

# Ugandans commend their government's performance in bridging the gender gap

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**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 311 | Derick Msafiri and Veronica Kakengi**

## Summary

Bridging gender gaps is a global priority, embodied in the United Nations (2019) Sustainable Development Goal No. 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." Its importance is underscored by the insight that countries cannot develop their full potential if gender inequality prevents women from fully engaging in political and socio-economic activities (Gabola et al., 2018; Churchill, Nuhu, & Lopez, 2018).

In Uganda, government efforts to promote gender equality include a National Gender Policy (2007), a Gender and Equity Strategy for Social Protection (2018), and a variety of program interventions emphasizing women's empowerment, such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme, Labour Works Program, and Youth Livelihood Program (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2019). But despite notable efforts, women still lag behind men in access to political and socio-economic opportunities. Women remain vulnerable to gender-based violence, own fewer assets than men, make up just 35% of Parliament, and are less likely than men to have paid employment (28% vs. 46%) (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017a, 2017b, 2019; Gabola et al., 2018; Wyrod, 2008).

According to the latest Afrobarometer survey, most Ugandans endorse gender equality and say the government has done a good job of promoting opportunities for women. A majority think gender equality has been achieved when it comes to getting an education and a job. But a sizeable share of the population would still prioritize men when jobs are scarce, and almost one-fifth of women still report experiencing gender-based discrimination.

## Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer directs a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 38 countries since 1999. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Uganda, led by Hatchile Consult Lt, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Ugandans between 26 December 2016 and 8th January 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Uganda in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, and 2015.

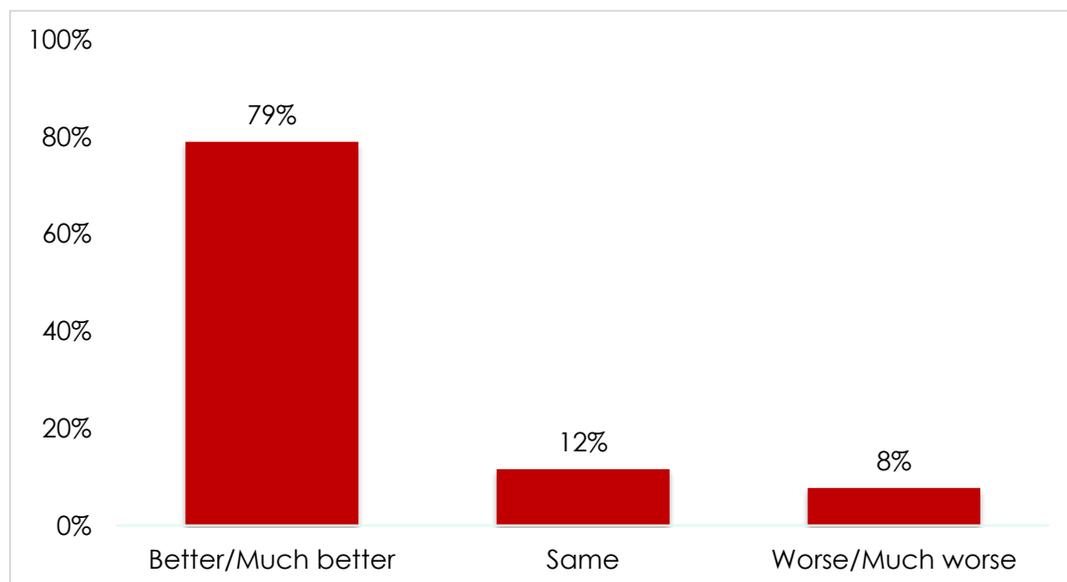
## Key findings

- More than three-quarters (79%) of Ugandans say equal opportunities and treatment for women have improved in recent years.
- Most Ugandans say gender equality has already been achieved when it comes to getting an education (86%) and a paying job (80%). Far fewer – though still a majority – say the same about owning and inheriting land (55%).
- But almost one in five women (18%) say they experienced gender-based discrimination during the previous year.
- A majority of Ugandans say women should have the same chance as men to be elected to public office (76%) and to own and inherit land (71%). But a substantial minority believe that men should be given priority for scarce jobs (39%) and that families are better off if women, rather than men, have primary responsibility for the home and children (38%).
- Ugandans are almost unanimous (86%) in praising the government's performance in promoting opportunities and equality for women.

## Access to opportunities and treatment of women

Eight out of 10 Ugandans (79%) say that equal opportunities and treatment for women are “better” or “much better” now compared to “a few years ago.” About one in five say the situation has worsened (8%) or remained unchanged (12%) (Figure 1).

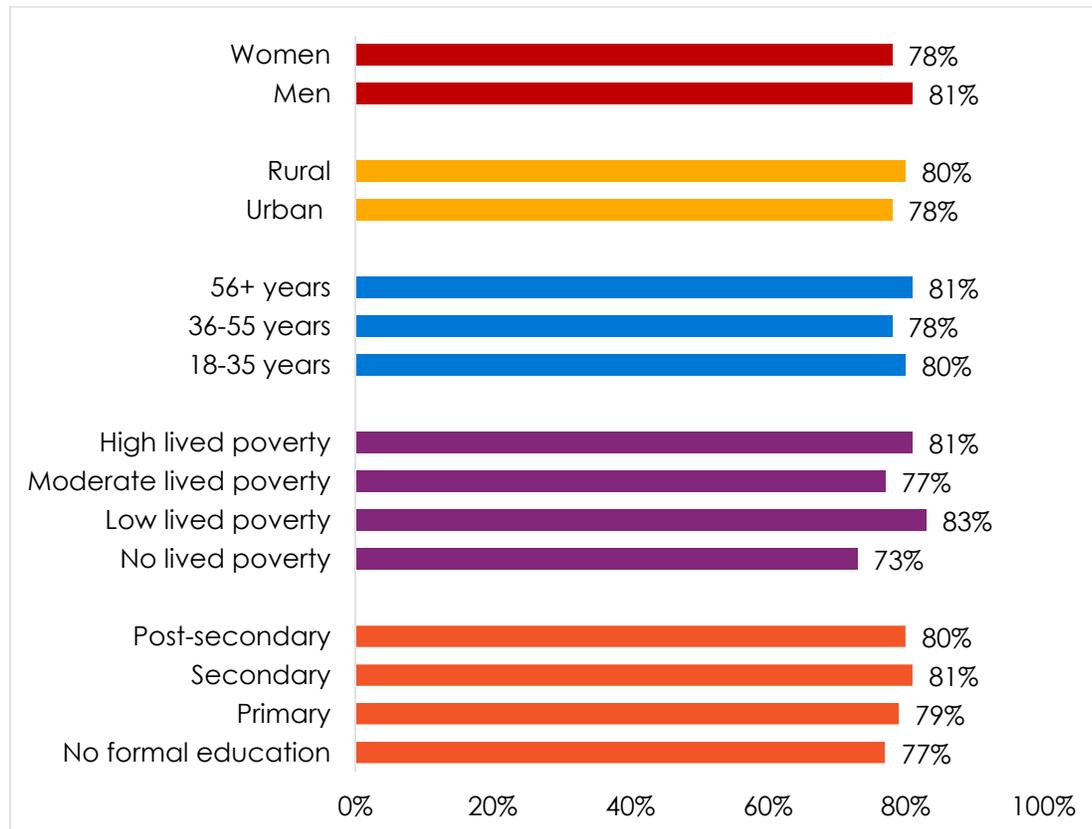
**Figure 1: Opportunities and treatment for women compared to a few years ago**  
 | Uganda | 2017



**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Equal opportunities and treatment for women?

These assessments are remarkably consistent across key socio-demographic groups, varying little by respondents' gender, age, residency location, or educational status. The wealthiest respondents (those experiencing "no lived poverty")<sup>1</sup> are slightly less likely to see progress (73%), perhaps reflecting higher expectations for progress among this group (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Improved opportunities and treatment for women** | by socio-demographic group | Uganda | 2017

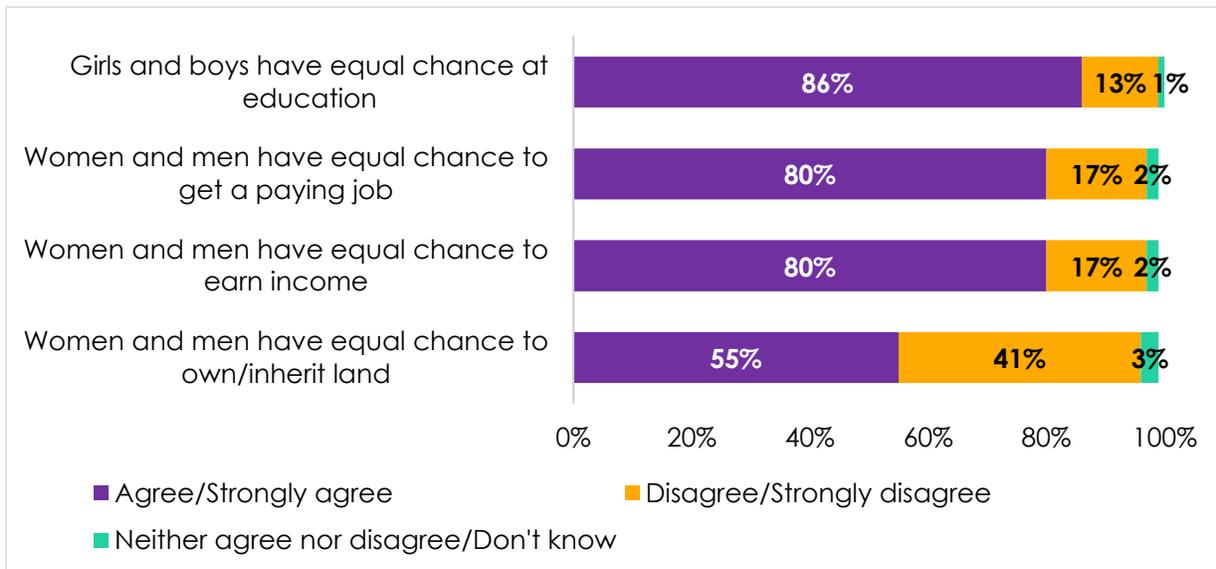


**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Equal opportunities and treatment for women? (% who say "better" or "much better")

Large majorities of Ugandans assert that gender equality is already a reality when it comes to education and jobs (Figure 3). At least eight out of 10 respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that girls and boys have an equal chance to get an education (86%) and that women and men have an equal opportunity to get a paying job (80%) and to earn an income (80%). A much slimmer majority (55%) say that women currently have the same chance as men to own or inherit land.

<sup>1</sup> Afrobarometer assesses respondents' "lived poverty" based on responses to the following questions: "Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?"

**Figure 3: Perceptions of gender equality | Uganda | 2017**



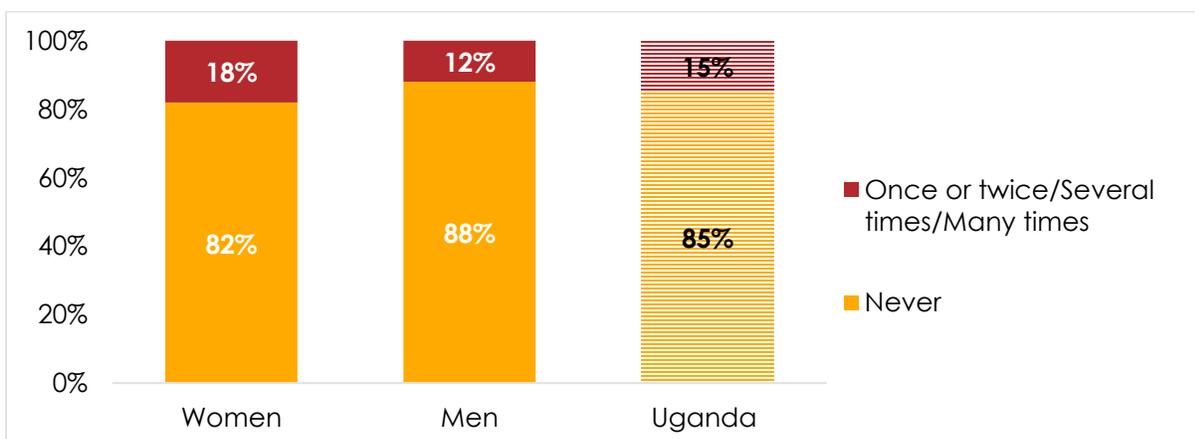
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree, or haven't you heard enough to say? In our country today:

- Girls and boys have equal opportunities to get an education?
- Women and men have equal opportunities to own and inherit land?
- Women and men have equal opportunities to get a job that pays a wage or salary?
- Women and men have equal opportunities to earn an income?

### Gender discrimination and violence

Despite positive assessments of progress toward gender equality, almost one in five Ugandan women (18%) say they experienced discrimination based on their gender during the 12 months preceding the survey, including 6% who say this occurred "several times" or "many times." Somewhat fewer men (12%) say they were victims of gender-based discrimination (Figure 4).

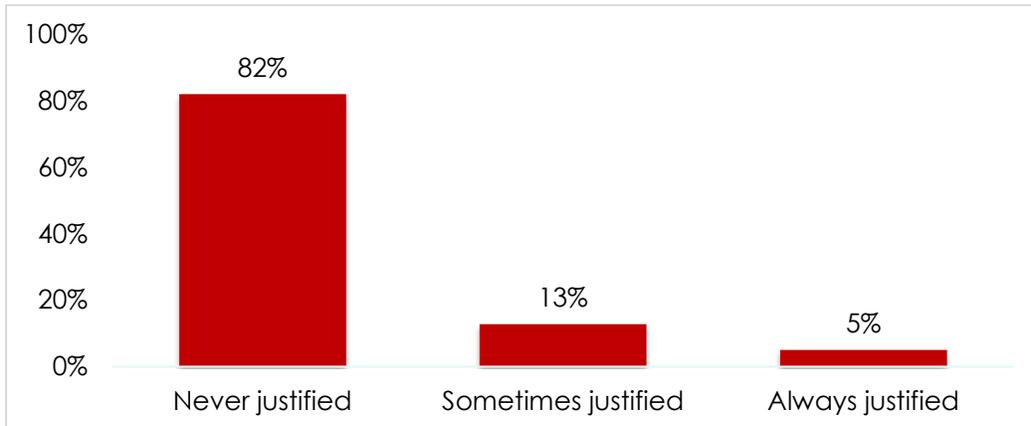
**Figure 4: Experienced discrimination based on gender | Uganda | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** In the past year, how often, if at all, have you personally been discriminated against based on any of the following: Your gender?

More than eight in 10 Ugandans (82%) say a man is “never” justified in beating his wife. But that leaves nearly one in five citizens who see wife-beating as “sometimes” (13%) or “always” (5%) justifiable (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Is domestic violence ever justified? | Uganda | 2017**



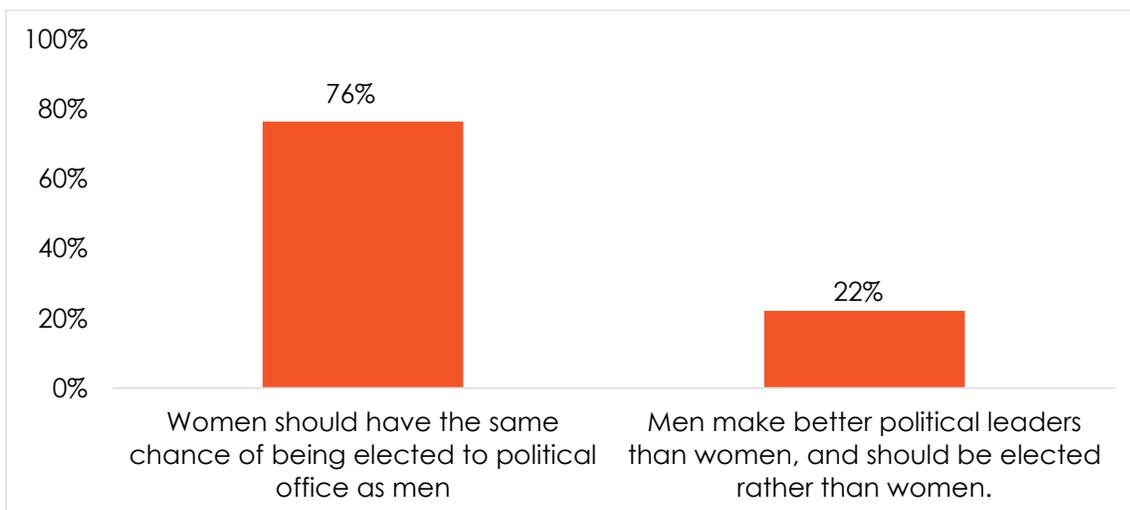
**Respondents were asked:** Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, sometimes be justified, or never be justified: For a man to beat his wife?

### Popular support for equal rights

A majority of Ugandans support equal rights for women, but survey responses reflect some differences in views of gender roles.

Three-quarters (76%) of respondents say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to political office. Fewer than one in four (22%) think men make better political leaders than women and should be elected in their place (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Support for gender equality in politics | Uganda | 2017**

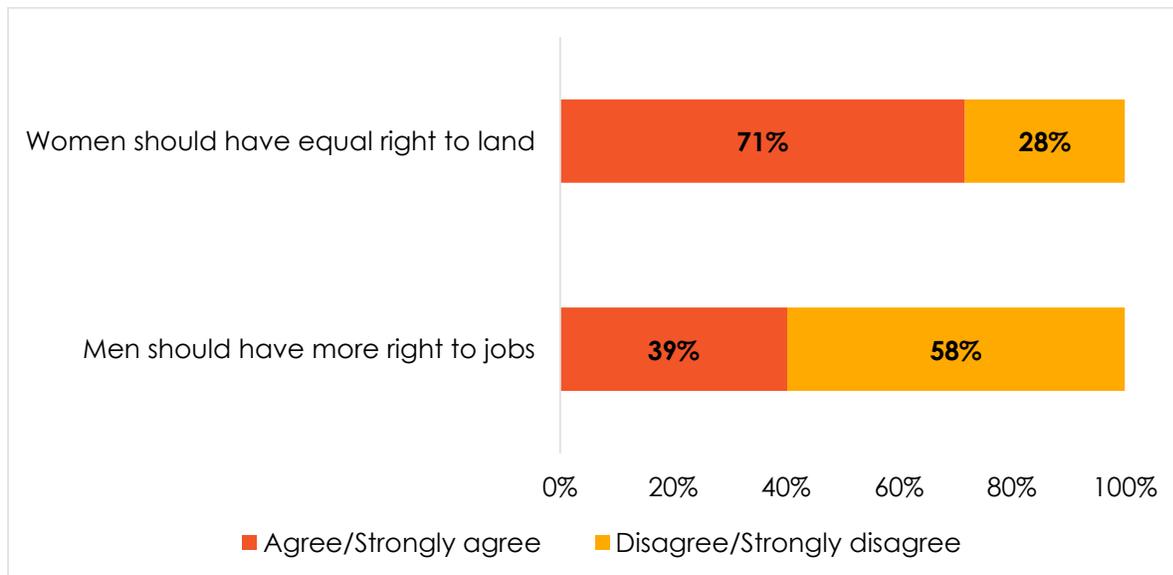


**Respondents were asked:** Which of the following statements is closest to your view? (% who “agree” or “agree very strongly” with each statement)

Seven in 10 Ugandans (71%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land (Figure 7).

But a much slimmer majority stand for equality when it comes to jobs: 58% “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the idea that men should be given priority when jobs are scarce.

**Figure 7: Support for equal rights to land and jobs | Uganda | 2017**



**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?*

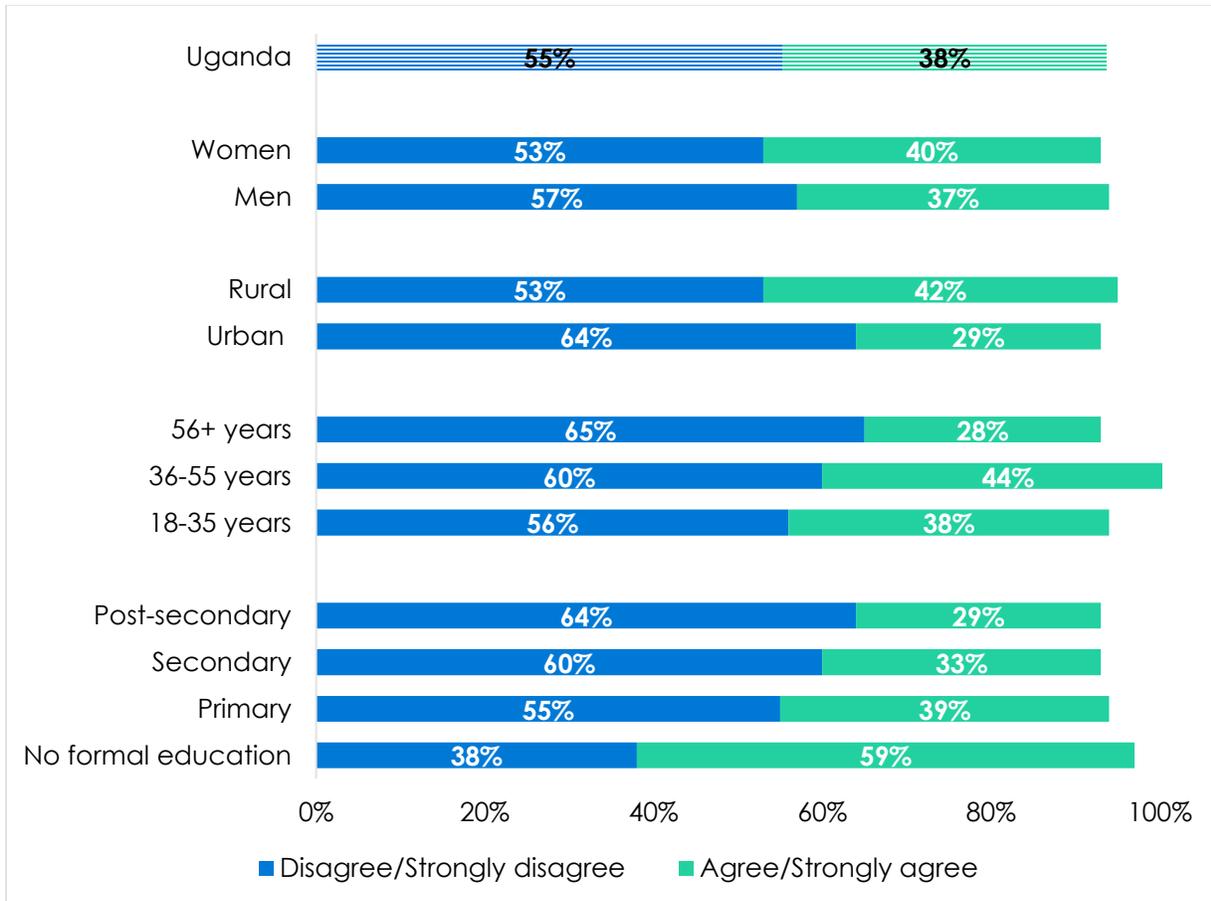
*When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women?*

When it comes to gender roles, Ugandans are divided as to whether families are better off if a woman, rather than a man, has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children. A slim majority (55%) “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with this idea – well above the average of 38% across 34 countries surveyed in 2016/2018. But about four in 10 (38%) agree that it's better if women have the main care-taking role (Figure 8).

Women are actually slightly *less* likely to disagree than men (53% vs. 57%) with the idea that families are better off under a woman's care. In urban areas, disagreement is considerably higher than in rural zones (64% vs. 53%). And disagreement increases with respondents' level of education, ranging from 38% among those with no formal education to 64% among those with post-secondary qualifications.

Perhaps surprisingly, older respondents (65% among those aged 56 or older) are more likely to disagree than youth (56% among those aged 18-35).

**Figure 8: Better if women care for home and children** | by socio-demographic group  
 | Uganda | 2017

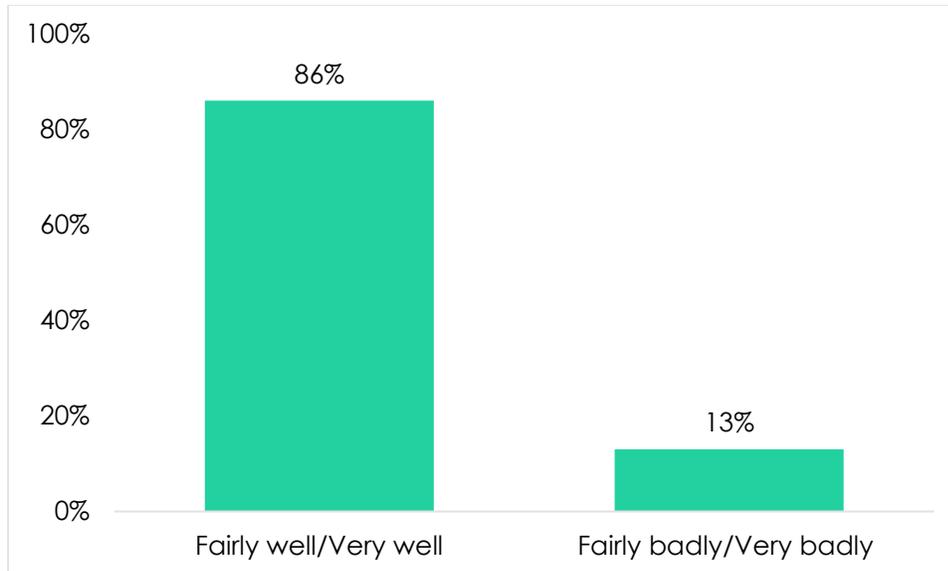


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: In general, it is better for a family if a woman has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children rather than a man?

### Government performance on gender equality

Overall, Ugandans are almost unanimous in praising their government's efforts to promote opportunities and equality for women: 86% describe its performance on this issue as "fairly" or "very" good, while only 13% say it is handling gender equality "fairly badly" or "very badly" (Figure 9). As was the case on the question of whether equal opportunity has improved in recent years, assessments of the government's performance are fairly consistent across key demographic groups, but the wealthiest respondents are less likely to approve of the government's performance (72%).

**Figure 9: Government performance on promoting opportunities and equality for women**  
| Uganda | 2017



**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 opportunities and equality for women?

## Conclusion

In its citizens' eyes, Uganda is working its way toward gender equality. The government receives high marks for its efforts to promote opportunities for women, and most citizens say things have changed for the better in recent years. But despite these positive assessments, a substantial part of the population – about four out of every 10 citizens – don't think women have achieved equality when it comes to owning and inheriting land. A similar number think that men have more right to a job than women. And reports of gender-based discrimination are still far too common to declare full gender equality a reality in Uganda.

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