



Press Release

24 September 2014

Malawians support a strong Parliament in spite of disappointment with their representatives

Summary

Malawians value Parliament's legislative and oversight role but are highly critical of the performance of parliamentarians, according to the latest Afrobarometer survey. A majority want parliament to vet the president's appointment of cabinet ministers and hold the president accountable. Most citizens disapprove of how their Members of Parliament (MPs) have been doing their work and feel that their MPs do not listen to them. A significant proportion of MPs are perceived to be corrupt, and public trust in the National Assembly has waned.

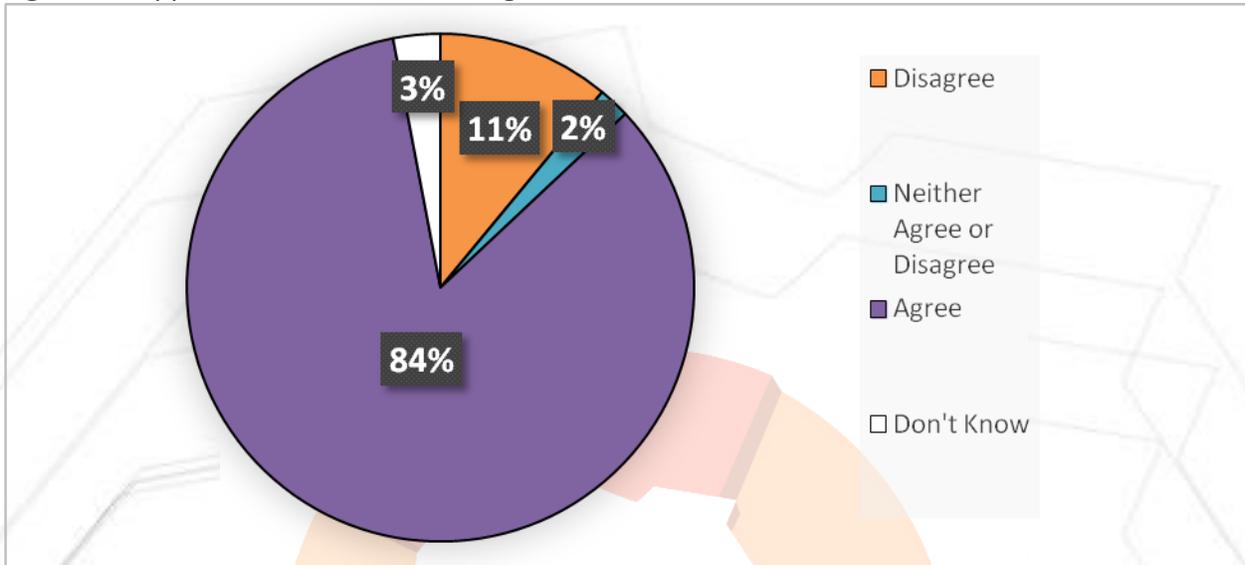
Key findings

- Support for parliamentary powers is strong: More than eight in 10 Malawians (84%) want parliament to vet the president's Cabinet appointments. About 60% say the president should regularly appear before Parliament to explain his actions. And about three-fourths (73%) say Parliament should have the power to make laws even if they go against the wishes of the president. (Figure 1-2)
- Approval ratings of MPs are low. Only three of 10 Malawians approve of the way their MPs perform their duties. Only 15% had contact with their MPs in the previous year to share their views or register some important problem. A majority (60%) feels that MPs never listen to what ordinary people have to say. (Figure 2-4)
- Three-quarters of Malawians (74%) say at least some parliamentarians are involved in corruption. Only half of Malawians trust the National Assembly, compared to 64% who trusted it in 2012. (Figure 5-6)

Conclusions and recommendation

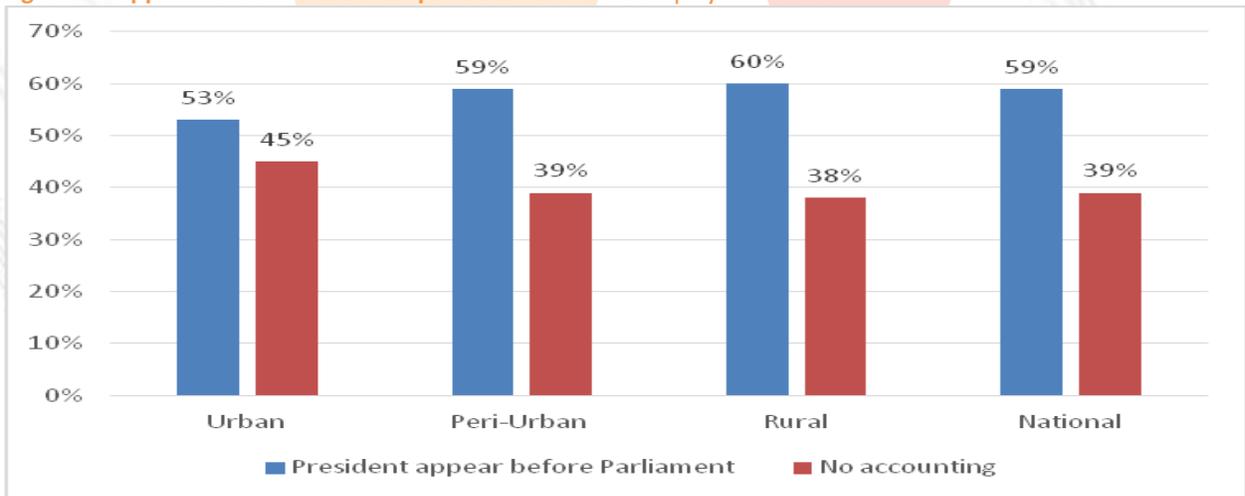
- The findings clearly show that Malawians strongly support the institution of Parliament in the country's political set-up but are calling on their MPs to serve them better.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi should be amended to empower parliament to vet presidential appointments of cabinet ministers. Parliaments should institutionalise presidential question time.
- Members of parliament should create platform for engaging with their constituents and work towards redeeming the confidence of Malawians

Figure 1: Support for Parliament vetting of Cabinet ministers



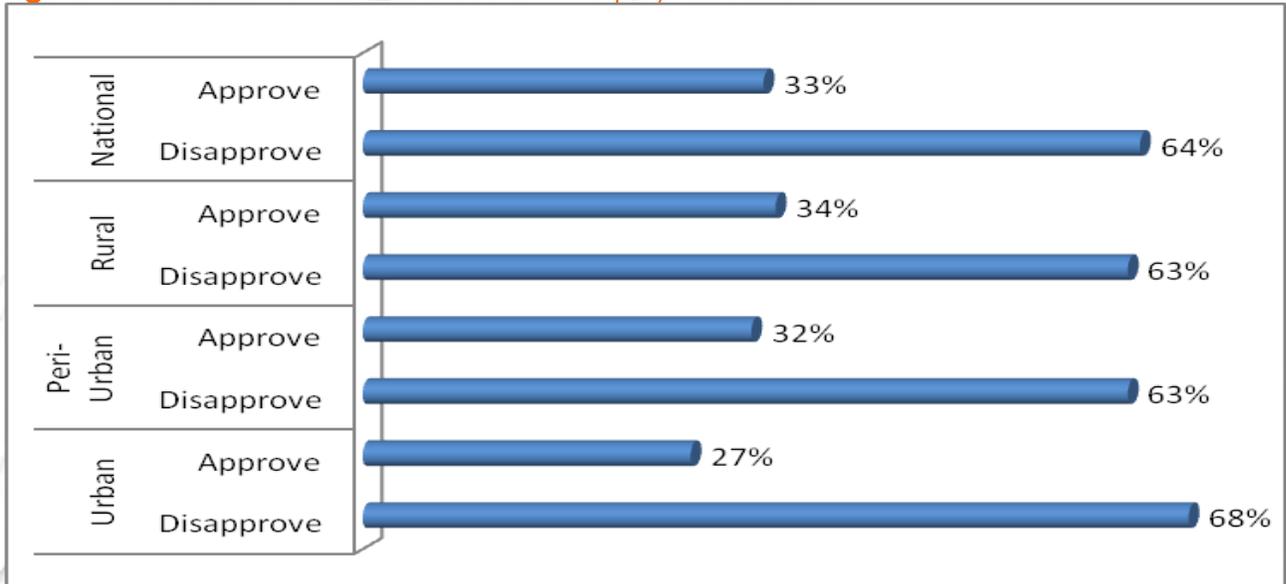
Participants were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements ... “Parliament should scrutinize all presidential nominees for Cabinet appointment and reject those deemed to be unqualified.”

Figure 2: Support for MPs to hold the president accountable | by residence



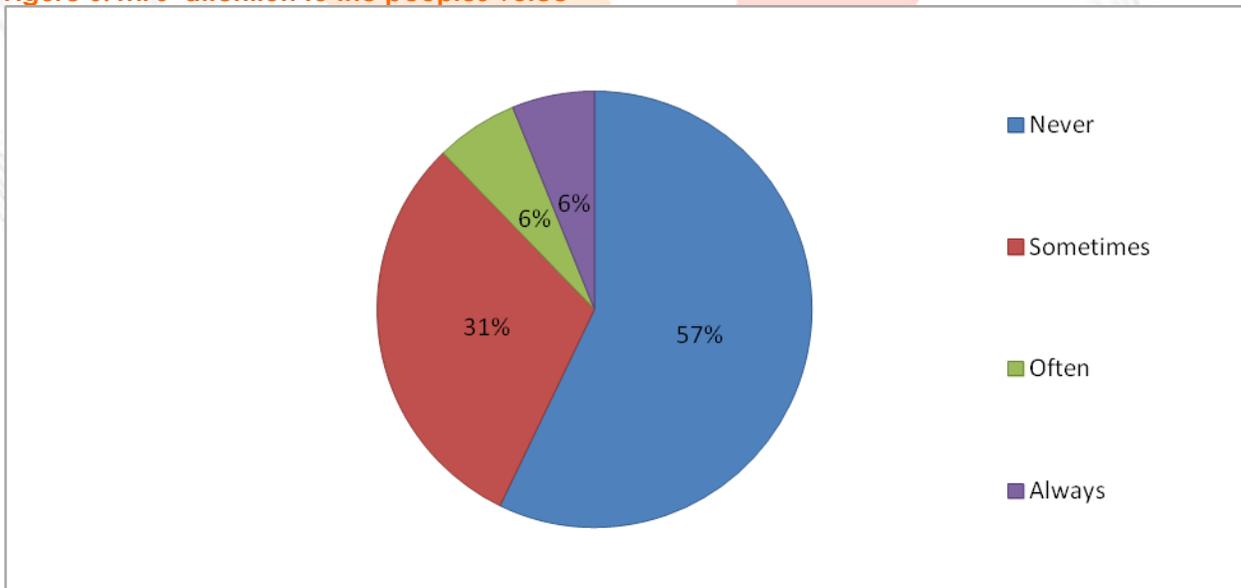
Participants were asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? “Parliament should ensure that the president explains to it on a regular basis how her government spends taxpayers’ money” or “The President should be able to devote her full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying her actions.”

Figure 4: Evaluation of Performance of MPs | by residence



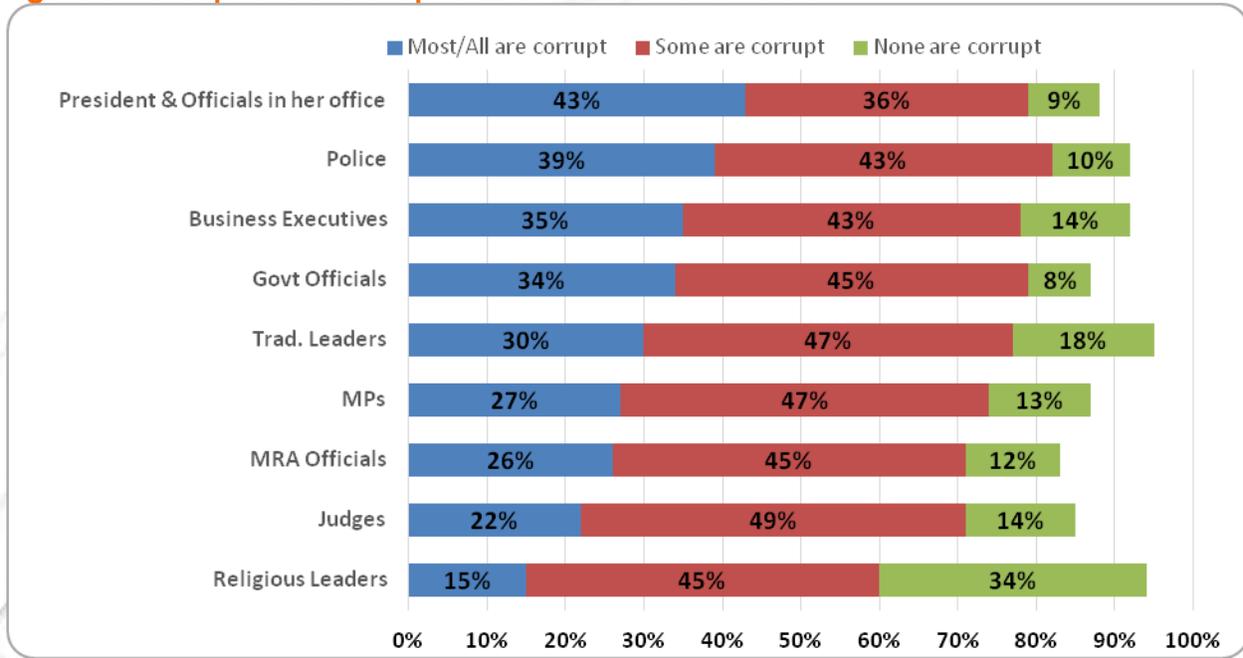
Participants were asked: Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?... Your Member of Parliament.

Figure 6: MPs' attention to the peoples voice



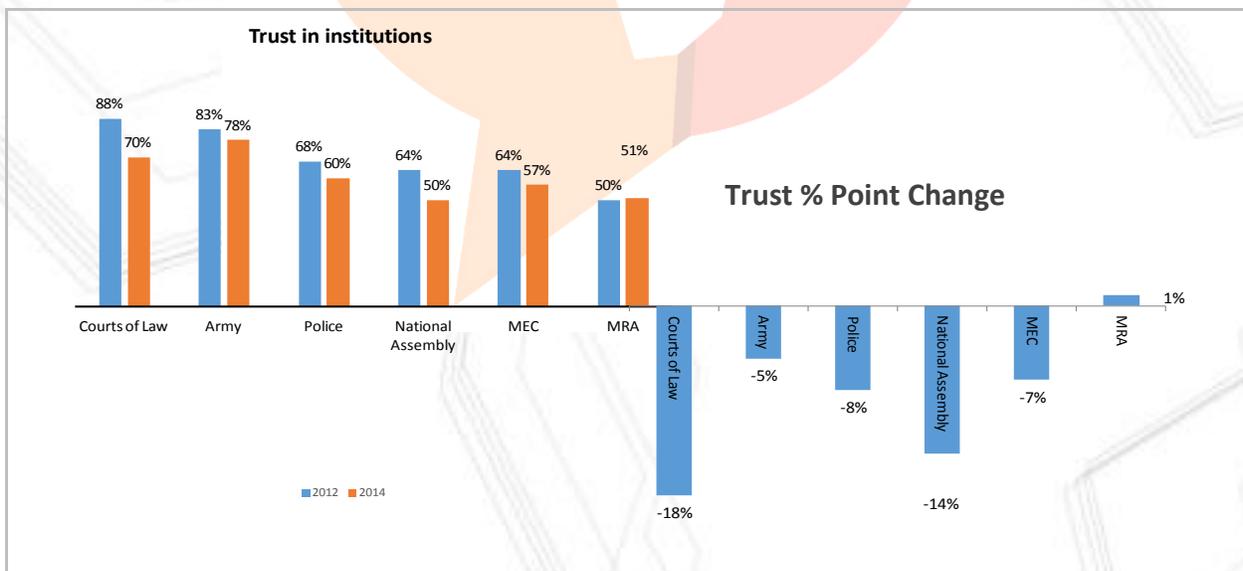
Participants were asked: How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say... Members of Parliament?

Figure 6: Perceptions of corruption: MPs and other officials



Participants were asked: How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?

Figure 8: Trust in National Assembly and other institutions (2012-2014)



Respondents were asked: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?" The figure shows percentages of those who said "somewhat" or "a lot."

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, and the World Bank.

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