Dispatch No. 1067 | 28 October 2025

Moroccan women still face harassment, barriers to equality in employment and politics

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1067 | Marcelline Amouzou

Summary

Women's empowerment in Morocco remains a critical issue for both individual human rights and broader social progress. As the United Nations Development Programme (2014, p. 2) highlights, "Unless women and girls are able to fully realise their rights in all spheres of life, human development will not be advanced."

Despite legal reforms and policy efforts (United Nations Development Programme, 2022), Moroccan women continue to face significant gaps in economic participation and political empowerment. These disparities are reflected in the World Economic Forum's (2025) Global Gender Gap Report, which ranks Morocco 137th out of 148 countries. Within the Middle East and North Africa region, the country places 10th out of 14, underscoring the broader regional challenges to advancing gender equality.

The Moroccan government has signed on to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, whose Goal 5 calls for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making (United Nations, 2025). Morocco has also committed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (EuroMed Rights, n.d.).

The 2011 Constitution reinforces these commitments by enshrining equality between men and women, prohibiting discrimination, and affirming the primacy of ratified international conventions over domestic law (EuroMed Rights, n.d.).

In line with these obligations, the government has adopted a series of policies and programmes aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women. Most recently, it launched the Strategic Framework of the Government Plan for Equality 2023-2026, which includes the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme designed to increase women's labour-force participation (Kingdom of Morocco, 2023). This framework focuses on three key areas: enhancing women's economic inclusion and entrepreneurship, preventing and addressing gender-based violence, and promoting gender-equal values across society. The plan was developed in consultation with government ministries and civil-society stakeholders and is overseen by the National Committee for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, established to ensure policy coordination and accountability.

In 2018, the Moroccan Parliament passed Law 103-13 to combat all forms of violence against women, marking a significant step toward gender justice. The law criminalises various forms of gender-based violence, including harassment, sexual assault, and cyber violence. It also outlines legal protections and support mechanisms for survivors (Morocco World News, 2018).

Afrobarometer offers a citizens' perspective on the effectiveness of strategies to empower women. Survey findings in Morocco suggest that women continue to face discrimination, harassment, and barriers in various facets of life, both public and private.

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While women have achieved parity with men in higher education, they are far less likely to have paying jobs. Three in 10 respondents report that families prevent women from taking jobs, and four in 10 say women and girls frequently experience sexual harassment in public spaces, including schools.

Most Moroccans say women and girls are likely to be believed if they complain of discrimination or harassment, but most also think the police and courts need to do more to protect women and girls from such treatment.

While most women say they should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office, barely half of men agree.

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. Ten survey rounds in up to 45 countries have been completed since 1999. Round 10 surveys (2024/2025) cover 38 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 a nationally representative sample of 1,200 adult citizens of Morocco in February 2024. 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 Morocco in 2013, 2015, 2018, 2021, and 2022.

Key findings

- Moroccan women and men are at parity in secondary and post-secondary education (57%-58%). More women than men lack formal schooling (18% vs. 14%).
    - Most Moroccans (84%) say it is rare or unheard of for families to prevent girls from going to school because they prioritise boys' education. But 15% say this happens frequently, and this share rises to 28% in rural areas and to 33% among economically disadvantaged respondents.
    - More than one in four citizens (27%) say that schoolgirls "often" or "always" face discrimination, harassment, or requests for sexual favours from their teachers. Among poor respondents, 39% say such abuses are common.
- Among working-age adults, men are four times as likely as women to be employed full time (47% vs. 12%) and part time (23% vs. 6%).
    - While many citizens say that women face no particular barriers to entering and advancing in the workforce, others cite barriers such as social norms, a lack of flexible work arrangements and childcare, inadequate education or training, and discrimination by employers.
    - Three in 10 citizens (30%) report that husbands or family members "often" or "always" prevent women from taking paid employment. This figure rises to more than four in 10 among rural residents (42%), those with no formal education (45%), and poor respondents (49%).
- About two-thirds (65%) of Moroccans say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office. Barely half (49%) of men share this view, compared to 82% of women.

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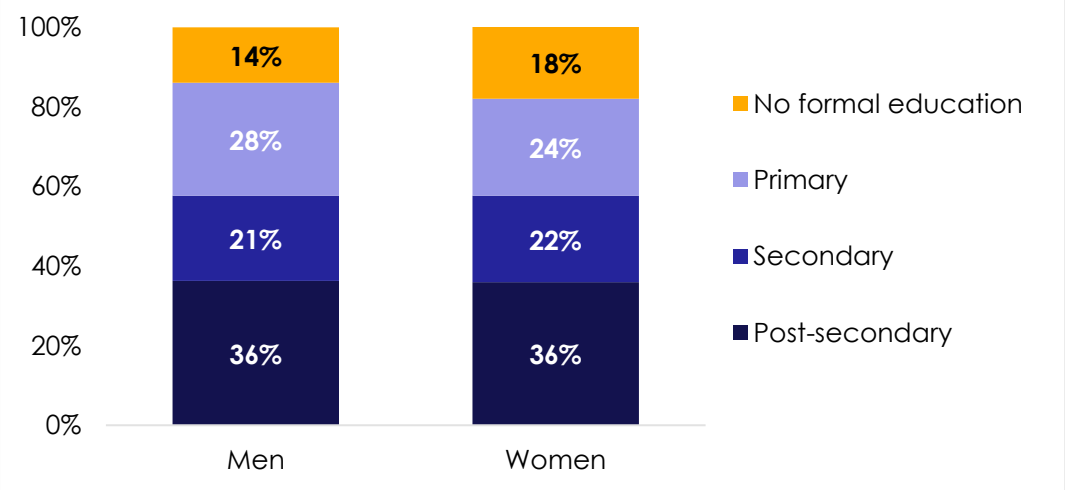
- More than four in 10 Moroccans (43%) say women "often" or "always" experience sexual harassment in public spaces, such as in markets, on the street, and in public transport.
    - A majority (62%) of respondents consider it "somewhat likely" or "very likely" that women and girls will be believed if they report incidents of discrimination or harassment.
    - But three-fourths (75%) of citizens say the police and courts should do more to protect women and girls from discrimination and harassment.

Education

Moroccan women and men are about equally likely to have secondary or post-secondary education (58% of men, 57% of women). Somewhat more women than men lack formal schooling altogether (18% vs. 14%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Level of education | by gender | Morocco | 2024



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

About one in seven Moroccans (15%) say families "often" or "always" prevent girls from attending school because they prioritise boys' education, while 84% believe this happens "rarely" or "never" (Figure 2).

Almost three in 10 citizens (27%) report that schoolgirls "often" or "always" face discrimination, harassment, or demands for sexual favours from teachers. In comparison, nearly two-thirds (63%) say this is rare or does not occur.

Perceptions that girls' education takes a back seat to boys' are three times as common among rural residents (28%) as among their urban counterparts (9%) (Figure 3). And fully one-third (33%) of citizens experiencing moderate or high lived poverty[1] say boys are "often" or "always" given higher priority in schooling, compared to just 13% and 7% among those experiencing low or no lived poverty, respectively.

[1] Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents' levels of 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 past year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Lekalake (2025).

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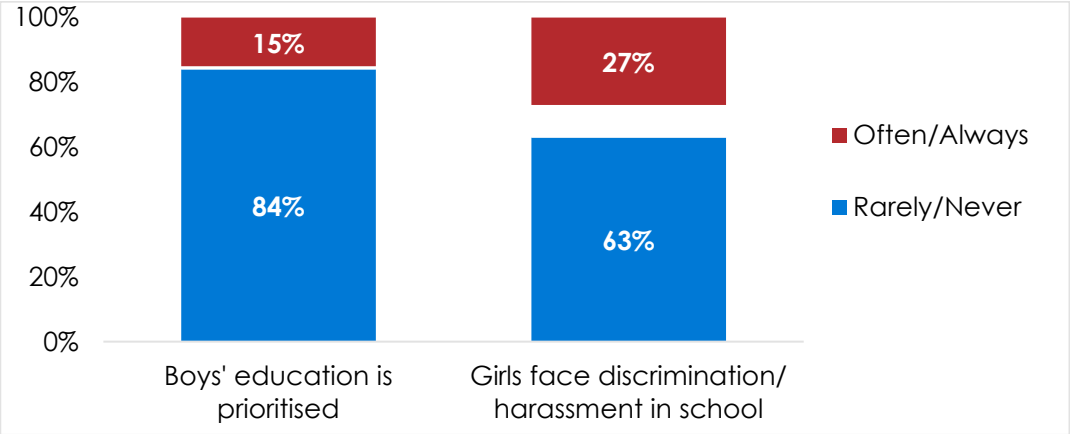
These views also differ by education level: One in four respondents with no formal schooling (25%) report that boys' education is prioritised, compared to just 10% among those with post-secondary qualifications.

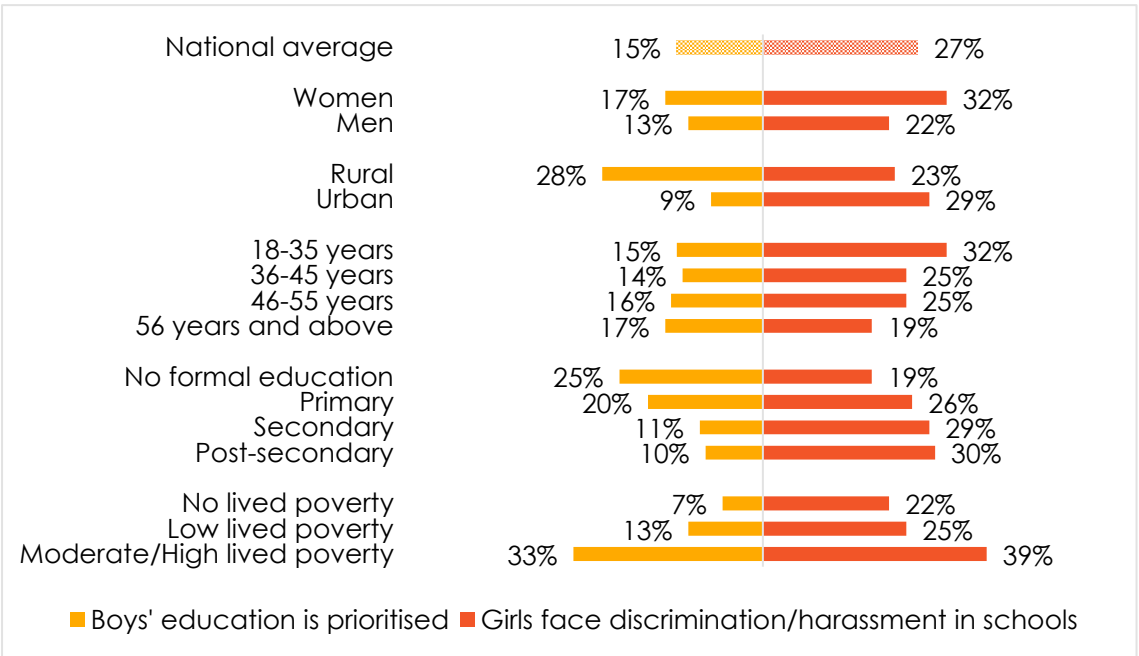
Frequent discrimination or harassment of girls in school is also most widely reported by poor respondents (39%). Women (32%), youth (32%), urban residents (29%), and highly educated respondents (30%) are also particularly likely to say that girls "often" or "always" face discrimination or harassment.

Figure 2: Discrimination and harassment in education | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How frequently do the following things occur in your community: Girls are prevented from attending school because their families prioritise the education of boys? Girl students face discrimination, harassment, or requests for sexual favours from their teachers?*

Figure 3: Discrimination and harassment in education | by demographic group | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How frequently do the following things occur in your community: Girls are prevented from attending school because their families prioritise the education of boys? Girl students face discrimination, harassment, or requests for sexual favours from their teachers? (% who say "often" or "always")*

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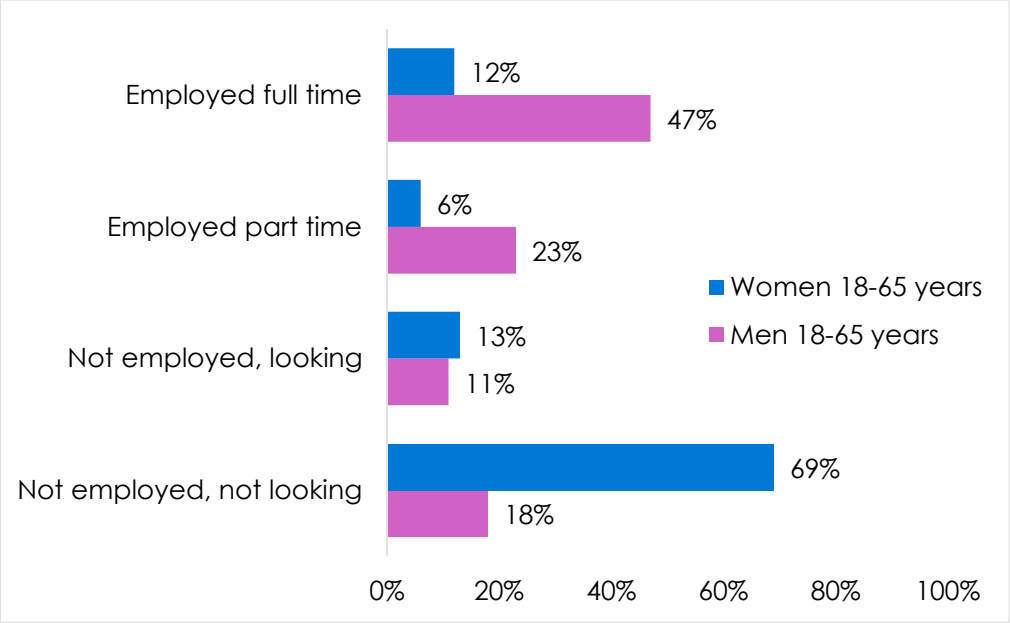
Employment

Among working-age adults (18-65 years old), Moroccan men are four times as likely as women to be employed full time (47% vs. 12%) (Figure 4). A similar gap exists in part-time employment (23% vs. 6%).

The share of those who are not employed but actively looking for jobs is nearly the same across genders (13% of women vs. 11% of men). This indicates that the employment gap stems primarily from the large number of women who are not in paid employment and not looking for jobs (69% of women vs. 18% of men). Among working-age women, 54% identify as homemakers and 20% identify as students.

Figure 4: Employment status | 18- to 65-year-olds | by gender | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *Do you have a job that pays a cash income? [If yes:] Is it full time or part time? [If no:] Are you currently looking for a job? (Respondents over age 65 are excluded.)*

When asked what they think is the main barrier to women entering and advancing in the workforce, the most common response among both women (30%) and men (37% is that women do not face any particular barriers (Figure 5).

About one in five women (21%) say the main blockage is that it's not socially acceptable for women to hold paid employment, a reason also cited by 27% of men. Somewhat fewer respondents cite a lack of remote or flexible work arrangements (14% of women) and a lack of childcare (13% of women). About one in 10 women say that women lack the necessary education or skills (10%) and that employers prefer to hire men (8%).

When asked how common it is for women in their community to be prevented by husbands or relatives from taking paid employment, three in 10 respondents (30%) say this happens "often" or "always" (Figure 6).

Perceptions of this restriction are significantly more prevalent in rural areas than in cities (42% vs. 24%). They decline sharply as respondents' education level rises, from 45% among those with no formal schooling to 20% among those with post-secondary qualifications. But they increase just as sharply alongside citizens' experience of lived poverty, from 20% among well-off respondents to 49% among the poor.

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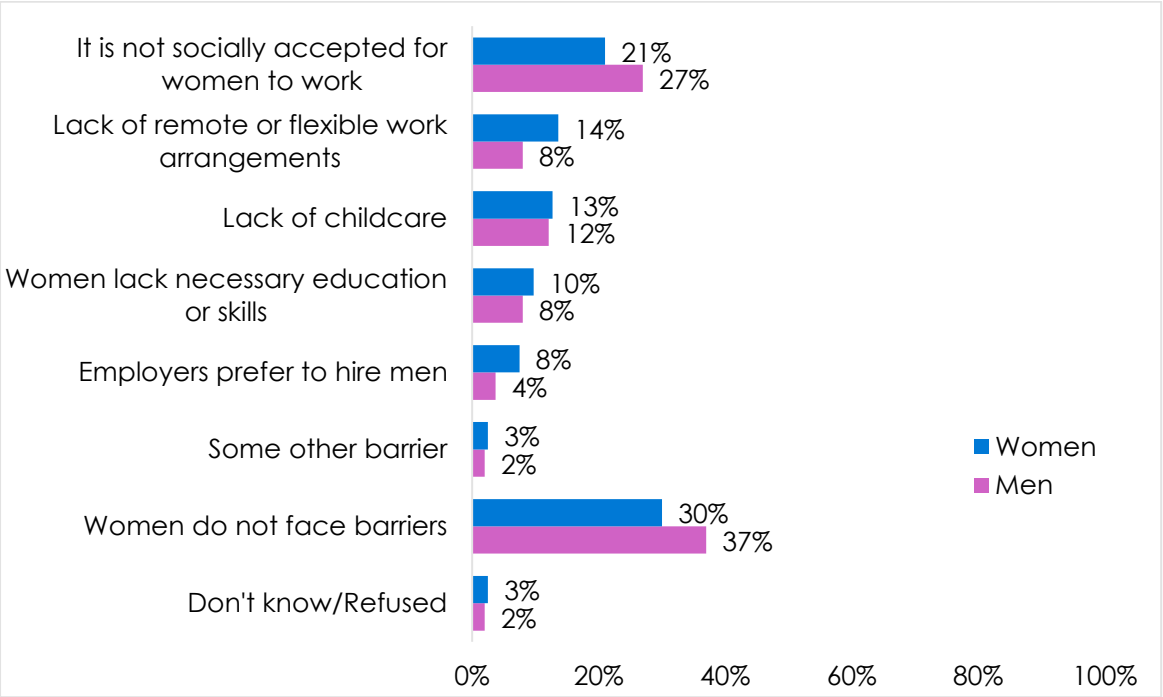
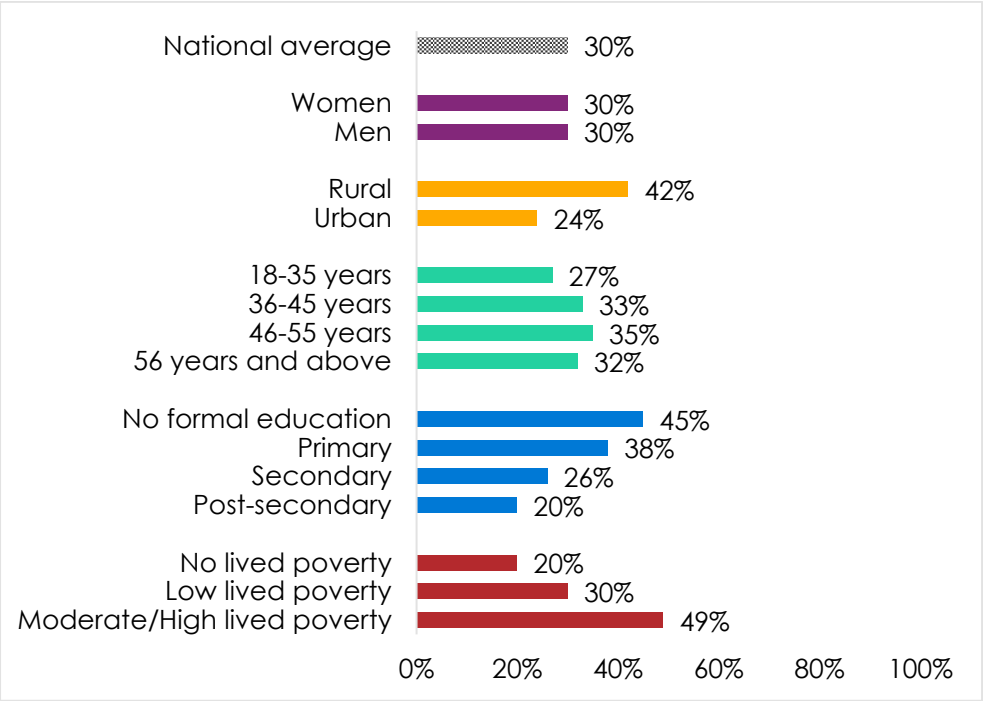
Figure 5: Main barrier to women's employment | by gender | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, which of the following is the main barrier to women entering and moving up in the workforce?*

Figure 6: Women are barred from working by spouses/families | by demographic group | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How frequently do the following things occur in your community: Women are prevented by their spouses or other family members from taking paid employment? (% who say "often" or "always")*

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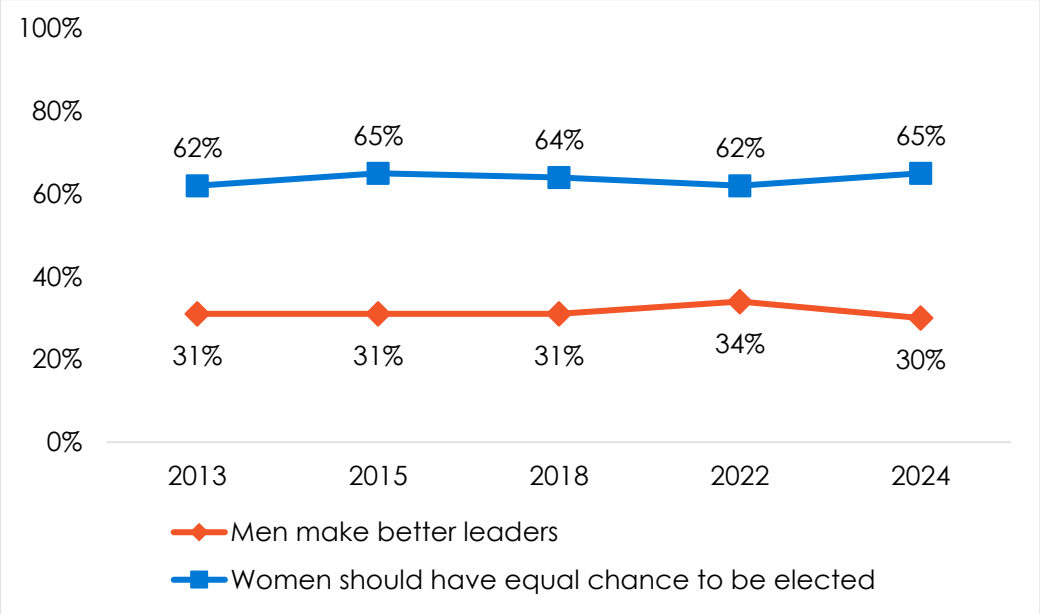
Leadership

While women make up half of Morocco's population (Trading Economics, 2025), they hold only 24% of seats in Parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024). Do Moroccans believe in gender fairness in politics?

About two-thirds (65%) of citizens say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office, while 30% think men make better leaders and should be given priority at the ballot box (Figure 7). These views have remained stable over the past decade.

Figure 7: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | Morocco | 2013-2024



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.

Women and men differ sharply on this question: More than eight in 10 women (82%) favour gender equity in politics, compared to barely half (49%) of mend (Figure 8). Substantial gaps also separate urban and rural residents (68% vs. 60%), youth and seniors (71% vs. 55%), the most and least educated (74% vs. 55%), and the well-off and the poorest (72% vs. 61%).

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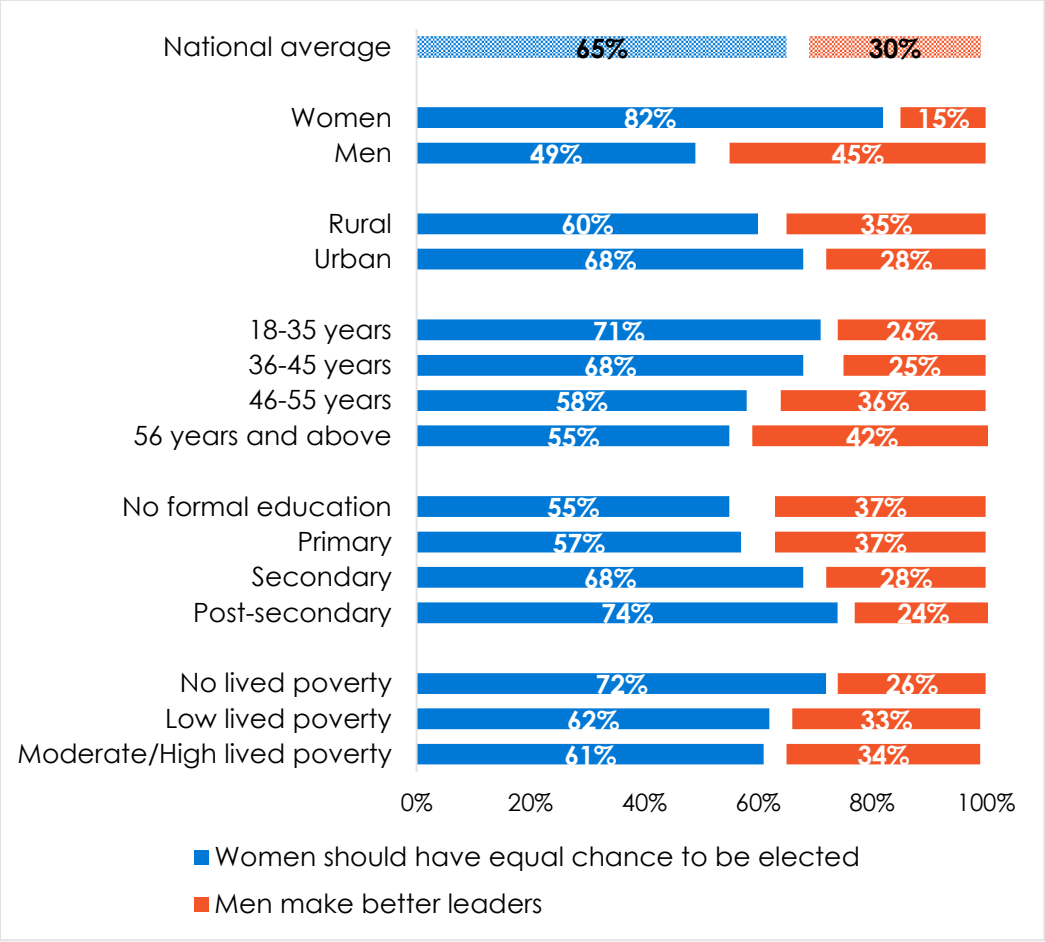
Figure 8: Should women have an equal chance to be elected? | by demographic group | Morocco | 2024



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.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can be both psychologically and socially damaging, posing a significant threat to the safety and well-being of women and girls (UN Women, 2020). Eliminating sexual harassment is crucial for ensuring that women and girls can fully participate in public life without fear or intimidation.

More than four in 10 citizens (43%) say women "often" or "always" experience sexual harassment in public spaces such as in markets, on the street, or in public transport (Figure 9). Almost as many (38%) say such incidents occur "rarely," while 16% say they "never" happen

More women than men see sexual harassment as a frequent occurrence (48% vs. 38%), and urbanites are twice as likely as rural residents to report this as a frequent problem (51% vs. 26%) (Figure 10). Youth (46%) also see it as a more frequent occurrence than seniors (34%).

Perceptions of sexual harassment as a widespread problem also increase with respondents' education, from 32% among those with no formal schooling to 50% of those with post-secondary education.

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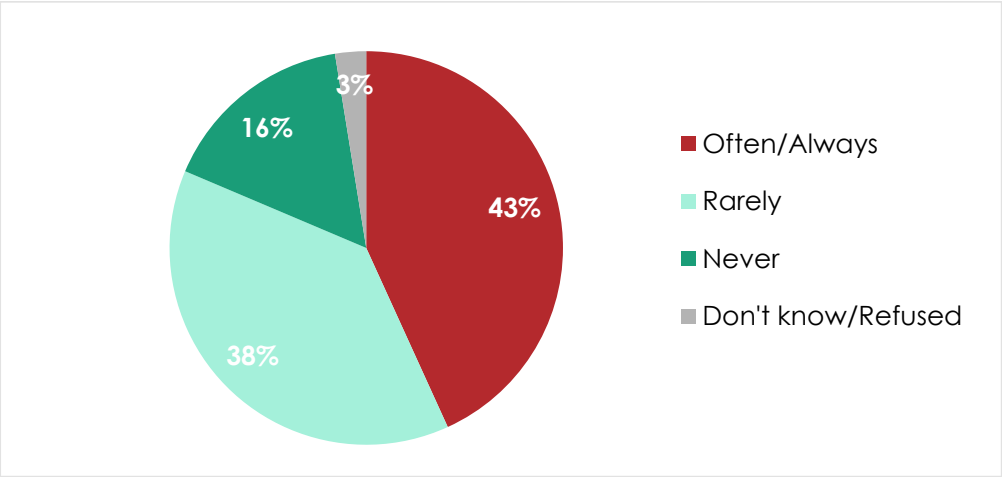
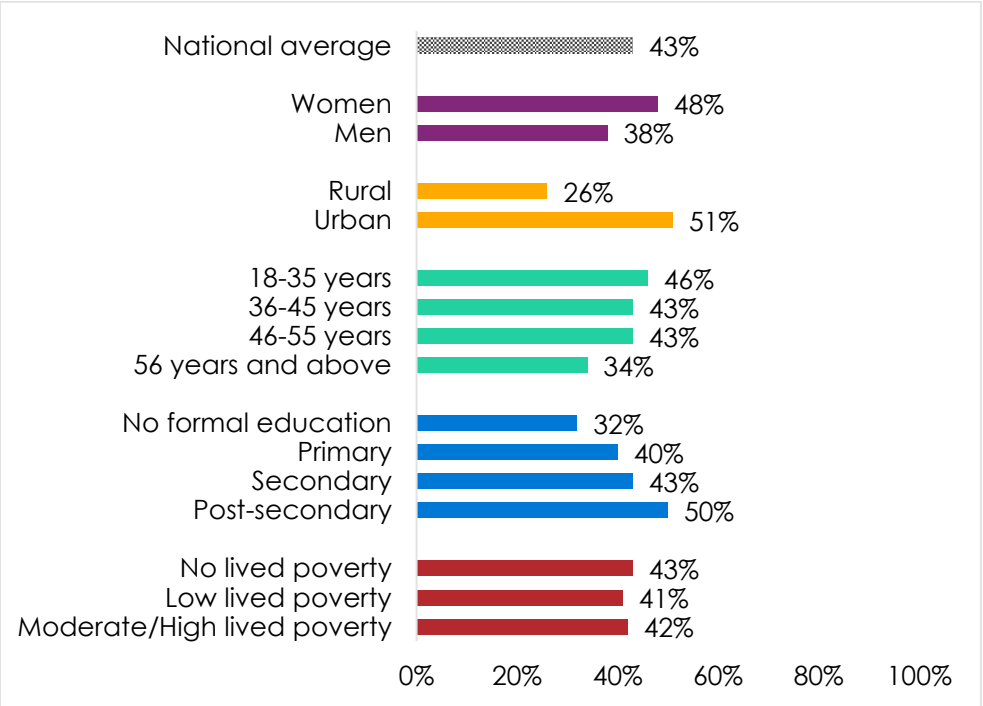
Figure 9: How often are women sexually harassed in public spaces? | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How frequently do the following things occur in your community: Women are sexually harassed in public places such as in markets, on the streets, or in public transport?*

Figure 10: Sexual harassment of women in public spaces | by demographic group | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *How frequently do the following things occur in your community: Women are sexually harassed in public places such as in markets, on the streets, or in public transport? (% who say "often" or "always")*

If women and girls report discrimination or harassment in public spaces such as workplaces or schools, a majority (62%) of citizens say they are "somewhat likely" (40%) or "very likely" (22%) to be believed (Figure 11). However, more than one-third (35%) say such complaints will probably not be taken seriously.

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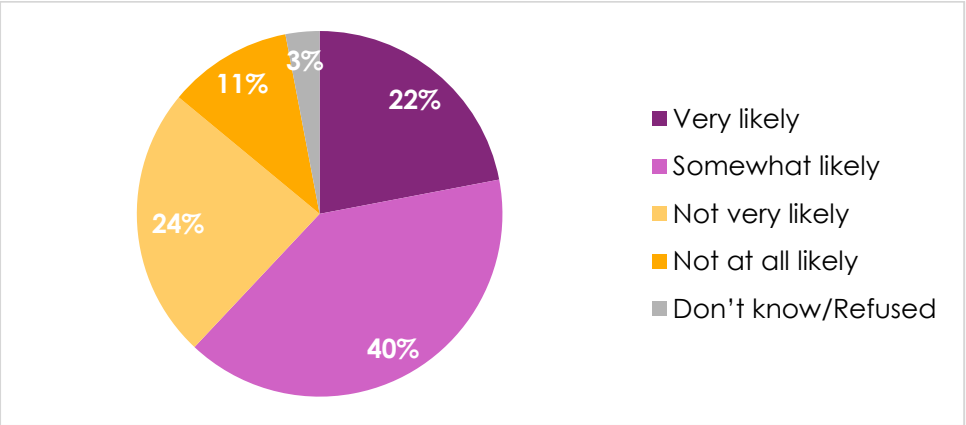
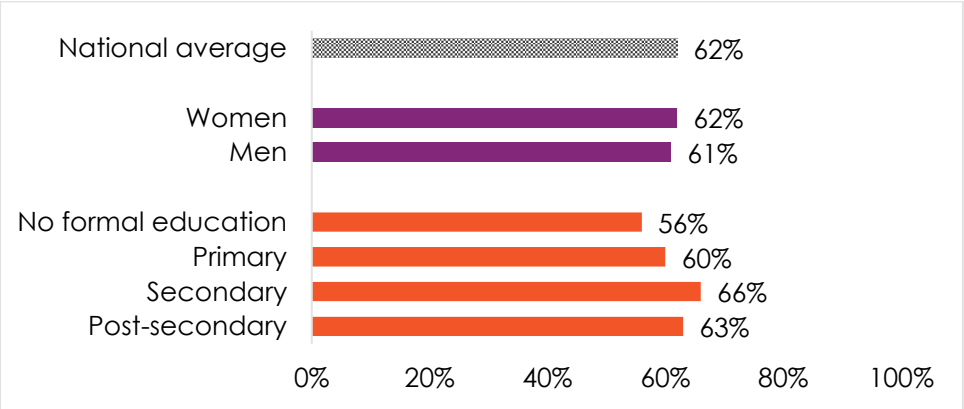
Figure 11: Are women and girls believed when they complain of discrimination or harassment? | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *In your community, how likely is it that people will believe women or girls if they complain about being discriminated against or harassed in schools, workplaces, or other public spaces?*

Women and men are equally likely to say that complaints of discrimination or harassment will be taken seriously (Figure 12). The share of those who think women and girls will be believed if they complain of discrimination or harassment goes up with respondents' education level, from 56% among those without formal schooling to 66% among those with secondary qualifications.

Figure 12: Likely that women and girls will be believed if they complain of discrimination or harassment | by gender and education level | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *In your community, how likely is it that people will believe women or girls if they complain about being discriminated against or harassed in schools, workplaces, or other public spaces? (% who say "very likely" or "somewhat likely")*

Even if a slim majority of Moroccans do not view discrimination and harassment as widespread, fully three-fourths (75%)[2] say the police and courts need to do more to protect

[2] Due to rounding, percentages for combined categories reported in the text may differ slightly from the sum of sub-categories shown in figures (e.g. 48% "need to do somewhat more" and 28% "need to do much more" sum to 75%).

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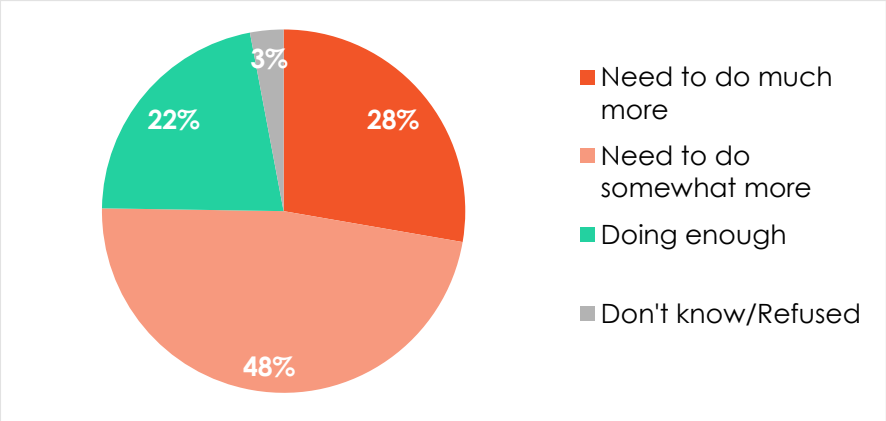
women and girls from these threats, including 28% who say they need to do "much more" (Figure 13).

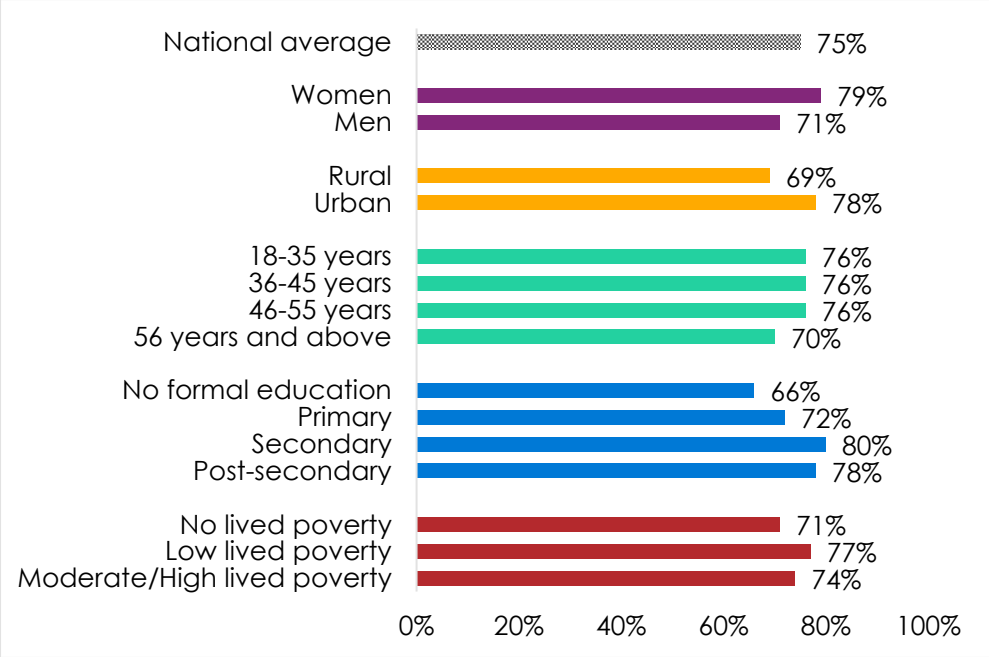
Figure 13: Are police and courts protecting women and girls? | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *Do you think the police and courts in this country are doing enough to protect women and girls from discrimination and harassment in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, or do they need to do more?*

Women are more likely than men to say that the authorities should be doing more to protect them from discrimination and harassment (79% vs. 71%) (Figure 14). Support for greater protective efforts is also higher among urban than rural residents (78% vs. 69%) and among more educated respondents (78%-80%) than among those with less schooling (66%-72%).

Figure 14: Police and courts need to do more to protect women and girls | by demographic group | Morocco | 2024



Respondents were asked: *Do you think the police and courts in this country are doing enough to protect women and girls from discrimination and harassment in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, or do they need to do more? (% who say "need to do much more" or "need to do somewhat more")*

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Conclusion

Survey data suggest that women's empowerment is a work in progress in Morocco. Women match men in higher education but lag far behind in the labour market, in part because social norms and hiring biases restrict their entry and advancement.

Support for equal opportunity in political leadership is widespread but far from unanimous, especially among men.

Sexual harassment in public spaces, including schools, is a serious concern. Moroccans express confidence that women and girls will be believed if they report discrimination and harassment, but a strong majority also demand a more effective police and court response to protect them from these abuses.

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Financial support for Afrobarometer is provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation via the World Bank Think Africa Project, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations - Africa, Luminate, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Obama Foundation, the European Union Commission, the World Bank Group, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

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Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1067 | 28 October 2025

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