Where to start? Aligning Sustainable Development Goals with citizen priorities

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 67 | Thomas Bentley, Markus Olapade, Pauline Wambua, and Nora Charron

Summary

On 1 January 2016, the United Nations' new development agenda will take effect. Titled "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," it extends and supplements the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges facing citizens around the globe. The SDGs set high targets on a very broad range of issues: ending poverty, achieving food security, ensuring healthy lives, high-quality education, gender equality, sustainable water management, and affordable and reliable energy, among others – 17 goals in all, supported by 169 targets (UN, 2015).

Where to start? What to prioritize, amidst so many needs and ambitions? The UN notes that implementation will require "the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people," taking into account "different national realities, capacities, and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities" (UN, 2015, pp. 2-3).

One place to start in identifying priorities is to ask the people. For governments and civil-society activists, country-level data on popular priorities (publicly available for analysis at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis) can help guide agenda-setting and investment decisions to address the most important sustainable development challenges.

In its sixth round of surveys (2014/2015), Afrobarometer asked citizens in 36 countries, who together represent more than three-fourths of the continent's population, what they consider the most important problems that their governments should address and what their priorities are for investing their country's resources.

This dispatch presents findings from 32 countries for which Round 6 data are currently available.[1] We find that the most frequently cited problem across the continent is unemployment, followed by health, education, and infrastructure. But in some countries other issues loom larger, including water supply in Guinea and Burkina Faso; food shortages in Mali, Malawi, and Niger; and crime and security in Kenya and Madagascar. Among the poorest citizens, health and water supply rank at the top.

When it comes to Africans' priorities for more government investment, education and health stand out across all key demographic groups. Education, in particular, ranks at or near the top of investment priorities in all surveyed countries. Again, country-level realities are reflected in national priorities; in Malawi, Mali, and Burundi, for example, agricultural development surpasses education and health as the most frequently cited top priority for increased government spending – in line with those countries' ranking of food shortage as a high-priority problem.

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[1] Data from additional Round 6 surveys in Gabon, Morocco, Mozambique, and Sao Tome & Principe will be available by the end of 2015.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and findings from Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2% (for samples of 2,400) or +/3% (for samples of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level.

This dispatch uses data from 47,941 interviews completed in 32 countries (see Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates). Interested readers should watch for additional findings to be released over the coming months.

Key findings

- Across the 32 surveyed countries, the most frequently cited problems are unemployment, health, and education, although poverty and food shortage, taken together, are also a dominant concern.

- But the most important problems vary by country: Water supply is the top problem in Guinea and Burkina Faso, while food shortage is the most frequently cited problem in Malawi, Mali, and Niger. In Kenya and Madagascar, crime and security top the list.

- Poor citizens rank problems differently than their wealthier counterparts, emphasizing problems of basic survival (health, water, and food) and infrastructure and placing comparatively less emphasis on unemployment and crime/security.

- When we turn to the somewhat narrower question of which of six specific sectors should be prioritized for greater investment of state resources, across the 32 countries, education and health care are citizens' top priorities. Education is the top priority for additional government investment in three-fourths of all countries.

- But investment priorities also vary by country. Agricultural development is the top priority in Malawi, Mali, and Burundi, while infrastructure heads the list in Lesotho. Security ranks as a higher priority in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tunisia than in other countries.

- The rank ordering of investment priorities is fairly consistent regardless of respondent age, education, income, gender, or urban-rural location. However, the relative emphasis on these issues varies:
    - Education is more likely to be a top priority among younger or better-educated citizens, while health and agricultural development are more likely to be top priorities for older or less-educated citizens.
    - Education and security are more likely to be top priorities for wealthier or urban citizens, whereas agricultural development is more likely to be cited by poorer or rural respondents.

The context: Daily challenges

Before considering what Africans say about their countries' problems and their priorities for government spending, we begin by taking a brief look at their daily lives, especially the challenges that many still face in meeting their basic needs – a reality that likely shapes those priorities.

More than four in 10 face at least occasional difficulties in meeting their most basic needs for food (44%), clean water (45%), and medical care (48%), and more than one in 10 confront these hardships frequently (13%, 19%, and 15%, respectively) (Figure 1). Cash is especially scarce, with three-quarters (73%) at least occasionally lacking a cash income and 40% facing this problem frequently.

Figure 1: Lived poverty: Going without the basics | 32 countries | 2014/2015
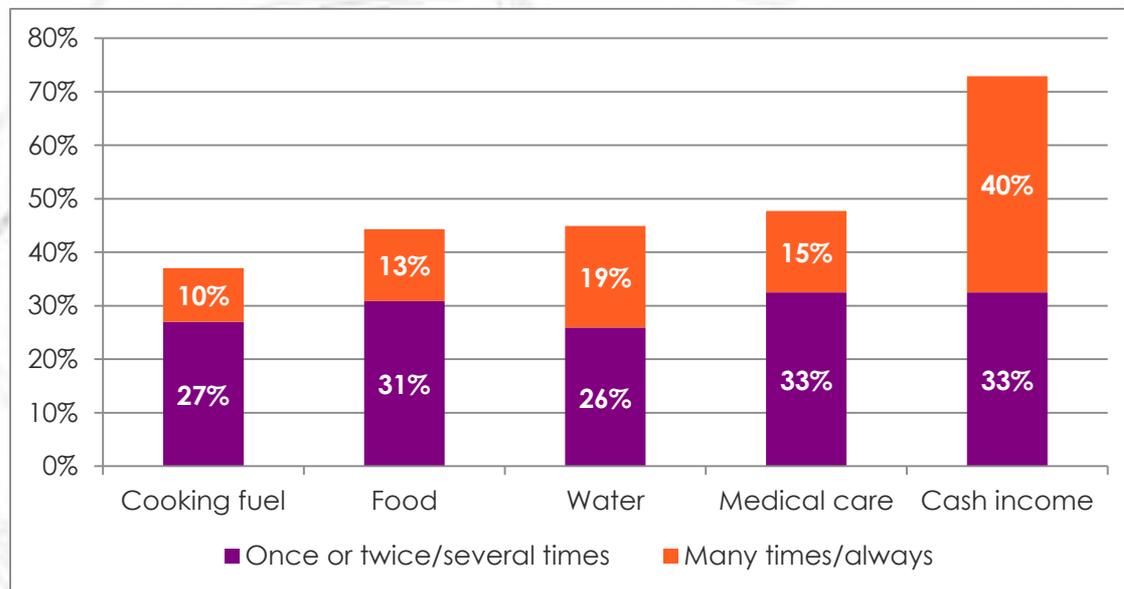
Respondents were asked: *Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without enough: Food to eat? Clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Fuel to cook your food? A cash income?*
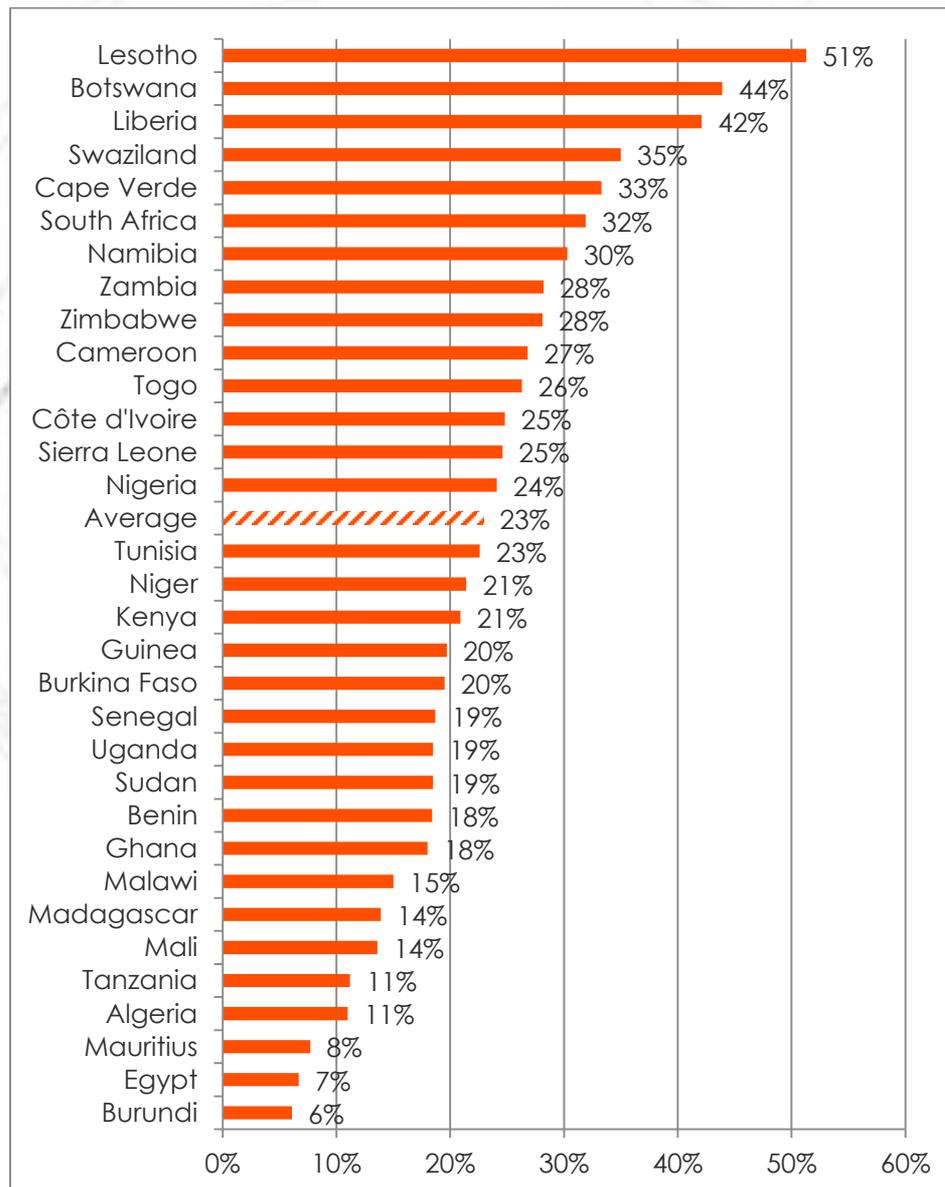
The lack of cash income likely reflects widespread employment challenges. While 37% of respondents report having either full-time (26%) or part-time (11%) work that provides a cash income, almost one in four (23%) are unemployed but looking for work, and another 40% do not have a job that pays a cash income and are not looking for one (Figure 2). The proportion of adults who are unemployed but looking for work ranges from just 6% in Burundi to 51% in Lesotho (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Employment status | 32 countries | 2014/2015
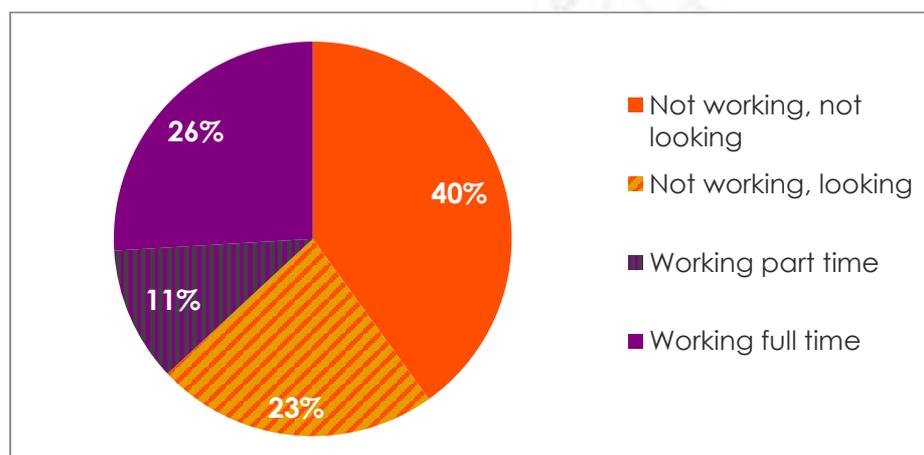
Respondents were asked: *Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is it full time or part time? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job?*

Figure 3: Unemployment status by country | 32 countries | 2014/2015

Country	%
Lesotho	51%
Botswana	44%
Liberia	42%
Swaziland	35%
Cape Verde	33%
South Africa	32%
Namibia	30%
Zambia	28%
Zimbabwe	28%
Cameroon	27%
Togo	26%
Côte d'Ivoire	25%
Sierra Leone	25%
Nigeria	24%
Average	23%
Tunisia	23%
Niger	21%
Kenya	21%
Guinea	20%
Burkina Faso	20%
Senegal	19%
Uganda	19%
Sudan	19%
Benin	18%
Ghana	18%
Malawi	15%
Madagascar	14%
Mali	14%
Tanzania	11%
Algeria	11%
Mauritius	8%
Egypt	7%
Burundi	6%

Respondents were asked: *Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is it full time or part time? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job? (% not working but looking for work)*

Most important problems

Citizens' life circumstances may shape their views of the challenges of sustainable development. When respondents were asked to cite "the most important problems facing this country that government should address" and allowed to give up to three responses, the most frequent response, on average across the 32 countries, is unemployment (cited by 37% of respondents) (Figure 4). A variety of government and social services occupy the next four spots, including health (31%), education (23%), infrastructure/transport (22%), and water supply (20%).
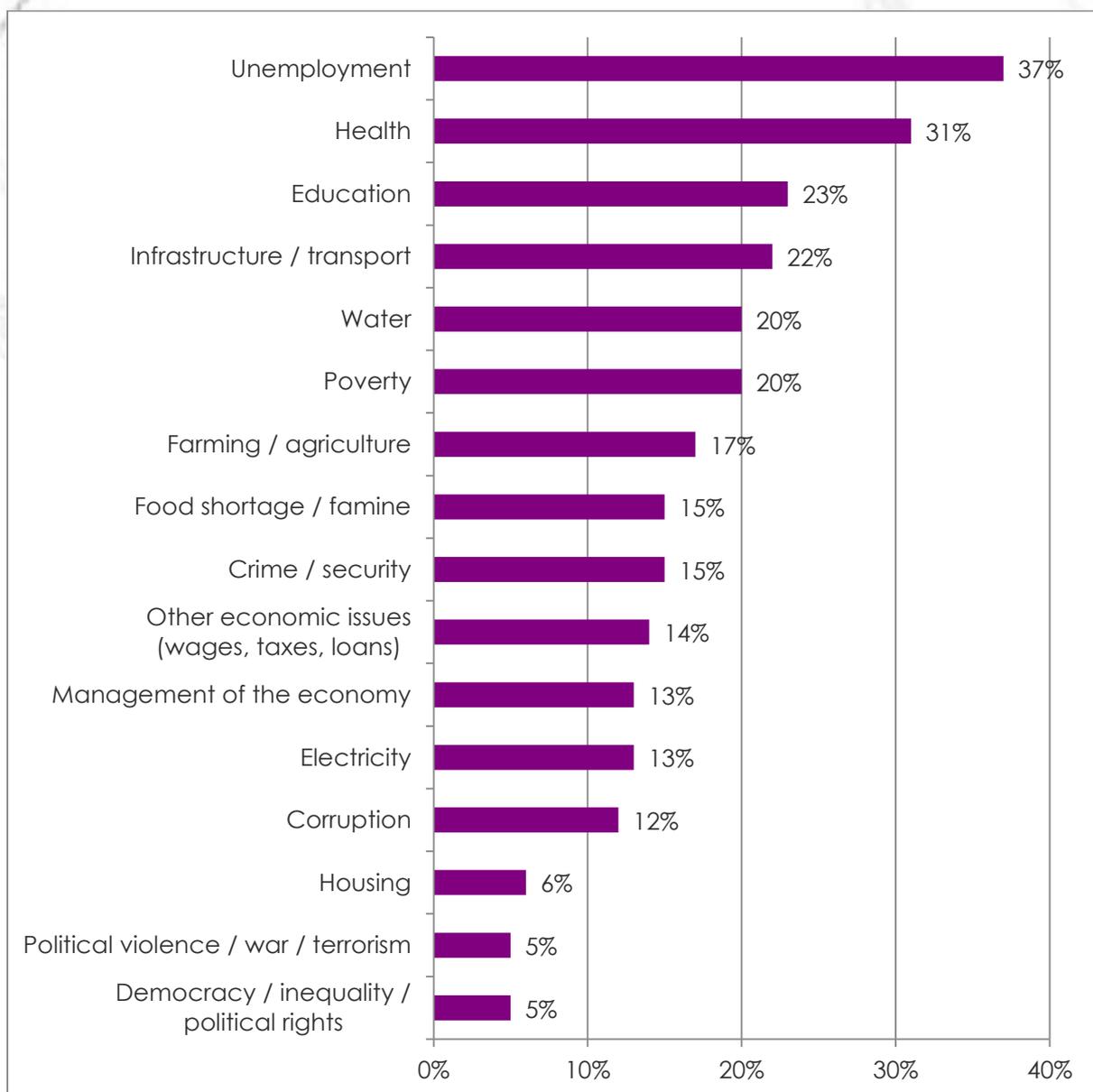
These services are followed by a variety of economic issues. Ensuring personal economic survival is a high overall priority, with poverty cited by one in five respondents (20%) and an additional 15% listing food shortages as a key concern (along with 17% who mention

farming/agriculture). General economic management is cited by 13%, and 14% mention other economic concerns such as wages and taxes.

Personal security is also an important concern for many: 15% identify crime and security, and another 5% mention political violence and insecurity due to war and terrorism.

Politics and governance are somewhat lower priorities, led by corruption at 12%, followed by democracy, inequality, and political rights (5%). The struggle to survive economically and to attain an acceptable physical quality of life clearly dominates respondents' immediate responses. On the other hand, Afrobarometer data also show that Africans remain highly committed to democracy (Bentley, Han, & Penar, 2015) and to the fight against corruption (Transparency International, 2015).

Figure 4: Most important problems | 32 countries | 2014/2015

Unemployment	37%
Health	31%
Education	23%
Infrastructure / transport	22%
Water	20%
Poverty	20%
Farming / agriculture	17%
Food shortage / famine	15%
Crime / security	15%
Other economic issues (wages, taxes, loans)	14%
Management of the economy	13%
Electricity	13%
Corruption	12%
Housing	6%
Political violence / war / terrorism	5%
Democracy / inequality / political rights	5%

Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?*
Note: *Respondents could give up to three responses. Figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem among their top three.*

National differences in most important problems

Reflecting diverse national circumstances, citizens' most important problems vary significantly across countries. The top problem overall, unemployment, is the most frequently cited problem in nearly half (15) of the surveyed countries. There is a remarkable degree of consensus on its importance in a number of countries, including in Cape Verde (where 72% of citizens cite the problem as their top concern), South Africa (71%), Namibia (62%), Mauritius (60%), Botswana (57%), Lesotho (57%), and Tunisia (57%) (Figure 5). In Malawi and Tanzania, on the other hand, unemployment does not even make the top 10, surpassed by more basic needs such as food supply, health, and water.

Health dominates in seven countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia), and in Burkina Faso, although health falls second, it is nonetheless cited by 49% of respondents. Education ranks second or third in eight countries, led by Sierra Leone (54%), and agriculture is among the top three issues in Liberia (39%), Senegal (37%), Zambia (31%), Madagascar (28%), and Burundi (27%). Poverty leads in Burundi (40%), and food shortage is the predominant concern in Malawi (52%), Niger (51%), and Mali (45%).

Infrastructure and transport take the top spot in Liberia (51%) and Benin (41%), and 48% of Guineans also cite this issue. Guineans' top issue, however, is water supply (59%), which is also a major concern for citizens of Burkina Faso (60%, top priority) and Niger (49%, second priority).

Crime and security are rated as the top concern in Kenya (40%) and Madagascar (36%) and near the top in Mauritius (44%), Tunisia (43%), Cape Verde (38%), and South Africa (27%). Housing rates as a high priority for Algerians (41%) and South Africans (27%), while electricity supply is cited by one-third of Guineans (33%), Nigerians (32%), and Ghanaians (31%). Finally, Tunisians express widespread concern with overall management of the economy (41%, third priority), while Mauritians (34%) and Algerians (26%) identify other economic issues such as wages and taxes among their key concerns.
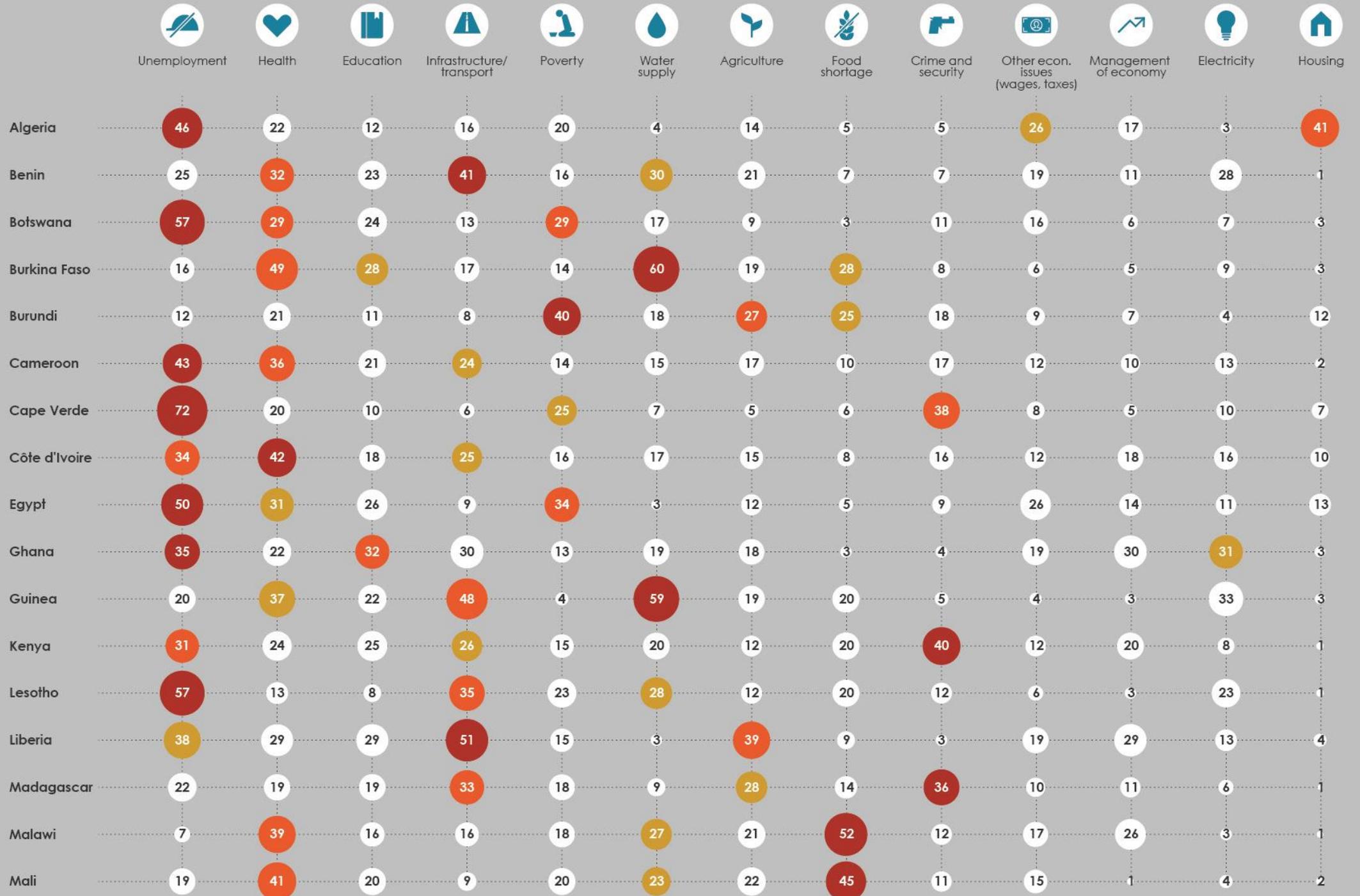
Poverty and most important problems

As might be expected, people at different socioeconomic levels differ in their perceptions of their country's most important problems. Survey respondents can be grouped by socioeconomic level using Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI), an experiential measure based on shortages of basic necessities (see Figure 1 above). An average index or score is calculated for each respondent, ranging from zero for those who never went without any necessary item to 4 for an individual who reported always going without all of them. Respondents are then sorted into four groups: those with no lived poverty (LPI=0, 20% of all respondents), those with low lived poverty (LPI=0.2 to 1.0, 33% of respondents), those with moderate lived poverty (LPI=1.2 to 2.0, 30% of respondents), and those with high lived poverty (LPI>2.0, 17% of respondents).[2]
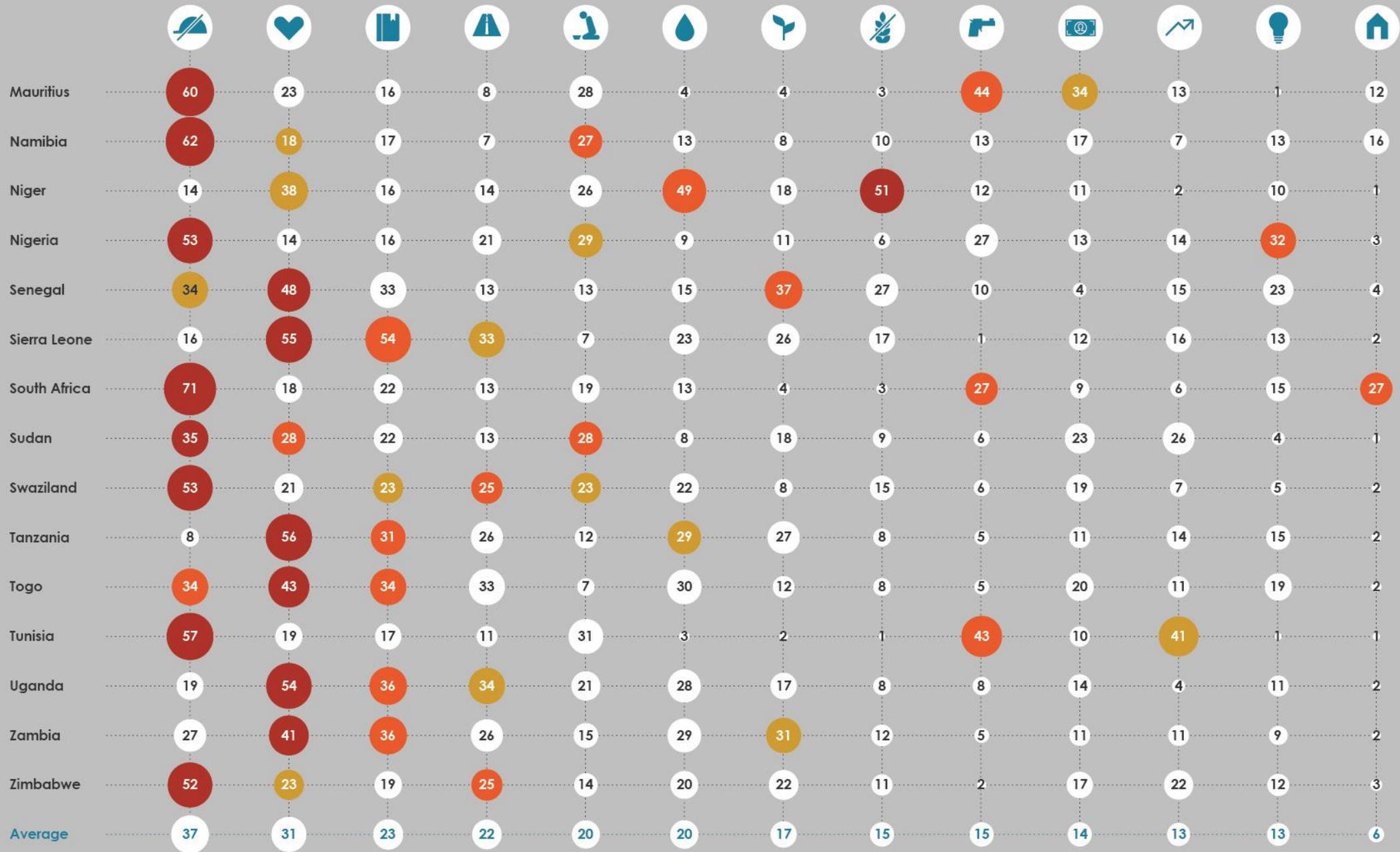
In assessing national problems, citizens experiencing high lived poverty are more likely to prioritize problems of basic survival such as food shortage, health, and water supply than those experiencing lower levels of poverty (Figure 6). They are also more likely to prioritize farming and agriculture, as well as infrastructure and transport. On the other hand, unemployment, economic management, and other economic issues such as wages and taxes are of lower priority to poor citizens, as are crime and security, corruption, and housing (Figure 7).

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[2] For more information about Afrobarometer's LPI, see Dulani, B., Mattes, R., & Logan, C. (2013). After a decade of growth in Africa, little change in poverty at the grassroots. Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 1, available at http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Briefing%20paper/ab_r5_policypaperno1.pdf.

Figure 5: Most important problems, by country | 32 countries | 2014/2015

Country	Unemployment	Health	Education	Infrastructure/ transport	Poverty	Water supply	Agriculture	Food shortage	Crime and security	Other econ. issues (wages, taxes)	Management of economy	Electricity	Housing
Algeria	46	22	12	16	20	4	14	5	5	26	17	3	41
Benin	25	32	23	41	16	30	21	7	7	19	11	28	1
Botswana	57	29	24	13	29	17	9	3	11	16	6	7	3
Burkina Faso	16	49	28	17	14	60	19	28	8	6	5	9	3
Burundi	12	21	11	8	40	18	27	25	18	9	7	4	12
Cameroon	43	36	21	24	14	15	17	10	17	12	10	13	2
Cape Verde	72	20	10	6	25	7	5	6	38	8	5	10	7
Côte d'Ivoire	34	42	18	25	16	17	15	8	16	12	18	16	10
Egypt	50	31	26	9	34	3	12	5	9	26	14	11	13
Ghana	35	22	32	30	13	19	18	3	4	19	30	31	3
Guinea	20	37	22	48	4	59	19	20	5	4	3	33	3
Kenya	31	24	25	26	15	20	12	20	40	12	20	8	1
Lesotho	57	13	8	35	23	28	12	20	12	6	3	23	1
Liberia	38	29	29	51	15	3	39	9	3	19	29	13	4
Madagascar	22	19	19	33	18	9	28	14	36	10	11	6	1
Malawi	7	39	16	16	18	27	21	52	12	17	26	3	1
Mali	19	41	20	9	20	23	22	45	11	15	1	4	2

Country	🚫	❤	📖	🛣	👷	💧	🌱	🌾	🔫	💵	📈	💡	🏠
Mauritius	60	23	16	8	28	4	4	3	44	34	13	1	12
Namibia	62	18	17	7	27	13	8	10	13	17	7	13	16
Niger	14	38	16	14	26	49	18	51	12	11	2	10	1
Nigeria	53	14	16	21	29	9	11	6	27	13	14	32	3
Senegal	34	48	33	13	13	15	37	27	10	4	15	23	4
Sierra Leone	16	55	54	33	7	23	26	17	1	12	16	13	2
South Africa	71	18	22	13	19	13	4	3	27	9	6	15	27
Sudan	35	28	22	13	28	8	18	9	6	23	26	4	1
Swaziland	53	21	23	25	23	22	8	15	6	19	7	5	2
Tanzania	8	56	31	26	12	29	27	8	5	11	14	15	2
Togo	34	43	34	33	7	30	12	8	5	20	11	19	2
Tunisia	57	19	17	11	31	3	2	1	43	10	41	1	1
Uganda	19	54	36	34	21	28	17	8	8	14	4	11	2
Zambia	27	41	36	26	15	29	31	12	5	11	11	9	2
Zimbabwe	52	23	19	25	14	20	22	11	2	17	22	12	3
Average	37	31	23	22	20	20	17	15	15	14	13	13	6

Key

⬤ % of all respondents

🔴 1st 🟠 2nd 🟡 3rd — ranking in the country

Respondents were asked
In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?

Note Respondents could give up to three responses. Figure shows % of respondents who identify each issue as one of their country's three most important problems.

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Lived poverty levels do not significantly affect respondents' prioritization of education or even of poverty itself. And citizens express concern about problems with electricity supply largely regardless of poverty level.

Figure 6: Poverty and higher-priority problems | 32 countries | 2014/2015
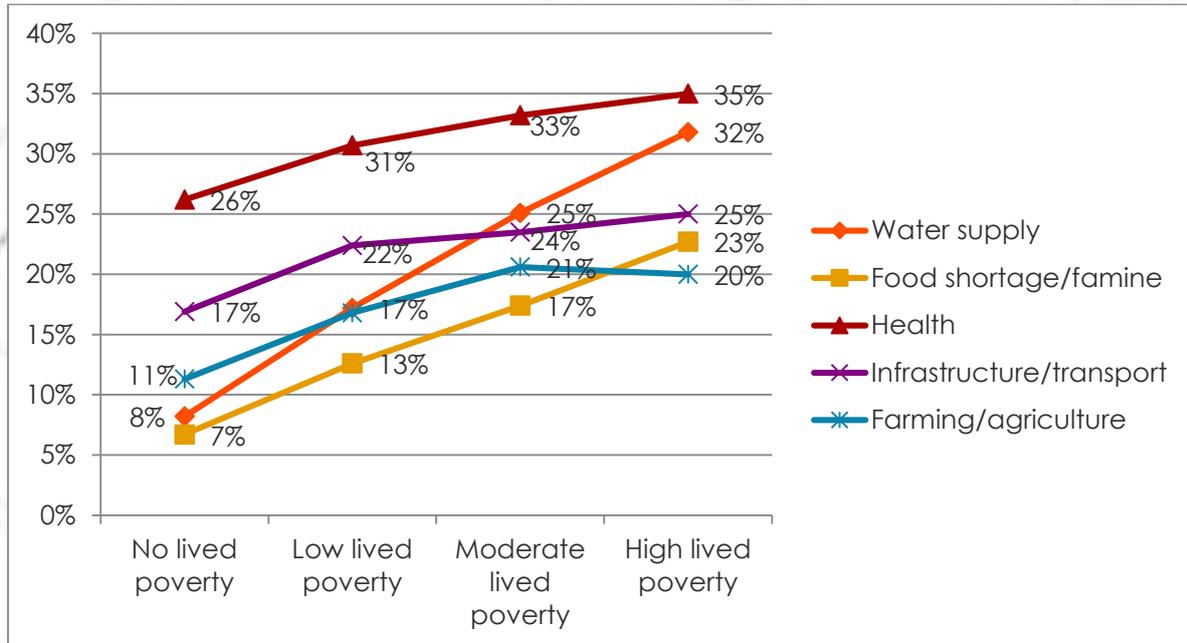
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?*

Figure 7: Poverty and lower-priority problems | 32 countries | 2014/2015
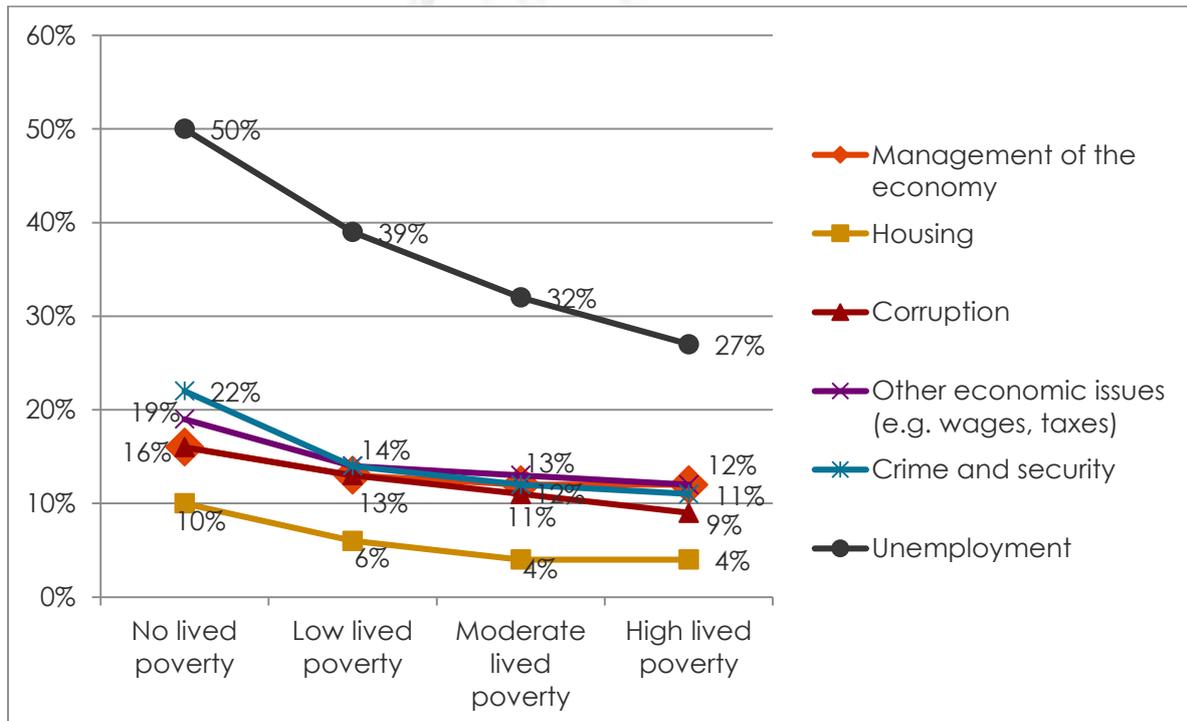
Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?*

Are there also national-level factors that help explain the differences in perceived priority problems across countries? It is beyond the scope of this paper to do a full analysis of country-level factors that shape popular priorities. But some preliminary explorations are revealing. In particular, we find that the relationships observed between wealth and perceived priority problems at the individual level largely hold up at the national level as well. Citizens in countries at lower levels of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita[3] are more likely to prioritize agriculture (Figure 8), water supply (Figure 9), health, infrastructure, and food shortage than those in wealthier countries.[4] In contrast, citizens in countries with higher levels of GDP per capita are more likely to cite unemployment (Figure 10), corruption, crime and security, housing, poverty, and other economic issues (such as wages and taxes).[5] There was no significant relationship between per capita GDP and prioritization of education, energy supply, democracy, political violence, and economic management. Figures 8 and 10 illustrate the marked shifts that can occur as countries grow economically and popular priorities transition from a focus on livelihoods dependent on agriculture to wage employment.[6]

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

But per capita GDP alone does not tell the whole story. For example, while concerns about water supply tend to be higher in low-wealth countries, it is also clear from Figure 9 that this priority is much more important in some low-wealth countries than in others. In Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Niger, water supply is a dominant concern, while in Liberia, a country at an equally low level of per capita GDP, it hardly registers as a priority at all. This emphasizes the importance of asking citizens in each country about their priorities before setting policy agendas and making decisions about development investments.

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[3] GDP per capita data are from World Bank (2015): http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD.

[4] GDP per capita was negatively correlated with: agriculture (Pearson's r=-.659**), water (-.486**), health (-.442*), infrastructure (-.515**), and food shortages (-.494**). All correlations were statistically significant (** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)).

[5] GDP per capita was positively correlated with: unemployment (Pearson's r=.724**), corruption (.474**), crime and security (.448*), housing (.554**), poverty (.435*), and other economic issues (.462**). All correlations were statistically significant (** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)).

[6] Note that urbanization may have closely linked effects. For example, higher rates of urbanization are also strongly correlated with higher prioritization of unemployment (Pearson's r=.677**) and housing (r=.445*) and with lower prioritization of food shortages (r=-.677**), water supply (r=-.517**), and agriculture (r=-.390*). Fuller exploration of which of these factors – per capita GDP, urbanization, or some other factor – best explains differences in perceived priority problems would require multivariate analysis that is beyond the scope of the present paper.

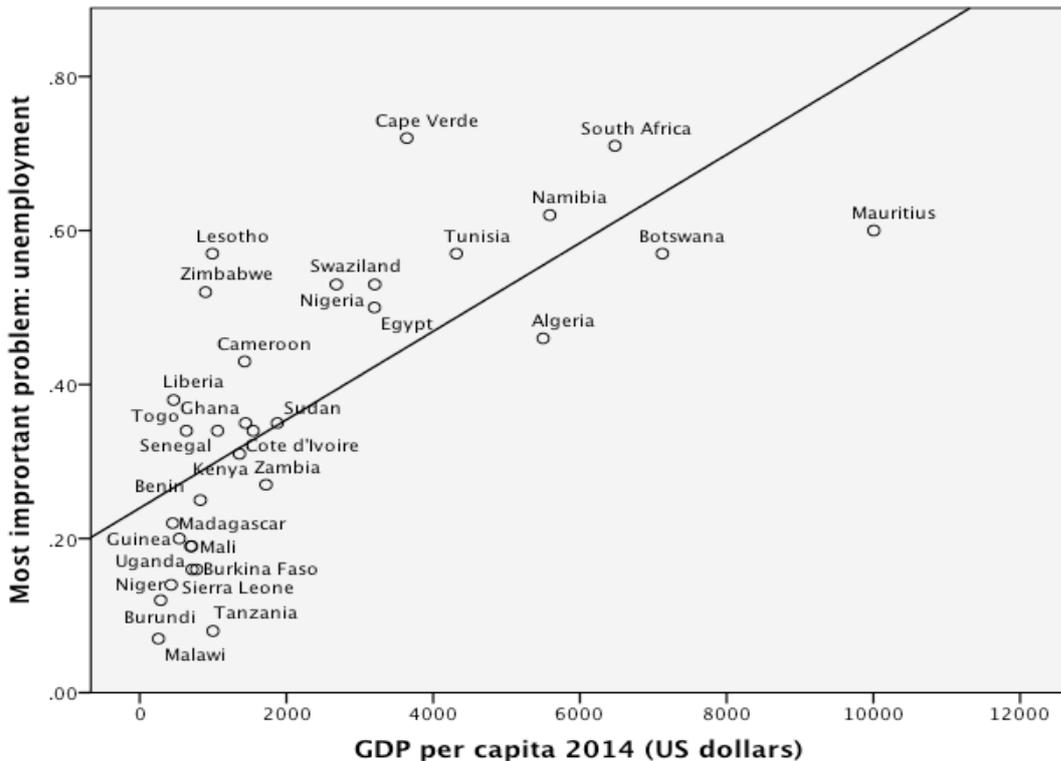**Figure 8: Per capita GDP and priority problems: Agriculture** | 32 countries | 2014/2015
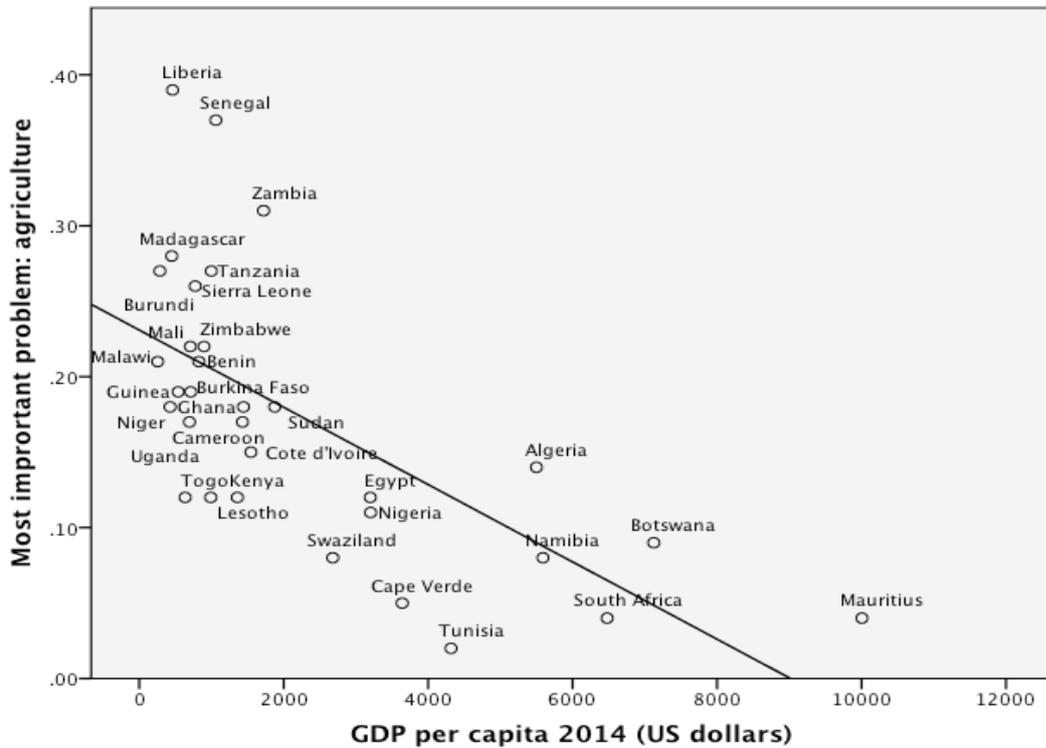
Note: Pearson's r=-.659** (significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed))

Figure 9: Per capita GDP and priority problems: Water supply | 32 countries | 2014/2015
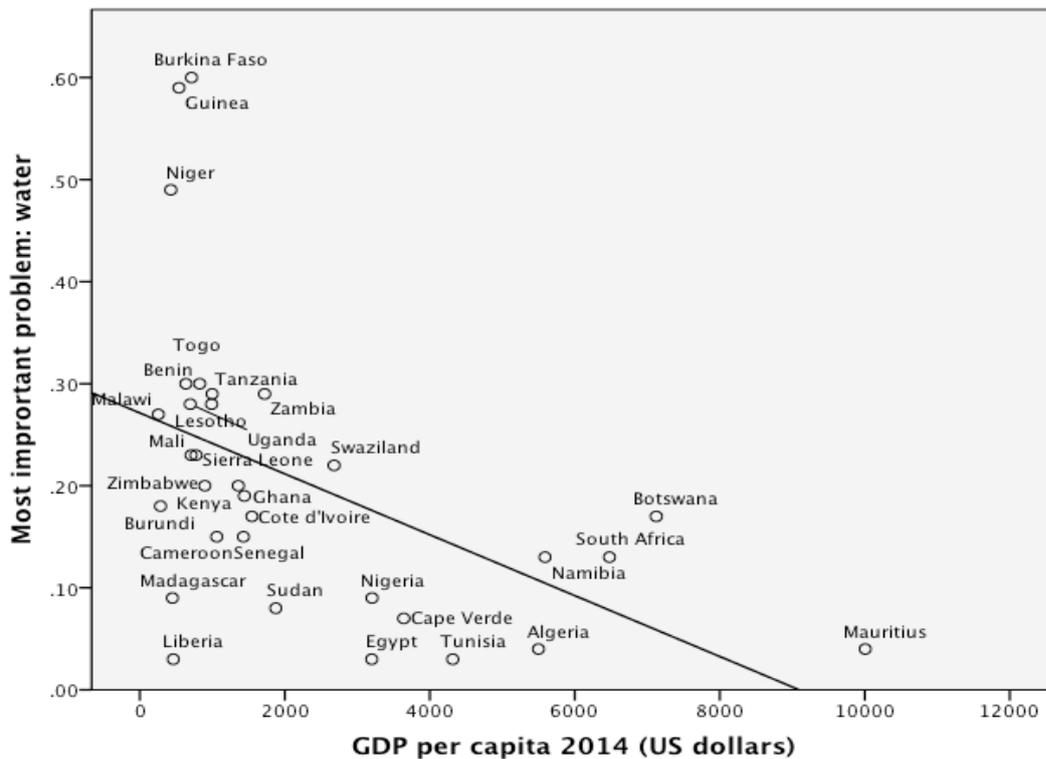
Note: Pearson's r=-.486** (significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed))

Figure 10: Per capita GDP and priority problems: Unemployment | 32 countries | 2014/2015

*Note: Pearson's r=.724** (significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed))*

Investment priorities

We next turn to a somewhat narrower question about investment priorities, asking respondents which of six key sectors in which government is a major service provider they would prioritize for increased government spending: health, education, agriculture, energy supply, crime and security, or infrastructure. Note that although unemployment was identified by many as one of their country's most critical problems, it was not included among the list of investment options on this question because it is not a government service *per se*. In fact there is no agreement among policy makers about whether government intervention is the most appropriate means for addressing job creation or whether this should be a private-sector initiative.

Given citizens' varied perceptions of the most important problems that their governments should address, which of these sectors do they prioritize for additional government investment?

On average across the 32 countries, education and health care are by far the highest priorities (Figure 11). More than half of respondents cite education as either their first (36%) or second (18%) priority, and half list health care first (21%) or second (29%).

Agriculture is in third place, cited by about one in three respondents as a first or second priority, followed by infrastructure, named by one in four respondents. Security and energy supply fall behind these other issues on the scale of popular priorities.

Figure 11: First and second investment priorities | 32 countries | 2014/2015
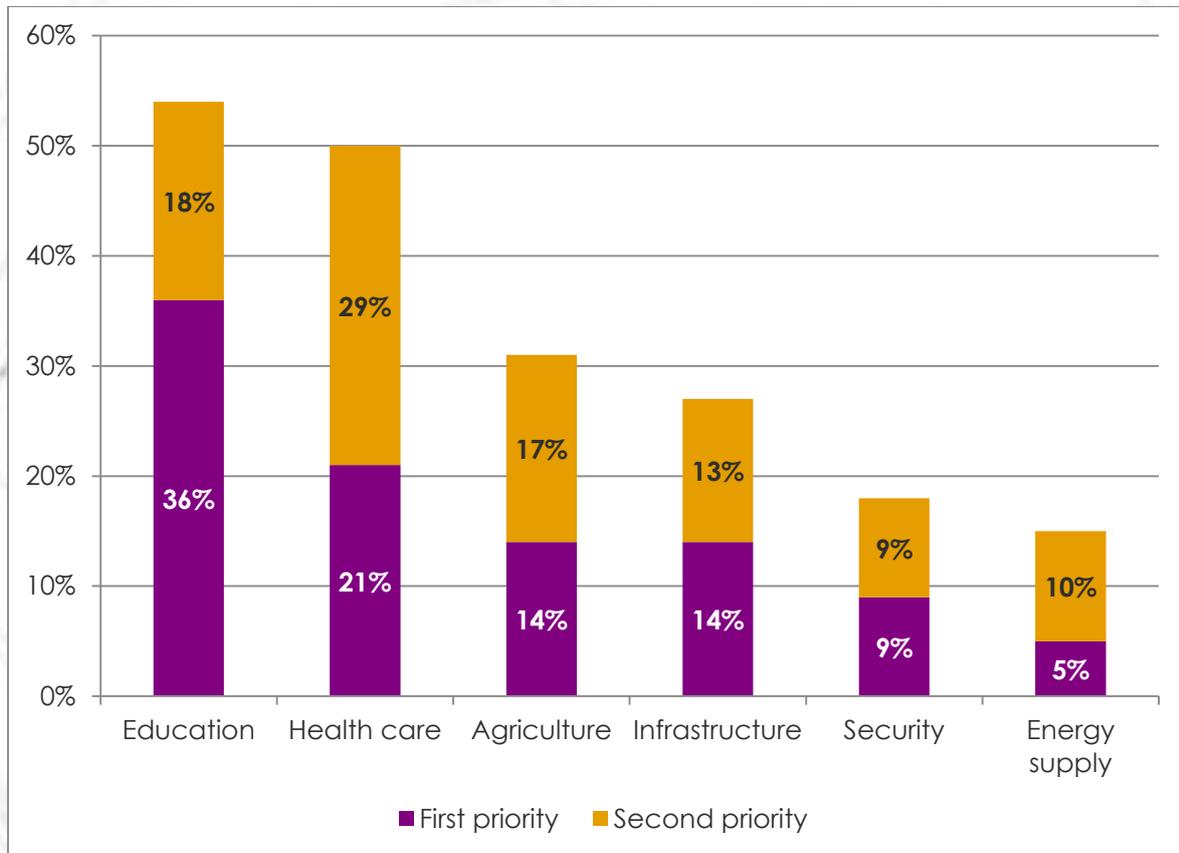
Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? And which would be your second priority?*

Spending priorities vary considerably across countries. Focusing only on respondents' first priorities, education ranks first in all but eight countries (Figure 12); among these six sectors, education never falls below third position in any country.

Health care is the most frequently cited investment priority in five countries – Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Niger, Senegal, and Togo (where it is tied with education) – and is the second-most-frequently cited priority in 16 countries. Only four countries – Lesotho, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Swaziland – do not rank health care among their top three issues for increased government spending.
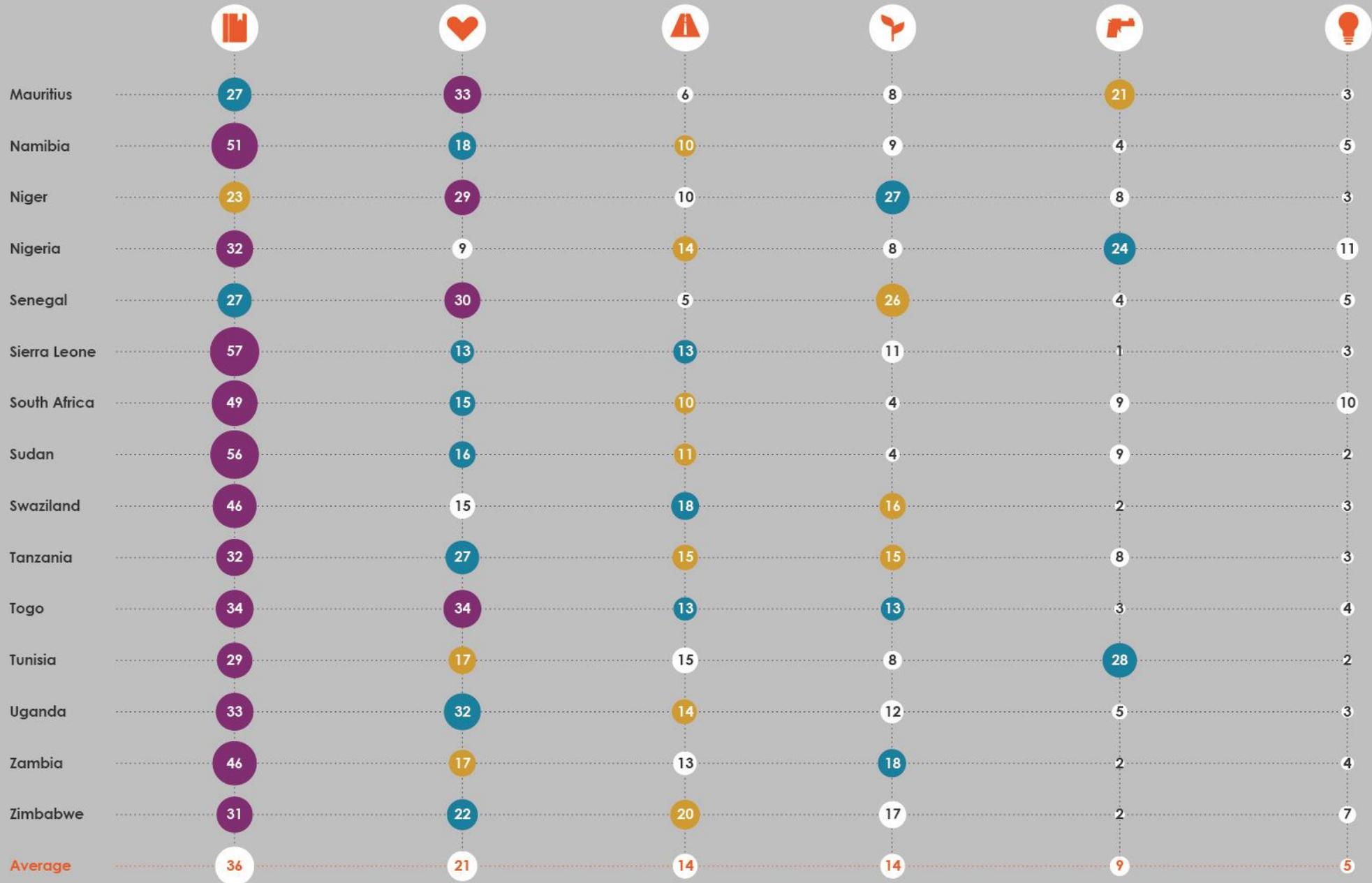
But respondents in several countries report markedly different investment preferences. In Malawi, Mali, and Burundi, for example, citizens identify agricultural development as their top priority for increased government spending – a result that is consistent with their high ranking of food shortage among their most important problems.

Lesotho is the only country that rates infrastructure as its top spending priority and energy supply among its top three.

Security is a far more prominent investment priority in a number of countries that have faced recent terrorist attacks, including Kenya, Nigeria, and Tunisia, though it also ranks high in some of the region's wealthiest countries, where crime, rather than terrorism, has become a prominent concern (e.g. Cape Verde and Mauritius).

Figure 12: Top investment priority, by country | 32 countries | 2014/2015

	Education	Health care	Infrastructure	Agricultural development	Security	Energy supply
Algeria	33	22	15	10	14	2
Benin	33	18	22	15	3	7
Botswana	46	20	14	10	6	3
Burkina Faso	29	40	9	14	5	3
Burundi	22	23	8	30	11	6
Cameroon	47	14	20	8	8	2
Cape Verde	34	29	5	10	16	4
Côte d'Ivoire	30	27	18	13	8	3
Egypt	47	21	11	4	11	2
Ghana	47	12	18	10	2	9
Guinea	30	17	24	16	5	9
Kenya	24	11	11	11	18	2
Lesotho	26	12	28	12	4	14
Liberia	49	11	23	8	5	4
Madagascar	27	14	23	15	19	3
Malawi	25	27	8	31	4	4
Mali	23	23	8	32	10	3

Country	📕	❤️	⚠️	🌱	🔫	💡
Mauritius	27	33	6	8	21	3
Namibia	51	18	10	9	4	5
Niger	23	29	10	27	8	3
Nigeria	32	9	14	8	24	11
Senegal	27	30	5	26	4	5
Sierra Leone	57	13	13	11	1	3
South Africa	49	15	10	4	9	10
Sudan	56	16	11	4	9	2
Swaziland	46	15	18	16	2	3
Tanzania	32	27	15	15	8	3
Togo	34	34	13	13	3	4
Tunisia	29	17	15	8	28	2
Uganda	33	32	14	12	5	3
Zambia	46	17	13	18	2	4
Zimbabwe	31	22	20	17	2	7
Average	36	21	14	14	9	5

Key

% of all respondents

ranking in the country — 1st / 2nd / 3rd

Respondents were asked If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (Figure shows % citing each issue as their first priority.)

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Demographics and investment priorities

The relative emphasis that citizens place on investment priorities varies according to their age, education, gender, and location in urban or rural areas.

For example, young people (ages 18-25) place much more emphasis on education (41%) than the oldest respondents (age 66+) (27%) (Figure 13). Older people, in contrast, place higher priority on investments in agricultural development and health care.

Figure 13: Investment priorities by age | 32 countries | 2014/2015
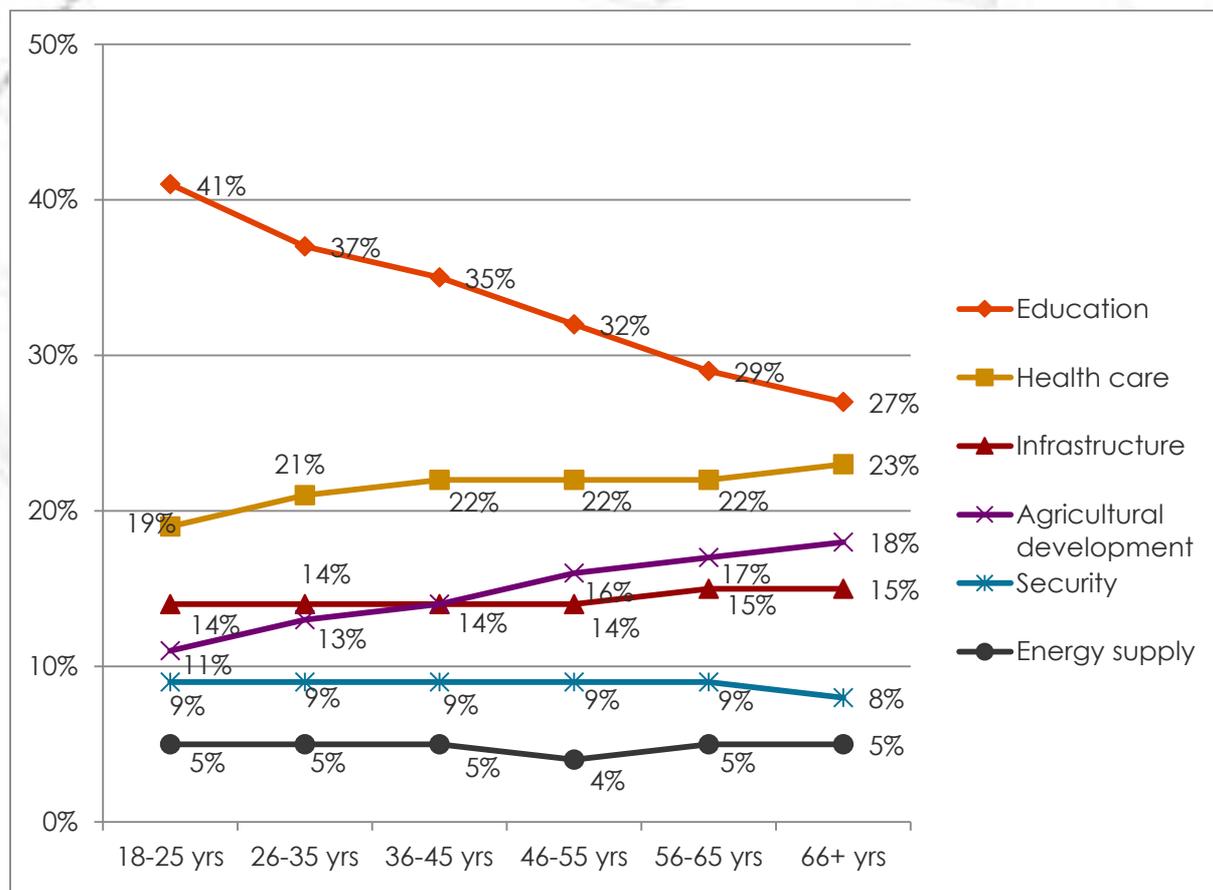
Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (% citing each issue as their first priority)*

Moreover, increased spending on education is far more likely to be cited as a top priority by citizens with secondary (41%) or post-secondary education (44%) than by those without any formal education (28%) or with only primary education (31%) (Figure 14). Health care and agricultural development, on the other hand, decrease in importance as education level rises. Agricultural development ranks in third place among citizens without formal education (21%) but drops to fifth place among those with post-secondary education (8%).

Education remains the top investment priority across all socioeconomic levels, although poorer Africans are slightly less likely to cite this issue (32%) than the wealthiest (39%). The poorest are also less concerned with security (which drops from 13% to 7% across income groups) and more concerned with agricultural development (which increases from 9% to 17%) (Figure 15).
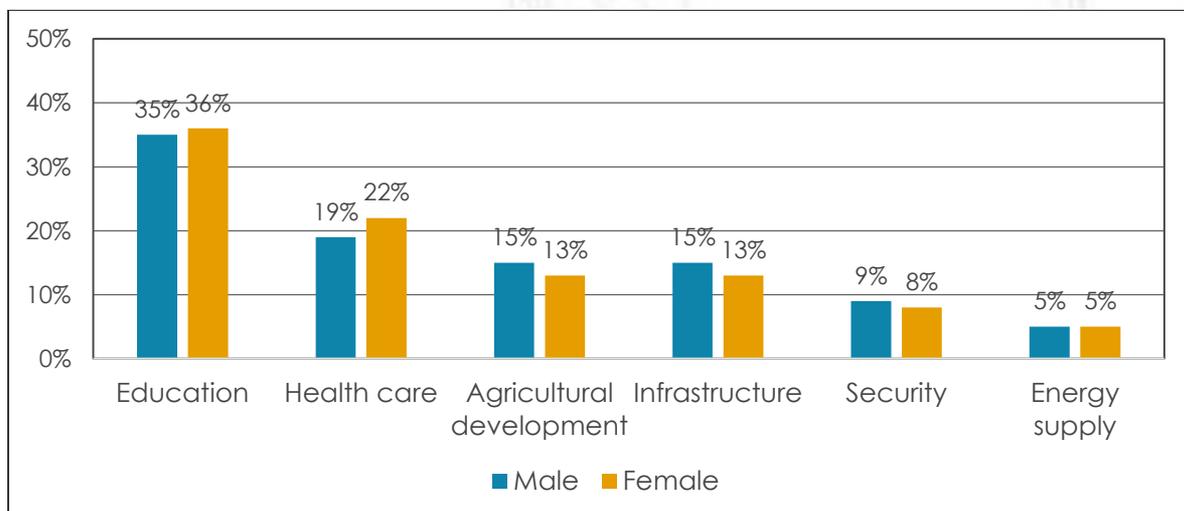
Figure 14: Investment priorities by level of education | 32 countries | 2014/2015
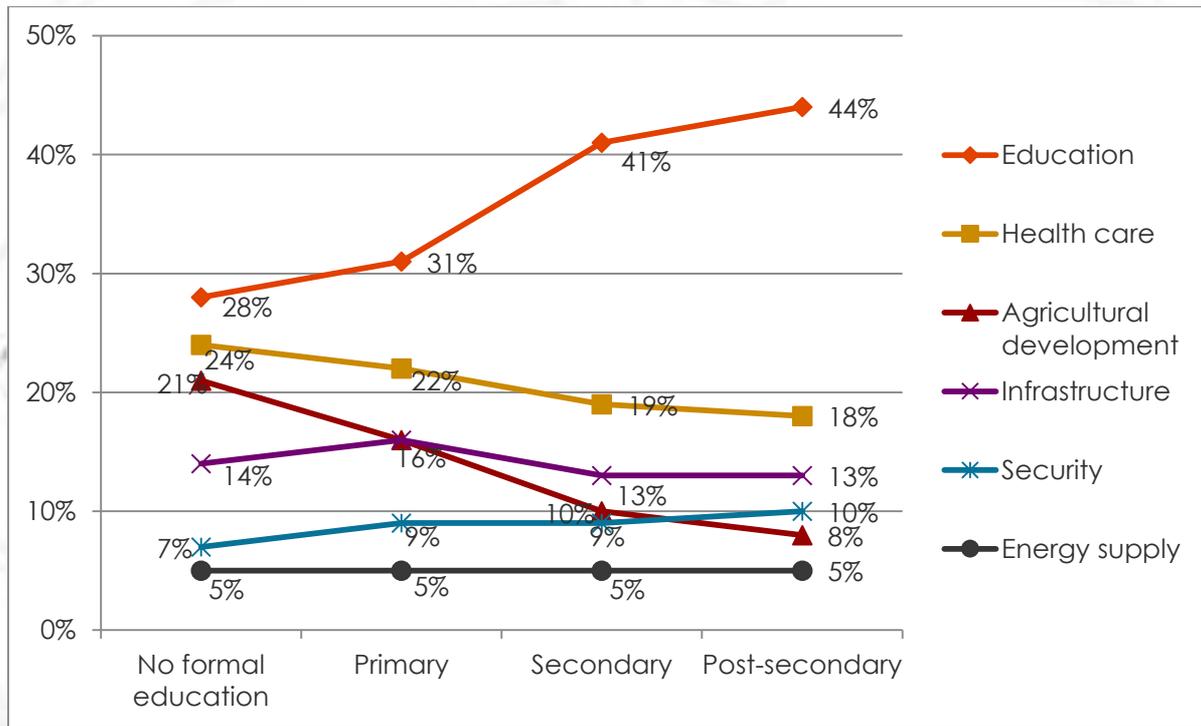
Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (% citing each issue as their first priority)*

Figure 15: Investment priorities by level of lived poverty | 32 countries | 2014/2015
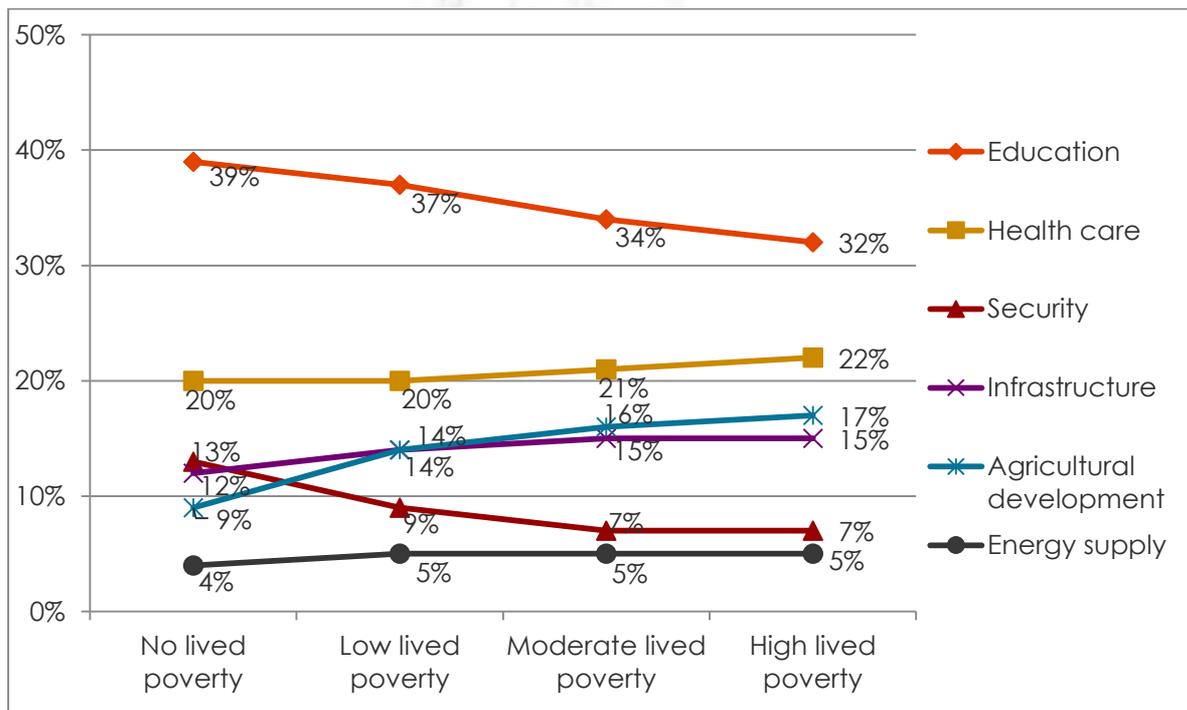
Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (% citing each issue as their first priority)*

Education features as the most important priority for 40% of urban respondents but just 33% of rural respondents (Figure 16). Instead, rural respondents (17%) are almost twice as likely as urban dwellers (9%) to identify agriculture as the top investment priority, and they are also more likely to prioritize infrastructure (16% rural vs. 12% urban).

Figure 16: Investment priorities by urban-rural location | 32 countries | 2014/2015
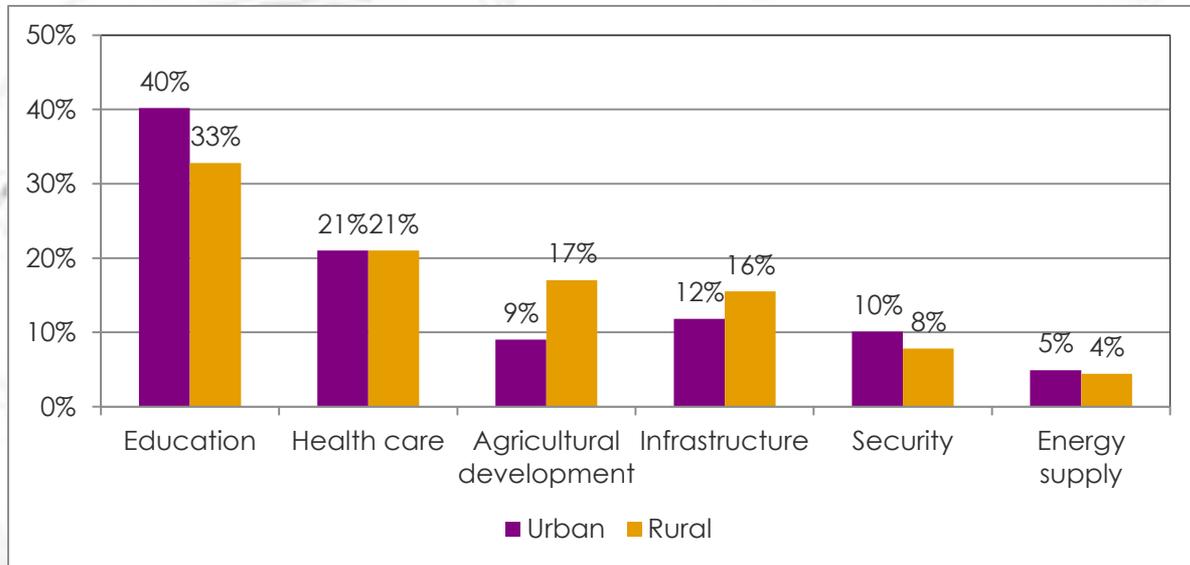
Respondents were asked: If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (% citing each issue as their first priority)

On the aggregate, men and women reveal quite small differences in their investment priorities. The only (barely) significant difference is on health care, which is a slightly higher priority for women (22%) than for men (19%) (Figure 17). However, as on priorities overall and by other demographic attributes, these similarities in aggregate obscure differences at the country level – as illustrated in the example for Tunisia in Figure 18.

Figure 17: Investment priorities by gender | 32 countries | 2014/2015

Respondents were asked: If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (% citing each issue as their first priority)

Figure 18: Investment priorities by gender | Tunisia | 2015
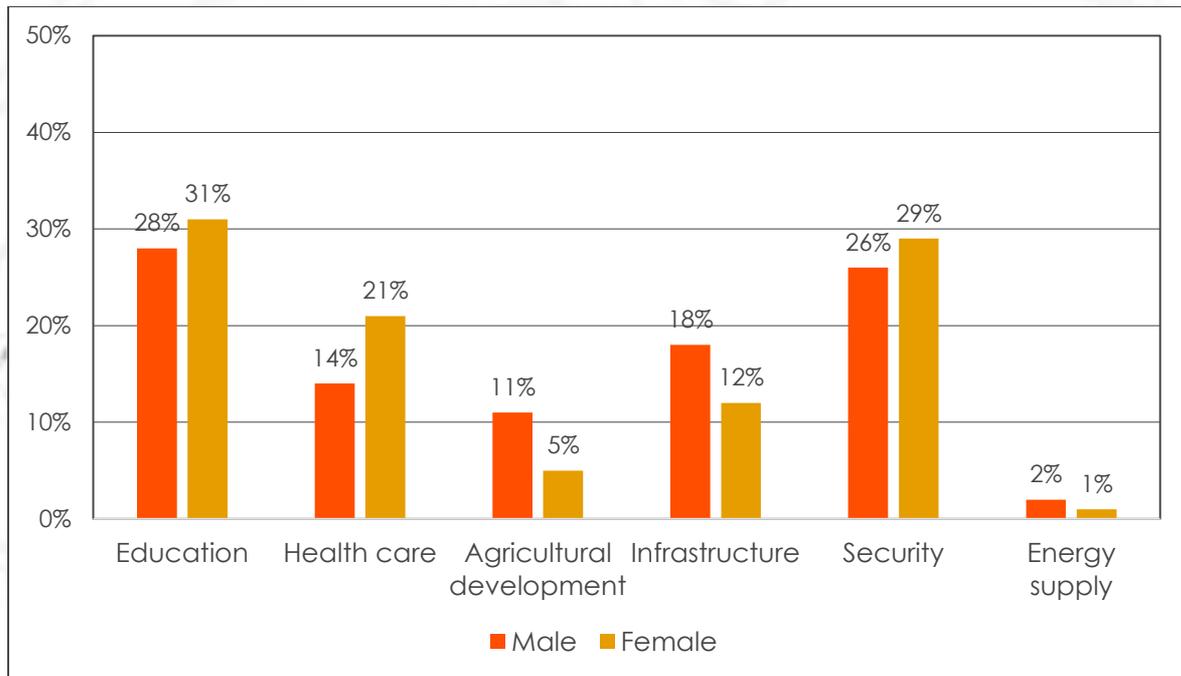
Respondents were asked: *If the government of this country could increase its spending, which of the following areas do you think should be the top priority for additional investment? (% citing each issue as number one priority)*

Conclusion

Based on new data gathered in 2014 and 2015 from across 32 African countries, unemployment and health top the list of problems that Africans want their governments to address. For increased government investment in key policy sectors, citizens' top priorities are education and health care.

Amid the variations in country-level and demographic-group priorities and emphases that policy actors must fully explore, two encouraging features stand out. First, the Africans interviewed express significant agreement on top priorities. Second, almost every problem has a substantial number – even if a small percentage – of citizens who consider it a top priority. Both of these facts can be starting points for progress toward achieving the challenging goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 6 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Months when Round 6 fieldwork was conducted	Previous survey rounds
Algeria	May-June 2015	2013
Benin	May-June 2014	2005, 2008, 2011
Botswana	June-July 2014	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012
Burkina Faso	April-May 2015	2008, 2012
Burundi	September-October 2014	2012
Cameroon	January-February 2015	2013
Cape Verde	November-December 2014	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011
Côte d'Ivoire	August-September 2014	2013
Egypt	June-July 2015	2013
Gabon*	September 2015	N/A
Ghana	May-June 2014	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012
Guinea	March-April 2015	2013
Kenya	November-December 2014	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011
Lesotho	May 2014	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012
Liberia	May 2015	2008, 2012
Madagascar	December 2015-January 2015	2005, 2008, 2013
Malawi	March-April 2014	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012
Mali	December 2014	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013
Mauritius	June-July 2014	2012
Morocco*	November 2015	2013
Mozambique*	June-August 2015	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012
Namibia	August-September 2014	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012
Niger	April 2015	2013
Nigeria	December 2014-January 2015	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013
Sao Tome & Principe*	July-August 2015	N/A
Senegal	November-December 2014	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013
Sierra Leone	May-June 2015	2012
South Africa	August-September 2015	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011
Sudan	June 2015	2013

Country	Months when Round 6 fieldwork was conducted	Previous survey rounds
Swaziland	April 2015	2013
Tanzania	August-November 2014	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012
Togo	October 2014	2012
Tunisia	April-May 2015	2013
Uganda	May 2015	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012
Zambia	October 2014	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013
Zimbabwe	November 2014	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012

Round 6 data from Gabon, Morocco, Mozambique, and São Tomé & Principe were not available at the time of writing but will be available by the end of 2015.

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