

Revisiting human security in Africa in the post-COVID-19 era

By Guy Lamb



Introduction¹

Although Africa has recorded fewer than 2% of COVID-19 cases worldwide (World Health Organization, 2023), the pandemic has had severe socioeconomic and governance effects on the continent, affecting individuals, organisations, and governments (Josephson, Kilic, & Michler, 2021; Ozili, 2022). The restrictive measures employed to contain the virus have shown that COVID-19 is not just a health crisis; it has had direct negative impacts on economic, social, and political life, including increases in poverty, food insecurity, socioeconomic disparities, social upheaval, and authoritarianism (Adam, Henstridge, & Lee, 2020; Ayanlade & Radeny, 2020; Bargain & Aminjonov, 2021; Thomson & Ip, 2020).


Meanwhile, Africa remains the most conflict-affected continent, with 56 conflicts recorded in 2021 and about 30% of the population living in conflict zones (UNDP, 2022). It is also the continent that consistently experiences the highest levels of lethal state repression (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2021). Furthermore, the African continent has experienced substantial increases in communicable diseases since 2010, which has placed additional burdens on health systems (UNDP, 2022).

Insecurity has been exacerbated by three global threats that have been gaining momentum in recent years, namely climate change, the digital divide, and inequality, all of which hamper the realisation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Africa has been severely affected by warming temperatures, rising sea levels, and, in some countries, extreme weather events such as floods (as in Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and droughts (as in Angola, Ethiopia, and Somalia) (World Meteorological Association, 2020). In Africa, only 33% of the population use the Internet (compared to the global average of 63%), only 41% have active mobile phone subscriptions (compared to the global rate of 83%), and the cost of mobile data is close to four times the global average (International Telecommunication Union, 2021). Finally, Africa is the continent with the highest level of income inequality, mainly due to historical and structural economic factors such as the prominence of the extractive sector, the relatively small size of the formal economy, and the widespread practice of subsistence agriculture (Bigsten, 2016).

These challenges present complex and interconnected threats to the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of people and communities in Africa. Responses to these threats require the synergistic use of the combined capacities of state institutions, civic actors, the private sector, and local communities. These are exactly the situations where the concept of human security can prove relevant, as it has great potential for improving our understanding of how interconnected threats across various dimensions are endangering people and communities and for helping us identify solutions that can protect the most vulnerable in society.

In response to the multiple challenges that COVID-19 has presented, as well as risks that predate the pandemic, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022) issued a special report on human security in February 2022. Arguing that risks associated with planetary pressures such as climate change and biodiversity loss are overlayed on inequalities in human development, the report demonstrates how the concept of human security can help us understand these challenges and frame responses to them. In its Agenda 2063, the African Union (2013) has committed to establishing an African Human Security Index (AHSI) as a long-term development initiative.

¹ This policy paper is based on a report titled "Revisiting human security in Africa in the post-COVID-19 era" (October 2022) that was commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.



As part of efforts to broaden and deepen the conversation on human security in Africa, JICA partnered with Afrobarometer on a research project to bring the views and experiences of African citizens into the discourse. This policy paper focuses on human security dynamics and developments in five African countries that the project prioritised (Angola, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tunisia) as well as one country where relevant survey questions were piloted (Namibia), and explores the following questions:

- What is the state of human security, and what are the key threats to it in these six countries?
- How have COVID-19 and government responses to the pandemic impacted the elements of human security?
- What policy measures are needed to enhance human security in Africa from the perspective of ordinary people?

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 9 surveys are being completed in early 2023.

Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of 1,200-2,400 that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This policy paper is based on Round 9 data collected in 2021 and 2022 in Angola, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Namibia. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size). Due to rounding, reported totals may differ by 1 percentage point from the sum of sub-categories.

Human security conceptual framework

The concept of human security gained prominence in the mid-1990s following publication of the *Human Development Report 1994* by the UNDP (1994). This report concentrated on a “people-centred” or “human” concept of security, a significant shift from the traditional prioritisation of the security of states, especially in terms of military resources and capacity. The report built on the seminal work of Barry Buzan (1983), which argued that traditional notions of security had to be expanded and should take societal, economic, and environmental considerations into account. The UNDP report proposed that human security ultimately entails freedom from fear and want and the freedom to live with dignity. It described human security as comprising seven key security elements: economic, food, health, environment, personal, community, and political (Table 1).

Table 1: Seven elements of human security

Economic security	People have an assured, stable basic income (through productive work or guaranteed government support, such as a welfare grant).
Food security	People always have physical and economic access to basic food.
Health security	People always have access to dignified health care, and the burden of disease is adequately managed by government authorities.
Environmental security	People are protected from predictable environmental disasters and threats that can arise from environmental degradation, pollution, and climate change, and always have safe access to clean water.
Personal security	People are protected from crime and violence.
Community security	People are protected from violence and instability in their communities.
Political security	People are protected from government repression, human rights abuses, and violence perpetrated by non-state groups (or threats thereof), as well as from actions (such as the restriction of rights) by governments and others that negatively impact individual well-being.

Note: Definitions adapted from the UNDP Human Development Report, 1994

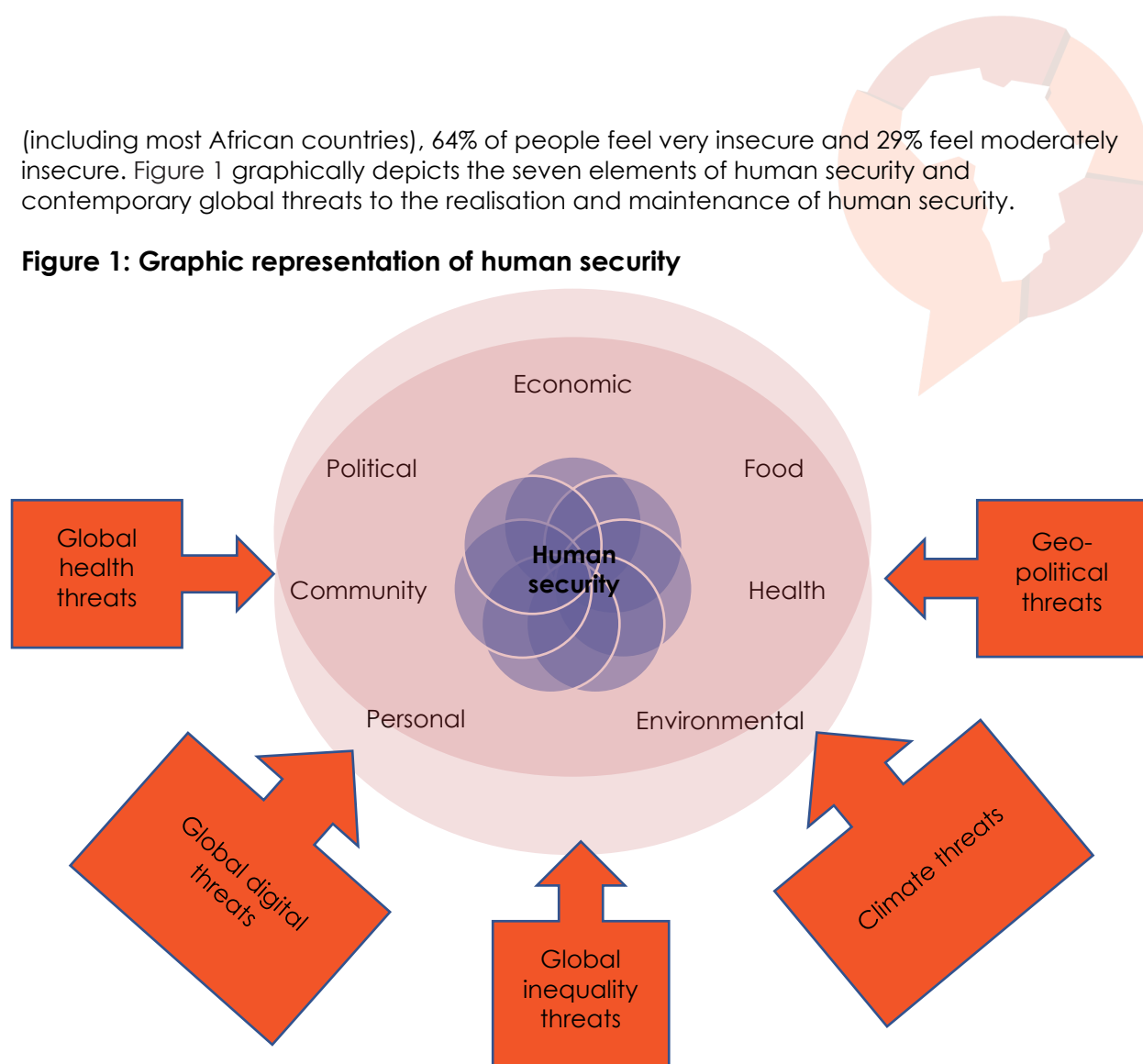
Between the 1990s and 2010s, the term “human security” became widely used in both the development and security literatures. The UN Commission on Human Security was established in January 2001, and human security began to feature more regularly in UN reports and UN General Assembly resolutions (Martin, n.d.). A prominent report, *Human Security Now* (Commission on Human Security, 2003), provided an updated definition suggesting that human security entails the protection and integrity of the “vital core” of human capabilities, such as fundamental freedoms and human fulfilment. This includes not only protecting persons and groups from severe threats, but also building agency and resilience among populations through the establishment of systems, structures, and processes that support individuals’ strengths and aspirations to ensure that people survive, thrive, and live dignified lives. An underlying notion was that “People protected can exercise many choices. And people empowered can avoid some risks and demand improvements in the system of protection” (Commission on Human Security, 2003, p. 12). That is, human security has a key agency dimension in that it seeks to “empower and emancipate” individuals and communities so they can more meaningfully take charge of their own lives by “putting them at the centre of policy, analysis, and debate and addressing the problems they face in their daily lives” (McCormack, 2008, p. 113).

Discussions and debates related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) led to a resurgence of interest in human security, increasingly viewed as a precondition for and a key facilitatory aspect of sustainable and inclusive development. Human security frameworks have been constructed to formulate and analyse responses to complex and interrelated challenges to the survival and dignity of people, such as climate change and poverty. For example, the UN Human Security Unit (2016) proposed a human security framework that comprises five key principles: people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented, and including both protection and empowerment. There has been growing consensus that, in essence, human security means freedom from fear, want, and indignity.

The definitional debate about human security has been further advanced by the UNDP (2022) special report titled *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity*. This report emphasises a sense of increased human insecurity accelerated by a variety of global threats, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (and the possibility of future pandemics), geopolitical shifts (as demonstrated by the war in Ukraine), the digital divide, and climate change. The report also states: “[A] strong focus on economic growth and much less attention to equitable human development have produced stark and growing inequalities and destabilizing and dangerous planetary change” (UNDP, 2022, p. 3). In particular, the report notes that in low and medium human development countries

(including most African countries), 64% of people feel very insecure and 29% feel moderately insecure. Figure 1 graphically depicts the seven elements of human security and contemporary global threats to the realisation and maintenance of human security.

Figure 1: Graphic representation of human security



Human security in six countries: An overview

There is consensus in the human security literature that an intrinsic link exists between human development and human security. That is, human beings are generally freer from fear, want, and indignity in countries with higher levels of human development, as they are empowered to identify and pursue paths to meaningful and safe lives rooted in increasing freedoms. Hence human development ultimately leads to improvements in the well-being of underdeveloped populations (Duffield, 2006; UNDP, 2020).

The six target countries are at different levels of human development: Tunisia and Gabon are classified as having high human development; Namibia, Kenya, and Angola are rated as having medium human development; and Nigeria is ranked among low human development countries. All six recorded marginal increases in their Human Development Index scores between 2010 and 2019 (UNDP, 2020).

Human development and human security are fundamentally affected by the quality of governance at the state level (Howe, 2013), as governance determines how common resources essential for human survival and living a dignified life are managed and distributed. Hence, good governance is likely to enhance human security (Smith, 2007; Davis, 2017).

Further, both human development and human security tend to prosper in peaceful societies, which typically enjoy more inclusive economic growth, higher levels of life expectancy, and more robust health and education systems than non-peaceful societies (Cortright, 2016). This is largely demonstrated in Table 2, which lists the Human Development Index (HDI), Ibrahim

Index of African Governance (IIAG), and Global Peace Index (GPI) scores for these countries. For the HDI and GPI, a score of 1 is a perfect scenario; a higher HDI score equates to a higher level of human development, while a higher GPI score indicates a less peaceful society. For the IIAG, higher scores equate to more effective governance performance. Higher peace and governance scores are generally matched with lower (more peaceful) GPI scores, but this development-governance-peace nexus is not entirely consistent in terms of the scoring. Tunisia, for example, has the highest HDI and IIAG scores, but a lower GPI score than three of the other countries because of risks associated with safety and security within Tunisia (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022a).

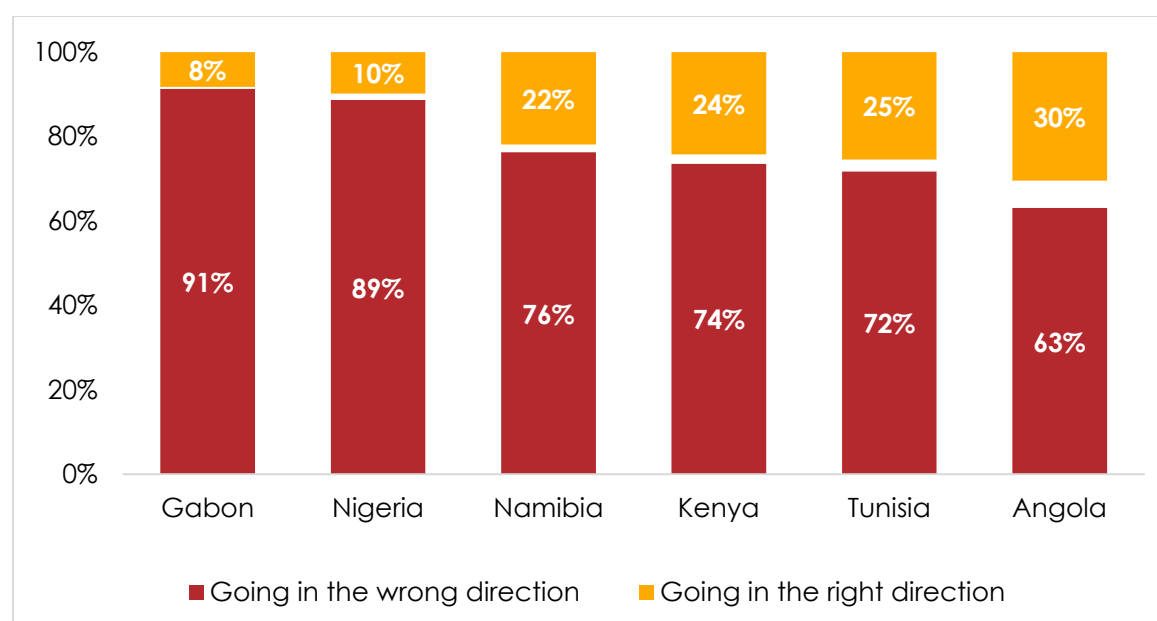
Table 2: Human Development Index, Ibrahim Index of African Governance, and Global Peace Index scores: 6 African countries

	Human Development Index (2020) score	Ibrahim Index of African Governance (2020) score	Global Peace Index (2022) score
Tunisia	0.740	70.4	1.996
Gabon	0.703	47.7	1.973
Namibia	0.646	65.1	1.908
Kenya	0.601	58.5	2.303
Angola	0.581	40	1.982
Nigeria	0.539	45.5	2.725

Hence, if human security theory holds true, increases in human development should translate to human security gains. However, as the sections below will demonstrate, the relationship between human development and human security, as seen through citizens' eyes, is complex.

Starting with people's overall feeling about the direction of their country, we find evidence of considerable insecurity. In all six countries, large majorities say their countries are going "in the wrong direction," ranging from 63% in Angola to 91% in Gabon (Figure 2).

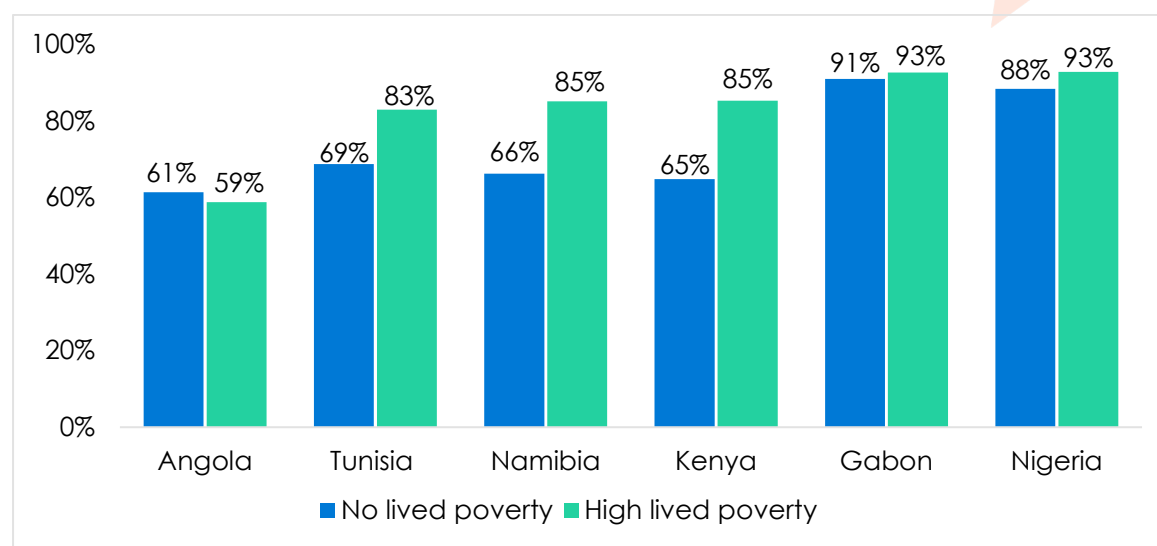
Figure 2: Country going in the right or wrong direction? | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?

Men and women differ very little in their views except in Tunisia, where women (74%) are more pessimistic than men (69%) about the direction of their country. Except in Angola and Gabon, pessimism about the overall direction of their country is particularly pronounced among the poorest respondents, with between 83% and 93% of people experiencing high lived poverty² expressing this view (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Country going in the wrong direction | by lived poverty | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction? (% who say “wrong direction”)

A high level of pessimism regarding their country's direction can be seen as reflecting a sense of unease or apprehension about whether basic human security needs will be satisfied. It may be informed by negative economic and governance experiences and assessments, including those related to COVID-19 and the government's response to the pandemic (Bigsten, 2016; Chen, Lee, Dong, & Taniguchi, 2021; Wu et al., 2021).

In terms of human security priorities identified in the Afrobarometer data, respondents in the six countries most often identify unemployment and management of the economy as the “most important” problems that their governments should address. Urban residents and men are particularly likely to emphasise these two issues. Gabonese citizens cite health as a priority area, while for Kenyans, crime is a significant issue in addition to job creation and economic performance. Poverty and food insecurity are also key areas of concern for respondents in most countries, though to a lesser degree.

These findings suggest a degree of prioritisation among elements of human security, with economic security – which often underpins other human security elements such as food, health, and personal security – at the top.

Economic security

Economic insecurity is prominent in all six countries highlighted in this paper. Poverty levels, considered as the proportion of the population living below the international poverty line of US \$1.90 a day, are particularly high in Angola (32.3%), Gabon (33.4%), Kenya (36.1%), and

² 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 & Patel (2022).

Nigeria (40.1%) (World Bank, 2022a) (Table 3). In addition, all six countries have experienced declining GDP per capita growth rates in recent years, with negative consequences for stable household income.

Researchers have estimated that about 86% of total employment in Africa occurs in the informal sector (mainly agriculture and petty trade), with more women (89.7%) than men (82.7%) being employed in the informal sector (Kiaga & Leung, 2020). Informal-sector employment is in excess of 80% in Nigeria, Kenya, and Angola, and somewhat lower in Tunisia and Namibia. These workers often experience unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, with inadequate labour and social protections and with low or irregular pay (International Labour Organization, 2022a).

For many households in Nigeria, Kenya, and Tunisia, personal remittances are an important source of income, making up between 3.4% and 4.7% of GDP. For Angola, Gabon, and Namibia, remittances make up less than 0.4% of GDP (International Organization for Migration, 2022). International remittance flows to sub-Saharan Africa declined by 8.1% in 2020 due to COVID-19 lockdowns, but they rebounded in 2021 (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development, 2022), demonstrating that economic security can be weakened (or strengthened) by the introduction of more (or less) restrictive international migration regulations.

The provision of social protection in Africa is generally extremely limited; only 7.3% of the working-age population is protected by comprehensive social security systems (International Labour Organization, 2022a). In Angola, Kenya, and Nigeria, the share of the population covered by at least one social protection benefit is between 10% and 11%. Social protection is much better in Namibia (24.2%) and Tunisia (50.2%). Across Africa, government spending on social assistance averages 3.8% of GDP; social protection spending in Gabon, Nigeria, and Kenya is less than 0.5% of GDP, while Tunisia spends 0.8% and Namibia 2.9% of GDP (International Labour Organization, 2022b).

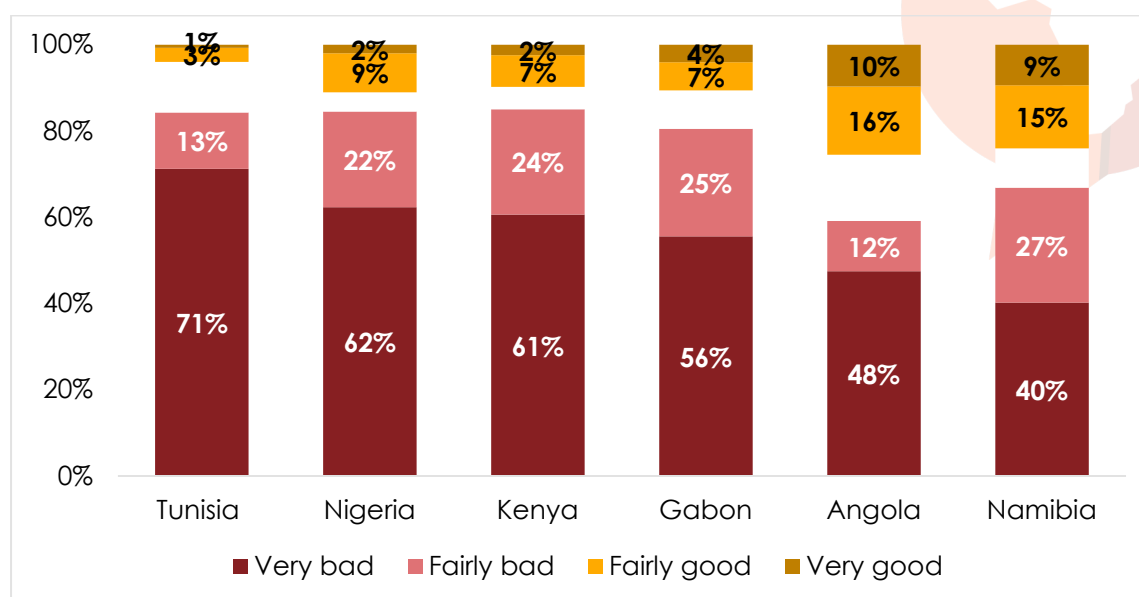
Table 3: Macro-level economic security indicators

	% of pop. below poverty line (2022)	% employed in informal sector (2020)	Remittances as % of GDP (2022)	% of pop. with social protection (2022)
Tunisia	15.2	58.8	4.7	50.2
Gabon	33.4	n/a	0.1	n/a
Namibia	17.4	67.0	0.4	24.2
Kenya	36.1	83.0	3.4	10.1
Angola	32.3	94.1	<0.1	10.5
Nigeria	40.1	92.9	4.3	11.0

Structural economic challenges such as poor growth, informal employment, and inadequate social protection are reflected in the experiences of African citizens. Figure 4 below shows that in all six surveyed countries, large majorities feel economically insecure, describing the current economic situation in their country as “fairly bad” or, more often, “very bad.” More than eight in 10 Tunisians (84%), Nigerians (84%), Kenyans (85%), and Gabonese (81%) share this sentiment, along with 67% of Namibians and 60% of Angolans.

Negative assessments of the economy are particularly common among the poor and those with no formal education or only primary education, especially in Gabon and Kenya. Men and women are about equally gloomy when it comes to their country's economic condition, as are rural and urban residents.

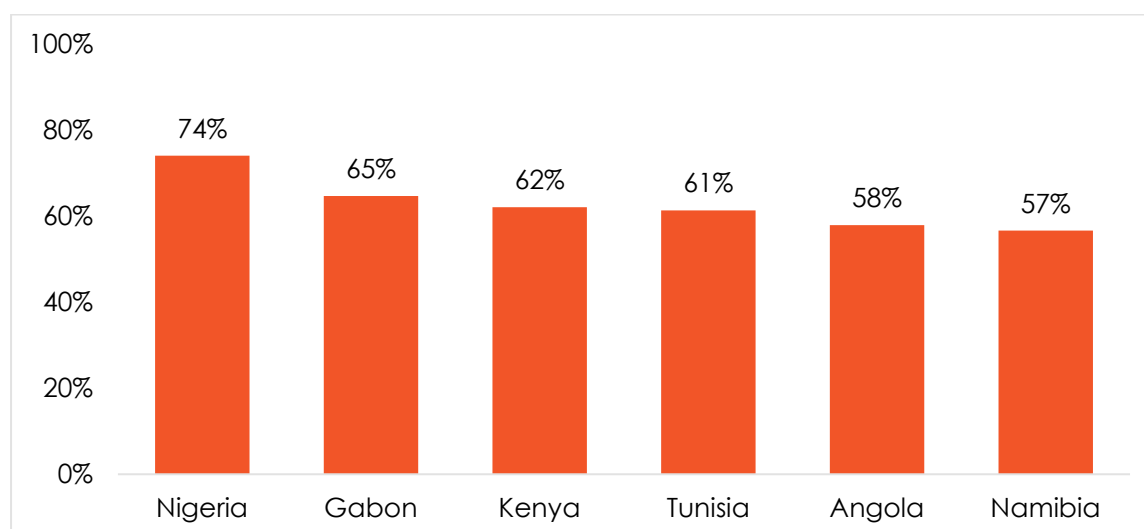
Figure 4: Economic condition of the country | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



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

When asked about current economic conditions compared to 12 months before the survey, substantial majorities in all six countries say they are now “worse” or “much worse” (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Country's economic conditions worse than 12 months ago | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



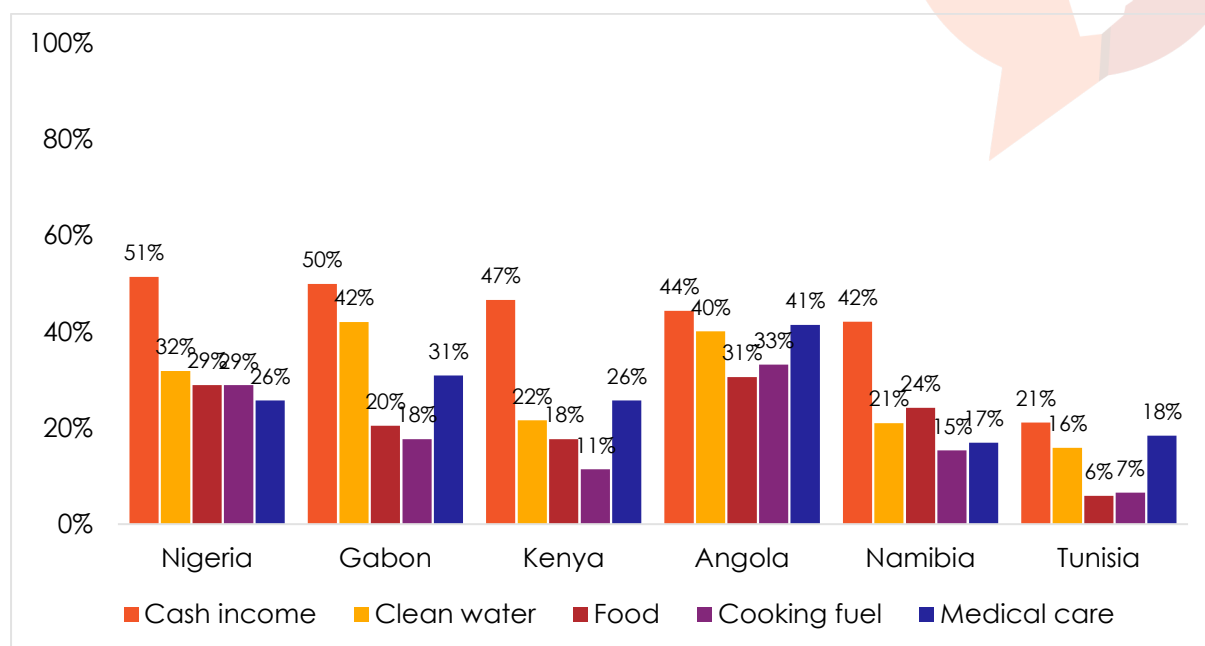
Respondents were asked: Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago? (% who say “much worse” or “worse”)

These assessments are also reflected in people's experience of “lived poverty,” or the deprivation of basic life necessities (enough food, enough clean water, medical care or medicines, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income). In this section we focus on lack of a cash income as an indicator of economic insecurity; lack of food, medical care, and water will be discussed in the sections on food, health, and environmental security below.

As shown in Figure 6 below, half of Nigerians (51%) and Gabonese (50%) report that they or a family member went without a cash income “many times” or “always” during the year

preceding the survey. Almost as many Kenyans (47%), Angolans (44%), and Namibians (42%) say the same thing. Only in Tunisia did much fewer citizens (21%) frequently lack an income.

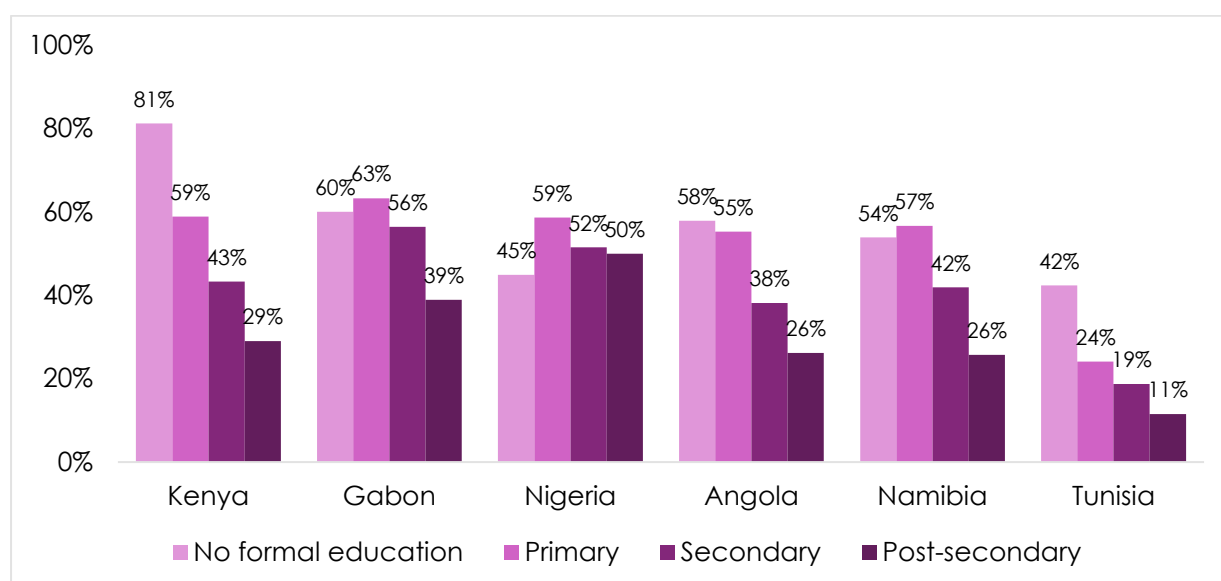
Figure 6: Frequently went without basic necessities | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



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? (% who say “many times” or “always”)

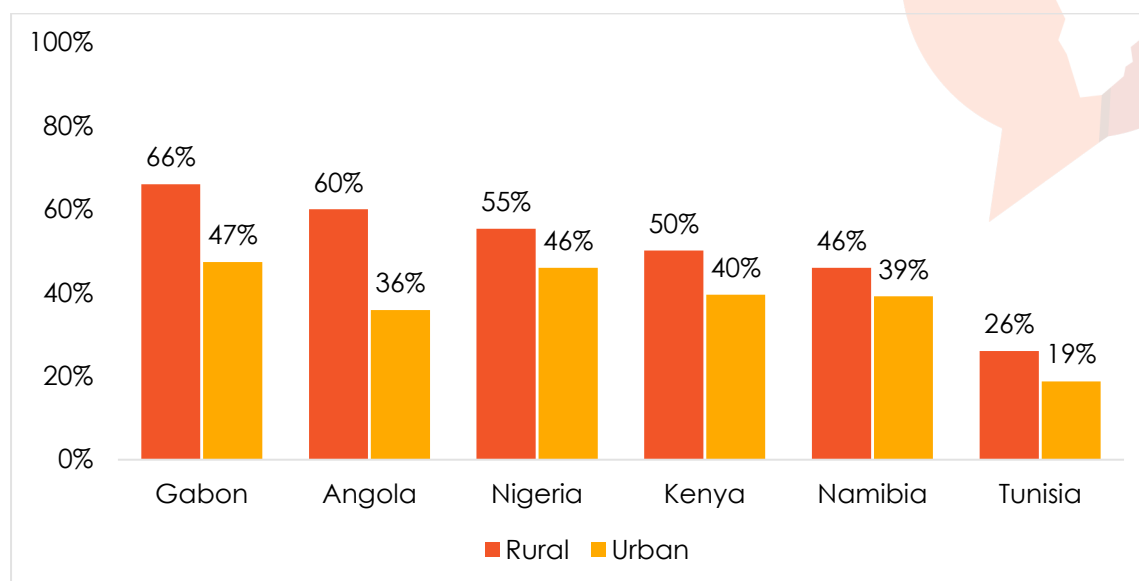
In most countries, going without a cash income was especially common among citizens with primary schooling or less (58% on average across the six countries) (Figure 7). Rural populations were substantially more affected by a lack of an income than urban residents, especially in Gabon (66% vs. 47%) and Angola (60% vs. 36%) (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Frequently went without a cash income | by level of education | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without a cash income? (% who say “many times” or “always”)

Figure 8: Frequently went without a cash income | by rural-urban location
| 6 African countries | 2021/2022

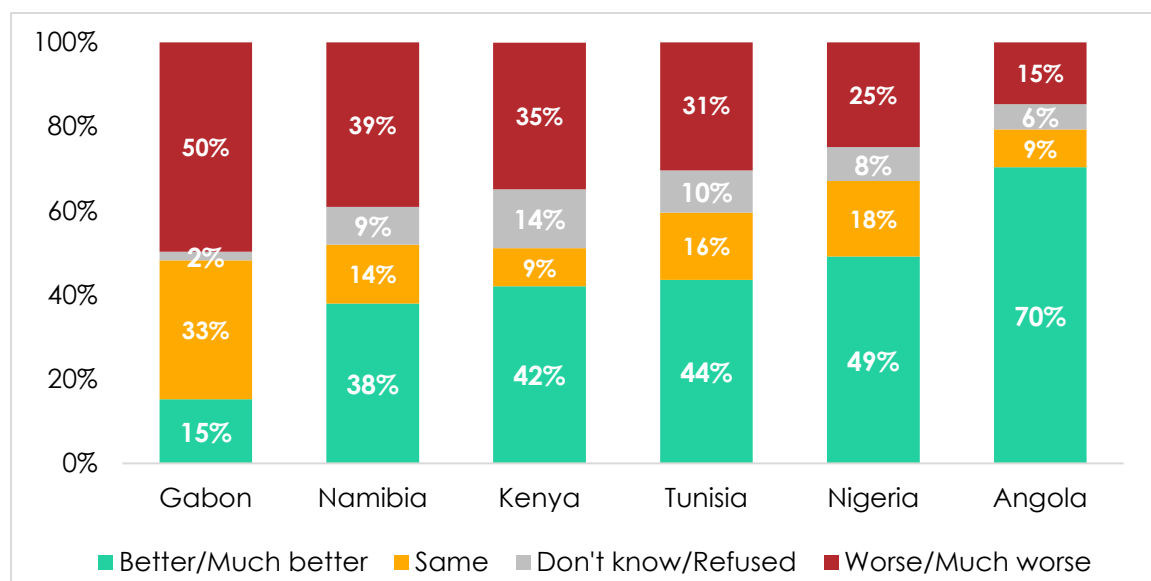


Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without a cash income? (% who say “many times” or “always”)

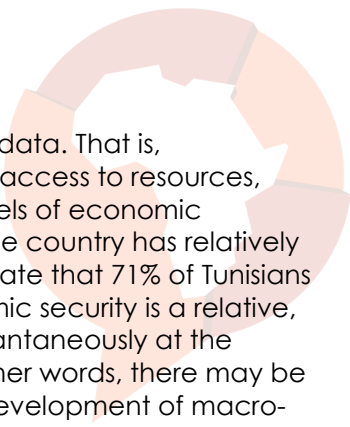
Looking to the future, people's economic outlook is somewhat less gloomy, although projections vary widely across the study countries. As shown in Figure 9, half (50%) of Gabonese expect economic conditions to get “worse” or “much worse” during the next 12 months, while only 15% think things will improve. At the other extreme, 70% of Angolans are optimistic, while only 15% are pessimistic.

Namibians, Kenyans, and Tunisians are fairly divided in their expectations, while optimists outnumber pessimists by 2-to-1 in Nigeria.

Figure 9: Economic prospects of the country in the next year | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?



The Afrobarometer data generally mirror the macro-level economic data. That is, populations in those countries with high levels of poverty and limited access to resources, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Gabon, and Angola, have reported high levels of economic insecurity. Tunisia is an outlier, as the macro indicators suggest that the country has relatively high levels of economic security, while the Afrobarometer data indicate that 71% of Tunisians think economic conditions are “very bad.” This suggests that economic security is a relative, context-specific phenomenon that may be experienced almost instantaneously at the individual level but may take time to reflect at the macro level. In other words, there may be a lag between what people experience in their daily lives and the development of macro-level indicators.

Food security

Many African countries are acutely affected by food insecurity. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has estimated that about 55% of Africans experienced moderate or severe food insecurity between 2018 and 2020 (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021). According to FAO data, the prevalence of moderate/severe food insecurity was above the African average (of 33.7%) in Angola, Kenya, Namibia, and Nigeria, with Angola (73.5%) and Kenya (68.5%) being the most food-insecure of the six countries³ (Table 4).

Data reported on the UN SDG data platform indicate that among the six countries that are the focus of this paper, Kenyans are most severely affected by hunger (23% of the population), followed by Angola (18.6%) and Gabon (16.6%) (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). In Angola, Namibia, Nigeria, and Kenya – all experiencing food crises, according to the World Food Programme – food security has been worsened by economic recession (exacerbated by COVID-19) and acute drought (Global Network Against Food Crises, 2022). In pastoral communities, malnutrition resulting from drought has disproportionately affected women, children, and older people (Global Network Against Food Crises, 2022).

Table 4: Macro-level food security indicators

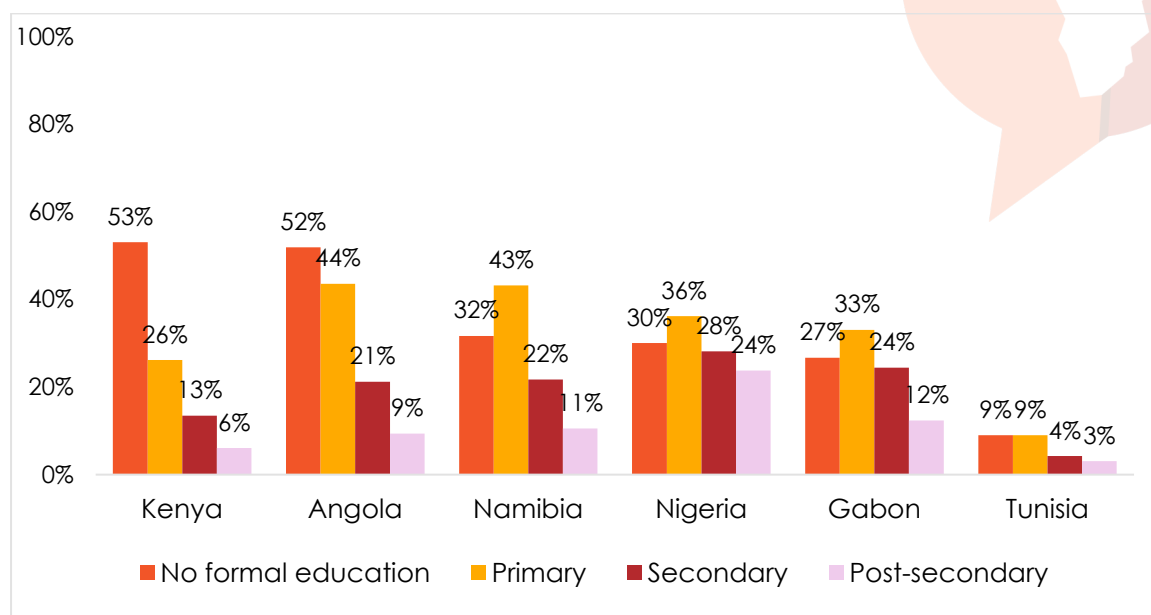
	Experienced severe food insecurity (% of population) (2021)	Experienced moderate food insecurity (% of population) (2021)	Affected by hunger (% of population) (2022)
Tunisia	10.7	25.1	2.5
Gabon	n/a	n/a	16.6
Namibia	32.1	57.6	14.7
Kenya	25.7	68.5	23.0
Angola	26.9	73.5	18.6
Nigeria	21.4	57.7	12.6

Afrobarometer findings confirm the extent of food insecurity in the six study countries, as shown in Figure 6 above. About three in 10 Angolans (31%) and Nigerians (29%) say they went without enough food “many times” or “always” during the preceding year, as do substantial proportions in Namibia (24%), Gabon (20%), and Kenya (18%). Tunisia again stands out, with just 6% of respondents reporting a frequent lack of food.

On average across the six countries, the least educated were most frequently affected by insufficient access to food (Figure 10). And food insecurity was considerably more common in rural areas than in cities, with gaps of 21 percentage points in Gabon, 17 points in Angola, and 15 points in Nigeria and Namibia (Figure 11).

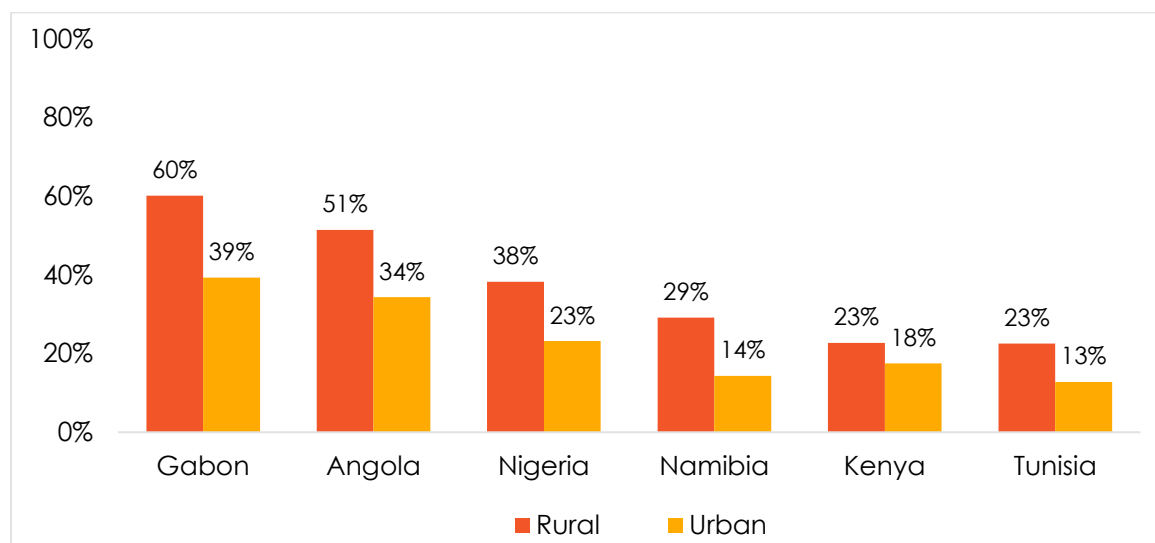
³ No FAO data are available on moderate/severe food insecurity in Gabon.

Figure 10: Frequently went without enough food | by level of education | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without enough food to eat? (% who say "many times" or "always")

Figure 11: Frequently went without enough food | by urban-rural location | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without enough food to eat? (% who say "many times" or "always")

Africa is also at heightened risk of food insecurity due to climate change, which has "increased the frequency and intensity of droughts in some regions, lowered animal growth rates and productivity in pastoral systems, and produced negative effects in food security in drylands, among other impacts" (World Meteorological Association, 2020, p. 22). Geopolitical dynamics, including the war in Ukraine, also create major risks to food security in Africa, especially in Kenya and Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2022a).

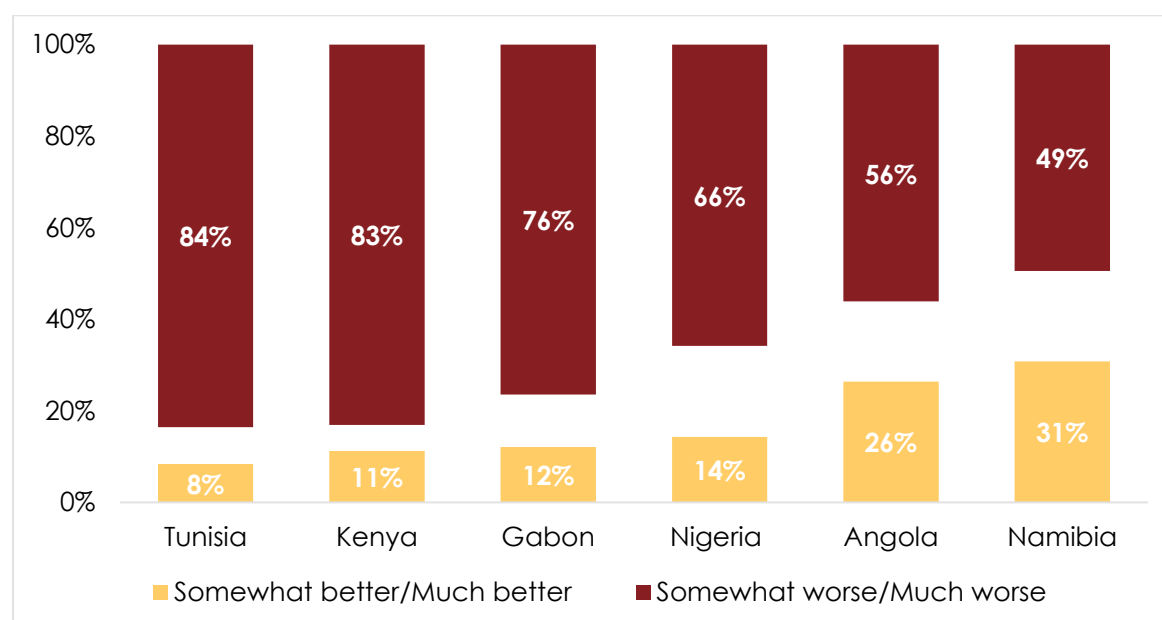
Despite its importance as a threat to human security, climate change is not widely known in Africa. While the impact of climate change may manifest in Afrobarometer survey data as

concerns about water and food shortages (Selormey, Dome, Osse, & Logan, 2019), survey findings indicate that a large proportion of respondents in the six countries have not heard of climate change, including 68% of Tunisians, 67% of Nigerians, and 52% of Namibians. Only in Gabon and Kenya do majorities say they are aware of climate change (70% and 53%, respectively).

In line with reports in the climate change literacy scholarship (Muttarak & Lutz, 2014; Simpson et al., 2021), Afrobarometer findings show that the lack of climate change awareness is highest in rural areas (67% vs. 47% in urban areas), among women (54% vs. 48% among men), among the poor (63% vs. 47% of those experiencing no lived poverty), and among those with little or no formal education (77% vs. 33% of those with a post-secondary education).

Among citizens who are aware of climate change, however, majorities in five countries (and a plurality in the sixth, Namibia) say that it is making life “somewhat worse” or “much worse” (Figure 12). More than three-fourths of adults who have heard of climate change share this assessment in Tunisia (84%), Kenya (83%), and Gabon (76%).

Figure 12: Is climate change making life worse? | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



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

The Afrobarometer data are largely consistent with the macro-level food security data on the most food-insecure populations, namely Angolans, Namibians, and Nigerians: More than a quarter of people in these three countries report that they frequently went without enough food to eat in the past year. However, the Afrobarometer data indicate that food insecurity in Kenya may not be as acute as the macro data suggest. This probably suggests that in some countries, people develop coping mechanisms to mitigate the effects of limited access to food, which emphasises the complex (and context-specific) nature of measuring food security at the macro level.

Health security

On a variety of indicators of health security, these six countries tend to record sub-par performances, though scores vary by country (Table 5).

On universal health coverage, an SDG target and an indicator of access to dignified health care, Nigeria (38.3), Angola (39.2), Kenya (51.6), and Gabon (53) score well below the global

average of 67 on the Universal Health Coverage Service Coverage Index (World Health Organization, 2022a). Namibia (62.2) and Tunisia (68.1) perform considerably better. Encouragingly, all six countries' scores have increased significantly since 1990.

None of the six countries matches the global average of 18 medical doctors per 10,000 people, another indicator of access to dignified health care. Kenya has the lowest ratio (1.6 per 10,000), followed by Angola (2.1), Nigeria (3.8), Namibia (4.2), Gabon (6.8), and Tunisia (13) (World Health Organization, 2022b).

Infant mortality is high in Nigeria (72 per 1,000 live births) and Angola (48), while Gabon, Kenya, and Namibia have infant mortality rates of about 30 per 1,000, close to the global average of 29 per 1,000 live births (World Health Organization, 2022b).

Table 5: Macro-level health security indicators

	Universal Health Coverage Service Coverage Index score (out of 100) (2022)	Medical doctors per 10,000 (2022)	Infant mortality per 1,000 live births (2022)
Tunisia	68.1	13.0	14
Gabon	53.0	6.8	31
Namibia	62.2	4.2	30
Kenya	51.6	1.6	31
Angola	39.2	2.1	48
Nigeria	38.3	3.8	72

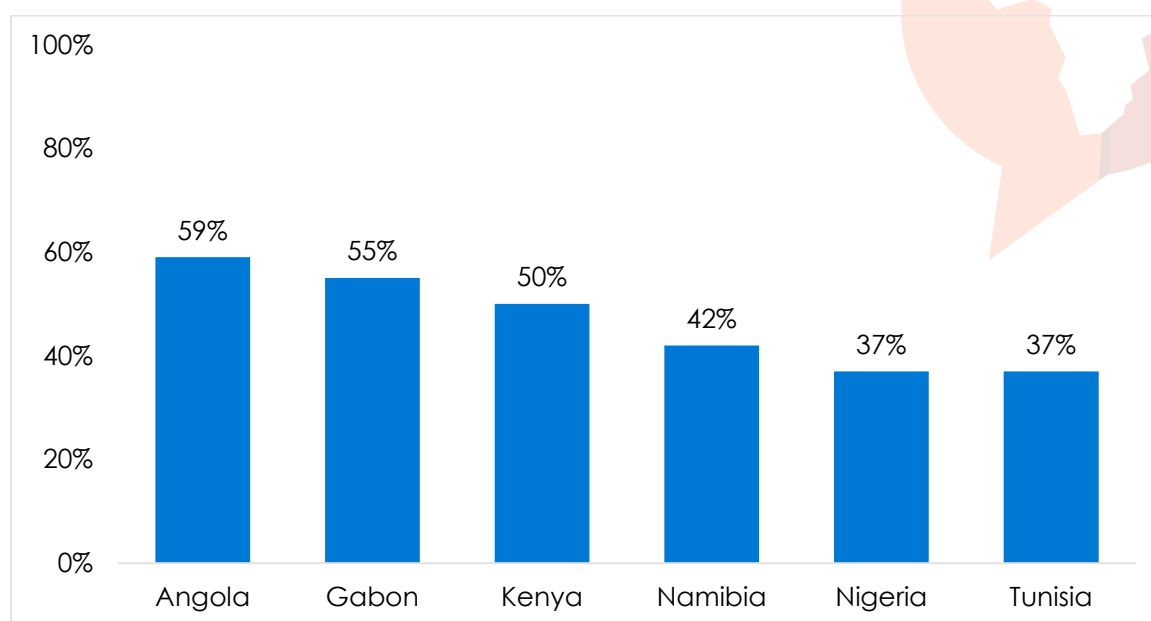
Variation by country with respect to access to dignified health care and medication is also evident in the Afrobarometer data. As shown in Figure 6 above, 41% of Angolans say they went without medical care or medicine “many times” or “always” during the previous year, in addition to substantial proportions who say this happened “several times” (25%) or “just once or twice” (17%). More than one-fourth of Kenyans (26%), Nigerians (26%), and Gabonese (31%) also report experiencing frequent deprivation of medical care, as do slightly fewer Tunisians (18%) and Namibians (17%).

On average across the six countries, frequently going without needed medical treatment or medication was more commonly experienced among rural populations (40%, vs. 21% in urban areas), as well as among citizens living in poverty (43%) and those with no formal schooling (68%). There were no significant gender or age disparities.

In addition to those who went without medical care, many citizens say they had trouble getting the care they needed. Among respondents who had contact with health facilities during the preceding year, majorities in Angola (59%) and Gabon (55%) report that it was “difficult” or “very difficult” to obtain services. So do 50% in Kenya, 42% in Namibia, and 37% in Nigeria and Tunisia (Figure 13).

Access to medical care and medication was more difficult for women than for men in Nigeria (41% vs. 32%) and Angola (61% vs. 56%), while fewer women than men reported difficulties in Tunisia (34% vs. 39%). Women's access to health care has been identified in studies as a persistent problem due to such factors as inadequate access to financial resources, family circumstances, and too few facilities that cater to women's needs (such as reproductive health care) (Dominic, Ogundipe, & Ogundipe, 2019).

Figure 13: Difficulty in accessing medical care | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents who had contact with health facilities during the previous year were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain the medical care you needed? (% who say "difficult" or "very difficult") (Respondents who had no contact with health facilities during the previous year are excluded.)

Among problems contributing to citizens' difficulties in obtaining care may be an inadequate supply of medical staff. Many respondents who sought care at a public hospital or clinic report finding an absence of doctors or other medical personnel "a few times" or "often." This was especially common in Tunisia (70%), Gabon (62%), and Angola (56%).

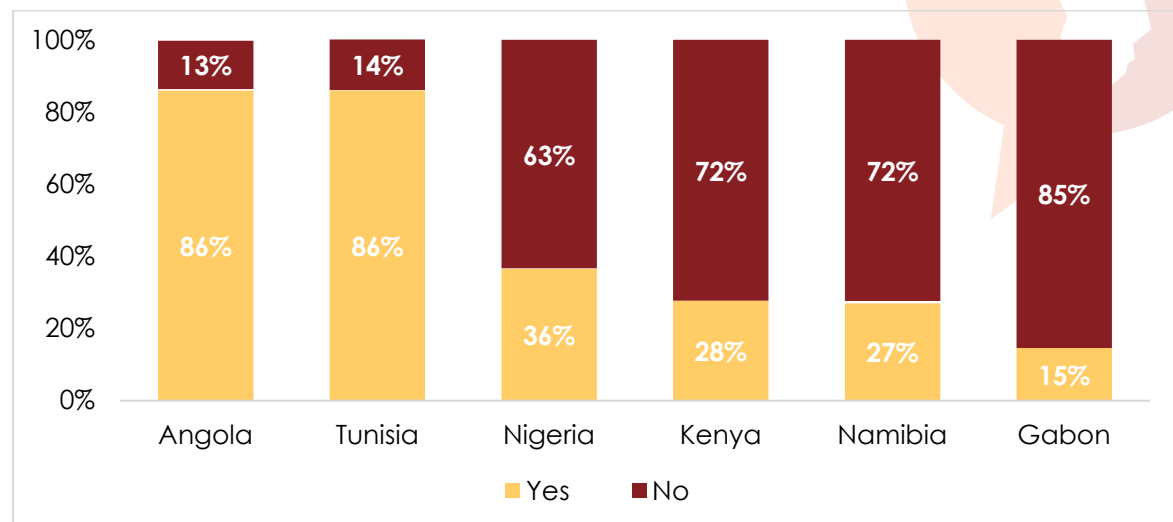
The COVID-19 pandemic has posed particular challenges for health systems in Africa and around the globe. One challenge is vaccination. According to World Health Organization (2023) data, Tunisia is the best-performing of the six countries in terms of COVID-19 vaccination rollout, with 54% of the population fully vaccinated by mid-February 2023. The other five countries have made less progress with their vaccination programmes, with only 25% of Angolans, 20% of Kenyans, 21% of Namibians, 12% of Gabonese, and 32% of Nigerians being fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Afrobarometer data show considerably higher self-reported COVID-19 vaccination levels, in part because the survey asked whether respondents had received at least one dose rather than whether they were fully vaccinated. Almost nine out of 10 Angolans (86%) and Tunisians (86%) report having received a COVID-19 shot, though self-reported vaccination rates are still relatively low in Nigeria (36%), Kenya (28%), Namibia (27%), and Gabon (15%) (Figure 14).

A study by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine reports that, apart from inadequate access to vaccines in many African countries, low vaccine uptake is driven mainly by misinformation, not being personally exposed to COVID-19, and concerns about vaccine safety (Samarasekera, 2021).

In all countries except Tunisia, self-reported levels of vaccination are noticeably lower in rural areas (33%, vs. 43% in urban areas, on average), as well as among poor citizens (31%), those without formal education (30%), and women (36%, vs. 41% of men) – groups that often experience difficulties accessing health care services in all countries except Tunisia.

Figure 14: Received at least one COVID-19 vaccination | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022

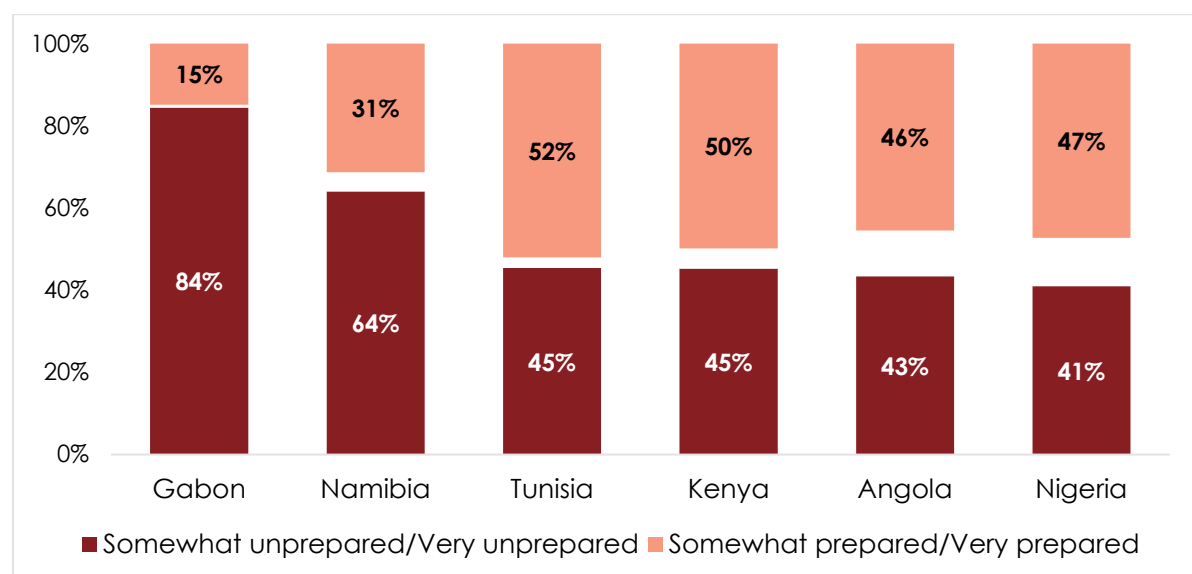


Respondents were asked: Have you received a vaccination against COVID-19, either one or two doses?

Looking beyond the current pandemic, the Global Health Security Index measures the capacities of 195 countries to prepare for epidemics and pandemics. The 2021 index indicates that most African countries (including the six countries highlighted in this paper) are greatly underprepared to respond adequately to pandemics in the future (Global Health Security Index, 2022).

Citizens in Gabon and Namibia agree with this assessment: 84% and 64%, respectively, say their government is “somewhat unprepared” or “very unprepared” for a future pandemic. Views are more mixed in Tunisia, Kenya, Angola, and Nigeria (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Country preparedness for future health emergencies | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: After experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic in [your country], how prepared or unprepared do you think the government will be to deal with future public health emergencies?

The experiences of ordinary citizens as reported in the Afrobarometer data mostly echo the macro data on health security, with those in countries with low levels of universal health

coverage service and a shortage of medical personnel reporting considerable difficulties in accessing medical care, such as Angola, Gabon and Kenya. However, the data for Nigeria are somewhat surprising, as Nigeria has the lowest universal health coverage service and the highest infant mortality rate of the six countries; nonetheless, Nigerians report fewer difficulties in accessing medical care compared to the other countries. This possibly suggests that interpretations of access to health care may vary across countries and/or that more people in Nigeria may be accessing traditional/non-Western health care systems, which may not be captured in the formal systems.

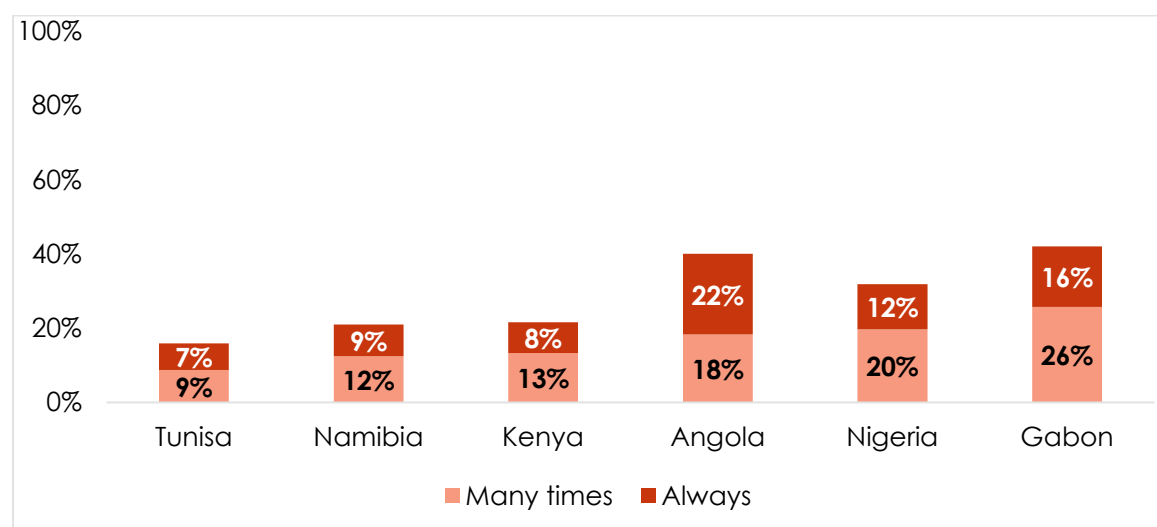
Environmental security

In many African countries, access to safe, reliable, and affordable water remains limited. In five of the countries examined in this paper – Tunisia being the exception – less than half the population has access to basic handwashing facilities (see Table 6 below), including just 24.7% in Kenya and 26.7% in Angola (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). Further, except in Tunisia, access to basic water services by the rich and the poor is starkly unequal, especially in Angola and Kenya (UNICEF, 2022).

Precarious access to clean water is also reflected in the Afrobarometer data: Only 5% of Nigerians, 23% of Kenyans, and 31% of Angolans report that they have piped water in their dwellings or compounds. Access to water is better in the other countries, where more than 60% of citizens say they have access to piped water.

Moreover, a significant number of people say they went without enough clean water “many times” or “always” during the previous year, led by Gabon (42%) and Angola (40%) (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Frequently went without enough clean water | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



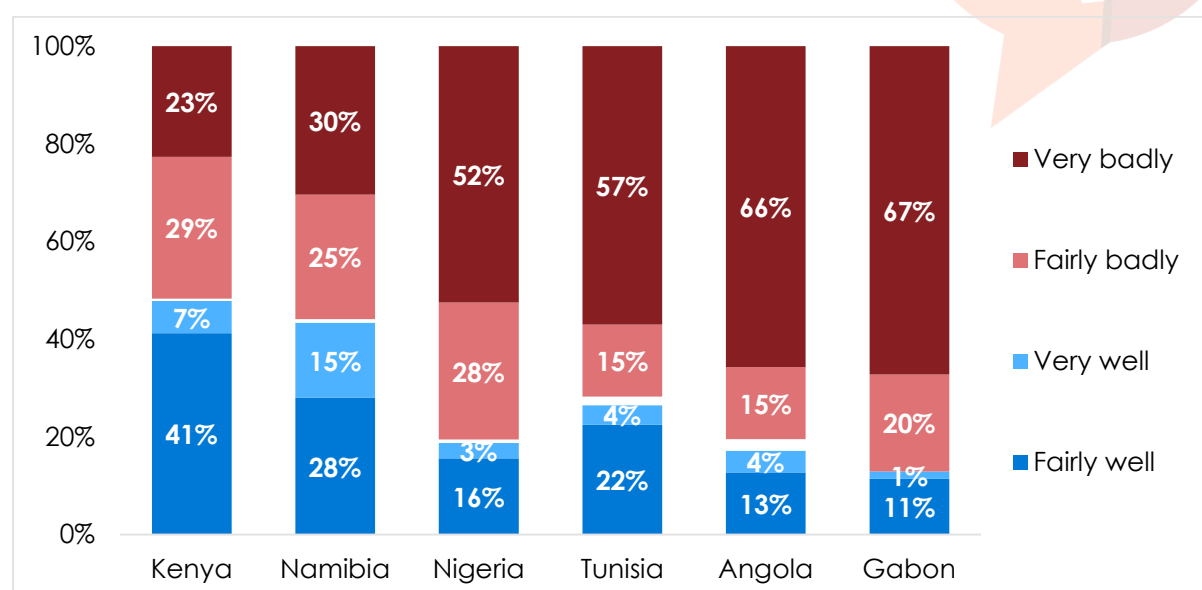
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without enough clean water for home use?

Inadequate access to clean water is reflected in high levels of dissatisfaction with the government’s performance in delivering water and sanitation services (Figure 17). Majorities in all six countries say their government is doing a “fairly bad” or “very bad” job on water/sanitation, including at least eight out of 10 citizens in Gabon (87%), Nigeria (81%), and Angola (80%).

Dissatisfaction with government delivery of water and sanitation services is fairly consistent across ages and genders, but it is higher in rural areas than in cities (76% vs. 67% on average across the six countries). Negative assessments are also more common among less educated

citizens in Gabon, Namibia, and Kenya and among the poorest respondents (except in Nigeria).

Figure 17: Government provision of water and sanitation services | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



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: Providing water and sanitation services?

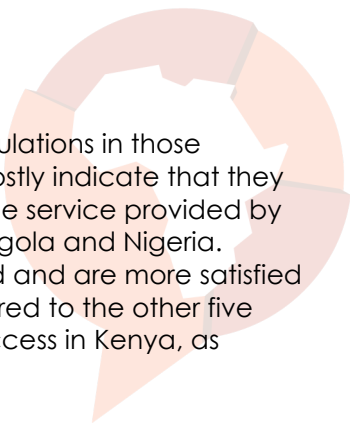
According to data published by the World Resources Institute (2022), most African countries are at elevated water risk, meaning they are particularly vulnerable to droughts and floods, seasonal variability of rainfall, and water stress. Namibia and Angola are classified as being at extremely high water risk, Kenya and Nigeria at high, and Tunisia and Gabon at medium to low. Water risk is likely to be exacerbated by climate change.

Despite not being major contributors to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions resulting in global warming, African countries face numerous other climate-change hazards in addition to water insecurity. Compared to wealthier countries in Europe, the Americas, and Asia, air pollution per capita in the six African countries is low, ranging from 0.4 metric tons of CO₂ emissions per capita in Kenya to 92.6 in Tunisia (vs. a global average of 4.5 metric tons) (Climate Watch, 2020). Nonetheless, Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia, and Angola are at notable risk of experiencing negative consequences of climate change and have limited capacity to cope with such changes, according to the INFORM indicators (International Monetary Fund, 2022). These four countries have also consistently experienced on average an annual surface temperature increase of more than 1 degree Celsius since 2015 compared to a 1950-1981 baseline (International Monetary Fund, 2022).

Table 6: Macro-level environmental security indicators

	Access to basic handwashing facilities (% of population)	Air pollution (CO ₂ emissions per metric ton) per capita
Tunisia	78.7	2.6
Gabon	n/a	2.4
Namibia	48.7	1.7
Kenya	24.7	0.4
Angola	26.7	0.8
Nigeria	41.9	0.6

Sources: World Health Organization (2022b) and Climate Watch (2020)



The Afrobarometer and macro-level data are closely related as populations in those countries with low levels of access to basic handwashing facilities mostly indicate that they often went without access to clean water and are dissatisfied with the service provided by their governments in this regard. This was especially the case with Angola and Nigeria. Kenyans report higher levels of access to clean water than expected and are more satisfied with their government's efforts to provide access to water as compared to the other five countries. This may suggest that apparent improvements to water access in Kenya, as experienced by citizens, may not be reflected in the macro data.

Personal and community security

Feeling secure in your home and community is a central part of human well-being. Fear of being a victim of crime or violence can result in high levels of stress, anxiety, and other negative mental health outcomes (Curiel & Bishop, 2018).

While reliable crime data for most African countries are generally not published, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2019) estimates that the annual homicide rate, which many crime researchers consider a proxy indicator for the level of violence in a society (Pratt & Godsey, 2003), is more than twice as high in Africa (13 per 100,000 people) as it is globally (6.1). Three of the six countries examined in this analysis (Tunisia and Kenya) have homicide rates below the global mean, while Nigeria's (21.99) is almost quadruple the global rate (see Table 7).

The Gallup (2022) Law and Order Index assigns law-and-order scores to countries based on citizens' views of personal safety (feelings of safety, exposure to common/street crime, and trust in the local police). High index scores indicate high levels of law and order. Gabon, Nigeria, Namibia, and Kenya are in the bottom one-fourth of 115 countries in terms of safety; Gabonese and Namibians feel less safe walking alone in their community at night than citizens of more than 90% of countries covered in the index.

Table 7: High-level personal and community security indicators

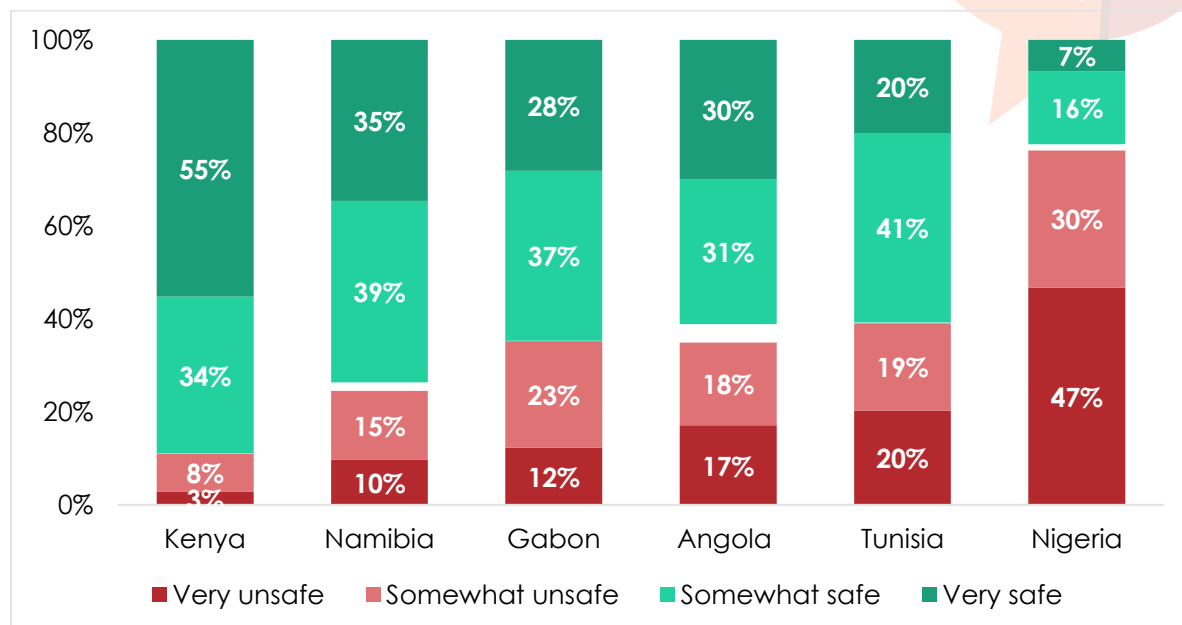
	Homicide rate (per 100 000) (2019)	Gallup Law and Order Index (2022)	Intimate partner violence victimisation (% of women/girls 15 years and older)
Tunisia	4.76	75	n/a
Gabon	n/a	54	48.6
Namibia	11.92	64	26.7
Kenya	3.46	63	40.7
Angola	n/a	n/a	34.8
Nigeria	21.99	65	17.4

Afrobarometer findings show wide variation across the six countries in perceptions of safety. In response to the question, "In general, would you say [your country] is a safe or unsafe country to live in?," more than three-fourths (77%) of Nigerians say their country is "somewhat unsafe" or "very unsafe" (Figure 18). Between 35% and 39% of respondents from Angola, Gabon, and Tunisia consider their country unsafe, while large majorities of Kenyans (89%) and Namibians (74%) think they live in a "somewhat safe" or "very safe" country.

Interestingly, in response to a further question about safety trends, three-fourths of respondents in Kenya (75%) and Namibia (74%) say their countries have become "a little more safe" or "much more safe" over the past five years, along with 56% of Angolans (Figure 19). But majorities see a decline in safety in Tunisia (56%), Gabon (71%), and Nigeria (72%).

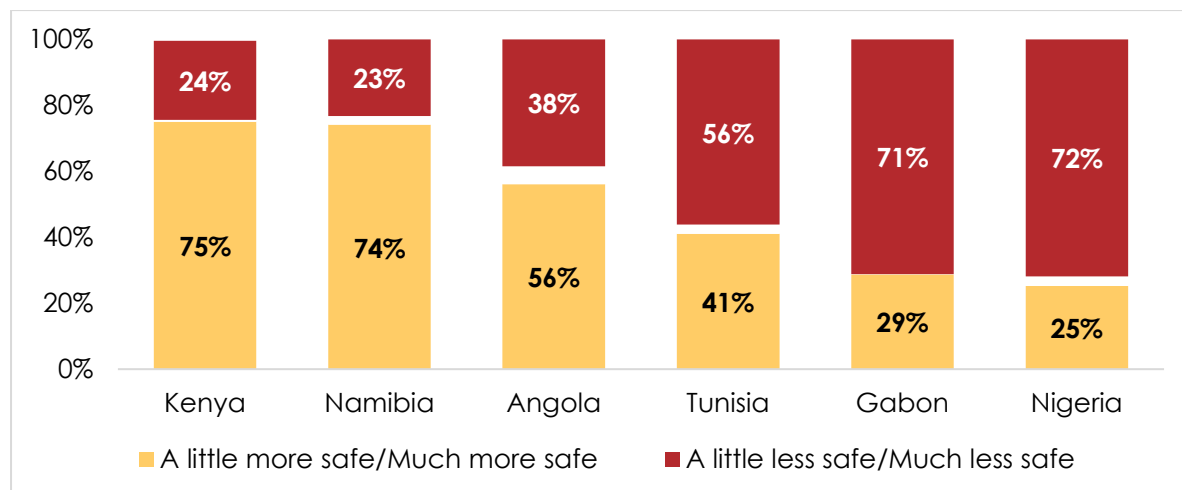
On average across the six countries, there were no significant differences by gender, age, education, or experience of poverty with regard to perceptions of increasing or decreasing safety in their country.

Figure 18: Country safe or unsafe? | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: In general, would you say [your country] is a safe or unsafe country to live in?

Figure 19: Safer or less safe? | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



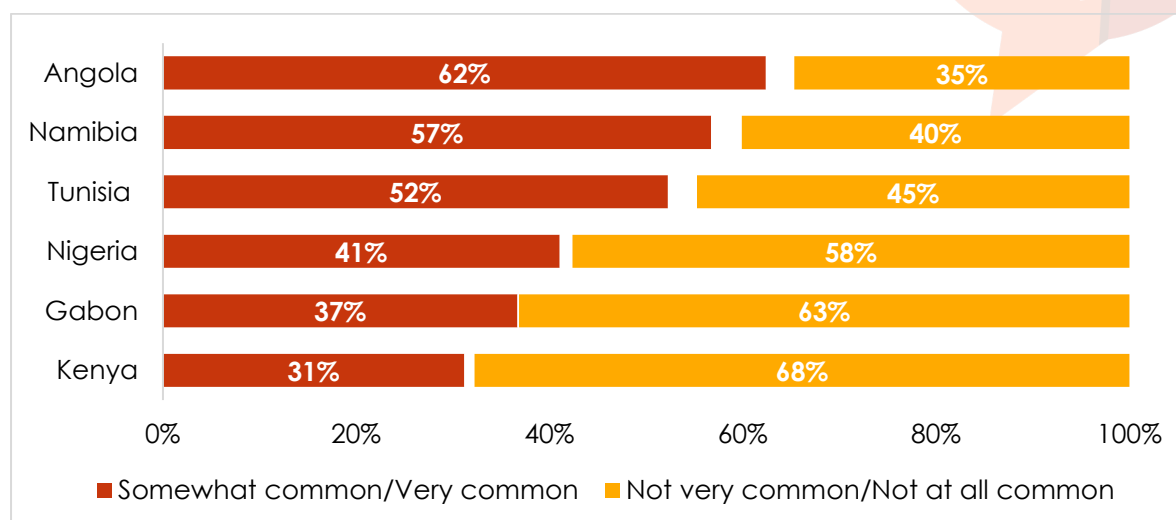
Respondents were asked: Looking back over the last five years, do you feel that the country has become safer or less safe?

Violence against women and girls is a significant problem in all six countries; on average, 48% of respondents say such violence is “somewhat common” or “very common” in their community. This assessment is most widespread in Angola (62%), followed by Namibia (57%) and Tunisia (52%), while only 31% of Kenyans describe violence against women and girls as common (Figure 20).

In all countries except Tunisia, more women than men report that violence against women and girls is common. This perception is also more prevalent in urban than in rural areas (50% vs. 43% on average across all six countries). And except in Nigeria, the poorest citizens are

more likely than their better-off counterparts to see violence against women and girls as a common occurrence.

Figure 20: How common is violence against women and girls? | 6 African countries | 2021/2022

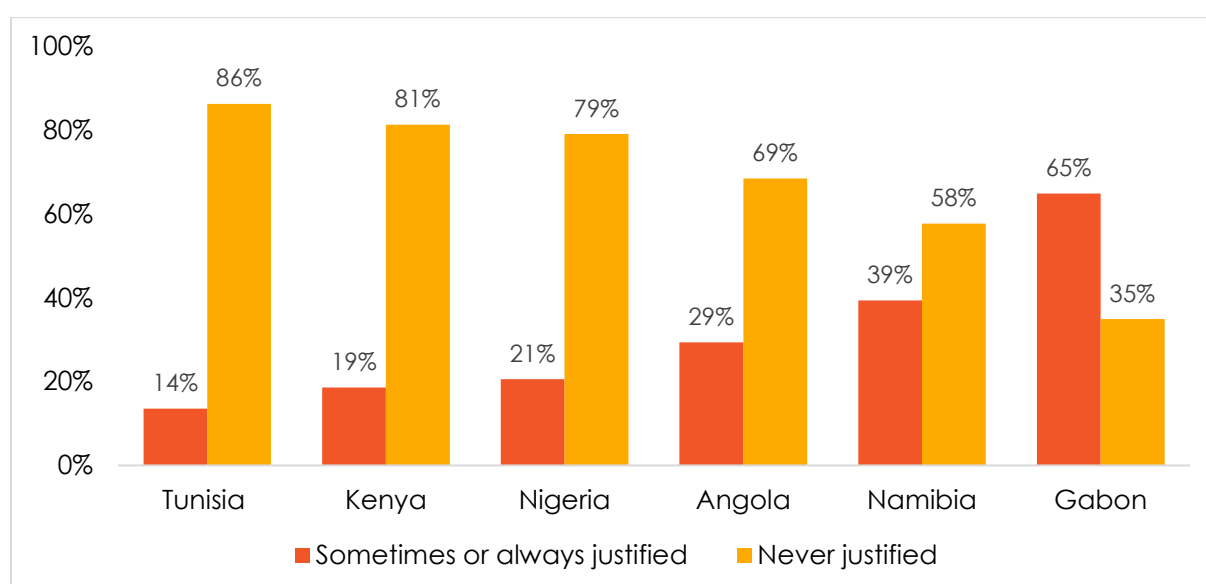


Respondents were asked: In this area, how common do you think it is for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or in the community?

Some women may also feel less than safe in their homes considering popular attitudes regarding men's use of physical force to discipline their wives (Figure 21). While majorities reject such violence as "never justified" in all countries except Gabon, substantial minorities endorse it as "sometimes" or "always" justified in Namibia (39%), Angola (29%), Nigeria (21%), Kenya (19%), and Tunisia (14%).

Gabon is an outlier: Two-thirds (65%) of all adults consider the use of physical force to discipline women justified.

Figure 21: Is the use of physical force to discipline women justified? | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to use physical discipline on his wife if she has done something he doesn't like or thinks is wrong?

On average across the six countries, acceptance of physical discipline against women is more common among people experiencing high levels of poverty (35%, vs. 25% of well-off people) and those with no formal education (41%, vs. 25% of those with post-secondary qualifications). In all countries except Namibia and Nigeria, more men than women hold this view, but it also garners significant support among women in Gabon (61%) and Angola (23%).

These findings are consistent with UNDP (2020) Human Development Index data indicating high levels of intimate-partner violence in Kenya (where 40.7% of women aged 15 and older have experienced such violence during their lifetime), Gabon (48.6%), and Angola (34.8%), (no data available for Nigeria).

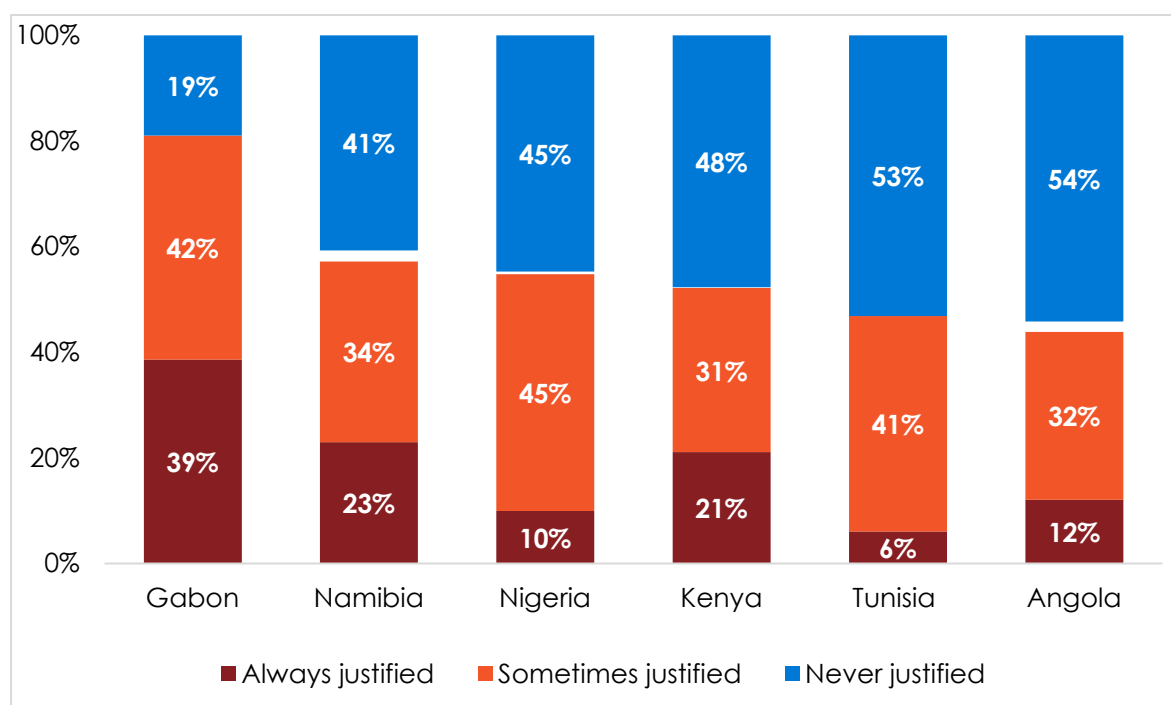
More Africans endorse the use of physical force to discipline children. On average across the six countries, 56% of respondents say parents are "sometimes" or "always" justified in physically disciplining their children. Majorities in four of the six countries favour this view, including 81% of adults in Gabon (Figure 22). In Tunisia and Angola, 53% and 54%, respectively, see this practice as "never justified."

On average across the six countries, support for physical disciplining of children is stronger in rural areas than in cities (36% vs. 28%), but we find no significant differences in averages by gender, age, education, or poverty level.

Approval of corporal punishment is not unique to Africa: The World Health Organization (2021) estimates that globally, 60% of children between the ages of 2 and 14 are regularly subjected to corporal punishment, despite evidence that it can result in physical and mental health problems and increase the risk of violence perpetrated by children.

Furthermore, studies have shown that parents who use corporal punishment on their children are at increased risk of committing more severe forms of child maltreatment (World Health Organization, 2021).

Figure 22: Justified for parents to physically discipline their children? | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For parents to use physical force to discipline their children?

When asked how often people in their community or neighbourhood physically discipline their children, almost two-thirds of Tunisians (65%) and Angolans (63%) say the practice is “somewhat frequent” or “very frequent” (Figure 23). More than four in 10 citizens agree in Namibia (46%), Gabon (45%), and Nigeria (43%).

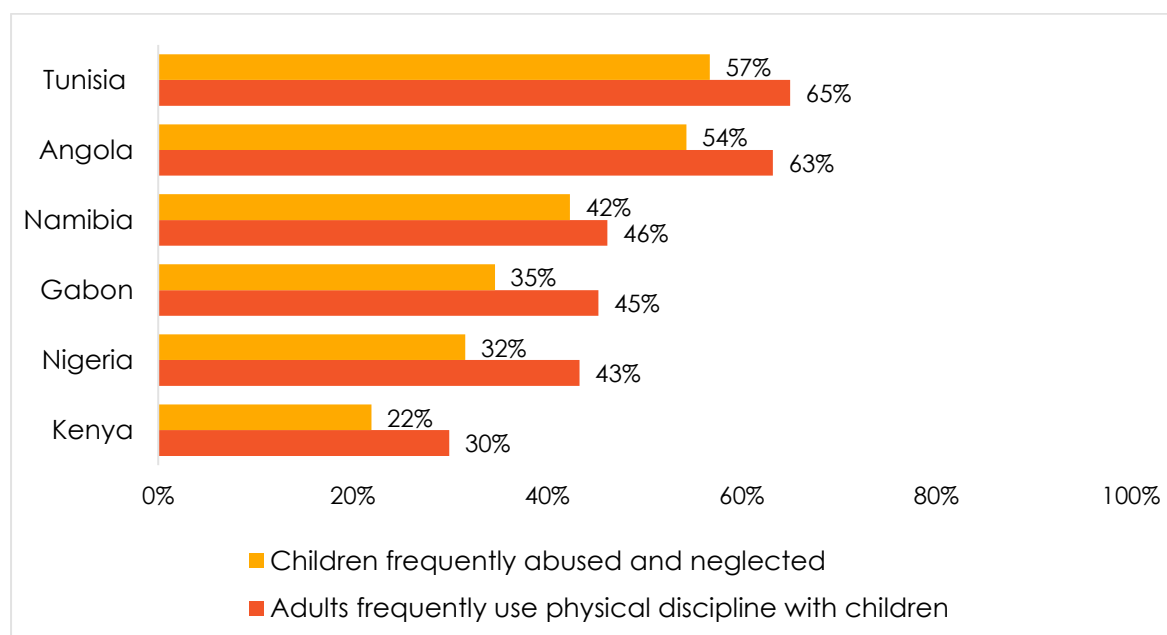
In the eyes of surveyed citizens, physical disciplining of children is more widespread than child abuse and neglect. Even so, majorities in Tunisia (57%) and Angola (54%) describe child abuse and neglect as “somewhat” or “fairly” frequent occurrences in their community. In Kenya, only 22% of respondents say child abuse and neglect happen frequently in their community.

Interestingly, countries where larger proportions of citizens see physical disciplining of children as a common occurrence are also more likely to record larger proportions reporting frequent child abuse and neglect.

Except in Namibia and Kenya, perceptions of child abuse as a frequent occurrence are more widespread in rural than in urban areas. On average across the six countries, we find no significant differences by gender, age, education, or poverty level. These findings are in line with numerous studies indicating that socio-economic status, age, and gender are not key determinants of child abuse and neglect, but that it is rather parent-child relations, family dynamics, and the inadequacy of child protection services that pose the greatest risk for child maltreatment globally (Stith et al., 2009).

Figure 23: Frequency of physical discipline, abuse, and neglect of children

| 6 African countries | 2021/2022



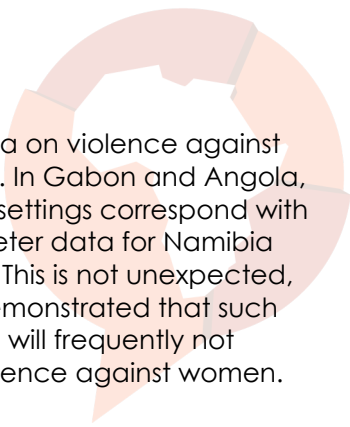
Respondents were asked: How frequently do you think the following things occur in your community or neighbourhood:

Adults use physical force to discipline children?

Children are abused, mistreated, or neglected?

(% who say “somewhat frequently” or “very frequently”)

There are some disparities between the Afrobarometer data and the macro-level data in terms of personal and community security. In the case of Nigeria, the relatively high homicide rate corresponds with very high levels of perceived insecurity (the highest among the six countries), but this is at odds with the relatively positive Gallup Law and Order score. For Tunisia, the macro-level data suggest that Tunisia is a safe place to live. Nonetheless, close to 40% of Tunisians feel unsafe. This suggests that personal and community security is a nuanced phenomenon that is highly sensitive to perceptions and situational factors.



There are also some incongruences between the Afrobarometer data on violence against women and the macro-level data on intimate partner violence (IPV). In Gabon and Angola, views that condone the use of violence against women in domestic settings correspond with high levels of IPV reported by UNDP (2020). However, the Afrobarometer data for Namibia and Kenya do not correspond with the IPV data published by UNDP. This is not unexpected, as scholars working on violence against women have consistently demonstrated that such violence tends to be under-reported and that respondents in surveys will frequently not provide reliable responses to questions concerning their views on violence against women.

Political security

Among countless ways to examine political security, one informative approach is through the concept of “positive peace,” which comprises “the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies” and can lead to “an optimal environment for human potential to flourish” (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022c, p. 4).

The Positive Peace Index 2022 ranks Tunisia and Namibia as enjoying high levels of positive peace, Kenya and Gabon as medium positive-peace countries, and Angola and Nigeria as experiencing low levels of positive peace (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022c).

For Angola, the index cites a lack of acceptance of the rights of others, a poorly functioning government, inequitable distribution of resources, and corruption as key factors undermining positive peace.

In the case of Nigeria, it identifies terrorism as an important factor weakening positive peace. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) shows that organised political violence incidents increased by almost 30% from 2020 to 2021 and that the country continued to experience numerous security threats from insurgent and militia groups in 2022 (ACLED, 2022a). Children in rural areas of Nigeria have been at heightened risk of abduction by armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2022b).

Despite being classified as experiencing medium levels of positive peace, both Gabon and Kenya are noted for high levels of corruption and governance problems (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022c). In Gabon, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) flagged weak democracy, growing restrictions on freedoms of association and assembly, and declining levels of safety and security (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2021). In Kenya, Nigeria, and Namibia, the IIAG found signs of deterioration in security/safety and the rule of law between 2010 and 2019, while there were improvements in Angola and Tunisia over the same period (see Table 8 below). Kenya has also been at heightened risk of extremist violence, especially from groups associated with Al-Shabaab based in neighbouring Somalia, and in 2022 parts of Kenya were affected by electoral violence (ACLED, 2022b).

The threat of collective violence and terrorism has remained relatively low in Angola, Namibia, Gabon, and Tunisia (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022b), although there is a small-scale protracted insurgency in Angola's Cabinda enclave and Tunisia has been at low-level risk of attacks from jihadist groups (Crisis Group, 2021).

Citizens in the six countries are also at risk of repression from state security forces. Police and militaries have been responsible for human rights abuses, including the use of excessive force against citizens, especially in relation to public protests. In this regard, there appears to be a correlation between security-force abuses and states with more pronounced institutional cultures of oppression, such as Kenya, Nigeria,⁴ Angola, and Tunisia (Amnesty International, 2022; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021).

⁴ In 2020, the International Criminal Court intimated that the Nigerian security forces may have been responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the context of their counterinsurgency operations against non-state armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2022b).

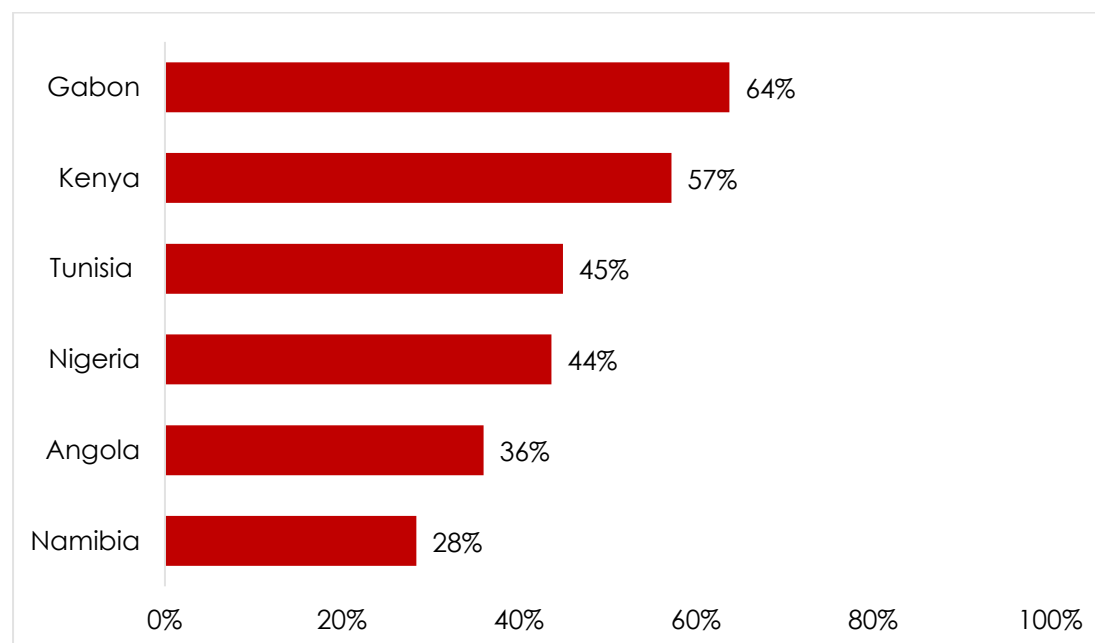
Table 8: Ibrahim Index of African Governance security and rule of law scores (2019)

	Security and rule of law score (out of 100) (2019)	Average change in security and rule of law score between 2010-2014 and 2015-2019
Tunisia	72.4	+13.4
Gabon	43.7	-3.2
Namibia	69.6	-2.0
Kenya	56.3	-2.3
Angola	44.1	+5.5
Nigeria	44.3	-3.2

Citizen experiences with political security vary widely across the six countries, including with respect to the impact of collective violence, repressive actions by security forces, apprehensions about openly criticising the government or ruling parties, and the protection of the rights of vulnerable and minority groups.

Significant proportions of the population report that police “often” or “always” use excessive force in managing public protests or demonstrations, including majorities in Gabon (64%) and Kenya (57%) and more than four in 10 citizens in Tunisia (45%) and Nigeria (44%) (Figure 24).

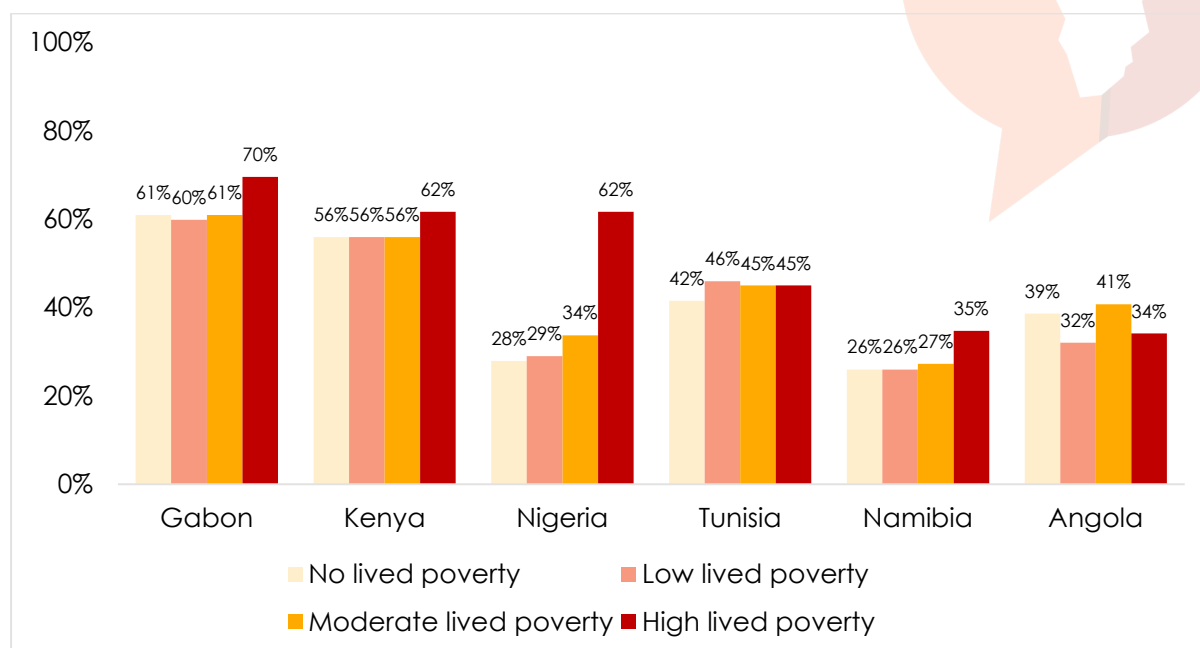
Figure 24: Police use excessive force during protests | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often do the police use excessive force in managing protests or demonstrations? (% who say “often” or “always”)*

In all six countries, this is a more common concern in urban than in rural areas. And except in Tunisia and Angola, citizens experiencing moderate or high levels of lived poverty are more likely to say police use excessive force during protests than their better-off counterparts (46% vs. 41% on average) (Figure 25). This aligns with the literature on the policing of protests, which finds that poorer communities tend to be disproportionately affected by police use of force (Terrill & Reisig, 2003).

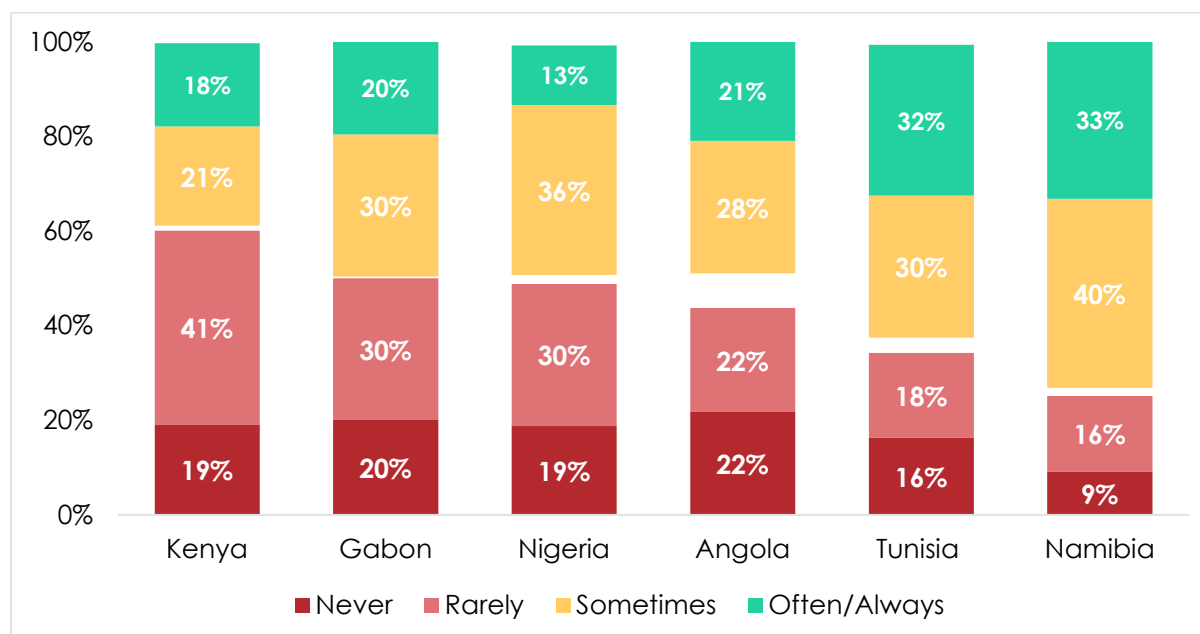
Figure 25: Police often/always use excessive force during protests | by lived poverty
| 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the police use excessive force in managing protests or demonstrations? (% who say "often" or "always")

Similarly, many respondents say the police "rarely" or "never" act in a professional manner and respect citizens' rights (Figure 26). Six in 10 Kenyans (60%) see the police as lacking professionalism and respect, as do half of Gabonese (50%) and Nigerians (49%). Even in Namibia, where only 25% complain about a lack of police professionalism, only one-third (33%) say the police "often" or "always" act professionally and respect everyone's rights.

Figure 26: Police professionalism and respect for citizens' rights | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



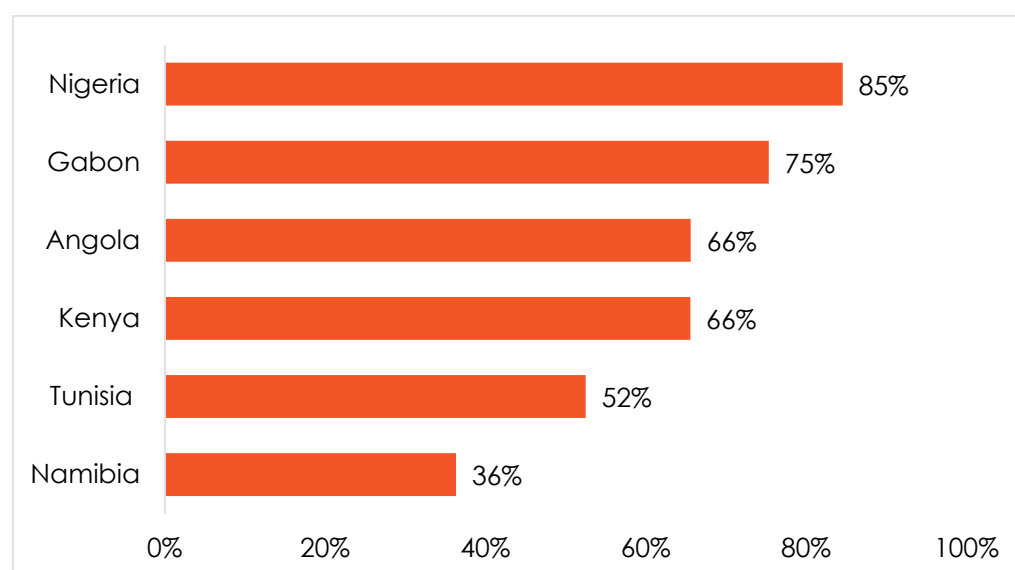
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the police in this country operate in a professional manner and respect the rights of all citizens?

Police behaviour that is brutal, repressive, disrespectful, or corrupt has strongly negative implications for public trust. Majorities in five of our six countries say they trust the police “just a little” or “not at all” (Figure 27). This includes 85% of Nigerians, perhaps reflecting public awareness of campaigns against police brutality such as the #EndSARS movement triggered by abuses by the country’s Special Anti-Robbery Squad (Human Rights Watch, 2022b). But large majorities also express distrust of the police in Gabon (75%), Angola (66%), and Kenya (66%).

Namibia stands out with 64% of citizens who say they trust the police “somewhat” or “a lot,” perhaps a reflection of less use of force by the Namibian police compared to their counterparts in the other five countries (Amnesty International, 2022).

In all six countries, low levels of trust in the police are more pronounced in cities than in rural areas (67% vs. 54% on average). This gap is particularly notable in Angola (75% vs. 49%).

Figure 27: Lack of trust in police | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say: The police? (% who say “just a little” or “not at all”)

Lack of trust in the police and negative views of police behaviour have negative consequences for human security, as affected populations are less likely to report crimes to, seek assistance from, and cooperate with the police, often leaving problems affecting community safety unresolved (Akinlabi, 2020; Sherman & Eck, 2003).

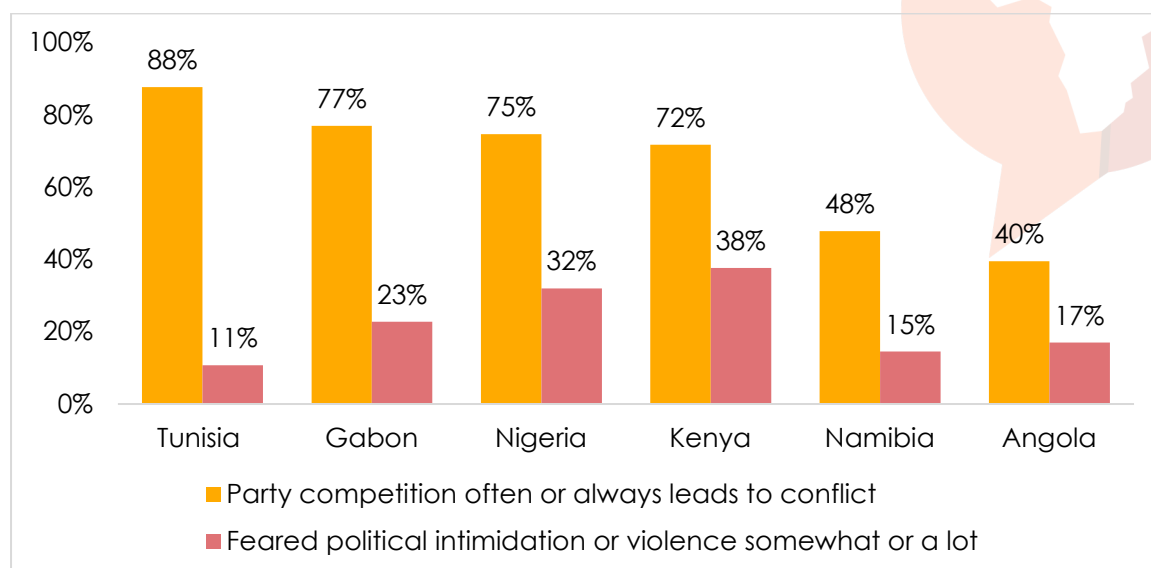
Another source of insecurity is violence or potential violence related to politics. Elections and electoral campaigns are particular flashpoints, though some countries are more at risk than others (Laakso, 2019).

Afrobarometer survey findings show widespread concern about competition between political parties: Large majorities in Tunisia (88%), Gabon (77%), Nigeria (75%), and Kenya (72%) say that such competition “often” or “always” leads to violent conflict (Figure 28).

Fewer citizens expect inter-party competition to generate violent conflict in Namibia (48%) and Angola (40%) – both countries long dominated by single parties – although smaller opposition parties in Namibia have experienced intimidation rhetoric from leaders and supporters of the ruling South West African People’s Organisation (SWAPO) (Melber, 2015, 2021).

Expectations that party competition will produce violence are more common in urban than in rural areas (70% vs. 61% on average across the six countries), while other key demographic groups differ little in their views.

Figure 28: Political intimidation and violence | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked:

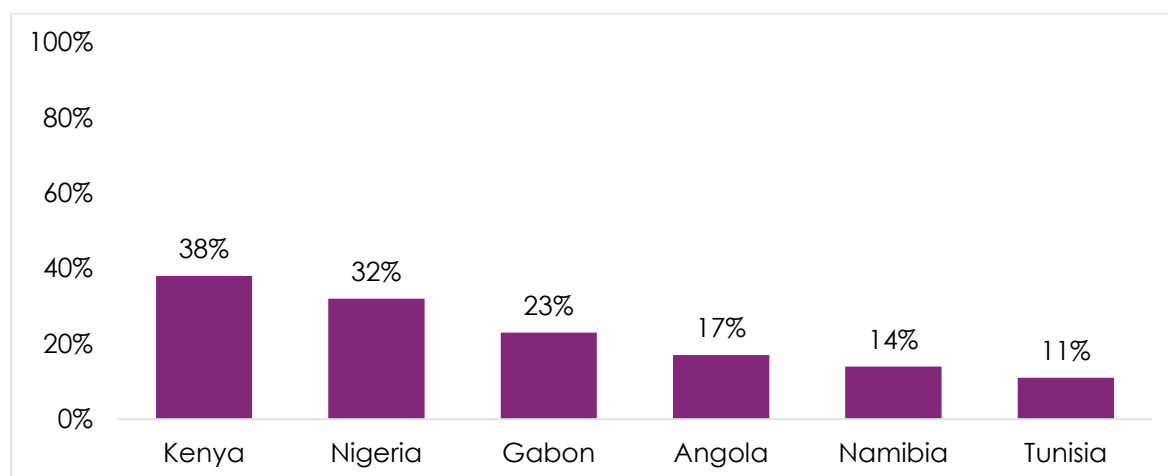
In your opinion, how often, in this country, does competition between political parties lead to violent conflict?

During the last national election campaign in [year], how much did you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?

Asked about their experiences during their country's most recent national election campaign, Kenyans (referring to their 2017 election) are most likely to say that they feared becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence "somewhat" or "a lot" (38%). About one-third (32%) of Nigerians and one-fourth (23%) of Gabonese report experiencing the same fear (Figure 29).

Fear of falling victim to political intimidation or violence was especially strong among the poorest Kenyans (49%) and Gabonese (27%). Above-average levels of concern were also recorded among some ethnic groups, such as the Damara in Namibia, the Luo and Luyha in Kenya, and the Igbo in Nigeria, perhaps reflecting historical experiences of political intimidation or violence.

Figure 29: Fear of political intimidation and violence | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: During the last national election campaign in [year], how much did you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")

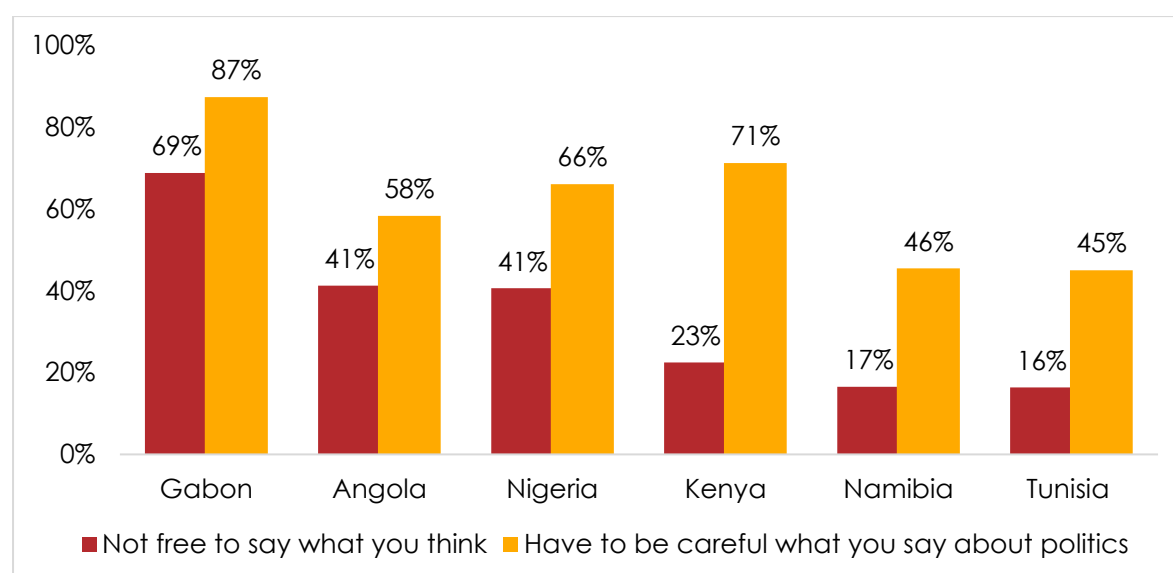
Fear can also lead to self-censorship if citizens do not feel free to say what they think. Particularly in countries with authoritarian characteristics, such as Angola and Gabon, citizens may fear reprisals by the government or supporters of the ruling party, and journalists and academics may be monitored and detained by security services, if they openly criticise the powers that be (Freedom House, 2022; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2021).

These dynamics are reflected in the Afrobarometer survey data (Figure 30). Nearly seven in 10 citizens (69%) in Gabon say they are “not very free” or “not at all free” to say what they think, and four in 10 Angolans (41%) and Nigerians (41%) agree.

In even larger numbers, respondents say that people in their country “often” or “always” have to be careful when they talk about politics. Almost nine out of 10 Gabonese (87%) say such caution is necessary. Even in countries with better democratic credentials, such as Namibia and Tunisia, almost half (46% and 45%, respectively) express concerns about having open discussions about politics.

In Kenya, though often noted for political participation and pluralism, 71% of citizens call for caution in discussions of political matters, perhaps reflecting the highly ethnic nature and embedded patronage of the country’s politics, with well-documented instances of opposition members being subjected to intimidation (Kanyinga, 2014; Yoxon, 2017).

Figure 30: Constraints on free speech | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked:

In this country, how free are you to say what you think? (% who say “not very free” or “not at all free”)

In your opinion, how often, in this country, do people have to be careful of what they say about politics? (% who say “often” or “always”)

Political insecurity – sometimes accompanied by threats to personal safety – is especially pronounced for minority groups. For instance, LGBTQ+ people face extensive discrimination, and at times physical abuse, by fellow citizens and security personnel in Nigeria, Kenya, Angola, and other countries. Same-sex relationships, though decriminalised in Angola in 2019, are still illegal in Kenya, Tunisia, and other countries (Freedom House, 2022).

In Gabon, migrants/foreigners are frequently subjected to harassment by security forces (Freedom House, 2022). And in some countries, women who engage in politics and contest for public office often face discrimination. Afrobarometer findings show that majorities in Tunisia (84%) and Gabon (59%) say a woman who runs for political office will likely be criticised or harassed in her community. In the other four countries, around half (between 46% and 52%) of respondents agree.

The Afrobarometer data generally mirror the macro-level (IIAG) data: Countries with high security and law and order scores, such as Tunisia and Namibia, also tended to record greater trust in the police and more widespread perceptions that the police generally act in a professional manner and that restrictions on free speech are minimal. In contrast, in countries with low security and law and order scores, such as Gabon and Nigeria, popular evaluations of the police are generally negative.

COVID-19: Government response and impact

Throughout the world, countries have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and government responses at varying levels of severity, but none has escaped some level of impact on human security. Table 9 shows the number of COVID-19 infections and deaths in the six countries that are the focus of this paper, though under-reporting due to inadequate access to both testing and health care is likely (Cabore, et al., 2022; UNDP, 2021).

According to the WHO COVID-19 tracker, the governments of four of our six countries (Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, and Tunisia) responded to COVID-19 with relatively severe mitigation measures, including mandatory masking, restrictions on movement and gatherings, and the closure of schools. Gabon and Angola instituted less severe containment responses, although health services in these two countries were the most disrupted in Africa due to COVID-19 infection waves in 2021 (World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa, 2022).

Table 9: COVID-19 infections and confirmed deaths | 6 African countries

	Infections	Confirmed deaths	Confirmed deaths/population
Angola	102,301	1,912	0.00006
Gabon	48,511	306	0.000006
Kenya	337,500	5,672	0.0001
Namibia	166,448	4,072	0.0016
Nigeria	260,764	3,147	0.00002
Tunisia	1,128,693	29,041	0.0024

Source: WHO COVID-19 Dashboard (as of 1 August 2022)

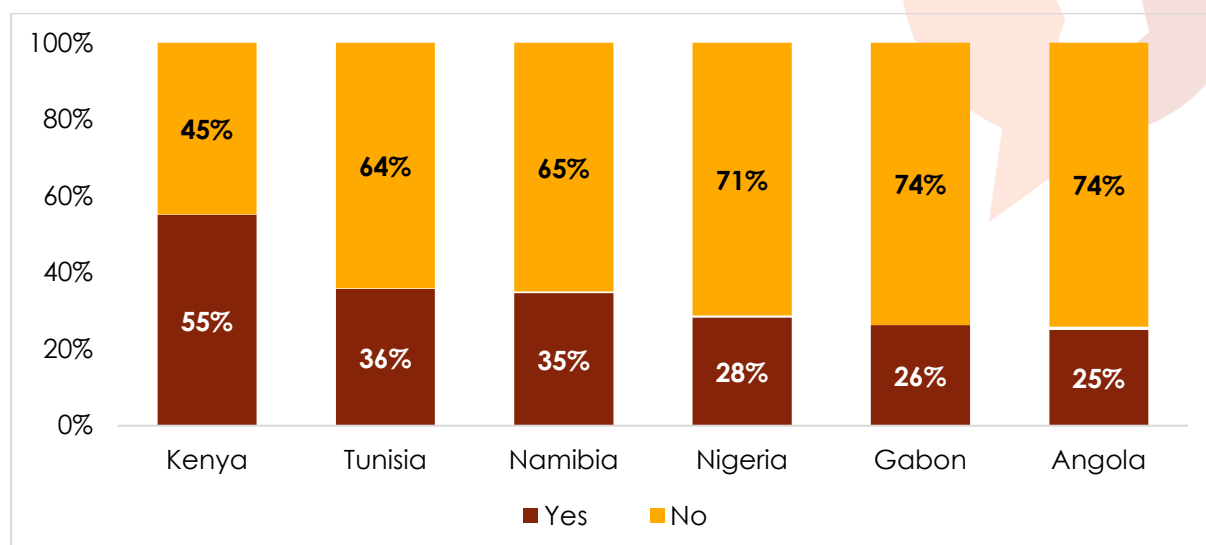
Throughout Africa, the pandemic and mitigation measures generally resulted in declines in GDP growth, increases in unemployment, and negative effects on income generation in the informal sector in 2020 (UNDP, 2021). To varying degrees, economic growth rebounded modestly in 2021, but Russia's invasion of Ukraine and subsequent Western sanctions on Russia are having serious negative effects on African economies (African Development Bank, 2022).

As shown in Figure 31 below, COVID-19 had a severe impact on the financial security of families in all six of our countries. A majority (55%) of Kenyans say they or a family member temporarily or permanently lost a job, business, or primary source of income because of the pandemic. The same was true for more than one-third of Tunisians (36%) and Namibians (35%) and one-fourth or more of Angolans (25%), Gabonese (26%), and Nigerians (28%).

The higher percentages in Kenya, Tunisia, and Namibia could be attributable in part to dramatic reductions in international tourism revenue due to global travel restrictions (World Bank, 2022b).

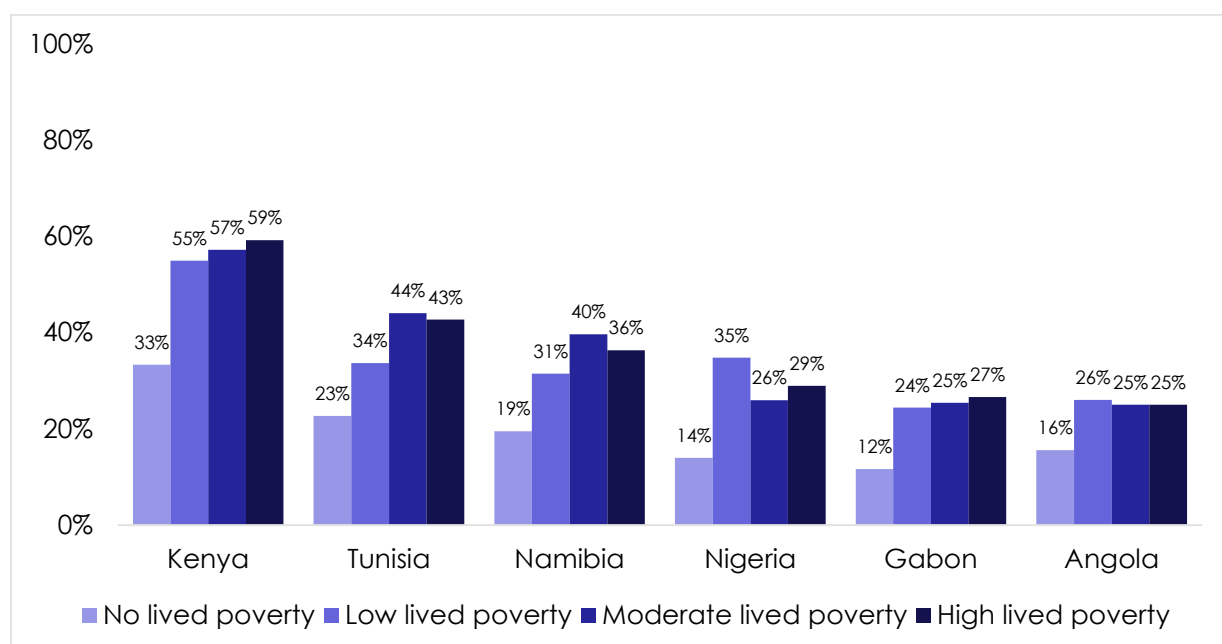
In all six countries, the loss of a job, business, or other income source was more common in urban than in rural areas (39% vs. 27% on average), no surprise since most employment and business opportunities exist in cities and towns. The data also show that those experiencing moderate or high levels of lived poverty were more negatively affected than better-off citizens (Figure 32).

Figure 31: Lost primary source of income due to COVID-19 | 6 African countries
| 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business, or primary source of income?

Figure 32: Lost primary source of income due to COVID-19 | by lived poverty
| 6 African countries | 2021/2022



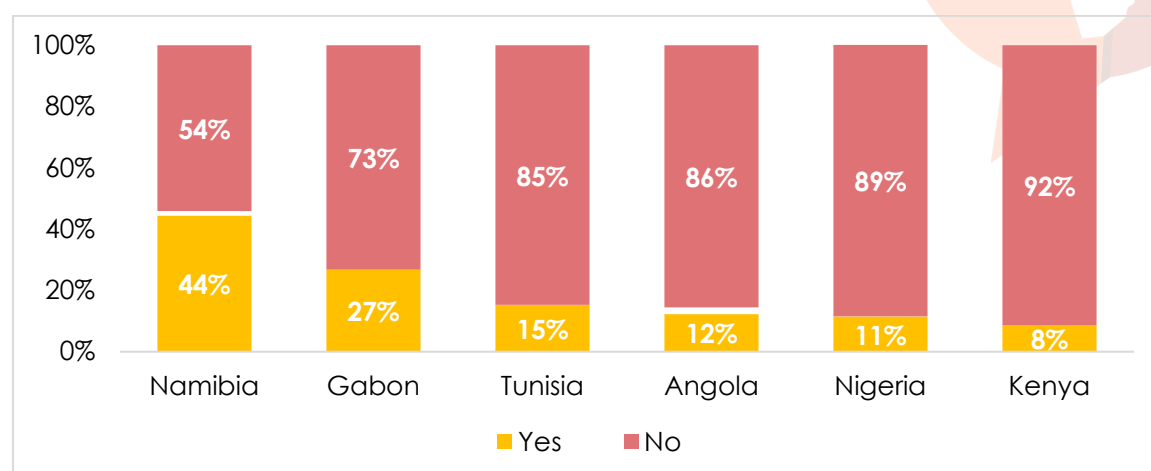
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business, or primary source of income? (% who say "yes")

Despite these serious economic consequences, few people (between 8% and 15%) in Kenya, Nigeria, Angola, and Tunisia received some form of pandemic-related relief, such as food or cash, from the government. Government assistance was more common in Namibia (44%) and Gabon (27%) (Figure 33).

On average across the six countries, key demographic groups differ little on this question, although some country-level disparities exist. For example, in Namibia, citizens with no formal

education are less likely to report receiving assistance (31%) than those with primary (48%), secondary (48%), or post-secondary (39%) schooling.

Figure 33: Received COVID-19 relief assistance | 6 African countries | 2021/2022

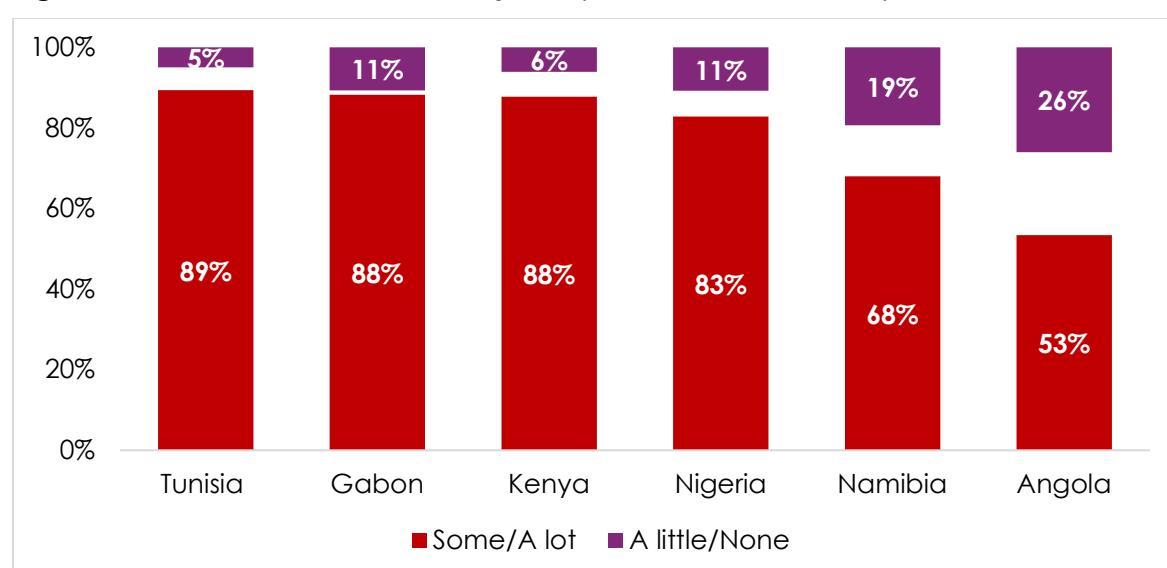


Respondents were asked: Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were not normally receiving before the pandemic?


A lack of adequate pandemic-related assistance may have been particularly galling – and damaging to public faith in government institutions and systems of governance (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022a) – if citizens believe that resources intended for the pandemic response were lost to corruption.

The Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International (2021) describes corruption as pervasive in Nigeria, Angola, Kenya, and Gabon, and less endemic in Namibia and Tunisia. But Afrobarometer findings show that majorities in all six countries believe that “some” or “a lot” of COVID-19 resources were stolen in corrupt transactions (Figure 34). Almost nine out of 10 citizens hold this view in Tunisia (89%), Gabon (88%), and Kenya (88%), with Nigeria (83%) not far behind.

Figure 34: COVID-19-related corruption | 6 African countries | 2021/2022



Respondents were asked: Considering all of the funds and resources that were available to the government for combating and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, how much do you think was lost or stolen due to corruption?



Moreover, in five of the six countries, between 56% and 68% of respondents say corruption worsened “a lot” during the preceding (pandemic) year, while only between 5% and 14% think it decreased. The exception is Angola, where only 27% say corruption increased “a lot” and 9% “somewhat,” perhaps reflecting recent anti-corruption measures introduced by the government (Schipani & Pilling, 2021).

Inadequate, poorly managed government support is one example where better preparation might help mitigate a pandemic's negative effects on livelihoods, health, and other dimensions of human security, especially for people experiencing poverty. As we saw above, many Africans do not have confidence in their government's ability to manage future health emergencies, but laying the groundwork now might ease this additional source of insecurity.

Conclusion and recommendations

This analysis has demonstrated that applying a human security lens to development studies provides a deeper and more multifaceted understanding of human development. So does bringing the voices of African citizens into the discourse, providing useful insights into how people perceive and experience human security in their daily lives.

The analysis shows concerning levels of insecurity – exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – all along the spectrum of human security dimensions, from health and food to environment and politics. All six African countries we examine exhibit aspects of these elements of insecurity, though they seem particularly pronounced in countries with lower HDI scores (Nigeria, Angola, and Kenya).

Citizens in the six countries express considerable economic insecurity in their negative assessments of their country's economic condition and overall direction, their frequent lack of a cash income, and their limited optimism about the future. Job and business losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, and inadequate government assistance to tide them over, have heightened their vulnerabilities.

In substantial numbers, citizens report going without enough to eat, enough clean water, and needed medical care – challenges to food, health, and environmental security essential to a dignified life, even to survival. Climate change intensifies the urgency of these challenges.

Perceptions of personal safety and security vary across the six countries, with majorities in three countries reporting declines. Women and girls are at particular risk in all of them, judging from widespread reports of gender-based violence as a common occurrence and persistent minorities – and a two-thirds majority in Gabon – who endorse the use of physical violence to discipline female partners.

Views are mixed on whether physical disciplining of children is acceptable, but substantial numbers say it occurs frequently in their community. Child abuse and neglect are less widely reported, but far from rare.

A variety of indicators point to some level of political insecurity, including perceptions – varying by country – that the police use excessive force in managing protests, lack professionalism, and are untrustworthy; that party competition leads to violent conflict; and that people are not free to speak their minds, especially about politics.

The poor, the less educated, and urban residents tend to experience particularly high levels of disadvantage across the seven elements of human security. We identified no significant differences in security-related perceptions by gender and age, though more detailed country-level analysis may be needed to do so.

It is also evident that human security is undermined by external threats, especially COVID-19, climate change, and, lately, the ongoing war in Ukraine.

It is worth noting that popular perceptions and experiences are not always consistent with the macro-level measures of national performance. Some of these gaps present interesting puzzles and are worth deeper investigations to help shed light on the underlying drivers.

Drawing on these analyses, we offer a few top-line recommendations:

- 
- A human security lens provides nuanced insights into human development. The human security framework should be incorporated into human development analyses and calculations. This would also help build momentum for the African Union's African Human Security Index initiative.
 - Given the extent to which external threats such as pandemics and climate change undermine human security, it is important for African governments, intergovernmental organisations, and donor governments to analyse these threats within a human security framework and to work collaboratively and proactively to address them.
 - African governments should prioritise planning and resourcing for their response to future health emergencies and other disasters, restoring citizen confidence in their ability to ensure the population's security.
 - While all dimensions of human security are important, economic and environmental security stand out with their implications for the other dimensions, and should be prioritised.
 - Women and children remain at particular risk. Ensuring their personal security through the prevention of violence and abuse should be a cross-cutting priority.

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for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at
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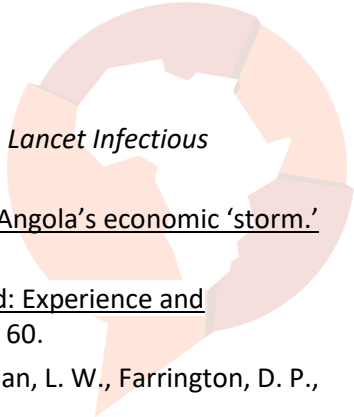


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Guy Lamb is the programme lead of the BA (International Studies) programme in the Department of Political Science at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He also serves on South Africa's National Planning Commission, where he chairs the Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security Task Team.

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