

Mbabane, Eswatini
23 December 2021

News release

Emaswati want government to address unemployment amid worsening living conditions

Eswatini's stagnating economic growth, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has had a devastating impact on citizens' livelihoods. After recording significant gains between 2013 and 2018, citizens' assessments of their personal living conditions have taken a nosedive, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Most Emaswati have a bleak outlook on the economy: Almost two-thirds of citizens expect things to get worse during the coming year.

In managing the economy, most Emaswati rank unemployment as the No.1 critical economic issue they want government to address.

Key findings

- The share of Emaswati who describe their personal living conditions as "fairly good" or "very good" dropped from 46% in 2018 to just 9% in 2021 (Figure 1).
- Rural residents are somewhat more likely than urban residents to record negative assessments of their personal living conditions. Younger and more educated respondents are more positive about their living conditions than older and less educated citizens (Figure 2).
- Only two in 10 citizens (21%) expect the country's economic condition to improve over the next year (Figure 3).
- Unemployment tops the list of important problems that citizens say the government should address (Figure 4).

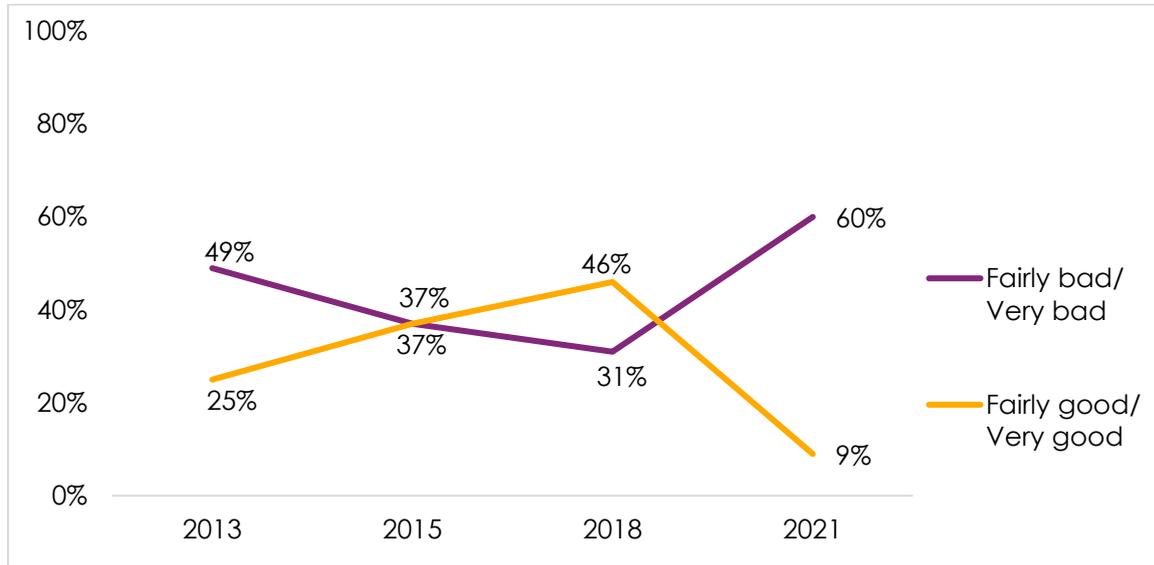
Afrobarometer surveys

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. 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 Eswatini, led by ActivQuest, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Emaswati in March-April 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 were conducted in Eswatini in 2013, 2015, and 2018.

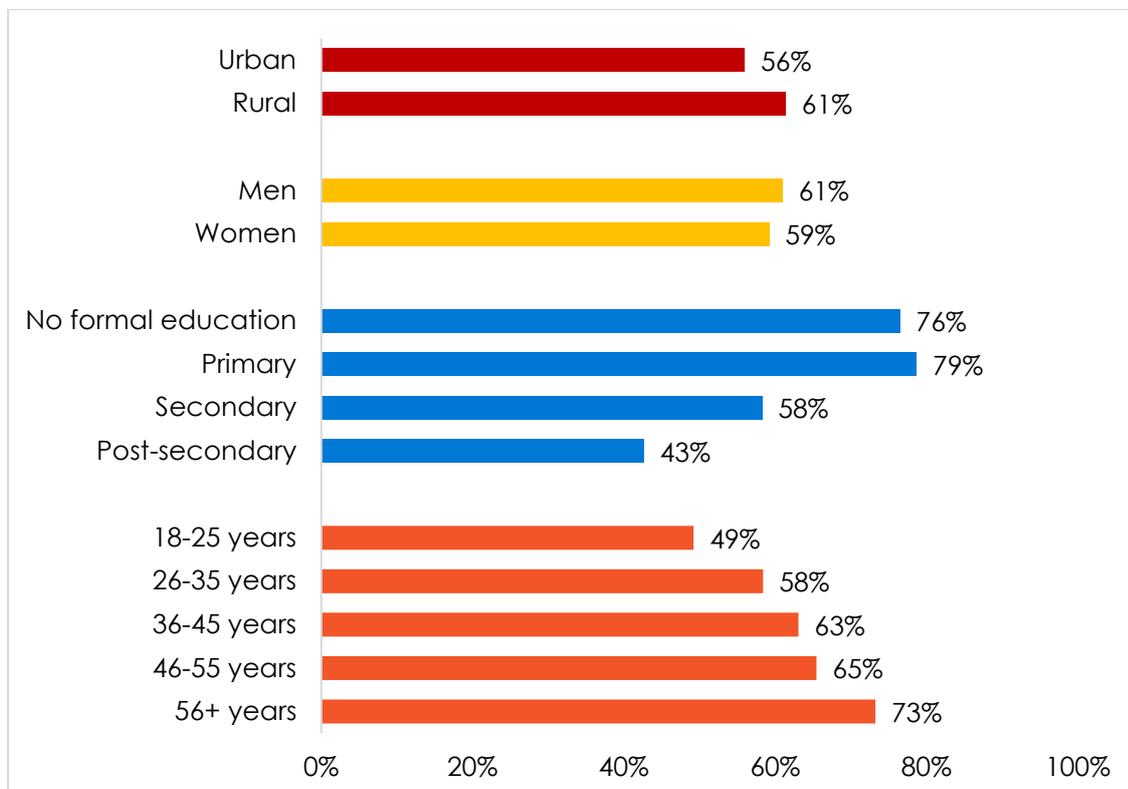
Charts

Figure 1: Personal living conditions | Eswatini | 2013-2021



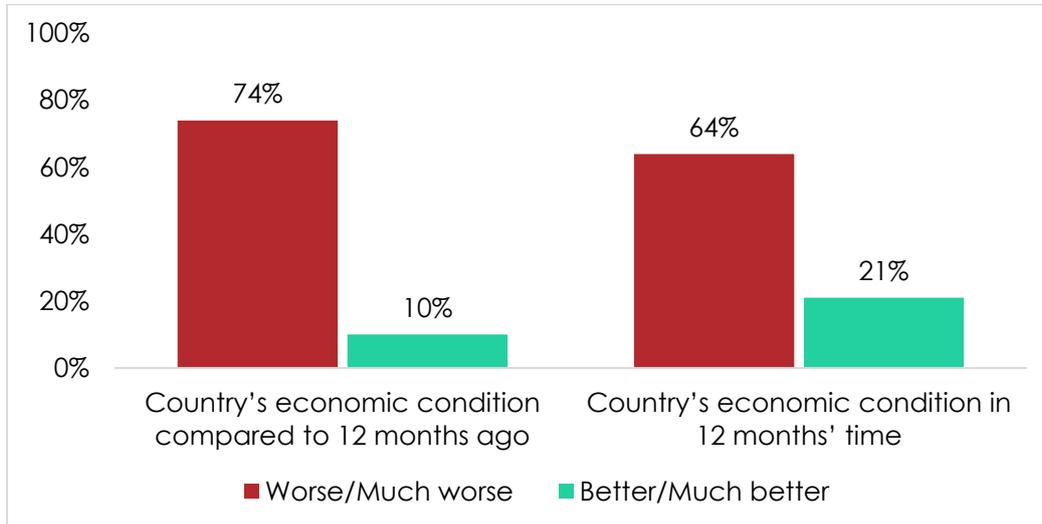
Respondents were asked: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?

Figure 2: Negative assessments of personal living condition | by socio-demographic group | Eswatini | 2021



Respondents were asked: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions? (% who say "fairly bad" or "very bad")

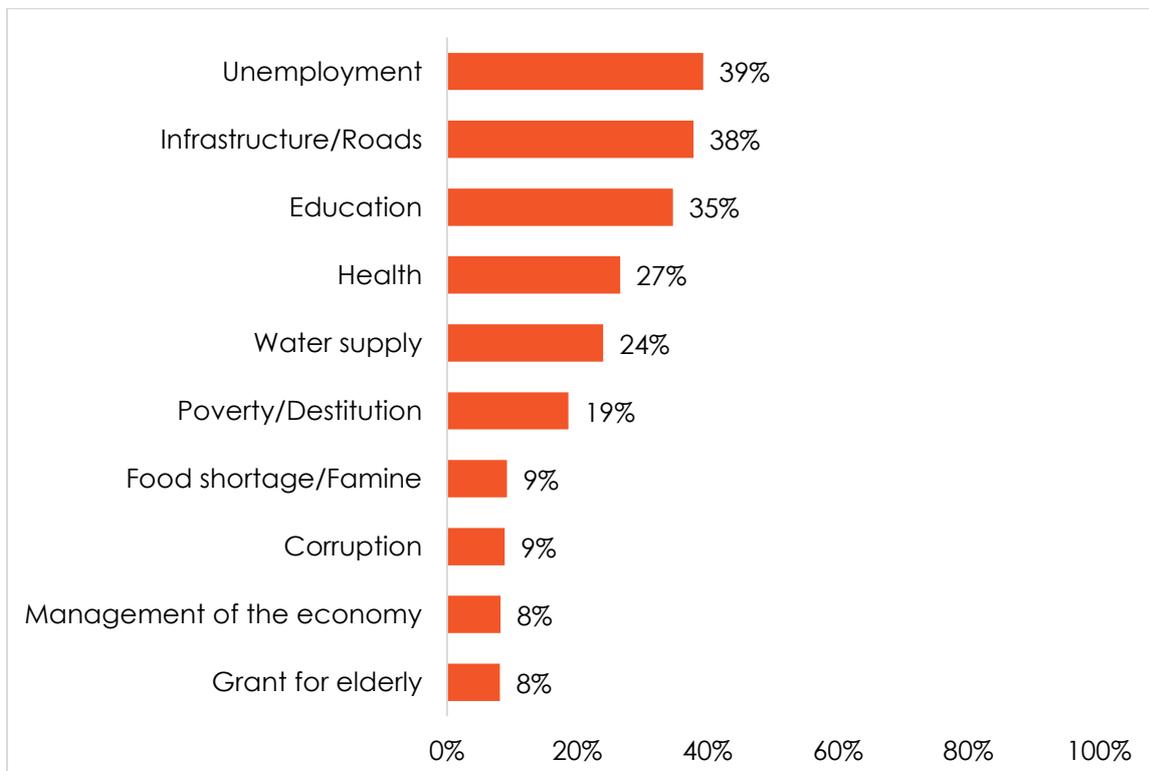
Figure 3: Country's economic condition 12 months ago and 12 months ahead
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Respondents were asked:

*Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?
 Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?*

Figure 4: Most important problems government should address | Eswatini | 2021



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Note: Respondents could give up to three responses. The figure shows the % of respondents who cite each problem among their three responses.)*

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