

Accra, Ghana
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News release

Young Africans surpass previous generations, with 66% reaching secondary education, yet youth still grapple with unemployment

Young Africans are forging ahead of their predecessors, with 66% attaining secondary school education, according to a study unveiled on Thursday during a youth-led webinar hosted by Afrobarometer and in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. This achievement, however, stands in stark contrast to the reality that the youth still grapple with unemployment.

Themed "Understanding the youth's perspective: Exploring needs and aspirations," the webinar brought together youth activists to shed light on critical issues concerning young Africans, including unemployment, views on democracy, and political participation.

Presenting insights drawn from Afrobarometer data from 36 African countries surveyed in 2021/2022, Shannon van Wyk-Khosa, Afrobarometer digital portfolio manager, disclosed that while unemployment tops the list of the most important problems that young Africans want their government to address, governments are consistently given low ratings for their efforts in creating jobs. Out of the 36 countries, only two have majorities approving of their governments' performance on job creation – Zambia (72%) and Seychelles (60%). Majorities in other countries say their governments are doing a poor job.

Sharing data on democracy, Wyk-Khosa said that: "compared to elderly citizens, the youth express greater dissatisfaction with democracy, mistrust their elected leaders, and are more open to military intervention in case of abuse of power."

Close to six in 10 Africans under 36 years old (56%) are willing to tolerate military intervention if elected leaders abuse power – 10 percentage points more than among those over 55 years old.

Despite their various challenges, youth show lower rates of political engagement than their elders across a variety of indicators, including voting in national elections, attending community meetings, joining others to raise issues, and contacting their leaders to discuss important problems.

Ayobami Ojebode, director of research systems strengthening and knowledge mobilization at the Mastercard Foundation, emphasised the Foundation's commitment to empowering African youth through informed strategies and initiatives.

"We do not pretend to know what the youth's most important problems are, or their views on the economic conditions of their country or of themselves," Ojebode said in his welcoming remarks. "That is why we have opened up channels that allow us to simply listen to young people. In each of our countries of operation, we have youth advisory groups who work with our country teams."

In line with their shared commitment to offer a platform for African voices to be heard, the webinar is part of the "Exploring youth issues and priorities and strengthening youth capacities across Africa" partnership between Afrobarometer and the Mastercard

Foundation. The partnership supports Afrobarometer in producing and widely disseminating data on the priorities and aspirations of African youth.

Mohammed El-Ouazzani Hassani, a master's programme student in Data and Discourse Studies at the Technical University of Darmstadt, Germany, moderated the youth-led webinar.

Notable quotes

Dedo Doku, DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Leadership for Africa Scholar

"The demographics non-negotiably demand that youth are the most critical stakeholders and key client in any African economic agenda. We must recognise our power, harness our energies through supporting existing mobilisation efforts to ensure suitable governance and democratic processes for a sustainable future."

Farida Bemba Nabourema, executive director of the Togolese Civil League

"In many parts of this continent, young people are left to fend for themselves. The conditions in which they are living are deteriorating by the day. There is growing insecurity, growing inequality, and absence of basic services. The total failure of our governments to be able to provide and deliver on basic services has created an environment of discontent where young people are left to provide for themselves."

Louise Kanza, international development consultant

"Our challenges find their roots in our lack of togetherness and pan-Africanism."

Mandipa Ndlovu, governance researcher and development policy analyst

"The rest of Africa is not immune from the ripple effects of what is happening in the Sahel. The youth need to be tangibly reassured that their leaders are working for them and not against them."

About Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer (AB) is a trusted source of high-quality data and analysis on the experiences, attitudes, and preferences of African citizens. With an unmatched track record of 350,000+ interviews in 42 countries, representing the views of 75% of the African population, AB is leading the charge to bridge the continent's data gap. AB data inform many global indices, such as the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators. The data are also used for country risk analyses and by credit rating and forecasting agencies such as the Economist Intelligence Unit. All AB data sets are publicly available on the [website](#) and may be analysed free of charge using AB's [online data analysis tool](#).

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation is a registered Canadian charity and one of the largest foundations in the world. It works with visionary organizations to advance education and financial inclusion to enable young people in Africa and Indigenous youth in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. Established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company, the Foundation is an independent organization



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separate from the company, with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa. Its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by the Foundation's Board of Directors and leadership.

For more information on the Foundation, please visit www.mastercardfdn.org.

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