



Mbabane, Eswatini  
9 November 2023

## News release

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### **Emaswati perceive gender-based violence to be on the rise, say domestic violence should be treated as a criminal matter**

While a majority of Emaswati believe violence against women is not common in their community, most say the level of gender-based violence (GBV) increased over the past year.

A majority of citizens say it is never justified for men to use physical force to discipline their wives, and many say domestic violence is a criminal matter that requires the involvement of law enforcement authorities, rather than a personal affair that should be handled within the family.

Emaswati are divided on whether a woman will be criticised, harassed, or shamed if she reports GBV to the authorities, but most believe that the police take gender-based violence seriously.

Most citizens cite threats made against victims of GBV as the main reason people do not report cases to the police, followed by fear of losing financial support from the perpetrator and fear of being stigmatised.

#### **Key findings**

- More than four in 10 (43%) Emaswati say violence against women is “somewhat common” (24%) or “very common” (19%) in their community, while 54% believe violence against women is “not very common” (42%) or “not at all common” (12%) (Figure 1).
- More than eight in 10 citizens (82%) say the level of gender-based violence increased “a lot” (68%) or “somewhat” (14%) over the past year (Figure 2).
- Nine in 10 respondents (91%) say it is “never” justified for a man to use physical force to discipline his wife (Figure 3).
- Close to four in 10 Emaswati (36%) believe a woman is “somewhat likely” (21%) or “very likely” (15%) to be criticised, harassed, or shamed if she reports gender-based violence to the authorities, while 61% consider such a response unlikely (Figure 4).
  - Most citizens (82%) believe that the police are likely to take cases of GBV seriously (Figure 5).
- More than two-thirds (69%) of Emaswati say domestic violence should be treated as a criminal matter rather than as a private matter to be resolved within the family (Figure 6).
- Asked what they think is the main reason that many GBV cases are never reported to the police, respondents most frequently cite perpetrators' threats against the victims (34%), fear of losing financial support from the perpetrator (21%), and fear of being stigmatised by society (19%) (Figure 7).

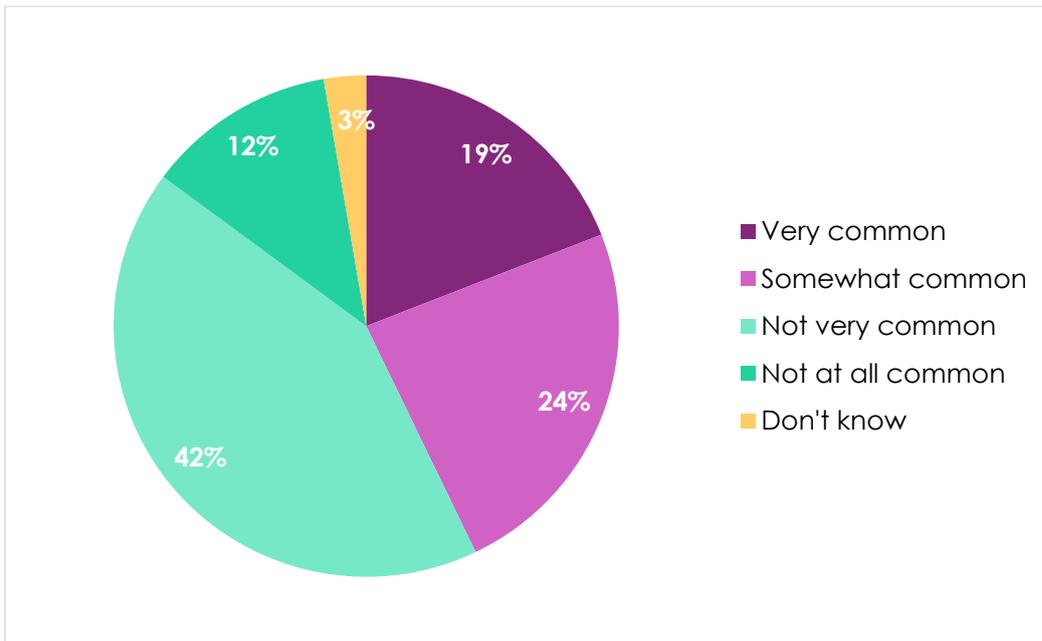
### Afrobarometer surveys

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

The Afrobarometer team in Eswatini, led by QA Strategic Information, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult citizens 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 Eswatini in 2013, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

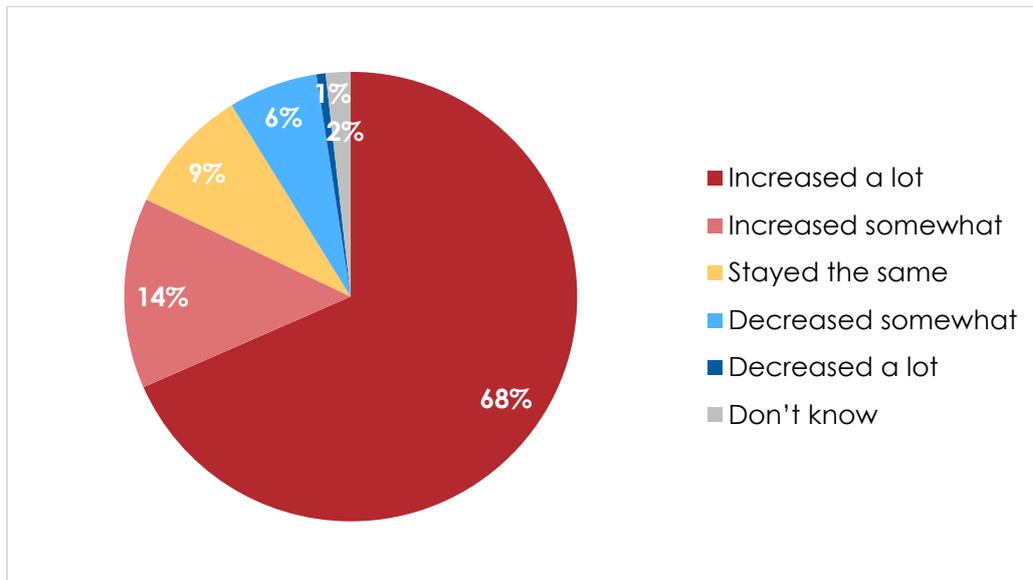
### Charts

**Figure 1: Frequency of gender-based violence | Eswatini | 2022**



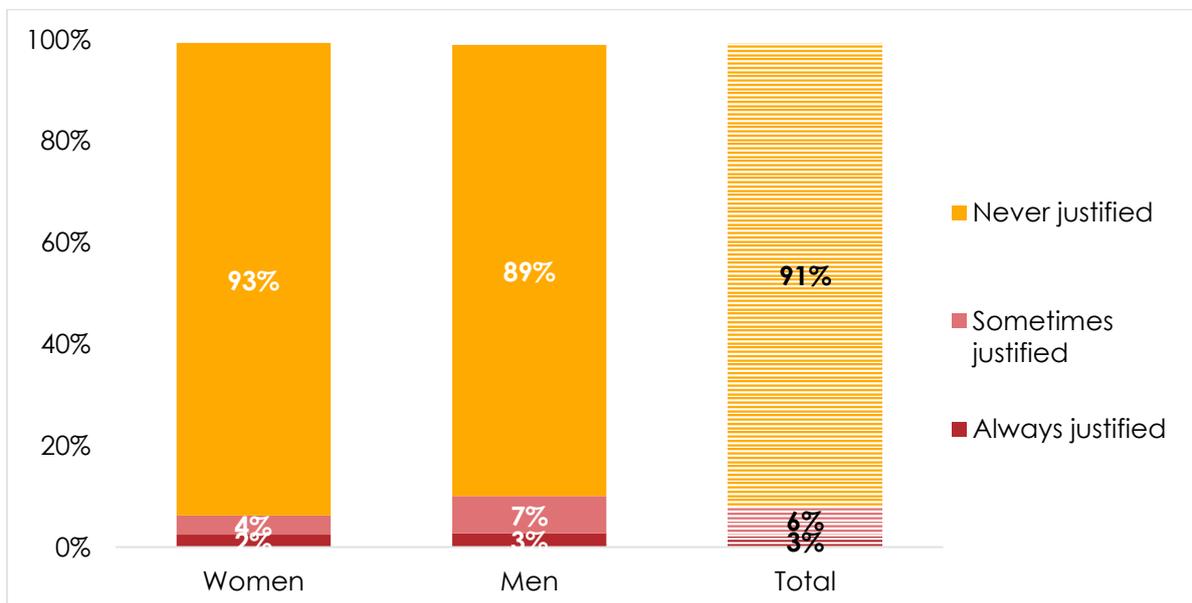
**Respondents were asked:** *In this area, how common do you think it is for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or the community?*

**Figure 2: Level of gender-based violence** | Eswatini | 2022



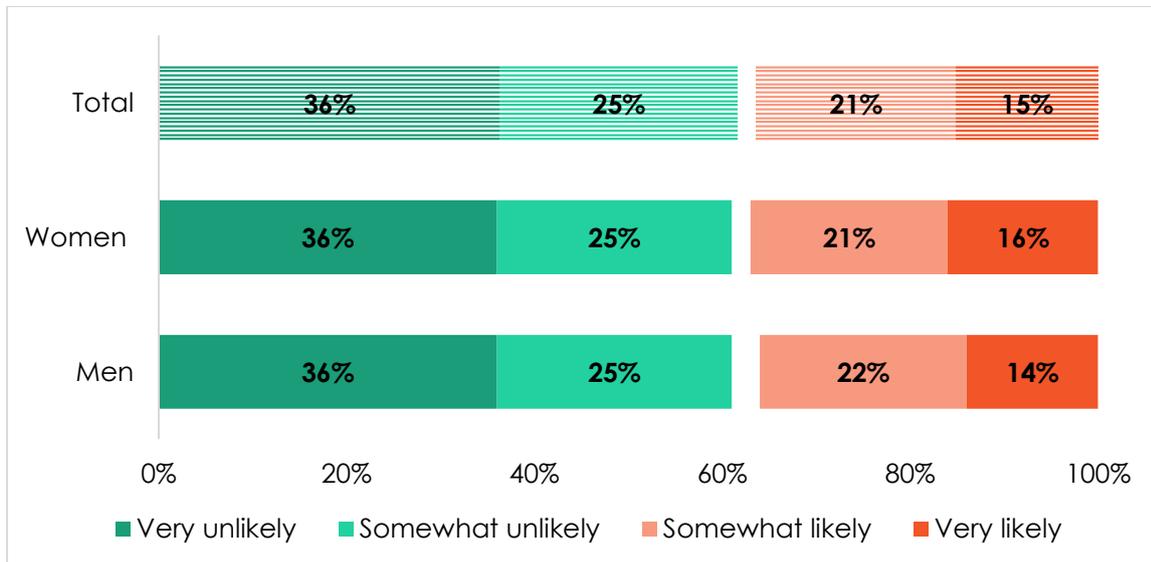
**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, would you say the level of gender-based violence in this country has increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past year?

**Figure 3: Is it justified for men to use physical force to discipline their wives?**  
 | by gender | Eswatini | 2022



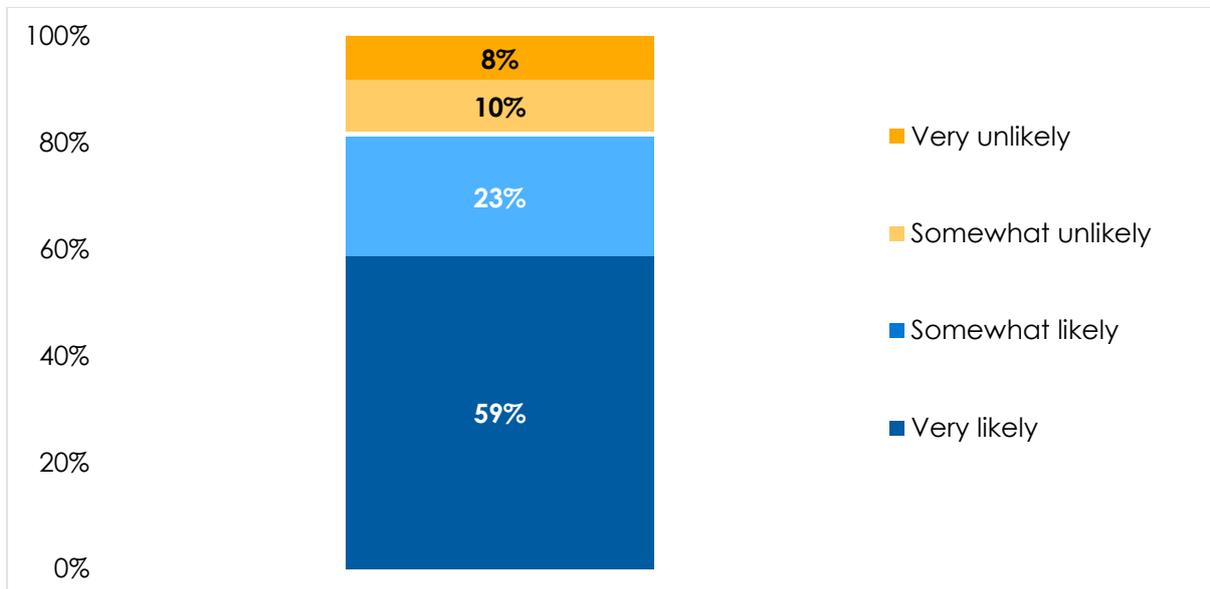
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to use physical discipline on his wife if she has done something he doesn't like or thinks is wrong?

**Figure 4: Will a woman be criticised, harassed, or shamed for reporting GBV?**  
 | Eswatini | 2022



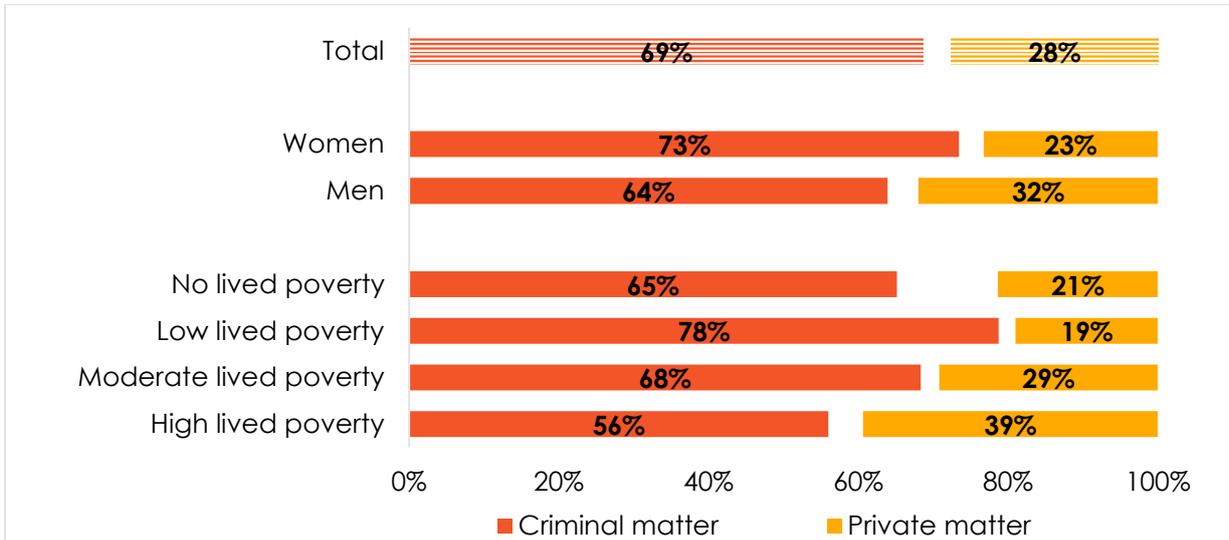
**Respondents were asked:** *If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: She will be criticised, harassed,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

**Figure 5: Do the police take GBV cases seriously?** | Eswatini | 2022



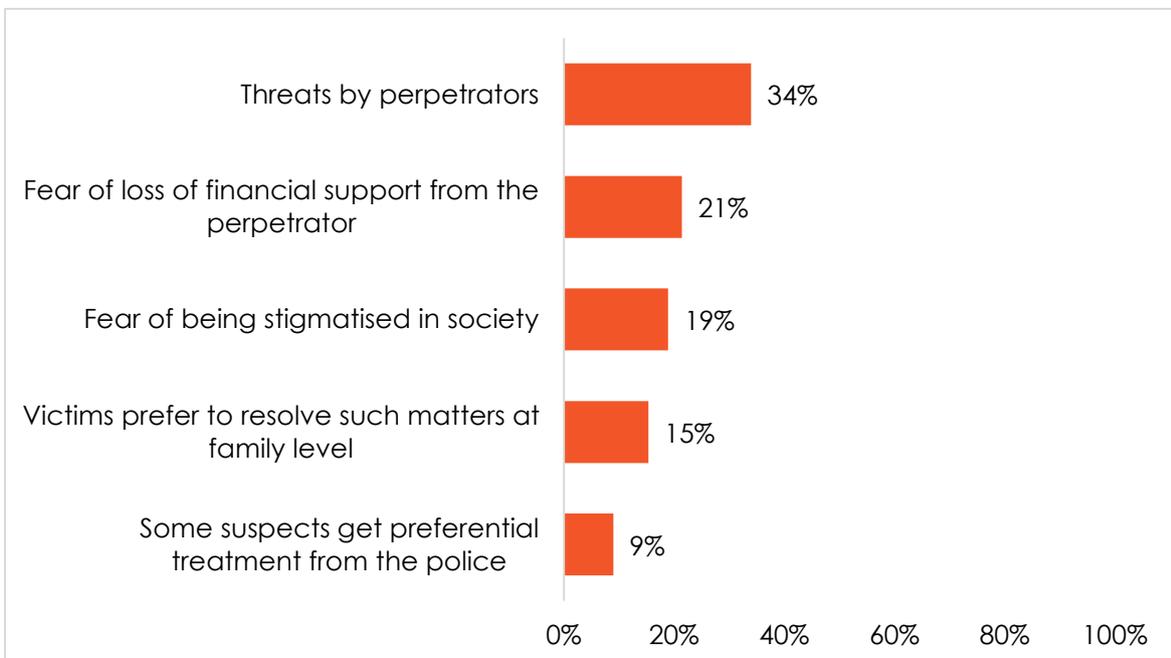
**Respondents were asked:** *If a woman in your community goes to the police to report being a victim of gender-based violence, for example, to report a rape or report being physically abused by her husband, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: Her case will be taken seriously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

**Figure 6: Is domestic violence a criminal or private matter? | by gender and lived poverty | Eswatini | 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)

**Figure 7: Main reasons for not reporting GBV | Eswatini | 2022**



**Respondents were asked:** Some cases of gender based violence or GBV go unreported to the police in Eswatini. Please tell me what you think is the main reason people do not report cases of GBV to the police.

**For more information, please contact:**

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