



# The Experience of Poverty in South Africa: A Summary of Afrobarometer Indicators, 2000-2011

January 2013

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys, covering up to 35 African countries in Round 5 (2011-2013). It measures public attitudes on democracy and the quality of governance, economic performance, social service delivery, political behavior, and other critical social and political issues. The Afrobarometer also provides comparisons over time, as four rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2010, and Round 5 is currently underway.

Afrobarometer surveys generate a variety of measures of individuals' economic status and experience with poverty, which can be compared at both the sub-national (e.g., by province or urban vs. rural) and cross-national levels. The surveys also collect data on respondents' access to and utilization of public services, and on their political engagement. This bulletin presents findings on the experience of poverty in South Africa based primarily on the most recent Afrobarometer survey (Round 5, 2011), providing information that may be useful for policymakers and activists working on poverty-related concerns.

The findings are presented in five sections. The first section details Afrobarometer's poverty indicators (e.g., access to food and clean water) over time in the South African context. The second section illustrates the cross-country differences between South Africa and other countries in Southern Africa across the poverty indicators. Section 3 provides data on South Africans' ownership of particular goods (e.g. motor vehicles) and access to household facilities (e.g. water and latrine), which can serve as additional indicators of household economic status. The fourth section details the provision of public goods (e.g. schools, clinics and markets), and explores how South Africans' varying levels of poverty are linked to their access to good quality public services, such as medical care. Finally, Section 5 presents findings regarding differences in political and community-based participation among South Africans' at varying levels of poverty. In sum, the sections taken together give some indication about South Africans' diverse experiences with poverty, and how these different experiences influence their political engagement.

## The Round 5 Survey in South Africa

Afrobarometer's work in South Africa is coordinated by Citizens Surveys, Ltd, with technical support from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), an Afrobarometer Core Partner. Fieldwork for Round 5 was conducted between October and November 2011. The survey interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2399 adult South Africans drawn from all nine provinces of the country; a sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. For more information on this survey and on the Afrobarometer, visit the website at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

## Points of Interest

### Section 1: Measuring Poverty in South Africa

- Several areas, such as access to food, water, and cooking fuel, show modest improvement over time. Yet, a large segment of the population still does not always meet its food, water, and cooking fuel needs. The biggest gains in access are in the provision of medical care (Figure 1.1)
- There are substantial urban-rural and provincial variations in South Africans' ability meet to their food needs. For instance, rural dwellers struggle more than urbanites. Further, the proportion of individuals who are always able to meet their food needs ranges from highs in

Free State (75%) and Limpopo (74%) to lows in Kwazulu Natal (53%) and the Eastern Cape (56%) (Figures 1.3 and 1.4)

## **Section 2: South Africa in Comparison: Poverty in Southern Africa**

- In comparison with Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, the aggregate figures suggest that South Africa generally outperforms its Southern African neighbors across poverty indicators (Figures 2.1 and 2.2)

## **Section 3: Alternative Indicators of Economic Status**

- As of 2011, over 70% of South Africans report owning a radio and television, yet less than 30% own a motor vehicle (Figure 3.1)
- Most South Africans have a latrine and water supply located either within their house or within their compound. A majority of respondents (56%) pay for water services (Figures 3.2 to 3.4)

## **Section 4: Poverty and Service Provision**

- Over 50% of South Africans have critical infrastructure, such as electric grid, piped water system, sewage system, and cell phone services in the surrounding area (i.e. within their census enumeration area) (Figures 4.1 and 4.2)
- Even so, it is clear that the access to and quality of public goods is quite different across economic status (Figures 4.3 and 4.4, 4.5 through 4.9).
- South Africans who experience the highest levels of poverty are significantly more likely to say it is difficult to get household services (53%) and medical care (45%) from the government compared to the wealthy (31% and 24%, respectively) (Figures 4.3 and 4.4)
- South Africans experiencing both modest and severe poverty use public medical clinics somewhat more than those who experience none or very low poverty (Figure 4.5)
- The experience of poorer South Africans at public clinics is comparably worse than the experiences of those who are better off; poorer South Africans are significantly more likely to report that the clinics they use lack medicine and supplies, that they encounter doctor absences and long wait times, and that they sometimes experience inattention and disrespect from staff (Figures 4.6 through 4.9).

## **Section 5: Poverty and Political Participation**

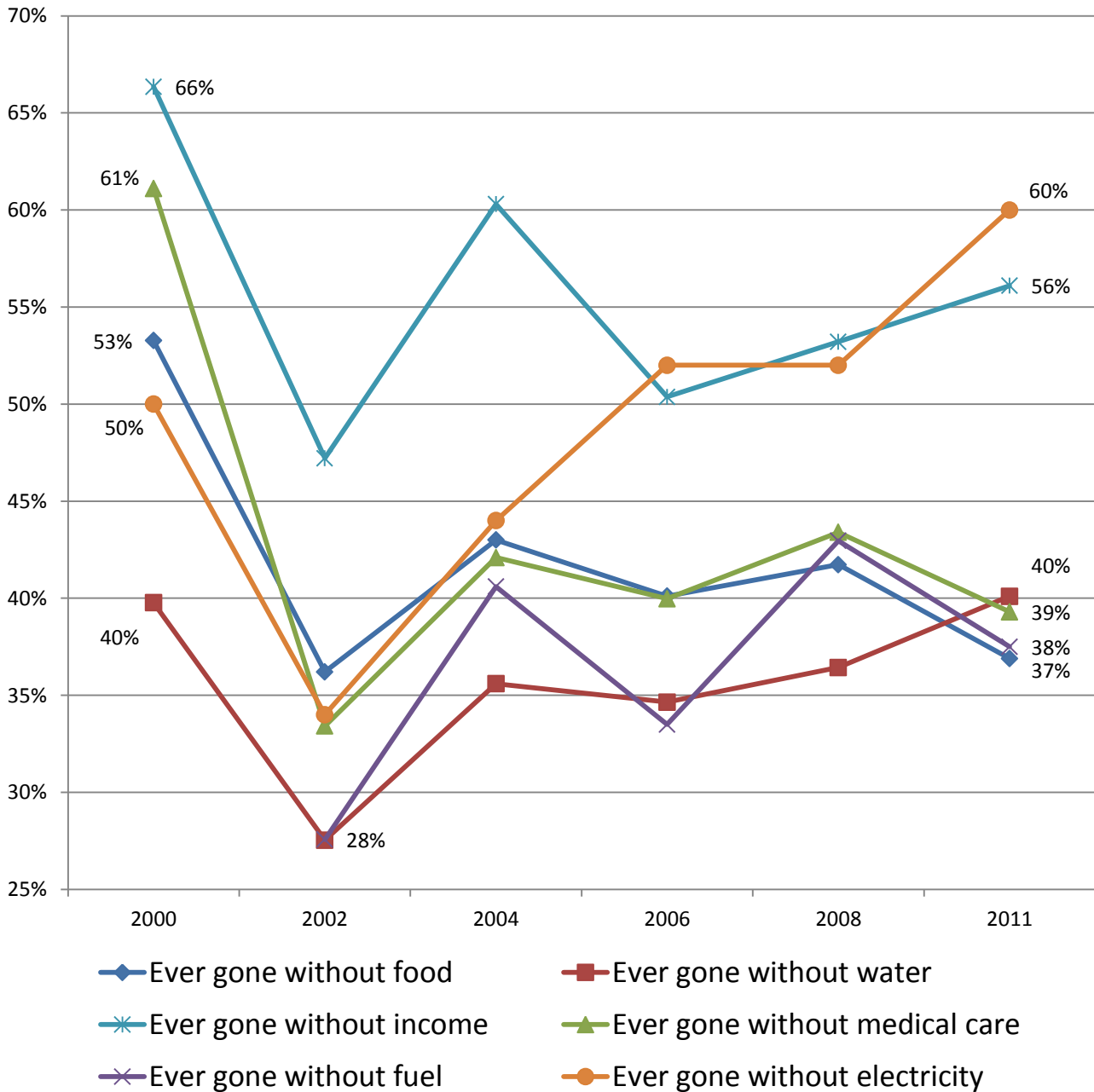
- Overall, South Africans experiencing modest and severe poverty appear to be more engaged in various forms of political and community-based involvement than South Africans experiencing none or very low levels of poverty.
- One-third (31%) of the poorest South Africans contacted their local government councilor at least once in the past year, compared to 22% of South Africans experiencing none or very low levels of poverty (Figure 5.1).
- Similarly, 20% of the poorest had contacted a party official, compared to only half as many (10%) of the wealthiest (Figure 5.3).
- More than two-thirds (69%) of the poorest South Africans (and 66% of those experiencing modest levels of poverty) had attended a community meeting in the past year, compared to 49% of the wealthiest (Figure 5.4).
- The poorest are roughly twice as likely to have participated in a protest or demonstration (17%) compared to their wealthier counterparts (9%) (Figure 5.6).

## SECTION 1: MEASURING POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

### 1.1 Variable: Access to Basic Goods and Services, 2000-2011

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without:

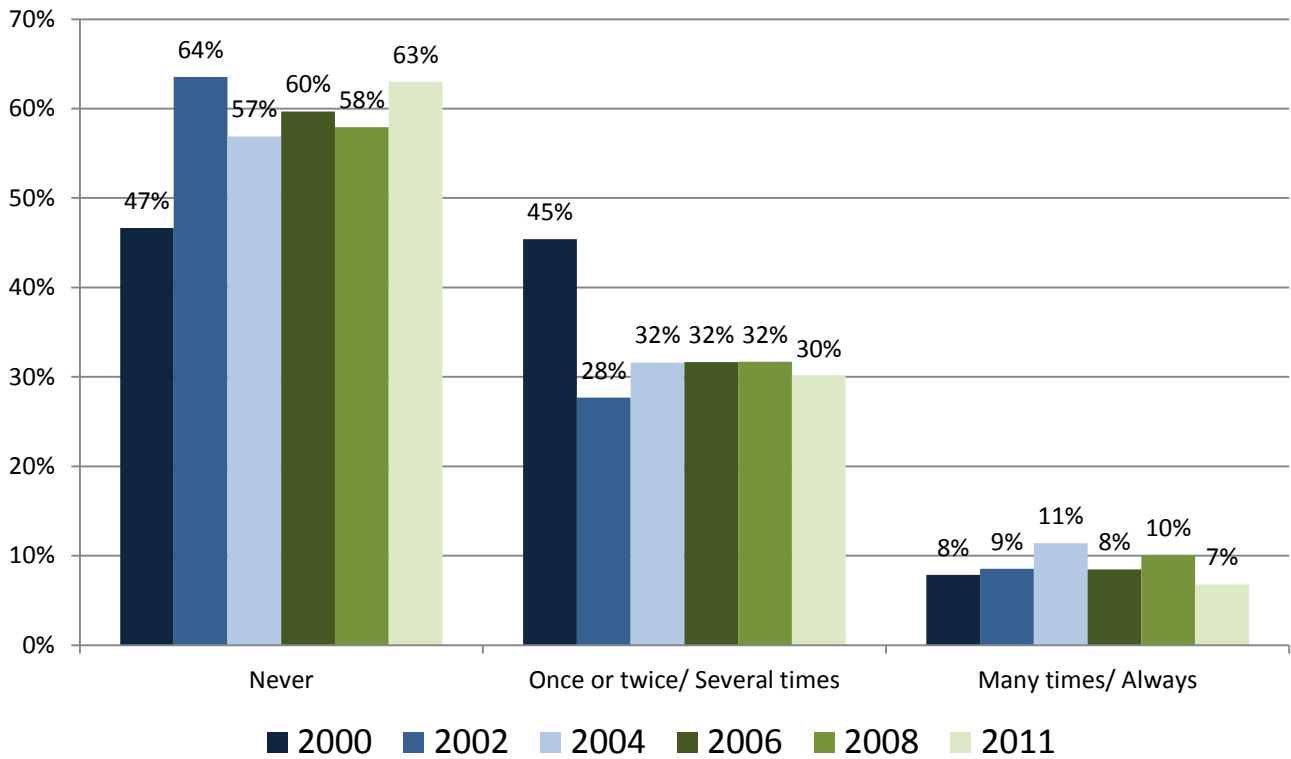
- Enough food to eat?
- Enough clean water for home use?
- Medicines and medical care?
- Enough fuel to cook your food?
- A cash income?
- Electricity in your home?



*Note: Represents the aggregate percentage of respondents who ever went without a basic good or service, i.e., responded with once or twice, several times, many times, or always.*

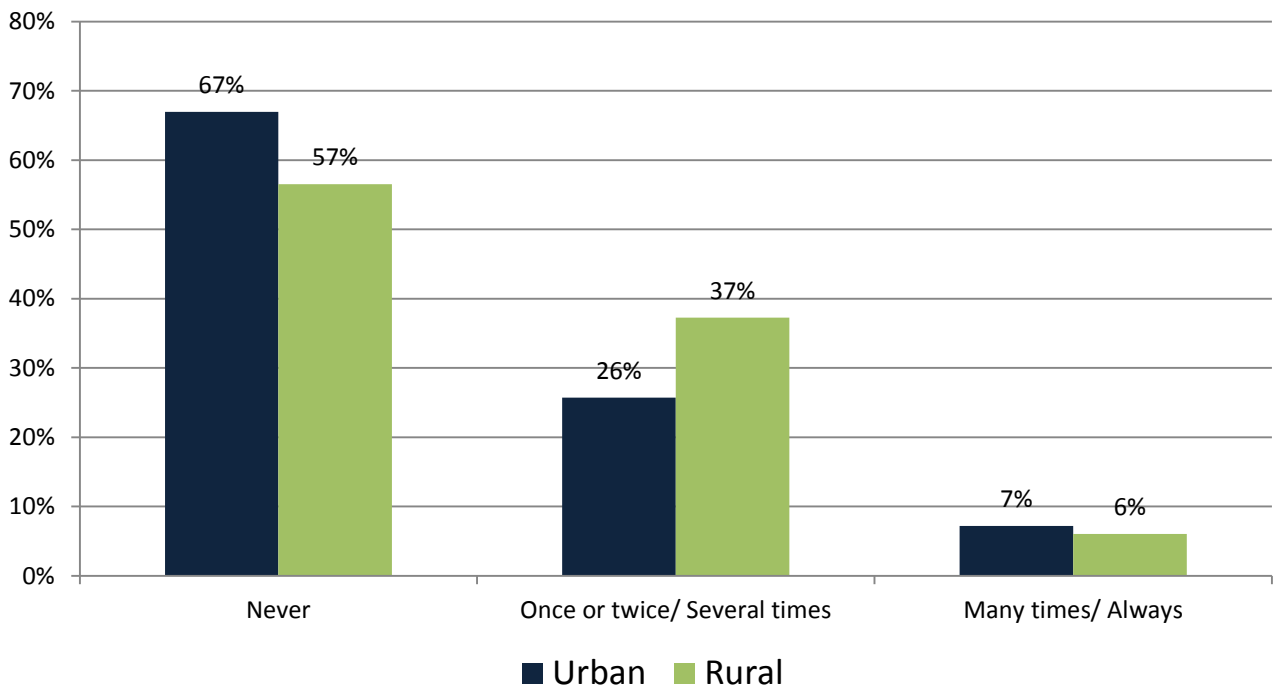
### 1.2 Variable: Going Without Food, 2000-2011

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat?



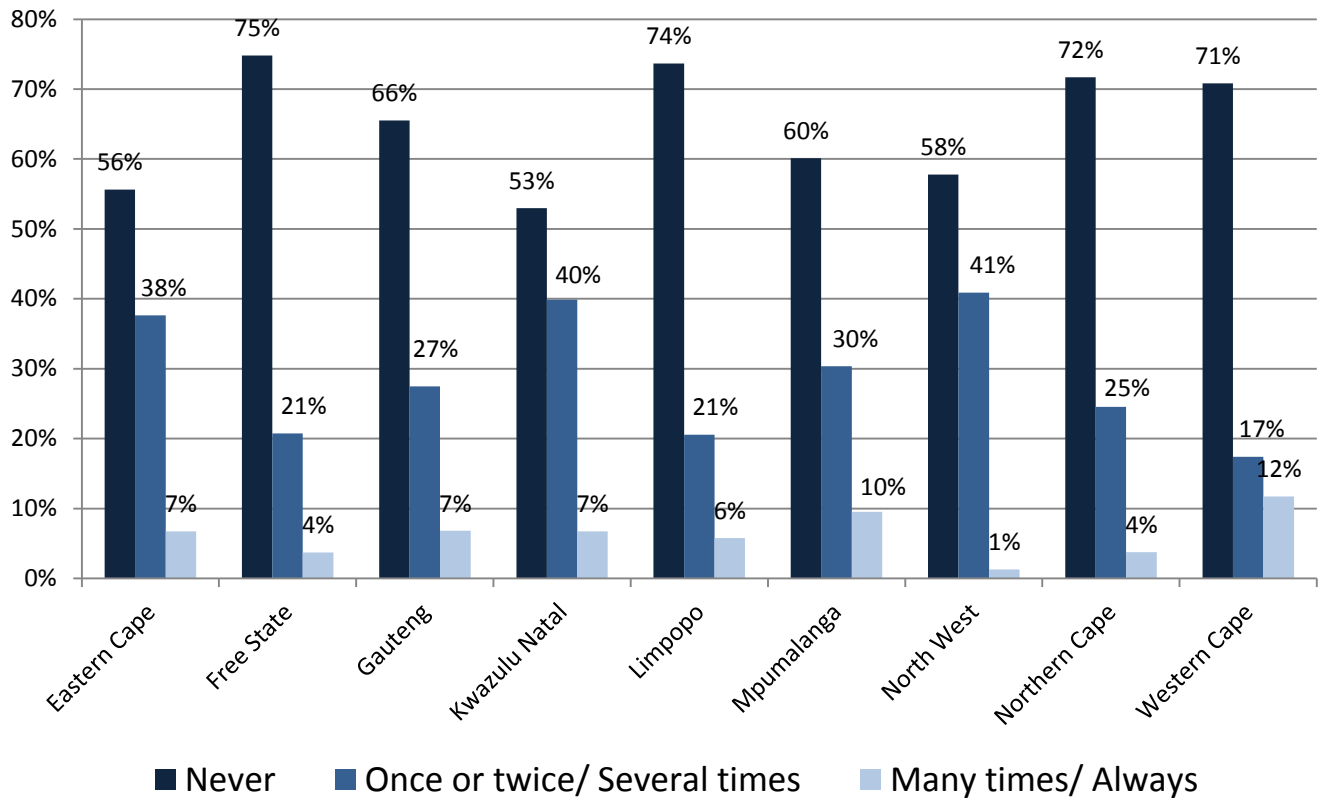
### 1.3 Variable: Going Without Food, by Urban and Rural, 2011

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat?



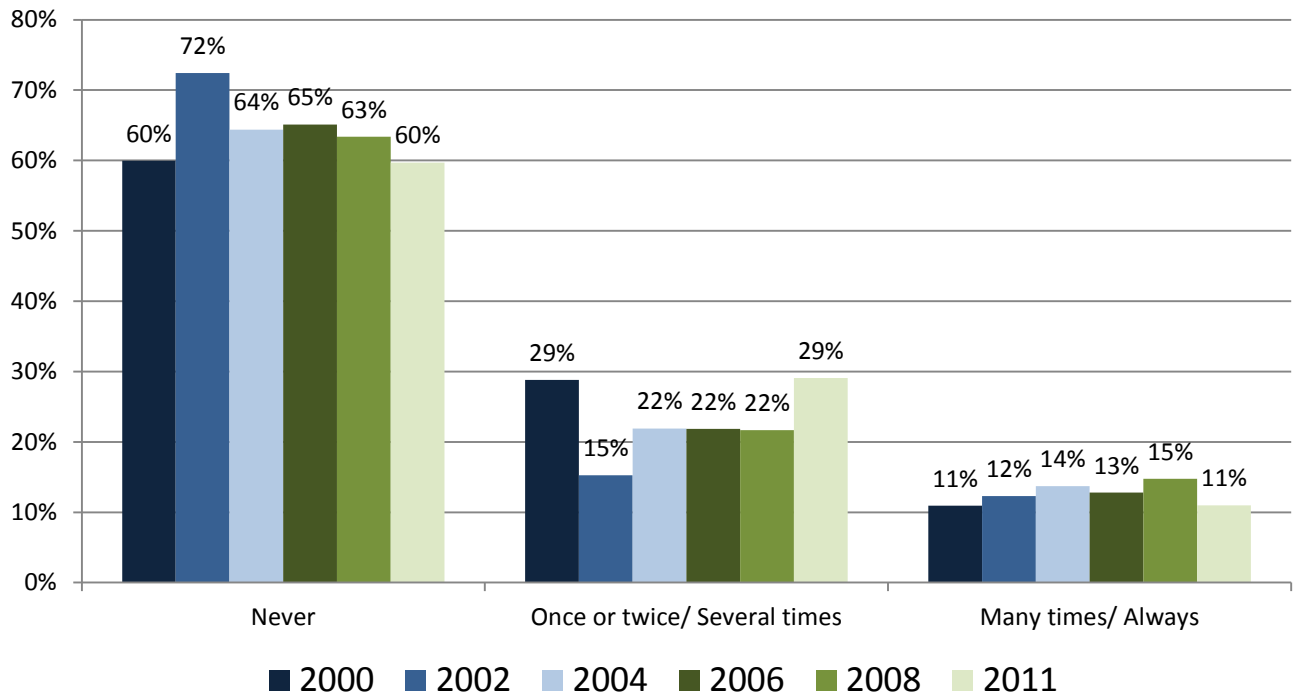
### 1.4 Variable: Going Without Food, by Province, 2011

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat?



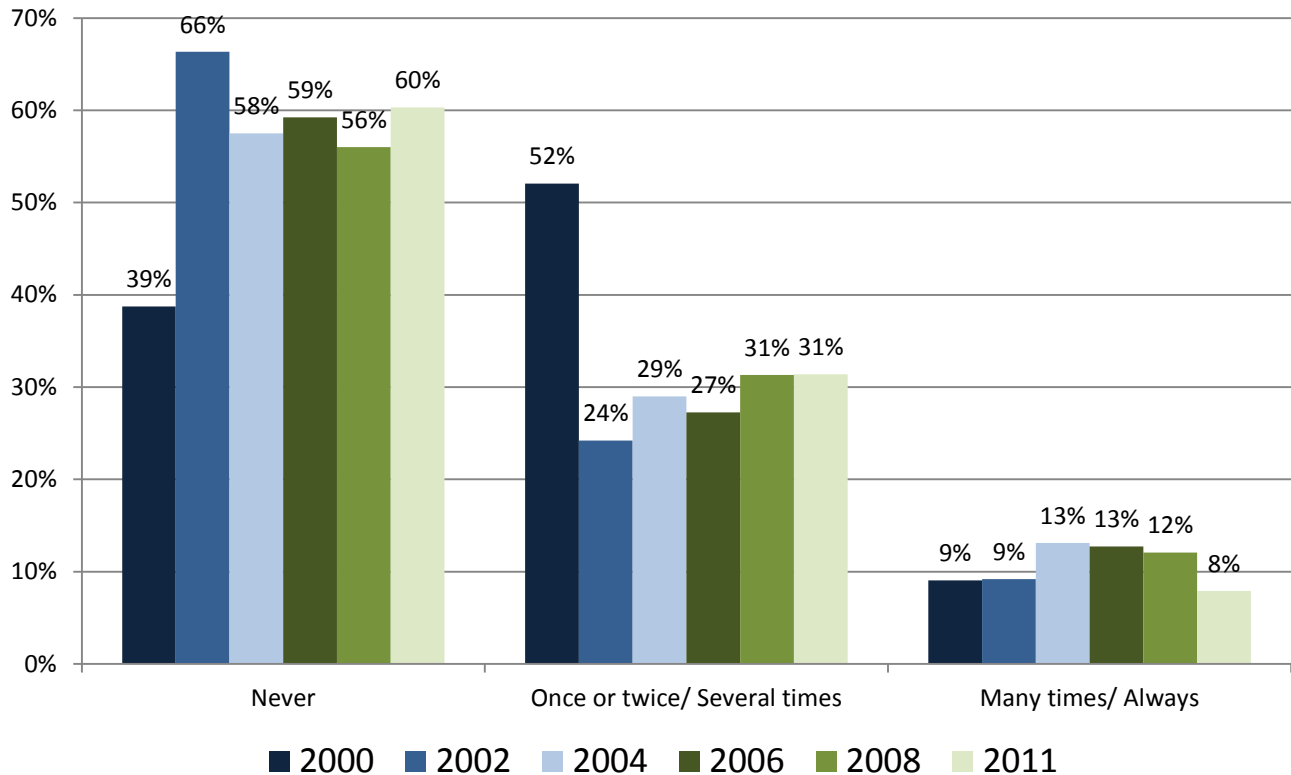
### 1.5 Variable: Going Without Clean Water, 2011

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough clean water for home use?



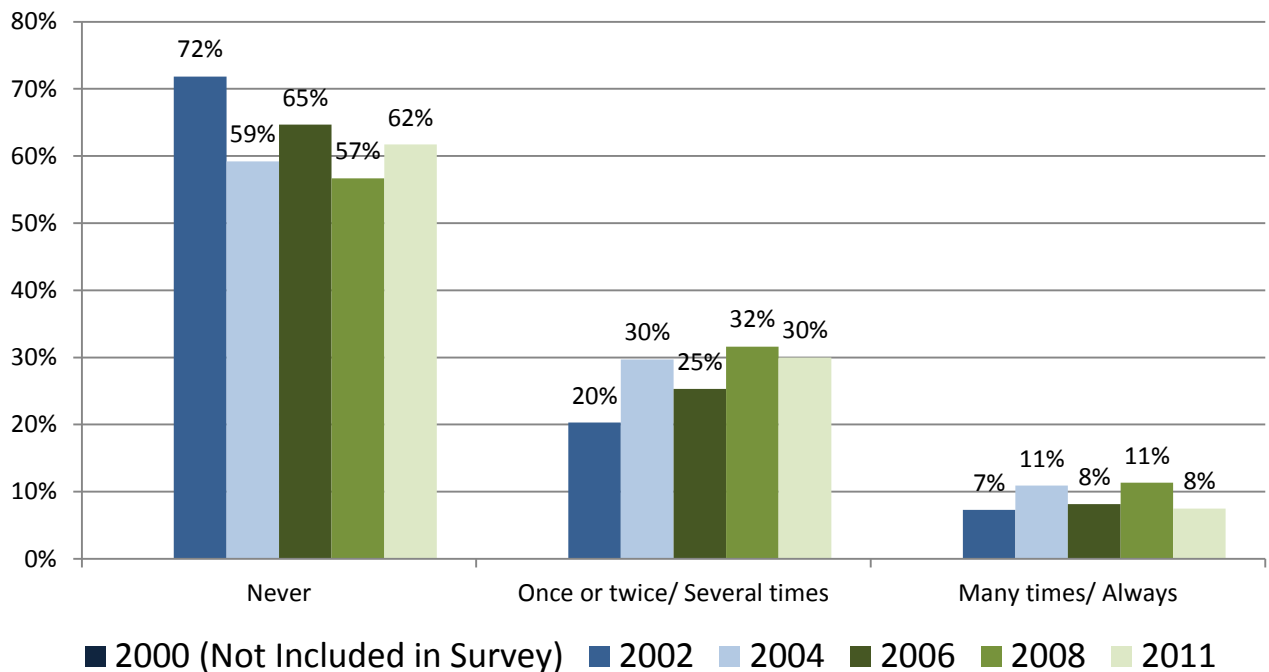
### 1.6 Variable: Going Without Medicines or Medical Treatment, 2011

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Medicines or medical treatment?



### 1.7 Variable: Going Without Cooking Fuel, 2011

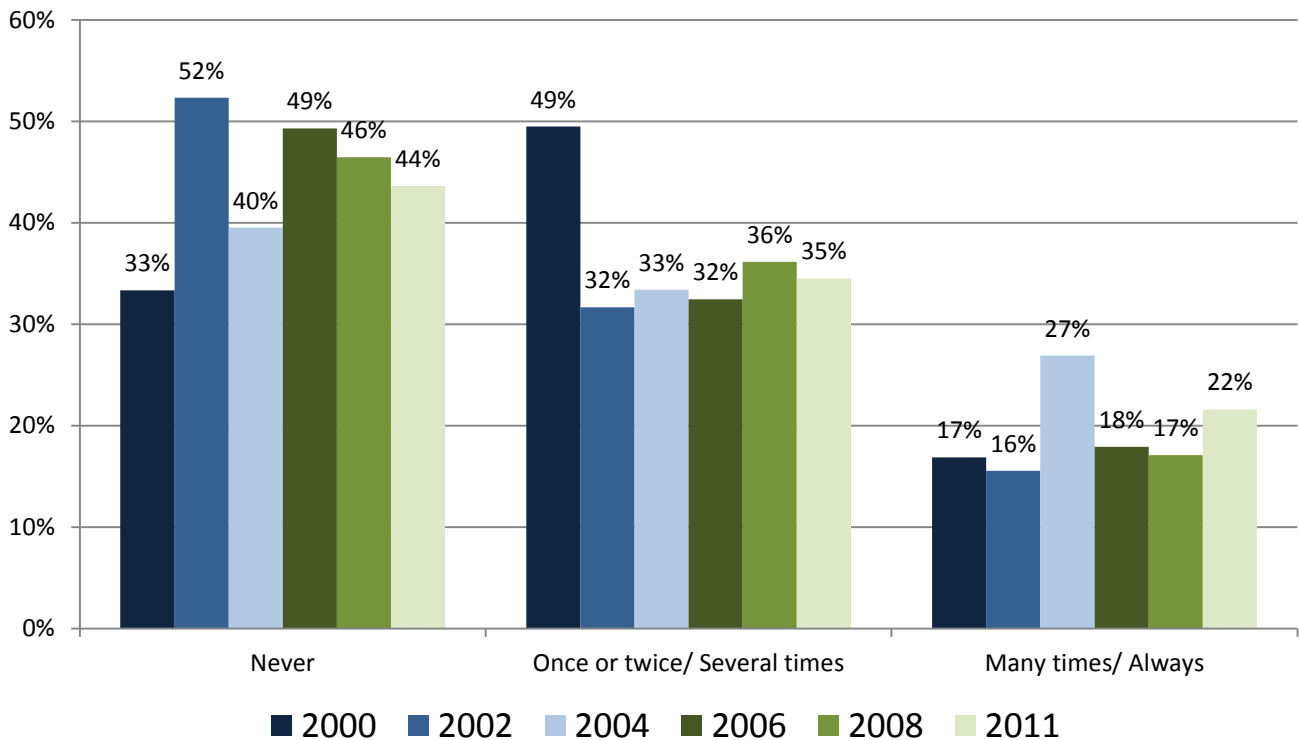
**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough fuel to cook your food?



*Note: Question was not included in the 2000 Afrobarometer survey.*

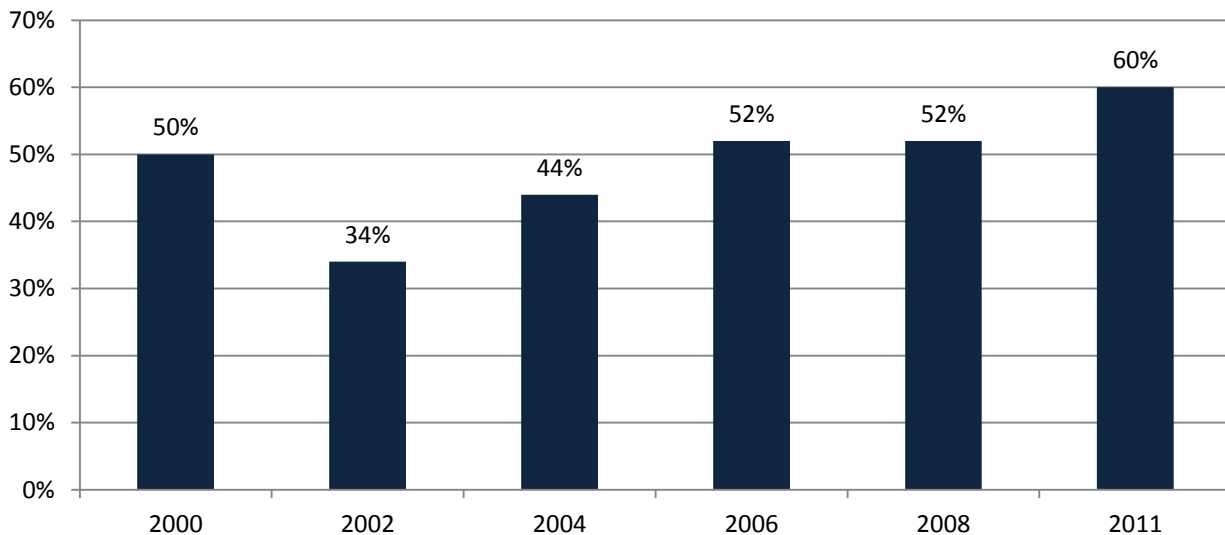
**1.8 Variable: Going Without Cash Income, 2011**

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: A cash income?



**1.9 Variable: Going Without Electricity, 2011**

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without: Electricity in your home?



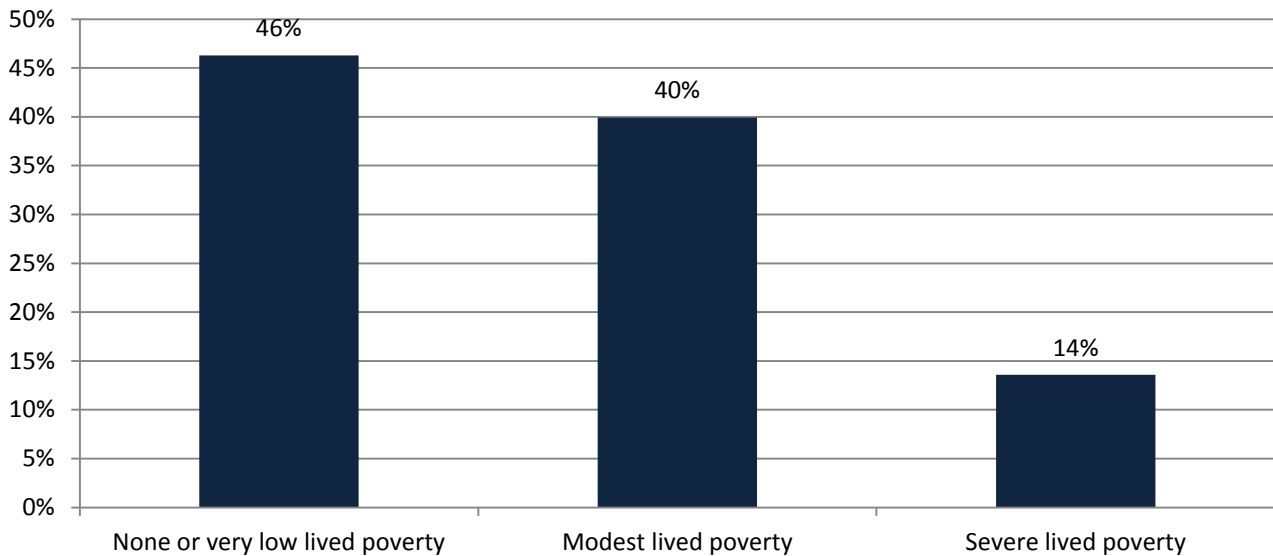
*Note: Represents the aggregate percentage of respondents who ever went without a basic good or service, i.e., responded with once or twice, several times, many times, or always.*

### 1.10 Variable: Lived Poverty Index, 2011

**Index:** The Lived Poverty Index is calculated as the average of responses to five questions that asked respondents: In the past year, how often, if ever, did you or anyone in your family go without:

- Enough food to eat
- Enough clean water for home use
- Medicines or medical treatment
- Enough fuel to cook food
- Cash income

Respondents are then grouped according to the average level of deprivation they experienced. Those experiencing none or very low lived poverty on average never went without; as shown in the graph, they represent 46% of all respondents. Respondents experiencing modest lived poverty on average went without just once or twice, and comprise 40% of the sample. Respondents experiencing severe lived poverty on average went without basic goods and services several times, many times, or always during the past year; they represent 14% of the sample.



We will use these three categories to disaggregate some of the findings in the sections on access to services and on political participation.



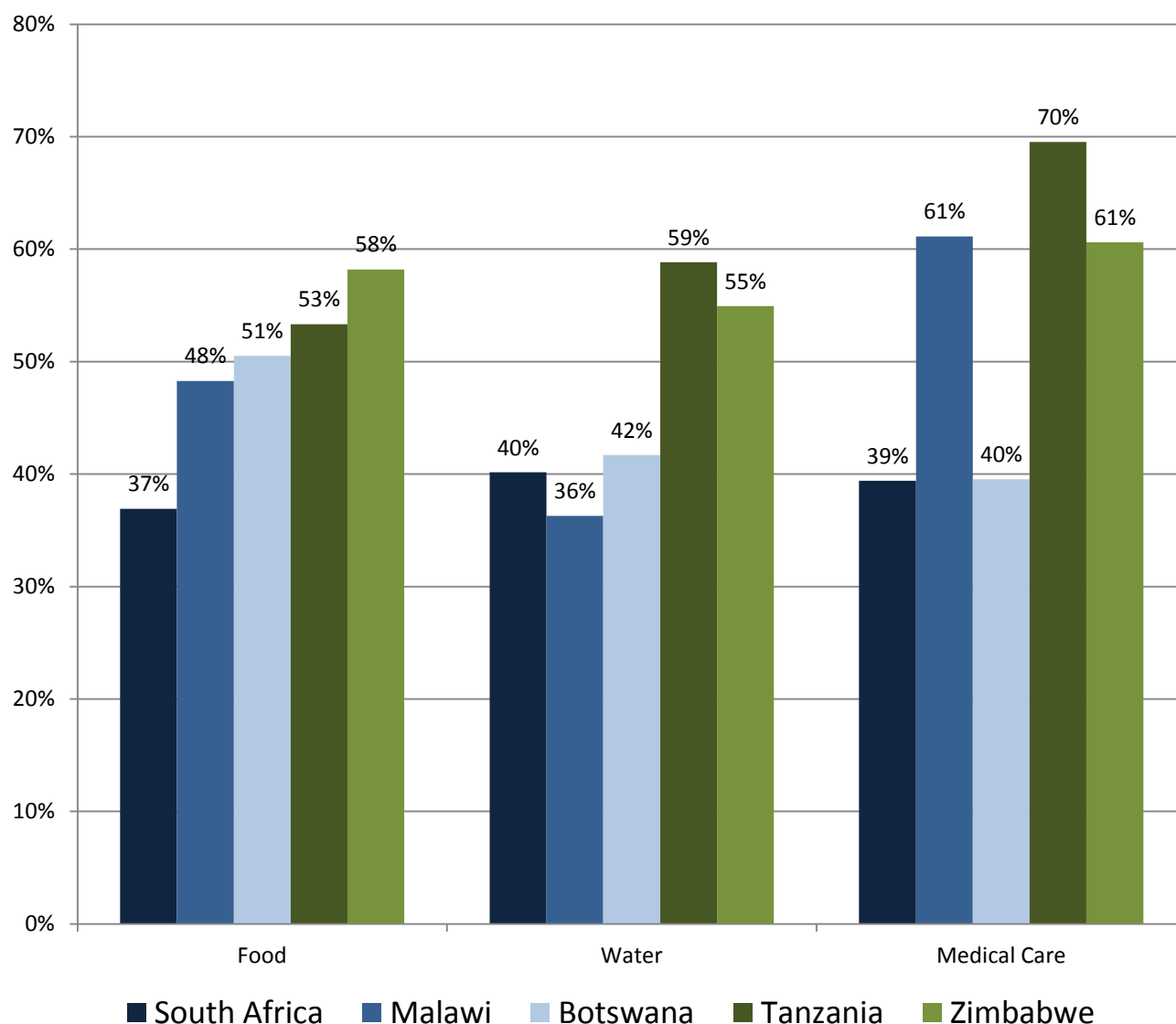
## **SECTION 2:**

### **SOUTH AFRICA IN COMPARISON: POVERTY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

#### **2.1 Variable: Access to Basic Goods and Services, Southern Africa, 2011-2012<sup>1</sup>**

**Question:** 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 and medical care



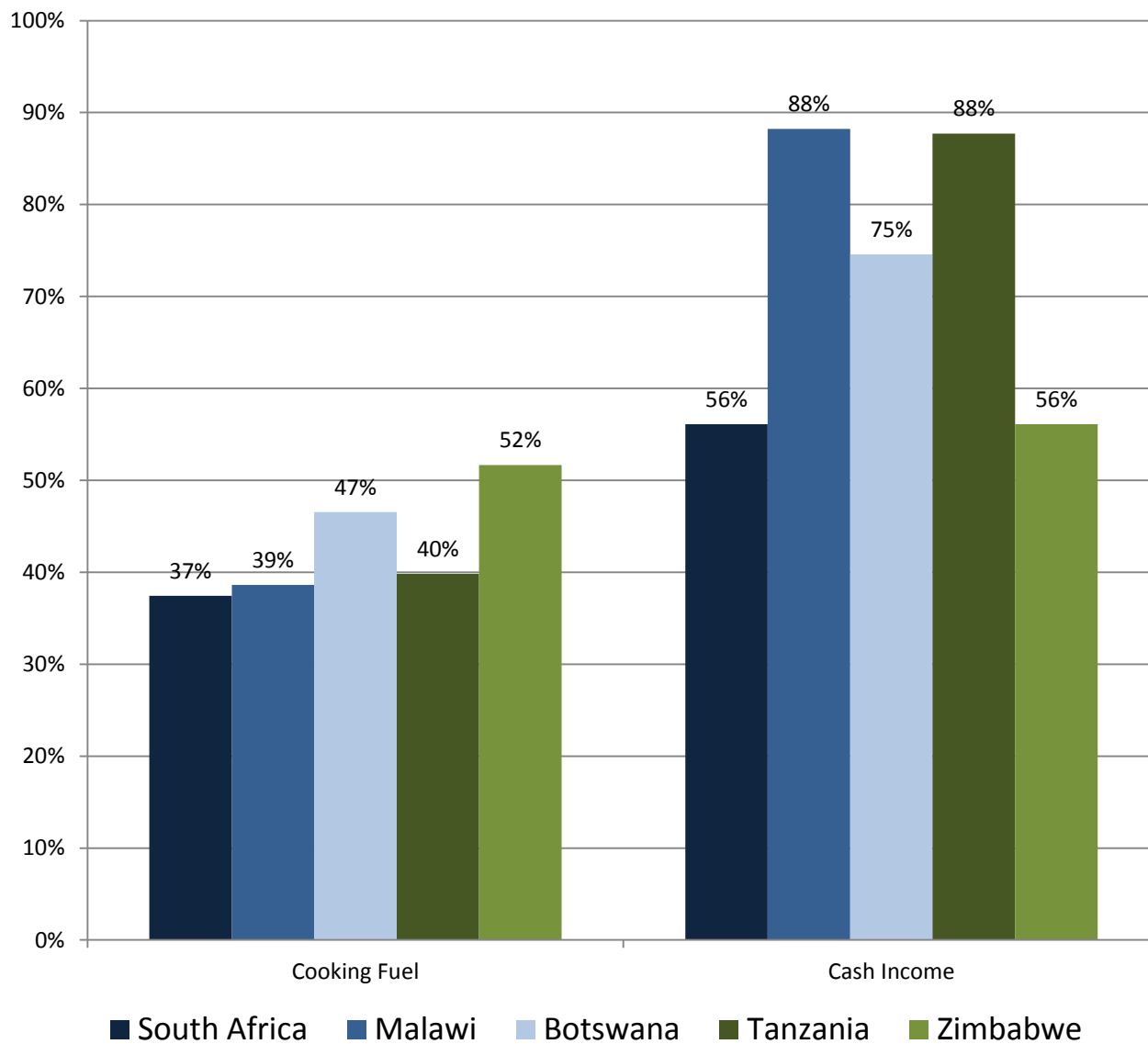
*Note: Represents the aggregate percentage of respondents who ever went without a basic good or service, i.e., responded with once or twice, several times, many times, or always.*

<sup>1</sup> As of the time this indicator bulletin was produced, Round 5 data was not yet available for Lesotho, Namibia or Mozambique. Data for all three countries will be available by early 2013.

## 2.2 Variable: Access to Basic Goods and Services, Southern Africa, 2011-2012

**Question:** Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or anyone in your family gone without:

- Enough fuel to cook your food
- A cash income



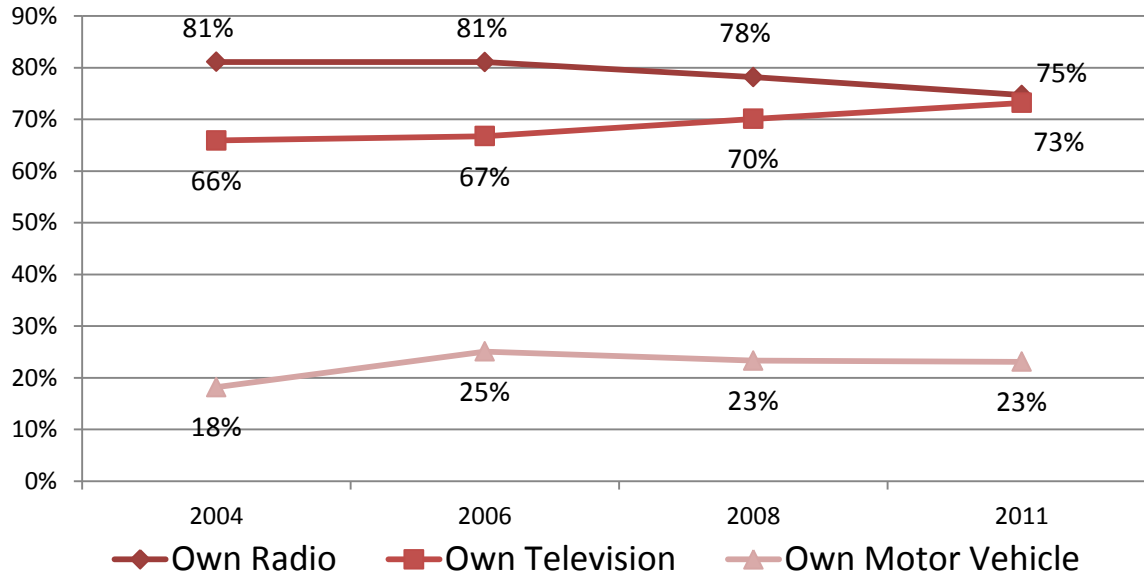
*Note: Represents the aggregate percentage of respondents who ever went without a basic good or service, i.e., responded with once or twice, several times, many times, or always.*

## **SECTION 3:** **ALTERNATIVE INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC STATUS**

### **3.1 Variable: Ownership, 2004-2011**

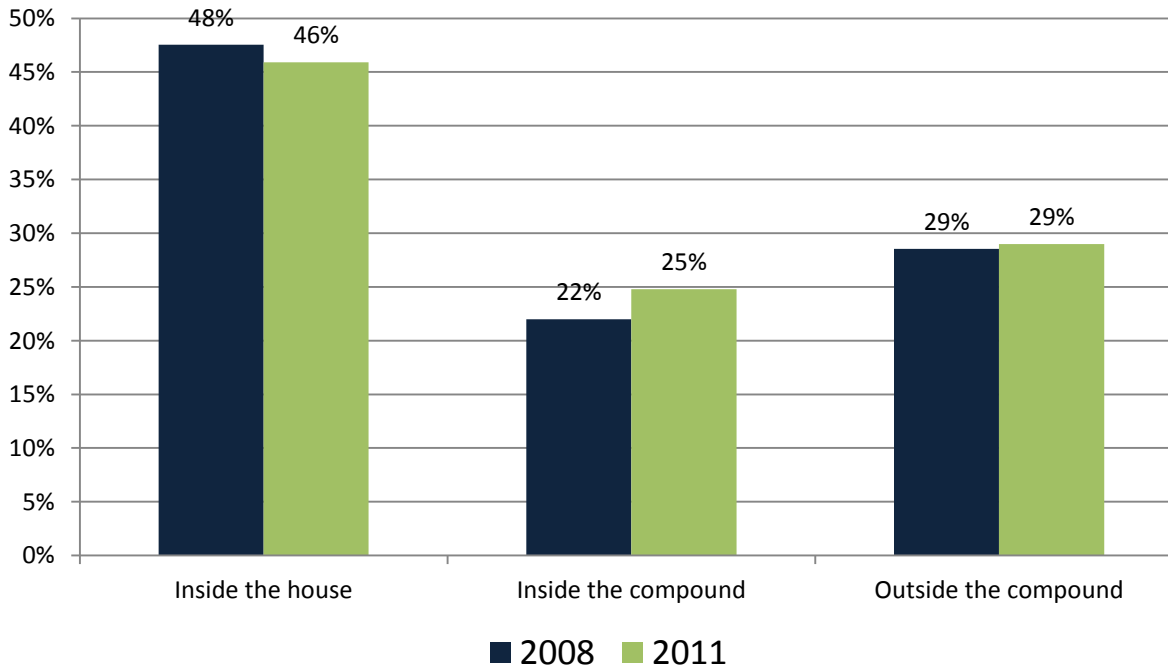
**Question:** Which of these things do you personally own?

- Radio
- Television
- Motor vehicle, car, or motorcycle



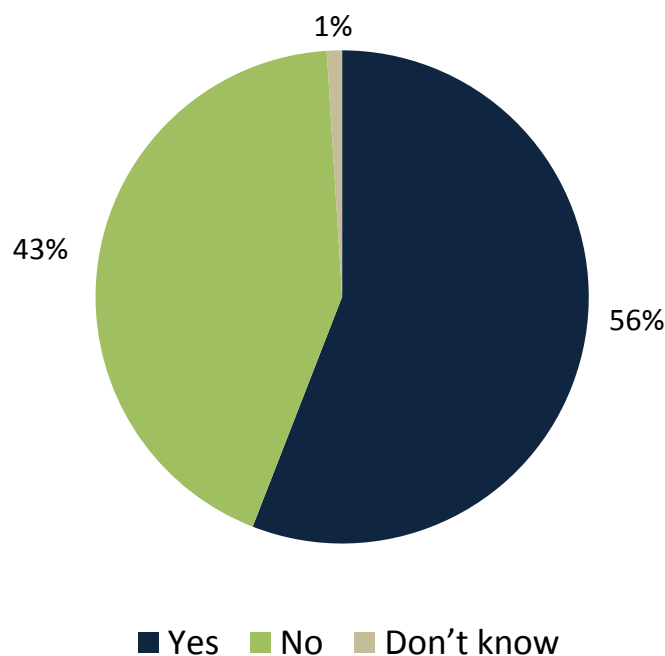
### **3.2 Variable: Source of Water, 2008-2011**

**Question:** 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.



### 3.3 Variable: Source of Water, 2008

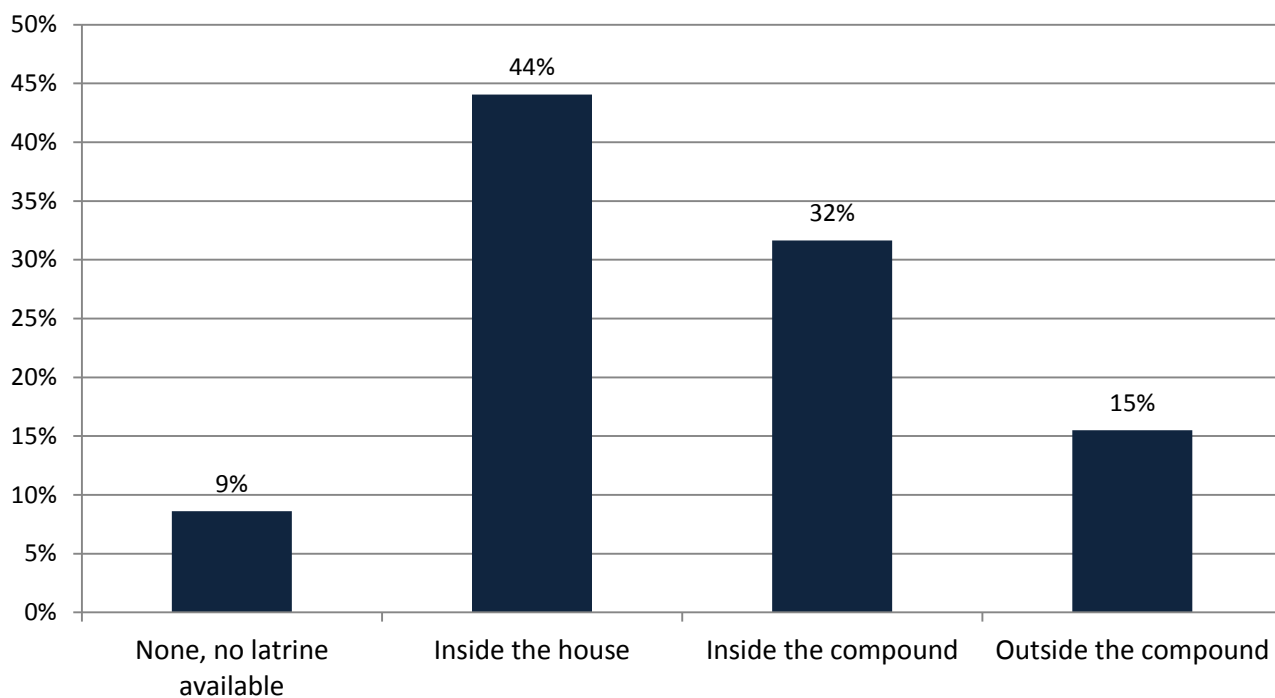
**Question:** Do you have to pay for using water from this source?



*Note: Survey data from the 2008 Afrobarometer survey.*

### 3.4 Variable: Location of the Latrine, 2011

**Question:** Please tell me whether each of the following are available inside your house, inside your compound, or outside your compound: A toilet or latrine.



## SECTION 4: POVERTY AND SERVICE PROVISION

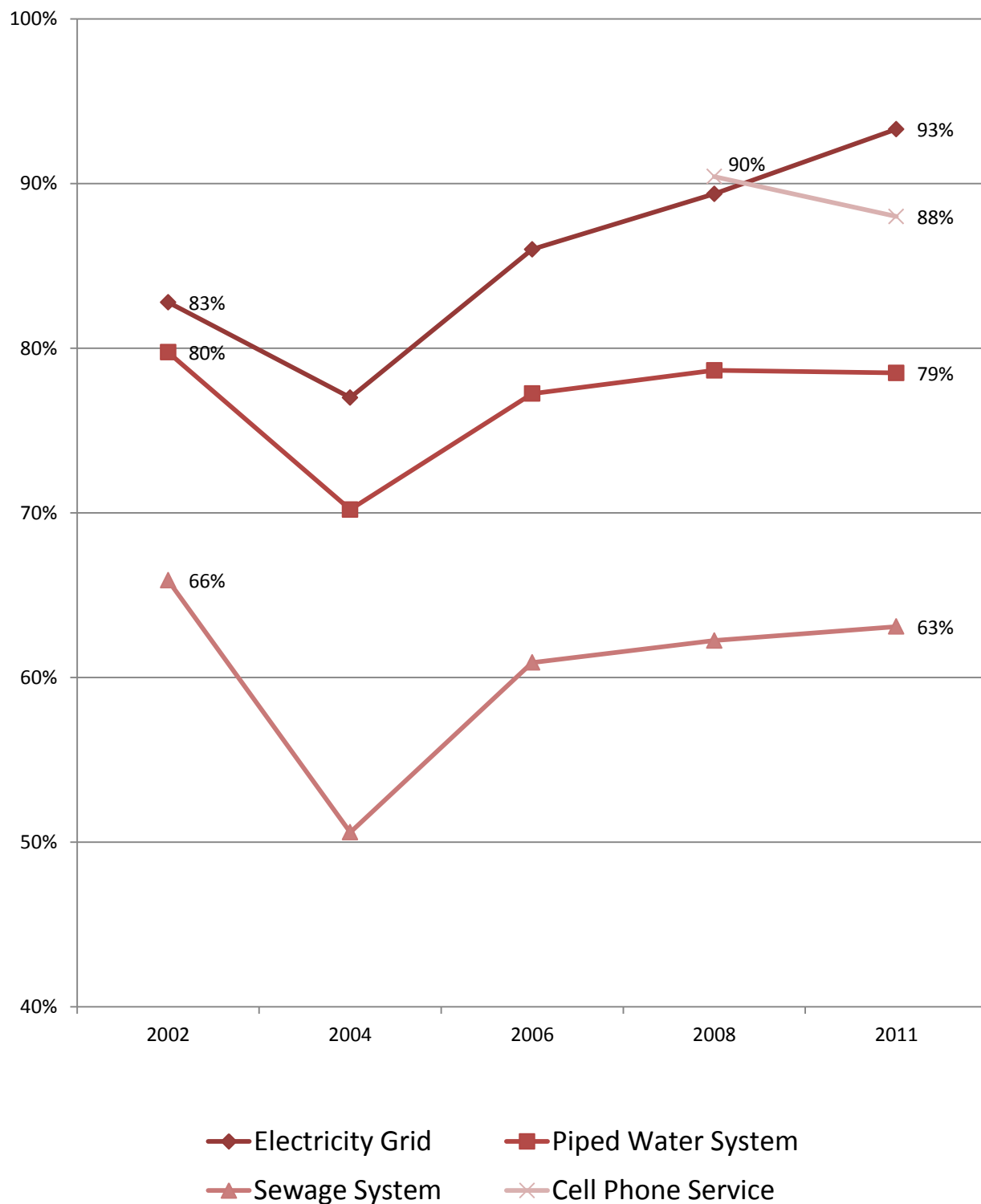
### 4.1 Variable: Facilities in the Sampling / Enumeration Area, 2002-2011

**Question:** Are the following services present in the primary sampling unit/ enumeration area?



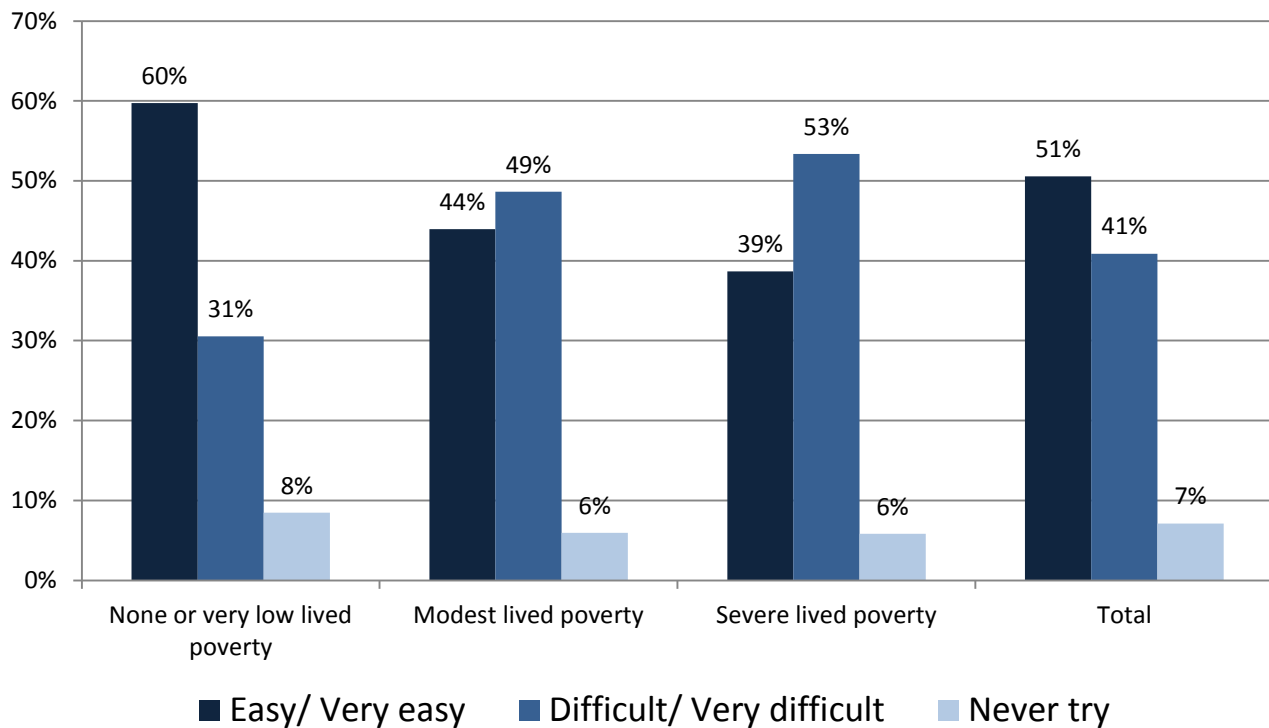
#### 4.2 Variable: Facilities in the Sampling/ Enumeration Area, 2002-2011

Question: Are the following services present in the primary sampling unit / enumeration area?



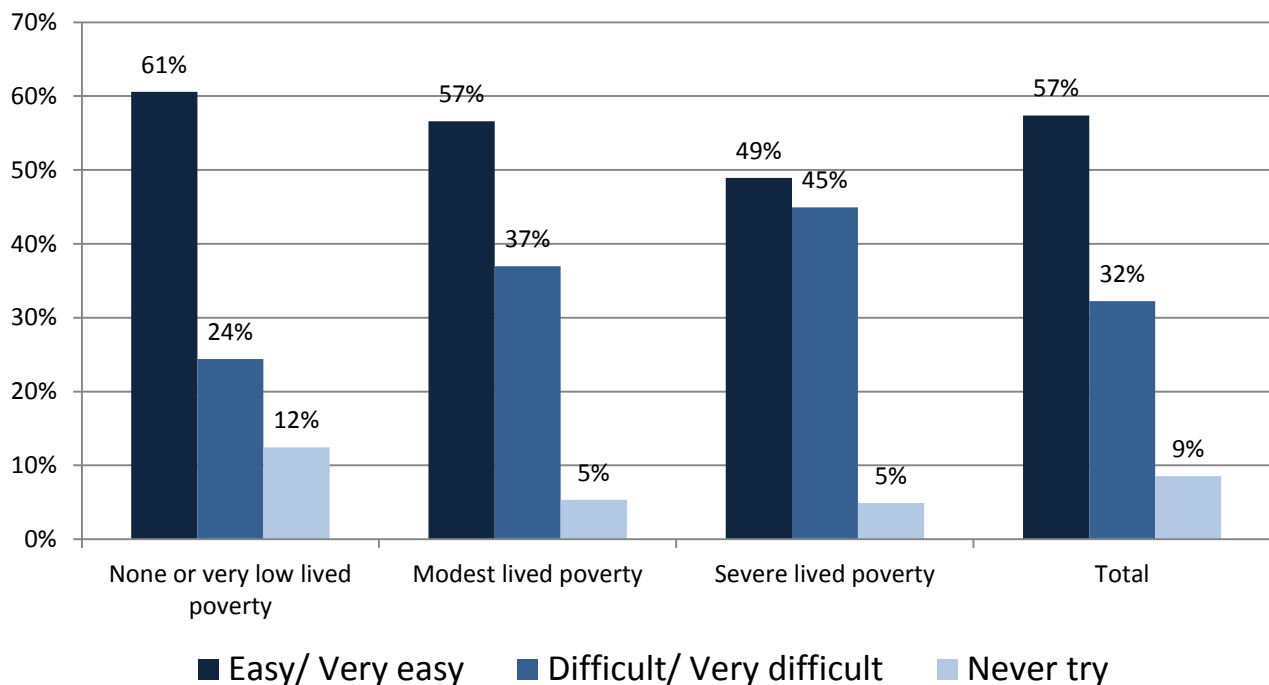
### 4.3 Variable: Access to Household Services from the Government, by Poverty Level, 2011

**Question:** Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain the following services from government (or do you never try and get these services from the government): Household services like piped water, electricity, or telephone?



### 4.4 Variable: Access to Medical Treatment from the Government, by Poverty Level, 2011

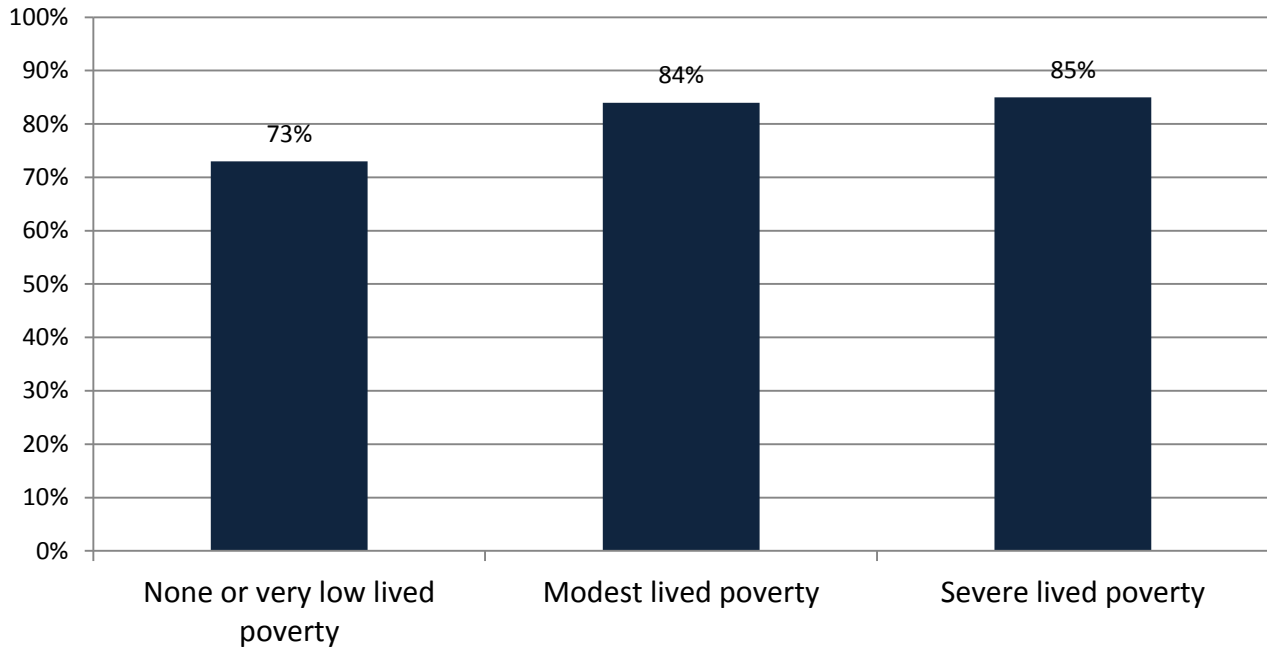
**Question:** Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it to obtain the following services from government (or do you never try and get these services from the government): Medical treatment at a public clinic or hospital?



#### 4.5 Variable: Use of Public Clinics, by Poverty Level, 2011

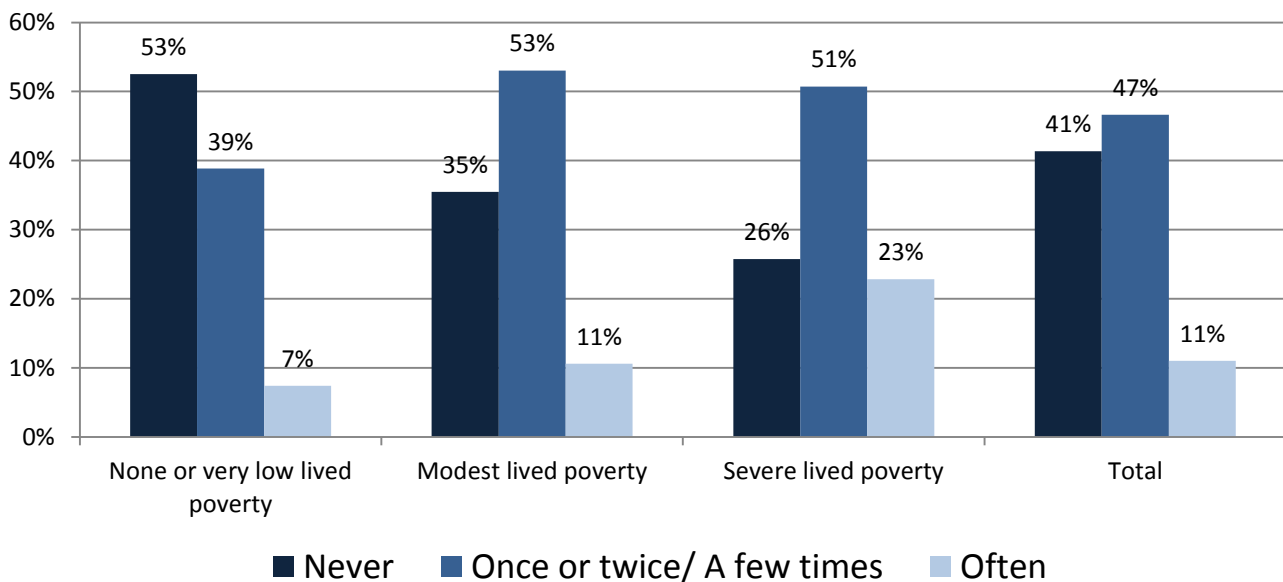
**Question:** Percentage of respondents who used public clinics in the past year.

Note: These figures are derived from responses to the following question: “Have you encountered any of these problems with your local public clinic or hospital during the past 12 months?” Respondents had the option to answer or to indicate that they had “No experience with public clinics in last 12 months.” Figures shown are those who *do* report using a public clinic in the past year.



#### 4.6 Variable: Lack of Medicine/ Medical Supplies at Public Clinics, by Poverty Level, 2011

**Question:** Have you encountered any of these problems with your local public clinic or hospital during the past 12 months: Lack of medicines or other supplies?

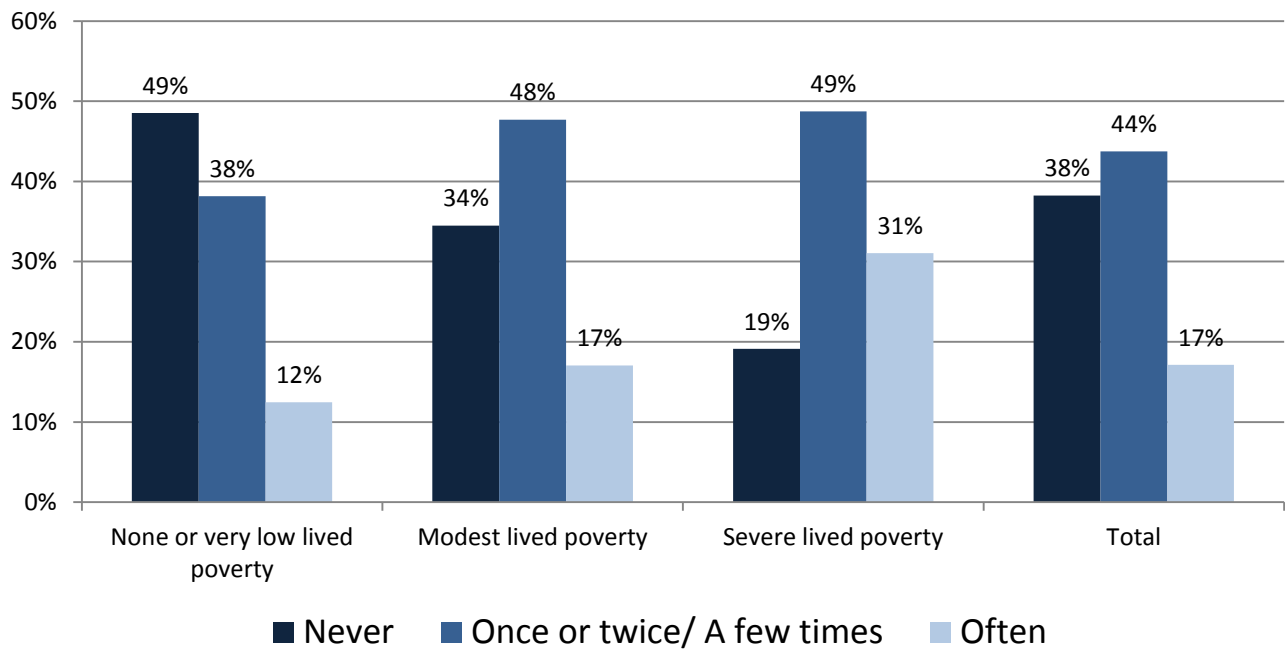


Note: Results are based on the subset of respondents who did use public clinics in the past 12 months.



**4.7 Variable: Lack of Attention and Respect at Public Clinics, by Poverty Level, 2011**

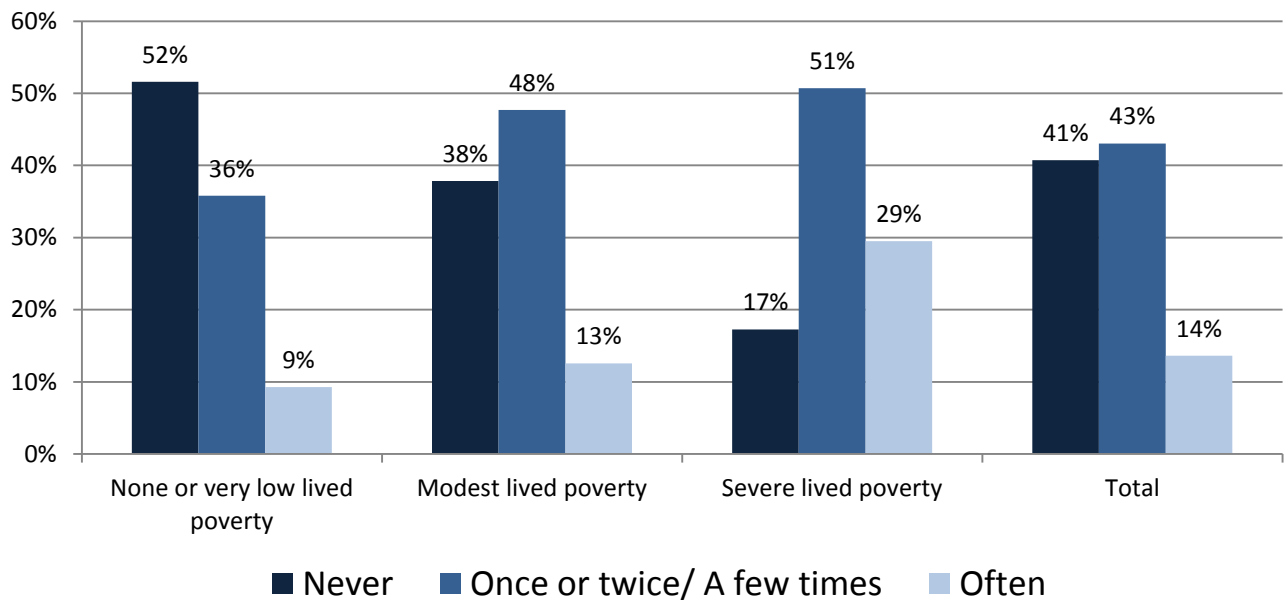
**Question:** Have you encountered any of these problems with your local public clinic or hospital during the past 12 months: Lack of attention or respect from staff?



*Note: Results are based on the subset of respondents who did use public clinics in the past 12 months.*

**4.8 Variable: Absent Doctors at Public Clinics, by Poverty Level, 2011**

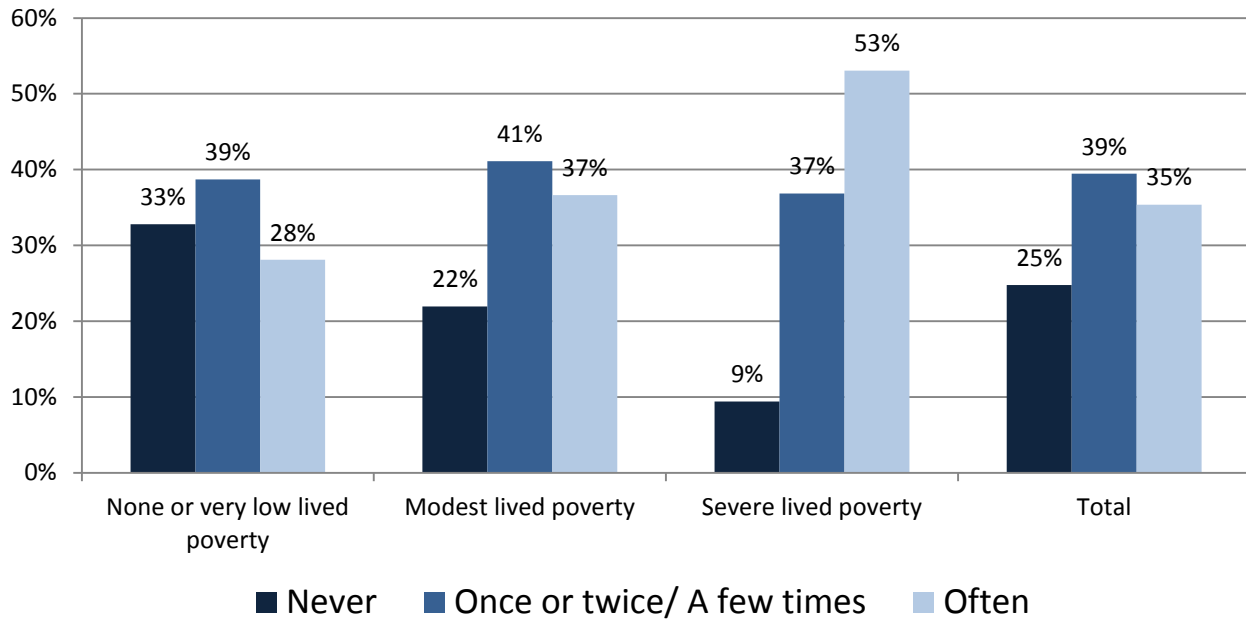
**Question:** Have you encountered any of these problems with your local public clinic or hospital during the past 12 months: Absent doctors?



*Note: Results are based on the subset of respondents who did use public clinics in the past 12 months.*

#### 4.9 Variable: Long Wait Time at Public Clinics, by Poverty Level, 2011

**Question:** Have you encountered any of these problems with your local public clinic or hospital during the past 12 months: Long wait time?

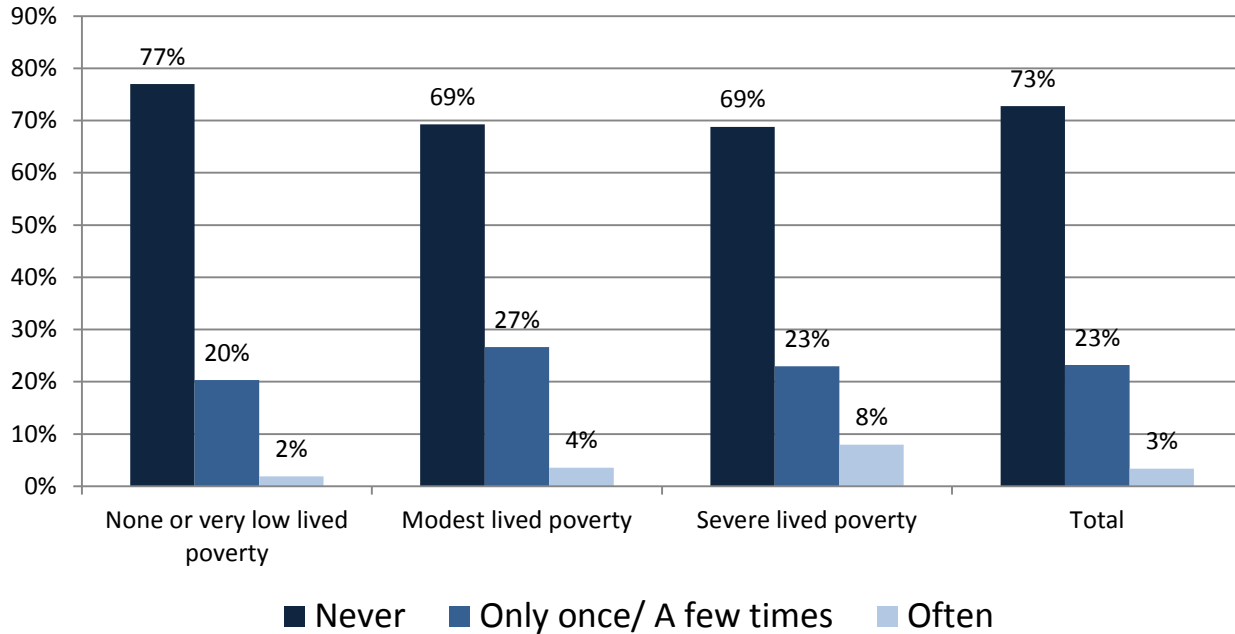


*Note: Results are based on the subset of respondents who did use public clinics in the past 12 months.*

## SECTION 5: POVERTY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

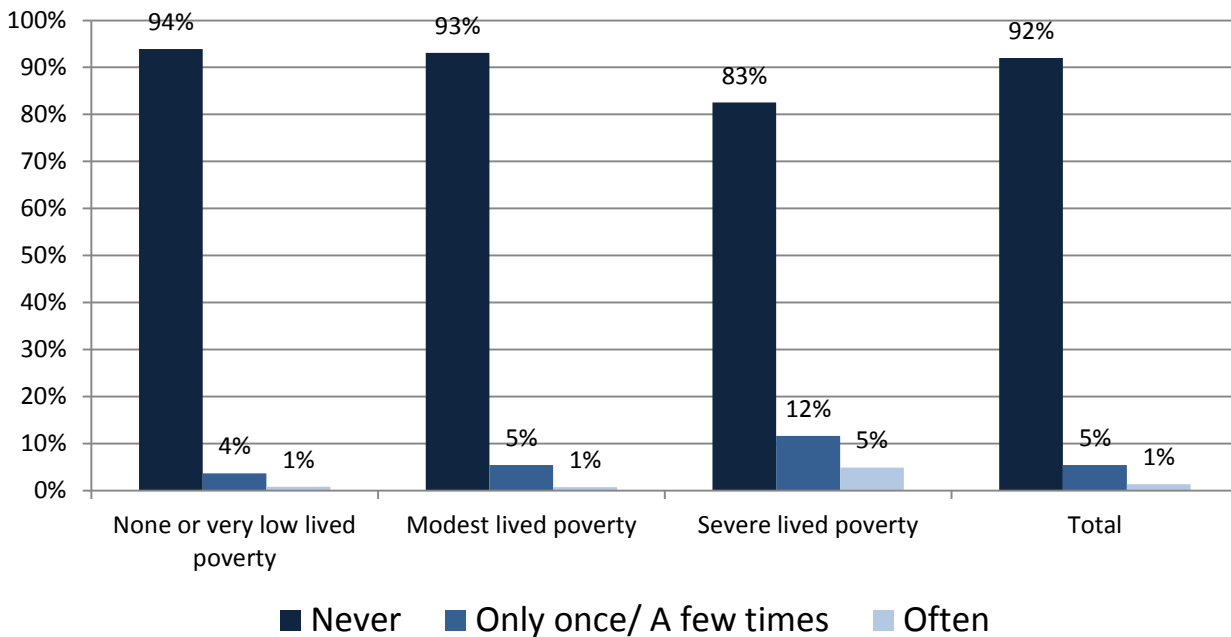
### 5.1 Variable: Contacting Local Government Councilor, by Poverty Level, 2011

**Question:** During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views? A local government councilor.



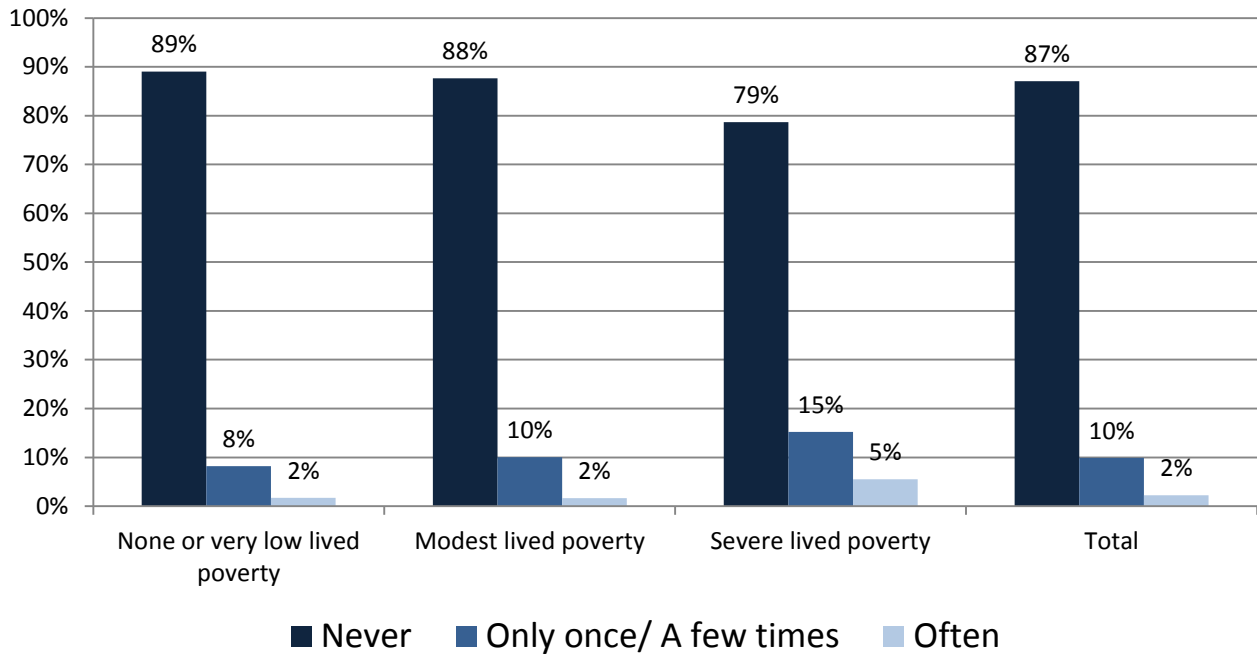
### 5.2 Variable: Contacting Official of a Government Agency, by Poverty Level, 2011

**Question:** During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views? An official of a government agency.



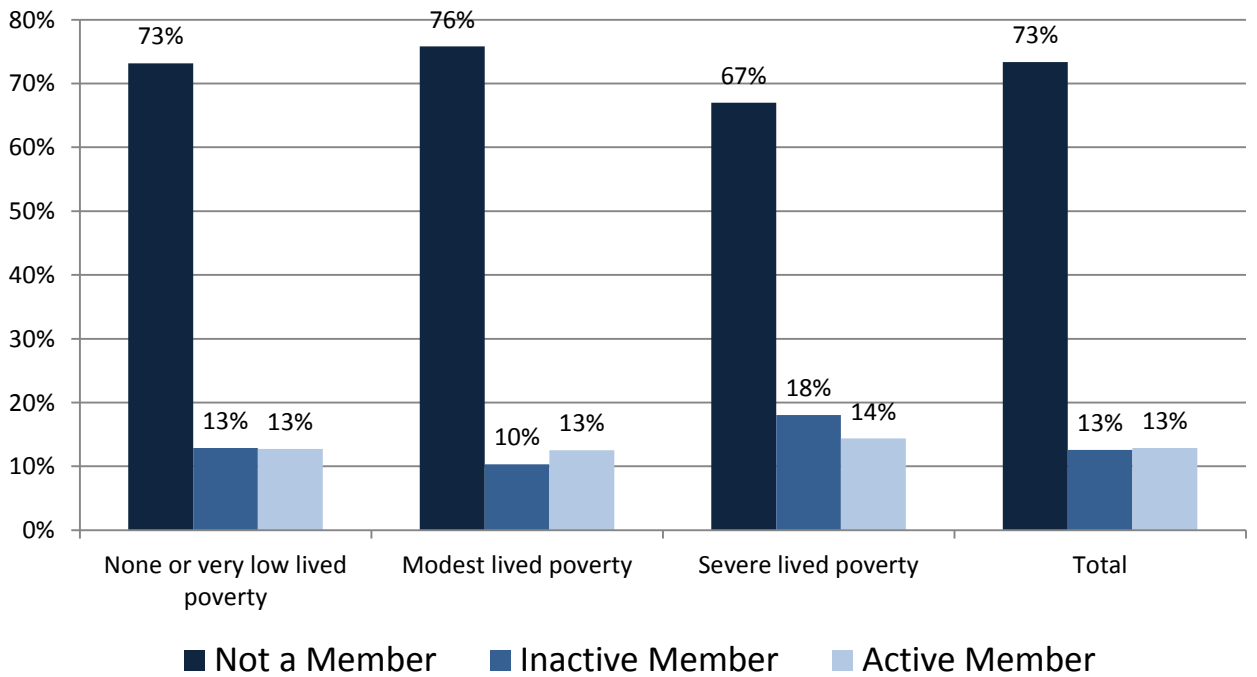
**5.3 Variable: Contacting Political Party Official, by Poverty Level, 2011**

**Question:** During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views? A political party official.



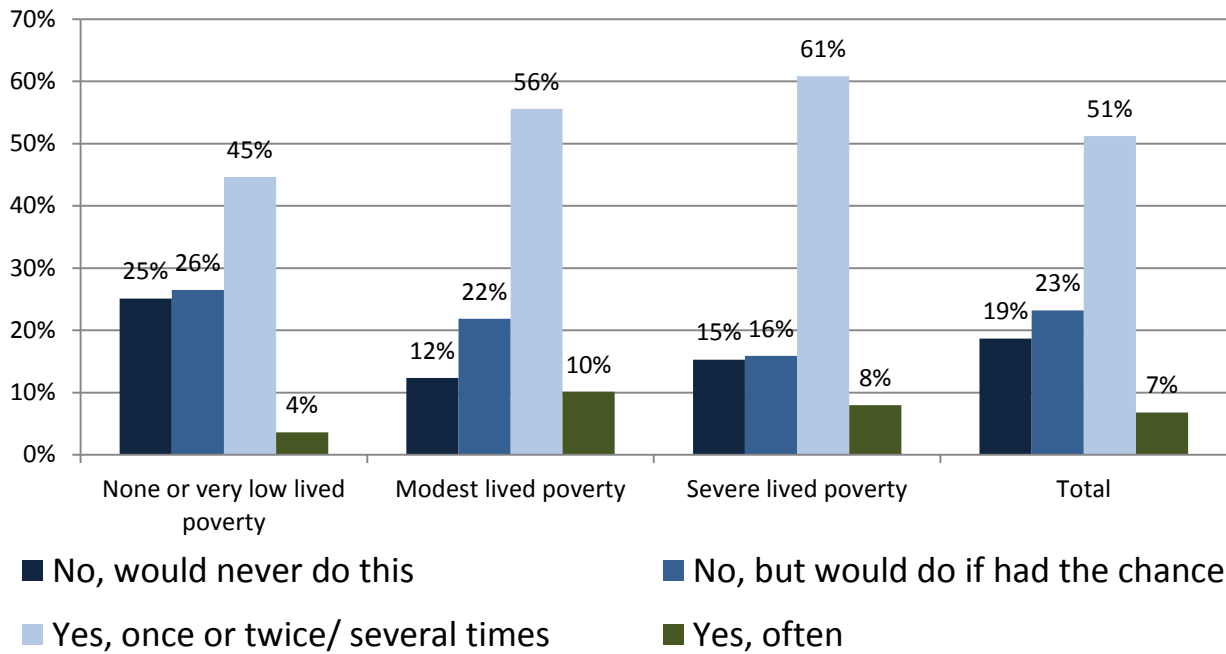
**5.4 Variable: Involvement in Voluntary Association or Community Group, by Poverty Level, 2011**

**Question:** Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member: Some other voluntary association or community group.



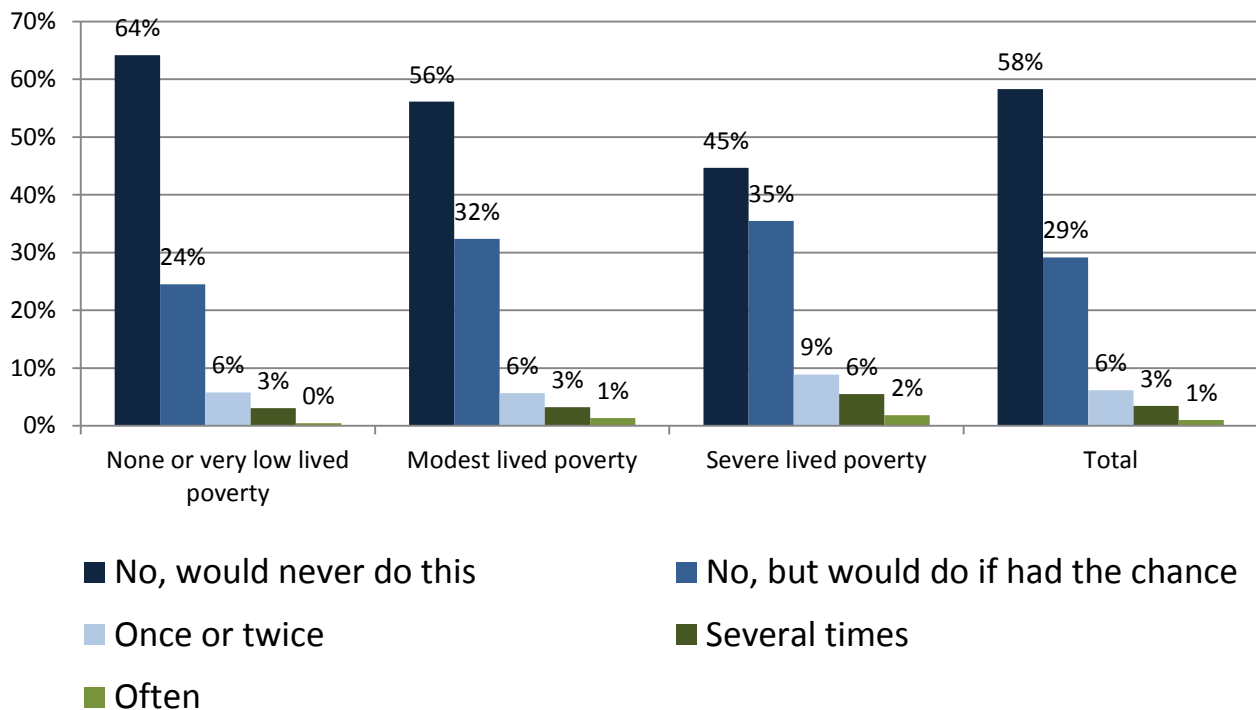
**5.5 Variable: Attendance at Community Meetings, by Poverty Level, 2011**

**Question:** Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a community meeting. If not, would you do this if you had a chance?



**5.6 Variable: Attendance at Demonstrations and Protest Marches, by Poverty Level, 2011**

**Question:** Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a demonstration or protest march. If not, would you do this if you had a chance?



The Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 20 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. We gratefully acknowledge generous core support for Afrobarometer Round 5 from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Idasa is the Afrobarometer Core Partner for Southern Africa. For more information please contact Anyway Chingwete, AB Project Manager for Southern Africa, [achingwete@idasa.org.za](mailto:achingwete@idasa.org.za), or visit [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)