

Afrobarometer
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News release

In search of opportunity: Young and educated Africans most likely to consider emigration, Afrobarometer surveys show

More than one-third of Africans have considered emigrating, including about half of young adults and highly educated citizens, according to new Afrobarometer findings from across the continent.

In the third of its Pan-Africa Profiles based on recent public-opinion surveys in 34 African countries, Afrobarometer reports that on average, about one in five Africans say they have thought “a lot” about emigrating, and 3% say they are taking concrete steps to leave, such as obtaining a visa. Interest in emigration varies widely; in five countries, more than half the population has given emigration at least “a little” thought.



The new report, available at www.afrobarometer.org, shows that the most popular destination among potential emigrants is neither Europe nor North America but another African country, and that potential emigrants are overwhelmingly motivated by a hunger for jobs and economic opportunity. But contrary to the notion that migrants are simply a country's most impoverished citizens, youth and education are far more strongly correlated with interest in emigration than poverty.

The report's detailed analyses by country, region, and demographic group provide useful insights for policy making to address migration – not just in destination countries concerned about their ability to absorb large numbers of immigrants, but also in countries of origin at risk of losing some of their most educated, motivated, and creative young people.

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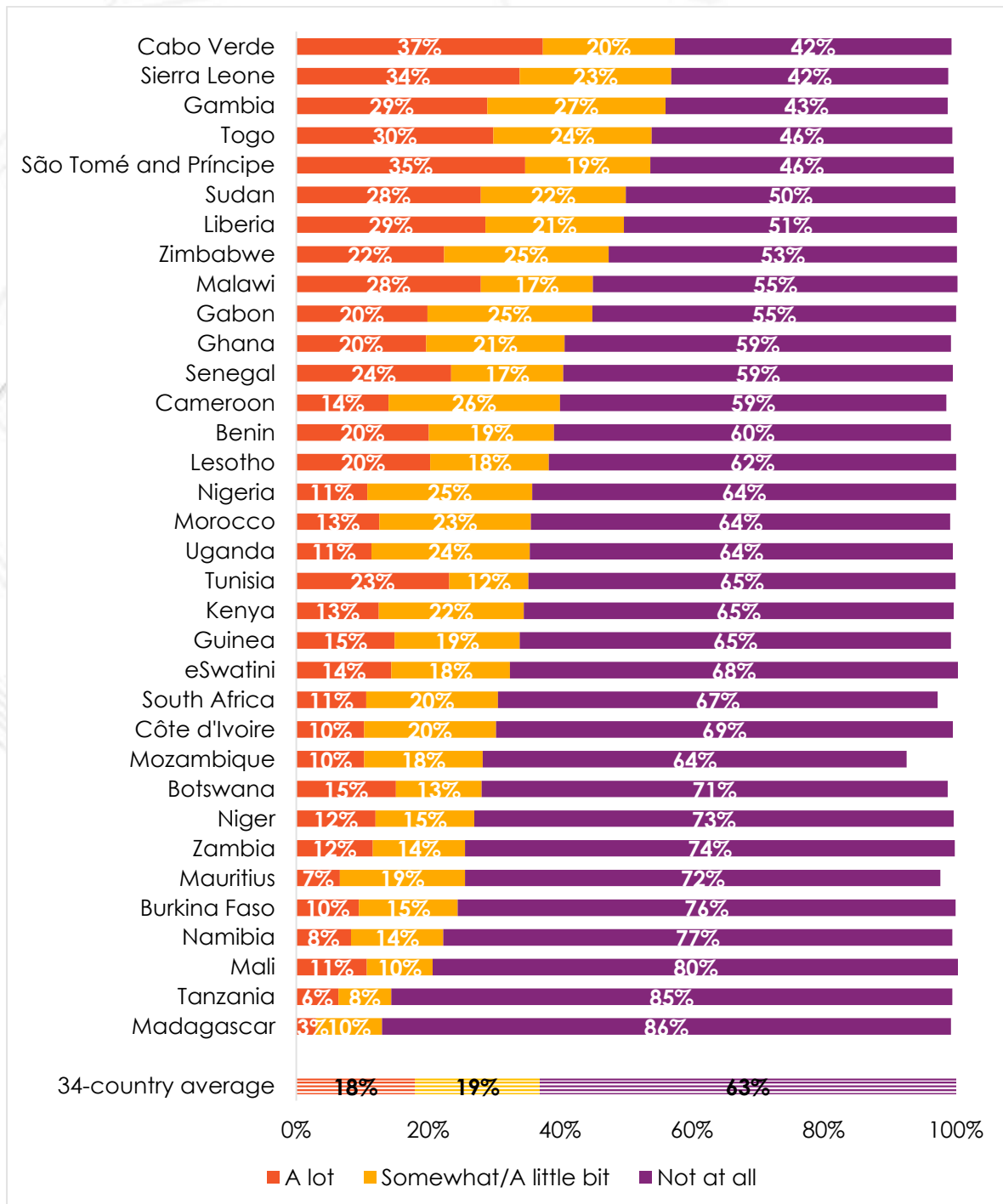
Key findings

- More than one in three Africans (37%) have considered emigrating, including 18% who have given this “a lot” of thought (Figure 1). A majority of citizens say they have thought at least “a little bit” about leaving Cabo Verde (57%), Sierra Leone (57%), the Gambia (56%), Togo (54%), and São Tomé and Príncipe (54%).
- Among those who have considered emigrating (“potential emigrants”), on average one in 10 (9%) – or about 3% of the total population – say they are currently making preparations to move. These proportions are highest in Zimbabwe and Lesotho.
- Young adults and highly educated citizens are most likely to consider leaving their country: About half of each group say they have considered it at least “a little bit” (Figure 2). Potential emigrants are more numerous among men (40%) and urban residents (44%) than among women (33%) and rural dwellers (32%), while thoughts of moving abroad are about equally common among the relatively well-off and the poor.
- Among potential emigrants, more than one-third would like to move to another country within their region (29%) or elsewhere in Africa (7%) (Figure 3). This preference for staying on the continent is especially strong in Southern Africa (58%) and weakest in North Africa (8%). Europe (27%) and North America (22%) are the most popular destinations outside Africa.

- In almost all countries, by far the most frequently cited reasons for emigrating are to look for work (44% on average) and to escape poverty and economic hardship (29%) (Figure 4).

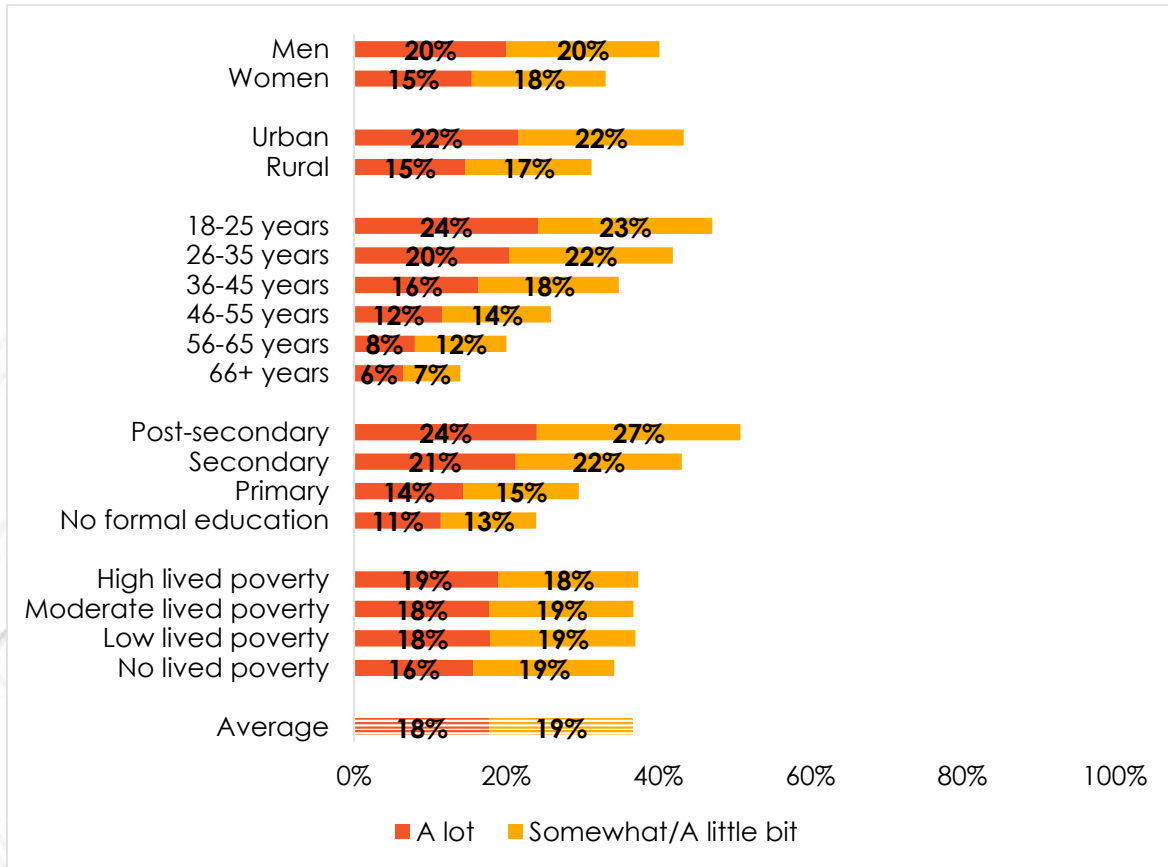
Charts

Figure 1: Considered emigrating | 34 countries | 2016/2018



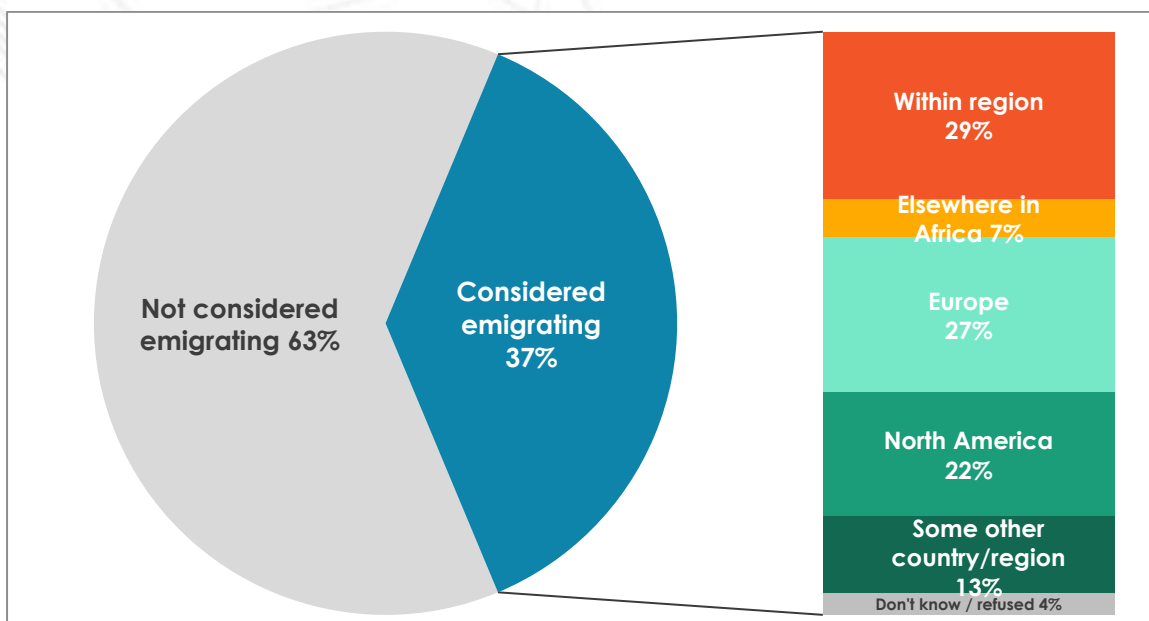
Respondents were asked: How much, if at all, have you considered moving to another country to live? ("Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.)

Figure 2: Considered emigrating | by socio-demographic group | 34 countries | 2016/2018



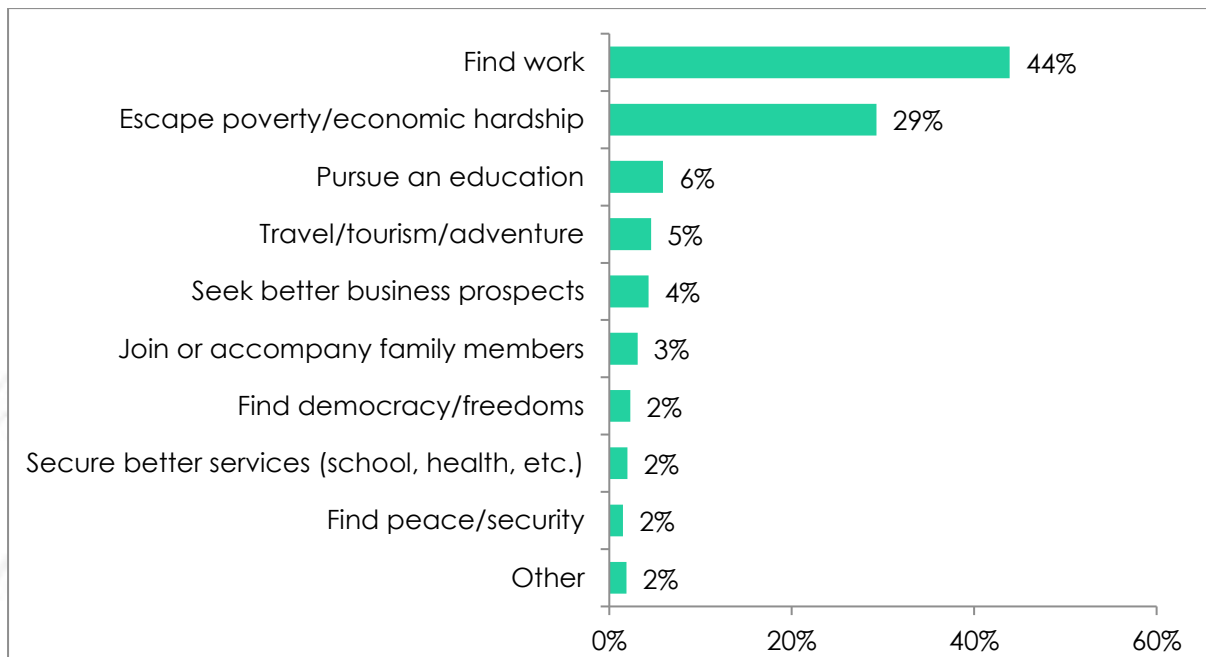
Respondents were asked: How much, if at all, have you considered moving to another country to live?

Figure 3: Preferred destination for potential emigrants | 34 countries | 2016/2018



Excluding those who said they had "not at all" considered emigration, respondents were asked: If you were to move to another country, where would you be most likely to go?

Figure 4: Reasons for considering emigration | 34 countries | 2016/2018



Excluding those who said they had “not at all” considered emigration, respondents were asked: What is the most important reason why you would consider moving from [your country]?

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Six rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 survey findings in 34 countries are being released in 2018/2019. Interested readers may follow our releases, including our Pan-Africa Profiles series of cross-country analyses, at #VoicesAfrica and sign up for our distribution list at www.afrobarometer.org.

Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples. Sample sizes of 1,200-2,400 yield country-level results with a margin of sampling error of +/-2 to 3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

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