

FACTSHEET

The Mawazo Institute is a women-led African organisation supporting early-career women researchers across the African continent as they work to find solutions to local and global development challenges.

BACKGROUND

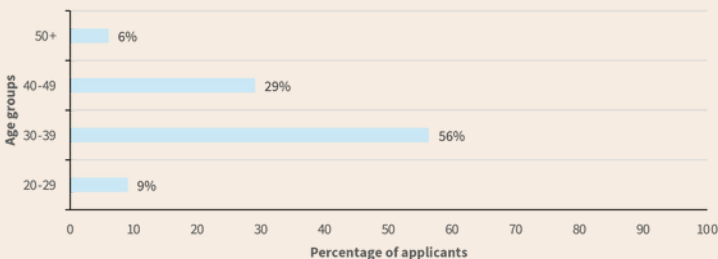
The *Status of African Women in Research Report (2025)* offers an in-depth look at the experiences of African women pursuing doctoral studies. It highlights the systemic barriers they face – including limited funding, mentorship, mobility, and institutional support – and calls for actionable steps to transform the future of African research.

The *report* is based on data from two main sources. In 2022, an open call for the Mawazo Fellowship, a non-residential programme for African women PhD students, resulted in **927 submitted applications**. An ‘Academic Needs’ survey was conducted to better understand the needs of women researchers in Africa and was embedded within the Mawazo Fellowship application process, with **1445 applicants completing the survey by the end of the open call**.

By centring real stories and data, the report humanises the experiences of African women researchers and serves as a crucial resource for shaping more inclusive research environments.

DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

TOTAL APPLICANTS BY AGE GROUP



56%

The highest proportion of the Mawazo Fellowship applicants fall within the 30-39 age bracket, making it the predominant group.

Out of the 927 applications received, only

6%

were 50 years and above, and only 2.5% of these applicants were successful.

The oldest applicant in the 50+ age group has spent a total of

13 YEARS

in their PhD programme.

On average, older applicants are taking approximately **double the time to complete their PhDs** as their younger counterparts.

What does this mean for African women in research?

In academia, especially across Africa, “older women” are often referred to as women who are beyond childbearing age or aged 50 and above.

Unfortunately, society tends to unfairly place labels on them, such as not being tech-savvy or “less productive” than their male counterparts. **Gendered ageism is the double challenge of age and gender bias, creating barriers to academic access, affordability, and support, further blocking women from thriving in higher education.**

Between juggling family responsibilities, financial constraints and the serious lack of scholarships for older students, the road to a PhD becomes complicated and riddled with hurdles.

It is imperative to integrate women into our academic communities by acknowledging diverse educational needs that exist throughout an individual’s life, ensuring PhD programmes and institutions meet and support those needs.

Academia should be a space for everyone, no matter their gender or age! This includes creating an inclusive environment that caters to the needs of older women, providing them with the necessary support and resources to succeed.



Curious about the rest of the continent? Access the full report here



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