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News release

Kenyans grow more dissatisfied with economic conditions, Afrobarometer survey shows

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenyans were dissatisfied with their government's economic performance as increasing numbers reported poor economic conditions, an Afrobarometer analysis shows.

Despite a decade of strong economic growth that allowed Kenya to be classified as a middle-income country, a majority of citizens were not content with the economic situation, according to the survey, which was conducted in August-September 2019.

Fewer than half of Kenyans said the country was moving in the right direction, and most described economic conditions as bad, even if a growing minority gave positive assessments of their own living conditions. Young Kenyans were generally a bit more upbeat about the economy than their elders.

Key findings

- As of late 2019, fewer than half (44%) of Kenyans said their country was headed in the right direction, a modest decrease from 2016 (48%) (Figure 1).
- Two-thirds (65%) of Kenyans described the country's economic situation as "fairly bad" or "very bad," a 10-percentage-point increase from 2016 (Figure 2). But only about one-third (36%) expected things to get worse during the next year, while 45% believed they would get better.
- Young people were somewhat more positive than their elders about the state of the economy and its chances for improvement in the near future (Figure 3).
- Four in 10 Kenyans (41%) said their personal living conditions were "fairly" or "very" good, continuing a steady decade-long improvement. The same proportion (42%) described their living conditions as bad (Figure 4).
- But large proportions of the population experienced shortages of basic life necessities during the year preceding the survey, including "many times" or "always" going without a cash income (39%), enough clean water (21%), needed medical care (19%), and enough food (14%) (Figure 5).
- Large majorities said the government was performing "fairly badly" or "very badly" on narrowing gaps between rich and poor (79%), creating jobs (78%), keeping prices stable (76%), and other economic issues (Figure 6) .

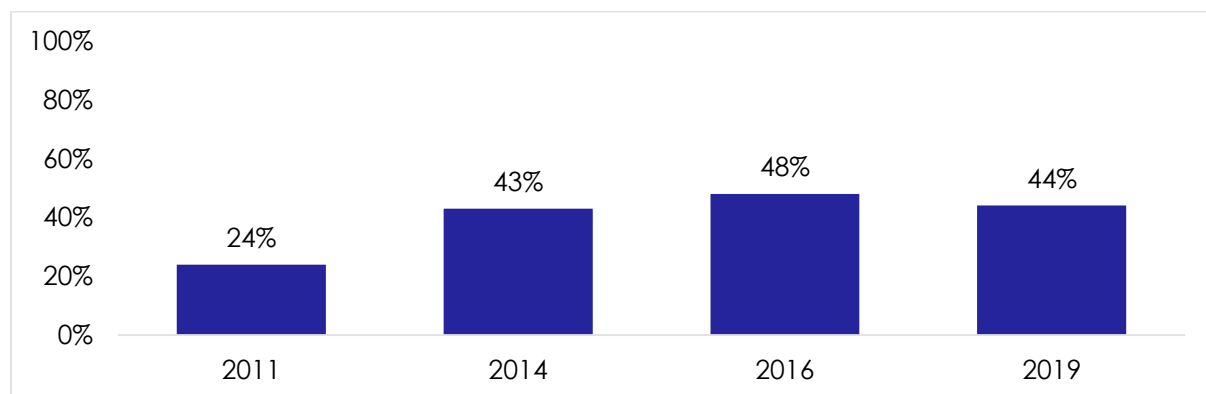
Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018, and Round 8 surveys are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Kenya, based at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, interviewed 2,400 adult Kenyans in August-September 2019. 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 Kenya in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016.

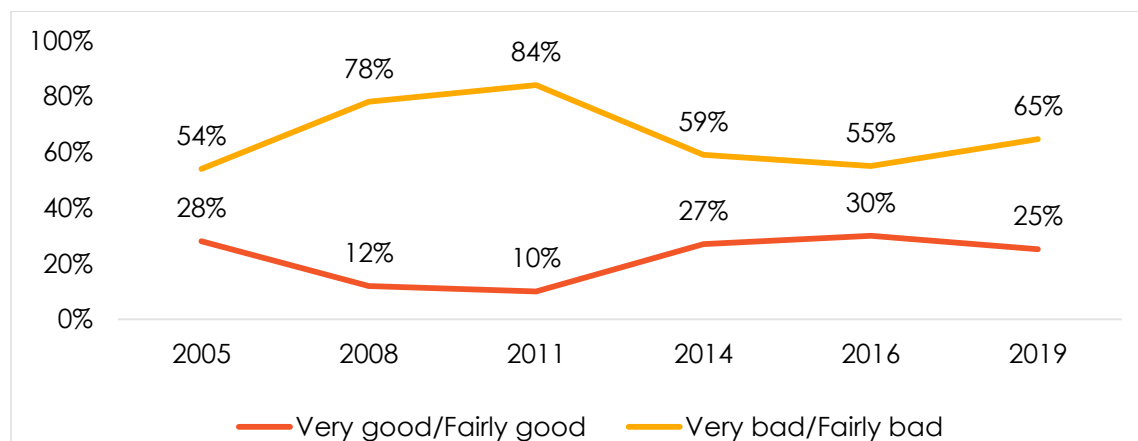
Charts

Figure 1: Country going in the right direction | Kenya | 2011-2019



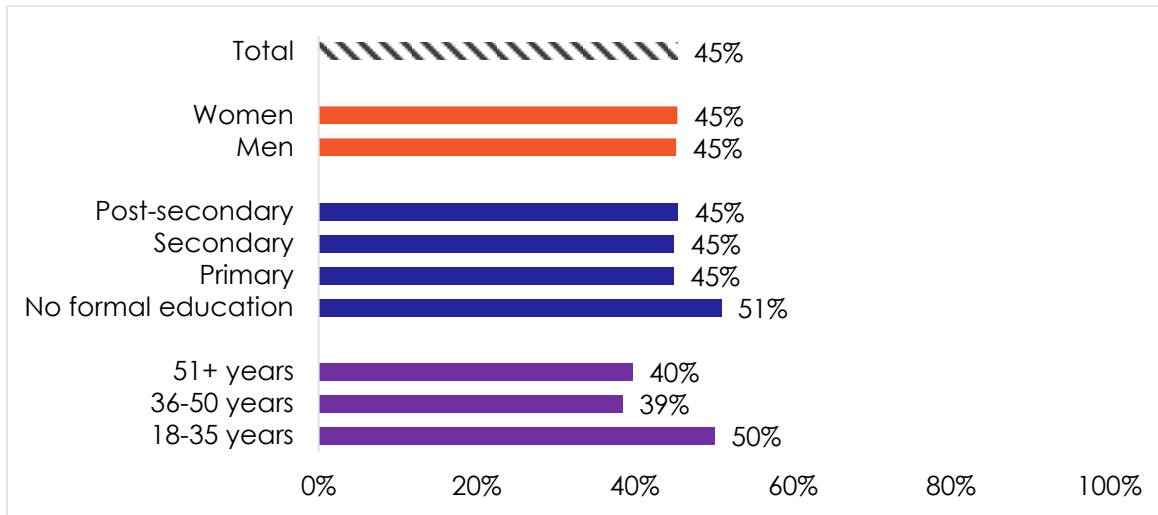
Respondents were asked: *Let's start with your general view about the current direction of our country. Some people might think the country is going in the wrong direction. Others may feel it is going in the right direction. So let me ask you about the overall direction of the country: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction? (% who say "right direction")*

Figure 2: Country's economic condition | Kenya | 2005-2019



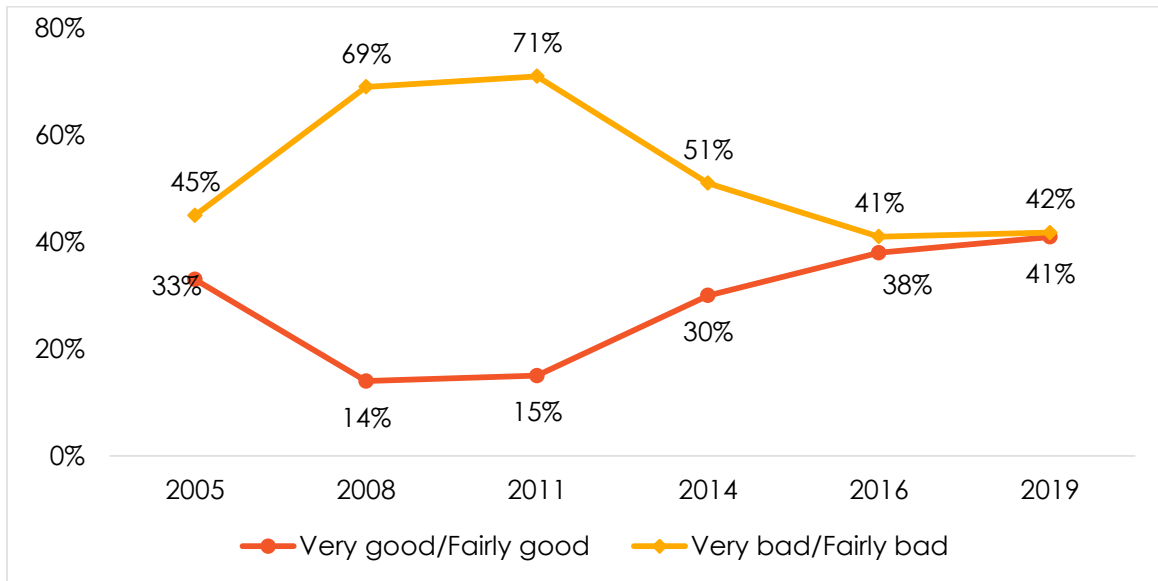
Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?*

Figure 3: Country's economic condition better in 12 months' time | by gender, education, and age | Kenya | 2019



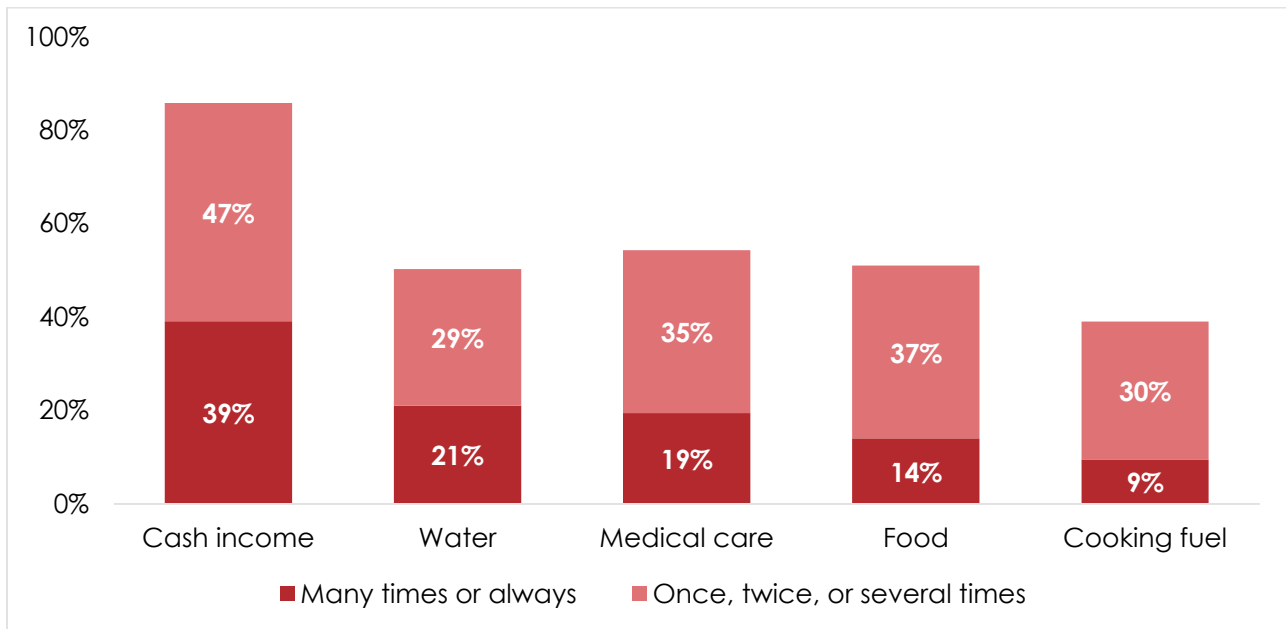
Respondents were asked: Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time? (% who say "better" or "much better")

Figure 4: Personal living conditions | Kenya | 2005-2019



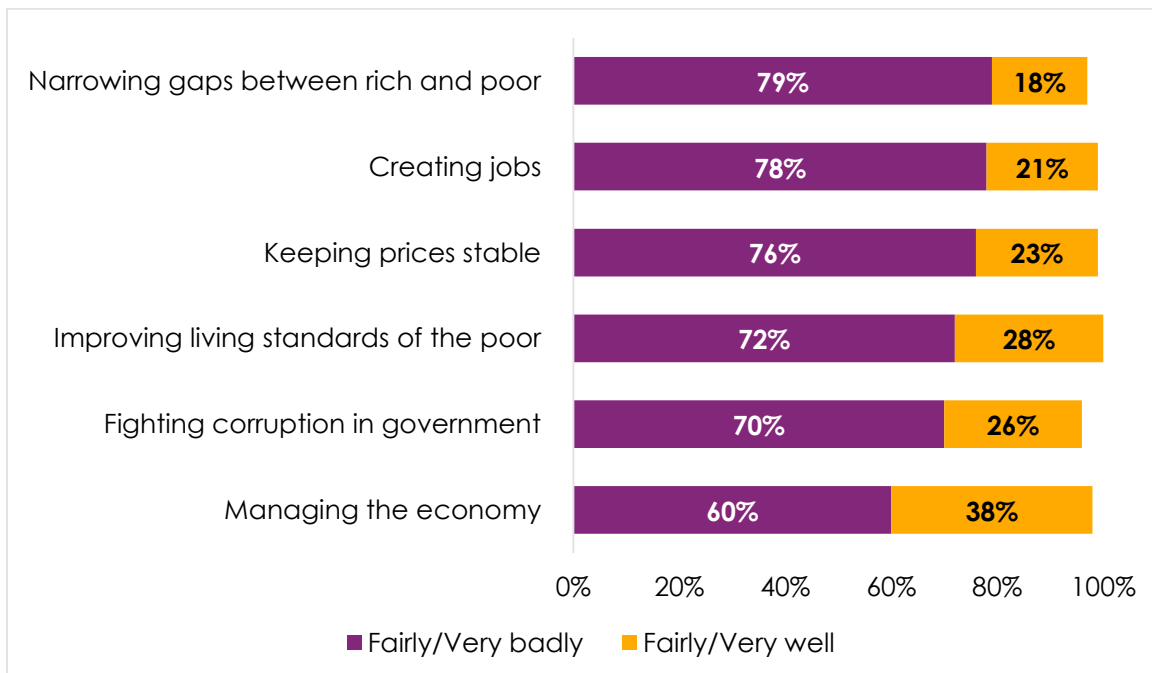
Respondents were asked: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?

Figure 5: Going without basic necessities | Kenya | 2019



Respondents were asked: 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 6: Government performance on economic issues | Kenya | 2019



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?



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