News release

Zambians see gender-based violence as a top priority, but many think women will face backlash if they report to the authorities

Zambians see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women’s-rights issue that their government and society must address, a recent Afrobarometer study shows.

Most Zambians say it is never justified for a man to use physical force to discipline his wife and express confidence that the police take GBV cases seriously.

But a slim majority also consider domestic violence a private matter to be handled within the family and think it’s likely that a woman who reports GBV to the authorities will be criticised, harassed, or shamed by others in the community.

Key findings

- Zambians see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women’s-rights issue that the government and society must address (Figure 1). Unequal access to education follows in second place.

- Almost half (48%) of citizens say violence against women and girls is a common occurrence in their community (Figure 2).

- Almost three-fourths (72%) of Zambians say a man is “never justified” in using physical force to discipline his wife (Figure 3).

- A large majority (73%) of citizens believe that the police are likely to take cases of GBV seriously (Figure 4).

- But more than half (54%) of citizens consider it “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 (Figure 5).

- Views are divided on whether domestic violence should be referred to the police or handled within the family: 43% say domestic violence should be treated as a criminal matter, but a slim majority (51%) consider it a private matter (Figure 6).

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 conducted in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 9 surveys are being completed in early 2023. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Zambia, led by the Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), a research wing of the University of Zambia, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 Zambian adults between 3

Charts

**Figure 1: Most Important women’s-rights issue | Zambia | 2022**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal access to education</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too few women in influential positions in government</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal opportunities or pay in the workplace</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unequal rights of property ownership and inheritance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these/No issues for government to address/Don’t know</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other issue</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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: How common is gender-based violence? | Zambia | 2022**

- Very common: 22%
- Somewhat common: 36%
- Not very common: 26%
- Not at all common: 15%
- Don’t know: 2%

*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? | Zambia | 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: Do the police take GBV cases seriously? | Zambia | 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: Will a woman be criticised, harassed, or shamed for reporting GBV?
| Zambia | 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 6: Is domestic violence a criminal or private matter? | Zambia | 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)
For more information, please contact:
Edward Chibwili  
National investigator  
Institute of Economic and Social Research, University of Zambia  
Telephone: +260 968 104603/+260 971 754083  
Email: edward.chibwili@unza.zm  

Visit us online at:  
https://www.unza.zm/institutes/inesor  
www.afrobarometer.org  

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.