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Africans back gender equality, but gaps persist: Governments urged to do more

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Africans back gender equality, but gaps persist: Governments urged to do more

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 749 | **Maame Akua Amoah Twum and Carolyn Logan**

Summary

Everywhere we look, we are reminded that gender equality is a cornerstone of Africa's development. The African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 identifies "full gender equality in all spheres of life" as one of its core goals. Under this goal, outcomes targeted for achievement *by 2023* include removing all obstacles to women's ownership and inheritance of property, contracting, and ownership of bank accounts; ensuring that at least one in five women have control of productive assets; and reducing violence against women by at least one-third (with elimination to be achieved by 2063) (African Union, 2015a, b).

Similarly, the United Nations' (2016) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the centrality of gender equality both as a goal in its own right (SDG#5) and as a thread woven throughout the SDG goals, targets, and indicators.

We see evidence of at least some measure of commitment to these goals across the continent. Forty-four African states have ratified the 2003 Maputo Protocol on the rights of women in Africa, which has just celebrated its 20th anniversary (African Union, 2003, 2023). Similarly, 52 African states have ratified the United Nations (1979) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and all UN member states are enjoined to pursue the SDGs.

Yet gender-equality advocates also recognise that reality is still far from matching up with these lofty aspirations. Change, while real, is often slow and uneven; gaps persist even as both men and women make gains in educational attainment, in access to technology and information, and in the workplace.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), for example, reports that girls are still more likely to be out of school than boys (UNECA, 2023), due not only to families' lower prioritisation of girls' education but also to factors such as child marriage and gender-based violence (Savedra & Brixi, 2023; African Development Bank & UNECA, 2020). On the World Bank's (2020) Women, Business and the Law Index, Africa's score inches upward, suggesting that economic and legal equality is still many years away. The Equal Measures 2030 (2022) SDG Gender Index, which tracks gender-equality indicators for 14 SDGs, describes progress in Africa as "slow and patchy."

Afrobarometer offers a citizens' perspective on gender equality in Africa, based on a special module included in Round 9 surveys in 39 countries between late 2021 and mid-2023. Our findings, too, suggest slow progress alongside persistent challenges. In principle, most Africans are on board with the goals of gender equality, and many even report that equality in employment and land rights is largely a reality.

But in data on women's lived experience – their educational attainment, their employment status, their control over resources – the gender gaps are still there, often showing little change over the past decade (see e.g. Lardies, Dryding, & Logan, 2019). Support for women

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in politics confronts expectations of community backlash. Even physical security remains a top-of-mind concern: Gender-based violence ranks as the No. 1 women's-rights issue that Africans say their government and society must address.

In short, turning stated support for equality into a reality embedded in law, in social acceptance, and in everyday practice still appears to be a long-term undertaking. One encouraging note: Majorities of Africans say both that their governments are doing reasonably well at addressing gender equality and that they need to do more, recognising that the job is far from finished.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. (See Appendix Table A.1 for a list of countries and fieldwork dates.)

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with samples of 1,200-2,400 that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-3 to +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

This 39-country analysis is based on 53,444 interviews. The data are weighted to ensure nationally representative samples. When reporting multi-country averages, all countries are weighted equally (rather than in proportion to population size).

Key findings

- Africans see gender-based violence (GBV) as the most important women's-rights-related issue that their government and society need to address, followed by too few women in influential positions in government, unequal access to education, and unequal opportunities in the workplace.
    - Almost four in 10 citizens (38%) say GBV is "somewhat common" or "very common" in their community.
- A sizeable and (slowly) growing majority (75%) of citizens say women should have the same chance of being elected to public office as men.
    - But more than half (52%) say that a woman who runs for office is likely to be criticised or harassed.
    - Women are still consistently less likely than men to join in many forms of civic engagement, including voting.
- On average across 39 African countries, women are less likely than men to have secondary or post-secondary education (51% vs. 59%), a gap that is even wider among the youngest citizens, although their levels of educational attainment are also higher.
- Almost three-quarters (73%) of Africans say women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land, though support for equality varies from just 31% in Mauritania to 92% in Cabo Verde.
    - A narrower majority (58%) endorse women's equal right to jobs, again varying widely by country.

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- About seven in 10 citizens (69%) say women in fact enjoy equal rights when it comes to jobs, but fewer (63%) say the same about land ownership.

- Women trail men significantly in ownership of key productive and informational assets such as motor vehicles (15% vs. 31%), radios (50% vs. 65%), and bank accounts (34% vs. 43%).
  - Similarly, women are less likely than men to say they make household financial decisions themselves (35% vs. 44%).

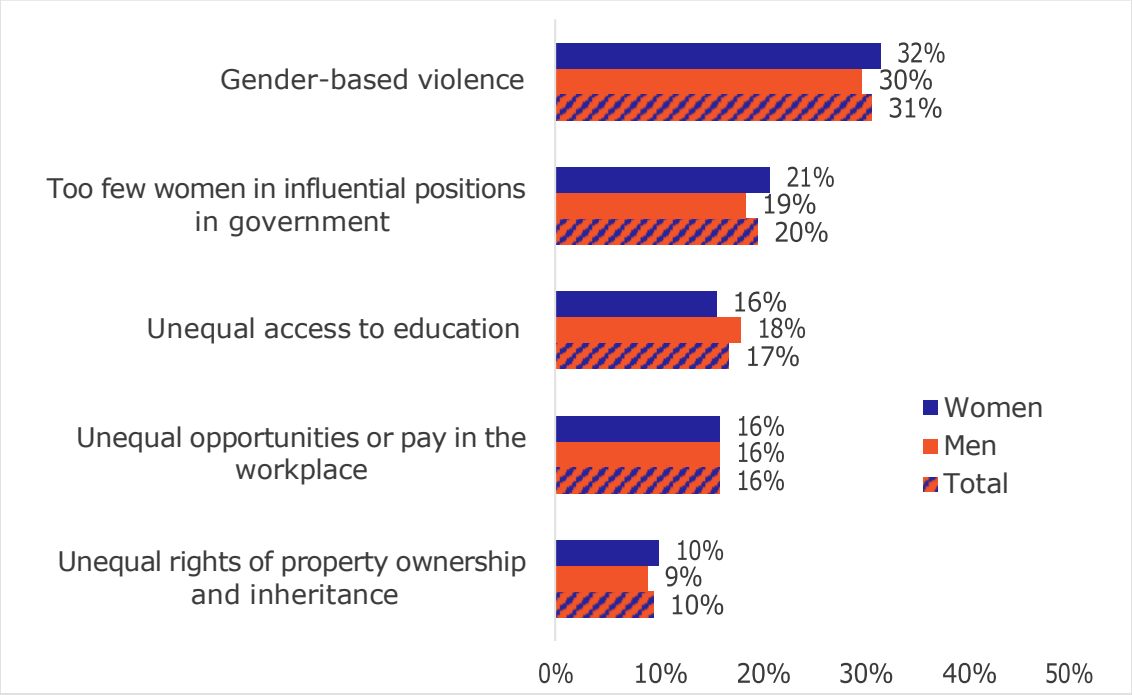
- Governments get relatively positive marks for their efforts to promote gender equality, but nearly two-thirds (63%) of citizens say their governments should be doing more.

Women's equality: The challenge

The fight for women's equality takes place on many fronts: in homes, communities, and schools; in markets, workplaces, and businesses; and in the halls of Parliament and government offices. Which of these battlefronts do Africans perceive as the most critical for addressing their inequality challenges?

We asked respondents which of five issues related to women's rights and equality is the most important for their government and society to address. Gender-based violence (GBV) is the most widely cited concern, identified by nearly one in three (31%) as the top priority (Figure 1). This is followed by women's exclusion from influential positions in government (20%), unequal access to education (17%), and unequal economic opportunities (16%). One in 10 (10%) cite unequal rights to own and inherit property as the priority challenge.

Figure 1: Most important women's-rights issue | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following issues related to women's rights and equality do you think is the most important for our government and society to address?*

Men and women are almost identical in their views on these issues, and the same is true for rural and urban residents (not shown). However, people who experience high lived

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poverty[1] are significantly less likely than the wealthiest respondents to cite GBV (26% vs. 35%), and more likely to highlight unequal access to education (20% vs. 11%) (Figure 2). Similarly, those with no formal education are far less likely to prioritise GBV (21%) and also place higher priority on access to education (24%).

Figure 2: Most important women's-rights issue | by lived poverty and education | 39 countries | 2021/2023

Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following issues related to women's rights and equality do you think is the most important for our government and society to address?*

Country profiles can, however, differ substantially from this mean. GBV is the highest-ranked issue in 21 of 39 countries, and majorities identify it as the priority in five of those: Cabo Verde (69%), Lesotho (64%), Botswana (59%), Tunisia (56%), and Namibia (52%) (Table 1). But it barely registers as an issue in Mauritania (5%) and is a relatively low priority in a number of other countries in West and Central Africa. Women's exclusion from influential positions in government ranks as the most important issue in nine countries, led by Congo-Brazzaville

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(41%), while unequal access to education is prioritised in six countries, with more than one-

[1] Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

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third mentioning this issue in Guinea (38%), Mauritania (37%), and Mali (36%). Workplace inequality is the top issue in four countries, led by Gabon (30%).

Table 1: Most important women's-rights issue | 39 countries | 2021/2023

	Gender-based violence	Too few women in influential positions in government	Unequal access to education	Unequal opportunities or pay in the workplace	Unequal rights of property ownership and inheritance
Cabo Verde	69%	10%	5%	13%	1%
Lesotho	64%	7%	7%	11%	9%
Botswana	59%	14%	4%	13%	6%
Tunisia	56%	7%	8%	17%	5%
Namibia	52%	11%	9%	9%	12%
Tanzania	49%	12%	12%	5%	16%
South Africa	48%	15%	9%	12%	10%
Liberia	47%	20%	19%	9%	5%
Malawi	44%	16%	15%	16%	6%
Uganda	42%	12%	15%	10%	16%
Eswatini	41%	22%	5%	14%	15%
São Tomé and Príncipe	41%	16%	7%	18%	4%
Kenya	35%	14%	21%	14%	12%
Mauritius	34%	27%	2%	17%	5%
Zimbabwe	34%	28%	7%	6%	17%
Sierra Leone	33%	17%	25%	12%	7%
Zambia	29%	18%	25%	17%	5%
Mali	26%	9%	36%	11%	10%
Ethiopia	25%	17%	15%	20%	17%
Morocco	24%	14%	13%	28%	6%
Cameroon	23%	29%	18%	13%	15%
Mozambique	23%	21%	13%	18%	14%
Angola	23%	15%	18%	17%	7%
Senegal	22%	26%	13%	27%	7%
Sudan	21%	18%	29%	16%	5%
Gambia	21%	14%	29%	14%	6%
Seychelles	21%	13%	6%	15%	3%
Madagascar	20%	25%	13%	25%	15%
Congo-Brazzaville	20%	41%	11%	18%	10%
Ghana	19%	29%	19%	22%	6%
Nigeria	18%	29%	20%	16%	9%
Gabon	17%	29%	16%	30%	6%
Niger	17%	18%	29%	18%	10%
Benin	16%	25%	20%	13%	21%
Côte d'Ivoire	16%	29%	25%	15%	14%
Togo	15%	27%	22%	21%	11%
Burkina Faso	14%	26%	23%	18%	18%
Guinea	12%	23%	38%	17%	10%

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Mauritania	5%	26%	37%	23%	3%
39-country average	31%	20%	17%	16%	10%
	Most important issue		Second-most important issue		

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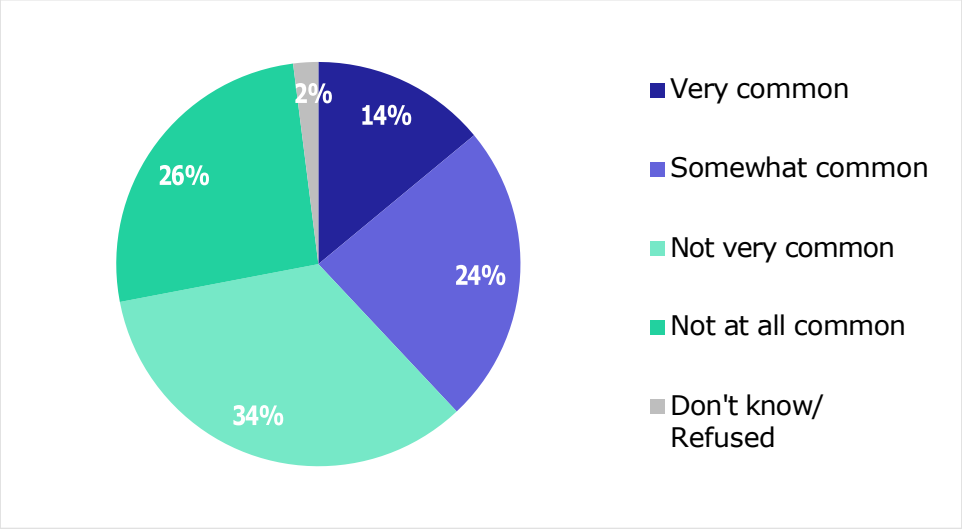
The prevalence of gender-based violence

Experts believe that African women face some of the highest rates of GBV in the world (Zegeye et al., 2022), estimating that as many as one in three will experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime (UNECA, 2023). But research on local perspectives on this issue is still limited. Afrobarometer included questions on this topic for the first time in Round 9.

We find that almost four in 10 Africans (38%) say that GBV is either "somewhat common" (24%) or "very common" (14%) in their communities (Figure 3). This ranges from highs of 62% in Angola and 57% in Namibia to more modest – but still quite troubling – 19% in Tanzania and 21% in Ghana. Moreover, a majority of respondents (52%) believe it is likely that women who report incidents of GBV to the police are likely to be "criticised, harassed, or shamed by others in the community." On a brighter note, fully eight out of 10 respondents (81%) believe the police will take such reports seriously.[2]

Figure 3: Frequency of gender-based violence | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *In this area, how common do you think it is for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or the community?*

Women in politics and government

The relatively limited access of women in most African countries to the halls of government power is seen as a key impediment to promoting progress toward gender equality. Men continue to outnumber women by a 3-to-1 margin in parliamentary seats and ministerial positions on the continent (UNECA, 2023; UN Women, 2023). While many men share the aspiration toward equality, women's voices, votes, and leadership will likely be required to give this issue the attention and action that are necessary to accelerate the pace of change. What factors hold women back?

On average across Africa, three-quarters (75%) of citizens say women should have the same chance as men to vie for political office. This is the majority view in all surveyed countries except Sudan, where a slim majority (53%) say men make better political leaders and should thus be given priority as candidates (Figure 4).

[2] For more detailed findings on the special module of questions on gender-based violence included in Afrobarometer Round 9, including prevalence, police and community response, and whether people view it as a private or a criminal matter, see M'Cormack-Hale, Patel, and Diouf (2023).

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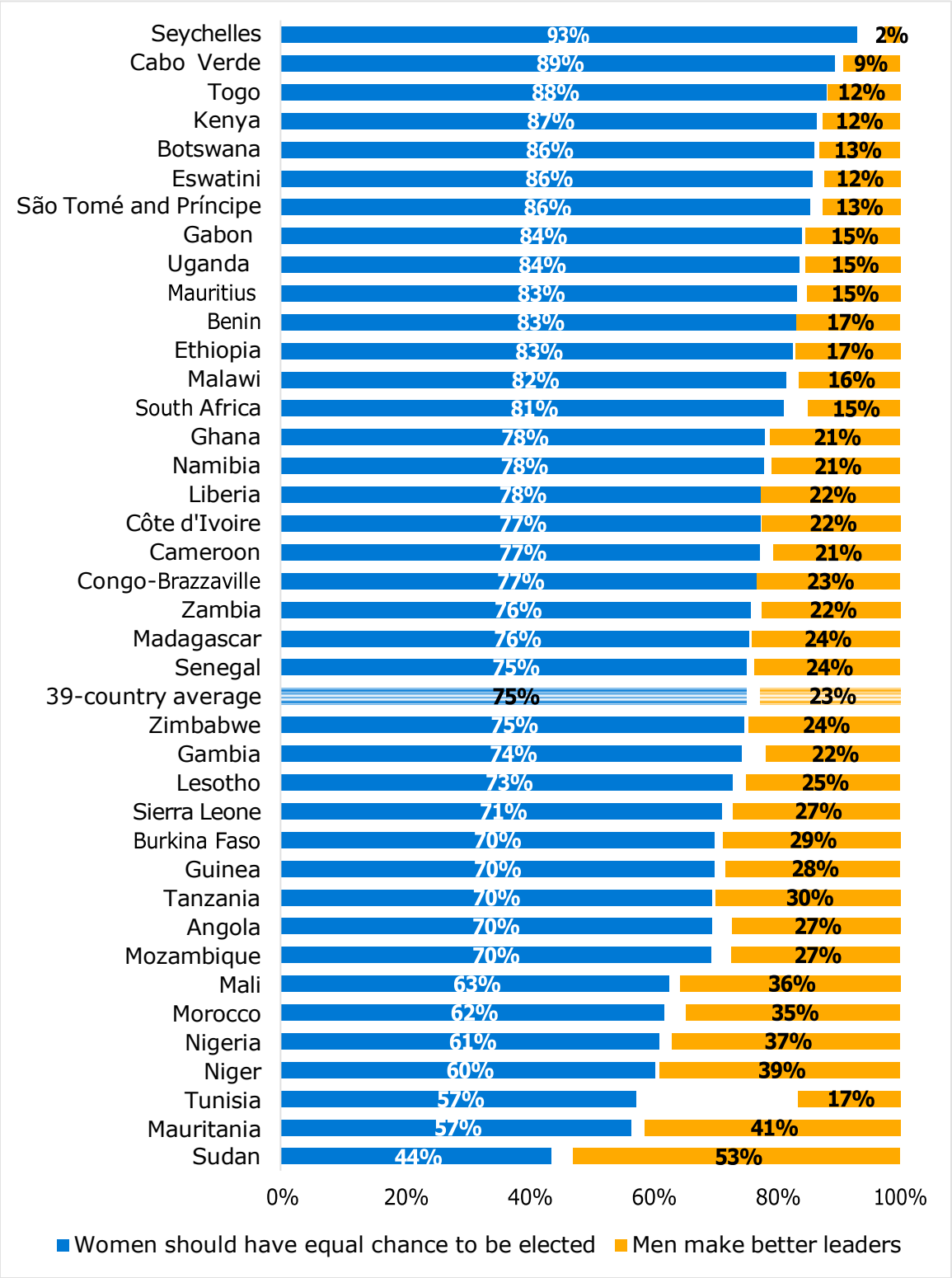
Figure 4: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women.
Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

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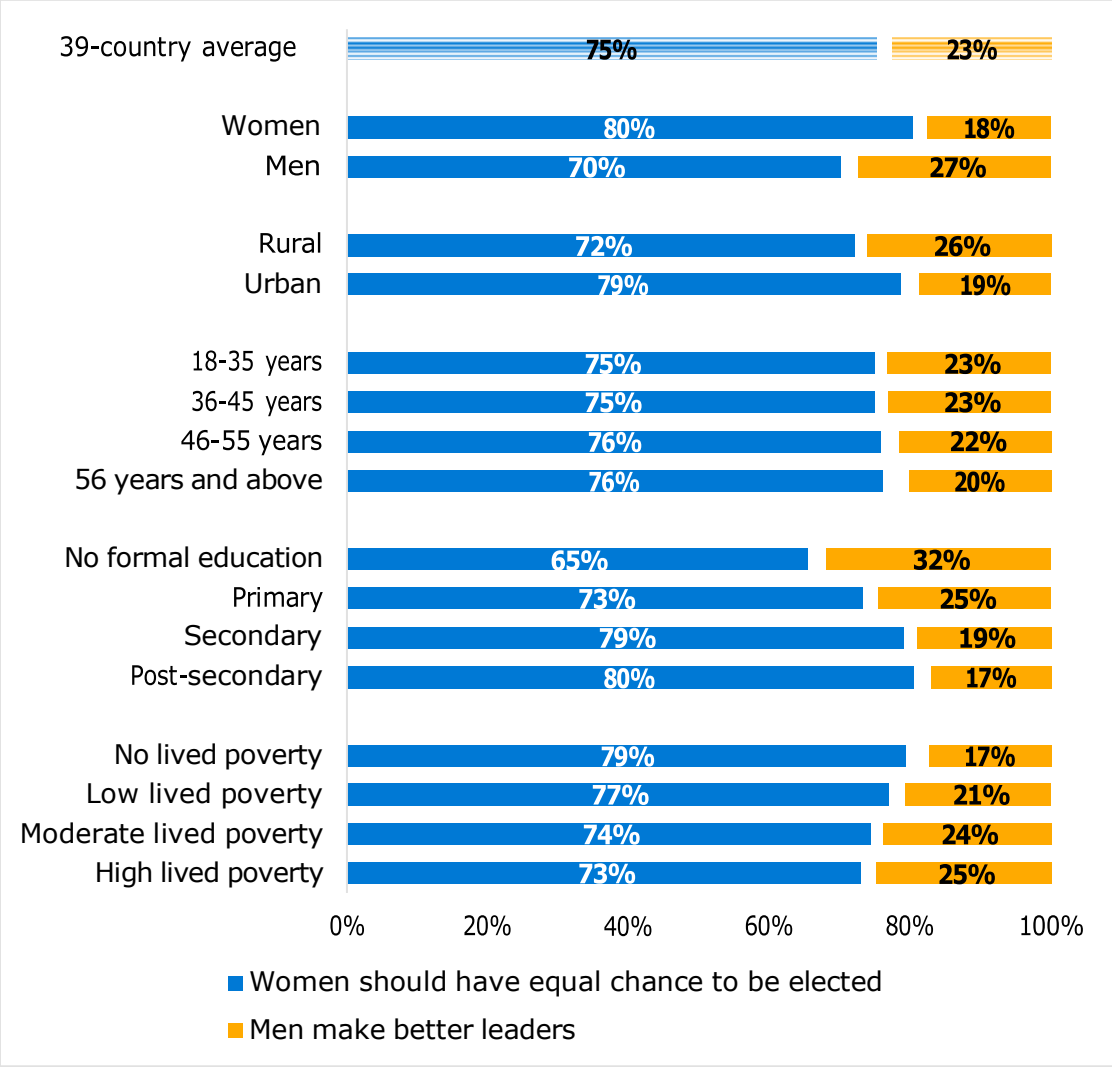
More women (80%) than men (70%) endorse gender equality in politics, but large majorities of all socio-demographic groups agree (Figure 5). Citizens with post-secondary education (80%), those who are economically better off (79%), and urban residents (79%) are more likely to agree with this perception than their less educated, poorer, and rural counterparts. But there is no generation gap in these attitudes: Africans of all ages are equally supportive of gender equality in politics.

Figure 5: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women.
Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

Over the past decade, this already strong support for women in politics has ticked up still further, gaining 4 percentage points across 30 countries since 2011/2013 (Figure 6). Only one country, Tanzania, saw a substantial decline (-11 points), while 18 countries saw gains of at least 4 points, and Benin (+10), Kenya (+11), Senegal (+11), and Uganda (+17) witnessed double-digit gains (not shown).

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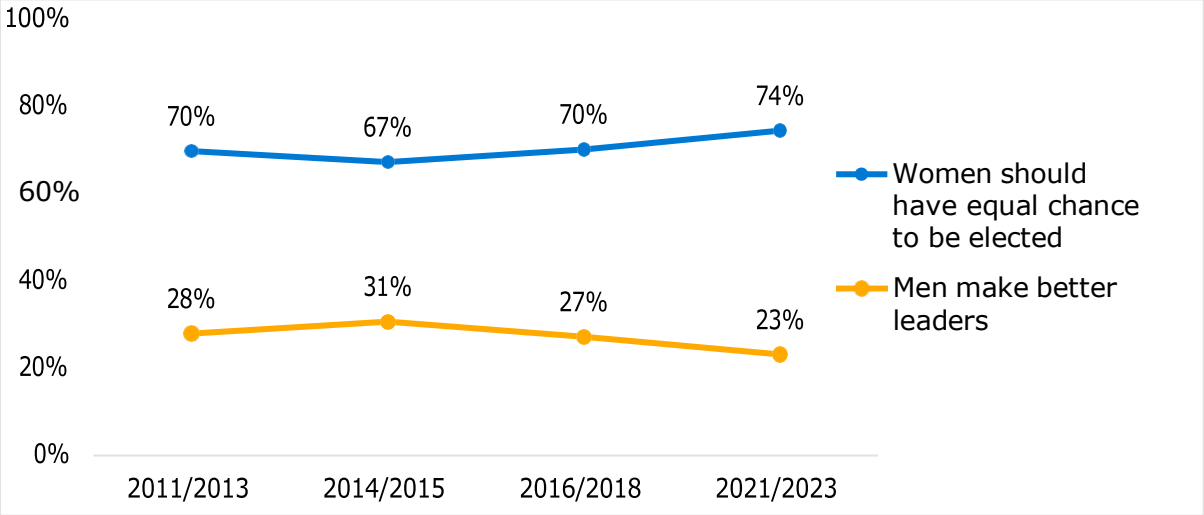
Figure 6: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | 30 countries | 2011-2023

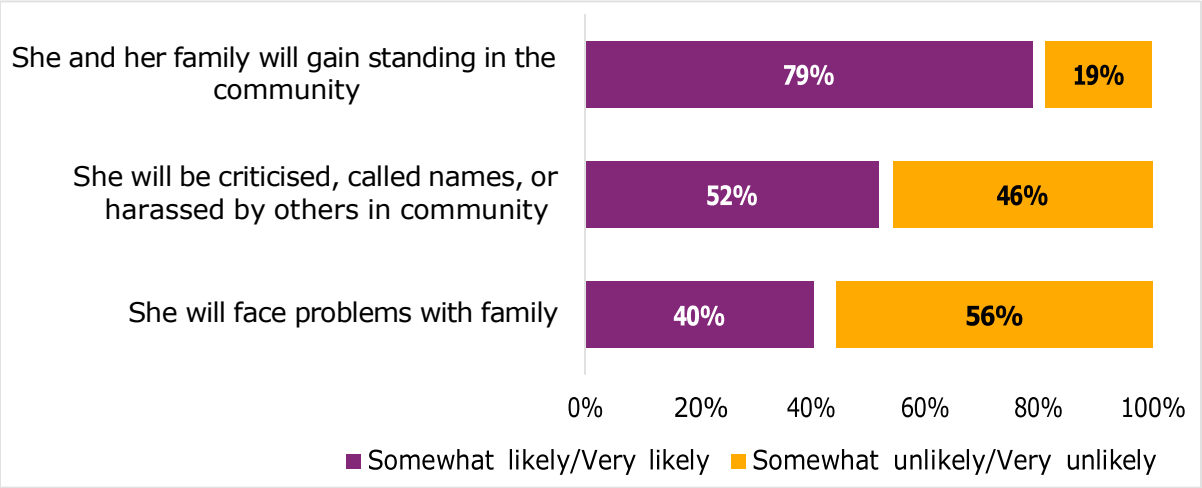


Respondents were asked: *Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*
Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women.
Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

But the story is not always so simple. Even if she believes that voters will give her the same consideration as a male candidate, a woman may be further encouraged to run for public office – or discouraged from doing so – by other expected consequences of her candidacy.

On the positive side, eight in 10 African citizens (79%) think a woman will gain standing in the community if she runs for office. But more than half (52%) also think it is likely she will be criticised, called names, or harassed, and 40% say she is likely to face problems with her family (Figure 7). The prevalence of these negative expectations may reinforce some women's reservations about throwing their hats into the ring.

Figure 7: For better or for worse: How running for elected office might affect women's lives | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *If a woman in your community runs for elected office, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: She and her family will gain standing in the community? She will be criticised, called names, or harassed by others in the community? She will face problems with her family?*

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The view that a woman and her family will gain standing in the community if she runs for elective office is shared by more than six in 10 citizens in all 39 countries, and tops 80% in 21 of them (Table 2). Agreement is strongest in Tanzania (92%), Gabon (90%), and Uganda (90%).

Table 2: Somewhat/Very likely consequences for women of running for office | 39 countries | 2021/2023

	Positive consequences	Negative consequences	
	Gain standing	Be criticised/harrassed	Face family problems
Tanzania	92%	38%	35%
Gabon	90%	60%	40%
Uganda	90%	51%	46%
Togo	89%	55%	42%
Madagascar	89%	54%	31%
Morocco	87%	46%	35%
Mauritius	86%	36%	31%
São Tomé and Príncipe	86%	56%	40%
Ghana	86%	42%	35%
Liberia	86%	65%	54%
Zimbabwe	85%	58%	54%
Cameroon	85%	61%	45%
Cabo Verde	85%	67%	49%
Tunisia	84%	85%	52%
Côte d'Ivoire	84%	58%	28%
Malawi	83%	37%	31%
Benin	83%	60%	41%
Congo-Brazzaville	83%	34%	33%
Sierra Leone	82%	42%	21%
Zambia	81%	43%	33%
Mali	81%	50%	46%
Senegal	79%	50%	44%
Nigeria	79%	47%	38%
Gambia	78%	60%	40%
Sudan	78%	59%	48%
Kenya	77%	53%	40%
Niger	77%	56%	52%
Ethiopia	76%	47%	44%
Lesotho	72%	60%	52%
Burkina Faso	72%	60%	38%
South Africa	70%	59%	51%
Seychelles	69%	31%	19%
Namibia	68%	46%	40%
Eswatini	68%	45%	45%
Mozambique	66%	57%	51%
Mauritania	65%	51%	34%
Guinea	64%	50%	39%
Botswana	63%	43%	40%
Angola	62%	51%	40%
39-country average	79%	52%	40%
	90+%	<30%	
	80%-89%	30%-39%	

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70%-79%	40%-49%
<70%	50%-59%
	60+%

At the same time, majorities in 25 countries expect that others will probably criticise or harass women candidates. More than eight in 10 Tunisians (85%) consider this likely, far surpassing any other country.

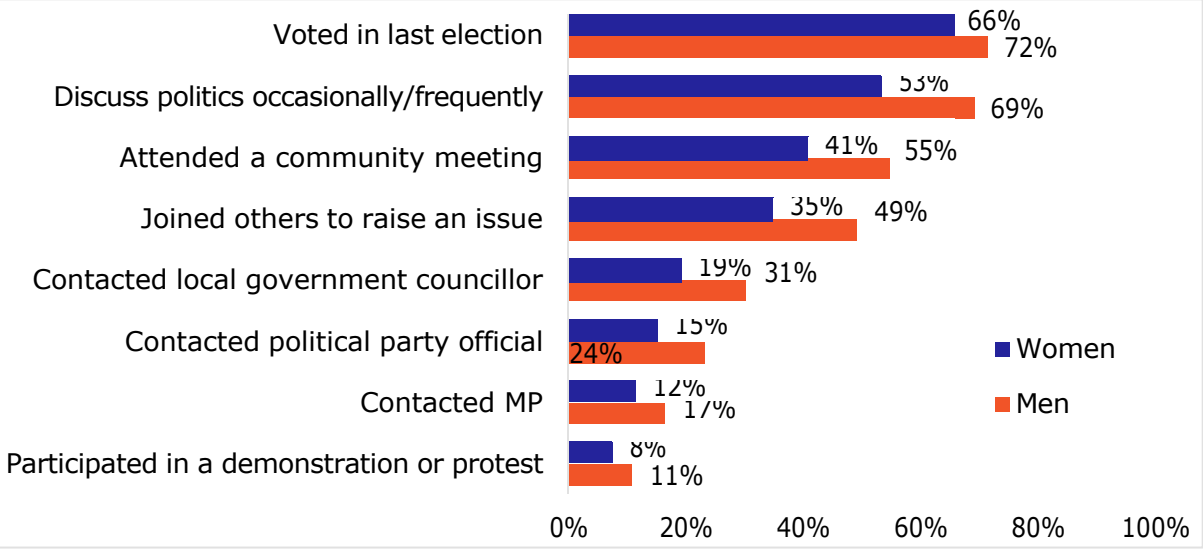
Fewer anticipate family problems, including just one in five Sierra Leoneans (21%) and Seychellois (19%). Still, slim majorities in seven countries expect problems with the family: Zimbabwe (54%), Liberia (54%), Tunisia (52%), Niger (52%), Lesotho (52%), South Africa (51%), and Mozambique (51%).

There are only a few countries where things consistently look good – i.e. high expectations of positive outcomes and low expectations of negative outcomes – for women who enter politics. In Tanzania, Mauritius, Malawi, and Congo-Brazzaville, more than 80% anticipate positive consequences and fewer than 40% predict either negative outcome. Seychellois' expectations of improved standing are somewhat lower (69%), but they are least likely to predict negative outcomes.

At the opposite extreme, majorities anticipate both negative outcomes for women in seven countries, led by Tunisia and Liberia.

Of course, women participate in politics not only as politicians, but also as ordinary citizens, and there are important gaps on this side of the ledger as well. Women are consistently less likely than men to engage in all forms of civic and political engagement measured by Afrobarometer. The gap is 6 percentage points for voting (66% for women, compared to 72% for men) and is substantially wider for several other key means of exerting political influence, including joining others to raise issues (35% for women vs. 49% for men) and contacting local government councillors (19% vs. 31%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: The participation gap | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked:

> *In the last national election, held in [year], did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote? Or can't you remember whether you voted? (Respondents who were too young to vote are excluded.)*
> *Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a community meeting? Got together with others to raise an issue? Contacted your local government councillor? Contacted a political party official? Contacted your member of Parliament? Participated in a demonstration or protest march? (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "often")*
> *When you get together with your friends or family, how often would you say you discuss political matters?*

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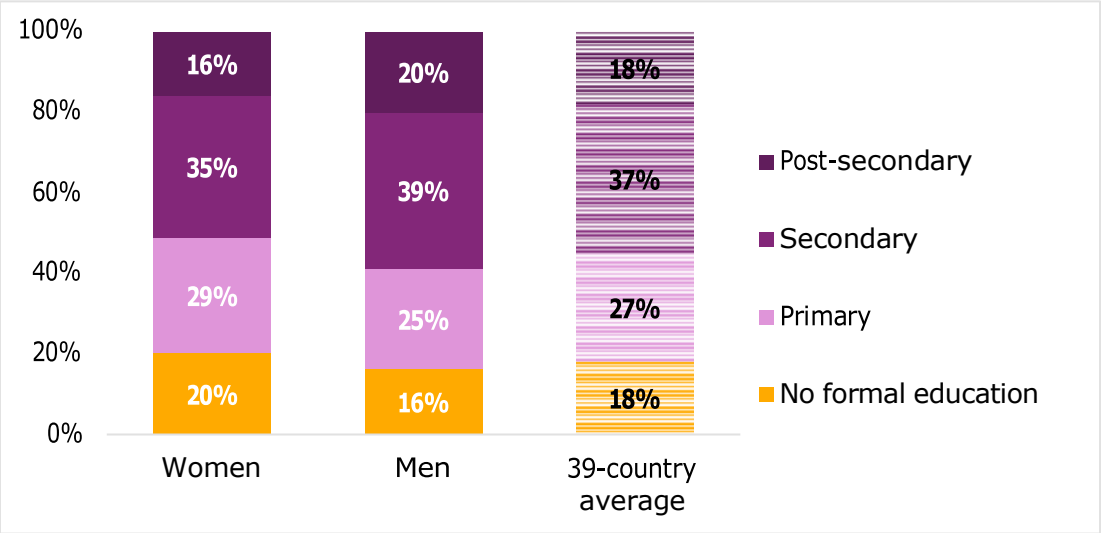
Educational attainment

The past decade has seen substantial improvements in educational attainment across Africa, although some countries continue to face challenges (Evans & Acosta, 2020). Gender gaps appear to be a particularly persistent challenge.

On average across 39 African countries, women are slightly less likely than men to have post-secondary qualifications (16% vs. 20%) or secondary schooling (35% vs. 39%), and more likely to report only primary education (29% vs. 25%) or no formal schooling (20% vs. 16%) (Figure 9).

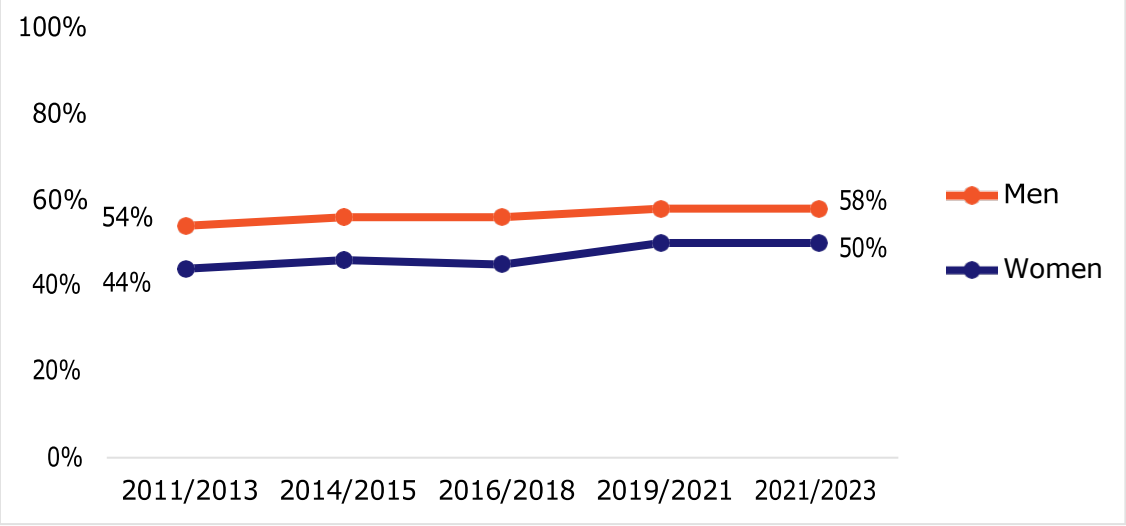
Moreover, while Afrobarometer records significant gains across 30 countries over the past decade in educational achievement for both men and women, the gender gap has been relatively constant. For attainment of secondary or post-secondary education, the gap has narrowed only marginally, from 10 percentage points in 2011/2013 to 8 points in 2021/2023 (Figure 10).

Figure 9: Educational attainment | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *What is your highest level of education?*

Figure 10: Trends in educational attainment | by gender | 30 countries | 2011-2023



Respondents were asked: *What is your highest level of education? (% who say they have secondary or post-secondary education)*

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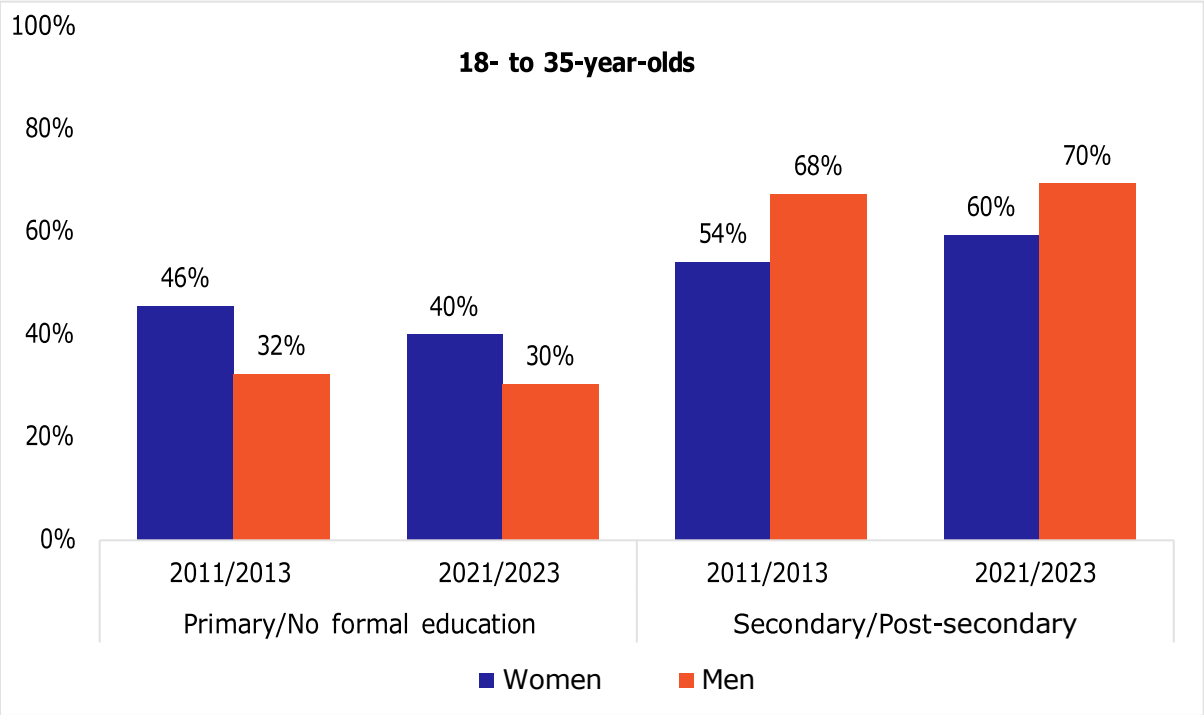
The story becomes slightly more complex when we focus only on the youngest cohort of 18- to 35-year-olds. Overall educational attainment is higher in this cohort than among their elders, and has increased modestly, from 60% with secondary/post-secondary qualifications in 2011/2013 to 64% in 2021/2023 (not shown). But the gender gap is actually wider for this group than for other cohorts – 10 percentage points in 2021/2023, although it has narrowed from 14 points in 2011/2013 (Figure 11). Achieving gender parity in education will clearly require more aggressive efforts to boost the participation of girls and young women.

Figure 11: Trends in educational attainment among 18- to 35-year-olds | by gender | 30 countries | 2011-2023



Respondents were asked: *What is your highest level of education?*

Economic (in)equality

Finally, we turn to the realm of economic (in)equality. The African Development Bank and UNECA (2020) report that the challenges faced by women in the economic realm are comparable to those they face in politics and government. Statistics continue to show that women are under-represented among managers and professionals, and over-represented among the unemployed, the under-employed, and the insecurely employed.

Do Africans want gender equality when it comes to jobs, economic opportunity, and control over productive resources? Do they think they are achieving it?

Starting in the workplace, we find that four in 10 Africans (40%) say men should have more rights than women to jobs if work is scarce, although a majority (58%) reject this form of gender discrimination (Figure 12). Men (50%) trail women (66%) by a substantial margin in insisting on gender equality in the job market. Support for equality in hiring increases with respondents' level of education, ranging from 49% of those with no formal schooling to 65% of those with post-secondary qualifications, as well as with respondents' economic status, from 53% among the poorest to 64% among the best-off. Urban residents (62%) are more likely to endorse equal opportunity in hiring than their rural counterparts, but here again, views do not differ by age group.

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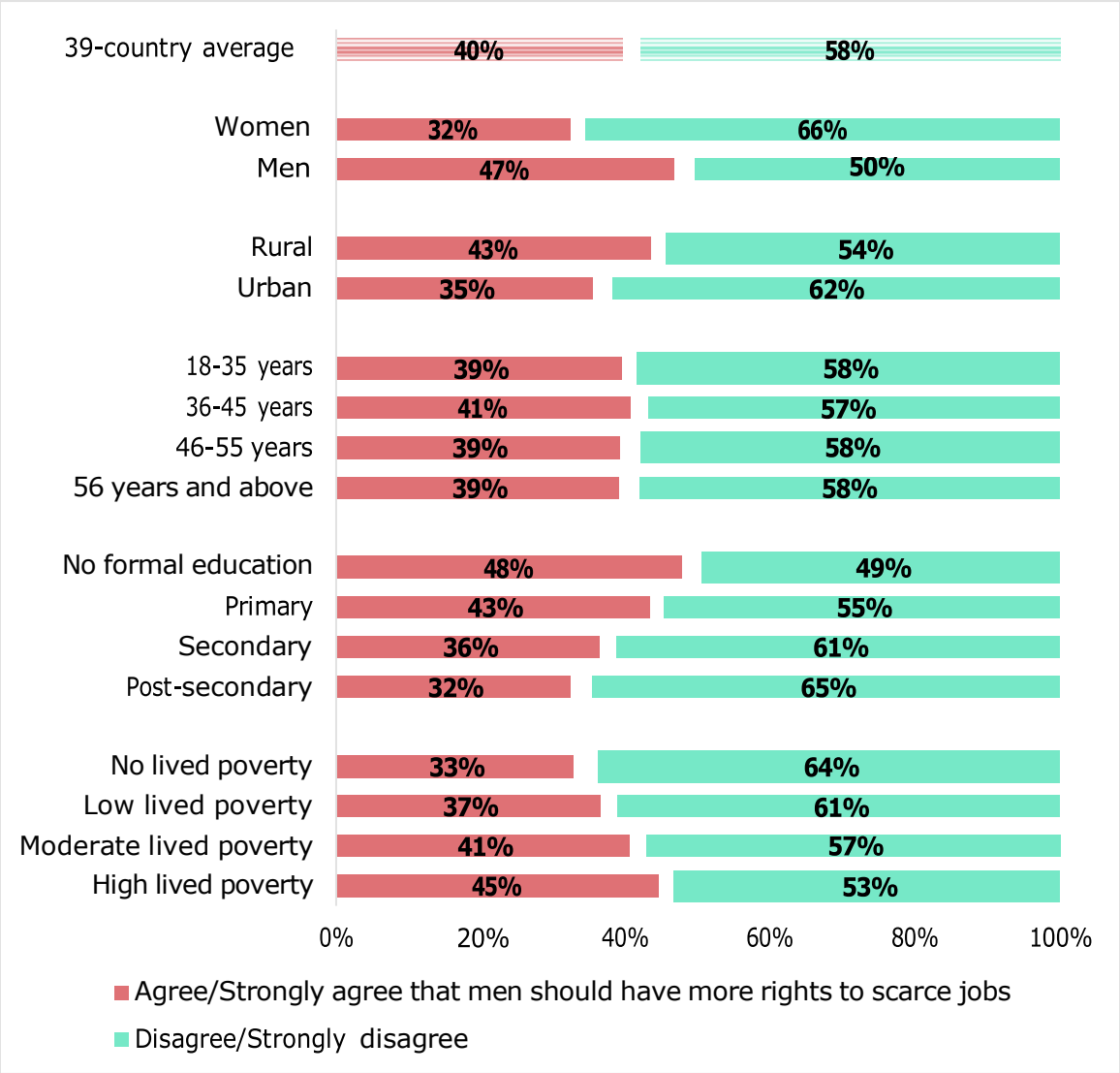
Figure 12: Should men have priority for scarce jobs? | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.*

What about access to economic resources, especially that most critical of assets, land? Across much of Africa, women have faced grossly unequal rights to own and inherit land. In many African societies, property, especially land, has been owned primarily by men: "Land belongs to the man, the produce in it to the woman," according to one common saying (Arekapudinayda & Almodóvar-Reteguis, 2020). Traditionally, even a widow might not inherit her husband's land, which might pass instead to his brothers or other male relatives. While inheritance laws are gradually changing to increase women's ownership rights, UNECA (2023) estimates that even now only 15% of landowners in sub-Saharan Africa are women. Achieving the Agenda 2063 goal of increasing women's ownership of land will require a complex mix of legal reform and shifts in awareness and social norms that will strengthen women's ability to claim their rights and society's willingness to enforce them (Lwabukuna, 2023).

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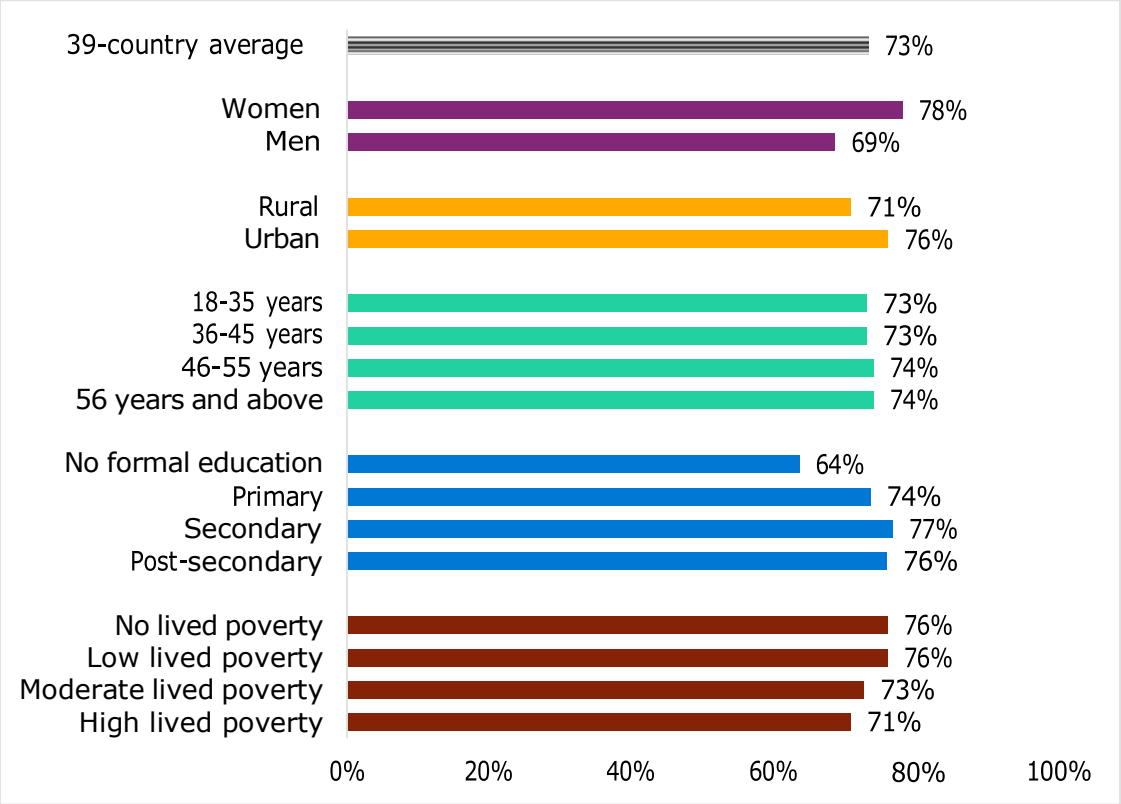
While both laws and practice may be shifting in some places, what are popular perspectives on these issues?

On average across 39 countries, nearly three-quarters (73%) of Africans endorse women's equal rights to own and inherit land. Here, too, men (69%) are less likely than women (78%) to believe in equality (Figure 13). Support for equality in land ownership is significantly weaker among respondents with no formal schooling (64%, compared to 74%-77% among more educated citizens), among the poorest citizens (71%, vs. 76% of the best-off citizens), and in rural areas (71%, vs. 76% in cities).

Figure 13: Women should have equal rights to land | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")*

Countries differ dramatically in their support for gender equality in hiring and land ownership (Figure 14). While more than three-fourths of Cabo Verdeans (80%) and Seychellois (78%) reject gender discrimination in employment, only about one-third of respondents in Madagascar (32%) and Niger (35%) agree.

The country spread is even wider when it comes to endorsing equality in land ownership, ranging from just 31% in Mauritania to more than nine out of 10 in Cabo Verde (92%), Botswana (91%), and Mauritius (91%).

Greater support for equality in land rights than in hiring – a 15-point gap on average – holds true in 35 of the 39 countries, with Madagascar serving as an extreme example: 89% endorse equal rights to land, vs. only 32% who want gender equality in hiring – a 57-percentage-point gap. Only Mauritania and Tunisia register somewhat greater support for equality in hiring, while equality in both sectors is about equally popular in Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

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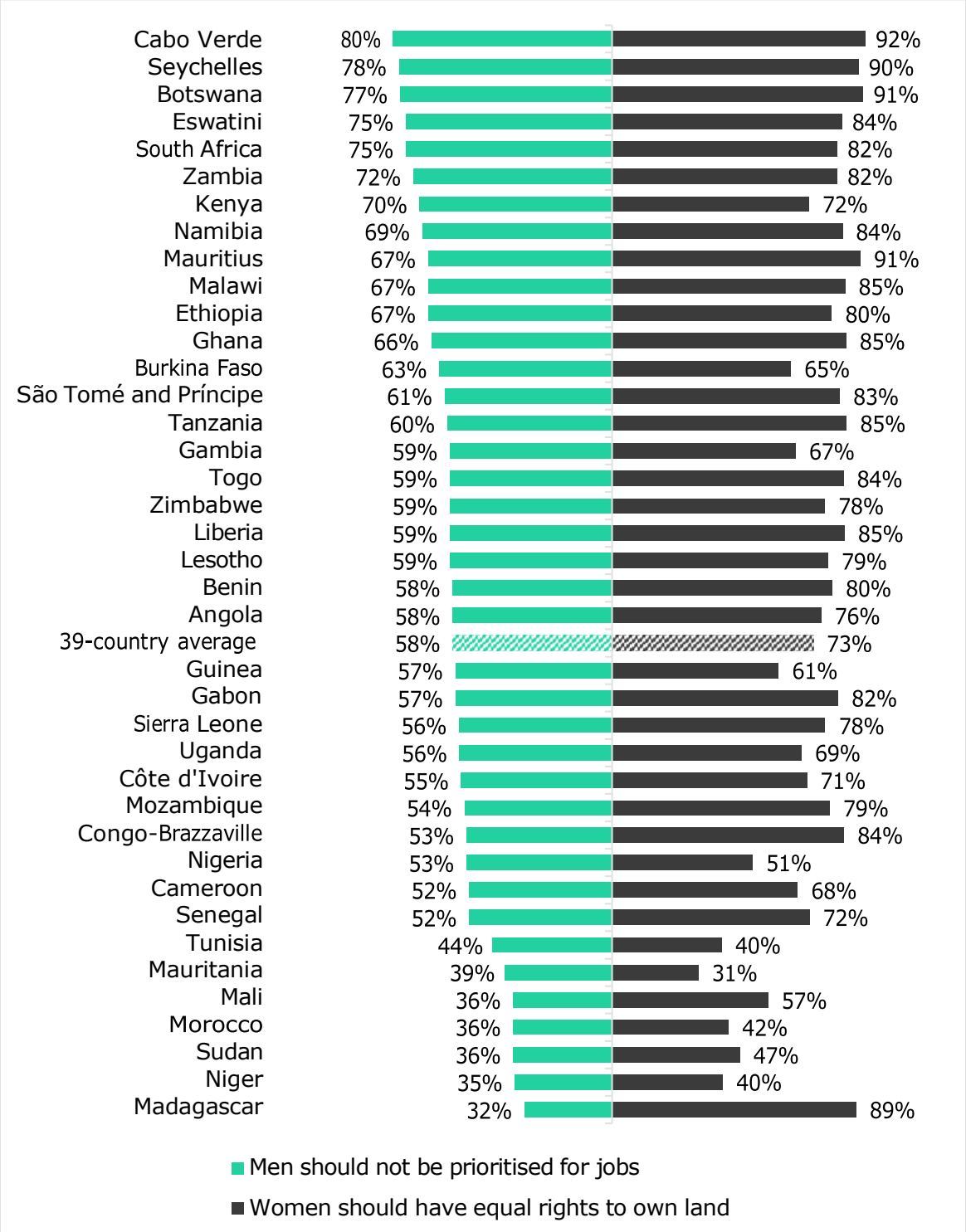
Figure 14: Should women have equal rights to jobs and land? | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:*

When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women. (% who "disagree" or "strongly disagree")

Women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

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While majorities say women should have equal rights to jobs and land, have they achieved equality? More than six out of 10 Africans believe they have: 69% say women have the same opportunities as men to get a paying job, while 63% think women have the same chance to own and inherit land (Figure 15).

But country profiles on these issues vary widely. Malagasy, Tanzanians, Togolese, and Mauritians lead the way in expressing high confidence that economic equality is a reality for women in their countries. Majorities report that women have equal access to jobs in all but two countries: Nigeria (44%) and Sudan (48%). But fewer than half of citizens in 12 countries say women have equal opportunity to own and inherit land, including just three in 10 Mauritanians (31%) and Nigerians (30%).

Sudan and Nigeria are the only countries where fewer than half of citizens see gender equality as a reality in both hiring and land ownership.

Gender equality in hiring doesn't always go hand in hand with gender equality in land ownership, in citizens' eyes. In Mauritania, for example, 66% of respondents say women and men have equal opportunities to get paying jobs, but only 31% say the same about owning/inheriting land – a 35-percentage-point gap. We see similarly large gaps – always with land ownership less equal than jobs – in Morocco (28 points), Senegal (26 points), Burkina Faso (24 points), Tunisia (24 points), Zimbabwe (22 points), and Uganda (21 points).

Women and men offer identical assessments of gender equality in hiring as well as in land ownership (Figure 16). Rural and urban residents also see eye to eye on employment opportunities, but not on land (61% rural, 66% urban).

Youth are less likely than the elderly to see equal opportunities in hiring (67% vs. 72%), but they agree regarding land ownership/inheritance.

Economically vulnerable and less educated citizens are less likely than their well-off and more educated counterparts to say that gender equality in hiring and land ownership is a reality, perhaps suggesting that progress toward gender parity has not benefited all social strata equally.

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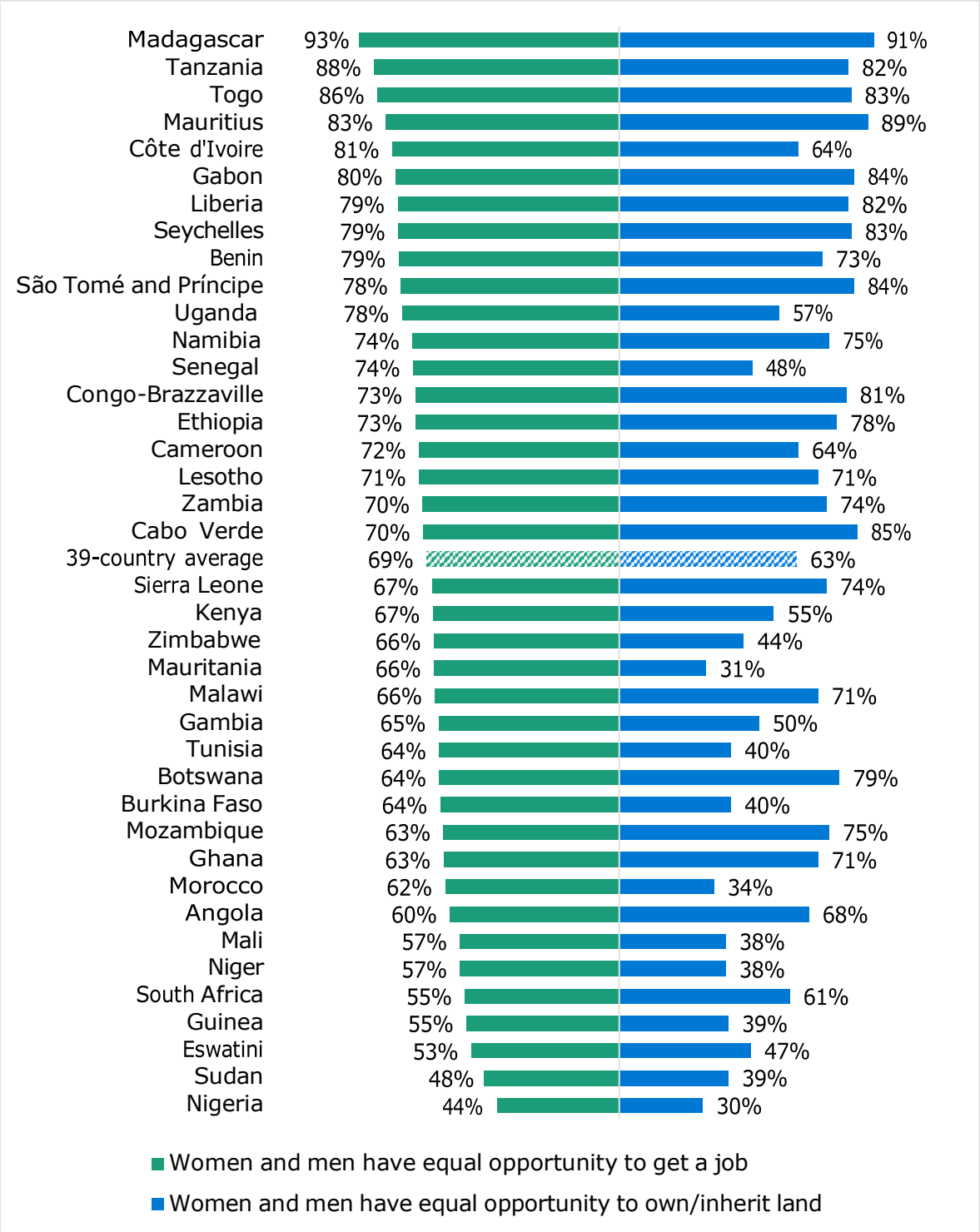
Figure 15: Do women and men have equal opportunities to get a job and to own/inherit land? | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:*

In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to get a job that pays a wage or salary.

In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to own and inherit land.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

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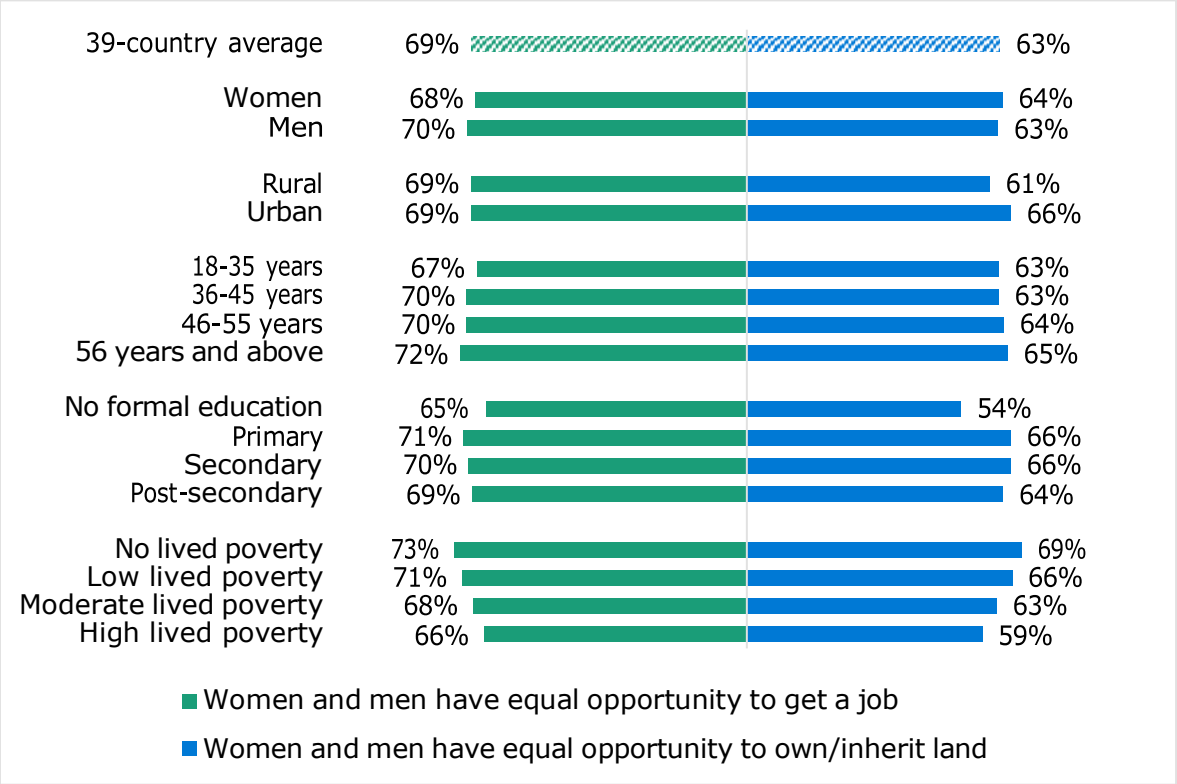
Figure 16: Do women and men have equal opportunities to get a job and to own/inherit land? | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:*

In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to get a job that pays a wage or salary.

In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to own and inherit land.

(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Although majorities, on average, see gender equality as both appropriate and achieved in employment and land rights, we see significant differences when we turn to what women and men tell us about their own economic situations.

Compared to men, women are significantly less likely to be employed full time (16% vs. 24%) or part time (8% vs. 12%), and much more likely not to have paid employment (76% vs. 65%) (Figure 17). However, the gap in the share who are not in paid employment is largely explained by the fact that a higher proportion of women are not engaging in the labour market. An equal number of men and women – 32% of each – say they are unemployed and looking for work, while women are significantly more likely – by 11 percentage points – to say they do not have paid employment and are not looking for work.

Women also trail men in control over several other critical assets in addition to land. They are about half as likely as men to own a motor vehicle (15% vs. 31%), another key productive asset, and are 5 to 15 percentage points less likely to own a mobile phone (79% vs. 86%), a radio (50% vs. 65%), a television (47% vs. 54%), a bank account (34% vs. 43%), and a computer (15% vs. 20%) (Figure 18).

These asset divides carry over into a broader digital divide, feeding gaps in women's access to critical news and information. Although there have been gains for both men and women across all indicators since 2016/2018 (Lardies, Dryding, & Logan, 2019; Malephane, 2022), we still find that women consistently lag behind men by 7-8 percentage points (Figure 19).

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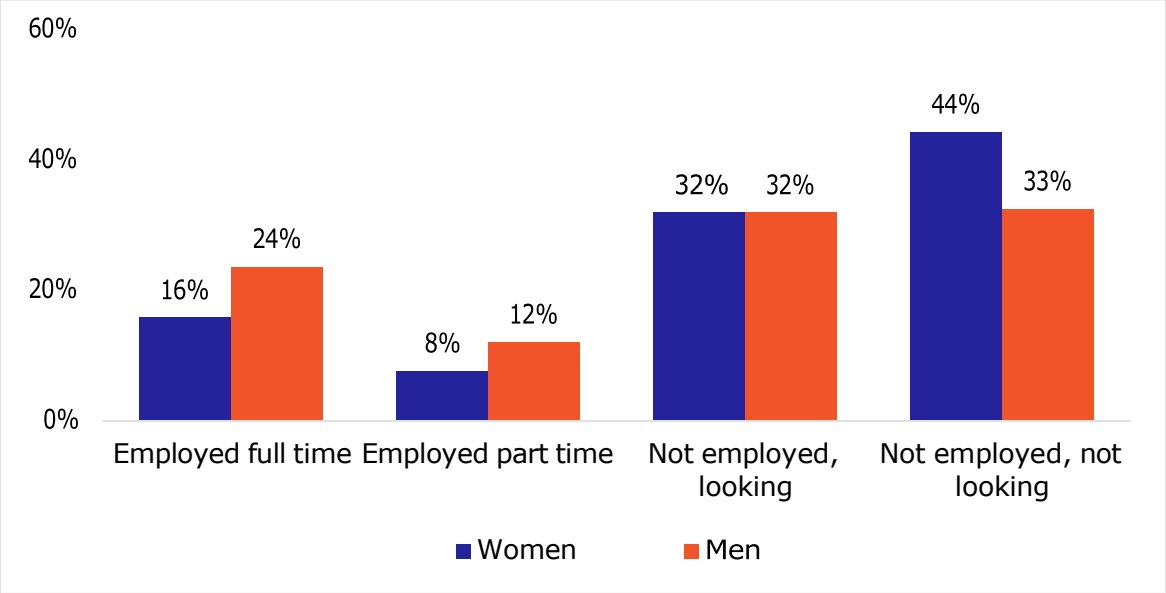
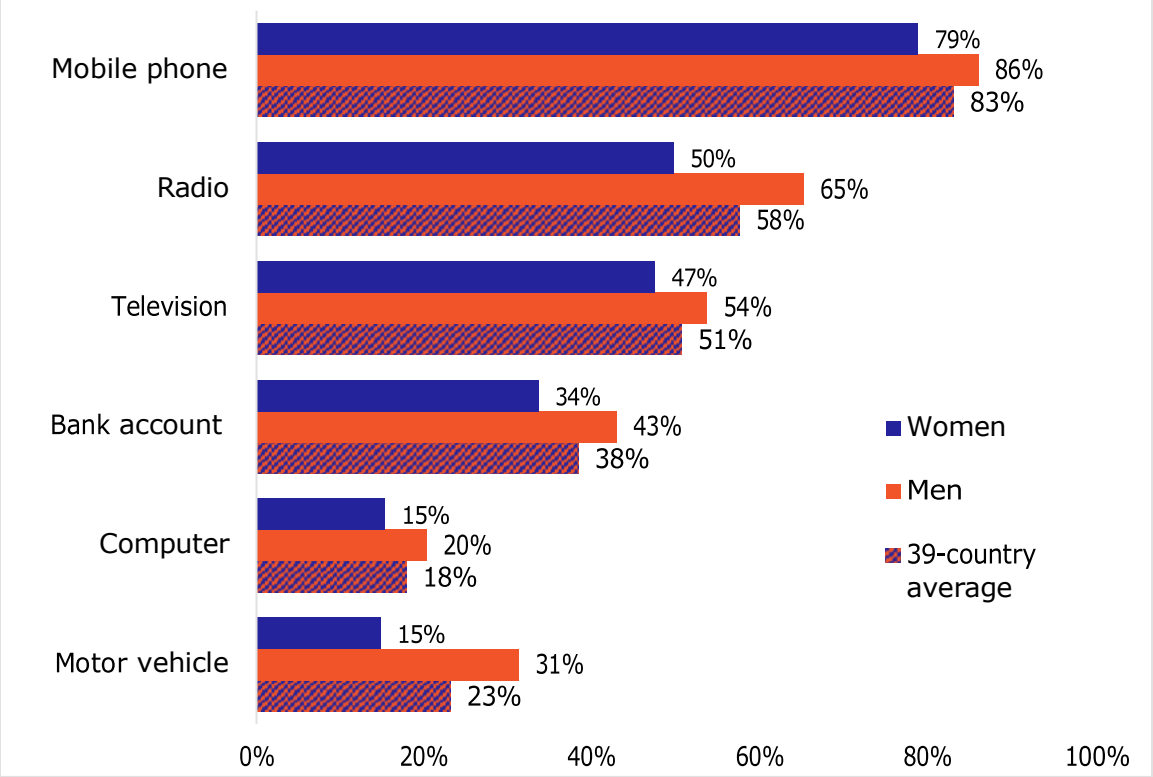
Women's voice in household financial decisions is also more limited than men's. Women are almost twice as likely as men to report that they defer decisions about how household money is spent to their spouses or other family members (16% vs. 9%), while men are more likely than women to say they make decisions on their own (44% vs. 35%) (Figure 20).

Figure 17: Employment status | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is it full time or part time? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job?*

Figure 18: Asset ownership | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *Which of these things do you personally own?*

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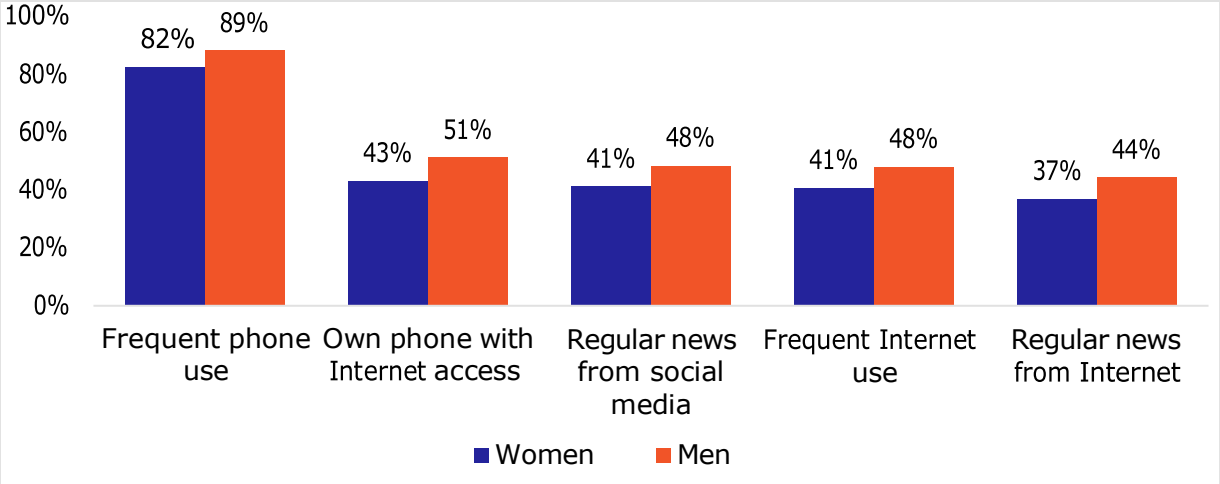
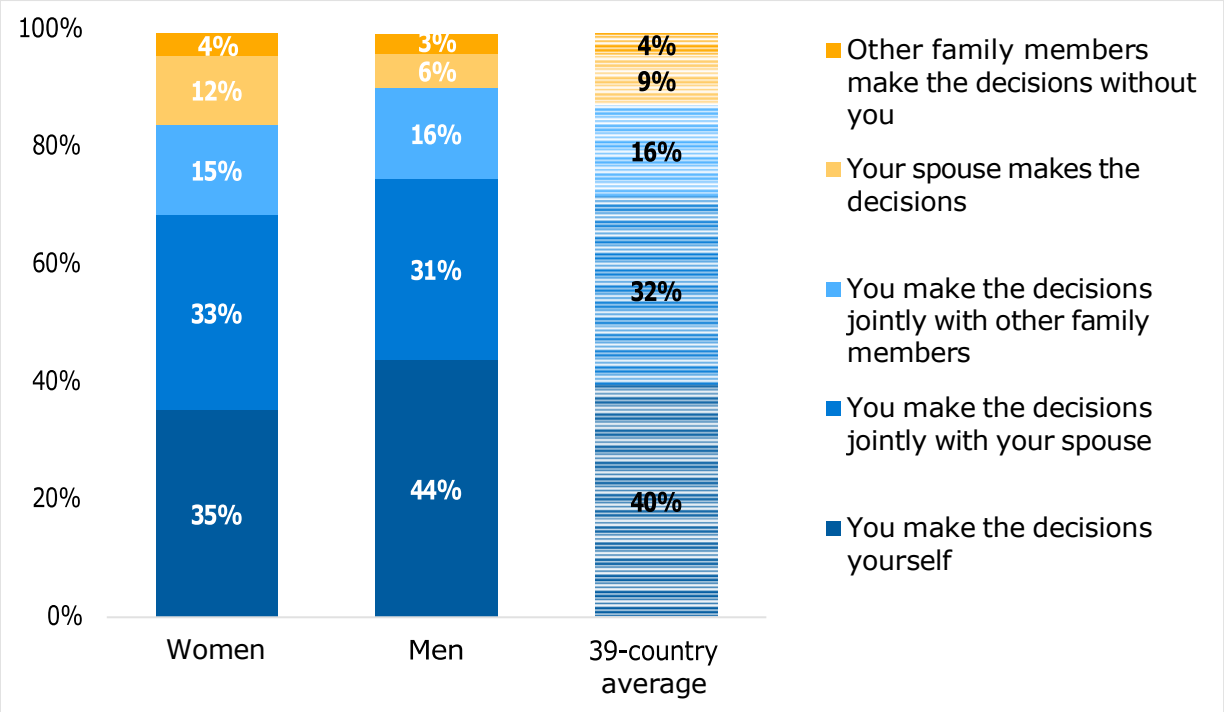
Figure 19: Digital divide | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked:

How often do you use: The Internet? A mobile phone? (% who say "a few times a week" or "every day")
Which of these things do you personally own: Mobile phone? [If "yes":] Does your phone have access to the Internet? (% of all respondents who own a phone with Internet access)
How often do you get news from each of the following sources: Internet? Social media? (% who say "a few times a week" or "every day")

Figure 20: Who decides how money is used? | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *What is the main way that decisions are made about how to use any money that you have or earn, for example from a job, a business, selling things, or other activities?*

Government performance in promoting gender equality

Despite these gaps in women's status and achievement, on average people give their governments some of their best performance ratings on "promoting equal rights and

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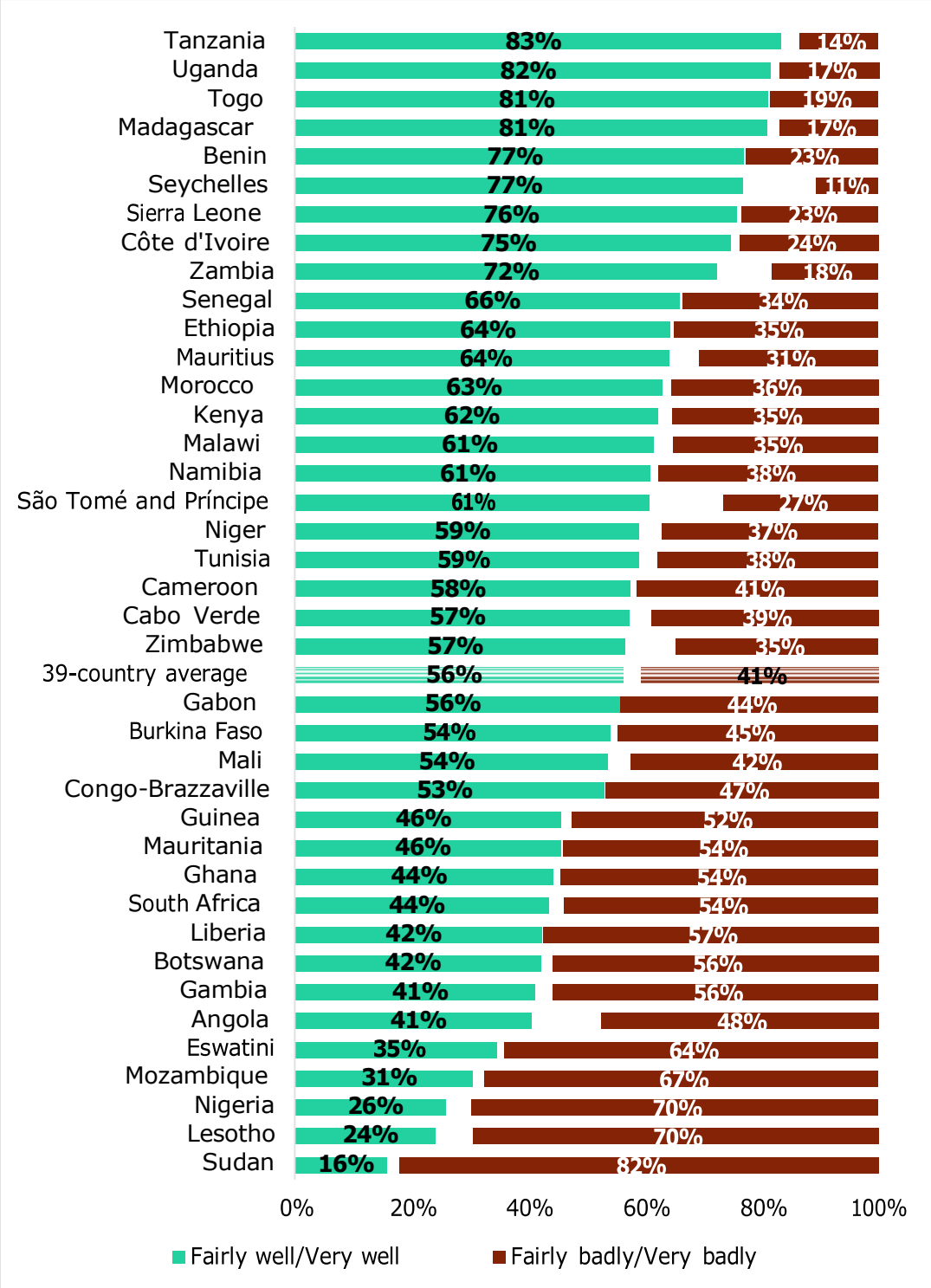
opportunities for women." A majority (56%) say their government is doing a "fairly" or "very" good job of fostering equality, while 41% disagree (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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: Promoting equal rights and opportunities for women?*

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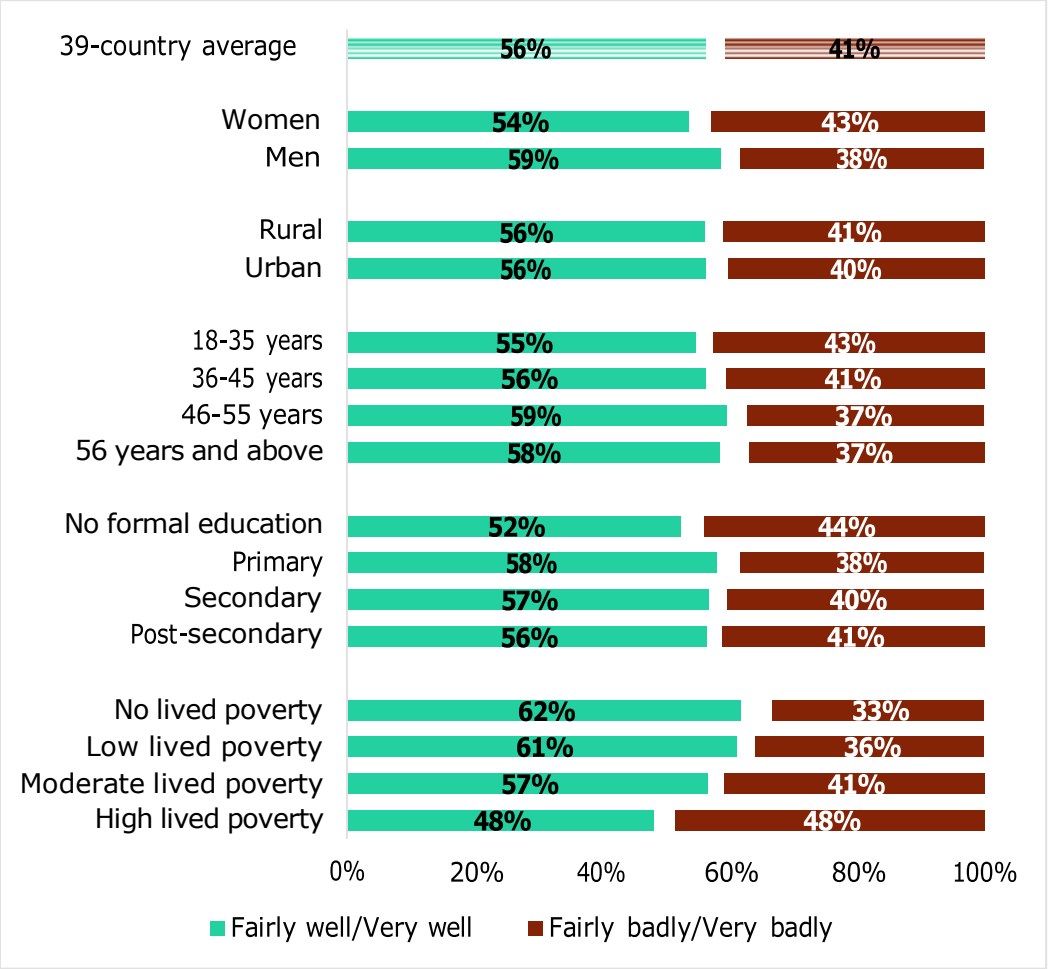
Among 17 sectors that the survey asks about, ranging from job creation to protection of vulnerable children, gender equality is the only sector where a majority of citizens give positive marks for government performance (not shown).

Positive ratings reach as high as eight in 10 in Tanzania (83%), Uganda (82%), Togo (81%), and Madagascar (81%), but only one in four agree in Nigeria (26%) and Lesotho (24%), and a paltry 16% of Sudanese say the same.

Differences across socio-economic groups are generally modest. Most significantly, economically well-off citizens (62%) are substantially more likely to be satisfied with their government's efforts on gender equality than the poorest citizens (48%). Smaller gaps separate men from women (59% vs. 54%) and more educated citizens from those with no formal schooling (56% vs. 52%) (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women | by demographic group | 39 countries | 2021/2023



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: Promoting equal rights and opportunities for women? (% who say fairly well or very well).*

But even if government performance ratings are generally positive, 63% of citizens – including 66% of women – say their government needs to do more to promote equal rights and opportunities for women (Figure 23).

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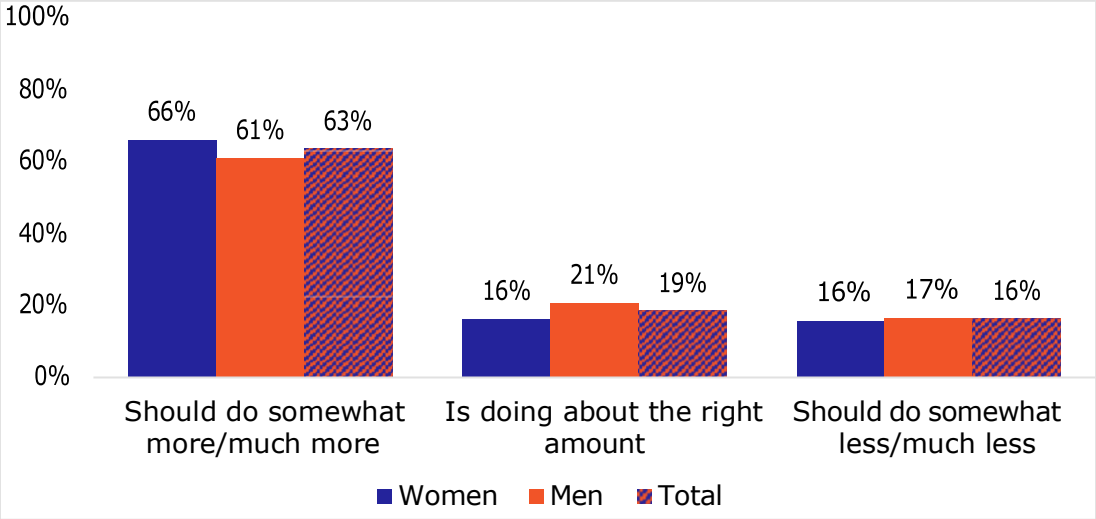
Figure 23: Should the government do more or less to promote equal rights and opportunities for women? | by gender | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, should government and elected officials be doing more than they are doing now to advance the rights and equality of women, or should they be doing less, or are they doing about the right amount?*

Conclusion

Tackling gender inequality in a country, and across a continent, is a massive challenge. It requires changes not just to laws, but also to attitudes. It requires shifting expectations – among boys and girls, men and women – about women's role in the home, in society, in business, and in government. And it requires a reimagining, for women and girls, of what their world can and should look like, and how they must make their voices heard to achieve it.

Evidence from the latest round of Afrobarometer surveys offers some cause for optimism as well as reminders of how much remains to be done. Support for the *principle* of gender equality appears to be taking root. Majorities say they believe in the rightness of gender equality. These attitudes are not yet universal, but they are widespread and growing, albeit slowly.

But achieving equality is very much a work in progress. While many Africans say gender parity already exists in such key areas as access to jobs and land, the data point to persistent disadvantages for women in educational attainment, control over key assets and finances, and political participation. And violence against women and girls, which a disturbing 38% of adults say is common in their community, ranks as the top women's-rights issue facing governments and societies.

African governments receive more positive performance ratings on their promotion of gender equality than they do on economic management, job creation, and a host of other issues. But a majority of citizens also insist that more needs to be done. Economically disadvantaged communities, where citizens are less likely to see gender equality as a reality and to pronounce themselves satisfied with their government's efforts, may be one place to focus renewed efforts.

If support for equality *in principle* is winning the day, equality *in practice* is still elusive, and advocates of gender equality will need to redouble their efforts if the shared goals of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs are to become shared realities.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Afrobarometer Round 9 fieldwork dates and previous survey rounds

Country	Round 9 fieldwork	Previous survey rounds
Angola	Feb.-March 2022	2019
Benin	Jan. 2022	2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
Botswana	June-July 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Burkina Faso	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Cabo Verde	July-Aug. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2019
Cameroon	March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Congo-Brazzaville	June-July 2023	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2013, 2014, 2017, 2019
Eswatini	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Ethiopia	May-June 2023	2013, 2020
Gabon	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2015, 2017, 2020
Gambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2018, 2021
Ghana	April 2022	1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Guinea	Aug. 2022	2013, 2015, 2017, 2019
Kenya	Nov.-Dec. 2021	2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019
Lesotho	Feb.-March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Liberia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
Madagascar	April-May 2022	2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2018
Malawi	Feb. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Mali	July 2022	2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Mauritania	Nov. 2022	NA
Mauritius	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2020
Morocco	Aug.-Sept. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Mozambique	Oct.-Nov. 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021
Namibia	Oct.-Nov. 2021	1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019
Niger	June 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Nigeria	March 2022	2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2020
São Tomé and Príncipe	Dec. 2022	2015, 2018
Senegal	May-June 2022	2002, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021
Seychelles	Dec. 2022	NA
Sierra Leone	June-July 2022	2012, 2015, 2018, 2020
South Africa	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2021

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Sudan	Nov.-Dec. 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2021
Tanzania	Sept.-Oct. 2022	2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Togo	March 2022	2012, 2014, 2017, 2021
Tunisia	Feb.-March 2022	2013, 2015, 2018, 2020
Uganda	Jan. 2022	2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019
Zambia	Aug.-Sept. 2022	1999, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2020
Zimbabwe	March-April 2022	1999, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021

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