

Banjul, the Gambia  
28 May 2021

## News release

---

### **Gambians feel less safe but want ECOMIG to leave, Afrobarometer survey shows**

A growing number of Gambians feel unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods and fear crime in their homes, the latest Afrobarometer survey indicates.

Over the past three years, citizens' sense of personal safety has decreased alongside their approval of the government's efforts to reduce crime.

Even so, the Gambia Armed Forces and Police Force remain among the country's most trusted institutions.

And an overwhelming majority of Gambians want the ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia (ECOMIG) to leave to allow Gambia's military and police to take charge of the security needs of the country. ECOMIG, which has been charged with security in the country since the political impasse of 2017, continues to operate under a mandate ending in December 2021. There are also discussions of transforming the mission into a policing force.

In response to perceptions of an upsurge in crime, the Gambia Police Force has launched a high-visibility patrol dubbed Operation Zero Crime. In a recent address to the nation, President Adama Barrow acknowledged increasing crime and assured citizens that he would boost the capacity of the Gambia Police Force in order to respond effectively.

The Gambia is also implementing a security sector reform program to move away from politicized security institutions common under the previous regime.

#### **Key findings**

- Almost half (47%) of Gambians say they felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhood at least once during the past year, an 11-percentage-point increase compared to 2018 (36%) (Figure 1).
- The proportion of citizens who feared crime in their homes at least once during the previous year also rose by 11 percentage points, to more than one-third (36%).
- Fewer than four in 10 Gambians (37%) say the government is doing a good job of reducing crime, a 17-percentage-point drop compared to 2018 (54%). Public approval of the government's performance on preventing or resolving violent conflict declined by 22 points, to 41% (Figure 2).
- Among Gambians who sought assistance from the police during the previous year:
  - Fewer than half (44%) say they found it "easy" or "very easy" to get the needed assistance (Figure 3).
  - The proportion who say they had to pay a bribe to obtain police assistance almost doubled compared to 2018, from 20% to 36%.

- Even so, popular trust in the country's security forces remains relatively strong, well ahead of trust in elected leaders. Six in 10 Gambians (59%) say they trust the Gambia Police Force "somewhat" or "a lot," while two-thirds (67%) say the same about the Gambia Armed Forces (Figure 4).
- Almost eight in 10 Gambians (78%) want the ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia (ECOMIG) to leave, a 28-percentage-point increase compared to 2018 (50%) (Figure 5).

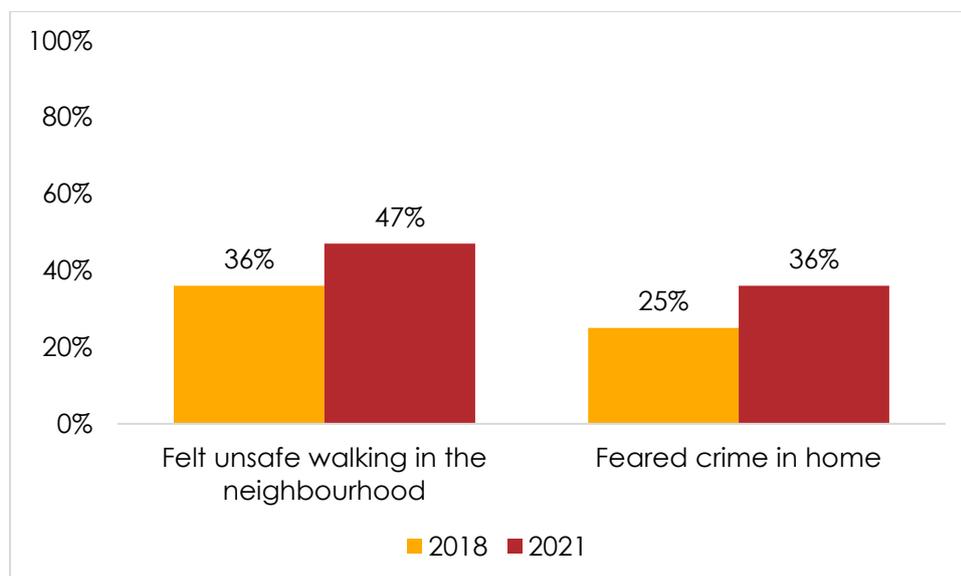
### Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans' experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in the Gambia, led by the Center for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies (CePrass), interviewed 1,200 adult Gambians between 30 January and 23 February 2021. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. A previous Afrobarometer survey was conducted in the Gambia in 2018.

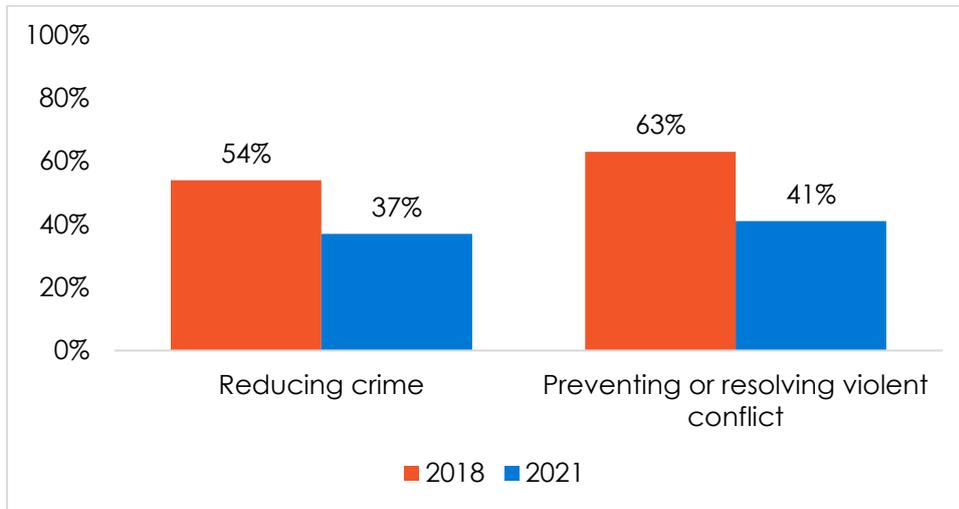
### Charts

**Figure 1: Feeling unsafe | The Gambia | 2018-2021**



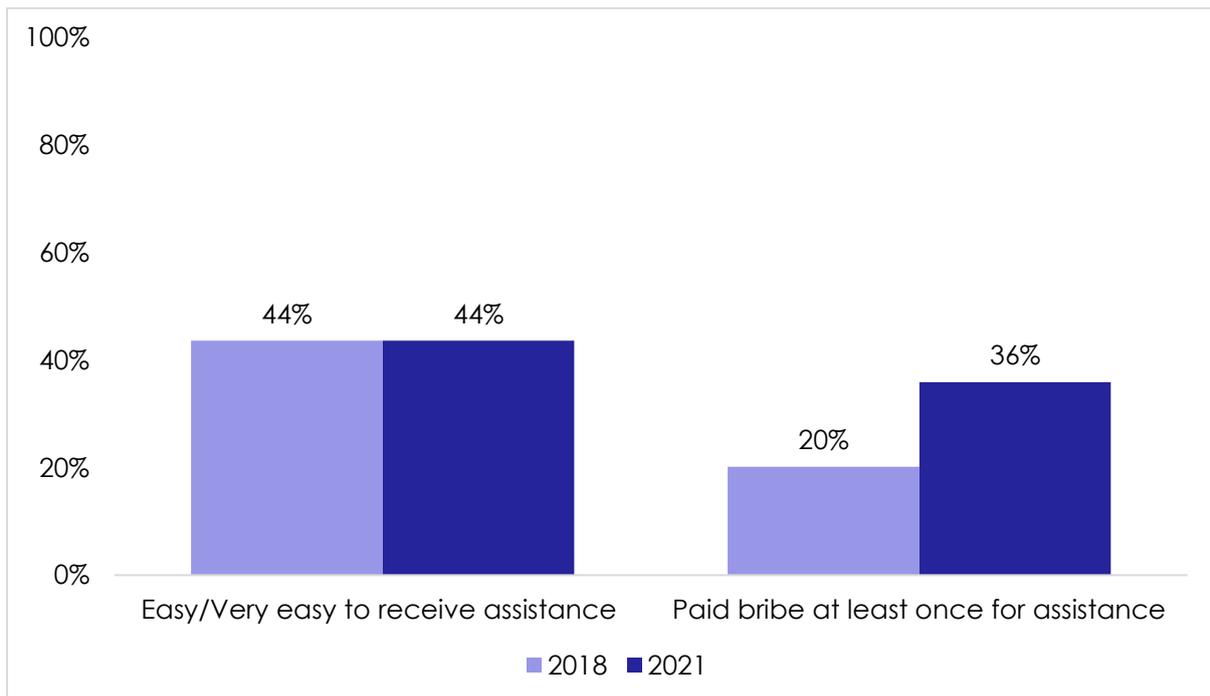
**Respondents were asked:** Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your home? (% who say "just once or twice," "several times," "many times," or "always")

**Figure 2: Government handling of crime and violent conflict** | The Gambia  
 | 2018-2021



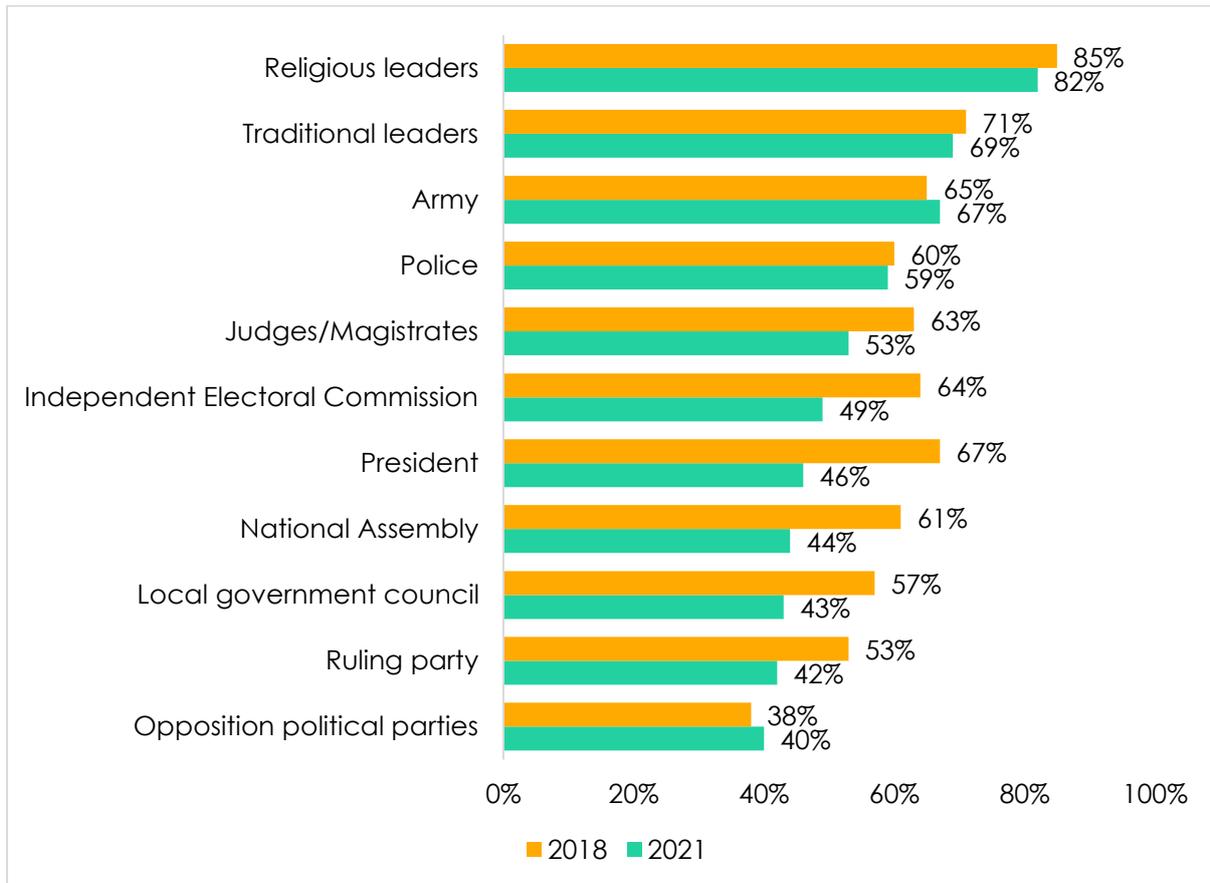
**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

**Figure 3: Receiving police assistance** | The Gambia | 2018-2021



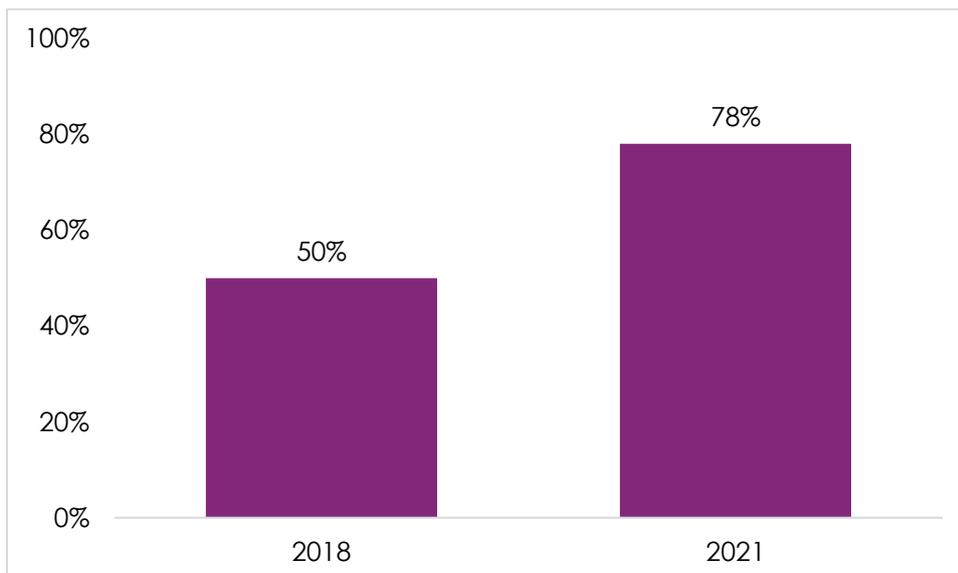
**Respondents who say they requested assistance from the police during the previous year were asked:**  
 How easy or difficult was it to obtain the assistance you needed? (% who say "easy" or "very easy")  
 And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed? (% who say "often," "a few times," or "once or twice.")

**Figure 4: Trust in institutions and leaders | The Gambia | 2018-2021**



**Respondents were asked:** How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "a lot" or "somewhat")

**Figure 5: Time for ECOMIG to leave | The Gambia | 2018-2021**



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: The ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia (ECOMIG) has served its purpose. It is time they leave in order for the Gambian Armed Forces and Police to take charge of security matters of the country.

**For more information, please contact:**

Demba Kandeh  
Communications manager  
Centre for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies  
Telephone: +220-2481478  
Email: dekankeh@utg.edu.gm

Visit us online at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

