

Angolan youth's discontent marked by concern about health, jobs, food and water insecurity

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Summary

Angola's population is strikingly young: Three-fourths (75%) of its 34 million people are under the age of 30, and only 3% are above age 65 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2016).

Does the government prioritise the needs of young people?

Angola ranks 166th out of 181 countries in the Global Youth Development Index, lagging behind its Southern African neighbours in its efforts to promote youth education, employment, health, equality and inclusion, peace and security, and political and civic participation (Commonwealth, 2020; Business Weekly, 2021).

Angolan youth face particular challenges in a struggling economy with high unemployment, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Rodrigues, 2022). A severe drought in 2022 worsened food insecurity and living conditions, adding to the list of obstacles that impede youth development (United Nations Population Fund, 2023).

The Angolan government has stated its commitment to creating employment and training opportunities for young people, in line with the National Youth Plan's vision to include the youth demographic in the economic, political, social, economic, and cultural development of the country (Ver Angola, 2023; African Network of Youth Policy Experts, 2017). In a move that affirmed the importance of youth voices, the Ministry of Youth and Sports launched a messaging service that allows youth to make their voices heard regarding the challenges that concern them (United Nations Population Fund, 2020). Most recently, the National Assembly approved a resolution for the country's ratification of the Declaration on the Development and Empowerment of Youth in the Southern African Development Community, with a particular focus on young women, young people with disabilities, and rural youth (Angop, 2024).

The Afrobarometer Round 9 survey in Angola, conducted in 2022, provides an on-the-ground look at the situation of the country's young people. Survey findings show that Angolan youth have more education than their elders but are also more likely to be unemployed. Health, unemployment, food insecurity, and water supply top the list of the most important problems that young Angolans want their government to address.

Fewer than four in 10 youth approve of the way the president and members of Parliament (MPs) have performed their jobs. Though powerful in number, Angola's youth are less likely than their elders to participate in some change-making political and civic activities, including voting.

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 Angola, led by Oviliongwa – Estudos de Opinião Pública, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Angolans between 9 February and 8 March 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. A previous survey was conducted in Angola in 2019.

Key findings

- Health, unemployment, food shortages, and water supply are the most important problems that Angolan youth (aged 18-35 years) want their government to address.
- On average, Angolan youth have more education than their elders. More than six in 10 youth (63%) have secondary or post-secondary schooling, compared to 51%, 43%, and 27% of the progressively older cohorts.
- But youth are also more likely to be unemployed: Two-thirds (67%) of young Angolans say they are looking for a job, compared to 33%-52% of older respondents.
- More than half (52%) of youth describe their personal living conditions as “fairly bad” or “very bad.”
- Only one in 10 young people give the government a passing grade on its efforts to create jobs (10%) and improve the living standards of the poor (11%).
- Only around three in 10 young respondents approve of the job performance of President João Lourenço (33%) and their member of Parliament (28%).
- Young Angolans are less likely than their elders to vote in elections, contact traditional leaders, and attend community meetings.

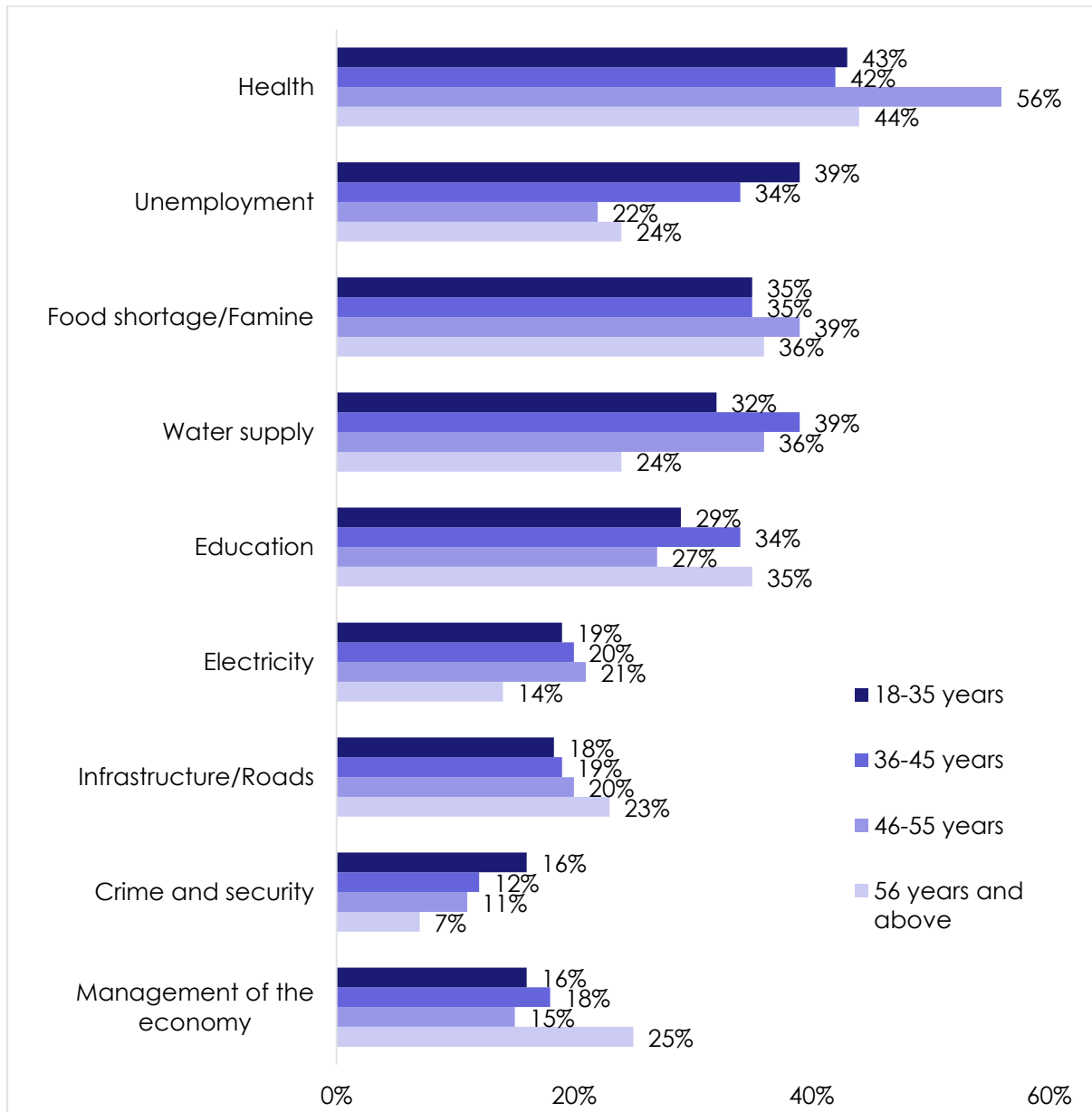
Most important problems

When asked what they consider the most important problems that their government should address, health tops the list of concerns for youth (aged 18-35 years), cited by 43% of young respondents as one of their top three priorities, followed by unemployment (39%), food shortage/famine (35%), and water supply (32%) (Figure 1).

Young respondents are more likely to cite unemployment as an urgent priority than their elders (34% of 36- to 45-year-olds and 22%-24% of older respondents). Though crime/security ranks only eighth on the list, youth are more likely to mention it as a top concern than older cohorts (16% vs. 7%-12%).

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Figure 1: Most important problems | by age group | Angola | 2022



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per respondent. Figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem as one of up to three priorities.)*

The status of youth: More educated, less employed

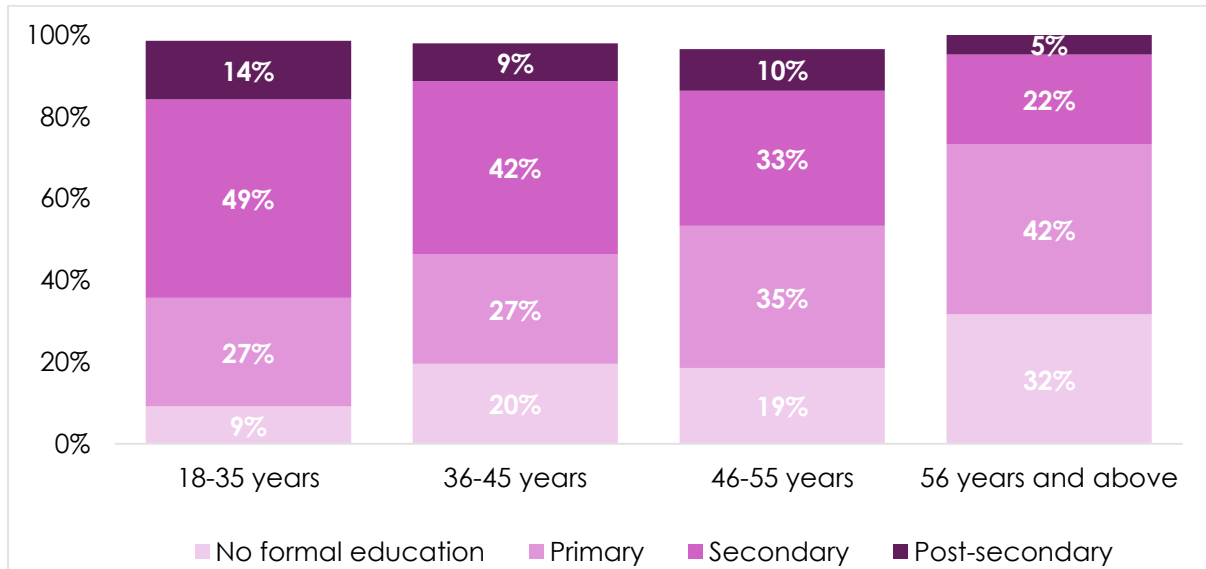
Young citizens are more likely than their elders to have an education, but they are less likely to have a job.

More than six in 10 of youth (63% of those aged 18-35 years) have secondary or post-secondary schooling, compared to about half (51%) of those aged 36-45 years, 43% of those aged 46-55 years, and 27% in the over-55 age group (Figure 2). Youth are also less likely than the older groups to lack formal education altogether (9% vs. 19%-32%).

Even though they are more likely than their elders to be educated, young people are also more likely to be looking for cash-income jobs.

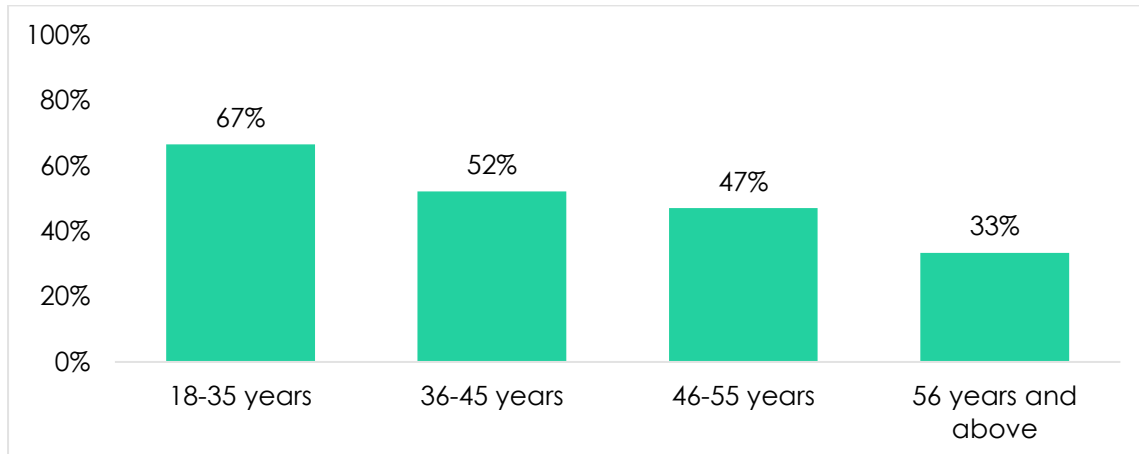
Across the age brackets, two-thirds (67%) of youth are unemployed and looking for work, compared to 33%-52% of older respondents (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Education level | by age group | Angola | 2022



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

Figure 3: Not employed and looking for a job | by age group | Angola | 2022

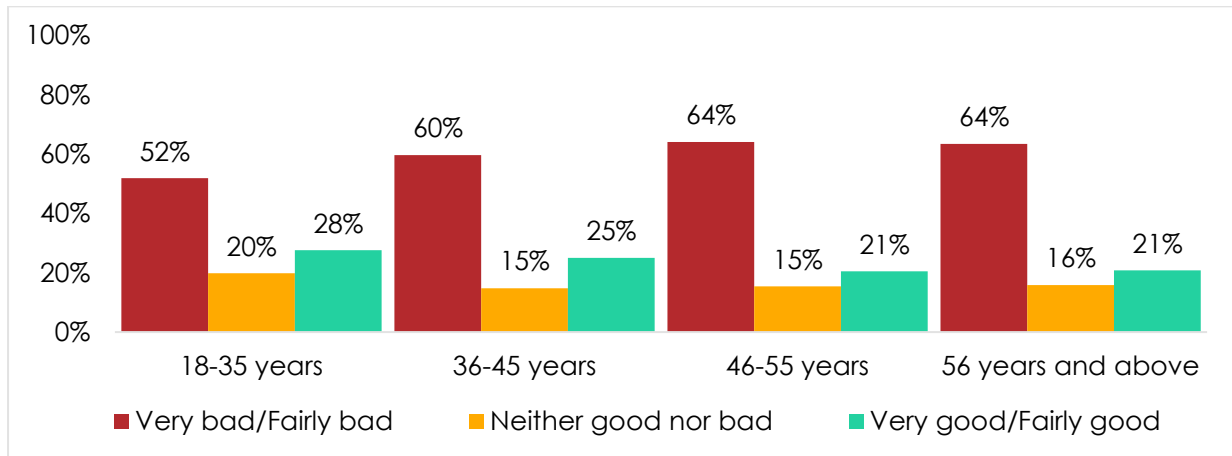


Respondents were asked: Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is it full time or part time? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job? (% who say "no, but looking")

Young citizens are less than enthusiastic about their personal living conditions. More than half (52%) of youth describe their living conditions as "very bad" or "fairly bad," while only 28% say they are good (Figure 4). But they are significantly less negative in their assessments than their elders (60%-64% "fairly" or "very" bad).

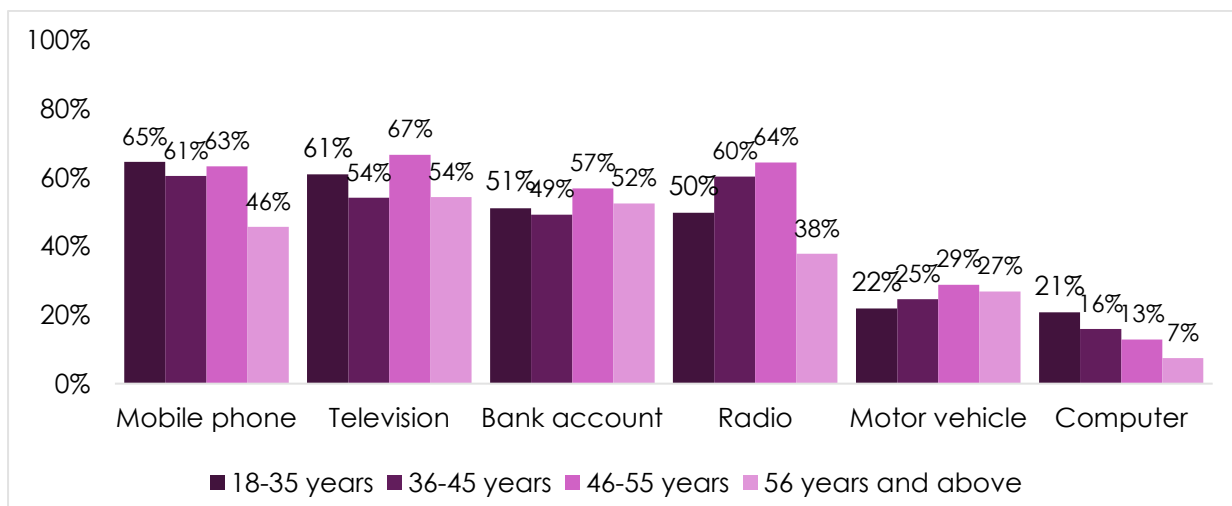
When it comes to asset ownership, about two-thirds (65%) of young Angolans own a mobile phone – not very different from the middle age ranges (Figure 5). While the youth are more likely than their elders to own a computer (21% vs. 7%-16%), they are less likely to claim personal ownership of a motor vehicle (22% vs. 25%-29%) – an asset that might be owned instead by the head of their household. They are about as likely as their elders to own a bank account (51% vs. 49%-57%).

Figure 4: Personal living conditions | by age group | Angola | 2022



Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?*

Figure 5: Asset ownership | by age group | Angola | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Which of these things do you personally own?*

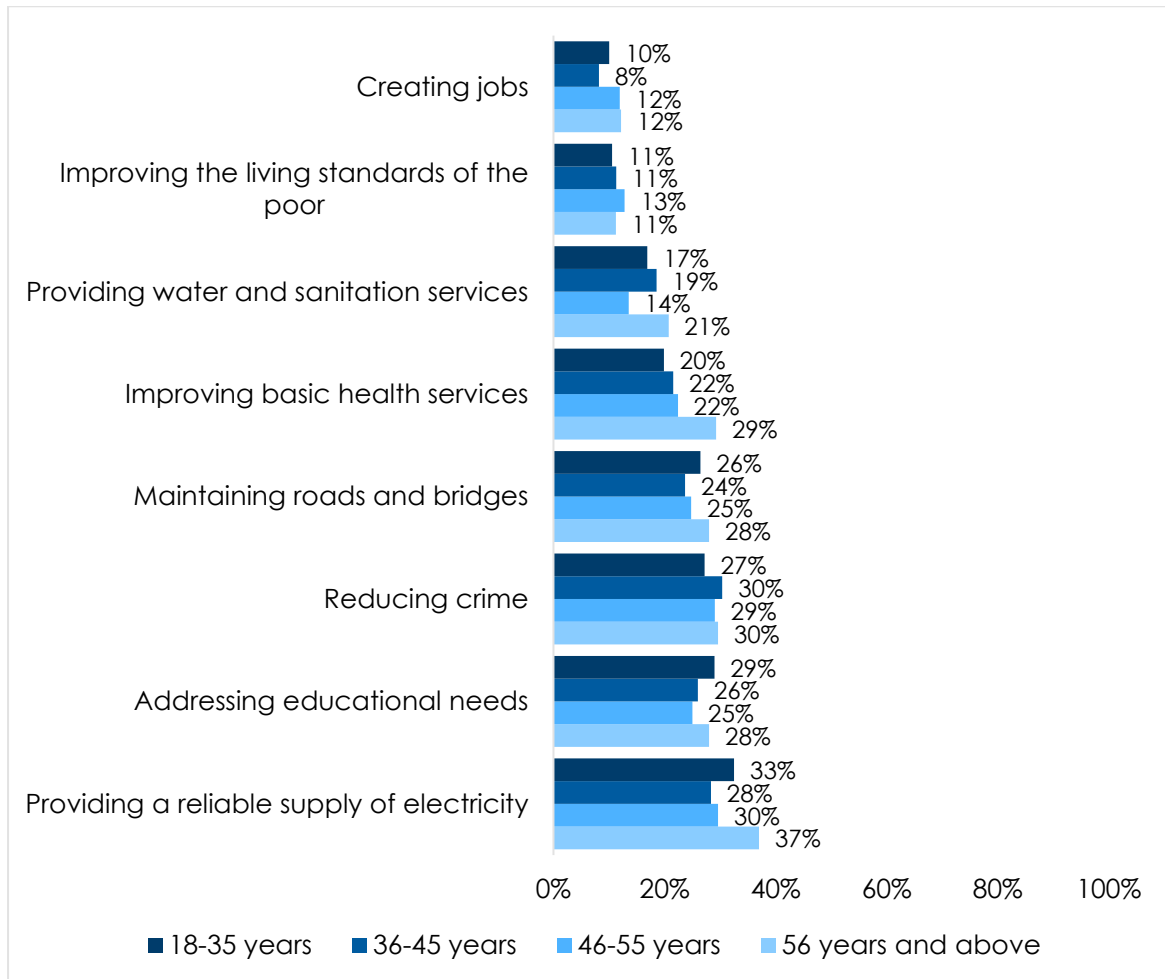
Is the government meeting the needs of Angola's youth?

Only small minorities of Angolans say the government is doing a good job on their top priorities (Figure 6). Differing only modestly from their elders, one in 10 young respondents say the government is performing “fairly well” or “very well” on creating jobs (10%) and improving the living standards of the poor (11%), and roughly one in five approve of government performance on providing water and sanitation services (17%) and improving basic health services (20%).

Young Angolans give the government slightly better marks on maintaining roads and bridges (26% approval), reducing crime (27%), addressing educational needs (29%), and providing a reliable supply of electricity (33%).

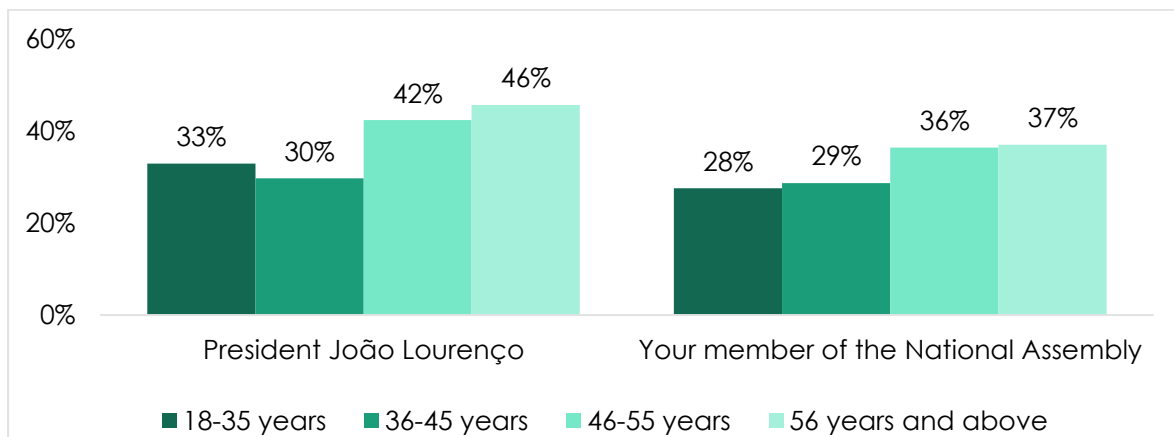
In line with their negative assessments of the government's performance, only one-third of youth (33% of those aged 18-35 years) “approve” or “strongly” approve of the performance of President João Lourenço (Figure 7). Their views are even more unfavourable on the performance of members of the National Assembly (28% approve). In both assessments younger Angolans are more critical than the over-45 age groups.

Figure 6: Government performance on youth priorities | by age group
 | Angola | 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 7: Performance of elected leaders | by age group | Angola | 2022



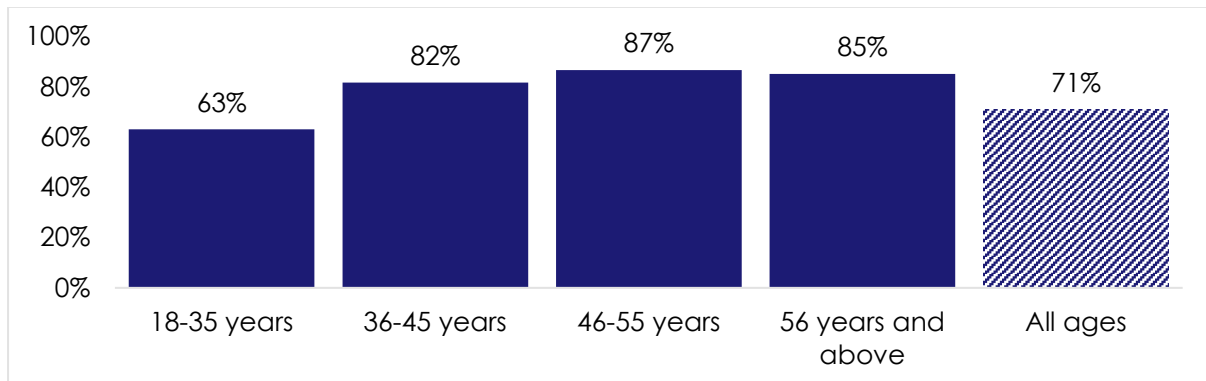
Respondents were asked: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (% who "approve" or "strongly approve")

Political and civic engagement by the youth

In a democracy, dissatisfied citizens have a variety of outlets to express their views, ranging from community meetings and interaction with elected officials to national elections. Survey findings suggest that young Angolans have room to expand their influence through political and civic engagement.

Around the world, young people are generally less likely than their elders to vote in elections (Barrett, 2018), and Afrobarometer findings confirm this pattern in Angola. Excluding respondents who were too young to vote at the time, only 63% of 18- to 35-year-olds say they voted in the national election in 2017, compared to 82% of 36- to 45-year-olds, 87% of 46- to 55-year-olds, and 85% of those over age 55 (Figure 8).

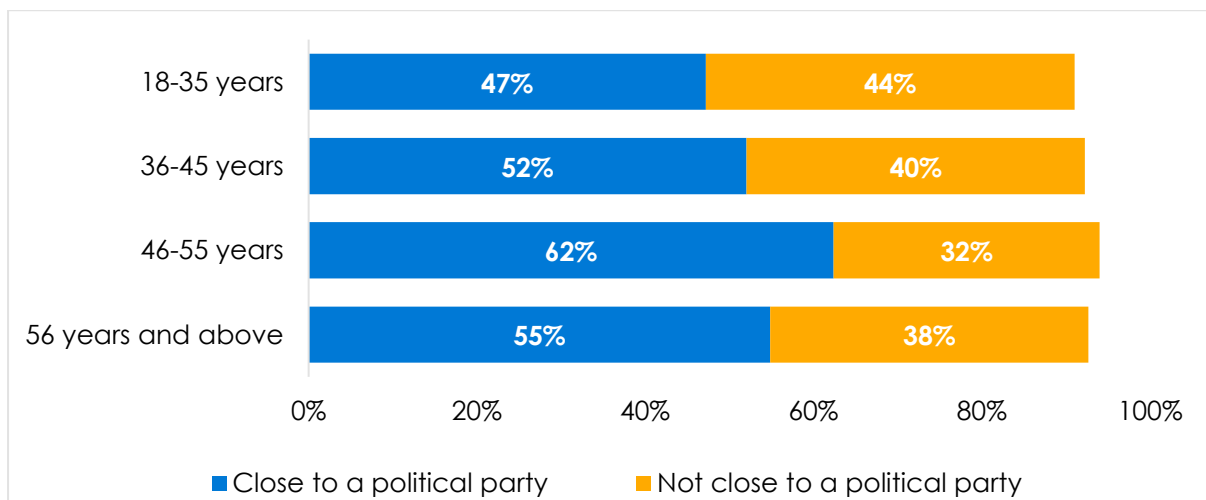
Figure 8: Self-reported voting in the 2017 election | by age group | Angola | 2022



Respondents were asked: In the last national election, held in 2017, 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 2017 are excluded.)

Similarly, young people in Angola are less likely than their elders to identify with a political party (Figure 9). Fewer than half (47%) of young respondents say they “feel close” to a party, compared to 52%-62% of older respondents.

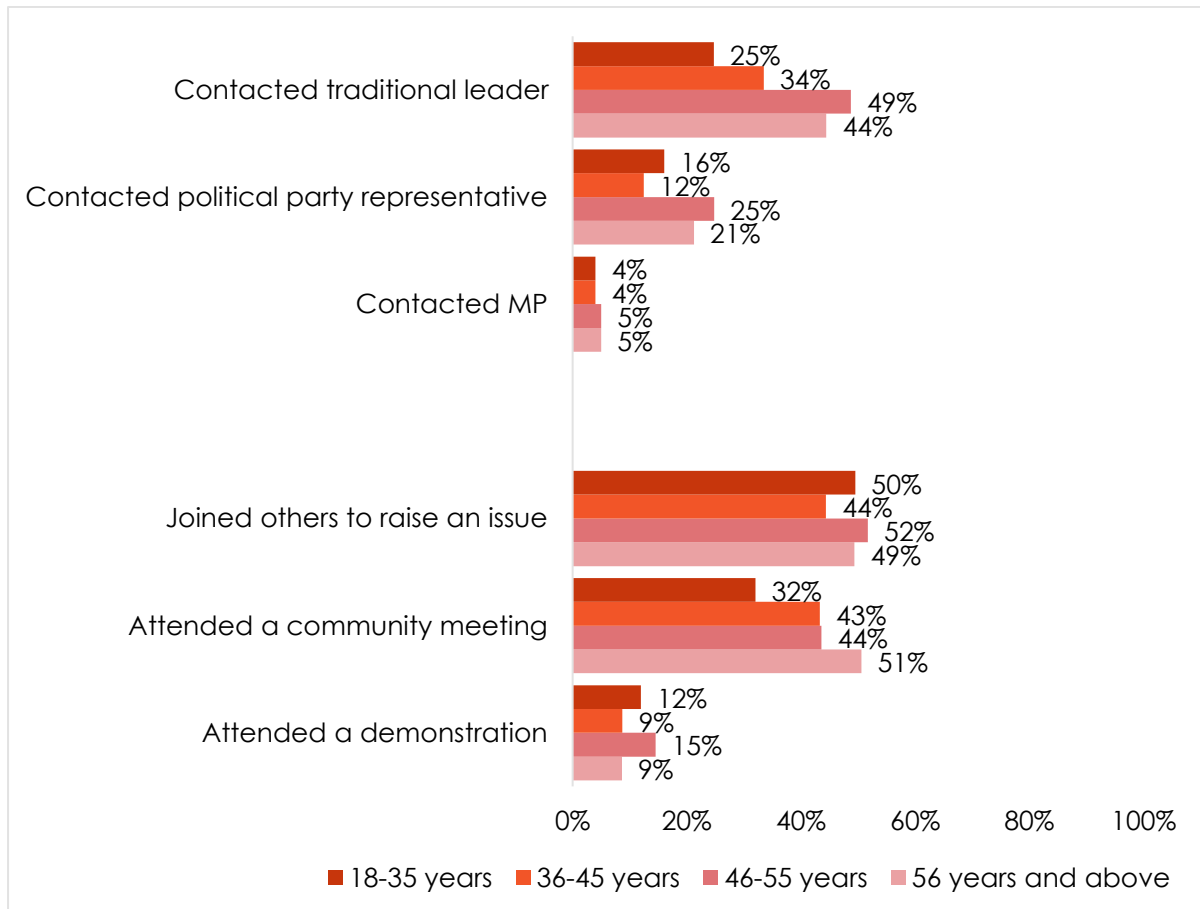
Figure 9: Political party affiliation | by age group | Angola | 2022



Respondents were asked: Do you feel close to any particular political party?

The pattern is more mixed when it comes to some other forms of political and civic engagement (Figure 10). Young Angolans are less likely than their elders to report having attended a community meeting (32% vs. 43%-51%) or contacted a traditional leader (25% vs. 34%-49%) during the previous year. But they are more likely than 36- to 45-year-olds to have contacted a political party representative (16% vs. 12%), joined others to raise an issue (50% vs. 44%), and participated in a demonstration or protest (12% vs. 9%). Only 4% of youth say they contacted a member of Parliament during the past year, about the same rate as among the older groups.

Figure 10: Participation in civic and political activities | by age group | Angola | 2022



Respondents were asked:

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")
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")

Conclusion

Young Angolans rank health, unemployment and food and water insecurity as the top priorities needing urgent government action, and they are dissatisfied with their government's failure to address these issues. Given their perceived failure to respond to key challenges confronting the youth demographic, elected leaders face less-than-stellar approval ratings from their young constituents.

Low levels of youth civic engagement and political participation suggest that there is room for young people to increase their involvement in formal political processes, such as voting in elections, as well as in more informal modes of engagement, such as attending community meetings and contacting political representatives.

By the same token, political and civil-society leaders interested in mending the disconnect between young citizens and democratic processes may need strategies to create spaces and opportunities for engagement with young people.

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