

Dispatch No. 726 | 3 November 2023

# Climate change worsens life in Cabo Verde; citizens want collective action to combat it

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 726 | Margaret Eduonoo**

## Summary

As a small island developing state in the Sahelian arid belt, Cabo Verde is “on the frontlines of the existential crisis generated by climate disruptions,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said during a visit in January (Africanews, 2023). Prolonged drought, intensifying storms and flash floods, rising temperatures and sea levels, and other manifestations of climate change threaten the archipelago's food security, fisheries and other livelihoods, and rich biodiversity (World Bank, 2021, 2022; Floodlist, 2020; African Economic Outlook, 2023; Varela, Romeiras, & Luís, 2022; Vieira, 2023; Monteiro et al., 2020; World Food Programme, 2022).

Cabo Verde ranks as the 98<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country in the world to climate change and 76<sup>th</sup> out of 192 countries in readiness to tackle the threat (ND-GAIN, 2021).

The government and international partners have prioritised proactivity and economic resilience to navigate climate shocks, outlined in a National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2022-2030 (Ministério da Agricultura e Ambiente, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2022; World Bank, 2022). Among its commitments is an emissions-reduction target of 18% below business as usual by 2030, to achieve a net-zero economy by 2050.

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

Findings show that a growing number of citizens report worsening drought and flooding. Among those who have heard of climate change, most say it is worsening living conditions. Overwhelming majorities say greater efforts are needed from developed countries, the Cabo Verdean government, business and industry, and ordinary citizens to protect the country from the climate threat.

## 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 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 Cabo Verde, led by Afrosondagem, interviewed 1,200 adult Cabo Verdeans in July and August 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 Cabo Verde in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, and 2019.

## Key findings

- Eight in 10 Cabo Verdeans (80%) say droughts have become more severe over the past 10 years, up from 73% in 2017. Almost half (47%) say the same about floods, more than twice as many as in 2017.
- Two-thirds (66%) of Cabo Verdeans say they have heard of climate change. Among those who are aware of climate change:
  - An overwhelming majority (81%) say it is making life in Cabo Verde worse.
  - Large majorities believe that ordinary citizens can help curb climate change (72%) and that their government needs to take immediate climate action, even at considerable economic cost (64%).
  - Most assign the primary responsibility for combating climate change to developed countries (32%), the government (29%), or ordinary citizens (23%).
  - Large majorities say “a lot more” action to limit climate change is needed from developed countries (78%), the government (77%), and business and industry (68%).
- Only one-third (34%) of all survey respondents 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. An overwhelming majority (80%) of Cabo Verdeans say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” over the past 10 years (Figure 1).

Almost half (47%) say the severity of flooding has worsened, while 31% say floods have become less severe.

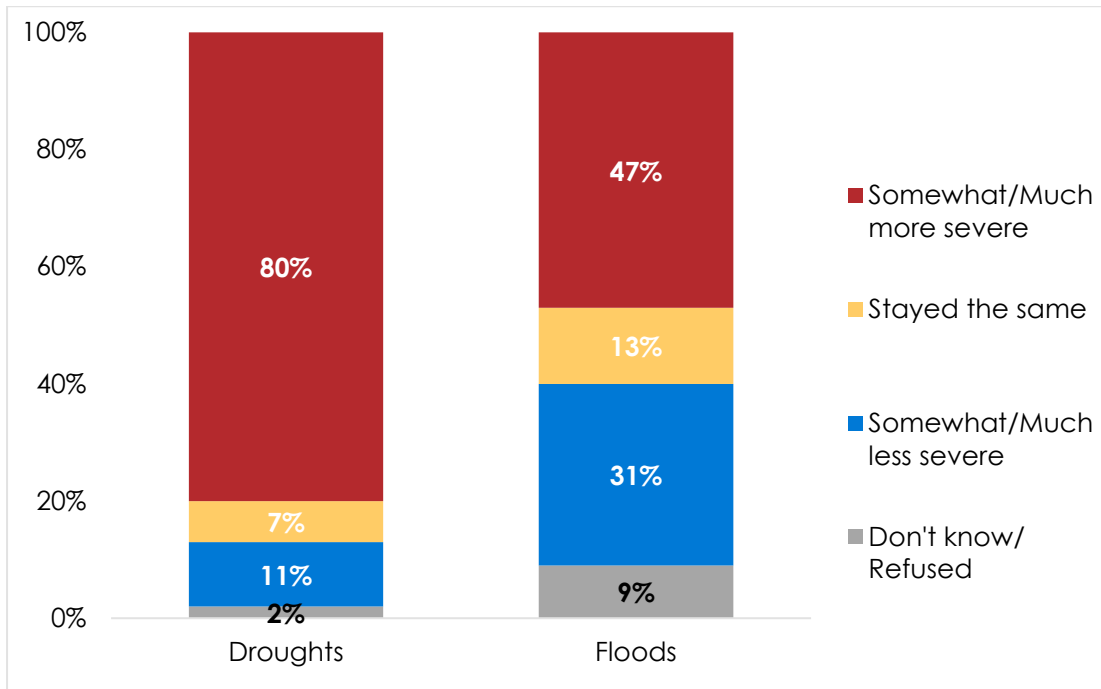
Compared to 2017, the proportion who report that droughts have worsened has increased by 7 percentage points, while perceptions of worsening floods have more than doubled (Figure 2).

Perceptions of increasingly severe droughts are fairly consistent across key demographic groups (Figure 3). Worse flooding is reported more frequently in cities than in rural areas (52% vs. 34%). Citizens experiencing high or moderate lived poverty<sup>1</sup> (50%-52%) are more likely to report worsening floods than better-off respondents (42%-46%).

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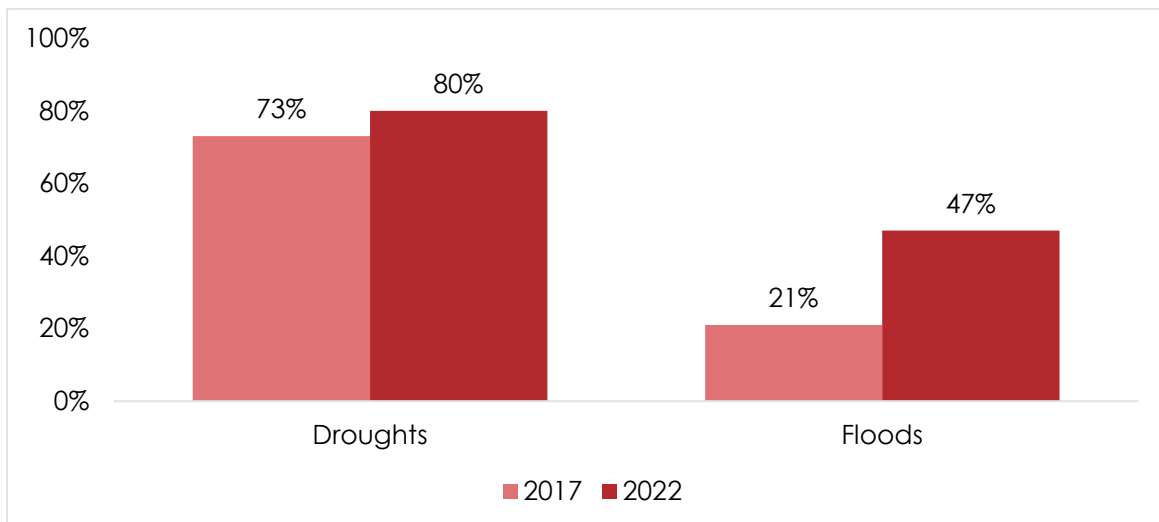
<sup>1</sup> Afrobarometer’s Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents’ levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on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

**Figure 1: Severity of droughts and floods | Cabo Verde | 2022**



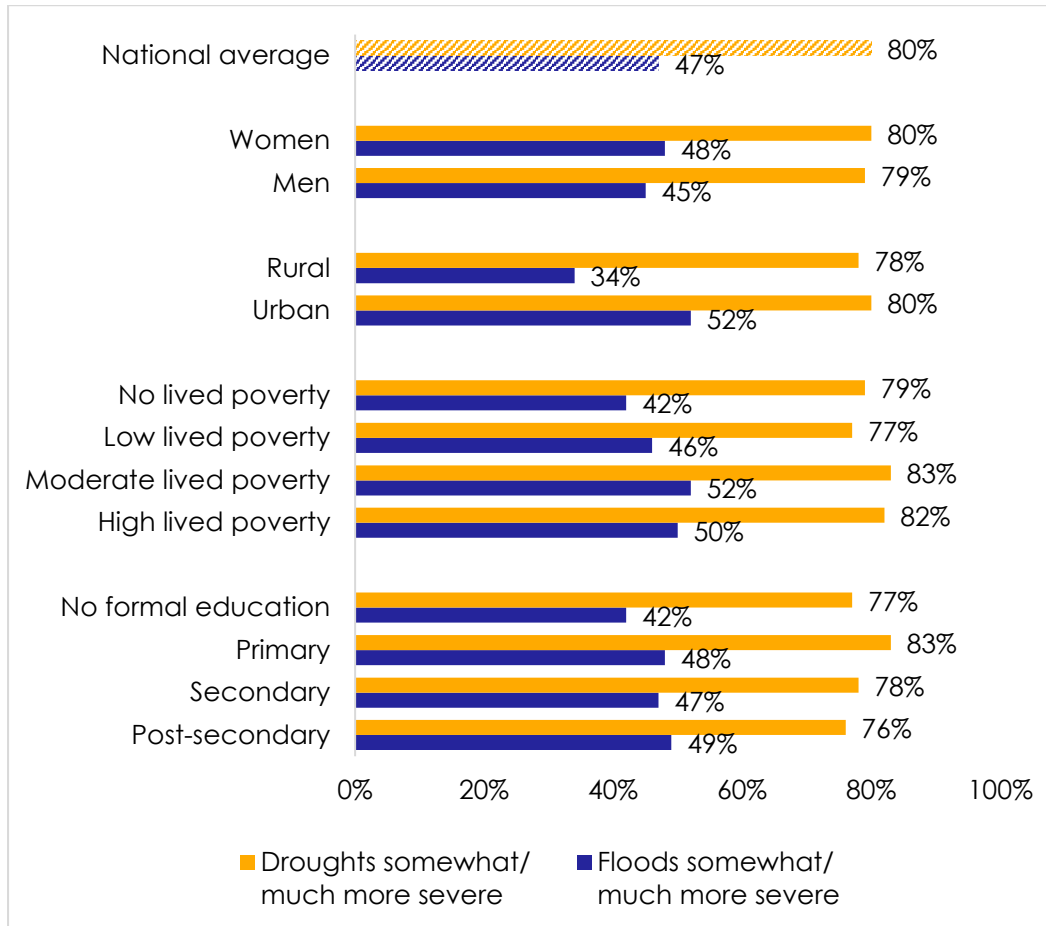
**Respondents were asked:** In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

**Figure 2: More severe droughts and floods | Cabo Verde | 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 demographic group | Cabo Verde  
 | 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”)*

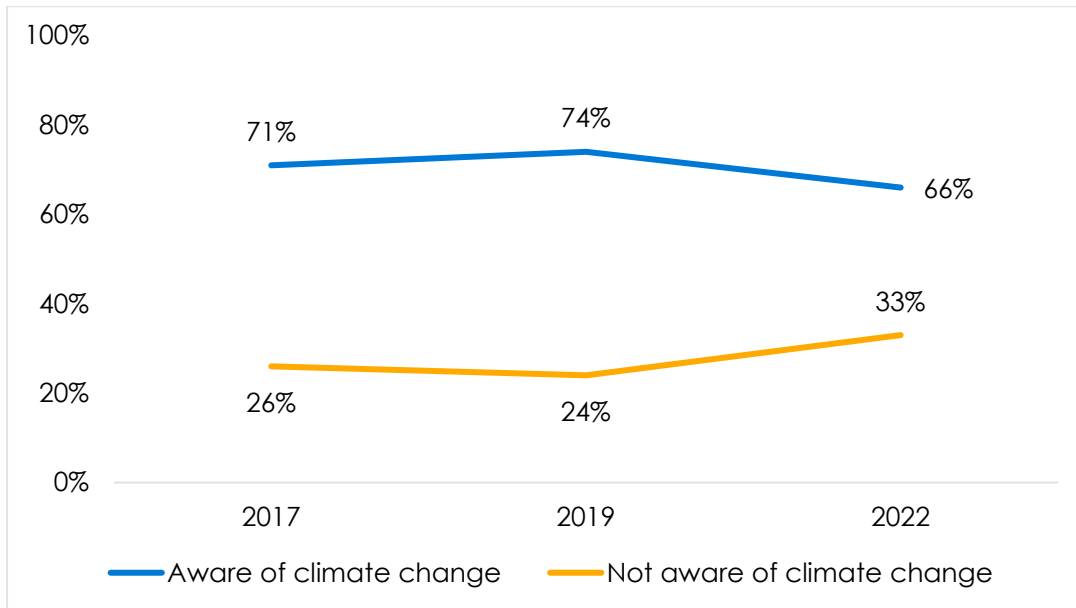
### Awareness of climate change

Two-thirds (66%) of Cabo Verdeans say they have heard of climate change, a somewhat smaller proportion than reported awareness of climate change in 2019 (74%) (Figure 4). This decline may reflect fluctuating levels of acute awareness of weather events (e.g. in response to media reports) combined with a tenuous understanding of climate change.

Women are less aware of the climate crisis than men (59% vs. 73%), as are rural residents compared to urbanites (59% vs. 69%) (Figure 5). Awareness of climate change is extremely low among citizens with no formal education (32%), and relatively low among poorer respondents (53%) and older citizens (58%).

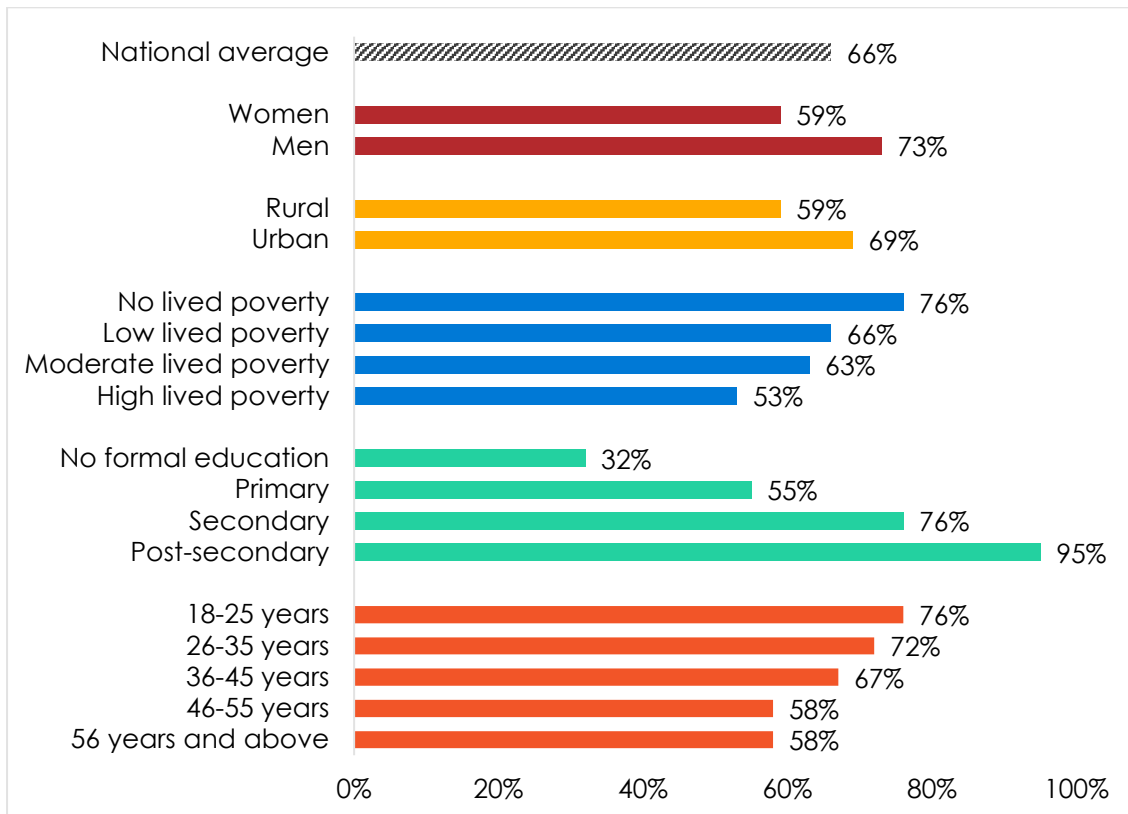
Awareness of climate change increases with respondents' news consumption. Those who get news “every day” or “a few times a week” from the radio, television, social media, the Internet, or newspapers are significantly more likely to be familiar with climate change than those who use these news channels “less than once a month” or “never,” reaching gaps of more than 30 percentage points for social media and the Internet (Figure 6).

**Figure 4: Awareness of climate change | Cabo Verde | 2017-2022**



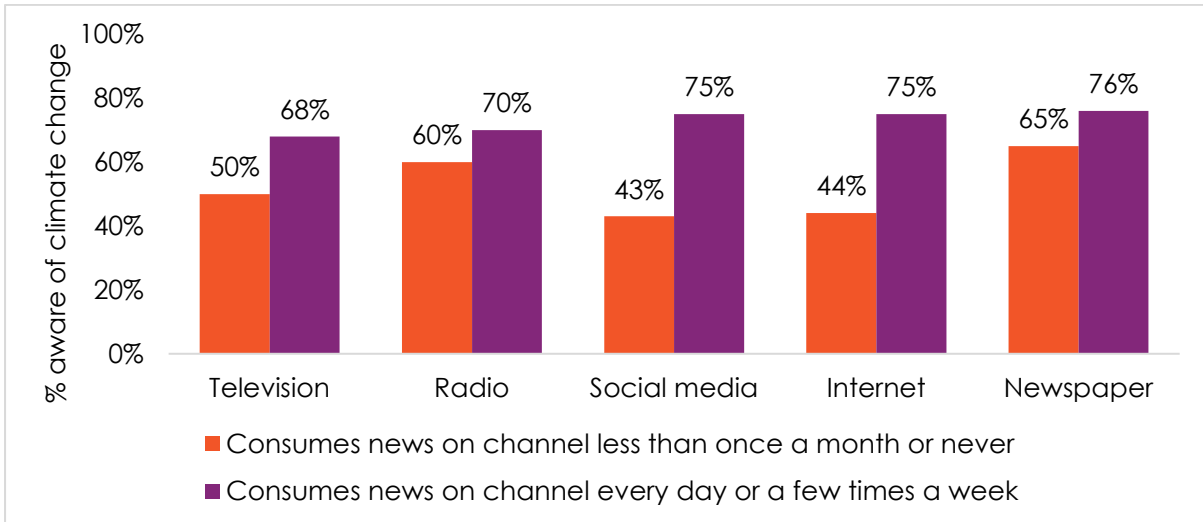
**Respondents were asked:** Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?

**Figure 5: Awareness of climate change | by demographic group | Cabo Verde | 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 6: Awareness of climate change** | by news media consumption  
 | Cabo Verde | 2022



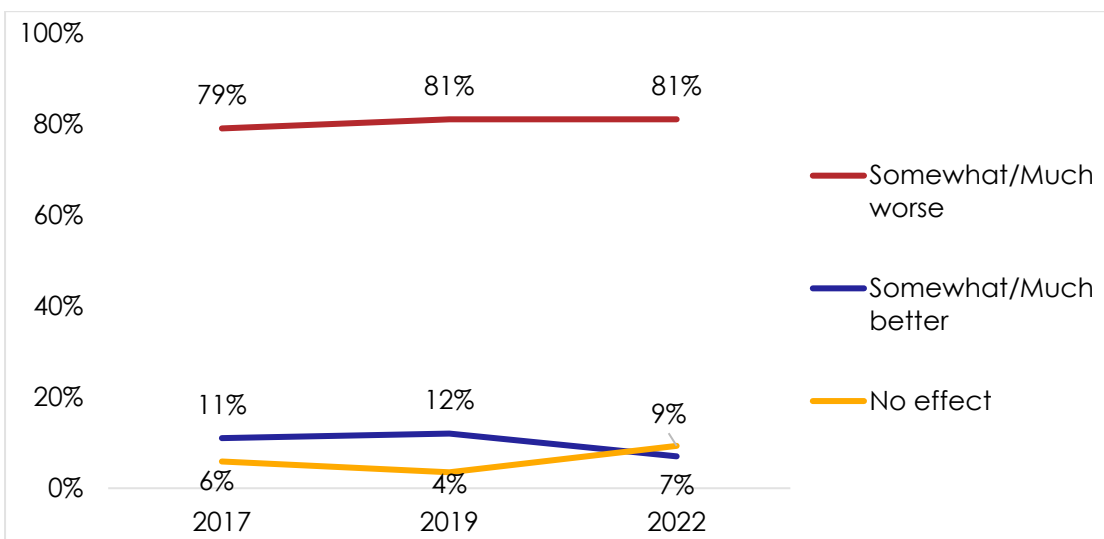
**Respondents were asked:** Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say "yes")

### Effects of climate change

Among citizens who have heard of climate change, an overwhelming majority (81%) say it is making life "somewhat worse" (35%) or "much worse" (46%) (Figure 7). This proportion has held steady over the past five years.

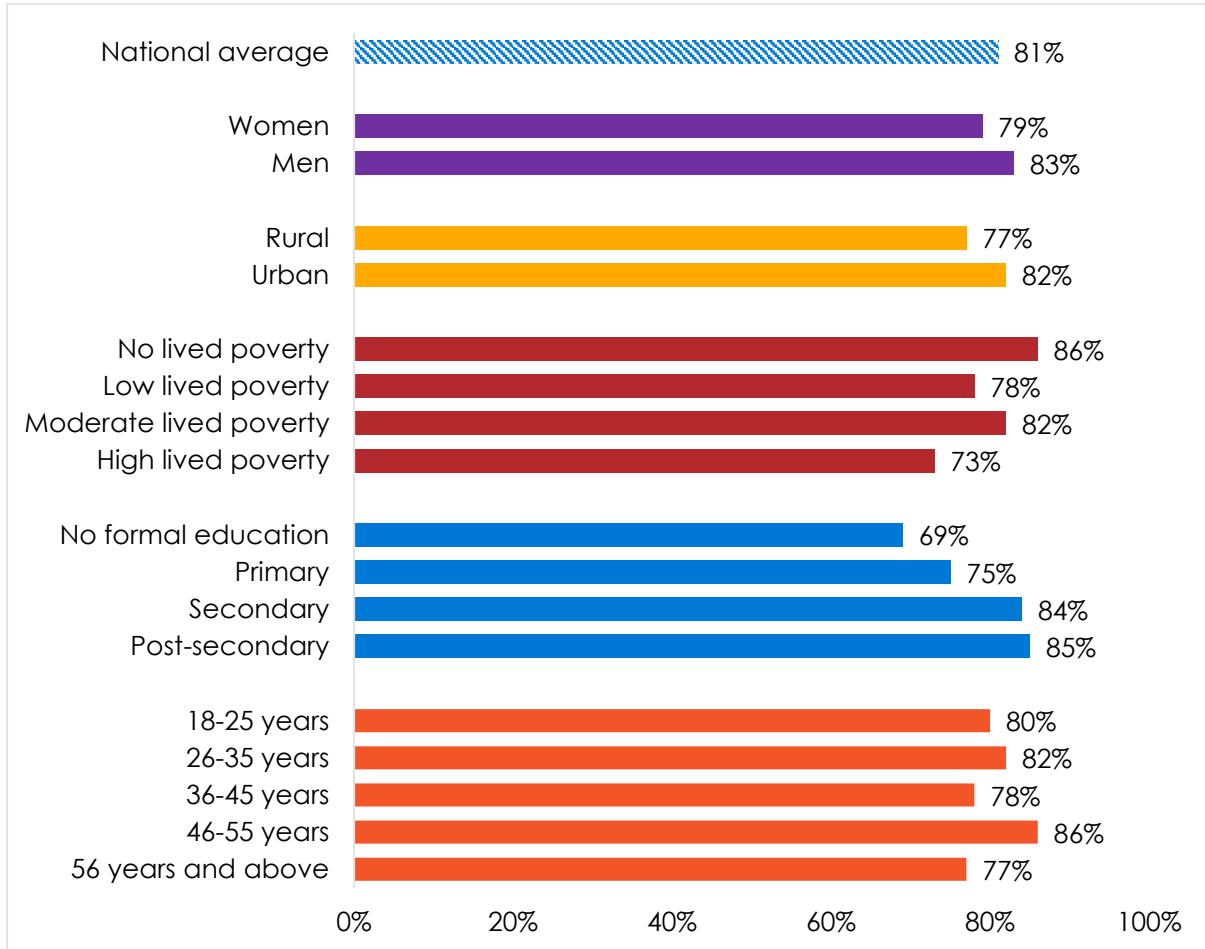
Men (83%) and urban residents (82%) are somewhat more likely to report adverse effects of climate change than women (79%) and rural residents (77%) (Figure 8). This perception is also more common among economically well-off citizens (86%) and those with secondary or post-secondary education (84%-85%).

**Figure 7: Effects of climate change** | Cabo Verde | 2017-2022



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

**Figure 8: Climate change is making life worse** | by demographic group  
 | Cabo Verde | 2022



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

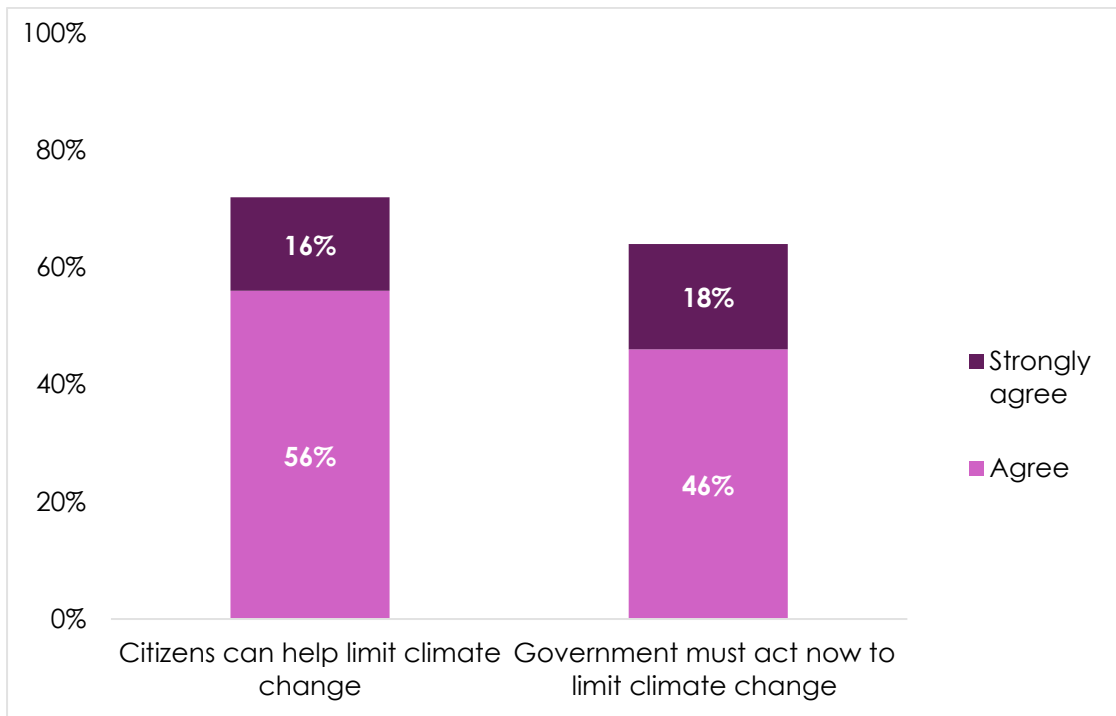
### Fighting climate change

Almost three-fourths (72%) of respondents who are aware of climate change believe that ordinary citizens can help limit climate change (Figure 9). A strong majority (64%) want their government to take immediate steps to fight climate change, "even if it is expensive or causes some job losses or takes a toll on our economy."

Asked who should have primary responsibility for limiting climate change and reducing its impact, respondents most frequently cite rich or developed countries (32%), the government (29%), and ordinary citizens (23%) (Figure 10). Only 6% assign this responsibility mainly to business and industry.

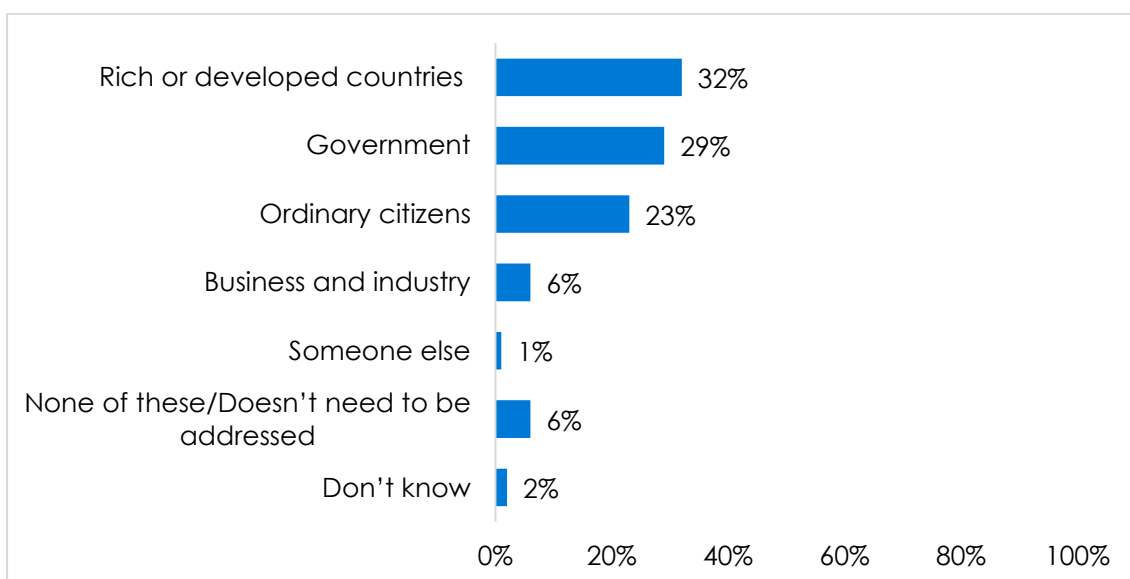
But no matter who has the primary responsibility, none of the key stakeholders is doing enough to limit climate change, according to survey respondents (Figure 11). More than nine out of 10 Cabo Verdeans say greater efforts against climate change are needed from developed countries (93%) and the Cabo Verdean government (96%), including more than three-fourths who want to see "a lot more" action. Similarly, overwhelming majorities call for greater effort by business and industry (93%) and ordinary citizens (88%).

**Figure 9: Limiting climate change** | Cabo Verde | 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 Cabo Verdean 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.)

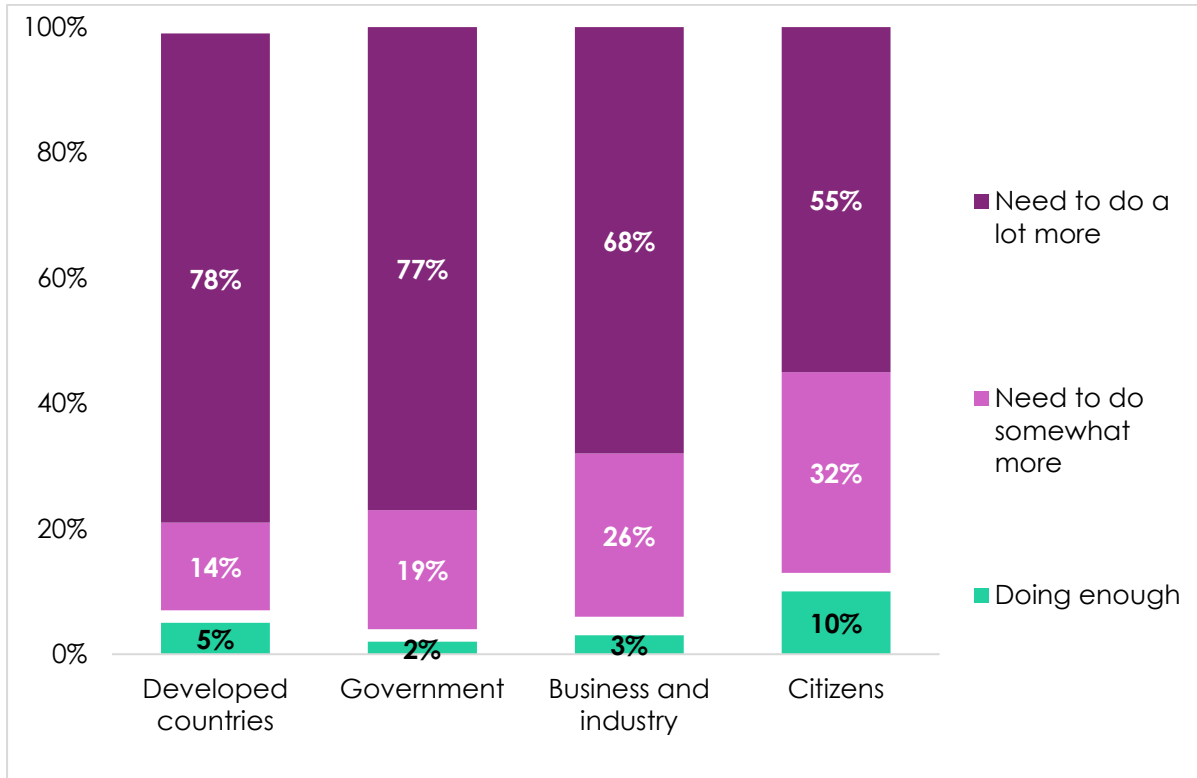
**Figure 10: Who should have primary responsibility for limiting climate change?**  
 | Cabo Verde | 2022



**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? | Cabo Verde | 2022**



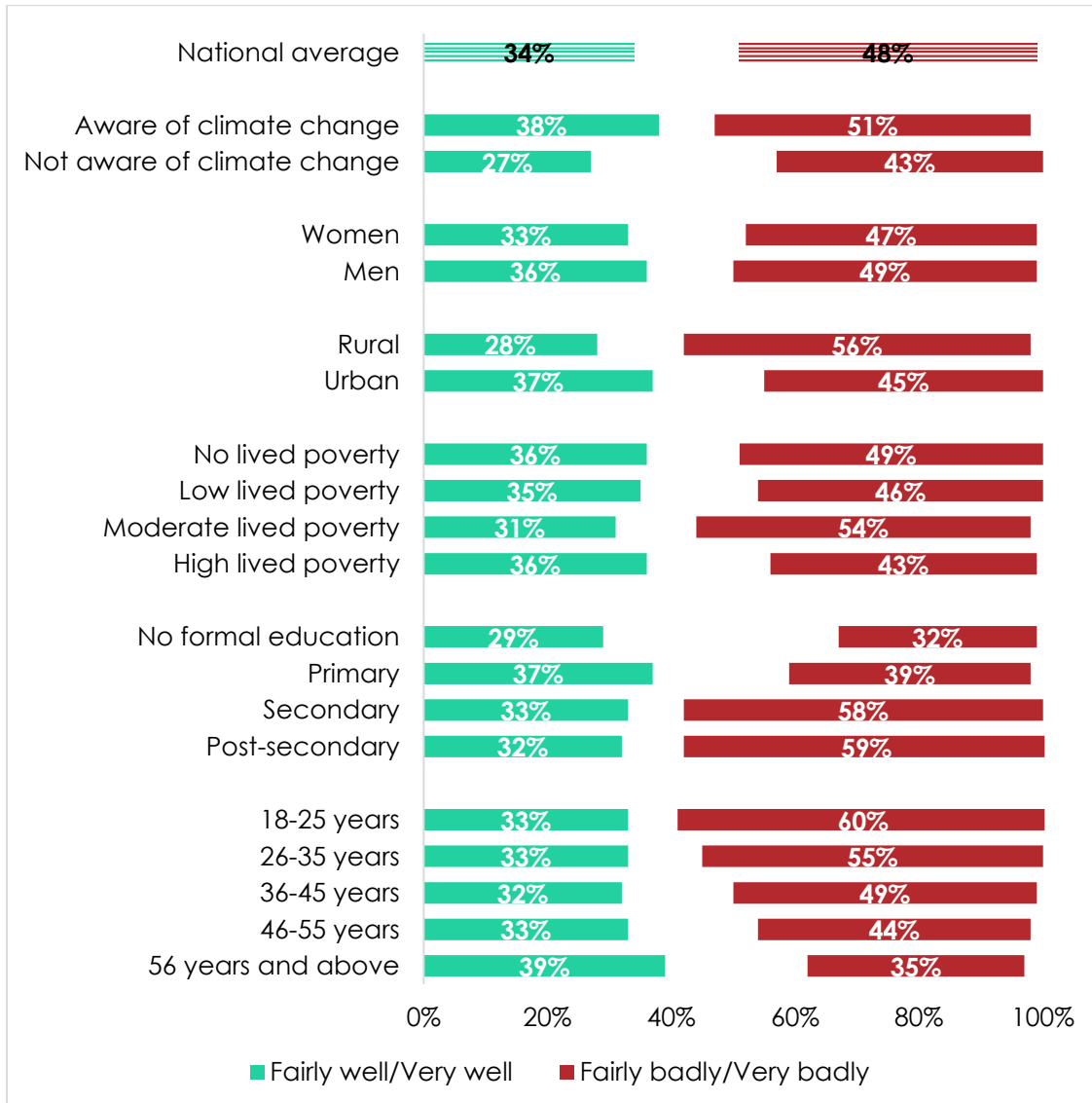
**Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked:** Do you think each of the following are doing enough to limit climate change, or do they need to do more, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Only 34% of all survey respondents say the government is doing a “fairly good” or “very good” job of addressing climate change, while 48% are not pleased with the government's handling of the issue (Figure 12). Almost one in five (18%) say they “don't know” or refused to answer the question.

Respondents who are aware of the term “climate change” are more likely to rate the government favourably than those who are not (38% vs. 27%). Approval of the government's performance is lower in rural areas than in cities (28% vs. 35%). The highest negative ratings come from the most educated citizens (59%) and the youngest (60%).

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 12: Government performance in handling climate change | by demographic group | Cabo Verde | 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 drought and food insecurity continue to plague Cabo Verde, most citizens who are aware of climate change blame it for worsening living conditions on their islands. In near-unanimity, they say greater efforts are needed from developed countries, the Cabo Verdean government, business and industry, and ordinary citizens to limit climate change.

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Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation headquartered 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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