



Lusaka, Zambia
7 July 2021

News release

Majority of Zambians want to protect unrestricted access to social media and Internet, Afrobarometer survey shows

A majority of Zambians say social media and the Internet help people be better citizens, and unrestricted access to them should be protected, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Among Zambians who are familiar with social media, most say it has both positive effects, such as keeping citizens informed, and negative effects, such as making them more likely to believe false information. Overall, positive assessments of social media's impact on society outnumber negative assessments by 2-to-1.

As for who spreads fake news – via social media or any other media outlet – most Zambians blame politicians and political parties.

Key findings

- Almost one in four Zambians say they use social media (24%) and/or the Internet (22%) “every day” to get news (Figure 1).
- A slim majority (51%) of Zambians say unrestricted access to the Internet and social media should be protected, vs. just 34% who would prefer to see access regulated by the government (Figure 2).
 - Support for unrestricted access to the Internet and social media is stronger among Zambians with secondary (58%) or post-secondary education (63%) than among their less educated counterparts (39%) (Figure 3).
- Among Zambians who have heard of social media, a majority see both positive and negative effects of these digital platforms, including that they make people more informed about current events (91%) and help them have more impact on political processes (74%) but also that they make them more likely to believe false news (76%) and more intolerant of people who hold different views (61%) (Figure 4).
- Overall, half (49%) of citizens familiar with social media believe that it has a positive impact on society; only about half as many (24%) see its impact in a negative light (Figure 5).
- Most Zambians (80%) say politicians and political parties “sometimes” or “often” spread information that they know is false. About six in 10 blame fake news on government officials and social media users (61% each) (Figure 6).

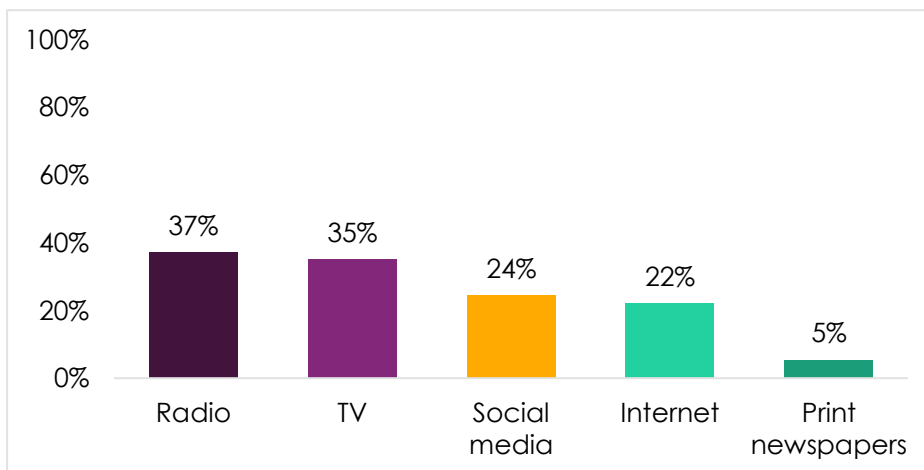
Afrobarometer surveys

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 (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Zambia, led by the Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), a research unit of the University of Zambia, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 Zambian adults in November-December 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 Zambia in 2012, 2015, and 2017.

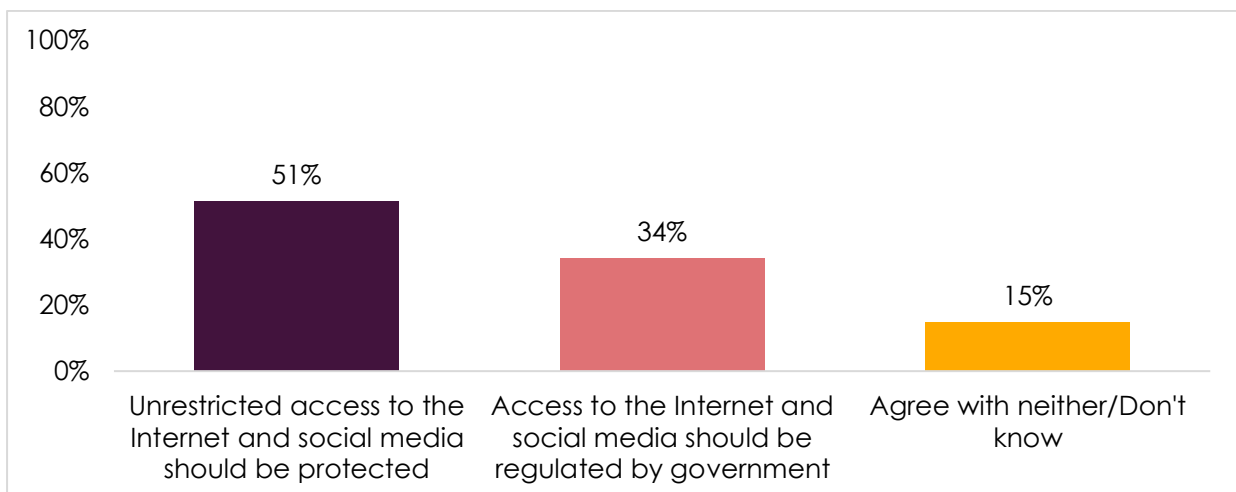
Charts

Figure 1: Sources of daily news | Zambia | 2020



Respondents were asked: How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say "every day")

Figure 2: Should access to the Internet and social media be protected or regulated?
| Zambia | 2020



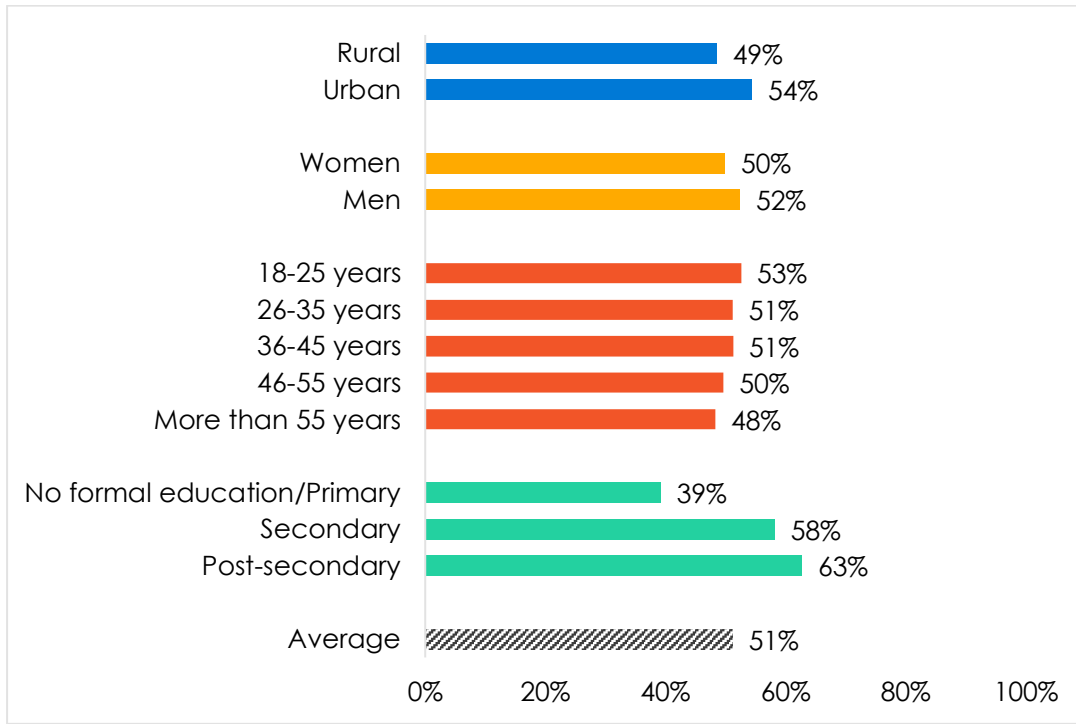
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

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 Zambians, so access should be regulated by government.

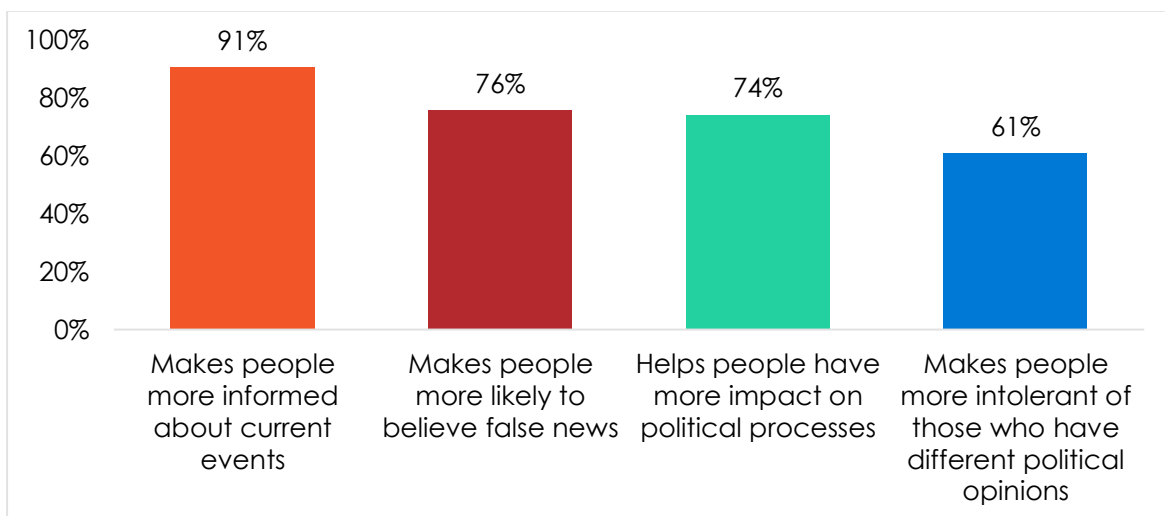
(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 3: Support for unrestricted access to the Internet and social media | by socio-demographic group | Zambia | 2020



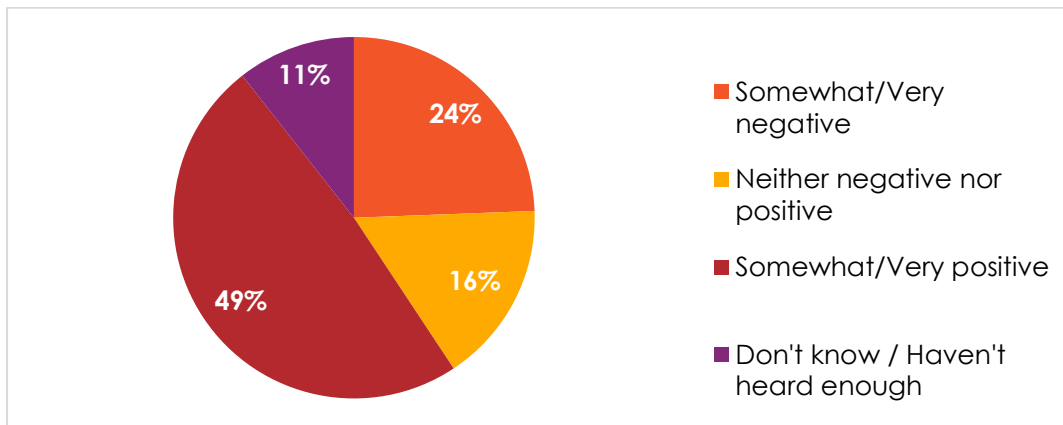
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 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 1)

Figure 4: Views on the impact of social media | Zambia | 2020



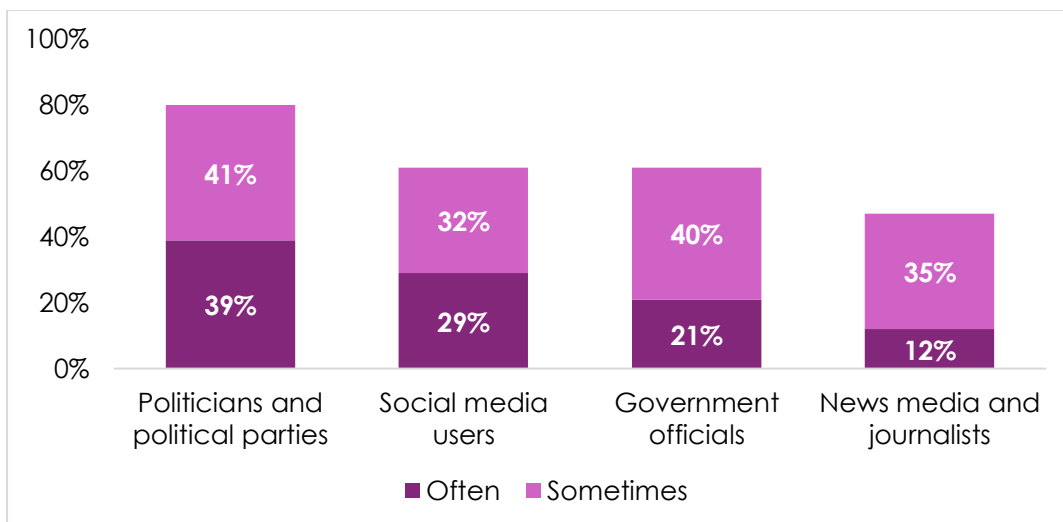
Respondents who said they had heard of social media were asked: Regardless of whether you personally use social media yourself, please tell me whether you agree or disagree that social media ...
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Figure 5: Is social media good or bad for society? | Zambia | 2020



Respondents who said they had heard of social media 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?

Figure 6: Who spreads false information? | Zambia | 2020



Respondents were asked: Please tell me how often, in this country, you think people from each of the following groups spread information that they know is false?

For more information, please contact:

Edward Chibwili
 Institute of Economic and Social Research, University of Zambia
 Email: edward.chibwili@unza.zm

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