



Maseru, Lesotho
1 September 2022

News release

In Lesotho, gender-based violence is a 'shadow pandemic' yet to be eliminated

Gender-based violence is the most important women's-rights issue that Basotho want the government and society to address, many citing it as a common problem in homes and communities, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

A majority of citizens say it is never justified for men to use physical force to discipline their wives, and most say gender-based violence is a criminal matter that requires the involvement of law enforcement authorities, rather than a personal affair that should be handled within the family.

But while most Basotho believe that the police take gender-based violence seriously, many say a woman is likely to be criticised, harassed, or shamed if she reports such violence to the authorities.

Key findings

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Basotho see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women's-rights issue that the government and society must address (Figure 1).
- A majority (53%) of citizens say violence against women is a "somewhat common" (28%) or "very common" (25%) occurrence in their community (Figure 2).
- More than eight in 10 Basotho (85%) say it is "never" justified for a man to physically discipline his wife. Fewer than two in 10 think it is "sometimes" (11%) or "always" (4%) justified (Figure 3).
- Almost six in 10 respondents (56%) consider it "somewhat likely" (29%) or "very likely" (27%) that a woman will be criticised, harassed, or shamed if she reports gender-based violence to the authorities (Figure 4).
 - But most citizens (79%) believe that the police are likely to take cases of GBV seriously (Figure 5).
- A slim majority (53%) of Basotho say domestic violence should be treated as a criminal matter rather than as a private matter to be resolved within the family (Figure 6).

Afrobarometer surveys

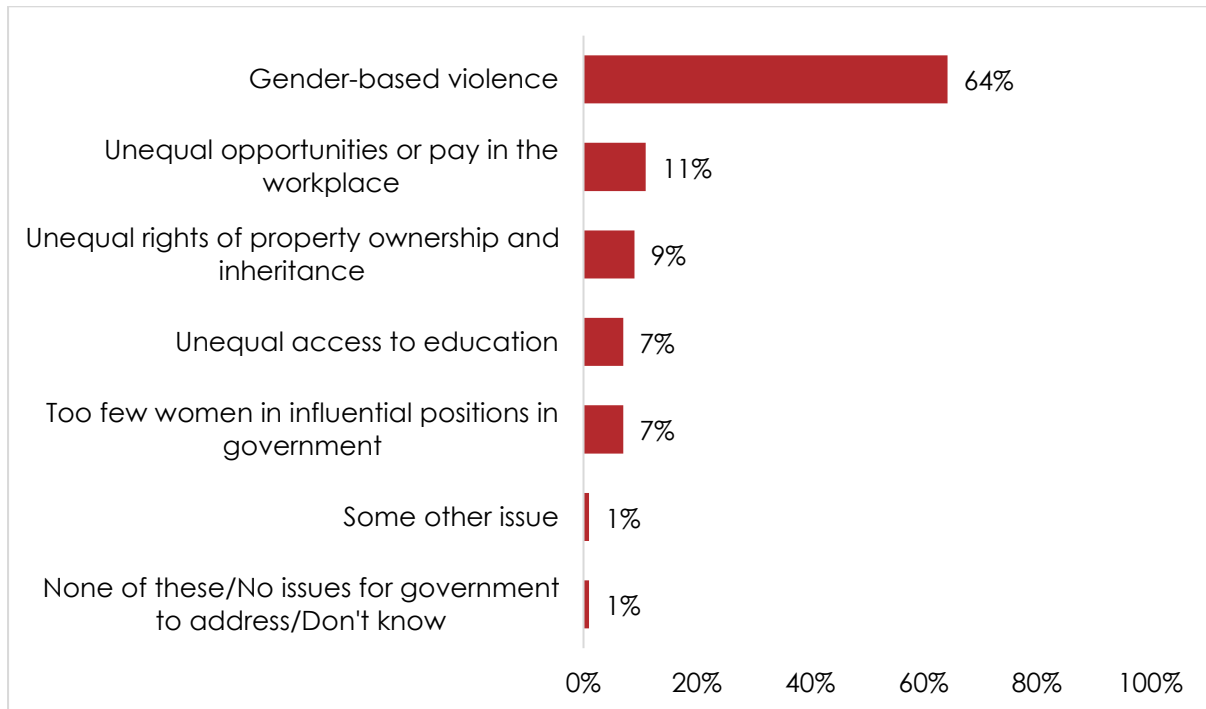
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2022) are currently underway.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

The Afrobarometer team in Lesotho, led by Advison 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.

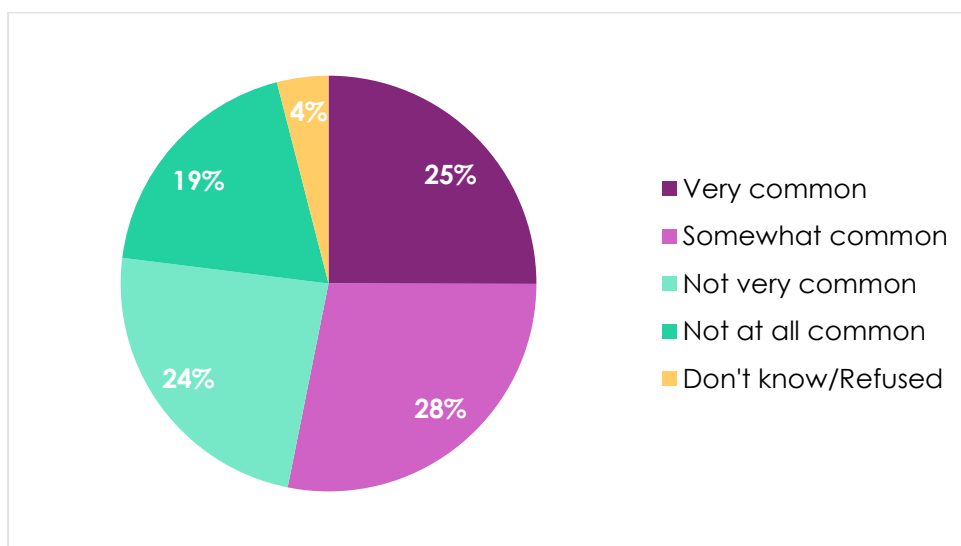
Charts

Figure 1: Most important women’s-rights issue | Lesotho | 2022



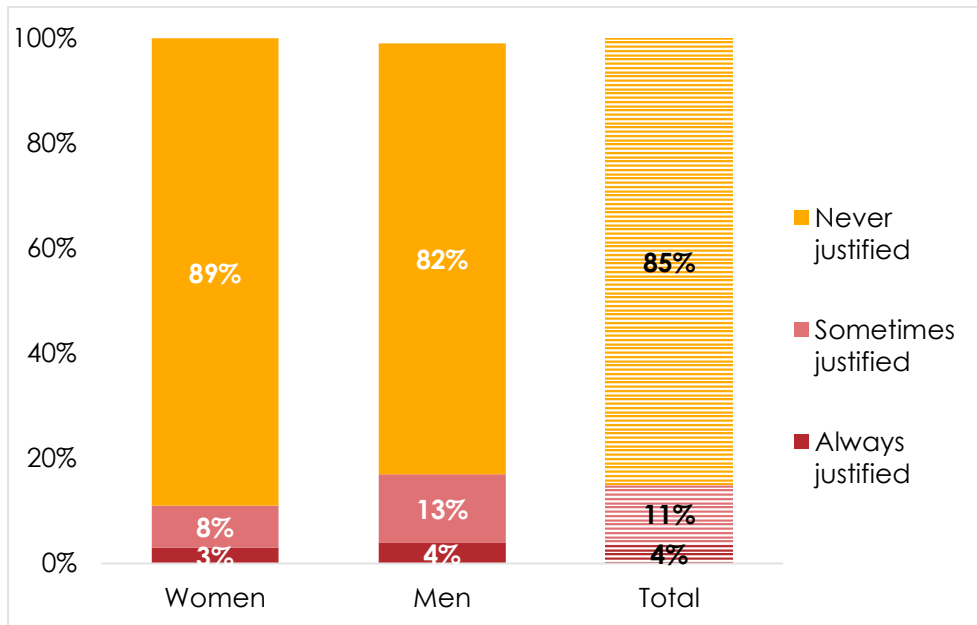
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following issues related to women's rights and equality do you think is the most important for our government and society to address?*

Figure 2: Frequency of gender-based violence | Lesotho | 2022



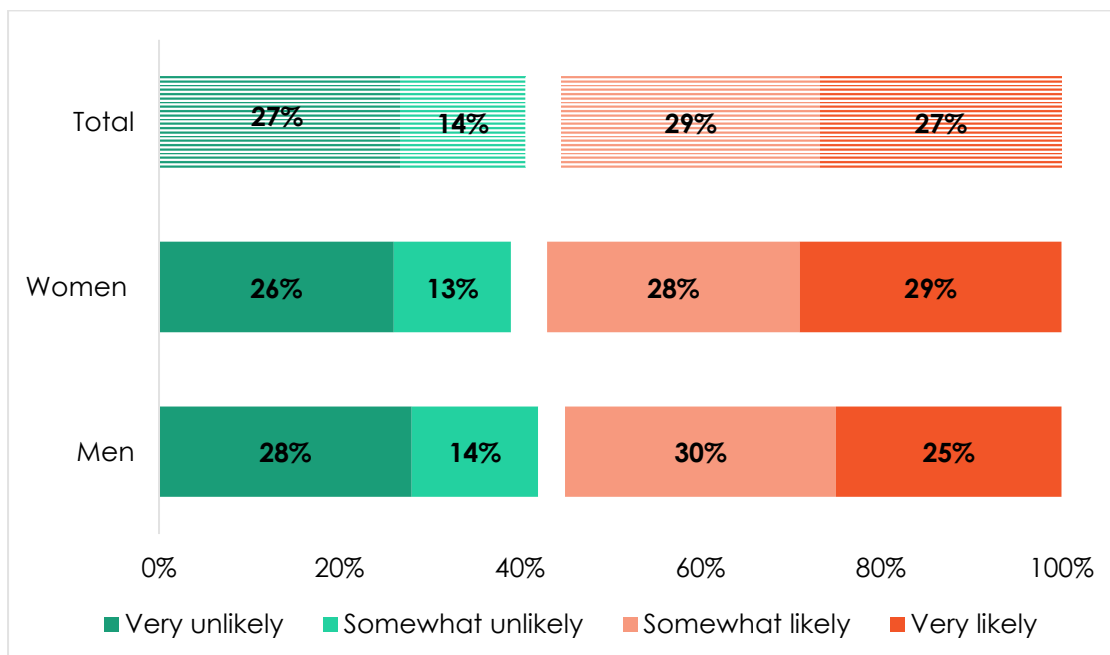
Respondents were asked: *In this area, how common do you think it is for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or the community?*

Figure 3: Is it justified for men to physically discipline their wives? | by gender
 | Lesotho | 2022



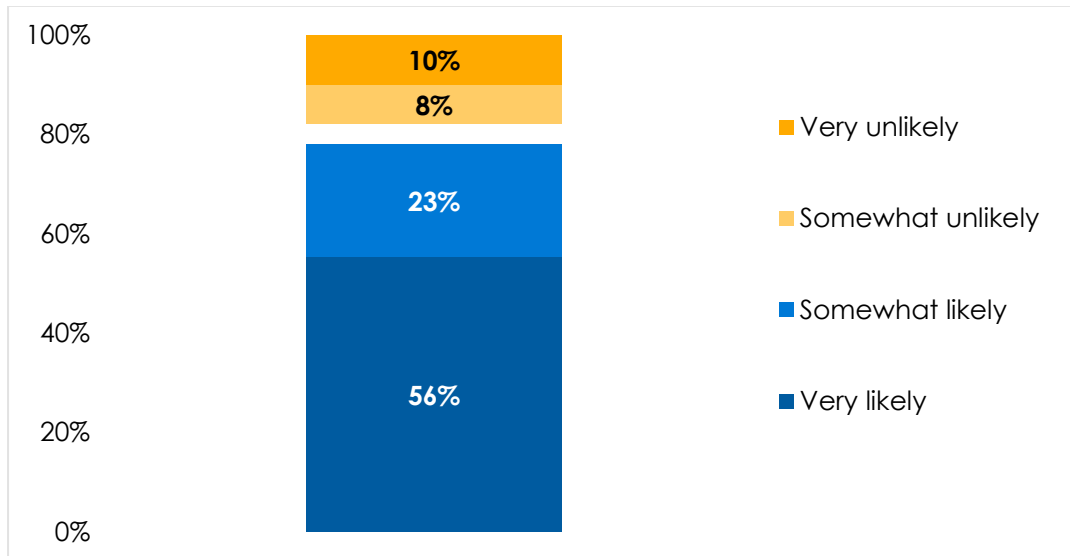
Respondents were asked: For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to use physical discipline on his wife if she has done something he doesn't like or thinks is wrong?

Figure 4: Will a woman be criticised, harassed, or shamed for reporting GBV?
 | by gender | Lesotho | 2022



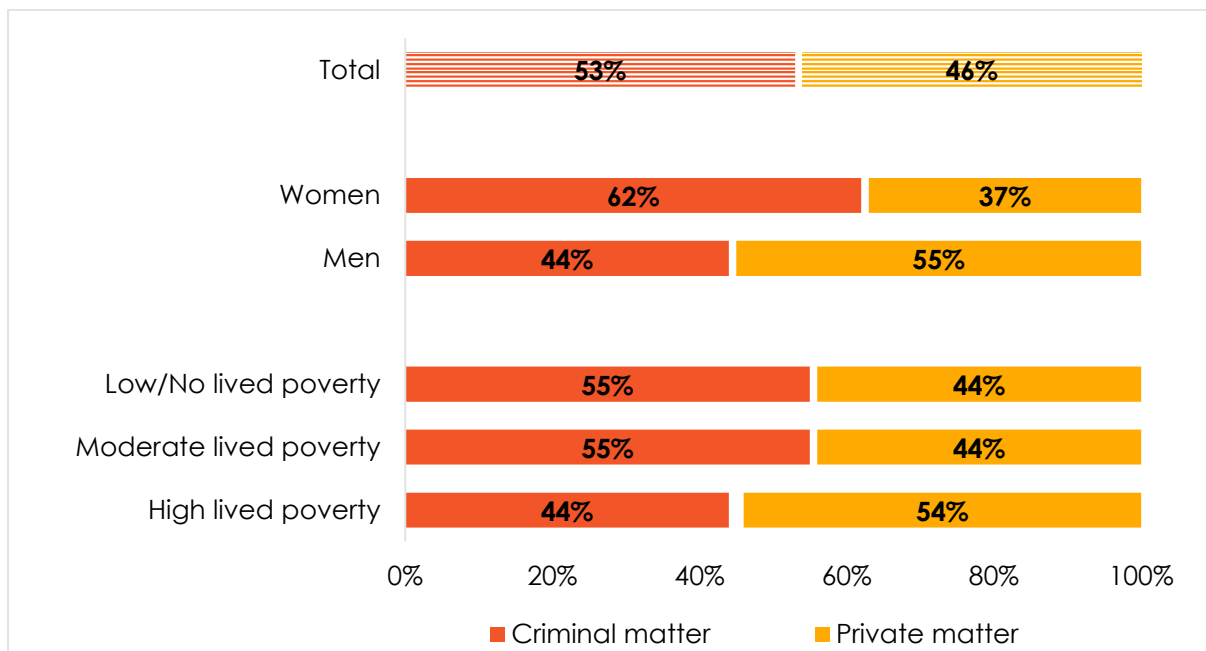
Respondents were asked: If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: She will be criticised, harassed, or shamed by others in the community?

Figure 5: Do the police take GBV cases seriously? | Lesotho | 2022



Respondents were asked: If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: Her case will be taken seriously by the police?

Figure 6: Is domestic violence a criminal or private matter? | by gender and lived poverty | Lesotho | 2022



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Domestic violence is a private matter that needs to be handled and resolved within the family.
 Statement 2: Domestic violence is a criminal matter whose full resolution requires the involvement of law enforcement agencies.
 (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

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