



Maseru, Lesotho
23 September 2022

News release

Basotho cite brutality, lack of professionalism, and corruption among police failings

A majority of Basotho say the police are frequently guilty of abuse and criminal activities, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Amid a growing sense of insecurity in their neighbourhoods and homes, only one-third of Basotho say they trust the police, who rank high among the country's institutions in perceived corruption.

A majority of Basotho say the police routinely torture or abuse people in their custody, use excessive force in dealing with criminals, and engage in illegal activities. Few think the police operate in a professional manner and respect citizens' rights.

And citizens overwhelmingly say the government is doing a bad job of reducing homicides and other crime.

Key findings

- Half (50%) of Basotho say they felt unsafe while walking in their neighbourhood at least once during the previous year. Close to six in 10 (58%) say they feared crime in their home (Figure 1).
- Nearly nine in 10 Basotho (88%) believe that the homicide rate in the country has increased over the past five years (Figure 2).
- More than half (52%) of citizens say that "most" or "all" police are corrupt – the third-worst rating among 13 institutions and leaders the survey asked about (Figure 3).
- Only one-third (33%) of Basotho say they trust the police "somewhat" or "a lot" (Figure 4).
 - The share of citizens who say they don't trust the police "at all" has climbed by 20 percentage points since 2017 (Figure 5).
- Seven in 10 Basotho (71%) say the police "often" or "always" abuse or torture people in their custody (Figure 6).
 - Majorities also say the police routinely engage in illegal activities (58%) and use excessive force with criminals (55%).
 - Almost half (48%) say the police routinely use excessive force in managing protests, while 44% say they "often" or "always" stop drivers without good reason.
 - But 79% consider it likely that the police will take reports of gender-based violence seriously.
- Most citizens give the government poor marks on reducing crime (85%) and addressing or preventing homicides (65%) (Figure 7).

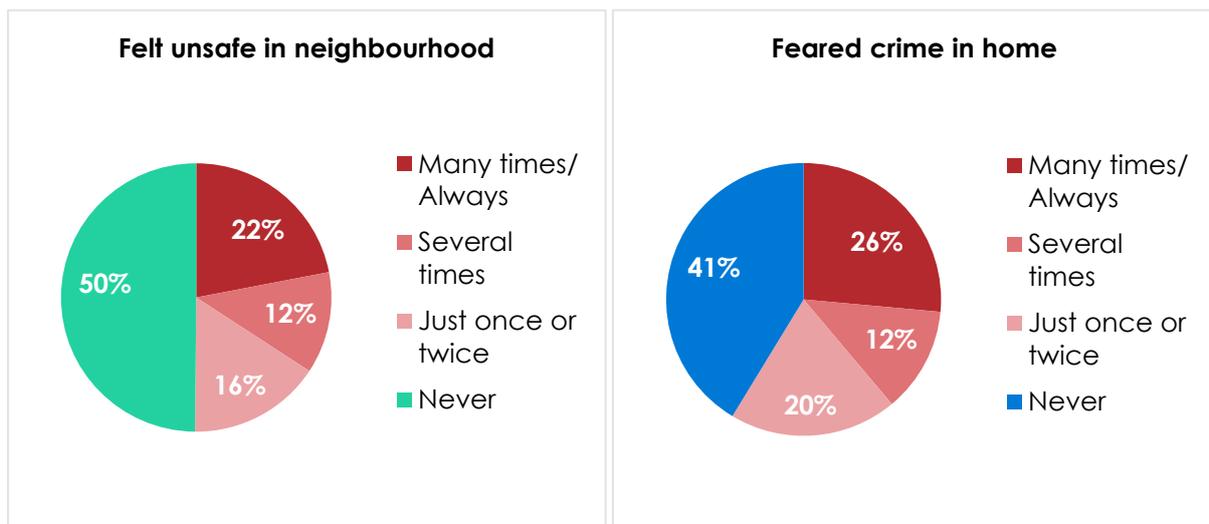
Afrobarometer surveys

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 Lesotho, led by Advision Lesotho, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens in February-March 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 Lesotho in 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2020.

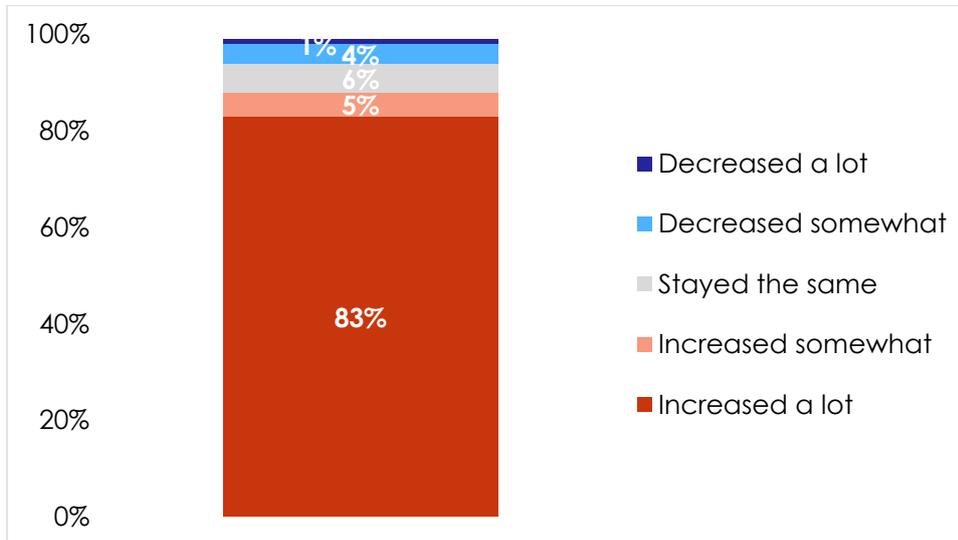
Charts

Figure 1: Insecurity and fear of crime | Lesotho | 2022



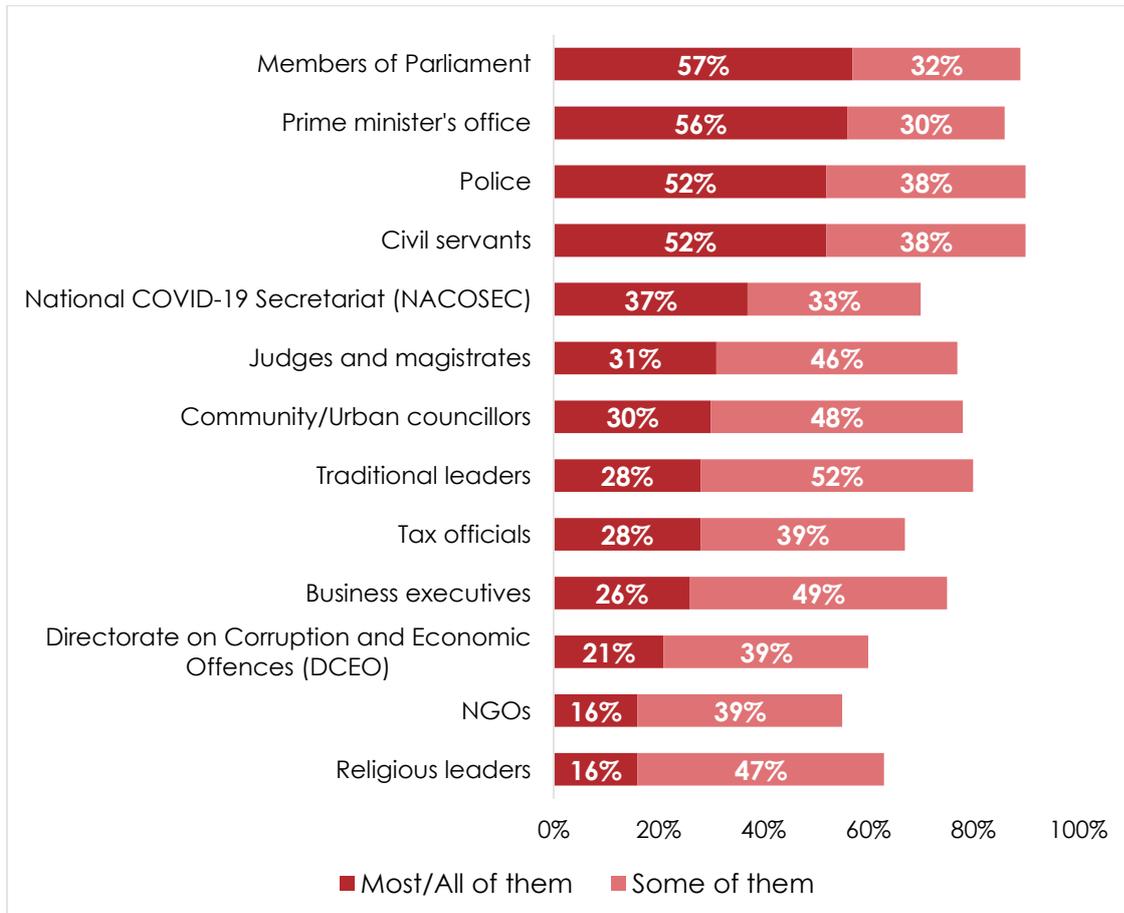
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your own home?

Figure 2: Has homicide rate increased or decreased? | Lesotho | 2022



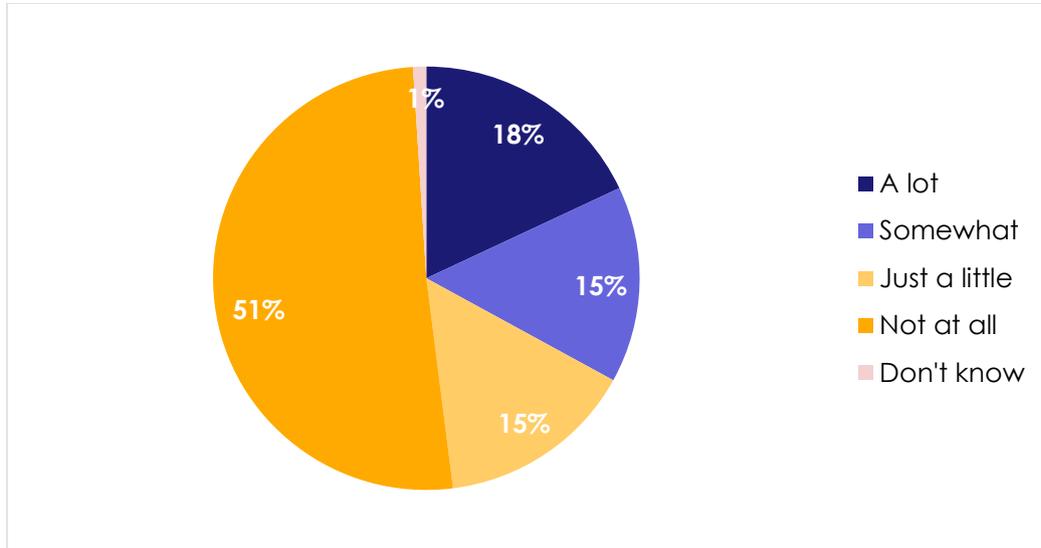
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, would you say the rate of murder or killings in this country has increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past five years?

Figure 3: Perceived corruption among institutions and leaders | Lesotho | 2022



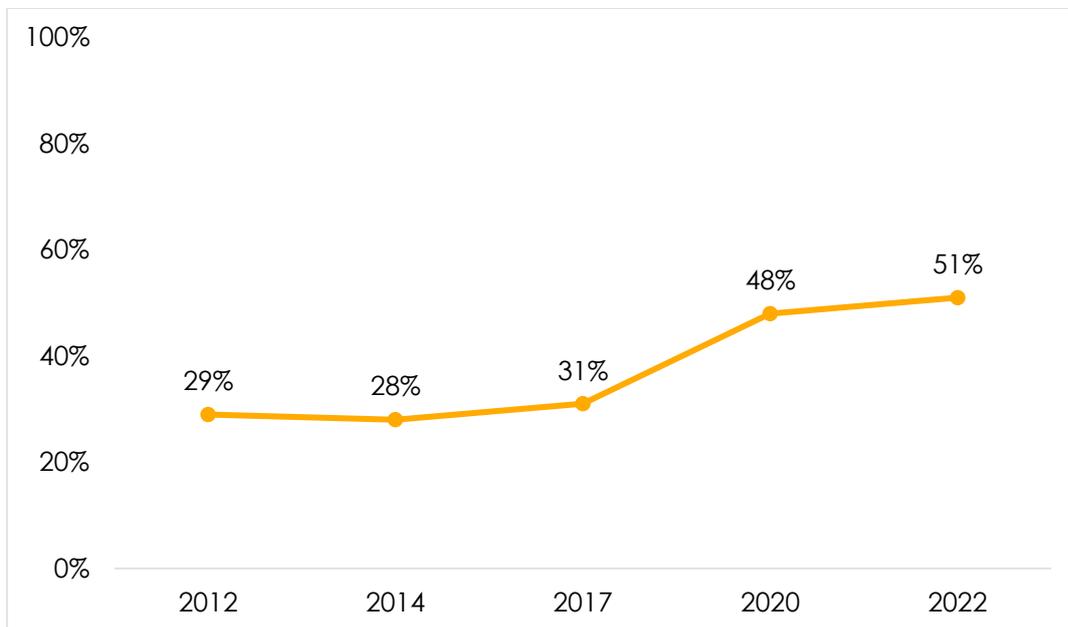
Respondents were asked: How many of the following do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Figure 4: Trust in the police | Lesotho | 2022



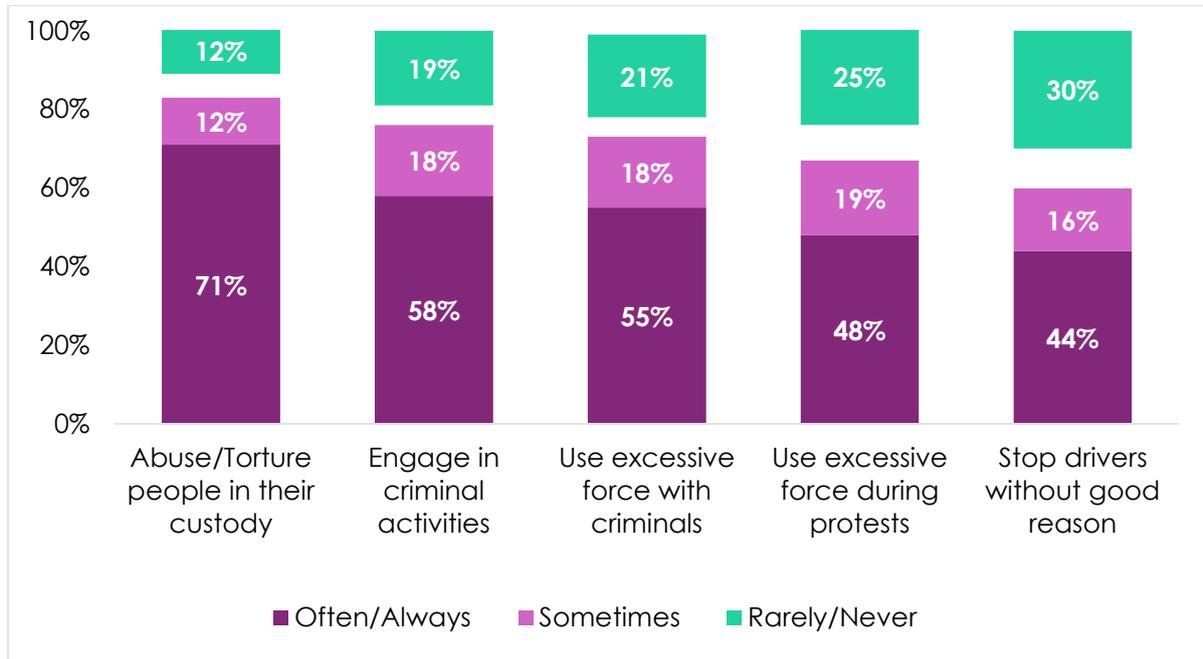
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the police, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Figure 5: Don't trust the police at all | Lesotho | 2012-2022



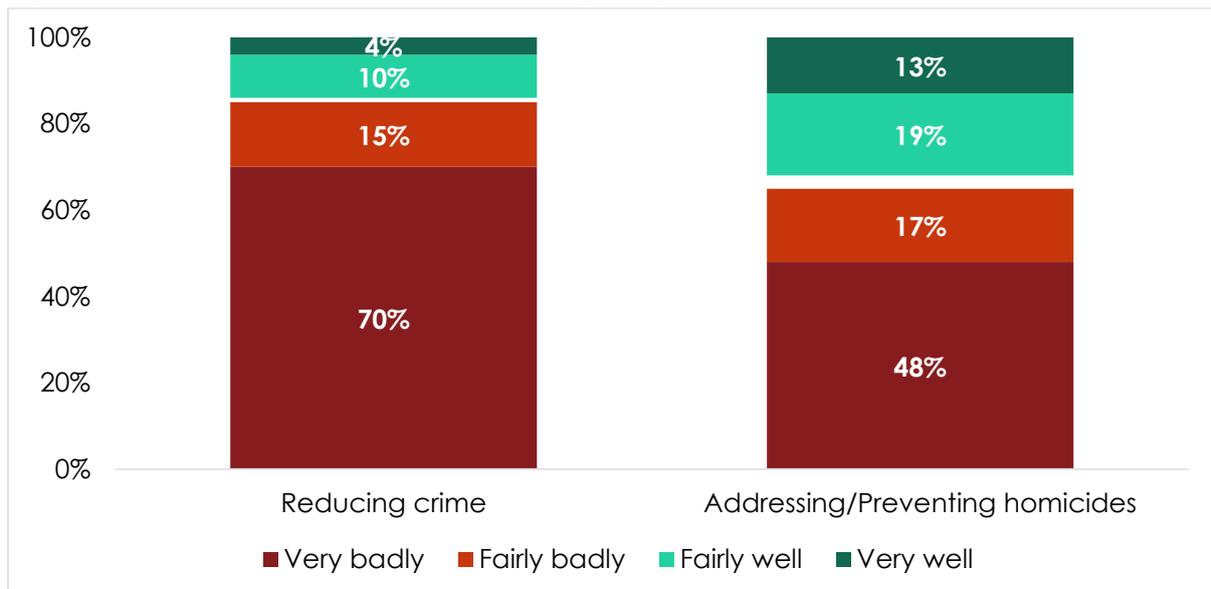
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the police, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "not at all")

Figure 6: Improper police practices | Lesotho | 2022



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the police in Lesotho:
 Stop drivers without good reason?
 Use excessive force in managing protests or demonstrations?
 Use excessive force when dealing with criminals?
 Engage in criminal activities?
 Abuse or torture people in their custody?

Figure 7: Government performance on fighting crime/homicides | Lesotho | 2022



Respondents were asked:
 How well or badly would you say the current government is handling reducing crime, or haven't you heard enough to say?
 How well or badly would you say the security services are doing to address or prevent the problem of murders or killings, or haven't you heard enough to say?

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