State of Youth Leadership in Nigeria: 2025 Report

September, 2025

Executive summary

What happens when young Nigerians want to lead, but the system keeps making them play with the handbrake on? This survey set out to explore that exact question.

In August 2025, 120 people—mostly AIESEC members and alumni—told us how they lead, grow, and try to shape change. The results reveal a generation brimming with leadership ambition, skills, and drive… but often hitting the same brick walls: not enough resources, not enough trust, and not enough seats at the decision-making table.

- **53.78%** are currently in leadership positions—whether in companies, community groups, or their own ventures.

- **76.42%** say public speaking is a core skill they've gained through AIESEC (meaning at least three-quarters can confidently tell you why they deserve the last slice of cake).

- The top three barriers are lack of funding/resources (80%), age-based stereotypes (76%), and lack of mentorship (63.2%).

- **65%** believe young Nigerians aren't given enough space to lead, and only 17.5% rate youth leaders as "very effective."

These results reveal a key tension:

- On one hand, young leaders believe they've grown significantly through leadership opportunities in AIESEC—most rate themselves as better leaders now than when they started.

- On the other hand, there's low public confidence in youth leadership and widespread doubt about the nation's future being in safe hands.

Why does this matter? For policymakers, institutions, youth organizations, and private sector actors, it's a warning sign and an opportunity rolled into one. Ignore these findings, and you risk wasting a ready pool of talent. Act on them, and you tap into one of the most motivated, skilled, and socially-conscious demographics in the country.

> *In short: Nigerian youth are ready to lead. The question is, will the system let them?*

Demographics

Methodology

This survey ran in late July and early August 2025, distributed mainly through AIESEC Nigeria's networks using Google forms. A total of 120 valid responses were recorded, each offering insight into how young Nigerians approach leadership, develop skills, and navigate the barriers in their way.

Notes on Scope and Representativeness

While this survey offers valuable insight into youth leadership in Nigeria, the results should be read with the sample in mind.

Network bias: 92.5% of respondents are current members of AIESEC, a youth leadership organization. This means the findings reflect the experiences of individuals already engaged in structured leadership activities and may not capture the perspectives of young Nigerians outside such networks.

Demographic tilt: The sample is majority female (58.33%) and heavily skewed toward undergraduates and recent graduates. Older youth, those in full-time employment, or those outside formal education are underrepresented.

Geographic concentration: Over half of respondents reside in the South West, which may limit the generalizability of findings to regions with different cultural, political, or economic contexts.

Self-reporting: All data is based on respondents' self-assessment, which can be influenced by personal perception, optimism bias, or the desire to present oneself positively.

This doesn't make the findings less valuable, it simply means they are most representative of urban, educated youth with access to leadership networks. Broader studies including rural, informal, and non-affiliated youth populations would complement and deepen the picture presented here.
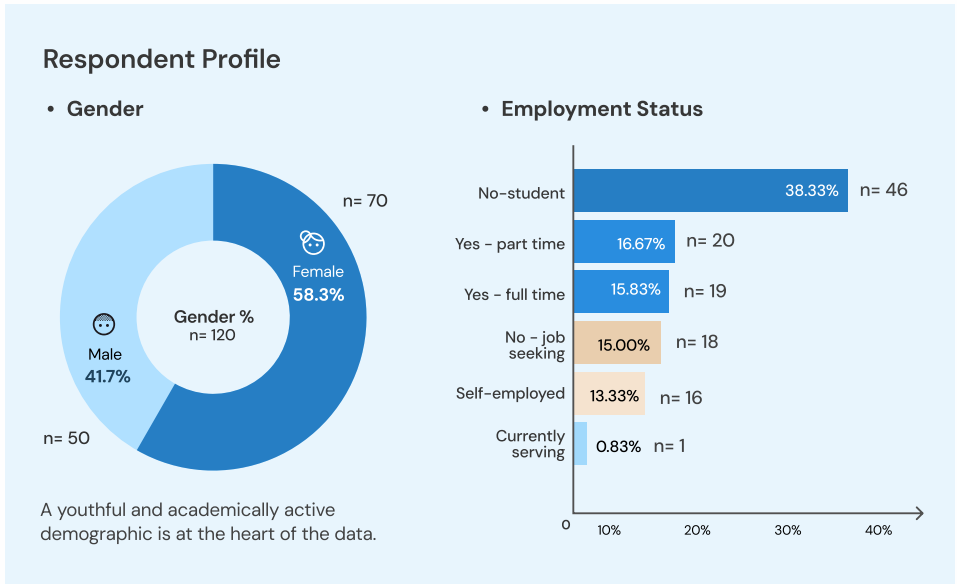
Respondent Profile

Women formed a majority in this survey, making up 58.33% of respondents, with men at 41.67%. While not an extreme gap, it reflects a slightly stronger female presence in the responses, possibly mirroring AIESEC's internal gender dynamics.

Academically, the group is unmistakably youth-driven. More than two-thirds (68.33%) are current undergraduates, with another 27.5% having already completed a bachelor's degree. Only a small handful have diplomas, certificates, or fall into other categories. This means we're mostly hearing from a cohort whose leadership experiences are unfolding alongside academic commitments — a combination that can be energizing but also exhausting.

Regionally, the South West dominates with 55.08% of respondents. North Central follows with 22.88%, and the South South with 13.56%. The remaining respondents are scattered across the North West and South East, small in number but essential in reminding us that youth leadership isn't just a southern or urban story.

Employment patterns also reveal a group with flexibility and room to explore leadership roles. Students account for 38.33%, while part-time workers (16.67%) and self-employed respondents (13.33%) make up significant shares. Full-time employees form 15.83% of the sample, with others in national service or actively job-hunting. These patterns suggest that the majority have schedules that allow them to engage in extracurricular leadership — whether in campus associations, community projects, or entrepreneurial ventures — though often with limited resources to support such efforts.

Respondent Profile

• **Gender**

n= 70

Female
58.3%

Male
41.7%

Gender %
n= 120

n= 50

A youthful and academically active demographic is at the heart of the data.

• **Employment Status**

No-student	38.33%	n= 46
Yes – part time	16.67%	n= 20
Yes – full time	15.83%	n= 19
No – job seeking	15.00%	n= 18
Self-employed	13.33%	n= 16
Currently serving	0.83%	n= 1

0   10%   20%   30%   40%

Leadership Experience and Roles

When it comes to actual leadership involvement, this is a group that is already trying to drive change. A little over half of respondents (53.78%) say they currently hold a leadership position, whether in an organization, a community group, or through running their own venture.
Nearly 44.07% of respondents say they have started an initiative as a direct result of their time in AIESEC.

The types of leadership roles vary widely. Within AIESEC, they range from team members to Local Committee Executive Board members, with the latter group showing the highest rate of starting their own initiatives (66.67%). Beyond AIESEC, leadership shows up in campus associations, nonprofit boards, religious communities, and entrepreneurial ventures.

AIESEC's impact on leadership confidence is almost unanimous. An overwhelming 96.66% either agree or strongly agree that the organization has made them better leaders. The top capacities strengthened include:

Public speaking and presentations
The kind of skill that makes you less nervous speaking to a hall of 200, and more nervous about your microphone not working.

76.42%

Team and people management
Learning to motivate others even when deadlines, and tempers, are tight.

71.54%

Emotional intelligence
Reading the room and responding with tact, not just authority.

69.11%

Resilience and adaptability
Bouncing back when plans, budgets, or team members suddenly change.
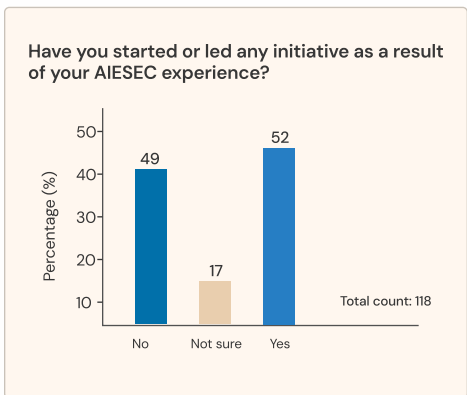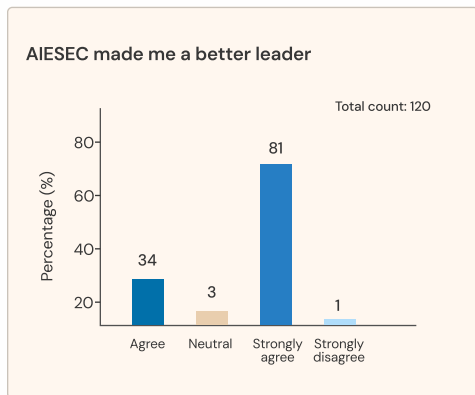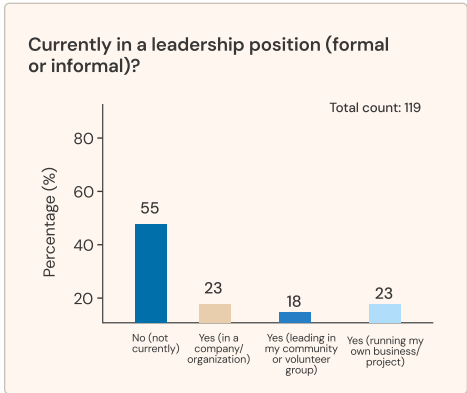
55.28%

Cross-cultural collaboration
Navigating cultural differences without derailing the mission.

50.41%

Together, these findings suggest that youth leadership in Nigeria—at least within this sample—is less about holding a title and more about having the capacity, confidence, and courage to lead. The challenge is ensuring these skills and experiences are recognized and applied in the wider society, beyond the familiar territory of campus groups or youth-focused organizations.

Leadership Development through AIESEC

Currently in a leadership position (formal or informal)?

Total count: 119

AIESEC made me a better leader

Total count: 120

Have you started or led any initiative as a result of your AIESEC experience?

Total count: 118

Perceptions of Youth Leadership in Nigeria

If you ask these young leaders whether Nigeria gives them enough space to lead, the answer is, for the most part, a polite but firm "no." A full 65% believe young Nigerians are not given enough opportunity to take on leadership roles in society. Another 15.83% aren't sure, leaving fewer than one in five (19.17%) who think the system is doing well in this regard.

This perception cuts across gender and leadership experience, but it's especially strong among those who already hold leadership positions. It seems that the more leadership exposure someone has, the more they notice the limits placed on youth voices—whether that's due to institutional hierarchy, political gatekeeping, or the cultural idea that leadership belongs to "senior" people.

When it comes to how effective youth leaders are today, the verdict is mixed at best. The largest group (38.33%) say youth leaders are "somewhat effective," while 33.33% take a neutral stance. Only 17.5% rate them as "very effective," and a small but telling 10.84% believe they are "not very effective" or "not effective at all."

In other words, while young people in this survey feel they are building strong leadership skills, they are far from convinced that youth leaders as a whole are making enough impact.

This skepticism bleeds into views on Nigeria's future. When asked whether the country is in good hands based on today's youth, nearly half (47.5%) said they weren't sure. About a third (34.17%) felt optimistic, and the rest (18.33%) were not. It's not exactly a resounding vote of confidence—more like a cautious "let's wait and see."

Taken together, these numbers reveal a tension at the heart of youth leadership in Nigeria: skills and ambition are abundant, but trust—both in the opportunities provided to youth and in youth leaders themselves—is in short supply. This gap between ability and perception may be one of the most important challenges to address if the country is to truly harness its young leadership potential.

Values & Societal Impact
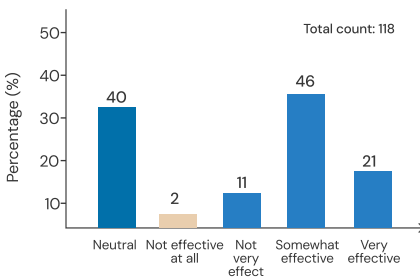
- AIESEC influenced your sense of social responsibility or desire to impact society?
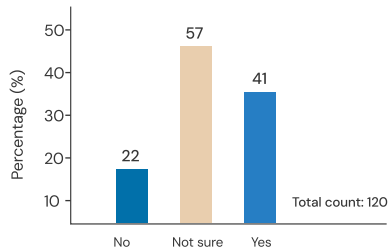

Total count: 120
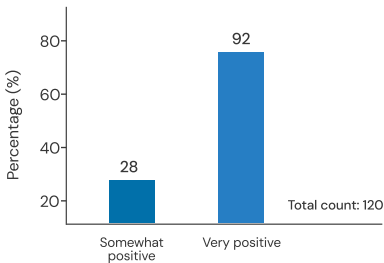
- Do you believe young Nigerians are given enough space to lead in society?

Total count: 118
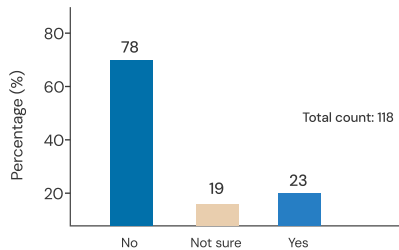
- Effectiveness Level of youth leaders in Nigeria are today

Total count: 118

- Based on today's youth, do you think the future of Nigeria is in good hands?

Total count: 120

Skills and Functional Areas

The most common skill gained is public speaking and presentations, cited by 76.42%. That's more than three-quarters of respondents who feel comfortable commanding a room—whether that's delivering a keynote, pitching a project, or simply explaining to a skeptical relative why they're coming home late from a meeting again. Close behind is team and people management (71.54 %), the skill that turns groups of individuals into functioning units even when deadlines and personalities collide.

Other high-ranking skills include:

Emotional intelligence — reading emotions and responding with empathy, not just

69.11%

Resilience and adaptability — staying steady when plans change, budgets shrink, or teammates drop out.

55.28%

Cross-cultural collaboration — navigating different cultural norms without losing momentum.
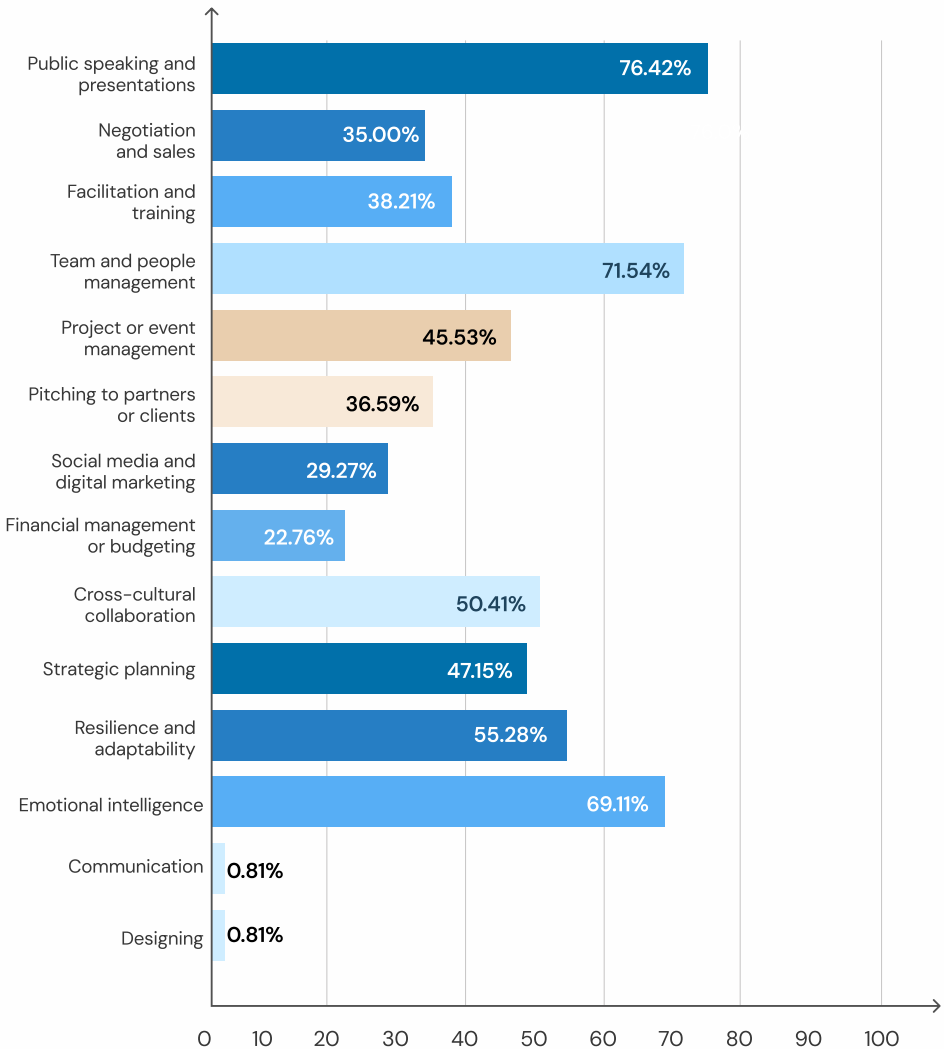
50.41%

These skills are applied across functional areas within AIESEC. The most common roles are in marketing and communications (31.36%) and business development (24.58%). Others work in exchange programs (both incoming and outgoing), finance, and legal affairs. This spread suggests that while the leadership skills are broad, many participants are putting them to work in operational and outward-facing contexts where visibility, relationship-building, and persuasion are key.

It's also worth noting that many respondents hold leadership roles outside AIESEC. More than half (51.26%) lead in campus or departmental associations, while over a third (36.13%) are active in nonprofits or volunteer organizations. Smaller but significant numbers lead in religious or community settings (28.57%), student governments, political advocacy groups, and startups. This shows that for many, AIESEC is a launchpad rather than the sole arena for their leadership journey.

In short, these young Nigerians are far from one-dimensional. They're developing the kinds of skills —communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence—that are vital in any leadership setting, and they're applying them in contexts that stretch well beyond the organization that helped nurture them.

Skills & Functional Experience

Skill	Percentage
Public speaking and presentations	76.42%
Negotiation and sales	35.00%
Facilitation and training	38.21%
Team and people management	71.54%
Project or event management	45.53%
Pitching to partners or clients	36.59%
Social media and digital marketing	29.27%
Financial management or budgeting	22.76%
Cross-cultural collaboration	50.41%
Strategic planning	47.15%
Resilience and adaptability	55.28%
Emotional intelligence	69.11%
Communication	0.81%
Designing	0.81%

Challenges and Barriers of Youth Leadership in Nigeria

The single most common challenge is lack of access to resources or funding (80% of all challenge mentions). This is not surprising—initiatives, whether they're startups, community projects, or advocacy campaigns, rarely run on goodwill alone. Without seed capital, sponsorship, or even small operational budgets, many ideas stall before they can make an impact.

Close behind is cultural or age-based stereotypes (76%). This is the persistent belief that leadership belongs to older, more "experienced" people—often defined as those who have been in the system longer, not necessarily those with better ideas. For young leaders, this means constantly having to prove they deserve a seat at the table, and sometimes being told outright to "wait their turn."
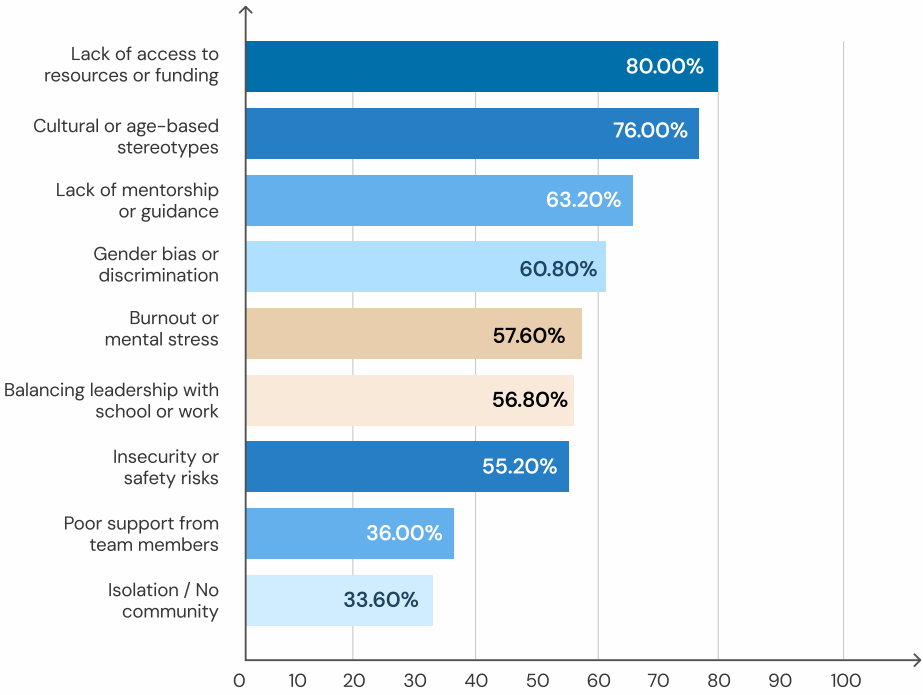
The third major barrier is lack of mentorship or guidance (63.2%). Even the most self-driven young leader benefits from having someone more experienced to help navigate complex decisions, connect them to networks, and keep them from reinventing the wheel. The absence of this support can leave many feeling isolated and unsure how to grow.

Other challenges, while slightly less common, still have a significant impact:

	Gender bias or discrimination, which affects both access to opportunities and treatment in leadership spaces.	60.8%
	Burnout and mental stress, often from juggling leadership with school, work, and personal responsibilities.	57.6%
	Balancing leadership with other commitments, a constant struggle for student leaders.	56.8%
	Insecurity and safety risks, particularly relevant for community-based work in volatile environments.	55.2%

These findings underscore that the biggest obstacles are rarely about motivation or capability. Instead, they're systemic—rooted in how society values youth leadership, allocates resources, and provides (or withholds) support. It means that even the most talented young leaders are running uphill, often without the gear they need to make it to the top.

Challenges Faced by Youth Leaders

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of access to resources or funding	80.00%
Cultural or age-based stereotypes	76.00%
Lack of mentorship or guidance	63.20%
Gender bias or discrimination	60.80%
Burnout or mental stress	57.60%
Balancing leadership with school or work	56.80%
Insecurity or safety risks	55.20%
Poor support from team members	36.00%
Isolation / No community	33.60%

Support Youth Leaders Want

If the previous section shows what's holding young leaders back, this one makes it clear what they believe would push them forward. And the message is simple: invest in us—our skills, our ideas, and our environments—and we'll take it from there.

At the very top of the list are training and upskilling (79.84%) and funding and resources (also 78.23%). In other words, they don't just want a budget; they want to be equipped to use it well. Without funding, even the best ideas stay on paper. Without training, even well-funded projects risk underperforming. The two go hand-in-hand.

The third most requested form of support is mentorship (77.42%). This lines up neatly with the earlier finding that lack of mentorship is one of the biggest barriers. Young leaders don't just want financial investment—they want wisdom and guidance from people who've navigated similar paths before.

Rounding out the top needs are:

Networking and visibility — because great work often goes unnoticed without the right connections.

70.16%

Safer and more Safer and more inclusive spaces — creating environments where all young people, regardless of gender, background, or beliefs, can step up without fear of discrimination or harm.

69.35%

Other priorities, though slightly lower in the rankings, still matter: policy or legal backing for youth-led initiatives (57.26%) and mental health support (53.23%). The latter is particularly important given the levels of burnout and stress noted earlier.

The throughline in all these requests is that they are not one-off "fixes." They point to the need for sustained investment, systems of support, and enabling environments. These leaders don't just want to be given a chance—they want to be equipped to succeed when the chance comes.

Where Youth Leadership is Most Visible

If youth leadership in Nigeria had a "most likely to succeed" list, technology, entrepreneurship, and media would be the top names on it. These three sectors dominate the survey results, with technology slightly in the lead at **83.33%**, followed closely by entrepreneurship and startups **(78.33%)** and media and entertainment **(79.17%).**

Why these sectors? Part of the reason is accessibility. The digital economy and creative industries offer relatively low entry barriers compared to politics or large-scale corporate leadership. A laptop, an internet connection, and a compelling idea can sometimes be enough to get started—though, as we've seen, funding still makes a huge difference. Technology and entrepreneurship also tend to value innovation over seniority, giving young leaders a better chance to break through.
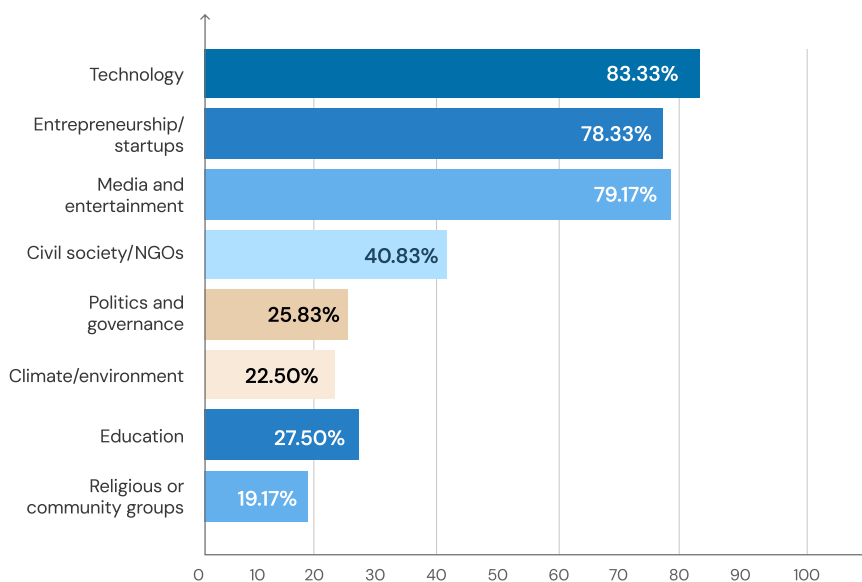
Media and entertainment's strong showing reflects both cultural influence and digital reach. From content creators to independent filmmakers, young Nigerians are using storytelling to shape public opinion, advocate for causes, and build personal brands that command attention.

Beyond the big three, civil society and NGOs (40.83%) also stand out as key spaces for youth leadership, especially for those driven by social change. Education (27.5%) comes next, followed by politics and governance (25.83%), climate and environmental work (22.5%), and religious or community leadership (19.17%).

While politics is further down the list, its presence is important—it shows that some young Nigerians are entering the formal corridors of power, even if the path is steeper and the doors harder to open.

Overall, the sector breakdown suggests that youth leadership flourishes most where agility, creativity, and innovation are rewarded. The challenge now is to bring the same energy and opportunity into sectors where decision-making power has traditionally been out of reach for younger generations.

Sector with the most youth leaders

Sector	Percentage
Technology	83.33%
Entrepreneurship/startups	78.33%
Media and entertainment	79.17%
Civil society/NGOs	40.83%
Politics and governance	25.83%
Climate/environment	22.50%
Education	27.50%
Religious or community groups	19.17%

Implications for Youth Organizations

Youth organizations like AIESEC, student unions, volunteer groups, and youth-focused NGOs are already playing a central role in leadership development. This survey confirms that they are often the first serious leadership environment young Nigerians experience. But it also shows where these organizations can raise the bar.

The clearest message from respondents is that mentorship is essential, not optional. While training programs, conferences, and workshops are useful, having a trusted guide who can offer real-world insight makes a significant difference. Mentorship accelerates learning, builds confidence, and can save young leaders from costly mistakes. In practice, this means:

- **Creating structured mentorship programs** that match emerging leaders with experienced professionals, alumni, or community figures like the LEAP Africa's Social Innovators Programme and JCI's ELV8O mentorship program

- **Building long-term mentorship relationships** rather than short, event-based ones, so advice and support grow with the leader's needs.

- **Including diverse mentors—by sector, gender, and background**—to give mentees a broad perspective on leadership challenges.

Beyond mentorship, youth organizations need to expand their reach beyond their usual circles. With 92.5% of this survey's respondents coming from AIESEC, it's clear that leadership opportunities are concentrated in well-connected networks. This leaves out young people in rural areas, informal communities, and less resource-rich institutions.

Expanding outreach could mean hosting leadership clinics in underrepresented regions, as the Nigeria Youth Futures Fund has done by deliberately targeting projects outside urban centers; partnering with local grassroots groups, a path YIAGA Africa has already taken as it scaled from a campus movement into a nationwide civic platform; or running short-term community projects in less connected areas, as AIESEC's National Volunteer program has done to take leadership experience beyond big-city hubs.

Another takeaway is the need to actively address gender and regional disparities in leadership opportunities. Female respondents formed the majority here, but gender bias still ranked high as a barrier. Regional representation was heavily tilted toward the South West. Youth organizations should track their own leadership demographics and take deliberate steps to ensure a balanced, inclusive pipeline.

Finally, youth organizations must position themselves not just as training grounds but as launchpads. Skills development is valuable, but the ultimate measure of success is whether young leaders go on to lead impactful initiatives beyond the organization itself.

That requires stronger alumni engagement, continued access to resources after membership, and partnerships that open real-world opportunities—much like BudgIT's Civic Hive fellowship, where participants receive support to build civic-tech projects that keep growing long after the program ends.

In short, youth organizations are already making leaders—but they could make many more, from many more places, if they invest as much in access, diversity, and ongoing support as they do in training content.

Implications for Policymakers

For policymakers, this survey is both a reality check and a roadmap. The reality check: despite decades of rhetoric about "empowering youth," many young Nigerians still feel shut out of meaningful leadership opportunities. The roadmap: address structural barriers, provide real resources, and embed youth leadership into the nation's decision-making architecture.

1. Create enabling legal and policy frameworks

Youth-led initiatives need more than applause, they need the protection and backing of law. This could mean:

- Passing legislation that guarantees youth representation in decision-making bodies at local, state, and federal levels.
- Introducing procurement or funding quotas for youth-led businesses and social enterprises.
- Recognizing and formalizing volunteer or civic leadership as valid public service, with benefits like grants or tax incentives.

Lagos has already offered a glimpse of this approach through the ReadySetWork program that embeds entrepreneurship and leadership training into higher education policy, showing how state policy can set the tone for wider adoption.

2. Fund youth leadership as a national priority

The top barrier in this survey is lack of resources. Funding cannot remain a private-sector afterthought—it should be part of national development strategy. Practical steps include:

- Establishing state and federal youth leadership funds, accessible through transparent, competitive processes.
- Partnering with banks and microfinance institutions to offer low-interest loans or grants to youth-led ventures.
- Funding incubators and accelerator programs specifically for youth-led civic, creative, and entrepreneurial projects.

The federal government's Nigeria Youth Investment Fund is one attempt at this, while the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund has supported thousands of young people with employability programs and business support. Past models like YouWiN! also show how transparent competitions can channel public funds into youth entrepreneurship at scale.

3. Actively dismantle age-based and gender-based stereotypes

Cultural change often follows policy change. Mandating youth participation in governance or funding youth-led projects helps normalize the idea that leadership isn't reserved for those over a certain age, or a certain gender. Public awareness campaigns can further challenge outdated perceptions and highlight examples of young leaders making measurable impact.

The federal government's efforts to institutionalize a **30% quota for youth in government appointments** is a step in this direction. It forces institutions to move past the idea that leadership belongs only to older, more "seasoned" people and open up space for women and young people to shape decisions at the highest levels.

4. Bring leadership development into the education system

Leadership shouldn't depend on joining an NGO or student group, it should be part of every young Nigerian's education. This means embedding leadership skills (public speaking, project management, teamwork, critical thinking) into school curricula from secondary level, coupled with practical opportunities for students to lead community projects.

5. Go beyond "youth" branding

Youth-focused campaigns are common, but lasting impact comes from sustained engagement. This means multi-year partnerships with youth organizations, scholarship and fellowship programs, and alumni networks that keep young leaders connected to the company's ecosystem even after formal programs end.

The **MTN Foundation Scholarships** show this approach in practice, providing thousands of scholarships each year while linking recipients to a broader professional network.

The business case is clear: investing in youth leadership is a way to secure adaptable, innovative, and loyal talent while building brand equity with a generation that values authenticity over slogans. **If the private sector treats young Nigerians only as customers and not as co-creators, it will miss out on the full value they bring.**

Implications for Media and Cultural Institutions

If skills and ambition are the engine of youth leadership, then public perception is the fuel—or the brake. This survey shows that while young Nigerians feel capable, the public's trust in youth leadership remains low. Media and cultural institutions have the power to change that narrative, not just by telling stories, but by reframing who is seen as a leader in the first place.

1. Make youth leadership visible beyond the "usual suspects"

Coverage often focuses on celebrity entrepreneurs, tech founders, or social media influencers. While these figures matter, there are thousands of lesser-known young Nigerians leading impactful projects in rural communities, local governance, education reform, and social activism. Media outlets can:

- Launch regular features or segments dedicated to grassroots youth leaders.
- Partner with local journalists to find and tell these stories authentically.
- Highlight diversity—gender, region, socioeconomic background—so leadership doesn't look like a closed club.

Channels Television's "Rubbin' Minds" has pioneered this by giving young professionals and advocates a platform for national conversations every week.

2. Shift the tone from novelty to normalcy

Too often, stories about young leaders are framed as "surprising" or "against the odds." While these narratives can be inspiring, they can also reinforce the idea that youth leadership is rare and exceptional. Instead, media can normalize the image of young people in positions of authority by:

- Including youth voices as routine experts or commentators in news coverage.
- Covering youth-led projects as standard parts of political, economic, and social news—not just as human-interest sidebars.

Recent features like Business Insider Africa's profile of a 17-year-old Nigerian Earth Prize winner using recycled materials to build parks show how youth achievements can be reported as substantive, not token.

3. Challenge stereotypes head-on

Cultural institutions—from film and TV to literature and music—play a role in shaping who audiences imagine as leaders. Writers, producers, and directors can:

- Portray young characters as competent decision-makers, not just apprentices or rebels.
- Tell stories that show collaboration between generations instead of conflict.
- Incorporate narratives that reflect the real barriers identified in this survey—ageism, lack of resources, gender bias—while also showing pathways to overcoming them.

The Creative Arts Leadership Summit in Enugu, convened by actor David Oyelowo and the GEANCO Foundation in 2025, is one example of how cultural platforms can foreground women and youth in leadership through mentorship and workshops.

4. Use influence to build bridges

Media and cultural platforms are uniquely positioned to connect young leaders to larger audiences, investors, and collaborators. This can be done by:

- Hosting public dialogues or town halls where young leaders present ideas directly to decision-makers.
- Co-creating campaigns with youth organizations to raise awareness of specific issues (climate, education, entrepreneurship).
- Offering production or publishing resources to help youth tell their own stories in their own voices.

BudgIT's DataFest illustrates this by bringing journalists, civic-tech innovators, and young activists together to co-create stories and data-driven campaigns.

5. Avoid tokenism

Inviting one youth speaker to a panel of ten seasoned professionals is not representation—it's a photo opportunity. Media and cultural spaces should ensure that youth perspectives are integrated into conversations in a way that's substantive and sustained, not symbolic.

Outlets like TheCable have begun dedicating regular space to youth activism and policy commentary, showing how mainstream platforms can normalize youth voices.

Ultimately, if media and cultural institutions treat young leaders only as stories to be consumed, the narrative will fade as quickly as the headline. But if they treat them as stakeholders with valuable insights and solutions, they can help shift public perception from "Are they ready?" to "How do we help them succeed?"

Summary of Key Insights

The data in this survey points to a youth leadership landscape that is rich in capacity but constrained in opportunity. Several themes stand out:

01
Strong self-perceived growth

Nearly all respondents credit AIESEC with making them better leaders, with especially high gains in public speaking, team management, and emotional intelligence.

02
Leadership is active, not theoretical

Over half are currently in leadership roles, and nearly 44% have launched initiatives because of their AIESEC experience.

03
Opportunities are limited

65% believe young Nigerians are not given enough space to lead, and fewer than one in five view youth leaders as "very effective."

04
Skills and confidence are high, but recognition is low

The capacity to lead exists, but public trust and systemic support have not caught up.

05
Barriers are structural

Funding gaps, age-based stereotypes, and lack of mentorship top the list of obstacles, suggesting the problem isn't motivation but the environment.

06
High-potential sectors dominate

Technology, entrepreneurship, and media are the most visible arenas for youth leadership, but there's untapped potential in politics, education, and community-based leadership.

The pattern is consistent: young Nigerians are ready to lead and, in many cases, are already doing so. The challenge—and the opportunity—lies in making sure their leadership is not confined to a few sectors or youth-focused spaces but is recognized and empowered across society.

Final Thoughts and Future Research

This survey captures a snapshot of youth leadership in Nigeria at a moment when both opportunity and urgency are high. The respondents—mostly students and recent graduates—show a remarkable blend of ambition, skills, and early leadership experience. Yet the same themes keep surfacing: the playing field is uneven, the rules are often stacked against youth, and recognition still lags behind reality.

If there is one takeaway, it's that the question is no longer whether Nigerian youth can lead. They can, and they are. The real issue is whether institutions, communities, and the wider public will give them the space, trust, and resources to lead effectively.

Future research should dig deeper in three areas:

1. **Beyond formal leadership pipelines:** This survey leans heavily on the AIESEC network. There's a need to hear from young leaders outside structured organizations—those working in informal community settings, family businesses, activist circles, or creative collectives.

2. **How stereotypes operate in practice:** While age-based and gender-based bias emerged as major challenges, we need more qualitative insight into how these biases play out in recruitment, project funding, and decision-making.

3. **Perspectives of non-leadership youth:** Understanding how young Nigerians who are not in leadership positions perceive leadership—and what would motivate them to step up—can help expand the pipeline.

In many ways, this survey shows both the promise and the paradox of Nigerian youth leadership. The skills are in place, the drive is evident, and the results—where youth have the chance—speak for themselves. Now the task is to match this readiness with the structures and support systems that will allow it to flourish across all sectors and all parts of the country.

The next chapter of youth leadership in Nigeria will not be written by one sector alone. It will take schools, businesses, governments, NGOs, and the media working alongside young people—not just talking about them—to create an environment where leadership potential is not just spotted, but fully realized.

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About Column

Column is a content and research studio that helps founders, executives, and public leaders turn expertise into influence. Our work spans research reports, messaging development, campaign strategy, and thought leadership—all built to resonate with your audience and advance your goals. With a team that blends deep experience in writing, design, and media, we turn your ideas into clear, credible content that gets results.

Whether you're looking to build authority, shape public discourse, or generate demand, Column is your partner in turning expertise into action.

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About AIESEC

AIESEC is a global youth-led nonprofit founded in 1948. It develops young people through cross-cultural exchanges and leadership programs. Active in over 120 countries with about 40,000 members, its core programs are Global Talent (professional internships), Global Teacher (teaching placements), and Global Volunteer (short-term projects tied to the UN Sustainable Development Goals). AIESEC holds consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and is recognized by UNESCO.

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