



Most Swazis say free cross-border movement desirable but not yet a reality

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 93 | Vimbai Tsododo

Summary

As a result of its strong economic position on the continent, Southern Africa experiences high volumes of migration. Development and employment opportunities in the mining, manufacturing, and agricultural industries draw both skilled and unskilled labour. Southern Africa is also a springboard for regular and irregular migration to Europe and the Americas (International Organization for Migration, 2015).

Despite efforts to push for national legislation and regional agreements to create an environment that promotes freedom of movement for the region's citizens, the latest Afrobarometer survey in Swaziland shows that Swazis still perceive it as difficult to cross international borders.

Two-thirds of Swazis support free cross-border movement in Southern Africa for trade or work in other countries. While Swazis hold mixed views on regional political integration, a majority see the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and African Union (AU) as at least "a little bit" helpful to their country.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in more than 35 countries in Africa. After five rounds of surveys between 1999 and 2013, results of Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being published. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200 or 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Swaziland, led by activQuest, interviewed 1,200 adult Swazis in April-May 2015. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. One previous survey was conducted in Swaziland in 2013.

Key findings

- Two in three Swazis (68%) say people living in Southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders for trade or work in other countries.
- More than half (55%) of Swazis say it is currently "difficult" or "very difficult" to cross international borders to work or trade in other countries.
- Swazis are divided over whether governments in the region should help guarantee free elections and human rights in neighbouring countries (43%) or should instead respect other countries' national sovereignty (50%).

- Pluralities of Swazis say the AU (44%) and SADC (48%) help their country “somewhat” or “a lot.” More than one-third of citizens say they do not know enough about these organisations to assess whether they are helpful.

Freedom of cross-border movement to trade and work

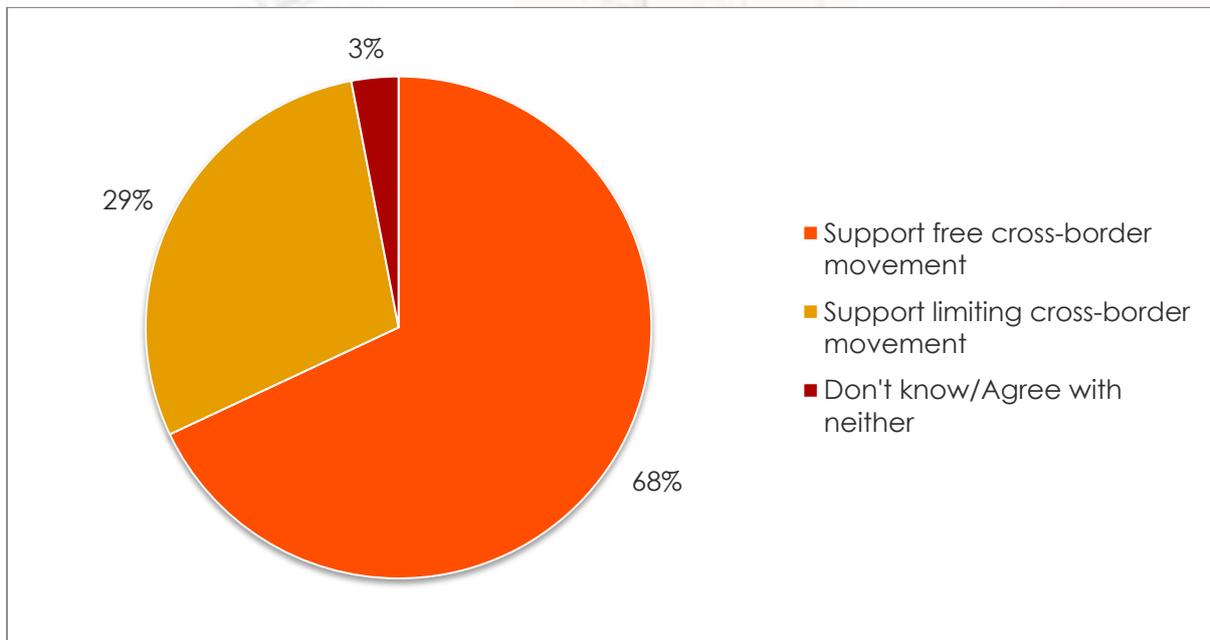
Two-thirds (68%) of Swazi citizens support free movement across international borders in order to trade and work, while 29% prefer limiting cross-border movement to protect citizens against immigrant labour and low-priced imports (Figure 1).

Urban respondents are slightly more likely than rural Swazis to advocate free movement, 71% vs. 67%, while men and women hold similar views on the question.

Despite strong sentiment in favour of free movement, more than half (55%) of Swazis say it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to move across international borders for purposes of trade and work (Figure 2). About one-third (32%) say it is “easy” or “very easy,” while 13% say they have never tried to cross a border or don’t know. Perceptions of the difficulty of crossing borders differ little by urban-rural residence or gender.

Compared to other countries in the Southern Africa regions, Swaziland ranks second, after Zimbabwe (75%), in support for free cross-border movement, while less than four in 10 citizens in Namibia (37%) and Botswana (38%) share this position (Figure 3). Along with South Africa and Madagascar, Botswana and Namibia are also the countries most likely to say that it’s easy to cross borders for trade or work.

Figure 1: Free movement across borders vs. limited movement | Swaziland | 2015



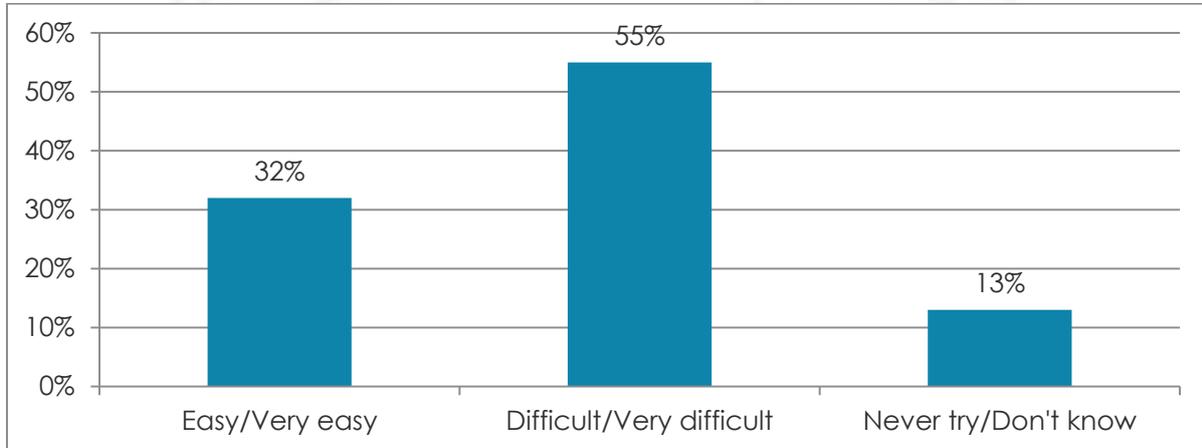
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: People living in Southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries.

Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.

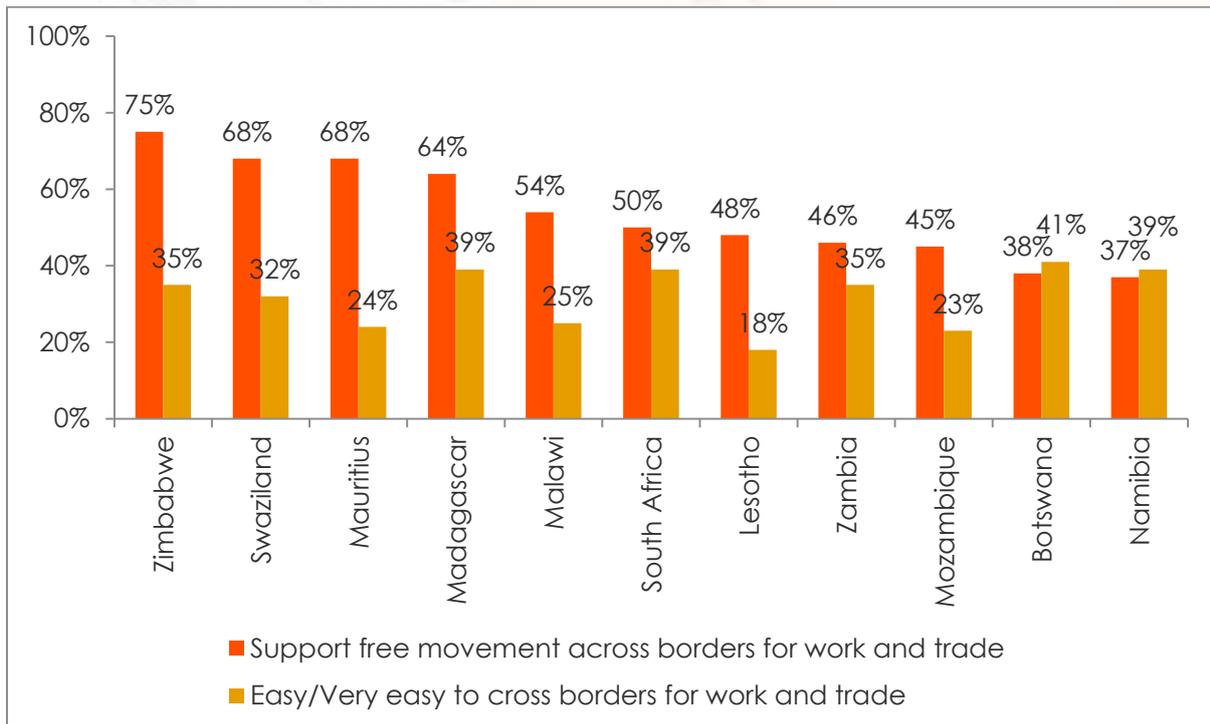
(% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

Figure 2: Difficulty in crossing borders for trade or work | Swaziland | 2015



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 3: Support for free cross-border movement and ease of movement across borders | Southern Africa | 2015



Respondents were asked:

1. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.
 Statement 1: People living in Southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries.

Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods. (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with Statement 1)

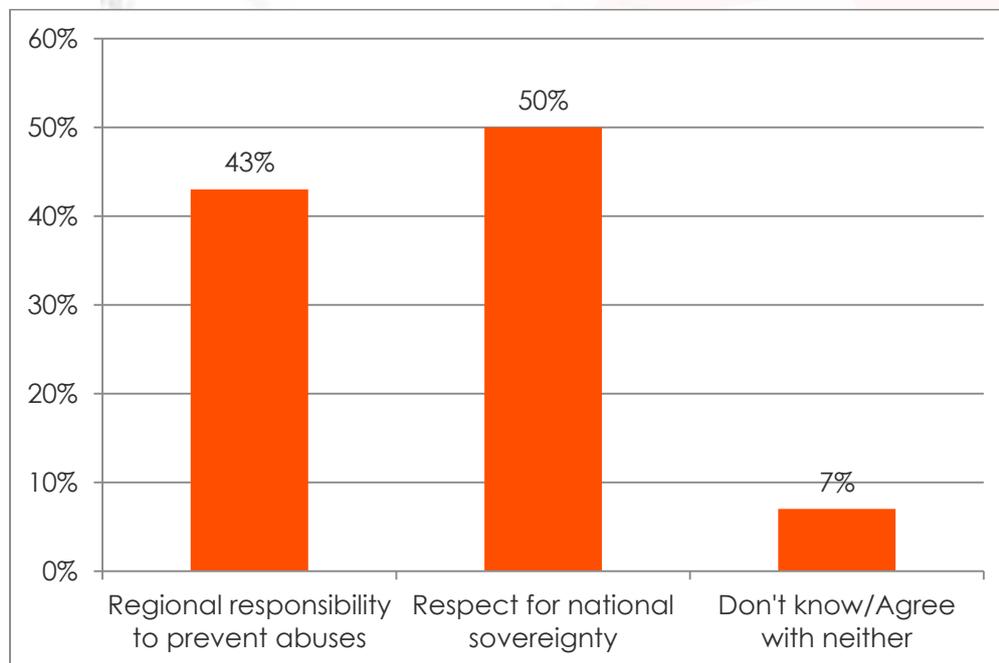
2. In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in Southern Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "easy" or "very easy")

Swazis split over regional responsibility vs. national sovereignty

On a question that explores citizens' attitudes regarding regional political integration, Swazis are divided. More than four in 10 (43%) agree that governments "have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region" through diplomatic or even military intervention, while half (50%) instead emphasize the need to respect other countries' sovereignty (Figure 4).

Most other countries in the region also emphasize respect for national sovereignty over a regional responsibility, in some cases by large majorities (Figure 5). The same is true across the continent (see Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 91, available at www.afrobarometer.org.)

Figure 4: Regional responsibility to prevent abuses vs. respect for national sovereignty | Swaziland | 2015



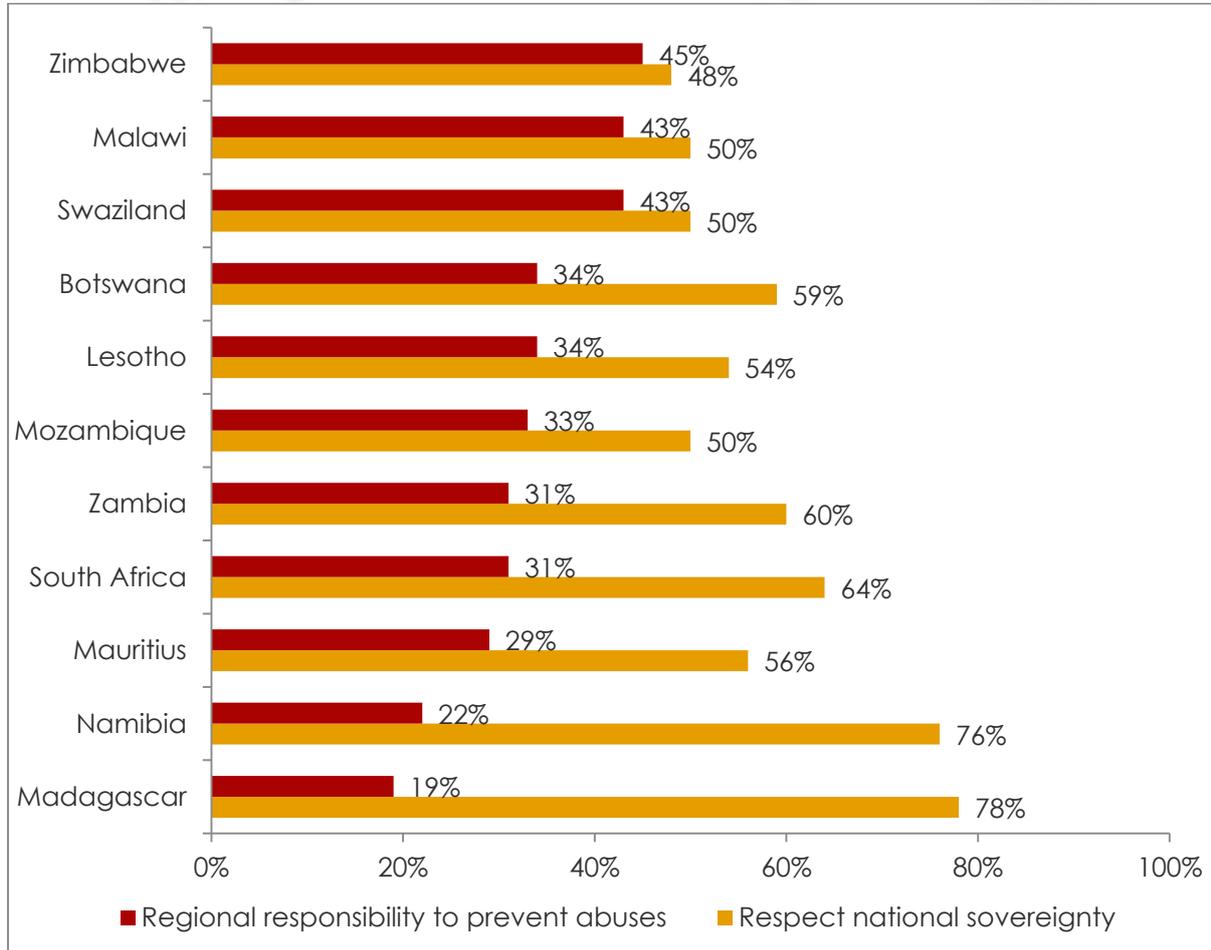
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: The governments of each country in Southern Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions or military force.

Statement 2: Each country in this region should respect the independence of other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Figure 5: Regional responsibility to prevent abuses vs. respect for national sovereignty | Southern Africa | 2015



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: The governments of each country in Southern Africa have a duty to try to guarantee free elections and prevent human rights abuses in other countries in the region, for example by using political pressure, economic sanctions or military force.

Statement 2: Each country in this region should respect the independence of other countries and allow them to make their own decisions about how their country should be governed.

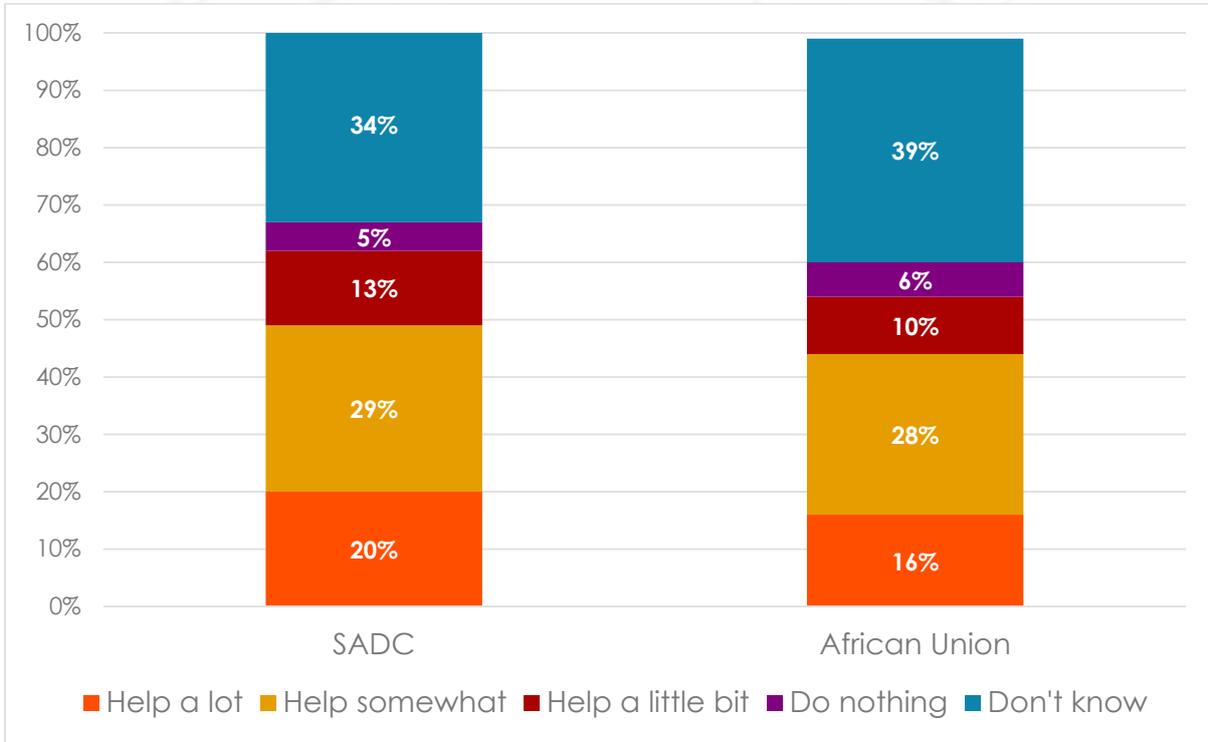
(% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

Helpfulness of Southern African Development Community and African Union

Pluralities of Swazis see the AU and SADC as helpful to their country. About half (48%) say SADC helps Swaziland “somewhat” or “a lot,” while 44% say the same about the AU. Only about one in 20 Swazis say that the two organisations “do nothing” for their country. Significantly, more than one-third of Swazis say they don’t know enough about the AU and SADC to assess whether they are helpful (Figure 6).

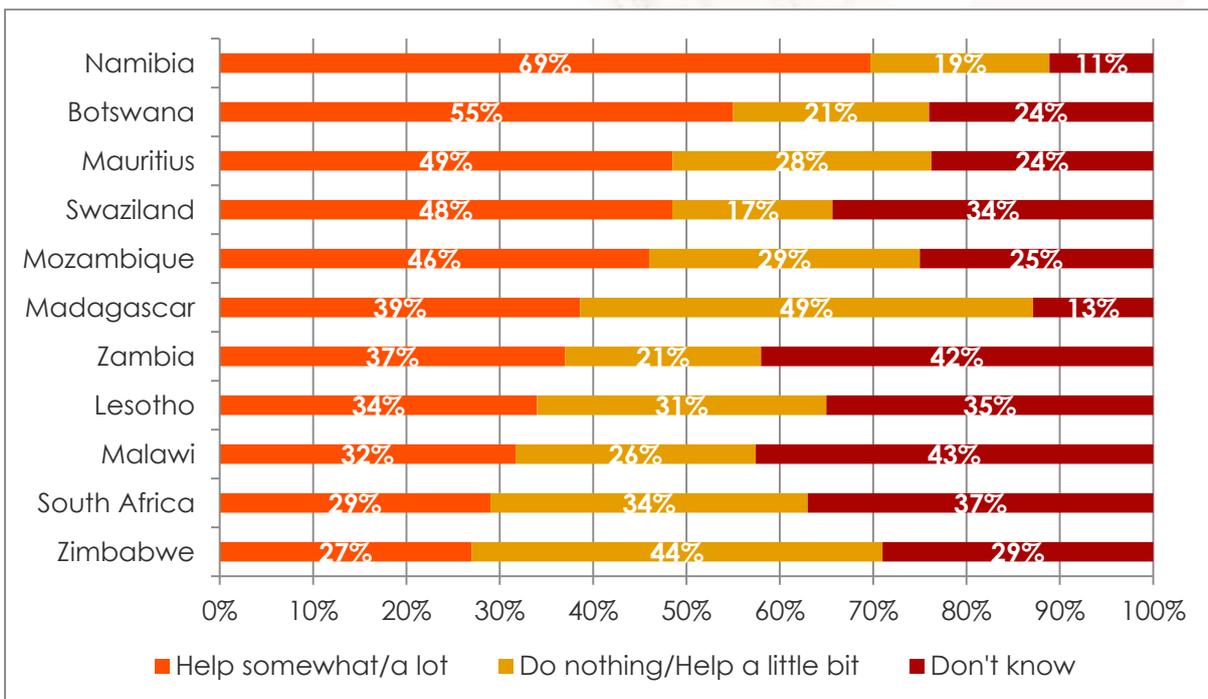
Among 11 Southern African countries, assessments that SADC helps “somewhat” or “a lot” range from 27% in Zimbabwe and 29% in South Africa to 69% in Namibia (Figure 7). “Don’t know” responses are high in most countries, ranging up to 43% of respondents in Malawi. Assessments with regard to the AU follow a similar pattern.

Figure 6: Perceived helpfulness of SADC and AU | Swaziland | 2015



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 7: Perceived helpfulness of SADC | 11 countries in Southern Africa | 2015



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Conclusion

Results of the Afrobarometer survey show that most Swazis support free movement across international borders for trade and work, but their experience suggests that in fact crossing borders is difficult. While a substantial proportion of the population support a regional role for states in protecting free elections and human rights in neighbouring countries, a plurality of Swazis instead emphasize the need to respect national sovereignty. A majority of Swazis see the AU and SADC as helping their country at least “a little bit,” but more than one-third say they don’t know enough about these organisations to assess whether they are helpful.

To further explore this data, please visit
Afrobarometer's online data analysis facility at
www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

References

International Organization for Migration. (2015). Southern Africa: The regional migration context. Available at <http://www.iom.int/southern-africa>. Accessed 18 April 2016.

Vimbai Tsododo is operations manager for activQuest, the Afrobarometer national partner in Swaziland. Email: vimbai@activQuest.com.

Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Core support for Afrobarometer Rounds 5 and 6 has been provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank.

For more information, please visit www.afrobarometer.org.

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 93 | 25 May 2016