



Dispatch No. 702 | 21 September 2023

# Moroccans endorse women's political participation but not equal access to jobs, land

**Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 702 | Mhammed Abderebbi and Josephine Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny**

## Summary

The Global Gender Gap Index considers Morocco to be among the countries with the widest gender gaps, ranking it 136<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries (World Economic Forum, 2023). While Morocco ranked 90<sup>th</sup> in political empowerment, it performed worse on the other indicators: 141<sup>st</sup> in economic participation and opportunity, 130<sup>th</sup> in health and survival, and 115<sup>th</sup> in educational attainment.

Article 19 of Morocco's Constitution highlights the country's commitment to ensuring full gender equality (Constitute Project, 2011). The United Nations (2023) confirms that the country has made significant progress in gender equality, with a decrease in child marriages and improvements in girl-child education and women's political leadership. However, economic and political gender gaps persist, fuelled by discriminatory laws and social norms. For example, women hold only 24% of parliamentary seats, and only 5.4% of firms have women in top management positions (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 (2021/2023) questionnaire to explore Africans' experiences and assessments of gender equality.

Survey findings show that fewer than half of Moroccans endorse women's right to equal opportunity in hiring and land ownership – issues on which women and men hold very different views. And while a majority say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to political office, almost half say women who run for office are likely to be criticised or harassed.

Even though women are just as educated as men, unequal opportunities and pay in the workplace is the most frequently cited women's-right issue that the country must address. Gender gaps also persist in ownership of certain key assets and autonomy in financial decision making.

Women are less likely than men to approve of the government's performance on promoting equal rights and opportunities and are considerably more likely to say the government needs to do more.

## Afrobarometer survey

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. Ninet survey rounds in up to 42 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 9 surveys (2021/2023) cover 39 countries. Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Morocco, led by Global for Survey and Consulting (GSC), interviewed 1,200 adult Moroccans in August 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level

results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in Morocco in 2013, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

## Key findings

- Educational achievement is fairly equal among men and women in Morocco.
- With the exception of mobile phones and computers, women trail men in the ownership of key assets that the survey asked about: motor vehicles (24% vs. 57%), bank accounts (42% vs. 65%), televisions (68% vs. 84%), and radios (41% vs. 57%).
- Women are more than twice as likely as men to defer to their spouses or other family members regarding financial decision making in the household (38% vs. 14%).
- Fewer than four in 10 Moroccans (36%) say women should have the same rights as men to jobs, and only 42% say women should have equal rights to own or inherit land.
  - Women and men differ sharply in their views on equality in hiring and land ownership.
  - Moroccans cite inequality in workplace opportunities or pay as the most important women's-rights issue that their government and society must address.
- More than six in 10 Moroccans (62%) say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office.
  - But while 87% of citizens think a woman will gain standing in the community if she runs for office, 46% think it's likely she will be criticised or harassed, and 35% say she will probably face problems with her family.
- A majority (63%) of respondents say the government is doing a “fairly good” or “very good” job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women. Women and less educated, rural, and poor citizens are less likely to approve of the government's performance.
- About four in 10 citizens (39%) say the government should do more to promote women's rights and opportunities.
  - Women are about twice as likely as men to call for more government action in promoting women's rights and opportunities (51% vs. 27%).

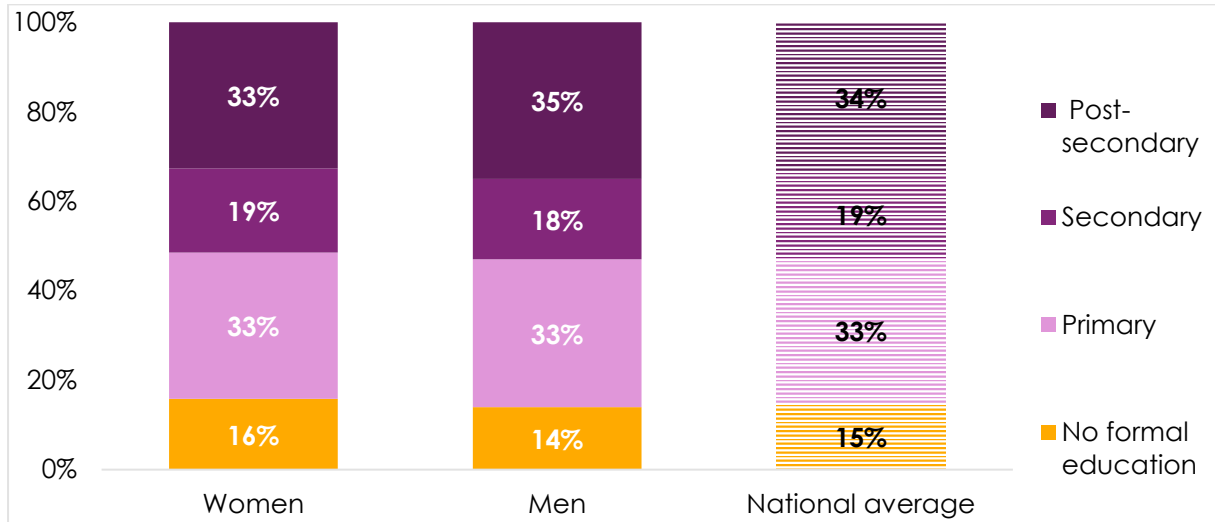
## Education and control of assets

Educational achievement is gender-equal in Morocco. Women and men are about equally likely to have post-secondary (33% vs. 35%) and secondary education (19% vs. 18%) (Figure 1). Primary education stands at 33% for both genders, with no formal schooling at 16% for women and 14% for men.

However, women are significantly less likely than men to own certain key assets (Figure 2). More than twice as many men as women own motor vehicles (57% vs. 24%). Women also trail men in ownership of bank accounts (42% vs. 65%), televisions (68% vs. 84%), and radios (41% vs. 57%). Women and men are equally likely to own computers (31% each) and mobile phones (94% vs. 96%).

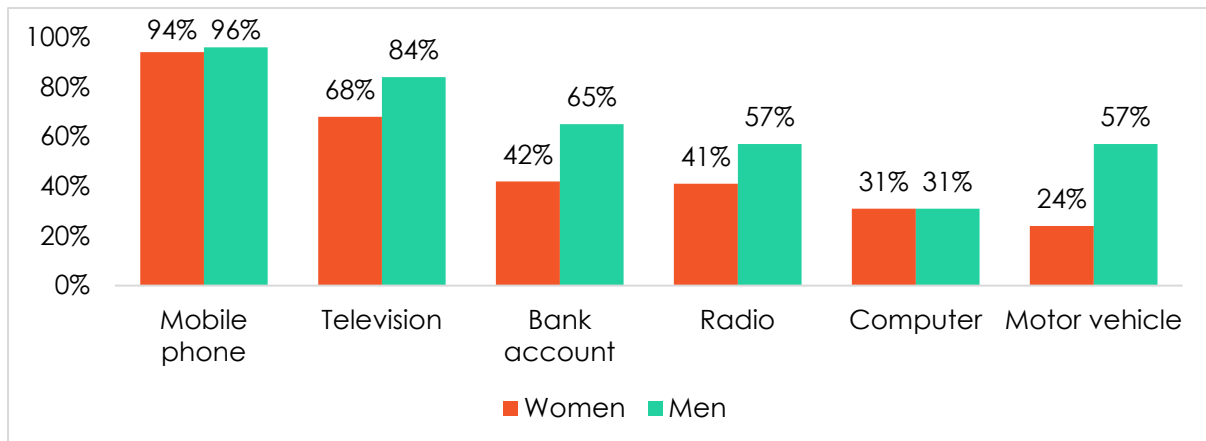
Women are also far less likely than men to have a voice in household financial decisions (Figure 3). Men are three times as likely as women to say they make decisions themselves about how household money is spent (46% vs. 15%). More women than men defer financial decisions to their spouses (24% vs. 5%) or to other family members (14% vs. 9%).

**Figure 1: Educational attainment** | by gender | Morocco | 2022



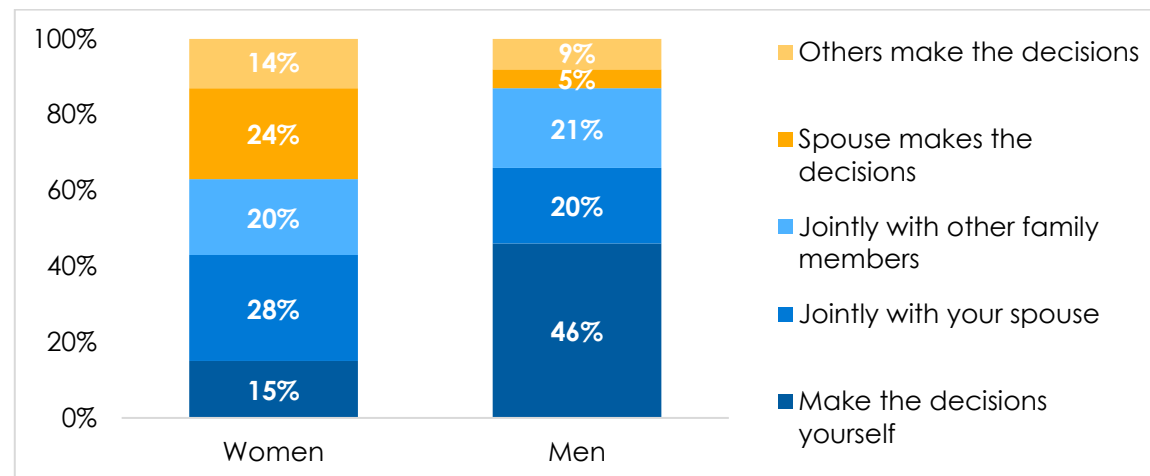
**Respondents were asked:** What is your highest level of education?

**Figure 2: Asset ownership** | by gender | Morocco | 2022



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

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



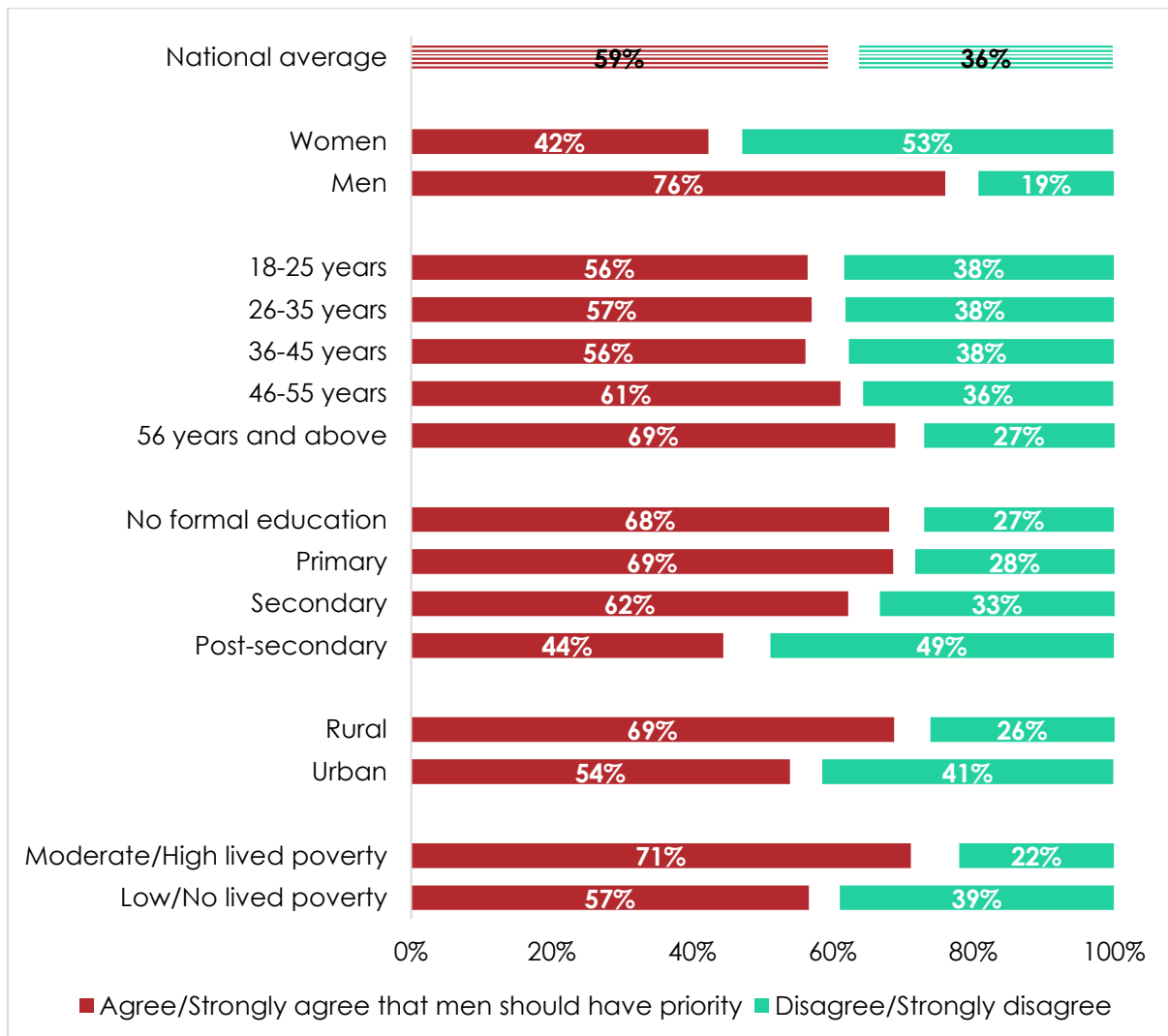
**Respondents were asked:** What is the main way that decisions are made about how to use any money that you have or earn, for example from a job, a business, selling things, or other activities?

## Rights to a job and land

Six in 10 Moroccans (59%) say that, if jobs are scarce, men should have more rights than women to being employed (Figure 4). Only 36% endorse equal rights in hiring. Women are far more likely than men (53% vs. 19%) to support gender equality in employment.

Support for equality in hiring increases with respondents' level of education, ranging from 27% among those with no formal schooling to 49% among those with post-secondary qualifications. This support is also stronger in cities than in rural areas (41% vs. 26%) and among economically better-off citizens than among those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty<sup>1</sup> (39% vs. 22%).

**Figure 4: Should men have priority for scarce jobs? | by demographic group**  
| Morocco | 2022

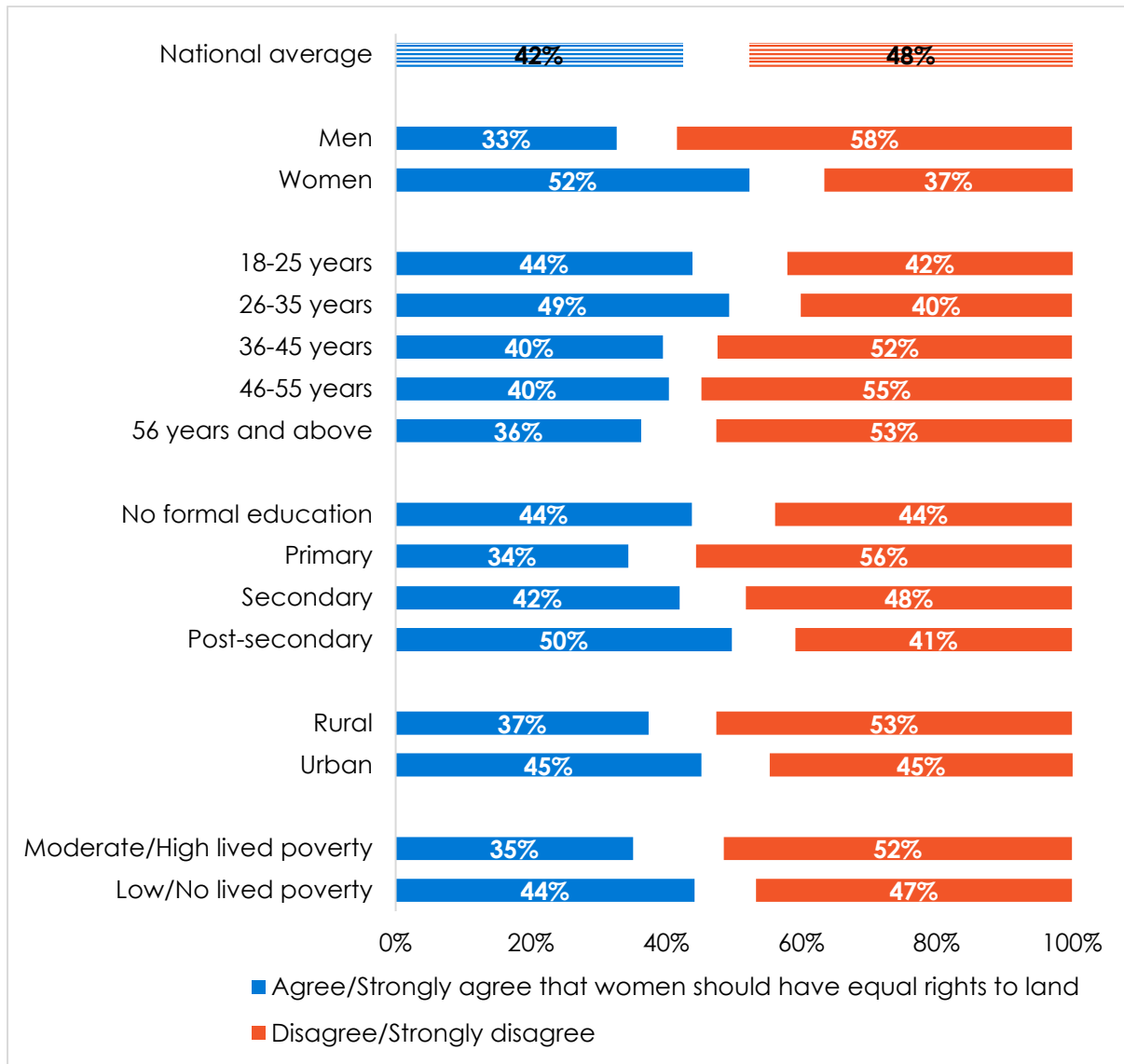


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.

<sup>1</sup> 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).

Similarly, only four in 10 Moroccans (42%) endorse equal rights to own and inherit land (Figure 5). Here, too, women (52%), economically well-off residents (44%) and urban residents (45%) are more likely to believe in equality than men (33%), economically vulnerable residents (35%), and rural residents (37%). Support for equality is highest among citizens with post-secondary education (50%).

**Figure 5: Should women have equal rights to land?** | by demographic group  
 | Morocco | 2022

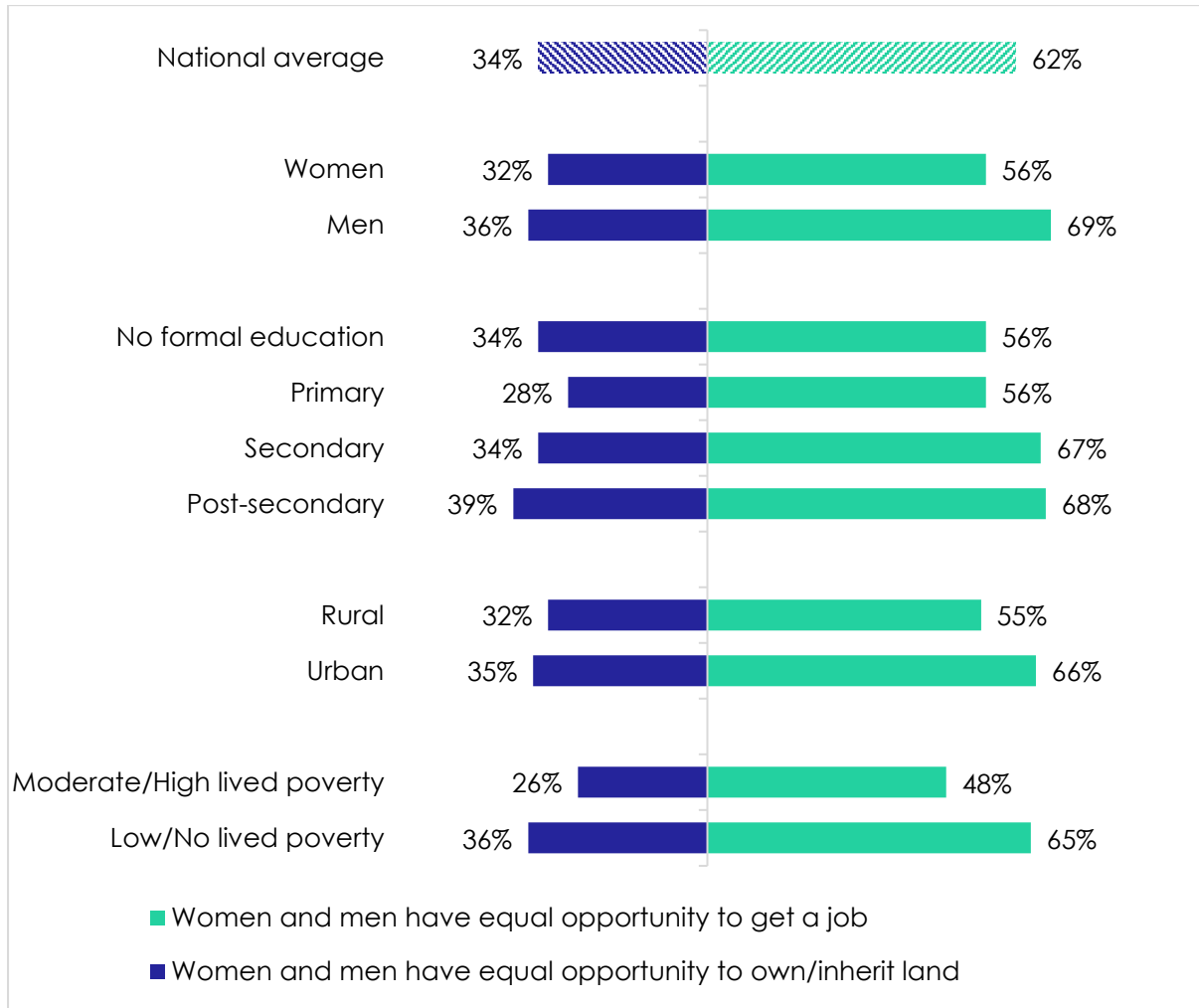


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: Women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land.

Even though a majority of Moroccans oppose gender equality in hiring, more than six in 10 (62%) say that in practice, women enjoy the same employment opportunities as men (Figure 6). The perception that job opportunities are equal is more common among men (69%), urban residents (66%), and better-off citizens (65%) than among women (56%), rural residents (55%), and those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty (48%). This view is also more widespread among highly educated citizens (67%-68%) than those with primary or no formal education (56%).

But only one-third (34%) of respondents say that women and men have the same opportunities when it comes to owning or inheriting land. Perceived equal opportunity to own land is slightly higher among the economically well-off (36%) than the poor (26%) and among men than women (36% vs. 32%).

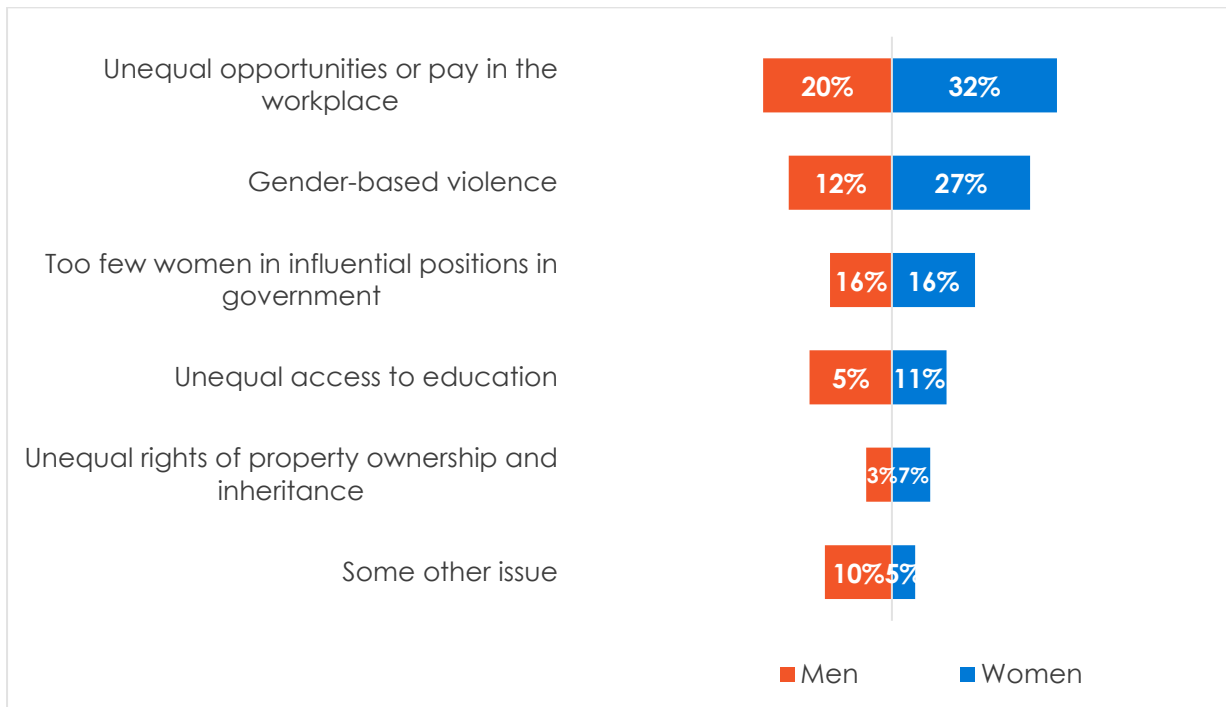
**Figure 6: Do women and men have equal opportunities to get a job and to own/inherit land?** | by demographic group | Morocco | 2022



**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”)

Inequality in women’s opportunities or pay in the workplace tops the list of most important women’s-rights issues that Moroccans want their government and society to address, outranking gender-based violence (Figure 7). Notably, more women than men prioritise each of these issues (32% vs. 20% for inequality in the workplace, 27% vs. 12% for gender-based violence).

**Figure 7: Most important women’s-rights issue | by gender | Morocco | 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?*

### Gender equality in political participation

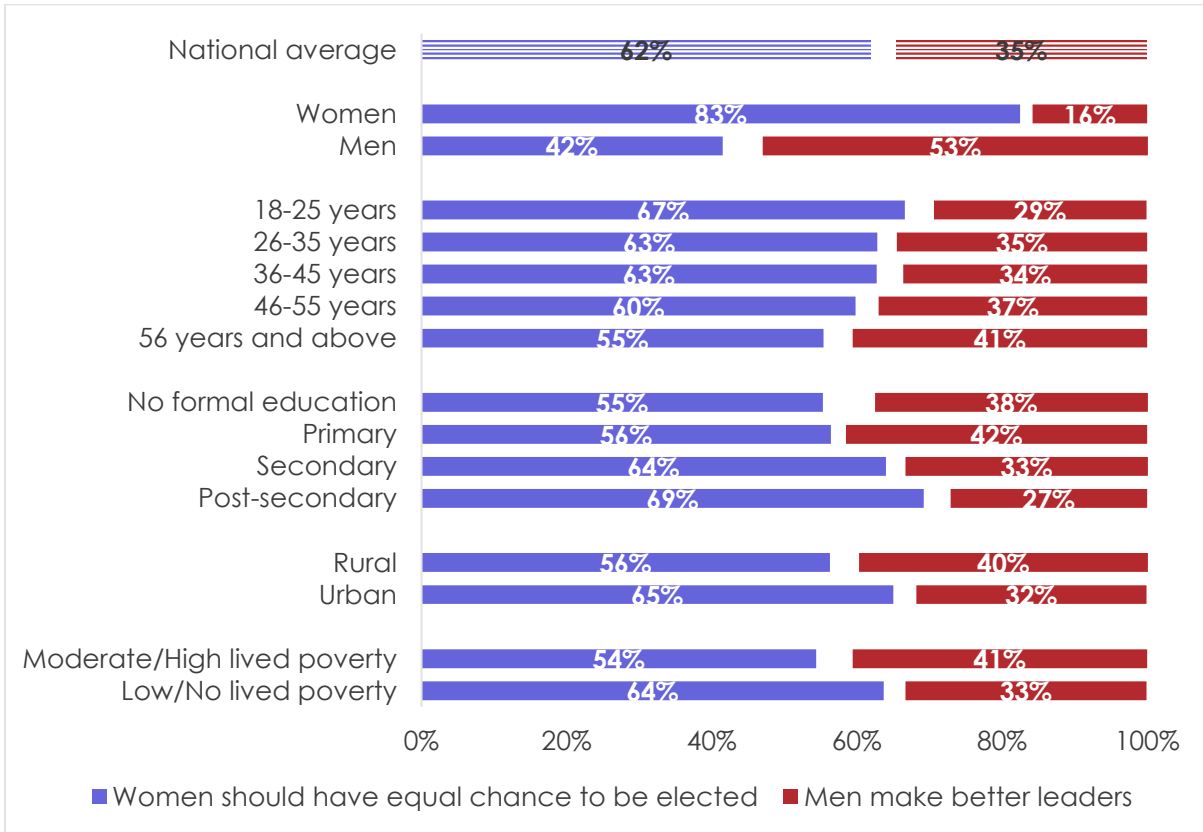
One critical aspect of gender equality is women’s participation in political leadership, which helps ensure that women’s voices are heard in policy making. In Morocco, about six in 10 citizens (62%) say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office, rejecting the idea that men make better political leaders and should thus be given priority as candidates (35%) (Figure 8).

Women are twice as likely as men to endorse equality in politics (83% vs. 42%). Younger adults, highly educated citizens, urban residents, and the economically well-off are more likely to support equality in politics than older, less educated, rural, and poorer counterparts.

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.

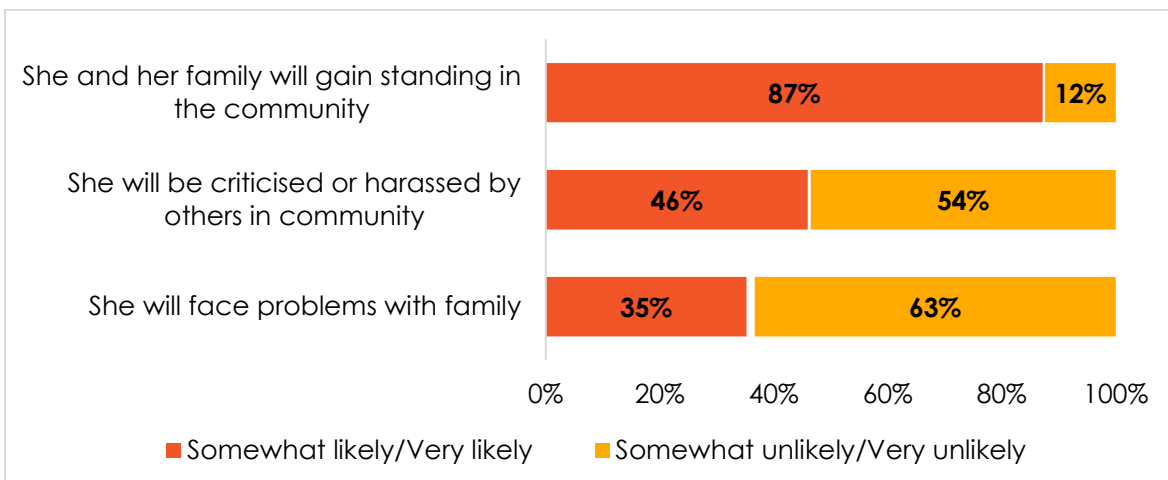
On the positive side, close to nine in 10 Moroccans (87%) say it is “somewhat likely” or “very likely” that a woman and her family will gain standing in the community if she runs for elective office (Figure 9). But almost half (46%) of citizens consider it likely that others in the community will criticise her, call her names, or harass her for seeking public office, while more than one-third (35%) think she might face problems with her family. Such expectations, though in the minority, might contribute to some women's reluctance to enter politics.

**Figure 8: Should women have an equal chance to be elected?** | by demographic group | Morocco | 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 9: For better or for worse: How running for elected office might affect women's lives** | Morocco | 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?

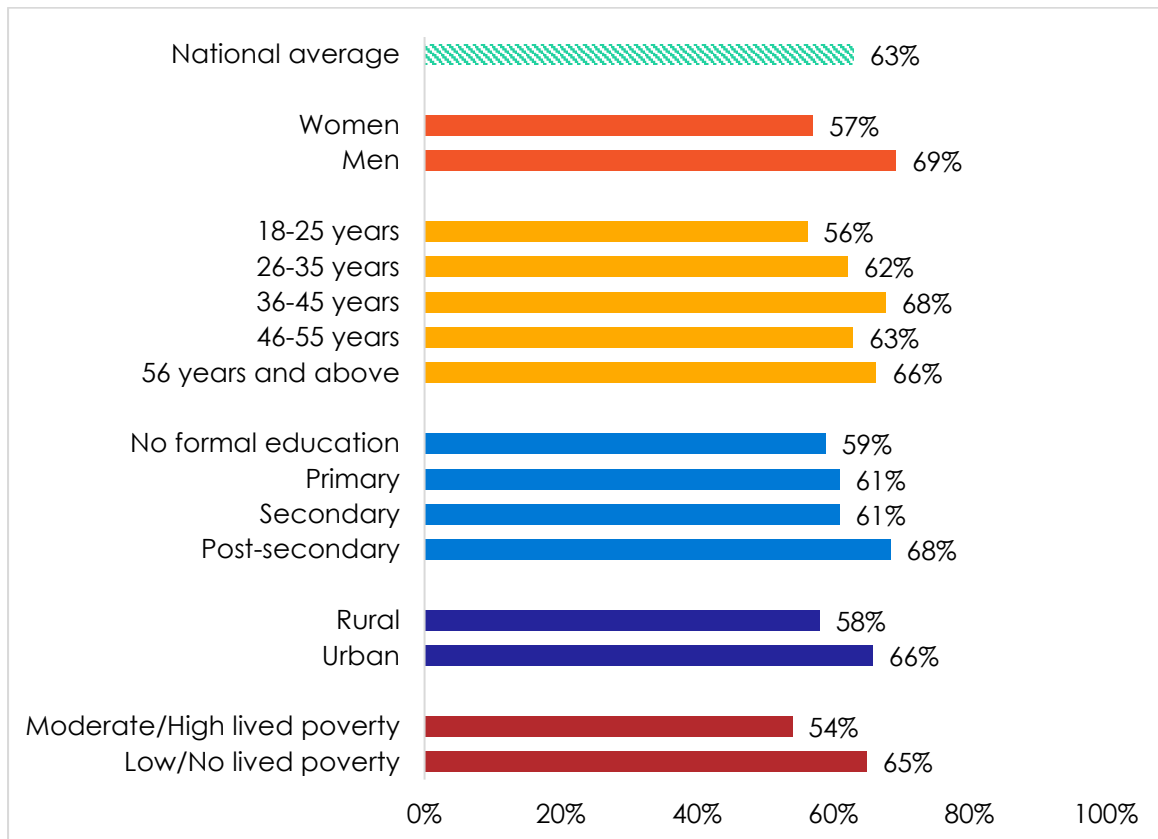


## Government performance on promoting equal rights and opportunities

More than six in 10 Moroccans (63%) say their government is doing a “fairly” or “very” good job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, while 36% disapprove of the government’s performance (Figure 10).

Women are less likely than men to be satisfied with the government’s efforts (57% vs. 69%). Approval ratings are higher in cities than in rural areas (66% vs. 58%) and higher among better-off respondents (65%) than those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty (54%). Citizens with post-secondary education (68%) are more likely to be satisfied with the government’s efforts than those with less education (59%-61%). These findings suggest that some of the benefits of growing gender equality may not be reaching less educated, rural, and poorer populations.

**Figure 10: Government performance on promoting equal rights and opportunities for women | Morocco | 2022**

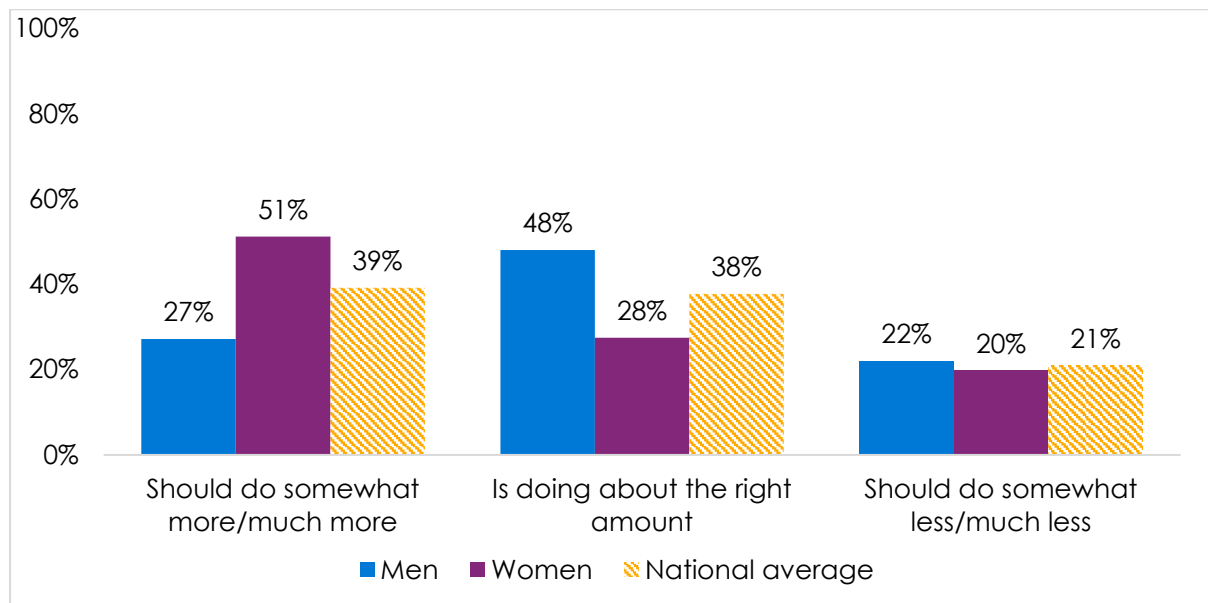


**Respondents were asked:** How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven’t you heard enough to say: Promoting equal rights and opportunities for women? (% who say “fairly well” or “very well”)

Even if the government’s performance ratings are generally positive, 39% of Moroccans think it should do “somewhat more” or “much more” to promote equal rights and opportunities for women (Figure 11). About the same proportion (38%) say the government is doing about the right amount, while 21% think it should reduce its gender-equality efforts.

The view that the government should do more is about twice as common among women (51%) as it is among men (27%). Men are more likely than women to say that the government is already doing enough (48% vs. 28%).

**Figure 11: Should the government do more or less to promote equal rights and opportunities for women? | by gender | Morocco | 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

The latest Afrobarometer data suggest that women's economic empowerment faces an uphill battle in Morocco, where fewer than half of citizens endorse women's right to equal opportunity in hiring and land ownership. Women and men diverge sharply in their views on these questions, with opposition to gender equality the majority view among men.

Since men occupy most positions of power in the workplace, it's hardly surprising that in spite of gender parity in educational attainment, inequality in workplace opportunities and pay emerges as the most widely cited women's-rights issue that the government and society must address.

A majority of Moroccans do think women should have the same right as men to run for elective office, although this is a minority position among men, and a substantial share of the population think female candidates are likely to face criticism or harassment from the community.

While a majority of citizens approve of the government's performance on promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, approval is significantly lower among women as well as less educated, rural, and poorer populations.

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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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