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# Tanzanian youth cite health, water, economy as priority problems government should address

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 810 | Constantine George Simba and Derick Msafiri**

## Summary

More than one-third of Tanzanians are youth aged 15-35 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022a), a vast resource as well as a major challenge for the country's development. Fully integrating young citizens in economic, social, and political life is the promise of the future, but barriers abound, ranging from widespread poverty to limited educational and employment opportunities (Hairy, 2023; UNDP, 2023; International Labour Organization, 2022)

Among the 80% of youth who are economically active, 87% are employed while 13% are looking for work, according to the 2020/21 Integrated Labour Force Survey (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022b).

Despite their large numbers, young people are under-represented in political processes: Only 19% of Tanzania's members of Parliament are aged 40 or below (Fussi, 2023).

The government's efforts to empower the youth include the National Youth Development Policy, launched in 2007, which aims to increase opportunities for employment and encourage participation in economic and political life. The National Strategy for Youth Involvement in Agriculture (2016-2021) emphasises youth access to land, credit, and market information, and youth are among priority targets for a local government interest-free loan programme. A new strategy called the Building Better Tomorrow – Youth Initiatives for Agribusiness (BBT-YIA) aims to train and coach youth-led agribusinesses.

The Afrobarometer Round 9 survey, conducted in 2022, sheds light on how the youth of Tanzania perceive the country's political and economic landscape. Survey findings show that while Tanzanian youth are more educated than their elders, they are also more likely to be unemployed.

A majority of young Tanzanians think their country is moving in the right direction, but many see their national economy and personal living conditions as bad and doubt that things will improve in the near future. Health, water supply, and management of the economy are at the top of the list of problems that young citizens want their government to address.

Tanzania's youth are also less likely than their elders to participate in change-making political and civic activities, including voting.

## Afrobarometer surveys

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

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 2,400 Tanzanian adults in September-October 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2021.

## Key findings

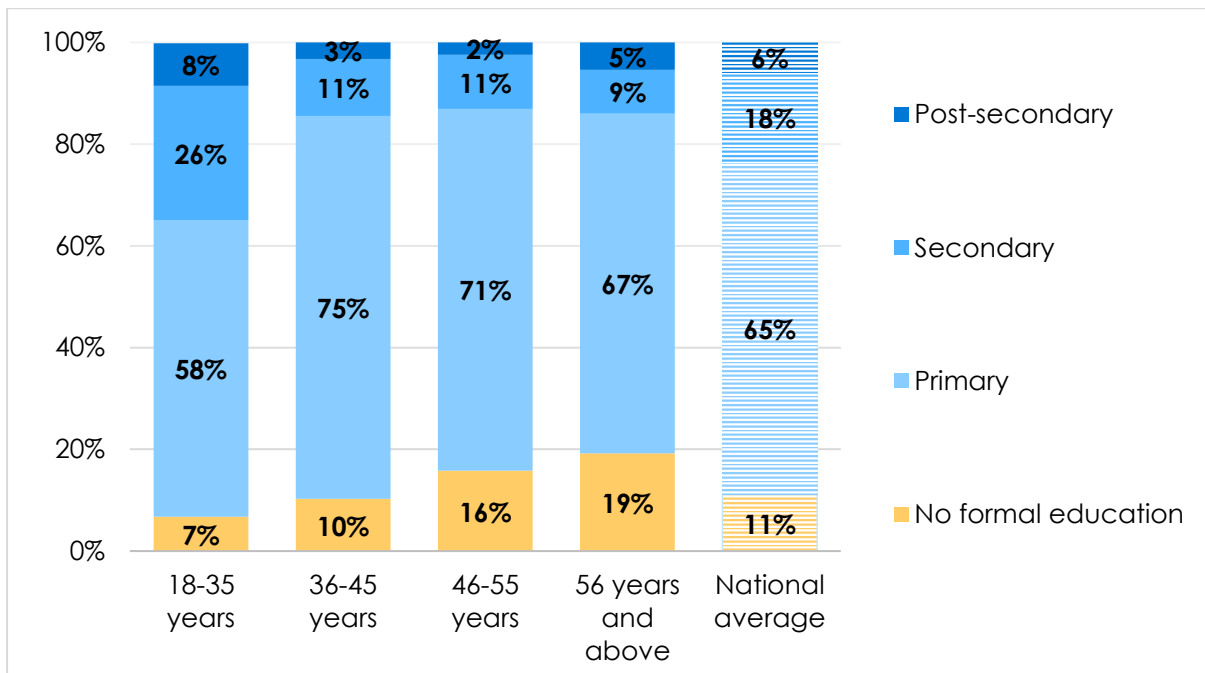
- About one-third (34%) of Tanzanian youth have secondary or post-secondary education, outpacing previous generations.
- But young citizens are also more likely than their elders to be unemployed: 24% say they don't have a job and are looking for work.
- Three-fourths (76%) of young Tanzanians say they own a mobile phone, 20% a bank account, 11% a motor vehicle, and 6% a computer.
- Health ranks at the top of problems that Tanzanian youth say their government should address, followed by water supply and management of the economy. Unemployment ranks only sixth among youth priorities.
- But a majority of young respondents also commend the government's efforts on these priority issues, saying it is performing "fairly well" or "very well" on improving basic health services (73%), providing water and sanitation services (64%), and managing the economy (60%).
- While more than six in 10 youth (62%) say their country is going in the "right direction," fewer than half offer favourable assessments of the nation's economy (35%) and their personal living conditions (33%). And only 37% think things will improve during the coming year. Still, young respondents are somewhat more positive in their assessments than their elders.
- Tanzanian youth are less likely than their elders to engage in political and civic activities such as voting in elections, attending community meetings, joining with others to raise an issue, and contacting elected officials.

## Education, employment status, and asset ownership

Tanzanian youth have more formal education than their elders. One-third (34%) of young citizens (aged 18-35) have secondary or post-secondary education, in contrast to 13%-14% among the older age groups (Figure 1). The percentage of respondents without formal education increases with age, ranging from 7% of youth to 19% of those aged 56 years and above.

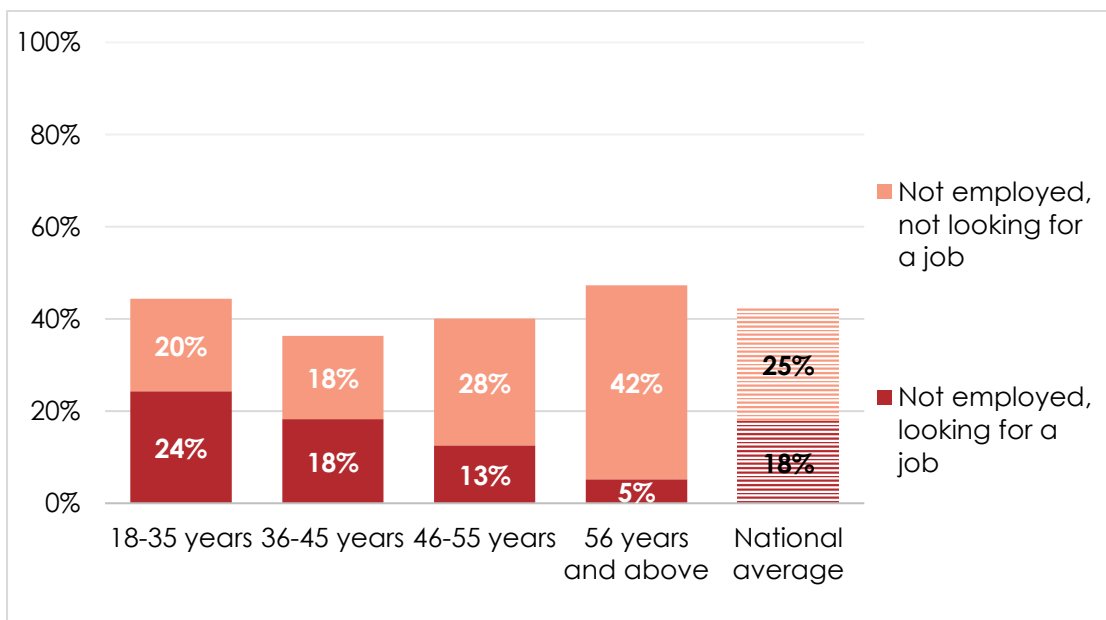
Even though young people are more educated than adults, they face a higher likelihood of unemployment. One-fourth (24%) of youth say they are not employed and are seeking employment, compared to 18% of 36- to 45-year-olds and 13% of 46- to 55-year-olds (Figure 2). In addition, 20% of young respondents say they are not employed and not looking for work.

**Figure 1: Education level** | by age group | Tanzania | 2022



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

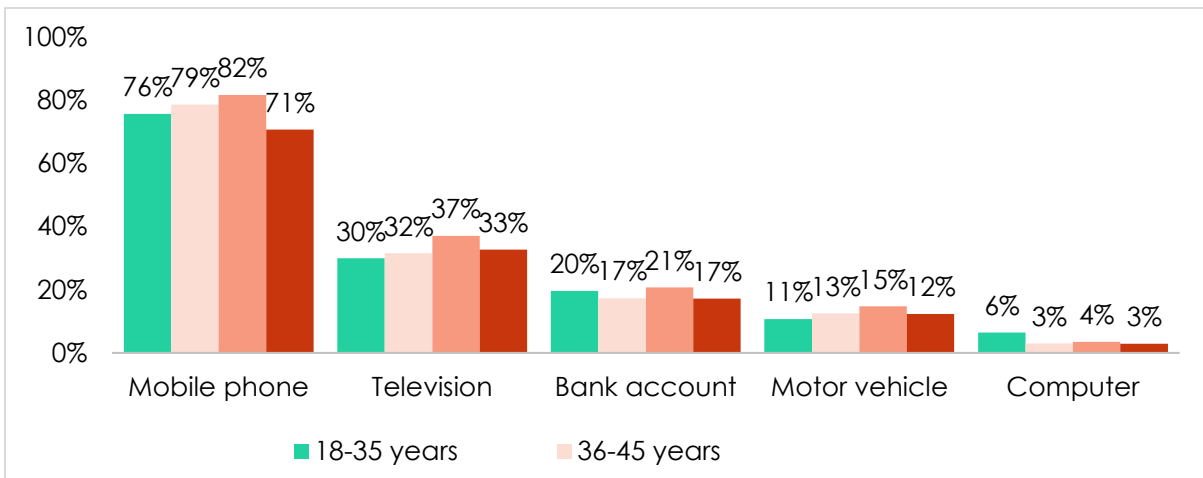
**Figure 2: Unemployment rate** | by age group | Tanzania | 2022



**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?

In terms of asset ownership, Tanzanian youth don't differ dramatically from their elders (Figure 3). Three-fourths (76%) say they own a mobile phone, slightly fewer than in the 46-55 age group (82%). Three in 10 (30%) report personally owning a television, 20% a bank account, 11% a motor vehicle, and 6% a computer.

**Figure 3: Asset ownership** | by age group | Tanzania | 2022

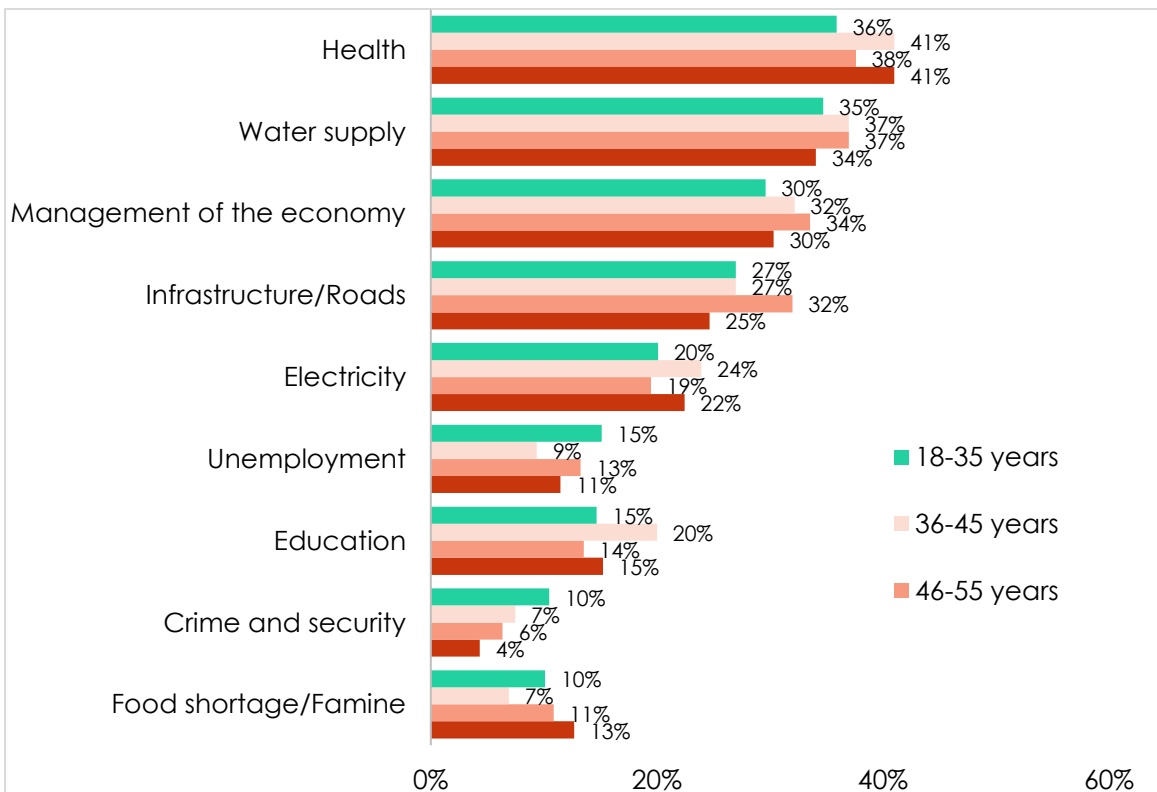


**Respondents were asked:** Which of these things do you personally own?

**Priorities for action**

Asked what they consider the most important problems that their government should address, young Tanzanians are most likely to cite health (36%), water supply (35%), and management of the economy (30%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Most important problems** | by age group | Tanzania | 2022



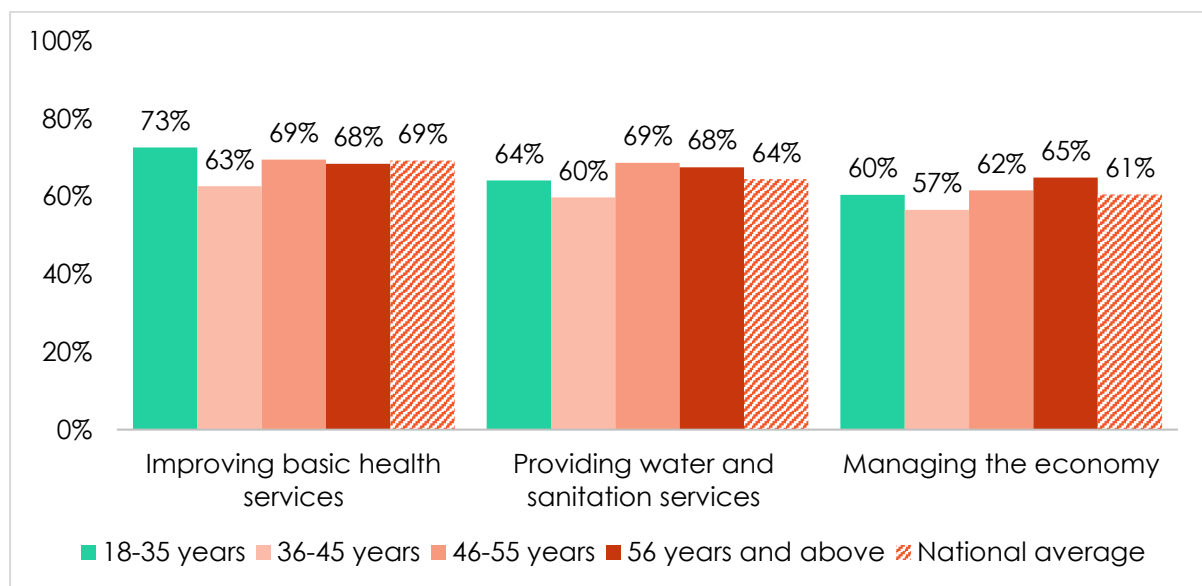
**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Up to three responses per person; figure shows % of respondents who cite each problem among their three priorities.)

Infrastructure/roads (27%) and electricity (20%) rank fourth and fifth among youth priorities. In contrast to youth in many African countries (Sanny, van Wyk-Khosa, & Asunka, 2023), unemployment comes in at just No. 6, cited by 15% of young respondents.

### Evaluation of government performance

On their top priorities for government action, a majority of youth – like their elders – rate their government’s performance as “fairly” or “very” good. (Figure 5). Almost three-quarters (73%) of young respondents think the government is doing a good job of improving basic health services, and more than six in 10 approve of government efforts on providing water and sanitation services (64%) and managing the economy (60%).

**Figure 5: Approval of government performance on health, water supply, and managing the economy | by age group | Tanzania | 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")

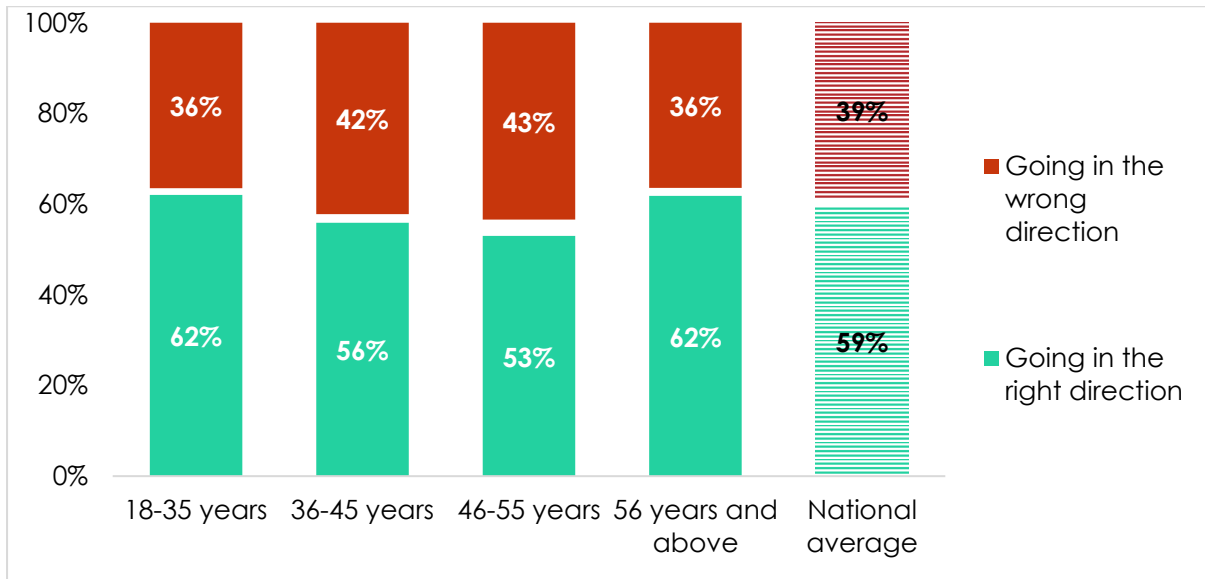
### Views on country's direction and economic situation

Young Tanzanians also offer a fairly positive outlook on the direction of their country: 62% say Tanzania is heading in the "right direction," while only 36% see it as taking the wrong path (Figure 6). Their assessments match those offered by the over-55 cohort and are somewhat more positive than those of middle-aged citizens.

Despite their appreciation of Tanzania's overall direction, half (50%) of youth describe the country's economic situation as "fairly bad" or "very bad," while only 35% think it is good and 14% say it is neither good nor bad. Their assessments are somewhat less negative than those of older cohorts (54%-60% fairly/very bad) (Figure 7).

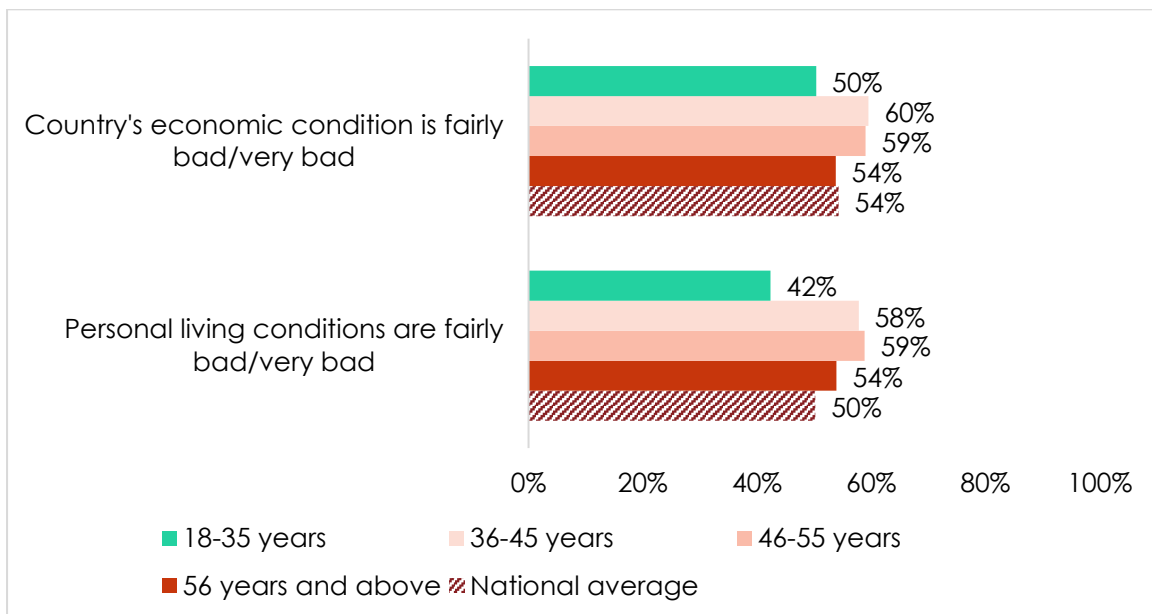
Young citizens' views on their personal living conditions are also mixed: 42% describe them as "fairly bad" or "very bad," 33% as fairly/very good, and 24% as neither. Again, youth are more positive in their assessments than older cohorts (54%-59% fairly/very bad).

**Figure 6: Country's direction** | by age group | Tanzania | 2022



**Respondents were asked:** Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?

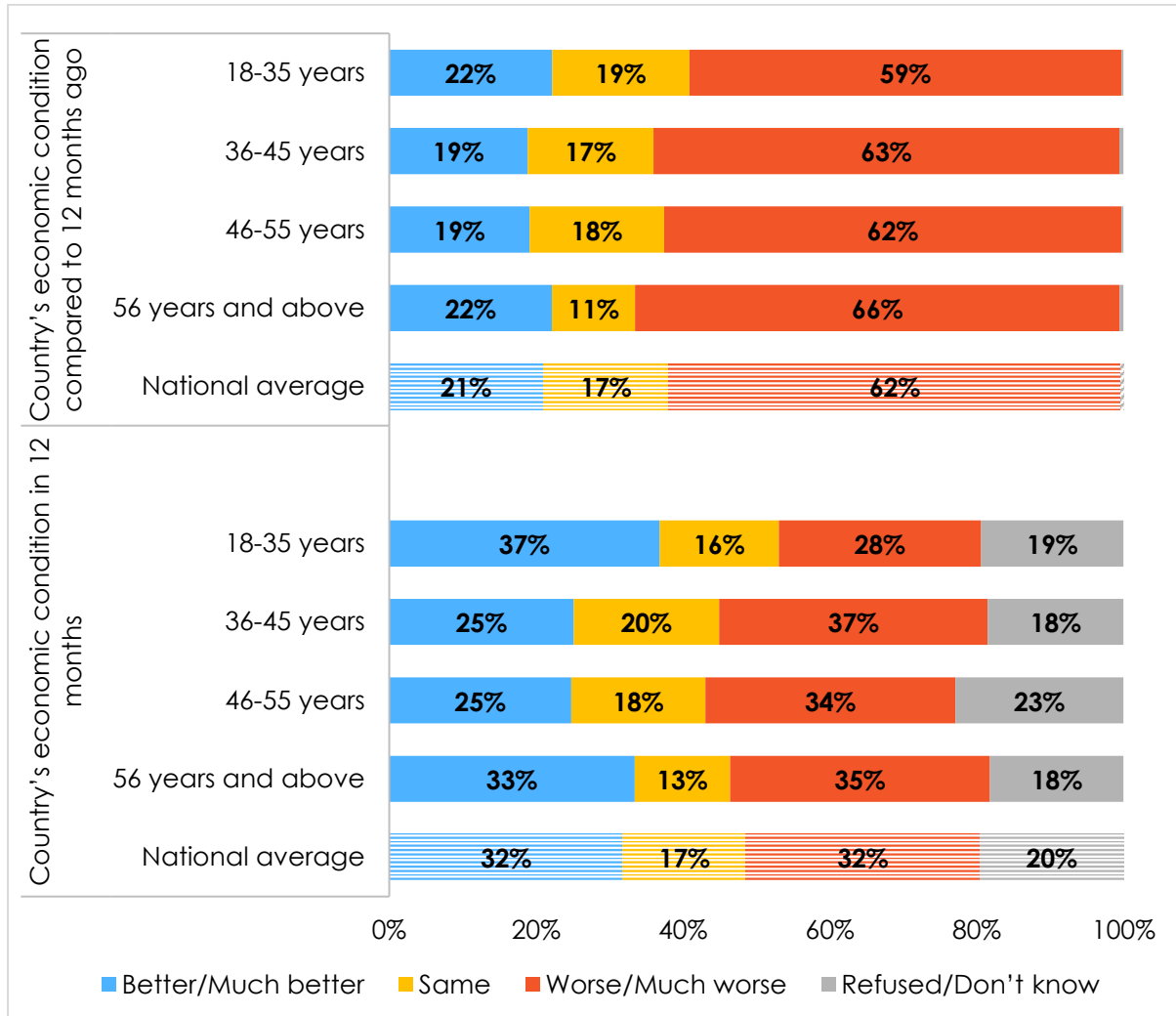
**Figure 7: Negative assessments of country's economy and personal living conditions** | by age group | Tanzania | 2022



**Respondents were asked:** In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country? Your own present living conditions? (% who say "fairly bad" or "very bad")

While six in 10 youth (59%) say economic conditions in the country have worsened over the past year, only half as many (28%) think they will continue to deteriorate over the coming 12 months, while 37% expect things to get better (Figure 8). Here, too, youth are somewhat more optimistic than older cohorts, in which only 25%-33% expect to see improvements over the coming year.

**Figure 8: Retrospective and prospective assessment of country's economic conditions**  
| Tanzania | 2022



**Respondents were asked:** Looking back, how do you rate economic conditions in this country compared to 12 months ago? Looking ahead, do you expect economic conditions in this country to be better or worse in 12 months' time?

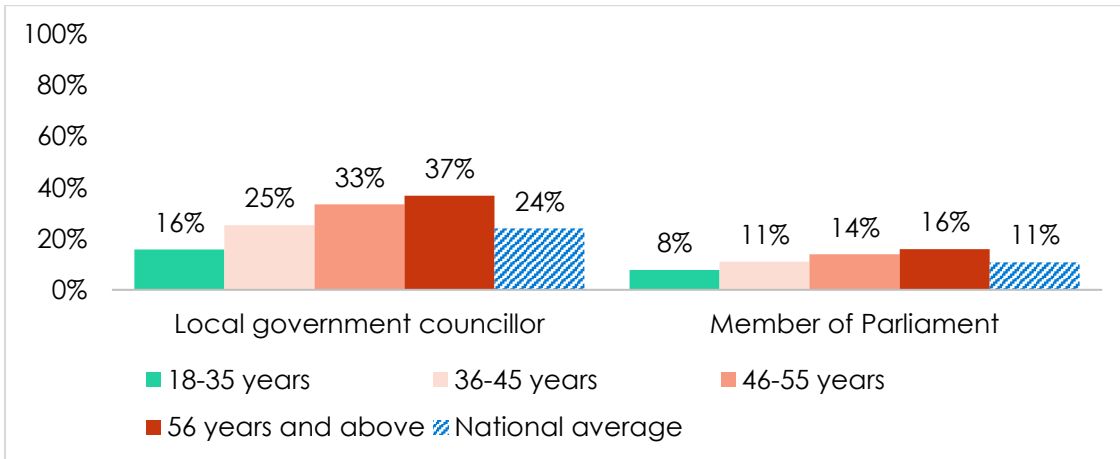
### Political engagement

In general, young Tanzanians are less likely to engage in civic and political activities than their elders. Only 16% of youth say they contacted a local government councillor during the previous year to talk about an important problem or share their views – about half the rate among those over age 45 (33%-37%) (Figure 9).

Similarly, youth were about half as likely as the over-46 groups to contact a member of Parliament (8% vs. 14%-16%).

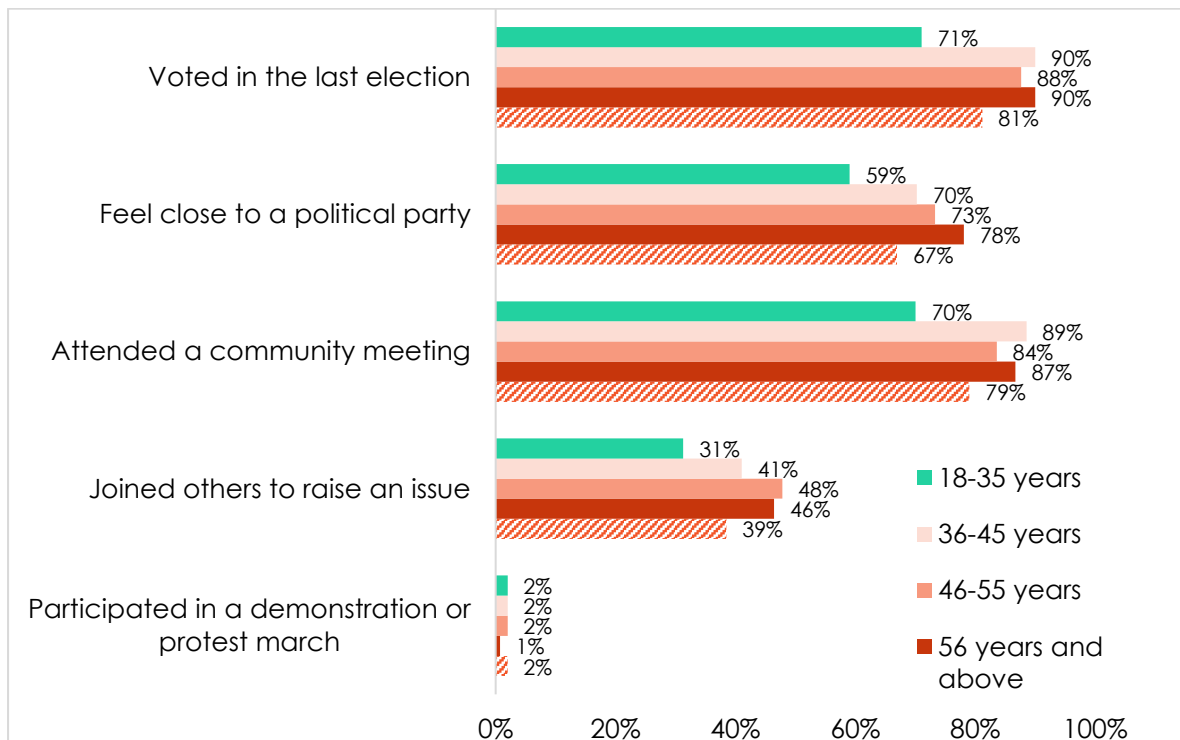
Seven in 10 young respondents (71%) say they voted in the last national election in 2020, compared to 88%-90% among their older counterparts (Figure 10). They are also less likely than their elders to identify with a political party (59%) and to say they attended a community meeting (70%) or joined others to raise an issue (31%).

**Figure 9: Contacted political representatives during previous year | by age group | Tanzania | 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”)

**Figure 10: Political participation | by age group | Tanzania | 2022**



**Respondents were asked:**

In the last national election, held in 2020, did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (Respondents who were too young to vote in 2020 are excluded.)

Do you feel close to any particular political party?

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

Despite possessing higher levels of education than older generations, young Tanzanians face a higher likelihood of unemployment. Even so, a majority see their country as heading in the right direction. Their assessments of the economy, their personal living conditions, and short-term prospects for improvement are less than glowing, but still somewhat more optimistic than those of their elders.

In the political sphere, young Tanzanians are less engaged than older cohorts, though majorities say they feel close to a political party, voted in the last election, and attended a community meeting during the past year.

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