



March 2009

POPULAR VIEWS ON CRIME IN TANZANIA

Introduction

The effects of living in fear of crime are many, multifaceted, and undesirable. The fear of crime can have an impact on aspects of the conduct of citizens' day-to-day activities and cause behavioral changes. People may reduce the number of working hours, increase spending for personal safety, or a curtail time spent outdoors.

One of the foremost responsibilities of any government is to provide a secure environment in which the general public can survive and thrive. But not all governments have met this obligation with the same degree of commitment or effectiveness. The purpose of this bulletin is to explore popular perceptions of the crime situation in Tanzania, and the government's effectiveness in handling this issue. The findings presented here are based on three Afrobarometer surveys of public attitudes conducted in 2003, 2005 and 2008.

These survey findings indicate that Tanzanians saw modest improvements in their personal safety and security between 2003 and 2005, but there have been no further gains since then. Furthermore, although levels of theft victimization are still very high, Tanzanians nonetheless offer a generally positive assessment of the government's efforts to reduce crime.

Background

At least by appearances, the Government of Tanzania has recently renewed its commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for all Tanzanians. This is underscored in Cluster III of the nation's socio-political economy roadmap, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), produced in 2005.

The sixth goal in Cluster III of the NSGRP aims at achieving broad outcomes to improve personal security, reduce crime, and eliminate sexual abuse and domestic violence. The operational target for this goal is to "ensure the institutions and agents of government such as the police, courts and prisons observe human rights and ensure justice and security for all citizens". A number of relevant strategies to help realise the underlying aim have already been identified and are being implemented. These include enhancing the capacity of authorities by training and equipping the police to combat crime, terrorism, illicit business, trading in persons, drug-trafficking, and related problems. It also includes efforts to increase the capacity of judges, magistrates and state attorneys to handle large numbers of cases.

In an apparent effort to further underline the government's commitment to safeguarding the safety of its residents, a new Ministry of Public Safety and Security was set up in 2006. This new Ministry was

charged with all matters related to public safety and was given control of the police force. The new Minister of Public Safety went so far as to introduce a shoot-to-kill policy against violent criminals, and home and mobile telephone numbers of the country's 26 regional police chiefs were publicly released. The Ministry was, however, disbanded during a cabinet reshuffle in February 2008. This move generated mixed reactions¹, but it generally called into question the true depth of the government's commitment to fighting crime.

The Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer surveys are now conducted in 20 countries in Africa, using a common survey instrument and methodology. The recent survey in Tanzania was the fourth in a series conducted in the country. The first three rounds were conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2005 respectively. The Round 4 survey was carried out from 23rd June to 12th July 2008, and was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,208 adult Tanzanians drawn from the National Master Sample. Given Tanzania's estimated population of 38 million people, a sample of this size gives an overall margin of sampling error of +/-3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.² The survey was conducted in all regions of the country, with each region sampled in proportion to its share of the national population.³ Interviews were conducted in 71 districts on Mainland Tanzania and 8 districts on Zanzibar. Furthermore, 27 percent of the respondents were drawn from urban areas and the remaining 73 percent from rural areas, reflecting the national urban/rural distribution. Fieldwork was conducted by Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), an independent research organization, with support from the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) of Ghana, an Afrobarometer Core Partner.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

Levels of Victimization

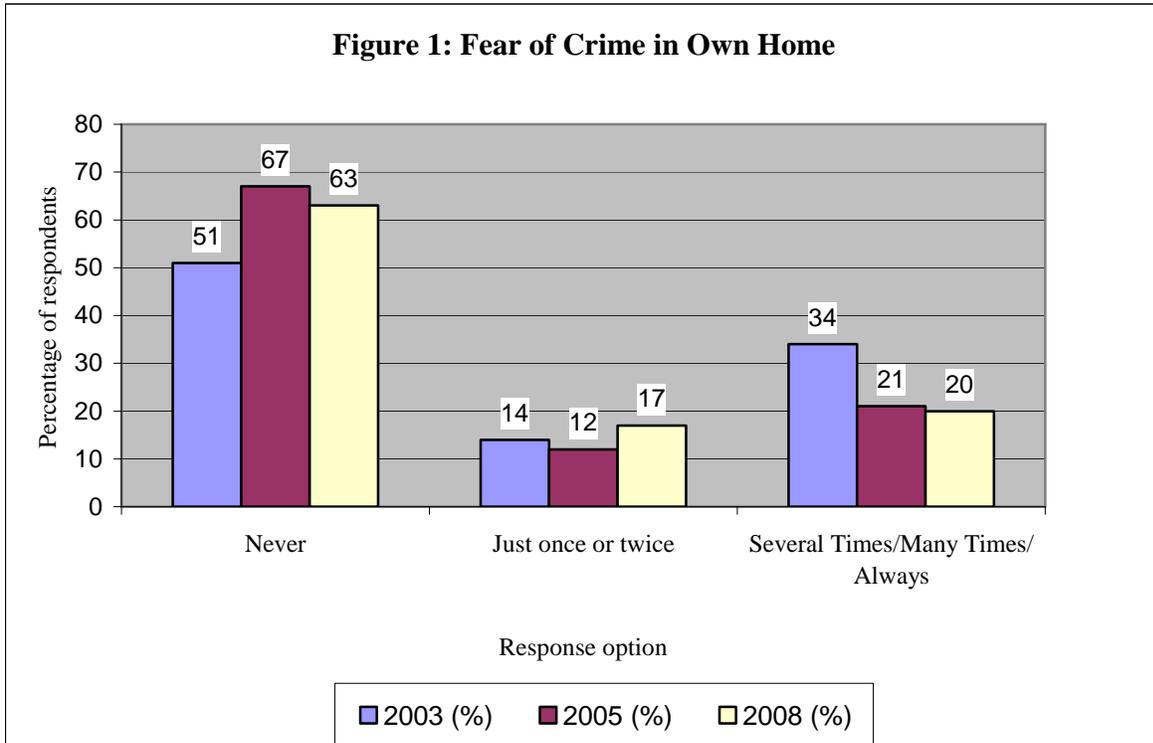
Do Tanzanians live in fear of becoming victims of crime? In 2003 we found that a disturbing 48% of all respondents confronted fear of criminal victimization at least occasionally, and an astonishing one in three felt fearful on a regular basis (Figure 1). The number who reported never fearing crime was only marginally higher, at 51%. Since then, however, the situation has undergone a marked improvement, with two-thirds reporting never fearing crime in 2005, and only slightly fewer (63%) saying the same in 2008.⁴ This suggests some success on the part of law enforcement agencies, communities and relevant ministries, in preventing and combating crime since 2003, although it is notable that these improvements were registered *before* the government's renewed commitment to the battle in 2006. It also must be noted that while the situation has improved substantially from 2003, we nonetheless find that more than one in three Tanzanians (37%) still lives with at least occasional fear of crime in 2008.

¹ Mixed partly because of the recognized need to reduce the size of the government at the time and because it was also construed as downgrading the fight against crime from the list of priorities.

² Thus, for an estimate of, say, 50 percent, there is a 95 percent chance that the actual percentage lies between 47 and 53 percent.

³ The only exception is Zanzibar, where an intentional over-sample was done to produce an analyzable sub-sample, which is important given that the region is autonomous in many aspects of economic, social and political management. However, all national results reported here are weighted so that Zanzibar only contributes in proportion to its actual share in the national population.

⁴ The difference between the 2005 and 2008 figures is not statistically significant.



Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family feared crime in your own home?

Observations regarding the levels of fear of crime correlate with findings on the actual experience of theft in people's homes (Table 1). Experience of theft was at its lowest in 2005, with 79% reporting that they had not experienced the problem in the previous year. In 2008, slightly fewer respondents (74%) indicated that they had not experienced theft in their homes. There is nonetheless a notable improvement since 2003. But this should not mask the fact that at least one in four of those surveyed (26%) had experienced theft at least once in the past year. This is a less than rosy reflection of how secure people are in their homes in Tanzania.

Table 1: Experience of Theft in the Home

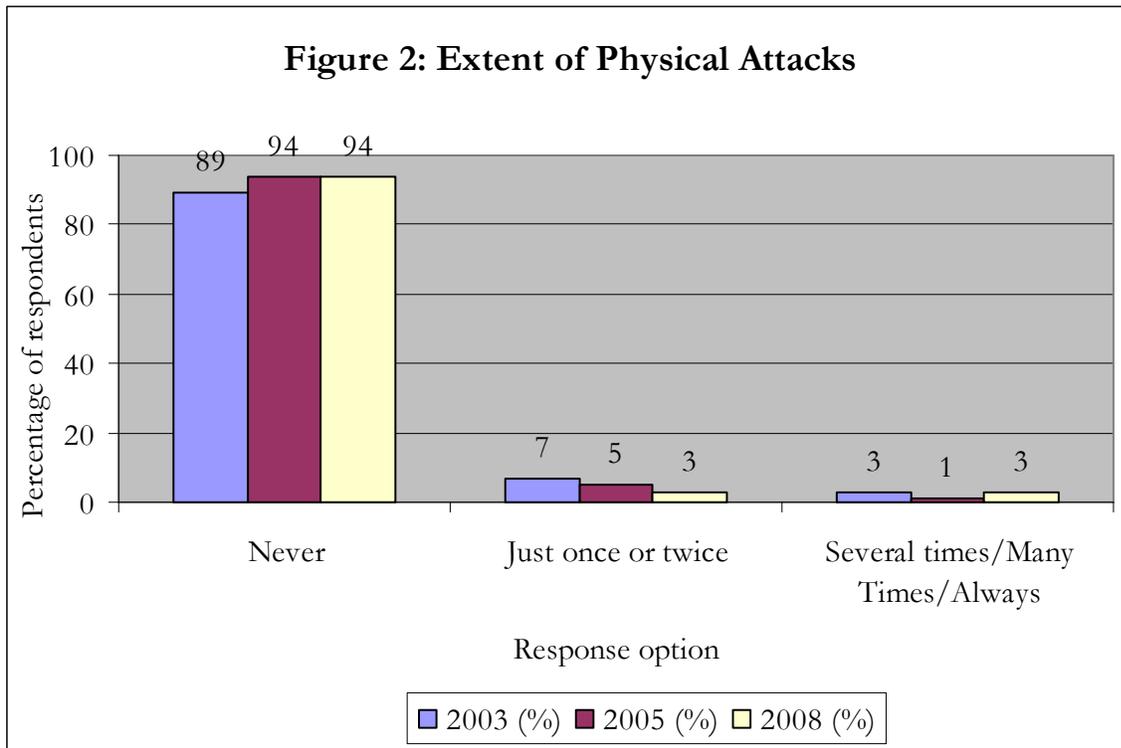
	2003	2005	2008
Never	66	79	74
Just once or twice	23	13	19
Several Times/Many Times/ Always	11	8	7

Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family had something stolen from your home?

With 37% of respondents reporting fear of crime in their homes in 2008, it is perhaps not very surprising that six percent of those surveyed had been physically attacked in the twelve months leading up to the survey (Figure 2).⁵ Even though the vast majority (94%) have had no such experience, it seems likely that the effects of these attacks on a relatively small number of individuals have wider psychological

⁵ Note that the Afrobarometer does not ask questions specifically about domestic violence. Some of these reported attacks may reflect incidences of domestic violence.

effects on the community and the general feeling of safety in one's home. That is, criminal acts regardless of where they take place, play a role in invalidating the principles of the home as a safe haven.



Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family been physically attacked?

Crime a Low Priority

Given these levels of fear and victimization, it may come as a surprise that this issue ranks quite low on the public's agenda of key government priorities. When asked what they think are the most important problems facing the country that the government should address, most Tanzanians identified access to water supply (14 percent), economic management (10 percent) and health and infrastructure (9 percent each). Only about 2 out of 100 Tanzanians rank crime and security high on the agenda (Table 2).

Table 2: Most Important Problem Facing the Country

	2001	2003	2005	2008
Water Supply	8	5	16	14
Economic Management	8	8	5	10
Health	12	5	9	9
Infrastructure	5	1	11	8
Crime and Security	1	3	2	2

In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that the government should address?

Responsibility for Law and Order

Who bears responsibility for keeping Tanzanians safe in the popular view? In general, most Tanzanians (62%) hold their central government primarily responsible for maintaining law and order (Table 3). This

is perhaps a reflection of the citizenry's understanding of its social contract with the central governing authorities, as well as the types of law enforcement organs (such as the police and the courts) directly under the auspices of the central government. Another quarter (26%) attribute the responsibility to local government, and interestingly, one in ten (10%) believe that members of each community must take responsibility for themselves. Does this reflect an implicit recognition among these individuals that they cannot rely on the government to keep them safe?

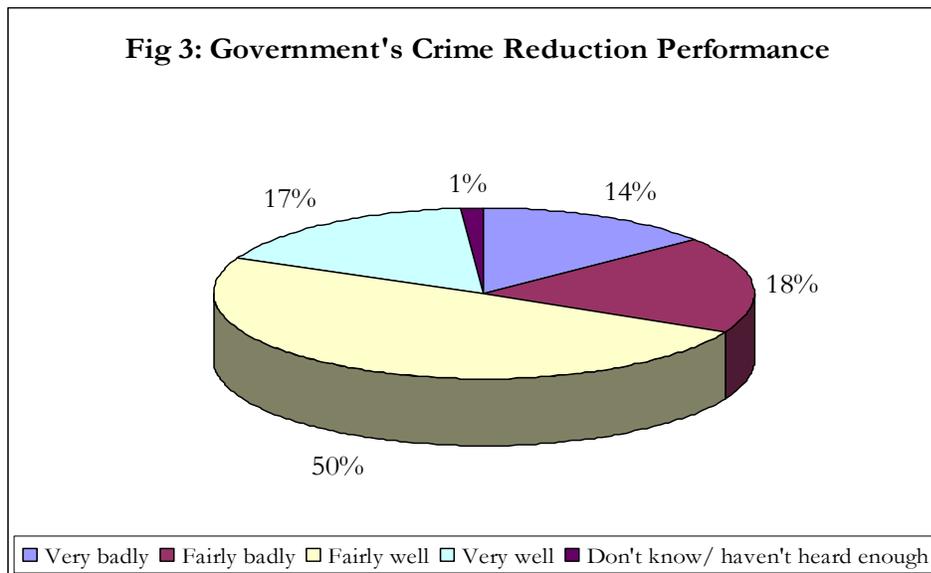
Table 3: Institutions Responsible for Maintaining Law and Order

	Percentage of respondents
Central government	62
Local government	26
Members of the community	10
Traditional leaders	1
None of them	0
Don't know	1

Who do you think actually has primary responsibility for maintaining law and order? Is it the central government, the local government, traditional leaders, or members of your community?

How Effective are Government Efforts?

Given the large burden of responsibility for law and order placed on the government, survey findings offer some words of comfort for the government with respect to its efforts to reduce crime. The consensus of fully two-thirds (67%) of respondents is that the government has performed fairly or very well in its efforts to reduce crime. This figure is not significantly different from the 69% reported in 2005. But we do see a rise in 2008 in the number of respondents faulting the government's crime reduction efforts, with 32% of respondents registering faults in 2008, up from 25% in 2005.



How well or badly would you say the current government is handling reducing crime, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Given the large number of respondents who give the government positive marks in its efforts to tackle crime, it comes as no surprise that citizens' trust in the government institutions charged with maintaining law and order is also fairly high. Tables 4 and 5 below sum up respondents' trust in two key institutions of law and order, the police and the courts.

Table 4: Trust in the Police

	2003	2005	2008
Not at all	13	6	14
A little	35	8	25
Somewhat	39	23	34
A lot	11	62	26
Don't know	2	2	1

How much do you trust the police, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Note: In 2003, slightly different response categories were used, which may have an impact on changes observed between 2003 and 2005. Response options in 2003 were: Not at all / A little bit / A lot / A very great deal / Don't know.

Table 5: Trust in the Courts of Law

	2003	2005	2008
Not at all	10	3	6
Just a little	33	7	19
Somewhat	41	28	40
A lot	12	57	33
Don't know	4	4	1

How much do you trust the courts of law, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Note: See note on Table 4 regarding 2003 response options.

Sizeable proportions of respondents hold a considerable degree of trust in the police force and the courts of law, with 60% and 73% respectively reporting that they trust these institutions either "somewhat" or "a lot". These figures complement earlier observations about the relatively high approval of what the central government was doing to reduce crime. Nonetheless, we see that more than one third (39%) report only little or no trust in the police, and one quarter (25%) feel this way about the courts. While there have been clear gains since 2003, these critical institutions still have some way to go in earning the full support and respect of the Tanzanian public.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Self-reported levels of fear of crime, and of the actual experience of it, have held relatively steady since 2005, but are down significantly from 2003 levels. Nonetheless, significant numbers still report victimization in the past year, an indicator that the crime problem is far from solved in Tanzania. Even so, Tanzanians do not consider crime to be nearly as important a national issue as water supply, economic management, health or infrastructure.

Moreover, the general consensus on the question of government performance in securing law and order appears to be that the social contract between the government and the citizenry is being fulfilled. Citizens

appear to know who to look to in addressing matters of law and order, and have faith in the performance of public agencies responsible for this task. In sum, they are relatively happy with government's performance in tackling this issue.

But challenges remain. While majorities report lives free of fear and victimization, and satisfaction with the government's efforts to tackle the issue, there are still sizeable minorities that fear crime or in fact fall victim to it, and that do not paint such a rosy picture of the government's efforts. And this problem may only be exacerbated as the country faces growing economic challenges and continuing population growth. The institutions responsible for safety and security must therefore be further strengthened. The next step will be to explore who these people are, geographically, economically and socially. This will help identify where the government can target its crime fighting efforts so that its support on this issue can be not just sustained, but improved.

This Briefing Paper was prepared by Jamal Msami of Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA)

The Afrobarometer, a cross-national survey research project, is conducted collaboratively by social scientists from 20 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), and the Institute for Research in Empirical Political Economy (IREEP, Benin). Several donors support the Afrobarometer's research, capacity building and outreach activities, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Department for International Development (UK), the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For more information, see: www.afrobarometer.org