



Freetown, Sierra Leone
15 February 2021

News release

Majority of Sierra Leoneans want the country to finance its own development, but welcome loan conditions and international trade

A majority of Sierra Leoneans want their country to finance its own development even if this means they have to pay more in taxes, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

If the country receives external loans or development assistance, these should be tied to strict requirements about how the resources are used and to the promotion of democracy and human rights, a majority of citizens say.

The government established the Sierra Leone Local Content Agency to promote local businesses and entrepreneurship. However, the survey shows that citizens are divided on whether to shield domestic producers from foreign competition, and most want foreign-owned retail shops that will ensure a wide choice of low-cost consumer goods.

Key findings

- A majority (61%) of Sierra Leoneans want the country to finance its development from its own resources, even if it means they have to pay more taxes (including 40% who “agree very strongly” with this approach) (Figure 1).
 - Only about a quarter (24%) prefer the use of loans from foreign countries and institutions to develop the country.
- Only about four in 10 (38%) say foreign donors or lenders should allow our government to make its own decisions about how to use the resources. A slight majority (52%) want donors/lenders to enforce strict requirements on how resources are spent (Figure 2).
- Nearly six in 10 respondents (57%) say that donors should make sure the government promotes democracy and human rights, while only one-third (33%) want the government to be free to make its own decisions on democracy and human rights (Figure 3).
- Half (51%) of Sierra Leoneans say that in order to develop, the country must rely on trade with the rest of the world, including by opening its borders to foreign imports.
 - But almost the same proportion (45%) want the country to rely on local production and protect local producers from foreign competition (Figure 4).
- Seven in 10 Sierra Leoneans (71%) say the government should continue to permit foreigners to set up shops in the country to ensure a wide choice of low-cost consumer goods (Figure 5).

Afrobarometer surveys

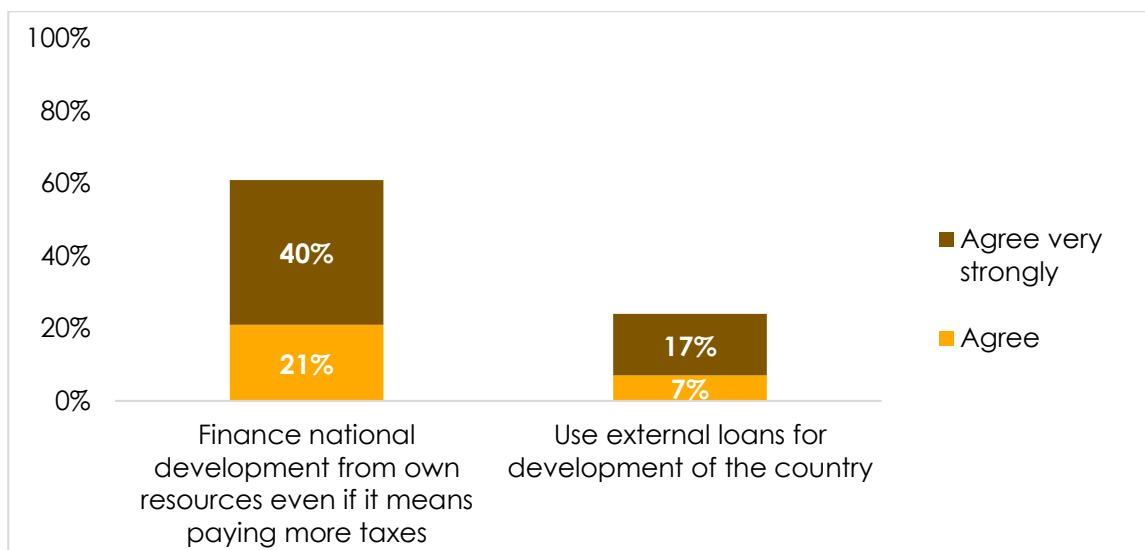
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 are planned 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 Sierra Leone, led by the Institute for Governance Reform, interviewed 1,200 adult Sierra Leoneans in March 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 Sierra Leone in 2012, 2015, and 2018.

Charts

Figure 1: Finance national development from own resources vs. use external loans
 | Sierra Leone | 2020

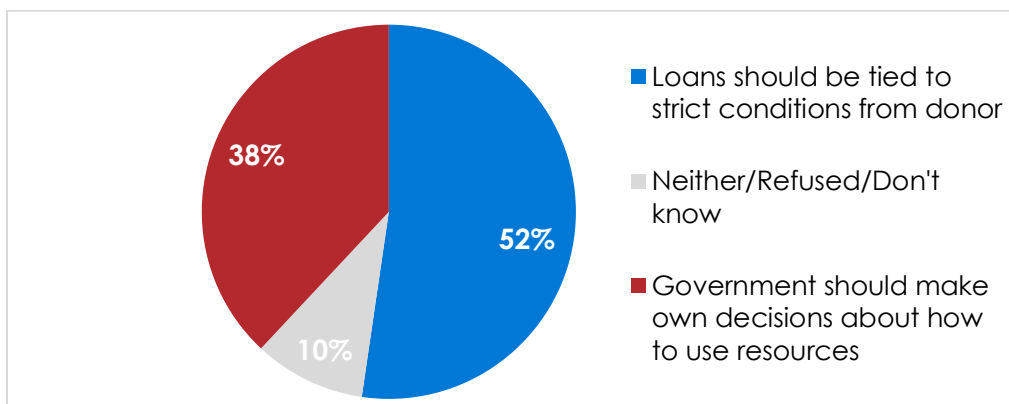


Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: It is important that as an independent nation, we finance development from our own resources, even if it means paying more taxes.

Statement 2: We should use external loans for the development of the country, even if it increases our indebtedness to foreign countries and institutions.

Figure 2: Should assistance be tied to strict requirements? | Sierra Leone | 2020

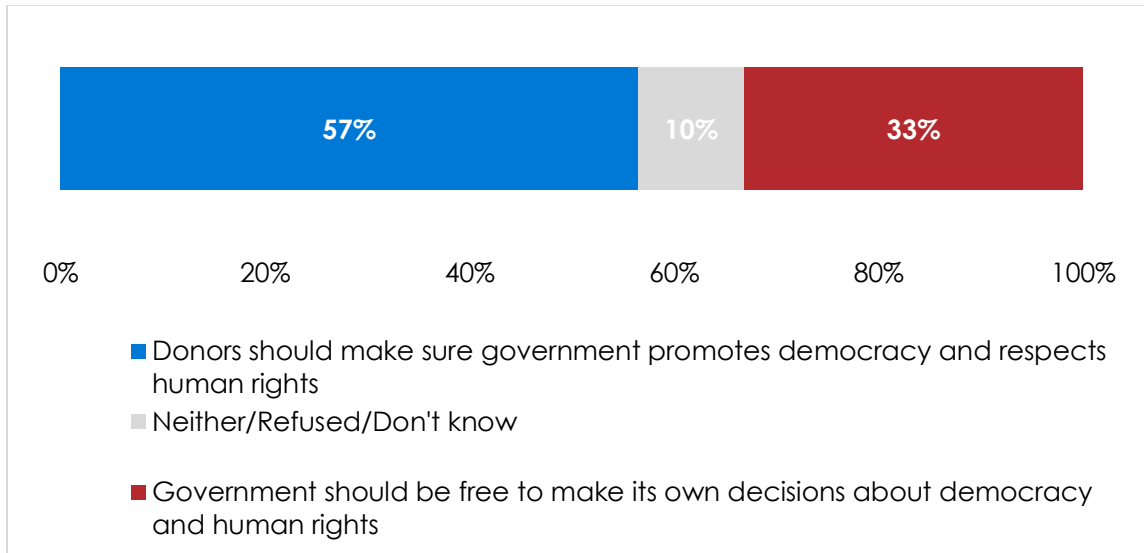


Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: When other countries give loans or development assistance to Sierra Leone, they should enforce strict requirements on how the funds are spent.

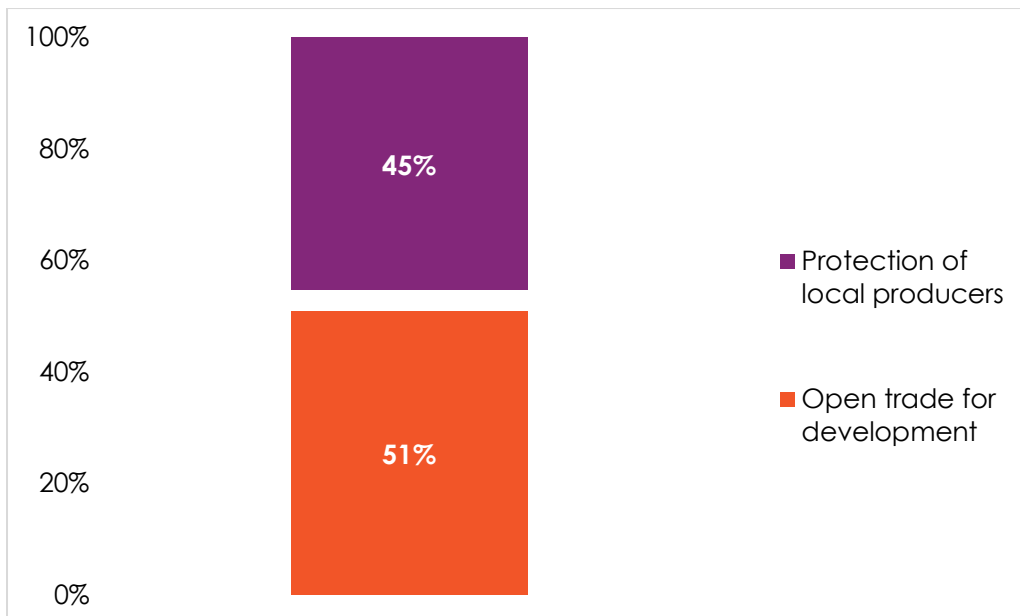
Statement 2: When other countries give Sierra Leone loans or development assistance, they should allow our government to make its own decisions about how to use the resources.

Figure 3: Should loans be tied to the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights? | Sierra Leone | 2020



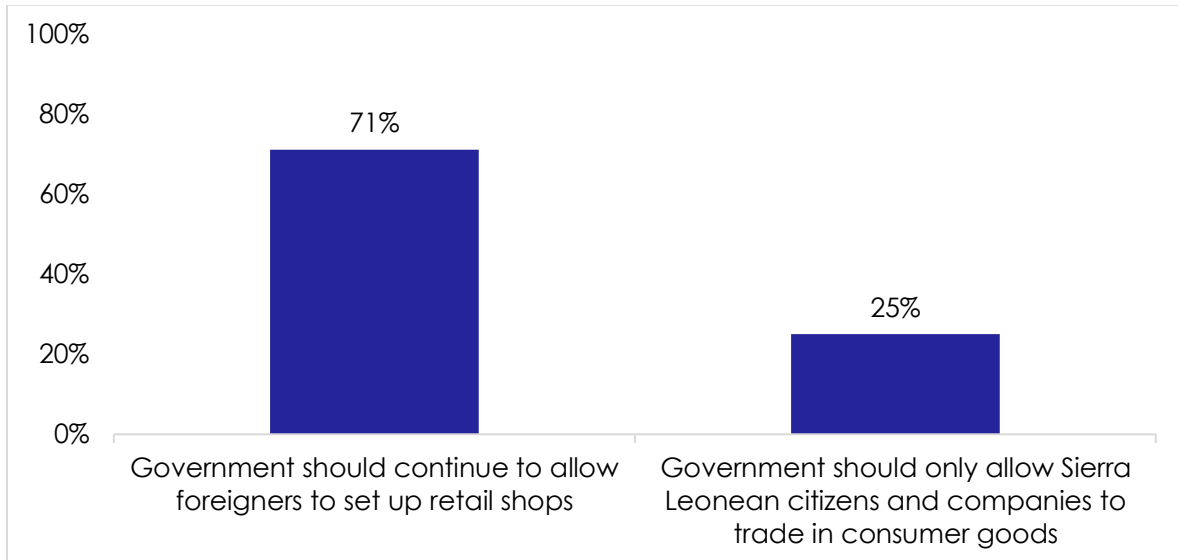
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: When other countries give loans or development assistance to Sierra Leone, they should enforce strict requirements to make sure our government promotes democracy and respects human rights.
 Statement 2: Even if other countries give Sierra Leone loans or development assistance, our government should make its own decisions about democracy and human rights.
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 4: Relying on foreign imports vs. locally produced goods | Sierra Leone | 2020



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: In order to develop, our country must rely on trade with the rest of the world, including by opening our borders to foreign imports.
 Statement 2: In order to develop, our country must rely on local production and protect local producers from foreign competition.
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 5: Restrict trading in consumer goods to nationals or allow foreigners to trade?
 | Sierra Leone | 2020



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: The government should only allow citizens and companies of our own country to trade in consumer goods, even if this means we will have fewer goods or higher prices.
 Statement 2: The government should continue to permit foreigners and foreign corporations to set up retail shops in this country to ensure we have a wide choice of low-cost consumer goods.
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each Statement)

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