

# Ugandans prioritise job creation and education to help young people, even if it requires higher taxes

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1176 | Ssenkumba Muhammad**

## Summary

The United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) position decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and inclusive access to quality education at all levels (SDG 4) at the heart of sustainable development efforts. These goals underscore the importance of equipping young people with the skills they need to participate meaningfully in economic life. At the national level, Uganda's long-term development blueprint, Vision 2040, similarly emphasises human capital development and employment generation as key drivers of transformation from a predominantly low-income to a competitive upper-middle-income country (Government of Uganda, 2013).

Although Uganda has made significant progress in expanding access to education, the relationship between education and labour-market success is far from linear (Uganda Bureau of Statistic, 2021). Many young graduates face difficulties in securing meaningful work due to inadequate skills, limited experience, and a mismatch between educational qualifications and labour-market requirements, forcing many to settle for roles misaligned with their qualifications (Kanya, 2022; Monitor, 2021). This leads to underutilisation of human capital, economic inefficiency, and wasted resources.

As the country's youth and total population continue to grow, calls for government to prioritise investments in job creation and equipping young people with relevant skills for the job market dominate public debate (Ainomugisha, 2024; Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Development, 2022; Nalweera, 2025; Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2025; UNESCO, 2025). These calls reflect a broader recognition that education and employment are central to household stability, poverty reduction, and long-term national development.

Results of an Afrobarometer survey in January 2025 show that education and job creation rank high among the most important problems that citizens say the government must address, and top the list of priority programmes to help young people. Although a majority of Ugandans approve of the government's performance on education, ratings have declined significantly over the past two decades, and far fewer think the government is doing an adequate job on reducing unemployment. Most citizens say they would be willing to pay higher taxes or user fees to support public education and programmes to help young people.

## 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. 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 Uganda, led by Hatchile Consult Ltd., interviewed a nationally representative sample of 3,000 adult Ugandans in January 2025. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-1.8 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> Afrobarometer survey in Uganda.

## Key findings

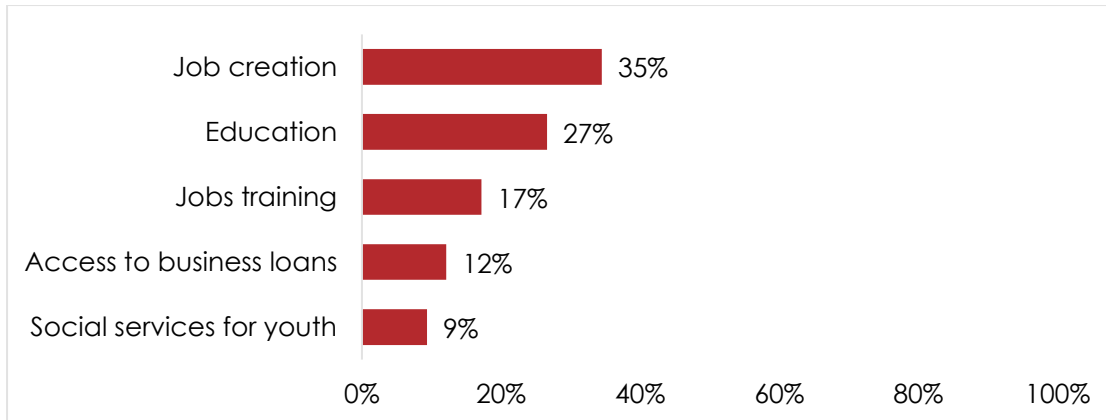
- Job creation and education are the top priorities for government spending to help young people, according to survey respondents.
- A majority (58%) of Ugandans approve of the government's performance on providing education, though approval has declined significantly over the past two decades.
  - Only 44% of citizens approve of the government's performance on job creation.
- Education and unemployment rank second and sixth among the most important problems that Ugandans say their government should address.
- Slightly more than one-quarter (28%) of Ugandan adults say they hold full-time jobs, with another 17% working part time.
  - About one in five (21%) say they don't have a job and are looking for one. This situation is more common among youth (27%) than among older groups (7%-16%), and is also particularly widespread among those with secondary education (25%), the poorest citizens (24%), and residents in the Eastern (31%) and Northern (26%) regions.
- Unwillingness to work in certain jobs, inadequate training, and a lack of experience required by employers are the most frequently cited barriers to youth employment.
- If given a choice, almost half (47%) of youth say they would start their own businesses, while 23% would opt for a public-sector job and 13% would choose to work in agriculture.
- Large majorities of Ugandans say they are willing to pay higher taxes or user fees in order to fund public education (75%) and initiatives to help young people (72%), as well as programmes to assist the poorest people (70%).

## Priorities for government investment to help young people

Citizens' views on which initiatives should be given the highest priority for government investment are essential for understanding public policy preferences and enhancing citizen participation and accountability in youth-focused policy making. Figure 1 shows respondents' opinions on the programmes where they would like the government to increase spending to improve young people's opportunities and well-being.

Job creation emerges as the top priority, cited by more than one-third (35%) of respondents, followed by education (27%). These two priorities combined constitute 62%, underscoring Ugandans' concern about formal learning and employment as pathways to better life chances. Jobs training (17%) ranks third, followed by access to business loans (12%) and social services for youth (9%).

**Figure 1: Priorities for government investment to help young people | Uganda | 2025**



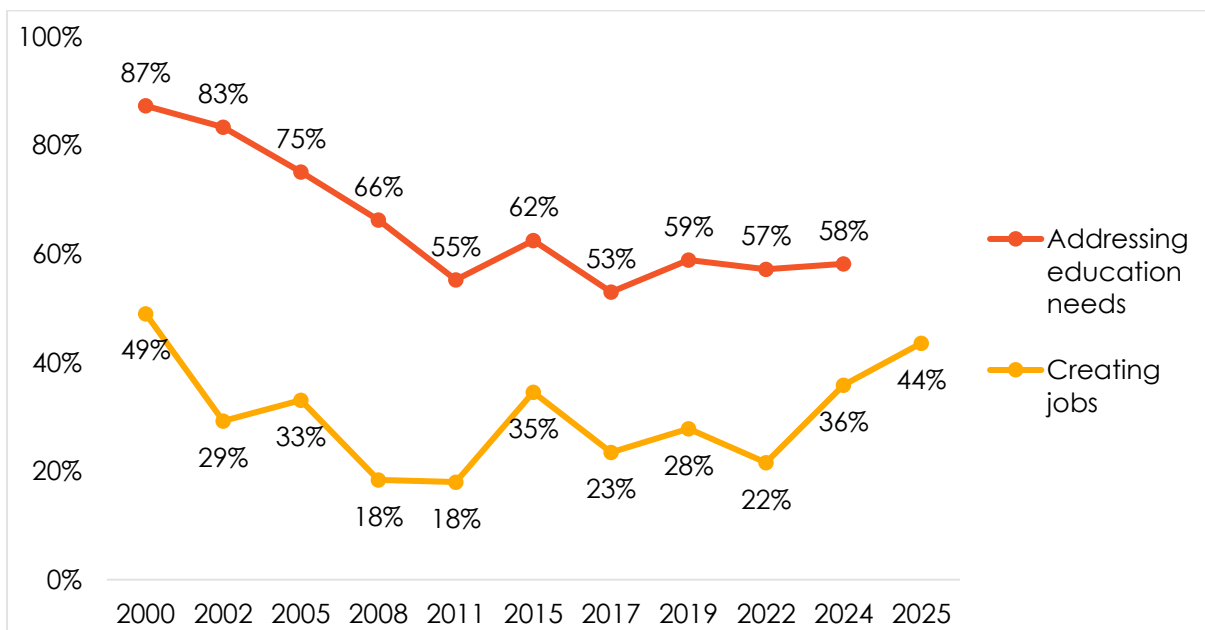
**Respondents were asked:** *If the government could increase its spending on programmes to help young people, which of the following areas do you think should be the highest priority for additional investment?*

### Government handling of education and job creation

Over the past quarter-century, the government's efforts to reduce unemployment have never met with the approval of even half of Ugandans (Figure 2). From 49% who said the government was doing "fairly well" or "very well" on job creation in 2000, approval dropped to as low as 18% in 2008-2011. It has since regained lost ground but still remains well below half (44%).

Approval of the government's performance on education has been consistently higher, but has dropped by 29 percentage points since 2000, from 87% to 58% in 2024, the most recent time the question was asked.

**Figure 2: Government handling of education needs and job creation | Uganda | 2000-2025**



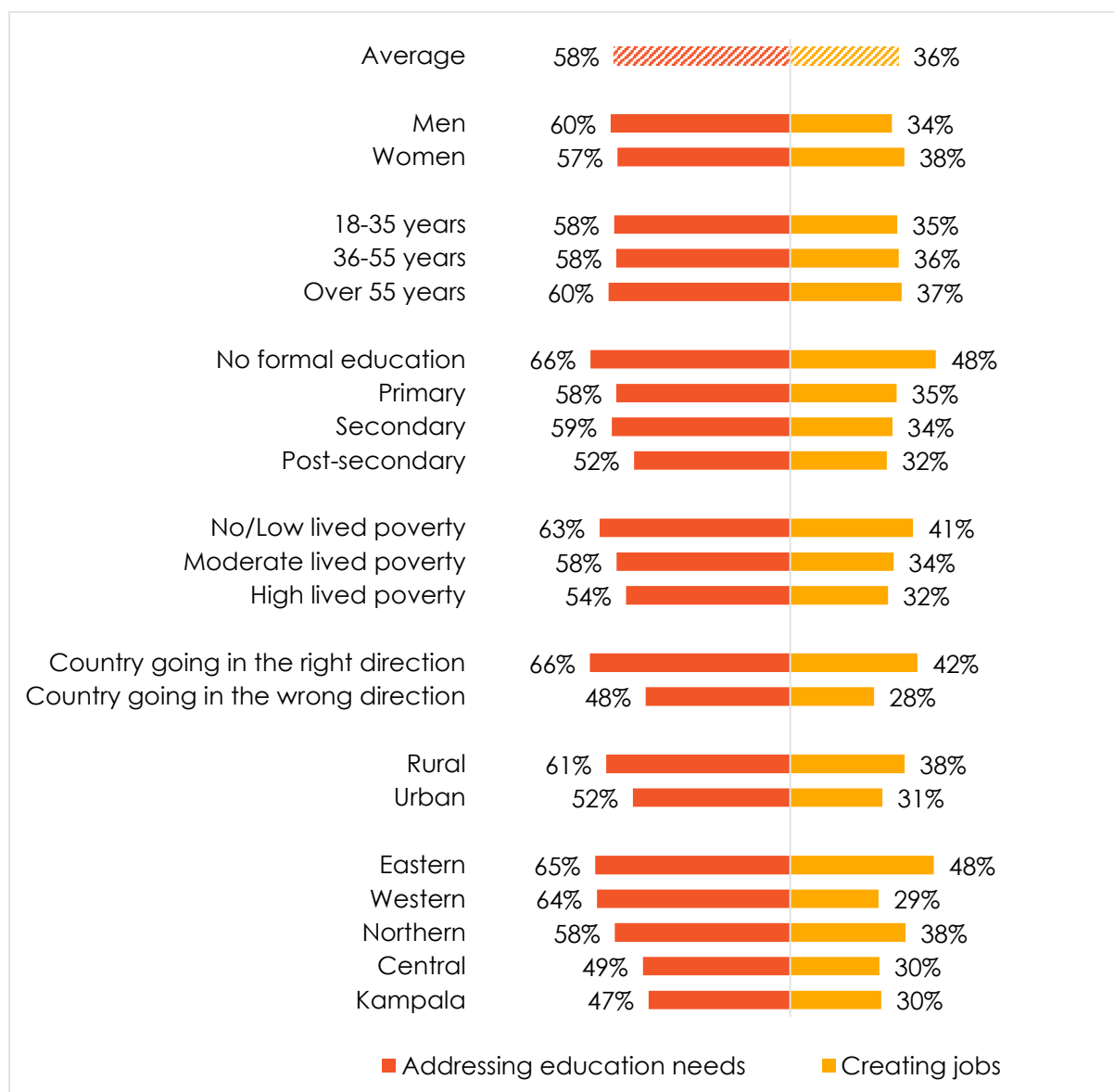
**Respondents were asked:** *How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")*

Approval of the government's performance on both education and job creation is highest in the Eastern Region (65% and 48%, respectively) and low in Kampala (47% and 30%). Approval on job creation is equally low in the Western (29%) and Central (30%) regions (Figure 3).

Performance ratings are also higher (by 7-9 percentage points) among rural than urban residents. As might be expected, respondents who say the country is going in "the right direction" are more likely to approve of the government's performance than those who think the country headed "in the wrong direction."

Approval declines as respondents' education level increases, but ratings are more positive among economically well-off citizens than among those experiencing high levels of lived poverty.

**Figure 3: Approval of government performance on education and job creation**  
 | by demographic group | Uganda | 2024



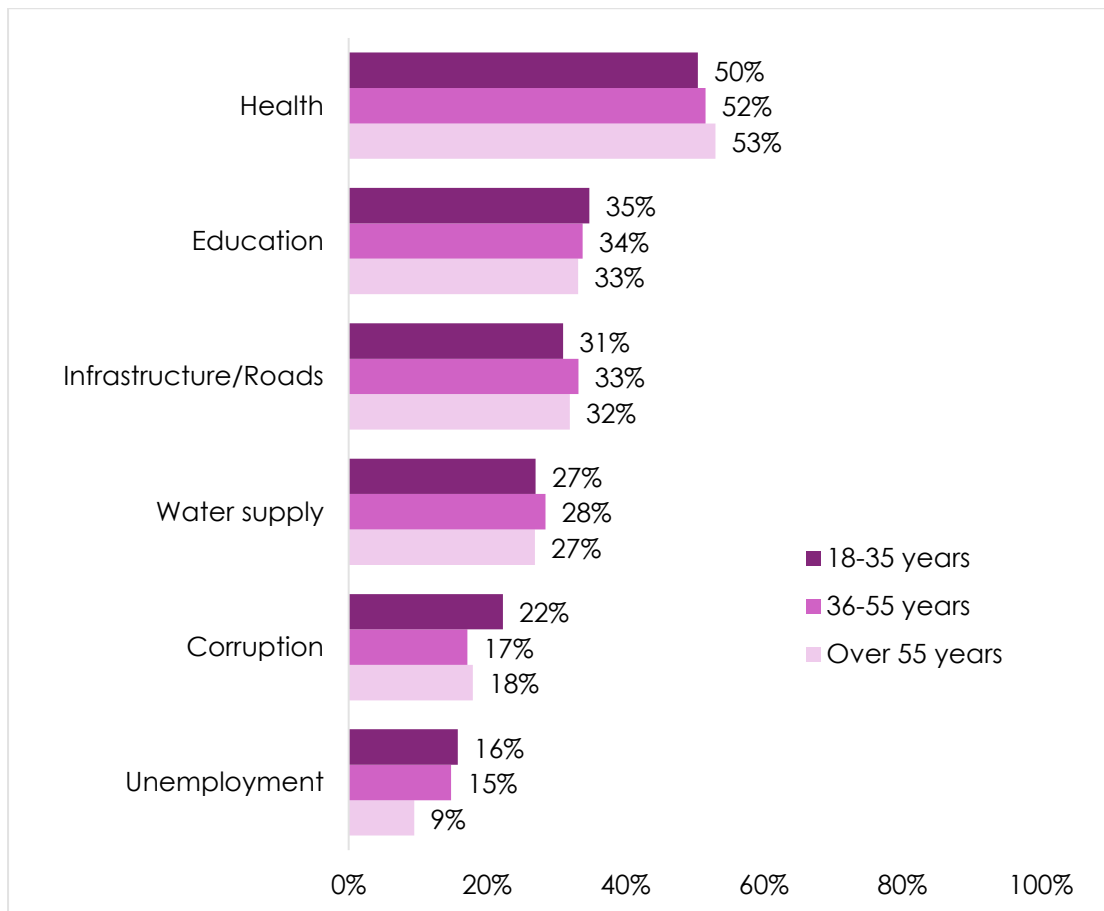
**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say "fairly well" or "very well")

### Most important problems government should address

Education and unemployment rank high among the most important problems that Ugandans say their government should address (Figure 4). Education places second, after health, with about one-third of respondents in all age groups citing it as one of their top three priorities for government action.

Unemployment ranks sixth, and is of greater concern among youth (aged 18-35) and the middle-aged (aged 36-55) than among senior citizens.

**Figure 4: Citizen priorities for government action** | by age group | Uganda | 2025



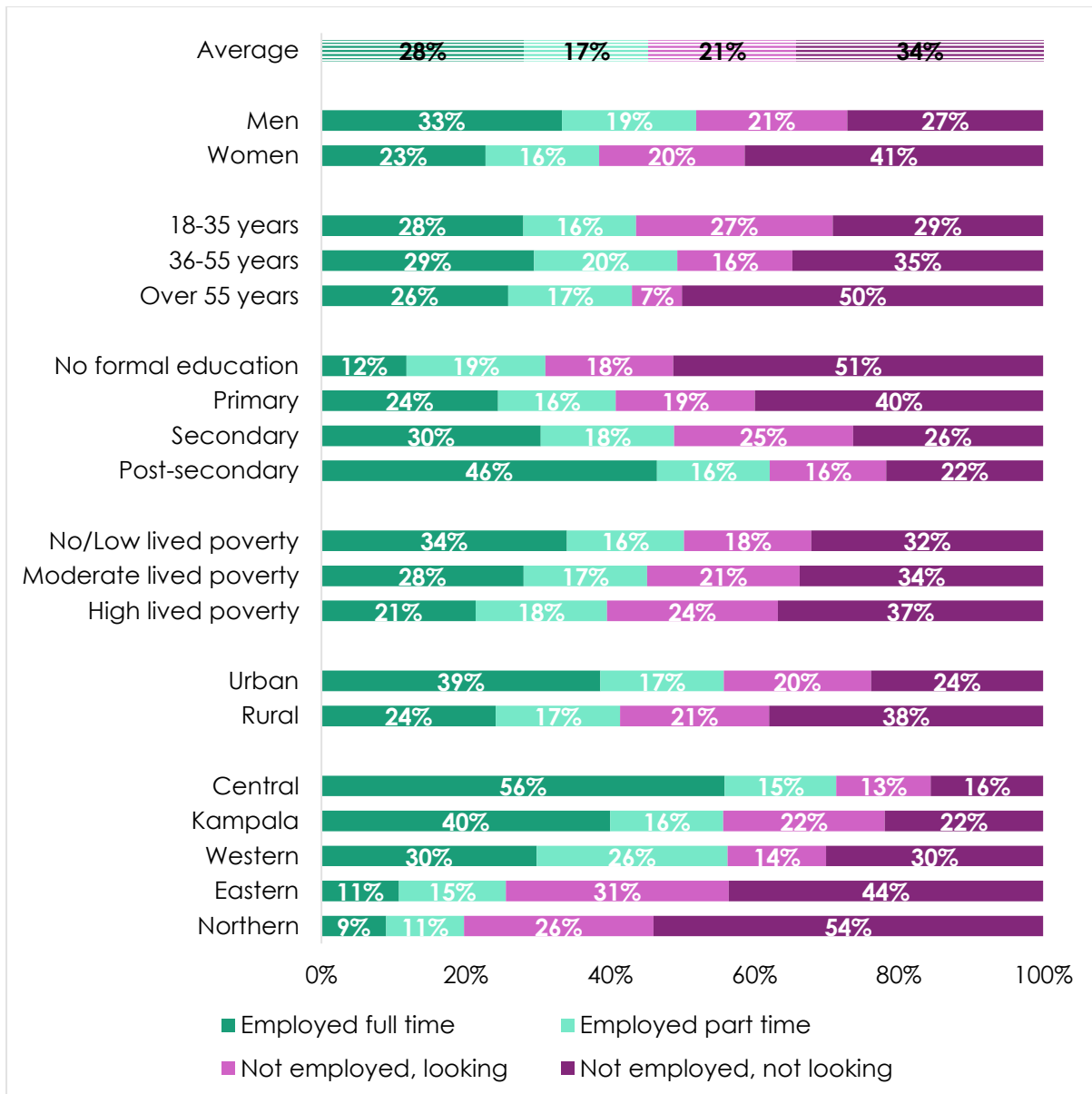
**Respondents were asked:** *In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?*

### Employment

Not quite three in 10 Ugandan adults (28%) say they have full-time jobs, while 17% report part-time employment (Figure 5). One in five (21%) say they don't have a job but are looking for one, while 34% say they are not employed and not looking for work.

Unemployment (i.e. not having a job and actively looking for one) is more common among youth (27%) than among older groups (7%-16%). It is also particularly high among those with secondary education (25%), the poorest citizens (24%), and residents in the Eastern (31%) and Northern (26%) regions.

**Figure 5: Employment status** | by demographic group | Uganda | 2025



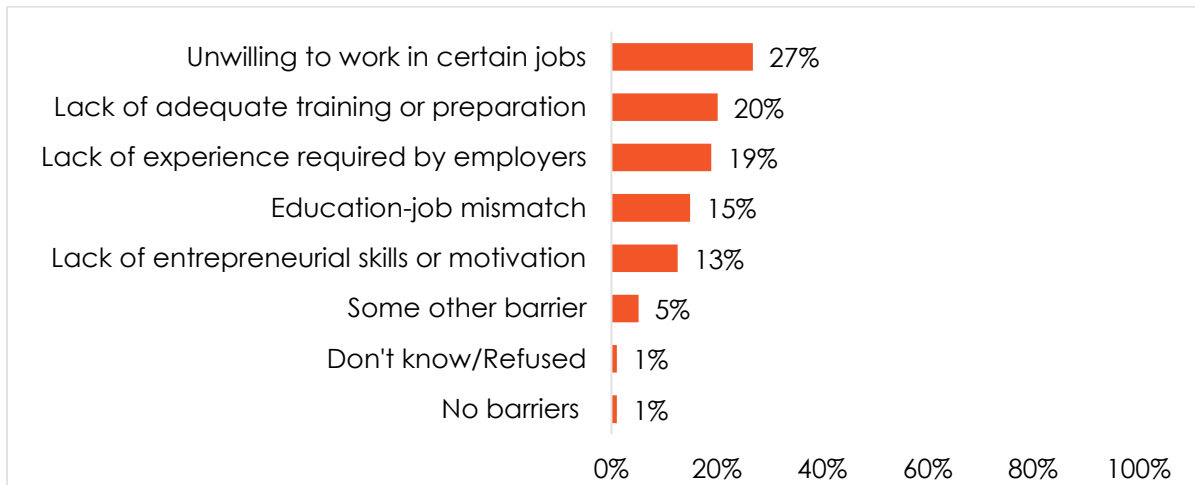
**Respondents were asked:** Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is your job part time or full time? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job?

### Barriers to youth employment

In addition to general economic conditions and a shortage of jobs, youth may face particular barriers to entering or advancing in the workforce. Among survey respondents, the most frequently cited barrier is a perceived unwillingness on the part of youth to work in certain jobs, such as agriculture (27%) (Figure 6). This is followed by inadequate training or preparation (20%), a lack of experience required by employers (19%), a mismatch between educational qualifications and job requirements (15%), and a lack of entrepreneurial skills or motivation (13%). Almost no one (1%) says there are no particular barriers to youth employment.

Older Ugandans are more likely to cite an unwillingness to work in certain jobs (33%) than younger groups (25%-26%).

**Figure 6: Barriers to youth employment | Uganda | 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?*

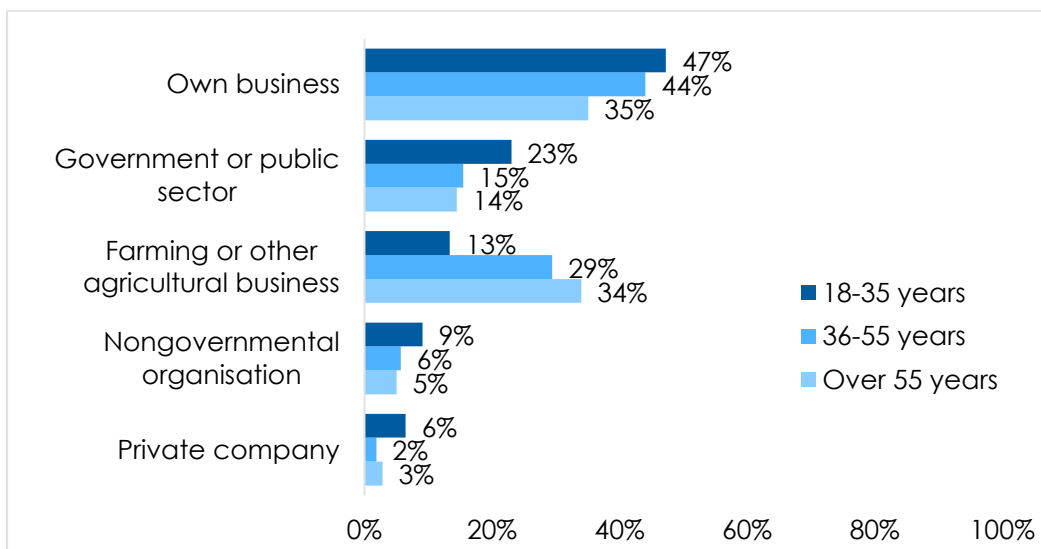
### Preferred work sector

Understanding the types of jobs young people aspire to might inform policies aimed at expanding job opportunities.

Almost half (47%) of youth (aged 18-35) say they would most like to start their own business, while 23% would opt for a position in the public sector and 13% for work in agriculture (Figure 7). About one in 10 (9%) would look for employment in a nongovernmental organisation, while only 6% would prefer a private-sector job.

Compared to their elders, young Ugandans are more interested in entrepreneurship and far less interested in agriculture, suggesting there is some validity to perceptions that some youth are unwilling to take certain jobs.

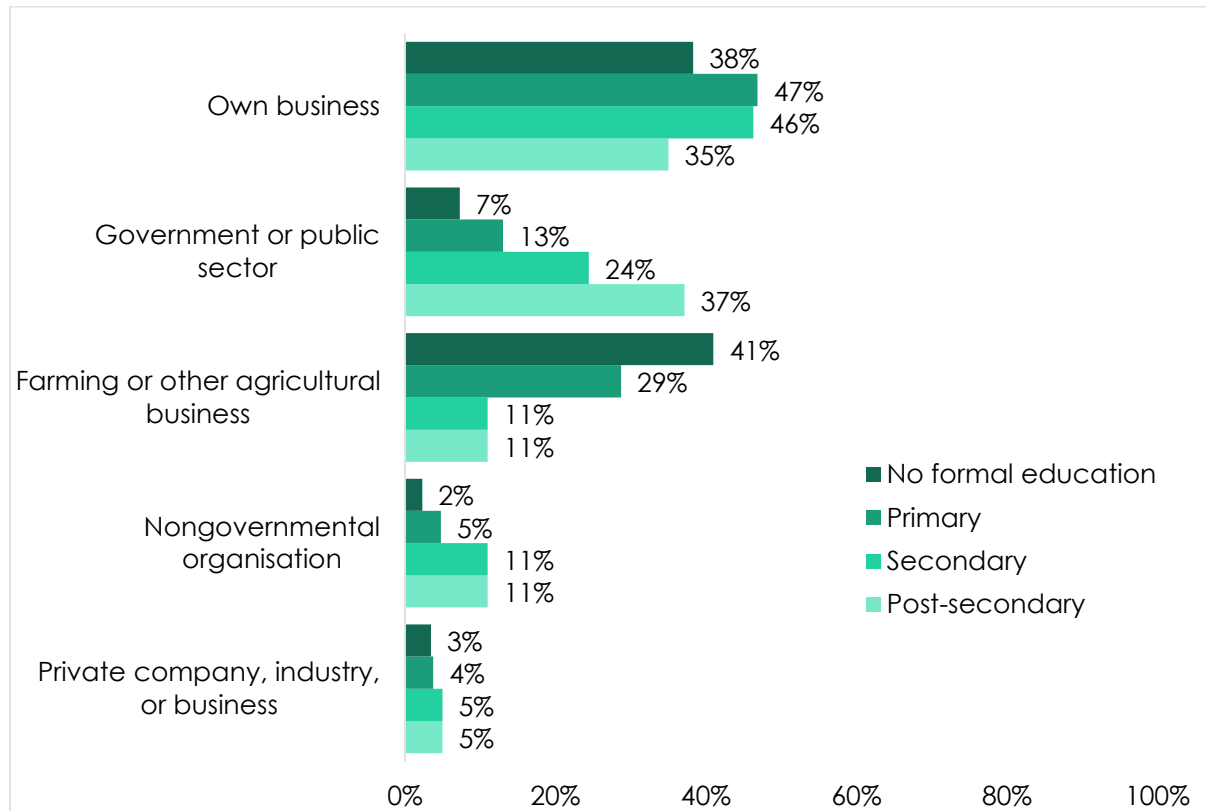
**Figure 7: Sector of first choice for work | by age group | Uganda | 2025**



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

Starting a business is particularly attractive to Ugandans with primary or secondary education, while interest in jobs in the public sector and in nongovernmental organisations increases sharply with respondents' level of education (Figure 8). Respondents with no formal schooling are far more interested in agricultural work than those with formal education.

**Figure 8: Sector of first choice for work | by level of education | Uganda | 2025**



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

### Willing to pay higher taxes?

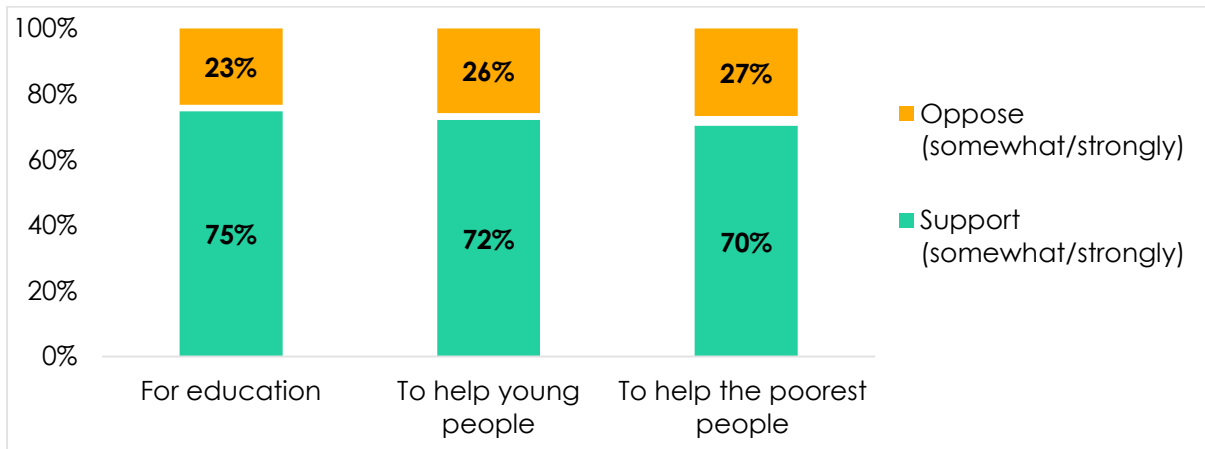
Initiatives for youth development and social welfare require adequate government funding. To gauge public willingness to contribute, respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose the government raising taxes or user fees to increase spending on education and programmes to help young people and the poor.

The results indicate strong public support for increased government investment across all three areas (Figure 9). At least seven in 10 respondents say they “somewhat” or “strongly” support higher taxes or fees to fund public education (75%), initiatives to help young people (72%), and programmes for the poorest people (70%). Only about one in four citizens express opposition.

Willingness to pay more taxes or user fees to support education and help young people is high (at least seven in 10 respondents) across key demographic groups, including gender, urban-rural location, age, and education level (Figure 10). Support is strongest in the North (85% for education, 83% for young people) and weakest in the East (66% and 68%).

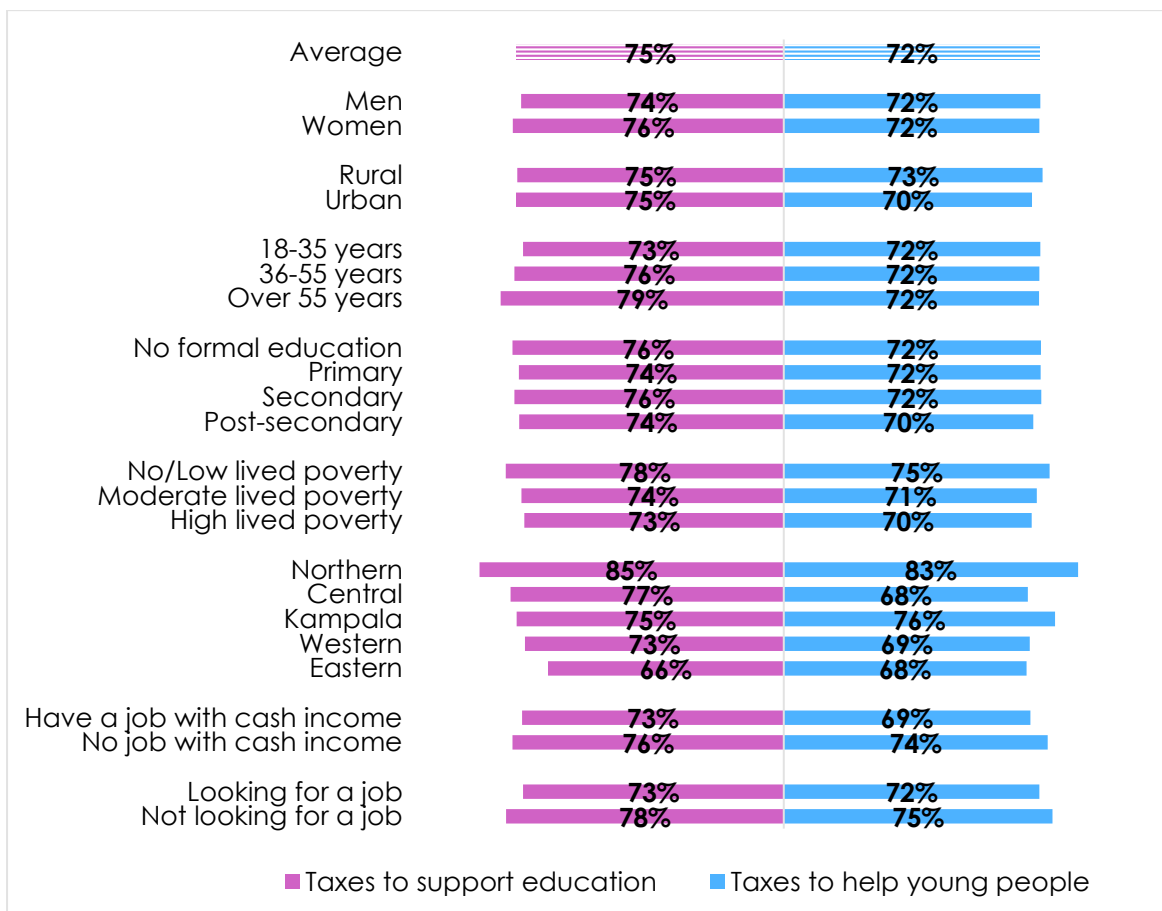
Ugandans who have jobs that pay a cash income are slightly less supportive than those who don't, as are those who are looking for work compared to those who aren't. But support for higher taxes or fees is strong regardless of employment status.

**Figure 9: Willing to pay more taxes or user fees for education, youth, and poverty reduction? | Uganda | 2025**



**Respondents were asked:** If the government decided to make people pay more taxes or user fees in order to increase spending in the following areas, would you support this decision or oppose it: Public education? To help young people? To help the poorest people in the country?

**Figure 10: Support for higher taxes or user fees for education, youth, and poverty reduction | by demographic group | Uganda | 2025**



**Respondents were asked:** If the government decided to make people pay more taxes or user fees in order to increase spending in the following areas, would you support this decision or oppose it: Public education? To help young people? (% who say "somewhat support" or "strongly support")

## Conclusion

Ugandans rank education and unemployment among their country's most urgent problems, and prioritise them for additional government investment to help young people – even if that means paying higher taxes or user fees.

Citizens point to inadequate preparation and a lack of experience as barriers to youth employment, along with young people's unwillingness to take certain types of jobs. At the same time, young people's preference for self-employment, public-sector jobs among the highly educated, and agricultural work among less-educated youth point to segmented labour-market aspirations that require differentiated policy responses.

Overall, survey findings underscore a broad social consensus that investing in education, skills development, and job creation is urgent and legitimate, and that citizens are prepared to bear additional costs if these investments translate into meaningful employment opportunities for young people. This provides a strong public mandate for government to strengthen education quality, align training with labour-market needs, and implement inclusive job-creation strategies targeting youth.

---

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data –any question, for any country and survey round. It's easy on and free at [www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis](http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis).

---

## References

- Ainomugisha, S. (2024) Pro-employment budgeting will stimulate job creation in Uganda. Economic Policy Research Centre. 14 September.
- Government of Uganda. (2013). Uganda Vision 2040.
- Kanya, R. M. (2022). Graduates say lack of jobs has led them into domestic work. NTV Uganda [Video]. Graduates say lack of jobs has led them into domestic work - YouTube
- Mattes, R., & Lekalake, R. (2025). Decade of destitution? Severe lived poverty is surging in many African countries. Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 943.
- Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Development. (2022). National employment strategy 2023-2028 and action plan 2023-2025
- Monitor. (2021). Jobless graduates chase dreams on boda bodas. 19 April.
- Nalweera, A. (2025). Striking a balance to enhance job quality and quantity for Uganda's workforce. Economic Policy Research Centre. 10 March.
- Parliament of the Republic of Uganda. (2025). Improved school infrastructure key for new curriculum – MPs.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. (2024). National population and housing census 2024: Final report – volume 1 (main).
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. (2021). National labour force survey 2021: Main report.
- UNESCO. (2025). Uganda pushes for digital transformation in education through ICT integration.
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

**Ssenkumba Muhammad** is a statistician for Hatchile Consult Ltd., Afrobarometer's National Partner in Uganda. Email: [muhammad@hatchileconsult.com](mailto:muhammad@hatchileconsult.com).

Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan research network. Regional coordination of National Partners in about 40 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and Innovante Recherche en Economie et Gouvernance (IREG) in Benin. Michigan State University and the University of Malawi provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer is provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation via the World Bank Think Africa Project, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations - Africa, Luminate, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Obama Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the European Union Commission, the World Bank Group, the Population Institute, the Centre for International Governance Innovation, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Royal Embassy of Denmark in Uganda/Danida, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Donations help Afrobarometer give voice to African citizens. Please consider making a donation to Afrobarometer. To make an online donation, kindly follow this [link](#) or this [link](#). To discuss institutional funding, contact Felix Biga ([felixbiga@afrobarometer.org](mailto:felixbiga@afrobarometer.org)) or Runyararo Munetsi ([runyararo@afrobarometer.org](mailto:runyararo@afrobarometer.org)).

For more information, please visit [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.



Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1176 | 5 May 2026