



In fight against climate change, Seychellois call for greater effort by developed countries, industry, government, and citizens

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 691 | Walleign S. Hassen

Summary

Seychelles, a small island developing state made up of about 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, is ecologically fragile and highly vulnerable to climate change. High exposure to natural disasters and the impacts of rising temperatures and sea levels threaten wide-ranging effects on infrastructure, agricultural yields, livelihoods and the national economy, and human security (Scandurra, Romano, Ronghi, & Carfora, 2018; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018; Robinson, 2015; Nurse et al., 2014).

Most of Seychelles' development and 80% of its critical infrastructure are located on the coastline and directly exposed to climate-change impacts such as sea-level rise, floods, and erosion (Etongo, 2019; Rice, Rolf, Rumschlag, & Xie, 2019).

Early to recognise the threat, Seychelles was the second country to ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992). Under the commitments of the Paris Agreement, its Nationally Determined Contributions document pledges to reduce economy-wide emissions by 26% by 2030 and to achieve a net-zero emissions economy by 2050 (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). A variety of adaptation interventions, ranging from retaining walls and rock armoring to ecosystem-based adaptation actions such as dune and mangrove restoration and watershed management, are underway and are considered national priorities (Etongo, Amelie, Pouponneau, & Filho, 2021).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 questionnaire to explore Seychellois' experiences and perceptions of climate change.

Findings show that climate change is a well-known concept in Seychelles, and a majority of citizens familiar with climate change say it is making life worse. While most citizens praise the government's efforts to limit change, overwhelming majorities say greater efforts are needed from developed countries, business and industry, and ordinary citizens as well as the government.

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. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

In Afrobarometer's first survey in Seychelles, a team led by the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult

Seychellois in December 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

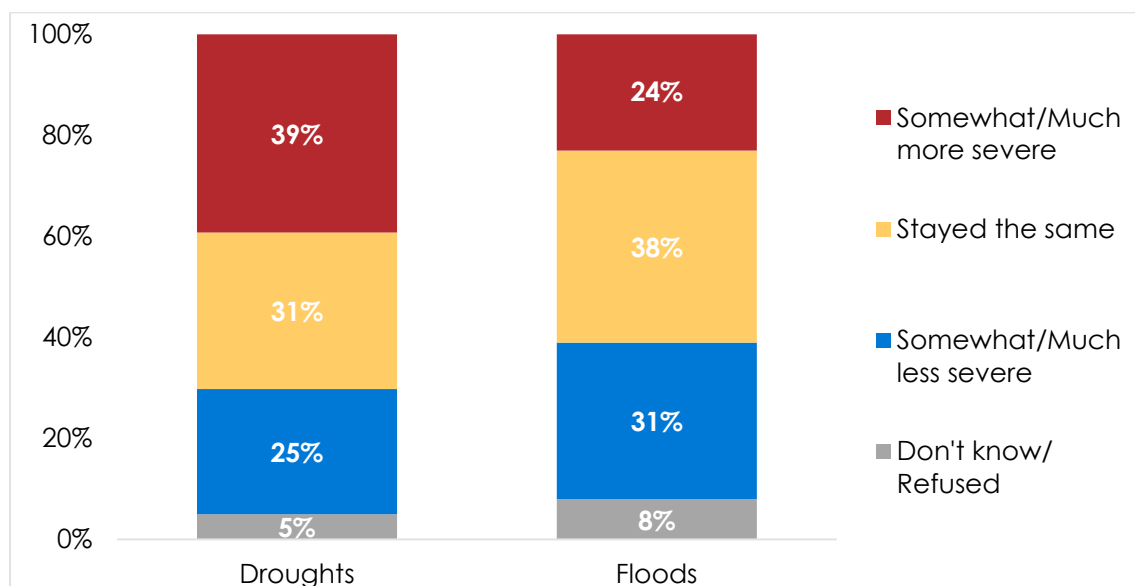
Key findings

- About four in 10 Seychellois (39%) say droughts have become more severe over the past 10 years, while a majority say they have lessened in severity (25%) or stayed the same (31%). Only 24% say floods have gotten worse.
- Eight in 10 Seychellois (80%) say they have heard of climate change. Among those who are aware of climate change:
 - More than half (54%) say it is making life in Seychelles worse.
 - More than three-quarters (78%) say ordinary citizens can help curb climate change, while 64% want the government to take immediate action to limit climate change, even if it is expensive, causes job losses, or takes a toll on the economy.
 - Large majorities say greater efforts to limit climate change are needed from developed countries (89%), business and industry (88%), the government (86%), and ordinary citizens (80%).
- Overall, two-thirds (65%) of Seychellois say the government is doing a good job of addressing climate change.

Severity of extreme weather conditions

Before asking about climate change, Afrobarometer asked respondents about their experiences with extreme weather conditions. Four in 10 Seychellois (39%) say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” over the past 10 years, while 25% say they have become less severe and 31% say they have stayed the same (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Severity of droughts and floods | Seychelles | 2022



Respondents were asked: In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

In contrast, only 24% say that the severity of floods has increased, while one third (31%) report that they become less severe and 38% say the severity of flooding has not changed.

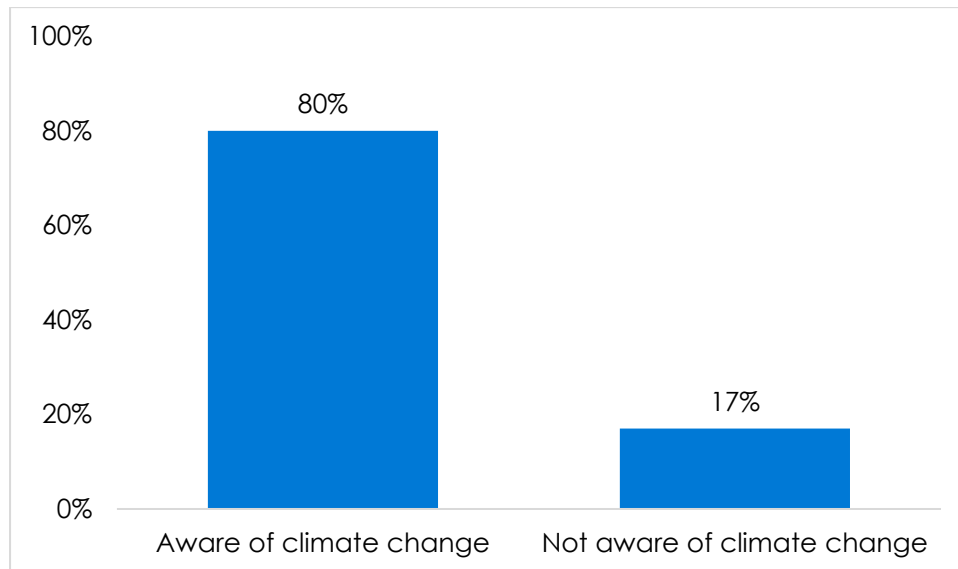
Assessments of the severity of drought and flooding differ little by respondents' economic status, perhaps reflecting most of the population's shared proximity to the coastline and its climatic conditions.

Climate change

Awareness of climate change

Eight in 10 Seychellois (80%) say they have heard of climate change (Figure 2), the highest level of awareness recorded in Afrobarometer surveys in 37 African countries in 2021/2022.

Figure 2: Awareness of climate change | Seychelles | 2022



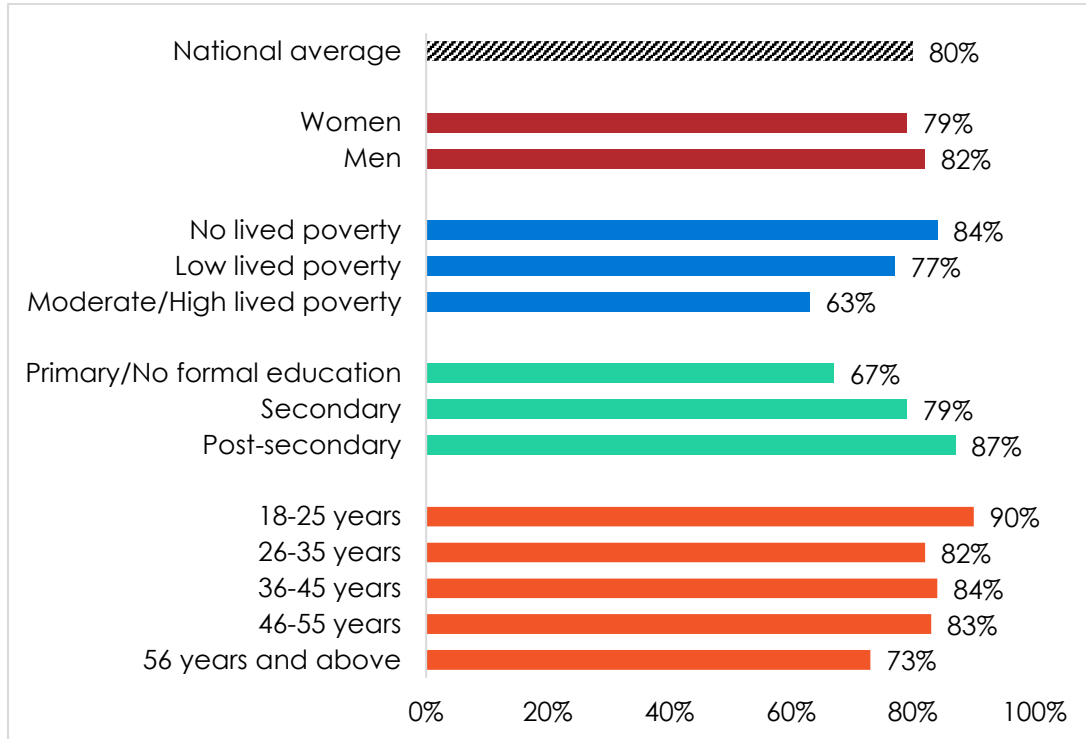
Respondents were asked: *Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?*

Poor citizens (those experiencing moderate or high "lived poverty"¹) are less familiar with the term "climate change" (63%) than better-off respondents (77%-84%) (Figure 3). Similarly, awareness is lower among citizens with primary schooling or less (67%) than among those with secondary (79%) or post-secondary (87%) education. The youngest generation (18-25 years) has the highest level of awareness of climate change (90%).

Awareness of climate change is higher among citizens who get news "every day" or "a few times a week" from social media, the Internet, or newspapers (85% each) than among those who rarely or never use these channels for news (69%-77%) (Figure 4). This pattern does not hold for television and radio news, where frequent consumers are actually somewhat less likely to be familiar with climate change.

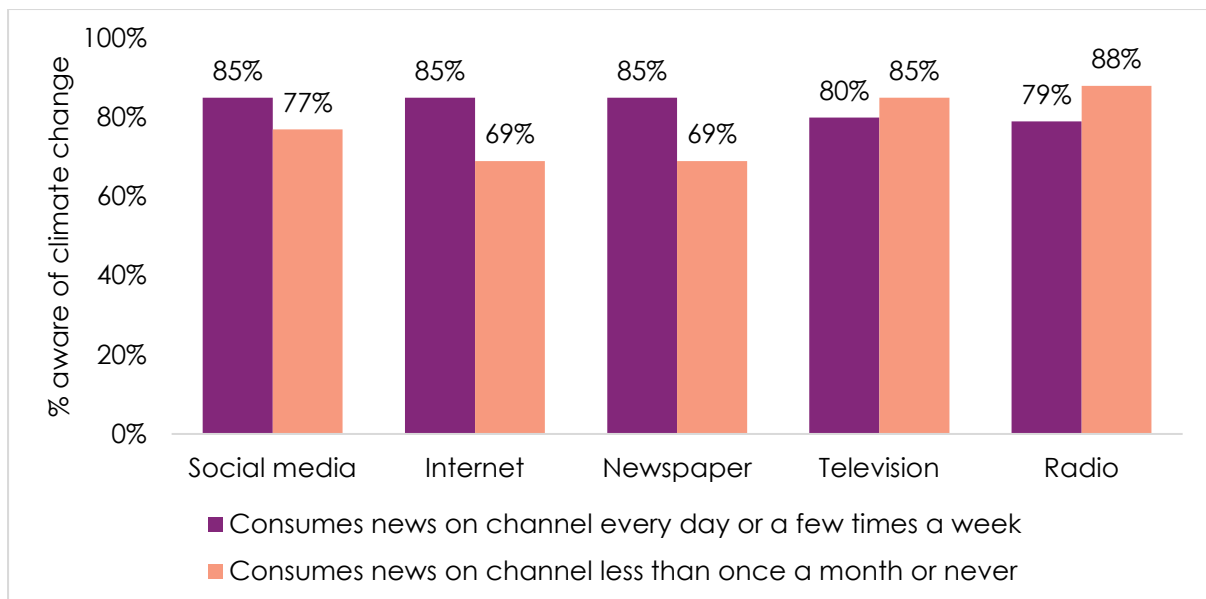
¹ Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

Figure 3: Awareness of climate change | by demographic group | Seychelles
 | 2022



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

Figure 4: Awareness of climate change | by news media consumption | Seychelles
 | 2022



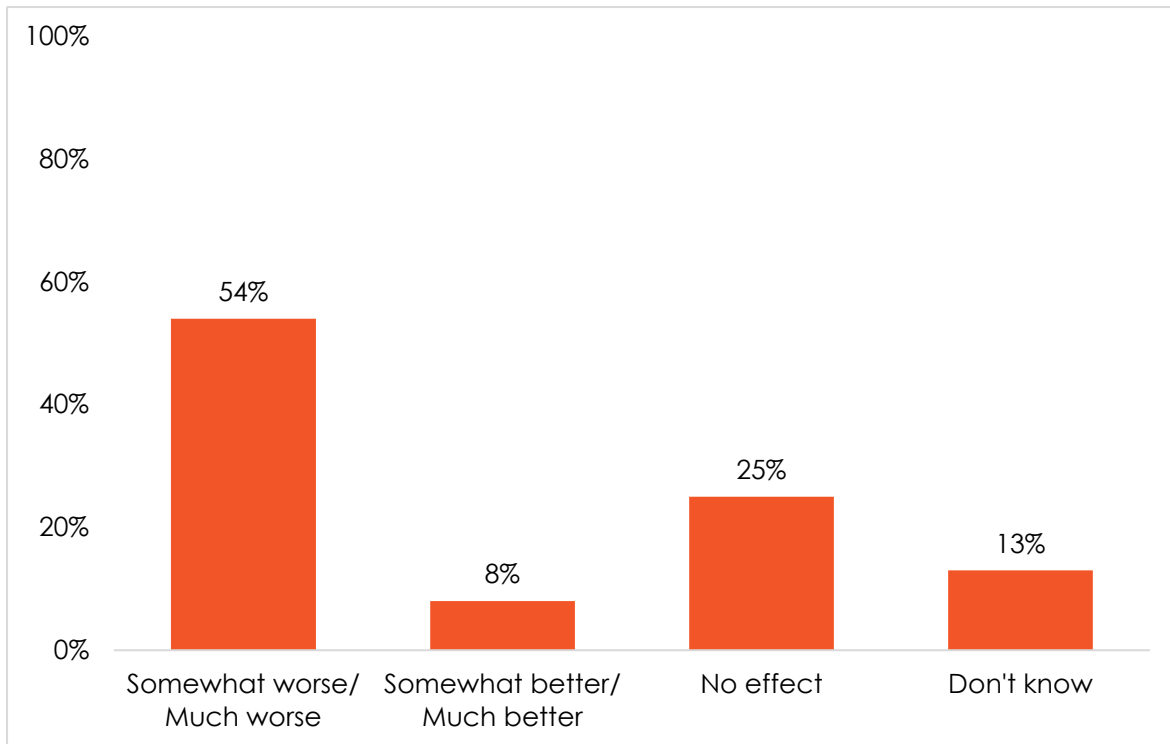
Respondents were asked:

Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?
 (% who say "yes")
 How often do you get news from the following sources?

Effects of climate change

Among Seychellois who have heard of climate change, a majority (54%) say it is making life worse. Substantial proportions say that climate change is affecting life in Seychelles (25%) or that they “don’t know” (13%), while 8% say it is making life better” (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Effect of climate change | Seychelles | 2022

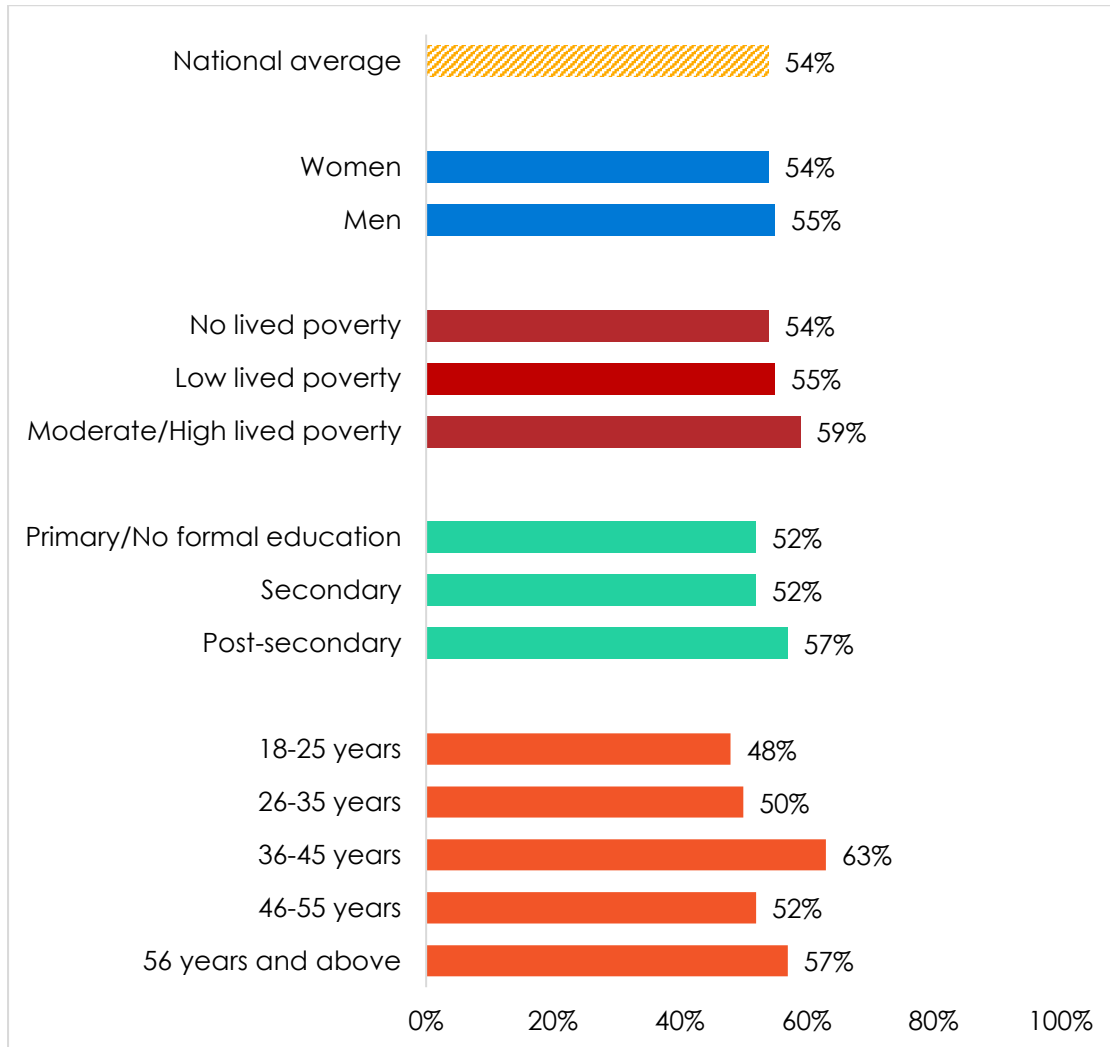


Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Seychelles better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

The negative impacts of climate change seem to be perceived similarly by demographic subgroups. A gap of 5 percentage points separates the poor and the economically better-off (59% vs. 54%) as well as the highly educated and the unschooled (57% vs. 52%) (Figure 6). The youngest are least likely to think climate change is making life worse (48%).

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Figure 6: Climate change is making life worse | by demographic group | Seychelles
 | 2022



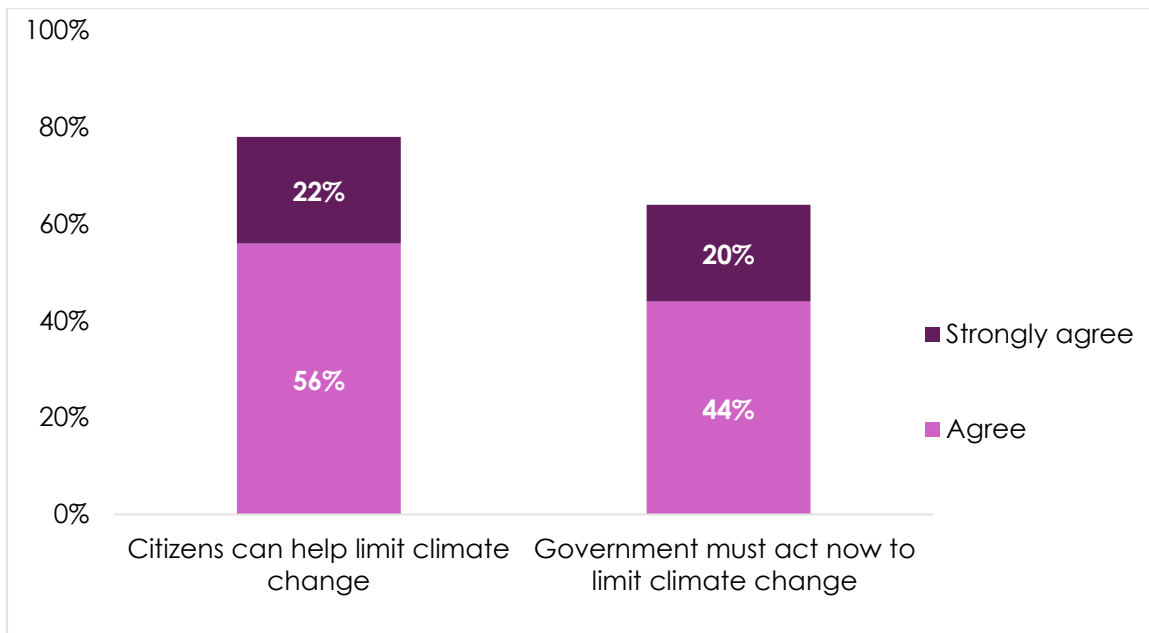
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Seychelles better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "somewhat worse" or "much worse") (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Fighting climate change

Large majorities of Seychellois who are familiar with climate change believe that both ordinary citizens and the government have roles to play in fighting it. More than three-fourths (78%) say that citizens can help curb climate change, while almost two-thirds (64%) say the government should take steps now to limit climate change, "even if it is expensive or causes some job losses or other harm to our economy" (Figure 7).

When asked who should have primary responsibility for fighting climate change, respondents most frequently cite rich or developed countries (30%) and ordinary citizens (25%) (Figure 8). Fewer assign this responsibility primarily to the government (16%) and to business and industry (15%).

Figure 7: Limiting climate change | Seychelles | 2022



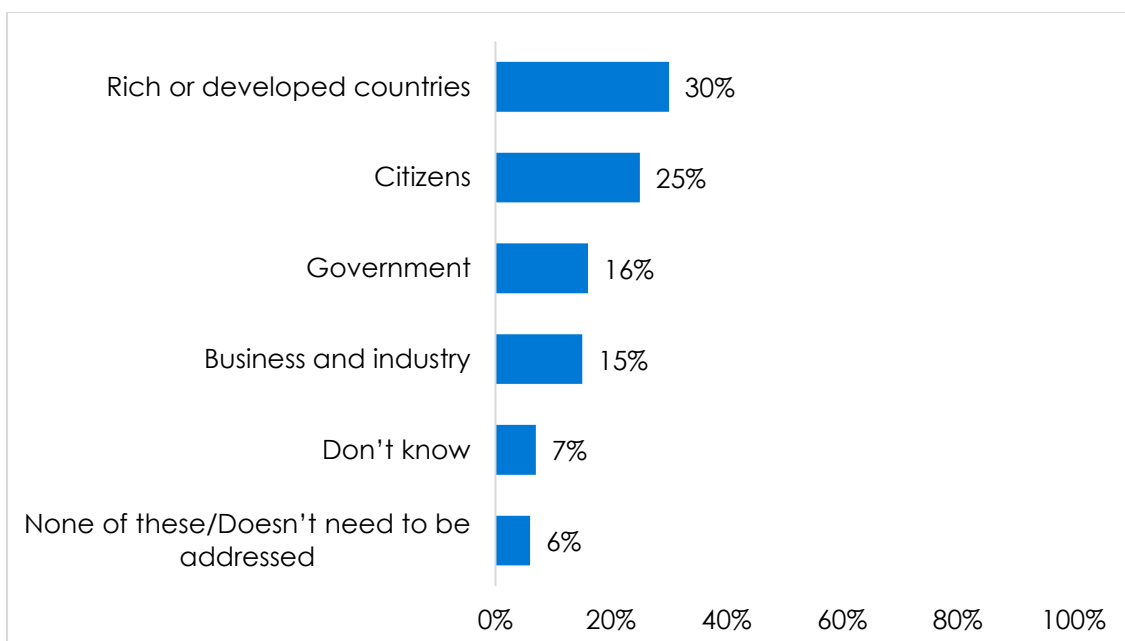
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Ordinary Seychellois 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 are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

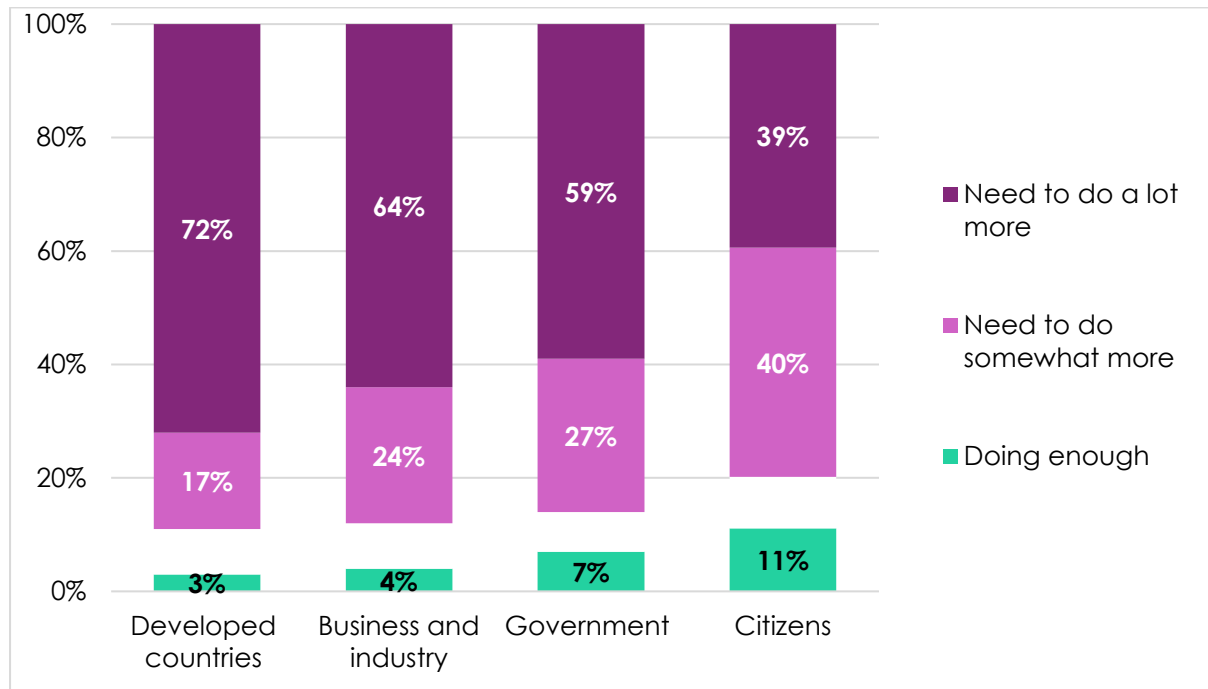
Figure 8: Who should have primary responsibility for limiting climate change?
 | Seychelles | 2022



Respondents who are aware 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 are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Most Seychellois believe that key stakeholders are not doing enough to limit climate change (Figure 9). Almost nine out of 10 respondents familiar with climate change say developed countries (89%), business and industry (88%), and the government (86%) need to do more, including large majorities who call for “a lot more” climate action. Eight in 10 (80%)² say the same thing about ordinary citizens.

Figure 9: Are stakeholders doing enough to limit climate change? | Seychelles | 2022



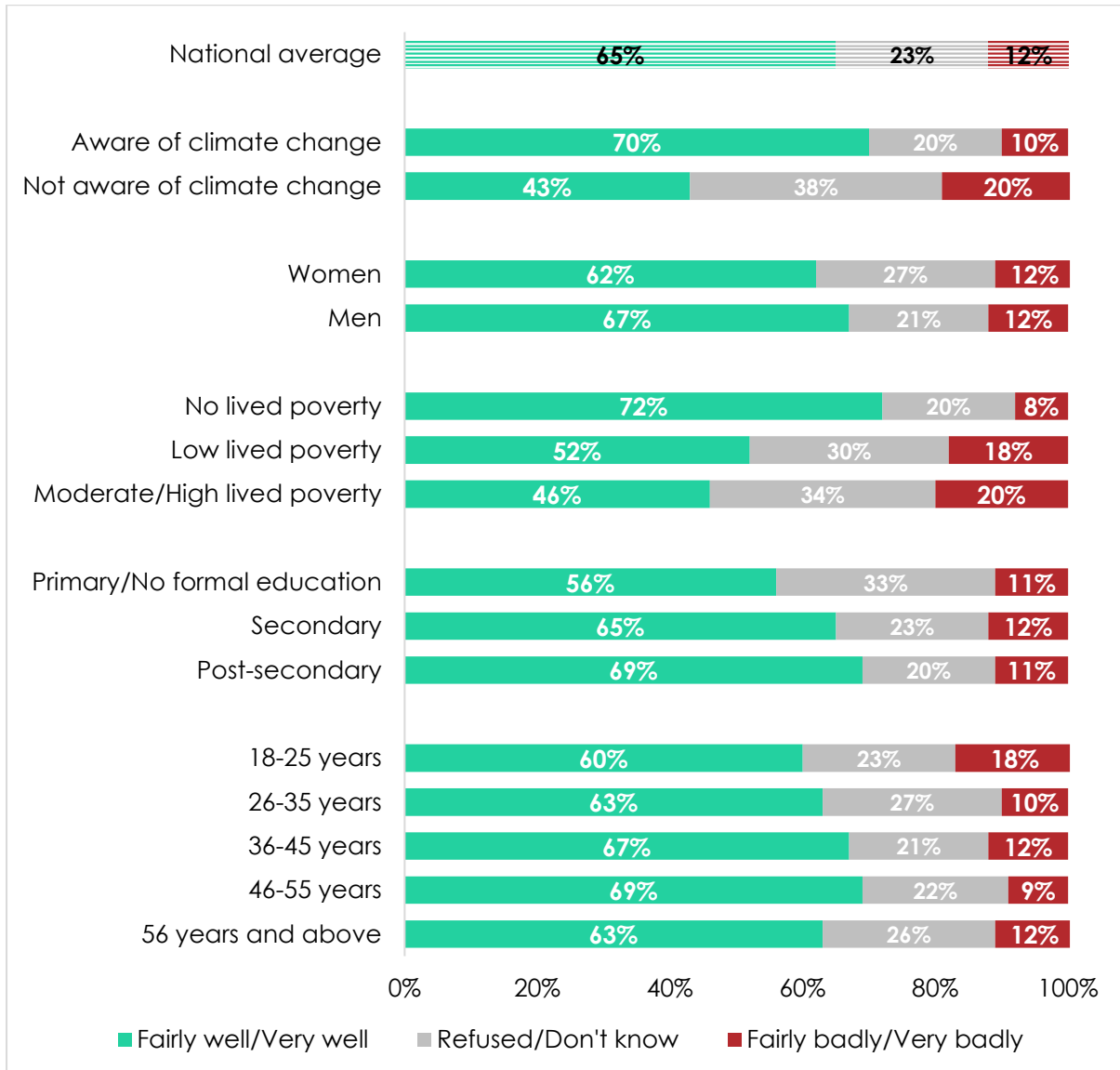
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think each of the following are doing enough to limit climate change, or do they need to do more, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

While they want more government action, Seychellois also approve of the government's efforts so far: Two-thirds (65%) describe the government's performance on addressing climate change as “fairly good” or “very good” (Figure 10). Only 12% give the government a failing grade on climate change.

Respondents who are aware of climate change are more likely to rate the government favourably than those who are not (70% vs. 43%). Approval of the government's efforts is particularly high among citizens with post-secondary education (69%) and economically well-off respondents (72%).

² Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. 40% “somewhat more” and 39% “a lot more” sum to 80%).

Figure 10: Government performance in handling climate change | by demographic group | Seychelles | 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: Addressing the problem of climate change?

Conclusion

As inhabitants of a small island developing state, Seychellois are well aware of climate change, and most believe they can play a role in curbing it. But they also expect greater efforts to limit climate change from developed countries, business and industry, and their government, even at considerable economic cost.

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