



Freetown, Sierra Leone
2 November 2022

News release

Gender-based violence a high priority in Sierra Leone, but citizens say women who come forward likely to face criticism and shame

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the most important women's-rights issue that Sierra Leoneans say their government and society must address, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

While a majority of people say violence against women and girls is uncommon in their neighbourhoods, many indicate that women are likely to face criticism or harassment if they report such violence to the police.

Most Sierra Leoneans think that the police are likely to take cases of GBV seriously. But a majority consider domestic violence a private matter to be resolved within the family rather than a criminal matter requiring the involvement of law enforcement.

In recent years Sierra Leone has declared rape a national emergency and strengthened laws against sexual violence but continues to be rocked by high-profile cases of gender-based violence, including the recent murder of Sinnah Kai-Kargbo, in which her boyfriend stands accused.

Key findings

- Sierra Leoneans see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women's-rights issue that the government and society must address (Figure 1).
- Two-thirds (67%) of citizens say violence against women is "not very common" or "not at all common" in their community, while 32% – and 36% of women – disagree (Figure 2).
- Almost half of respondents consider it "somewhat likely" (21%) or "very likely" (27%) that a woman will be criticised, harassed, or shamed if she reports gender-based violence to the authorities. Only 37% say this is "very unlikely" (Figure 3).
- But most (93%) believe that the police are likely to take cases of GBV seriously (Figure 4).
- A majority (57%) of Sierra Leoneans say domestic violence should be treated as a private matter to be resolved within the family rather than as a criminal matter.

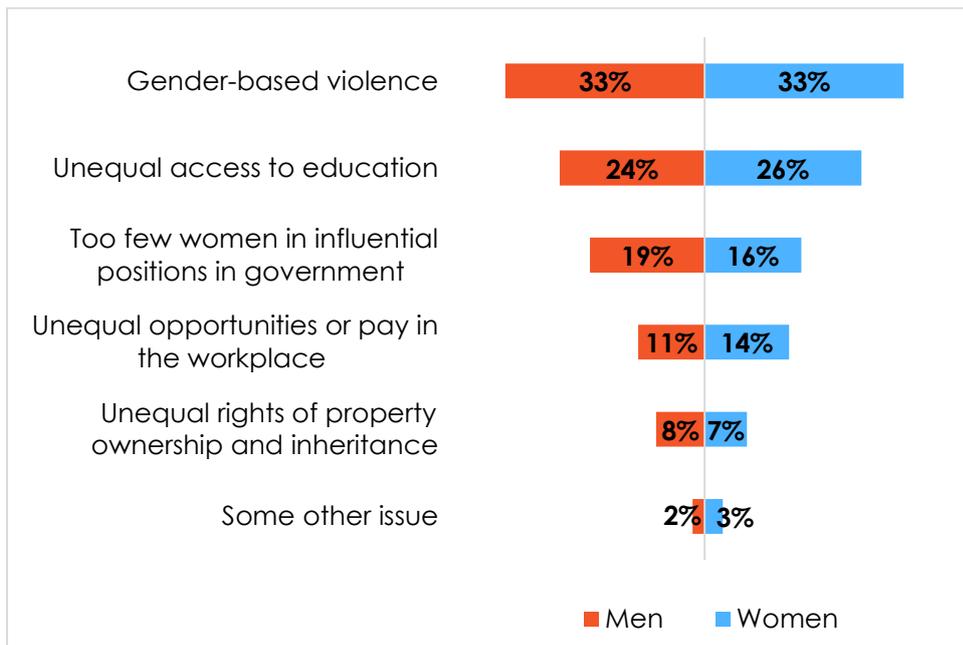
Afrobarometer surveys

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

The Afrobarometer team in Sierra Leone, led by the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR), interviewed 1,200 adult citizens of Sierra Leone between 13 June and 9 July 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 Sierra Leone in 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2020.

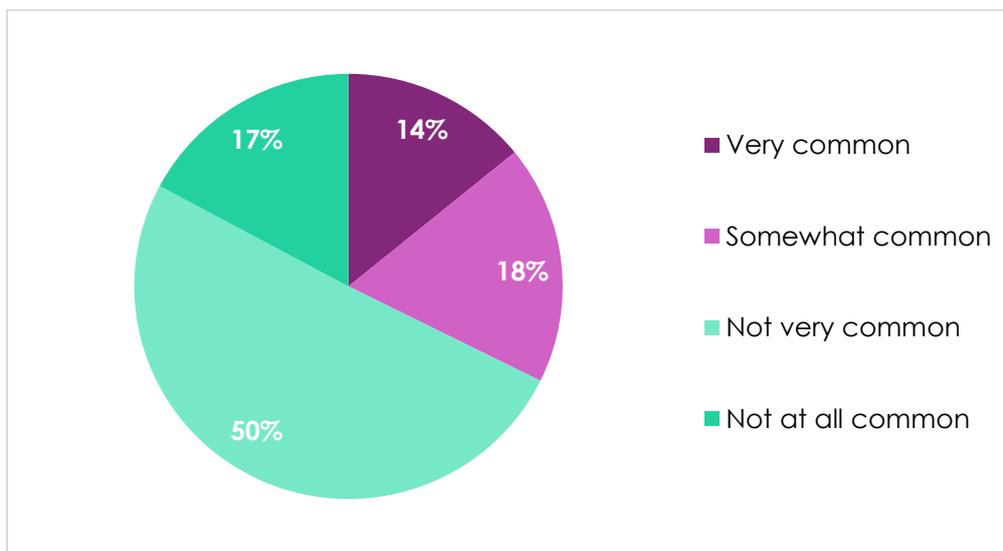
Charts

Figure 1: Most important women’s-rights issue | by gender | Sierra Leone | 2022



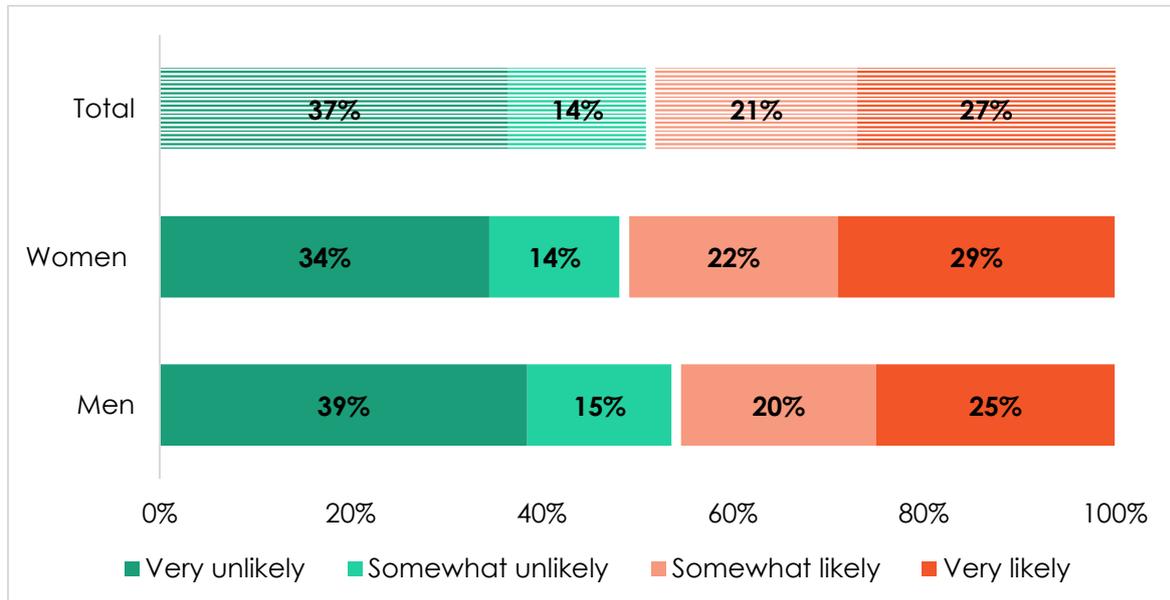
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following issues related to women's rights and equality do you think is the most important for our government and society to address?*

Figure 2: Frequency of GBV | Sierra Leone | 2022



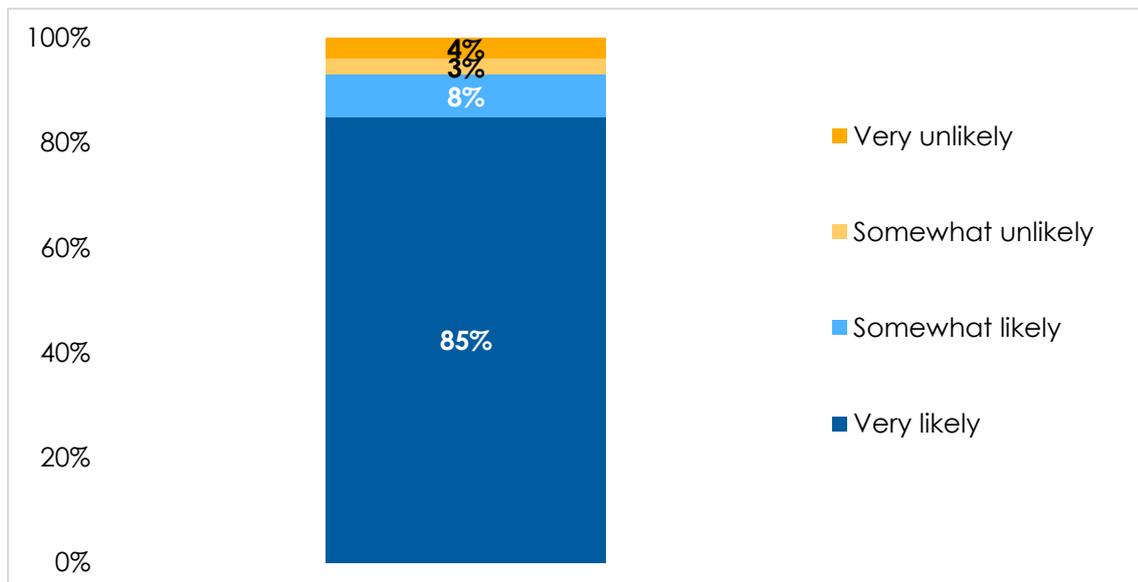
Respondents were asked: *In this area, how common do you think it is for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or the community?*

Figure 3: Will a woman be criticised, harassed, or shamed for reporting GBV?
 | by gender | Sierra Leone | 2022



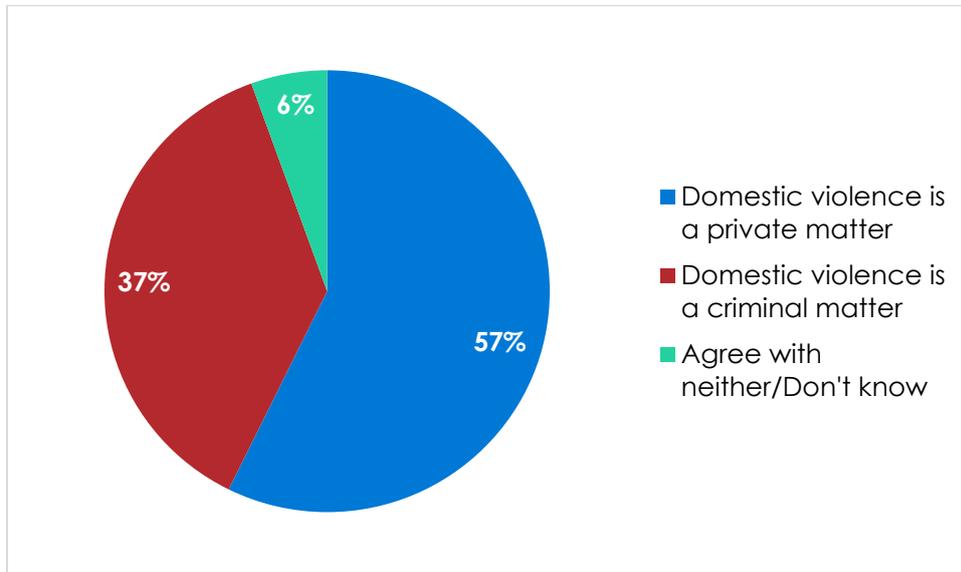
Respondents were asked: If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: She will be criticised, harassed,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

Figure 4: Do the police take GBV cases seriously? | Sierra Leone | 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 5: Is domestic violence a criminal or private matter? | Sierra Leone | 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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