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News release

Economic challenges push more Gambians to consider emigration, new Afrobarometer study finds

About seven in 10 Gambians have considered emigrating, with the proportion of citizens who have given it “a lot” of thought almost doubling since 2018, a new Afrobarometer survey shows.

The most common reasons cited by potential migrants are the desire to escape economic hardship and the search for work opportunities.

Those who are most likely to emigrate are young adults, part-time workers, unemployed individuals, and those with post-secondary education. North America and Europe are the most popular destinations for citizens considering migration.

As the world observes International Migrants Day (18 December), the Gambia and other African countries contend with “brain drain,” high-risk irregular migration, and other emigration-related challenges while also benefiting from remittances by citizens working abroad.

Key findings

- More than two-thirds (68%) of Gambians say they have considered leaving their country, a 12-percentage-point increase compared to 2018 (56%) (Figure 1). The share of citizens who say they have given “a lot” of thought to emigration has almost doubled, from 29% to 53%.
- Thoughts of emigrating are most common among part-time workers (83%), unemployed citizens (80%), and those with post-secondary education (81%) (Figure 2).
 - Young adults (75% of those aged 18-35) are more likely than older cohorts (37%-70%) to consider emigrating.
- Among those who have considered emigrating, three in 10 (30%) cite the desire to escape economic hardship or poverty, while a similar proportion point to the search for work opportunities (28%) (Figure 3).
- The most popular destinations for potential emigrants are North America (30%) and Europe (28%) (Figure 4).

Afrobarometer surveys

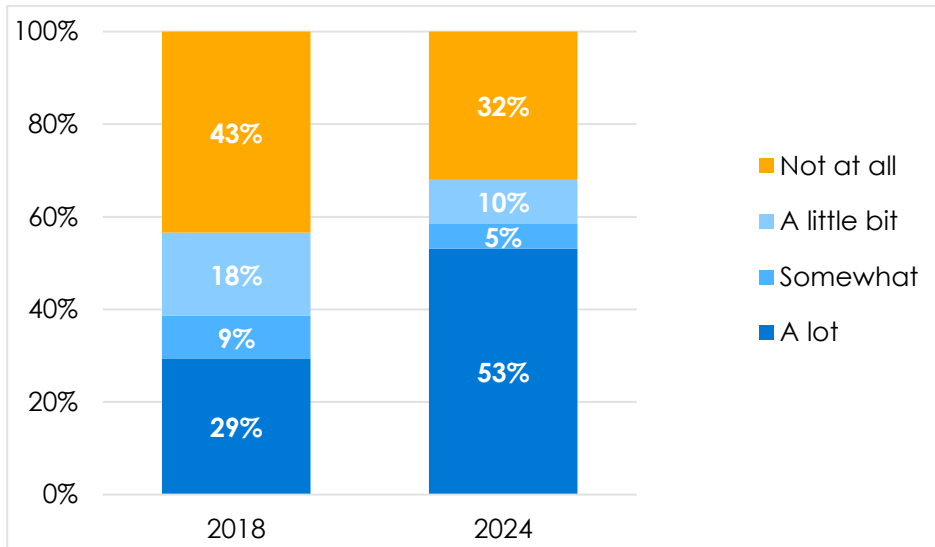
Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 were launched in January 2024. Afrobarometer’s national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice.

The Afrobarometer team in the Gambia, led by the Center for Research and Policy Development, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Gambians in

April-May 2024. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in the Gambia in 2018, 2021, and 2022.

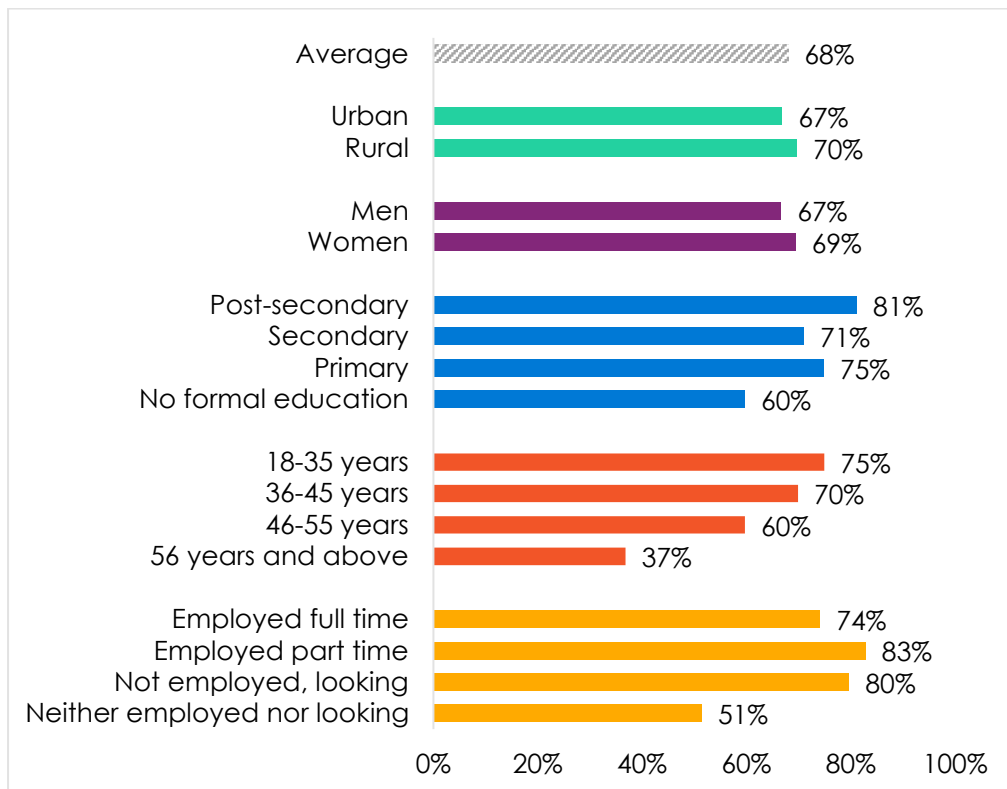
Charts

Figure 1: Considered emigrating | Gambia | 2018-2024



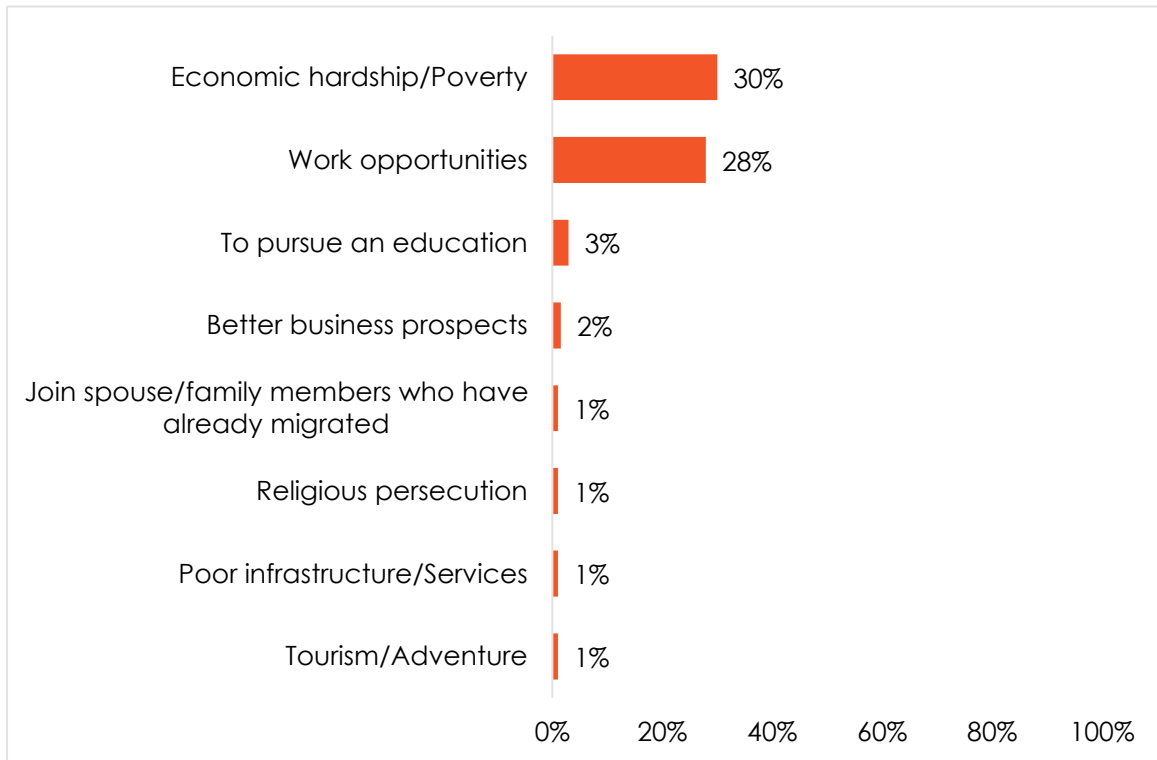
Respondents were asked: How much, if at all, have you considered moving to another country to live?

Figure 2: Considered emigrating | by demographic group | Gambia | 2024



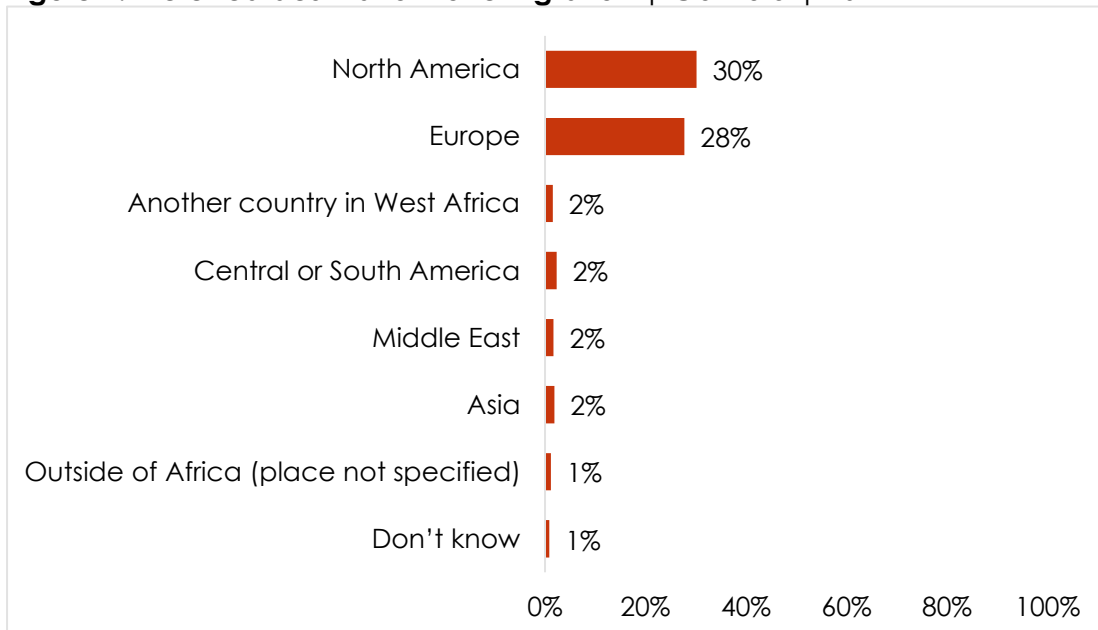
Respondents were asked: How much, if at all, have you considered moving to another country to live? (% who say "a little bit," "somewhat," or "a lot")

Figure 3: Main reason to consider emigration | Gambia | 2024



Respondents who say they have considered emigrating were asked: There are several reasons why people leave their home to live in another country for an extended period of time. What about you? What is the most important reason why you would consider moving from the Gambia? (Respondents who say they have not considered emigrating are excluded.)

Figure 4: Preferred destination for emigration | Gambia | 2024



Respondents who say they have considered emigrating were asked: If you were to move to another country, where would you be most likely to go? (Respondents who say they have not considered emigrating are excluded.)

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