



Women's Political Participation in Africa 2021-2024

CENTRAL Region

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe

Fact Sheet

	Africa	Horn	East	Southern	Central	North	West
Lower houses of parliament 2024	26% (25%)	31% (33%)	34% (33%)	29% (28%)	22% (19%)	22% (24%)	20% (16%)
Upper houses of parliament 2024	21% (20%)	28% (30%)	34% (29%)	31% (29%)	28% (20%)	10% (11%)	7% (12%)
Parliament overall 2024	25% (24%)	30% (33%)	34% (32%)	29% (28%)	23% (19%)	20% (21%)	19% (16%)
Political party leadership 2024	9% (12%)	0% (17%)	11% (15%)	19% (14%)	0% (7%)	0% (0%)	0% (11%)
Election management bodies 2024	29% (28%)	30% (21%)	45% (45%)	37% (40%)	23% (20%)	15% (25%)	27% (24%)
Local government 2024	25% (21%)	29% (N/A)	24% (35%)	25% (20%)	24% (27%)	26% (3%)	28% (2%)
Speakers 2024	25% (21%)	0% (0%)	44% (33%)	43% (35%)	27% (18%)	0% (0%)	16% (16%)
Mayors of capital cities 2024	29% (19%)	25% (20%)	0% (0%)	20% (19%)	29% (43%)	17% (0%)	36% (20%)
Top executive positions 2024	13% (7%)	8% (10%)	28% (12%)	21% (9%)	11% (7%)	0% (0%)	7% (7%)
Cabinet 2024	24% (22%)	19% (17%)	36% (32%)	30% (26%)	18% (20%)	21% (13%)	21% (19%)

KEY	Increased since 2021 (in brackets)
	Decreased since 2021 (in brackets)
	The same as 2021 (in brackets)

QUICK FACTS

- Since 2021, the number of women lower house parliamentarians in Africa has increased by one percentage point, from 25% to 26%. At this rate of progress, we will reach parity by 2100.
- Central Africa has not achieved 30% representation of women at any level, and declined in four of the ten areas measured, and improved somewhat in the other six.
- In Central Africa, 22% of lower house parliamentarians are women, a three percentage point increase since 2021.
- Women in the lower houses of parliament in Central Africa range from 34% in Cameroon, while the Central African Republic (13%) has the lowest representation.
- Only two countries, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, have achieved 30% of women in the lower house of parliament. No country in Central Africa has achieved 30% of women in local government.
- Five countries in Central Africa use some form of quota system at the national, local, or both levels.
- Women are best represented in the upper houses of parliament, and least represented in political party leadership, where no women hold positions.
- Four countries in Central Africa held national and local government elections between 2021 and 2024 - three increased, and one declined.

Context

There are eight countries in Central Africa. Overall, Central Africa is marked by a complex interplay of political instability, human rights violations, and security challenges. Many countries in the region struggle with governance issues and the repercussions of armed conflicts, necessitating comprehensive international and regional efforts to address these multifaceted problems.

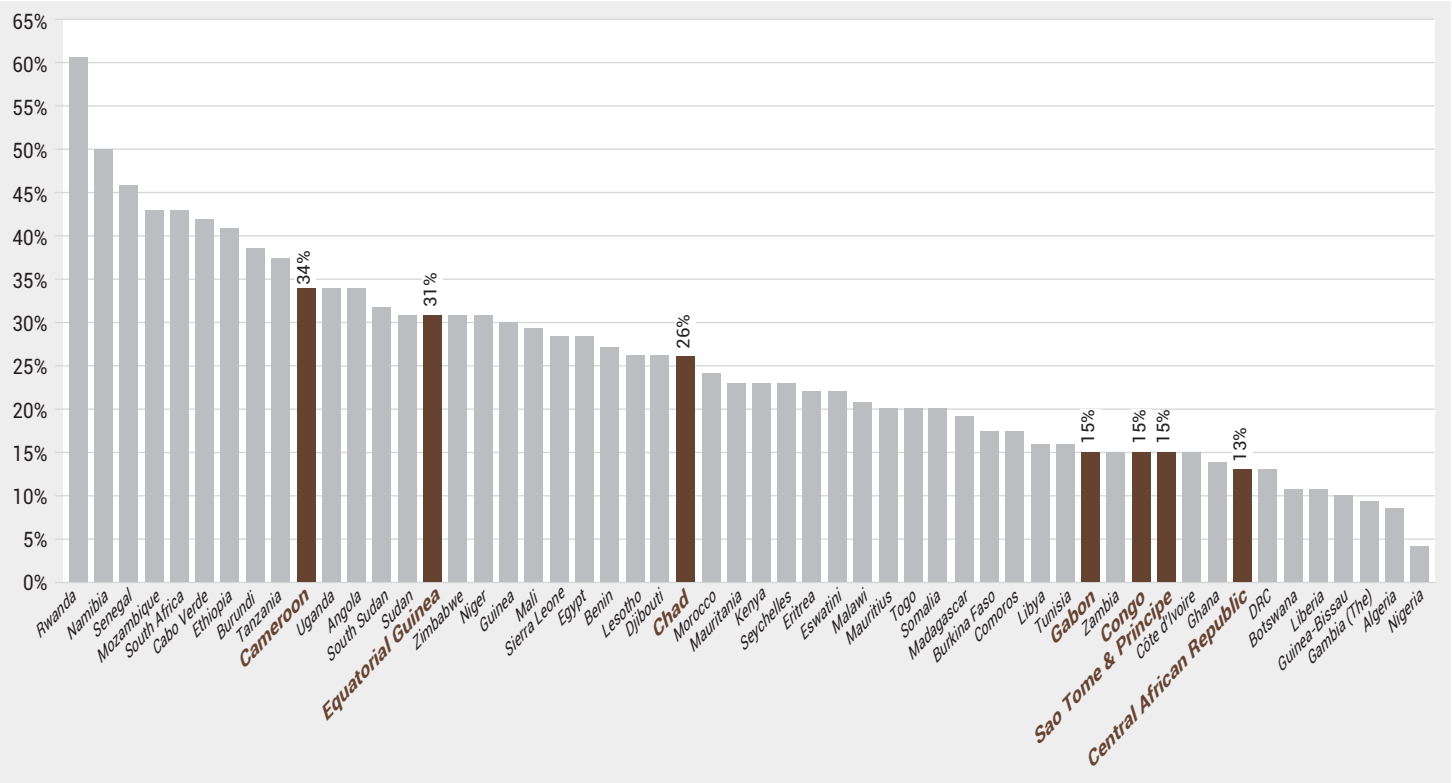
Cameroon faces significant political unrest, particularly in the Anglophone regions, where a secessionist movement has led to armed conflict, resulting in thousands of deaths and large-scale displacement. **CAR** remains mired in conflict, with multiple armed groups actively challenging government authority. The violence has led to severe human rights violations, including killings, sexual violence, and recruitment of child soldiers. **Chad** has experienced political instability following the death of longtime leader Idriss Déby in 2021. In **Congo Brazzaville**, political tensions are prevalent, particularly regarding President Denis Sassou Nguesso's long

tenure and attempts to extend his rule. **Equatorial Guinea** is characterised by authoritarian rule under President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who has been in power since 1979. **Gabon** has seen political unrest, particularly surrounding recent elections and governance issues. There are concerns about human rights violations, including crackdowns on opposition parties and freedom of expression. The island nation of **Sao Tome and Principe** generally experiences a relatively stable political environment compared to its regional counterparts, however, the country still faces challenges such as economic dependency and governance issues.

These contexts directly impact women's rights in general and WPP in particular.

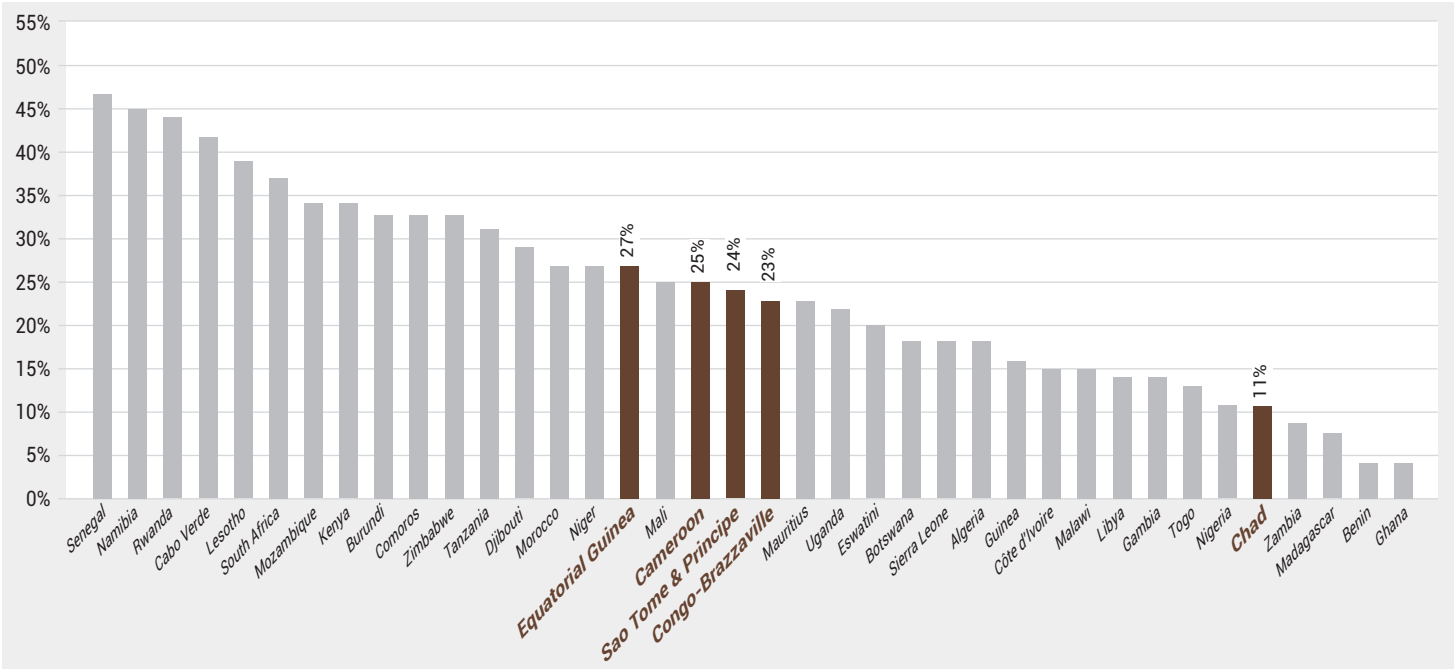
WPP in lower houses of parliament in Africa ranges from a high of 61% in Rwanda to a low of 4% in Nigeria. Cameroon has the highest proportion of women in Central Africa (34%), while the Central African Republic (13%) has the lowest.

WPP in Lower Houses in African countries, 2024



WPP, at the local government level in Africa, ranges from 47% in Senegal to four percent in Benin and Ghana. There is only data for five countries in Central Africa, where WPP ranges from 27% in Equatorial Guinea to 11% in Chad.

WPP in local government by region



Recent elections in Central Africa (2021-2024)

Four countries in Central Africa held national government elections between 2021 and 2024. The largest increase was in Chad, with an 11 percentage point increase. The largest decline was in Sao Tome and Principe, where WPP decreased by nine percentage points from 24% to 15%. There were no local government elections in Central Africa between 2021 and 2024.

% Change	National
10% or Over	Chad (11%) Equatorial Guinea (10%)
0 to 4%	Congo (3%)
-1 and under	Sao Tome and Principe (-9%)

Obstacles to WPP

Progress has been made, however, research shows that women continue to face several barriers, not only in accessing political spaces but also in exercising their agency and power once elected.

Electoral systems and quotas

Electoral systems and quotas (TSMs) have been shown to enhance WPP at all levels. The electoral system is the way in which representatives are elected, these systems.

In Africa, three main types of electoral systems are used:

- **Constituency** or “First Past the Post” (FPTP)/ plurality/majority systems - Winner takes all, generally yield poorer results for women and minority groups.
- **Proportional Representation** (PR) - Most conducive to increasing women’s representation, especially using the zebra list system.
- **Mixed** system using both PR and constituency systems - Middle ground, more countries moving to this system.

Quotas are temporary special measures (TSMs) to increase WPP. At the national level 45 of the 54 African states have some form of quota at the lower house level. At the local level of the 41 countries for which we could get data, 28 have some form of quota, with similar results to those in the lower house.

Any type of quota can be combined with any type of electoral system to increase women's political

representation, with varying degrees of success. It shows that the best combination for increasing WPP in Africa is the PR system where political parties provide for quotas voluntarily at the national level, while the mixed system with legislated candidate quotas is the most effective at the local government level. In the FPTP system voluntary party quotas are the least effective, while the most effective quota in the FPTP system is reserved seats for women.

Lower House					Local Government		
Country	Rank LH	Electoral system	Quota	%Women	Electoral system	Quota	%Women
Cameroon	48	PR	Legislated Candidate	34%	PR	Voluntary party (SDF)	25%
Equatorial Guinea	60	PR	None	31%	PR	None	27%
Chad	93	Mixed	None	26%	Mixed	None	11%
Sao Tome and Principe	144	PR	Legislated Candidate	15%	PR	Legislated Candidate	24%
Congo	144	FPTP	Legislated Candidate	15%	FPTP	Legislated Candidate	23%
Gabon		FPTP	Legislated Candidate	15%	FPTP	Legislated Candidate	No data
Central African Republica	153	FPTP	Legislated Candidate	13%	TRS	Legislated Candidate	No data
TOTAL CENTRAL				22%			24%

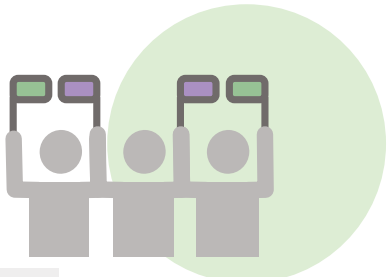
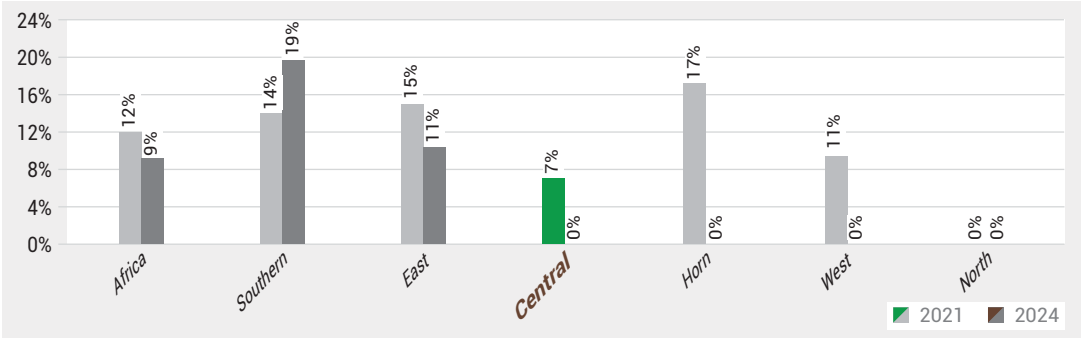
Five countries in Central Africa use some form of quota system at the national, local, or both levels. All five use a legislated candidate quota at the national, while four use this form of quota at the local government level. It clearly shows that even where there are legislated candidate quotas, this does not necessarily guarantee equal representation.

Congo-Brazzaville, which has an FPTP system, adopted a 30% quota in 2016. This resulted in a four-percentage point increase in WPP from 7% to 11%. In August 2022, at the opening of the 15th legislature of the National Assembly, the percentage of elected women rose from 11% in the 14th legislature to 15%, despite the 30% quota. This result shows that in the FPTP system, a legislated quota is no guarantee of the stated desired outcome.



Political parties

Women's representation in political party leadership in Africa, by region, 2021-2024

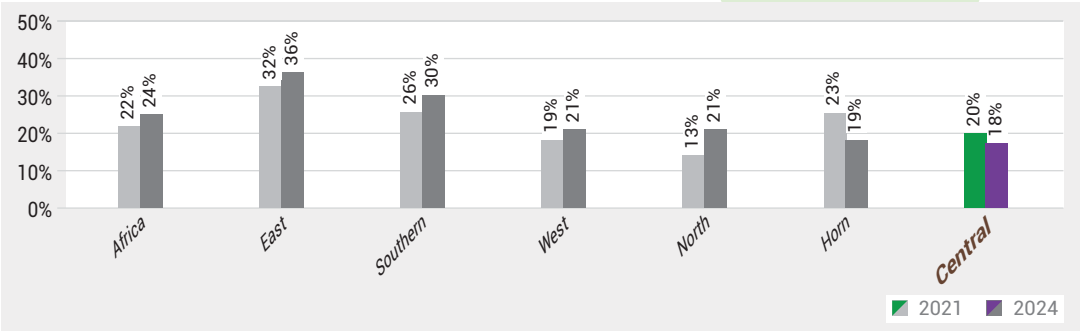


Political parties are instrumental to advancement into national leadership, and male dominance of top leadership (Leader, Secretary General (SG) and DSG) is a feature in every country.

There are no women in the top leadership of the top two political parties in Central Africa.

Cabinet

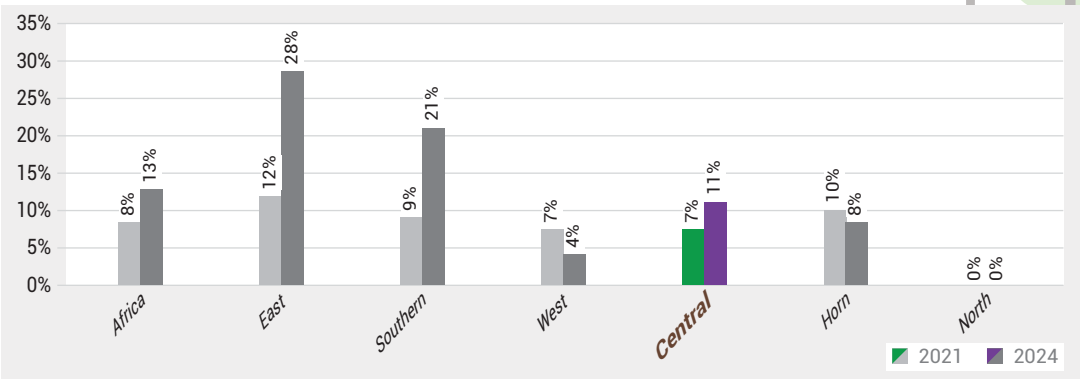
Women in Cabinet in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Overall, Female Cabinet ministers increased by two percentage points to 24%. In Central Africa, 18% of Cabinet ministers are women. Women ministers range from 20% in Gabon to 15% in Cameroon.

Top Executive

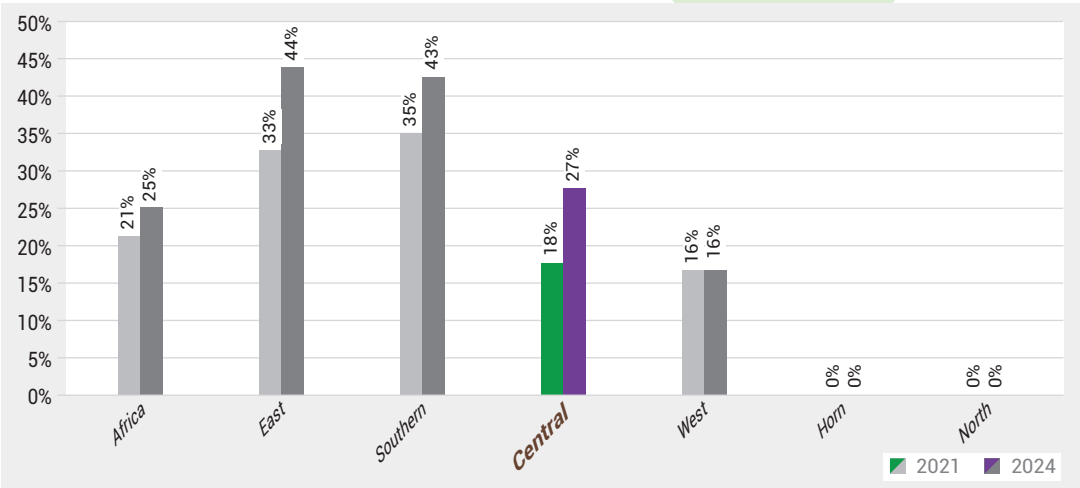
Women in top executive of governments in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Eleven percent of the top executive of government in Central Africa are women. Two percentage points lower than the continental average of 13%. Rose Christiane Raponda is the Vice President of Gabon. Manuela Roka Botey is Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea.

Speakers

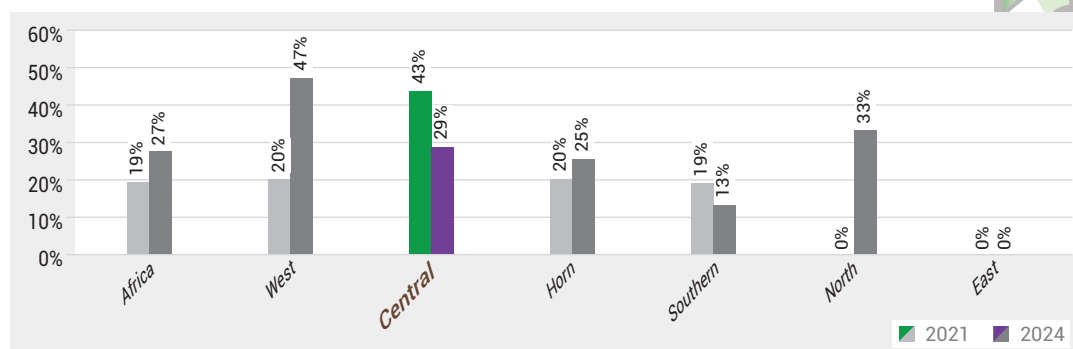
Women speakers in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



27% of speakers in Central Africa parliaments are women. Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and Gabon have female speakers

Mayors of capital cities

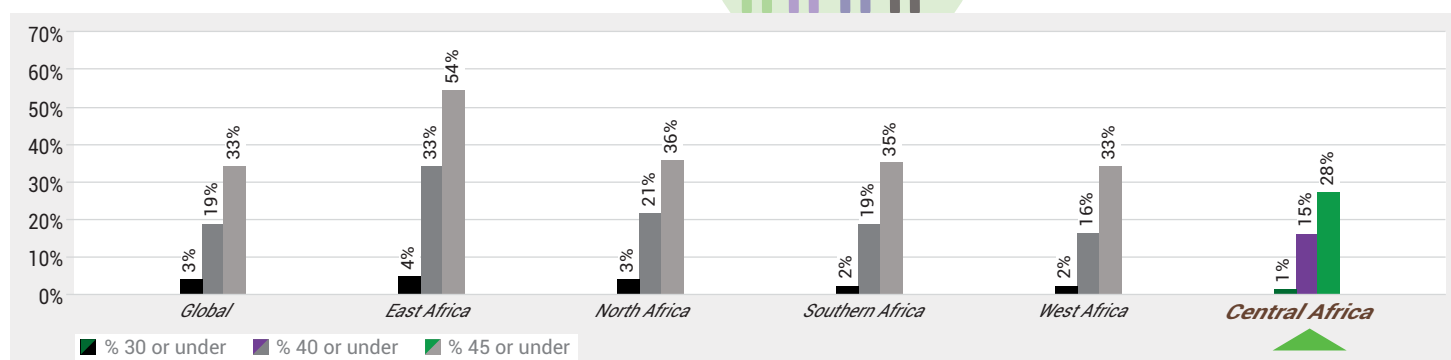
Women mayors of capital cities in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



There are two Mayors of capital cities in Central Africa. MariaColoma Edjang Bengono is Mayor of Malabo, Equatorial Guinea and Christine Mba Ndutume is the mayor of Libreville Gabon.

Youth representation

Youth representation in parliament in Africa by region



Globally, 33% of MPs in the lower houses of parliament are under 45 years old, 19% are under 40 years old, and just 3% under 30 years old. Central Africa has the fewest young MPs in Africa, 28% are 45 years or under, 15% are 40 years or under, and just 1% are 30 years or younger.

Representation by age bracket

Country	Chamber	% 30 or under	% 40 or under	% 45 or under
Cameroon	National Assembly	1	9	18
Central African Republic	National Assembly	1	17	29
Chad	Transitional National Council	1	18	32
Sao Tome and Principe	National Assembly	2	24	38

Sao Tome and Principe have the highest proportion of MPs 45 years or younger, while Cameroon has the lowest.



Cameroon's president Paul Biya at 90 years is the oldest head of state in the world in a country with a median population age of just 18.5 years.

All graphs, tables and information are sourced from the second edition of the WPP Africa Barometer, read the full version [here](#).