



Dispatch No. 872 | 4 October 2024

# Mozambicans see government as failing on key economic issues

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 872 | Nyasha McBride Mpani**

## Summary

Mozambique's economic landscape has undergone significant changes in recent years. The early 2010s saw relative macroeconomic stability and economic growth, fuelled by investments in natural resources and infrastructure. The country's economic outlook began to deteriorate in the mid-2010s, marked by a sharp decline in growth rates and rising fiscal deficits (360 Mozambique, 2023). Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019 exacerbated the situation by severely damaging infrastructure and displacing thousands (World Bank, 2020). The insurgency in the northern region, which began around 2017, further destabilised the national economy by disrupting local markets, displacing communities, and deterring investment (Boyce, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic compounded these difficulties, disrupting trade and contributing to a global economic slowdown. The number of people living in poverty rose from 13.1 million to 18.9 million, largely due to the impact of COVID-19 on families (World Bank, 2024). Despite these setbacks, Mozambique has seen some recovery in recent years. The World Bank (2024) reported a 5% GDP growth rate in 2023, driven by the start of liquid natural gas production at Coral South and a strong performance in agriculture and services.

In 2022, the government declared the adoption of 20 measures to stimulate growth and improve governance, including reductions in corporate income taxes and the introduction of visa exemptions for citizens of low-risk countries. Within three months, the Economic Reforms Office in the Ministry of Economy and Finance announced that 60% of these measures had been implemented (360 Mozambique, 2023).

Findings from Afrobarometer's most recent survey, conducted in late 2022, show that while a majority of Mozambicans believe the country is heading in the right direction, this share has declined significantly over the past decade. Fewer than half of citizens are satisfied with the country's economic situation or their own living conditions, and only half are optimistic that things will improve in the near future. Large majorities give the government failing grades on its management of economic issues.

## 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, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,120 adult Mozambicans in October, November, and December 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 Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

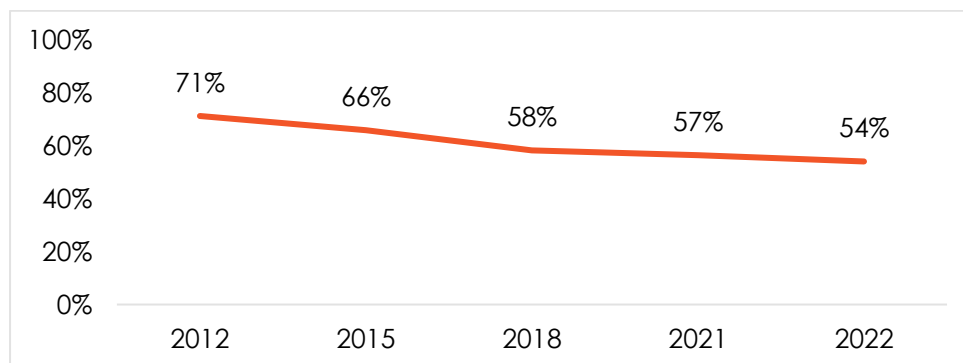
## Key findings

- A narrow majority (54%) of Mozambicans believe the country is heading in “the right direction,” a decline from 71% in 2012.
- Fewer than half (46%) of citizens rate the country's economic condition as “fairly good” or “very good,” while 38% view it as “fairly bad” or “very bad.”
  - Only about one-third (35%) of respondents find their personal living conditions satisfactory.
- Reflecting on the past year, only 22% believe the country's economic condition has improved, while twice as many (45%) think it has worsened.
  - But half (50%) of those surveyed are optimistic that conditions will improve in the next year.
- Most Mozambicans are dissatisfied with the government's handling of key economic issues, including keeping prices stable (79%), creating jobs and narrowing income gaps (both 76%), and improving living standards of the poor (74%).
  - Seven in 10 citizens (71%) are unhappy with the government's overall management of the economy.

## Overall direction of the country

Mozambicans have become increasingly pessimistic about the country's overall direction: Only a slim majority (54%) believe the country is heading in the right direction, continuing a steady decline from 71% in 2012 (Figure 1).

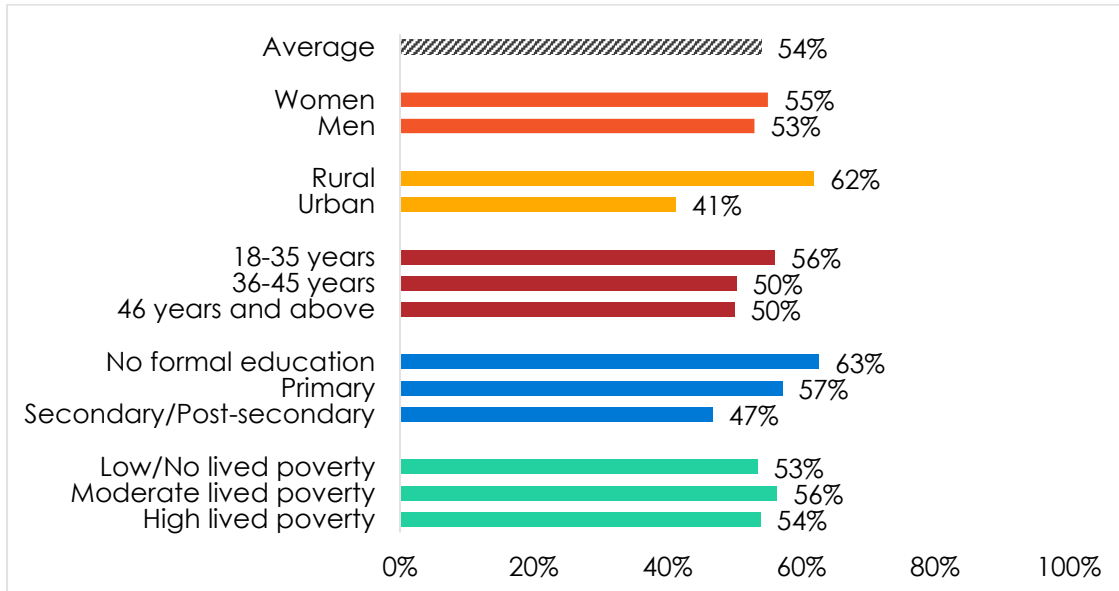
**Figure 1: Country going in the right direction | Mozambique | 2012-2022**



**Respondents were asked:** *Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction? (% who say “right direction”)*

Perceptions of the country's overall direction vary across demographic groups. Rural residents (62%) and those with no formal education (63%) are more likely to display optimism about the economy's trajectory, while only 41% of urban dwellers and 47% of individuals with secondary or post-secondary education feel the country is on the right track (Figure 2). Young respondents (aged 18-35) are slightly more positive (56%) than older generations (50%).

**Figure 2: Country going in the right direction** | by demographic group  
 | Mozambique | 2022



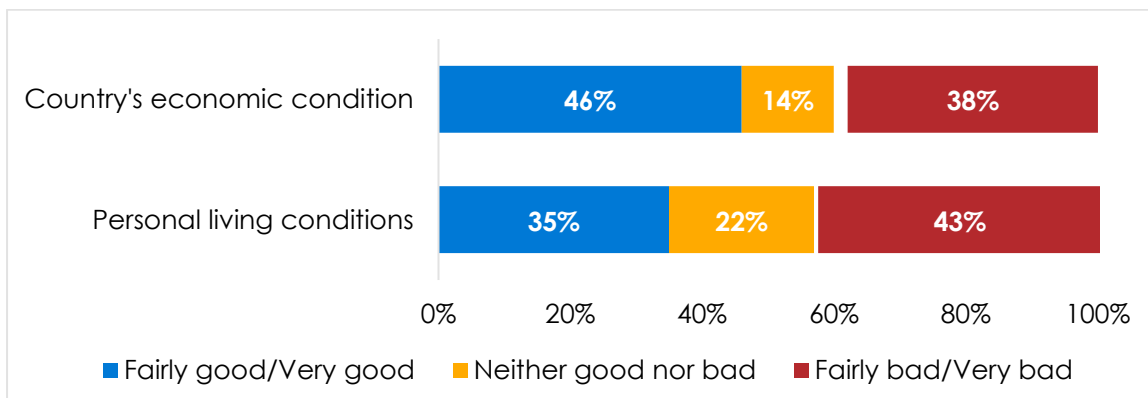
**Respondents were asked:** Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction? (% who say "right direction")

### Country's economic condition and personal living conditions

Mozambicans are less than enthusiastic in their economic outlook, but there are notable differences between their perceptions of the country's economic condition and their assessments of their own living conditions (Figure 3).

A plurality (46%) rate the country's economic condition as "fairly good" or "very good," while 38% see it as "fairly bad" or "very bad." In contrast, citizens are more likely to be negative about their personal living conditions, with only 35% judging them positively while a larger proportion (43%) view them as unsatisfactory. An additional 22% hold a neutral stance regarding their personal living conditions.

**Figure 3: Country's economic condition and personal living conditions**  
 | Mozambique | 2022



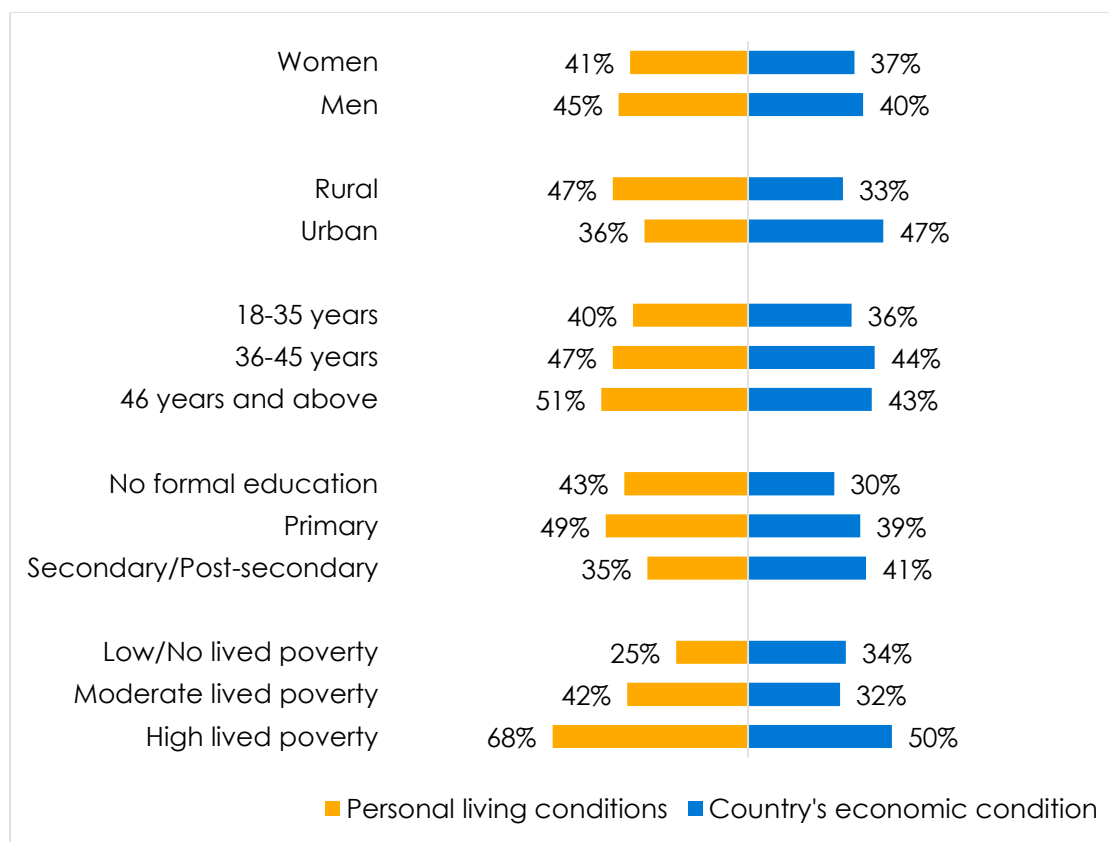
**Respondents were asked:** In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? Your own present living conditions?

Mozambicans experiencing high lived poverty<sup>1</sup> are the most critical, with half (50%) rating the country's economic condition negatively and two-thirds (68%) expressing dissatisfaction with their personal living conditions (Figure 4). In contrast, only one-fourth (25%) of the country's well-off citizens see their own economic situation in a negative light.

Negative perceptions of the country's economy are more common among urban residents (47%) than their rural counterparts (33%), but the latter are more likely to be dissatisfied with their living conditions than the former (47% vs. 36%).

Young respondents are less negative than their elders in their assessments of both the economy and their own living conditions.

**Figure 4: Negative assessments of country's economic condition and personal living conditions** | by demographic group | Mozambique | 2022

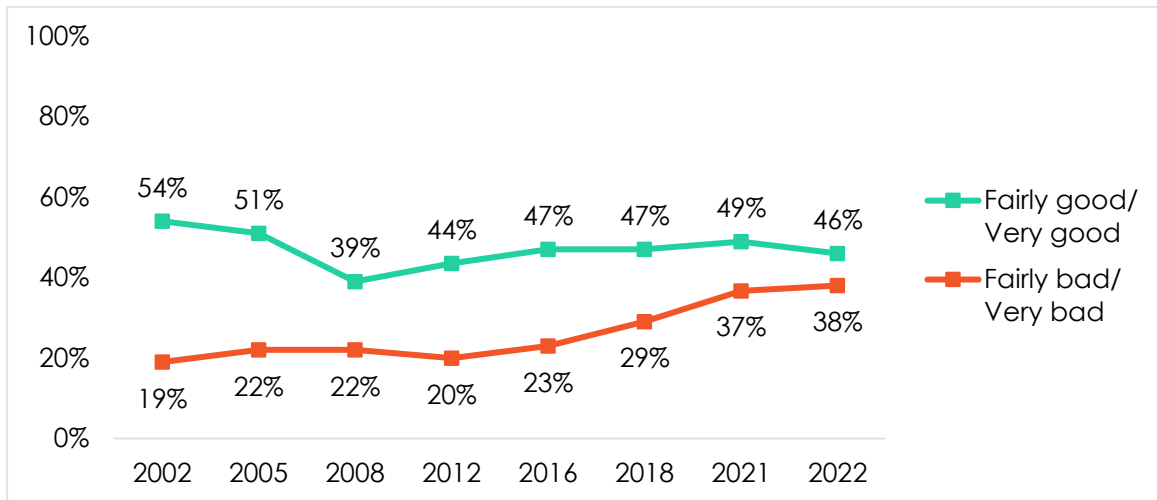


**Respondents were asked:** In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? Your own present living conditions? (% who say "fairly bad" or "very bad")

Mozambicans' positive assessments of the country's economic condition have hovered at close to half of the sample in recent survey rounds. But in the decade since 2012, the share of those casting negative judgements about the economy has almost doubled (from 20% to 38%) (Figure 5).

<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 past year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

**Figure 5: Country's economic condition** | Mozambique | 2002-2022

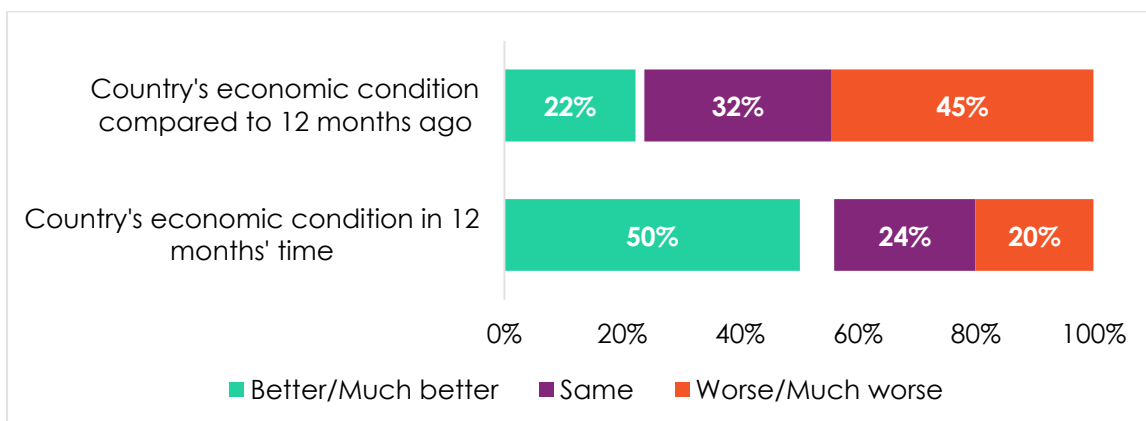


**Respondents were asked:** *In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?*

Mozambicans have contrasting views on the economy's recent past and near future. Compared to 12 months ago, only one-fifth (22%) feel it is doing "better" or "much better" now, while twice as many people (45%) believe it is "worse" or "much worse" (Figure 6). About one-third (32%) think it remained the same.

Looking ahead, half (50%) of those surveyed expect the country's economic condition to improve over the coming year, whereas only 20% anticipate a deterioration and 24% foresee no change.

**Figure 6: Economic conditions – retrospective and prospective outlook** | Mozambique | 2022



**Respondents were asked:**

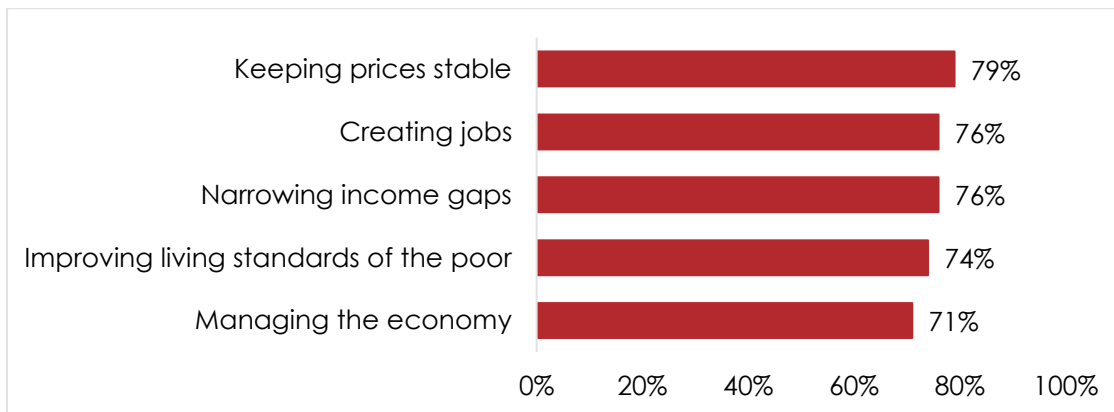
*Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?  
 Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?*

### Government performance on key economic issues

Citizens overwhelmingly express dissatisfaction with the government's performance on key economic issues. A strong majority believe the government has performed "fairly badly" or

"very badly" on keeping prices stable (79%), indicating widespread frustration with inflation and the rising cost of living (Figure 7). Similarly, more than seven in 10 respondents are critical of the government's efforts to narrow income gaps and create jobs (both 76%), improve the living standards of the poor (74%), and manage the economy (71%), reflecting a general sense of discontent with its economic policies.

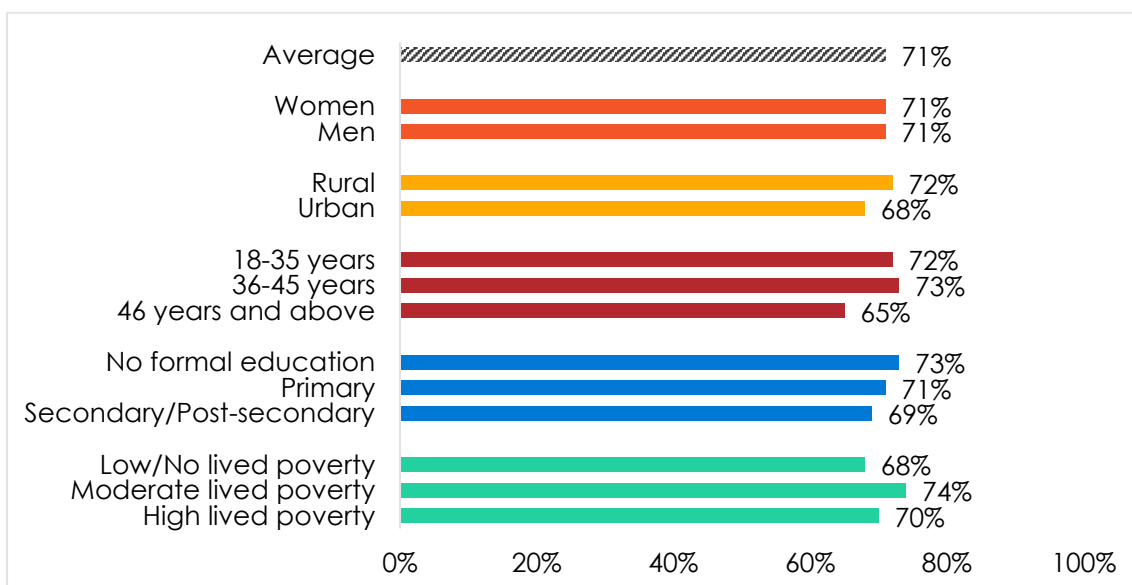
**Figure 7: Negative ratings of government performance** | Mozambique | 2022



**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: Keeping prices stable? Creating jobs? Improving living standards of the poor? Narrowing gaps between rich and poor? Managing the economy? (% who say "fairly badly" or "very badly")

Negative assessments of the government's handling of the economy are prevalent across key demographic groups (Figure 8). Urban residents (68%), older citizens (65%), and the most educated respondents (69%) are somewhat less likely to express dissatisfaction than their various counterparts.

**Figure 8: Negative assessments of government's economic management**  
| 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: Managing the economy? (% who say "fairly badly" or "very badly")

## Conclusion

Public sentiment in Mozambique reflects growing frustration with the country's direction and widespread dissatisfaction with economic conditions. While optimists outnumber pessimists when it comes to expectations for the future, the government faces a tall order in addressing citizens' concerns about inflation, unemployment, inequality, poverty, and overall economic management.

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