



Policy Brief No. 2

Africa Rising? Popular Dissatisfaction with Economic Management Despite a Decade of Growth

By Jan Hofmeyr

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New findings from the Afrobarometer, based on surveys conducted in an unprecedented 34 African countries between October 2011 and June 2013,¹ reveal widespread dissatisfaction with current economic conditions despite a decade of strong growth. Africans overwhelmingly reject their governments' management of their economies, giving failing marks for job creation, improving the living standards of the poor, and narrowing the gaps between the rich and poor.

Economic growth appears to benefit only a few, according to the ordinary people who participated in Afrobarometer's surveys. Growing economies are not creating enough jobs, or making life significantly better for Africa's poor. Glowing GDP growth figures might therefore offer little solace to people without jobs or those mired in poverty. Popular opinion is thus increasingly out of sync with the "Africa Rising" narrative that has been gaining traction among government officials and international investors.

Key Findings: Africa Rising?

Written off as "The Hopeless Continent" 13 years ago by *The Economist*, Africa has since confounded skeptics, becoming the world's fastest growing region.² Annual GDP growth on the continent averaged 4.8% over the past decade (2002-11)³, leading the publication to

¹ Afrobarometer surveys are based on nationally representative samples. These 34-country results therefore represent the views of approximately three-quarters (76%) of the continent's population. Countries included are: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Results from a 35th country, Ethiopia, will be available shortly. The total number of respondents in the 34 countries was 51,605.

² African Development Bank Group, 2013, *Annual Development Effectiveness Review 2013: Toward Sustainable Growth for Africa*.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all economic growth rates reported are annual averages calculated for the decade from 2002-11, based on data from African Development Bank available at <http://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/statistics/>. Liberia growth rates are calculated for the period from 2004-2011. Somalia is excluded.

acknowledge its misdiagnosis in December 2011, this time tagging Africa as “The Hopeful Continent”. An abundance of upbeat macroeconomic statistics has made Africa a new darling of portfolio investors.

This decisive shift in perceptions of Africa by the international investor community is a significant achievement. Stereotypes about a region or a continent can be difficult to change, even when they contradict measureable indicators, such as GDP growth, but the growing acceptance of the “Africa Rising” narrative represents just such a transformation. Yet to sustain this rising optimism, ordinary Africans must share in the benefits of growth along with those in boardrooms in global capitals. A growing, resurgent Africa should, first and foremost, benefit those that live in it.

The Afrobarometer’s data on popular perceptions about the condition of national economies, and the effectiveness of governments’ efforts to manage them, reveal a wide gap in perceptions between ordinary Africans and the global economic community. In particular:

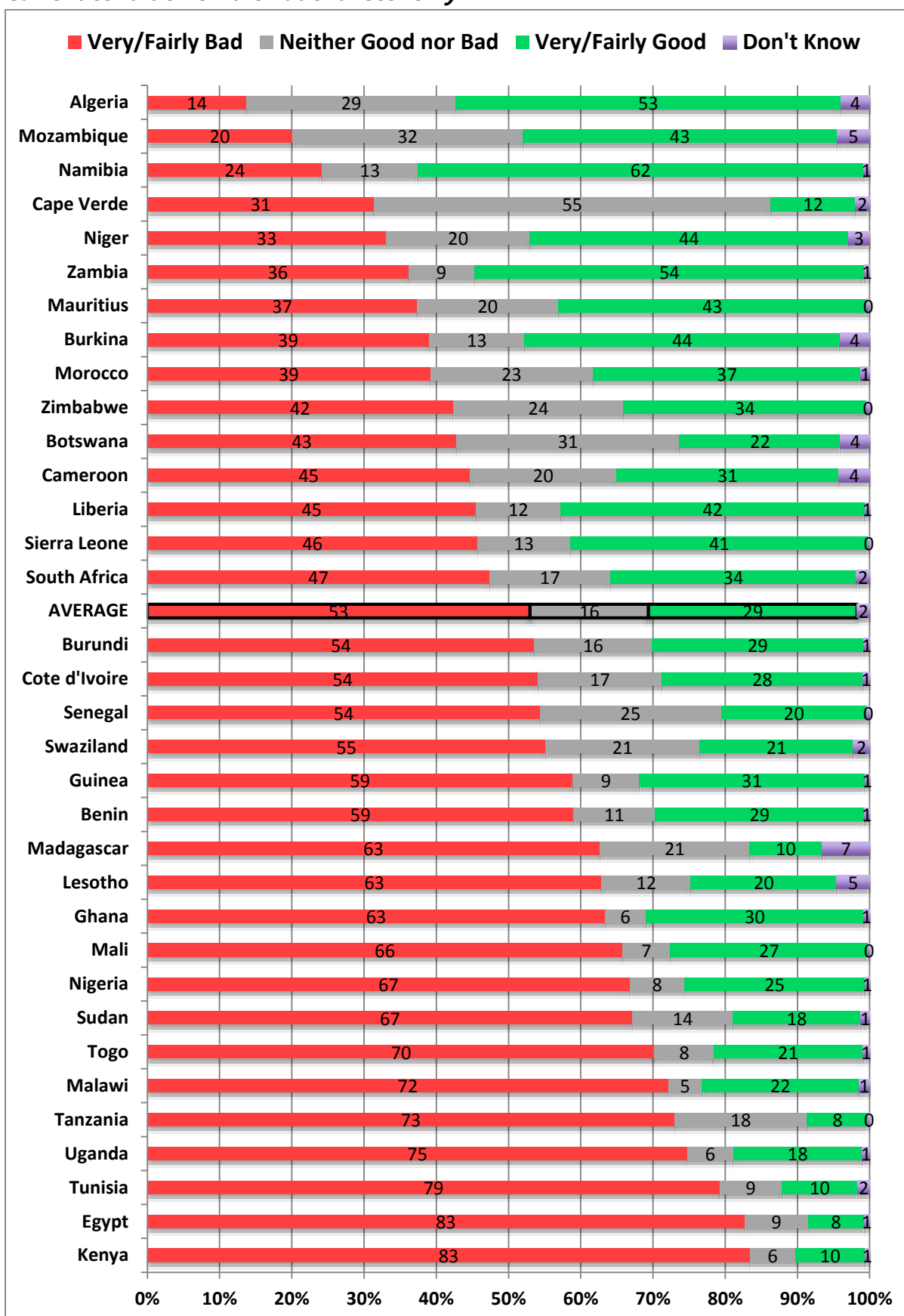
- Across 34 countries a majority (53%) rate the current condition of their national economy as “fairly” or “very bad”, while just 29% offer a positive assessment. Negative assessments outnumber positive reviews in 26 of 34 countries. The only notable exceptions are Namibia, Zambia and Algeria.
- Just one in three Africans (31%) think the condition of their national economies has improved in the past year, compared to 38% who say things have gotten worse.
- Similarly, 32% say their own personal living conditions have improved in the past year, compared to 33% who say they have gotten worse (34% saw no change). In addition, many individuals still experience regular shortages of basic necessities; these rates of “lived poverty” remain essentially unchanged.
- Africans give their governments failing marks for economic management (56% say they are doing “fairly” or “very badly”), improving the living standards of the poor (69% fairly/very badly), creating jobs (71% fairly/very badly), and narrowing income gaps (76% fairly/very badly).
- Many Africans nonetheless express optimism about the future: 57% expect the economy to be better in a year.
- At the regional level, West Africa tends to be the most positive and optimistic region, while East Africans are consistently the most negative, and the least optimistic about the future.

Popular Perspectives on the State of the Economy

Across 34 countries a majority of Africans (53%) rate the condition of their national economies as either “fairly” or “very bad”, compared to just 29% who rate them positively (and 16% who say they are “neither good nor bad”). Majorities in 19 countries, and pluralities in 26, indicated that their domestic economies were in a bad state, including four countries where three-quarters or more of the population feel this way. Majorities say their countries’ economies are good in just three countries: Namibia (62% fairly/very good), Zambia (54%) and Algeria (53%).

Among the five countries with the lowest ratings, two – Egypt and Tunisia – recently experienced an overthrow of government as a part of the “Arab Spring”. The other three – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – have all sustained high levels of growth in the past decade, especially Tanzania (7.0%) and Uganda (6.9%). Negative responses in excess of 60% were also reported in fast-growing West African states like Nigeria and Ghana, both of which also enjoyed high annual growth rates over the past decade (6.8% in Ghana, 8.8% in Nigeria). In Southern Africa, two of the region’s economic stalwarts, Botswana and South Africa, have also enjoyed solid, steady growth albeit on a somewhat more modest scale (at 4.4% and 3.6%, respectively). But they likewise generate more negative responses from their citizens than positive ones: 43% of Botswana and 47% of South Africans consider their economies to be in a bad state, compared to just 22% and 32%, respectively, who are more positive.

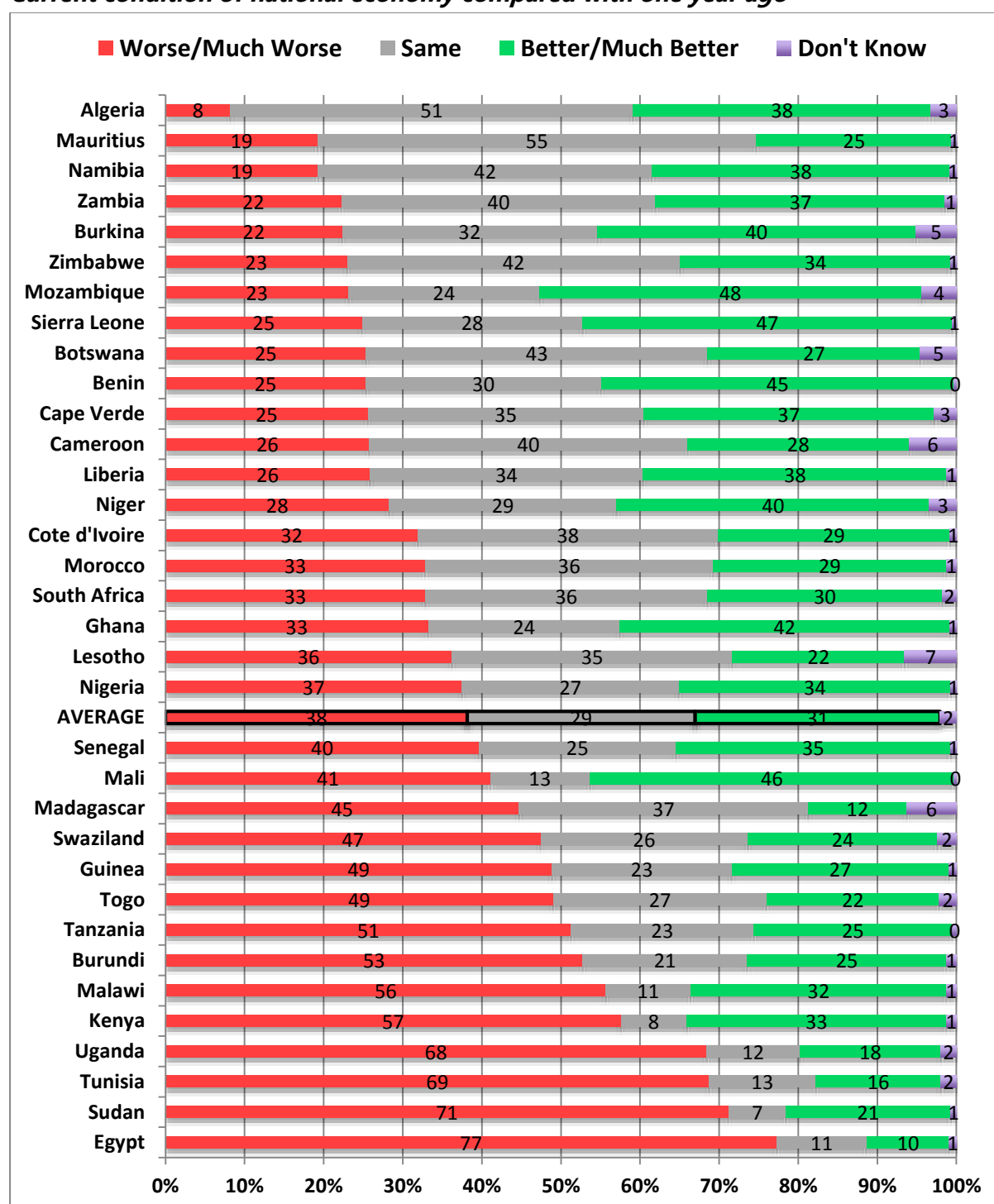
Current condition of the national economy



Question: In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?

When asked to compare their country's present economic condition to a year previously, only one third (31%) report improvements consistent with the "Africa rising" narrative. A plurality (38%) instead report that their country is doing "worse" or "much worse" than a year ago, while 29% saw no change. In no country did a majority report improving economic conditions.

Current condition of national economy compared with one year ago



Question: Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to one year ago?

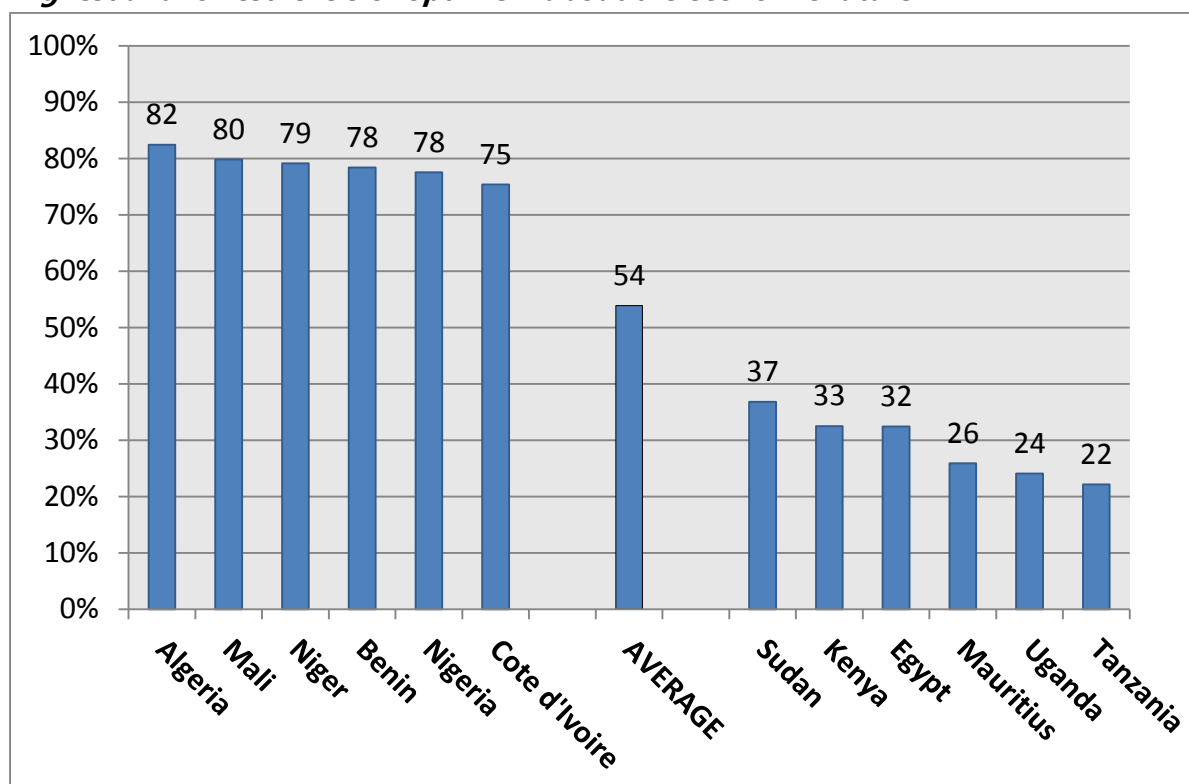
Respondents in Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Mali, Benin, and Ghana expressed greater satisfaction with the economy than people in other countries, with more than 40% indicating that the country's economic circumstances were "better" or "much better" than they had been 12 months earlier. With the exception of Benin and Mali, these countries had all achieved growth rates in excess of 5% between 2002 and 2011. But the five countries most likely to report decline again included Egypt, Tunisia, Uganda and Kenya, now joined by Sudan, and several of these have enjoyed similar growth rates (4.8% in Egypt, 3.9% in Tunisia, 6.9% in Uganda, 4.2% in Kenya, and 6.5% in Sudan).

In South Africa, the public is roughly evenly divided: one-third of respondents (33%) indicate that the economy has gotten worse, and 30% say it has improved, while 36% see no change. Meanwhile in Zimbabwe, after several years of suffering under the burden of international economic sanctions, the signing of the Global Political Agreement between Zanu-PF and the MDC in 2008 paved the way for political stability, which has had a marked impact on Zimbabwe's growth trajectory, albeit from a low base. While a plurality of Zimbabwean respondents (42%) said that the country's economic situation remained unchanged, those who said the situation is improving (34%) outnumbered those who reported worsening conditions (23%).

Africans express optimism about the future. Asked whether they expected their economies to be better or worse in 12 months time, a solid majority (57%) said conditions would improve, compared with just 21% who anticipate decline and 12% who expect no change. Only 10% are unwilling to venture a guess ("don't know").

Algerians are the most optimistic, with 80% anticipating improving conditions. In general, the same countries that gave the most negative ratings of their current economic situation are also more pessimistic about the future. Tanzanian, Ugandan, Egyptian, Kenyan and Sudanese respondents are among the most skeptical about the prospects for improvement in their countries' economic fortunes. In fact, Tanzania and Uganda are the only countries where majorities expect things to get worse; Egypt, Kenya, Sudan and Mauritius are the only other countries where pluralities anticipate decline rather than progress. In contrast, six West African countries (Nigeria, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Senegal, and Ghana), count amongst the ten most optimistic states. Mozambique is the only Southern African country in this group.

Highest and lowest levels of optimism about the economic future



Question: Looking ahead, do you expect the economic conditions in this country in twelve months time to be better or worse? (percent who say better/much better)

Evaluations of Personal Economic Conditions

The ability to live a life of material dignity plays a critical role in determining how citizens evaluate the state and economic conditions. Moreover, political stability and continuing economic growth are only likely to be sustainable if citizens feel that they are materially secure, or at least see a real prospect of improved living conditions.

Many Africans do not yet feel a sense of material security. Nearly half (48%) say their personal living conditions are “fairly” or “very bad”, compared to 31% who feel more secure (“fairly” or “very good”). One in five (21%) are ambivalent; perhaps these people are in transition from harder times to a more secure status, but do not yet feel confident in their circumstances.

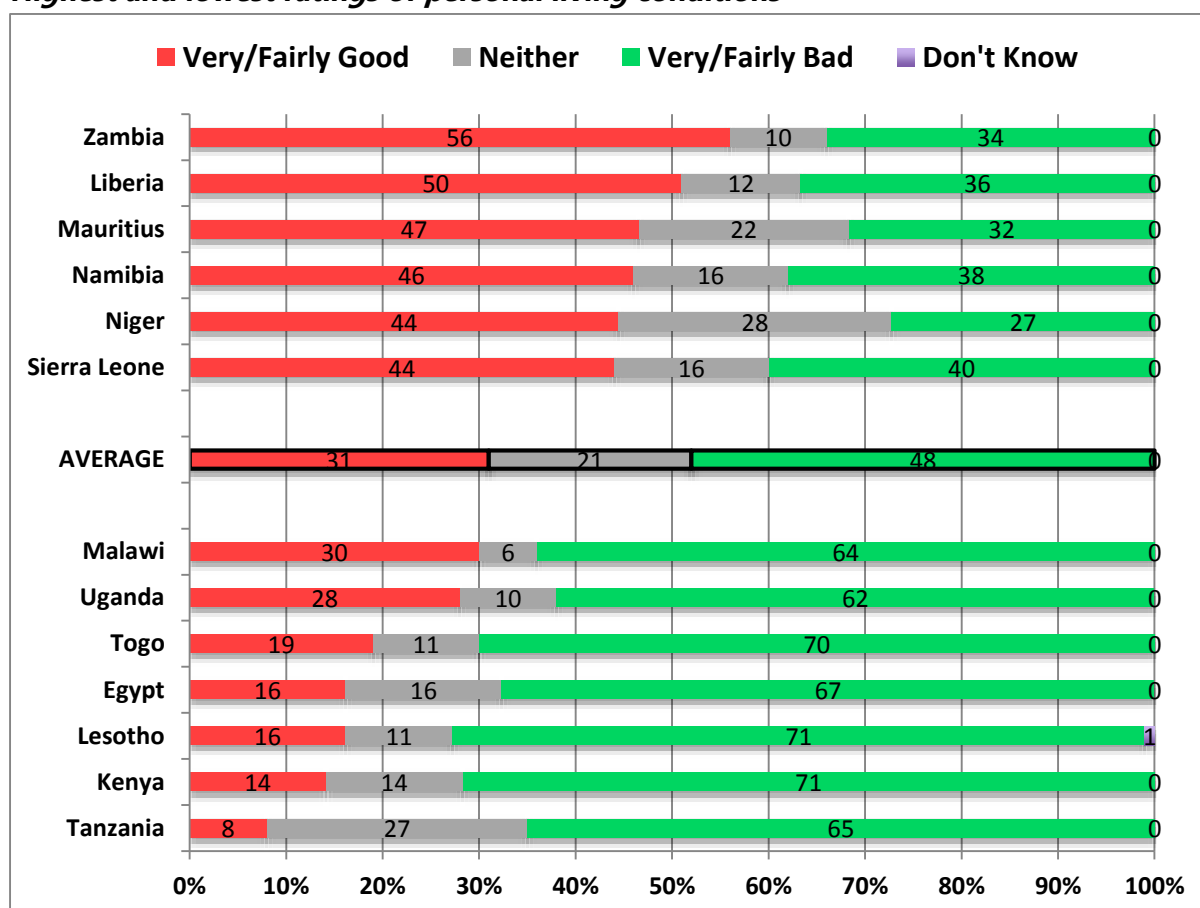
Zambians and Liberians are most positive about their personal living conditions, with 56% and 50%, respectively, rating their situation as “very” or “fairly good”. Considering that both countries are rated by UNDP as having “low human development”⁴ these ratings might seem surprisingly positive. But individuals’ own assessments of their personal living conditions are by their nature subjective – based on comparison to one’s previous status, to the conditions

⁴ According to the United Nations Development Programs 2013 Human Development Report, Liberia has a score of .333 on the Human Development Index (HDI), 26th from the bottom, and Zambia, with a score of .481, is 43rd from the bottom. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1990/chapters/>.

of others, to current expectations and hopes for the future, and to concrete changes in access to health care, education or other services.

Countries with low scores on the Human Development Index (HDI) but rapid improvements in quality of life may therefore have more upbeat evaluations of personal living conditions than those with higher HDI scores, but where progress has stalled or occurs at a slower pace than in the past. Zambia and Liberia have experienced high levels of growth over the past decade (5.8% and 6.2%⁵ per annum, respectively), but especially in a country such as Liberia, which has been ravaged by war for protracted periods, the experience of peace, and the related economic benefits that it brings, were likely a significant contributing factor to this result. Other countries with relatively high “good” ratings on personal living conditions include Mauritius (47% positive), Namibia (46%), Nigeria (42%), and South Africa (41%).

Highest and lowest ratings of personal living conditions



Question: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?

In contrast, even though Botswana is regarded globally as a star performer, 57% of Botswana describe their living conditions as being fairly or very bad, compared to a mere 17% who give good ratings. This might be attributed to high levels of income inequality in the country, although South Africa and Namibia have comparable inequality figures, but

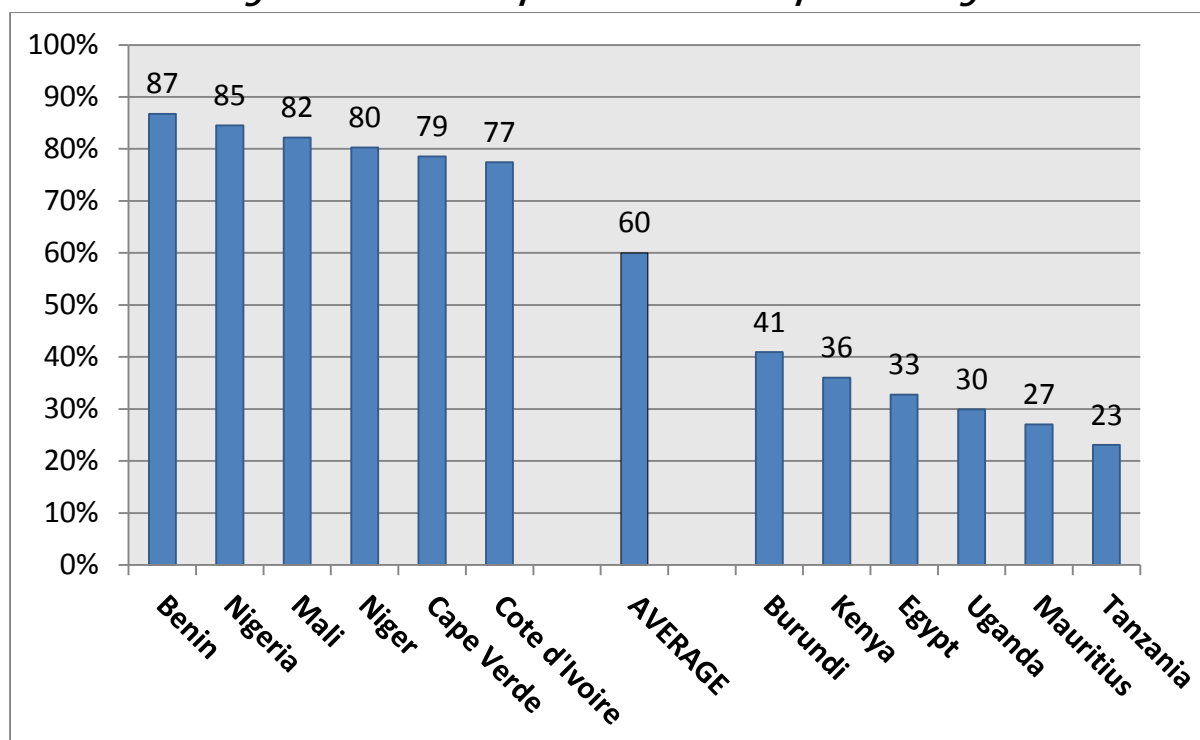
⁵ Liberia average growth figures are calculated from 2004-2011, after the last civil war when the country experienced severe economic contraction. If 2002 and 2003 are included, the per annum rate over this 10 year period drops to 2.2%.

somewhat more content citizens. Among the other worst performers, Tanzania and Kenya again feature prominently, as does Egypt, which at the time of the survey was undergoing profound political change, largely as a result of the economic marginalisation of ordinary citizens.

A sense of relative well-being also matters. Asked how their personal living conditions compared to those of others in their country, respondents were roughly equally divided, with 34% describing themselves as worse off, 36% as the same, and 27% as better off than others. This suggests that people generally have a good sense of their position relative to others in their country. The public is even more evenly divided on the question of whether they personally are making progress: 32% rate their personal living conditions as better compared with one year ago, 34% as the same, and 33% as worse.

Many are optimistic about the future, however: 60% expect their own situation to be “better” or “much better” in a year’s time. The ten most optimistic countries, where large majorities expect a brighter future, are all located in West and North Africa, including Benin (87% positive), Nigeria (85%), and Mali (82%). In sharp contrast, all four East African countries (Burundi (41%), Kenya (36%), Uganda (30%) and Tanzania (23%)) are among the most negative, joined by Egypt (33%).

Countries with highest and lowest expectations about improved living conditions



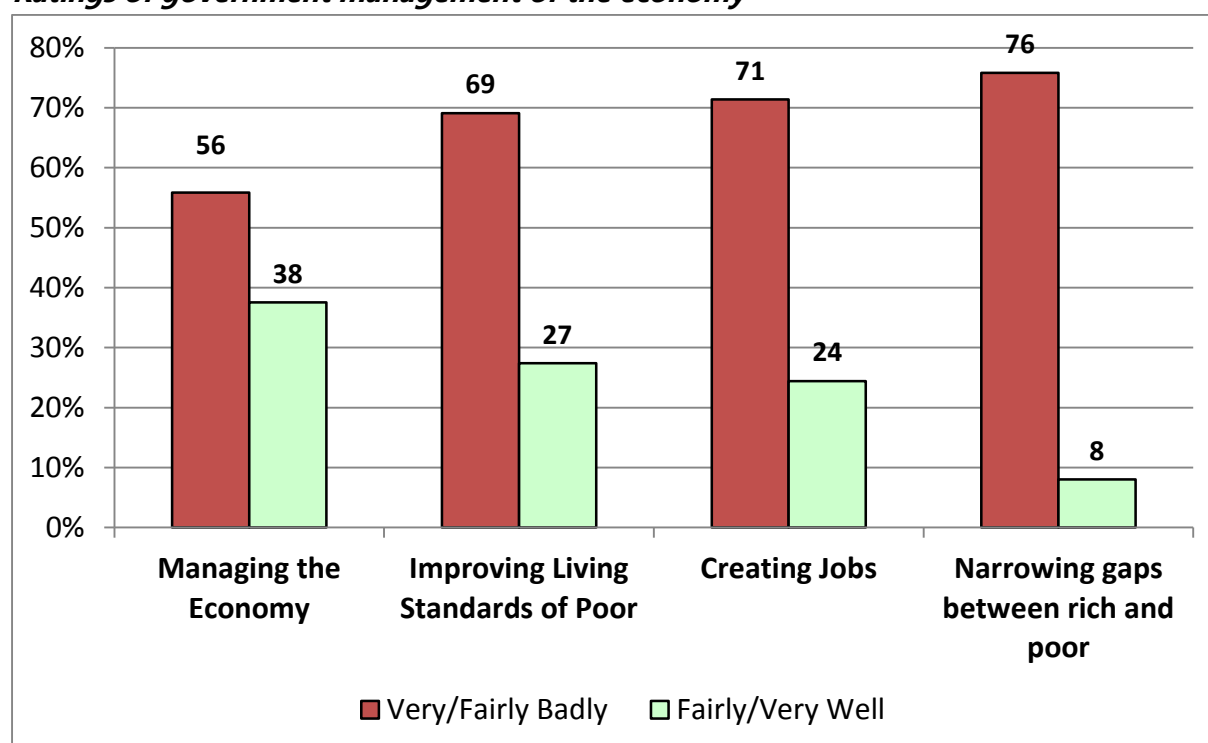
Question: Looking ahead, do you expect your living conditions to be better or worse in twelve months? (percent who say better/much better)

These findings are consistent with related results on levels of “lived poverty”⁶ across Africa. Based on respondents’ own reports of how often they go without basic necessities such as food, water, and medical treatment, as well as cash income, it is evident that large numbers of Africans still face significant hardship. Approximately 20% go without food, water and medical care on a frequent basis, and roughly 50% experiencing such shortages at least occasionally. In 16 countries where the extent of lived poverty has been tracked for a decade (2002-2012), there is little overall change; although a few countries have recorded improvements, a similar number have witnessed declines. The overall finding is that levels of poverty have been stagnant, rather than declining as some official statistics – and high growth rates – might suggest.

Popular Perspectives on Government Management of the Economy

Another reason people may be less sanguine than economists about the state of their national economies may relate to their perspectives on the performance of government, as well as imbalances in the distribution of the benefits of growth. Governments get extremely poor ratings for their handling of the economy. Large majorities say that their governments are doing “fairly” or “very badly” at managing the economy (56% negative ratings), improving the living standards of the poor (69%), creating jobs (71%) and reducing the income gap between the rich and poor (76%).

Ratings of government management of the economy



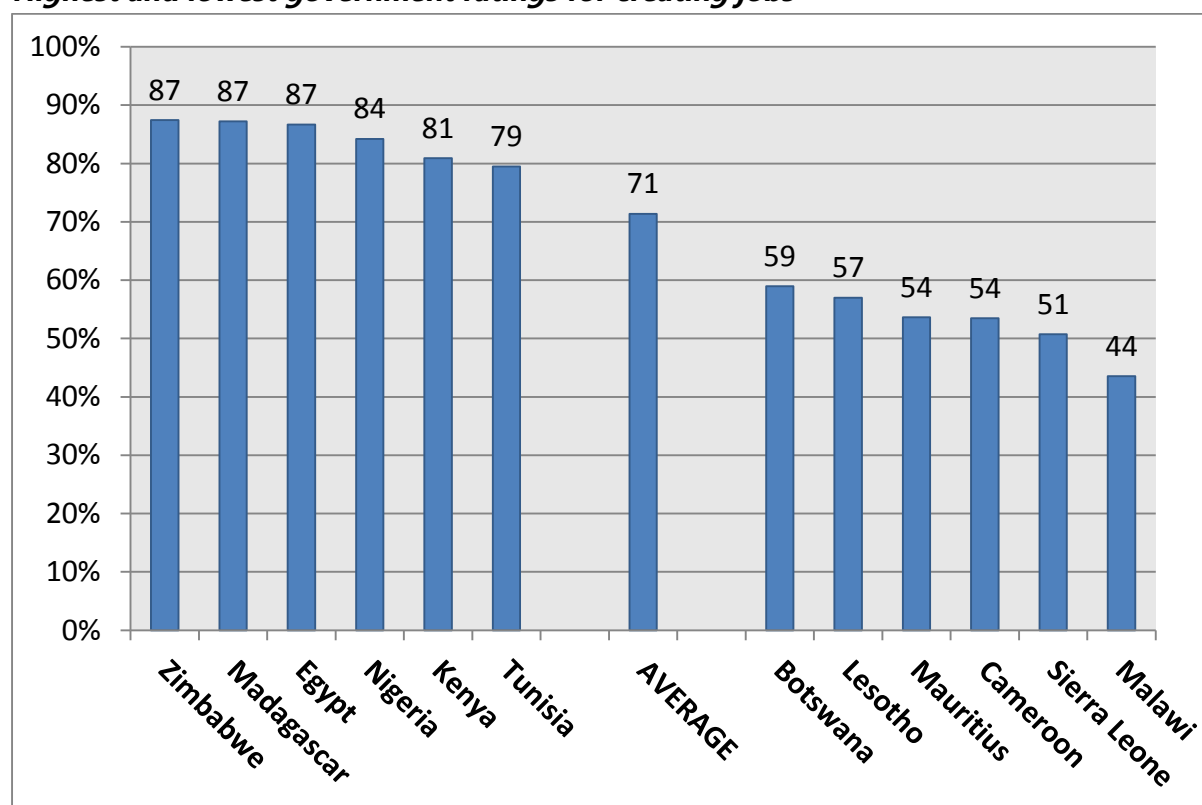
Question: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?

⁶ Boniface Dulani and Robert Mattes, October 2013, *After a Decade of Growth in Africa, Little Change in Poverty at the Grassroots*, Afrobarometer Policy Brief No. 1.

Jobs are crucial for an improvement in the livelihoods of ordinary citizens, and it is clear that people are dissatisfied with their governments' attempts to create employment. Majorities – often large ones – in every country except Malawi provide negative evaluations of their governments' efforts (and even in Malawi a plurality does so). In Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 80% or more offer negative assessments, and many other countries follow close behind.

In South Africa, where more than a quarter of the workforce is unemployed according to official calculations⁷, 77% of respondents report that the government is failing in its efforts to get citizens to work. Amidst such high unemployment levels and their impact on income inequality (South Africa has a Gini-coefficient of 0.70, one of the highest in the world), the government's perceived inability to address the problem of job creation has contributed to rising protests, some of which have directly challenged the authority of the state.

Highest and lowest government ratings for creating jobs



Question: How well or badly would you say the government is handling creating jobs, or haven't you heard enough to say? (percent who say fairly/very badly)

Even higher numbers give their governments poor marks for their efforts to reduce the income gap between rich and poor. There is a clear disconnect between the glowing reports of impressive GDP growth across much of the continent, and Africans' own reports of the economic hardships they still confront in their daily lives. These negative ratings of

⁷ Expanded definitions put the number at close to 35%.

government performance on poverty, jobs, and income equality may be at the root of that disconnect.

If economic growth is being driven by sectors that create limited employment, and the benefits of growth accrue only to a few, then glowing GDP growth figures will offer little solace to those that want to escape poverty. Moreover, if growth exacerbates social inequalities, the outcome may be increasing political instability. The growing protest trend in South Africa may be one example of just such causes and effects. This is a lesson that many fast-growing African economies will do well to learn. If the proceeds of growth are not shared equitably through society, the impact of rapid economic expansion may ultimately become more destructive than good for a society.

Annex: Full Results by Country

General economic conditions: How would you describe the present economic condition of this country?

Country	Very/Fairly Bad	Neither Good nor Bad	Very/Fairly Good	Don't Know
Algeria	14	29	53	4
Benin	59	11	29	1
Botswana	43	31	22	4
Burkina Faso	39	13	44	4
Burundi	54	16	29	1
Cameroon	45	20	31	4
Cape Verde	31	55	12	2
Cote d'Ivoire	54	17	28	1
Egypt	83	9	8	1
Ethiopia	<i>forthcoming</i>			
Ghana	63	6	30	1
Guinea	59	9	31	1
Kenya	83	6	10	1
Lesotho	63	12	20	5
Liberia	45	12	42	1
Madagascar	63	21	10	7
Malawi	72	5	22	1
Mali	66	7	27	0
Mauritius	37	20	43	0
Morocco	39	23	37	1
Mozambique	20	32	43	5
Namibia	24	13	62	1
Niger	33	20	44	3
Nigeria	67	8	25	1
Senegal	54	25	20	0
Sierra Leone	46	13	41	0
South Africa	47	17	34	2
Sudan	67	14	18	1
Swaziland	55	21	21	2
Tanzania	73	18	8	0
Togo	70	8	21	1
Tunisia	79	9	10	2
Uganda	75	6	18	1
Zambia	36	9	54	1
Zimbabwe	42	24	34	0
Average	53	16	29	2

Current condition of national economy compared to one year ago: Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to one year ago?

Country	Worse/Much Worse	Same	Better/Much Better	Don't Know
Algeria	8	51	38	3
Benin	25	30	45	0
Botswana	25	43	27	5
Burkina Faso	22	32	40	5
Burundi	53	21	25	1
Cameroon	26	40	28	6
Cape Verde	25	35	37	3
Cote d'Ivoire	32	38	29	1
Egypt	77	11	10	1
Ethiopia	<i>forthcoming</i>			
Ghana	33	24	42	1
Guinea	49	23	27	1
Kenya	57	8	33	1
Lesotho	36	35	22	7
Liberia	26	34	38	1
Madagascar	45	37	12	6
Malawi	56	11	32	1
Mali	41	13	46	0
Mauritius	19	55	25	1
Morocco	33	36	29	1
Mozambique	23	24	48	4
Namibia	19	42	38	1
Niger	28	29	40	3
Nigeria	37	27	34	1
Senegal	40	25	35	1
Sierra Leone	25	28	47	1
South Africa	33	36	30	2
Sudan	71	7	21	1
Swaziland	47	26	24	2
Tanzania	51	23	25	0
Togo	49	27	22	2
Tunisia	69	13	16	2
Uganda	68	12	18	2
Zambia	22	40	37	1
Zimbabwe	23	42	34	1
Average	38	29	31	2

National economic conditions in twelve months: Looking ahead, do you expect the economic conditions in this country in twelve months time to be better or worse?

Country	Better/Much Better	Same	Worse/Much Worse	Don't Know
Algeria	82	10	1	6
Benin	78	6	12	4
Botswana	49	18	19	14
Burkina Faso	59	10	12	19
Burundi	40	14	39	8
Cameroon	57	11	10	21
Cape Verde	74	10	11	6
Cote d'Ivoire	75	9	11	5
Egypt	32	8	48	11
Ethiopia	<i>forthcoming</i>			
Ghana	73	9	10	8
Guinea	64	6	23	7
Kenya	33	6	47	14
Lesotho	51	15	15	20
Liberia	67	8	11	13
Madagascar	41	22	20	17
Malawi	45	6	30	20
Mali	80	2	12	6
Mauritius	26	34	36	5
Morocco	59	14	17	10
Mozambique	72	7	9	12
Namibia	68	17	11	4
Niger	79	6	9	6
Nigeria	78	9	10	4
Senegal	73	6	10	10
Sierra Leone	69	12	13	6
South Africa	55	20	21	4
Sudan	37	9	44	8
Swaziland	66	14	13	7
Tanzania	22	14	55	9
Togo	52	8	17	22
Tunisia	50	5	34	11
Uganda	24	10	55	11
Zambia	62	17	11	10
Zimbabwe	52	18	20	11
Average	57	11	21	10

Personal living conditions: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?

Country	Very/Fairly Good	Neither Good nor Bad	Very/Fairly Bad	Don't Know
Algeria	38	43	19	0
Benin	28	19	53	0
Botswana	17	25	57	0
Burkina Faso	40	14	46	0
Burundi	25	22	54	0
Cameroon	36	29	34	1
Cape Verde	14	58	27	0
Cote d'Ivoire	25	22	53	0
Egypt	16	16	67	0
Ethiopia	<i>forthcoming</i>			
Ghana	36	6	58	0
Guinea	33	10	57	0
Kenya	14	14	71	0
Lesotho	16	11	71	1
Liberia	50	12	36	0
Madagascar	10	34	55	0
Malawi	30	6	64	0
Mali	34	13	52	0
Mauritius	47	22	32	0
Morocco	40	31	29	0
Mozambique	25	43	32	1
Namibia	46	16	38	0
Niger	44	28	27	0
Nigeria	42	14	42	1
Senegal	28	28	43	0
Sierra Leone	44	16	40	0
South Africa	41	18	41	0
Sudan	28	19	51	1
Swaziland	26	25	49	0
Tanzania	8	27	65	0
Togo	19	11	70	0
Tunisia	30	16	54	0
Uganda	28	10	62	0
Zambia	56	10	34	0
Zimbabwe	31	26	43	0
Average	31	21	48	0

Personal living conditions in twelve months: Looking ahead, do you expect your living conditions in twelve months time to be better or worse?

Country	Better/Much Better	Same	Worse/Much Worse	Don't Know
Algeria	76	14	3	7
Benin	87	3	8	2
Botswana	53	20	15	11
Burkina Faso	65	8	9	17
Burundi	41	16	37	6
Cameroon	63	9	5	22
Cape Verde	79	11	5	6
Cote d'Ivoire	77	10	9	4
Egypt	33	12	44	12
Ethiopia	<i>forthcoming</i>			
Ghana	77	8	8	7
Guinea	64	10	20	6
Kenya	36	8	42	14
Lesotho	49	17	15	19
Liberia	74	8	7	11
Madagascar	46	29	13	11
Malawi	47	9	25	19
Mali	82	3	10	6
Mauritius	27	39	30	4
Morocco	62	16	12	11
Mozambique	68	10	8	14
Namibia	68	21	6	4
Niger	80	6	9	5
Nigeria	85	6	7	3
Senegal	77	6	8	9
Sierra Leone	72	11	12	5
South Africa	57	25	14	4
Sudan	44	12	35	8
Swaziland	70	15	9	6
Tanzania	23	18	50	10
Togo	59	8	13	20
Tunisia	53	12	26	9
Uganda	30	10	51	10
Zambia	64	18	8	9
Zimbabwe	54	19	18	9
Average	60	13	17	9

Ratings of government management of economy: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Country	Managing the Economy		Improving Living Standards of Poor		Creating Jobs		Narrowing Gaps between Rich and Poor	
	Very/Fairly Badly	Very/Fairly Well	Very/Fairly Badly	Very/Fairly Well	Very/Fairly Badly	Very/Fairly Well	Very/Fairly Badly	Very/Fairly Well
Algeria	38	51	77	21	70	29	76	18
Benin	59	39	73	27	71	28	80	20
Botswana	27	67	25	74	59	40	53	44
Burkina Faso	54	35	70	26	70	24	76	18
Burundi	55	41	71	28	75	20	81	16
Cameroon	58	31	74	21	54	40	78	15
Cape Verde	37	52	54	40	69	25	65	26
Cote d'Ivoire	54	39	79	19	71	26	81	13
Egypt	87	9	89	10	87	12	90	7
Ethiopia	forthcoming							
Ghana	53	46	65	34	66	32	70	27
Guinea	63	35	76	23	79	18	76	22
Kenya	77	22	83	16	81	18	87	11
Lesotho	32	28	44	22	57	12	54	9
Liberia	55	41	71	28	72	26	82	16
Madagascar	72	15	89	8	87	7	87	6
Malawi	27	52	41	39	44	33	47	33
Mali	69	26	75	23	73	25	80	18
Mauritius	39	61	48	52	54	46	68	29
Morocco	61	26	76	21	79	18	83	13
Mozambique	42	47	60	31	65	27	63	26
Namibia	36	61	68	31	74	26	80	19
Niger	54	40	74	25	68	25	79	18
Nigeria	81	19	85	15	84	16	88	12
Senegal	51	43	76	22	78	19	79	17
Sierra Leone	47	52	55	44	51	47	59	39
South Africa	53	45	66	33	77	23	76	22
Sudan	77	16	84	13	77	19	84	11
Swaziland	58	36	66	33	68	30	76	19
Tanzania	73	26	81	18	79	21	86	13
Togo	71	23	78	19	77	18	81	14
Tunisia	74	21	80	18	79	19	85	12
Uganda	81	18	77	22	78	18	82	14
Zambia	34	62	55	43	65	32	66	29
Zimbabwe	50	49	65	34	87	12	78	21
Average	56	38	69	27	71	24	76	8

Jan Hofmeyr is head of programme for policy and analysis, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), jhofmeyr@ijr.org.za

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