

Pretoria, South Africa
3 July 2023

News release

Awareness of climate change remains low in South Africa, new Afrobarometer study shows

Despite climate change making headlines, lack of knowledge of this concept remains high in South Africa, an Afrobarometer survey indicates. Half of all adults say they have never heard of climate change.

This lack of awareness is particularly common among women, less educated citizens, rural residents, the elderly, and the poor.

Among citizens who are aware of climate change, most say it is making life in the country worse. Majorities agree that ordinary citizens can help curb climate change and want the government to take immediate action even if it is expensive.

In South Africans' eyes, the government and ordinary citizens share primary responsibility for fighting climate change and reducing its impact.

Key findings

- Fewer than half (43%) of South Africans say they have heard of climate change, while 51% say they have not heard of this phenomenon (Figure 1).
 - Awareness of climate change is lower among women (40%), citizens with less education (22%), rural residents (36%), the elderly (33%), and the poor (33%) (Figure 2).
- Among those who are aware of climate change:
 - More than half (56%) say it is making life in South Africa worse, a decline of 6 percentage points since the last Afrobarometer survey in 2021 (62%) (Figure 3).
 - Seven in 10 (71%) believe that ordinary citizens can help curb climate change, and more than six in 10 (63%) say the government must take immediate action to limit climate change, even if it is expensive, causes job losses, or takes a toll on the economy (Figure 4).
 - Most assign primary responsibility for fighting climate change to the government (37%) or to ordinary citizens (36%) (Figure 5).

Afrobarometer surveys

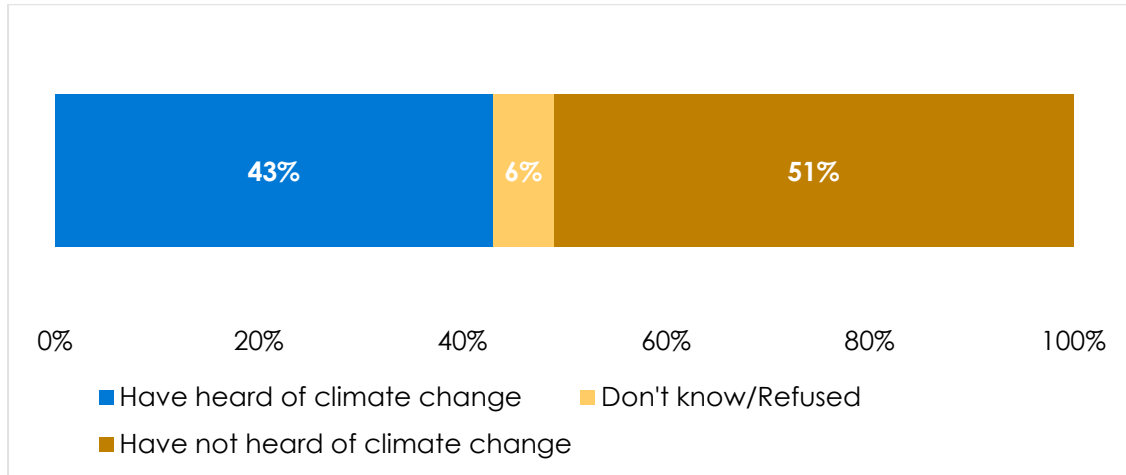
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys are being completed in 2023. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,582 adult South Africans in November-December 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of

+/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

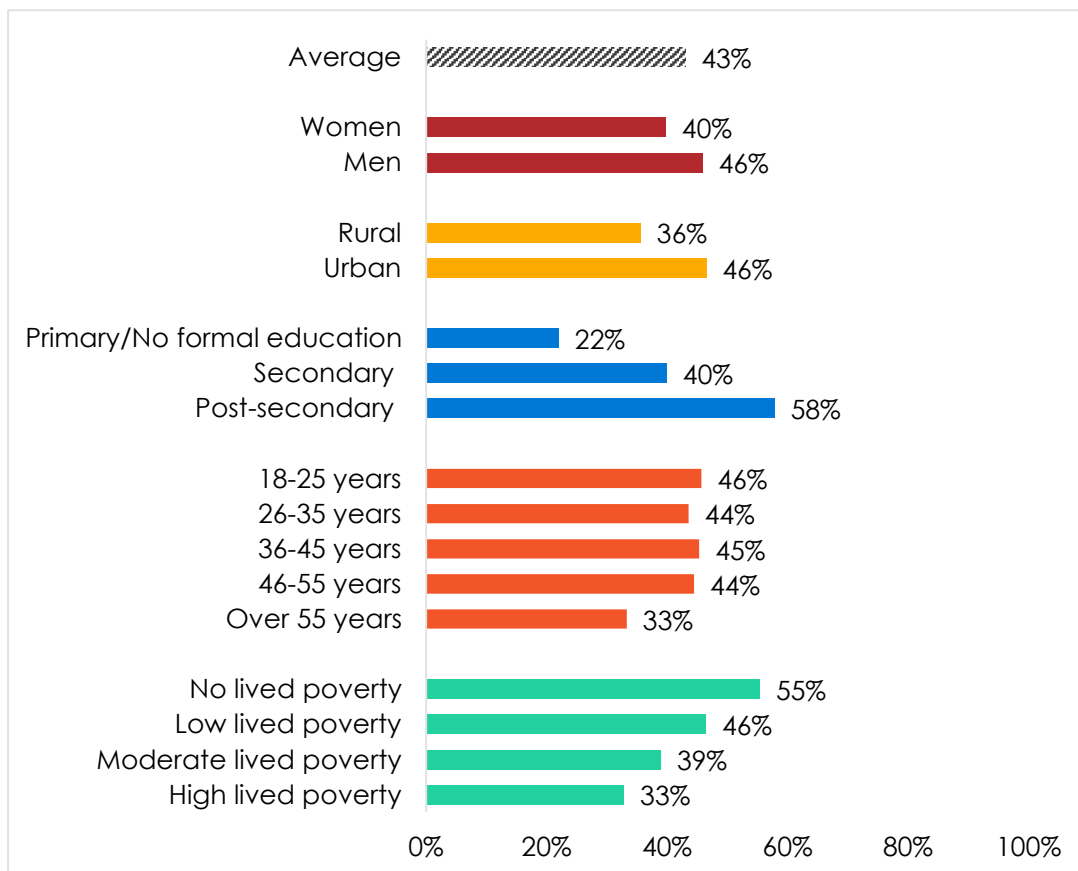
Charts

Figure 1: Climate change awareness | South Africa | 2022



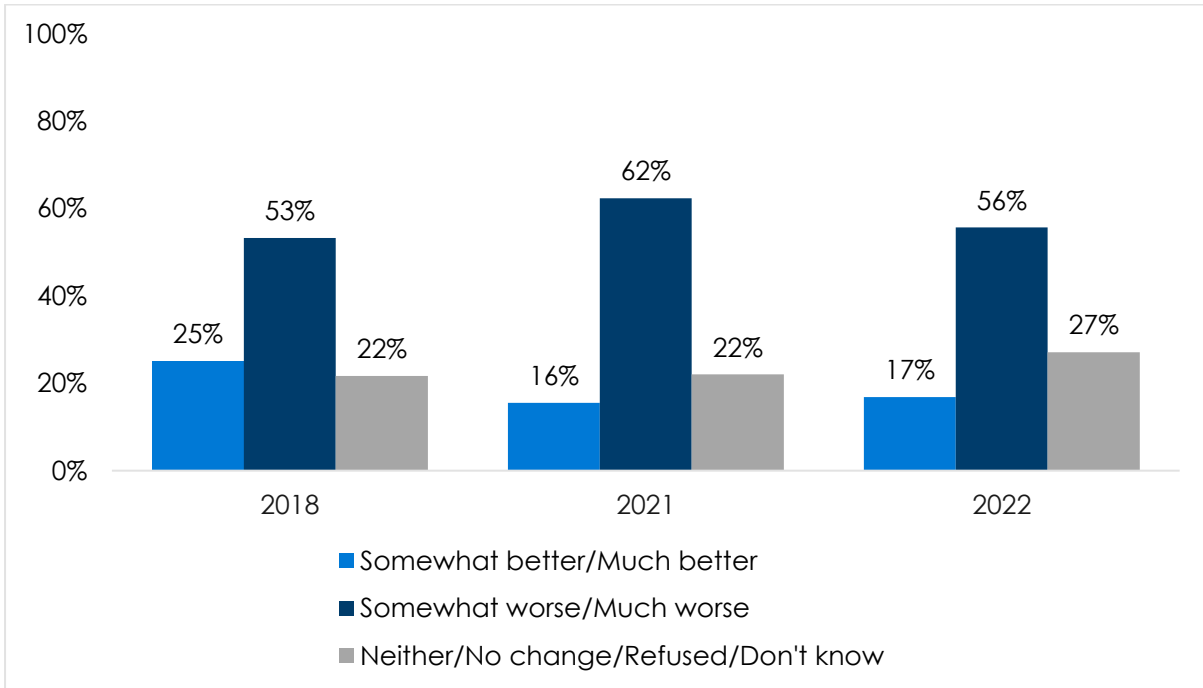
Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?

Figure 2: Climate change awareness | by demographic group | South Africa | 2022



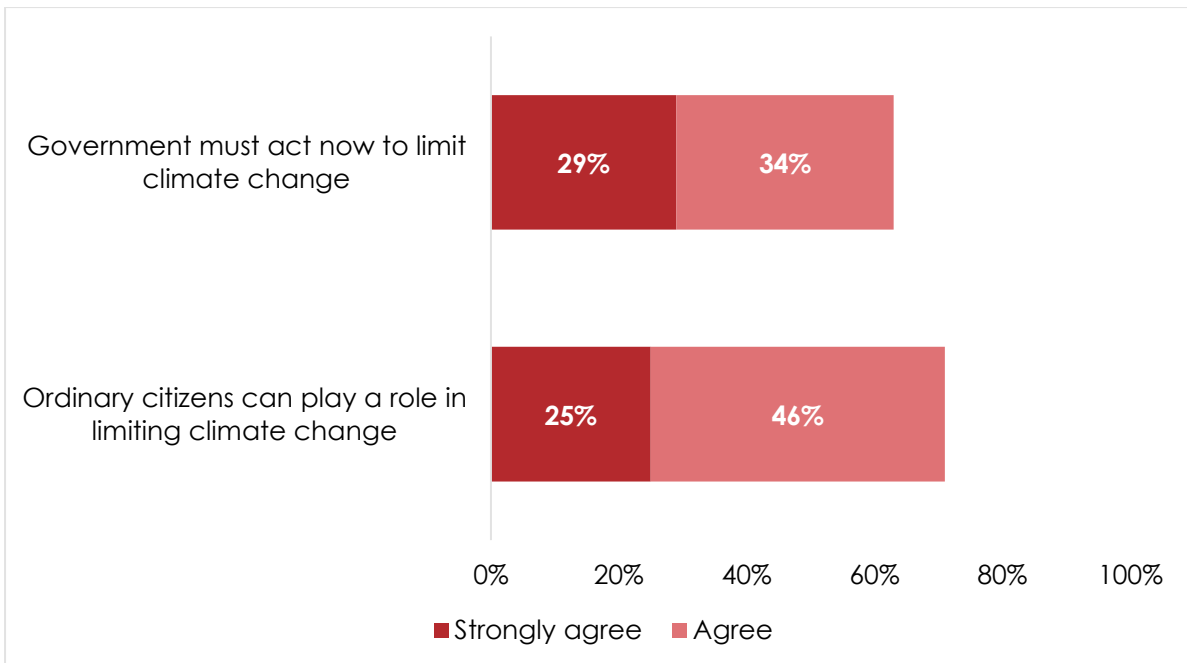
Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% "yes")

Figure 3: Is climate change making life better or worse? | South Africa | 2018-2022



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

Figure 4: Limiting climate change | South Africa | 2022



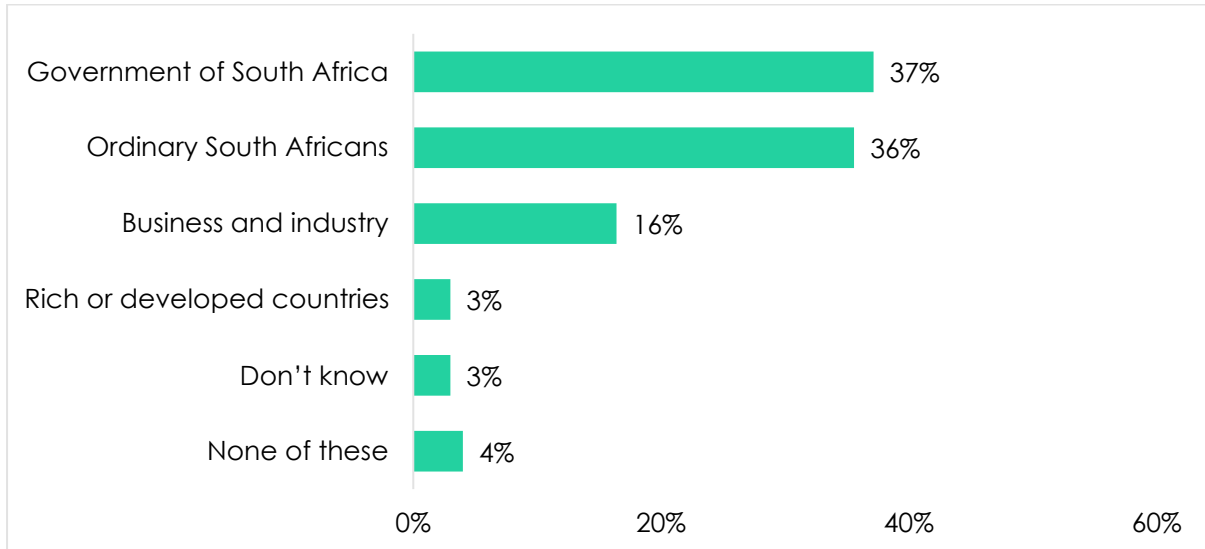
Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Ordinary South Africans can play a role in limiting climate change?

It is important for our government to take steps now to limit climate change in the future, even if it is expensive or causes some job losses or other harm to our economy?

(Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Figure 5: Who has primary responsibility for limiting climate change? | South Africa
 | 2022



Respondents who said they had heard of climate change were asked: Who do you think should have primary responsibility for trying to limit climate change and reduce its impact? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

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