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News release

Lived poverty remains stubbornly high in Africa, new Afrobarometer report shows

Lived poverty remains persistently high across African countries as majorities of citizens experience shortages of basic necessities such as food, clean water, and medical care, according to the latest Afrobarometer Pan-Africa Profile.

Based on nationally representative surveys in 38 African countries, the analysis finds that moderate or high levels of lived poverty affect an average of six in 10 citizens, ranging up to more than eight in 10 in Chad and Gabon.

After worsening steadily between 2014 and 2023, levels of lived poverty show no sign of improving in the latest survey round. Many respondents say they had to turn to informal support networks such as family, friends, and community organisations for assistance to make ends meet.

The findings also reveal that lived poverty is associated with difficulties in accessing essential public services, including health care, police assistance, and government documentation. Meanwhile, individuals experiencing high levels of lived poverty are less likely to own a bank account, whereas mobile money is relatively accessible across the lived-poverty gradient.

Key findings

- On average across 38 countries, eight in 10 citizens (79%) say they or a family member went without a cash income at least once during the preceding year, including 43% who did so "many times" or "always" (Figure 1).
    - Two-thirds (65%) went without needed medicine or medical care, and majorities suffered shortages of clean water (57%), food (58%),[1] and cooking fuel (52%).
- Across 30 countries surveyed in both 2014/2015 and 2024/2025, the proportion of citizens experiencing moderate or high levels of lived poverty increased by 13 percentage points, from 47% to 60% (Figure 2).
    - Rates of moderate/high lived poverty vary dramatically by country, ranging from 7% in Seychelles to 86% in Chad.
- Almost half (47%) of respondents say they had to seek assistance from family members during the previous year to make ends meet, while 33% sought help from friends or neighbours and 12% requested assistance from religious, community, or charitable groups (Figure 3).
- Poverty is compounded by reduced access to essential services. The poorest citizens are roughly twice as likely as the well-off to report that they found it difficult to obtain health care, a government identification document, and police assistance (Figure 4).

[1] Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. for food, 19% "many times/always," 21% "several times," and 17% "just once or twice" sum to 58%).

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- Poor citizens are half as likely as their well-off counterparts to own a bank account (40% vs. 83%). But mobile-money account ownership is widespread and fairly consistent across income levels, at 69% among the poorest and 71% among the wealthiest (Figure 5).

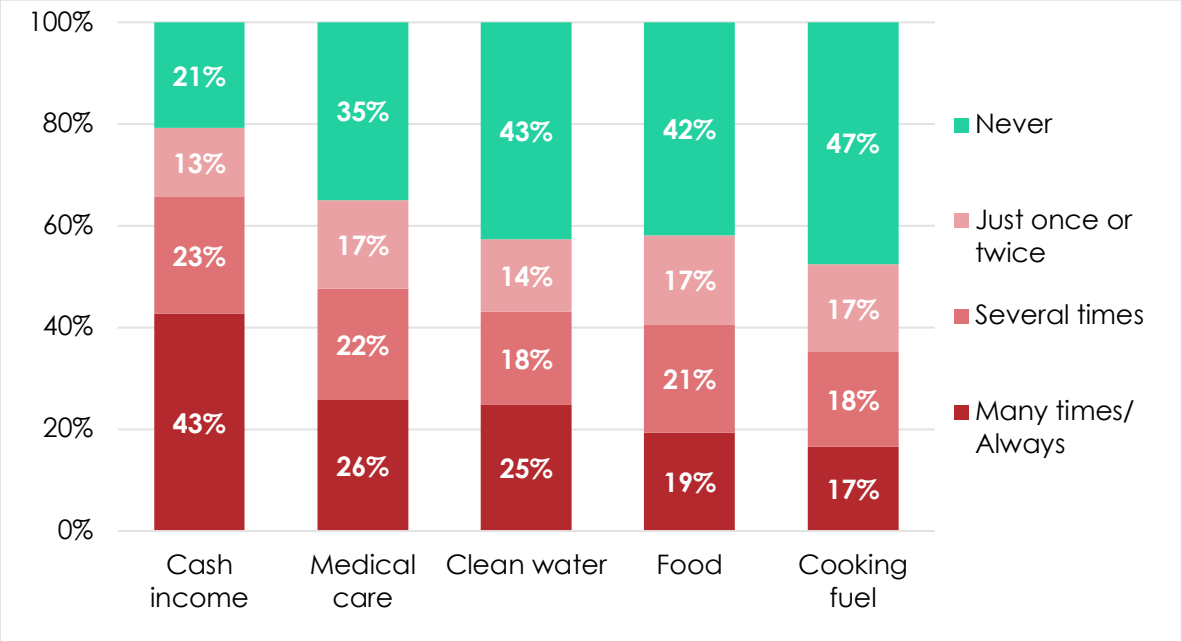
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys (2024/2025) cover 38 countries.

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. For more on our sampling methodology, click here. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Charts

Figure 1: Went without basic necessities | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?*

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Figure 2: Country-level changes in moderate/high lived poverty | 38 countries* | 2014-2025

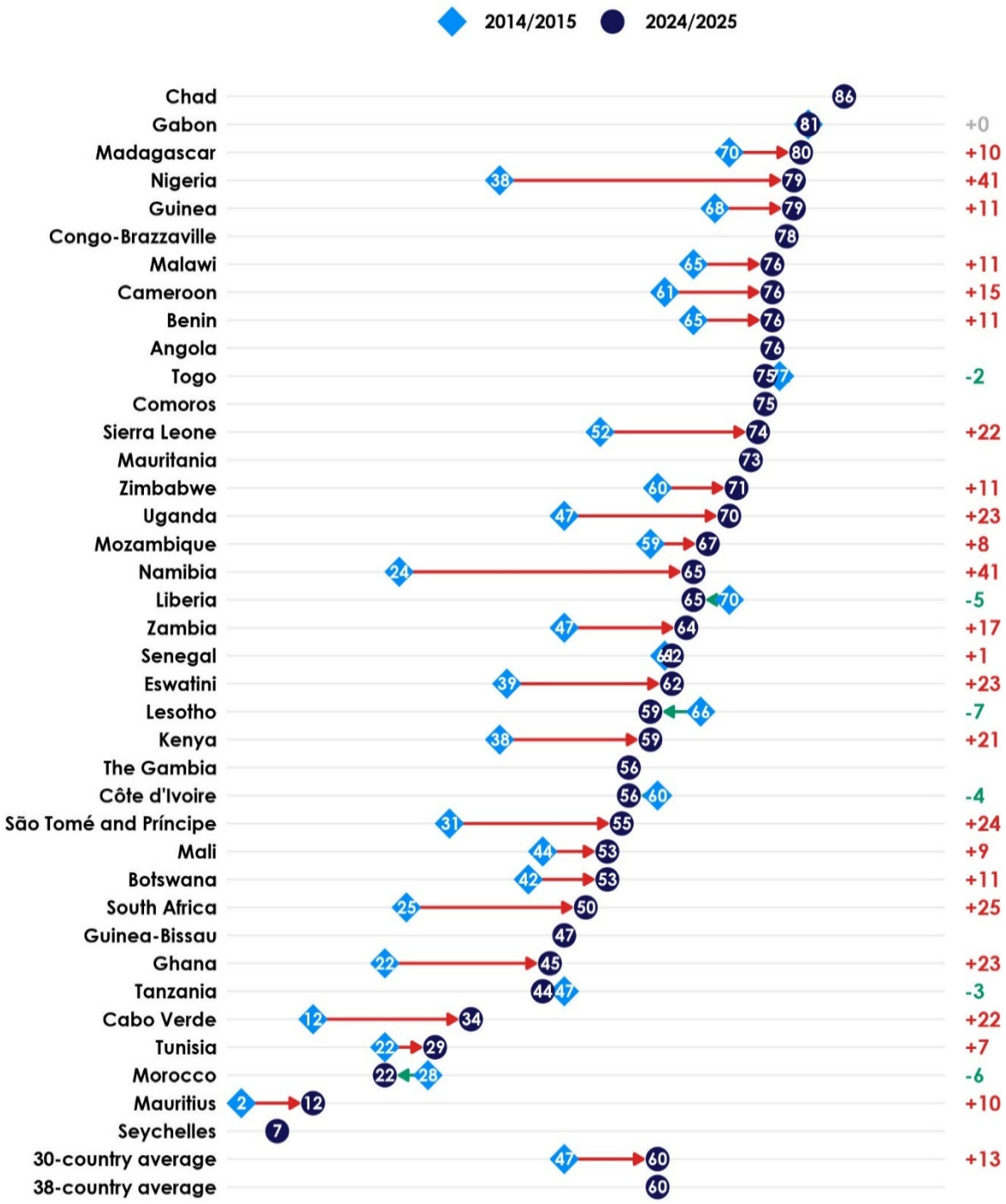

*Figure shows % of respondents who experienced moderate or high lived poverty in 2014/2015 (light-blue diamonds) and 2024/2025 (dark-blue circles), as well as percentage-point change (at far right). *Figure includes 2024/2025 findings for 38 countries and over-time changes for the 30 countries surveyed in both 2014/2015 and 2024/2025.*

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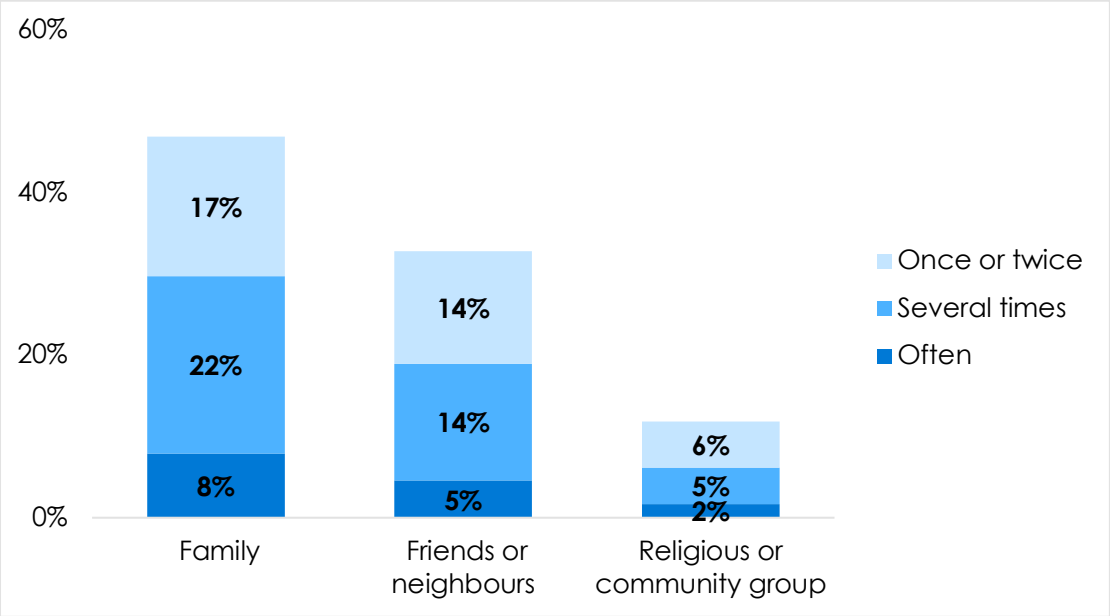
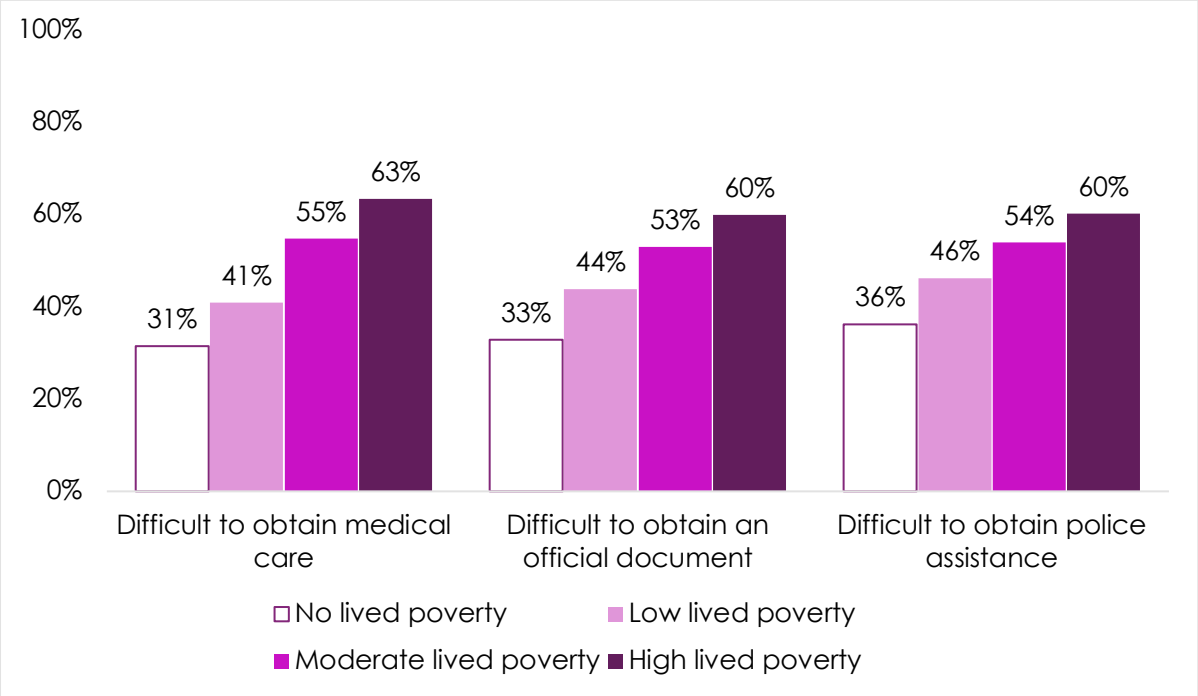
Figure 3: Sought assistance to make ends meet | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *In the past year, did you have to turn to any of the following for assistance to make ends meet: Family members? Friends or neighbours? A religious, community group, or charitable organisation?*

Figure 4: Difficulty accessing public services | by level of lived poverty | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents who had contact with selected public services during the previous year were asked: *How easy or difficult was it to obtain the [needed services]? (% who say "difficult" or "very difficult")*

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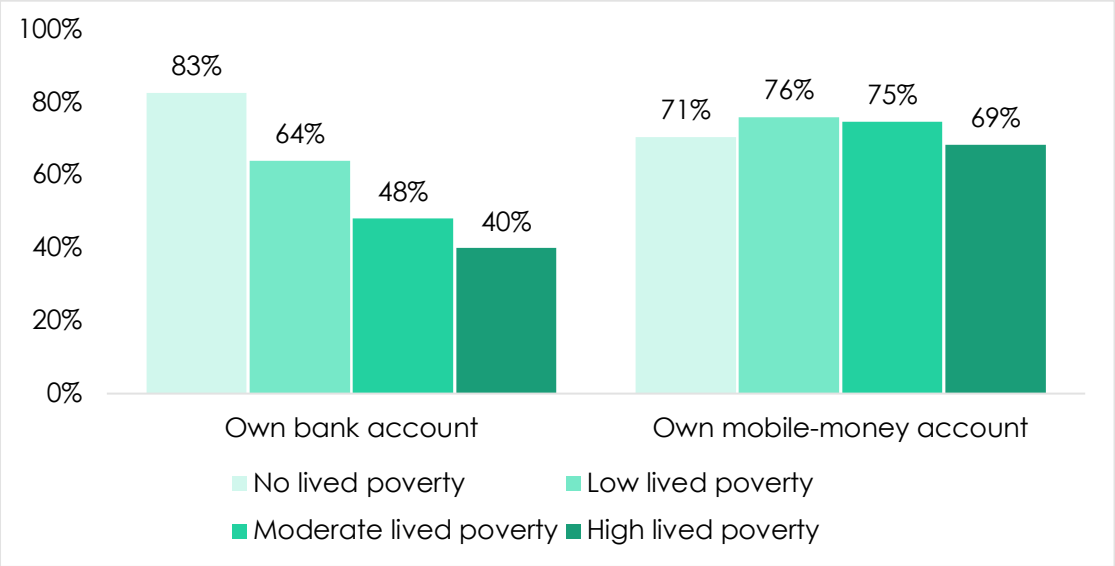
Figure 5: Bank and mobile-money account ownership | by lived poverty | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *Which of these things do you personally own: Bank account? Mobile-money account? [If "No":] Does anyone else in your household own one? (% who say they or a household member own an account)*

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