



ETHIOPIA

PEACE & JUSTICE SURVEY 2023



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INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia has a long history of human rights violations and conflicts that have deeply affected the nation. Most recently, the period from 2020 to 2022 saw intense conflict in the Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions with considerable loss of life and allegations of serious violations by all parties to the conflict.

The November 2022 Pretoria Agreement on cessation of hostilities and the subsequent Nairobi Agreement created opportunities to address historical grievances and confront gross rights violations, including the adoption of a comprehensive transitional justice process.¹ However, violence continues in regions like Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Sidama and Oromia due to protracted intercommunal conflicts. Climate change and droughts have exacerbated food insecurity, while armed conflict persists in Oromia, where peace talks have not progressed so far, and violence has erupted in Amhara.²

Before the Tigray conflict, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed introduced transitional justice initiatives to distance Ethiopia from the abuses of previous regimes. This included the establishment of the 2018 Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission pursuant to a newly enacted Reconciliation Law³ and acknowledgment of the pre-2018 regime's violence against the Ethiopian people. Institutions like the Attorney General's Office have initiated procedures to hold past perpetrators accountable for corruption and other forms of abuses committed before⁴ and during the 2018 transition.⁵

Amidst the Tigray war, Ethiopia continued transitional justice efforts. The government shut down the Reconciliation Commission and established the National Dialogue Commission, adding a dialogue process parallel to the transitional justice process.⁶ The government also established the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJWGE), which released a Green Paper on policy options after the 2023 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The TJWGE has undertaken national consultations ahead of drafting a national transitional justice policy for Ethiopia.

Peace processes often neglect affected communities' perspectives, despite their crucial role in sustaining peace and preventing atrocities. The TJWGE consultations, while important, might not have fully captured the population's diverse views across all regions. To complement this process, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) in collaboration with the Partnership for Pastoralist Development Association (PAPDA) and local universities, and with support from the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR), and the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), implemented a rigorous, representative, and methodologically robust consultation to gain a deeper understanding of the population's perceptions about peace and justice. This comprehensive mixed-method research gathered data from diverse communities across all regions of Ethiopia, including a survey of 6,689 randomly selected adult Ethiopians. Its results are presented in this report. ■

▼ Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia



CONTEXT

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a federal entity comprised of 11 National Regional States (NRS), including Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), South-Western Region, Sidama, Gambella, and Harari. It also has two city administrations, Addis Ababa (the federal capital) and Dire Dawa. These 11 regional states and two city administrations are home to over eighty nationalities and distinct ethnic groups⁷ and over 126 million people, with a population growth rate of approximately 2.55 percent.⁸ Most Ethiopians reside in rural areas, reflecting the country's predominantly agricultural character. A significant proportion of the Ethiopian population grapples with multidimensional poverty, including hunger. Ethiopia's economy, which had experienced significant growth in recent years, faces complex challenges because of high inflation, fiscal deficit, the war in the northern regions, and political instability in other parts of the country.⁹

With the exception of the brief period of Italian military occupation from 1936 to 1941,¹⁰ Ethiopia is the sole sub-Saharan African nation to have successfully overcome European colonial forces, escaping the horrors and lasting consequences of colonialism. As a result, Ethiopia has become a symbol of pride and Pan-Africanism.¹¹ This has contributed to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity, (now the African Union), in Addis Ababa in 1963.¹² Nonetheless, Ethiopia's historical trajectory is marred by episodes of violence, oppression, and internal conflict. The country has rarely witnessed a peaceful transfer of power without substantial bloodshed. It is essential to consider Ethiopia's historical context for any transitional justice or peacebuilding initiative to be effective (see also figure 2).

UNIFICATION & ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE – 1855 THROUGH 1976

Several independent regions were unified into modern Ethiopia towards the close of the 19th century. This union marked the conclusion of the Era of the Princes, a

period from 1769 to 1855 characterized by the absence of central governance, wherein numerous provinces engaged in brutal conflicts with neighboring regions and countries, including Sudan, Egypt, and European powers such as Great Britain.¹³ Ethiopia's unification occurred under Emperor Menelik II and garnered international recognition in 1896 when the nation defeated Italy at the Battle of Adwa.¹⁴ After Emperor Menelik II's death in 1916, Empress Zewditu presided over Ethiopia for 14 years, a period also known for a power struggle between Lij Iyasu and Ras Teferi. The latter, who became Emperor Haile Selassie I, ultimately ascended to the throne in 1930, proclaiming divine anointment as the king of kings.¹⁵ Emperor Haile Selassie's regime was marked by the Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-36) and the brief period of Italian military occupation in Ethiopia during which the emperor remained in exile in Great Britain.¹⁶

Upon his return to Ethiopia in 1941, Haile Selassie instituted multiple reforms to modernize the Ethiopian government, including establishing a parliament, modernizing laws, introducing a comprehensive penal code in 1957, and revising the 1931 Constitution in 1955.¹⁷ He also committed to international peace and justice through Ethiopia's adherence to the 1945 London Agreement, membership to the United Nations, and the ratification, as the first country in the world, of the 1948 Genocide Convention.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Haile Selassie's regime denied civil liberties and political rights to its people. Selassie's tenure was also marked by severe famine and socio-economic disparities due to the feudal and aristocratic system he cultivated. An ensuing economic crisis led to widespread peasant revolts, student protests, and opposition from elites. The pressure eventually led to the emperor's downfall in 1974, when the Derg, a coordinating committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and Territorial Army, toppled the regime, marking the end of 3,000 years of Ethiopian monarchy.¹⁹

THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION AND THE DERG: 1974 - 1991

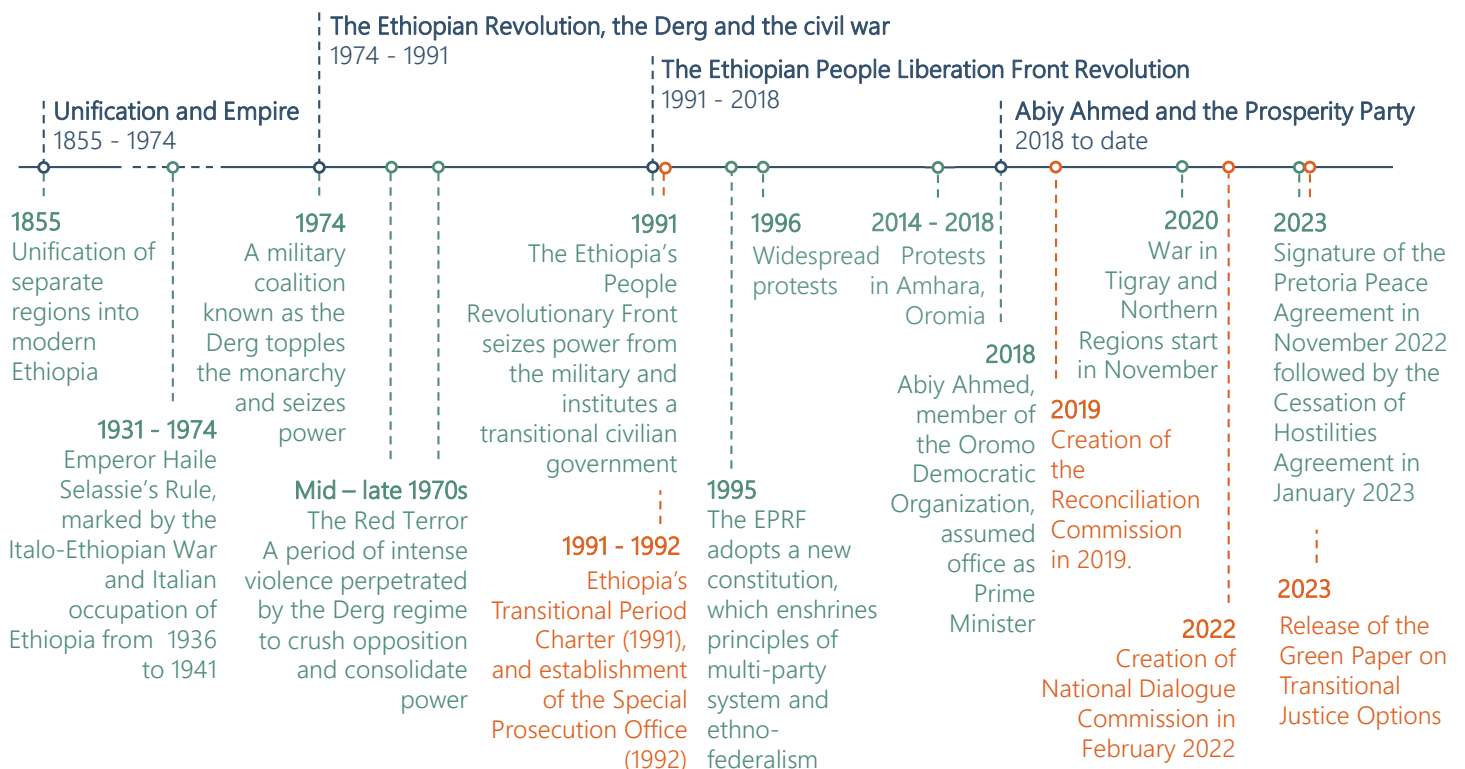
The widespread dissatisfaction with Haile Selassie's handling of economic and social issues in Ethiopia drove armed groups, the working class and student-led movements, to operate in tandem to bring down the regime. However, these movements lacked structure and political leadership, and had no cohesive political agenda or mutual plans for an eventual post-monarchy era. When the monarchy fell, the lack of direction created a power vacuum. Taking advantage of the situation, a more radical section of the military seized political control. This group, the Derg, made up of low-ranking military officers, established a provisional military government and initiated a shift towards communism in Ethiopia.²⁰

While the population briefly hoped for justice and reform, the Derg's regime led by Mengistu Haile Mariam quickly devolved into a brutal and repressive regime, targeting students and other groups who had spearheaded the movement to overthrow the monarchy. These groups opposed the Derg's

consolidation of power, calling for the establishment of a provisional civilian government. Among the firmest opposition was the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), which later played a pivotal role in the Derg's overthrow.²¹ Rather than conceding to these demands, the Derg resorted to increasingly coercive and repressive tactics, which culminated in the Red Terror.²² This period of extreme violence and turmoil entailed mass killings, forced disappearances, torture, and widespread human rights abuses, leading to a 17-year civil war between the Derg regime, Ethiopian-Eritrean anti-government insurgents, and leftist civilian factions within Ethiopia.²³ The regime's actions plunged the country into immense suffering and instability. While the precise death toll from the Derg's actions remains disputed, estimates suggest over 50,000 casualties occurred and scholars estimate that millions suffered physical harm or incurred material losses due to the regime's actions and policies.²⁴

The Derg's grip on power ultimately unraveled in 1991 when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of ethnic-nationalist rebel

▼ Figure 2: Timeline of major political transition and transitional justice



groups primarily from the Tigray, Amhara, and Oromia regions, joined forces with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to successfully oust Mengistu and his government.²⁵ The ethnic-nationalist forces gained strength when the Derg implemented its 'Land-to-the-Tiller' motto by abolishing all private land ownership and prohibiting the sale, lease, or mortgage of rural land.²⁶ These measures were hugely unpopular and led to widespread dissatisfaction and rebellion. The ensuing guerrilla war waged by the EPRDF and OLF defeated the Derg in 1991, allowing them to take control of the government and usher in a new phase of Ethiopian politics by bringing ethnic nationalism to the forefront.²⁷ This shift marked the end of the Derg regime. Yet, its legacy of violence continued shaping the nation's trajectory for years to come.²⁸

THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATIC FRONT REVOLUTION: 1991 - 2018

The post-Derg era marked a period of significant political and social transformation in Ethiopia. After nearly two decades of authoritarian rule and devastating conflict, Ethiopia attempted to embark on a path towards democratization and decentralization under the leadership of the EPRDF, a political coalition consisting of four ethnic-defined groups from Tigray, Oromia, Amhara, and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. However, the Tigray's People Liberation Front (TPLF) largely dominated the EPRDF.²⁹ After initially pursuing policies of ethnic federalism, efforts to balance regional autonomy and national unity ultimately contributed to rising ethnic tensions in the following years.

The EPRDF led the country by establishing a contested Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) from 1991-1995.³⁰ It officially established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in 1995 by adopting a new constitution, which enshrined principles of multi-party democracy, ethnic-federalism, and human rights. Embedded within the 1995 Constitution is a chapter laying out several provisions on democratic and political rights. It also contains stipulations intended to serve as guarantees of non-repetition of violence, including outlawing amnesty and immunity for international crimes such as genocide, war crimes,

torture, enforced disappearances, summary execution, and other similar offenses. Notwithstanding these constitutional guarantees and positive developments, the post-Derg era continued to witness diverse forms of violence perpetrated by state forces against civilians across the country, including instances of post-election violence, inter-ethnic communal conflict, and political violence against selected individuals and groups.³¹

Despite its promises of democracy, the EPRDF essentially functioned as the sole dominant party, maintaining a firm grip on the political landscape.³² Additionally, issues such as poverty, inequality, and governance challenges persisted. Over the years, *dissatisfaction* with the EPRDF's rule led to protests and demands for greater political openness and reform. Tensions within the EPRDF regarding TPLF political dominance, and a perception among Ethiopians that economic benefits of development in Ethiopia had disproportionately flowed to Tigray or TPLF leaders, exacerbated grievances across ethnic groups – especially in Oromia, where more than two years of mass protests occurred over economic issues and calls to remove TPLF leaders.³³ These tensions, which demonstrated intensifying ethnic-identity politics in Ethiopia, culminated in a significant political shift in 2018 when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Oromo Democratic Organization (OPDO), assumed office and initiated a series of reforms aimed at addressing long-standing social issues. Abiy promised to foster a more inclusive, democratic Ethiopia through his reform agenda.³⁴

ABIY AHMED AND THE PROSPERITY PARTY: 2018 ONWARD

The onset of the 2018 transition initially seemed like a relatively peaceful power transfer. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's efforts to forge peace with Eritrea and open up the political space earned him the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.³⁵ However, tensions between the outgoing and incoming powers escalated into another devastating civil war within Ethiopia by late 2020. The war in the northern region of Tigray had deep-seated political causes. A primary trigger was a long-simmering dispute between the TPLF, a powerful regional group and dominant party within the EPRDF, and Abiy Ahmed's central government. The TPLF felt marginalized by

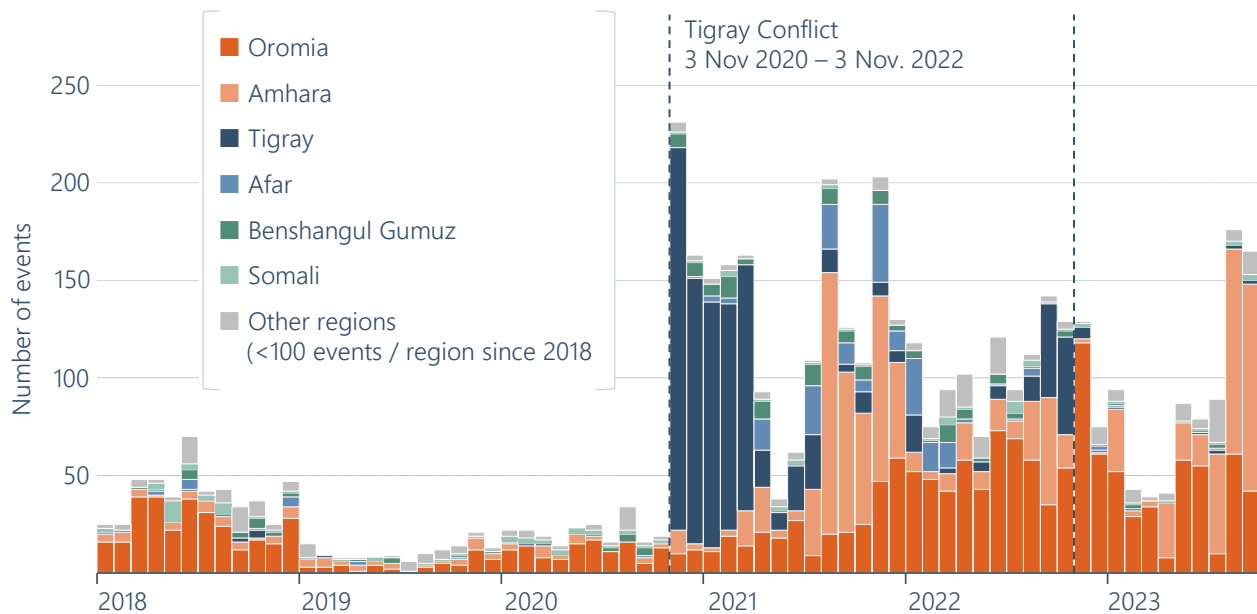
Abiy's consolidation of power through dismantling the EPRDF and merging its members into the new Prosperity Party. The TPLF then took steps to create an alternative coalition challenging Abiy's new order.³⁶

Tensions between Abiy and the TPLF came to a head when the TPLF held regional elections in September 2020, despite an order from Abiy to postpone elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Abiy viewed the TPLF decision as a direct challenge to his government's legitimacy.³⁷ On November 4, 2020, Abiy announced military operations in Tigray, following allegations that the TPLF attacked a federal military base in Tigray. The Ethiopian authorities accused TPLF of aggression while Tigrayan forces maintained it acted in self-defense. The conflict escalated quickly, drawing in various regional and international actors, resulting in extensive violence, displacement, and a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.³⁸ The Tigray War, as it is colloquially known, affected the northern regions of Tigray, Amhara and Afar from November 2020 to November 2022, exacting a grievous death toll estimated at around 600,000 civilians.³⁹ All parties involved in the conflict face allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including widespread reports of sexual violence, indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance.⁴⁰ The conflict concluded on

November 2, 2022, with a peace agreement brokered by the African Union in Pretoria, South Africa, between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF. The agreement mandated a permanent cessation of hostilities and aimed to restore services and aid access to Tigray. The TPLF agreed to disarm within a month as part of the agreement. Notably, Eritrea, a significant player in the conflict, was not part of the accord and continued occupying parts of Tigray into 2023.⁴¹

Beyond Tigray, large-scale and widespread inter-ethnic and communal violence has become commonplace in various regions of Ethiopia (figure 3).⁴² Violence in Oromia has persisted since early 2019, while clashes between Fano militias and government forces in Amhara escalated in mid-2023.⁴³ There has also been violence and instability reported in other areas such as the Metekel region of Benishangul Gumuz, among Afar and Somali communities, and southern regions like the newly established Central Regional State.⁴⁴ Several regional conflicts are interconnected with the political turmoil stemming from the Tigray War and the federal government. The numerous concurrent internal conflicts highlight the deep ethnic and political divisions within the country, demonstrating the complexity of creating political stability and promoting peace and justice in Ethiopia.

▼ Figure 3: Political violence by regions – 2018-2023 (data source: ACLED 2023, figure by the authors)



HISTORY OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia has made several attempts to introduce and implement transitional justice mechanisms over the past decades. However, such attempts have failed to comprehensively address past gross human rights violations, hindering the nation's healing and prospects for lasting peace. The first official endeavor to instate a transitional justice process was created by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) after the fall of the Derg in 1991. In 1992, the TGE established the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) to bring alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses during the Derg regime to justice, marking a departure from previous practices that had resulted in the unlawful detentions or summary execution of former officials, as witnessed in 1974.⁴⁵

POST-1991 CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS

Between 1992 and 2010, over 5,000 individuals faced legal action for crimes committed during the Derg regime. However, the judicial process faced criticism for several reasons. First, criminal proceedings fell short of international justice standards, lacking several fair trial guarantees. This deficiency was further compounded by the lack of a robust legal infrastructure capable of prosecuting such a substantial number of individuals simultaneously. Second, the decision regarding which accountability process to adopt was considered a top-down decision because it was not preceded by public consultations or discussions, raising concerns about the inclusivity and transparency of the accountability process.

Additionally, the prosecutions have been labeled as "victor's justice" because they only targeted members and affiliates of the Derg, contributing to perceptions of bias within the accountability efforts.⁴⁶ Moreover, the accountability process post-1991 displayed a propensity to treat actions that could potentially qualify as international crimes as ordinary offenses, primarily due to the absence of adequate legal frameworks for addressing, mainly, torture, enforced disappearances, and crimes against humanity. Such actions hindered the capacity to adequately address the gravity of the crimes committed during the Derg regime.⁴⁷ Also, the

accountability process largely ignored gender-based violence that took place in the context of the civil war and political repression during the Derg.

Apart from criminal accountability, the post-Derg transitional justice process did not incorporate other transitional justice mechanisms, despite recommendations from international organizations and appeals from former regime members. Scholars highlight that the Transitional Government of Ethiopia missed the opportunity to draw insights from South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission for reckoning with the past.⁴⁸ It also overlooked other countries' experiences and lessons learned from ethnic and traditional mechanisms in dispute-resolution and peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the transitional justice process that followed the Derg era lacked public or victims' participation. The decision to pursue prosecutions and reject amnesty and reconciliation was viewed as politically motivated rather than aimed at addressing past grievances. This perspective was evident in various aspects of the process. For instance, conflict victims received no reparations, as the government implemented a selective form of unofficial reparations primarily benefiting former members of armed groups aligned with the TPLF. Moreover, memorialization efforts primarily focused on celebrating war heroes and victories over the Derg, neglecting the suffering endured by actual victims.

The EPRDF led transitional justice process has also failed in the truth finding process. Although the SPO was initially established with dual mandates of ensuring accountability and recording the truth for posterity, it had focused only on issues of accountability. As a result, historical causes and natures of conflicts remain largely unresolved. Ethiopians today still debate issues such as who shot the first bullet, the Derg or opposition political groups, in the context of the start date of the Red-Terror in 1970s.

Overall, the transitional justice process implemented by the TGE and then by the EPRDF failed to bring about the intended change and, instead, exacerbated divisions within Ethiopia, ultimately contributing to

another civil war between the TPLF and the federal government three decades later.⁴⁹

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE POST-2018

Ethiopia embarked on a new chapter in peacebuilding after the 2018 political transition that brought Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power. His administration initiated several peacebuilding efforts to address the nation's violent past. Notably, the government expressed its commitment to reconciliation and truth-seeking by establishing the now-defunct Reconciliation Commission and the Borders and Identity Issues Commission in 2019. In an unprecedented move, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed made a statement in mid-2018 to the Ethiopian Parliament acknowledging the state's involvement in episodes of torture and indiscriminate civilian killings, acts that constitute crimes against humanity under international law.⁵⁰ However, Ethiopia has continued to be affected by multiple protracted violent conflicts, impeding peacebuilding efforts.⁵¹

Amid ongoing conflicts and the failure of post-2018 transitional justice initiatives, Ethiopia established a National Dialogue Commission (NDC) to engage in a nationwide discourse to achieve political consensus on the nation's past and its path forward. The NDC's creation signaled a shift towards a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the NDC has thus far failed to demonstrate its ability to meet expectations given that it has not yet progressed into a meaningful dialogue process.⁵² A renewed transitional justice effort emerged in early 2023 with the official release of a Green Paper on Ethiopia's transitional justice policy options by the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJWGE), which was commissioned by the Ministry of Justice. This marked the beginning of the development of a comprehensive national transitional justice policy. The Green Paper serves as the foundation for nationwide consultations designed to involve

relevant stakeholders in the policy design process. The TJWGE conducted consultations from March to September 2023. The group is now in the process of drafting a report that will summarize the results of the consultations and serve as the basis for an upcoming policy.

The current effort aims to establish a comprehensive transitional justice framework to address violence from multiple conflicts and regimes in Ethiopia. It therefore goes beyond the recent conflict in the northern region. However, concerns persist among individuals and stakeholders that the initiative may not align with international standards. Building upon Ethiopia's past experiences and prior transitional justice processes, the upcoming transitional justice process must grapple with critical questions. These encompass issues of accountability for past gross human rights violations, examining who should face prosecution and under what mechanisms, and the relevant institutional frameworks for conducting prosecutions and trials of alleged perpetrators. Equally vital is achieving reconciliation and the role that traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms will play in fostering domestic peacebuilding processes and techniques.

Ultimately, the central question of the transitional justice process will be how to create social conditions that enable Ethiopians to coexist peacefully amid diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. To achieve this, engaging the population and affected communities is imperative to capture and understand their perspectives on the various transitional justice policies being considered. Without meaningful community involvement, the transitional justice process risks producing suboptimal outcomes due to a lack of trust and buy-in from relevant stakeholders. ■

THE STUDY

This study aims to provide a rigorous, representative, and methodologically robust assessment of needs, perceptions and attitudes about peace and justice among the population of Ethiopia. It uses a sequential mixed-methods approach, beginning with 20 key informant interviews with local and international experts to inform the survey design. This was followed by a population-based quantitative survey administered to a random sample of 6,689 Ethiopian adults across all regions and city administrations. Finally, four focus groups were held in selected regions to inform the report's quantitative data analysis (figure 4).

SURVEY DESIGN

SAMPLE

This survey used a stratified multi-stage cluster sampling process to select adult residents for participation in the survey randomly. The survey was stratified by regions and city administrations (the "Strata"), with the sampling procedure designed to provide a representative sample for each stratum.

The sample size calculation used a sample size formula for proportion in a single population, and assumed a maximum variability of 50%, a 95% confidence level, and a margin of error of 5% between the sample and the population, considering an intra-cluster correlation of $\rho = 0.05$. Considering the potential significant variation in key indicators and limited knowledge of the true estimate, the study assumed the maximum variability. This target sample size was increased to

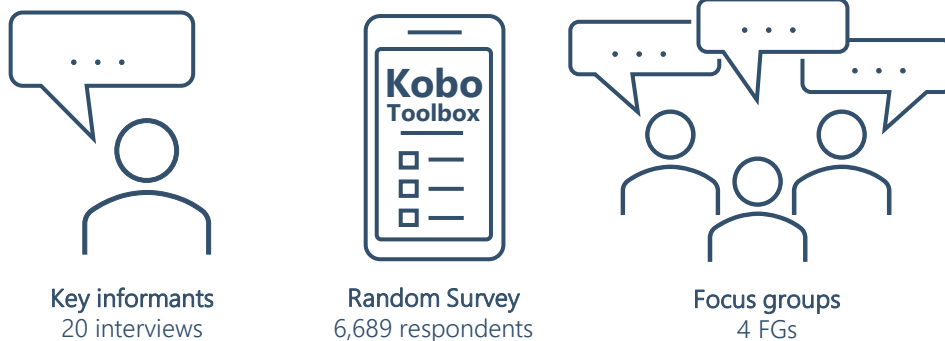
enable comparison by strata and gender, resulting in a target sample size of 6,600 interviews.

At the first stage, the sampling was based on geographic clusters or "enumeration areas" (EAs) previously set by the Ethiopian Central Statistics Office for the 2019 national census.⁵³ Nationally, there are 149,093 EAs, averaging 131 households. We obtained a random sample of 16 EAs per region and city administration, except for the more populous Amhara and Oromia regions for which 22 EAs were selected to ensure a good distribution across populated areas. In total, 220 EAs were selected. Within each EA, trained enumerators used a systematic random method to select from a listing of households. Once a household was selected, enumerators randomly chose one adult permanent resident of the household to participate in the study.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The research team designed and developed a standardized, semi-structured questionnaire and consent form in English, Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrigna, Somali, and Afari, after consulting with local experts and representatives from NGOs, government, and academic institutions. Study subjects were interviewed in their preferred language. The questionnaire underwent a pre-test to ensure clarity of language, and necessary amendments were made to create the final version for interviewing study subjects in the regional states and city administrations.

▼ *Figure 4: Mixed-methods sequential design*



The final questionnaire consisted of 16 sections:

- Demographics and wealth
- Immediate priorities and access to services
- Information
- Security
- Peace
- Social cohesion
- Reconciliation
- Governance
- Measures for victims
- Accountability
- Justice mechanisms
- Truth
- Retribution
- Trials
- Vetting
- Exposure to violence and trauma

The instrument was coded and installed on phones and tablets running KoboToolbox, a free and open-source digital data collection platform. The tool enables quality control of completed forms and prevents common user mistakes such as missing questions.

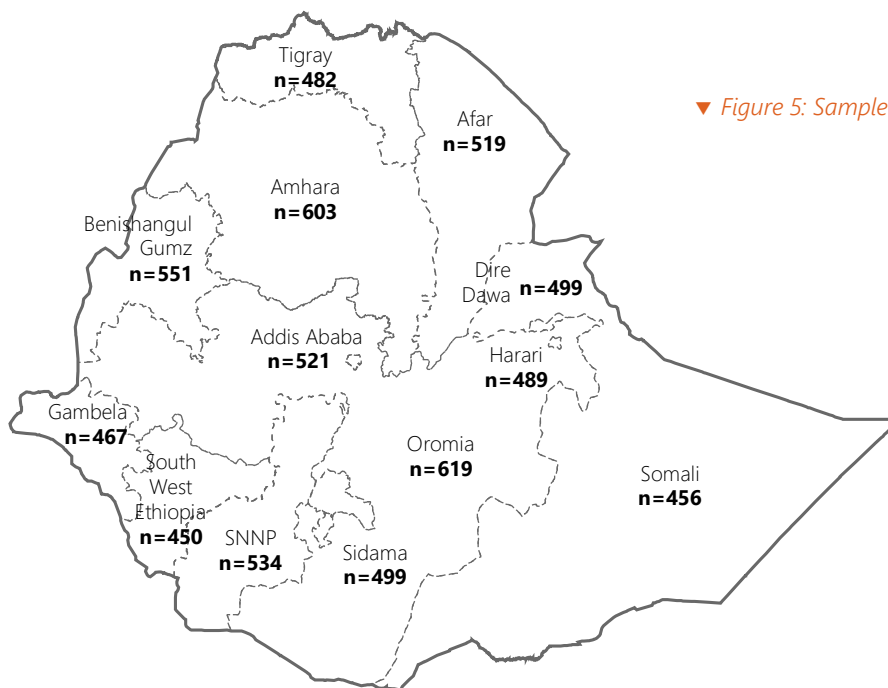
DATA COLLECTION, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ANALYSIS

Data collection was implemented by trained and experienced enumerators and supervisors communicating with study subjects in their mother

tongue. Data collection occurred between May 20th and July 17, 2023.

In total, interviewers attempted to visit 252 EAs and conducted interviews in 220 EAs (87% per the initial design); 32 EAs across 12 of the 13 strata were inaccessible due to insecurity or physical barriers. In total, interviewers approached 7,649 households, among which 6,689 (87.5%) could participate; 960 (12.5%) households could not participate because nobody was eligible, nobody was present, or nobody accepted. Among the participating households, interviewers approached 7048 individuals and conducted interviews with 6,689 (95%, above the sampling target), while 359 (5%) refused, were absent, or could not participate for other reasons. The final sample distribution is illustrated in figure 5. Data collection supervisors and senior university partners continuously monitored data collection for quality and compliance with the data collection protocol.

Data were transmitted daily from the field or at least every three days when connection to the Internet was not readily available. At the end of data collection, the data was exported from KoboToolbox to a statistical software for analysis. Weights were applied to reflect the unequal probability of sampling across strata.



▼ Figure 5: Sample by regions

Simple frequencies and cross-tabulations were computed. Subjects were categorized based on enumeration sites, districts, regions, and relevant stratification groups. Data aggregation enabled comparisons of perceptions and attitudes towards transitional justice options across geographic and socio-demographic factors.

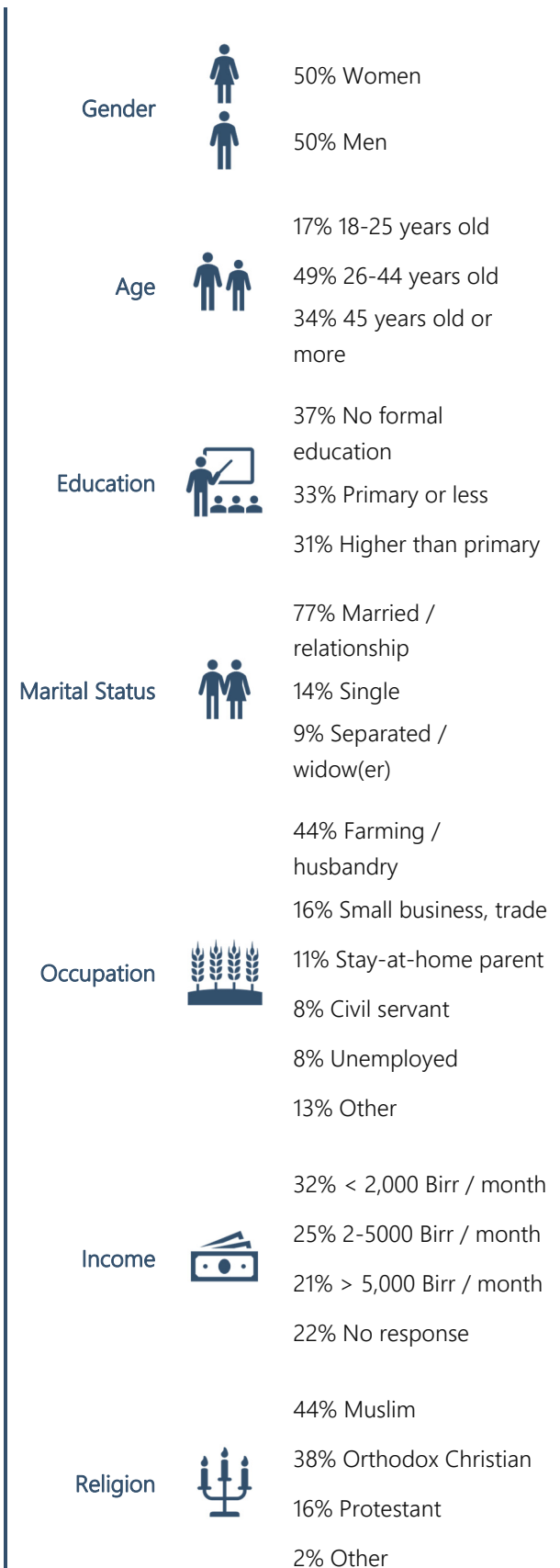
SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The survey methodology was designed to ensure equal representation of men and women in the sample (50% each) (figure 6). The average age of participants was 39.1 years old (only adult participants aged 18 years old or above were eligible). Most participants (77%) were in a marital relationship (77% married or living with partner), with smaller percentages of participants who were single and never married (14%), divorced or separated (5%) or widow(er) (4%). Most respondents were literate as defined by the ability to read and write a simple message in any language (62%); half or less of the population was literate in the regions of Somali (32%) and South West Ethiopia People (47%). This is consistent with reported levels of education, with 31% reporting no formal education (68% in Somali), and 31% reporting at least some secondary education or higher.

The most frequent occupation (44%) were in the agricultural sector (farming, 39%, and husbandry, 5%), and small business / trade (16%), with no other occupation accounting for more than ten percent of the population, except for women: 22% of women identified as a stay-at-home parent; 32% of the respondents reported income of less than 2,000 Birr / month.

In terms of religious belief, most respondents identified as Muslim (44%), Orthodox Christians (38%), or Protestants (16%). Ethnicity was not assessed due to the sensitivity of the question. However, Ethiopia is a highly diverse country with many ethnic groups, each with its distinct language, culture, and identity. Many of these ethnic groups are concentrated in specific regions of the country, often referred to as "homelands" or "ethnic regions," such as Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, SNNPR, Somali, and Afar.

▼ Figure 6: Sample characteristics



ETHICAL REVIEW

The study protocol was approved by an IRB section of the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers, and Anthropologists [ESSSA] in Ethiopia and was reviewed and exempted at Brigham and Women Hospital in the United States.

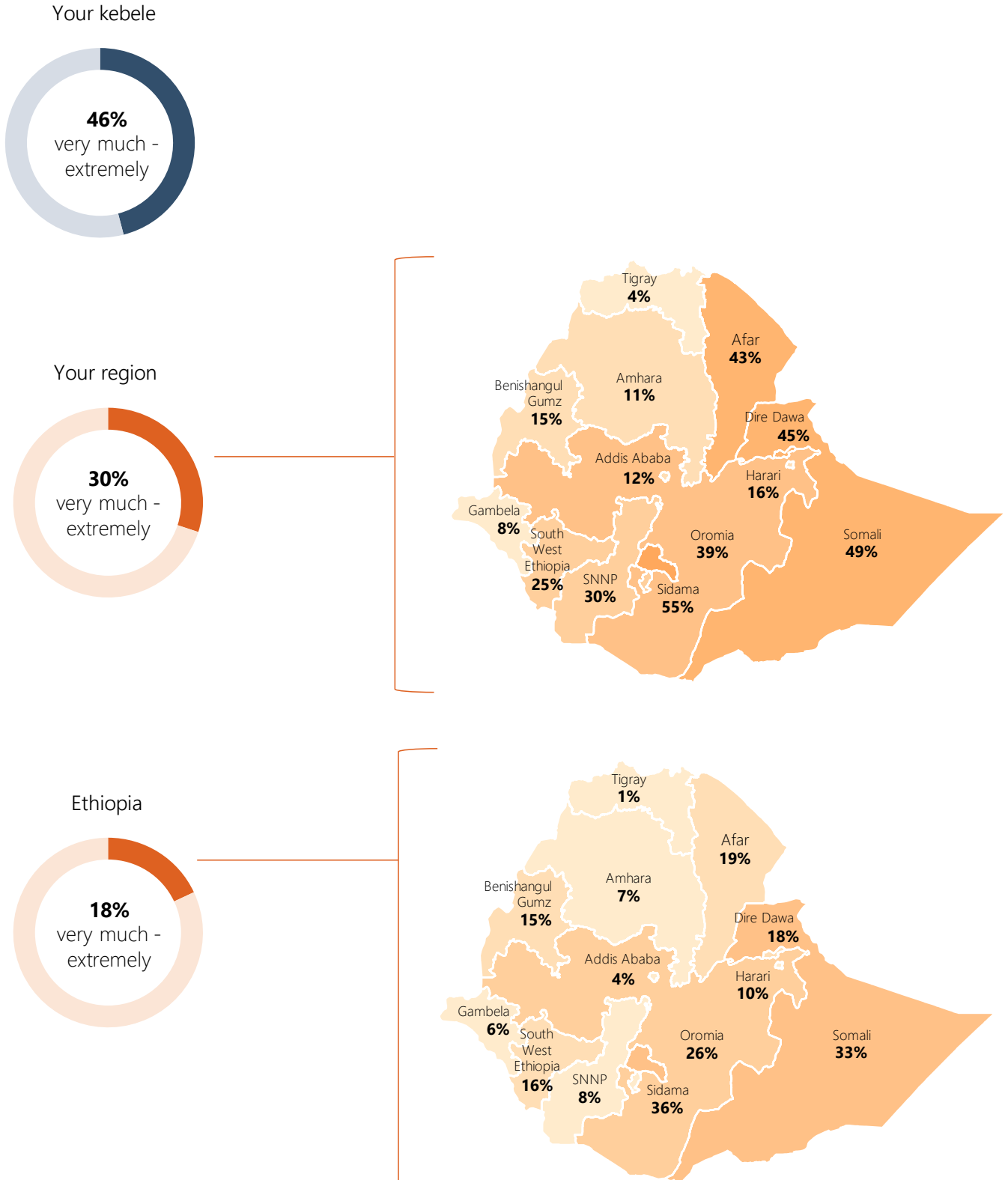
LIMITATIONS

Despite the rigorous design of this research, limitations are inherent in any study of this nature. Firstly, while the response rate is high (85% of the households selected and 95% of the individuals selected), some individuals opted out or could not participate. Furthermore, insecurity hampered access to some EAs. Although we cannot determine how non-participation might have skewed results, the sampling strategy was tailored to mitigate selection bias as much as possible. The responses reflect the opinions during the survey, acknowledging that perspectives can evolve. Secondly, the study's reliance on self-reported data raises various validity concerns. These include the accuracy of memory, potential misunderstandings of questions or concepts, emotional reactions to sensitive queries, or deliberate misreporting due to the stigma attached to specific responses. To address these issues, the questionnaire underwent throughout testing and refinement to ensure clarity and minimize biases. Despite these efforts, the potential for such biases cannot be eliminated. Our recognition of these limitations is essential for a nuanced interpretation of the study's findings, keeping in mind that they provide a snapshot of attitudes during a specific period and may not account for the complex and variable nature of individual memories and experiences. ■

RESULTS

▼ Figure 7: Perception of peace

How do you rate peace and stability in...
(% rating very – extremely peaceful)



PEACE AND SECURITY

THERE IS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM DESPITE PERCEPTIONS OF INSECURITY AND LACK OF PEACE.

The survey assessed how individuals perceive their environment in terms of peace and security. Perception of the environment as peaceful and secure is associated with greater social cohesion, fostering cooperation, and collective problem-solving within communities.

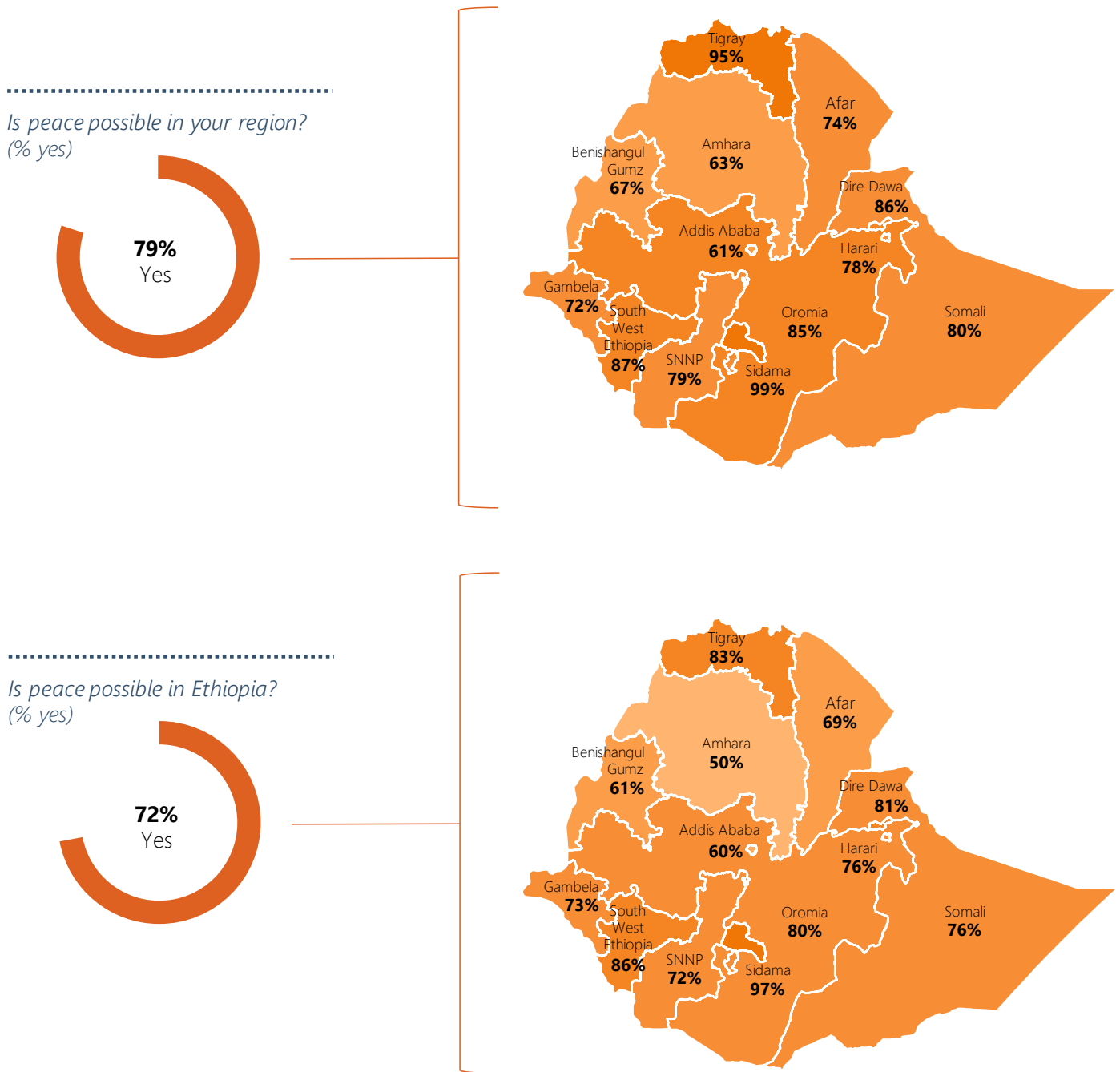
Additionally peaceful and secure environments increase the likelihood of engaging in positive behaviors, trust in institutions, contributing to community development, and participating in social interactions.

The results show that less than half the participants rate their environment to be peaceful. Most notably at the national level, just 18% rate the country to be peaceful. Participants are more frequently positive when considering peacefulness at the regional level (30% positive) and at the local level (46% positive about their Kebele). Data vary across regions, with positive perception of a peaceful environment being least frequent for all levels (national, regional and local) in the capital city of Addis Ababa and the regions of Tigray, Amhara, Gambela and Harari (figure 7).

The survey also finds that about half or less of the population feels safe in common situations such as conducting their daily activities (52%), walking at night in their kebele (41%), meeting strangers (31%), or talking to authorities (28%) and security forces (27%) (figure 9). Compared to the perception of a peaceful environment, there are greater variations in perceived security across regions. However, the regional patterns are similar. Respondents in Addis Ababa and the regions of Tigray, Amhara, Gambela, and Tigray, Amhara, Gambela and Harari were least likely to report feeling safe across the proposed situations.

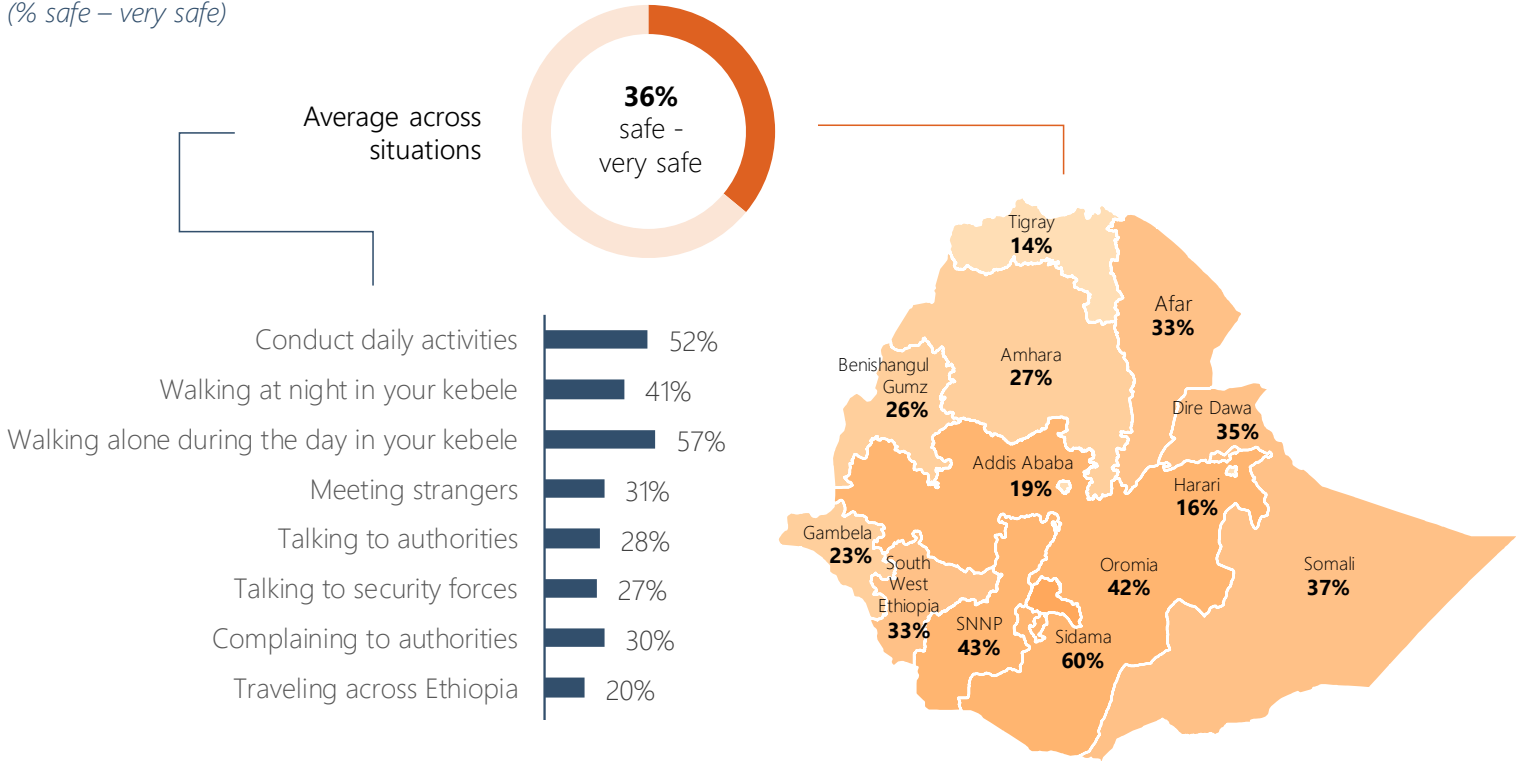
Despite rating their environment as insecure, most participants believed at the time of the survey that security in Ethiopia would improve in the next year (61%), and most believed that peace was possible in the country (72%) and for their region (79%) (figure 8). Respondents were least optimistic about prospects for security in Addis Ababa (30%) and the regions of Amhara (36%), and Gambela (36%). Respondents were least positive about the prospect of peace at the national level in Addis Ababa and the region of Amhara (60% and 50%, respectively). The respondents in these same areas were also least positive about the prospect of peace at the regional level (61% and 63%, respectively) ■

▼ Figure 8: Perception of peace (continued)

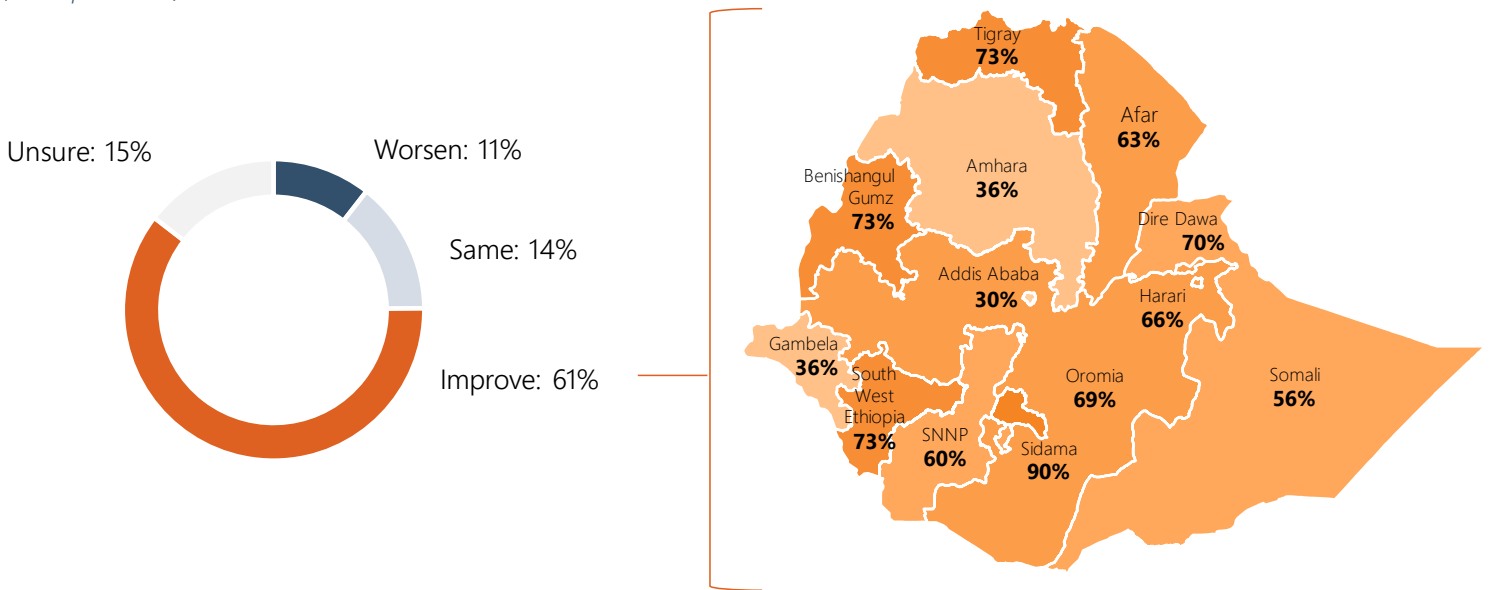


▼ Figure 9: Perception of security

How safe you feel doing the following
(% safe – very safe)

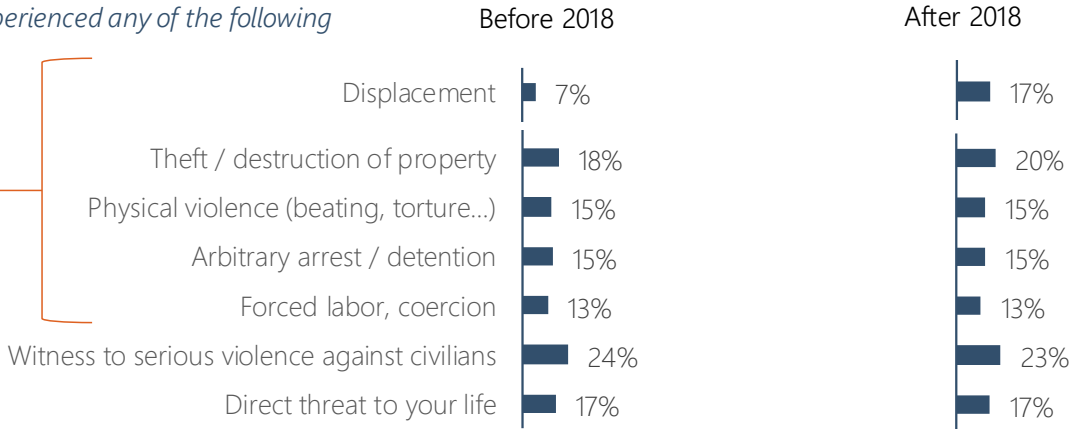


How will security in Ethiopia change in the next year?
(% respondents)

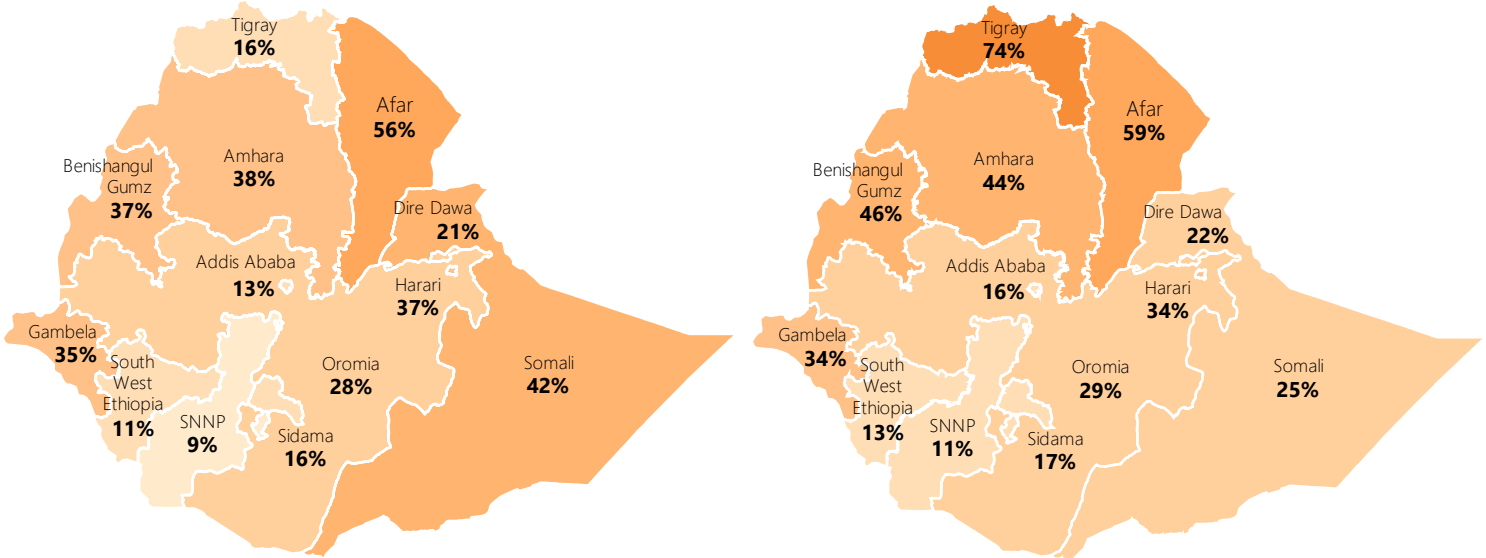
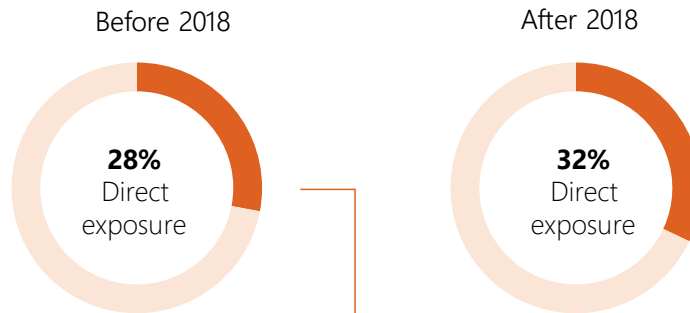


▼ Figure 10: Exposure to violence

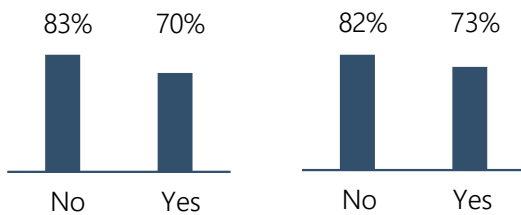
Have you experienced any of the following (% yes)



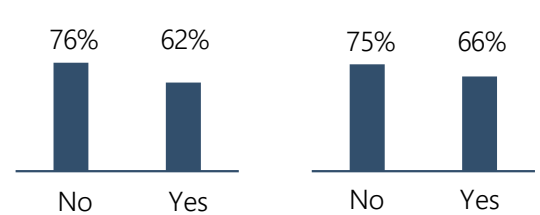
Direct exposure (% participants)



Is peace possible in your region? (% yes)



Is peace possible in Ethiopia? (% yes)



Direct exposure Before 2018

After 2018

Direct exposure Before 2018

After 2018

WIDESPREAD TRAUMA UNDERMINES VIEWS ON PEACE AND SECURITY.

To assess the severity of conflict-related harm and its impact on individuals in different regions, the survey asked respondents to report on their direct experience of violence, including the theft and destruction of property, physical violence (beating, torture), arbitrary arrest or detention, and experiences of forced labor or other forms of coercion. The survey distinguished between the periods before and after 2018 since that year marked significant political and social changes in the country with the election of Abiy Ahmed.

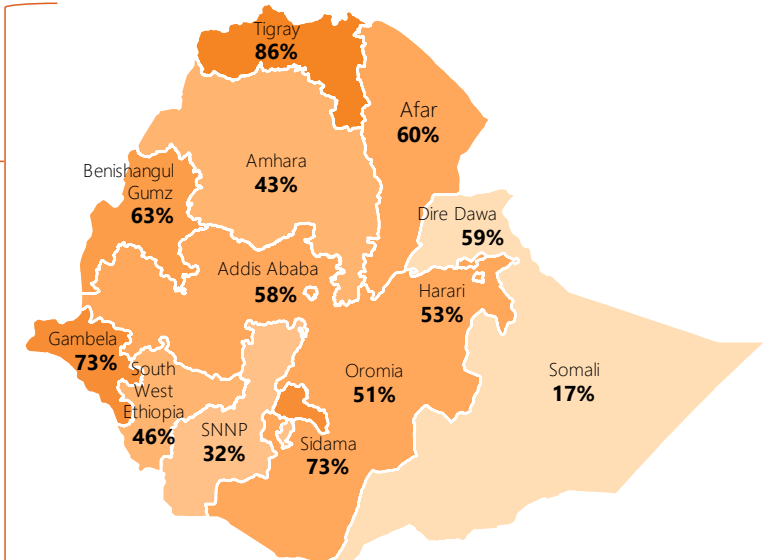
Nationally, 17% of the population reported being forcibly displaced after 2018, compared to 7% who reported being displaced before 2018. Overall, 32% of the population reported being exposed to some form violence after 2018, compared to 28% before 2018. Combined, as many as 37% report exposure to conflict-related violence at some point in their past (figure 10).

The frequency of self-reported exposure to conflict-related violence is similar for both periods across all regions of Ethiopia, except for a major increase in Tigray, as expected, where 74% reported exposure to violence after 2018 compared to 16% before 2018, and in Ethiopia Somali, which shows a significant decrease in reported exposure (25% after 2018 compared to 42% before 2018). The results show that exposure to violence is widespread, with more than one third of participants reporting exposure in six of the regions and city administrations after 2018 and similar proportion reporting exposure to violence before 2018 in six regions as well.

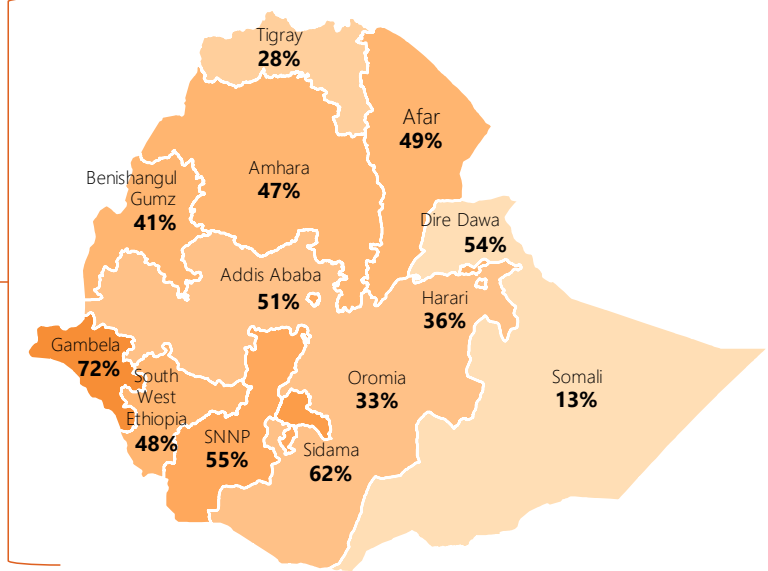
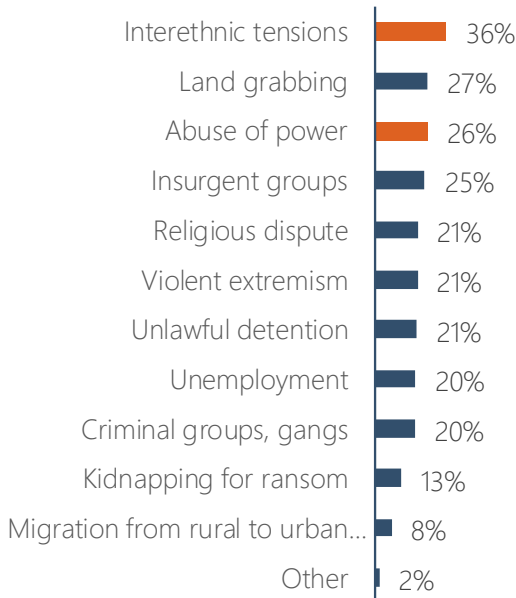
The results also show that survivors of violence, both before and after 2018, tend to be less optimistic about future improvement in security and prospects for peace compared to those who did not experience such violence. ■

▼ Figure 11: Root causes and response

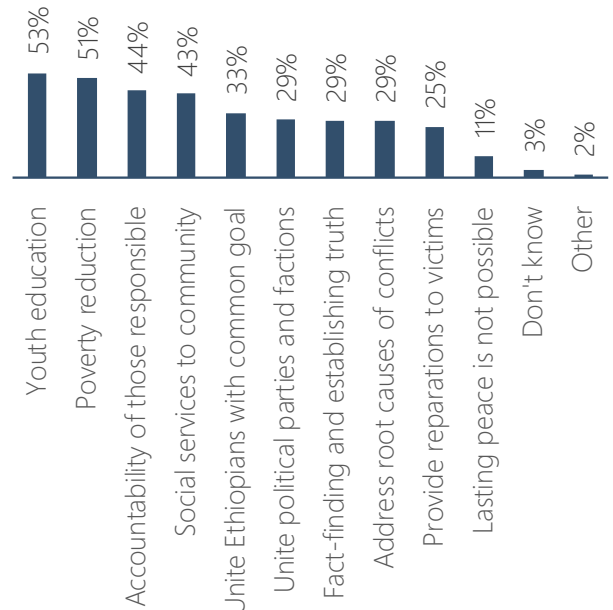
What are the causes of conflicts and violence?
(% respondents)



What are the causes of insecurity?
(% respondents)



What needs to be done for lasting peace?
(% respondents)



POVERTY REDUCTION AND MEASURES FOR SECURITY AND JUSTICE ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS CONFLICTS RESULTING FROM POLITICAL AND ETHNIC DIVIDES AND COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES.

Participants identify a wide range of causes for both insecurity and conflicts in Ethiopia. When considering insecurity, the most frequently mentioned causes are interethnic tensions (36%), land grabbing (27%), abuse of power (26%), and the presence of insurgent groups (25%) (figure 11). There are some overlaps with the most frequently identified sources of conflicts, including political and ethnic differences (48% and 39%, respectively), land and resource disputes (34%), sectarianism (29%), elite rivalries (28%) and economic inequalities (26%). Political and ethnic differences are the most frequently identified causes of conflicts in all regions, except in Somali, where a higher percentage mention land and resource disputes.

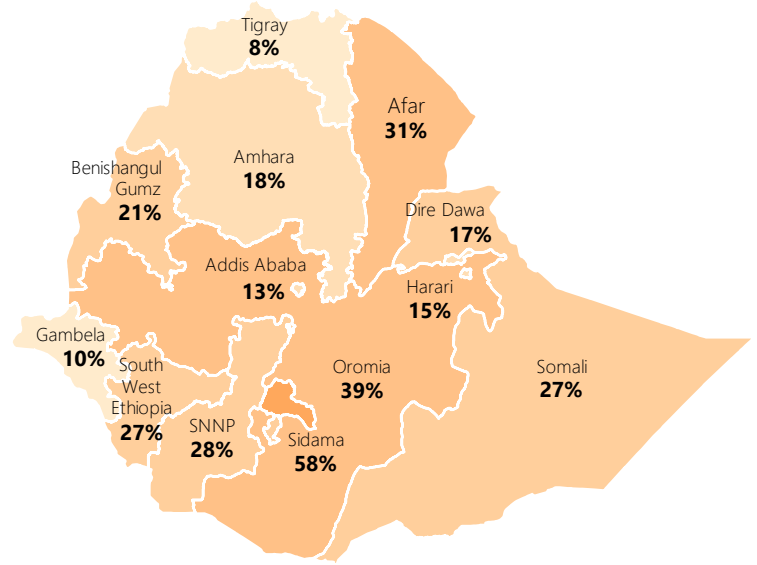
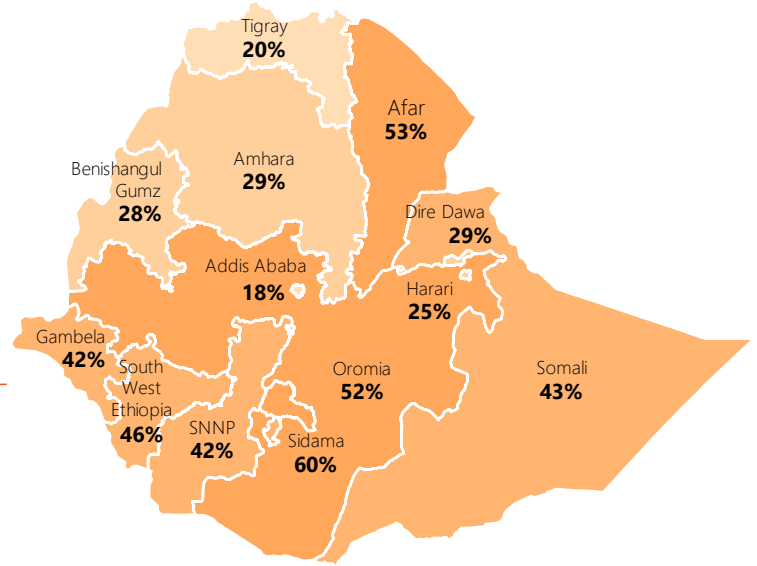
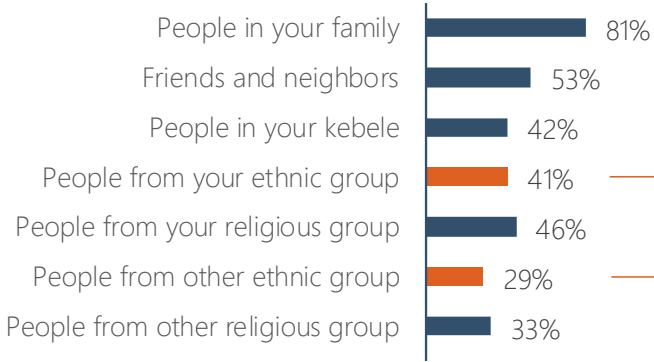
Politics (mentioned by 57% of the participants) and ethnicity (mentioned by 54% of respondents) are also identified as the main factors that divide Ethiopians. Politics is most frequently mentioned in the regions of Tigray (77%), Gambela (75%), Sidama (70%) and Oromia (68%). Ethnicity is most frequently identified as a factor that divides Ethiopians in SSNP (86%), Addis Ababa (83%), Sidama (82%), South West Ethiopia People (75%), and Gambela (75%).

When asked what measures would enhance security and peace, participants often point out the importance of addressing poverty and lack of services, implementing security sector reforms, and ensuring justice and accountability. These proposed measures align with what respondents believe should be the government's priorities. In terms of enhancing security, the measures mentioned most frequently by respondents are reducing poverty (55%), providing education to youth (53%), improving the capacity of the police and army (38% and 33%, respectively), and delivering essential services (34%). As for peace, the

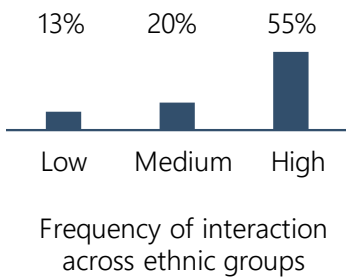
most frequently mentioned means of achieving peace include educating youth (53%), reducing poverty (51%), holding perpetrators accountable (44%), and providing social services (43%). Respondents believe that the government's overall priorities should be to improve security (55%), deliver essential services and needs (54%), provide education (40%), and generate jobs and employment (40%). Although regional differences exist in proposed approaches to peace and security, the most common responses remain consistent among respondents. ■

▼ Figure 12: Social cohesion

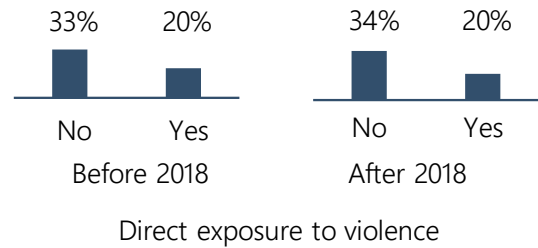
How much do you trust the following?
(% very - extremely)



How much do you trust people from other ethnic group?
(% very - extremely) by frequency of interaction



How much do you trust people from other ethnic group?
(% very - extremely) by exposure to violence



DISTRUST ACROSS GROUPS IS HIGH, BUT EXPANDING INTER-GROUP INTERACTION MAY HELP BUILD TRUST.

This survey shows that ethnic divides are perceived as a leading cause of Ethiopia's conflicts and political violence. Distrust among different communities is pronounced (figure 12): Only 29% of participants expressed trusting 'very much or extremely' individuals from ethnic groups different from their own, and just 34% expressed similar levels of trust in people from another religion than theirs. Even considering intra-group trust, few participants expressed trusting 'very much or extremely' individuals in their neighborhood (53%), Kebele (42%), from their ethnic group (41%), or their own religious group (46%).

These figures are significantly lower than the levels of trust observed in other regions with extensive inter-ethnic conflicts, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). More than 20 polls conducted between 2013 and 2022 found that interethnic trust never dipped below 60 percent in the eastern part of the DRC.⁵⁴

Social trust across ethnic groups is especially shallow in Tigray (5%) and Addis Ababa (10%). Both administrative areas generally have the lowest percentages of participants expressing trust within and across groups.

The low level of trust across ethnic groups may explain why less than half the participants expressed comfort at the idea of interaction with individuals from another ethnic group, even in ordinary situations like working together (43%), participating in events or ceremonies together (40%), or living as neighbors (35%).

However, increased interaction is associated with higher levels of trust and comfort across situations. Nationally, about one in three participants indicated frequent interaction with people from another ethnic group (42%) or another religious group (34%). To facilitate comparison, we grouped individuals with few interactions (35%), somewhat frequent interactions (33%), and frequent interactions (32%). Among participants with few interactions, just 13% expressed

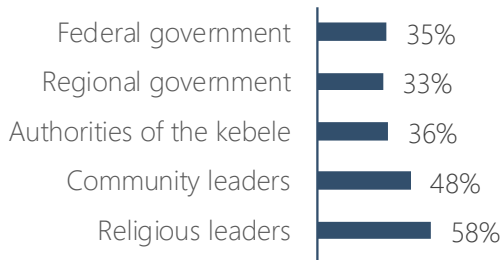
trust in other ethnic groups, compared to 20% among respondents with somewhat frequent interactions and 55% among those with frequent interactions. Similarly, 14% of respondents with few interactions expressed trust in people from other religious groups, compared to 25% and 33%, respectively, for participants with 'somewhat frequent' and 'frequent' interactions.

We explored the relationship between exposure to violence and trust and found that exposure to violence is associated with lower levels of inter-group trust.

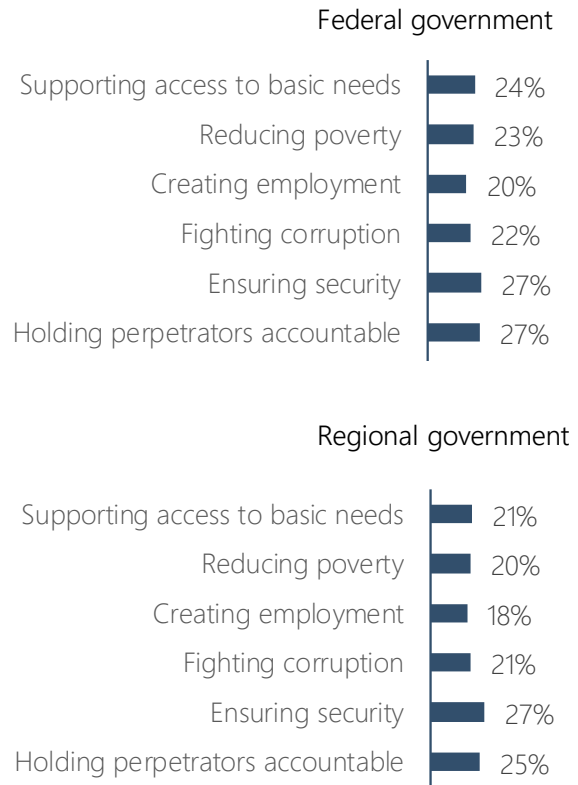
Among participants reporting exposure to violence after 2018, 18% express inter-ethnic trust, compared to 34% of those who reported no such exposure to violence; similarly, 20% of those reporting exposure to violence before 2018 express inter-ethnic trust, compared to 34% of those who did not report such exposure to violence. Distrust across groups does not appear to be associated with optimism for peace. ■

▼ Figure 13: Governance

How would you rate the contribution of the following actors to building peace in Ethiopia? (% good - very good)



How would you judge the efforts of the federal and regional government in the following areas? (% good - very good)



TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE IS LOW, ESPECIALLY AMONG SURVIVORS, UNDERMINING OPTIMISM FOR PEACE.

About one-third of the population is positive about the government's efforts toward peace at the federal (35%), regional (33%), or local (kebele – 36%) levels.

Perception of these efforts at the federal level is least positive in the regions of Tigray (11%), Amhara (10%), and Addis Ababa (14%) (figure 13).

More generally, less than 3 out of 10 participants are positive about the efforts of the federal government across a series of domains, including supporting access to basic needs (24%), reducing poverty (23%), creating employment (20%), fighting corruption (22%), ensuring security (27%), or holding accountable perpetrators of violence during the conflicts (27%). The percentages are similar or lower for the regional government's performances (figure 14).

The respondents' poor perception of performances may explain why trust in all levels of government – national, regional, and other local levels – is relatively low, with less than a third of the population trusting that such actors would act in the best interest of the population: 28% trust the federal government to act in their best interest, compared to 26% expressing trust in their regional government and 25% expressing trust in their kebele administration. Less than 10% of the population express trust in federal and regional authorities in regions like Tigray, Amhara, and Addis Ababa.

Respondents are more positive about the contribution to peace of religious (58%) and community leaders (47%) in all regions except Addis Ababa (23%) and Harari (29%). Trust is higher in religious leaders (49%) and elders/community leaders (47%).

Exposure to violence is associated with lower levels of trust in government: 13% of those reporting exposure to violence after 2018 express trust in the government, compared to 35% of those who reported no violence. Exposure to violence before 2018 is also associated with lower trust: 16% of those exposed report trust in the federal government compared to 33% of those not

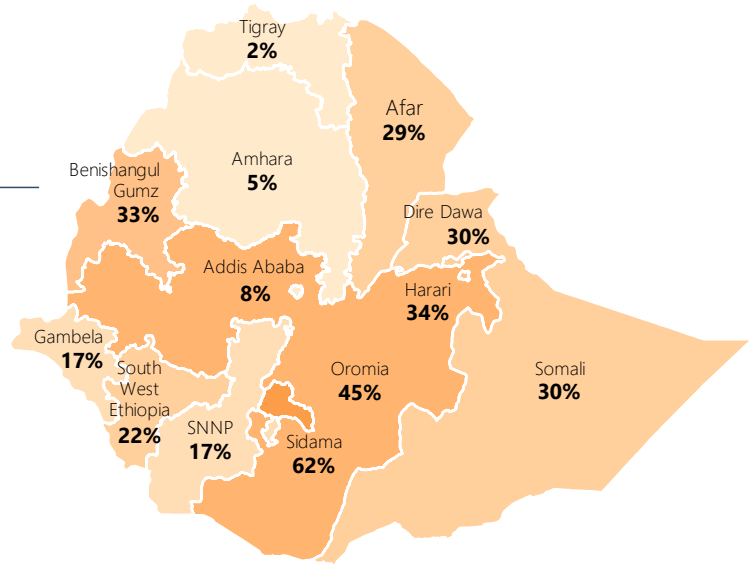
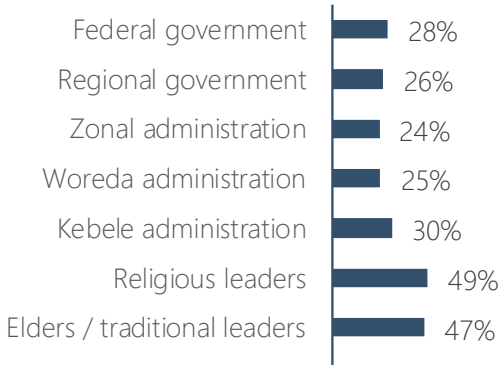
exposed. Low trust in the government is associated with less optimism for peace. Among participants who do not believe that peace is possible, 8% express trust that the federal government acts in the interest of the population, compared to 34% among respondents who believe that peace is possible.

The disconnect between the Ethiopian population and their governing institutions extends to the justice system (figure 15), with less than a third expressing trust in judges (30%) or existing investigative systems (20%). Only 28% trust the federal government to implement fair accountability efforts. Additionally, trust in government appears to be tightly linked with optimism (or pessimism) about the peace process. Among respondents who are optimistic about the prospect for peace, 34% reported that they trust the government to implement fair accountability efforts, compared to just 13% of respondents who are not optimistic about peace.

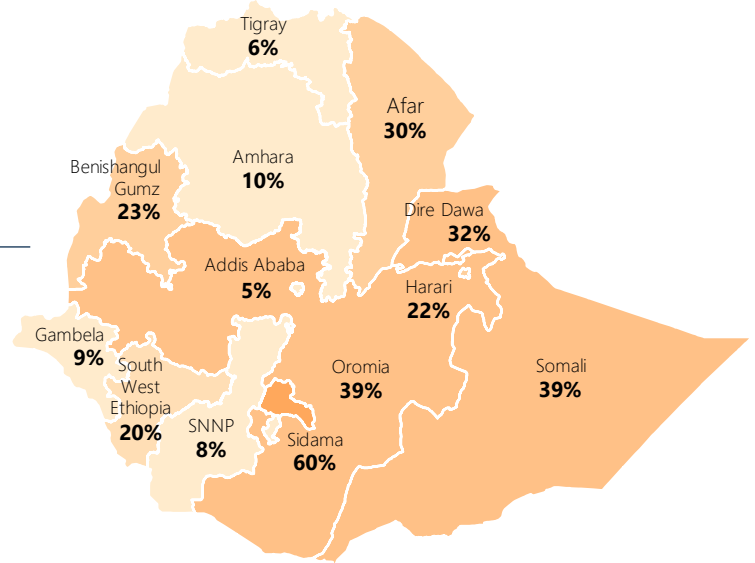
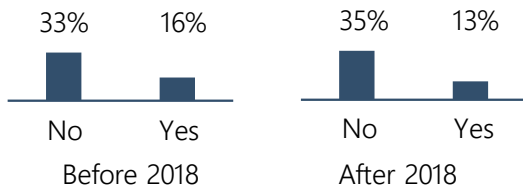
More generally, 26% of participants express trust in the Ethiopian justice system; an opinion shared by just 3% of the participants in Tigray, 10% in Addis Ababa, 14% in SNNP, 16% in Amhara and 18% in Gambela. Lack of trust is generally associated with a perceived lack of judicial independence (71%), corruption (56%), or involvement in violence (44%). In addition, the survey finds that half of the population or more sees the Ethiopian justice system as too expensive for ordinary people (50%), inaccessible (53%) and too complicated (53%). ■

▼ Figure 14: Governance (continued)

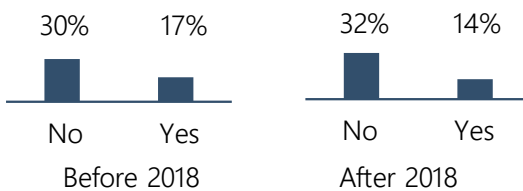
How much you trust the **following actors** to act in the best interest of the population?



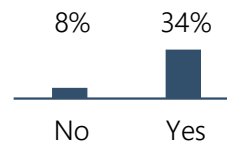
How much do you trust the **regional government** (% very - extremely) by exposure to violence



How much do you trust the **federal government** (% very - extremely) by exposure to violence



How much do you trust the **federal government** (% very - extremely) by belief that peace is possible

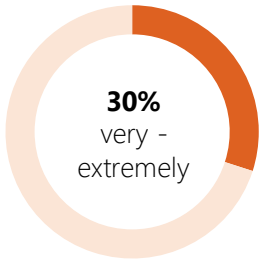


Direct exposure to violence

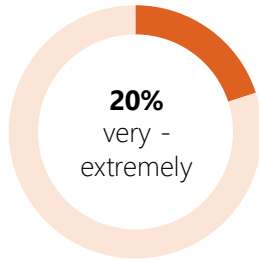
Believe peace is possible

▼ Figure 15: Confidence in justice

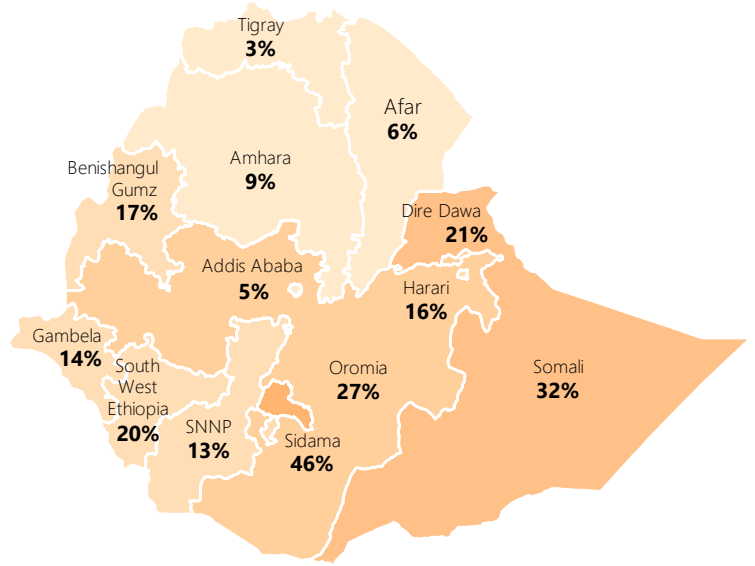
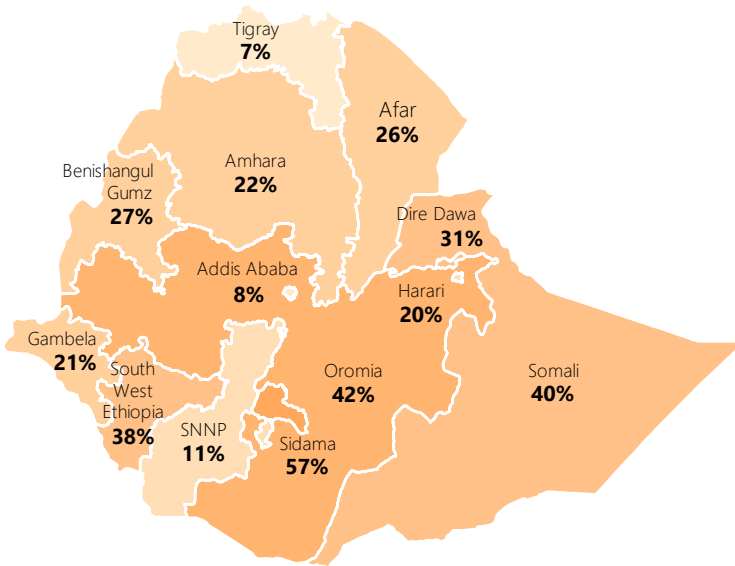
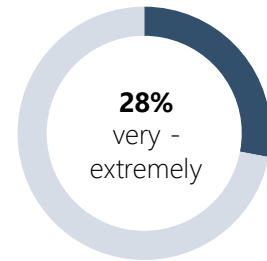
How much do you trust judges?
(% very - extremely)



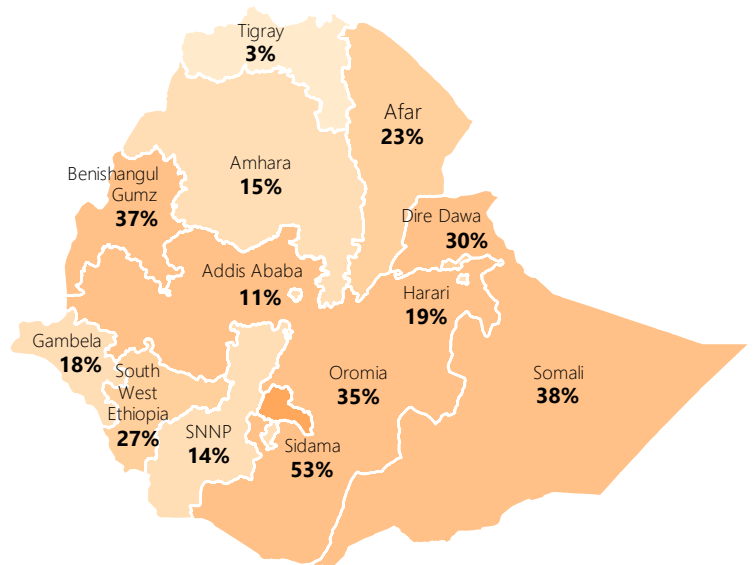
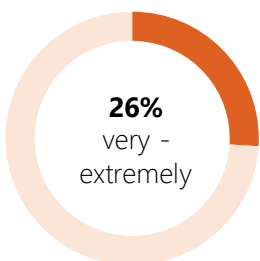
How much do you trust the existing investigative and prosecution system?
(% very - extremely)



How much do you trust the federal government to implement fair accountability efforts?
(% very - extremely)

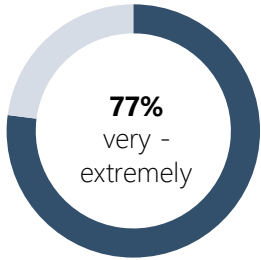


How much do you trust the justice system?
(% very - extremely)

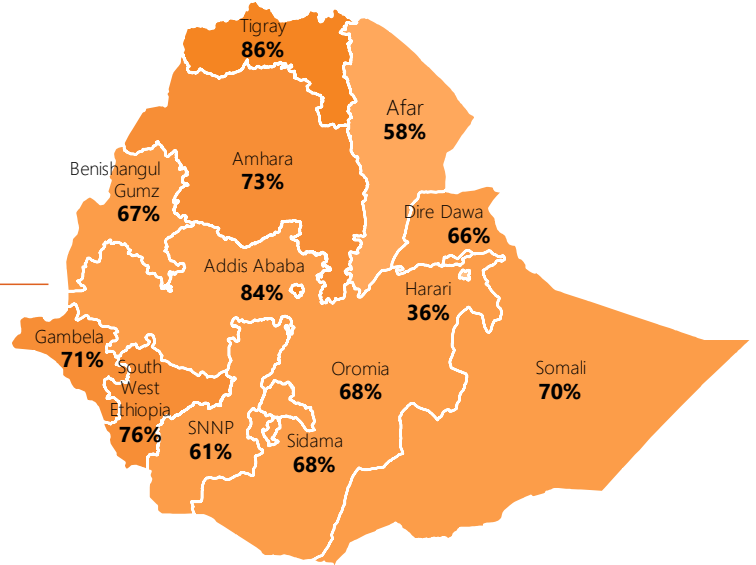
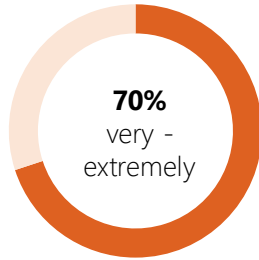


▼ Figure 16: Important of transitional justice mechanisms

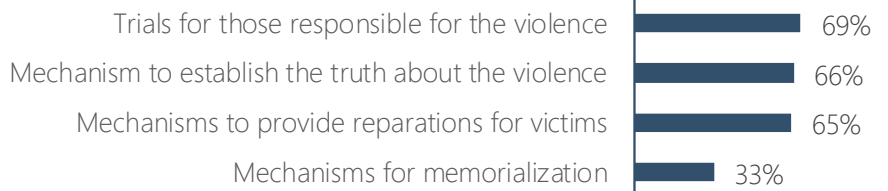
How important is **justice** to build a **lasting peace**?
(% very - extremely)



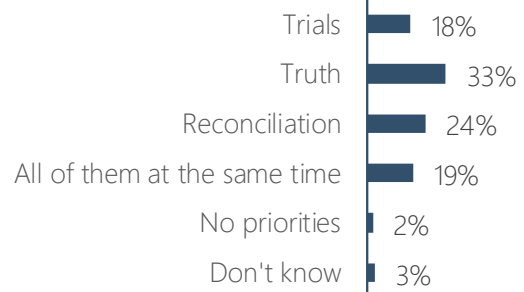
How important is **accountability** to build a **lasting peace**?
(% very - extremely)



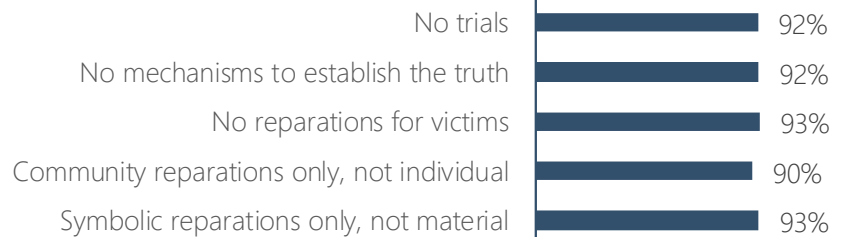
More generally, how important is it to have mechanisms that seek to do the following?
(% very – extremely important)



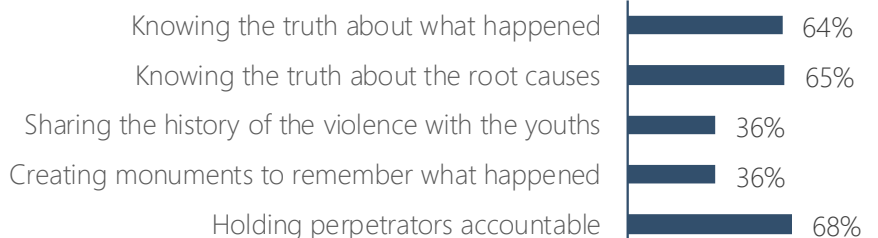
Which should come first?
(% not acceptable)



Would the following be acceptable?
(% not acceptable)



How important is the following **for reconciliation**?
(% very – extremely important)



TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

ACCOUNTABILITY IS SEEN AS CENTRAL TO HOPES OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, REQUIRING CRIMINAL ACCOUNTABILITY, TRUTH-SEEKING AND REPARATIONS.

As noted above, holding perpetrators accountable (44%) is among the top three most frequent responses when asked openly what, if anything, needs to be done to establish lasting peace in Ethiopia, alongside education (53%) and poverty reduction (51%). Furthermore, respondents' views on accountability appear to be deeply held: 70% believed that accountability was 'very much' or 'extremely' important to build a lasting peace, and 77% reported that justice was similarly important for peace. These views were held by more than half the population in every region except Harari (figure 16).

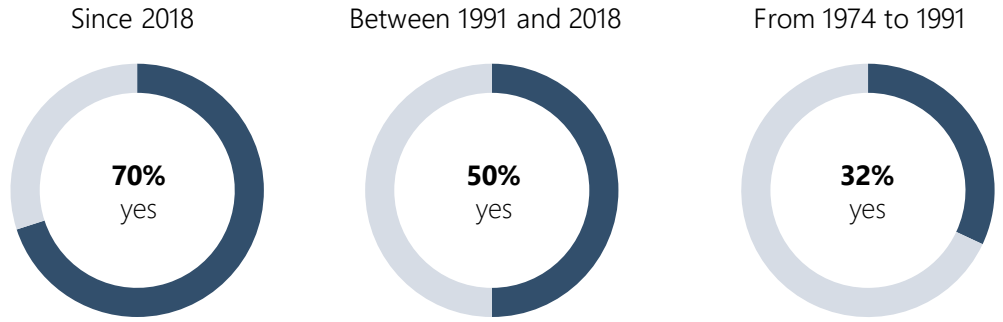
When asked more directly about the importance of various mechanisms, most participants judged that it is 'very important or essential to have trials for those responsible for the violence (69%), to have mechanisms to establish the truth (66%) or provide reparations (65%). Participants placed less emphasis on memorialization (33%). Almost all participants would find it unacceptable to have no trials (92%), no truth-seeking mechanism (93%), or no reparations (90%). While some differences exist across regions, more than half the population in every region ranks trials, truth-seeking, or reparations as very or extremely important.

The survey also explored whether respondents felt transitional justice could lead to reconciliation across ethnic and social divides. The results show that knowing the truth about what happened, and the root causes of conflicts, are important to 64% and 65% of the population, respectively. Similarly, 68% see accountability as very or extremely important. Fewer

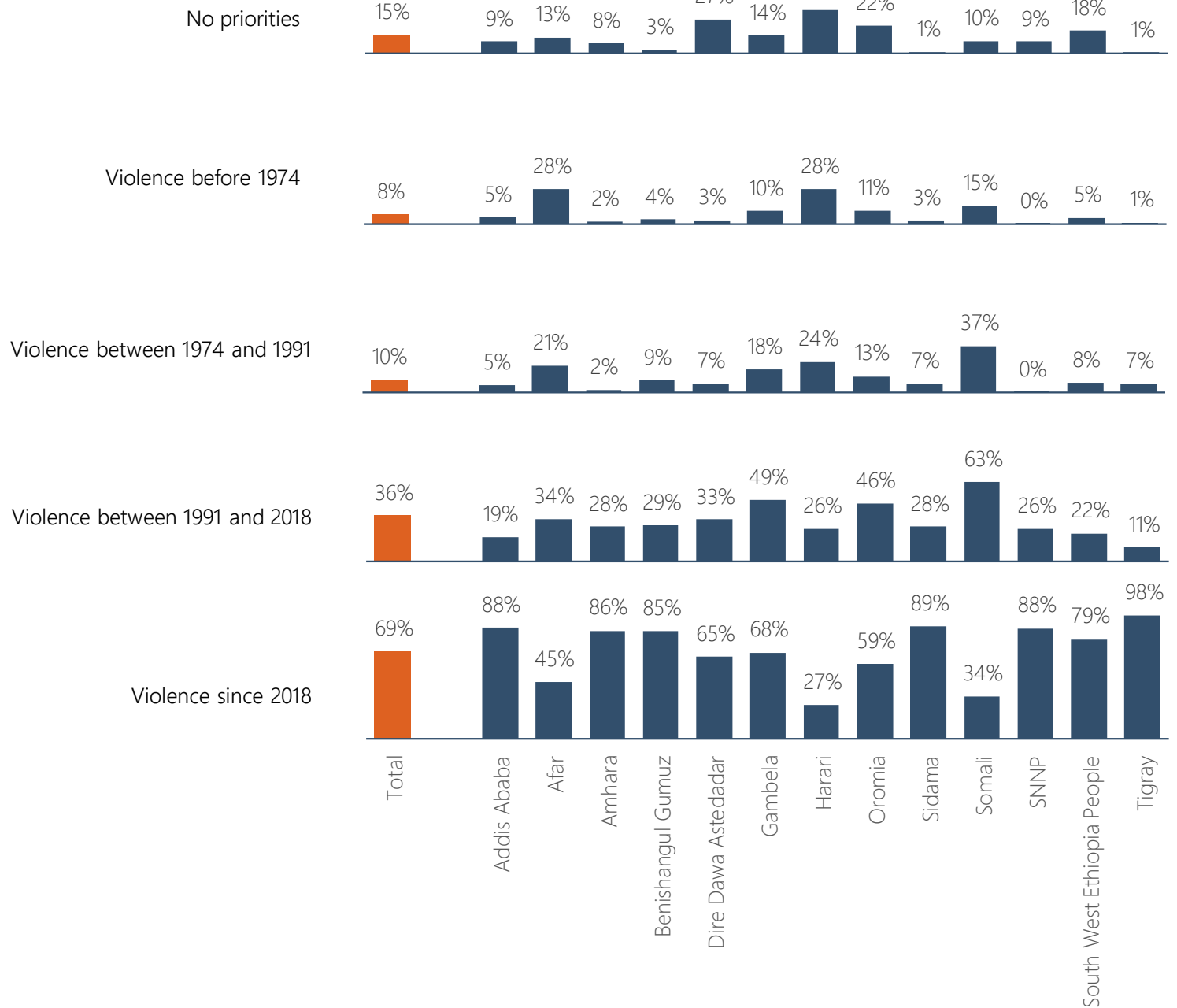
respondents emphasized memorialization, including sharing history with young people (36%) and creating monuments (36%). Accountability is seen as necessary across all regions for more than half the population, except Harari (36%). ■

▼ Figure 17: Temporal priority

Is it possible to achieve justice for the violence that occurred over the following periods?
(% Yes)



Which period should be prioritized for accountability, if any?
(% participants, multiple priorities)
By regions



THERE IS CAUTIOUS HOPE FOR JUSTICE, BUT WITH SOME DISAGREEMENT ON THE TIME PERIOD TO PRIORITIZE AND THE VENUE FOR TRIALS.

Just as there is cautious optimism for peace, most participants believe that it is possible to achieve justice in Ethiopia for violence that occurred since 2018 (70%). Participants are less optimistic about the possibility of justice for earlier periods of violence, including for violence that occurred after the civil war, between 1991 and 2018 (50%), or during the civil war (32%). This pessimism may reflect practical barriers to documenting and investigating past crimes (figure 17).

Accordingly, most respondents believe that the most recent violence since 2018 should be prioritized in terms of providing measures for victims (81%) and accountability measures (69%). In contrast, fewer respondents support prioritizing the period from 1991 to 2018 (36% and 36%, respectively) or the civil war period from 1974 to 1991 (9% and 10% respectively). There are differences across regions, however, with less than half the population in regions such as Afar, Ethiopia Somali, and Harari prioritizing the period since 2018 for accountability, reflecting how Ethiopia's conflicts and violence have affected different areas over time.

Further highlighting the importance of trials, 76% of participants said it was necessary to hold trials for the violence that occurred since 2018. Support dropped to 54% when respondents were asked about the 1991-2018 period, and only 36% found it necessary when asked about the civil war (1974-1991). In Ethiopia Somali, however, 82% of the population affirmed the necessity of trials for the 1991-2018 period, and 61% said trials were necessary for the civil war period (figure 18).

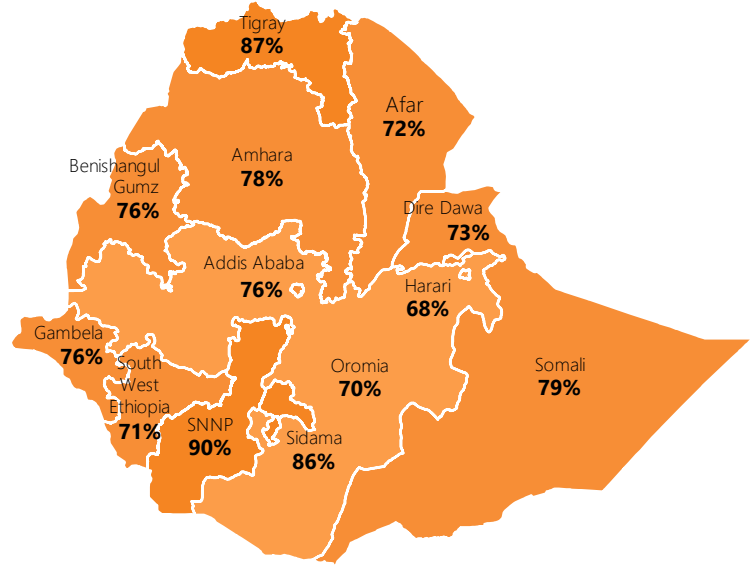
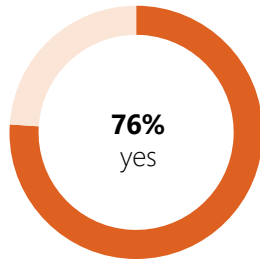
In addition to diverging views on temporal focus, there are significant regional differences in people's preferences for specific venues for criminal trials. Nationally, 41% favor existing domestic courts, 23% favor a new special domestic court, 23% favor a hybrid court with international/foreign judges, and smaller percentages favor international courts set up by the UN (11%) or the African Union (3%). But in Tigray, just 2% favored domestic courts, compared to 60% favoring a UN tribunal and 27% favoring a hybrid court. In contrast, less than 5% favored a UN tribunal in regions like Benishangul Gumuz, Sidama, or the South-West region, where most favored domestic trials (figure 19).

These perspectives may be a function of individual exposure to violence, trust in governmental institutions, and regional dynamics. As a result, a singular approach might not be universally accepted or effective. ■

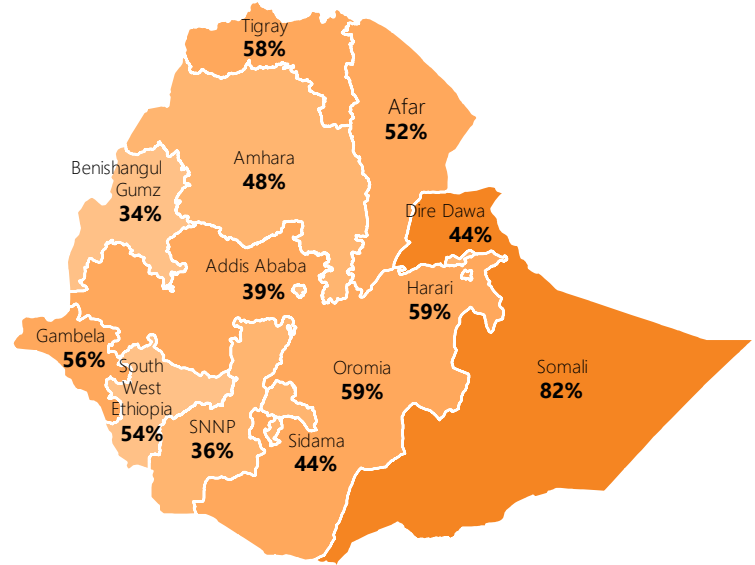
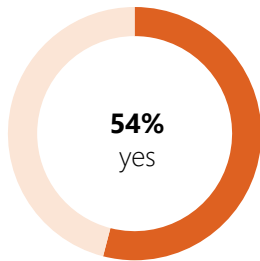
▼ Figure 18: Temporal priority (continued)

Are trials necessary for the violence that occurred over the following periods?
(% Yes)

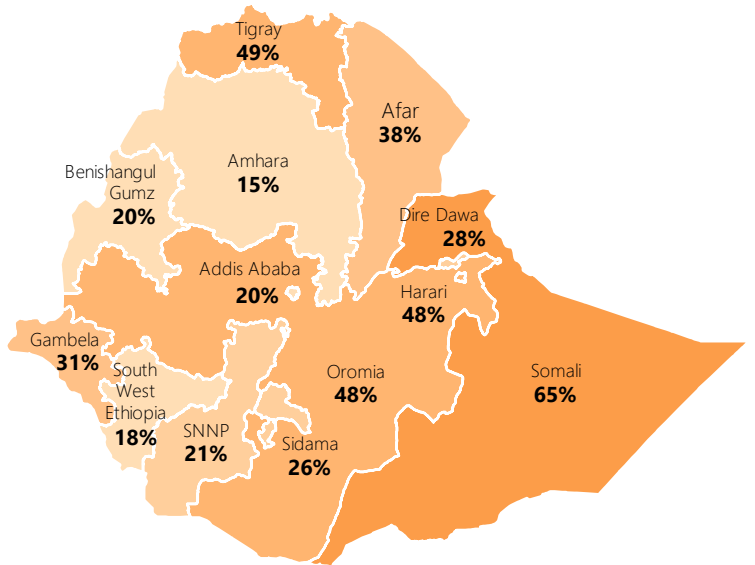
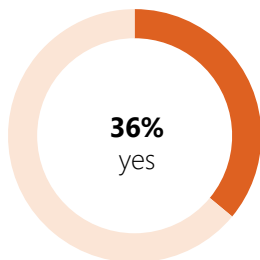
Since 2018



Between 1991 and 2018

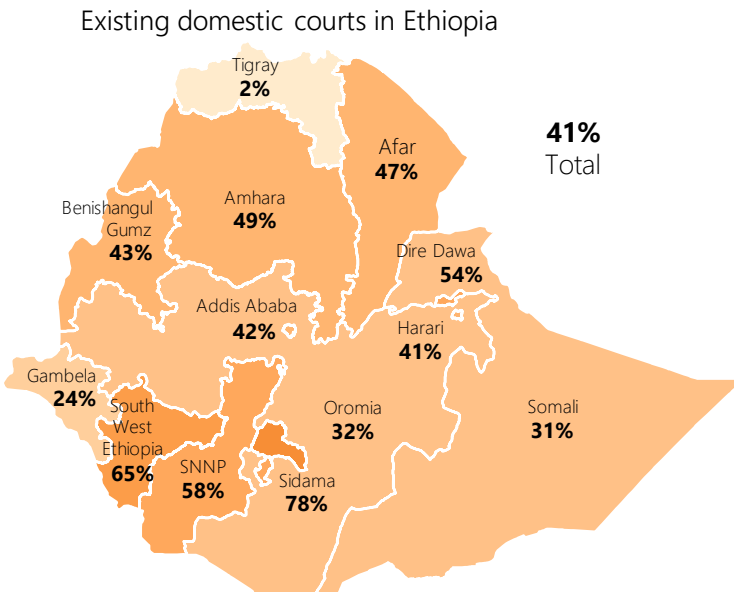


From 1974 to 1991

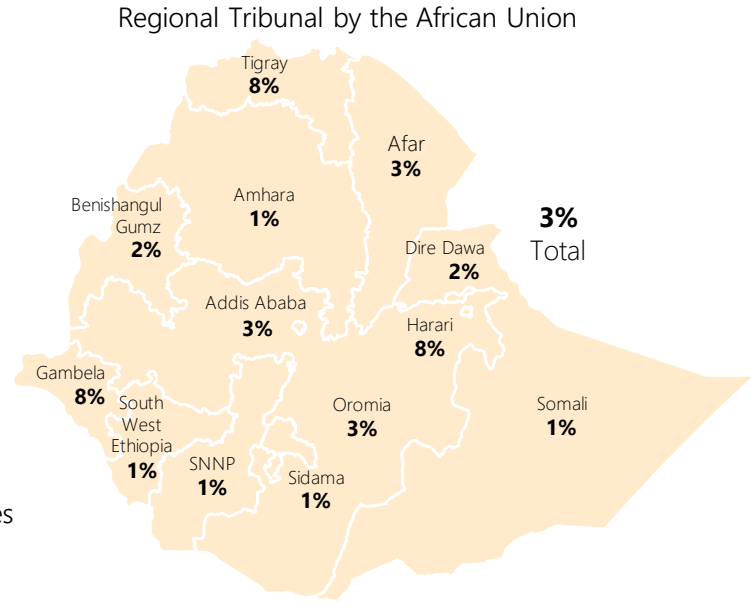
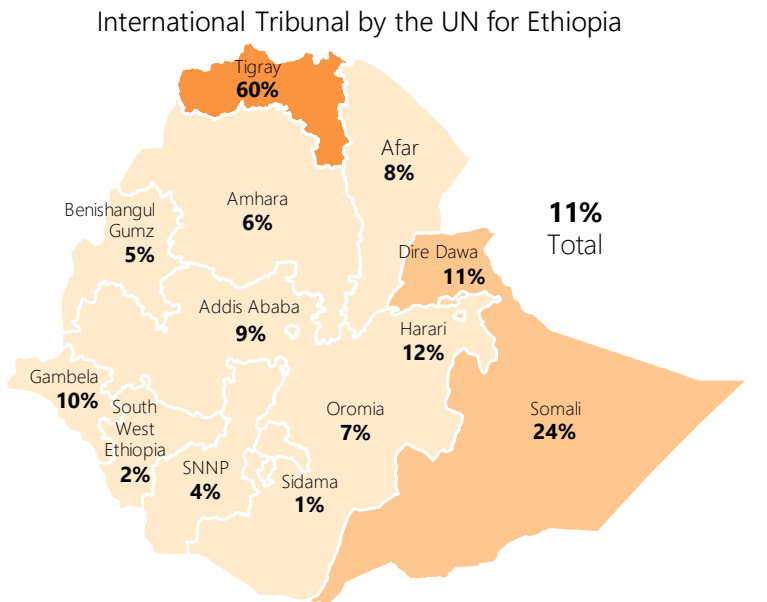
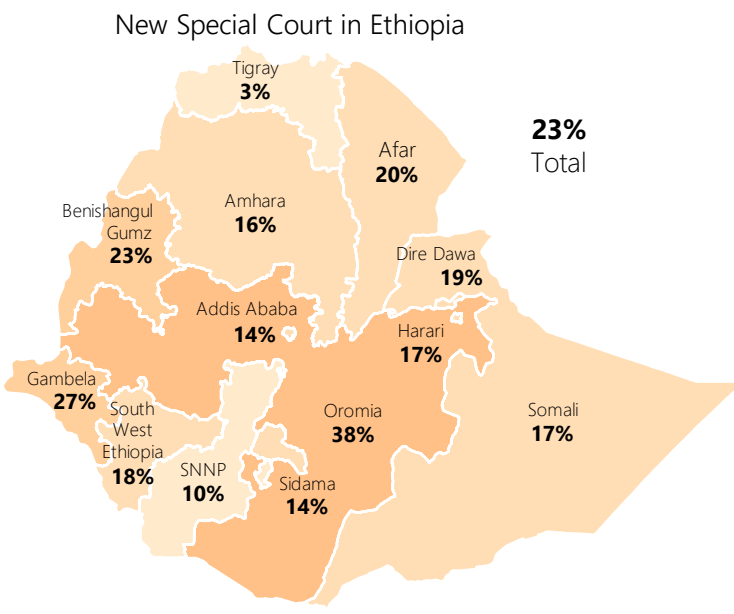
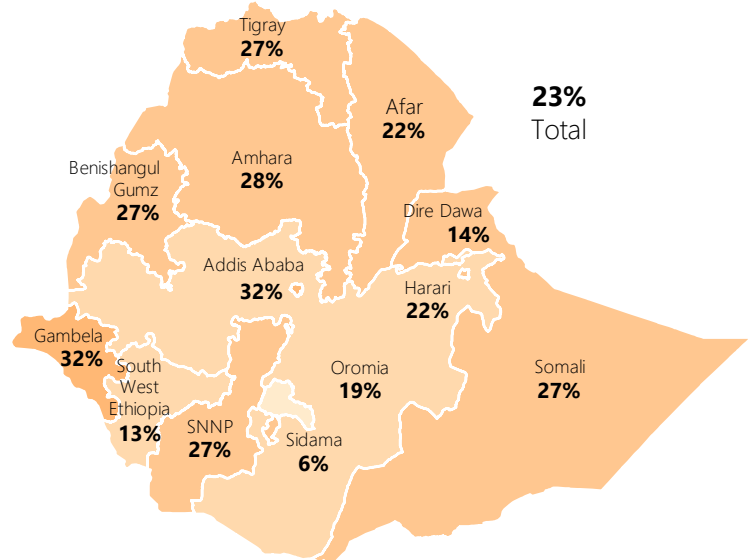


▼ Figure 19: Venue for trials

which of the following would you prefer to hold trials for the violence and conflicts in Ethiopia (% participants, one choice)



Hybrid court with Ethiopian and International/foreign judges



Acceptable for trials (% acceptable)

- 37% Existing domestic courts in Ethiopia
- 35% New Special Court in Ethiopia
- 31% Hybrid court with Ethiopian and International/foreign judges
- 28% International Tribunal by the UN for Ethiopia
- 25% Regional Tribunal by the African Union

▼ Figure 20: Accountability and punishment

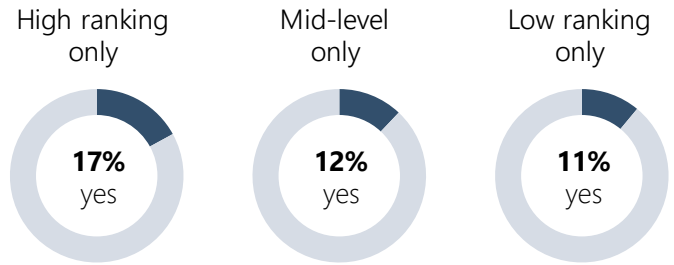
Who should be held accountable for the violence and conflicts in Ethiopia

(% respondents, open-ended, first response)



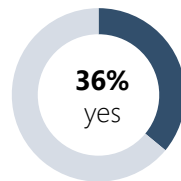
Is it sufficient if **only** the following armed groups, military and government officials are held accountable

(% yes)



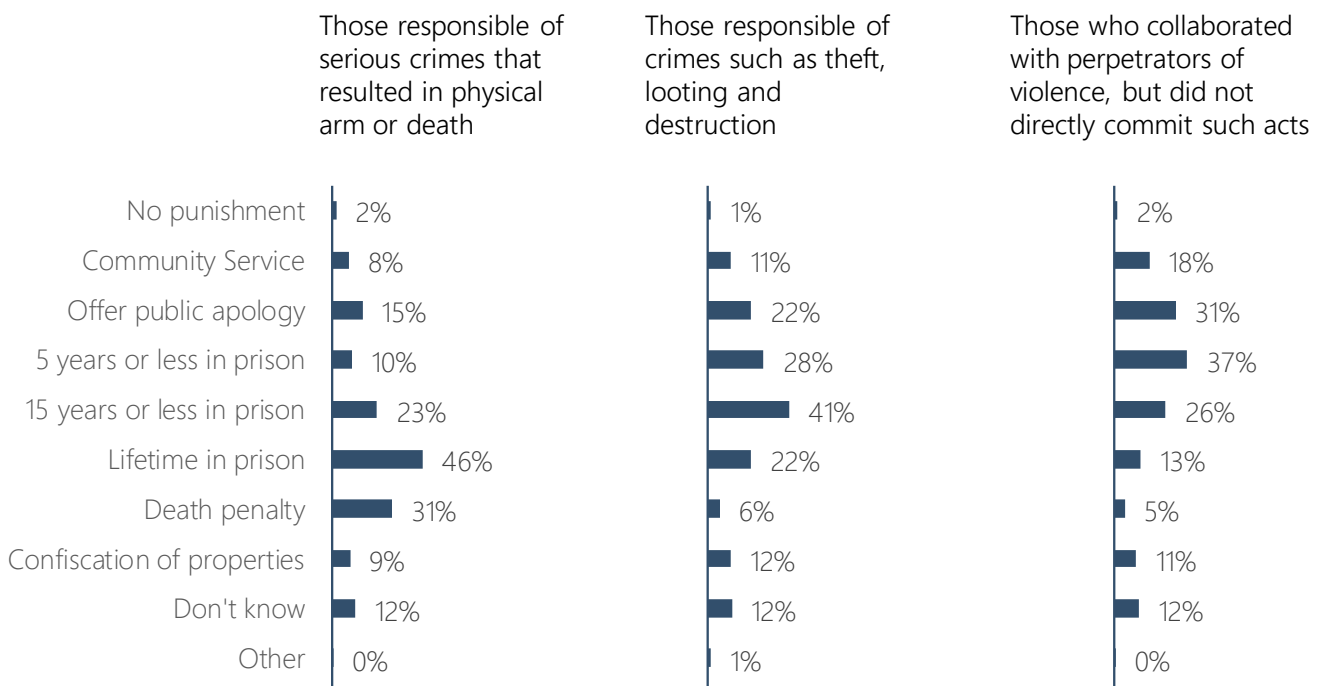
Should anyone receive amnesty?

(% yes)



What should be the punishment for the following?

(% respondents, open-ended, first response)



PARTICIPANTS CALL FOR TOP-DOWN ACCOUNTABILITY AND SEVERE PUNISHMENT.

The survey asked participants who, if anyone, should be held accountable for the violence and conflicts in Ethiopia, allowing respondents to provide a maximum of three answers. The most frequently cited actors are federal (50%) and regional (38%) government members, followed by criminal group members (35%), armed group commanders (31%), financial supporters of armed groups (29%), and national army commanders (25%). Federal government members were most frequently mentioned in Tigray (89%), Amhara (65%) and Addis Ababa (77%). Few participants would find it sufficient if only high-ranking (17%) or only low-ranking (11%) members of armed groups were held to account (figure 20).

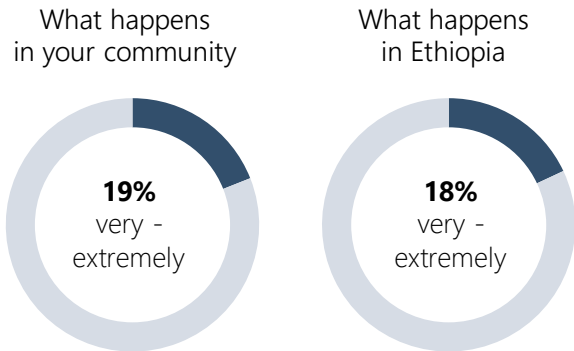
In addition to wanting to see a wide range of actors held accountable, participants expect harsh punishments. When asked what, if any, should be the punishment for those responsible for serious crimes that resulted in physical harm or death, participants most frequently mentioned a lifetime in prison (46%), or the death penalty (31%). Considering lesser crimes, such as theft, looting, and destruction of goods and assets, participants frequently suggested that the punishment should be up to 15 years (41%) or up to 5 years (28%) in prison. In addition, participants proposed similar punishment, 15 years or less (26%) or five years or less (37%) for collaborators or individuals who supported violent actors without being directly involved.

Consistent with these findings, only a minority of Ethiopians (36%) are willing to accept amnesties or pardons for anyone involved in violence and conflicts in Ethiopia. However, respondents expressed more lenient views about amnesties for individuals who only unknowingly or unwillingly contributed to the violence. Respondents also demanded that amnesties be administered by the justice system (55%) and that those applying for amnesty must admit their guilt (50%) or issue an apology (54%).

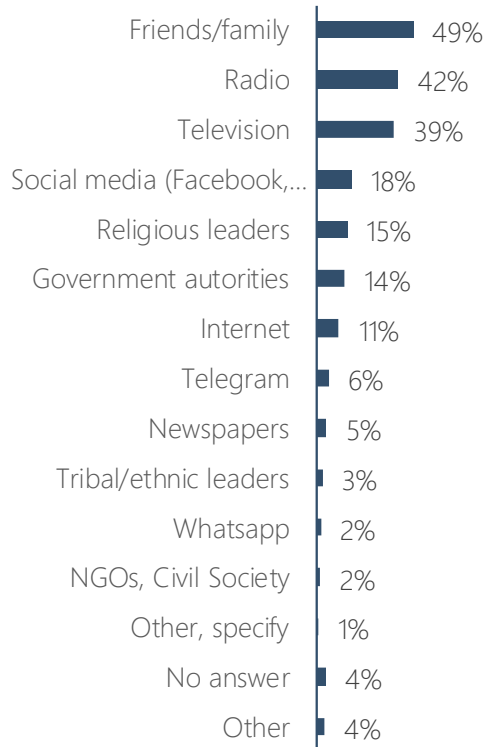
Furthermore, nearly three quarters (72%) of participants oppose allowing perpetrators of violence to continue working within the security services. The response was similar regarding individuals from security services who followed orders resulting in violence against civilians - about 73% believe that they should not be allowed to continue their service. More generally, participants are uncomfortable about having such individuals in the community and interacting with them in various settings. ■

▼ Figure 21: Information

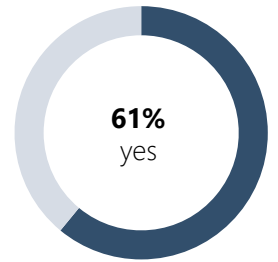
How well informed are you about the following?
(% very –extremely well informed)



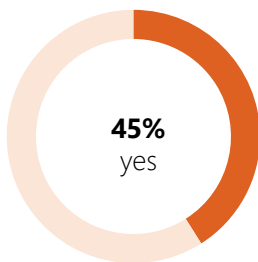
Main sources of information
(% participants, open-ended)



Believes people spread misinformation to instigate violence
(% yes)



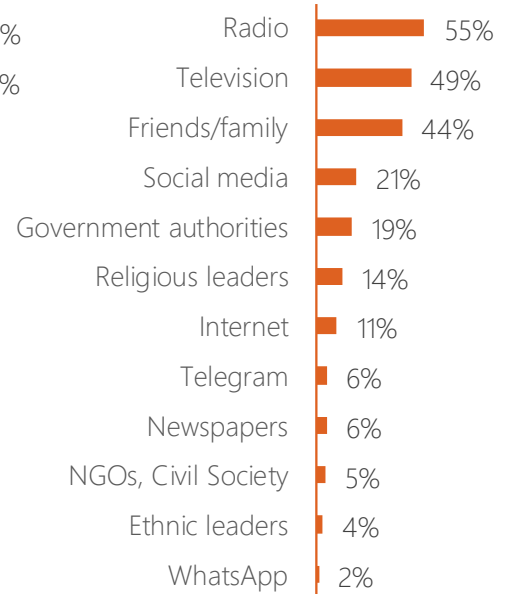
Have you heard of the government's efforts to hold accountable those who are responsible for violence
(% yes)



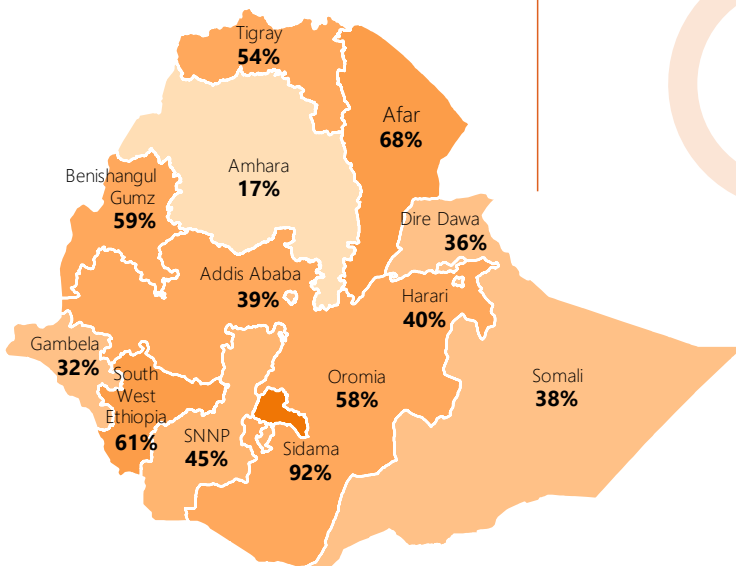
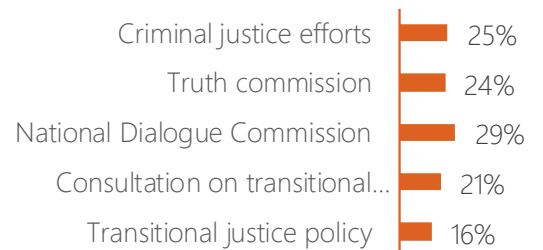
Self-rated knowledge
(% good – very good)



Main sources of information on accountability
(% participants, open-ended)



Heard of...
(% participants, open-ended)



LACK OF INFORMATION, RUMORS AND LACK OF ENGAGEMENT MAY UNDERMINE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AWARENESS AND CONFIDENCE IN JUSTICE.

The survey results suggest that Ethiopians are dissatisfied with their access to reliable news and reporting. Only one fifth of respondents agreed that they were well-informed about events in their community (19%) or at the national level (18%). Many rely heavily on informal sources like friends and family (49%), while similar percentages rely on formal sources such as the radio (42%) and television (39%). Poor access to news and reporting may enable the spread of disinformation, with a large majority (61%) believing some actors deliberately spread falsehoods to instigate violence. This belief is most frequently held in regions like Tigray (93%), Afar (82%), Gambela (79%) and Sidama (77%) (figure 21).

Despite the relatively limited access to information, almost half of the participants (45%) indicated that they have heard about the federal government’s efforts to hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions, and 41% describe their knowledge of such efforts as ‘good’ or ‘very good.’ This finding is notable given limited implementation and outreach to date.

Awareness about such efforts is least prevalent in the Amhara region (17%), where participants rely on both informal sources such as friends and family (44%) and formal sources including the radio (55%) and television (49%).

While there is awareness of accountability efforts in general, only about one in four respondents has heard of specific efforts relating to accountability, including the National Dialogue Commission (29%), criminal justice efforts (25%), truth-seeking efforts (24%), ongoing consultation on transitional justice (21%), or transitional justice policy (16%). Moreover, just one in five participants believe that the government includes the perspective of the population (22%) in its accountability efforts, and 24% felt it includes the perspective of women.

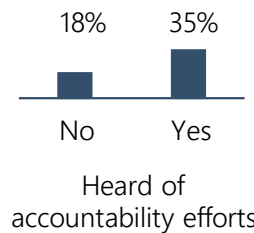
Awareness about transitional justice efforts was strongly associated with trust in the judicial system (figure 22). Among participants who had heard about the government accountability efforts, 70% trust the federal judicial system to conduct fair trials for the violence and conflicts, compared to 36% among those who had not heard about these efforts. Similarly, 35% of participants who have heard of the government accountability effort express general trust in the judicial system, compared to 18% among participants who have not heard about such efforts. ■

▼ Figure 22: Information (continued)

Do you trust the federal government to implement fair accountability efforts? (% very - extremely) by awareness of accountability efforts

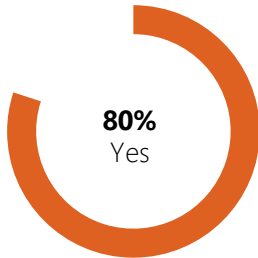


How much do you trust the justice system? (% very - extremely) by awareness of accountability efforts

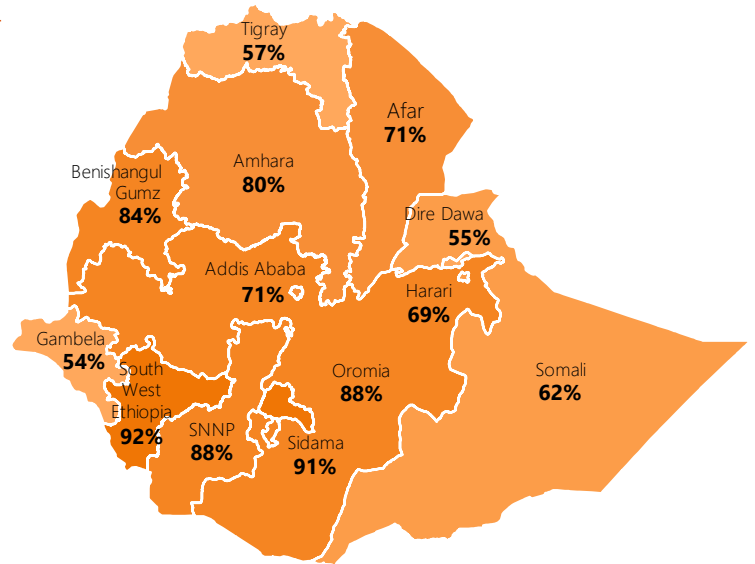


▼ Figure 23: Traditional mechanisms

Should traditional or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms be used to address conflicts and political violence (% yes)

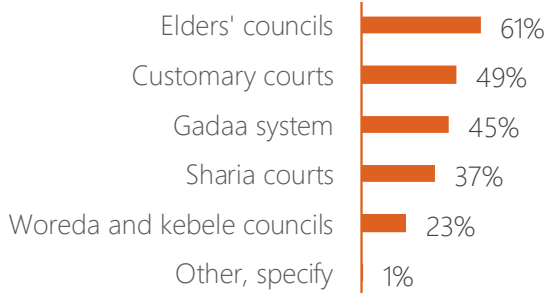


Total

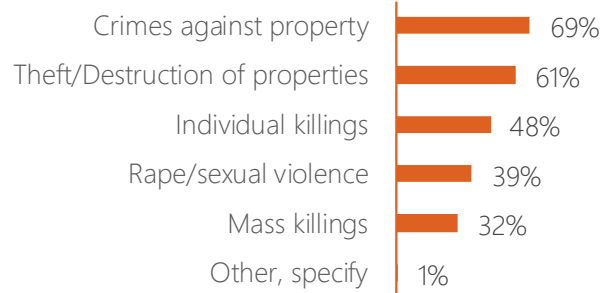


By regions

If yes, which mechanism? (open question, % responses)



What types of crimes should they be used for? (open question, % responses)



If not, why not? (open question, % responses)



TRADITIONAL JUSTICE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY.

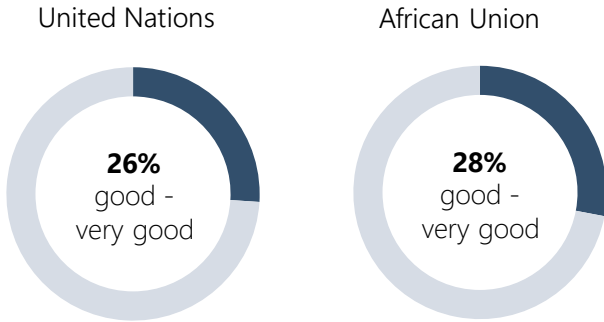
Four out of five participants (80%) believe that traditional or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms should be used to address conflicts and political violence in Ethiopia, including elders' councils (61%), customary courts (49%), and the Gadaa System (45%) (figure 23).

Opposition to using such mechanisms is associated with a perception of bias or partisanship (43%) and lack of respect for the human rights of all parties involved (36%) because of the scale and scope of the violence (30%). Respondents also noted the lack of involvement of women (27%) and the inability to apply such mechanisms to interethnic conflict (24%).

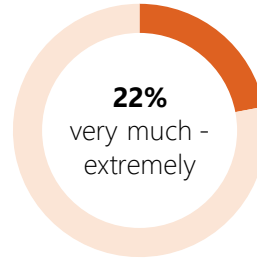
Among those who believe that traditional or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms should be used, respondents most frequently mentioned that such mechanisms should be used for low-level crimes such as crimes against property (69%) and theft/destruction of properties (61%). There is less support for their use in addressing individual and mass killings (48% and 32%, respectively), or sexual violence (39%). ■

▼ Figure 24: International community

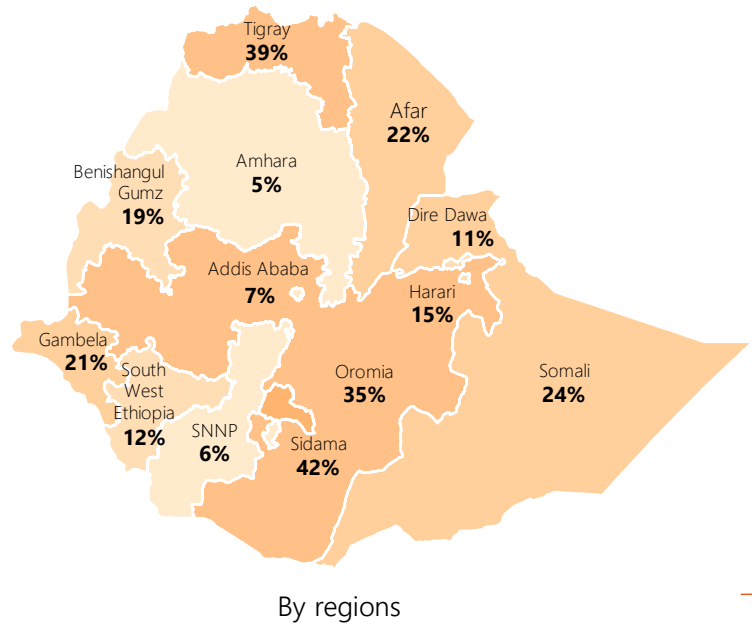
How would you rate the contribution of the following actors to building peace in Ethiopia:



How much you trust the **international community** to act in the best interest of the population?



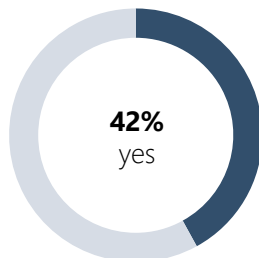
How much should the **international community** be involved in ...



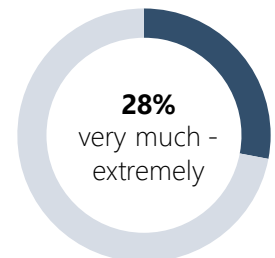
What role(s) should the **international community** play?
(open question, % responses)



Have you heard of the International Criminal Court? (ICC)



Would you trust the ICC to conduct fair and accurate investigation in Ethiopia



THERE IS LIMITED SUPPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO PLAY A ROLE IN ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS, EXCEPT IN TIGRAY.

Overall, few participants are positive about the current contribution of international actors to peace in Ethiopia, including the UN (26%) and the African Union (28%) (figure 24). Considering the UN, the most frequently positive regions are Tigray (50%), Oromia (40%) and Sidama (39%), while the lowest percentages of positive opinion are found in Amhara (5%), SNNP (9%), and Addis Ababa (14%). Similarly, considering the African Union, the lowest levels of satisfaction with efforts towards peace are found in Amhara (14%), SNNP (13%), and Addis Ababa (15%).

These results may explain why few (22%) participants express trust in the international community, which is lower than the percentage expressing trust in the federal government (28%). Again, the lowest percentages of people expressing trust in the international community are found in Amhara (5%), SNNP (6%), and Addis Ababa (7%).

The low trust is also reflected in the perceived role that the international community should play in accountability efforts. Overall, less than one in three participants believe that the international community should be very or extremely involved in accountability efforts (29%) or trials (27%) for those responsible for the violence in Ethiopia. When explicitly asked what role the international community should play, the only roles proposed by more than half the population are financial and technical support (62% and 58%, respectively); 38% mentioned pressuring the government to comply with international standards, 31% stated reparations and compensations, and 14% mentioned arresting and returning fugitives. There is more support for the involvement of the international community in truth seeking (69% positive). Still, again, the role is most frequently defined in terms of financial support (67%) or as an advisory role (63%).

Geographically, the international community's role in accountability and trials has little support across all regions, except in Tigray, where more than half the population would like to see the international community 'very' or 'extremely' involved in accountability efforts (55%) and trials (67%).

We also asked specific questions regarding the International Criminal Court and United Nations. Overall, 42% of Ethiopians have heard about the International Criminal Court. This awareness ranged dramatically by region, with the highest being in Tigray (81%), Somali (68%), Afar (63%), Sidama (58%), and Addis Ababa (56%). Awareness of the ICC was lowest in Dire Dawa (19%), South West Ethiopia People (25%), and Amhara (22%). Among those who were aware of the ICC, 28% stated they would trust the ICC very much or extremely to conduct a fair and accurate investigation in Ethiopia. ■

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

DISCUSSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The survey results presented in this report provide detailed, ground-level insights on peace, security, and justice in Ethiopia from the perspective of the population. The data reflect the complexities and nuances of the Ethiopian socio-political landscape and underscore essential areas for intervention and policymaking to foster sustainable peace and stability in Ethiopia. The results show that:

- While insecurity and lack of peace are real concerns for many respondents, there is a prevailing sense of optimism for peace and security. However, widespread experiences of conflict-related violence reported by one third of the population tend to be linked with more pessimistic perspectives.
- Ethnic and political divides, and competition for resources, are identified as main root causes for conflicts and violence. There is a high level of distrust across socio-cultural groups and towards institutions. Distrust likely undermines confidence that peace is possible, but trust and social cohesion between socio-cultural groups appears to improve with contact and interaction across groups.
- There is clearly a demand for multi-dimensional transitional justice and holding perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions is central to building lasting peace and reconciliation. Survey participants clearly articulate the value of impartial transitional justice measures like trials, truth-seeking processes, and reparations as necessary for peace and reconciliation. However, lack of access to information coupled with disinformation could undermine awareness and confidence in transitional justice efforts.
- The survey finds a sense of confidence that justice is possible, and half the participants believe that the federal justice system can conduct fair trials for the violence and conflicts that have occurred in Ethiopia. Views diverge, however, on key aspects that could undermine transitional justice efforts. Prioritization of accountability for harms since 2018 risks ignoring historically rooted grievances in regions afflicted by previous periods of violence. Ethiopians are also split on their attitudes towards domestic vs. international trials, with Tigray respondents rejecting domestic courts nearly unanimously.
- The survey results indicate widespread demand for criminal accountability and punitive sentencing directed at senior leadership levels across all parties to the conflicts and violence. This includes government leaders and commanders within the military and armed groups. The survey also notes strong calls for severe criminal punishments for grave abuses coupled with broad rejection of potential amnesties.
- The survey results indicate a general openness to integrating local customary justice mechanisms into formal transitional justice processes, especially when adjudicating lower-level crimes. This likely reflects greater public familiarity and confidence in traditions of communal dispute mediation by elders and customary leaders.
- Participants are not positive about the international community's engagement in Ethiopia's transitional justice efforts, except for respondents in Tigray. Most, however, emphasize the need for technical and financial support. ■

RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey findings in this report offer a comprehensive view of the current state of peace, security, and justice in Ethiopia, as perceived by its population. These findings highlight the critical need for effective interventions and policy actions that address the intricate socio-political challenges Ethiopia faces. Key insights include the population's mixed sentiments of optimism and concern regarding peace and security, exacerbated by experiences of conflict-related violence. The survey underscores the profound impact of ethnic and political divisions, resource competition, and widespread distrust in both socio-cultural groups and institutions. Importantly, it reveals a strong demand for impartial transitional justice measures, but with diverse and sometimes conflicting demands in terms of scope and venues for trials. This section proposes a set of recommendations to foster sustainable peace and reconciliation, while navigating the complexities of Ethiopia's transitional justice efforts.

These recommendations are primarily intended for policymakers, government officials, and key stakeholders in Ethiopia who are directly involved in peacebuilding, governance, and transitional justice efforts. They are also relevant to international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign governments that provide support or have an interest in the stability and development of Ethiopia. The recommendations address the concerns and aspirations of the Ethiopian population as reflected in the survey, making them pertinent for community leaders, local justice practitioners, and civil society groups who play a crucial role in grassroots mobilization and implementation.

We make the following recommendations:

1. *Enhance the population's aspiration for peace and security by initiating transparent measures towards achieving it, as well as fostering trust and social cohesion.* Establishing community support groups and tailored programs for those impacted by violence, including reparations, is crucial to reinstate hope and fostering a more enduring environment of peace and security. Community-based programs that encourage

collaboration and understanding, as well as strategies to increase transparency and accountability of state institutions, can enhance trust among different socio-cultural groups and towards the state.

2. *Ensure that senior leaders and commanders from all parties involved in conflicts and political violence are held criminally accountable.* This involves conducting impartial investigations and trials and considering the broad public demand for punitive sentencing for grave abuses. The criminal prosecution of those responsible for serious crimes among all parties to the conflict must be part of the approach to transitional justice. Prosecutions will signify a pivot towards impartial accountability, contributing to the deterrence of future harm to Ethiopians and rebuilding trust in state institutions.
3. *Engage in genuine and impartial transitional justice efforts beyond trials to include truth-seeking processes, and reparations in a sequenced or staggered approach for different eras and regions.* Ensure these measures are transparent and accessible to all, addressing both recent and historical grievances. The varied viewpoints found in the survey highlight the complexity of balancing accountability for recent and past violations, as well as determining the appropriate nature, scale, and locality of mechanisms, reflecting the distinct experiences of survivor groups across geography and over time. A singular rigid approach (or an unacceptable one) risks accusations of partiality and disenfranchisement among individuals and communities seeking acknowledgment of their suffering. This calls for continued consultation and engagement across groups. Otherwise, transitional justice is unlikely to gain broad legitimacy, especially in the absence of a political transition.
4. *Ensure continued consultation and communications to foster confidence and participation across groups if transitional justice*

- is to be nationally legitimate, especially in the absence of a political transition.* Outreach, community and civil society engagement, and more generally improving public access to accurate information is needed to manage expectation and combat disinformation.
5. *Recognize and incorporate local customary justice practices, especially for lower-level offenses, into the transitional justice process.* This should be done in a way that respects human rights and complements formal legal systems. Integrating, systematizing, and codifying positive principles from indigenous mediation models could make them viable accountability pathways for ordinary offenses in suitable cases. Leveraging such community-rooted structures could also expand engagement and reconciliation around ordinary violence impartially. However, any adapted customary system would require thorough assessments, pilot tests and civilian oversight.
 6. *Build confidence in the justice system.* Enhance the capacity and impartiality of the federal justice system to conduct fair trials. This might involve training for judges and legal staff, infrastructure improvements, and measures to protect the judiciary from political interference. It would also include community outreach and partnering with civil society to help increase population knowledge about the justice system and its ongoing functions.
 7. *Considering adopting collective memorialization strategies to acknowledge and remember the past,* starting with an official governmental acknowledgment of past wrongs, apology, and statement of responsibility. Previous experiences with controversial memorials during past transitional justice initiatives means a different approach is needed that emphasizes the shared suffering of all Ethiopians. The process and symbols used may revive trauma and tensions, calling for an inclusive and participatory approach to memorialization.
 8. *Collaborate with international partners.* While maintaining national sovereignty, the international community should be tapped to provide support and independent monitoring. Specialized technical assistance programs that align with the specific needs of Ethiopia's transitional justice efforts is crucial, but so is the need for independent and impartial oversight. The international community can encourage and support the active involvement of civil society organizations to play a critical role in ensuring transparency, advocating for victims' rights, and providing essential services to those affected by past injustices.
 9. *Engage regularly with the population* to gather feedback on the effectiveness of implemented measures and adjust strategies accordingly. This ongoing dialogue can help ensure that the population is aware of measures taken by the government and interventions remain relevant and effective in addressing peace and justice in Ethiopia. ■

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study show that pursuing transitional justice in Ethiopia in the absence of a political transition presents significant complexity, especially considering competing demands among survivors and the general population. Divisions between political, ethnic, and religious groups add to this complexity. Decisions will likely be interpreted through a sectarian lens.

Participants are clear about their demand for justice and accountability through trials, truth-seeking, and reparations. Implementing these mechanisms calls for a conflict prevention approach. Intervention must be carefully designed to avoid triggering renewed violence. Transparency, inclusive policies, and dialogue across communities are essential to consider regional sensitivities around addressing past harms.

An important initial step will be for the government to officially acknowledge past wrongs through an apology

and statement of responsibility. This recognizes survivors' need for recognition of harm done over decades. Additionally, the government can empower an independent effort to map harms and engage with survivors.

Criminal prosecution serves a crucial role but is unlikely to address all harms without complementary mechanisms. Yet, Ethiopia faces financial and capacity constraints. A pragmatic solution may be to adopt a staggered approach using varied strategies for different eras and regions. For example, customary courts could resolve local conflicts and hold low-level individuals to account, reflecting diverse justice demands. The international community must support these efforts through resources, expertise, and impartial oversight to ensure inclusion, transparency, and fairness.

Regardless of government choices, identifying possible tensions and unintended consequences allows justice to be survivor-centered, credible, impartial, and effective. An intelligent, impartial transitional justice program will give Ethiopia the best chance of enduring peace – which is exactly what the country deserves after decades of violence. ■

ENDNOTES

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- [2] Nosmot Gbadamosi. "Ethiopia's Other War." Foreign Policy (blog), November 16, 2022. See also Adane Tadesse, 'A Reflection on the Conflict in Amhara Region of Ethiopia' Wilson Center, September 29, 2023
- [3] Reconciliation Commission Establishment Proclamation, No.1102 /2018, entered into force 5 February 2019.
- [4] The Ministry of justice brought charges against former officials and members of the National Intelligence and Security Service in the case of Getachew Assefa Abera et al., against police officers in the case of Commander Alemayehu Hailu Babata et al., and against prison administration officers in the case of Officer Geberemariam Weliday Abirha et al.
- [5] This in particular involves the case of former President of Somali region, Abdi Mohammed et al (Abdi Ille), in connection to crimes committed in the Somali region in 2019.
- [6] The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission Establishment Proclamation No. 1265 /2021, entered into force 13 January 2022.
- [7] 'Overview about Ethiopia', Ethiopian Embassy, Wahington D.C. <https://ethiopianembassy.org/overview-about-ethiopia/>
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