

## Togolese express tolerance toward (most) minorities and support for gender equality

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 238 | Thomas Isbell and Hervé Akinocho

### Summary

The government of Togo has taken recent steps to protect the rights of women and minorities. One is a new penal code, adopted in November 2015 after years of advocacy by human-rights organizations, that strengthens protections against gender-based violence and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, and other factors. However, the new law reinforces sanctions against people in same-sex relationships (Journal Officiel, 2015).

Another legal step forward is a law on land rights, adopted by the National Assembly in June 2018, which reconciles traditional and modern law in a statute promoting equality for women and men (Kakpo, 2018; Korolakina, 2016; LomeChrono, 2018).

Civil-society advocacy and a government program converting traditional circumcisers to economic development agents by providing them with loans and training are credited with helping reduce the prevalence of female genital circumcision (Ministère de l'Action Sociale, de la Promotion de la Femme, de la Protection de l'Enfant et des Personnes Agées, 2008; Dagban-Zonvide, 2013; 27avril.com, 2014; Réaux, 2018). According to Togo's third Demographic and Health Survey (2013), the prevalence of excision decreases with women's age, ranging from 10.2% among women aged 40-45 to 0.3% among girls under age 15. The prevalence of childhood marriage (before age 15) has also declined, ranging from 11.1% among women aged 45-49 to 1.9% among those aged 15-19.

Despite advances in some areas, reality remains a step behind in others. Contrary to President Faure Gnassingbé's promise, ahead of the legislative elections of 2013, of male-female parity, women made up only 19% of elected members to the National Assembly – the same percentage as their representation in his government (Republicoftogo.com, 2018; Assemblée Nationale Togolaise, 2015). While access to education has improved for girls, retention in school remains problematic (PASEC, 2016). And the prevalence of violence against women remains troubling: 10% of women reported having suffered physical abuse during the 12 months preceding the survey, while 4% said they experienced sexual violence. Only 7% of victims reported their abuse to authorities (Demographic and Health Survey, 2013).

In this dispatch we examine social tolerance and attitudes toward gender equality in Togo. Findings show that most Togolese express tolerant attitudes toward people of different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities, but very few extend the same tolerance toward people in same-sex relationships.

Togolese are widely supportive of gender equality when it comes to life opportunities, such as access to education and land and a fair shot at being elected to public office. But if jobs are scarce, a substantial minority would give priority to men. And most citizens think it's better for a family if a woman is taking care of the household and children.

On a peripherally related question about strategies for reducing the country's fertility rate, majorities endorse promoting universal education for girls and financial autonomy for women, as well as adopting a three-child limit per family.

## Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Six rounds of surveys were conducted in up to 37 countries between 1999 and 2015, and Round 7 surveys are being completed in 2018. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Togo, led by Center for Research and Opinion Polls (CROP), interviewed 1,200 adult Togolese in November 2017. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Togo in 2012 and 2014.

## Key findings

- Nine out of 10 Togolese express tolerant attitudes toward people of different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities. But only one in 10 show the same tolerance for people in same-sex relationships.
- About one in eight Togolese say they experienced discrimination based on their gender (12%) or religion (13%) during the previous year. Even more (20%) suffered discrimination based on their ethnicity.
- Togolese generally report positively on gender equality in their country today. Most say boys and girls have an equal chance at an education (96%) and women have the same chance as men to get a paying job (90%) and to own and inherit land (79%).
- Most Togolese also support gender equality in principle when it comes to owning land (82%) and running for public office (84%). Support is somewhat weaker (65%) with regard to equality when jobs are scarce. And two-thirds (65%) of all respondents – including three-fourths (74%) of women – say it is better for a family if a woman, rather than a man, has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children.
- Majorities of Togolese say the country's fertility rate could be effectively reduced by promoting universal education for girls (88%), promoting financial autonomy for women (84%), and adopting a three-child limit per family (58%).

## Social tolerance

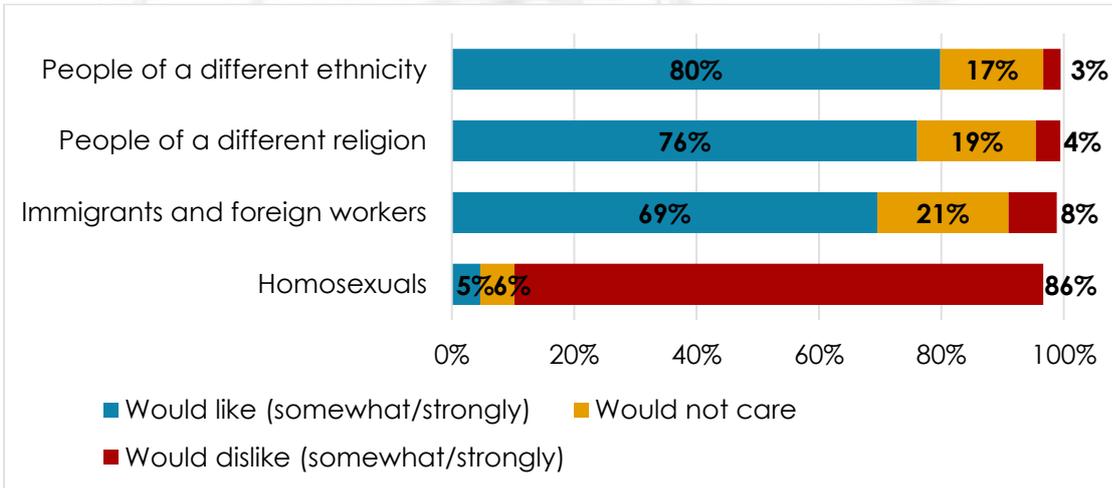
For overwhelming majorities of Togolese, ethnicity, religion, and national origin are not barriers to social acceptance (Figure 1). More than nine in 10 Togolese say they would like (80% “strongly” or “somewhat”) or “would not care” (17%) if they had neighbours of a different ethnicity. Proportions are similar with regard to neighbours of a different religion (76% would like it, and 19% say they wouldn't care) and neighbours who are immigrants or foreign workers (69% like, 21% would not care). These attitudes have not changed since Afrobarometer's 2014 survey.

However, almost nine in 10 Togolese (86%) say they would dislike having neighbours who are in same-sex relationships, including 82% who say they would “strongly dislike” it. That's 3 percentage points – just the survey's margin of error – lower than in 2014. Only 6% say they “would not care,” and even fewer (5%) say they would like having homosexual neighbours.

Such attitudes toward homosexuals appear consistent regardless of respondents' urban-rural location, gender, age group, and economic status. Only respondents' level of education

shows a difference; surprisingly, the best-educated Togolese are most likely to say they would dislike living next to people in same-sex relationships (89%, compared to 83% of those with no formal education).

**Figure 1: Social tolerance | Togo | 2017**

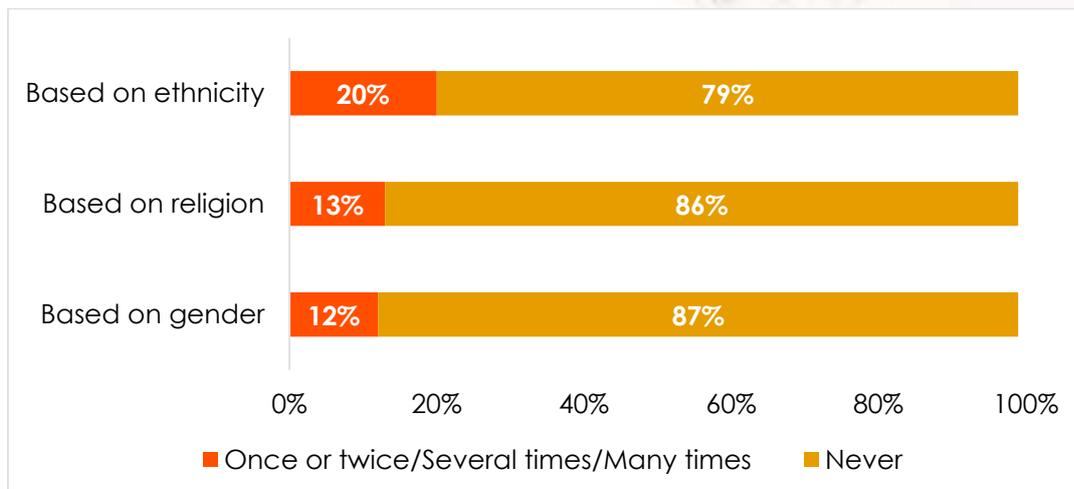


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbors, dislike it, or not care: People from other ethnic groups? Immigrants or foreign workers? People of a different religion? Homosexuals?

### Discrimination and harassment

Despite high levels of tolerance in Togo for people of other ethnicities, religions, and nationalities, discrimination and harassment continue to affect significant minorities of citizens. One in five respondents (20%) say they experienced discrimination or harassment based on their ethnicity during the year preceding the survey. About one in eight say their religion (13%) or their gender (12%) was the basis of discrimination/harassment they experienced (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Experienced discrimination or harassment | Togo | 2017**

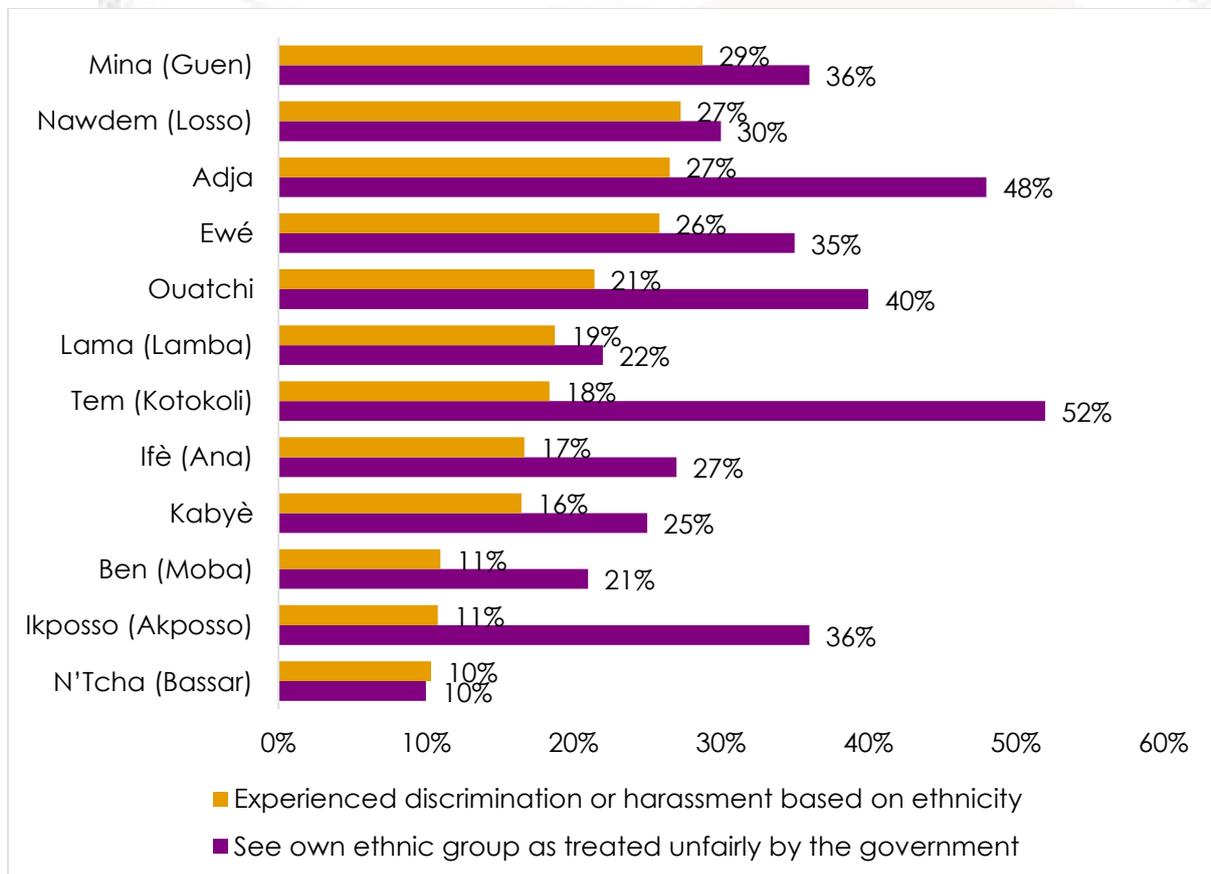


**Respondents were asked:** In the past year, how often, if at all, have you personally been discriminated against or harassed based on any of the following: Your ethnicity? Your religion? Your gender?

Experiences of ethnicity-based discrimination and harassment vary widely across ethnic groups. It is important to note that breaking down survey responses by ethnic group requires analyzing small sub-samples, producing results with very large margins of error. Thus, except for the Ewé and Kabyè groups, reported percentages should be considered indicative and interpreted with caution. With this caveat in mind, we see that the experience of discrimination or harassment based on ethnicity is particularly frequently reported by members of the Mina (Guen) (29%), Nawdem (Losso) (27%), Adja (27%), and Ewé (26%) groups (Figure 3).

When asked how often, if ever, members of their ethnic group are treated unfairly by the government, Tem (Kotokoli) most frequently say this happens “often” or “always” (52%), followed by Adja (48%) and Ouatchi (40%).

**Figure 3: Discrimination/harassment and unfair treatment based on ethnicity | Togo | 2017**

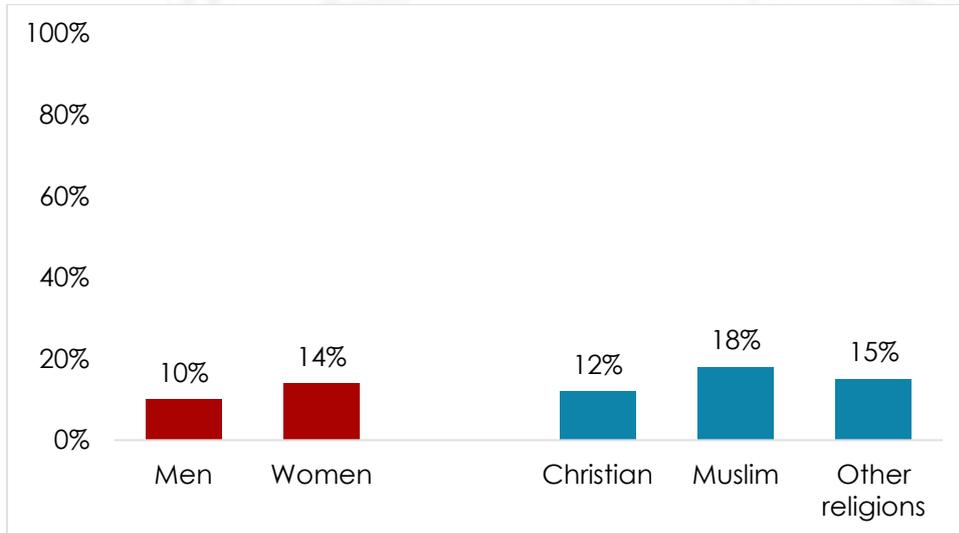


**Respondents were asked:**

- In the past year, how often, if at all, have you personally been discriminated against or harassed based on any of the following: Your ethnicity? (% who say “once or twice,” “several times,” or “many times”)
- How often, if ever, are [members of your ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government? (% who say “often” or “always”)

Women are somewhat more likely than men to say they experienced gender-based discrimination or harassment, 14% vs. 10%, while Muslim respondents report discrimination/harassment based on religion more frequently than Christians (18% vs. 12%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Experienced discrimination/harassment based on gender or religion**  
 | by gender and religion | Togo | 2017



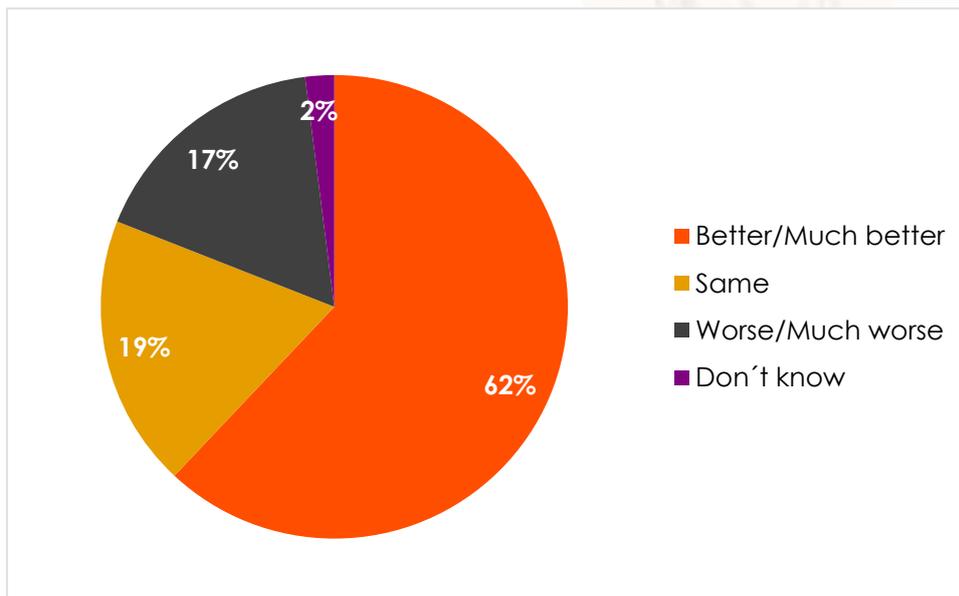
**Respondents were asked:** In the past year, how often, if at all, have you personally been discriminated against or harassed based on any of the following: Your gender? Your religion? (% who say "once or twice," "several times," or "many times")

### Attitudes toward gender equality

#### Equal opportunity for women

Six in 10 Togolese (62%) say things have improved over the past few years with regard to equal opportunity and treatment for women (Figure 5). About one in five (19%) believe nothing has changed, and 17% think things have gotten worse.

**Figure 5: Better or worse: Equal opportunities and treatment for women** | Togo | 2017



**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?

When asked about access to life opportunities in present-day Togo, large majorities say girls have the same chance as boys to obtain an education (96%) and women have the same chance as men to get a paying job and earn an income (90%) and to own and inherit land (79%) (Figure 6).

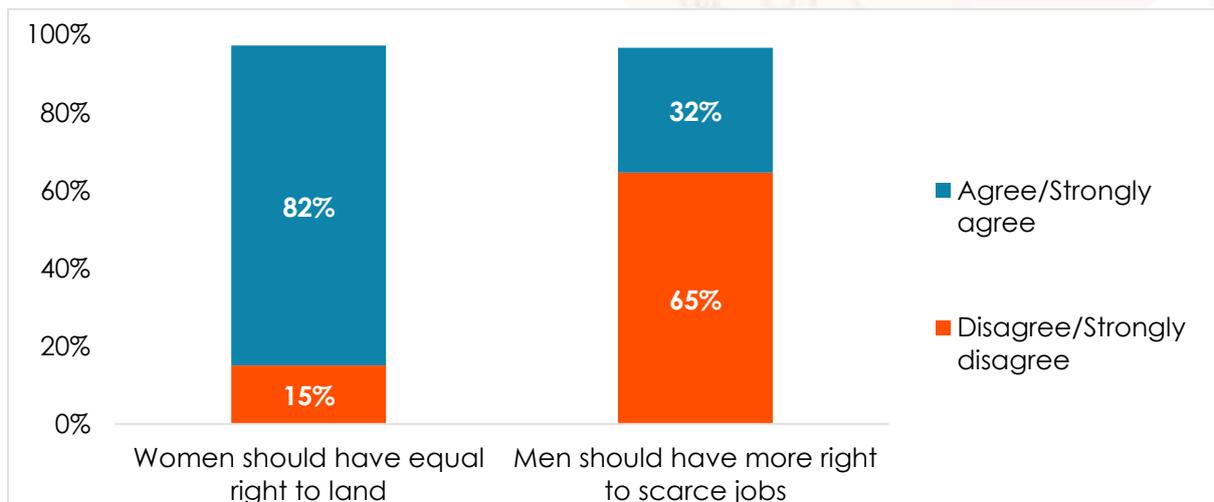
**Figure 6: Equal chance at life opportunities | Togo | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree.

Asked about their views on women’s rights in principle, most Togolese “agree” or “strongly agree” that women should have the same right as men to own and inherit land (82%). Two-thirds of respondents also favour equal rights to a job, but a substantial one in three (32%) say that when jobs are scarce, men should have “more right to a job” than women (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Should women have the same rights as men to land and jobs? | Togo | 2017**

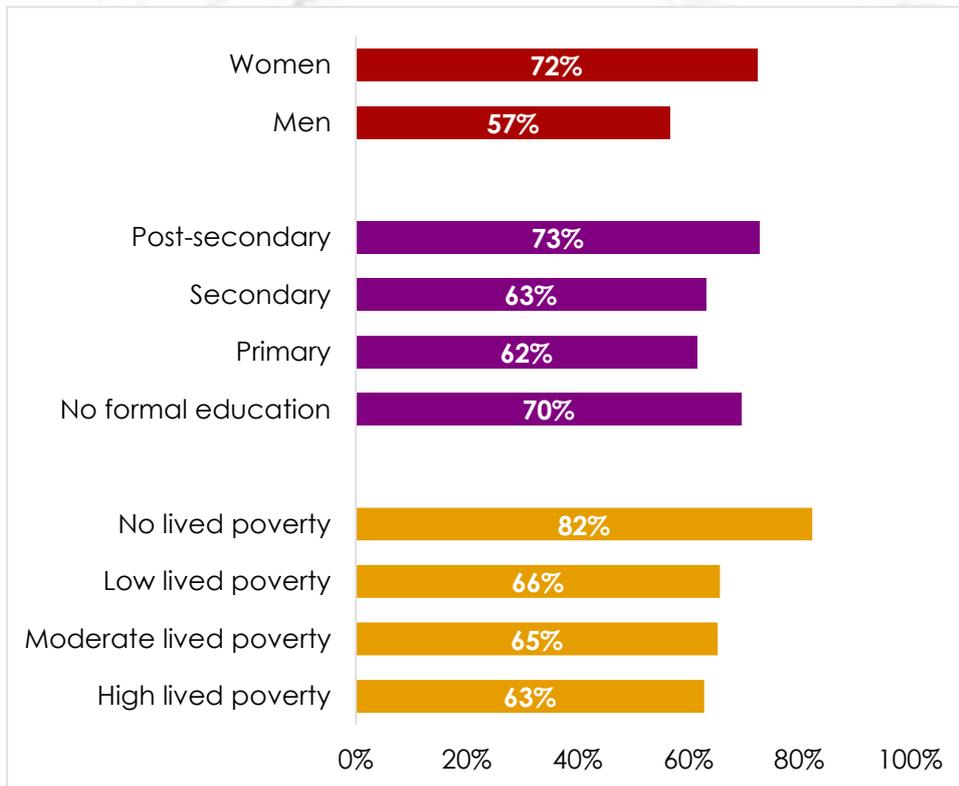


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

- When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women?
- Women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land?

Disagreement with the idea that men should receive preferential consideration for scarce jobs is especially strong among women (72%, vs. 57% of men), respondents with post-secondary educational qualifications (73%), and the wealthiest respondents<sup>1</sup> (82%) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Men should not have more right to scarce jobs** | by socio-demographic group | Togo | 2017

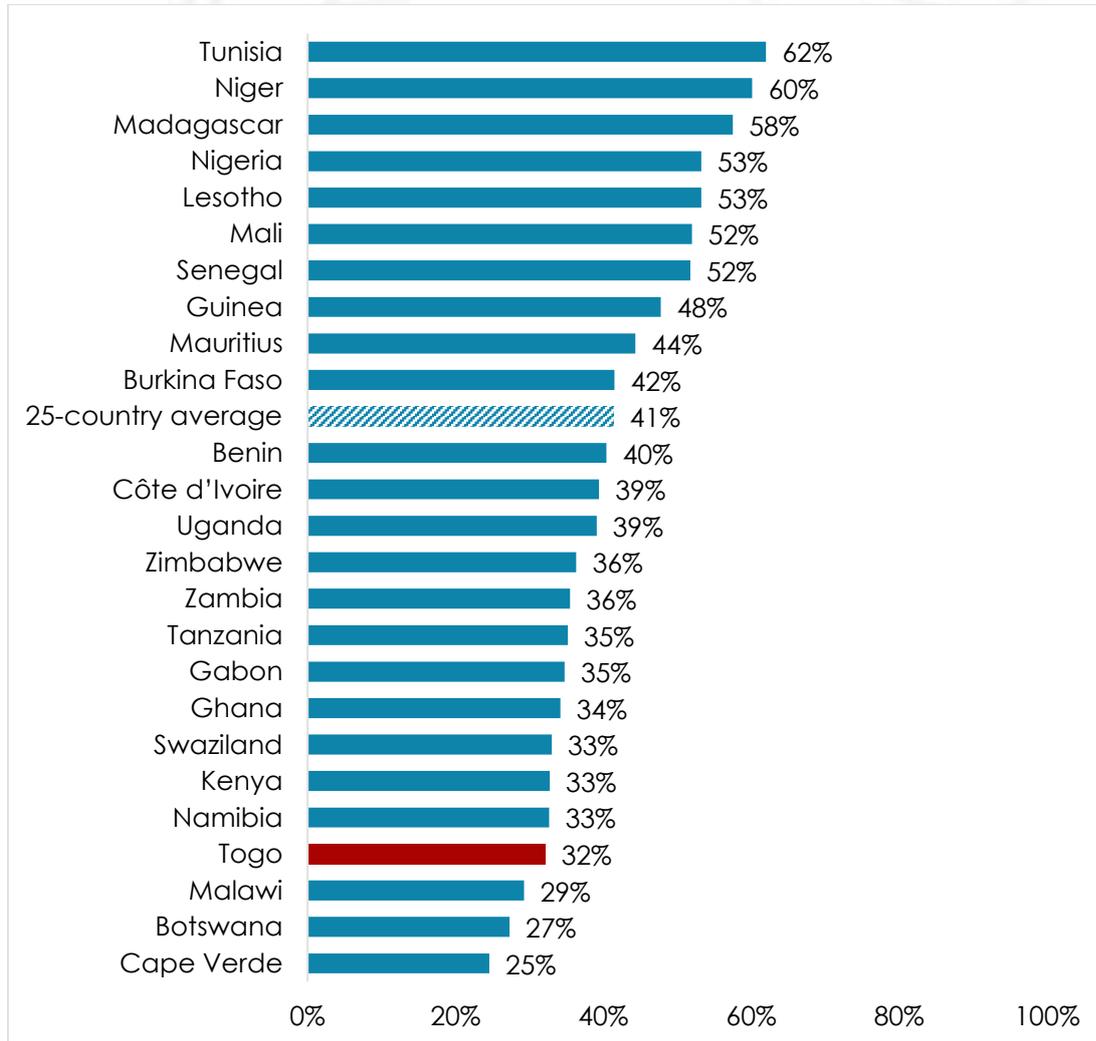


**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women? (% who “disagree” or “strongly disagree”)

Among 25 African countries surveyed by Afrobarometer, Togo ranks near the bottom in support for the idea that men should have priority for scarce jobs (Figure 9). Citizens of Tunisia (62%), Niger (60%), and Madagascar (58%) are almost twice as likely to hold this opinion as Togolese.

<sup>1</sup> Afrobarometer assesses respondents’ “lived poverty” based on responses to the following questions: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Enough fuel to cook your food? A cash income?

**Figure 9: Men should have more right to scarce jobs** | 25 African countries  
 | 2016/2018



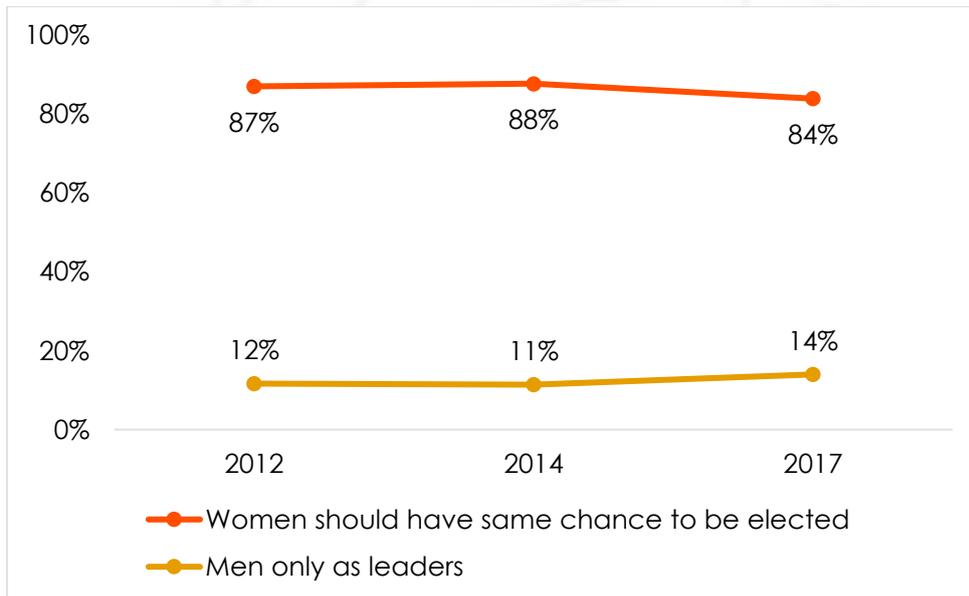
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women? (% who "agree" or "strongly agree")

### Women's roles in political leadership and the home

More than eight in 10 Togolese (84%) say women should have the same chance as men to be elected to public office. This level of support has held fairly steady in recent years (down 4 percentage points from 2014) (Figure 10). One in seven respondents (14%) instead agree that "men make better political leaders than women and should be elected rather than women."

Women are just slightly more likely than men to support women's equality when it comes to being elected, 86% vs. 82%. This gap was larger in 2014, 92% vs. 83%, before the proportion of women endorsing equality dropped by 6 percentage points (Figure 11).

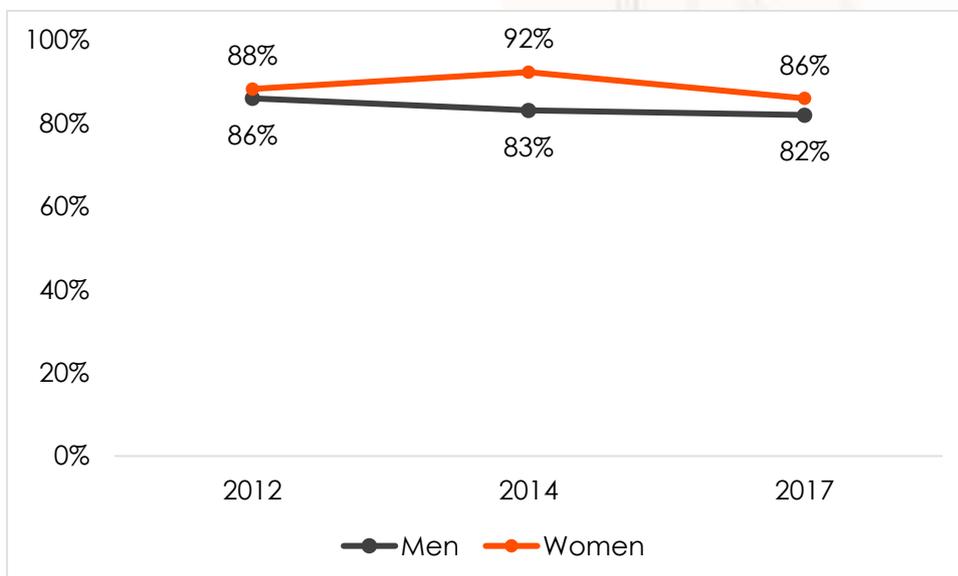
**Figure 10: Women as political leaders | Togo | 2012-2017**



**Respondents were asked:** Let's talk for a moment about the kind of society you would like to have in this country. 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.

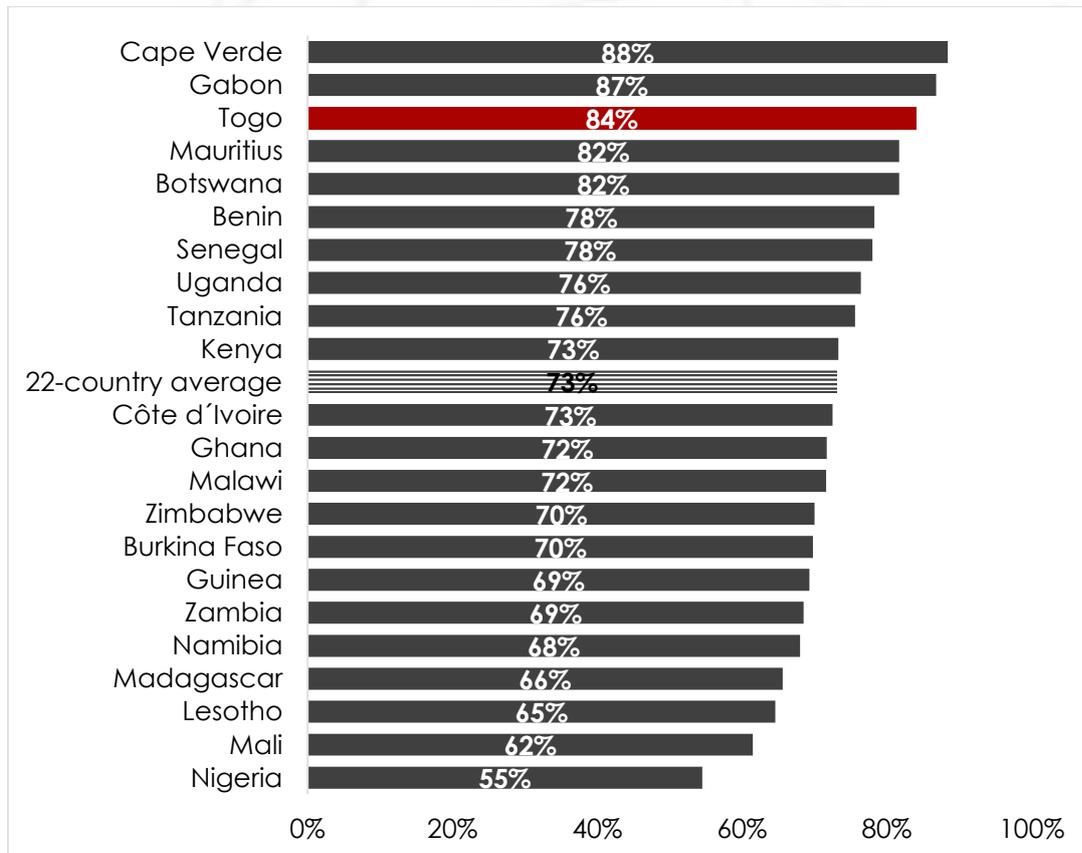
**Figure 11: Women as political leaders | by gender | Togo | 2012-2017**



(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that women should have the same chance as men to be elected)

Togo ranks near the top among 22 African countries with regard to openness to female political leaders; only Cape Verde (88%) and Gabon (87%) score higher (Figure 12). Majorities in all 22 countries are supportive of women as leaders.

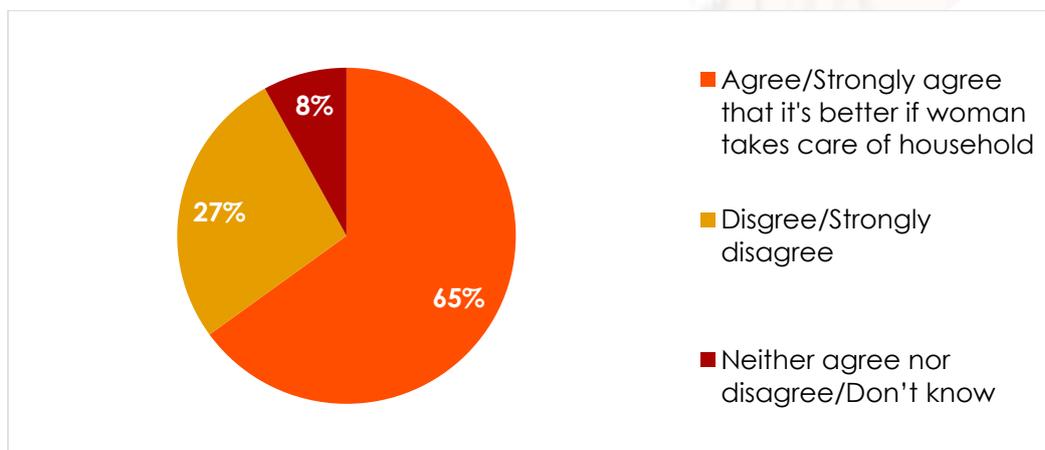
**Figure 12: Support for women as political leaders** | 22 African countries | 2016/2018



(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that women should have the same chance as men to be elected)

While Togolese welcome women on the campaign trail, they also believe it is better for a family if a woman, rather than a man, takes care of the household and children. Two-thirds (65%) of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" with this position (Figure 13).

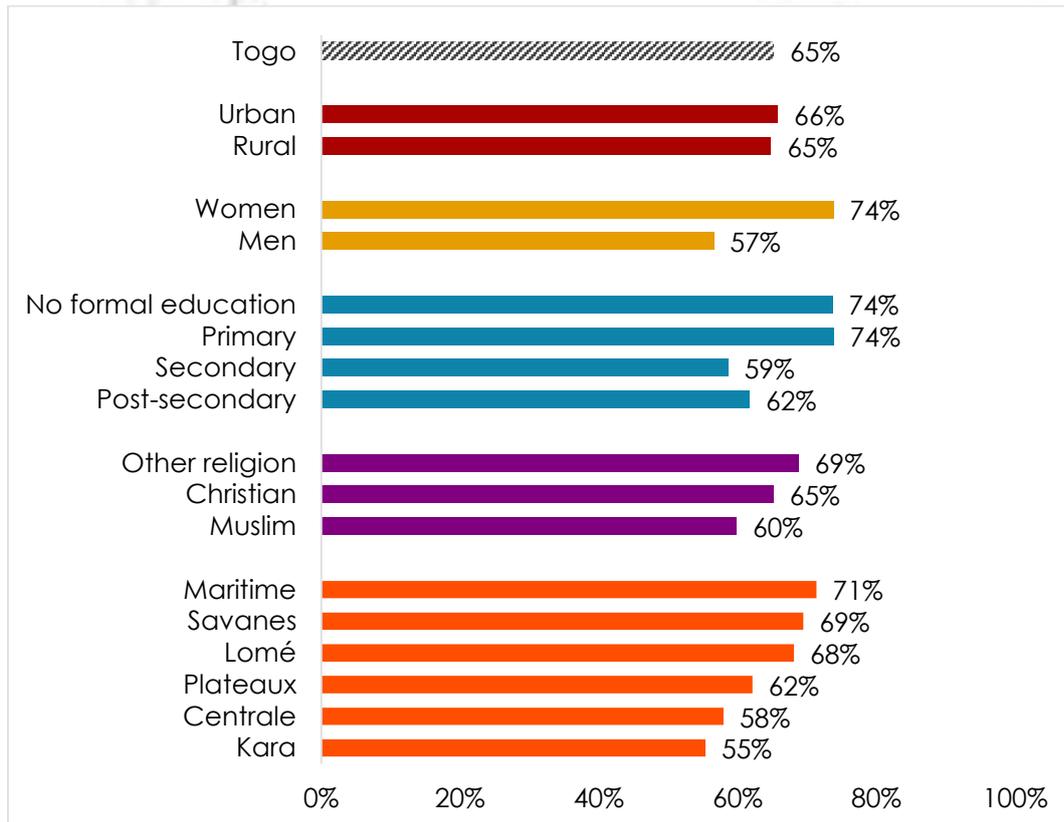
**Figure 13: Better if woman takes care of household?** | Togo | 2017



**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: In general, it is better for a family if a woman has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children rather than a man?

Women are more likely than men (74% vs. 57%) to assert that families are better off with a woman providing care (Figure 14). So are less-educated respondents (74% among those with a primary education or without any formal schooling) compared to their better-educated counterparts. Muslim respondents are less likely (60%) than respondents who are Christian (65%) or practice some other religion (69%) to endorse this view, which is also more popular in Maritime (71%), Savanes (69%), and Lomé (68%) than in other regions.

**Figure 14: Better if woman takes care of household | by socio-demographic group**  
 | Togo | 2017



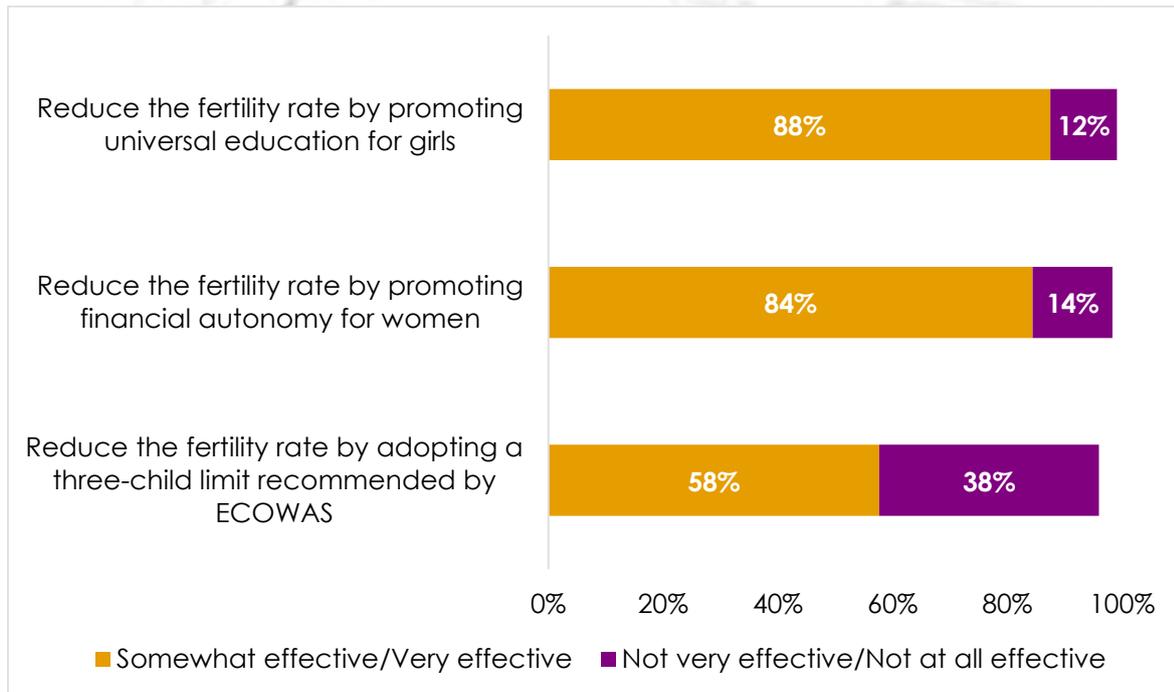
**Respondents were asked:** For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree: In general, it is better for a family if a woman has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children rather than a man? (% who “agree” or “strongly agree”)

### Views on proposals to reduce fertility rate

In a question peripherally related to women's roles and family life, the Afrobarometer team in Togo asked respondents about their views on proposals for reducing fertility rates (estimated at an average of 4.8 children per woman in Togo in 2013/2014, down from 6.4 in 1988 (Demographic and Health Survey, 2013)). This followed a statement by French President Emmanuel Macron, at the G20 summit in July 2017, suggesting that high fertility rates are to blame for poverty in Africa (Allemandou, 2017; Blum, 2017), and a policy recommendation by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament, two weeks later, of a three-child limit per family (Beninto.info, 2017; Cameroonvoice, 2017). This policy recommendation was made without any public debate that might have raised issues regarding the policing of women's bodies and freedoms, the role of the state in determining family dynamics, factors underlying family planning, and the educational and financial independence of women in making decisions about reproduction.

When asked about possible policies to reduce the fertility rate, most Togolese say that promoting universal education for girls (88%) and promoting women's financial autonomy (84%) are good approaches. The three-child limit as recommended by ECOWAS is less popular; while a majority (58%) of respondents also support this proposal, opposition (38%) is almost three times as strong as opposition to the other approaches (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: How to reduce fertility rate | Togo | 2017**



**Respondents were asked:** Some people suggest different ways to reduce the fertility rate in countries like Togo. Please tell me how much you think each of the following approaches would be effective in reducing fertility:

- Reduce the fertility rate by promoting universal education for girls?
- Reduce the fertility rate by promoting financial autonomy for women?
- Reduce the fertility rate by adopting a three-child limit recommended by ECOWAS?

## Conclusion

Citizens of Togo express broad-minded attitudes toward women's rights as well as toward people who are different from themselves, with the marked exception of people of a different sexual orientation. Combined with repressive laws, these attitudes toward homosexuality block the opening of a dialogue and keep the LGBT community in secrecy and exclusion. While the government, under pressure from international donors, implements anti-HIV interventions targeting this group, which is severely affected by the epidemic, society has yet to undertake a public debate concerning their rights.

More broadly, survey findings suggest that Togo must pay greater attention to inclusion of all elements of society, including certain ethnic groups and traditional or non-mainstream religions that for a variety of reasons may feel excluded.

With respect to gender, popular support is strong in Togo for equality in education and politics. On the question of land ownership, support for equality rallies behind the struggles of organizations that have succeeded in obtaining a law ending legal ambiguity between traditional and modern law.

Togolese citizens also support gender equality in employment, although here enthusiasm is tempered by a substantial minority who, seeing the man as the head of the family, think that men should have priority when it comes to scarce jobs. And most citizens assert that a family is better off if a woman, rather than a man, takes care of the household and children.

If the population is ready to overturn barriers to gender equality, political and administrative authorities must continue to seek measures to translate these good intentions and new legal texts into everyday reality.

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