

Afrobarometer
Accra, Ghana
3 March 2020

News release

After decade-long improvement, lived poverty is on the rise in Africa, Afrobarometer survey finds

Reversing a decade-long trend of improving living standards, lived poverty is on the rise again in Africa, a new analysis of Afrobarometer data reveals.

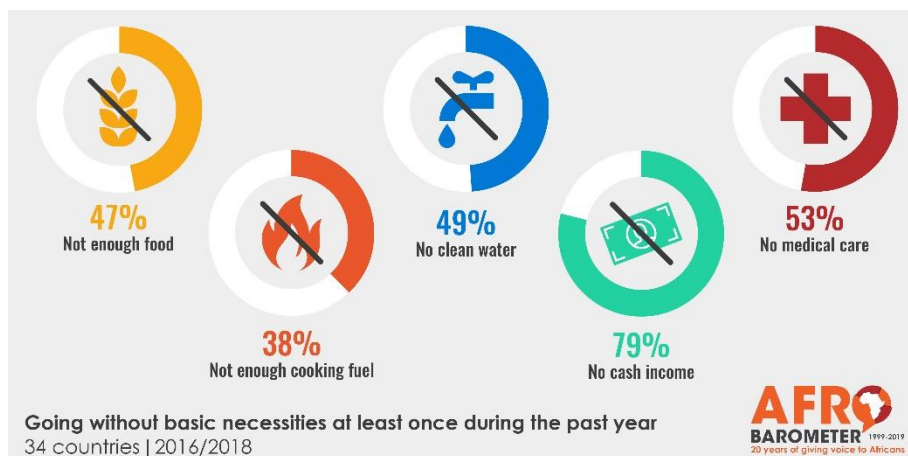


Findings from national surveys in 34 African countries are detailed in Afrobarometer's [new Pan-Africa Profile](#) on lived poverty, released today. The analysis shows that after declining steadily since 2005, deprivation of basic necessities increased between 2015 and 2018.

As a way to prevent squandering hard-won gains in Africans' living standards, the data point to the need for a renewed commitment amongst citizens, governments, and international donors to defending democracy and expanding service-delivery infrastructure.

Key findings

- Between 2005 and 2015, Afrobarometer surveys tracked a steady improvement in the living conditions of the average African. The most recent surveys, however, suggest that Africa is in danger of forfeiting these gains.
 - While the citizens of most African countries are still doing better than they were in 2005/2006, lived poverty – measured as shortages of food, clean water, health care, heating fuel, and cash income – has increased on average across all surveyed countries (Figure 1) and at the country level in about half of surveyed countries (Figure 2).
 - The trend is similar for “severe lived poverty,” or frequent shortages of these basic necessities.
- Large numbers of Africans are still failing to meet their most basic needs. Across 34 countries, more than half (53%) of all respondents report facing shortages of medicine or medical services at least once in the previous 12 months, and nearly as many experienced shortages of clean water (49%) and food (47%). The most commonly cited form of deprivation remains lack of access to cash income (79%).



- Lived poverty varies widely across the continent, ranging from a rare occurrence in Mauritius to a common experience in Guinea and Gabon (Figure 3). In general, lived poverty is highest in Central and West Africa, and lowest in North Africa.
- Lived poverty also varies widely *within* societies. Africans who live in urban or suburban areas, those who have higher levels of education, and those who have a job (especially in a middle-class occupation) are less likely to live in poverty, as are younger people and men.
- But more important than personal characteristics are factors at the level of government and the state:
 - People who live in countries with longer experiences of democratic government are less likely to live in poverty.
 - People who live in communities where the state has installed key development infrastructure such as paved roads, electricity grids, and piped-water systems are less likely to go without basic necessities (Figure 4).

Afrobarometer surveys

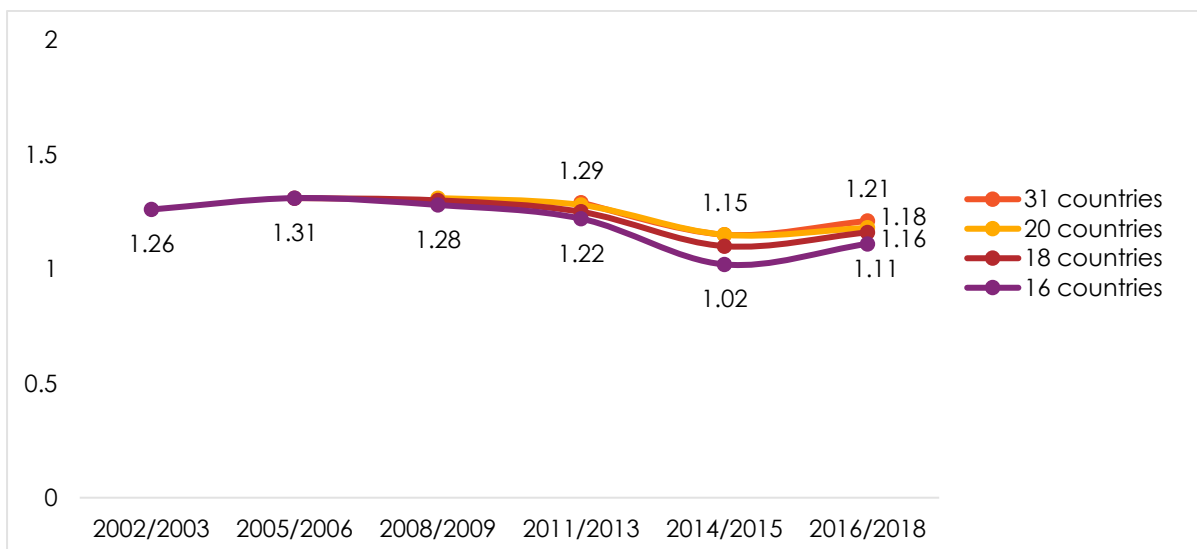
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans' experiences and evaluations of quality of life, governance, and democracy. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed since 1999.

Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples. Sample sizes of 1,200 or 2,400 yield country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-3 or 2 percentage points, respectively, at a 95% confidence level. Round 7 interviews with 45,823 citizens in 34 countries represent the views of more than three-fourths of Africans.

Interested readers may follow our releases, including our Pan-Africa Profiles series of cross-country analyses, at #VoicesAfrica and sign up for our distribution list at www.afrobarometer.org.

Charts

Figure 1: Lived Poverty Index (LPI) over time | various country samples | 2002-2018



Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities (enough food, enough clean water, health care, enough heating fuel, and cash income) on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities).

Figure 2: Change in Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores | 33 countries | 2014-2018

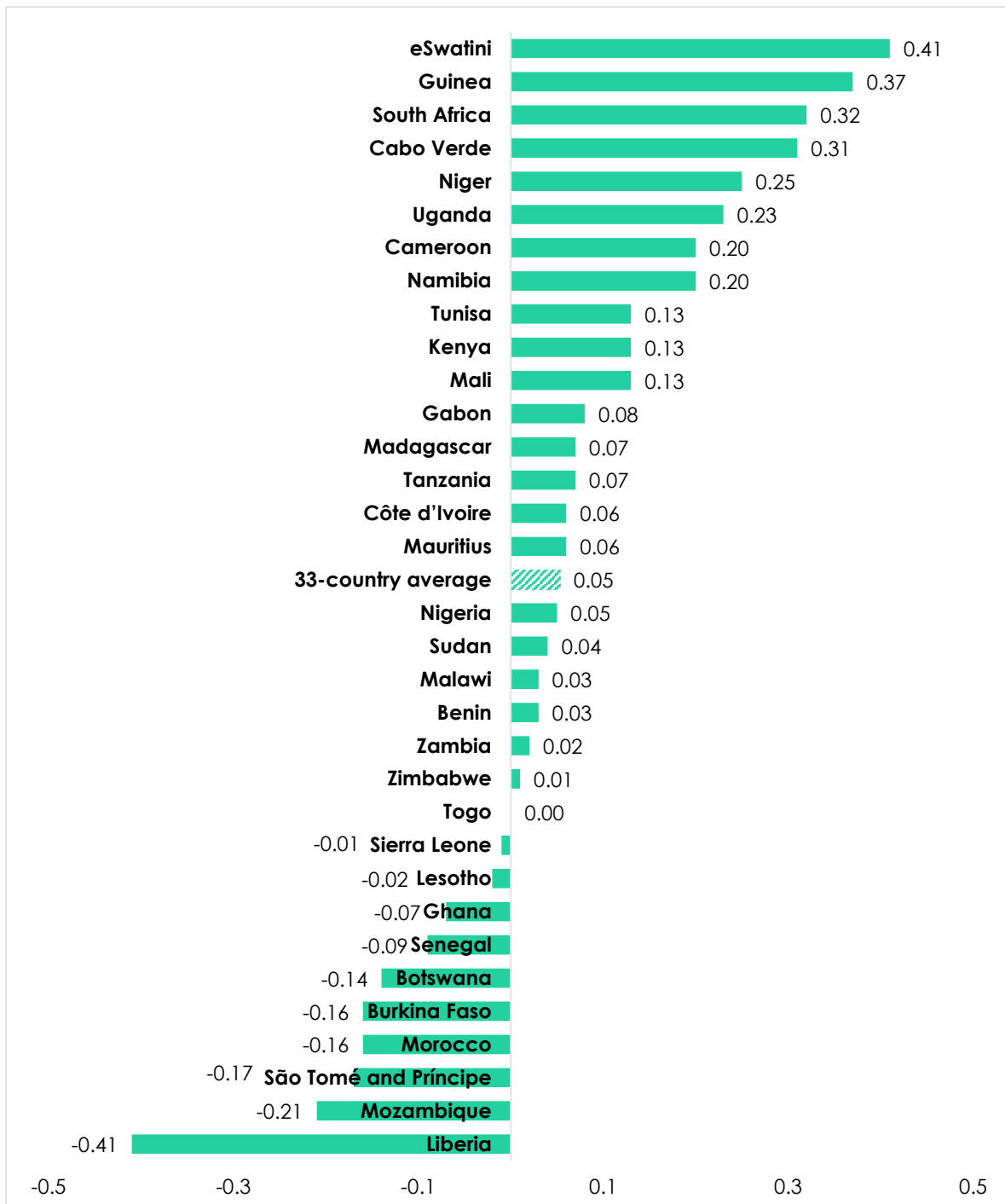
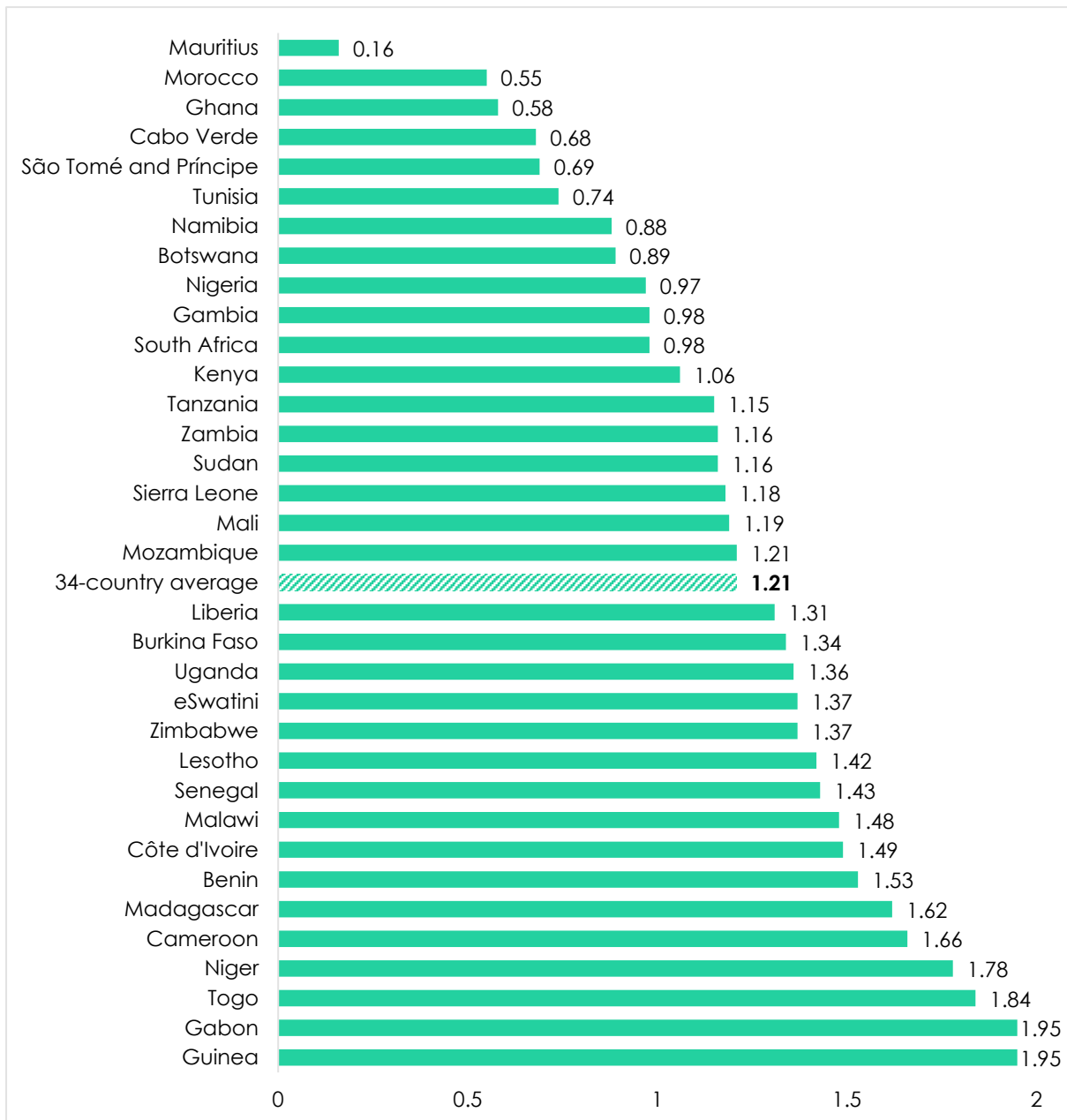


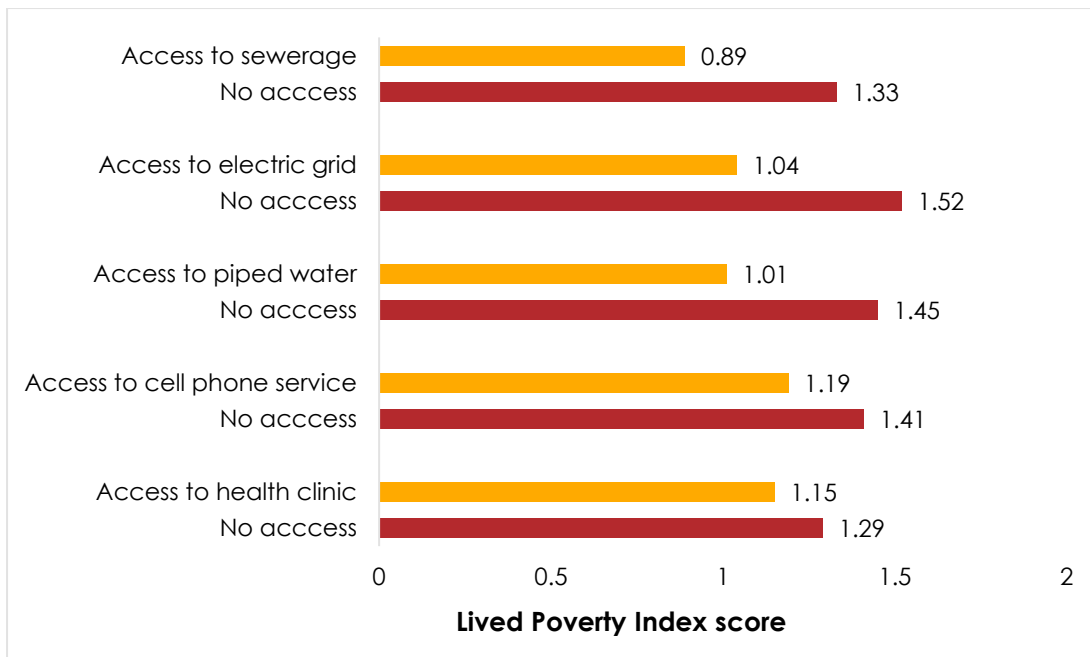
Figure shows increases or decreases in LPI scores between Round 6 (2014/2015) and Round 7 (2016/2018) surveys. LPI scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities (enough food, enough clean water, health care, enough heating fuel, and cash income) on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities).

Figure 3: Lived Poverty Index | by country | 34 countries | 2016/2018



Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities).

Figure 4: Connections between development infrastructure and lived poverty
 | 34 countries | 2016/2018



In each enumeration area, **Afrobarometer enumerators recorded** the presence or absence of key infrastructure, including an electricity grid, piped-water system, sewage system, mobile-phone service, and health clinic.

For more information, please contact:

Sibusiso Nkomo
 Telephone: + 27 73 561 2490
 Email: snkomo@afrobarometer.org

Gugu Nonjinge
 Telephone: +27 72 788 5983
 Email: gnonjinge@afrobarometer.org

Visit us online at: www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on **#VoicesAfrica**.

