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News release

Africans strongly support women's autonomy in marriage and reproductive decisions, but are divided on contraceptive access, new Afrobarometer Pan-Africa Profile reveals

Most Africans support the right of girls and women to make their own choices about marriage and childbearing, a [new Afrobarometer Pan-Africa Profile report](#) shows.

The report, based on 50,961 interviews conducted during Afrobarometer's Round 10 surveys across 38 African countries in 2024/2025, shows that most citizens want girls who become pregnant to be allowed to continue their schooling. A large majority also favour the teaching of sexuality education in schools to help young people make informed decisions about their health and relationships.

Despite strong support for teaching sexuality education in schools, public opinion is divided on whether to make contraceptives available to anyone who is sexually active regardless of age. However, a majority of Africans endorse the idea of making contraceptives available to anyone who is sexually active regardless of marital status.

Opinions are also mixed on the issue of abortion: There is broad acceptance of pregnancy termination if the mother's health or life is in danger, but only half of citizens consider abortion justifiable if the pregnancy is due to rape or incest, and there is strong opposition to abortion if the woman does not want to have a baby or does not have the resources to take care of one.

Given the sensitive nature of topics explored in this report, analyses of the proportions of non-responses and the robustness of measurement of individual items point to findings that should be interpreted with caution. For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see [Afrobarometer Methods Note No. 5](#).

Afrobarometer survey

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. Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys (2024/2025) cover 38 countries.

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice. National samples of 1,200-2,400 yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

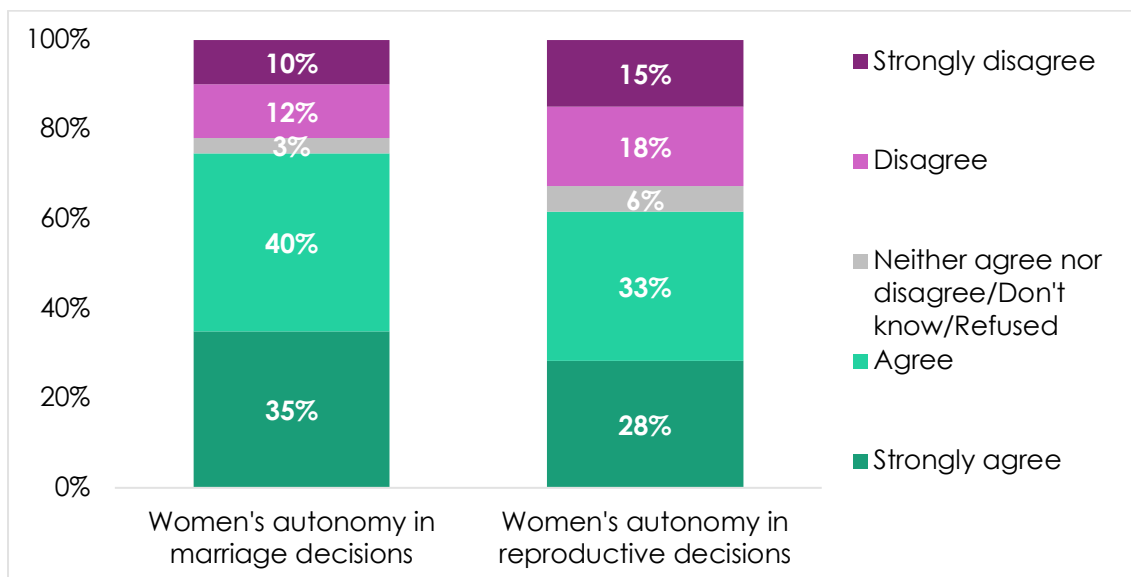
Key findings

- On average across 38 countries, large majorities of Africans say women should be able to decide for themselves whether and when to marry (75%) as well as when to have children and how many children to have (62%) (Figure 1).
 - Women are significantly more likely than men to support a woman's autonomy in marriage decisions (78% vs. 71%) and reproductive choices (69% vs. 55%) (Figure 2).

- More than seven in 10 Africans (73%) endorse the teaching of sexuality education in school.
 - Support is almost universal in Madagascar and Cabo Verde but drops below one-fourth of citizens in Morocco and Mauritania (Figure 3).
- About eight in 10 citizens (81%) – including majorities in all surveyed countries – say girls who get pregnant or have children should be allowed to continue their schooling (Figure 4).
- A majority (58%) of Africans say contraceptives should be made available to anyone who is sexually active regardless of marital status (Figure 5).
 - But only about half (49%) would make them available to anyone who is sexually active regardless of age.
 - Access to contraceptives regardless of marital status and age is less popular among rural residents, older respondents, and less educated citizens.
- A majority (63%) of respondents say abortion can “sometimes” or “always” be justified if the woman's health or life is at risk (Figure 6).
 - Almost half (48%) say the same for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, while the other half (47%) disagree.
 - Solid majorities say pregnancy termination is “never justified” in cases where the woman is economically unable to care for a child (65%) or where she doesn't want the pregnancy for any reason (69%).

Charts

Figure 1: Women's autonomy in decisions about marriage and childbearing
 | 38 countries | 2024/2025

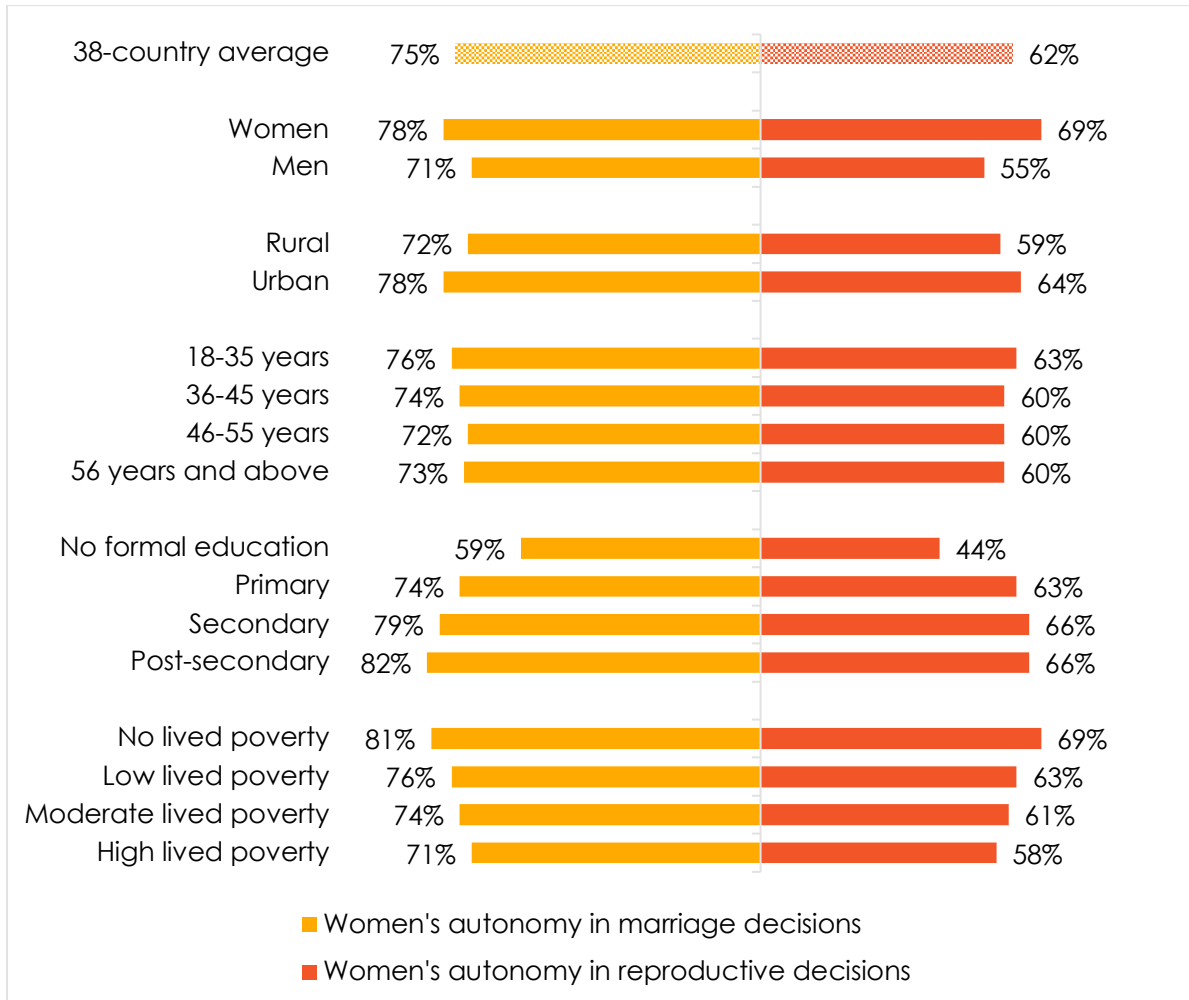


Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Girls and women should decide for themselves whether and when they should marry.

Women should decide for themselves when and how many children they want to have.

Figure 2: Support for women's autonomy in decisions about marriage and childbearing | by demographic group | 38 countries | 2024/2025



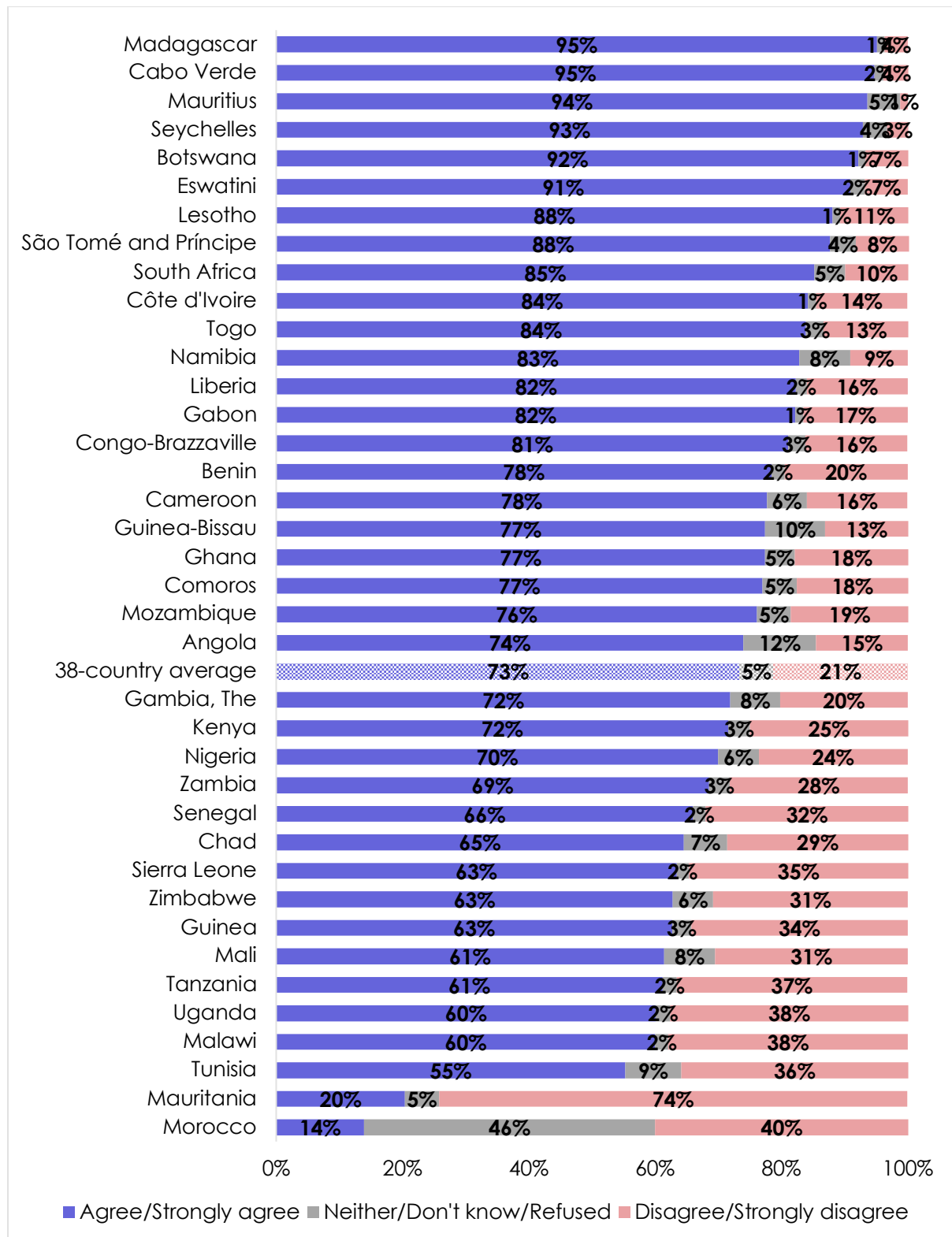
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Girls and women should decide for themselves whether and when they should marry.

Women should decide for themselves when and how many children they want to have.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

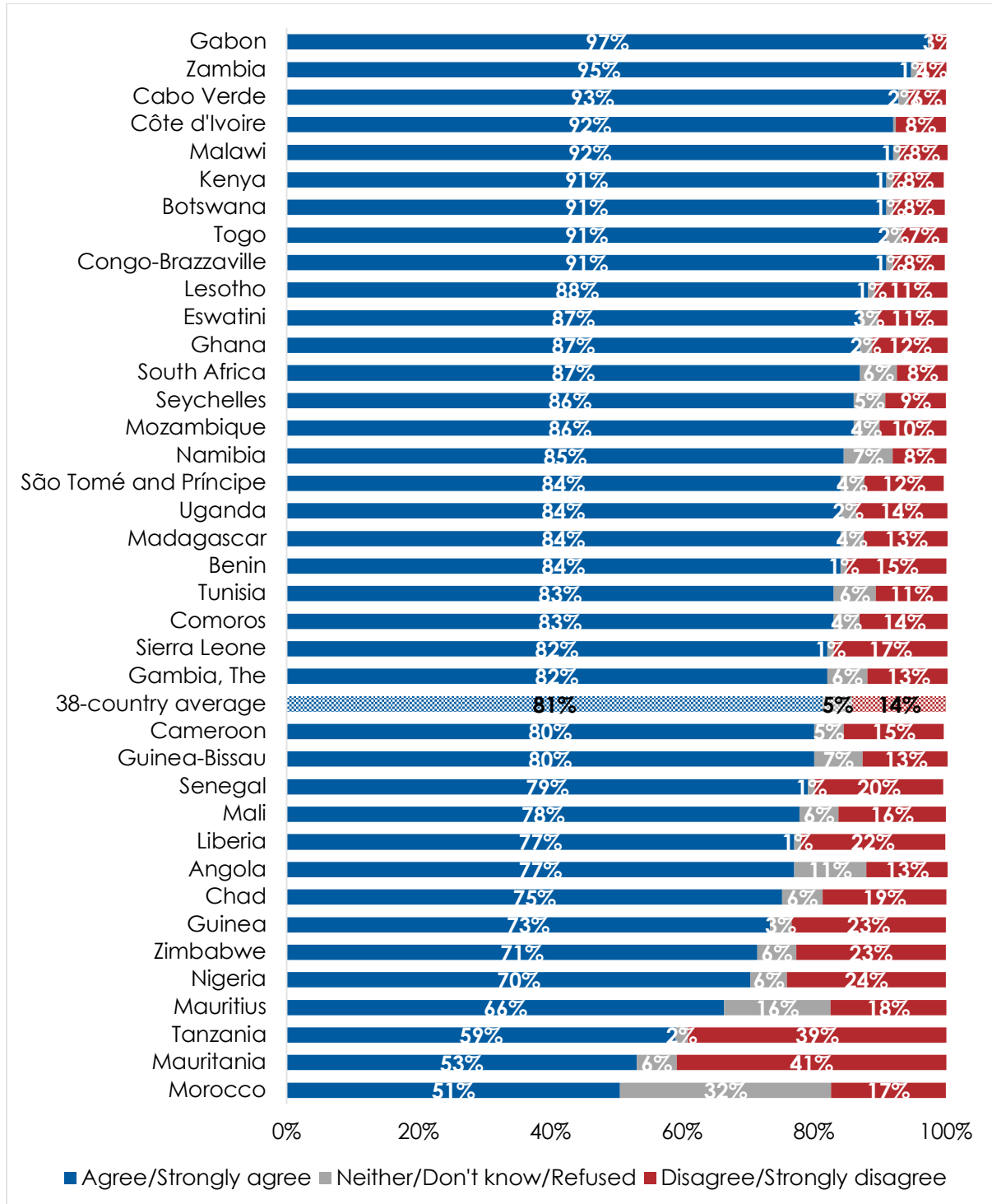
Figure 3: Should schools teach sexuality education? | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Schools should teach sexuality education to young people to help them make informed decisions.

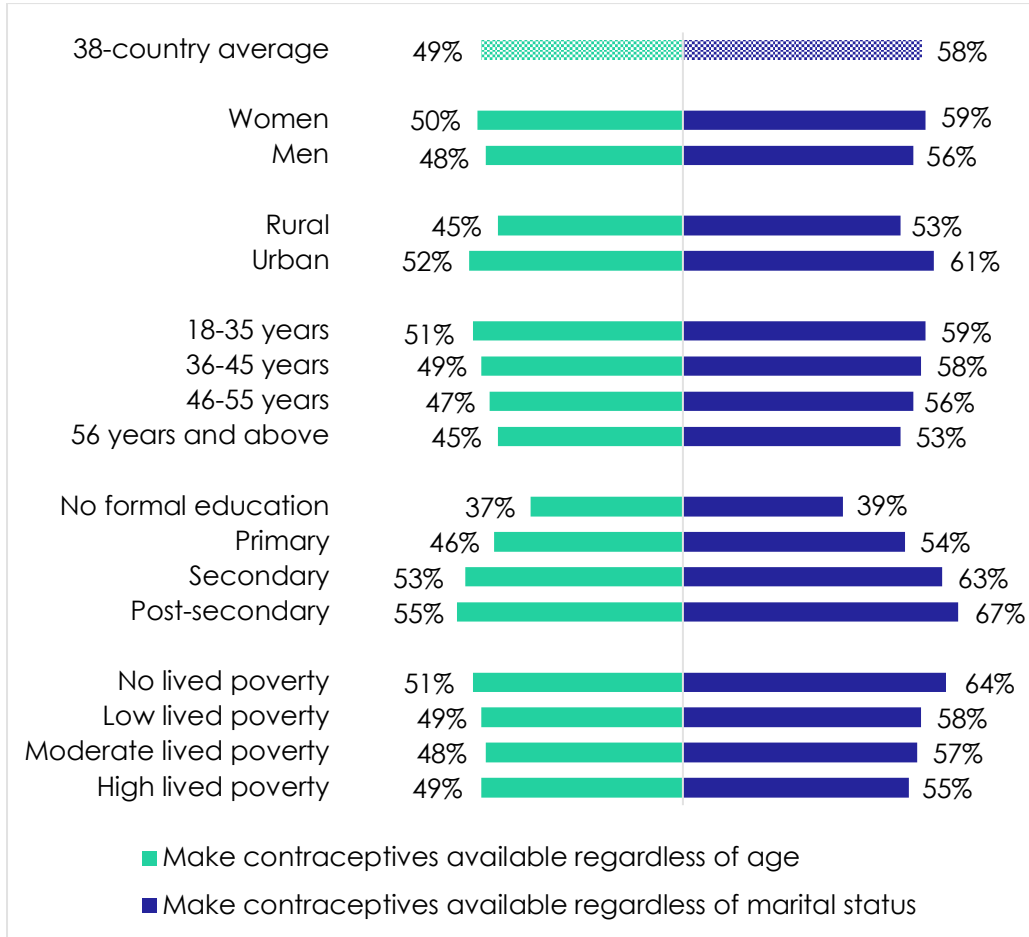
Figure 4: Girls who become pregnant should be allowed to stay in school

| 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Girls should be allowed to continue their schooling even if they become pregnant or have children.

Figure 5: Support for making contraceptives available regardless of age and marital status | by demographic group | 38 countries | 2024/2025



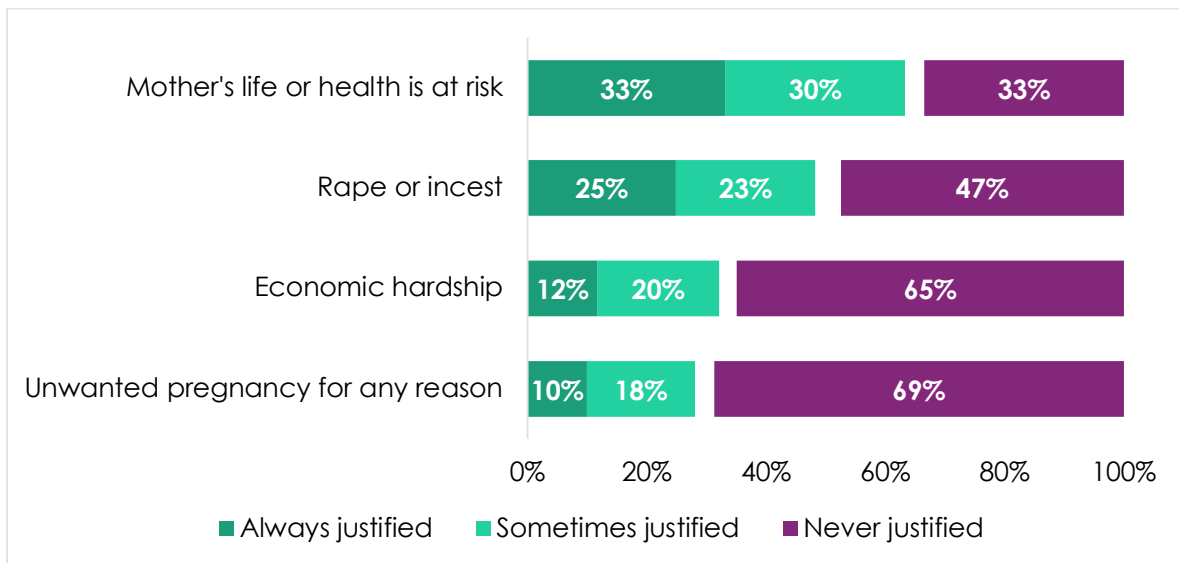
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Contraceptives should be available to everyone who is sexually active regardless of age.

Contraceptives should be available to everyone, regardless of marital status.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Figure 6: Justification of pregnancy termination | 38 countries* | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: For each of the following situations, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified for a woman to terminate a pregnancy if:

The pregnancy is as a result of rape or she has been impregnated by a close relative such as her father or brother.

Her health or life is in danger if she keeps the pregnancy.

She is going through economic hardships and cannot take care of a child.

She does not want to keep the pregnancy for any reason.

* Question about rape or incest was not asked in Tunisia.

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