

Despite threat to cocoa and reforestation response, only half of Ivoirians aware of climate change

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 221 | Thomas Isbell, Joseph Kone, and Kaphalo Segorbah Silwe

Summary

As the world's largest producer of cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire is particularly vulnerable to climate variations and unpredictable weather (Vaast, 2018). Unfavorable weather changes have already negatively impacted the quality and quantity of production (ENCA, 2015), threatening the livelihoods of smallholder farmers as well as the national economy.

While the cocoa sector in the past has been at the mercy of rainfall patterns, the Ivoirian government is now taking a longer-term approach to mitigating the consequences of climate change while helping to repair some of the environmental damage caused by the cocoa sector itself. The government is planning to spend \$1.1 billion to restore and rebuild the country's forest regions. With the help of international donors and lenders, this ambitious plan aims to regrow forests that have shrunk by more than 80% since 1960 due mainly to expanding cocoa production and illegal farming (Aboa, 2018; Hoije, 2018).

In a country that depends on favorable climate conditions to produce cocoa, how do ordinary citizens view climate change? Data from the latest Afrobarometer survey show that a majority of Ivoirians say droughts have become more severe in the country, but only about half of citizens have heard of climate change. Among those who are aware of climate change, most say that it is making life in Côte d'Ivoire worse but that ordinary citizens can do at least "a little" to help fight it.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys are being conducted in 2016/2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Côte d'Ivoire, led by the Centre de Recherche et de Formation sur le Développement Intégré (CREFDI), interviewed 1,200 adult Ivoirians in December 2016-January 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Côte d'Ivoire in 2013 and 2014.

Key findings

- Almost six out of 10 Ivoirians (57%) say droughts have become "somewhat" or "much" more severe in their region over the past 10 years. Only one in five (22%) say the same about flooding.

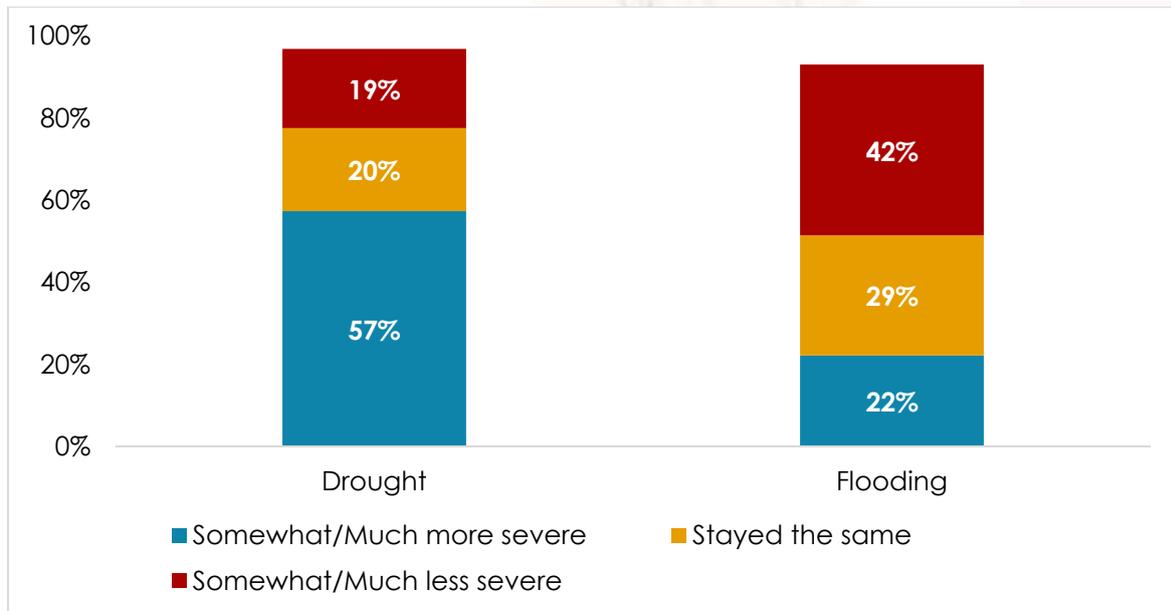
- Four out of 10 Ivoirians (43%) say climate conditions for agricultural production have worsened over the past decade – four times as many as think they've improved (11%).
- Only slightly more than half (54%) of citizens say they have heard of climate change. Citizens with no formal education, women, rural residents, and older respondents are less likely to be aware of climate change.
- Among those who have heard of climate change, six in 10 (60%) attribute the phenomenon mainly to human activity.
- Three-fourths (74%) of people who have heard of climate change say it is making life in Côte d'Ivoire worse.
- More than six out of 10 Ivoirians who are aware of climate change believe that ordinary citizens can contribute “a little bit” (35%) or “a lot” (27%) to stopping it.

Changes in the climate

Before mentioning “climate change,” Afrobarometer asked respondents whether they think climate conditions have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed the same over the past 10 years.

Almost six out of 10 Ivoirians (57%) say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” in their region over the past decade (Figure 1). One out of five (19%) say drought has become less severe, and about the same proportion say they have stayed the same (20%) or been less severe (19%). Four in ten respondent, conversely report that flooding has become less severe (42%) and only 22% feel that flooding has become more severe (22%).

Figure 1: Severity of drought and flooding | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



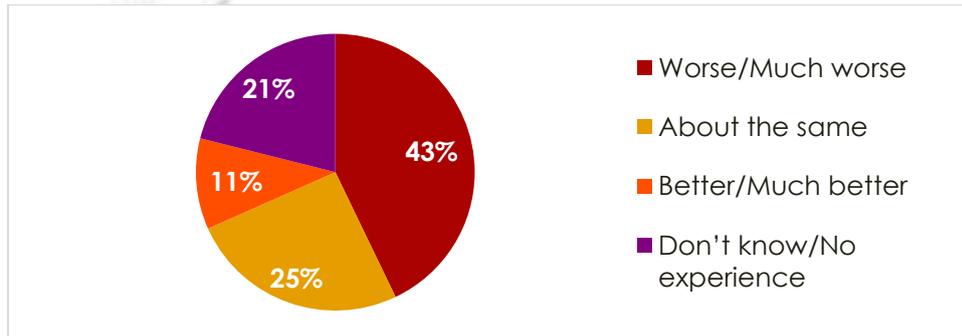
Respondents were asked: In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

- Severity of droughts?
- Severity of flooding?

With regard to agricultural production, a plurality (43%) say climatic conditions have gotten “worse” or “much worse” over the past 10 years, compared to 11% who say they’ve gotten better (Figure 2). Almost half of respondents either see climate conditions for agricultural production as unchanged (25%) or say they don’t know (21%).

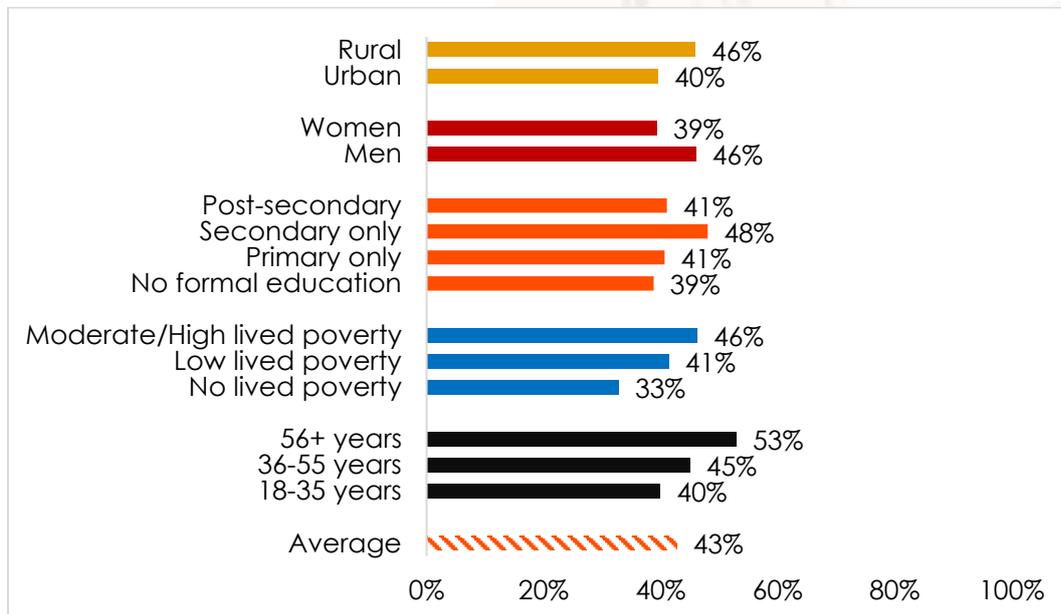
Assessments that climate conditions for agricultural production have worsened are more common than average among rural residents (46%), men (46%), and poor respondents¹ (46%) (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Climate conditions compared to 10 years ago | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents were asked: In your experience, would you say climate conditions for agricultural production in your area have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same over the last 10 years, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Figure 3: Climate conditions for agricultural production worse than 10 years ago | by socio-demographic group | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents were asked: In your experience, would you say climate conditions for agricultural production in your area have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same over the last 10 years, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say “worse” or “much worse”)

¹ Afrobarometer assesses lived poverty based on responses to the following questions: “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?”

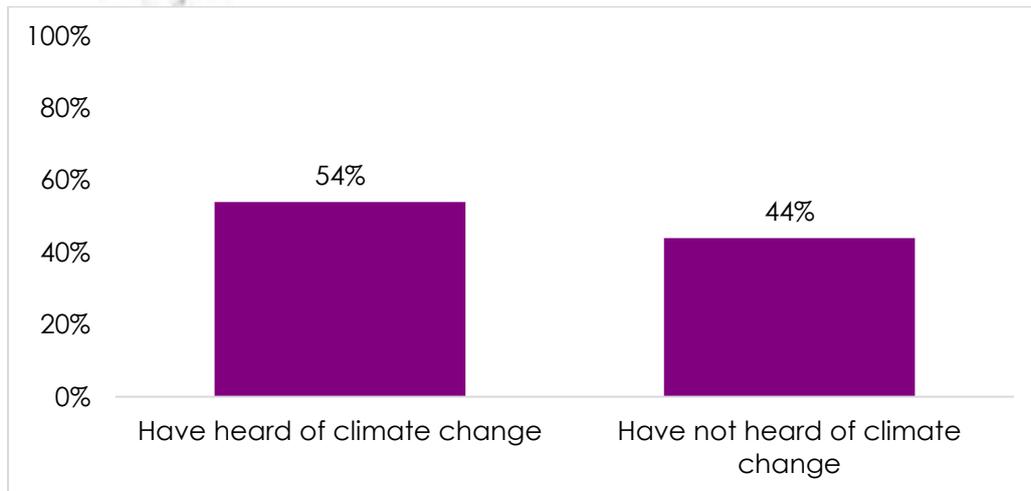
Knowledge of climate change

Despite perceptions of changes in climatic conditions, just slightly more than half (54%) of Ivoirians say they have heard of the concept of “climate change” (Figure 4).

Socio-demographic groups in which climate change is least known include rural residents (53%), women (55%), citizens with no formal education (66%) or only a primary education (56%) (Figure 5).

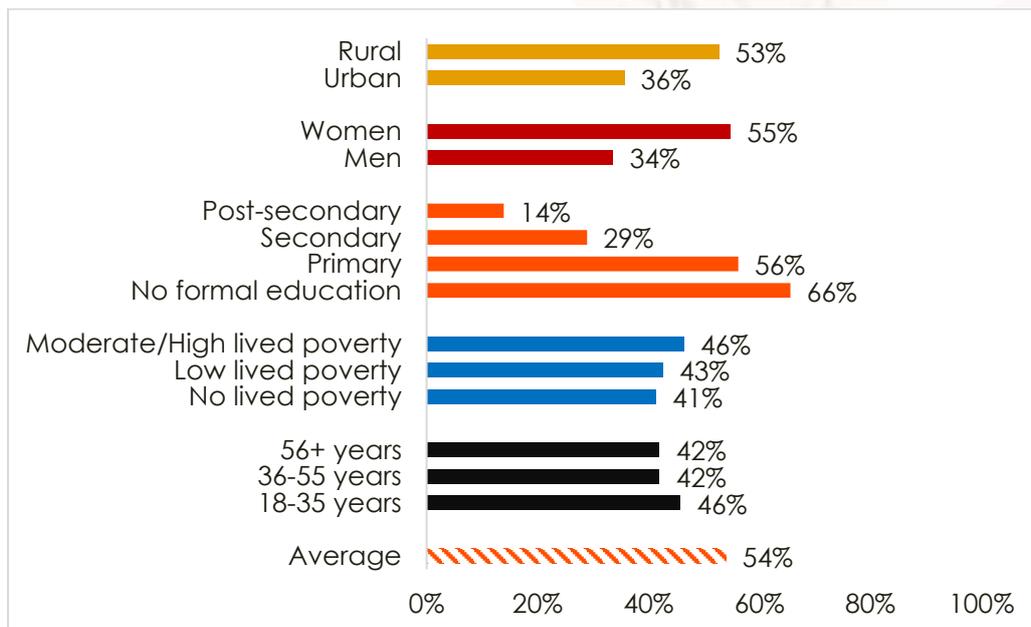
Among Ivoirians who have heard of climate change, three-fourths (75%) understand it as negative changes in the weather, such as more droughts, floods, or extreme heat (Figure 6).

Figure 4: Awareness of climate change | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



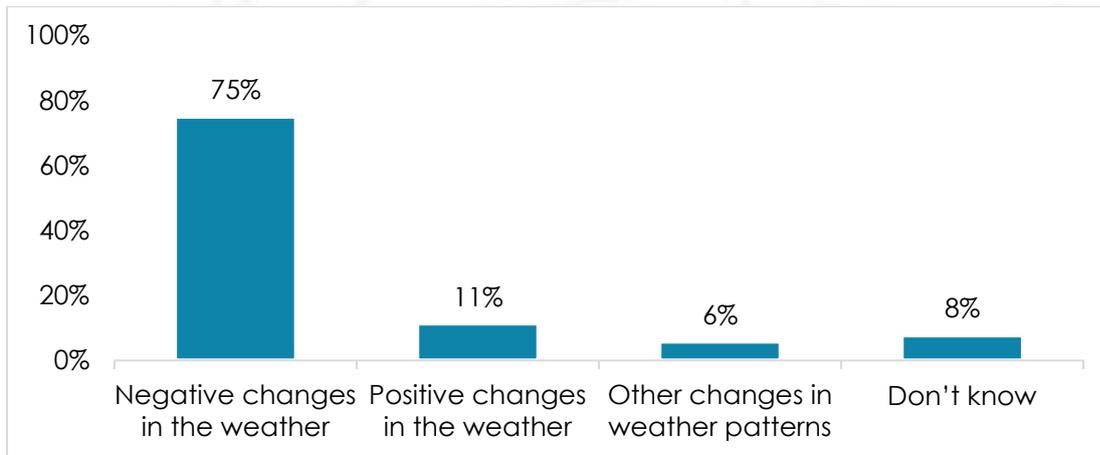
Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?

Figure 5: Have not heard of climate change | by socio-demographic group | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say “no”)

Figure 6: Meaning of climate change | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017

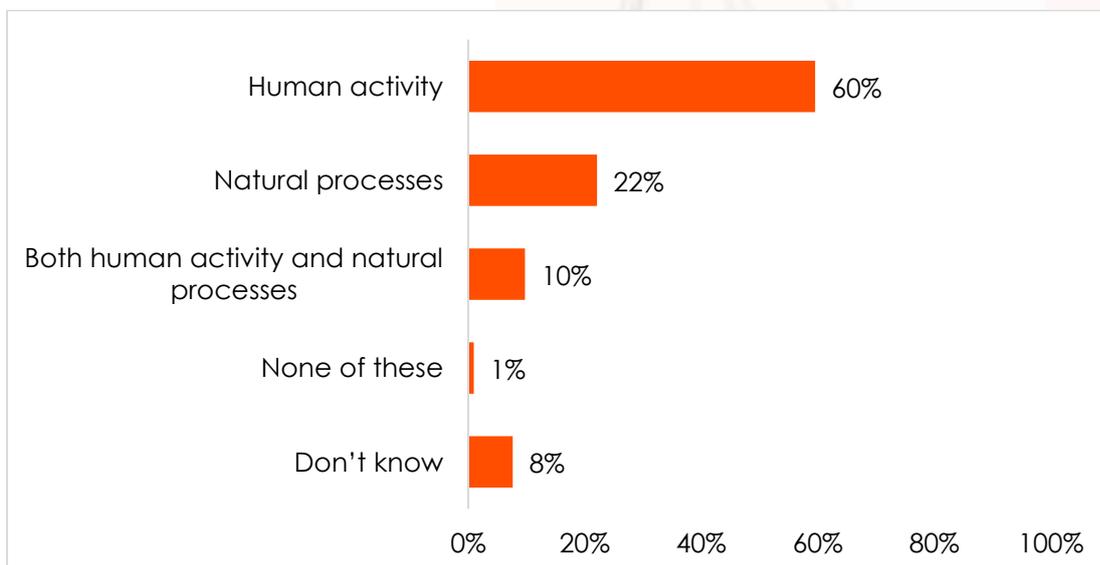


Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: What does the phrase “climate change” mean to you? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Causes and effects of climate change

Among those familiar with climate change, six out of 10 respondents (60%) say its main cause is human activity (Figure 7). About one in five (22%) attribute climate change to natural causes, while one in 10 (10%) say that both human activity and natural processes cause climate change.

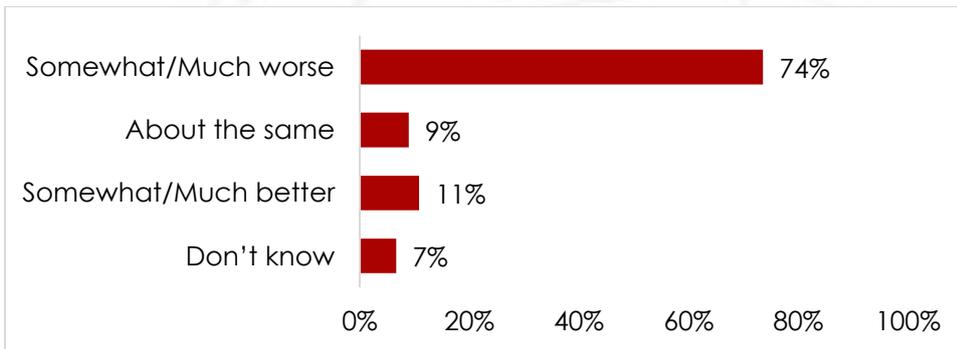
Figure 7: Main cause of climate change | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: People have different ideas about what causes climate change, What about you? Which of the following do you think is the main cause of climate change, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

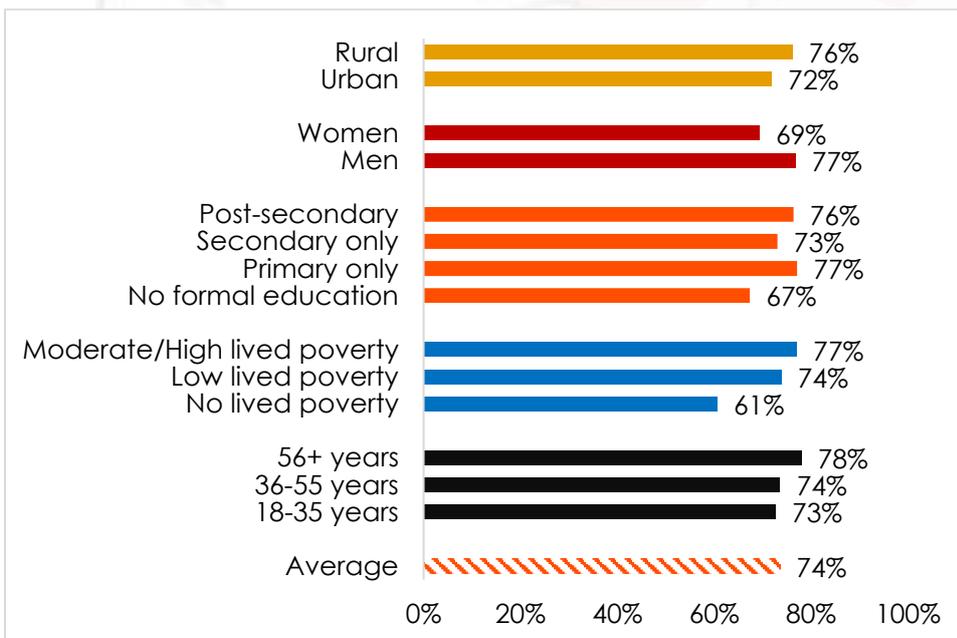
Three-fourths (74%) of Ivoirians who have heard of climate change say it is making life in their country worse (Figure 8). This view is particularly common among rural residents (76%), men (77%), the poor (77%), and older respondents (78% among those aged 56 and older) (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Climate change affecting life | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Côte d'Ivoire better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Figure 9: Climate change is making life worse | by socio-demographic group | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



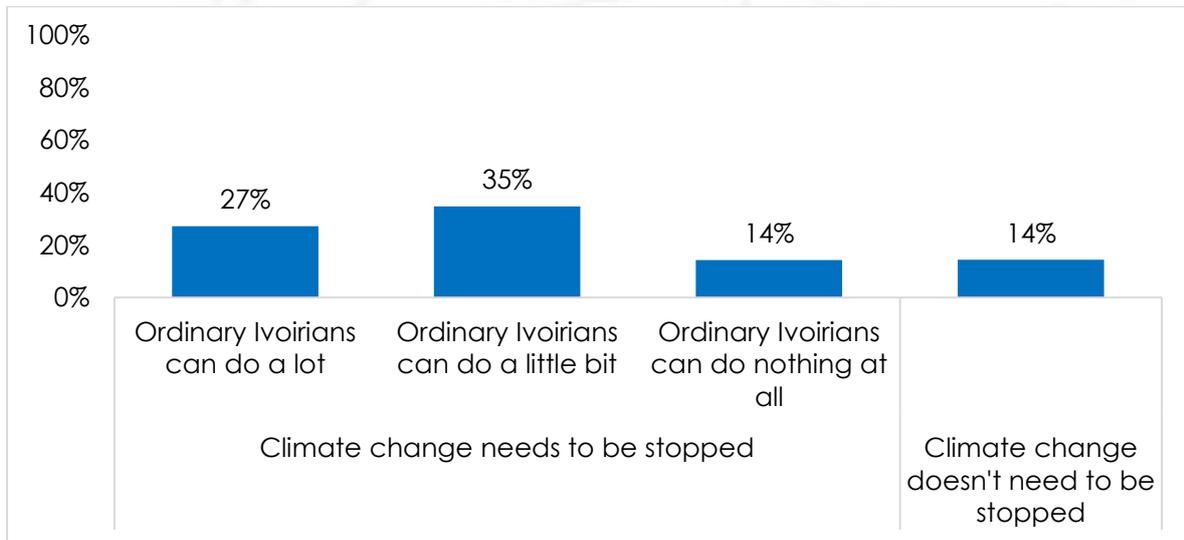
Respondents were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Côte d'Ivoire better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "somewhat worse" or "much worse") (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Can ordinary Ivoirians stop climate change?

Of those familiar with the phenomenon, three-fourths (76%) say climate change needs to be stopped, and a majority say ordinary Ivoirians can do "a lot" (27%) or "a little bit" (35%) to fight it. One in seven (14%) say there is nothing that ordinary citizens can do, and the same proportion say it is not necessary to stop climate change (Figure 10).

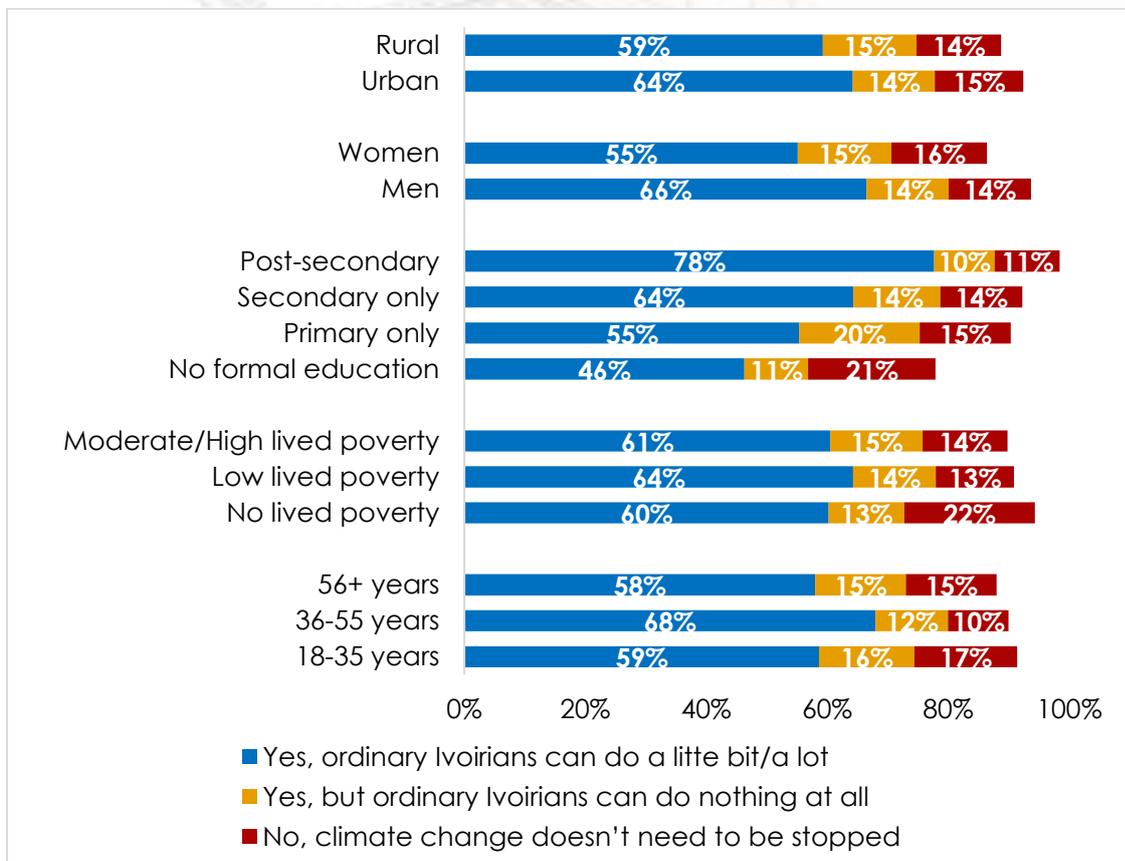
The view that ordinary citizens can contribute to fighting climate change is more widely shared by men (66% vs. 55% of women) and urban residents (64% vs. 59% of rural residents), and increases strongly with respondents' education level, ranging from 46% of those without formal education to 78% of those with post-secondary qualifications (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Can ordinary people help stop climate change? | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents were asked: Do you think that climate change needs to be stopped? [If yes:] How much do you think that ordinary Ivoirians can do to stop climate change? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Figure 11: Can ordinary people help stop climate change? | by socio-demographic group | Côte d'Ivoire | 2017



Respondents were asked: Do you think that climate change needs to be stopped? [If yes:] How much do you think that ordinary Ivoirians can do to stop climate change? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Conclusion

Ivoirians' personal observations appear to confirm that climate change is affecting agricultural production. But despite the threat it poses to cocoa, just slightly more than half of citizens are aware of climate change. As the government pursues its ambitious reforestation plan, it should also seize opportunities for public information and advocacy about climate change, especially among less-educated, rural, female, and older citizens. People from all social classes should be involved in actions aimed at minimizing the effects of climate change, in line with the United Nations' 13th Sustainable Development Goal.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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