

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
16 November 2023

News release

Ethiopians seek constitutional changes to add federal languages, Afrobarometer survey shows

Ethiopians continue to favour amending the country's Constitution to make the federal government multilingual, limit the prime minister to two terms, and elevate the status of Addis Ababa to a federal member state, a new Afrobarometer survey shows. However, public opinion is divided on the right to self-determination and the national emblem.

Large majorities say the Constitution should be amended – rather than replaced or maintained as it is – to reflect the needs of contemporary Ethiopia.

Majorities also support designating more working languages – in addition to Amharic – for the federal government and instituting term limits for the prime minister. In a sharp departure from Afrobarometer's previous survey in 2020, a majority of citizens now seek a constitutional amendment to make Addis Ababa a member state of the federation.

The survey shows some popular support for – as well as significant opposition to – proposed constitutional provisions that have been controversial among the political elite. These include the removal of Article 39, which enshrines the right of nations, nationalities, and people to self-determination, and the removal of the emblem at the centre of the national flag.

The survey results will feed ordinary people's views into the ongoing debate among the political elite regarding the Constitution.

Key findings

- About two-thirds (67%) of Ethiopians support amending the Constitution, while only 16% want it to be discarded or replaced and 16% say it should be kept unchanged (Figure 1).
- The proportion of citizens who favour replacing the Constitution has increased by 5 percentage points since the previous Afrobarometer survey in 2020 (Figure 2).
- Regarding proposed constitutional amendments (Figure 3), majorities support:
 - Designating more working languages for the federal government in addition to Amharic (67%).
 - Limiting the number of terms that the prime minister can hold office (66%).
 - Making Addis Ababa a member state of the Federation in its own right (53%, up from 35% in 2020).
- Fewer than half of citizens support proposed amendments that would:
 - Remove the emblem at the centre of the national flag (39%).
 - Remove Article 39, which guarantees the rights of nations, nationalities, and people to self-determination, secession, and establishment of their own regional state government.

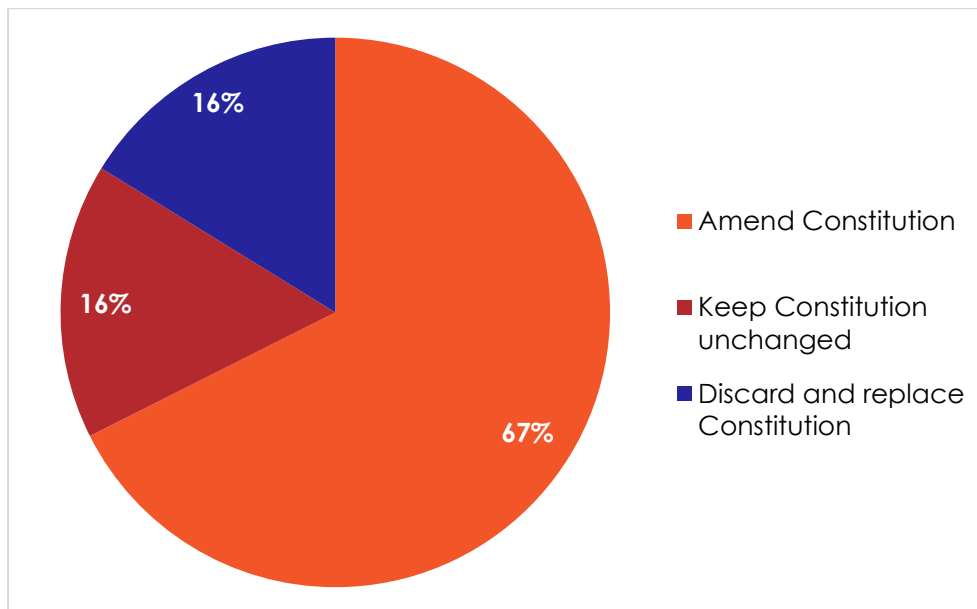
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Nine rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 42 countries since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2022/2023) cover 39 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Afrobarometer team in Ethiopia, led by ABCON – Research & Consulting, interviewed 2,400 adult Ethiopians between 25 May and 22 June 2023. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. A previous survey was conducted in Ethiopia in 2020.

Charts

Figure 1: Should Ethiopia's Constitution be kept as it is, amended, or replaced?
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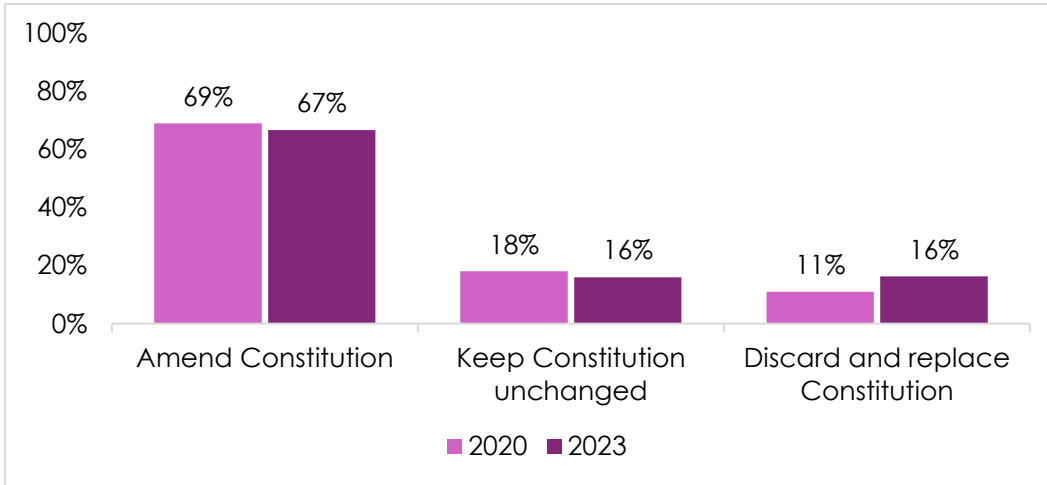
Respondents were asked: Which of these statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The current Constitution of Ethiopia should be kept as it is; there is no need for changes or reforms.

Statement 2: The country's current Constitution should be kept, but it should be amended to meet the needs of the current time.

Statement 3: The current Constitution should be discarded and replaced with a new Constitution.

Figure 2: Change over time: Should Constitution be kept as it is, amended, or replaced? | Ethiopia | 2020-2023



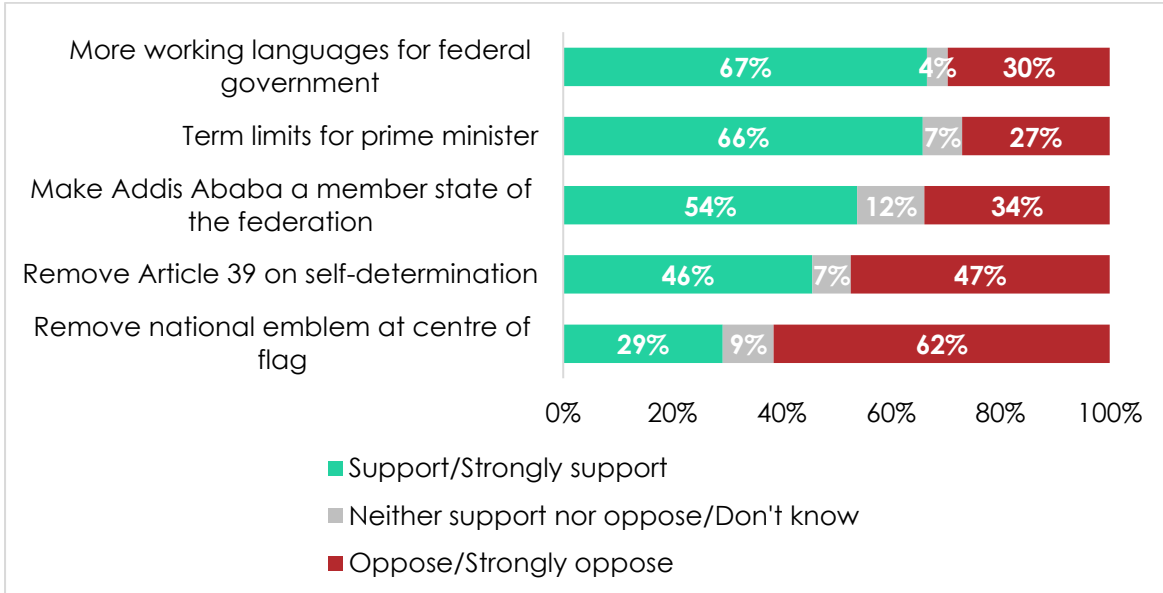
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Figure 3: Views on proposed constitutional amendments | Ethiopia | 2023



Respondents were asked:

A number of proposals have been made about how Ethiopia should amend or replace some provisions in the current Constitution. Would you support or oppose each of the following proposed changes to the Ethiopian Constitution, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Removal of the article which guarantees the right of nations, nationalities, and peoples to self-determination, secession, and establishment of their own regional state governments?

The national emblem at the centre of the Ethiopian flag should be removed or replaced?

Other languages in addition to Amharic should be designated as working languages of the federal government?

Adding a provision imposing term limits on the office of the prime minister?

Making Addis Ababa a member state in the federation?

For more information, please contact:

Mulu Teka
National investigator
ABCON – Research & Consulting
Tel +251 973 077 414 , +251 115 531 470, +251 115 521 696, +251 115 537 061
mulu.mtg@gmail.com / info@abconltd.et
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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