



Tanzanians approach competitive election with confidence in freedom to choose

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 52 | Rose Aiko and Thomas Bentley

Summary

On 25 October 2015, Tanzania will have its fifth multiparty election since the restoration of the multiparty system in 1992. The incumbent president, Jakaya Kikwete, is ineligible to be elected due to the constitutional limit of two five-year terms for the presidential office. Following a highly contested nomination process, the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), selected John Magufuli as its presidential nominee, unexpectedly eliminating several heavyweights from the race.

After failing to secure the ruling party's nomination, Edward Lowassa, a former prime minister during Kikwete's first term, defected to the opposition Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema) and now stands as the presidential nominee of the opposition Coalition for People's Constitution (UKAWA), formed by CHADEMA, the Civic United Front (CUF), the National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi), and the National League for Democracy (NLD). The addition of Lowassa has strengthened the opposition front and points toward what may be Tanzania's most competitive election ever.

Moreover, recent Afrobarometer survey results show that although citizens' assessments of government performance improved on several fronts between 2012 and 2014 (see Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 50 at www.afrobarometer.org), a majority of citizens say that economic conditions are "fairly" or "very" bad and the country is headed in the wrong direction.

This year's election represents a test for the country's election processes as well as for the ruling party. Public support for elections is solid: A majority of Tanzanians say that good citizens should always vote and that leaders of a country should be chosen through free and fair elections. Most feel "completely" free to vote for the candidate of their choice, and public trust in the National Electoral Commission (NEC), though weaker than a decade ago, remains substantial.

Still, significant proportions of the population voice concerns about whether votes are counted fairly and whether voters are offered a genuine choice in elections, as well as about bribery of voters and biased media coverage. More than half of citizens express concern that elections are not effective at enabling voters to remove underperforming leaders from office. And some citizens express fear of election-related intimidation and violence.

As Election Day approaches, it is crucial that efforts are sustained to achieve a high-quality election in which voters' choices count and voters' safety is assured.

Afrobarometer survey

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues across more than 30 countries in Africa. Five rounds of surveys were conducted between 1999 and 2013, and Round 6 surveys are currently under way (2014-2015). Afrobarometer conducts face-to-

face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with nationally representative samples of between 1,200 and 2,400 respondents.

The Afrobarometer team in Tanzania, led by REPOA, interviewed 2,386 adult Tanzanians in September and October 2014. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Tanzania in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2012.

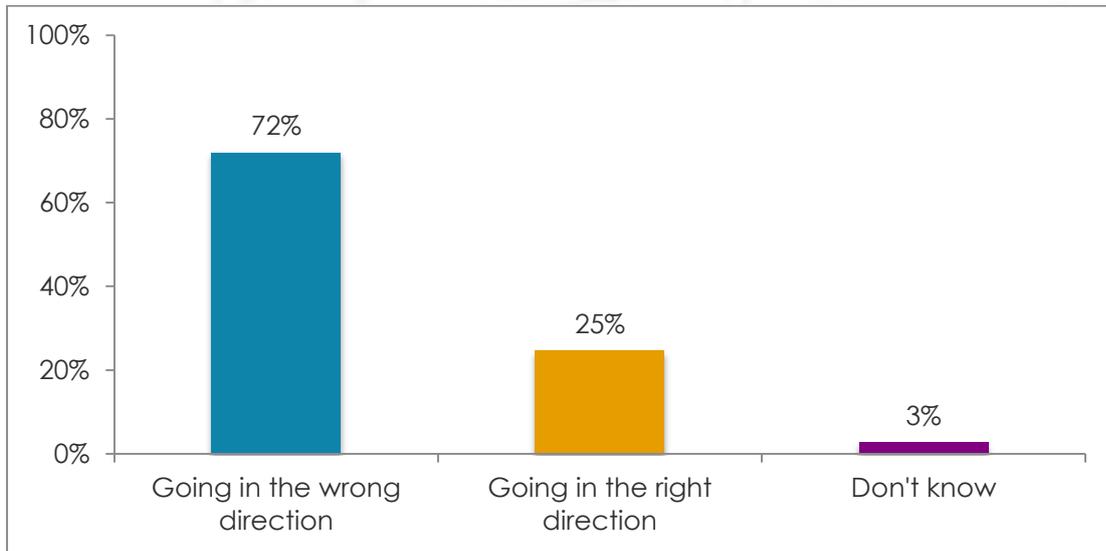
Key findings

- Almost three-fourths (72%) of Tanzanians believe the country is going in the wrong direction, and two-thirds (66%) perceive the country's current economic conditions as "fairly bad" or "very bad."
- An overwhelming majority of Tanzanians (81%) say that good citizens should "always" vote in elections and that leaders of the country should be chosen through regular, open, and honest elections.
- Three-fourths of Tanzanians rate the last national elections, in 2010, as "completely free and fair" or "free and fair, but with minor problems."
- Eight out of 10 citizens (80%) feel "completely free" to vote for the candidate of their choice, and more than two-thirds (68%) say they trust the NEC "somewhat" or "a lot."
- But substantial proportions of the population express concerns about whether votes are counted fairly (39% say "never" or only "sometimes"), as well as whether voters are bribed, whether the media covers all candidates fairly, and whether voters are offered a genuine choice in elections.
- Moreover, more than half say that elections are not effective at enabling voters to remove underperforming leaders from office (56%) and at ensuring that members of Parliament reflect voters' views (57%).
- About half (48%) say they do "not at all" fear becoming a victim of intimidation and violence during election campaigns, while 5% fear this "a lot." One-third (32%) say voters are "never" threatened with violence at the polls, whereas 64% say this happens at least "sometimes."

A test for the ruling party?

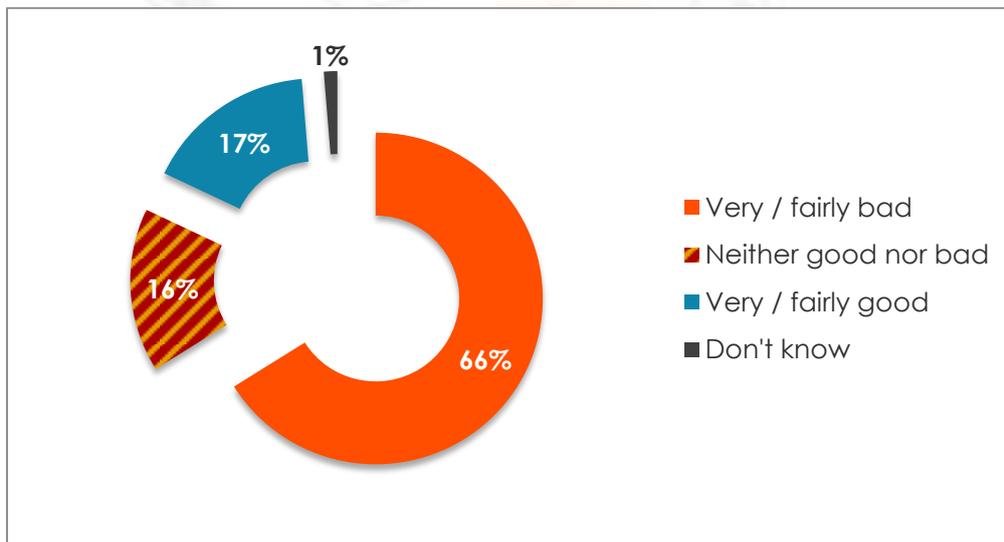
According to opinions expressed last September and October, nearly three-fourths (72%) of the Tanzanian public believe that the country is headed in the "wrong direction" (Figure 1), and two-thirds (66%) perceive present economic conditions as "fairly bad" or "very bad" (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Direction of the country | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: *Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?*

Figure 2: Present economic condition of the country | Tanzania | 2014



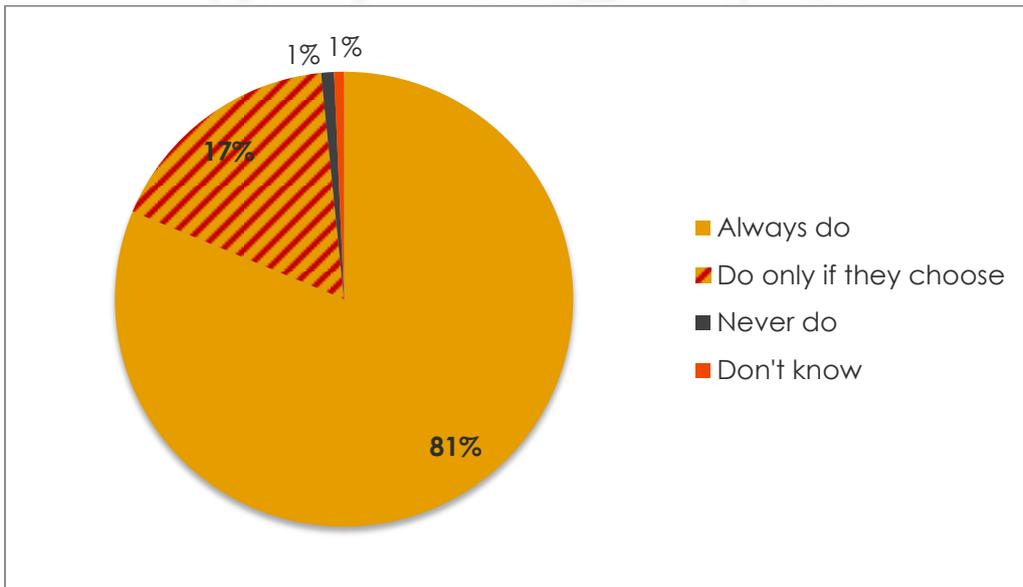
Respondents were asked: *In general, how would you describe the present economic condition of this country?*

Good citizens vote in elections

In the 2010 elections, only 42% of the 20.1 million people registered to vote actually went to the polls on Election Day. In a bid to improve voter turnout in 2015, the contesting parties and civil society have been conducting campaigns urging Tanzanians to go out and vote, with the media leading in delivering the message.

Survey respondents say overwhelmingly (81%) that voting in elections is something that a good citizen "should always do" (Figure 3).

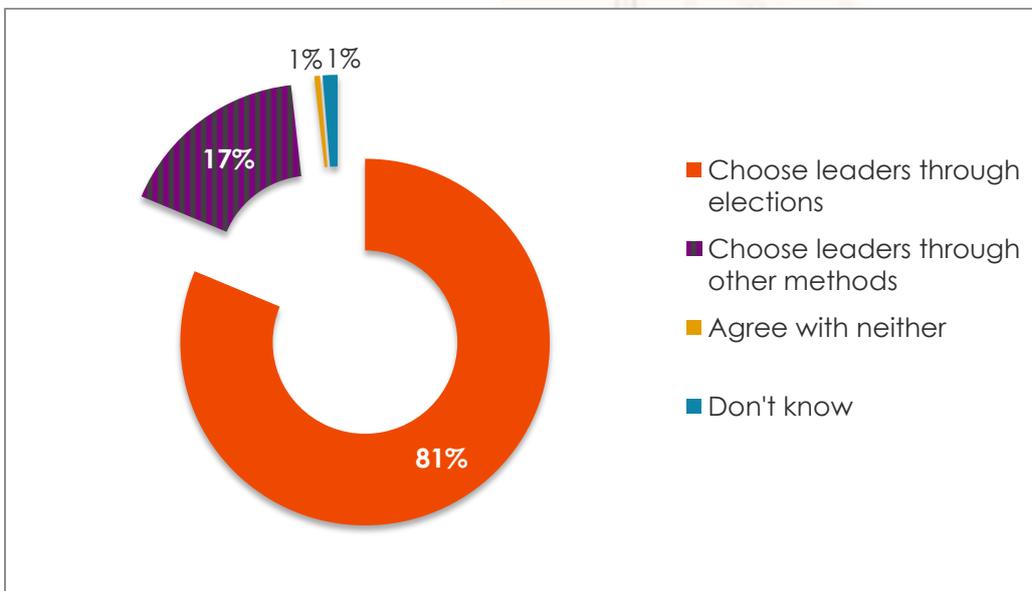
Figure 3: Good citizens vote in elections | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it is something a good citizen in a democracy should always do, never do, or do only if they choose: Vote in elections?

Tanzanians also express strong support for regular, open, and honest elections (81%) over other methods of choosing their political leaders (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Choose leaders through elections vs. other methods | Tanzania | 2014

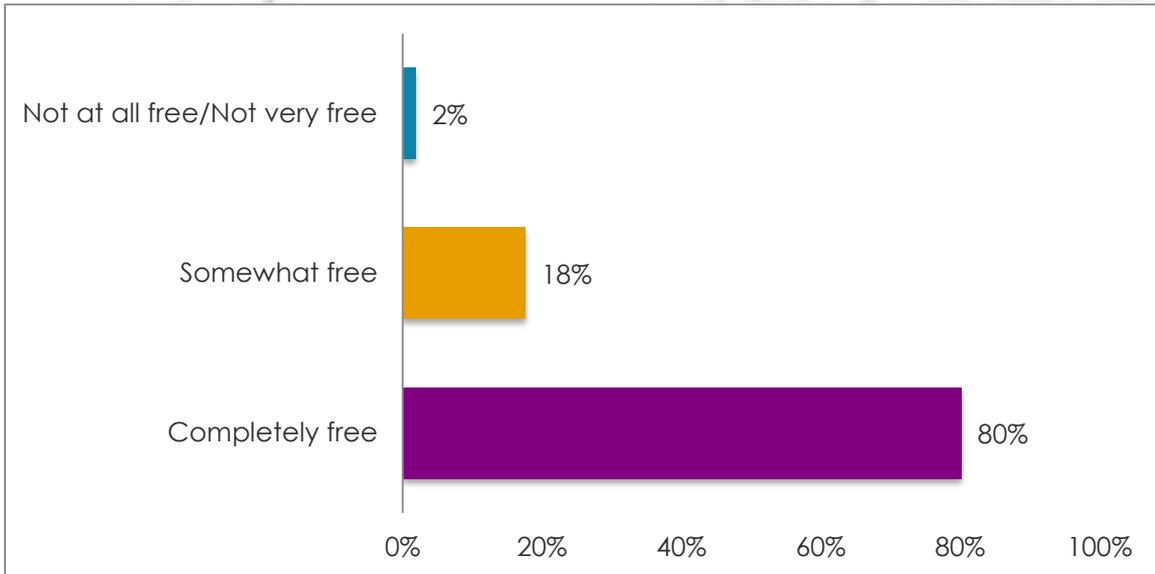


Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?
 Statement 1: We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections.
 Statement 2: Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.
 (% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" with each statement)

Perceived freeness and fairness of elections

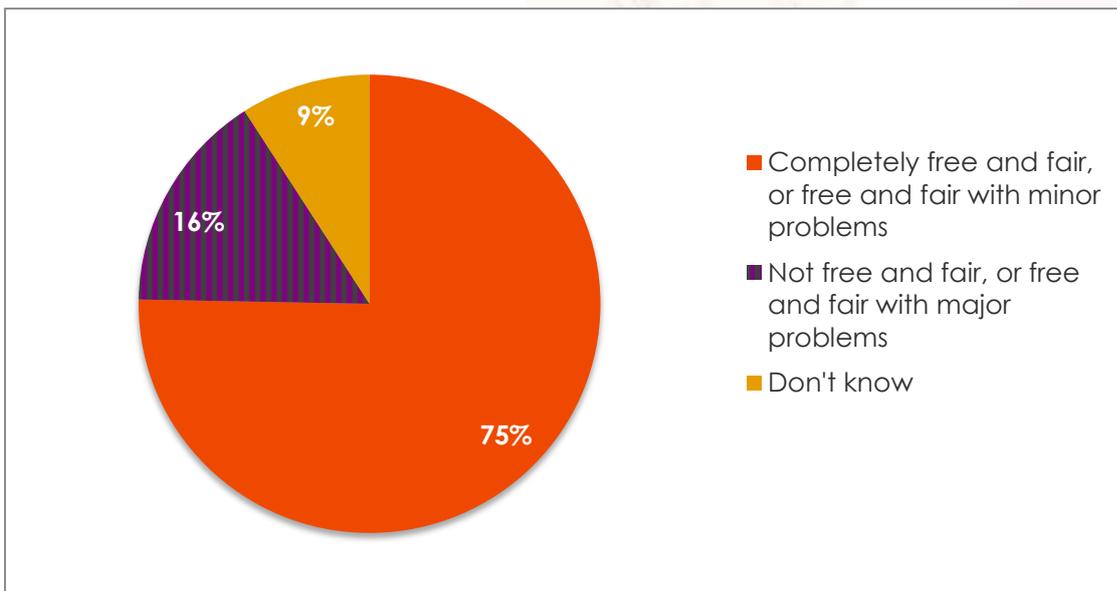
Tanzanians generally rate the freeness and fairness of their electoral environment positively. Eight out of 10 (80%) say they are “completely free” to vote for the candidate of their choice (Figure 5), and three-fourths (75%) rate the country’s most recent national election (2010) as “completely free and fair” or “free and fair, but with minor problems” (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Freedom to vote for candidate of one’s choice | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: *In this country, how free are you to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured?*

Figure 6: Freeness and fairness of 2010 national elections | Tanzania | 2014

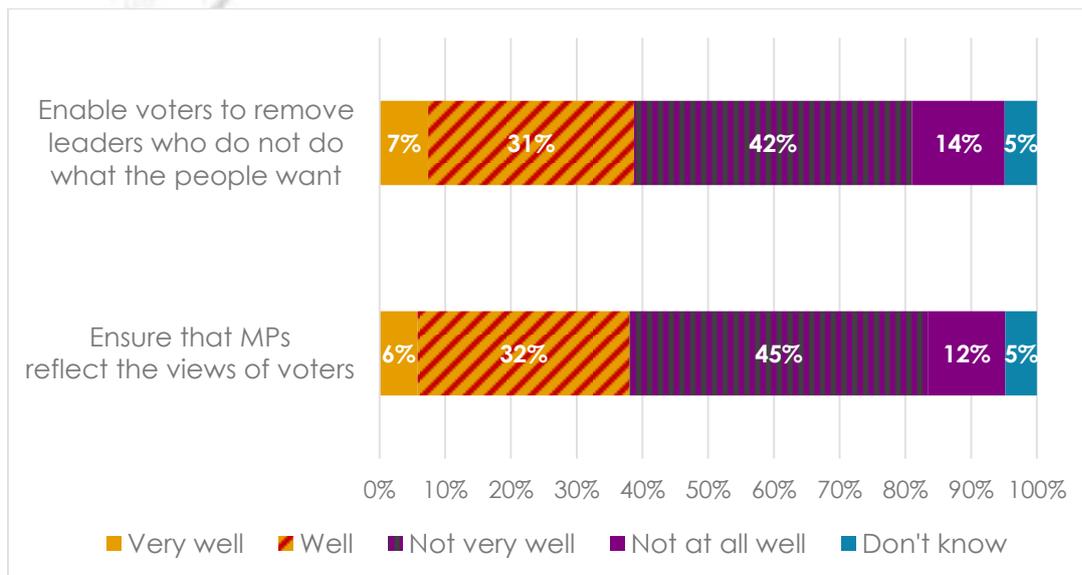


Respondents were asked: *On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election, held in 2010?*

Election effectiveness and environment

Although elections are an important mechanism for voters to hold their political leaders accountable, their effectiveness is not uniform across countries. More than half (56%) of Tanzanians say that elections perform “not at all well” or “not very well” in enabling voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want, while 57% say that elections are not effective in ensuring that members of Parliament reflect the voters’ views (Figure 7).

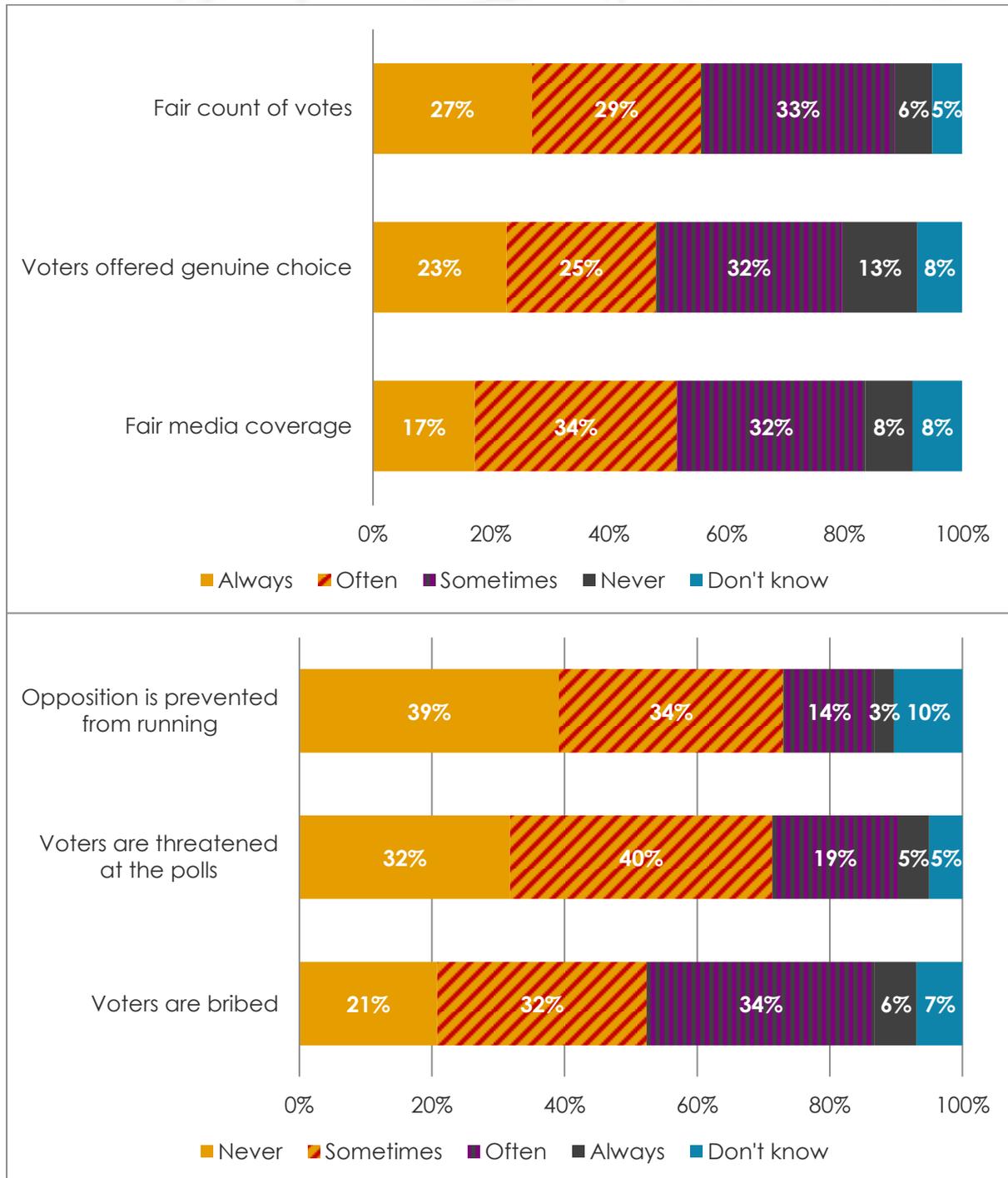
Figure 7: Effectiveness of elections | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections: (1) Enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want? (2) Ensure that members of Parliament reflect the views of voters?

Public perceptions of Tanzania's election environment are mixed. While more than half of citizens (56%) say that votes are “always” or “often” counted fairly, 39% say this occurs “never” or only “sometimes.” Only 17% say that opposition parties are “always” or “often” prevented from running for public office. On the other hand, significant minorities express concerns that voters are bribed (41% say “often” or “always”), that the media does not provide fair coverage of all candidates (40% say fair coverage is provided “never” or only “sometimes”), and that voters are “never” or only “sometimes” offered a genuine choice in elections (45%) (Figure 8). About half (48%) of Tanzanians say they have no fear of intimidation or violence during election campaigns, while 5% express “a lot” of fear and almost half say they are “somewhat” (20%) or “a little bit” (26%) afraid (Figure 9). However, when asked about security at the polls, as shown in Figure 8, only 32% say people are “never” threatened, whereas the majority say people are threatened “sometimes” (40%), “often” (19%), or “always” (5%), suggesting an elevated fear of during polling.

Figure 8: Perceptions of the election environment | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often do the following things occur in this country's elections:

Votes are counted fairly?

Voters are offered a genuine choice in the elections?

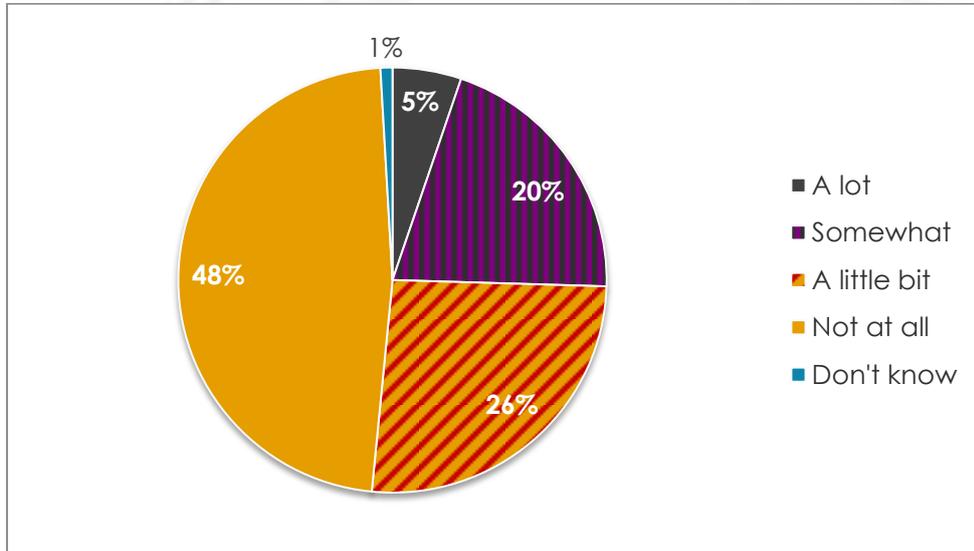
The media provides fair coverage of all candidates?

Opposition candidates are prevented from running for office?

Voters are threatened with violence at the polls?

Voters are bribed?

Figure 9: Fear of intimidation or violence during election campaigns | Tanzania | 2014

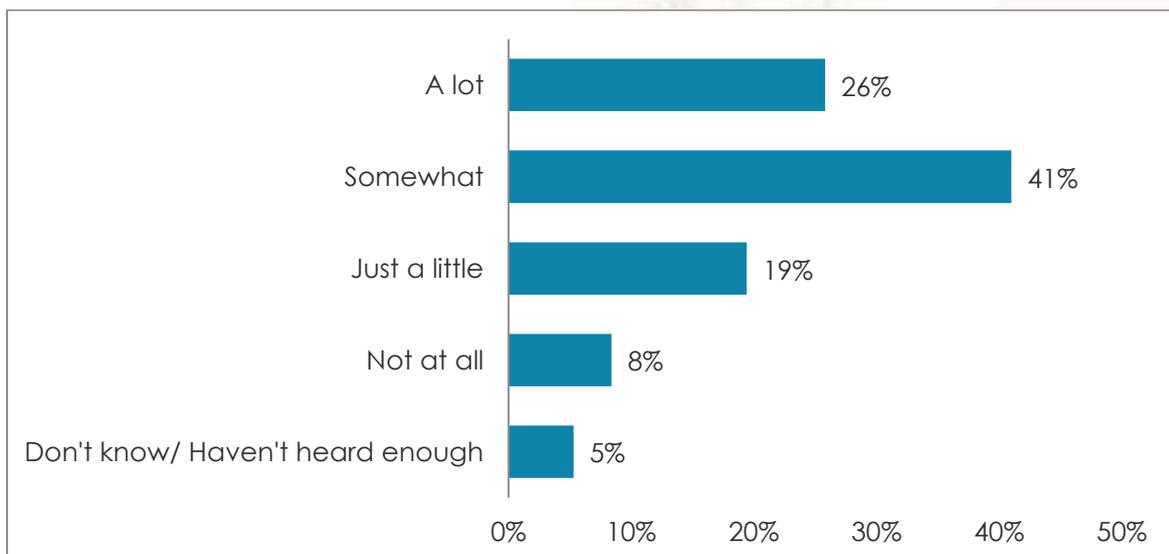


Respondents were asked: *During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?*

Trust in the electoral commission

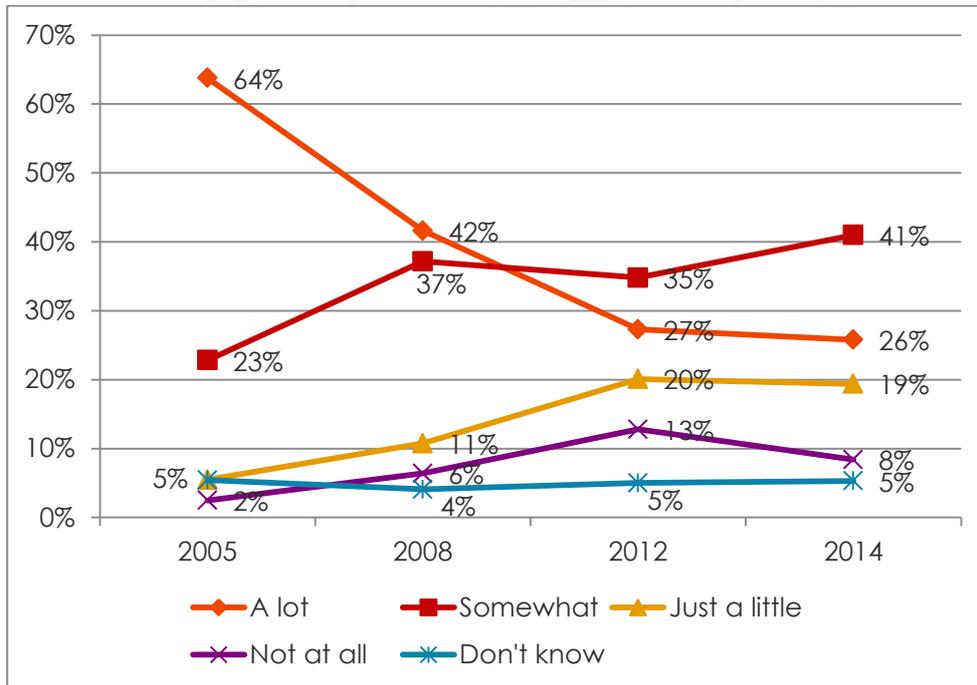
Even though voters express concerns about the effectiveness of elections, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) enjoys substantial public trust: More than two-thirds (68%) of Tanzanians say they trust the NEC “somewhat” or “a lot” (Figure 10). However, the proportion of citizens who trust the NEC “a lot” (26%) is far lower than it was a decade ago (64% in 2005) (Figure 11).

Figure 10: Trust in the National Electoral Commission (NEC) | Tanzania | 2014



Respondents were asked: *How much do you trust the National Electoral Commission?*

Figure 11: Trust in the National Electoral Commission (NEC) | Tanzania | 2005-2014



Conclusion

This year's general election offers Tanzanians an important opportunity to choose leaders who can propel the country in the direction they want. The election will be a test for the ruling party as well as for the electoral commission, whose foundation of public trust, though substantial, has weakened over the past decade. Survey results point to significant concerns about the likelihood of a fair vote count, bribery of voters, and fair media coverage. Fear of political intimidation and violence is at relatively low levels, but almost two-thirds of citizens say that voters are “sometimes,” “often,” or “always” threatened at the polls.

Despite these concerns, a large majority of respondents believe that they have the freedom to choose the leaders they want and that every good citizen should vote. Tanzanians will need to put their beliefs into practice by casting their votes on Election Day. At the same time, it is crucial that Tanzanian authorities continue to maintain a peaceful environment for high-quality elections.

To further explore this data, please visit Afrobarometer's online data analysis facility at www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

Rose Alko is a researcher for REPOA in Tanzania. Email: raiko@repoa.or.tz

Thomas Bentley is a research assistant for Afrobarometer and a PhD student in the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. Email: bentle88@msu.edu

Afrobarometer is produced collaboratively by social scientists from more than 30 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Core support for Afrobarometer Rounds 5 and 6 has been provided by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank.

For more information, please visit www.afrobarometer.org and www.repoa.or.tz.

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 52 | 19 October 2015