
Afrobarometer Round 6

New data from
across Africa



Accra, Ghana
12 August 2016

News release

Youth Day: Does less engaged mean less empowered? Political engagement lags among Africa's youth (Afrobarometer)

Political and civic engagement by African youth is declining and is particularly weak among young women, according to new Afrobarometer survey findings.

The findings, which are being released on International Youth Day 2016 (August 12), show African youth are less likely than their elders to engage in a variety of political and civic activities, including voting, attending community meetings, joining others to raise an issue, and contacting leaders. Young women express significantly less interest in public affairs than young men.

The gap between African Youth Decade aspirations and the reality of youth engagement suggests that governments and development partners have considerable work to do to achieve the goals of increased youth participation and empowerment, especially for young women.

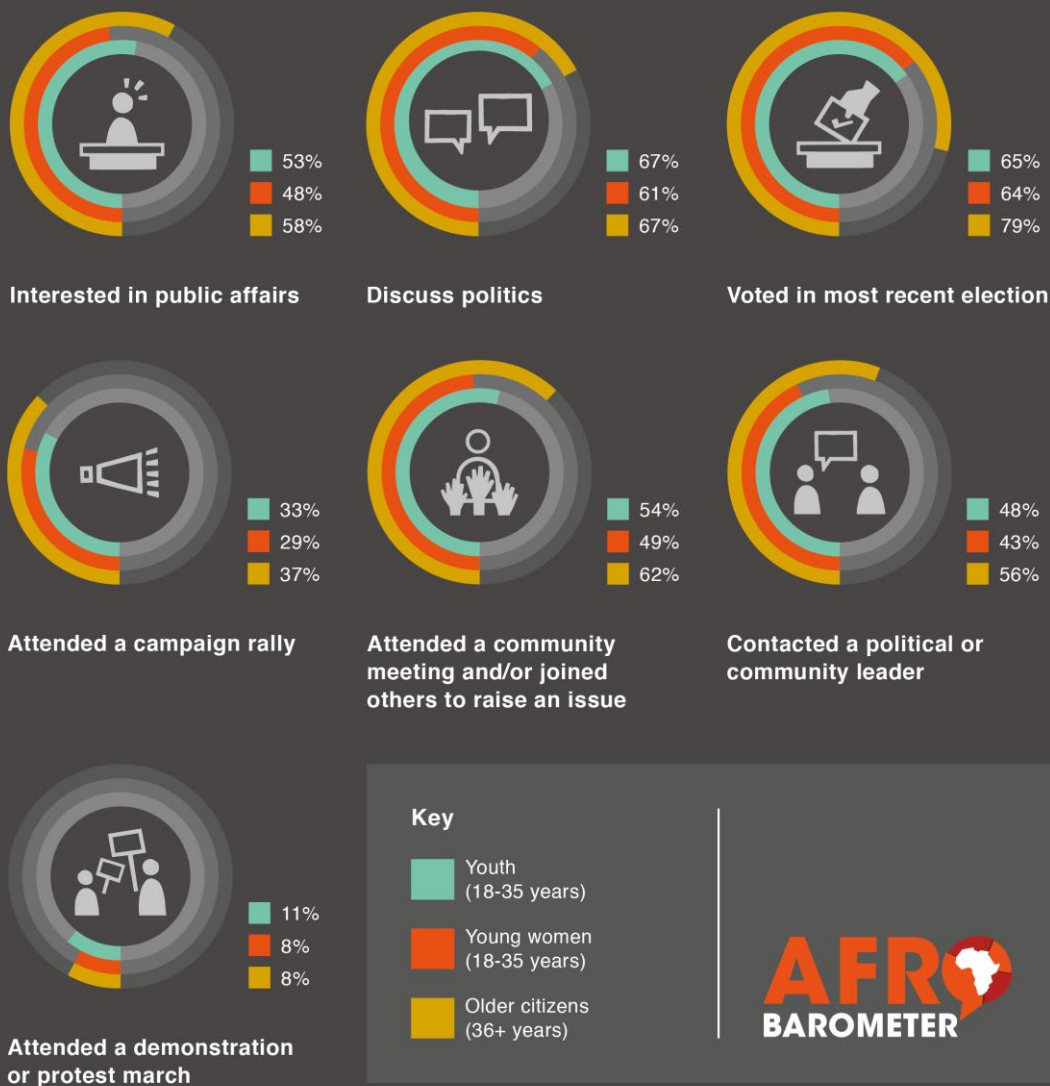
Titled "Does less engaged mean less empowered?" (Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 34), the report is based on nearly 54,000 interviews in 36 African countries in 2014/2015. It is available in English and French at <http://globalreleases.afrobarometer.org>.

Key findings

- Political engagement is generally lower among African youth than among their elders, particularly in terms of voting. Two-thirds (65%) of 18- to 35-year-old respondents who were old enough to vote in the last national election say they did so, compared to 79% of citizens above age 35.
- Slightly more than half (53%) of African youth report being "very" or "somewhat" interested in public affairs, while two-thirds (67%) say they discuss politics with friends or family at least "occasionally." Young women report significantly less interest (48% vs. 60% of men) and discussion (61% vs. 74%) (Figure 1).
- Attendance at campaign rallies is the most popular form of pre-electoral engagement among young Africans: One-third (33%) say they attended at least one in the previous year, compared to 37% of older citizens. The gender gap in participation in rallies averages 10 percentage points (Table 1).
- Less than half (47%) of 18- to 35-year-olds say they attended a community meeting at least once during the previous year, while 40% joined others to raise an issue (vs. 57% and 47% for older citizens). Young women's participation lags behind that of their male peers (by 9 percentage points, on average).
- Not quite half (48%) of youth say they contacted political or community leaders during the previous year to discuss an important issue, with lower reported engagement levels among young women than men (43% vs. 53%).

- Youth participation in demonstrations and protest marches is lower than in more conventional forms of engagement: 11% of young survey respondents say they attended at least one protest in the previous year (vs. 8% of older citizens). Again, women report lower participation levels than men (8% vs. 13%).
- Comparison over time in 16 countries shows that youth engagement levels have declined since 2005/2006 across most of these indicators, particularly interest in public affairs and measures of civic activism (both by 9 percentage points) (Figure 2).

Political and civic engagement of African youth 36 countries | 2014/2015



Afrobarometer

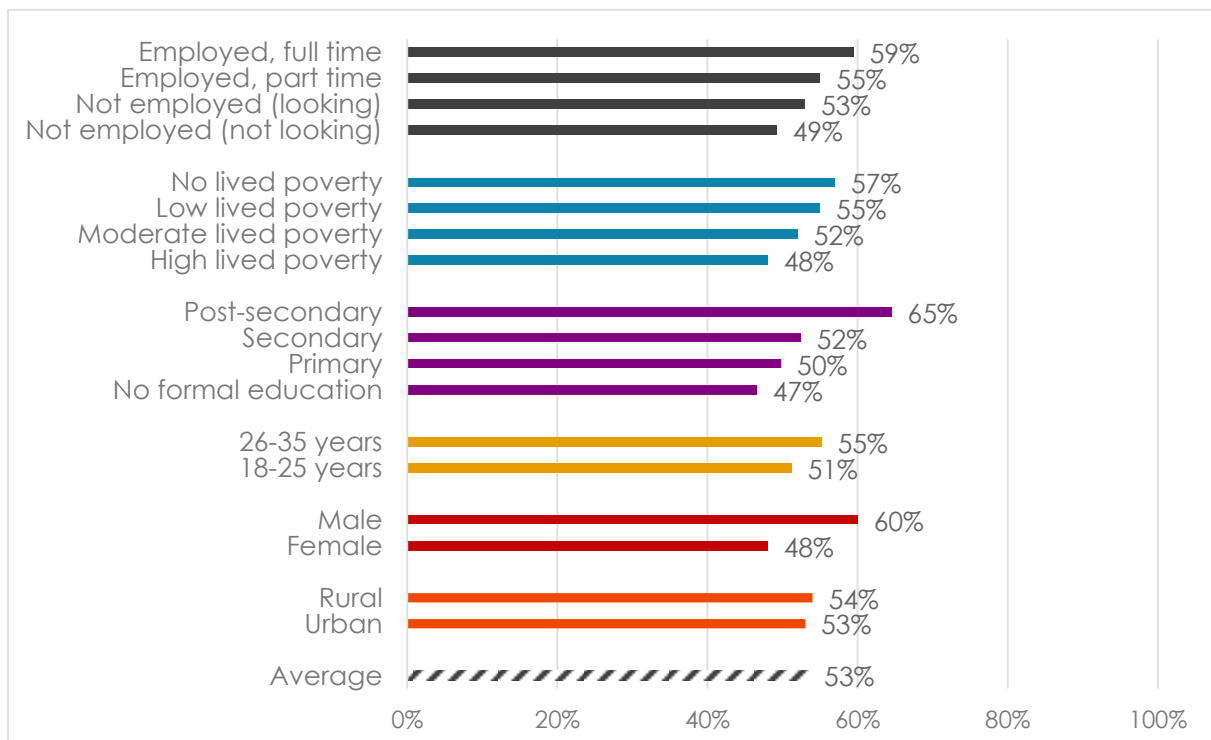
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and findings from Round 6 surveys (2014/2015) are currently being released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2% (for samples of 2,400) or +/-3% (for samples of 1,200) at a 95% confidence level.

Interested readers should visit <http://globalreleases.afrobarometer.org> for previous Round 6 releases and watch for additional releases over the coming months.

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

Charts

Figure 1: Interest in public affairs | by employment status, lived poverty, education, age, gender, and urban-rural residence | 18- to 35-year-olds | 36 countries | 2014/2015



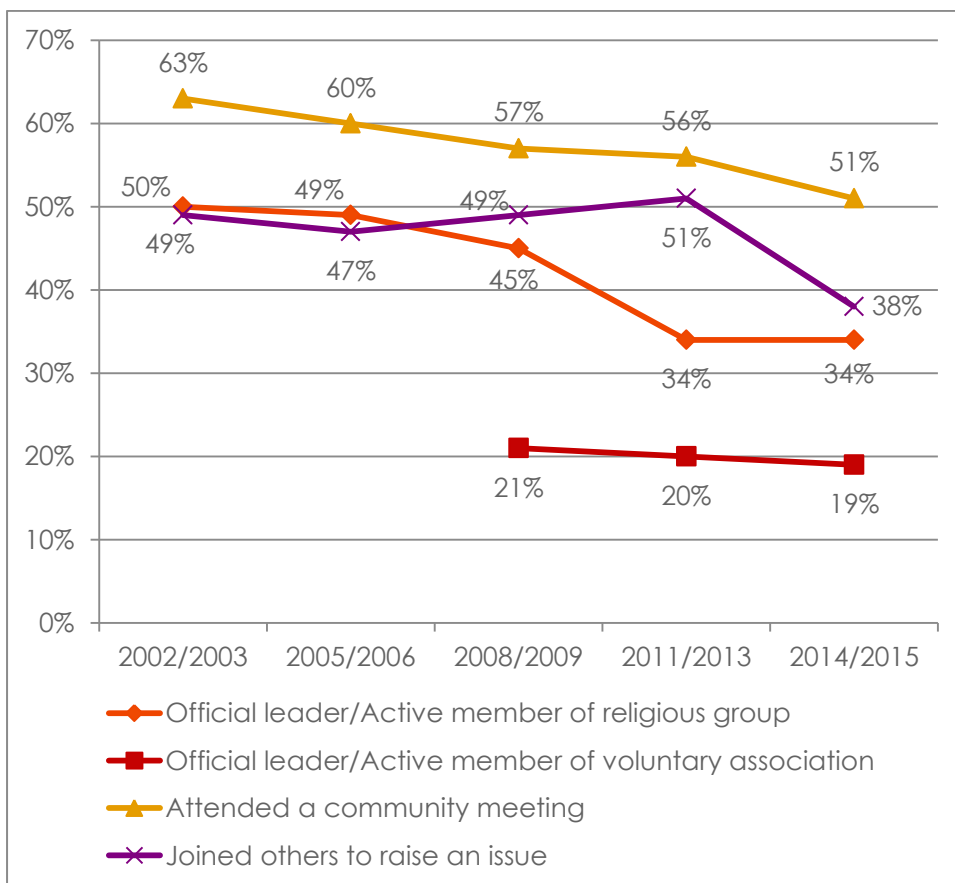
Respondents were asked: How interested would you say you are in public affairs? (% "very interested" or "somewhat interested")

Table 1: Gender gaps in youth political engagement | 36 countries | 2014/2015

Young African women are less likely to...	Male	Female	% point difference
Discuss politics “frequently” or “occasionally”	74%	61%	13
Be “very” or “somewhat” interested in politics	60%	48%	12
Contact at least one political or community leader	53%	43%	10
Join others to raise an issue	45%	35%	10
Attend campaign rallies	38%	29%	10*
Attend community meetings	51%	43%	8
Attend demonstrations or protest marches	13%	8%	5
Vote in national elections	66%	64%	2

* Rounded numbers may result in an apparent 1-percentage-point discrepancy.

Figure 2: Declining youth civic engagement | 18- to 35-year-olds | 16 countries | 2002/2015



Respondents were asked:

1. Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member?
2. 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. (% “yes”)



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