Perceptions of Opportunity and Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Key Points

- Feelings of disempowerment are an important consequence of social and economic exclusion in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Africans’ economic optimism and perceptions of job availability are strongly related to their current income level.
- In some countries with poor human rights records, residents’ satisfaction with personal freedom and belief in the value of hard work rise with income.
- Satisfaction with local education systems also tends to rise with income; strong relationships are seen in several countries, including Zimbabwe and Mali.
Gallup World Poll Methodology

- Data presented here were gathered in 2008, 2009 and 2010 from 31 countries in sub-Saharan Africa
- All surveys are conducted in person after being translated into the major languages spoken in each country
- All surveys use randomly selected, nationally representative samples. Sample sizes are 1,000 in every country except Cameroon, where it is 1,200
- The Gallup World Poll continually surveys residents in more than 150 countries, representing more than 98% of the world’s adult population
Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?
Results divided by respondents’ RELATIVE INCOME LEVEL within their own countries

Poorest 20%: Getting better 34%, Staying the same (vol.) 26%, Getting worse 39%
Second 20%: Getting better 40%, Staying the same (vol.) 27%, Getting worse 33%
Middle 20%: Getting better 45%, Staying the same (vol.) 26%, Getting worse 29%
Fourth 20%: Getting better 49%, Staying the same (vol.) 25%, Getting worse 26%
Richest 20%: Getting better 57%, Staying the same (vol.) 22%, Getting worse 21%
Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?

Results divided by respondents’ LEVEL OF COMFORT ON THEIR PRESENT INCOME
Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

- **Poorest 20%**: 14% Getting better, 22% Staying the same (vol.), 63% Getting worse
- **Second 20%**: 26% Getting better, 28% Staying the same (vol.), 25% Getting worse
- **Middle 20%**: 38% Getting better, 37% Staying the same (vol.), 24% Getting worse
- **Fourth 20%**: 31% Getting better, 44% Staying the same (vol.), 25% Getting worse
- **Richest 20%**: 19% Getting better, 53% Staying the same (vol.), 27% Getting worse
Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?

Results divided by respondents' relative income level within their own countries

- **Poorest 20%**
  - Getting better: 25%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 50%
  - Getting worse: 24%

- **Second 20%**
  - Getting better: 26%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 50%
  - Getting worse: 23%

- **Middle 20%**
  - Getting better: 19%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 58%
  - Getting worse: 23%

- **Fourth 20%**
  - Getting better: 12%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 64%
  - Getting worse: 12%

- **Richest 20%**
  - Getting better: 12%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 12%
  - Getting worse: 7%
Right now, do you feel your standard of living is getting better or getting worse?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

- Poorest 20%
  - Getting better: 18%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 36%
  - Getting worse: 44%

- Second 20%
  - Getting better: 36%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 31%
  - Getting worse: 34%

- Middle 20%
  - Getting better: 42%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 13%
  - Getting worse: 45%

- Fourth 20%
  - Getting better: 56%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 16%
  - Getting worse: 28%

- Richest 20%
  - Getting better: 62%
  - Staying the same (vol.): 17%
  - Getting worse: 21%
Thinking about the job situation in the city or area where you live today, would you say that it is now a good time or a bad time to find a job? Results divided by respondents’ RELATIVE INCOME LEVEL within their own countries.
Perceptions of Job Availability Rise with Income Levels
Data aggregated from 31 sub-Saharan African countries, 2008-2010

Thinking about the job situation in the city or area where you live today, would you say that it is now a good time or a bad time to find a job?
Results divided by respondents’ LEVEL OF COMFORT ON THEIR PRESENT INCOME

- Good time
- Bad time

Finding it very difficult on present income: 27% Good time, 68% Bad time
Finding it difficult on present income: 33% Good time, 62% Bad time
Getting by on present income: 40% Good time, 54% Bad time
Living comfortably on present income: 52% Good time, 44% Bad time
Thinking about the job situation in the city or area where you live today, would you say that it is now a good time or a bad time to find a job?
Results divided by respondents' relative income level within their own countries

- **Poorest 20%**: 32% Good time, 56% Bad time
- **Second 20%**: 49% Good time, 46% Bad time
- **Middle 20%**: 62% Good time, 34% Bad time
- **Fourth 20%**: 74% Good time, 22% Bad time
- **Richest 20%**: 70% Good time, 28% Bad time

Perceptions of Job Availability Rise with Income Levels

CHAD, December 2009
Thinking about the job situation in the city or area where you live today, would you say that it is now a good time or a bad time to find a job?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Good Time</th>
<th>Bad Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorest 20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second 20%</td>
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<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle 20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>40%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest 20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In [country], are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?

Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorest 20%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second 20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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In [country], are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

Satisfaction with Personal Freedom Rises with Income in Some Countries
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, November 2009

Poorest 20%: 43% Satisfied, 51% Dissatisfied
Second 20%: 39% Satisfied, 61% Dissatisfied
Middle 20%: 39% Satisfied, 60% Dissatisfied
Fourth 20%: 69% Satisfied, 32% Dissatisfied
Richest 20%: 66% Satisfied, 34% Dissatisfied
In [country], are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?

Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

- Poorest 20%:
  - Satisfied: 45%
  - Dissatisfied: 55%

- Second 20%:
  - Satisfied: 64%
  - Dissatisfied: 36%

- Middle 20%:
  - Satisfied: 73%
  - Dissatisfied: 27%

- Fourth 20%:
  - Satisfied: 70%
  - Dissatisfied: 30%

- Richest 20%:
  - Satisfied: 80%
  - Dissatisfied: 20%
Belief that Hard Work Pays Off Shows Little Variation at Aggregate Level
Data aggregated from 31 sub-Saharan African countries, 2008-2010

Can people in this country get ahead by working hard, or not?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

- **Poorest 20%**: 82% Yes, can get ahead, 16% No, cannot get ahead
- **Second 20%**: 82% Yes, can get ahead, 16% No, cannot get ahead
- **Middle 20%**: 84% Yes, can get ahead, 15% No, cannot get ahead
- **Fourth 20%**: 85% Yes, can get ahead, 14% No, cannot get ahead
- **Richest 20%**: 88% Yes, can get ahead, 12% No, cannot get ahead
Can people in this country get ahead by working hard, or not?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Yes, can get ahead</th>
<th>No, cannot get ahead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorest 20%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Second 20%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 20%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth 20%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest 20%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belief that Hard Work Pays Off Rises with Income in Some Countries

SENEGAL, June 2009

Can people in this country get ahead by working hard, or not?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

- **Yes, can get ahead**
- **No, cannot get ahead**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
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<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorest 20%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second 20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 20%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth 20%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest 20%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belief that Hard Work Pays Off Related to Literacy Rates
Data from 28 sub-Saharan African countries, $r = 0.53$
In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the educational system or the schools?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries
In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the educational system or the schools?
Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

Satisfied  
Dissatisfied

<table>
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<td>30%</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest 20%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the educational system or the schools?

Results divided by respondents’ relative income level within their own countries

- **Poorest 20%**: Satisfied 80%, Dissatisfied 20%
- **Second 20%**: Satisfied 79%, Dissatisfied 21%
- **Middle 20%**: Satisfied 76%, Dissatisfied 23%
- **Fourth 20%**: Satisfied 67%, Dissatisfied 33%
- **Richest 20%**: Satisfied 43%, Dissatisfied 57%

**Mali**, October 2009
Conclusion

- Though the relationships between income level and perceptions of empowerment are modest at the aggregate level, they are much stronger in some African countries than others.
- Countries where perceptions of empowerment are most strongly related to income include those where political patronage and human rights violations are most severe.
- Economic inclusion and empowerment are just two concepts that fall under the larger bracket of social mobility which in turn is simply one element fed into a broader concept of social cohesion – consistent perceptual measures can also be used to address the other elements.
Thank you