

Lived poverty rises in Africa for the first time in a decade

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'Lived poverty' has increased in Africa for the first time in a decade, according to an international study led at the University of Strathclyde.

The Afrobarometer survey found that a decade of steady improvement in the living conditions of the average African person came to a halt between 2016 and 2018.

Lived poverty—measured as the frequency with which people are without basic necessities such as food, [clean water](#), health care, heating fuel and cash income—was more likely to occur in rural areas and less likely in nations which had seen long periods of democratic government and had established infrastructure.

The study identifies commitment to democracy as a key to tackling poverty.

Professor Robert Mattes, of Strathclyde's School of Government & Public Policy, co-founder and senior adviser of Afrobarometer, produced a report on its latest study.

He said: "People who live in countries that have institutionalised, free and fair, multiparty elections and provide a wide matrix of rights and liberties are less likely to experience destitution. People who live in communities where the state has installed key development infrastructure such as paved roads, electricity grids, and piped-[water systems](#) are also less likely to go without basic necessities.

The study conducted interviews with more than 45,000 people in 34 African nations. They were asked how often, if at all, in the past year they had gone without:

- enough food to eat
- enough clean water for home use
- medicines or medical treatment
- enough fuel to cook food
- a cash income.

Responses options offered were: "never"; "just once or twice"; "several times"; "many times" and "always."

More than half of the respondents—53% - had faced shortages of medicine or medical services at least once in the previous year, while just under half had been short of clean water or food (47%). More than three-quarters—79% - faced a lack of access to cash income, the most commonly reported form of deprivation.

The survey found that people rarely experienced deprivation in Mauritius but the average person had gone without several basic necessities several times in the preceding year in Guinea and Gabon. In general, lived poverty was found to be highest in Central and West Africa and lowest in North Africa.

Lived poverty also varied widely within societies, endured far more frequently than those who live in suburbs and cities.

[Afrobarometer](#) is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African people's experiences and evaluations of quality of life, governance, and democracy. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed since 1999.

Provided by University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

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