

Public service delivery in Tanzania: Fewer problems and bribes, improved satisfaction

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 271 | Derick Msafiri

Summary

Access to basic public services is regarded as a major determinant of human development and productivity, a prerequisite for ensuring the welfare of a country's citizens (Armah-Attah, 2015). But access to basic public services remains a major problem in many developing economies (Ofori-Mensal, 2017).

Despite stable economic growth averaging 7% over the past decade, Tanzania continues to face substantial development challenges (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2018; African Development Bank Group, 2018). The government has adopted a variety of development initiatives consistent with its commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2030 as well as National Development Vision 2025, which aims to transform the country into a middle-income economy. Among other approaches, the government has sought to improve delivery of public services through administrative, legal, labour, and financial reforms focusing on transparency, accountability, and performance of civil servants (Lufunyo, 2013)

This dispatch examines citizens' perceptions and experiences with regard to four major public services that Tanzanians rank among the most important problems their government should address: health care, water/sanitation, electricity, and education. Findings from the most recent Afrobarometer survey show that while infrastructure remains limited, citizens' experiences have improved, with declines in reported difficulties, delays, and bribe payments in obtaining services and increases in citizen approval of government performance.

Afrobarometer survey

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

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed 2,400 adult Tanzanians in May 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, and 2014.

Key findings

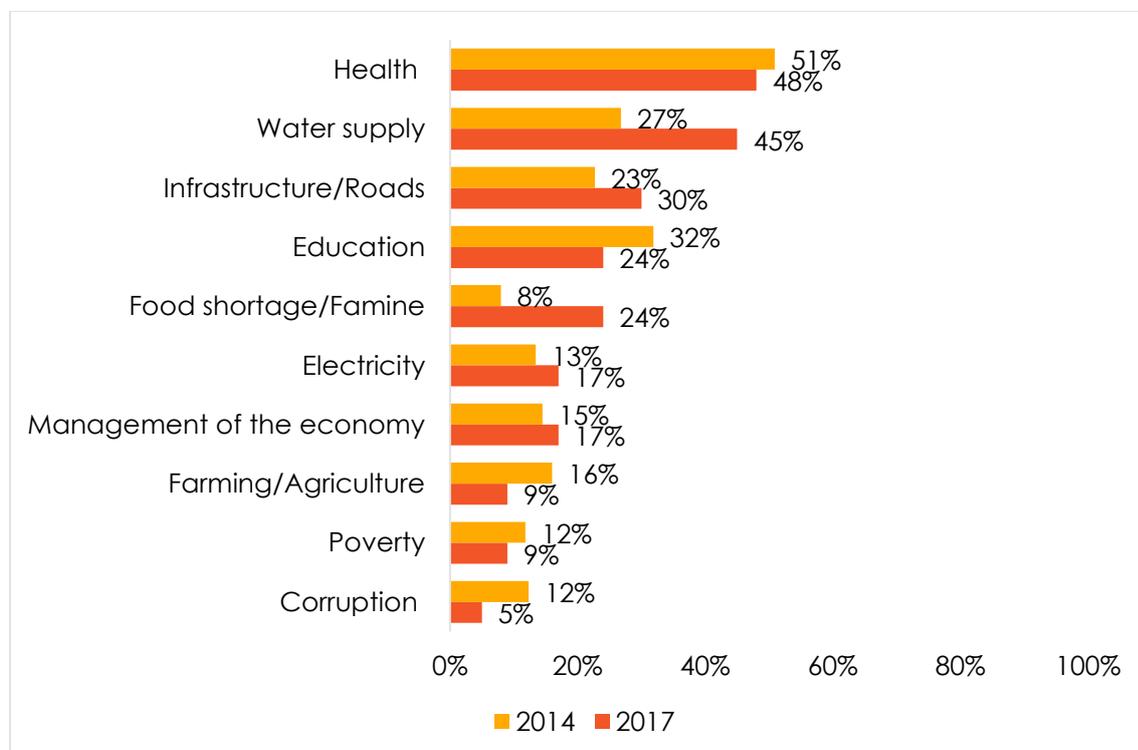
- Health, water supply, education, and electricity are among the top six priority problems that Tanzanians want their government to address.

- Infrastructure for delivering these services is limited, especially in rural areas. Overall, a majority (56%) of Tanzanians live in areas with an electric grid, 39% in areas with a piped water system, but only 5% in areas with a sewage system. More Tanzanians live within easy walking distance of a school (69%) and a health clinic (42%).
- In each of these sectors, service delivery appears to have improved since 2014, with fewer Tanzanians reporting difficulties, delays, and bribe-paying.
 - The proportion of respondents encountering difficulties in obtaining health care declined by 7 percentage points, and citizen approval of government performance rose from 49% to 58%.
 - With regard to water, sanitation, and electricity, the share reporting difficulties in obtaining services from the government dropped by 15 percentage points, and bribe payment shrank by more than half.
 - Among those who had contact with public schools, 85% found it easy to obtain needed services, an improvement from 73% in 2014, and public approval of government performance increased from 54% to 73%.
- Poor citizens are considerably more likely to report difficulties and delays than their wealthier counterparts.

Most important problems

When asked what are their country's most important problems that the government should address, and allowed up to three responses, Tanzanians cite health, water supply, education, and electricity among their top priorities (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Most important problems facing the country | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses were recorded per respondent. Figure shows percentage of responses citing each problem.)*

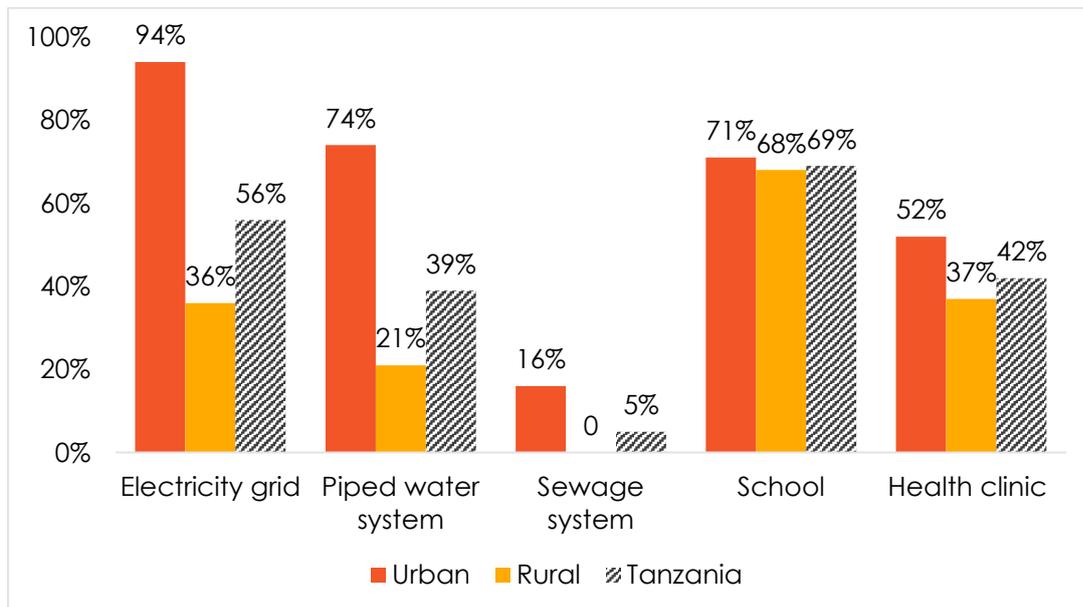
Health and water supply, cited by 48% and 45% of respondents, respectively, rank as the No. 1 and No. 2 problems. Education (24%) places at No. 4 and electricity (17%) at No. 6. Water supply increased significantly in importance between the 2014 and 2017 surveys (gaining 18 percentage points), while education dropped by 8 percentage points; the proportions prioritizing health and electricity changed little.

Availability of services

Provision of public services requires the presence of adequate infrastructure. Afrobarometer asked its survey enumerators to record whether key service-delivery infrastructure is present within the enumeration area or, in the case of schools and health clinics, within easy walking distance. By this definition of access, more than half (56%) of Tanzanians have access to an electric grid, 39% have access to a piped water system, and only 5% have access to a sewage system. More Tanzanians live within easy walking distance of a school (69%) and a health clinic (42%) (Figure 2).

Survey enumerators' observations confirm huge infrastructure deficits in rural areas compared to cities. Urbanites are two to three times as likely as rural residents to have access to an electric grid (94% vs. 36%) and a piped water system (74% vs. 21%). And sewage systems were found to be completely absent in rural areas. Disparities are less pronounced when it comes to schools (71% urban vs. 68% rural) and health clinics (52% vs. 37%).

Figure 2: Local presence of infrastructure for basic services | by urban-rural residence | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents were asked:

- Are the following services present in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area: An electricity grid that most houses can access? A piped-water system that most houses can access? A sewage system that most houses can access?
- Are the following facilities present in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area or within easy walking distance: A school? A health clinic?
 (% "yes")

Service delivery

To explore the quality of the delivery of key public services, Afrobarometer asked respondents whether they had contact with these services during the previous year, how

easy or difficult it was to obtain needed services, how quickly they were able to obtain the needed services, and whether they had to pay a bribe to do so. Responses shed some light on the quality of service delivery with regard to health care, water/sanitation, electricity, and education in Tanzania.

Health care

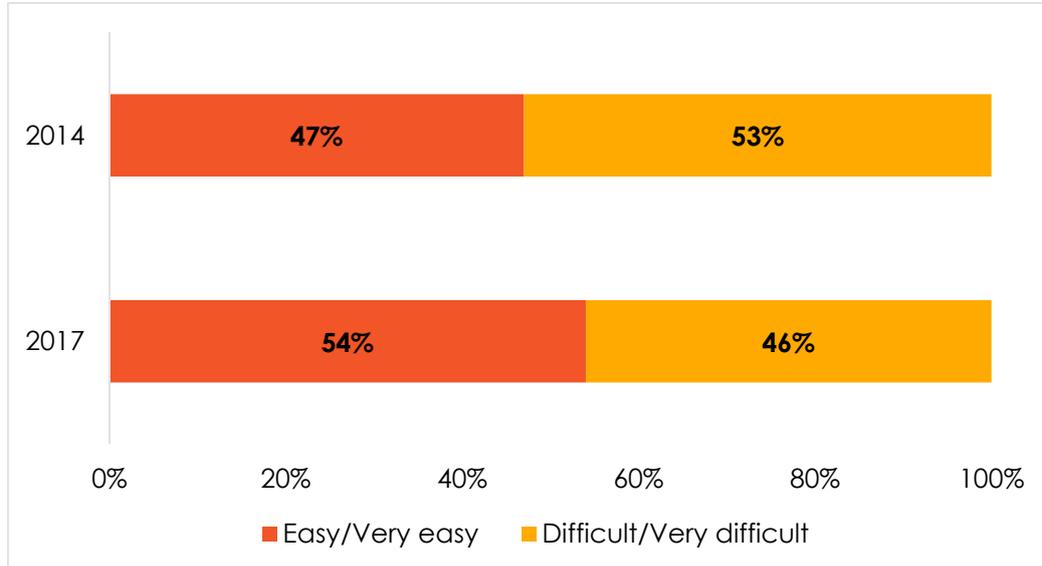
Among the three-quarters (76%) of Tanzanians who say they had contact with a public clinic or hospital during the year preceding the 2017 Afrobarometer survey, more than half (54%) say it was “easy” or “very easy” to obtain the care they needed, an improvement from 47% in 2014 (Figure 3).

The poorest respondents are far more likely than their wealthier counterparts to report difficulties in obtaining health care: Among those with high lived poverty,¹ 70% say they found it “difficult” or “very difficult,” compared to 24% of those with no lived poverty (Figure 4). Less-educated respondents and young people are also more likely to encounter difficulties than better-educated and older citizens.

When asked how long it took them to receive medical care, half (49%) of respondents say they received the services “right away” or “after a short time,” while the other half (51%) say they waited for “a long time” or “never” received the services (Figure 5).

Again, the poorest respondents (70%) are twice as likely as the wealthiest (34%) to report long waits or never receiving services. This problem is also more commonly reported by young and less-educated respondents.

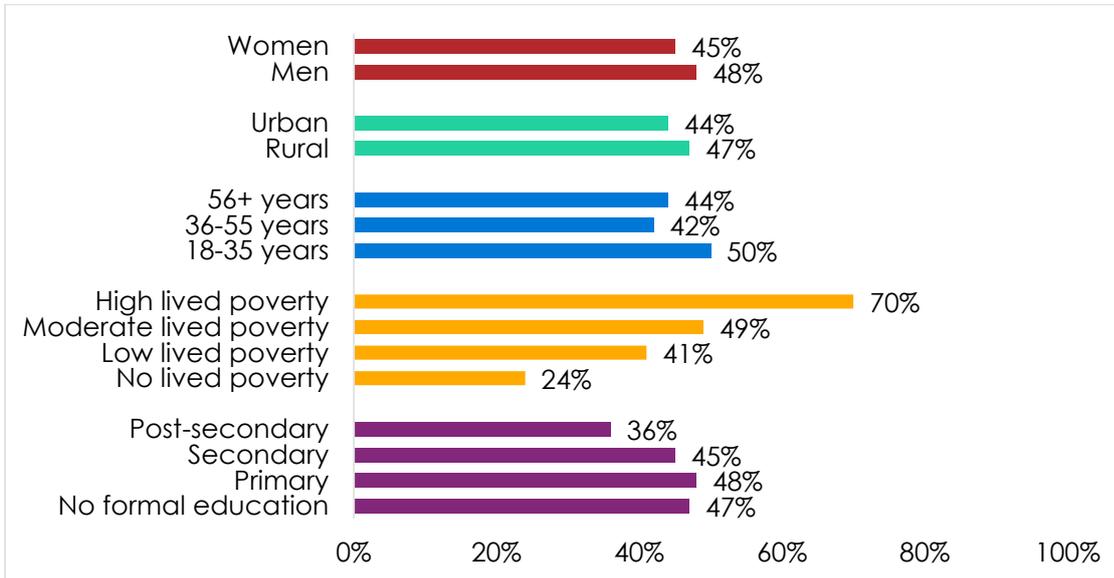
Figure 3: Ease/difficulty of obtaining medical care | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents who said they had contact with public clinics or hospitals were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the medical care you needed? (Respondents who had no contact with public clinic or hospital are excluded.)

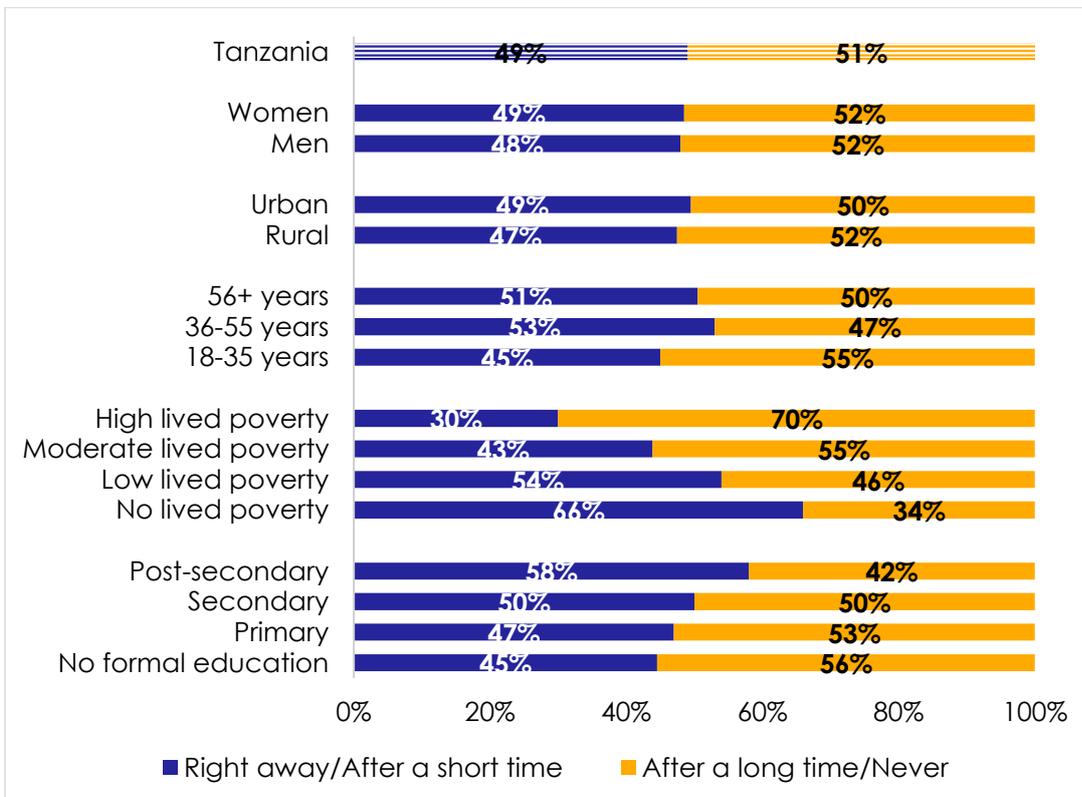
¹ Afrobarometer assesses lived poverty based on responses to the following questions: “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?”

Figure 4: Difficulty in obtaining medical care | by socio-demographic group
 | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents who said they had contact with public clinics or hospitals were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the medical care you needed? (% who say "difficult" or "very difficult")

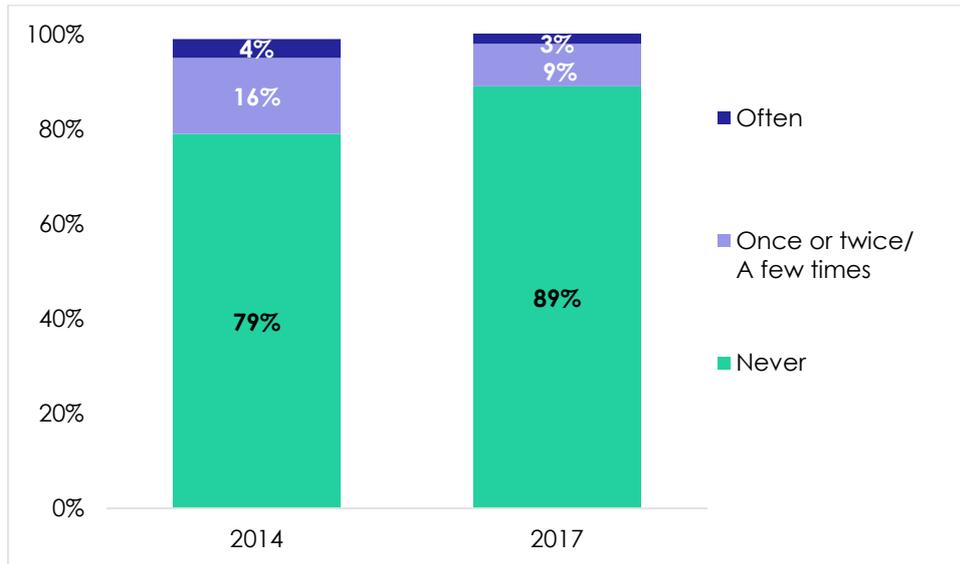
Figure 5: Time taken to obtain medical care | by socio-demographic group
 | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents who said they had contact with public clinics or hospitals in the past 12 months were asked: How long did it take you to receive the medical care that you needed? (Respondents who had no contact with a public clinic or hospital are excluded.)

Among respondents who had contact with public health services, about one in 10 say they had to pay a bribe “once or twice” (5%), “a few times” (4%), or “often” (3%) to obtain the services they needed. The proportion who say they “never” had to pay a bribe increased by 10 percentage points between 2014 and 2017, from 79% to 89% (Figure 6).

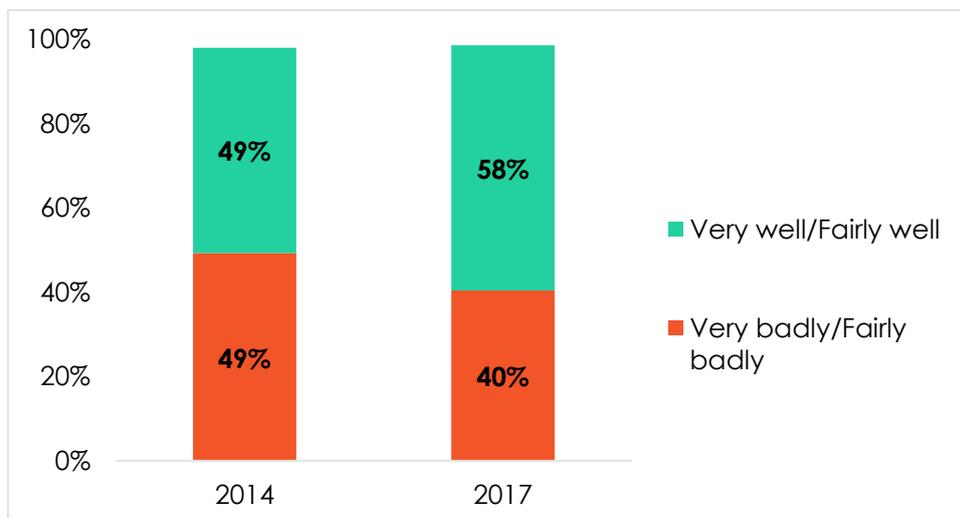
Figure 6: Payment of bribe to obtain public health services | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents who had contact with public clinic or hospital were asked: And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor for a health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed? (Respondents who had no contact with a public clinic or hospital are excluded.)

All in all, a majority (58%) of Tanzanians say the government is performing “fairly well” or “very well” in improving basic health services, an improvement from 49% in 2014 (Figure 7),

Figure 7: Government performance in improving basic health services | Tanzania | 2014-2017



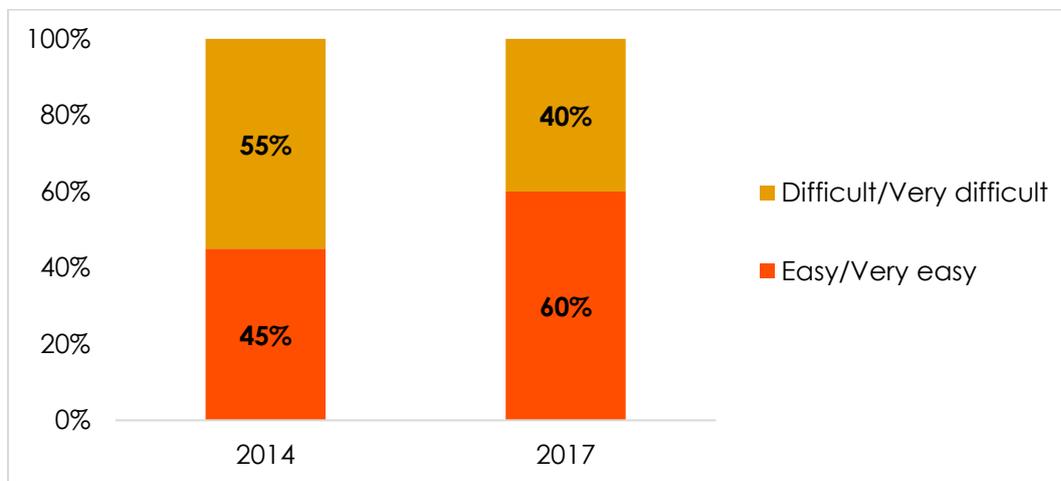
Respondents were asked: Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Improving basic health services?

Water, sanitation, and electricity services

About one in six Tanzanians (16%) say they tried to get water, sanitation, or electric services from the government during the 12 months preceding the 2017 survey. Among these respondents, six out of 10 (60%) say it was “easy” or “very easy” to obtain these services, up from 45% in 2014 (Figure 8).

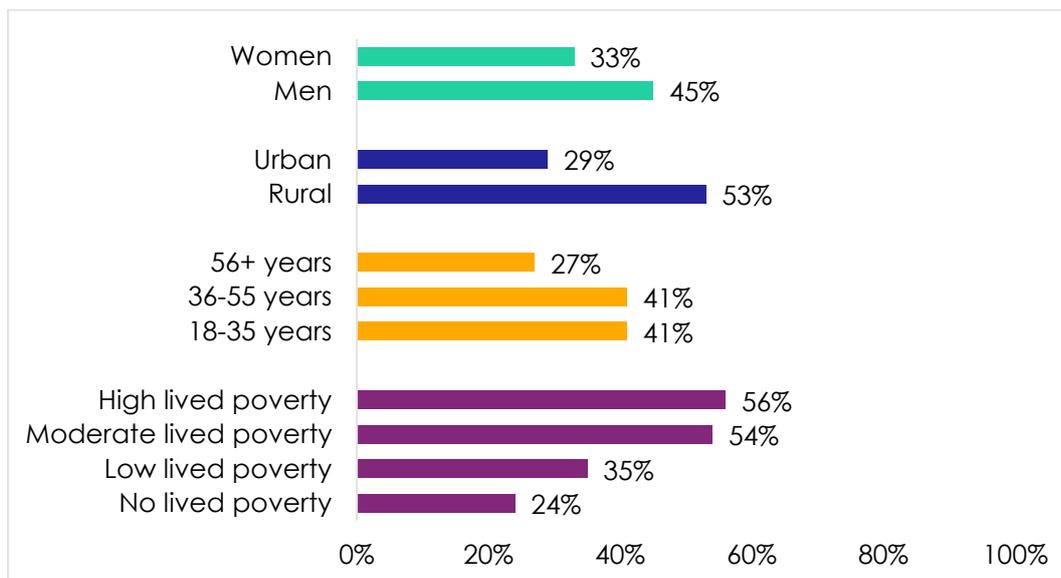
Men (45%) and rural residents (53%) are more likely than women (33%) and city dwellers (29%) to report difficulties in obtaining utility services from the government (Figure 9). Once again, poor respondents (56% and 54% of those with high and moderate lived poverty, respectively) are most likely to experience difficulties.

Figure 8: Ease/difficulty of obtaining water, sanitation, and electricity services
 | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents who tried to obtain utility services from the government were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the services you needed? (Respondents who had no contact are excluded)

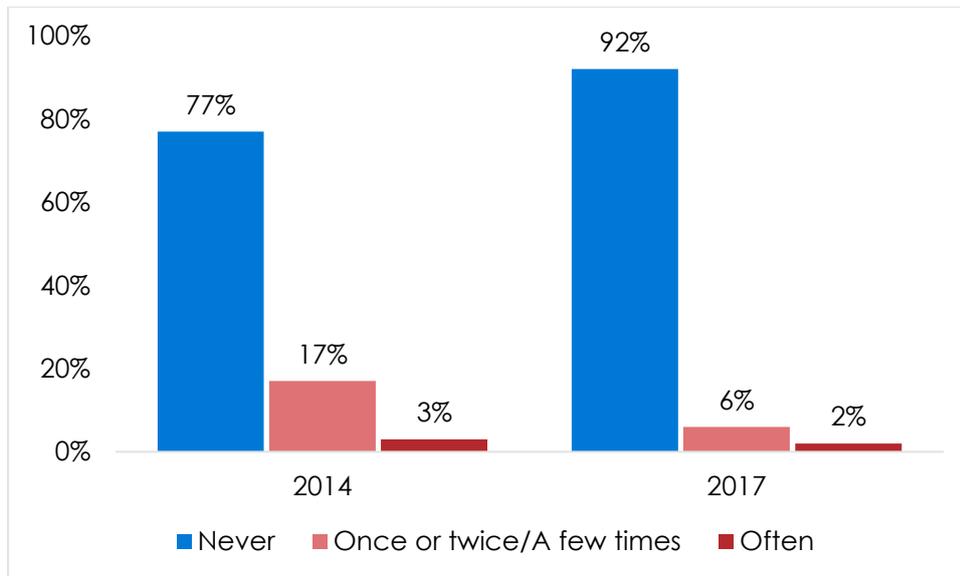
Figure 9: Difficulty in obtaining water, sanitation, and electricity services
 | by socio-demographic group | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents who tried to obtain utility services from the government were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the services you needed? (% who say “difficult” or “very difficult”)

Among Tanzanians who tried to obtain water, sanitation, or electricity services from the government, about one in 12 say they had to pay bribe “once or twice” (2%), “a few times” (4%), or “often” (2%) – fewer than half as many as reported paying bribes for the same purpose in 2014. The proportion who say they “never” paid a bribe to obtain utilities services from the government grew from 77% to 92% (Figure 10).

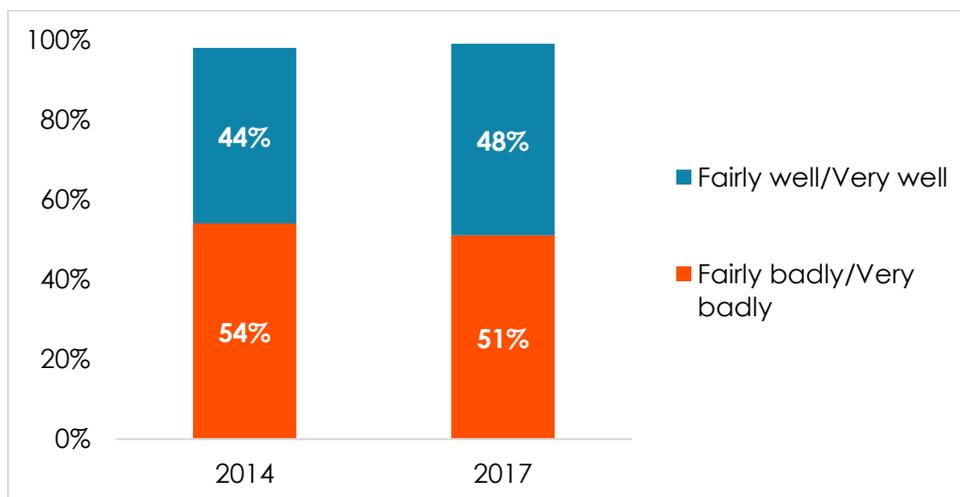
Figure 10: Payment of bribe to obtain utility services | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents who tried to obtain utility services from the government were asked: And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a government official in order to get the services you needed? (Respondents who had no contact are excluded.)

Overall, Tanzanians are about evenly divided in their assessments of the government's performance in providing water and sanitation services: 48% say it is doing “fairly well” or “very well” – up from 44% in 2014 – while 51% say the opposite (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Government performance in handling water and sanitation | Tanzania | 2014-2017

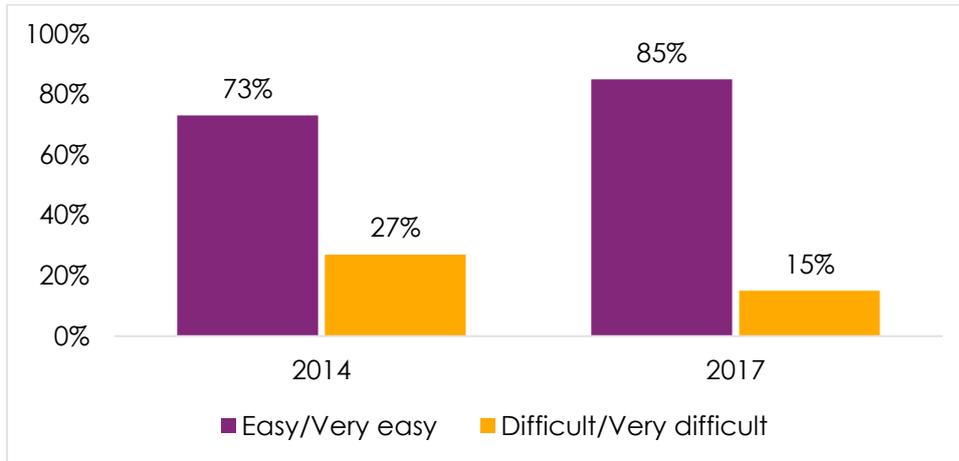


Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Providing water and sanitation services?

Education

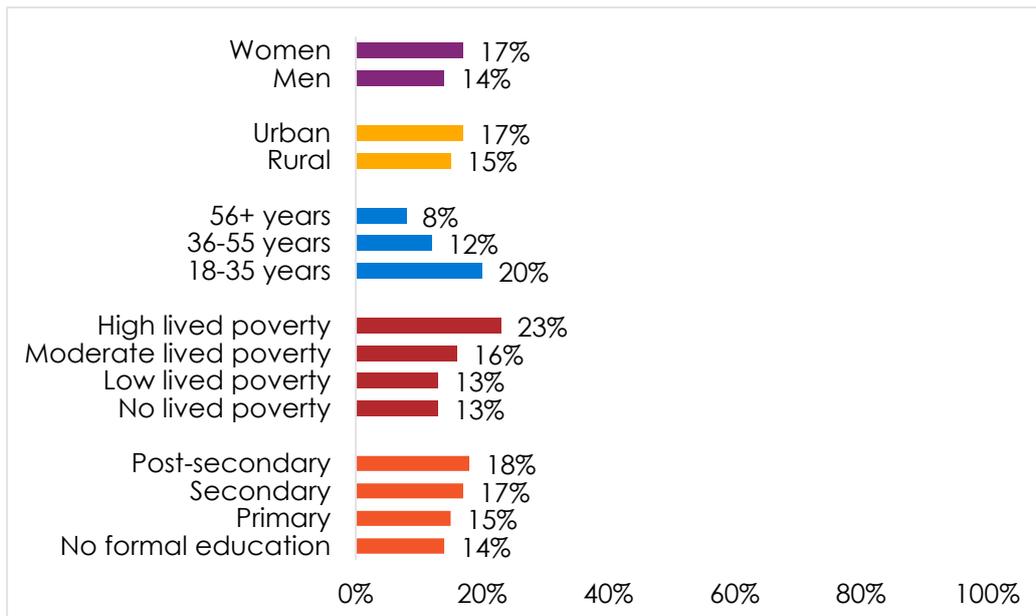
Among the four in 10 Tanzanians (43%) who say they had contact with public schools during the preceding 12 months, most (85%) say it was “easy” or “very easy” to get the services they needed from teachers or school officials, an improvement from 73% in 2014. Only 15% say it was difficult (Figure 12). As with health care and utilities, poor respondents are more likely to report difficulties in obtaining public school services (23% vs. 13% among those with no or low lived poverty) (Figure 13). Young respondents (20%) are also more likely to encounter problems than their elders.

Figure 12: Ease/difficulty of obtaining public school services | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents who said they had contact with public schools were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the services you needed from teachers or school officials? (Respondents who had no contact with public schools are excluded.)

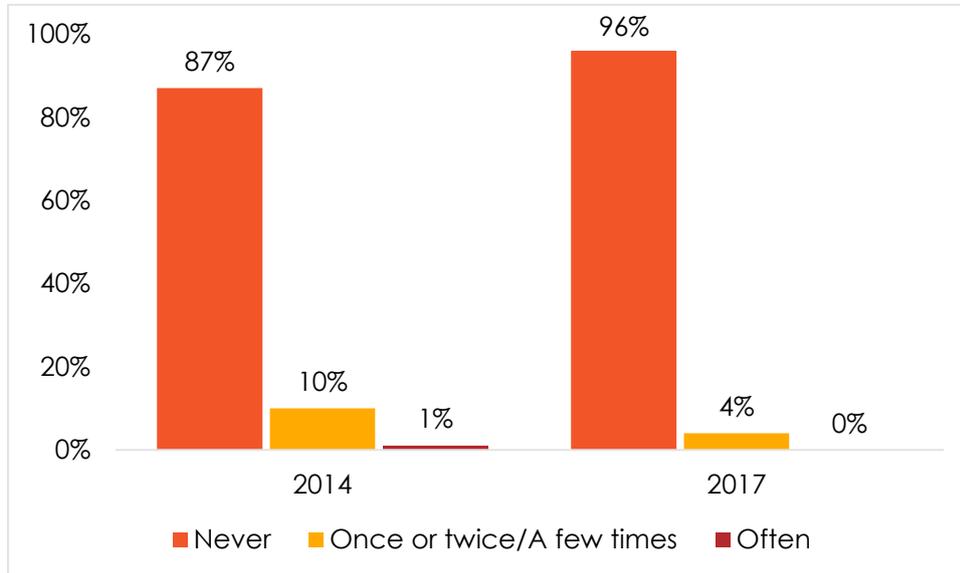
Figure 13: Difficulty in obtaining public school services | by socio-demographic group | Tanzania | 2017



Respondents who said they had contact with public schools were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the services you needed from teachers or school officials? (Respondents who had no contact with public schools are excluded.)

Among the Tanzanians who had contact with public schools, 4% say they had to pay a bribe at least once to get the services they needed, a decrease from 11% in 2014 (Figure 14).

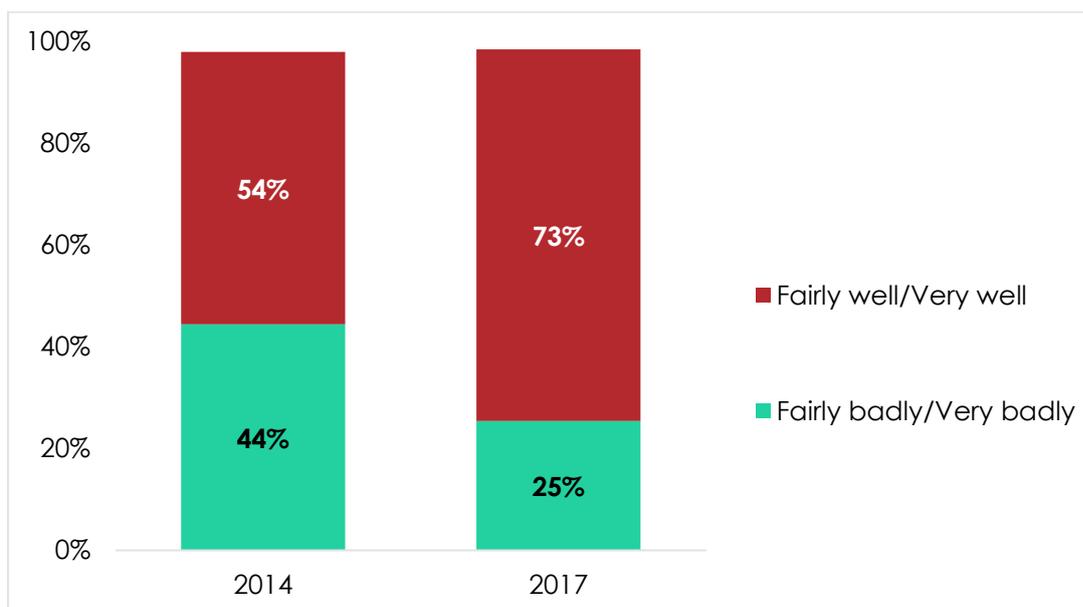
Figure 14: Payment of bribe to obtain public school services | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents who had contact with public school services were asked: And how often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a teacher or school official in order to get the services you needed from the schools? (Respondents who had no contact with public schools are excluded.)

Almost three-quarters (73%) of Tanzanians say the government is performing “fairly well” or “very well” in addressing educational needs, a sharp increase from 54% in 2014 (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Government performance in addressing educational needs | Tanzania | 2014-2017



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Addressing educational needs?

Conclusion

The government of Tanzania appears to have made headway in improving the delivery of basic public services. Findings from the Afrobarometer survey show citizens experience fewer problems, delays, and occasions when they feel the need to pay bribes. Popular assessments of the government's performance remain mixed when it comes to utilities and health care, but are clearly on the upswing. Plenty of challenges remain, especially in serving the poorest citizens and developing infrastructure in rural areas.

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Derick Msafiri is an intern working with REPOA, the Afrobarometer national partner in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Email: msafiriderick@gmail.com.

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