



Press Release

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Majority of Malawians Report the Country is Heading in the Wrong Direction

A strong majority (78%) reported the country was heading in the wrong direction, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey held in March 2014. Malawians' perceptions on which direction the country is heading to, and perceptions about their living economic conditions were collected as part of the Afrobarometer Round 6 Survey.

Key Findings

- More than 3 in 4 Malawians (78%) said the country was going in the wrong direction in March 2014, up from 1 in 2 in May 2012. This is across residence, region, age groups, education level (Table 1)
- Some possible economic reasons for this assessment include
 - Bad current economic conditions experienced by a strong majority (78%)
 - Poor economic conditions compared to 12 months ago as 69% said their 2014 economic conditions were worse than in 2013
 - Compared to 2012, more people reported having experienced bad economic conditions in 2014 (from 70% to 78%) and worsening economic conditions over the previous 12 months (from 56% to 69%)
 - Increased lived poverty among Malawians, especially in cash income as 64% said they had always or many times gone without a cash income over the previous 12 months (Figure 1)
- Poor government performance in a number of key performance areas
 - 74% of surveyed respondents reported that the government had failed to control inflation
 - 69% said the government performed badly in managing the economy
 - 68% reported that the government performed badly on fighting corruption
 - 67% lamented on the government's performance on reducing inequality
 - 64% said it performed badly in reducing crime (Table 2)
- Survey reflects government regressing in a number of performance areas that fetched strong approval in 2012. An additional
 - 41% in 2014 than in 2012 report failure of the government in managing the economy

- 40 % in 2014 than in 2012 are unhappy about the government's effort in fighting corruption
- A third more citizens in 2014 than in 2012 lament the government's effort in reducing crime, the same proportion that are unhappy about the government's efforts in addressing educational needs.
- Close to 3 in 4 (72%) lament on how the government handled the cash gate scandal

Conclusions and recommendation

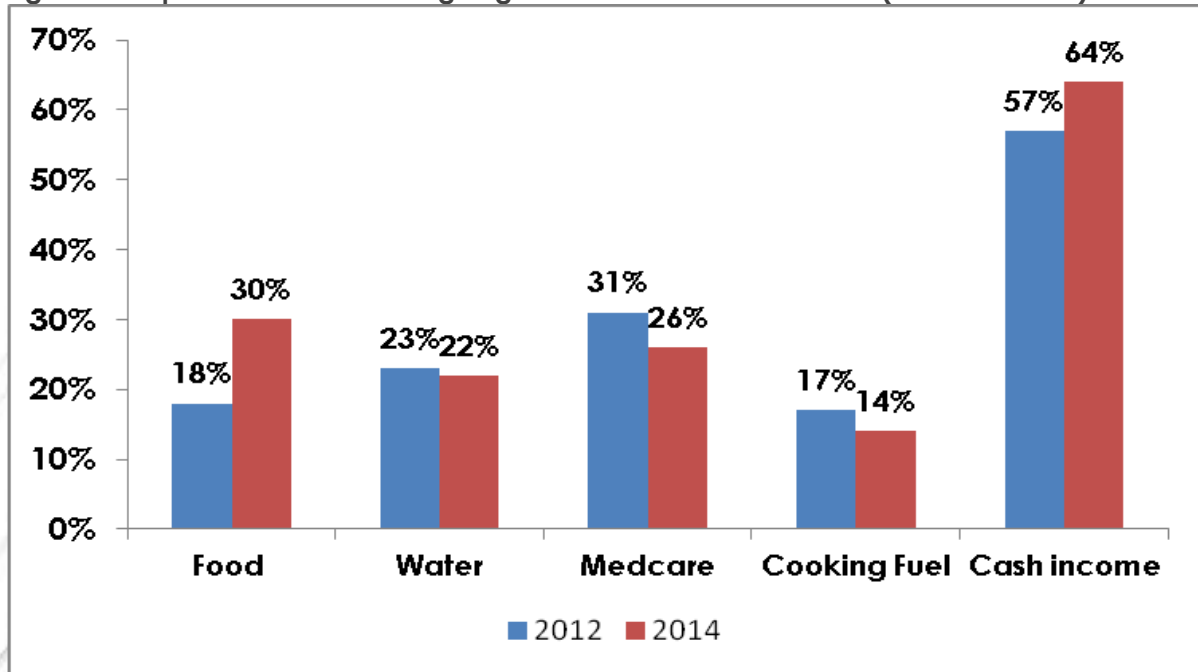
- Malawians are seemingly forming their perceptions based on lived experiences
- The perceptions held in March 2014, whether based on reasoning or not, may have influenced the election results, if one chooses to believe them
- A recommendation from this is that in a democracy it is imperative to gauge and manage perceptions on a continuous basis

Table 1: Proportion of Malawians saying the country is going in the wrong direction

	2012	2014
Malawi	50%	78%
Residence		
Urban	67%	84%
Towns	47%	66%
Rural	49%	77%
Region		
North	35%	56%
Centre	47%	83%
South	60%	79%
Age Group		
18-35 yrs	54%	78%
36-50 yrs	47%	78%
51 yrs +	44%	72%
Education level		
None	48%	72%
Primary	52%	78%
Post Primary	50%	80%

The question was: Some people might think the country is going in the wrong direction. Others may feel it is going in the right direction. So let me ask YOU about the overall direction of the country: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?

Figure 1: Proportion of Malawians going without basic commodities (2012 and 2014)



The question was: "Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Gone without enough food to eat, clean water for home use, medicines or medical treatment, fuel to cook your food and cash income? Is it never, just once or twice, several times, many times or always"

Table 2: Malawians saying the Government handled the following areas fairly or very badly (in percent)

Area	2012	2014	Change
Keeping prices down	63	74	11
Managing the economy	28	69	41
Fighting corruption in government	28	68	40
Narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor	48	67	19
Reducing crime	30	63	33
Creating jobs	44	63	19
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	37	60	23
Improving the living standards of the poor	42	59	17
Maintaining roads and bridges	30	50	20
Providing a reliable supply of electricity	34	50	16
Addressing educational needs	17	49	32
Providing water and sanitation services	29	49	20
Improving basic health services	19	48	29

The question was: *Now let's speak about the performance of the present government of this country. How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?*

Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer is an independent research project that has measured countries' social, political, and economic atmosphere since 1999, and is now on its six survey round, covering 35 countries. In Malawi, the surveys are done by University of Malawi at the Centre for Social Research. It is funded by the Department of International Development, United States Agency for International Aid, Swedish Aid Agency, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, World Bank, Transparency International and the Gates Foundation.

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