



**AFRICAN
YOUTH
SURVEY
2026**

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



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

African Youth Survey 2026

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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

The African Youth Survey

FOREWORD

Welcome to the future.

Every two years I sit down with the final data from the African Youth Survey and every two years it does the same thing to me. It challenges my assumptions. It recalibrates my expectations. And, if I am honest, it unpicks some of my prejudices. I would suggest it will do the same to you, if you let it.

Who would have predicted that young South Africans would look at Putin's Russia with such warmth? Not the analysts in London or Washington, that is for certain. Who would have guessed that young Rwandans, the most digitally ambitious generation on the continent, still switch on a radio for their news? Or that Ghana's youth, having lived through brutal inflation and a currency in freefall, remain confident in their national economy? The data does not care what the commentariat believes. That is precisely why it matters.

We have been running these surveys since 2020. This year our field researchers crossed 16 countries and sat down, face to face, with 4,901 young people. Since we began, we have canvassed nearly 19,000 respondents across 28 countries. Let me be blunt about why that matters. This is not a focus group. This is not a think piece written from a hotel room in Nairobi. This is the largest, most rigorous body of research into what young Africans actually think, and it gives us the right to draw real conclusions. Anyone who wants to talk about Africa's future without engaging with this data is simply guessing.

And the future is the point. Africa is already the youngest continent on earth, with a median age of 19 and a half, and it is getting younger. While China ages, while Europe shrinks, Africa booms. By 2030 this continent will be home to over 40





percent of the world's young people. So when people ask me why I keep funding this work, my answer is simple. If you want to know where the world is going, ask the largest cohort of the fastest growing population on the planet. Everything else is nostalgia.

There is too much in the 2026 survey to summarise here, but one pattern comes through with total clarity. The youth of Africa are positive, pragmatic and powerful.

Positive, because they refuse the poverty narrative that the international media still peddles about this continent. Ebola may be a reality in the Congo basin, but young Congolese have lived with outbreaks for decades. They do not panic. They get on with it. The doom merchants could learn something.

Pragmatic, because look at how they read President Trump's second term. They watched him dismantle USAID, an institution that shaped healthcare and education here for half a century, and they did not descend into hysteria. They priced it in. They understand they are dealing with a transactional president, and transactions are something Africans understand very well. It is no accident that this same administration is now building the largest American infrastructure project in Africa in a generation, new rail capacity to move the rare earths of Katanga and northern Zambia to market. Young Africans grasped before most Western diplomats did that sentiment is dead and interests are alive. Good. Aid built dependency. Trade builds nations.

And powerful, because listen to what they are demanding. Not handouts. Voice. Seats in cabinet. And, most pointedly, term limits for presidents. Consider the absurdity they have identified:

the youngest population on earth governed by the oldest leaders on earth. That is not a demographic quirk. That is a scandal. And our young people are calling it out, calmly and clearly, while too many of their leaders pretend not to hear.

They should hear it. History is unambiguous about what happens to those who ignore the young. It was the Young Turks who ended five centuries of Ottoman rule. It was a young man from Young Bosnia who shot an Archduke in Sarajevo and brought down the Habsburgs and the Romanovs with him. It was young Chinese in Tiananmen Square who posed the greatest challenge the Communist Party has ever faced. And it was a leader of the ANC Youth League who dragged his movement in a radical new direction and ended apartheid. His name was Nelson Mandela.

The young do not ask permission forever. Eventually they act. The only question for Africa's leaders, and for the world's, is whether they will be partners in that change or casualties of it.

So read this survey. Go back to it. Argue with it. But do not ignore it, because the 19,000 young people behind these pages are not a data set. They are the future, and they are already here.

Welcome to the future.

IVOR ICHIKOWITZ
Chairman, Ichikowitz Family Foundation

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.

REDEFINING SECURITY

Mohamed Okash is a researcher, social entrepreneur, and environmentalist dedicated to addressing humanity's most pressing challenges, climate change, social inequality, and sustainable development. As the founding director of the Institute of Climate and Environment (ICE) in Mogadishu, he is also a member of the Global Future Council on Climate and Nature Governance, where he contributes to global conversations on sustainable policy and environmental resilience

For many young Africans, security no longer begins and ends with the absence of violence. It is also about whether they can find work, afford basic necessities, trust public institutions and believe that tomorrow can be better than today.

That is one of the most important messages emerging from this year's Africa Youth Survey. Traditional threats such as conflict, terrorism, crime and physical violence remain deeply serious. Yet the survey shows that unemployment and poverty are now seen as the greatest threats to community safety. More than half of young Africans identify economic hardship as the primary danger facing their communities, while job creation is seen as the most effective step governments can take to improve security.

This should force a wider conversation about what security now means. A young person who fears violence is insecure. So is a young person who cannot find work, cannot earn a decent income and cannot see a pathway to a better life. For this generation, security is bound up with dignity and opportunity. It is about protection from harm but it is also about the ability to build a meaningful future.

This matters because Africa is entering a demographic era unlike any other. We have the world's youngest population and, potentially, the world's greatest workforce. That should be a historic advantage. Yet if millions of young people remain excluded from opportunity, that advantage can become a source of frustration rather than prosperity. Economic exclusion weakens trust, increases the pressure to migrate and can leave communities more vulnerable to instability. Jobs are therefore much more than an economic issue. They are a security issue and a governance issue, not only a development issue.

The survey also challenges the way governments traditionally organise themselves around security. For too long, security has been treated mainly as the responsibility of police, military and intelligence institutions. Those institutions matter, but young Africans are telling us that education, employment, climate resilience, healthcare and good governance also shape whether societies feel safe. Ministers responsible for finance, youth affairs, education, environment and local government are therefore just as important to long-term stability as those responsible for policing and defence.

There is also a hopeful story in the findings. Across the continent, seven in ten young people say they feel safe in their country and more than half believe their country is safer today than it was three years ago. Some of the strongest improvements are recorded in countries such as Somalia and Ghana, which challenges simple assumptions that perceptions of safety are driven only by the absence of conflict or crime.

Somalia's story is especially important. The country still faces significant challenges, but it has also shown remarkable resilience. Over the past decade, progress in institution-building, local governance, education, civic engagement and economic activity has helped create a more complex reality than the one often reflected in international headlines. The lesson is that progress is possible even in difficult circumstances. Stability is rarely achieved overnight. It is built gradually through trust, persistence and the sense that public institutions are moving in the right direction.

Trust is central to all of this. A government can invest heavily in security infrastructure, but if citizens do not trust institutions, stability remains fragile. Trust encourages people to cooperate with authorities, resolve disputes peacefully and participate constructively in public life. Without it, societies become more vulnerable to division, misinformation and unrest. With it, even difficult challenges become easier to manage collectively.

Looking ahead, African leaders will also need to prepare for risks that sit outside conventional security frameworks. Climate change is one of the most urgent. Across the continent, climate stress is affecting water, food systems, livelihoods, migration patterns and economic productivity. In fragile contexts, these pressures can deepen existing vulnerabilities and place additional strain on institutions. Climate adaptation is therefore not simply about protecting ecosystems. It is about protecting people, livelihoods and stability.

The same applies to the convergence of climate stress, youth unemployment and rapid urbanisation. Each of these pressures can be managed in isolation. Together, they can become much more difficult to contain if governments wait too long. Misinformation, declining trust, technological disruption and future competition over resources such as water and critical minerals will all also shape Africa's security landscape in the decades ahead.

The response cannot come from security institutions alone. It must come from societies that invest in people, strengthen trust and create meaningful opportunities for participation. Young people are already building businesses, leading community initiatives, advancing climate action and contributing to peacebuilding efforts. They are often the first to identify problems and among the first to develop practical solutions.

The challenge is therefore not whether young Africans are ready to contribute. The challenge is

whether institutions are ready to listen, trust and invest in them.

The African countries that succeed will not be defined by wealth or military strength alone. They will be those that give young people a genuine stake in the future. True security is not simply protection from threats. It is the creation of societies in which young people can thrive.



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.





www.ichikowitzfoundation.com