

# AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 46

## TEN YEARS OF DEMOCRACY IN MALAWI: ARE MALAWIANS GETTING WHAT THEY VOTED FOR?

by Stanley Khaila and  
Catherine Chibwana

**A comparative series of national public  
attitude surveys on democracy, markets  
and civil society in Africa.**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Afrobarometer is a comparative series of public attitude surveys conducted in many African countries. Round 2 surveys were conducted between June 2002 and October 2003. Round 2 of the Afrobarometer covered 15 sub-Saharan African countries (8 in SADC: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia; 5 in West Africa: Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal; and 2 in East Africa: Kenya and Uganda). In Malawi, we conducted the Round 2 survey from April 29 to May 18, 2003, interviewing a total of 1200 respondents drawn from all the districts in the country, from Chitipa to Nsaje. The first Afrobarometer survey in Malawi was conducted in November-December 1999.

Key findings of the 2003 survey in Malawi include the following:

### **Demand for Democracy**

- A majority (78 percent) of Malawians prefer regular, open and honest elections.
- Sixty-three percent prefer many political parties to allow real choices in who governs them.
- Seventy-six percent say two five-year terms in office is adequate for the president and 63 percent say section 83(3) of the constitution should not be amended.
- Malawians reject authoritarian rule of any type (one-party rule, military rule, etc.)
- A majority of Malawians support the rule of law.

### **Supply of Democracy**

- Fifty-seven percent of Malawians say Malawi is a democracy with major problems or not a democracy at all. The northern region is more dissatisfied with democracy than either the centre or south.
- In Malawi, the army and the police are most trusted (72 percent and 64 percent, respectively).
- Seventy-one percent say economic and political freedoms are better or much better under the multiparty regime. This is also true for freedom of choice, and freedom from unjust arrest. However, Malawians are less free from crime and violence.
- Thirty percent of Malawians believe the president often ignores the constitution.
- A significant minority (36 percent) say the government often treats people unequally.
- Perceptions of the level of corruption are quite high. Forty-six percent of the Malawians say most border officials, 47 percent of the police, and 46 percent of government officials are involved in corruption. Others perceived to be quite involved in corruption include the business community (local and foreign), elected leaders, judges and magistrates, and the office of the presidency.

## SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

“As the dust was settling over the ruins of the Berlin Wall, people everywhere, in all walks of life and of all ideologies, shared a moment of wild optimism toward the prospects of a more just and democratic world. In little more than a decade, it has become apparent that democracy may not be all it is reputed to be and, to some, justice seems to recede even as it is pursued.” (Introductory statement of the Call for Papers for the 2003 IPSA World Congress, Durban, South Africa).

For 30 years, from 1964 to 1994, Malawi was under a centralised, one-party and one-man dictatorship. The National Referendum in 1993 brought to an end this era of one-party rule and ushered in multiparty democracy through the formation of new political parties. Malawians greeted the referendum results and the subsequent general elections with optimism and hope for a better Malawi. Political commentators claimed that the voters’ decision to change the system of government in the 1993 referendum was strong evidence that the one-party system of government had failed to meet the expectations of the majority of the people. Ten years have elapsed since 1993. Are Malawians getting what they voted for? Is the multiparty system of government meeting the expectations of those voters who voted for multiparty democracy in the referendum of 1993? This paper utilises data from the Afrobarometer survey and attempts to shed some light on these burning questions.

Before getting to the analyses of the Afrobarometer data, we would like to provide the social, political and economic context within which the respondents to the questionnaire lived at the time of the survey.

On the social front, poverty in Malawi is widespread, deep and severe, resulting in 65.3 percent of the population falling below the poverty line of an income of less than a dollar a day (Government of Malawi, 2002). In 1994, per capita income was US\$160, and it was the same in 2001. In 2002 the National Economic Council (NEC) carried out a survey on “Qualitative Impact Monitoring of Poverty Alleviation Policies.” Half of the respondents in the communities covered by this survey felt that poverty had gotten worse, while a quarter said it had decreased and another quarter felt it had remained the same. Those who felt that the situation had gotten worse attributed this to high commodity prices, closure of the government-owned Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) markets, lack of access to credit, HIV/AIDS, low produce prices and an increase in crime. Some social indicators also showed a declining trend. For example, life expectancy has dropped from 44 to 38 years, and adult literacy has declined from 44 percent to 40 percent between 1995 and 2000.

According to the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP), there is a very high level of inequality in Malawi, which is well illustrated by the fact that in 1997/98, the richest 20 percent of the population consumed 46.3 percent of the total reported consumption of goods and services, while the poorest 20 percent consumed only 6.3 percent. In urban areas the situation was even worse; the richest 20 percent consumed 58.4 percent, while the poorest 20 percent consumed only 4.5 percent. The Gini coefficient was 0.52 for urban areas, as opposed to 0.37 in rural areas (Table 1).

The MPRSP states that almost half of poor households are self-employed and agriculture is the predominant economic activity, especially for rural areas. However, most of the poor are constrained in terms of both land and labour. About 81 percent of the poorest 10 percent of households have landholdings of less than 0.5 hectares. By contrast, 64 percent of the richest 10 percent of households cultivate more than 1 hectare of land. Females are disproportionately affected by labour constraints as they spend more time caring for their families, including the sick, especially HIV/AIDS patients.



**Table 1: Indices of Inequality in Consumption**

	Gini Coefficient	Consumption of Group as percentages of Total Consumption of Population	
		Poorest 20 percent	Wealthiest 20 percent
National	.40	6.3	46.8
Rural	.37	6.7	44.3
Urban	.52	4.5	58.4

Source: Government of Malawi (2000) *Profile of Poverty in Malawi: Poverty Analysis of the Integrated Household Survey*

Around 50.4 percent of the population is engaged in non-farm business activity, and this proportion is higher in urban areas (67.5 percent) than in rural areas (47.9 percent). Trading is the most common non-farm business activity for both the urban and rural areas. However, in the urban areas trading is more common among the poor, while in the rural it is dominated by the non-poor. Subsistence agriculture is the main source of income for the rural poor, accounting for 63.7 percent of their income. Despite this, most agricultural production is home consumed. Notably, income from agricultural sales is *not* the most important source of cash income in rural areas. The major source of *cash income* for Malawian households is wage income, but it contributes only 13.0 percent of income for the rural poor. However, there is limited participation in the cash economy by the poor, especially by women.

It is important to point out that in 2002, the year preceding our survey; there was a severe food crisis in Malawi. This was partly due to poor rains the previous year and also due to the draw down on the National Food Reserve by the government.<sup>1</sup> There were accusations and counter-accusations as to who made the decision to draw down the grain reserves; the government blamed it on IMF advice, but the IMF denied any responsibility. On the other hand there were questions as to how the maize was sold and who sold it. This situation created a feeling that there was something wrong with the way the National Food Reserve was drawn down<sup>2</sup>.

On the positive side, the country has witnessed a boom in the informal trading sector (vendors are everywhere selling all sorts of goods). In addition, Malawi has seen the arrival of international supermarkets such as Shoprite, Seven-Eleven, and Metro. The construction industry has also been growing fast, in both residential housing and business complexes. Nthara (2003) notes that more modern houses and commercial buildings are being built and that the population of cars on the roads has increased. Similarly, television antennae and satellite dishes on rooftops have become a common sight in cities and district centres.

On the other hand, the period has been characterised by high inflation which is indicated by the high Consumer Price Index (CPI) alongside the falling value of the Malawi Kwacha. Between 1980 and 1990 inflation averaged 16.6 percent. However, between 1994 and 2002 inflation averaged about 37 percent; in some years it went as high as 83 percent. Interest rates have soared to more than 50 percent. The net effect of these trends has been increases in food prices and transport costs. To make matters worse, the economic reforms implemented during this period have resulted in the closure of many companies,

<sup>1</sup> In 2001, the Government decided to sell all the maize (draw down) from the National Food Reserve because they received technical advice that it had met its shelf life in the silos and that it would soon go bad. It was also argued that keeping maize stocks is an expensive exercise and cannot be done for prolonged period.

<sup>2</sup> In the last quarter of 2001, newspapers carried critical headlines concerning the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA). For example: "Maize Reserve Looted, Some Ministers Bought Maize Cheaply," Daily Times, August 29, 2001; "Prohibitive Maize Prices Force People to Eat *Madea* [maize bran]," Daily Times, September 4, 2001; "NFRA Did Not Buy Surplus, Sold Maize," Nation, 11 September 2001; and "ADMARC Sold Maize Meant for Reserves," Daily Times, 11 September 2001.

resulting in massive job losses. Some political analysts have observed that economic reforms have contributed to economic decline in Malawi (Anders, 2002).

On the political scene, Malawi's political pluralism has brought with it allegiances among political elites which are unpredictable and erratic. At the time of the referendum in 1993, the political divide was between the conservatives who supported Kamuzu Banda's one-party, one-man authoritarian regime and those who were for a multiparty system of government. These were the democrats, who, according to Harri Englund, were emboldened by aid donors' insistence on respect for human rights and good governance, staged protests and formed pressure groups. Now all political parties share the tenets of liberalism in both politics and the economy. Their differences cannot be pinpointed with a reference to substantially divergent values and objectives. Everybody is committed to multiparty democracy, respecting human rights and the market economy (Englund, 2002).

The distinguishing feature of Malawi's political scene is now the parties' regional bases. It is common knowledge among Malawians that the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) has its stronghold in the Northern Region, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) has its base in the Central Region, and the United Democratic Party (UDF)<sup>3</sup> is strongest in the heavily populated Southern Region. The regional demographic configuration of Malawi gives no chance to AFORD to win a presidential election or have a majority in the national assembly. Yet neither the MCP nor UDF alone feels confident of winning the presidency. This is one of the reasons why AFORD has been used as a trump card in both the parliamentary and presidential elections.

The electorate in the Northern Region have shown conservatism and discipline in their consistent vote for AFORD. In the transition elections of May 1994, AFORD scooped all the 33 parliamentary seats in the North and had zero seats in the South. In 1999, AFORD lost only 5 of the 33 Northern seats, and this can be explained by the fact that Chakufwa Chihana, AFORD's presidential candidate in 1994, had formed an alliance with the "party of death and darkness," the MCP, which managed to win four constituencies in the North.

The presidential elections have also shown a similar trend. In the 1994 Presidential elections, Chihana won 88 percent (404,837) of the votes from his northern stronghold. In 1999 AFORD did not field a presidential candidate because it formed an alliance with the MCP. For this reason, the MCP presidential candidate, Gwanda Chakwamba, was able to scoop 87 percent (573,688) of the northern votes, compared to Kamuzu Banda's dismal performance in 1994, when he had a mere 7 percent.

On the other hand, the central and the southern electorates have been relatively more willing to vote for a party whose stronghold is elsewhere. For instance, in both the 1994 and 1999 elections, all three major parties (AFORD, MCP and UDF) won constituencies in Central Region, and Southern Region was shared between the MCP and UDF. In the 1994 presidential race, the UDF presidential candidate, Bakili Muluzi, garnered 47 percent, 28 percent and 4 percent of the Southern, Central and Northern Regions' votes, respectively. In the 1999 elections the votes for Muluzi were distributed as follows: 79 percent (1,746,643) in the South, 35 percent (634,912) in Central Region, and 9 percent (61,130) Northern Region. These statistics indicate that, in a real sense there are only two national parties in the country, and AFORD is only a Northern Region party. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the Northern Region

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<sup>3</sup> AFORD is a party with its power base in the Northern region and played a significant role in change over from the one party rule to multiparty; the MCP is the first black led party to win majority seats in Nyasaland parliament in 1961. It is the party historically associated with ushering in self rule and independence from Britain in 1964. Its power base is in the Central region. The UDF started as a pressure group in the run up to the 1993 multiparty vs. one party referendum. After the referendum it registered as a party and won the general elections in 1994. It is the currently the ruling party.

hardly legitimised the two major parties (MCP and UDF) in the 1994 elections, and only legitimised MCP in 1999 because of an alliance with AFORD.

The post Banda democratic era has been characterised by shifting alliances among political parties as well as among individual politicians. We have seen the state president, Muluzi, extending a friendly hand to John Tembo, his sworn enemy. Brown Mpinganjira, a founding member of the ruling UDF, has been seen in the company of Hetherwick Ntaba and Gwanda Chakwamba, both stalwarts of the MCP. Chakufwa Chihana of AFORD has moved from UDF to MCP, and back to UDF again. Roth Patel, one-time Minister of Transport in the UDF, quit the party to form his own. Bingu wa Mutharika, former president of the now defunct United Party, left his own party to ally himself with the ruling UDF party. Khwauli Msiska, a member of parliament from AFORD, tabled the controversial “open terms bill” in Parliament which aimed at amending section 83(3) to allow Muluzi to run for a third term. A large number of MPs from the opposition, including John Tembo, then leader of the opposition, supported the bill. Many of the founding fathers of the UDF (Mpinganjira, Mbewe, Aleke Banda, Makhumula, Harry Johnson, etc.) fell out of favour with their party and have since formed their own or joined other parties.

The shifting of alliances has not spared the opposition. In the MCP, long-standing chasms came to the surface when John Tembo boycotted a convention called for by his boss, the party’s president, Gwanda Chakwamba, and decided to have his own convention instead. Chakwamba then took Tembo to court and relations soured. In the aftermath of the failed third term bill, Parliament threw Tembo and Kate Kainja (Secretary General of MCP) out of Parliament, asserting that they had committed the crime of contempt of court. This saw Chakwamba return to his seat as leader of opposition in Parliament. Tembo and Kainja challenged the decision of Parliament and appealed to the Supreme Court, which dismissed Parliament’s decision, returning them to Parliament. Soon after this, Chakwamba announced that he was forming his own party, the Republican Party. Earlier on, Hetherwick Ntaba, previously a close ally of Chakwamba in the MCP, had seen his membership in the party challenged by both Tembo and Chakwamba. He too quit the party and formed his own, the New Congress Party.

AFORD had its own internal problems. Chihana,<sup>4</sup> who had resigned as Second Vice President in 1995 and renounced his partnership with the UDF, suddenly realised that his resignation meant that he would not get a retirement package. He subsequently rejoined the UDF in 2003 and was appointed Second Vice President again, and Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation. This irked the younger MPs in the party, and the party subsequently broke in two. Hence, the North now has two parties, the Movement for Genuine Democracy (MGOODE) and AFORD. MGOODE has since joined the coalition of opposition parties, while AFORD has formed an alliance with the UDF.

These shifts in alliances reveal several things about African democratic politics. For one, they can be driven by greed and the need to access wealth. Alliances are entered into because it is expedient to do so. Political leaders have learnt that in Africa, politics provides a means to form alliances with international figures and allows one to exploit local resources for one’s personal gain. In this intractable and continuous shifting of alliances among parties and individuals, the political behaviour of the ruling party has been less than completely democratic. However, it must be said that one thing acknowledged by everyone about the ruling UDF, and President Muluzi in particular, is their willingness to allow free speech and expression. But that is all. Everything else has to be taken with a grain of salt. For starters, while freedom of speech has been allowed, freedom of association was suppressed by the amendment of

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<sup>4</sup> Chihana’s AFORD party formed a coalition government with the UDF in 1994, but this partnership was short-lived. In 1995, announcing his resignation as Second Vice President at his Chombe Motel in the Northern Region, Chihana described the UDF leadership as corrupt. AFORD formed an alliance with the MCP in the 1999 elections, which were won by the UDF. In 2003, Chihana rejoined the UDF-led Government and praised President Muluzi as a good man and a kind leader.

Section 65 of the Constitution, which made it a crime for an MP to associate with any group of a political nature.

Secondly, the violence and intimidation perpetrated by the ruling party's young democrats has been described as equal to or worse than that of Kamuzu Banda's Young Pioneers and Youth Leaguers. Some have commented that the Banda Young Pioneers and Youth Leaguers had at least an identity and one knew who tortured them. The UDF young democrats have no identity and often disguise themselves, earning themselves the nickname "suspected young democrats." They are difficult to discipline and have allegedly been responsible for many beatings of people who criticised or held dissenting views from the ruling party or the state president.

Corruption in public places has also been said to be high under the democratic dispensation. The Danish Government withdrew development aid to Malawi, citing corruption as the reason. There are other pieces of evidence as well, such as the draw down of the National Food Reserve, the Field York international exercise book scandal involving the Ministry of Education, and the Auditor General's report revealing that millions of Kwacha were awarded to phoney contractors who never constructed anything. There have been rumours that the drug scarcity in government hospitals is due to mismanagement and outright thievery.

There have also been signs of ambitions for unlimited power comparable to that wielded by former dictator Kamuzu Banda. Muluzi's bid for a third term is the clearest evidence of this ambition. When this bid was defeated by Parliament, the UDF national executive committee manoeuvred the party constitution to make it possible for Muluzi to continue as party chairman after leaving office. The party executive then went ahead to hand pick Bingu wa Mutharika as Muluzi's successor against the wishes of many members of the party, resulting in an exodus of senior members.<sup>5</sup>

The UDF era has also been marred by hate speech. Despite the rhetoric concerning freedom of expression, the UDF leadership has castigated opponents. Senior members of the party have been called *madea* (maize bran). Many opposition leaders have been cursed in public rallies. Swearing has formed part of regular speech by the UDF leadership. In many cases the hate speeches have violated personal privacy of individuals.

The foregoing has been a description of the social, economic and political context that prevailed in Malawi at the time of the survey. We are aware that this context influenced the responses from the respondents in different ways. We are also aware that if the context were to change some of the responses would also change. However, we are confident that on some variables responses would remain stable. This is the nature of longitudinal surveys.

What follows is a description of the main findings of the survey on the themes of demand and supply of democracy. The demand side is analysed through the variables that measure support for democratic values. The supply side looks at how satisfied people are with the way democracy is being implemented in Malawi. Following this approach, the next section is a description of the demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by a section discussing the demand for democracy in Malawi. The final section focuses on the supply of democracy.

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<sup>5</sup> Since Bingu wa Mutharika became the UDF candidate for the 2004 presidential election, Justin Malewezi (the First Vice President), Harry Thomson (minister and member of the party's executive committee), Mbewe (minister and Treasurer general of the party), Aleke Banda (minister and Vice President of the party) and many others have resigned from the UDF party.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The Afrobarometer survey is based on a nationally representative sample of 1200 adult citizens. Sampling was done in four stages in the rural areas and three stages in urban areas. In rural areas, the first stage was to select Traditional Authorities (TAs) within which EAs fall to minimise logistical problems. The second stage was then the selection of EAs and thirdly households. The fourth stage involved selecting respondents within the household. In urban areas, the sampling was in three stages. The first was by ward (equivalent of an EA), then household and finally respondent. The number of EAs selected per TA and, by extension, per district was determined by the population size of the TA and district. A more detailed discussion of the sampling methodology is provided in Appendix 1.

The survey was conducted in all the 27 districts of the country based on the 1998 national census of the National Statistical Office (13 districts from the south, with 47 percent of the population; 5 from the north, with 13 percent; and 9 from the centre, with 41 percent). The sample size from each district is shown in Table 2. The sample was composed of 1200 respondents, of which 51 percent were men and 49 percent women. Thirteen percent were from urban areas and 87 percent from the rural areas.

*Table 2: Distribution of the Sample*

Region	District	Urban	Rural	Total
Central	Dedza	-	56	56
	Dowa	-	48	48
	Kasungu	-	56	56
	Lilongwe	55	113	168
	Mchinji	8	40	48
	Nkhotakota	7	25	32
	Ntcheu	-	39	39
	Ntchisi	-	16	16
	Salima	-	24	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>487</b>
Northern	Chitipa	-	16	16
	Karonga	6	26	32
	Mzimba	-	72	72
	Nkhata Bay	-	16	16
	Rumphi	-	16	16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>152</b>
Southern	Balaka	-	32	32
	Blantyre	52	44	96
	Chikwawa	-	40	40
	Chiradzulu	-	32	32
	Machinga	8	40	48
	Mangochi	-	72	72
	Mulanje	-	48	48
	Mwanza	-	16	16
	Nsanje	8	24	32
	Ntcheu	-	1	1
	Phalombe	-	24	24
	Thyolo	-	56	56
	Zomba	8	56	64
	<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>561</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>152</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>1200</b>

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 96. However, 72 percent were under 40, with 47 percent being between 18 and 30 (Table 3). About 95 percent of respondents had children aged between 0 and 5.

This is not surprising as Malawi has a young population with high a dependency ratio of children to adults.

**Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents**

	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
18-30 years	528	47.3
31-40 years	278	24.9
41-50 years	145	13.0
51+ years	166	14.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1117</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Fifty-eight percent of respondents were heads of households. Of these, 69 percent were men and 31 percent women (Table 4). This is comparable to figures from the National Statistical Office, which indicate that 30 percent of Malawian households are headed by women.

**Table 4: Heads of Household, by Gender (percent)**

	<b>Are you head of household</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	
Male	21	69	38	49
Female	79	31	62	51
	100	100	100	100

Asked which Malawian language was their home language, slightly over half (58 percent) of respondents said Chichewa (Chimang'anja and Chichewa are dialects of the same language), 14 percent Chiyao, 11 percent Chitumbuka, 9 percent Chilomwe, and 2 percent each Chisena and Chingoni. Languages such as Chinkhonde, Chindali, Chisenga and Chitonga were mentioned by less than 2.5 percent of all respondents. . The survey questionnaire was translated into Chichewa, Chiyao and Chitumbuka (Table 5).

**Table 5: Language of Respondent**

	<b>Percent</b>
Chichewa	53
Chiyao	14
Chitumbuka	11
Chilomwe	9
Chimang'anja	5
Chisena	3
Chingoni	2
Chinkhonde	1
Chindali	1
Chisdnga	1
Chitonga	1

Sixteen percent of respondents had no formal schooling at all. About 42 percent had some primary schooling, 14 percent had completed primary school, and another 14 percent had some secondary school education. Only about 10 percent of respondents had completed secondary school or had post-secondary school qualifications (Table 6).

**Table 6: Education of Respondent**

	<b>Percent</b>
No formal schooling	16
Informal schooling only	3
Some primary schooling	42
Primary school completed	14
Some secondary school/high school	14
Secondary school completed/high school	7
Post-secondary qualifications, not university	3
Some university, college	1
University, college completed	0.3
Post-graduate	0.1

Over 95 percent of the respondents believe in some religion. Thirty percent are Catholics, 39 percent Protestants (belonging to different Christian churches or churches of the reformed theology), 15 percent Muslim, 9 percent African Independent Church, and 4 percent practice traditional religion (Table 7). Most of the respondents (75 percent) attend a religious service at least once a week. Only 5 percent never attend any. Thus, the majority display high levels of religiosity.

**Table 7: Religion of Respondent**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency of attendance</b>	<b>Percent</b>
None	3	Never	5
Islam	15	About once a year or less	1
Catholic	30	About once every several months	6
Protestant (Mainstream)	24	About once a month	13
Protestant (Evangelical/ Pentecostal)	15	About once a week	54
African Independent Church	9	More than once a week	21
Traditional religion	4	Don't know	1
Hindu	0.2		
Atheist (Do not believe in a God)	0.1		
Don't know	0.2		

In terms of main occupation, 53 percent of the respondents are farmers, and of these, 25 percent produce only for home consumption. In addition, 71 percent of the respondents had no job that paid cash income and were not looking for one. These findings reflect the importance and structure of the agricultural sector, which employs about 80 percent of the population and is dominated by smallholder farmers (Table 8).

In terms of employment fully 87 percent say they are not employed and 71 percent say they are not even looking for a job. Only 9 percent have a full time job. With 71 percent of the people not looking for a job, it is possible that the prospects of getting a job are pretty dismal. On the other hand, it may be that, since the majority of the respondents are smallholder farmers, they are basically self-employed.

Respondents were asked to state how much money they earn per month, together with their spouses. The results indicate that 43 percent earn no income at all, 10 percent earn MK1-400, 12 percent take in MK401-2000, and 17 percent earn over MK2000. Of these respondents, only about 14 percent rely on someone who works for the government. As can be expected, the financial situation of most of the respondents is not impressive. Seven out of 10 spend all their income, and only one in 10 save something

each month. Most The demographic statistics are largely in agreement with most of the national statistics. This agreement gives credence to the representativeness of the sample.

**Table 8: Occupation and Financial Situation**

Main occupation	Percent	Employment Status	Percent
Never had a job	18	No (not looking)	71
Farmer (only for home consumption)	25	No (looking)	16
Farmer (produces surplus for sale)	27	Yes, part time (not looking)	2
Farmer (produces mainly for sale)	2	Yes, part time (looking)	2
Farm worker	1	Yes, full time (not looking)	4
Fisherman	1	Yes, full time (looking)	5
Trader/Hawker/Vendor	2		
Businessperson	9	<b>Household income</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Professional (e.g., lawyer, , nurse, etc.)	2	None	43
Supervisor/Foreman	1	MK101-400	10
Clerical Worker	1	MK401-2000	12
Domestic Worker/Maid/Char/House help	0.4	Over MK2000	17
Teacher	2	Refused	6
Government Worker	1	Don't know	9
Armed Services/Police/ Security Personnel	1		
Student	2	<b>Govt salary in household</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Housewife/Works In the Household	4	No	86
Retail worker	0.1	Yes	14
Artisan/skilled manual worker, formal sector	1		
Artisan/skilled manual worker, informal	1	<b>Household Financial Situation</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unskilled manual, formal sector	0.4	Both spend savings AND borrow money	2
Unskilled manual worker, informal sector	0.3	Borrow money to live on	2
Other	1	Spend some savings	4
		Spend all income (break even)	77
		Save money	10
		Don't know	5

## DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY IN MALAWI

As observed already, the demand side is analysed through the variables that measure support for democratic values. In the following sections, we analyse support for democracy using several variables.

### Malawians' Preferred Form of Government

Respondents were asked several questions to determine whether they regard democracy as the “only game in town,” or whether they could support non-democratic political systems and politicians. The first question asked the respondents, “Which of these three statements is closest to your own view?: a) Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; b) In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable; and c) For someone like me, it does not matter what kind of government we have. Table 9 presents the results. Clearly, Malawians prefer democracy to any other type government. In 2003, 64 percent agreed with the first statement. However, about 22 percent agree that “in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.” These results almost replicate the 1999 results.



**Table 9: Support for Democracy**

	1999	2003
Democracy is preferable to any kind of government.	66	64
In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic government.	22	22
For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	11	10
Don't know	2	4

*Which of these statements is closest to your view? (percent)*

### **Rejection of Authoritarianism**

In consolidating democracy, it is necessary for people to reject the authoritarian system and forge ahead with democracy. The perceptions of Malawians consistently reject dictatorial tendencies although some nostalgia is present. For example, 66 percent of Malawians reject one party rule while 25 percent approve it. In addition, 84 percent reject military rule and 78 percent do not want to see a situation where elections and the National Assembly are abolished to allow the President to decide everything (Table 10).

**Table 10: Rejection of Authoritarian Alternatives**

	Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove	Neither Approve Nor Disapprove	Approve	Strongly Approve	Don't know [DNR]
Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.	53	13	4	10	18	1
All decisions are made by a council of chiefs or elders.	38	11	6	18	25	2
The army comes in to govern the country.	70	14	3	4	5	3
Elections and the National Assembly are abolished so that the president can decide everything.	62	16	4	7	7	4

*There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives? (percent)*

However, when it comes to traditional rule, only about half (49 percent) do not approve of a situation in which a council of chiefs or elders makes all decisions, while 43 percent approve. And regional differences are very stark (Table 11). Fully 62 percent in the North approve, as do 58 percent in Central Region. In the South, on the other hand, only 26 percent approve, while 63 percent disapprove (53 percent “strongly disapprove”). However, there are no differences between men and women on this issue. The Northern and Central Regions seem to believe in their chiefs more, but why? In the North, this may in part reflect the influence of the Ngoni leadership, which is based on principles of a monarchy.

**Table 11: Rejection of Rule by Chiefs or Elders, by Region**

	Central	Northern	Southern
Strongly Disapprove	27	18	53
Disapprove	10	15	11
Neither approve nor disapprove	4	3	8
Approve	25	41	7
Strongly approve	33	20	19
Don't know	2	2	2

In their rejection of authoritarian rule, Malawians are no different from other Africans. They join large majorities in most other Afrobarometer countries in rejecting military and one-party rule. The lowest levels of rejection of non-democratic regimes are found in Mozambique (Table 12).

**Table 12: Rejection of Authoritarian Alternatives, Across Countries**

	Reject Military Rule	Reject Traditional Rule	Reject Strongman Rule	Reject One-Party Rule
Botswana	79	50	85	68
Cape Verde	75	-	67	79
Ghana	83	69	82	79
Kenya	92	59	90	75
Lesotho	85	50	82	61
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>66</b>
Mali	65	44	66	71
Mozambique	54	32	41	47
Namibia	52	46	58	55
Nigeria	68	61	71	79
Senegal	75	45	77	76
South Africa	77	63	73	67
Tanzania	87	73	86	63
Uganda	85	48	90	53
Zambia	95	72	90	72
<b>15-Country Mean</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>67</b>

(percent “disapprove”/“strongly disapprove”)

### Views about Democratic Principles

Where do Malawians stand on some of the key principles of a democratic political system? About eight in ten (78 percent) would like to choose their leaders through regular, open and honest elections, while about 2 in 10 Malawians believe that elections sometimes produce bad results and other methods for choosing the country's leaders should be adopted. A majority of Malawians (74 percent) believes that many political parties are necessary to make sure that Malawians have real choices in who governs them. However, 33 percent believe that political parties create confusion, and that it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Malawi (Table 13), perhaps reflecting discomfort with the constant shifts in alliances among Malawi's parties. When these results are broken down by party affiliation, there were no major differences.

With respect to term limits for the president, most Malawians (76 percent) agree that “the president must obey the law, including the Constitution, for example by serving no more than two terms in office.” A minority Malawians (21 percent) instead agree that the President of Malawi should be able to serve as

many terms in office as he wishes. When asked specifically whether or not the Malawi Constitution should be changed to increase the number of terms for the President, this view is equally clear. Sixty-three percent say the constitutional two-term limit on the number of terms a President can serve should not be changed, while 32 percent say the Constitution should be amended to allow the President to serve no more than three terms.

The rejection of increased term limits for the president may reflect the public’s realisation that the longer a person stays in power, the more absolute their power becomes. And as they say, “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Malawians learned a great lesson from Kamuzu’s life presidency and they do not want it to be repeated.

In terms of who should make laws, 62 percent say the members of the National Assembly represent the people, and therefore they should make laws for the country, even if the President does not agree. On the other hand, 31 percent believe that since the President represents everyone, he should pass laws without worrying about what the National Assembly thinks.

**Table 13: Views about Democratic Principles**

	Agree strongly with A	Agree with A	Agree with neither	Agree with B	Agree strongly with B	Don't know
A. We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections. B. Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country’s leaders.	66	13	1	6	14	1
A. Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Malawi. B. Many political parties are needed to make sure that Malawians have real choices in who governs them.	26	8	2	14	50	1
A. The President of Malawi should be able to serve as many terms in office as he wishes. B. In Malawi, the President must obey law, including the Constitution, for example by serving no more than two terms in office.	16	5	2	14	63	1
A. The Members of the National Assembly represent the people; therefore, they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree. B. Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the National Assembly thinks.	47	15	5	9	22	3
A. Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems. B. If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government.	26	8	2	15	46	3
A. The Malawi Constitution, which currently limits the President to two consecutive five-year terms, should be amended to allow the president to serve no more than three terms. B. The constitutional limit on the number of terms a president can serve should not be changed.	27	5	2	12	52	3

*Which of the following statements is closest to your view?*

Six in ten Malawians (61 percent) believe that if our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government, while one-third (34 percent) believe that the present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems. This situation is worrying in that it appears a good segment of Malawians are willing to go back to the authoritarian rule that they rejected in the 1993 referendum and 1994 multiparty elections if the democratic system does not work. Understanding what leads people to think this way – e.g., poor security, breakdown of law and order, the weak economy, etc. – would offer guidance as to how the country can get its democratic principles back on track. It is clear that the implementation of democratic principles has been incomplete. There are signs of continuities from the old regime, which create the impression that democracy is not any better. Furthermore, democracy is sometimes inefficient and it may not deliver the social and economic goods that people want. The inability of democracy to deliver social and economic goods and services may be a danger with an impatient electorate who want their lives to improve.

### **Democratic Values**

Some of the fundamental values of democracy have to do with tolerance, transparency and accountability, universal suffrage, equality under the law and equal rights between men and women. We asked respondents to tell us where they stand on a number of issues relating to these values. The results are presented in Table 14.

Solid majorities of Malawians want their leaders to be even-handed rather than favouring their own family or group (88 percent), want to hold their leaders accountable for their actions (82 percent), want everybody to have the opportunity to vote (80 percent), and, surprisingly, want to depend on the government as though it is their parent (69 percent). In addition, Malawians want equality for both men and women (68 percent) and they want to choose ordinary citizens as leaders (62 percent), rather than the wealthy.

The mixed pattern displayed here shows that there are some Malawians who think like citizens, while others think like clients. This pattern reflects the dependency syndrome that is widespread in Malawi, emanating from the autocratic rule of the previous government. This syndrome was evident in Malawi during the debates about the “Targeted Input Distribution” programme that has distributed free inputs for farmers since the 1998/99 agricultural season, and the free distribution of maize at party meetings and functions to ordinary citizens regardless of their poverty level and the season. Some supported the President’s initiative arguing that most Malawians are poor and lack these things, while others were against the whole idea, believing it perpetuates the dependency syndrome that was especially widespread during the previous one-party era. The latter group called for a more sustainable strategy that would help Malawians develop as citizens and fend for themselves. People often cited the Chinese proverb: “Give a farmer a fish, he will beg everyday, but teach a farmer to fish, he will fish for life.”

**Table 14: Democratic Values**

	Agree strongly with A	Agree with A	Agree with neither	Agree with B	Agree strongly with B	Don't know
A. People should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life. B. The government should bear the main responsibility for the well-being of people.	43	5	2	14	36	1
A. Each person should put the well-being of the community ahead of their own interests. B. Everybody should be free to pursue what is best for themselves as individuals.	34	8	4	17	35	1
A. It is alright to have large differences of wealth because those who work hard deserve to be rewarded. B. We should avoid large gaps between the rich and poor because they create jealousy and conflict.	32	9	5	12	40	2
A. In order to make decisions in our community, we should talk until everyone agrees. B. Since we will never agree on everything, we must learn to accept differences of opinion within our community.	41	11	1	13	34	0
A. As citizens, we should be more active in questioning the actions of our leaders. B. In our country these days, we should show more respect for those in authority.	68	14	0	6	11	1
A. All people should be permitted to vote, even if they do not fully understand all the issues in an election. B. Only those who are sufficiently well educated should be allowed to choose our leaders.	71	9	5	4	9	2
A. Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs and should remain so. B. In our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment as men do.	25	5	1	16	52	1
A. It is better to have wealthy people as leaders because they can help provide for the community. B. It is better to have ordinary people as leaders because they understand our needs.	23	6	7	16	46	1
A. Since everyone is equal under the law, leaders should not favour their own family or group. B. Once in office, leaders are obliged to help their own family or group.	72	16	0	4	7	0
A. People are like children, the government should take care of them like a parent. B. Government is an employee; the people should be the bosses who control the government.	54	15	2	9	19	1

## SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY IN MALAWI

The supply side of democracy looks at how people evaluate the performance of the democratic dispensation in the country. There are a number of variables that can be used to evaluate the supply of democracy. In this paper we use perceived extent of and satisfaction with democracy, the extent of political freedoms, evaluations of government performance, perceived corruption, and levels of trust in institutions and officials.

### Perceived Extent of Democracy in Malawi

We asked people “In your opinion how much of a democracy is Malawi today?” The results show that approximately 38 percent believe their country is governed democratically (17 percent saying it is a full democracy, and 21 percent a democracy with minor problems). Almost two in every five Malawians (39 percent) say it is a democracy with major problems, and one in five (19 percent) think it is not a democracy at all (Table 15).

However, there are significant differences among respondents from the three regions of the country. For instance, whereas just 6 percent of Southerners and 21 percent of those from Central Region believe Malawi is not a democracy, a majority (56 percent) of Northerners say the same.

**Table 15: Extent of Democracy, by Region**

	Central	Northern	Southern	Total
A full democracy	15	14	20	17
A democracy, but with minor problems	18	7	27	21
A democracy, with major problems	41	21	41	39
Not a democracy	21	56	6	19
Do not understand question/democracy	2	1	2	2
Don't know	3	1	4	3

*How much of a democracy is Malawi today?*

Respondents were asked whether they are close to any political party. In response, 32 percent say they are not close to any party, while 44 percent say they are close to the UDF, 15 percent to MCP, 4 percent to AFORD, and 2 percent to NDA (Table 16). Of those who were close to a party, we asked them how close they are to it. Their responses indicate that 46 percent are very close, while 11 percent are somewhat close.

**Table 16: Political Party Affiliation**

	percent
No, not close to any party	32
United Democratic Front (UDF) Party	44
Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	15
Alliance for Democracy (AFORD)	4
National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Pressure Group	2
Other	0
Refused to answer	2
Don't know	2

Party affiliation appears to influence people’s evaluations of the extent of democracy in Malawi. Of the respondents with affiliation to UDF, nearly half (48 percent) think the country is either a full democracy, or one with minor problems. However, among those affiliated to the MCP, AFORD and NDA, only about one-quarter (25 percent, 22 percent and 28 percent, respectively) say the same (Table 17).

**Table 17: Extent of Democracy, by Party Affiliation**

	<b>None</b>	<b>UDF</b>	<b>MCP</b>	<b>AFORD</b>	<b>NDA</b>
A full democracy	15	23	8	14	7
A democracy, but with minor problems	16	26	17	8	21
A democracy, with major problems	40	35	49	20	45
Not a democracy	22	10	24	58	28
Do not understand question/democracy	2	3	1	-	-
Don't know	5	4	1	-	-

### **Satisfaction with Democracy**

We also asked people to tell us how satisfied they are with the way democracy works in Malawi. The results show that opinion is evenly split on this question, with 47 percent saying they are very or fairly satisfied, and 49 percent saying they are not very or not at all satisfied (Table 18).

Once again there are sharp regional differences. Almost 74 percent of the respondents in the Northern region are not satisfied with democracy, compared to 49 percent in the Central Region and 42 percent in the South.

**Table 18: Satisfaction with Democracy, Nationally and by Region**

	<b>Central</b>	<b>Northern</b>	<b>Southern</b>	<b>Total</b>
Very satisfied	23	13	26	23
Fairly satisfied	23	10	29	24
Not very satisfied	21	14	29	24
Not at all satisfied	28	60	13	25
Malawi is not a democracy	2	2	2	2
Don't Know	4	1	1	2

*Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Malawi?*

Party affiliation also influences evaluations of the performance of democracy. Those respondents who are affiliated to opposition parties appear to be less satisfied with democracy than those linked to the ruling party. Among AFORD, MCP and NDA backers, approximately seven in ten respondents (72, 66 and 68 percent, respectively) are satisfied with democracy, compared to three in ten (30 percent) who are dissatisfied among those affiliated with the ruling UDF Party (Table 19). There is a proverb in Chichewa which says “*Mwini mbiya sada chala*” – One who makes pots does not criticise oneself for making a bad pot. It appears that affiliation to the ruling party makes some members less critical of the performance of the party as doing so would create psychological dissonance.

**Table 19: Satisfaction with Democracy, by Party Affiliation**

	<b>None</b>	<b>UDF</b>	<b>MCP</b>	<b>AFORD</b>	<b>NDA</b>
Very satisfied	14	38	7	16	10
Fairly satisfied	20	26	25	12	21
Not very satisfied	39	18	25	12	41
Not at all satisfied	31	12	41	60	27
Malawi is not a democracy	2	3	1	-	-
Don't Know	3	2	1	-	-

In general, the percentage of Malawians who say they are satisfied with democracy is quite low compared to 13 other countries surveyed (Table 20). Only South Africans, Nigerians and Cape Verdians are less satisfied.

**Table 20: Satisfaction with for Democracy, across Countries**

	Percent of respondents satisfied with democracy
Kenya	79
Namibia	69
Mali	63
Tanzania	62
Uganda	60
Botswana	58
Senegal	56
Zambia	55
Mozambique	53
Lesotho	49
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>47</b>
South Africa	44
Nigeria	34
Cape Verde	33

### Perceived Political and Economic Freedoms

It appears that Malawians are continuing to enjoy greater political freedoms and rights under the multiparty regime than under the former one-party state of the MCP. Freedom of expression, association, and electoral choice are all rated as considerably better now than in the past (Table 21). When 2003 responses are compared to those from the first survey in 1999, there does appear to be a very small but consistent decline in perceptions of improvement (e.g., from 89 percent saying there is more freedom of speech in 1999 to 88 percent in 2003), but in all cases, the small differences are within the margin of error.

**Table 21: Changes in Political Freedoms Between One-Party and Multiparty Eras, 1999 and 2003**

	Freedom of speech		Freedom of Association		Freedom of Choice	
	1999	2003	1999	2003	1999	2003
Worse/ Much worse	8	9	5	5	4	5
Same	2	3	1	2	1	4
Better/ Much better	89	88	93	91	94	91
Don't know	1	0	1	1	0	0

*We are going to compare our present system of government with the former system of one-party rule before 1994. Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they used to be under the one-party MCP government, or about the same: a) freedom to say what you think; b) freedom to join any political organization you want; and c) freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured.*

Respondents were also asked to compare the extent of political freedoms between the first and second term under multiparty rule (Table 22). Across seven measures, an average of 39 percent see improvements from the first to second term, and 38 percent feel things are unchanged. One in five, however, thought things had gotten worse, with safety from crime and violence showing a sharp decline (61 percent say it is worse or much worse).



**Table 22: Changes in Political Freedoms, First and Second Terms**

	<b>Worse / Much worse</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Better / Much better</b>
Freedom to say what you think	14	40	45
Freedom to join any political organization you want	7	40	51
Freedom from being arrested when you are innocent	18	40	39
Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured	7	40	52
The ability of ordinary people to influence what government does	16	39	42
Safety from crime and violence	61	21	17
Equal and fair treatment for all people by government	26	44	28
<b>Average</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>

*We would now like to ask about the same issues, but this time comparing between President Dr. Muluzi's current term of office and his first term of office from 1994 to 1999. Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were during the President's first term, or about the same.*

### **Perceptions of Political Competition, Rule of Law, and Equality**

We wanted to know respondents' perceptions about political competition, the rule of law, and equality. To begin, we asked whether competition between political parties leads to conflict. A majority (58 percent) says political competition never or only rarely leads to conflict, but a sizeable minority (35 percent) takes the opposite view, voicing the concern that party competition often or always leads to conflict.

We also asked respondents whether the President adheres to the Constitution in the performance of his duties. It is notable that almost one in every four Malawians (25 percent) thinks he never ignores the Constitution, and 3 in 10 (32 percent) say he does so only rarely. On the other hand, a significant minority (31 percent) thinks he often or always does.

A number of explanations may be offered for this finding but most prominent is the selective use of the amended Section 65 of the Constitution, which gives the Speaker power to declare a constituency vacant if an MP is found to be associating with a group or association of a political nature. This section has only been applied to MPs from the opposition or those with dissenting views within the ruling party. Another possible explanation is the attempt by the ruling party to change Section 83 of the Constitution, which limits the president to a maximum of two five-year terms in office. First the party wanted to change the provision to leave it open, arguing that the ballot would remove a bad president. This was defeated in Parliament. Later the amendment was modified to limit the terms of office to three. This has not yet been debated in Parliament; the Attorney General has verbally indicated that Government will withdraw the bill but officially it has not been withdrawn. Other constitutional matters that may have influenced responses to this question include the creation of the Chiefs Council, which is not provided for in the Constitution, and the repeal of the sections that provided for recall of MPs and for the establishment of the senate. These provisions were put in the Constitution for good reasons, and many were not happy when the ruling party tabled bills to amend these sections and Parliament approved.

Finally, respondents were asked whether all people are treated equally under the law. More than one in two Malawians (53 percent) say that people are rarely or never treated unequally under the law. About one-third (36 percent) think that unequal treatment occurs often or always (Table 23). Under the UDF regime, as during the Kamuzu Banda era, there have been discriminatory tendencies in recruitment, appointments, promotions and dismissals. Many people believe they have lost their jobs on political grounds and they think they are victims. On the other hand, development projects are also seen as being distributed on political grounds. The President has been outspoken at public rallies saying those areas where there are opposition MPs cannot get development projects because they are supporting the wrong party. This has affected trust in the political system.

**Table 23: Perceptions of Governance**

	<b>Does competition between political parties lead to conflict</b>	<b>Does the President ignores the Constitution</b>	<b>Are people treated unequally under the law</b>
Never	18	25	21
Rarely	40	32	32
Often	27	22	22
Always	8	9	14
Don't know	8	13	11

*In this country, how often:*

### **Trust in Institutions and Officials**

To evaluate levels of public trust in various political institutions and officials, we asked respondents, “How much do you trust each of the following [officials or institutions], or haven’t you heard enough about them to say?” Results are shown in Table 24.

**Table 24: Trust in Institutions and Officials**

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little bit</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>A very great deal</b>	<b>Don't know/haven't heard enough</b>
The Army	9	15	26	46	4
Trust in Traditional Leaders	9	19	28	40	3
Public corporations	11	18	28	36	7
The Police	12	22	27	37	3
Courts of law	8	26	29	33	5
Government broadcasting service	9	22	29	30	9
The President	18	30	22	26	4
Big private corporations	14	24	26	22	15
Independent broadcasting services	16	20	25	21	19
Your Local Council	23	29	24	21	4
The Ruling Party	23	29	24	21	4
Small businesses/shopkeepers	18	34	24	18	6
The National Electoral Commission	22	32	21	17	9
The National Assembly	26	31	20	17	5
Traders in local markets	22	34	21	16	6
Opposition Political Parties	35	26	18	16	5
Government newspapers	13	20	20	14	33
Independent newspapers	15	19	19	14	33

In Malawi the Army is most trusted (72 percent trust it “a lot” or “a very great deal”). In 1999, 71 percent also said they trusted the army most of the time or always.<sup>6</sup> Mkandawire (2003) argues that the Malawi Army is still disciplined and professional because Kamuzu Banda never used the army for his dictatorship lest they know who really had the power. Instead he used the Malawi Young Pioneers and the police. This is one possible reason why the army has retained the trust of the people. But another reason could be that the army played a crucial role in weakening Kamuzu Banda’s iron grip on the country. They routed out the notorious and dreaded Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) in 1993 in what was dubbed “Operation Bwezani.” Many people would agree that Operation Bwezani was critical in the peaceful removal of Kamuzu Banda and the MCP regime.

Traditional leaders follow close behind the army, with the trust of 68 percent. The police also enjoy the trust of a majority (64 percent) of Malawians. This is a great improvement in the performance of the police compared to their reputation in 1999, when only 42 percent said they trusted them most of the time or always. The police in Malawi have had a notorious reputation for abusing their power. The British Department for International Development (DfID) has invested a lot of resources in reform programmes for the police. This improved image must mean that the reform programme is yielding dividends.

The courts come fifth with 62 percent of respondents saying they trust them, up from 47 percent in 1999. Like the police, the courts were not trusted during the one-party regime, especially because of the bad reputation of the traditional courts.

The President continues to enjoy considerable trust among the people with 48 percent saying they trust him, little changed from 1999, when 50 percent expressed trust. This is despite the defeat of his bid to run for a third term. It appears that Malawians attributed the open terms bill to the party and not the President.

The National Assembly enjoys the trust of only 37 percent of respondents, compared to 45 percent for Local Councils. The Electoral Commission also fares relatively poorly, with only 38 percent expressing a fair degree of trust.

An interesting observation is the trust Malawians express in public corporations such as ADMARC and ESCOM. Nearly two-thirds of Malawians (64 percent) say they trust these corporation, compared to 48 percent who say they trust big private corporations. Both small business traders and local traders (hawkers) enjoy less trust than larger corporations.

With regard to the media, it must be noted that historically the *Malawi News* and the *Daily Times* have always been seen as opposition papers since the multiparty government came to power. However, recent changes in the management of the papers, which installed Cassim Chilumpha, an executive member of the ruling UDF Party, as Chairman of the Board of Blantyre Newspapers, cast doubt as to whether these papers are truly opposition papers. In addition, *The Nation* was seen as the only truly independent newspaper. However, as it is owned by Aleke Banda, who until recently was a senior member in the executive of the ruling UDF, the paper came to be seen as the mouthpiece of the UDF. At the time of the survey, however, *The Nation* had been carrying headlines critical of the Government. It is therefore reasonable to say that there was no true “government paper” except for the *UDF News*, whose circulation is very limited. This may be the reason why there is almost no difference in the people’s level of trust between the independent and the government papers, which enjoy the trust of 34 and 33 percent,

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<sup>6</sup> In 1999, the question was phrased slightly differently. People were asked to state how much they trusted various institutions “to do what is right,” and response options were “never,” “only some of the time,” “most of the time,” “just about always,” and “haven’t heard enough about him to know.”

respectively. The figures for 1999 are 35 and 36 percent for the government and independent newspapers respectively.

On the other hand, government broadcasters (TV Malawi and Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)) appear to be trusted by a good majority of Malawians (59 percent say they trust TV Malawi and MBC a lot or a very great deal). The rating of the MBC was 56 percent in 1999. There are considerable differences of opinion, however, between rural respondents and their urban counterparts. Approximately 45 percent of urban dwellers trust public radio and TV a lot or a very great deal, compared to 61 percent of rural dwellers who say the same thing.

A cross-national analysis of trust in key institutions is shown in Table 25. The Malawi president enjoys more trust than the presidents of just five countries. In contrast, Malawi's opposition parties enjoy more trust than in all but three other countries; only Senegal, Mali and Tanzania have higher proportions of respondents who trust the opposition. On the other hand, in nine countries higher proportions of respondents trust the ruling party. Malawi's police and army have some of the highest ratings across the 15 countries.

**Table 25: Trust in Institutions, across Countries**

	President	Opposition	Ruling party	Electoral Commission	National broadcast	Police	Military
Botswana	44	14	43	27	57	57	60
Cape Verde	22	22	19	16	36	36	35
Ghana	65	28	51	49	53	51	54
Kenya	70	16	65	51	47	28	58
Lesotho	58	19	55	46	51	51	50
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>72</b>
Mali	71	39	58	46	80	63	79
Mozambique	75	22	61	51	58	50	52
Namibia	76	15	59	41	47	48	51
Nigeria	17	16	15	11	26	11	20
Senegal	73	37	54	49	65	70	82
South Africa	37	12	32	31	47	35	32
Tanzania	79	36	66	60	64	51	72
Uganda	61	16	56	20	57	43	51
Zambia	47	15	32	21	48	42	52

*How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (percent trust "a lot" / "a very great deal")*

### Performance of Government

In this survey, we asked people to make judgements about government performance across a wide range of government policy areas such as managing the economy, creating jobs, and improving basic health services. The question was put forward as follows: "How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?"

Table 26 shows that the government appears to be rated highly on the provision of social services such as health, education and water supply. For instance, majorities say government is doing fairly well or very well in combating malaria (61 percent), delivering household water (60 percent), improving basic health services (52 percent), and addressing educational needs (51 percent). In 1999, the respective statistics for delivering household water and basic health services were 65 percent and 46 percent. The positive rating for malaria is most likely because of the subsidised mosquito nets (Chitetezo nets) and the campaign against malaria on the radio. As for the water, health, education sectors, the positive results may be

attributed to the achievements of the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), the activities of NGOs and some donor projects.

On the other hand, when it comes to managing the economy, fighting corruption, reducing crime, reducing the gap between the rich and poor, and keeping prices stable, the performance of government is rated most unfavourably. On keeping prices stable, 87 percent said the government is doing fairly badly or very badly, although this is actually a small improvement compared to 1999, when 92 percent offered a negative rating. With regard to narrowing the gap between the rich and poor and fighting corruption, large majorities (82 and 68 percent, respectively) say the government is doing fairly or very badly. Eighty-one percent say the government is ineffective in creating jobs, compared to 67 percent in 1999. Three-quarters (77 percent) give the government poor marks for reducing crime (78 percent in 1999). And 66 percent say the government is doing either fairly badly or very badly at managing the economy, down 4 points from 1999. It is clear that, in terms of economic performance, the government is generally viewed as performing quite poorly.

**Table 26: Government Performance**

	Very badly	Fairly badly	Fairly well	Very well	Don't know/Haven't heard enough
Combating malaria	17	19	42	19	3
Delivering household water	18	19	36	24	3
Improving basic health services	27	21	39	13	1
Addressing educational needs	28	21	35	16	1
Combating HIV/AIDS	31	17	33	16	3
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	35	25	29	10	2
Resolving conflicts	26	25	29	10	10
Managing the economy,	47	19	22	7	5
Fighting corruption in government	46	22	19	7	6
Reducing crime	59	18	18	5	2
Creating jobs	61	20	13	3	3
Narrowing gaps between rich and poor	61	21	11	3	4
Keeping prices stable	71	16	9	3	1

*How well or badly would you say the government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?*

Cross-national comparisons of these results are given in Table 27. Generally, the performance of Malawi on many of these issues is below the performance of the other African countries included in the study.

**Table 27: Government Performance, across Countries**

	Creating jobs	Stabilising Prices	Managing economy	Aids	Education	Water	Enough food
Botswana	30	29	60	75	79	71	49
Cape Verde	22	29	33	56	54	46	36
Ghana	45	57	67	77	64	56	55
Kenya	52	49	83	79	94	41	35
Lesotho	28	17	40	48	77	47	32
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>39</b>
Mali	51	39	55	70	74	58	37
Mozambique	23	22	45	45	66	43	36
Namibia	46	26	73	66	83	54	41
Nigeria	22	16	31	62	38	30	22
Senegal	36	40	51	76	59	48	43
South Africa	9	17	38	46	61	60	21
Tanzania	39	53	68	78	78	46	45
Uganda	29	56	59	76	83	56	39
Zambia	19	22	50	66	68	45	40

(percent “fairly well” / “very well”)

### Leadership Performance

We also wanted to know how citizens evaluate the performance of President and their MPs and Councillors. We asked them the following question: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the President/your MP/your Local Councillor have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven’t you heard enough about them to make a judgement?”

The President, in general, seems to perform his job well from the public’s perspective (Table 28). Close to 65 percent approve of the way the President performed his job over the previous year. On the other hand, 53 percent disapprove of the way their Local Councillors are performing their jobs, and MP performance likewise receives low ratings from 55 percent. It has been argued that MPs are not popular because they do not reside in their constituencies, so this statistic is not surprising. What is surprising is the poor performance of the Local Councillors, who reside within their constituencies. There must therefore be another explanation for the poor rating of both the MPs and Councillors.

**Table 28: Public Officials Approval Ratings**

	President	Councillor	MP
Strongly Approve	32	15	14
Approve	32	28	27
Disapprove	12	20	22
Strongly Disapprove	20	33	33
Don't know/Haven't heard enough	4	4	5

*Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following leaders have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to know? (percent)*

Respondents were further asked “How much of the time do you think elected leaders, like parliamentarians or local councillors, try their best to look after the interests of people like you,” and “How often [do they] listen to what people like you have to say?” An overwhelming majority of Malawians give their elected leaders very low marks for responsiveness (Table 29). Most say their leaders look after their interests never (58 percent) or only some of the time (29 percent) and that they listen to constituents never (62 percent) or only some of the time (25 percent).

**Table 29: Responsiveness of Leaders**

	<b>Leaders look after interests of the people</b>	<b>Leaders listen to people</b>
Never	58	62
Some of the time	29	25
Most of the time	6	7
Always	1	1
Don't know	5	5

### **Perceived Corruption in Public Places**

Another measure of leadership performance is perceptions of corruption. We asked respondents “How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say?” The top of the list is occupied by border officials, police and government officials. Forty-eight percent of Malawians say most or all border officials and police are corrupt, and 45 percent say the same about government officials (Table 30). They are followed by the business community (local and foreign) (38 percent each), judges and magistrates (36 percent), elected leaders and the office of the presidency (35 percent each). NGO leaders (27 percent), teachers and school administrators (27 percent), and religious leaders (19 percent) are perceived as least corrupt. The findings show that corruption is widespread, involving a cross-section of the citizenry. However, the percentage of Malawians who do not know or have not heard enough about these people to comment ranged from 13 to 26 percent, suggesting that many have not had direct experience of corruption with these community and political leaders.

**Table 30: Perceptions of Corruption**

	<b>Proportion of officials perceived to be corrupt (percent)</b>				
	<b>None</b>	<b>Some of them</b>	<b>Most of them</b>	<b>All of them</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Border officials (e.g., customs and immigration)	8	18	27	21	26
Police	13	24	28	20	16
Police	13	24	28	20	16
Foreign businessmen	12	25	21	17	25
Local businessmen	14	33	24	14	15
Judges and magistrates	14	31	23	13	19
The President and Officials in his Office	15	29	20	15	20
Elected leaders, such as parliamentarians	17	29	23	12	18
Teachers and school administrators	24	35	17	10	14
Leaders of NGOs or community organizations	16	30	18	9	26
Religious leaders	36	30	13	6	14

### **Ability to Enforce the Law**

When it comes to law enforcement, we asked Malawians: “How likely do you think it would be that the authorities could enforce the law if a person like yourself committed a serious crime/did not pay a tax on some of the income they earned/obtained household services (like water and electricity) without paying?” Nearly 9 in 10 Malawians (87 percent) believe it is likely or very likely that authorities would enforce the law if they committed a serious crime, 7 in 10 (73 percent) if they evaded tax, and 6 in 10 (64 percent) if they obtained services without paying (Table 31).

**Table 31: State Capacity to Enforce the Law**

	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Likely	Very likely	Don't know
Committed a serious crime	3	8	24	63	1
Did not pay a tax on some of the income they earned	11	11	22	51	5
Obtained household services (like water and electricity) without paying	12	10	14	50	14

*How likely do you think it would be that the authorities could enforce the law if a person like yourself: (percent)*

Finally, we asked respondents to compare the current UDF government with the former MCP government under one-party rule, and say whether the one we have now is more or less: able to enforce the law; effective in the delivery of services; corrupt; and trustworthy. Perceptions are mixed (Table 32). With respect to ability to enforce the law and trustworthiness, respondents were evenly divided, with about 4 in 10 saying the government is more able or more trustworthy, and a similar number saying it is less so. On the other hand, just over half perceive the current government as more effective in service delivery (55 percent), but at the same time, a similar number see it as more corrupt (51 percent). The results imply that support for the present regime is mixed.

The differences are quite sharp at the regional level (Table 33). People from the Central Region say that the current government is less able to enforce the law, less trustworthy and more corrupt. On a positive note, they say the government is more effective in service delivery. Northerners are far more negative. Large majorities of them perceive the government as less able to enforce the law, less effective in the delivery of services, and less trustworthy. Interestingly, unlike the others, they perceive the government as less corrupt. Southerners, on the other hand, are much more positive. Solid majorities say that the current government is more able to enforce the law, more effective in service delivery, and more trustworthy. However, like those from the central region, they believe the current government is also more corrupt. We did not observe any significant differences between men and women.

**Table 32: Comparative Ability to Enforce the Law**

	Much More	More	About the same	Less	Much Less	Don't know
Able to enforce the law	22	21	12	14	27	5
Effective in the delivery of services	29	26	13	12	16	2
Corrupt	37	14	7	14	20	7
Trustworthy	24	19	12	18	24	3

*Comparing the current government with the former MCP administration under one-party rule, would you say that the one we have now is more or less: (percent)*

**Table 33: Comparative Ability to Enforce the Law, by Region**

	More			About the Same			Less		
	C	N	S	C	N	S	C	N	S
Able to enforce the law	43	11	51	6	11	17	47	75	26
Effective in the delivery of services	52	16	69	12	11	16	34	70	13
Corrupt	55	37	52	5	3	10	35	55	28
Trustworthy	33	12	59	13	7	12	51	78	24



## **CONCLUSIONS**

In analysing the data from the Afrobarometer survey conducted in Malawi in May 2003, we have looked at both the demand for and the supply of democracy. The results suggest that there is a high demand for democracy in Malawi, but also that Malawians are being supplied with less democracy than they demand.

### **Demand for Democracy in Malawi**

As we have seen, a solid majority (64 percent) of Malawians prefer democracy to any other type of government. Further, majorities reject most non-democratic forms of government, such as military or one-party rule. However, it is important to note that about 22 percent would vote for a non-democratic government under certain circumstances, and there is some nostalgia for one-party rule. Moreover, only a plurality rejects rule by traditional leaders as an alternative to democracy. A regional analysis shows that Northerners are particularly amenable to this non-democratic system of government.

In general, the current multiparty regime is rated more positively than the past one-party regime, but there are exceptions. In particular, the current system fares very badly with regard to protection of people from crime and violence, reinforcing the view that law and order have suffered under the UDF-led multiparty government.

Malawians value regular, open and honest elections, and a majority believe many political parties are necessary to make sure that Malawians have real choices in who governs them. It is noteworthy, however, that fully 33 percent believe that political parties create confusion, and that it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties. This view could be the result of the frequent shifts in alliances among political leaders and parties in the multiparty era.

When it comes to terms of office for the president, most Malawians (76 percent) say the current law with its two-term limit must be obeyed, and that the Malawi Constitution should not be changed to increase this limit (63 percent), sending a loud and clear message to their leadership. The rejection of three or more terms of office for the president reflects a realisation that the longer a person stays in power, the more absolute their is likely to become.

However, Malawians are impatient and a sizeable majority believes that if the present system of government cannot produce results soon, another form of government should be adopted. This situation is worrying in that it appears a good segment of Malawians are willing to go back to the authoritarian rule that they rejected in the 1993 referendum and 1994 multiparty elections.

### **Supply of Democracy in Malawi**

We have said that the supply of democracy is less than the demand. This is evident particularly from the fact that 58 percent of Malawians rate their country as either a democracy with major problems, or not a democracy at all.

In terms of satisfaction with democracy, a slim plurality (49 percent) say they are not very satisfied or not at all satisfied. The regional differences in opinion are also very strong. Almost 74 percent of the respondents in the Northern Region are unsatisfied, compared to 49 percent in the Central Region and 42 percent in the South.

Party affiliation also influences evaluations of the performance of democracy. Those respondents who are affiliated to opposition parties appear to be much less satisfied with democracy than those linked to the ruling party.

Comparison of perceived political and economic freedoms and rights under the multiparty regime shows that solid majorities of Malawians believe political and economic freedoms are better under the multiparty regime than during the one-party era.

A number of public institutions enjoy a great deal of trust from the citizens of Malawi. The Army is most trusted (72 percent), followed by traditional leaders (68 percent) and the police (64 percent). This is a great improvement in the performance of the police compared to their reputation in 1999, when only 42 percent said they trusted them most of the time or always. The courts are trusted by 62 percent of respondents, up from 47 percent in 1999. The president continues to enjoy moderate trust among the people, with 48 percent saying they trust him, reflecting no significant change from 1999, when 50 percent said they trusted him most of the time or always.

The government appears to be rated highly on the provision of social services such as health, education and water supply. On the other hand, when it comes to managing the economy, fighting corruption, reducing crime, reducing the gap between the rich and poor and keeping prices stable, the performance of government is rated most unfavourably. Generally, the performance of Malawi on many of these issues is below the performance of other African countries included in the study.

In terms of job performance of the President, Councillors and MPs, we observe that the president, in general, seems to perform his job well compared to the councillors and MPs. Lack of interest in the people appears to be the important factor damaging the reputations of councillors and MPs.

A good percentage of Malawians believe there is a great deal of corruption among public officials. For instance, nearly half say all or most of the border officials, police, and government officials are involved in corruption. They are followed by the business community (local and foreign), elected leaders, judges and magistrates, and officials in the office of the presidency.

In general, we have learned that demand for democracy is high among Malawians: they prefer democracy to any other form of government, and for the most part they reject dictatorial tendencies, although some nostalgia for the authoritarian past is evident. Comparing the demand for and supply of democracy and good governance as outlined above displays some of the weaknesses in the democratisation process that could explain this nostalgia. The most notable problematic areas include:

- Government performance in managing the economy, fighting corruption, and reducing crime, among others.
- Corruption among public officials.
- Performance of Local Councilors and MPs.

## **APPENDIX 1. Sampling Procedures**

### **Administrative Structure**

Malawi is divided into three regions, namely Northern, Central and Southern Regions. Within each region, the country is further subdivided into administrative districts. There are a total of 26 administrative districts in the mainland of the country, and one small district which is an island on Lake Malawi. Northern Region has 5 administrative districts excluding the island, Central Region has 9 districts, while Southern Region has 12 districts. Each one of the districts is further divided into Traditional Authorities (TAs), and each TA is divided into Enumeration Areas (EAs). EAs are areas demarcated prior to a population census in such a way that an enumerator could manage to enumerate the population in the area within 21 days. EAs are normally comprised of about 250 households, on average. The average household size for Malawi is estimated at 4.3 persons. Maps are available which show the EAs within each one of the Traditional Authorities, and these are updated prior to each census. Malawian urban areas are gazetted as Cities, Townships and Bomas. The Bomas are the centre of administration within almost all districts. Cities are divided into areas called Wards, and Wards are further divided into EAs of more or less the same size, in terms of household population, as the rural EAs. Maps of enumeration areas are available at Traditional Authority, Boma, Township and Ward levels, respectively.

### **Sample Design Specifications**

The Afrobarometer sampling protocol suggests that a sample of 1200 respondents selected from 150 EAs (clusters) will be adequate to give national results with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percent, with a confidence level of 95 percent. In Malawi, these 150 EAs have been distributed across each of the regions in proportion to the population in the region as found in the 1998 Population Census. Hence, Northern Region, which has the least share of households, is allocated 19 sample EAs, 61 are allocated to Central Region, and 70 are allocated to Southern Region.

Almost all studies on governance that have been conducted in Malawi have shown that Malawi is significantly heterogeneous in governance indicators between regions as well as between urban and rural areas. For this reason, it was decided to stratify the primary sampling units (enumeration areas) into rural and urban categories in each region. There were thus six major strata formed for sampling purposes. The urban areas were taken as the areas gazetted as such, and included Cities, Towns, Bomas and Municipalities.

It was also thought necessary to capture the possible variation that exists from one district to another within each region. Hence, it was decided that each district should be represented in the sample. The regional allocation of enumeration areas was thus further distributed among the districts in that region in proportion to the rural population of each district. The share of urban EAs in each region was also determined by their population. The 150 sample primary units were then distributed as per the allocation shown in Table A.1.

**Table A.1: Sample Distribution, by District**

District/Area	Population	Enumeration Areas	Respondents
<b>Northern Region</b>	<b>1,225,436</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>152</b>
Chitipa rural	119163	2	16
Karonga rural	166761	3	18
Nkhatabay rural	155318	2	16
Rumphi rural	114291	2	16
Mzimba rural	510272	8	64
Northern Urban	159631	2	16
<b>Central Region</b>	<b>4,066,320</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>488</b>
Kasungu rural	452905	7	56
Nkhotakota rural	210198	3	24
Ntchisi rural	162107	2	16
Dowa rural	397038	6	48
Salima rural	223873	3	24
Lilongwe rural	905879	14	112
Mchinji rural	313468	5	40
Dedza rural	471274	7	56
Ntcheu rural	361974	5	40
Central Urban	567604	9	72
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>4,633,968</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>560</b>
Mangochi rural	572920	9	72
Machinga rural	352644	5	40
Zomba rural	480746	7	56
Chiradzulo rural	233351	4	32
Blantyre rural	307344	5	40
Mwanza rural	129826	2	16
Thyolo rural	444821	7	56
Mulanje rural	415744	6	48
Phalombe rural	229412	3	18
Chikwawa rural	342232	5	40
Nsanje rural	177937	3	24
Balaka rural	238800	4	32
Southern Urban	708161	10	80

The selection of the allocated number of EAs was done systematically using the method of probability proportional to size among the EAs within each district.

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