



# Only one in three Tanzanians aware of climate change

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 227 | Stephen Mwombela and Thadeus Mboghoina**

## Summary

According to the Tanzania Natural Resource Forum (2018), climate change is “arguably the most important emerging issue for the world.” The impacts of climate change are particularly devastating to the poor in developing countries (National Environment Management Council, 2007), who often lack the means to mitigate and recover from climate-induced shocks and stresses such as flooding and drought. Rural inhabitants, who are largely dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, suffer from decreased availability of water due to changes in rainfall patterns and/or increased temperatures (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014; Drakenberg, Ek, & Wallin Fernqvist, 2016).

In Tanzania, recurring drought has already had negative effects on the agriculture, water, and energy sectors, and continuing climate change will have disastrous implications for food security, among other issues (Irish Aid, 2016; Tanzania Natural Resource Forum, 2018; Arndt, Farmer, Strzepek, & Thurlow, 2012). Irish Aid (2016) has estimated that more than 70% of all natural disasters in Tanzania are related to climate change.

As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, the government of Tanzania has taken steps to address climate change, including the development of a National Climate Change Strategy (United Republic of Tanzania Vice President's Office, 2012). Alongside its ambition to transform Tanzania into an industrialized middle-income economy, the government has emphasized environmental sustainability as a foundation of its development policy (High Level Symposium on Climate Change, Environment and the National Economy, 2018).

But despite alarming projections and the government's actions, many Tanzanians have limited knowledge about climate change. Results of the most recent Afrobarometer survey show that while a majority of Tanzanians think that climatic conditions for agricultural production have gotten worse over the past decade, only one in three citizens have heard of climate change.

## Afrobarometer survey

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. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys are being conducted in 2016/2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed 2,400 adult Tanzanians in May 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, and 2014.

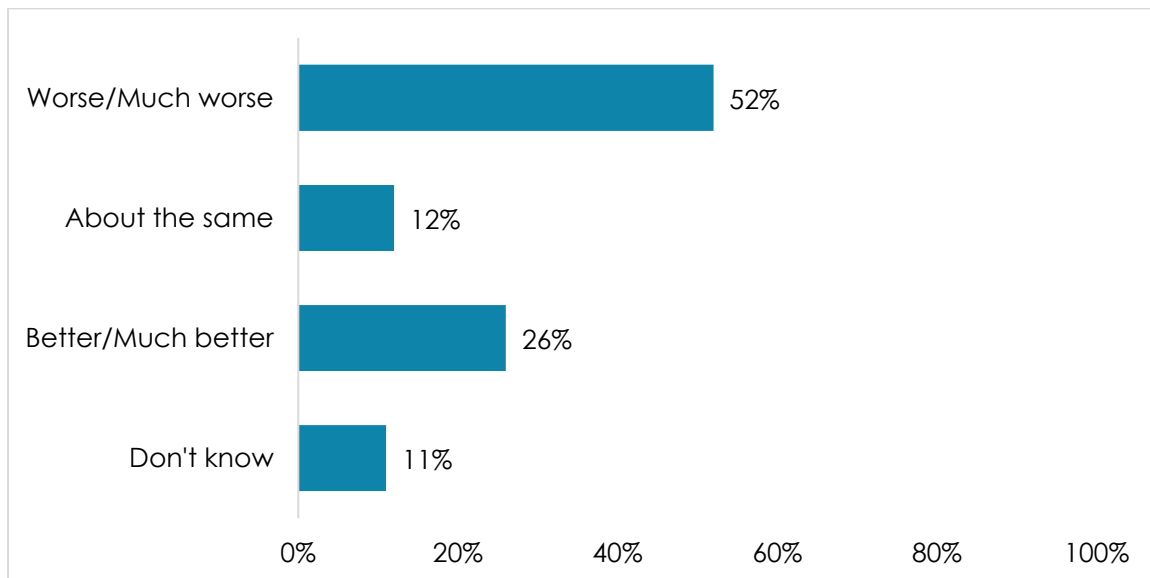
## Key findings

- A majority (52%) of Tanzanians say that climate conditions for agricultural production in the country are “worse” or “much worse” compared to 10 years ago. About the same proportion (51%) say droughts have become “somewhat more severe” or “much more severe.”
- Flooding, however, has decreased in severity, according to eight in 10 respondents (81%).
- Only one in three Tanzanians (32%) say they have heard of climate change. Awareness of climate change is particularly low among rural, less-educated, and female respondents.
- Among those who have heard of climate change, most attribute it to human activity (71%), affirm that it is making life in Tanzania worse (84%) and needs to be stopped (85%), and believe that ordinary citizens can do at least “a little bit” (68%) to help stop it.

## Climate conditions over the past decade

Before mentioning climate change, Afrobarometer asked respondents about changes in the weather in their regions over the past decade. A majority (52%) of Tanzanians say that climate conditions for agricultural production have gotten “worse” or “much worse.” Only about half as many (26%) say they’ve improved (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Climate conditions for agricultural production compared to 10 years ago**  
 | Tanzania | 2017

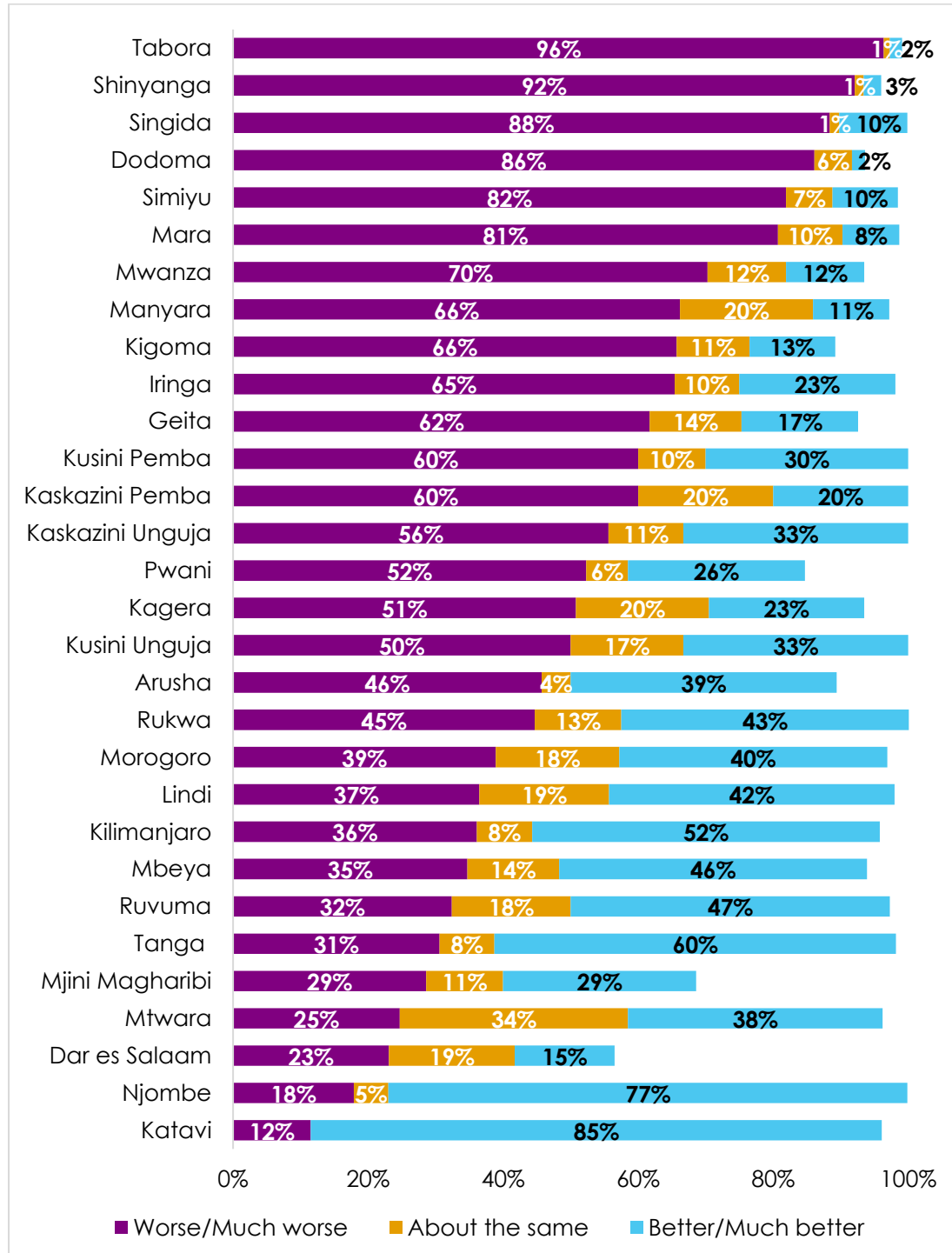


**Respondents were asked:** *In your experience, would you say climate conditions for agricultural production in your area have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same over the last 10 years, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

Views vary widely by region. The assessment that climate conditions for agricultural production have gotten worse is shared by large majorities in regions in the Lake Zone (92% in Shinyanga, 82% in Simiyu, and 81% in Mara) as well as regions in the Central Zone (96% in

Tabora, 88% in Singida, and 86% in Dodoma) (Figure 2). But majorities see climatic conditions for agricultural production as having improved in Katavi (85%), Njombe (77%), Tanga (60%), and Kilimanjaro (52%).

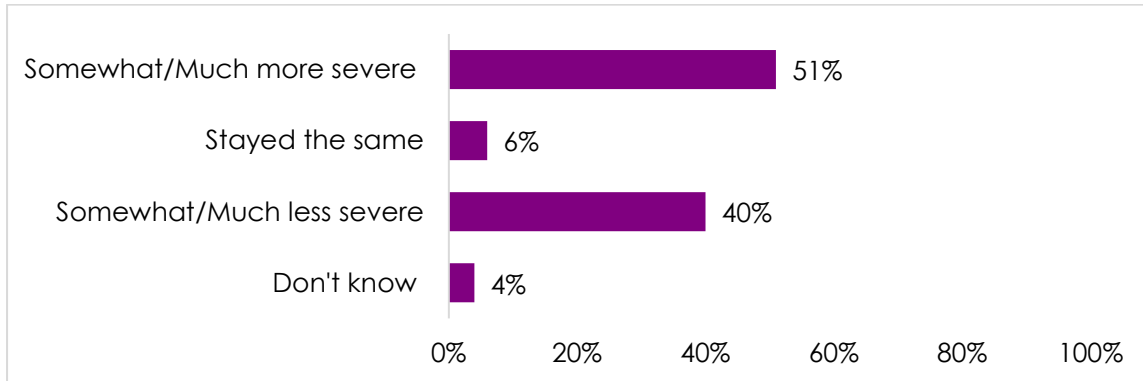
**Figure 2: Climate conditions for agricultural production compared to 10 years ago**  
 | by region | Tanzania | 2017



**Respondents were asked:** In your experience, would you say climate conditions for agricultural production in your area have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same over the last 10 years, or haven't you heard enough to say?

Similarly, 51% of Tanzanians say droughts in their area have gotten “somewhat” or “much” more severe in the past 10 years. But four in 10 respondents say droughts have become less severe (Figure 3).

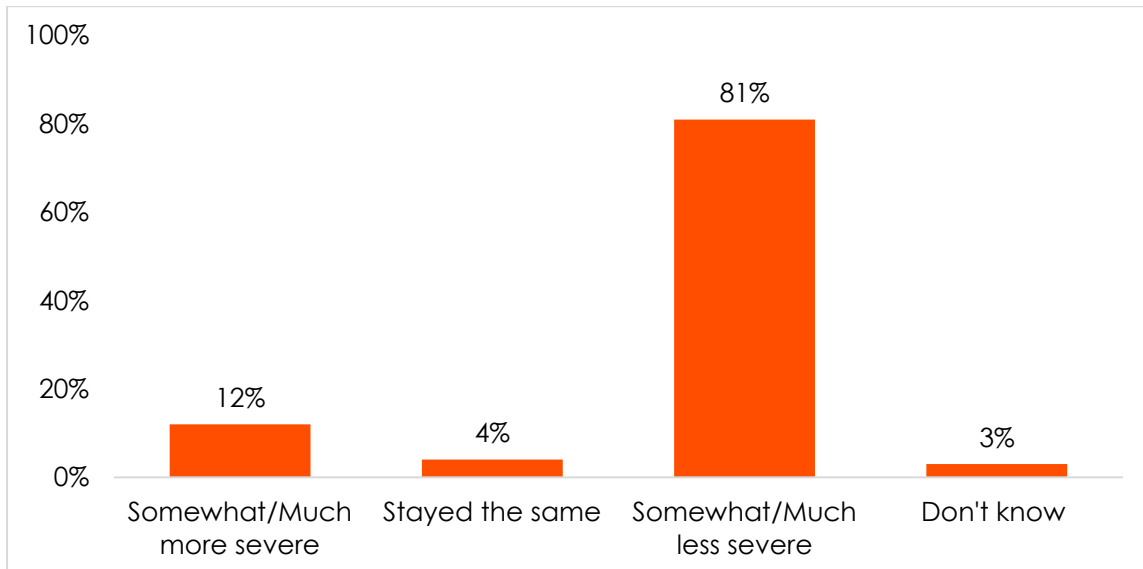
**Figure 3: Severity of droughts | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** *In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of droughts in the area where you live? Have they become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?*

With regard to flooding, moreover, eight in 10 Tanzanians (81%) say their severity has diminished over the past 10 years. Only 12% say flooding in the area where they live has become “somewhat more” or “much more” severe (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Severity of flooding | Tanzania | 2017**

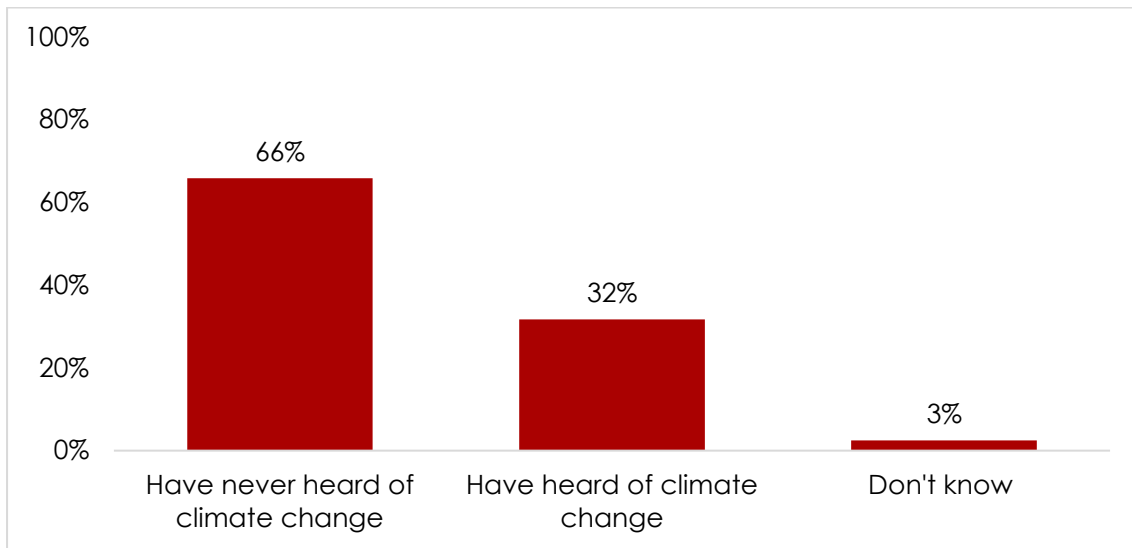


**Respondents were asked:** *In your experience, over the past 10 years, has there been any change in the severity of flooding in the area where you live? Has it become more severe, less severe, or stayed about the same?*

### Knowledge of climate change

Despite some personal observation of changes in the weather, most Tanzanians are unfamiliar with the concept of climate change. Only one in three (32%) say they have heard of it, while two-thirds say they have never heard of it (66%) or “don't know” (3%) (Figure 5).

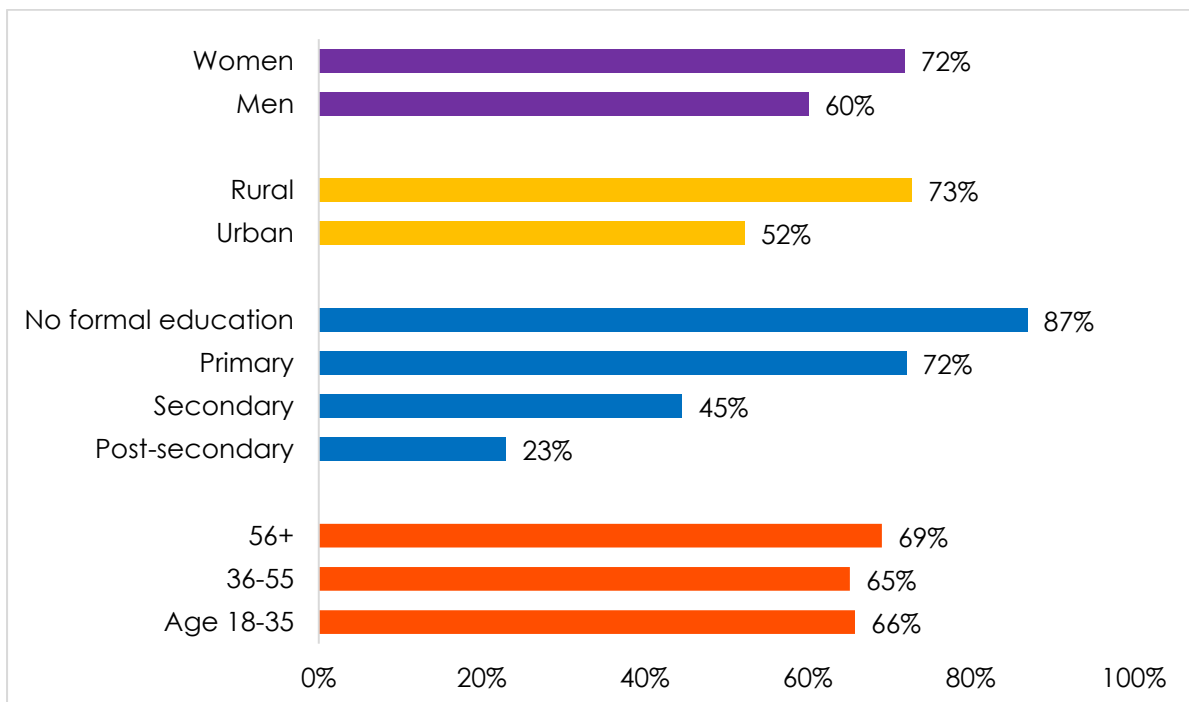
**Figure 5: Have heard of climate change | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet?

Lack of familiarity with climate change is highest among Tanzanians with no formal education (87%) or only primary schooling (72%) (Figure 6). Rural Tanzanians are more likely than their urban counterparts not to have heard of climate change (73% vs. 52%), while more women than men are unfamiliar with the concept (72% vs. 60%). Older Tanzanians are more frequently unfamiliar with climate change than their younger counterparts.

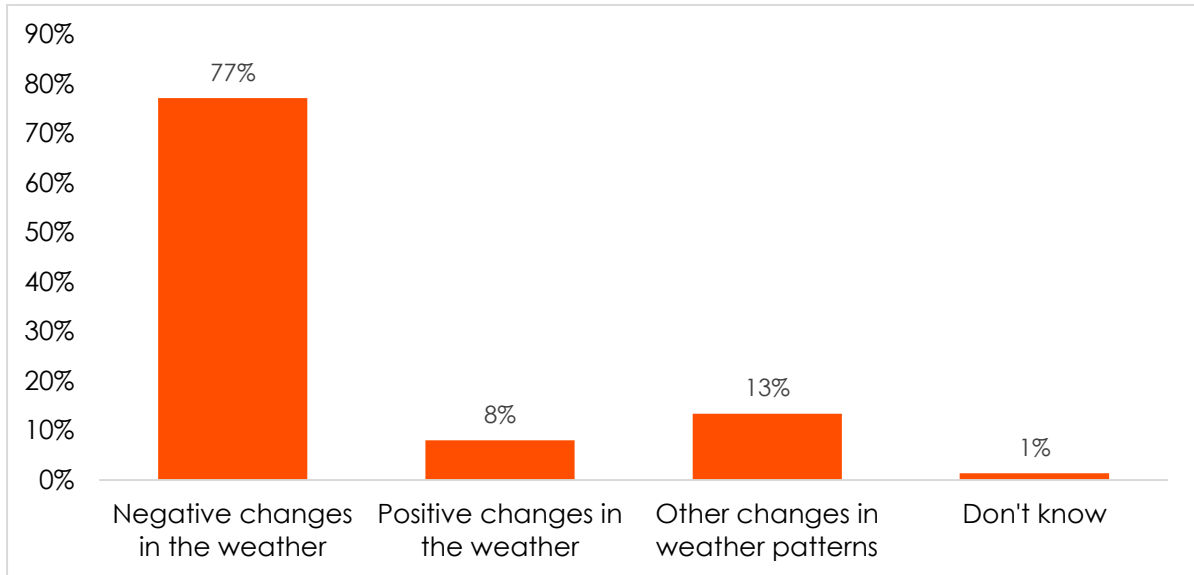
**Figure 6: Have not heard of climate change | by gender, residency location, education, and age | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** Have you heard about climate change, or haven't you had the chance to hear about this yet? (% who haven't heard about climate change)

Among those who have heard of climate change, most (77%) define it as negative changes in the weather (Figure 7).

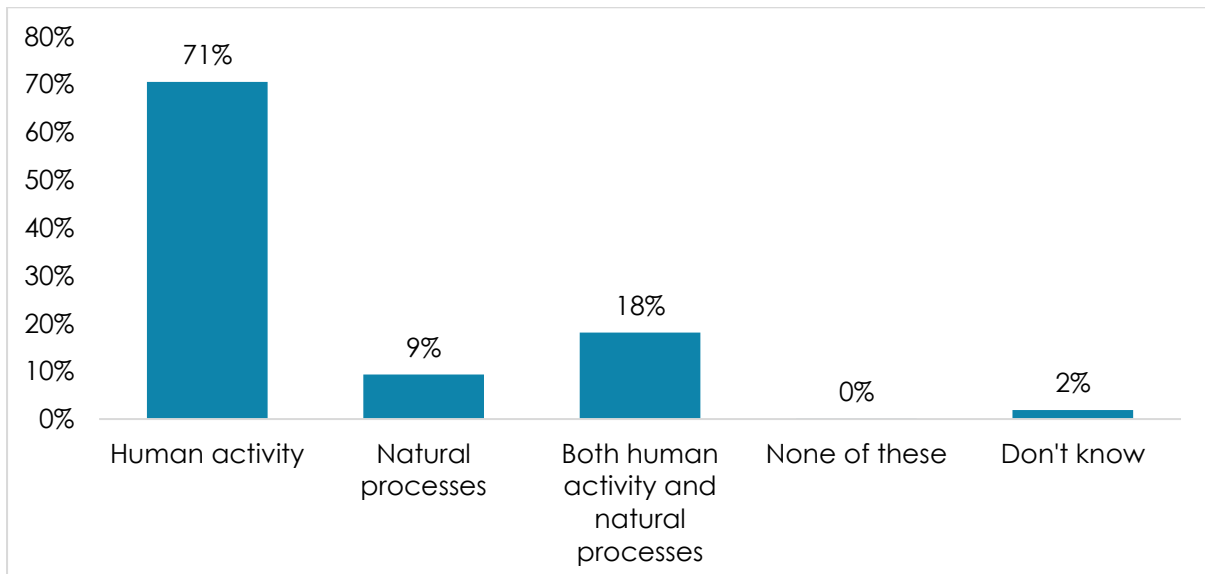
**Figure 7: Meaning of climate change | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents who had heard of climate change were asked:** What does the phrase “climate change” mean to you? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

As for the main cause of climate change, most (71%) of those who are familiar with the concept of climate change attribute it to human activity. Only 9% think climate change is primarily caused by natural processes, while 18% say “both human activity and natural processes” cause climate change (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Main cause of climate change | Tanzania | 2017**

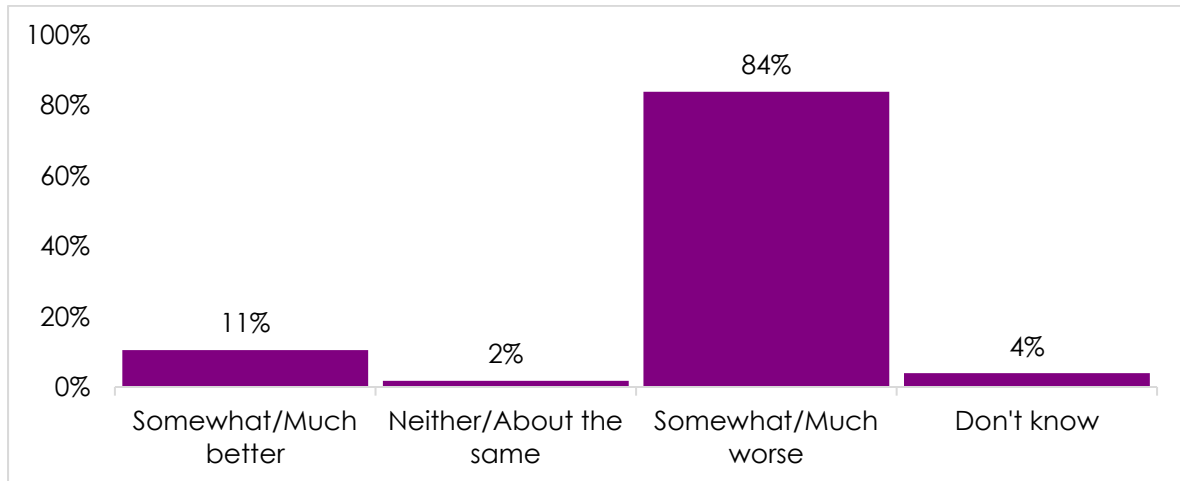


**Respondents who had heard of climate change were asked:** People have different ideas about what causes climate change. What about you, which of the following do you think is the main cause of climate change, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

## Impact and mitigation of climate change

Among those who have heard of climate change, most respondents (84%) say it is making life in Tanzania “somewhat worse” or “much worse” (Figure 9). Only 11% think climate change is having a positive impact on the nation’s quality of life.

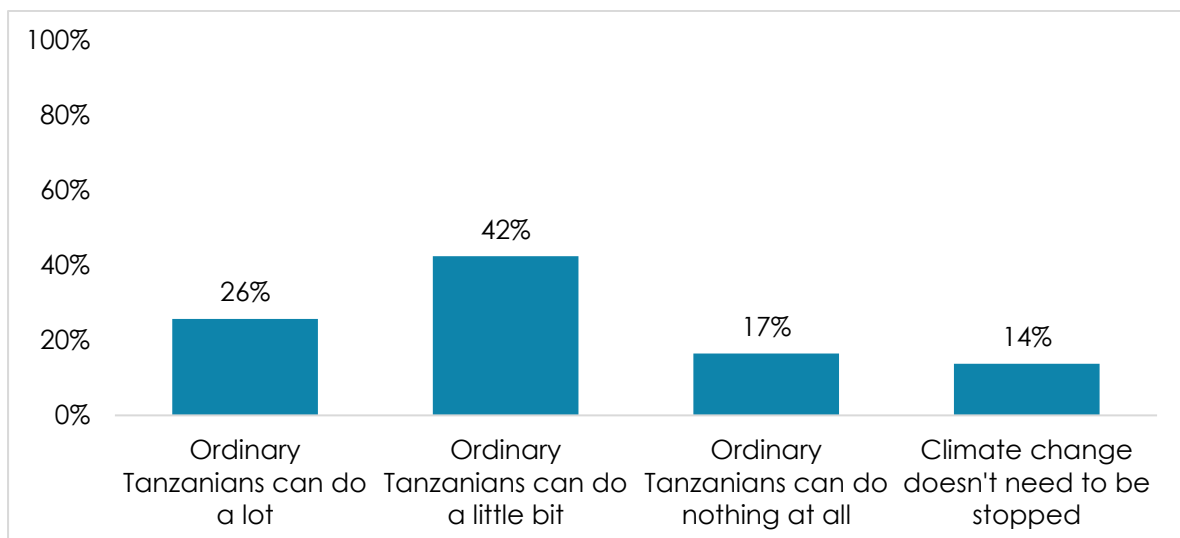
**Figure 9: Climate change affecting country | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents who had heard of climate change were asked:** Do you think climate change is making life in Tanzania better or worse, or haven't you heard enough to say? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

Among Tanzanians who have heard of climate change, most (85%) say the problem needs to be stopped, and a majority believe that ordinary citizens can do “a little bit” (42%) or “a lot” (26%) to help in this fight (Figure 10). While this may seem encouraging, these percentages do not include the two-thirds of Tanzanians who have never heard of climate change.

**Figure 10: Stopping climate change | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents who had heard of climate change were asked:** Do you think that climate change needs to be stopped? [If yes:] How much do you think that ordinary Tanzanians can do to stop climate change? (Respondents who had not heard of climate change are excluded.)

## Conclusion

Despite the projected harmful impacts of climate change and the government's steps to mitigate or prevent them, few Tanzanians are aware of climate change. The government, civil society, and the media can do much more to inform and sensitize citizens about risks and possible actions, particularly farmers and smallholding communities, extension officers and other government officials, rural communities, senior citizens, women, and primary and secondary students, who are the nation's future.

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