



AFRICAN YOUTH SURVEY 2026

**AFRICA'S PLACE IN A
DISRUPTED WORLD**
GEOPOLITICS, DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY

STRICT EMBARGO: Not for publication,
broadcast or external distribution
before 00.01 SAST 29 July 2026.

iff
ICHIKOWITZ
FAMILY FOUNDATION

The African Youth Survey 2026 is dedicated to the hopes and aspirations of Africa's youth.

African Youth Survey 2026

A White Paper on the findings of the Ichikowitz Family Foundation – African Youth Survey 2026. Published in 2026 by the Ichikowitz Family Foundation Copyright © 2026. The Ichikowitz Family Foundation. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the written permission of the Ichikowitz Family Foundation.

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation, Burson and PSB logos are trademarks. Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of their respective owners.

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation along with the various contributors will not accept responsibility for any direct or indirect loss or damage you may suffer as a result of using or relying on any of the information in this publication or study.

Special thanks to:

The various commentators whose analysis and insight brought depth and context to the findings. To Profit Partnership (Pty) Ltd for the design, layout and production.



Partners:



CONTENTS

Page 2	Survey Methodology
Page 4	Executive Summary
Page 48	The Ichikowitz Family Foundation

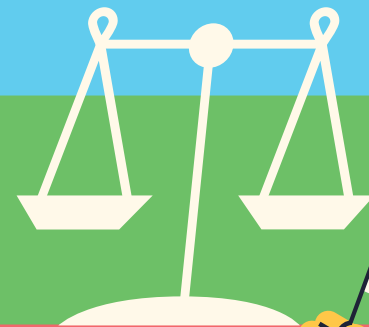
1. Afro-Optimism

Page 6



2. Foreign Relations & Influence

Page 16



3. The Multilateral Order

Page 26



4. Democracy & Governance

Page 32



5. Safety, Security & Extremism

Page 42



Gender ratio

50:50

Years of age

18-24

Face-to-face interviews
with country nationals

4,901



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation launched the African Youth Survey in 2020 to provide governments, the private sector, and civil society with insights into the aspirations, motivations, and viewpoints of Africa's youth. The most comprehensive study of its kind to date, the Survey gives a voice to one of the world's most consequential demographics, providing young Africans with the opportunity to share their opinions, experiences, and ambitions with the world.

Since its inception in 2020, the Survey has become a valued resource for policymakers, media, and stakeholders seeking high-quality research on the issues that matter most to Africa's youth. It has steadily grown its reputation as one of the most impactful pieces of research produced on the continent. PSB Insights, a global insights consultancy, has conducted four waves of research among youth across the continent for the African Youth Survey. Each wave consisted of:

- Face-to-face interviews (approx. 300 per market)
- African youth (nationals of each country) between the ages of 18-24
- Sample split 50:50 male and female
- Three distinct interview locations across each country
- Five separate districts within each interview location
- Respondents offered to take the survey in a range of local languages for each country
- Responses recorded electronically via tablet
- No incentives were offered as part of the research

Note: Where 2026 African Youth numbers are shown on their own, this includes all countries surveyed for this year's research: Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Comparisons of change between 2020, 2022, 2024 and 2026 are shown only among countries that have been researched in every wave of research, which are Congo Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Zambia.

Country	2020	2022	2024	2026	
Angola	-	✓	-	-	
Botswana	-	-	✓	-	
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	✓	
Cameroon	-	-	✓	-	
Chad	-	-	✓	✓	
Congo Brazzaville	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Côte d'Ivoire	-	-	✓	-	
DRC	-	✓	-	✓	
Ethiopia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gabon	✓	✓	✓	-	
Ghana	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kenya	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Liberia	-	-	-	✓	
Malawi	✓	-	✓	-	
Mali	✓	-	-	-	
Mozambique	-	✓	-	✓	
Namibia	-	-	✓	-	
Nigeria	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rwanda	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Senegal	✓	-	-	-	
Somalia	-	-	-	✓	
South Africa	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sudan	-	✓	-	-	
Tanzania	-	-	✓	-	
Togo	✓	-	-	✓	
Uganda	-	✓	-	-	
Zambia	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Zimbabwe	✓	-	-	✓	
Total Countries	14	15	16	16	
Total Interviews	4,200	4,206	5,575	4,901	18,882

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Afro-Optimism and Future Outlook – Afro-optimism is growing, with youth more positive about the direction of their country, economy, and the continent than in 2024, and just under half now say their country is heading in the 'right direction'. Strong uplifts in Ghana, Zambia, and Ethiopia have driven this rebound, though the rising cost of living remains the most impactful event of the past five years. In response, youth now prioritise creating new, well-paying jobs alongside reducing corruption as the most important steps for the continent to progress.

International Influence and Alliances – Four-in-five remain concerned about the influence of foreign powers, even as perceptions of individual countries are increasingly positive. China and the United States are still seen as the most influential external powers, with China's influence the more warmly received, while the EU enjoys especially strong standing as nine-in-ten now consider it an ally. In an increasingly divided world, youth prioritise strong alliances with powers that deliver tangible benefits such as trade and investment over those based on shared values.

The Trump Effect and US Relations – Youth are divided as to whether their leaders should find ways to work with President Trump or stand up to him, with those in South Africa most likely to favour opposition. Despite having expected their country to be better off under Biden in 2024, around three-in-five are now optimistic about the future under Trump, particularly on military support and security. Just under half believe the closure of USAID will negatively impact their country, with healthcare services and disease prevention seen as the areas most affected.

The Multilateral Order – With seven-in-ten believing the world is becoming more divided, multinational organisations are increasingly felt to have a positive impact. The African Union and the United Nations are viewed as the most influential organisations, and youth broadly trust the UN while strongly backing reform, with overwhelming support for permanent African representation on the Security Council. Promoting peace and security is seen as the UN's top priority over the next five years, ahead of 'softer' interventions.

Youth Voices and Representation – Three-quarters of youth believe too few young people hold leadership positions in government, and a similar proportion would be more likely to vote for a party promoting young candidates. Support for generational change is clear, with the creation of a 'Minister for Youth' role attracting broader approval than any other governance reform tested. While youth believe their voice matters to leaders and that they can drive meaningful change, most feel their leaders remain out of touch with their needs.

Systems of Government and Democracy – Three-quarters of youth continue to prefer democracy over non-democratic government, though support is not uncritical, with over half saying a Western-style model is unsuitable for the African context. Youth favour an 'African-style' democracy defined by national unity and stability, leaders who deliver jobs and services, and free and fair elections. Equality before the law remains a core expectation – just over half agree everyone in their country is treated equally – and there is strong backing for both term limits (seven-in-ten) and age limits for Presidents and Prime Ministers.

Safety, Security, and the Military – Seven-in-ten youth feel safe in their country today, and satisfaction with police and security has reached a six-year high, though only a quarter are 'very satisfied' and confidence falls sharply in Chad and Mozambique. Unemployment and poverty are felt to pose the biggest threat to community safety, and in turn job creation is overwhelmingly seen as the most effective way for governments to improve security. The military commands strong regard, with four-in-five viewing it as a source of national pride and over half willing to consider a career in service.



Afro-optimism continues to strengthen, with youth expressing growing confidence in the direction of both the African continent and their own countries, with sentiment now surpassing pre-COVID levels. This positive momentum holds across scales: continental optimism is echoed in how youth view the trajectory of their own nations. Yet economic pressures, particularly the rising cost of living, temper this outlook for a meaningful share of youth; for the first time across all waves, jobs and corruption emerge as equal priorities for the years ahead, reflecting a generation navigating economic anxiety alongside an enduring demand for accountability.

Afro-optimism has risen considerably since the last wave, with over two-in-five youth (43%) now expressing positivity about the direction of the African continent. This marks a meaningful improvement on 2024 (37%) and a return to pre-COVID levels. Several factors may help explain this shift. In 2024, many African youth were still contending with the lingering societal consequences of COVID-19 — ongoing disruptions to education and employment, deteriorating mental health, and the compound pressures of a cost-of-living crisis that disproportionately hit those already in precarious economic positions. By 2026, a number of these pressures appear to be easing: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects GDP growth across Sub-Saharan Africa at 4.3% for 2026, up from 3.2% in 2023, with 21 countries expected to exceed 5% growth¹. Inflation, which had been a defining source of household anxiety, has moderated considerably — the World Bank estimates Sub-Saharan Africa's inflation rate stabilising at around 9% through 2026, down from a peak of 22% in 2024².

However, the decline in negative sentiment has not straightforwardly translated into increased optimism. Uncertainty has notably increased, rising from 7% in 2024 to 11% in 2026, though this level remains consistent with pre-COVID norms. This suggests that while youth are stepping back from pessimism, many remain cautious about the continent's direction rather than confident in it. The pattern reflects a broader “cautious recovery” described in the Africa Sustainable Development Report 2025³, which notes that while macroeconomic conditions have improved across parts of the continent, households continue to face persistent pressures related to the cost of living and limited employment opportunities.

At a country level, at least a quarter of youth in every market aside from South Africa express positivity about the direction of the continent. Optimism is highest in Rwanda (68%), Somalia (66%), Burkina Faso (60%), and Ghana (60%). Ghana's shift is particularly notable, with optimism rising by 24 percentage points since 2024, from 36% to 60%. This considerable change in mood is likely a result of the transfer of government in 2025

¹ IMF. *World Economic Outlook Update (2026)*. <https://www.imf.org/en/publications/weo/issues/2026/04/14/world-economic-outlook-april-2026>

² IMF. *World Economic Outlook Update (2026)*. <https://www.imf.org/en/publications/weo/issues/2026/04/14/world-economic-outlook-april-2026>

³ African Union Commission, ECA, AfDB & UNDP. *2025 Africa Sustainable Development Report (2025)*. <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/2025-africa-sustainable-development-report>

and the economic confidence that followed. Recent World Bank⁴ assessments of Sub-Saharan economies also point to enhanced resilience in these markets following macroeconomic reforms.

Nigeria records another significant shift, with nearly a third of youth now positive about the continent's direction (30%), up from just a tenth (10%) in 2024. A recent IMF⁵ report on Nigeria attributes this improvement in sentiment to

4 World Bank. Africa's Pulse. No. 32. Pathways to Job Creation in Africa. (2025). <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/43738>

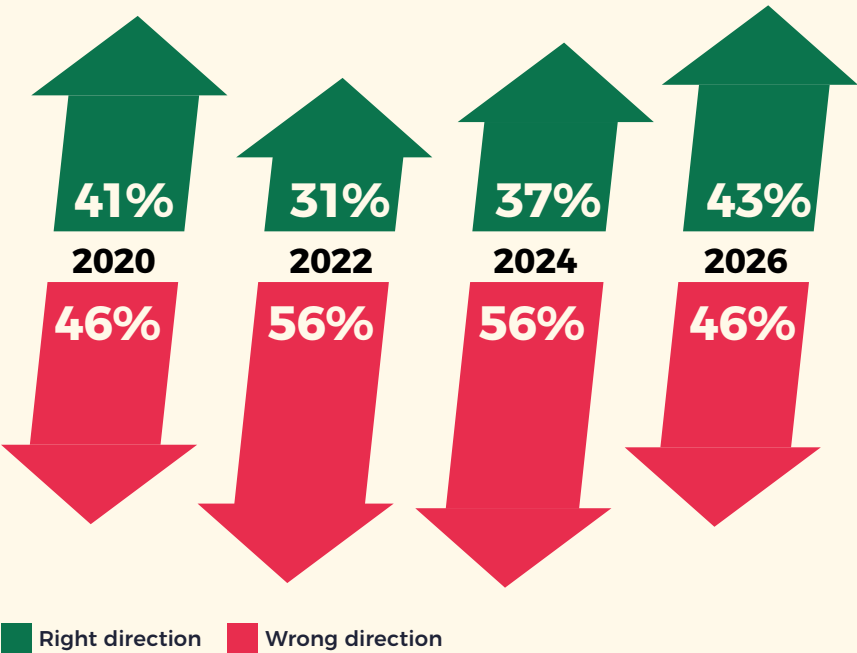
5 International Monetary Fund. African Dept. IMF Staff Country Reports 2025, 157. Nigeria: 2025 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Nigeria. (2025). <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798229015127.002>

positive signs of economic adjustment following major structural reforms.

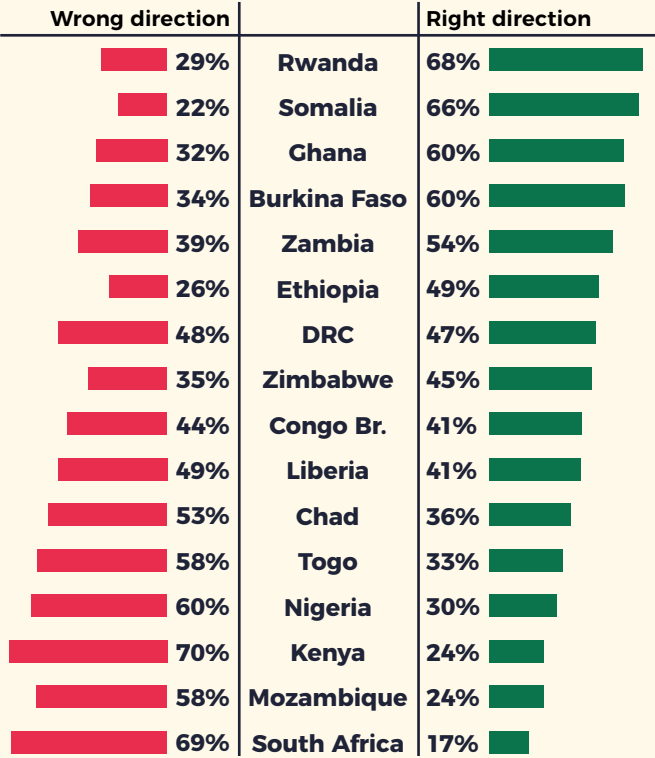
In contrast, negativity remains pronounced in Kenya (70%) and South Africa (69%), where seven-in-ten youth believe the continent is headed in the wrong direction. Uncertainty is highest in Ethiopia (26%), followed by Zimbabwe (20%) and Mozambique (18%). All three countries appear on the World Bank's 2026 list of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations⁶, a designation that helps explain why youth in these markets remain unsure about the continent's future,

6 World Bank. Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (2025). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/classification-of-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations>

African continent direction

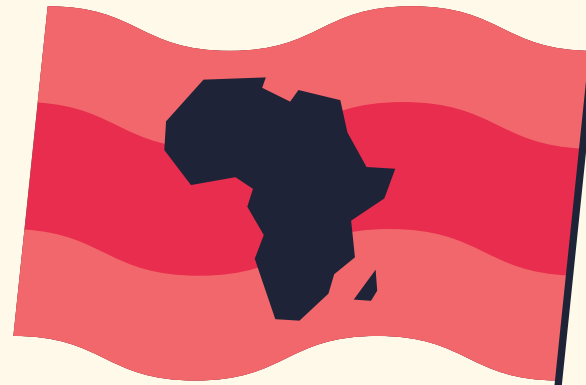


*Comparing only the eight countries asked in 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 so figures will differ slightly to the 2024 overall figures which contains ten countries

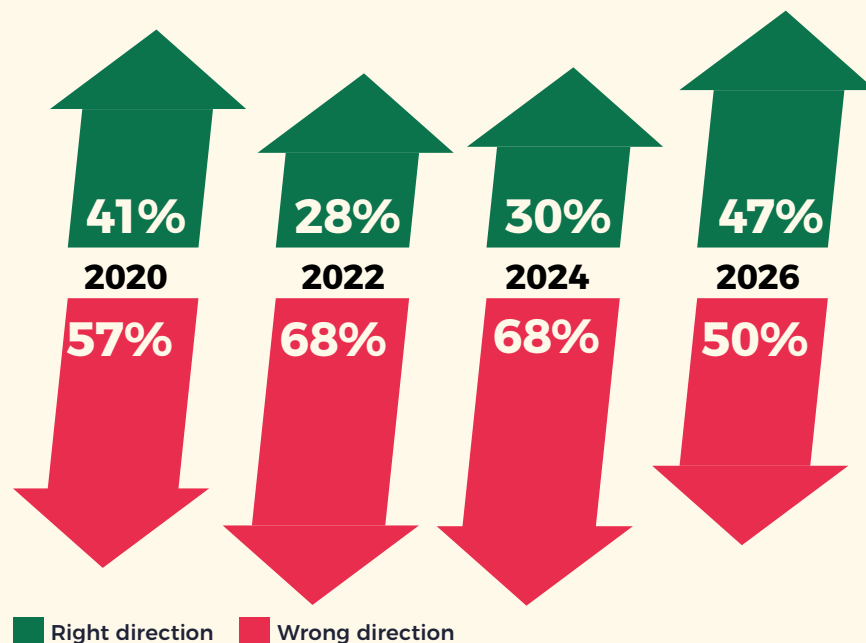


with political instability, economic crisis, and security threats continuing to weigh on their outlook.

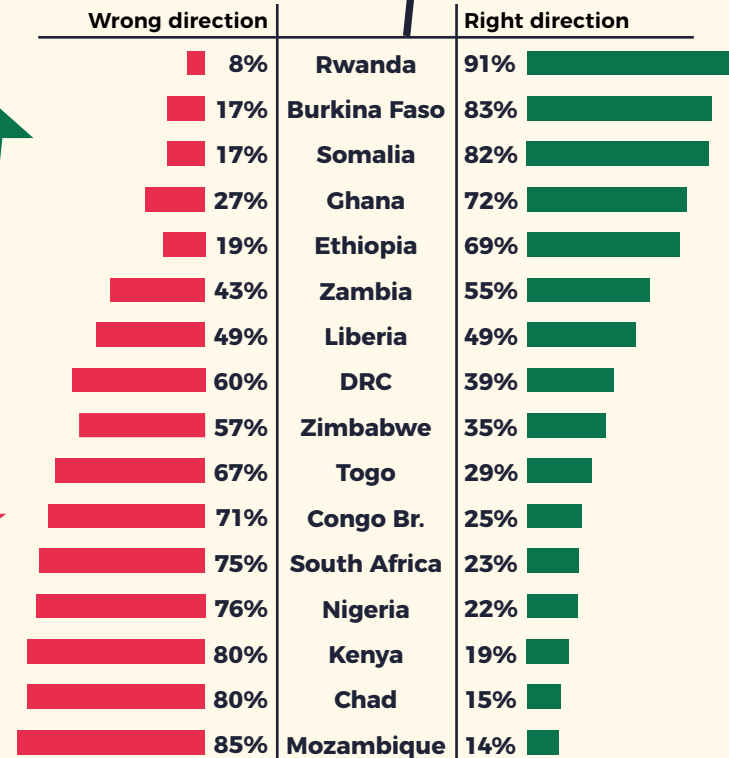
- **Most likely to say Africa is going in the right direction:** Rwanda (68%), Somalia (66%) and Ghana/Burkina Faso (60%)
- **Most likely to say Africa is going in the wrong direction:** Kenya (70%), South Africa (69%) and Nigeria (60%)
- **Top three countries with highest level of uncertainty:** Ethiopia (26%), Zimbabwe (20%) and Mozambique (18%)

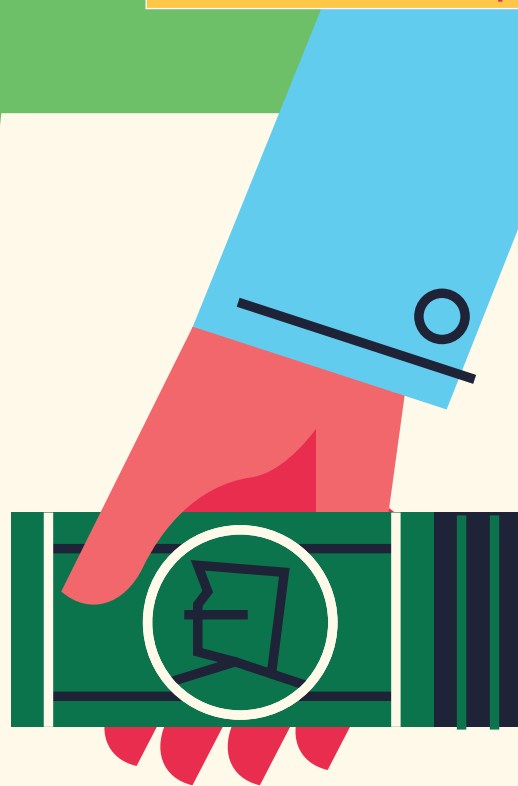


Country direction



**Comparing only the eight countries asked in 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 so figures will differ slightly to the 2024 overall figures which contains ten countries*

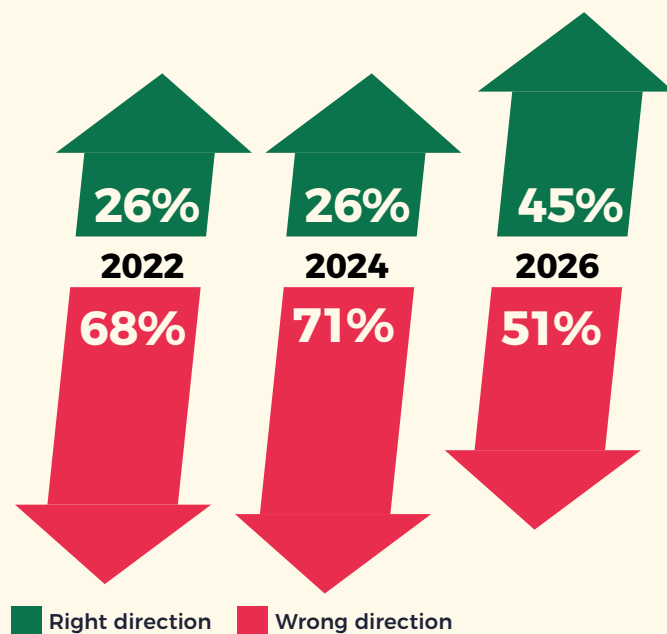




Overall positive continental outlook is broadly mirrored at a country level, with youth in Rwanda (91%), Burkina Faso (83%), Somalia (82%), and Ghana (72%) among the most optimistic about the direction their own country is taking. Compared to 2024, confidence has grown notably in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Zambia. Kenya runs counter to this trend, however, where optimism about country direction has declined since the last wave, likely reflecting the financial strain on households, softening economic forecasts, and heightened regional instability.

- **Most likely to say the country is going in the right direction:** Rwanda (91%), Burkina Faso (83%) and Somalia (82%)
- **Most likely to say the country is going in the wrong direction:** Mozambique (85%), Chad/Kenya (80%) and Nigeria (76%).

National economy direction



*Comparing only the eight countries asked in 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 so figures will differ slightly to the 2024 overall figures which contains ten countries
 **National economy question not asked in 2020

Wrong direction		Right direction
16%	Burkina Faso	83%
21%	Rwanda	79%
19%	Somalia	79%
27%	Ghana	72%
19%	Ethiopia	68%
43%	Zambia	55%
49%	Liberia	49%
60%	DRC	39%
57%	Zimbabwe	35%
63%	Togo	29%
70%	Congo Br.	24%
74%	South Africa	23%
76%	Nigeria	22%
79%	Kenya	19%
77%	Chad	15%
82%	Mozambique	14%

Optimism about country direction extends to perceptions of the national economy, and the relationship between the two is consistent across all markets: youth who feel positively about their country's direction tend to feel the same about their national economy. Youth in Burkina Faso, Rwanda, and Somalia most strongly embody this, with over three-quarters in each market expressing positivity about both.

In Burkina Faso, this optimism is potentially shaped in part by populist domestic reforms introduced under the government of Ibrahim Traoré and a more stable economic outlook. However, this does run counter to the security situation in the country, creating a challenge in interpreting the results. In Somalia, optimism may reflect a combination of improving economic conditions – GDP growth of 4.0% in 2024, supported by remittances and agricultural recovery –

alongside the government's National Transformation Plan 2025–2029.⁷

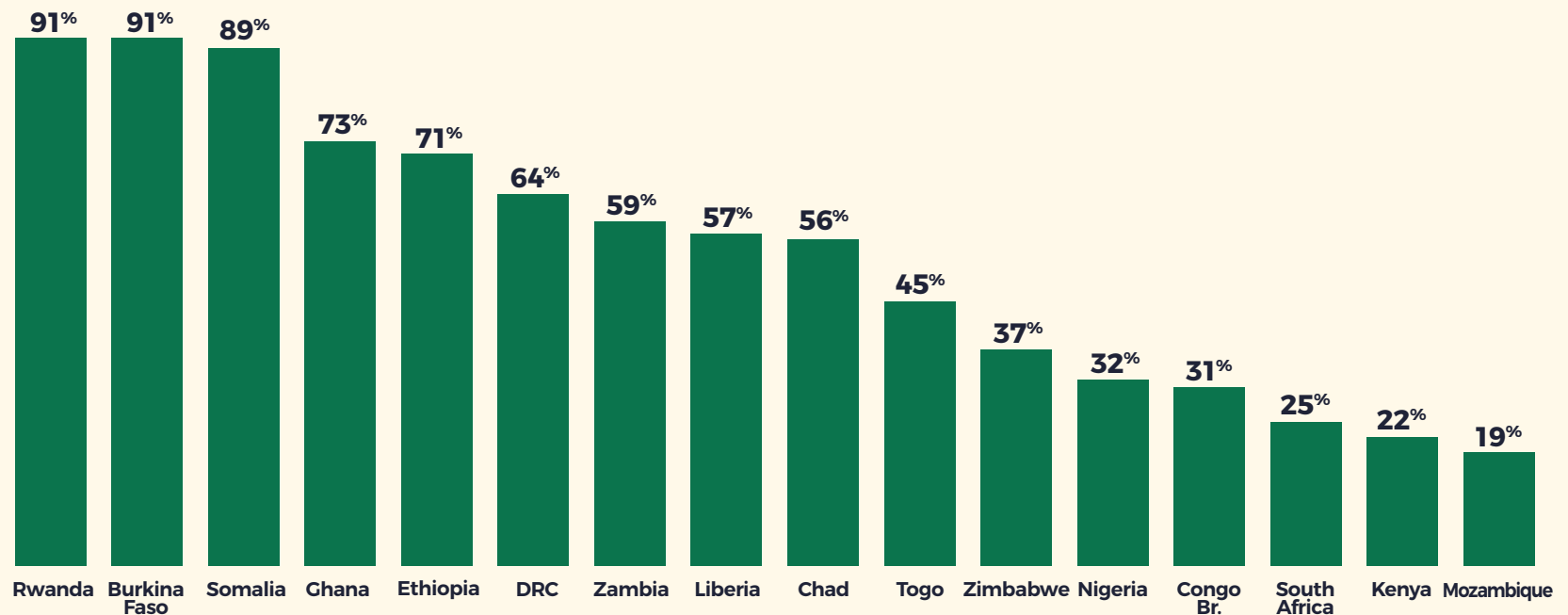
The picture is markedly different elsewhere. Youth in Mozambique (82%), Kenya (79%), and Chad (77%) are among the most pessimistic about the direction of their national economy, underscoring the uneven nature of economic recovery across the continent.

- **Most likely to say National Economy is going in the right direction:** Burkina Faso (83%), Rwanda (79%), and Somalia (79%)

⁷ World Bank. *Somalia's Economic Prospects are Positive, but Foreign Aid Cuts are Downsizing Growth (2025)* <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/06/30/somalia-afe-economic-prospects-are-positive-but-foreign-aid-cuts-are-downsizing-growth>

Optimism and excitement towards future

Showing % selecting 'Optimistic' + 'Excited'



* Missing values = Don't know

- **Most likely to say National Economy is going in the wrong direction:** Mozambique (82%), Kenya (79%), and Chad (77%)

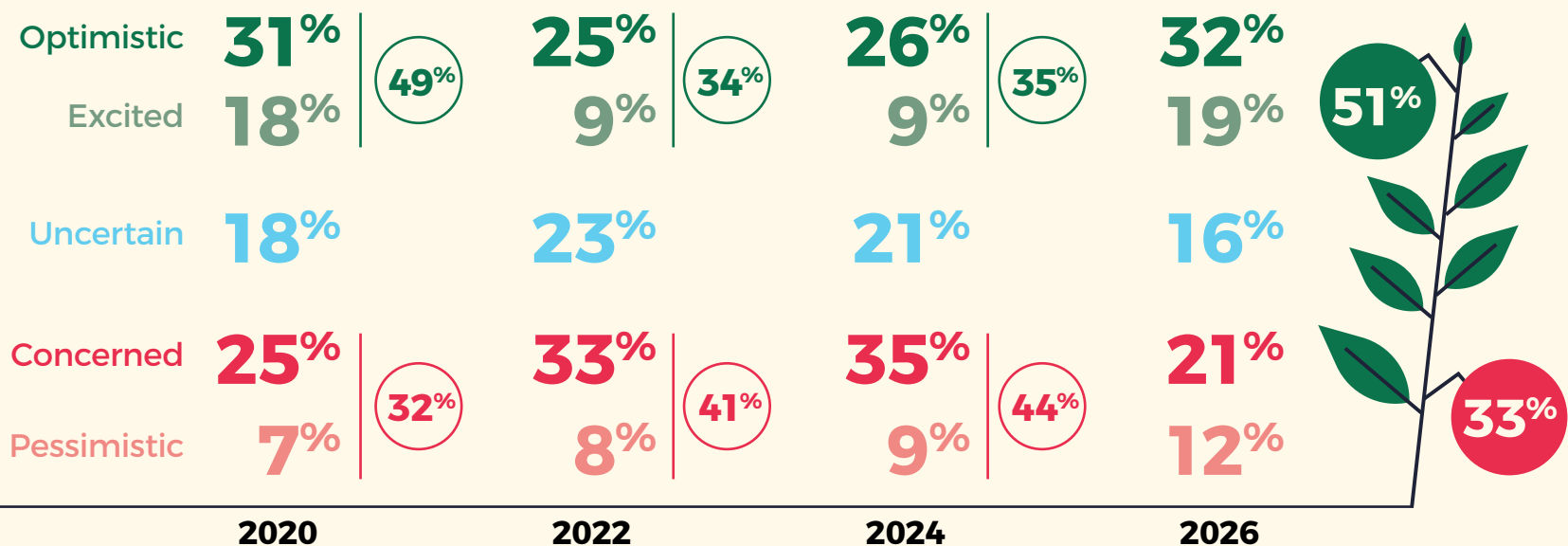
Employment opportunity emerges as a central driver of this variation. In markets where concern about the lack of jobs has fallen considerably since 2024, optimism about the country's direction has tended to rise in step, with the sharpest declines recorded in Ethiopia and Zambia. While this pattern is not universal, the scale of these shifts points to a broader easing of anxiety among youth and a growing, if cautious, confidence in the direction of their country.

- In Ethiopia, concern about employment fell by 44 pp. from 2024, while positive sentiment about the country's direction rose by 44 pp.

- In Zambia, concern about employment fell by 41 pp. from 2024, while positive sentiment about the country's direction rose by 32 pp.
- In Ghana, concern about employment fell by 34 pp. from 2024, while positive sentiment about the country's direction rose by 51 pp.
- In Nigeria, concern about employment fell by 31 pp. from 2024, while positive sentiment about the country's direction rose by 16 pp.

In these countries, we see stable, growing economies that often sit above their long-term trend data. Nigeria, for example, is now growing at a faster rate than at any point since 2015, while Ethiopia has managed to maintain one of the highest rates of growth anywhere in the world (9.2% in 2025).

Optimism about the future is growing, with half of youth now positive about the future of their country



Over half of African youth (51%) are optimistic or excited about the future of their country, a substantial rise from a third (35%) in 2024. Optimism is highest among youth in Burkina Faso (91%) and Rwanda (91%), with Ghana, Ethiopia, and Zambia recording the largest increases since the last wave. This upward trend aligns with wider findings from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Africa⁸ which point to growing, albeit uneven, economic optimism among African populations, particularly among younger cohorts.

This optimism is not, however, evenly distributed across age groups. Within the survey, optimism peaks among 23-year-

⁸ UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa. *Defiant Progress. Advancing the Africa's Union's sustaining peace and development agenda (2025)*. <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/defiant-progress-advancing-african-unions-sustaining-peace-and-development>

olds, while those aged 18 to 19 are the least optimistic about their country's future. When thinking about employment, younger respondents aged 18 to 21 are also more likely than those aged 22 to 24 to prioritise job creation as a marker of Africa's progress, suggesting that cost-of-living pressures weigh more heavily on those who have yet to establish themselves in the job market.

A third of youth (33%) remain negative about the future of their country; however, this is an improvement from 2024 (44%). Those describing themselves as "pessimistic" have edged up to 12%, the highest level since the start of our research in 2020, and the proportion is highest in Kenya (27%) and South Africa (24%). Taken together, this trend emphasises that there is less consensus among youth and more variation in experiences and outcomes.

MOST IMPACTFUL EVENT OF LAST FIVE YEARS

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

2022

2024

2026

The rising cost of living

South Africa: 42%; Ethiopia: 41%; Kenya: 38%

-

-

27%

Political instability

Burkina Faso: 44%; Mozambique: 36%; Congo Br: 35%

16%

16%

18%

Deaths from infectious disease

Liberia: 23%; Zimbabwe: 22%; Kenya/Mozambique: 20%

45%

35%

16%

The technological/digital revolution

Rwanda: 19%; Liberia: 15%; Ghana: 12%

9%

11%

9%

Increased access to essential services and resources

Liberia: 18%; Ghana: 17%; South Africa/Zambia: 14%

7%

10%

8%

Environmental challenges

Somalia: 15%; Kenya: 11%; Ghana/Zimbabwe: 10%

5%

9%

8%

Democratic changes

Liberia: 12%; Ghana/Somalia: 11%; Togo: 9%

9%

10%

7%

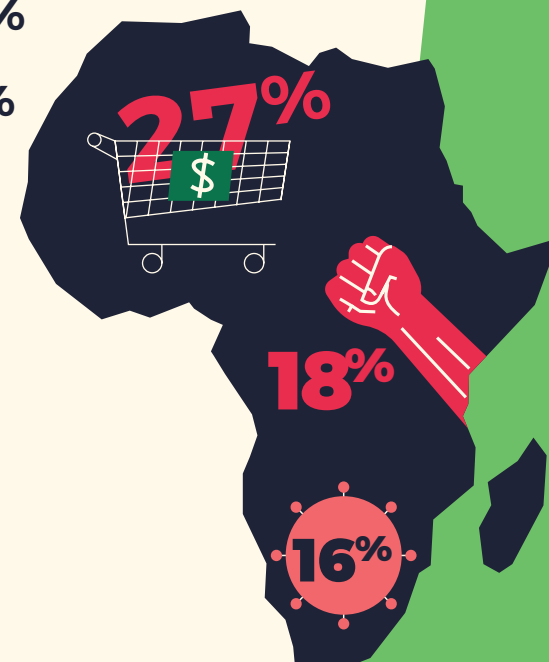
International involvement in Africa

Somalia: 11%; Liberia: 8%; Ghana/Zimbabwe: 7%

6%

7%

5%



*Not showing tracked data due to change in answer choices asked

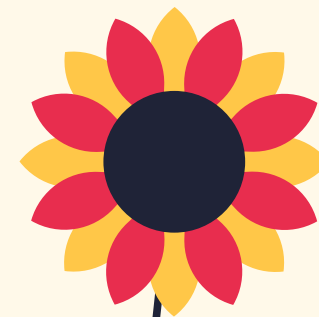
- **Most likely to express optimism and excitement about the future of the country:** Rwanda/Burkina Faso (91%), Somalia (89%) and Ghana (73%)
- **Least likely to express optimism and excitement about the future of the country:** South Africa (25%), Kenya (22%) and Mozambique (19%)

The rising cost of living has moved to the top of African youth's collective experience, overtaking deaths from infectious diseases and political instability as the most impactful event of the past five years. The day-to-day consequences of geopolitical tensions and global conflict, feeding through to higher food and fuel costs, weighs

heavily on youth across the continent. This is reflected in real data – inflation in Sub-Saharan Africa peaked in 2024 at the highest level (22%) since 1994.⁹ World Bank analysis¹⁰ also makes clear that tighter financial conditions and rising costs disproportionately impact the most disadvantaged households, with young people particularly exposed.

9 IMF, *World Economic Outlook Update* (2026). <https://www.imf.org/en/publications/weo/issues/2026/04/14/world-economic-outlook-april-2026>

10 UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, *Defiant Progress. Advancing the Africa's Union's sustaining peace and development agenda* (2025). <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/defiant-progress-advancing-african-unions-sustaining-peace-and-development>



Most important things for Africa to progress

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

	2020	2022	2024	2026
Creating new, well-paying jobs South Africa: 35%; DRC/Zimbabwe: 34%; Zambia: 31%	24%	29%	21%	27%
Reducing government corruption Kenya: 38%; South Africa: 37%; Mozambique: 31%	28%	23%	24%	25%
Increasing access to basic needs and services Zambia: 34%; Nigeria: 24%; Kenya: 22%	16%	16%	17%	18%
Making it easier to start a business DRC: 33%; Togo: 27%; Congo Br.: 23%	10%	13%	14%	16%
Achieving peace and stability in Africa Burkina Faso: 30%; Mozambique: 26%; Rwanda: 23%	17%	13%	16%	14%
Modernizing the education system Congo Br.: 25%; Chad: 23%; Rwanda: 20%	14%	16%	16%	14%
Building a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship Rwanda: 26%; Ethiopia: 19%; Zambia: 15%	12%	14%	13%	13%
Encouraging more foreign investment Nigeria: 14%; Zimbabwe: 13%; Ghana: 12%	6%	5%	8%	9%
Embracing digital and technological innovation Rwanda: 16%; Ghana/Somalia: 11%; Congo Br./Nigeria: 10%	6%	10%	10%	9%
Limiting the influence of foreign powers Ghana: 13%; South Africa/Zambia/Liberia: 10%; Rwanda/Burkina Faso/DRC/Somalia: 9%	6%	7%	8%	8%

*Comparing only the eight countries asked in 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 so figures will differ slightly to the 2024 overall figures which contains ten countries

Looking ahead to the next five years, a quarter of youth place equal importance on creating new, well-paying jobs (27%) and reducing government corruption (25%), broadly in line with 2024 levels. This convergence reflects the deepening link between economic and governance concerns: for many youth, the lack of employment opportunities compounds the pressure of rising costs, making corruption and its role in stifling economic opportunity feel equally urgent. According to the 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index¹¹, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to record the highest levels of public sector corruption worldwide, lending weight to why both priorities carry equal force.

At a country level, political instability emerges as the most impactful event of the past five years for youth in Burkina Faso (44%), Mozambique (36%), and Congo Brazzaville (35%). This reflects a broader regional picture: the UN Security Council¹² has identified the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the African Great Lakes region as areas facing persistent challenges to peace, security, and sustainable development. In Congo Brazzaville specifically, long-standing concerns around ethno-regional favouritism, corruption, and weak administrative oversight continue to shape the political landscape.

Despite being among those who identified political instability as the most impactful development of the past five years, the majority of youth in Somalia and Burkina Faso (89%) report satisfaction with their government's efforts to maintain political stability, a notable finding that may reflect confidence in current leadership trajectories in both countries. The picture varies elsewhere: in Liberia and Zimbabwe, nearly a quarter of youth cite deaths from infectious disease as the most impactful event of the past five years, with the rising cost of living an equally pressing concern in Zimbabwe, suggesting that for some

countries the challenges of the past five years have been defined by multiple, overlapping crises rather than a single dominant issue.

Country-level priorities for continental progress reflect these varied realities. In Burkina Faso, nearly a third of youth (30%) identify achieving peace and stability as the most important driver of progress, a view that carries particular resonance given the country's experience of two coup d'états in the past five years. In Zambia, just over a third (34%) point to expanding access to basic needs and services, while in Chad, just under a quarter (23%) identify modernising the education system as the most pressing priority.



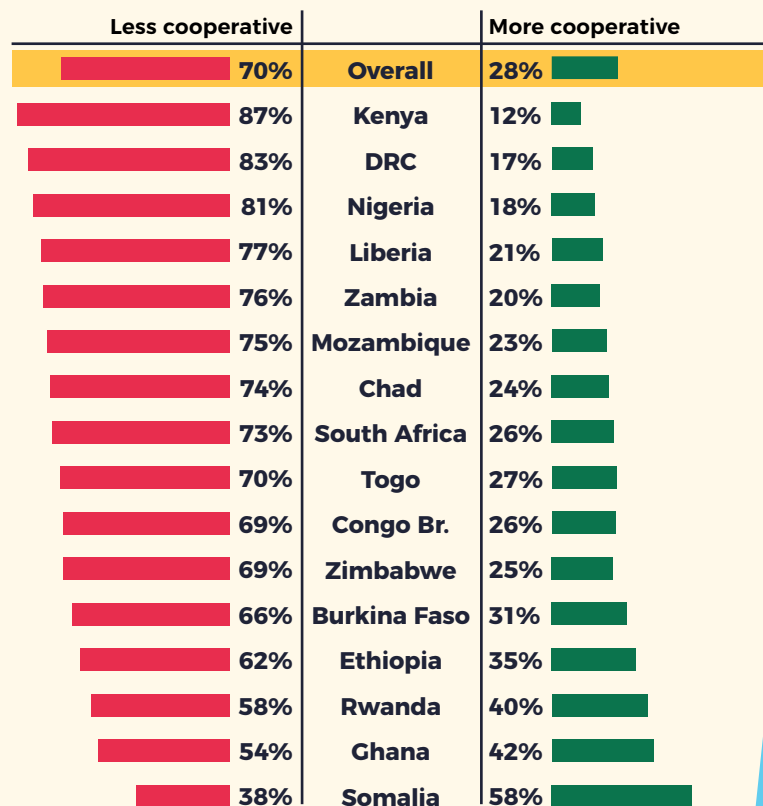
¹¹ Transparency International. *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025: Public sector corruption sees Sub-Saharan Africa face the highest corruption levels globally* (2026). <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/corruption-perceptions-index-2025-public-sector-corruption-sub-saharan-africa-face-highest-corruption-levels-globally>

¹² UN Security Council. (United Nations. (2020). *United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (S/2020/1045)*, United Nations. (2021). *Comprehensive, Integrated and Redoubled Support to the Sahel (S/RES/2531)*.



Perceptions of foreign influence remain broadly positive among African youth, even as the landscape continues to shift. Perceived influence from China and India has grown since 2024, with China increasingly viewed as a more favourable partner than the United States – a sentiment shaped in part by the return of the Trump administration. The United Nations and the African Union continue to command strong confidence as institutions seen to act in African interests. Nonetheless, concern about the overall scale of foreign influence persists, with notable variation at a country level reflecting an enduring tension between the perceived benefits of international engagement and anxieties about sovereignty and self-determination.

World direction



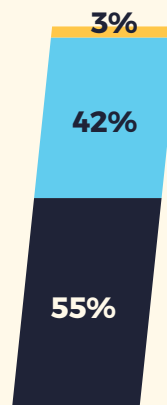
A sense of global fracture is palpable among African youth, as seven-in-ten (70%) believe the world is becoming more divided and dangerous, a view felt most acutely in Kenya (87%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (83%), and Nigeria (81%). All three countries feature on the World Bank's 2026 list of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations¹, meaning that for many of these young people, a more dangerous world is not an abstract concern but one rooted in lived experience. Somalia stands apart, with 58% of youth believing the world is becoming more cooperative, the only country in the survey where this view holds majority support, potentially reflecting a change in how global powers involve themselves in Somali affairs.

Just under half of youth (43%) identify economic and infrastructure investment as the most important quality in an international ally, with respect for natural resources ranking a close second (39%). A third prioritise democratic values and human rights (34%) and non-interference in domestic affairs (34%). Taken together, these findings point to a clear preference for allies that deliver meaningful economic support while respecting the right of national leaders to govern without external interference. This resonates with calls from the United Nations Economic

¹ World Bank. *Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations* (2025). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/classification-of-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations>

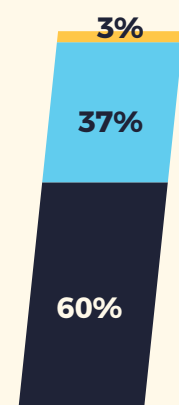
Priorities in alliances

- Don't know
- Prioritise alliances with countries that share similar values and systems of government, even if they are less effective at delivering benefits around trade and investment
- Prioritise alliances with countries that are effective and can deliver benefits like trade and investment, regardless of their system of government



Approach to alliances

- Don't know
- My country should remain as neutral as possible in its foreign policy, avoiding strong alliances with any major global powers
- My country should build strong alliances with one or two major global powers to ensure long-term benefits



Commission for Africa² and the African Union's Agenda 2063³ for African leaders to strategically leverage natural resources to ensure equitable resource exchange in the global supply chain and reduce aid dependency.

Views on the nature of international partnerships reflect this pragmatic outlook. Over half (55%) of African youth believe alliances with countries that are effective and can deliver tangible institutional benefits – such as trade and investment – should take priority. In contrast, over two-in-five (42%) favour alliances with countries that share similar values and systems. A further three-in-five (60%) agree that their country should build strong ties with one or two major powers, while more than a third (37%) believe neutrality is the better approach. In a context where the rising cost of living is a defining concern, the preference for effective, benefit-driven international alliances over ideological alignment is perhaps unsurprising.

At a country level, however, preferences regarding international partnerships diverge considerably. Youth in

² United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Economic Report on Africa 2024: Investing in a Just and Sustainable Transition in Africa (2024). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4045339?v=pdf>

³ African Union. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (2015). https://au.int/Agenda2063/popular_version

Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa favour strong, effective allies who also maintain neutrality, a preference that likely speaks to their countries' recent histories of contested elections and economies sensitive to political pressure. In Kenya, Chad, Togo, and the DRC – where populations are navigating active conflict and political reform – youth place the greatest weight on allies capable of delivering long-term benefits, consistent with the UN Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) 2025 assessment⁴ that political instability and geopolitical disruption directly deter investment and worsen economic conditions.

On the other hand, youth in Somalia, Zambia, and Congo Brazzaville place greater emphasis on shared values alongside neutrality, suggesting that ideological alignment remains an important consideration in these contexts. In Nigeria and Rwanda, youth seek both: allies who share their values and can deliver concrete, long-term benefits. These findings reflect a generation that is geopolitically aware and attuned to the specific needs of their countries, seeking partners offering meaningful support without interfering in domestic affairs.

⁴ United Nations. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Trade and Development Report 2025 (2025). <https://unctad.org/publication/trade-and-development-report-2025>

Criteria for choosing an ally

- 43%** Ability to invest in our country's infrastructure and economy
- 39%** Respect for my country's natural resources
- 34%** Democratic values and a strong human rights record
- 34%** Respect for our country's sovereignty and non-interference in our domestic affairs
- 30%** Provides access to advanced technology and knowledge transfer
- 29%** Willingness to provide military and security support
- 29%** Provides a predictable and consistent long-term relationship
- 15%** A shared history or cultural ties

Influence

Perceived foreign influence has intensified since 2024, with the United States now identified as influential by over four-in-five youth (81%) – an increase from 74% in 2024. China follows closely at 79% – the same level as 2024 (78%).

Beyond these two dominant powers, the perceived influence of other non-Western actors is rising sharply. Just under half of youth (45%) identify India as having a growing influence on their country, up 8 percentage points since the last wave, while Russia's perceived influence has expanded to over half of youth (54%), up from over two-in-five (44%) in 2024.

At a country level, Russia's perceived influence is most pronounced in Burkina Faso, where 95% of youth say it has influence over their country, the highest of any market in the survey, followed by Congo Brazzaville (69%) and Chad (65%). These are countries that, according to the European Parliament⁵, have developed growing diplomatic, economic, and military ties with Russia. By contrast, fewer than a quarter of youth in Somalia (26%) and Liberia (24%) say the same.

The broadening of perceived foreign influence corresponds with continued positivity in how that influence is viewed, with overall sentiment becoming more favourable since 2024. While China and the United States are seen as broadly equal in terms of reach, the two powers diverge markedly on perception: nearly all youth who identify China as influential view that influence positively (95%), compared to over four-in-five (85%) for the United States.

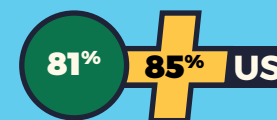
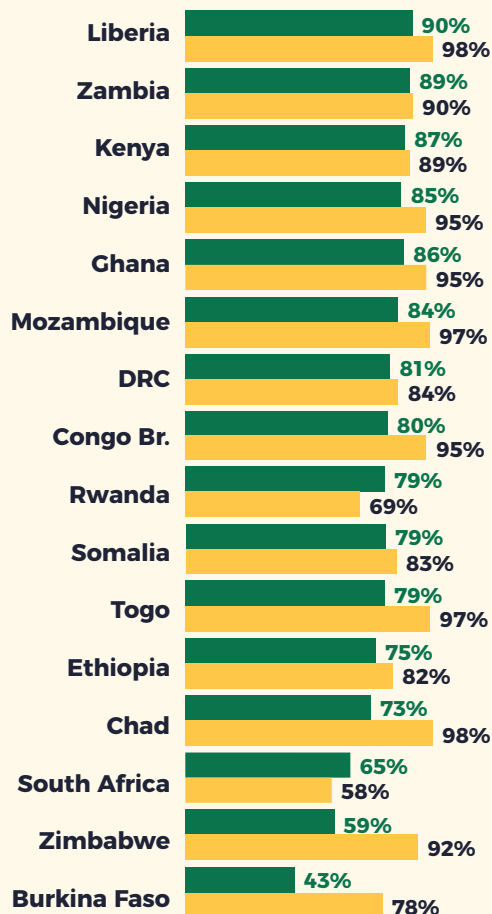
⁵ European Parliamentary Research Service. *Russia in Africa: An atlas* (2024). [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/757654/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)757654_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/757654/EPRS_BRI(2024)757654_EN.pdf)

FOREIGN INFLUENCES

How much influence, do you think the following countries have on your country and is it positive or negative?

Youth continue to believe that China and the United States have the greatest influence on their country, though Russia and India's influence is rising.

Influence of the United States



INFLUENCE



POSITIVE

Influence = A lot + some influence

Positive = Very + somewhat positive



80%

2024: 72%; 2022: 74% 2020: 80%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES:

Mozambique: 91%
South Africa: 88%
Liberia: 85%

BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES:

Burkina Faso: 72%
Zimbabwe: 62%
Somalia: 62%

are concerned about the influence from foreign powers

EUROPEAN UNION

68%

92%

UK

63%

95%

GERMANY

49%

90%

47%

87%

FRANCE

54%

83%

RUSSIA**TOP 3 COUNTRIES INFLUENCED:**

Burkina Faso: 95%
Congo Br.: 69%
Chad: 65%

CHINA

79%

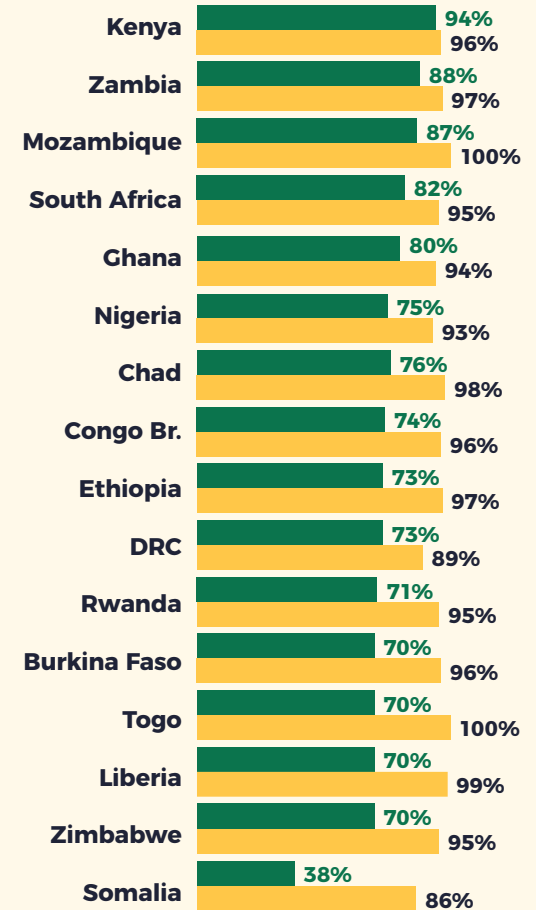
95%

INDIA

45%

91%

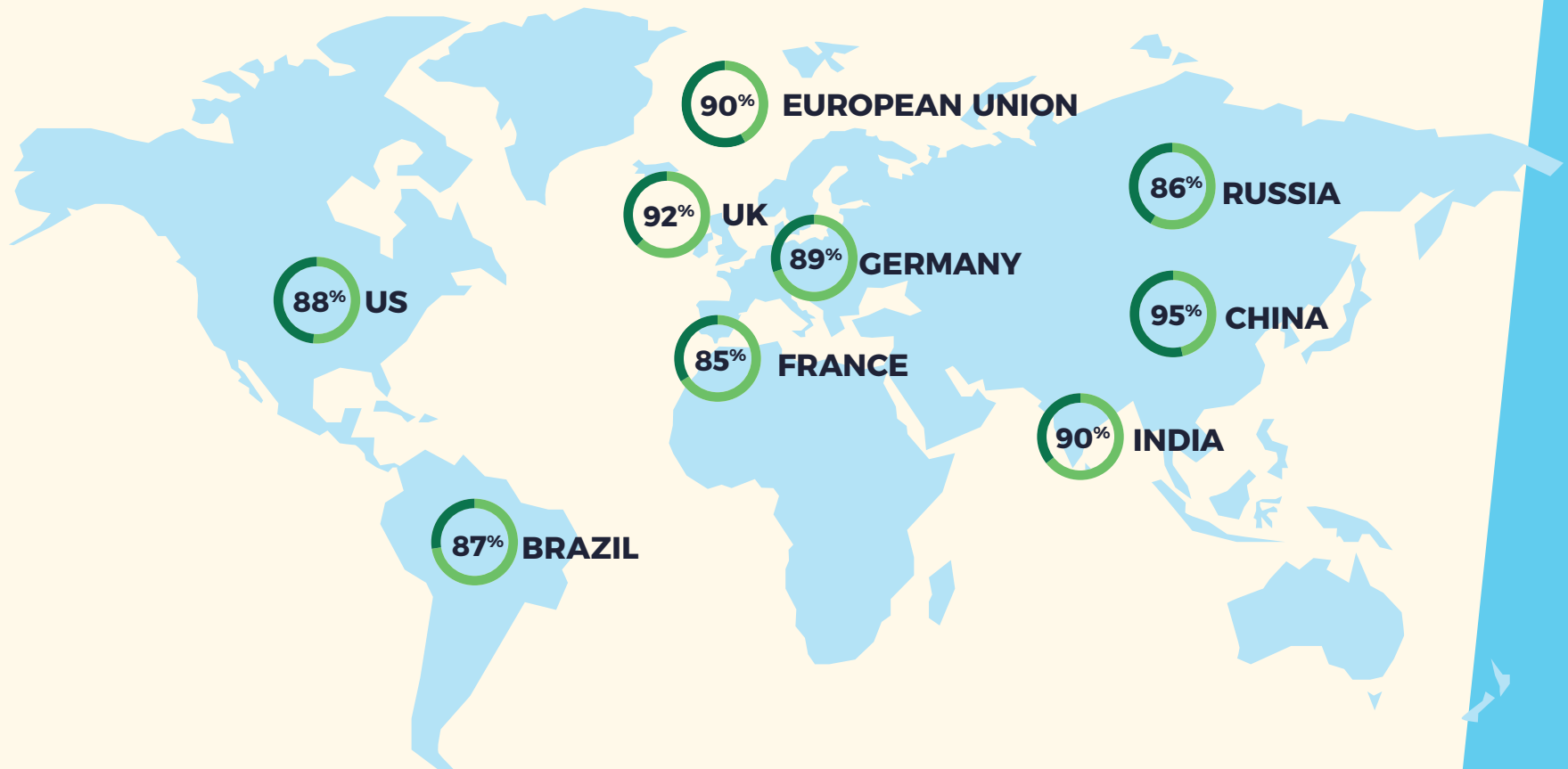
Influence of China



Alliances with foreign countries

Showing % selecting 'Strong ally' + 'Somewhat of an ally'

■ Strong ally ■ Somewhat of an ally



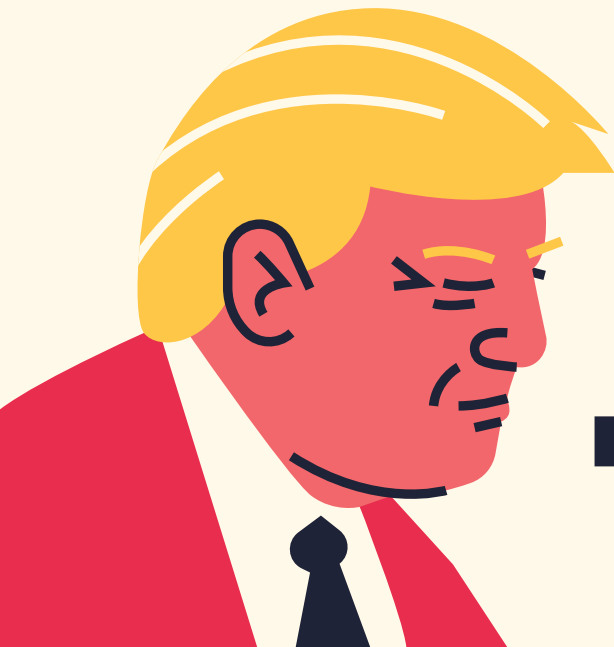
Foreign allies

Most foreign countries and organisations are viewed as allies rather than adversaries, with China standing out most clearly: nearly all African youth (95%) consider it an ally, a higher proportion than for any other country tested. This positivity is reflected at a country level too, with youth in Togo and Mozambique (both 100%) among the most favourable in their assessment of China's influence.

Yet despite this broad positivity towards specific foreign actors, concern about foreign influence in general remains a persistent undercurrent. Eight in ten youth (80%) say they are concerned about the influence foreign powers have on their country, an increase from 2024

though broadly consistent across all waves. This concern is most acute in Mozambique, where nearly all youth (91%) express worry about foreign influence, closely followed by South Africa, where nearly nine-in-ten (88%) say they are 'concerned.'

The United States is viewed positively by the majority of African youth, with near-universal support in Liberia (98%), Chad (98%), Togo (97%) and Mozambique (97%). South Africa, however, is a notable exception, where just over half of youth (58%) view US influence positively, likely reflecting the relative unpopularity of the US administration and its relationship with South Africa.

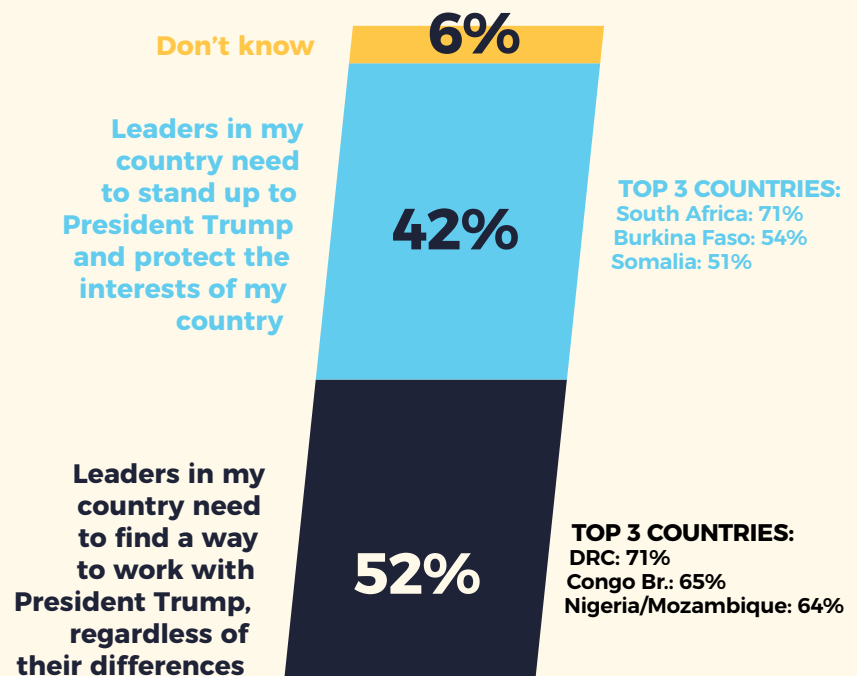


TRUMP

In 2024, African youth were asked which administration would be more beneficial for their country across a range of measures, from foreign investment to youth empowerment. Two-in-five (42%) believed a Biden administration would be better for their country, compared to a quarter (23%) who felt the same about a Trump administration, with an equal proportion (25%) expressing no preference between the two. Despite the stated preference for a Biden presidency, around three-in-five (58–60%) youth are very or somewhat optimistic that the Trump administration will bring about a better future, with optimism most pronounced around youth empowerment, security operations, and counterterrorism.

This positivity, however, sits alongside deeper unease, pointing to many of the complexities of the relationship with the US. Just over half (58%) of youth believe the US will disregard international law to gain access to natural resources in their country, with concern highest in South Africa and Liberia (both 70%). On the question of how their leaders should respond, youth are divided: just over half (52%) believe leadership should

Attitudes towards Trump administration



Optimism of the future under Trump administration

Military support for your country



Security co-operation and counterterrorism



Youth empowerment in your country



Democracy and governance support



Health programs and support



Development aid and assistance programs



Trade relations with your country



Respect for international law/ norms



Political support / relations with my country



Very optimistic Somewhat optimistic Somewhat pessimistic Very pessimistic Don't know

58%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES:
 South Africa/Liberia: 70%
 Ghana/Somalia: 68%
 Mozambique: 66%

BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES:
 Zimbabwe: 48%
 Kenya: 38%
 Nigeria: 36%

Agree the US will disregard international law to gain access to natural resources

Attitudes towards USAID cuts

NEGATIVE IMPACT

46%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Mozambique: 76%
Kenya/Rwanda: 63%
Liberia: 56%

POSITIVE IMPACT

26%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Ghana: 41%
Nigeria: 40%
Liberia: 37%

NO IMPACT

16%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

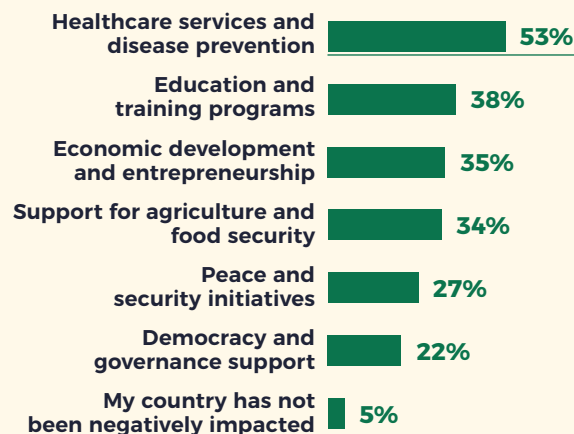
Congo Br.: 30%
DRC: 29%
South Africa: 25%

DON'T KNOW

11%



Areas most impacted by USAID funding cuts



TOP 3 AFFECTED

Zambia: 83%
Mozambique: 83%
Kenya: 75%

find pragmatic ways to work with the Trump administration, while seven-in-ten (71%) South African youth feel their leaders should actively stand up to Trump in defence of their country and its resources. In the DRC, the balance tips the other way, with over seven-in-ten (71%) youth advocating for collaboration with the Trump administration regardless of differences.

The closure of USAID has divided opinion further. Over two-in-five (46%) youth believe it will have a negative impact on their country, with concern highest in Mozambique (76%), Rwanda and Kenya (both 63%), where youth feel its closure will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable members of society. Just over a quarter (26%) take a more optimistic view, believing the closure will force leaders to confront domestic challenges directly, a sentiment strongest in Nigeria and Ghana (40% and 41% respectively). A further one-in-ten (11%) remain uncertain about the impact.

Just over half (53%) of youth identify healthcare services and disease prevention as the areas most affected by cuts to USAID funding, a concern felt most acutely in Zambia and Mozambique, where over four-in-five (83%) already report experiencing the impact, and in Kenya, where three-quarters (75%) say the same.





While African youth are broadly favourable towards global organisations like the UN, there is a strong appetite for reform and structural change. Support for permanent African representation on the United Nations Security Council is overwhelming, and youth want to see the organisation prioritise peace, security and accountability over the next five years as the world grows increasingly fragmented and divisive. The African Union and the UN are seen as the most influential international bodies, with both viewed as having a broadly positive impact on the continent. In particular, the African Union is regarded as an increasingly significant force, a finding that speaks to a deeper conviction among African youth that the continent must be empowered to shape its own future. Awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) remains limited, though familiarity with it tends to inspire confidence in its potential.



The influence of external actors extends beyond individual nations to encompass global organisations and institutions. Three-quarters of African youth (77%) identify the African Union and the UN as the most influential bodies in their countries, and positivity towards global organisations has increased considerably since 2024:

- **African Union** – 96% positive (up 13 percentage points)
- **World Trade Organisation** – 95% positive (up 13 percentage points)
- **United Nations and World Trade Organisation** – 94% positive
- **The European Union** – 92% (up 16 percentage points)

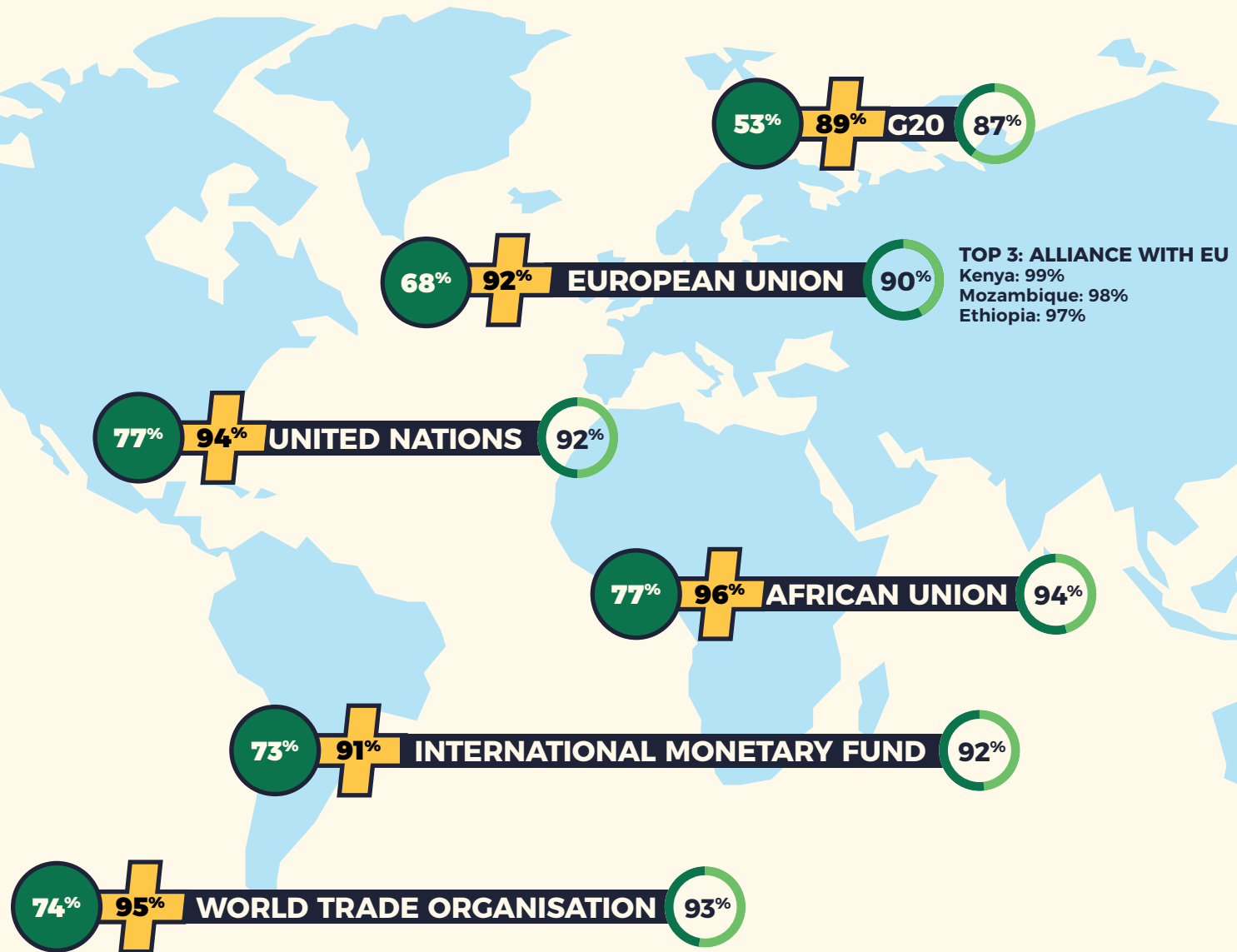
The sharp rise in positive perceptions of the European Union is consistent with its increasingly visible and strategic engagement in Africa's economic integration agenda. This is reflected in part by the EU's reaffirmed partnership with the AfCFTA Secretariat to develop intra-Africa trade and

investment, with the EU and its member states serving as the Secretariat's principal partners. Initiatives such as these have likely contributed to the EU's heightened visibility and perceived relevance among African youth.

The broadly positive view held by African youth extends to perceptions of organisations as partners. The African Union, for instance, is regarded as a strong ally by nearly all youth (94%), closely followed by the World Trade Organisation (93%), United Nations (92%) and International Monetary Fund (92%), each recognised as strong allies by the vast majority.

The high familiarity of the African Union does not translate to high recognition of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Just under a quarter of youth (22%) are familiar with AfCFTA, with the highest familiarity in Liberia (39%) and Ghana (35%), and the same level as seen when the question

How much influence do you think the following organisations have on your country and is it positive or negative?



INFLUENCE **POSITIVE**
Influence = A lot + some influence
Positive = Very + somewhat positive

STRONG ALLY **SOMEWHAT OF AN ALLY**
Showing % selecting
'Strong ally' + 'Somewhat of an ally'

Influence of foreign organisations

UNITED NATIONS	TOP 3 COUNTRIES Ghana: 90%; Liberia: 88%; Mozambique: 85%
THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION	TOP 3 COUNTRIES Ghana: 85%; Rwanda: 80%; Kenya/South Africa: 76%
INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND	TOP 3 COUNTRIES Ghana: 90%; Chad: 85%; Mozambique: 84%;
THE EUROPEAN UNION	TOP 3 COUNTRIES Mozambique: 88%; Congo Br./Kenya: 80%; Togo: 79%
G20	TOP 3 COUNTRIES South Africa: 75%; Rwanda: 66%; Ethiopia: 61%

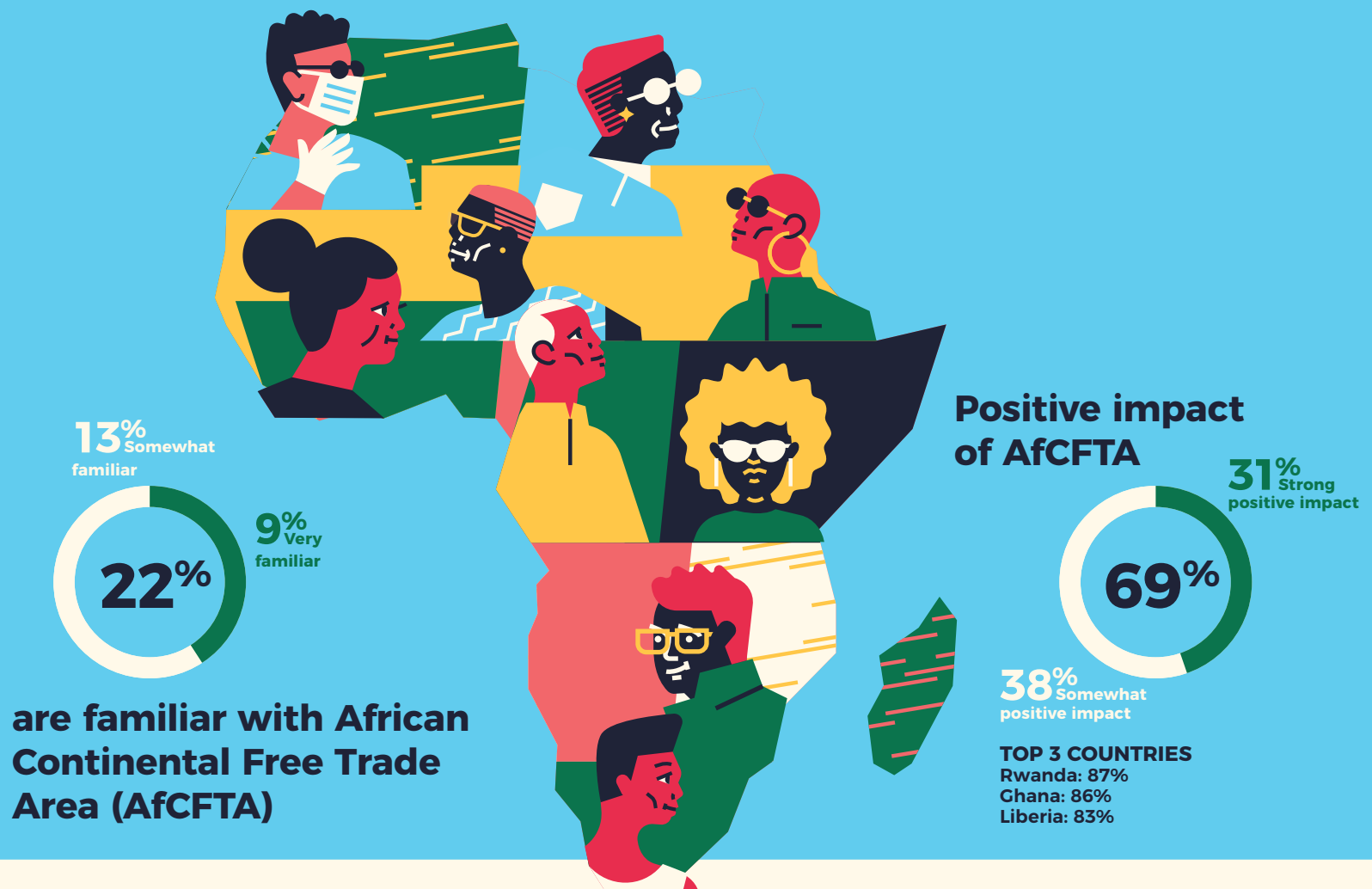


Influence of the European Union

Mozambique	88%	98%
Congo Br.	80%	89%
Kenya	80%	97%
Togo	79%	87%
Chad	77%	94%
Ghana	76%	95%
Liberia	70%	96%
Somalia	69%	90%
Nigeria	67%	93%
DRC	66%	82%
Ethiopia	62%	96%
Rwanda	61%	87%
South Africa	58%	81%
Zambia	57%	93%
Zimbabwe	57%	87%
Burkina Faso	52%	75%

INFLUENCE **POSITIVE**

Influence = A lot + some influence
Positive = Very + somewhat positive



was last asked in 2022. As the host country of the AfCFTA Secretariat, Ghana plays a pivotal role in championing the integration of the agreement across African Union member states. Meanwhile, Liberia recently launched an AfCFTA implementation initiative. Both factors likely explain the comparatively high awareness of the AfCFTA among youth in these two countries.

These patterns are consistent with broader findings from the 2025 Economic Report on Africa 2025¹, which notes that while AfCFTA holds transformative potential, awareness and implementation remain uneven across countries. This

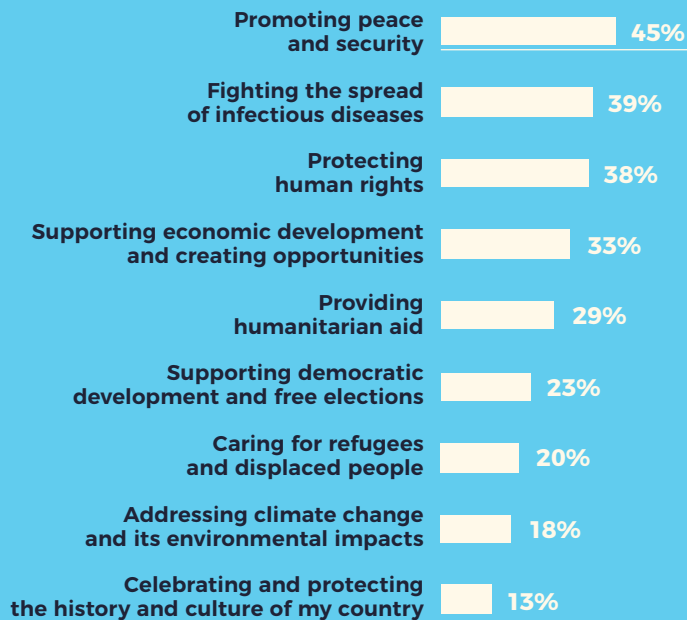
¹ United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa. *Economic Report on Africa 2025: Advancing the Implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: Proposing Transformative Strategic Actions (2025)*. <https://repository.uneca.org/entities/publication/ffc1fc2f-c9f5-4631-856b-a6836c0837a5>

disparity is evident at the other end of the spectrum, as DRC (14%), Zambia and Kenya (both 15%) record the lowest awareness among African youth, where familiarity stands at just over one-in-ten.

Among those familiar with AfCFTA, two-thirds (69%) of youth are optimistic about its economic impact on their country, with Rwandan and Ghanaian youth the most optimistic (87% and 86% respectively); in Ghana, this likely reflects the country's central institutional role. In contrast, youth in Congo-Brazzaville and Chad hold a more measured view of the Agreement, with just over half (51%) expressing optimism about its impact.

Turning to the United Nations, three-quarters of youth (72%) agree that it is a positive and effective influence in helping

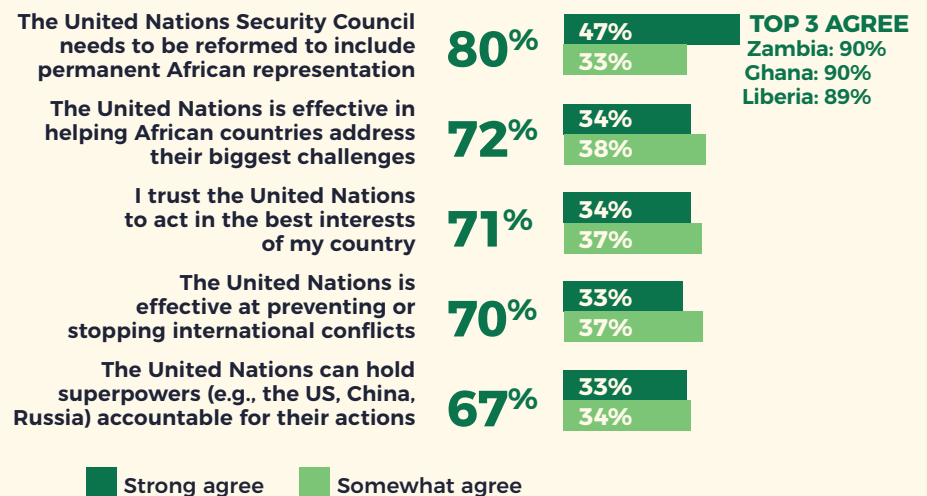
Priority for the UN over the next five years



TOP 3 MOST IMPORTANT

Burkina Faso: 58%
DRC: 56%
Congo Br.: 54%

African youth perspective of the UN



TOP 3 AGREE
Zambia: 90%
Ghana: 90%
Liberia: 89%

African countries address their biggest challenges. Trust in the organisation runs deep, with nearly three-quarters (71%) believing it acts in the best interests of their country and seven-in-ten (70%) viewing it as effective at preventing or stopping international conflicts. Around two-thirds (67%) go further still, trusting the UN to hold superpowers (the US, China and Russia) accountable for their actions. African youth view the UN as a formidable and principled force – one they expect to be both effective and equitable on the world stage.

African youth demonstrate genuine confidence in the UN's ability to deliver, though there is also appetite for reform. 80% of African youth believe the UN requires reform to include permanent African representation, with agreement highest among youth in Zambia (90%), Ghana (90%) and Liberia (89%). This view reflects wider institutional aspirations raised in the Africa Integration Report 2025, which emphasises persistent gaps in global governance representation and positions Africa as a strong, influential global actor advocating for fair representation in international institutions.

Looking ahead to the next five years, promoting peace and security emerges as the clear UN priority for African youth, with agreement strongest in Burkina Faso (58%), DRC (56%) and Congo Brazzaville (54%). Arts, culture and heritage feature least prominently among the priorities youth would like to see the organisation pursue.



DEMOCRACY È GOVERNANCE



African youth are calling for greater representation in government, expressing widespread belief that youth leadership is insufficient and strong support for policies that would expand their participation. The proportion of youth saying their voice matters to leadership remains unchanged since 2022, and many continue to believe their governments do not sufficiently prioritise the issues that affect them most. Despite these frustrations, African youth remain firmly committed to democracy, favouring a model of governance that reflects an African understanding of the concept – one rooted in national unity, willing to incur trade-offs to govern effectively, but protective of equality, freedom of speech, and free and fair elections. In line with the 2024 findings, just over half of youth believe that everyone in their country is equal before the law.

African Voice

African youth have great potential to drive substantive change, a fact increasingly recognised by global institutions. A notable example is the UN's 2024 launch of the Africa Youth Voices (AYV) Network¹, recognising that integrating the perspectives of African youth is vital to achieving both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

When asked whether their voices matter to their leaders, seven-in-ten (70%) youth believe they do, though confidence varies considerably by country. Those in Liberia (89%), Rwanda (88%) and Ghana (85%) are most confident, while fewer than half in Nigeria (38%), South Africa (48%) and Congo Brazzaville (48%) feel the same.

When plotted against Freedom House's Global Freedom Scores², however, these findings reveal a counterintuitive pattern, whereby African youth in less free countries are often more likely to believe their voice matters to leadership. Rwanda, for instance, carries one of the lowest Global Freedom Scores, yet records among the highest levels of agreement that their voice matters to leadership. In contrast, South Africa and Nigeria – ranked among the most free countries sampled – produce markedly low agreement. Perhaps most concerning is the position of Congo Brazzaville and Chad, where low Global Freedom Scores compound low feelings of representation, leaving youth there among the most disengaged. These findings suggest that formal political freedoms alone do not translate into a felt sense of civic agency.

¹ United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa: Africa Youth's Voices (2024). <https://www.un.org/osa/aficas-youth-voices>

² Freedom House. Countries and Territories: All Scores (2026). https://freedomhouse.org/country/scores?sort=fiw&sort_order=desc&type=all



70% agree their voice matters

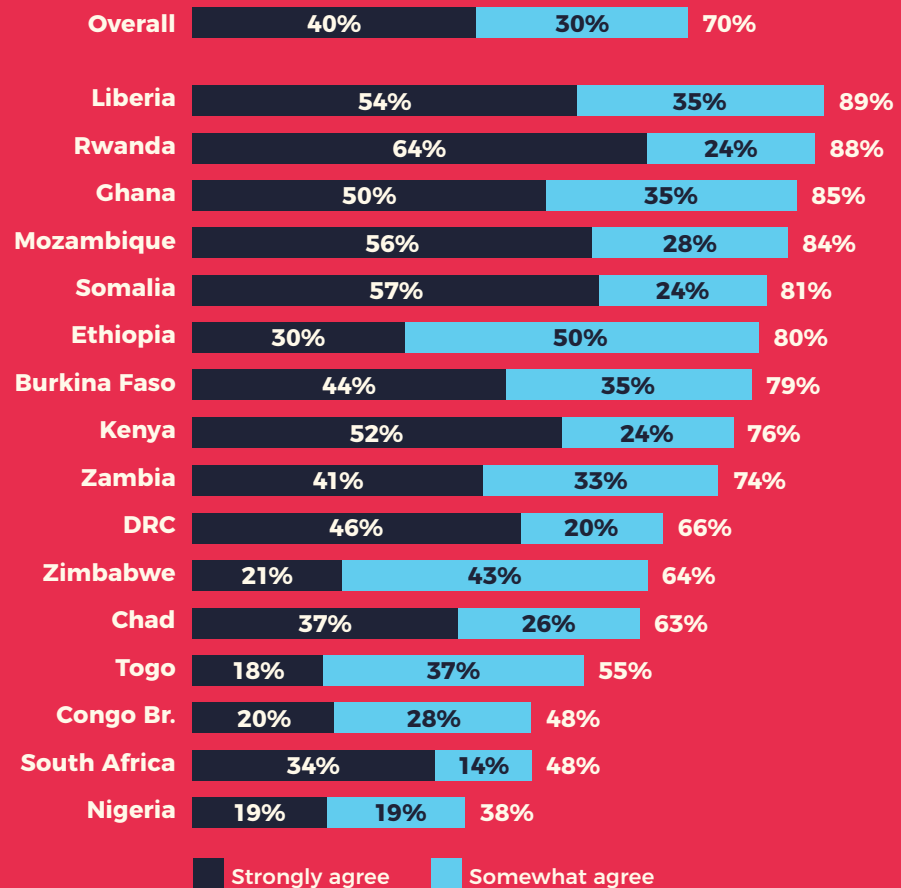
Beyond feeling heard, African youth are also optimistic about their capacity to drive meaningful change. Thinking about the next five years, confidence in their ability to influence decision-making is high, rising to near universal levels in Liberia (97%), Rwanda (96%), Burkina Faso and Ghana (both 94%) – a finding that speaks to a generation determined to play an active role in shaping the continent's future.

African youth are equally encouraged by their potential to shape the decisions that affect their lives, with sentiment again strongest in Liberia (97%), Ghana (94%) and Burkina Faso (94%). Across the continent, there is a palpable willingness among youth to engage in the processes that will define their futures.

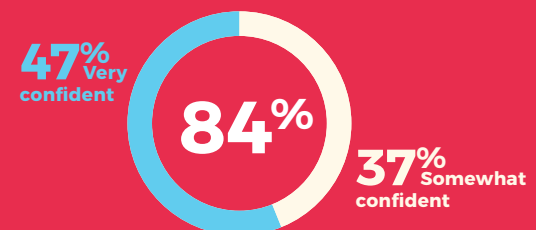
Central to this ambition is a demand for greater diversity in governance. Over three-quarters of youth (76%) believe there are too few young people in government, and this conviction carries direct electoral weight, with four-in-five (79%) saying they would be more likely to vote for a political party that fielded more young candidates. This view is held most strongly in Mozambique (97%) and Kenya (96%), closely followed by Chad and South Africa (90%).

Questions of age in leadership are equally prominent. Nearly two-thirds of youth (65%) support the introduction of age limits for presidents and prime ministers, identifying 57 as the preferred upper age limit, while over three-quarters (79%) back the creation of a dedicated Minister for Youth in government. These findings speak to a broader desire for generational change in how governance is structured and who it ultimately serves.

Does your voice matter to your national leaders?



Confidence in young peoples influence on political decisions



TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Liberia: 97%
Rwanda: 96%
Ghana: 94%

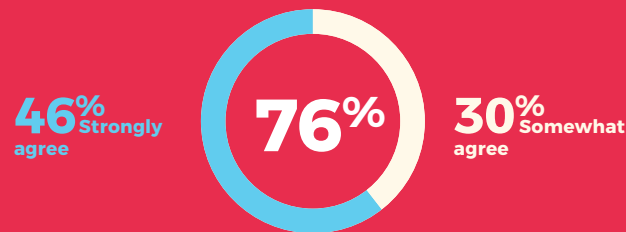
BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES

South Africa: 74%
Congo Br.: 63%
Nigeria: 60%





Leaders are out of touch with young peoples needs



TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Mozambique: 96%
South Africa: 88%
Chad: 87%

BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES

Ethiopia: 62%
Burkina Faso: 53%
Rwanda: 45%

African Leadership

I would be more likely to vote for a political party that had more young candidates



TOP 3 AGREE

Mozambique: 97%
Kenya: 96%
Chad/South Africa: 90%

TOP 3 DISAGREE

Congo Brazzaville: 37%
Rwanda: 34%
Ethiopia: 30%

There are not enough young people in leadership positions in my government



TOP 3 AGREE

South Africa/ Zambia/Chad: 89%
Mozambique: 88%
Kenya: 86%

TOP 3 DISAGREE

Rwanda: 44%
Ethiopia: 43%
Burkina Faso: 36%

Strongly agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

For many, gender representation is an equally pressing concern. Two-thirds (68%) of African youth believe their country would be better off if more women held government positions, with agreement strongest in Chad (83%), Ghana and Zimbabwe (80%), and Ethiopia and South Africa (77%). Concrete support for gender inclusion extends to legislative mandates. Around two-thirds of youth (65%) would approve a law requiring a set number of government positions to be reserved for women, and over half (53%) would support equivalent provisions for minority groups, including tribal, ethnic and religious communities.

However, agreement is far from universal: over half of youth in Kenya (53%) disagree that their country would be better off with more women in government, a sentiment echoed by

over two-in-five in DRC (42%), Somalia and Congo Brazzaville (both 41%). These variations reflect the diversity of social and cultural contexts across the continent, a reminder that attitudes towards representation remain nuanced and country specific.

Together, these findings reflect a clear and growing demand for equitable representation across all dimensions of governance, consistent with guidance from the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration³, which identifies both equity and representation as foundational to sustainable development.

³ UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration. (United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). (2018). *Principles of effective governance for sustainable development.*)



68%

TOP 3 AGREE

Chad: 83%
Ghana: 80%
Zimbabwe: 80%

TOP 3 DISAGREE

Kenya: 53%
DRC: 42%
Somalia/Congo Br.: 41%

say their country would be better governed if more women held senior positions in Government.

Democracy

African youth broadly favour a pluralist political system with accountable leadership. Three-in-five (64%) reject the idea of one-party rule, pushing back against the concentration of power, and a clear majority oppose abolishing elections and parliament in favour of unchecked presidential authority. Views on military governance are more divided, however, with similar proportions expressing approval (40%) and opposition (43%). This near-even split points to a tension at the heart of youth political sentiment: while democratic values command majority support, a significant minority remain open to alternative forms of governance, potentially depending on context.

This tension is reflected in how youth weigh democratic processes against effective delivery. African youth are almost evenly split between a government that delivers results quickly at the expense of full democratic process (48%), and one that upholds democracy but operates more slowly (47%). Those in DRC (65%), South Africa (61%) and Ghana (60%) lean towards effective delivery, while youth in Zambia (66%), Mozambique (60%) and Chad (58%) favour democratic process, even at the cost of speed.

Three-quarters of African youth nonetheless express a preference for democracy, consistent with previous editions of this survey. While this sentiment is strongest in Zambia

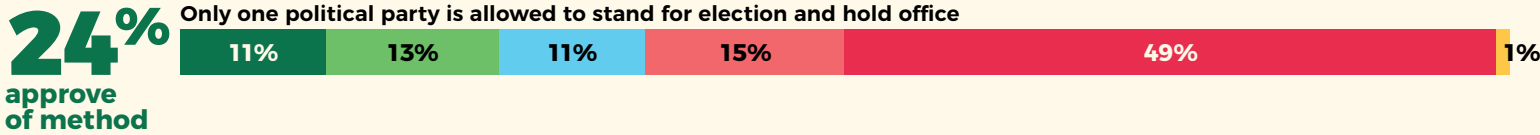
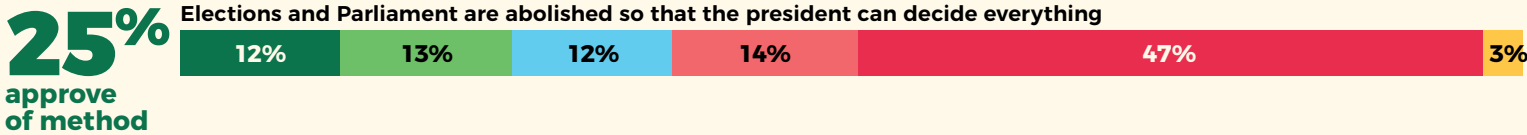
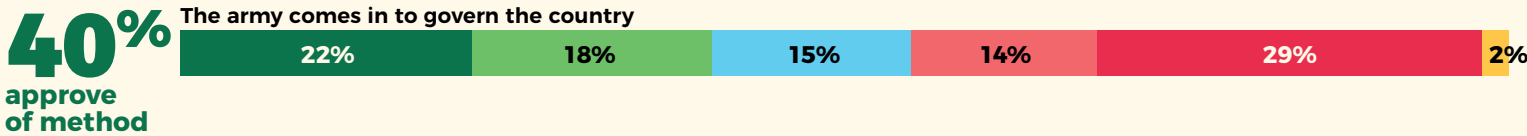
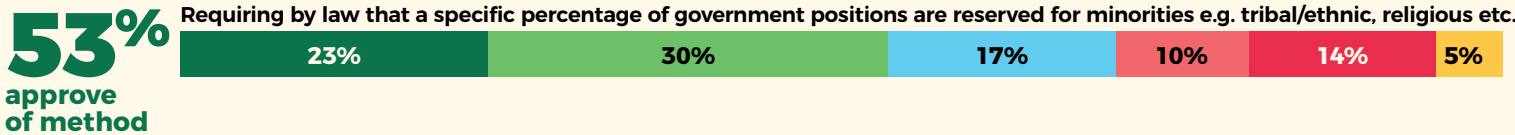
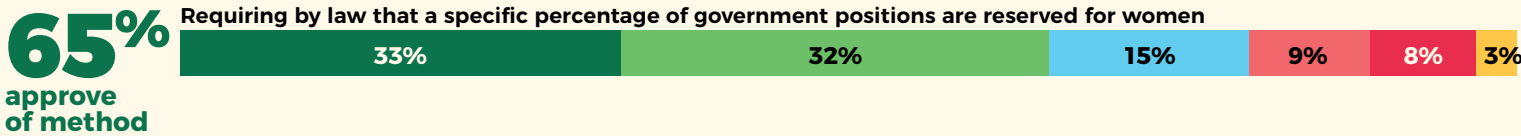
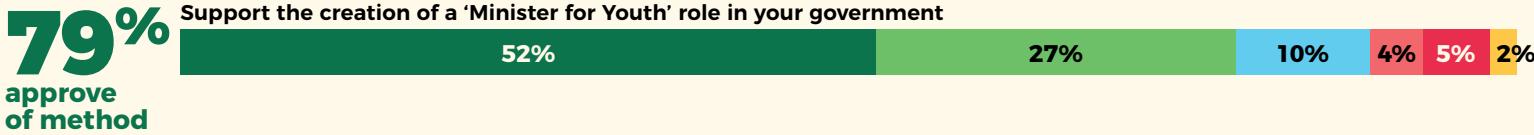
(83%) and Kenya (81%), Burkina Faso presents a more complex picture: just under half (49%) of youth consider democracy preferable, while over two-in-five (44%) – the highest proportion across all surveyed countries – say a non-democratic government can be preferable in some circumstances. Marked by political fragility in recent years, the country's divided views are perhaps unsurprising.

Among those who favour non-democratic governance, acceptance of certain trade-offs is notable. For instance, half believe limiting the right to protest is a fair compromise; this view is held most strongly in Mozambique (76%), followed by Kenya and Nigeria (both 59%) and Burkina Faso (58%).

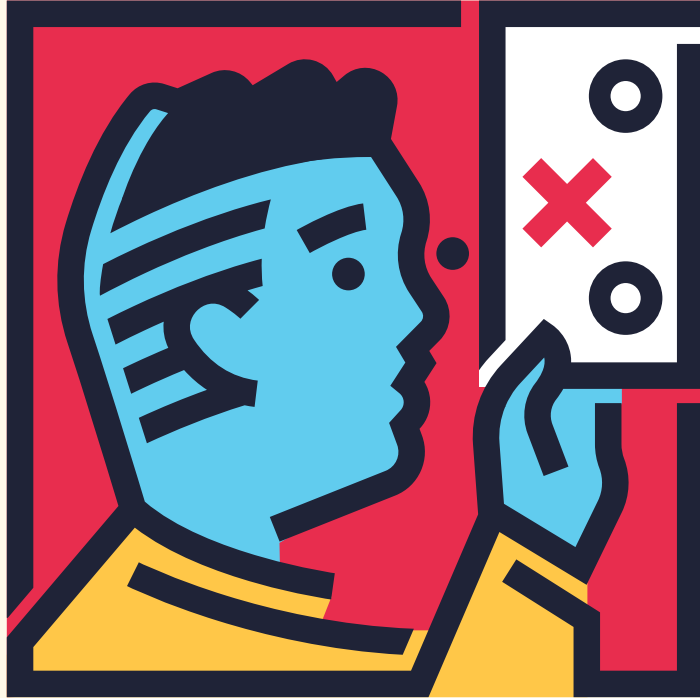
Western-style democracy – broadly defined as a multi-party system with regular competitive elections, underpinned by the protection of rights and freedoms – is not universally embraced in the African context. Just over half of youth (56%) believe it is not suitable for Africa, with support for this model highest in Congo Brazzaville (54%), Kenya (53%) and Togo (51%). Scepticism is strongest in Zambia (75%), Burkina Faso (65%) and DRC (62%), where around two-thirds or more believe it does not translate well to the African context.

Notably, opposition to Western-style democracy has declined since 2024, when three-in-five (61%) of youth questioned its suitability for Africa. This shift, however, has not translated into

Ways to govern a country



Strongly approve Somewhat approve Neither Somewhat disapprove Strongly disapprove Don't know



Systems of government and democracy*

47% Prefer a fully democratic system regardless of delivery

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Zambia: 66%
Mozambique: 60%
Chad: 58%

BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES

Nigeria/Burkina Faso: 41%
Ghana/South Africa: 37%
DRC: 34%

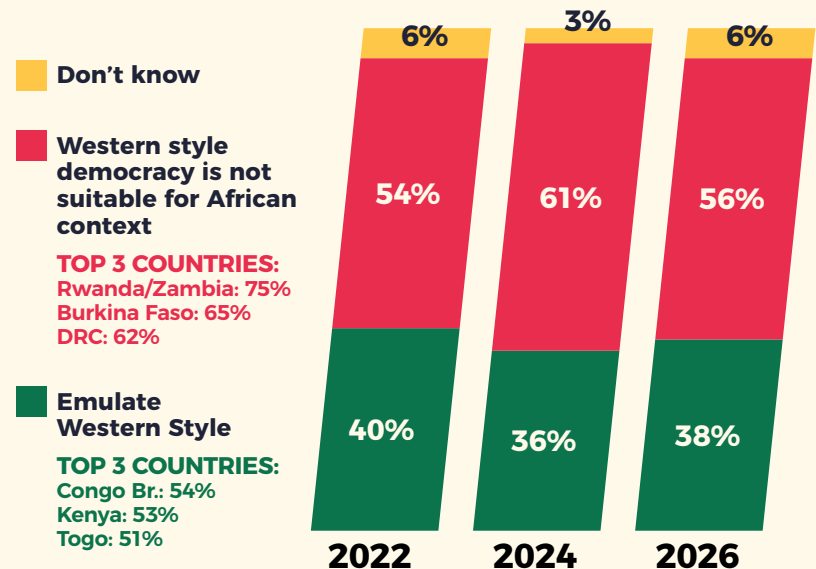
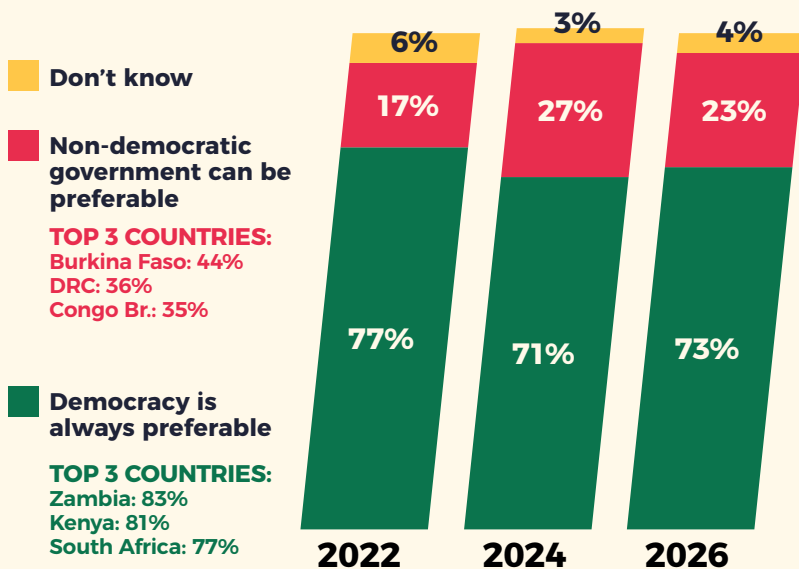
48% Prefer a government which delivers effectively

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

DRC: 65%
South Africa: 61%
Ghana: 60%

BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES

Somalia: 41%
Chad/Mozambique: 36%
Zambia: 33%



*Question not asked in 2020

*Comparing only the eight countries asked in 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 so figures will differ slightly to the 2024 overall figures which contains ten countries



African-style democracy



Limits on a non-democratic government

- 49%** Protest rights
- 46%** Media freedom
- 45%** Regular Elections
- 40%** Opposition parties

TOP 3 COUNTRIES:

Mozambique: 76%
Nigeria: 59%
Kenya: 59%

What makes up an african-style democracy?

- 48%** National unity and stability
- 46%** Regular free and fair elections
- 43%** Leaders who deliver jobs and services
- 36%** Community decision-making
- 29%** Respect for elders and traditional authorities
- 27%** A multi-party system with a wide range of political choices
- 25%** Strong leadership, even if power is concentrated

TOP 3 COUNTRIES:

Rwanda: 71%
Kenya: 63%
Zambia: 58%

54%

TOP 3 AGREE
Rwanda: 89%
Somalia: 77%
Ghana: 76%

**Agree everyone
in their country
is equal before
the law**



Countries where equality under law is not the most important:

Congo Br.	Freedom of speech	48%
Ethiopia	Freedom of speech	39%
Kenya	Free and fair elections	53%
Nigeria	Free and fair elections	57%
Zambia	Free and fair elections	55%
Togo**	Freedom of speech	41%
Mozambique	Free and fair elections	68%
Somalia	Free and fair elections	45%
Zimbabwe	Free and fair elections	48%

** Comparing only the eight countries asked in 2024, and 2026 so figures will differ slightly to the 2024 overall figures which contains ten countries*

*** Freedom of speech is tied with equality of all citizens in Togo*

greater approval as uncertainty has grown, rising from 3% in 2024 to 6% in 2026. These findings suggest that many youth are still working through what governance should look like for their country and continent.

For African youth, conceptions of an African-style democracy span a wide spectrum, from systems that incorporate elements of authoritarianism to models built on equitable decision-making that draw on the perspectives of traditional leaders and indigenous communities. In this sense, African youth navigate between the realities of current governance and an idealistic vision rooted in traditional values, shaped by distinct local, political and historical contexts.

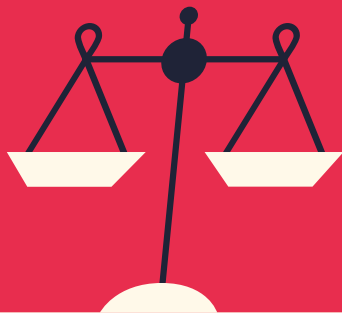
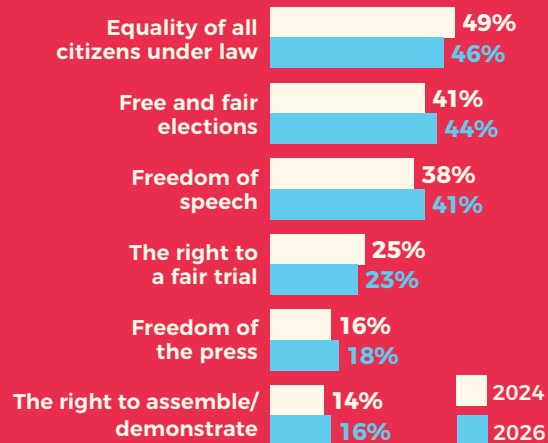
African youth envision an 'African-style democracy' with national unity and stability at its core, underpinned by leadership that delivers employment and key services. Just

under half (48%) cite national unity and stability as central to their vision of democracy, with sentiment strongest in Rwanda (71%), Kenya (63%) and Zambia (58%). Party systems with concentrated power, on the other hand, rank as the least desirable model. Across the survey's findings a consistent theme emerges: African youth are seeking economic stability and tangible outcomes that improve their lives.

Equality of all citizens under the law remains the top democratic priority for African youth, though agreement has declined by three percentage points since 2024. Free and fair elections follow closely, rated the most important democratic value by over two-in-five (44%) of youth, up three percentage points from 2024.

Country-level variation reveals distinct priorities within this picture. Freedom of speech is rated highest in Congo

Most important pillars of democracy*

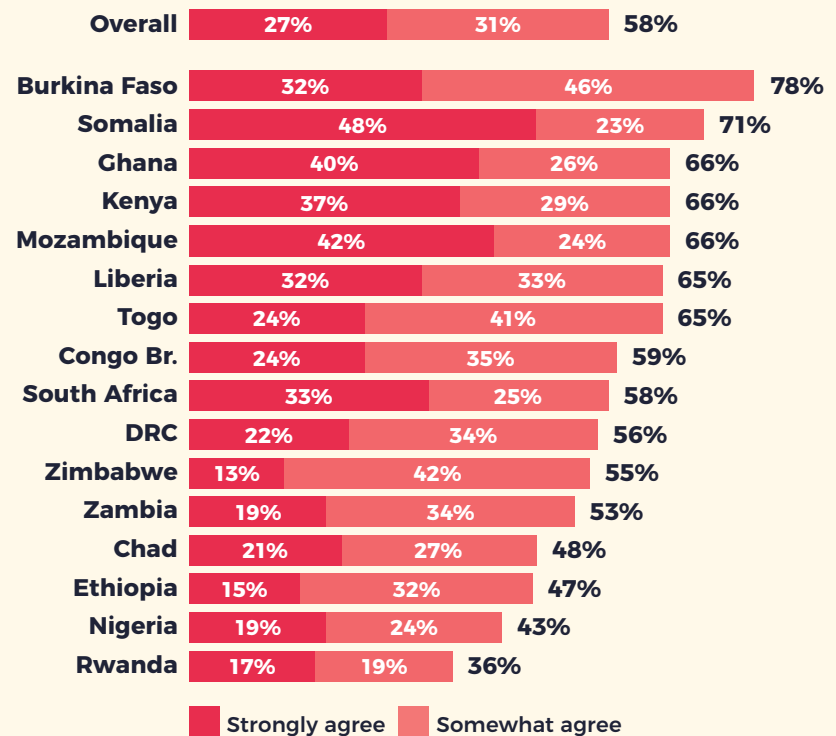


Brazzaville (48%) and Ethiopia (39%), while in Togo it is tied with equality under the law, both at 41%. Free and fair elections rank as the top priority across a broader range of countries, including Mozambique (68%), Nigeria (57%), Zambia (55%), Kenya (53%), Zimbabwe (48%) and Somalia (45%). The International IDEA Global State of Democracy Report (2023)⁴ notes that electoral integrity remains the democratic indicator most closely tied to youth civic engagement across Africa, suggesting that the primacy of free and fair elections reflects a deep desire for meaningful political participation.

Over half of African youth (54%) believe that everyone is equal before the law in their country, though the range

⁴ International IDEA. *The Global State of Democracy 2023: The New Checks and Balances* (2023). <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-02/the-global-state-of-democracy-2023-the-new-checks-and-balances.pdf>

Support for non-peaceful protests and actions to enact political change



across the continent is stark. In Chad, just under a quarter (23%) hold this view, while in Rwanda (89%), Somalia (77%) and Ghana (76%), over three-quarters do.

Support for non-peaceful protest and political action is similarly varied. Backing is strongest in Burkina Faso, where over three-quarters (78%) agree, closely followed by Somalia (71%). Fewer than half in Chad (48%), Ethiopia (47%), Nigeria (43%) and Rwanda (36%) express such support. The rise of Gen Z-led protest movements speaks to this range: #EndSARS movement in Nigeria in 2020, and Kenyan youth mobilising against a finance bill in 2024. These moments illustrate how youth-led civic action is increasingly shaping political discourse across the continent, even where majority support for such action does not exist.

SAFETY, SECURITY & EXTREMISM



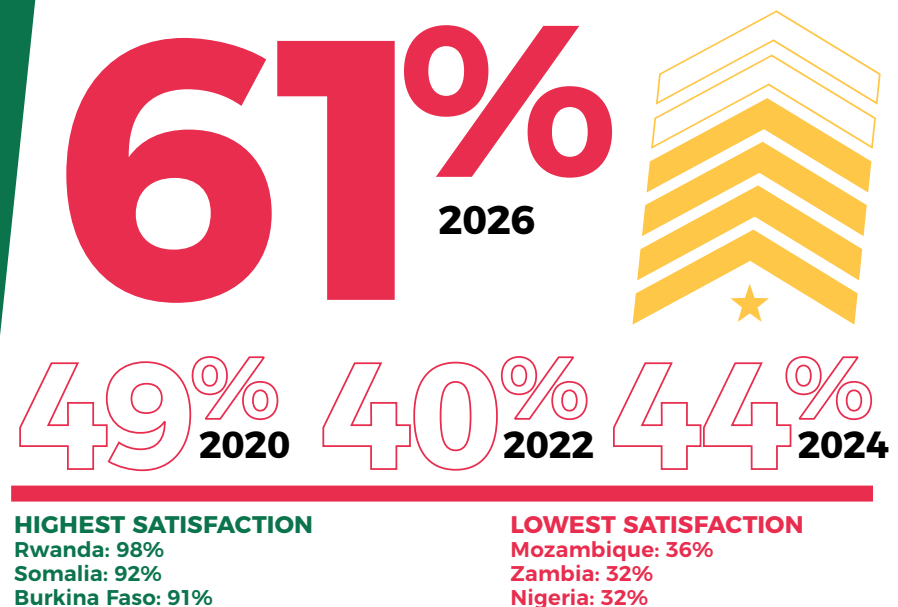
For African youth, security is as much an economic concern as a physical one, with unemployment and poverty seen as the greatest threat to community safety. Personal safety perceptions are broadly positive, with many youth reporting they feel safer than three years ago – most notably in Somalia and Ghana – though perceptions remain weakest in Chad and Mozambique. Job creation is overwhelmingly identified as the most effective step governments could take to improve security. Satisfaction with police has reached a high point compared to previous editions of this survey, but strong approval remains limited as only around a quarter of youth feel ‘very satisfied’, dropping to under one-in-ten in Chad and Mozambique. Concerns about immigration have grown this wave, despite more than half of youth remaining satisfied with how their governments are handling the issue. Cross-border threats are also a pronounced concern, particularly among youth in Ghana and Mozambique.

African youth are broadly positive about their personal safety, with seven-in-ten (70%) reporting they feel safe in their country. Confidence is highest in Rwanda (99%), Zambia (92%) and Ghana (91%), while at the other end of the spectrum, just a quarter (26%) of youth in Chad and under a third (30%) in South Africa feel the same. Chad's low safety perception is consistent with its broader context: according to the World Bank, the country is marked by persistent conflict and political fragility.

- **Top three countries with highest reported levels of safety (% of agreement):** Rwanda (99%), Zambia (92%), Ghana (91%)
- **Top three countries with lowest reported levels of safety (% of agreement):** Chad (26%), South Africa (30%) and Nigeria (41%)

Crime victimhood remains a lived reality for many, with around a quarter of African youth (23%) reporting that either they or an immediate family member has been a victim in the past three years. The variation across the continent is considerable: in DRC (47%) and South Africa (43%), this approaches nearly half of all youth, while in Kenya just one-in-ten (10%) report the same.

Satisfaction with police and security



- **Top three countries reporting that an immediate family member was a victim of crime in the last three years (% selecting yes):** DRC (47%), South Africa (43%), and Somalia/Chad (29%)
- **Bottom three countries reporting that an immediate family member was a victim of crime in the last three years (% selecting yes):** Kenya (10%), Rwanda (12%) and Nigeria/Togo (15%).

South Africa's results warrant particular attention. Despite its relatively high development and wealth compared to much of the rest of the continent, it scores poorly on measures of safety and security in the survey. This is consistent with its standing on global crime indices: South Africa scores 74.51 on the Numbeo Crime Index¹ — the highest in Africa — ranks 7th globally on the 2025 Global Organized Crime Index², and records an intentional homicide rate of approximately 45.2 per 100,000 people, nearly ten times the G20 average³. It also ranks 124th on the 2025 Global Peace Index, having declined from the previous year. For South African youth, low feelings of personal safety are not a matter of perception — they reflect the structural realities of a country where poverty, gang activity, and an overstretched police force continue to shape everyday life.

Despite this, the broader trajectory is one of cautious improvement. Over half (57%) of African youth feel their country is safer than it was three years ago, with this sentiment strongest in Rwanda (95%), Somalia (86%) and Ghana (79%). South Africa presents a consistent picture of concern, with rates of crime victimhood among the highest surveyed and just over a quarter (26%) feeling safer today than three years ago.

- **Top three countries feeling safer compared to three years ago (% of agreement):** Rwanda (95%), Somalia (86%), and Ghana (79%)
- **Bottom three countries feeling safer compared to three years ago (% of agreement):** South Africa (26%), Chad (28%), and Nigeria (30%)

When asked to identify the biggest threat to their communities, over half of African youth (54%) point to unemployment and poverty, a finding that is particularly pronounced in Kenya (70%), Zambia (69%) and DRC (61%), where around two-thirds agree — consistent with broader findings on the cost of living in

1 Numbeo. *Crime in South Africa (2026)*. https://www.numbeo.com/crime/country_result.jsp?country=South+Africa

2 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC). *Global Organized Crime Index 2025 (2025)*. <https://ocindex.net/>

3 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *Global Study on Homicide 2023 (2023)*. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/global-study-on-homicide.html>

70%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Rwanda: 99%
Zambia: 92%
Ghana: 91%

Feel safe in their country today

BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES

Nigeria: 41%
South Africa: 30%
Chad: 26%

57%

Feel safer in their country compared to three years ago.

TOP 3 COUNTRIES

Rwanda: 95%
Somalia: 86%
Ghana: 79%

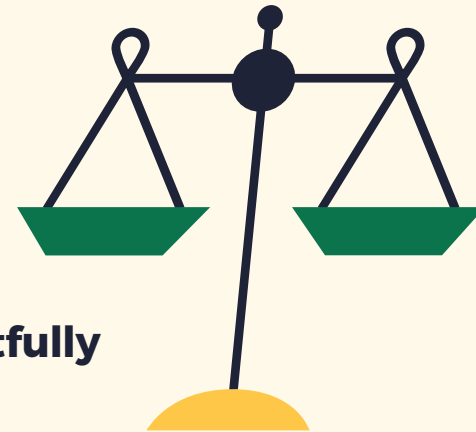
BOTTOM 3 COUNTRIES

Nigeria: 30%
Chad: 28%
South Africa: 26%

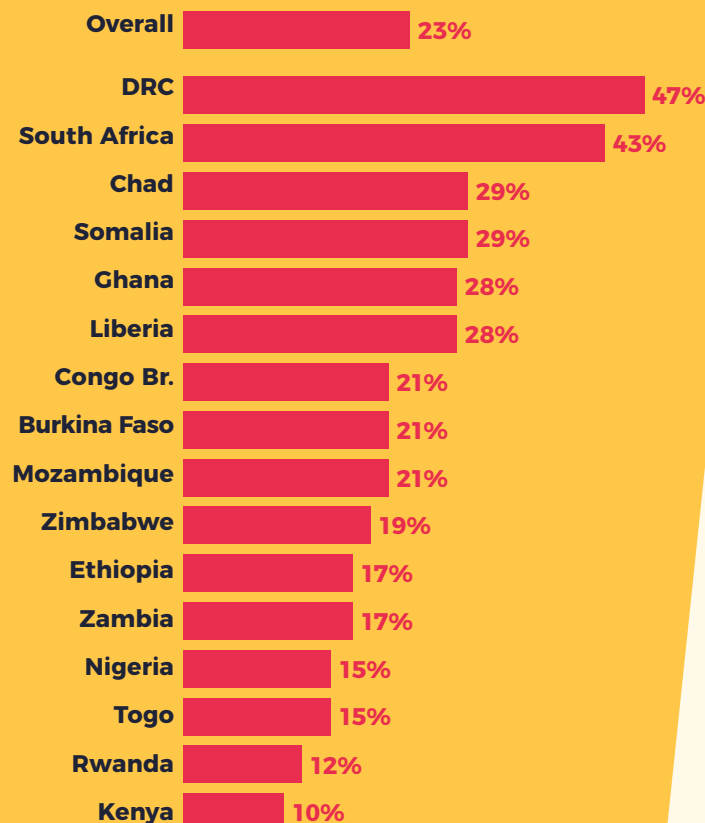
61% **2024: 58%**

TOP 3 COUNTRIES
 Rwanda: 93%
 Burkina Faso: 83%
 Ghana: 82%

**agree they are treated fairly and respectfully
 by Police and Security Services**



Victim of a crime in the past five years



this survey. This is a view echoed at the institutional level: the IMF's Regional Economic Outlook on Sub-Saharan Africa⁴ identifies job creation as one of the most urgent policy challenges facing the continent, noting that economic growth has not been translating into sufficient formal employment, particularly for young people.

In line with this, job creation is seen as the top priority for improving security, a view most strongly held in Kenya (70%), Zambia (68%) and Congo Brazzaville (66%), consistent with youth priorities outlined elsewhere in this Survey.

Satisfaction with the police has reached an all-time high, with nearly two-thirds of African youth (61%) expressing satisfaction, a 17 percentage point increase from 2024 (44%). This is driven by a small number of countries – increases are biggest in Ethiopia and Congo Brazzaville.

Perceptions of respectful treatment by police are broadly positive, with three-in-five African youth (61%) reporting this to be their experience in line with 2024 findings, strongest in Rwanda (93%), Burkina Faso (83%) and Ghana (82%). At the other end of the spectrum, just under a third of youth in Chad (29%) report respectful treatment, a finding consistent with the low perceptions of equality before the law and police satisfaction also recorded in the

⁴ IMF, *Regional Economic Outlook – Sub-Saharan Africa* (2026). <https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/reo/afr/2026/april/english/text.pdf>

country. Taken together, these results point to a structural concern that institutions meant to protect and serve are not fulfilling their mandate. This is reinforced by Human Rights Watch's 2025 analysis⁵, which notes that impunity is a significant problem within Chad's security forces, as corruption, poor discipline, and the ability of wrongdoers to leverage political connections routinely goes unpunished across the police, gendarmerie, and national security apparatus.

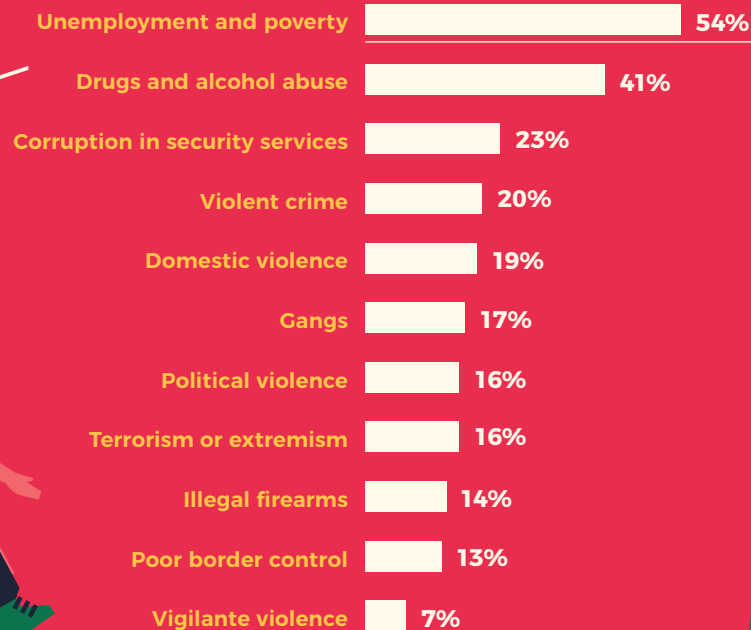
- **Top three countries with the strongest level of agreement (% of agreement):** Rwanda (93%), Burkina Faso (83%), and Ghana (82%)
- **Top three countries with the lowest level of agreement (% of agreement):** Chad (29%), Congo Brazzaville/Nigeria (33%), and DRC (34%)

These institutional concerns sit alongside growing unease about movement across borders: concern about asylum and immigration has remained a consistent theme across all editions of this survey, and it appears to be growing. As the world becomes increasingly fractured by conflict and political instability, the number of displaced individuals continues to rise. Against a backdrop of population growth, cost-of-living pressures and limited employment opportunities, immigration concerns among African youth are firmly held. Despite this, over half of youth (57%) express satisfaction with their governments' efforts to limit illegal immigration.

Beyond immigration, cross-border threats more broadly command significant concern, with more than three-quarters of

⁵ Human Rights Watch. World Report 2025 (2025). https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2025/01/World%20Report%202025.pdf

Biggest threat to safety in African communities



TOP 3 COUNTRIES
 Kenya: 70%
 Zambia: 69%
 DRC: 61%

African youth expressing worry. Human trafficking tops the list, with four-in-five (80%) expressing concern, followed by the smuggling of drugs or weapons (79%) and armed groups crossing borders (78%). Concern is highest across all four threat categories in Ghana and Mozambique.

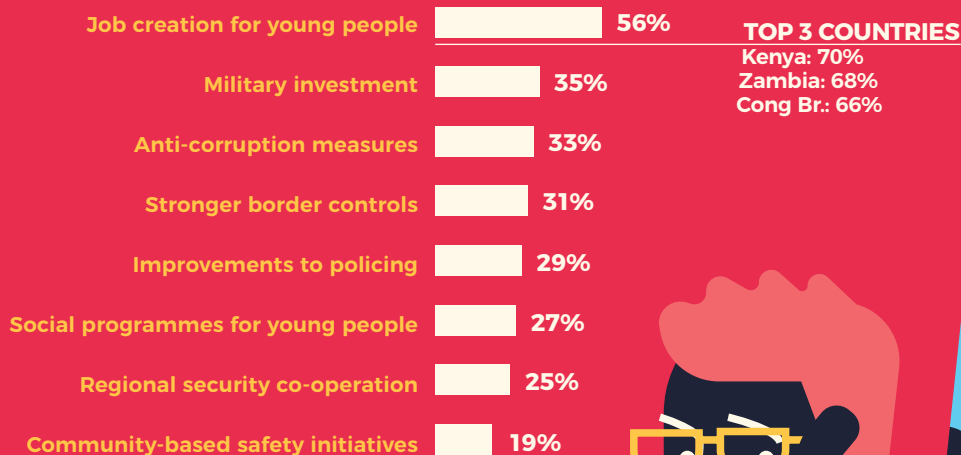
Top three countries showing highest concern vs. lowest concern (% expressing concern):

- **Armed groups crossing borders:**
 - o Ghana/Mozambique (93%) and Nigeria (91%)
 - o Rwanda (64%), Togo (65%), and Zimbabwe (66%)
- **Smuggling drugs or weapons:**
 - o South Africa (92%), Ghana/Liberia/Mozambique (90%), and Nigeria (88%)
 - o Togo (58%), Congo Brazzaville (69%), and Zambia (72%)
- **Human Trafficking:**
 - o Ghana (93%), Mozambique/South Africa (91%) and Liberia (90%)
 - o Rwanda (63%), and Somalia/Togo (66%)
- **Illegal migration:**
 - o Ghana (91%), Mozambique (90%) and Liberia/South Africa (88%)
 - o Togo (55%), Burkina Faso (59%), and Rwanda (60%)

72%

concerned about asylum and immigration

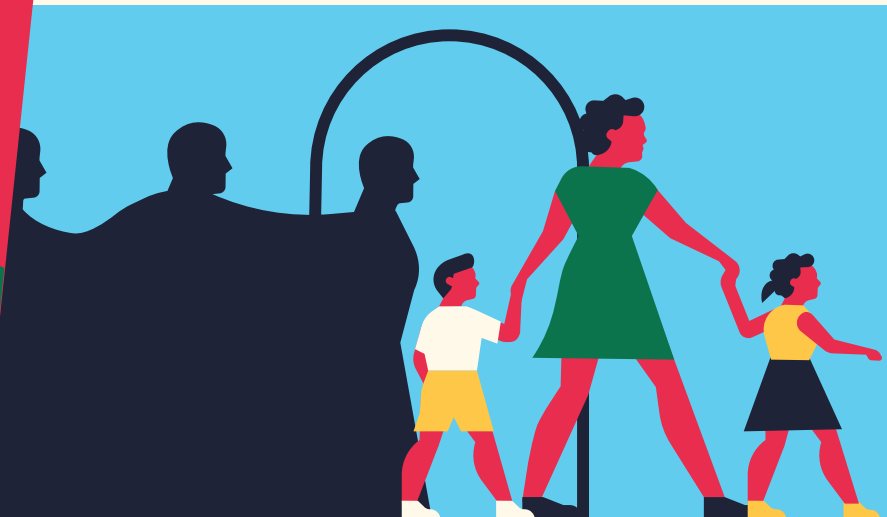
Government priorities to improve security



55%

TOP 3 COUNTRIES
 Burkina Faso: 87%
 Rwanda: 86%
 Ghana: 81%

are satisfied with government efforts to limit illegal immigration





Citizen Action through inspiration, insight and sustainability

From a challenging past of adversity and hardship, it's the people of Africa that make this continent special; they tell a story of triumph of the human spirit and the power of human beings to forge new beginnings from the ashes of injustice and build a future based on equality and democracy. When you are on this continent you will be awed by our infrastructure, bedazzled by our beauty and humbled by our people and you will know what it means to say: "anything is possible".

At the heart of our common humanity, is our instinct to forge an environment in which we can thrive and flourish.

Democracy provides the environment for this. But, democracy is not simply elections – our power to vote for the people who make decisions is important; but that is not where our responsibility ends. We must work tirelessly, every day to craft our society in a way that is just, equitable and dignified.

And we commit to this. We pledge to building citizens for action through inspiration, insight and sustainability.

This is our promise.

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation (IFF) has committed itself to the kind of active citizenship that promotes the preservation of our heritage, the conservation of our environment, and the education of our people.

We use various channels, such as film, music, research, publications and art to foster dialogue between people, to be a torchbearer for innovation and to conserve Africa's biodiversity and heritage for future generations.

We aim to help build a continent where people are encouraged to dream big, to challenge the inconceivable and achieve the impossible



Key Programmes

The African Oral History Archive

Our African Oral History Archive charts the untold stories of Africa's vivid history, magnificent heritage and collective memory. Over 160 interviews in the African Oral History Archive have been recorded to date. To celebrate 20 years of South Africa's Democracy, the Foundation produced a series of films, books and artworks to celebrate our most acclaimed and unknown history makers. The award-winning documentary series, *The Rainbow Makers*, is in distribution across broadcast, educational and multi-media platforms. Currently, lesson plans are being developed for distribution to high schools.

Conservation

The Ichikowitz Family Foundation has a strong track record of conservation leadership within Africa having financed and initiated innovative anti-poaching and environmental programmes for ten years.

The Foundation's anti-poaching initiatives include the donation of surveillance aircraft and other critical equipment to national parks, training programmes to strengthen the capabilities of park rangers and counter-poaching units, the implementation of award-winning global and national campaigns to raise awareness of the plight of endangered species, and the creation of one of the largest Anti-Poaching and K9 Training Academy's in Africa.

Citizenship

Torchbearer for innovation. Building self-belief and confidence among Africans.



Heritage

Promote an understanding of our complex history. Insights into the hopes and aspirations of Africa's youth.



Conservation

Conserve the continent and biodiversity.



“I have seen what happens when the world writes Africa's story without Africans in the room, and I have spent thirty years watching the gap between that story and the truth. The African Youth Survey exists to close that gap with evidence no one can dismiss. This year, Africa’s young people across sixteen countries told us the future they intend to build. The only question that remains is whether the rest of us, in government, in business and on this continent, are wise enough to build it with them.”

Ivor Ichikowitz, Chairman of the Ichikowitz Family Foundation



STRICT EMBARGO:
**Not for publication, broadcast or external
distribution before 00.01 SAST 29 July 2026.**



www.ichikowitzfoundation.com