

Kampala, Uganda  
12 January 2021

## News release

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### Ugandans see COVID-19 impacts on the election – and election impacts on the pandemic, Afrobarometer survey shows

Ugandans expect the COVID-19 pandemic to have significant negative impacts on Thursday's general election, a new Afrobarometer survey shows. They also fear that the election will worsen the pandemic.

Even so, in interviews in late December and early January, a majority favoured going ahead with the election as planned – but with relaxed police enforcement of COVID-19 regulations.

Among negative impacts, a majority of respondents said the pandemic would hinder the work of election observers and the ability of all candidates to have a fair chance to campaign. Overall, about half thought the pandemic would affect the credibility of election results.

Most citizens thought it was likely that voters gathering at polling sites would increase the number of COVID-19 infections in the country.

For more survey findings on Uganda's upcoming election, please visit [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

#### Key findings

- As of December-January, a majority of Ugandans said the COVID-19 pandemic would have “some impact” or “a lot of impact” on candidates' ability to have a fair chance to campaign (61%), the ability of observers to fully monitor the election (56%), and citizens' attendance at campaign rallies or meetings (51%). About half (48%) expected the overall credibility of election results to be affected by the pandemic (Figure 1).
  - Substantial proportions also foresaw pandemic impacts on the Electoral Commission's ability to ensure free and fair elections (45%), the ability of police and security forces to enforce electoral laws fairly (44%), and citizens' decisions to go to the polling station (39%).
- More than seven in 10 Ugandans (72%) considered it likely that COVID-19 infections would spread as a result of people gathering to vote (Figure 2).
- But only one-third (32%) of Ugandans said the 2021 elections should have been postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 3).
- Almost two-thirds (64%) endorsed the government's proposal to help ensure that citizens are informed by providing free radio sets to all Ugandan households and free TV sets to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- More than six in 10 citizens (62%) said that to help ensure a free, fair, and credible election, the police should relax enforcement of COVID-19 regulations during the election campaign (Figure 4).

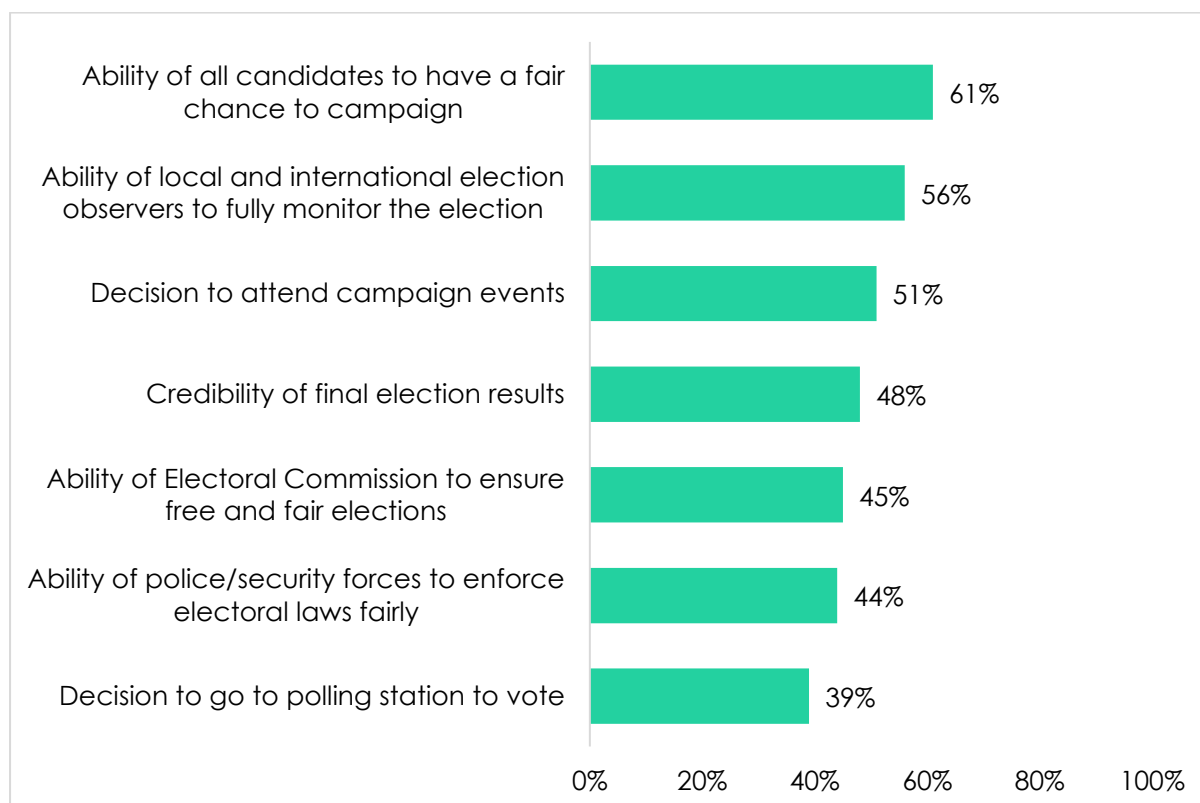
## Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that has provided reliable data on experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life in 38 African countries since 1999. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

With financial support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, the Afrobarometer team in Uganda, led by Hatchile Consult Limited, interviewed 2,400 adult Ugandans between 22 December 2020 and 7 January 2021 in 300 enumeration areas across 110 districts. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. This was the 11<sup>th</sup> Afrobarometer survey in Uganda since 1999.

## Charts

**Figure 1: Impact of COVID-19 on elections** | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how much impact do you expect the COVID-19 pandemic to have on each of the following aspects of the 2021 general elections? (% who said "some impact" or "a lot of impact")

Your decision to go to a polling station to vote in person?

Your decision to attend in-person campaign meetings or rallies?

The ability of the Electoral Commission of Uganda to ensure that the election is free and fair?

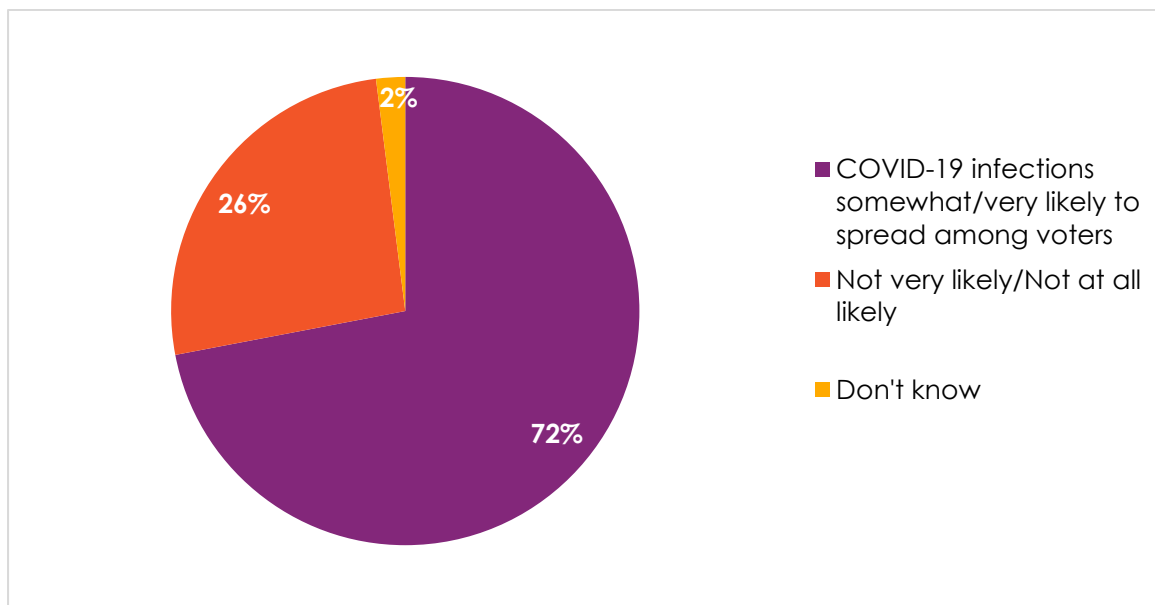
The ability of the police and security agencies to fairly enforce electoral laws?

The ability of all candidates to have an equal and fair chance to campaign and communicate with voters?

The ability of local and international election observers to fully monitor the elections?

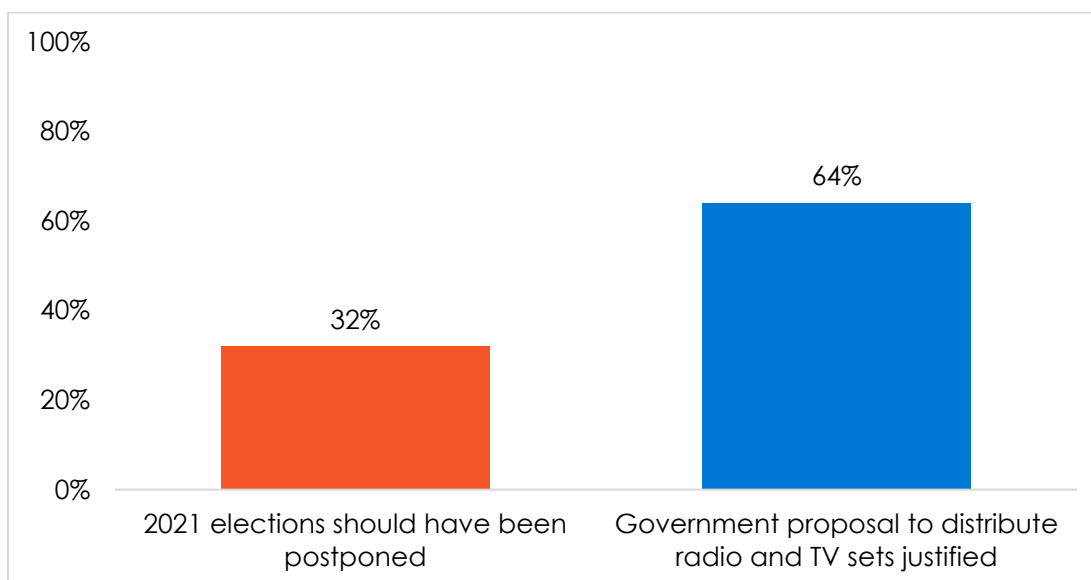
The credibility of the final result of the general elections?

**Figure 2: Will election increase COVID-19 infections?** | Uganda | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** How likely do you think it is that the following problem could arise on Election Day due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or haven't you heard enough to say: COVID-19 infections will spread as a result of people gathering to vote in the election?

**Figure 3: Views on postponing elections and distribution of free radio/TV sets** | Uganda | 2020/2021

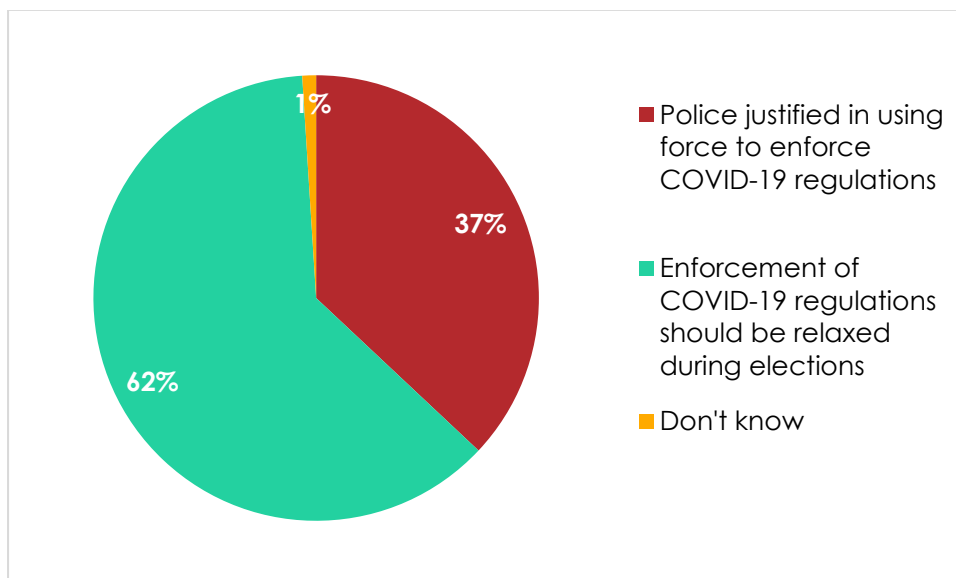


**Respondents were asked:** In view of the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda and government's decision to move most election campaigns over to the media, please tell me whether you disagree or agree with each of the following statements: (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

The 2021 general elections should have been postponed until it becomes safe for all voters to participate.

Government's proposal to provide free radio sets to all Ugandan households and TV sets to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic is justified.

**Figure 4: Enforcement of COVID-19 regulations during elections | Uganda**  
 | 2020/2021



**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view?  
 Statement 1: Knowing the health and economic dangers COVID-19 can cause to Uganda, the police are justified to use extreme force to enforce COVID-19 regulations during the election campaign.  
 Statement 2: For the sake of having a free, fair, and credible election, the police should relax their enforcement of COVID-19 regulations.  
 (% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

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