



Zomba, Malawi  
13 April 2023

## News release

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### Malawians see gender-based violence as a top priority – and a criminal matter

Malawians see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women's-rights issue that the government and society must address, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

Citizens overwhelmingly reject the idea that a man is justified in using physical force against his wife and express confidence that the police take GBV cases seriously.

A majority consider GBV a criminal matter requiring the involvement of law enforcement rather than a private matter to be handled within the family.

But almost half also think it's likely that a woman who reports such violence to the authorities will be criticised, harassed, or shamed by others in the community.

#### Key findings

- Malawians see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women's-rights issue that the government and society must address (Figure 1).
- But almost two-thirds (65%) of citizens say violence against women and girls is not a common occurrence in their community (Figure 2).
- Malawians overwhelmingly (94%) say a man is "never justified" in using physical force to discipline his wife (Figure 3).
- More than four in 10 citizens (44%) say it is "somewhat" or "very" likely that a woman who reports being a victim of GBV will be criticised, harassed, or shamed by others in the community. About the same proportion (43%) consider it "very unlikely" (Figure 4).
- Most respondents (90%) believe that the police are likely to take cases of GBV seriously (Figure 5).
- More than six in 10 citizens (62%) 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

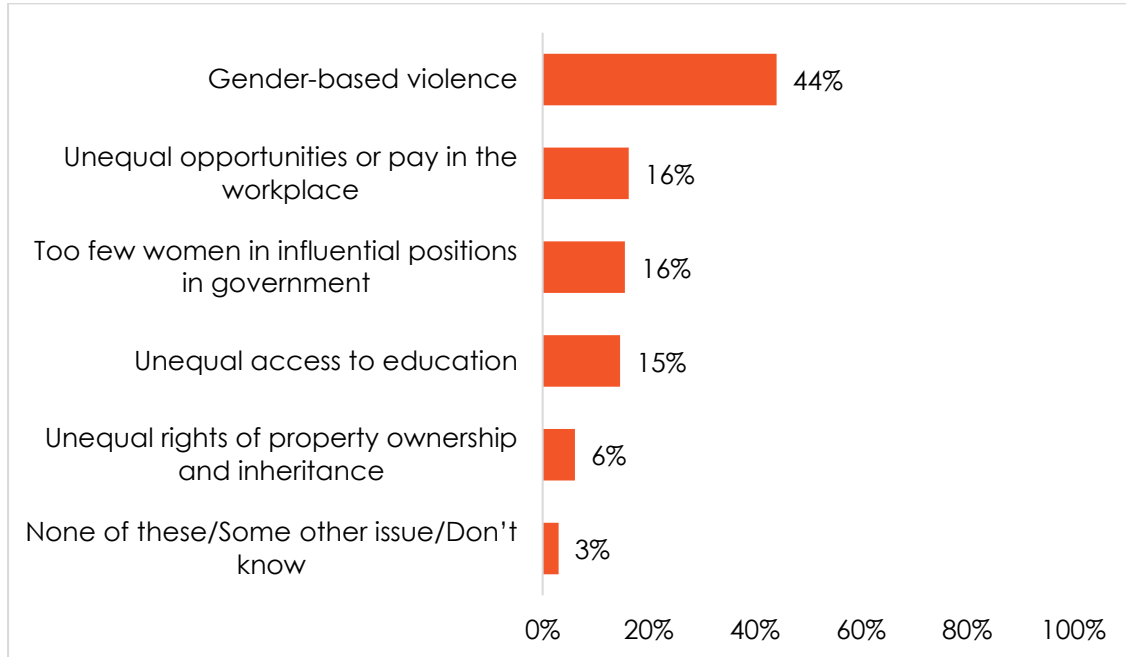
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been conducted since 1999. Round 9 surveys are being completed in early 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 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.

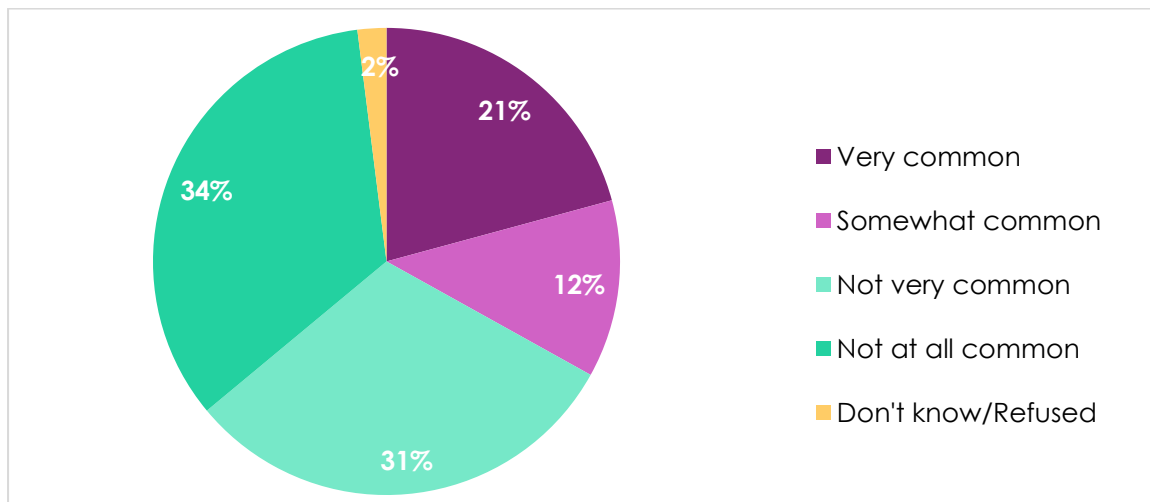
**Charts**

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



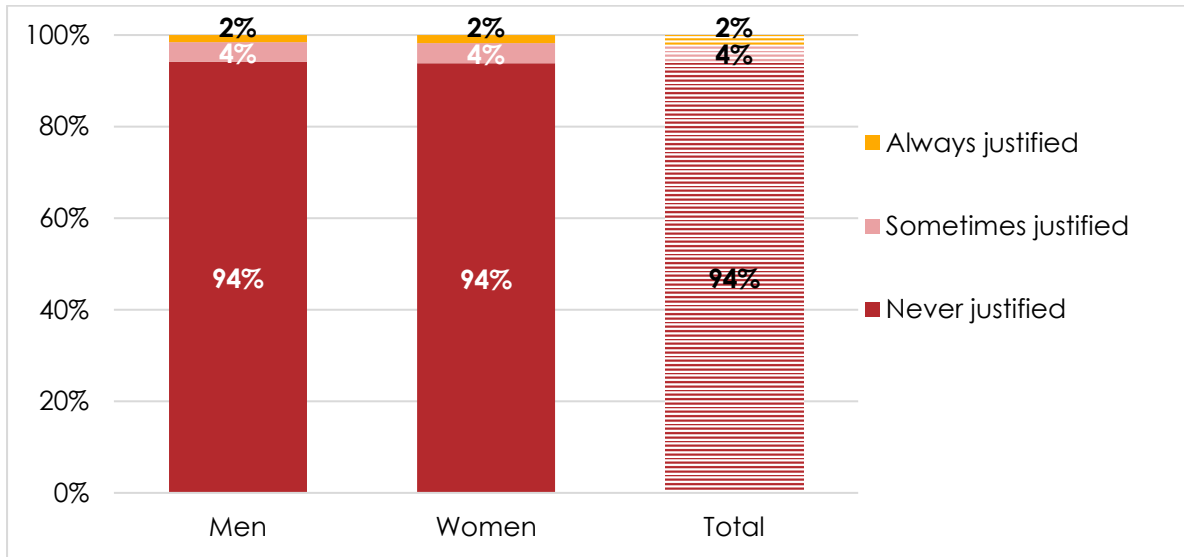
**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, which of the following issues related to women's rights and equality do you think is the most important for our government and society to address?

**Figure 2: Frequency of GBV | Malawi | 2022**



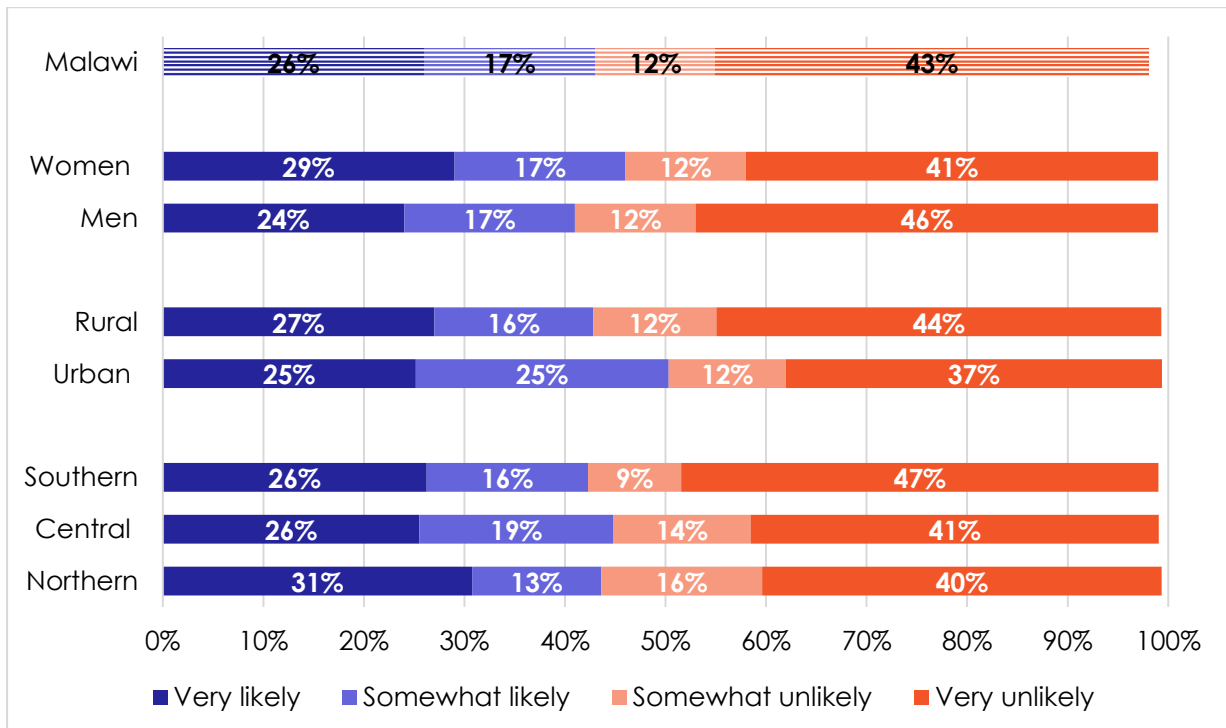
**Respondents were asked:** In this area, how common do you think it is for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or the community?

**Figure 3 : Is it justified for men to physically discipline their wives? | Malawi | 2022**



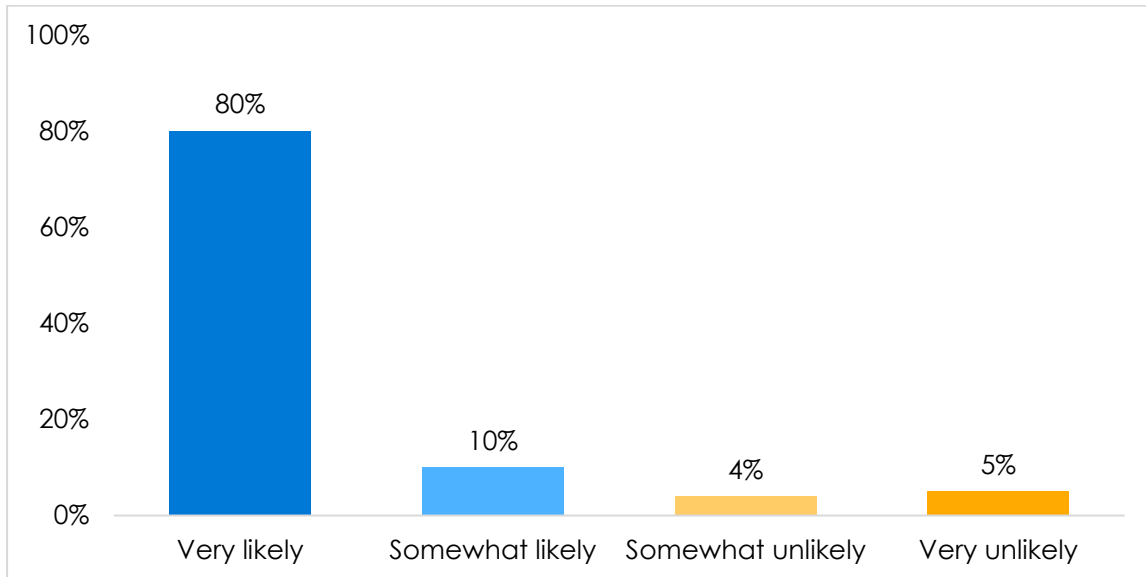
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to use physical discipline on his wife if she has done something he doesn't like or thinks is wrong?

**Figure 4: Will a woman be criticised, harassed, or shamed for reporting GBV?**  
 | by demographic group | Malawi | 2022



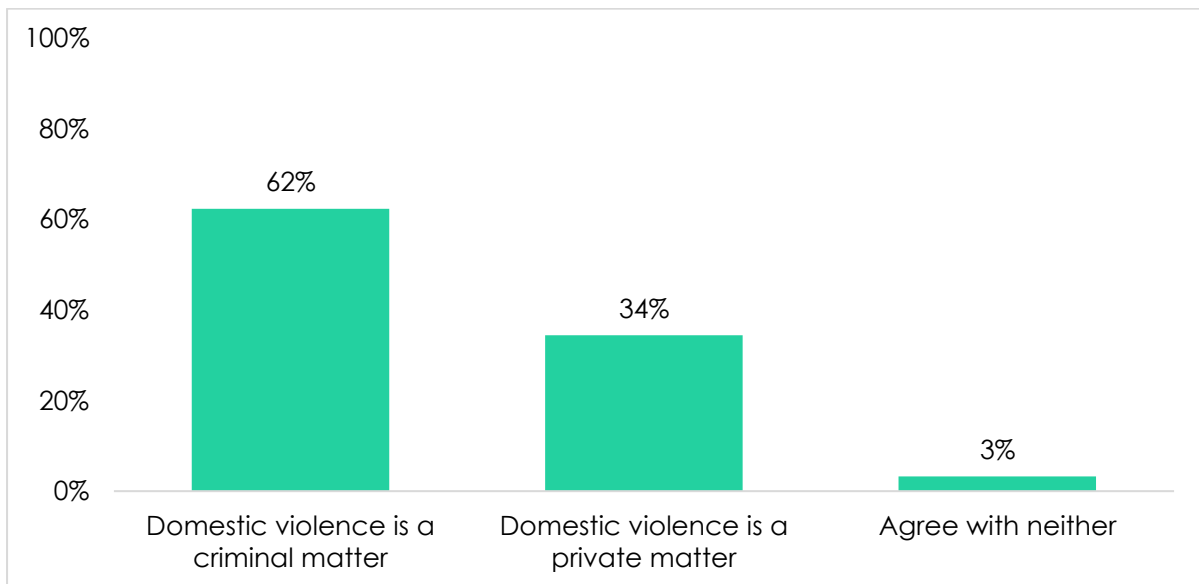
**Respondents were asked:** If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: She will be criticised, harassed,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

**Figure 5: Do the police take GBV cases seriously?** | Malawi | 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?** | Malawi | 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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