waiver

Cabo Verdeans are not in favour of the visa exemption law passed by its Parliament, which will allow EU passport holders to enter the country without visas. Compared to the minority (31%) who “approve” or “strongly approve,” more than half (55%) of citizens “disapprove” or “strongly disapprove” of the visa waiver (Figure 3).

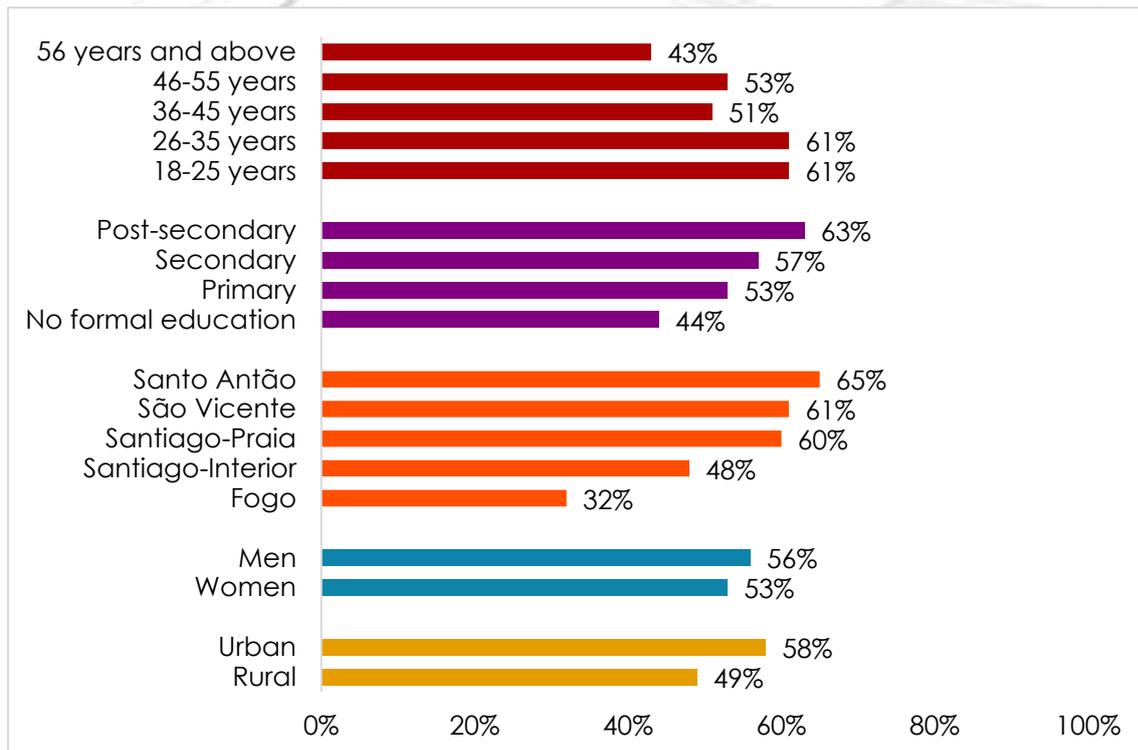
Figure 3: Citizens' views on visa exemption | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: Please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the government's decision to make travel to Cabo Verde visa-free for European Union passport holders to boost tourism in Cabo Verde.

Disapproval is stronger among urban residents (58%) than their rural counterparts (49%), and among youth (61%) than their elders (Figure 4). Opposition increases with respondents' level of education and is also higher among residents of Santo Antão (65%), São Vicente (61%), and Santiago-Praia (60%) than among residents of Santiago-Interior (48%) and Fogo (32%).

Figure 4: Citizen disapproval of visa exemption | by socio-demographic group | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: Please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the government's decision to make travel to Cabo Verde visa-free for European Union passport holders to boost tourism in Cabo Verde. (% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove")

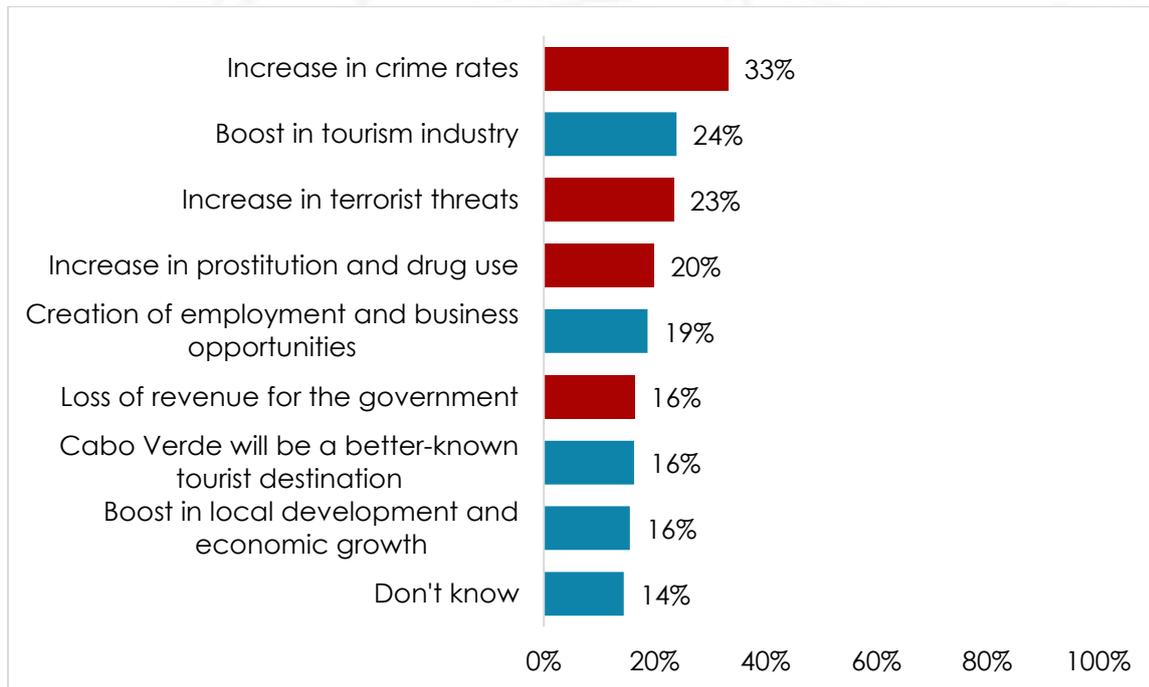
The law, which is scheduled to take effect in January 2019, met with opposition when it was passed in 2017, as some citizens predicted a loss of revenue and argued that the EU does not offer visa exemptions for Cabo Verdeans (Lusa, 2018).

When asked what they expect the effects of the law to be, survey respondents (allowed up to two responses each) were more likely to foresee harm (93% of responses) than good (75%). One-third (33%) of Cabo Verdeans perceive an increase in crime rates as the most likely consequence of implementing the law (Figure 5). About a quarter (23%) expect an increase in terrorist threats, and one-fifth (20%) predict an increase in prostitution and drug use.

Although tourism is credited with economic growth and increased employment in Cabo Verde, several studies also say it led to an increase in crime, prostitution – particularly in juvenile prostitution – and drug trafficking in the islands of Sal and Boa Vista (Barros, 2007; dos Anjos, 2012; da Luz, 2013).

On the other hand, somewhat fewer citizens expect positive effects such as a boost in the tourism industry (24%), creation of employment and business opportunities (19%), greater awareness of Cabo Verde as a tourist destination (16%), and a boost in local development (16%).

Figure 5: Expected effects of the visa-exemption law | Cabo Verde | 2017

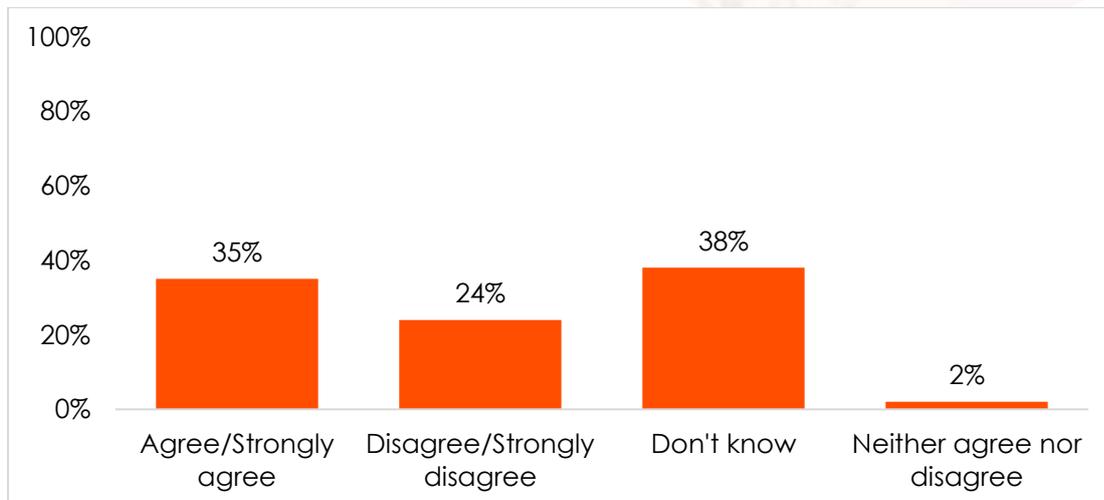


Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what effects do you expect when visa-free travel for European Union passport holders takes effect?*

Cabo Verdeans approve of regionalization

Unlike the visa exemption, the government's regionalization proposal aimed at giving greater autonomy to the islands draws more public support than opposition. More than one-third (35%) of Cabo Verdeans say they "agree" or "strongly agree" with the proposed regionalization, while one-fourth (24%) disagree with the reform (Figure 6). However, close to four in 10 (38%) say they don't know enough about the regionalization issue to take a stand.

Figure 6: Citizens' views on regionalization | Cabo Verde | 2017

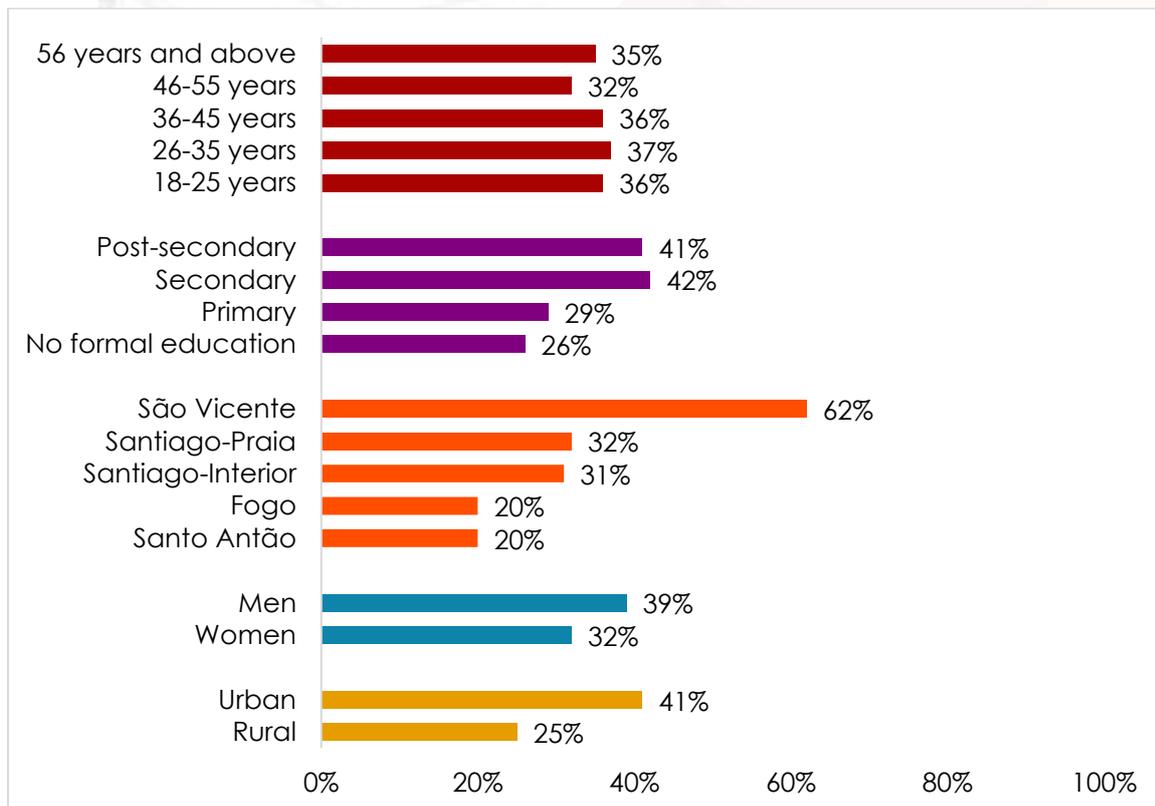


Respondents were asked: *Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Regionalization is important, so the government of Cabo Verde should prioritize it above other needs of the country?*

Detailed public discussions on regionalization began in 2015 when the previous government commissioned a study to analyze Cabo Verde's 25-year experience with decentralization. While the debate has involved a variety of political and social actors and academics and the government has organized several meetings about the proposed regionalization in various islands, many citizens, particularly those in rural areas, have not been actively engaged (Semedo, Veiga, Santos, & Barbosa, 2014).

The policy of regionalization is supported most strongly by residents of São Vicente (62%), an island that is widely seen as losing in importance as one of Cabo Verde's largest development hubs as its contribution to the country's GDP declines (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2018); movements in support of regionalization are headquartered there. The policy is least supported by residents of Fogo (20%) and Santo Antão (20%). Men, the educated, and urban residents are more likely to support the policy than women, citizens with low or no education, and rural residents (Figure 7).

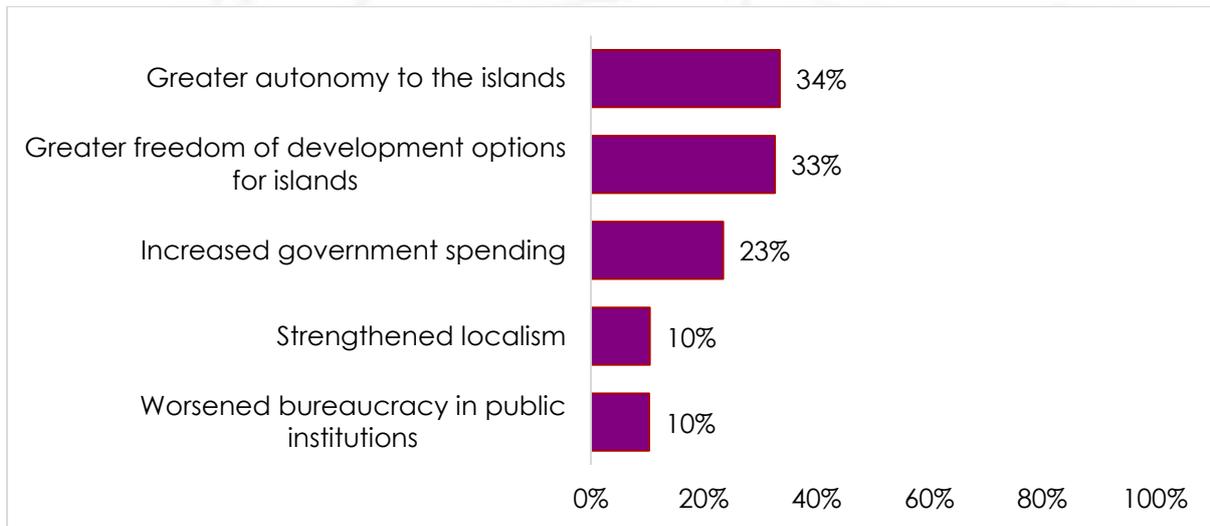
Figure 7: Citizen support for regionalization | by socio-demographic group
 | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Regionalization is important, so the government of Cabo Verde should prioritize it above other needs of the country? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Asked what they think are the likely effects of implementing regionalization, one-third (34%) of respondents say regionalization will provide greater autonomy to the islands (Figure 8). The same proportion expect regionalization to ensure greater freedom of development options for the islands (33%), and one in 10 (10%) expect it to strengthen localism. One-fourth (23%) expect the policy to increase government spending, while one in 10 (10%) think it will worsen bureaucracy in public institutions.

Figure 8: Expected effects of proposed regionalization | Cabo Verde | 2017



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the two potential effects that you expect after the implementation of the regionalization proposal in Cabo Verde?*

Conclusion

Cabo Verdeans favour the proposed policy on regionalization but disapprove of granting visa exemptions to EU passport holders, as they expect it to cause more harm than good for the country. To allay public fears and increase receptiveness to both reforms, government should organize broader consultations with citizens and take their views into consideration while educating them about the benefits of the policies.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer Round 7 has been provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Endowment for Democracy, and Transparency International.

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