

Summary Observations on a Preliminary Review of the Use of Statistics in the Upcoming Economic Report on Africa [ERA] 2026 themed “Growth Through Innovation: Harnessing Data and Frontier Technologies for Africa’s Economic Transformation”

14th November 2025

1. Motivation for the Review

This exercise is mainly underscored by the resolve of the Africa Centre for Statistics (ACS) to initiate pragmatic interventions to improve data and statistics quality assurance practices in the Commission. The resolve transcends adherence to professional standards, which includes accuracy, confidence and comparability and aims to deepen the culture of a deliberate reflection on the use of selected statistics for the guidance of policymakers. The ACS was further motivated to pursue this exercise given the data recency of most micro-development and social indicators for Africa countries across different databases including the ECASStats. Finally, the scope of the theme, which reflects the imperatives of data for the continent’s economic transformation presents the need to cross validate the intent, accuracy and implication of the use of numbers in the report.

In this summary report, the framework for the review and initial observations on the use of statistics in Chapter One are presented for discussions. The last section of this summary report presents a case for feedback to assess the merit of investing efforts to undertake this exercise for the entire report and its possible consideration for future flagship reports of the Commission

2. Framework for the Review of the Use of Statistics in the ERA 2026

In the context of a yet to be published report, the quality of statistics was assessed from a use perspective implying that issues related to production are excluded. The preliminary quality assurance of the use of statistics in the ERA 2026 has been undertaken based on four objectively measurable dimensions. These are timeliness of the statistics used, user relatability of the accuracy of statistics used, source citation of the statistics used and the criteria for generalisation and interpretation. The preliminary analyses have been presented based on counts, variability across the observations of the use of statistics in the report and comparison with external sources. For the sake of simplicity, the dimensions were not weighted and other quality assurance considerations such as consistency, reproducibility of ECA’s calculations and relevance have not been included in this preliminary analysis.

3. Initial Observations based on a Review of the Chapter One of ERA 2026

For a preliminary analysis, a maximum of three observations for each of the four the dimensions have been highlighted in this summary.

3.1 Timeliness of statistics used in the ERA 2026

- 3.1.1 Data recency ranges from –2 [Africa’s forecasted GDP Growth Rate (2027)] to 14 [Incidence of extreme poverty in Congo (2005 – 2011)] years with the highest among social indicators, notably poverty and other social indices.

- 3.1.2 The cross-country comparison of the earliest and latest time dates for the same variable varies with instances where the most recent statistic is earlier [Multidimensional Poverty (MPI) for Comoros; 2012] than the initial date for another country (MPI for Nigeria; 2013).
- 3.1.3 The range of reference (latest) years for some of the cross-country analysis exceeds a decade, for instance, the Gini Index for Congo has a citation year of 2011, compared to 2022 for Zambia and Equatorial Guinea.

3.2 User reliability of the accuracy of statistics used in the ERA 2026

- 3.2.1 The ERA 2026 reports a decrease in real GDP growth rate from 3.4 to 3.2 per cent for 2023 and 2024, contrasting the 2025 AfDB's African Economic Outlook publication of an increase from 3.0 to 3.3 per cent, with both publications citing the IMF World Economic Outlook as the base reference.
- 3.2.2 The ERA 2026 reports Africa's urban share of 54.0 per cent in 2020, contrasting the 43.5 per cent published in the UN World Urbanisation Prospectus (World Urbanization Prospectus, 2018) -, for the same year.

3.3 Source citations of statistics in the ERA 2026

- 3.3.1 Source citations of statistics in the ERA 2026 ranged from recognised open-source databases and publications to both popular and locality specific newspapers, with the Introductory Chapter referencing the latter at least five unique times.
- 3.3.2 The citation, ECA calculations (elaborations) based on a given database has been used a few times (at least 10 times) as a source for either a figure or a table in the introductory chapter only, but it is unclear in some instances what the calculations entailed.

3.4 Criteria for generalisation and interpretation

- 3.4.1 The number of countries for some of the figures, for example, the charts for MPI (42) and Gini Index (51) are less than the 54 member states, yet the representation has been generalised for Africa without an indication of the implications for regional representativity.
- 3.4.2 The missingness of countries across annualised time series charts such as the use of the Gini Index, which has greater than three missing points for more than a ten-year period, impacts the interpretation of the trends in income inequality.

4. Potential Next Steps

The manual undertaking of this exercise will be time consuming and considering the strict deadlines leading to the publication of the ERA 2026, initial efforts have been invested in automating the process of quality assuring the use of statistics. However, the scope of quality assurance and associated impact may further be expanded leading to

an extension in the time required for this undertaking. It is therefore imperative to assess the merit of this exercise, if any and agree on the scope for quality assurance.

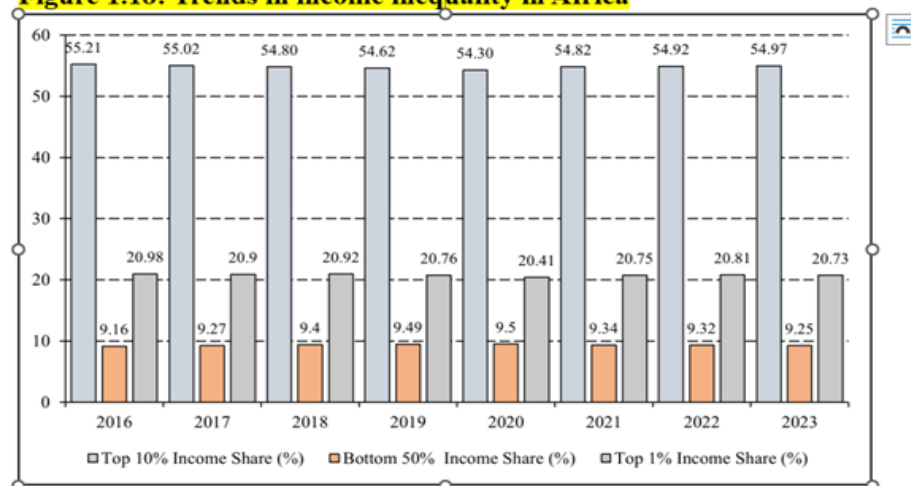
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5. Annexes/Additional on the Observations

a) Examples of calculations that are not methodologically clear

Most African countries have experienced high income inequality in recent times, with more than three-quarters of Africa's income being earned by the top 11 per cent of the income distribution while the bottom 50 per cent controlling less than a tenth of Africa's total income. This has remained largely unchanged over the last 10 to 20 years as shown in figure 1.18.

Figure 1.18: Trends in income inequality in Africa



Source: ECA calculations using data from World Inequality Lab (2025)

The World Inequality Lab does not give figures for the top 11%; they give the top 1% and the top 10%. If the 11% mentioned in the text is the sum of the 10% and the 1%, then the calculation should be reconsidered, as the 1% is inclusive of the top 10%.

b) Figures that are different from those published by other international organizations

Extract	ERA 2026	Reference period	The IMF data
Africa's GDP growth is projected at 3.5 per cent in 2025 supported by public investment	3.5 per cent	2025	3.7
East Africa's output is expected to expand by 5.8 per cent	5.8 per cent	2025	6
West Africa's growth is estimated at 3.4 per cent in 2024	3.4 per cent	2024	3.6
Central Africa's growth improved to 4.1 per cent	4.1 per cent	2024	2.6
North Africa's GDP growth slowed to 2.7 per cent in 2024	2.7 per cent	2024	3.3

Africa's average inflation rate decreased to 12.8 per cent	12.8 per cent	2024	18.3 for Sub-Sahara & 14.3 for Middle east & North Africa
Nigeria's inflation remained high at 24.3 per cent	24.3 per cent	2024	33.2
South Africa's inflation declined to 5.2 per cent	5.2 per cent	2024	4.4
Africa's public debt-to-GDP ratio remained elevated at 62 per cent	62 per cent	2024	65
Africa's real GDP growth is expected to reach 3.9 per cent in 2025	3.9 per cent	2025	3.7
Africa's GDP expected to average 4.2 per cent in 2026-2027	4.2 per cent	2026-2027	3.8
Emerging and developing economies' average at 4.1 per cent	4.1 per cent	2026-2027	4.1
South Asia at 6.1 per cent	6.1 per cent	2026-2027	4.7
Growth in oil-exporting countries projected to decline from 3.9 per cent in 2025 to 3.5 per cent in 2026	3.9 per cent-3.5 per cent	2025-2026	No data is available
Mineral-rich economies growth 3.1 per cent in 2025 from 2.2 per cent in 2024	2.2-3.1 per cent	2024-2025	No data is available
East Africa growth 5.4 per cent in 2025 and 6.7 per cent in 2026	5.4-6.7 per cent	2025-2026	6 in 2025 & 6 in 2026
West Africa expected to grow at an average 4.9 per cent in 2025-2026	4.9 per cent	2025-2026	4.2
Guinea growing at 8.9 per cent over the period	8.9 per cent	2025-2026	8.9
Senegal at 6.3 per cent	6.3 per cent	2025-2026	4.5
Côte d'Ivoire at 6.4 per cent	6.4 per cent	2025-2026	6.4
Nigeria projected to grow by 2.7 per cent in 2026	2.7 per cent	2026	4.2
North Africa GDP growth projected to rise by 4.0 per cent in 2025-2026	4.0 per cent	2025-2026	3.6
Central Africa growth expected to rise from 2.4 per cent in 2025 to 3.5 per cent in 2026	2.4-3.5 per cent	2025-2026	3 in 2025 & 2.8 in 2026

Southern Africa sub-region growth projected at 2.2 per cent in 2025-2027	2.2 per cent	2025-2027	2.35
South Africa growth projected to remain subdued at 0.98 per cent in 2025	0.98 per cent	2025	1.1
South Africa to reach 1.3 per cent in 2026 and 1.6 per cent in 2027	1.3-1.6 per cent	2026-2027	1.1 in 2025 & 1.2 in 2026
Zambia at 6.8 per cent	6.8 per cent	2026	6.4
Zimbabwe at 4.6 per cent	4.6 per cent	2026	4.6
Swaziland at 5.0 per cent	5.0 per cent	2026	4.6
Services share of GDP at 48.8 per cent in 2024	48.8 per cent	2024	The sum of Agriculture, Industry and Service does not add up to 100%
Industry share 26.2 per cent	26.2 per cent	2024	
Agriculture share 17.9 per cent	17.9 per cent	2024	
Manufacturing share 11.3 per cent	11.3 per cent	2024	
ICT sector's contribution to GDP rose from GHS 4.4 billion to GHS 21 billion	4.4-21 billion	2016-2022	No information is available
GDP increased by an estimated 8-10 per cent and per capita income by around \$530 by end of 2023	8-10 per cent; \$530	2023	Not realistic
Average fiscal deficits expected to narrow down from 6.0 per cent in 2025 to 5.4 per cent in 2026	6.0-5.4 per cent	2025-2026	The average fiscal deficit of Africa is -1.2 in 2024 & -0.6 in 2025
North Africa fiscal deficit increasing from 7.8 per cent in 2024 to 10.4 per cent of GDP in 2025	7.8-10.4 per cent	2024-2025	The average fiscal deficit of North Africa is -6.4 in 2024 & -3.3 in 2025
Southern Africa deficit widening from 4.9 per cent of GDP in 2024 to 5.5 per cent in 2025	4.9-5.5 per cent	2024-2025	The average fiscal deficit of Southern Africa is -1.05 in 2024 & 0.35 in 2025
East Africa fiscal deficit increasing from 3.7 per cent of GDP in 2024 to 3.8 per cent in 2025	3.7-3.8 per cent	2024-2025	The average fiscal deficit of eastern Africa is -1.5 in 2024 & -0.1 in 2025
Central Africa fiscal deficit remaining moderate from 1.6	1.6-1.7 per cent	2024-2025	The average fiscal deficit of eastern Africa

per cent in 2024 to 1.7 per cent in 2025			is -1.5 in 2024 & -0.1 in 2025
West Africa deficit narrowing from 4.8 per cent in 2024 to 3.8 per cent in 2025	4.8-3.8 per cent	2024-2025	The average fiscal deficit of eastern Africa is -1.3 in 2024 & 0.1 in 2025
Burundi debt-to-GDP ratio 46.1 per cent (2016) rising to 66.5 per cent (2021) then 35.3 per cent (2025)	35.3-66.5 per cent	2016-2025	Burundi debt-to-GDP in 46.1 in 2016, 25.9 in 2020 and 80.3 in 2025
Republic of Congo debt-to-GDP ratio 84.6 per cent (2016) reaching 91.4 per cent (2025)	84.6-91.4 per cent	2016-2025	Republic of Congo debt-to-GDP in 84.6 in 2016 and 91.4 in 2025
Kenya debt-to-GDP ratio 50.4 per cent (2016) to 68.3 per cent (2025)	50.4-68.3 per cent	2016-2025	Kenya debt-to-GDP in 50.4 in 2016 and 68.5 in 2025
Namibia debt-to-GDP ratio 45.8 per cent (2016) rising to 63.9 per cent (2025)	45.8-63.9 per cent	2016-2025	Namibia debt-to-GDP in 45.8 in 2016 and 63.9 in 2025
Rwanda debt-to-GDP ratio 41.1 per cent (2016) reaching 77.6 per cent (2025)	41.1-77.6 per cent	2016-2025	Rwanda debt-to-GDP in 36.5 in 2016 and 73.2 in 2025
Tanzania debt-to-GDP ratio 39.8 per cent (2016) to 47.1 per cent (2025)	39.8-47.1 per cent	2016-2025	Rwanda debt-to-GDP in 36.5 in 2016 and 73.2 in 2025
Uganda debt-to-GDP ratio 31.3 per cent (2016) rising to 54.0 per cent (2025)	31.3-54.0 per cent	2016-2025	Uganda debt-to-GDP in 31.3 in 2016 and 50.2 in 2025
Africa average debt-to-GDP ratio projected to rise from 66.8 per cent in 2024 to 67.2 per cent in 2025	66.8-67.2 per cent	2024-2025	Average Africa 66.2 in 2024 and 62.4 in 2025
North Africa debt-to-GDP ratio 79.6 per cent	79.6 per cent	2025	North Africa 112.9 in 2024 and 95.1 in 2025
Southern Africa debt-to-GDP ratio 74.6 per cent	74.6 per cent	2025	North Africa 112.9 in 2024 and 95.1 in 2025
West Africa debt-to-GDP ratio 58.7 per cent	58.7 per cent	2025	West Africa 59.2 in 2024 and 57.2 in 2025
East Africa debt-to-GDP ratio 55.6 per cent	55.6 per cent	2025	East Africa 56.2 in 2024 and 55.6 in 2025
Central Africa debt-to-GDP ratio 45.9 per cent	45.9 per cent	2025	Central Africa 47.5 in 2024 and 48.3 in 2025

Southern Africa inflation decline from 48.0 per cent (2024) to 12.6 per cent (2025) and 7.0 per cent (2026)	48.0-7.0 per cent	2024-2026	In southern Africa the inflation rate is 22.4 in 2024, 11.1 in 2025 and 7.3 in 2026
West Africa inflation from 17.6 per cent (2024) to 14.8 per cent (2026)	17.6-14.8 per cent	2024-2026	In western Africa the inflation rate is 23.6 in 2024, 17.1 in 2025 and 15.8 in 2026
East Africa inflation from 12.1 per cent (2024) to 9.6 per cent (2025) and 7.2 per cent (2026)	12.1-7.2 per cent	2024-2026	In Eastern Africa the inflation rate is 4.1 in 2024, 4.4 in 2025 and 4.8 in 2026
North Africa inflation from 20.8 per cent (2024) to 12.7 per cent (2025) and 9.2 per cent (2026)	20.8-9.2 per cent	2024-2026	In Northern Africa the inflation rate is 14.2 in 2024, 12.2 in 2025 and 10.3 in 2026

c) Data with significant time lags

(1.1.3) ICT Sector Indicators – Ghana

Indicator	Value(s)	Reference Year(s)	Country	Source Mentioned
ICT sector contribution to GDP	GHS 4.4 billion	2016	Ghana	Not explicitly cited, likely national accounts / ECA
ICT sector contribution to GDP	GHS 21 billion	2022	Ghana	Not explicitly cited, likely national accounts / ECA
ICT sector share of GDP	≈ 4 % of GDP	2022	Ghana	ECA (implied)
GDP increase due to digital financial services	+8–10 %	Estimated as of 2023	Ghana	Derived from model estimation
Increase in per capita income due to digital financial services	+ US\$ 530	By end 2023	Ghana	Derived from estimation

Despite covering a period up to 2023, this dataset exhibits timeliness limitations for several reasons:

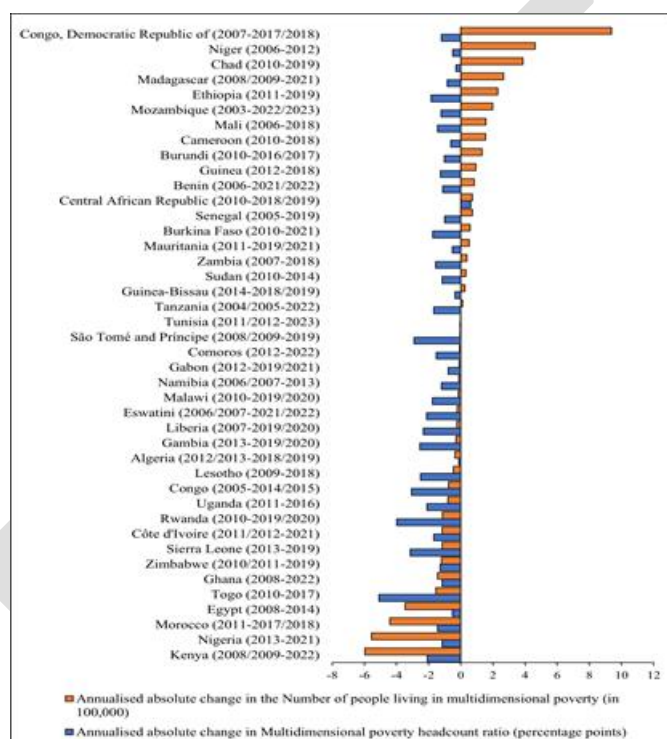
1. Lag in the reference period

The latest actual year for the ICT sector GDP contribution is 2022, meaning the data reflect economic activity that is now three years old (as of 2025).

The 2023 estimates are model-based projections, not finalized data, so they cannot yet confirm observed outcomes.

1.5.1 Multidimensional poverty

Figure 1.15: Trends in Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty and Number of Multidimensionally Poor People in Africa



Source: ECA calculations using data from Alkire et al (2024)

Country	Survey Years (First–Last)
Congo, Democratic Republic of	2007–2018
Niger	2006–2012
Chad	2010–2019
Madagascar	2009–2021

Ethiopia	2011–2019
Mozambique	2003–2023
Mali	2006–2018
Cameroon	2010–2018
Burundi	2010–2017
Guinea	2012–2018
Benin	2006–2022
Central African Republic	2010–2018
Senegal	2015–2019
Burkina Faso	2010–2021
Mauritania	2011–2019
Zambia	2007–2018
Sudan	2010–2014
Guinea-Bissau	2014–2018
Tanzania	2004/2005–2022
Tunisia	2011/2012–2023
São Tomé and Príncipe	2008/2009–2019
Comoros	2012–2022
Gabon	2012–2019
Namibia	2006–2017
Malawi	2010–2019/2020
Eswatini	2006/2007–2021/2022
Liberia	2007–2019/2020
Gambia	2013–2019/2020
Algeria	2013–2019
Lesotho	2009–2018
Congo (Republic of)	2005–2014
Uganda	2011–2022

Rwanda	2010–2019/2020
Côte d’Ivoire	2011–2021
Sierra Leone	2011–2019
Zimbabwe	2011–2019
Ghana	2010–2022
Togo	2010–2017
Morocco	2011–2017
Egypt	2003–2014
Nigeria	2013–2021
Kenya	2008/2009–2022

Key observations

- Earliest baseline year: 2003 (Mozambique, Egypt)
- Most recent end year: 2023 (Tunisia, Mozambique)
- Average data coverage: ~10–12 years per country
- Median latest survey year: 2019
- Number of countries with pre-2020 latest survey: $\approx 70\%$
- Countries with recent (2021–2023) data: Benin, Tunisia, Mozambique, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria

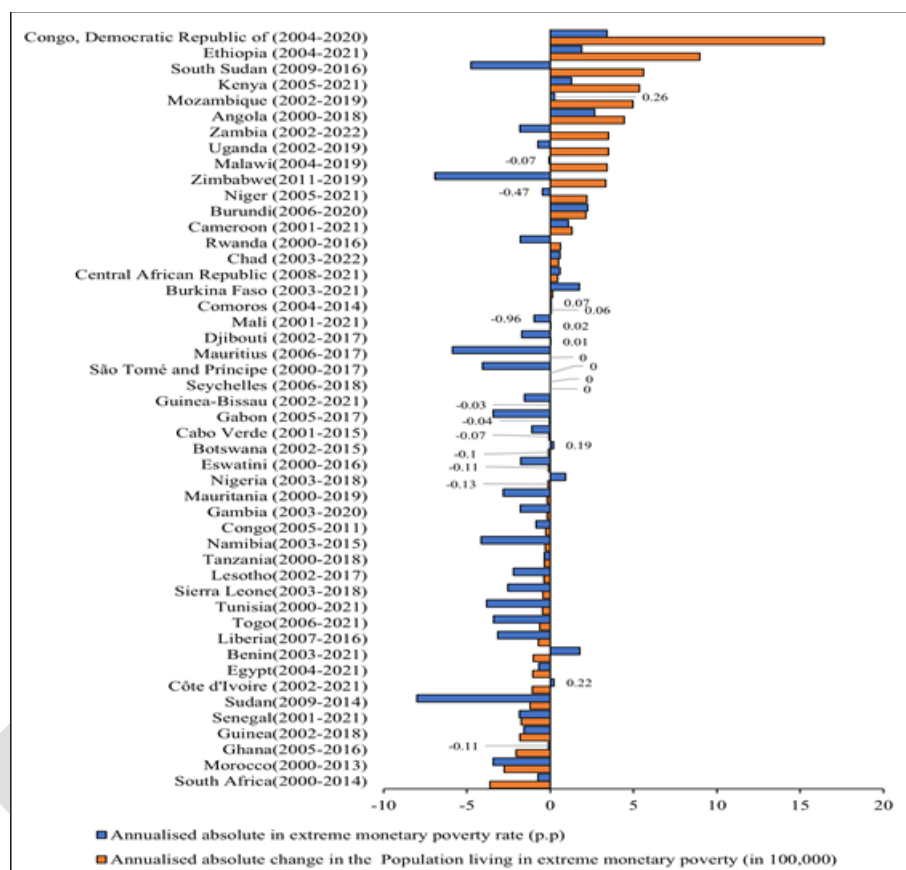
Summary table of timeliness

Aspect	Observation
Reported source	Alkire et al. (2024), <i>Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024</i>
Actual data collection window	2003 – 2023
Median last data year	2019
Timeliness gap (as of 2025)	2–10 years

Policy implication	The figure reflects long-term structural trends, not real-time poverty dynamics; it omits post-2020 shocks (COVID-19, inflation, conflict).
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1.5.3 (1.5.3) Monetary poverty

Figure 1.16: Incidence of extreme monetary poverty and the number of extreme monetary poor in Africa



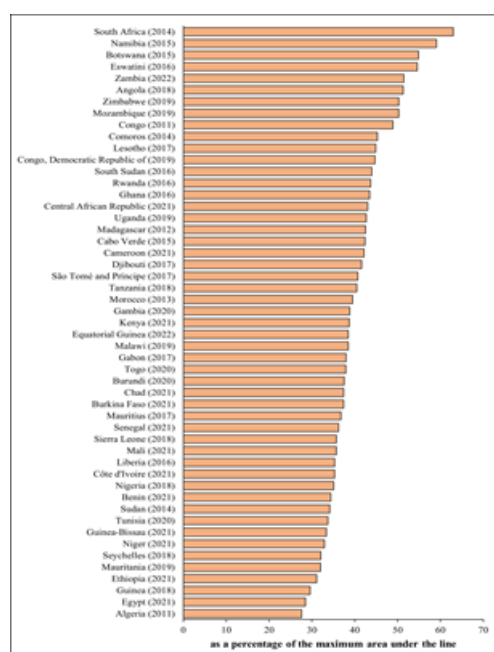
Source: ECA calculations using data from World Bank (2025j)

Country	Survey Years (First–Last)
Congo, Democratic Republic of	2004–2020
Ethiopia	2004–2021
South Sudan	2009–2016
Kenya	2005–2021
Mozambique	2002–2019
Angola	2008–2020
Zambia	2002–2022

Uganda	2002–2019
Malawi	2004–2019
Zimbabwe	2011–2019
Niger	2005–2021
Burundi	2006–2020
Cameroon	2001–2021
Rwanda	2000–2016
Chad	2003–2022
Central African Republic	2008–2021
Burkina Faso	2003–2021
Comoros	2004–2014
Mali	2001–2021
Djibouti	2002–2017
Mauritius	2006–2017
São Tomé and Príncipe	2000–2017
Seychelles	2006–2018
Guinea-Bissau	2002–2021
Gabon	2005–2017
Cabo Verde	2001–2015
Botswana	2002–2015
Eswatini	2000–2016
Nigeria	2003–2018
Mauritania	2000–2019
Gambia	2003–2020
Congo (Republic of)	2005–2011
Namibia	2003–2015
Tanzania	2000–2018
Lesotho	2002–2017
Sierra Leone	2003–2018
Tunisia	2000–2021
Togo	2006–2021
Liberia	2007–2016
Benin	2003–2021
Egypt	2004–2021
Côte d’Ivoire	2002–2021
Senegal	2001–2021
Guinea	2002–2018
Ghana	2005–2016
Morocco	2000–2014
South Africa	2000–2014

1.5.4 Inequality

Figure 1.19: Gini Index for African Countries (latest year)



Each bar in the figure represents a country's Gini Index (a measure of income inequality ranging from 0 = perfect equality to 100 = perfect inequality) expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the Lorenz curve for the most recent available year.

Country	Latest Data Year
South Africa	2014
Namibia	2015
Botswana	2015
Eswatini	2016
Zambia	2019
Zimbabwe	2019
Mozambique	2019
Congo (Republic of)	2017
Lesotho	2017
Congo, Democratic Republic of	2018
South Sudan	2016
Rwanda	2016
Ghana	2016
Central African Republic	2019
Madagascar	2012
Cabo Verde	2017

Cameroon	2014
Djibouti	2017
São Tomé and Príncipe	2017
Morocco	2021
Gambia	2020
Equatorial Guinea	2006
Malawi	2019
Togo	2021
Chad	2020
Burkina Faso	2014
Mauritania	2019
Senegal	2018
Sierra Leone	2021
Liberia	2016
Côte d'Ivoire	2021
Benin	2015
Tunisia	2020
Seychelles	2018
Mauritania (duplicate entry corrected)	2019
Guinea-Bissau	2021
Egypt	2021
Algeria	2011

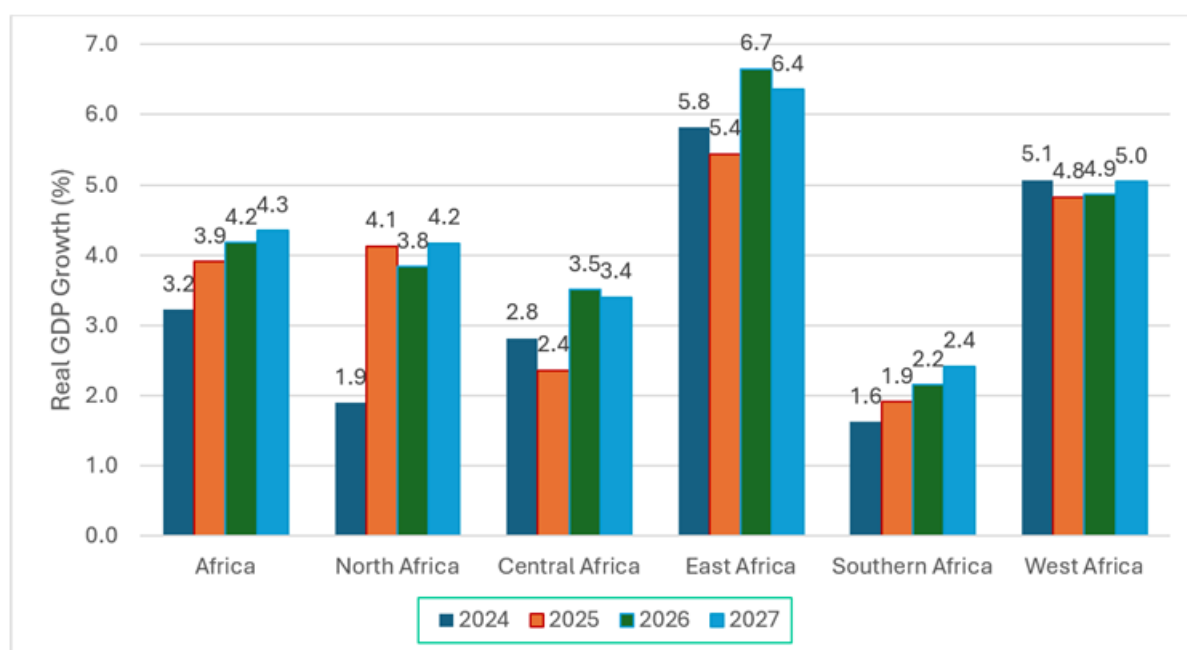
Metric	Value / Observation
Earliest data year	2006 (Equatorial Guinea)
Latest data year	2021 (multiple countries)
Median latest year	2018
Countries with post-2020 data	Morocco, Togo, Chad, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Egypt
Countries with pre-2015 data	11 ($\approx 25\%$ of sample)

Summary: Timeliness assessment

Aspect	Observation
Reported Source	World Bank (2025i), based on WDI and PovcalNet
Data Range	2006–2021
Median Year	2018
Timeliness Gap (as of 2025)	4–19 years
Primary Cause of Lag	Infrequent household income/expenditure surveys and delayed harmonization
Impact	Inequality estimates reflect pre-pandemic or pre-inflation realities, reducing their usefulness for current policy analysis

Table with no clear distinction between estimation forecasts

Figure 1.3: Growth in Africa by subregion, 2024-2027

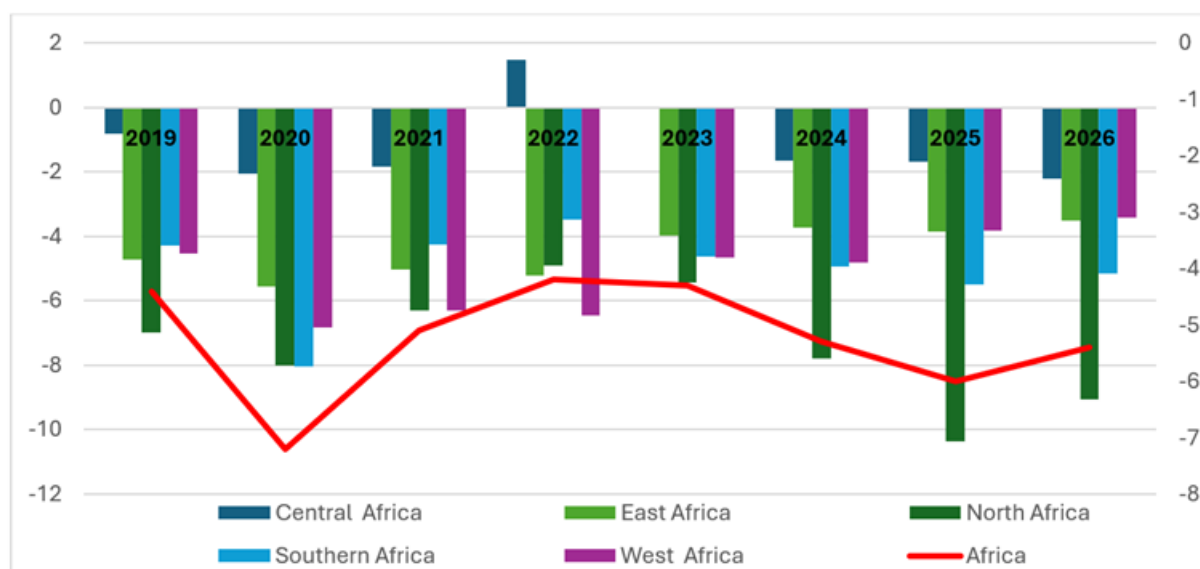


Source: ECA calculations based on data from IMF World Economic Outlook database, IMF(2025a)

Notes: e= estimates and f = forecasts

Even though the legend says e=estimates f=forecast, there is no ‘e’ or ‘f’ on the graph

Figure 1.6: Fiscal Deficit (General government net lending/borrowing) as per cent of GDP, 2019-2026



Source: ECA calculations based on IMF, 2025a.