Zomba, Malawi
31 July 2025

News release

Half of young Malawians are unemployed, have considered emigrating, Afrobarometer survey shows

Half of Malawian youth are not working and looking for a job, and half have also thought about moving abroad, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey.

Fewer than one in 10 Malawians aged 18-35 have a part-time or full-time job. Three-fifths say they would prefer to start their own business, while one-fifth would rather work in government.

Youth cite job creation, education, and access to business loans as top priorities for government spending on young people.

Nine-tenths of young citizens who have considered leaving Malawi are motivated by economic reasons, such as finding better work opportunities or escaping poverty.

Key findings

- More than half (53%) of young Malawians report not being employed and seeking work, compared to 46% among 36- to 45-year-olds, 35% among 46- to 55-year-olds, and 17% among those aged 56 years and above (Figure 1).
    - Fewer than one in 10 youth report having a full-time (3%) or part-time (5%) job.
- Starting their own business is the most preferred job option among young people (61%), followed by employment in the public sector (18%) (Figure 2).
- For youth-focused initiatives, young citizens would like the government to prioritise investment in job creation (26%), education (25%), and access to business loans (23%) (Figure 3).
- Half (51%) of youth report having considered emigration at least "a little bit," more than twice as many as among senior citizens (24%) (Figure 4).
- Nine in 10 youth who have considered moving abroad are motivated by economic reasons: 56% want to find better job opportunities, while 33% want to escape economic hardship or poverty (Figure 5).

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 10 surveys were launched in January 2024. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens in August 2024. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Malawi in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2022.

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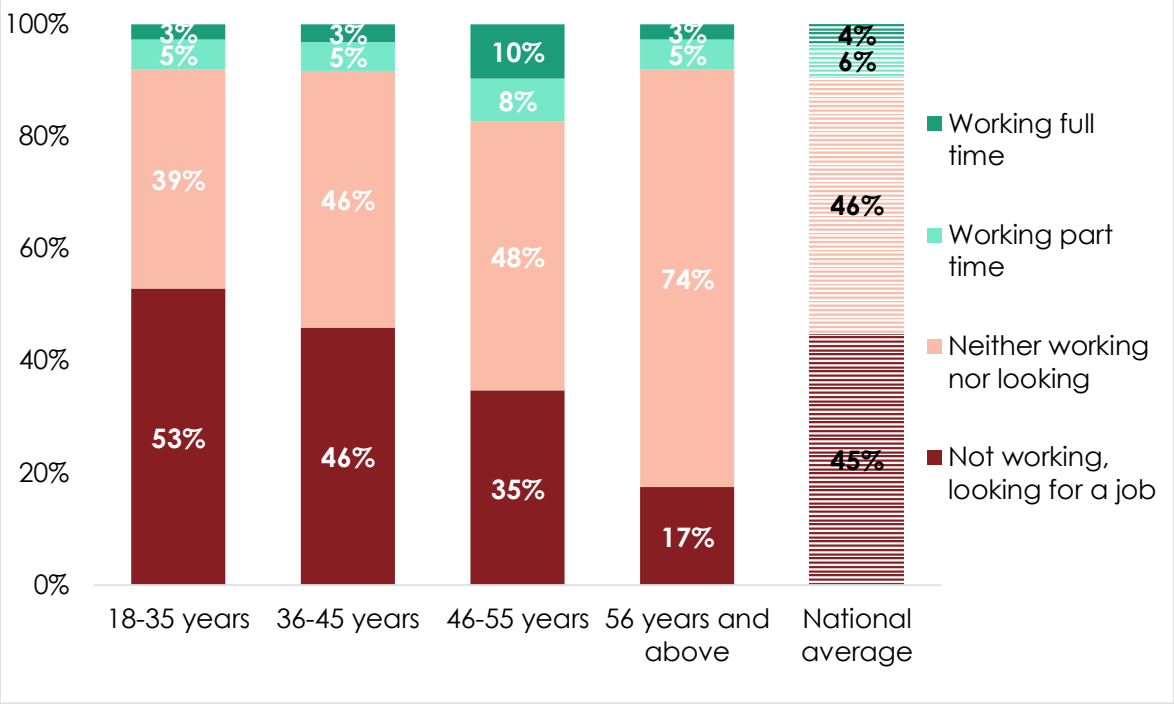
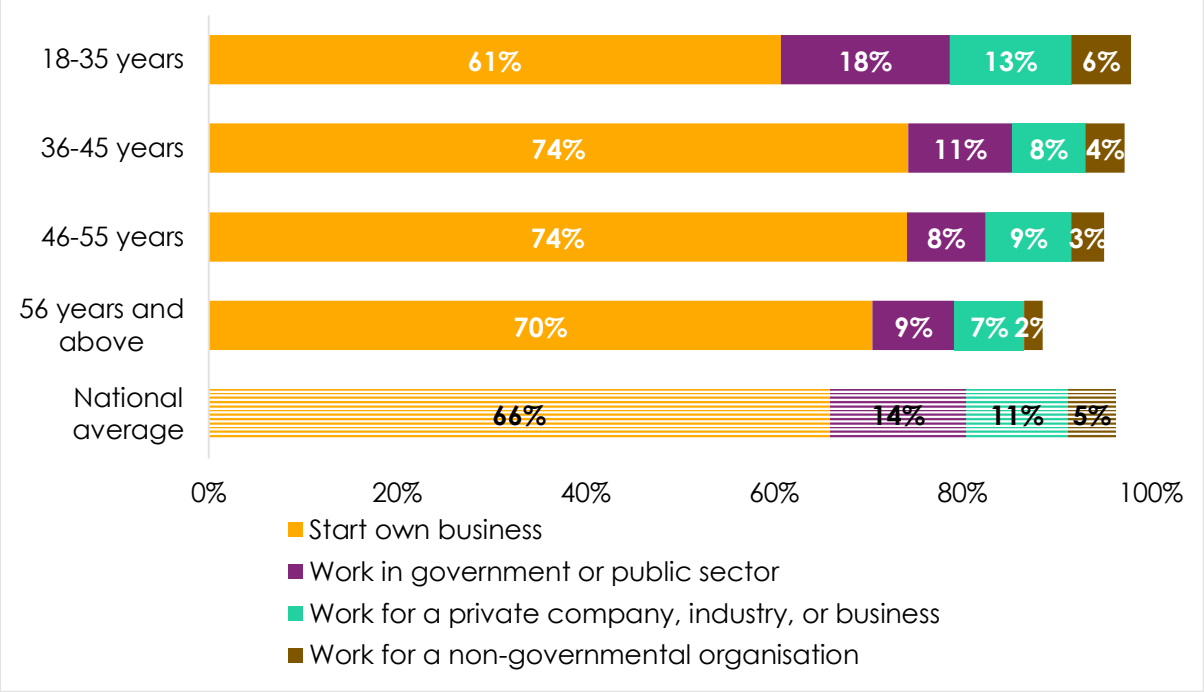
Charts

Figure 1: Employment status | by age group | Malawi | 2024



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?*

Figure 2: Preferred job sector | by age group | Malawi | 2024



Respondents were asked: *If you could work in any sector you wanted, which of the following would be your first choice?*

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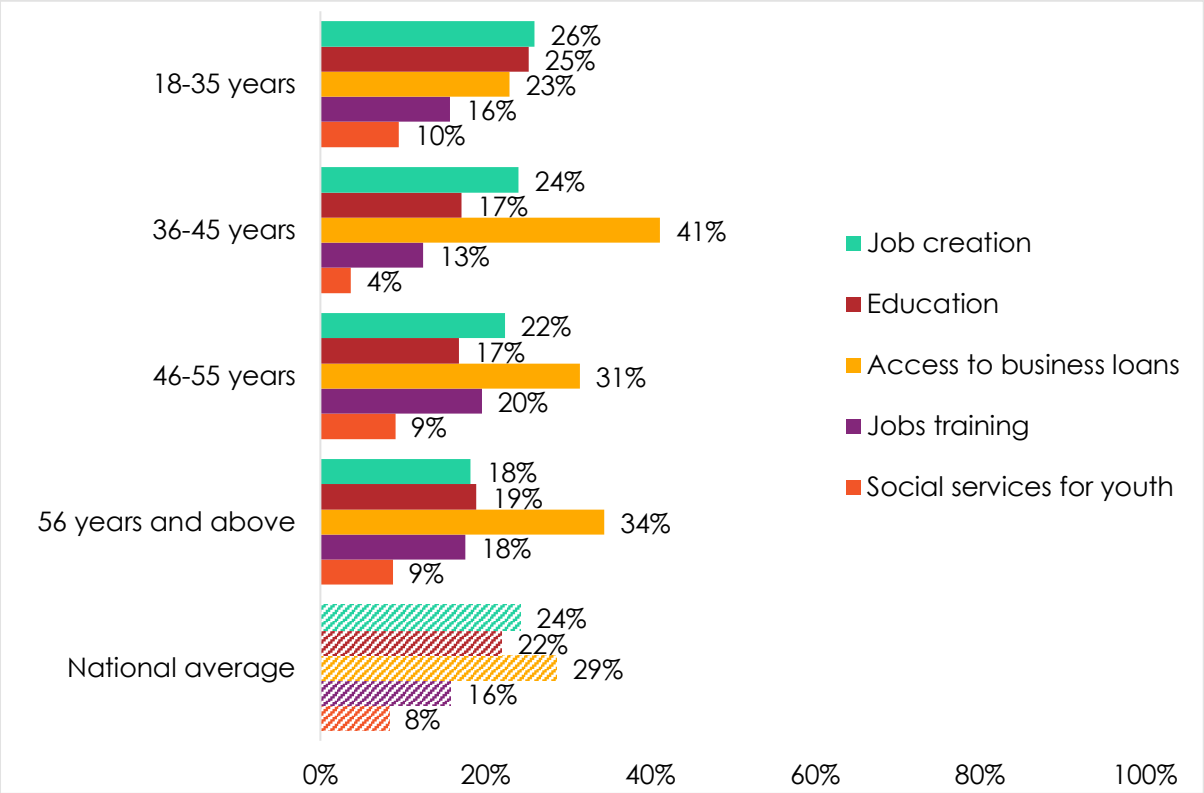
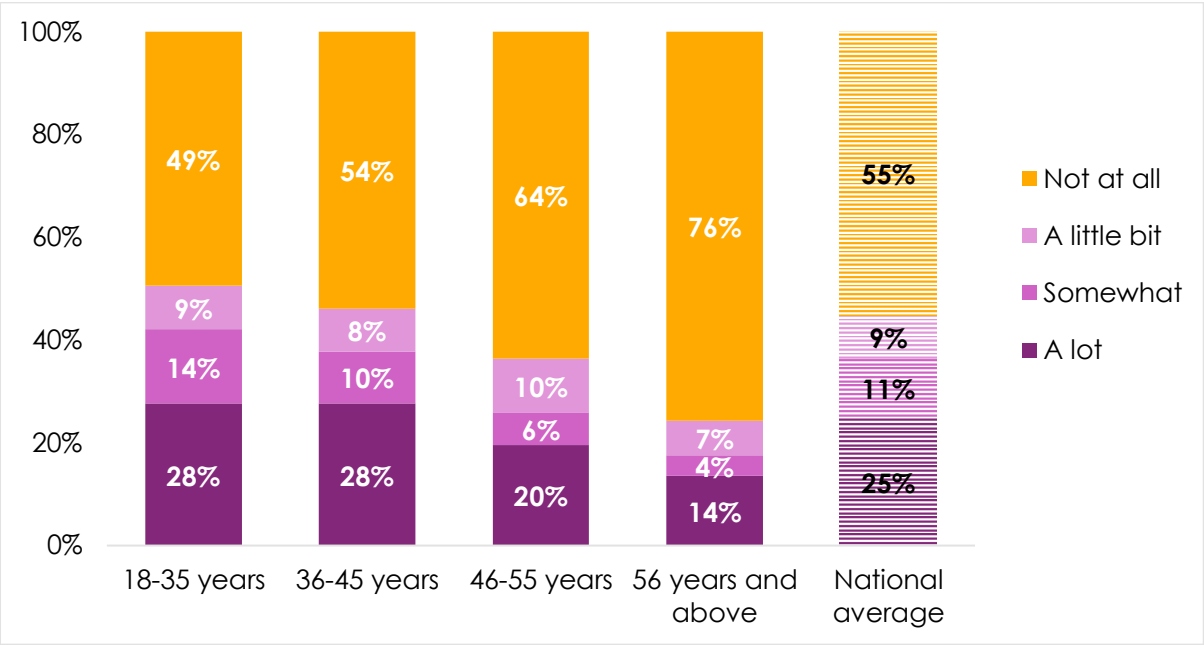
Figure 3: Government spending priority to help youth | by age group | Malawi | 2024



Respondents were asked: *If the government could increase its spending on programmes to help young people, which of the following areas do you think should be the highest priority for additional investment?*

Figure 4: Considered emigrating | by age group | Malawi | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How much, if at all, have you considered moving to another country to live?*

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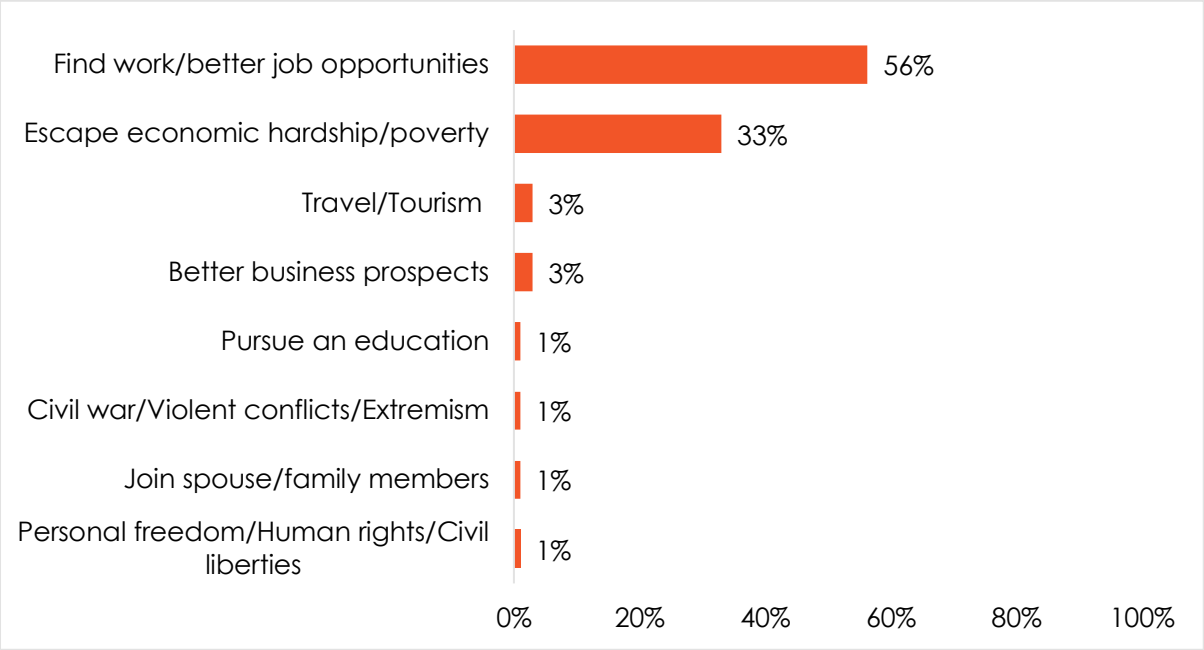
Figure 5: Reasons for considering emigration | respondents aged 18-35 years | Malawi | 2024



Respondents who have considered leaving the country were asked: *There are several reasons why people leave their home to live in another country for an extended period of time. What about you? What is the most important reason why you would consider moving from Malawi? (Respondents who have not considered emigration are excluded.)*

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