



Free speech within bounds? Tanzanians' support for critical and independent news media and evaluation of media performance

Findings from the Afrobarometer Round 6 survey in Tanzania

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Outline

- At a glance
- About the Afrobarometer and survey data
- Context
- Perceptions of individual freedom of speech
- How important is media freedom to the Tanzanian public?—support for critical and independent media
- Is it serving its purpose?—public perception of conduct (reliability) and performance (effectiveness) of news media



At a glance

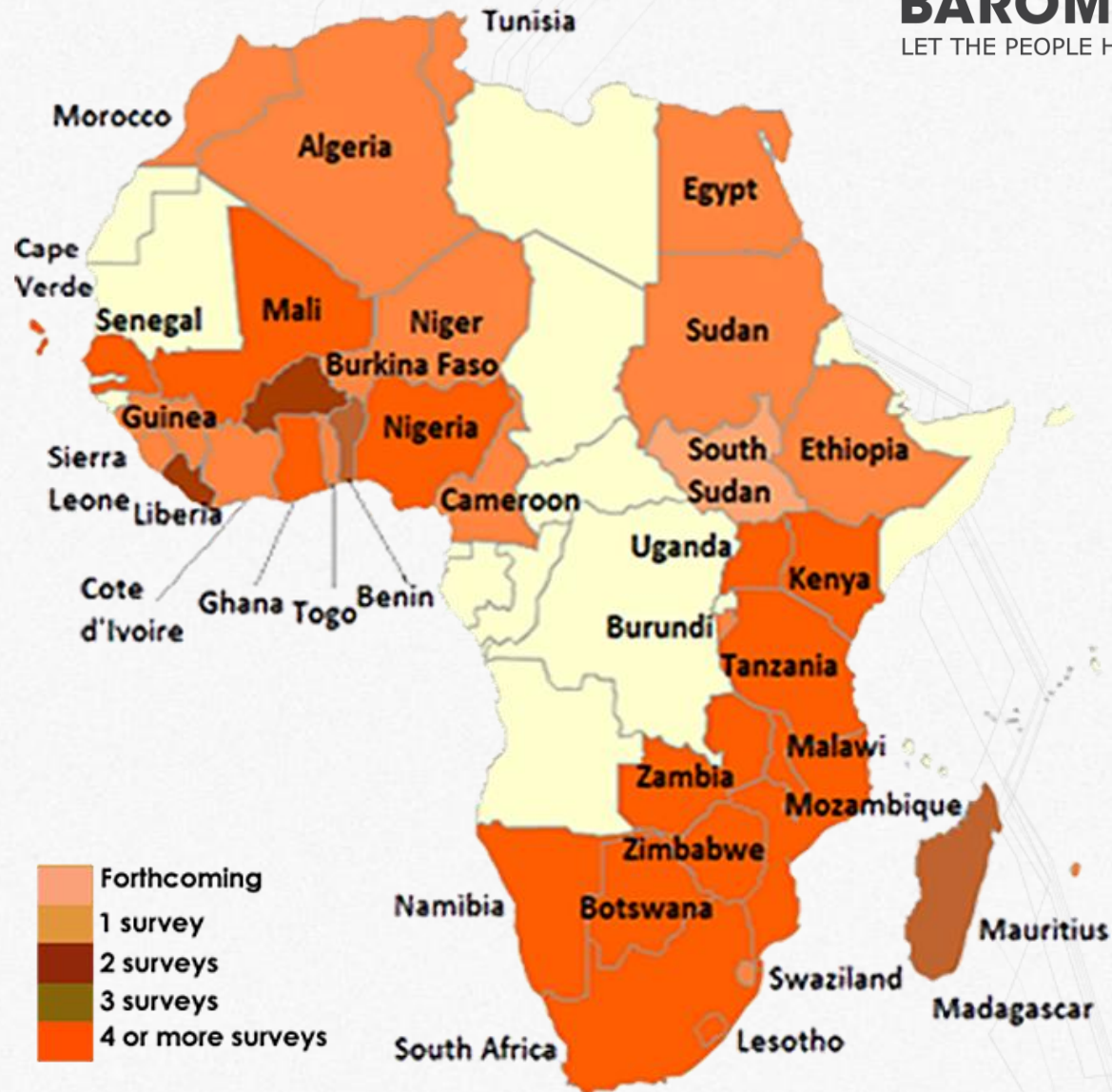
- Majority of citizens support critical investigative, and independent news reporting.
 - However, there is growing preference for less negative news.
 - Concern about the effect of too much negative reporting on the rise since 2012.
 - Rising support for government control.
- A stable majority, since 2012, express confidence in reliability of news media reports. However, at least 1 in 5 express reservations.
- Media rated by a majority as effective in investigating and reporting corruption, but a slight decline in 2014 compared to 2012.

What is Afrobarometer?

- An African-led, non-partisan survey research project that measures citizen attitudes on democracy and governance, the economy, civil society, and other topics.
- Started in 12 countries in 1999, to cover 36 African countries in Round 6(2014-2015).
- **Goal:** To give the public a voice in policy making by providing high-quality public opinion data to policymakers, policy advocates, civil society organizations, academics, news media, donors and investors, and ordinary Africans.
- National Partners in each country conduct the survey. In Tanzania, Afrobarometer Round 6 survey was conducted by REPOA.

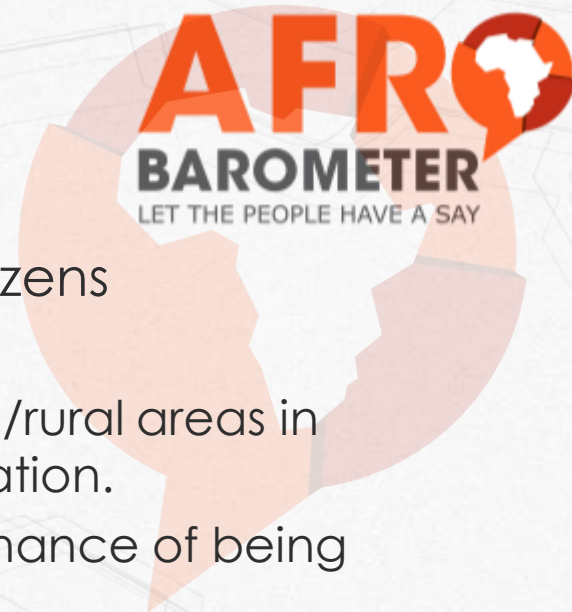


Where Afrobarometer works



Methodology

- Nationally representative sample of adult citizens
 - ❑ All respondents are *randomly* selected.
 - ❑ Sample is distributed across regions and urban/rural areas in proportion to their share in the national population.
 - ❑ Every adult citizen has an *equal and known* chance of being selected.
- Face-to-face interviews In the language of the respondent's choice.
- Standard questionnaire allows comparisons across countries and over time.
- Sample size in Tanzania of 2,386 adult citizens yields a margin of error of +/-2% at a 95% confidence level.
- Fieldwork for Round 6 in Tanzania was conducted between 26 August and 29 September 2014.



Survey demographics

Gender	%
Male	50
Female	50
Location	
Urban	34
Rural	66
Mainland	97
Zanzibar	3
Education	
No formal education	11
Primary	61
Secondary	22
Post-secondary	6

Age	%
18-25	20
26-35	30
36-45	23
46-55	14
56-65	7
Over 65	5
Don't know	1

Context



- Civil society concern over state's growing intolerance of critical opinion and dissent in Tanzania in recent years.
- Several critical newspapers suspended or deregistered, extralegal intimidation of press, suing for libel reported.
- Self-censorship by journalists, reported to be common as a result.
- Dearth of analyses of popular attitudes as regards media independence and conduct.

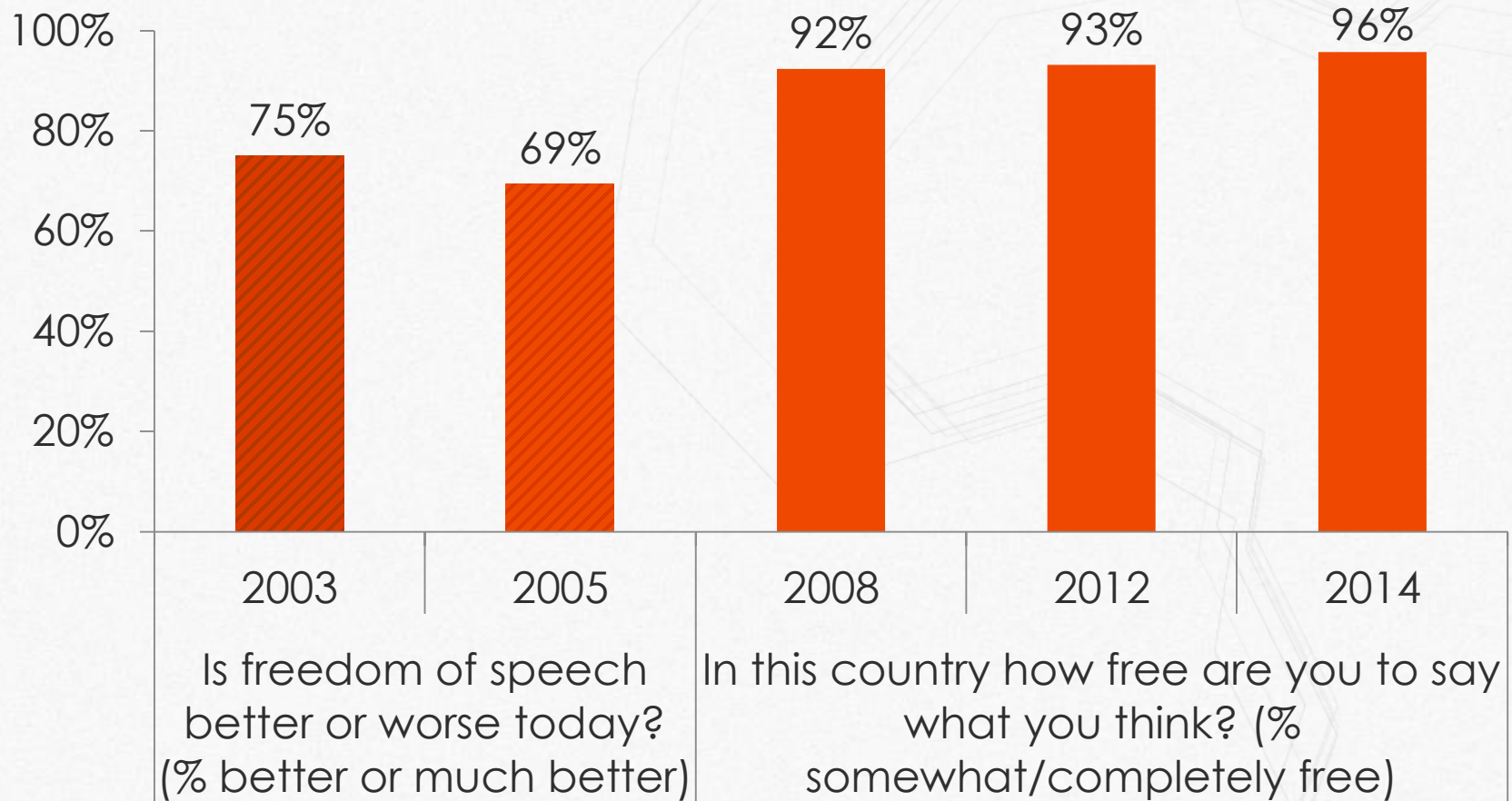


Individual freedom of speech

Key findings

- Tanzanians remain generally satisfied with the level of individual freedom of speech.
 - Nearly unanimous (96%) satisfaction with freedom of expression in 2014.
 - In 2012, Tanzania among the top-rated countries (out of 34 in Africa) in terms of public satisfaction with individual freedom of speech (second after Malawi) (Mitullah and Kamau, 2013).

Individual freedom to say what one thinks



In 2003, respondents were asked: We are going to compare our present system of government with the former system of one-party rule. Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they used to be, or about the same: Freedom to say what you think?

In 2005, respondents were asked: Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: Freedom to say what you think?

In 2008, 2012, and 2014, respondents were asked: In this country, how free are you: to say what you think?



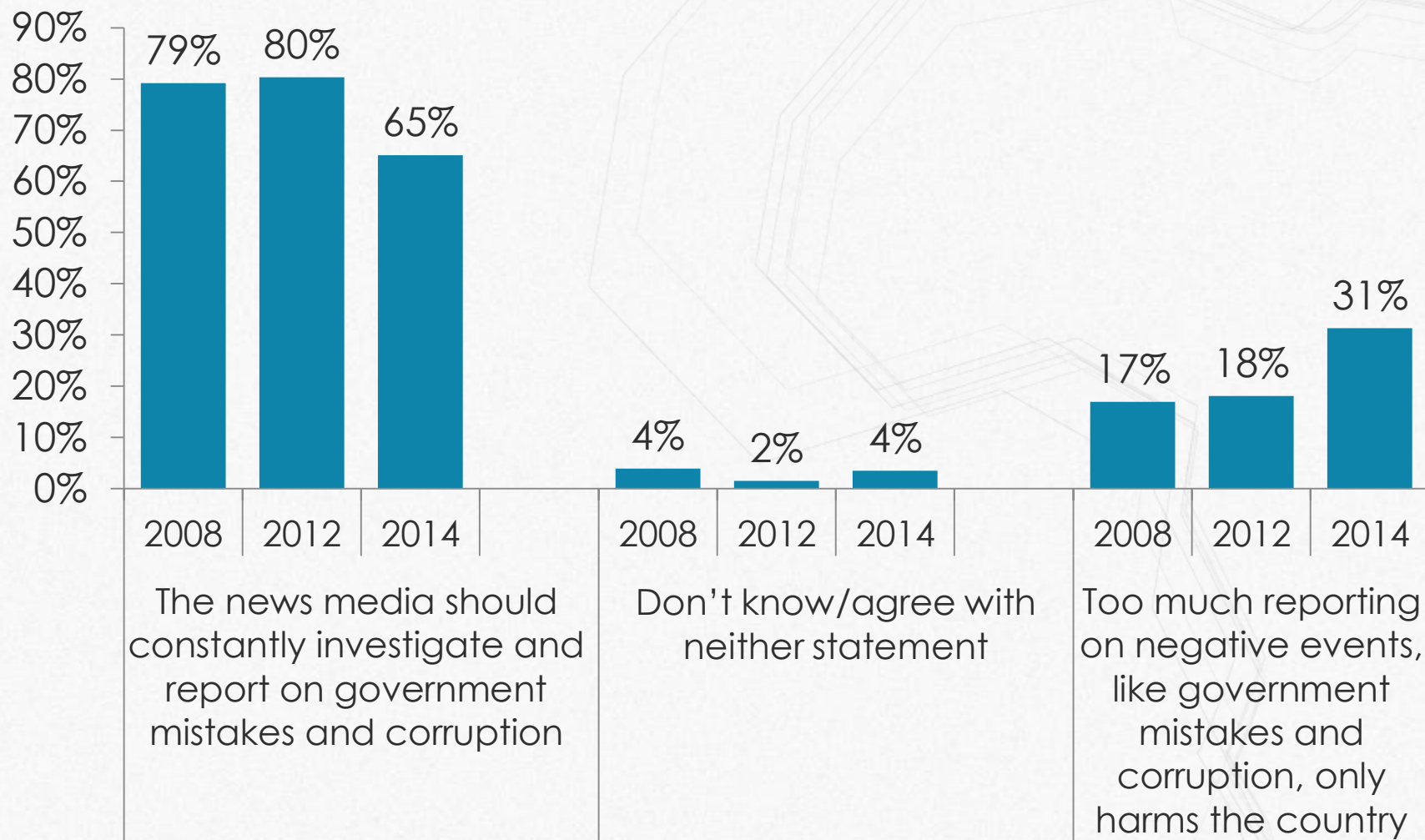
Support for critical investigative media



Key findings

- 65% support critical investigative media, say the media should constantly scrutinize the government and report malfeasance. This is 15 percentage points lower than in 2012.
- Support comparatively high in Zanzibar, in urban areas, among youth, and among well educated.
- However, proportion of citizens expressing concern about too much negative reporting has risen from 18% in 2012 to 31% in 2014.
- Exposure to news media is associated with higher individual support for critical media, but support tends to average among the most frequent users of news media.

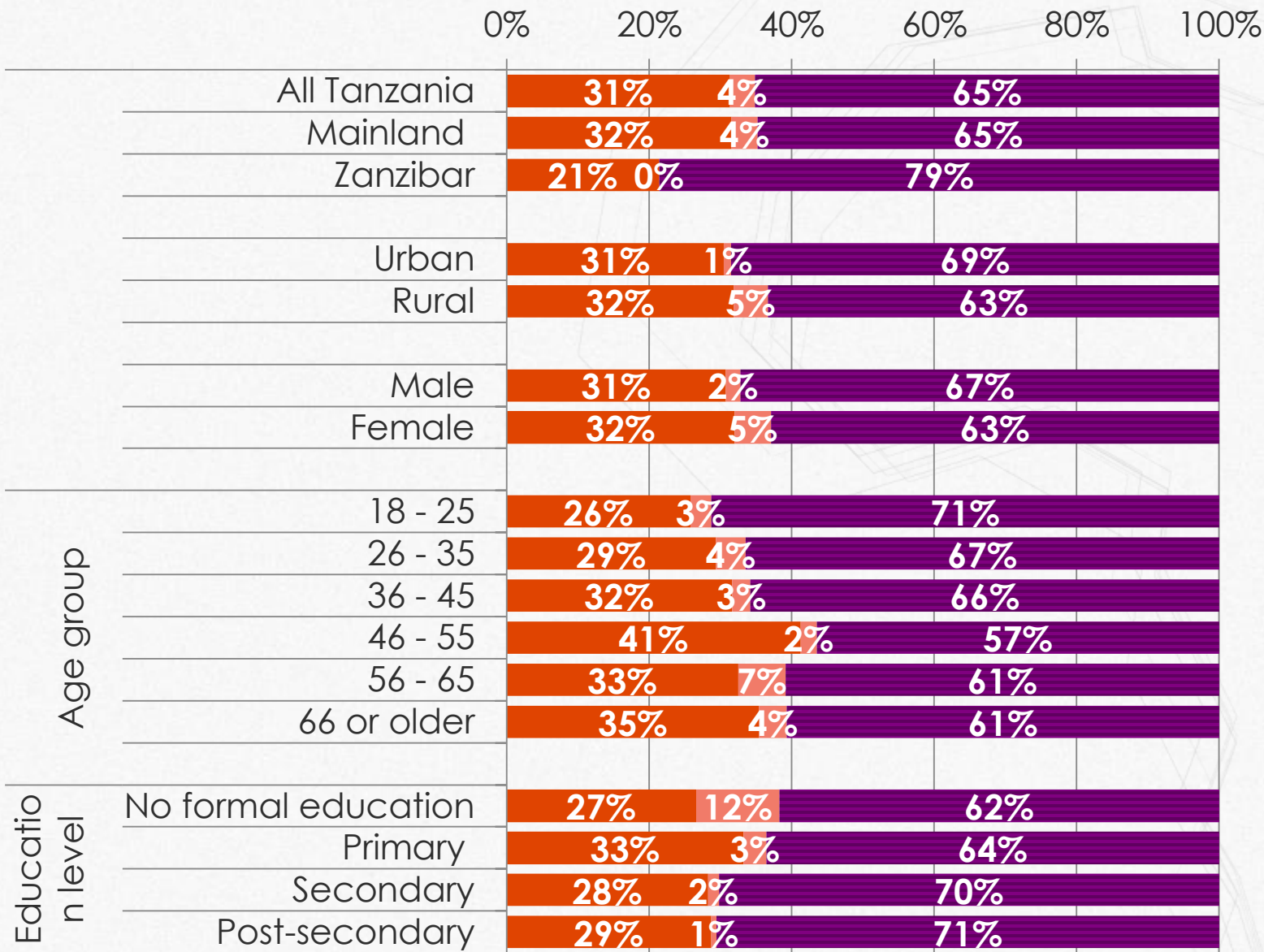
Support for critical investigative media | 2008-2014



Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? (% of respondents)

Support for critical investigative media

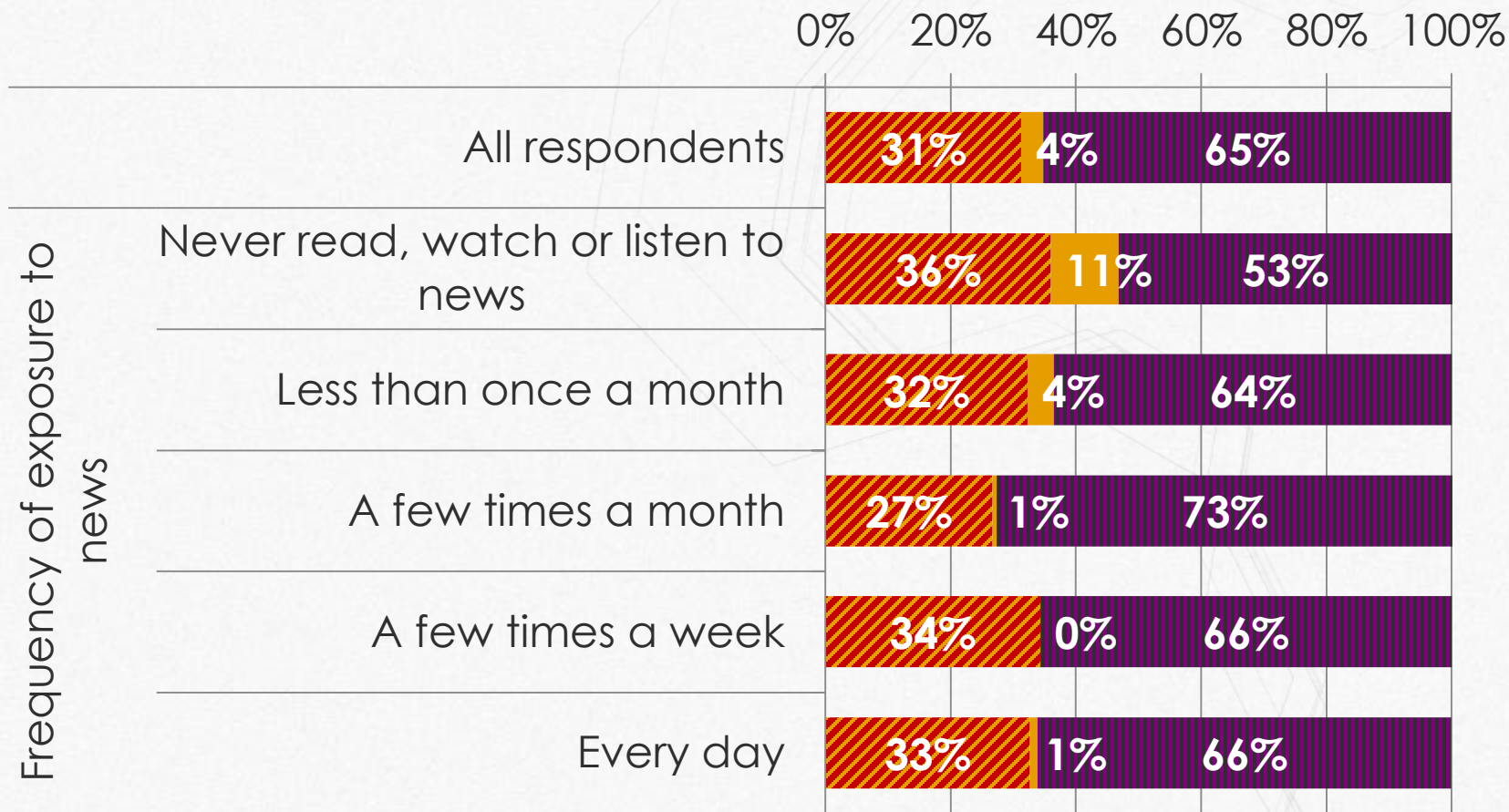
by location, gender, age, and education level | 2014



- Media should avoid negative reporting
- Don't know/agree with neither
- Media should check the government



Support for critical media by degree of exposure to news | 2014



■ Media should avoid negative reporting
 ■ Don't know/agree with neither
 ■ Media should check the government

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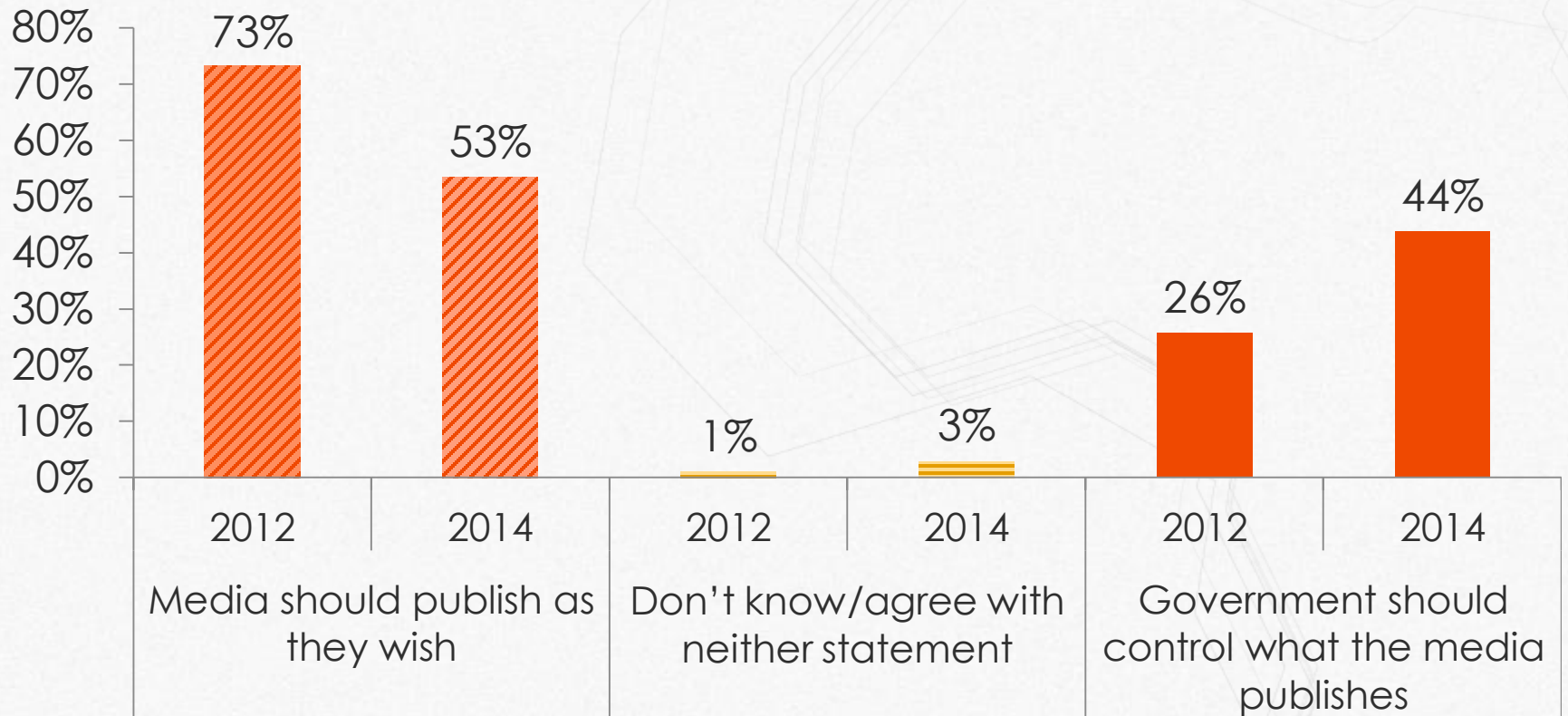
Public support for independent news reporting

Key findings



- More than half (53%) of citizens say the media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.
- This is 20 percentage points lower than in 2012.
- The proportion of respondents favouring government control rose from 26% in 2012 to 44% in 2014.
- Exposure to media modestly associated with higher level of support for independent media.

Support for independent media | 2012-2014

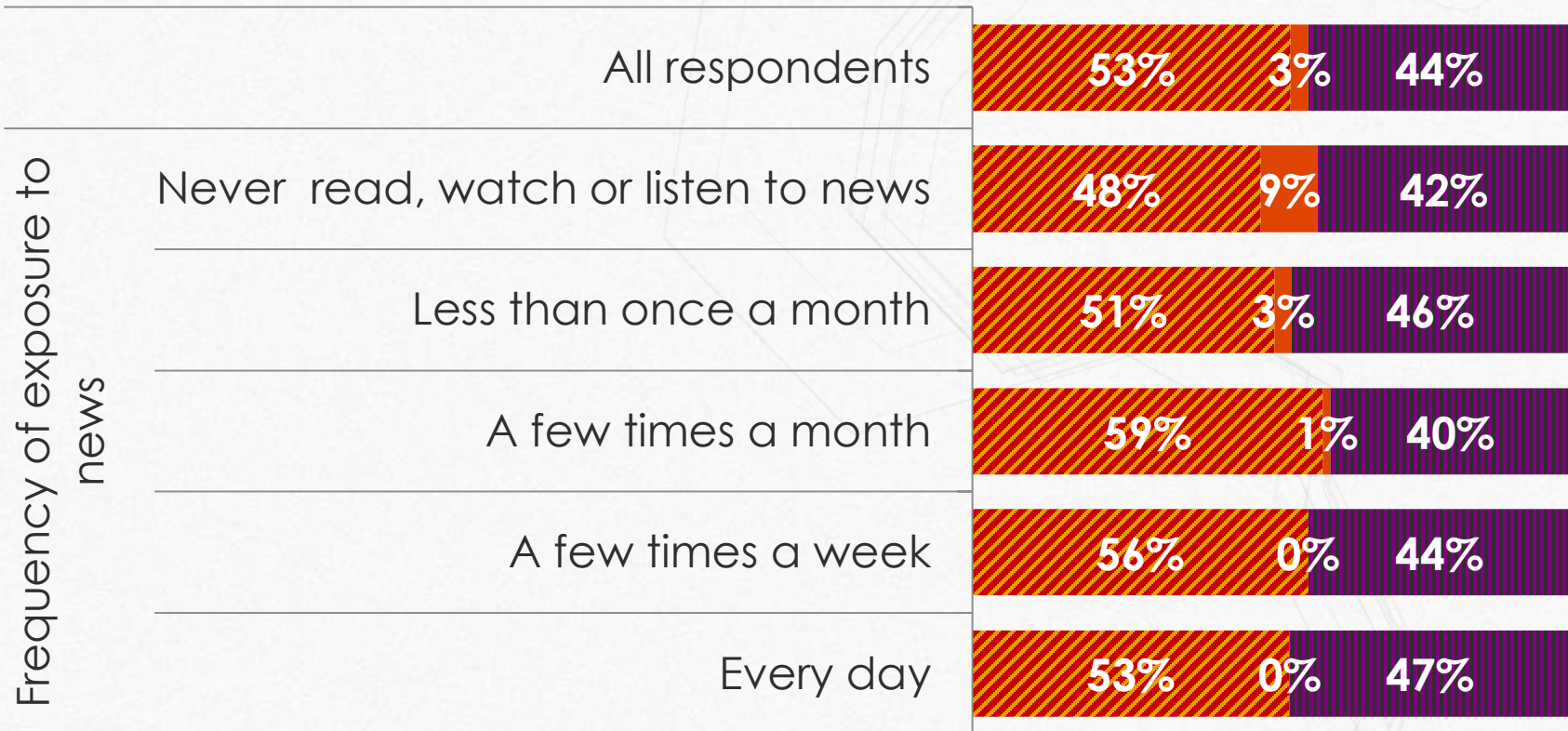


Respondents were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your views? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. (% who “agree” or “agree strongly”)

1: The media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control.

2: The government should have the right to prevent the media from publishing things that it considers harmful to society.

Support for independent media by exposure to news | 2014



- Media should publish as they wish
- Don't know/agree with neither
- Government should control what the media publishes

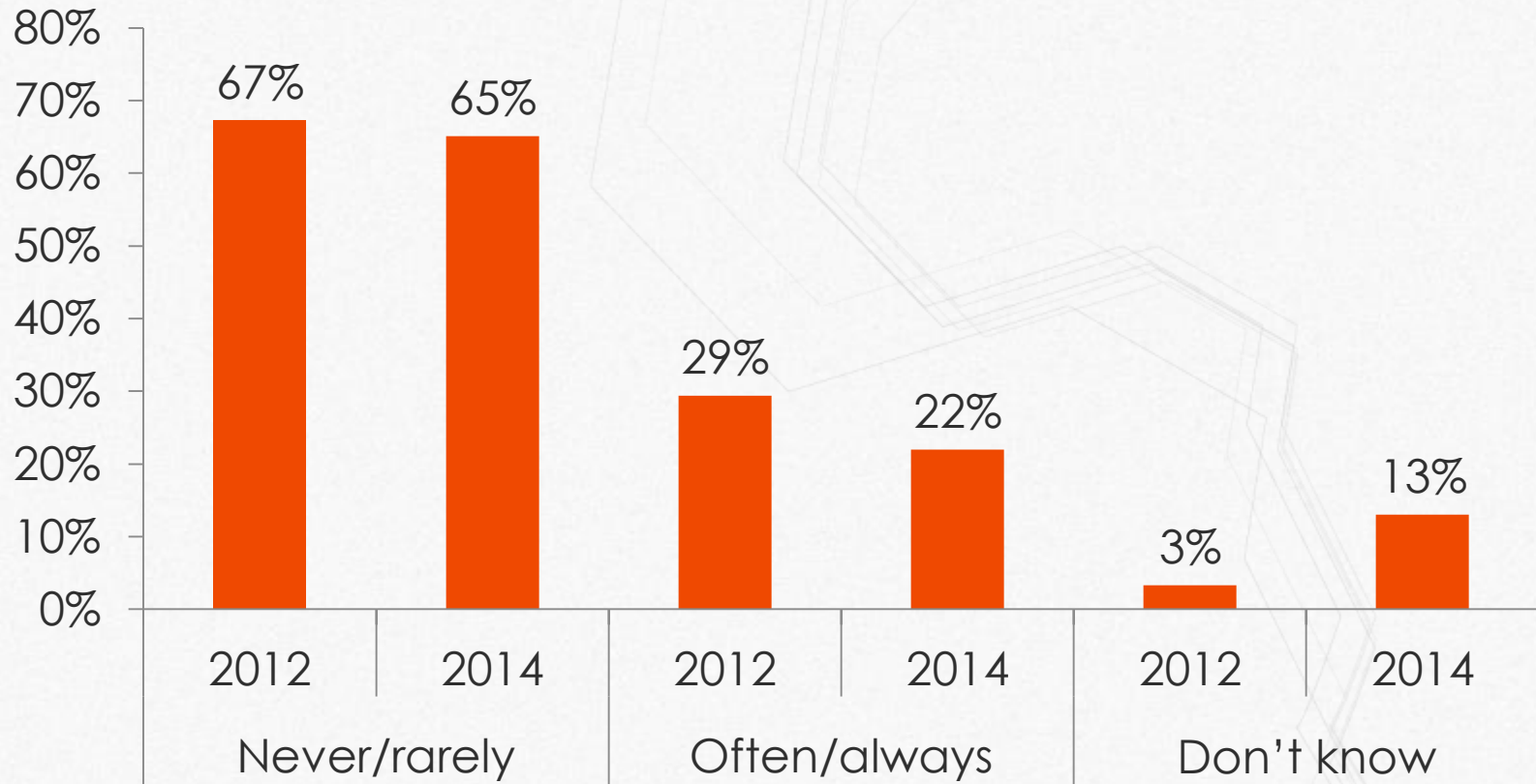


Public evaluation of reliability of news reports by the media

Key findings

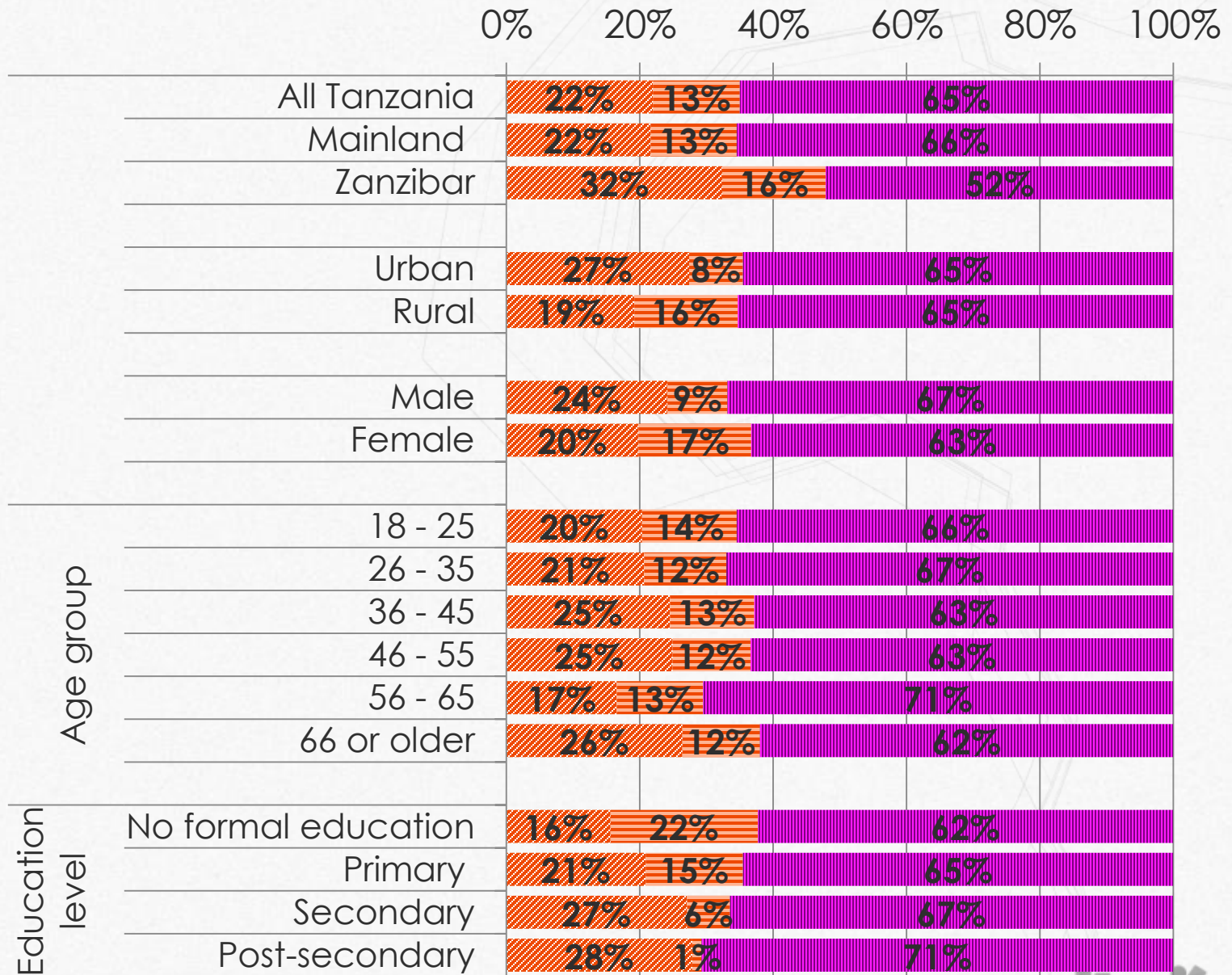
- A stable majority (65% in 2014 compared to 67% in 2012) express trust in reliability of news reports
 - However, 1 in 5 are concerned and a much higher proportion is non-committal in their assessment.
- The more educated persons are not only more likely to approve of news reliability, but also to express concern about lack of it.
- Exposure to media has modest positive correlation with approval of news reliability.

Does the media abuse its freedom by publishing things it knows are not true? | 2014



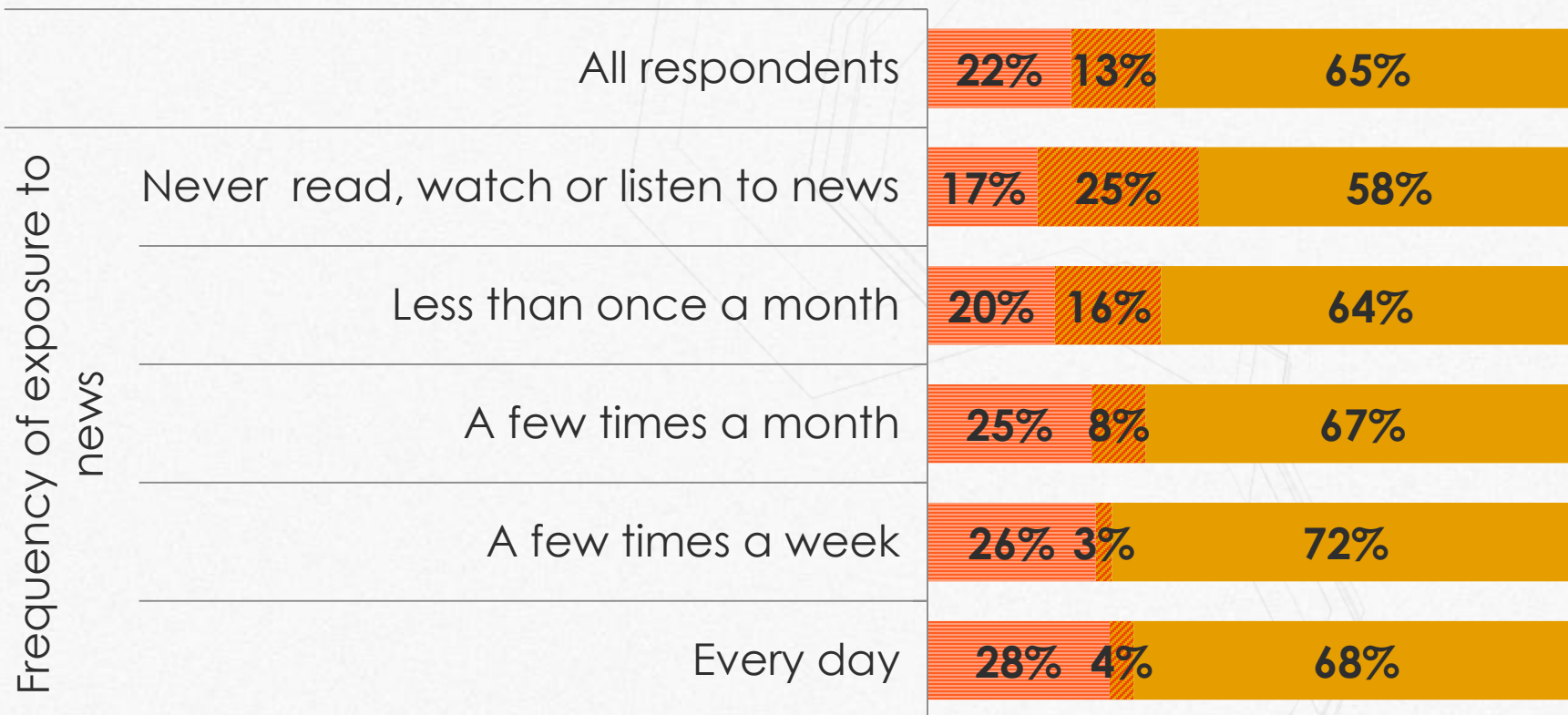
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, how often, in this country, does the news media abuse its freedoms by printing or saying things it knows are not true?

Does the media abuse its freedom by publishing things it knows are not true | 2014



Often/Always
 Don't know
 Never/rarely

Perceived reliability of news reports | by extent of exposure to news | 2014



■ Often/always
 ■ Don't know
 ■ Never/rarely

Respondents were asked: *In your opinion, how often, in this country, does the news media abuse its freedoms by printing or saying things it knows are not true?*

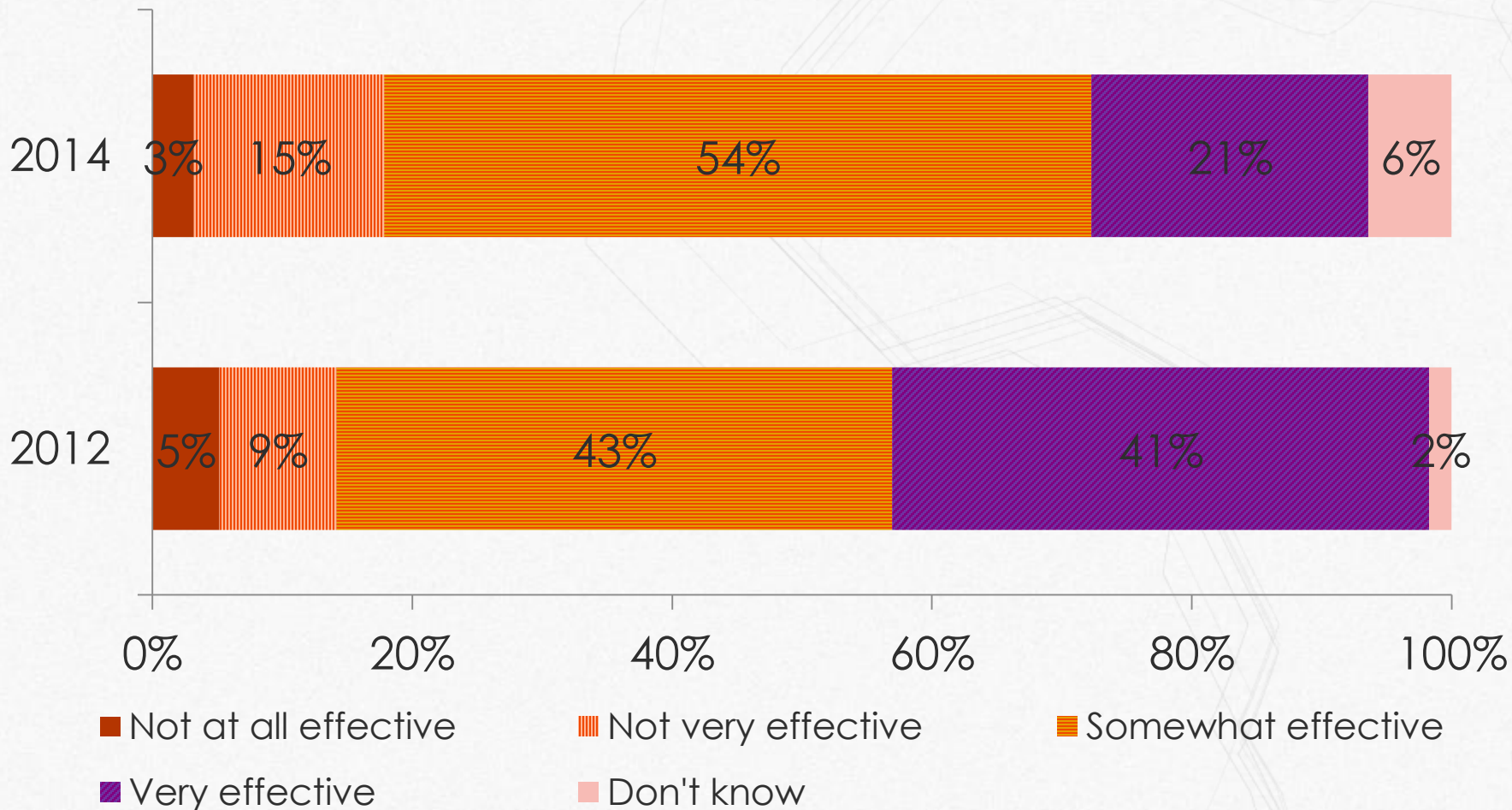


How effective is the media in its watchdog role?

Key findings

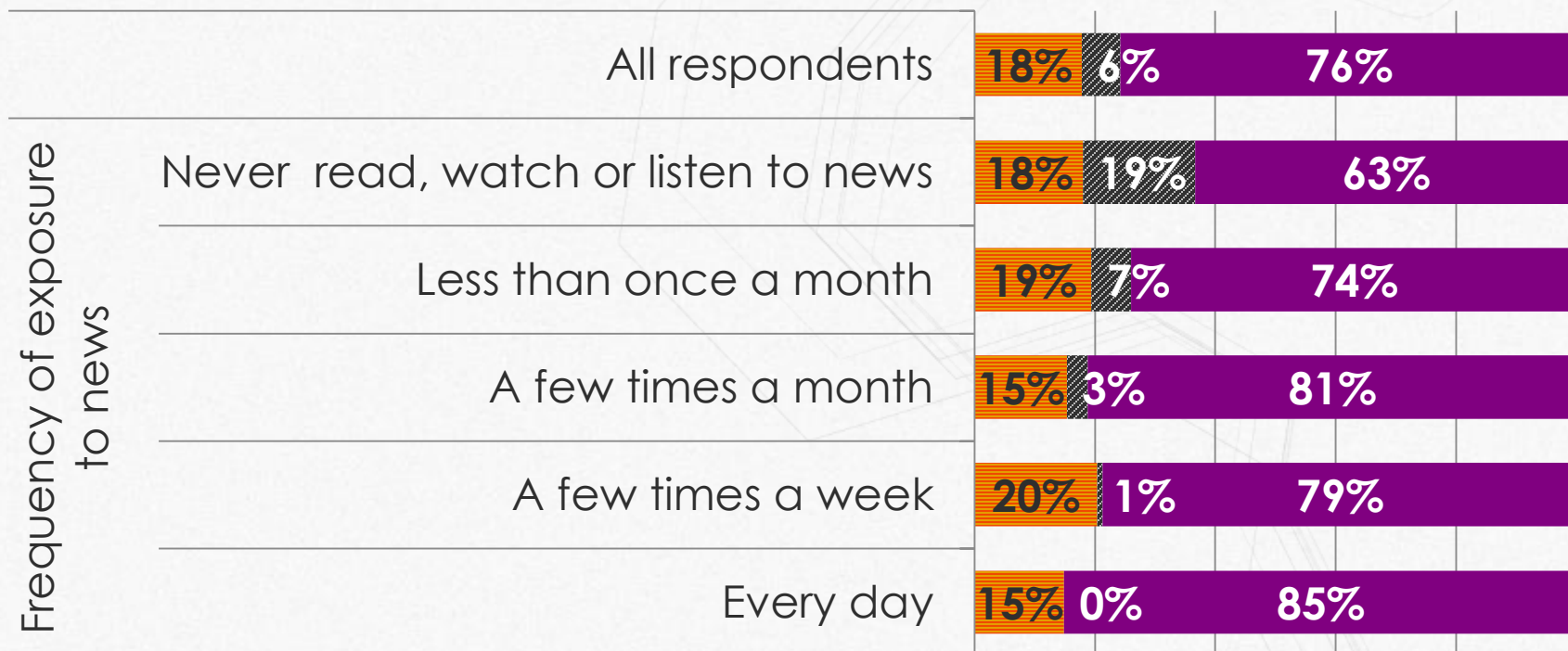
- Three fourths (76%) laud news media's effectiveness in investigating and reporting malfeasance.
- Media effectiveness is rated more positively by residents of Zanzibar compared to the mainland, men compared to women; and rises with education level of respondents
- Approval of media effectiveness also strongly correlated with frequency of exposure to news.

Media effectiveness in exposing corruption | 2012-2014



Respondents were asked: *In this country, how effective is the news media in revealing government mistakes and corruption?*

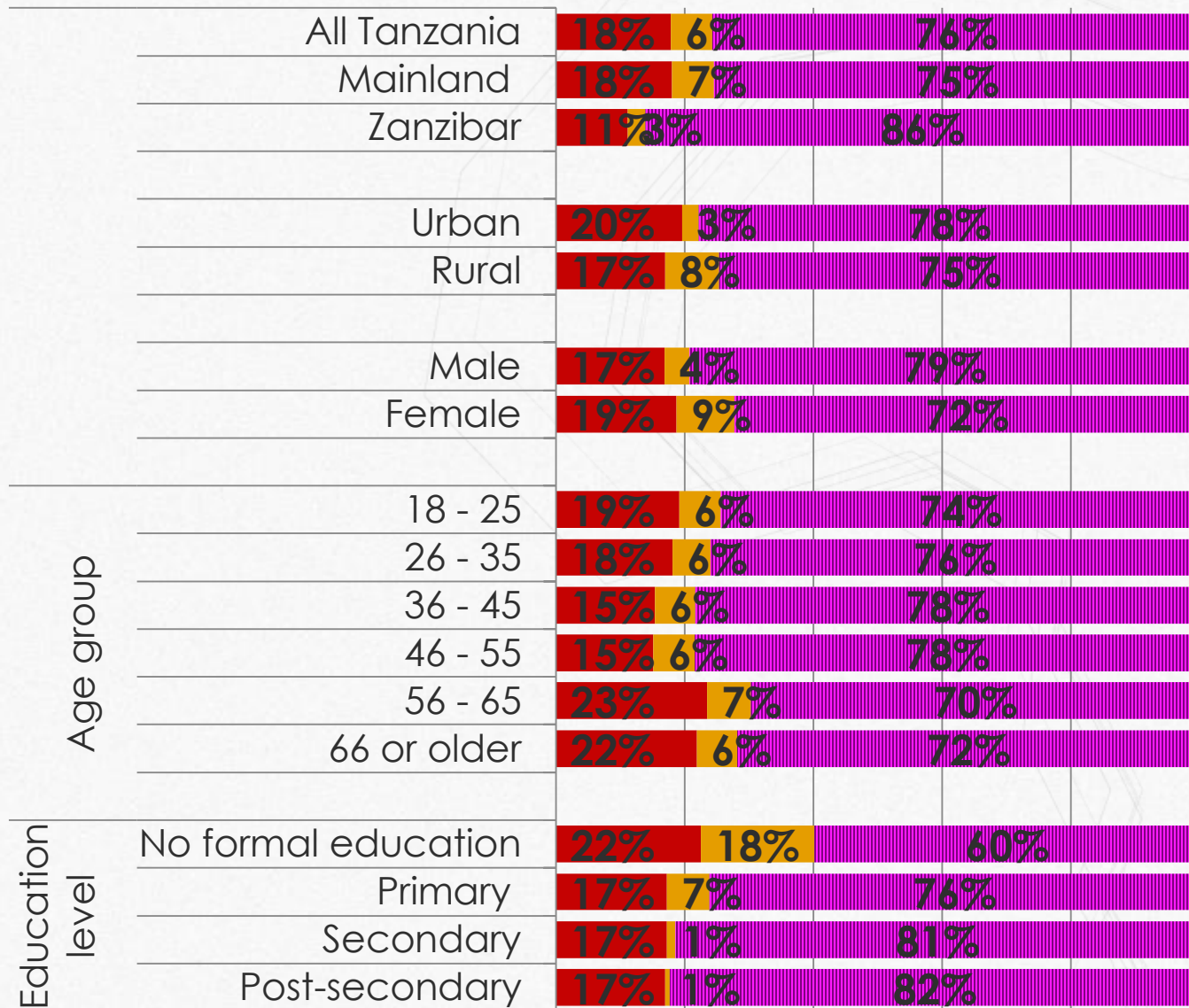
Media effectiveness in exposing corruption | by frequency of exposure to news | 2014



- Not at all effective/not very effective
- ▨ Don't know
- Somewhat effective/very effective

Respondents were asked: *In this country, how effective is the news media in revealing government mistakes and corruption?*

Media effectiveness in exposing corruption | by location, gender, age, and education level | 2014



- Not at all effective/not very effective
- Don't know
- Somewhat effective/very effective





Conclusions

- Citizens are generally satisfied with individual freedom of expression.
- A shift in public sentiment:
 - Preference for less negative reporting, rising support for government control.
- Approval of media conduct (news reliability), but also some concern regarding lack thereof.
- Media effectiveness approved by a majority, but approval has weakened in 2014 compared to 2012.
- Challenges for the media:
 - Regaining popular support for independence
 - How to meet public preference for less negative reporting
 - Defending credibility in the face of growing state strictness

Thank you
Shukran

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