

# WESTERN 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.

## WESTERN AFRICA KEY INSIGHTS

### FELLOWSHIP INTEREST

322 applications originated from Western Africa – accounting for

**35%**

of all submissions received by Mawazo.

*Nigeria accounted for the largest share of applications in the Western Africa region, with 20% of total applications.*

### FUNDING CHALLENGES

**71%**

of applicants reported receiving no financial support for their PhD studies.

Over half

**66%**

of applicants were self-funding their PhDs.

Only

**11%**

of West Africa applicants received grants from their universities – highlighting deep gaps in institutional support.

### THEMATIC AREA OF RESEARCH

**Agriculture and Food Security** emerged as the leading focus, accounting for

**26%**



This was closely followed by **Life and Health Sciences**

**25%**



and **Climate Change, Environment, and Natural Sciences**, reflecting strong interest in addressing urgent global and regional challenges.

**23%**



### RESEARCH MOBILITY

Nigeria

**19%**

had the highest number of applicants undertaking their PhDs in their home country and the highest number of applicants of West African nationalities undertaking their PhD research in the country. This suggests that **Nigeria is a hub for research activity in Western Africa**, with many students from other countries going to study there.

### BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

An overwhelming

**88%**



of West African applicants reported difficulty collaborating with other researchers – although **significantly high, it is the lowest rate across the continent**.



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