



Centre for Social Research
Zomba, Malawi
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News release

In Malawi, women lag in political participation; support for women's leadership declines

Despite being led by a female president for almost two years, Malawian women are less likely to be involved in political discussions and show less interest in public affairs than their male counterparts, according to a 2014 Afrobarometer survey.

Women in Malawi are also less likely than men to attend a political rally or campaign meeting, to persuade others to vote for a candidate, and to work for a political candidate.

Survey results show a sharp decline in public support for women's political leadership.

This data is being released at a time of vivid debate about which factors contributed to a decline in women's representation in Parliament (from 22% in 2009 to 17% in 2014) despite several national efforts to enhance women's participation in politics.

Key findings

- While almost eight in 10 men (79%) say they discuss politics "occasionally" or "frequently," only six in 10 women (65%) do so (Figure 1). Interest in public affairs shows the same gap, 77% for men vs. 64% for women. These gender gaps have persisted or increased since 2002.
- Women in Malawi are less likely than men to participate in political activities. While more than half (56%) of men say they attended a political rally in the previous year, only 44% of women did so. Women were also 8-12 percentage points less likely than men to attend a campaign meeting, persuade others to vote a certain way, or work for a political candidate (Figure 2).
- The proportion of Malawians who say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to office has declined since 2012, from 78% to 61% (Figure 3).

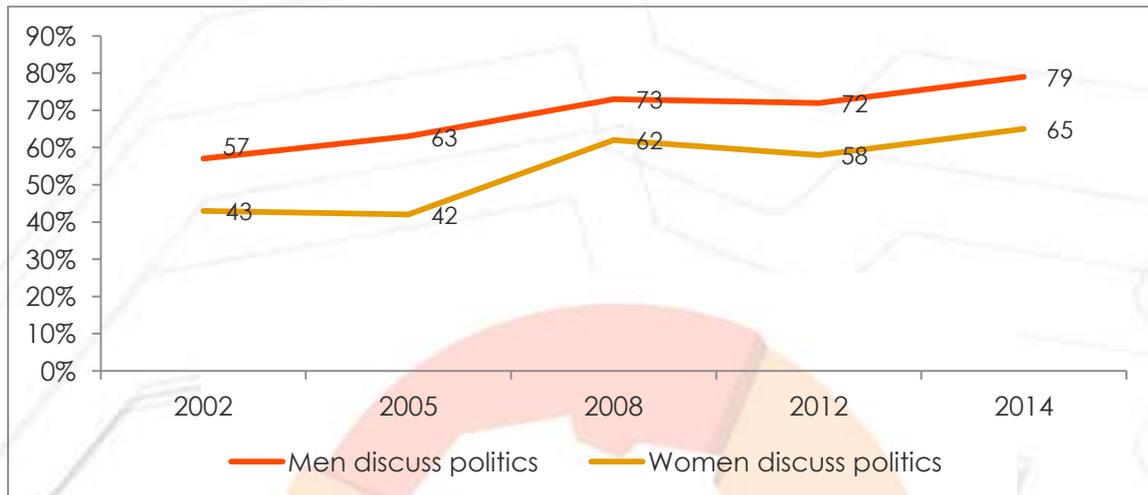
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is an African-led, 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 Malawi, led by the Centre for Social Research at the University of Malawi, interviewed 2,400 adult Malawians between 24 March and 5 April 2014. A sample of this size yields results with a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys have been conducted in Malawi in 1999, 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2012.

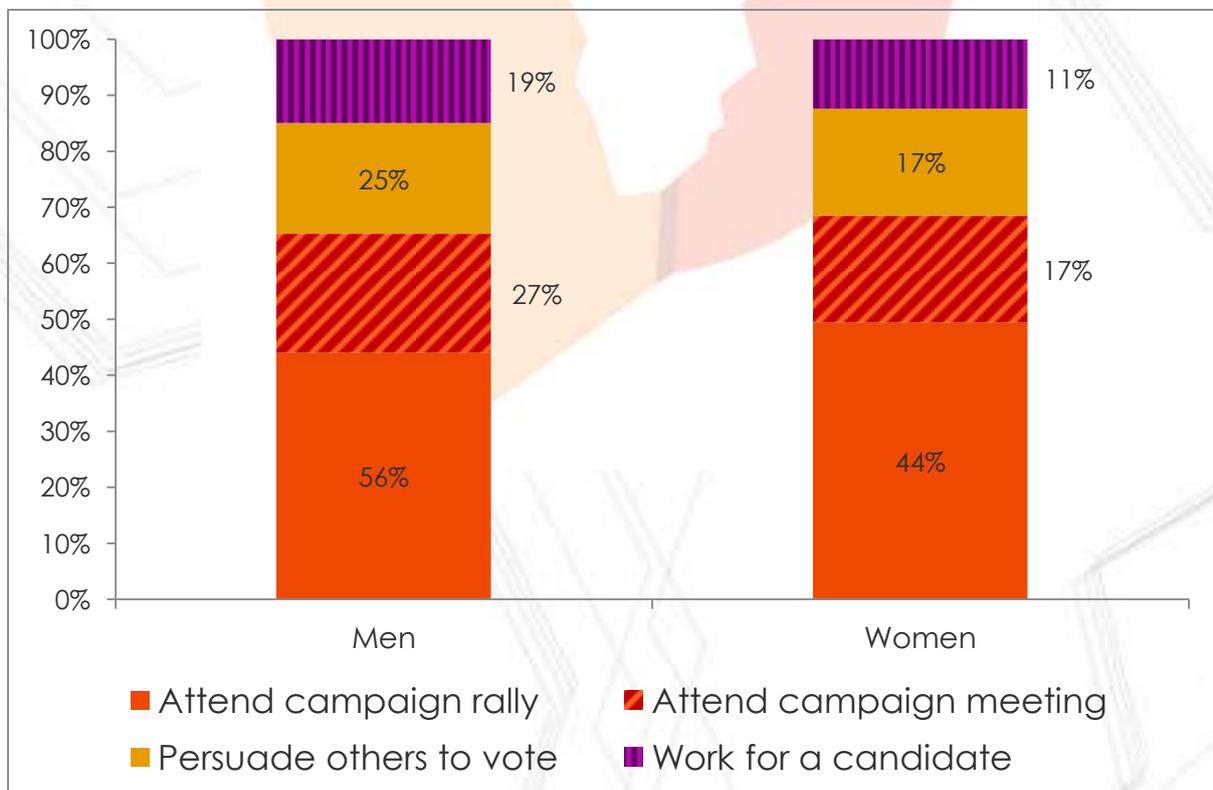
Charts

Figure 1: Participation in political discussion | by gender | 2002-2014



Respondents were asked: *When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters? (% who said "frequently" or "occasionally")*

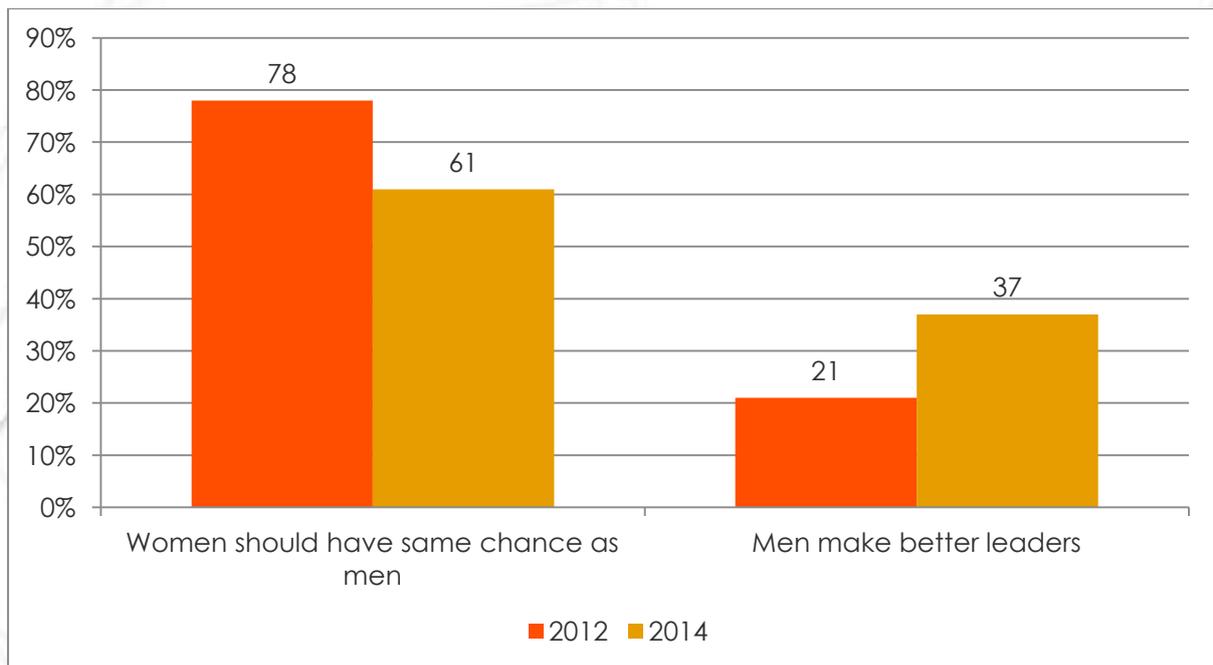
Figure 2: Electoral campaign activism | by gender | 2014



Respondents were asked: *Thinking about the last national election in 2009, did you:*

- Attend a campaign rally?
- Attend a campaign meeting with a candidate or campaign staff?
- Try to persuade others to vote for a certain presidential or legislative candidate or political party?
- Work for a candidate or party?
 (% who said "yes")

Figure 3: Support for women's leadership | 2012-2014



Respondents were asked: Let's talk for a moment about the kind of society you would like to have in this country. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2.

Statement 1: Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women.

Statement 2: Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men. (% who "agree" or "very strongly agree")

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