



Freetown, Sierra Leone
19 August 2020

News release

Sierra Leoneans increasingly concerned about the economy, new Afrobarometer study shows

Only one-third of Sierra Leoneans say the country is going in the right direction, a significant decline after some optimism with the change in government in 2018, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

Sierra Leoneans are overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their personal living conditions and the country's economy, and very few citizens believe the government is doing a good job of handling the economy. Dissatisfaction with the country's economy and personal living conditions is reflective of citizens' increasing levels of deprivation in their everyday lives, as large majorities experience shortages of food, clean water, and other basic necessities. Citizens in the opposition-controlled Western and Northern regions are especially bleak in their outlook.

In 2018, President Julius Maada Bio inherited an economy undergoing austerity measures and faced high expectations of economic improvement. These survey findings suggest that a series of steps to strengthen the economy have yet to translate into material gains for most citizens.

Key findings

- Only one-third (32%) of Sierra Leoneans say the country is going "in the right direction," a 13-percentage-point decline compared to 2018 (45%) (Figure 1).
 - The perception that the country is moving in the right direction is more common in ruling party strongholds – Southern (57%) and Eastern (53%) regions – than in opposition party strongholds – Western (16%) and Northern (14%) regions.
- Just one in 10 Sierra Leoneans (11%) describe the country's economic condition as "fairly good" or "very good" (Figure 2). Negative assessments (84%) have almost doubled since 2012 (46%).
- Only two in 10 citizens (19%) describe their personal living conditions as "fairly good" or "very good" (Figure 3). The proportion who describe their living conditions as fairly/very bad (72%) has increased by 32 percentage points since 2012 (40%).
- Nine in 10 respondents (89%) say they went without a cash income at least once during the year preceding the survey, including 43% who did so "many times" or "always" (Figure 4). Almost as many report experiencing shortages of medical care (81%), food (70%), and clean water (68%).
- The government receives lower approval ratings on its economic performance than on other issues. Fewer than two in 10 respondents say the government is doing a good job of handling the economy (19%), improving living standards of the poor (15%), narrowing income gaps (10%), creating jobs (10%), and keeping prices stable (7%) (Figure 5).

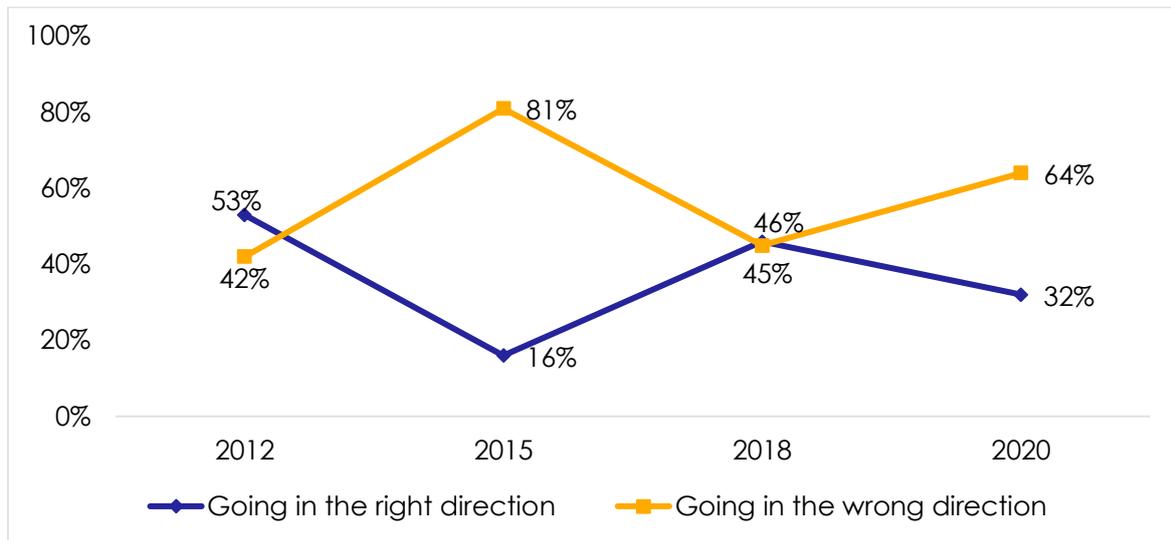
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018. Round 8 surveys in 2019/2020 are planned in at least 35 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Sierra Leone, led by the Institute for Governance Reform, interviewed 1,200 adult Sierra Leoneans in March 2020. 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 Sierra Leone in 2012, 2015, and 2018.

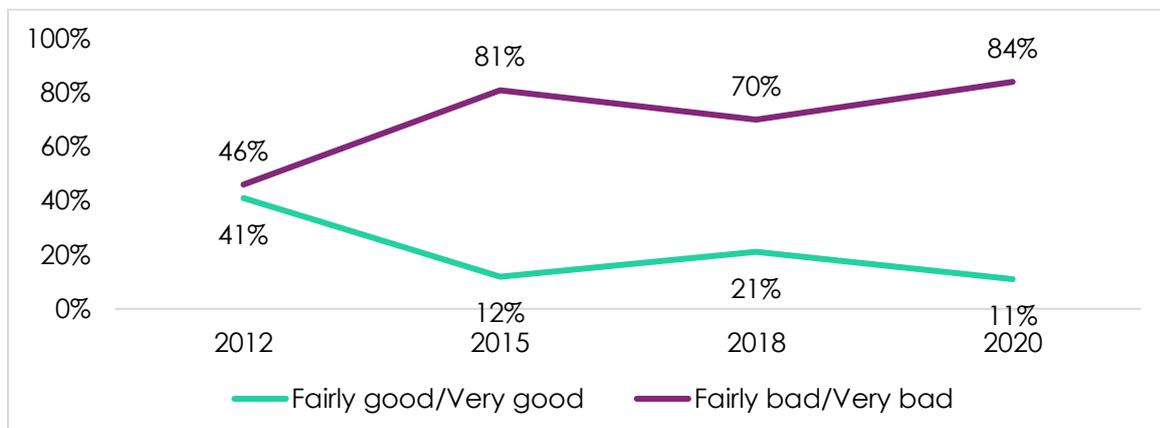
Charts

Figure 1: Direction of the country | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



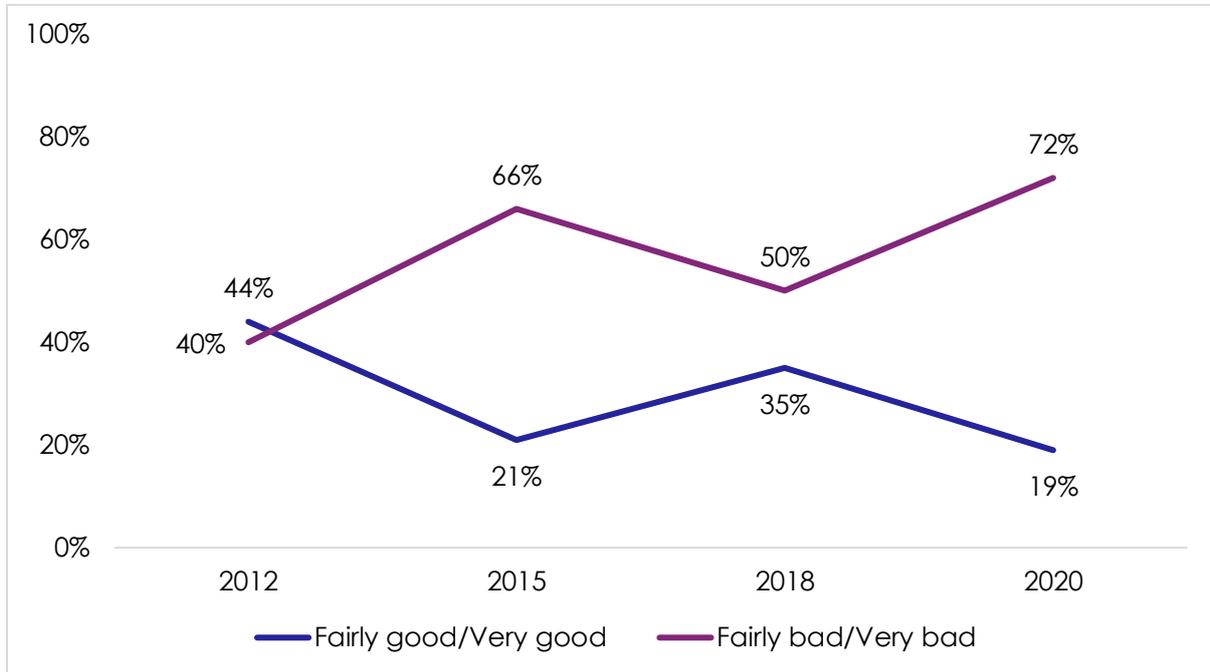
Respondents were asked: *Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?*

Figure 2: The country's economic condition | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



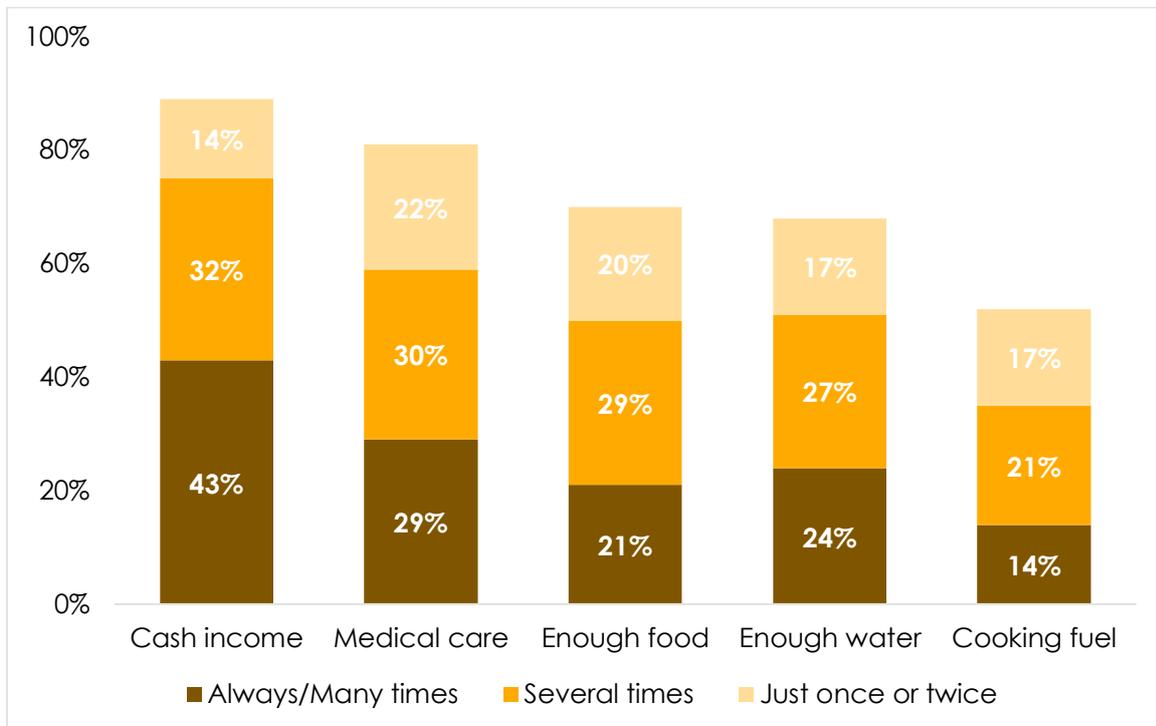
Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?*

Figure 3: Personal living conditions | Sierra Leone | 2012-2020



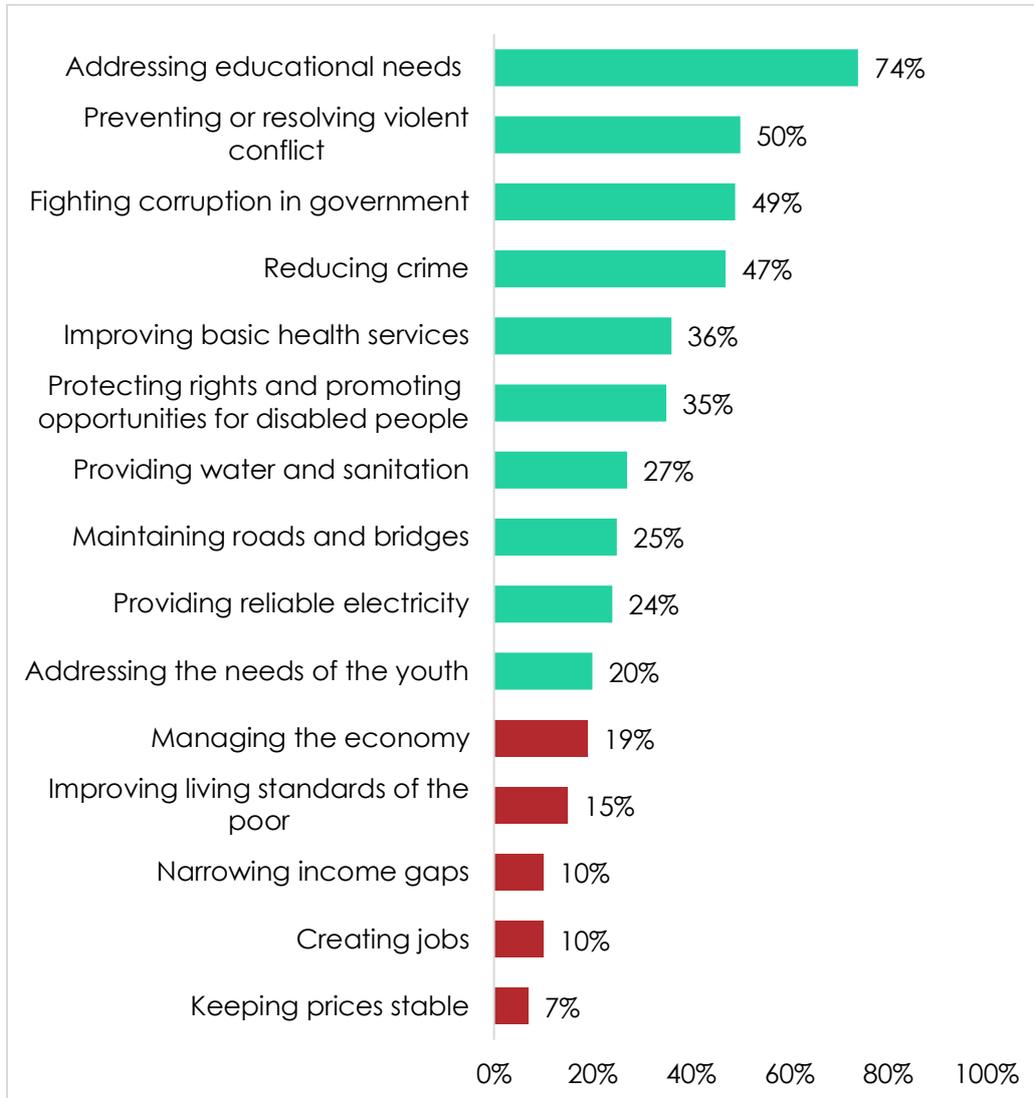
Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?*

Figure 4: Went without basic necessities in the past year | Sierra Leone | 2020



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?*

Figure 5: Approval ratings for government performance | Sierra Leone | 2020



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")

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