



Mbabane, Eswatini
31 July 2023

News release

Emaswati say country is going in the wrong direction as lived poverty continues to rise

A majority of Emaswati describe the country's economic condition as bad and say Eswatini is headed in the wrong direction, a new Afrobarometer survey indicates.

Increasing numbers of citizens are suffering shortages of basic life necessities such as a cash income, medical care, food, and water.

Overwhelming majorities say the government is performing poorly on key economic issues, although most citizens who accessed key public services during the past year say they encountered few difficulties.

As national elections approach after the current government's five-year term was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in June 2021, the new administration will have to deal with a stagnating economy and citizens whose livelihoods hang in the balance.

Key findings

- More than eight in 10 Emaswati (84%) say the country is going in "the wrong direction," twice as many as in 2018 (42%) (Figure 1).
- Almost nine in 10 citizens (86%) describe the country's economic condition as "fairly bad" or "very bad," an increase of 38 percentage points compared to 2018 (48%) (Figure 2).
- Growing numbers of citizens report going without a cash income (78% in 2022), medical care (78%), enough food (66%), enough cooking fuel (61%), and enough clean water (55%) at least once during the year preceding the survey. All these proportions have been increasing since 2015 (Figure 3).
- Public approval ratings have plummeted for the government's performance on managing the economy (12%), improving the living standards of the poor (10%), creating jobs (6%), narrowing gaps between rich and poor (5%), and keeping prices stable (4%) (Figure 4).
- However, among citizens who sought selected public services during the previous year, majorities say they found it easy to get help from public schools (79%), public health facilities (64%), and the police (63%). But almost two-thirds (63%) say it was difficult to obtain a government identity document such as a birth certificate, driver's license, passport, voter's card, or permit (Figure 5).

Afrobarometer surveys

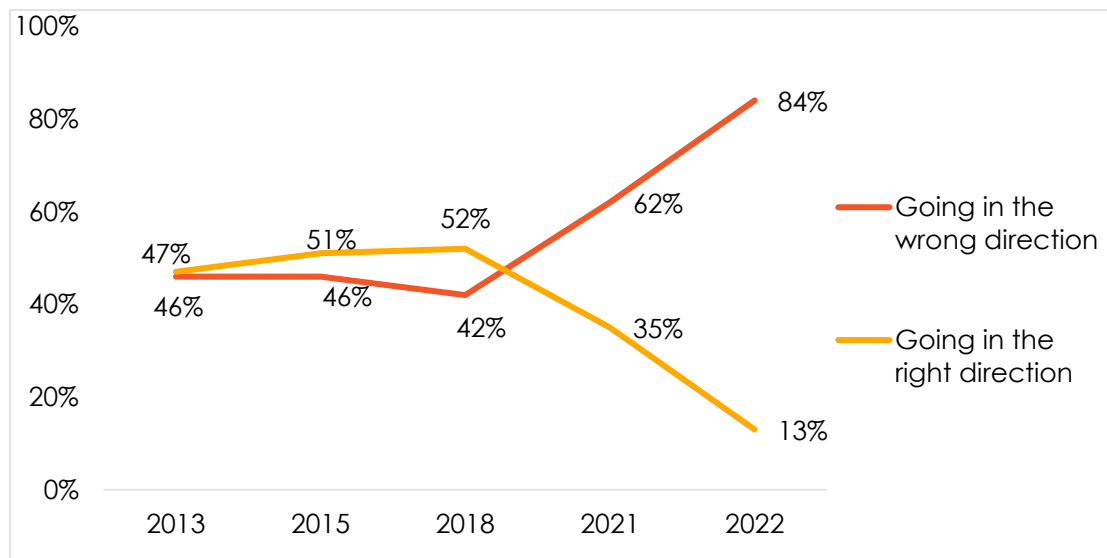
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 42 countries since 1999. Round 9

surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Eswatini, led by QA Strategic Information, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult citizens in October-November 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 Eswatini in 2013, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

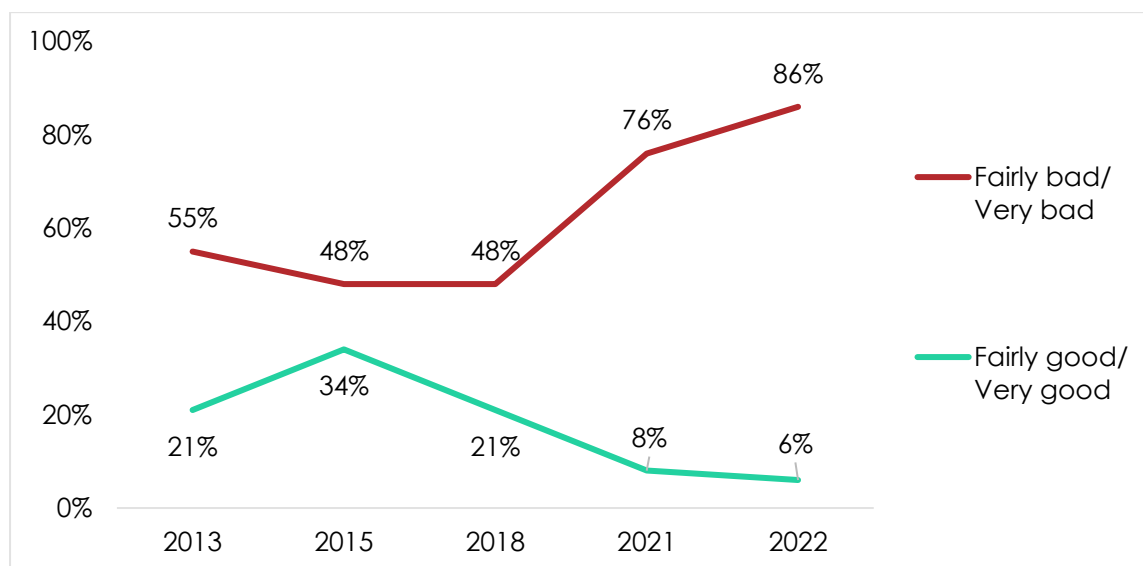
Charts

Figure 1: Direction of the country | Eswatini | 2013-2022



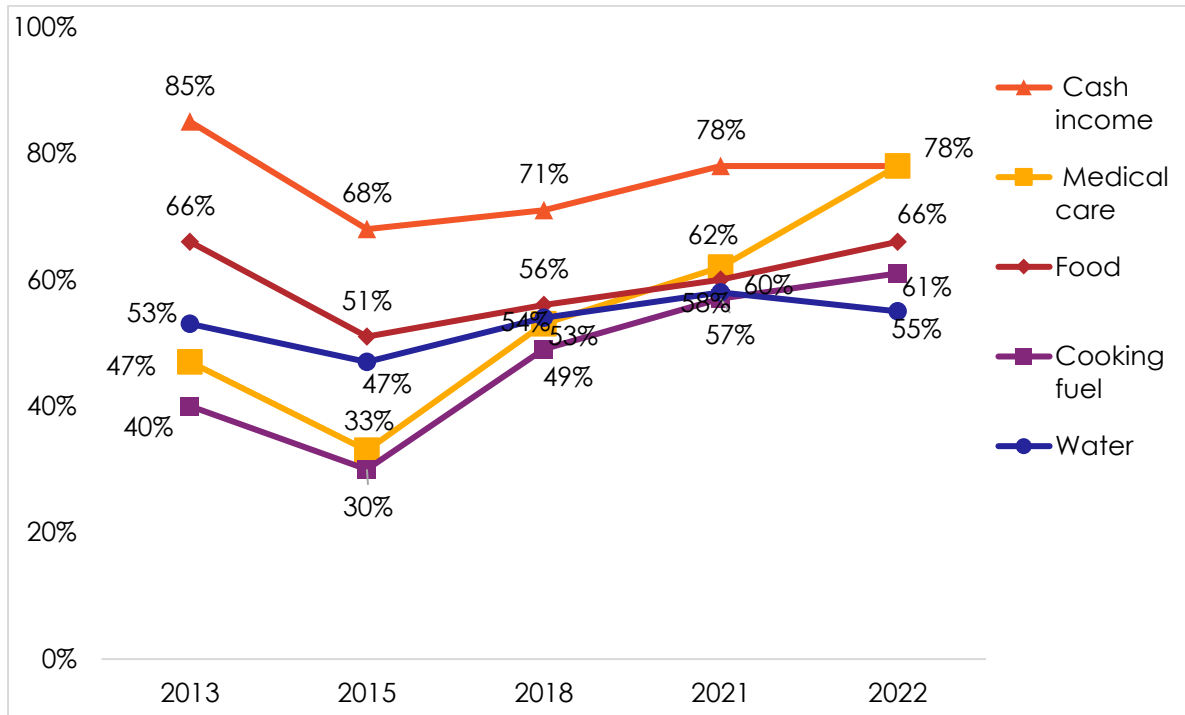
Respondents were asked: *Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?*

Figure 2: Country's economic condition | Eswatini | 2013-2022



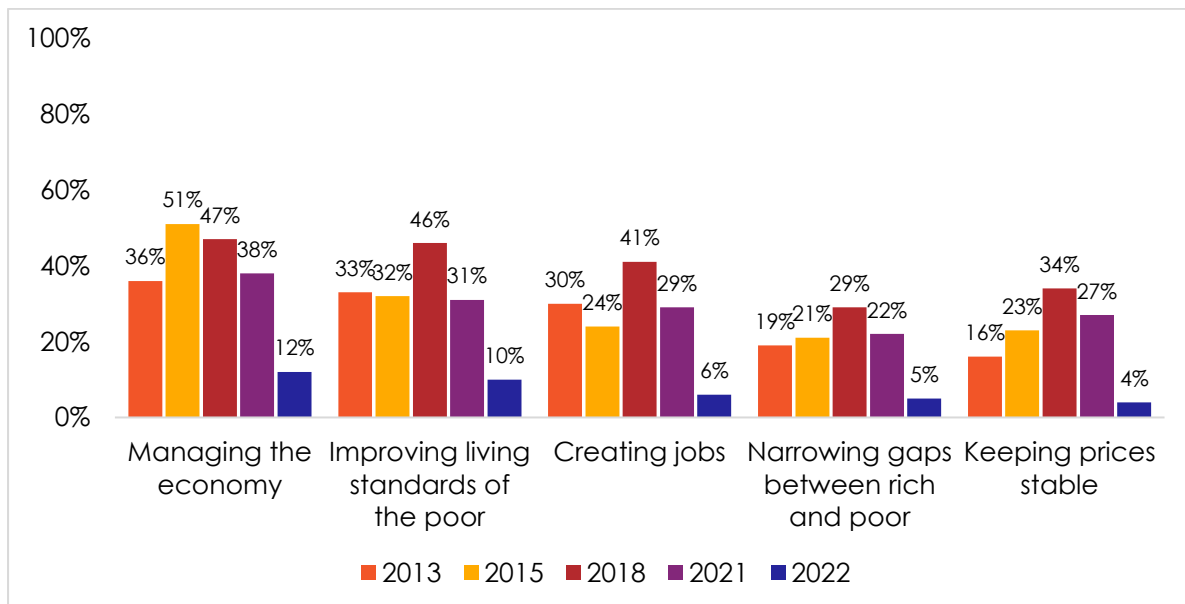
Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?*

Figure 3: Went without basic necessities | Eswatini | 2013-2022



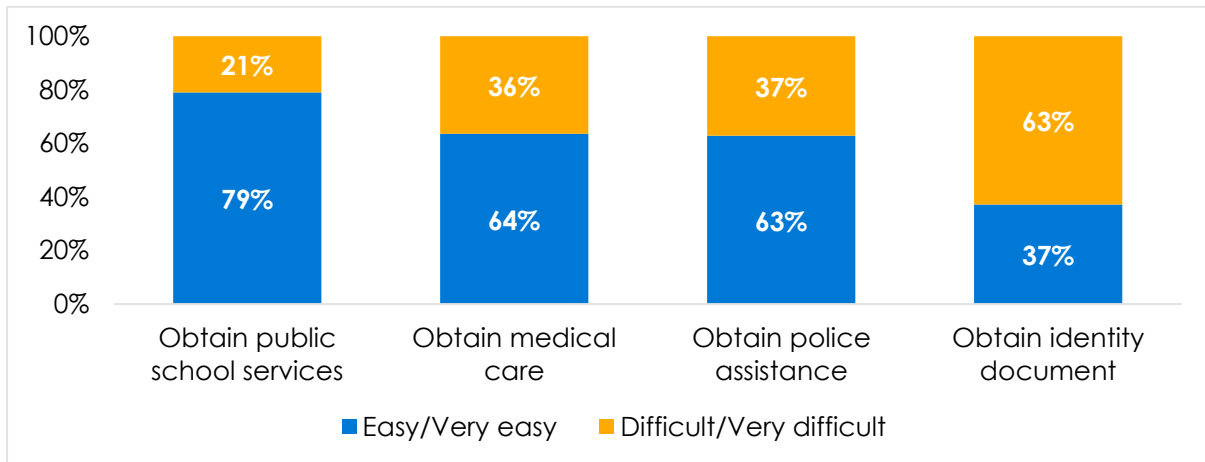
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income? (% who say "just once or twice," "several times," "many times," or "always")

Figure 4: Approval of government performance on economic issues | Eswatini | 2013-2022



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

Figure 5: Ease of accessing public services | Eswatini | 2022



Respondents who say they sought selected public services during the previous year were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain [the needed services]? (Respondents who had no contact with these services are excluded.)

For more information, please contact:

Mbuso Dlamini
 Managing director
 ActivQuest
 info@activquest.com
 +268-2422 1934

Visit us online at:
www.activquest.com
www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

