



C O V I D - 1 9
Y O U T H
S U R V E Y

Introduction

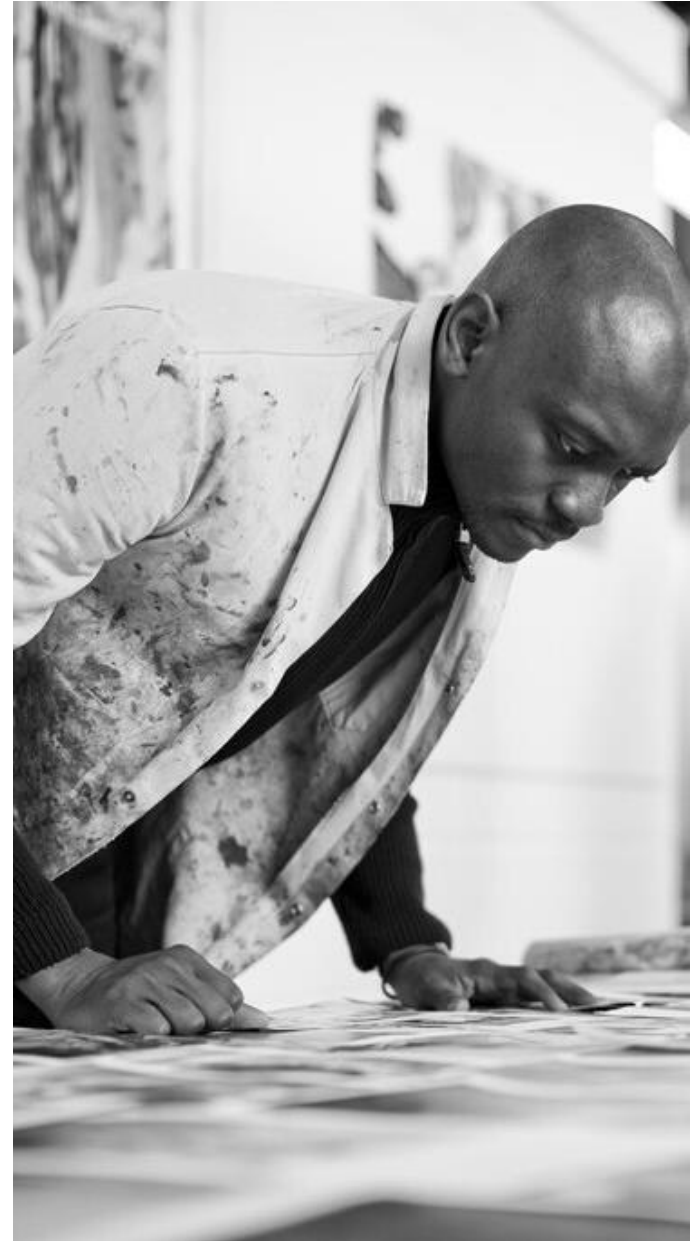
For decades the British Council has been surveying the opinions of young people in African countries, recording their aspirations, particularly around work and education. Our pre-Covid research in Ethiopia and Nigeria gave solid grounds for optimism: young people overall were confident about their futures and the future of their countries. That is no longer the case.

If young people are fearful for the future, cannot find a job or start a business, then the sense of accompanying powerlessness and loss of faith can have dangerous repercussions for the stability of any country.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa the British Council focuses on helping young people achieve better livelihoods, whether supporting them directly, or through partnerships with the institutions, government ministries, business and networks that form the environment in which they work.

The British Council believes young people, the majority of Africa's population, are one of the continent's greatest assets and their views and relationships with the UK will be critical to the future mutual prosperity of both.

Moses Anibaba
Director, Sub-Saharan Africa

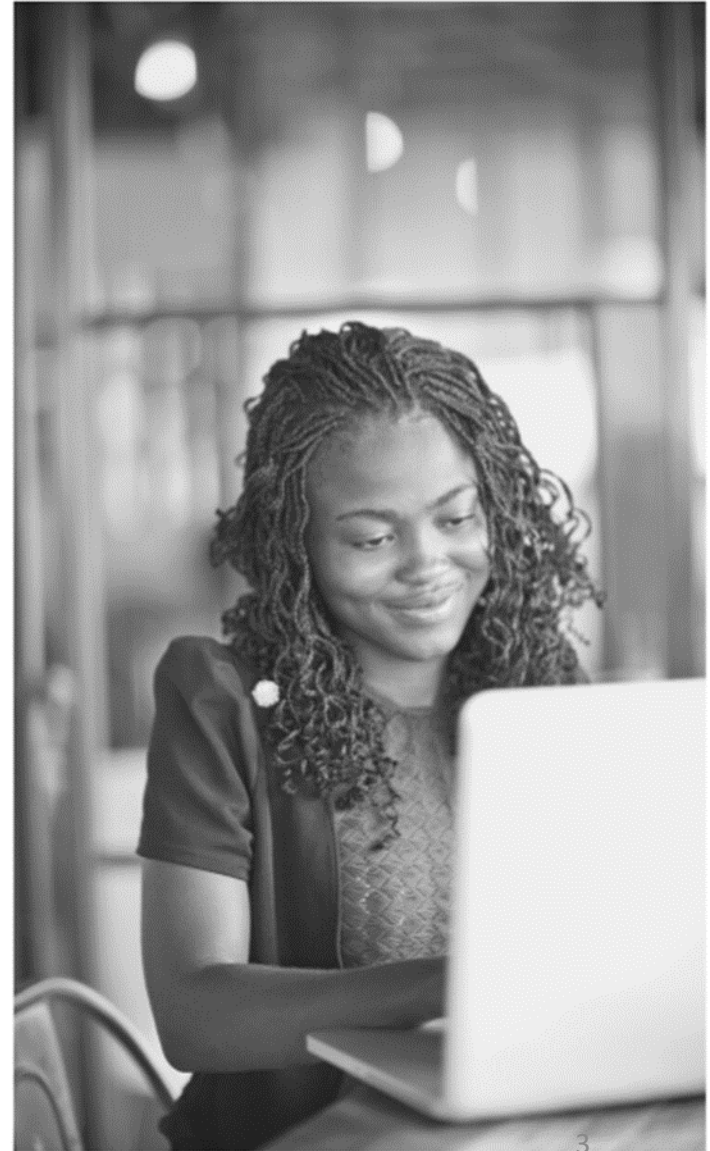


Methodology

The survey targeted 18-35 year old Africans in urban areas. It consisted of an online questionnaire and then a second smaller wave of telephone interviews and text messages. The survey fieldwork was conducted between 3 June – 1 July 2020.

The questionnaire through a social media campaign and also distributed through WhatsApp by British Council staff members and contacts. Lastly, the questionnaire was shared with partner organisations in the youth and skills space.

The first wave of the survey covered six countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia) and received 4,575 eligible responses.



Covid-19 Youth Survey sample distribution

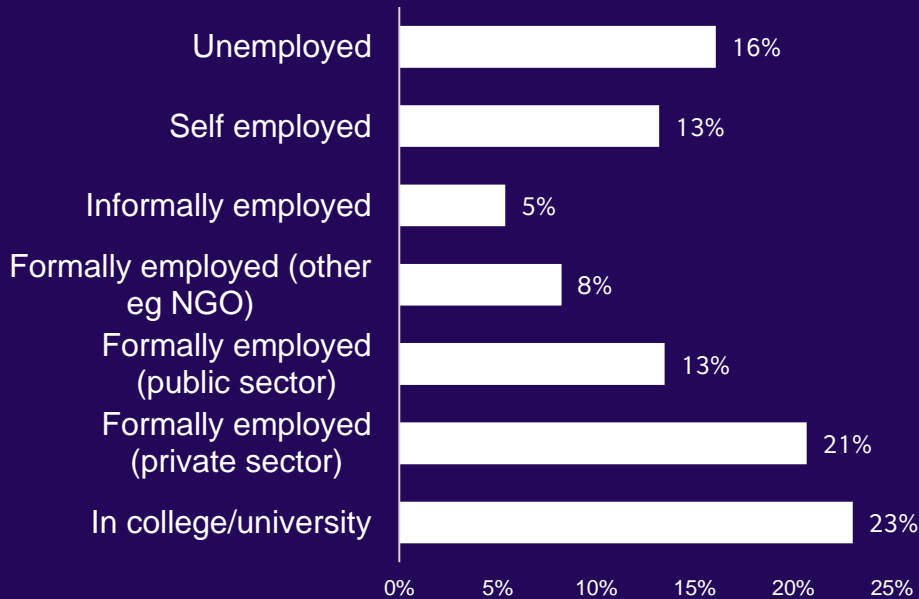


4575

Total responses between 18-35 years across six countries Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan and Zimbabwe



OCCUPATION

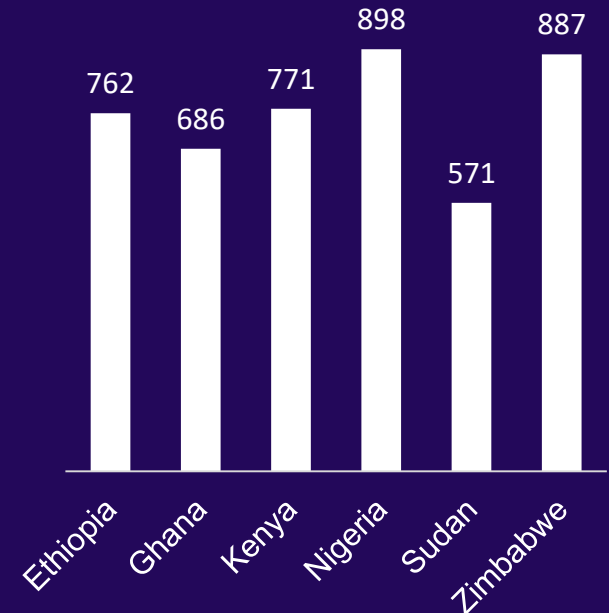


42%
Female



58%
Male

DISTRIBUTION PER COUNTRY



Top findings

- 01** Covid-19 will hit economy harder than health
- 02** Young African optimism has vanished
- 03** Starting a business – not finding a job – is top priority
- 04** Different levels of impact and trust between sexes
- 05** Education disruptions will damage prospects of the young
- 06** International orgs are much more trusted than local ones
- 07** UK soft power is strongest in Africa but under threat

1. Covid-19 will hit economy harder than health



The pandemic is exacerbating previously observed trends of high unemployment and a lack of job opportunities among young people.

In Ethiopia in 2019, nearly half of respondents said that a lack of employment opportunities had impacted them negatively in the previous five years.

In Kenya, more than two-thirds of those interviewed identified the lack of employment opportunities as the main challenge faced by youth. Today fears for the economy are the top concern of young people, even above their own physical and mental health.

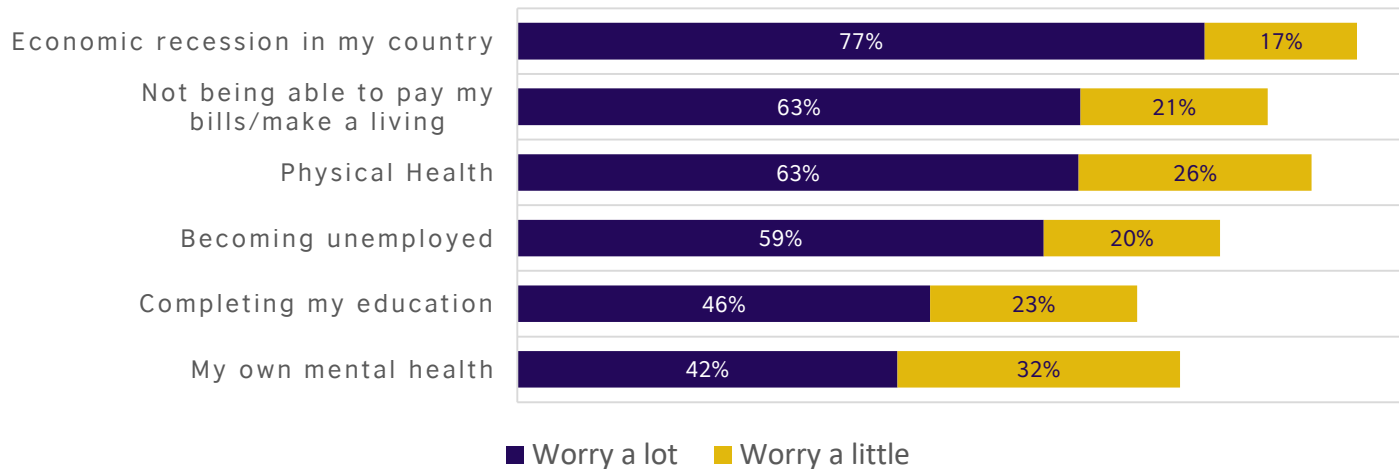
Across Africa, most youth see opportunities diminishing post-Covid 19. The most pessimistic countries were Kenya, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, where over 70 per cent of respondents predicted there would be fewer opportunities for their lives after the pandemic.

Youth in Nigeria (82 per cent) and Zimbabwe (85 per cent) worry more about recession in their country compared to their counterparts in Ghana (63 per cent) and Sudan (69 per cent).

The pandemic is affecting formal workers in the same way as the self-employed and unemployed youth. There was little to no difference in their responses.

Fears and anxiety

When asked to list their concerns surrounding Covid-19, respondents produced these priorities:



“The side effects of Covid-19 pandemic is affecting our socio-economic sector as young people. We are more worried and so depressed due to financial constraints.”
Male, 18-24 year old, Kenya

“Fresh graduates and youth without jobs are forced to stay home instead.”
Female, 18-24 year old, Sudan

"People are not concerned about the outbreak. They believe their means of livelihood have been take away." Male, 31-35 year-old, Nigeria

1. Covid-19 will hit economy harder than health



Employed youth in Kenya and Zimbabwe are very uncertain about their future career prospects with over 90 per cent predicting that the employment opportunities and income levels will get worse due to Covid-19.



Almost 80 per cent of respondents in Kenya report decreased incomes and the expectation of significant adverse effects on their financial well-being. This is followed closely by Zimbabwe at 78 per cent. Whilst youth in Ghana are slightly more optimistic about the financial well-being compared to other countries.

Providing young Africans with skills and opportunities to access jobs, whether it's through English or other professional qualifications, is a top priority for the British Council. A sudden, sharp, economic downturn across the whole of Africa will make it more difficult for young people to find work, making these skills all the more valuable.

Regional Director Moses Anibaba

2. Young African optimism has vanished

Previous British Council '[Next Generation](#)' research found high levels of optimism among young people. In Kenya 62 per cent said their lives were better than those of their parents' generation, and 88 per cent thought their lives would be better in five years. In Ethiopia 77 per cent were optimistic about their future and 64 per cent thought the country would improve in the next five years. In Zimbabwe 55 per cent of 18-24-year-olds predicted things would change for the better.



However, our latest survey finds high levels of concern for the future among the vast majority of young people we questioned. The most pessimistic countries were Kenya, Zimbabwe and Nigeria where over 70 per cent of respondents predicted there would be fewer opportunities for their lives after the pandemic.

The vast majority of the African populations are young. But if young people are fearful for the future, cannot find a job or start a business, then the sense of accompanying powerlessness and uncertainty leads to a loss of faith and trust which has the potential to manifest in adverse or alternative pathways, undermining or threatening a country's stability.

Head of Governance and Civil Society Pooja Kingsley

3. Starting a business – not finding a job – is top priority



*“I am more concerned about job security and interested in entrepreneurial diversification.”
25-30 years, self-employed, Ghana*



Nearly **40 per cent** of them say that **Covid-19** has prompted them to be entrepreneurs while less than 30 per cent are looking to employment.

Covid-19 will have negative impacts on young people at the very start of their careers and is likely to disrupt career progression. **Only 38 per cent interested in getting a job** and employment opportunities

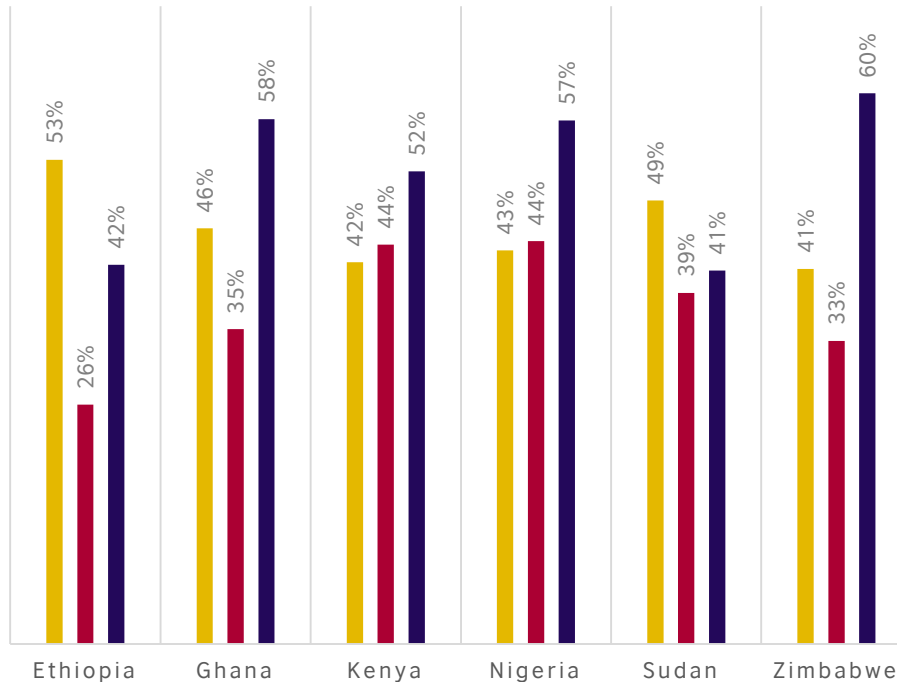


Half of young Africans in college and university would prefer to start a business compared to seeking employment in the current economic environment.

Over two-thirds of self-employed people (69 per cent) would still consider entrepreneurship ‘after Covid-19’ despite the challenges and uncertainties of the economic situation.

Future goals

How has the Covid-19 outbreak changed your goals?



- Starting a business
- Getting a job and employment opportunities
- Developing their skills through training

60 per cent of the **young Zimbabweans** are interested in **entrepreneurship** compared to their counterparts from other countries. They are followed closely by youth in Ghana (58 per cent), Nigeria (57 per cent) with Ethiopia and Sudan at 42 and 41 per cent respectively.

66 per cent of unemployed youth, most of whom have recently lost their jobs due to the pandemic, are seeking new employment opportunities while 52 per cent would consider entrepreneurship and starting a business.

3. Starting a business – not finding a job – is top priority



Fifty-nine per cent of Kenyans surveyed in our 2018 Next Generation survey said that ‘in an ideal world’ they would like to be self-employed. In Ethiopia, 75 per cent said they would like to set up their own business and in Zimbabwe there was a strong entrepreneurial culture pre-Covid-19. A global pandemic is one of the many reasons that this is not an ideal world, yet in all countries, setting up a business is prioritised above getting a job.

Our separate research into the job creation powers of social enterprises in SSA have found they are strong drivers of employment. Social enterprises create jobs where they are needed the most, with 73% of social enterprises in Africa deliberately employing people from low income backgrounds.

Bureaucracy and systemic blockages make it hard for young people to start a business. On a positive note, social enterprises are supporting entrepreneurship and our research shows they are better geared towards creating new positions than traditional business – while also addressing many of Africa’s other pressing challenges in health, pollution or climate change. Our work supports social and creative enterprise at several different levels, with governments, institutions, incubators and entrepreneurs themselves.

Skills and Portfolio Lead Robert Njoroge

4. Different levels of impact and trust between sexes



74 per cent of women in Zimbabwe are anxious about the current economic situation in the country compared to 56 per cent in Ghana.

Although women are **more likely to follow Covid-19 rules and regulations** compared to men, they are less likely to trust the local or national government interventions compared to men.



The pandemic **disproportionately affects women's mental and emotional health**. More women (61 per cent) than men (55 per cent) predict their mental and physical wellbeing will get worse because of the pandemic.

More men (45 per cent) **aspire to become entrepreneurs post Covid-19 compared to women** (36 per cent). This gender gap is greatest in Kenya (41 per cent vs 51 per cent) and Nigeria (37 per cent vs 46 per cent).

4. Different levels of impact and trust between sexes

When taking an average measure across all their different concerns, we found women in Sudan, Kenya and Ghana are slightly more pessimistic about their future compared to men, whereas in Nigeria and Ethiopia this difference is reversed.



Women are more likely to rely on their family, friends and social media (59 per cent average across both categories) for information on Covid-19 compared to men who average 47 per cent.



On the other hand, slightly more men (25 per cent) are likely to obtain this information from traditional media sources such as radio stations and print newspapers for information compared to women (19 per cent).

Access to information is a fundamental and universal right that is also critical to the empowerment of young women. While the survey highlighted women's reliance on personal networks such as family and friends for information, social media is emerging as a powerful medium for engaging young women in places where access to internet is assured. That more young women than men are likely to pursue skills development opportunities presents an opportunity for significant work in providing skills offers that enhance women's labour force participation.

Senior Consultant on Gender and Inclusion Alice Wekesa

5. Education disruptions will damage prospects of the young



“I am more concerned about finishing my education and getting employment” 18-24 years, In college/university, Zimbabwe

75 per cent of 18-24-year-olds in college/university are concerned by the **disruption of their education**. In Zimbabwe and Kenya concern is higher among men than women, in Ethiopia and Nigeria this picture is reversed and in Ghana the concern is equal between the sexes.

Youth in Zimbabwe (15 per cent), Sudan (16 per cent) and Kenya (17 per cent) have the least confidence in the way their schools are handling the current crises compared to the other countries

However, women are **more interested in developing their skills** through training than men. The gap is especially wide in Ethiopia (54 per cent vs 41 per cent) and Sudan (45 per cent vs 34 per cent).

While our respondents are over 18, we know that having role models in secondary and higher education is an important factor in encouraging younger girls to continue their education.

Director of Education and Skills Andrew Zerzan

6. International organisations more trusted than local ones



65 per cent of youth have **high confidence in international organisations' work managing Covid-19** while only 40 per cent have confidence in national governments or 22 per cent in local schools

Women in Nigeria and Ethiopia are less trusting of INGOs, with only 22 per cent trusting international organisations compared to 44 per cent of the men in those countries.



More than half of youth in Ethiopia (57 per cent) trust their national government and ministry of health in their response towards Covid-19, compared to Zimbabwe where the figure was 21 per cent, followed by Sudan and Nigeria.

The high level of trust that young Africans have with international organisations presents an opportunity for mutual cooperation between the UK and African countries – especially in areas of mutual benefit such as education.

Regional Director Moses Anibaba

7. UK soft power is strong in Africa but under threat



Cumulatively, the UK ranks as the most attractive country among respondents.

China tops the table of people's interest in doing business and trade with another country, with 52 per cent of respondents. The UK came second with 48 per cent of African youth saying it was a good place with which to engage in business and trade.



UK arts and culture are its top attraction. No other country comes close to the UK in the minds of African youth in terms of culture and arts. In fact, British arts and culture was the only country that a majority of youth identified as attractive.

A majority of youth (59 per cent) have read positive articles about China's Covid-19 response, far above the coverage given to the UK. However, the UK ranks second with 44 per cent, ahead of Germany (42 per cent) and New Zealand (35 per cent).

7. UK soft power is strong in Africa but under threat



Young people in Sub-Saharan Africa have more **positive attitudes towards the UK**, ahead of the USA and Canada. These attitudes not only reflect influence on arts, culture and education opportunities but also for friendships and making connections.



Positive sentiments are slightly higher amongst those aged 25 and above compared to younger respondents.

Arts, culture and the creative industries create good trading and economic opportunities between the UK and the countries of Africa. They also, perhaps more importantly, provide space for young people from the UK and Africa to reimagine their relationship, develop new connections and leverage the trust that comes with increased understanding.

Director Arts Ojoma Ochai

Country attractiveness post Covid-19

Young people were asked to rate countries' attractiveness thinking about a 'post-Covid' world

Country	Business/Trade	Consume arts and culture	International Study Destination	Make personal contacts and friends with	Visit (as a tourist)	Overall Attractiveness
UK	48%	42%	61%	64%	48%	53%
USA	39%	26%	35%	51%	32%	37%
Canada	27%	22%	50%	44%	37%	36%
Germany	34%	30%	42%	38%	33%	35%
China	53%	26%	17%	22%	18%	27%
Australia	17%	19%	31%	31%	30%	26%
New Zealand	13%	14%	24%	20%	25%	19%
France	12%	22%	12%	20%	27%	19%
Japan	23%	24%	11%	15%	16%	18%
South Africa	18%	20%	8%	19%	16%	16%
Kenya	11%	19%	6%	15%	12%	12%
South Korea	12%	16%	10%	13%	11%	12%
India	15%	21%	6%	10%	7%	12%
Ghana	10%	16%	6%	14%	8%	11%
Greece	3%	14%	3%	8%	13%	8%
Russia	7%	9%	6%	10%	8%	8%
Senegal	5%	10%	2%	8%	3%	6%
Others	6%	5%	5%	4%	7%	5%
Vietnam	6%	7%	2%	5%	5%	5%

Contributors



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