Economic Conditions and Government Performance: Evidence from Liberian Afrobarometer Round 5 Survey

Tuesday, April 16, 2013

What is the Afrobarometer?

- The Afrobarometer (AB) is a comparative series of public opinion surveys that measure public attitudes toward democracy, governance, the economy, leadership, identity, and other related issues.

- The AB is an independent, non-partisan, African-based network of researchers

- The first round of surveys took place in 1999-2001 in 12 countries. The Network is now conducting "Round 5" surveys in up to 35 countries during 2011-2012

- **Purpose:** to measure popular perspectives on the social, political, and economic environments in each country where it is implemented and across Africa.

- **Goal:** to give the public a *voice in policy making processes by providing high-quality public opinion data to policy-makers, advocates, academics, media, donors, and ordinary Africans.*

Country Coverage 1999 - 2002

Round 1, 1999 – 2001, 12 Countries

- *Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa,*
  Zambia, Zimbabwe
- *West Africa: Ghana, Mali, Nigeria*
- *East Africa: Tanzania, Uganda*

Round 2, 2002 – 2003, 16 countries

- Cape Verde, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal

Round 3, 2005 – 2006, 18 countries

- *Benin, Madagascar*

Round 4, 2008 – 2009, 20 countries

- Burkina Faso, Liberia

Round 5, 2011 – 2013, up to 35 countries

- Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d' l Voire, Egypt, Guinea, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Togo, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Sudan

Who is the Afrobarometer?

A Pan African Network of Survey researchers and analysts

- In each country there is a National Partner responsible for survey implementation. In Liberia the National Partner is the Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD)

- **Four Core Partners provide technical assistance and Network management**
  - Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Ghana
  - Institute for Development Studies, (IDS), University of Nairobi, Kenya
  - Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy, (IREEP), Benin
  - New Core Partner in Southern Africa to be determined

- **Two Support Units for capacity building and quality assurance**
  - Michigan State University
  - University of Cape Town

- **Round Five Core Funders include**
  - DFID
  - SIDA
  - USAID
  - Mo Ibrahim Foundation (MIF)

Survey Methodology

- Nationally representative sample of adult citizens
  - *all respondents are randomly selected*
  - *every adult citizen has an equal and known chance of being selected*
- Face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice
- Standard survey instrument across all countries for comparability
- Field work for Round Five was conducted in Liberia between June and July 2012.
- The survey interviewed 1200 adult Liberian citizens proportionate to the Liberian population (based on 2011 projections of the 2008 Census); A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/- 3% at a 95% confidence level.
- Afrobarometer's work in Liberia is coordinated by the Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD) and fieldwork as carried out by Citizens Surveys, Ltd.

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SURVEY FINDINGS

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Level of education

Level of education among Liberians is clustered around primary (partial/completed) and secondary (partial/completed).

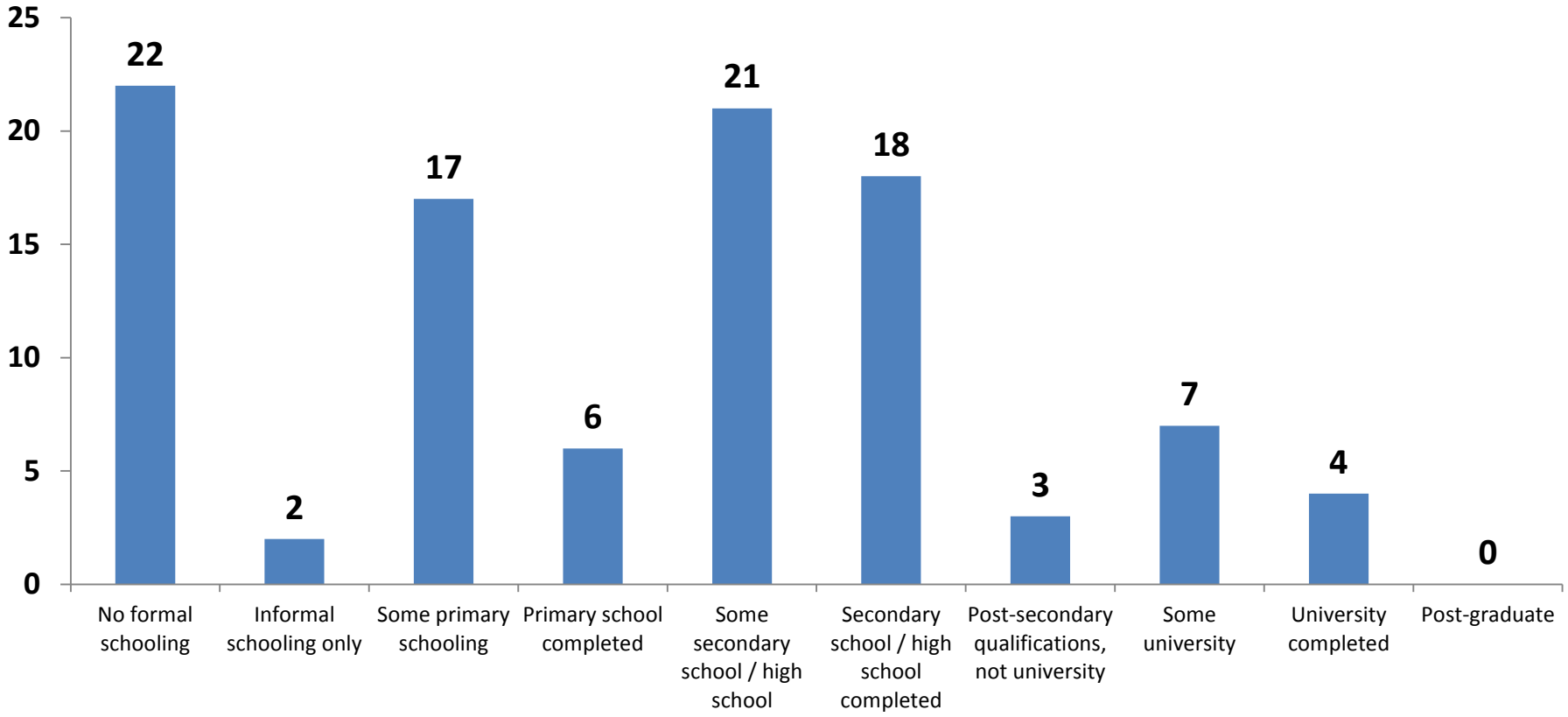
- **6 percent** have completed primary education while **17 percent** dropped out at that level.

- Similarly, **18 percent** have secondary education while about a little less than a quarter **(21 percent)** exited without completing.

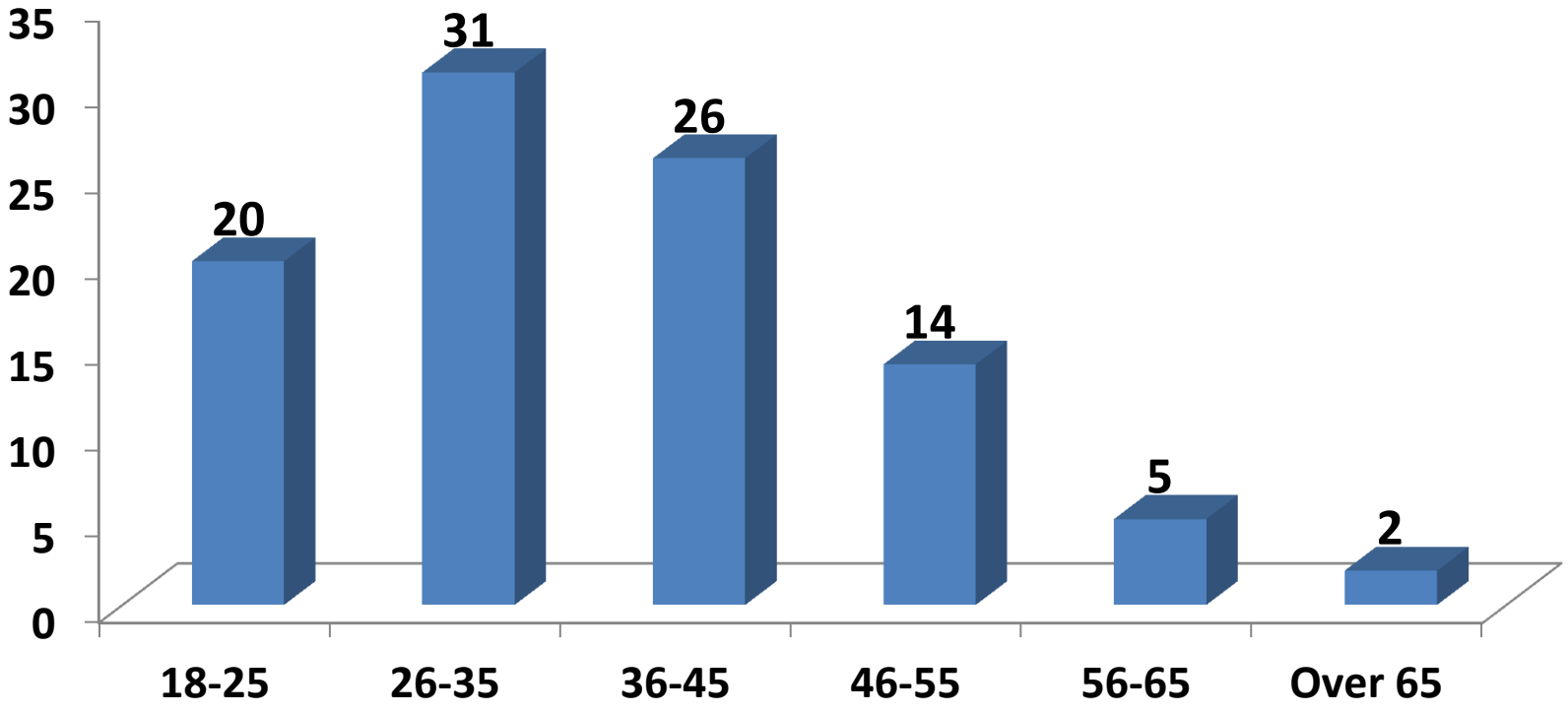
- Only small minorities of Liberians have post-secondary/polytechnic **(3 percent)**, some university **(7 percent)** and full university **(4 percent)** education.

- Nearly a quarter **(22 percent)** however have no informal education.

Level of education

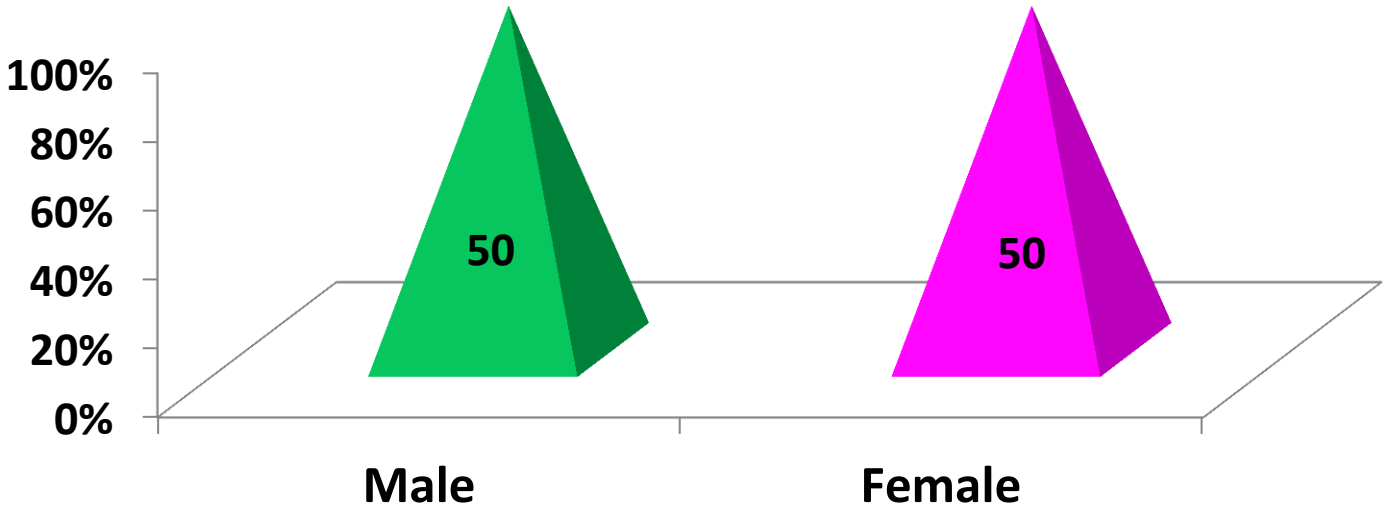


Age distribution



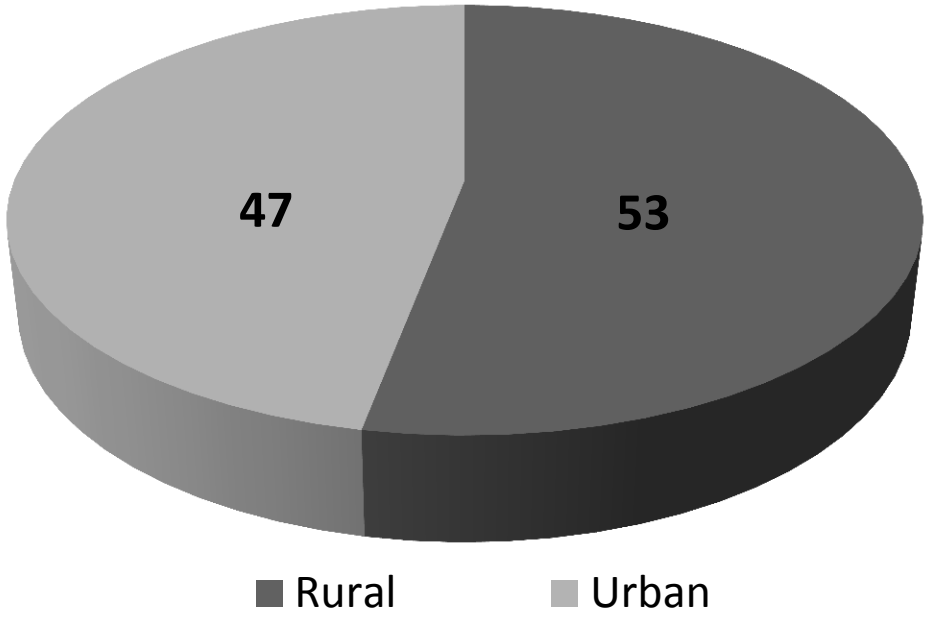
Gender Distribution

- Afrobarometer strives for gender balance by alternating the gender of respondents during data collection. Thus, half of respondents are males and the other half, females.



Rural - Urban distribution

- Fifty-three (53) percent of respondents are located in rural settlements while 47 percent are in urban areas. This distribution reflects the current settlement pattern of Liberia.



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R5 Key Findings: A

POPULAR PERCEPTIONS OF NATIOANL ECONOMIC & PERSONAL LIVING CONDITIONS

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How do Liberians assess the country's economic conditions

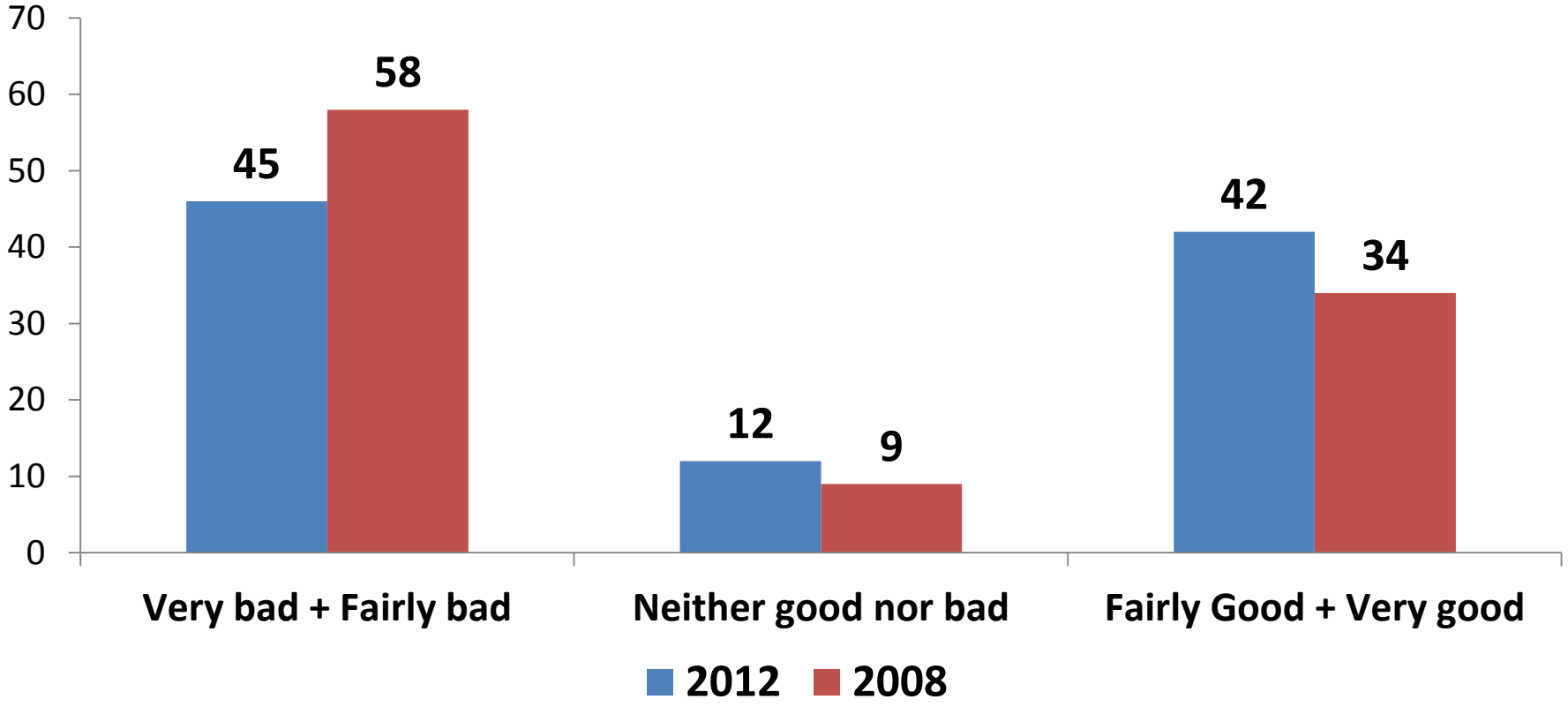
- Liberians are divided in their opinion regarding the country's economic condition. While **45 percent** think the national economic condition is *"fairly bad or very bad"*, **42 percent** think it is *"fairly good or very good".*

- Another **12 percent** of Liberians believe the present economic conditions is *"neither good nor bad"*.

- Overtime, the percentage of Liberians who assess the national economic conditions to be *"fairly bad or very bad"* dropped by **13 percentage points** from the 2008 figure of **58 percent**.

- In contrast, those who rate the economic condition as *"fairly good or very good"* increased by **8 percentage points** from the **34 percent** in 2008 to **42 percent**.

Perception of Country Current Economic Condition (2012 versus 2008)



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What do Liberians perceive about their personal living condition since the restoration of democratic governance

When asked about their personal living condition

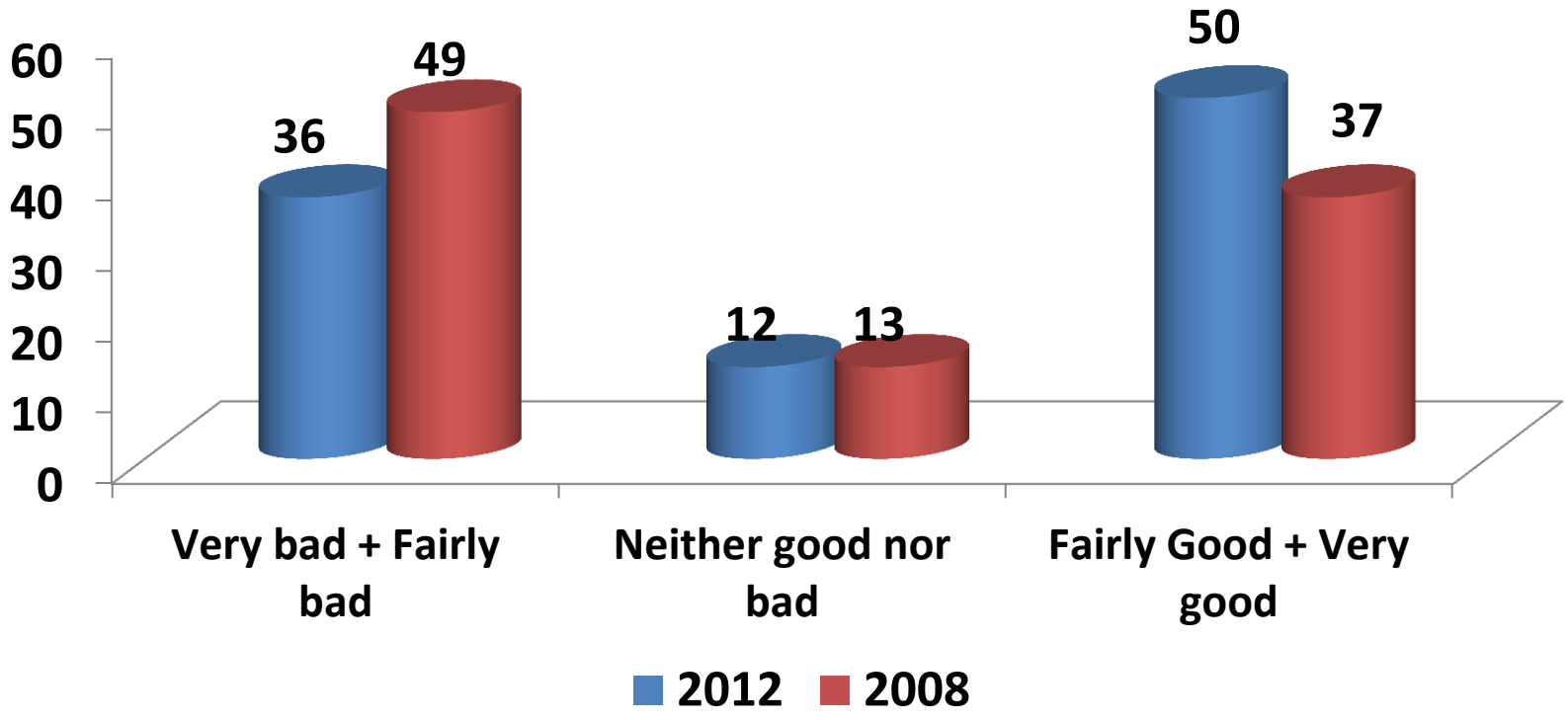
- Majority **(50 percent)** describe their living conditions as ***"very good or fairly good"*** while a sizeable minority (**36 percent**) think it is ***"very bad or fairly bad"***.

- A tiny minority **12 percent**, however believe that their personal living condition is ***"neither good nor bad"***

- With time, the number of Liberians who described their living conditions as ***"fairly good or very good"*** increased by **13 percentage points** from 37 percent in 2008 to **50 percent** in 2012**.**

- Conversely, those who think of their personal living conditions as ***"Very bad or fairly bad"*** drop by **13 percentage points** from 49 percent in 2008 to 36 percent in 2012.

Perception About Personal Living Condition (2012 versus 2008)



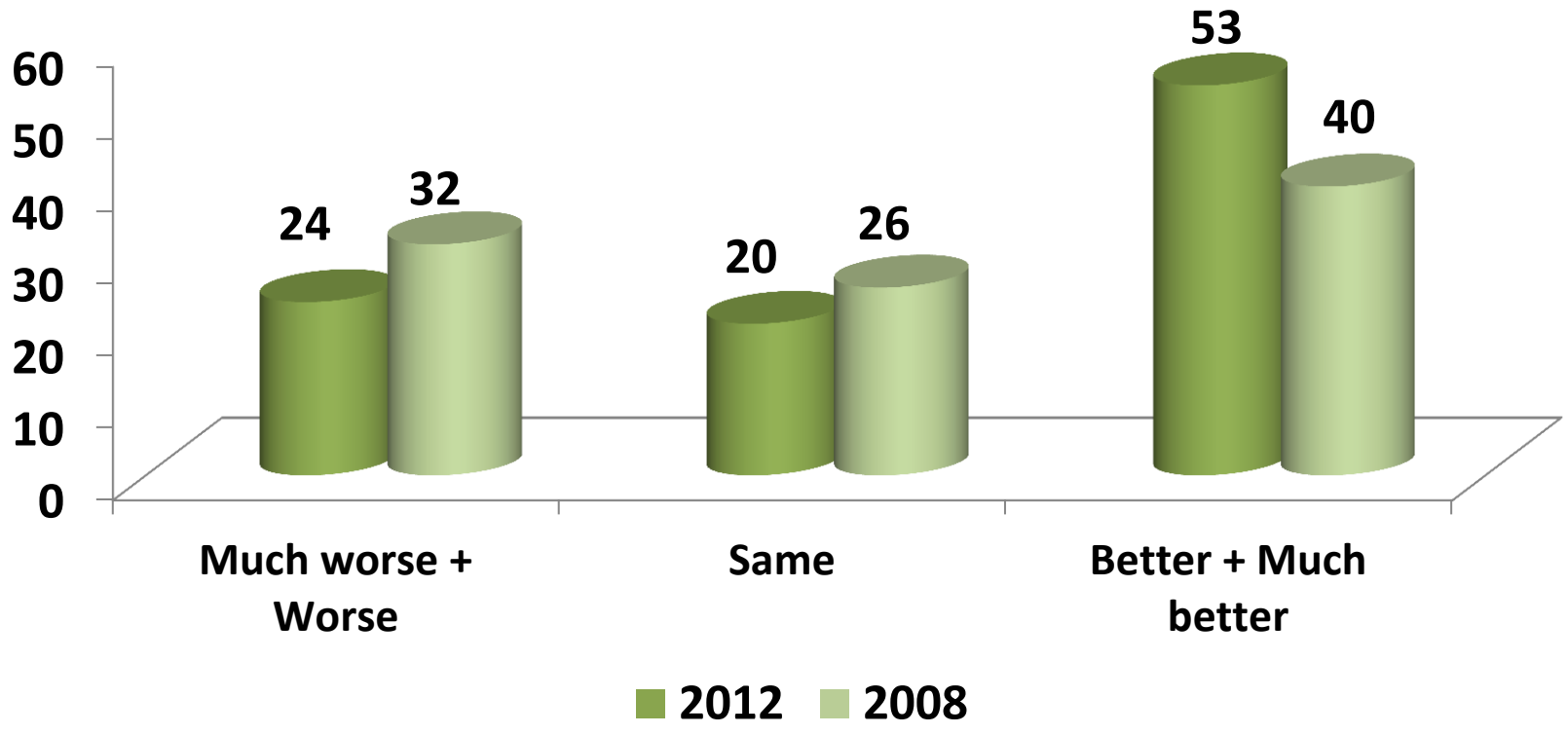
What do Liberians think about their personal living conditions compare to others?

- Despite the unfavourable assessment of the macro economic conditions, majority of Liberians (**53 percent**) consider their living conditions to be "much better or better" than other Liberians.

- A small proportion (**24 percent**) think their situation is ***"much worse or worse"*** than their fellow Liberians while **20 percent** believe their condition is the same as other Liberians.

- Overtime, Liberians who assessed their personal living conditions compare to others improved by **13 percentage points** over the 2008 figure of **40 percent**.

Your Living Condition Compare To Others (2012 versus 2008)



How do Liberians assess the country's present economic conditions compare to twelve months ago

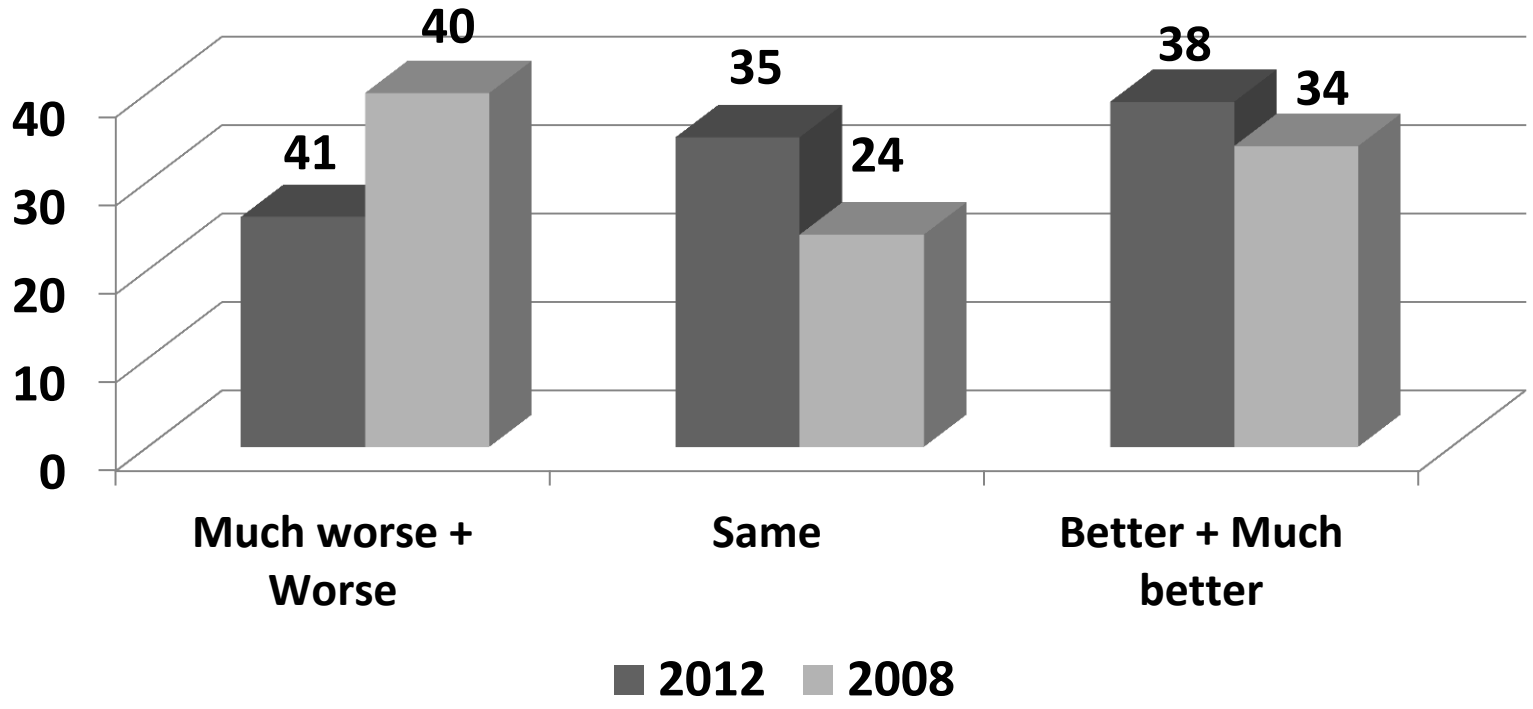
- While a little over a third of Liberians (**38 percent**) described the present economic condition as "much better or better" compared to 12 months ago, **41 percent** rather think it is "much worse or worse".

- Another **35 percent** claimed the present economic condition is the same as it was 12 months ago.

- Overtime, the proportion of Liberians who see the current economic condition as an improvement over 2008 situation increased by **X percentage points**.

- Probable cause of fluctuation in the assessment could be attributed to growing public disenchantment against reported cases of corruption, public frustration to see large investment projects start to create employment couple with reports of oil discovery.

Perception Of Country Economic Condition Compare To Twelve Months Back (2012 versus 2008)



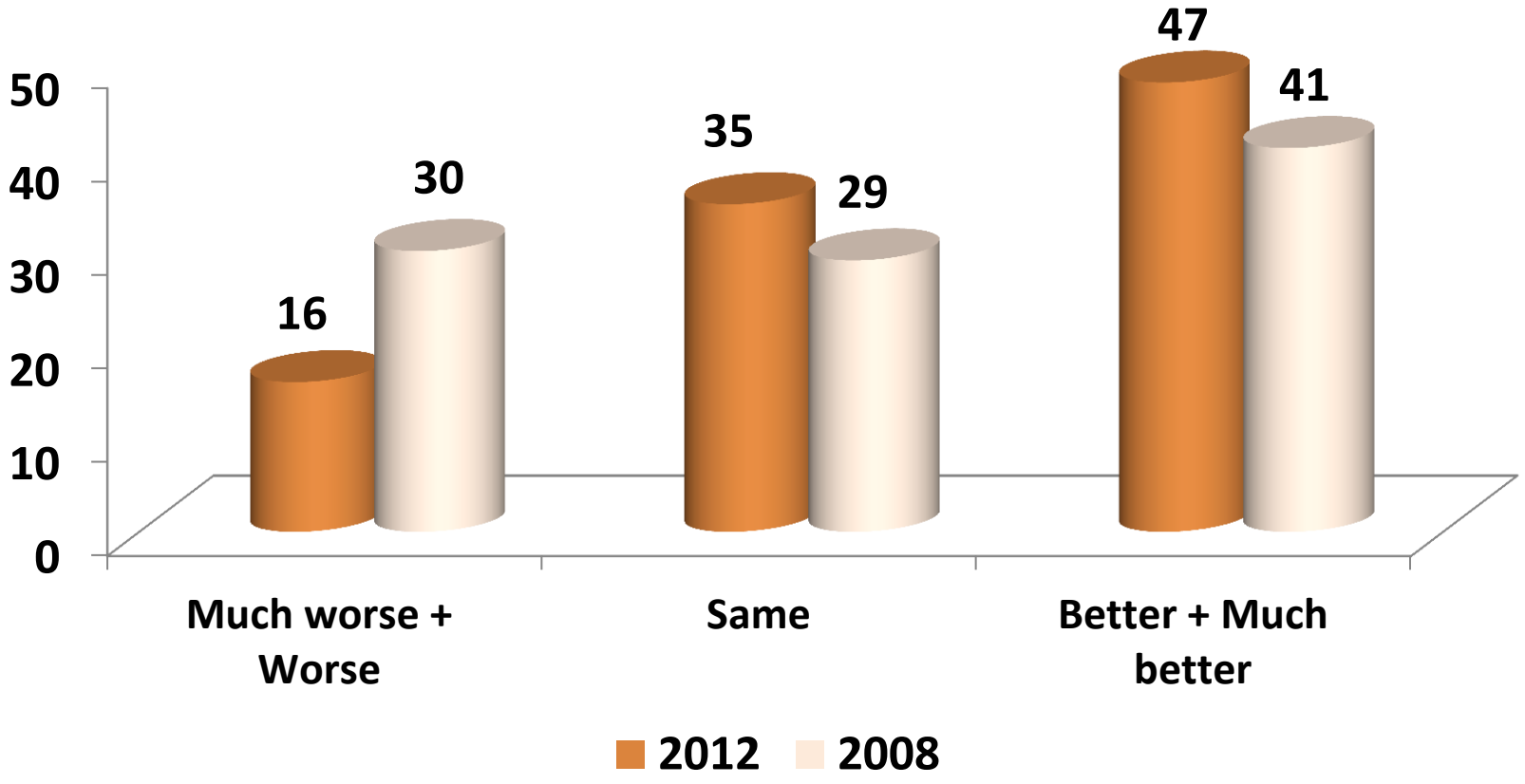
What do Liberians perceive of their personal living conditions compare to twelve months

- A small majority Liberians (**47 percent**) say their living condition is ***"much better or better"*** compared to 12 months ago.

- Less than a fifth (**16 percent**) think their situation is ***"much worse or worse"*** while a third (**35 percent**) think the situation remains unchanged compared to the past year.

- Quite encouraging, there was a significant reduction (**14 percent**) in the proportion who assessed their living conditions compared to 12 months ago as much worse and worse from 2008 figure of **30 percent**

Your Present Living Condition Compare to Twelve Months Back (2012 versus 2008)



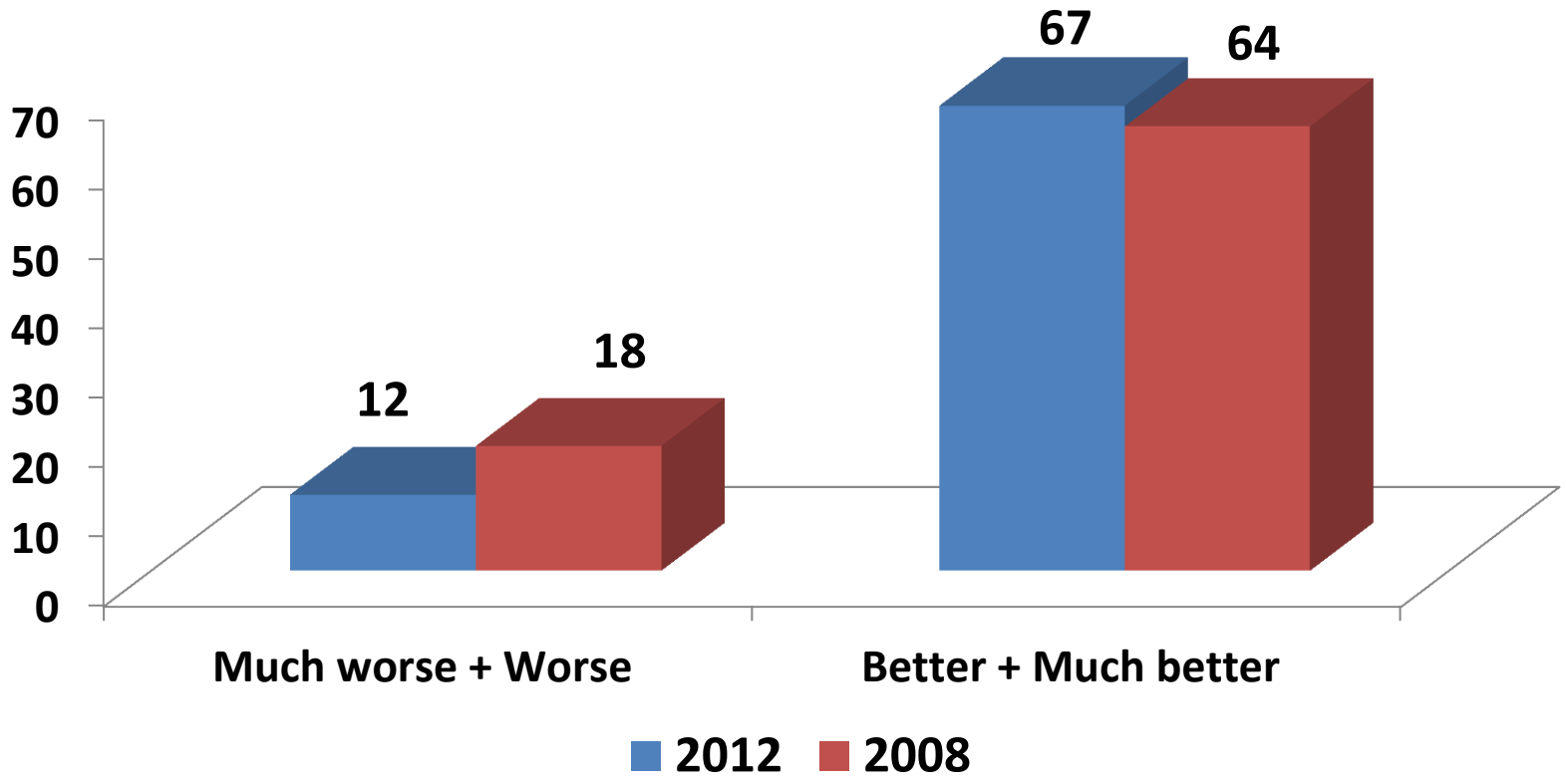
What do Liberians think about future economic conditions?

Liberians remain optimistic about the national economic condition.

- **67 percent** believe the economic condition of the country will be ***"better or much better"*** in 12 months time. **12 percen**t however think otherwise.

- Interestingly, optimism amongst Liberians about the future economic condition of the country has not changed much since 2008. Nearly similar proportion **64 percent** predicted the economic condition would be ***"better or much better"*** in 12 months time in 2008.

Country economic condition compare to twelve months in the future (2012 versus 2008)



But what do Liberians think about their future personal living condition

- Large majority (**74 percent)** are hopeful that in 12 months time their personal living conditions will be ***"much better or better".***

- In contrast, only a tiny proportion **(7 percent)** think their situation will worsen.

- Hopes about future personal living conditions amongst Liberians is consistent since 2008. Similar majority (**67 percent**) also expressed optimism about their personal living condition becoming ***"much better or better"*** in 12 months time.

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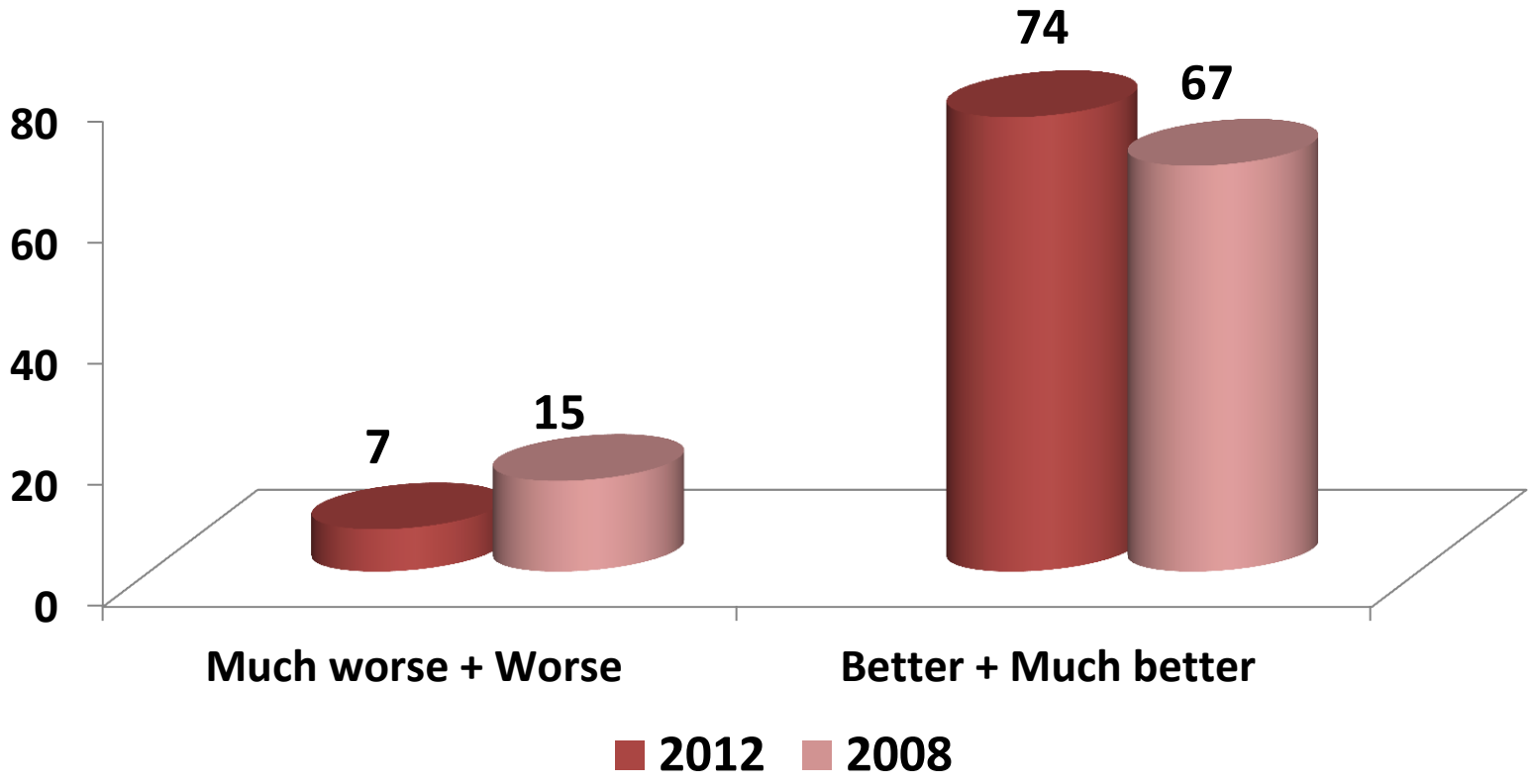
Your personal living condition in twelve months time (2012 versus 2008)



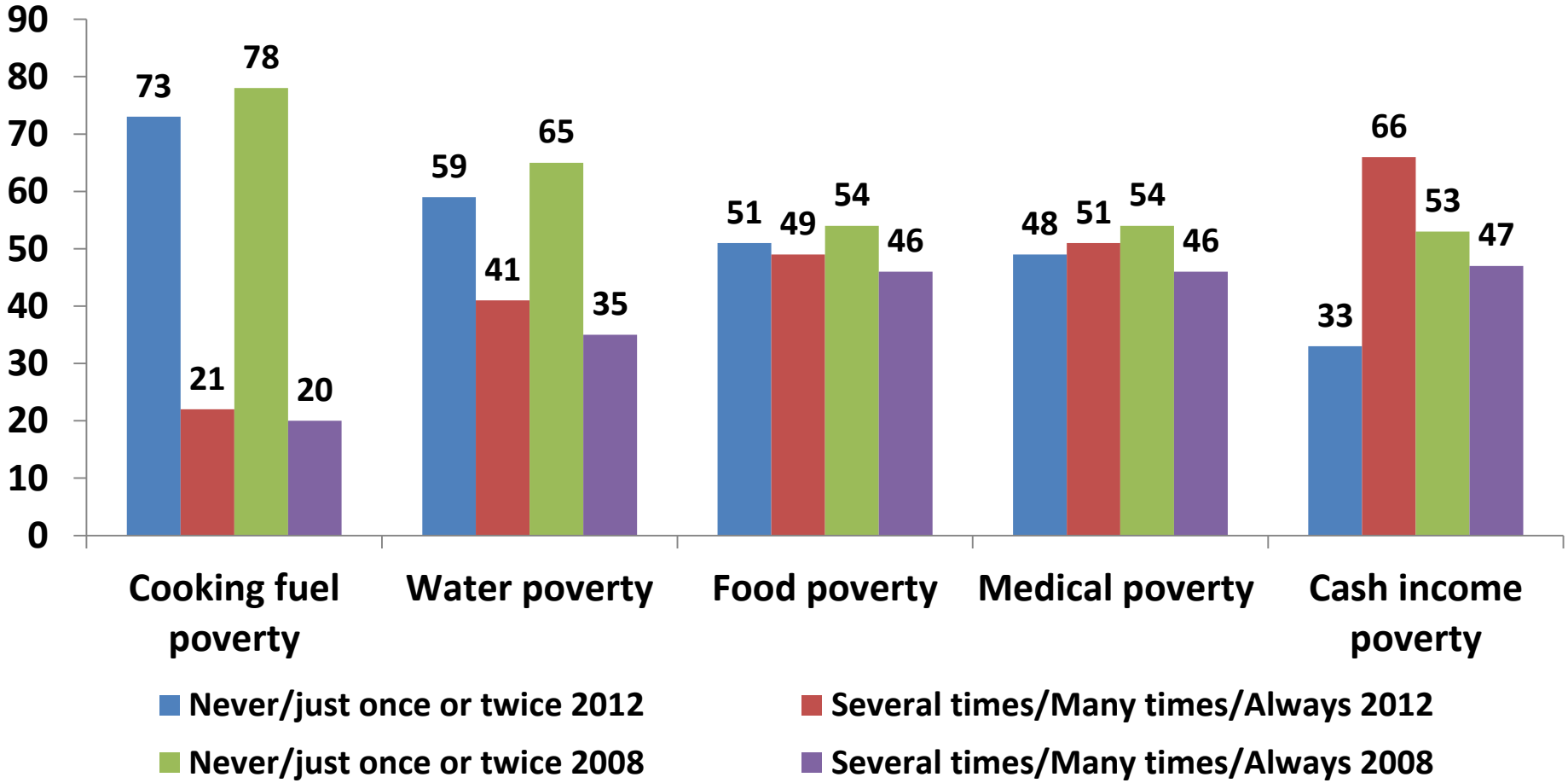
Afrobarometer tracks the prevalence of poverty by looking at people's experiences with shortages of basic necessities.

- In general, sizeable proportions of Liberians experienced shortages *"several times, many times or always"* with the following basic necessities in 2012 :

  → *Cash income **66 percent** (Never, **33 percent**)*
  → *Medicine/medical **51 percent** (Never, **48 percent**)*
  → *Food **49 percent** (Never, **51 percent**)*
  → *Potable water **41 percent** (Never, **59 percent**)*
  → *Fuel for cooking, **21 percent** (Never, **73 percent**)*

- Poverty is therefore a serious challenge confronting a segment of the Liberian people and must be of concern to development policy makers. This affirms Liberia placement at the bottom of the poverty table

Liberians' experience with poverty



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LIBERIANS ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

R5 Key Findings – B

Liberians largely disapprove Government's performance in several areas. Results from the 2012 Afrobarometer Survey show Liberians rated government performance *"very badly or fairly badly"* in the following areas:

- Managing the economy;
- Improving standard of living;
- Creating jobs;
- Keeping pricing down;
- Narrowing gaps between rich and poor;
- Providing water and sanitation services;
- Ensuring everyone has enough to eat;
- Fighting corruption;
- Maintaining roads and bridges; and
- Providing reliable supply of electricity.

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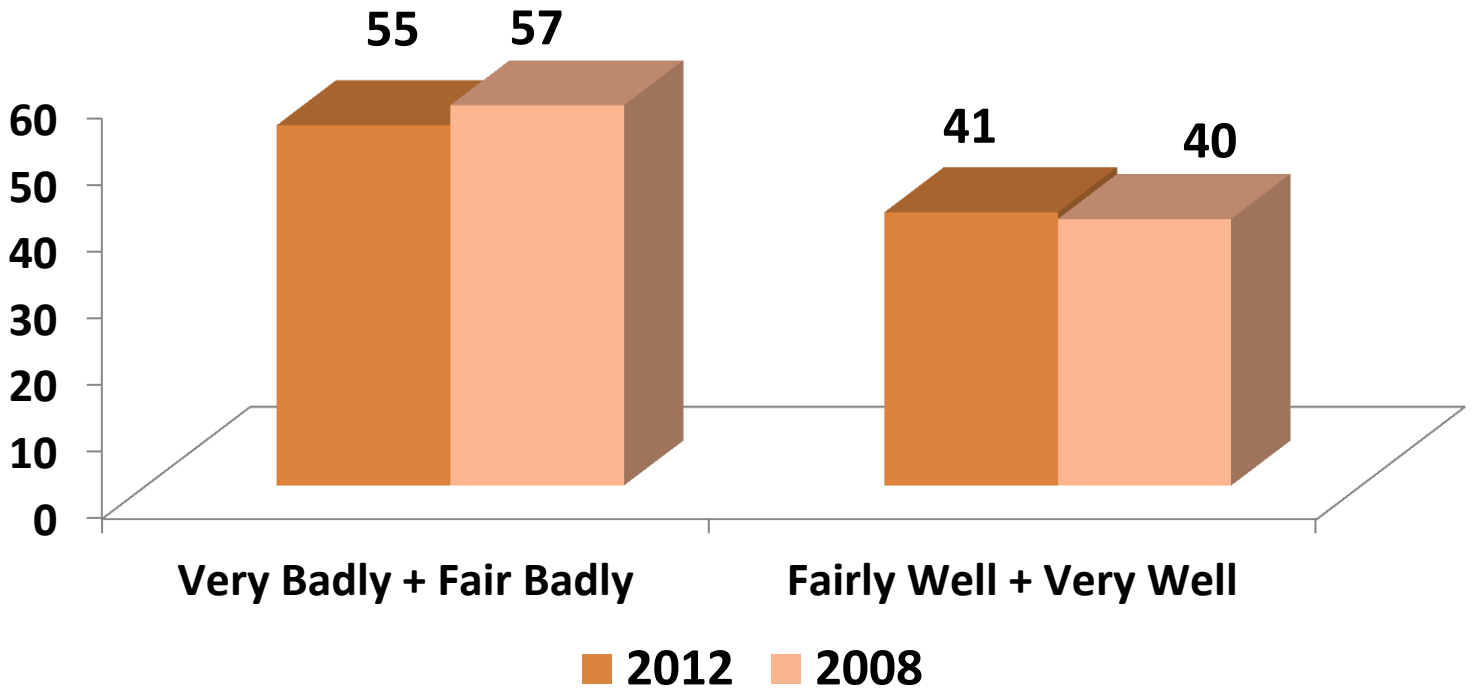
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling the management of the economy? (2012 versus 2008)



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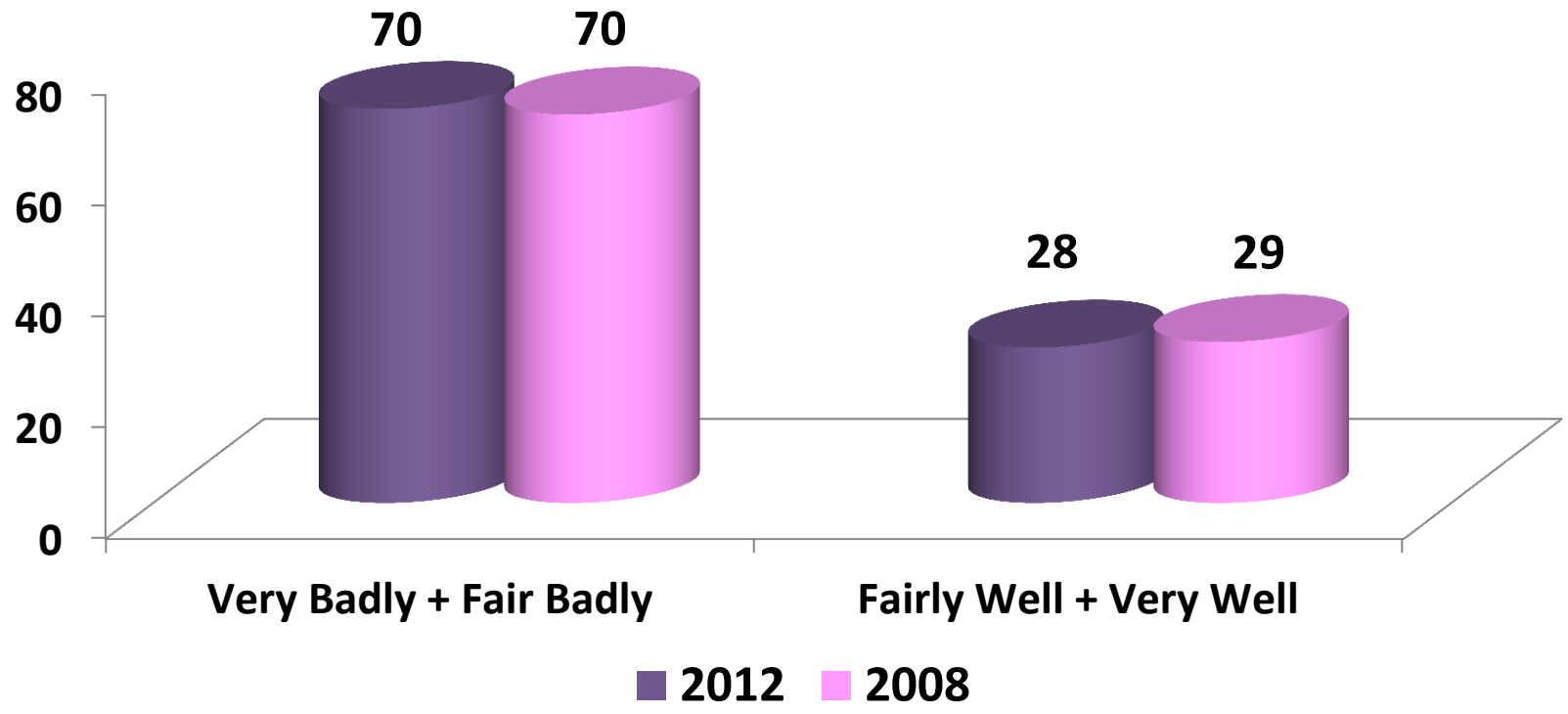
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling improvement of the living standards of the poor? (2012 versus 2008)



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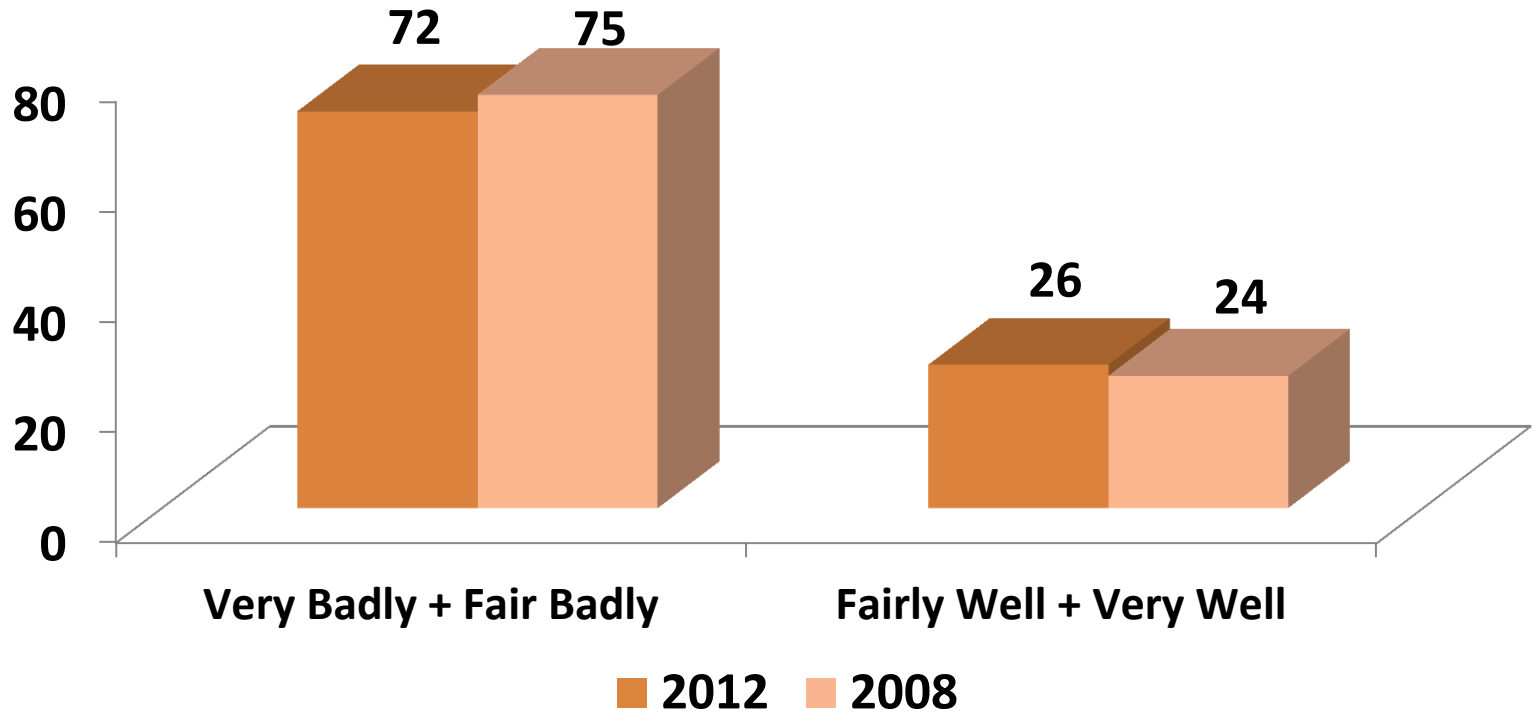
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling the Creation of jobs? (2012 versus 2008)



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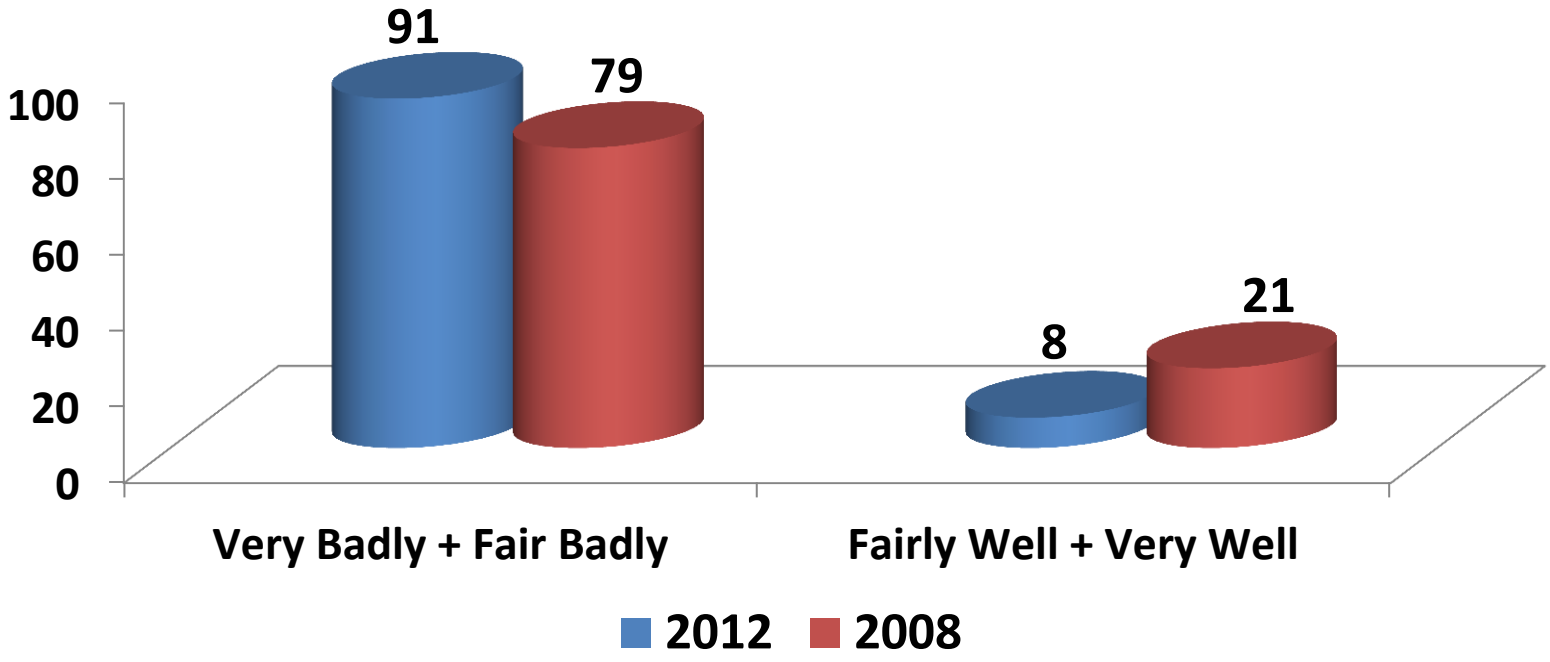
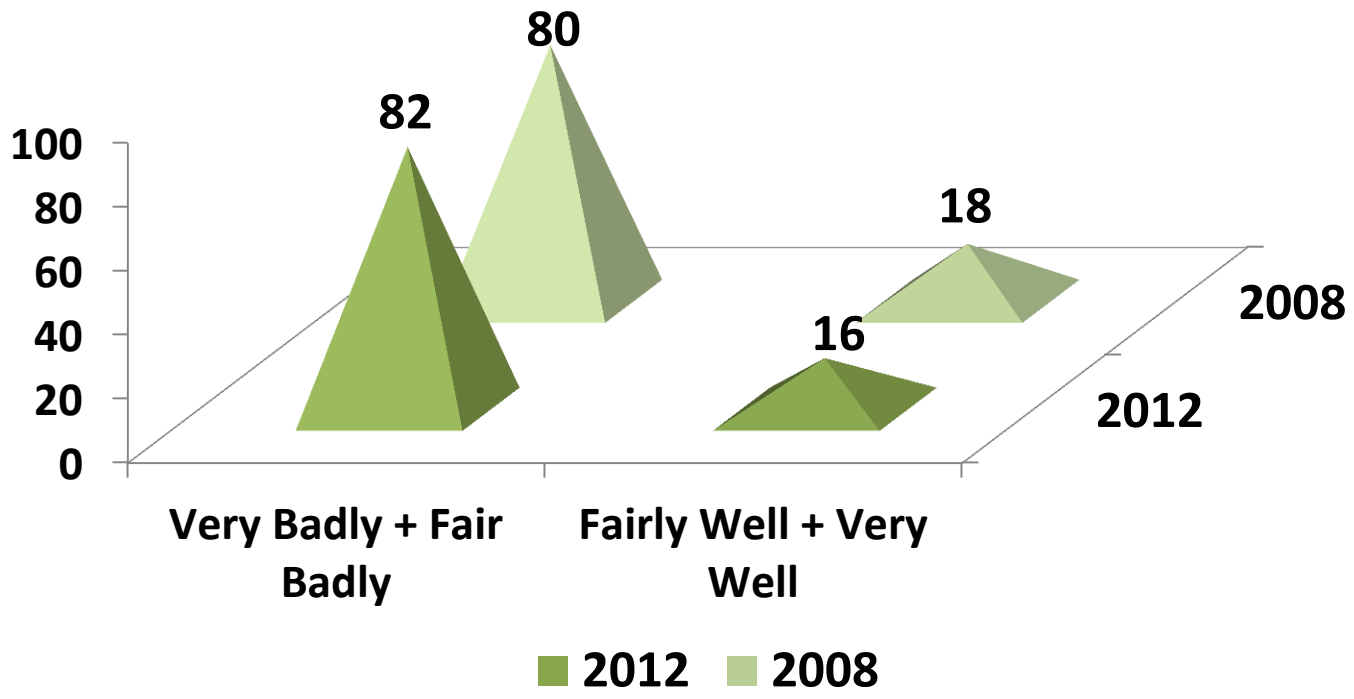
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling Keeping prices down? (2012 versus 2008)



How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling narrowing gaps between rich and poor? (2012 versus 2008)



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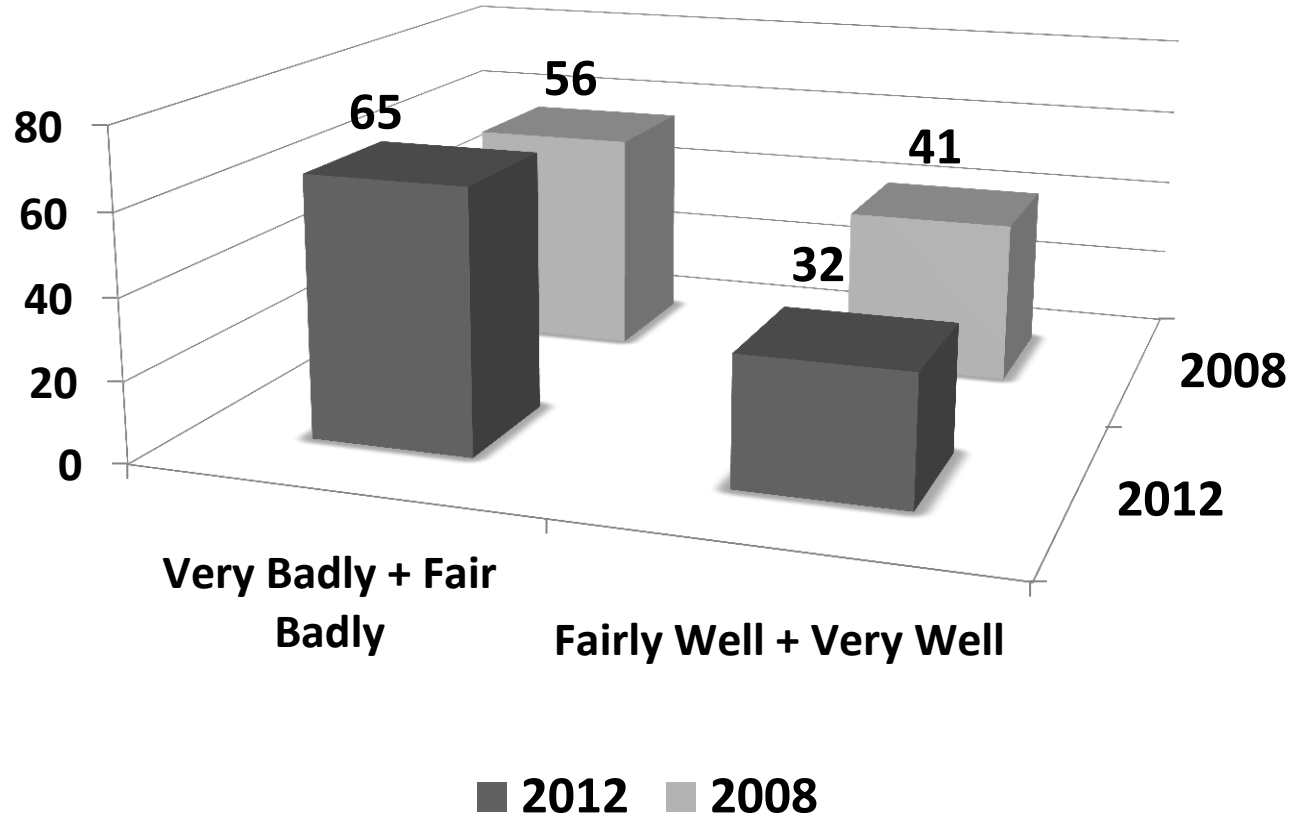
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling providing water and sanitation services? (2012 versus 2008)



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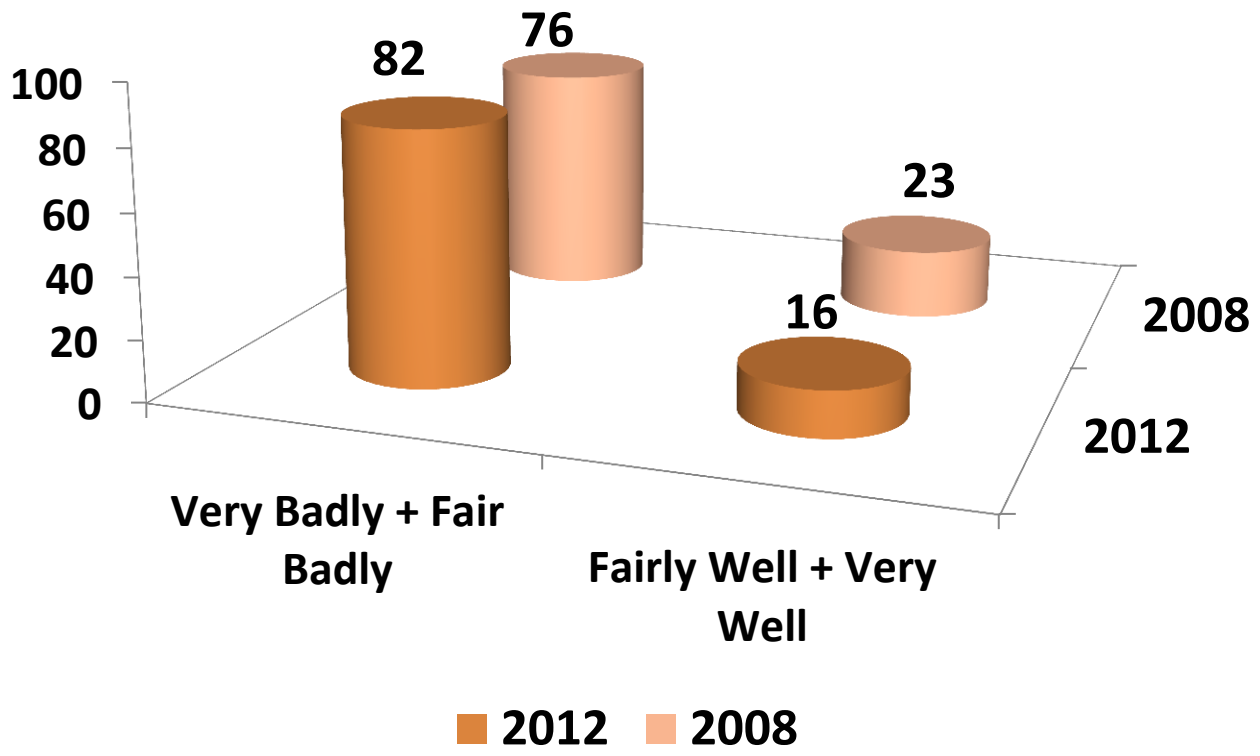
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling ensuring everyone has enough to eat? (2012 versus 2008)



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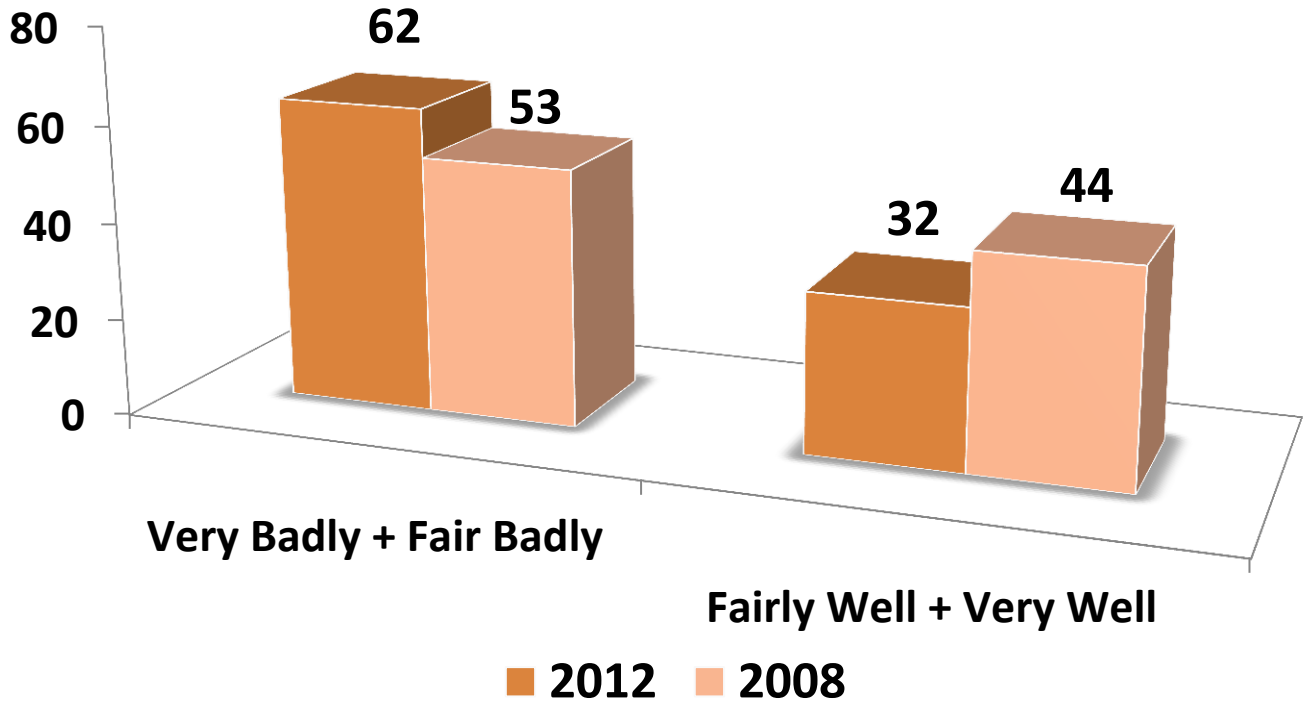
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling fighting corruption in government? (2012 versus 2008)



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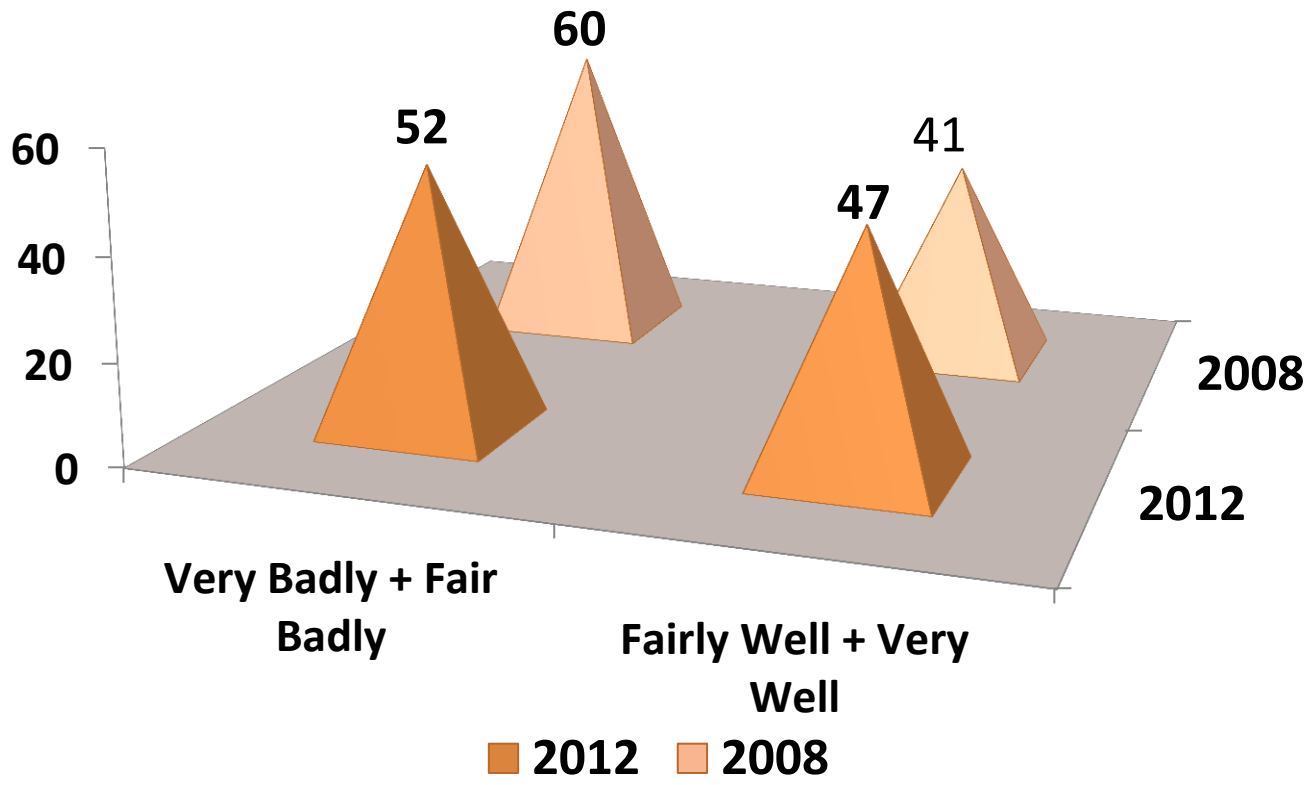
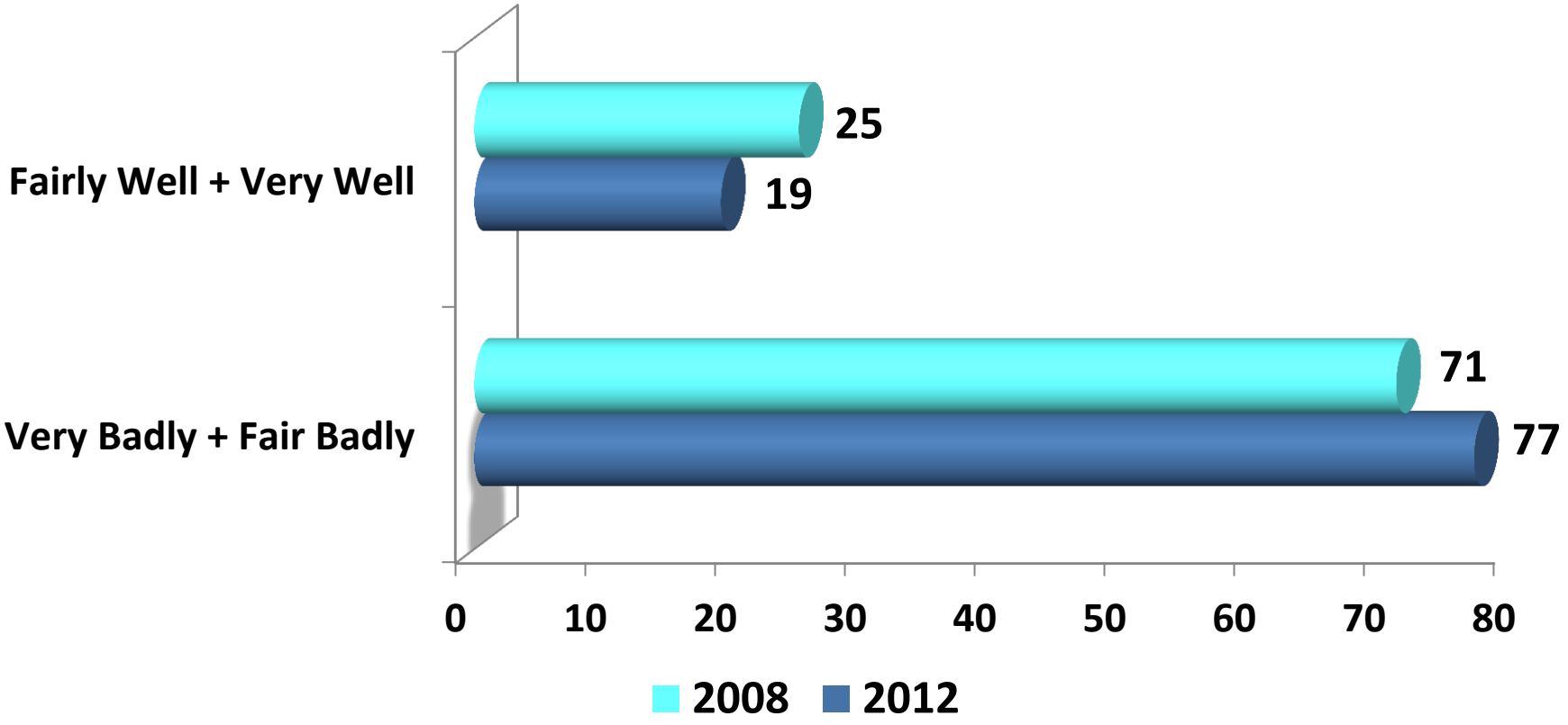
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling maintaining roads and bridges? (2012 versus 2008)



How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling providing reliable electricity? (2012 versus 2008)



Notwithstanding the negative ratings in some areas, government received positive performance ratings in the following areas:

- Reducing crime;
- Improving basic health services;
- Addressing educational needs;
- Combating HIV /AIDS;
- Empowering women; and
- Resolving violent conflict between communities.

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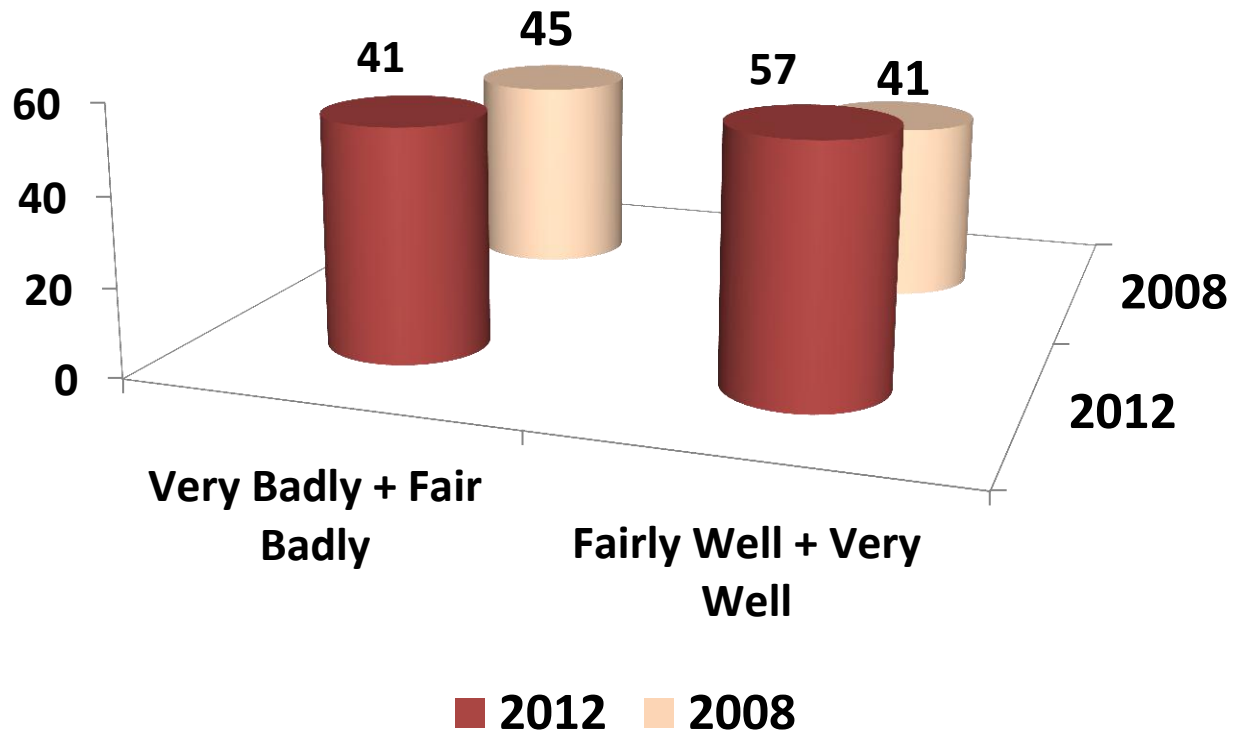
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling Reducing crime? (2012 versus 2008)



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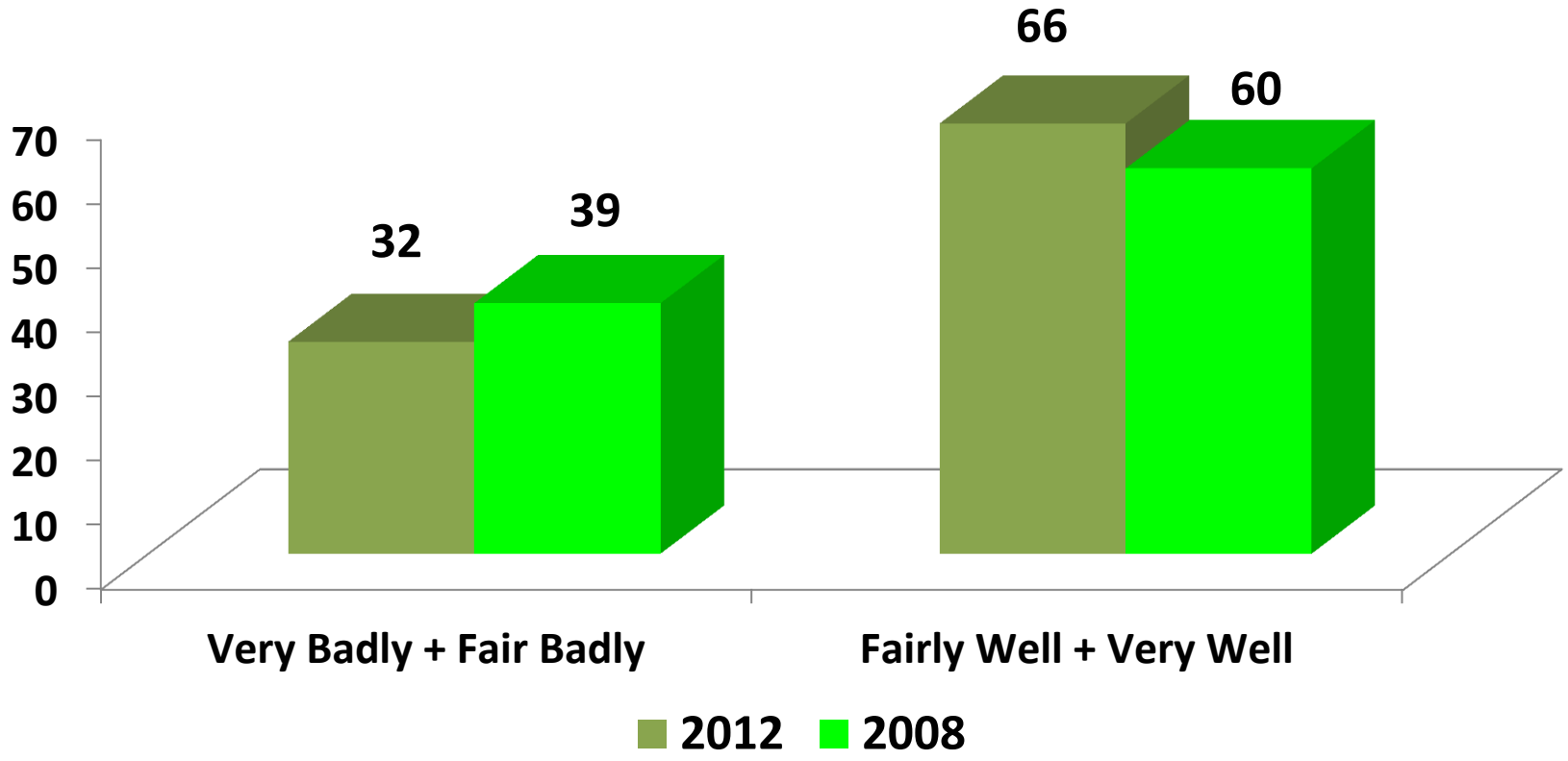
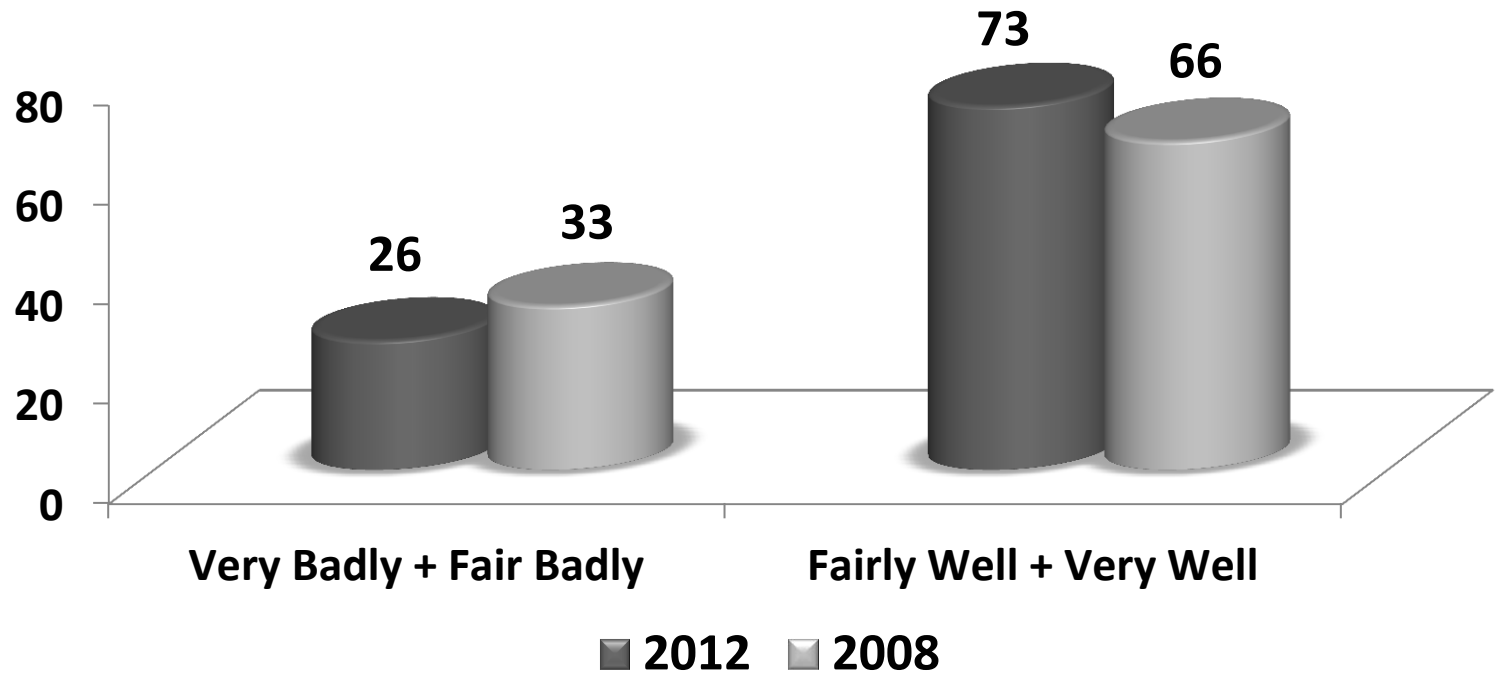
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling Improving basic health services? (2012 versus 2008)



How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling Addressing educational needs? (2012 versus 2008)



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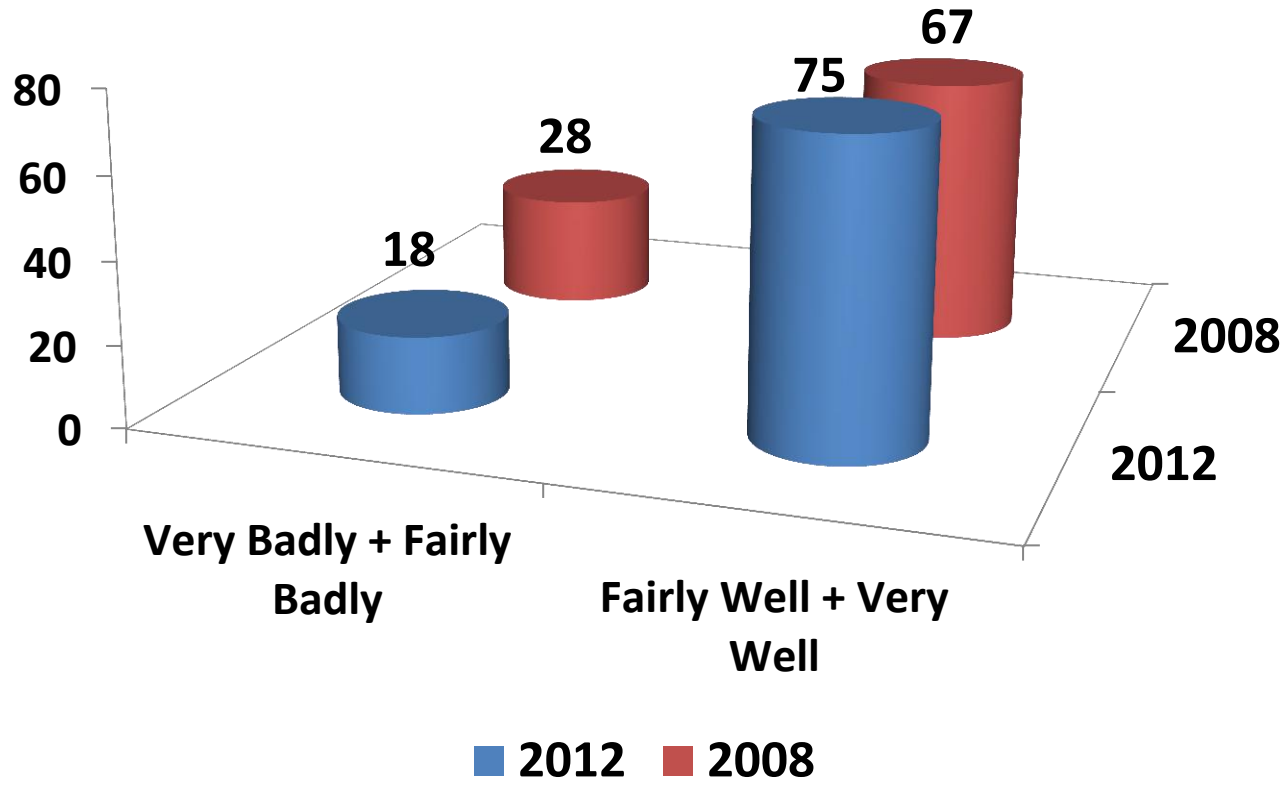
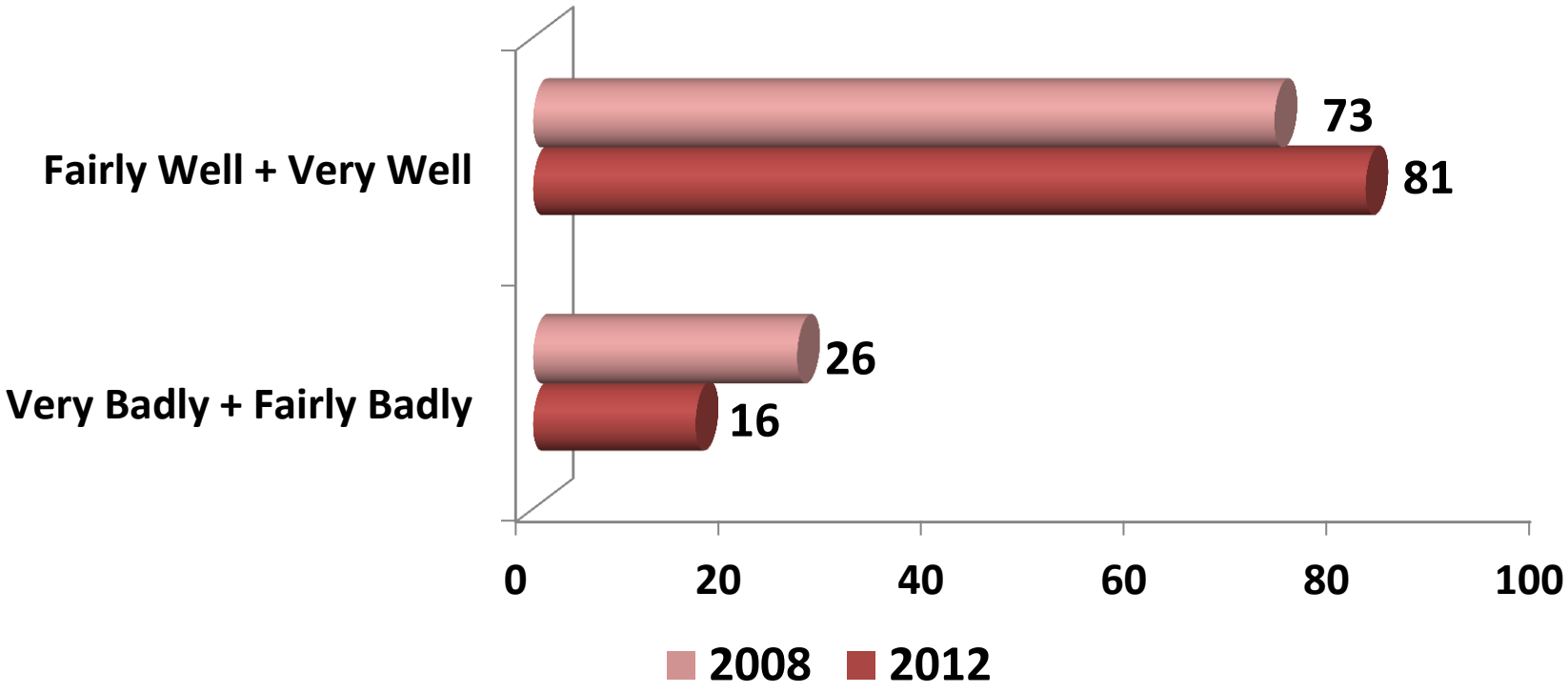
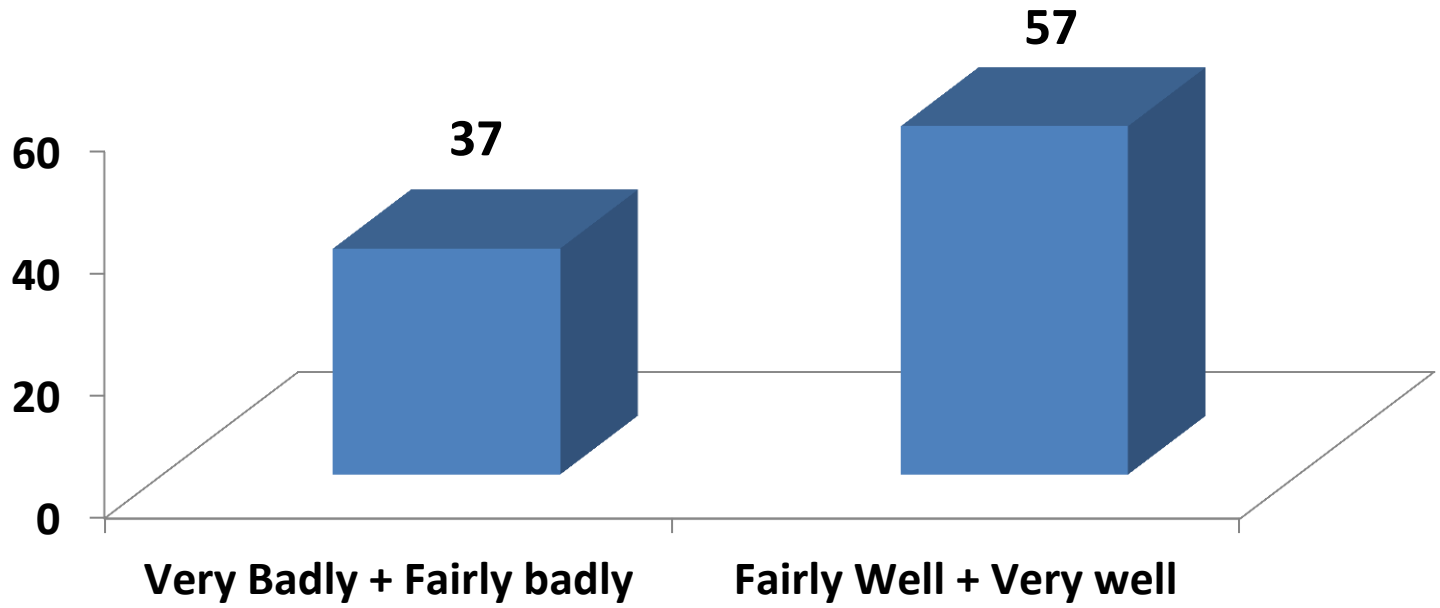
How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling combating HIV/AIDS? (2012 versus 2008)



How well or badly is the Unity Party-led government handling empowering women? (2012 versus 2008)

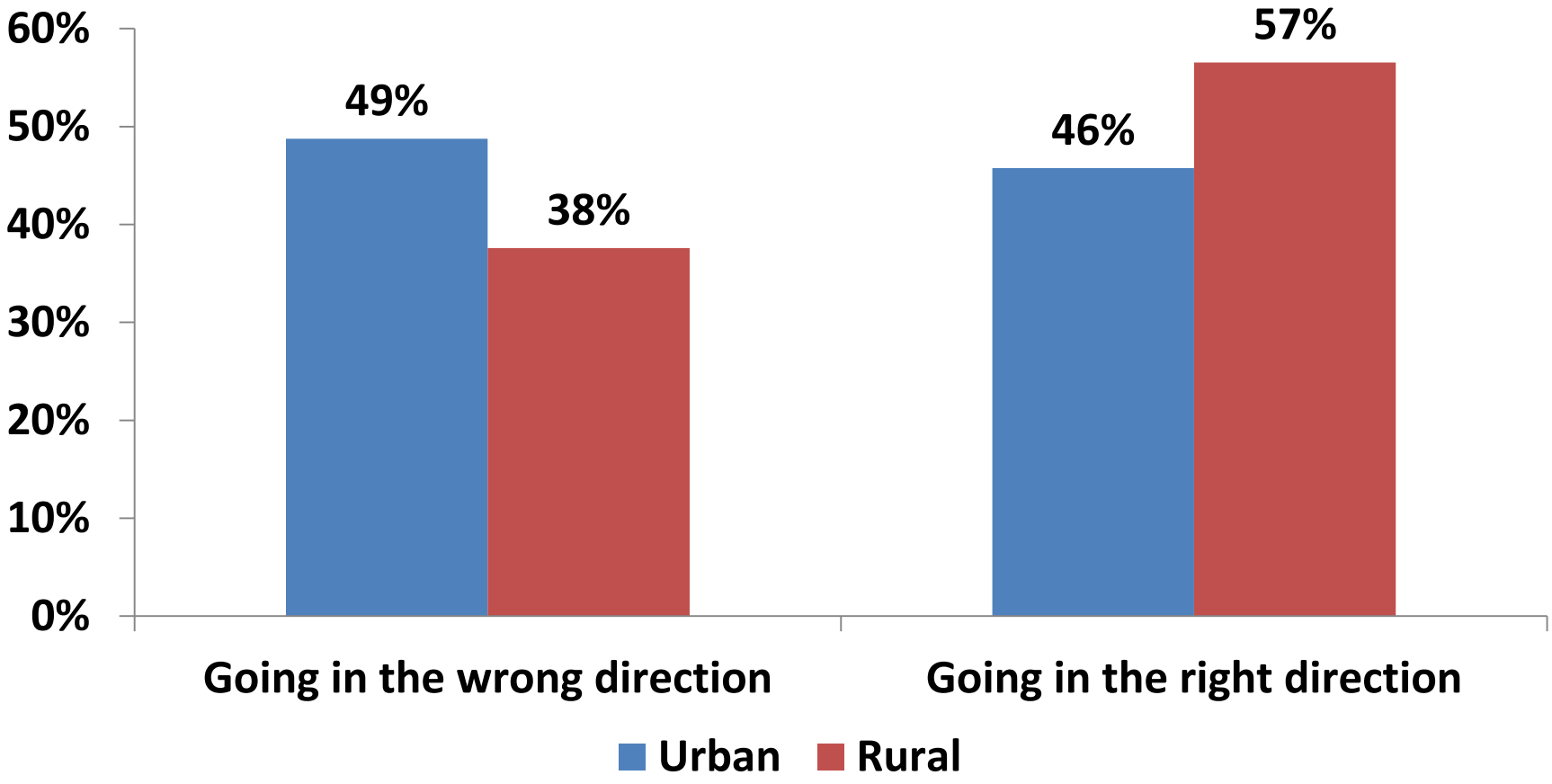


How well or badly would you say the Unity Party-led government helping in Resolving violent conflict between communities



Given the generally unfavorable performance ratings received by government, what do Liberians think about the general direction of the country?

- Majority of Liberians **(52 percent**) believe the country is heading in the right direction.
- However, a large minority (**43 percent**) think otherwise while **6 percent** don't know.
- Across settlements, rural dwellers **(57 percent**) are slightly more positive about the direction of the country compared to those in urban settlements **(46 percent**) .
- On the other hand, many more urban dwellers **(49 percent**) compared to **(38 percent**) rural folks think the country is heading in the wrong direction.


60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
49%
38%
46%
57%
Going in the wrong direction
Going in the right direction
Urban
Rural

Conclusion

- Although Liberians are optimistic about prospects for their personal living conditions, they do not think the country's macro economic situation is favorable.

- Despite government pronounced successful implementation of poverty reduction strategy, results from the 2012 study show popular disapproval of government performance since 2008 in the delivery of basic social services and facilities

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CORRUPTION AND TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

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