



Centre for Social Research
University of Malawi
Zomba, Malawi
9 April 2020

News release

Malawians receptive to security-related curfews but face many challenges in a potential COVID-19 lockdown, survey shows

Two-thirds of Malawians say that when faced with threats to public security, the government should be able to impose curfews and set up roadblocks to prevent people from moving around, according to an Afrobarometer survey in late 2019.

While the survey was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic threatened Africa, its findings suggest that a coronavirus lockdown, if instituted, would be respected.

However, the survey also reveals major challenges that many Malawians would face in a lockdown. Most Malawians rely on water sources and toilet facilities outside their compounds, making it difficult to implement hygiene measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as frequent handwashing.

Moreover, large majorities of citizens reported going without basic necessities during the previous year, including enough food, medical care, and cash income. These shortages would test Malawians' ability and resolve to honour a lockdown that they might otherwise consider necessary.

Key findings

- In late 2019, two out of three Malawians (67%) said that when faced with threats to public security, the government should be able to impose curfews and set up roadblocks to prevent people from moving around. This view is particularly common in the South region (70%) and among urban residents (76%), economically well-off respondents (83%), and those with secondary (70%) or post-secondary (71%) education (Figure 1).
- Nine out of 10 Malawians (90%) said their households rely on water from sources outside their homes or compounds. And about six in 10 (61%) do not have toilets or latrines in their homes or compounds (Figure 2).
- Rural and poor Malawians are at a considerable disadvantage when it comes to piped water and toilet facilities (Figure 3). Only 3% of rural residents enjoy piped water in their homes or compounds, compared to 39% of city dwellers. For toilets, the gap is 37% vs. 50%. Similarly, the economically best-off citizens are 10 times as likely as the poorest to have piped water (40% vs. 4%), and twice as likely to have toilets in their homes/compounds (56% vs. 28%).
- Most Malawians said they went without cash income (95%), without enough food (79%), and without needed medical care (65%) at least once during the previous year, including many who frequently lacked these basic necessities (Figure 4).

Afrobarometer surveys

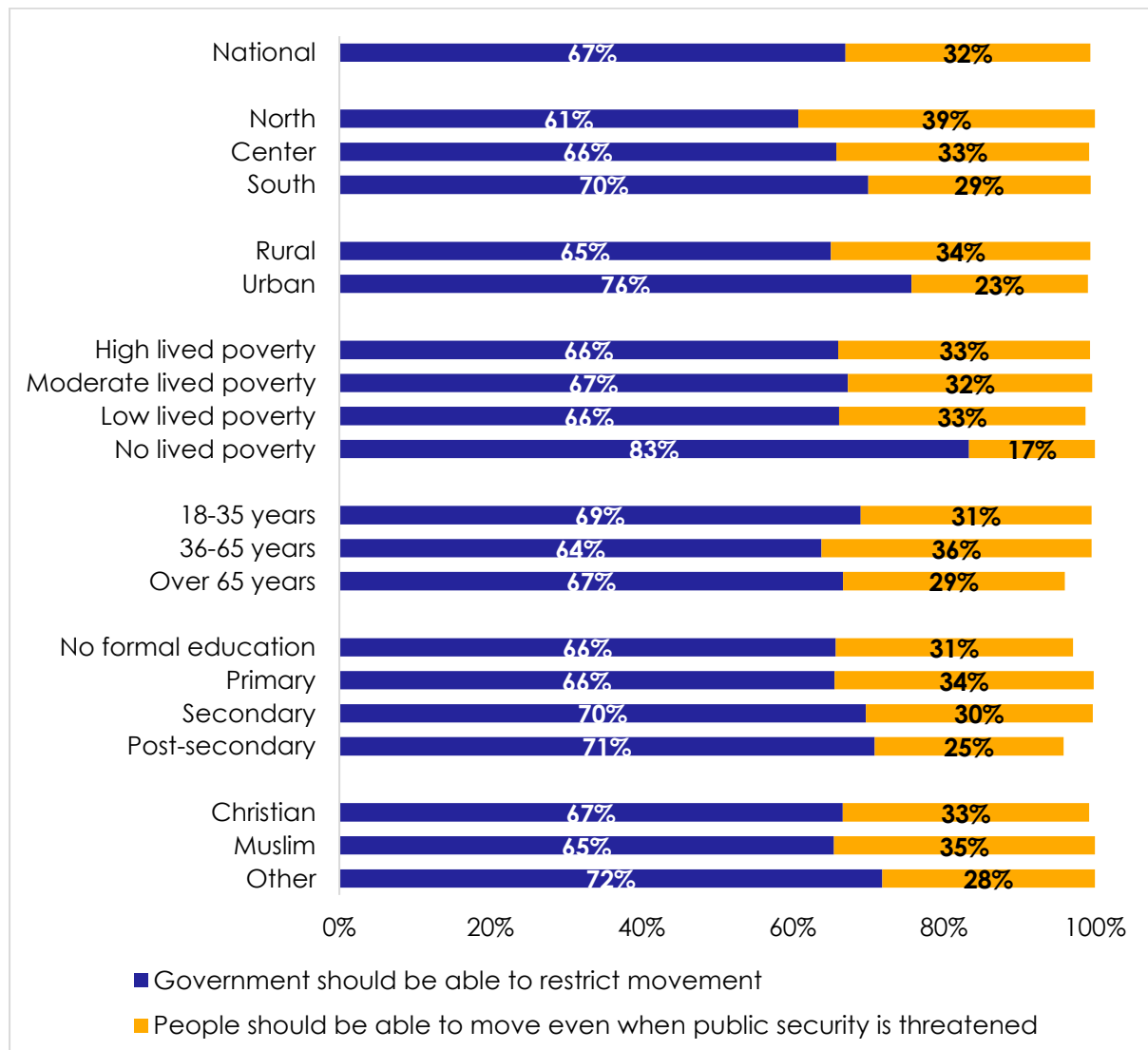
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

Seven rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018, and Round 8 surveys are being conducted in 2019/2020. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, interviewed 1,200 adult Malawians in November and December 2019. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Malawi in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

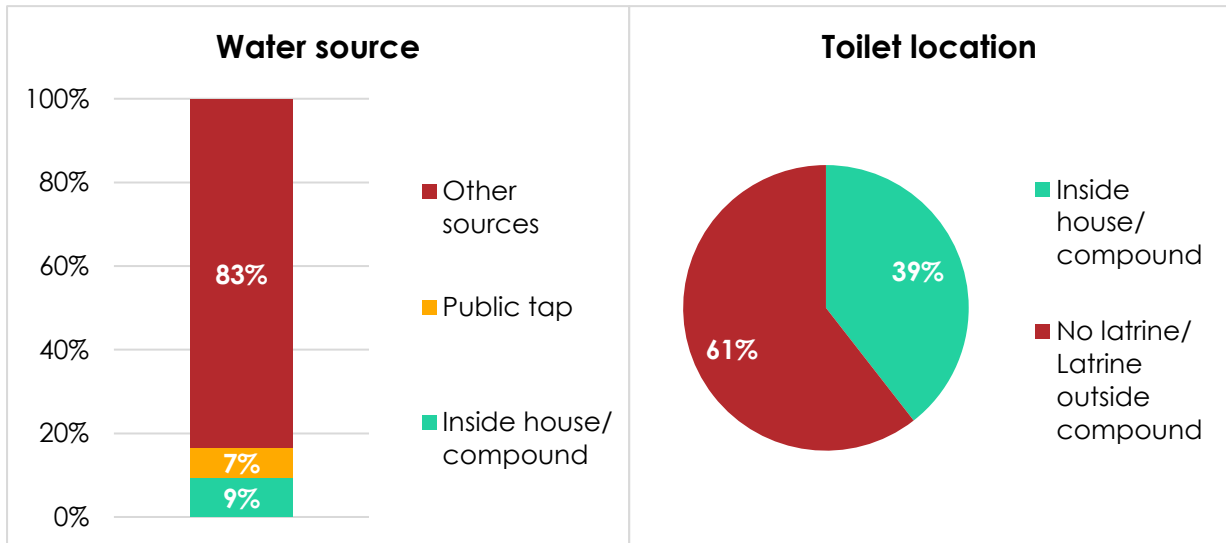
Charts

Figure 1: Willingness to trade freedom of movement for security | by socio-demographic group | Malawi | 2019



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Even if faced with threats to public security, people should be free to move about the country at any time of day or night.
 Statement 2: When faced with threats to public security, the government should be able to impose curfews and set up special roadblocks to prevent people from moving around.

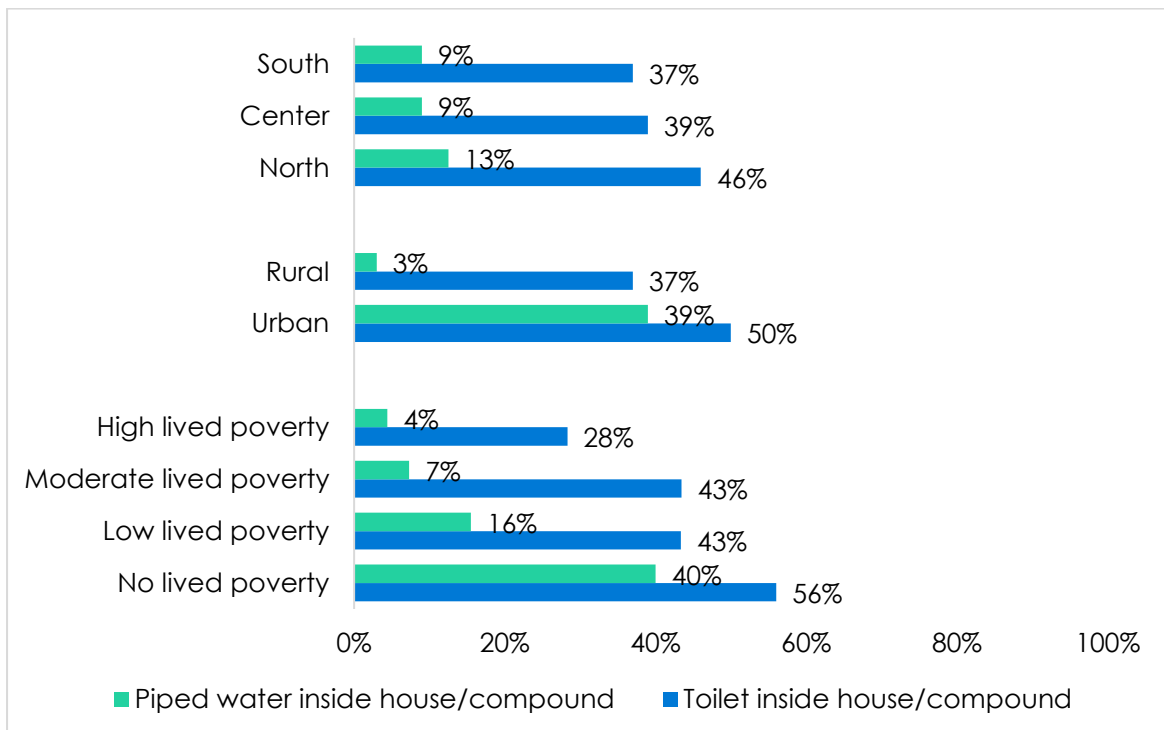
Figure 2: Point of access to water and toilet | Malawi | 2019



Respondents were asked:

Please tell me whether each of the following are available inside your house, inside your compound, or outside your compound: Your main source of water for household use? Do you have a toilet, water closet, or latrine available for your use? [If yes:] Is it inside your house, inside your compound, or outside your compound, or is there none available?

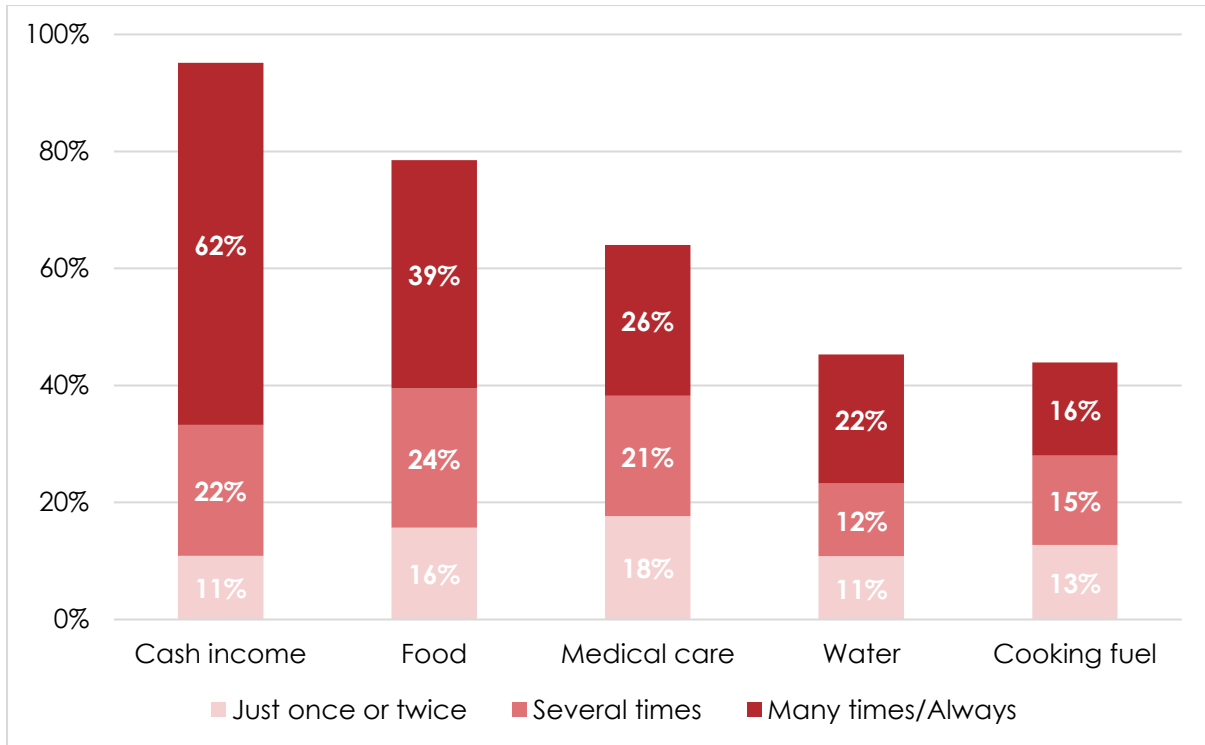
Figure 3: Water source and toilet inside the house or compound | by region, urban-rural location, and lived poverty level | Malawi | 2016/2018



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Please tell me whether each of the following are available inside your house, inside your compound, or outside your compound: Your main source of water for household use? Do you have a toilet, water closet, or latrine available for your use? [If yes:] Is it inside your house, inside your compound, or outside your compound, or is there none available?

Figure 4: Went without basic necessities | Malawi | 2019



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?

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