

Afrobarometer
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News release

African governments get passing marks on education – if schools are accountable and responsive, Afrobarometer survey finds

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa's education systems were making slow but steady progress in getting kids into school and keeping them beyond the primary grades, a new analysis of Afrobarometer data shows.



Many governments received passing marks on their performance in addressing educational needs, especially if citizens saw their schools as transparent in how they use tax revenues and responsive to reports of teacher misconduct.

Findings from national surveys in 34 African countries between late 2016 and late 2018 are detailed in Afrobarometer's [new Pan-Africa Profile on education](#). The analysis shows that beyond citizens' direct experiences with their schools, democracy matters: People are more likely to be satisfied with the delivery of educational services if transparency and accountability at the school level are embedded in a political system that encourages these qualities.

Key findings

- On average across 34 countries, one in five African adults (20%) have no formal education, 28% attended primary school, 37% attended secondary school, and 15% attended institutions of higher learning.
- Over the past two decades, the proportion of the adult population with no formal education has shown a slow but consistent decrease ([Figure 1](#)), while the share of those with secondary or post-secondary education has risen ([Figure 2](#)). Gains over time are also reflected in much higher rates of secondary and post-secondary education among younger respondents than among their elders ([Figure 3](#)).
 - But countries vary widely in educational attainment. While almost all Gabonese and Mauritians have been to school, about two-thirds of citizens in Niger (68%), Burkina Faso (64%), and Mali (64%) have had no formal education ([Figure 4](#)).
- Nine out of 10 Africans (91%) said that boys and girls have equal opportunities to get an education. But gender gaps in educational attainment persist. Women are more likely than men to lack formal schooling (23% vs. 17%) and less likely to have secondary or post-secondary education (47% vs. 57%). And while 17 countries have eliminated the gender gap in formal education among the youngest cohort, large differences remain in Mali (a 27-percentage-point gap), Niger (23 points), Burkina Faso (17 points), and Benin (13 points).
- On average, a slim majority (54%) of Africans said their governments were doing a good job of meeting educational needs. But assessments varied widely by country, with approval levels ranging from eight out of 10 citizens in eSwatini and Ghana to fewer than two out of 10 in Morocco and Gabon ([Figure 5](#)).

- Urban residents, poor respondents, and more-educated citizens were less satisfied with their government's performance on education.
- Citizens who believe they can access budget information about their schools and can have teachers held accountable are more likely to give government positive performance reviews than those who are less confident of school transparency and accountability (Figure 6). In short, education outcomes matter in performance evaluations, but so do the processes through which education services are delivered.
- Africans who see their country as a well-functioning democracy are significantly more likely to approve of the government's performance on education. The more years a country has been an electoral democracy, the more likely it is that its citizens are satisfied with the delivery of public education services (Figure 7).

Afrobarometer surveys

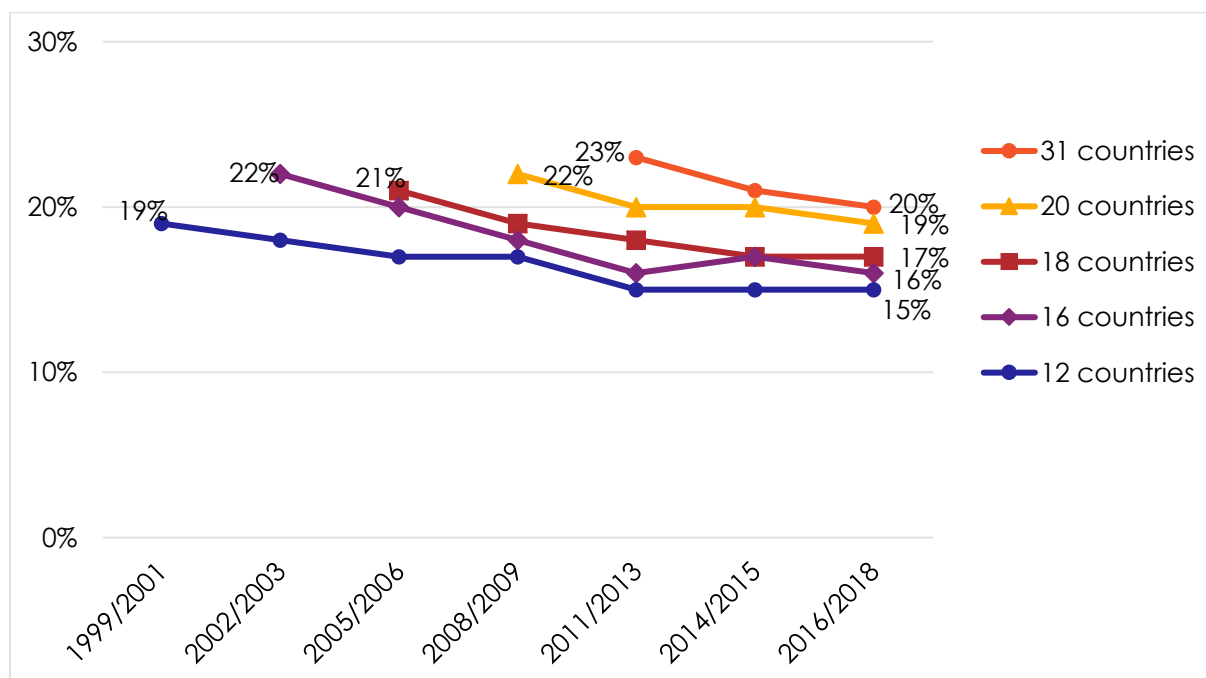
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on Africans' experiences and evaluations of quality of life, governance, and democracy. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed since 1999.

Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples. Sample sizes of 1,200 or 2,400 yield country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-3 or 2 percentage points, respectively, at a 95% confidence level. Round 7 interviews with 45,823 citizens in 34 countries represent the views of more than three-fourths of Africans.

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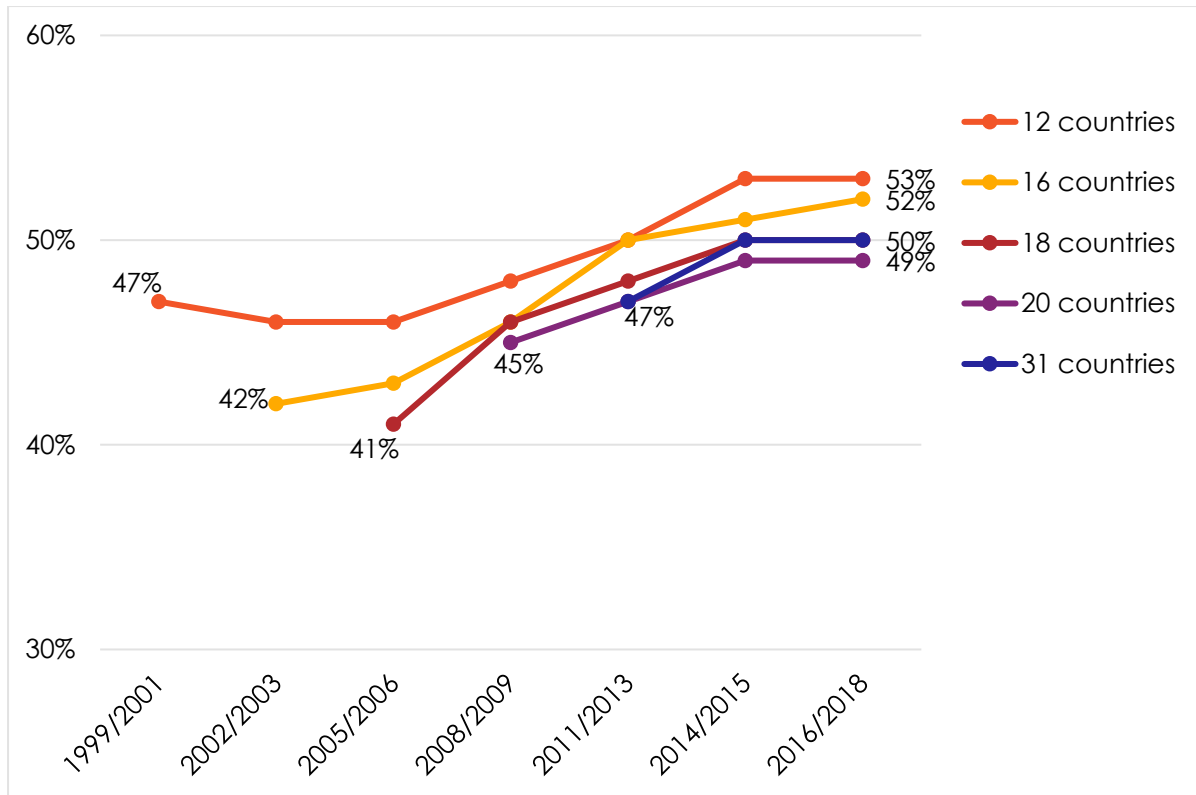
Charts

Figure 1: No formal education | various country samples | 1999-2018



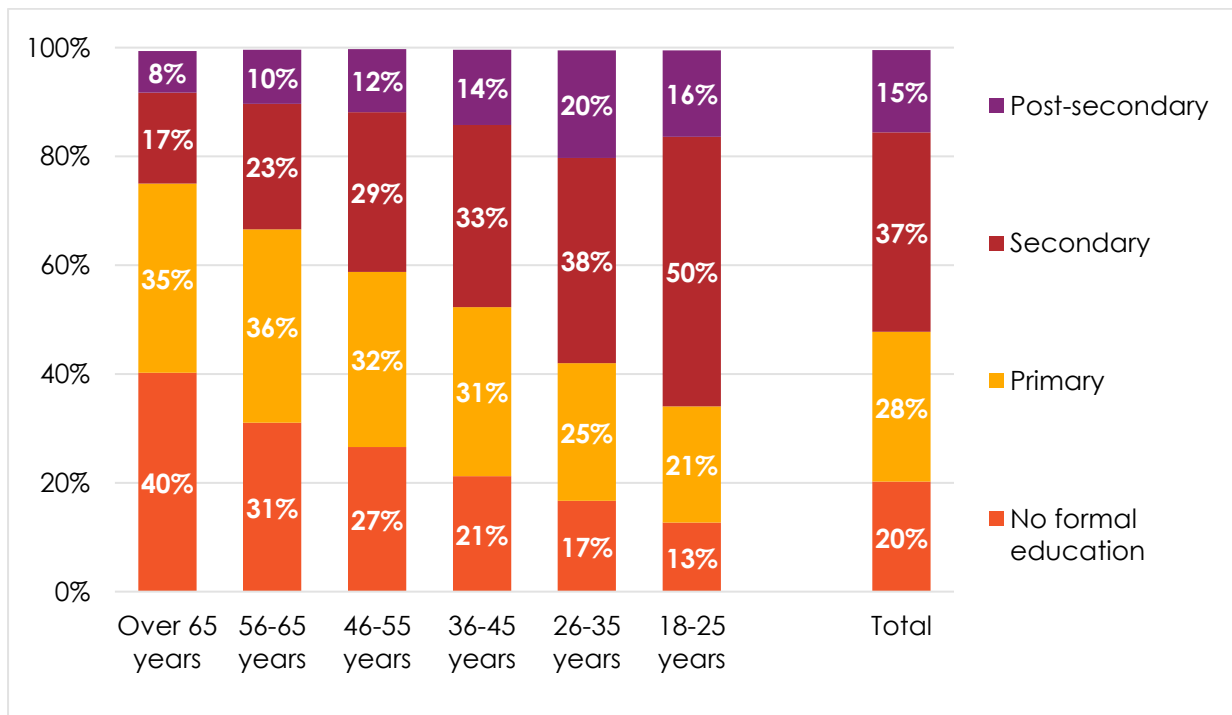
Respondents were asked: What is your highest level of education?

Figure 2: Secondary or post-secondary education | various country samples | 1999-2018



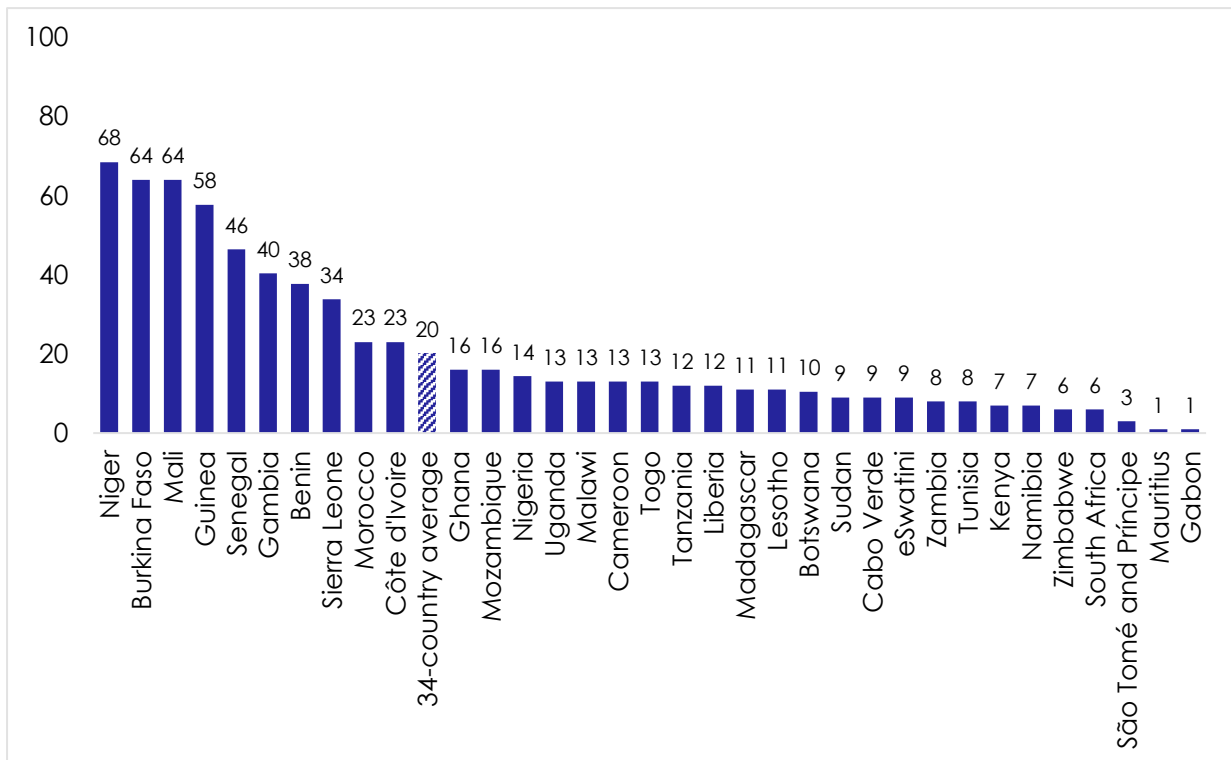
Respondents were asked: What is your highest level of education?

Figure 3: Educational attainment | by age group | 34 countries | 2016/2018



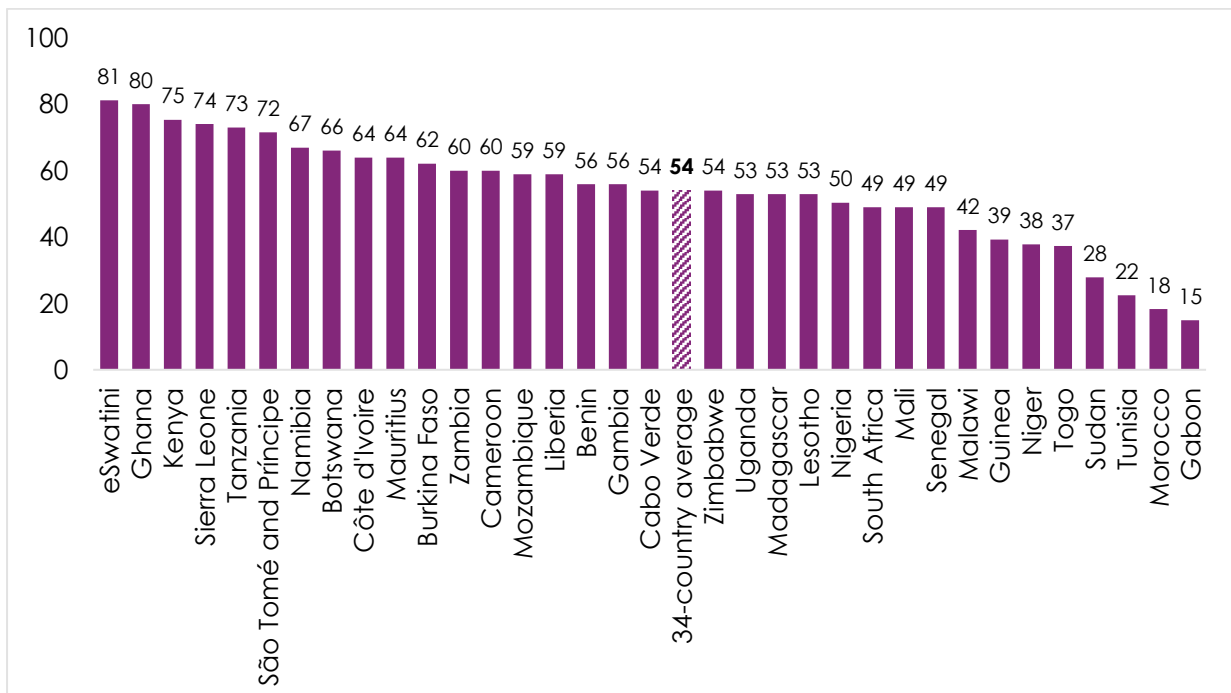
Respondents were asked: What is your highest level of education?

Figure 4: No formal education (%) | 34 countries | 2016/2018



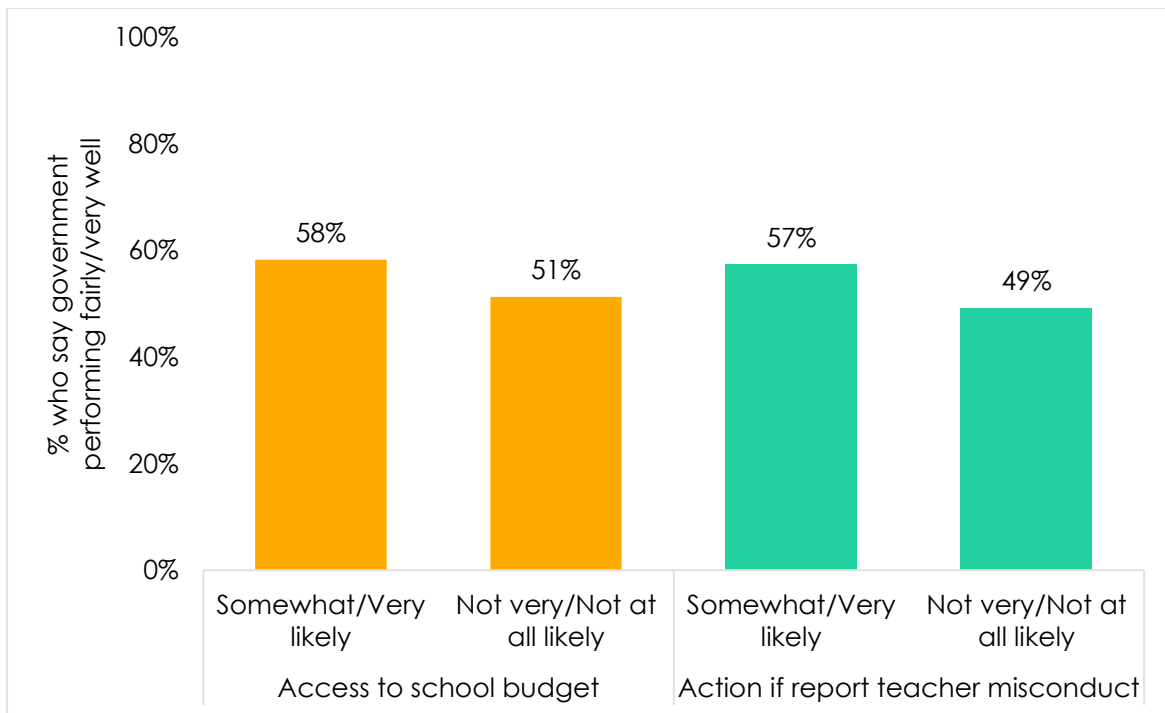
Respondents were asked: What is your highest level of education? (% who have no formal schooling)

Figure 5: Satisfaction with government performance on education (%) | 34 countries | 2016/2018



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: Addressing educational needs? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

Figure 6: Satisfaction with government performance on education | by perceptions of transparency and accountability | 34 countries | 2016/2018



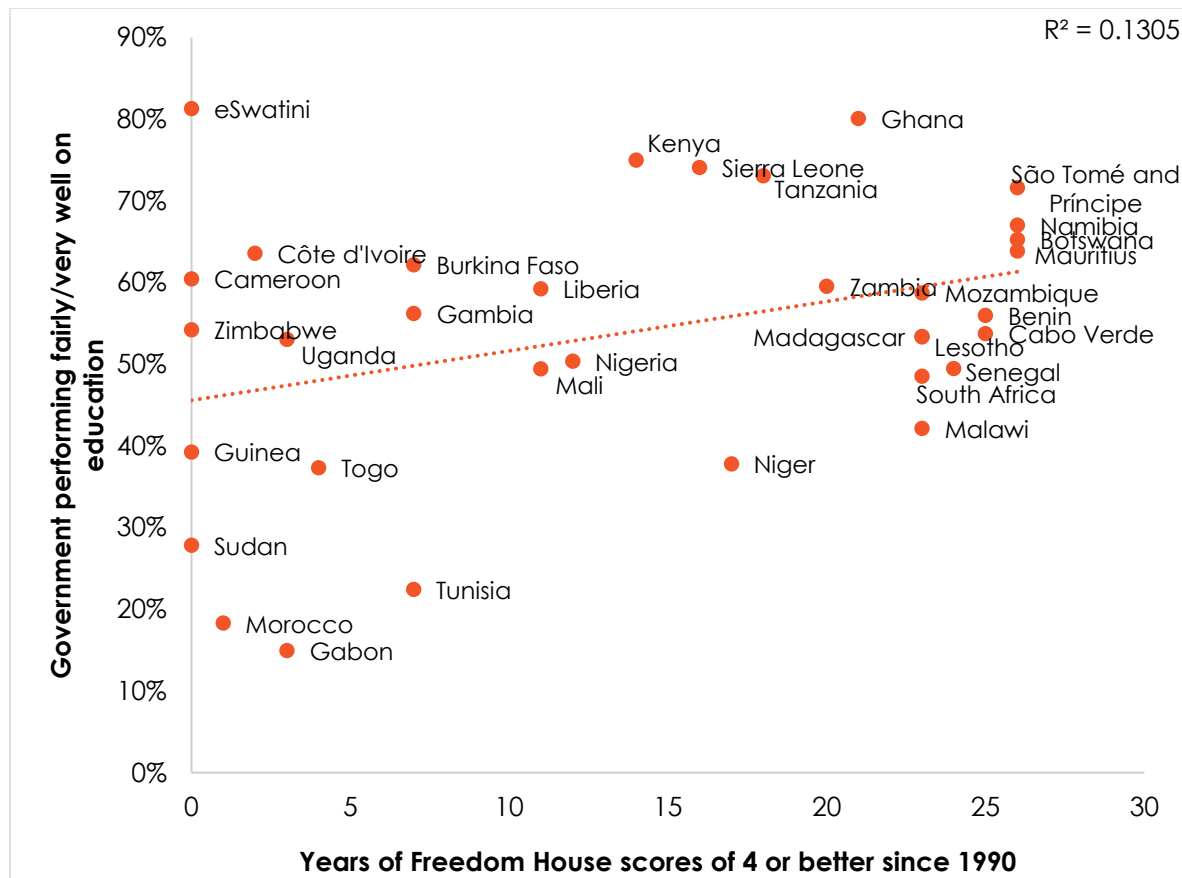
Respondents were asked:

How likely is it that you could get the following information from government or other public institutions, or haven't you heard enough to say: If you went to the local school to find out what the school's budget is and how the funds have been used?

How likely is it that you could get someone to take action if you went to a government office or other public institution to report the following problems, or haven't you heard enough to say: If you went to the local school to report teacher misbehavior such as absenteeism or mistreatment of students?

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Addressing educational needs?

Figure 7: Years as a democracy and assessments of government performance on education | 34 countries | 2016/2018



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