

# Finding work, escaping poverty drive potential emigrants in Tanzania

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 284 | Derick Msafiri**

## Summary

In an interconnected world, migration is inevitable and complex, a source of opportunity and challenge for countries of both origin and destination (International Organization for Migration, 2018; Food and Agriculture Organization, 2017; Boghean, 2016). In recent years, migration has become a high-visibility policy issue around the globe, including in Africa, as tens of thousands have made their way to Europe and hundreds have died trying or been subjected to mistreatment, even sold as slaves (BBC News, 2017; International Organization for Migration, 2015).

In 2015 and 2016, the government of Tanzania suspended more than 70 recruitment agents for household workers and restricted foreign travel by job seekers, arguing that it was protecting young Tanzanians from abusive treatment abroad (allAfrica, 2018).

According to findings from the most recent Afrobarometer survey, about one in six Tanzanians have considered moving abroad – the second-lowest level of interest in emigration among 34 surveyed countries in Africa. Youth and well-educated citizens are particularly likely to think about leaving the country, most often in order to find jobs and to escape economic hardship. The most preferred destination among potential emigrants is another African country.

## Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and results of Round 7 surveys (2016/2018) are currently being released. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative sample.

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed 2,400 adult Tanzanians in May 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, and 2014.

## Key findings

- One in 10 Tanzanians (10%) say they or family members have lived abroad in recent years. But by a margin of about 4 to 1, citizens say it is difficult to cross international borders in East Africa in order to work or trade.
- About one in six Tanzanians (15%) say they have considered moving to another country to live, the second-lowest level of interest in emigration among 34 African

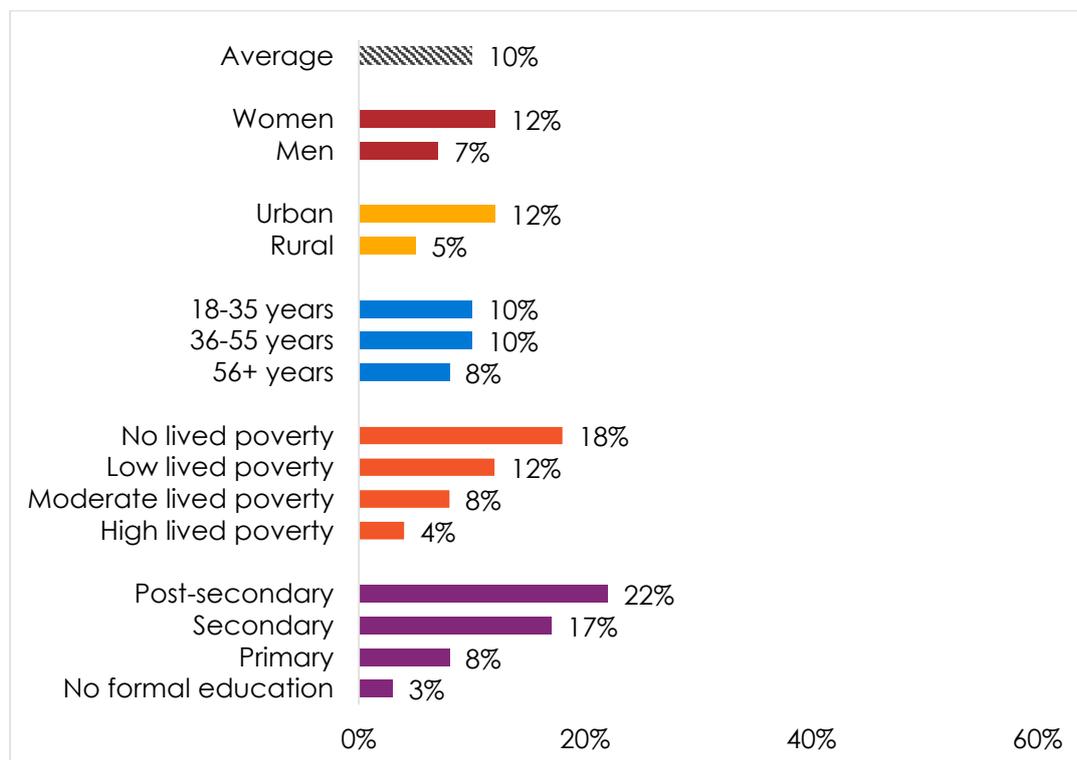
countries surveyed by Afrobarometer. About one in 20 citizens (6%) say they have thought “a lot” about emigrating.

- Among Tanzanians who have considered emigration, 5% say they are taking concrete steps to leave the country, such as seeking a visa.
- The most common reasons that respondents give for considering emigration are to find work (34%) and to escape poverty and economic hardship (29%).
- The most preferred destinations for potential emigrants are in Africa (51%), followed by North America (17%) and Europe (15%).

### Living abroad and crossing borders

One in 10 Tanzanians (10%) say they or family members have gone to live in another country for at least three months during the past three years (Figure 1). Better-educated respondents are more likely to report having lived abroad than their less-educated counterparts, ranging from 3% of those with no formal education to 22% of those with post-secondary qualifications. Similarly, citizens who are economically better off are more likely to have lived in another country, ranging from 4% of those with high “lived poverty”<sup>1</sup> to 18% of those with no “lived poverty.”

**Figure 1: Lived outside the country** | by socio-demographic group | Tanzania | 2017

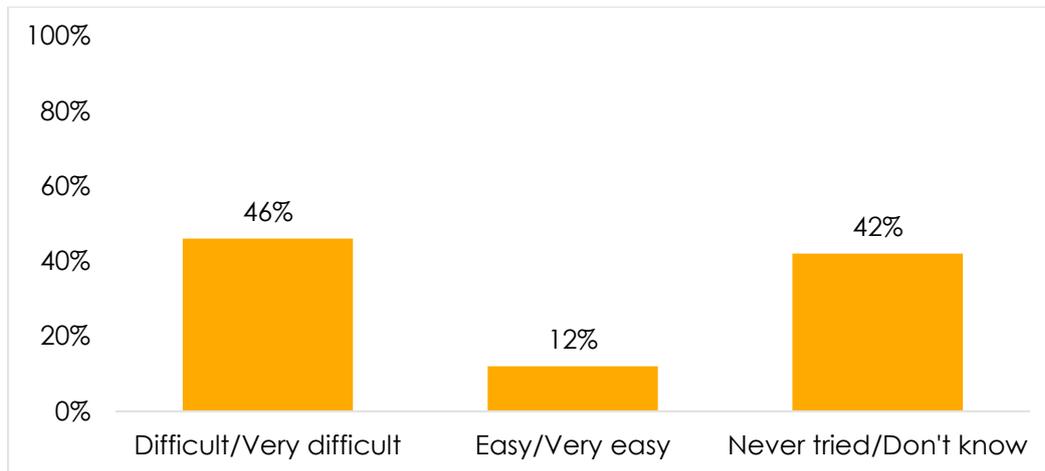


**Respondents were asked:** During the past three years, have you or anyone in your household gone to live in another country outside Tanzania for more than three months? (% who say “yes”)

<sup>1</sup> Afrobarometer assesses respondents’ “lived poverty” based on responses to the following questions: “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?”

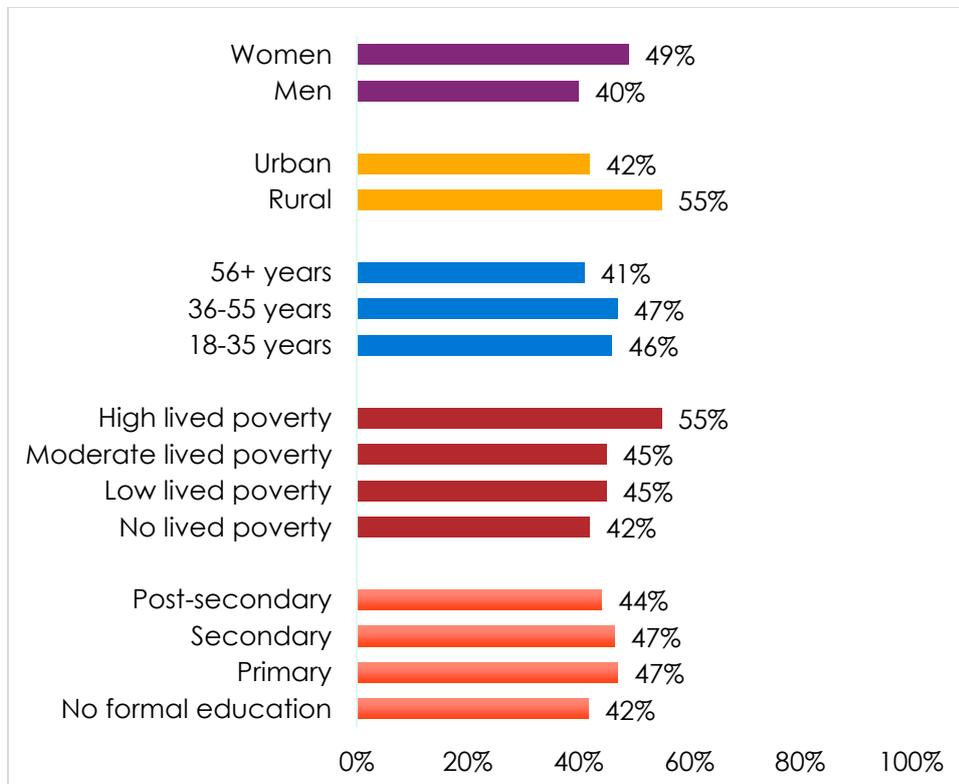
Asked how easy or difficult it is to cross international borders in order to work or trade in another country in East Africa, only 12% say it is “easy” or “very easy,” while almost half (46%) describe it as “difficult” or “very difficult.” More than four in 10 (42%) say they’ve never tried or “don’t know” (Figure 2). Women (49%), rural residents (55%), and the poorest citizens are particularly likely to say that crossing borders is difficult (Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Easy or difficult to cross borders | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in East Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say?

**Figure 3: Difficult to cross borders | by socio-demographic group | Tanzania | 2017**

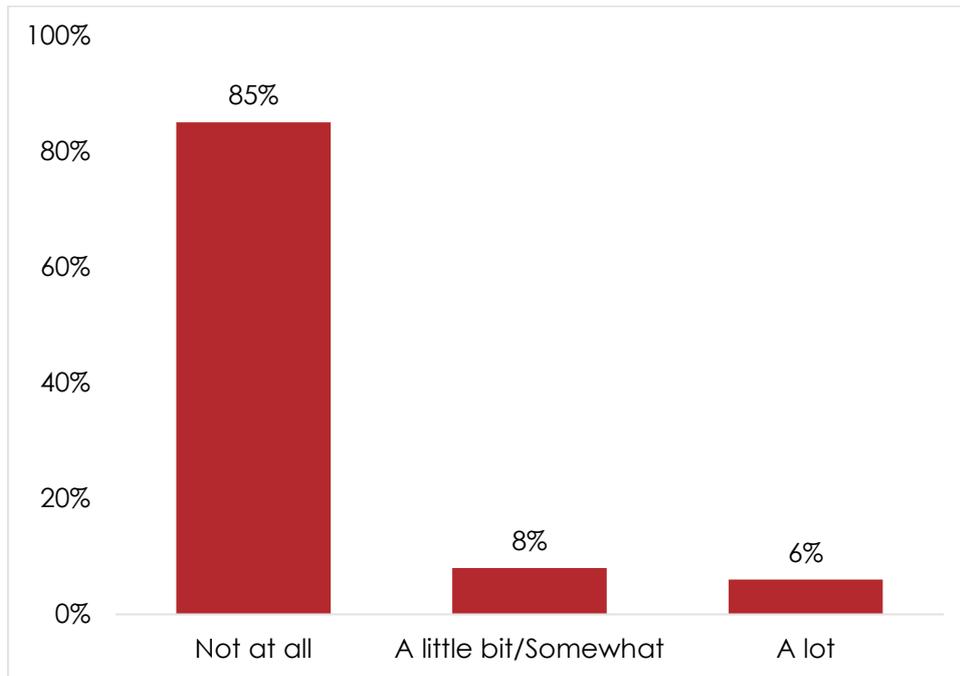


**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it for people in [East] Africa to cross international borders in order to work or trade in other countries, or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who say “difficult” or “very difficult”)

## Considered emigration

About one in six Tanzanians (15%)<sup>2</sup> say they have considered moving to another country to live, including 6% who say they have given the idea “a lot” of thought (Figure 4). Among 34 African countries that Afrobarometer surveyed in 2016/2018, only citizens of Madagascar (13%) are less likely than Tanzanians to consider emigration.

**Figure 4: Considered emigration | Tanzania | 2017**



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

Youth and educated Tanzanians are particularly likely to consider emigration (Figure 5). Among respondents aged 18-35 years, one in five (20%) have thought at least “a little bit” about moving abroad, about twice the proportion of 36- to 55-year-olds (11%) and four times that of older respondents (5%).

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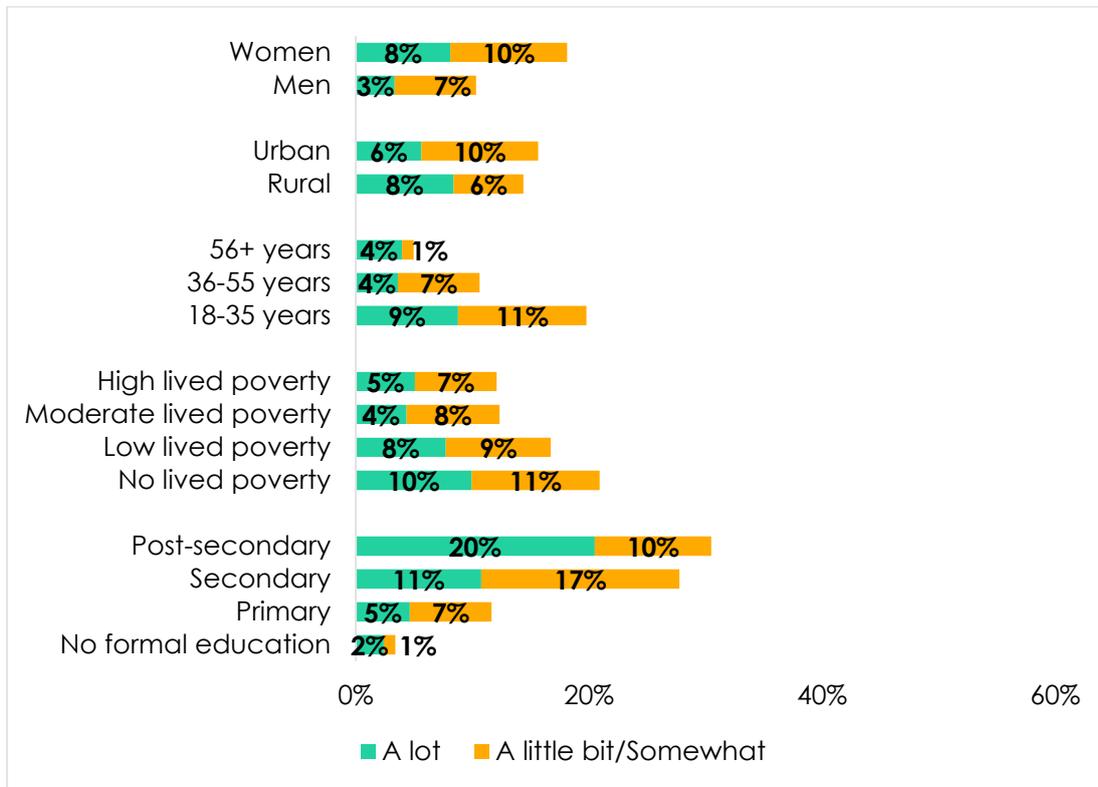
And among those with post-secondary education, three in ten (30%) – twice the proportion in the general population – have considered emigration at least “a little bit,” including 20% who have given it “a lot” of thought. By contrast, only 12% of those with a primary education and just 4% of those with

no formal education have thought about moving abroad. The pattern is similar, but less pronounced, for respondents at different economic levels, ranging from 12% of the poorest to 21% of the best-off.

Women are more likely to consider emigration than men (18% vs. 10%), but thoughts of moving abroad are about equally common in cities and rural areas.

<sup>2</sup> Because of rounding, the percentage for combined categories may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories (e.g. 6% “a lot” and 8% “a little bit/somewhat” combine to total 15%).

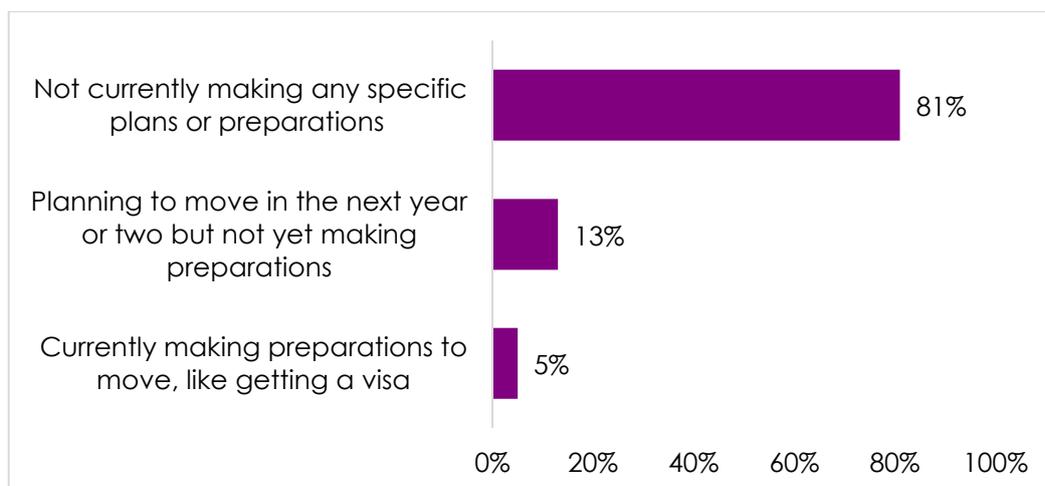
**Figure 5: Considered emigration** | by socio-demographic group | Tanzania | 2017



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

Of those Tanzanians who had considered emigration a little bit, somewhat, or a lot, four out of five (81%) say they have not made specific plans to move to another country, while 13% say they are planning to move in the next year or two but have not yet made concrete preparations. One in 20 (5%) – or less than 1% of the adult population – say they are making preparations to leave, such as getting a visa (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Planning or making preparations to emigrate** | Tanzania | 2017

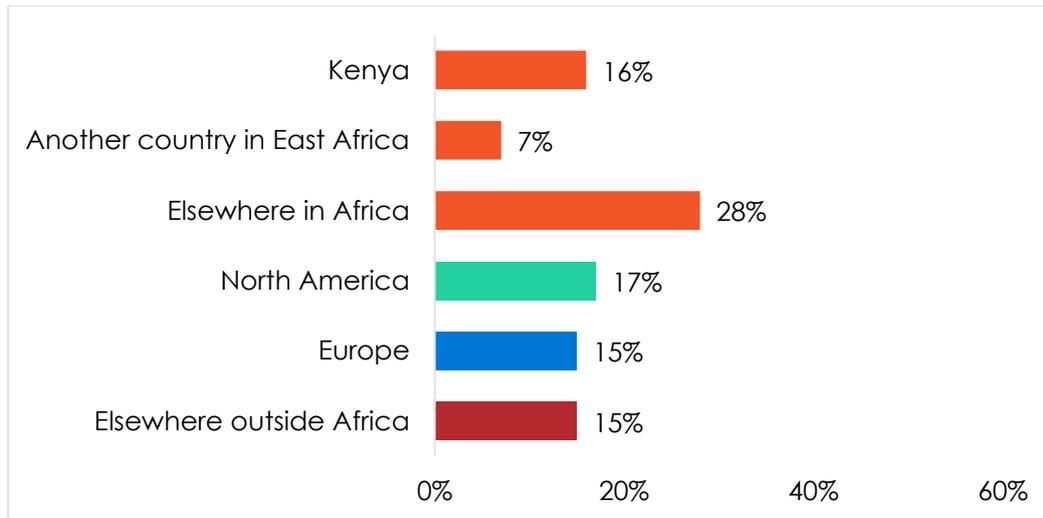


**Respondents who said they had considered emigrating were asked:** How much planning or preparation have you done in order to move to another country to live? (Analysis excludes those who said they had not considered emigrating.)

### Most likely destination

Among Tanzanians who said they had considered emigration at least “a little bit,” more than half (51%) would stay on the continent, including 16% who would choose to go to Kenya and 7% who would prefer another country in the East African region. About one in three would opt for North America (17%) or Europe (15%), while 15% would choose a country elsewhere outside Africa (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Preferred destination | Tanzania | 2017**

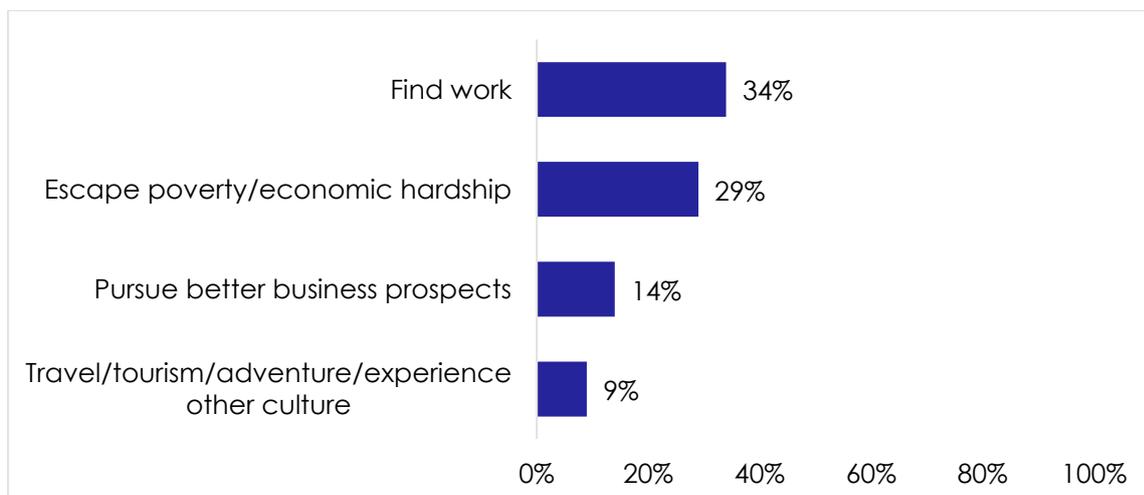


**Respondents who said they had considered emigrating were asked:** If you were to move to another country, where would you be most likely to go? (Analysis excludes those who said they had not considered emigrating.)

### Most important reason for emigrating

The most factors motivating potential emigrants in Tanzania are to find work (34%) and to escape poverty and economic hardship (29%) (Figure 8). About one in seven (14%) cite a desire for better business prospects, while 9% would be looking for tourism and adventure.

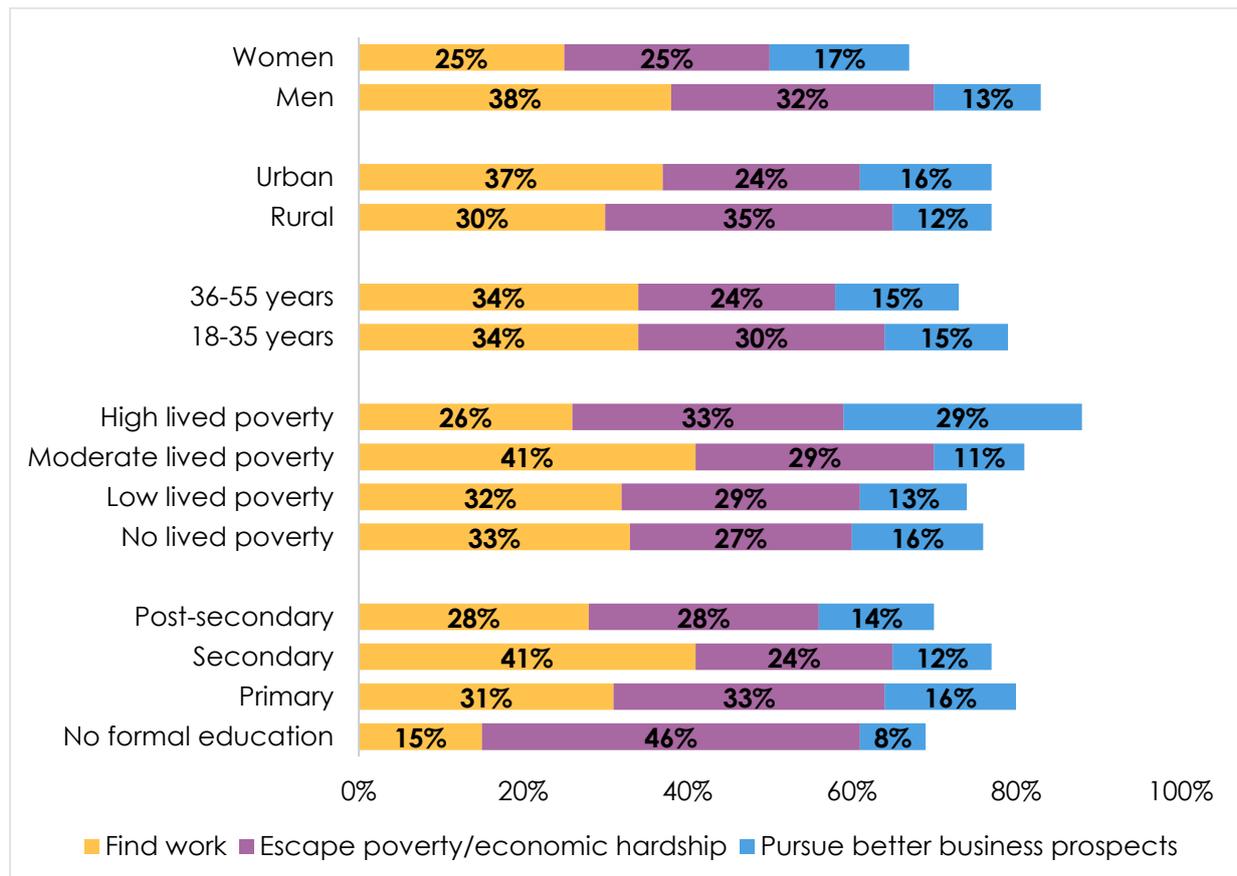
**Figure 8: Most important reason for emigrating | Tanzania | 2017**



**Respondents who said they had considered emigrating were asked:** What is the most important reason why you would consider moving from Tanzania (Analysis excludes those who said they had not considered emigrating.)

Men are more likely than women to cite finding work (38% vs. 25%) and escaping poverty/economic hardship (32% vs. 25%) as motivating factors. Jobs are a stronger draw for urban residents (37% vs. 30%), while escaping poverty is more often cited by rural citizens (35% vs. 24%) (Figure 9). Almost half (46%) of respondents with no formal education say the main reason they would consider emigration is to escape poverty, while finding a job is the strongest attraction for those with secondary schooling (41%).

**Figure 9: Most important reason for emigrating** | by socio-demographic group  
 | Tanzania | 2017



**Respondents who said they had considered emigrating were asked:** What is the most important reason why you would consider moving from Tanzania? (Analysis excludes those who said they had not considered emigrating.) (Note: The sample for the age group "56 years and older" is too small to report reliable point estimates.)

## Conclusion

While Tanzanians are less likely than most other Africans to consider moving to other countries, the proportion of citizens who have thought about it – 15% – is hardly negligible. Moreover, it's the young and the best-educated who are most likely to look abroad for opportunities – lacking at home – to find a good job and economic advancement.

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Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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