



Zomba, Malawi
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News release

Most Malawians believe in the existence of witchcraft and support criminalising it, Afrobarometer survey shows

Most Malawians strongly believe that witchcraft exists and support changing the law to criminalise its practice, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

Educated citizens are more likely to believe in the existence of witchcraft than those with no formal education. Most Malawians associate witchcraft with using magic to kill people, make them sick, or bring them misfortune.

The survey shows that the elderly, especially elderly women, are at greatest risk of being victims of witchcraft accusations.

A majority of Malawians favour changing the law to criminalise witchcraft, providing support for the findings and recommendations of the Special Law Commission on the Review of the Witchcraft Act in Malawi.

These findings also suggest a need for raising public awareness and instituting measures to protect segments of the population at risk of being accused of witchcraft.

Key findings

- Three in four Malawians (74%) believe "a lot" in the existence of witchcraft. Only 14% say it doesn't exist (Figure 1).
- Educated citizens (82%) are more likely to believe in the existence of witchcraft than those with no formal education (71%) (Figure 2).
- More than six in 10 Malawians (63%) say that in their communities, elderly people are most often associated with witchcraft (Figure 3).
- Almost three-fourths (72%) of Malawians say witchcraft should be criminalised (Figure 4).

Afrobarometer surveys

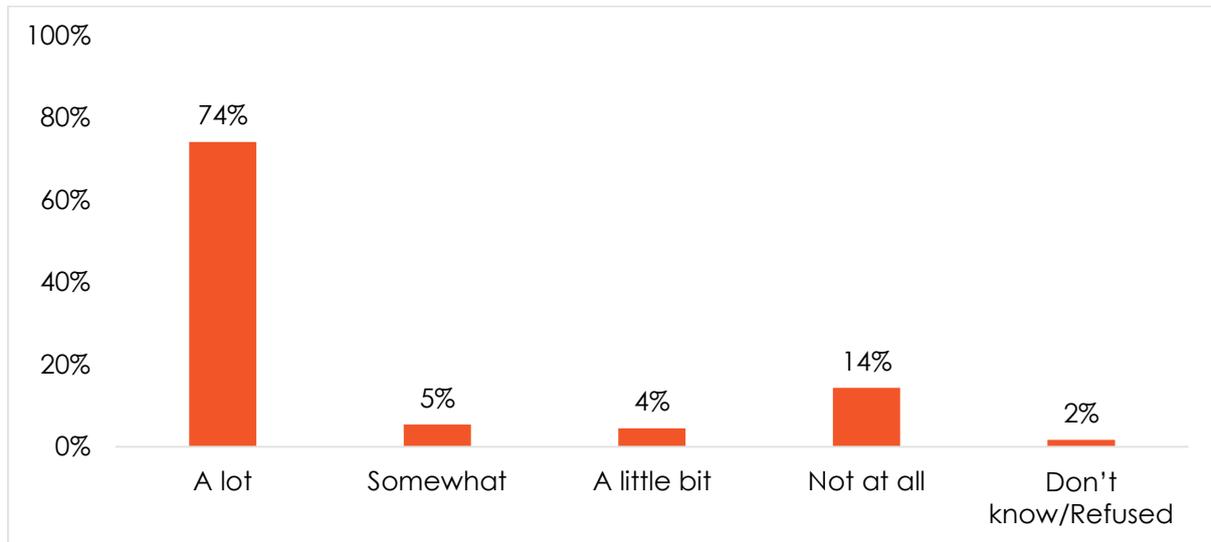
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2022) are currently underway. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Malawians in February 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95%

confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Malawi in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019.

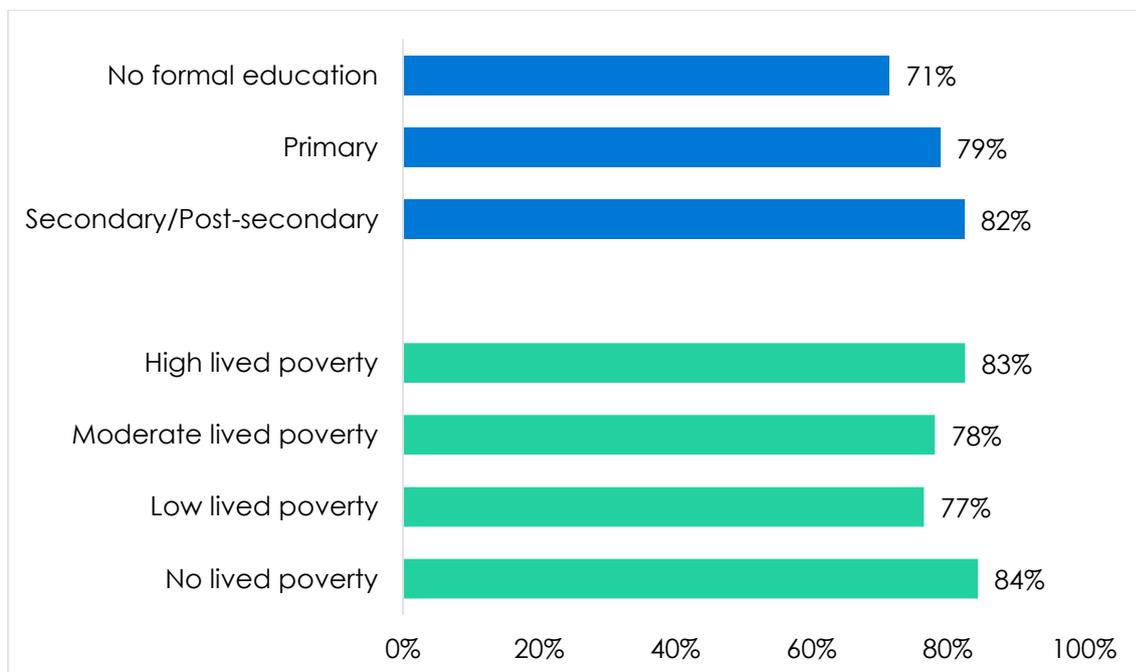
Charts

Figure 1: Belief in the existence of witchcraft | Malawi | 2022



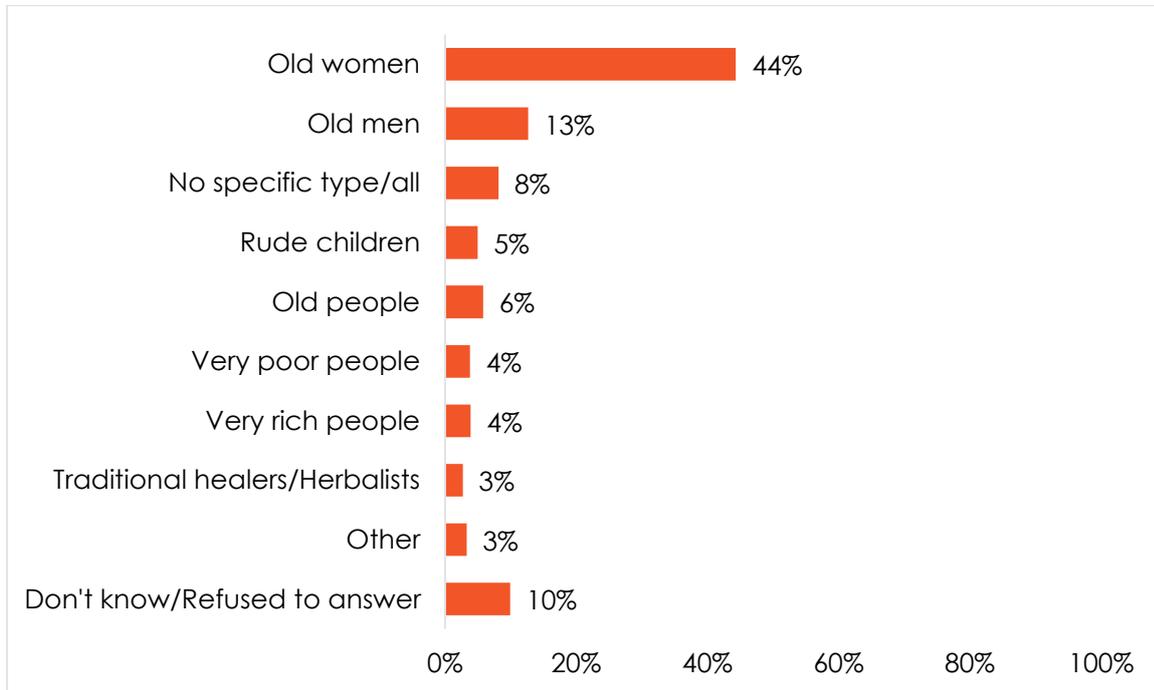
Respondents were asked: Please tell me, how much, if at all, do you believe that witchcraft exists?

Figure 2: Belief in the existence of witchcraft | by education and lived poverty | Malawi | 2022



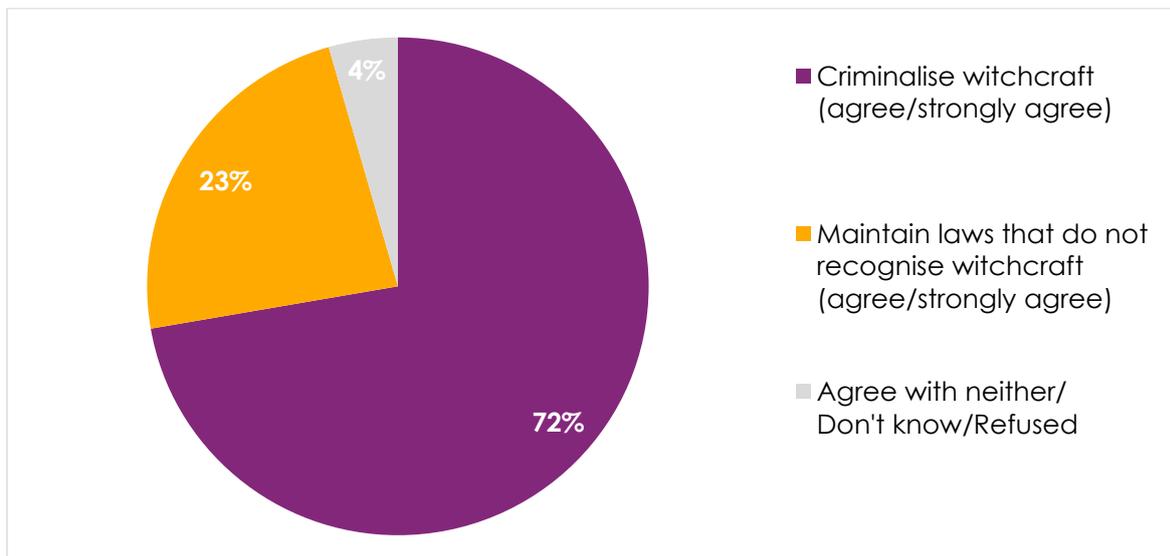
Respondents were asked: Please tell me, how much, if at all, do you believe that witchcraft exists? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

Figure 3: Type of people most associated with witchcraft | Malawi | 2022



Respondents were asked: In your community, which type of people are most associated with witchcraft?

Figure 4: Should witchcraft be criminalised? | Malawi | 2022



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement 1: The current laws that do not recognise witchcraft have served the country well and should be maintained.

Statement 2: The laws of our country should be changed to recognise and criminalise witchcraft.

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