

Amid persistent gender inequalities, Ghanaians call for government action to bridge the gaps

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 573 | Maame Akua Amoah Twum and Mavis Zupork Dome

Summary

Globally, women continue to trail men in education, economic opportunity, political leadership, and other areas. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 – achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls by 2030 – appears even more remote given the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations, 2022; UN Women, 2022).

Ghana is doing worse than most countries in advancing toward gender equality, according to the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, which ranks Ghana 117th out of 156 countries – 23rd in sub-Saharan Africa – on its progress (World Economic Forum, 2021). The index report notes that women's income in Ghana is just 29.2% of men's, second-worst on the continent after Mali (28.1%).

Similarly, Ghana's 2021 census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021a, 2021b) found that while women outnumber men in the service sector, they are underrepresented at management levels. More girls and women than boys and men have never attended school and lack literacy. Among 275 parliamentarians in Ghana, only 40 (14.6%) are women, and among 6,000 assembly members across the country, only 216 (3.6%) are women (Parliament of Ghana, 2022; allAfrica.com, 2022).

Ghana's commitment to gender equality is reflected in its Constitution, which prohibits gender discrimination and mandates "reasonable regional and gender balance in recruitment and appointment to public offices" (Republic of Ghana, 1996); its ratification of the Maputo Protocol (African Union, 2005) and other international agreements; and its national policy and institutional framework (Women and Girls Empowered, 2022). But its long-awaited Affirmative Action Bill, which calls for a progressive increase in women's active participation in the public bureaucracy to achieve parity by 2030, has yet to be passed, despite government promises to do so in 2017 and 2020 (Ghana Today, 2022).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 (2021/2022) questionnaire to explore Africans' experiences and perceptions of gender equality.

Survey findings show that in Ghana, women still lag behind men in educational attainment, ownership of key assets, and financial autonomy. Strong majorities of citizens express support for women's right to equality in hiring, in land ownership, and in political leadership. But sizeable minorities also consider it likely that female candidates for elective office might suffer criticism, harassment, or family problems.

A majority of Ghanaians say the government needs to do more to promote equal rights and opportunities for women.

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. Eight survey rounds in up to 39 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2022) are currently underway. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Ghana, led by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2,400 adult Ghanaians in April 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Ghana in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019.

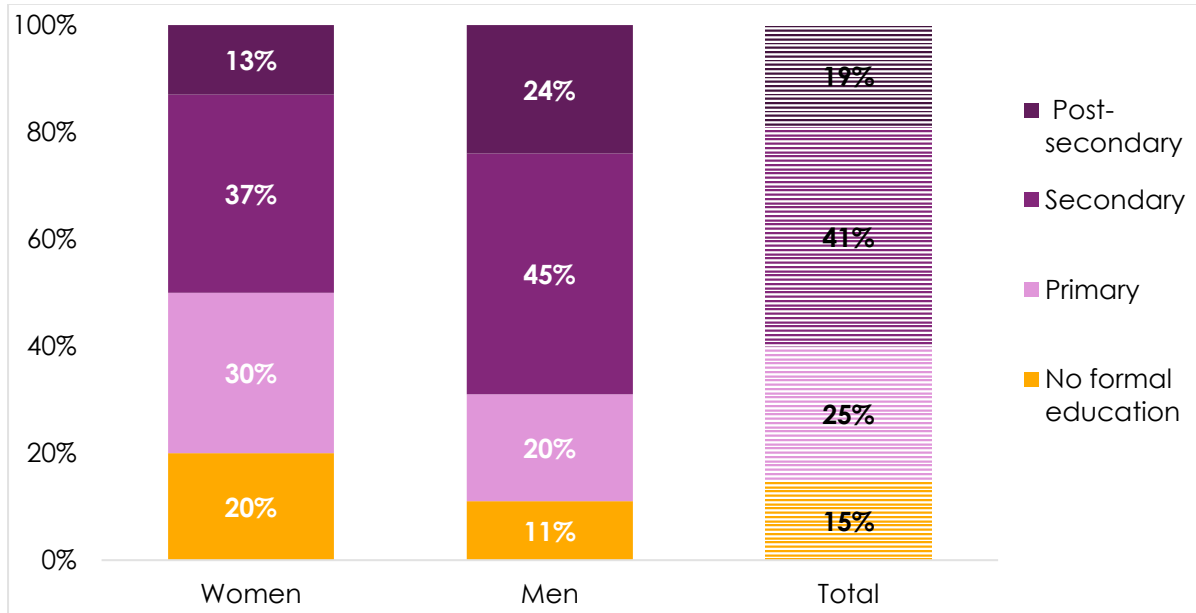
Key findings

- In Ghana, women are less likely than men to have secondary education (37% vs. 45%) or post-secondary education (13% vs. 24%). More women than men have no formal education (20% vs. 11%).
- Women trail men significantly in ownership of important assets, including a mobile phone (90% vs. 95%), a bank account (42% vs. 57%), a motor vehicle (12% vs. 37%), and a computer (13% vs. 26%).
 - Similarly, women are less likely than men to say they make household financial decisions (51% vs. 60%).
- Strong majorities of Ghanaians say women should have the same rights as men to get paying jobs (66%) and to own and inherit land (85%). Men are less likely than women to support gender equality in hiring and land rights.
 - Majorities of citizens say women in fact enjoy equal rights when it comes to jobs (63%) and land (71%).
- More than three-fourths (78%) of Ghanaians say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office.
 - But while almost nine out of 10 citizens (86%) think a woman will gain standing in the community if she runs for office, substantial minorities also consider it likely that she will be criticised or harassed (42%) or will face problems with her family (35%).
- Two-thirds (67%) of Ghanaians say the government should do more to promote equal rights and opportunities for women.

Education and control of assets

In Ghana, women trail men in educational attainment. Men are almost twice as likely as women to have post-secondary education (24% vs. 13%), and more men than women have secondary schooling (45% vs. 37%). Women are more likely than men to have no formal schooling (20% vs. 11%) (Figure 1).

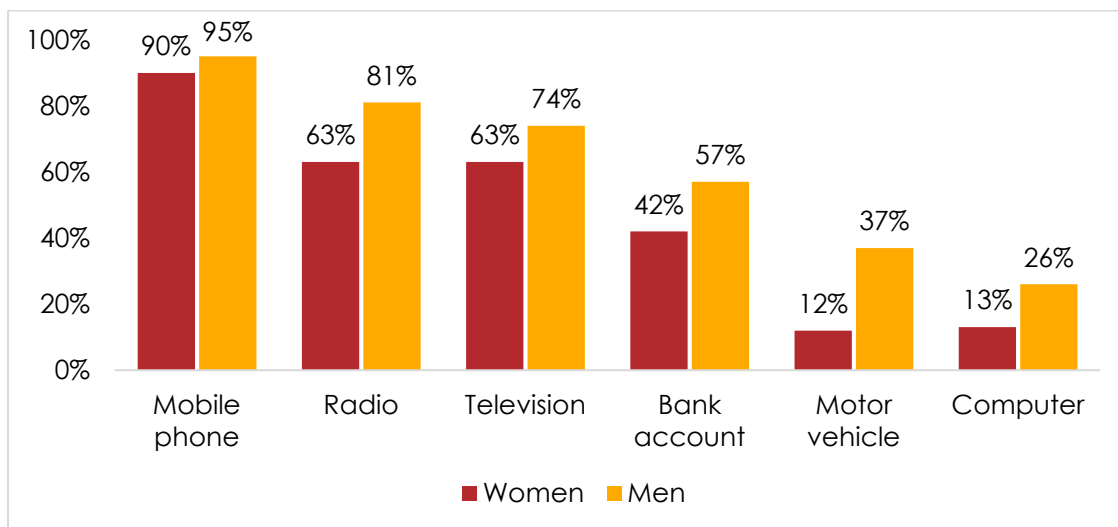
Figure 1: Educational attainment | by gender | Ghana | 2022



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

Women are also significantly less likely than men to own key assets, including a mobile phone (90% vs. 95%), a radio (63% vs. 81%), a television (63% vs. 74%), a bank account (42% vs. 57%), a motor vehicle (12% vs. 37%), and a computer (13% vs. 26%) (Figure 2).

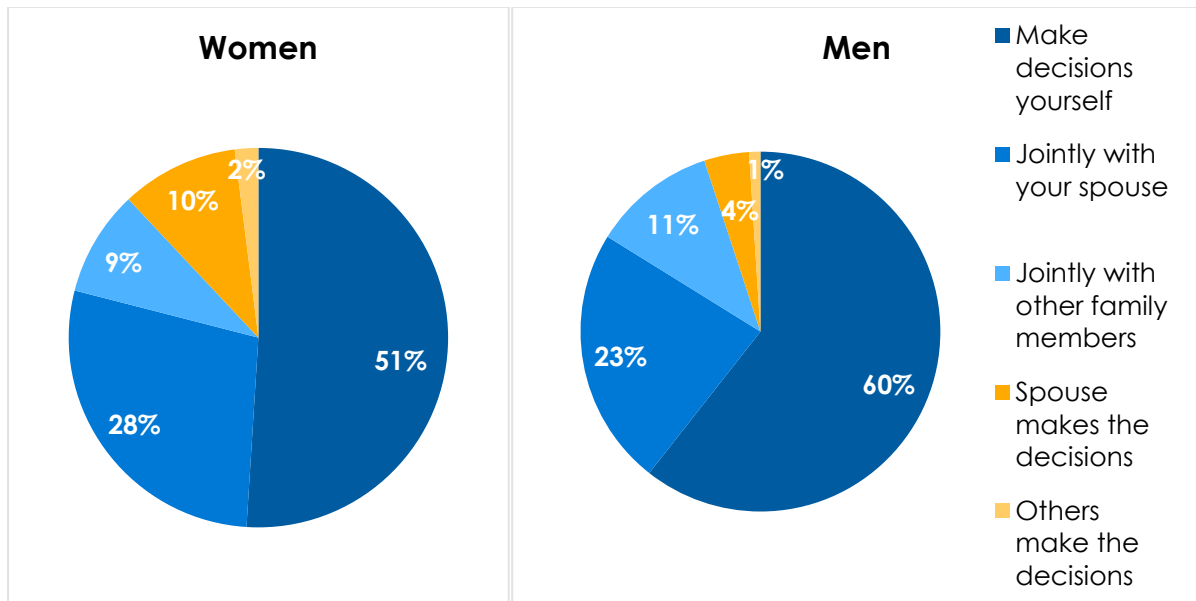
Figure 2: Asset ownership | by gender | Ghana | 2022



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

When it comes to who decides how household money is spent, women are less likely than men to say they make the decisions themselves (51% vs. 60%) (Figure 3). More women than men say that they make such decisions jointly with their spouse (28% vs. 23%). Women are twice as likely as men to say that the spouse or other family members make such decisions (12% vs. 5%), leaving them without a voice in household financial decisions.

Figure 3: Who decides how money is used? | by gender | Ghana | 2022



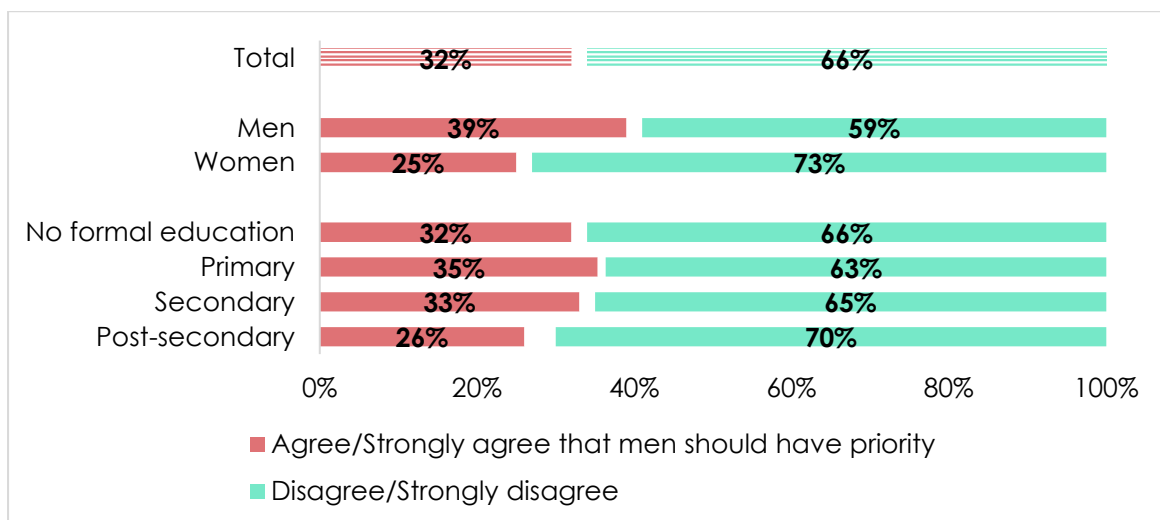
Respondents were asked: What is the main way that decisions are made about how to use any money that you have or earn, for example from a job, a business, selling things, or other activities?

Rights to a job and land

The ability to claim certain rights can be a tool to promote gender equality – or to maintain inequality. Do Ghanaians want gender equality when it comes to jobs and land?

About one-third (32%) of Ghanaians endorse the idea that men should be given priority over women in hiring when jobs are scarce, while two-thirds (66%) reject this form of gender discrimination (Figure 4). Men (59%) trail women (73%) in insisting on gender equality when it comes to jobs. Citizens with post-secondary education (70%) are somewhat more likely to support equality in hiring than those with less education (63%-66%).

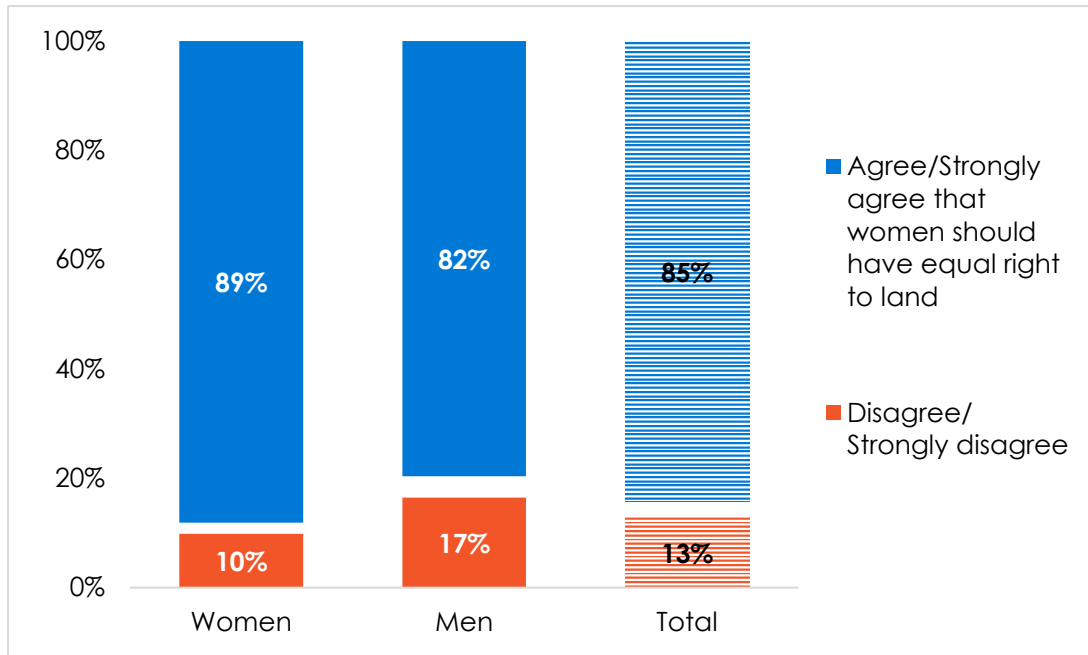
Figure 4: Should men have priority for scarce jobs? | by gender and education | Ghana | 2022



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.

An overwhelming majority (85%) endorse equal rights to own and inherit land. Here, too, men are somewhat less likely than women to believe in equality (82% vs. 89%) (Figure 5), while views do not differ significantly by urban-rural location, age, education, or economic status.

Figure 5: Should women have equal rights to land? | by gender | Ghana | 2022



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.

While most Ghanaians endorse equal rights to jobs and land, do women already enjoy equality? Large majorities of respondents say women do have the same opportunities as men to get a paying job (63%) and to own and inherit land (71%) (Figure 6).

Women are somewhat less likely than men to report equal opportunities in hiring (61% vs. 65%) but not in land ownership and inheritance (72% vs. 70%).

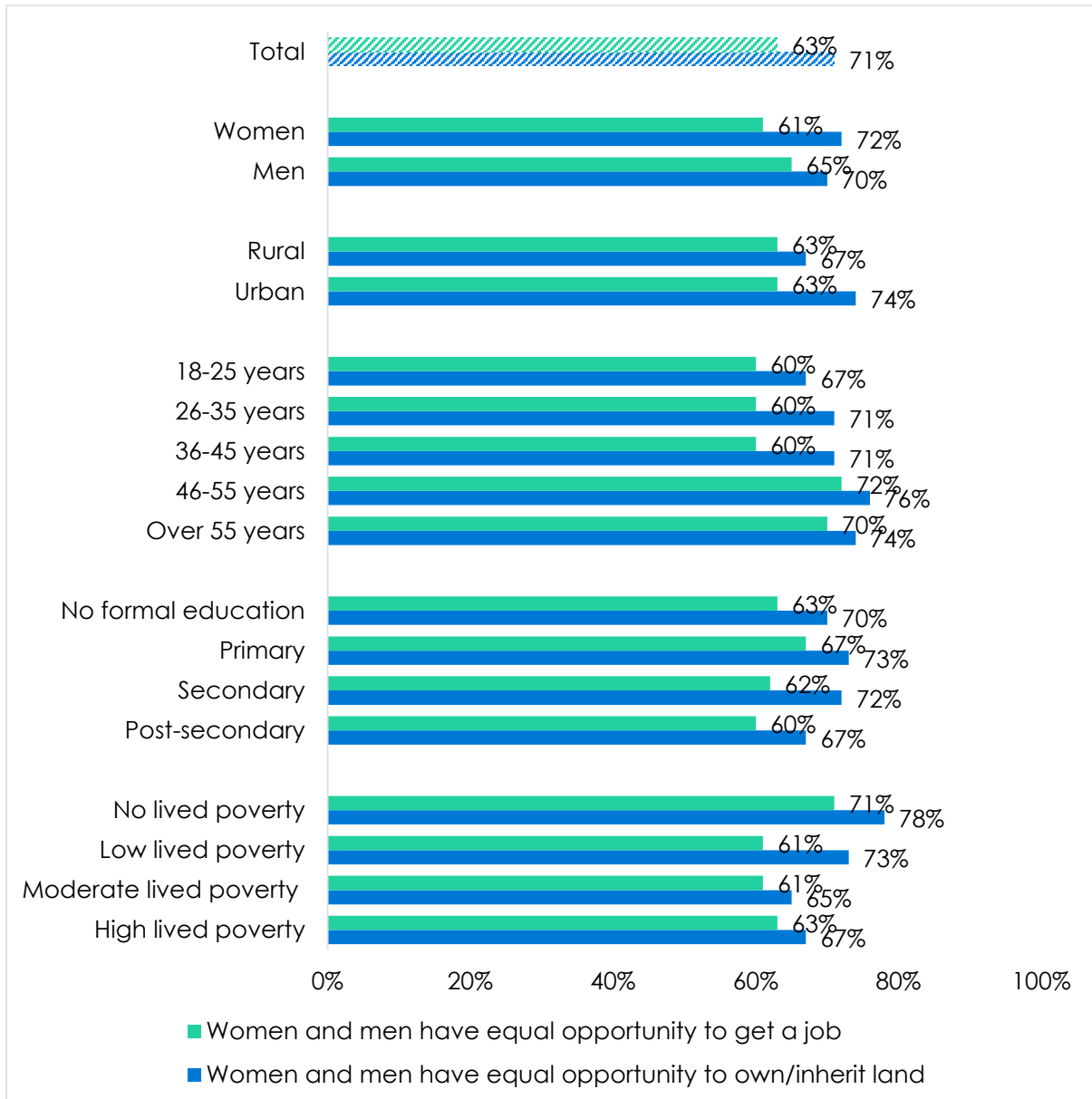
While rural and urban residents hold identical views on opportunities in hiring, rural dwellers are less likely than urbanites to perceive gender equality in land ownership and inheritance (67% vs. 74%).

Older and economically better-off citizens are more likely than younger and poorer respondents to perceive gender equality in both hiring and land ownership.¹

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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 (2020).

Figure 6: Do women and men have equal opportunities to get a job and to own/inherit land? | by demographic group | Ghana | 2022



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")

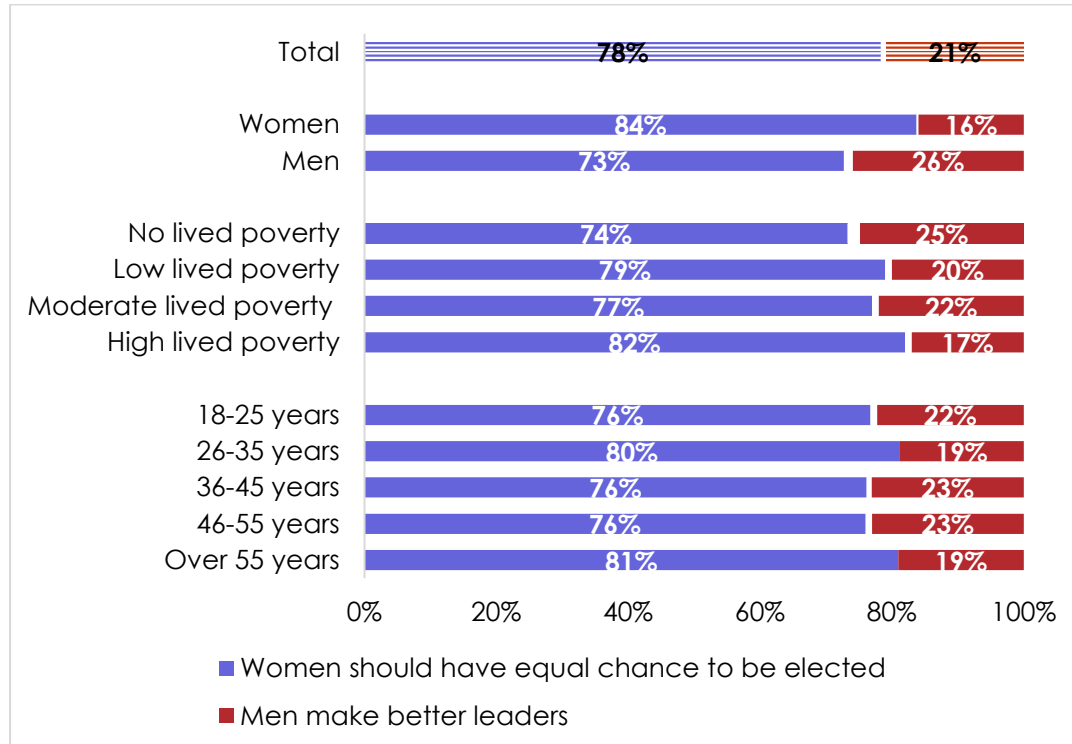
Gender equality in political participation

One way to contribute to gender parity is to increase women's participation in political leadership so that their voices are heard in policy making.

In Ghana, more than three-fourths (78%) of citizens say women should have the same chance as men to vie for political office, rejecting the idea that men make better political

leaders and should thus be given priority as candidates (Figure 7). More women (84%) than men (73%) endorse equality in politics. Poor citizens are more likely to agree than their economically better-off counterparts, ranging from 82% among those with high lived poverty to 74% among those with no lived poverty. Older folks (81%) are more likely to support this idea than the youth (76%).

Figure 7: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | by gender, economic status, and age | Ghana | 2022



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)

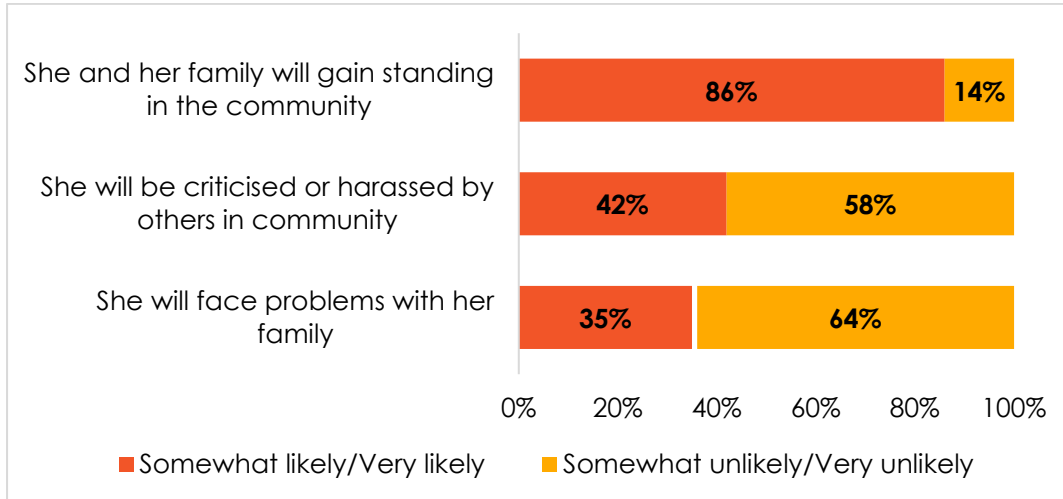
Even if she believes that voters will give her the same consideration as a male candidate, a woman may be further encouraged to run for public office – or discouraged from doing so – by other consequences she expects to result from her candidacy.

On the positive side, almost nine out of 10 Ghanaians (86%) say it is “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that a woman and her family will gain standing in the community if she runs for elective office (Figure 8).

Findings are a bit more mixed when it comes to other potential reactions. About four in 10 respondents (42%) consider it likely that other people in the community will criticise her, call her names, or harass her for seeking public office, while 35% think she might face problems with her family. The fact that majorities see these negative consequences as unlikely may or may not be enough to overcome some women’s reservations about throwing their hats into the ring.

Women and men hold very similar views on these questions.

Figure 8: For better or for worse: How running for elected office might affect women's lives | Ghana | 2022



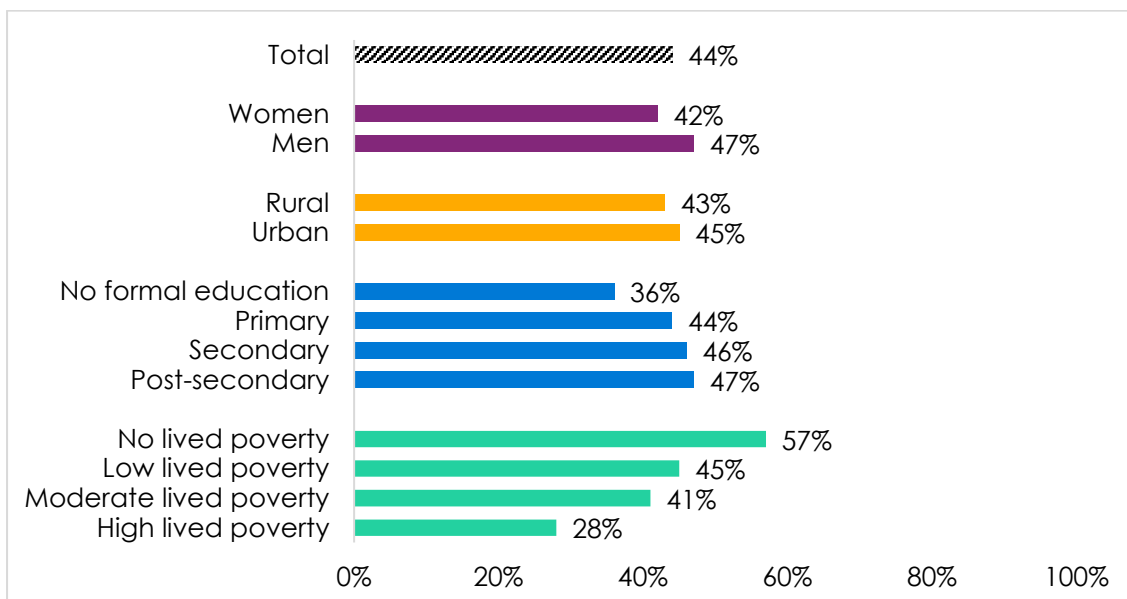
Respondents were asked: *If a woman in your community runs for elected office, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur?*

- 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?*

Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities

Fewer than half (44%) of Ghanaians say their government is doing a "fairly good" or "very good" job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women (Figure 9), while 55% disapprove of the government's performance.

Figure 9: Approval of government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women | Ghana | 2022

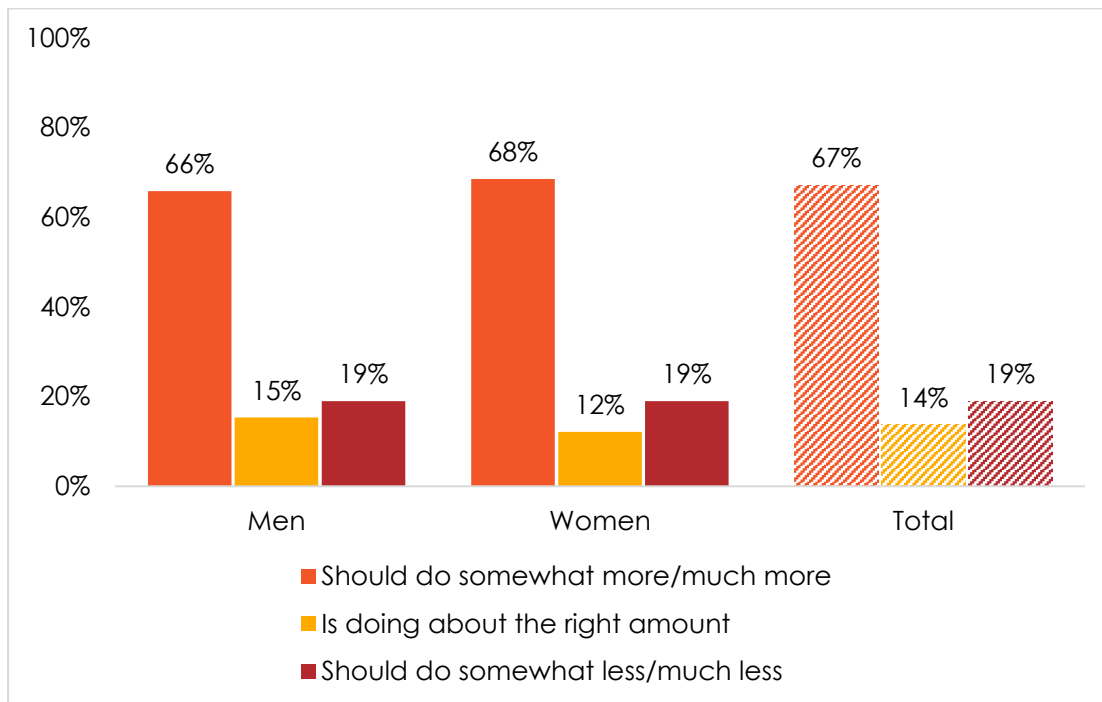


Respondents were asked: *How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Promoting equal rights and opportunities for women? (% who say fairly well or very well).*

Approval ratings are somewhat higher among men than women (47% vs. 42%) but vary more strongly by respondents' education and economic levels. Citizens with no formal schooling (36%) are less likely to be satisfied with the government's efforts on gender equality than those with primary or higher education (44%-47%). Similarly, respondents experiencing high lived poverty (28%) are far less likely to express satisfaction on this issue than their better-off counterparts (41%-57%). These findings suggest that some of the benefits of growing gender equality may not be reaching less educated and poorer populations.

Even if the government's performance ratings are generally positive, two-thirds (67%) of citizens think it could do "somewhat more" or "much more" to promote equal rights and opportunities for women. One in seven (14%) say it's doing about the right amount, while two in 10 (19%) think the government should reduce its gender-equality efforts. Women and men offer similar appraisals of the government's level of effort (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Should the government do more or less to promote equal rights and opportunities for women? | by gender | Ghana | 2022



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

Ghanaians express strong support for gender equality. Yet the country's women continue to trail men in education, asset ownership, financial independence, and political leadership.

One missing element may be greater government engagement, which a large majority of citizens want. For many activists, the Affirmative Action Bill represents an important next step toward gender equality in Ghana.

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Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

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