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Mozambicans give government poor marks on its efforts to promote equal rights for women

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 774 | Asafika Mpako and Stephen Ndoma

Summary

Women outnumber men in Mozambique (United Nations Mozambique, 2022), but despite their dominance in number, they still trail men on key economic, social, and political indicators.

On the economic front, low levels of education and training impede women's job prospects (UN Women Africa, 2022). Only 3.8% of women are estimated to be active in the formal labour market (Ryan, 2020), while 90% work in agriculture, a sector marked by low wages and poor social security (Fórum Mulher, 2019; United Nations Mozambique, 2021).

In education, gender enrolment disparities have been significantly reduced, but the rate of completion is much lower for girls due to heavy domestic burdens, early pregnancy, and the high prevalence of child marriage, all of which force a premature exit from the schooling system (USAID, 2019). More than half (53%) of the country's young women marry before age 18, and 17% before age 15 (United Nations Mozambique, 2022; World Bank Group, 2023).

The high incidence of HIV/AIDS among women is also rooted in gender inequality, as women's economic and social disadvantages increase their vulnerability to infection (UNAIDS, 2021). In 2022, 54,000 new infections were recorded among women, compared to 30,000 among men (Club of Mozambique, 2023). Women register a prevalence rate of 15.2% compared to 9.5% among men (UNAIDS, 2021).

The Mozambican government has demonstrated a strong political commitment to gender equality, adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and signing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Maputo Protocol, and the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, 2019). The country has made impressive strides in ensuring women's political representation: As of 2021, 42.4% of seats in Parliament were held by women (UN Women, 2021).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 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 Eduonoo, 2023).

In Mozambique, findings show gender gaps in educational attainment, asset ownership, and household financial decision making. Most citizens express support for equal rights in land ownership, but only a slim majority endorse gender equality in hiring. And while most Mozambicans say a woman should have the same right as a man to be elected to public office, majorities also consider it likely that a female candidate will suffer criticism and harassment from the community and problems with her family.

Overall, a majority of Mozambicans give their government poor marks on its efforts to promote gender equality, but fewer than half call for greater effort.

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

The Afrobarometer team in Mozambique, led by Ipsos, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,120 adult Mozambicans in October, November, and 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. Previous surveys were conducted in Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021.

Key findings

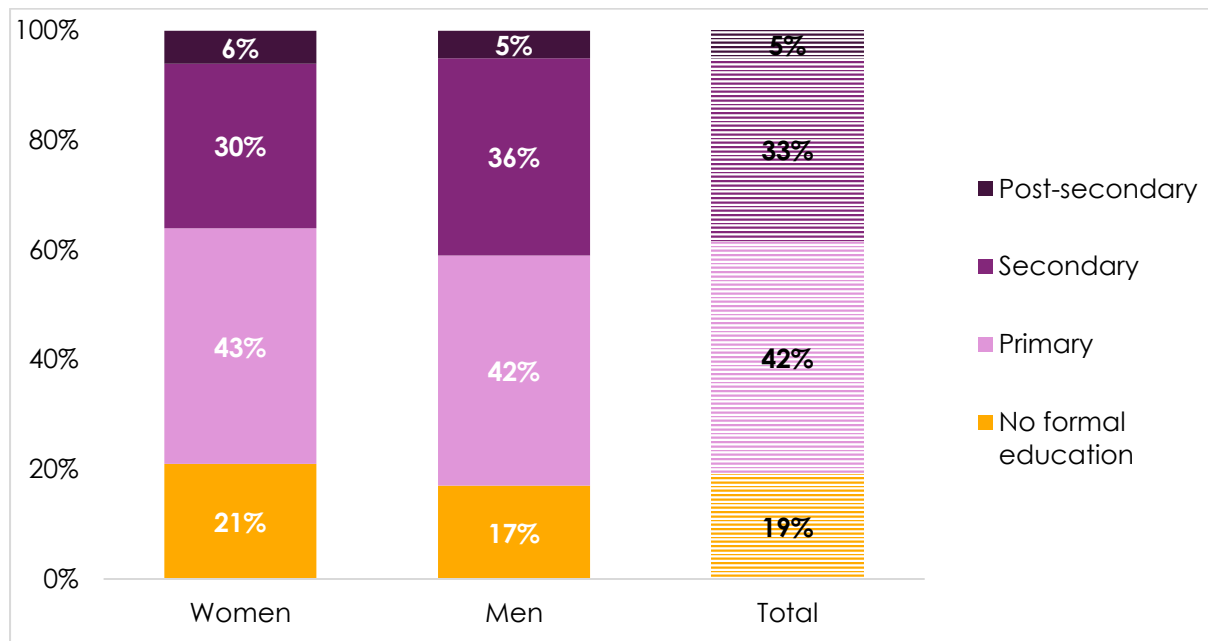
- In Mozambique, fewer women than men have secondary schooling (30% vs. 36%), and more lack formal education altogether (21% vs. 17%).
- Gender gaps persist in ownership of some key assets, including a mobile phone (59% vs. 72%), a bank account (20% vs. 29%), a motor vehicle (11% vs. 19%), and a computer (9% vs. 14%).
- Women are less likely than men to say they make decisions themselves about how household money is spent (20% vs. 33%).
- A slim majority (54%) of Mozambicans say women should have the same chance as men of getting a job, while 40% oppose gender equality in hiring.
- A stronger majority (79%) endorse equal rights in land ownership and inheritance.
- Seven in 10 citizens (70%) say women should have the same chance as men to be elected to political office.
 - However, majorities consider it likely that a woman running for public office will be criticised, called names, or harassed by others in the community (57%) and will face problems with her family (51%).
- Fewer than one-third (31%) of Mozambicans say their government is doing a good job of promoting gender equality. But only 41% say it should be doing more.

Education and control of assets

Men lead in educational achievement in Mozambique (Figure 1). Women and men are about equally likely to have post-secondary qualifications (6% and 5%, respectively). They are also equally likely to cite primary school as their highest level of educational attainment (43% and 42%). But more men than women have secondary schooling (36% vs. 30%), suggesting that young girls drop out before secondary school. Additionally, fewer men than women lack formal education altogether (17% vs. 21%).

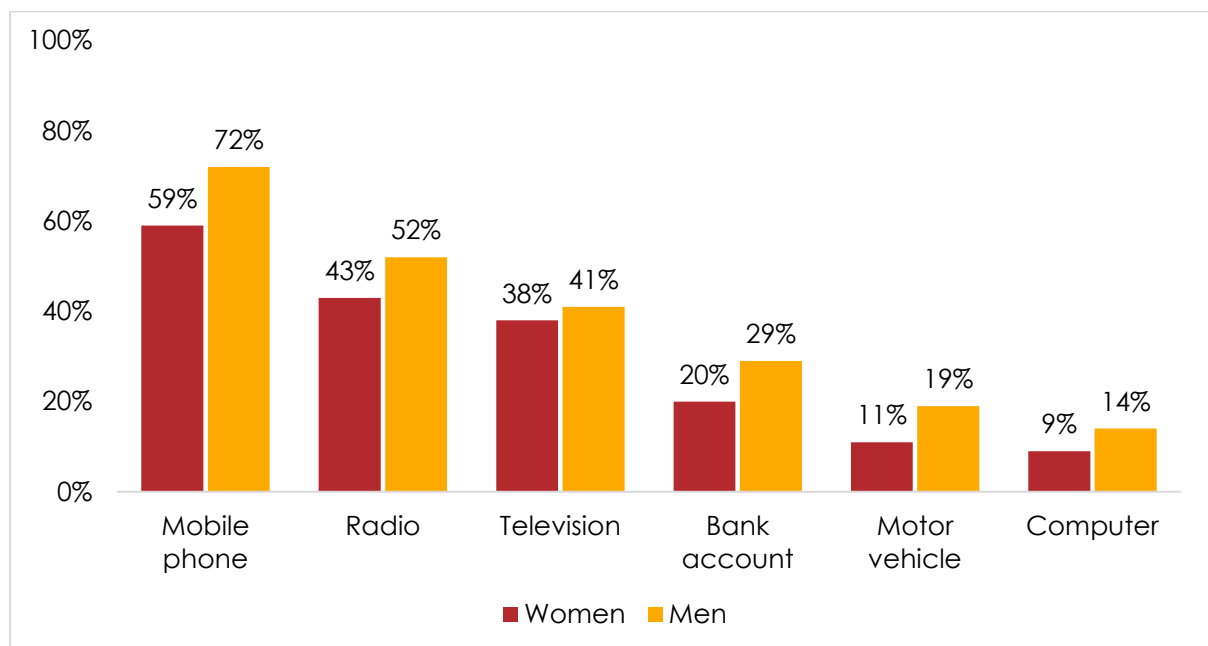
A look at asset ownership reveals some significant gender gaps: Fewer women than men report personally owning a mobile phone (59% vs. 72%), a radio (43% vs. 52%), a bank account (20% vs. 29%), a motor vehicle (11% vs. 19%), and a computer (9% vs. 14%), while television ownership is close to gender-equal (38% vs. 41%) (Figure 2).

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



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

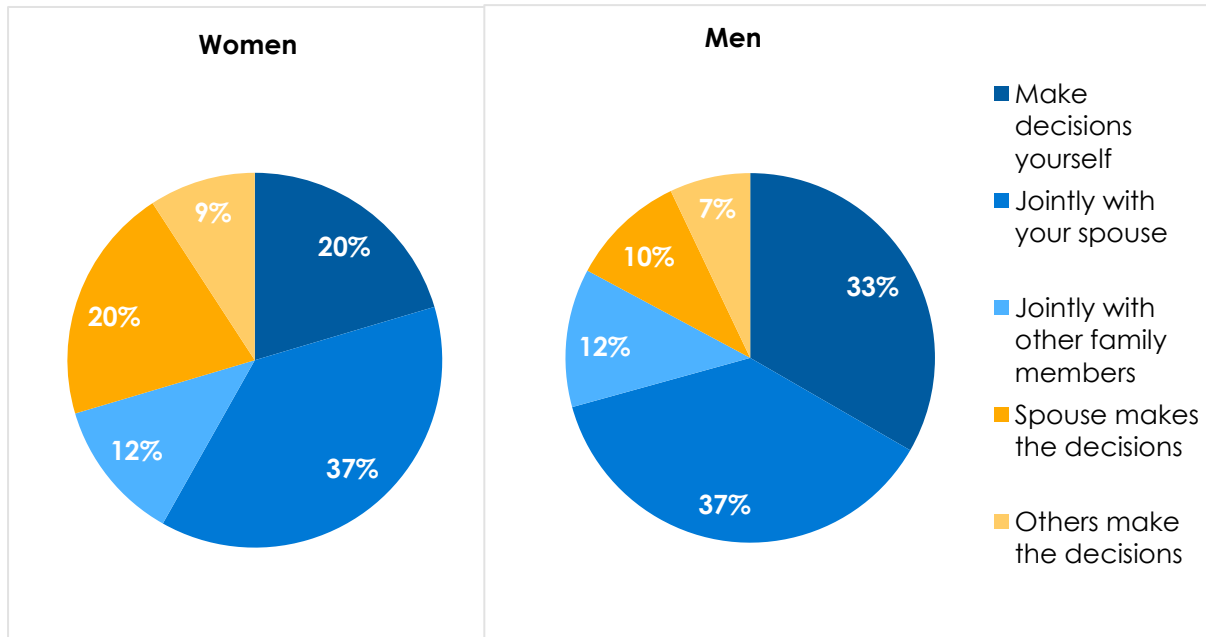
Figure 2: Asset ownership | by gender | Mozambique | 2022



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

Turning to decisions about how money is used in the household, more men (33%) than women (20%) report making these decisions themselves (Figure 3). Nearly four in 10 respondents (37% each) say they make financial decisions jointly with their spouse, while more women (20%) than men (10%) say their spouse makes the decisions. About one in 10 women and men say other family members make the decisions without their input (9% of women, 7% of men).

Figure 3: Who decides how money is used? | by gender | Mozambique | 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 Mozambicans want gender equality when it comes to jobs and land? And if so, how close to equality are they?

Support for gender equality in hiring is far from overwhelming in Mozambique. While a slim majority (54%) of respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the idea that men should be given priority over women in hiring when jobs are scarce, 40% endorse this form of gender discrimination (Figure 4). Support for equality is weaker among men (47%) than women (61%), and increases with respondents’ education level, ranging from 48%-50% among those with primary schooling or less to 62% among those with secondary or post-secondary qualifications.

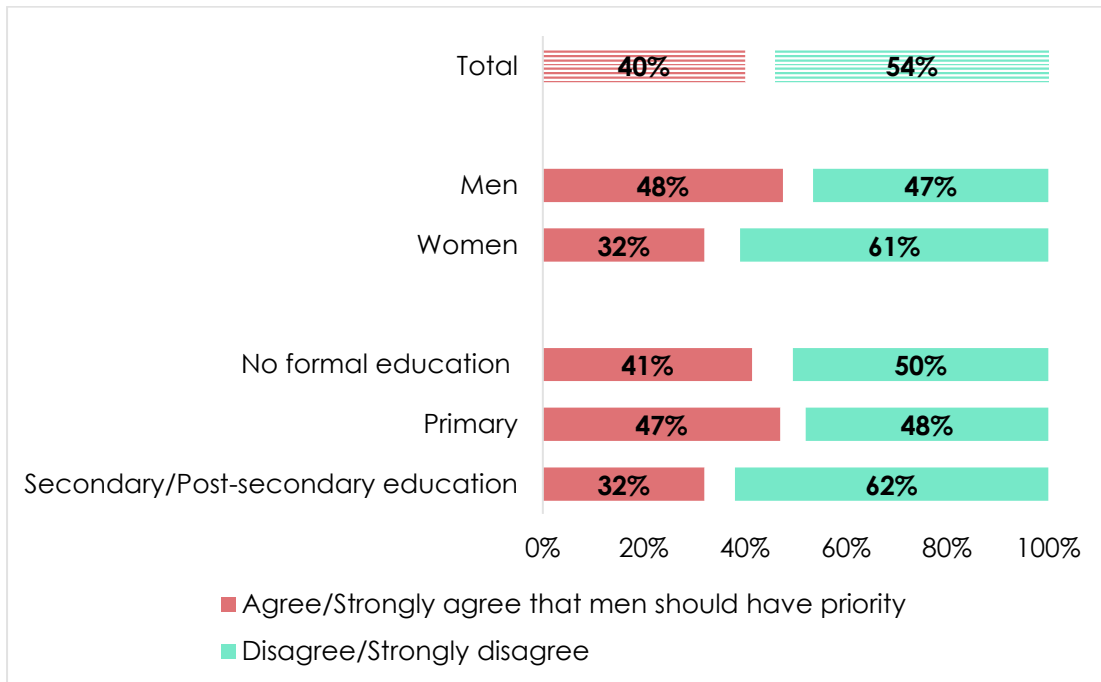
On the issue of land, about eight in 10 Mozambicans (79%) say that women should have equal rights to land ownership and inheritance (Figure 5). More women (82%) than men (77%) support equal land rights.

Despite fairly weak support for gender equality in hiring, more than six in 10 citizens (63%) say that women in the country in fact currently have the same opportunities as men to get jobs (Figure 6). This perception is less common among respondents with no formal education (54%) and older citizens (58% of those aged 46 years and above) than among their more educated and younger counterparts.

More Mozambicans (75%) say women and men enjoy equal opportunities to own or inherit land. Equal proportions of women and men, as well as of rural and urban residents, perceive opportunities to own land in Mozambique as gender-equal. The most educated and economically well-off citizens are most likely to share this perception (78% each).¹

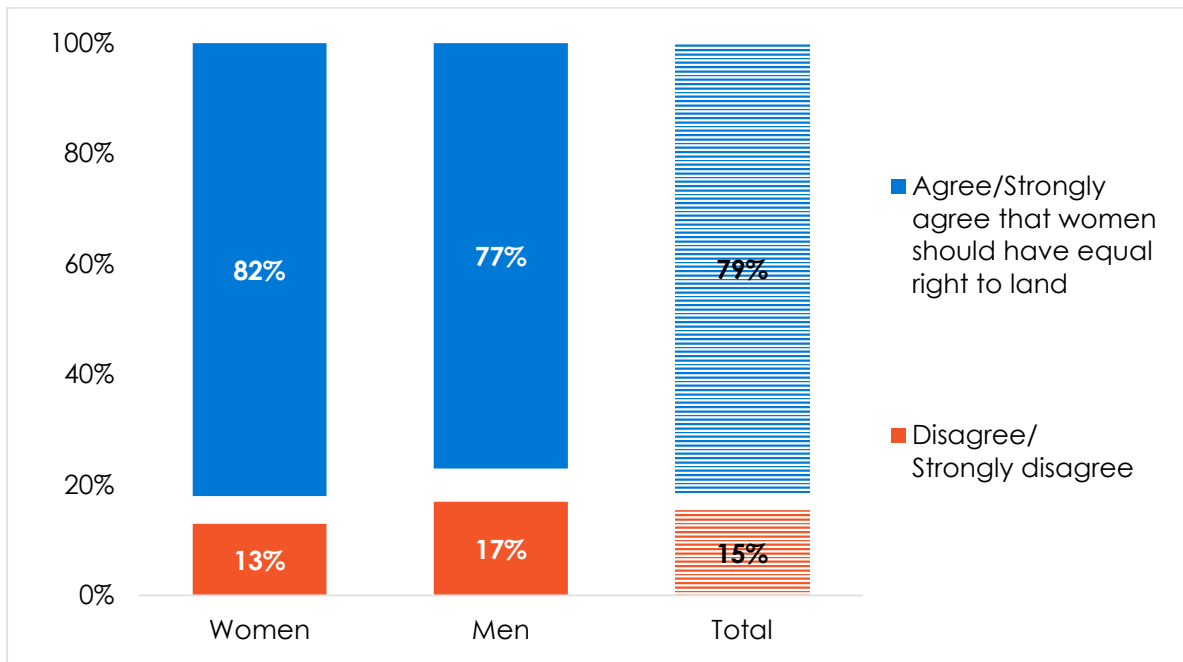
¹ Afrobarometer’s Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents’ levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food and water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the past year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Patel (2022).

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



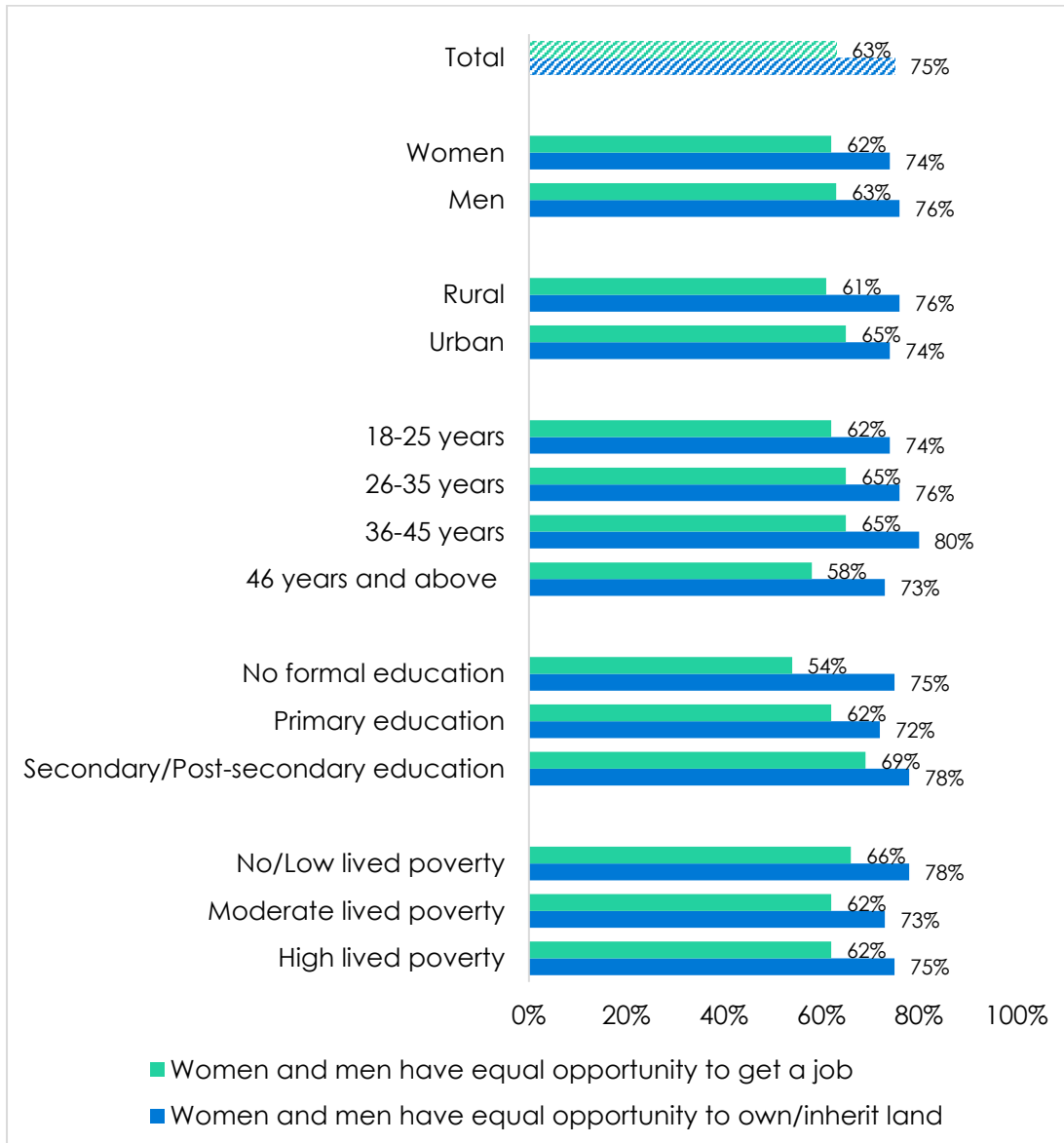
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women.

Figure 5: Should women have equal rights to land? | by gender | Mozambique | 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.

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

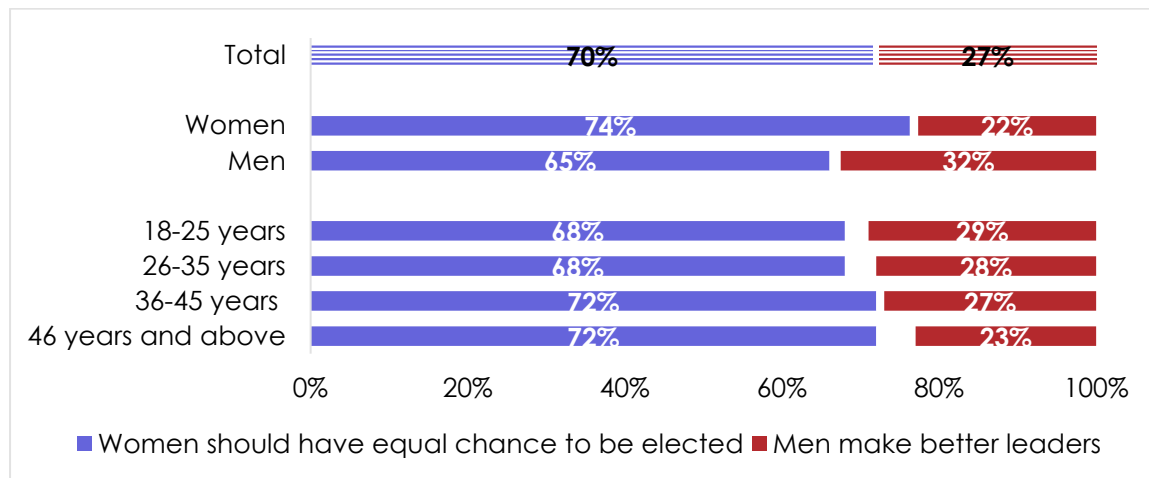
(% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

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.

Seven in 10 Mozambicans (70%) say women should have the same chance as men to be elected to political office (Figure 7). More women (74%) than men (65%) favour gender equality in political participation. But younger respondents are somewhat less supportive of political equality than their elders (68% vs. 72%).

Figure 7: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | by gender and age | Mozambique | 2022



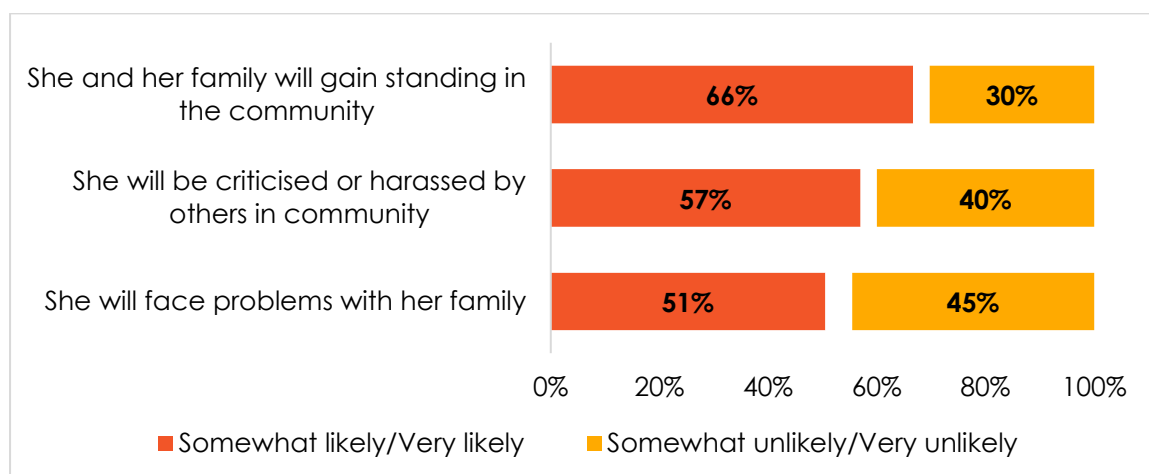
Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women.
 Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.
 (% who “agree” or “strongly 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, two-thirds (66%) of Mozambicans 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).

But almost six in 10 (57%) also say that a woman standing for election is likely to be criticised, called names, or harassed by others in the community, while 51% think she will probably face problems with her family – perceptions that might discourage some women from entering a political race.

Figure 8: For better or for worse: How running for elective office might affect women’s lives | Mozambique | 2022



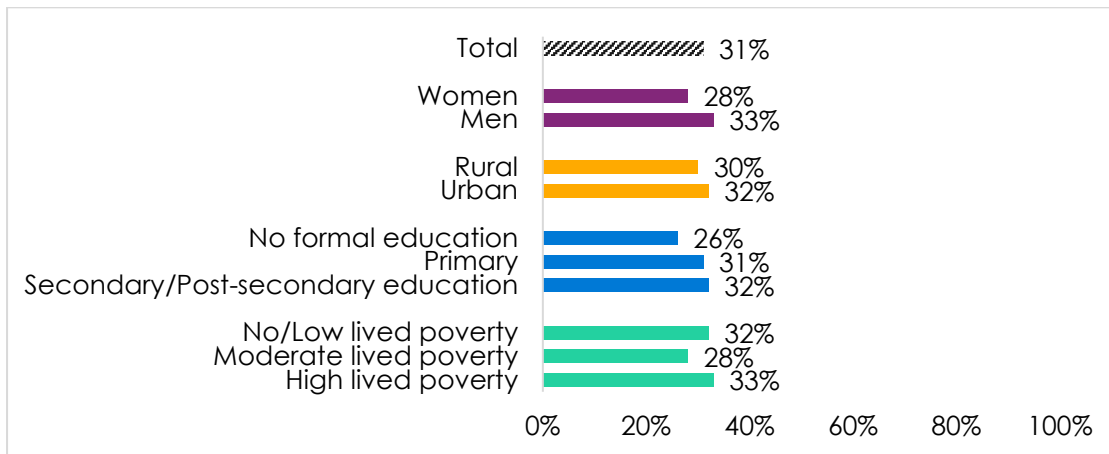
Respondents were asked: If a woman in your community runs for elected office, how likely or unlikely is it that the following things might occur: She and her family will gain standing in the community? She will be criticised, called names, or harassed by others in the community? She will face problems with her family?

Government performance in promoting equal rights and opportunities

Overall, fewer than one-third (31%) of Mozambicans say the government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” on promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, while 68% say it is doing a poor job (Figure 9). Approval ratings are particularly low among the least educated (26%) and women (28%).

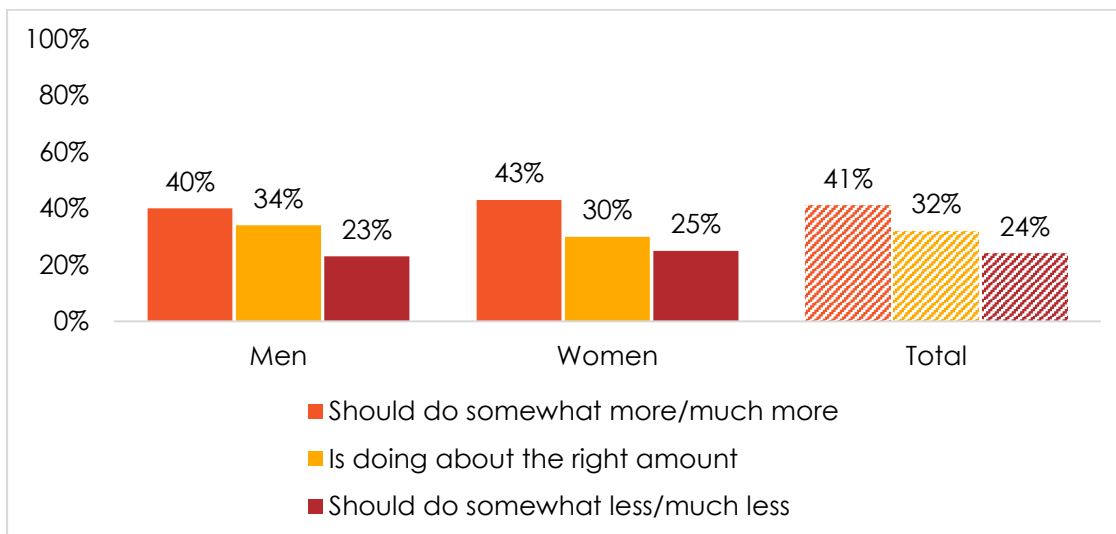
Even so, views are mixed on whether the government should devote greater effort to this issue. About four in 10 respondents (41%) say the government should be doing “somewhat more” or “much more” to promote gender equality in the country, while 32% say it is doing about the right amount and 24% think it should do less. Women and men differ only modestly in their views on the government’s level of effort in the fight for gender equality (Figure 10).

Figure 9: Government performance on promoting equal rights and opportunities for women | by demographic group | Mozambique | 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”)

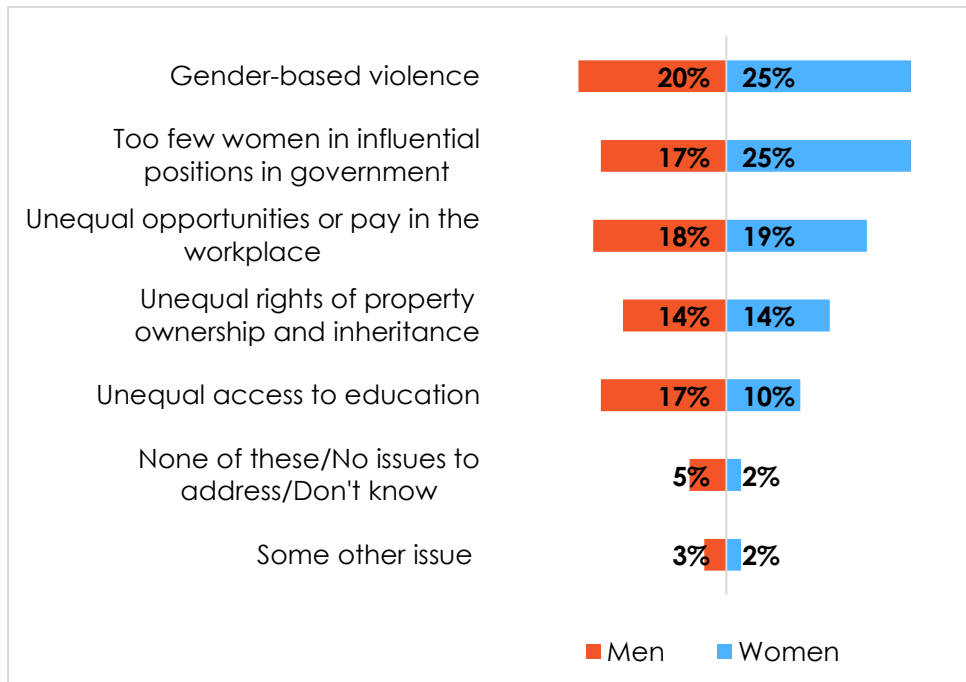
Figure 10: Should the government do more or less to promote equal rights and opportunities for women? | by gender | Mozambique | 2022



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?

Asked what they consider to be the most important women's-rights issue for their government and society to address, women most frequently cite gender-based violence (GBV) and a lack of women in influential positions in government (25% each), followed by unequal opportunities or pay in the workplace (19%) (Figure 11). GBV also ranks at the top for men (20%), who are more likely than women to cite unequal access to education as the top priority (17% of men vs. 10% of women).

Figure 11: Most important women's-rights issue | by gender | Mozambique | 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 Mozambicans express support for gender equality in land ownership, but backing for equal rights in hiring is less solid. And while most citizens endorse a woman's right to run for public office, majorities also think that female candidates are likely to face negative reactions from the community or problems with their family.

The government receives poor marks for its gender-equality efforts. But it also receives less-than-clear marching orders from its citizens, who are divided over whether the government should be doing more, the same, or less to promote equal rights and opportunities for women.

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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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