



Dispatch No. 687 | 18 August 2023

Amid increasing insecurity, Mozambicans fault police for corruption, lack of professionalism

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 687 | Richard Kweitsu

Summary

The police are often the closest government authority in local communities, tasked with maintaining public safety and order, enforcing the law, and preventing and investigating criminal activities (Modise, Taylor, & Raga, 2022; Wiatrowski & Goldstone, 2010). They are the first point of contact whenever citizens are faced with any form of danger. In democracies, police are expected to be professional, impartial, accessible, and proactive, and to uphold the highest standards of integrity (Modise, 2022).

In Mozambique, the police have often come under criticism for falling well short of professional standards. In addition to media reports highlighting abuses by individual officers (allAfrica, 2022; Mouahidi, 2023), the police have been accused of extrajudicial executions, torture, extortion, and other human-rights violations in their response to insurgents in the North, who have repeatedly targeted police stations with their attacks (Jentzsch, 2022; Amnesty International, 2021; Cheatham, Long, & Sheehy, 2022).

In March, the police drew widespread condemnation for their violent repression of peaceful demonstrations in remembrance of the late musician Azagaia (Amnesty International, 2023).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 (2021/2023) questionnaire to explore Mozambicans' experiences and assessments of police professionalism.

Survey findings show that a growing share of citizens report feeling insecure or fearful, and few approve of the government's performance against crime.

While a slim majority say they trust the police at least "somewhat," almost half of those who interacted with the police during the previous year say they had to pay a bribe, and the police are more widely seen as corrupt than any other institution the survey asked about.

In substantial numbers, Mozambicans complain that police officers engage in illegal activities, use excessive force, and stop drivers without good reason, and few respondents vouch for officers' professionalism and respect for citizens' rights.

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. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Mozambique, led by Ipsos Mozambique, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Mozambicans in October-November 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 Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

Key findings

- Almost six in 10 Mozambicans say they felt unsafe while walking in their neighbourhood (59%) and feared crime in their home (56%) at least once during the year preceding the survey. Experiences of insecurity have increased over the past decade and are particularly common among poor citizens.
- About one in 10 Mozambicans (9%) say they requested assistance from the police during the previous year. Almost half (48%) encountered the police in other situations, such as at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation.
 - Among citizens who requested assistance from the police, 60% say it was easy to get the help they needed. But 51% say they had to pay a bribe.
 - Similarly, 47% of respondents who encountered the police in other situations say they had to pay a bribe to avoid problems.
- More than half (55%) of Mozambicans say “most” or “all” police officials are corrupt, the worst rating among 11 institutions and leaders the survey asked about.
- A slim majority (52%) of citizens say they trust the police “somewhat” or “a lot.”
- Substantial minorities say the police “often” or “always” stop drivers without good reason (45%), engage in criminal activities (39%), and use excessive force on suspected criminals (37%) and protesters (34%). In addition, about three in 10 respondents say the police “sometimes” do these things.
- Only 29% of citizens say the police “often” or “always” operate in a professional manner and respect all citizens’ rights.
 - However, 68% consider it likely that the police will take reports of gender-based violence seriously.
- Only one-third (34%) of Mozambicans say the government is doing a good job of reducing crime.

Sense of security

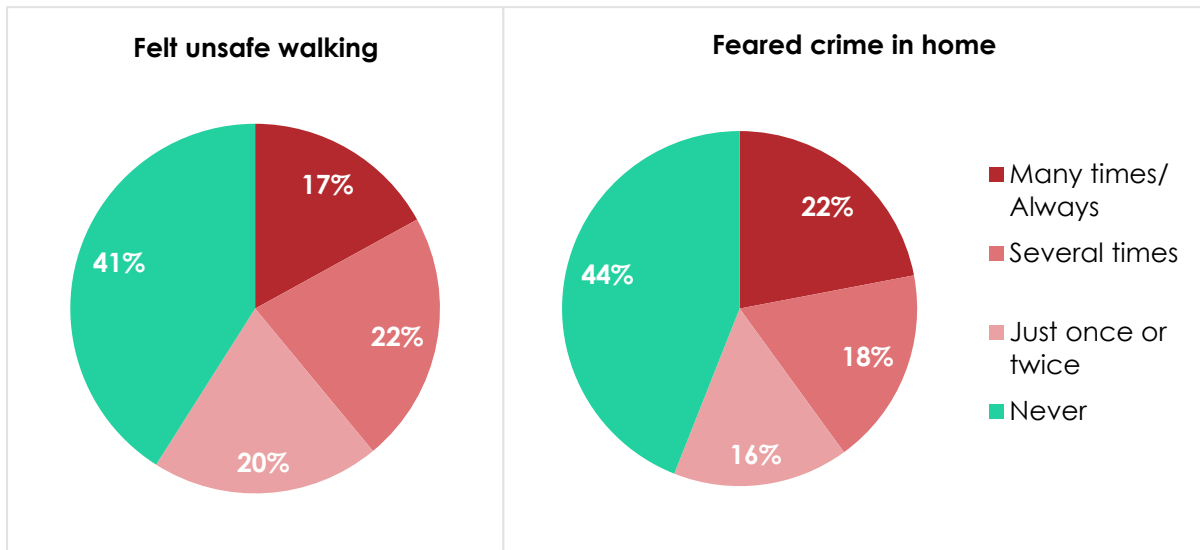
The most basic role of the police is to protect people and their property. Do Mozambicans feel safe in their communities?

Survey responses show a significant lack of a sense of personal security among citizens. About six in 10 respondents (59%) say they felt unsafe while walking in their neighbourhood at least once during the previous year, including 39% who report feeling unsafe “several times,” “many times,” or “always” (Figure 1).

Similarly, more than half (56%) say they feared crime in their home at least once, including 40% who say this happened “several times,” “many times,” or “always.”

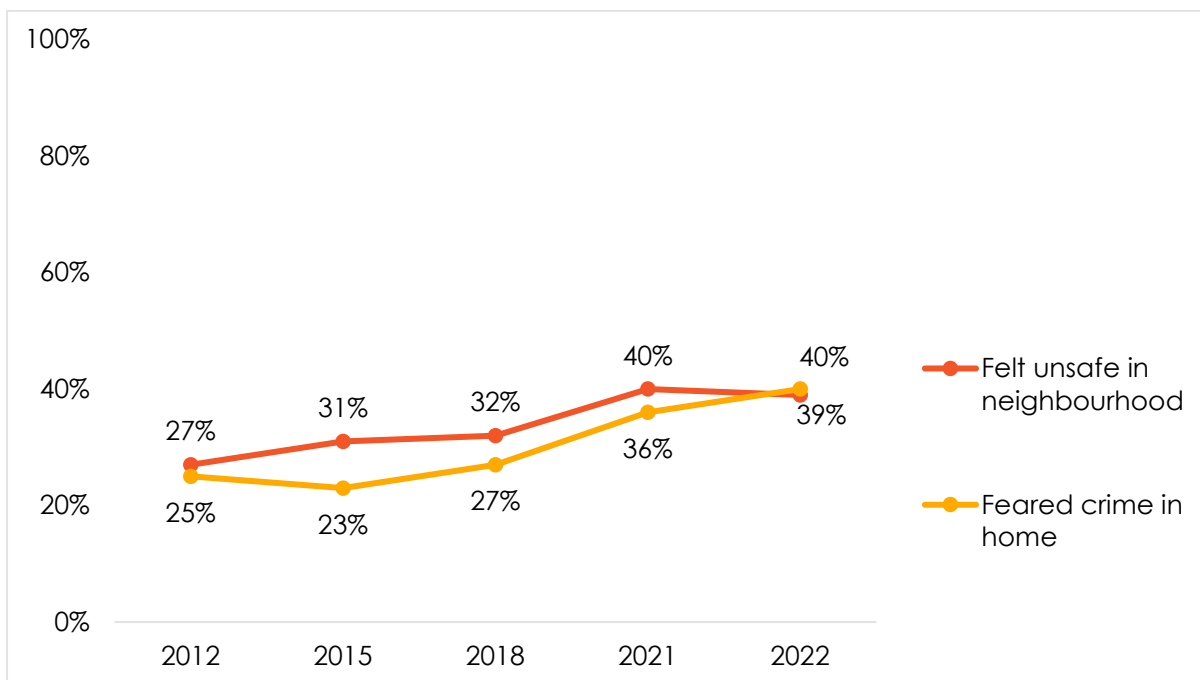
The proportion of Mozambicans who report feeling unsafe in their communities at least “several times” increased by 12 percentage points over the past decade (from 27% in 2012) (Figure 2). Similarly, the share who feared crime in their homes at least “several times” has risen by 15 points over the same time period.

Figure 1: Insecurity and fear of crime | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your own home?

Figure 2: Experienced insecurity and fear of crime at least 'several times'
 | Mozambique | 2012-2022

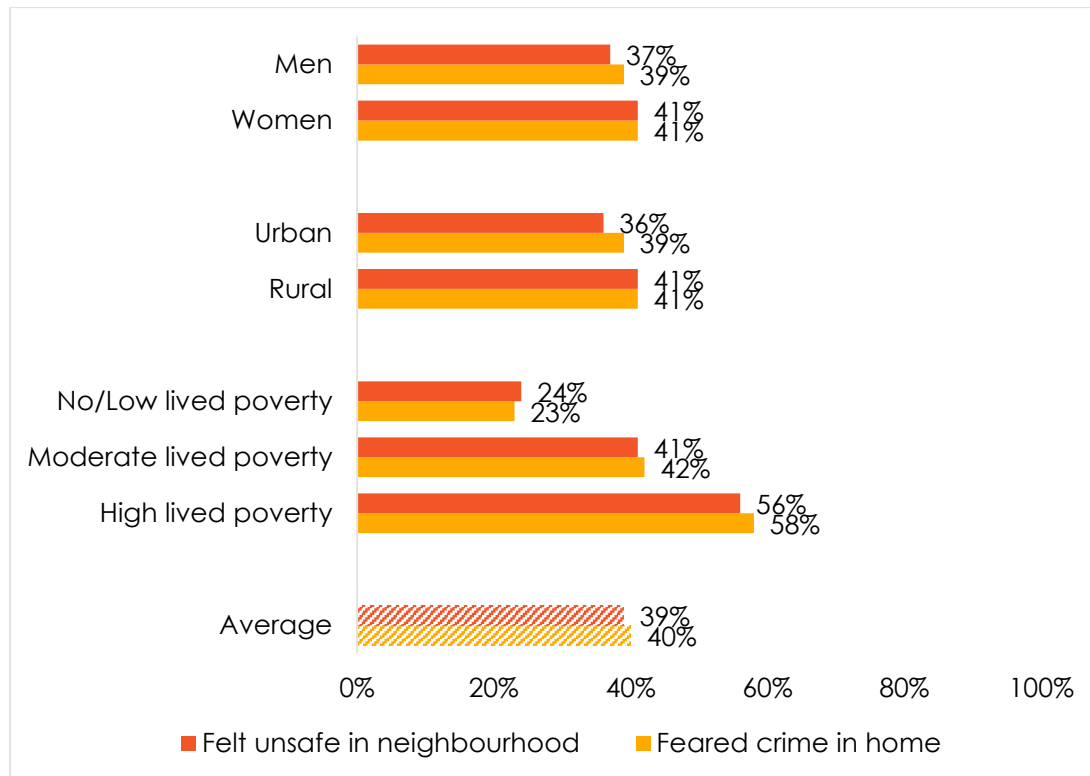


Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your own home? (% who say "several times," "many times," or "always")

Feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood is somewhat more common in rural areas than in cities (41% vs. 36%) (Figure 3). But much larger differences are associated with economic status:

Citizens experiencing high lived poverty¹ are more than twice as likely as well-off individuals to report feeling unsafe (56% vs. 24%) and fearing crime (58% vs. 23%).

Figure 3: Experienced insecurity and fear of crime at least ‘several times’ | by gender, location, and lived poverty | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your own home? (% who say “several times,” “many times,” or “always”)

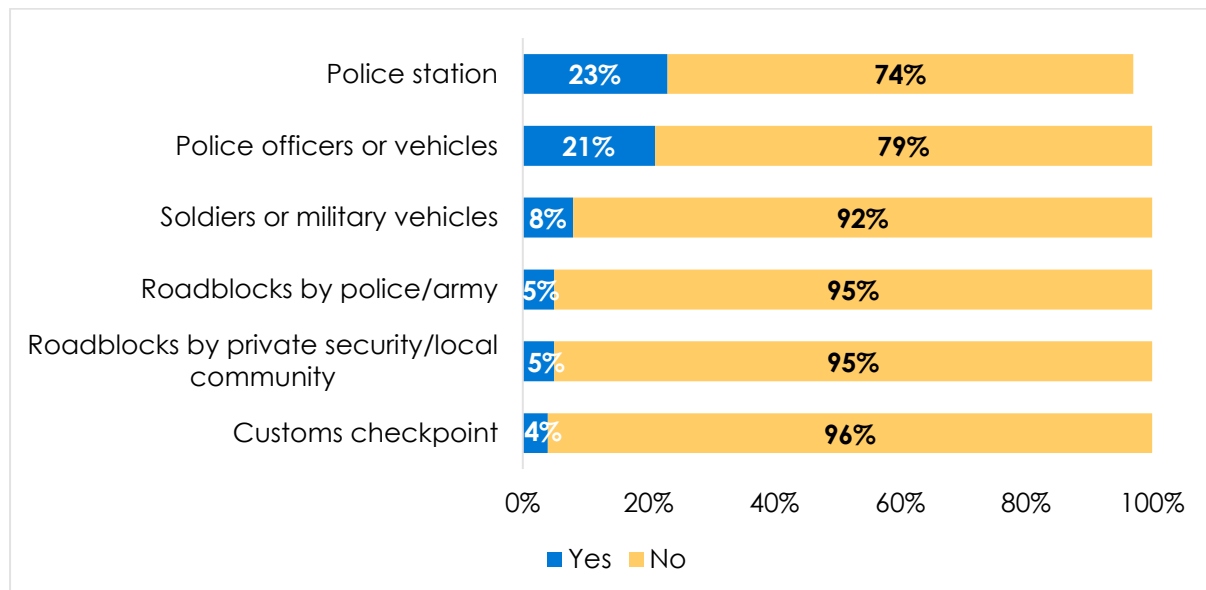
Police/security presence

One factor that might affect people's sense of security is the presence of security forces. As part of their data-collection process, Afrobarometer field teams make on-the-ground observations in each census enumeration area (EA) they visit about services and facilities that are available in the area. Since the EAs visited are selected to represent the population of the country as a whole, these data provide reliable indicators of infrastructure and service availability.

In Mozambique, Afrobarometer field teams found police stations in or within easy walking distance of 23% of the EAs they visited (Figure 4). In addition, they saw police officers or police vehicles in 21% of the EAs. Other signs of security-related activity were less common, including soldiers or military vehicles (8%), roadblocks by the police or army (5%) or by private security or the local community (5%), and customs checkpoints (4%).

¹ Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

Figure 4: Presence of police/security | Mozambique | 2022



Survey enumerators were asked:

Are the following facilities present in the primary sampling unit (PSU)/enumeration area (EA) or in easy walking distance: Police station?
 In the PSU/EA, did you (or any of your colleagues) see: Any police officers or police vehicles? Any soldiers or army vehicles? Any roadblocks set up by police or army? Any customs checkpoints? Any roadblocks or booms set up by private security providers or by the local community?

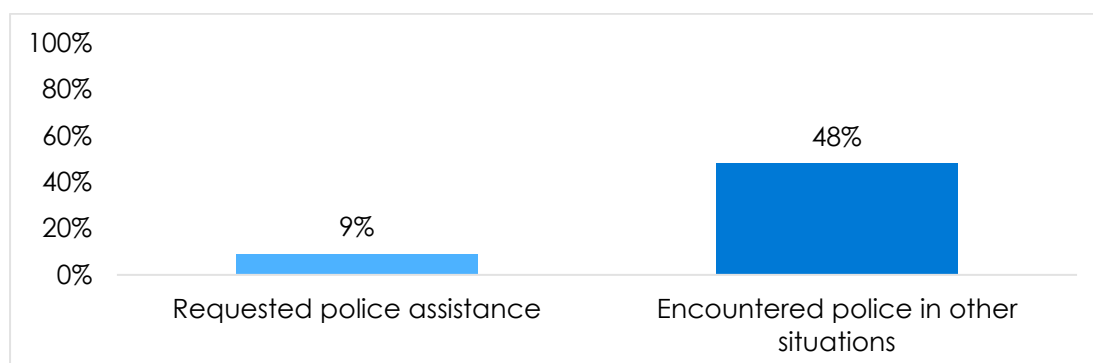
Encounters with the police

How often do Mozambicans encounter the police in their daily lives?

About one in 10 respondents (9%) say they requested police assistance during the previous year. More than five times as many (48%) encountered the police in other situations, such as at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation (Figure 5).

Overall, 51% report contact of one or both types, i.e. requesting police assistance and in other, less voluntary, encounters, while 49% say they did not interact with the police during the past year.

Figure 5: Contact with the police | Mozambique | 2022

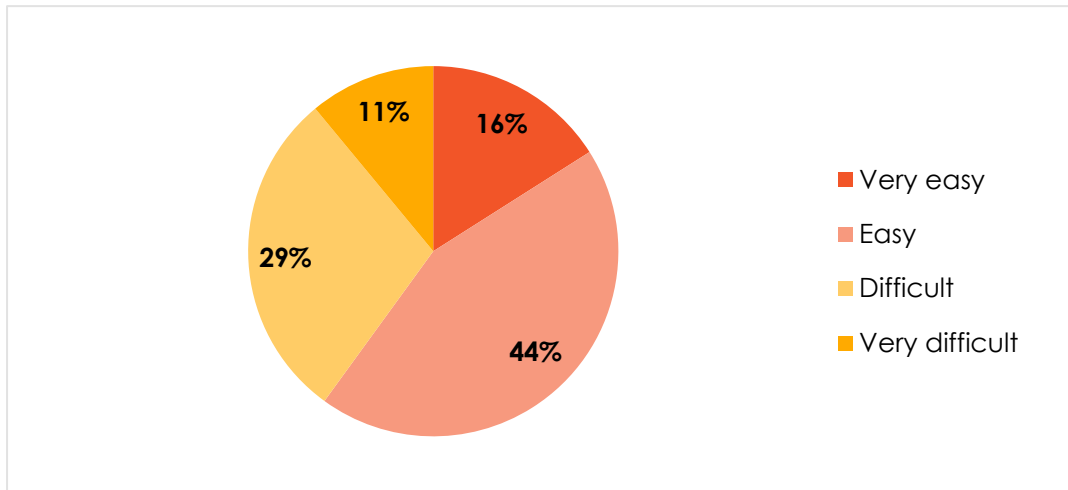


Respondents were asked:

In the past 12 months, have you requested assistance from the police?
 In the past 12 months, how often have you encountered the police in other situations, like at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation?

Among citizens who asked for assistance from the police, 60% say it was “easy” or “very easy” to get the assistance they needed, while 40% describe it as difficult (Figure 6).

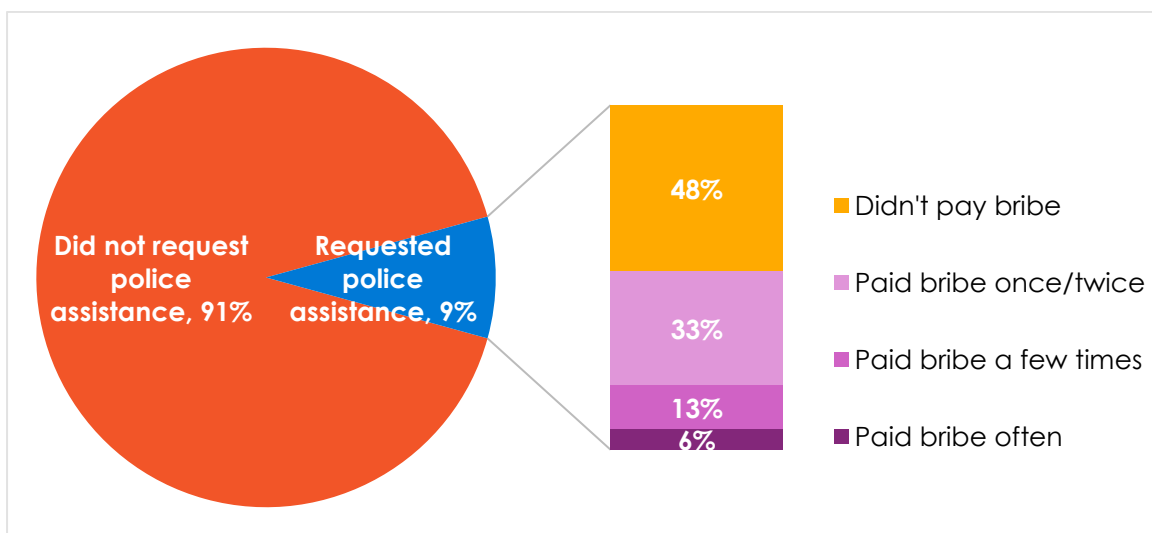
Figure 6: Ease of obtaining police assistance | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents who requested police assistance during the previous year were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the assistance you needed? (Respondents who did not request police assistance are excluded.)

However, among those who asked for help from the police, more than half (51%) say they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance they needed, including 18% who say this happened “a few times” or “often”² (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Paid a bribe to obtain police assistance | Mozambique | 2022



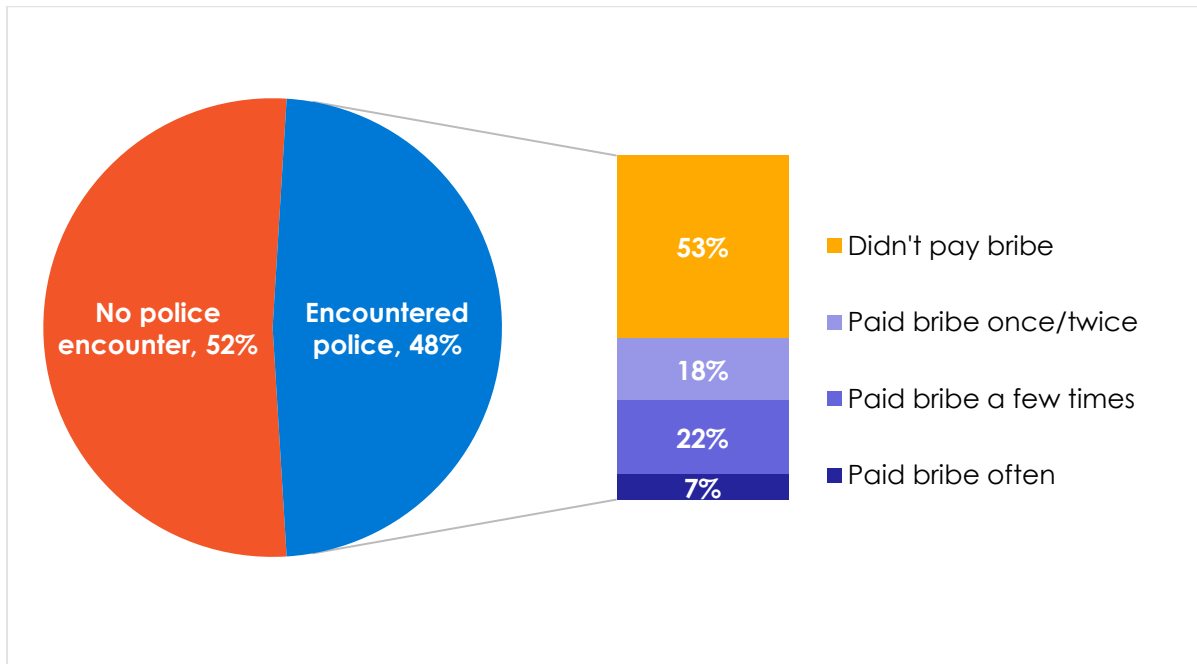
Respondents were asked: In the past 12 months, have you requested assistance from the police? (If “yes”:] How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed?

² Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. 13% “a few times” and 6% “often” sum to 18%).

Similarly, among those who encountered the police in other, less voluntary situations, 47% say they had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to avoid problems, including 29% who say this happened more than once or twice (Figure 8).

This translates to almost one-fourth (23%) of all Mozambican adults – including those who had no contact with the police – paying a bribe to avoid problems with the police.

Figure 8: Paid a bribe to avoid problems with the police | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: *In the past 12 months how often have you encountered the police in other situations, like at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation? [If yes:] And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed?*

To summarise the experience among all Mozambican adults during the past year, about one-fourth (24%) paid a bribe at least once to get police assistance, to avoid a problem with the police, or both.

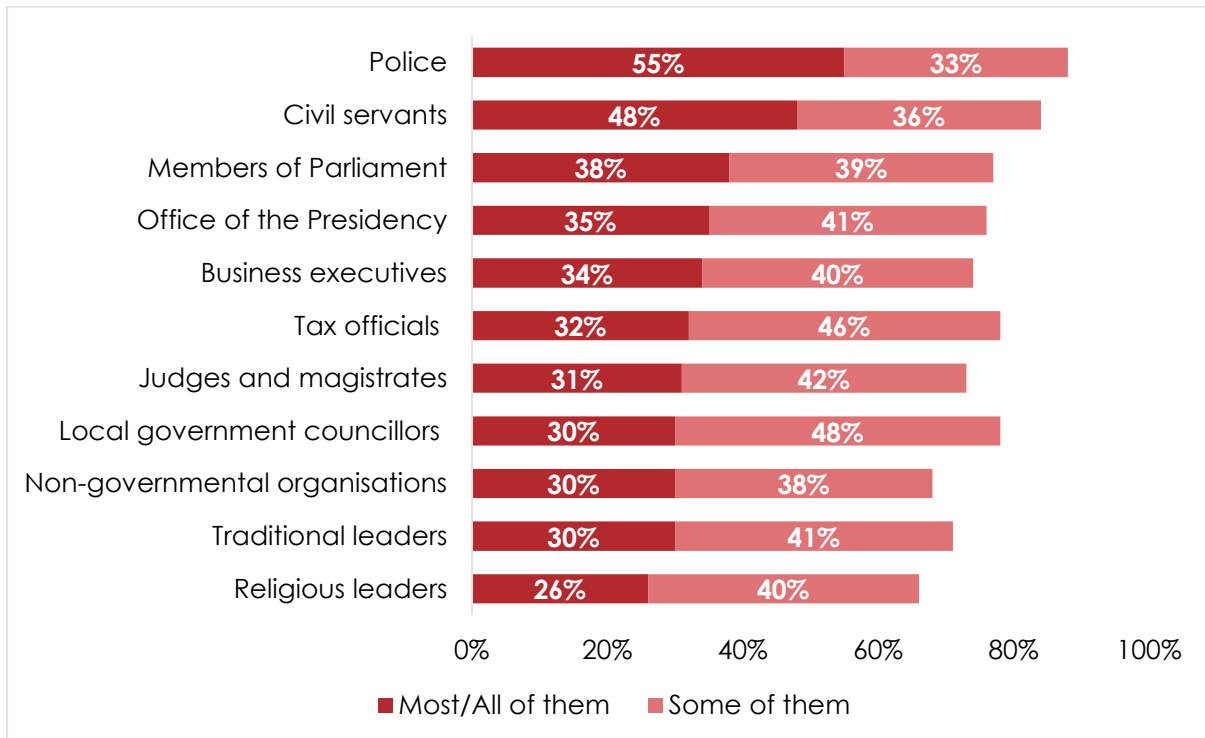
Police corruption

Given the frequency of self-reported bribe-paying to the police, it's little surprise that a majority (55%) of Mozambicans say that "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt – the worst rating among 11 institutions and groups of leaders that the survey asked about (Figure 9). In addition, 33% say that "some" police officials are corrupt.

The perception that "most" or "all" police officials are corrupt is somewhat more common among men (59%) and urban residents (58%) than among women (52%) and rural residents (53%) but is the majority view across key demographic groups (Figure 10).

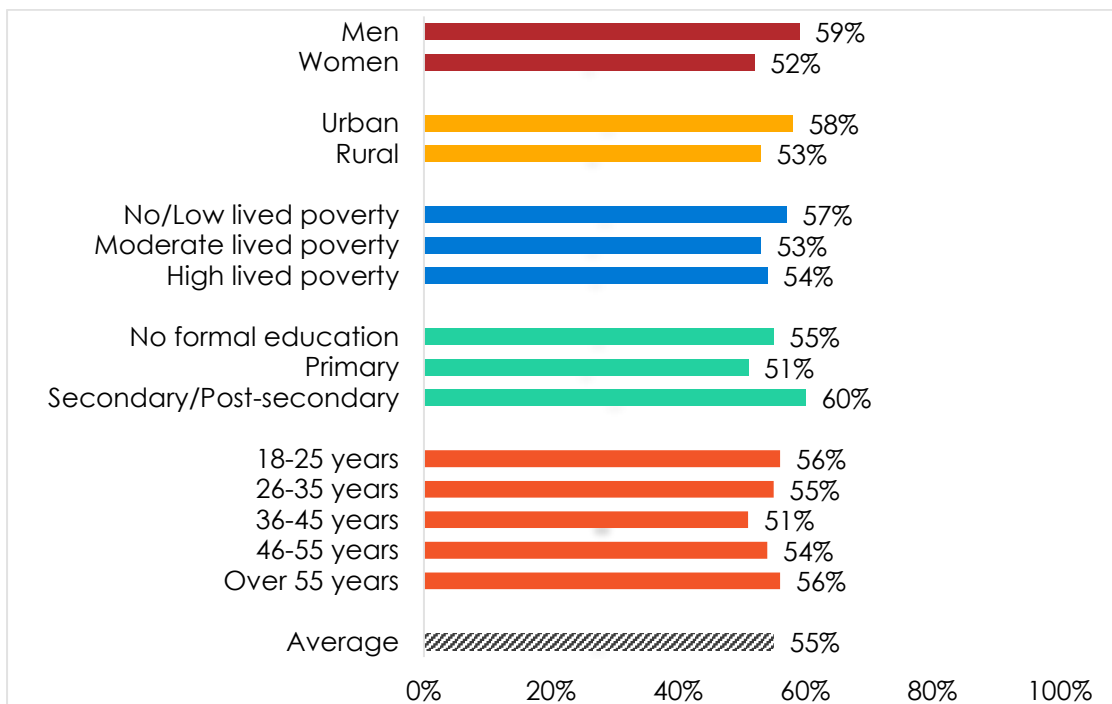
Findings also suggest that interactions with the police may reinforce perceptions of corruption. Respondents who live in EAs where field teams saw police officers are more likely to say that most/all police are corrupt than are their counterparts in EAs where no police presence was observed (64% vs. 53%). And about seven out of 10 citizens (71%) who encountered the police "often" during the previous year report widespread police corruption, compared to 49% of those who didn't encounter the police (Figure 11).

Figure 9: Perceived corruption among institutions and leaders | Mozambique | 2022



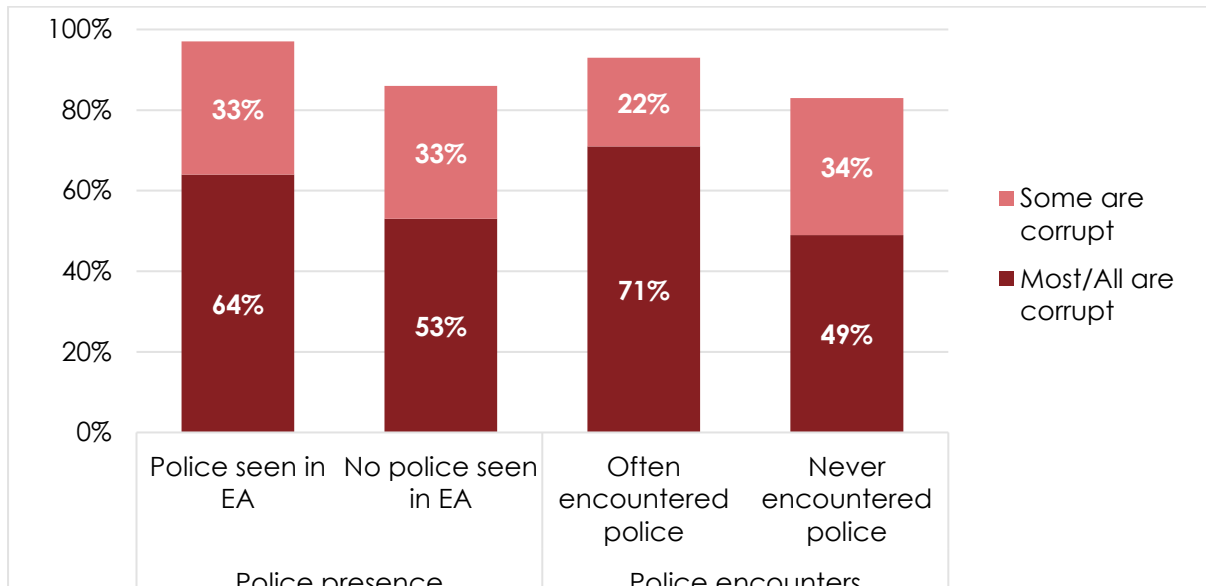
Respondents were asked: How many of the following do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Figure 10: Perception that most/all police are corrupt | by demographic group | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: How many of the following do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Police? (% who say "most of them" or "all of them")

Figure 11: Perceived police corruption | by police presence and frequency of interaction with police | Mozambique | 2022



Survey enumerators were asked: In the PSU/EA, did you (or any of your colleagues) see any police officers or police vehicles?

Respondents were asked:

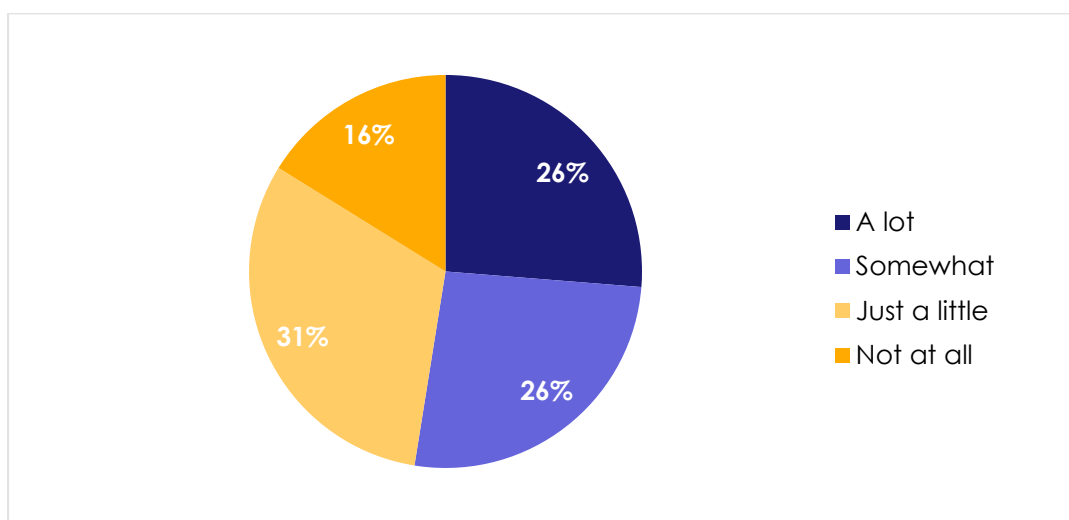
In the past 12 months, how often have you encountered the police in other situations, like at checkpoints, during identity checks or traffic stops, or during an investigation?

How many of the following do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Police?

Trust in the police

When it comes to public trust in the police, Mozambicans are divided: A slim majority (52%) say they trust the police "somewhat" (26%) or "a lot" (26%), while 47% express "just a little" or no trust "at all" (Figure 12).

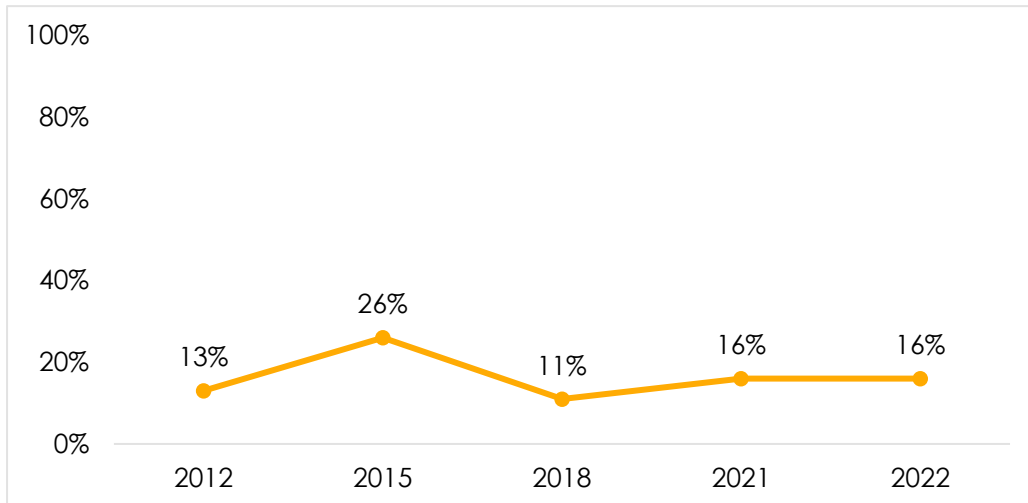
Figure 12: Trust in the police | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the police, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

The share of citizens who say they don't trust the police "at all" spiked at 26% in 2015 before settling back to its more typical range (16% in 2022) (Figure 13).

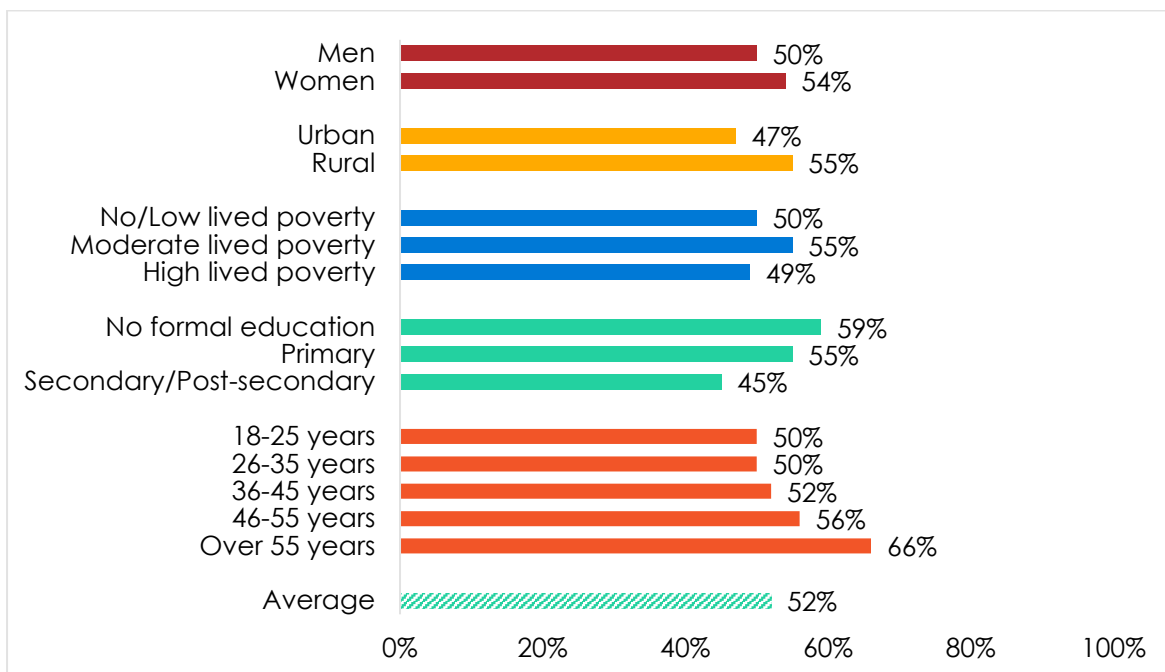
Figure 13: Don't trust the police 'at all' | Mozambique | 2012-2022



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the police, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "not at all")

Women (54%) and rural residents (55%) express somewhat greater trust in the police than men (50%) and urbanites (47%) (Figure 14). Trust in the police declines as levels of education increase, ranging from 45% among highly educated citizens to 59% among those with no formal schooling. Older citizens (66%) are more likely to trust the police than youth (50% of 18- to 35-year-olds)

Figure 14: Trust in the police | by demographic group | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the police, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

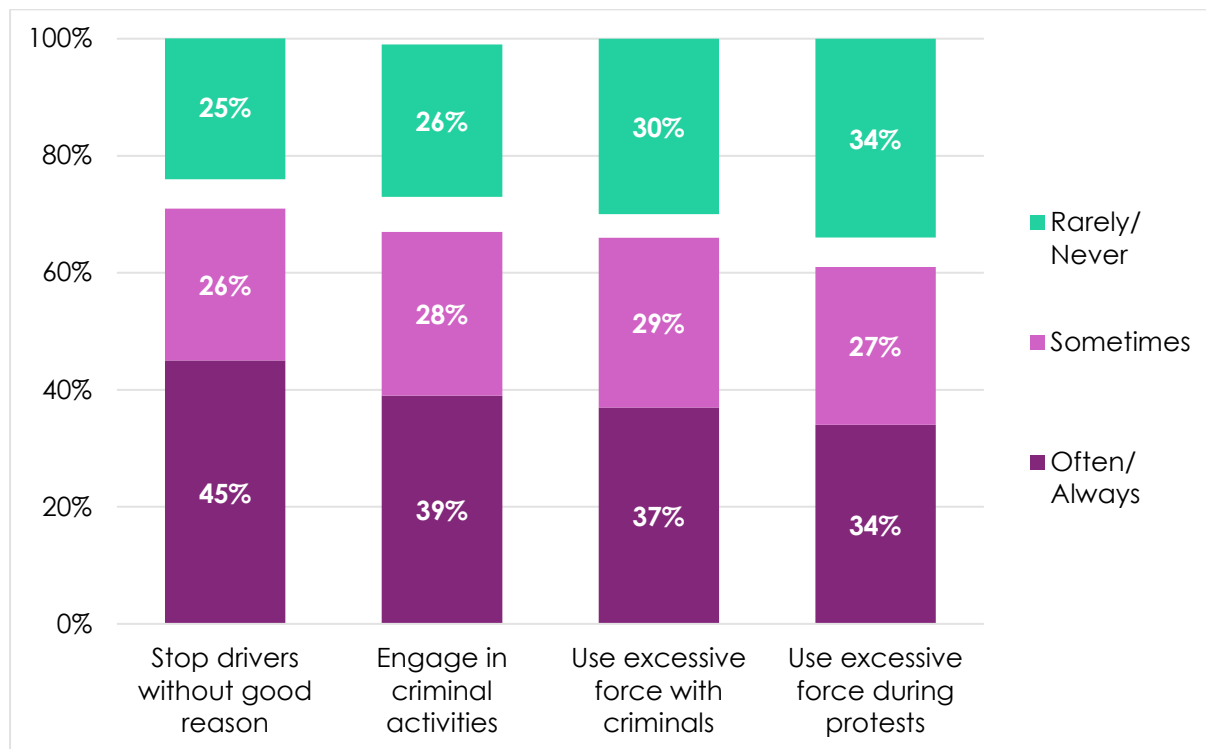
Police conduct

In addition to fairly widespread perceptions of the police as corrupt and untrustworthy, many Mozambicans say at least some police officers engage in improper and even illegal activities (Figure 15).

Almost half (45%) of respondents say the police “often” or “always” stop drivers without good reason, in addition to 26% who say they “sometimes” do so. Four in 10 (39%) say the police routinely engage in criminal activities; only a quarter (26%) of citizens think the police “rarely” or “never” commit crimes.

And more than one-third say the police frequently use excessive force with suspected criminals (37%) and with protesters (34%).

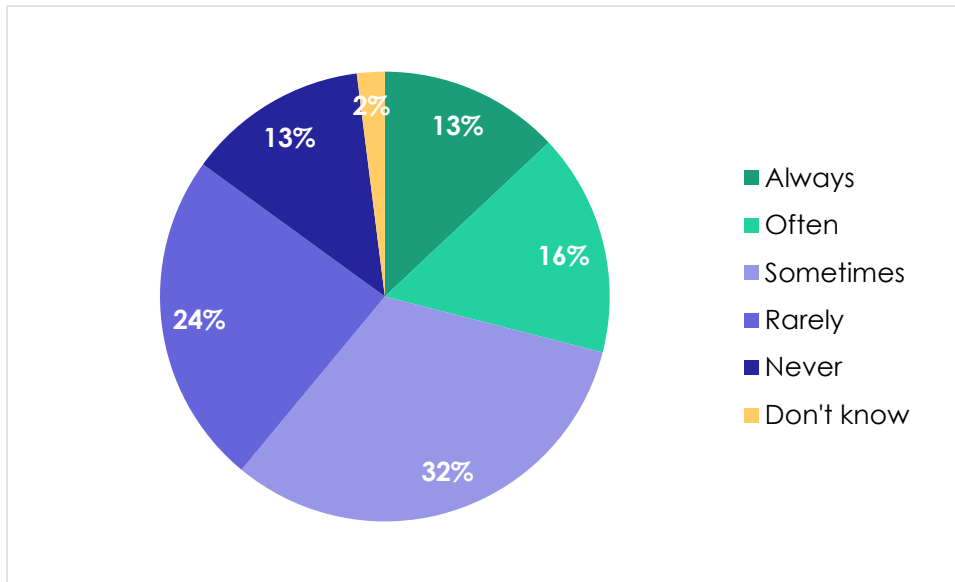
Figure 15: Improper police practices | Mozambique | 2022



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

Overall, only three in 10 respondents (29%) say the police “often” or “always” operate in a professional manner and respect all citizens’ rights, while 37% assert that such behaviour is rare or unheard of (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Do the police act professionally and respect citizens' rights?
 | Mozambique | 2022

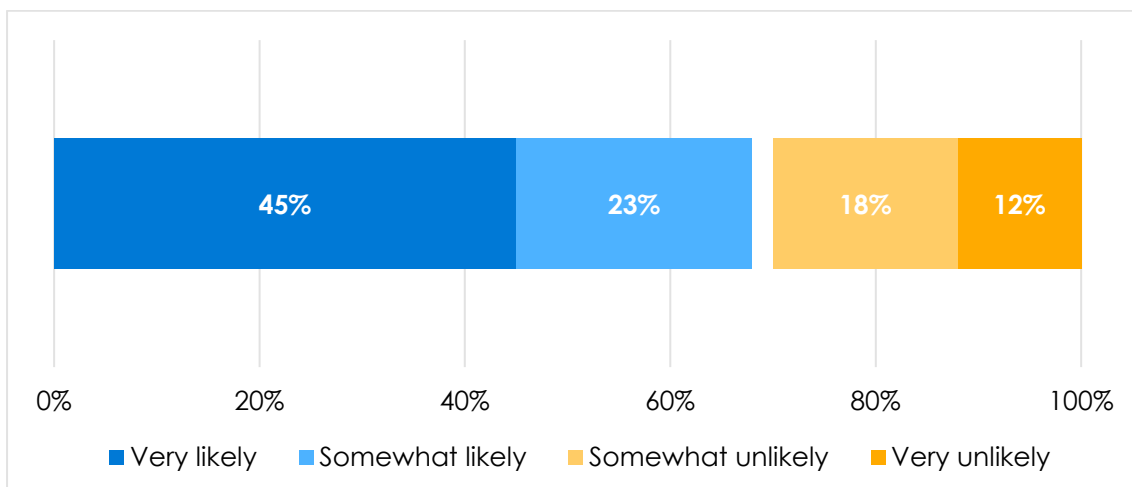


Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often do the police in Mozambique operate in a professional manner and respect the rights of all citizens?*

Mozambicans give their police better marks on their handling of gender-based violence (GBV): 68% say the police are likely to take such cases seriously, including 45% who consider this “very likely” (Figure 17).

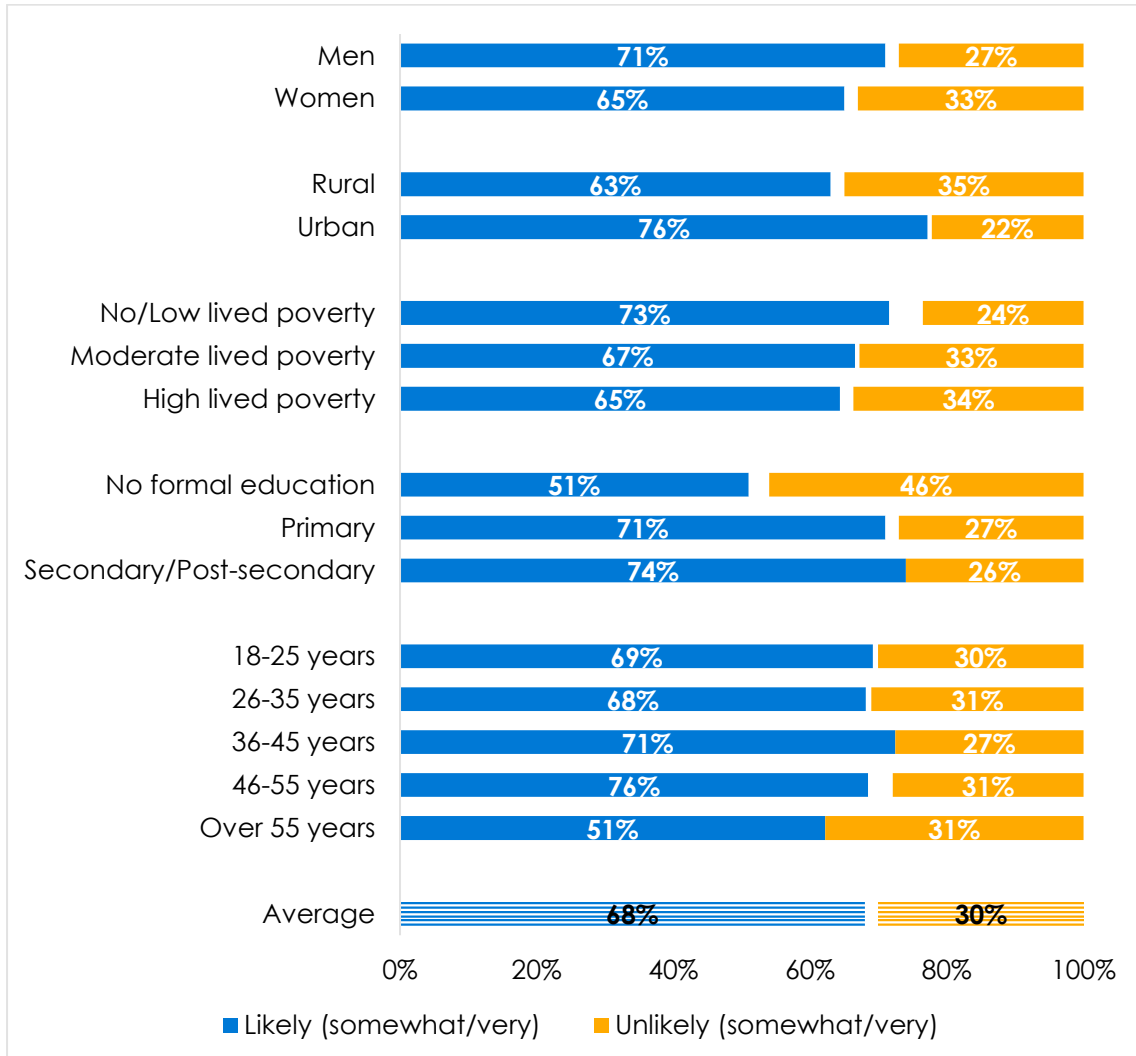
Men are somewhat more likely than women to think the police will take GBV cases seriously (71% vs. 65%), as are urban compared to rural residents (76% vs. 63%) (Figure 18). Confidence in the police response is lower among citizens without formal education (51%) and among the poor (65%) than among their more educated and better-off counterparts.

Figure 17: Do the police take gender-based violence seriously? | Mozambique
 | 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 her case will be taken seriously by the police?*

Figure 18: Do the police take gender-based violence seriously? | by demographic group | Mozambique | 2022



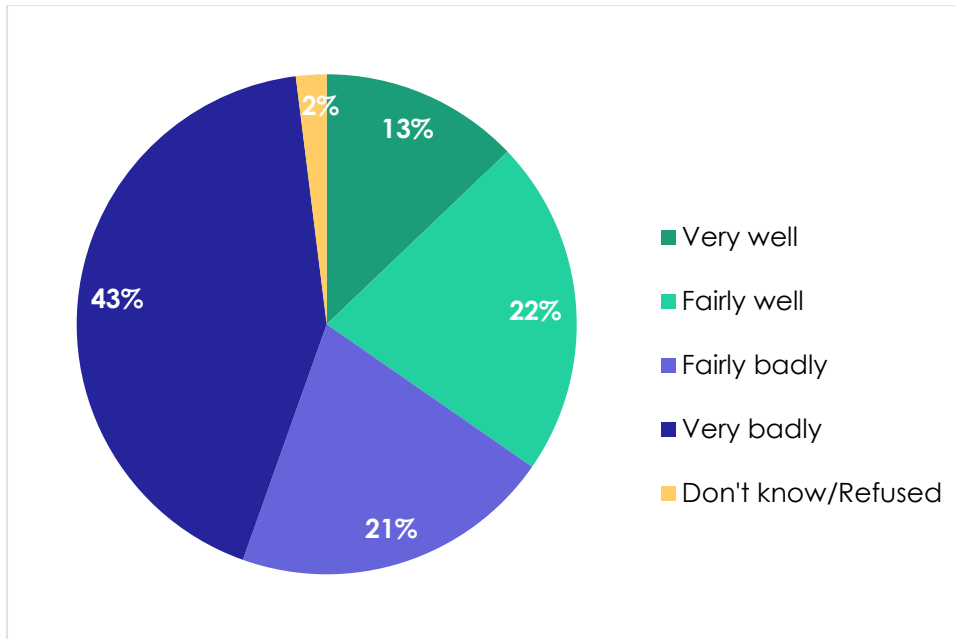
Respondents were asked: *If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that her case will be taken seriously by the police?*

Government performance on reducing crime

Overall, only about one-third (34%) of Mozambicans say the government is doing a “fairly good” or “very good” job of reducing crime, while 64% are critical of the government’s performance on this issue, including 43% who say it is doing “very badly” (Figure 19).

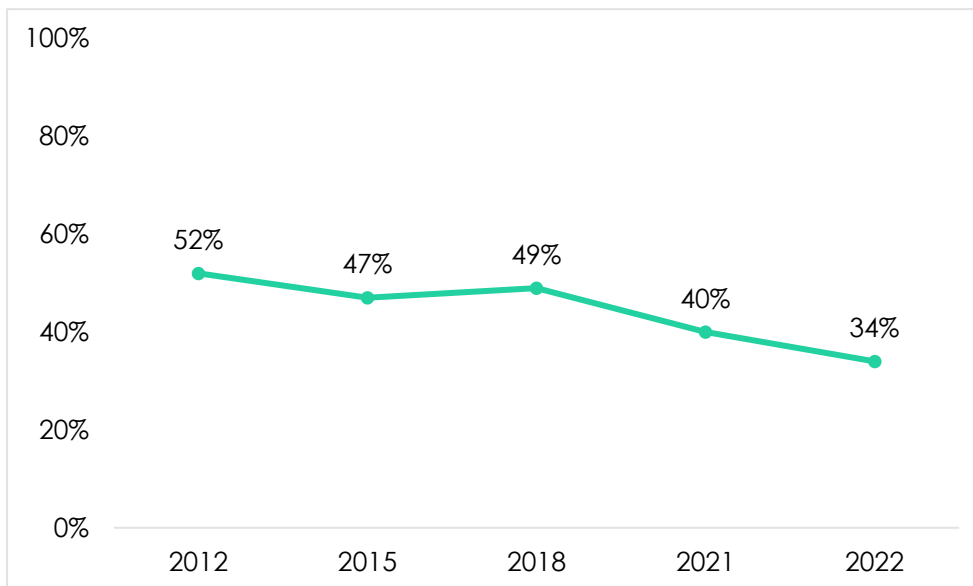
Over the past decade, approval of the government’s crime-reduction efforts has dropped by 18 percentage points, from 52% in 2012 (Figure 20).

Figure 19: Government performance on reducing crime | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling reducing crime, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 20: Government performing well on crime reduction | Mozambique | 2012-2022



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling reducing crime, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

Conclusion

Amid increasing experiences of insecurity, Mozambicans offer negative assessments of their government's performance against crime and their police officers' integrity and professionalism.

A majority of citizens see most/all police officers as corrupt, an assessment that may reflect the common experience of having to pay a bribe to get police assistance or avoid problems. Perceptions that police officers engage in criminal activities and use excessive force are widespread as well, leading most Mozambicans to conclude that they are unprofessional and fail to respect citizens' rights.

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