

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation  
Durban, South Africa  
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## News release

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### South Africans express economic unease, hope for improvement, survey shows

As Africa's most advanced economy struggles with high unemployment and eroding consumer purchasing power, South African citizens share a deep sense of economic unease, Afrobarometer's recent survey suggests.

Most South Africans say the country is headed in the wrong direction and describe economic conditions as bad. Majorities rate the government's performance on economic indicators as poor, and close to two-thirds of citizens say they would be willing to forgo elections if a non-elected leader were able to impose law and order and provide housing and jobs.

Still, a majority express optimism that things will turn around soon.

For a detailed analysis, please see [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

#### Key findings

- More than two-thirds (68%) of South Africans see their country as heading in the wrong direction (Figure 1).
- Two-thirds (66%) assess their country's economic condition as "fairly bad" or "very bad," an increase from 54% recorded in 2015 (Figure 2).
- Six in 10 citizens (61%) say the government is performing "fairly badly" or "very badly" on management of the economy.
- But a slim majority of South Africans are hopeful for the near future: 53% say they expect things to be "better" or "much better" in 12 months' time, an 11-percentage-point improvement from 2015 (Figure 3).

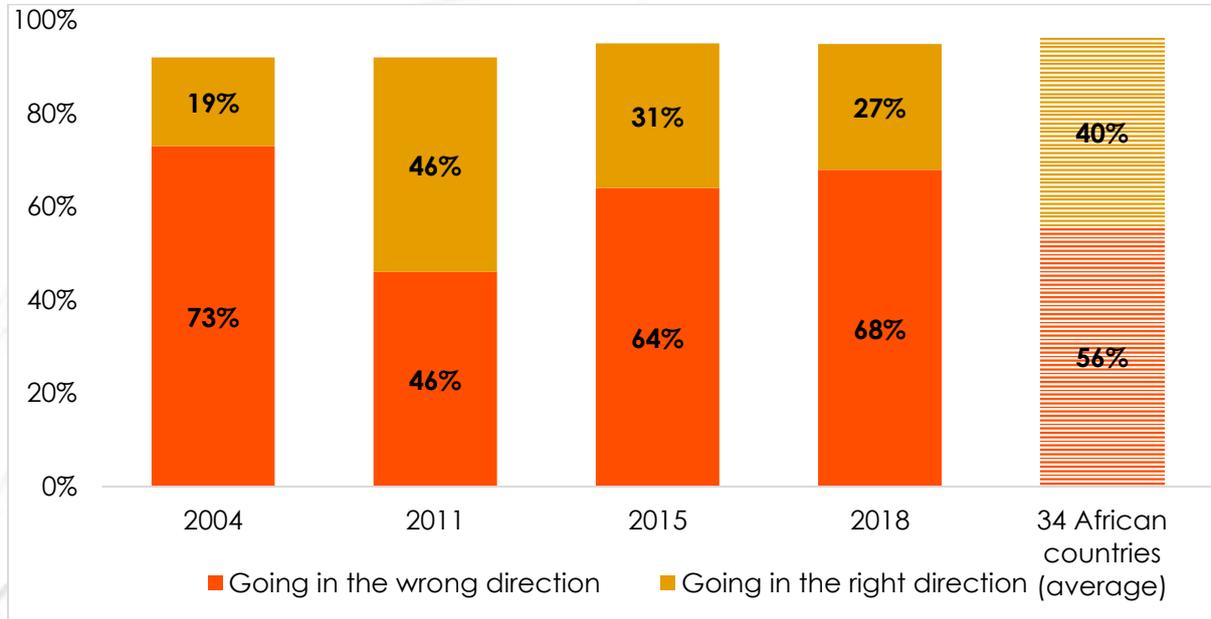
#### Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2018. 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 1,800 adult South Africans in August and September 2018. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015.

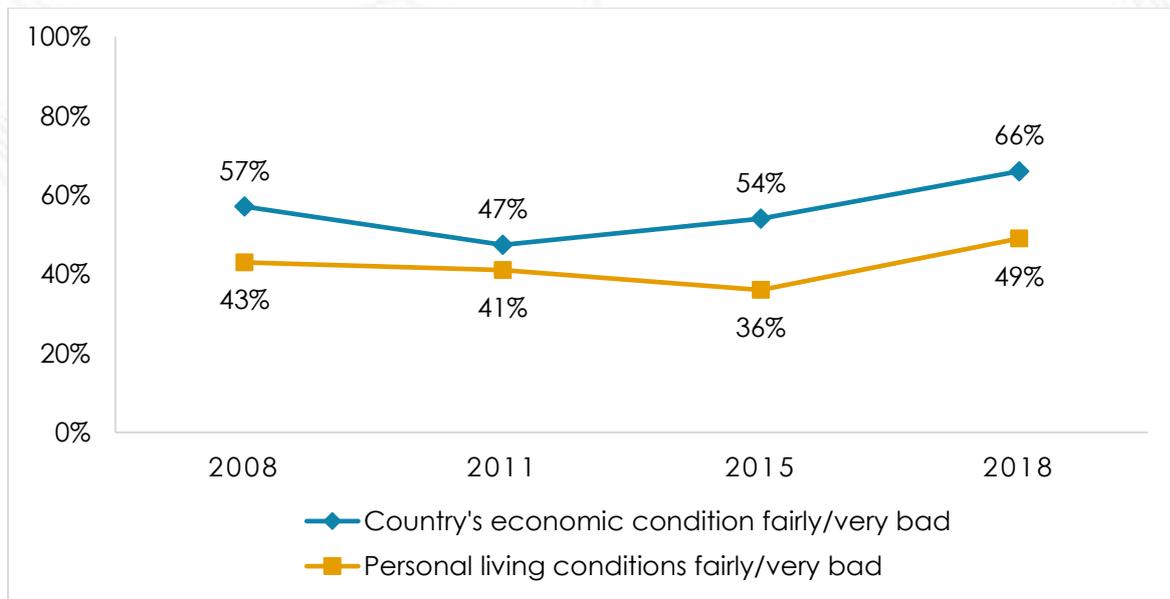
**Charts**

**Figure 1: Direction of the country | South Africa | 2004-2018**



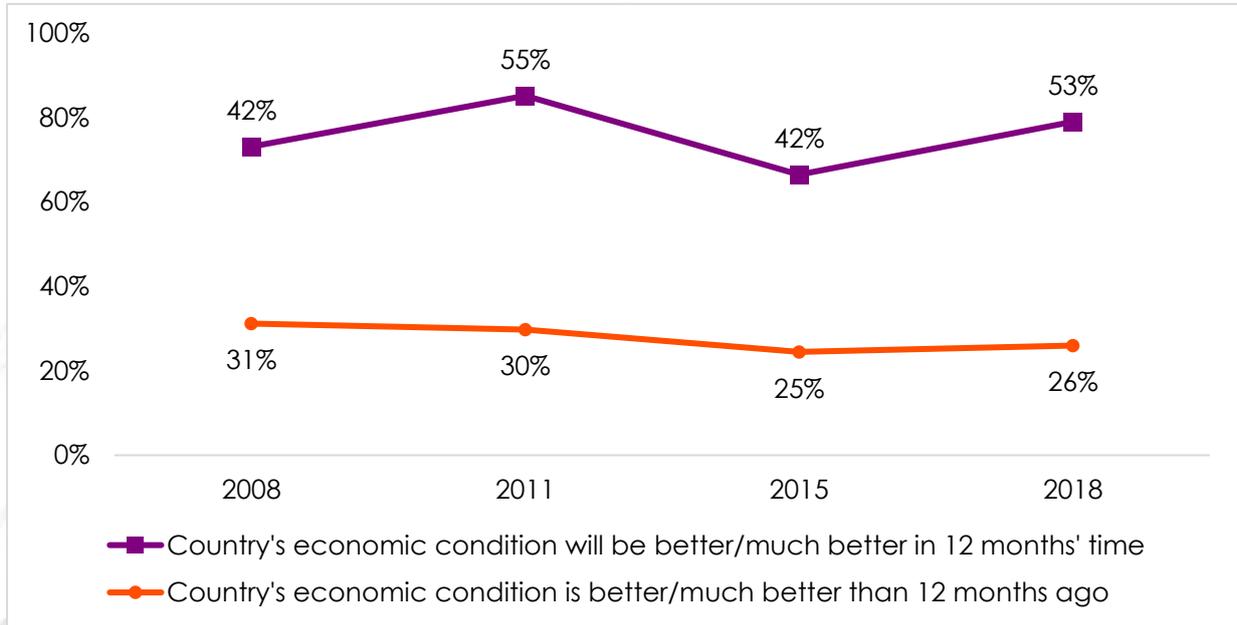
**Respondents were asked:** Some people might think the country is going in the wrong direction. Others may feel it is going in the right direction. So let me ask you about the overall direction of the country: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or in the right direction?

**Figure 2: Perceptions of country's economic and personal living conditions as bad | South Africa | 2008-2018**



**Respondents were asked:** In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? Your own present living conditions?

**Figure 3: Looking back and ahead: economic conditions better** | South Africa  
 | 2008-2018



**Respondents were asked:**

*Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago?  
 Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?*

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