



# In Seychelles, majority support gender equality, think greater efforts are needed

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 703 | Anne Okello

## Summary

In Seychelles, the principles of gender equality are grounded in the Constitution and the National Gender Policy of 2016 (Southern African Development Community, 2022). Seychelles' society is generally considered to be matrifocal, with women wielding significant influence at home and in the public sphere (Choppy, 2020). According to the 2022 general census, more than half of Seychellois households are headed by women (Seychelles News Agency, 2022).

While Seychelles has attained 40% representation for women at the management level in the private sector, women hold only 23% of elected positions in the National Assembly, with eight women among the 35 members elected in the 2020 elections (IPU Parline, 2023; World Bank, 2022). The gender wage gap is 19%, and men are more likely than women to secure higher-paying jobs (International Labour Organization, 2018).

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.

In Seychelles, survey data show no disadvantage for women when it comes to educational attainment or financial autonomy. Most Seychellois express support for women's rights to equality in hiring, land ownership, and political leadership, though a sizeable minority consider it likely that women might suffer criticism or harassment if they run for public office. Most citizens approve of the government's performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, although many say greater efforts are needed.

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

In Afrobarometer's first survey in Seychelles, a team led by the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult Seychellois in December 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

## Key findings

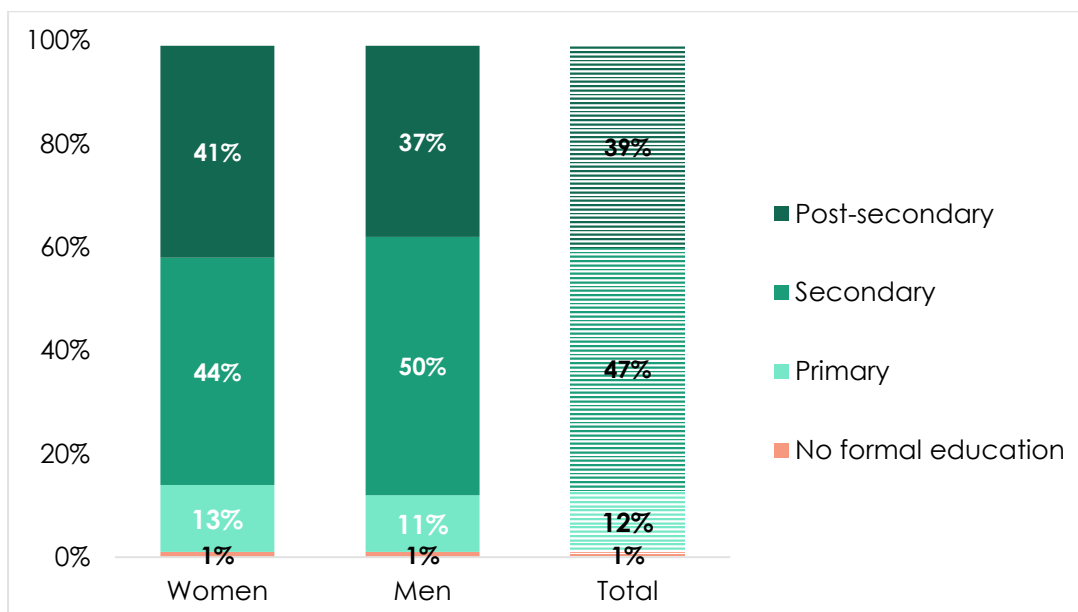
- Educational achievement is close to gender-equal in Seychelles, with slightly more post-secondary schooling among women than men (41% vs. 37%).

- Men and women are about equally likely to own key assets such as a bank account or a mobile phone, but fewer women own computers (43% vs. 50%) and motor vehicles (14% vs. 19%).
- Women are significantly more likely than men to say they make decisions themselves about how household money is spent (64% vs. 52%).
- Strong majorities say women should have the same rights as men to get paying jobs (78%) and to own and inherit land (90%).
  - About eight in 10 citizens say that in Seychelles today, women and men in fact enjoy equal rights when it comes to jobs (79%) and land ownership (83%).
- Almost unanimously (93%), Seychellois say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office.
  - While close to seven in 10 (69%) citizens think a woman will probably gain standing in the community if she runs for office, one-third (31%) think it is likely she will be criticised or harassed, and 19% say she will probably face problems with her family.
- More than three-fourths (77%) of citizens say the government is performing “fairly well” or “very well” in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women.
- More than half (56%) say the government should do more to advance gender equality.

### Educational attainment

Educational achievement is nearly gender-equal in Seychelles (Figure 1). Women are more likely than men to attain post-secondary qualifications (41% vs. 37%) and somewhat less likely than men to have secondary schooling (44% vs. 50%). Proportions with primary or no formal education are almost equal (14% vs. 12%).

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

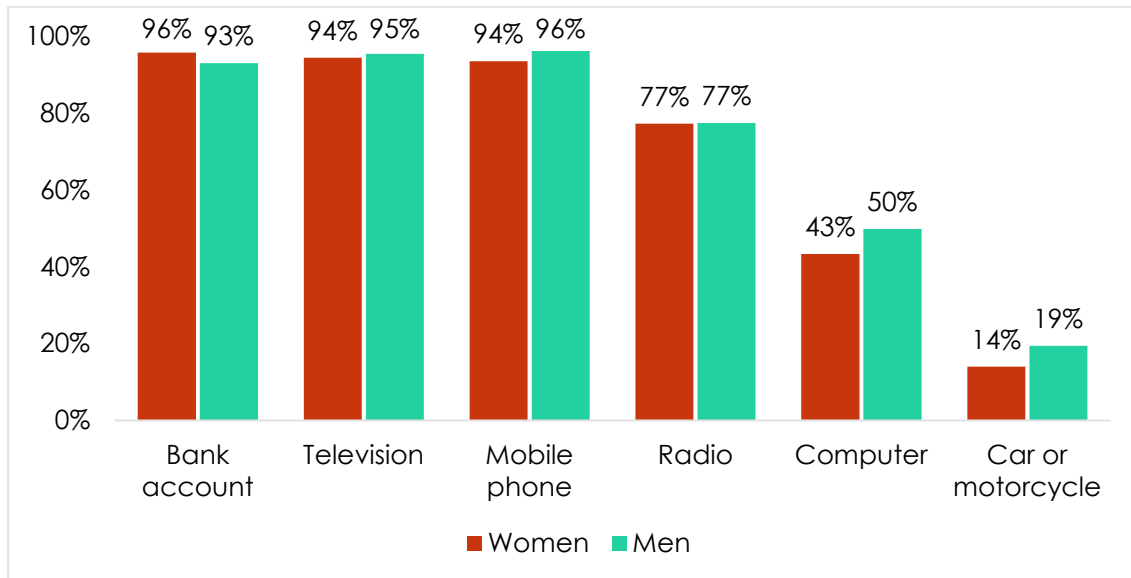


**Respondents were asked:** What is your highest level of education?

### Asset ownership and financial decision making in households

When it comes to control over assets, women and men are about equally likely to own a bank account (96% vs. 93%), a television (94% vs. 95%), a mobile phone (94% vs. 96%), and a radio (both 77%) (Figure 2). Fewer women than men say they own a computer (43% vs. 50%) and a car or motorcycle (14% vs. 19%).

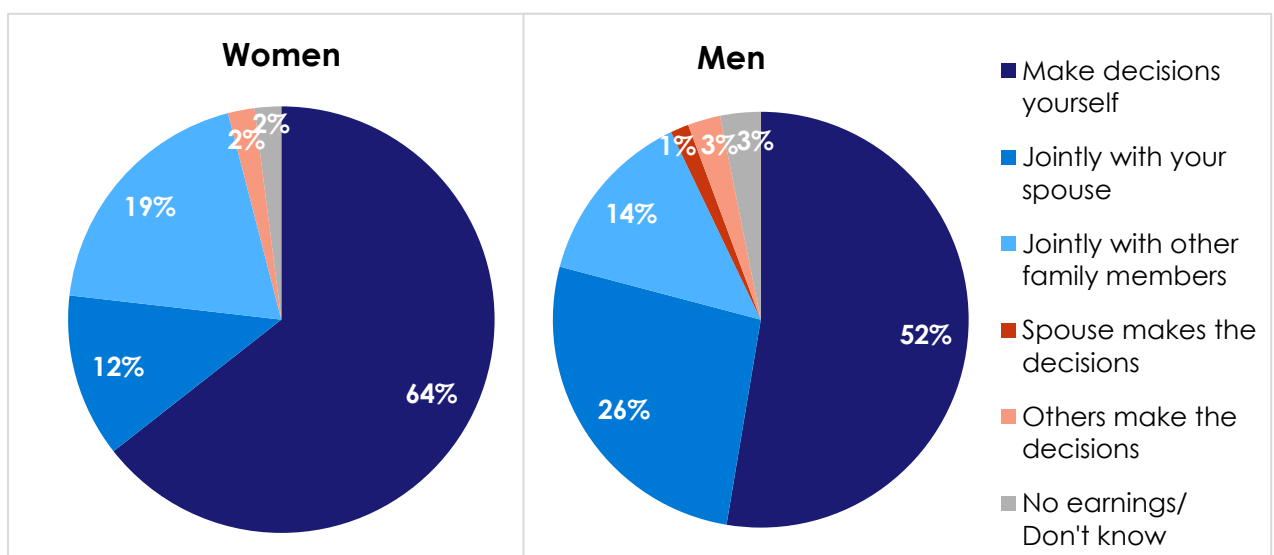
**Figure 2: Asset ownership** | by gender | Seychelles | 2022



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

In decisions about how money is spent, more women than men say they make the decisions themselves (64% vs. 52%) or jointly with other family members (19% vs. 14%) (Figure 3). Fewer women than men say they make decisions jointly with their spouses (12% vs. 26%).

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

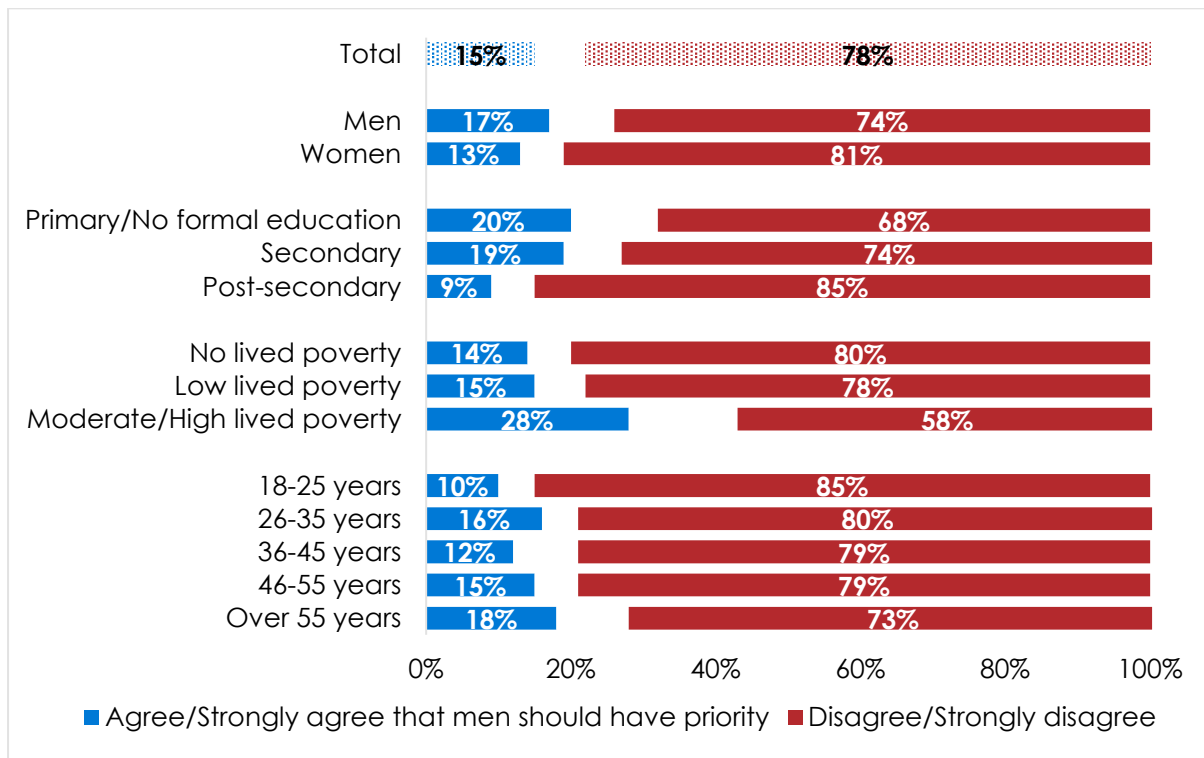


**Respondents were asked:** What is the main way that decisions are made about how to use any money that you have or earn, for example from a job, a business, selling things, or other activities?

## Rights to a job and land

Fewer than two in 10 Seychellois (15%) say that men should be given priority over women in hiring when jobs are scarce, while 78% reject this form of gender discrimination (Figure 4). Men (74%) trail women (81%) in insisting on equality when it comes to jobs. Support for equality in hiring increases with respondents' education level, ranging from 68% of those with primary education or no formal schooling to 85% of those with post-secondary education. It is also higher among respondents experiencing no "lived poverty"<sup>1</sup> (80%) than among poor citizens (58% of those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty). Older Seychellois (73% of those aged 56 and above) trail younger respondents (85% of 18- to 25-year-olds) in endorsing equality when it comes to jobs.

**Figure 4: Should men have priority access to scarce jobs? | by demographic group | Seychelles | 2022**



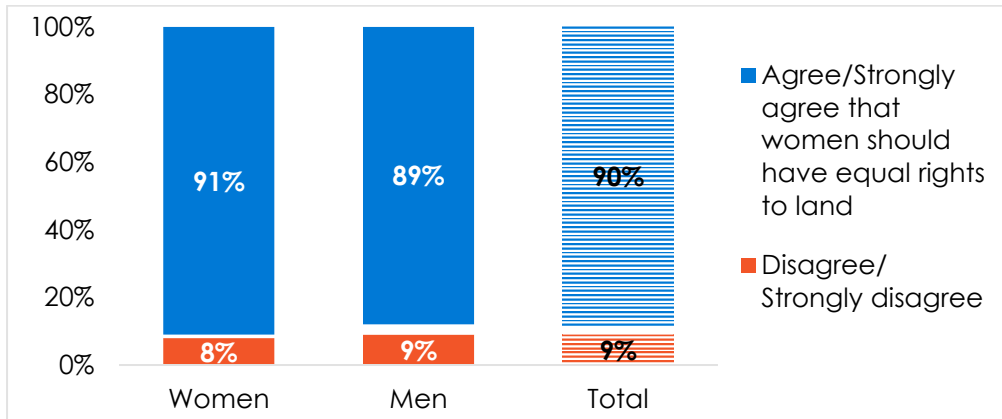
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.

An even larger majority (90%) endorse equal rights to own and inherit land (Figure 5). Here, the proportion of men and women who believe in equality is almost equal (89% vs. 91%).

Poor citizens (those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty) are less likely than well-off respondents to think that gender parity has been achieved in hiring (66% vs. 81%) or land ownership (78% vs. 84%). The same is true of the youngest respondents (aged 18-25 years) compared to their elders.

<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).

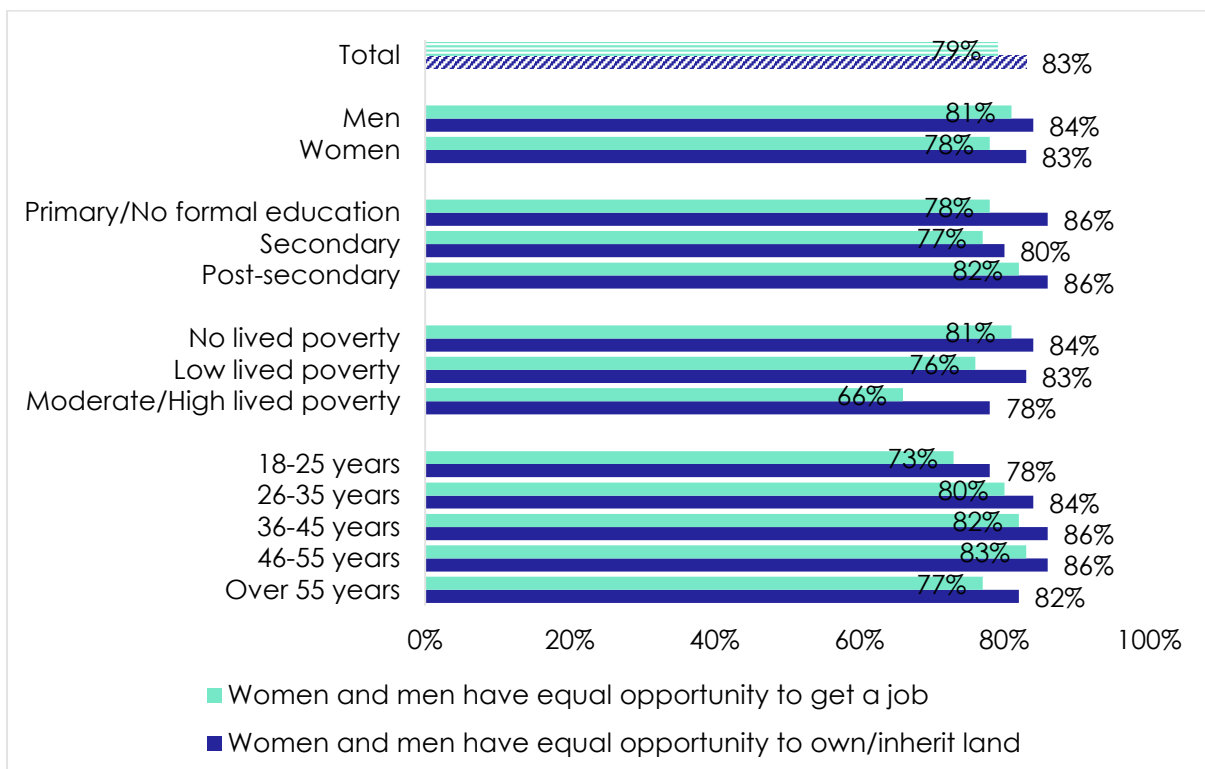
**Figure 5: Should women have equal rights to land?** | by gender | Seychelles | 2022



**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 large majorities say women should have equal rights to jobs and land, have they achieved equality? About eight in 10 Seychellois report that women do have the same opportunities as men to get a paying job (79%) and to own or inherit land (83%) (Figure 6).

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

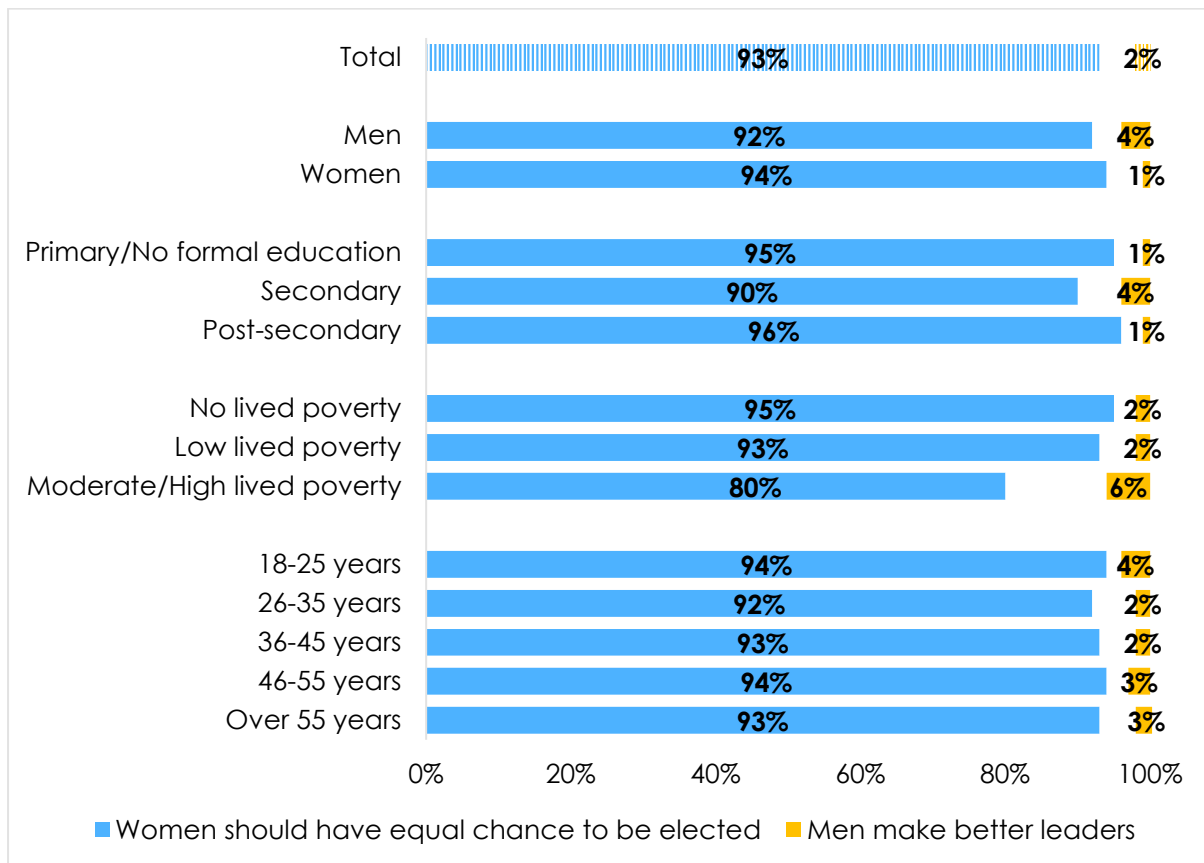
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

## Gender equality in political participation

One 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 Seychelles, more than nine in 10 citizens (93%) 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). Support for equality in politics varies little by respondents' gender or age, but poor respondents (80% of those experiencing moderate or high lived poverty) are less likely to share this attitude than those experiencing no lived poverty (95%).

**Figure 7: Should women have an equal chance to be elected?** | by demographic group | Seychelles | 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.

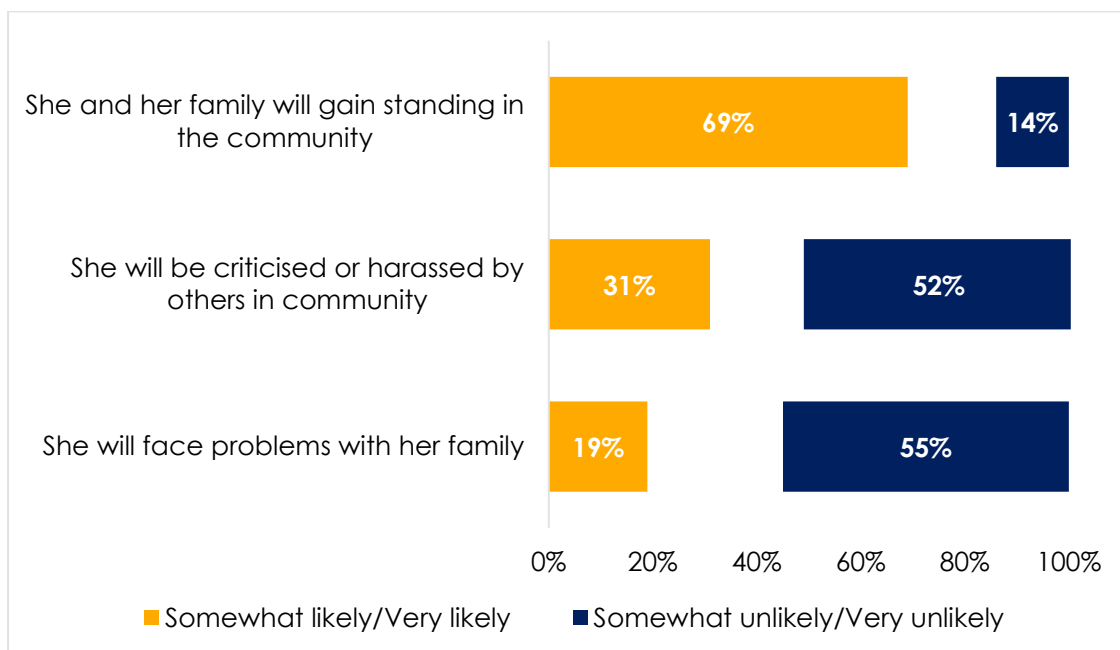
Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men. (% who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each statement)

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

Close to seven in 10 Seychellois (69%) 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).

On the other hand, almost one-third (31%) of respondents consider it likely that others in the community will criticise her, call her names, or harass her for seeking public office, while 19% think she might face problems with her family. In addition, quite a few respondents (18% and 26%, respectively) either refused to answer or said they “don't know” whether such negative reactions are likely. The fact that slim majorities see it as unlikely that a woman will face community criticism/harassment (52%) or family problems (55%) as a result of running for office may or may not be enough to overcome some women's reservations about contesting for public office.

**Figure 8: For better or for worse: How running for elected office affects women's lives**  
 | Seychelles | 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?*

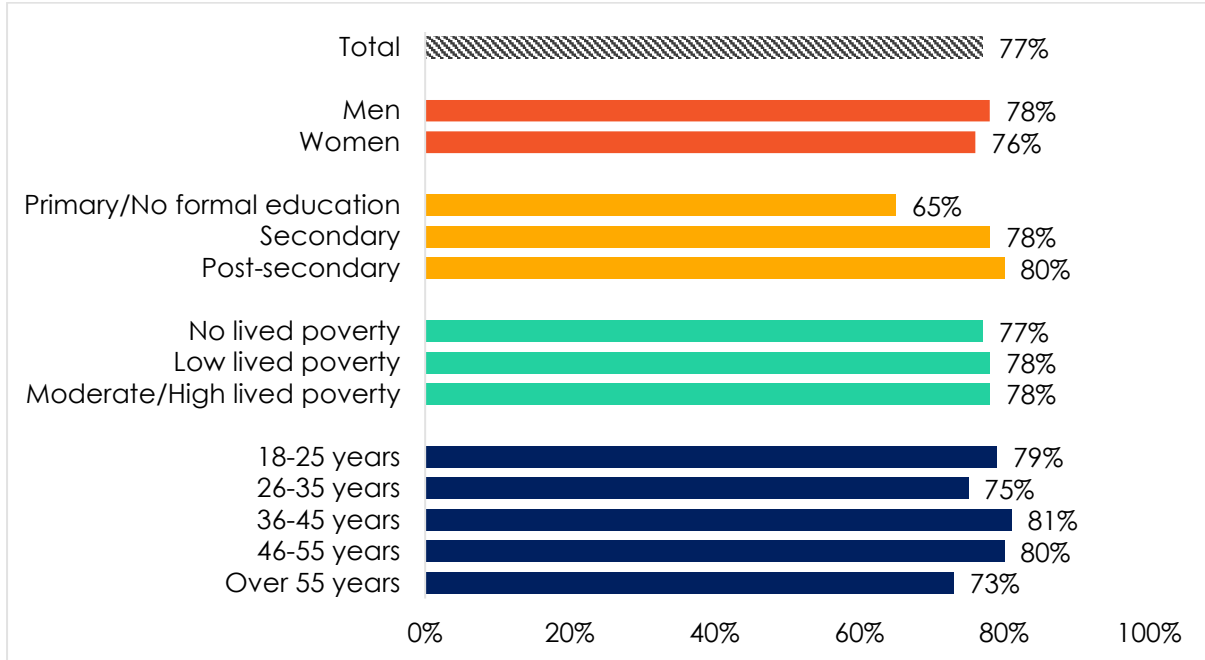
### Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities

Overall, more than three-fourths (77%) of Seychellois say their government is doing a “fairly good” or “very good” job of promoting equal rights and opportunities for women (Figure 9). Women and men are about equally likely to praise the government's efforts (76% vs. 78%). Approval ratings are higher among respondents with post-secondary education (80%) than among those with primary schooling or less (65%). These findings suggest that some of the benefits of growing gender equality may not be reaching populations with low levels of education.

Respondents aged over 55 years (73%) are less likely to be satisfied with the government's efforts than those in other age groups.

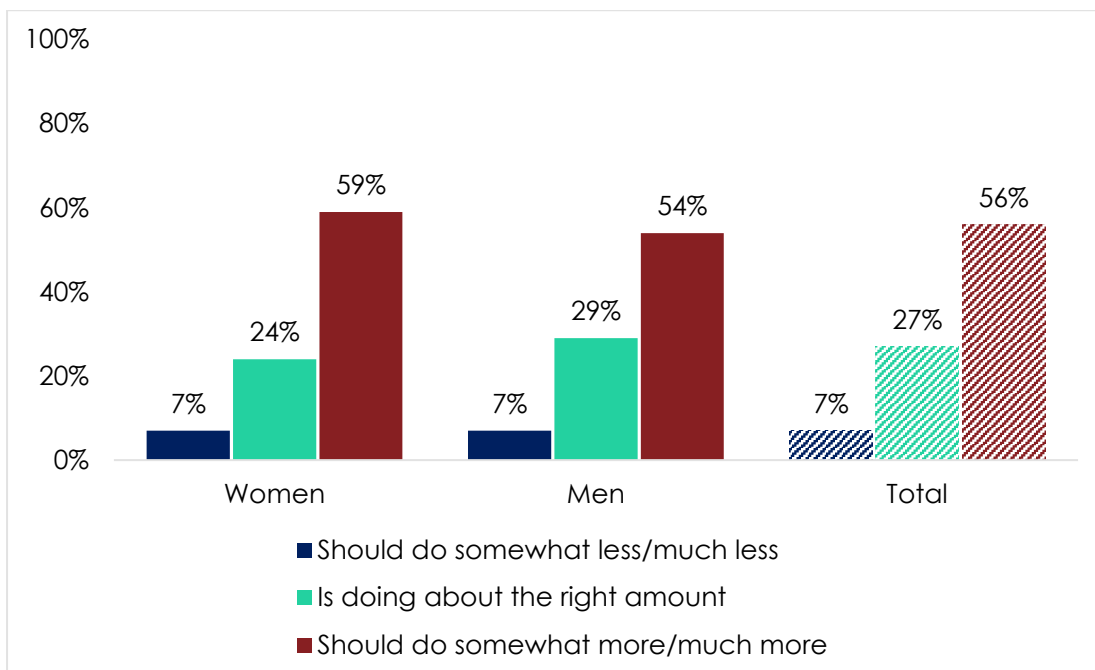
Despite their positive assessment of efforts to date, more than half (56%) of Seychellois think the government and elected officials should do “somewhat more” or “much more” to promote equal rights and opportunities for women (Figure 10). More women than men call for a greater government effort (59% vs. 54%).

**Figure 9: Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women** | by demographic group | Seychelles | 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")

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

Survey findings show that women in Seychelles enjoy gender parity or better when it comes to educational achievement and financial decision making, and most Seychellois express support for gender equality in access to paying jobs and land ownership.

Giving women an equal chance at being elected to public office wins overwhelming popular support. Still, a sizable minority think women may face problems in the community and at home if they run for office – possibly one of many reasons why so few women hold parliamentary seats.

While most Seychellois approve of the government's performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, a majority say more needs to be done.

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Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, nonpartisan 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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