United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Bridging the gap between research and policy towards accelerating demographic dividend in West Africa: an exploratory survey of researchers' experiences

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Background paper for the seminar of think tanks and experts on bridging the gap between research and policy in West Africa

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Centre for Demographic Dynamics for Development (DDD)

Area of Specialisation of the ECA Sub-Regional Office of West Africa (SRO-WA)

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has been at the forefront of Africa's developmental agenda in recent times, driven by the continental agenda 2063 and the UN 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs). It has been widely acknowledged that Africa's potential in leveraging the demographic dividend is critical to achieving the development goals.

In 2015, the UN projected that Africa's fertility rates would decline further in the next decades such that by 2050, the ratio of the working population (15-64 years) to the dependent population (below 15 and 65+ years) will be greater than in Asia, Europe, and North America(1). This projection implies Africa has great potential to experience a demographic dividend, which is an opportunity for accelerated economic growth during the period when the share of the population at working age increases. However, this dividend is not automatic and whether it materialises, and the extent of the benefit depends substantially on policies and institutions in key realms that include macroeconomic management, human capital, trade, governance, labour, and capital markets(2).

The African Union through the Assembly decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.601(XXVI)] of January 2016, devoted the theme of the year 2017 to "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investment in Youth"(3). In furtherance of the decision, the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UNFPA and other partners developed a roadmap focussing on four (4) key pillars:

1. Employment and entrepreneurship
2. Education and skills development
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Rights, governance, and youth empowerment

The roadmap and pillars are to support and guide Member States to develop country specific action plans and areas of focus to achieve the demographic dividend at national levels.

To implement this AU roadmap to achieve the demographic dividend (DD) and in effect the SDGs and Agenda 2063, there is urgent need for robust policy reforms and programs at country levels. Evidence of 'what works' will play an essential role in fostering effective and efficient policies and programs. The use of evidence in policy and practice has not only proven to produce better results, but also reduces poverty, improves health outcomes and advances development performance (4). Now more than ever, the United Nations is stressing on enhancing scientific research and encouraging innovation particularly in developing countries as outlined in the sustainable development goals (SDG 9.5) (5).

Further, the UN Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 – "The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development", underlined that science must play a major role in advancing sustainable development. It further calls on universities, policymakers, and research funders to increase support for research guided by the 2030 agenda, while simultaneously working together to strengthen the science-policy-society interface.(6).

Even though the value of research is becoming more widely recognized, the uptake of research evidence by policymakers to solve problems or enhance implementation effectiveness remains weak worldwide(7). For example, evidence suggests that translating clinical discoveries into practice takes 17 to 20 years, and that fewer than half of clinical innovations ever make it into general practice. This phenomenon is even more profound in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)(8).

Several factors have been known to affect translation of research into policy. These include lack of policy-oriented research(9), poor linkages between researchers and policymakers, and the lack of technique in disseminating research results to influence policy(10). Improving evidence-based policymaking therefore points to a holistic view of the scientific research environment from all angles of knowledge production to assess context, researcher's knowledge and experiences in evidence-based

policy processes. Additionally, while policymakers have been interviewed extensively for their views on the gap between research and policy, there is still paucity of knowledge about researchers' perceived experiences especially in West Africa. Besides, the few studies done in the subject area have focused primarily on health policy and practice. We are not aware of a study of researchers from a wide range of sectors of development and social sciences comprising of all 15 ECOWAS Member States.

To this end, the Centre for Demographic Dynamics for Development (DDD) of the ECA in its efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving the demographic dividend and sustainable development in the ECOWAS region, seek to strengthen research capacity to respond adequately to the current policy needs in the subregion. Furthermore, in the context of evidence-based decision making, there is no better way to set the example than by using evidence from the ground to inform institutional planning and decision making.

The report explores the extent to which researchers in West Africa are conducting and translating policy-oriented research and their perspectives on the best strategies to bridging the gap between research and policy. Specifically, the paper sought to i) assess researchers' perceived experiences in the conduct and translation of policy-oriented research ii) determine factors hindering and facilitating research translation in West Africa iii) ascertain existing interventions to bridging the gap between research and policy and iv) seek recommendations in terms of support required by researchers to conduct and translate policy-informed research.

2. THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN THE CONTEXT OF WEST AFRICA

The West African subregion comprises 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)1 and it is home to an estimated 401.861million people in 2020 with average annual growth rate of 2.7, higher than the continental average of 2.5 and the world average of 1.1(11). The ECOWAS zone represents 30% of the population of Africa and around 5% of the world's population (11). By 2050, the population of the subregion is projected to reach 8% of the world's population and 31.6% of Africa's population. Like the rest of Africa, the sub-region has a young population with 44% under age 15 and an average total fertility rate of 5.5(12).

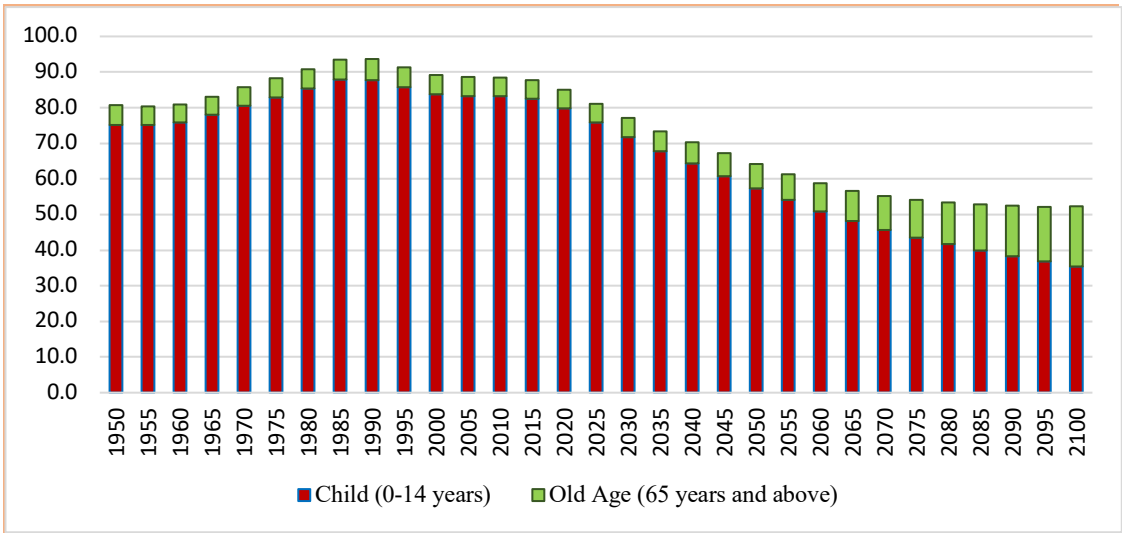
2.1. The dependency ratio approach

The working-age population (25 to 64 years) is growing faster than other age groups in West Africa, and this can definitely yield an opportunity for accelerated economic growth known as the "demographic dividend". As dependency rates reduce, the opportunity for demographic dividend becomes brighter. The concept of demographic dividend prescribes that in the developing world, the rise in the share of the working ages and related changes can provide a strong impetus for economic development (13,14).

The dependency rates are a key factor that determines prosperity in many countries given its positive relationship with productive activities. Dependency ratios are defined as the number of dependents per 100 persons of working age (15-64)(15).

[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

Figure 1: Dependency Rates in West Africa



Source: ECA, 2020

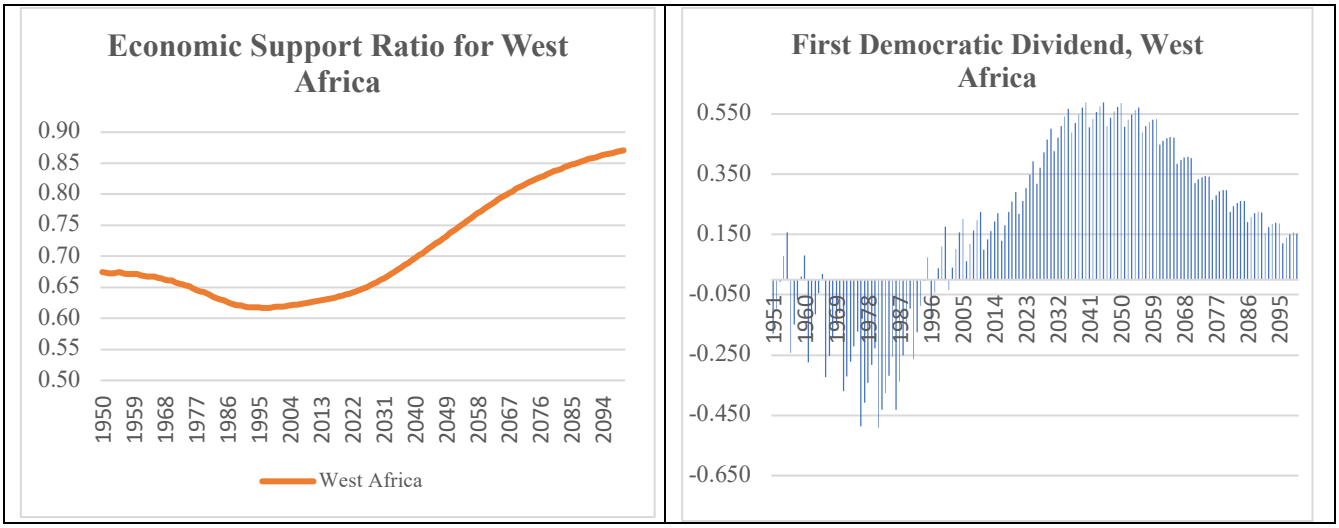
Dependency rates fell from 90.8 in 1950 to 85 in 2020. A ratio of 85 dependants (comprising 80 children and 5 over-65s) per 100 people aged 15-64 years means that 1.2 persons within the working age have to support each dependent person.
Some studies have argued that demographic dividend occurs when the total dependency ratio is not higher than 67 dependants per 100 population in the working ages, in which case, there are at least 3 people of working age for every 2 dependants(16). We can therefore deduce that the window of opportunity for West Africa will open from year 2045 when the dependency rates are projected to have reduced to 67.

2.2.The economic support ratio approach

Although measuring dependency rates for countries using demographic ratios of the working age definition has often been utilised as explained in the last section, there are recent studies directing attention to the inappropriateness of this measure. This is because of the increasing large proportion of out of labour population within the age group and especially among young adults aged 16 – 30 years. In addition, unemployment rates mean that even when the labour participation rate is high, there could also be a large proportion of this age group not employed in decent jobs. This means that an inherent "advantage" of a heavy concentration of population in the working ages may not translate into a heavy concentration of those that are actually working(17). The crux of the matter of demographic dividend has to do with the balance between production and consumption. To better understand the relation between changing age structure and economic growth we need to move beyond dependency ratios and consider "economic support ratios", which is the ratio between the number of effective producers and the number of effective consumers (18). The growth rate of the support ratio represents the first demographic dividend. The economic support ratio is often computed using the approach of the National Transfer Accounts (NTA) (19).

Using the economic support ratio approach the profile of demographic dividend indicates that West Africa had entered the period of first demographic dividend since year 2002. The first DD will peak around the year 2045, depending on the pace and pattern of fertility. (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Economic Support Ratio and First Demographic Dividend in West Africa



Source: ECA, 2020

2.3. The research agenda

Demographic dynamics are the mega trends shaping the development landscape in West Africa. The high population growth and youth dependency ratio varying across countries tend to pose serious social and economic challenges and undermine development efforts. These challenges notwithstanding, the population dynamics presents a window of opportunity to generate productivity gains and improve the quality of life of the population.

On the one hand, rapid growth of population leading to a significant youth bulge and limited job opportunities could prevent a large proportion of the population from contributing to and benefiting from economic growth. Besides, every aspect of the sustainable development goals, including consumption, production, employment, access to infrastructures, social services, health, education, housing, water, food, and energy, is influenced by population trends. Climate change and environmental challenges stemming from pressures on the planet's resources are also exacerbated by population growth.

On the other hand, population dynamics if well managed could help countries to reap demographic dividends resulting from the large concentration of the population in the working age range as countries go through demographic transition and make critical investments in education, health and job-generating sectors. This implies that the prospects of the age structure of the population need to be well-harnessed to enjoy the economic benefits of population changes. Furthermore, it is a crucial moment to prepare the ground for an increasing ageing population after the demographic dividend. In addition to having one of the youngest populations in the world, the proportion of the population in the working ages in West Africa is growing faster than in other age groups, creating a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth, if appropriate investments are made. Equally important and related to population dynamics are migration and urbanisation, which are powerful determinants for sustainable development.

The challenges pertaining to population dynamics in West Africa cannot be dissociated from the challenges of sustainable development as embedded in SDGs 2030 and Agenda 2063. Considering the tremendous disruption to these policy agendas by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia crisis,

it will be fundamental that countries embark on population policies or reinforce their existing strategies with innovative evidence-based research and analysis.

This will include, but not limited to, the formulation and implementation of policies that will accelerate and help realise the demographic benefits; investment in digital skills and technology to promote virtual learning; improvement of productivity and job creation; encouragement of family planning; investment in reproductive health services and in women's empowerment; and adoption of environment-friendly consumption behaviour.

The research agenda should be oriented on providing evidence for policy action. The interaction between researchers and policy makers should be dynamic and bidirectional so that research results are taken into account in countries' development policy, programmes and budgetary planning.

3. METHODS

3.1.Survey design and administration

We surveyed researchers in all 15 West African countries who conduct research in any area of development in universities, think tanks, civil society organizations (CSOs), research institutions or government agencies. We chose to collect data from all member states to capture any context specific issues from these countries. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling technique where we reached out to researchers on the Office's lists of partners, and institutional websites including universities, CSOs, LinkedIn and asked them to share the survey among their network of researchers. This approach was taken to ensure that desired target population reached.

A self-administered web-based questionnaire was developed comprising of 3 parts. I) general information and experience of policy-oriented research ii) Researchers' views, experiences and evaluation of policy-oriented research in West Africa; and iii) Researchers views on strategies to improve evidence-based policymaking in West Africa. Questions were influenced by literature search, and common knowledge while still giving the opportunity for personal views through open ended questions. The questionnaire was developed in English and French, (the two dominant languages spoken in 13 out of the 15 countries) and peer reviewed before sending out. Researchers reached in Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde were bilingual and completed the survey in French. The objectives of the survey were clearly written in the introductory information. Anonymity was assured as no personal identifiable information like name or email address was collected.

We created a mailing list and emailed the questionnaire to respondents asking them to share among their network of researchers. For participants who are Heads of institutions, we sent personalised emails requesting them to share the survey with members of their institutions who meet the eligibility criteria. We also distributed the questionnaire with colleagues in the office and other UN agencies to share with researchers in their networks especially in their respective countries. Questionnaires were also shared via WhatsApp and Facebook messenger to friends and personal contacts who are researchers. To boost response rate, several reminders were sent via the various media. Data were collected over a period of one month, from 31st March to 26th April 2022.

3.2.Data management

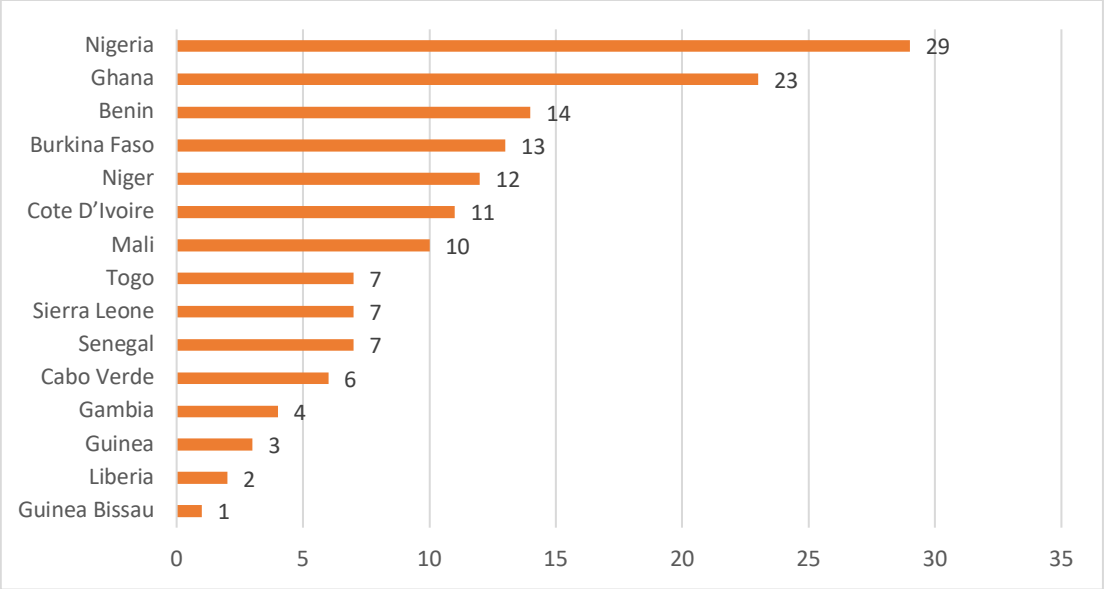
We collected all survey data into MS Excel for data cleaning and coding. Responses from 'other' and open-ended questions were coded into common themes and variables recategorized to accommodate a wider range of viewpoints when necessary. We combined the top and bottom two categories of ordinal scales (for example, strongly disagree and disagree vs strongly agree and agree) whenever possible. Clean data of 149 eligible responses were then exported in STATA version 16 for analysis. Descriptive data analysis was performed, and proportions reported in figures and frequency distribution tables. Total numbers reported in tables vary from variable to variable due to missing values on specific questions.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

A total of 164 completed responses were received, however, fifteen (15) did not meet the eligibility criteria (thirteen were from countries outside the ECOWAS region and two were not researchers). Hence, only 149 responses were included in the analysis.

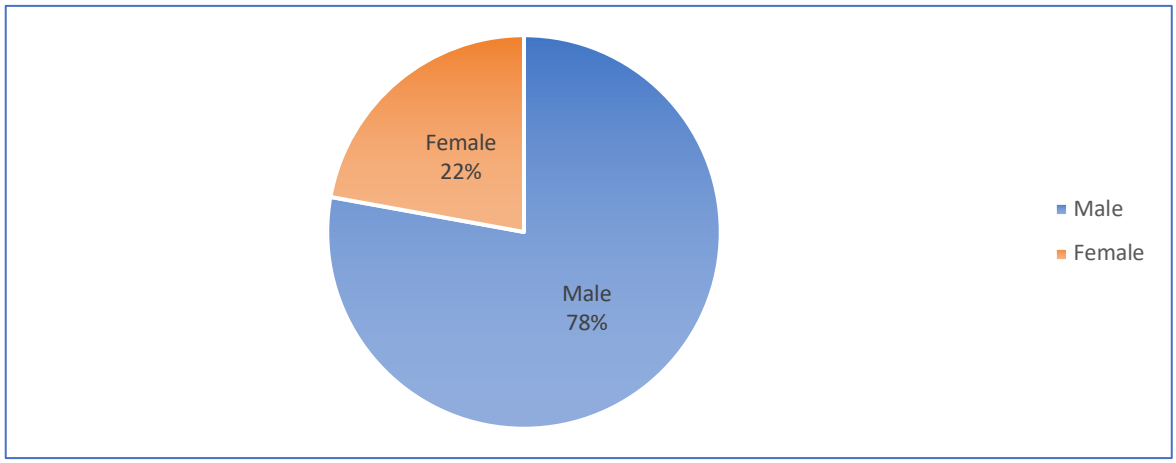
4.1. Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

Figure 1: Researchers by country



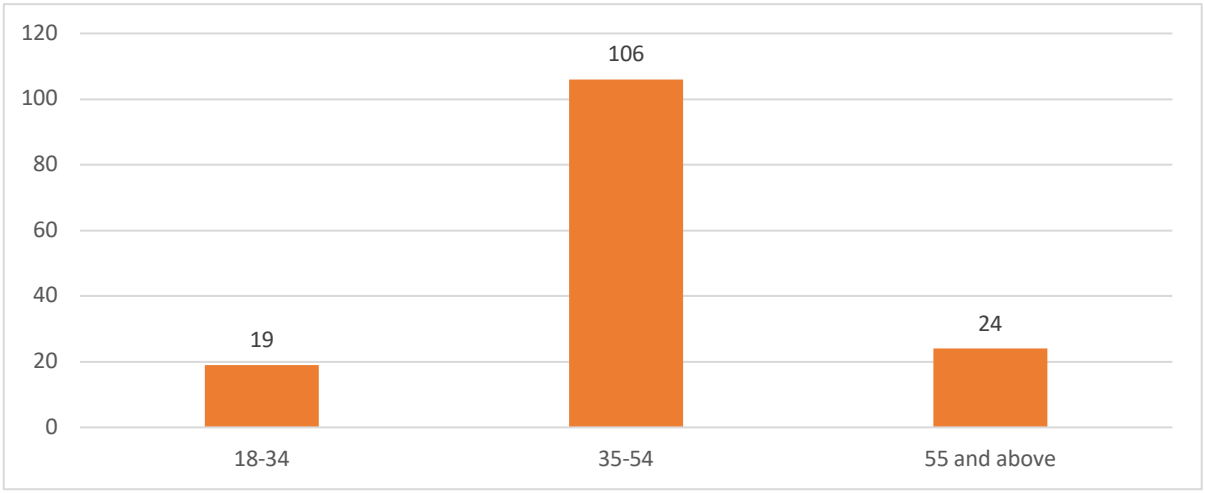
Responses were received from all 15 Member States though there are disparities in the numbers. Majority of responses were from Nigeria (29) Ghana (23) Benin (14) Burkina Faso (13), Niger (12) and Cote D'Ivoire (11). A fair number from Senegal (7) Sierra Leone (7) Togo (7) and Cabo Verde (6) with low response from The Gambia (4) Guinea (3) Liberia (2) and Guinea Bissau (1). Conclusions from this survey might be skewed towards some countries than others. Nevertheless, responses have a good balance from francophone and anglophone West Africa and reflect in general terms the size of these countries' populations. In this sense, the two most populous countries- Nigeria and Ghana- are the origin of the majority of responses. The second least populous country, Guinea Bissau, is represented by just one response, while Cabo Verde presents a good engagement in the survey if compared to the size of its population.

Figure 2: Sex distribution of participants



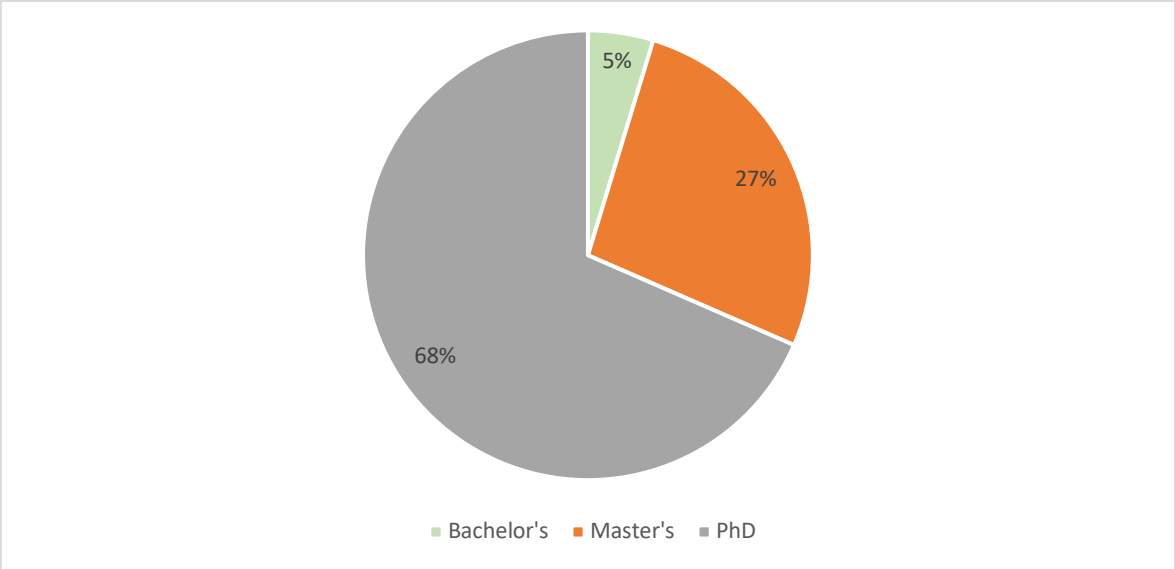
Majority 116(78%) of responders were male. It is possible to verify a great imbalance between male and female respondents. Nevertheless, the share of female respondents (22%) is in line with the available data for the region regarding women as a share of total researchers. In 2017, they represented up to 30% of researchers in the ECOWAS subregion(20).

Figure 3: Respondents by age-group



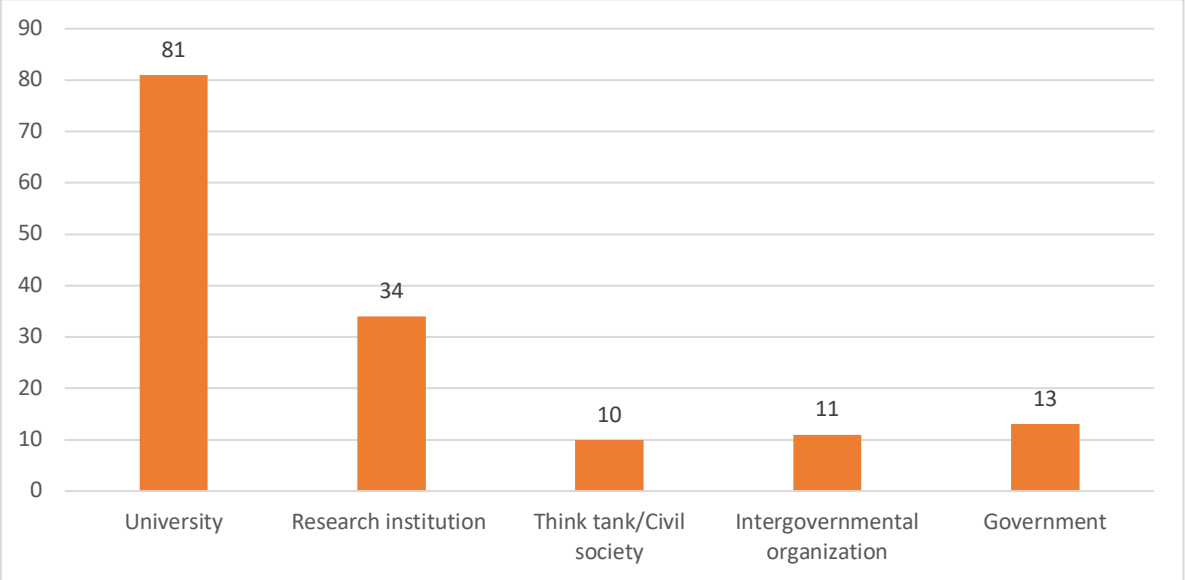
A vast majority106 (71.14%) of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54 years, followed by 55 years and above 24 (16.11%) then 18-34years (12.75%). Considering that majority of respondents have doctoral degrees, a terminal degree that takes longer years to attain, it is expected to see this age distribution.

Figure 4: Respondents' level of education



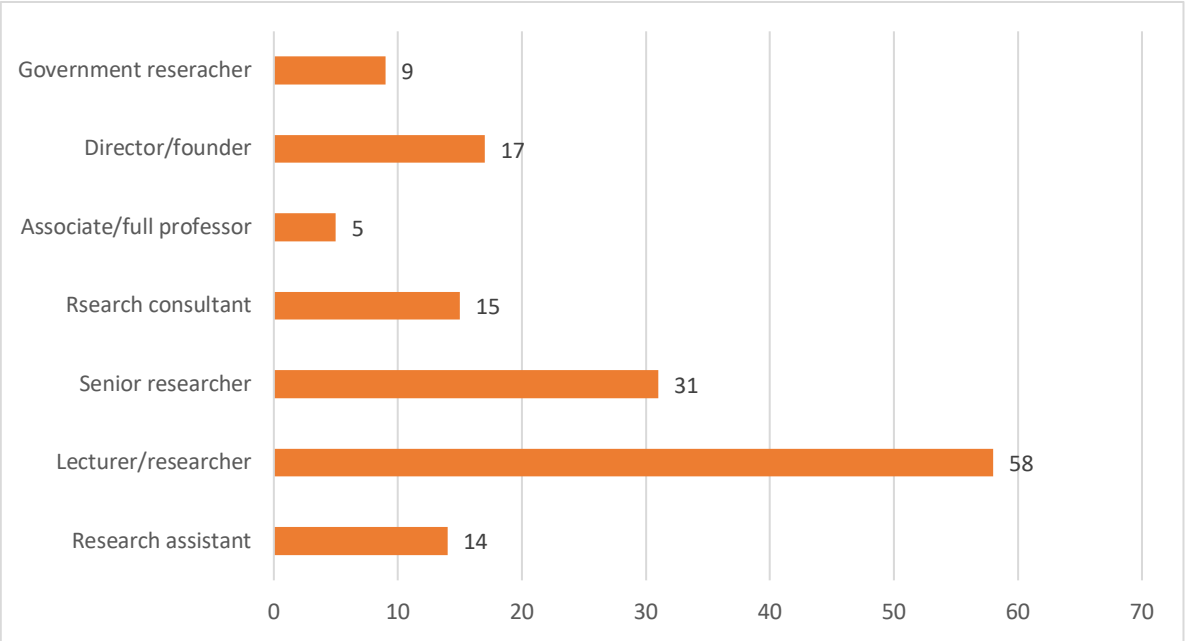
In terms of education, majority 100 (68%) hold doctoral degrees followed by master's degree 40(27%), then bachelor's 7(5%). It is true that research is dominated by scientists with masters and doctoral degrees. This result is in line with current situation particularly in academic institutions and shows that the survey reached its target population.

Figure 5: Respondents' institutions



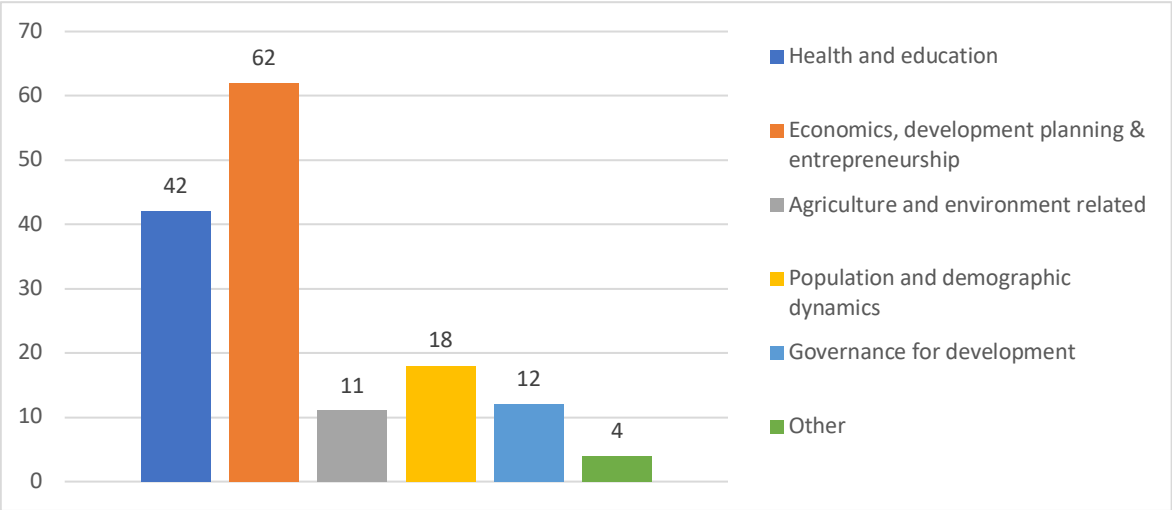
Over half 81(54.36) of respondents work in the university, followed by research institutions 34(22.82%), with least response from think thanks and civil society organizations 10(6.71%). The survey aimed to reach researchers from a wide range of institutions and even though over half of respondents are from the universities which is naturally expected, the results also show a fair representation from other institutions.

Figure 6: Researchers' positions at work



More than a third 58(38.93%) of respondents are researchers/lecturers followed by senior researchers 31 (20.81%) with least responses from professors/associate professors. A fair number of respondents are also Directors and founders of research institutions and think tanks. Some responders also work in government research offices and government statistical agencies. The result shows that we achieved our aim of assessing a holistic view of research from diverse areas of knowledge production in the sub-region.

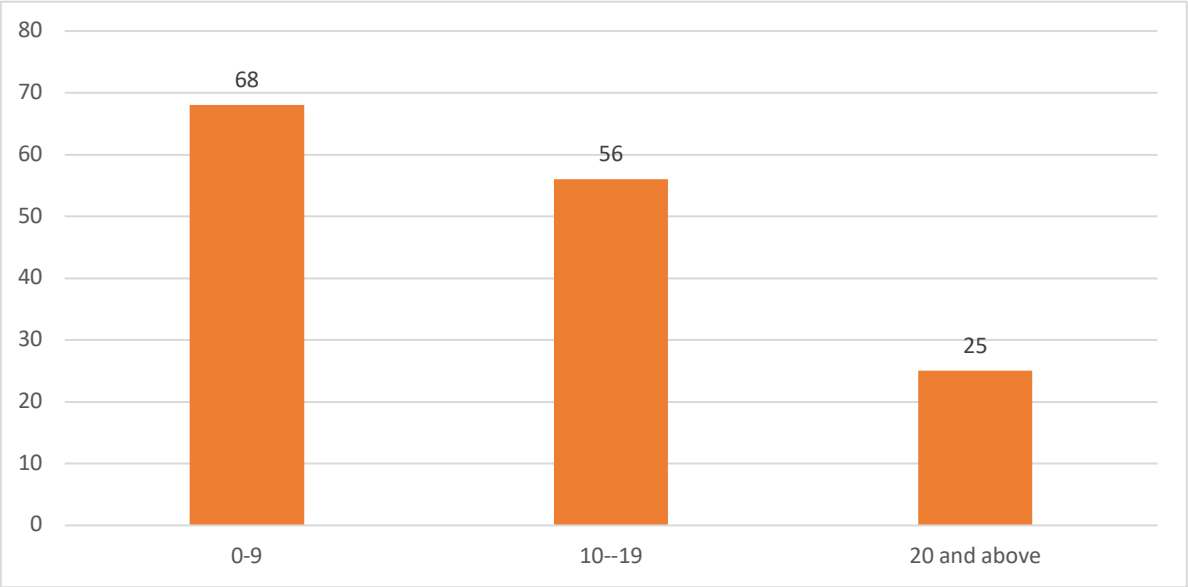
Figure 7: Area of research specialization



Respondents come from a wide range of disciplines spanning from economics, development planning and entrepreneurship 62(41.61%), health and education 42(28.19%), population and demographic dynamics 18(12.08%), and agriculture and environment related 11(7.38). Others included energy, information technology and digital transformation. The survey intended to sample researchers

particularly from areas covering the four pillars of the AU roadmap for demographic dividend (Education, health, employment, governance) which was achieved as seen by the result in figure 7.

Figure 8: Researchers' years of research experience



Nearly half (45.64%) of respondents have one to nine years research experience, a little over a third 56(37.58%) have 10-19 years' experience and 25(16.78) have 20 years' experience and above. From the results, respondents have a good number of research experience to give a valid evaluation of their experiences in conducting and translating policy-oriented research in West Africa.

4.2.Researchers' perceived experiences in policy-oriented research and knowledge translation

4.2.1. Researchers' perceived experiences and translation activities

Respondents were asked ten questions regarding their experiences and research translation activities as well as their views about the linkage between research and policy and they could answer "yes", "no" or "don't know", except for one question, which demanded respondents to rank how relevant their research was to policy agenda. The questions and the respective answers in terms of frequency and percentage are displayed in Table 1. It should be noted however that the total numbers reported in the table vary from variable to variable due to missing values on specific questions.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of perceived experiences and translation activities

Researcher characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Have conducted research that directly influenced policy		
Yes	120	80.54
No	15	10.04
Don't know	14	9.40
My research influence development policy at national level		
Yes	90	63.38
No	33	23.24
Don't know	19	13.38

Relevance of research to current policy agenda		
High	91	61.07
Average	44	29.53
Low	14	9.40
Have good knowledge of current policy agenda		
Yes	110	78.01
No	24	17.02
Don't know	7	4.96
Involve policy makers in research		
Yes	90	62.94
No	9	6.29
Don't know	44	30.77
Have close contact with policymakers		
Yes	78	56.52
No	9	6.52
Don't know	51	36.96
Have skills to communicate research to policymakers		
Yes	124	86.71
No	14	9.79
Don't know	5	3.50
Disseminate research in ways that policy makers understand		
Yes	115	82.73
No	3	2.16
Don't know	21	15.11
Agree that research can influence policymaking		
Yes	140	94.59
No	7	4.73
Don't know	1	0.68
Agree that evidence-based policy making is beneficial for development		
Yes	134	95.04
No	6	4.26
Don't know	1	0.71

Researchers were asked if they have ever been involved in a research project that directly influenced policy, approximately 80% responded in the affirmative with only 10% never been involved in a research project leading to policy. This shows that majority of surveyed researchers have experience in the research-to-policy process. However, the finding could also be attributed to the fact that most of the researchers contacted have been engaged with the Office at one point on a policy related program.

Only about two thirds of researchers reported having their research influence policy at local or national levels. This could be due in part, to the lack of policy relevant research as evidenced by only 61% rating their research as highly relevant to current policy agenda. Moreover, nearly one in four (22%) researchers have no knowledge about the policy agenda in their countries. This further supports the lack of policy-oriented research since they have no knowledge of the policy needs requiring research attention. Considering that researchers play a crucial role in the policymaking process right from agenda setting through to implementation and evaluation, it is a worrying revelation that these researchers in the sample are not involved in such processes.

Although about 95% of researchers agreed that research can influence policy and is beneficial for development, only 62% involve policymakers in their research and approximately 40% of them have

no close contacts with policymakers. It is not surprising that the lack of engagement between researchers and policy makers was reported as a significant barrier to evidence-based policy making.

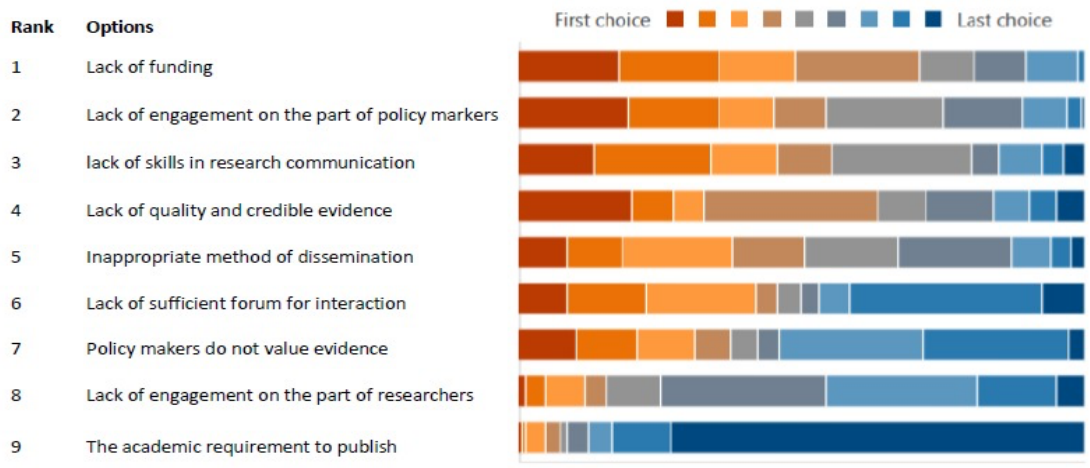
While about 86% of researchers reported that they have the skills to communicate research and 82% said they disseminate research findings effectively, when asked to choose three most significant barriers to evidenced based policy making, almost half of researchers and over a third considered the lack of skills to communicate research and inappropriate method of dissemination as significant barriers respectively. This could mean either researchers exaggerated their abilities or thought that their skills were inadequate to properly communicate and disseminate research.

4.3. Researchers' reported barriers and facilitators for translating research into policy.

4.3.1. Barriers to research translation

Respondents were asked to rank barriers to conducting policy-oriented research and evidence-based policy making in order of significance with first choice being most significant and last choice, least significant. Results are presented in figure 9 below**.**

Figure 9: Barriers of research translation

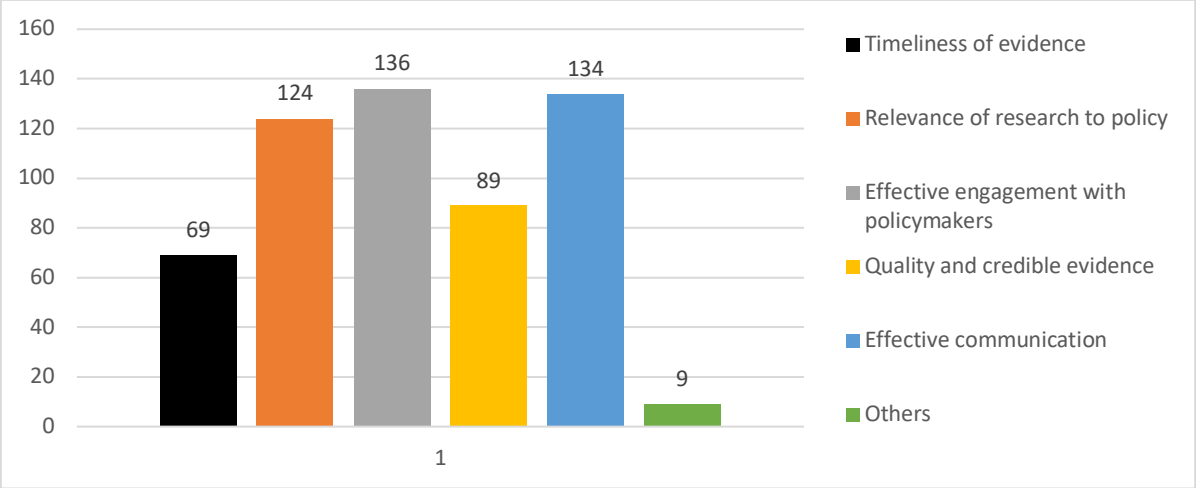


When asked to select their most significant barriers to research translation into policy, lack of funding was selected by nearly half (48.8%) of respondents among their top three barriers followed by lack of skills to communicate research findings (45.7%) then lack of engagement by policymakers. In addition, 42% of respondents selected insufficient forum to engage with policymakers and 37.8 % selected inappropriate method to disseminate research findings to policy makers. Lack of credible and quality research, policymakers not valuing research and lack of researcher engagement was selected by 32.9%, 31.2% and 11.6 % of researchers respectively.

4.3.2. Facilitators of research translation

Respondents answered questions on their views about effective strategies to facilitate research translation. They were free to select as many options as necessary including stating others not in the list. Details of results are presented in figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Effective strategies to bridging the gap between research and policy



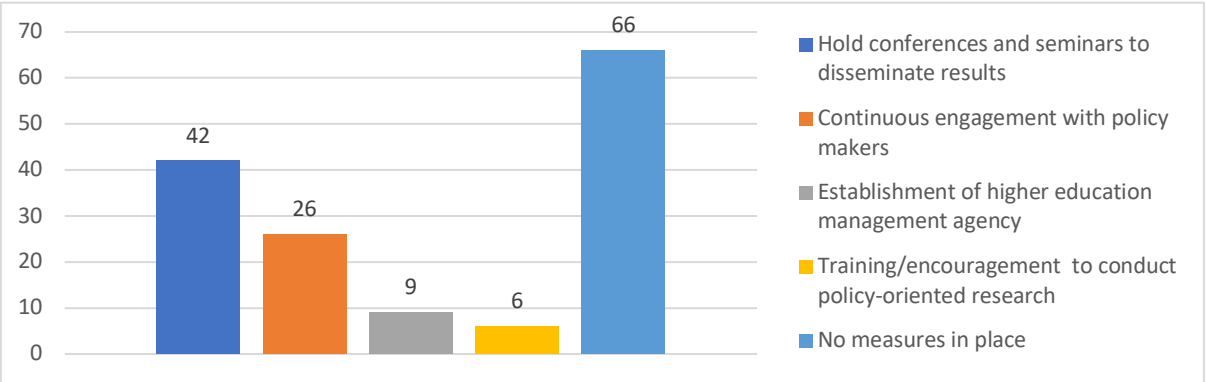
In their response on effective strategies to research translation, effective engagement with policy makers; effective communication; relevance of research to policy were each selected by over 100 respondents. Quality & credible evidence and timeliness of evidence were also chosen by over 50 respondents as effective strategies to bridge the gap between research and policy.

4.4. Existing interventions and support required by researchers to bridge the gap between policy and research in west Africa.

To assess existing efforts to promote policy-oriented research and uptake, respondents were asked in an open-ended question to provide measures in place in their institutions. Responses were coded and categorised into common themes and presented in figure 11. Subsequently, respondents were asked if they had received funding for their research between the years 2015 and 2022 of which they were required to answer, 'yes' or 'no'. Those who answered yes, were further asked to provide names of funders and projects where possible. Responses on funders were categories as shown in figure 13.

4.4.1. Institutional best practices

Figure 11: Best practices by institutions to bridge the gap between research and policy

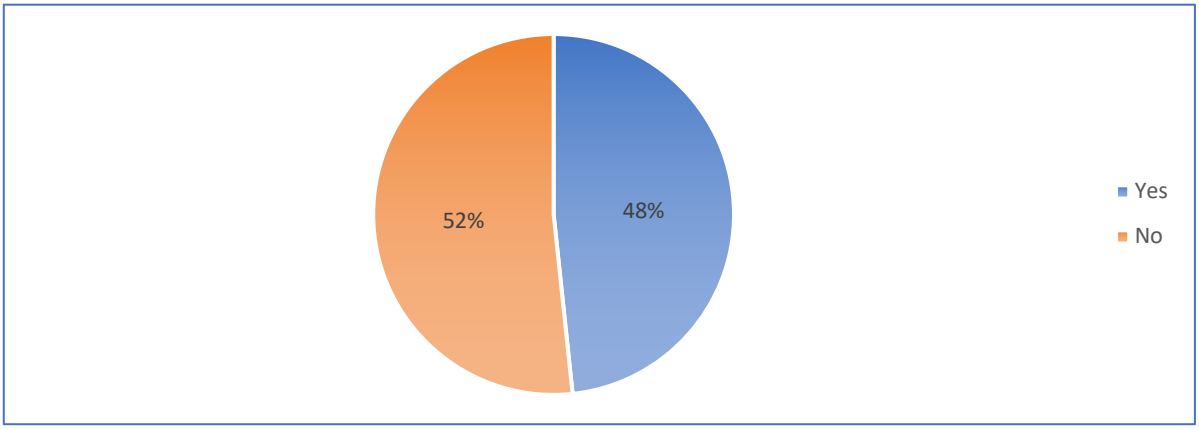


Respondents were asked about best practices put in place by their institutions to bridge the gap between research and policy. Nearly half (44.30%) reported no measures in place. Existing measures include holding regular seminars and workshops to disseminate research results; continuous engagement of policy makers; training and encouragement to conduct policy-oriented research; establishment of institutional or national agency that oversee policy-informed research. Findings indicate that while

some efforts are being made by institutions, these are grossly inadequate to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

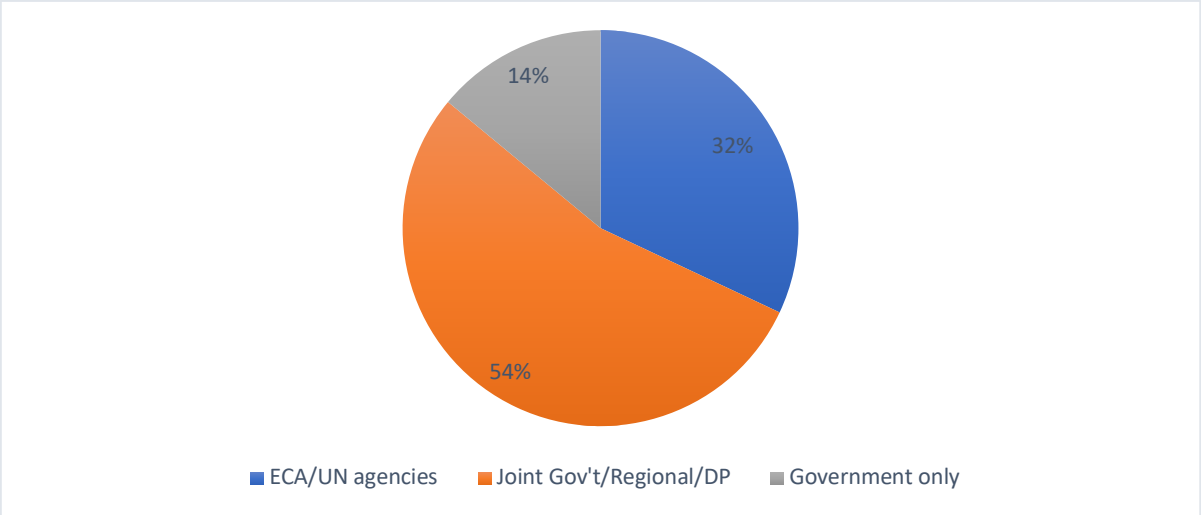
4.4.2. Funding

Figure 12: Received funding between 2015 and 2020



When asked whether researchers received funding for their research in the last 7years, less than half (48%) of researchers reported receiving funding, which is a particularly worrying figure, given than funding can boost research in the most needed areas.

Figure 13: Institutions that funded research projects between 2015 and 2022

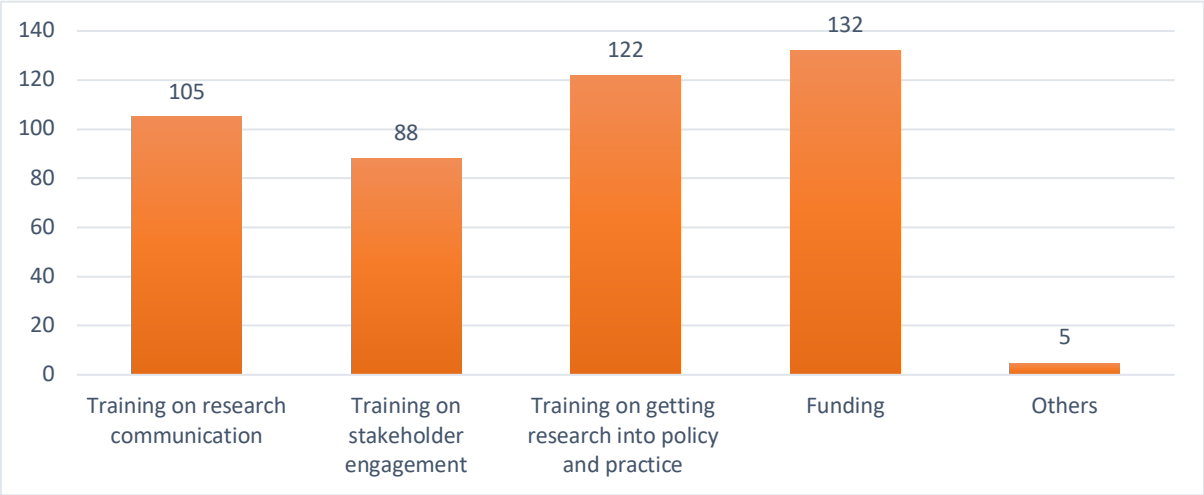


Where funding was received, they usually came from ECA and other UN agencies, regional organizations or development partners. Government only funding accounted for only 14% of the funding received. This result confirms the data on the funding landscape in Africa. Though governments pledged to increase spending for research and development (R&D) towards the achievement of the sustainable development goal 9, investment in research as a percentage of GDP remains less that 0.4% in Sub Saharan African (5,21)

4.5. Support required to conduct and disseminate policy-oriented research

To determine the kind of support required by researchers to conduct policy-oriented research, respondents were asked to select types of support needed. They were free to select more than one option including specifying others not on the list. Details of results are presented in figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Perceived support needs



Though funding was most selected by researchers, other needs like capacity building in stakeholder engagement, research communication and training on getting research into policy were also highly recommended.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.Conclusion

Findings from the survey indicate that majority of researchers in the sample have experience conducting policy-oriented research and some have practical experience in evidence-based policymaking processes. However, when it comes to conducting research as a routine practice, only two-thirds conduct policy relevant research and consider influencing policy at the local and national levels.

Even though a good number of researchers are aware of current policy agenda, quite a worrisome proportion have no knowledge of current policy agenda in their countries or subregion. There is more potential for policy sensitization and involvement of researchers in policy discussions starting from agenda setting.

While almost 95% of the respondents agree that evidenced-based policy making is beneficial for development and that research can influence policymaking, only about two-thirds involve policymakers in their research and even less have close contact with policymakers. From the researcher's perspectives, lack of funding, lack of engagement on the part of policymakers, insufficient linkages between researchers and policymakers in addition to lack of skills to engage account for these results.

Many institutions from which respondents work have no measures in place to promote policy-oriented research or uptake of research for policy. Additionally, funding for research in the subregion is generally low and dominated by the UN and its agencies, other development partners and regional organizations

with considerably low funding from governments. It is disturbing that almost half of the respondents affirmed that they have not received funding in the last 7 years.

Overall, the survey presents a great baseline information about policy-oriented research and evidence-based policymaking in the ECOWAS region. As intended, the survey gives great insights to the Centre for Demographic Dynamics for Development (DDD) of the ECA-SRO/WA to guide future efforts in strengthening research capacity and evidence-based policy making in the subregion.

5.2.Recommendations

Following the findings from the survey, the following recommendations are made to the ECA:

1. Strengthen policy sensitization among researchers and encourage involvement of researchers in policy discussions starting from agenda setting.
2. Create platforms for engagement between researchers and policymakers to promote evidence-based policy making.
3. Expand advocacy for increased government investment in research and development while promoting private sector support for research in the ECOWAS region. The budgeting sensitive for demographic dividend initiative could be optimised for integrating funding for research into national budgets.
4. Address gender disparity in research in efforts to strengthen capacity and human capital for research.
5. Address capacity needs of researchers through trainings on i) stakeholder engagement; ii) research communication and dissemination; iii) writing successful research grants; iv) getting research into policy and practice among others
6. Engage research institutions and national research regulatory bodies to develop or improve guidelines and institutionalise measures that enhance policy-oriented research and evidence-informed policy making.
7. Support governments to strengthen research oversight.

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Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

Dear Researchers,

The Sub-Regional Office for West Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA/SRO-WA) based in Niamey, Niger, covers all 15 Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Its mandate is to contribute to the structural transformation of West African countries by promoting inclusive and sustainable development. Taking West Africa's population challenges into consideration, the ECA/ SRO-WA's area of specialization is focused on Demographic Dynamics for Development (DDD) which is key to unlocking the subregion's myriad of potentials. To achieve transformational change in Member States, the Office provides countries with policy options and solutions, as well as building their capacities to respond effectively to developmental challenges.

The present survey is to give West African researchers the opportunity to express their experiences in conducting policy-oriented research and to also indicate their aspirations for the improvement of effective strategies to translating research into policy in West Africa.

The information gathered will guide the work of the ECA/SRO-WA and help to plan appropriate programs for researchers in the sub region to improve evidence-based policy making for development.

Therefore, we kindly request your contribution in filling out this questionnaire. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to respond to all the questions. The responses will be kept confidential, and anonymity is guaranteed. Only aggregate responses will be published.

Sincerely

I- GENERAL INFORMATION

1. ***Gender***
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Female

2. ***Age group***
   ☐ Under 18
   ☐ 18-24
   ☐ 25-34
   ☐ 35-44
   ☐ 45-54
   ☐ 55-64
   ☐ Above 64

3. ***What is your level of education?***
   ☐ Bachelors
   ☐ Masters
   ☐ PhD
   ☐ Other (Please specify)

4. ***Please select the country you work in***
   .....

5. ***What type of institution do you work with?***
   - ☐ University
   - ☐ Research institution
   - ☐ Think Tank
   - ☐ Civil Society Organization
   - ☐ Inter governmental organizations (IGOs)
   - ☐ Other (Please specify)

6. ***What is your position in your institution?***
   Click or tap here to enter text.

Professor
Associate professor
Senior lecturer
Lecturer
Doctor

Senior Researcher
Researcher
Research assistant

7. ***What is your area of research specialization?***
   - ☐ Development and planning
   - ☐ Population dynamics
   - ☐ Education/Health
   - ☐ Entrepreneurship/ job creation/ employment
   - ☐ Governance for development
   - ☐ Economic development
   - ☐ Other (Please specify)

8. ***How many years have you been conducting research?***
   - ☐ 0-4 years
   - ☐ 5-9 years
   - ☐ 10-14 years
   - ☐ 15-19 years
   - ☐ 20 years and above

9. ***Have you been involved in a research project that directly influenced policy?***
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Don't know

II- EVALUATION OF POLICY-ORIENTED RESEARCH IN WEST AFRICA

10. ***To what extent do you agree with the following statements?***

(1= Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly agree; or Don't know)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Don't know**
Development research at the national level can influence domestic policy makers if appropriate strategies are employed	○	○	○	○	○

Evidence-based policy making, and implementation is beneficial for development	○	○	○	○	○
I have the technical skills to communicate my research findings to policy makers	○	○	○	○	○
I involve policy makers in the design and conduct of my research	○	○	○	○	○
I have close contacts with policy makers	○	○	○	○	○
I have a good knowledge and understanding of current development policy agenda in my country and subregion	○	○	○	○	○
My research findings influence development policy at the national/ local level	○	○	○	○	○
I disseminate research findings in ways that policy makers understand	○	○	○	○	○

11. Please rate how relevant your research is to current policy agenda in your country?

*(On a scale of **1** to **5** with 5 being the highest)*

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	○	○	○	○	○

12. Have you done any research in the field of social sciences, including population and inclusive development, that was funded by government or non-governmental agency between 2015 and 2022?

Yes

No

13. If yes, please provide more information (Name of project and funding agency)

14. **Choose the three (3) most significant factors hindering research from translating into policy*?***

☐ Lack of quality and credible evidence
☐ Lack of skills in research communication
☐ Inappropriate method of dissemination
☐ Lack of funding
☐ Lack of engagement on the part of policy makers
☐ Lack of engagement on the part of researchers
☐ Policy makers do not value evidence-based policy making
☐ Insufficient forums that bring together researchers and policy makers
☐ The academic requirement to publish
☐ Others (Please specify)

III- IMPROVEMENT OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. What in your opinion are effective strategies to translating research into policy?

☐ Timeliness of the evidence
☐ Relevance of research to policy agenda
☐ Effective engagement of policy makers and researchers
☐ Quality and credible evidence
☐ Effective communication and dissemination of findings and key actionable recommendations
☐ Others (Please specify)

2. ***What best practices does your institution put in place to bridge the gap between research and policy?***

a. ... *b.* ... *c.* ...

3. ***What support will you need to conduct and disseminate policy-oriented research?***

☐ Training on research communication
☐ Training on stakeholder engagement
☐ Training on getting research into policy and practice
☐ Funding
☐ Others (Please specify)

4. ***Would you like to add any further comments or recommendations to appropriate capacity building for researchers in the sub region?***
