

Institute for Public Policy Research
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News release

Most Namibians see public information as inaccessible, want private communication to stay private

A large majority of Namibians doubt they could obtain information on local development plans, land ownership, school budgeting, and business registration from public institutions, according to the most recent Afrobarometer survey.

Even though the Namibian government has been working on an access-to-information law over the past few years, it has not yet tabled a bill in Parliament. This year, Namibia dropped by two spots in the 2018 Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index, which notes that the lack of a freedom of information law continues to hinder journalists' work.

When it comes to the government obtaining information, Namibians say the government should not be able to monitor private communications, such as mobile-phone conversations. But they are divided as to whether the government should be able to regulate what is said in places of worship.

Key findings

- Only a minority of Namibians think it "somewhat likely" or "very likely" that they could access information from public sources on local development plans (20%), land ownership (23%), school budgets (24%), and business registration (30%) (Figure 1).
- About half of Namibians say that people "often" or "always" have to be careful about how they vote (41%), which political organizations they join (44%), and what they say when discussing politics (49%) (Figure 2).
- Six in 10 Namibians (61%) say that people's private communications, such as mobile-phone conversations, should not be monitored by government agencies (Figure 3).
- Almost half (48%) of Namibians say the government should be allowed to "regulate what is said in places of worship, especially if preachers or congregants threaten public security" (Figure 4).

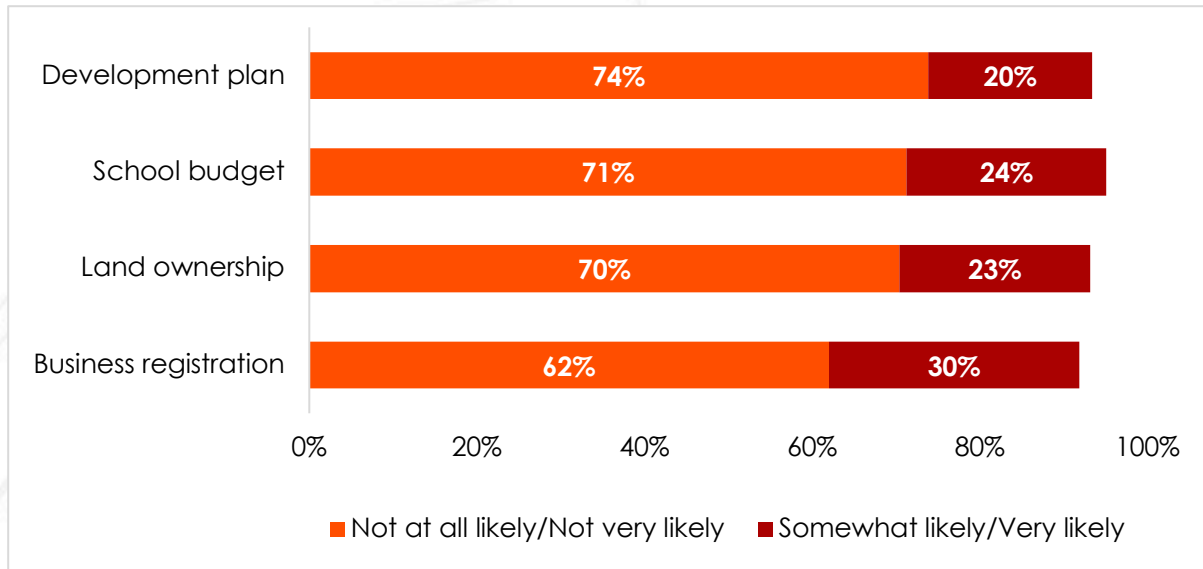
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 African countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys (2016/2018) are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Namibia, led by the Institute for Public Policy Research, interviewed 1,200 adult Namibians in November 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Namibia in 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, and 2014.

Charts

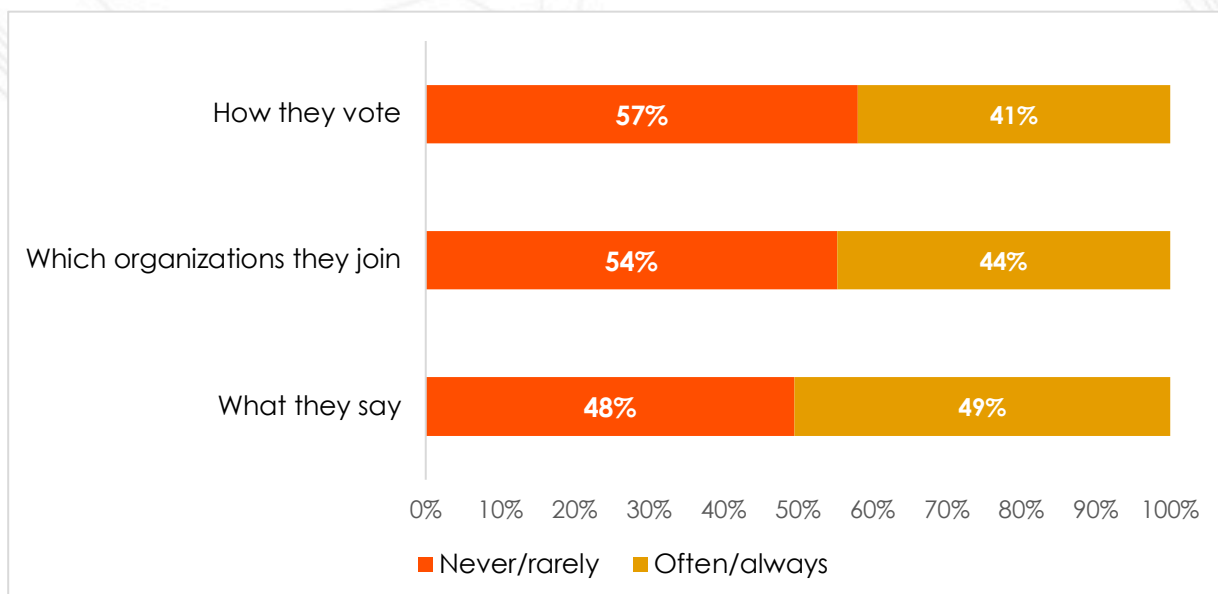
Figure 1: Perceptions of access to information | Namibia | 2017



Respondents were asked: How likely is it that you could get the following information from government or other public institutions, or haven't you heard enough to say:

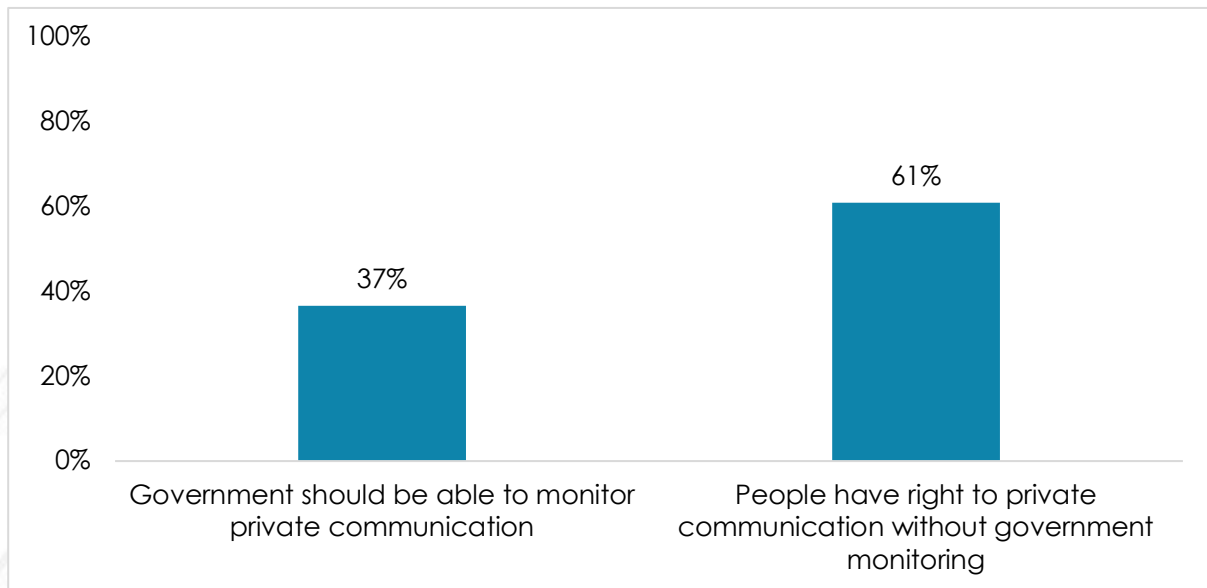
- If you went to the local authority, that is, the municipality, town, or village council office that is closest to you to find out about the constituency development plan and budget or to find out who owns a piece of land in your community?
- If you went to the local school to find out what the school's budget is and how the funds have been used?
- If you went to your regional office of the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development to find out how to register a new business in your community?

Figure 2: How often people are careful about ... | Namibia | 2017



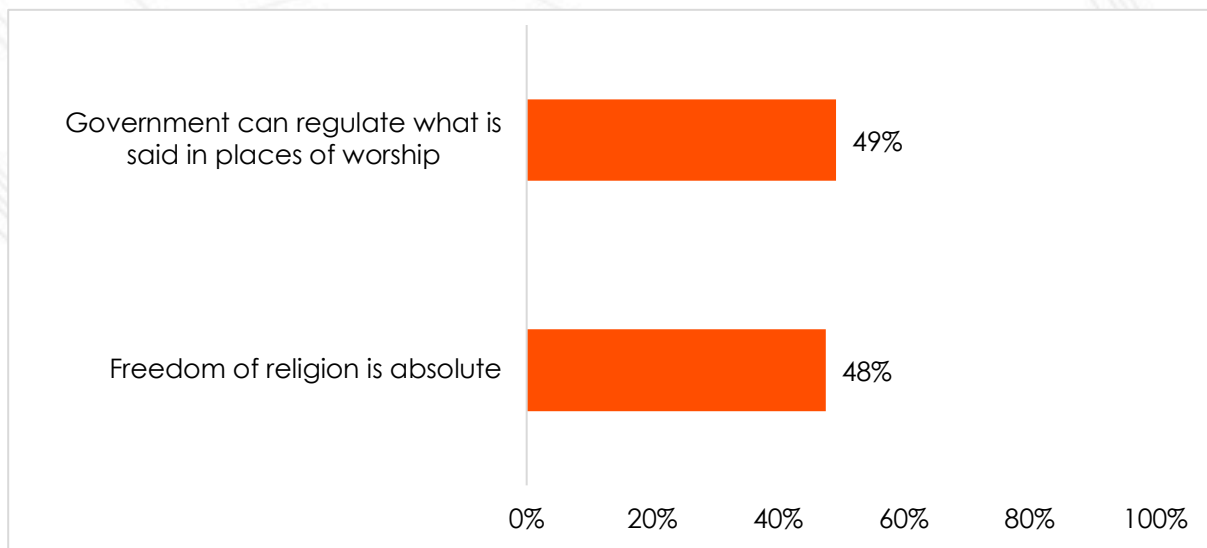
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often, in this country, do people have to be careful about: How they vote in an election? What political organizations they join? What they say about politics?

Figure 3: Government surveillance | Namibia | 2017



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Government should be able to monitor private communications, for example on mobile phones, to make sure that people are not plotting violence.
 Statement 2: People should have the right to communicate in private without a government agency reading or listening to what they are saying.
 (% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

Figure 4: Religious freedom | Namibia | 2017



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Freedom of religion and worship are absolute, meaning that government should never limit what is said in a place of worship.
 Statement 2: Government should have the power to regulate what is said in places of worship, especially if preachers or congregants threaten public security.
 (% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

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