

Maseru, Lesotho
27 June 2022

News release

Basotho want environmental protection but prioritise jobs

Nearly six in 10 Basotho say pollution is a serious problem in their community. However, if environmental-protection policies threaten jobs and incomes, more than half of citizens would want jobs to be prioritised.

Basotho say the benefits of natural resource extraction, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh negative impacts such as pollution. However, a large majority want the government to regulate natural resource extraction more tightly in order to reduce its negative impact on the environment.

Key findings

- Nearly six in 10 Basotho (57%) say pollution is a “somewhat serious” (19%) or “very serious” (38%) problem in their community (Figure 1).
- Citizens say trash disposal (cited by 28% of respondents), pollution of water sources (28%), deforestation (14%), and air pollution (12%) are the most important environmental issues in their community (Figure 2).
- Three-quarters (75%) of citizens say plastic bags are a major source of pollution in their community (Figure 3).
- If environmental-protection policies threaten jobs and incomes, more than half (55%) of citizens would want jobs to be prioritised (Figure 4).
- More than half (52%) of Basotho say the primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping communities clean rests with local citizens. Far fewer would defer that responsibility to the national government (28%), traditional leaders (13%), or their local governments (2%) (Figure 5).
- By a margin of more than 2 to 1, Basotho say the benefits of natural resource extraction, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh negative impacts such as pollution (Figure 6).
 - However, a large majority (72%) want the government to regulate natural resource extraction more tightly in order to reduce its negative impact on the environment.

Afrobarometer surveys

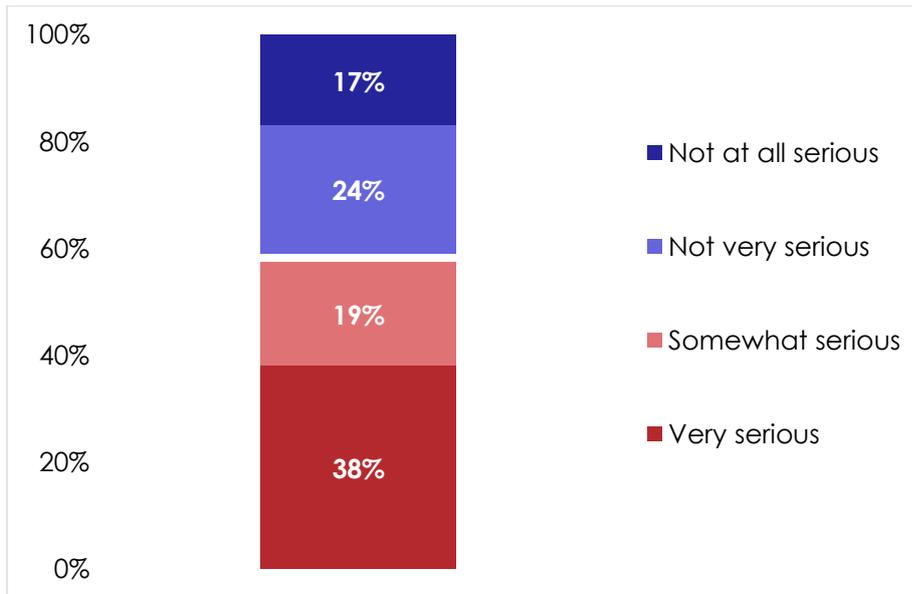
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2022) are currently underway. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Lesotho, led by Advison Lesotho, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens in February-March 2022. 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 Lesotho in 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2020.

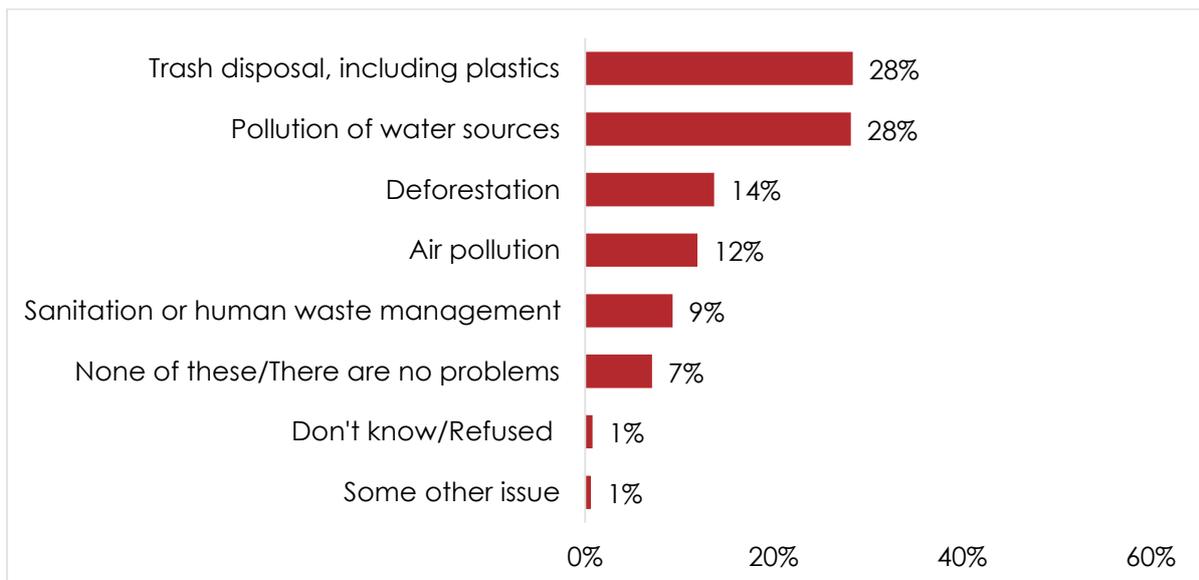
Charts

Figure 1: Extent of pollution in the community | Lesotho | 2022



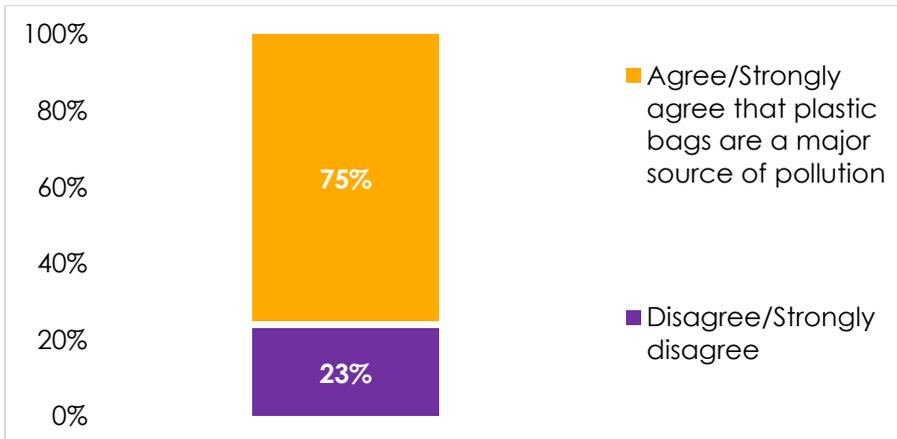
Respondents were asked: How serious a problem is pollution, such as the accumulation of trash or garbage, or damage to the quality of the air, the water, or the land in your community?

Figure 2: Most important environmental issue in the community | Lesotho | 2022



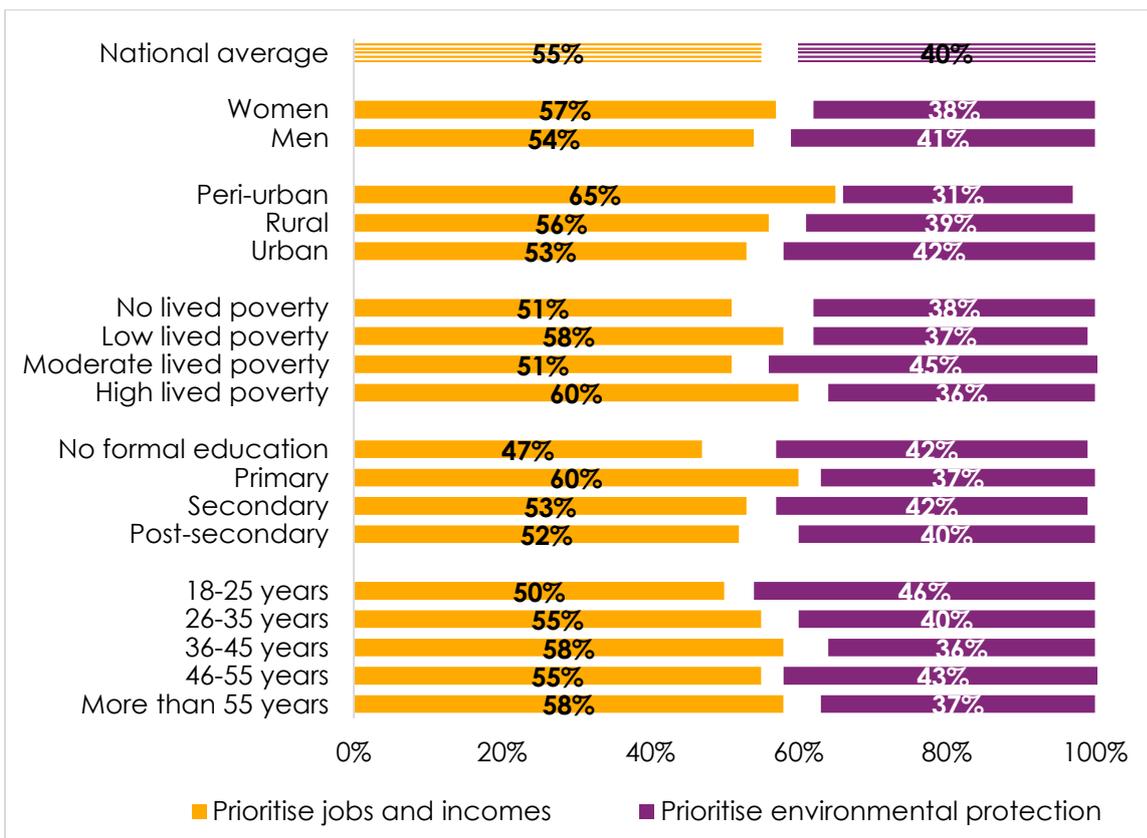
Respondents were asked: Which of the following is the most important environmental issue in your community today?

Figure 3: Are plastic bags a major source of pollution? | Lesotho | 2022



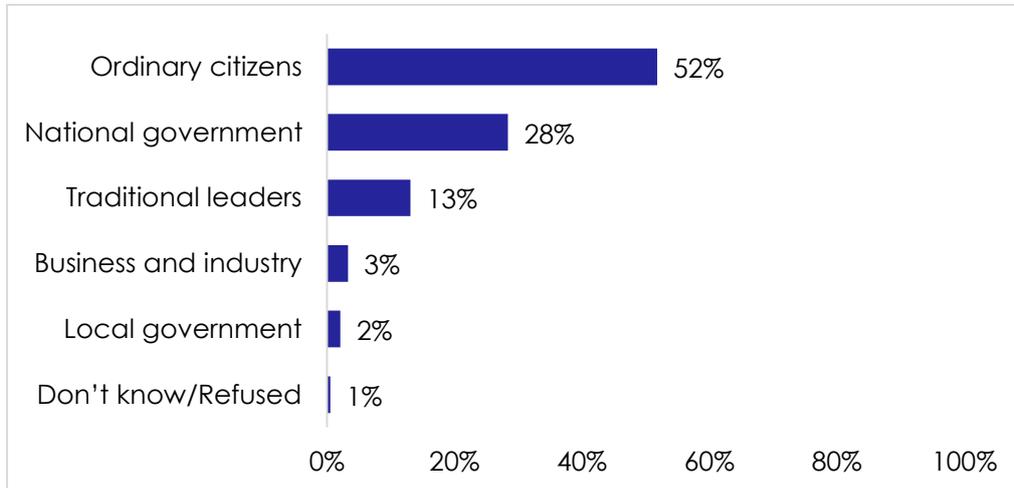
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Plastic bags are a major source of pollution in this country?

Figure 4: Should government prioritise jobs or the environment? | by demographic group | Lesotho | 2022



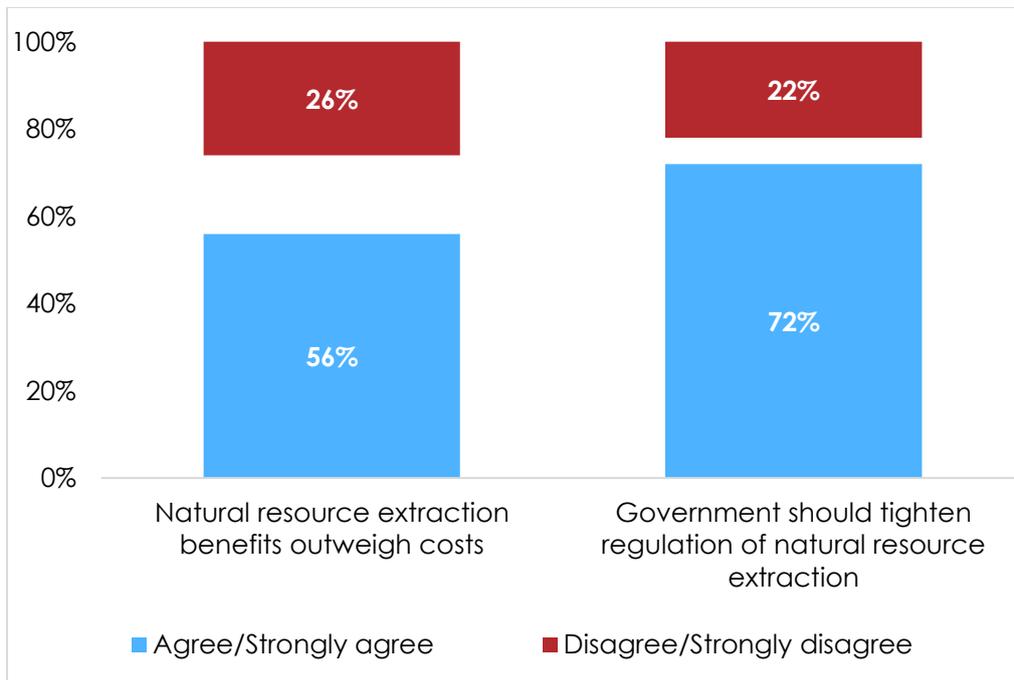
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: The government should focus on creating jobs and increasing incomes, even if that means increasing pollution or other environmental damage.
 Statement 2: The government should focus more on preventing pollution and protecting the environment, even if this means there will be fewer jobs or there will be other disruptions to our daily lives.
 (% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

Figure 5: Who should be responsible for reducing environmental pollution? | Lesotho | 2022



Respondents were asked: Who do you think should have primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping your community clean?

Figure 6: Natural resource extraction: Costs vs. benefits | Lesotho | 2022



Respondents were asked: Natural resource extraction such as mining, oil drilling, or wood harvesting can have benefits, such as jobs and revenue. But it can also pose problems for nearby communities, such as pollution or deforestation. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

In general, the benefits of resource extraction activities to local communities, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh the costs, such as pollution.

In this country, natural resource extraction should be more tightly regulated by government to reduce the negative impacts on the environment.

For more information, please contact:

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