

SOUTHERN AFRICA 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.

SOUTHERN AFRICA KEY INSIGHTS

FELLOWSHIP INTEREST

151 applications from Southern Africa – accounting for

16%

of all submissions received by Mawazo.



FUNDING CHALLENGES

Southern Africa

53%

had the highest proportion of individuals who were successful in receiving funding.



Southern Africa is the only region registering more applicants with funding compared to those without.

THEMATIC AREA OF RESEARCH

Life and Health Sciences emerged as the leading focus, accounting for

19%



This was closely followed by **Gender, Rights and Governance**,

17%



Business, Trade and the Economy

14%



and **Education and Pedagogy**, reflecting strong interest in addressing urgent global and regional challenges.

14%



45%

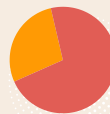
of applicants were self-funding their PhDs.



Only

28%

of Southern African applicants secured university-based grants – **the highest rate across the continent**, highlighting deep gaps in institutional support.



RESEARCH MOBILITY

South Africa

15%



had the highest number of applicants undertaking their PhDs in their home country and also had the highest number of applicants of other Southern African nationalities undertaking their PhD research in the country.

- The country had the most nationally diverse PhD applicants, with **16 countries** from across the continent represented. This highlights South Africa's attractiveness as a **hub for research on the continent!**
- **31%** of all applicants were from the **Southern Africa** region.
- **Less than 1%** of Southern African applicants undertook their PhD in another region.

BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

An overwhelming

93%



of Southern African applicants reported difficulty collaborating with other researchers.



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

THE STATUS OF
AFRICAN
WOMEN IN
RESEARCH
REPORT

Presented by Mawazo Institute



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WOMEN LEADING RESEARCH IN AFRICA

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