

Banjul, the Gambia
19 July 2021

News release

Gambians support public access to government information, Afrobarometer survey shows

By a 2-to-1 margin, Gambians support citizens' right to access government information, in agreement with a bill that recently gained approval by the National Assembly.

The latest Afrobarometer survey in the Gambia shows widespread popular support for key elements of an access to information bill that will allow journalists, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens to obtain many types of information held by the government. The bill still awaits assent by President Adama Barrow.

In the past, many Gambians have expressed little confidence in their ability to obtain information on local school and development plans and budgets.

Key findings

- More than six in 10 Gambians (61%) say the public should have access to government information. Only 31% believe that information held by public authorities is only for use by government officials and should not have to be shared with the public (Figure 1).
- Economically well-off citizens (74%), urban residents (69%), and youth (64%) are most likely to insist that the government should have to share information with the public (Figure 2).
- In the past, many citizens have expressed little confidence that they could obtain government information. In a 2018 survey, fewer than four in 10 said they were "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to be able to find out about local development plans and budgets (38%) and school budgets (38%). Larger proportions thought they could obtain information about who owns a piece of land (46%) and how to register a new business (62%) (Figure 3).

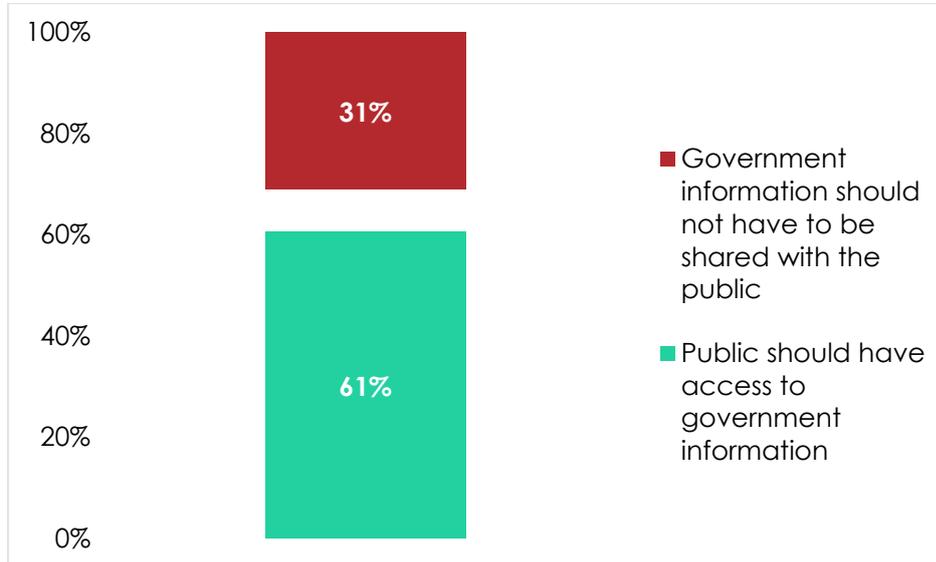
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans' 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 (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in the Gambia, led by the Center for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies (CepRass), interviewed 1,200 adult Gambians between 30 January and 23 February 2021. 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 Afrobarometer survey was conducted in the Gambia in 2018.

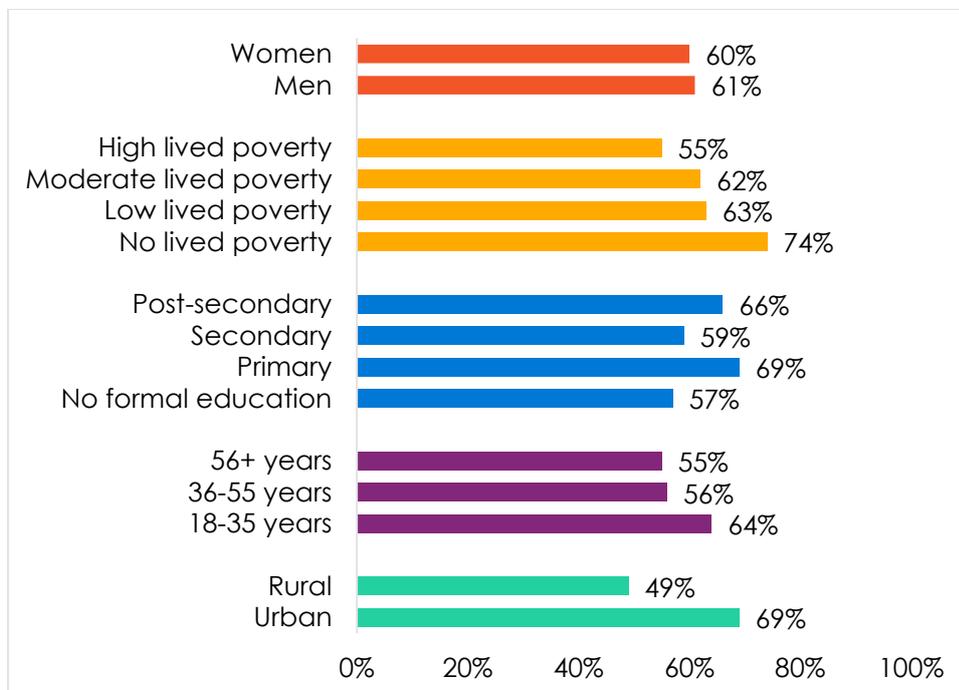
Charts

Figure 1: Should government have to share information? | The Gambia | 2021



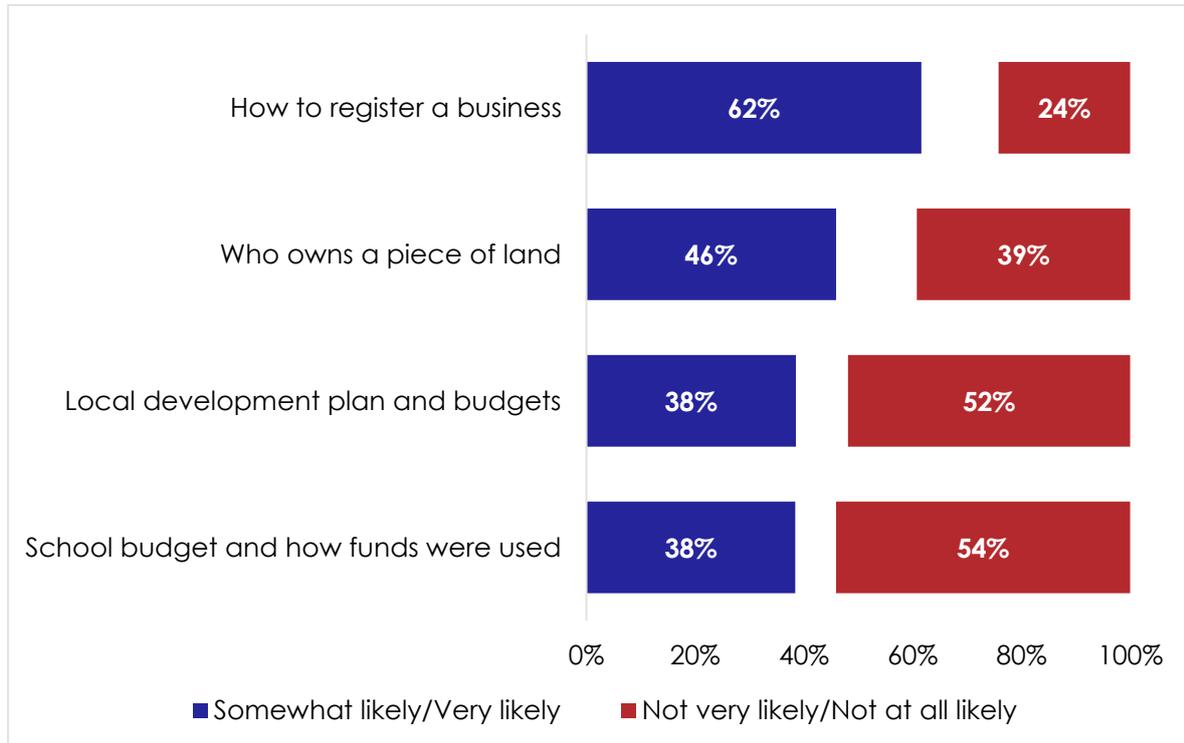
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Information held by public authorities is only for use by government officials; it should not have to be shared with the public? (% who "agree/strongly agree" and "disagree/strongly disagree")

Figure 2: Sharing of government information | by demographic group | The Gambia | 2021



Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Information held by public authorities is only for use by government officials; it should not have to be shared with the public? (% who "disagree" or "strongly disagree")

Figure 3: Access to government information | The Gambia | 2018



Respondents were asked: How likely is it that you could get the following information from government or other public institutions, or haven't you heard enough to say:

If you went to the local school to find out what the school's budget is and how the funds have been used?

If you went to the Department of Physical Planning to find out who owns a piece of land in your community?

If you went to the municipal, city, or area council to find out about the municipal, city, or area council development plan and budgets?

If you went to the Registrar of Companies at the Ministry of Justice to find out how to register a new business in your community?

For more information, please contact:

Demba Kandeh
Communications manager
Center for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies
Telephone: +220-2481478
Email: dekankeh@utg.edu.gm

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