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News release

World Water Day: Majority of Africans still go without safe water, Afrobarometer surveys show

As the world converges at the United Nations' first World Water Conference since 1977, a majority of Africans continue to go without enough clean water, the latest Afrobarometer surveys show.

On average across 28 African countries, 57% of citizens say they went without enough clean water for household use at least once during the previous year. One in four households suffered shortages of safe water "many times" or "always."

Fewer than four in 10 Africans give their governments a passing grade on the provision of water and sanitation services.

As leaders and activists gather under the World Water Day theme of "Accelerate change," these findings highlight the challenge confronting African governments, development partners, and other stakeholders if they don't want to miss Sustainable Development Goal 6, "access to water and sanitation for all."

Key findings

- On average across 28 African countries, a majority (57%) of citizens say they went without enough clean water at least once during the year preceding the survey. One in four households (25%) suffered shortages of safe water "many times" or "always" (Figure 1).
 - Frequent water shortages affected about four in 10 households in Gabon (42%), Angola (40%), Cameroon (40%), Guinea (39%), and Benin (38%). In contrast, fewer than one in 20 Mauritians (1%) and Moroccans (3%) frequently went without enough water.
- Close to half (45%) of citizens live in areas without piped-water infrastructure (Figure 2).
 - While piped-water systems are available in nearly all enumeration areas in Mauritius (99%) and Tunisia (93%), at least seven in 10 enumeration areas in Guinea (70%), Liberia (71%), Malawi (72%), and Zimbabwe (74%) do not have piped-water systems.
- Citizens in rural areas are more than three times as likely as those in urban areas to lack access to piped-water infrastructure (68% vs. 19%) (Figure 3).
- Only half of households have their main source of water inside the home (26%) or elsewhere in the compound (24%), while 50% have to go outside the compound to get their water (Figure 4).
- Only 38% of Africans say their governments are doing "fairly well" or "very well" at providing water and sanitation services (Figure 5).

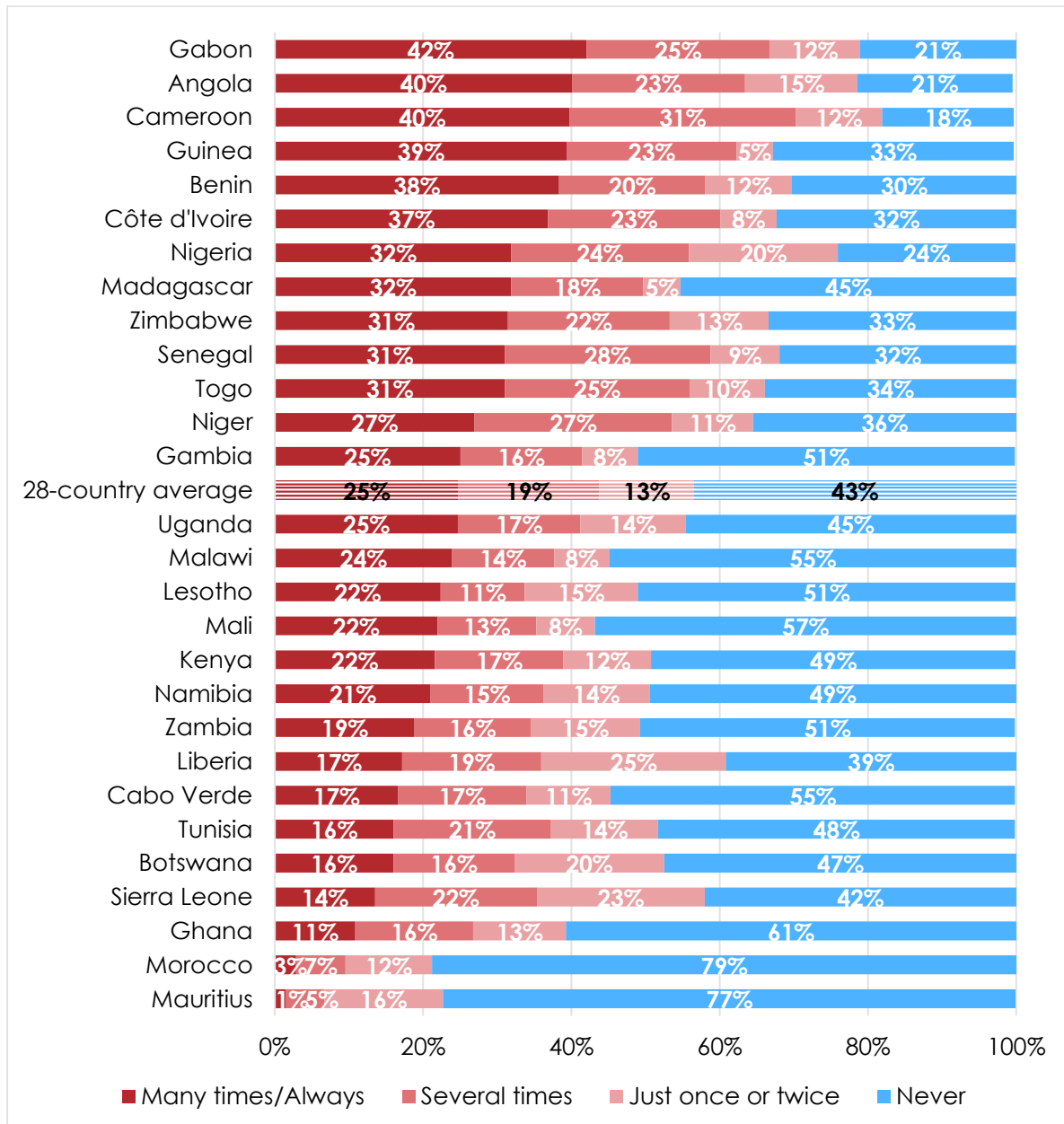
- Majorities approve of their government's performance on water/sanitation in just five of the surveyed countries: Mali (59%), Niger (57%), Morocco (56%), Mauritius (56%), and Botswana (55%). Fewer than one in five citizens agree in Gabon (13%), Liberia (17%), Angola (17%), and Nigeria (19%).

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 conducted 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, which yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

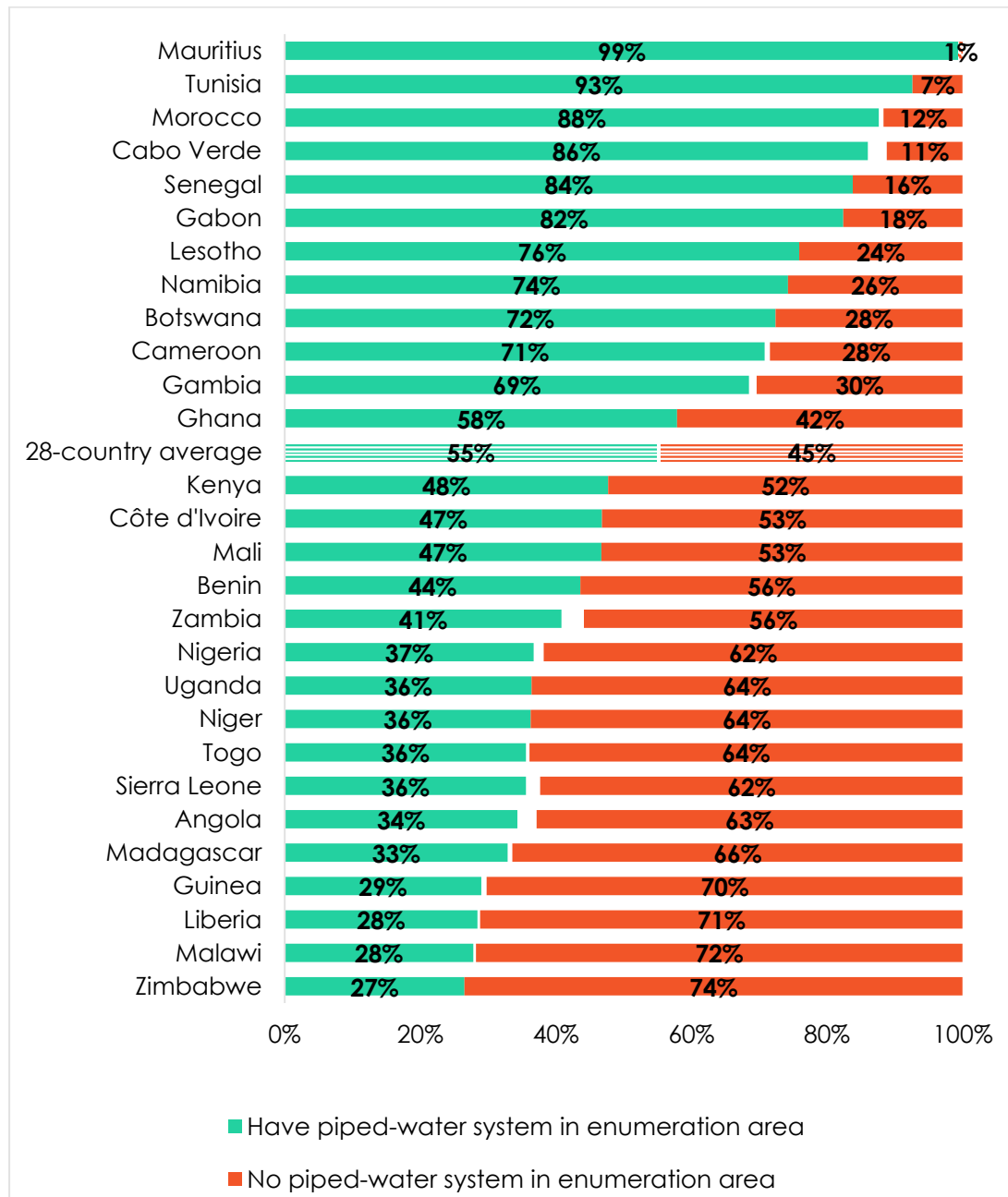
Charts

Figure 1: Going without enough clean water | 28 African countries | 2021/2022



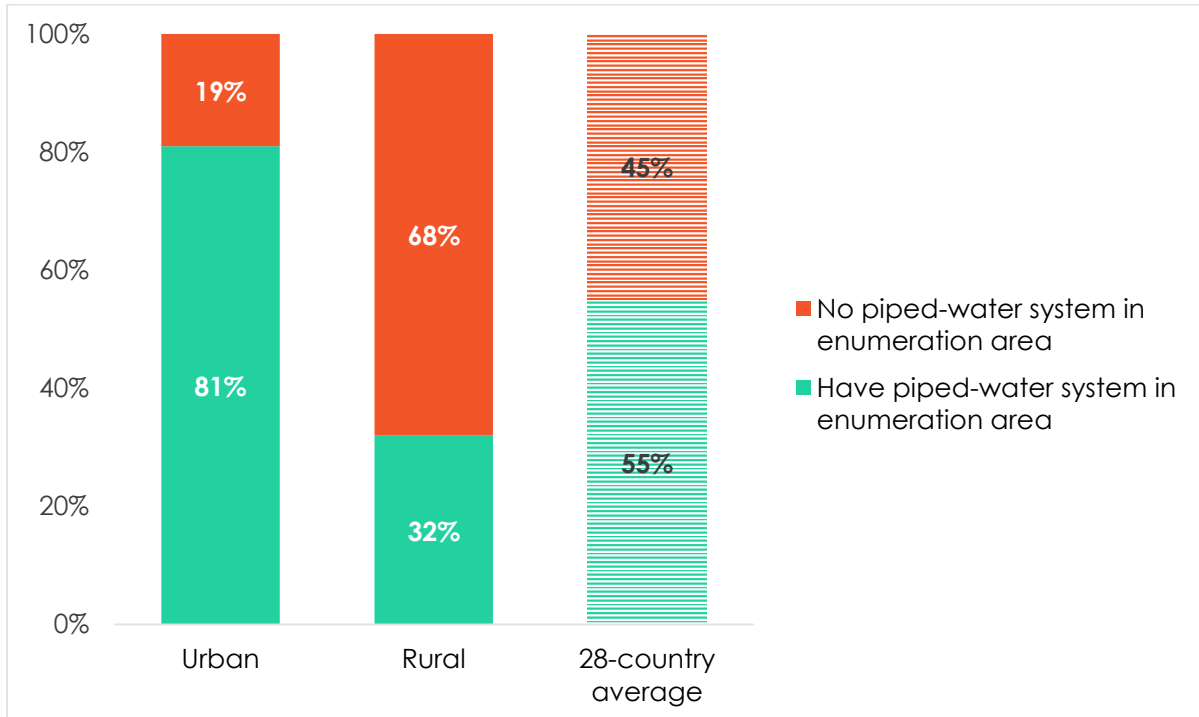
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without enough clean water for home use?

Figure 2: Proportion of citizens living in enumeration areas with piped-water systems
 | 28 African countries | 2021/2022



Afrobarometer interviewers were asked to observe: Are the following services present in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area: Piped-water system that most houses could access?

Figure 3: Proportion of citizens living in enumeration areas with piped water systems
 | by rural-urban location | 28 African countries | 2021/2022



Afrobarometer interviewers were asked to observe: Are the following services present in the primary sampling unit/enumeration area: Piped-water system that most houses could access?

Figure 4: Point of access to water | 28 African countries | 2021/2022

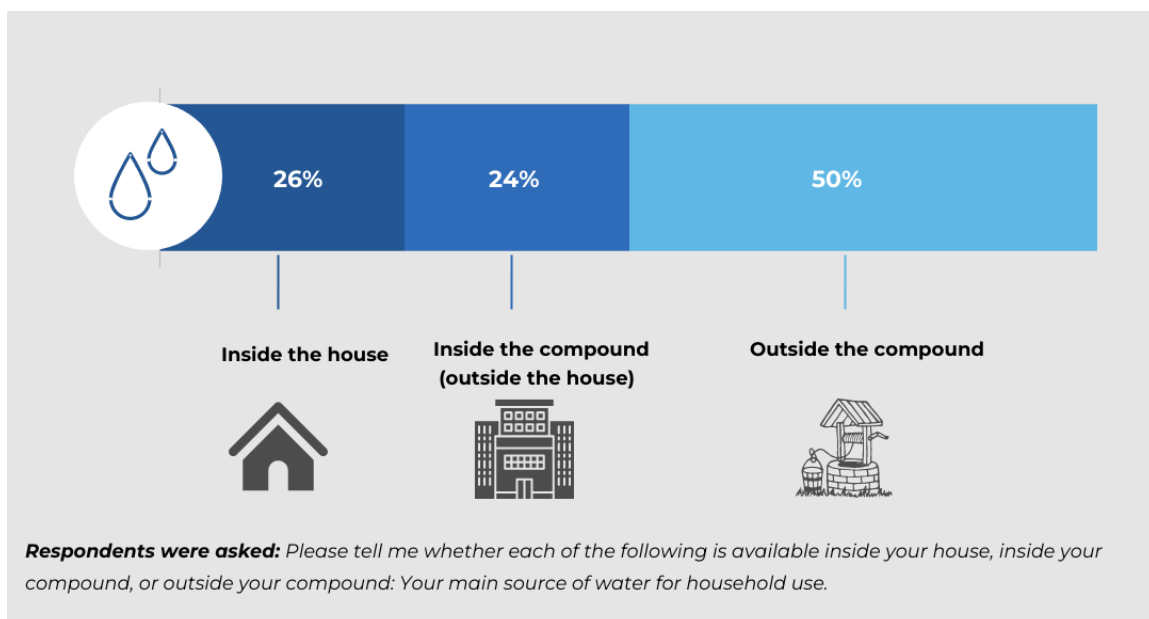
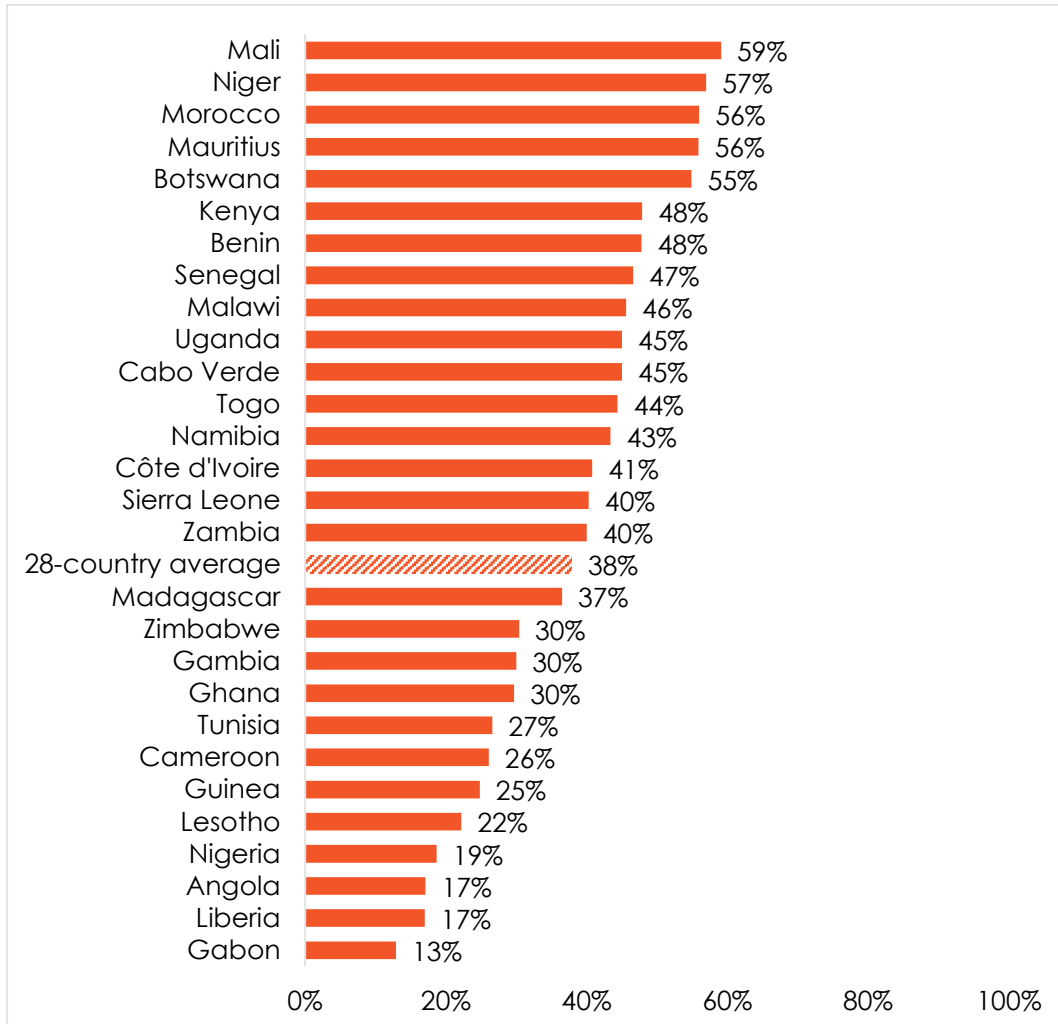


Figure 5: Government performance in providing water and sanitation services
 | 28 African countries | 2021/2022



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? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

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