

Batswana report improving gender equality and approve of government efforts

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 318 | David Jacobs and Thomas Isbell

Summary

The political, economic, and social inequality of women in Africa has been part of international discourse since the 1950s, when the United Nations began interrogating the effects of harmful traditional norms and practices on women across the continent. Human-rights groups have worked with and challenged African governments to promote women's access to education, health care, economic opportunities, and participation in governance and politics (Murungu, 2017). While progress has been made, persistent gaps are the focus of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2016).

In Botswana, the African Development Bank's (2015) Africa Gender Equality Index Report found a mix of strengths and weaknesses. Giving it the seventh-highest overall score in Africa, the report described Botswana as strong in promoting gender equality in economic opportunity and human development, but relatively weak in ensuring legal and political equality.

Data from Afrobarometer's most recent survey in Botswana show that women generally agree with men that gender equality has improved in recent years and that women enjoy equal rights when it comes to jobs and land ownership. Women are no more likely than men to report gender-based discrimination, and in fact are somewhat more likely than men to find it easy to obtain key public services. Popular support for gender equality at the ballot box has been solid for more than a decade, although one in three men still say they should be given priority for scarce jobs.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Ghana, directs a pan-African, nonpartisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues in African countries. Seven rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 38 countries since 1999. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples.

The Afrobarometer team in Botswana, led by Star Awards, interviewed 1,200 adult Batswana in July 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 Botswana in 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017.

Key findings

- In Botswana, women are no more likely than men to say they suffered gender-based discrimination during the previous 12 months (6% each) and are somewhat less likely

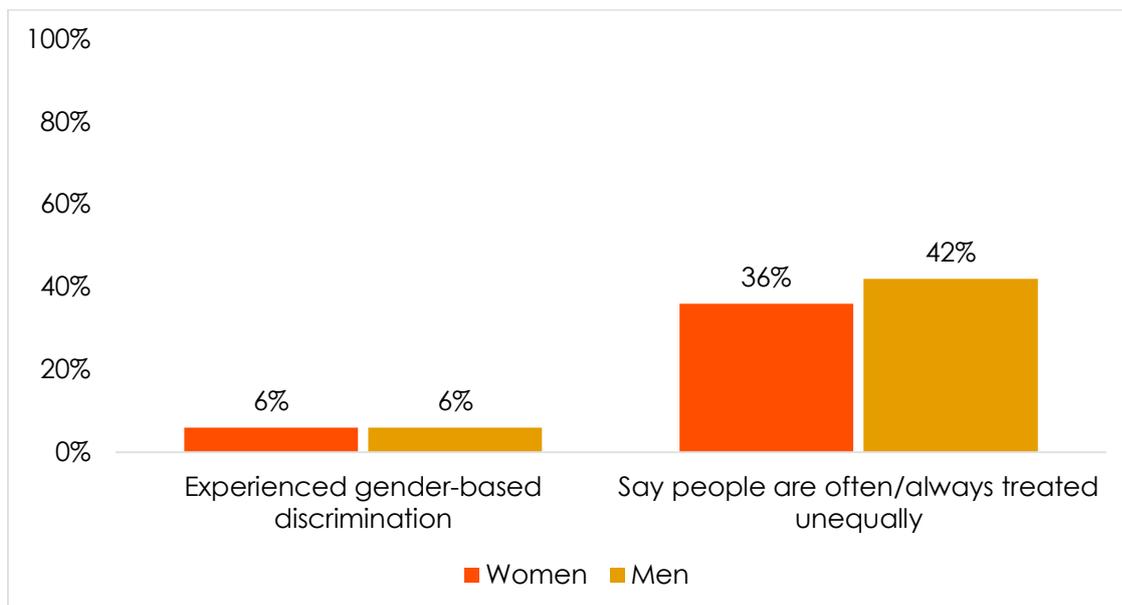
to say that people are “often” or “always” treated unequally under the law (36% of women vs. 42% of men).

- More women than men say it is easy to access basic public services. Both women and men say they are generally treated with respect by public officials.
- Two-thirds (67%) of Batswana say equal opportunities and treatment for women have improved in recent years, and most (83%) approve of the government’s performance in promoting gender equality.
- Nine out of 10 Batswana (89%) support equal rights for women to own and inherit land, and seven out of 10 (69%) oppose giving men priority for scarce jobs.
- Consistently since 2005, more than 80% of Batswana have affirmed that women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office.

Gender discrimination and unequal treatment

About one in 20 women (6%) say they experienced gender-based discrimination during the 12 months preceding the survey – the same proportion as recorded for men. Women are somewhat less likely than men to say that people are “often” or “always” treated unfairly under the law (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender-based discrimination and unequal treatment | Botswana | 2017

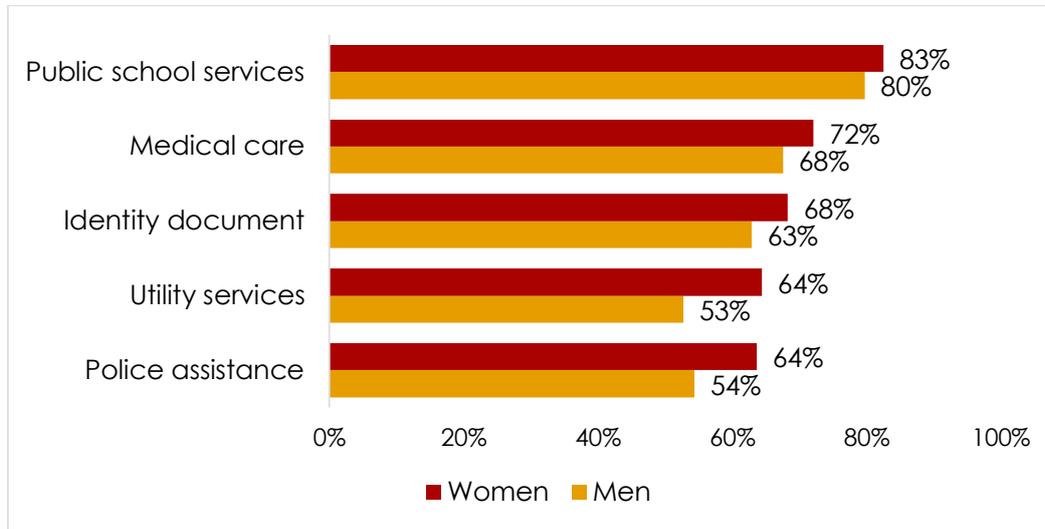


Respondents were asked:

*In the past year, how often, if at all, have you personally been discriminated against based on any of the following: Your gender?
 In your opinion, how often, in this country, are people treated unequally under the law?*

Moreover, women are more likely than men to say they found it “easy” or “very easy” to obtain key public services. Among respondents who said they tried to access certain services during the 12 months preceding the survey, a majority of Batswana women say it was easy to get police assistance (64%), household utility services (64%), a government identity document (68%), medical care (72%), and public school services (83%). On all these questions, men are slightly less likely to report having found it easy to obtain the needed services (Figure 2).

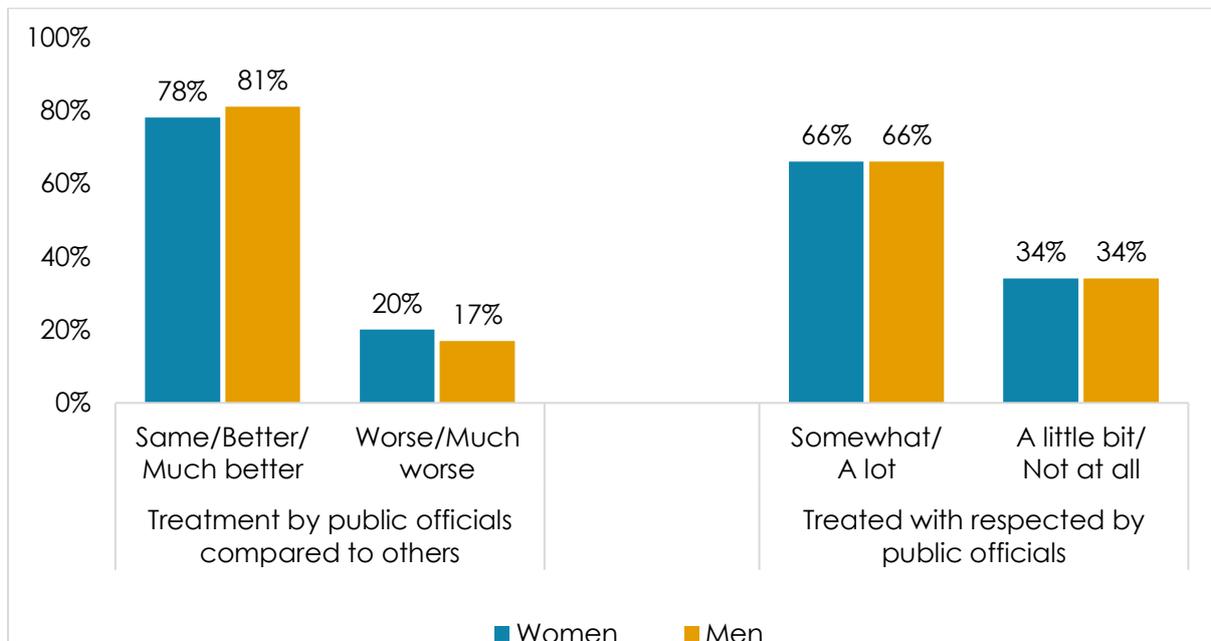
Figure 2: 'Easy' to obtain public services | by gender | Botswana | 2017



Respondents who said they tried to obtain certain public services during the previous 12 months were asked: How easy or difficult was it to obtain [the needed service]? (Respondents who had not tried to obtain these services are excluded.)

And women and men give very similar answers when asked whether public officials treat them with respect (66% say "somewhat" or "a lot") and whether public officials treat them better or worse than they treat other people (78% of women and 81% of men say they are treated the same, better, or much better) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Treatment by public officials | by gender | Botswana | 2017



Respondents were asked:

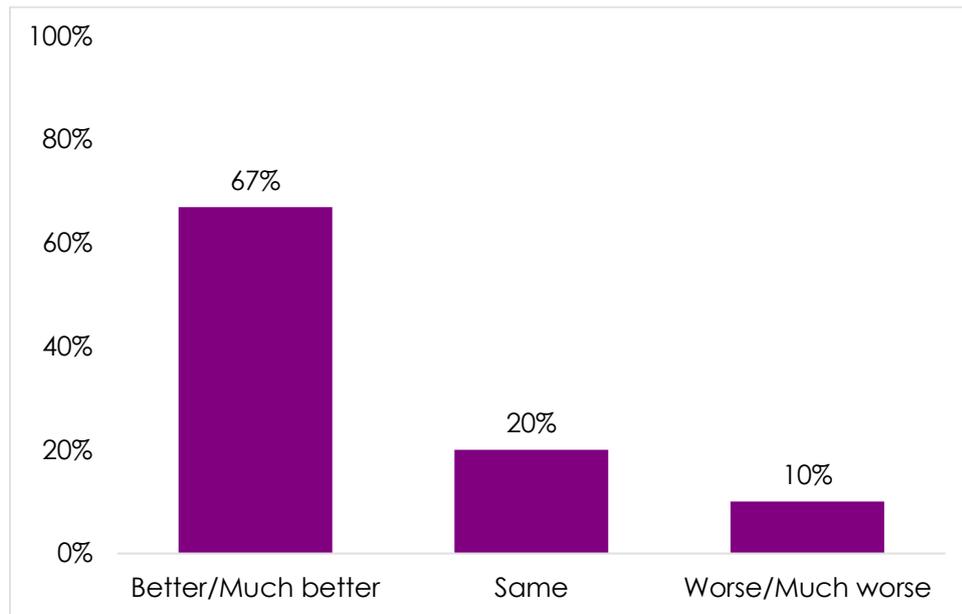
In general, when dealing with public officials, do you think that they treat you better, the same, or worse than other people

In general, when dealing with public officials, how much do you feel that they treat you with respect?

Perceptions of equal opportunity

Two-thirds (67%) of Batswana say equal opportunities and treatment for women have improved compared to “a few years ago.” Only one in 10 (10%) say they have gotten worse (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Better or worse: Equal opportunities and treatment for women | Botswana | 2017

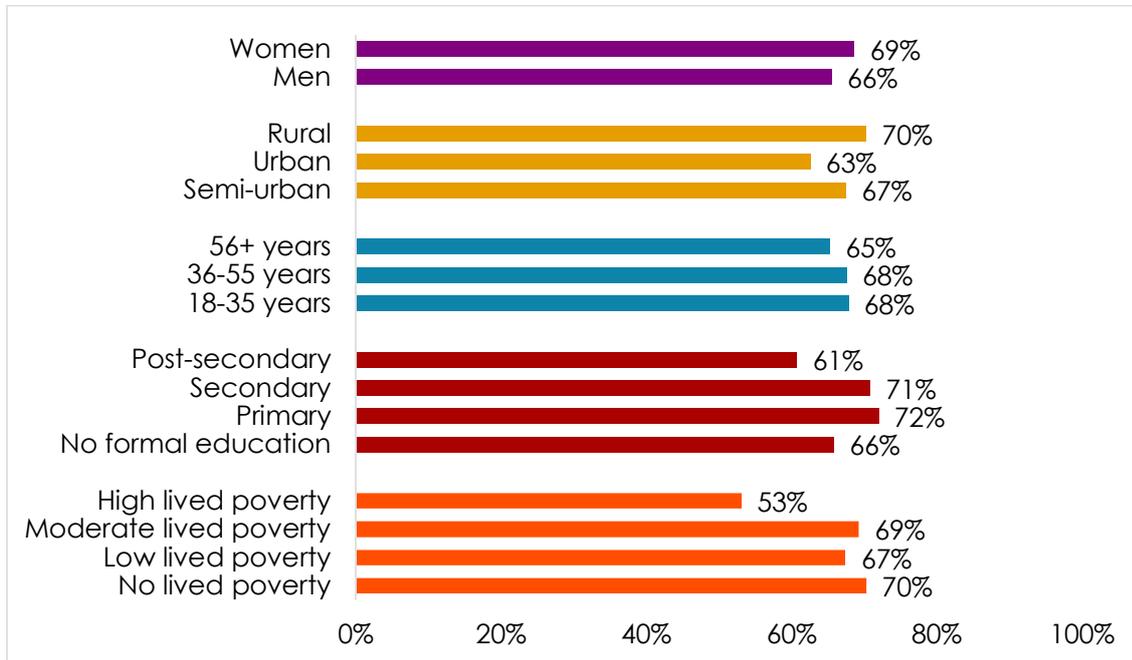


Respondents were asked: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Equal opportunities and treatment for women?

Women (69%) agree with men (66%) that opportunities and treatment for women have improved. Key socio-demographic groups that are least likely to agree with this assessment are urban residents (63%), respondents with post-secondary education (61%), and the poorest¹ citizens (53%) (Figure 5).

¹ Afrobarometer’s Lived Poverty Index (LPI) measures respondents’ levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without basic necessities (enough food, enough water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the preceding year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes, Dulani, & Gyimah-Boadi (2016).

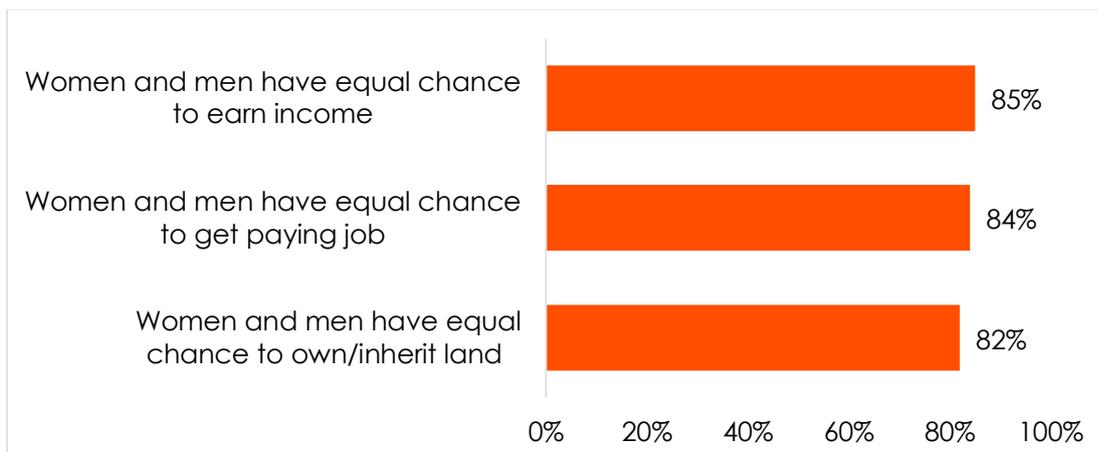
Figure 5: Improvement in equal opportunities and treatment for women
 | by socio-demographic group | Botswana | 2017



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? (% who say "better" or "much better")

In practice, large majorities of Botswana assert that women already enjoy the same opportunities as men when it comes to earning an income (85%), getting a paying job (84%), and owning or inheriting land (82%) (Figure 6). Women and men hold similar views on these questions (not shown).

Figure 6: Equal opportunities to land and jobs | Botswana | 2017



Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree, or haven't you heard enough to say?

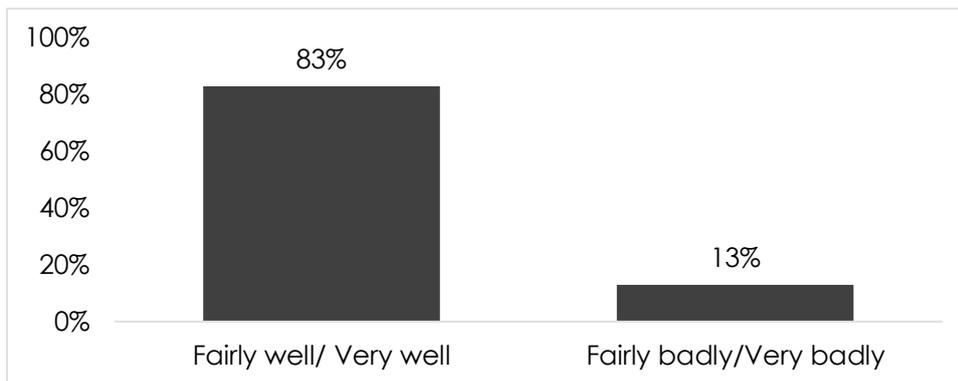
In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to earn an income.

In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to get a job that pays a wage or salary.

In our country today, women and men have equal opportunities to own and inherit land.

Consistent with the Africa Gender Equality Index, an overwhelming majority (83%) of Botswana say their government is doing “fairly well” or “very well” in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women. Only 13% disapprove of the government’s performance on this issue (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Government performance in promoting equal rights/opportunities for women | Botswana | 2017



Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say: Promoting opportunities and equality for women?

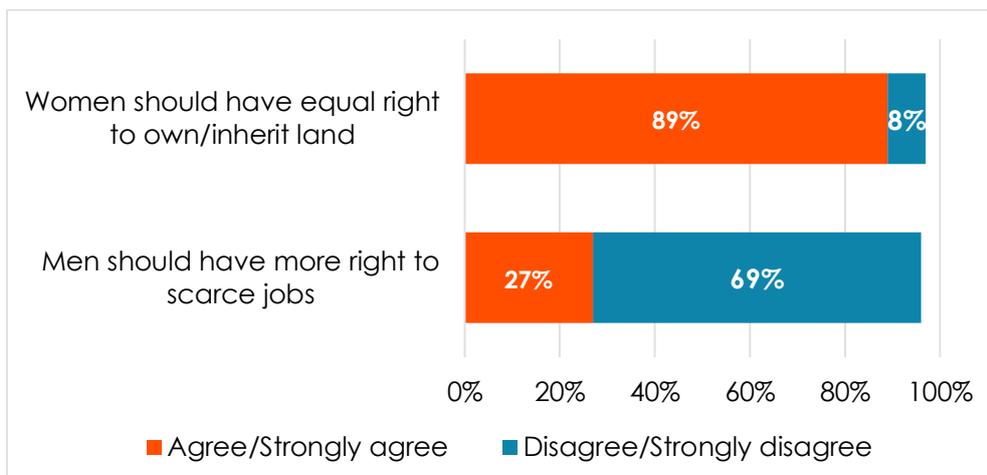
Support for equal rights for women

Strong majorities of Botswana support equal rights for women when it comes to land ownership and jobs (Figure 8).

Nine out of 10 respondents (89%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land.

A smaller but still strong majority (69%) endorse equal rights in the job market by disagreeing with the idea that men should be given priority when jobs are scarce. About one in four respondents (27%) support this kind of discrimination in the job market.

Figure 8: Support for equal rights to land and jobs | Botswana | 2017



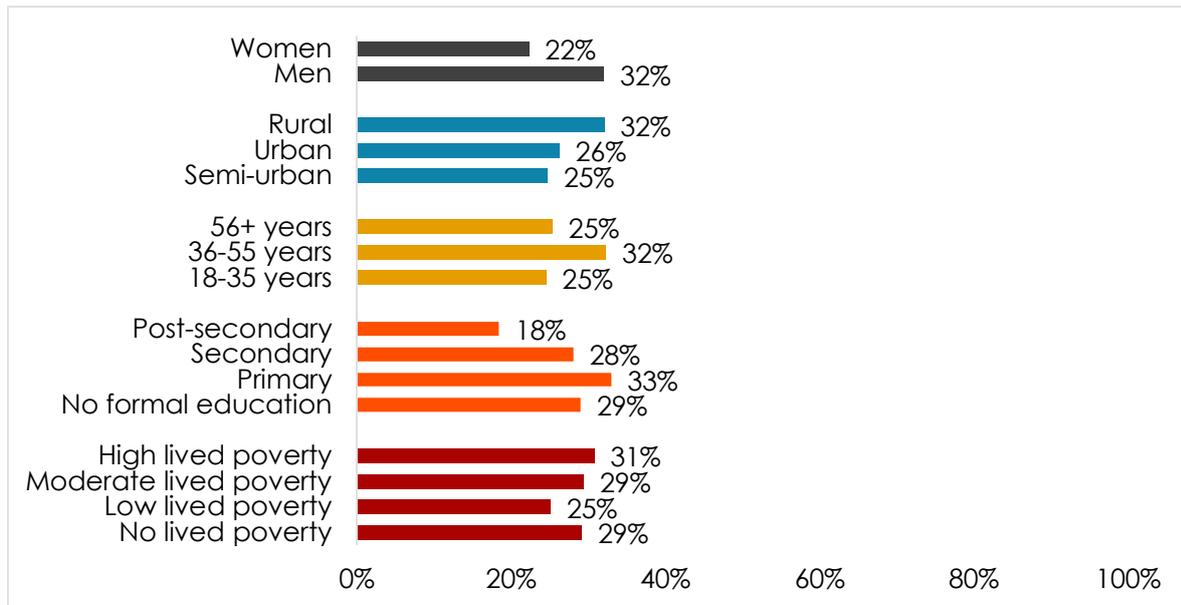
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree:

Women should have equal right to land?

When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women?

The view that men should have more right to a job is more popular among men (32%) and rural residents (32%) than among women (22%) and urbanites (26%) or semi-urban dwellers (25%). The best-educated respondents are least likely to endorse such discrimination (18%) (Figure 9).

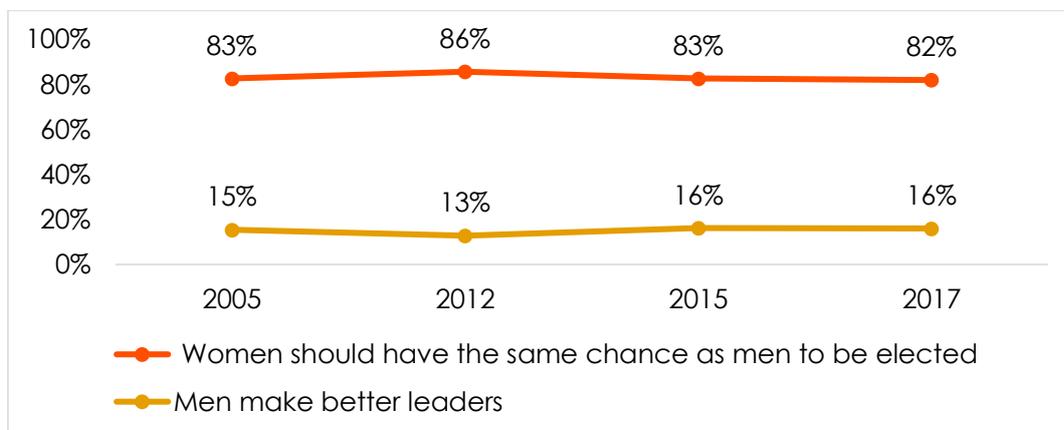
Figure 9: Men have more right to job | by socio-demographic group | Botswana | 2017



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 “agree” or “strongly agree”)

When it comes to political leadership, more than eight in 10 Botswana have consistently endorsed women's equality for more than a decade. As of 2017, just 16% still say that men make better political leaders and should be elected instead of women (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Support for equal opportunity to be elected | Botswana | 2005-2017



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

- 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.

Conclusion

Batswana widely support equal opportunities and rights for women. Two out of three citizens see gender equality as improving, and most say the government is doing a good job of promoting women's rights. Although most respondents are in favour of women's equal rights when it comes to jobs and land, a significant minority feels that men should be given priority when employment is scarce.

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