



# The Power of Narratives: Exploring the Influence of Propaganda Narratives on U.S. Ethiopian Migrants' Remittance-Sending Behavior Post 2020 Ethiopia/Tigray Conflict



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## Background/Context

- Experts refer to the conflict as a “fully-pledged propaganda war,” characterized by high level of cyber warfare. "War over narrative," as both sought to control and shape public perception: Pro-Ethiopian Government vs TPLF
- The conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region is multifaceted and complex, where it cannot be simply understood through a single lens, hence we explore identity and state formation and other factors.

## Research Question

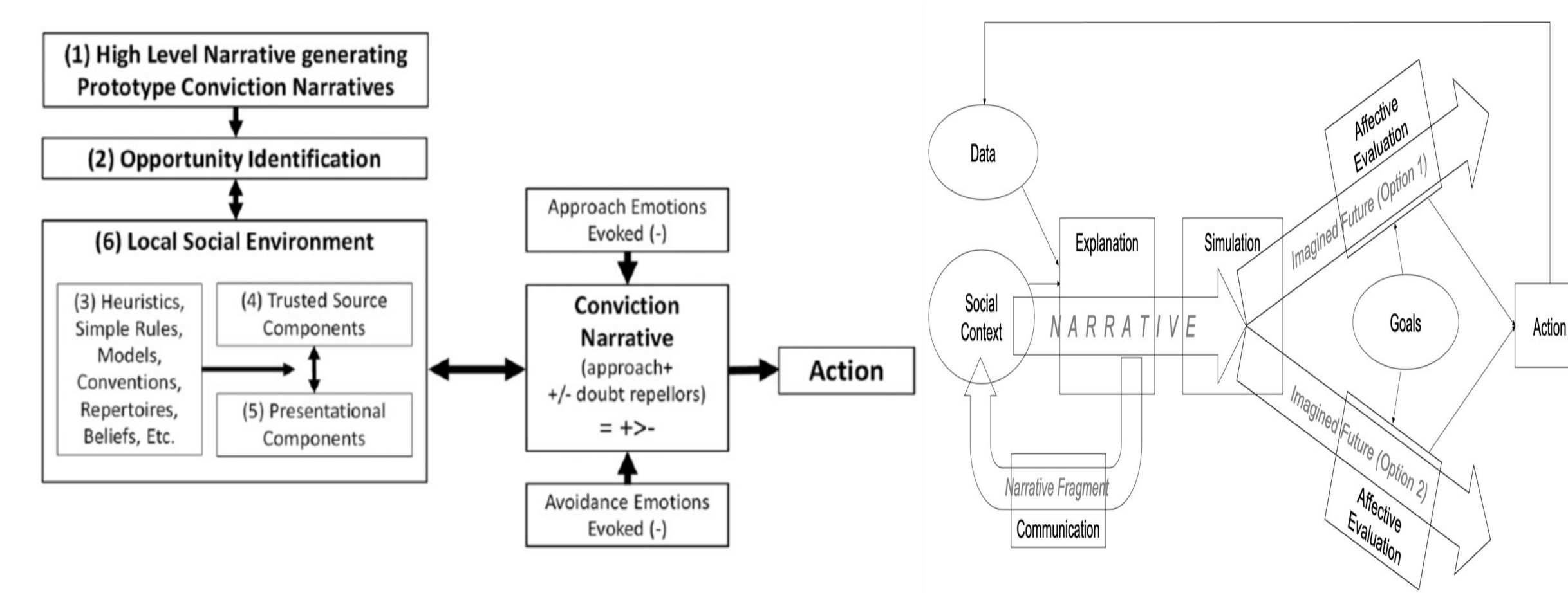
- Characterized by radical uncertainty and fuzzy evaluation
- Question:** The study investigates how exposure to nationalism and ethnonationalism propaganda narratives shaped the beliefs and preferences of U.S Ethiopian migrants, and how conviction and alignment towards these narratives affected their remittance behavior.
- Hypothesis:** (1) High exposure to conflicting propaganda narratives may influence remittance-sending behavior
- (2) The level of conviction towards the conflicting propaganda narratives is a key determining factor resulting change, which may vary depending on past beliefs.
- (3) Alignment with personal and family values, nationalism, and transnational engagement influences behavior
- (4) Higher conviction to ethnonationalism PN will lead to an increase in remittance-sending behavior within group and use of informal channels, while higher conviction to nationalism PN will lead to remittance-sending through formal channels.

## Data and Methodology

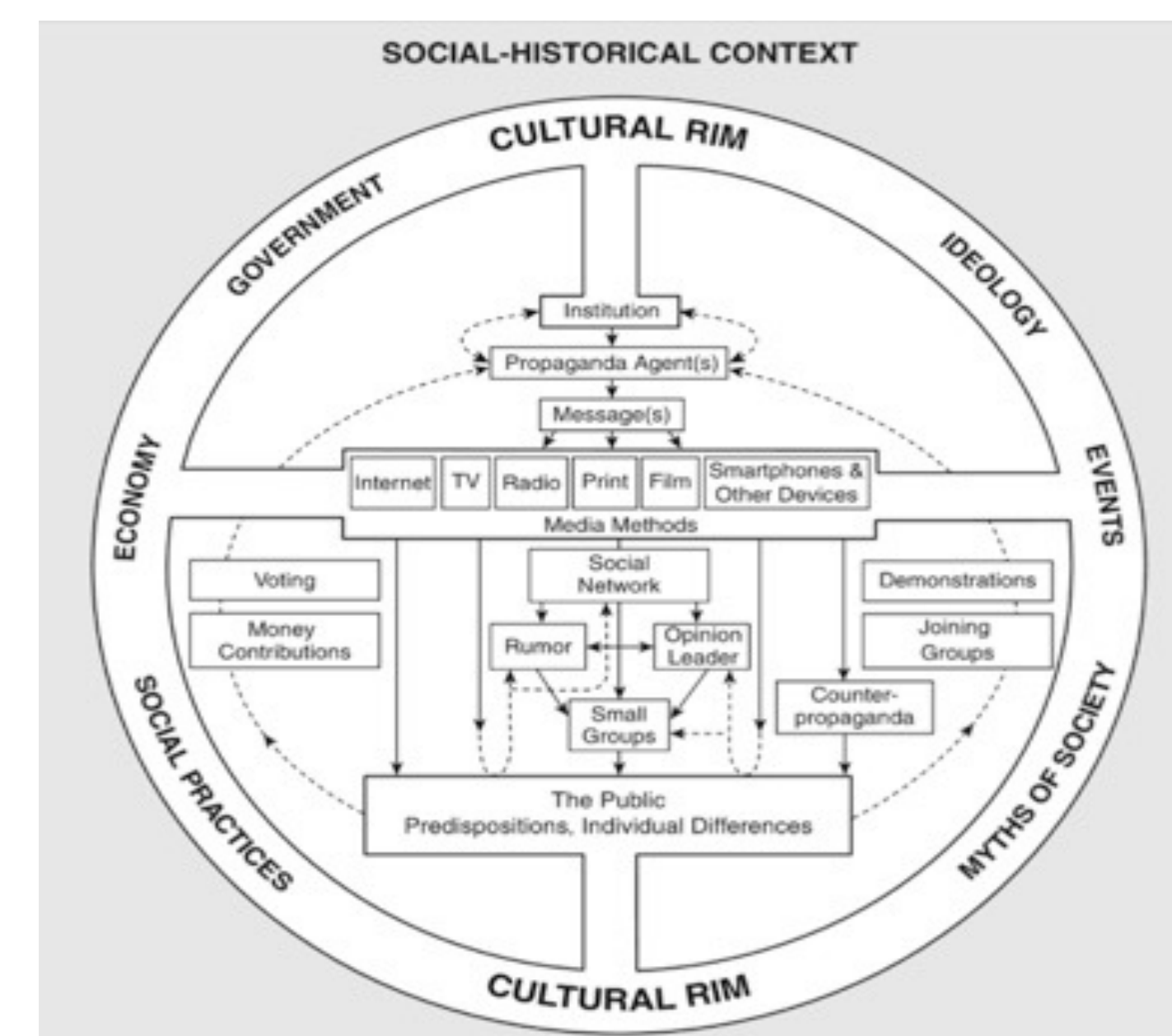
- Conducted personal survey method with data analyzed using Tableau, Qualtrics, and Excel
- Snowball sampling used to distribute survey in DMV area, targeting participants with access to formal channels and ruling out accessibility issues
- Survey divided into 5 sections, gathering demographic information, examining remittance behavior and motivations, assessing exposure to propaganda, investigating migrant stances on conflicting narratives, and exploring changes in remittance behavior during conflict
- Approved by HRSC and received grant from Henry J. Copeland Independent Study Fund Awards Committee

## Theoretical Framework

- Integrated framework developed to explain complex interplay between propaganda, narratives, conviction, and remittance-sending behavior.
- Remittances as forms of “Philanthropy” and “Resilience,” going beyond the traditional notion.
- Propaganda as a form of a narrative.
- Nationalism VS Ethnonationalism Propaganda
- Conviction Narrative theory, decision-making under radical uncertainty, posits individuals create and rely on narratives to make sense of events, influencing their choices subject to the individual past conviction.
- Rather focusing on rationality and utilities, it is based on factors such as emotions, values, and personal experiences.

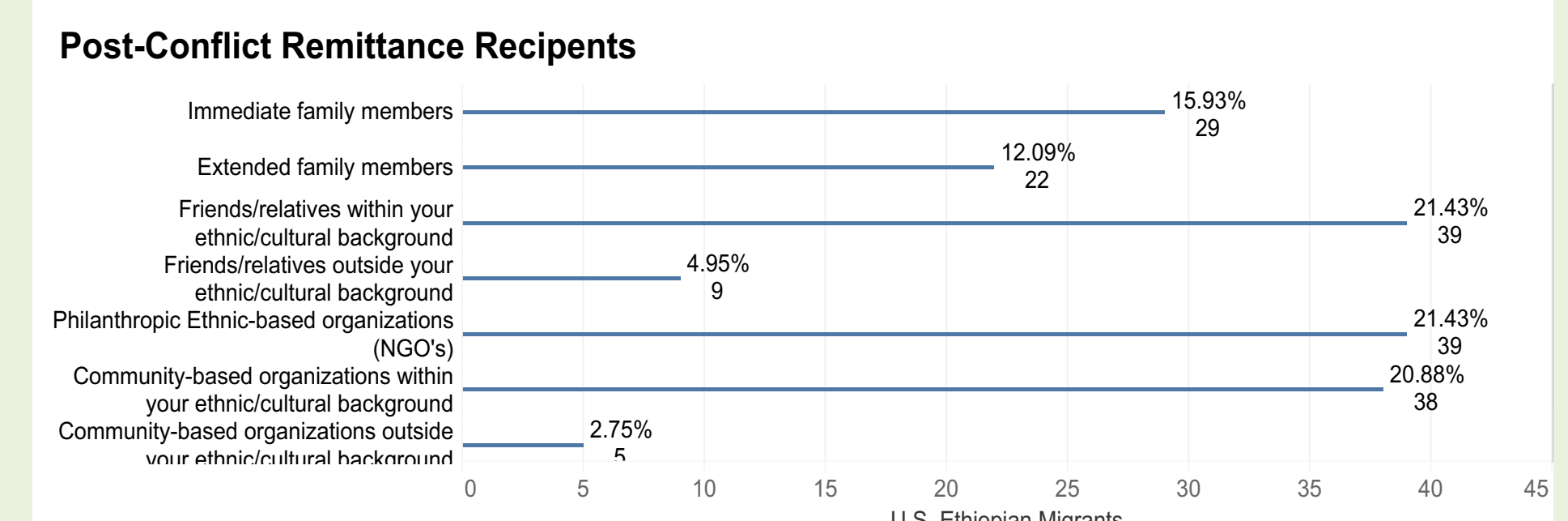
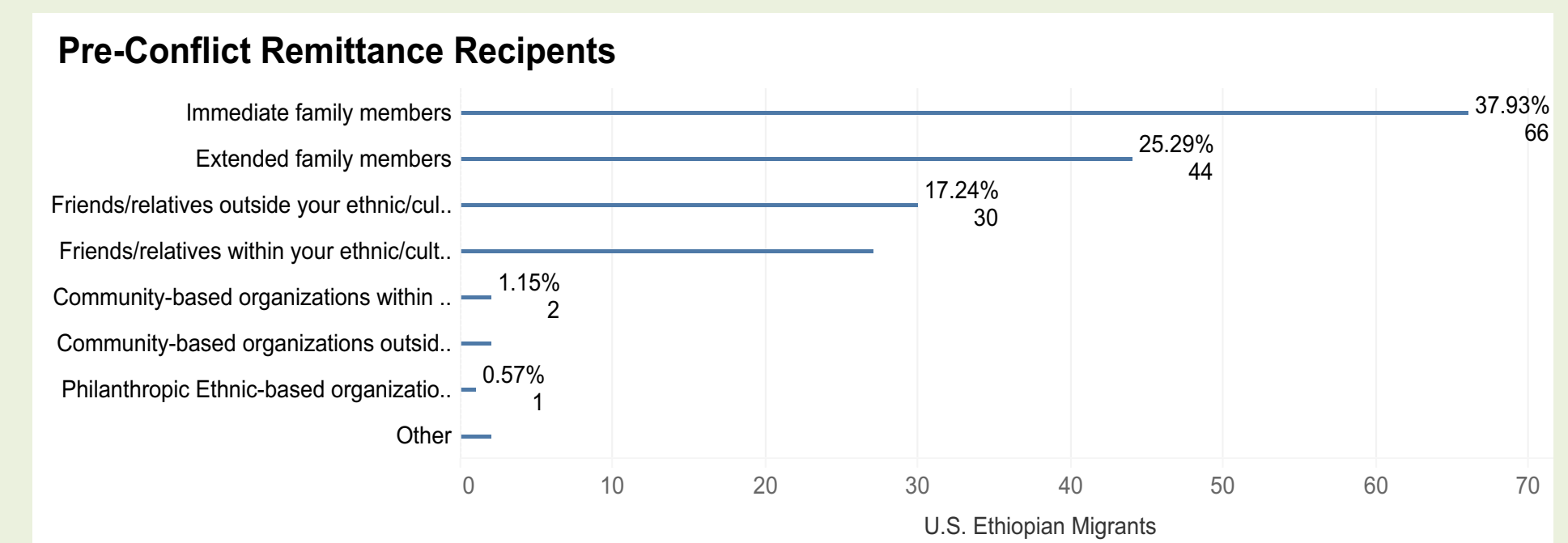
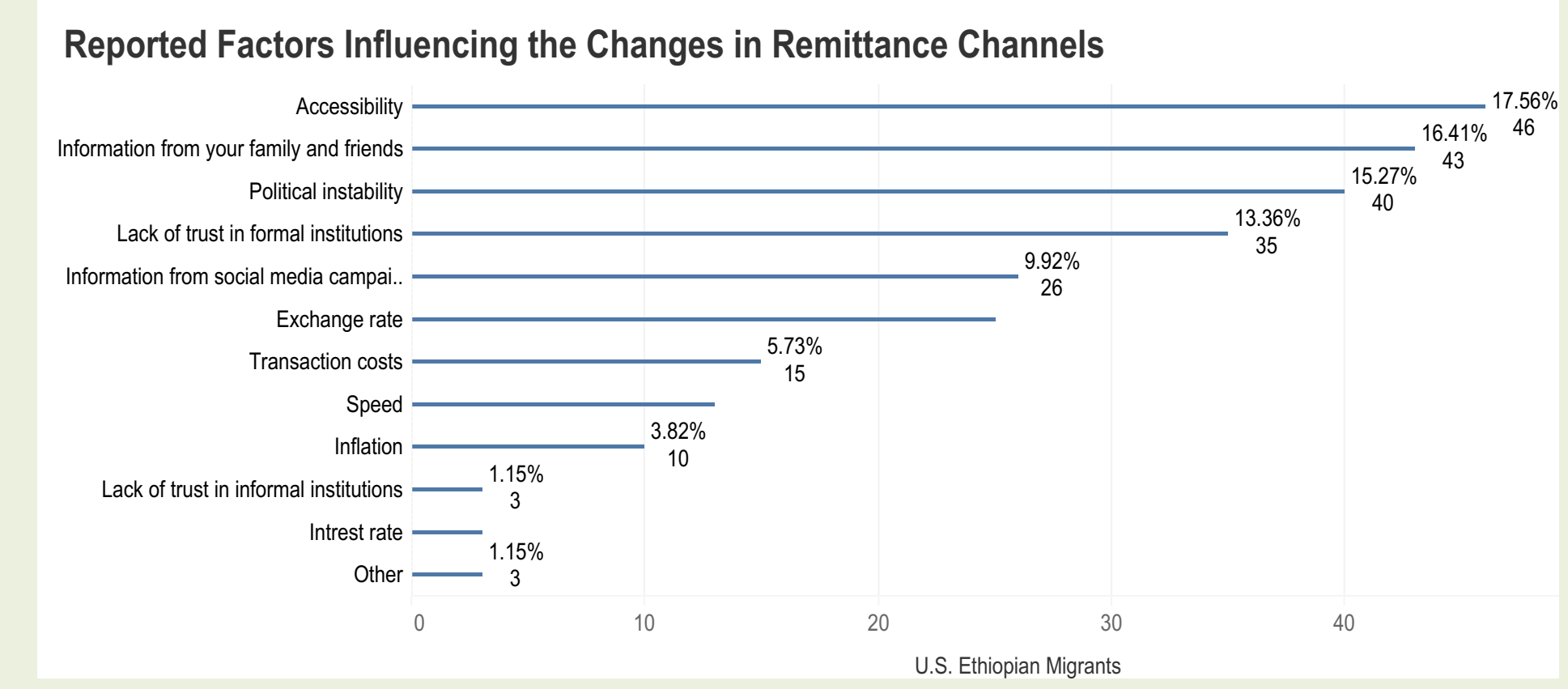
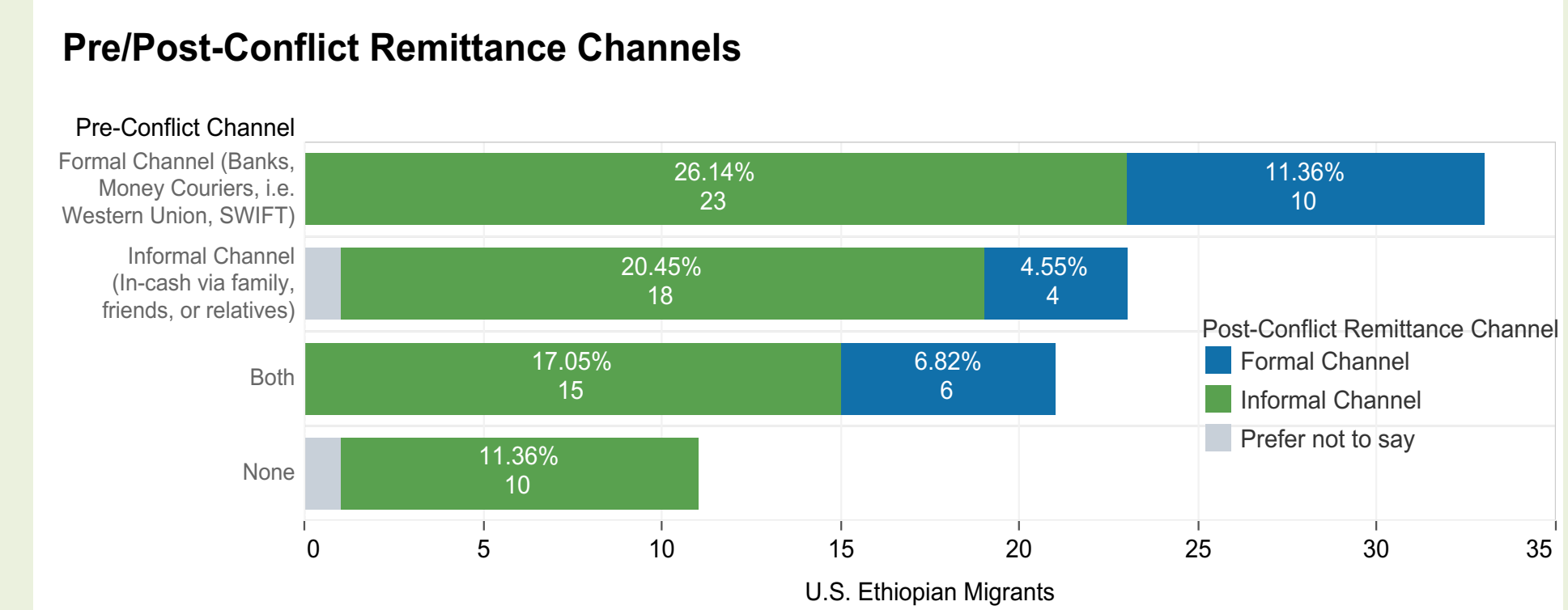
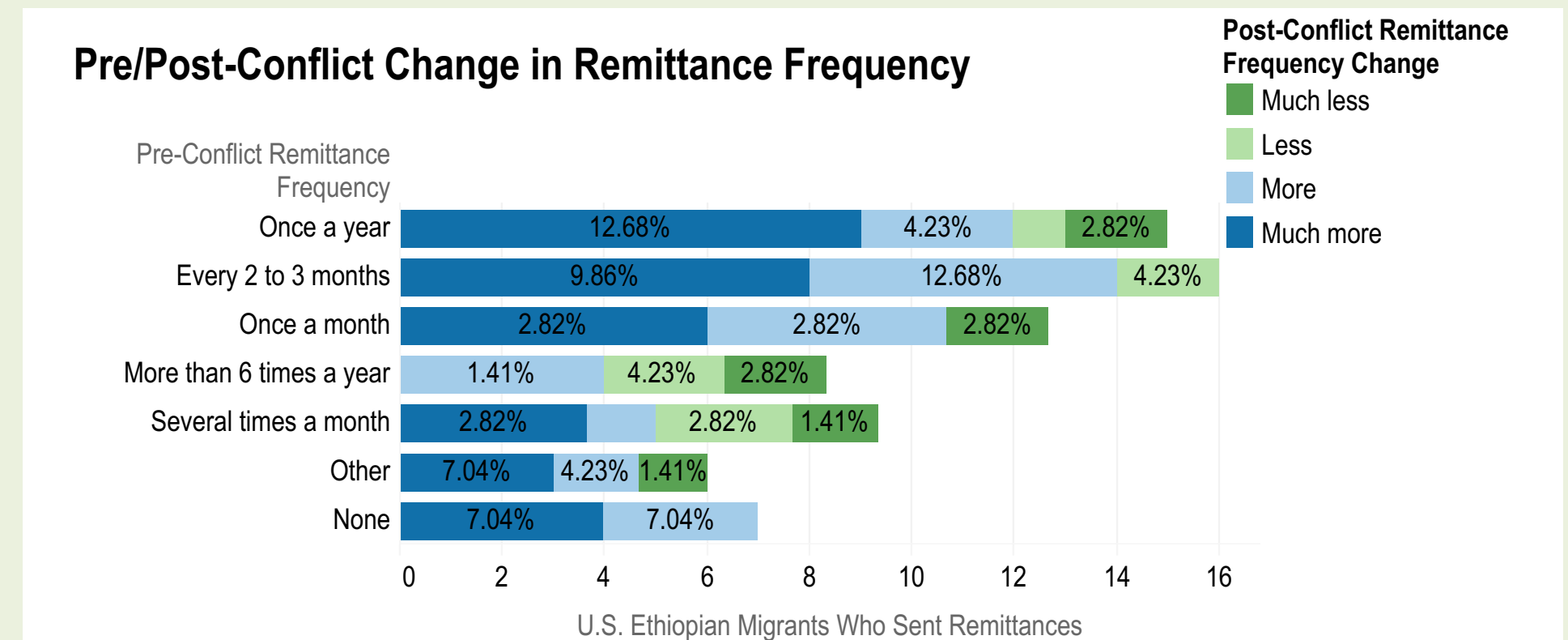
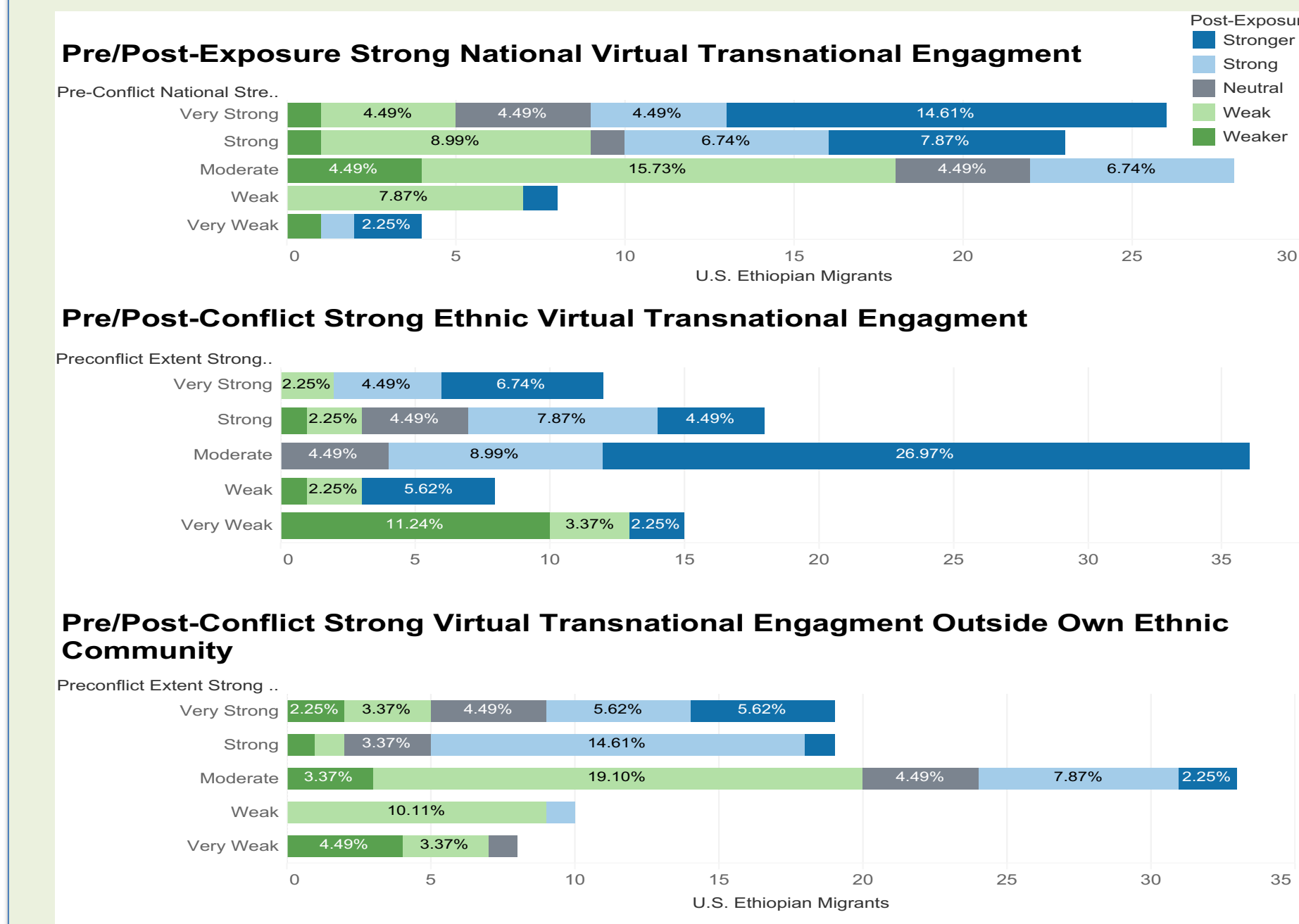
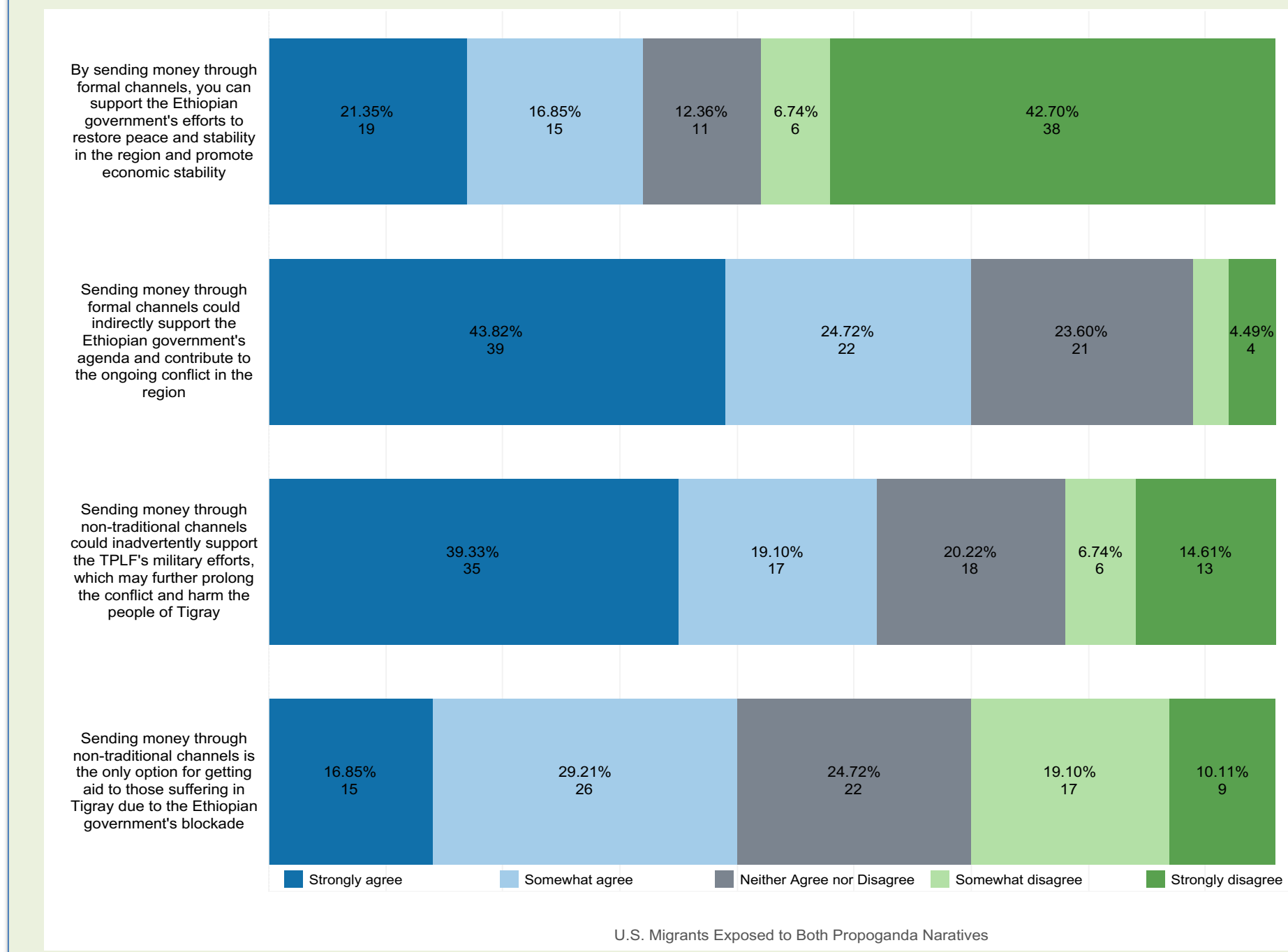
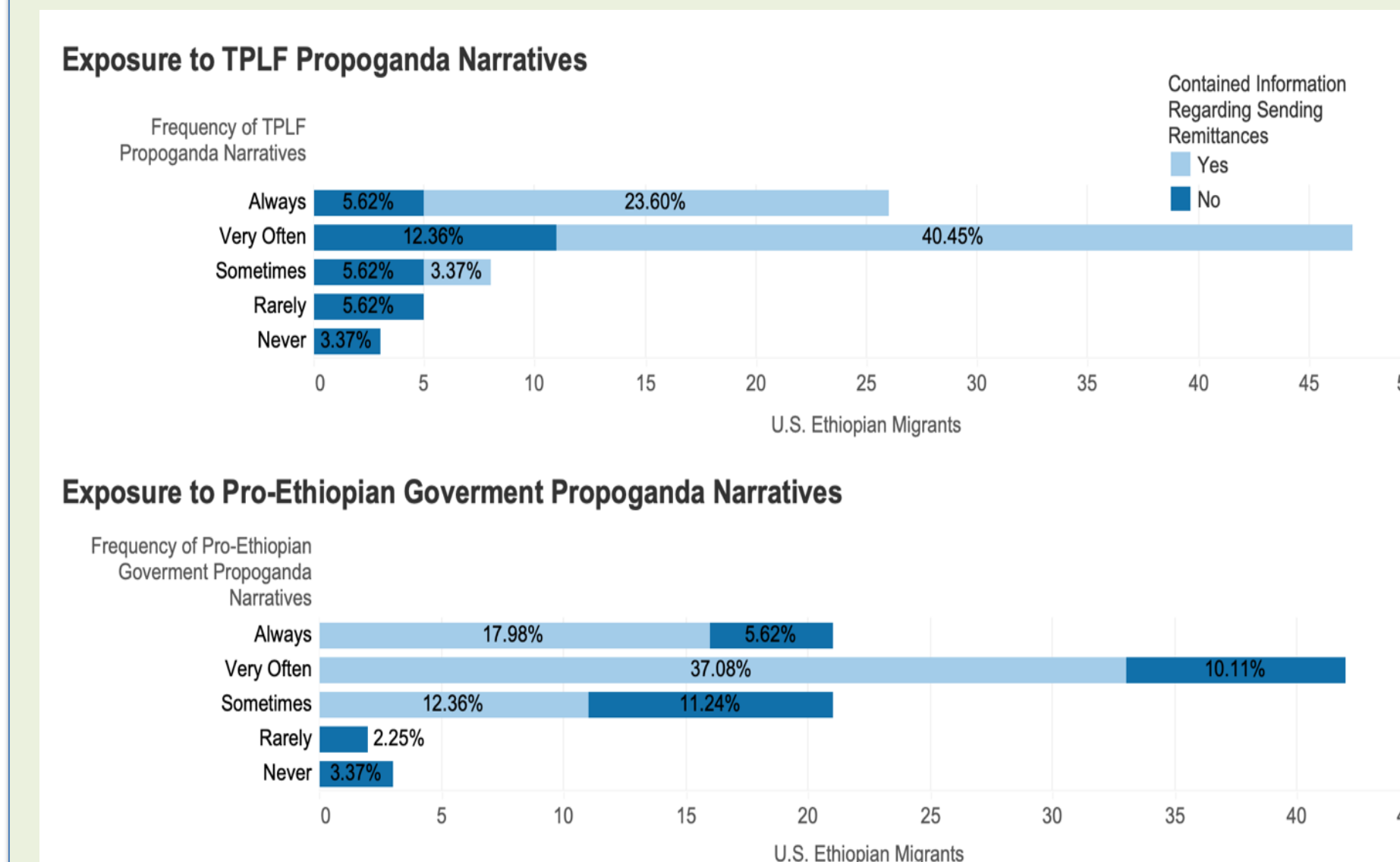


- Propaganda using Jowett and O'Donnell's model



## Results

- The results reveal significant effects on respondents' remittance sending behavior, with the majority increasing their frequency of sending, choosing informal channels for sending, and diversifying their recipients of remittances.
- Level of conviction towards propaganda narratives determined extent of behavioral change
- Challenges: lack of reliable and accessible channels, safety and security of the money, collective remitting instead of individual



## Discussion

- High exposure indeed impacted Ethiopian RSB, key themes found were ethnic solidarity versus nationalism, formal versus informal channels, increasing polarization, and differing virtual transnational engagement closely linked to our hypotheses.
- Divide within diaspora community and politicization of remittance sending behavior created divisions and uncertainty.
- The findings have important implications for policymakers, remittance providers, and development organizations interested in designing interventions to support migrants during periods of political instability and contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between propaganda exposure, conviction, and remittance-sending behavior.