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News release

Africans cite corruption, brutality, and lack of professionalism among police failings, new Afrobarometer report reveals

Only one in three Africans say their police usually operate in a professional manner and respect citizens' rights, a [new Afrobarometer report](#) shows.

An analysis of survey findings from 39 African countries finds that substantial minorities report corruption, use of excessive force, and even criminal activity by their police forces. Fewer than half express trust in the police or approve of their government's performance in fighting crime.

The analysis shows that negative perceptions of police professionalism and corruption go hand in hand with low public trust in the police, poor marks on government performance in reducing crime, and citizens' sense of insecurity.

Key findings

- Only one-third (32%) of citizens say their police "often" or "always" operate in a professional manner and respect the rights of all citizens, ranging from just 13% in Nigeria to 58% in Burkina Faso (Figure 1).
- Among respondents who sought police assistance during the previous year, 54% say it was easy to get the help they needed, but 36% say they had to pay a bribe. Among those who encountered the police in other situations, 37% report having to pay a bribe to avoid problems, ranging from 1% in Cabo Verde to 70% in Liberia (Figure 2).
- Across 39 countries, three in 10 citizens (29%) say their police "often" or "always" engage in criminal activities, in addition to 27% who say they "sometimes" do (Figure 3).
- On average, about four in 10 Africans say their police "often" or "always" use excessive force in managing protests (38%) and dealing with suspected criminals (42%) (Figure 4).
- Fewer than four in 10 citizens (37%) say their government is doing "fairly well" or "very well" at reducing crime, ranging from just 10% in Sudan to 77% in Benin (Figure 5).
- Fewer than half (46%) of citizens say they trust the police "somewhat" or "a lot" (Figure 6).

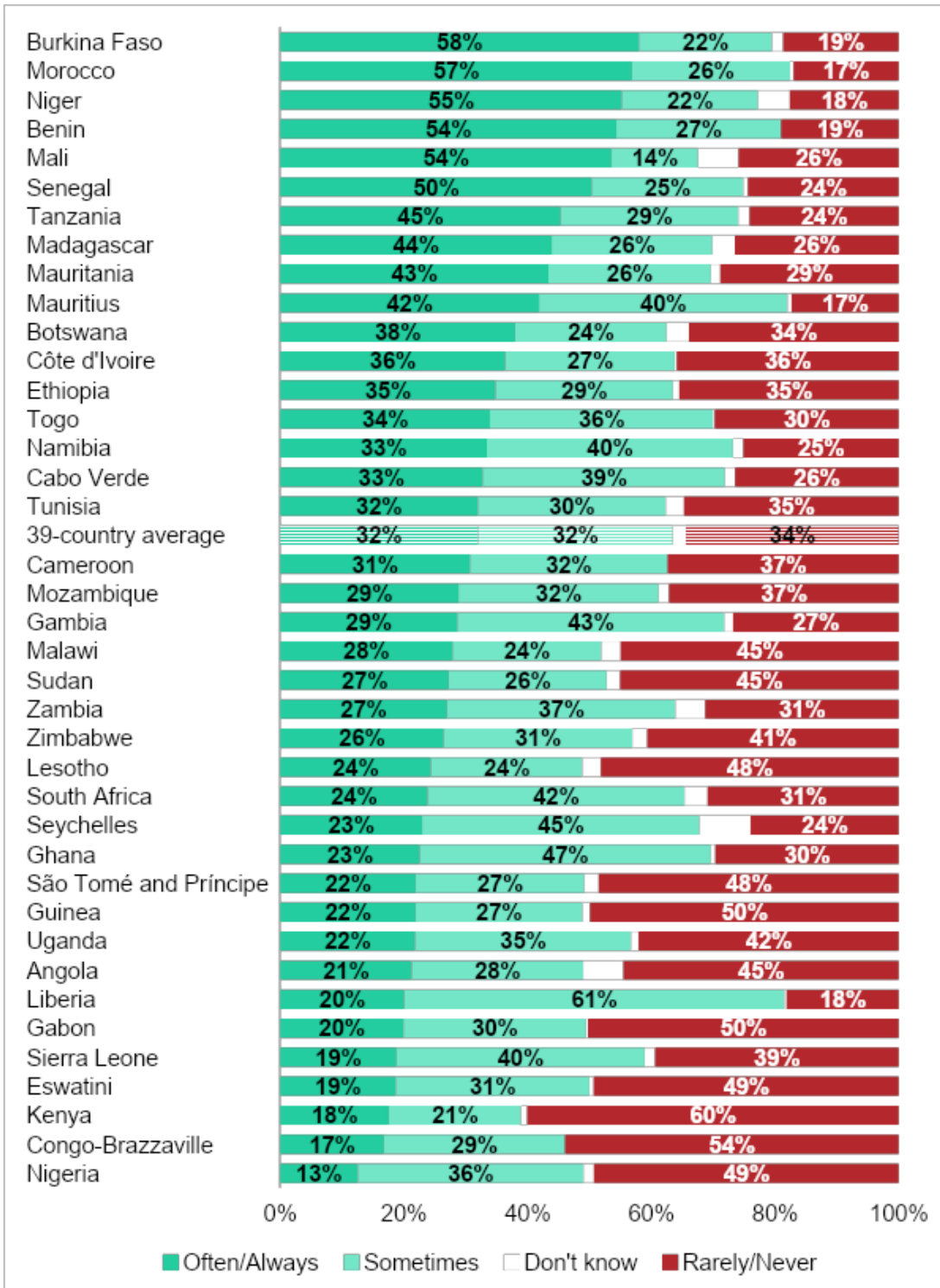
Afrobarometer surveys

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 with samples of 1,200-2,400 adults that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-3 to +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

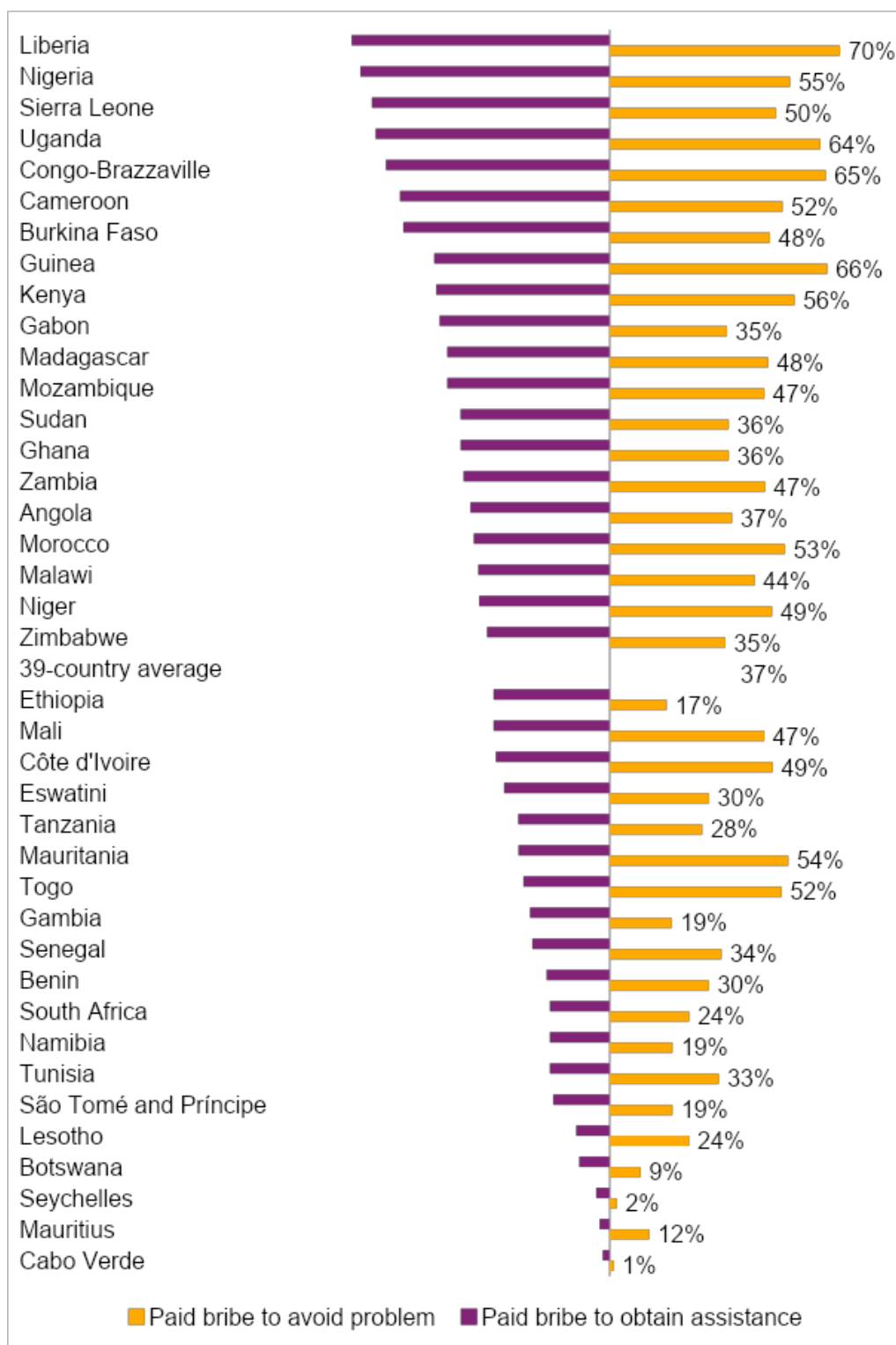
Charts

Figure 1: Do police act professionally and respect citizens' rights? | 39 countries
| 2021/2023



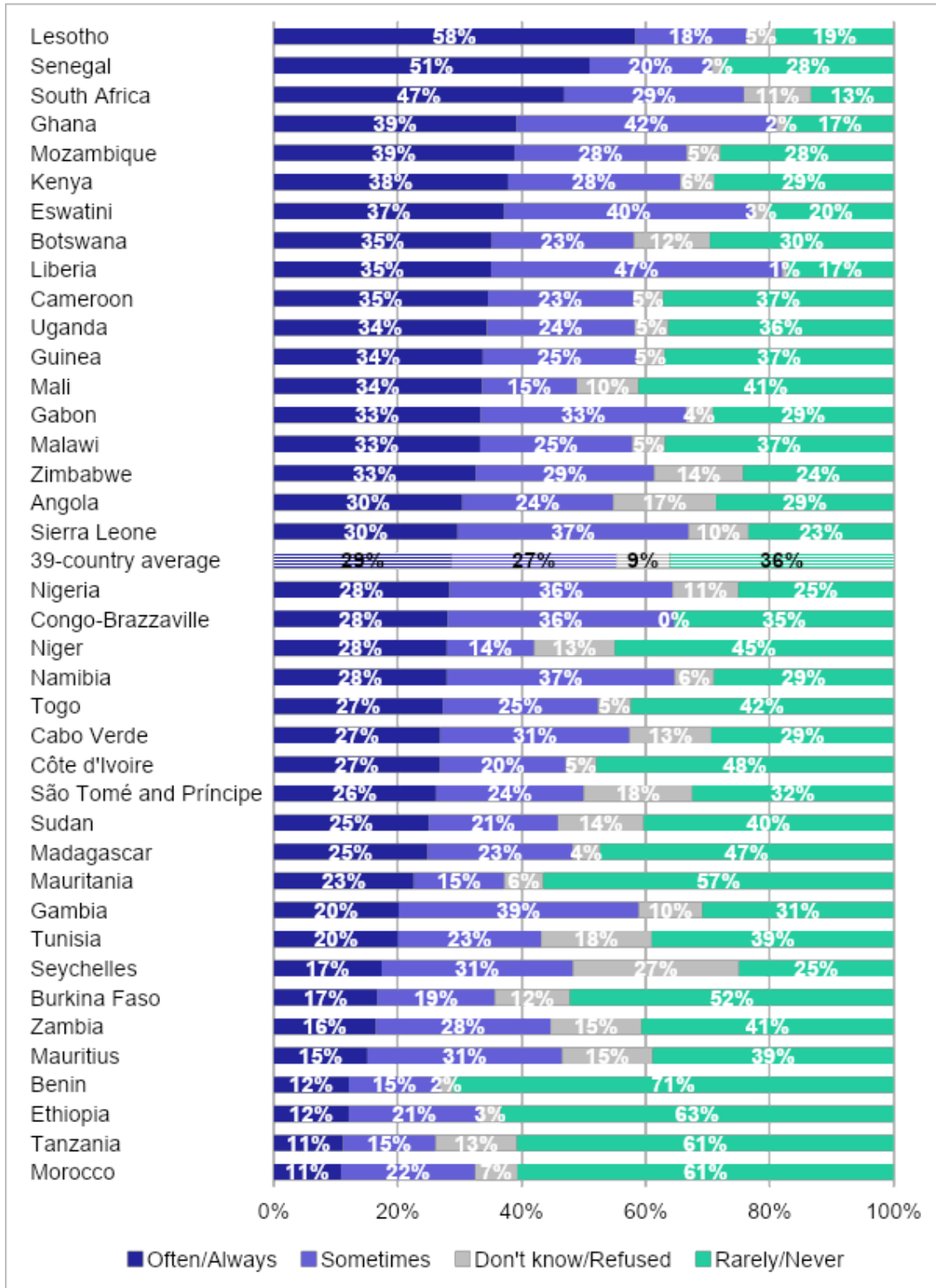
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the police in [your country] operate in a professional manner and respect the rights of all citizens?

Figure 2: Pay bribe to receive police assistance/avoid problems | 39 countries | 2021/2023



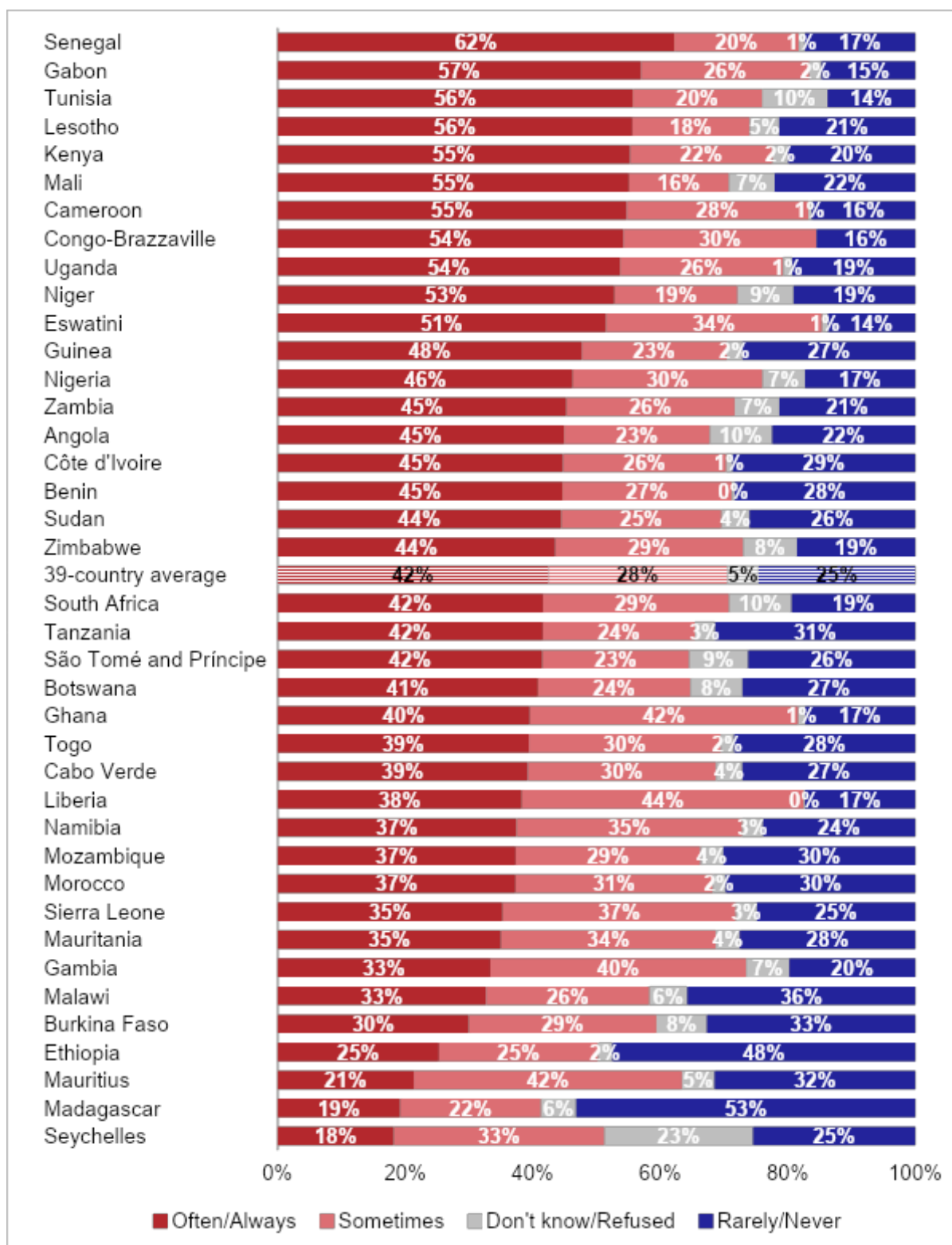
Respondents who encountered the police during the previous year were asked: How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer: In order to get the assistance you needed? In order to avoid a problem during one of these encounters? (% who were asked to pay a bribe) (Respondents who did not have contact with the police are excluded.)

Figure 3: How often do police engage in criminal activities? | 39 countries
 | 2021/2023



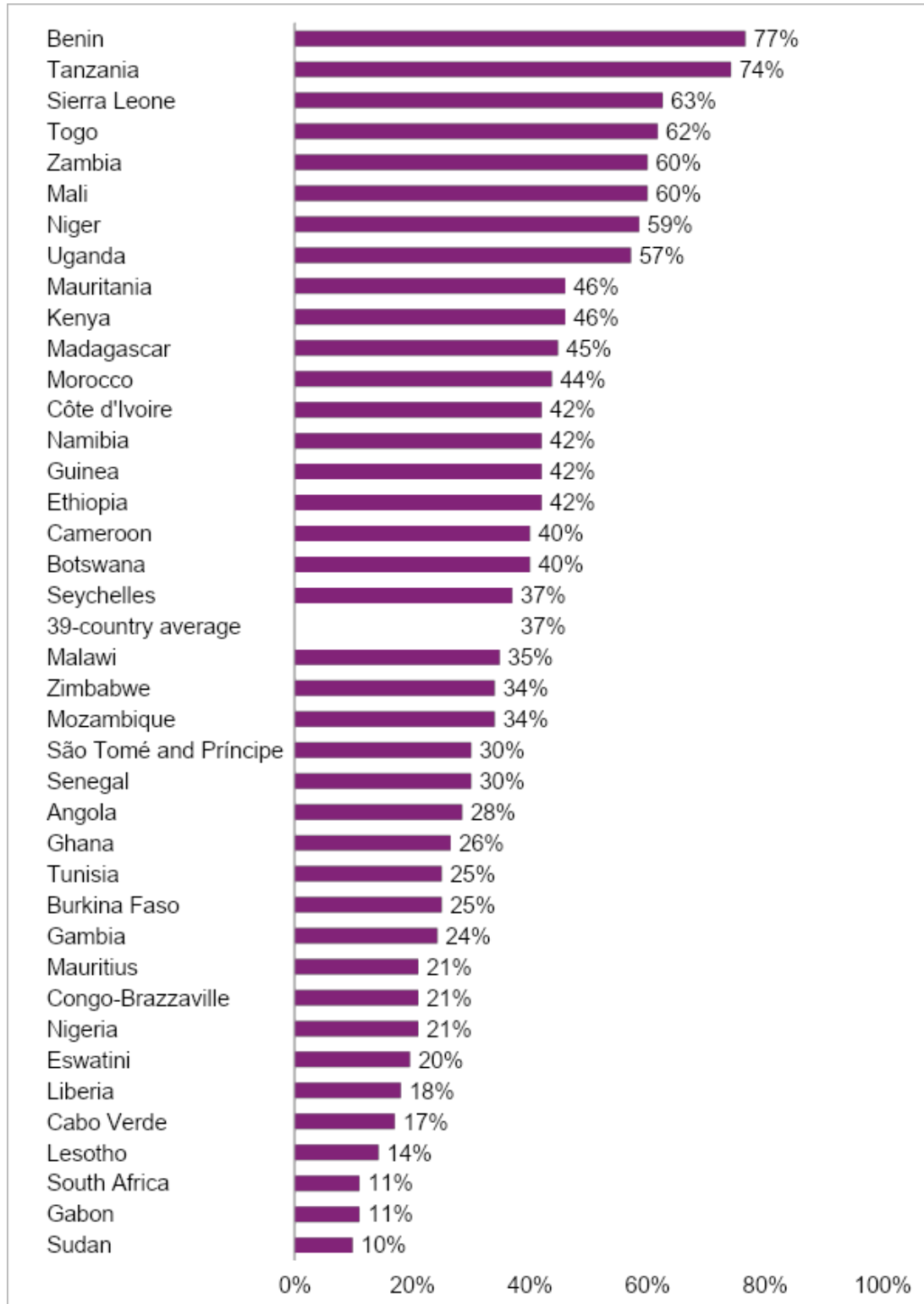
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often do the police in [your country] engage in criminal activities?*

Figure 4: Do police use excessive force with suspected criminals? | 39 countries
| 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often do the police in [your country] use excessive force when dealing with criminals?*

Figure 5: Government performance on crime reduction | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

Figure 6: Trust the police somewhat/a lot | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

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