



# AFROBAROMETER *Briefing Paper*

## CITIZENS' VIEWS ON CRIME IN TANZANIA

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The effects of living in fear of crime are many, multifaceted and undesirable. Fear of crime can impact on how citizens conduct day-to-day activities and can trigger changes in behaviour. People may reduce their working hours, increase spending for personal safety, or curtail time spent outdoors.

By Jamal Msami

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. This briefing paper examines popular perceptions of crime in Tanzania and citizens' perceptions on the government's effectiveness in maintaining law and order. The findings presented here are based on data from three Afrobarometer surveys of public attitudes conducted in 2003, 2005 and 2008.

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

### BACKGROUND

From a policy perspective, the Government of Tanzania has recently renewed its commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for all Tanzanians. In particular, Goal 6 in Cluster III of the National Strategy

for Growth and Reduction of Poverty 2005-2010 (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 Goal 6 have already been identified and are being implemented. These include enhancing the capacity of police by training and equipping them to combat crime, terrorism, illicit business, trading in persons, drug-trafficking, and related problems. Efforts are also underway to increase the capacity of judges, magistrates and state attorneys to handle large numbers of cases.

In an apparent effort to underline the government's commitment to public safety, 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 the 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 reactions<sup>1</sup> but, generally, it called into question the true depth of the government's commitment to fighting crime.

## THE AFROBAROMETER

The Afrobarometer is now conducted in 20 countries in Africa using a standard survey instrument and methodology. The survey seeks citizens' opinions on the economic, political and social circumstances in their countries, with topics covering democracy, governance, national identity, participation in the political process and quality of electoral representation, livelihoods, service provision, economic management, crime, and trust in institutions. The first three rounds of the Afrobarometer were conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2005. The latest survey (Round 4) was carried out from 23 June to 12 July 2008, and was based on a nationally representative random sample of 1,208 adult Tanzanians above the age of 18 years of age (i.e. voting age), with an even split of male and female respondents. Based upon Tanzania's estimated population of 38 million people, the overall margin of sampling error is +/-3% at a 95% confidence level.<sup>2</sup> The survey was conducted in all regions of the country, with each region sampled in proportion to its share of the national population.<sup>3</sup> Interviews were conducted in 71 districts on Mainland Tanzania and 8 districts on Zanzibar. Furthermore, 27% of respondents were drawn from urban areas and 73%

from rural areas, which is consistent with 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

### Fears Still Persist

Do Tanzanians live in fear of becoming victims of crime? In 2003, a disturbing 48% of all respondents feared becoming a victim of crime in their own home at least occasionally, and an astonishing one in three (34%) felt fearful on a regular basis (see Figure 1). The number who reported never fearing crime was 51%. Since then, however, the situation has undergone a marked improvement. Two-thirds (67%) of respondents in 2005 reported never fearing crime in their own home, and only slightly fewer respondents (63%) felt the same in 2008.<sup>4</sup> This suggests some success on the part of law enforcement agencies, relevant ministries and communities in preventing and combating crime since 2003, although it is notable that these improvements were recorded before the government's renewed commitment to law and order in 2006. Moreover, while the situation has improved substantially from 2003, over one in three Tanzanians (37%) still reported living with at least occasional fear of crime in 2008.

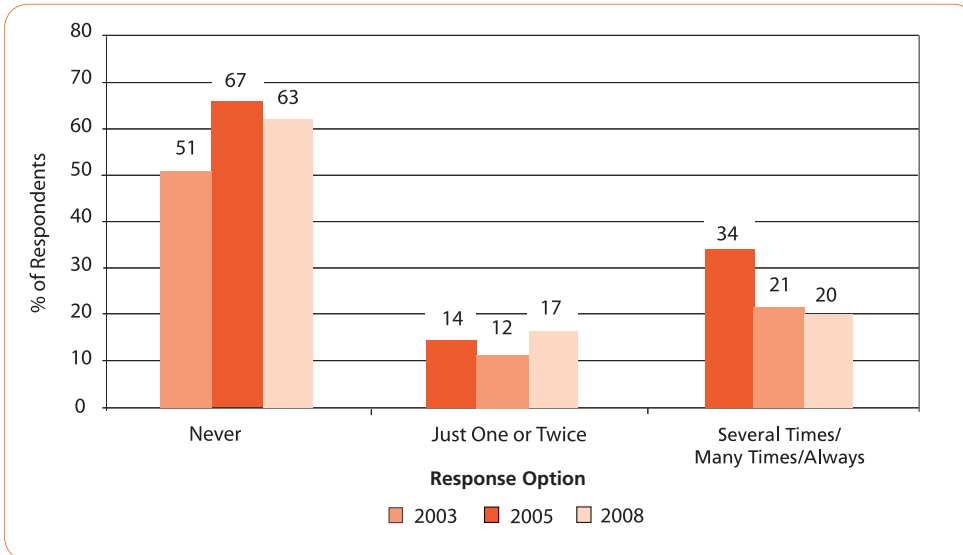
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<sup>1</sup> Reactions varied partly because of the recognized need to reduce the size of the government at the time. However, the abolition of the Ministry was also construed as downgrading the fight against crime from the government's list of priorities.

<sup>2</sup> For example, for a survey finding calculated to be 50%, there is a 95% chance that the actual percentage would lie within +/-3% of the finding, i.e., between 47 and 53%.

<sup>3</sup> The only exception is Zanzibar, where an intentional over-sampling was performed to produce a sub-sample large enough for statistical analysis, which is important given that the region is autonomous in many aspects of economic, social and political management. The final sample split was 1,096 respondents (91%) from Mainland Tanzania and 112 respondents (9%) from Zanzibar. However, all national results reported in this brief are weighted so that Zanzibar only contributes in proportion to its actual share in the national population.

<sup>4</sup> The difference between the 2005 and 2008 figures is not statistically significant.



**Figure 1** Citizens' Fear of Crime in Their Own Home, 2003, 2005 and 2008

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

Citizens' perceptions on fear of crime correlate with findings on the actual experience of theft from people's homes (see Table 1). Experience of theft was at its lowest in 2005, with 79% of respondents reporting that they had not experienced any theft from their home in the previous year. In 2008, slightly fewer respondents (74%) indicated that they had not experienced theft from their homes, but this still represents a significant improvement since 2003. However, this result cannot mask the fact that about one in four respondents (26%) reported having had something stolen from their homes at least once in the past year. This is a less than rosy reflection of how secure people are in their homes in Tanzania.

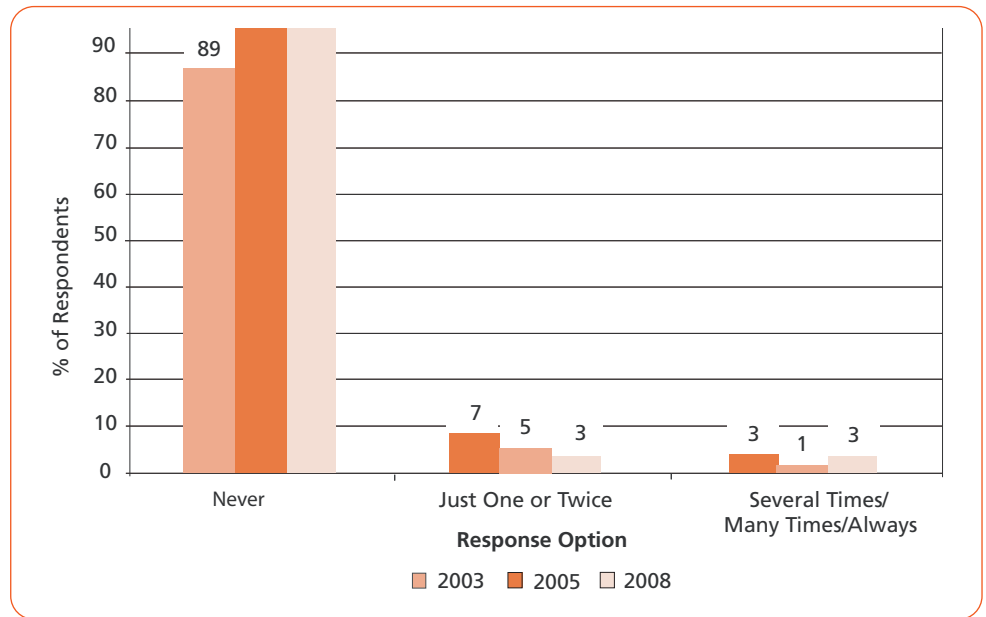
**Table 1:** Frequency of Theft from the Home, 2003, 2005 and 2008 (% of Respondents)

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Note that the Afrobarometer does not ask questions specifically about domestic violence. Some reported attacks may therefore be incidences of domestic violence.

**Figure 2** Frequency of Physical Attacks, 2003, 2005 and 2008



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

In addition, data show that 6% of respondents had been physically attacked in the twelve months prior to the survey (see Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> Even though the vast majority (94%) had not been victims of physical attacks, the effects of physical attacks on a relatively small number of individuals would likely have wider psychological impact on the community and the general feeling of safety in one’s home. Criminal acts, regardless of where they take place, can negatively impact people’s perceptions that their home represents a safe haven.

### Crime a Low Priority

Given the reported levels of fear of crime and victimization, it is surprising that the issue of crime and security ranks low on the public’s agenda of key government priorities. When Tanzanians were asked what they considered to be the most important problems facing the country that the government should address, the issues most commonly cited were access to water supply (14%), economic management (10%), and health and infrastructure (9% each). Only about 2% of Tanzanians ranked crime and security high on the agenda (see Table 2).

## Responsibility for Law and Order

Who bears responsibility for keeping Tanzanians safe? In general, most respondents (62%) hold the central government primarily responsible for maintaining law and order (see Table 3). This finding may reflect the citizenry's understanding of its social contract with 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 national government. Another quarter of respondents (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: Citizens' Perceptions of the Institutions Responsible for Maintaining Law and Order, 2008**

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

*Survey Question: 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?*

**Table 2: Citizens' Perceptions of Most Important Problem Facing the Country, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2008 (% of Respondents)**

Problem	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

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

## How Effective are Government Efforts in Reducing Crime?

Two-thirds (67%) of respondents in 2008 believed that the government has performed fairly or very well in its efforts to reduce crime (see Figure 3). This percentage is not significantly different from the finding of 69% in 2005. However, the number of respondents who were critical of the government's crime reduction efforts (i.e.,

considered that the government has performed fairly or very badly in its efforts to reduce crime) increased to 32% in 2008, up from 25% in 2005.

Trust in the government institutions charged with maintaining law and order is also fairly high. Tables 4 and 5 present survey findings on respondents' trust in two key institutions of law and order, the police and the courts.

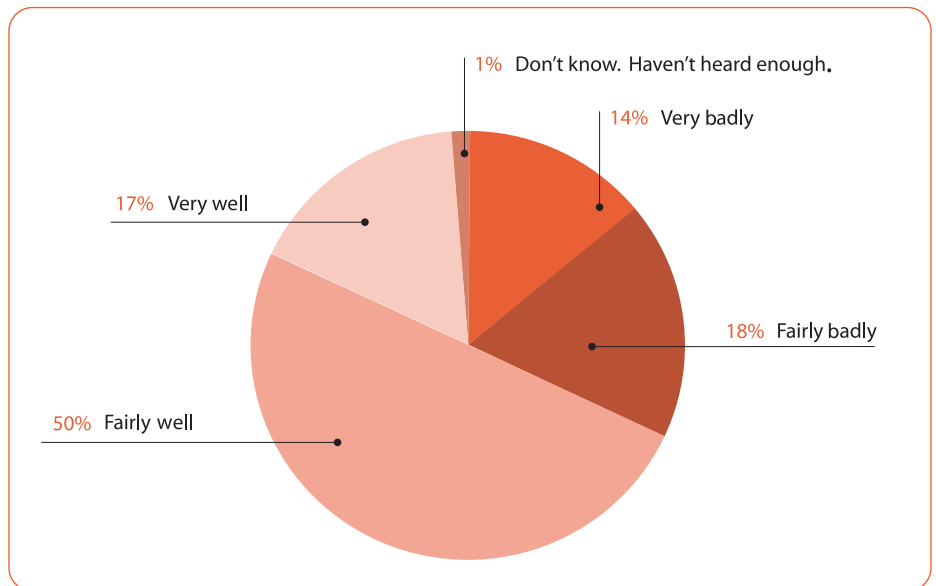
**Table 4** Citizens' Trust in the Police, 2003, 2005 and 2008 (% of Respondents)

Response	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

Survey Question: 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 the later survey rounds in 2005 and 2008. Response options in 2003 were: Not at all / A little bit / A lot / A very great deal / Don't know.

**Figure 3** Citizen's Perceptions of Government Performance in Reducing Crime, 2008



**Table 5 Citizen's Trust in the Courts of Law, 2003, 2005 and 2008 (% of Respondents)**

Response	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

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

*Note: See note below Table 4 regarding 2003 response options.*

In 2008, a majority of respondents held a considerable degree of trust in the police force and the courts of law (i.e. trusted these institutions 'somewhat' or 'a lot'). Overall, 60% of respondents reported these levels of trust in the police, and 73% felt similarly about the courts. These figures complement findings on the relatively high approval by respondents for what the

central government is doing to reduce crime. Nonetheless, more than one-third (39%) of Tanzanians reported 'little' or 'no' trust in the police, and one-quarter (25%) felt this way about the courts. While there have been clear gains since 2003, these key institutions still have some way to go in earning the full support and respect of the Tanzanian public.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Levels of fear of crime among Tanzanians, and citizens' reported experience of being victims of crime, have held relatively steady since 2005, but are down significantly from 2003 levels. The majority of citizens in 2008 reported living free of fear of crime and victimization, and also reported satisfaction with the government's efforts to combat crime. In addition, Tanzanians do not consider crime to be nearly as important a national issue as water supply, economic management, health or infrastructure.

Moreover, citizens showed knowledge of, and trust in, the two key institutions responsible for maintaining law and order, the police force and the courts. Overall, the latest survey findings indicate that Tanzanians are relatively happy with the government's performance in handling crime and security.

But challenges remain. Sizeable minorities of Tanzanians in 2008 still fear crime or had been victims of criminal acts in the past year, which indicates that the crime problem is far from solved. And this problem may be exacerbated as the country faces growing economic challenges and continuing population growth. Key institutions responsible for safety and security must, therefore, be further strengthened. In addition, to better inform policy and enforcement, research is required to identify those populations most at risk of crime, i.e. to ascertain people's geographic, economic and social vulnerability to crime. This knowledge will help the government to target its efforts in combating crime and improving security for all Tanzanians.

Afrobarometer is a comparative series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, markets and civil society in Africa. It is an independent, non-partisan research project that measures the social, political and economic atmosphere in Africa. Afrobarometer surveys are conducted in more than a dozen African countries and are repeated on a regular cycle. Because the instrument asks standard set questions, countries can be systematically compared and trends in public attitudes can be tracked over time.

**Country and regional reports can be obtained from the Afrobarometer website: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)**

Countries participating in the Afrobarometer include: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

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