



SOUTH AFRICA

CITIZENS CALL FOR A GENDER-EQUAL WORLD : A ROADMAP FOR ACTION¹



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WHAT DO RESPONDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA THINK ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY?

- ➔ **The vast majority of respondents in South Africa declare that gender equality is “important” to them personally (91 percent).** An age gradient exists, with younger respondents aged 18 to 24 feeling gender equality is more “important” to them personally (95 percent) than respondents aged 60 and older (81 percent).
- ➔ **Only forty-six percent of respondents in South Africa think gender equality in South Africa is “better” now than it was 25 years ago.** Among female respondents the picture shifts notably, with more female respondents believing the situation is “worse” compared to 25 years ago (30 percent) than male respondents (19 percent), or that the situation has stayed “more or less the same” (31 percent, female; and 25 percent, male). An income gradient exists, with those in the highest income quintile believing things are “better” (54 percent), compared to only 30 percent in the lowest.
- ➔ **The vast majority of respondents (85 percent) think that the South African government “should do more” to promote gender equality and 10 percent think it is “doing the right amount.”** Of the 85 percent who think the government should do more, most believe that “a lot more” should be done (65 percent).
- ➔ **Fifty-four percent of respondents in South Africa claim that the government should “reform laws to promote equality between men and women and end discrimination against women.”** This view is held more strongly by female (62 percent) than male respondents (46 percent).
- ➔ **As to the explanations for gender inequality in South Africa, the most agreed-upon reason is “because of religion and culture that do not treat women and girls as equals” (51 percent),** rising slightly among female respondents (54 percent).

¹ This country data sheet captures findings from a public perception survey on gender equality for South Africa. This work is co-led by Focus 2030 and Women Deliver. The survey was executed through an online poll, conducted by Deltapoll, in 17 countries. Approximately one thousand respondents in each country were surveyed in July/August 2020. Demographic data collected included: gender, age, income level, education level, last vote in national elections (where applicable), ethnicity (where applicable), migrant status, and region of residency. In South Africa, 1,010 respondents were surveyed, including 512 female respondents and 498 male respondents and 3 respondents who identified “in another way.” Of the 1,010 respondents, 219 were aged 18 to 24, 423 were aged 25 to 44, 219 were aged 45 to 59, and 149 were aged 60 and older. Please see www.focus2030.org and www.womendeliver.org for more information.

² Text in italics and quotes reflect survey response options presented to respondents.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- ➔ **Ending gender-based violence is ranked the first priority by respondents in South Africa**, with 46 percent choosing “*end violence against women*” as their first choice for government action to improve gender equality in the country. Eighty-one percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ To end gender-based violence, most respondents in South Africa (73 percent) believe that **the South African government should “increase accountability for [perpetrators of] physical and sexual crimes against women.”** There is also support for “*ending traditional practices that are harmful to women and girls*” (59 percent), and “*funding programs to support women who have experienced violence*” (51 percent). Thirty-five percent of male respondents support government intervention to “*address the unequal balance of power between women and men at home within families, marriages, and relationships,*” but this rises to 43 percent among female respondents, and up to 52 percent among female respondents aged 18 to 24.
- ➔ **A majority of respondents in South Africa (85 percent) feel at risk, or know someone who feels at risk, of assault or harassment** in some place or other. The most common place to feel at risk, or know of someone who feels at risk, is in “*public spaces*” (66 percent of respondents and 71 percent of female respondents). Among female respondents aged 18 to 24, this rises to 77 percent. Forty-eight percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 also feel at risk, or know someone who feels at risk, of harassment “*online,*” compared to 39 percent of those aged 60 and older. Additionally, 18 percent of respondents who self-identified as white indicated they did not feel, or know someone who feels, at risk in any of the listed places, as opposed to 10 percent of respondents who self-identified as Black.
- ➔ Half of respondents in South Africa (50 percent) believe it is “*unacceptable*” for women to “*always obey their partners,*” with 27 percent deeming it “*acceptable.*” A significant proportion believe that it is “*acceptable*” for women to “*refuse sexual intercourse with a partner*” (70 percent), and that it is “*unacceptable*” to “*whistle at a woman in the street or touch her without consent*” (87 percent).
- ➔ **Twenty-nine percent of female respondents have had their “freedom of movement restricted by family members or a partner,”** and this rises to 38 percent of female respondents aged 18 to 24.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

- ➔ **Promoting women’s economic justice and rights is the second most highly-ranked priority**, with 18 percent ranking “*implement access to well paid jobs, equal pay, financial independence, and property rights*” as top priority. Sixty-six percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ **In order to improve women’s broader economic opportunities and decision-making powers, “preventing violence and harassment in the workplace” (58 percent) and “achieving equal pay for women and men” (47 percent) are seen as key measures for government action by respondents in South Africa.** The importance of gender pay parity is greater for older cohorts, 45 percent of those aged 18 to 24 citing pay parity as important, compared with 61 percent of those aged 60 and older.

- ➔ Seventy-two percent of female respondents in South Africa feel that they have faced at least one type of discrimination in their life. Thirty-nine percent of all female respondents have “not had the same access to promotion opportunities in [their] job as their male peers,” and 32 percent report that they “are not paid as much [their] male counterparts.” In addition, 18 percent report they “had difficulty accessing education and professional training compared with male peers/relatives,” and 17 percent “have not or will not receive the same inheritance as [their] male relatives.”
- ➔ Sixty-five percent of respondents find it “unacceptable” “to let women do the majority of housework, childcare, and elderly care,” with more female respondents finding this “unacceptable” (71 percent) than male respondents (58 percent). Additionally, “to ask a woman during a job interview whether she has, or would like to have, children,” is “unacceptable” for 66 percent of respondents. The majority (85 percent) also believe that “women earning less than men for the same work” is “unacceptable,” with more female respondents finding this “unacceptable” (90 percent) than their male counterparts (79 percent).
- ➔ The economic impact of the pandemic seems to have affected female and male respondents similarly in South Africa, with both declaring they “lost [their] job” (14 percent) and “faced unexpected financial hardship” (17 percent) at the same rate. **Gender differences do arise in housework and care; however, with 66 percent of female respondents declaring their “time doing household work has increased” compared to male counterparts (51 percent), and 29 percent say their “time dedicated to the care of others has increased” compared to 19 percent of male respondents.**
- ➔ **Among female respondents aged 18 to 24, 70 percent declare their “time doing household work has increased”** (compared to 51 percent of male respondents the same age), **and 30 percent say “time dedicated to the care of others has increased”** (compared to 20 percent of male respondents aged 18 to 24).



FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP

- ➔ **Feminist movements and leadership is the third most cited priority overall**, with 14 percent ranking “improve women’s participation and leadership in politics, and cultural and social movements” as top priority. Fifty-six percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ **Forty-four percent of respondents think the South African government should “support women’s political leadership and participation.”** Additionally, **43 percent of respondents also support the government taking action to “achieve equal representation of women in politics.”**
- ➔ **Sixty-nine percent of respondents “agree” that “imposing gender quotas in all political decision-making bodies is a good way to advance gender equality in South Africa,”** with 12 percent disagreeing (nine percent female, compared to 15 percent male respondents). Younger female respondents aged 18 to 44 were more supportive of gender quotas compared with other age groups (77 percent).



TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- ➔ **Technology and innovation for gender equality is the fourth most cited priority**, with 10 percent ranking “invest in technology to improve women’s access to health services, education, and economic opportunities” as top priority. Forty percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ **To promote the use of technology and innovation for gender equality, 65 percent of respondents in South Africa think the government should “increase opportunities for women in STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).”** Respondents also support “investing in technology that helps deliver healthcare and other services virtually for girls and women” (51 percent) and “increasing safety of digital spaces for girls and women” (50 percent).



BODILY AUTONOMY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

- ➔ **Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights is the fifth most cited priority**, with five percent ranking “access to contraception and family planning, good maternal health, and sex education in schools” as top priority. Twenty-seven percent choose this as a top-three priority.
- ➔ **“Increasing access to sexual health services” (53 percent) and “increasing youth engagement in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health services” (47 percent) are measures respondents in South Africa believe that the government should take to improve women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights.** “Increasing youth engagement in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health services” is important to younger respondents aged 18 to 24 (50 percent) than older respondents aged 60 and older (40 percent).
- ➔ **Eighteen percent of female respondents in South Africa have had “difficulty accessing [their] chosen method of contraception,” rising to 26 percent among female respondents aged 18 to 24.** A smaller percentage of female respondents in South Africa (nine percent) have had “difficulty accessing abortion and post-abortion care.” Again, this is more pronounced (12 percent) among female respondents aged 18 to 24.
- ➔ In South Africa, seven percent of respondents have had “difficulties accessing contraception and other sexual health services” during the Covid-19 pandemic. Again, younger respondents, aged 18 to 24, have had the most difficulty (12 percent).



FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

- ➔ **Feminist action for climate justice is the sixth most cited priority**, with three percent ranking “promote women’s participation in climate change action” as top priority. Fifteen percent choose this as a top-three priority.

- ➔ **Sixty-nine percent of respondents claim that the South African government should “promote the training and hiring of women in jobs related to climate change,”** with female respondents supporting this measure (73 percent) more than male respondents (65 percent). Fifty-nine percent of respondents also support *“increasing girls’ and women’s participation in the development of solutions to tackle climate change.”* Fifty-eight percent of respondents support *“increase funding for women-led organizations that are working to fight climate change,”* with female respondents more in favor of this measure (62 percent) than male respondents (54 percent).



FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- ➔ **Eighty-three percent of respondents in South Africa hold the view that their government should “increase its funding for gender equality in South Africa.” Sixty-eight percent also believe that the government should “increase its funding for international projects and organizations fighting for gender equality around the world.”** More female than male respondents support increased funding for gender equality, both nationally (90 percent, compared to 78 percent) and for international projects and organizations (73 percent, compared to 63 percent). Respondents who self-identified as Black (82 percent) are more likely to support an increase in government funding for gender equality than respondents who self-identified as white (65 percent).
- ➔ Additionally, a higher proportion of younger respondents support funding for gender equality, whether domestically (87 percent among 18 to 24, compared with 78 percent among 60 and older) or abroad (78 percent among 18 to 24, compared with 58 percent among 60 and older). This figure is even higher among younger female respondents (aged 18 to 24), of whom 93 percent support *“increased funding for gender equality in South Africa,”* and 79 percent want the government to *“increase its funding for international projects and organizations fighting for gender equality around the world.”*
- ➔ **Seventy-two percent of respondents in South Africa “agree” that “achieving gender equality is essential to end poverty in all countries,”** compared to nine percent who *“disagree”* with this statement.



WHAT ACTIONS ARE RESPONDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA WILLING TO TAKE?

- ➔ To encourage policymakers to tackle gender inequality, 54 percent of respondents would be willing to *“promote gender equality in everyday conversations and interactions.”*
- ➔ Fifty-three percent of respondents would be willing to *“vote in an election for a candidate supporting gender equality.”* The same proportion of respondents, 53 percent, would *“sign a petition”* or *“share information about gender equality on social media.”*



IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- ➔ The health impact of the pandemic affected male and female respondents similarly, with 13 percent of respondents citing they “*experienced physical illness*” and 24 percent citing they “*experienced illness of a family or household member.*” However, female respondents who self-identified as Black are twice as likely than those who self-identified as white to have experienced “*illness of a family or household member*” (31 percent of Black women compared to 15 percent of white women and 25 percent of Black men) and “*death of a family or household member*” (27 percent of Black women, 12 percent of white women and 19 percent of Black men). Female respondents who self-identified as Black are also more likely to have had difficulty accessing “*medical treatments, medicines, health and hygiene supplies*” during this time (24 percent, compared to 16 percent of white women).
- ➔ The most notable difference between male and female respondents is in their reporting of experiences of stress and mental health. Considerably more female (57 percent) than male respondents (41 percent) have “*experienced emotional stress and mental health issues*” during the Covid-19 pandemic. The intersection of age and gender is shown to have an impact, as younger female respondents aged 18 to 24 (70 percent) report having “*experienced emotional stress and mental health issues*” than younger male respondents (57 percent).
- ➔ Reflecting upon the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on gender equality, 44 percent “*agree*” that “*the government’s response to support people through the Covid-19 pandemic in [their] country has met the needs of women and men equally.*” Thirty-two percent of respondents “*disagree,*” with more female respondents disagreeing (38 percent) than male respondents (27 percent).
- ➔ Ninety-one percent of respondents in South Africa “*agree*” that “*women should be involved in all aspects of the global health response and recovery efforts to Covid-19, including in the development of policies and treatments.*”
- ➔ More respondents “*agree*” that “*inequality between women and men will rise as a consequence of Covid-19*” (42 percent) than “*disagree*” (27 percent), with 29 percent “*neither agreeing nor disagreeing.*” Disagreement with the statement is driven more by male respondents (34 percent), compared to female respondents (20 percent).

This country data sheet is a supplement to Citizens Call for a Gender-Equal World: A Roadmap for Action, a global report on the findings from a 17-country public perception survey on gender equality. For the full report and all country data sheets, please visit: www.focus2030.org and <http://womendeliver.org/citizens-call-for-a-gender-equal-world/>.