



Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
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News release

Despite decline in lived poverty, South Africans increasingly pessimistic about the economy

Considering the barrage of bad economic news to which South Africans have been subjected, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of 2015 Afrobarometer survey findings on the economy is that on a personal level, citizens seem to be doing slightly better. Furthermore, fewer South Africans in 2015 than in 2011 report having gone without basic necessities during the previous year.

However, at a macroeconomic level, a majority of South Africans view the economy as performing “fairly badly” or “very badly”. Compared to 2011, more citizens in 2015, say the country’s economic situation is bad, view economic conditions as worse than a year ago and not likely to improve over the next 12 months.

Citizens’ pessimism about the economy aligns strongly with its performance. With the exception of the recession of 2008-2009, economic prospects in 2016 are at their weakest point since 2000, with the economy projected to grow at 0,9%, having dropped from 1.3% in 2015 and 1.5% in 2014. The official unemployment rate remains high at 24,5% (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

The findings on the economy are being released at a time when the government, amid a severe drought and the impact of load shedding, has announced its plan to increase prices for some basic commodities as well as electricity.

For more information, please refer to the Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 83 (available at www.afrobarometer.org).

Key findings

- A majority (54%) of South Africans rate their country’s economic situation as “fairly bad” or “very bad,” an increase from 47% in 2011.
- On a personal level, fewer South Africans than in 2011 describe their own living conditions as “bad”, 36% vs. 41%.
- The proportion saying in 2015 that economic conditions are “worse” or “much worse” than 12 months earlier rose by 6 percentage points, from 33% in 2011 to 39%. Similarly, looking ahead, the proportion of those foreseeing worse conditions in 12 months’ time grew by 8 percentage points, from 21% to 29%.
- South Africans are less likely than in 2011 to report having gone without basic necessities at least once in the preceding year (Figure 2). About three in 10 citizens went without food (30%), water (31%), and medical care (29%) at least once, each reflecting a decrease of 8-10 percentage points from 2011. However, access to a cash income remains a challenge for a majority of citizens.

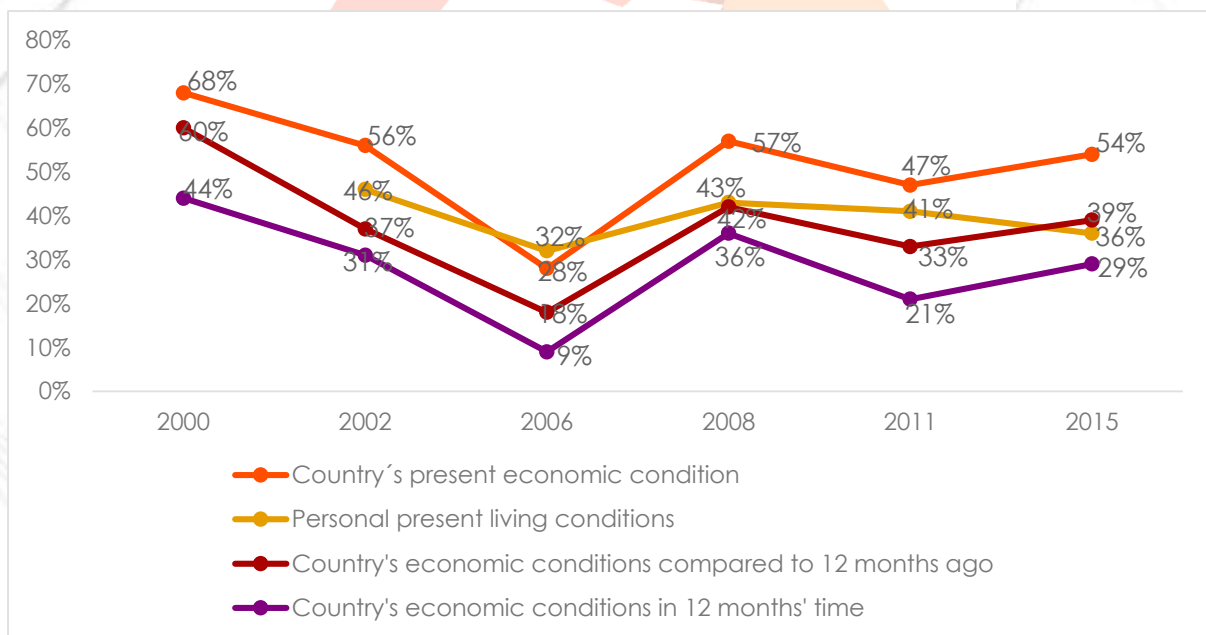
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and Plus 94 Research interviewed 2,400 adult South Africans in August and September 2015. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011.

Charts

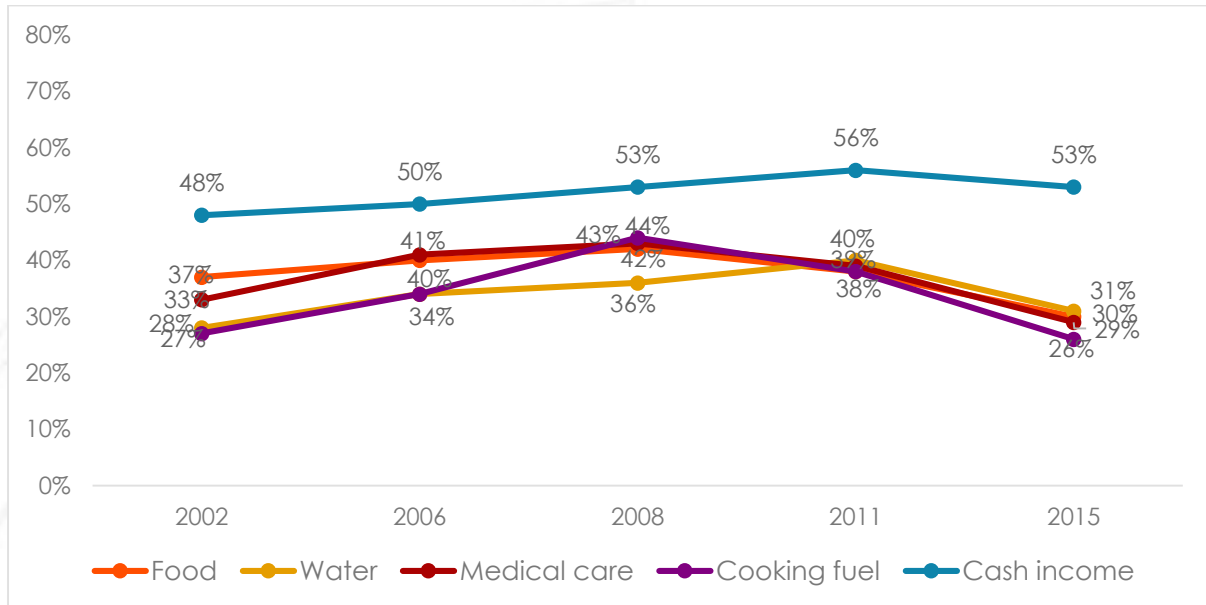
Figure 1: Negative rating of economic conditions | South Africa | 2000-2015



Respondents were asked: In general, how would you describe:

1. The present economic condition of this country?
2. Your own present living conditions?
 (% who say "fairly bad" or "very bad")
3. Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?
4. Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?
 (% who say "worse" or "much worse")

Figure 2: Going without basic necessities | South Africa | 2002-2015



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? (% who say "just once or twice," "several times," "many times," or "always")

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