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Mozambicans who have heard of climate change want collective action to fight it

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 724 | Marcelline Amouzou

Summary

With an extensive coastline, widespread poverty, an economy dependent on agriculture, and weak infrastructural and institutional development, Mozambique is highly vulnerable to the manifold impacts of climate change (ReliefWeb, 2022a; Manuel, Tostão, Vilanculos, Mandlhate, & Hartley, 2021).

Shifts in weather patterns have heightened the frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events, including both floods and droughts. Idai and Kenneth (both in 2019), Ana and Gombe (both in 2022), and Freddy (2023) are among the cyclones and tropical storms that have killed hundreds, displaced many thousands, and caused massive destruction throughout the country in recent years (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022; ACAPS, 2023).

Climate change also poses a threat to Mozambique's economy. The agricultural sector, a key driver of the nation's economy and the primary source of income for more than 70% of the population, is particularly vulnerable (Manuel et al., 2021; International Trade Administration, 2022). In 2022 alone, flood and wind damage resulted in the loss of an estimated 91,000 hectares of crops and harvest delays, exacerbating food insecurity (ReliefWeb, 2022b; USAID, 2021).

The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (2021) Index ranks Mozambique 154th out of 185 countries, meaning only 31 countries are less prepared for the climate risks they face. The Global Climate Risk Index identified Mozambique as the country most severely affected by weather-related losses in the world in 2019 (Germanwatch, 2021).

The government's response has included a National Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy, a Strategic Programme for Climate Resilience, a disaster management fund, and a range of projects to protect coastlines, relocate vulnerable communities, and otherwise strengthen climate resilience, though funding and coordination remain challenges (United Nations Environment Programme, 2022; U.S. Department of State, 2022).

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

Findings show that a majority of Mozambicans are not aware of climate change. Among those who are familiar with the climate threat, about half say it is making life worse, and majorities call for greater climate action by the government, business and industry, developed countries, and ordinary citizens.

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.

The Afrobarometer team in Mozambique, led by Ipsos Mozambique, interviewed 1,200 adult Mozambicans between 3 May and 19 July 2021. 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 have been conducted in Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

Key findings

- More than four in 10 Mozambicans (44%) say droughts have become more severe in their region over the past 10 years, while one-third (33%) say the same about floods.
- Fewer than four in 10 citizens (37%) say they have heard of climate change, while 60% say they have not. Among those who are aware of climate change:
 - About half (47%) say it is making life in Mozambique worse.
 - More than two-thirds (68%) 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. Almost as many (63%) believe that ordinary citizens can help curb climate change.
 - Large majorities say greater efforts to limit climate change are needed from business and industry (87%), the government (85%), developed countries (80%), and citizens (72%).

Severity of extreme weather conditions

Before asking about climate change, Afrobarometer asked respondents about their experiences with extreme weather conditions. A plurality (44%) of Mozambicans say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” over the past 10 years, whereas 28% of respondents report a decrease in severity, while 24% affirm that drought conditions have remained unchanged (Figure 1).

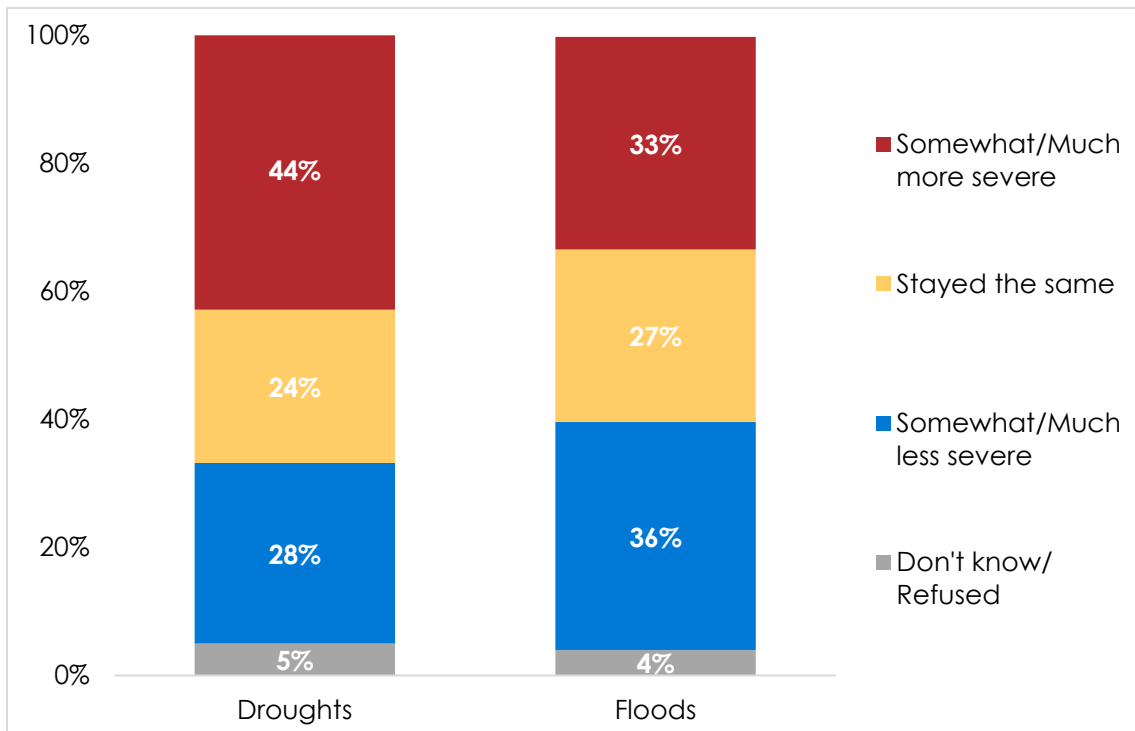
Only one-third (33%) of respondents say floods have increased in severity, while 36% report that they have become less severe.

In comparison to findings in 2017, the proportion who say droughts have become more severe has increased by 12 percentage points. Perceptions of worsening flood conditions have increased by 11 points during the same period (Figure 2).

Rural residents are more likely than urban residents to report increasingly severe droughts (47% vs. 39%), while they share the same perceptions of worsening floods (Figure 3). Economically well-off respondents (those experiencing no or low “lived poverty”¹) are significantly less likely to report escalating severity of droughts (32%) than those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty (50%-51%).

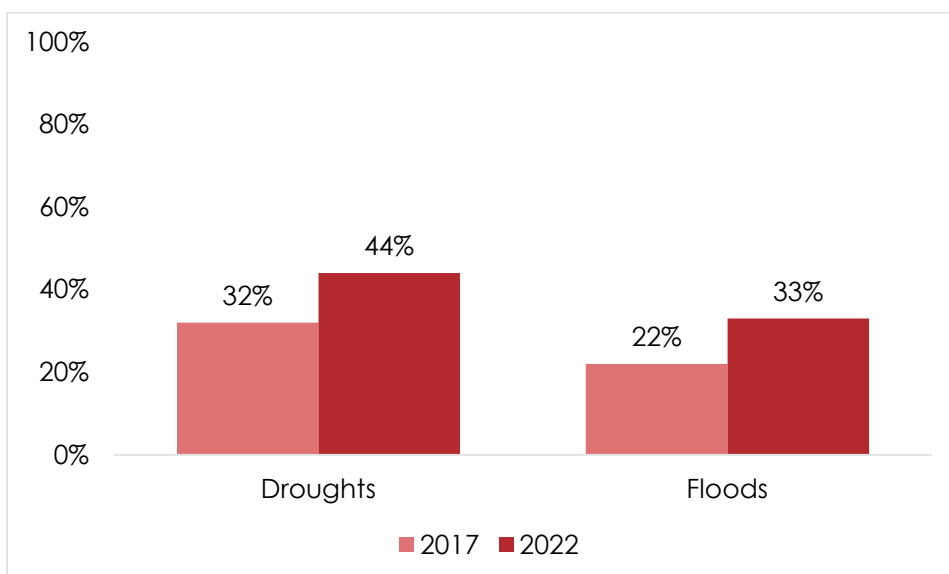
¹ Afrobarometer’s Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents’ levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty,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

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



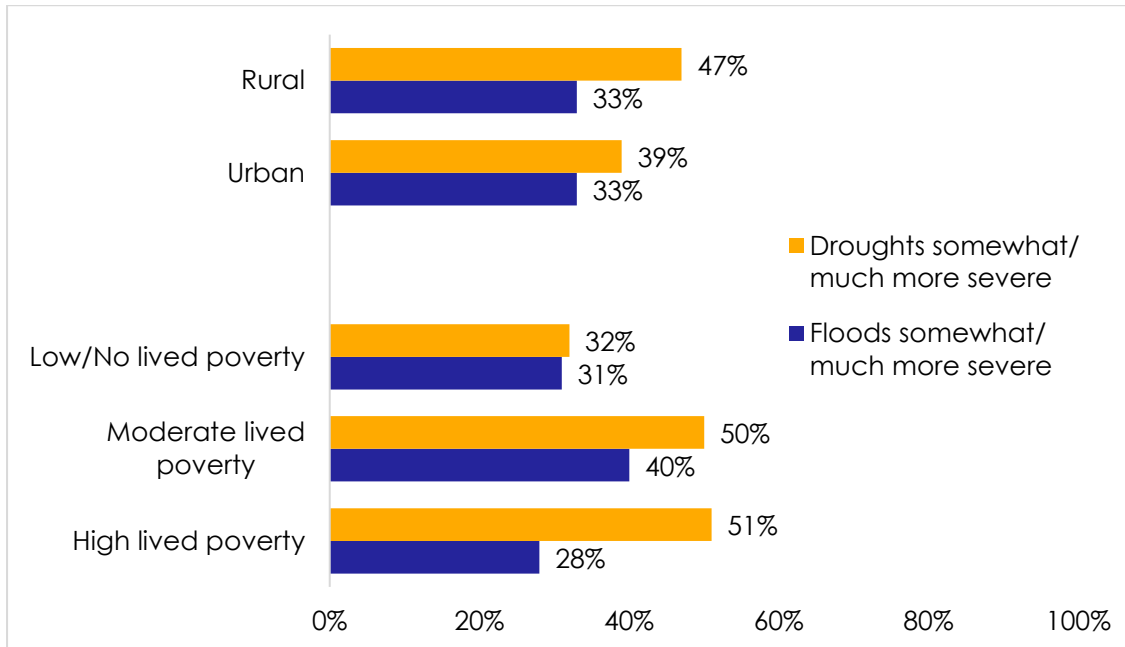
Respondents were asked: In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

Figure 2: Increasing severity of droughts and floods | Mozambique | 2017-2022



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

Figure 3: More severe droughts and floods | by urban-rural residence and lived poverty | Mozambique | 2022



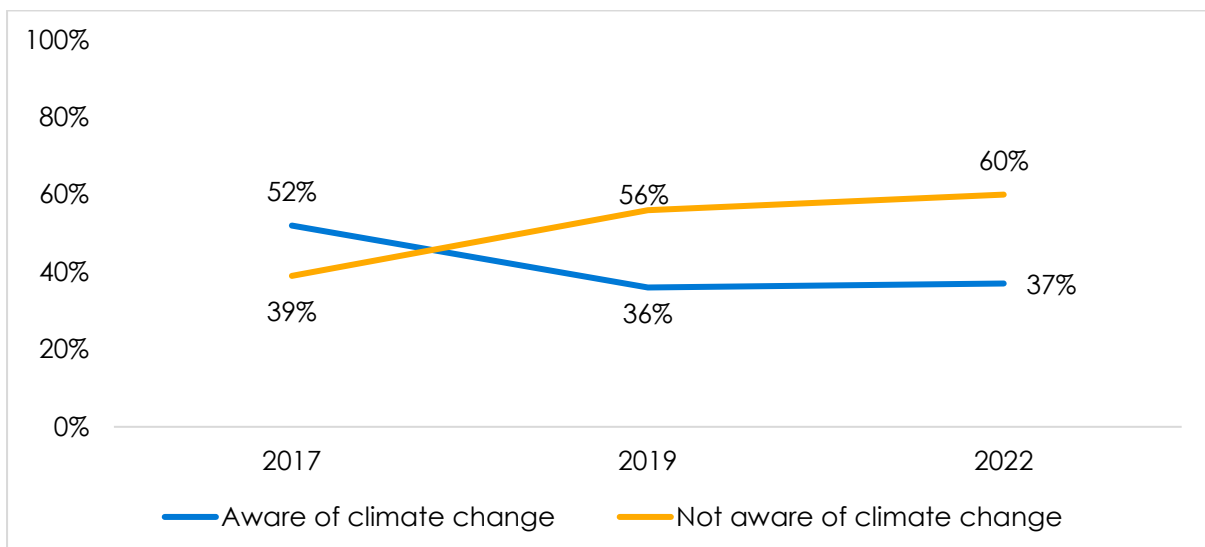
Respondents were asked: In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? (% who say "somewhat more severe" or "much more severe")

Climate change

Awareness of climate change

Fewer than four in 10 Mozambicans (37%) say they have heard of climate change, about the same proportion as in 2019 (36%) though lower than in 2017 (52%) (Figure 4).

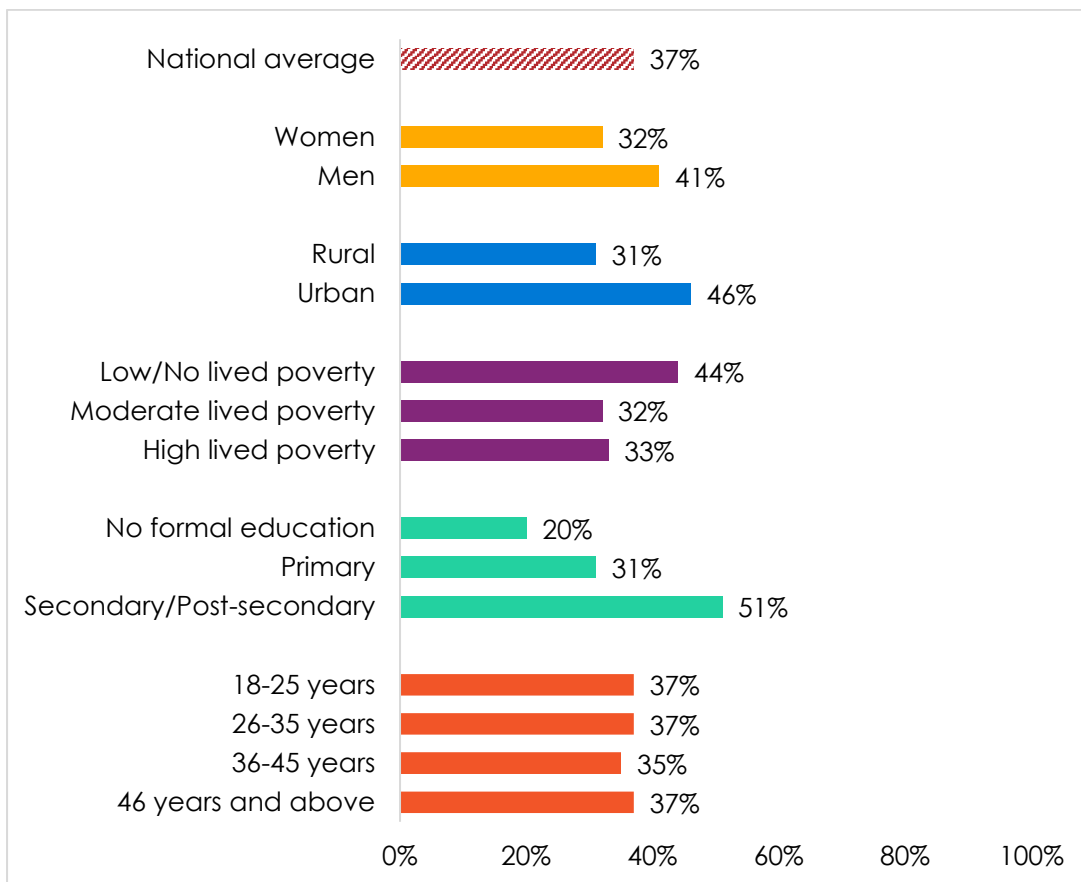
Figure 4: Awareness of climate change | Mozambique | 2017-2022



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

While perceptions of increasingly severe droughts are more prevalent in rural areas, rural residents demonstrate significantly lower awareness of climate change than their urban counterparts (31% vs. 46%), as do women compared to men (32% vs. 41%) (Figure 5). Citizens experiencing moderate or high levels of lived poverty are less acquainted with the term "climate change" (32%-33%) than better-off respondents (44%), and individuals with at least secondary schooling are more than twice as likely to report being aware of climate change as those without any formal education (51% vs. 20%).

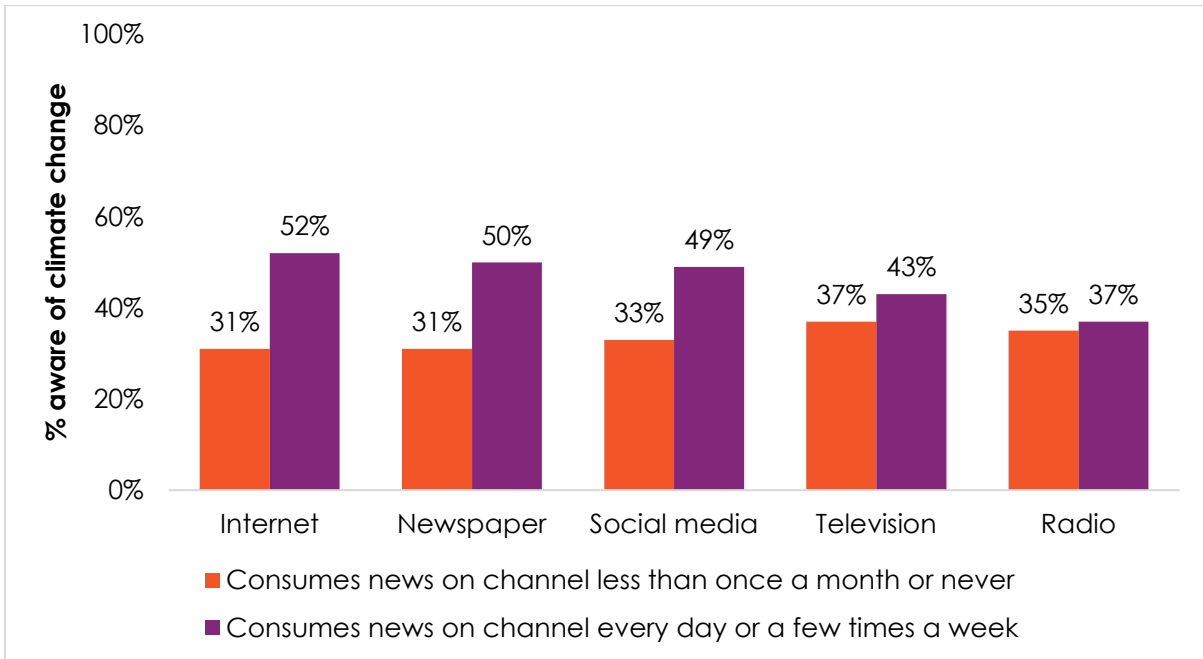
Figure 5: Awareness of climate change | by demographic group | Mozambique | 2022



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

Climate-change awareness increases with respondents' news-consumption habits. Among individuals who rarely or infrequently (less than once a month) access news from sources such as radio, television, social media, the Internet, and newspapers, only 31%-37% have heard of climate change (Figure 6). In contrast, awareness of climate change is notably higher among respondents who frequently (at least a few times a week) obtain news from the Internet (52%), newspapers (50%), social media (49%), and television (43%).

Figure 6: Awareness of climate change | by news media consumption
 | Mozambique | 2022

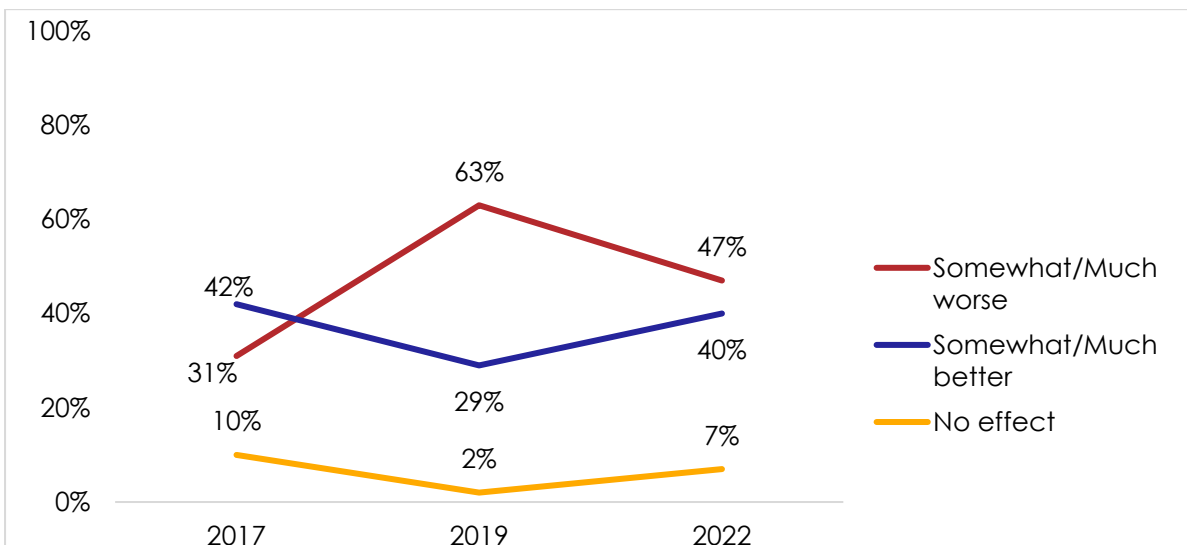


Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say "yes")

Effects of climate change

Among Mozambicans who are aware of climate change, fewer than half (47%) say it is making life "somewhat worse" or "much worse," while 40% say it is making life better (Figure 7). Perceptions of the detrimental consequences of climate change have fluctuated, doubling between 2017 (31%) and 2019 (63%) before dropping back to 47%.

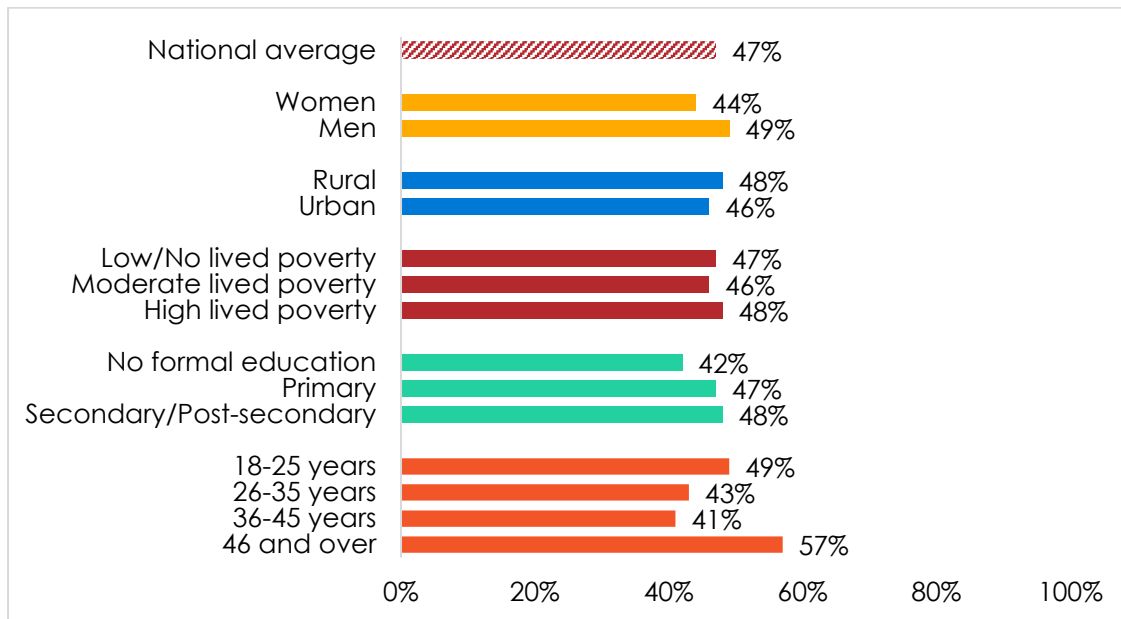
Figure 7: Effect of climate change | Mozambique | 2017-2022



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

Perceptions of the adverse consequences of climate change are more pronounced among older people (57% of those aged 46 and above) than among younger respondents (41%-49%) (Figure 8). Individuals with no formal schooling (42%) are somewhat less likely than others (47%-48%) to say climate change is making life worse.

Figure 8: Climate change is making life worse | by demographic group
 | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Mozambique 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

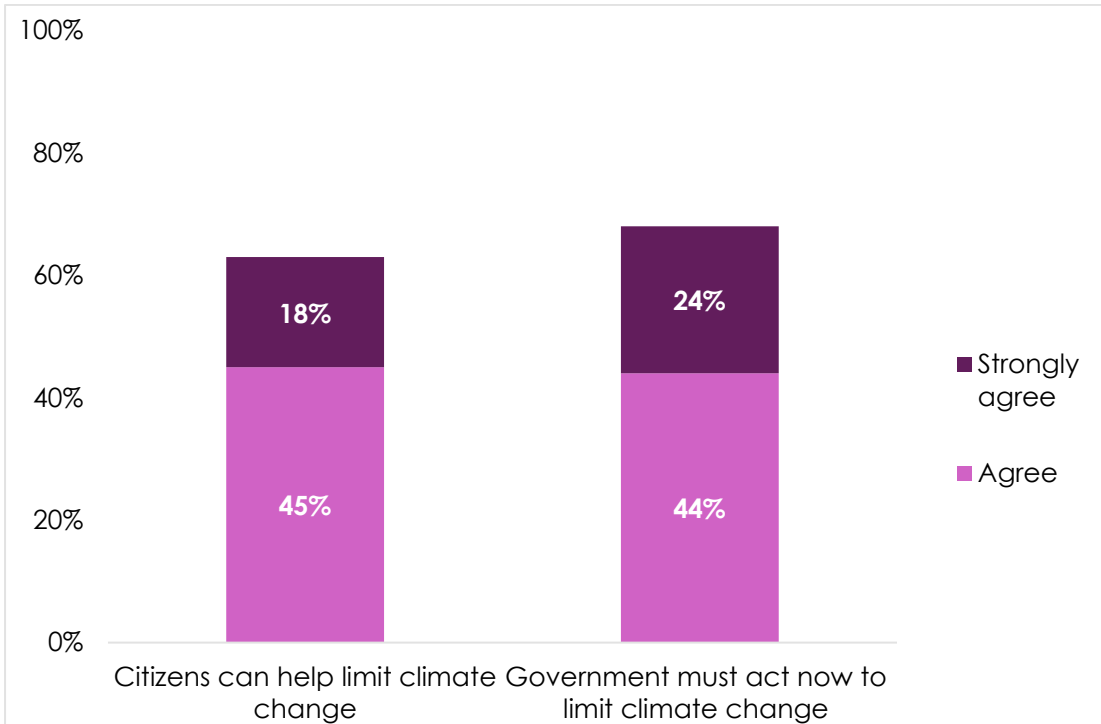
A majority of Mozambicans see addressing climate change as a responsibility shared by citizens and the government. Among respondents who have heard of climate change, more than two-thirds (68%) say the government must act now to limit climate change, even if such measures entail high costs, job losses, or other economic repercussions. Similarly, 63% express agreement or strong agreement with the idea that citizens can contribute to curbing climate change (Figure 9).

This view of climate change as a shared challenge is also reflected in public perceptions of who has primary responsibility for combating climate change and mitigating its impact: 36% of respondents assign this task mainly to the government, 30% to ordinary citizens. Fewer consider business and industry (15%) and rich or developed countries (6%) as primarily responsible for limiting climate change (Figure 10).

Are stakeholders doing enough to limit climate change? Respondents answer with a resounding "No." Large majorities say greater efforts are needed from business and industry (87%), the government (85%), developed countries (80%), and citizens (72%)² (Figure 11). This includes majorities who say that "a lot more" needs to be done by business and industry (58%) and the government (57%).

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. 58% "a lot more" and 30% "somewhat more" sum to 87%).

Figure 9: Limiting climate change | Mozambique | 2022



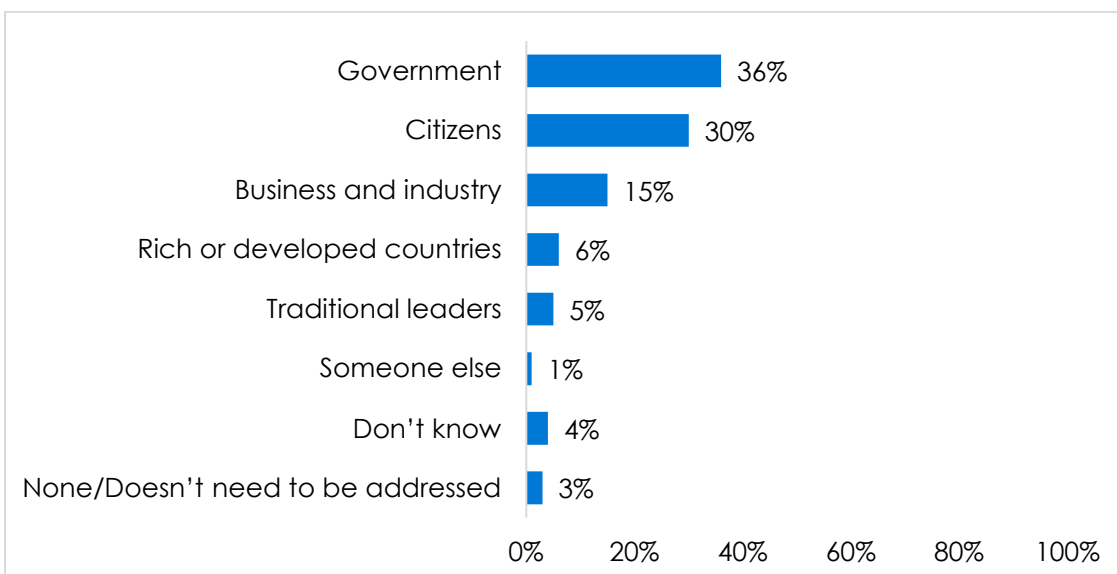
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Ordinary Mozambicans 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.

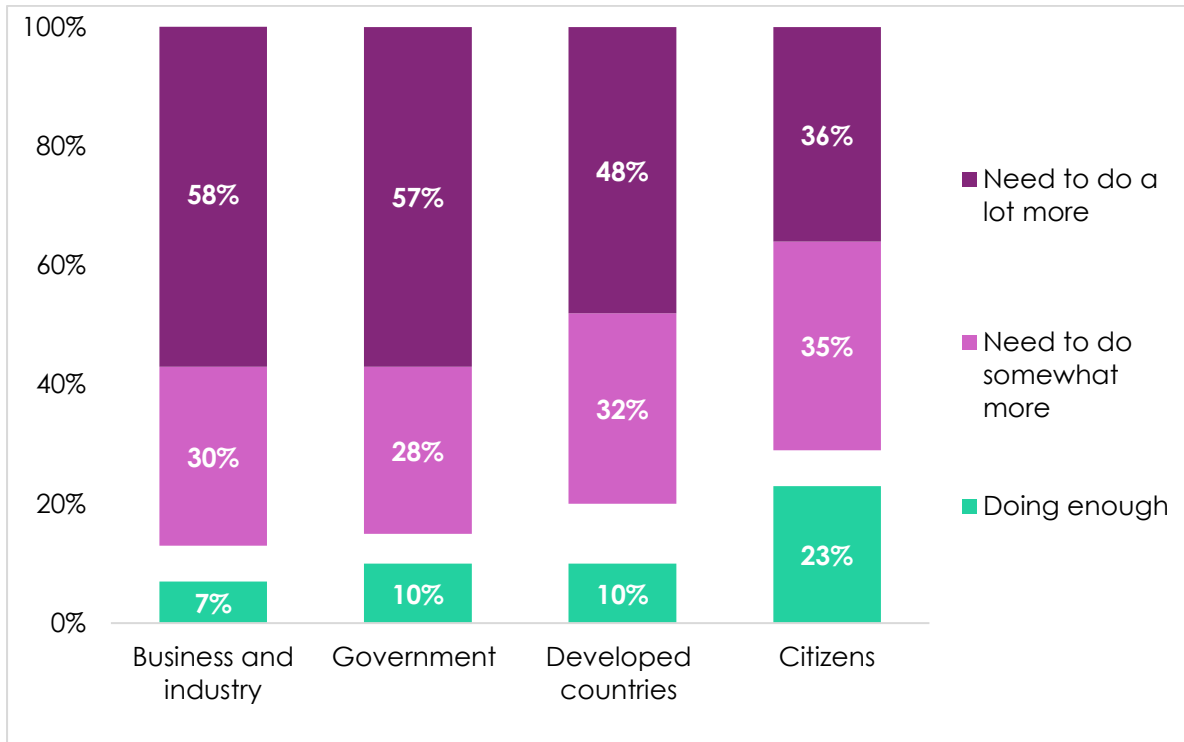
(Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Figure 10: Who has primary responsibility for limiting climate change?
 | Mozambique | 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.)

Figure 11: Are stakeholders doing enough to limit climate change? | Mozambique
 | 2022



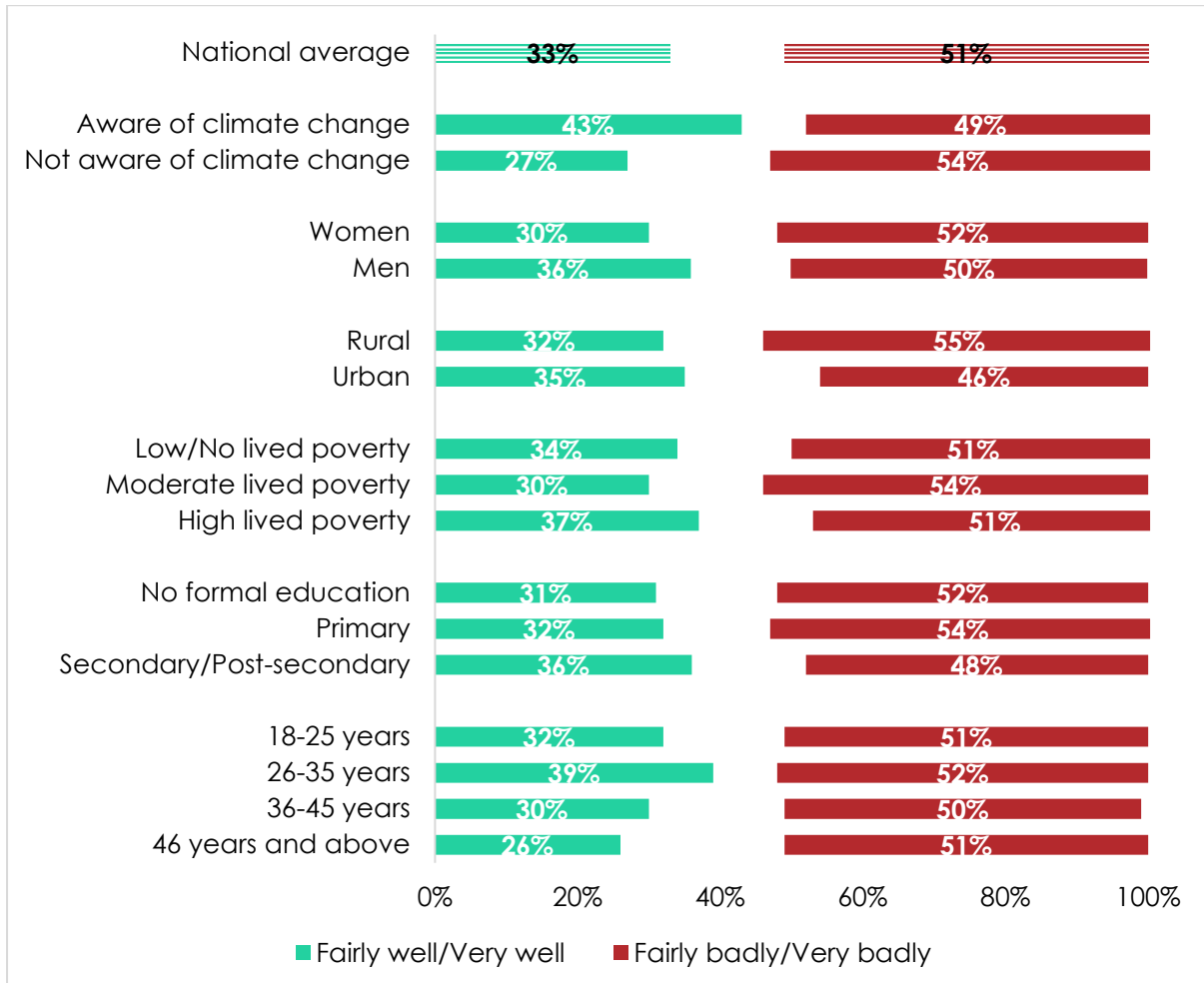
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think each of the following are doing enough to limit climate change, or do they need to do more, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Overall, only one-third (33%) of Mozambicans say their government is performing “fairly well” or “very well” in addressing the issue of climate change, while more than half (51%) think it is doing a poor job (Figure 12).

Respondents who are aware of the term “climate change” are more likely to rate the government favourably than those who are not (43% vs. 27%). Negative assessments are more widespread among rural residents (55%) than urbanites (46%).

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Figure 12: Government performance in handling climate change | by demographic group | Mozambique | 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

While climate change presents a clear and present threat to the livelihoods and lives of Mozambicans, survey findings show a striking lack of public awareness of the phenomenon and its impacts. Even among the minority of citizens who have heard of climate change, fewer than half believe it is negatively affecting life in their country. This suggests that the government's efforts to limit climate change have not been accompanied by extensive public outreach to build popular support for climate action.

Among citizens who are aware of climate change, strong majorities do endorse immediate climate action, even at considerable economic cost, calling for greater efforts by the government, business and industry, and developed nations as well as by ordinary citizens.

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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.

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