

Mbabane, Eswatini
18 October 2021

News release

In Eswatini, economic conditions worsen; citizens cite poor government performance

After recording significant gains between 2013 and 2018, citizens' assessments of economic conditions in Eswatini have taken a nosedive, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Large majorities of citizens say the country is headed in the wrong direction and describe both the national economy and their personal living conditions as bad. Increasing numbers are going without basic life necessities, and few are optimistic that things will get better during the coming year.

While a majority of Eswatini who accessed key public services last year encountered few difficulties, most say the government is performing poorly on key economic issues.

Eswatini's stagnating economic growth has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini's post-COVID-19 recovery plan aims to stimulate economic growth through high-impact projects led by the private sector in order to improve citizens' livelihoods.

Key findings

- Only about one-third (35%) of Eswatini say the country is going in the right direction, a sharp decline from 2018 (52%) (Figure 1).
- Three-fourths (76%) of citizens say the country's economic condition is "fairly bad" or "very bad," a dramatic increase compared to three years ago (48%) (Figure 2).
- Only two in 10 citizens (21%) expect the country's economic condition to improve over the next year.
- Increasing numbers of citizens report going without enough food (60%), enough clean water (58%), needed medical care (62%), and a cash income (78%) at least once during the year preceding the survey (Figure 3).
- Fewer than four in 10 citizens approve of the government's performance on managing the economy (38%), improving living standards of the poor (31%), creating jobs (29%), keeping prices stable (27%), and narrowing gaps between rich and poor (22%). All reflect declines since 2018 (Figure 4).
- However, among citizens who sought public services during the previous year, majorities say they found it easy to get help from public schools (69%), public health facilities (68%), and the police (63%) (Figure 5).

Afrobarometer surveys

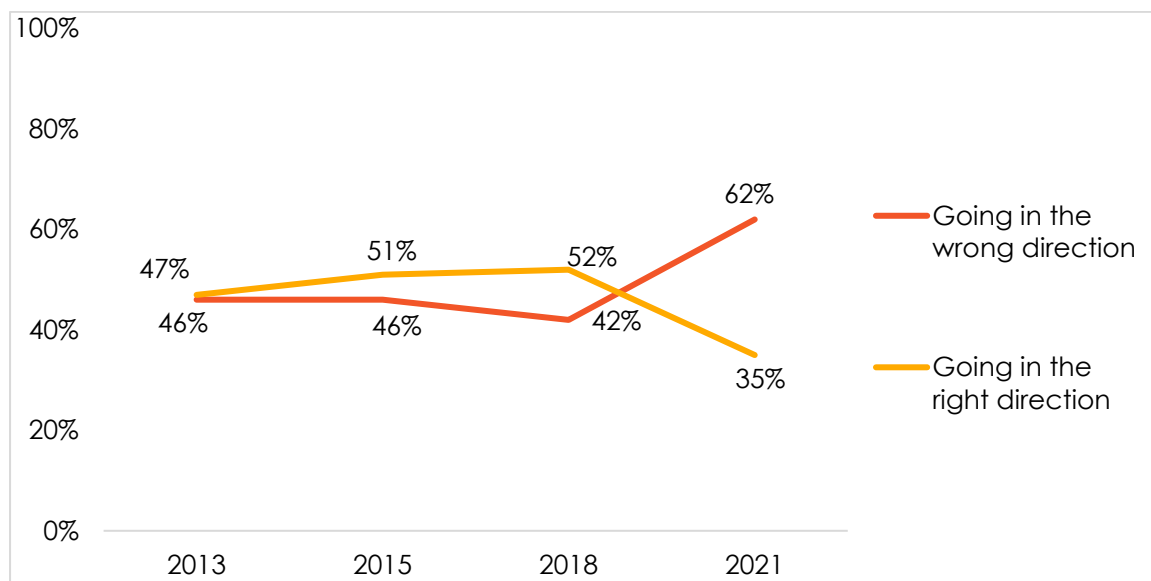
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8

surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Eswatini, led by ActivQuest, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Eswatini in March-April 2021. 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 Eswatini in 2013, 2015, and 2018.

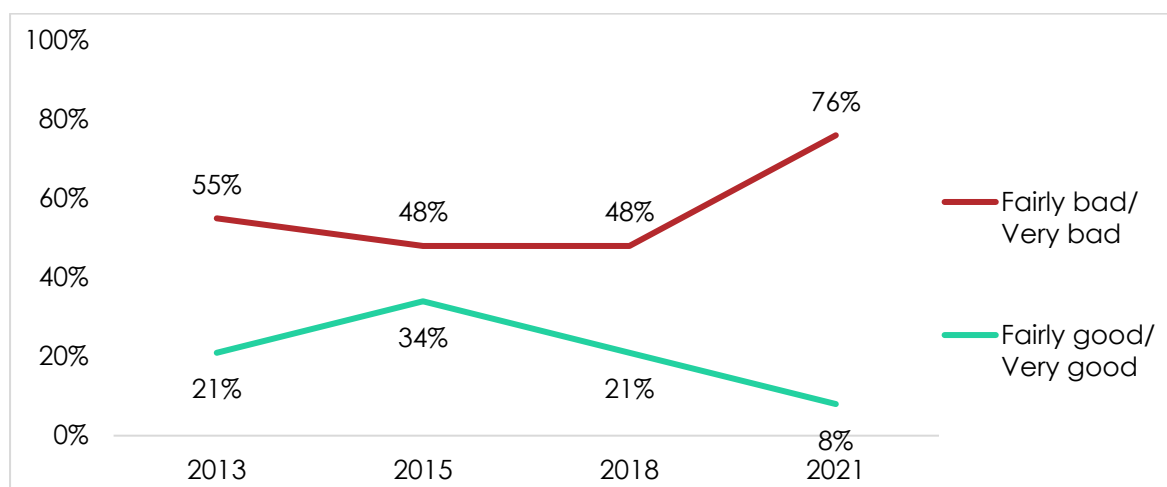
Charts

Figure 1: Direction of the country | Eswatini | 2013-2021



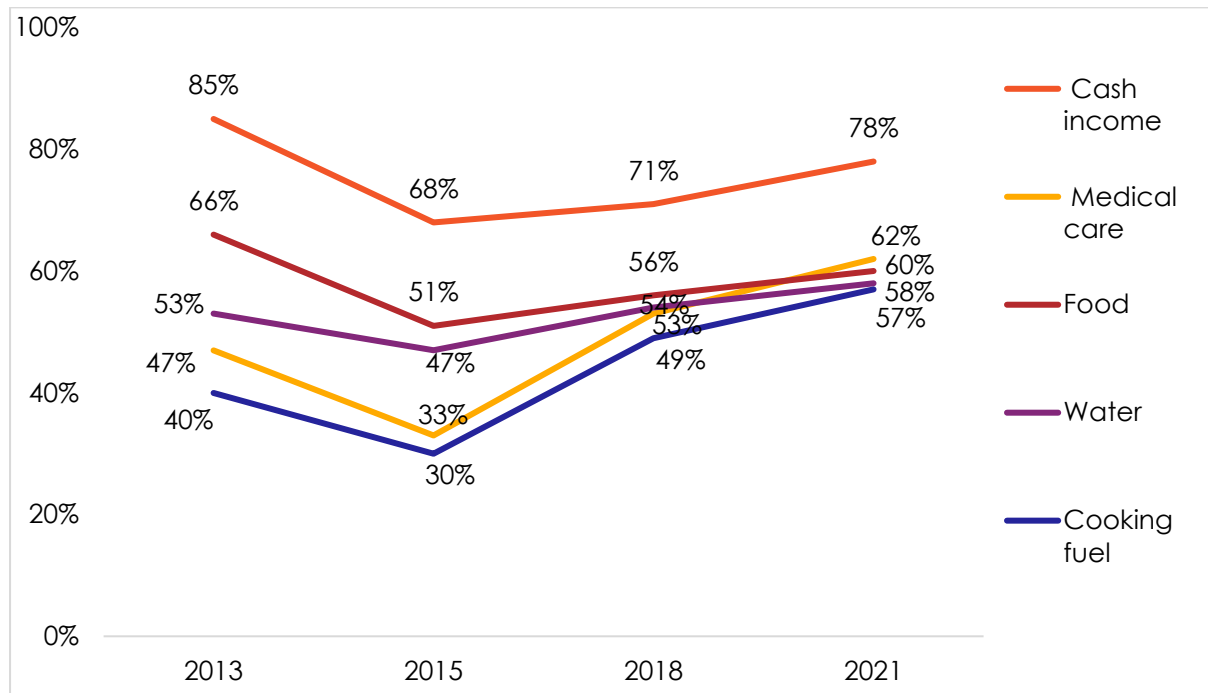
Respondents were asked: *Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?*

Figure 2: Country's economic condition | Eswatini | 2013-2021



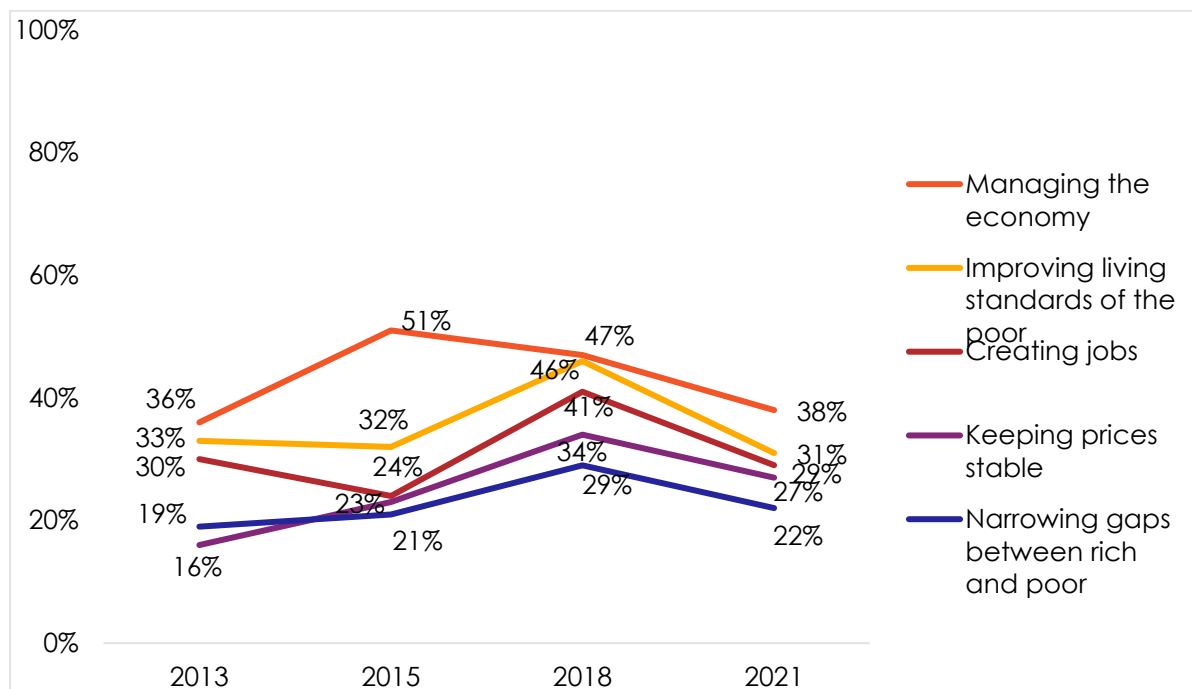
Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?*

Figure 3: Went without basic necessities | Eswatini | 2013-2021



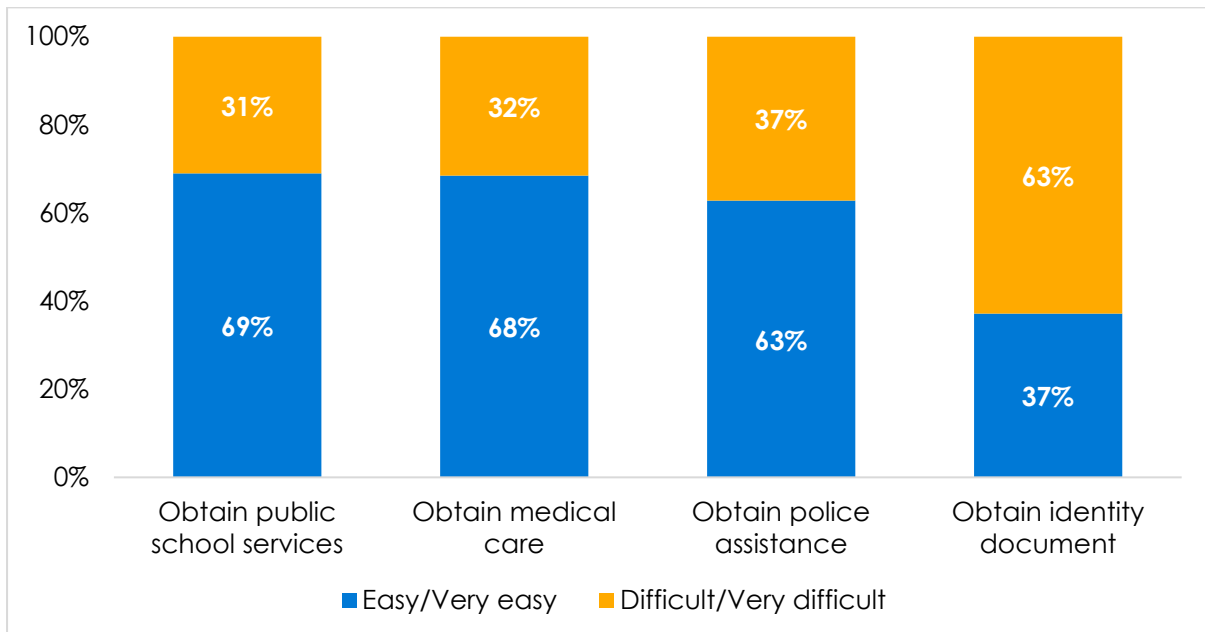
Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income? (% who say “just once or twice,” “several times,” “many times,” or “always”)

Figure 4: Government performance on economic issues | Eswatini | 2013-2021



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say “fairly well” or “very well”)

Figure 5: Accessing public services | Eswatini | 2021



Respondents who say they sought selected public services during the previous year were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain [the needed services]? (Respondents who had no contact with these services are excluded.)

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