

## **Round 1: January-June 2023**

### **Think for Africa (TAP)- AAAWE virtual mentoring program for African Women**

#### **Economists**

Prepared by  
Professor Elizabeth Asiedu  
President and Founder of AAAWE  
[elizabeth.asiedu@aaawe.org](mailto:elizabeth.asiedu@aaawe.org)

**July 15, 2023**

The Association for the Advancement of African Women Economists (AAAWE), founded in March 2012 by Professor Elizabeth Asiedu, launched its first phase of the virtual mentoring program for African women economists in collaboration with the Think for Africa Program (TAP) in January 2023. This program aimed to provide mentoring support and professional development opportunities to African women economists, foster a supportive community, and enhance their academic and professional growth. In economics, the representation of women varies across academic ranks and fields of study. Overall, women make up around 30% of assistant professors and PhD students, with significantly lower proportions at the whole professor level (8-13%). The proportion of women among first-year PhD students has been around 30% in recent years (Lundberg & Stearns, 2018). Despite these numbers, the journey for many African women in economics is fraught with challenges, including gender biases, lack of mentorship, and limited access to professional networks.

AAAWE was established to address these disparities and advance African women in economics. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by African women economists, AAAWE seeks sponsorship to provide resources, mentoring, and support to foster their professional growth. The mentoring phase for African women economists is a critical component of AAAWE's mission. By connecting mentees with experienced mentors, the program seeks to bridge the gap between academic training and professional success, enabling more African women to excel in economics. The role of these mentors is crucial, as they not only provide guidance but also serve as role models for the mentees, inspiring them to reach their full potential.

This report provides a summary of the first round of the Think for Africa (TAP)- AAAWE virtual mentoring program for African women economists. The application portal opened on November 3, 2022, and closed on December 10, 2022. The program ran for six months (January 2023 to June 2023), and selected mentees met with their mentors at least six times. The applications were limited to African women, i.e., whose country of origin is in Africa. Fifty women were selected out of the 205 applicants. The mentors' research interests guided the selection. The 50 chosen mentees were paired with 15 mentors. All the mentors are African women economists. The impact of this

program on the selected mentees has been significant, with many reporting increased confidence, expanded networks, and a more straightforward path to their professional goals.

The report is organized into five sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the applicants' profiles, Section 2 outlines the profiles of the selected individuals and mentors for the program, Sections 3 and 4 detail the mentoring activities and program evaluation, and Section 5 delves into the challenges faced and offers recommendations.

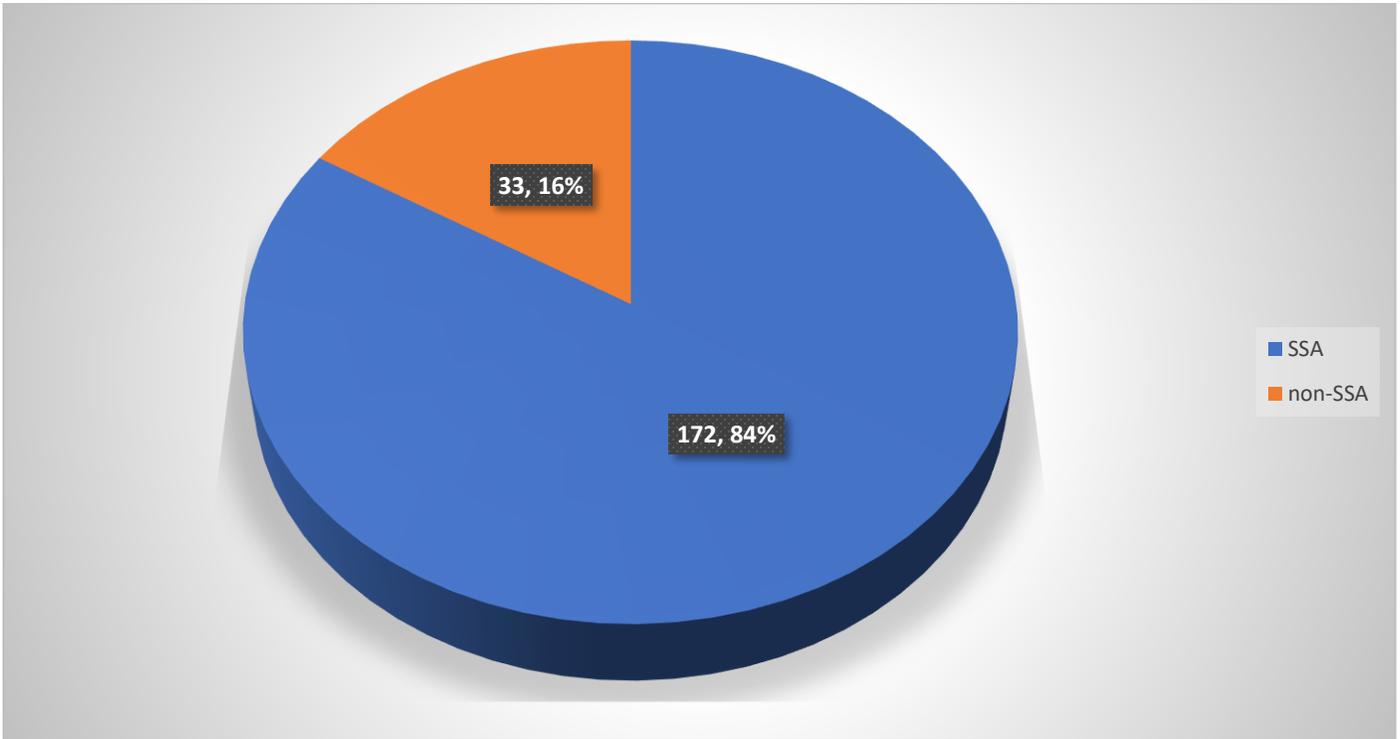
## Section 1

**Table 1: Applicants by country of residence**

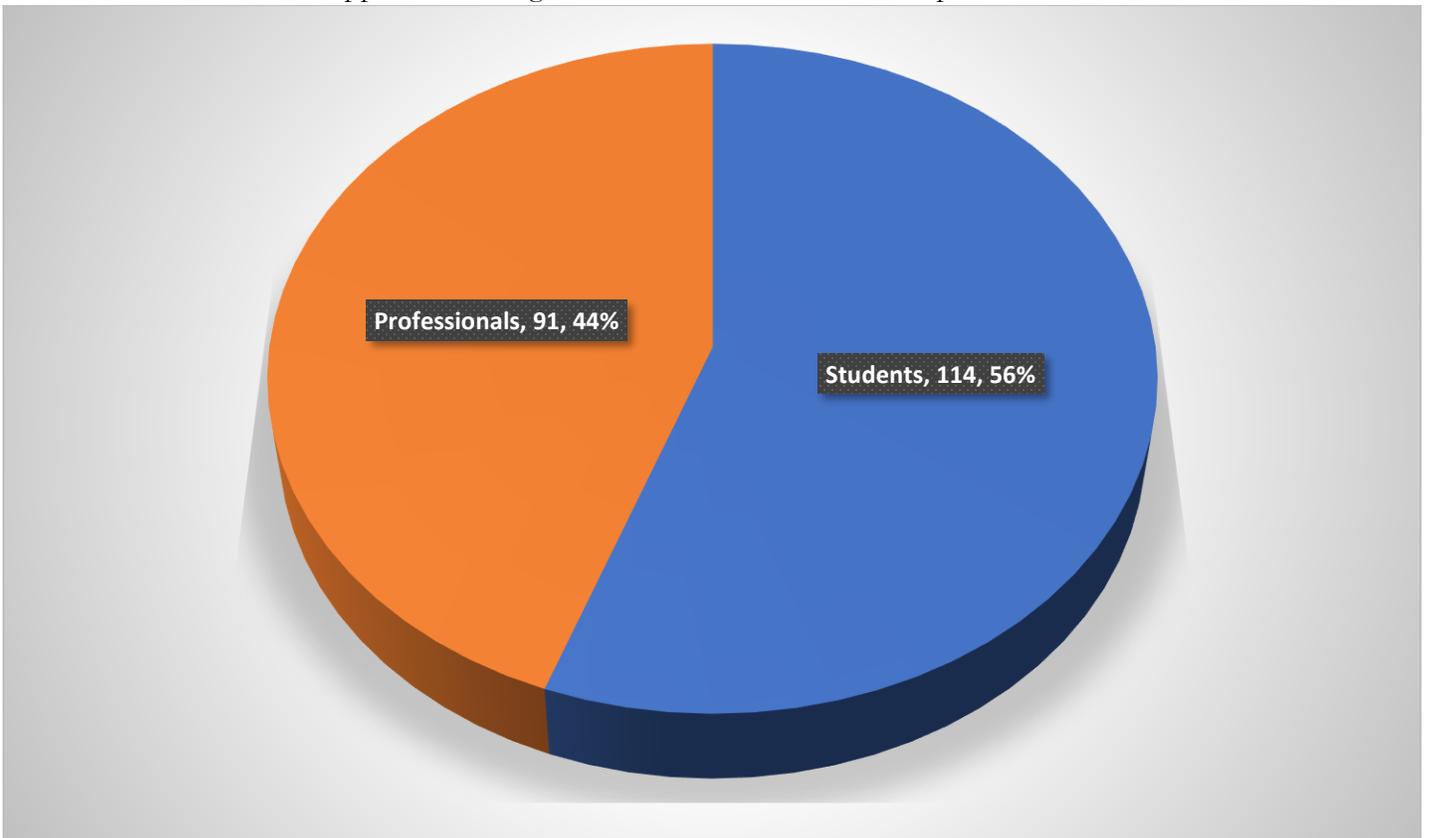
- There were 205 applicants from 35 countries (26 countries in SSA and 9 outside SSA)

Country of Residence of Applicants	Total	Professionals	Students
<b>All countries</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>114</b>
Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	172	74	98
Outside SSA	33	17	16
<b>SSA Countries</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>98</b>
Benin	4	2	2
Burkina Faso	7	3	4
Burundi	1	0	1
Cameroon	26	6	20
Cote D'Ivoire	10	1	9
Ethiopia	3	2	1
Ghana	13	7	6
Kenya	5	3	2
Madagascar	1	1	0
Malawi	5	3	2
Mali	1	1	0
Nigeria	58	30	28
Senegal	10	4	6
South Africa	10	3	7
Sudan	1	1	0
Tanzania	3	0	3
Togo	1	0	1
Uganda	8	3	5
Zambia	1	1	0
Zimbabwe	4	3	1
<b>Outside SSA</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>
Algeria	1	1	0
Belgium	2	0	2
Canada	2	1	1
China	2	1	1
France	5	3	2
Germany	3	1	2
Italy	2	0	2
U.K.	4	2	3
U.S.	11	8	3

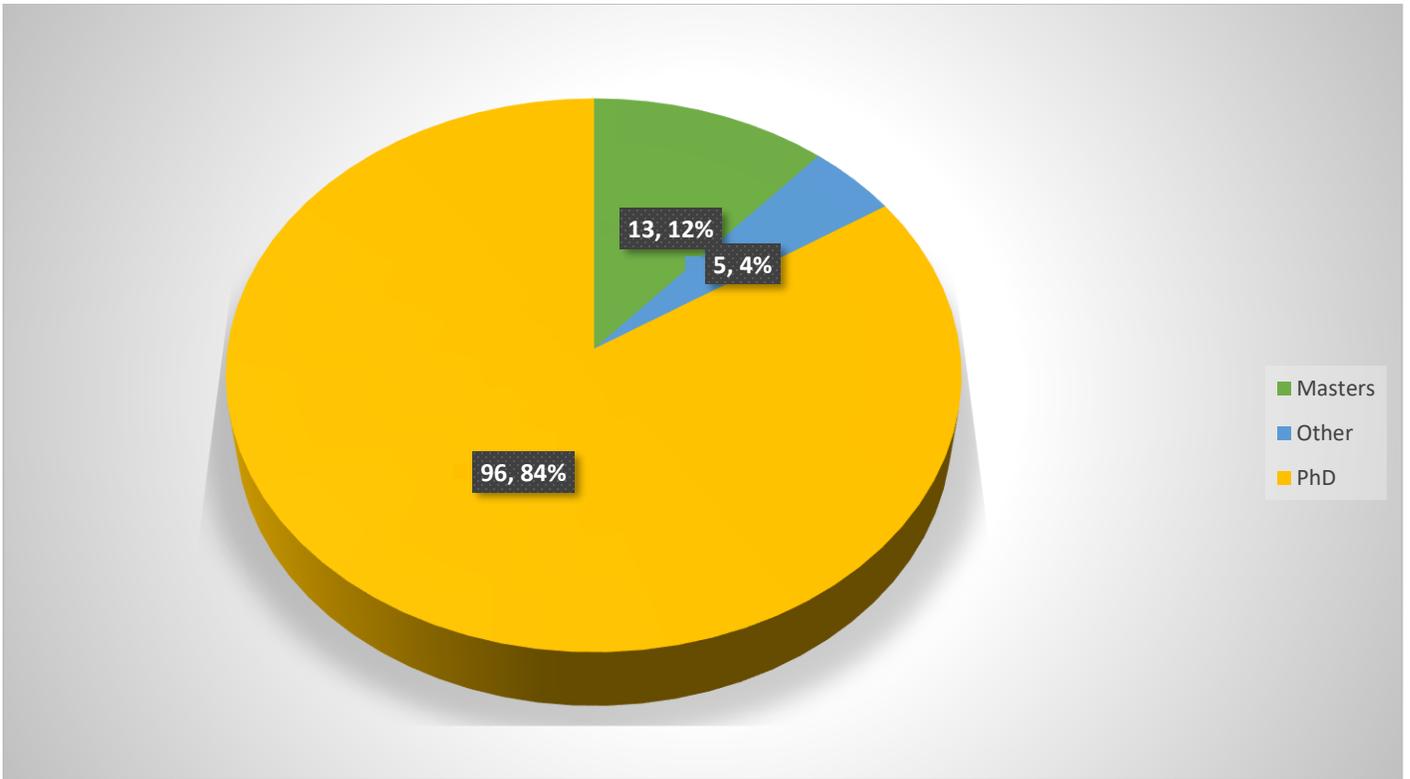
- About 84% of the applicants resided in SSA, and 16% lived outside SSA.



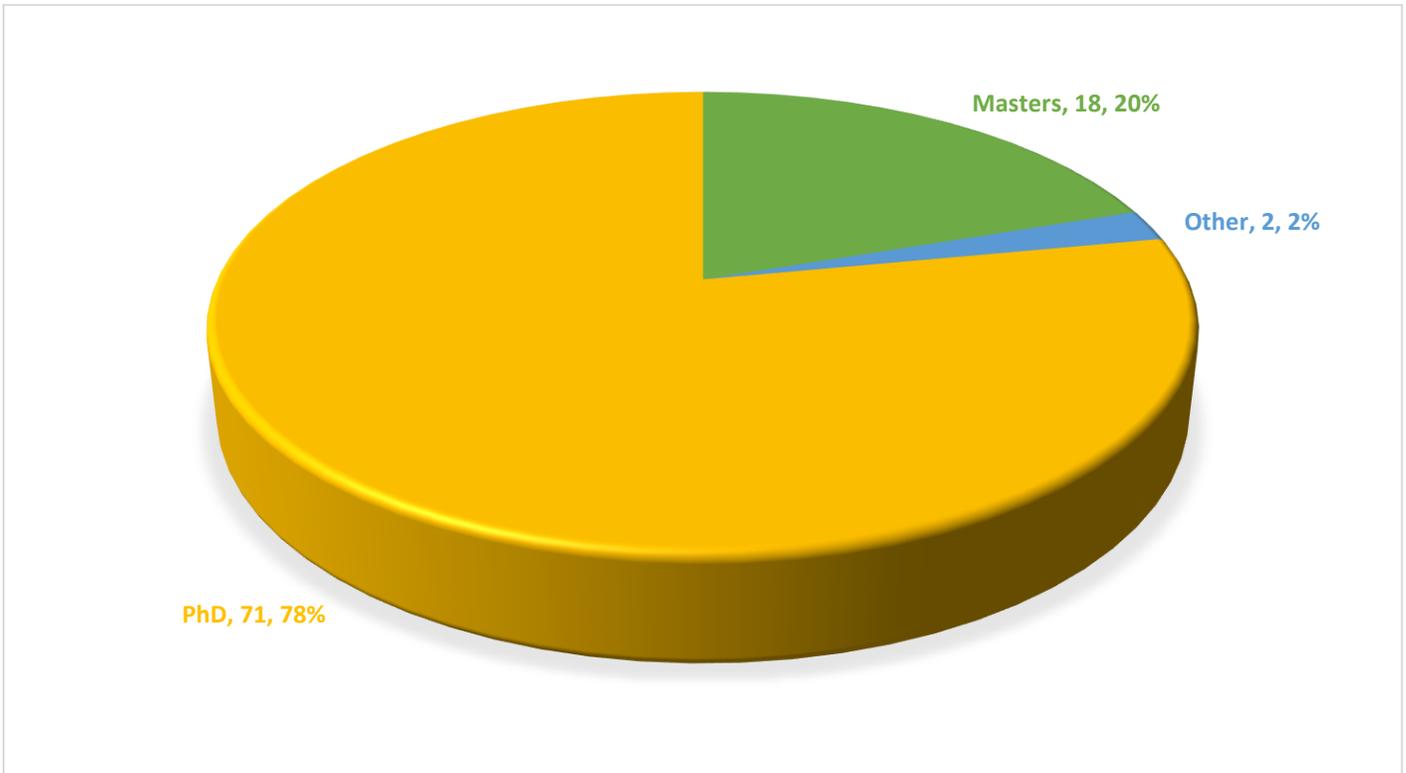
- About 56% of the applicants were graduate students and 44% were professionals



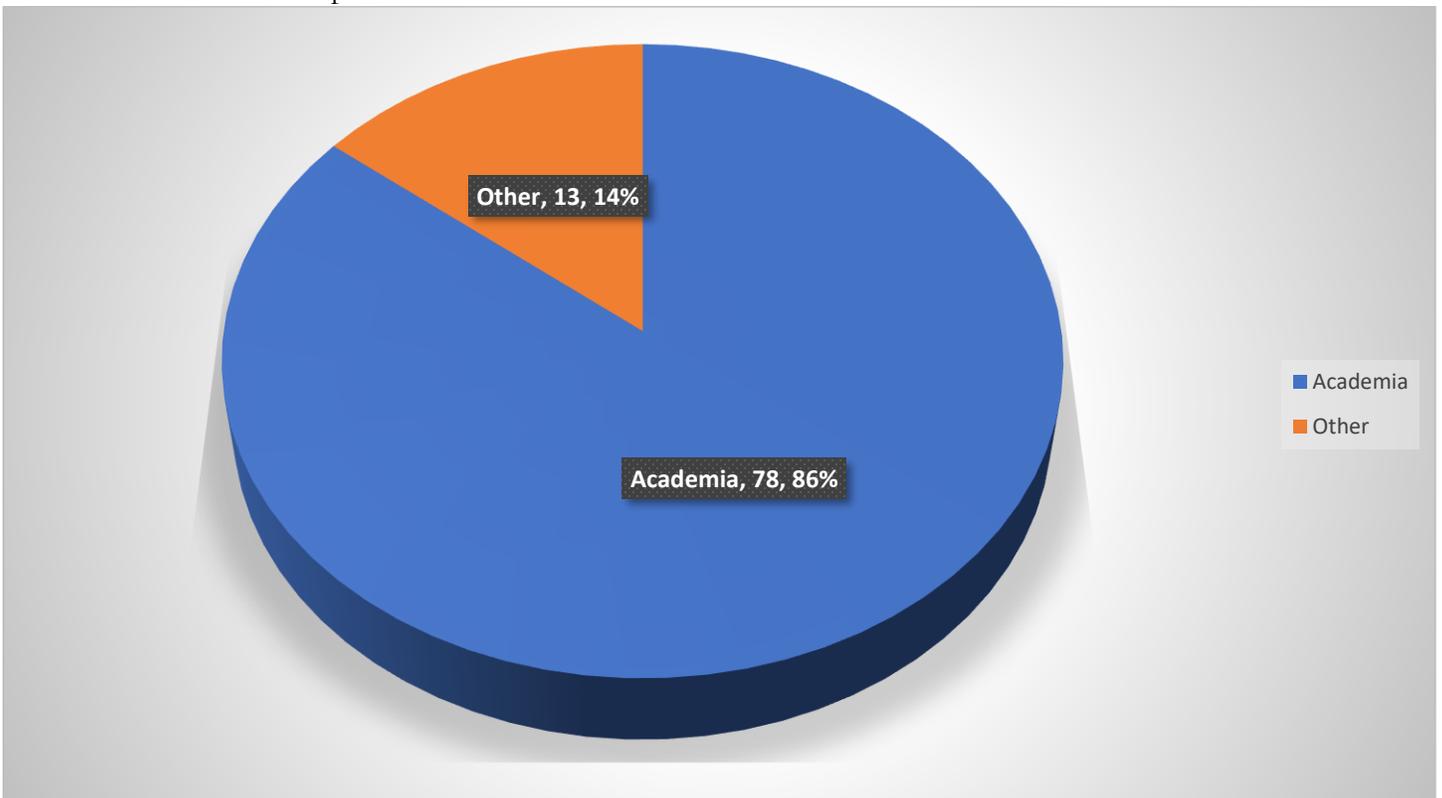
- Among the student applicants, 84% were in Ph.D. programs and 12% were pursuing master's degrees.



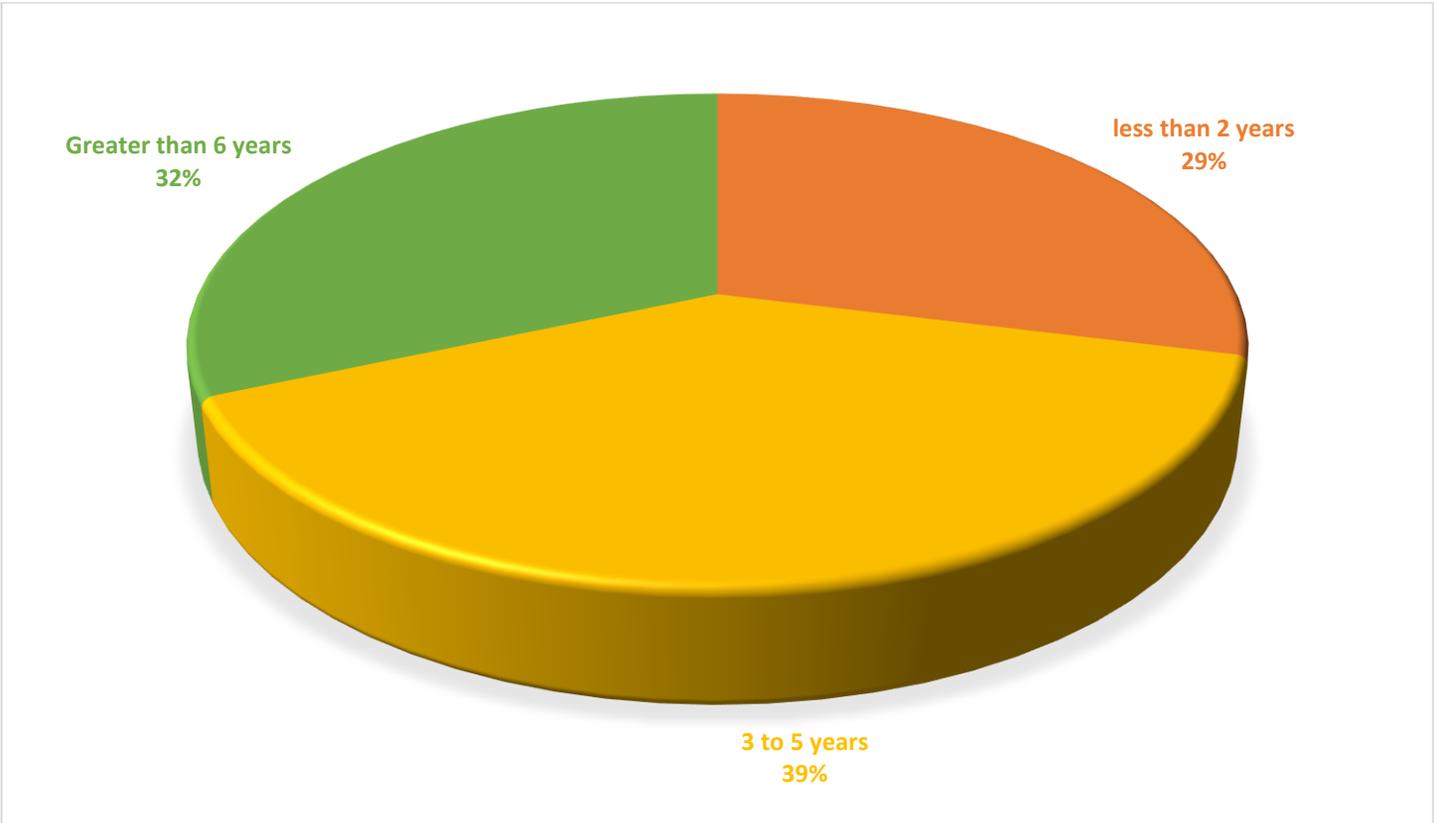
- Among the Professionals, 71% have PhDs and 20% have master's degrees.



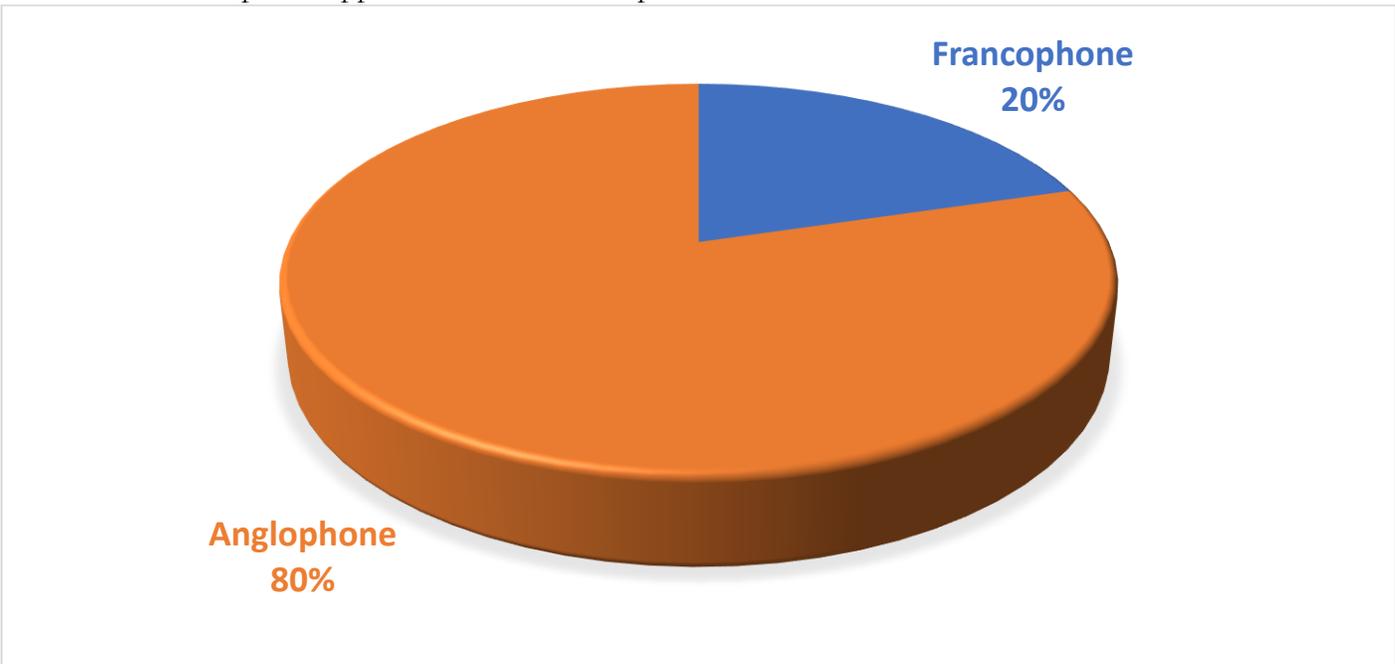
- About 86% of the professionals were in academia.



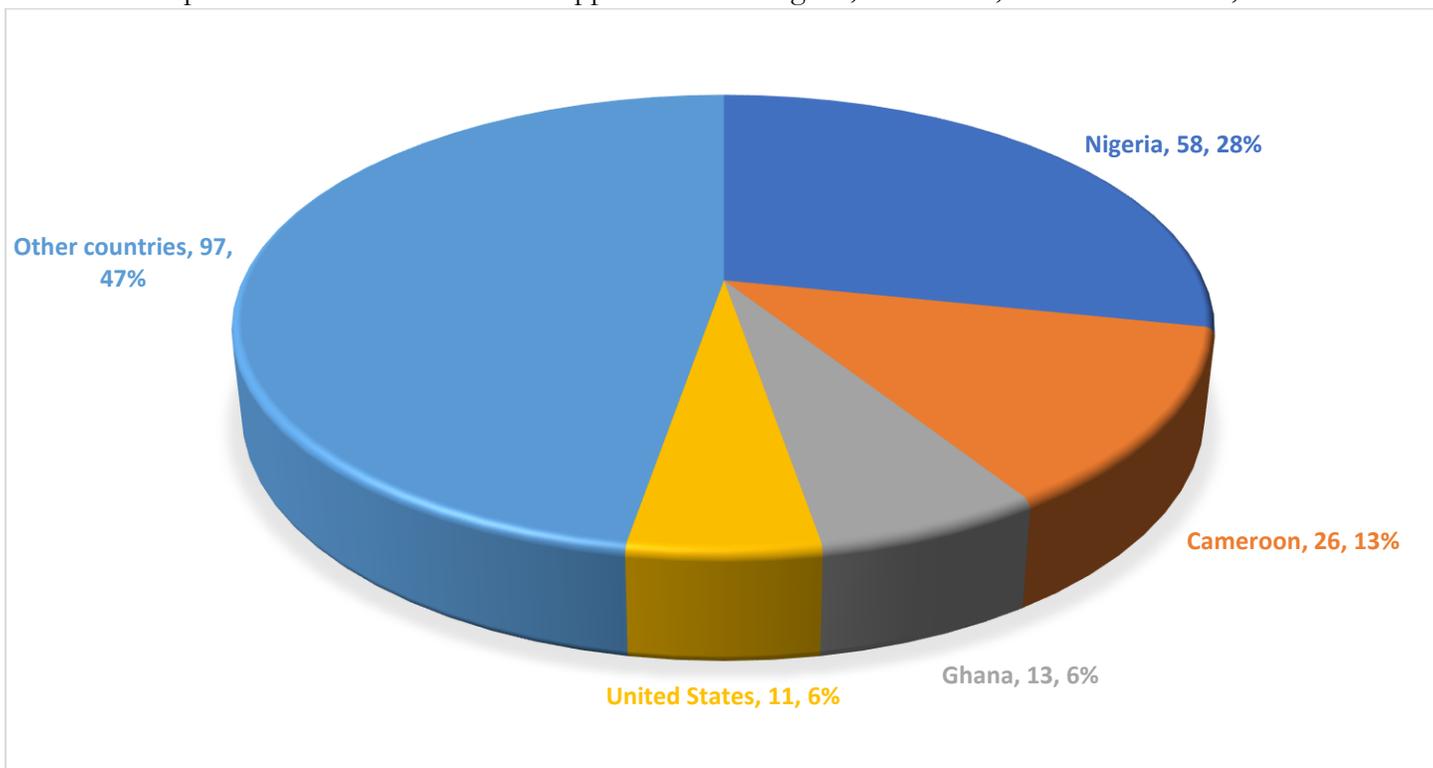
- About 68% of the professionals were early career economists (graduated less than six years ago)



- About 80% of SSA applicants were from Anglophone countries.
- The Francophone applicants were over sampled to ensure a balance.



- The top five countries with the most applicants were Nigeria, Cameroon, The United States, and Ghana



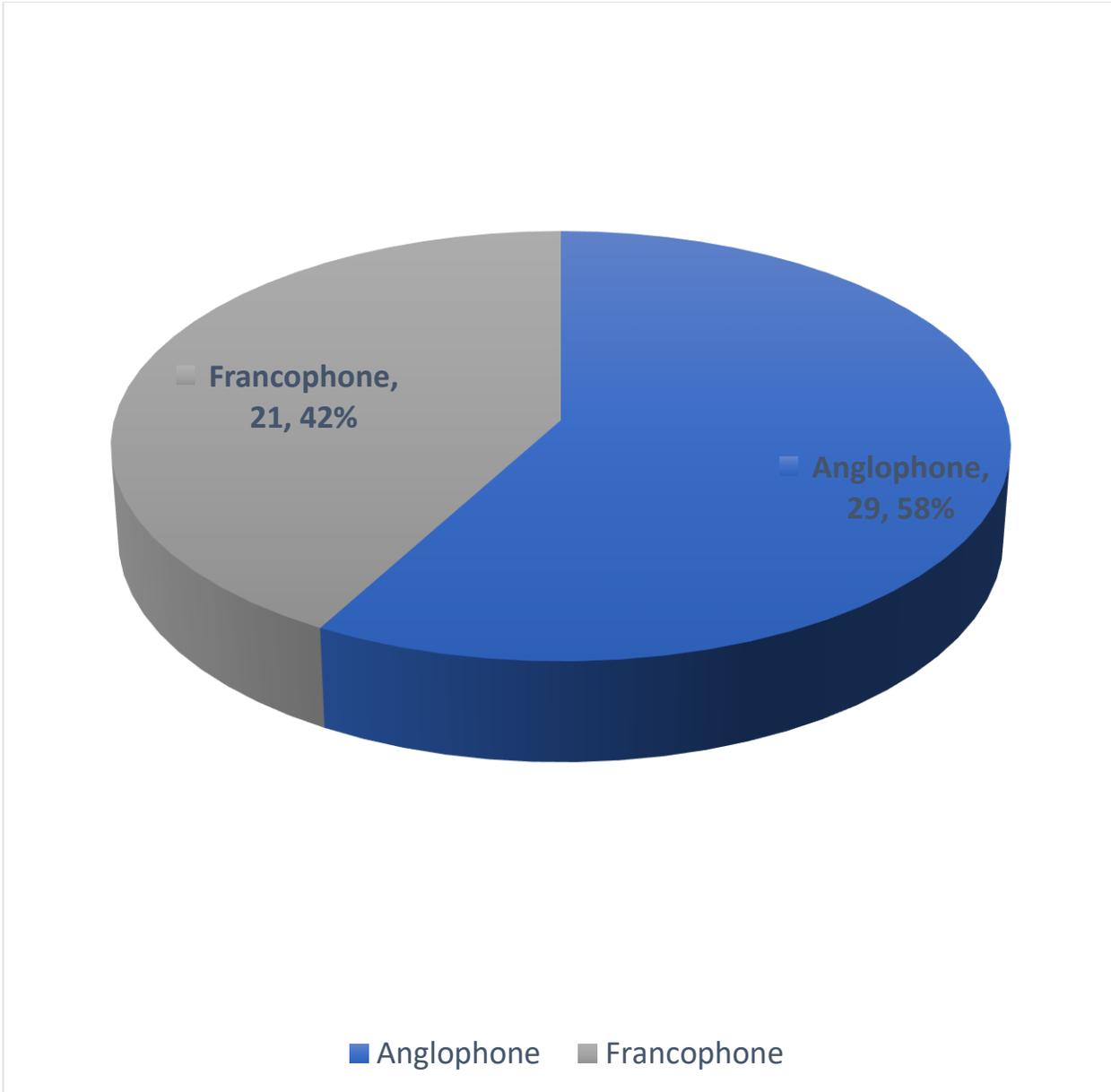
## Section 2

Table 1: Selected applicants by country of residence

Country of residence	Total	Professionals	Students
Benin	1		1
Burkina Faso	2		2
Cameroon	9		9
Côte D'Ivoire	4		4
Ghana	7	3	4
Malawi	1		1
Nigeria	15	4	11
Senegal	5		5
South Africa	2		2
Tanzania	1		1
Uganda	3	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>42</b>

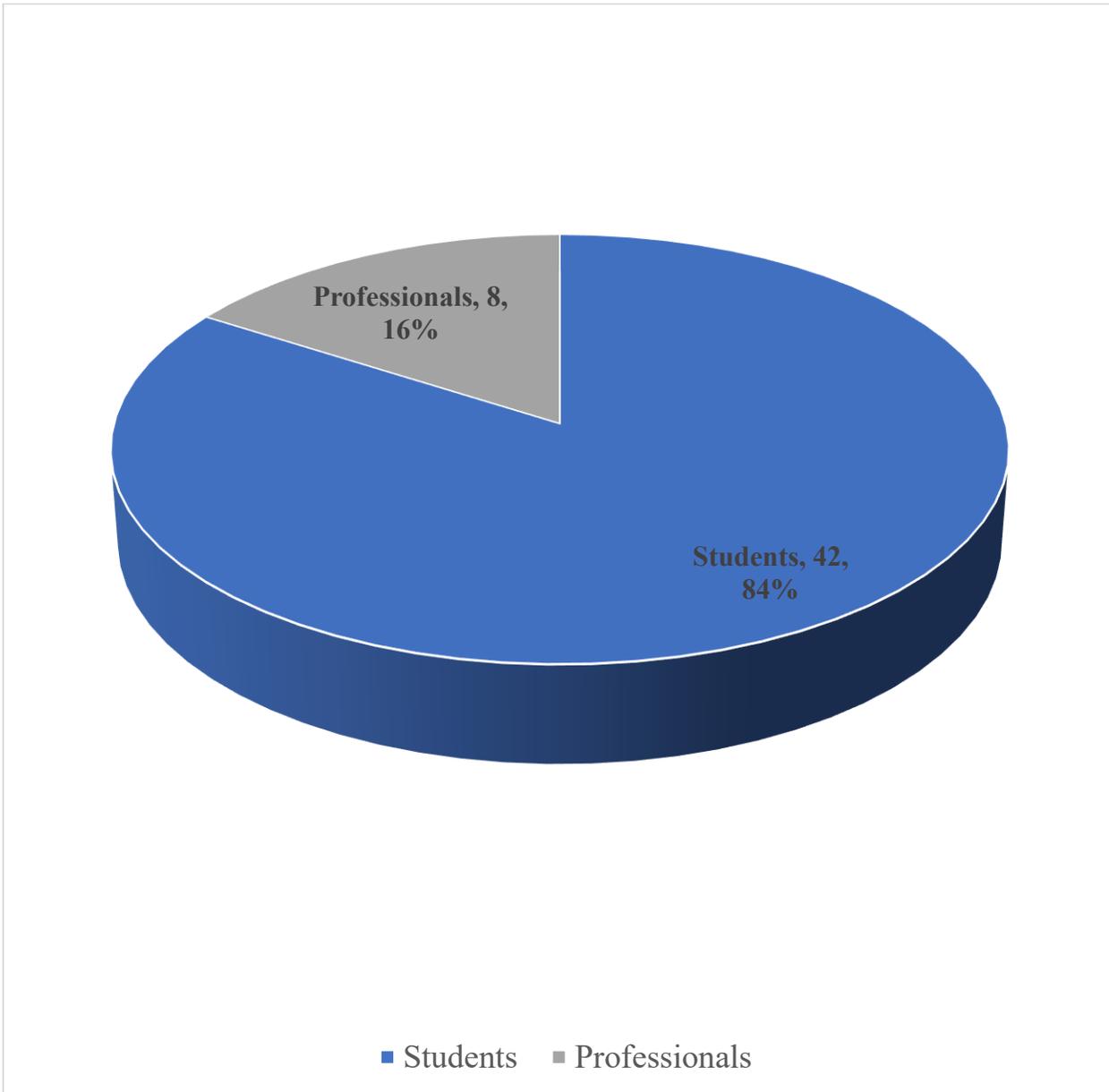
**Figure 1**

- 58% of the applicants reside in Anglophone countries and 42%



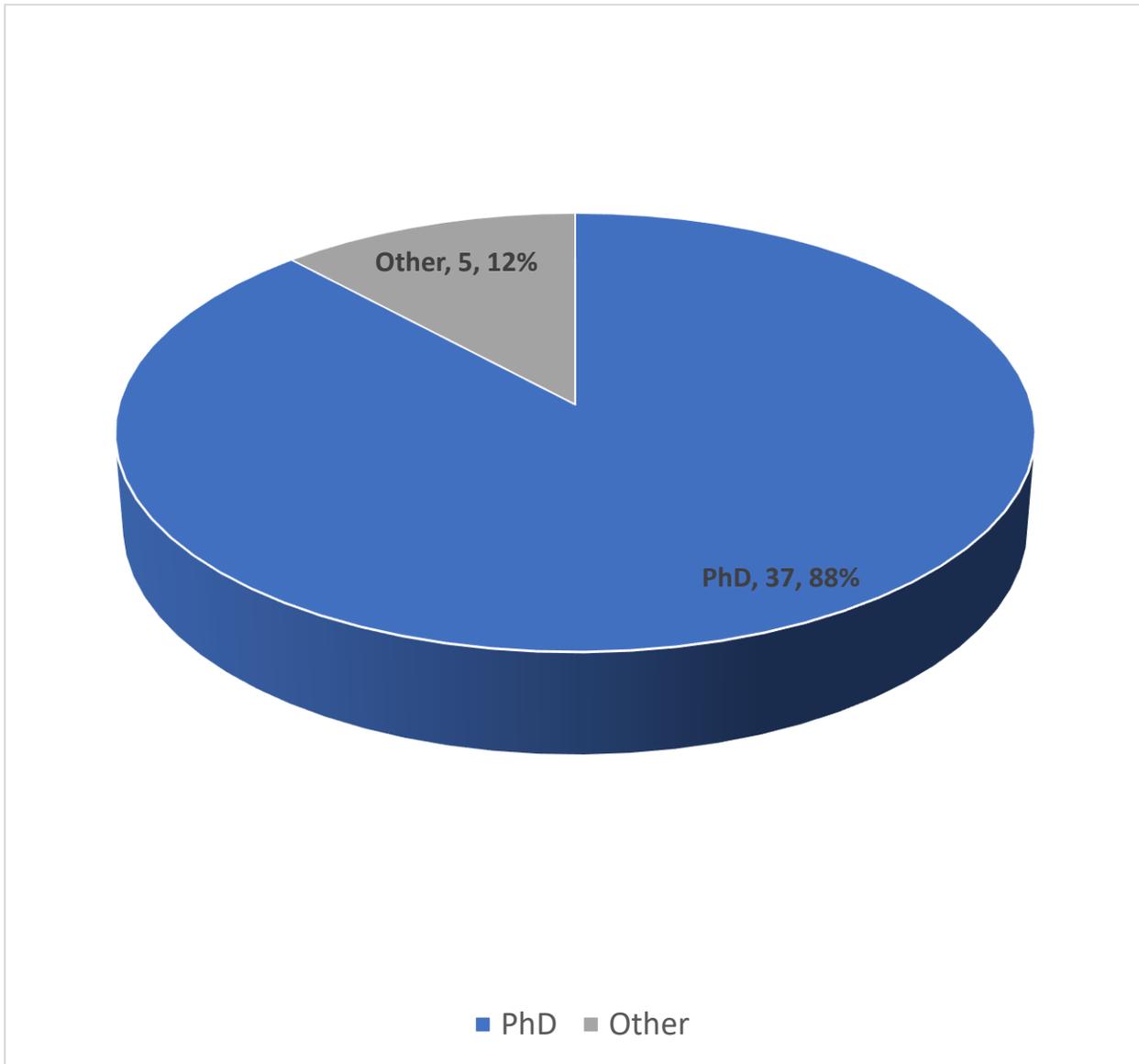
**Figure 2**

- About 84% of the women are students, and 16% are junior professionals



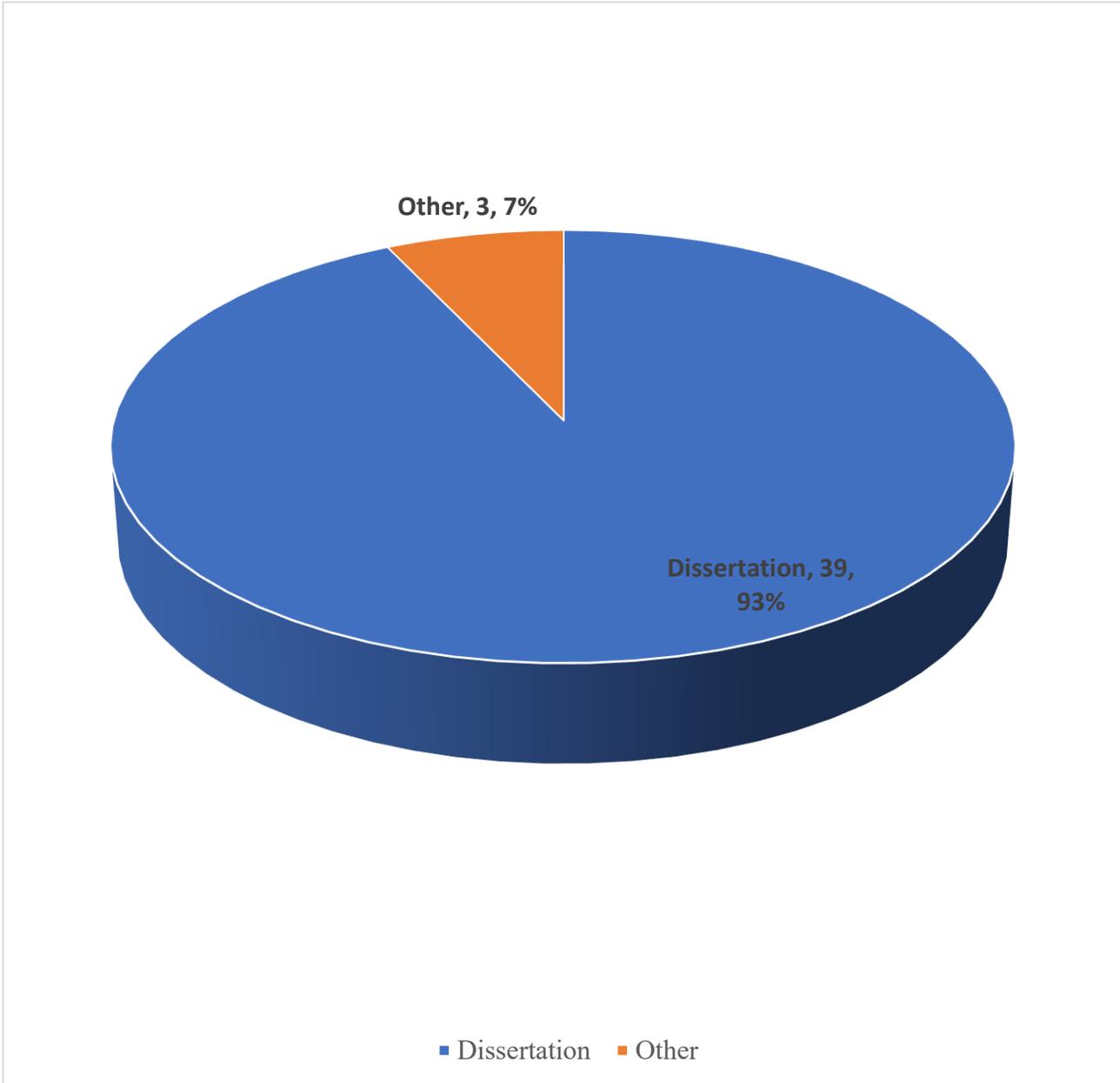
**Figure 3**

- About 88% of the students are pursuing a Ph.D. and 12% are pursuing other degrees (mostly master's and MPhil degrees).



**Figure 4**

- About 93% of the students are working on a dissertation and 7% have not started dissertation work.



## Profile of Mentors

- All the mentors have extensive research experience and are originally from Africa.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Country of Residence</b>
Associate Professor	Wellesley College	Ghana	US
Associate Professor	University of Ghana	Ghana	Ghana
Senior Lecturer	University of Pretoria	Zimbabwe	South Africa
Senior Lecturer	University of Pretoria	Ethiopia	South Africa
Senior Fellow	Center for Global Development	Nigeria	US
Researcher	United Nations University at Merit	Zimbabwe	Netherlands
Professor	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	Ghana	US
Senior Lecturer	University of Johannesburg	South Africa	South Africa
Senior Lecturer	University of Pretoria	South Africa	South Africa
Senior Economist	IFC/World Bank	Senegal	US
Economist	Institute for Sustainable Development	Cameroon	France
Lecturer	Norbet Zongo University	Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso
Postdoctoral Fellow	Stanford University	Cameroon	US
Senior Economist	IFC/World Bank	Burkina Faso	US
Economist/Consultant	Canadian Ministry of Health/World Bank	Cameroon	Canada

## Section 3

### Mentoring Activities

**Meetings with mentors:** Mentors were assigned to 4-5 mentees with similar research interests. During the mentoring period, the mentors held group mentoring sessions at least six times. These sessions provided a platform for discussing research progress, offering feedback, and providing career development advice.

**Econometric Society Conference:** AAAWE organized two sessions at the Econometric Society Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, from June 1-3, 2023. Additionally, the mentees were allowed to apply for membership in the Econometric Society and participate in the conference virtually at no cost. Approximately 90% of the mentees took advantage of this rare opportunity. The conference aimed to simulate the experience of academic conferences, providing a platform for mentees to showcase their work, receive feedback, and engage with peers and mentors.

**AAAWE/TAP Webinar:** To commemorate the end of the mentoring session, a joint webinar was organized on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with the theme “African Women in the Economics Profession.” Professor Elizabeth Asiedu, the President of AAAWE, moderated the webinar, and the panelists included Dr. Andrew Dabalen, the World Bank Chief Economist for Africa; Ms. Amina Rwakunda, former Chief Economist of Rwanda; Professor Nkechi Owoo, University of Ghana; and Dr. Frances Nakakawa, from Makerere University.

## Section 4

### Evaluation and Feedback

An end-of-program evaluation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the mentoring program. The evaluation included surveys and feedback forms completed by 40 mentees. The results of the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive. Most mentees reported high levels of satisfaction with the mentoring program, noting that the mentoring sessions were extremely beneficial for their professional growth. Many mentees highlighted significant improvements in their research skills, understanding of the publication process, and grant application techniques. Additionally, the program facilitated valuable networking opportunities, connecting mentees with mentors and peers across the continent. The mentees suggested the following: provide comprehensive materials on econometrics and data analysis, organize combined workshops with multiple mentors and mentees to expand professional networks, fund connection costs, in-person meetings, and publication fees, extend the program duration to one year for deeper engagement, hold monthly virtual meetings for sharing progress and career updates, include internships with organizations like the World Bank, offer more structured activities, including practical training sessions and gender workshops, establish a virtual community for ongoing support and collaboration. The sentiments of the mentors are summarized by the feedback (verbatim) from two mentors.

**Mentor 1:** The mentorship program has benefited me in so many ways than I could imagine. Firstly, the program afforded me the opportunity to learn so much from the wealth of experience of my mentor, Prof. Nkechi Owoo. I

learnt from both her professional and personal experiences as a woman in the Economics career as well as a wife and mother and how well she has been able to balance it all in spite of the very relatable challenges. Also, regarding my research, I was able to gain invaluable insights and comments for my work, which has made it advance to its final stage at the moment, and I am proud to say that I am almost at the stage of publication. This was made possible through comments and directions that I received from both my mentor and fellow colleagues. In addition, the mentorship gave me the privilege of getting a sponsored membership of the Econometric Society and the opportunity to partake virtually in the Econometric Society Conference in Africa, which may still have remained a dream till now due to financial constraints. Last but not least, I was able to meet with other mentees who have become more than just colleagues but future collaborators and friends. I was able to learn from them as well.

**Mentor 2:** The mentorship program has been a wonderful learning experience for me. For the past five months, my teammates and I have been exposed to some topics that would help us in our research and future plans. Some of these topics include striking a balance among career, well-being, and family; having a strategic career plan and guidelines for successful publishing in a standard journal; the need to join a relevant professional association; the success of a PhD student; and securing a post-doctoral position abroad. From this mentorship program, I have been able to improve the quality of my thesis. The guidance and mentorship from my mentor have taught me to be always positive, strive to be the best and build a culture of networking. I participated in the 2023 African Meeting of the Econometric Society, and it was an eye-opener for me. I saw young people like me doing exploits, and I was encouraged to improve my skills. Through this mentorship program, I will also be participating in the Africa Training Workshop in Econometrics (ATWE) from 12th - 14th June 2023.

## Section 5

### Challenges and Recommendations

The program was mostly successful, but we did face several challenges. One of the main challenges was time management, as some mentees found it difficult to balance program activities with their professional and personal commitments. Additionally, occasional technical difficulties during virtual sessions affected the smooth running of some meetings. Another challenge was the limited resources that prevented some members from participating in the conference in person. Lastly, it was challenging to identify and recruit Francophone mentors.

To tackle these challenges, several recommendations have been proposed for the second round of the program. These include organizing virtual workshops to improve mentors' personal and professional development,

securing funds to allow mentors to attend in-person conferences, scaling up the program to accommodate more women, and making a focused effort to recruit more Francophone mentors.