

# Gender Power in Africa

Analysis of the Imbalances  
That Shape Women's Lives

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# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
National Development Plans on Gender	6
<b>Research Approach and Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
Stakeholder interviews	8
Literature review and conceptual framework	8
Review of quantitative data	8
In-depth interviews	9
Research limitations	9
<b>Research Results and Insights</b>	<b>10</b>
Part 1: Society & Culture	10
Overall perceptions of how women are treated	10
Gender-based violence and women’s safety	11
Social pressures	12
Part 2: Politics & Economics	14
Political and civil engagement	14
Economic justice	18
Part 3: Education & Faith	22
Out-of-school and completion rates	22
Impact of religiosity on perceptions of gender	24
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>31</b>

# Executive Summary

The analysis in this report presents a synthesis of recent research by Gallup on gender equality in five countries in Eastern and Southern Africa: Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The study incorporates findings from an analysis of recent quantitative data from the Gallup World Poll and international agencies like the UN and World Bank, as well as qualitative in-depth interviews with residents in each of the five countries conducted expressly for this project.

## Key findings include:

### Society and culture

- **Perceptions that women are treated with respect and dignity have declined across all countries studied except Tanzania.** Gallup's World Poll data show that in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, the percentage of residents who believe women are treated with respect and dignity has fallen substantially over the past decade. In 2021, this perception reached low levels among both men (27%) and women (28%) in South Africa.
- **In-depth interview participants noted that fundamental gender disparities and inequalities shape the lives of women in their societies.** Women were generally seen to be given fewer educational and employment opportunities than men and to have less freedom in their ability to make decisions about their lives.
- **Reducing gender-based violence (GBV) and increasing women's safety are critical priorities.** At least one-fourth of women in each country of focus said they have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, with this figure reaching 45% in Uganda. Additionally, the 2021 Gallup World Poll found that less than half of women in South Africa (27%), Zimbabwe (35%), Kenya (40%) and Uganda (45%) felt safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live – well below the worldwide average of 64%.
- **Social expectations placed on women remain barriers to education and the labour market.** Despite legal stipulations to the contrary, child marriage remains common in all countries studied, affecting education and employment prospects for girls in particular. In-depth interview participants – including female interviewees – described the need to balance women's gains with traditional practices that focus on domestic tasks and child-rearing.

### Politics and economics

- **Women's representation at the national political level has improved, but they are less likely to raise concerns to local officials or be aware of their legal rights.** Quota systems have increased women's representation in national legislative assemblies; however, they remain less likely than men to express concerns to local officials in all five countries. Furthermore, in-depth interview participants of both genders frequently expressed beliefs that women and young girls did not know the legal rights available to them.
- **Across Sub-Saharan Africa, there are significant gender gaps in employment and access to financial resources.** In all five countries studied, women were less likely than men to work full-time for employers – jobs that are most likely to be in the formal sector. In Kenya, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, women were significantly less likely than men to have an account at a financial institution or mobile money service provider.

### Education and faith

- **Many in-depth interview participants cited the importance of education to achieving gender equality.** However, attendance in secondary education varies among the five countries, and more information is needed about gender gaps in education quality.
- **Religiosity is high and impacts perceptions of gender equality.** In 2020, at least 97% of women in all five countries except South Africa (85%) said religion was an important part of their daily lives. Though participants in some in-depth interviews suggested that religious teachings have socialised many to accept patriarchal norms, a few participants offered alternative interpretations that support more egalitarian views.

# Introduction



**“When more women work, economies grow. Women’s economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes.” – UN Women<sup>1</sup>**

Though much of Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced rapid economic growth in the past 20 years, the region continues to suffer from high poverty rates and long-standing developmental challenges like infrastructure deficiencies, skilled labour shortages and poor governance in many countries. Academic literature shows that women’s lack of economic participation and empowerment stand as barriers to social and economic development.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Yet women continue to face discrimination in all areas and regions of many countries, with women in rural areas often facing the most challenging conditions.<sup>5,6</sup>

Most African countries have committed to empowering women and reducing gender disparities. For example, 42 countries – including the five included in this study – have ratified the Protocol to the 2003 African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the “Maputo Protocol”), which calls for governments to combat discrimination against women, end harmful practices such as underage marriage, and provide equal access to a range of fundamental rights, including economic, social, civil and political rights.<sup>7</sup>

Many countries have also passed legislation in support of women, including laws addressing gender-based violence, supporting women’s property rights and promoting women’s political representation.<sup>8</sup>

The analysis in this report presents a synthesis of recent research by Gallup on gender equality in five countries in Eastern and Southern Africa: Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The study incorporates findings from quantitative data analysis – including Gallup World Poll data and other data sources – and qualitative in-depth interviews with residents in each of the five countries.

1 *Facts & figures: Economic empowerment.* (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

2 How empowering women supports economic growth. (2022, March 7). *International Monetary Fund.* <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/03/07/how-empowering-women-supports-economic-growth>

3 Revenga, A., & Shetty, S. (2012, March 12). Empowering women is smart economics. *International Monetary Fund, Finance & Development*, 49(1). <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm>

4 Gocio, D., & Kulkarni, K. G. (2016). Women’s empowerment and economic development: The cases of Bangladesh and Kenya. *International Journal of Education Economics and Development*, 7(3/4), 113. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kishore-Kulkarni/publication/313411578\\_Women's\\_empowerment\\_and\\_economic\\_development\\_the\\_cases\\_of\\_Bangladesh\\_and\\_Kenya](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kishore-Kulkarni/publication/313411578_Women's_empowerment_and_economic_development_the_cases_of_Bangladesh_and_Kenya)

5 International Labour Organization. (2019, November 19). *Empowering women in the rural economy*, p.2. [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/economic-and-social-development/rural-development/WCMS\\_601071/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/economic-and-social-development/rural-development/WCMS_601071/lang-en/index.htm)

6 *Facts & figures: Rural women and the Millennium Development Goals.* (n.d.). UN Women. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/facts-figures.html>

7 African Union. (2003). *Protocol to the African charter on human and people’s rights on the rights of women in Africa.* [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter\\_on\\_rights\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_africa.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_africa.pdf)

8 OECD. (2021). *Legal frameworks in the African region.* [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/sigi-2021-regional-report-for-africa\\_d35d2506-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/sigi-2021-regional-report-for-africa_d35d2506-en)

## National Development Plans on Gender

**Kenya:** In addition to “adopting and strengthening measures to increase access to and retention of girls and boys in public education at all levels,” Kenya’s National Policy on Gender and Development recommends “promoting mentorship programmes in schools” and “to sensitise households to encourage girls to take up STEM-related careers.”<sup>9</sup> The country’s national plan also aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and men, as well as girls and boys.<sup>10</sup>

**South Africa:** The vision for South Africa’s National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide is a “South Africa free from gender-based violence directed at women, children and LGBTQIA+ persons.” South Africa’s efforts to achieve this vision are broken into two sets of five-year outcomes between 2020 and 2030. Among the outcomes, all GBV survivors will be “able to access efficient and sensitive criminal justice that is quick, accessible, responsive and gender inclusive.”<sup>11</sup>

**Tanzania:** In addition to improving education quality, Tanzania’s most recent national five-year development plan emphasises making access to education universal to all children.<sup>12</sup> A World Bank assessment in 2022 noted that “while the country has moved towards gender parity in participation for girls and boys in lower levels of education, on the mainland, there are still significant gender gaps at the upper secondary level where school fees are still in place.”<sup>13</sup> The country’s five-year plan calls for gender mainstreaming and increasing opportunities for girls to receive education and training.

**Uganda:** Uganda’s constitution guarantees women equal treatment with men, including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. The country’s current National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP III) further aims to increase women’s participation in peace and development processes, including by 1) preventing all forms of violence and promoting peace within families and communities, 2) promoting meaningful participation of women in governance at all levels, and 3) strengthening women’s capacity to prevent or mitigate natural and human-made disasters.<sup>14</sup>

**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe’s second National Gender Policy was enacted in 2013 to eradicate “gender discrimination and inequalities in all spheres of life and development.”<sup>15</sup> It identified eight priority areas for the development of policy objectives: 1) constitutional and legal rights, 2) economic empowerment, 3) politics and decision-making, 4) health, 5) education and training, 6) gender-based violence, 7) gender and the environment and 8) media and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

For more details on each country’s plans and how they fit within the AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment, see Appendix 1.

9 Republic of Kenya. (2019). *National Policy on Gender and Development*. <http://psyg.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NATIONAL-POLICY-ON-GENDER-AND-DEVELOPMENT.pdf>

10 Ibid.

11 Republic of South Africa. (2020). *National strategic plan on gender-based violence & femicide: Human dignity and healing, safety, freedom & equality in our lifetime*. <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbv-final-doc-04-05.pdf>

12 The United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Finance and Planning. (2021, June). *National five year development plan 2021/22 –2025/26: Realising competitiveness and industrialization for human development*. <https://www.tro.go.tz/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FYDP-III-English.pdf>

13 *Tanzania gender-based violence assessment: Scope, programming, gaps and entry points*. (2022). World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099155003312242676/pdf/P17605107388b40600a73a0ef1c83555589.pdf>

14 The Republic of Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. (2021). *National action plan III on women, peace and security 2021-2025*. <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Uganda-2021-2025.pdf>

15 *End of project evaluation: Peak Youth tackling HIV project: Restless development Zimbabwe*. (2013). Restless Development. [https://restlessdevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/RestlessDev\\_PeakYouthReport-2020.pdf](https://restlessdevelopment.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/RestlessDev_PeakYouthReport-2020.pdf)



# Research Approach and Methodology

The *Gender Power in Africa* report synthesises results from the previous phases of research conducted for this study, which included:

- stakeholder interviews
- a review of recent literature on gender equality in Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe
- a review of the Gallup World Poll and other quantitative data in the areas of focus
- a series of in-depth interviews conducted in each of the five countries studied

## Stakeholder interviews

Porticus and Gallup identified eight experts on gender inequality in Africa. Interviews of up to 60 minutes were conducted with each expert to understand their perspective on the systemic factors and root causes that drive and perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination against women in the five countries studied.

## Literature review and conceptual framework

To provide context for the analysis of quantitative data and the in-depth interviews conducted for the project, Gallup reviewed recent literature on gender biases and patriarchal practices in Africa today, particularly in the five countries of interest. The review was used to inform a conceptual framework for examining the drivers of gender inequality and discrimination, as well as initiatives and trends that have contributed to narrowing gender gaps in the region.

## Review of quantitative data

Analyses in this report are based on reviews of quantitative and contextual data on gender equality in the five countries studied, with particular emphasis on findings from the Gallup World Poll.

The World Poll has been conducted annually in all five countries since 2007. Interviews are conducted face-to-face at respondents' homes every year except in 2020 when they were conducted via telephone during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working with local partners, Gallup typically surveys 1,000 individuals in each country or area using a standard set of core questions that have been translated into the major languages of the respective country. All samples are probability-based and nationally representative of the adult population within each country, including rural areas. For more information, see Appendix 2 on specific regions surveyed by Gallup in the five focus countries.

Data analysed from external sources included data from the World Bank, the United Nations Statistics Division, UNICEF, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, UN Women, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNESCO.



## In-depth interviews

Gallup conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 10 respondents in each country, asking questions about issues related to gender discrimination and the roles of men and women in society. The interviews were gender-matched, with female researchers conducting the interviews with female respondents, and male researchers interviewing male respondents.

Six women and four men were interviewed in each country, and interviews were evenly divided between respondents in urban and rural areas. Interviewees were selected to include people with different income and educational attainment levels, as well as different age groups. The selection process did not consider participants' experiences with or views on gender inequality; in that regard, the goal was simply to include "typical" people in each country.

## Research limitations

Women in the five African countries studied have a broad range of backgrounds, and intersections between gender and other characteristics, such as ethnicity, rural vs. urban residency and financial status, all of which often shape their opportunities for empowerment. Some of the findings in this report have been disaggregated by rural vs. urban residency and women's feelings about their current income. However, because World Poll respondents are not routinely asked to disclose their ethnicity, gender identity or disability status as part of the survey, the research could not be extended to other intersectional identities such as these.

More generally, data on other intersectional identities, particularly gender identity and disability status, are scarce because neither government nor non-government organisations collect this type of information in a standardised way.<sup>16,17</sup>

This highlights a vital deficiency in the data available on various economic, political and development dimensions: **There is a need to mainstream gender in all data collected at a national level in all countries.** All data collected at the national level in all countries should be able to be disaggregated by gender. Without such data, it is challenging to understand the full extent of inequality and discrimination so that more targeted efforts can be made to eliminate discrimination. For women's economic empowerment, the World Bank's Strengthening Gender Statistics (SGS) project has prioritised collecting gender-disaggregated data in three areas: assets, work and employment, and entrepreneurship.<sup>18</sup> The project engages with the National Statistics Office in 12 partner African and Asian countries (including Tanzania) to gather data for targeted gender-relevant guidance and advice.<sup>19</sup>

It should also be noted that though the term "gender" in this analysis often refers to the distinction between the two biologically determined sexes of male and female, the report acknowledges the importance of recognising other gender identities that do not conform to this binary distinction.

16 Park, A. (2015, March). *An inclusive approach to surveys of sexual and gender minorities* [Report of Meeting, Kathmandu, Nepal]. The Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Inclusive-Survey-SGM-Nepal-Mar-2015.pdf>; *The DHS program | Methodology*. (n.d.). The DHS Program Demographic and Health Surveys. <http://dhsprogram.com/What-We-Do/index.cfm>

17 Sabariego, C., Fellinghauer, C., Lee, L., Posarac, A., Bickenbach, J., Kostanjsek, N., Chatterji, S., Kamenov, K., & Cieza, A. (2021). Measuring functioning and disability using household surveys: Metric properties of the brief version of the WHO and World Bank model disability survey. *Archives of Public Health*, 79(1), 128. <https://archpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13690-021-00654-9>

18 *Strengthening gender statistics*. (2022). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/brief/strengthening-gender-statistics#2>

19 Ibid.

# Research Results and Insights<sup>20</sup>

## PART 1: SOCIETY & CULTURE

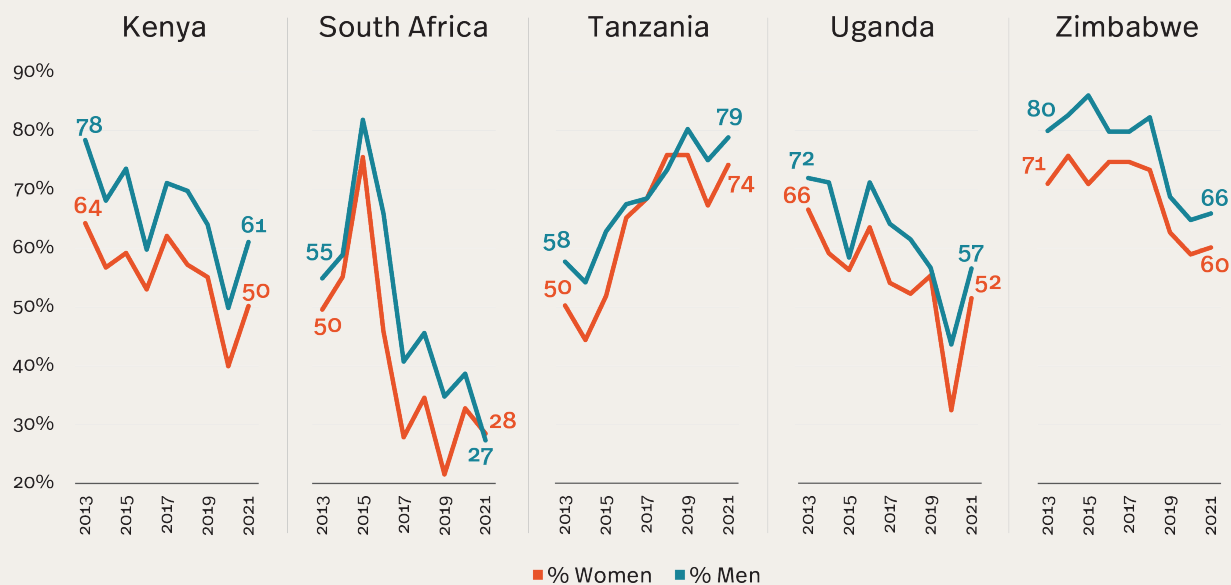
### Overall perceptions of how women are treated

**Key finding 1: Perceptions that women are treated with respect and dignity have declined in all countries studied except Tanzania.** Gallup World Poll data show that in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, perceptions that women are treated with respect and dignity have fallen substantially in recent years. In 2021, the percentage of people in South Africa who felt this way was just 27% among men and 28% among women, and only about half of women in Kenya (50%) and Uganda (52%) felt that women in their country were treated with respect and dignity. In Zimbabwe, 60% of women responded this way, down from 71% in 2013.

Tanzania is the only country studied where the perception that women are treated with respect and dignity has trended upward in recent years; 74% of women in Tanzania felt this way in 2021.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 1:

Do you believe women in [country] are treated with respect and dignity, or not?  
Percentage 'yes' by gender



<sup>20</sup> For further detailed analysis, please refer to the *Gender Power Analysis* and *In-Depth Interview* reports prepared for this project.

<sup>21</sup> See the *Gender Power Analysis* report for gender-disaggregated trends.

The sharp decline in South Africans' views that women are treated with respect and dignity may be particularly notable. Though it is one of the most economically developed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa has one of the highest rates of rape and femicide in the world.<sup>22</sup> The problem has increasingly entered the public consciousness in recent years: Anti-gender-based violence (GBV) protests erupted across South Africa in 2019,<sup>23</sup> and the country's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, called GBV a "second pandemic" in 2021.<sup>24</sup> In Uganda, activists calling for an end to harassment and unequal treatment against women have also been more visible in recent years, thanks in part to a growing feminist movement on social media.<sup>25</sup>

**Key finding 2: In-depth interview participants noted that fundamental gender disparities and inequalities shape the lives of women in their societies.** In the in-depth interviews, women were generally seen to be given fewer educational and employment opportunities than men and to have less freedom in their ability to make decisions about their lives:

- *"Even when the wife tells the husband she wants a job to start working rather than staying at home, the husband can't allow her. He doesn't give her freedom because she is the wife, and he married her. In my society, as a woman, they despise you and think you can't do a thing."* (23-year-old woman, rural Uganda)
- *"Well, I still feel sad about how women are generally treated in society and in family units, especially after achieving democracy in the country. I feel like, still to this day, women have to fight for their worth, not only in the society, not only in the workplace but also in the family. We still find women being treated as assets, as things that can be discarded of, as things to be owned, not as human beings with a mind, with intelligence, with emotions, and yeah, that's very sad ... I always to this day find myself having to fight, especially in the industry that I'm in, the arts, where the industry is male dominant, especially in offices where change can be effected."* (45-year-old woman, urban South Africa)

## Gender-based violence and women's safety

**Key finding 3: Reducing gender-based violence (GBV) and increasing women's safety are critical priorities.**

Intimate partner violence is common in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to 2018 World Health Organization data, nearly half of women in Uganda (45%), more than one-third in Kenya (38%), Tanzania (38%) and Zimbabwe (35%), and about one-fourth in South Africa (24%) report having experienced physical or sexual abuse by a current or former intimate partner in their lifetimes.<sup>26</sup>

While legislation against GBV exists in each of the five countries studied, enforcement agencies generally seem to lack accountability and consideration for survivors. For example, until recently, Kenya's legal and policy framework for addressing GBV focused on bringing the accused to "justice."<sup>27</sup> Among other commitments, the country's 2021 roadmap to accelerate national efforts to end gender-based violence scales up police services to GBV survivors.<sup>28</sup>

22 Gouws, A. (2022, August 4). *Rape is endemic in South Africa. Why the ANC government keeps missing the mark.* The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/rape-is-endemic-in-south-africa-why-the-anc-government-keeps-missing-the-mark-188235>

23 *South African women's fury at gender-based attacks spills onto the streets.* (2019, September 5). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/gender-based-violence-in-africa/>

24 *S. Africa battles 'second pandemic' of rape, abuse.* (2021, December 20). France 24. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20211220-s-africa-battles-second-pandemic-of-rape-abuse>

25 How Ugandan feminists make themselves heard. (2020, June 4). *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2020/06/04/how-ugandan-feminists-make-themselves-heard>

26 *Violence against women prevalence estimates.* (n.d.). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>

27 Aura, R. (2014). *Situational analysis and the legal framework on sexual and gender-based violence in Kenya: Challenges and opportunities.* Kenya Law. <http://kenyalaw.org/kl/index.php?id=4512>

28 *Kenya just committed to ending gender based violence in five years. Here's how they plan to do it.* (2021, August 10). Equality Now. [https://www.equalitynow.org/news\\_and\\_insights/kenya\\_just\\_committed\\_to\\_ending\\_gbv\\_in\\_5\\_years\\_here\\_s\\_how\\_they\\_plan\\_to\\_do\\_it/](https://www.equalitynow.org/news_and_insights/kenya_just_committed_to_ending_gbv_in_5_years_here_s_how_they_plan_to_do_it/)

Though the subject is extremely sensitive, several female in-depth interview participants discussed experiences with domestic violence.<sup>29</sup> Some had experienced GBV directly from their husbands or fathers, while others reported seeing their fathers beat or abuse their mothers.

- “[My father beating my mother] happened many times because my father was a drunkard ... It was war when he was drunk. Even we children, he would beat us ... It happened to me when I was married. I used to be beaten, and that’s why I left my marriage.” (58-year-old woman, rural Kenya)

Some in-depth interview participants – particularly women – also expressed concern about potential violence outside the home. Many viewed walking at night as something to be avoided unless they had a specific reason to be out. South African participants, in particular, voiced such concerns.

- “[Walking at night is] not safe at all. I don’t feel safe as a woman. I make sure I am nowhere near outside by nighttime.” (30-year-old woman, rural South Africa)

Such fears are reflected in Gallup’s 2021 World Poll data, which show that just 27% of women in South Africa said they felt safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live, and less than half reported feeling safe alone at night in Zimbabwe (35%), Kenya (40%) and Uganda (45%). Only in Tanzania (61%) did the figure come close to the global average for women of 64%. Notably, in the two countries where women were least likely to feel safe walking alone – Zimbabwe and South Africa – those living in urban areas were much less likely than those in rural areas to feel safe.

## Social pressures

### Key finding 4: Social expectations placed on women remain barriers to education and the labour market.

Such expectations perpetuate the well-documented imbalance in women’s participation in the labour market, despite gains in educational attainment among female students.<sup>30</sup> For example, a 2018 ILO report found that, on average, women in Africa spent 3.4 times as much time as men on unpaid care and domestic work.<sup>31</sup>

### Child marriage

Despite legal stipulations to the contrary, child marriage is common in all countries under study. Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) is one of the most harmful family practices. While CEFM affects both girls and boys, girls are much more likely to marry early than boys, and it is most potentially damaging to a girl’s development. Child brides often drop out of school and become pregnant, and these early pregnancies have a greater risk of ending in maternal or infant death.<sup>32</sup> Child brides are also at greater risk of sexual violence, abuse, social isolation and exploitation.<sup>33</sup>

A 2022 UNICEF report provides recent estimates on the number of women aged 20 to 24 who were first married or in a union before the ages of 15 and 18.<sup>34</sup> Though many countries in the region set the minimum legal age of marriage for girls at 18, UNICEF estimates 32% of young women in Eastern and Southern Africa were married before that. Specific results for the five countries studied are listed in Table 1. Only in South Africa does the law prohibiting underage marriage appear to be effectively enforced; in Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, about one-third of young women had been married or in a union before age 18.

29 As noted earlier, female interview participants were matched with female interviewers to help make them more comfortable discussing sensitive gender issues. In the case of GBV, participants who discussed it were offered contact details of a local NGO that works on such issues if appropriate.

30 *The economic cost of violence against women*. (2016, September 21). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>

31 *Women’s economic empowerment: East and Southern Africa region*. (2022). UN Women. <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/in-brief-womens-economic-empowerment-east-and-southern-africa-regional-office>

32 Nour, N. M. (2006). Health consequences of child marriage in Africa. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 12(11), 1644-1649. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3372345/>

33 *Child marriage – Frequently asked questions*. (2022, February). United Nations Population Fund. <https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage-frequently-asked-questions>

34 *Child marriage*. (2022). UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>

**Table 1:**
**Minimum legal marriage age and rates of underage marriage among women aged 20 to 24**

	Minimum legal marriage age for girls	Percentage of young women married before age 15	Percentage of young women married before age 18
<b>Kenya</b>	18	4	23
<b>South Africa</b>	18 (with exceptions, 15)	1	4
<b>Tanzania</b>	18 (with exceptions, 14)	5	31
<b>Uganda</b>	21 (with exceptions, 18)	7	34
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	18	5	34

While UNICEF’s estimates for these five countries illustrate how common CEFM is, it is important to note that these figures could be higher, as they predate the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing food crises in Eastern and Southern Africa. Increases in GBV, school closures and economic contraction during the pandemic have put even more girls – as many as 10 million more worldwide – at risk of child marriage over the next decade.<sup>35</sup>

During the first year of the pandemic, evidence emerged that even in African countries implementing the Global Programme to End Child Marriage (including Uganda), young girls were experiencing increases in violence, child marriage and teenage pregnancies.<sup>36</sup> In addition, there are reports that across the Horn of Africa (which includes Kenya), growing numbers of parents are marrying off girls – some as young as 12 – to support their families as the worst drought on record continues.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage. (2021). UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/covid-19-a-threat-to-progress-against-child-marriage/>

<sup>36</sup> UNFPA & UNICEF. (2020). *Child marriage in COVID-19 contexts: Disruptions, alternative approaches and building programme resilience*. <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/7651/file/Child-Marriage-in-COVID-19-contexts.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> *Child marriage on the rise in Horn of Africa as drought crisis intensifies*. (2022). UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-marriage-rise-horn-africa-drought-crisis-intensifies>

### Family structures

Efforts to increase women's access to education and the labour market will need to balance existing traditions and gender norms. Some in-depth interview participants – including female interviewees – noted that even if women had greater access to the labour market, traditional gender norms in the home should be respected, with men afforded a higher status.

- *“Men need to accept that we are now equal when it comes to that. For the women, the changes I mentioned still need to happen, but they must not forget that a man is the head of a home, and that must remain. Just because we are now able to work doesn't mean we must change who the head of the home is, and that is a man. We cannot as women be a head of a home.”* (30-year-old woman, rural South Africa)

In a few cases, respondents went so far as to say women should not take high-status jobs to avoid subverting the family hierarchy.

- *“When it comes to leading the country or big companies, that needs men to lead not women, because this can result in problems. Especially where the woman is married, it can result in their marriage breaking up because the woman will not be able to respect her husband anymore as she will be saying, 'I now hold a higher position.'”* (27-year-old woman, rural Zimbabwe)

However, while some participants were fully convinced of the importance of the “traditional” roles of men and women, others – of either sex – were more nuanced in their views, espousing both traditional and progressive viewpoints. For example, some male participants felt men should retain their position as breadwinners and heads of households, but at the same time, they thought working women should be paid a wage equal to their male counterparts.

Similarly, some women saw their position as chiefly “domestic” – focusing on raising children and looking after the household (often tied to their understanding of religious teachings) – but also felt more needed to be done to equalise the position of women in their country to gain the same amount of respect and opportunities as men.

## PART 2: POLITICS & ECONOMICS

### Political and civil engagement

**Key finding 5: Women's representation at the national political level has improved, but they are less likely to raise concerns to local officials and be aware of their legal rights.** Research and in-depth interviews show that while some progress has been made toward ensuring women enjoy greater political representation, gender parity has not been achieved.

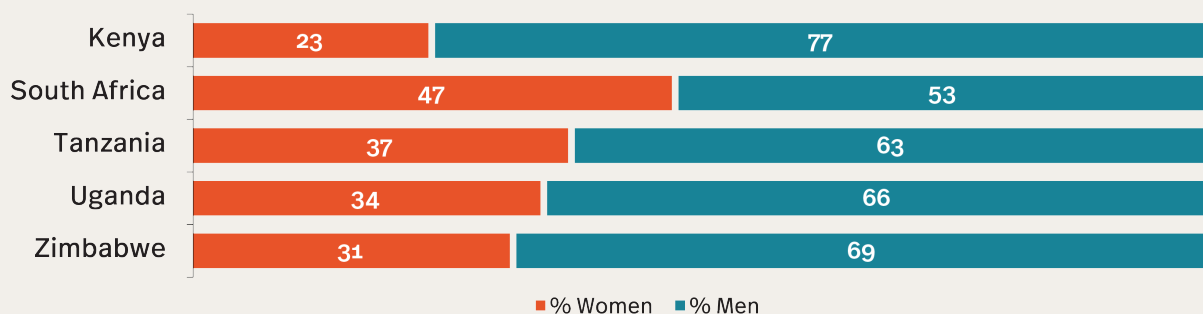
UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on Gender Equality calls for an increase in and meaningful participation of women in political decision-making. However, a 2021 report from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) states that women in Africa comprise just 25% of representation in lower parliamentary houses and 24% of representation overall.<sup>38,39</sup> Of the five countries studied for this report, only South Africa is close to gender parity in national parliaments and assemblies. However, most are above the regional average for Sub-Saharan Africa, the only exception being Kenya, where 23% of representatives are women.

38 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2021). *Women's political participation – Africa Barometer*. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2021.pdf>

39 *Young women's participation in politics & decision-making in African Union member states*. (2021). UN Women. <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/young-womens-participation-in-politics---decision-making-in-african-union-member-states>

**Figure 2:**

**Percentage of women and men in parliamentary and national political positions**



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022<sup>40</sup>

Many African countries have adopted quota systems to increase women’s representation in legislative assemblies. Among the five countries studied, all except South Africa have legislated quotas for their unicameral parliamentary house (Tanzania and Uganda), both bicameral houses (Kenya) or for their lower bicameral house (Zimbabwe).<sup>41</sup>

Though South Africa does not have gender quotas at the national level, there are legislated quotas at the subnational level. In local council elections, parties must ensure that 50% of the candidates on the party list are women.<sup>42</sup> This focus on parity in local politics provides women with entry points for careers in politics. Additionally, the country’s proportional representation electoral system means parties are represented in national and provincial assemblies in proportion to their electoral support, but the parties themselves select the candidates who will serve. Under this system, “smaller parties have a chance of winning seats and ensure the representation of women and a broader range of political views.”<sup>43</sup>

The African Union’s 2020 African Women’s Decade report notes that the effectiveness of minimum representation quotas has varied widely by country. It summarises a number of challenges cited by AU member states, including traditional gender norms and “the lack of political will among the authorities to enforce gender quotas for political party nominations and create women-friendly human resource policies in the public sector.”<sup>44</sup>

40 *Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments*. (2022). Inter-Parliamentary Union. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=12&year=2022>  
 41 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (n.d.). *Gender quotas database*. <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>  
 42 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (n.d.). *Gender quotas database | South Africa*. <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/310/35>  
 43 *Representation and participation of women in parliament*. (2021). Parliamentary Monitoring Group. <https://pmg.org.za/blog/Representation%20and%20Participation%20of%20Women%20in%20Parliament>  
 44 *Grassroots approach to gender equality and women’s empowerment 2010-2020*. (2020). African Union. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41992-doc-AWD\\_report\\_English\\_E.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41992-doc-AWD_report_English_E.pdf)

### **Gender quotas alone may not address barriers to change.**

Even though women's representation in many national assemblies is improving, they may still face gender-based barriers while in office. For example, a 2020 USAID report on Kenya states that “Women who do accede to elected and appointed office face limits on their ability to influence decisions and often are subject to harassment and gender-based political violence.”<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, increasing the proportion of women in Africa’s decision-making bodies does not guarantee the implementation of policies that improve women’s wellbeing. Such advancements often require broad institutional changes, including legal frameworks for gender equality and women’s empowerment, that involve governments and non-state actors, such as political parties, interest groups and private sector businesses. Thus, women’s effectiveness in legislative assemblies may be constrained by the fact that their participation in such bodies is not matched by rising participation in other political and economic spheres.<sup>46</sup>

### **Training that prepares female leaders for “transformative” change remains rare.**

Researchers like Milena Novy-Marx, in partnership with The Mastercard Foundation, have focused on the need for transformative leadership competencies – defined as “skills and capacities of character,” such as integrity and a sense of purpose – that drive young people to address inequity and improve the lives of others in their societies. Their review of leadership training opportunities for young women in Africa found that though talented youth have great potential to become transformative leaders in their countries, “few programs exist specifically to develop their leadership capacity.”<sup>47</sup>

The review identified 12 leadership training programs across Sub-Saharan Africa that support female transformative leaders, including Uganda’s Akina Mama wa Afrika and the Africa Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. However, the report also noted that such programmes are unevenly spread across the continent, and most do not specifically address gender issues. None of those profiled included all the recommended elements for a programme in women’s transformative leadership, which include “global awareness, transferable skills, professional development, self-exploration, mentoring, internships and a service-learning project.”<sup>48</sup>

Even if transformative leadership training for girls was more broadly available, some feel its effectiveness would be limited in environments where girls are subordinated to boys from an early age. Former President of Malawi Joyce Banda recently noted, “Despite the many commendable programs seeking to train and equip women leaders, many of them focus on those between the ages of 10 and 14, which is too late for peak impact. By the time many girls in Africa are in this age group, their education and well-being is treated as secondary to that of their brothers at the home.”<sup>49</sup>

45 USAID Kenya final gender analysis report. (2020). Banyan Global. <https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/USAID-Kenya-Final-Gender-Analysis-Report.pdf>

46 Ilesanmi, O. O. (2018). Women’s visibility in decision making processes in Africa—Progress, challenges, and way forward. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 3, 38. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00038/full>

47 Novy-Marx, M. (n.d.). *Women’s transformative leadership in Africa*. The MasterCard Foundation, p.5. <https://mastercardfdn.org/research/report-womens-transformative-leadership-in-africa/>

48 Ibid, p. 14.

49 Banda, J. (n.d.). *An agenda for advancing women leaders in Africa*. Wilson Center. [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/dr\\_joyce\\_banda\\_from\\_day\\_one.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/dr_joyce_banda_from_day_one.pdf)



**Low civic engagement may limit women’s opportunities to learn about their rights.**

Beyond taking positions of political power, women can practise civic engagement through local advocacy or by voicing their needs to public officials. However, Gallup data show women are less likely than men to voice their opinions to officials. Results from the 2021 World Poll reveal that men were about twice as likely as women to say they had voiced such opinions in Kenya (33% vs. 18%, respectively) and Tanzania (20% vs. 10%), with notable gaps also in South Africa (33% vs. 25%), Zimbabwe (26% vs. 20%) and Uganda (42% vs. 37%).

In-depth interview participants of both genders commonly expressed the sentiment that women and young girls did not know the legal rights available to them. Many suggested that the government played a primary role in disseminating this information and needed to do more to ensure that women were fully aware of laws intended to protect and empower them.

- *“Women don’t know their rights and the ability to achieve equality. Lack of awareness often is due to the prevailing culture and social norms which dictate what women should do; they are submissive to men. That is, we need to break the barriers, break down the barriers, and help women become more aware of their rights so that they can demand equality.”* (56-year-old man, urban Kenya)
- *“Yeah, I think women need more awareness of what their rights are because, in some societies, women don’t even know their basic rights as far as being protected by the rights. Sometimes their rights are being infringed right before their eyes without them realising [it]. So, the government has a better standing to, you know, educate, and I think it has to do that.”* (28-year-old man, urban Tanzania)

Many other factors may impede public engagement with local governance among the countries studied. The Kenyan government’s County Governance Toolkit<sup>50</sup> lists several such challenges, including:

- **Elite capture/marginalisation of low-status groups:** Local political processes are often dominated by “elites” – i.e., political insiders who influence local decision-making according to their own agendas. Conversely, low-status groups – often including women – suffer due to inadequate representation in public participation processes.
- **Public apathy:** The feeling that local governments are unresponsive to their input lowers citizens’ incentive to engage with representatives. This feeling may be compounded if community members feel local representatives do not understand their issues or concerns.
- **Difficulty accessing information on local government processes:** Information necessary for public engagement – such as local plans and budgets, policies and programmes and services – is often difficult for citizens to access and understand. Certain groups, such as those who speak only local languages, may be disproportionately affected by the lack of accessible information.
- **Structural barriers:** Bureaucratic decision-making processes may discourage participation by slowing the pace with which citizens can pursue certain issues.
- **Inadequate decentralisation of public consultations:** When county governments hold public consultations, they often do not reach communities further from the county centre, effectively excluding participation among residents in rural villages.



<sup>50</sup> Challenges of public participation. (n.d.). County Governance Toolkit. <https://countytoolkit.devolution.go.ke/challenges-of-public-participation>

## Economic justice

**Key finding 6: Across Sub-Saharan Africa, there are significant gender gaps in employment and access to financial resources.** Women’s economic empowerment is crucial for reducing gender inequality; without it, women lack the resources to be independent and autonomous. Gender gaps in employment and income have been shown to hinder economic development in Africa substantially. In 2019, for example, the UN estimated that Sub-Saharan Africa loses USD 95 billion yearly because of the gender gap in the labour market.<sup>51</sup>

### Employment and job quality

The Gallup World Poll asks people several questions about their employment status. In 2021, women aged 15 to 50 in each of the five countries studied were less likely than men to say they worked full time for an employer – jobs most likely to be in the formal sector. The largest gender gap was in Kenya, where 29% of men vs. 17% of women said they worked full time for an employer. According to USAID’s 2020 gender analysis of Kenya, “Almost 50% of men and 30% of women are paid or waged employees. Women are paid just more than half of what men receive for similar jobs.”<sup>52</sup>

Table 2:

Employment status by gender among adults aged 15 to 50, 2021<sup>53</sup>

	Kenya		South Africa		Tanzania		Uganda		Zimbabwe	
	Women n = 498	Men n = 432	Women n = 519	Men n = 354	Women n = 504	Men n = 321	Women n = 495	Men n = 432	Women n = 437	Men n = 354
Work full-time for employer	17%	29%	23%	28%	7%	14%	22%	30%	6%	14%
Work full-time for self	31%	30%	5%	7%	29%	46%	26%	31%	23%	24%
Work part-time, do not want full-time	6%	7%	3%	3%	11%	9%	6%	5%	5%	6%
Unemployed	11%	7%	24%	19%	6%	5%	9%	12%	9%	13%
Work part-time, want full-time	13%	11%	10%	14%	12%	11%	12%	9%	18%	13%
Out of workforce	22%	17%	35%	29%	35%	15%	26%	13%	40%	31%

Source: Gallup World Poll, 2021

Note: Percentages may sum to 100% ±1% due to rounding.

Employment figures say little about differences in the quality of jobs held by women and men. In 2019, the ILO reported that 83% of women employed in non-agricultural jobs were in informal sectors, compared with 72% of men – implying female workers have less access to work-based social protections and are more vulnerable to unsafe working conditions where they may be subjected to bodily harm as well as psychological and sexual abuse.<sup>54,55</sup> As the Overseas Development Institute, a U.K.-based think tank, concluded in 2019, “Empowerment is limited when women enter the labour market on unfavorable terms. This includes women’s engagement in exploitative, dangerous, or stigmatised work, with low pay and job insecurity.”<sup>56</sup>

51 Ighobor, K. (2019). *Economic empowerment of women good for all*. Africa Renewal. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2019-july-2019/economic-empowerment-women-good-all>

52 USAID Kenya final gender analysis report. (2020). Banyan Global. <https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/USAID-Kenya-Final-Gender-Analysis-Report.pdf>

53 Employment data gathered for the Gallup World Poll may differ from government employment statistics due to differences in the way employment status is defined, as well as differences in sampling and estimation methods.

54 Bonnet, F., Vanek, J., & Chen, M. (2019). *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical brief*. International Labour Organization. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_711798.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_711798.pdf)

55 Health vulnerabilities of informal workers. (2013). *The Rockefeller Foundation*. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/report/health-vulnerabilities-of-informal-workers/>

56 Ighobor, K. (2019). *Economic empowerment of women good for all*. Africa Renewal. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2019-july-2019/economic-empowerment-women-good-all>

**Women's economic activities were disproportionately affected by COVID-19.**

Due to their greater presence in less secure, informal employment, women in many African countries were more economically vulnerable than men to disruption from the COVID-19 crisis<sup>57</sup> – particularly in countries where the gender gap in informal employment is widest, including Tanzania and Zimbabwe.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, in many countries, women's informal businesses tended to be smaller and concentrated in service sectors that were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, such as hospitality, trade and domestic services, leading to a greater loss of income among female entrepreneurs than their male counterparts in the informal sector.<sup>59</sup> For example, FinMark Trust surveys conducted in seven African countries in March 2020, including Kenya, Uganda and South Africa, found that small businesses led by women stopped generating income at the outset of the pandemic, compared with 22% of small businesses led by men.<sup>60</sup>

A 2021 IFC report of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in 13 countries – including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa – found that over the longer term, women-led enterprises faced greater financial adversity as a result of the pandemic than those led by men. Across the 13 countries, women also shouldered an even higher proportion of unpaid care work during the pandemic than they had previously, and “these increased commitments at home translated into less time to focus on business, lower productivity at work and fewer finances to put toward their businesses.”<sup>61</sup>

**Access to financial services and technology**

**Key finding 7: Except in South Africa, women have fewer opportunities to access financial resources and less internet access than men across the countries studied.** Women may have less control over their lives when they do not have autonomous or direct access to financial resources. Findings from the World Bank's 2021 Findex database<sup>62</sup> (Figure 3) show that a majority of women in each country except Tanzania said they had an account at a financial institution or a mobile-money-service provider. While these gaps have largely closed in Uganda and South Africa, significant gender gaps in account ownership remain in Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.



57 *Assessing the damage: Early evidence on impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on girls and women in Africa.* (2015). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2022/05/25/assessing-the-damage-early-evidence-on-impacts-of-the-covid-19-crisis-on-girls-and-women-in-africa>

58 *The impact of COVID-19 on women and men.* (2021). Nairobi: UN Women and UNFPA, East and Southern Africa Regional Offices. [https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/abridged\\_-\\_impact\\_of\\_covid-19\\_on\\_gender\\_equality\\_and\\_women\\_empowerment\\_in\\_east\\_and\\_southern\\_africa.pdf](https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/abridged_-_impact_of_covid-19_on_gender_equality_and_women_empowerment_in_east_and_southern_africa.pdf)

59 *Impact of COVID-19 on women workers in the urban informal economy in Uganda and Kenya.* (2022, June 28). International Center for Research on Women. <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/impact-covid-19-women-workers-urban-informal-economy-uganda-and-kenya>

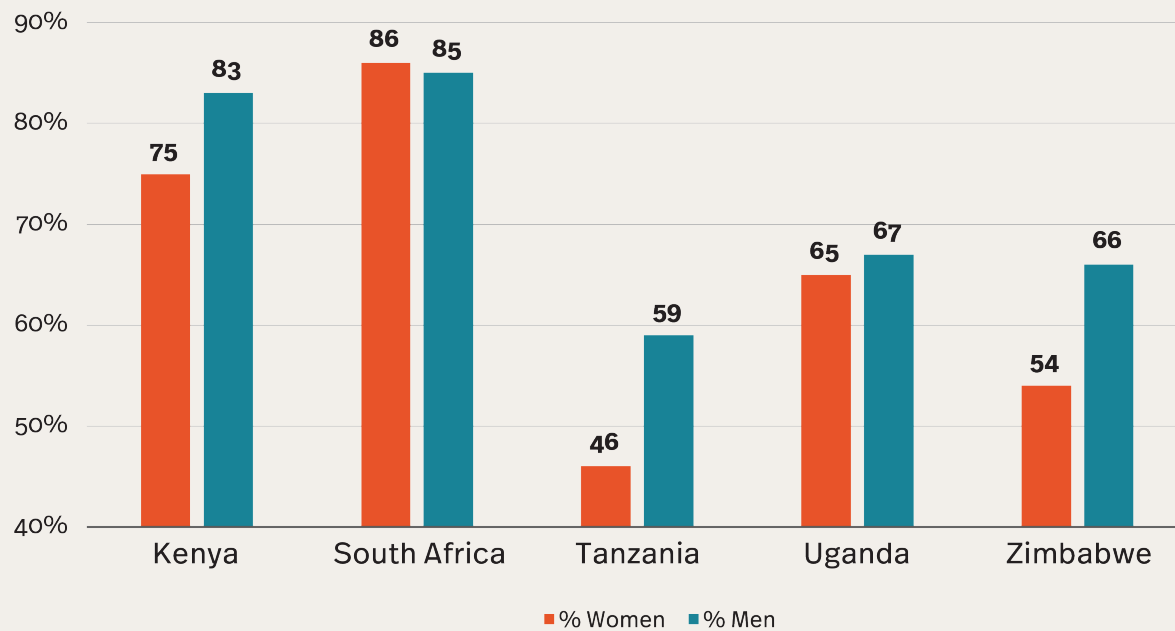
60 O'Donnell, M., Buvinic, M., Kenny, C., Bourgault, S., & Yang, G. (2021). *Promoting women's economic empowerment in the COVID-19 context* [Working Paper 575]. Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/promoting-wee-during-covid.pdf>

61 *COVID-19 and women-led MSMEs in Sub-Saharan Africa.* (2021, March). International Finance Corporation. <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/b03405d3-5082-497e-9027-6b4dd559bbf0/202103-COVID-19-and-Women-Led+MSMEs-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxGKX6C>

62 *The Global Findex database | Data.* (2021). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/globalfindex/Data>

Figure 3:

Percentage of women and men with an account at a financial institution or a mobile-money-service provider in 2021



Source: World Bank Global Findex Database, 2021

The World Bank's 2021 *Findex Report* describes the impact mobile finance has had on women in Africa: "Mobile money has become an important enabler of financial inclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa – especially for women – both as a driver of account ownership and of account usage through mobile payments, saving, and borrowing."<sup>63</sup> Relatedly, online digital tools also provide new opportunities for women to become small business owners. As a recent World Economic Forum article noted, many women in Africa become grassroots entrepreneurs out of financial necessity, and digital solutions and efficiencies can help them sustain such enterprises.<sup>64</sup>

However, internet access remains much less prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa than in other global regions, with mobile infrastructure better developed in some countries than others.<sup>65</sup> Gallup's 2021 World Poll results indicate that among the five countries studied, the overall proportion who said they have access to the internet ranged from two-thirds (66%) in South Africa to just 18% in Tanzania. The data also show that in four of the five countries studied, the percentage of men who said they had internet access was somewhat higher than the percentage among women (Figure 4).

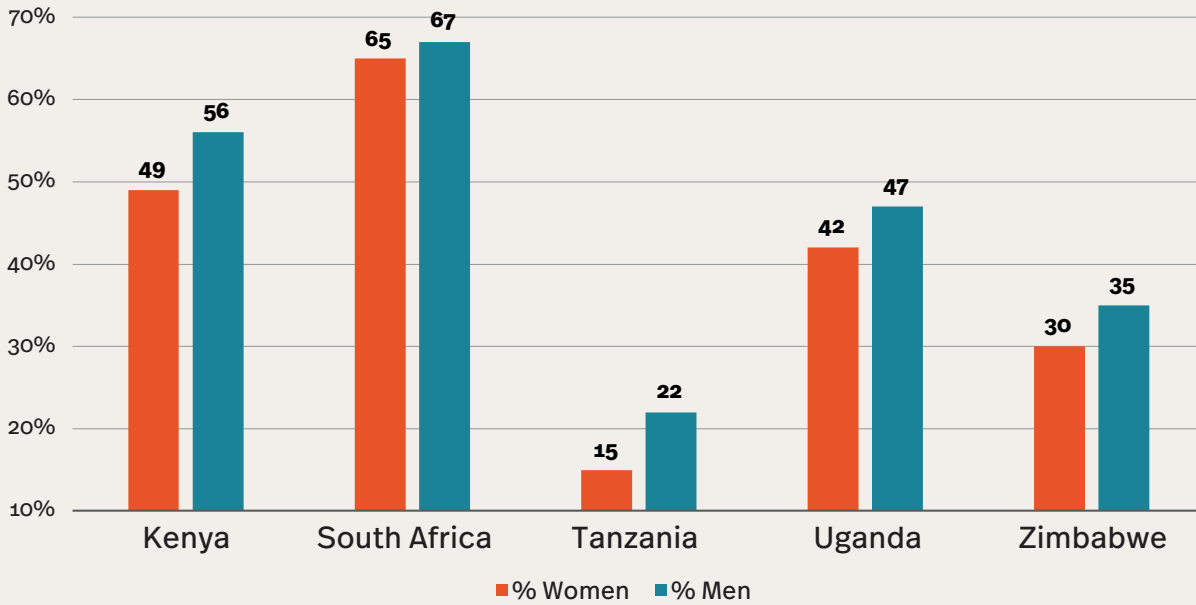
<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *How digital tech can help get Botswana's female entrepreneurs back in business*. (2021, November 18). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/11/digital-entrepreneurship-africa-botswana-women-gender-equality>

<sup>65</sup> Rezvija, V., Panday, S., & Lysenko, T. (2021). *Sub-Saharan Africa's demographic transition: A window of opportunity for growth*. S&P Global. [https://www.spglobal.com/\\_assets/documents/ratings/research/100344423.pdf](https://www.spglobal.com/_assets/documents/ratings/research/100344423.pdf)

Figure 4:

Do you have access to the internet in any way, whether on a mobile phone, a computer, or some other device? Percentage 'yes' by gender

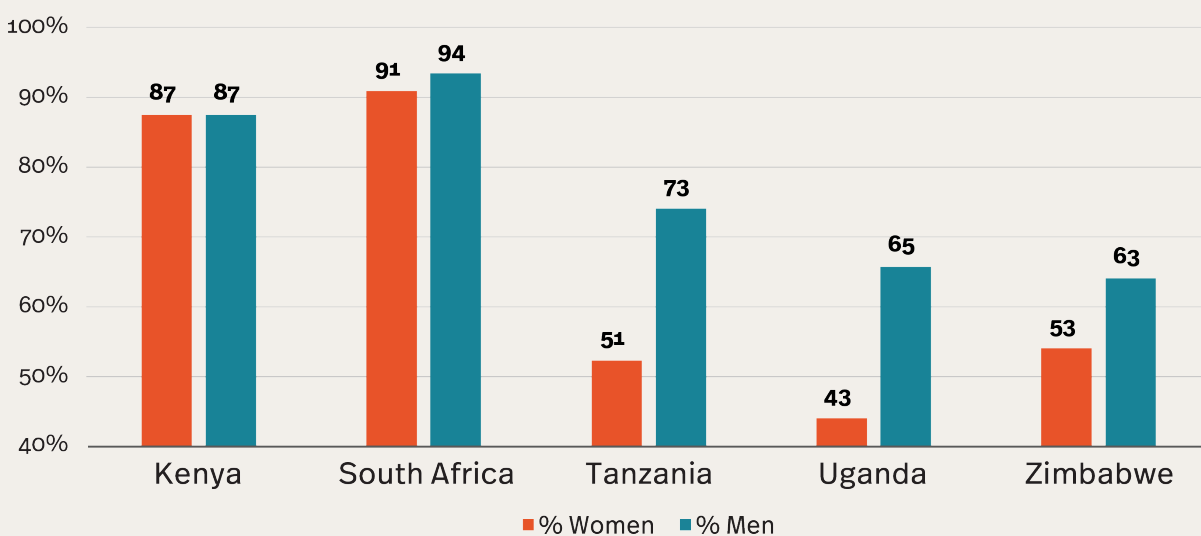


Source: 2021 Gallup World Poll

Additionally, Gallup’s 2021 data reveal gender gaps in internet use among those who do have access. In Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, women with internet access were considerably less likely than men with access to say they had gone online in the past 30 days.

Figure 5:

Have you used the internet in the past seven days, whether on a mobile phone, a computer, or some other device? Percentage 'yes' among those who said they had internet access



Source: 2021 Gallup World Poll

## PART 3: EDUCATION & FAITH

**Key finding 8: Many in-depth interview participants cited the importance of education in achieving gender equality. However, attendance in secondary education varies across the five countries and more information is needed about gender gaps in education quality.** However, attendance in secondary education varies across the five countries, and more information is needed about gender gaps in education quality.

The individual and societal benefits of education are well-established. It is the basis for the human capital development needed for economic growth but is also critical to other areas of human development, such as health and civic engagement.<sup>66</sup> In-depth interview participants noted that, while there remains more emphasis on educating boys than girls, education helps empower girls to be less subservient to the boys and men in their lives.

- *“An educated girl child is able to make decisions [better] than another girl who is not educated. What I am saying is our foremothers who were not educated would bow down to every instruction that was given by our forefathers, but the current crop of girls we have can resist some machination from members of the opposite sex.”* (44-year-old man, urban Zimbabwe)
- *“Education in a woman erases ignorance. For example, as a woman, if you don't study, you just exist. You are dragged along, perhaps by your husband.”* (23-year-old woman, urban Tanzania)

Notably, while female participants almost universally felt that girls should receive the same educational opportunities as boys, men also broadly supported this idea. While some male participants thought it was more important to educate boys – which they saw as logical since boys often grow up to be the breadwinner for their families – they were in the minority. A few explicitly said that educating girls would help the country progress toward its goal of gender equality.

- *“It's important [to educate women], since we are trying to create, the government is trying to create a situation whereby there are rights and opportunities, and so women are also getting opportunities to be the managers, to be the leaders. So, education is a good thing to continue because they will have skills that can compete with men.”* (42-year-old man, urban Zimbabwe)

### Out-of-school and completion rates

UNESCO statistics indicate the out-of-school rate (i.e., percentage not enrolled) for primary school-age children across Sub-Saharan Africa fell from 40% in 2000 to 23% in 2020. Further, while girls were more likely than boys to be out of primary school in 2000, in 2020, the rates for girls and boys were identical.

However, primary education and basic literacy are increasingly insufficient thresholds when it comes to economic empowerment. Across much of the continent, the focus has shifted to expanding access to secondary education. Here, the 2020 UNESCO data also show few gender gaps in out-of-school rates among the five countries studied, though girls were somewhat more likely than boys to be out of upper secondary school in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Much larger differences were seen between countries for both boys and girls, with far more out of secondary school in Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe than in Kenya and South Africa.

<sup>66</sup> *Transforming education in Africa: An evidence-based overview and recommendations for long-term improvements.* (2021). UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/media/106686/file/Transforming%20Education%20in%20Africa.pdf>

**Table 3:**
**UNESCO out-of-school estimates, 2020**

	Primary		Lower secondary		Upper secondary	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
<b>Kenya</b>	12%	8%	7%	6%	24%	18%
<b>South Africa</b>	7%	9%	7%	10%	20%	24%
<b>Tanzania</b>	16%	17%	53%	49%	88%	85%
<b>Uganda</b>	10%	13%	31%	35%	75%	73%
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	6%	8%	23%	28%	60%	54%

UNESCO also provides completion rate estimates for each level of schooling, with Kenya and South Africa again far ahead of Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe with regard to secondary school. There were a few notable gender gaps in the 2020 results. In Uganda, boys were more likely than girls to complete lower secondary school (47% vs. 38%). In Kenya, boys were somewhat more likely than girls to have completed upper secondary school, though the reverse was true in South Africa.

**Table 4:**
**UNESCO completion rate estimates, 2020**

	Primary		Lower secondary		Upper secondary	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
<b>Kenya*</b>	95%	91%	88%	86%	46%	51%
<b>South Africa</b>	99%	98%	92%	88%	56%	47%
<b>Tanzania</b>	86%	76%	35%	32%	12%	13%
<b>Uganda</b>	67%	64%	38%	47%	21%	23%
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	93%	91%	77%	73%	7%	11%

\*Kenya estimates from 2019 (2020 data not available)

While out-of-school rates were declining before the pandemic, school closures in 2020 affected roughly 250 million students in Sub-Saharan Africa – on top of the 100 million already out of school.<sup>67</sup> The following year saw little improvement: As schools reclosed across Eastern and Southern Africa, more than 32 million children were estimated to be out of school because of the closures or because they failed to return when schools opened.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> COVID-19: A catastrophe for children in sub-Saharan Africa. (2020). UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/esa/press-releases/covid-19-catastrophe-for-children-in-sub-saharan-africa>

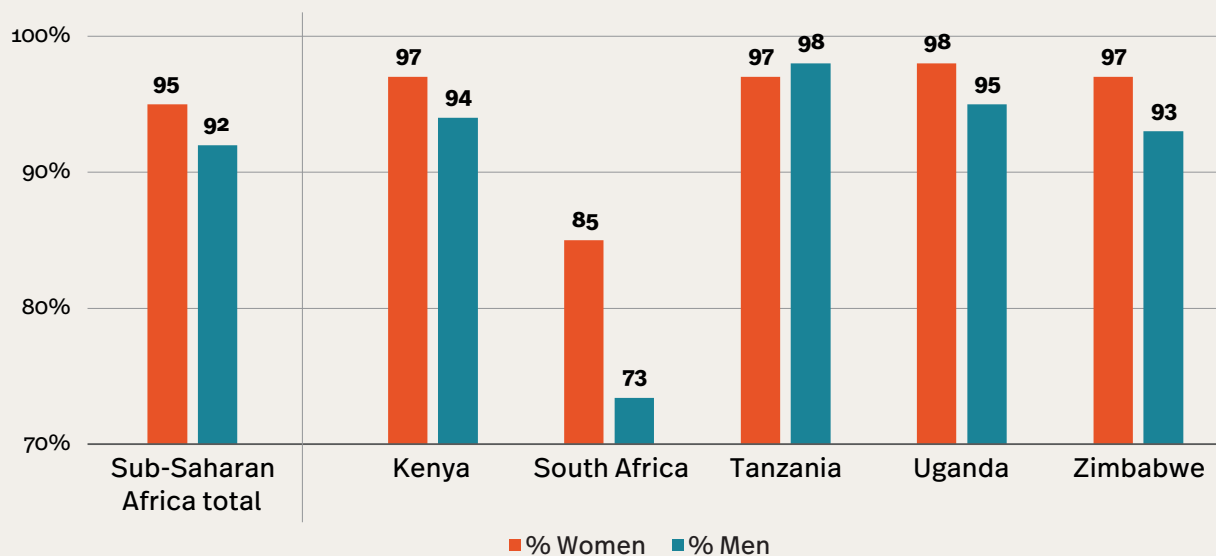
<sup>68</sup> 40 per cent of children in Eastern and Southern Africa are not in school. (2021). UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/40-cent-children-eastern-and-southern-africa-are-not-school>

## Impact of religiosity on perceptions of gender

**Key finding 9: Religiosity is high and impacts perceptions of gender equality.** The influence of religious traditions is more prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa than in almost any other global region. Gallup’s 2021 World Poll found that the vast majority of adults region-wide – 93% – said religion was an important part of their daily lives, including 95% of women. Among four of the five countries studied, there was little difference between responses among men and women; the only exception was South Africa, where men were significantly less likely than women to say religion was important in their daily lives.

Figure 6:

Is religion an important part of your daily life? Percentage ‘yes’ by gender, 2021



Such high levels of religiosity demonstrate that religious beliefs and communities must be accounted for in any strategy for implementing social and cultural change in Africa. In recent decades, the need to engage with faith communities around development issues – including gender equality issues – has been increasingly recognised in the international development community. For example, gender equality and empowerment is a key focus of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, which seeks to tap into the social capital vested in faith communities for sustainable development.<sup>69</sup>

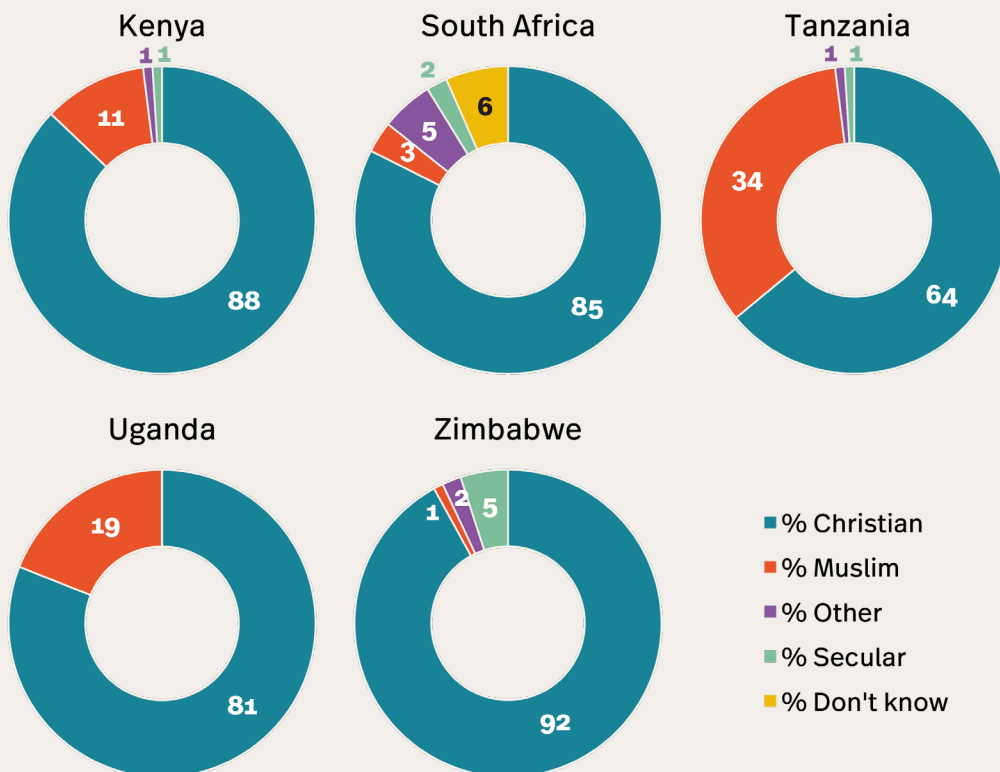
Christianity is the most prevalent religion in each of the five countries studied, though Muslims make up a sizeable minority in the East African countries, particularly Tanzania at 34%. Gallup’s 2021 World Poll also demonstrates that few people in any of the five countries identify as secular or non-religious.

<sup>69</sup> *What we do*. (n.d.). International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development. <https://www.partner-religion-development.org/work-streams/overview>



Figure 7:

Could you tell me what your religion is?



Note: Percentages may sum to 100% ±1% due to rounding.

In the in-depth interviews, many female participants expressed a desire for an increase in women’s rights and better treatment, while some more religious participants supported the preservation of traditional roles as that is what was taught in their religious studies.

- “I think this dates back to creation. I think God imposed this when he said, ‘Man, you are the head, and the woman is the helper.’ So, it’s natural that men are more respected and given more ... I don’t know how to put this, but they are more privileged.” (42-year-old woman, urban Uganda)
- “Religion says that the man should be the priority. For example, I am a Muslim. In this Islam, a man has to be the priority in matters of religion. I accept my place and man in society. Why do I agree? Due to its religious issues.” (23-year-old woman, urban Tanzania)
- “A woman is ... a helper, that is, to help her husband, and that is how we look at society. Help your husband to continue the family. Even from the Bible, it is said so.” (29-year-old woman, urban Kenya)

In a few cases, however, references to the Bible were used to illustrate women’s influence and capacity for leadership or the need to treat all people equally.

- “If we look in the Bible, there was a woman called Deborah. She was a soldier, and she led an army into war, and they were victorious. So, there is no difference between the roles of women since a woman succeeded in leading an army. Women can perform different jobs.” (19-year-old woman, rural Zimbabwe)
- “Religiously, in the Bible, we see that Esther was a prayer leader. Also, if you look at religion, they are known to give birth to leaders like Mary gave birth to Jesus.” (20-year-old man, rural Kenya)
- “[Religious leaders] have to teach that to the people, that we are all equal as we are all made in God’s image. They should use written word to teach people that we are all equal. For instance, using the Bible to show people that we are all equal and if the religious leaders lead a model exemplary life, then the community can see and copy from them.” (25-year-old man, rural Uganda)

# Conclusion

African respondents recognise the need to eliminate chronic and widespread gender disparities, acknowledging that they limit the potential of millions of African women and slow the region's social and economic progress. With birth rates declining and girls' access to education improving, the continent could achieve a substantial growth dividend if laws designed to empower women are better enforced and cultural barriers to change are lowered. Results from both the quantitative review and qualitative research indicate many residents of the five countries studied want to see women treated more fairly and respectfully.

However, government resources for implementing gender equality reforms are often limited, and enforcement of new laws may face resistance if they mean disrupting long-established social structures and introducing uncertainty in the lives of many people who already face an insecure future.

Results from this study suggest further research could help policymakers and women's advocates better understand which types of interventions are most likely to be successful in promoting social and economic change. Advocates could also benefit from more data on how conditions for women vary by other intersectional aspects of their identity, such as age, income, ethnicity and urban vs. rural residency. Amid Africa's diverse populations, such lenses could help develop strategies for closing opportunity gaps and empowering all women.



# Appendix 1

## A review of how the National Development Plan on Gender in five countries fits within the AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment

Kenya	
Maximising opportunities, outcomes and e-tech dividends	In addition to “adopting and strengthening measures to increase access to and retention of girls and boys in public education at all levels,” Kenya’s National Policy on Gender and Development recommends “promoting mentorship programmes in schools” and “to sensitise households to encourage girls to take up STEM-related careers.” <sup>70</sup>
Dignity, security and resilience	The country’s national plan aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and men, and girls and boys, by ensuring the enforcement of laws and policies, promoting advocacy and education programmes to change attitudes and culture and strengthening the capacity of institutions to investigate and prosecute related offences in a timely and effective manner. <sup>71</sup>
Effective laws, policies and institutions	Kenya has ratified seven of the nine global human rights instruments, and regionally, it has also ratified the Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Kenya has also adopted the African Union Agenda 2063, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the National Land Policy, which recognises women’s rights to own property. <sup>72</sup>
Leadership, voice and visibility	<p>The country’s national policy on gender and development also aims to “ensure equitable and meaningful participation and representation of women and men in governance, power and decision-making positions in the public and private sectors.”</p> <p>The policy recommends ensuring that political parties support women’s participation and promote gender equality and supports and encourages women’s “active and meaningful participation” in political and decision-making processes at the grassroots level.<sup>73</sup></p>

South Africa	
Maximising opportunities, outcomes and e-tech dividends	<p>South Africa’s National Development Plan for 2030 states that “young people deserve better educational and economic opportunities, and focused efforts are required to eliminate gender inequality.” The plan offers strategies to expand opportunities for young South Africans through “education, vocational training and work experience, public employment programmes, health and nutrition, public transport and access to information.”</p> <p>While it acknowledges that discrimination, patriarchal attitudes and poor access to education persist for women, the plan for 2030 deals with those factors “holistically.”</p> <p>However, the plan also specifically calls for “social, cultural, religious and educational barriers to women entering the job market” to be addressed, with measures instituted and evaluated over time.<sup>74</sup></p>
Dignity, security and resilience	<p>The vision for South Africa’s National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide is a “South Africa free from gender-based violence directed at women, children and LGBTQIA+ persons.” South Africa’s efforts to achieve this vision are broken into two sets of five-year outcomes between 2020 and 2030. Among the outcomes, all GBV survivors will be “able to access efficient and sensitive criminal justice that is quick, accessible, responsive and gender inclusive.”</p> <p>A short-term outcome of this will be to provide training and support to all service providers in the criminal justice system who deal with GBV and to strengthen survivor-focused services.</p> <p>Further, the plan calls for “accelerated initiatives that address women’s unequal economic and social position, through access to government and private-sector procurement, employment, housing, access to land, financial resources and other income-generating initiatives.”<sup>75</sup></p>

70 Republic of Kenya. (2019). *National policy on gender and development*. <http://psyg.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NATIONAL-POLICY-ON-GENDER-AND-DEVELOPMENT.pdf>

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Republic of South Africa National Planning Commission. (2012). *Our future – Make it work: National development plan 2030*. <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/Executive%20Summary-NDP%202030%20-%20Our%20future%20-%20make%20it%20work.pdf>

75 Republic of South Africa. (2020). *The national strategic plan on gender-based violence & femicide*. <https://www.justice.gov.za/vg/gbv/nsp-gbv-final-doc-04-05.pdf>

### South Africa (continued)

Effective laws, policies and institutions	South Africa's NSP reportedly seeks to align with a number of global, regional and national policy frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), which South Africa signed and ratified in 2004. <sup>76</sup>
Leadership, voice and visibility	<p>South Africa's National Gender Policy Framework in 2000 noted women's access to political power and decision making had improved since the country's independence – with strong representation of women in national, provincial and local branches of government.<sup>77</sup></p> <p>The country, like others in Africa, has led the world for years in women's representation within parliament. In 2020, nearly half of the seats in South Africa's national parliament were occupied by women, the second highest in Africa after Rwanda.<sup>78</sup></p>

### Tanzania

Maximising opportunities, outcomes and e-tech dividends	<p>Tanzania's most recent national five-year development plan, in addition to improving education quality, emphasises making access to education universal to all children.<sup>79</sup> A World Bank assessment in 2022 noted that "while the country has moved towards gender parity in participation for girls and boys in lower levels of education, on the mainland there are still significant gender gaps at the upper secondary level where school fees are still in place."<sup>80</sup> The country's five-year plan calls for gender mainstreaming and increasing the opportunities for girls to receive education and training.</p> <p>The plan additionally touts the success of various programmes to empower women within the past decade. For example, the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children has "continued to implement various programmes to empower women with the aim of increasing economic opportunities and building business capacity, access to capital, markets and credit facilities." From 2015 to 2020, the government reportedly provided billions to nearly 1 million female entrepreneurs.<sup>81</sup></p>
Dignity, security, and resilience	<p>A 2022 World Bank assessment of Tanzania's efforts to address GBV notes that the country has a "relatively progressive framework anchored in a progressive Constitution and relevant pieces of legislation," citing the National Plans of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children in Tanzania and Zanzibar. The country's penal code also criminalises some GBV offences and human trafficking, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation are illegal.<sup>82</sup></p> <p>However, the same report notes that enforcing these laws continues to be a challenge because of "weak investigations, insufficient evidence, social norms against reporting, delays within the court system, lack of training for law enforcement officers, inaccessible court costs, and corruption among police and the judiciary."<sup>83</sup></p>
Effective laws, policies and institutions	Tanzania has signed on to a number of international and regional frameworks committed to ending violence against women and children, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), 1984 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), in 2003.
Leadership, voice and visibility	Since Tanzania instituted gender quotas in parliament, women's representation in the National Assembly has slowly risen. In 2020, more than one third of seats in the country's parliament were occupied by women. And, since the death of the country's president John Magufuli, former Samia Suluhu Hassan has been leading the country as its first female president. <sup>84</sup>

76 Ibid.

77 The Office on the Status of Women. (n.d.). *South Africa's national policy framework for women's empowerment and gender equality*. [https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/national\\_policy\\_framework.pdf](https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/national_policy_framework.pdf)

78 Bathily, N. (2020). *Africa takes historic lead in female parliamentary speakers*. World Bank. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/nasikiliza/africa-takes-historic-lead-female-parliamentary-speakers>

79 The United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Finance and Planning. (2021, June). *National five year development plan 2021/22 –2025/26: Realising competitiveness and industrialization for human development*. <https://www.tro.go.tz/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FYDP-III-English.pdf>

80 *Tanzania gender-based violence assessment: Scope, programming, gaps and entry points*. (2017). World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099155003312242676/pdf/P17605107388b40600a73a0ef1c83555589.pdf>

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid p. 31.

84 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2022). *Tanzania is pursuing gender equality and youth inclusion*. <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/tanzania-pursuing-gender-equality-and-youth-inclusion>

Uganda	
Maximising opportunities, outcomes and e-tech dividends	<p>Universal primary education is mandatory for all girls and boys in Uganda. Universal secondary education is provided to all children who qualify, with government grants supporting one secondary school per sub-county.</p> <p>The Ugandan government has increasingly recognised the need for women’s economic empowerment and has helped women start small businesses through initiatives like the Uganda Women’s Entrepreneurship Programme. However, the World Bank notes that though gender gaps in labour force participation and entrepreneurial activity have narrowed, women continue to earn significantly less than men on average, and there is a need to move more female-led businesses from subsistence-level activities to more growth-oriented sectors and jobs.<sup>85</sup></p>
Dignity, security and resilience	<p>Uganda took significant steps to curb gender-based violence in 2010 with the Domestic Violence Act, which provides clear procedures for the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence and for the punishment of perpetrators. 2010 also saw the enactment of a law prohibiting female genital mutilation in the country. The 2016 National Policy on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence further provided a framework to guide different stakeholders in prevention of and response to GBV, with a view toward eliminating violence from society.</p>
Effective laws, policies and institutions	<p>Uganda’s 2007 Gender Policy provides the framework and guidelines for mainstreaming gender in the public sector. The policy established an Equal Opportunities Commission with a mandate to eliminate all forms of discrimination in access to social services, employment opportunities and governance structures, and to redress current gender imbalances. Women’s property rights were further protected by the Land Act, amended in 2010, which provides for joint ownership of the matrimonial home and property and prohibits either the husband or wife from selling matrimonial property without the consent of the other.</p>
Leadership, voice and visibility	<p>Uganda’s Affirmative Action Plan for Women in Politics guarantees one female member of parliament for each district and at least 30% representation by women on local government councils at all levels.</p>

<sup>85</sup> *Investing in gender equality in Uganda is smart economics.* (2021). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/publication/investing-in-gender-equality-in-uganda-is-smart-economics>



Zimbabwe	
Maximising opportunities, outcomes and e-tech dividends	<p>Zimbabwe has a long-standing commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for girls and boys, as reflected in relative gender parity in primary and secondary school completion rates.</p> <p>Despite ongoing gender disparities in employment and income, the Zimbabwean government recognises that women's economic empowerment is a key component of sustainable growth. The country's Broad-Based Women's Economic Empowerment Framework (BBWEEF) was created in 2012 to provide a systematic way to increase women's participation in key economic sectors through capacity-building, empowerment targets, and the mobilisation of financial resources.<sup>86</sup> National legislation guarantees equal access to bank loans for women and men.<sup>87</sup></p>
Dignity, security and resilience	<p>Zimbabwe's 2013 National Gender Policy recognised that despite policy reforms targeting GBV, including the Criminal Law Act of 2006 and the Domestic Violence Act of 2007, such violence remains prevalent and one of the biggest obstacles to women's leadership and participation in economic and social activities. The plan calls for strengthening institutional mechanisms for addressing GBV at all levels and eradicating social and cultural norms that legitimise the acceptance of GBV.</p>
Effective laws, policies and institutions	<p>The Constitution of Zimbabwe, adopted in 2013, also affirms the country's commitment to gender equality, citing gender balance as a guiding principle of government institutions and national objectives.</p> <p>The Bill of Rights states that men and women have a right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres, and voids all laws, customs and traditions that infringe on the rights of women and girls.</p> <p>The Constitution specifically guarantees the right of all women to own property, and married women retain their property in the event of divorce or the death of their husband.</p>
Leadership, voice and visibility	<p>The 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution set aside 60 national parliamentary seats exclusively for women, leading to an immediate rise in the number of female legislators to about one-third since that year.<sup>88</sup> However the quota system does not extend to local governments and expired in 2023, calling into question the country's ability to move toward further political parity.<sup>89</sup></p> <p>Zimbabwe remains a highly patriarchal society in which female candidates and officeholders often face derisive stereotypes and intimidation.<sup>90</sup></p>

86 Alliance for Financial Inclusion. (2019). *Gender, women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion In Zimbabwe*. [https://www.afi-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AFI\\_BTG\\_Zim\\_CS19\\_AW\\_digital.pdf](https://www.afi-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/AFI_BTG_Zim_CS19_AW_digital.pdf)

87 Ibid, p.6.

88 *Women make up more than one-third of Zimbabwe's new parliament*. (2013). UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/9/zimbabwe-women-mps-sworn-in>

89 Hamandishe, A. (2018). *Rethinking women's political participation in Zimbabwe's elections*. Africa Portal. <https://www.africaportal.org/features/rethinking-womens-political-participation-zimbabwes-elections/>

90 Nyavaya, K. (2022). *Stereotypes, violence keep women out of politics in Zimbabwe*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/7/25/stereotypes-violence-keep-women-out-of-politics-in-zimbabwe>



# Appendix 2

## Regions covered by the World Poll (2021 Example)

### Kenya

Baringo, Bomet, Bungoma, Busia, Elgeyo Marakwet, Embu, Garissa, Homa Bay, Isiolo, Kajiado, Kakamega, Kericho, Kiambu, Kilifi, Kirinyaga, Kisii, Kisumu, Kitui, Kwale, Laikipia, Lamu, Machakos, Makueni, Mandera, Marsabit, Meru, Migori, Mombasa, Murang'a, Nairobi, Nakuru, Nandi, Narok, Nyamira, Nyandarua, Nyeri, Samburu, Siaya, Taita Taveta, Tana River, Tharaka Nithi, Trans Nzoia, Turkana, Uasin Gishu, Vihiga, Wajir, West Pokot.

### South Africa

Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Northern Cape, Western Cape.

### Tanzania

Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Tabora, Singida, Shinyanga, Ruvuma, Rukwa, Pwani, South Uguja, North Uguja, South Pemba, North Pemba, Mwanza, Mtwara, Morogoro, Mbeya, Mara, Manyara, Kilimanjaro, Kigoma, Kagera, Iringa, Urban West, Arusha, Tanga, Simiyu, Katavi, Geita, Njombe, Lindi.

### Uganda

Buikwe, Bukomansimbi, Butambala, Buvuma, Gomba, Kalangala, Kalungu, Kampala, Kayunga, Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Luweero, Lwengo, Lyantonde, Masaka, Mityana, Mpigi, Mubende, Mukono, Nakaseke, Nakasongola, Rakai, Sembabule, Wakiso, Amuria, Budaka, Bududa, Bugiri, Bukedea, Bukwa, Bulambuli, Busia, Butaleja, Buyende, Iganga, Jinja, Kaberamaido, Kaliro, Kamuli, Kapchorwa, Katakwi, Kibuku, Kumi, Kween, Luuka, Manafwa, Mayuge, Mbale, Namayingo, Namutumba, Ngora, Pallisa, Serere, Sironko, Soroti, Tororo, Abim, Adjumani, Agago, Alebtong, Amolatar, Amudat, Amuru, Apac, Arua, Dokolo, Gulu, Kaabong, Kitgum, Koboko, Kole, Kotido, Lamwo, Lira, Maracha, Moroto, Moyo, Nakapiripirit, Napak, Nebbi, Nwoya, Otuke, Oyam, Pader, Yumbe, Zombo, Buhweju, Buliisa, Bundibugyo, Bushenyi, Hoima, Ibanda, Isingiro, Kabale, Kabarole, Kamwenge, Kanungu, Kasese, Kibaale, Kiruhura, Kiryandongo, Kisoro, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, Masindi, Mbarara, Mitooma, Ntoroko, Ntungamo, Rubirizi, Rukungiri, Sheema, Kagadi, Kakumiro, Omoro, Rubanda, Namisindwa, Pakwach, Butebo, Rukiga, Kyotera, Bunyangabu, Nabilatuk, Bugweri, Kasanda, Kwanja, Kapelebyong, Kibubube, Obongi, Kazo, Rwampara, Kitagwenda, Madi-Okollo, Karenga, Lusot.

### Zimbabwe

Bulawayo, Harare, Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Masvingo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands.



### **ABOUT PORTICUS**

Porticus is a philanthropic organisation that aims to create a just and sustainable future where human dignity flourishes. Our work aims to strengthen the resilience of communities so that all people have ownership over their future and natural resources are used in a sustainable way. Our work is realised through strong networks of partners including local and global NGOs, communities, people with lived experience, policy makers and co-funders. With colleagues based in 14 offices around the world, we explore solutions to today's social and environmental problems that benefit generations to come in four areas: the natural environment, society, education and faith.

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