



Women's Political Participation in Africa 2021-2024

HORN Region

Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia

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

- The Horn has regressed in four areas of women's political participation.
- In the **Horn**, 31% of lower house parliamentarians are women, a two-percentage point decline since 2021.
- There has been a one-percentage-point increase of women lower house parliamentarians in **Africa** since 2021, from 25% to 26%. At this rate of progress, we will reach parity by 2100.
- The **global** average for women in the lower house of parliament is 27%. It is one percentage point lower for Africa.
- Women in the lower houses of parliament in the Horn range from 20% in Somalia to 41% in Ethiopia.
- Only Ethiopia has achieved or surpassed 30% of women in the lower house of parliament.
- All four countries in the region use some form of quota at national, local or both levels.
- Women are best represented in lower house of parliament, and least represented in political party leadership, where women hold no positions.
- Biggest increase in the region is for women in Election Management Bodies from 21% to 30%, one percentage point higher than the average for Africa (29%).
- There have been 36 elections in Africa between 2021 and May 2024, three national elections took place in the Horn - Ethiopia increased by two percentage points, Djibouti remained the same and Somalia declined by five percentage points in the lower house.

Context

The political situation in the Horn of Africa is complex and dynamic, characterised by a mix of ongoing conflicts, political transitions and socio-economic challenges.



The human rights and security situation in **Djibouti** is relatively more stable compared to some of its neighbours in the Horn of Africa, but it still faces significant challenges, particularly concerning political freedoms and civil liberties. The political climate is authoritarian, characterised by limited democratic freedoms and ongoing human rights concerns. The political landscape is dominated by a single party, and genuine political pluralism is currently lacking.



Eritrea continues to suppress citizens basic rights, including to freedom of opinion, religion, and expression. Eritrean security forces have been found to be committing serious human rights violations in Ethiopia's Tigray region. Since gaining independence in 1993, the country has not held any elections, and the appointed president has refused to enforce the 1997 constitution, which ensures civil rights and limits executive power.



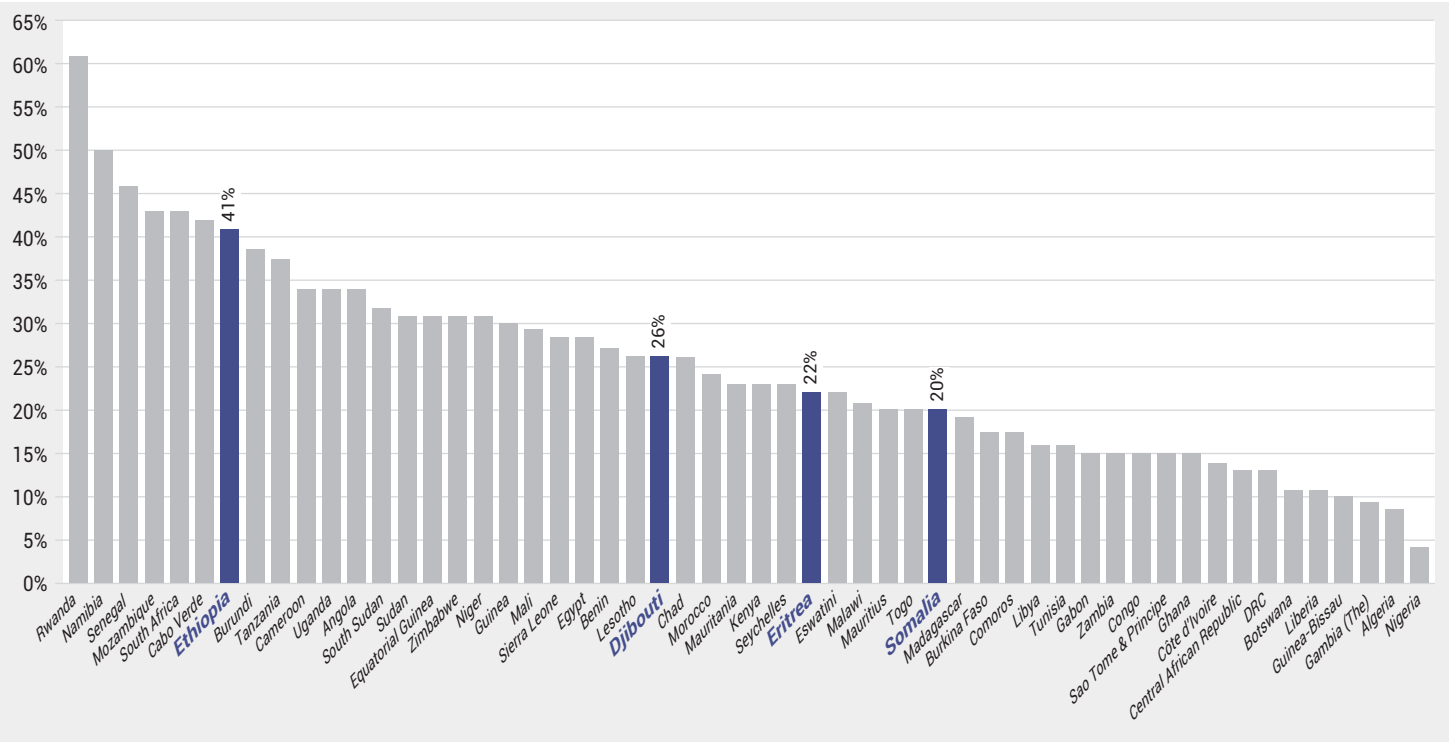
The human rights and security situation in **Ethiopia** remains fragile, with government security forces, militias, and non-state armed groups responsible for systematic abuses. Ethiopia's political situation is characterised by ethnic federalism, ongoing conflicts, particularly in Tigray and other regions, and significant human rights challenges. While there have been efforts towards reconciliation and reform, sustained commitment to governance, human rights, and addressing ethnic tensions will be crucial for achieving stability and peace in the country.



The human rights and security situation in **Somalia** remains challenging and complex, marked by ongoing conflict, political instability, and significant humanitarian needs. Somalia has been plagued by insecurity for decades and civilians are frequently caught in the crossfire of conflict. The political scene is marked by fragmentation and ongoing disputes over federalism, power-sharing, and electoral processes.

These contexts have a direct impact on women's rights in general and WPP in particular.

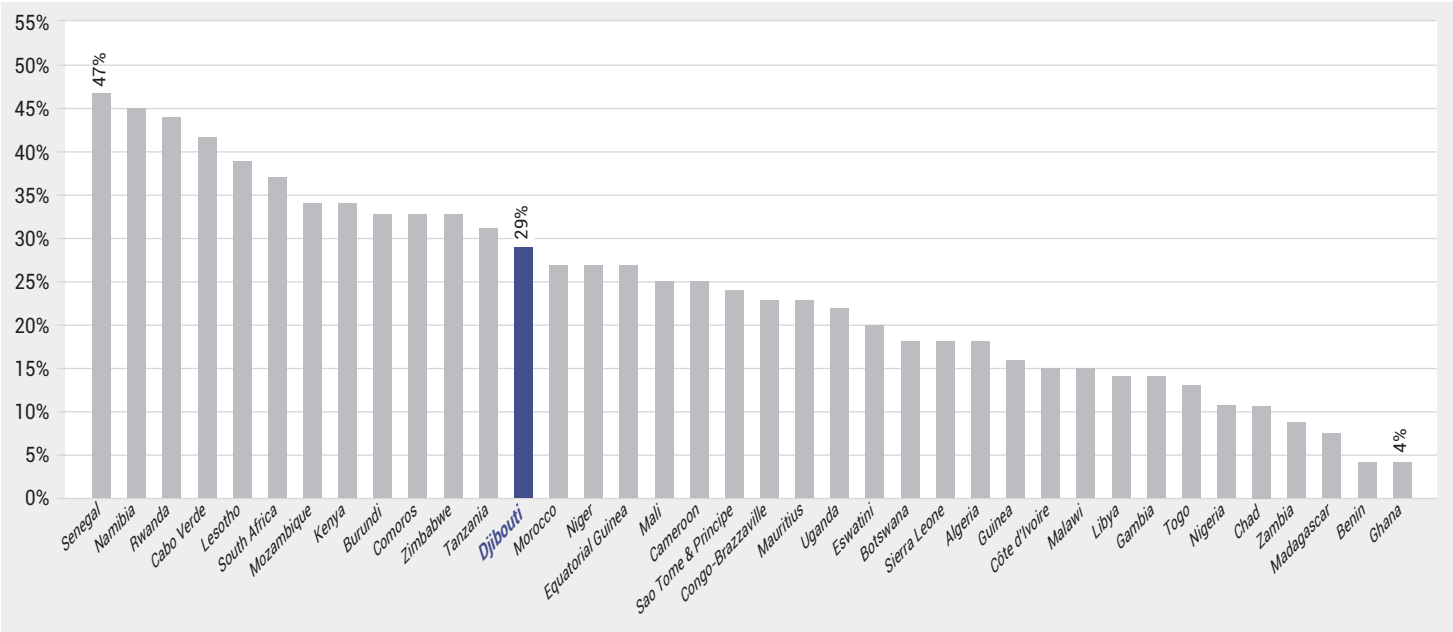
WPP in Lower Houses in African countries, 2024



WPP in lower houses of parliament in Africa range from a high of 61% in Rwanda to a low of 4% in Nigeria. Ethiopia (41%) has the highest proportion of women in the Horn, while Somalia has the lowest (20%)

At the local government level, WPP ranges from 4% in Ghana to 47% in Senegal.

WPP in local government by region



There is only data for one country in the Horn. WPP at the local government level in Djibouti is 29%.

The ongoing conflict in Eritrea has resulted in elections having been postponed indefinitely. In Somalia officials are not directly elected. We could not find data for local government for Ethiopia.

Recent elections in the Horn of Africa (2021-2024)

Three countries in the Horn held national elections between 2021 and 2024 - WPP in Ethiopia increased, in Djibouti it stayed the same and in Somalia, there was a decline of five percentage points.

% Change	Lower House
0 - 10%	Ethiopia (2%)
	Djibouti (0%)
-5%	Somalia (-5%)

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
Ethiopia	26	FPTP	None	41%	FPTP	None	No data
Djibouti	91	Mixed	Reserved seats (25%)	26%	Mixed	None	29%
Eritrea		Other	30% Reserved seats	22%	N/A	Reserved seats	No data
Somalia	120	Other	30% Reserved seats	20%	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL HORN				31%			29%

In the Horn, Eritrea and Somalia do not have elected officials however, they reserve 30% of seats for women. This has however not been complied with. Djibouti has complied with its 25% quota. Ethiopia is interesting because although there is no quota, political parties receive funding for including 20% female candidates on their lists, resulting in the share of WPP in parliament more than doubling in the election following the introduction of gender-targeted public funding.

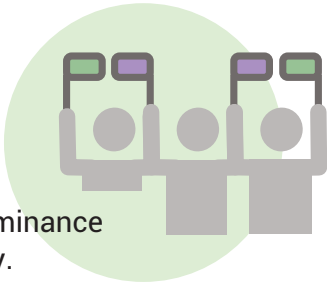


In Somalia, there are no direct elections; 135 traditional elders select the 275-member lower house¹ but the Garowe Principles (2012) provide for 30% reserved seats for women.

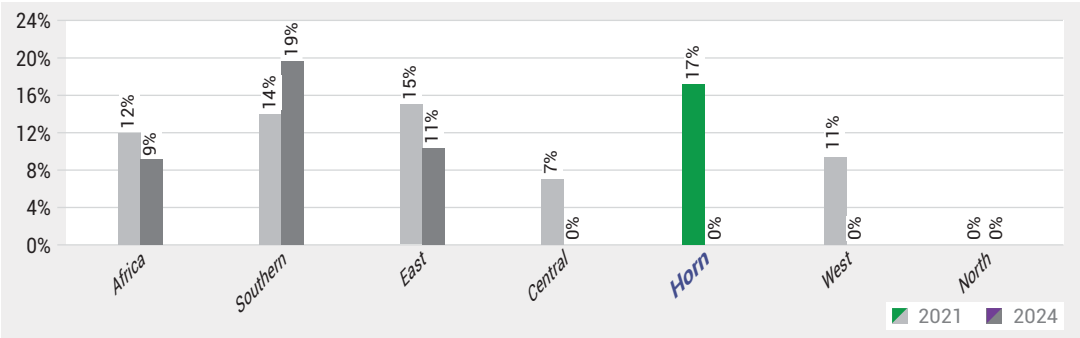
Despite some progress over the last ten years, representation of women remains low, increasing just six percentage points from 14% in 2012 to 20% in 2021. In the last elections, only 54 (20%) women were selected, falling short of the 30%. This case underscores the importance of designing the electoral system in conjunction with the quota. This system is exclusionary because members are selected, by a small group (135) of traditional leaders. This presents a problem because despite the legislated quota clan-based politics play a central role in a voting system where voting based on clan interests is encouraged, and women are often disregarded

Political parties

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.



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

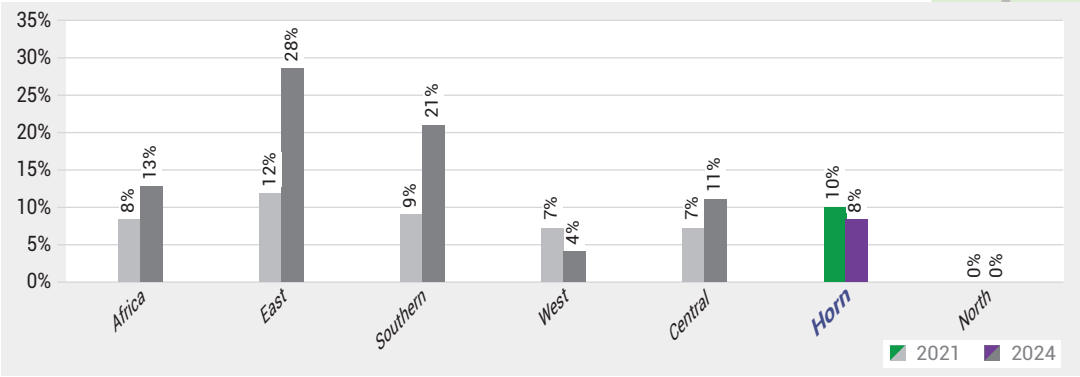


Since the 2021 Barometer, women's representation in executive positions of main political parties across the Horn dropped by 17 percentage points, from 17% to 0.

¹ https://api.data.ipu.org/node/158/basic-information?chamber_id=13573

Top Executive

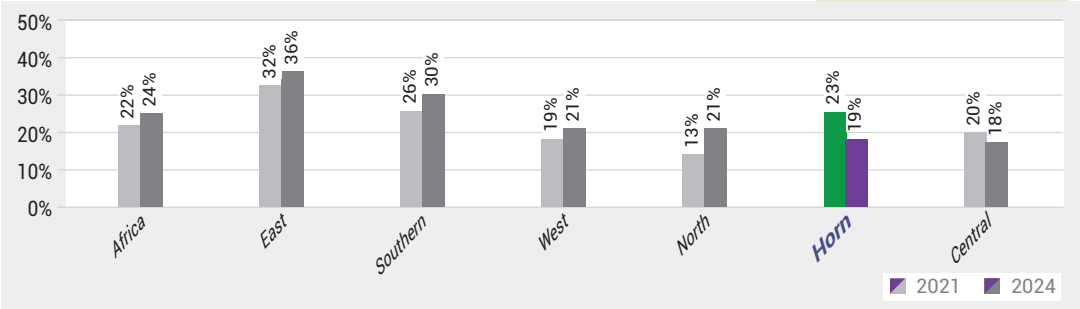
Women in top executive of governments in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



Women in top executive roles have also declined in the Horn, from 10% in 2021 to 8% in 2024. Sahle-Work Zewde is the president of Ethiopia, but this is essentially a ceremonial role.

Cabinet

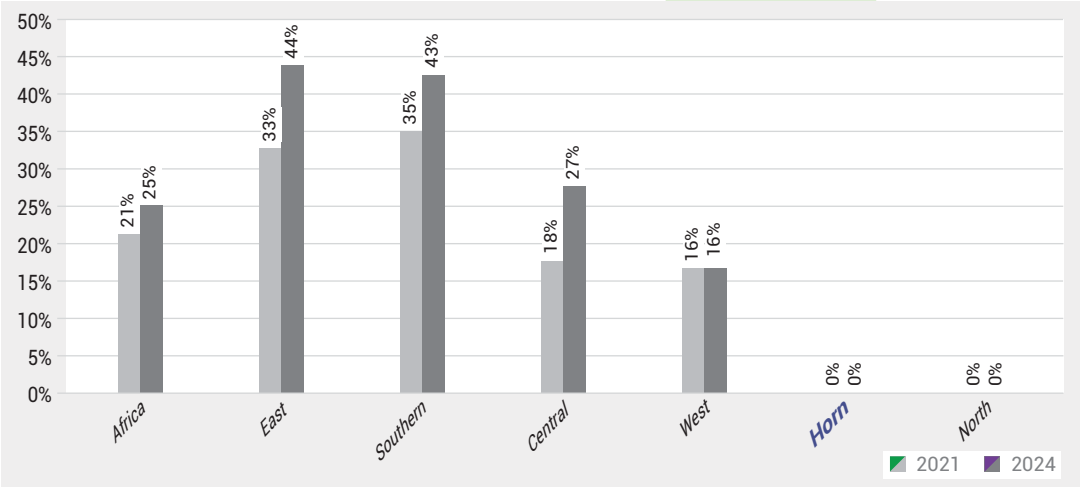
Women in Cabinet in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



WPP in cabinet in the Horn has declined by four percentage points since 2021. Women ministers range from 7% in Djibouti to 36% in Ethiopia. This correlates with the high representation of women in parliament, which is driven by the ruling party.

Speakers

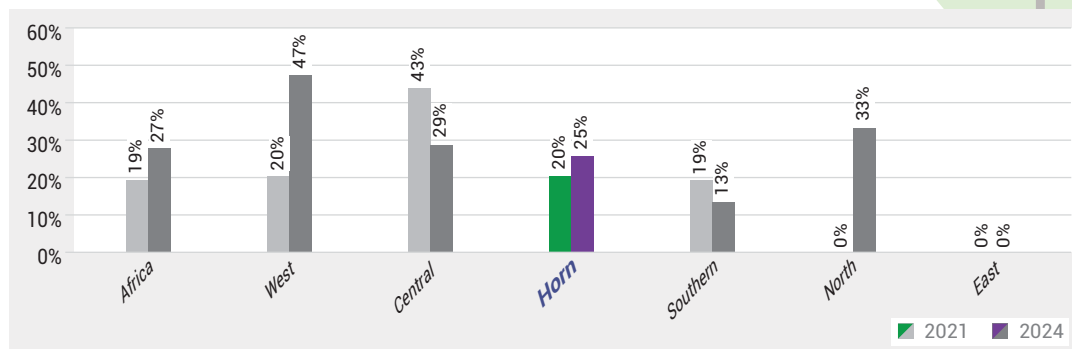
Women speakers in Africa, by region, 2021-2024



There are no female speakers in the Horn.

Mayors of capital cities

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

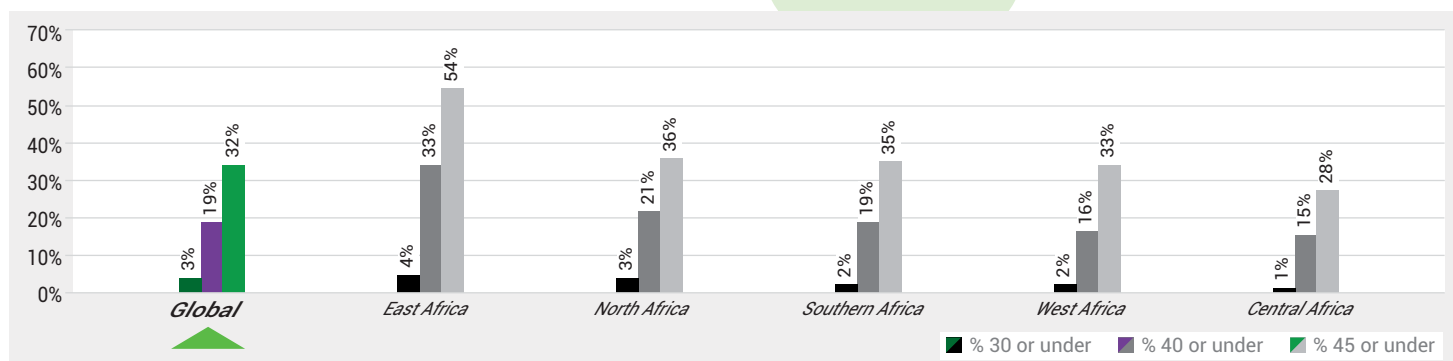


In the Horn, only one capital city has a female mayor.

Adanech Abebe is the Mayor of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia.

Youth representation

Youth representation in parliament in Africa by region



Overall, 32% of MPs in the lower houses of parliament are under 45 years old. Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union does not have a category for the Horn region. However, the country statistics available show that Ethiopia and Eritrea have more MPs under 45 than the average for Africa. In Ethiopia, 71% of MPs are under 45 years, and there are more women, particularly in the 31-40 age bracket.

	Overall	Male	Female
Ethiopia Lower House MPs			
30 years of age or younger	4%	1%	3%
40 years of age or younger	51%	21%	30%
45 years of age or younger	71%	35%	36%
Eritrea Lower House MPs			
30 years of age or younger	0%	0%	0%
40 years of age or younger	25%	12%	12%
45 years of age or younger	40%	22%	19%

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