



Pretoria, South Africa
31 October 2025

News release

South African youth see job creation as priority area for additional investment, look to government for work

If the government could increase its spending on programmes to help young South Africans, job creation would be the top priority for youth, a new Afrobarometer survey reveals.

Compared to older groups, youth show a greater interest in public-sector work: Almost half say they would prefer to work in government. Strikingly, they are less likely than senior citizens to say they would opt to start their own business, and they are also the second-least entrepreneurial among young citizens surveyed by Afrobarometer across 38 countries in 2024/2025.

Released ahead of Africa Youth Day (1 November), the study shows that nearly half of South African youth say they are unemployed and looking for a job. Another one-fifth of youth are not employed and not seeking work.

Apart from the country's economic conditions and shortage of jobs, young South Africans say the main barriers to youth employment are a lack of work experience, a lack of adequate training, and young people's aversion to jobs in tough sectors.

Key findings

- Almost half (47%) of young South Africans say they are not employed and are looking for work, vs. 38% of 36- to 55-year-olds (Figure 1).
- Aside from economic conditions and a shortage of jobs, South African youth say the main barriers to youth employment are a lack of work experience (35%), a lack of adequate training (25%), and young people's aversion to jobs in tough sectors (15%). Other young respondents cite a lack of entrepreneurial skills or motivation (13%) and a mismatch between educational qualifications and job requirements (10%) (Figure 2).
 - Elderly respondents offer somewhat similar assessments, though they are more likely to cite youth unwillingness to take on certain jobs (24% vs. 15%) and less likely to point to a lack of experience (24% vs. 35%).
 - There exists a cross-generational consensus that youth face particular barriers to employment: Only 1% think they don't.
- Almost half (45%) of youth say that if given a choice, they would prefer to work in government, vs. 28%-32% among older cohorts (Figure 3).
 - By contrast, youth are less entrepreneurial: Fewer than one-fourth (23%) would like to start their own business, compared to 38% of middle-aged respondents and almost half (47%) of those aged 56 and older.
- Across 38 countries surveyed by Afrobarometer since the start of 2024, South African youth are the second-least entrepreneurial, above only Namibians (19%) (Figure 4).

On average, more than half (52%) of young Africans would prefer to start their own business.

- If the government could increase its expenditures to help young people, job creation would be the top priority for South African youth (cited by 57% of young respondents) (Figure 5). Next in importance would be jobs training (15%), education (12%), and social services for youth (12%).

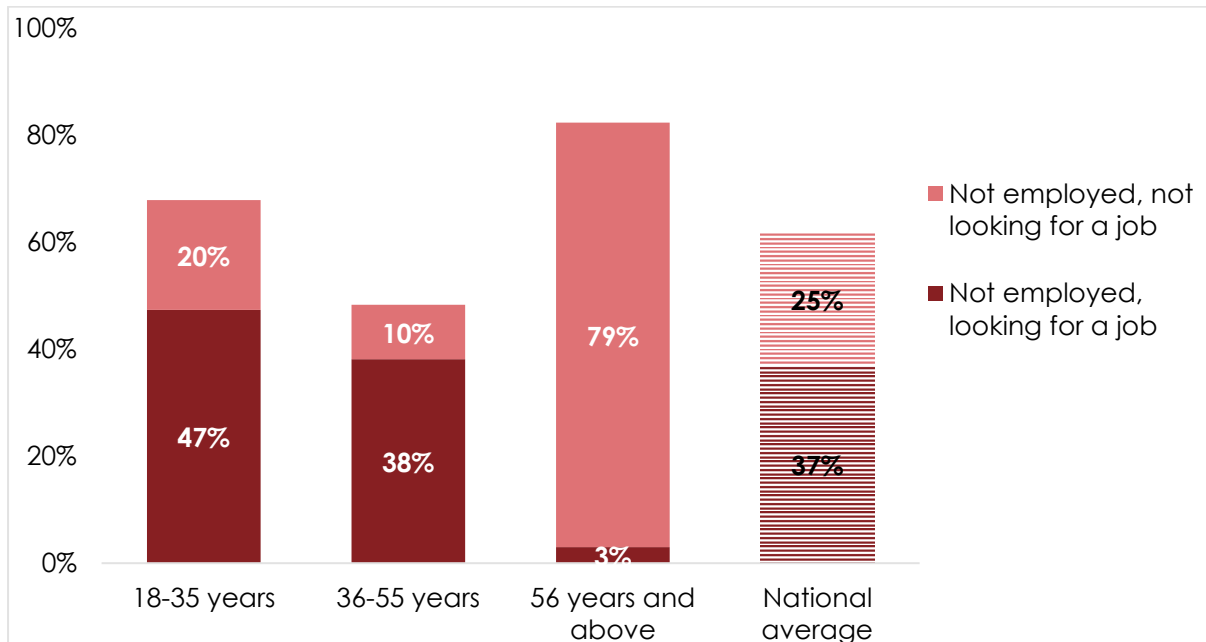
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys (2024/2025) cover 38 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, random, stratified probability sample of 1,600 adult citizens between 28 June and 19 July 2025. 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 were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021, and 2022.

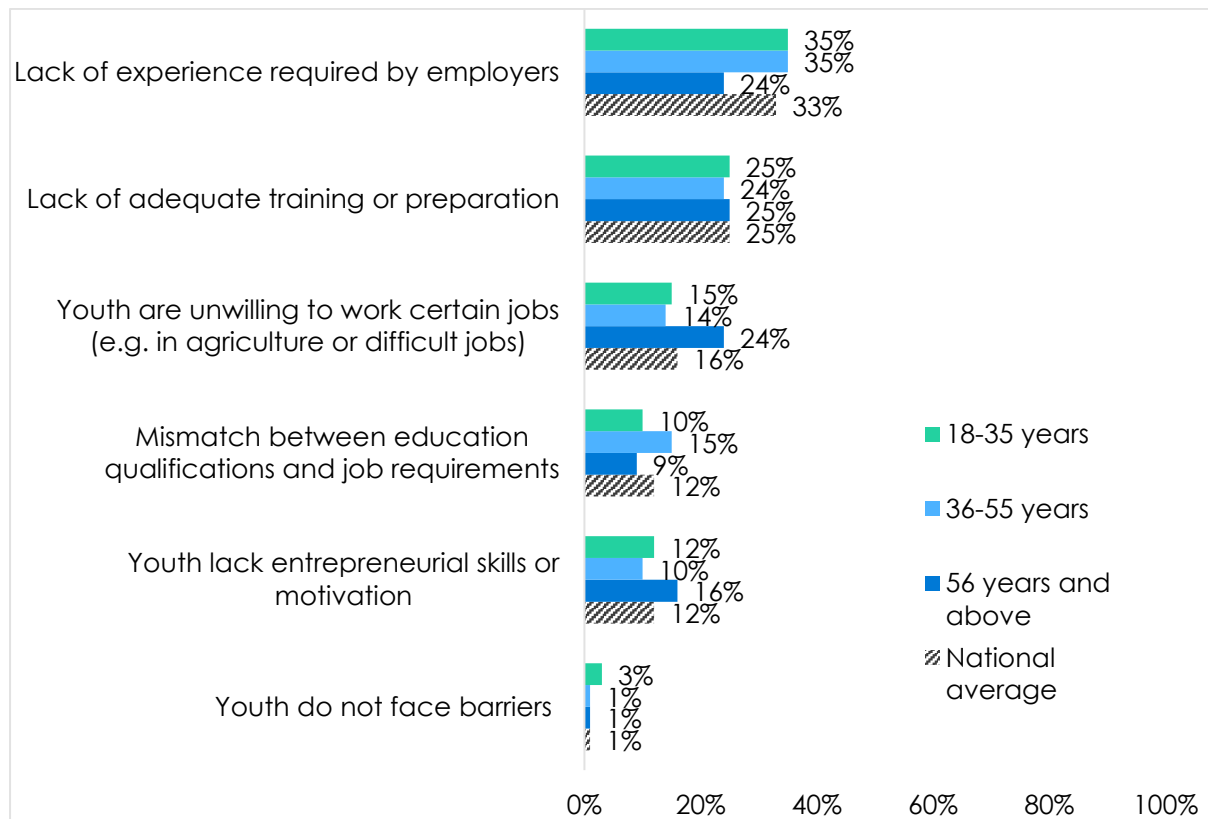
Charts

Figure 1: Not employed, looking vs. not looking for a job | by age group
 | South Africa | 2025



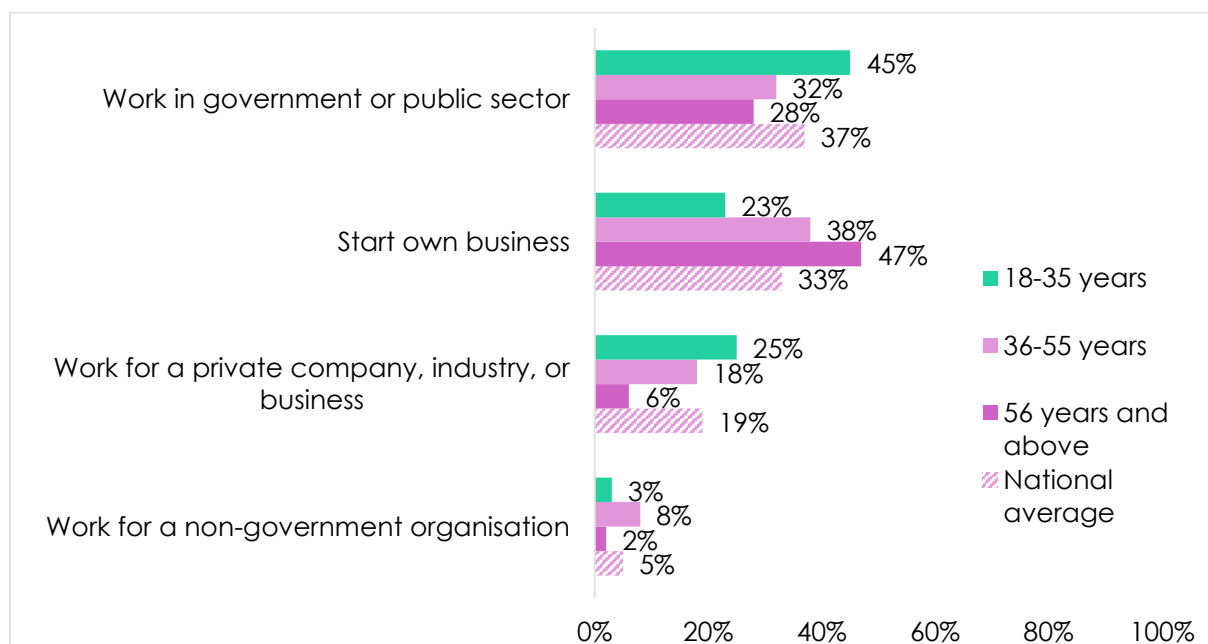
Respondents were asked: Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job?

Figure 2: Barriers to youth employment | by age group | South Africa | 2025



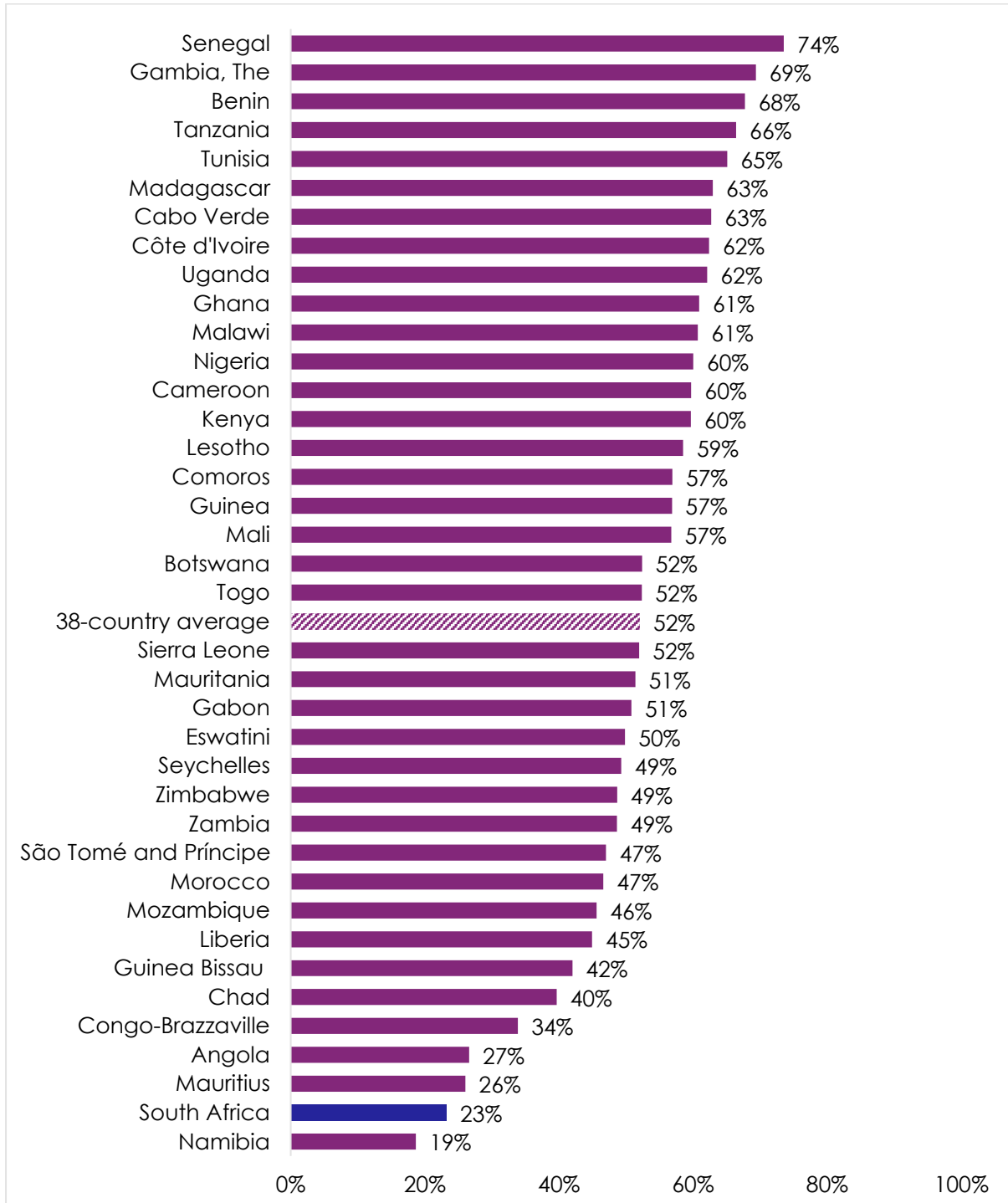
Respondents were asked: *Aside from economic conditions and a shortage of jobs, which of the following factors, if any, would you say is the main barrier to young people getting jobs and entering the workforce?*

Figure 3: Preferred job sector | by age group | South Africa | 2025



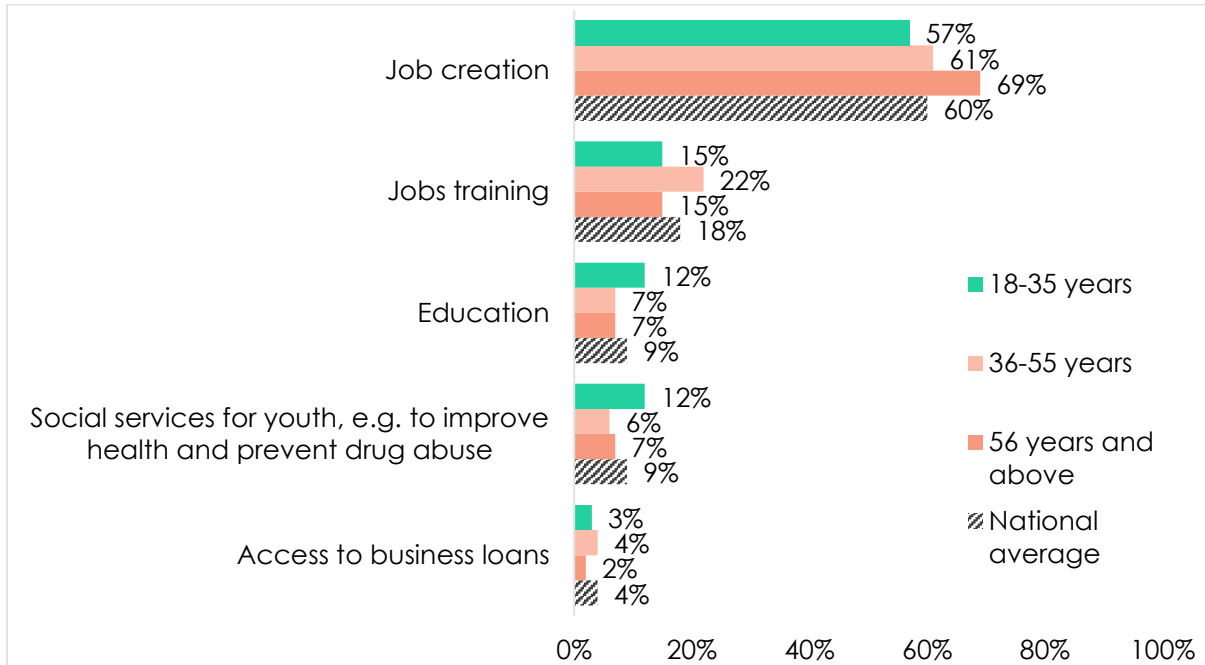
Respondents were asked: *If you could work in any sector you wanted, which of the following would be your first choice?*

Figure 4: Would choose to start their own business | respondents aged 18-35
 | 38 countries | 2024/2025



Respondents were asked: *If you could work in any sector you wanted, which of the following would be your first choice? (% who say "start own business")*

Figure 5: Priorities for government spending to help youth | by age group
 | South Africa | 2025



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?*

For more information, please contact:

Asafika Mpako
 Communications coordinator for Southern Africa
 Telephone: +27 83 979 8299
 Email: ampako@afrobarometer.org

Visit us online at:
www.ijr.org.za
www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

