



Zomba, Malawi
30 January 2023

News release

Majority of Malawians say vulnerable children lack needed support, Afrobarometer survey shows

A majority of Malawians say vulnerable children are often unable to obtain needed help and support in their community, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

Fewer than half of survey respondents say children who are abused or neglected, who are living with disability, or who have mental or emotional problems are generally able to get the help they need.

About four in 10 citizens describe child abuse and neglect as common in their community. A majority say out-of-school children are a frequent occurrence.

Despite these challenges, a majority of Malawians say their government is doing a good job of promoting the well-being of vulnerable children.

Key findings

- A majority of Malawians say that adults in their community do “not very frequently” (47%) or “not at all frequently” (10%) use physical force to discipline children. But more than four in 10 see this as a “somewhat frequent” (18%) or “very frequent” (24%) occurrence (Figure 1).
- Four in 10 Malawians (41%) say that children in their community are frequently abused, mistreated, or neglected.
 - Rural residents are more likely than urbanites to see child abuse and neglect as a frequent occurrence (43% vs. 29%). Matrilineal and patrilineal communities offer the same assessment of how often children are abused or neglected (Figure 2).
- Only 40% of citizens say children who are victims of abuse or neglect are generally able to receive help in their community. Even fewer say help is available for children with disability (38%) and for children and adults with mental or emotional problems (28%) (Figure 3).
 - Urban residents are more likely than their rural counterparts to report that help for abused or neglected children is available in their community (49% vs. 39%). The situation is also better in the Southern region (47%) than in the Central region (37%) and Northern region (28%) (Figure 4).
- More than six in 10 Malawians (62%) say that school-age children are frequently not in school in their community. This perception is more common in rural areas (63%) than in cities (54%). It is also more widespread in the Central region (68%) than the other two regions of the country (56%-57%). The situation is the same regardless of whether the community is patrilineal or matrilineal (Figure 5).

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of Malawians say the government is doing a “fairly” or “very” good job of protecting and promoting the well-being of vulnerable children (Figure 6).

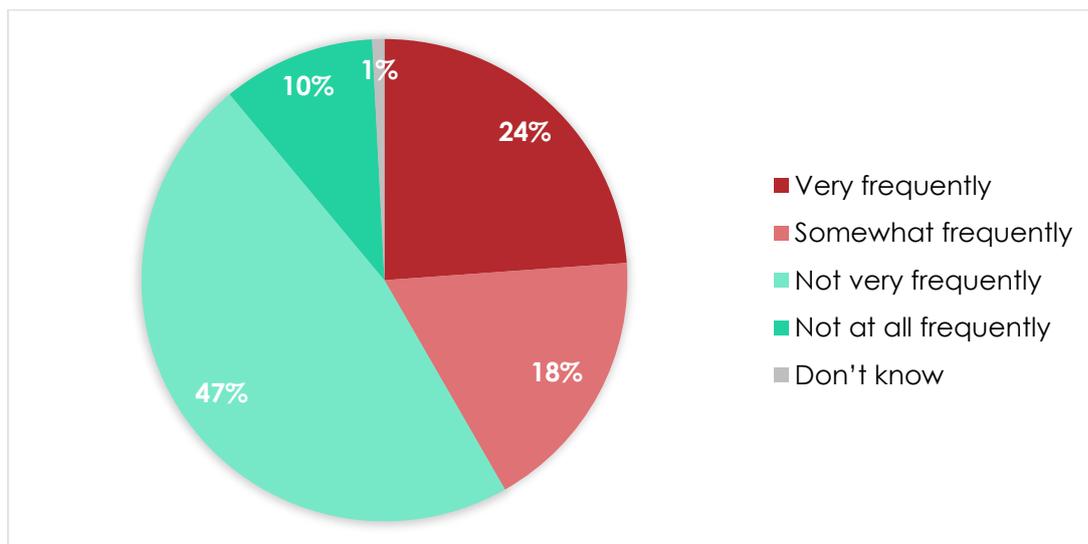
Afrobarometer surveys

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 conducted since 1999. Round 9 surveys are being completed in early 2023. Afrobarometer’s national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by 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.

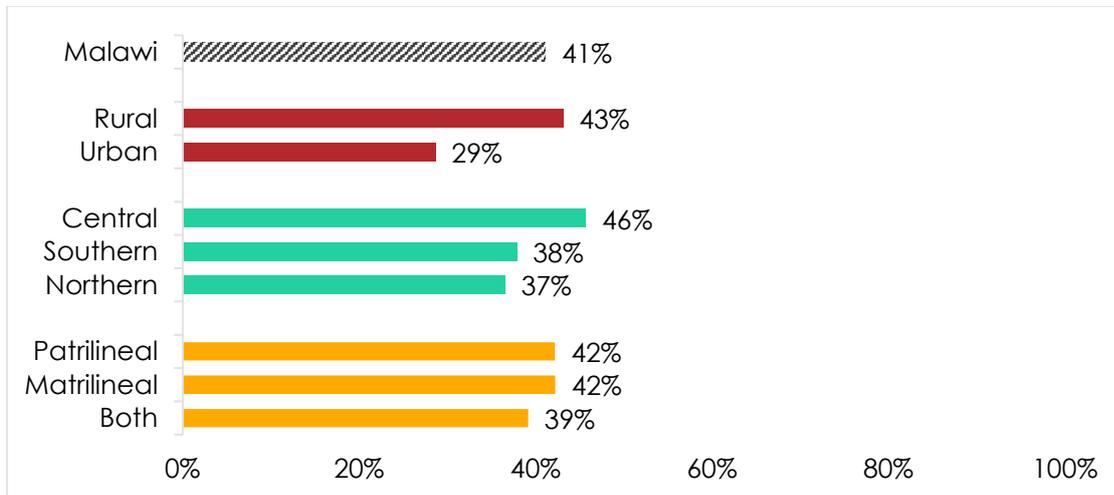
Charts

Figure 1: Use of physical force to discipline children | Malawi | 2022



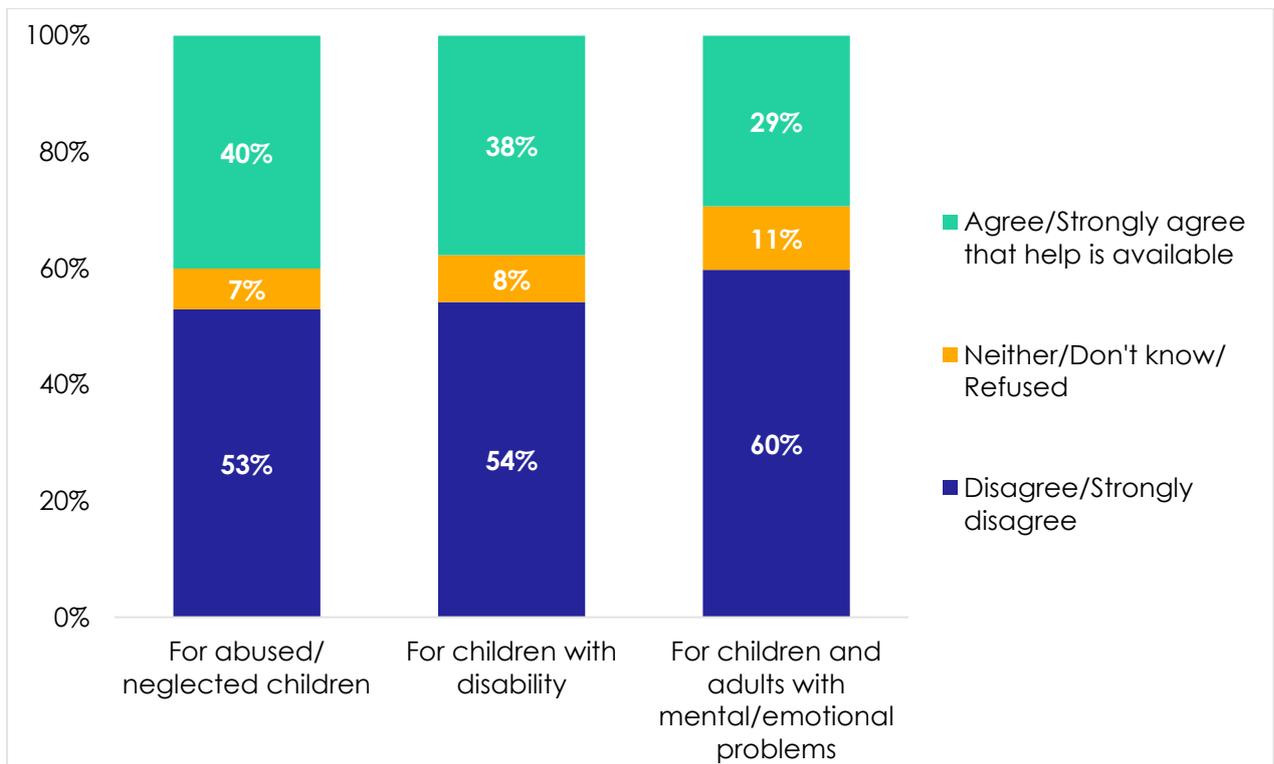
Respondents were asked: How frequently do you think adults use physical force to discipline children in your community or neighbourhood?

Figure 2: Children are somewhat/very frequently abused or neglected | by urban-rural location, region, and descent | Malawi | 2022



Respondents were asked: How frequently do you think children are abused, mistreated, or neglected in your community or neighbourhood? (% who say "somewhat frequently" or "very frequently")

Figure 3: Availability of help for vulnerable children | Malawi | 2022



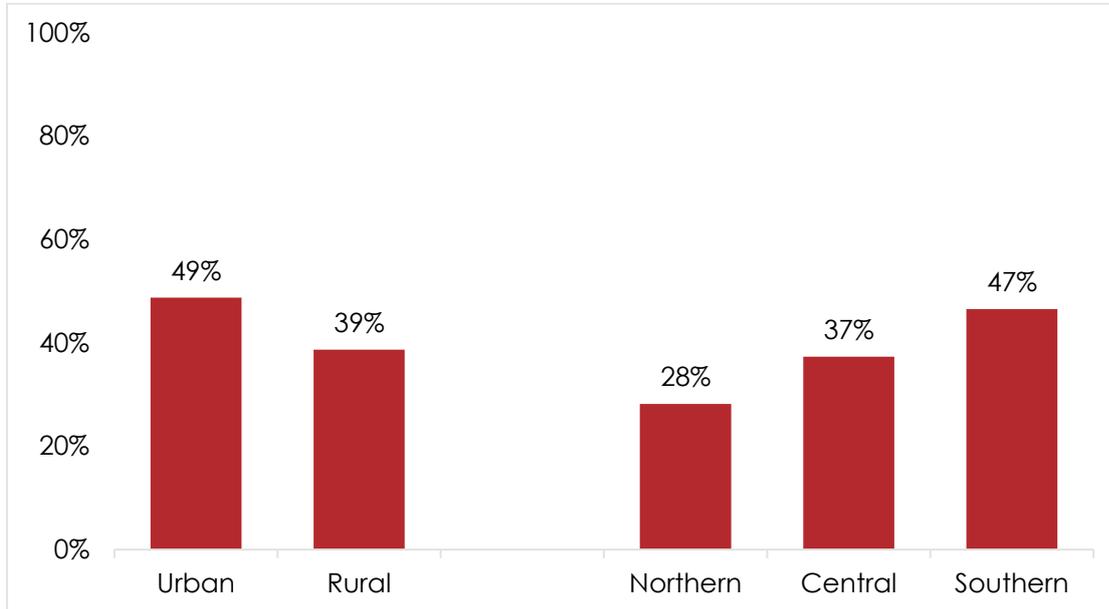
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

In general, people in this community are able to get help for children who are abused, mistreated, or neglected?

In my community, children who have a physical disability are generally able to get the support they need to succeed in life.

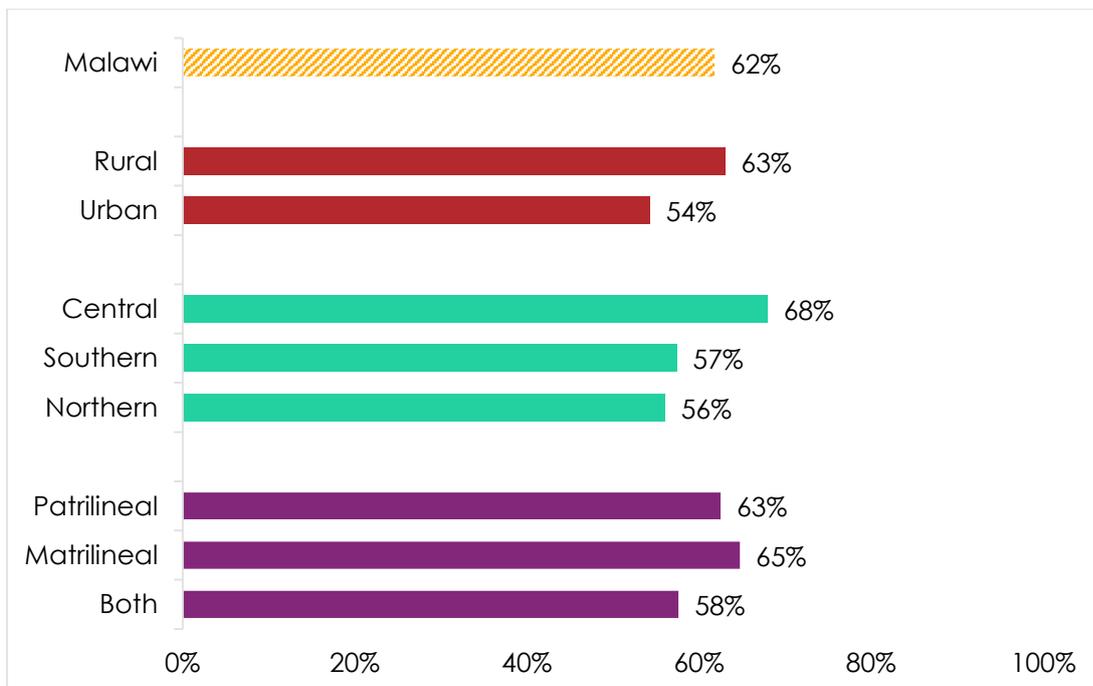
In my community, children and adults who have mental or emotional problems are generally able to get the help they need to have a good life.

Figure 4: Help is available for abused or neglected children | by urban-rural location and region | Malawi | 2022



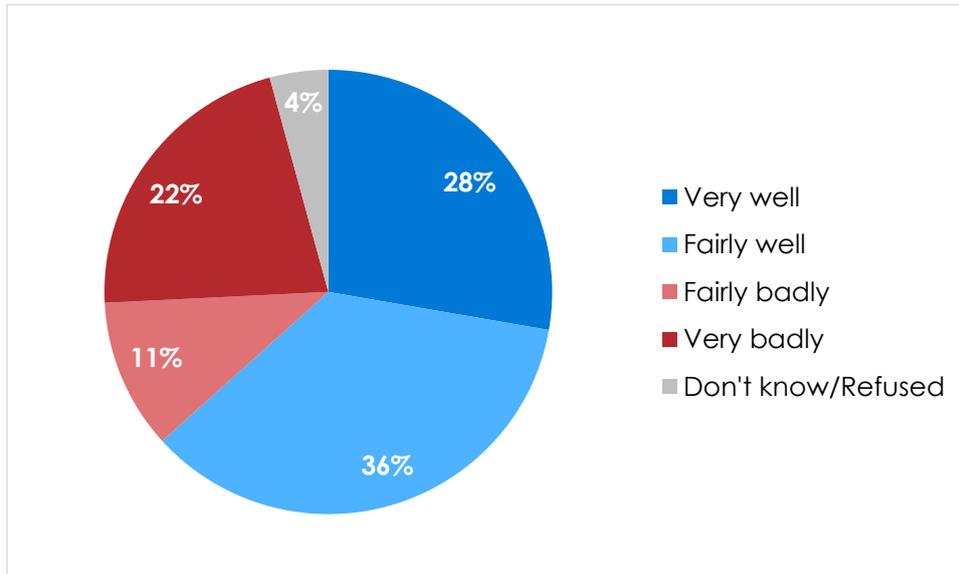
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: In general, people in this community are able to get help for children who are abused, mistreated, or neglected? (% who “agree” or “strongly agree”)

Figure 5: School-age children not in school | by urban-rural location, region, and descent | Malawi | 2022



Respondents were asked: How frequently do you think the following things occur in your community or neighbourhood: Children who should be in school are not in school?

Figure 6: Government handling of protection and promotion of well-being of vulnerable children | Malawi | 2022



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: Protecting and promoting the well-being of vulnerable children?

For more information, please contact:

Centre for Social Research
 Joseph J. Chunga
 Telephone: +265995623818
 Email: jchung@unima.ac.mw

Visit us online at:
www.crsunima.mw
www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

