

Time to clean up our act: Africans demand more government action on environmental protection, regulation of natural resource extraction

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 896 | Alfred Kwadzo Torsu and Carolyn Logan

Summary

Pollution and environmental degradation pose significant risks to human health, economic growth, biodiversity and ecosystem survival, and community sustainability. Pollution of air (UNEP, 2021) and water (WHO, 2024), inadequate management of human waste (UNEP, 2018; Gutberlet & Uddin, 2017), trash and the plague of plastic waste (OECD, 2022), and deforestation and destruction of habitats (Manu, Chen, Hoang, & Leu, 2024) all threaten lives and livelihoods across Africa and can conspire to hold back both human and economic development. Pollution and environmental degradation can have disproportionate impacts on poor and vulnerable populations (UNEA, 2018).



The essential, cross-cutting impact of environmental protection is reflected in the fact that preventing pollution and effectively managing resources appear repeatedly throughout the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Explicit environmental targets appear under goals of clean water and sanitation (SDG6), affordable and clean energy (SDG7), sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), responsible consumption and production (SDG12), climate action (SDG13), life below water (SDG14), and life on land (SDG15). Pollution and resource management also have implications for ending poverty (SDG1), stopping hunger (SDG2), and other goals (UNEP, 2023; United Nations, 2015).

Lack of regulation or enforcement, inadequate infrastructure, and poverty and weak economies leave many Africans especially susceptible to the ravages of pollution and environmental degradation. The State of Global Air, for example, estimates that the death rate in Africa associated with air pollution is nearly twice the global average (Health Effects Institute, 2022), while the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) reports that water-borne disease leads to 115 deaths every hour on the continent. Plastics contaminate water sources, provide breeding grounds for insects, and destroy habitat, with severe implications for both human and animal health (WHO, 2023). And while Africa is home to 65% of the world's uncultivated arable land (African Development Bank, 2017), the continent faces an environmental crisis driven in many cases by unsustainable and poorly managed exploitation of its natural resources, exacerbated by changing climate patterns.

Resource extraction is a particularly complex area of policy and action with profound environmental consequences. As the world transitions to renewable energy, electric vehicles, and artificial intelligence systems, there is a race to secure the minerals that are necessary to drive these innovations. According to the International Monetary Fund (2024), sub-Saharan Africa holds approximately 30% of the world's reserves of these essential minerals, particularly copper and cobalt, which are vital for the green transition (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023). Revenue from natural resource extraction is a critical component of the gross domestic product of many African countries. But as demand for mineral

resources grows, so too do concerns about environmental costs, especially for local communities, as well as equity in distribution of the proceeds (Manu et. al, 2024).

Some citizens, and countries, are taking action. Nobel Laureate Wangari Mathai led the women of Kenya's Green Belt Movement in planting millions of trees. Nearly three dozen countries have banned or limited the use of plastic bags and single-use plastics, although some struggle to implement these edicts (Greenpeace, 2020). Local activists across the continent have taken aim at preventing and responding to climate change (Belanger, 2021). And as we write, Ghanaians are marching in anti-*galamsey* protests – described as an “environmental prayer walk” – against informal gold mining that is linked to chemical pollution and environmental destruction (Reuters, 2024).

For the first time, Afrobarometer included in its Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) a module of questions on environmental governance and natural resource extraction. The findings reported here reveal that African publics clearly share these global concerns about the impacts of pollution, environmental mismanagement, and resource extraction on their communities. Large majorities say pollution is a serious problem in their communities and offer poor ratings of their governments' performance in addressing this problem. A resounding 78% urge their governments to do more to limit pollution and protect the environment.

When it comes to natural resource extraction, too, African publics demand more, especially tighter regulation by their governments, greater voice in resource extraction, and a fairer share of the proceeds for local communities. But we can also see that Africans struggle with the trade-offs that many perceive between promoting economic growth and protecting the environment. They are divided on whether the benefits of resource extraction outweigh the costs, and higher-than-usual proportions are unwilling or unable to offer an opinion on this difficult question. But if governments can address some of the key negatives with tighter regulation, greater public voice, and fairer revenue sharing – boosting the benefits while reducing the costs – it could shift the balance of public sentiment on this important issue.

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. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This 39-country analysis is based on 53,444 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Key findings

Africans are very concerned about **pollution and the condition of their local environment:**

- On average across 39 countries, two-thirds (66%) of Africans say environmental pollution is a serious problem in their communities; urban residents are especially concerned (72%).

- Citizens cite trash disposal, including plastics, most frequently (27%) as the leading environmental problem in their communities, followed by deforestation (19%) and water pollution (17%).
 - Deforestation (28%) stands out as the leading environmental concern in rural areas, while trash disposal (37%) tops the list in urban communities.
 - There is high variability across countries: Trash disposal is the top problem in 20 countries, while deforestation leads in 13, human waste disposal is the priority in five, and water pollution in three.
- Three-fourths (76%) of Africans say plastic bags are a major source pollution in their country.

They would like to see their **governments taking more – and more effective – action on environmental protection:**

- Almost half (46%) of respondents say ordinary citizens bear the primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping communities clean, but nearly as many believe that the government – either national (24%) or local (19%) – should take the lead. Only a handful assign a primary role to business and industry (5%).
- On average, just four in 10 Africans (40%) say their governments are doing a good job of protecting the environment, while 51% offer a negative review. And a resounding majority (78%) want their governments to do more.
- Citizens are evenly split on whether the government should prioritise protecting the environment even if it costs jobs and slows economic development (45%) or should focus on creating jobs even at the expense of environmental protection (45%).

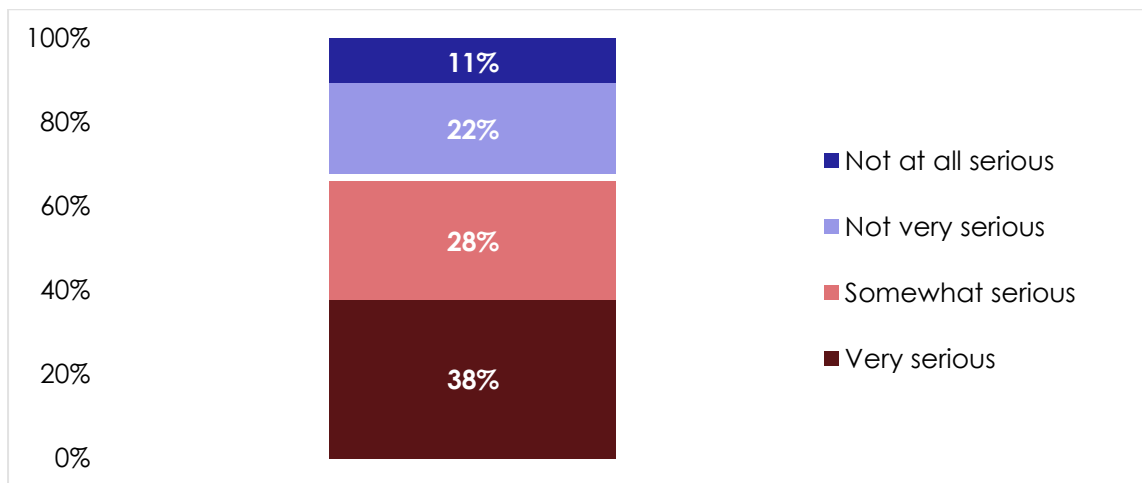
Africans are divided – or in many cases uncertain – about the benefits and costs of natural resource extraction and how they are distributed:

- A plurality of 45% say the benefits of natural resource extraction, such as jobs and revenue, outweigh the costs, such as pollution. But 38% believe the costs are greater, and a significant minority (17%) are undecided on this issue.
- Three-fourths (76%) of Africans want their governments to reduce the negative impacts by tightening regulations on natural resource extraction.
- A slim majority (51%) say ordinary citizens have a voice in decisions about resource extraction near their communities, but 36% disagree and 13% are unsure.
- People are evenly divided on the question of whether local communities do (41%) or do not (43%) receive a fair share of revenues from natural resource extraction.

Pollution: The scope of the problem

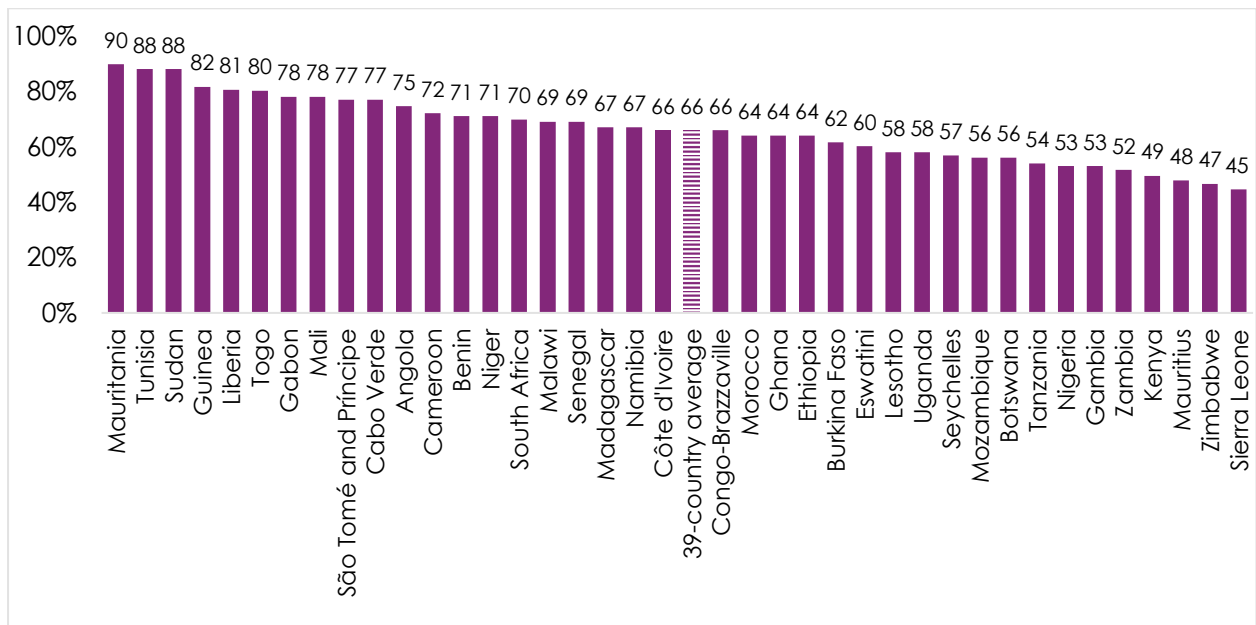
On average across 39 countries, sizeable majorities share global concerns about pollution and its impacts on their lives and societies, identifying pollution as a significant problem in their own communities. Two out of three (66%) consider pollution a “somewhat serious” (28%) or “very serious” (38%) problem in their communities (Figure 1). This includes overwhelming majorities in Mauritania (90%), Sudan (88%), and Tunisia (88%). The perception that pollution is a critical social problem is a minority view in only four countries: Kenya (49%), Mauritius (48%), Zimbabwe (47%), and Sierra Leone (45%) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Extent of pollution problem in local communities | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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?

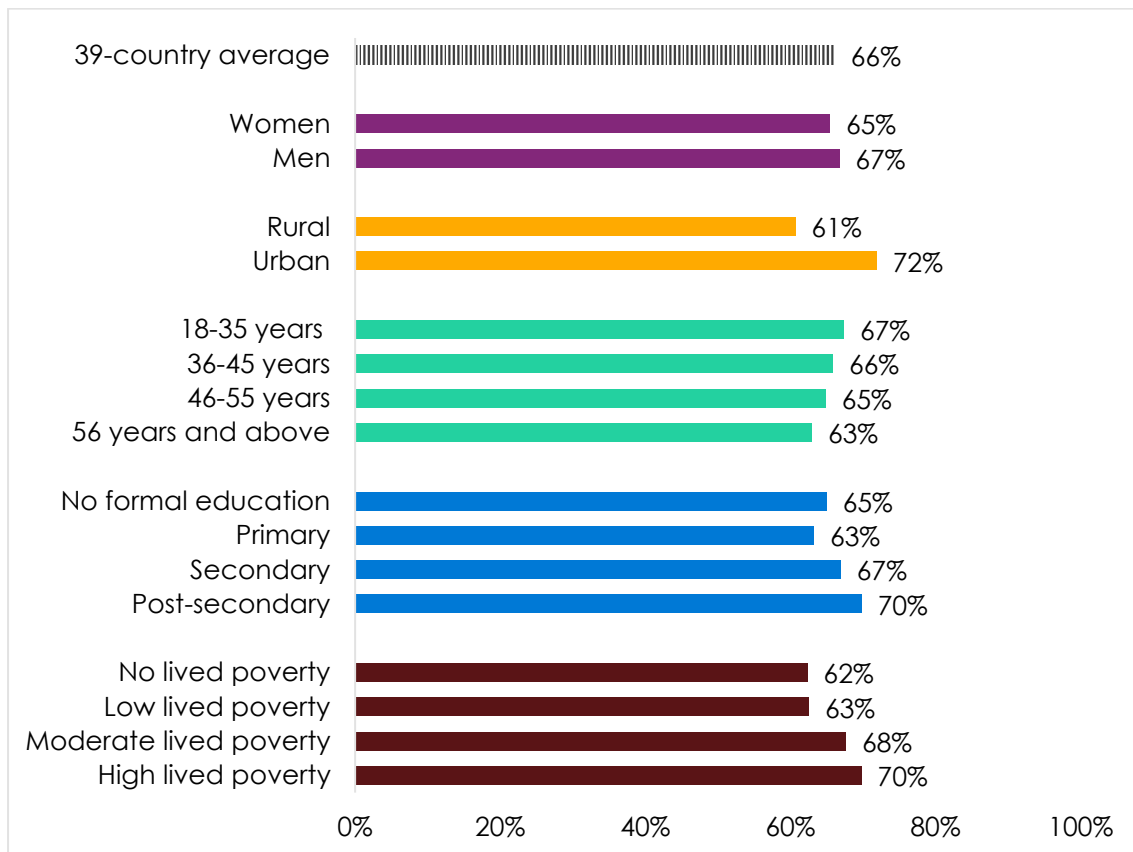
Figure 2: Pollution seen as a serious problem in the community | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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”)

On average, urban residents (72%) are more likely to view pollution as a serious problem than those in rural areas (61%) (Figure 3). A slightly larger proportion of young adults aged 18-35 (67%) and 36-45 (66%) consider pollution a serious issue compared to those aged 56 and above (63%). Additionally, people with post-secondary education (70%), as well as those experiencing higher levels of lived poverty¹ (70%), are more likely to see environmental pollution as a serious problem than those with primary schooling or less (63%-65%) and wealthier individuals (62%).

Figure 3: Pollution seen as a serious problem in the community | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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”)

Asked what they consider the most important environmental issue in their communities, about one in four respondents (27%) identify trash disposal, including plastic waste, followed by deforestation (19%), pollution of water sources (17%), poor sanitation or human waste management (17%), and air pollution (11%) (Figure 4).

Urban and rural populations contend with pollution problems in distinct but interconnected ways. Both trash disposal and sanitation issues are higher priority in urban than in rural areas

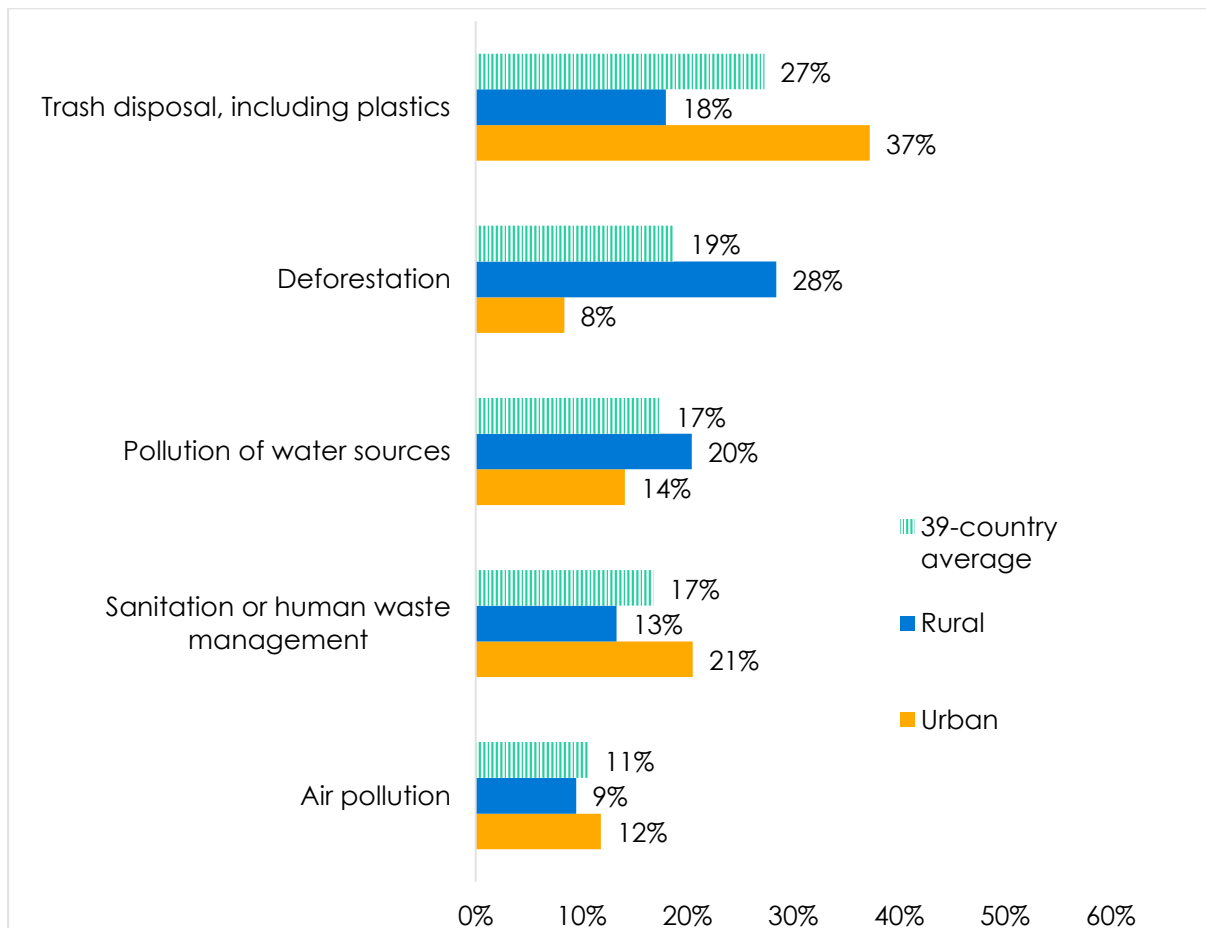
¹ Afrobarometer’s Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents’ levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty,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

(37% vs. 18% for trash/plastics, 21% vs. 13% for sanitation). Conversely, deforestation (28% in rural areas vs. 8% in urban areas) and water pollution (20% vs. 14%) are the more dominant concerns in rural areas.

But even within urban and rural areas, the problems people prioritise differ significantly based on income level as well (Figure 5). For example, deforestation, the highest-priority problem in rural areas, is much more important to the rural poor (30%) than to those who are better off (17%). The same is true for water pollution: 25% of the rural poor identify it as the top priority, compared to just 15% of more economically secure rural inhabitants. Wealthier people in rural areas are more similar to their urban counterparts in that they prioritise trash/plastics (28%) over other issues.

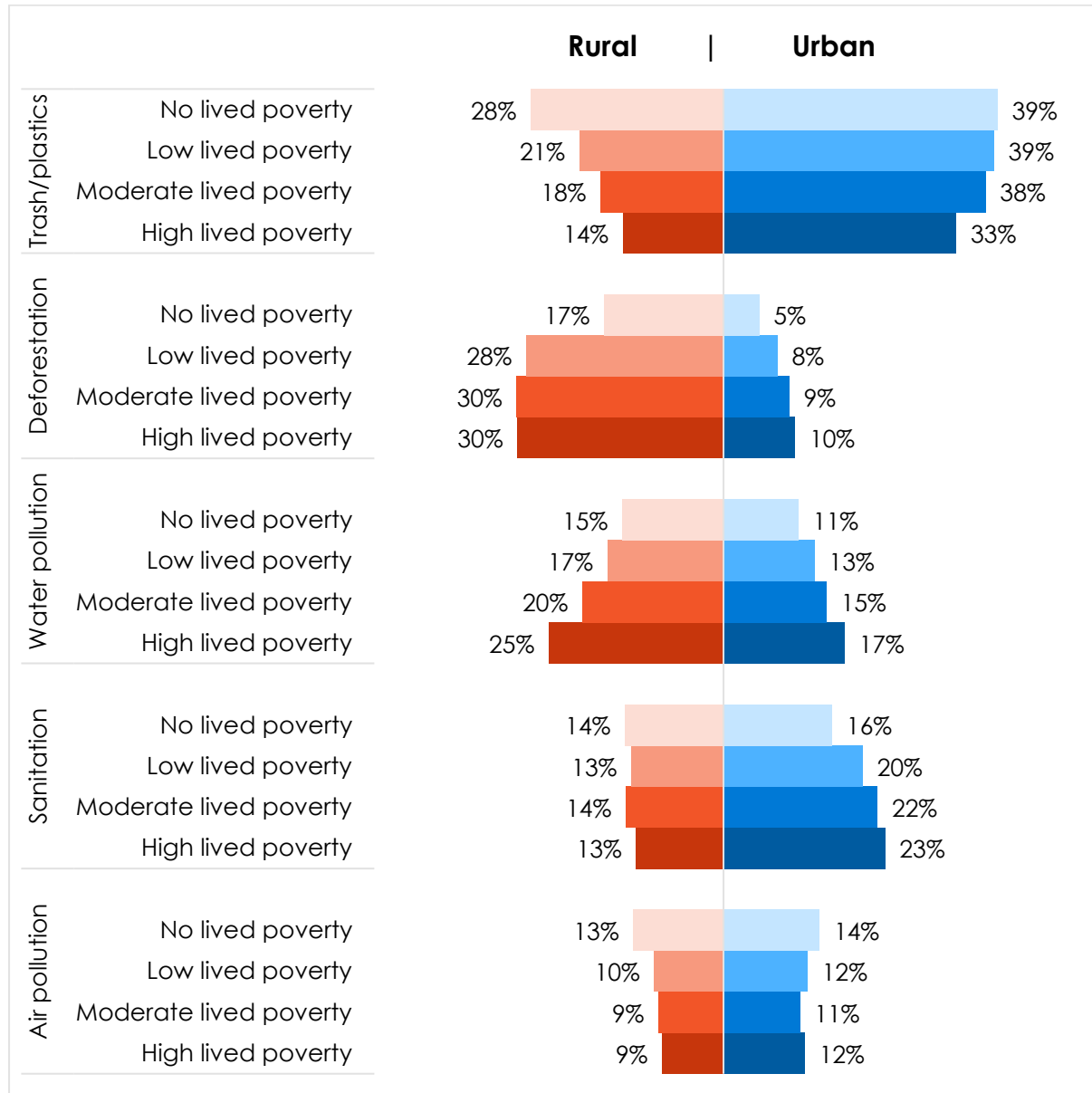
In urban areas, wealth differences are less pronounced but still important. Urbanites of all income levels place the highest priority on trash/plastics, but the wealthiest (39%) put more weight on this than the poorest urban dwellers (33%). Those who are economically less secure put higher priority on sanitation (23% among the poorest, 16% among those who are better off) and water pollution (17% vs. 11%).

Figure 4: Most important environmental issue in the community | by urban-rural location | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

Figure 5: Most important environmental issue in the community | by urban-rural location and poverty level | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

Trash/plastics disposal is identified as the biggest problem in 20 of 39 countries, cited by fully two-thirds (67%) of Batswana (Table 1). Deforestation ranks first in another 13 countries, led by Malawi (62%). It is also a prominent concern in several Sahelian countries – including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger – in a region where the Sahara Desert has expanded by approximately 10% over the past century (Mulhern, 2021).

Sanitation is the leading issue in five countries, cited by 37% of Gabonese, and water pollution is the top priority in three more, mentioned by 37% in Sudan. Air pollution ranks as a lower priority in most countries, although it is the highest priority in Senegal (24%).

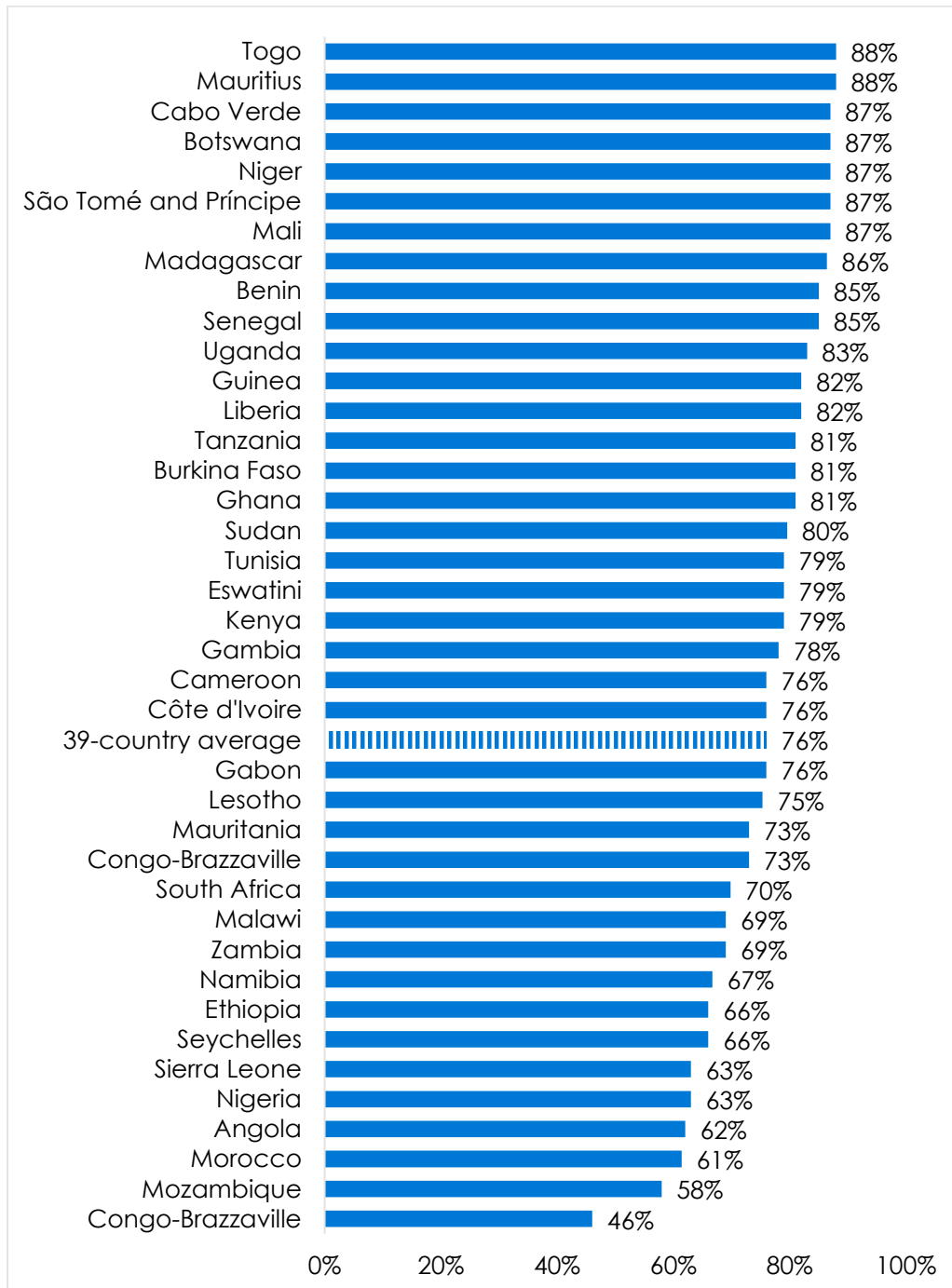
Table 1: Most important environmental issue | 39 countries | 2021/2023

	Trash/plastics disposal	Deforestation	Pollution of water sources	Sanitation	Air pollution
Angola	30%	7%	24%	8%	18%
Benin	24%	25%	12%	28%	6%
Botswana	67%	7%	4%	9%	6%
Burkina Faso	21%	24%	19%	18%	12%
Cabo Verde	48%	4%	11%	20%	7%
Cameroon	22%	23%	19%	23%	8%
Congo-Brazzaville	22%	21%	19%	20%	15%
Côte d'Ivoire	17%	27%	19%	23%	12%
Eswatini	44%	5%	18%	10%	8%
Ethiopia	10%	28%	24%	24%	7%
Gabon	22%	14%	18%	37%	6%
Gambia	28%	21%	12%	17%	7%
Ghana	31%	11%	16%	26%	6%
Guinea	10%	32%	27%	14%	15%
Kenya	25%	31%	14%	14%	6%
Lesotho	28%	14%	28%	9%	12%
Liberia	31%	6%	15%	28%	16%
Madagascar	11%	40%	25%	10%	8%
Malawi	13%	62%	13%	6%	2%
Mali	17%	32%	23%	10%	15%
Mauritania	20%	6%	27%	26%	19%
Mauritius	45%	2%	10%	6%	18%
Morocco	14%	3%	16%	30%	22%
Mozambique	17%	24%	20%	12%	13%
Namibia	29%	19%	10%	17%	12%
Niger	18%	36%	12%	16%	10%
Nigeria	27%	6%	15%	26%	10%
São Tomé and Príncipe	45%	8%	20%	14%	7%
Senegal	19%	15%	18%	15%	24%
Seychelles	55%	3%	5%	5%	8%
Sierra Leone	22%	14%	18%	30%	5%
South Africa	41%	5%	12%	16%	10%
Sudan	13%	3%	37%	23%	22%
Tanzania	33%	33%	13%	8%	4%
Togo	28%	23%	15%	19%	14%
Tunisia	38%	4%	25%	14%	11%
Uganda	22%	48%	11%	10%	5%
Zambia	29%	24%	17%	6%	8%
Zimbabwe	30%	23%	16%	10%	2%
39-country average	27%	19%	17%	17%	11%
	Highest priority problem		Second	Third	

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

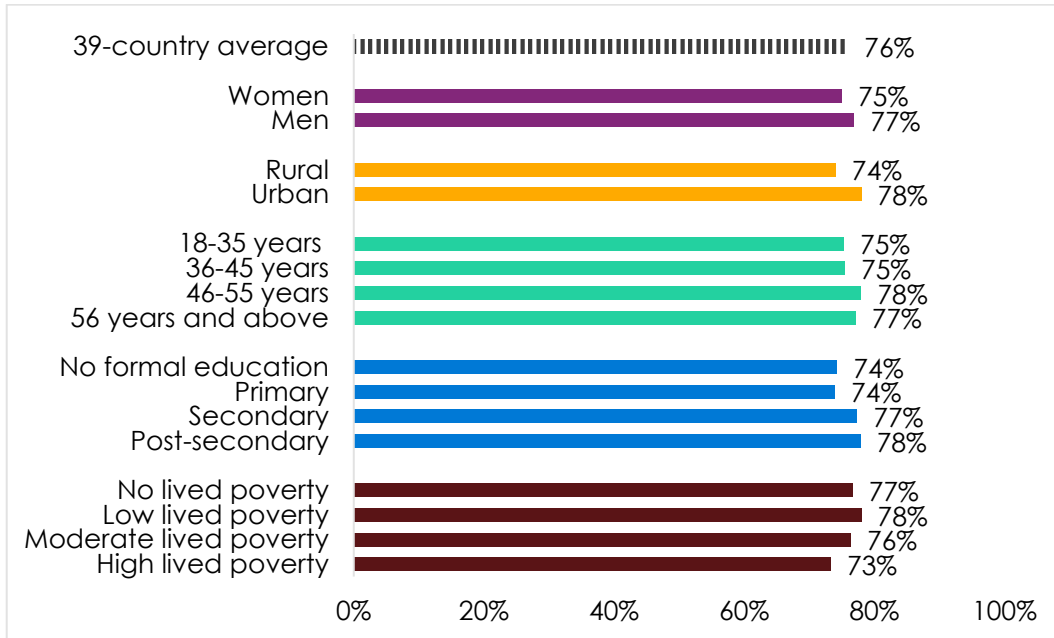
The emphasis on trash disposal and plastic waste is reinforced by the finding that three-quarters (76%) of Africans regard plastic bags as a major source of pollution in their country (Figure 6). More than 85% hold this view in Togo (88%), Mauritius (88%), Cabo Verde (87%), Botswana (87%), Niger (87%), São Tomé and Príncipe (87%), Mali (87%), and Madagascar (86%). Congo-Brazzaville (46%) is the only country where this concern is not shared by a majority of citizens. Large majorities share this perspective across all demographic groups (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Plastic bags seen as a major source of pollution | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Figure 7: Plastic bags seen as a major source of pollution | by demographic group
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023

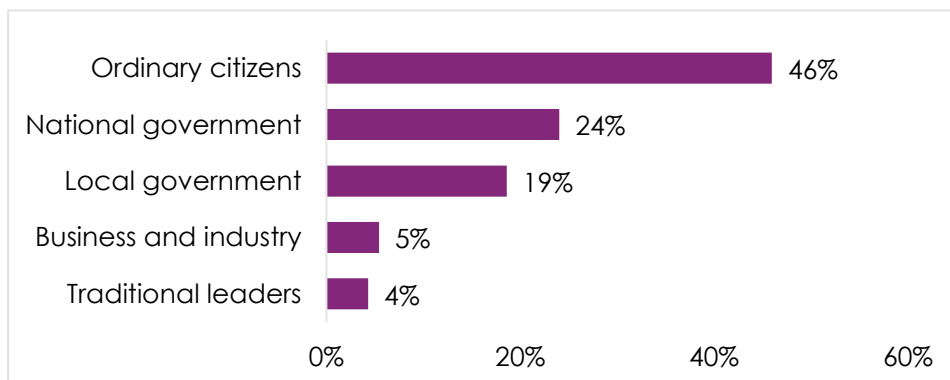


Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Plastic bags are a major source of pollution in this country. (% who “agree” or “strongly agree”)

Protecting the environment

On average, Africans are relatively evenly divided on the question of who has primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping their communities clean. Nearly half believe efforts to tackle environmental pollution should be led by ordinary citizens (46%), but almost as many (43%) assign this role to the government – either the national government (24%) or local government (19%) (Figure 8). Only 5% believe business and industry should play the leading role, and traditional leaders (4%) are also not considered key players on this issue.

Figure 8: Who should be responsible for reducing environmental pollution?
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023



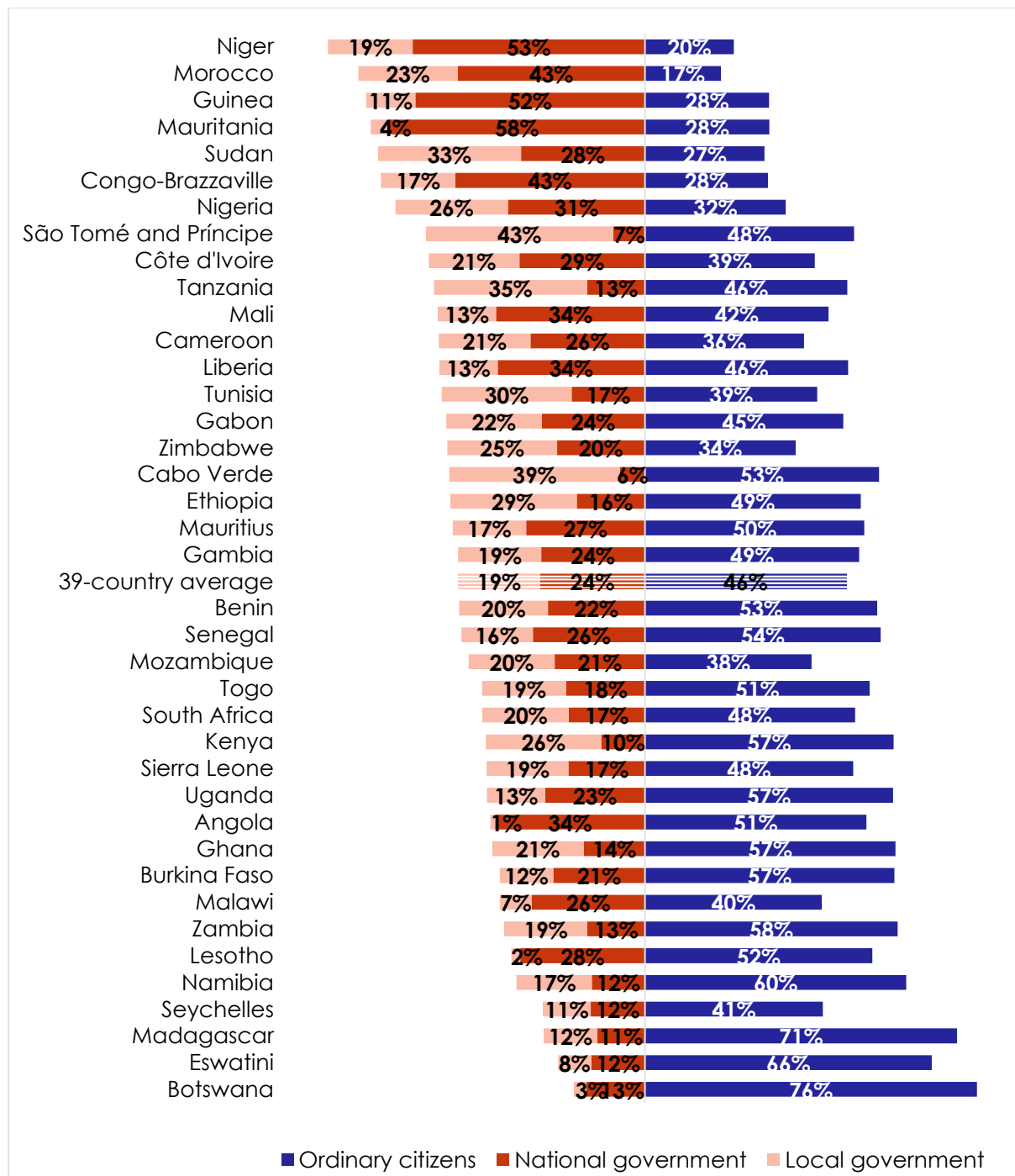
Respondents were asked: Who do you think should have primary responsibility for reducing pollution and keeping your community clean?

But across countries, citizens have starkly different perspectives on the responsibility for protecting their local environments (Figure 9). Three-quarters (76%) of Botswana would take on this task themselves, while just 16% would look to local (3%) or national (13%) governments.

In contrast, Moroccans (17% citizens, 65% government) and Nigeriens (20% citizens, 72% government) are far more inclined to put the burden of responsibility on their governments.

Only in Seychelles (21%), Morocco (12%), and Tunisia (12%) do more than one in 10 identify business and industry as the responsible party, and traditional leaders top 10% only in Malawi (21%), Sierra Leone (14%), Lesotho (13%), and Mozambique (10%) (not shown).

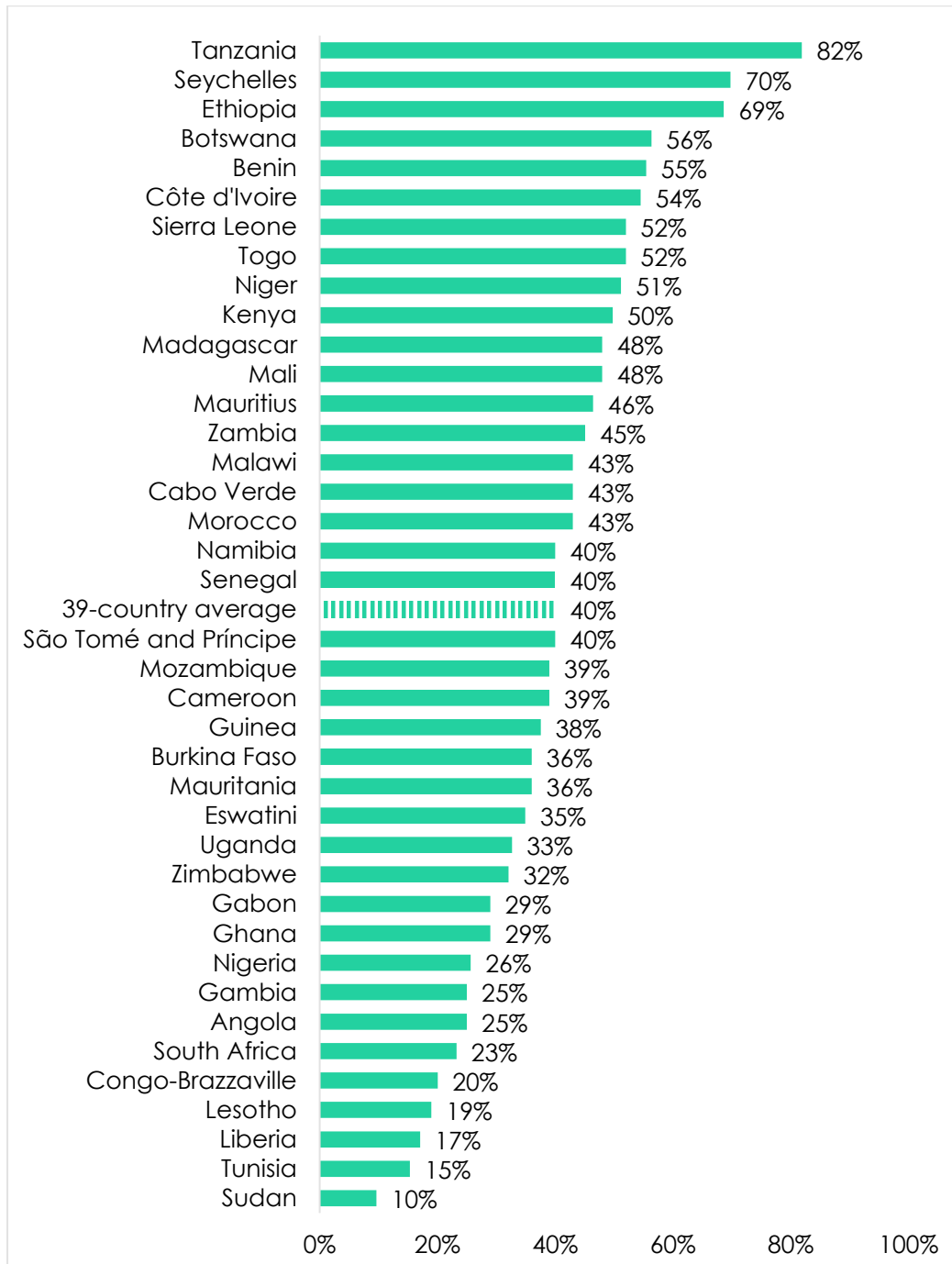
Figure 9: Who should be responsible for reducing environmental pollution?
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

Unfortunately, a slim majority (52%) do not think their governments are doing an effective job of managing pollution and environmental protection issues, compared to just 40% who offer a positive review. On the one hand, large majorities in Tanzania (82%), Seychelles (70%), and Ethiopia (69%) report that their governments are effective on this issue, but fewer than one in five say the same in Lesotho (19%), Liberia (17%), Tunisia (15%), and Sudan (10%) (Figure 10).

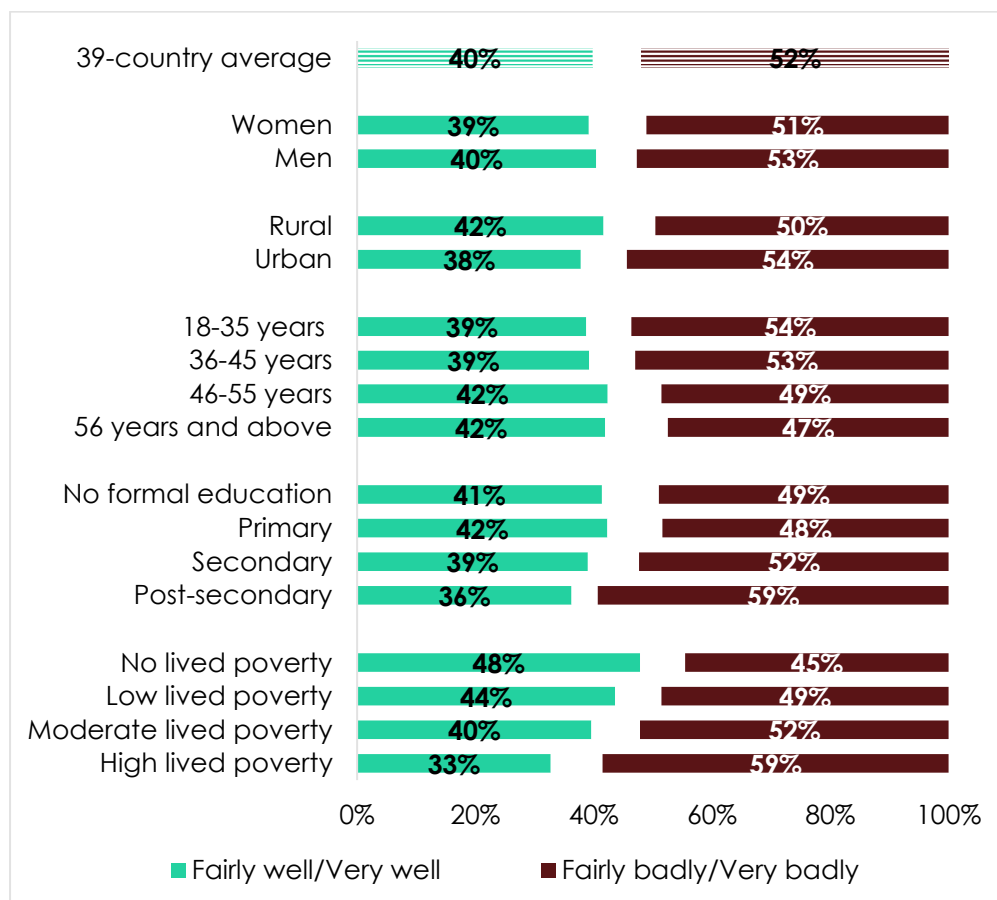
Figure 10: Government performance in reducing pollution and protecting the environment | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

We observe only minor variations in government performance based on gender, urban-rural residence, and age (Figure 11). However, a notable gap exists between those experiencing high levels of poverty and those with greater economic means: The poorest individuals are significantly more likely to give their governments a negative rating on environmental performance (59%) than those with greater financial stability (45%). In addition, those with higher educational status are considerably more likely to offer negative assessments of government performance on environmental governance.

Figure 11: Government performance in reducing pollution and protecting the environment | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



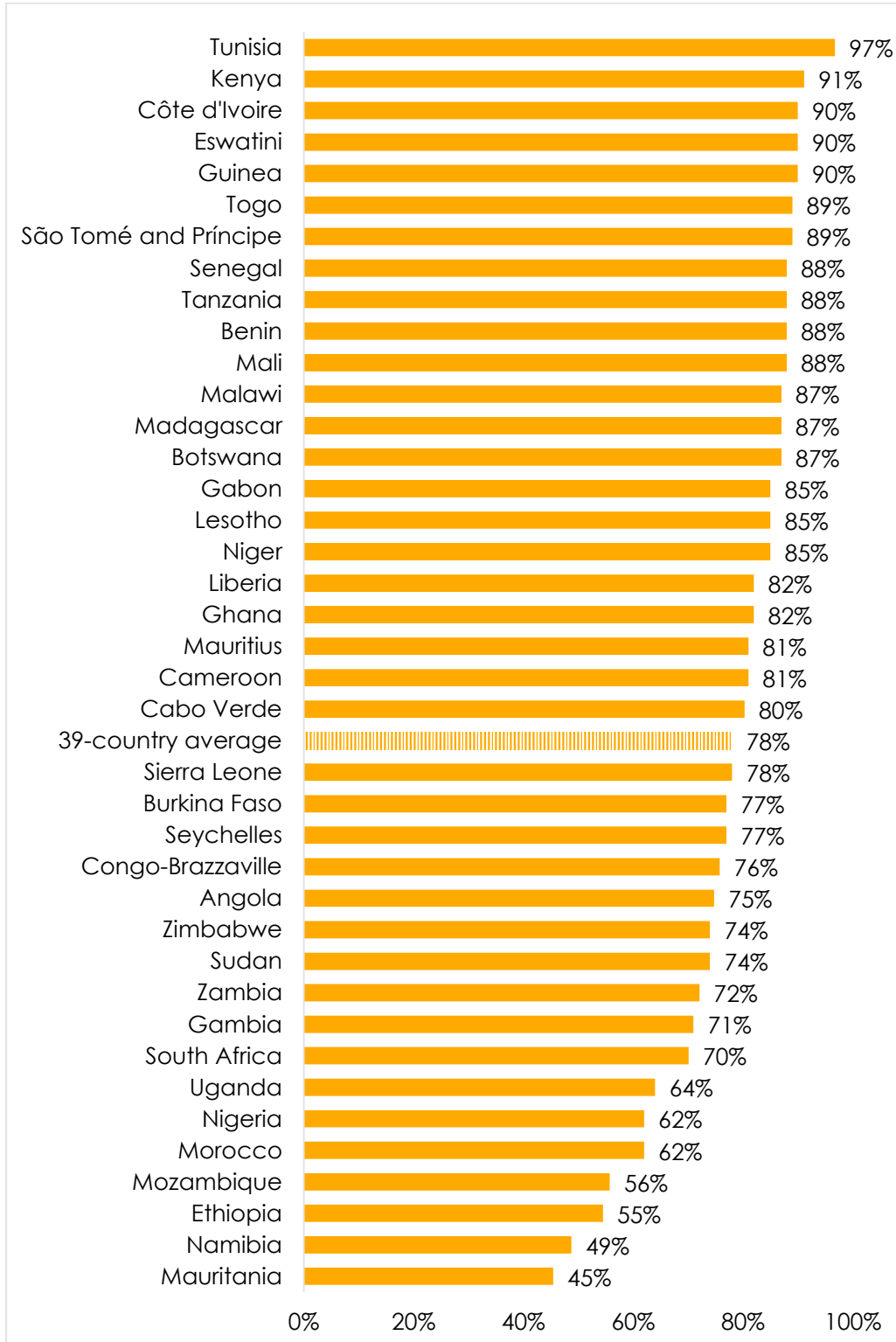
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Reducing pollution and protecting the environment?

Given the widespread perception that pollution and environmental degradation are serious problems in many communities, Africans are clear about their demand for their governments to do more to address these problems. An overwhelming majority (78%) want their governments to do more to limit environmental pollution

This sentiment is nearly universal in Tunisia (97%), and reaches 90% or more in Kenya (91%), Cote d'Ivoire (90%), Eswatini (90%) and Guinea (90%) (Figure 12). The only countries where this position does not receive majority support are Namibia (49%) and Mauritania (45%).

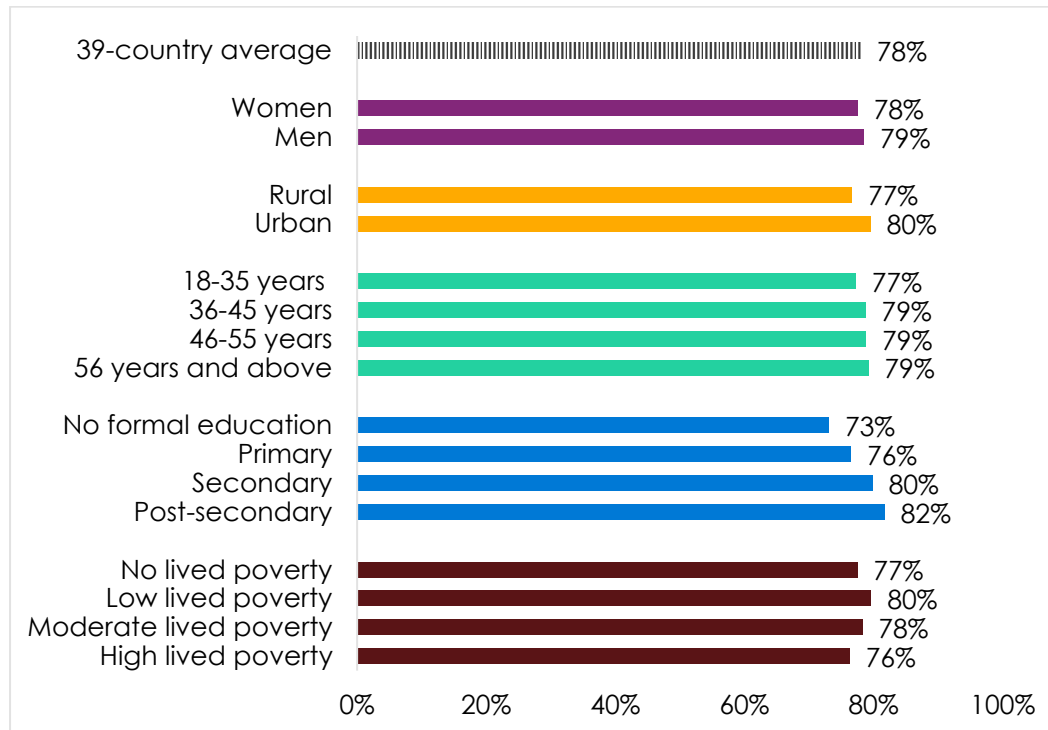
Demographic differences are mostly quite small, although individuals with post-secondary education are significantly more likely to want the government to do more to reduce pollution (82%) than those without formal education (73%) (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Government should do more to limit pollution and protect the environment
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

Figure 13: Government should do more to limit pollution and protect the environment
 | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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? (% who say “much more” or “somewhat more”)*

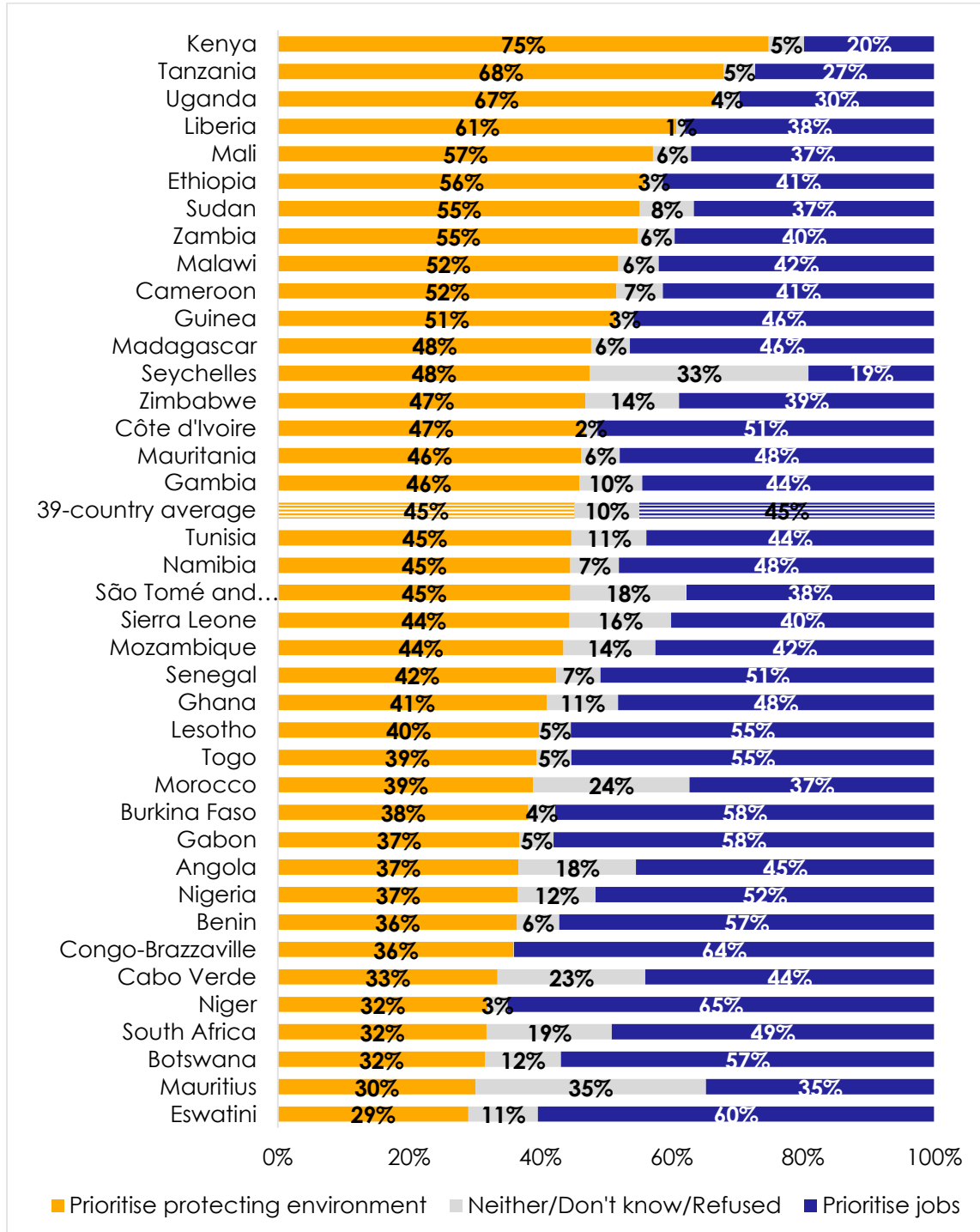
The goal of protecting the environment is sometimes characterised as being in conflict with efforts to maximise economic growth or job creation. An increasing body of evidence suggests that while some sectors may lose jobs due to stronger environmental protections in the short term, green policies can also be a source of jobs and growth (International Labour Organization, 2018). But these long-term gains are not always felt in the local communities where jobs may be lost.

Unemployment is a leading policy issue in many African countries, especially among youth (Ben Saad & Logan, 2024). And as Ghana's anti-*galamsey* protests against the environmentally destructive practice of open-cast mining illustrate, those determined to protect the environment may sometimes find themselves pitted directly against people who are desperately in need of jobs and incomes.

So how do citizens prioritise environmental action by their governments in cases where there may be difficult trade-offs between these goals?

The challenging nature of these questions is reflected in the fact that citizens are evenly divided on this issue: Across 39 countries, 45% of respondents favour environmental protection even if it costs jobs, while an equal number (45%) believe the government should prioritise job creation, even if it comes at the expense of protecting the environment (Figure 14). A majority of respondents in Kenya (75%), Tanzania (68%), Uganda (67%), and Liberia (61%) believe the government should prioritise protecting the environment. In contrast, respondents in Niger (65%), Congo-Brazzaville (64%), and Eswatini (60%) show a strong preference for job creation over environmental protection. In Ghana, 48% favour jobs, while 41% favour environmental protection.

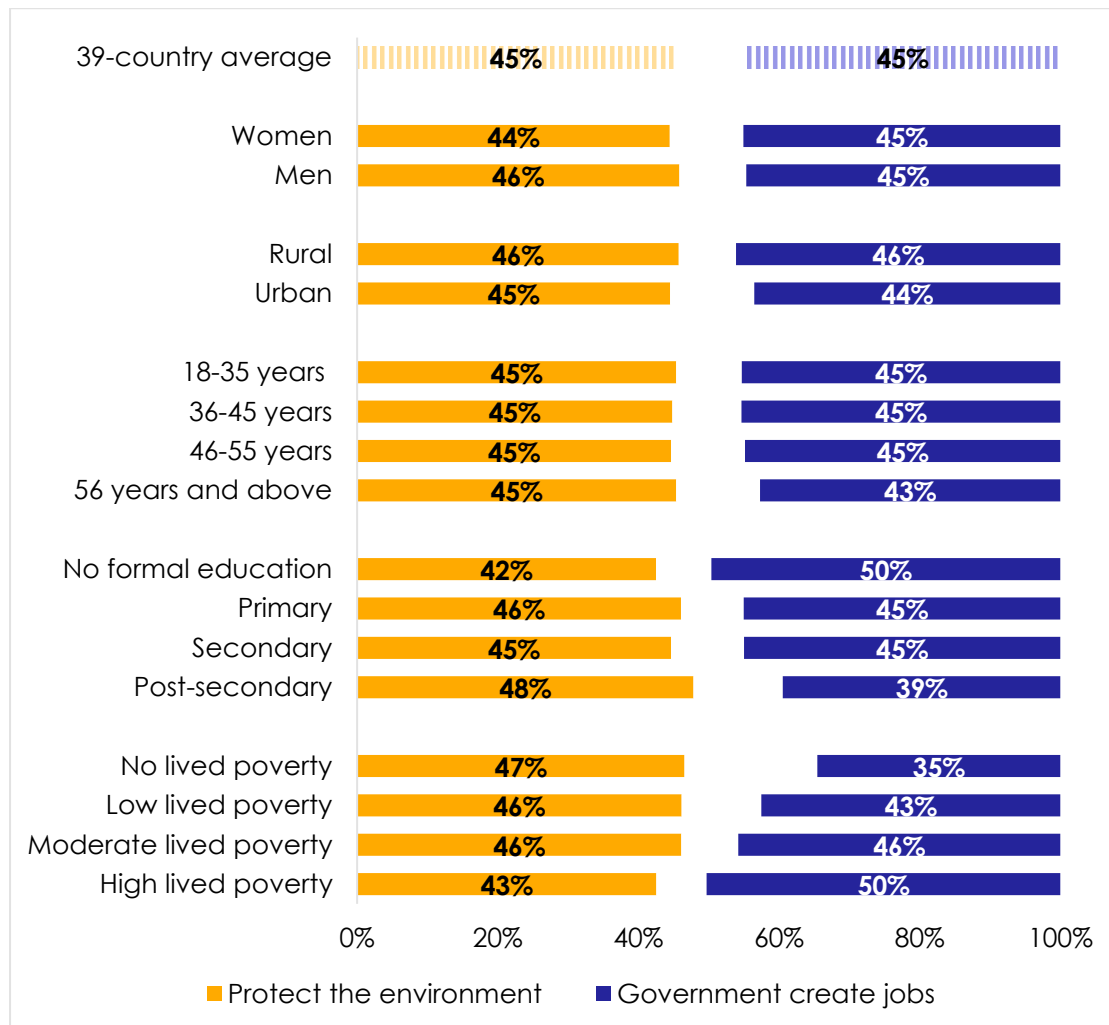
Figure 14: Should government prioritise jobs or the environment? | 39 countries
 | 2021/2023



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)

At the individual level, those with less education are significantly more likely to favour jobs (50%) than the most educated (39%), as are those who face greater economic insecurity (50%) compared to those who are better off (35%) (Figure 15). But even among the poorest, a sizeable minority (43%) still prioritise environmental protection, highlighting the widespread concern about this issue.

Figure 15: Should government prioritise jobs or the environment? | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



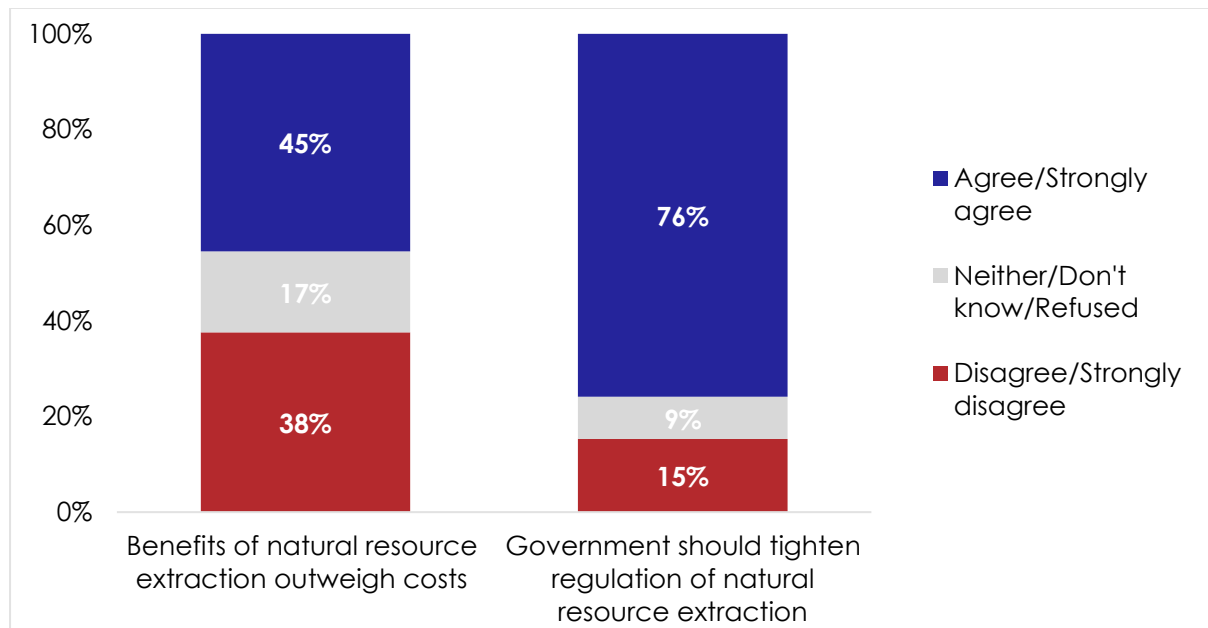
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 (% who “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement)

Natural resource extraction

As noted, resource extraction represents a particularly complex arena of policy and practice. It can be a vital source of revenue and jobs, but also a leading source of environmental degradation, especially in nearby communities, while raising critical issues about who benefits and how revenues are distributed.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that it is an arena in which Africans are closely divided on many issues, and one in which many people find it difficult to decide on a position. This is revealed first in the assessment of the costs vs. benefits of resource extraction. While a plurality (45%) of Africans believe that the benefits of resource extraction outweigh the costs, a substantial 38% say that costs exceed benefits, while 17% are unwilling or unable to take a position on this issue (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Natural resource extraction: Costs vs. benefits and regulation
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

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

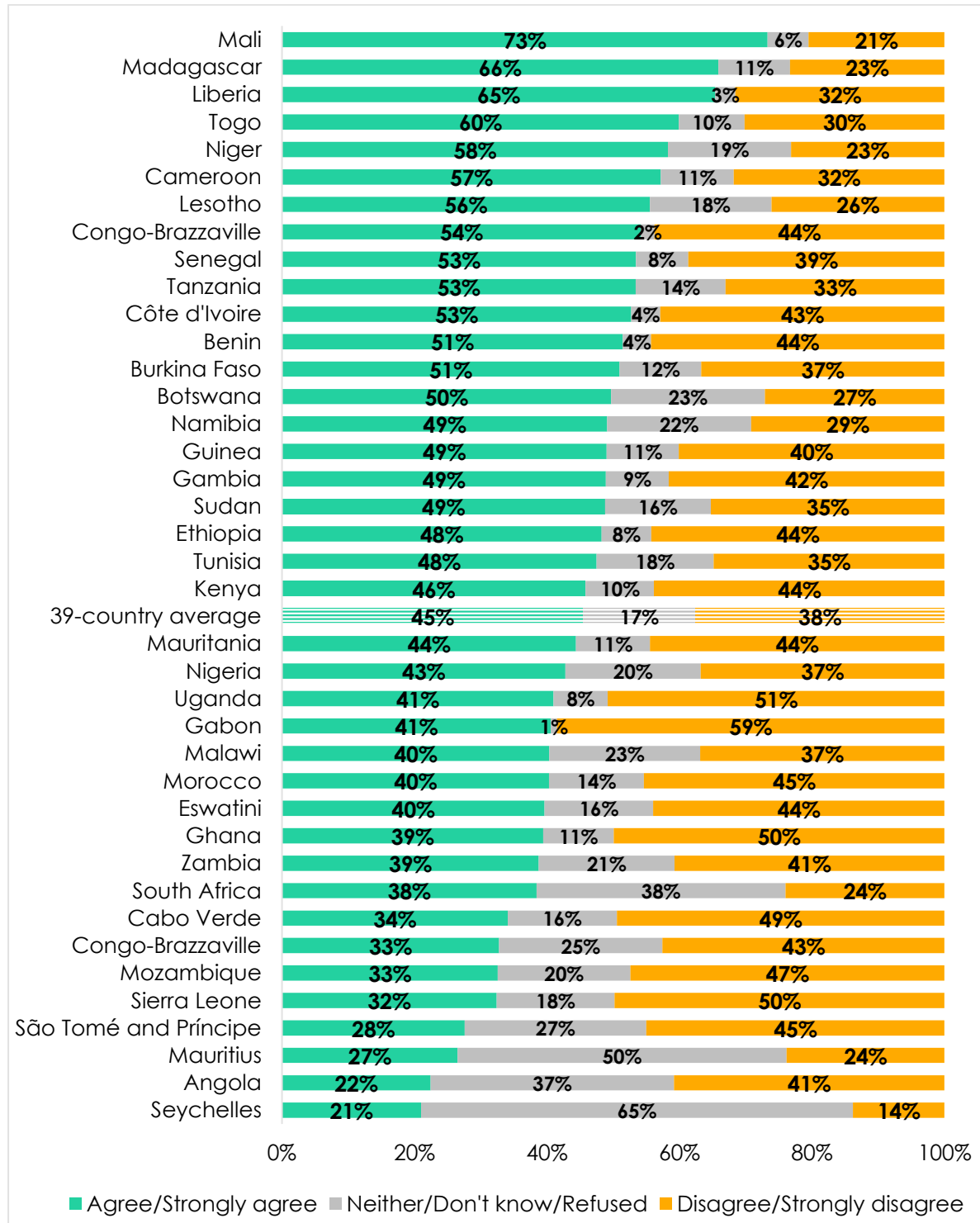
In a few countries, strong majorities are confident of the benefits of resource extraction, led by Mali (73%), Madagascar (66%), Liberia (65%), and Togo (60%) (Figure 17). Narrower majorities support this view in another nine countries. But in Seychelles (21%) and Angola (22%), fewer than one in four are convinced of the benefits of extraction. In fact, majorities see costs outweighing benefits in Gabon (59% costs greater vs. 41% benefits greater) and Uganda (51% vs. 41%), as do half of Ghanaians (50% vs. 39%) and Sierra Leoneans (50% vs. 32%) and pluralities in another seven countries.

Also notable is the number of citizens who are undecided on this complex issue: An unusually high proportion (17%) report that they agree with neither position (6%), don't know (10%), or refused to answer (less than .5%). More than one-third of respondents did not give an opinion in Seychelles (65%), Mauritius (50%), South Africa (38%), and Angola (37%), reflecting the difficult trade-offs involved.

Despite these mixed views regarding costs and benefits, the popular call for government action on this issue is nonetheless quite clear: A resounding majority (76%) of Africans want their governments to implement stricter regulations on natural resource exploitation. This

sentiment reflects both the widespread concern for the environment and the natural and social costs of unregulated resource exploitation, as well as the recognition that these costs could be mitigated by stronger government protections.

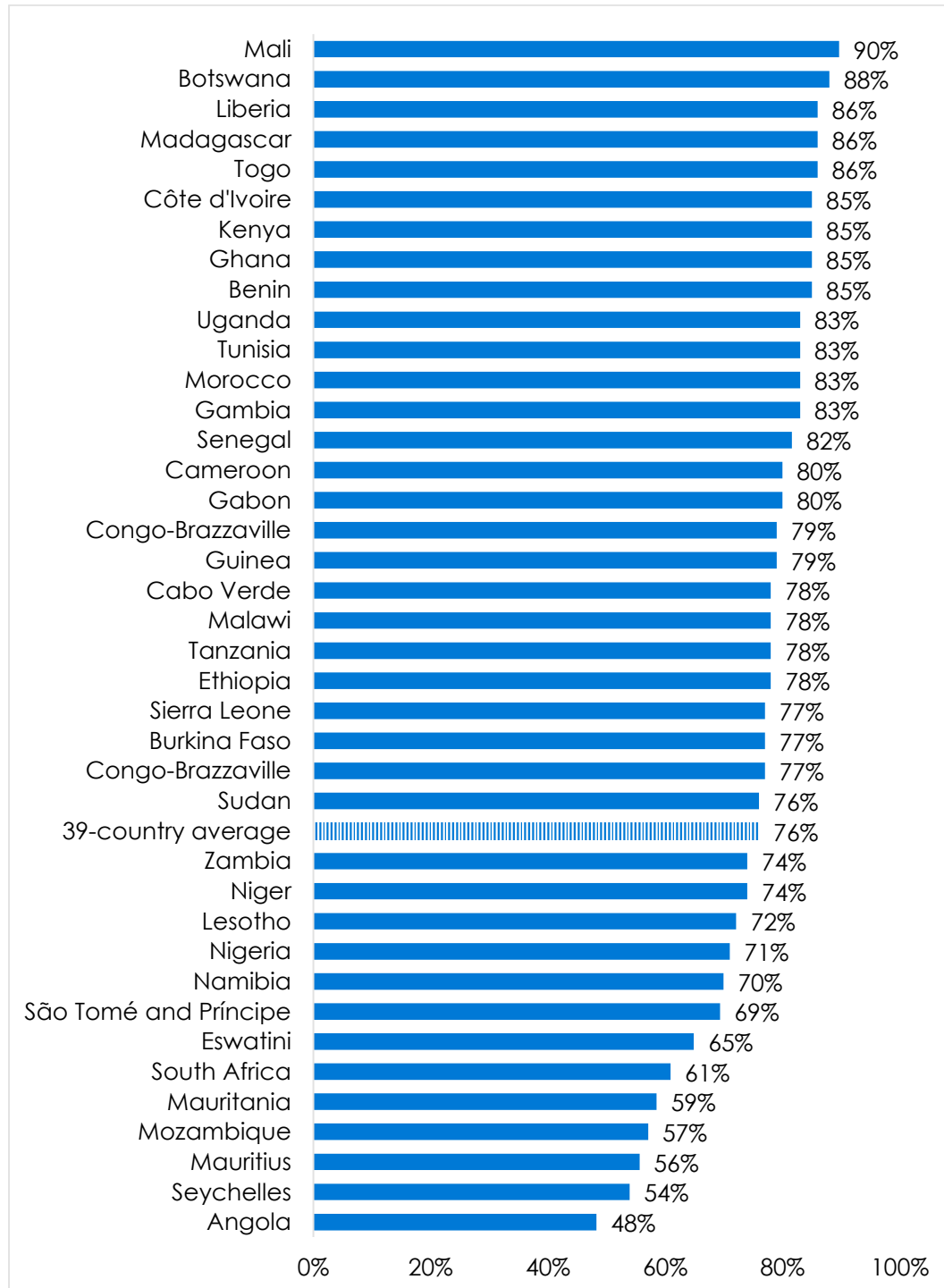
Figure 17: Costs vs. benefits of natural resource extraction | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: 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.

Three-quarters or more support tightening regulations on resource exploitation in 26 of 39 countries, led by Mali (90%) and Botswana (88%) (Figure 18). It is a majority view in all but one country, Angola, where a plurality (48%) of citizens favour stricter government oversight.

Figure 18: Demand for tighter regulation of natural resource extraction | 39 countries | 2021/2023



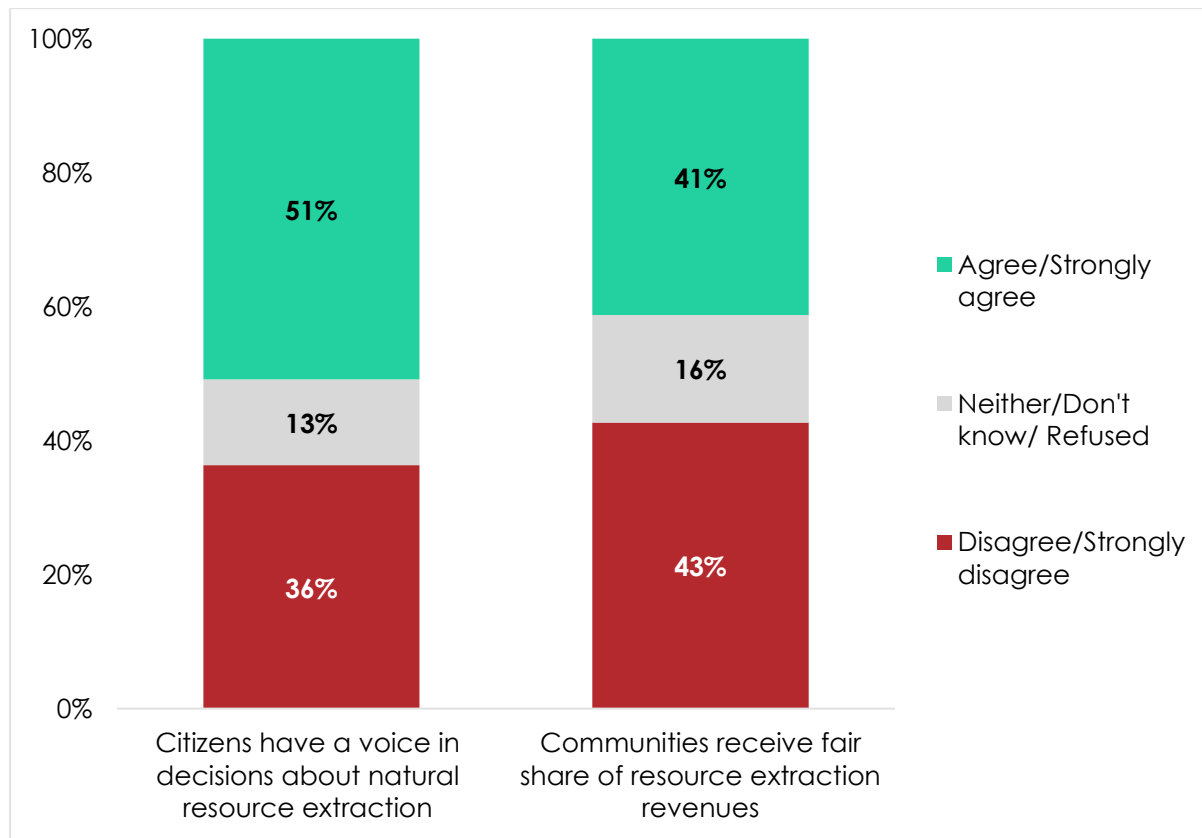
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: In this country, natural resource extraction should be more tightly regulated by government to reduce the negative impacts on the environment. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

The socio-demographic differences on both of these questions are generally very modest. The most striking difference with regard to regulating resource extraction is between those with no formal education or only primary education (74% supporting more regulation) and those who have attained post-secondary education (80%).

Many Africans are concerned, however, that they do not have a real say in planning and policy making around resource extraction. Overall, a slim majority (51%) believe that citizens do have a voice in decision making about natural resource extraction that occurs near their communities, but more than one in three (36%) disagree, and 13% are unsure (Figure 19).

In several countries, citizens seem confident of their influence: More than three-quarters report that citizens have a real say in Botswana (77%), Mali (79%), and Madagascar (87%) (Figure 20). But this is a minority position in 20 of 39 countries, and fewer than three out of 10 citizens agree in Morocco (28%) and Angola (24%).

Figure 19: Natural resource extraction: Community engagement | 39 countries
 | 2021/2023

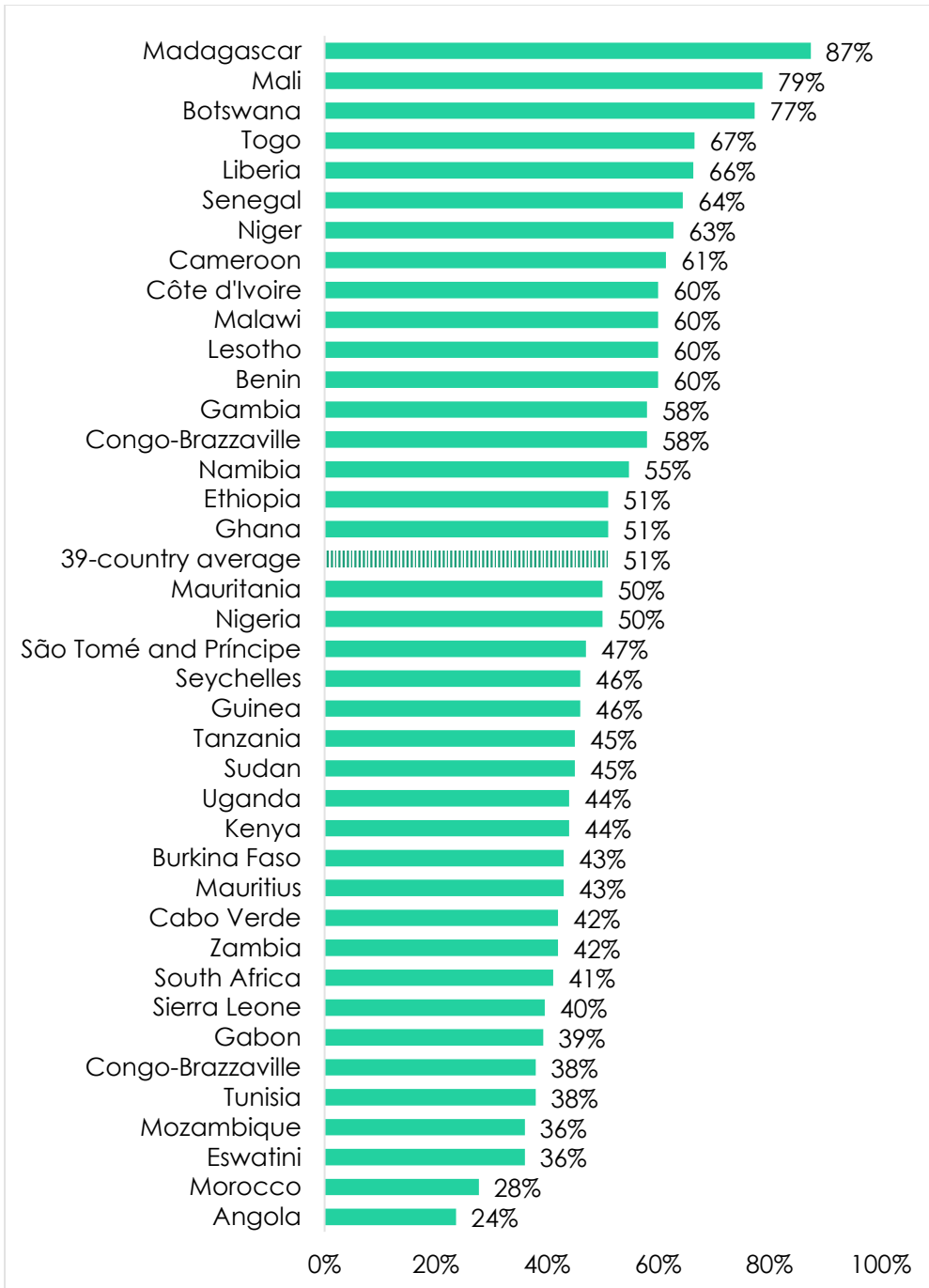


Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

Ordinary citizens 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.

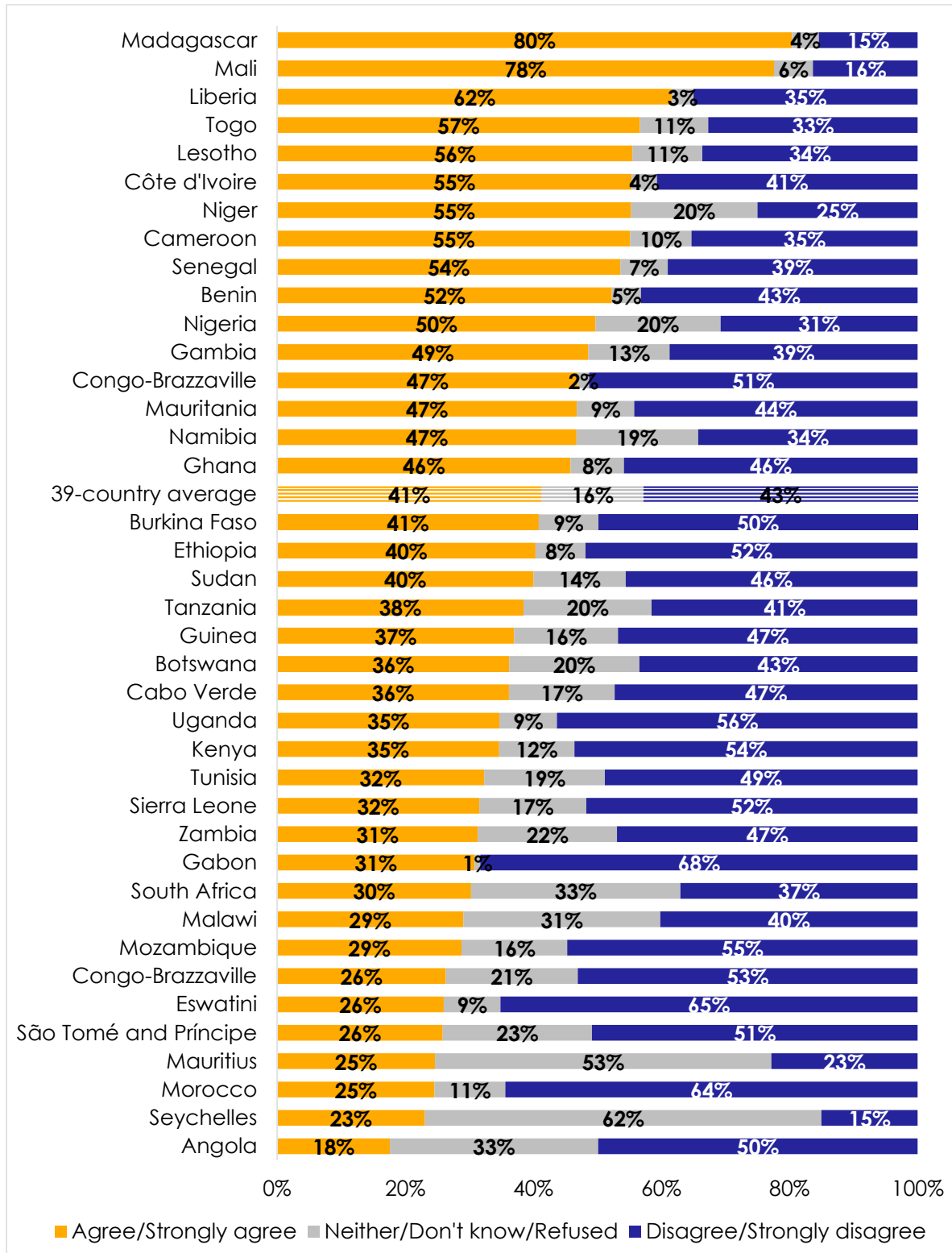
Figure 20: Natural resource extraction: Citizen voice | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: Ordinary citizens currently have a voice in decisions about natural resource extraction that takes place near their communities. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Africans are far less confident that the benefits of resource extraction are being distributed fairly: A plurality of 43% do not believe communities receive a fair share, compared to 41% who think they do. But pointing again to the uncertainty many feel around these issues, nearly one in six respondents (16%) are unsure (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Natural resource extraction: Do communities receive a fair share?
 | 39 countries | 2021/2023



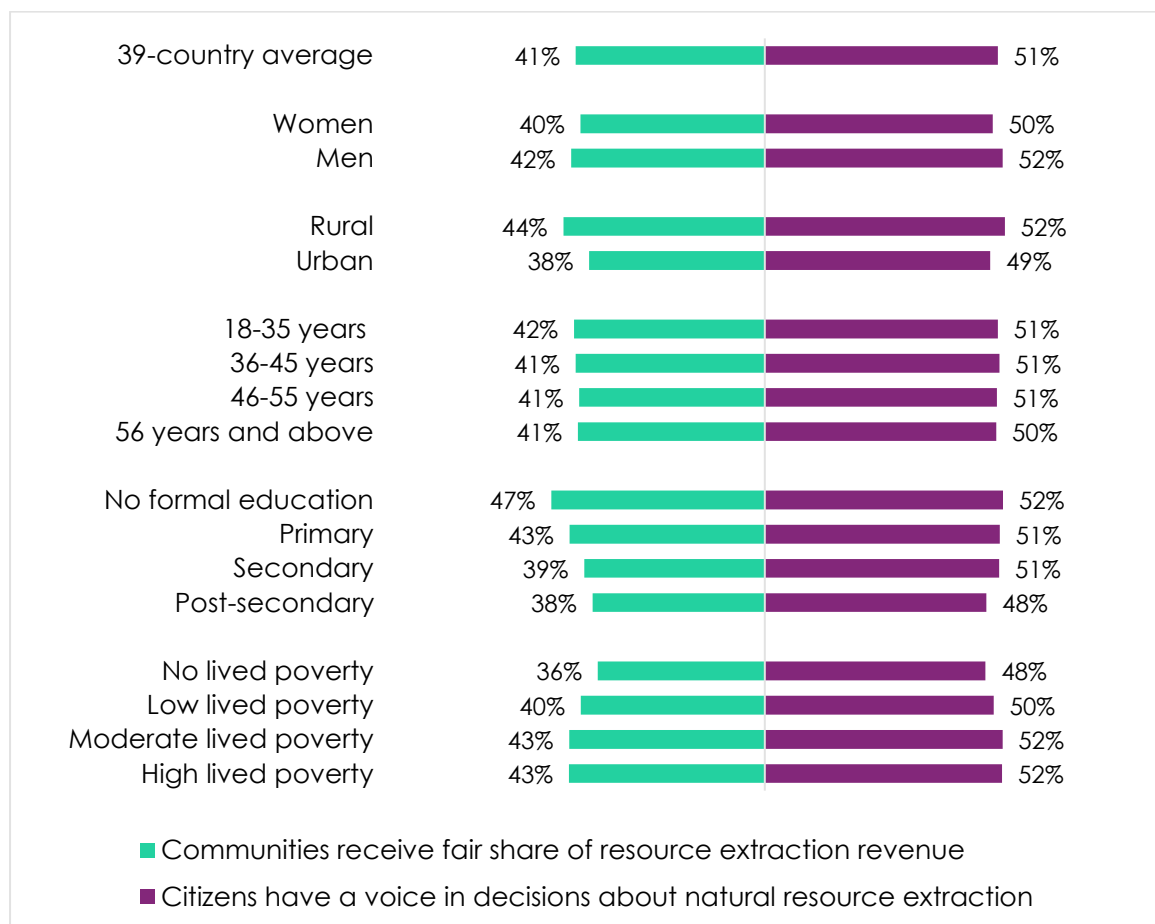
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statement: Local communities currently receive a fair share of the revenues from natural resource extraction that takes place near their communities.

Mali (78%) and Madagascar (80%) again report the most positive views, with overwhelming majorities saying that communities receive a reasonable share of revenues. In sharp contrast, no more than one in four are similarly satisfied in Mauritius (25%), Morocco (25%), Seychelles (23%), and Angola (18%). In fact, majorities disagree in 13 countries, led by Gabon (68% disagree), Eswatini (65%), and Morocco (64%). Seychellois and Mauritians are very undecided on this issue, with 62% and 53%, respectively, not expressing an opinion.

With respect to citizen voice, there are generally only modest differences across demographic groups, led by 4-percentage-point gaps between the wealthiest and the poorest and between the most and least educated (Figure 22).

In contrast, perceptions that revenue sharing is fair vary much more substantially, with a 9-point gap between those with no formal schooling (47% say distribution of revenues is fair) and those with post-secondary education (38%). A 7-point gap separates those with high lived poverty (43%) from the most economically secure (36%), and a 6-point difference separates rural residents (44%) from their urban counterparts (38%).

Figure 22: Natural resource extraction: Citizens' voice and community benefit
| by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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

Ordinary citizens 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.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Conclusion

The findings from Afrobarometer's first module of questions about environmental governance and resource extraction are quite revealing: Africans are clearly experiencing the costs of widespread pollution and poor management of resources in their local environments, and they want to see change. Concern about environmental conditions is widespread, and demands for greater government action to address these issues is overwhelming. Resounding majorities want to see more government action on reducing pollution and protecting the environment, as well as tighter regulation of the potentially destructive resource extraction industry.

People also want greater voice in decision making and greater fairness in the distribution of the benefits of resource extraction. While the popular calculus on the costs vs. benefits of resource extraction currently falls only narrowly in favour of benefits, addressing these issues has the potential to improve the quality of life in communities across the continent.

The Natural Resource Governance Institute (2019) argues that Africa (at least in the 28 sub-Saharan countries included in its study) has a reasonably sound body of laws to regulate resource exploitation, but suffers from sometimes-wide implementation gaps. It particularly cites challenges with fulfilling commitments to transfer revenues to local authorities and with sharing information on social and economic impacts. The institute recommends stronger implementation and enforcement, as well as greater transparency and accountability. African citizens seem to agree that it's time for their governments to step up and clean up to protect their citizens and communities.

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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Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Feb.-March 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Kenya	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	Oct.-Nov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021
Sudan	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Togo	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021

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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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