



Climate change: Few Moroccans see it as making life worse, feel empowered to fight it

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 343 | Mhammed Abderebbi

Summary

Since its participation in the ground-breaking Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992, Morocco has consistently contributed to international efforts to fight the effects of climate change. The country has launched several projects aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the population, economic sectors, and the natural environments and strengthening their capacities to adapt to climatic constraints (Ministère Délégué, 2014).

In light of National Directorate of Meteorology projections that average summer temperatures could increase by 2°-6°C and average rainfall could drop by 20% by the end of the century (Ministère Délégué, 2014), the Moroccan government is finalizing a national climate plan that focuses on strengthening resilience to climate risks. Ranked second-best in the world and best in Africa on the 2019 Climate Change Performance Index, the country has also launched a "green strategy" aimed at adapting to the reality of climate change and reducing its impact (Burck, Hagen, Marten, Höhne, & Bals, 2019).

But while the government considers the country increasingly vulnerable to extreme climate conditions such as droughts, floods, and heat waves (Ministère Délégué, 2014), the perceptions of Moroccan citizens do not reflect the same sense of urgency about climate change. The most recent Afrobarometer survey shows that only a slim majority of Moroccans are aware of climate change and that few see it as making their lives worse.

Only about one-third of those who have heard of climate change believe that ordinary people can contribute to fighting it.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans' experiences and evaluations of quality of life, governance, and democracy. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 38 countries since 1999, and Round 8 (2019/2020) surveys are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Morocco, led by Global for Survey and Consulting, interviewed 1,200 adult Moroccans in May 2018. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Morocco in 2013 and 2015.

Key findings

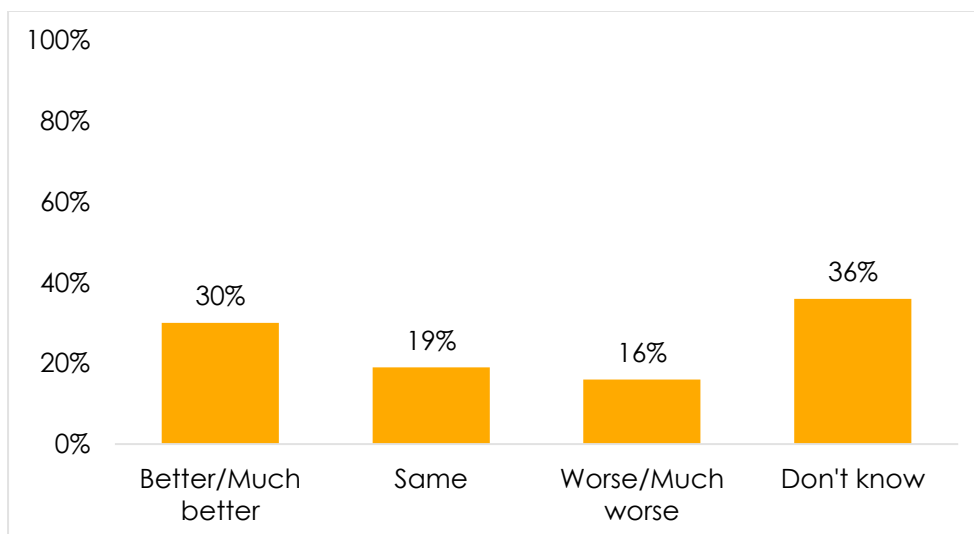
- Only one in six Moroccans (16%) say climate conditions for agricultural production in their area have gotten worse over the past decade, while about twice as many (30%) say they have improved.

- About half of respondents say droughts (52%) and flooding (54%) have become less severe over the past decade.
- Slightly more than half (54%) of Moroccans say they have heard of climate change, while four in 10 (39%) say they have not heard of it.
 - Awareness of climate change increases with respondents' education level, ranging from 17% of those with no formal education to 85% of those with post-secondary qualifications. Men (59%) are more likely than women (49%) to have heard of climate change, as are urban (61%) compared to rural (39%) residents and youth compared to their elders.
- Among those who have heard of climate change:
 - More than half (55%) know it refers to negative changes in the weather.
 - More than seven in 10 say it is mainly caused by human activity (41%) or by a combination of human activity and natural processes (31%).
 - About three in 10 (29%) are fully "climate change literate," meaning they have heard of climate change, they understand it to have negative consequences, and they recognize it as being caused at least in part by human activity.
 - Fewer than four in 10 (37%) say climate change is making life in Morocco "somewhat worse" or "much worse."
 - Fewer than four in 10 (37%) say ordinary people can do "a little" or "a lot" to stop climate change. The same proportion (36%) say ordinary people can do "nothing at all" to stop it.

Changes in climate conditions over the past 10 years

Before mentioning "climate change," Afrobarometer asked survey respondents about their own observations of changes in weather patterns in their region, particularly with regard to agricultural production. More than one-third (36%) of Moroccans say they have not experienced any changes in climate conditions for agricultural production or do not know. Fewer than two in 10 (16%) say climate conditions have gotten "worse" or "much worse," while three in 10 (30%) say they have gotten "better" or "much better" over the past 10 years (Figure 1).

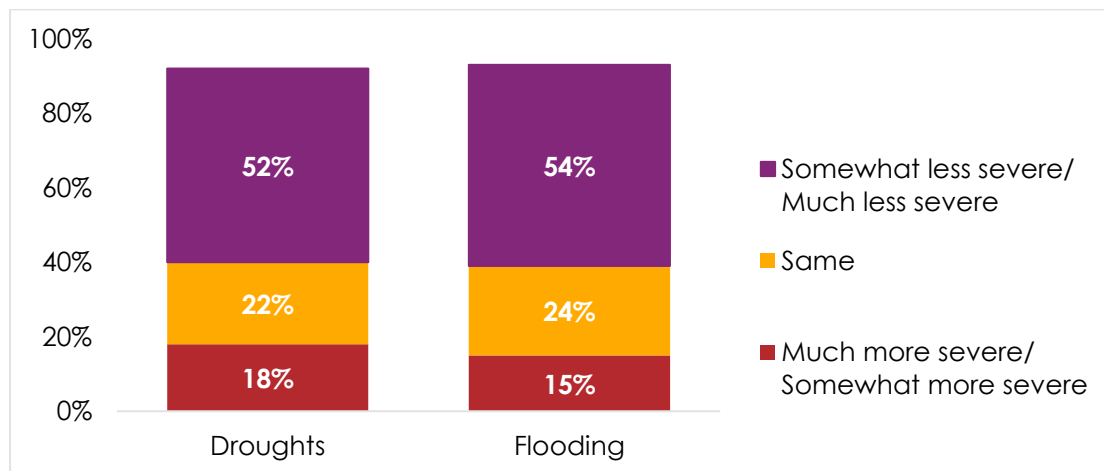
Figure 1: Change in climate conditions for agricultural production | Morocco | 2018



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?*

Slightly more than half of Moroccans say droughts (52%) and flooding (54%) have become “somewhat less severe” or “much less severe” over the past decade (Figure 2). Fewer than two in 10 see worsening droughts (18%) or floods (15%). Among the 34 African countries surveyed between 2016 and 2018, Morocco records some of the lowest experiences of worsening climatic conditions (see Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 60: [Change ahead: Experience and awareness of climate change in Africa](#)).

Figure 2: Change in severity of droughts and flooding | Morocco | 2018



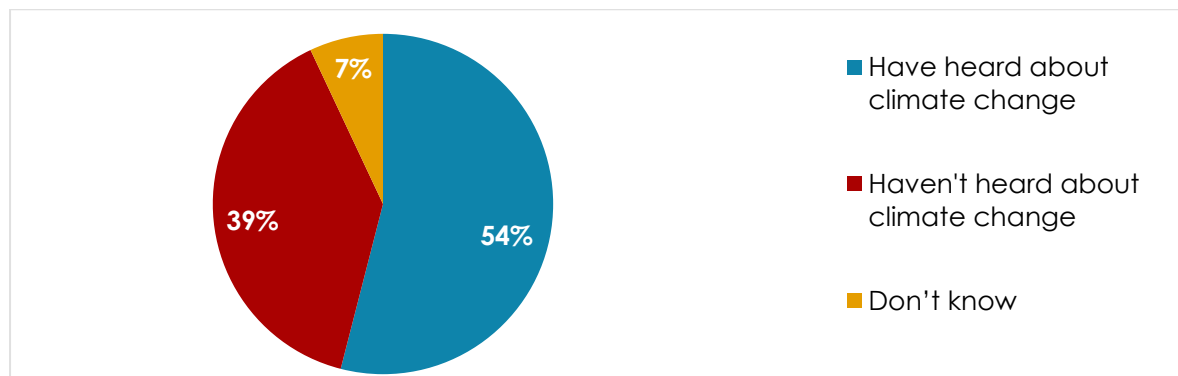
Respondents were asked: In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

Awareness of climate change

A slim majority (54%) of Moroccans say they have heard of climate change, while four in 10 (39%) have not (Figure 3).

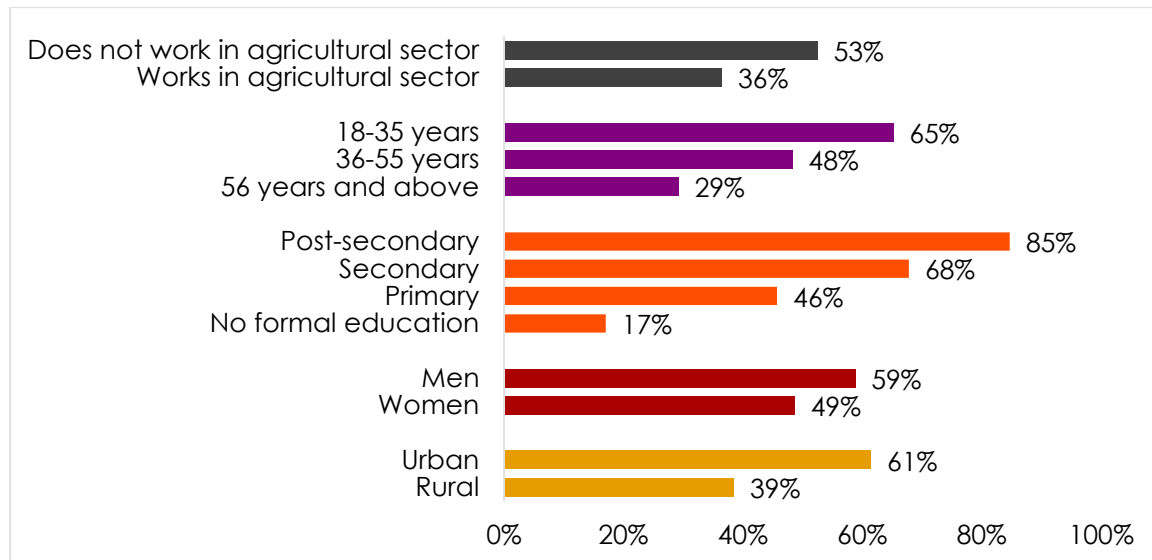
Awareness of climate change varies by respondents' level of education, gender, and area of residence (Figure 4). Citizens with post-secondary qualifications are five times as likely to have heard of climate change as those with no formal education (85% vs. 17%), while young adults are more than twice as aware of the phenomenon as elders (65% of those aged 18-35 vs. 29% of those aged 56 or older). Urban residents (61%) are more aware of climate change than their rural counterparts (39%), as are men (59%) compared to women (49%). Ironically, respondents who work in agriculture-related fields (farming, forestry, or fishing) are less aware of climate change than those employed in other sectors (36% vs. 53%).

Figure 3: Awareness of climate change | Morocco | 2018



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

Figure 4: Awareness of climate change | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2018

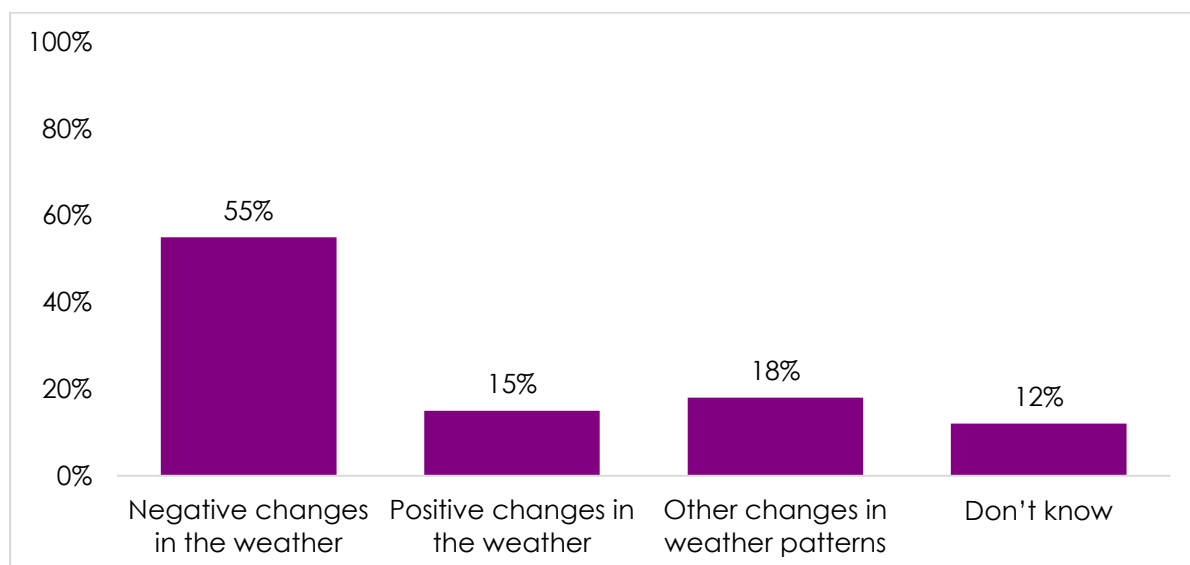


Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say they have heard of climate change)

Among those who have heard of climate change, more than half (55%) say it means negative changes in the weather (Figure 5). One-third understand it to refer to positive changes (15%) or other changes in weather patterns (18%), while one in nine (12%) do not know what climate change means.

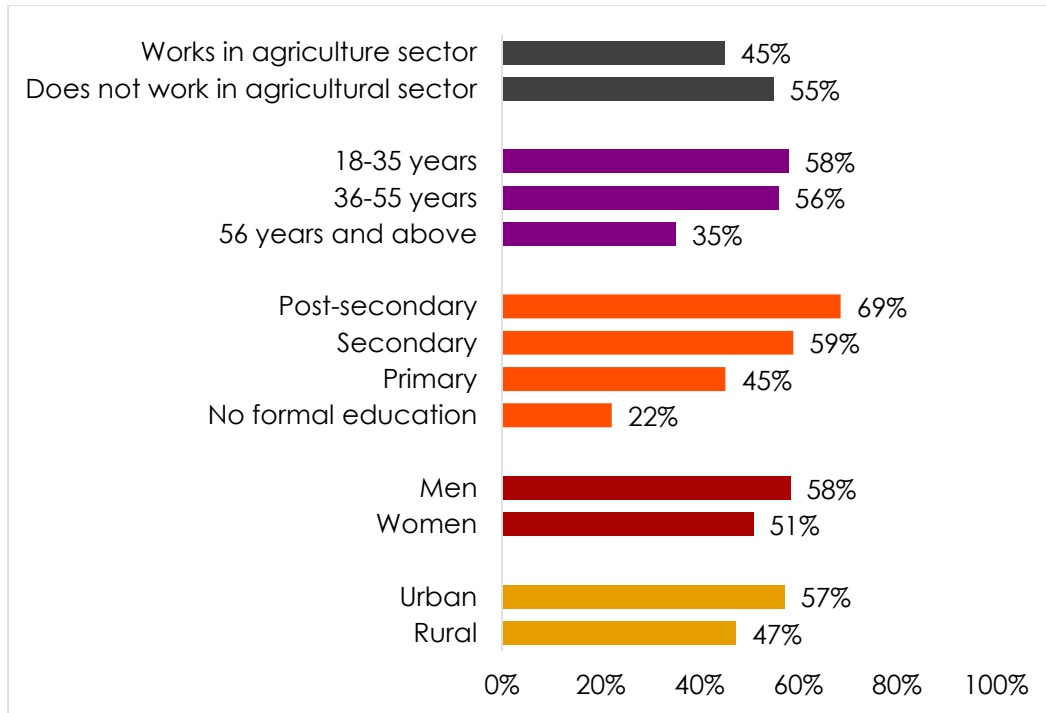
Again, youth (58%), more-educated citizens (69%), men (58%), and urban residents (57%) are more likely to identify climate change as consisting of negative effects on the weather (Figure 6). Respondents who work in the agricultural sector are less likely to associate climate change with negative changes in the weather than those in other sectors (45% vs. 55%).

Figure 5: Meaning of 'climate change' | Morocco | 2018



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: What does "climate change" mean to you? (Figure excludes respondents who said they had not heard of climate change.)

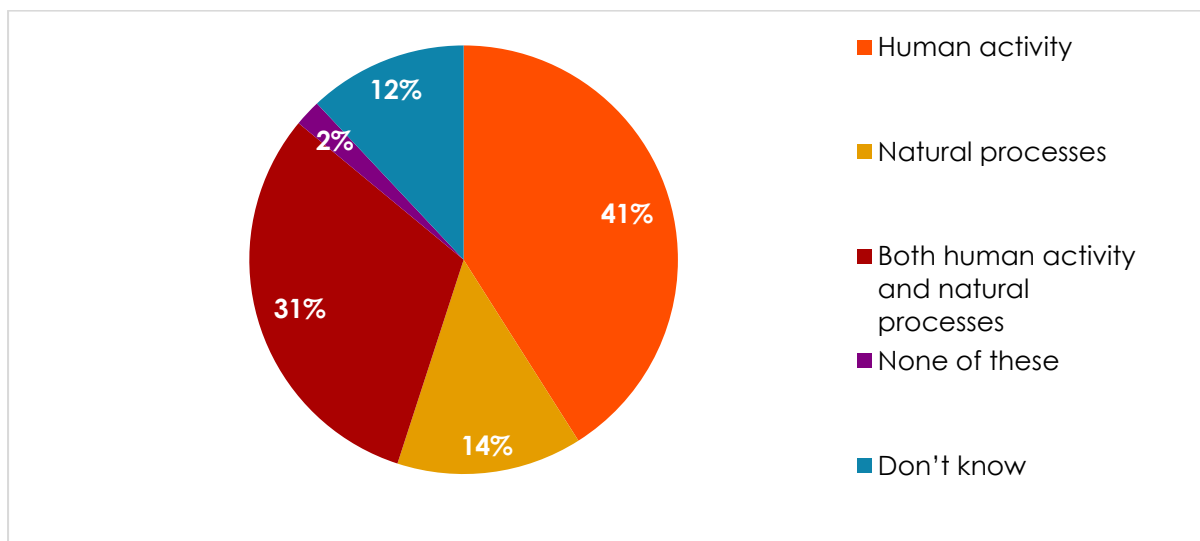
Figure 6: Climate change means negative changes in weather | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2018



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: What does “climate change” mean to you? (% who say climate change refers to negative changes in the weather) (Figure excludes respondents who said they had not heard of climate change.)

Among respondents who had heard of climate change, more than seven out of 10 say it is caused primarily by human activity (41%) or by a combination of human activity and natural processes (31%), while 14% attribute it to natural processes alone (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Cause of climate change | Morocco | 2018



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: Which of the following do you think is the main cause of climate change, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Figure excludes respondents who said they had not heard of climate change.)

About three in 10 Moroccans (29%) can thus be considered fully “climate change literate,” meaning they not only have heard of climate change but also understand it to have negative consequences and to be caused at least in part by human activity. This level of climate change literacy is about average across 33 African countries where these questions were asked in 2016/2018 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: ‘Climate change literacy’ | 33 countries | 2016/2018

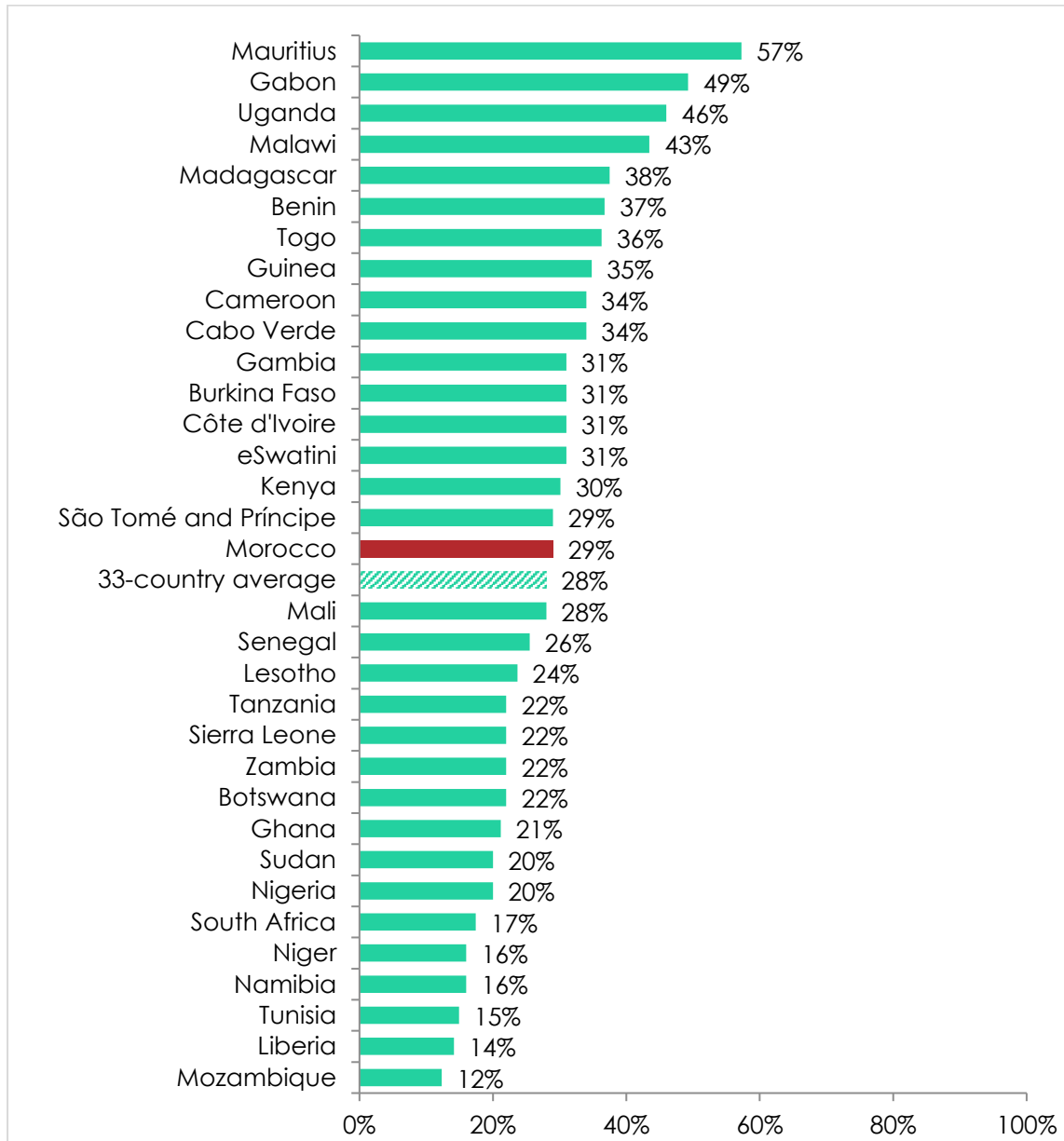


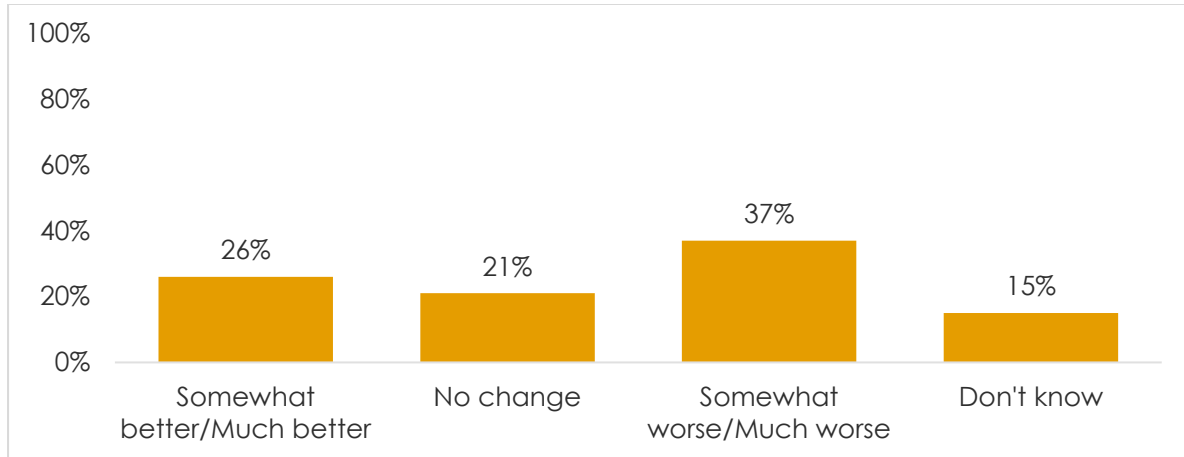
Figure shows % of respondents who are “climate change literate,” meaning they not only have heard of climate change but also associate it with negative changes in weather patterns and know that human activity plays a part in causing it.

Effects and mitigation of climate change

Given that Morocco is essentially an agricultural country, climate change can have immediate consequences for the population. In previous years, periods of drought and floods resulted in very poor harvests, forcing the state to distribute food to its people in distress.

But among survey respondents who had heard of climate change, only slightly more than a third (37%) say climate change is making life in Morocco “somewhat worse” or “much worse” (Figure 9). A quarter (26%) say the phenomenon is rather making their lives “better” or “much better,” while two in 10 (21%) do not see any changes.

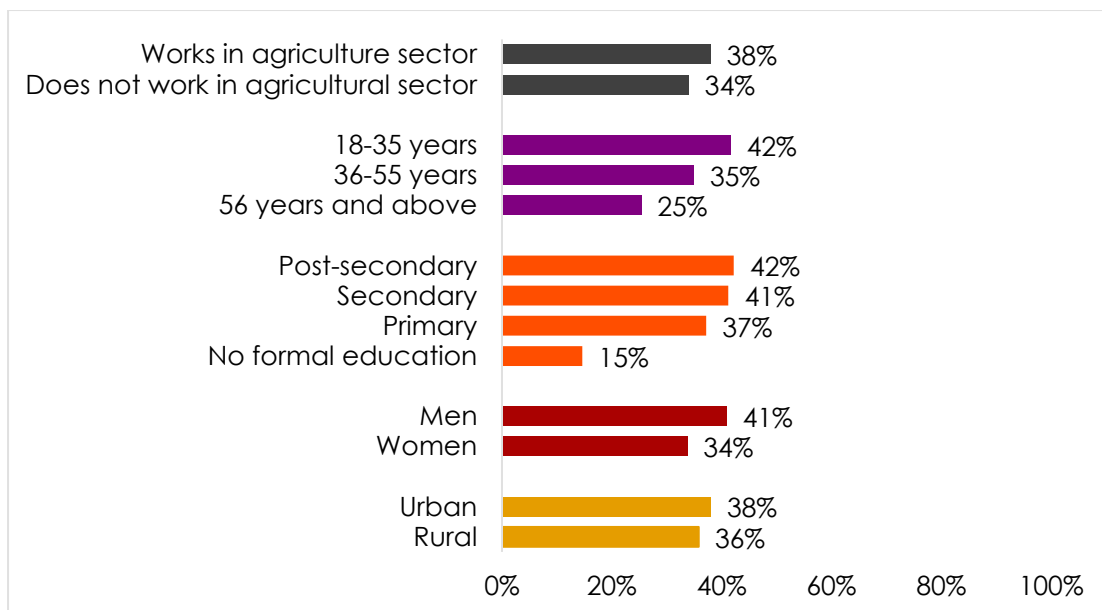
Figure 9: Is climate change making life better or worse? | Morocco | 2018



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Morocco better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Figure excludes respondents who said they had not heard about climate change.)

Perceptions of negative effects of climate change are more than twice as common among respondents with at least a primary education (37%-42%) as among those with no formal education (15%) (Figure 10). Young adults (42%) and men (41%) are also more likely than older respondents (25%) and women (34%) to see these negative effects.

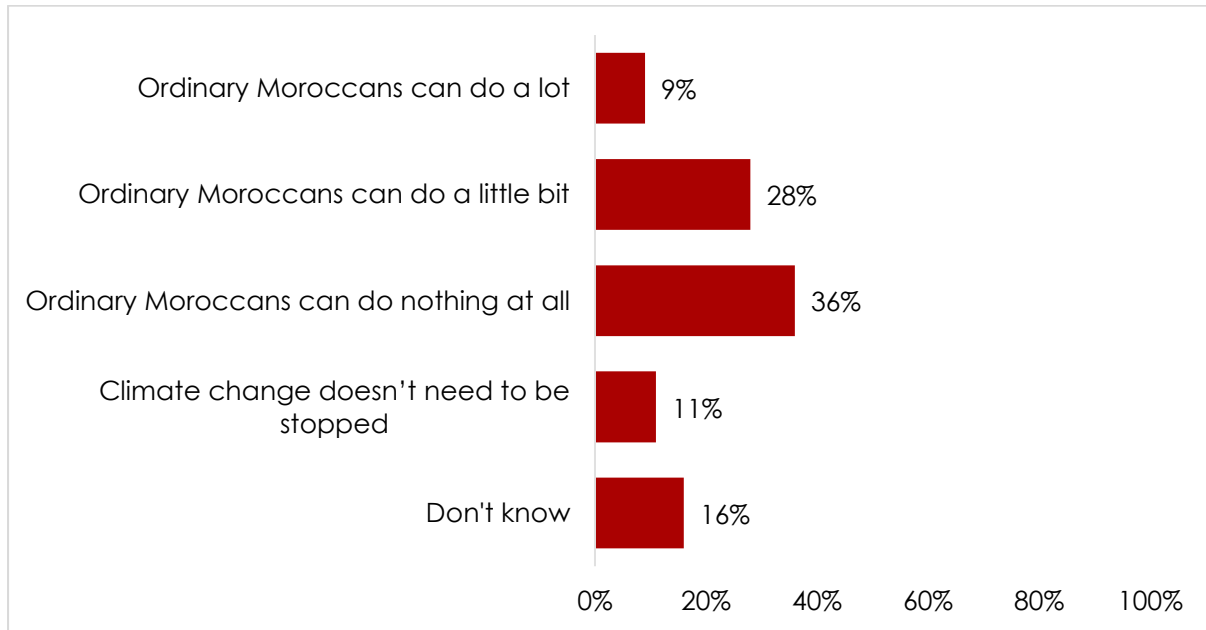
Figure 10: Climate change is making life worse | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2018



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Morocco better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say “somewhat worse” or “much worse”) (Figure excludes respondents who said they had not heard about climate change.)

In spite of the government's efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change, fewer than four in 10 Moroccans (37%) who have heard of climate say ordinary people can do "a little" or "a lot" to help stop it. The same proportion (36%) say ordinary people can do "nothing at all," while a quarter say either that it does not need to be stopped (11%) or that they don't know (16%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Stopping climate change | Morocco | 2018



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: Do you think that climate change needs to be stopped? [If yes:] How much do you think that ordinary Moroccans can do to stop climate change? (Figure excludes respondents who said they had not heard of climate change.)

Conclusion

The Afrobarometer survey reveals that only slightly more than half of Moroccans are aware of climate change, and fewer than one-third are "climate change literate." Few citizens believe that it is making life in Morocco worse and that ordinary people can do something to help stop it. These attitudes do not reflect the government's drive to put in place projects and measures to fight climate change. To ensure popular backing for its efforts, the government will need to intensify awareness creation about causes, effects, and mitigation of this phenomenon.

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.

References

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Afrobarometer, a non-profit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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