



Dispatch No. 285 | 15 March 2019

## Jobs loom large in Moroccans' attitudes toward in- and out-migration

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 285 | Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye and Mhammed Abderebbi**

### Summary

In the complex web of international migration, Morocco has the unusual distinction of being an origin and transit and receiving country. Morocco's own diaspora is the 10<sup>th</sup>-largest in the world, making up about 10% of its population (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). For decades, Morocco has also been a popular transit country for migrants seeking to cross to Europe; in 2018, the European External Action Service (2018) recorded more than 57,000 sub-Saharan and North Africans who arrived in Spain through Morocco. And in recent years, the country has become a destination for migrants who, unable or unwilling to cross to Europe, seek a new life in Morocco (International Migration Institute Network, 2019).

Under the guidance of King Mohammed VI, a continental leader on migration issues, the country adopted a human-rights-based National Immigration and Asylum Strategy in 2014 that calls for regularizing and integrating immigrants into society through access to education, health care, and work (North Africa Post, 2017; Gattioui, 2016; ReliefWeb, 2018). In fact, the country's Constitution grants immigrants the same rights as Moroccans, including the right to vote in local elections. There have, however, been reports of arrests and banishment of irregular immigrants in a bid to reduce their transit to Europe (Alimi, 2018).

Reflecting their country's complex engagement with migration issues, Afrobarometer's recent national survey reveals that Moroccan citizens' attitudes toward immigrants are a mix of welcome and caution. While a majority of Moroccans would welcome foreigners who start businesses, only minorities are in favour of allowing more refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons into the country, and half say migrants take jobs away from locals. The study also shows that more than one-third of Moroccans have considered emigrating, mostly to Europe and in search of jobs.

### 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 Round 7 surveys were completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Morocco, led by Global for Survey and Consulting, interviewed 1,200 adult Moroccans in May 2018. 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 Morocco in 2013 and 2015.

## Key findings

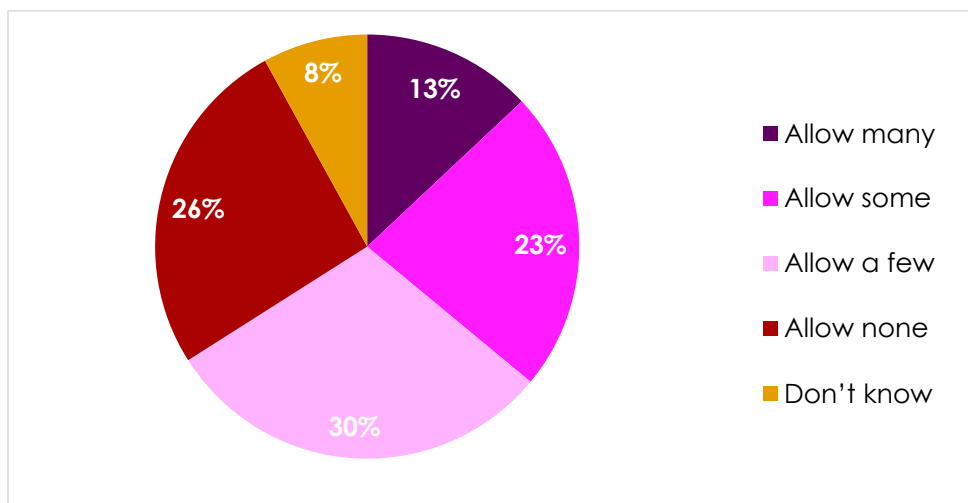
- About one-third (36%) of Moroccans say “some” or “many” refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons should be allowed to live in Morocco. But a majority want only “a few” (30%) or “none” at all (26%).
- Two-thirds (64%) see it as a good thing for an immigrant to start a business that employs nationals. About four in 10 would welcome an immigrant marrying one of their close relatives (39%) or becoming their neighbour (38%).
- But almost half (47%) of Moroccans “agree” or “strongly agree” that migrants take away jobs from locals, and thus the country should not accept any more migrants. Similarly, four in 10 (43%) think Morocco has enough migrants and should not allow more to enter the country. Three in 10 (31%), on the other hand, say migrants are an economic asset and the country should therefore be more welcoming.
- More than one-third (36%) of Moroccans have considered emigrating, including 13% who have given “a lot” of thought to the idea.
- The most popular destination for potential emigrants is Europe (68%). Only 1% would choose to move to another country in Africa.
- More than half (53%) of potential emigrants say the most important reason for considering emigration is to find work.

## Attitudes toward migrants

With its National Immigration and Asylum Strategy, Morocco aims to ensure a decent standard of living for immigrants and grant them access to basic services. And in leading development of the African Union’s African Agenda on Migration, King Mohammed VI has emphatically contested claims that migrants are an economic drag on host countries (North Africa Post, 2017).

However, more than half of Moroccans say only “a few” (30%) or “no” (26%) refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons should be allowed to live in the country (Figure 1). Only about one-third say “some” (23%) or “many” (13%) should be allowed to live in Morocco.

**Figure 1: Should migrants and refugees be allowed to live in Morocco? | Morocco | 2018**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, do you think we should allow many, some, a few, or no refugees, migrants, and other displaced persons to live in Morocco?

Two-thirds (64%) of Moroccans see it as a “good” or “very good” thing for an immigrant to start a business that employs nationals (Figure 2). About four in 10 would welcome an immigrant marrying one of their close relatives (39%) or becoming their neighbour (38%). But only a quarter (25%) are in favour of more immigrants being allowed into the country.

However, in each case, only a minority (ranging from 11% to 35%) describe these things as “bad” or “very bad,” while larger proportions (ranging from 22% to 39%) say they are “neither good nor bad.”

**Figure 2: Immigrants in Morocco: Good or bad? | Morocco | 2018**



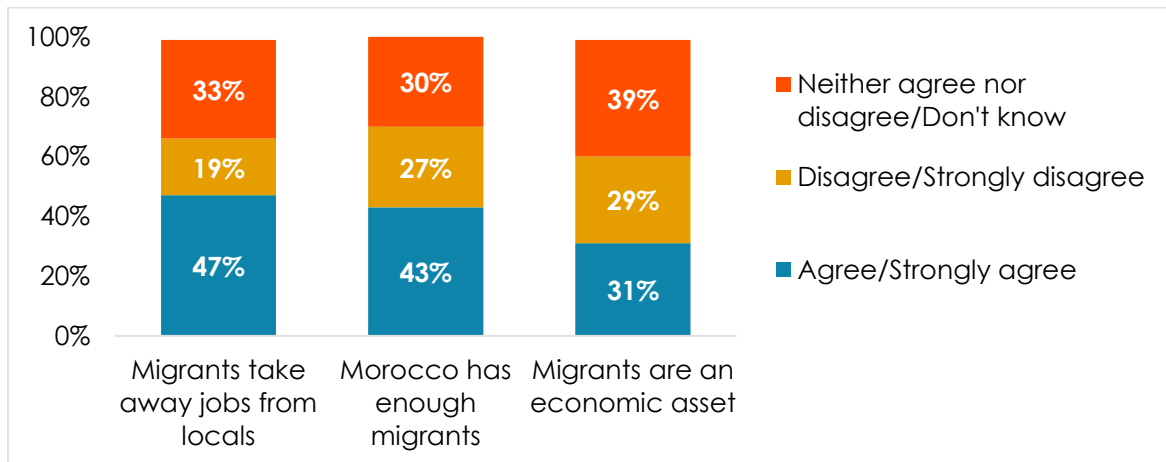
**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me whether you, personally, think each of the following is a good or a bad thing. (% who say “good thing” or “very good thing”)

Although a majority of Moroccans are in favour of migrants starting businesses that employ nationals, almost half (47%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that immigrants take away jobs meant for locals and the country should therefore not accept any more of them, while only one in five (19%) disagree (Figure 3). Similarly, four in 10 (43%) think Morocco has enough migrants and should not allow more to enter the country, while only about one in four (27%) disagree. Three in 10 (31%), on the other hand, say migrants are an economic asset and the country should therefore be more welcoming, while about the same proportion (29%) disagree. Again, large proportions (ranging from 30% to 39%) say they neither agree nor disagree with these statements or “don’t know.”

The view that migrants should be barred because they take away jobs is about equally common among women and men but somewhat more prevalent in urban areas (50%) than in rural zones (43%) (Figure 4). Compared to their younger and better-educated counterparts, senior citizens and respondents with no formal education are less likely to agree with this view and more likely to say they “don’t know.” As might be expected, unemployed Moroccans who are looking for jobs are more likely to agree with this notion (58%).

Similarly, the perception that Morocco has enough migrants and should not welcome any more is more widespread among urban residents, the educated, and those aged between 36 and 55 years.

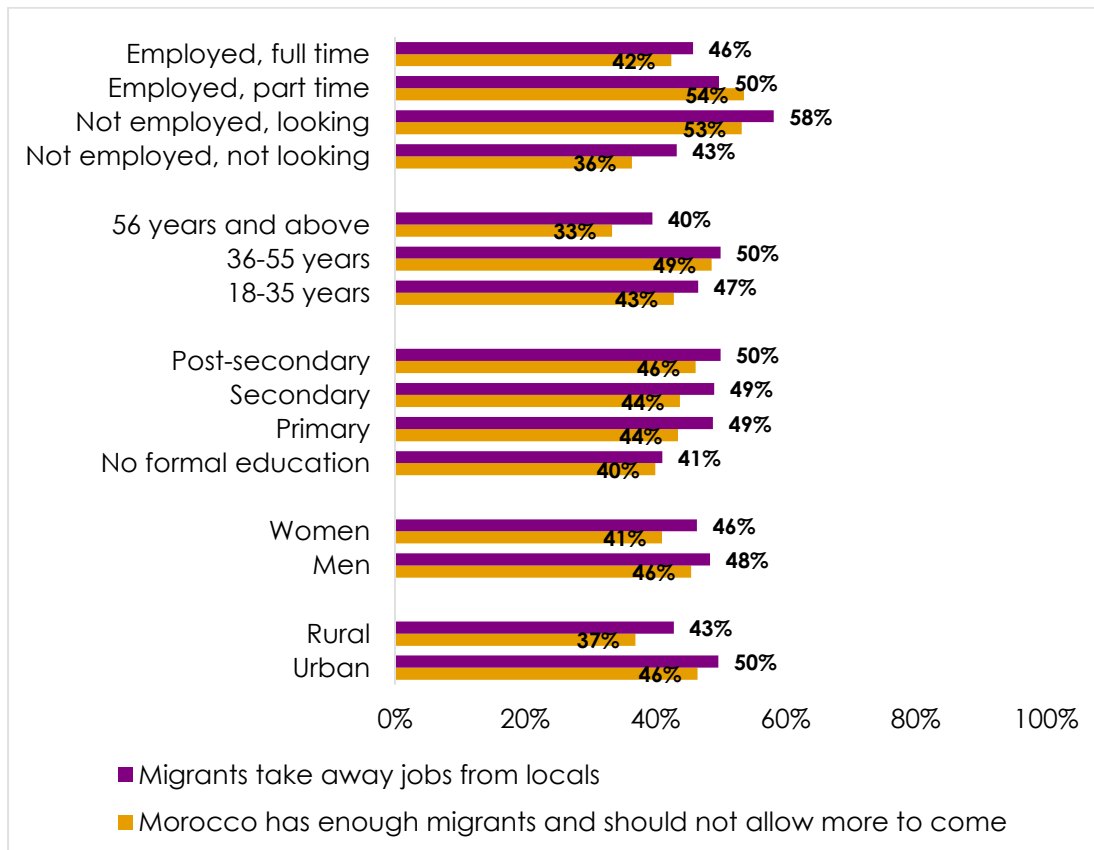
**Figure 3: Immigrants in Morocco | Morocco | 2018**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree or haven't you heard enough to say?

- People who come to live and work in Morocco take away jobs from locals and the country should therefore not accept any more migrants.
- Morocco has enough migrants and should therefore not allow more people to come and live in this country.
- Migrants are an economic asset to Morocco and the country should therefore be more welcoming.

**Figure 4: Migrants take away jobs and should not be allowed in | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2018**



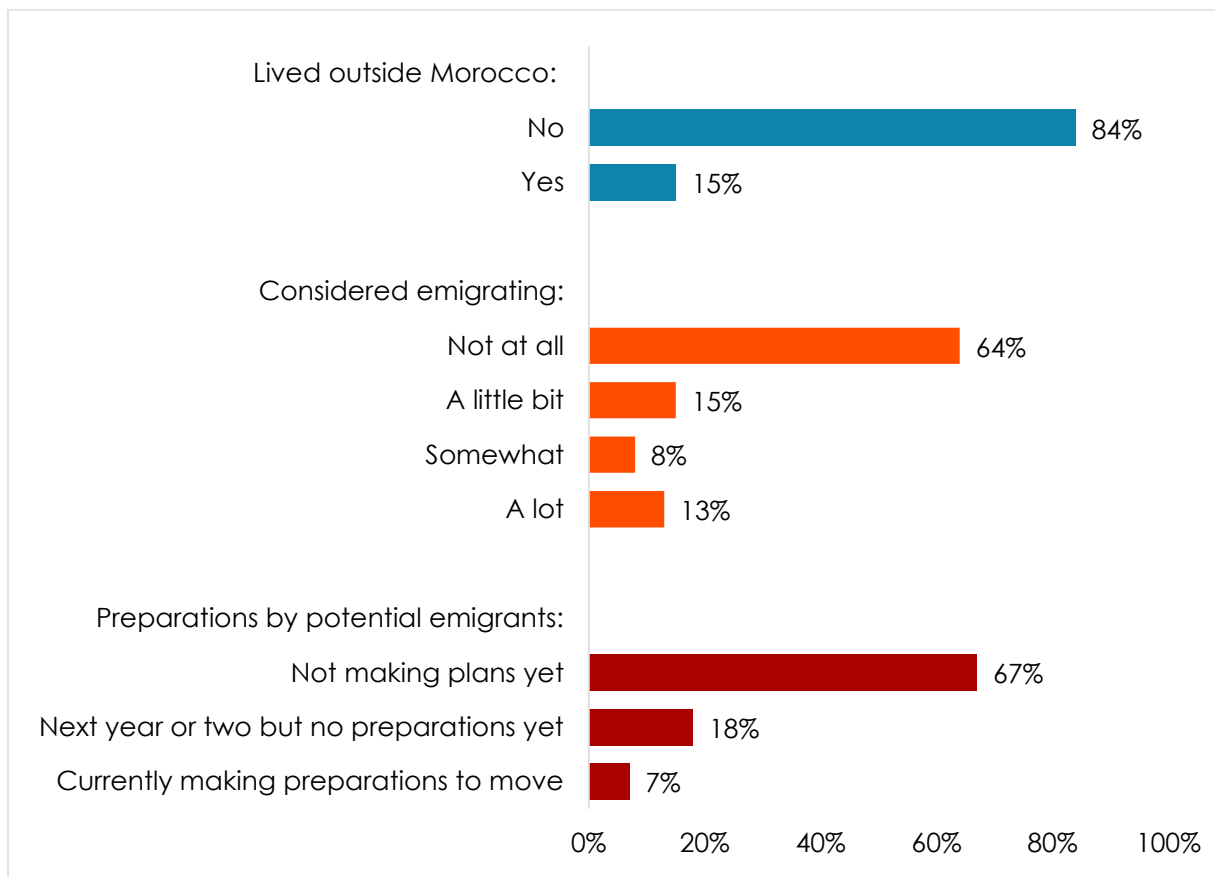
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree or haven't you heard enough to say? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

## Looking abroad: Moroccans' attitudes toward emigration

The inflow of remittances to Morocco was estimated to reach U.S. \$7.4 billion in 2018, 6% of the country's gross domestic product (World Bank, 2017). But fewer than one in four respondents say they depend on remittances "a little bit" (13%), "somewhat" (7%), or "a lot" (3%). And only about one in seven (15%) say they or members of their household lived outside the country for at least three months during the previous three years.

Asked how much, if at all, they have considered moving to another country, more than one-third (36%) of Moroccans say they have considered it at least "a little bit," including 13% who have given "a lot" of thought to the idea. Among those who have considered emigrating, 7% say they are taking concrete steps to emigrate, such as seeking a visa, while 18% say they intend to leave within the next year or two but have made no concrete preparations yet. Two-thirds (67%) say they have not made specific plans (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Emigration** | Morocco | 2018



**Respondents were asked:**

*During the past three years, have you or anyone in your household gone to live in another country outside Morocco for more than three months?*

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

*How much planning or preparation have you done in order to move to another country to live?*

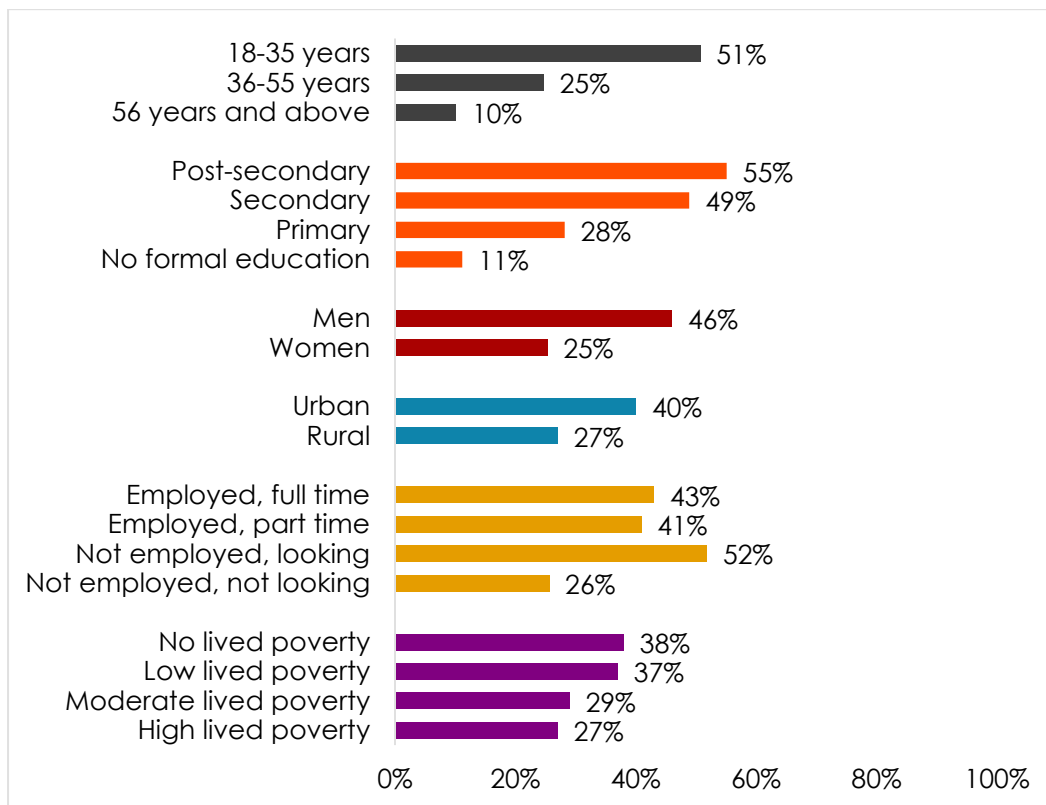
*(Asked only of respondents who said they had considered emigrating.)*

The inclination to consider emigrating increases with the respondents' level of education and decreases with age. Respondents with post-secondary education (55%) and youth aged 18-35 (51%) are five times as likely to consider emigrating as those with no formal education (11%) and those aged 56 years and above (10%) (Figure 6). Men (46%) and city dwellers

(40%) are also considerably more likely to consider moving abroad than women (25%) and rural residents (27%). Unemployed Moroccans looking for jobs (52%) are more likely to think about going abroad than those who have jobs or those who are not looking for employment.

Interestingly, economically better-off citizens are more likely to think of emigrating than the poor.<sup>1</sup> Almost four in 10 respondents experiencing no lived poverty (38%) or low lived poverty (37%) say they have considered emigrating, compared to fewer than three in 10 of those in the moderate or high lived poverty categories.

**Figure 6: Potential emigrants** | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2018

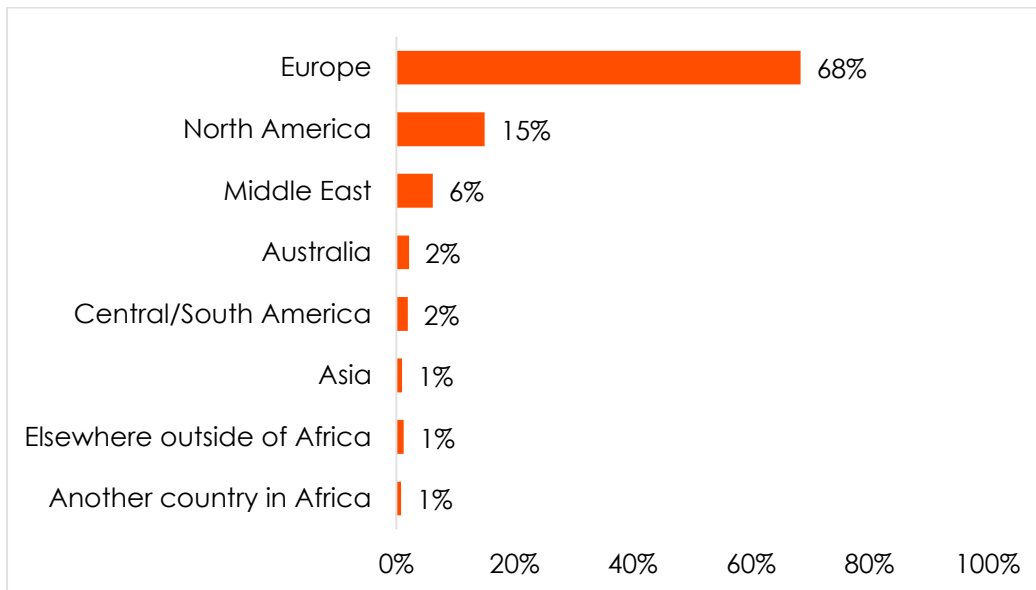


**Respondents were asked:** How much, if at all, have you considered moving to another country to live? (% who say "a little," "somewhat," or "a lot")

Almost all potential Moroccan emigrants have their eyes on countries outside of Africa. The most popular destination for potential emigrants is Europe (68%), followed by North America (25%) and the Middle East (6%) (Figure 7). Only 1% would prefer moving to another country in Africa. These findings are roughly consistent with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018) finding that 90% of the Moroccan diaspora is in Europe, and differ from the typical African pattern of strong intraregional migration (International Organization for Migration, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2018).

<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?*

**Figure 7: Preferred destination of potential emigrants | Morocco | 2018**

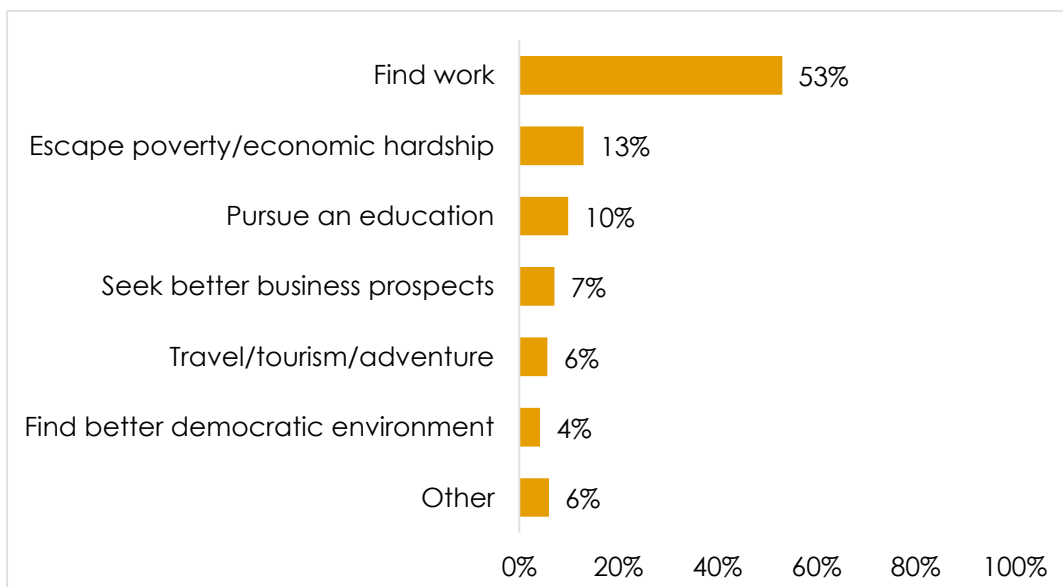


**Respondents who said they had considered emigrating were asked:** If you were to move to another country, where would you be most likely to go? (Analysis excludes those who said they had not considered emigrating.)

### Unemployment: Most important problem and main driver of emigration

More than half (53%) of potential emigrants in Morocco say the most important reason for considering moving abroad is to find work (Figure 8). About one in eight cite poverty and economic hardship (13%) as their main motivation, followed by pursuing an education (10%), seeking better business prospects (7%), engaging in travel and tourism (6%), and seeking a better democratic environment (4%).

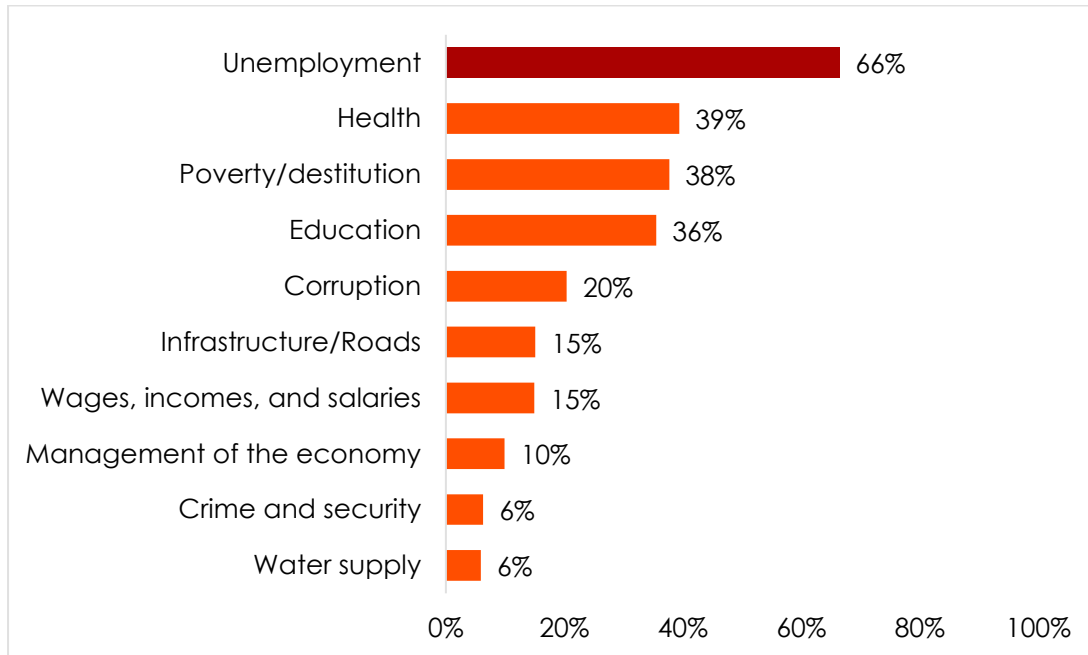
**Figure 8: Reasons for considering emigration | Morocco | 2018**



**Respondents who said they had considered emigrating were asked:** What is the most important reason why you would consider moving from Morocco? (Figures exclude those who said they had not considered emigrating)

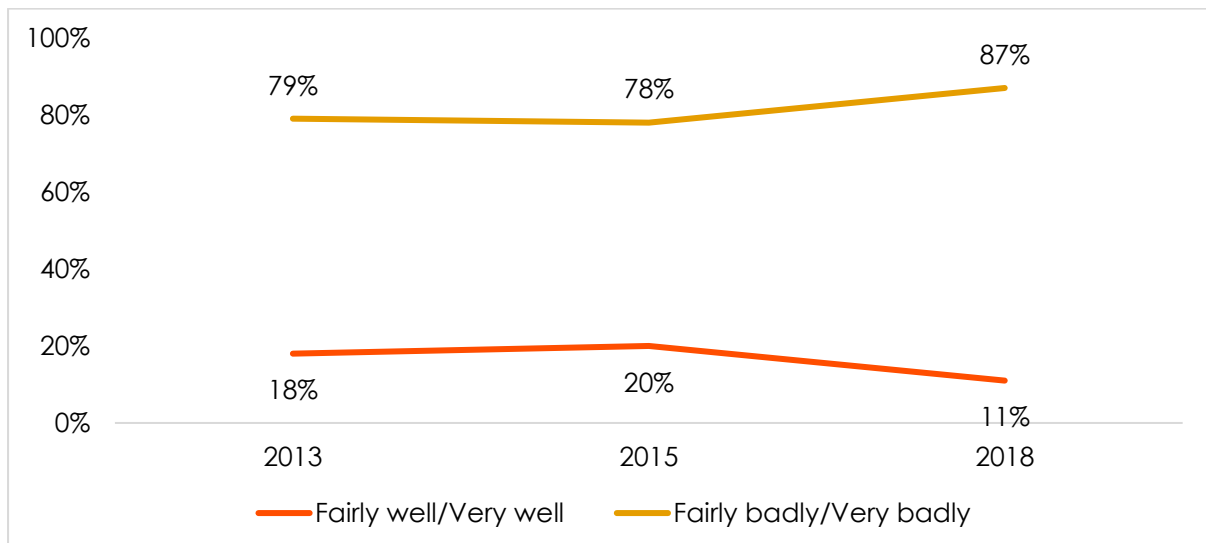
In line with its high priority among potential emigrants, unemployment is also the most important problem that Moroccans want the government to address, cited by 66% of respondents (Figure 9). With unemployment and underemployment rates estimated at 10.2% and 9.8%, respectively, even the creation of 86,000 jobs in 2017 (Haut Commissariat au Plan, 2018) has not impressed many Moroccans: Only one in 10 (11%) say the government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” on job creation, a decrease of 9 percentage points from 2015 (Figure 10).

**Figure 9: Most important problems (top 10) | Morocco | 2018**



**Respondents were asked:** In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address? (Respondents were allowed up to three responses.)

**Figure 10: Government performance in creating jobs | Morocco | 2013-2018**



**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Creating jobs?



## Conclusion

Unemployment, the most important problem that Moroccans want their government to address, also appears to be a significant factor in Moroccans' attitude toward immigrants and their desire to emigrate. By a 2-to-1 margin, Moroccans think immigrants are taking their jobs and so shouldn't be allowed into the country. And the search for work is by far the most common motivation for Moroccans who are considering moving abroad. Almost nine out of 10 Moroccans are dissatisfied with the government's performance in creating jobs – a clear challenge if the country wants to keep its young and best-educated human resources at home and welcome those who seek greener pastures in Morocco.

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Financial support for Afrobarometer Round 7 has been provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Endowment for Democracy, and Transparency International.

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