

Decade of destitution? Severe lived poverty is surging in many African countries

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Summary

The share of humanity who live in conditions of poverty has been falling since at least 1980. Measured as the proportion of people who live on less than \$2.15 a day, the figure has declined from above 40% to below 10% – or from 2 billion to fewer than 750 million in absolute terms (Hasell, 2022; Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023; Roser, 2024).

Afrobarometer surveys in the 2000s and 2010s tracked the same downward trends in poverty rates in Africa as measured by the proportions of people who tell interviewers that they go without a basket of basic necessities. Driven by consistent economic growth and expansion of development infrastructure, “lived poverty” fell markedly on the continent between 2005 and 2015 (Mattes, Dulani, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016).



However, economic growth stagnated in the middle part of the 2010s. And by the end of the decade, African economies were further battered by declining foreign investment and commodity prices, reduced grain imports, and rising domestic prices – trends linked to climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Ero & Mutiga, 2023; Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023). Important political trends were also afoot as levels of political freedom fell in many countries (Freedom House, 2024).

As a result of these dynamics, both the average rate of deprivation and the proportion of people living under conditions of severe lived poverty rose steadily. By Afrobarometer's eighth round of surveys, conducted in 2019/2021, results showed that Africa had given back all the gains in poverty reduction it had achieved in the previous decade (Mattes & Patel, 2022).

The most recent findings, from Afrobarometer Round 9 surveys – conducted in 39 African countries between October 2021 and June 2023 – confirm the continued expansion of lived poverty. Indeed, the average rate of “going without” is now the highest ever recorded by Afrobarometer since it began its surveys in 1999. Even more troubling is the increased intensity of material deprivation, with one in four Africans reporting conditions of severe lived poverty. Rates of severe lived poverty have increased in 21 of the 34 countries (62%) surveyed in both 2019/2021 and 2021/2023, and in 23 of 33 countries (70%) surveyed in both 2014/2015 and 2021/2023.

Exploratory analyses suggest that increased corruption, but not declining political freedoms, may play a role in resurgent lived poverty. But further research is required to conclusively test the relationship between poverty and long-term political trends on the continent.

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 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

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.

This 39-country analysis is based on 53,444 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Key findings

- Large numbers of Africans continue to struggle to meet their most basic needs. Majorities report going without a cash income (81%), medicine or medical care (66%), and sufficient food (59%), clean water (57%), and cooking fuel (51%) at least once during the previous year.
- As measured by Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI), material deprivation has climbed to its highest average level of the past 25 years.
- Rates of severe lived poverty, or the experience of "going without" basic necessities on a frequent basis, have also risen to a new high, affecting 24% of citizens.
- Lived poverty varies widely across the continent in extent, intensity, and trajectory. For example, over the past decade, severe material deprivation has fallen in Liberia, Burkina Faso, Togo, Gabon, and Morocco while increasing sharply in Nigeria, Namibia, Mali, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Lived poverty: Going without basic necessities in Africa

To measure lived poverty, Afrobarometer asks respondents: *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?* Respondents are offered the following range of options: "never" for those who experienced no shortages, "just once or twice," "several times," "many times," and "always." Because these questions are asked in all surveyed countries, we are able not only to monitor shifts in the levels and nature of poverty over time, but also to compare experiences across countries and regions.

Large numbers of Africans continue to struggle to meet their most basic needs. Across 39 countries surveyed in 2021/2023, two-thirds (66%) of respondents report having gone without medicine or medical services at least once in the previous 12 months (Figure 1). Almost six in 10 experienced shortages of food (59%) and clean water (57%), while 51% lacked cooking fuel. And fully eight in 10 Africans (81%) say they went without a cash income at least once during the year.

Overall, nine in 10 respondents report having faced at least one of these five forms of material deprivation in the previous year.

Even more troubling is the intensity of deprivation. In substantial numbers, Africans encountered *frequent* shortages ("many times" or "always") in the previous year with respect to a cash income (43%), medicine or medical treatment (25%), clean water (25%), food (19%), and cooking fuel (16%).

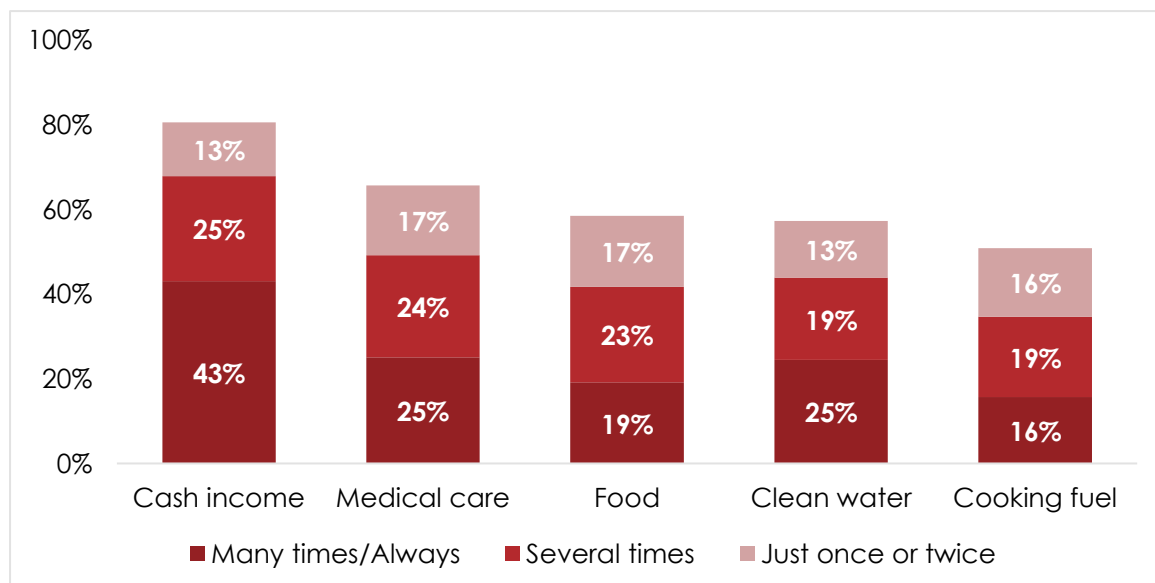
Measuring poverty

Poverty can be measured in different ways. At the national level, all countries produce national accounts data to calculate their gross national income (GNI), which is used to summarise national wealth and the total state of the economy. However, some analysts have questioned the capacity of many African countries' national statistics systems to generate these numbers reliably (Jerven, 2013).

At the personal or household level, national statistics offices conduct large household surveys to measure incomes, expenditures, assets, and access to services, which are then used to calculate national poverty lines and place individuals above or below these lines. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 1 focusing on reducing the number of people living on less than \$1.90 a day is a good example. However, such surveys are expensive and are conducted infrequently in many African countries. Other development organisations collect data on the consequences of poverty in a given country, such as the proportion of people who don't use improved drinking water sources or the proportion of children under age 5 who are underweight.

As a contribution to the tracking of poverty in Africa, Afrobarometer offers the Lived Poverty Index (LPI), an experiential measure that is based on a series of survey questions about how frequently people actually go without basic necessities during the course of a year. The LPI measures a portion of the concept of poverty that is not captured well by other measures, and thus offers an important complement to official statistics on poverty and development (Mattes, 2008). Because people are the best judges of their own interests, survey respondents are best placed to tell us about their quality of life, though they might not be able to do it with a great deal of precision. If Amartya Sen (1999) is right and the value of one's standard of living lies in the living itself, an experiential measure of shortages of the basic necessities of life takes us directly to the central core of the concept of poverty.

Figure 1: Going without basic necessities in Africa | 39 countries | 2021/2023



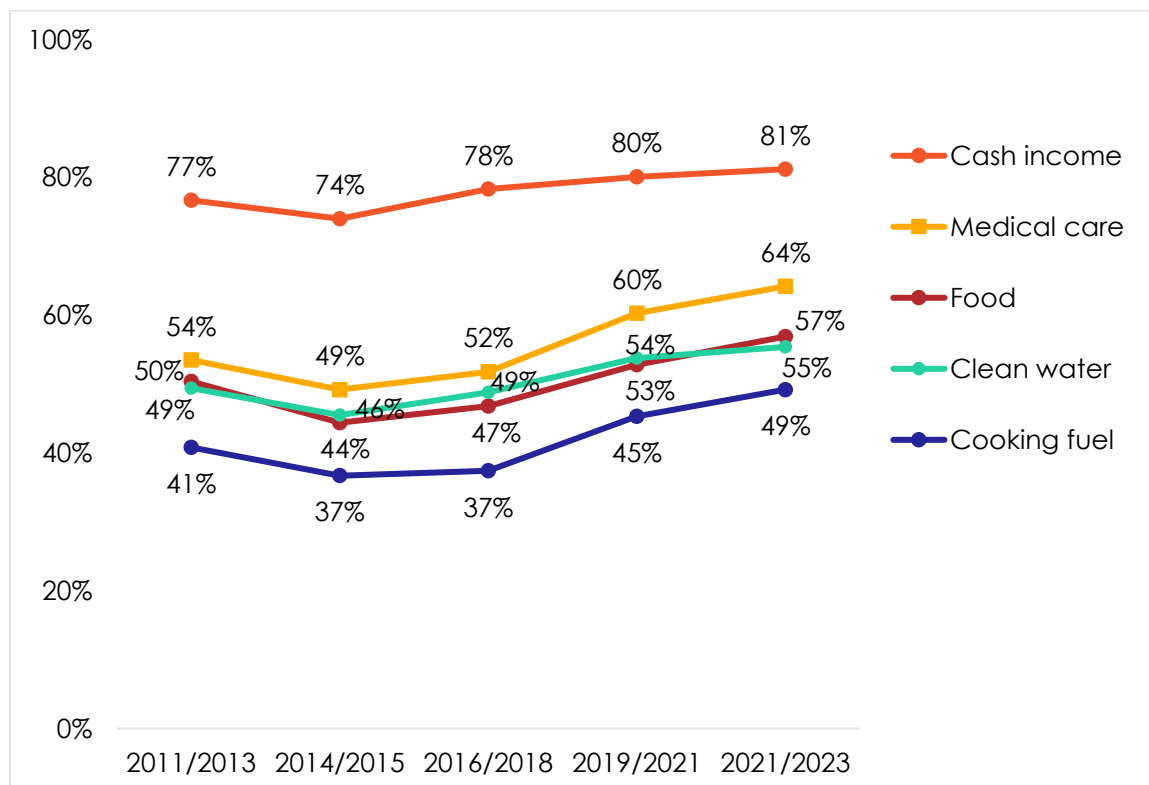
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income? (Note: Due to rounding, summed response categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of categories shown in graphics.)

Reflecting the continent's ongoing employment crisis, lack of access to a cash income remains the most frequently cited form of deprivation. On average across the 30 countries surveyed consistently since 2011/2013, about three-quarters or more of respondents have reported that they went without a cash income at least once during the previous year, with a 7-percentage-point increase since 2014/2015 (Figure 2).

While cash income is not in itself a basic need, access to it can enable citizens to meet their basic and non-basic needs. Income shortages therefore have many important spillover effects on people's lives. The fact that four-fifths of Africans report in 2021/2023 that they went without a cash income at least once during the previous 12 months – and that 43% did so frequently – poses a major development challenge, as many adults on the continent cannot afford to buy resources for immediate use or to invest in their long-term economic security.

Deprivation also shows increases, on average, for the other four basic necessities: Compared to 2014/2015, "going without" is up by 15 points for medical care, 13 points for food, 12 points for cooking fuel, and 9 points for clean water.

Figure 2: Shortage of basic necessities over time | 30 countries | 2011-2023

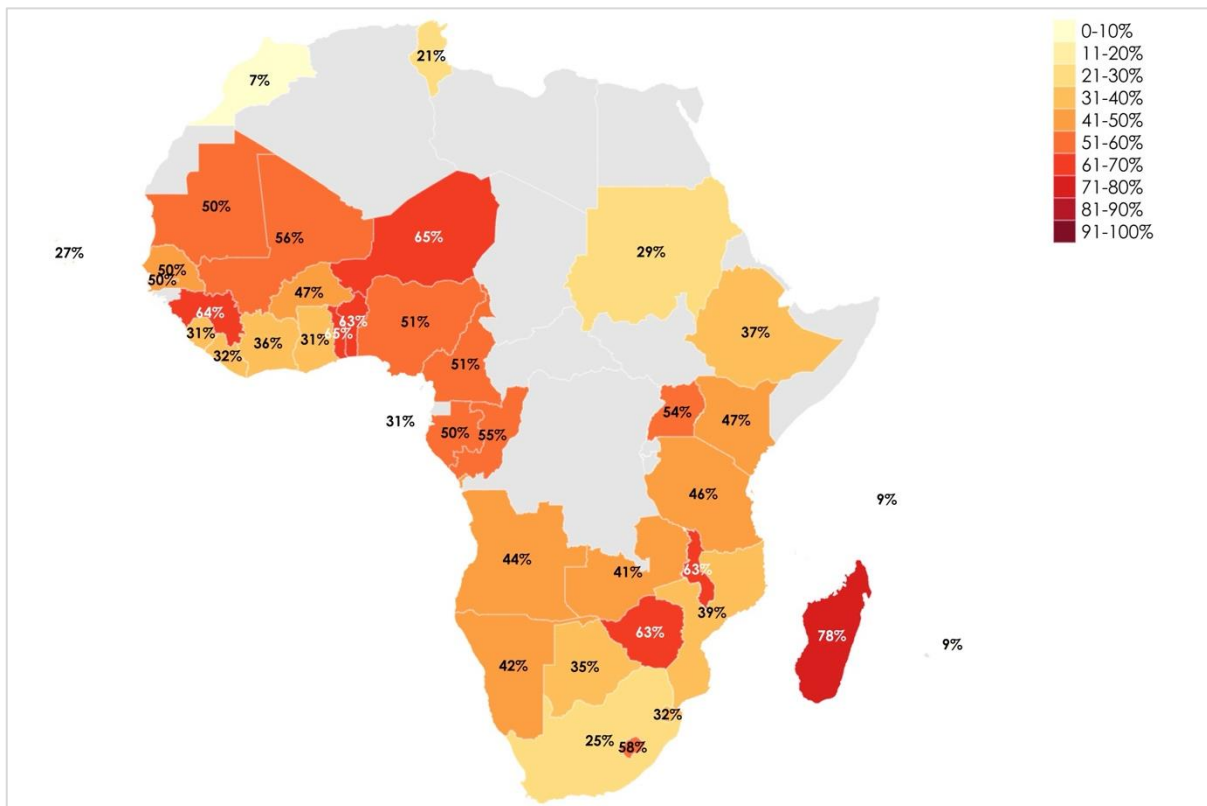


(% who say they or a family member went without these basic necessities "just once or twice," "several times," "many times," or "always" during the previous year)

These average figures, however, mask a great deal of variation in the extent of these shortages across the continent, as well as within societies. In terms of food, for instance, fewer than two in 10 Seychellois (13%), Mauritians (16%), and Moroccans (18%) experienced a shortage in the previous year, compared to four-fifths of Angolans (81%), Mauritians (82%), Nigerians (84%), Nigeriens (86%), and Brazzaville-Congolese (87%) (not shown).

Similarly, the share of citizens who frequently went without a cash income ranged from around one in 10 in Morocco, the Seychelles, and Mauritius to 78% in Madagascar (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Frequently went without a cash income | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without a cash income? (% who say “many times” or “always”)

The Lived Poverty Index (LPI)

Afrobarometer summarises the information in the five “gone without” questions by combining their responses to calculate an average score for each respondent, and for each country, that captures the rate of an underlying phenomenon we call “lived poverty.” This allows us to calculate an overall average with which to compare countries, regions, or groups. Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores range along a five-point scale from 0, for someone who never went without any of the five basic necessities, to a high of 4, which would indicate that an individual experienced a constant absence of all five basic necessities (Table 1).¹

Table 1: Categorising lived poverty

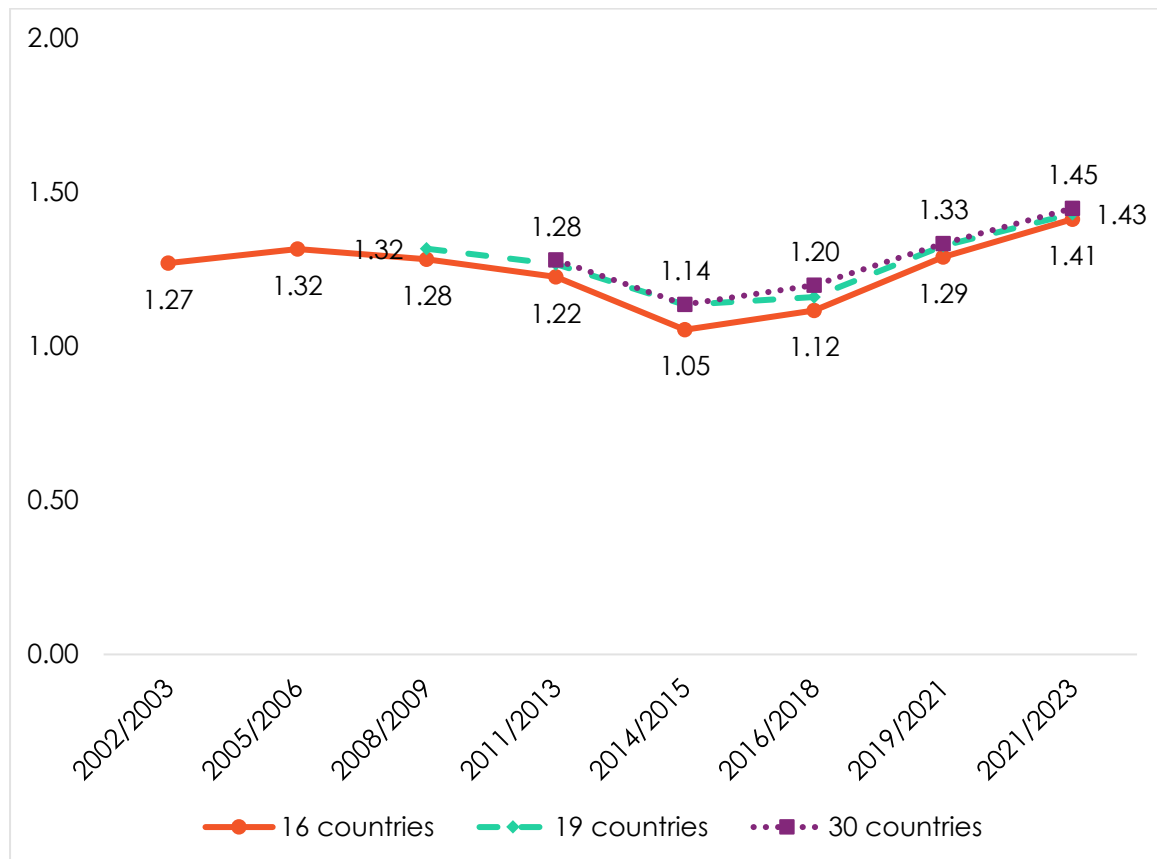
LPI score	Interpretation	Category
0.0	No shortages across five necessities	“No lived poverty”
0.2-1.0	One or two shortages across one or more items	“Low lived poverty”
1.2-2.0	Several shortages across one or more items	“Moderate lived poverty”
2.2 and above	Many or constant shortages	“Severe lived poverty”

¹ Previous research has demonstrated that this scale has impressive internal validity as well as reliability that is strong and consistent across all country samples and across all survey rounds (see Mattes, 2008). In Round 9 surveys, factor analysis extracted a single dimension with an eigenvalue of 2.65 that explains 52.9% of the common variance (reliability (alpha) = .777). For independent validations of the scale, see Meyer and Keyser (2016), Odhiambo (2019), and Ntodwa, Dulani, and Masumbu (2024).

The score for the mean level of lived poverty across all 39 countries surveyed in 2021/2023 is 1.45 (SD=0.958), which corresponds to “moderate lived poverty” (i.e. several shortages for at least one of the five necessities). This is the highest cross-national average LPI we have measured since we began Afrobarometer surveys in 1999 (Figure 4). Average LPI scores range from 0.36 in Seychelles to 2.11 in Mauritania (Figure 5), and a majority of countries experienced an increase in their average LPI score since the previous round of surveys in 2019/2021 (Figure 6).

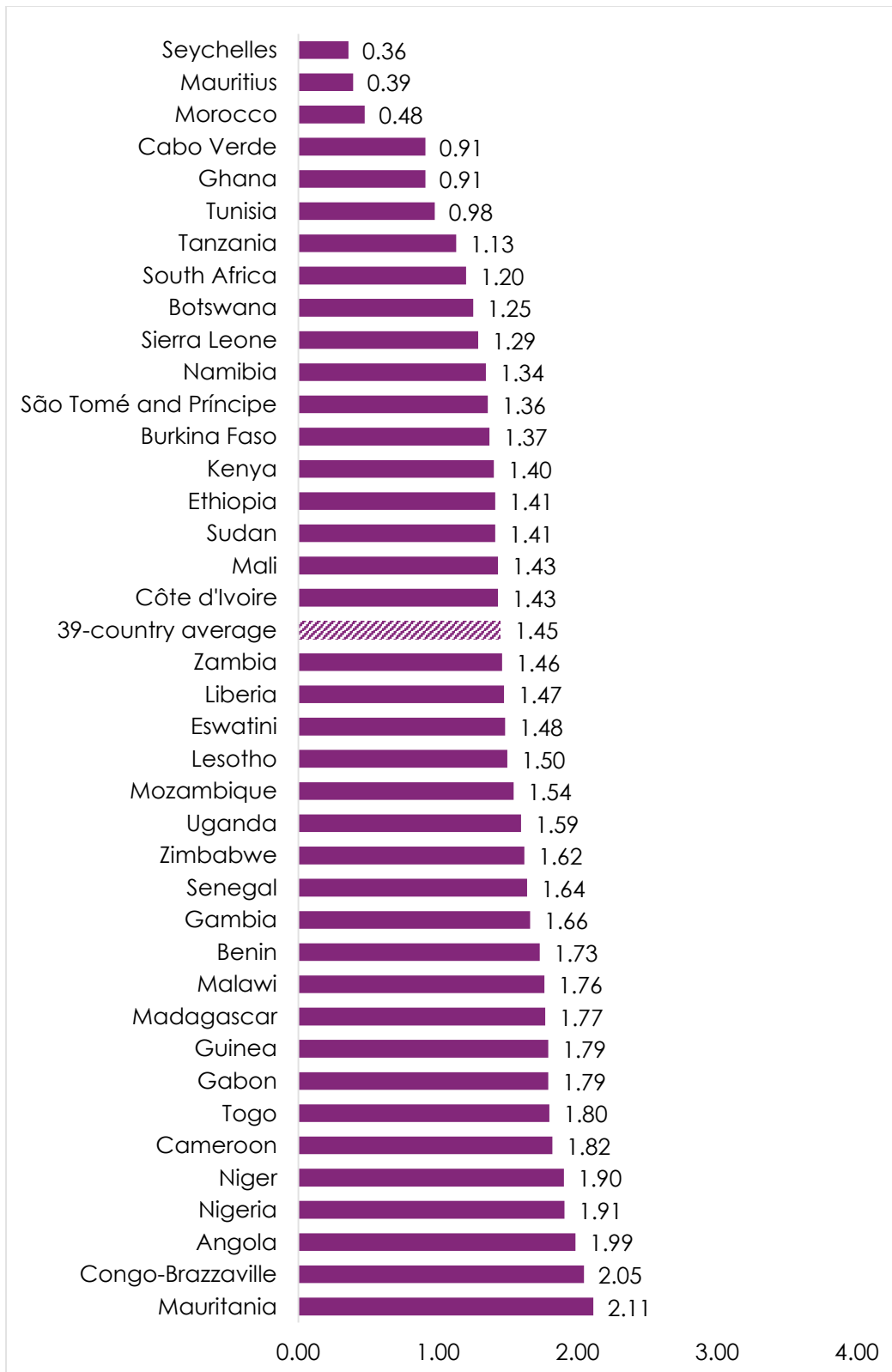
Our results also show important differences in the intensity of lived poverty across the continent (Figure 7). For instance, in both South Africa and Ghana, eight in 10 citizens experienced at least some shortage of basic necessities. But the two countries differ considerably in their relative shares across low (33% vs. 50%), moderate (30% vs. 25%), and high (20% vs. 9%) levels of lived poverty. Similarly, while 96% of citizens experienced some form of lived poverty in both Burkina Faso and Angola, severe lived poverty was more than twice as common in Angola (44%) as in Burkina (18%).

Figure 4: Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores over time, various country samples (average index score) | up to 30 countries | 2002-2023



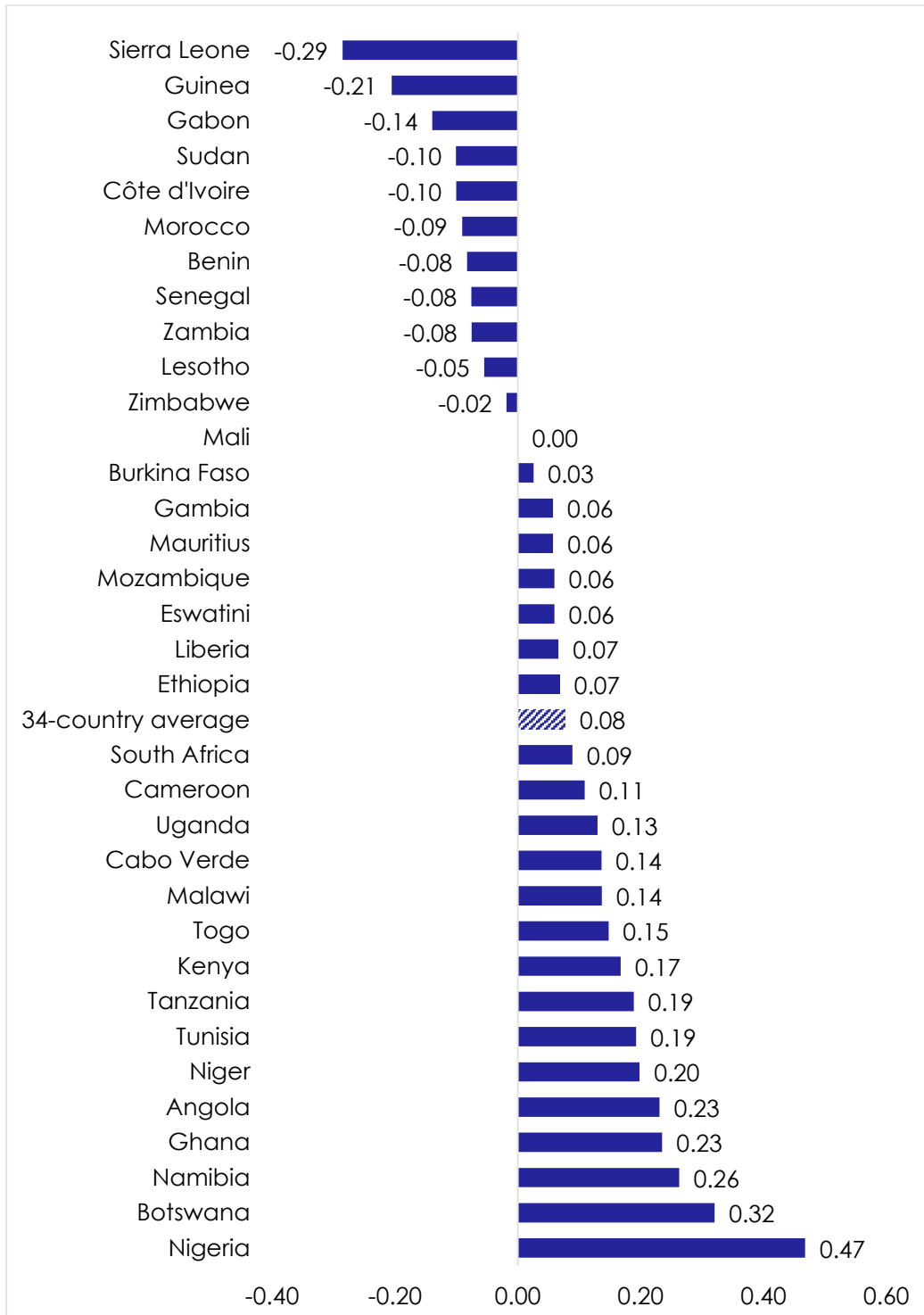
Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities).

Figure 5: LPI scores | 39 countries | 2021/2023



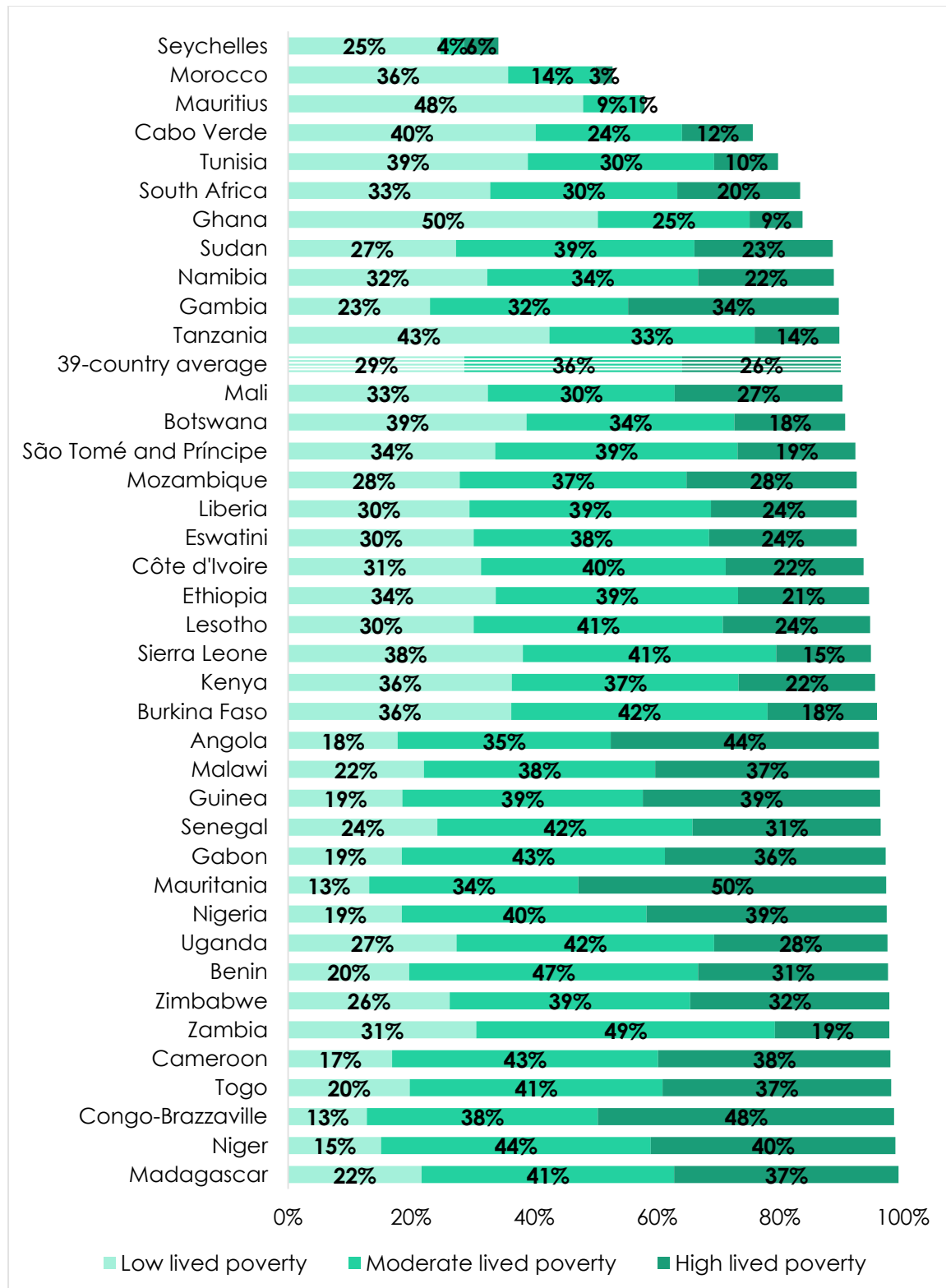
Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities). The figure shows average (mean) LPI scores by country.

Figure 6: Changes in LPI scores | 34 countries | 2019-2023



Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities). The figure shows changes in LPI scores between Afrobarometer Round 8 (2019/2021) and Round 9 (2021/2023).

Figure 7: Levels of lived poverty in Africa | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores reflect average deprivation of five basic necessities on a scale of 0 (no deprivation) to 4 (constant absence of all basic necessities). The figure shows the proportion of respondents in each country categorised as experiencing "low" (LPI score of 0.2-1.0), "moderate" (LPI score of 1.2-2.0), and "high/severe" (LPI score of 2.2-4.0) lived poverty.

Afrobarometer’s lived poverty measure also captures the share of Africans who enjoy *full* access to food, clean water, medication and medical care, cooking fuel, and a cash income (i.e. who experience no lived poverty). Overall, 10% of citizens enjoy this level of material security in 2021/2023. Access to these basic necessities increases with respondents’ age and education, is higher among urban than rural residents, and is more likely among citizens who report having a full-time job than those who either work part time or do not hold wage employment (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Full access to basic necessities | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023

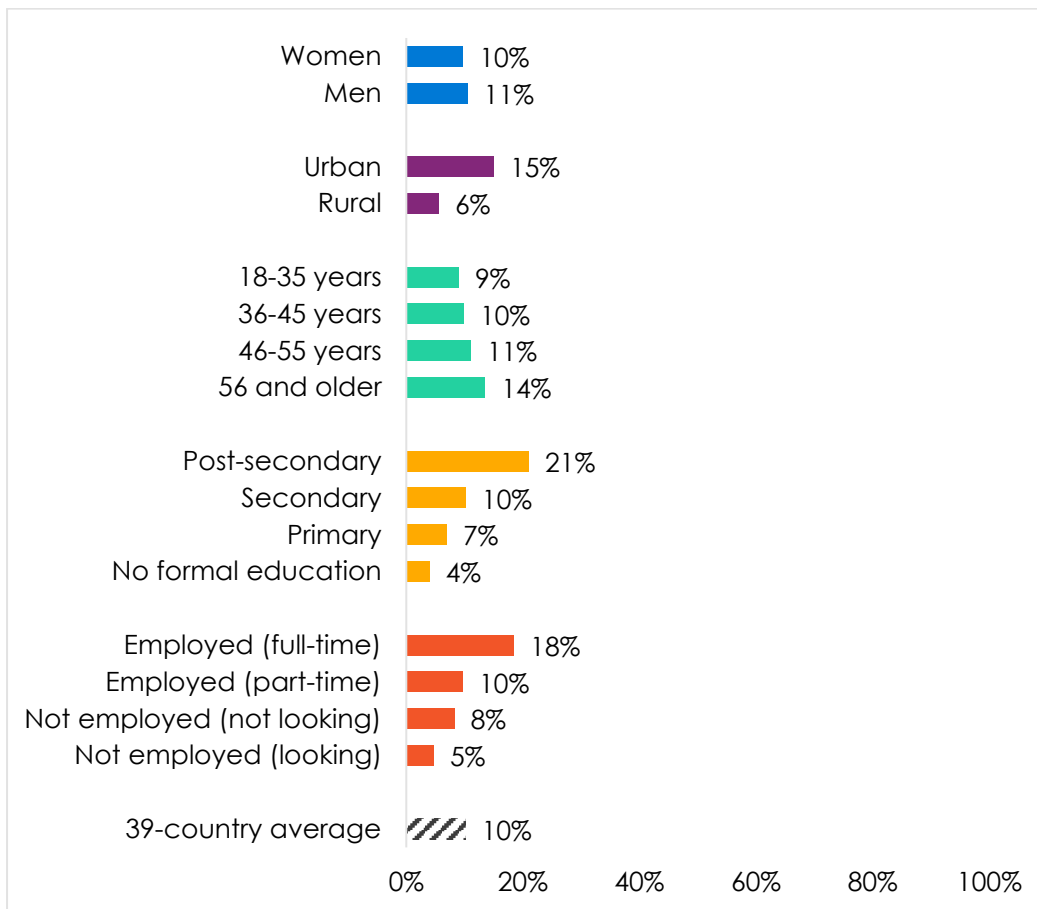


Figure shows the proportion of respondents in each demographic group categorised as experiencing “no lived poverty” (LPI score of 0.0).

Morocco is one of the few countries that experienced significant gains in this area: The proportion of citizens reporting full access increased by 11 percentage points between surveys in 2019/2021 and 2021/2023 (Figure 9). In contrast, it fell by 12 points in Mauritius – in large part due to a 21-point decline in the share of respondents who reported “never” going without a cash income.

Figure 9: Change in full access to basic necessities | 34 countries | 2019-2023

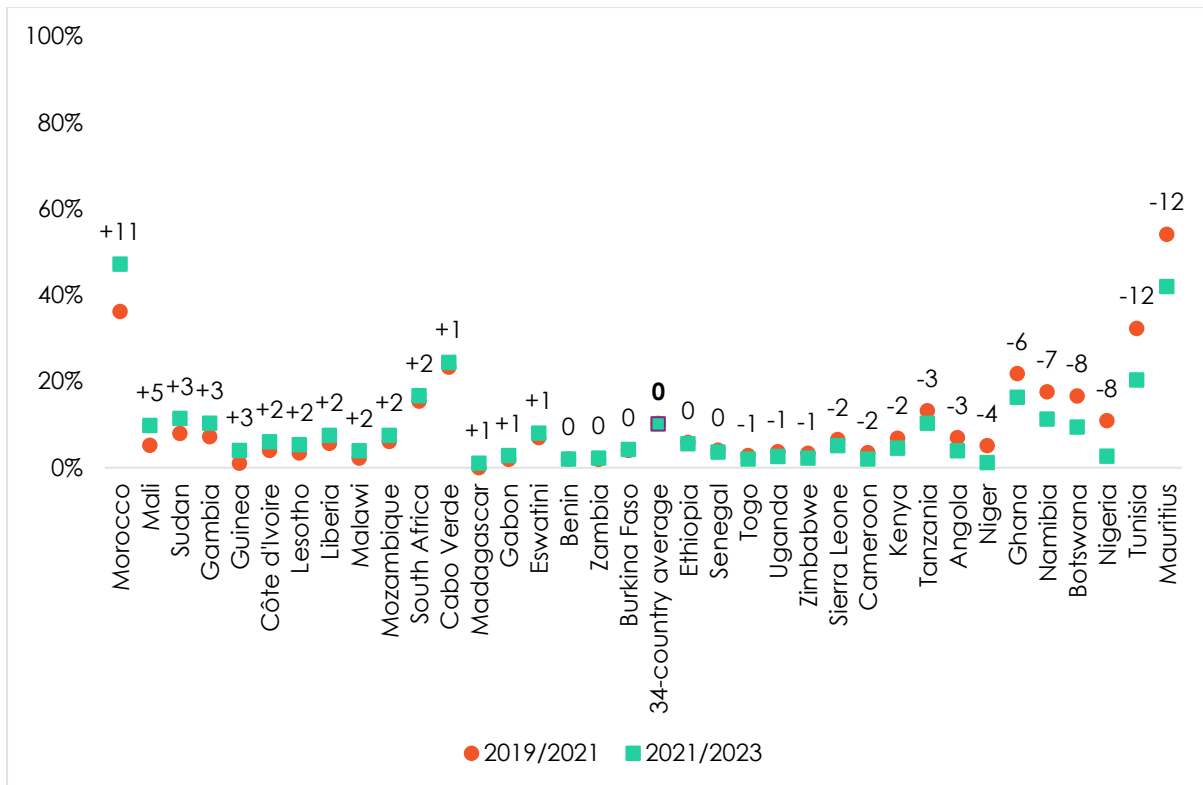


Figure shows the proportion of respondents in each country categorised as having experienced “no lived poverty” (LPI score of 0.0) in 2019/2021 (orange dots) and 2021/2023 (green squares). Value labels indicate the percentage-point difference between the two survey rounds.

Surging severe poverty

The World Bank (2024a) estimates that the number of people globally experiencing “extreme poverty” (defined as living on less than \$2.15 a day) increased by 23 million between 2019 and 2022. These figures indicate that 8.4% of the global population are living in extreme poverty, many of them in sub-Saharan Africa. The trend represents a significant setback in the pursuit of international targets, most notably the United Nations’ (2024) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030.

Long-term tracking of income-based poverty measures poses a substantial challenge, as it requires reliable data at a national level.² Poverty data from independent organisations, such as Afrobarometer’s LPI, consequently provide important supplemental insights.

We find that rates of severe poverty (measured as the proportion of citizens experiencing frequent or constant shortages of basic necessities) are surging in much of the continent – particularly over the longer term.

Differences by country

Figure 10 shows the proportion of citizens in each country categorised as experiencing severe levels of lived poverty in 2021/2023. Overall, one in four people (26%) fall into this category. Severe lived poverty is almost non-existent in Mauritius (1%) and is relatively rare in

² For instance, estimates of extreme poverty rates between 2021 and 2023 are available for just 11 of the 39 countries that Afrobarometer surveyed during this time period (World Bank, 2024b).

Morocco (3%), Seychelles (6%), Ghana (9%), and Tunisia (10%). At the other extreme, about half of citizens experience frequent shortages of basic necessities in Mauritania (50%) and Congo-Brazzaville (48%), followed by Angola (44%), Niger (40%), Nigeria (39%), Guinea (39%), and Cameroon (38%).

Regionally, we find that levels of severe lived poverty are more intense in Central African countries than in those in other parts of the continent. On average, 35% of citizens in the four Central African countries surveyed by Afrobarometer experienced severe deprivation, followed by 27% of West and Southern Africans, 22% of North Africans, and 18% of East Africans.

Figure 10: Severe lived poverty | 39 countries | 2021/2023

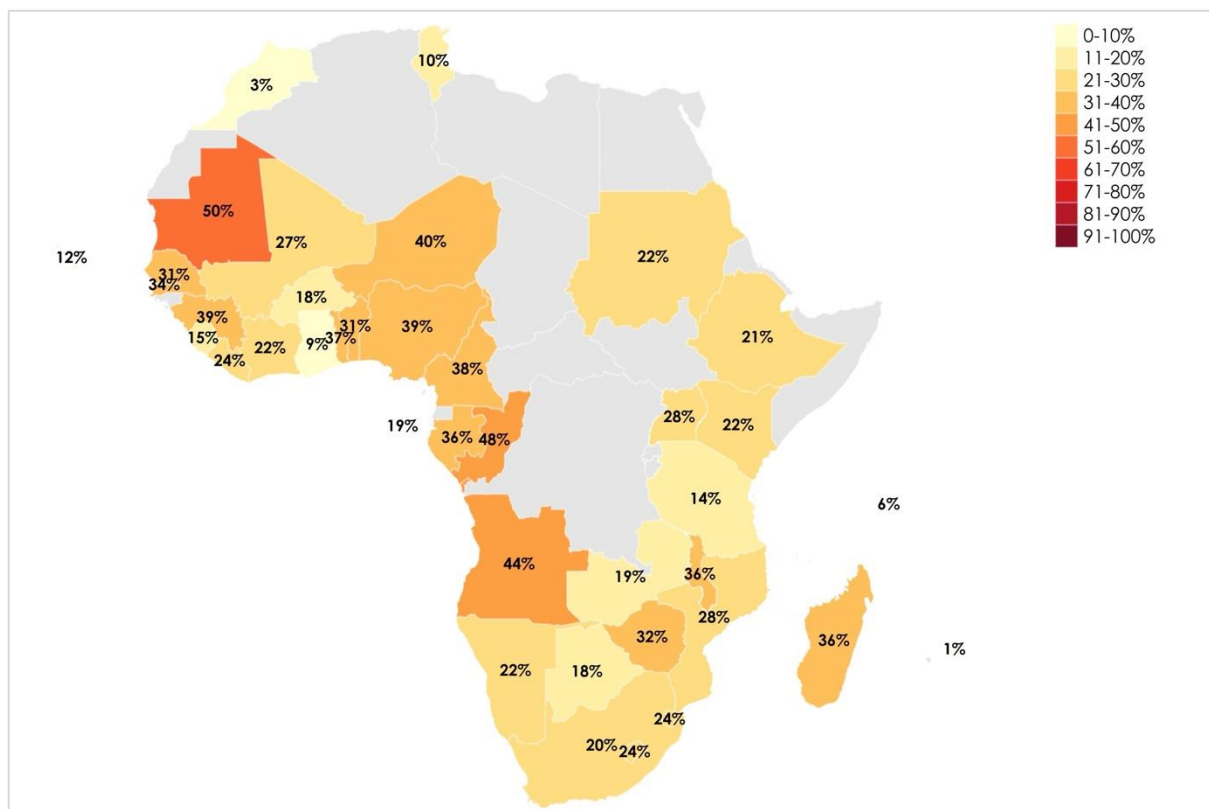


Figure shows the proportion of respondents in each country categorised as experiencing “high/severe lived poverty” (LPI score of 2.2-4.0).

Among the 34 countries surveyed by Afrobarometer in both 2019/2021 and 2021/2023, Sierra Leone experienced the greatest short-term gains in the reduction of severe poverty: The share of citizens categorised as facing these high levels of lived poverty fell by 11 percentage points, from 26% to 15%. Conversely, Nigeria experienced the largest increase in these rates, from 25% to 39% of citizens, followed by five Southern African countries – Namibia (+11 points), Botswana (+11 points), Malawi (+9 points), Angola (+6 points), and South Africa (+6 points) (Figure 11).

Expanding this analysis to a longer time frame shows that severe lived poverty rose by at least 2 percentage points in 23 of the 33 countries (70%) surveyed in both 2014/2015 and 2021/2023. These increases were highest in Nigeria (+26 points), followed by Namibia (+17 points), Mali (+17 points), and Zimbabwe (+15 points) (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Changes in severe lived poverty | 34 countries | 2019-2023

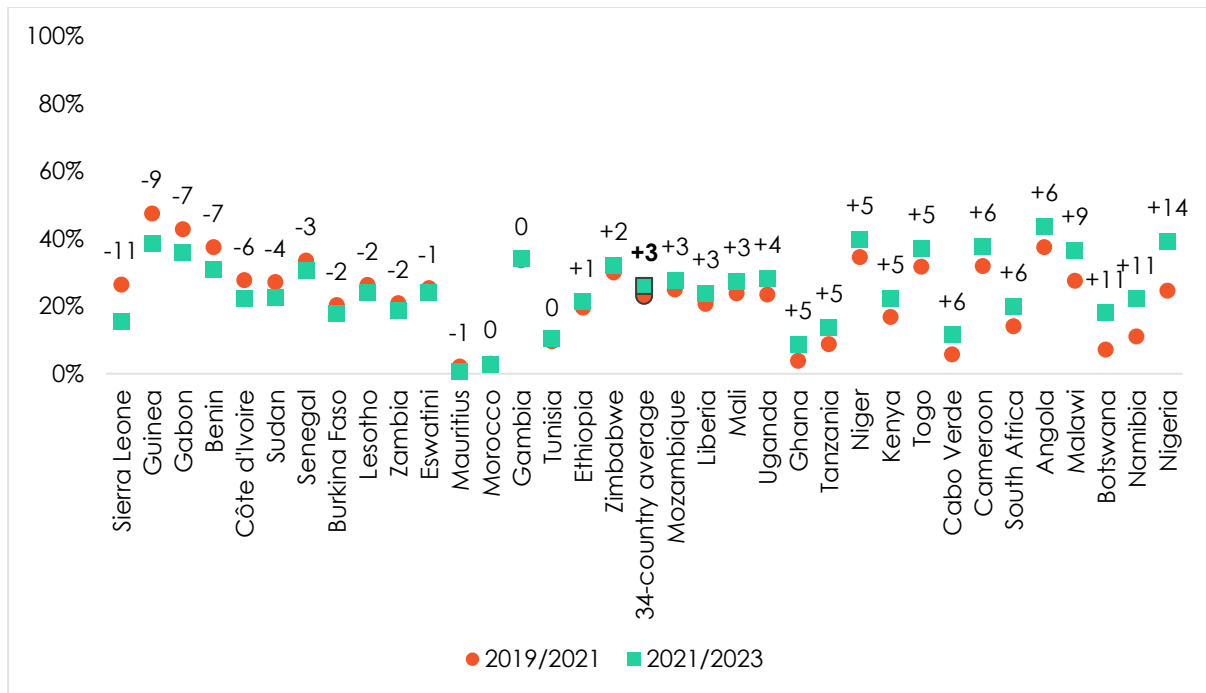


Figure shows the proportion of respondents in each country categorised as experiencing “high/severe lived poverty” (LPI score of 2.2-4.0) in 2019/2021 (orange dots) and 2021/2023 (green squares). Value labels indicate the percentage-point difference between the two survey rounds.

Figure 12: Changes in severe lived poverty | 33 countries | 2014-2023

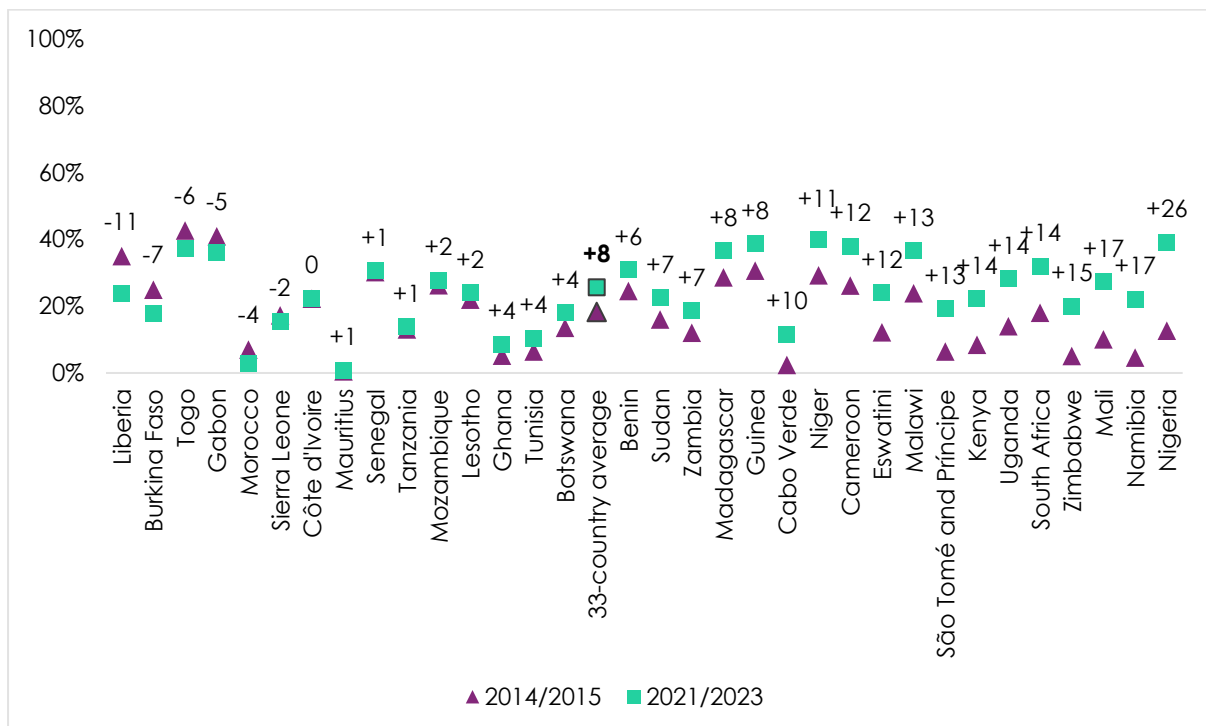


Figure shows the proportion of respondents in each country categorised as experiencing “high/severe lived poverty” (LPI score of 2.2-4.0) in 2014/2015 (purple triangles) and 2021/2023 (green squares). Value labels indicate the percentage-point difference between the two survey rounds.

Trends in severe lived poverty

The longest trend in severe lived poverty rates can be observed across the 16 countries that have been included in each Afrobarometer survey round since Round 2 (2002/2003).³ For this group, the share of respondents experiencing high lived poverty gradually declined from 22% in 2005/2006 to a low of 14% in 2014/2015 (Mattes, Dulani, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016). However, rates of severe lived poverty have since increased to a new high of 24% (Figure 13). A similar trajectory emerges for the larger sets of countries surveyed since 2008/2009 (19 countries) and 2011/2013 (30 countries).

Figure 13: Severe lived poverty over time, various country samples | up to 30 countries | 2002-2023

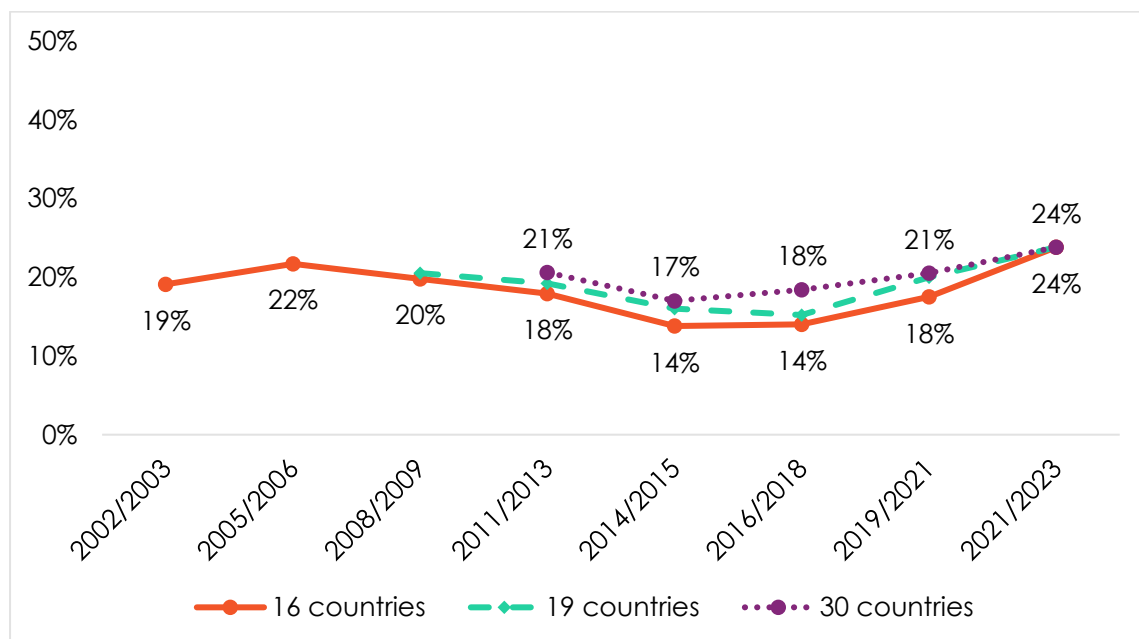


Figure shows the proportion of respondents categorised as having experienced “high/severe lived poverty” (LPI score of 2.2-4.0).

In our last report (Mattes & Patel, 2022), we found that all but one of the nine countries that had been previously identified as exhibiting sustained declines in lived poverty saw reversals of this trend in 2019/2021. Burkina Faso was the exception, having maintained its average LPI score.⁴ Figures 14 and 15 update this analysis by focusing on trends in severe lived poverty in the 10 countries with the largest reductions and the largest increases since 2014/2015.

Among the 31 countries surveyed in every survey round since 2014/2015, rates of severe material deprivation fell the most in Liberia (-11 percentage points), followed by Burkina Faso (-7 points), Togo (-6 points), Gabon (-5 points), and Morocco (-4 points) (Figure 14). However, these trajectories vary considerably. For instance, Morocco began at a significantly lower rate than the other four countries and experienced continual declines over time, from 7% in 2015 to 3% in 2022. In contrast, Gabon’s rates initially increased between 2015 (41%) and 2017 (46%) before eventually falling to 36% in 2021.

³ Botswana, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

⁴ The other highlighted countries were Cabo Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

As we saw in Figure 12 above, country-level increases in severe poverty rates were more dramatic, and Nigeria suffered the greatest rise in these levels between 2014/2015 (13%) and 2021/2023 (39%). However, a closer examination of these trends over time shows that, in contrast to the other four countries in this group, the share of Nigerians experiencing severe lived poverty reached its lowest point (10%) somewhat later – in 2017 – before surging by 29 percentage points (Figure 15).

Figure 14: Declining severe lived poverty | 5 countries | 2014-2023

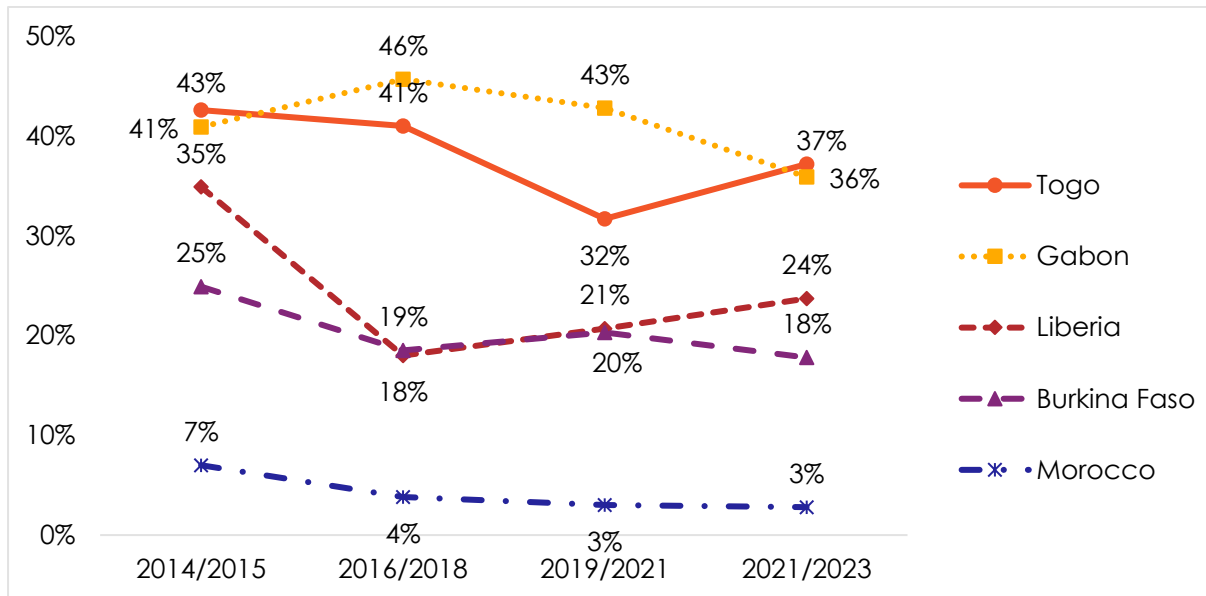


Figure shows the proportion of respondents categorised as having experienced “high/severe lived poverty” (LPI score of 2.2-4.0) for the countries that experienced the largest reductions in this measure since 2014/2015.

Figure 15: Increasing severe lived poverty | 5 countries | 2014-2023

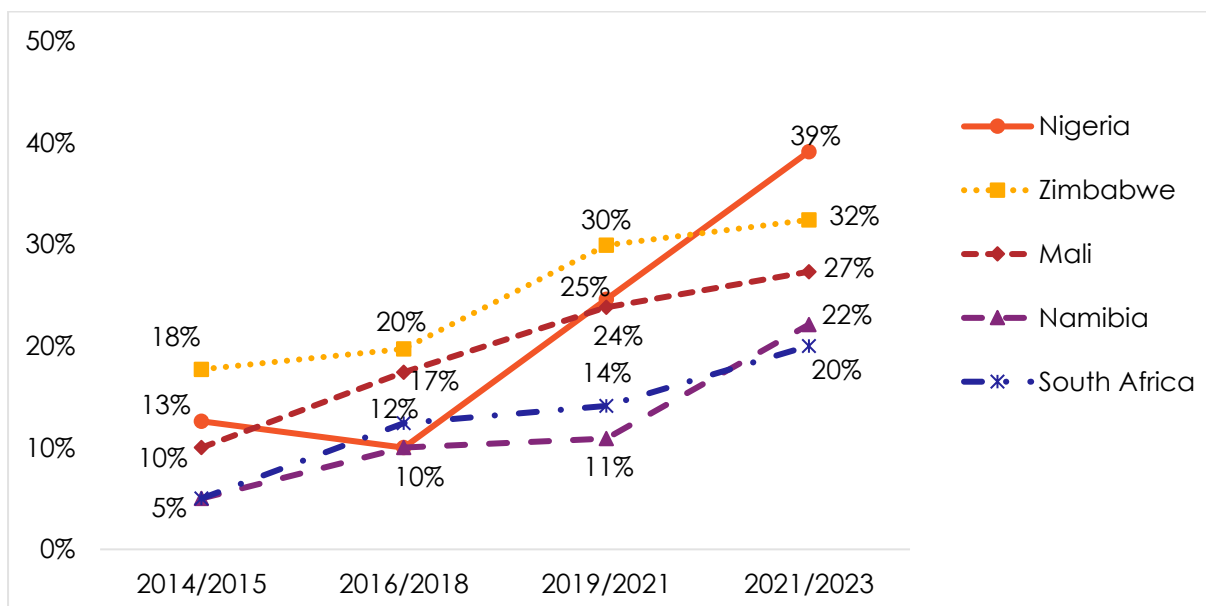


Figure shows the proportion of respondents categorised as having experienced “high/severe lived poverty” (LPI score of 2.2-4.0) for the countries that experienced the largest increases in this measure since 2014/2015.

Political changes and surging lived poverty

Why is the typical African worse off now than 10 years ago, and what accounts for the divergent trends across countries?

Economists point to a range of important factors that have limited economic growth over the past decade, including declining commodity prices and foreign investments, rising domestic prices, and reduced grain imports linked to climate change, the global shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Ero & Mutiga, 2023; Carbone & Ragazzi, 2023). Yet these events have affected the countries under examination in this analysis very unevenly.

Mauritius, for instance, saw its economy contract substantially in 2020 but enjoyed rapid subsequent growth. Others were not as fortunate. Thus, when we examine absolute growth in African economies (see Figure A.1 in Appendix A), we find a wide variation – at one end of the spectrum Mauritius, whose economy expanded by \$3,200 per capita (in constant 2021 U.S. dollars) between the Round 6 and Round 9 surveys, and at the other Sudan, Gabon, and Namibia, whose economies contracted by more than \$1,000 per capita (World Bank).

Moreover, the continent has witnessed at least two important political trends during this period, each of which has demonstrated links with economic outcomes such as growth and poverty.

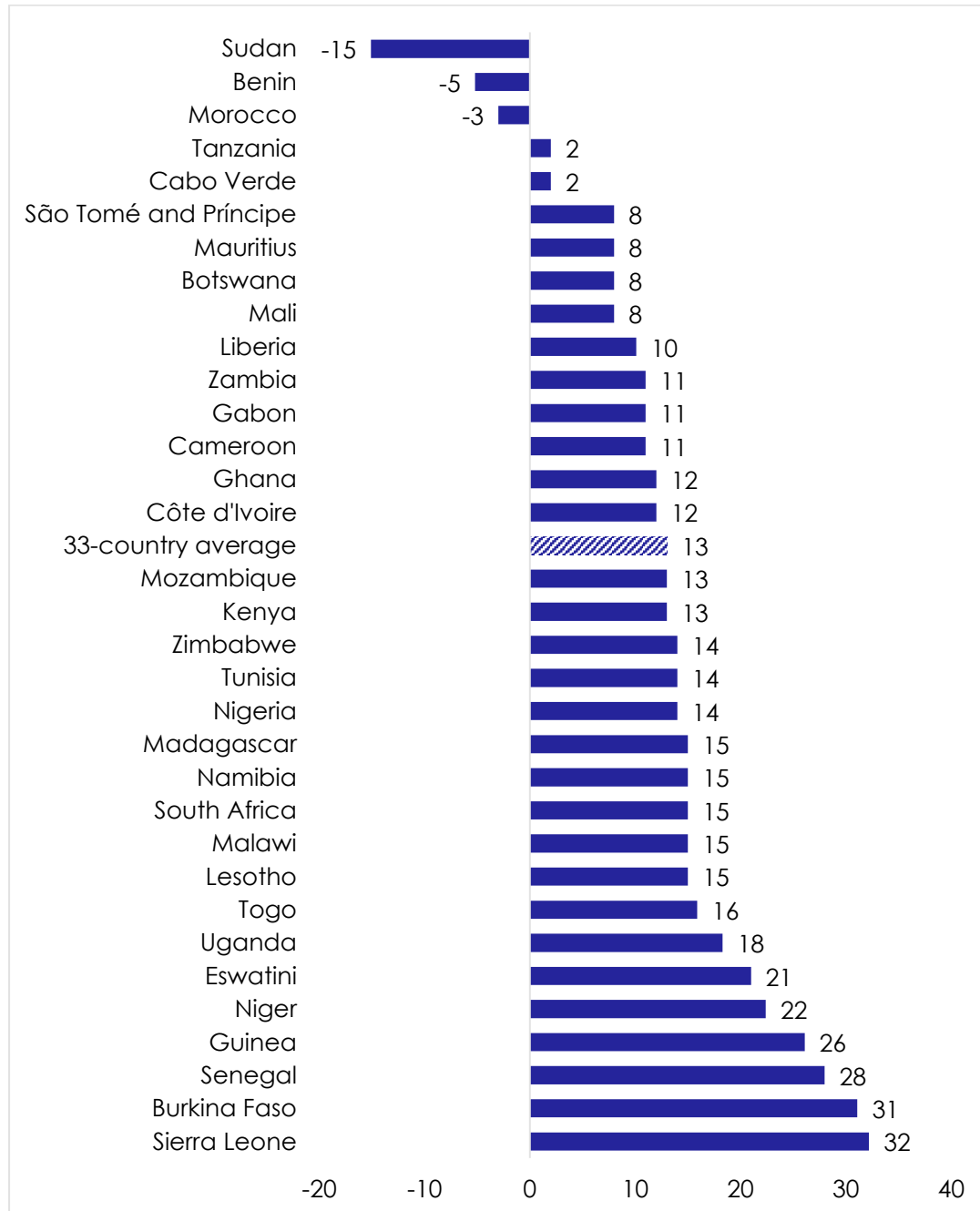
The first concerns democracy. Scholars and policy makers once thought that autocracies enjoyed an advantage in economic policy making over democracies because they were better able to use hierarchy and centralised authority to privilege long-term planning, bureaucratic expertise, and delayed gratification through investments in development infrastructure rather than welfare or consumer goods (Huntington, 1968; Kroenig, 2020). But since 2005, scholars have shown that there is actually a “democracy advantage” for economic development through limits on executive power and responsiveness to citizens’ needs (e.g. Halperin, Siegle, & Weinstein, 2005).

Over the past decade, however, Africa has experienced declining levels of political freedom and democratic space (Afrobarometer, 2024), even military coups; Freedom House (2024) has characterised it as a “decade of decline.”

The second political factor is corruption. Scholars have focused on the negative effects of political corruption – both at the upper echelons of power (Chetwynd, Chetwynd & Spector, 2003; Ugur, 2014) and during everyday interactions between citizens and government officials (Gupta, Davoodi, & Alonso-Terme, 2002) – on economic growth and poverty. Indeed, analyses of Afrobarometer data have found that corrupt bureaucrats find it easier to extort poor citizens than their better-off counterparts (Richmond & Alpin, 2013; Justesen & Bjørnskov, 2014). More importantly, studies have found links between changes in national levels of corruption and changes in individual lived poverty across several rounds of surveys (Eshun & Baah, 2019).

It is thus noteworthy that Afrobarometer data reveal a massive increase in corruption at the grassroots over the past decade, measured as the change in the proportion of people who say they had to pay bribes during the previous year to get an identity document from the government, to obtain services at a public school or a public health facility, or to get assistance from or avoid problems with the police (Figure 16; also see Dulani, Asiamah, & Zindikirani, 2023). Among citizens who had contact with these services, average self-reported bribe paying rose from 18% to 31% across the 33 countries surveyed in 2014/2015 and 2021/2023.

Figure 16: Change in payment of bribes to access public services | 33 countries
 | 2014-2023



The survey asked respondents whether, during the previous 12 months, they had contact with a public school, had contact with a public clinic or hospital, tried to get an identity document from the government, requested police assistance, or encountered the police in other situations.⁵ Respondents who said they did were asked whether they had to “pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour” to get the service they needed or to avoid problems with the police. The figure shows the percentage-point difference between 2014/2015 and 2021/2023 in the share of citizens who said they paid bribes “once or twice,” “a few times,” or “often.” Respondents who did not have contact with these services are excluded.

⁵ In 2014/2015, the item on paying bribes to the police was asked as a single question.

While a detailed examination of the potential harmful effects of democratic decline and increasing corruption on lived poverty is beyond the scope of this report, Appendix B presents results of preliminary analyses aimed at testing these hypotheses. The findings indicate that democratic erosion over the past decade has not played a substantial role in driving poverty in Africa (in part because poverty has increased among Africa's democracies as well as hybrid regimes and autocracies). But they also provide suggestive evidence that increasing lived poverty are related to rising corruption at the grassroots level.

Conclusion

The share of Africans going without basic life necessities on a regular basis has continued to increase, reflecting that most countries surveyed by Afrobarometer have lost the gains in poverty reduction they achieved in the first decade and a half of the 21st century.

Even more troubling is the increased share of citizens living under severe material deprivation as measured by both short-term and long-term changes in countries with economic trajectories as varied as Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

Our exploratory analyses presented in Appendix B indicate that further research is required to assess the relationship between surging lived poverty and two potential political explanations: declining democratic quality and increased corruption.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question,
for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at
www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

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Appendix A

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Feb.-March 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Kenya	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	Oct.-Nov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021
Sudan	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Togo	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021

Figure A.1: Change in gross domestic product | 33 countries | 2014-2023

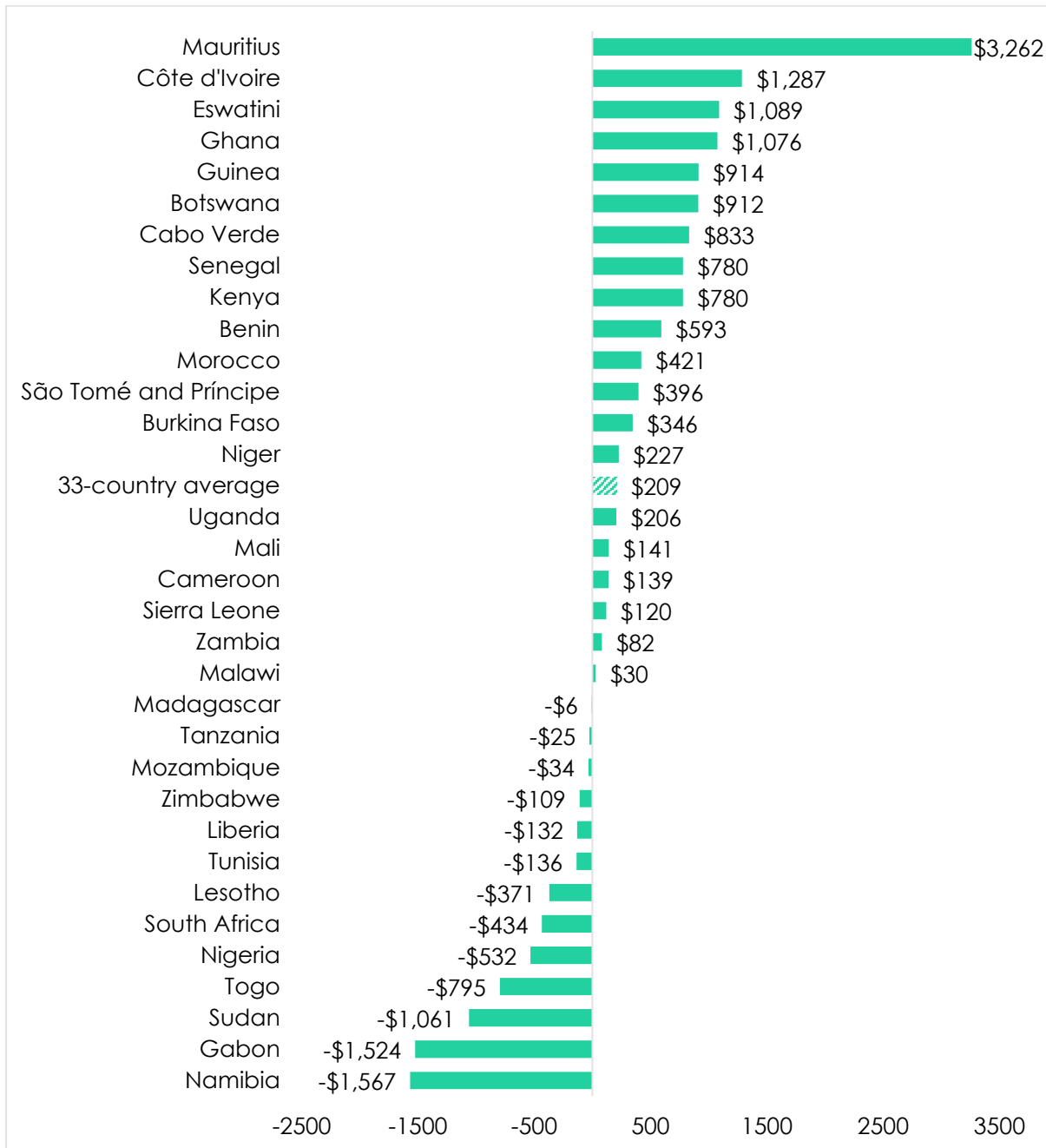


Figure shows the absolute change in gross domestic product purchasing power parity (GDP PPP) in constant 2021 U.S. dollars between 2014/2015 and 2021/2023. All values are for the particular years that each country was surveyed.

Appendix B

The following section provides preliminary, exploratory tests of the expectations highlighted in the final section of the report: Is the resurgence of lived poverty since 2014/2015 associated with country-level changes in democratic quality and/or grassroots corruption?

We do so through multiple regression analysis that examines the correlation between changes in democracy and bribery rates between 2014/2015 and 2021/2023, on one hand, and the level of lived poverty in 2021/2023. We measure lived poverty as the average score on the Lived Poverty Index. We measure changes in democracy using each country's Freedom House (2024) political rights score in its survey year. We measure corruption as the rate⁶ at which citizens say they had to pay bribes across four separate services in Afrobarometer 2014/2015 and 2021/2023 surveys: get assistance at a public school, get an identity document from the government, access public health services, and avoid a problem with the police. We also take into consideration each country's level of wealth (GDP per capita) in 2014/2015 and levels of economic growth.

We find no statistically significant association between Round 9 levels or between changing levels of democracy and lived poverty. However, the results for our measure of grassroots corruption suggests a path for future research. Whether the measure of corruption is expressed as the rate of bribe paying reported in Round 9 surveys (controlling for the level of bribe paying in the Round 6 surveys) or the change in bribe paying between those two points, citizen experiences of extortion are associated with the current level of lived poverty (Table B.1).

Table B.1: Relationship between growth, democracy, corruption, and lived poverty

	DV: Average LPI, Round 9			DV: Average LPI, Round 9	
	Standardised regression coefficient	Standardised regression coefficient		Standardised regression coefficient	Standardised regression coefficient
Constant	1.675	1.474	Constant	1.675	1.474
GDP, year of Round 6 (R6) survey	-.330**	-.338**	GDP, year of R6 survey	2.222**	2.568***
Change in GDP, R6 to R9	-.448***	-.465***	GDP, year of R9 survey	-2.633***	-2.998***
Freedom House political rights score, R6	-.241	–	Freedom House political rights score, R6	-.028	–
Change in Freedom House political rights score, R6 to R9	-.116	–	Freedom House political rights score, R9	-.221	–
Average rate of bribe paying across four services, R6	.001	.068	Average rate of bribe paying across four services, R6	-.454**	-.426*
Change in rate of bribe paying across four services, R6 to R9	.308*	.334*	Average rate of bribe paying across four services, R9	.404*	.438*
Adjusted R ²	.402	.386		.402	.386
N	33	33		33	33

Note: Coefficient for constant is unstandardised coefficient. ****p<=.001; ***p<=.010; **p<=.050; *p<=.100

⁶ The average frequency of bribe paying across the various services on a scale from 0 (“never”) to 3 (“often”). Respondents who did not have contact with these services are included in this analysis.

Clearly, there might be an inverse relationship whereby growing levels of destitution increase extortion by providing extractive bureaucrats with larger numbers of vulnerable victims. But we believe that corruption is more likely to be the primary force. Moreover, while grassroots extortion reduces poor people's ability to obtain government services, bribe paying is also an indicator of increases in corruption among high-level government officials. When local-level officials perceive that senior-level officials and elected leaders are involved in illicit activities, more and more bureaucrats may conclude that they can get away with augmenting their own income on the backs of ordinary citizens.

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Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, nonpartisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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