

Banjul, Gambia
16 June 2023

News release

Gambians accuse police of using excessive force, political bias

Only a minority of Gambians think their police consistently act in a professional manner, while many say officers stop drivers without good reason, use excessive force, and engage in criminal activities, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

More than half of respondents also complain that the police discriminate against citizens based on their political affiliation.

A majority of Gambians say the police are never justified in using force to try to impose order during public protests.

Since 2017, the government has sought to strengthen police professionalism as part of its security sector reform process.

Key findings

- Four in 10 Gambians (41%) say the police “often” or “always” stop drivers without good reason, in addition to 37% who say they “sometimes” do so (Figure 1).
- Around one-third of citizens say the police routinely use excessive force in dealing with protesters (36%) and criminal suspects (33%), while 20% say they frequently engage in criminal activities. Only minorities (20%-31%) think the police are never guilty of these abuses.
- Only three in 10 (29%) say the police “often” or “always” act professionally and respect all citizens’ rights (Figure 2).
- Six in 10 citizens (61%) say the police are “never justified” in using force in managing protests (Figure 3).
- A majority (56%) of Gambians say the police at least “sometimes” discriminate against citizens based on people’s political affiliation (Figure 4).

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 the Gambia, led by the Center for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies (CepRass), interviewed 1,200 adult citizens between 30 August and 19 September 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 the Gambia in 2018 and 2021.

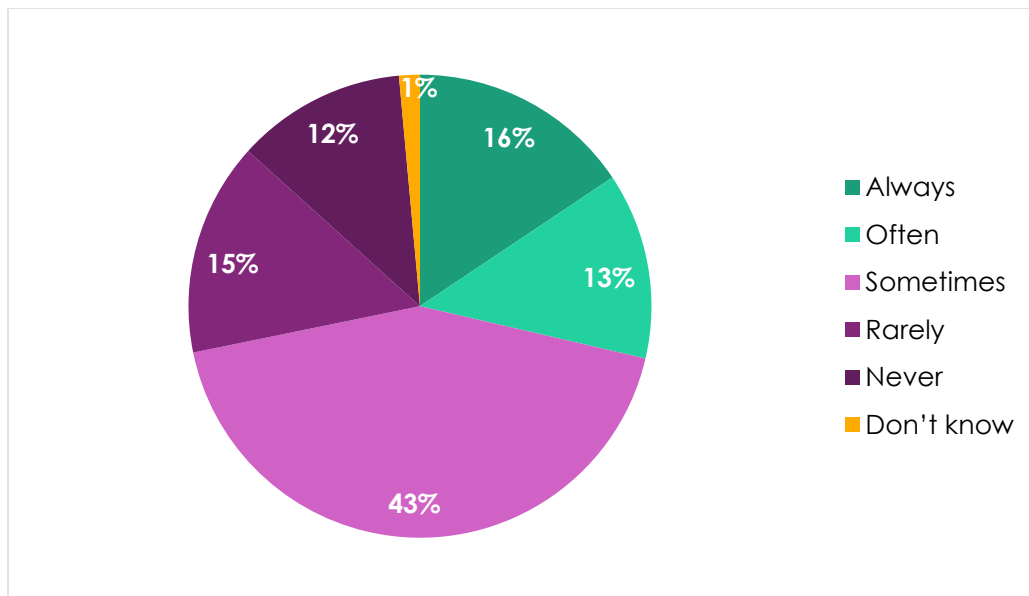
Charts

Figure 1: Improper police practices | Gambia | 2022



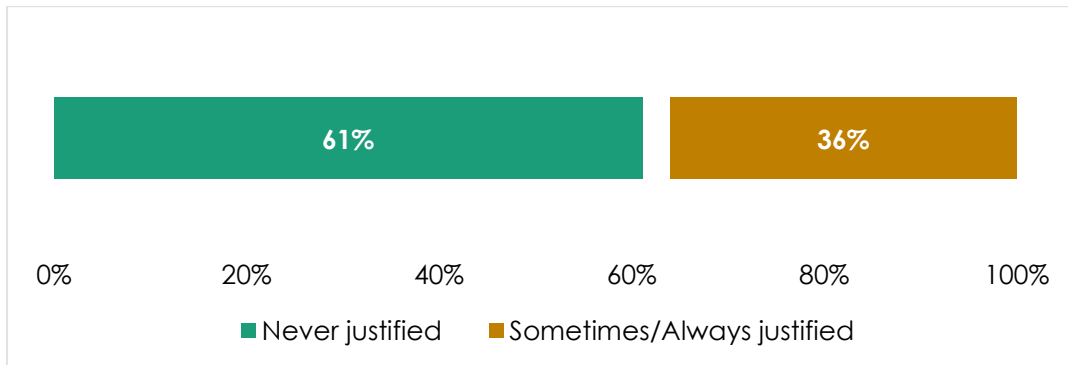
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the police in Gambia: Stop drivers without good reason? Use excessive force in managing protests or demonstrations? Use excessive force when dealing with criminals? Engage in criminal activities?

Figure 2: Do the police act professionally and respect citizens' rights? | Gambia | 2022



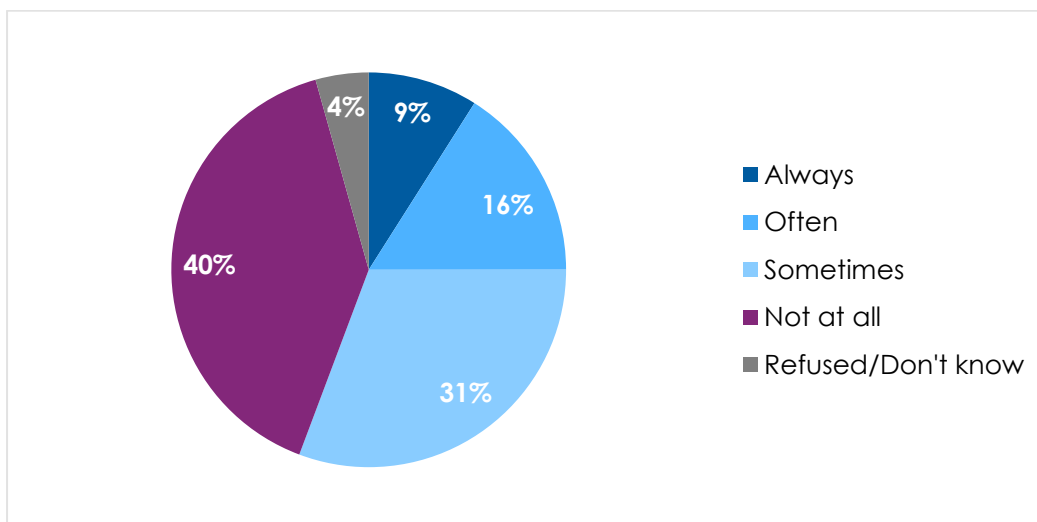
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the police in Gambia operate in a professional manner and respect the rights of all citizens?

Figure 3: Is it justified for police to use force during demonstrations? | Gambia | 2022



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified for the Gambian police to use force when seeking to impose order during demonstrations?

Figure 4: Discrimination by the police based on political affiliation | Gambia | 2022



Respondents were asked: How often, if ever, are citizens in this country discriminated against by the police on the basis of their political affiliation, that is how close they are to certain political parties?

For more information, please contact:

Sait Matty Jaw
 Center for Policy, Research and Strategic Studies
 Telephone: 7917039
 Email: saitjaw@gmail.com

Visit us online at www.afrobarometer.org.

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

