



Zomba, Malawi
4 August 2025

News release

Food shortage retakes top spot in list of most important problems Malawians want the government to tackle

Food shortage or famine tops the list of problems that Malawians say the government should address, cited by nearly six in 10 citizens as a priority, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

Between 2014 and 2024, food shortage or famine was consistently cited by citizens as one of the two most pressing problems requiring government intervention.

Other persistent problems include health and farming or agriculture.

Food shortage or famine is more of an issue among rural and peri-urban Malawians and women than urban residents and men. Concern also decreases with education level.

Key findings

- More than half (58%) of Malawians identify the most pressing problem facing the country as food shortage or famine (Figure 1).
 - Next on the list of priorities for government to address are the cost of living (28%), farming or agriculture (28%), and health (26%).
- From 2014 to 2024, food shortage or famine consistently appeared as one of the top two most important problems cited by Malawians, beaten only in 2022 by management of the economy (Table 1).
- Six in 10 rural and peri-urban dwellers (60%) cite food shortage or famine as their most urgent concern, compared to 45% of urban residents (Figure 2).
 - Rural and peri-urban residents are also more likely to cite farming or agriculture as an issue (31% vs. 14%), while urbanites are more likely to voice concern about the rising cost of living (39% vs. 27%) and management of the economy (24% vs. 15%).
- There is little difference across genders in their assessment of the five most urgent priorities, although women are 5 percentage points more likely than men to say food shortage or famine is a problem requiring government intervention (61% vs. 56%) (Figure 3).
- Participants without formal schooling lead in rating food shortage or famine as the most important problem (67%), compared to 62% among adults with primary education and 50% among those with secondary or post-secondary education (Figure 4).

Afrobarometer surveys

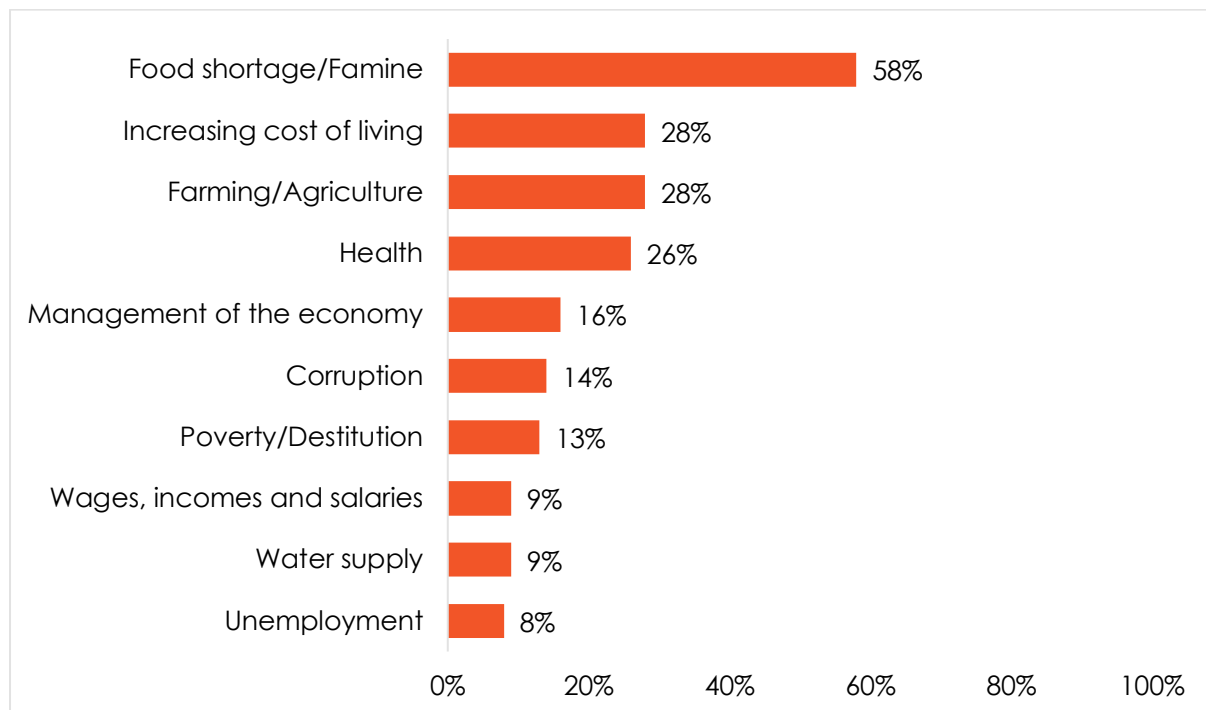
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys were launched in January 2024. Afrobarometer’s national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens in August 2024. 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 Malawi in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2022.

Charts

Figure 1: Most important problems | Malawi | 2024



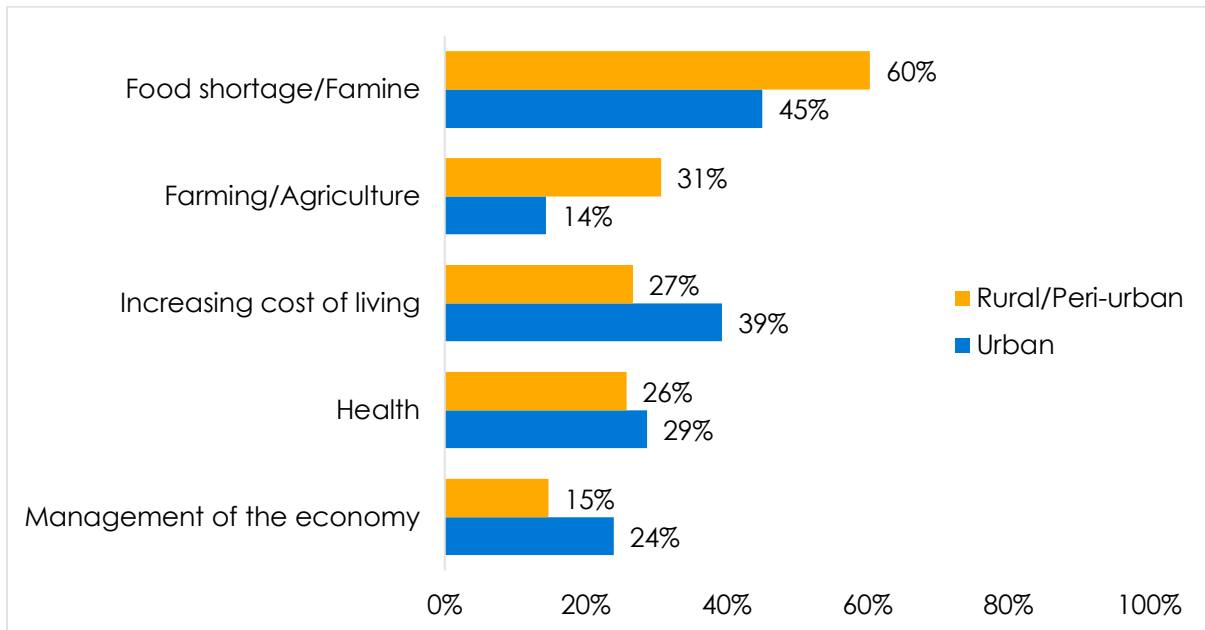
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person; figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem among their three priorities.)*

Table 1: Top three most important problems | Malawi | 2014-2024

2014	2017	2019	2022	2024
Food shortage/ Famine	Food shortage/ Famine	Food shortage/ Famine	Management of the economy	Food shortage/ Famine
Health	Management of the economy	Health	Food shortage/ Famine	Increasing cost of living
Water supply	Farming/ Agriculture	Farming/ Agriculture	Farming/ Agriculture	Farming/ Agriculture

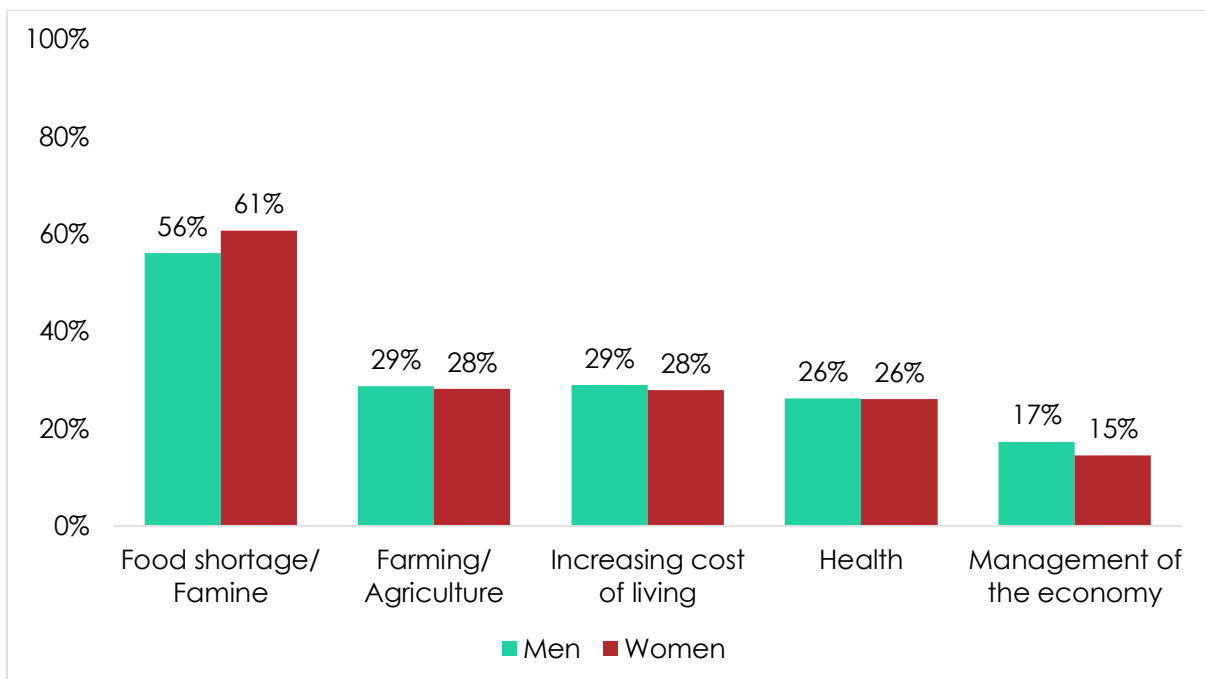
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person; figure shows the three priorities cited most often among all respondents.)*

Figure 2: Most important problems | by urban-rural location | Malawi | 2024



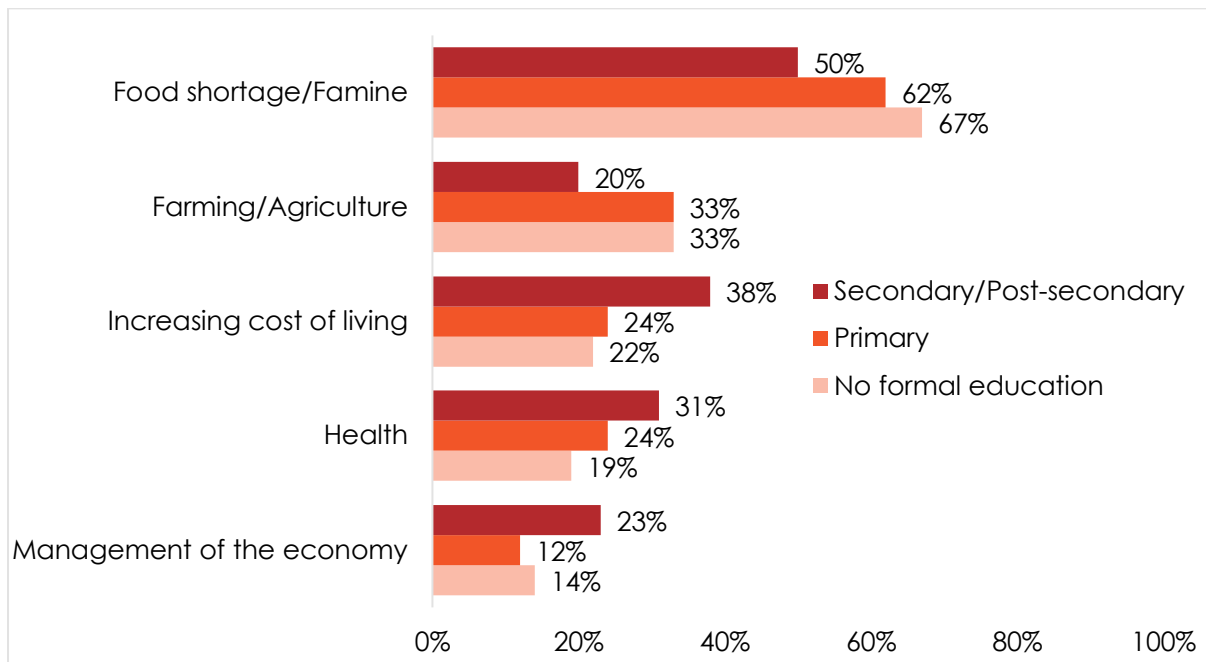
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person; figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem among their three priorities.)

Figure 3: Most important problems | by gender | Malawi | 2024



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person; figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem among their three priorities.)

Figure 4: Most important problems | by education | Malawi | 2024



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person; figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem among their three priorities.)*

For more information, please contact:

Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi
 Joseph J. Chunga
 Telephone: +265995623818
 Email: jchung@unima.ac.mw

Visit us online at:
www.crsunima.mw
www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

