

Angolans dissatisfied with government efforts to promote equal rights for women

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 622 | Carlos Pacatolo, David Boio, and Cecília Kitombe

Summary

Like many other African countries, Angola has ratified major international instruments on women's rights and gender equality and is committed to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (OHCHR, 2019).

Guided by its 2013 national gender equality policy, Angola has made significant gains in the representation of women in positions of political leadership (OHCHR, 2019). Almost four out of 10 seats in the National Assembly (38.1%) are held by women (Parlamento, 2023), and nine of the 23 ministries in President João Lourenço's administration are led by women.

However, the World Economic Forum's (2022) Global Gender Gap Index ranks Angola 125th out of 146 countries in gender parity, reflecting the many remaining challenges on the path to equal rights for women. Among them is gender-based violence: One in four Angolan women reported in 2018 that they had suffered physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a current or former romantic partner during the previous year (UN Women, 2023). Sexual harassment is a leading barrier to women's effective participation in the labour market, according to a UN Women adviser (Africa News, 2021). Almost one-third (30.3%) of women aged 20-24 years were married or in union before their 18th birthdays (UN Women, 2023).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 (2021/2023) questionnaire to explore Africans' experiences and perceptions of gender equality in control over assets, hiring, land ownership, and political leadership. (For findings on gender-based violence, see Kitombe & Pacatolo, 2023.)

In Angola, women match men in educational attainment and participation in household financial decision making, though they trail men in ownership of key household assets. Majorities express support for women's right to equality in hiring, land ownership, and political leadership, but most also consider it likely that a woman will suffer criticism or harassment if she runs for elective office.

Overall, fewer than half of Angolans approve of the government's performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999, and Round 9 surveys are to be completed in early 2023. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Angola, led by Ovulongwa – Estudos de Opinião Pública, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Angolans in February-March 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. A previous survey was conducted in Angola in 2019.

Key findings

- Educational achievement is gender-equal in Angola, according to survey results.
- Women are less likely than men to have a bank account (47% vs. 55%), a radio (47% vs. 58%), a motor vehicle (16% vs. 31%), and a computer (15% vs. 21%) but match men in participation in household financial decisions.
- A majority of citizens say women should have the same rights as men to get paying jobs (58%) and to own and inherit land (76%).
 - More than six in 10 citizens say women in fact enjoy equal opportunities in hiring (61%) and land ownership (68%).
- Seven in 10 Angolans (70%) say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office.
 - But while 62% of citizens think a woman will gain standing in the community if she runs for office, 51% also consider it likely that she will be criticised or harassed by others in the community.
- Fewer than half (41%) of Angolans say the government is doing a “fairly good” or “very good” job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women. Citizens with no formal education (27%) are least likely to approve of the government's performance.
- Citizens say gender-based violence, unequal access to education, and unequal opportunities in the workplace are the most important women's-rights issues that the government and society must address.

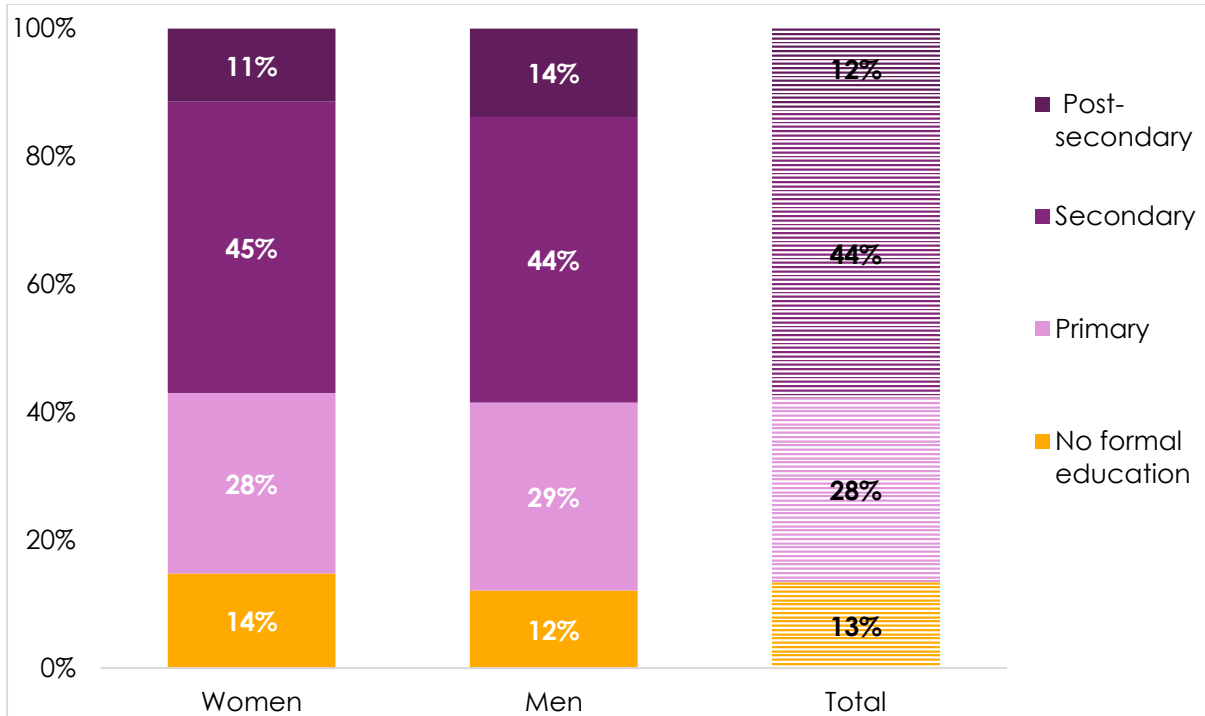
Education and control of assets

Angolan women and men report roughly equal levels of educational attainment (Figure 1). Majorities have secondary (11% of women, 14% of men) or post-secondary (45% and 44%) education. About four in 10 report primary schooling (28% and 29%) or no formal education (14% and 12%).

When it comes to control over assets, women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone (60% vs. 65%), a radio (47% vs. 58%), a bank account (47% vs. 55%), a motor vehicle (16% vs. 31%), and a computer (15% vs. 21%) (Figure 2).

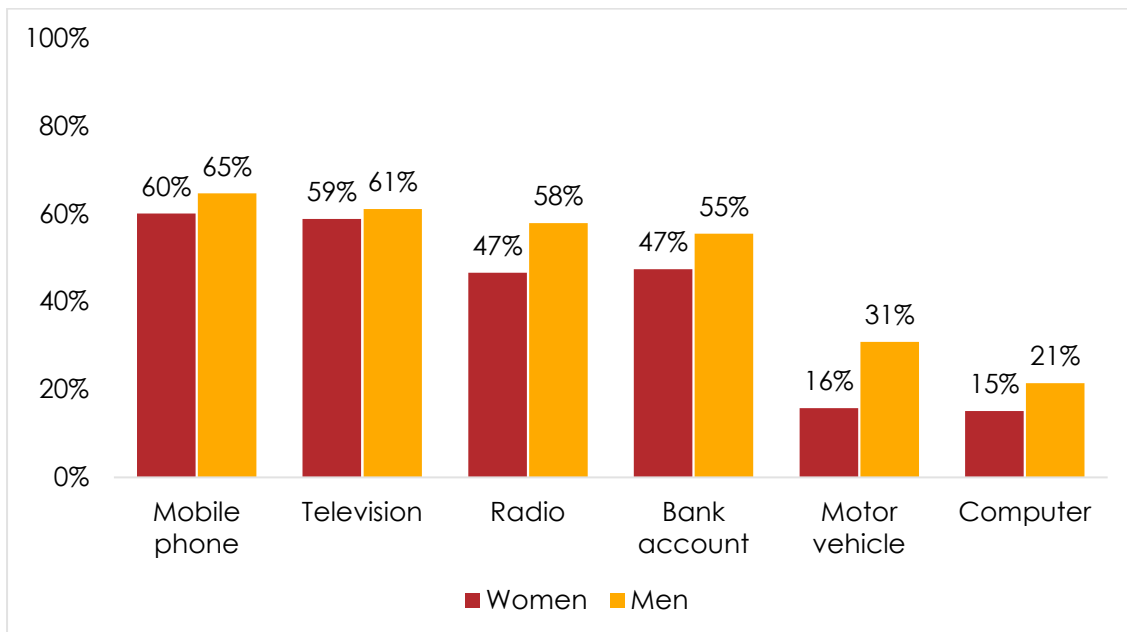
In decisions about how household money is spent, a majority of women say they make financial decisions themselves (29%) or jointly with their spouse (28%), and so do most men (36% and 25%, respectively) (Figure 3). Similar proportions say financial decisions are made without their input (17% for women, 15% for men).

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



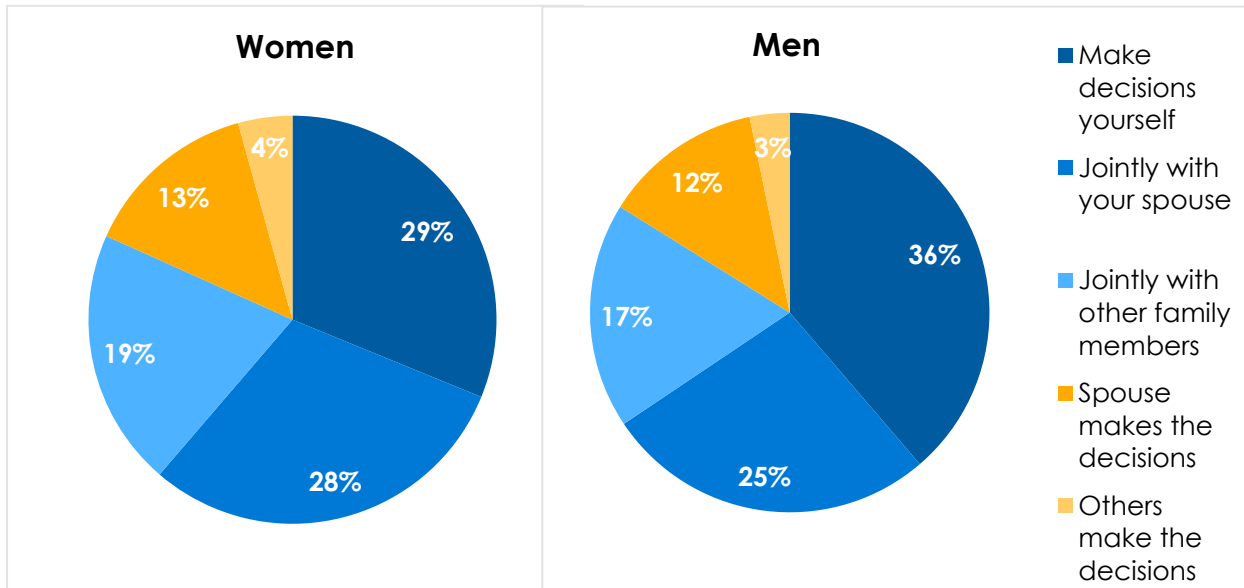
Respondents were asked: What is your highest level of education?

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



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

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



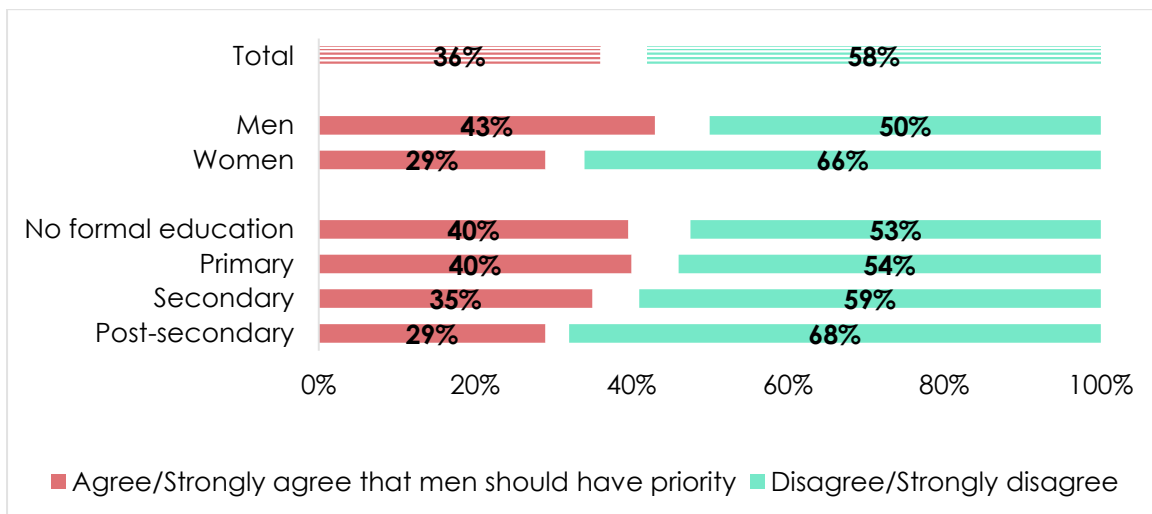
Respondents were asked: What is the main way that decisions are made about how to use any money that you have or earn, for example from a job, a business, selling things, or other activities?

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 Angolans want gender equality when it comes to jobs and land? And if so, how close to equality are they?

A majority (58%) of Angolans reject the idea that men should be given priority over women in hiring when jobs are scarce, but more than one-third (36%) endorse this form of gender discrimination (Figure 4).

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



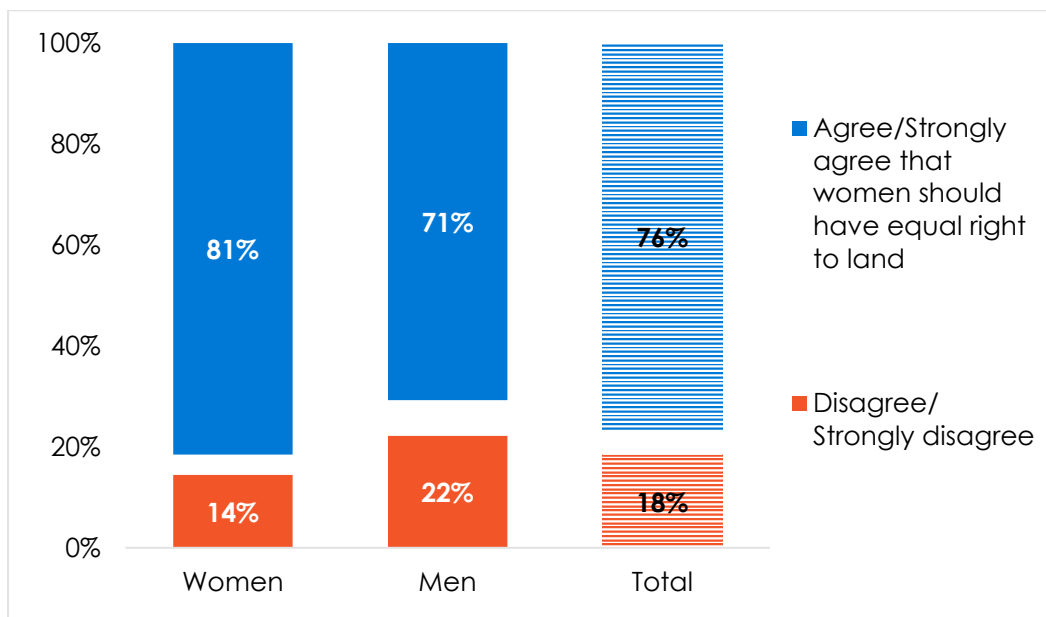
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.

Women are more likely than men to insist on gender fairness when it comes to jobs (66% vs. 50%). Support for equality in hiring increases with respondents' education level, ranging from 53% of those with no formal schooling to 68% of those with post-secondary qualifications.

A larger majority (76%) of Angolans endorse equal rights when it comes to land (Figure 5). Strictly speaking, the Angolan state does not grant citizens the right to own land, as Article 15 of the Constitution designates land as property of the state whose use, via surface rights, can be transferred to natural and legal persons.

Equal rights to land are supported by 81% of women; men trail by 10 percentage points (71%) in their support for equality.

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



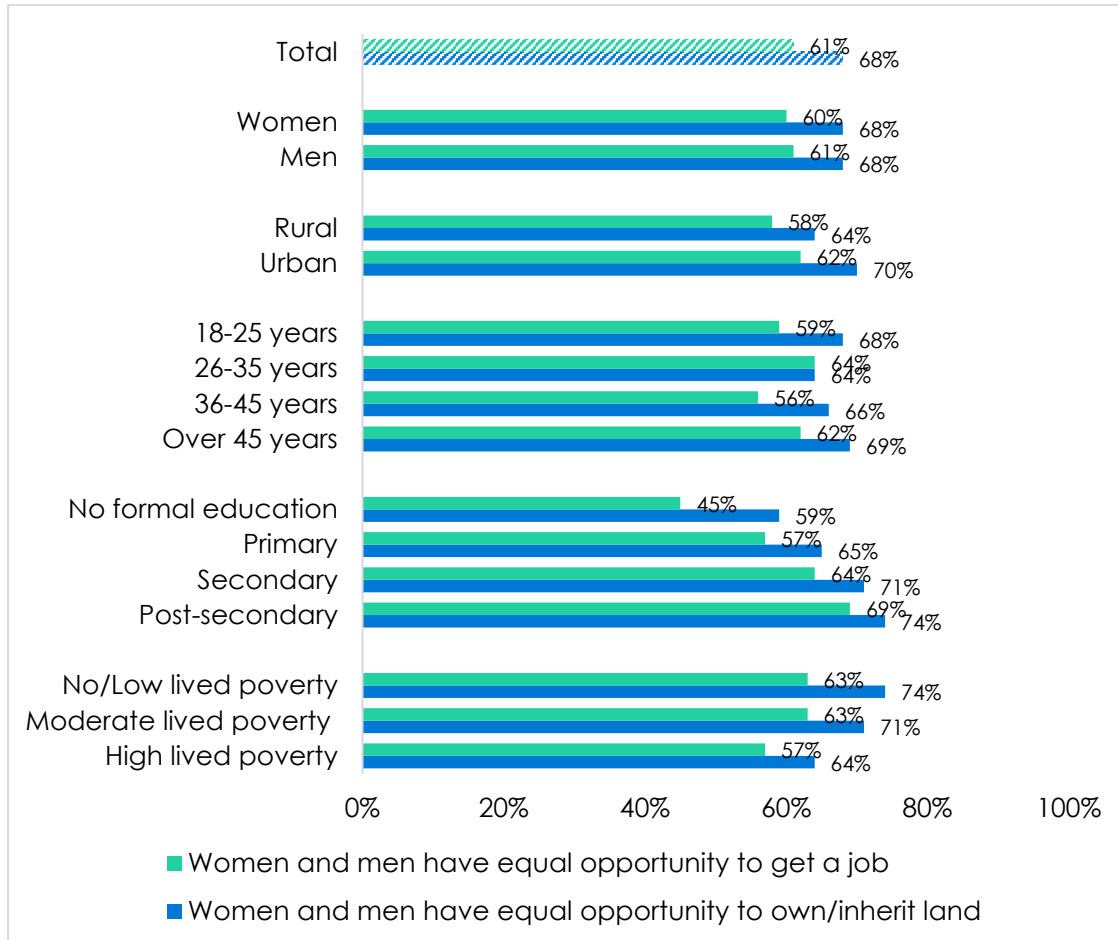
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land.

While majorities say women should have equal rights to jobs and land, have they achieved equality? Six in 10 Angolans (61%) say women do have the same opportunities as men to get a paying job, and even more (68%) make the same claim about owning or inheriting land (Figure 6).

Women and men see eye to eye on these questions, but poor respondents,¹ those with less education, and rural residents are less likely than the better-off, more educated, and urbanites to think parity has been achieved on either count.

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 & Patel (2022).

Figure 6: Do women and men have equal opportunities to get a job and land?
 | by demographic group | Angola | 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" with each statement)

Gender equality in political participation

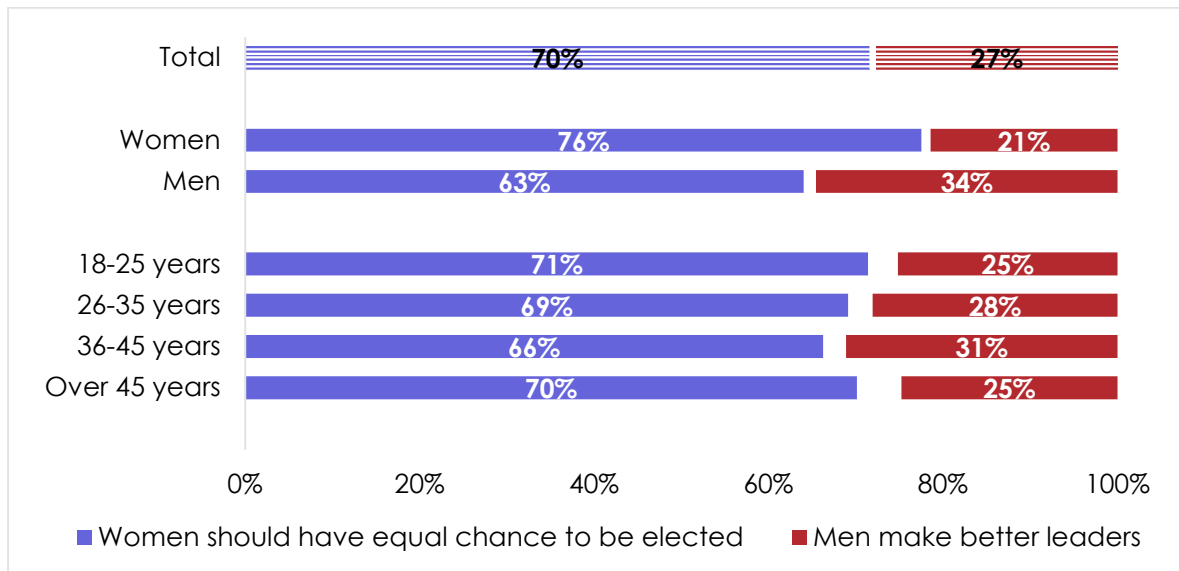
One critical aspect of gender equality is women's participation in political leadership, which helps ensure that women's voices are heard in policy making.

In Angola, seven in 10 (70%) 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. About one-quarter (27%) of respondents oppose this idea (Figure 7). More women (76%) than men (63%) endorse equality in politics.

Even if she believes that voters will give her the same consideration as a male candidate, a woman may be 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, more than six in 10 Angolans (62%) say it is "somewhat likely" or "very likely" that a woman and her family will gain standing in the community if she runs for elected office (Figure 8).

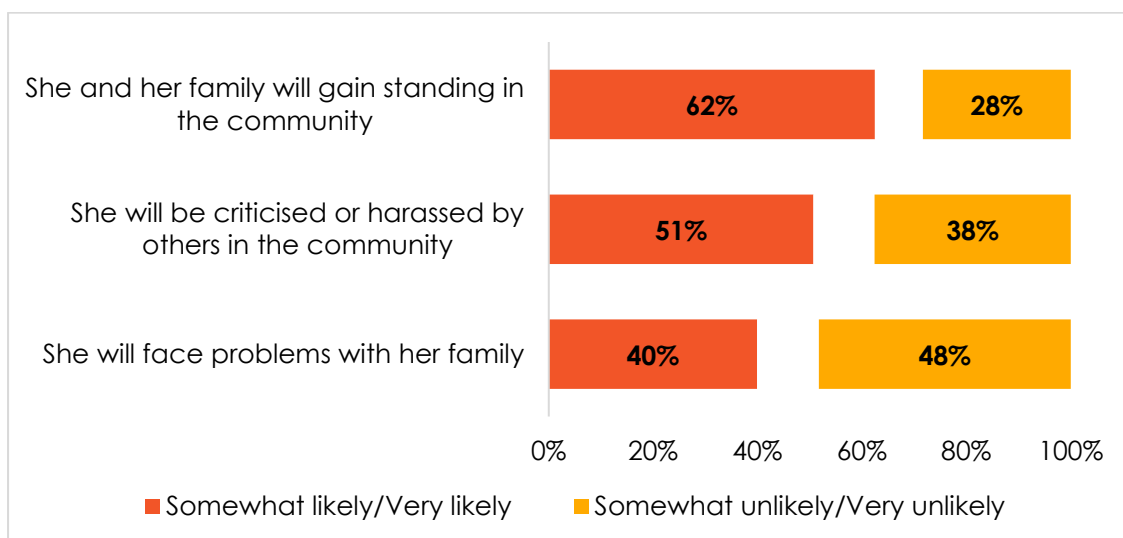
But more than half (51%) of respondents also consider it likely that others in the community will criticise her, call her names, or harass her for seeking public office, while 40% say she will probably face problems with her family – perceptions that might cause some women to hesitate to enter the political arena.

Figure 7: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | by gender and age | Angola | 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)

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

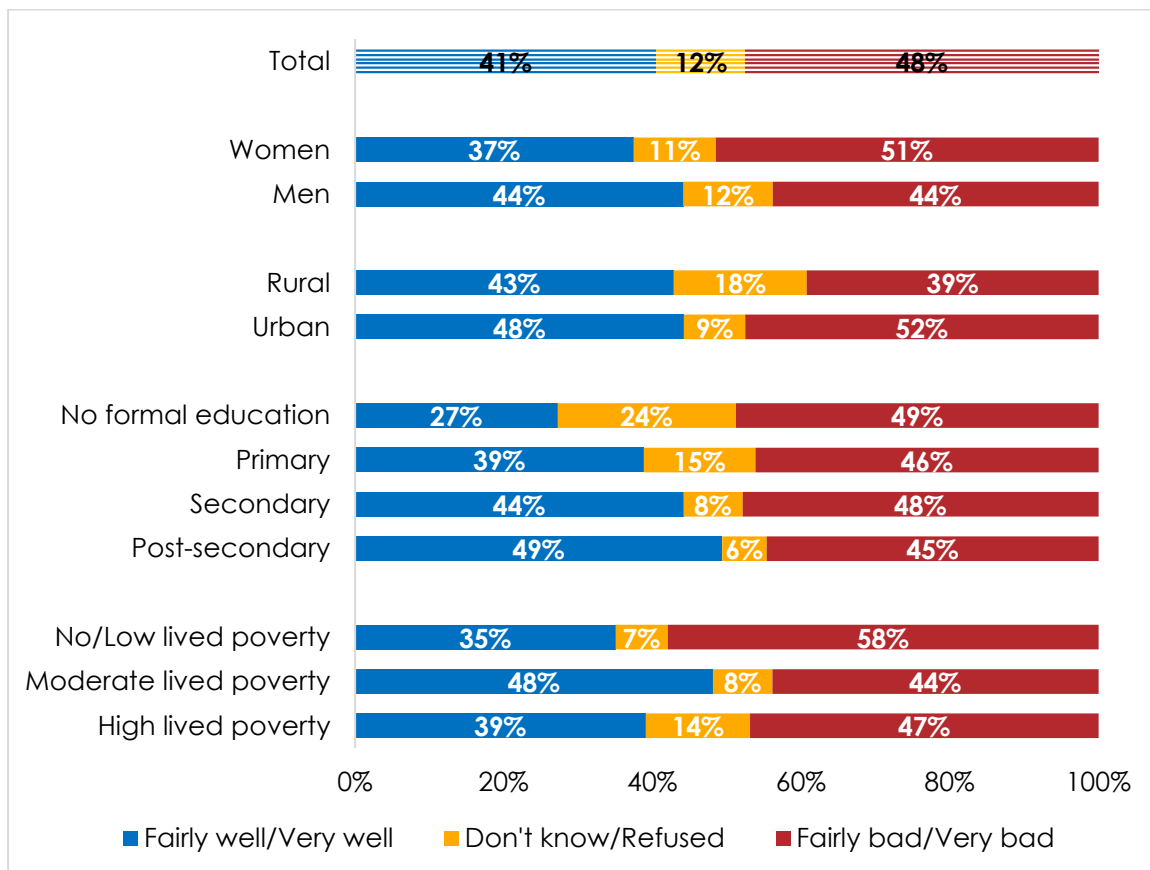
- She and her family will gain standing in the community?
- She will be criticised, called names, or harassed by others in the community?
- She will face problems with her family?

Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities

While the government has a key role to play in progress toward gender equality, only four in 10 Angolans (41%) say their government is doing a “fairly” or “very” good job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women (Figure 9).

Women are less likely than men to give the government's efforts a favourable assessment (37% vs. 44%), as are rural dwellers compared to urbanites (43% vs. 48%). Approval ratings increase significantly with respondents' education levels, ranging from just 27% of citizens with no formal schooling to 49% of those with post-secondary education. This finding suggests that some of the benefits of growing gender equality may not be reaching uneducated populations.

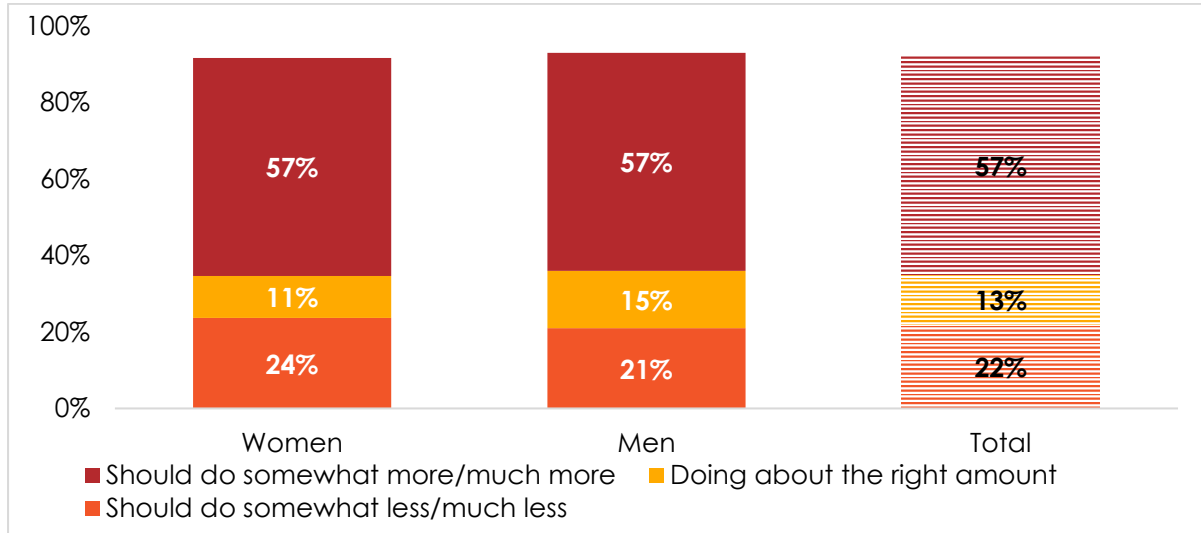
Figure 9: Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women | by demographic group | Angola | 2022



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?

In line with their negative assessment of the government's performance, a majority (57%) of respondents say the government should do “somewhat more” or “much more” to promote equal rights and opportunities for women. About one in five (22%) say it should do less, and 13% think it's doing about the right amount. Men and women differ little in their views on whether the government should intensify its efforts (Figure 10).

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

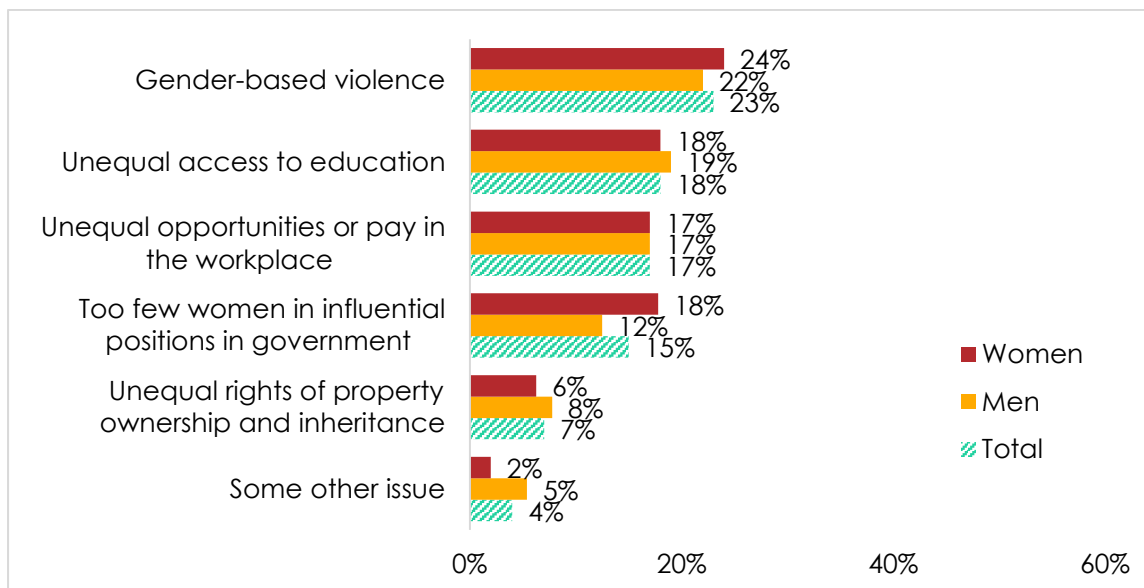


Respondents were asked: In your opinion, should government and elected officials be doing more than they are doing now to advance the rights and equality of women, or should they be doing less, or are they doing about the right amount?

Most important women’s-rights issue: Gender-based violence

Asked what they consider the most important issue related to women’s rights and equality for the government and society to address, survey respondents are most likely to cite gender-based violence as their top priority (23%), followed by unequal access to education (18%) and unequal opportunities or pay in the workplace (17%) (Figure 11). Women and men hold very similar views on gender priorities except that men are less likely to mention too few women in influential positions in government (12% vs. 18% of women).

Figure 11: Most important women’s-rights issue | by gender | Angola | 2022



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?

Conclusion

Most Angolans express support for gender equality in access to paying jobs, land ownership, and the right to run for public office. And survey findings show gender-equal educational achievement and financial decision making. But women's-rights activists will also note that more than one-third of citizens would give men priority in hiring, and a majority consider it likely that women who seek elective office will face criticism and harassment.

Fewer than half of Angolans approve of the government's performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, and a majority say it needs to do more.

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Carlos Pacatolo is principal investigator at Ovilongwa – Estudos de Opinião Pública, the Afrobarometer national partner for Angola, and a researcher at CESP-ISP Jean Piaget Benguela. Email: pacatolo@yahoo.com.br.

David Boio is a sociologist, co-principal investigator at Ovilongwa – Estudos de Opinião Pública, and a researcher at Centro Sol Nascente do Huambo. Email: davidboio@gmail.com.

Cecília Kitombe is a feminist and director at ADRA – Acção para o Desenvolvimento Rural e Ambiente-Benguela. Email: maiajose1985@gmail.com.

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