



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**YOUNG & KENYAN:
7 YEARS, 13,000 INTERVIEWS
WITH KENYA'S MOST
IMPORTANT GENERATION**



**AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE TRENDS
THAT WILL SHAPE THEIR FUTURE**



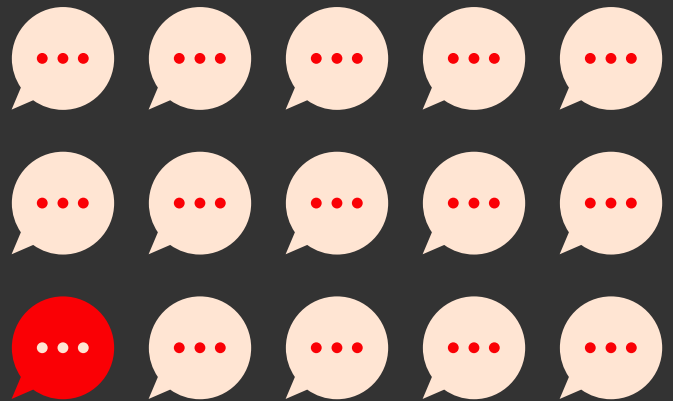
**SHUJAAZ
INC.**

INTRODUCTION

Today, 1 in 5 Kenyans are 15-24 years old.¹ These 11 million+ people are now the biggest youth population the country has ever seen. This is the generation that will decide Kenya's future.

We've been working with young people for over 11 years. We've always believed they can transform the future for the better – but we're not the only ones. This generation represents the beginning of a demographic shift that global economists have been waiting for.

The 'demographic dividend'² is a change in demographic structure that has enabled countries across East Asia to rapidly accelerate their productivity, economic growth and prosperity.³ So far, it's never happened in Africa. But experts say Kenya has a 15-year window of opportunity to realise its 'demographic dividend' by investing in this pivotal young generation.⁴ However, that will only be possible if young Kenyans' experiences, voices and ideas are heard, and understood. That's where this report comes in.



SEVEN YEARS, 13,000 INTERVIEWS

Every year since 2016 (except for 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions) we've held in-depth 1:1 conversations with a nationally representative group of more than 2,000 15-24-year-olds across the country. We talked about everything: money and work, sex and relationships, community and governance, technology and climate change.

What follows is a distillation of insights from more than 13,000 interviews and seven years of our team's analysis. These are the big trends that we think will shape this crucial generation's future. If you're designing policies, programmes or products for young people – this is for you.



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Learn the full story and discover all the key insights from seven years of national data.

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INCOME & WORK

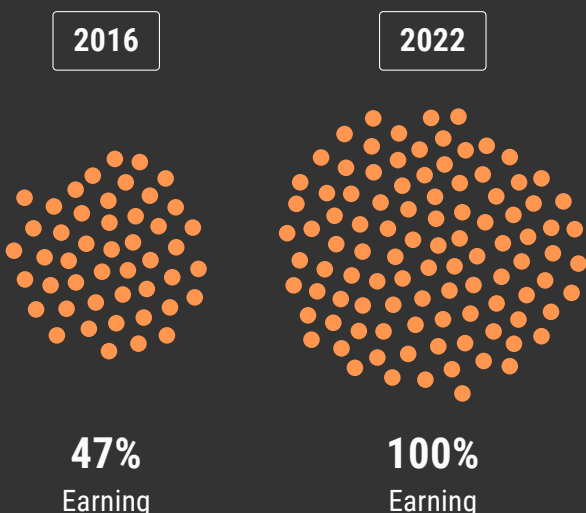
Kenya's households were being pushed into poverty long before the pandemic. Our research shows that young people began to report a fall in average earnings, and a rise in the cost of key essentials, back in 2019.⁵ In fact, a further 1.2m Kenyans fell below the poverty line between 2015 and 2021.⁶

BIG TREND #1

A generation-defining shift:

100% of 15-24-year-olds have to earn money

Facing increasing financial insecurity, this generation has had to step up to help their families and households stay afloat. While previous generations could rely on their parents, today 100% of 15-24-year-olds in Kenya report that they're having to earn some money to help cover or supplement their costs, up from just 47% in 2016.⁷



“Compared to our parents’ generation, we have to take care of ourselves. We have to learn to be self-reliant compared to life before.”

Informal is the only normal:

95% of young Kenyans work in the informal sector

According to the World Bank, nearly a million young people will enter the job market next year.⁸ Yet Shujaaz Inc research shows that just 5% of 15-24-year-olds ever find work in the formal sector. Instead, 95% of young people are finding work in Kenya's vibrant informal economy.⁹ One thing is clear: for this generation informal is the only normal.

Young earners could take Kenya into a better future.

Too many of these young informal sector earners are struggling. But they still add \$540m every month to Kenya's economy.¹⁰ Our research shows that small interventions – like exposure to inspiring role models, peer-to-peer skills training or access to financial services – can help struggling side-hustles become thriving businesses.

Our data also shows that full-time entrepreneurs are:

- more likely to use financial services to save¹¹
- more likely to use contraception¹²
- more likely to vote¹³



FIND OUT MORE

If we support 2 million hustlas to take their business full-time, they could add \$290 million more to Kenya's annual economy.¹⁴ Explore our visual report to find out what young people are asking for to navigate a tough new economy www.ShujaazInc.com

SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

This generation has big dreams. As for all of us, making those dreams happen can often depend on one thing: taking control of your sexual and reproductive health. Over the last seven years, more young people in Kenya have been taking control of their sexual and reproductive health and their futures.

Almost 9 in 10 young, sexually active Kenyans say they've now tried at least one method of modern contraception.¹⁵ But use of contraception isn't yet consistent – meaning too many young people are having children before they'd choose to.¹⁶

Key Stats: Young Kenyans and contraception

2 in 5

had access to their chosen contraception during the pandemic¹⁷

85%

of young sexually active Kenyans have tried modern contraception¹⁸

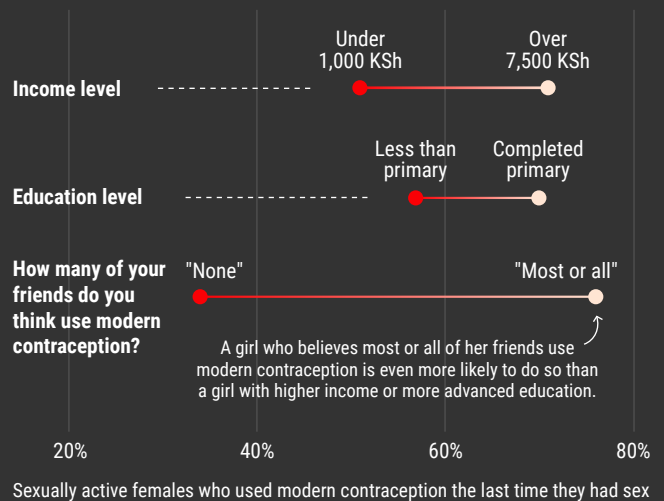


"I use condoms. I don't want to have unwanted pregnancies, children are not a mistake, so I want to plan."

BIG TREND #2

What has the biggest impact on modern contraception use? The perception of what's normal among friends.

Over the last seven years, we've found that norm change is the most effective way to put girls in control of their future for the long term – more than education levels or earnings. Our research shows that when a girl believes that 'most or all' of her friends use modern contraception, it significantly increases the likelihood that she'll use contraception the next time she has sex. If we want to put girls in control of their futures, we need to break down the persistent negative, social and cultural norms that are holding girls back.¹⁹



Powerful storytelling breaks down the negative social norms stopping young Kenyans from taking control of their futures. Our research²⁰ proves that young people who engage with Shujaaz analogue and digital media are:

- **43% more likely** to use condoms
- **2.4x more likely** to delay childbirth
- **2.7x less likely** to get married in their teens

FIND OUT MORE

'For young people, condoms aren't contraception.'

Explore our visual report to find out how young people are talking about sex and relationships, and what they're asking for to help put them in control www.ShujaazInc.com

GOVERNANCE & COMMUNITY

At the end of 2021, over 8 million 18-24-year-olds in Kenya were eligible to vote in the 2022 general election.²¹ That's the largest youth electorate in Kenyan history, representing around 28% of the total electorate.²² But, as polls closed across the country in August 2022, available data suggests that young people are likely to have represented less than 10% of votes.²³

Why didn't young Kenyans register to vote? In a dipstick SMS poll conducted before the election, four of the top five reasons given for not registering to vote – and half of all responses – were linked to a loss of trust in the ability of the leaders on the ballot to change their lives for the better.²⁴

Covid-19 is likely to have had a significant impact: In August 2020, 84% of young people said they felt ignored by decision-makers in the pandemic response.²⁵

But peaceful 2022 elections are helping to restore trust: 56% of young Kenyans said in a dipstick poll that the elections have changed their level of trust in the electoral process.²⁶

The 2022 elections left young people feeling hopeful: In a dipstick poll, 69% of young people used positive adjectives to describe the election, with the largest group (40% of all respondents) saying they felt 'hopeful'.²⁷



"We showed some maturity this time. We are confident that when other elections come, we will not have violence."

BIG TREND #3

This generation cares deeply about democracy

A far cry from the 'apathetic youth' stereotype, our research shows that young Kenyans care deeply about democracy. Despite the challenges of the last seven years, on average, 7 in 10 young people have consistently said they believe that their generation has a vital role to play in shaping Kenya's governance.²⁸ In 2022, 82% of young Kenyans said they believe they have something to contribute to their communities, but only 46% reported that they're currently able to make a big impact in their community.²⁹ This generation has much more to offer.

We asked young people: "What will you do first when you achieve success?" More than 50% said: "Give back to my community, to other youth or to my family."³⁰

Key Stats: Young Kenyans and democracy

7 in 10

on average, have faith in democracy³¹

6 in 10

believe they can play a role in local governance

8 in 10

say they have something to offer their communities



FIND OUT MORE

After the calmest election in decades, is it time to re-think what 'governance' means? Explore our visual report to find out more about why 'governance' means more than just 'politics' www.ShujaazInc.com

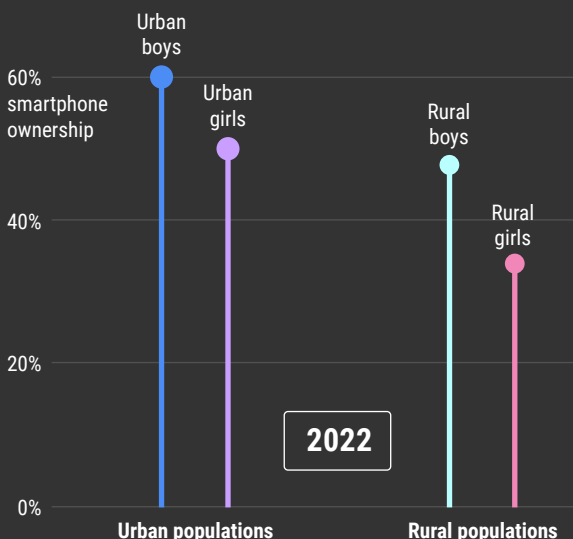
ON THE HORIZON

More than 83% of young Kenyans report feeling hopeful about the future.³² However, this generation are also clear-eyed about the challenges they can see coming. Here are three topics that young people think will impact their generation's future.

TECHNOLOGY

Smartphones hold big promise, but rural communities are getting left behind

The smartphone gap is closing; half of young people now own a smartphone, with ownership having doubled since 2018.³³ However, as technology drives forward, some young people are missing out. The urban-rural digital divide is outpacing digital gender disparity in Kenya, affecting young girls from rural communities the worst.³⁴



MENTAL HEALTH

Half of young Kenyans report struggling with their mental health

Our initial research shows that 6 in 10 young people have experienced challenges with their mental health, with the majority of those reporting experiencing feelings of depression, anxiety or panic and panic attacks.³⁵ But conversations with young people also reveal that, without the knowledge or vocabulary to talk about their experiences, they are encountering rejection and judgement, which is preventing them from seeking care.³⁶

1 in 2

young Kenyans report feelings of depression and panic attacks³⁷

1 in 3

young Kenyans believe a friend/peer has a drug or alcohol problem³⁸

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is here – this generation want the support to thrive, not just survive

It's unsurprising that 85% of young Kenyans believe the climate is changing – this generation is living through it.³⁹ Droughts have pushed millions of Kenyans into food insecurity; flooding has displaced people and drowned livestock; locusts have destroyed crops.⁴⁰ This generation is increasingly aware that the changing climate will affect every aspect of their futures. And as famine 'looms'⁴¹ across East Africa, experts confirm that they're right to be alarmed. However, many young Kenyans recognise that they will power Kenya's response to the crisis – and they're asking for the support to thrive, not just survive.

THESE TRENDS ARE FOR SHARING

If you've found these trends useful or the words from young people insightful - share them
www.ShujaazInc.com

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 United Nations Population Division. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>
- 2 PRB (November 26, 2012) Factsheet: Attaining the Demographic Dividend. Retrieved from <https://www.prb.org/resources/fact-sheet-attaining-the-demographic-dividend/>
- 3 Song, Sijia, "Demographic Changes and Economic Growth: Empirical Evidence from Asia" (2013). Honors Projects. 121. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/econ_honproj/121
- 4 Kenya was on the cusp of a demographic dividend as of the 2009 Census: the country launched its Demographic Dividend Model in July 2014, with the project being led by the National Council of Population and Development in partnership with USAID. According to UNFPA, with an average demographic window of opportunity lasting 29 years, Kenya has to realise its demographic dividend by around 2038. References: Health Policy Project (2014), Demographic Dividend Model Launched in Kenya. Retrieved from <http://www.healthpolicyproject.com/index.cfm?ID=DemDivKenya> ; UNFPA Kenya (August 20, 2015) Take advantage of demographic dividend; National Council for Population and Development (2017), Kenya's Demographic Dividend roadmap (2020-2030)
- 5 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey of Kenyan youth 15-24 years old Wave 1 (N=2,011), January 2016; Wave 2 (N=2,923), January-May 2017; Wave 3 (N=2,020), February-March 2018; Wave 4 (N=2,020), April-May 2019; Wave 5 (N=2,015), November 2020-January 2021; Wave 6 (N=2,006), November 2021-January 2022. Note: The annual survey did not go ahead in 2020
- 6 The World Bank (2020) Kenya: Selected Indicators (Source: MFMOD Database, World Bank WDI and GEM databases, IMF). Retrieved from <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/b3502c65235d8c72aef5f34d87ed6298-0500062021/related/data-ken.pdf>
- 7 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2016-2022.
- 8 The World Bank (June 27, 2019) Kenya Social Protection and Jobs Programs Public Expenditure Review 6/27/2019
- 9 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2022
- 10 The calculations are based on the Population Pyramid and Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey of youth Wave 6 (N=2,006) November 2021 - January 2022: 11.6m young Kenyans are working, with an average income of 5616 KES a month. This is KES 65,145,600,000 or 539,313,292.65 USD a month in total earnings (as of September 29, 2022)
- 11 Shujaaz Inc (2020, Issue 1) Shujaaz Inc Compass: Navigating the Road Ahead. Meet the Heroes: Introducing Kenya's 3m Young Micro-Entrepreneurs. Retrieved from https://www.shujaazinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Shujaaz-Inc_Compass_Meet-the-3m-Entrepreneurs-compressed-1.pdf
- 12 Ibid
- 13 Ibid
- 14 The calculations are based on the Population Pyramid and Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey of youth Wave 6 (N=2,006) November 2021 - January 2022: There are approximately 2m young people in the SStart-up HUstlas segment, who earn on average KES11,191 per month. The difference in average monthly income between this group and full-time entrepreneurs, who earn on average KES12,405 per month, is KES1,214. If all startup hustlas can advance to the full-time entrepreneur status, they will be contributing KES1,214X2mX12 months= KES 29,136,000,000 or about USD290m (as of September 29, 2022).
- 15 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2017-2022.
- 16 In our SMS survey of N=706 Kenyan girls aged 15-19 (June 2020), 47% said the most appropriate age for girls to become mothers for the first time would be 25 years old and above, while in reality 92% of girls get pregnant before they turn 25 years old and 51% get pregnant by the time they turn 18 years old. 12% of 15-19-year-old girls said they had a child in 2022; Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey of Kenyan youth 15-24 years old Wave 6 (N=2,006), November 2021-January 2022
- 17 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey of Kenyan youth 15-24 years old Wave 5 (N=2,015), November 2020 - January 2021; Wave 6 (N=2,006), November 2021 - January 2022
- 18 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2017-2022
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- 20 Shujaaz Inc (2020) the Research behind our Numbers. Retrieved from <https://www.shujaazinc.com/the-research-behind-our-impact-numbers/>
- 21 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019. Kenya Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, 2022
- 22 Ibid
- 23 Shujaaz Inc (2020, Issue 2) Shujaaz Inc Compass: Navigating the Road Ahead. Generation Engaged: How Young People Can Improve Kenya's Governance - If We Let Them. Retrieved from https://www.shujaazinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Shujaaz-Inc_Compass_Meet-Generation-Engaged-FINAL-compressed.pdf
- 24 Ibid
- 25 SMS survey of Shujaaz fans, N=945, August 2020
- 26 Shujaaz Inc dipstick SMS survey, October 2022 (N=194)
- 27 Ibid
- 28 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2017-2022
- 29 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2022
- 30 SMS survey with Shujaaz fans (N=417), June 2020
- 31 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2017-2022
- 32 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2022
- 33 Ibid
- 34 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2016-2022
- 35 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2022
- 36 Ibid
- 37 Ibid
- 38 Ibid
- 39 Ibid
- 40 Bloomberg (August 17, 2022) [Why East Africa Is Facing Its Worst Famine in Decades: QuickTake - Bloomberg](#)
- 41 Ibid
- 42 Shujaaz Inc nationally representative survey 2022



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