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News release

Jobs are top priority for South African youth, new Afrobarometer survey indicates

In a list of concerns that includes crime, electricity, and corruption, unemployment is the most important problem that young South Africans want their government to address, a recent Afrobarometer survey shows.

While the country's youth are more educated than middle-aged and older citizens, they are also more likely to be unemployed.

Similar to their elders, youth are overwhelmingly critical of the government's efforts on job creation, crime, electricity, and corruption.

Survey findings also indicate that young South Africans are not taking full advantage of political and civic avenues to make their voices and priorities heard.

Key findings

- Unemployment is the most important problem that South African youth want their government to address, cited by 54% of 18- to 35-year-old respondents as one of their top three priorities (Figure 1).
- Youth are more educated than their elders. More than nine out of 10 young citizens (94%) have secondary or post-secondary schooling (Figure 2).
- But young South Africans are also more likely to be unemployed: 47% of youth say they are looking for a job, compared to 35% of the middle-aged and 10% of older citizens (Figure 3).
- Only about one in 10 young people give the government a passing grade on its efforts to create jobs (11%), reduce crime (10%), provide electricity (12%), and fight corruption (10%) (Figure 4).
- Excluding respondents who were too young to vote at the time, only 51% of young respondents say they voted in the most recent national election, in 2019, compared to 65% of middle-aged and 77% of older citizens. Almost half (47%) of youth say they did not vote (Figure 5).
- Young South Africans are less likely to say they attended a community meeting during the previous year (40%, vs. 50%-58% of other age groups) or joined others to raise an issue (37%, vs. 40%-55% of older citizens) (Figure 6).
 - They are also less likely to report having contacted a local government councillor (33%, vs. 45% of their elders) or a political party official (15%, vs. 18%-23% among older respondents) during the previous year.
 - In contrast, they were no less likely than their elders to participate in a demonstration or protest (16%) or to contact a traditional leader (17%) or a member of Parliament (7%).

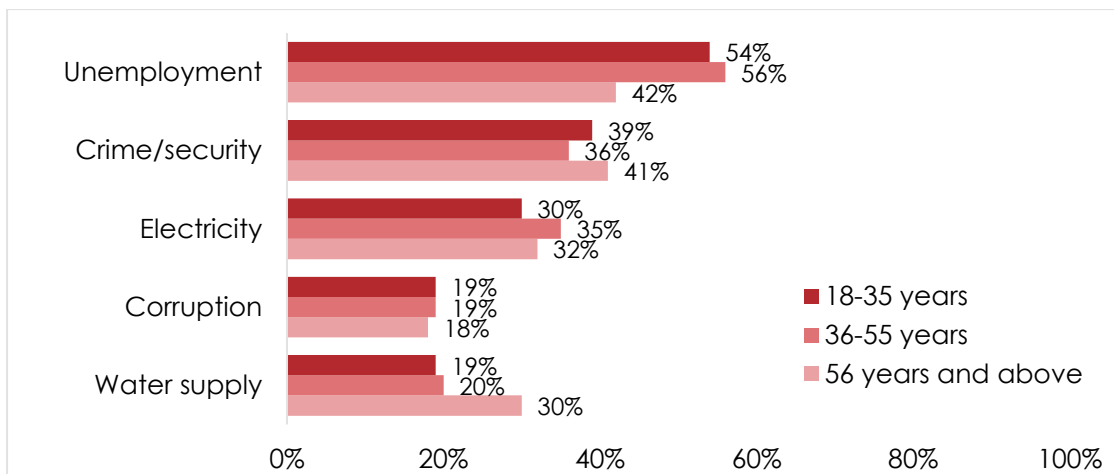
Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in South Africa, led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,582 adult South Africans in November-December 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

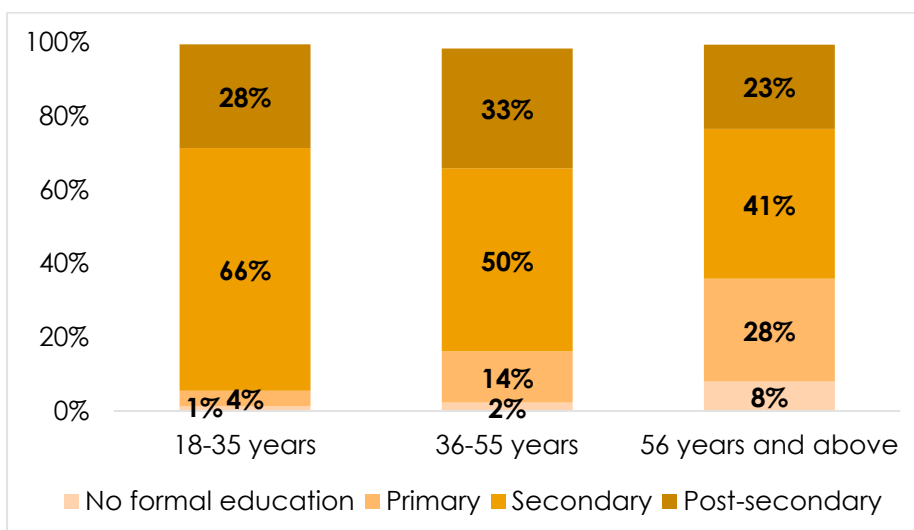
Charts

Figure 1: Most important problems | by age group | South Africa | 2022



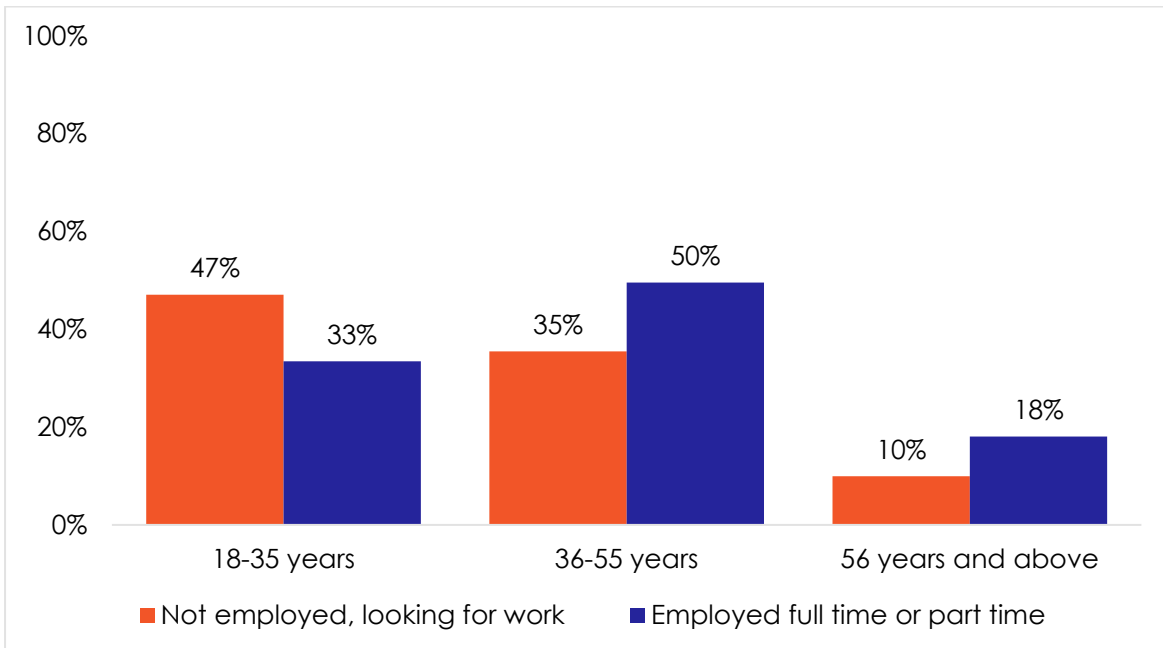
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three answers per respondent were recorded. The figure shows the % of respondents who cited each problem among their three priorities.)

Figure 2: Education level | by age group | South Africa | 2022



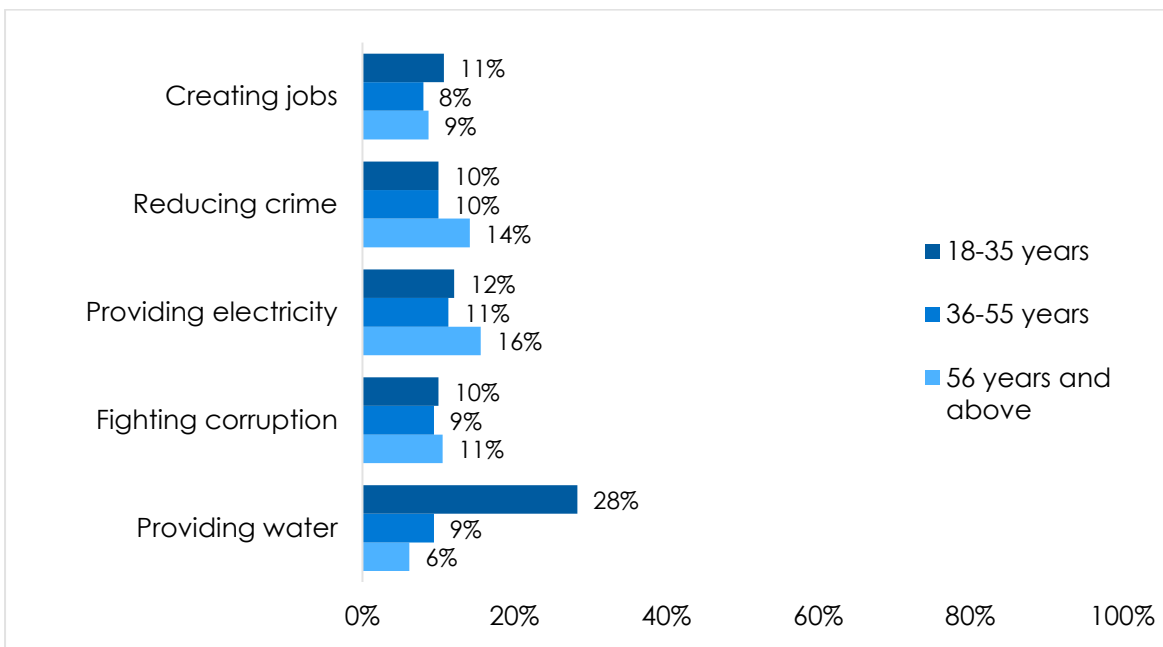
Respondents were asked: What is your highest level of education?

Figure 3: Employment status | by age group | South Africa | 2022



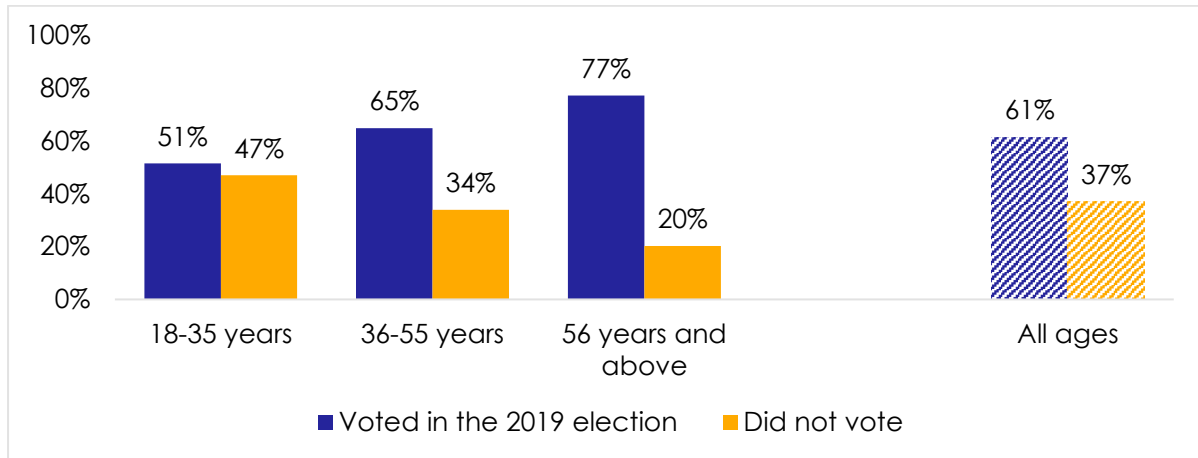
Respondents were asked: Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is it full-time or parttime? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job? (% who say "no, but looking")

Figure 4: Government performance on youth priorities | by age group | South Africa | 2022



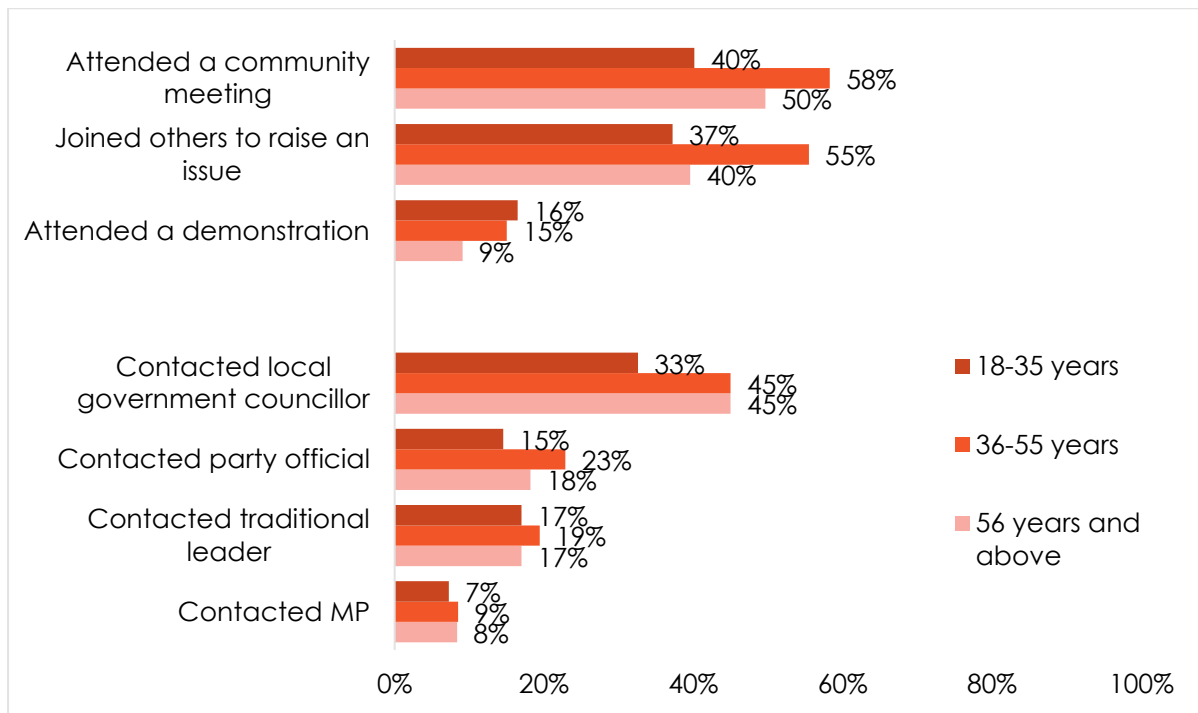
Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

Figure 5: Self-reported voting in the 2019 election | by age group | South Africa | 2022



Respondents were asked: *In the last national election, held in 2019, did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (% who say they voted) (Respondents who were too young to vote in 2019 are excluded.)*

Figure 6: Participation in civic and political activities | by age group | South Africa | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a community meeting? Got together with others to raise an issue? Participated in a demonstration or protest march? (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "often")*
During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views? (% who say "only once," "a few times," or "often")

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