

Institute for Public Policy Research
Windhoek, Namibia
13 February 2015

News release

Namibia continues to lessen lived poverty

Namibia¹ has experienced a dramatic decline in inequality and poverty over the past decades, according to official statistics from the National Statistics Agency and the National Planning Commission. The Gini coefficient (the measure of income distribution of a nation's residents which shows inequality levels) has decreased from over 7.4 in the 1990s to 6.8 in 2001 and 5.8 in the latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2009-2010). In the last Afrobarometer Lived Poverty Index (2011-2013) Namibia ranked the 9th least affected by lived poverty (0.99) out of 34 countries surveyed. This correlates with the latest World Bank data (2009) showing a low poverty gap (based on per capita consumption estimated from household survey data) in Namibia of 8.8, one of the lowest on the continent. However, Namibia had by far the largest share in the lowest category of "middle class" at 81% (AfdB, 2011 chart 18). Namibia has one of the most vulnerable middle classes.¹

Afrobarometer asked Namibians in the latest survey (2014) about access to food, medical care, cooking fuel, water for drinking and food to eat in the past year. A significant majority of respondents "never" experience shortages. For example, almost four out of five Namibians "never" or "just once or twice" (78%) experience a lack of food but cash income is less available than all other lived poverty items, linking it to unemployment. About one in two (41%) Namibians believe unemployment is the most important problem facing the country.

Key findings

- Over the past year, a majority of respondents reported "never" or "just once or twice" going without water (88%), medicines or medical treatment (88%), fuel to cook (90% more) and cash income (58%) (Figure 1).
- Urban and male respondents were more likely to "never" face food shortage (9% more) and only three regions (Zambezi, Erongo, and Hardap) featured more than half of respondents "never" experiencing a shortage of cash income.
- Kunene, Kavango West, and Ohangwena were the only regions to experience less than half of respondents "never" going without food. These are also historically the poorest regions of Namibia. One in five (21%) of all Namibian respondents were likely to experience food shortages "several times", "many times", or "always".

¹ African Development Bank, 2011. "Middle of the pyramid: Dynamics of the middle class in Africa."

Afrobarometer

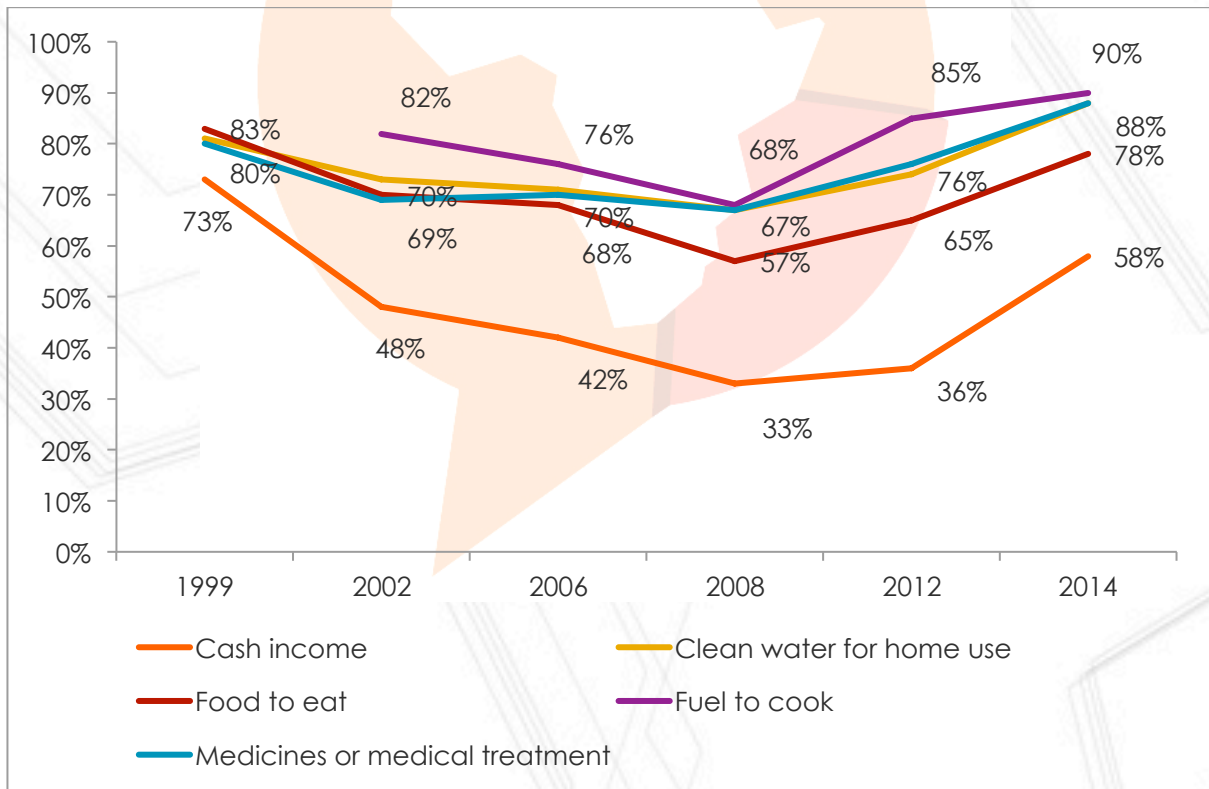
Afrobarometer is an African-led, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Namibia is led by Institute for Public Policy Research and Survey Warehouse interviewed 1,200 adult Namibians in August and September 2014. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Namibia in 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2012.

Charts

Figure 1: Gone without enough | Namibia | 1999-2014

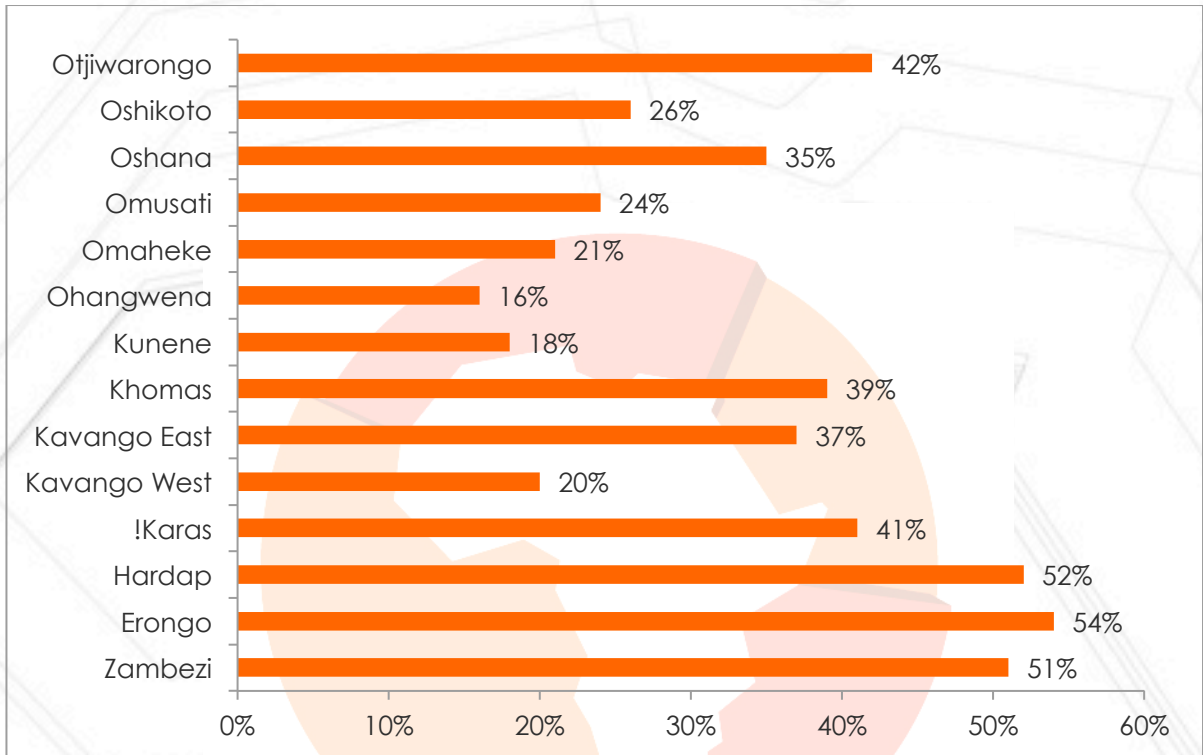
Answer: Never or Just Once or Twice



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough cash income, food to eat, cooking fuel, medicines or medical care, water? Options were Never, Once or Twice, Several Times, Many Times, Always

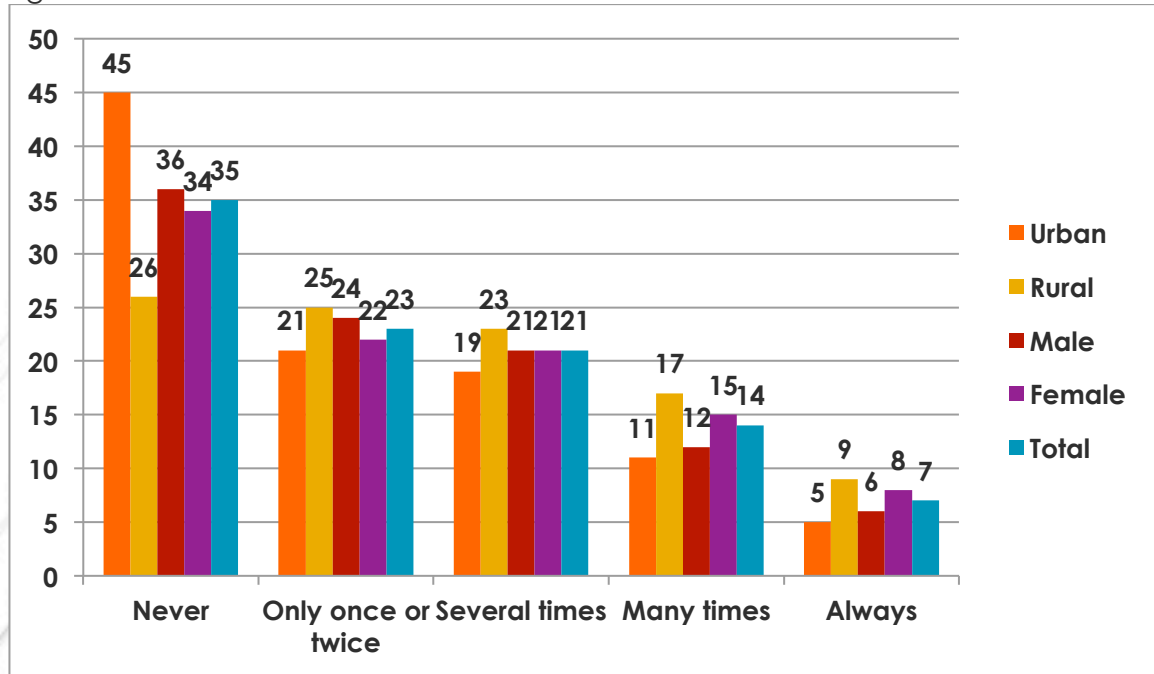
Figure 2: Regional distribution of going without cash income | Namibia | 2014

Answer: Never



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough cash income? Options were Never, Once or Twice, Several Times, Many Times, Always

Figure 3. Cash income 2014



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