



Institute for Development Studies
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News release

Kenyans see gains in gender equality, but support for women's empowerment still uneven, Afrobarometer survey finds

A majority of Kenyans say the country has made progress toward gender equality, but below-average support among men and lagging political engagement among women point toward remaining challenges, according to new Afrobarometer findings released on International Women's Day.

Popular perceptions that girls and women have a fair chance at education and jobs, that gender violence is never justifiable, and that women should be accorded a fair shot at being elected are in line with perceived progress toward gender equality, the new survey data show.

But much work remains to be done among men, who trail significantly on most of these indicators. Moreover, key pillars of women's progress continue to require strengthening, including an equal chance to own and inherit land and women's political engagement.

The findings are being released on International Women's Day, during a period of tense political competition pitting female candidates against their male counterparts in August general elections. The release also comes at a time when the country is beginning to assess the effects of its new gender empowerment laws, including equal rights for men and women to inherit land and other property.

Key findings

- A majority (56%) of Kenyans say that women's equality has improved in recent years. The best-educated women and men are twice as likely as their uneducated compatriots to see progress on gender equality (Figure 1).
- About one in seven women (15%) say they personally suffered discrimination or harassment based on gender in the past year.
- More than three-fourths (78%) of Kenyans say wife-beating is "never" justifiable.
- More than six in 10 Kenyans (63%) do not agree that men should be given priority in hiring if jobs are scarce.
- Nine out of 10 Kenyans say that girls now have the same educational opportunities as boys, but perceptions of gender equality drop to seven out of 10 with regard to earning an income and less than six out of 10 with regard to the right to own or inherit land (Figure 2).
- While 57% say women currently have equal rights to own and inherit land, more (64%) say they should have those rights. Men are almost twice as likely as women to reject equal rights for women when it comes to owning and inheriting land (39% vs. 21%).
- About two-thirds of Kenyan women (63%) and men (68%) say the government has performed well in promoting opportunities and equality for women.

- Three-fourths (73%) of Kenyans say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to political office (Figure 3). But men (66%) are less likely than women (81%) to hold this view. Support for women's political leadership has remained steady since 2011.
- Women are significantly less likely than men to discuss politics, to contact political leaders, to join others to raise an issue, and to attend community meetings.
- More than half (54%) of Kenyans say they fear political violence and intimidation "somewhat" or "a lot." Women and men are equally likely to express this fear.

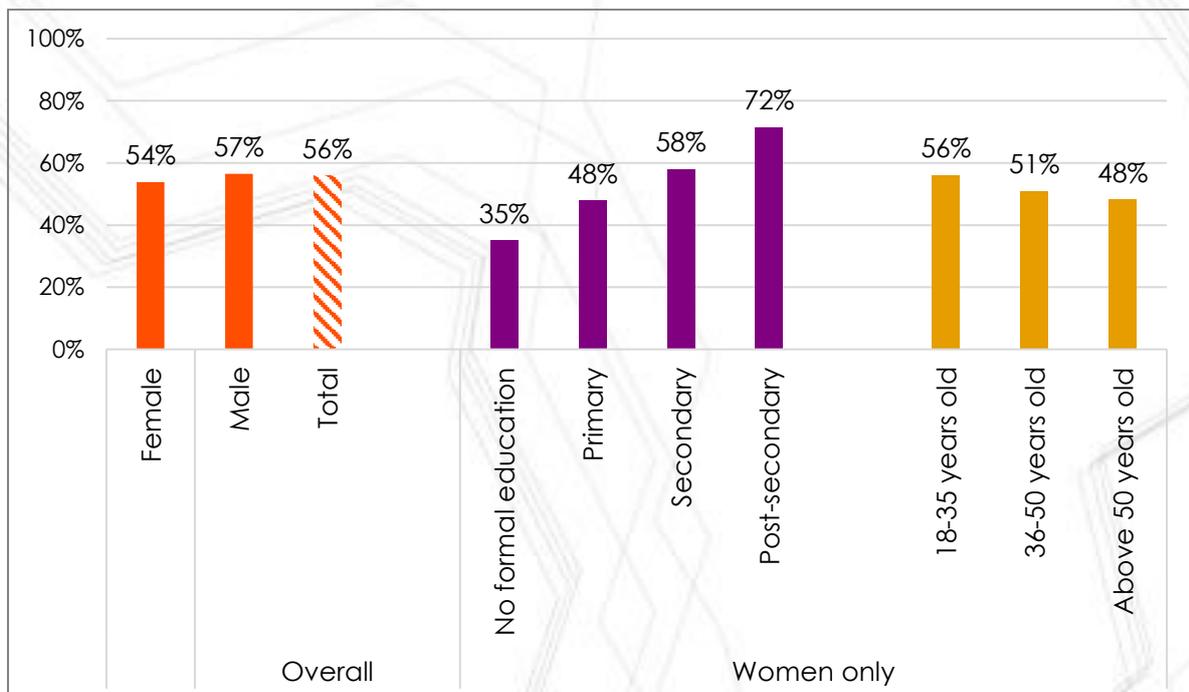
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in Africa. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 African countries between 1999 and 2016, and Round 7 surveys (2016/2017) are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Kenya, led by the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi, interviewed 1,599 adult Kenyans in September-October 2016. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Kenya in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2014.

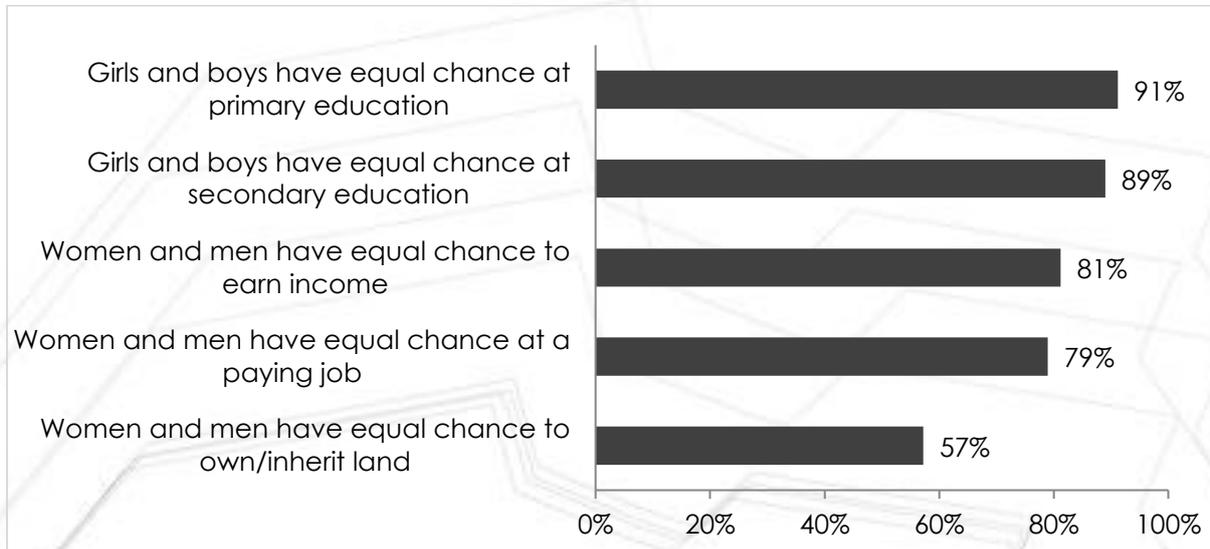
Figures

Figure 1: Improved opportunity and treatment for women | by socio-demographic group | Kenya | 2016



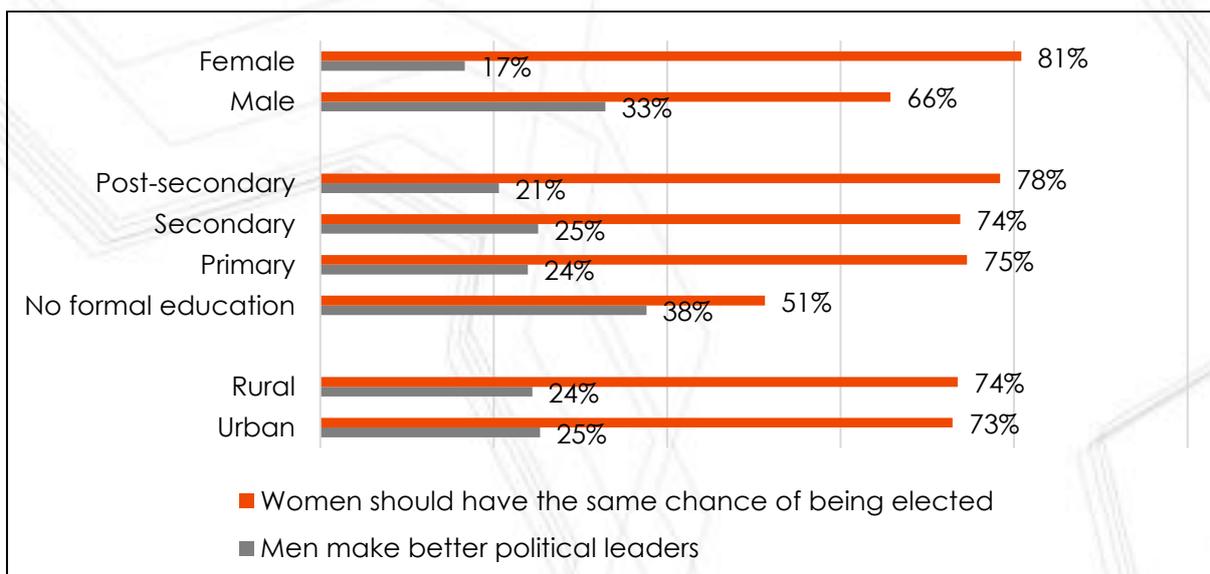
Respondents were asked: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Equal opportunities and treatment for women? (% who say "better" or "much better")

Figure 2: Equal access to life opportunities for girls/women | Kenya | 2016



Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree, or haven't you heard enough to say: In our country today, ...: Girls and boys have equal opportunities to get a primary education? Girls and boys have equal opportunities to get a secondary education? Women and men have equal opportunities to earn an income? Women and men have equal opportunities to get a job that pays a wage or salary? Women and men have equal opportunities to own and inherit land? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

Figure 3: Women in political leadership | by socio-demographic group | Kenya | 2016



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 "agree very strongly" with each statement)

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