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Mozambicans call for tighter governmental regulations to protect the environment

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 727 | Marcelline Amouzou

Summary

Delayed by the country's long civil war, resource extraction in Mozambique gained traction after the 1992 peace accords and has experienced notable growth in the past decade. Mozambique is expected to emerge as the third-largest global exporter of natural gas (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019). Coal, iron ore, tantalite, gold, bauxite, and graphite also form part of the wealth of natural resources that have propelled the mining sector's share of gross domestic product from 1.2% in 2010 to almost 10% in 2020 (Kamer, 2023; Britannica, 2023; World Bank, 2023). The number of people employed in the mining sector increased from about 49,000 in 2010 to nearly 71,000 in 2019 (Kamer, 2022).

While critical to Mozambique's economic development, the mining sector also joins agriculture, industry, population growth, and urbanisation in contributing to growing environmental problems such as air and water pollution, deforestation, and the management of solid and human waste (United Nations Environment Programme, 2023; Mutatisse et al., 2022; Global Water Partnership, 2022).

In its national planning and strategies, including the National Development Strategy and the Green Economy Action Plan, the government has prioritised "green growth" through sustainable infrastructure, efficient and sustainable use of resources, and strengthened resilience and adaptability (African Development Bank, 2015; Republic of Mozambique, 2014). Specific challenges are targeted through programmes such as the Innovative, Clean, Resilient, and Participatory Cities in Mozambique project (Wehubit Knowledge Exchange Network, 2023) and the Programme for Sustainable Waste Management (Government of Mozambique, 2021).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 questionnaire that explores citizens' experiences and perceptions of pollution, environmental governance, and natural resource extraction.

Findings show that a majority of Mozambicans view pollution as a serious problem in their communities. While many citizens consider it their personal responsibility to limit pollution, a majority say the government should increase its efforts to protect the environment.

Mozambicans hold mixed perceptions of the benefits and costs of natural resource extraction and say the government should regulate the industry more tightly to reduce its negative environmental impacts.

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 1,120 adult Mozambicans in October 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 have been conducted in Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

Key findings

On pollution and environmental governance:

- A majority (56%) of Mozambicans consider pollution a “somewhat serious” or “very serious” problem in their communities.
 - Citizens cite deforestation (23%), water pollution (20%), and trash disposal (17%) the most important environmental problems in their communities.
 - A majority (58%) see plastic bags as a major contributor to pollution in Mozambique.
- Almost four in 10 respondents (38%) say ordinary citizens have the primary responsibility for reducing pollution and maintaining cleanliness in their communities, while about the same proportion assign this responsibility to the national (20%) or local (20%) government.
- Only 39% of Mozambicans think their government is doing a good job of protecting the environment, while 48% disagree.
- A majority (56%) say the government should intensify its efforts to limit pollution and protect the environment.
- However, if environmental protection clashes with economic development, Mozambicans are divided in their views: 42% say the government should focus on creating jobs and increasing incomes, while 44% want it to prioritise protecting the environment.

On natural resource extraction:

- Only one-third (33%) of citizens think that the benefits of natural resource extraction, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh costs such as pollution.
- A majority (57%) say the government should regulate the natural resource extraction industry more tightly to reduce its detrimental effects on the environment.

Pollution and environmental governance

Pollution: The scope of the problem

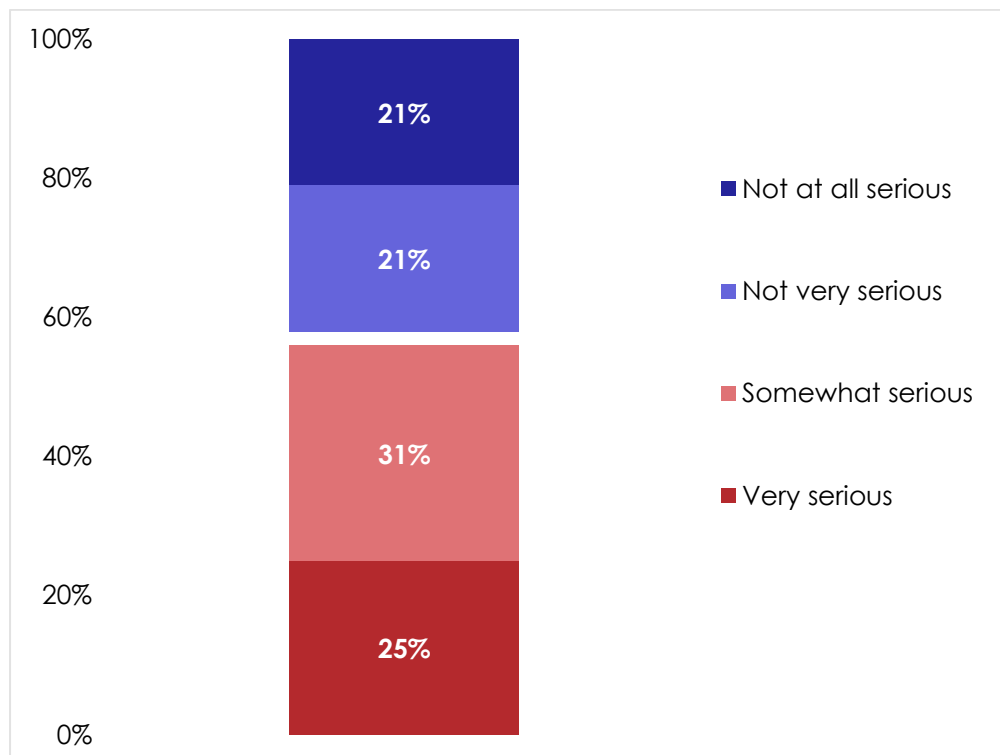
A majority (56%) of Mozambicans see pollution in their communities as a “somewhat serious” (31%) or “very serious” (25%) problem (Figure 1). About four in 10 (42%) believe pollution is “not very serious” or “not at all serious.”

Urban residents (62%) express greater concern about pollution than rural residents (52%) (Figure 2). Perceptions of pollution as a serious problem are higher among respondents who are economically better off, ranging from 47% among those experiencing high lived poverty¹ to 59%-60% among respondents with moderate, low, or no lived poverty. Similarly, citizens with at least a secondary education (64%) are more likely to see pollution as a serious problem than those with primary schooling or less (50%-52%). Pollution triggers greater concern among the youngest respondents (60% of individuals aged 18-25) than among their elders (49%-57%).

When asked what they consider the most important environmental issue in their community, Mozambicans cite a variety of concerns, including deforestation (23%), water pollution (20%), trash disposal (17%), air pollution (13%), and human waste management (12%) (Figure 3).

A majority (58%) of citizens say plastic bags are a major source of pollution in Mozambique, while 28% disagree and 14% don't take a position (Figure 4).

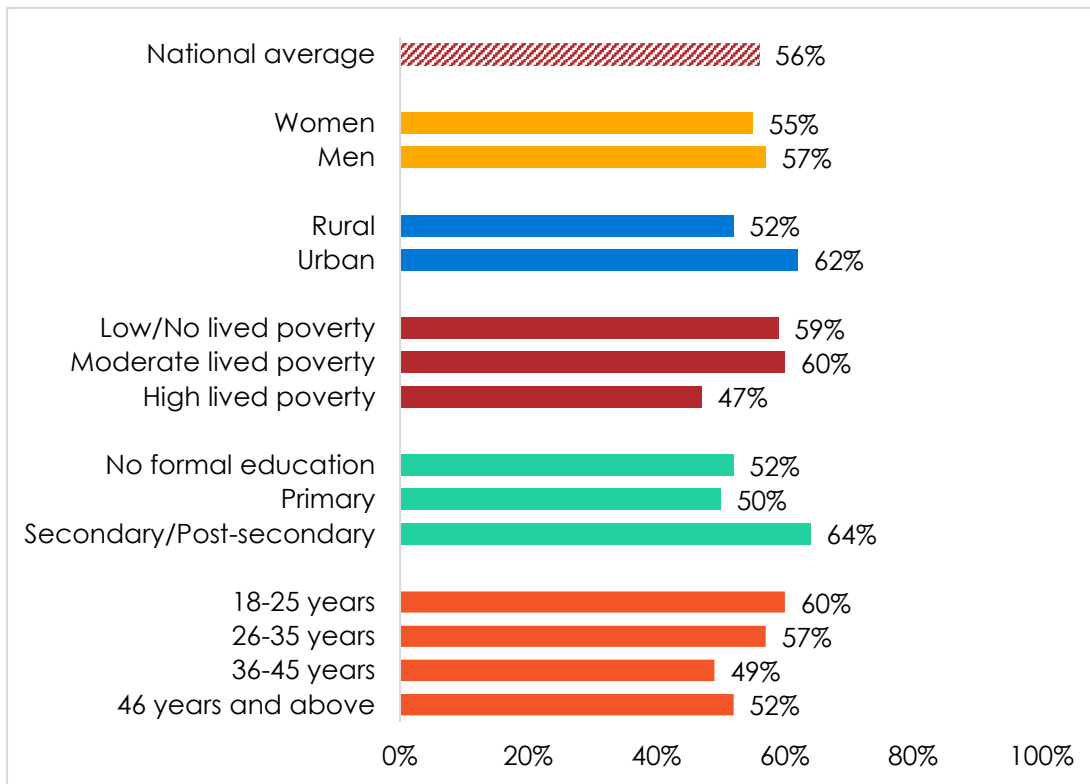
Figure 1: Extent of pollution in the community | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: How serious a problem is pollution, such as the accumulation of trash or garbage, or damage to the quality of the air, the water, or the land, in your community?

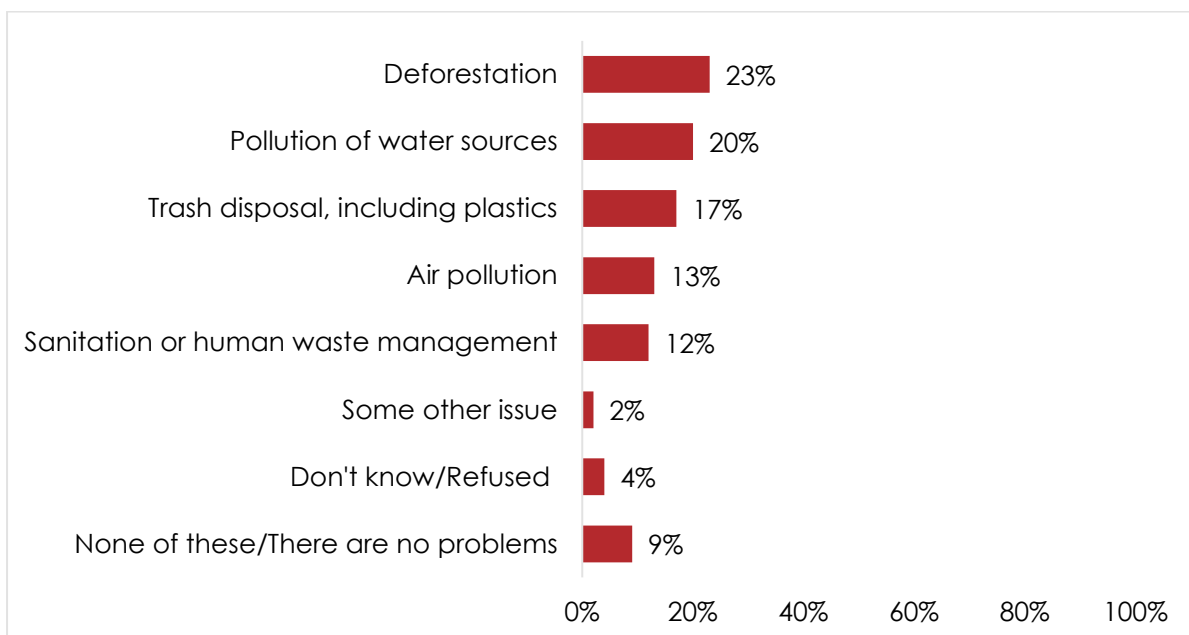
¹ Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty,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

Figure 2: Pollution is a serious problem in the community | by demographic group
 | Mozambique | 2022



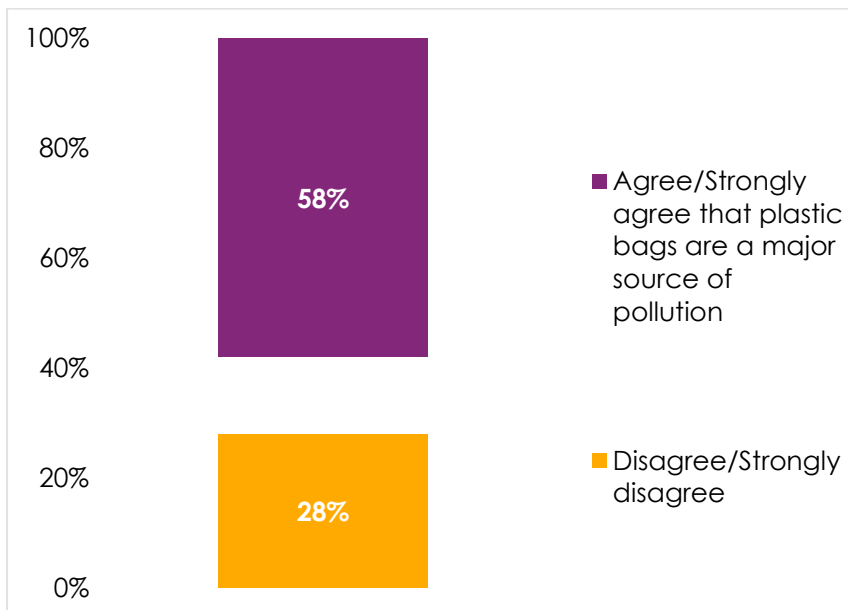
Respondents were asked: How serious a problem is pollution, such as the accumulation of trash or garbage, or damage to the quality of the air, the water, or the land, in your community? (% who say "somewhat serious" or "very serious")

Figure 3: Most important environmental issue in the community | Mozambique
 | 2022



Respondents were asked: Which of the following is the most important environmental issue in your community today?

Figure 4: Are plastic bags a major source of pollution? | Mozambique | 2022

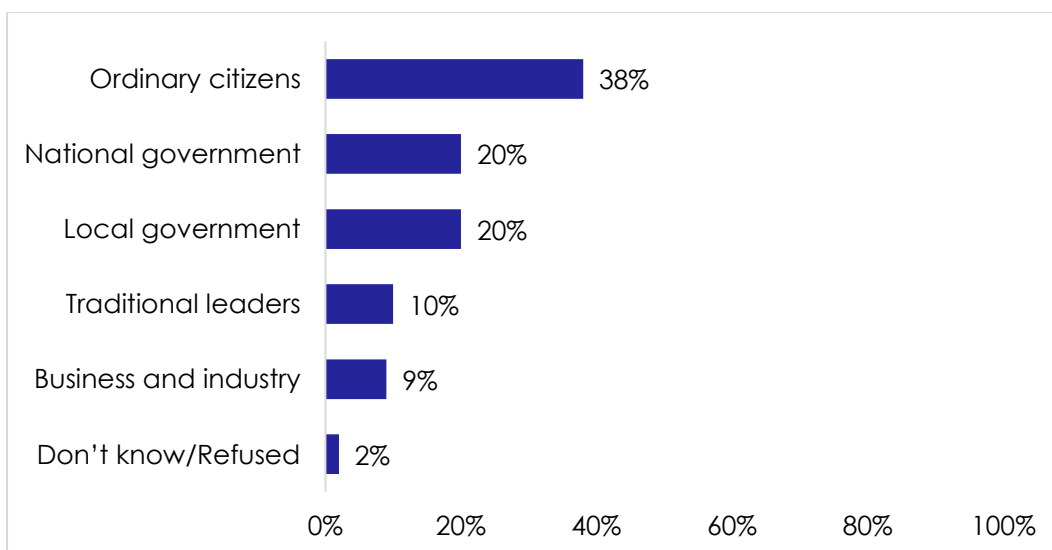


Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Plastic bags are a major source of pollution in this country.

Protecting the environment

For some Mozambicans, protecting the environment begins at home: About four out of 10 (38%) believe that the primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping the community clean lies with ordinary citizens (Figure 5). However, about the same proportion say this duty should mainly be in the hands of the national (20%) or local (20%) government. Fewer assign this responsibility primarily to traditional leaders (10%) and business and industry (9%).

Figure 5: Who should be responsible for reducing environmental pollution? | Mozambique | 2022



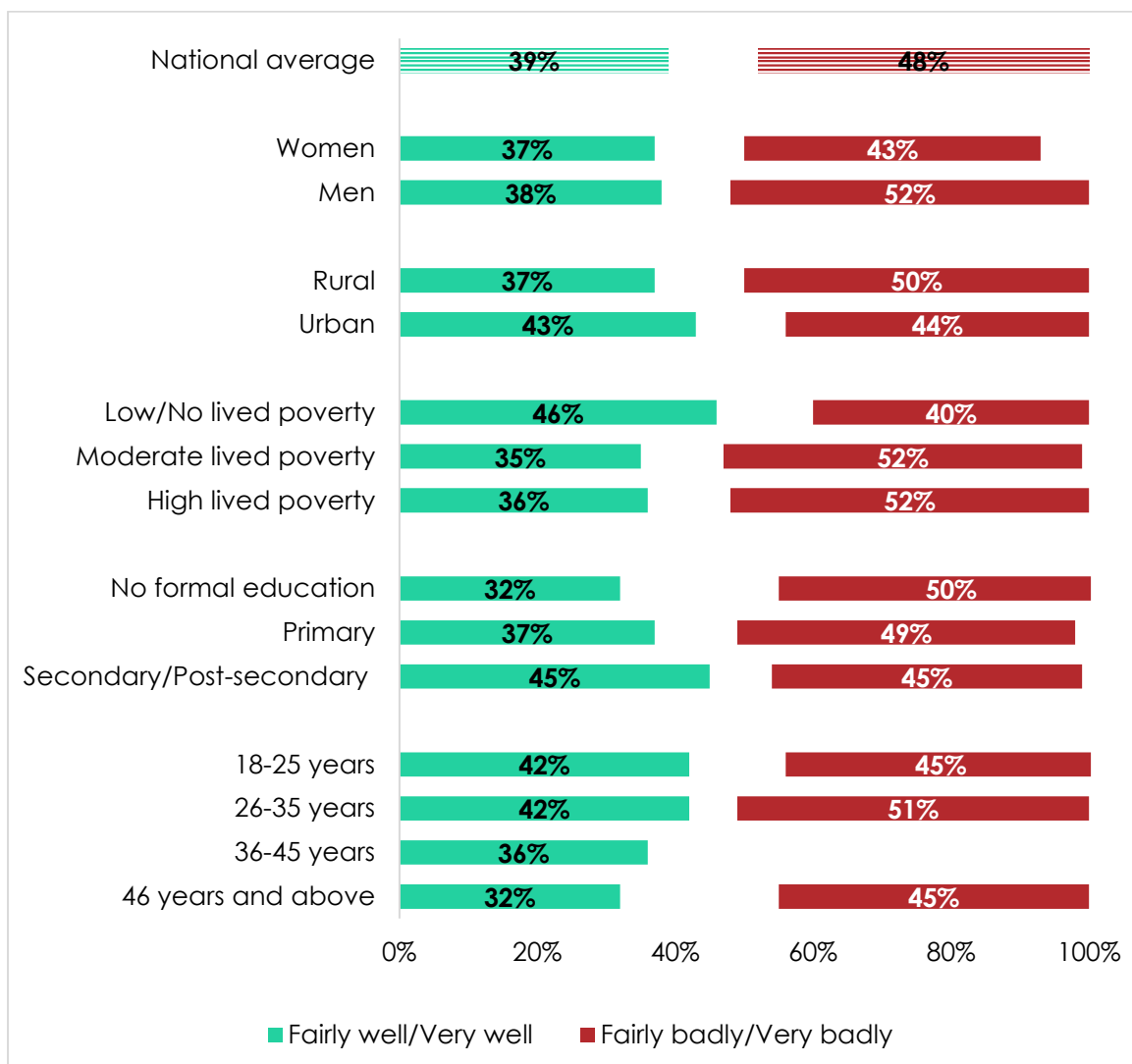
Respondents were asked: Who do you think should have primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping your community clean?

Overall, almost half (48%) of citizens express discontent with the government's performance on reducing pollution and protecting the environment, while 39% say the government is doing "fairly well" or "very well" (Figure 6).

Satisfaction with the government's efforts is somewhat more prevalent – though still not a majority view – among urban residents (43%), economically well-off citizens (46%), more educated respondents (45%), and 18- to 35-year-olds (42%) than among their various counterparts.

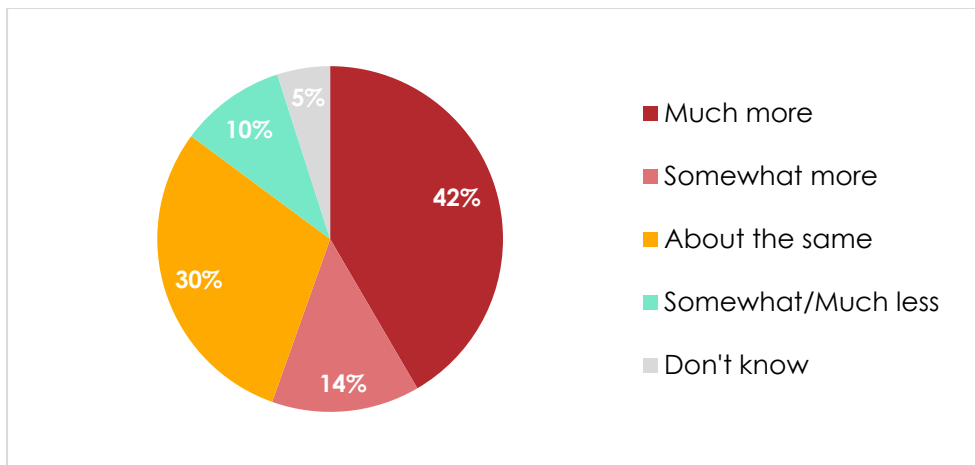
In line with these assessments, a majority (56%) of Mozambicans say the government should do more to limit pollution in the country, including 42% who say it should do "much more" (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Government performance on reducing pollution and protecting the environment | 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: Reducing pollution and protecting the environment?

Figure 7: Should the government do more to limit pollution? | Mozambique | 2022

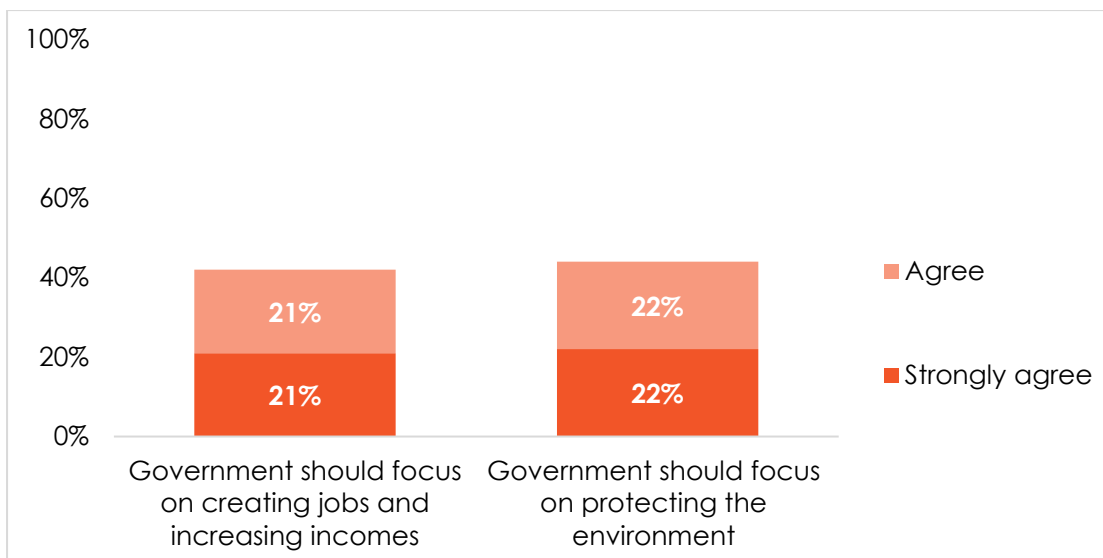


Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, should our government be doing more or less than it is currently doing to limit pollution and protect the environment in this country?*

However, if environmental-protection policies come into conflict with economic development, Mozambicans are divided as to the best approach: 42% say the government should focus on creating jobs and increasing incomes, even at the cost of greater environmental damage, while 44% prioritise environmental protection over economic concerns (Figure 8). About one in seven (14%) don't offer an opinion.

The tendency to emphasise jobs over environmental protection is somewhat stronger among women (46%) than men (39%), among better-off citizens (47%) than poorer citizens (39%-42%), among more educated respondents (46%) than those with less schooling (40%-42%), and among the youngest respondents (47%) compared to their elders (37%-42%) (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Should the government prioritise jobs or the environment? | Mozambique | 2022

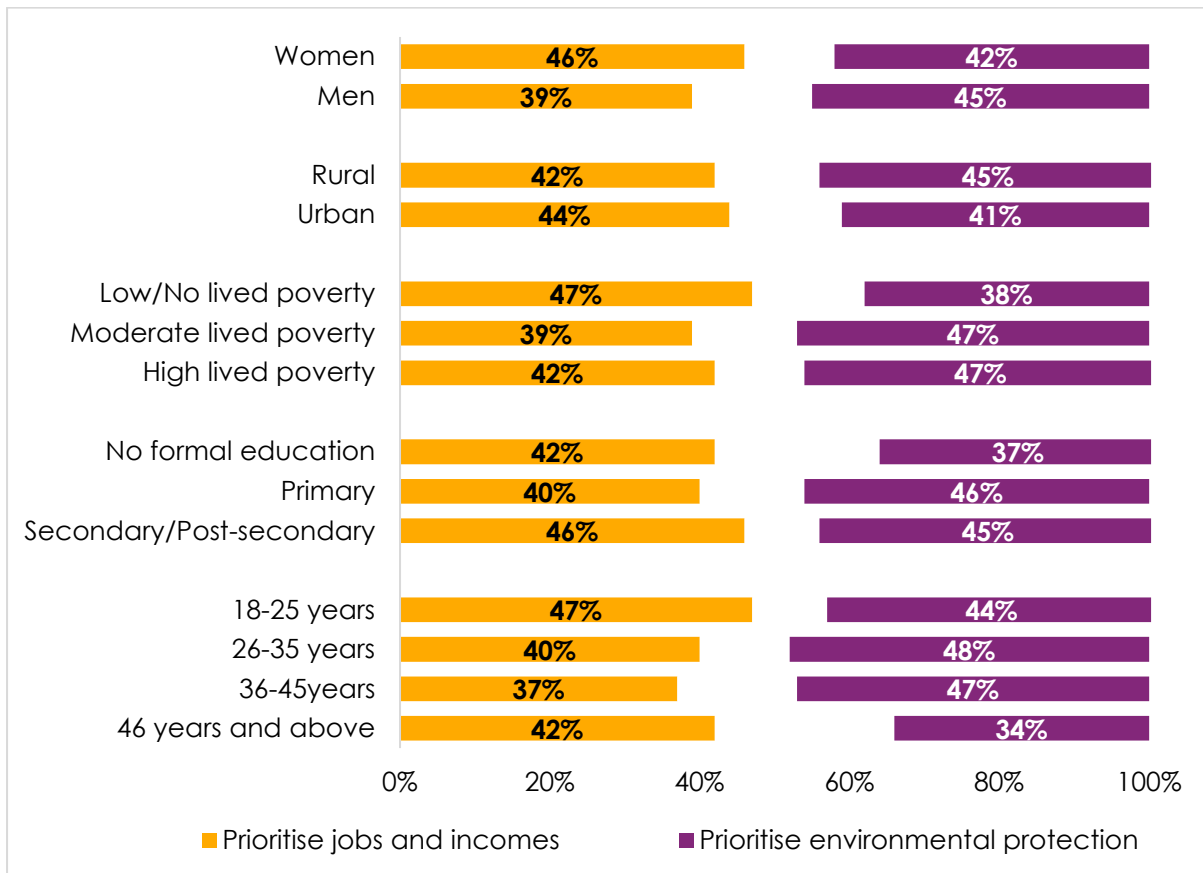


Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*

The government should focus on creating jobs and increasing incomes, even if that means increasing pollution or other environmental damage.

The government should focus more on preventing pollution and protecting the environment, even if this means there will be fewer jobs or there will be other disruptions to our daily lives.

Figure 9: Should the government prioritise jobs or the environment? | by demographic group | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: The government should focus on creating jobs and increasing incomes, even if that means increasing pollution or other environmental damage.
 Statement 2: The government should focus more on preventing pollution and protecting the environment, even if this means there will be fewer jobs or there will be other disruptions to our daily lives.
 (% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

Natural resource extraction

While the mining sector plays an increasingly important role in Mozambique’s economic development, it also contributes to some of the country’s environmental challenges.

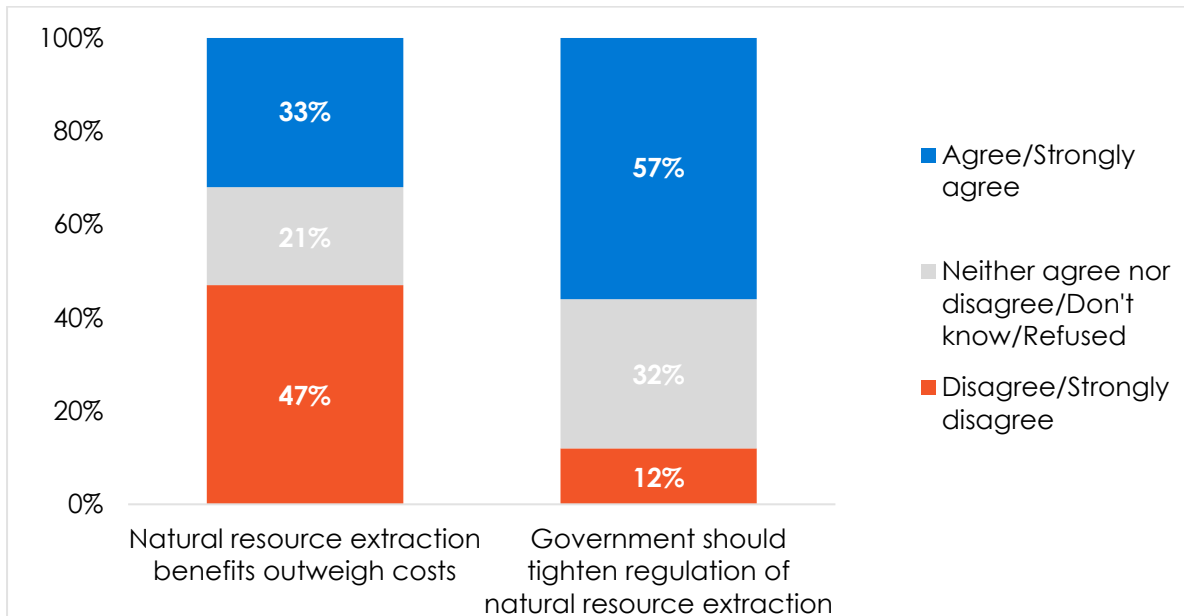
Only one-third (33%) of citizens say the benefits of natural resource extraction, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh costs such as pollution, while 47% disagree (Figure 10). One-fifth (21%) of respondents take neither side or say they “don’t know.”

In addition, a majority (57%) say the government should regulate the industry more tightly to reduce its negative impacts on the environment. Only 12% oppose this idea, while 32% assume a neutral position or say they “don’t know.”

When it comes to the stake of local communities in natural resource extraction, only 36% of respondents think ordinary citizens have a voice in decisions concerning nearby extraction activities, while almost half (48%) disagree (Figure 11).

Even fewer (29%) say local communities receive their fair share of revenues from resource extraction, while 54% say they don’t.

Figure 10: Natural resource extraction: Costs vs. benefits | Mozambique | 2022

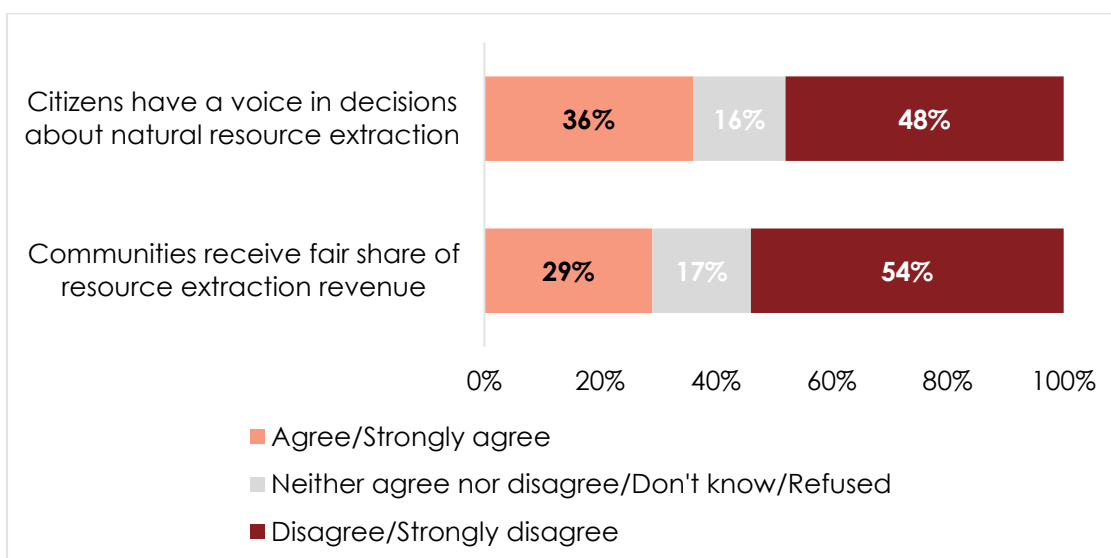


Respondents were asked: Natural resource extraction such as mining, oil drilling, or wood harvesting can have benefits, such as jobs and revenue. But it can also pose problems for nearby communities, such as pollution or deforestation. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

In general, the benefits of resource extraction activities to local communities, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh the costs, such as pollution.

In this country, natural resource extraction should be more tightly regulated by government to reduce the negative impacts on the environment.

Figure 11: Natural resource extraction: Citizens' voice and benefit | Mozambique | 2022



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Ordinary Mozambicans currently have a voice in decisions about natural resource extraction that takes place near their communities.

Local communities currently receive a fair share of the revenues from natural resource extraction that takes place near their communities.

Conclusion

A majority of Mozambicans consider pollution a serious problem in their communities. Many appear willing to pitch in to address the issue, but a majority also expect greater government action to protect the environment.

While the mining sector in Mozambique makes substantial contributions to the nation's economic growth, relatively few citizens think that its economic benefits outweigh its environmental costs or that local communities receive their fair share of revenues. A majority want tighter government regulations to reduce the industry's detrimental effects on the environment.

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.

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