

Amid increasing weather extremes, awareness of climate change remains low in Mozambique

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 504 | Trisha Patel and Jaynisha Patel

Summary

Stretching 2,740 km along the warm Indian Ocean, Mozambique is vulnerable to tropical cyclones and floods in the North and droughts in the South (Mavume, Banze, Macie, & Queface, 2021). According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (2021), Mozambique is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change, ranking 154th out of 192 nations in readiness to confront the threat.

The Index for Risk Management (2021), which assesses risks from humanitarian crises and disasters, also describes Mozambique as being at "very high" risk due to climate change, conflict, and other factors.

As last Monday's deadly tropical storm Ana reminded us (BBC, 2022), climate-related disasters are increasing pressures on infrastructure, public services, and humanitarian assistance. More than 60% of Mozambique's population, including many of its poorest communities, live along the coastline, facing growing exposure to sea-level rise, storm surges, and tropical cyclones (Irish Aid, 2018).

On 14 March 2019, the port city of Beira was ravaged by Tropical Cyclone Idai, southern Africa's most severe natural disaster in the past two decades (UNICEF, 2019). Six weeks later, Kenneth brought devastation to northern Mozambique – the first time in recorded history that two strong tropical cyclones made landfall in Mozambique within the same season (UNICEF, 2019).

Mozambique's agriculture sector, which employs more than 70% of the adult population, is highly vulnerable to increasing rainfall variability and drought, driving up the risk of chronic food shortages (Irish Aid, 2018). Climate change will touch most aspects of Mozambican life, from its important hydropower sector (Irish Aid, 2018) to increasing pressure on women as men migrate from drought-stricken regions to neighbouring countries in search of work (Ribeiro & Chaaúq, 2010).

While climate-change readiness and mitigation for Mozambique will require massive investments, part of getting Mozambique's population ready for the changing climate and increasing weather extremes is simple climate change literacy, i.e. making people aware of climate change, its causes due to human activity, and its negative effects (Selormey, Dome, Osse, & Logan, 2019).

The latest Afrobarometer survey in Mozambique finds that citizens are largely unaware of climate change. Awareness of climate change is particularly low in rural areas and among poor and less educated citizens. Where people get their news may also play a role, as those who use the Internet and social media as regular news sources are considerably more likely to be informed about climate change than those who rely on the radio, television, and newspapers.

Among Mozambicans who are familiar with the concept of climate change, the proportion who see it as making life worse has doubled since 2018.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans' experiences and evaluations on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Mozambique, led by Ipsos Mozambique, interviewed 1,200 adult Mozambicans between 3 May and 19 July 2021. 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 have been conducted in Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

The weighted Mozambique Round 8 sample is nationally representative except that it excludes rural Cabo Delgado, comprising about 6.3% of the adult population of Mozambique. Insecurity in the area and resulting difficulties in obtaining necessary fieldwork clearances prevented Afrobarometer from collecting sufficient data in this area.

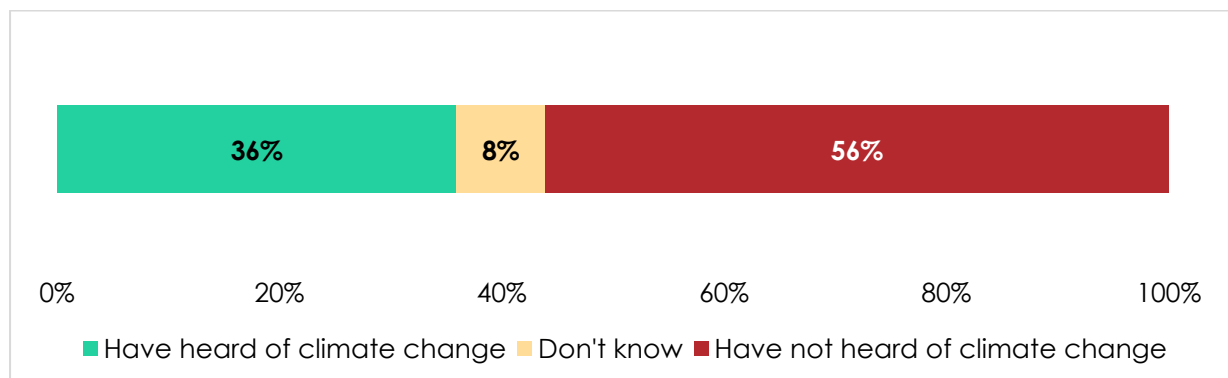
Key findings

- Only about one in three Mozambicans (36%) say they have heard about climate change.
- Awareness of climate change is particularly low in rural areas (26%), among citizens with less than a secondary education (24%-26%), and among the poor (22%).
- Citizens who get their daily news from the Internet and social media are more likely to have heard about climate change than those who use television, newspapers, or the radio as their main source of news.
- Among Mozambicans who have heard about climate change, almost two-thirds (63%) say it is making life worse – twice the proportion who expressed this view in 2018 (31%).

Do Mozambicans know about climate change?

Despite the country's high susceptibility to devastation from the changing climate, only about one in three Mozambicans (36%) say they have heard about climate change (Figure 1). This is significantly below the average of 58% across 34 African countries surveyed by Afrobarometer in 2019/2021.

Figure 1: Aware of climate change | Mozambique | 2021



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

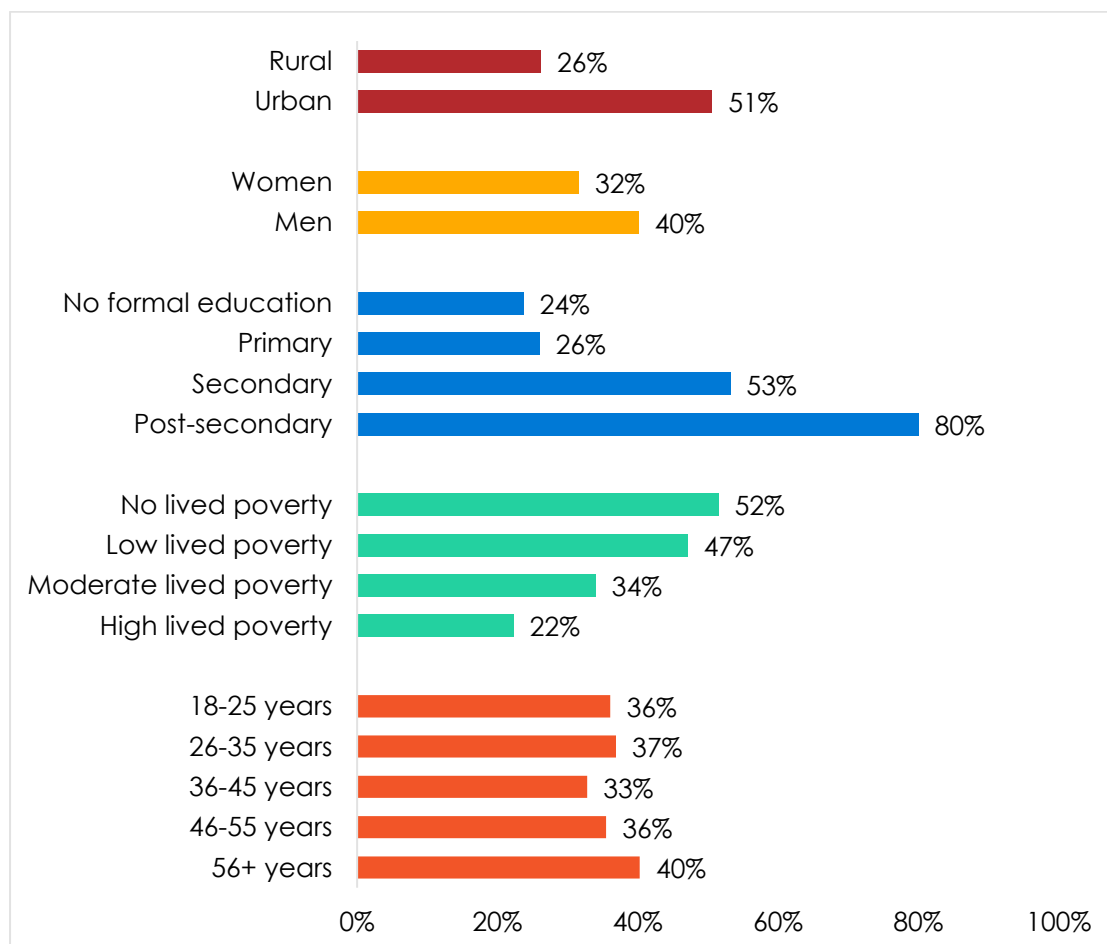
Figure 2 helps locate segments of the population where awareness of climate change is particularly low. Rural residents, who make up two-thirds of the country's population (World Bank, 2020), are only about half as likely to know about climate change as their urban counterparts (26% vs. 51%).

Citizens with less economic agency are also less likely to be familiar with the concept of climate change. Only one-quarter (24%-26%) of those with less than secondary schooling say they have heard of climate change, compared to 53% of those with secondary and 80% of those with post-secondary education.

Similarly, citizens experiencing high levels of lived poverty¹ (22%) are far less likely to know about climate change than those who are economically better off (47%-52%).

More men than women are aware of climate change (40% vs. 32%), but young Mozambicans are no more likely to have heard of the concept than their elders.

Figure 2: Aware of climate change | by socio-demographic group | Mozambique | 2021



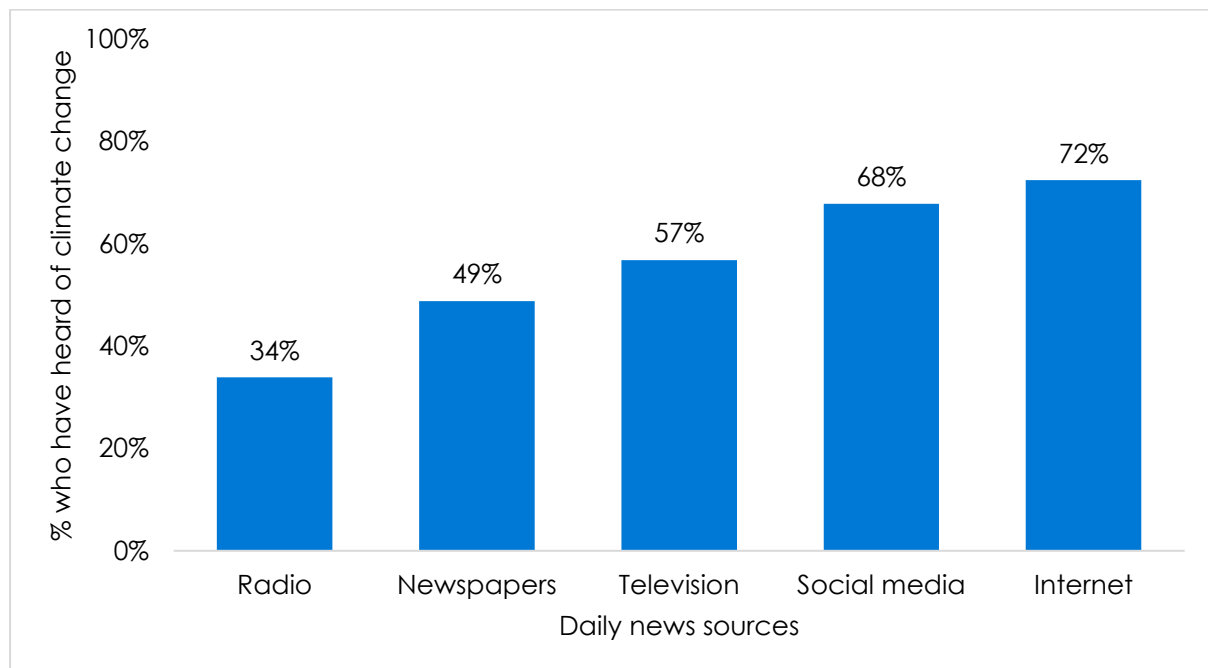
Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say "yes")

¹ Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes (2020).

Awareness of climate change also appears to vary based on where Mozambicans get their daily news (Figure 3). Those who consume news from the Internet and social media “every day” are most likely to know about climate change (72% and 68%, respectively). Among those who get their daily news from the radio, only one in three (34%) have heard about climate change, while about half of daily newspaper readers (49%) and television viewers (57%) are aware of the phenomenon.

These numbers suggest there is space for radio, newspaper, and television newsrooms to make a concerted effort to improve climate change awareness and literacy in Mozambique.

Figure 3: Climate change awareness and daily news source | Mozambique | 2021



Respondents were asked:

*How often do you get news from the following sources? (% who say “every day”)
 Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?
 (% who say “yes”)*

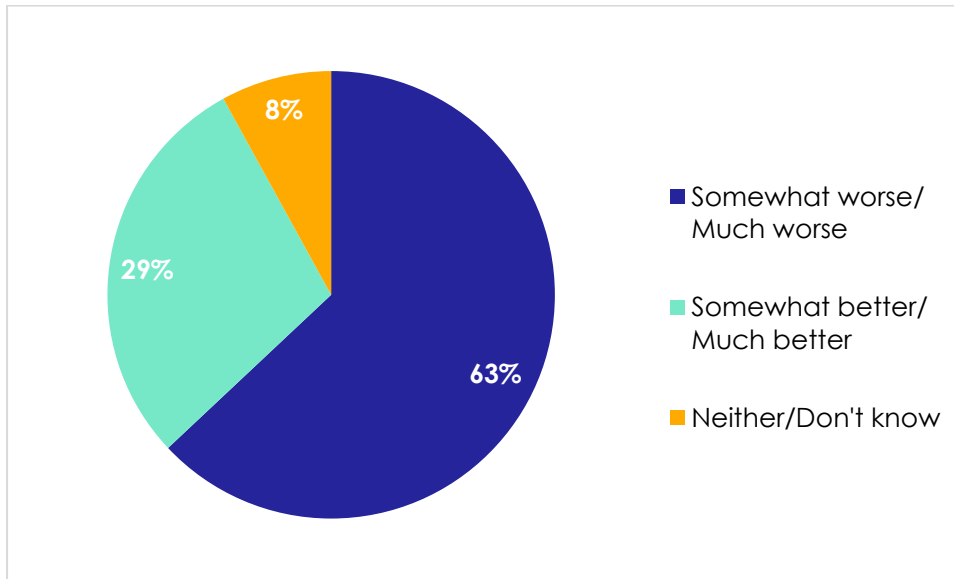
Climate change is making life worse

Among Mozambicans who are aware of climate change, almost two-thirds (63%) say it is making life in the country worse, compared to 29% who say it is making things better (Figure 4).

The share of respondents who see climate change as making life worse in Mozambique has doubled since 2018 (31%) (Figure 5), perhaps reflecting in part the deep impression left by cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019.

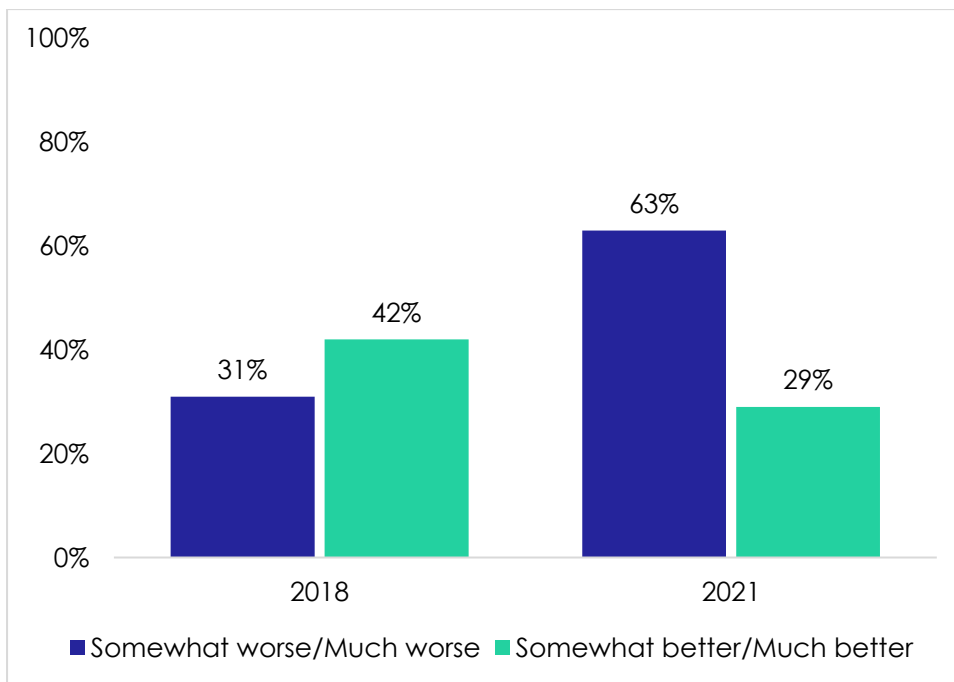
Similar to awareness of climate change, perceptions of its negative effects are more common in cities (34%) than in rural areas (15%) and among men (27%) compared to women (18%) (Figure 6). Mozambicans with more education or less lived poverty are more likely to perceive the impact of climate change as undesirable, even though the poor are more vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate.

Figure 4: Is climate change making life better or worse? | Mozambique | 2021



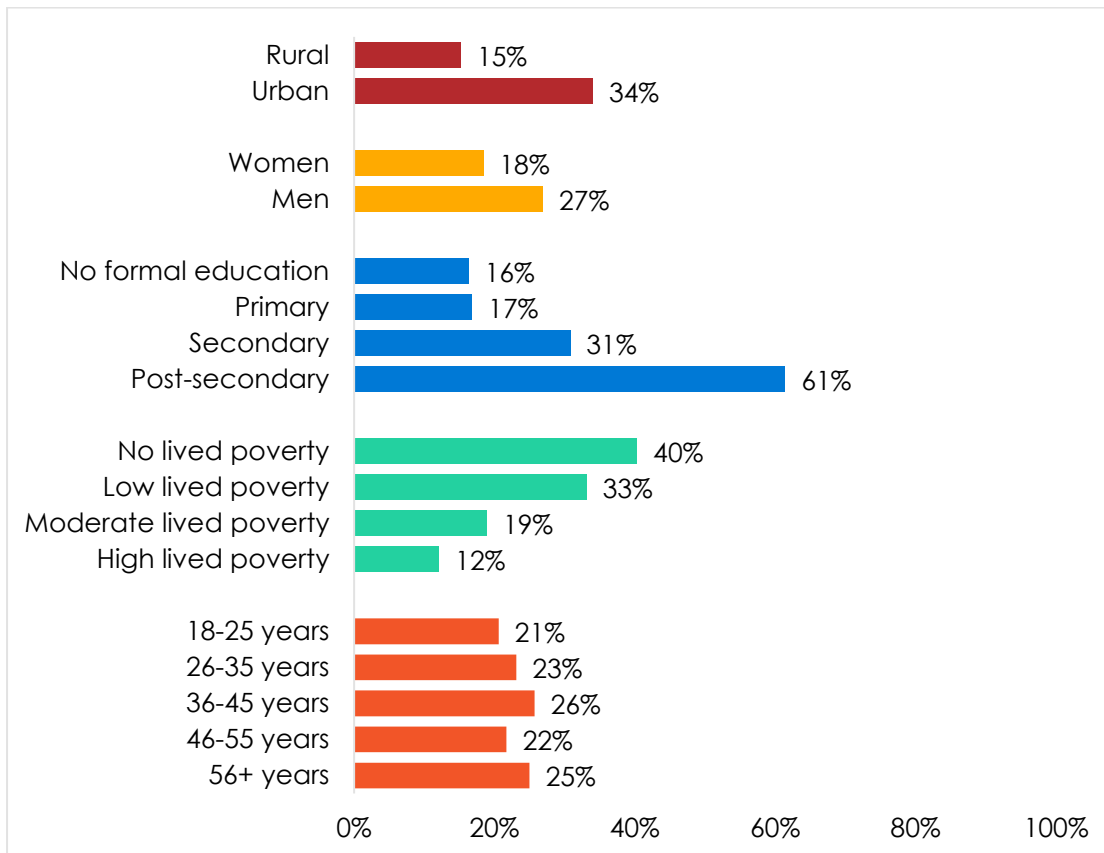
Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Mozambique better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Figure 5: Is climate change making life better or worse? | Mozambique | 2018-2021



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

Figure 6: Climate change is making life worse | by socio-demographic group
 | Mozambique | 2021



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

Conclusion

Although Mozambique is exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of climatic changes, the population is largely unaware of what climate change means. This is especially true for citizens with less economic agency due to poverty or limited education.

Part of ensuring that the population can build resilience to increasingly severe weather events is ensuring that people understand the changing context in which they live. More climate education is clearly needed, especially for people who have less education, have fewer financial resources, live in rural areas, or cannot access the Internet and social media. News editors for radio, television, and newspapers can help alleviate this knowledge deficit by delivering consistent and informed coverage of climate change, from concepts to causes to future realities.

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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