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Tanzanians say government must do ‘a lot more’ to limit climate change, but ordinary citizens should also do their part

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 865 | Jane Mpapalika

Summary

Climate change has become a growing concern for policy makers around the world. While Tanzania is one of the world's lowest emitters of greenhouse gases, it ranks as the 45th-most vulnerable country to climate change among 185 countries assessed by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index (2021), with low readiness to adapt to and mitigate its effects (International Monetary Fund, 2023).

The country has experienced recurring droughts (e.g. in the semi-arid central and north-eastern regions of Dodoma and Singida) and floods leading to deadly landslides (Lasteck & Chibelushi, 2023). Severe droughts and floods have resulted in food shortages, increased poverty, and income inequalities among poor households and smallholder farmers who depend on subsistence farming (Ojija, Abihudi, Mwendwa, Leweri, & Chisanga, 2017).

The government has developed the National Climate Change Response Strategy (2021-2026) and Climate Change Guidelines consistent with the Tanzania Development Vision (2025), the Third Five Year Development Plan (2021/22-2025/26), and United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 calling for climate action (Vice President's Office, 2021, 2022).

These ambitious plans notwithstanding, how do Tanzanians see the role of their government in mitigating climate change and adapting to its negative consequences?

Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 9 survey show that more than half of Tanzanians say that droughts have gotten worse in their region over the past 10 years. But only one-third of citizens have heard of climate change.

Among those who are aware of climate change, overwhelming majorities say it is making life worse and call on their government to do “a lot more” to limit climate change and its effects on their country.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan 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 conducted in up to 42 countries since 1999. Round 10 surveys were launched in January 2024. Afrobarometer national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

In Round 9, the Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 2,400 Tanzanian adults in September-October 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2

percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2021.

Key findings

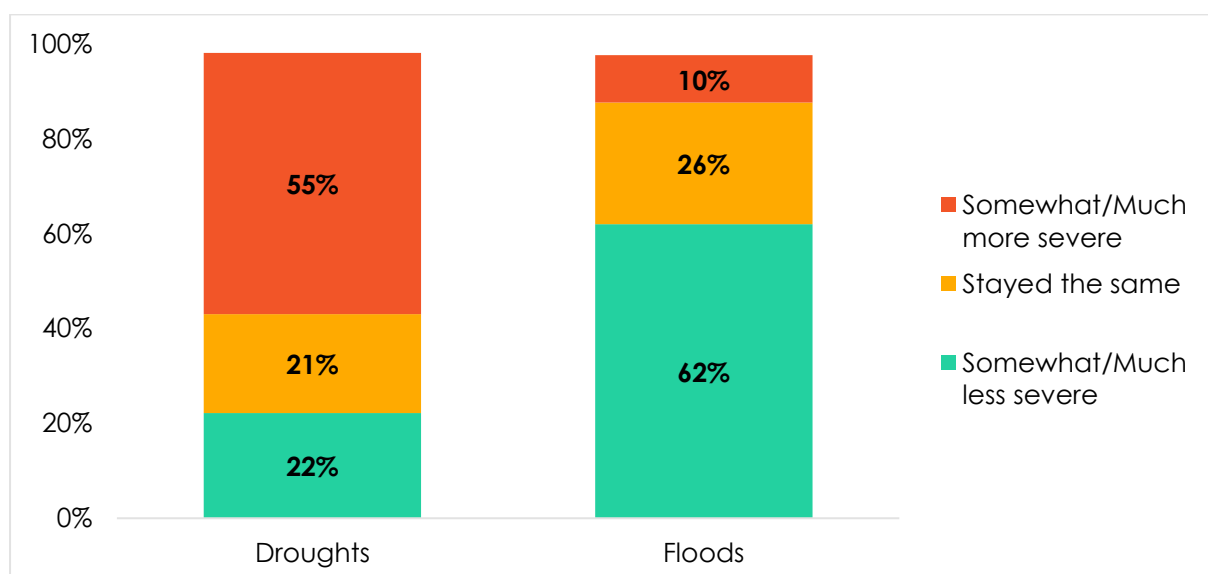
- More than half (55%) of Tanzanians say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” in their region over the past decade.
- Only about one-third (32%) of Tanzanians say they have heard of climate change. Women (25%), rural residents (24%), and less educated citizens (12%) are particularly unlikely to be aware of climate change.
- Among citizens who have heard of climate change:
 - Eight in 10 (81%) say it is making life in Tanzania “somewhat worse” or “much worse.”
 - Almost half (45%) say ordinary citizens have the primary responsibility for limiting climate change and reducing its impacts, while 40% assign this role to the government.
 - Overwhelming majorities say that the government should act now to limit climate change, even if it is expensive (86%), and that it must do “a lot more” to mitigate the threat (88%).

Experience with droughts and floods

More than half (55%) of respondents say that droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe” in their region compared to 10 years ago (Figure 1). On the other hand, 22% say droughts have become less severe.

Only 10% say that flooding has become more severe in their region over the past decade, while 62% say floods have become less severe.

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

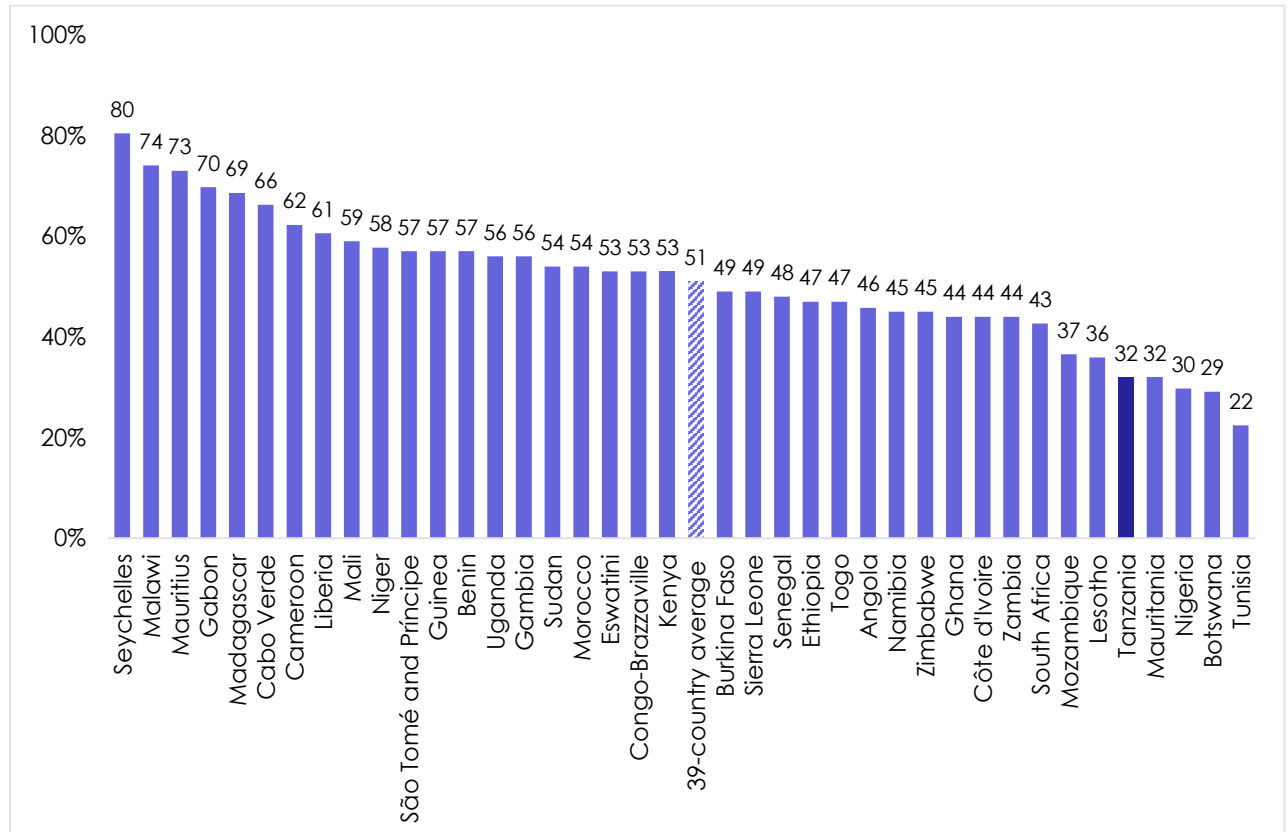


Respondents were asked: In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of the following events in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?

Awareness of climate change

Only about one-third (32%) of Tanzanians say they have heard of climate change (Figure 2). This is one of the lowest levels of climate change awareness among the 39 African countries that Afrobarometer surveyed in 2021/2023, well below the 51% average (Torsu & Krönke, 2023).

Figure 2: 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?

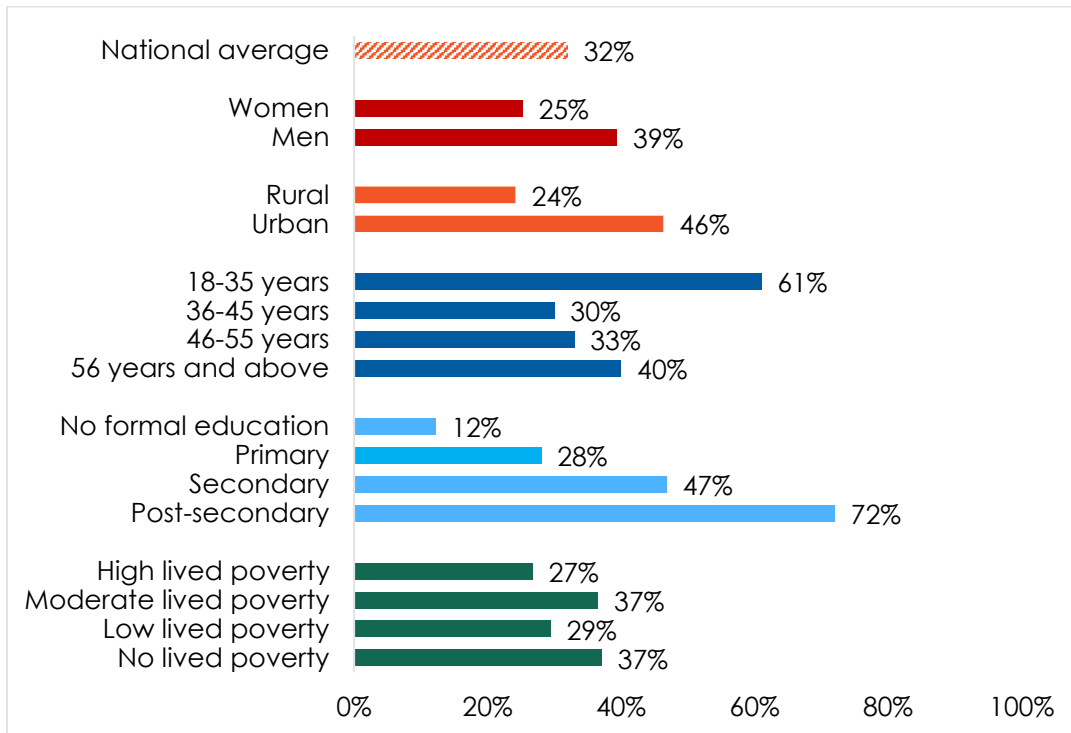
To deal with the growing threat of climate change, awareness of the issue at both the national and community levels is crucial. This requires individuals to be well-informed about how to mitigate and adapt to climate change, especially in countries like Tanzania, where a large share of citizens depend on agriculture for food production and employment opportunities.¹

Survey results show that awareness of climate change in Tanzania is considerably higher among urban residents (46%) and men (39%) than among rural residents (24%) and women (25%) (Figure 3). Awareness is six times as high among citizens with post-secondary qualifications (72%) as among those with no formal education (12%).

Youth (61%) are far more aware of climate change than their elders (30%-40%).

¹ According to the 2022 survey, 49% of Tanzanians say that their current or most recent job was in agriculture, farming, fishing, or forestry.

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

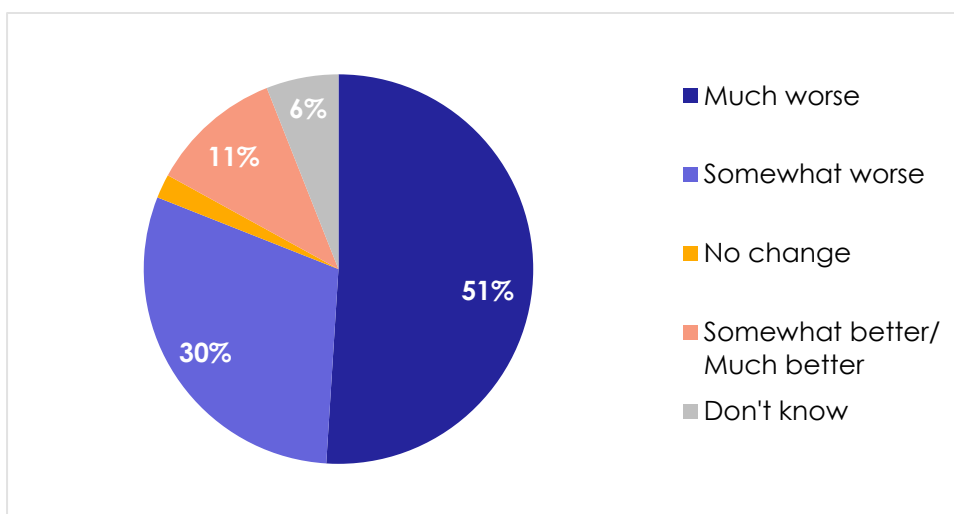


Respondents were asked: Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who say "yes")

Climate change is making life worse

Among Tanzanians who are familiar with climate change, eight in 10 (81%) say it is making life in the country worse, including fully half (51%) who say it is making life "much worse" (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Is climate change making life better or worse? | Tanzania | 2022



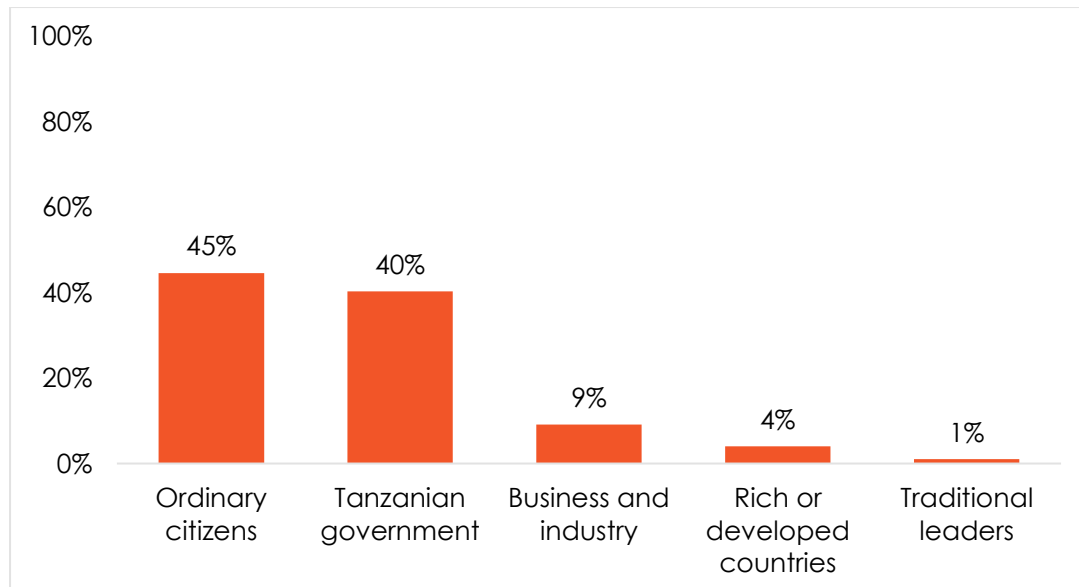
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think climate change is making life in Tanzania better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Roles in addressing climate change

While governments play a leading role in tackling development challenges, they often partner with other actors to achieve desired outcomes. With regard to climate change, the private sector, civil society, the media, and individual citizens can also contribute by, for example, raising climate change awareness, adopting climate-smart practices in agriculture, transitioning to renewable energy, and promoting clean cooking initiatives.

In fact, almost half (45%) of Tanzanians assign primary responsibility for limiting climate change and reducing its impact to ordinary citizens, while 40% give the government that task (Figure 5). Far fewer see business and industry (9%), rich or developed countries (4%), and traditional leaders (1%) as taking the lead.

Figure 5: Who has primary responsibility for limiting climate change? | Tanzania | 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.)

In their views on responsibility for limiting climate change, Tanzanians are not too different from the average across 39 African countries surveyed by Afrobarometer, though government places first (44%) and ordinary citizens second (30%) in the continental sample (Table 1). But countries vary widely in how they assign responsibility for leading the charge. Nigerians and Liberians overwhelmingly say the government should be primarily responsible for limiting climate change (76% and 75%, respectively). At the other extreme, few Seychellois (16%) and Tunisians (20%) look to the government, calling instead for rich or developed countries to take the lead (30% and 53%, respectively).

Joining Tanzania in giving priority to ordinary citizens are Madagascar (54%), Burkina Faso (48%), Zambia (47%), Botswana (45%), Kenya (44%), Eswatini (39%), Togo (38%, tied with the government), and São Tomé and Príncipe (36%).

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

	Government	Citizens	Rich/Developed countries	Business and industry
Nigeria	76%	14%	3%	2%
Liberia	75%	9%	5%	4%
Niger	71%	20%	5%	3%
Gambia	69%	21%	3%	3%
Guinea	63%	23%	7%	5%
Mauritania	62%	23%	6%	7%
Sierra Leone	59%	30%	1%	3%
Zimbabwe	58%	16%	3%	10%
Mali	57%	24%	11%	7%
Senegal	52%	23%	13%	7%
Sudan	47%	18%	13%	13%
Benin	46%	40%	7%	5%
Morocco	46%	10%	17%	18%
Ethiopia	46%	43%	5%	4%
Uganda	46%	43%	2%	3%
Lesotho	44%	18%	18%	9%
39-country average	44%	30%	12%	8%
Ghana	43%	42%	3%	9%
Congo-Brazzaville	43%	20%	27%	8%
Kenya	43%	44%	4%	5%
Cameroon	41%	25%	17%	12%
Côte d'Ivoire	41%	26%	16%	13%
Malawi	41%	39%	5%	2%
Angola	41%	29%	11%	12%
Tanzania	40%	45%	4%	9%
Namibia	39%	38%	8%	9%
Togo	38%	38%	11%	7%
Gabon	38%	11%	36%	14%
South Africa	37%	35%	3%	16%
Mauritius	36%	30%	22%	9%
Mozambique	36%	30%	6%	15%
Eswatini	34%	39%	15%	11%
São Tomé and Príncipe	34%	36%	24%	2%
Zambia	32%	47%	3%	6%
Botswana	32%	45%	5%	11%
Madagascar	31%	54%	6%	4%
Burkina Faso	29%	48%	7%	6%
Cabo Verde	29%	23%	32%	6%
Tunisia	20%	4%	53%	18%
Seychelles	16%	25%	30%	15%

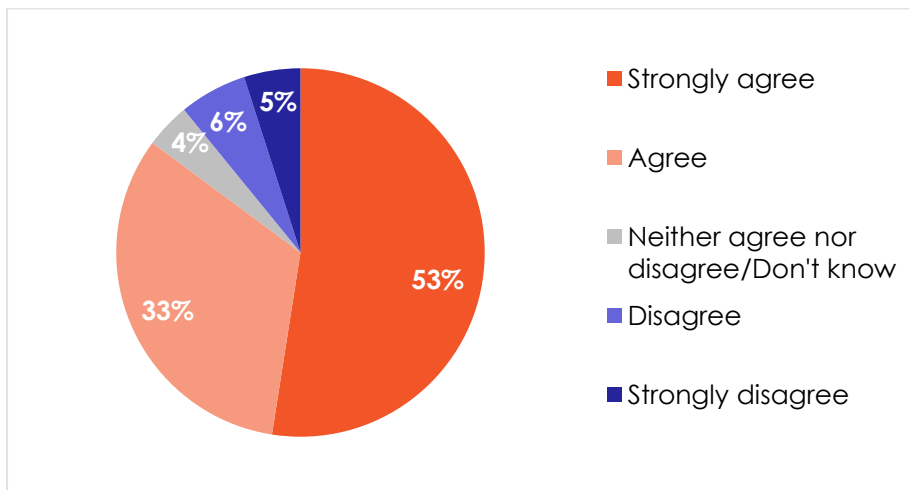


Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Who do you think should have primary responsibility for trying to limit climate change and reduce its impact? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

While many Tanzanians see themselves as primary actors, they also overwhelmingly say the government should act now to limit climate change, even if doing so is expensive or causes some job losses or other harm to the economy: 86% of respondents endorse this position, including 53% who “strongly agree” with it (Figure 6).

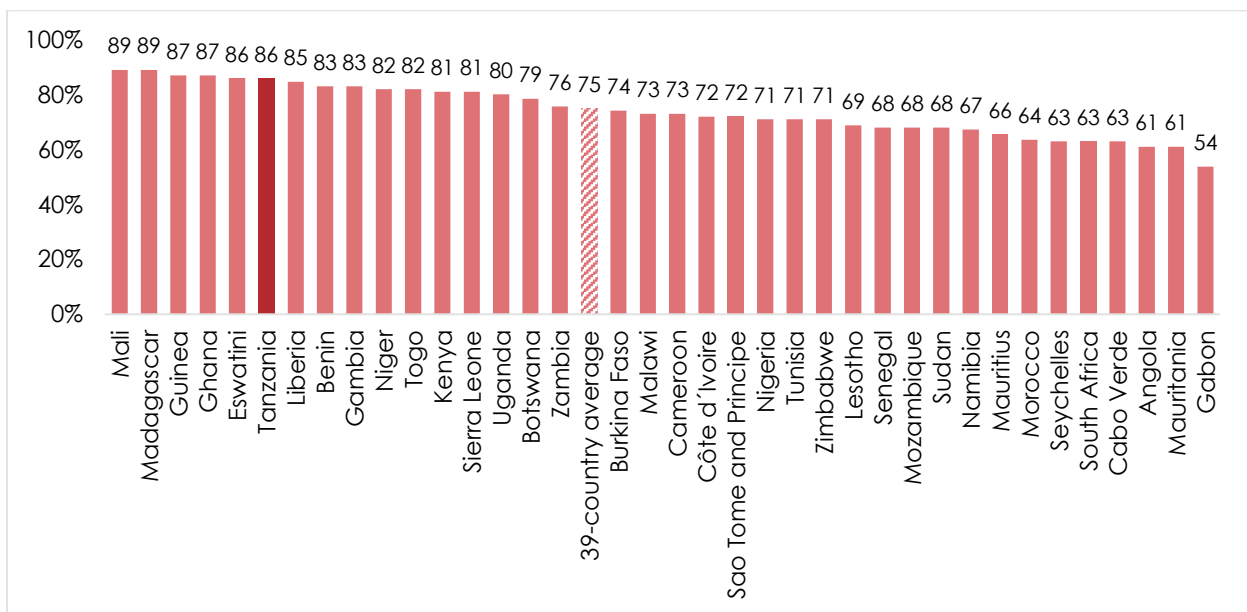
Tanzanians’ call for urgent government climate action is among the strongest on the continent, surpassed only by citizens in Madagascar (89%), Mali (89%), Ghana (87%), and Guinea (87%) (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Should government act now to limit climate change? | Tanzania | 2022



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

Figure 7: Government must act now on climate change | 39 countries | 2022

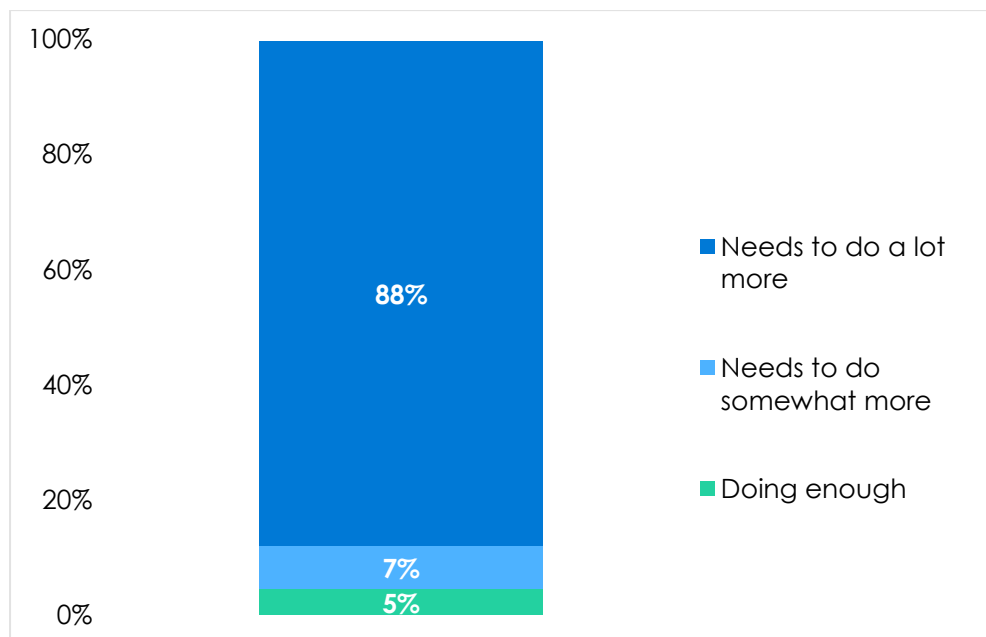


Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree. It is important for our government to take steps now to limit climate change in the future, even if it is expensive or causes some job losses or other harm to our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

In Tanzania, the government bundles responsibilities for implementing climate change mitigation activities in the Vice President's Office for Environmental Matters. The office has led a number of initiatives related to climate change, including promotion of local community engagement in forest management, planting of trees, and promotion of alternative sources of energy for cooking (Kulindwa & Ahlgren, 2021; Vice President's Office, 2022).

But again, Tanzanians overwhelmingly call for greater engagement: Almost nine out of 10 respondents (88%) say the government needs to do "a lot more" to fight climate change, in addition to 7% who say it should do "somewhat more" (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Is government doing enough to fight climate change? | Tanzania | 2022



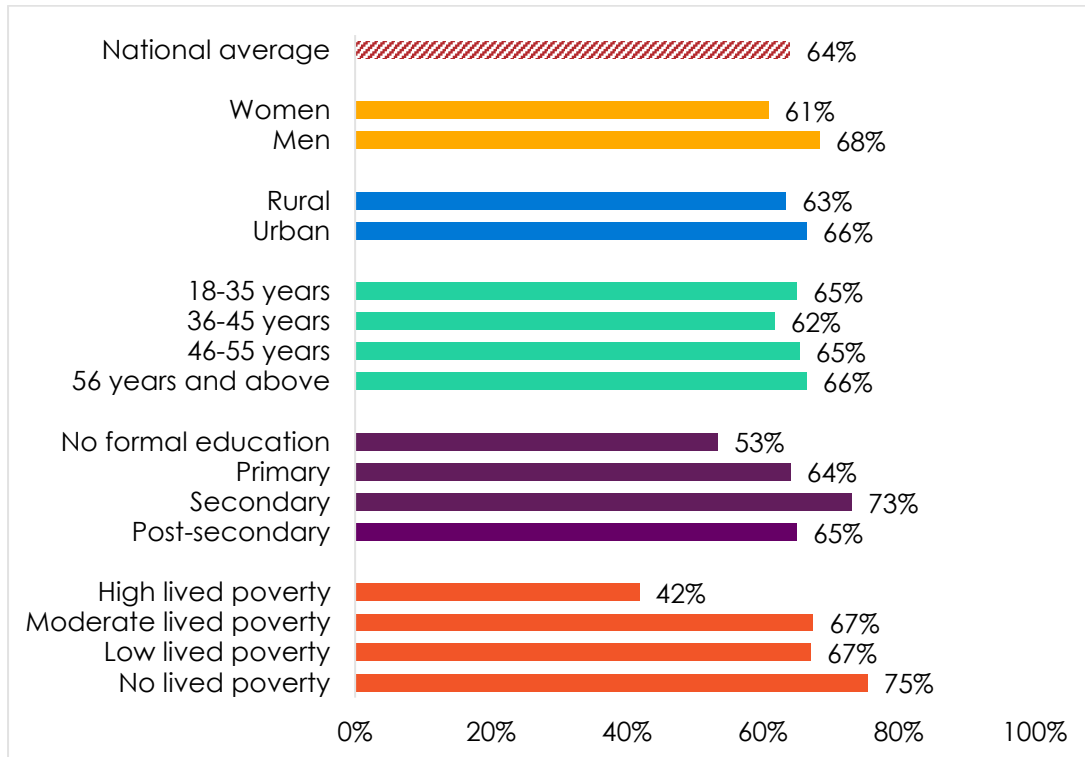
Respondents who are aware of climate change were asked: Do you think each of the following are doing enough to limit climate change, or do they need to do more, or haven't you heard enough to say: The government? (Respondents who are not aware of climate change are excluded.)

Even though citizens clearly expect their government to do more to fight climate change in the future, most are not critical of its efforts to date: Almost two-thirds (64%) say the government has done a "fairly good" or "very good" job on climate change (Figure 9).

Men are somewhat more likely to approve of the government's efforts than women (68% vs. 61%). Approval ratings are notably low among respondents with no formal education (53%) and those experiencing high levels of lived poverty² (42%), though these groups also record particularly high levels of "Don't know" responses (31% and 22%, respectively).

² 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 9: Government handling of climate change | by demographic group
 | Tanzania | 2022



Respondents were asked: How well 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? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

Conclusion

Despite the government's National Climate Change Strategy and related plans and initiatives, only one in three Tanzanians are aware of climate change. Awareness is even lower among rural residents, women, and less educated citizens. This suggests that the government still has a long way to go in addressing the most fundamental aspect of the climate change challenge: public awareness.

Among citizens who are climate change aware, overwhelming majorities say that it is making life worse and that the government should do "a lot more" to limit climate change, even at significant economic cost.

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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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, the University of Cape Town, and the University of Malawi provide technical support to the network.

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