

# With climate change making life worse, Africans expect governments and other stakeholders to step up

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 717 | Alfred Kwadzo Torsu and Matthias Krönke

## Summary

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing Africa today. The continent is responsible for less than 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, projected to experience some of its most severe impacts (Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, 2023). According to the most recent report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), temperature increases due to human-caused climate change have been detected across Africa, and many regions have warmed more rapidly than the global average (Trisos et al., 2023). Rising sea levels have left cities in East, West, and North Africa particularly vulnerable, and changes in rainfall patterns have worsened droughts and floods across the continent.



These changes have had devastating impacts on people's lives, livelihoods, and the environment, made worse by Africa's low adaptation capabilities. In 2022, North Africa was gripped by extreme heat, fuelling wildfires in Algeria and Tunisia. The Horn of Africa faced its worst drought in 40 years. In Somalia, almost 1.2 million people have been displaced by the catastrophic impacts of drought on pastoral and farming livelihoods (World Meteorological Organization, 2023). Tropical cyclones have spread death and destruction in Mozambique and Malawi (Davies, 2022). The effects are not limited to rural areas: About 70% of African cities are highly vulnerable to climate shocks (Gu, Gerland, Pelletier, & Cohen, 2015; Trisos et al., 2023). The human costs of climate change are expected to rise in the coming decades. According to the IPCC report, "multiple African countries are projected to face compounding risks from reduced food production across crops, livestock, and fisheries; increased heat-related mortality; heat-related loss of labour productivity; and flooding from sea-level rise, especially in West Africa" (Trisos et al., 2023, p. 1290).

Therefore, it is critically important that African countries urgently increase climate-change resilience and adaptation capacities (Stringer et al., 2023). This will require financial resources and coordinated interventions from African governments, business, civil society, and ordinary citizens. Unfortunately, developed countries, which contribute most to global warming, have yet to honour their pledge to mobilise sufficient funding for climate action in Africa (OECD, 2023). But even if existing pledges were realised, they would have to be complemented by interventions from African countries to successfully mitigate the effects of climate change.

During the recent Africa Climate Summit (2023) in Nairobi, Kenya, African leaders re-emphasised the need to accelerate and scale up climate-adaptation action. Improving domestic capabilities to respond to the escalating severity of climate impacts requires the buy-in of citizens as well as political leaders (Global Center on Adaptation, 2023), which is contingent on awareness of climate change and public understanding of climate risk.

Findings from Afrobarometer's latest round of public-opinion surveys in 39 African countries show that over the past decade, many Africans have experienced more severe droughts and floods. Yet these experiences do not necessarily translate into greater awareness of the threat: Only half of respondents say they have heard of climate change.

Among citizens who are aware of climate change, most expect their government to take the lead in dealing with its causes and consequences – and to do so more decisively than it has to date. They are prepared to support government measures to limit climate change, even if they are expensive or cause harm to the economy.

But Africans also expect “a lot more” climate action from business and industry, developed countries, and ordinary citizens, underscoring their view of climate change as a shared global challenge.

### **Afrobarometer survey**

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. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This 39-country analysis is based on 54,436 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

### **Key findings**

#### **Droughts and floods:**

- Significant proportions of Africans say droughts (47%) and floods (35%) have become more severe in their region over the past decade.
  - Rural and poor citizens are particularly likely to report increasingly severe droughts, as are people working in the agriculture sector.
  - Worsening droughts are of greatest concern in Madagascar (86%), Cabo Verde (80%), Niger (73%), and Tunisia (69%), while more severe flooding is most commonly reported in Lesotho (73%), Mauritius (68%), the Gambia (62%), and Niger (62%).

#### **Awareness of climate change:**

- On average across 39 countries, about half (51%) of respondents say they have heard of climate change.
  - Awareness of climate change ranges from 22% in Tunisia to 80% in Seychelles. It is particularly low among economically disadvantaged and less educated citizens, rural residents, and women.

#### **Effects of climate change:**

- Among people who are aware of climate change, more than seven in 10 (72%) say it is making life in their country worse. This is the majority view in 34 of the 39 surveyed countries, ranging up to 91% of citizens in Madagascar.

**Limiting climate change:**

- Among people who are aware of climate change:
  - About three-fourths say that citizens can help limit climate change (77%) and that their government should act now to limit climate change, even at considerable cost (74%).
  - Most people assign primary responsibility for limiting climate change to their government (44%) or to ordinary citizens (30%).
  - Large majorities demand “a lot more” action against climate change from their government (77%), developed countries (71%), and the business community (69%).

**Government performance on limiting climate change:**

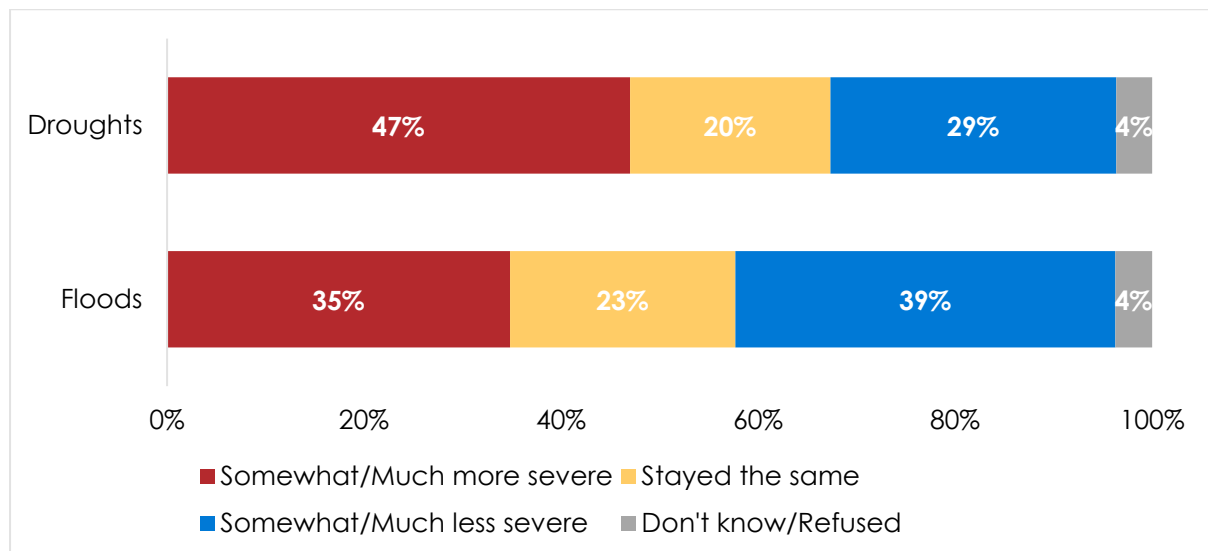
- Only about one in three Africans (36%) say their government is addressing the issue of climate change “fairly well” or “very well.”

**Severity of droughts and floods**

Before asking survey respondents about climate change, interviewers explored their experiences of extreme weather. On average across 39 countries surveyed between late 2021 and mid-2023, almost half (47%) of respondents say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” in their region over the past 10 years. Three in 10 (29%) say droughts have become less severe, while 20% report no change (Figure 1).

With regard to floods, about one-third (35%) of respondents say they have gotten worse, but more (39%) say they have become less severe, while 23% see the situation as unchanged.

**Figure 1: Severity of droughts and floods | 39 countries | 2021/2023**

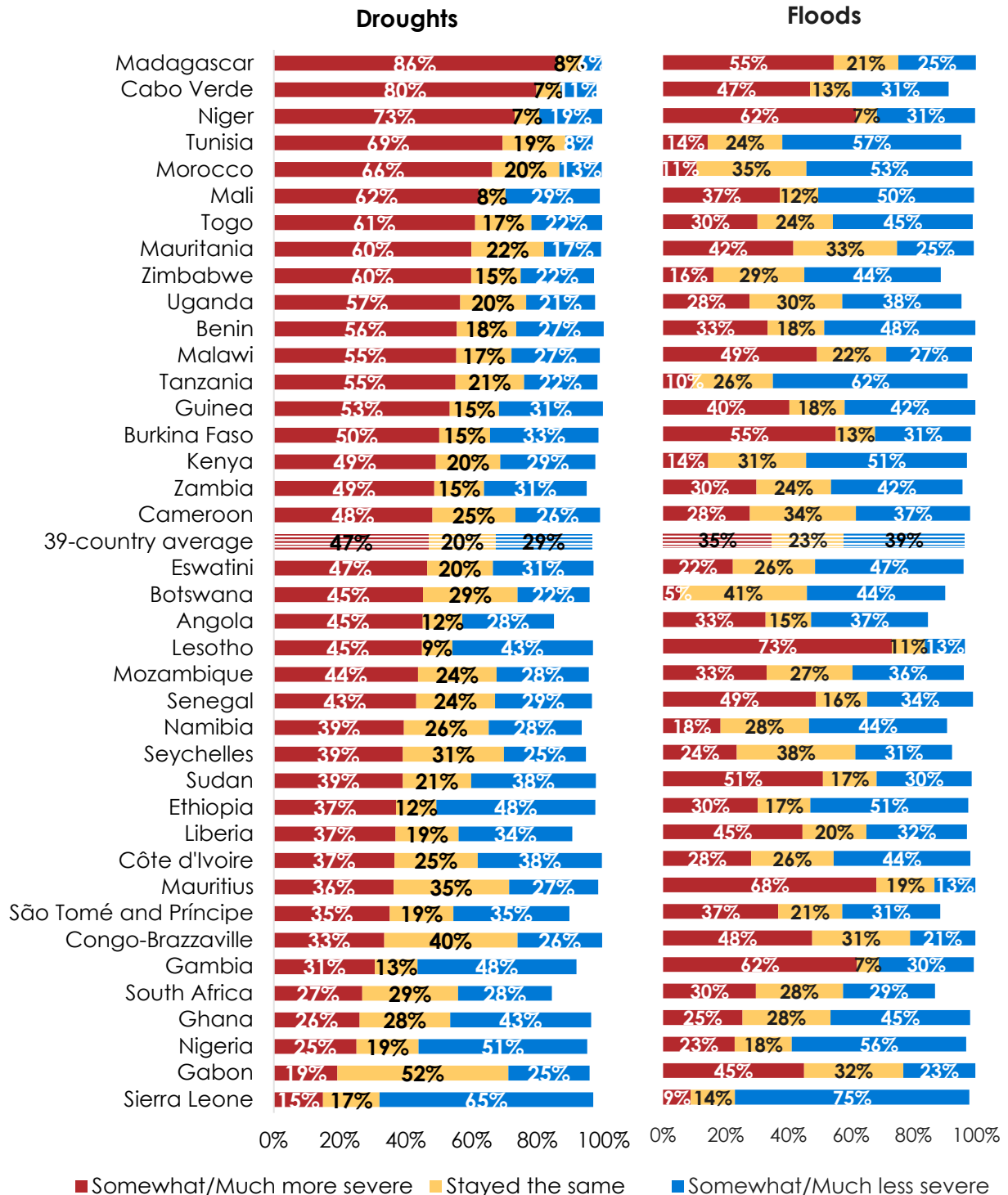


**Respondents were asked:** *In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?*

The extent to which Africans report increasing droughts and floods varies significantly across countries (Figure 2). In 15 of the 39 countries surveyed, at least half of respondents see an increase in the severity of droughts, led by Madagascar (86%), Cabo Verde (80%), Niger

(73%), and Tunisia (69%). On the other hand, majorities in Siera Leone (65%) and Nigeria (51%) report the opposite trend of less severe droughts.

**Figure 2: Severity of droughts and floods** | 39 countries | 2021/2023

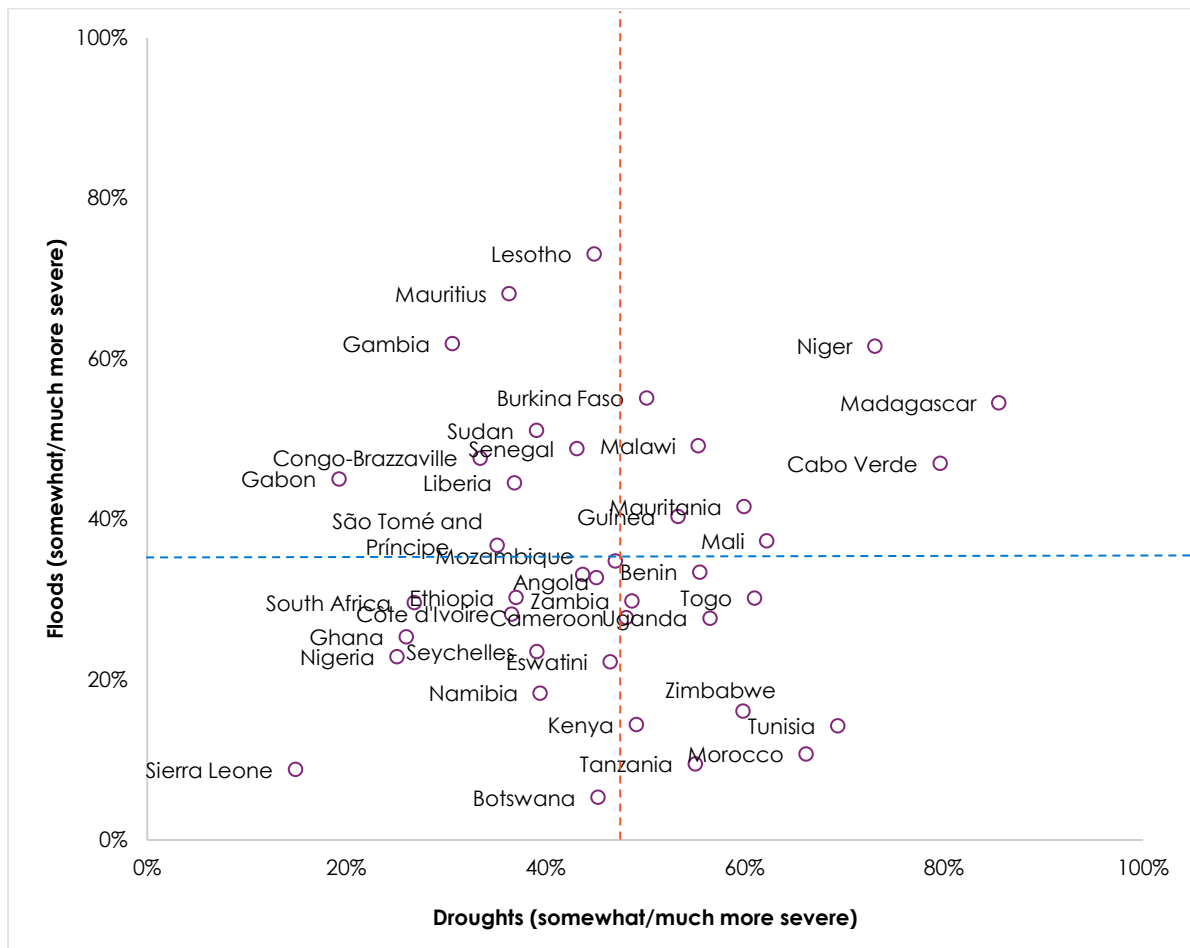


**Respondents were asked:** In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

Worsening floods, meanwhile, are of most concern among citizens in Lesotho (73%), Mauritius (68%), the Gambia (62%), and Niger (62%), while majorities report less severe flooding in Sierra Leone (75%), Tanzania (62%), Tunisia (57%), Nigeria (56%), Morocco (53%), Ethiopia (51%), and Kenya (51%).

Figure 3 illustrates the country-level response patterns for perceptions of increasingly severe droughts and floods. Countries in the lower right quadrant, such as Tunisia and Morocco, report primarily experiencing worsening droughts. Meanwhile, in the upper left quadrant, countries such as Mauritius and the Gambia mainly report worsening flooding. In the upper right quadrants are the countries where many citizens report both worse drought and worse flooding, such as Madagascar, Cabo Verde, and Niger. In the lower left quadrants are those where relatively few respondents see the severity of either event as increasing, such as Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

**Figure 3: Increasing severity of droughts and floods | 39 countries | 2021/2023**



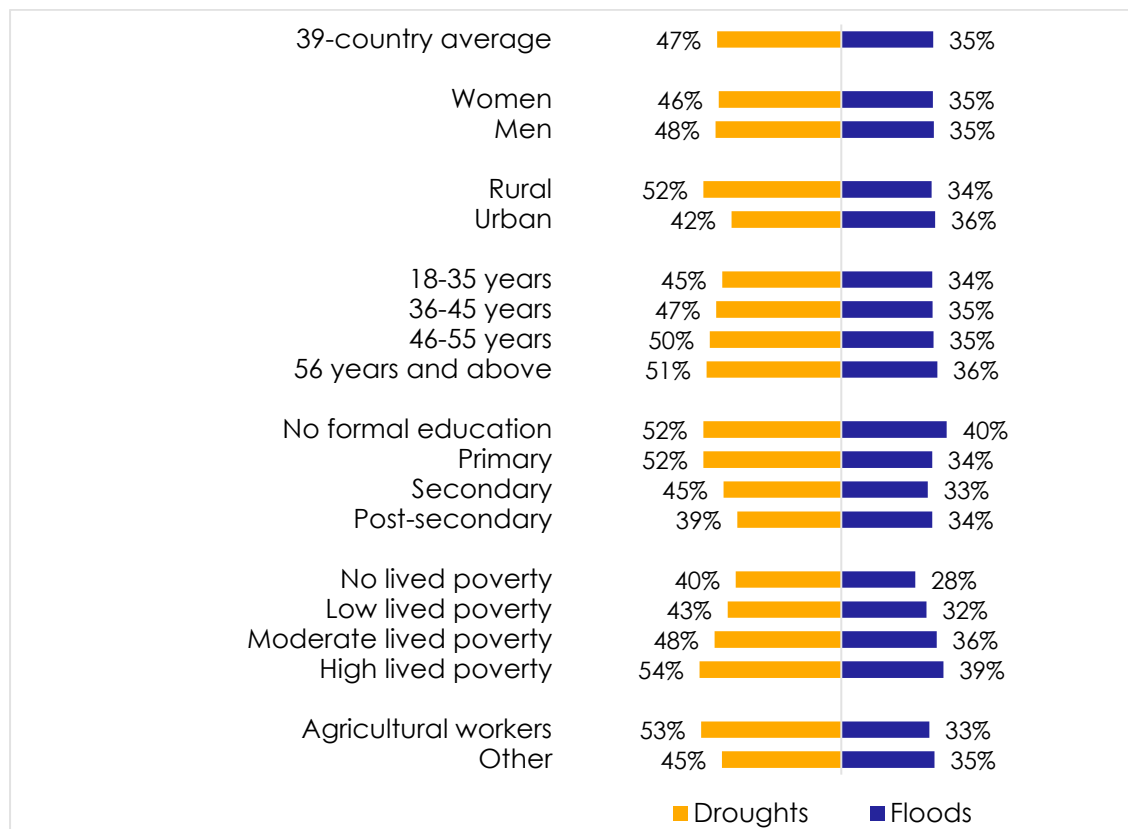
Data points reflect country averages for the percentage of respondents who say that droughts and floods have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” over the past decade. The red dashed line represents the 39-country average for droughts; the blue dashed line represents the 39-country average for floods.

Perceptions of severe weather events might also vary depending on people's personal living conditions and demographic characteristics. For example, those living off the land might be more sensitive to climatic changes and thus more likely to report increasing drought. Indeed, the data show that perceptions of worsening drought are more common among rural

residents (52%, vs. 42% of urbanites) and among respondents who work in the agricultural sector (53%, vs. 45% of those who don't) (Figure 4).

In addition, people who experience high levels of material deprivation report worsening droughts at higher rates than those who do not experience lived poverty<sup>1</sup> (54% vs. 40%). So do citizens with primary schooling or less (52%) compared to those with higher education (39%-45%). Economic and educational status show a similar pattern with regard to floods, perhaps suggesting that the disadvantaged are particularly exposed to weather extremes.

**Figure 4: More severe droughts and floods | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023**



**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? (% who say "somewhat more severe" or "much more severe")*

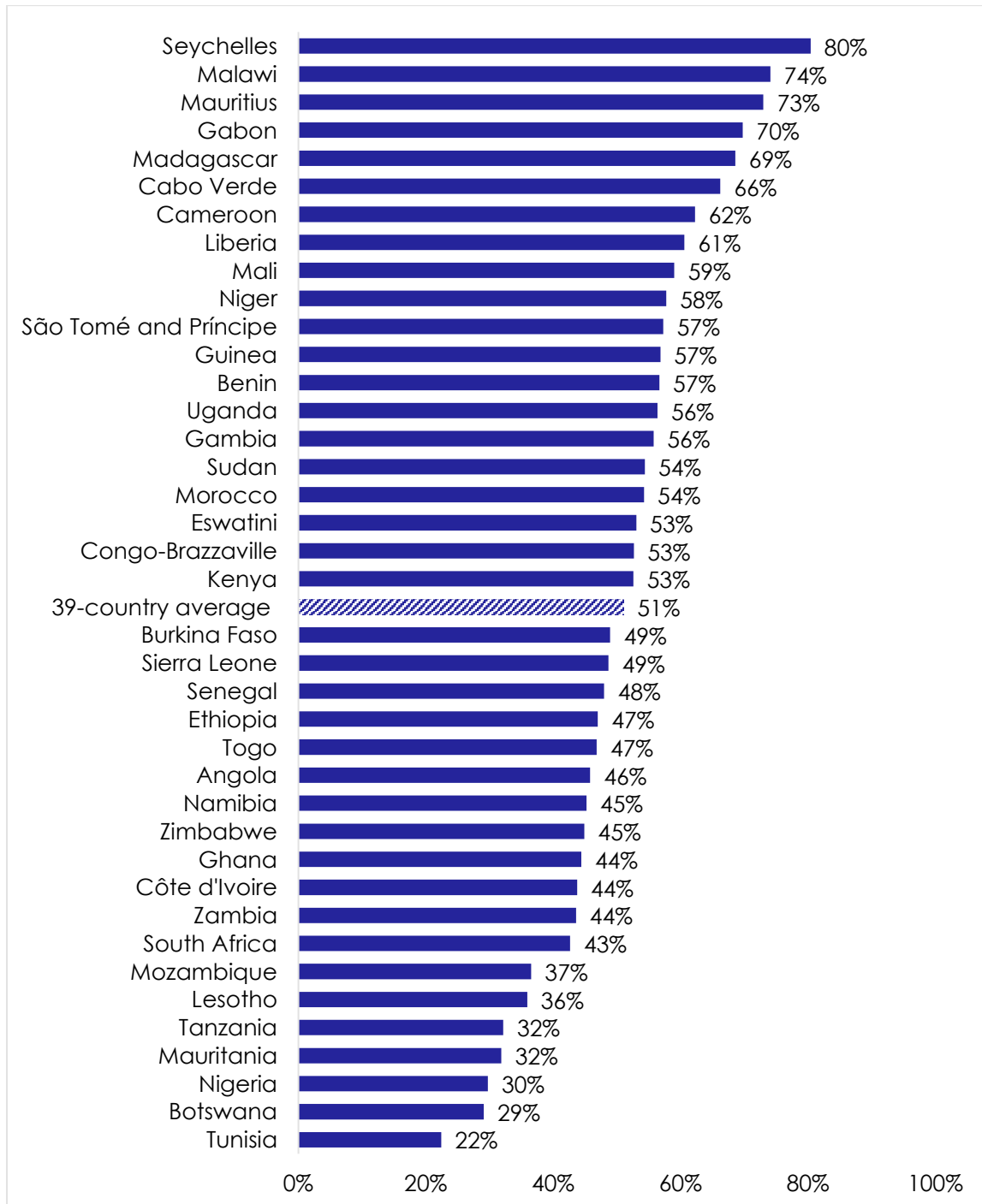
### Awareness of climate change

The recognition of climatic changes, such as worsening droughts and floods over time, may contribute to people's willingness to support actions to limit and/or adapt to the negative consequences of human-induced climate change. But climate-change awareness encompasses a fuller understanding of climatic changes that may depend on information received through education, the media, or campaigns by activists and governments.

<sup>1</sup> 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).

On average across 39 countries, about half (51%) of citizens say they have heard of climate change (Figure 5). Awareness of climate change is relatively high in small island states such as Seychelles (80%), Mauritius (73%), and Cabo Verde (66%), as well as in Malawi (74%), Gabon (70%), and Madagascar (69%). But fewer than one-third of citizens are familiar with the concept in Tanzania (32%), Mauritania (32%), Nigeria (30%), Botswana (29%), and Tunisia (22%).

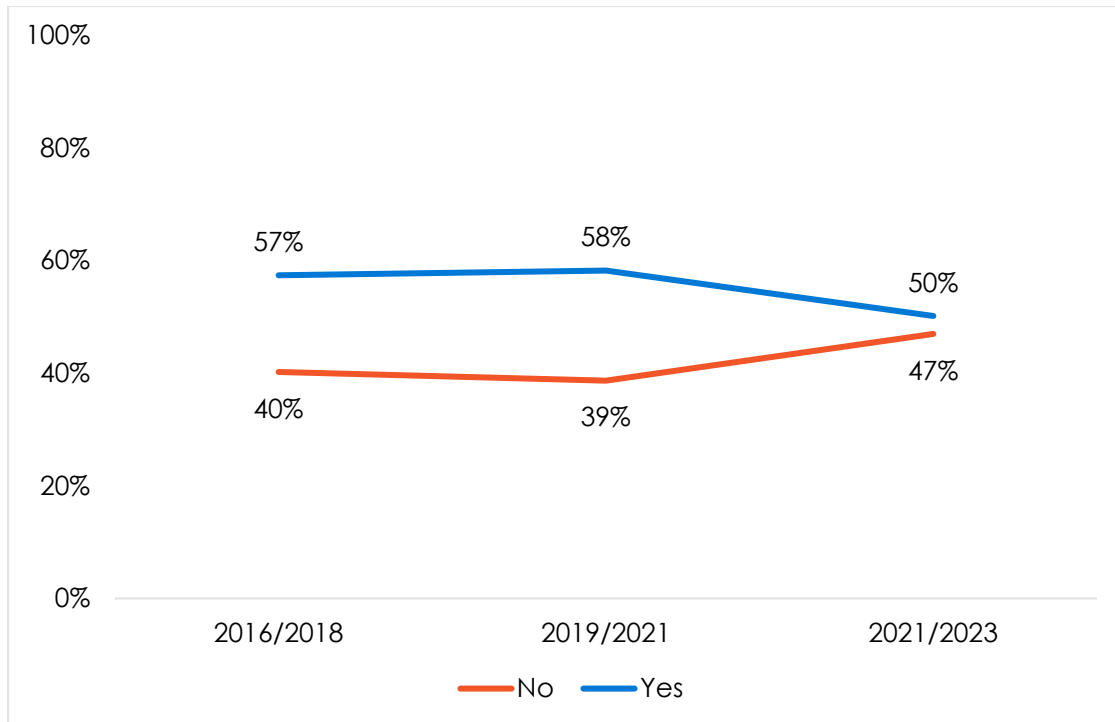
**Figure 5: Awareness of climate change** | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

On average across 32 countries surveyed consistently in Afrobarometer Round 7 (2016/2018), Round 8 (2019/2021), and Round 9 (2021/2023), awareness of climate change has actually declined by 7 percentage points (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Awareness of climate change** | 32 countries | 2016-2023



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

Comparing country-level changes in climate-change awareness between Round 7 and Round 9, we see three countries in which awareness has increased (Madagascar, Sierra Leone, and Liberia), seven countries with virtually identical levels of awareness, and 24 countries with decreased levels of climate-change awareness, including drops of more than 20 percentage points in Zimbabwe (-28), Botswana (-22), Uganda (-22), and Nigeria (-21) (Figure 7).

A comprehensive analysis of country- and individual-level factors that might explain recorded declines in awareness of climate change is beyond the scope of this report. One possibility is that recorded awareness of climate change reflects in part people's experience – in person or via media reports – of changing weather patterns. If so, one would expect respondents who perceive changes in the severity of floods and droughts to be more likely to be aware of climate change. Figure 8 suggests a possible link, as people who see flooding as having become more severe are significantly more likely to be aware of climate change (57%) than those who don't (48%-49%).

Crucially, people who are climate-change aware are not necessarily climate-change literate. Respondents are climate-change literate only if they are both aware of climate change and knowledgeable about its human causes.

Therefore, it is possible that decreases in climate-change awareness don't reflect decreasing knowledge of anthropogenic climate change but instead reflect less intense or less recent experiences of extreme weather. Put differently, citizens surveyed for Round 9 in Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Uganda might be less "climate-change aware" because they experienced



less extreme weather in the years leading up to the survey, compared to citizens who were surveyed in Round 7. Future research could combine climate data with geo-referenced Afrobarometer data to investigate this possibility.

**Figure 7: Change in climate-change awareness** | 34 countries\* | 2016-2023

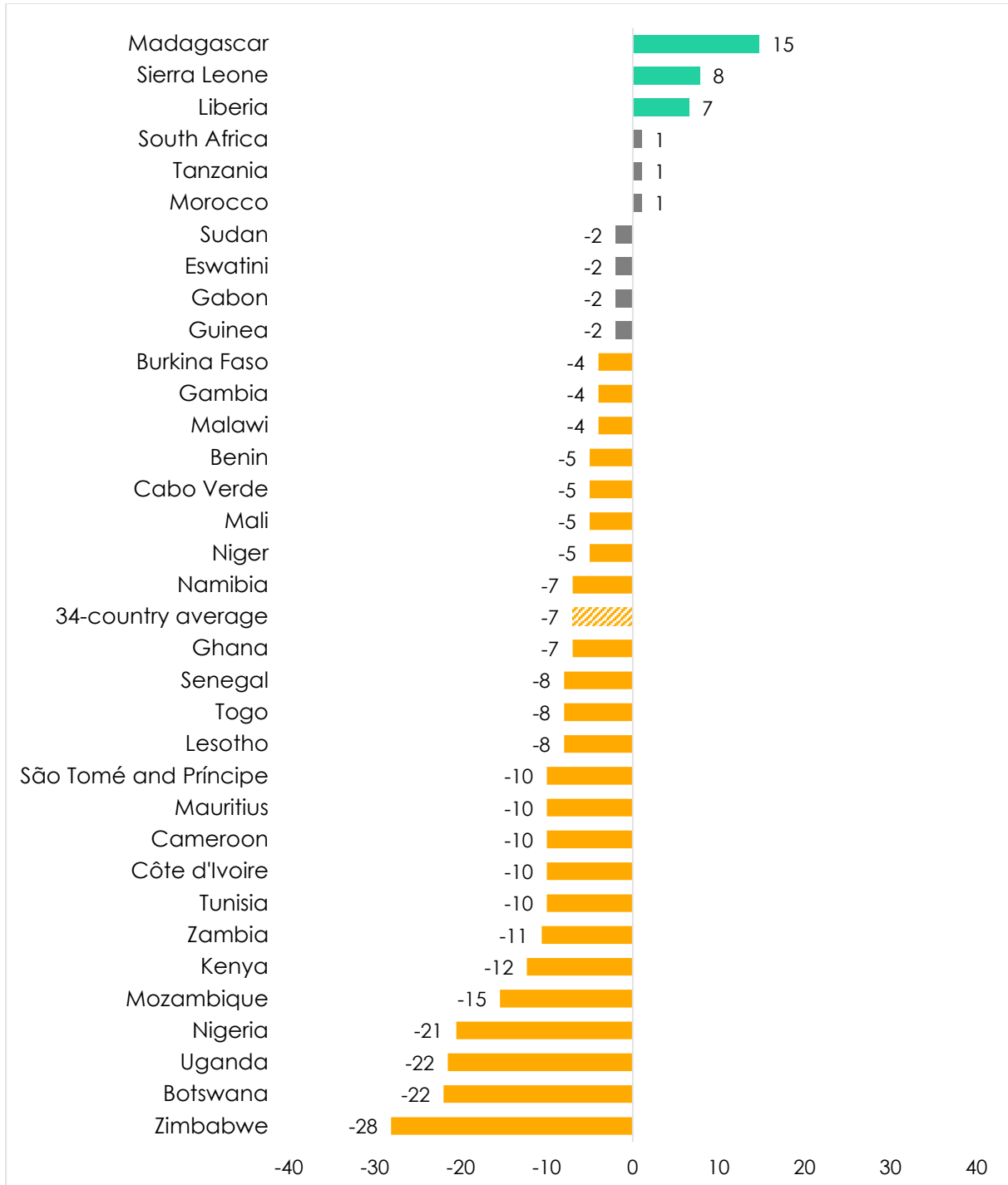
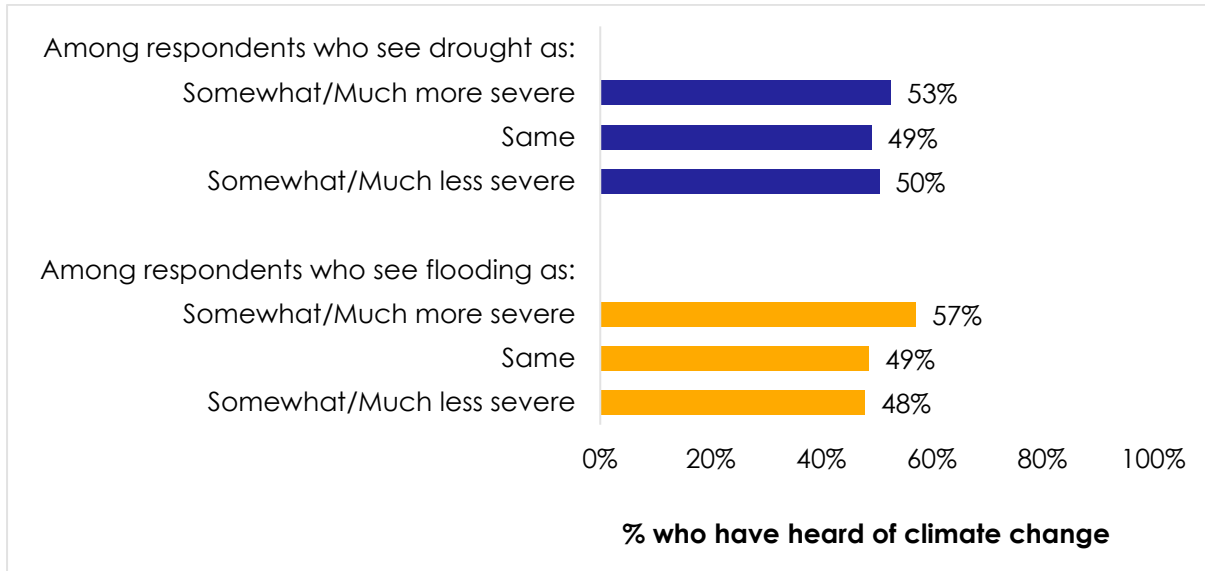


Figure shows the difference, in percentage points, between surveys in 2016/2018 and 2021/2023 in the proportion of respondents saying they had heard of climate change.

\* In addition to the 32 countries reflected in the previous figure, this figure includes Madagascar and São Tomé and Príncipe, which were surveyed in Round 7 and Round 9 but not in Round 8.

**Figure 8: Awareness of climate change and severity of droughts and floods**  
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023



**Respondents were asked:**

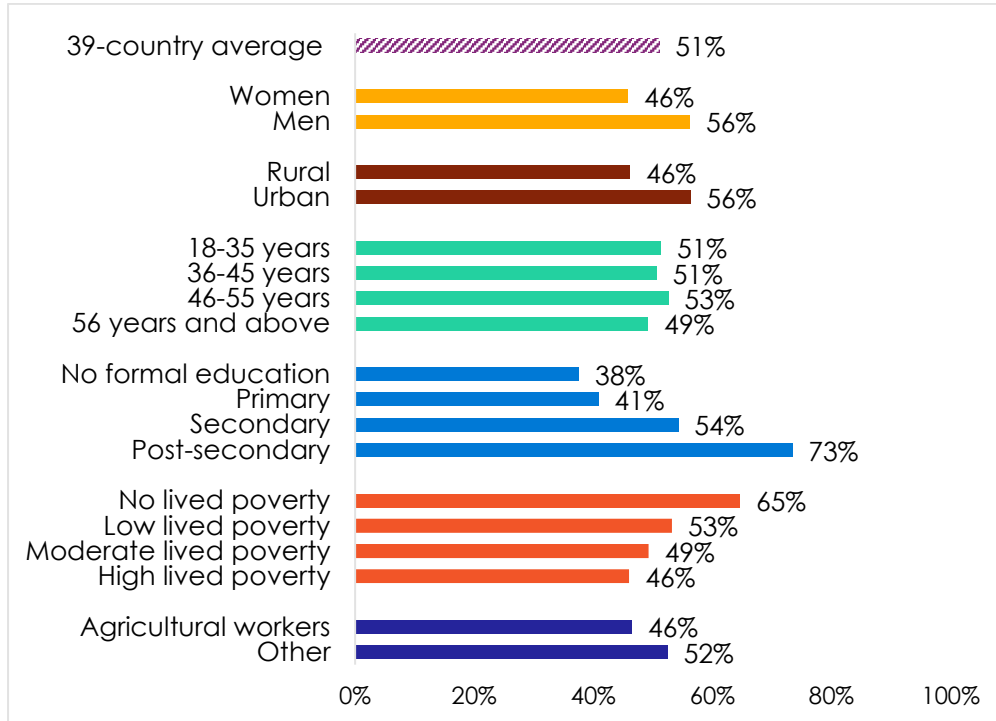
*In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live: Drought? Flooding? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?  
 Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?*

Improving our understanding of climate-change awareness and literacy is important beyond explaining changing patterns of climate-change awareness over time. While those who are merely climate-change aware might tend to respond to experienced climate and its effects without planning explicitly or consciously focusing on anthropogenic climate change, climate-change literate people are more likely to implement transformative responses. Their understanding of the risks associated with climate change informs their responses to current and projected climate change in terms of both adaptation and greenhouse gas mitigation (Simpson et al., 2021). Increasing the share of climate-change aware citizens is a prerequisite to increasing climate-change literacy. Higher levels of literacy, in turn, are essential to improving Africans' ability to successfully manage the negative consequences of climate change.

Previous Afrobarometer analysis has shown that 69% of Africans who are climate-change aware are also climate-change literate, and that education, gender, and location (urban vs. rural), among other factors, predict climate-change literacy (Selormey, Dome, Essima, & Logan, 2019; Simpson et al., 2021; Ayanlade et al., 2023). Therefore, learning more about who is climate-change aware will also provide valuable insights into who might become climate-change literate in future.

Although Round 9 data do not allow us to measure climate-change literacy, we use the established predictors of climate-change literacy to explore variations in climate-change awareness (Figure 9). Focusing on respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, the largest differences in levels of climate-change awareness are along different levels of education. Only 38% of respondents without formal schooling have heard of climate change, while the same is true for 73% of respondents with post-secondary education. We also see a clear gender gap (56% of men vs. 46% of women), and urbanites and wealthier respondents display higher levels of awareness than rural residents and poorer respondents.

**Figure 9: Awareness of climate change** | by demographic group | 39 countries  
| 2021/2023

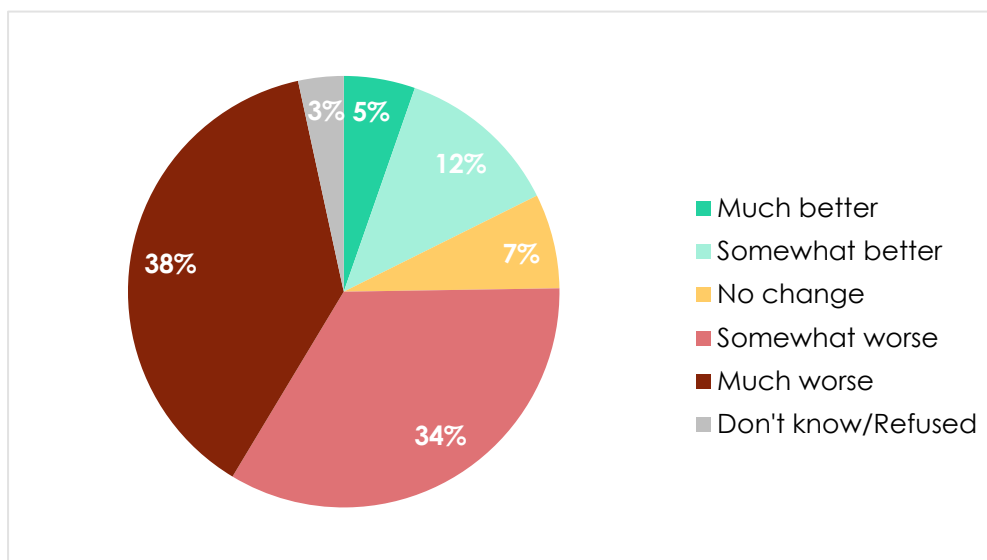


**Respondents were asked:** Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say "yes")

### Effects of climate change

Human-induced temperature increases and extreme weather events in many parts of Africa affect citizens in many ways. Among Africans who are aware of climate change, almost three-fourths (72%) believe that climate change is making their lives "somewhat worse" (34%) or "much worse" (38%) (Figure 10).

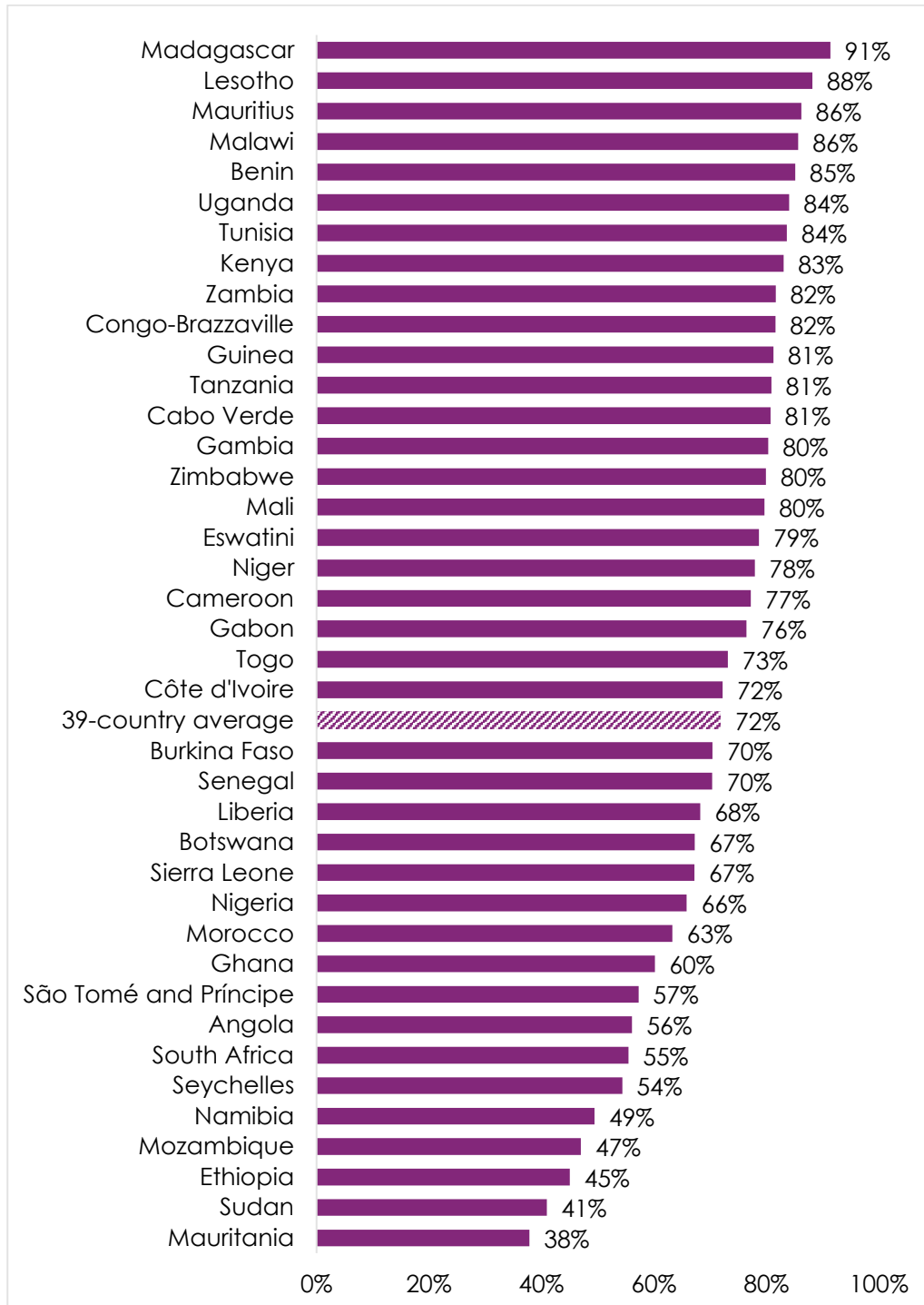
**Figure 10: Effects of climate change** | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

In Madagascar, a remarkable 91% of citizens say that climate change is making life worse. A further 15 countries record agreement of 80% or more. In contrast, fewer than half of respondents see climate change as making life worse in Namibia (49%), Mozambique (47%), Ethiopia (45%), Sudan (41%), and Mauritania (38%) (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Negative effects of climate change | 39 countries | 2021/2023**



**Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked:** Do you think climate change is making life in [country] 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.)

On average across 32 countries surveyed in both 2016/2018 and 2021/2023, the proportion of climate-change-aware respondents who say it is making life worse increased by 6 percentage points, including significant increases in 18 countries (Figure 12). The largest gains were recorded in Morocco (+26 percentage points), Mauritius (+25 points), and Zambia (+24 points), while Namibia (-13 points), Uganda (-9 points), and Togo (-8 points) show the largest declines.

**Figure 12: Change in perceptions that climate change is making life worse**  
 | 32 countries\* | 2016-2023

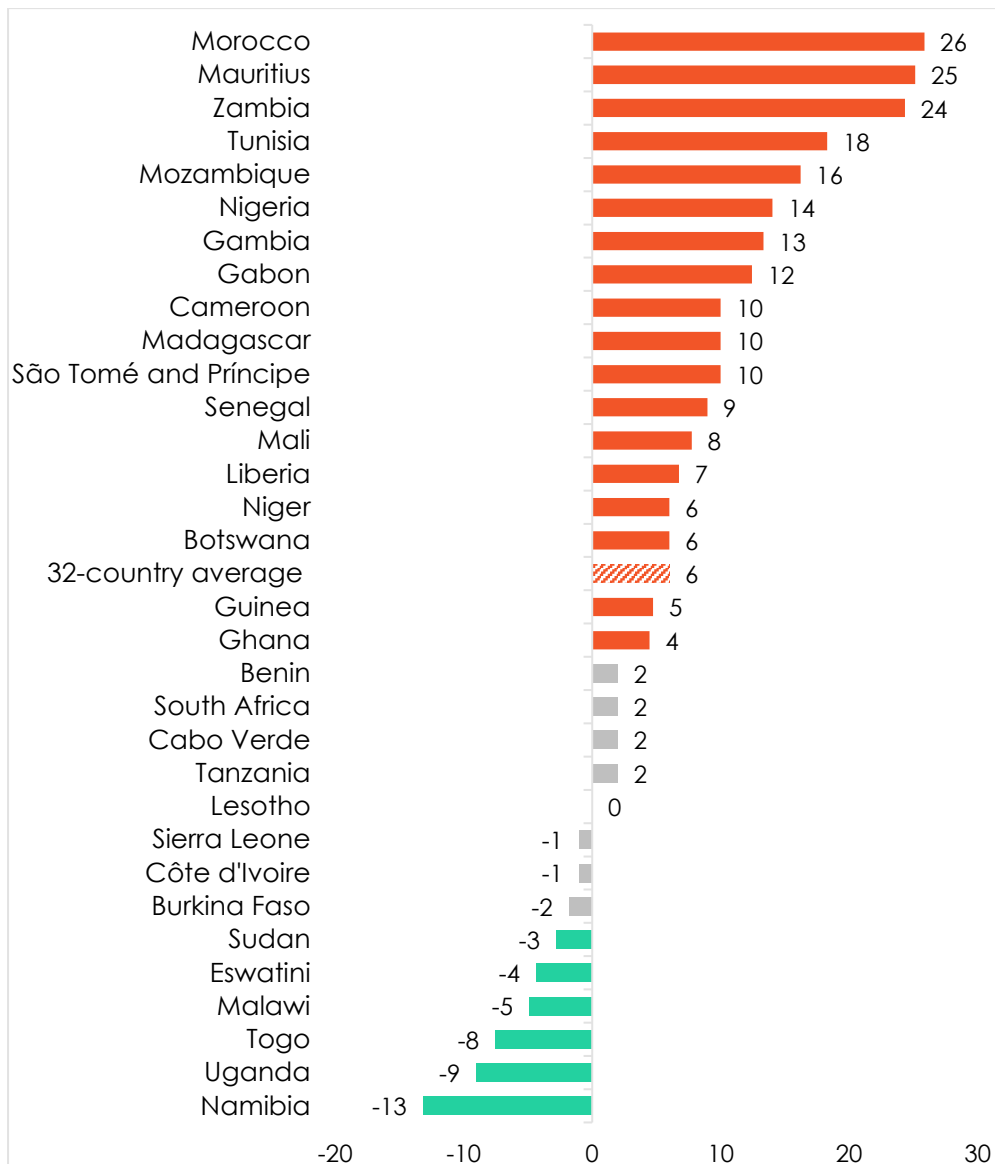


Figure shows the difference, in percentage points, between surveys in 2016/2018 and 2021/2023 in the proportion of respondents aware of climate change who say that climate change is making life worse. (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

\* Question was not asked in Kenya and Zimbabwe in Round 7 (2016/2018).

Variation along sociodemographic variables is fairly limited, with rural residents (75%) and the poorest respondents (74%) more likely to report negative effects than urbanites (69%) and well-off citizens (67%) (not shown).

An optimistic reading of these data suggests that awareness of climate change goes hand in hand with an understanding that it makes life worse. This is good news, as awareness is an important component of a more comprehensive understanding of how climate change affects societies (i.e. climate-change literacy). However, it is important to remember that only 51% of all respondents – and smaller proportions of less educated, poor, rural, and female respondents – are aware of climate change, as seen in Figure 9 above.

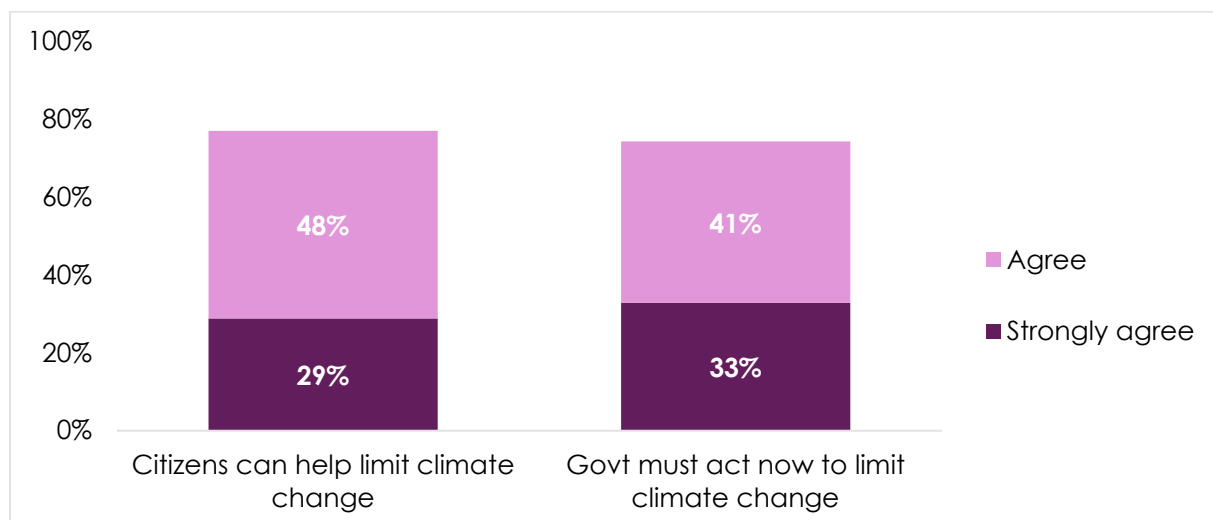
### Fighting climate change

Scientists have demonstrated that human activities that increase the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere contribute to global warming. Therefore, urgent action is needed to limit additional emissions and to reduce the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. This includes investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power; improving energy efficiency in homes and businesses; planting trees, which absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere; reducing reliance on cars by walking, biking, or taking public transportation; and supporting policies that reduce GHG emissions. While some of these actions can be taken by individuals, organisations, and businesses, others require collective action under the leadership of governments.

When it comes to minimising the drivers of climate change, more than three-fourths (77%) of climate-change-aware respondents believe that ordinary citizens can help (Figure 13). People are remarkably consistent across sociodemographic groups in sharing this view, with differences that do not exceed 6 percentage points (not shown).

A similarly solid majority (74%) say their government must act now to limit the effects of climate change, “even if it is expensive or causes some job losses or other harm to our economy.” This is the majority view in all surveyed countries, approaching nine out of 10 citizens in Madagascar (89%), Mali (89%), Ghana (87%), and Guinea (87%) (Figure 14). Support for urgent government action drops below two-thirds in just seven countries – Morocco (63%), Cabo Verde (63%), Seychelles (63%), South Africa (63%), Mauritania (62%), Angola (61%), and Gabon (54%).

**Figure 13: Limiting climate change** | 39 countries | 2021/2023



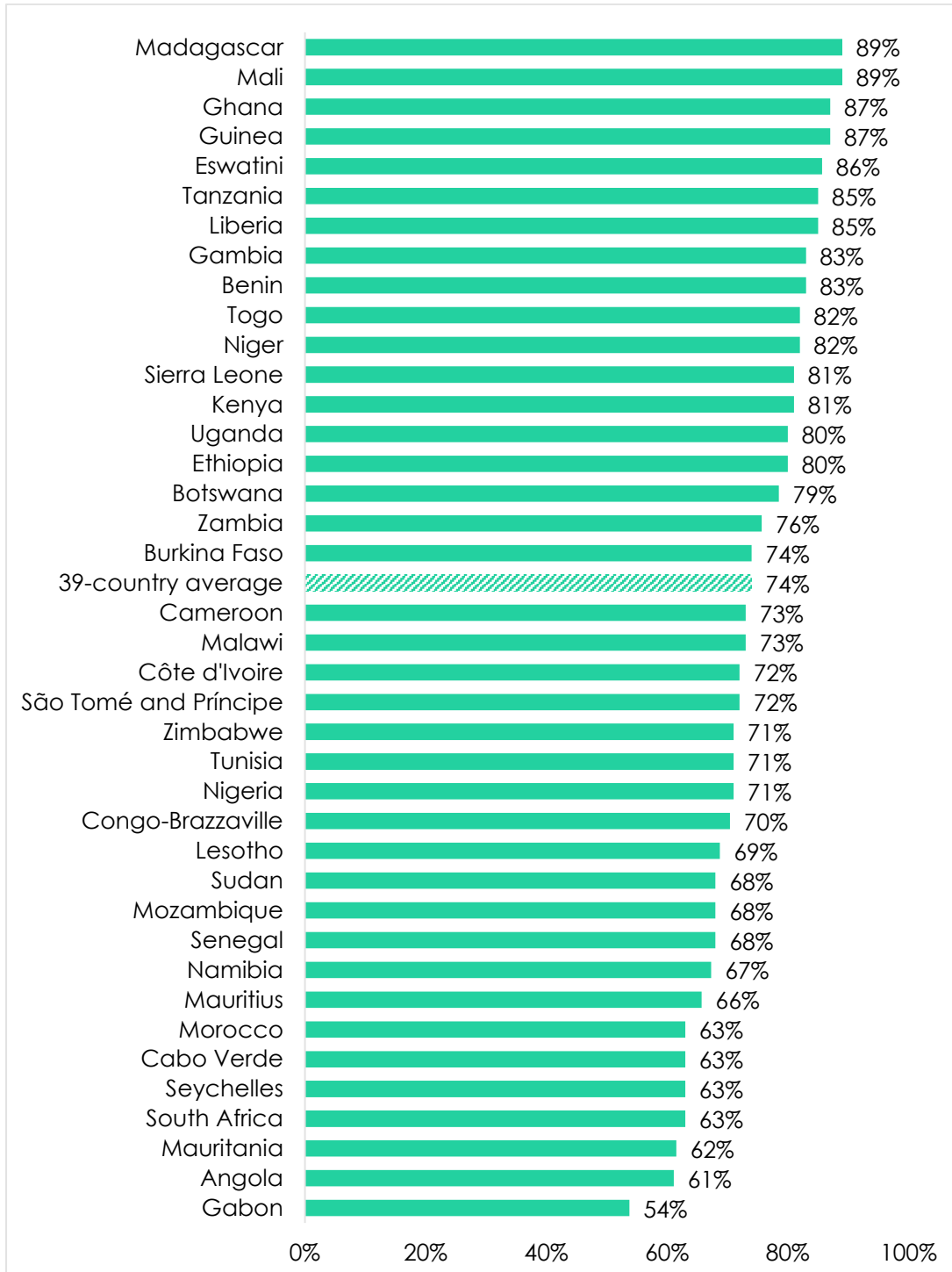
**Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Ordinary citizens 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.)

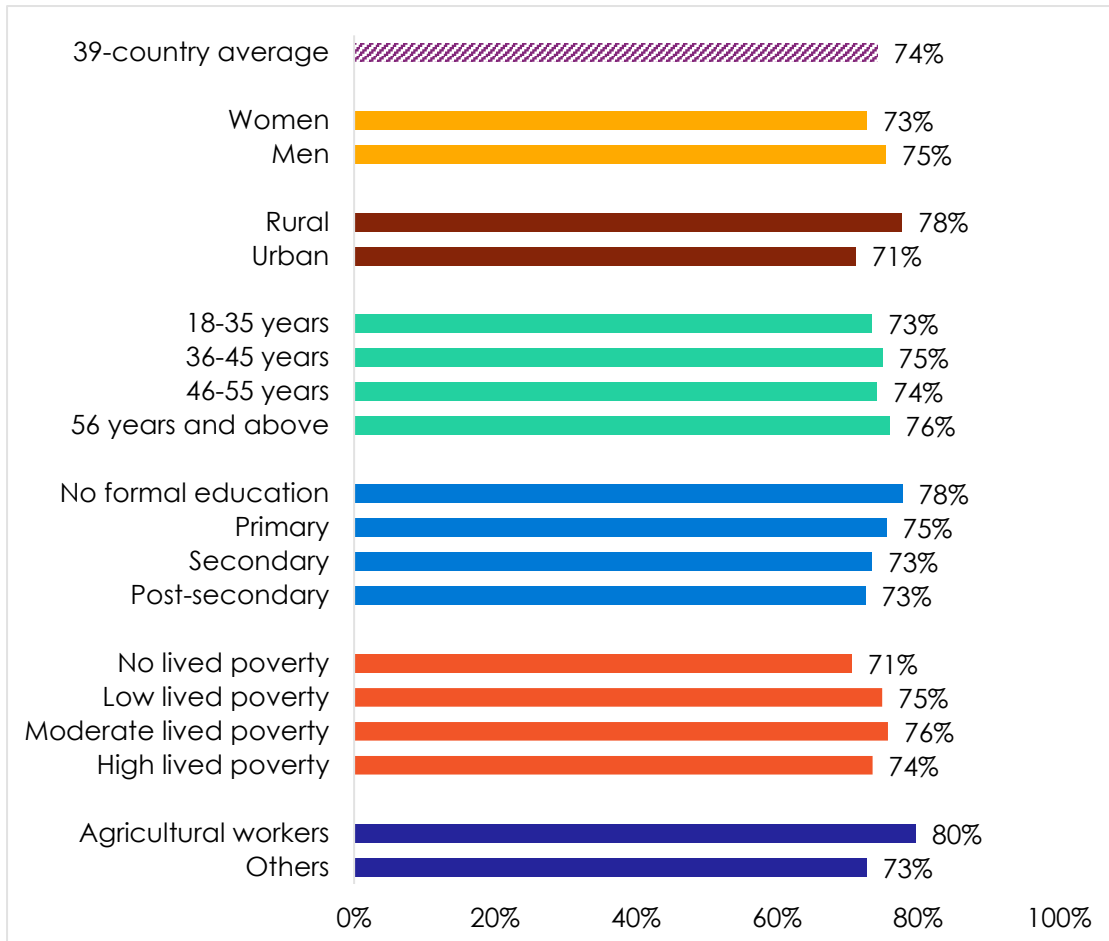
**Figure 14: Government must act now to limit climate change** | 39 countries  
 | 2021/2023



**Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: 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. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree") (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Variation across key sociodemographic groups is modest, with support for governmental climate action particularly strong among rural residents (78%), agricultural workers (80%), and respondents without formal education (78%) (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Government must act now to limit climate change** | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



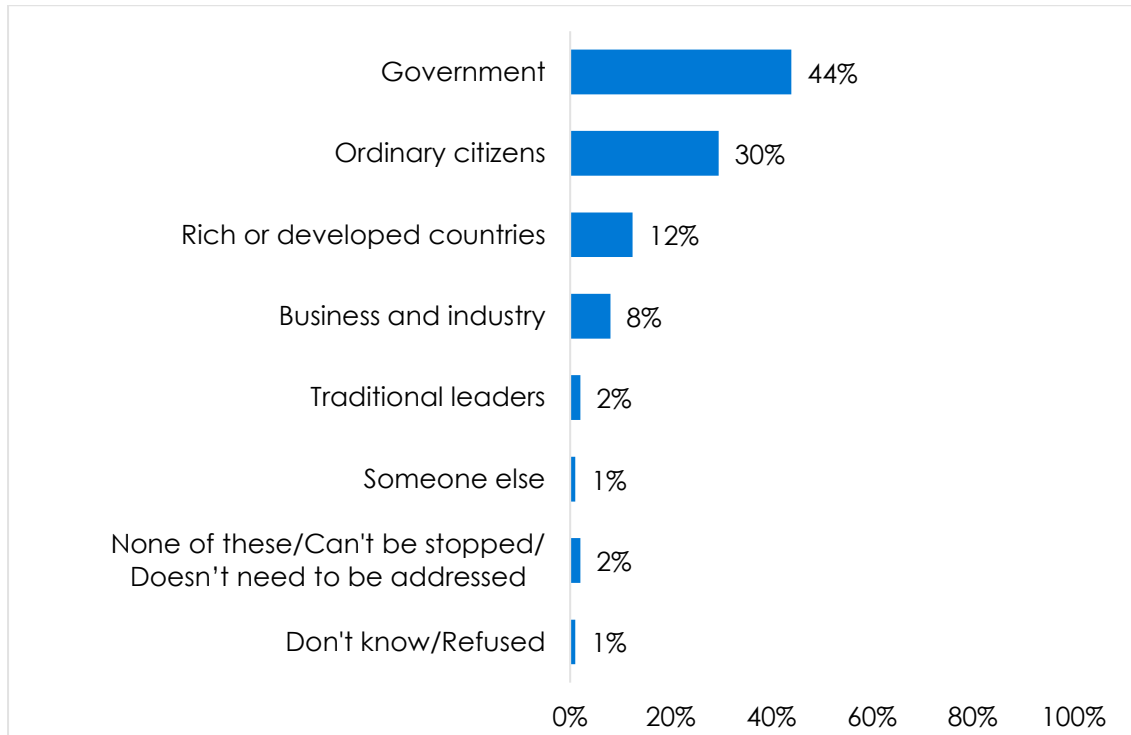
**Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: It is important for our government to take steps now to limit climate change in the future, even if it is expensive or causes some job losses or other harm to our economy. (% who “agree” or “strongly agree”) (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

When asked who should have primary responsibility for limiting climate change and reducing its impact on their country, citizens who are climate-change aware clearly identify two main stakeholders – government (44%) and their fellow citizens (30%) (Figure 16).

In contrast, just one in eight citizens (12%) believe that rich or developed countries should be primarily responsible for limiting climate change, and even fewer mention business and industry (8%) or traditional leaders (2%).



**Figure 16: Who has primary responsibility for limiting climate change? | 39 countries**  
 | 2021/2023



**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.)

However, there is substantial variation across these averages, as shown in Table 1. For example, strong majorities of more than two-thirds see government as primarily responsible in Nigeria (76%), Liberia (75%), Niger (71%), and the Gambia (69%), while the same is true of just 16% of Seychellois and 20% of Tunisians. Meanwhile, the view that citizens are primarily responsible for limiting climate change has majority support in Madagascar (54%) but is rare in Morocco (10%), Liberia (9%), and Tunisia (4%).

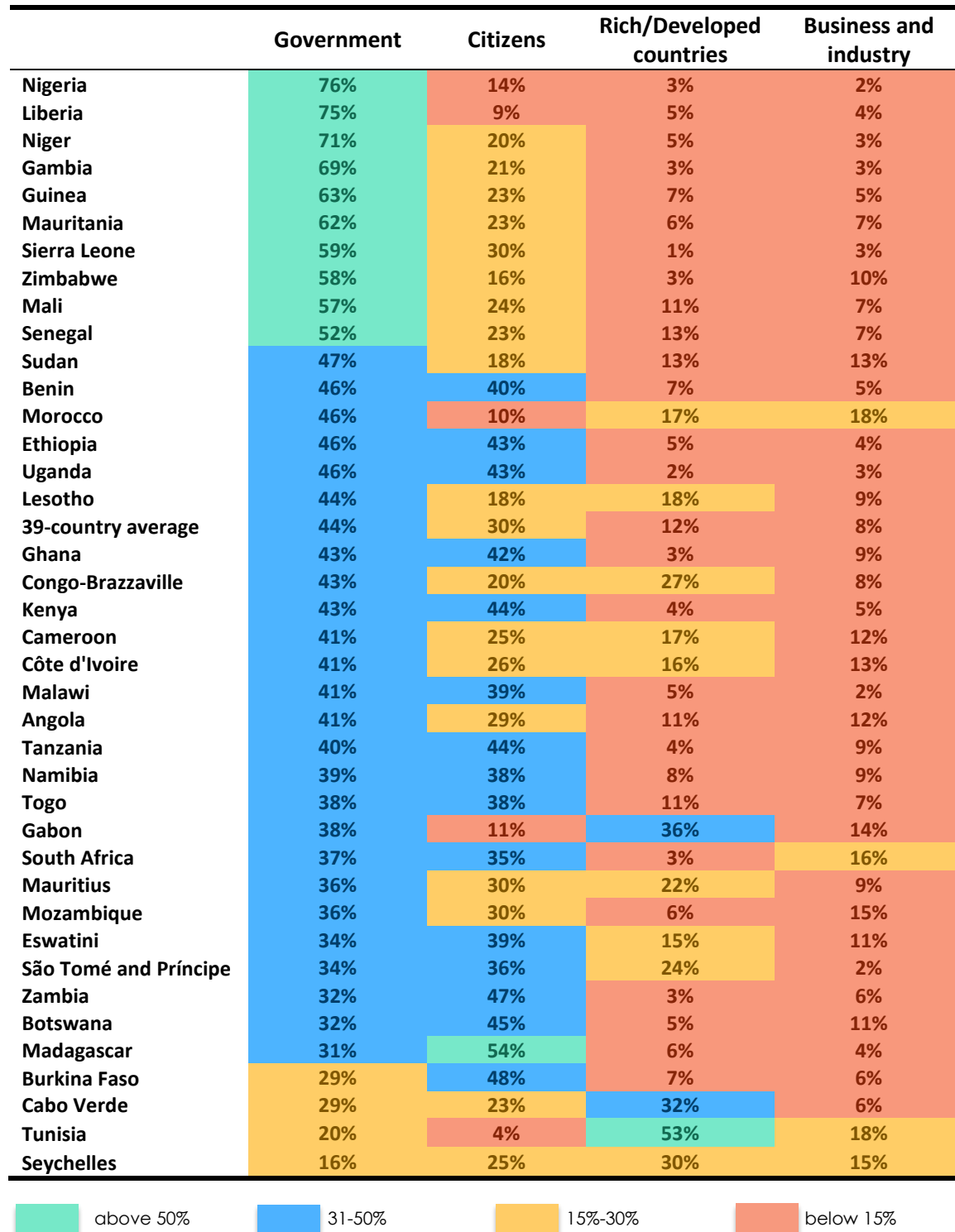
Tunisia is the only country where a majority (53%) of citizens look primarily to developed countries to address climate change, and no more than 18% in any country consider business/industry as primarily responsible.

Even though respondents highlight the role of governments and ordinary citizens in fighting climate change, they say that everyone could do better (Figure 17). Among Africans who are aware of climate change, more than three-fourths (77%) believe their government needs to do “a lot more” to curtail the effects of climate change, in addition to 15% who say it needs to do “somewhat more” – making the expectation of greater government action nearly universal (92%).

Further, about seven in 10 respondents say developed countries (71%) and the business community (69%) need to do “a lot more” to limit climate change. Only about one in 20 respondents (6%-7%) say these stakeholders are “doing enough” to fight climate change.

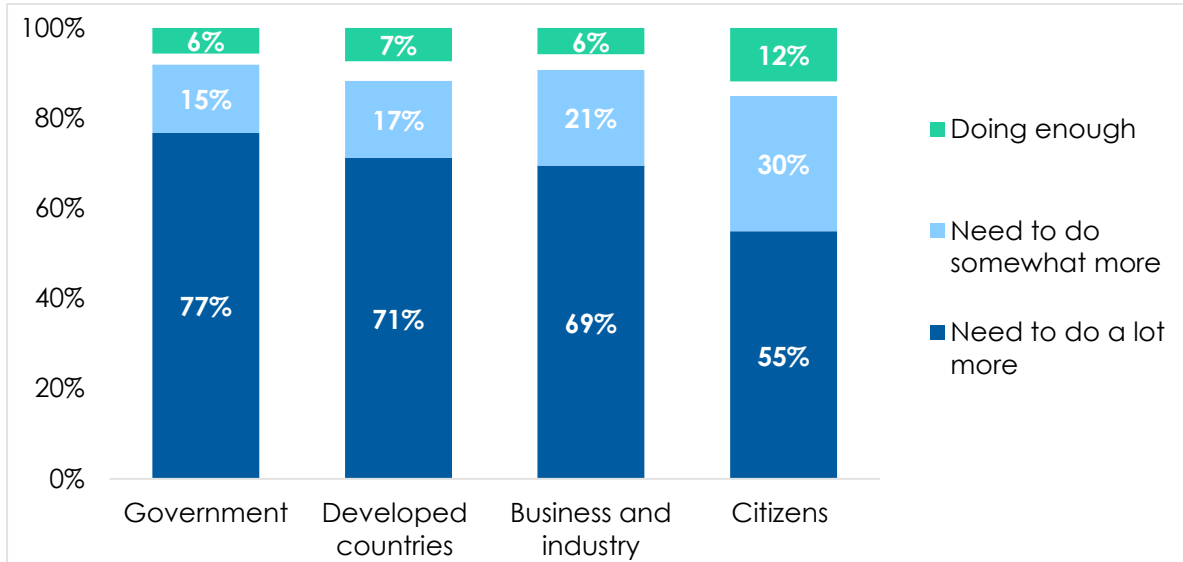
In comparison, respondents are somewhat more lenient with their fellow citizens: 55% say ordinary people need to do “a lot more,” while 30% think they should do “somewhat more.”

**Table 1: Who should have primary responsibility for limiting climate change?**  
| 39 countries | 2021/2023



**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.)

**Figure 17: Are stakeholders doing enough to limit climate change?** | 39 countries  
 | 2021/2023



**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.)

The call for “a lot more” government action has majority support in all surveyed countries, exceeding three-fourths of citizens who are aware of climate change in 25 of the 39 countries (Figure 18). Almost nine out of 10 respondents agree in the Gambia (89%), Eswatini (89%), Tunisia (89%), Madagascar (88%), and Tanzania (88%).

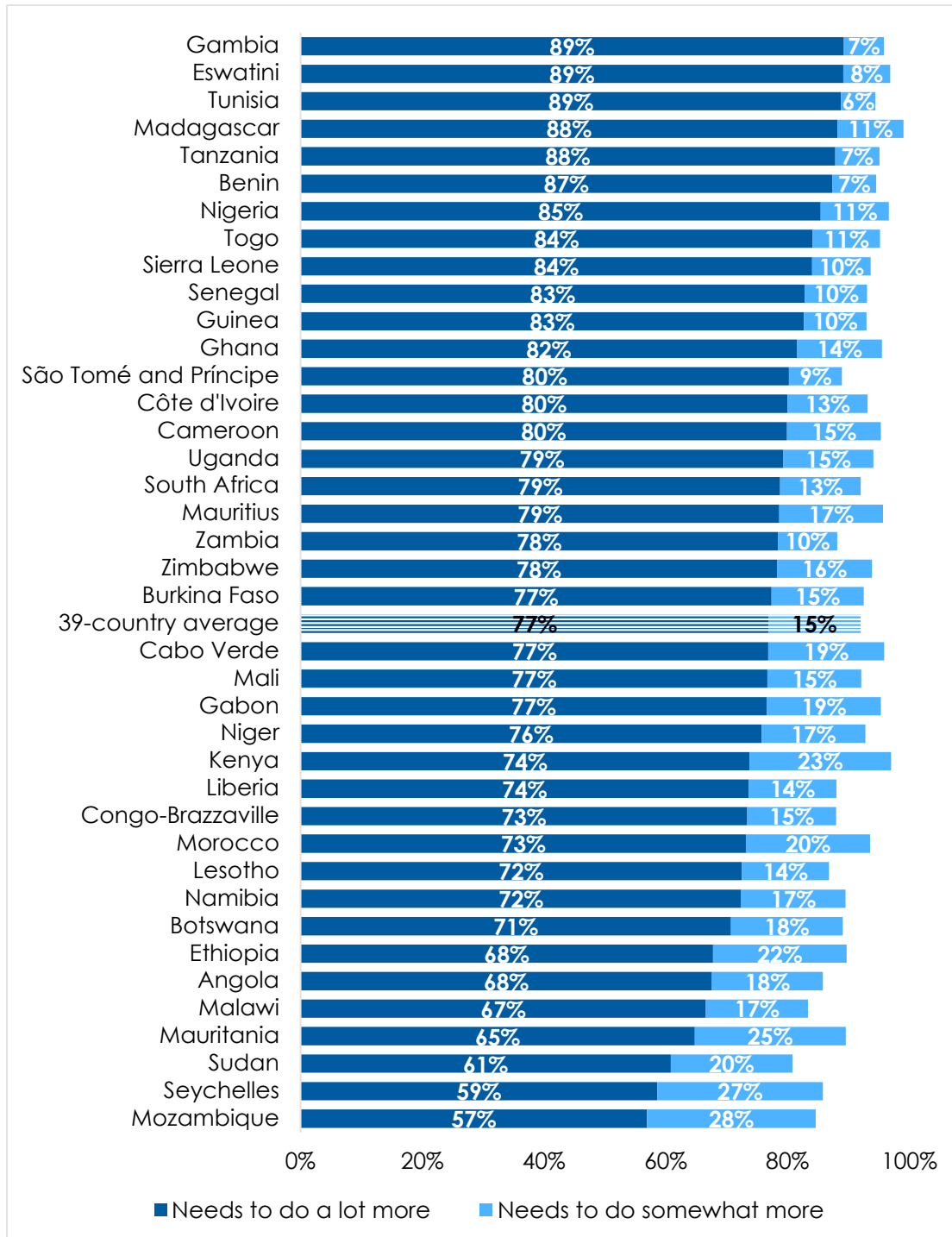
Even in countries with the weakest demand for “a lot more” government initiative – such as Mozambique (57%), Seychelles (59%), and Sudan (61%) – support for at least “somewhat more” climate action exceeds 80%.

Thanks to public opinion surveys that pose similar questions elsewhere, we can put Africans' expectations of government into a broader comparative perspective. In May-June 2023, Eurobarometer asked citizens in 27 European countries, “Do you think that the [country] government is doing enough, not enough, or too much to tackle climate change?” Although this question is not identical to the one asked by Afrobarometer, the findings allow us to draw some broad comparisons. In Figure 19 we combine the substantively similar answer options (Afrobarometer: “Needs to do somewhat more” and “Needs to do a lot more”; Eurobarometer: “Has not done enough”) across the 66 African and European countries.

While the exact results should be treated with caution given the variation in question phrasing, we can still make two interesting observations. First, the continental averages suggest that clear majorities of citizens on both continents want their governments to do more to tackle climate change (92% in Africa, 67% in Europe). Second, respondents in almost all African countries have higher expectations for additional climate action by their governments than Europeans. Only Malawi (83%) and Sudan (81%) have lower expectations than Croatia (85%), the European country in which the largest share of citizens expect more government action. These differences may reflect a number of factors, including 1) that African countries are generally more directly vulnerable than European countries to the effects of climate change; 2) that some European countries may already have taken highly publicised actions to fight climate change; and 3) that by excluding respondents who had

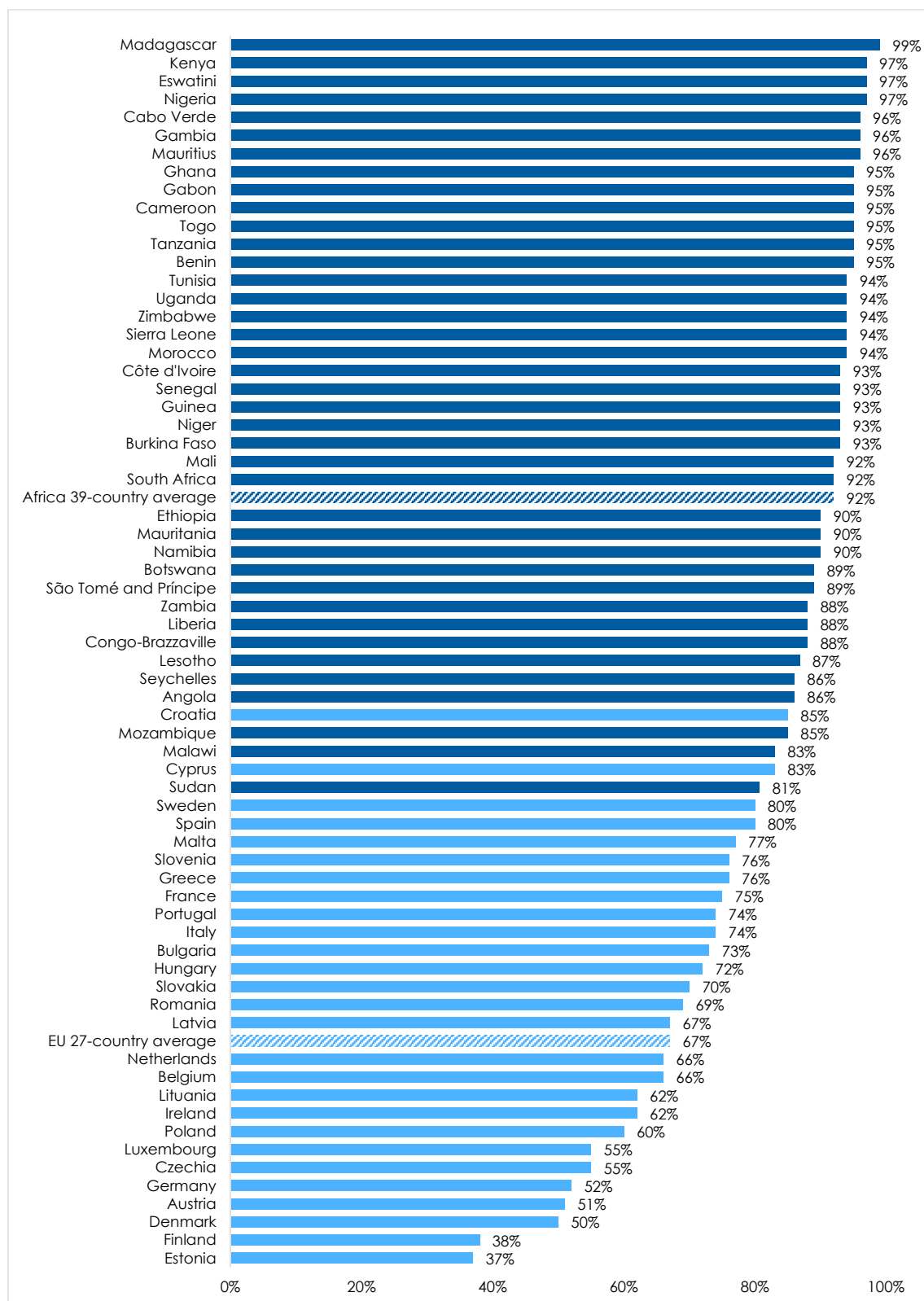
not heard of climate change, the Afrobarometer results focus on the most engaged citizens, who may be more likely to demand government action. But informed Africans clearly do not lag behind in their demand for urgent action.

**Figure 18: Government needs to do more to fight climate change | 39 countries**  
 | 2021-2023



**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: The government of [country]? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

**Figure 19: Government needs to do more to fight climate change | 66 African and European countries | 2021/2023**



**Respondents were asked:** African countries (only respondents who are aware of climate change): 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: The government of [country]? (% who say "need to do somewhat more" or "need to do a lot more"). European countries: "Do you think that the [country] government is doing enough, not enough, or too much to tackle climate change? (% who say "not enough")  
 Note: Since these questions are not identical, the cross-continental comparisons should be seen as exploratory, while the intra-continental comparisons are more robust.

## Government track record in dealing with climate change

African governments face multiple challenges in tackling climate change. On the one hand, countries must scale up the production of energy via renewable sources such as wind, solar, and water. This scaling up is taking place. Investments in renewable energy are growing rapidly, presenting significant potential for the transition to a low-carbon future. For example, Kenya already generates more than 93% of its electricity from renewable sources (McCarthy & Atkins, 2023), while hydropower accounts for at least 80% of electricity generation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zambia (Falchetta, 2023). While the continent has much greater potential that could be harnessed through government and private investment efforts, changes in precipitation patterns and increasing temperatures also have the potential to make such investments more risky (Falchetta, 2023; Malley, 2023).

On the other hand, as African countries are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, it is crucial that they improve their resilience to such impacts. Irrigation schemes, for example, are a vital component of efforts to minimise the negative consequences of seasonal rains becoming more erratic and less frequent due to climate change (Fleshman, 2007). Moreover, existing irrigation schemes must be upgraded to maintain a reliable supply of water as severe droughts occur in the future (Ford, 2022). However, these efforts must be balanced against many other pressing needs, such as reducing unemployment, fighting hunger, and promoting good health (Coulibaly, Silwé, & Logan, 2018).

Given these challenges, it is perhaps not surprising that only about one-third (36%) of Africans say their government is managing climate change “fairly well” or “very well” (Figure 20). Only three countries record majorities who approve of their government's performance: Ethiopia (66%), Seychelles (65%), and Tanzania (65%). In contrast, fewer than one in five citizens say the same in Angola (19%), Liberia (18%), Tunisia (15%), Lesotho (14%), and Sudan (11%).

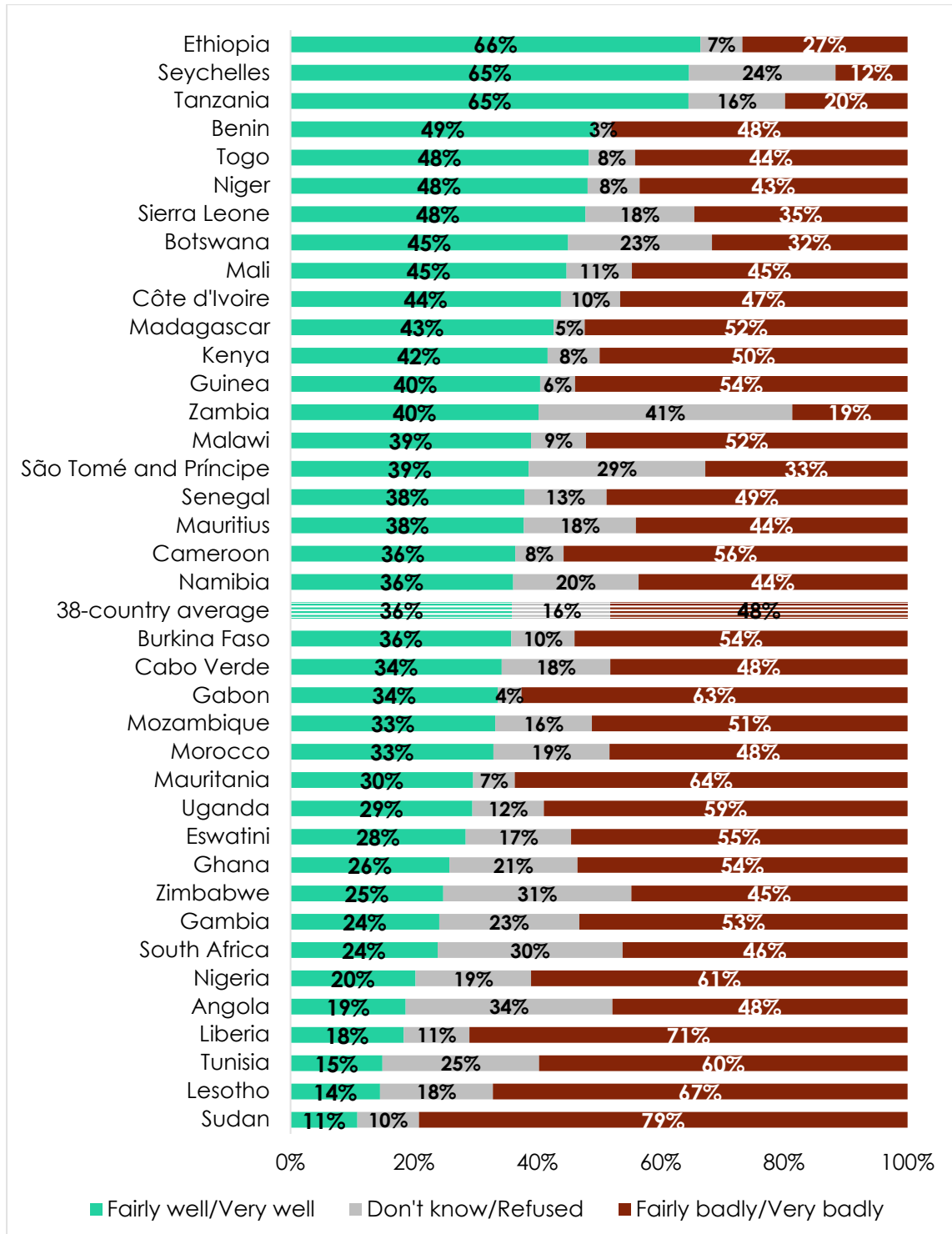
Citizens' low levels of approval of government efforts are consistent across age groups, genders, urban-rural locations, and education levels (Figure 21). But people who experience higher levels of material deprivation are less likely to approve of the government's efforts against climate change than their better-off peers (30% vs. 36%-44%).

---

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question,  
for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at  
[www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).

---

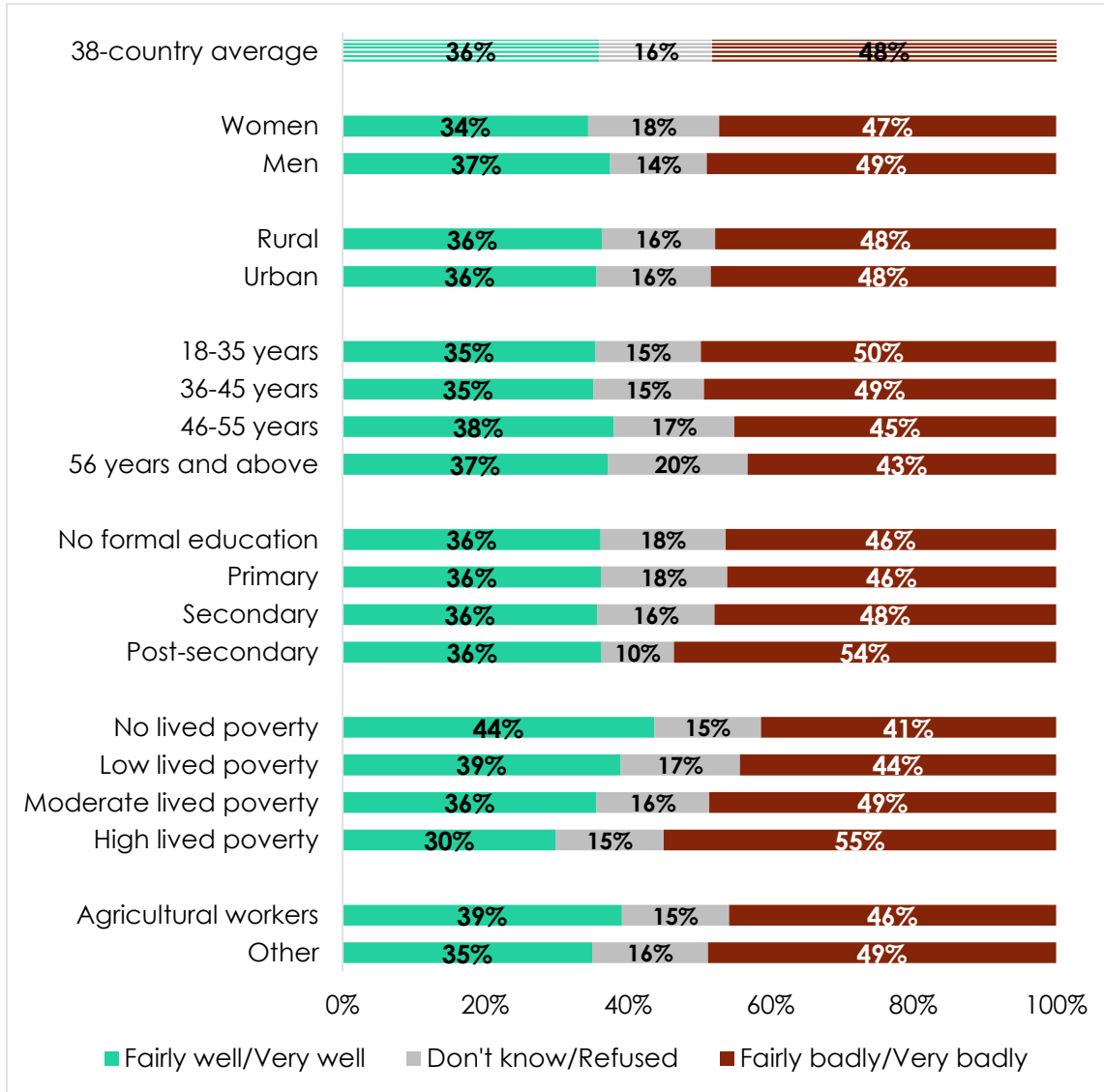
**Figure 20: Government performance in handling climate change | 38 countries\***  
 | 2021/2023



**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?

\* This question was not asked in Congo-Brazzaville. In response to a country-specific question about how well the Congo-Brazzaville government is addressing problems related to flooding and erosion, 84% of respondents describe its performance as "fairly bad" or "very bad."

**Figure 21: Government performance in handling climate change | by demographic group | 38 countries | 2021/2023**



**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

Africans have experienced extensive losses attributable to human-induced climate change, ranging from water shortages and reduced food production to the loss of lives and slower economic growth. These costs are expected to rise (Trisos et al., 2023). Given observed and predicted negative consequences of climate change, action to limit and mitigate its effects is a matter of life and death.

Among Africans who are aware of climate change, the call for such action is loud and clear: Most say climate change is making life worse, and most demand “a lot more” effort from their peers, from the private sector, from developed countries, and, most of all, from their governments – even at considerable economic cost. They clearly see climate change as a shared global challenge.



Yet half of Africans are still not aware of climate change. In Tanzania, Mauritania, Nigeria, Botswana, and Tunisia, fewer than one-third of adults have heard of the concept. Awareness is especially low among poor and less educated people, rural residents, and women. Such a lack of climate-change awareness – and, building on awareness, of climate-change literacy – makes it particularly difficult for governments to develop and implement informed and transformative adaptations.

Climate change is a problem too big and too complex to be tackled by any individual stakeholder – even the government. It is essential to build a common understanding around the causes of climate change and the importance of developing effective adaptation strategies. An important building block is to increase climate-change awareness and literacy among those with the least adaptive capacity. To achieve this, formal education and improved access to information will be critical (Simpson et al., 2021).

The benefits of building climate-change awareness are manifold. For example, while African women are on average less aware of climate change than men, researchers have found that they are more likely to adopt climate-resilient crops when they are climate-change aware and know about relevant adaptation options (Acevedo et al., 2020; Twyman et al., 2014). Similarly, climate-change awareness can positively affect other government responses, such as the ability of health systems to warn of environmental threats (e.g. increased disease burden due to climatic events or changes) and to provide relief (e.g. cooling interventions for pregnant women and infants during extreme heat) (Cherisch, 2023; Mash & Lokotola, 2023).

More broadly, advances in climate-change literacy hold the potential to complement local knowledge practices (Hurlbert et al., 2019) and, in partnership with thoughtful government interventions, lead to more informed adaptation to climate change on the continent.

## References

- Acevedo, M., Pixley, K., Zinyengere, N., Meng, S., Tufan, H., Cichy, K., Bizikova, L., Isaacs, K., Ghezzi-Kopel, K., & Porciello, J. (2020). A scoping review of adoption of climate-resilient crops by small-scale producers in low- and middle-income countries. *Nature Plants*, 6(10), 1231-1241.
- Africa Climate Summit. (2023). The African leaders Nairobi declaration on climate change and call to action - Africa climate summit 2023.
- Ayanlade, A., Smucker, T. A., Nyasimi, M., Sterly, H., Weldemariam, L. F., & Simpson, N. P. (2023). Complex climate change risk and emerging directions for vulnerability research in Africa. *Climate Risk Management*, 40, 100497.
- Cherisch, M. (2023). Why mothers and babies will suffer more as Africa grows hotter. Conversation. 7 September.
- Coulibaly, M., Silwé, K. S., & Logan, C. (2018). Taking stock: Citizen priorities and assessments three years into the SDGs. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 51.
- Davies, R. (2022). Mozambique – death toll from cyclone Gombe rises to more than 50. Flood List. 21 March.
- Falchetta, G. (2023). Climate change will affect hydropower: African countries must be prepared. Conversation. 4 September.
- Fleshman, M. (2007). Climate change: Africa gets ready. Africa Renewal. July.
- Ford, A. (2022). How can we help vulnerable people to adapt to climate change? London School of Economics and Political Science. 15 March.
- Global Center on Adaptation. (2023). Africa’s adaptation transformation: Doubling down through Africa adaptation acceleration program (AAP) compacts.
- Gu, D., Gerland, P., Pelletier, F., & Cohen, B. (2015). Risks of exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters at the city level: A global overview. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. Technical Paper No. 2015/2.
- Hurlbert, M., Krishnaswamy, J., Davin, E., Johnson, F. X., Mena, C. F., Morton, J., Myeong, S., Viner, D., Warner, K., Wreford, A., Zakieldean, S., & Zommers, Z. (2019). Chapter 7: Risk management and decision making in relation to sustainable development. In P. R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, & J. Malley (Eds.), *Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157988.009>
- Malley, C. (2023). Zimbabwe’s climate action plan: A win for the environment, health and energy. Conversation. 3 September.
- Mash, B., & Lokotola, C. L. (2023). Five questions for African countries that want to build climate-resilient health systems. Conversation. 25 June.
- Mattes, R., & Patel, J. (2022). Lived poverty resurgent. Afrobarometer Policy Paper 84.
- McCarthy, E., & Atkins, K. (2023). African countries are scaling up the fight against climate change. Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum. 14 February.
- Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. (2023). Notre Dame global adaptation initiative rankings.
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2023). Climate finance and the USD 100 billion goal.

- Ranasinghe, R., Ruane, A. C., Vautard, R., Arnell, N., Coppola, E., Cruz, F. A., Dessai, S., Islam, A. S., Rahimi, M., Ruiz Carrascal, D., Sillmann, J., Sylla, M. B., Tebaldi, C., Wang, W., & Zaaboul, R., (2023). Climate change information for regional impact and for risk assessment. In V. Masson-Delmotte, P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S. L. Connors, C. Péan, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M. I. Gomis, J. B. R. Matthews, S. Berger, M. Huang, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, B. Zhou, E. Lonnoy, T. K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, K. Leitzell, N. Caud (Eds.), *Climate change 2021: The physical science basis* (pp. 1767-19261). First ed. Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press. 10.1017/9781009157896.014.
- Selormey, E. E., Dome, M. Z., Essima, L. O., & Logan, C. (2019). Change ahead: Experience and awareness of climate change in Africa. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 60.
- Simpson, N. P., Andrews, T. M., Krönke, M., Lennard, C., Odoulami, R. C., Ouweneel, B., Steynor, A., & Trisos, C. H. (2021). Climate change literacy in Africa. *Nature Climate Change*, (11), 937-944.
- Stringer, L. C., Dhakal, S., Milkoreit, M., Mendoza, C., Mukherji, A., Shishlov, I., Fisher, S., Simpson, N. P., & Schleussner, C. F. (2023). Ratcheting up effectiveness to improve the global stocktake process. *One Earth*, 6(9), 1069-1073.
- Trisos, C. H., Adelekan, I. O., Totin, E., Ayanlade, A. Efitre, J., Gemed, A., Kalaba, K., Lennard, C., Masao, C., Mgaya, Y., Ngaruiya, G., Olago, D., Simpson, N. P., Zakieldean, S. (2023) Chapter 9: Africa. In H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, M. Tignor et al. (Eds.), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (pp. 1285-1455). IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Twyman, J., Green, M., Bernier, Q., Kristjanson, P., Russo, S., Tall, A., Ampaire, E., Nyasimi, M., Mango, J., McKune, S., Mwongera, C., & Ndourba, Y. (2014). Adaptation actions in Africa: Evidence that gender matters. Working Paper 83, CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security.
- World Meteorological Organization. (2023). Africa suffers disproportionately from climate change. 4 September.

## Appendix

**Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds**

Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Feb.-March 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Kenya	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	Oct.-Nov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021
Sudan	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Togo	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021

**Alfred Kwadzo Torsu** is a research analyst for Afrobarometer. Email: [atorsu@afrobarometer.org](mailto:atorsu@afrobarometer.org).

**Matthias Krönke** is a researcher in the Afrobarometer Analysis Unit. Email: [mkroenke@afrobarometer.org](mailto:mkroenke@afrobarometer.org).

Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer is provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations - Africa, Luminare, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the European Union Commission, the World Bank Group, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, the Global Centre for Pluralism, and GIZ.

Donations help Afrobarometer give voice to African citizens. Please consider making a contribution (at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)) or contact Felix Biga ([felixbiga@afrobarometer.org](mailto:felixbiga@afrobarometer.org)) or Runyararo Munetsi ([runyararo@afrobarometer.org](mailto:runyararo@afrobarometer.org)) to discuss institutional funding.

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.



**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 717 | 16 October 2023**