



Zomba, Malawi
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News release

Under one government after another, more and more Malawians live in poverty

A large majority of Malawians experienced moderate or high lived poverty during the past year, continuing a negative trend that started in 2008, results of Afrobarometer's 2022 survey show.

Moreover, the share of households reporting the most severe level of poverty has increased since 2019. The shortages that Malawian households experience most frequently are of a cash income and sufficient food.

Alongside worsening lived poverty, citizens' ratings of the government's performance on improving life for the poor have been growing increasingly negative since a 2008 assessment of the first-term Bingu wa Mutharika administration.

Key findings

- Three-fourths of Malawians experienced either moderate (38%) or high (37%) lived poverty during the year preceding the survey (Figure 1).
- Moderate/High lived poverty declined substantially between 2003 (77%) and 2008 (55%) but has risen by 19 percentage points since then. Moreover, compared to 2019, high lived poverty has increased by 17 percentage points while moderate lived poverty has decreased by 12 points (Figure 2).
- Shortages of basic necessities affect most Malawians. More than six in 10 citizens (63%) say they or someone in their family went without a cash income "many times" or "always" during the previous year. Substantial numbers of people report frequently going without enough food (35%), medical care or medicines (34%), cooking fuel (29%), and clean water (24%) (Figure 3).
 - All of these reported shortages have been increasing over the past decade (Figure 4).
- Citizens' assessments of the government's performance on improving the living standards of the poor were largely positive during Bingu wa Mutharika's first term (when 60% said the government was doing "fairly well" or "very well") and have been worsening since then. Only 15% of citizens approve of the current government's efforts to reduce poverty (Figure 5).

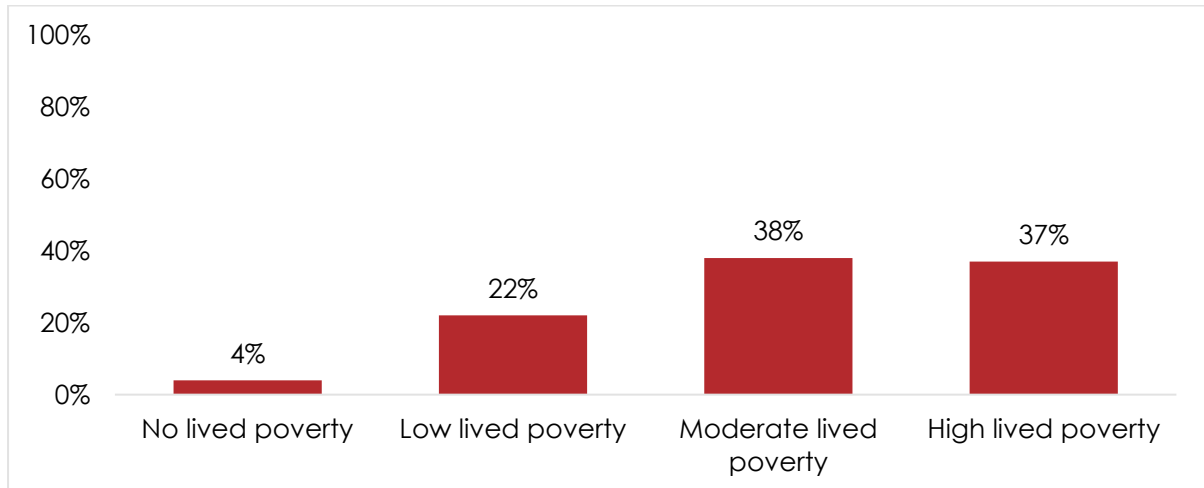
Afrobarometer surveys

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 conducted since 1999. Round 9 surveys are being completed in early 2023. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Malawians in February 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 Malawi in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019.

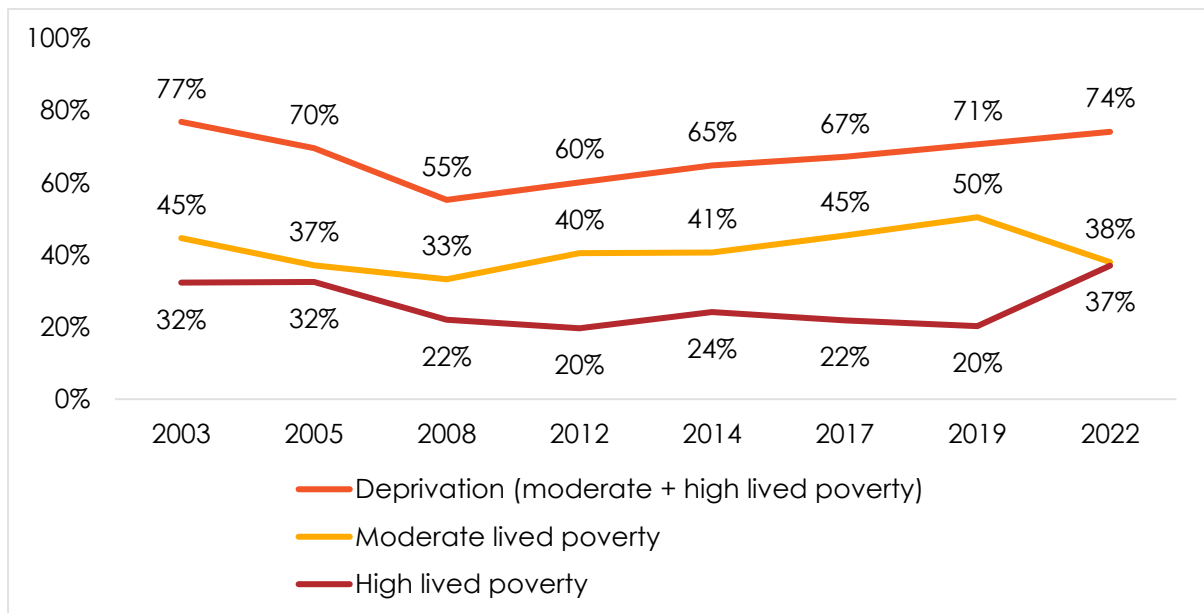
Charts

Figure 1: Levels of lived poverty | Malawi | 2022



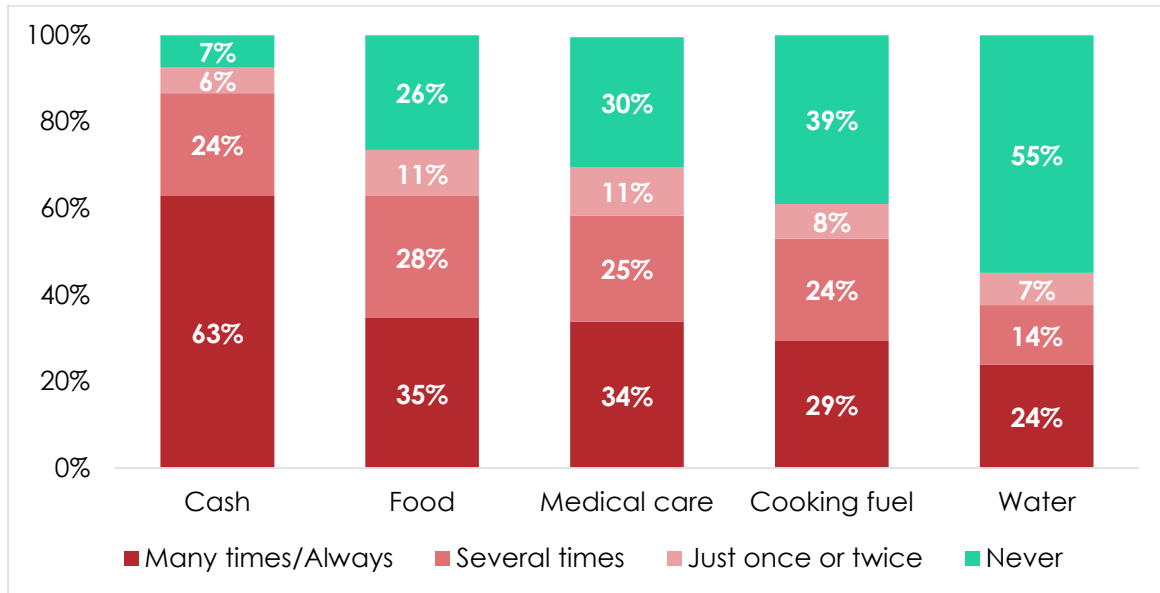
Lived poverty levels are based on responses to the questions: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?

Figure 2: Trends in deprivation | Malawi | 2003-2022



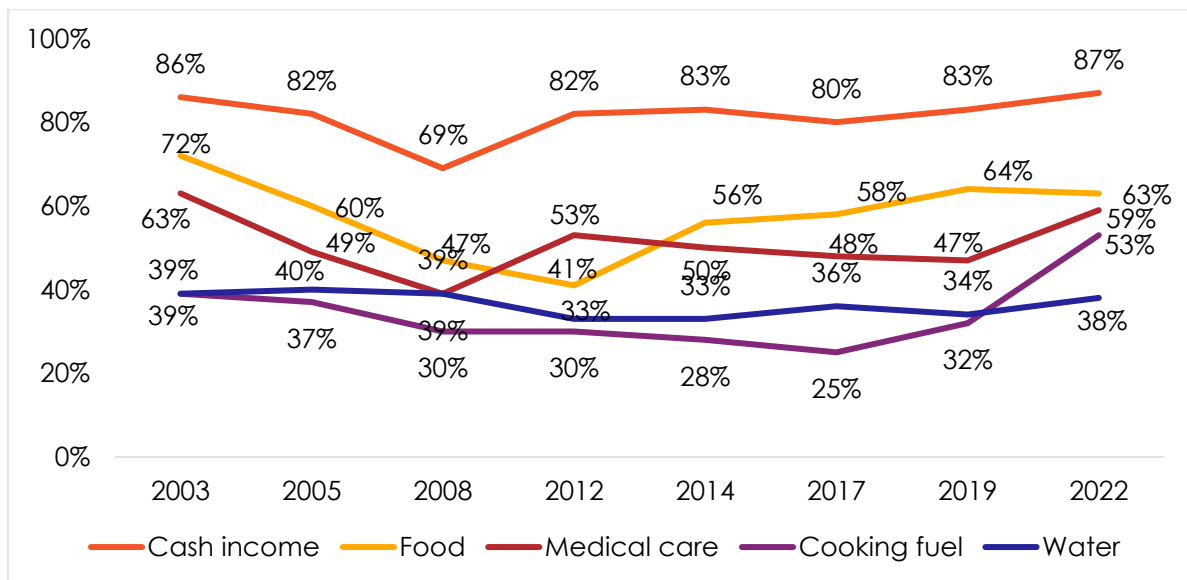
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Figure 3: Went without basic necessities | Malawi | 2022



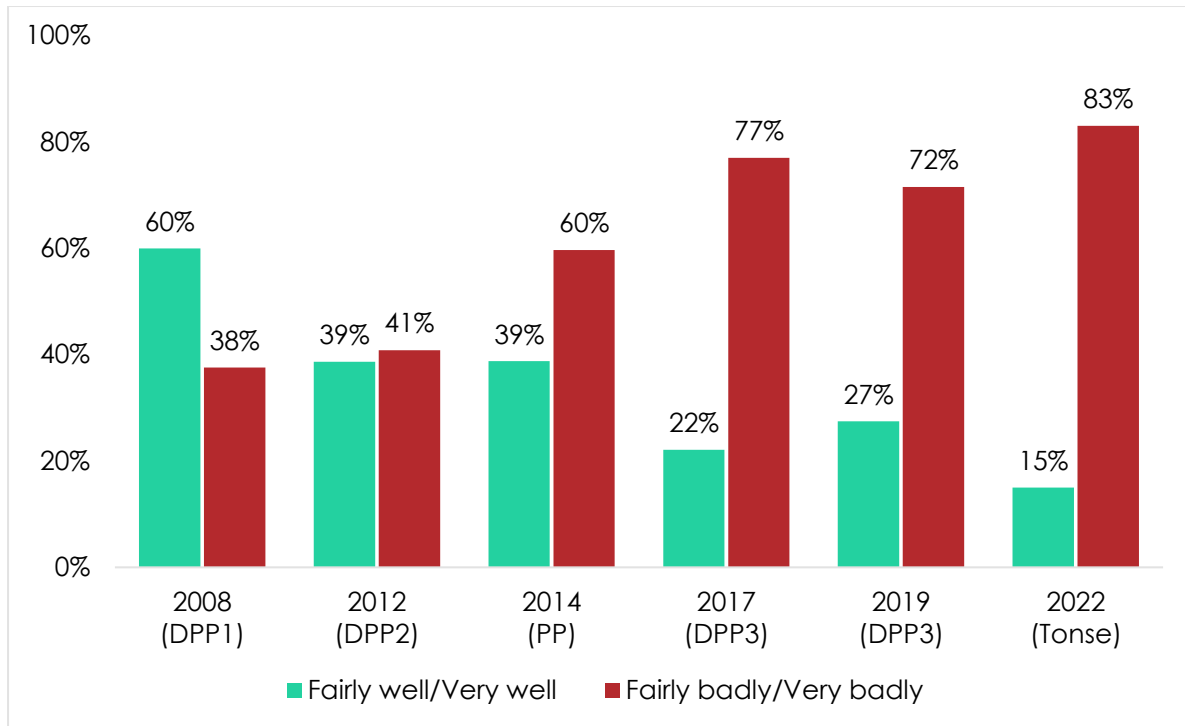
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?

Figure 4: Trend in going without basic necessities at least 'several times' | Malawi | 2003-2022



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 "several times," "many times," or "always")

Figure 5: Government performance in improving living standards of the poor
 | Malawi | 2008-2022



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: Improving the living standards of the poor? (Abbreviations referring to successive administrations: DPP= Democratic Progressive Party, PP=People's Party)

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