

Mbabane, Eswatini
20 December 2021

News release

Emaswati feel free to exercise their vote but not to say what they think

Most Emaswati feel free to choose whom to vote into office but not free to say what they think, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

A majority of citizens say they have to be careful when discussing politics.

Likewise, only a minority of citizens think the country's media is free to report and comment on current affairs without censorship or interference by the government.

Key findings

- More than three-fourths (78%) of Emaswait say people "often" or "always" have to be careful about what they say about politics, up by 14 percentage points compared to 2018 (Figure 1).
- While most citizens (81%) say they are free to vote as they please, fewer than half as many (36%) feel free to say what they think (Figure 2).
- Only about one-third (35%) of respondents believe that the media in Eswatini is "somewhat" or "completely" free from government interference (Figure 3).

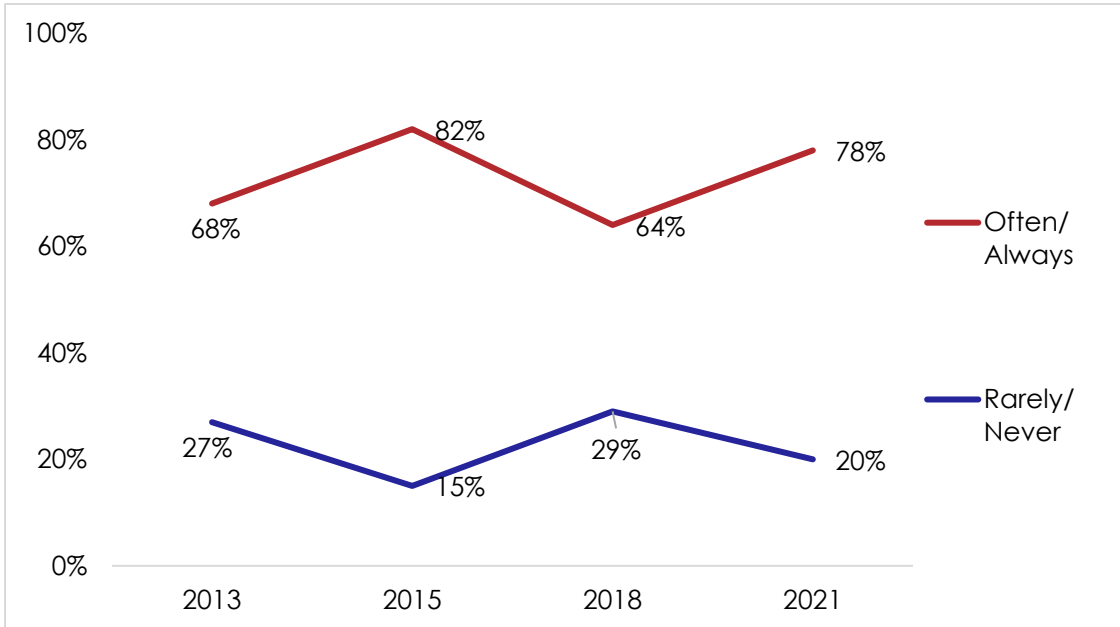
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. 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 Eswatini, led by ActivQuest, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Emaswati in March-April 2021. 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 Eswatini in 2013, 2015, and 2018.

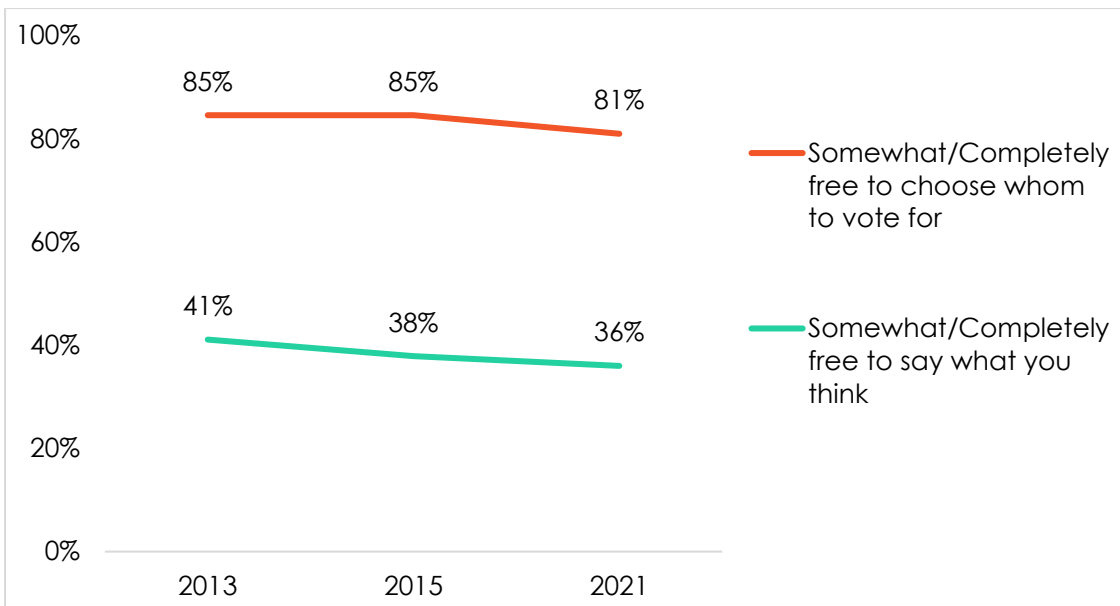
Charts

Figure 1: Do you have to be careful when discussing politics? | Eswatini | 2013-2021



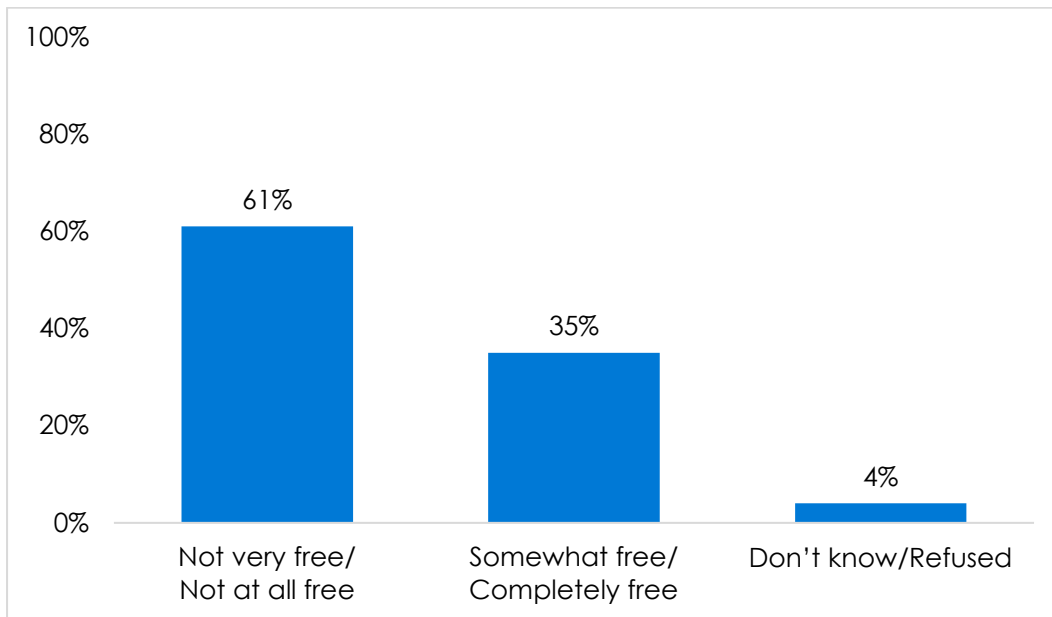
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often, in this country do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?*

Figure 2: Freedom to say what you think and to choose whom to vote for | Eswatini | 2013-2021



Respondents were asked: *In this country, how free are you: To say what you think? To choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?*

Figure 3: How free is the news media? | Eswatini | 2021



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how free is the news media in this country to report and comment on the news without censorship or interference by the government?*

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