

Afrobarometer  
Accra, Ghana  
28 October 2019

## News release

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### More than one in four Africans see wife-beating as justifiable, Afrobarometer survey finds

About one in four African women – and even more African men – say wife-beating is at least sometimes justified, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey. In some countries, up to seven in 10 citizens endorse domestic violence.

While a sizeable majority (71%) of Africans say it is “never justified” for a man to beat his wife, 28% – including 24% of women – see wife-beating as “sometimes” or “always” justified. Acceptance of violence against women is particularly widespread in Central and West Africa and among respondents with no formal education.

These findings from national surveys in 34 countries are part of a **soon-to-be-released Pan-Africa Profile** analysis based on a special gender-equality survey module. The new report will also examine popular support for gender equality, government performance on women's rights, and persistent gender gaps in education, employment, control over key assets, and access to technology.

#### Key findings

- More than one in four Africans (28%) – including 24% of women and 31% of men – say wife-beating is “sometimes” or “always” justified (Figure 1).
- Tolerance for violence against women is far higher in some countries, reaching seven in 10 citizens in Gabon (70%) and Liberia (69%) (Figure 2). Majorities also see domestic violence as an acceptable practice in Niger (60%), Mali (58%), Guinea (58%), Cameroon (53%), and Burkina Faso (53%). In contrast, no more than one in 20 respondents in Cabo Verde, Madagascar, eSwatini, and Malawi are willing to countenance domestic violence.
- In most countries, women are less likely than men to consider wife-beating justified, including double-digit gaps in 11 countries, led by Senegal and Kenya (16 percentage points each) and Côte d'Ivoire and Togo (14 points each). But in Liberia and Niger, women and men differ little in their high levels of acceptance of violence against women (Figure 2).
- In Central (46%) and West Africa (40%),<sup>1</sup> acceptance of domestic violence is more than twice as common as in the continent's North (17%), East (16%), and Southern (14%) regions (Figure 3).
- Citizens with no formal education (41%) are significantly more likely to endorse wife-beating than those with primary, secondary, or post-secondary schooling (23%-25%).

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<sup>1</sup> Regions: North Africa (Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia), Central Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe), Southern Africa (Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe), East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

Young adults (29% among those aged 18-35) are slightly more willing to accept domestic violence than their elders (25%-27%) (Figure 4).

### Afrobarometer surveys

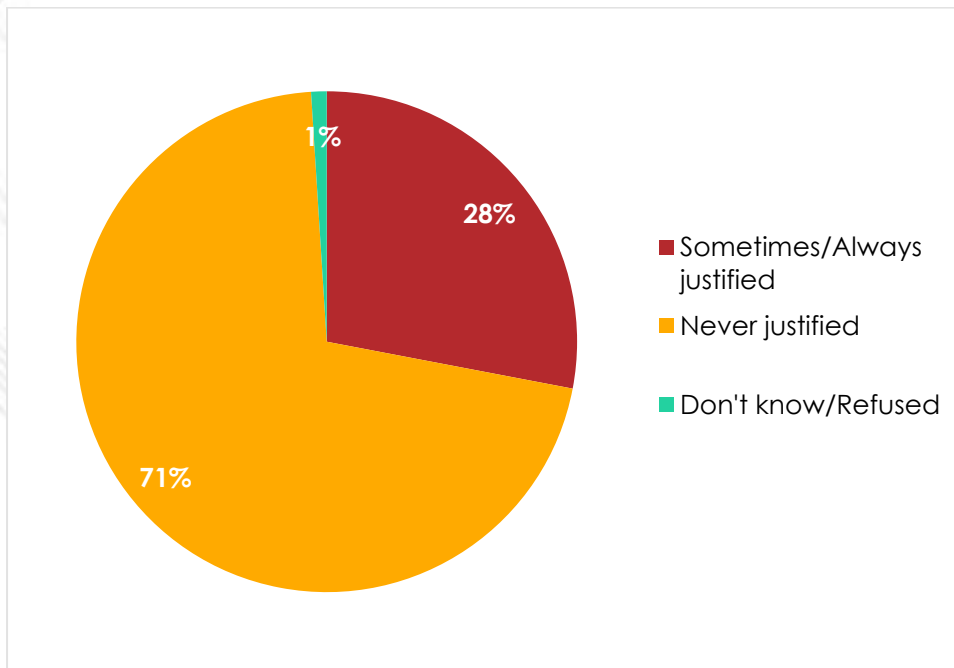
Afrobarometer heads a pan-African, nonpartisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across Africa. After six rounds of surveys in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2015, Round 7 surveys included 45,823 interviews completed in 34 countries between September 2016 and September 2018. The special module on gender equality was carried out in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

Round 8 surveys are planned in at least 35 countries in 2019/2020. Interested readers may follow all our releases, including our Pan-Africa Profiles series of cross-country analyses, at #VoicesAfrica, and sign up for our distribution list at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

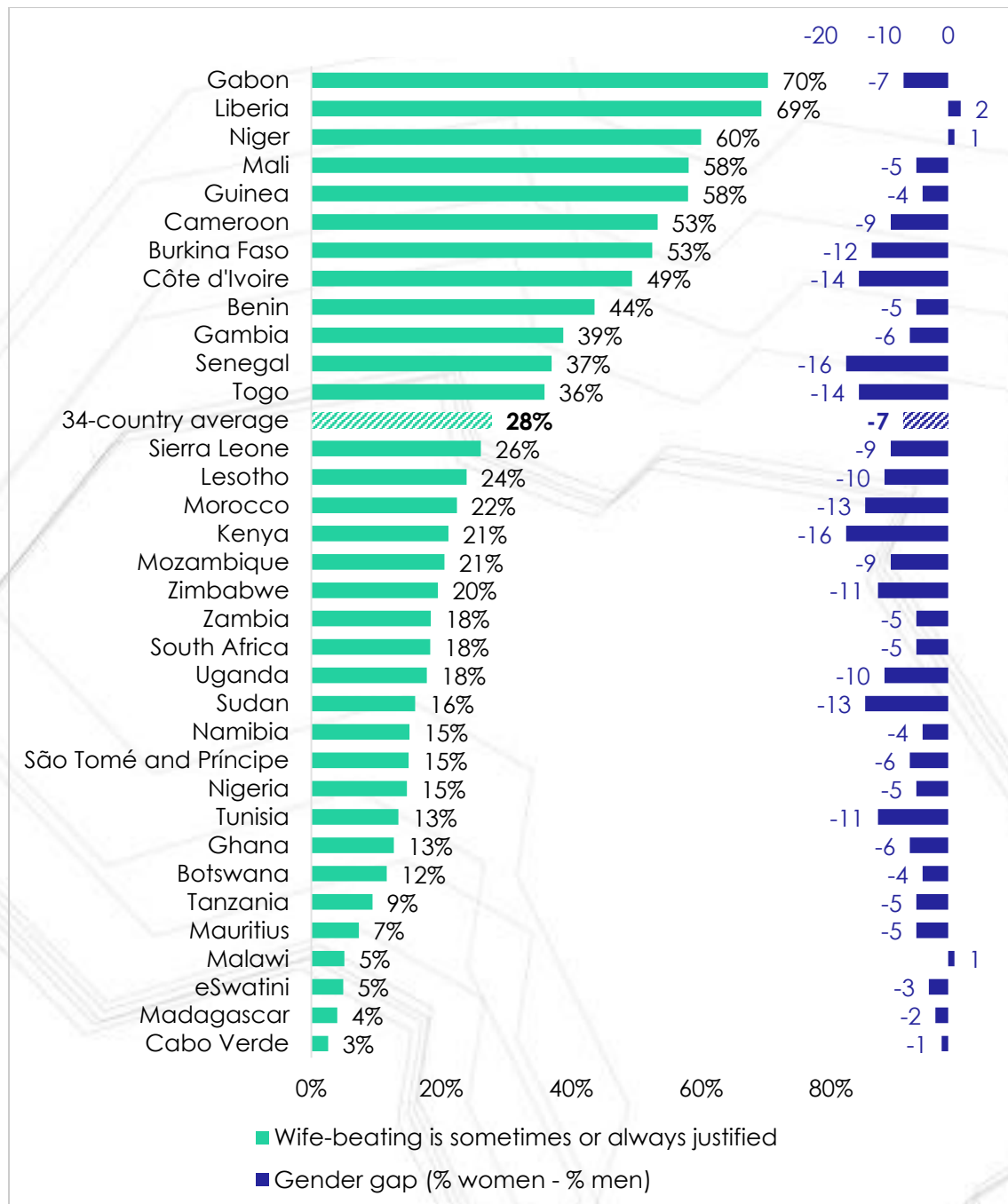
### Charts

**Figure 1: Justified for men to beat their wives?** | 34 countries | 2016/2018



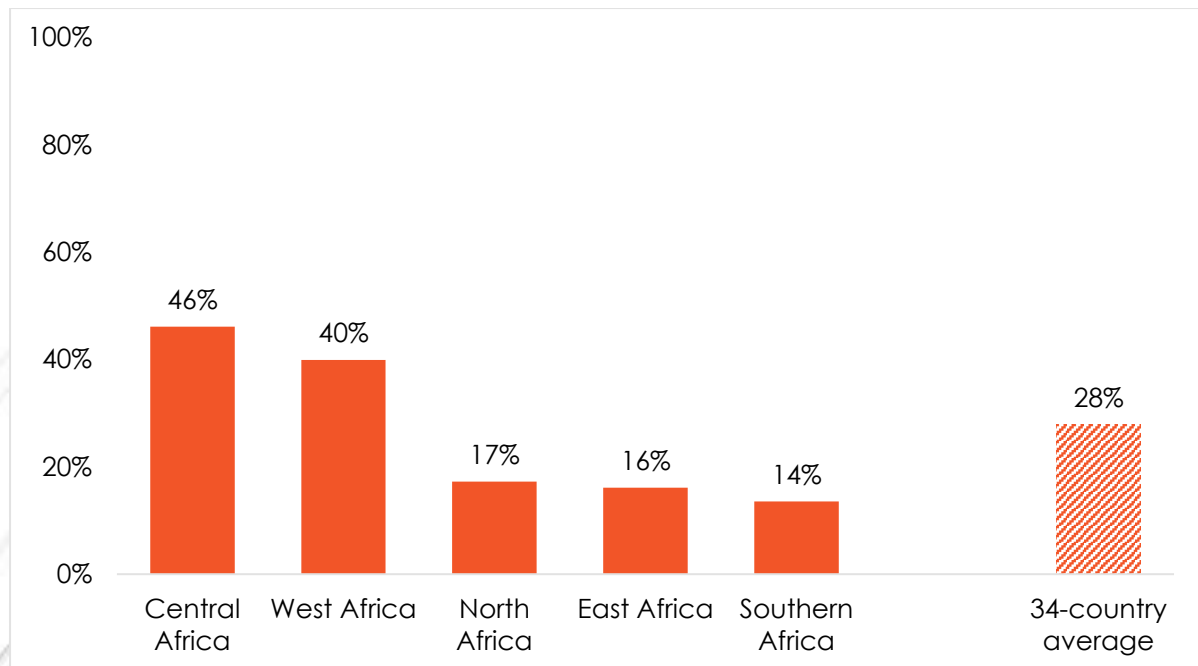
**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to beat his wife?

**Figure 2: Justified for men to beat their wives** | % by country and gender gap  
 | 34 countries | 2016/2018



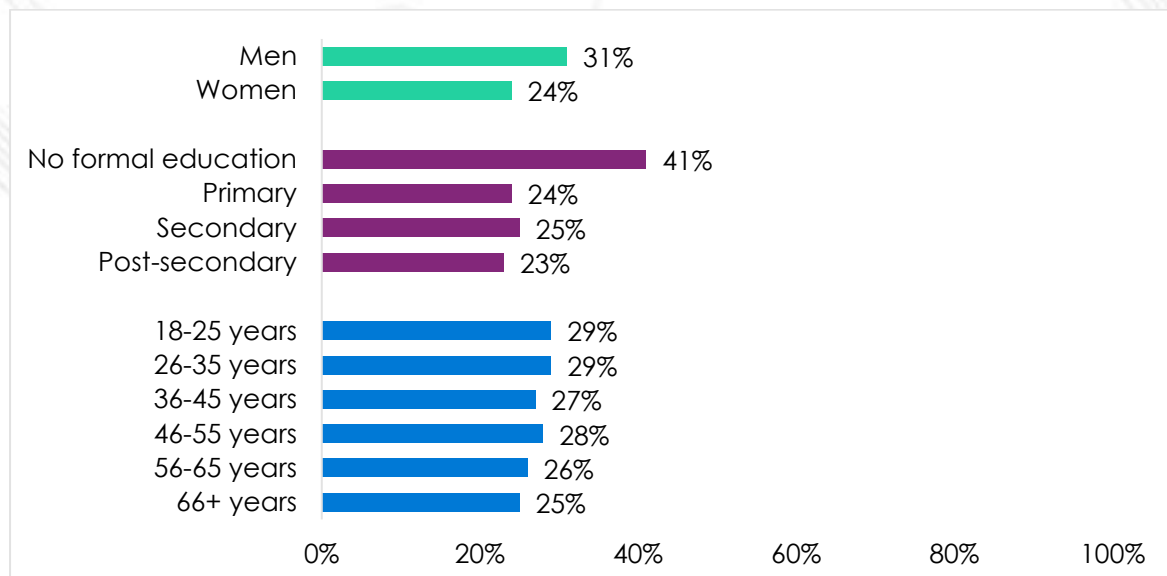
**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to beat his wife? (Bars on the left show % who say "sometimes justified" or "always justified"; bars on the right show the proportion of women minus the proportion of men who give this response.)

**Figure 3: Justified for men to beat their wives** | by region | 34 countries  
 | 2016/2018



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to beat his wife? (% who say "sometimes justified" or "always justified")

**Figure 4: Justified for men to beat their wives** | by socio-demographic group  
 | 34 countries | 2016/2018



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to beat his wife? (% who say "sometimes justified" or "always justified")

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