



Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi  
Nairobi, Kenya  
8 September 2020

## News release

---

### **Kenyans support rule of law in governance, respect for the law and courts by the president, Afrobarometer survey shows**

Kenyans overwhelmingly favour a government that follows the law even if it conflicts with the will of its supporters, according to the most recent Afrobarometer survey.

The survey also finds strong support among Kenyans for respect of the law and courts by the president.

Only one in 10 citizens say a government that enjoys popular support “should be free to do whatever the people want, even if it is outside the law.”

Three-quarters of Kenyans agree that indeed President Uhuru Kenyatta never or rarely ignores the courts and the laws of the country. In 2017, Kenyatta earned praise when he disagreed with, but accepted, a Supreme Court decision annulling his re-election victory and requiring a new election, which he won.

#### **Key findings:**

- Almost nine out of 10 Kenyans (88%) say government actions must always follow the law; only 11% think a popular government should be free to do “whatever the people want, even if it is outside the law” (Figure 1).
- More than eight out of 10 respondents (82%) say the president must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong. Support has been increasing for this view (Figure 2), which also rises with respondents' education level (Figure 3).
- Three-fourths (74%) of Kenyans say that in practice the president “rarely” or “never” ignores the courts and the laws of the country (Figure 4). Rural residents (76%) and older citizens (78% of those over age 50) are more likely to hold this view than urban residents (70%) and younger respondents (73%) (Figure 5).

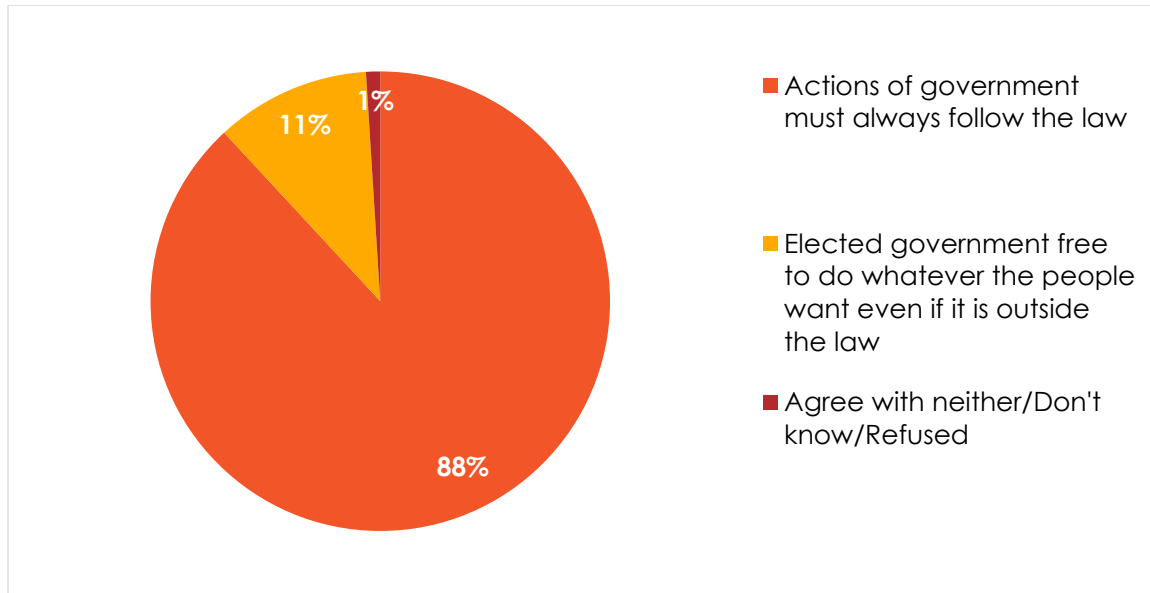
#### **Afrobarometer surveys**

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 2019/2020 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 Kenya, led by the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, interviewed 2,400 adult citizens of Kenya in August-September 2019. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys in Kenya were conducted in, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016.

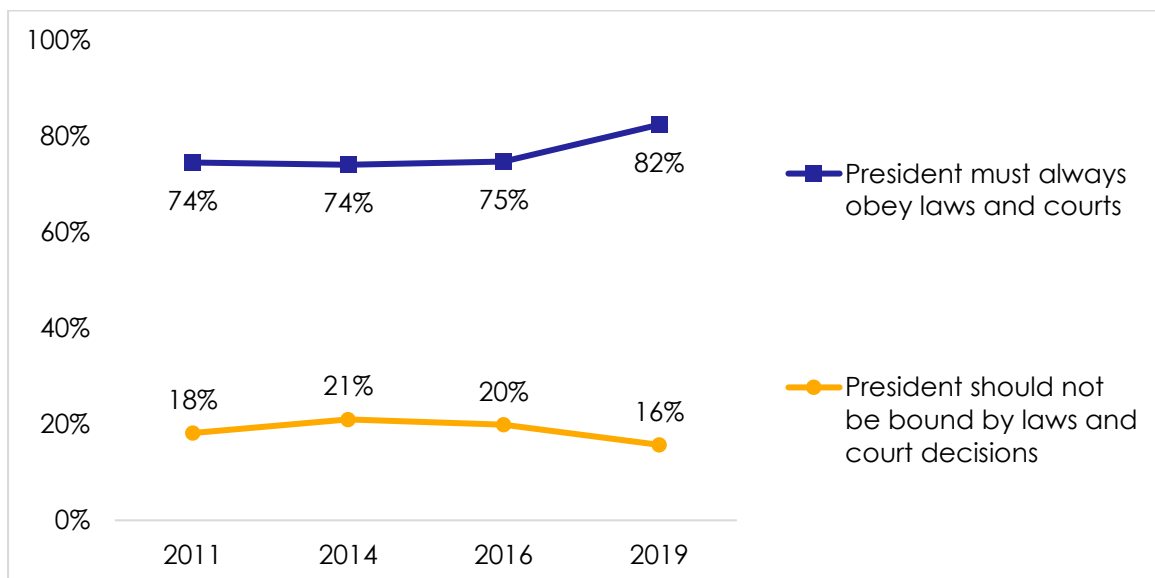
**Charts**

**Figure 1: Should government follow the law or the will of the people? | Kenya | 2019**



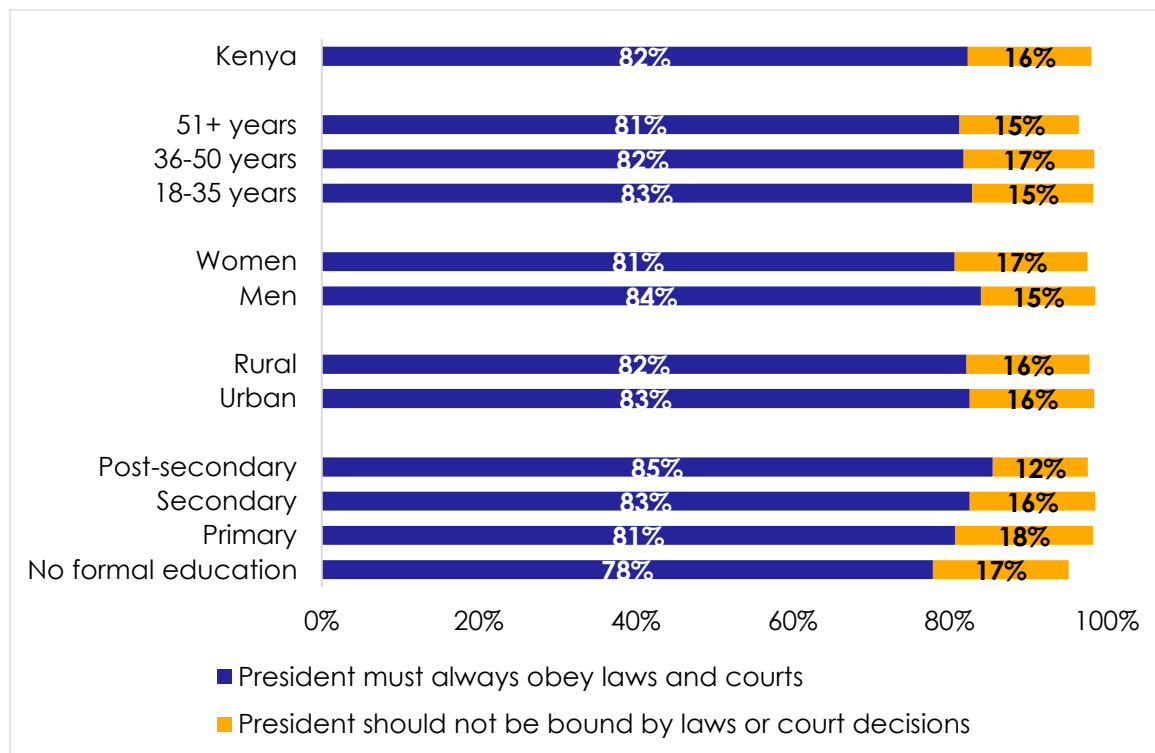
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: A government that enjoys the support of the people should be free to do whatever the people want, even if it is outside the law.  
 Statement 2: The actions of any government, no matter how popular it is, must always follow the law.  
 (% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

**Figure 2: Should the president be bound by laws and courts? | Kenya | 2011-2019**



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Since the president was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.  
 Statement 2: The president must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.  
 (% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

**Figure 3: Should the president be bound by laws and courts?** | by socio-demographic group | Kenya | 2019



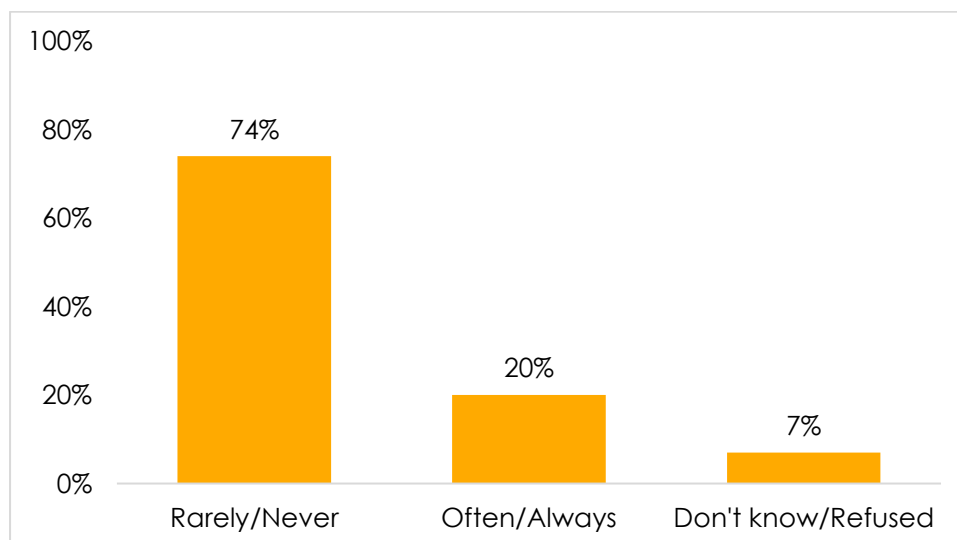
**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: Since the president was elected to lead the country, he should not be bound by laws or court decisions that he thinks are wrong.

Statement 2: The president must always obey the laws and the courts, even if he thinks they are wrong.

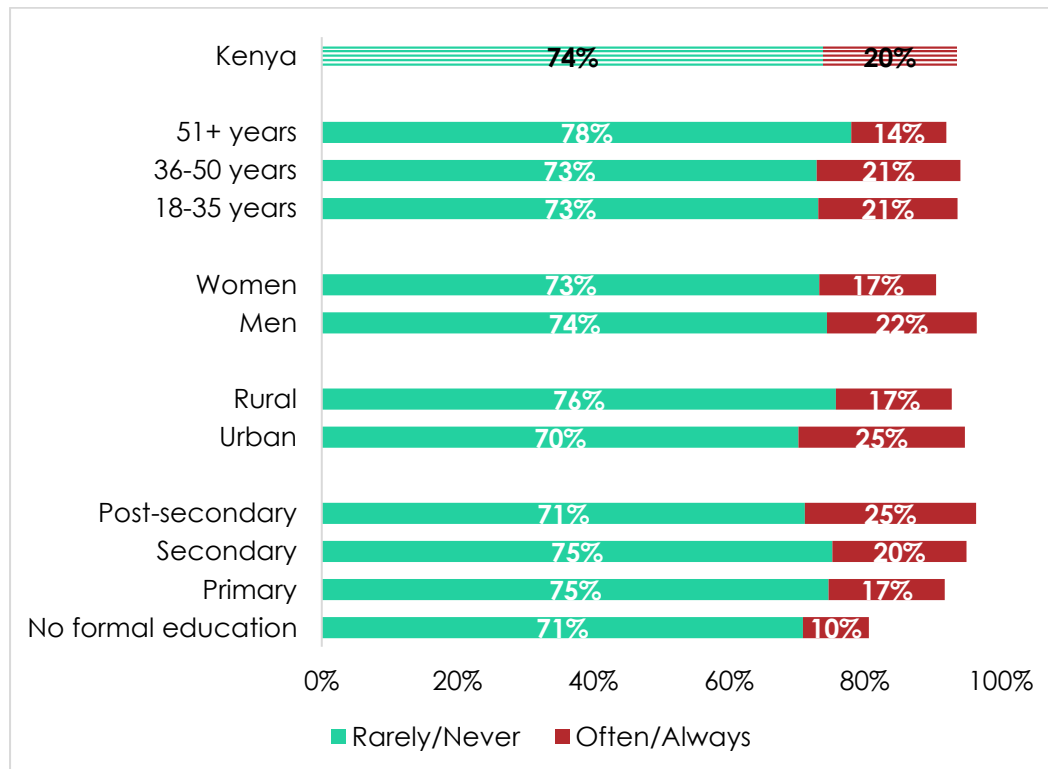
(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

**Figure 4: How often president ignores courts and laws** | Kenya | 2019



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how often, in this country, does the president ignore the courts and laws of this country?

**Figure 5: How often president ignores courts and laws | by socio-demographic group | Kenya | 2019**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, how often, in this country, does the president ignore the courts and laws of this country?*

**For more information, please contact:**

Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi  
 Simon Kodiaga  
 Communications Coordinator, East Africa  
 T: +254 724434667  
 E : skodiaga@afrobarometer.org

Visit us online at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

