

Cape Town, South Africa  
28 July 2021

## News release

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### **South Africans see postponing elections, using security forces to enforce lockdown as justified during COVID-19 pandemic**

With broad agreement across party lines, two-thirds of South Africans say that postponing elections or limiting campaigning is justified during a health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new Afrobarometer survey.

Majorities also endorse media censorship and the use of police and security forces to enforce public health mandates as justified steps during a pandemic.

The survey also found widespread support for the national lockdown as a necessary measure to limit the spread of COVID-19, although most citizens found it difficult to comply with the regulations.

Public opinion regarding postponing elections seems to endorse the Electoral Commission's decision to delay local government elections from October to February 2022. The move, recommended by former Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke, must still be approved by the Electoral Court.

#### **Key findings**

- Two-thirds (67%) of South Africans agree that a health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic justifies postponing elections or limiting political campaigning (Figure 1).
- Majorities also endorse the use of security forces to enforce public health measures (78%) and censorship of media reporting (56%) during a pandemic.
- Supporters of all the major political parties share the view that postponing elections or limiting political campaigning is a justified step during a pandemic, ranging from 63% of EFF and 67% of ANC supporters to 91% of DA adherents (Figure 2). No more than one in four respondents of any political persuasion disagree.
- Four in five South Africans (80%) say the national lockdown was necessary to curb the spread of the coronavirus (Figure 3).
- Despite support for the lockdown, nearly two-thirds (64%) say they found it "difficult" or "very difficult" to comply with lockdown restrictions (Figure 4).

#### **Afrobarometer surveys**

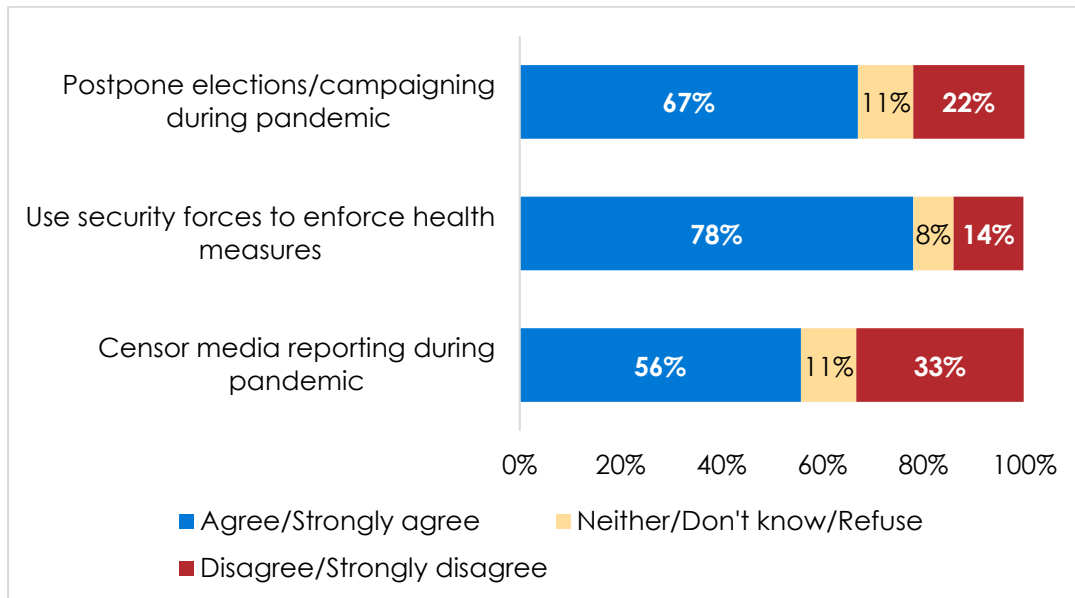
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200-2,400, which yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus 94 Research, interviewed 1,600 adult South Africans in May-June 2021. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95%

confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2018.

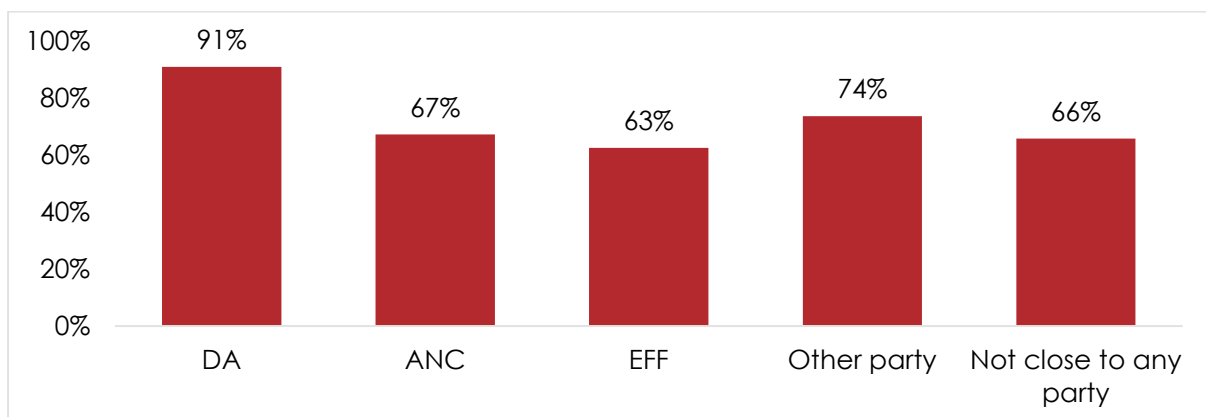
**Charts**

**Figure 1: Limiting democratic rights during pandemic | South Africa | 2021**



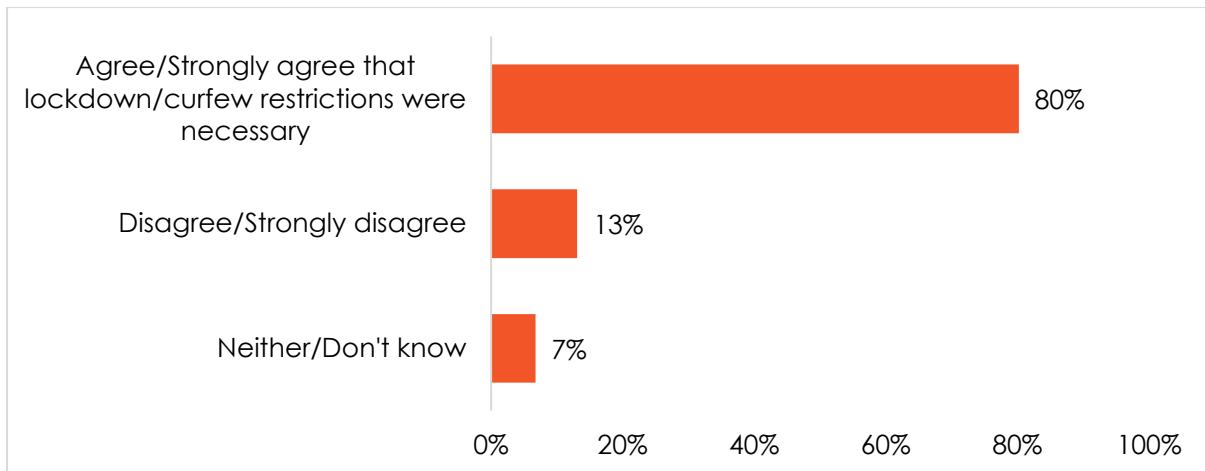
**Respondents were asked:** When the country is facing a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, do you agree or disagree that it is justified for the government to temporarily limit democracy or democratic freedoms by taking the following measures: Censoring media reporting? Using the police and security forces to enforce public health mandates like lockdown orders, mask requirements, or restrictions on public gatherings? Postponing elections or limiting political campaigning?

**Figure 2: Postpone elections or limit campaigning | by political party preference | South Africa | 2021**



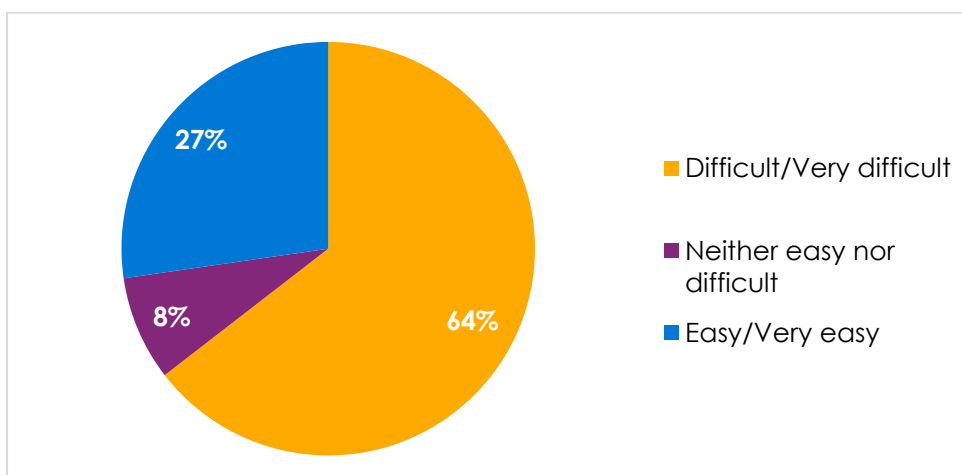
**Respondents were asked:** When the country is facing a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, do you agree or disagree that it is justified for the government to temporarily limit democracy or democratic freedoms by taking the following measures: Postponing elections or limiting political campaigning? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree") Do you feel close to any particular political party? Which party is that?

**Figure 3: Support for lockdown** | South Africa | 2021



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Even if the lockdown or curfew has negative impacts on the economy and people's livelihoods, it was necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19?

**Figure 4: Difficulty of complying with lockdown** | South Africa | 2021



**Respondents were asked:** How easy or difficult was it for you and your household to comply with the lockdown or curfew restrictions imposed by the government?

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