

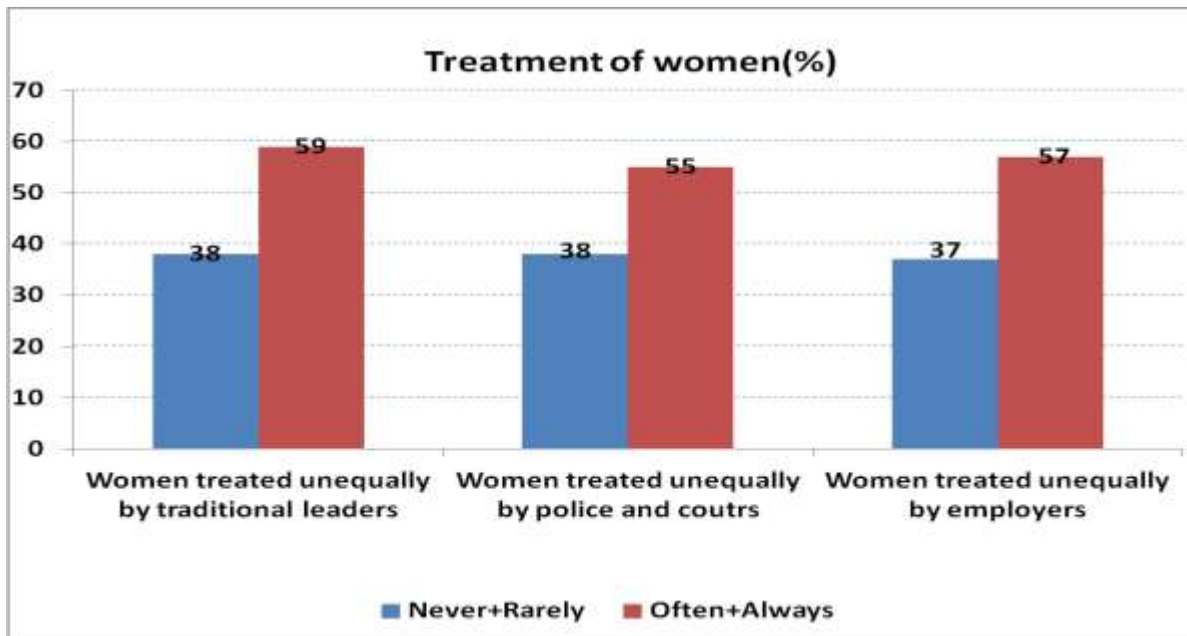


Press Release

Towards Socio-Economic Stability: Gender Equality and Access to Technology Still Challenging

As Sierra Leoneans speak up on a number of issues ranging from their economic status to social conditions the responses received point to a worrying trend on the issue of gender equality and access to technology as a way of deepening our socio-economic stability. In spite of the strides toward narrowing gender gaps in Sierra Leone, the survey reveals that there are huge disparities that are significantly affecting women in the areas highlighted.

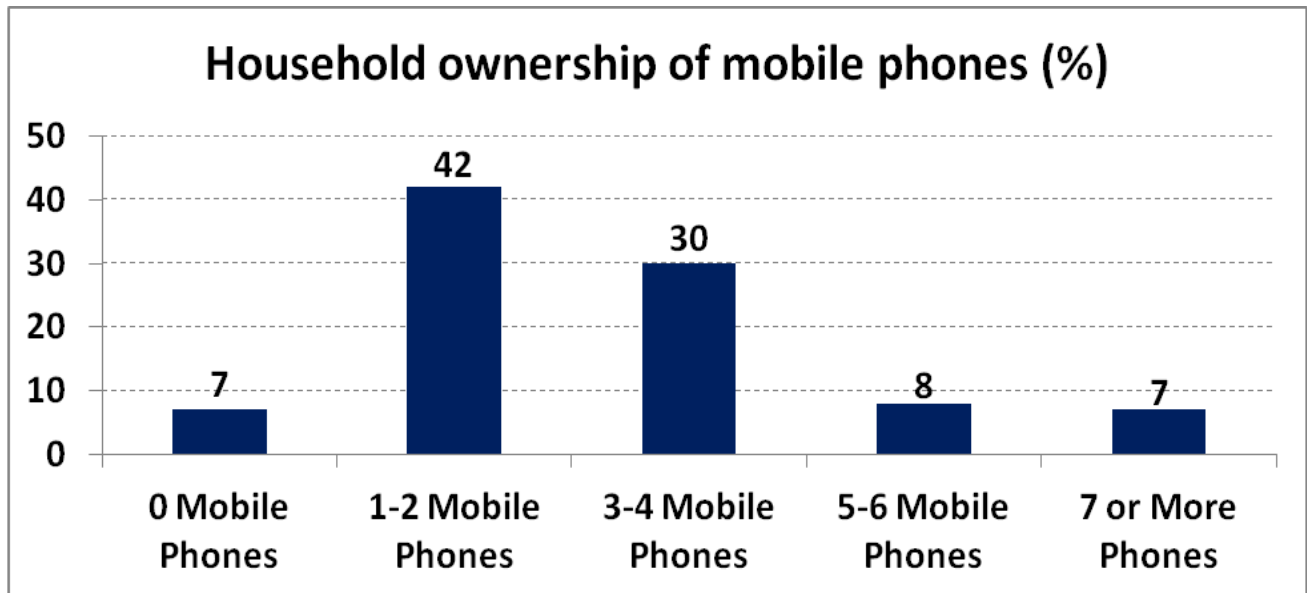
Equity/ Gender Equality



Sierra Leoneans perceive unequal treatment of women by traditional leaders, police, courts and employers. Majority (59%) think that women are “often or always” treated unequally by traditional leaders. A third (38%) thinks otherwise. 55% think that women are “often or always” treated unequally by police and courts. A third (38%) thinks otherwise. A majority (57%) think that women are treated unequally by employers. But a large minority (37%) think it “never or rarely” happens. However, questions remain as to what gender equality means to citizens, given the country’s recent troubled past, as well as broader concerns about post-conflict state building.

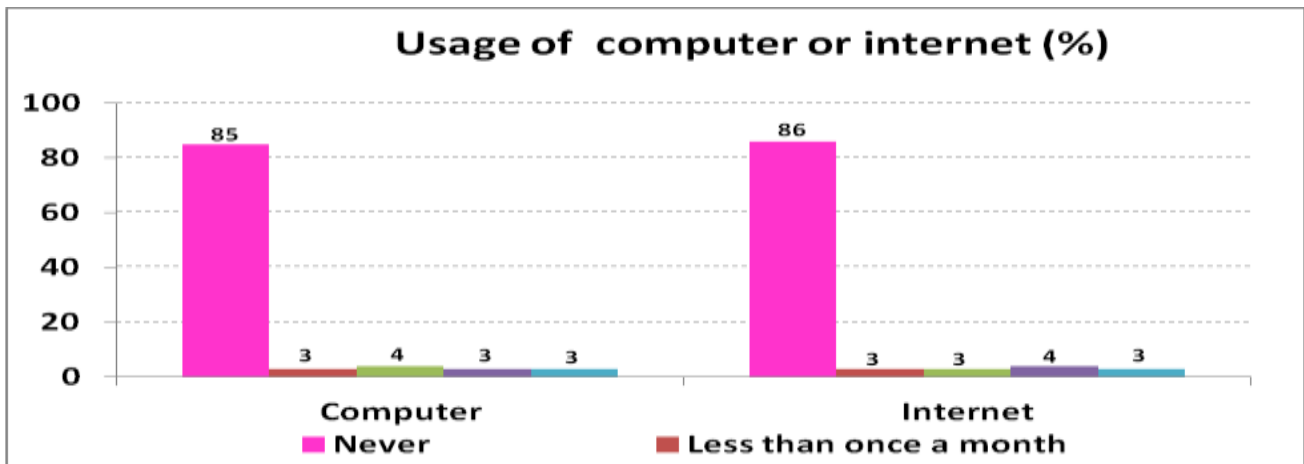
When it comes to information technology, the study reveals that Sierra Leoneans in the absence of land phones have resorted to the use of mobile phones as their primary means of communications. The graphical representation below shows that in a household, a sizable minority (42%) of Sierra Leoneans own at least 1-2 mobile phones, whilst a third (30%) owns at least 3-4 mobile phones and only 7% do not own a mobile phone.

Communications (Mobile Phones/ Internet)



A worrying trend is that a very significant majority (85%, 86%), almost on an equal basis never use computer/ internet respectively. This negative development points to a number of issues, like poor access to ICT infrastructural facilities, limited or non-existence of electricity supply in some parts of the rural areas. This poses serious ramifications for bridging the communications divide between the urban and rural areas.

Although Sierra Leone has made important strides since the end of the civil conflict in terms of improving the socio-economic status of its people, yet the result in terms of assessment in gender equality and opportunities for access and use of ICTs remains a problem and requires urgent attention.



Albeit in order to ensure that progress towards gender equality and access to technology is sustained, the country needs to complement domestic policy actions in each of these priority areas. The following recommendations are proffered;

- Ensure that the Labour Laws are implemented and monitored; taking into account specific gender considerations,
- Ensure that discriminatory clauses in the Sierra Leone 1991 Constitution are amended,
- Provide a universal access funds for companies to make contributions to government as a way of service providers accessing rural communities
- improving ICT infrastructural facilities across the country, especially ensuring that the fibre link is accessible in both urban and rural communities
- Ensure quality service delivery by service providers and ensuring that institutions embed computer literacy within course programme.

About the Afrobarometer

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public opinion surveys produced by an independent network of African social scientists. Now covering up to 35 African countries, the Afrobarometer measures the views of the electorate on democracy and its alternatives, the quality of governance and economic performance, and critical political issues of the day. The survey's standard instrument – used for four previous rounds of surveys (1999 – 2008) and the current Round 5 (2011 – 2013) – allows comparisons across countries over time.

About the Round 5 Survey in Sierra Leone

The Afrobarometer research in Sierra Leone was done by ITASCAP Limited and dissemination by Campaign for Good Governance and Lena Thompson. The fieldwork for Round 5 was conducted from 23rd June to 18th July 2012. ITASCAP interviewed a random sample of 1200 adult Sierra Leoneans, yielding results with a margin of sampling error of approximately +/- 3 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

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