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## News release

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### Combating gender-based violence tops Africa's agenda for women's rights, new Afrobarometer Pan-Africa Profile shows

Gender-based violence (GBV) ranks as the most important women's-rights issue that Africans want their government and society to address, according to [Afrobarometer's latest Pan-Africa Profile](#).

On average across 39 countries, almost four in 10 respondents say GBV is common in their community, though perceptions vary widely by country and demographic group.

The survey findings reveal a mixed picture regarding GBV. While most Africans say that men are never justified in using physical force to discipline their wives, only half think domestic violence should be treated as a criminal matter that requires the involvement of law enforcement, while the other half consider it a private matter to be resolved within the family. Similarly, while most Africans trust that the police will take reported cases of GBV seriously, more than half believe that women who report such crimes are likely to face criticism, harassment, or shaming from their community.

Africans' perceptions of GBV vary widely by country and demographic group, suggesting that a woman's fundamental right to safety depends at least in part on her location and circumstances.

#### Key findings

- Africans see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women's-rights-related issue that their government and society need to address (cited by 31% of respondents), ahead of the scarcity of women in positions of power (20%) and inequalities in education (17%) and the workplace (16%) (Figure 1).
  - Perceptions of GBV as the top priority vary widely by country, ranging from just 5% in Mauritania to 69% in Cabo Verde.
- On average across 39 countries, almost four in 10 citizens (38%) say GBV is "somewhat common" or "very common" in their community (Figure 2).
  - In nine countries, at least half of respondents say violence against women is a common occurrence, led by Angola (62%) and Namibia (57%). Poor citizens are more likely to report that GBV happens frequently.

- More than two-thirds (69%) of Africans say it is “never” justified for a man to use physical force to discipline his wife (Figure 3).
  - But 31% consider a husband's use of force “sometimes” or “always” justified, including majorities in eight of the 39 surveyed countries. Poor and uneducated citizens are particularly likely to endorse this form of domestic violence.
- Africans are divided on whether domestic violence should be treated as a criminal matter (50%) or a private matter (48%) to be resolved within the family (Figure 4).
- More than half (52%) of respondents say it is “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that victims of GBV will be criticised, harassed, or shamed by others in the community if they report to the police.
  - However, most citizens (81%) consider it “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that the police will take cases of GBV seriously.

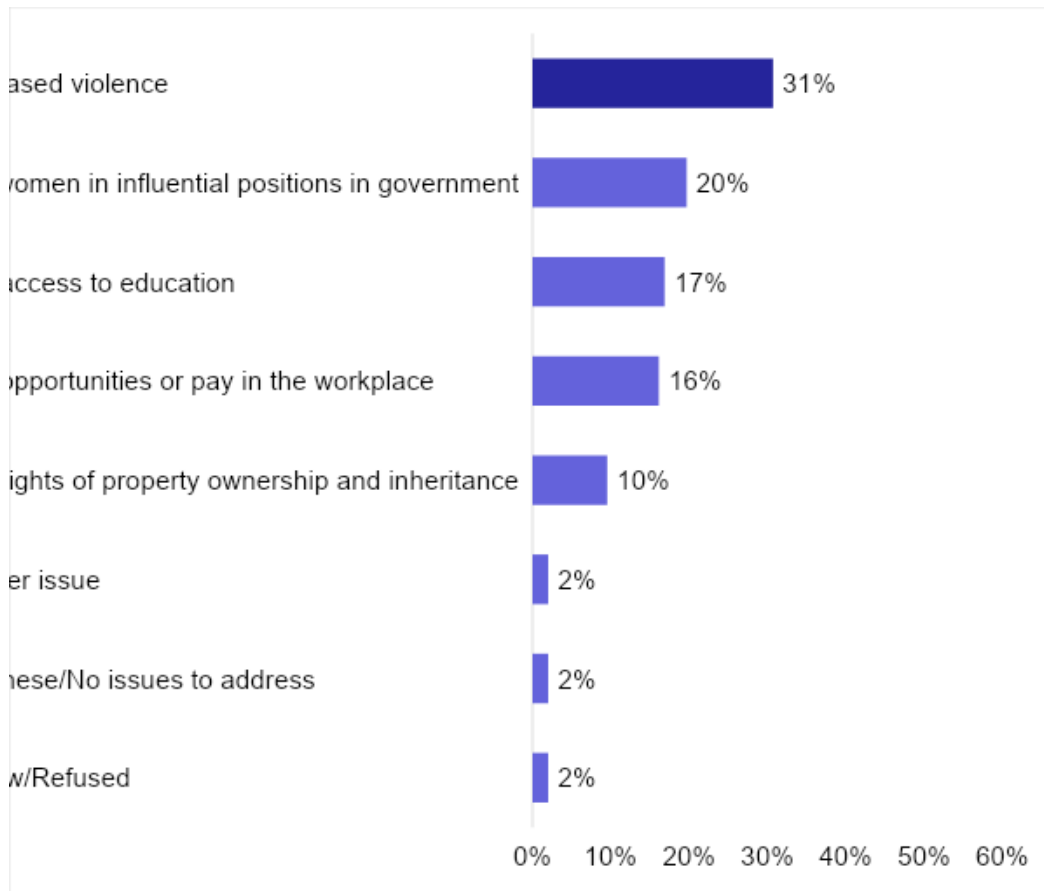
### Afrobarometer surveys

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) include 54,436 interviews in 39 countries.

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

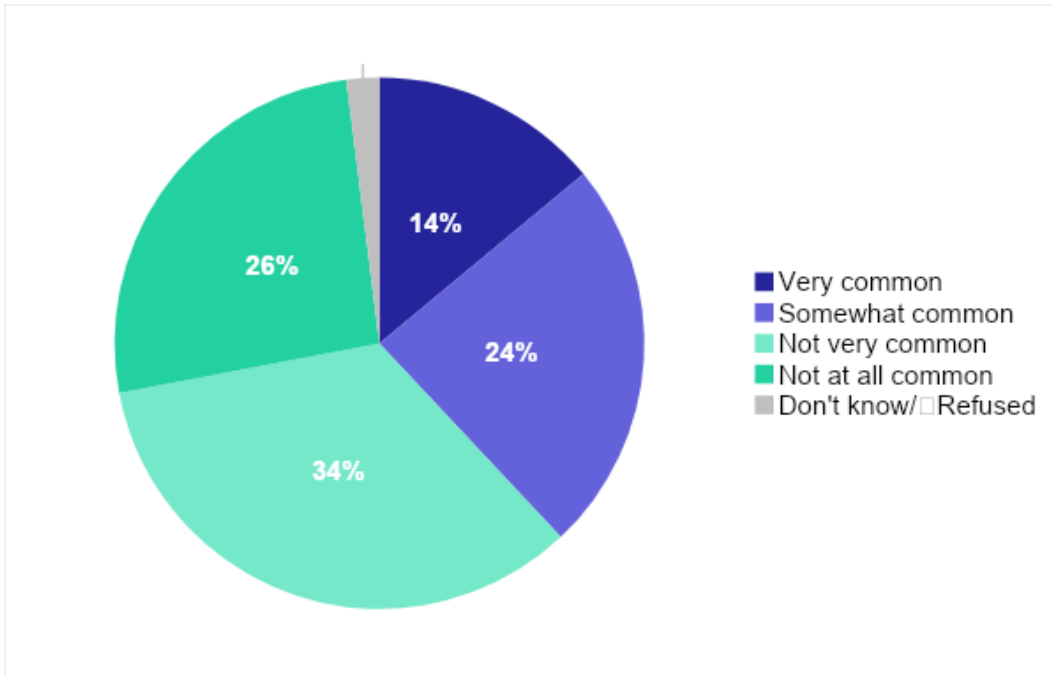
### Charts

**Figure 1: Most important women's-right issue** | 39 countries | 2021/2023



**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?*

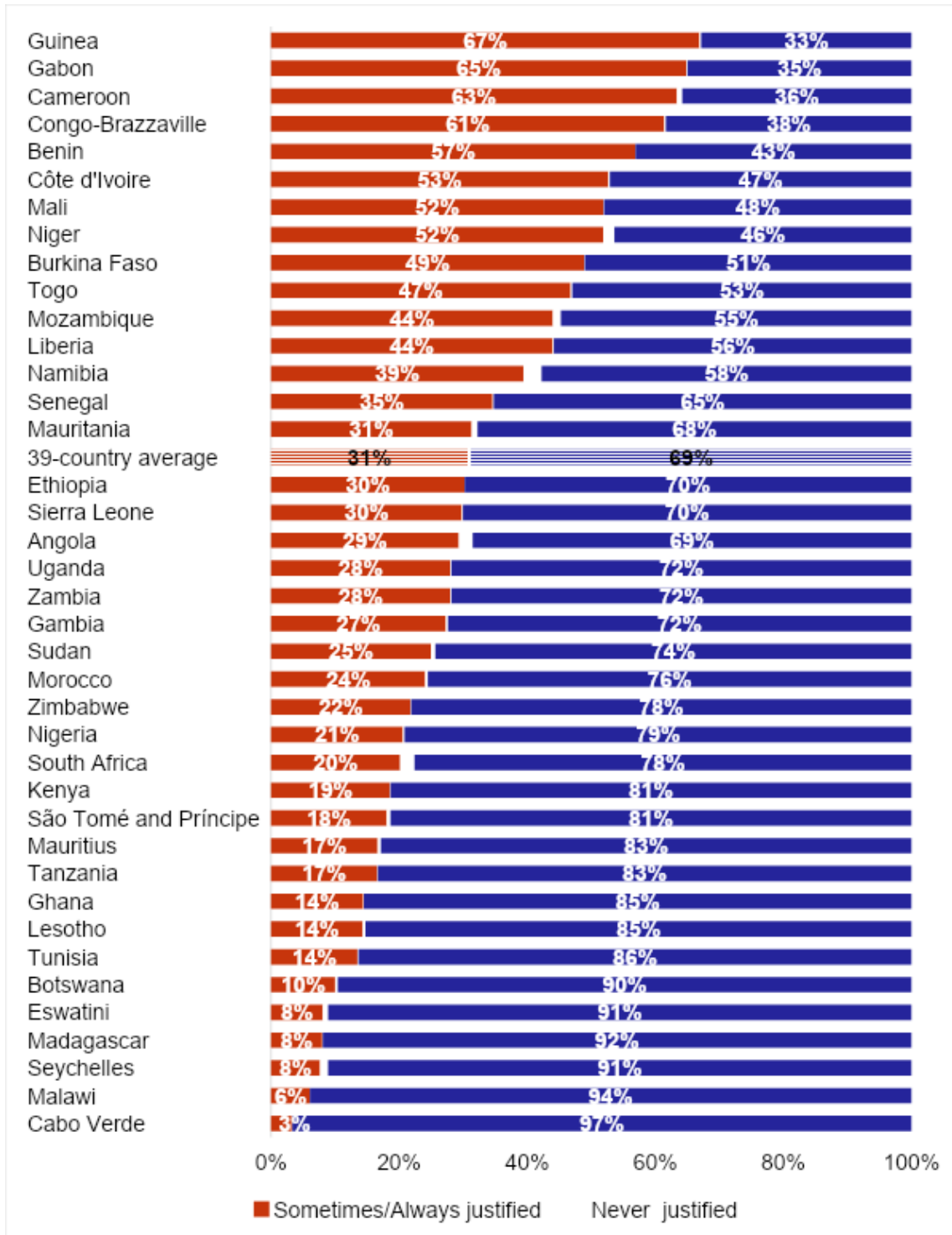
**Figure 2: Frequency of gender-based violence** | 39 countries | 2021/2023



**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?*

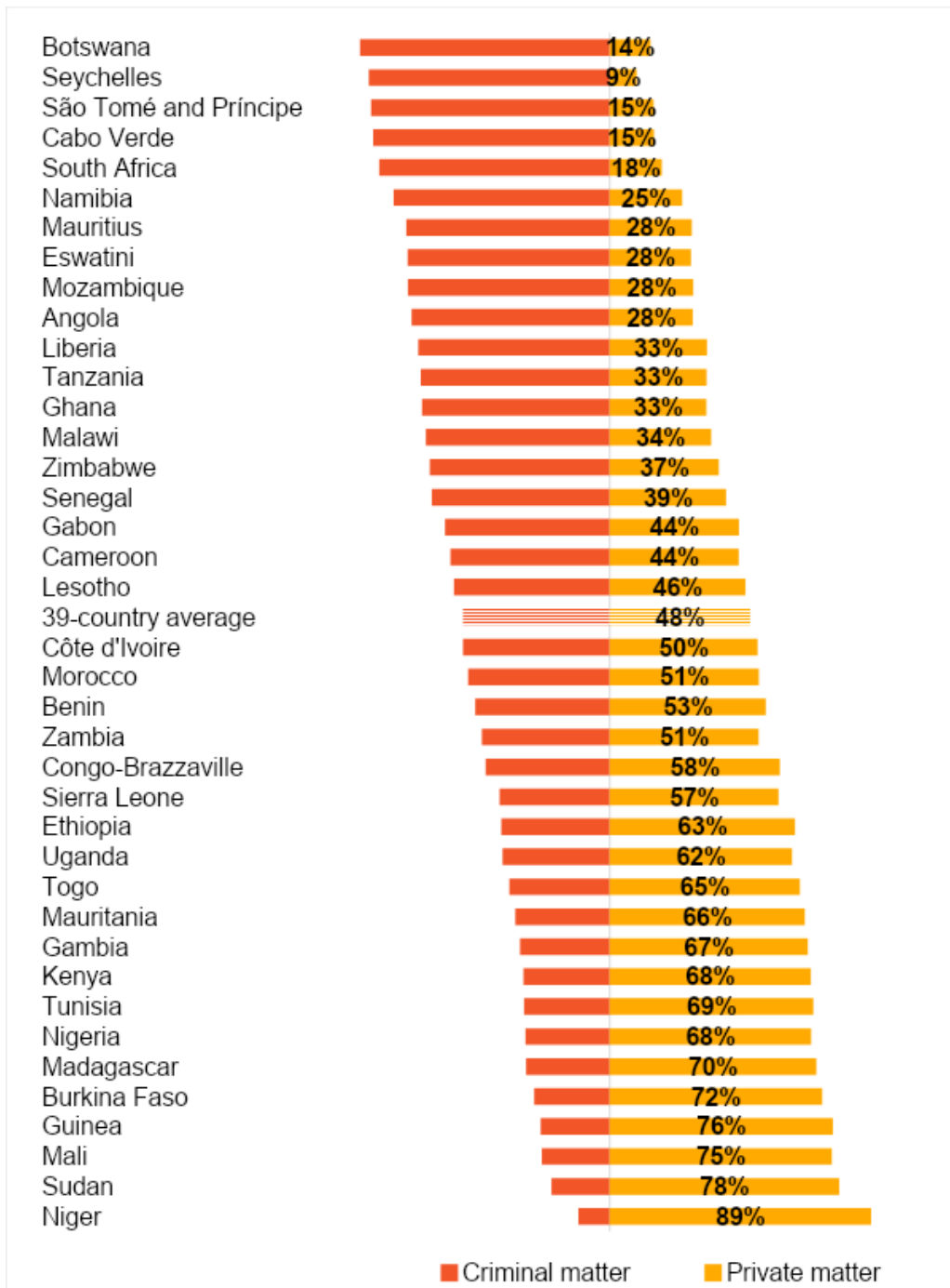


**Figure 3: Is it justified for men to physically discipline their wives? | 39 countries**  
 | 2021/2023



**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: Is domestic violence a criminal or private matter? | by country**  
| 39 countries | 2021/2023



**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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