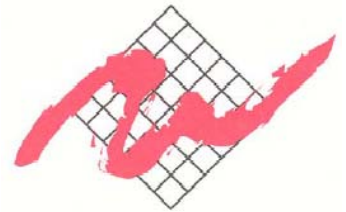


# The Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) Project

Focus on Morocco | Civic and Political Participation  
Topic Brief

*A project by the International Foundation for Electoral  
Systems (IFES) and The Institute for Women's Policy  
Research (IWPR) with funding from the Canadian  
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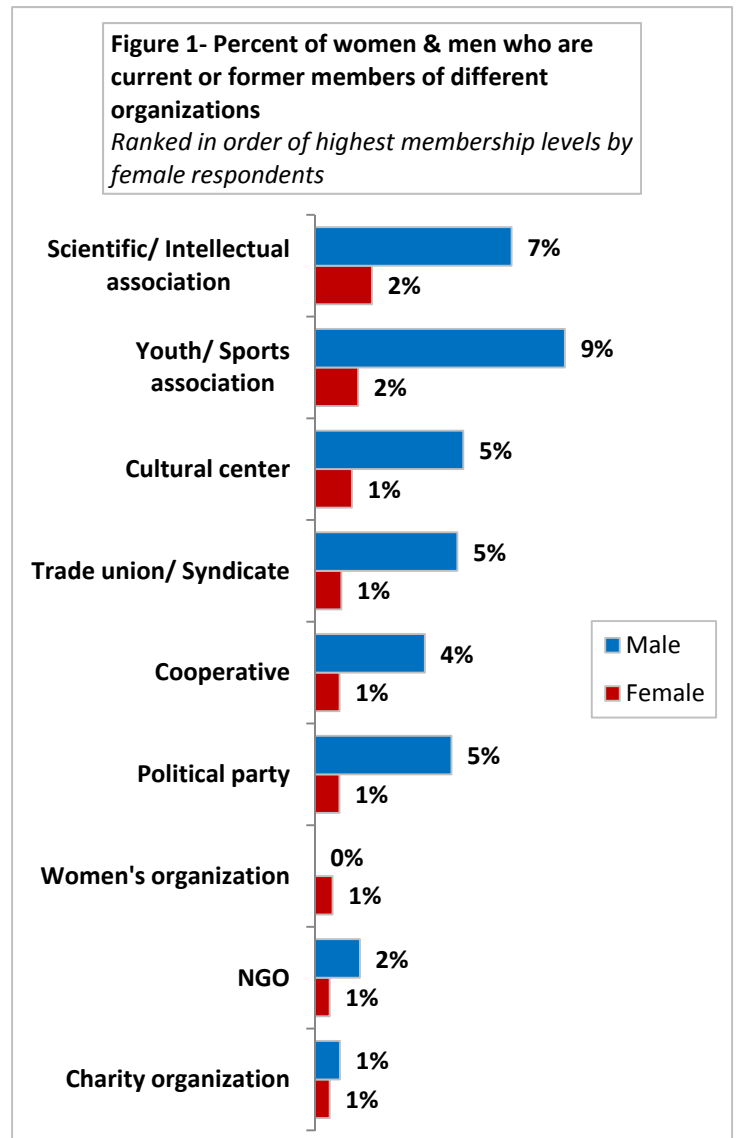
## CIVIC & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

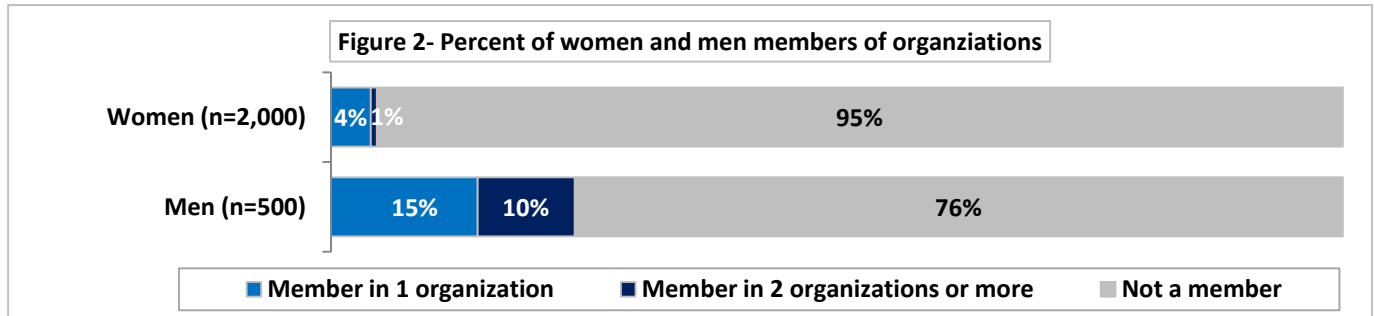
This topic brief presents the main findings from the SWMENA survey in Morocco on civic and political participation. It includes an analysis of civic engagement through membership in different types of organizations and taking part in different activities to express opinions on political and social issues. Voting behavior is also explored in reference to participation in the 2009 municipal elections in June 2009 as well as women’s opinions about policy priorities and factors influencing their voting choices.

### Engagement in Different Types of Organizations

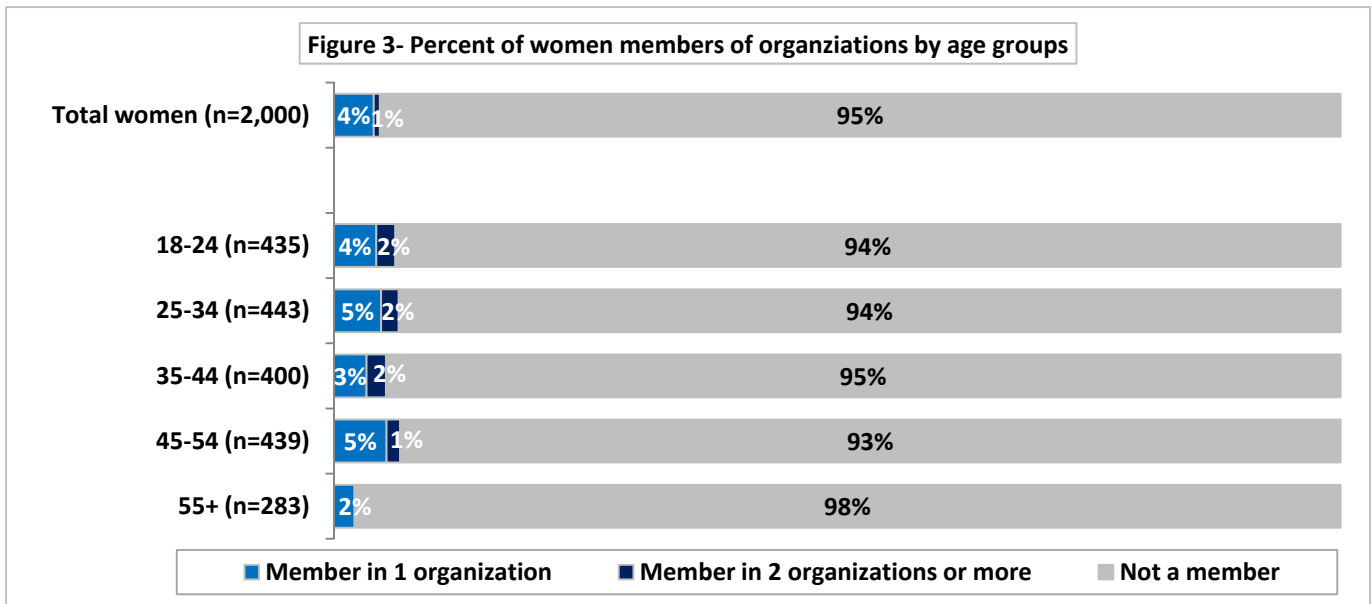
In order to examine the extent of civic engagement of women in Morocco, we asked respondents if they are currently or had been members of different types of organizations. This shows the level of association of people with others outside their house and can be a reflection of how active and informed they are as citizens.

- Data from the SWMENA survey suggests that overall levels of membership in different organizations are extremely low for women and relatively low for men as well.
- No more than 2% of Moroccan women say they are members of any type of organization. Men are generally more likely to be members of different types of organizations than women: 9% of surveyed men are members of youth or sports associations, 7% are members of scientific or intellectual associations, and 5% are members of cultural centers, trade unions, or political parties (Figure 1).
- When aggregating memberships in organizations regardless of organization type, we find that 4% of Moroccan women are members of one organization, 1% are members of two organizations and another 1% are members of three organizations or more. This leaves 95% of Moroccan women who are not members of any organization (Figure 2).
- Meanwhile, 15% of men are members of one organization, 6% are members of two organizations, and 3% are members of three organizations or more.



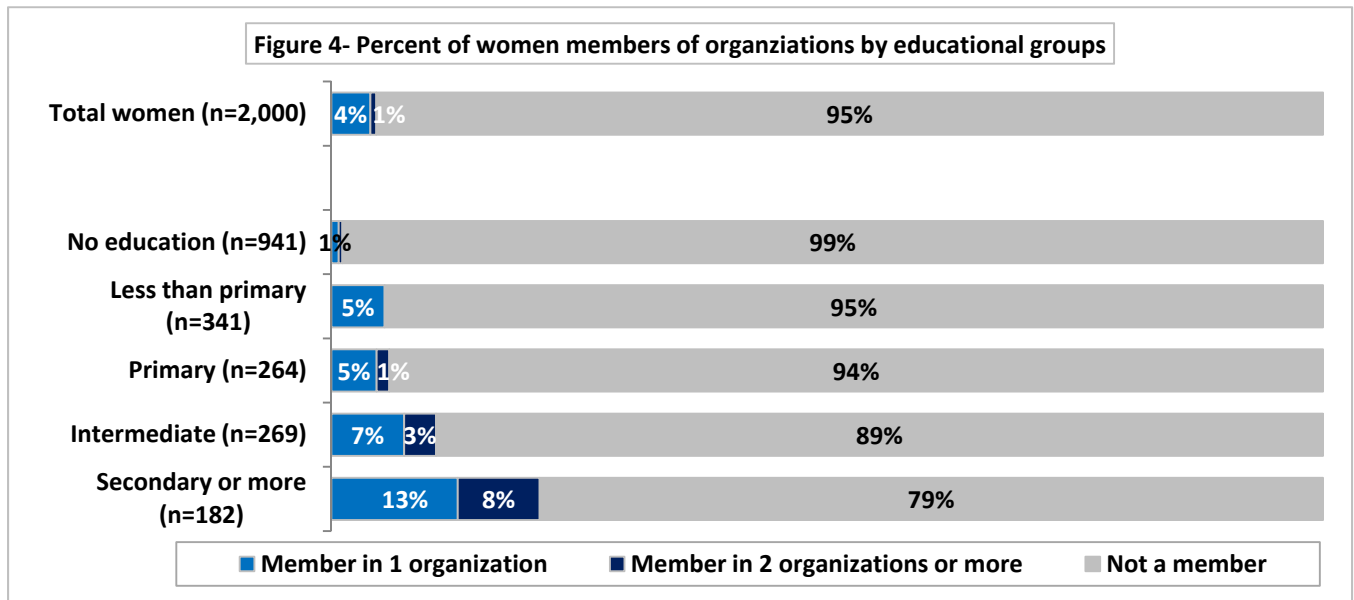


- When breaking down membership levels for women by age groups, we do not see significant differences. Membership in organizations is low across the board but is particularly limited for women who are 55 years or older. It is highest for women who are in the 25-34 age group where 5% are members of one organization and 2% are members of two organizations or more (Figure 3).

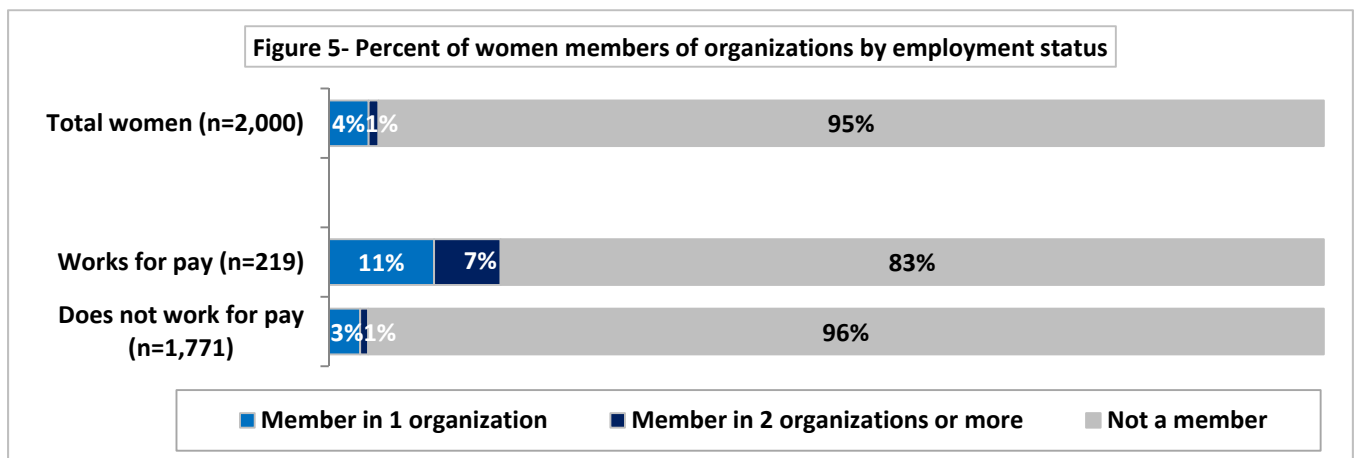


- Women’s civic engagement through membership in different organizations increases with educational attainment. For women with no education, membership in organizations is negligible, standing at a tiny 1%. (Figure 4). For those with less than a primary education, only 5% are members of one organization, the remaining 95% are not members of any organization. This is similar to those with a primary education where 5% are members of one organization and 1% are members of two organizations or more. Among women with an intermediate education, 7% are members of one organization, 3% are members of two organizations or more and 89% are not members of any organization. Those with a secondary education or higher exhibit higher levels of civic engagement: 13% are members of one organization and 8% are members of two organizations or more. Still, a hefty majority of women with a secondary education or higher (79%) are not members of any organization.





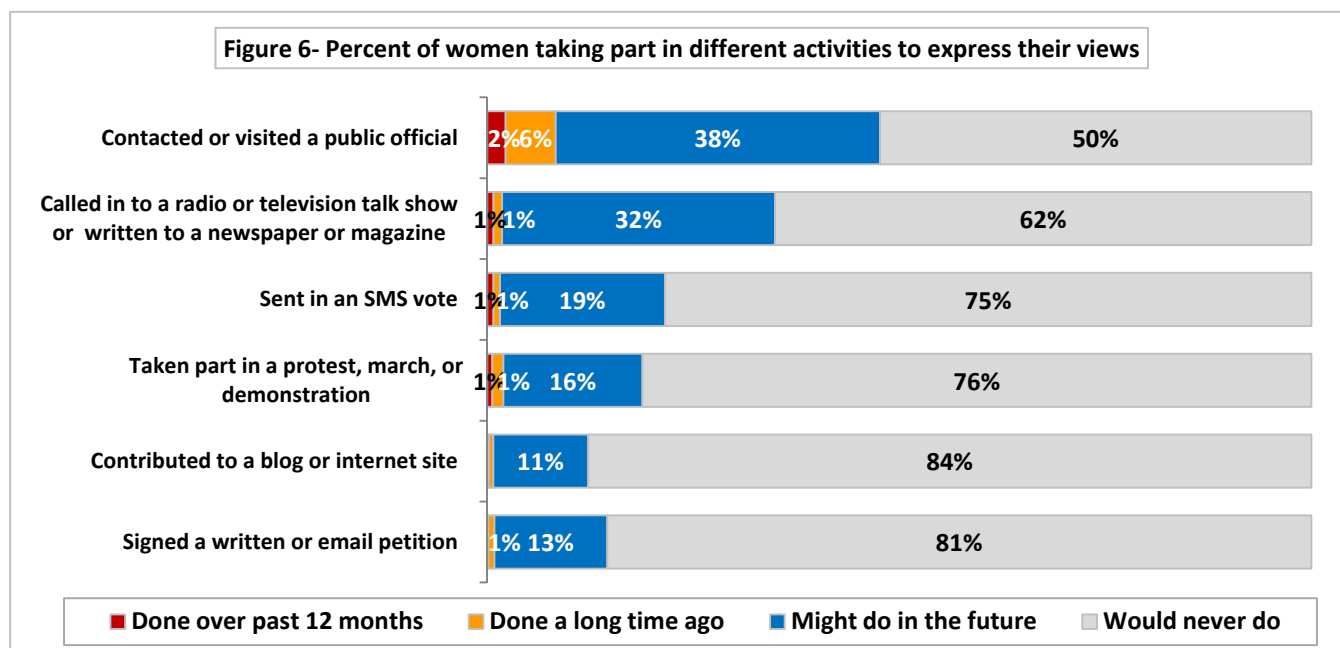
- When comparing women who are part of the labor force with those who are not, we find a large difference in the levels of membership in different organizations. Seventeen percent of women who are employed are members of one organization or more compared to only 4% of women who are not employed. This shows that as women’s economic role expands their level of civic engagement (as measured in terms of membership in organizations) increases as well (Figure 5).



## Engagement in Activities to Express Views

Another way of gauging the civic participation of women is by looking at different activities that women can take to express their opinions on political and social issues.

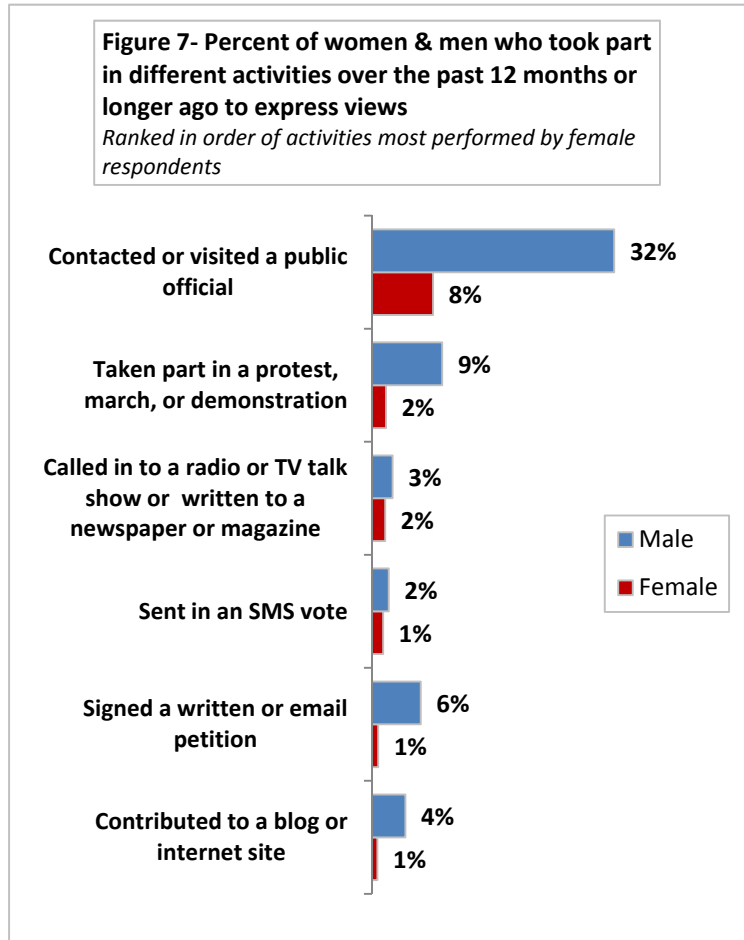
- The SWMENA survey suggests that very few Moroccan women take part in any activities to express their views on social and political issues. Indeed, when presented with a list of activities that citizens could use to make their opinions heard about issues in their community or at the national level, only a handful of women report taking part in any activity listed to express their views while the sweeping majority of women have not taken part in any activity and are not even willing to engage in these activities in the future.



- When specifically asked about whether they had contacted or visited a public official over the past year, 2% of women said they did and another 6% said they had done that longer ago. Thirty-eight percent said they might do that in the future while half the respondents said they would never do that. Other listed activities had even fewer women saying they had done them to express their views over the past year or longer ago. For example, only 1% of women had called in to a radio or TV show or written to a newspaper or magazine to express their views over the past year, and only 1% have sent in an SMS vote or taken part in a protest, march or demonstration to make their voices heard. Less than 1% have contributed to a blog or internet site or signed a written or email petition (Figure 6).
- What is also noteworthy is that, with the exception of the activity of contacting or visiting a public official, a sizable majority of Moroccan women are either unsure or say they will never take part in such activities in the future. This reflects a regrettably high degree of civic apathy among Moroccan women.

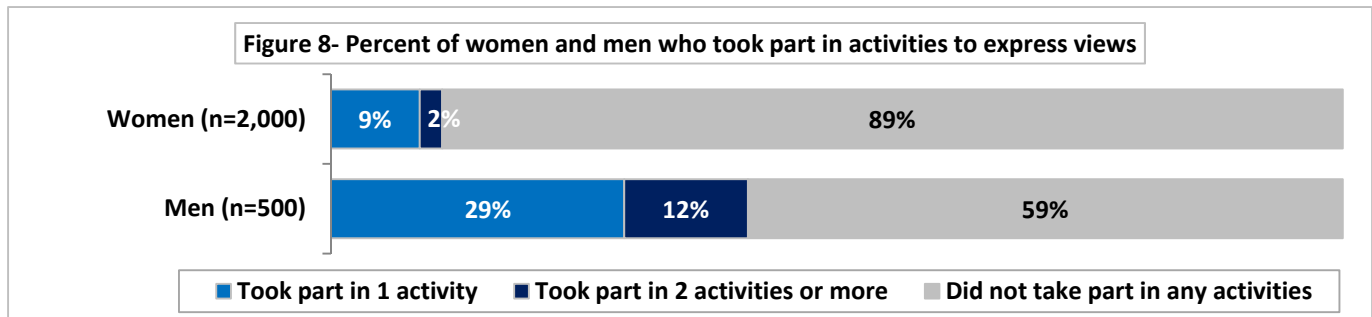


- Women’s participation in different activities to express their views is not only low in absolute terms but it’s also low relative to their male counterparts. Men are four times more likely (32%) than women (8%) to have contacted or visited a public official at any level of government over the past year or longer ago to express their views on a social or political issue. Similarly, 9% of men say that they have taken part in a protest, march or demonstration to express their views while only 2% of women have done the same. Six percent of men have signed a petition over the past year or longer ago compared with just 1% of women (Figure 7). Still there is an overall low level of civic engagement across the Moroccan public.

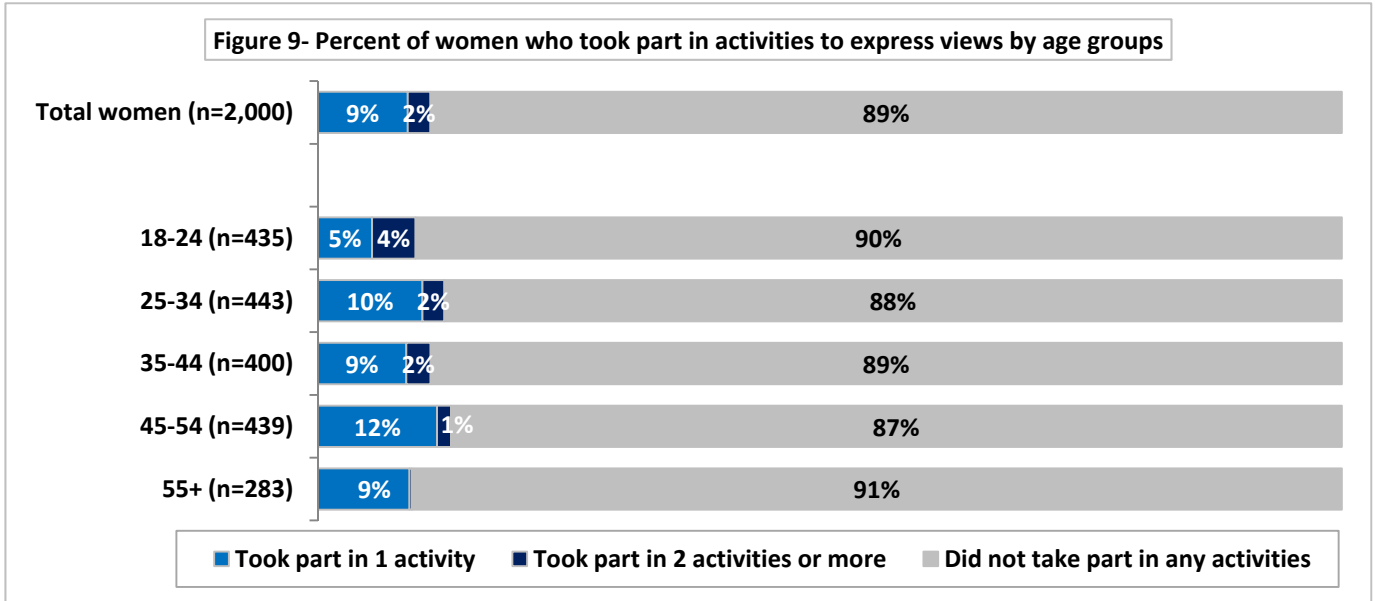


- When aggregating activities regardless of the type of activity, the difference in engagement between men and women becomes even more pronounced. Figure 8 shows that 29% of Moroccan men have taken part in one activity to express their views over the past year or longer ago and 12% have taken part in two activities or more. This leaves 59% of men who have not taken part in any activities to express their views. Meanwhile, the percent of women who have not taken part in any activities stands at a much higher 89% as only 11% of women have taken part in one or more activities to express their views over the past year or longer ago.

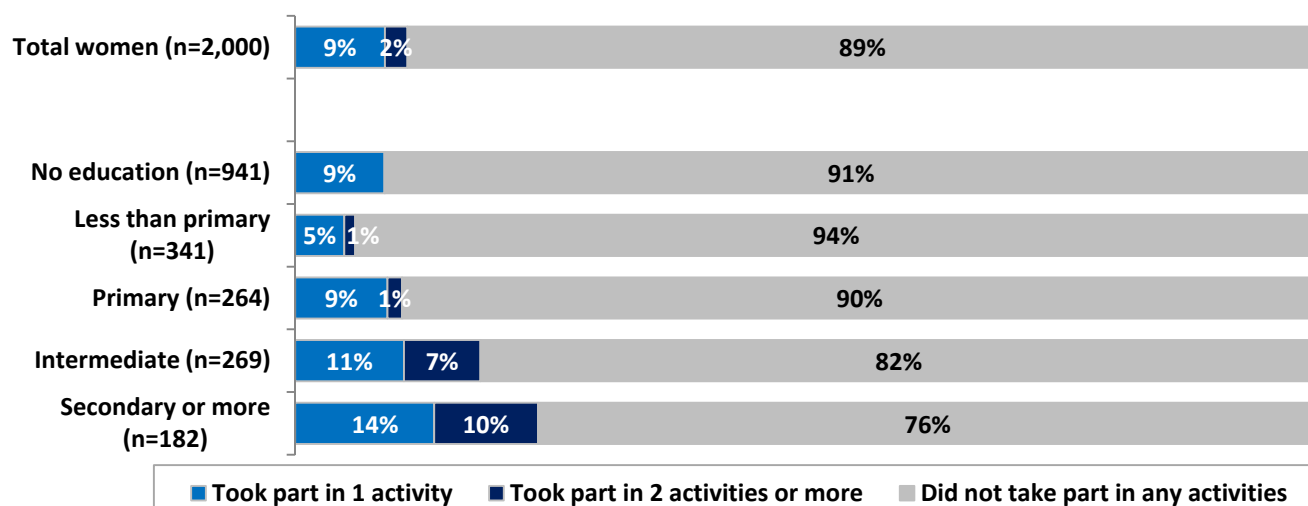
- When examining the data on women’s participation in activities by age groups, the data suggests that the 25-34 and the 45-54 are the most likely to have engaged in activities to express their views with 12% and 13% respectively saying they have engaged in at least one activity to express their views over the past year or longer. This compares to only 9% of women in the 18-24 age group (Figure 9). The same pattern is observed for men where engagement in activities is lower for the younger age group 18-24 than it is for those who are 25 or older.



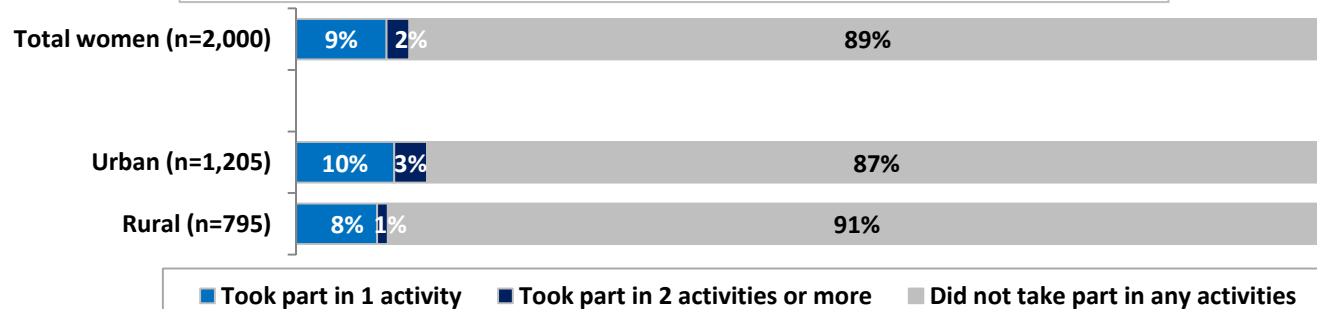
- When looking at women’s participation in activities by educational groups, we find that engagement increases as educational attainment increases. For women with a primary education or less, at least nine in 10 women have not taken part in any listed activity to express their views over the past year or longer ago while less than 10% have taken part in activities to express their views. For those with an intermediate education, 18% took part in at least one activity to express their views. As for women with a secondary education or higher, 24% took part in one activity or more to express their views (Figure 10). It must be noted, however, that men with a similar education level are much more active with 55% reporting taking part in one activity or more to express their views.



**Figure 10- Percent of women who took part in activities to express views by educational group**



**Figure 11- Percent of women who took part in activities to express views by urban/rural settlements**



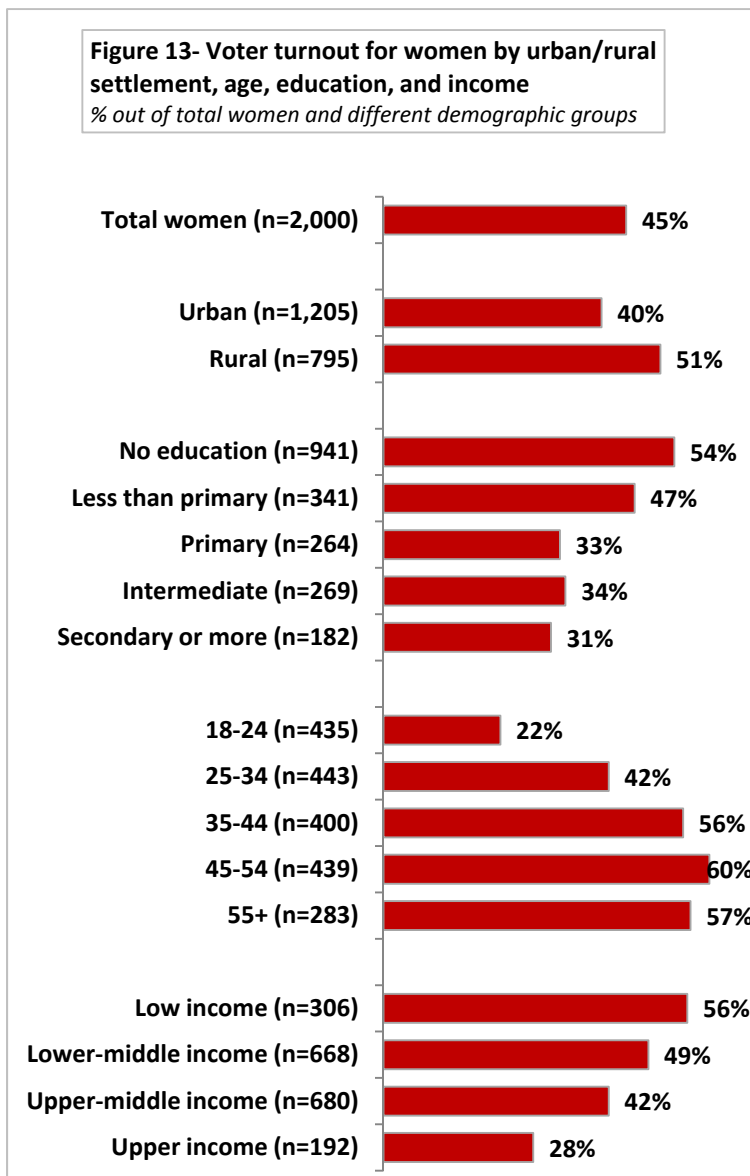
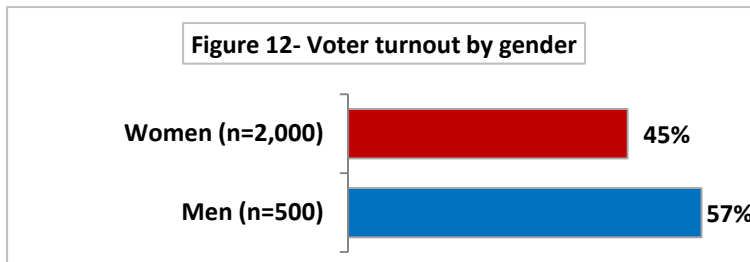
- Women in urban areas are slightly more likely to take part in activities than women in rural areas. Thirteen percent of women in urban areas have taken part in one activity or more to express their views compared with just 9% of women in rural areas (Figure 11).
- As seen with the pattern of women’s membership in different organizations by employment status, employed women are also much more willing to take part in activities to express their views than women who are not employed. Indeed, more than twice as many women who are employed (21%) have taken part in an activity to express their views than women who are not employed (10%).



## Voting in Municipal Elections

In addition to measuring participation through civic engagement, SWMENA survey respondents were asked a series of questions about their participation in the June 2009 municipal elections, which is a more direct form of political participation. Respondents were also asked about their opinions about policy priorities for elected officials and the main factors driving their voting choices.

- Survey results indicate that women’s participation in the municipal elections in June 2009 was lower than men’s. Indeed, 45% of surveyed women report having cast a vote in the June 2009 municipal elections versus a higher proportion of men (57%) who voted in these elections (Figure 12). This means that the majority of Moroccan women (54%) did not participate in the June 2009 municipal elections and that there is a gender gap in voter participation in Morocco.
- When looking at women’s voter turnout by urban and rural settlements, we find that women in rural areas (51%) are more likely to vote than women in urban areas (40%) (Figure 13). The same pattern is observed for men.
- It is also noteworthy that women’s participation in the elections is higher for those with no formal education than it is for women with a primary education or higher. Indeed, while a majority (54%) of women with no education have participated in the municipal elections, only one-third of women with a primary education or higher have participated in these elections. Voter turnout is in fact at its lowest level for those with a secondary education or higher (31%). The same relationship holds for men.
- The data also shows that as women’s income levels increase, their levels of voter participation drops steadily. The majority of women in the low income category (56%) reported voting in the



municipal elections compared with only 28% of women in the upper income categories. This suggests that the least educated and the poorest of women tend to turn out in higher numbers to the elections as they are easier to influence by political parties who often target them and pressure them to sway their votes. Meanwhile, women who are well-off and highly educated have the lowest voter turnout. This may be an indication that as women’s education levels increase, their skepticism regarding the effectiveness of political representation increases as well.

- When looking at women’s voter turnout by age groups, we find that women 35-54 are the most likely to vote while those 18-24 are the least likely to vote. Only 22% of women 18-24 report voting in the municipal elections compared with 42% of women 25-34, 56% of women 35-44 and 60% of women 45-54.
- Respondents who reported not casting a vote in the June 2009 municipal election were asked to provide the main reason why they didn’t vote. The most frequently cited reason by both women (38%) and men (31%) is not being registered to vote. Several women (10%) mention not being interested in elections or politics as their reason for not voting. The third most frequently cited reason by women is being out of town or country when elections happened. This was mentioned by 9% of women. This is followed by being busy (7%), sick (6%), and problems with the voting card (5%).
- As for men, the main reasons for not voting (except for the first reason) are slightly different from those mentioned by women. The second most cited reason is not supporting any candidate or party (15%), followed by the belief that all politicians are corrupt or bad (12%). This shows that two of the three top reasons men cite for not voting relate to their critical opinion of politicians, which means that they voluntarily chose not to vote whereas for women, two of the top three reasons for not voting stem from circumstances that are out of their control (Figure 14).

Figure 14- Why did you not cast a vote in the June 2009 municipal election? <i>% out of respondents who reported not voting; ranked from highest to lowest according to citations by female respondents</i>	Women (n=1,081)	Men (n=226)	
1) Was not registered to vote/ was not on the voter list	38%	31%	(1)
2) Not interested in elections/politics	10%	4%	(7)
3) Was out of town/country when elections happened	9%	5%	(6)
4) Was busy	7%	10%	(4)
5) Was sick	6%	2%	(11)
6) I did not receive the voting card/ voting card problems	5%	2%	(12)
7) All politicians are corrupt/bad	5%	12%	(3)
8) Was not allowed to vote	4%	2%	(10)
9) Did not support any candidate/party	4%	15%	(2)
10) Was not eligible to vote	3%	7%	(5)

Shows ranks according to citations by men

## Factors Influencing Voting Choices



Figure 15- When voting in parliamentary elections, what is the most important factor that influences your choice? <i>% out of total; ranked from highest to lowest according to citations by female respondents</i>	Women (n=2,000)	Men (n=500)	
1) Candidates who are not corrupt/ honesty of candidate	21%	19%	(2)
2) Services that candidates provide to our area	19%	24%	(1)
3) Candidate’s earlier performance	10%	10%	(6)
4) Candidate’s charisma/personality	9%	15%	(3)
5) Intellectual level of the candidate	9%	11%	(5)
6) Candidate’s stance on issues of importance to women	7%	1%	(9)
7) Services candidates provide to my family	6%	4%	(7)
8) Candidate’s platform	6%	13%	(4)
9) My family or friends always vote for/ like these candidates	4%	2%	(8)

Shows ranks according to citations by men

- When survey respondents were asked about the most important factors that influence their voting choices, the results showed that for both women and men, the top two factors are the same but in a different order: candidates who are not corrupt/honesty of the candidate and the services that candidates provide to their area. The candidates’ earlier performance was mentioned in the third place for women and in the sixth place for men. For men, the third most cited factor is the candidate’s charisma or personality (15%). For women it ranks in the fourth place (9%). For both men and women, the intellectual level of the candidate comes in fifth place as a factor influencing their voting choices. Meanwhile, twice as many men (13%) than women (6%) mention the candidate’s platform as the most important factor that influences their voting choice (Figure 15).

Figure 16- Factors influencing voting choices <i>Shows ranks according to mentions by women in each education group</i>	None (n=941)	<Primary (n=341)	Primary (n=264)	Intermediate (n=269)	Secondary or higher (n=182)
Candidates who are not corrupt/ honesty of candidate	1	5	4	3	3
Services that candidates provide to our area	2	3	1	8	8
Candidate’s charisma/personality	3	8	3	6	6
Candidate’s earlier performance	4	2	6	2	2
Candidate’s platform	5	7	8	5	5
Services candidates provide to my family	6	4	7	1	1
Candidates’ stance on issues of importance to women	7	6	5	4	4
Intellectual level of the candidate	8	1	2	7	7

- When looking at factors influencing women’s voting choices by respondents’ educational attainment, we find that the three factors that recur in the top three for most education groups are “candidates who are not



corrupt,” “services that candidates provide to our area” and “candidates’ earlier performance.” We find that respondents with an intermediate education or higher cite “services that candidates provide to my family” as the main factor influencing their voting choices. This factor figures at a much lower priority level for those with a primary education or lower. The “intellectual level of the candidate” is mentioned as the number one factor for women with incomplete primary education and as number two for women with a complete primary education. It is otherwise not considered a priority for women in other educational groups (Figure 16).

- When breaking down this data by urban and rural settlements, we find that the top two factors influencing women’s voting choices in urban areas are similar to rural areas: “Candidates who are not corrupt” and “Services that candidates provide to our area” but the order is different. The third most important factor for urban women: “Intellectual level of the candidate” ranks seventh for rural women. For rural women, the third most cited factor is the candidate’s charisma or personality.

Figure 17- Factors influencing voting choices <i>Shows ranks according to mentions by women in urban &amp; rural settlements</i>	Urban (n=1,205)	Rural (n=795)
<b>Candidates who are not corrupt/ honesty of candidate</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Services that candidates provide to our area</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Intellectual level of the candidate</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Candidate’s earlier performance</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Candidate’s charisma/personality</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Candidates’ stance on issues of importance to women</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>

Figure 18- Which issues should elected officials prioritize while in office?

*% out of total; ranked from highest to lowest according to citations by female respondents*

	Women (n=2,000)	Men (n=500)	
1) Creating jobs	63%	67%	(1)
2) Developing local infrastructure	59%	54%	(2)
3) Improving access to healthcare	39%	35%	(4)
4) Fighting poverty	30%	46%	(3)
5) Improving quality of education	29%	28%	(5)
6) Addressing internal political problems	21%	3%	(9)
7) Fighting corruption	17%	24%	(6)
8) Reinforcing stability/ national security	16%	22%	(7)
9) Improving the economy in general	10%	16%	(8)
10) Improving the status of women in the country	1%	1%	(10)

Shows ranks according to citations by men



Moroccan women were asked to rank their top policy concerns, i.e. the issues that they believe elected officials should prioritize while in office.

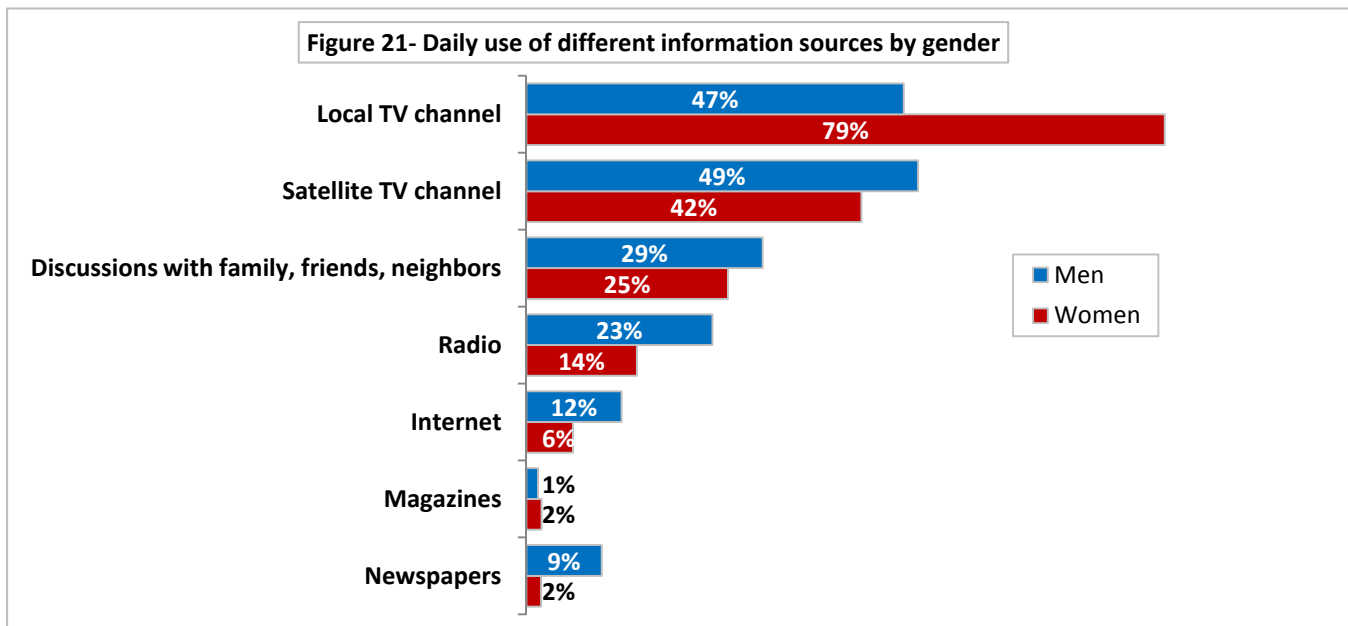
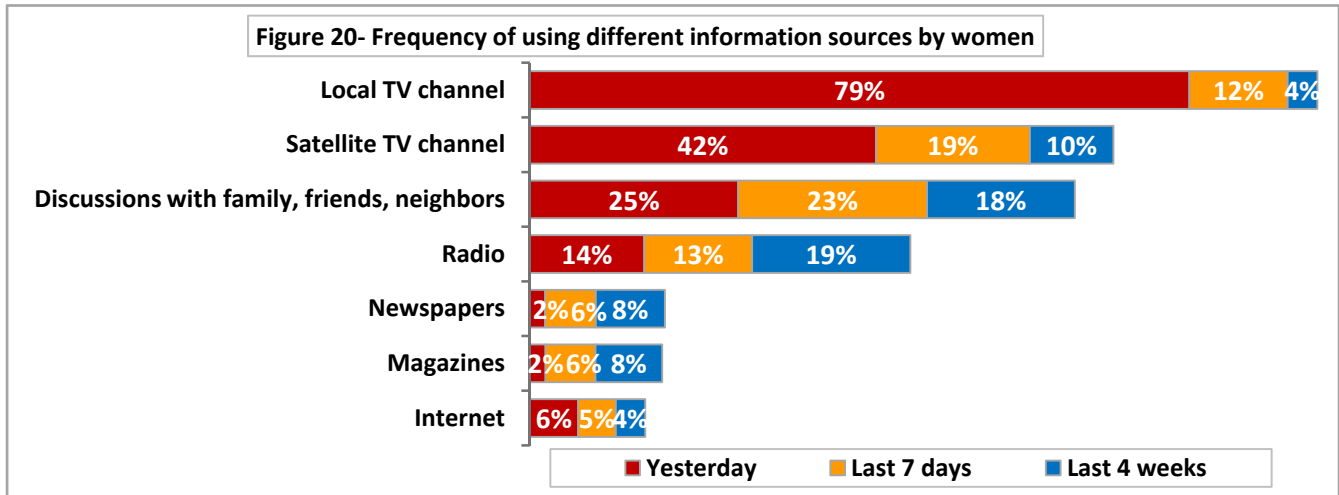
- Highest on their list is creating jobs (63%), followed by developing local infrastructure (59%) and improving access to healthcare (39%) (Figure 18). For men, the top two policy concerns are the same ones mentioned by women. Men’s third most-cited policy priority is fighting poverty. For both men and women, the top five policy concerns are the same but the order of importance is slightly different. Improving the status of women in the country is very low on women’s and men’s priority list: only 1% of men and women mention it in the tenth place.
- When comparing women’s top policy concerns in urban areas versus rural areas, we find that the top five concerns are the same but there is a slight difference in order. For urban women, the number one policy concern is creating jobs, followed by developing local infrastructure, then improving access to healthcare. For rural women, the top concern is, not surprisingly, developing local infrastructure, followed by creating jobs, then improving access to healthcare (Figure 19).

<b>Figure 19- Issues elected officials should prioritize while in office</b> <i>Shows ranks according to mentions by women in urban/rural settlements</i>	<b>Urban</b> (n=1,205)	<b>Rural</b> (n=795)
<b>Creating jobs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Developing local infrastructure</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Improving access to healthcare</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Fighting poverty</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Improving quality of education</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>



## Media Use & Interest in Politics

SWMENA survey respondents were asked about the frequency of using different media sources to obtain news and information about developments in Morocco.



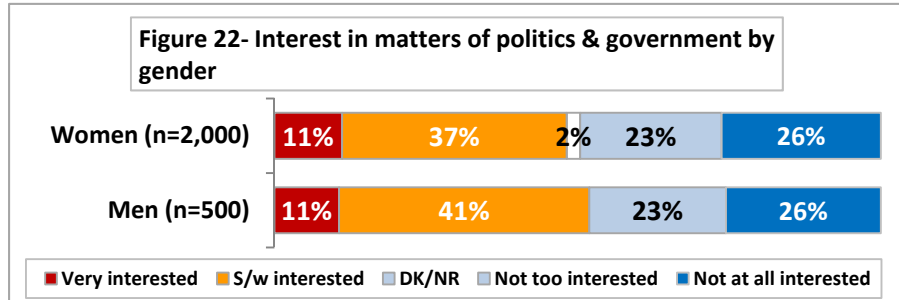
- Local TV is by far the most frequently used information source by women in Morocco: nearly eight in 10 women report watching local TV channels on a daily basis and four in 10 report watching satellite TV daily. Many Moroccan women resort to word of mouth (discussions with family, friends, neighbors) to learn about local developments: a quarter of women say they engage in such discussions daily and 23% do so on a weekly basis. Radio is used daily by 14% of women. Internet use and newspaper and magazine readership are limited with only



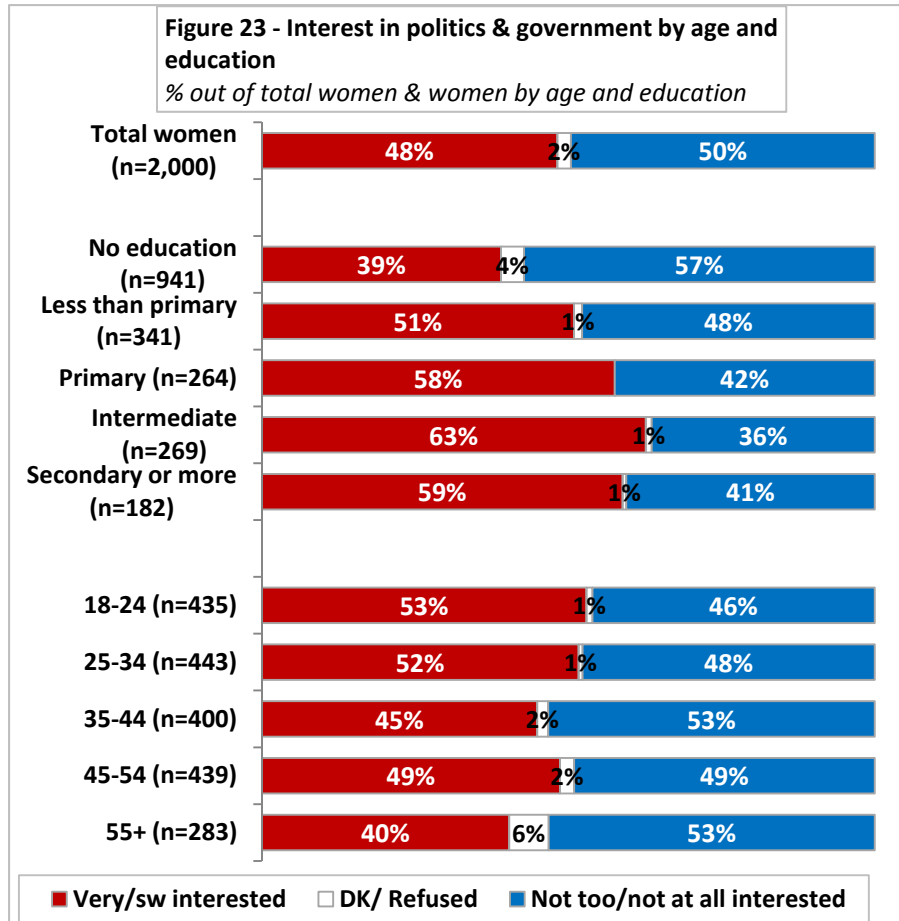
6% of Moroccan women using the internet on a daily basis and 2% reading newspapers and magazines daily (Figure 20).

- When comparing daily use of different information sources between men and women (Figure 21), we notice that women tend to watch local TV much more frequently than men: 79% of women watch it on a daily basis versus 47% of men. This is mostly likely due to the fact that the absolute majority of Moroccan women do not work outside of the house (90%) and are thus home-bound for most of their daily activities and tend to stay tuned to their TV sets more than men. For all other media sources, men use them more frequently than women.

- In terms of interest in matters of politics and government, women and men in Morocco are similar whereby similar proportions report being not at all interested (26%) or not too interested (23%) in these issues. The proportions of women and men who report being very or somewhat interested are also statistically equivalent. Overall, this shows that few men and women are very interested in matters of politics and government: only 11%.



- When looking at women’s interest in politics and government by education groups, we find that women with no education are less likely to be interested in these issues than women with a primary education or higher. Almost six in 10 women with a primary education or higher say they are very or somewhat interested in politics and government compared with only 39% of women with no education.



- In terms of age groups, women who are 55 or older are the least likely to be interested in matters of politics and government when compared to younger women. Women who are under 34 are the most likely to be interested in these issues.

