



Gaborone, Botswana
23 January 2025

News release

Batswana heavily favour continued use of the death penalty, new Afrobarometer survey shows

An overwhelming majority of Batswana are in favour of maintaining capital punishment for the most serious crimes despite international criticism of the practice, a new Afrobarometer survey indicates.

The protection of human rights has become a topical issue in Botswana politics, including questions about the legitimacy of the death penalty. Neighbouring Zimbabwe abolished the death penalty last month, leaving Botswana as the only country in the Southern Africa region that still uses the death penalty. The country has averaged one execution a year since 2019 and currently has 16 inmates on Death Row.

Critics of the death penalty argue that the law is often applied unequally to different groups in society. In Botswana, a sizeable minority of respondents say that the legal system in general treats people unequally, while a majority say such inequality is rare or non-existent.

Key findings

- More than eight in 10 Batswana (82%) believe that the death penalty is an appropriate form of punishment for the most serious crimes, such as murder (Figure 1).
- While support for the death penalty is strong across the board, women are more likely to support it than men (86% vs. 77%), as are older citizens compared to the youngest adults (85% vs. 75%) (Figure 2).
- Almost four in 10 Batswana (38%) say people “often” or “always” receive unequal treatment by the legal system, while 56% say this “rarely” or “never” happens (Figure 3).

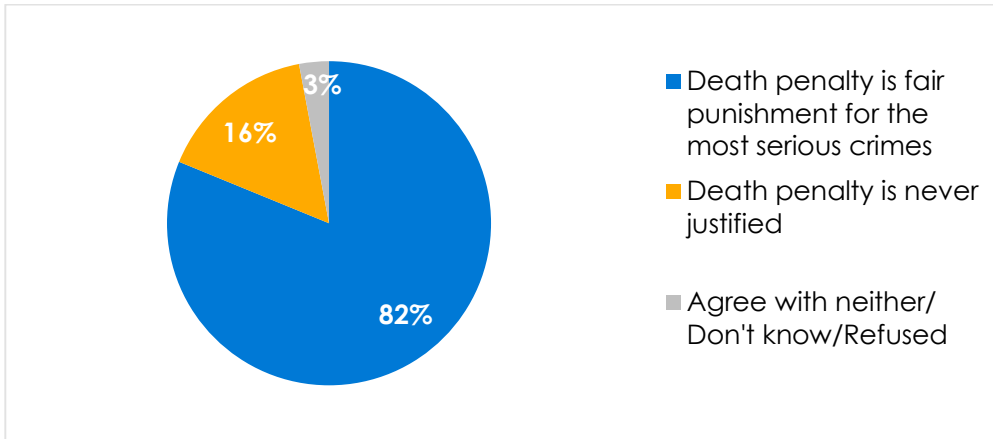
Afrobarometer surveys

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 10 were launched in January 2024. Afrobarometer’s national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Botswana, led by Star Awards, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Batswana between 6 July and 19 July 2024. 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 Botswana in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2022.

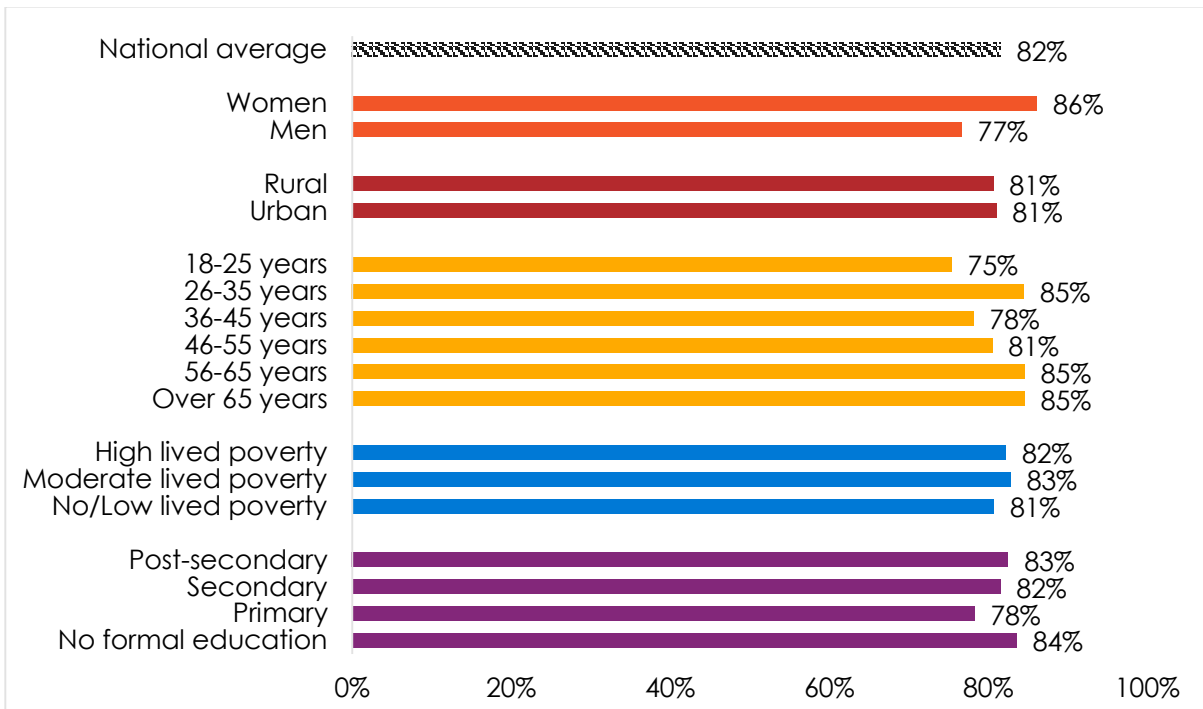
Charts

Figure 1: Views on the death penalty | Botswana | 2024



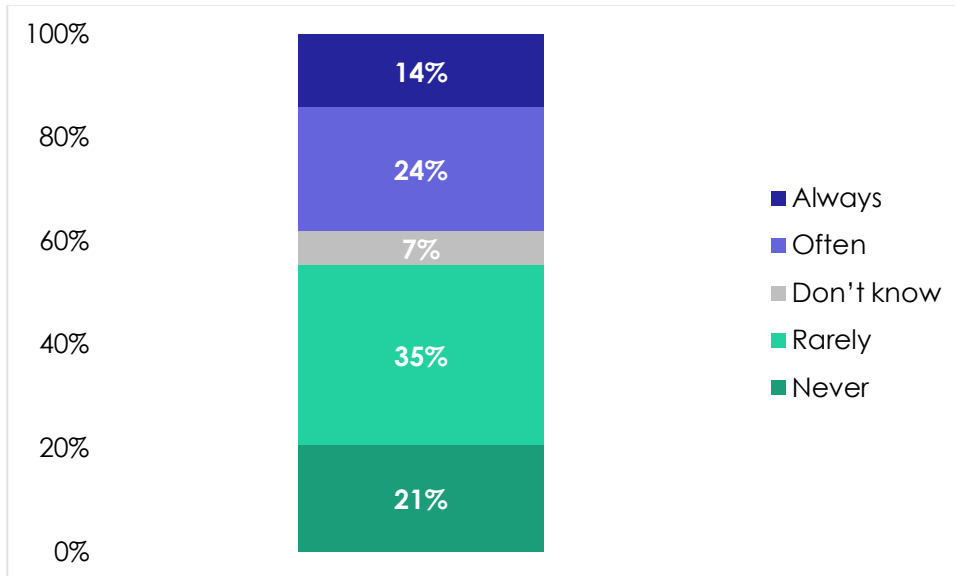
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: The death penalty is a fair punishment for people who have committed the most serious crimes, such as murder.
 Statement 2: There is no crime for which the death penalty can be justified.

Figure 2: Death penalty is fair punishment for the most serious crimes | by demographic group | Botswana | 2024



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: The death penalty is a fair punishment for people who have committed the most serious crimes, such as murder.
 Statement 2: There is no crime for which the death penalty can be justified.
 (% who agree with Statement 1)

Figure 3: Unequal treatment under the law | Botswana | 2024



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often, in this country, are people treated unequally under the law?*

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