

Cape Town, South Africa
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News release

South Africans rank unemployment as the country's most urgent priority, support jobs program for youth

Continuing a decade-long demand, South Africans rank unemployment as the country's most important problem that the government urgently needs to address, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

A lack of jobs continues to outrank crime, housing, education, and corruption among citizens' priorities for government action.

Indeed, a majority of citizens report going without a cash income at least once during the year preceding the survey. Many also experienced shortages of other basic necessities such as clean water, food, medical care, and cooking fuel.

Citizens indicate that they would be willing to pay more taxes to support programs to help young people, the demographic bearing the brunt of the jobs crisis. They say that if the government decided to increase its spending on such programs, job creation should be the highest priority for additional investment.

Key findings

- Unemployment is the problem mostly widely seen as a top priority for government action, cited by six in 10 respondents (60%). Job creation has been at the top of the list for the past decade (Figure 1).
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of South Africans say they went without a cash income at least once during the year preceding the survey, including 25% who did so "many times" or "always." Many also experienced frequent shortages of food (14%), clean water (19%), medical care (13%), and cooking fuel (17%) (Figure 2).
- Based on these reported shortages, almost half (47%) of South Africans experienced either high (14%) or moderate (33%) lived poverty (Figure 3).
- Seven in 10 (70%) citizens say they would be willing to pay higher taxes to fund youth programs (Figure 4).
- More than (53%) say that if the government could increase its spending on programs to help young people, the highest priority for additional investment should be job creation (Figure 5).

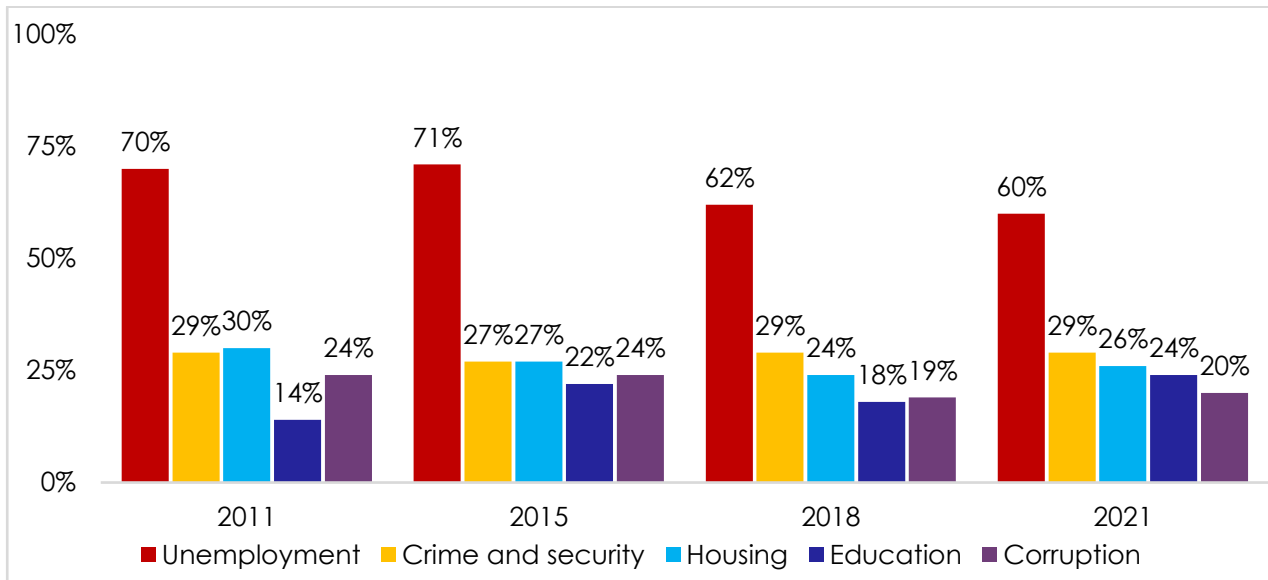
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Eight rounds of surveys have been conducted in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2021 cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus 94 Research, interviewed 1,600 adult South Africans in May-June 2021. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2018.

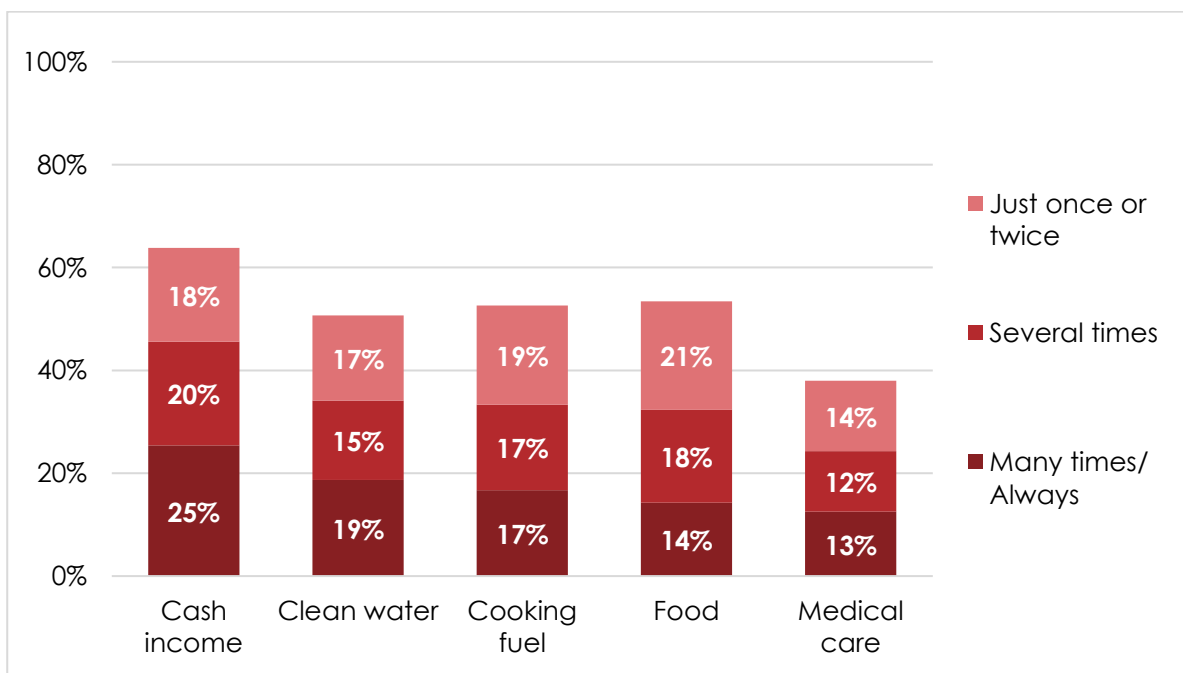
Charts

Figure 1: Most important problems | South Africa | 2021



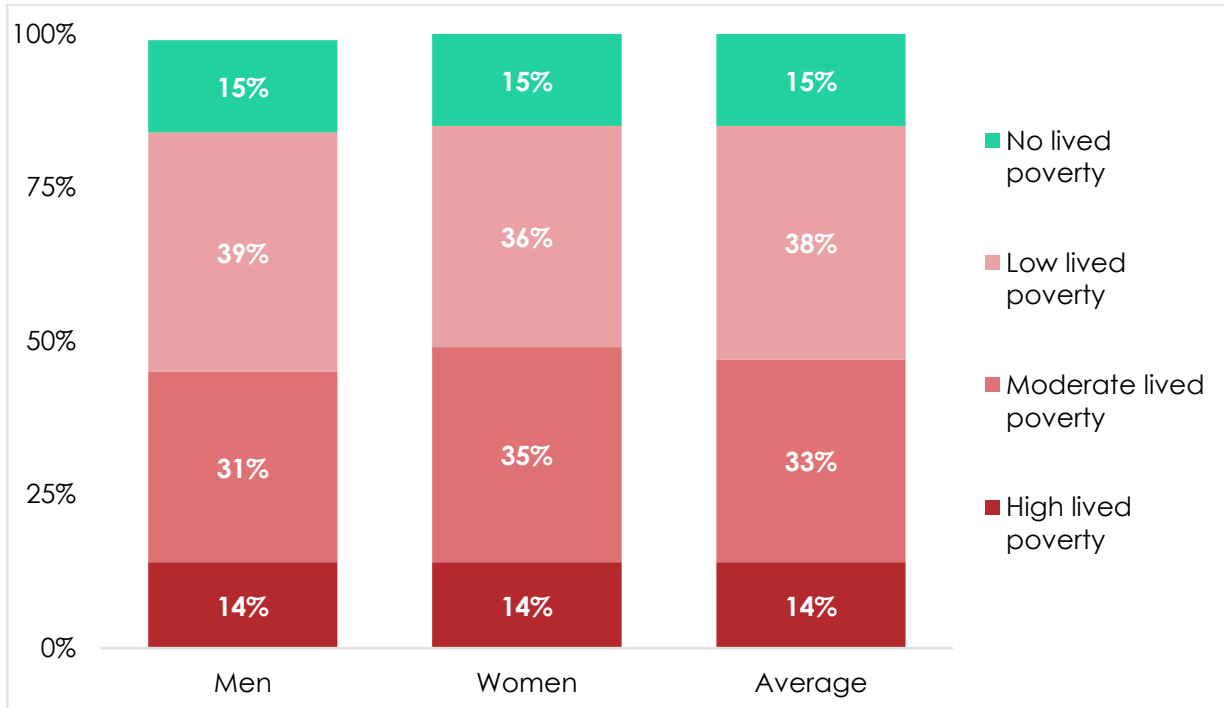
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Note: Up to three answers per respondent)

Figure 2: Going without basic necessities | South Africa | 2021



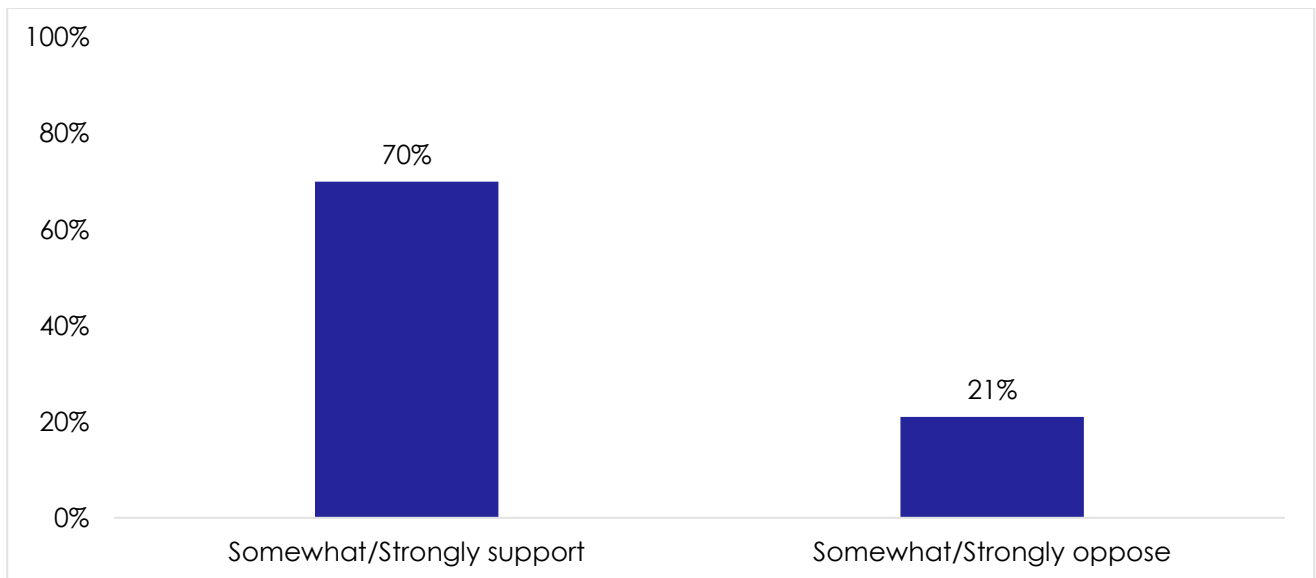
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?

Figure 3: Lived poverty | by gender | South Africa | 2021



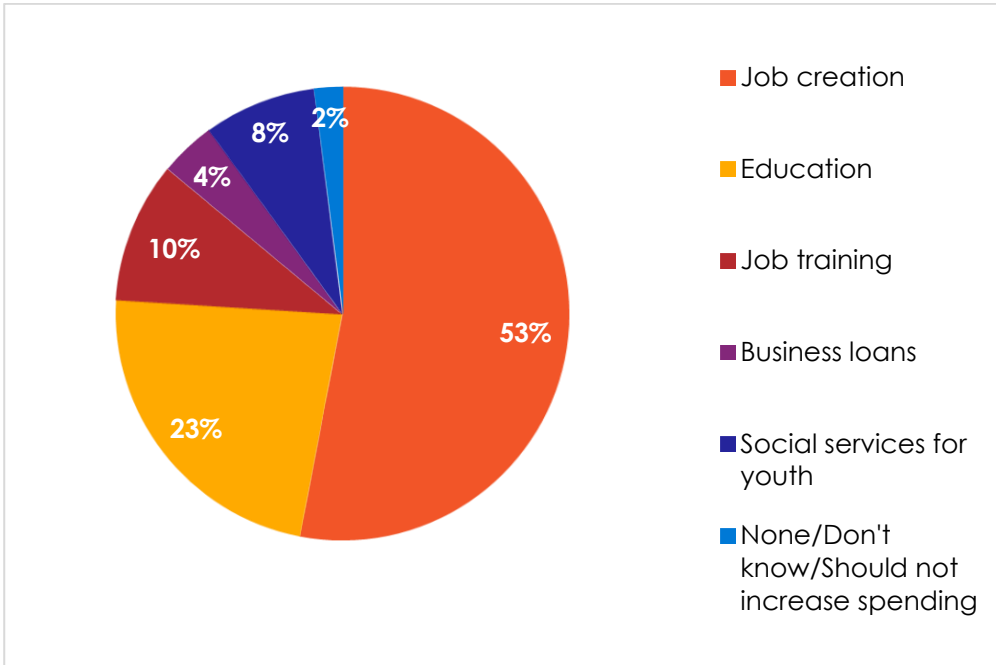
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Figure 4: Support for higher taxes to fund youth programs | South Africa | 2021



Respondents were asked: If the government decided to make people pay more taxes in order to support programs to help young people, would you support this decision or oppose it?

Figure 5: Highest priority for additional investment to help youth | South Africa | 2021



Respondents were asked: *If the government could increase its spending on programs to help young people, which of the following areas do you think should be the highest priority for additional investment?*

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