



# Speaking truth to power? Citizens' views on politics in Tanzania

## 1. Introduction

Tanzania's fifth phase administration, under President Magufuli, started with a bang. Immediately after the new President had been inaugurated in November 2015, a series of high profile actions to tackle corruption and wasteful public expenditure attracted popular support and widespread praise both within and outside the country. A *Sauti za Wananchi* survey round in 2016 found a very high level of approval (96%) for the President's performance<sup>1</sup>.

As early as January 2016, however, alarm was already being raised by the government's decision to stop live TV and radio broadcasts of parliamentary sessions<sup>2</sup>. Since then, though praise and support for the President's actions from a wide range of actors has continued, it

has been accompanied by a regular chorus of critics, largely focussed on two main areas of concern.

First, critics have pointed to a decline in respect for democratic rights and freedoms. New restrictions have been introduced both in law and in practice on the political freedoms of opposition parties, the media, civil society and even citizens. These include bans on political rallies and meetings, the arrest of several opposition politicians for sedition and other offences, bans and suspensions of several independent newspapers, and perceived heavy-handed policing of political matters including freedom of expression.

Second, some have noted signs that the

1 The People's President? <http://twaweza.org/go/sauti-government-performance-2016>

2 <http://www.thecitizen.co.tz/News/Chaos-rocks-Bunge-as-govt-cuts-live-coverage/1840340-3052474-kdep4a/index.html>

national economy may be suffering. Concerns about food security in late 2016 and early 2017 have eased, but worries about the wider economy have grown to take their place. In part, this has been fed by declines in imports and exports and a tightening of credit to the private sector<sup>3</sup>. It is also grounded in anecdotal evidence of difficult operating conditions both for business and for individual households and citizens' own views: the proportion mentioning poverty or economic issues as a major challenge for the country rose from 34% in 2015 to 72% in 2018<sup>4</sup>.

At the halfway mark for the first term of this administration, this brief presents data on citizens' views on political matters in Tanzania. What do citizens understand by key terms such as democracy, constitution and sedition? Do they perceive any change in freedom of assembly and freedom of expression in the last few years? What do citizens see as the role of opposition parties, and to what extent do they support controls on Presidential power? Which political parties do citizens feel closest to? And how do they rate the performance of elected representatives, including the President?

Data for the brief come from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. It is representative for Mainland Tanzania (not including Zanzibar). Information on the overall methodology is available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti). For this brief, data were collected from 1,241 respondents from the 27th round of the second *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 15 and 24 April, 2018.

The key findings are:

- Citizens see personal freedoms as more important than elections to the definition of democracy
- Citizens say there is less freedom in Tanzania in 2018 than there was three years ago
- Support for the rights of opposition parties has increased since 2016
- Most citizens say the President should be accountable to Parliament and must obey the law and the courts
- Almost all citizens are aware of the three major political parties in the country (CCM, Chadema and CUF) but public awareness of smaller parties is low
- A majority of citizens would elect CCM candidates if an election were held now
- A growing number of citizens do not feel close to any particular political party
- Citizens' approval of their elected representatives continues to fall
- Just over half the population approve of the performance of President Magufuli
- Rural areas have seen the biggest declines in support for CCM and in the approval of the President's performance

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3 <https://www.ippmedia.com/en/news/mps-arms-over-steep-decline-exports-figures>

4 *Sauti za Wananchi*, Panel 2: Round 1 (Aug-Sep 2015), Round 18 (April 2017) and Round 26 (Jan 2018), publication forthcoming

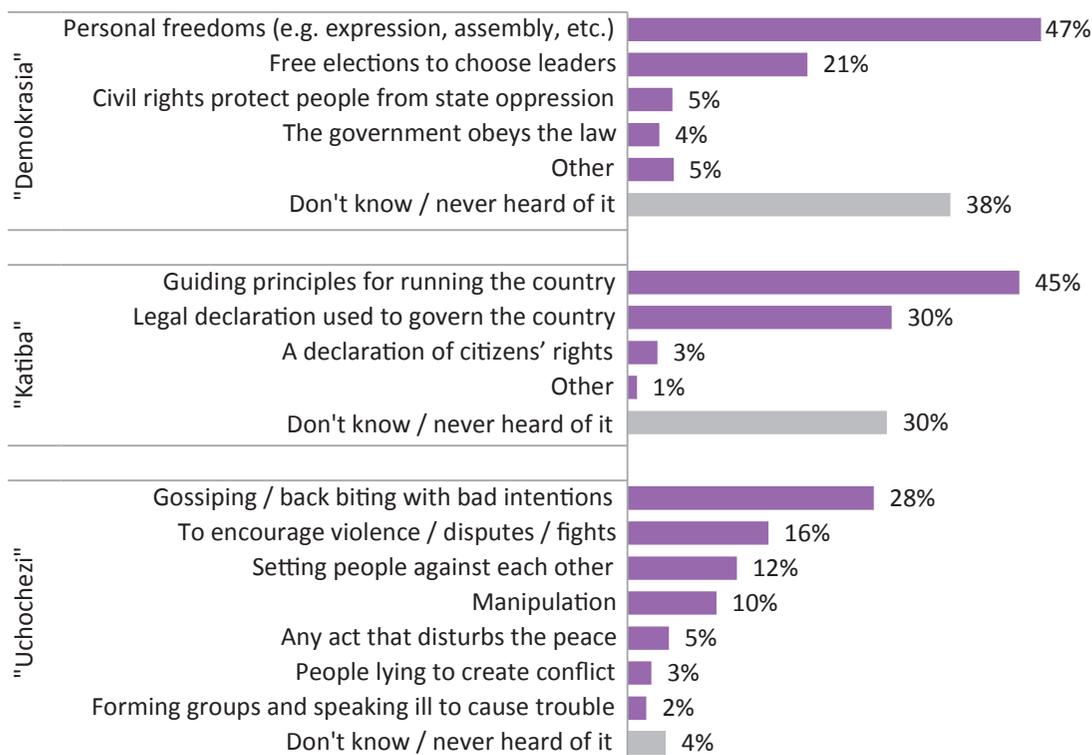
## 2. Nine facts about citizens' political views in Tanzania

### Fact 1: More citizens define democracy as *freedom* than as *elections*

Half of Tanzania's citizens (47%) define democracy in terms of personal freedoms such as freedom of expression and assembly, more than twice as many as those that identify democracy as elections (21%). Four out of ten citizens (37%) have heard of the term but do not really understand its meaning.

Most citizens understand the term *katiba* (constitution) as referring to either a set of guiding principles for running the country (45%) or a legal declaration used to govern the country (30%). Three out of ten (30%) are not confident in their understanding of the term.

**Figure 1: What do you understand by the words "demokrasia", "katiba" and "uchochezi"?<sup>5</sup>**  
(multiple responses permitted)



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)  
Base: all respondents (1,241)

5 Percentages in charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding

When it comes to the term *uchochezi* (sedition), citizens give a wide range of answers, though most centre around the idea of deliberate efforts to create disharmony or violence. These answers match closely the dictionary definition of *uchochezi*: words or actions designed to encourage violence or disagreements<sup>6</sup>.

It is worth noting, however, that these understandings of the term *uchochezi* are substantively different from the dictionary definition of the English term *sedition*, though they are commonly used as direct translations, including in legal contexts. The definition of *sedition* in the Oxford Living Dictionary is conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch<sup>7</sup>. This is a big step beyond anything mentioned by *Sauti za Wananchi* respondents, and indeed beyond the dictionary definition of *uchochezi*. The origin of the word *uchochezi* is the verb *kuchochea*, which is generally translated as to catalyse and is widely used in scientific contexts. Perhaps, therefore, a better translation of *uchochezi* into English would be incitement, and a better translation of *sedition* into Swahili would be *kuchochea uasi* or *kuchochea mapinduzi* (to incite a rebellion or revolution).

## **Fact 2: Citizens say they have less freedom than they did three years ago**

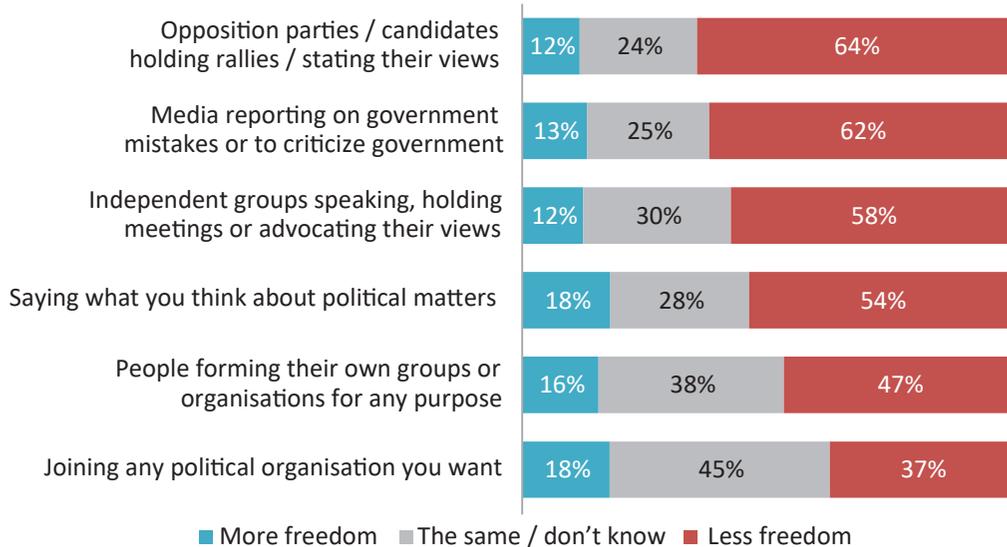
Across a range of different freedoms, citizens consistently say their freedom has declined in the past three years. The decline is most marked in the case of independent institutions: six out of ten citizens say the freedom of opposition parties (64%), the media (62%) and civil society (58%) has declined. Citizens also say their individual freedoms have declined, including freedom to say what they think about political matters (54%), to form groups or organisations (47%) and to join political organisations (37%).

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6 <https://sw.oxforddictionaries.com/ufafanuzi/uchochezi>

7 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sedition>

**Figure 2: Compared to three years ago, do you think there is more or less freedom in the following areas?**



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)  
**Base:** all respondents (1,241)

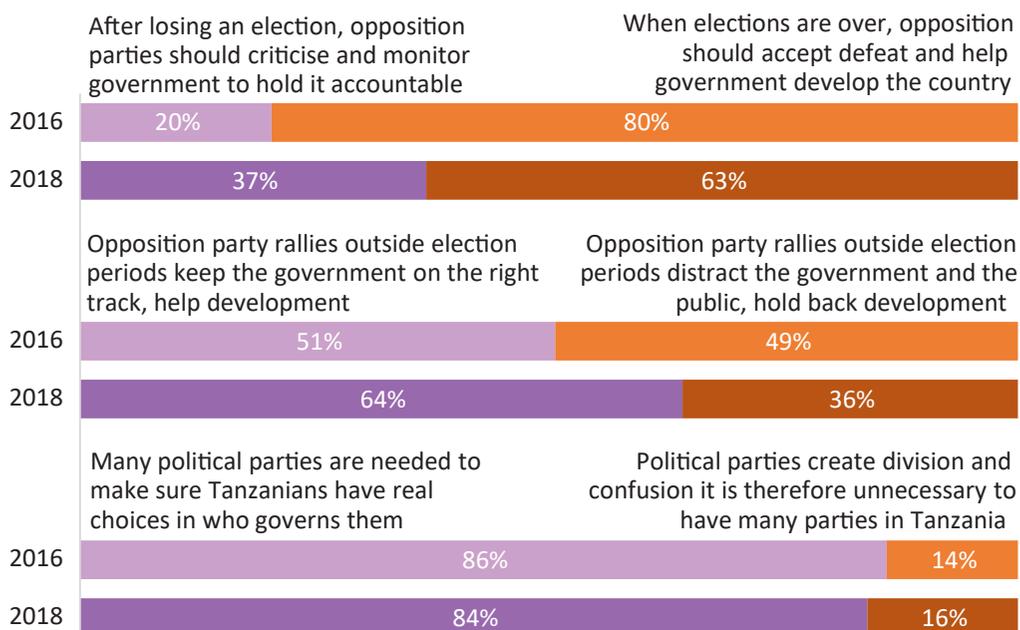
### Fact 3: Support for opposition party rights has increased since 2016

Four out of ten citizens (37%) say opposition parties should criticise and monitor the government between elections in order to hold it to account, up from two out of ten (20%) who felt this way in 2016. A majority still prefer the statement that opposition parties should accept defeat and support government efforts to develop the country in-between elections.

Similarly, support for the right of opposition parties to hold meetings and rallies has increased, from five out of ten (51%) in 2016, to six out of ten citizens (64%) in 2018. The alternative view – that opposition party rallies outside election campaign periods are a distraction – has declined in popularity over the same period.

Public support for multiparty democracy remains strong, largely unchanged since 2016. Five out of six citizens (84%) prefer the statement that many political parties are needed, leaving one out of six (16%) who prefer the alternative, that parties create division and confusion.

**Figure 3: Among each pair of statements, which do you agree with more?**



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018) and Round 11 (August 2016)

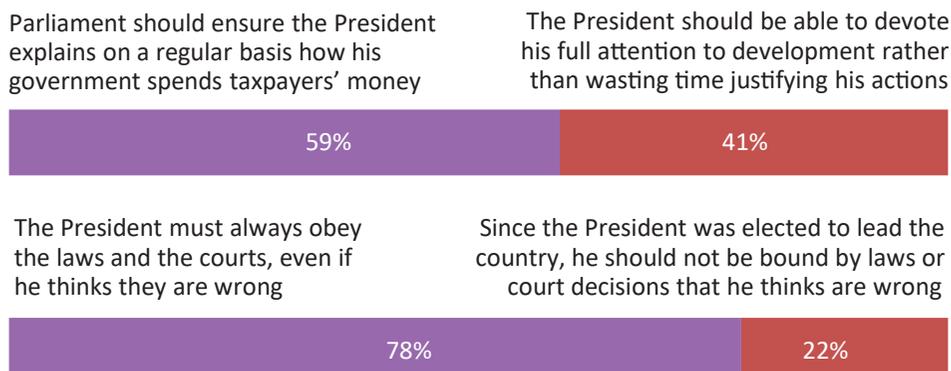
Base: all respondents (1,241 in Round 27; 1,602 in Round 11)

#### **Fact 4: Most citizens want the President to be accountable**

Six out of ten citizens (59%) prefer the view that Parliament should hold the President to account for public spending, leaving four out of ten (41%) who think that the President should be able to focus on development activities without any need to justify his actions.

A large majority (78%) say the President must always obey the law and the courts, preferring this view over the alternative – that the President was elected to lead the country and should therefore not be bound by laws or court decisions with which he disagrees.

**Figure 4: Among each pair of statements, which do you agree with more?**



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)

Base: all respondents (1,241)

Afrobarometer public opinion surveys (2014 and 2017)<sup>8</sup>

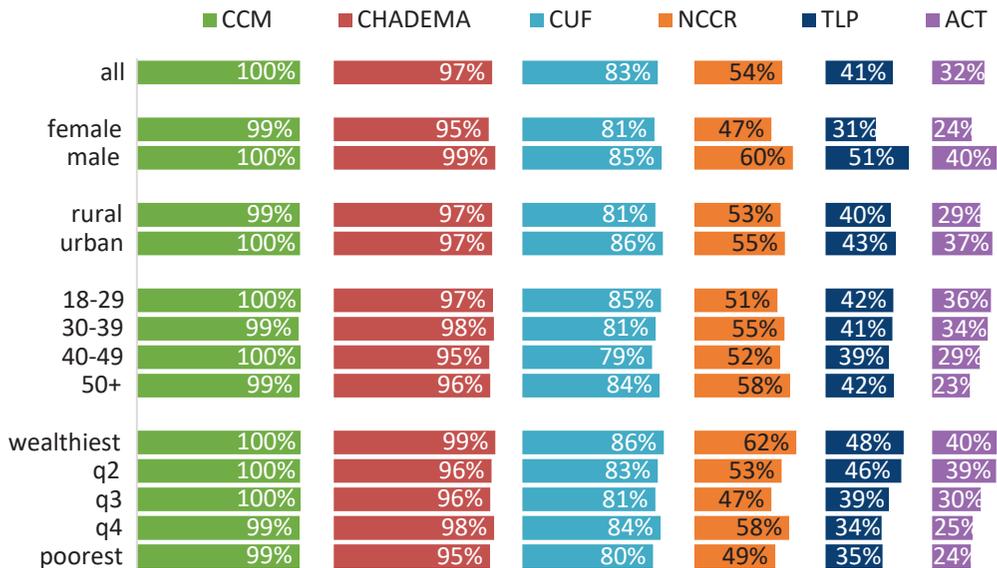
### **Fact 5: Public awareness of smaller political parties is low**

Almost all citizens are aware of three major political parties in Tanzania, namely CCM (100%), Chadema (97%) and CUF (83%). Awareness of other significant parties, however, is much lower. Among the other parties, NCCR Mageuzi (54%) is the most well-known, followed by TLP (41%) and ACT Wazalendo (32%).

Awareness of the larger parties is consistent across demographic groups, but awareness of the less well-known parties is higher among men, younger and wealthier citizens, and residents of urban areas.

<sup>8</sup> See Afrobarometer.org

**Figure 5: Which political parties are you aware of?**



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)

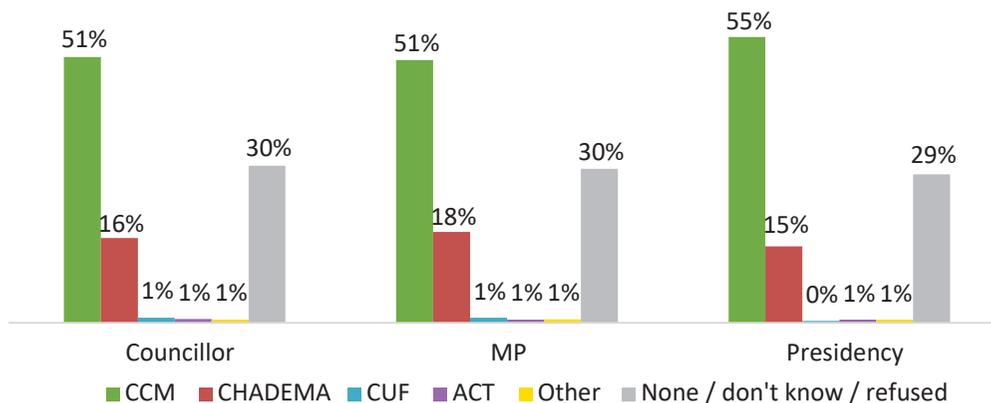
Base: all respondents (1,241)

### Fact 6: A majority of citizens would elect CCM candidates today

A small majority of citizens would elect CCM candidates for councillor (51%), MP (51%) and the Presidency (55%) if an election were held now. Candidates representing Chadema would win the support of around one out of six citizens (15-18%), and smaller parties would win support from a small number of citizens.

It is notable, however, that a large number of citizens (29-30%) are unsure who they would vote for.

**Figure 6: If the election was to be held today, which political party's candidate would you vote for, for each of the following positions?**



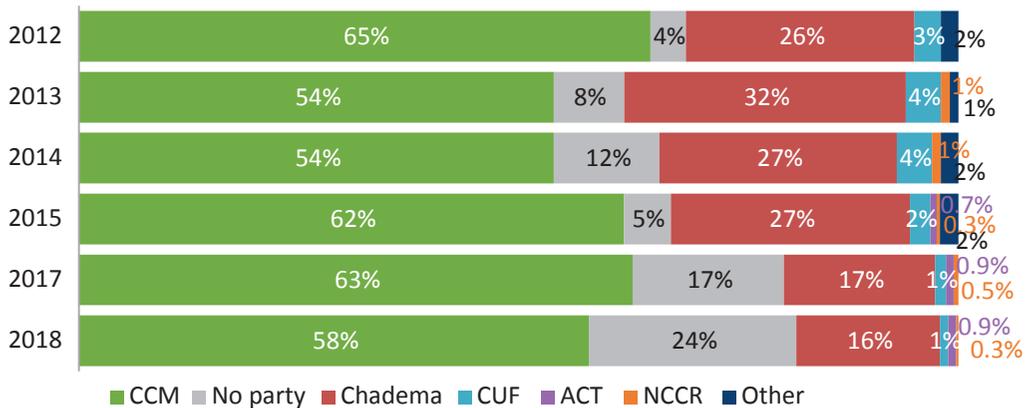
**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)  
 Base: all respondents (1,241)

**Fact 7: A growing number of citizens do not feel close to any particular political party**

One out of four citizens (24%) does not feel close to any particular political party, up since 2017 (17%) and 2012-2015 (4-12%).

The number of citizens who feel close to either CCM or Chadema has dropped since 2015. In the case of CCM, the drop has been small (62% to 58%), while for Chadema it has been a little larger (27% to 16%). Support for CUF has also fallen, though from a lower base, and support for ACT Wazalendo, NCCR Mageuzi and other parties remains stubbornly low.

**Figure 7: Which political party do you feel closest to, if any?**



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey,

Panel 1 Baseline (Oct-Dec 2012), Round 10 (Oct 2013) and Round 24 (Sep 2014);

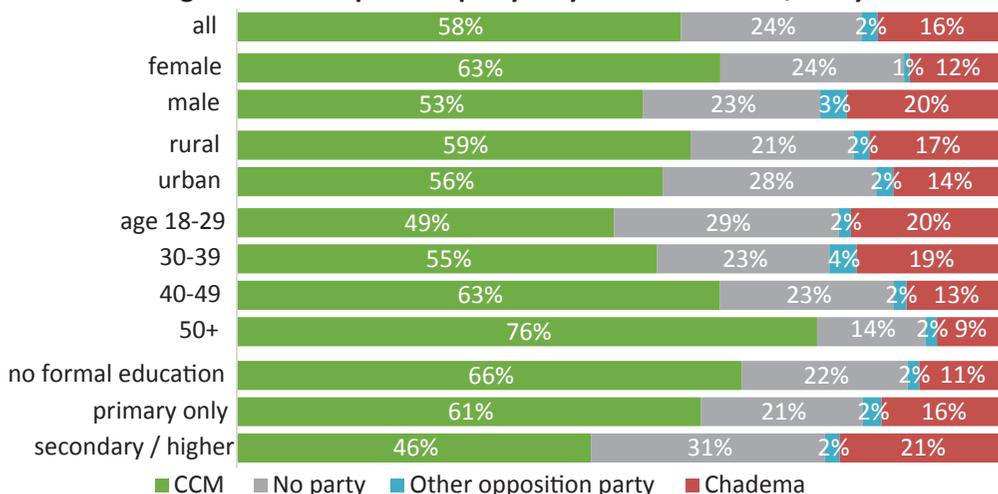
Panel 2 Round 1 (Aug-Sep 2015), Round 18 (Apr 2017) and Round 27 (Apr 2018)

Base: all respondents (1,241 in Round 27)

\* 27% for Chadema in 2015 includes 2% who felt closest to "UKAWA"

Older citizens (76%) are much more likely to feel close to CCM than the young (49%), and more women (63%) feel close to CCM than men (53%). Those with no formal education are more likely to feel close to CCM than those with secondary education or higher. There are no strong differences in support between rural and urban areas. It is worth noting, however, that support for CCM was previously substantially higher in rural areas compared to urban areas (66%-57% in 2017), but support in rural areas has dropped such that CCM support is now similar in both areas.

**Figure 8: Which political party do you feel closest to, if any?**



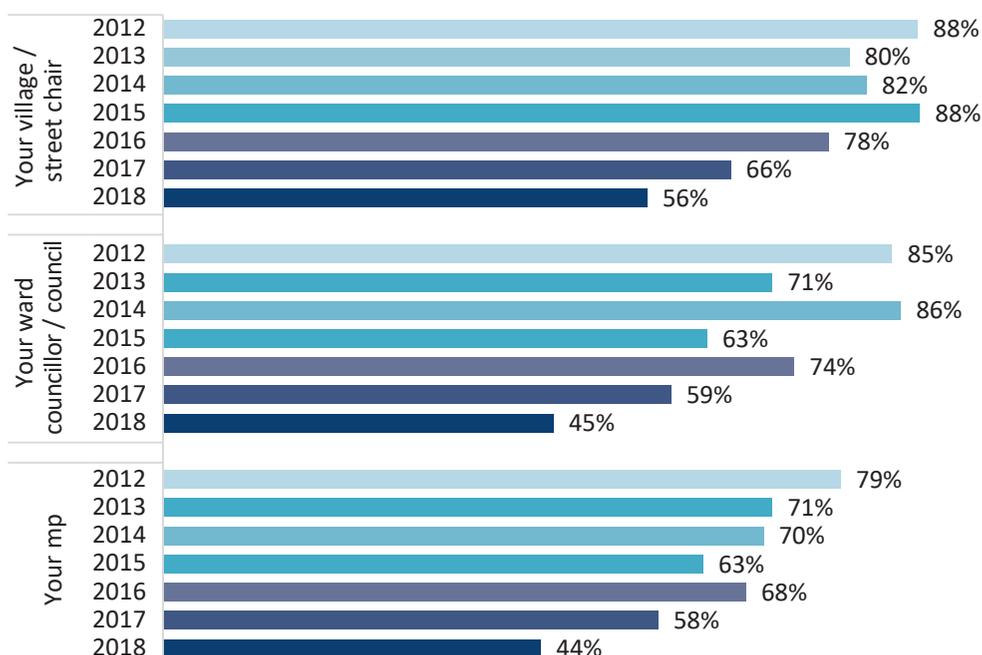
**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)

Base: all respondents (1,241)

## Fact 8: Citizens' approval for elected representatives continues to fall

Fewer than half of all citizens approve of the performance of their MP (44%) and councillor (45%) since coming to office. Approval of street / village chairs is a little higher (56%). In all these cases, approval ratings have fallen considerably over the past six years, from 79-88% in 2012, with most of the decline coming in the past two years.

**Figure 9: Do you approve of the way the following individuals have performed their duties since coming to office?**  
(% answering yes)

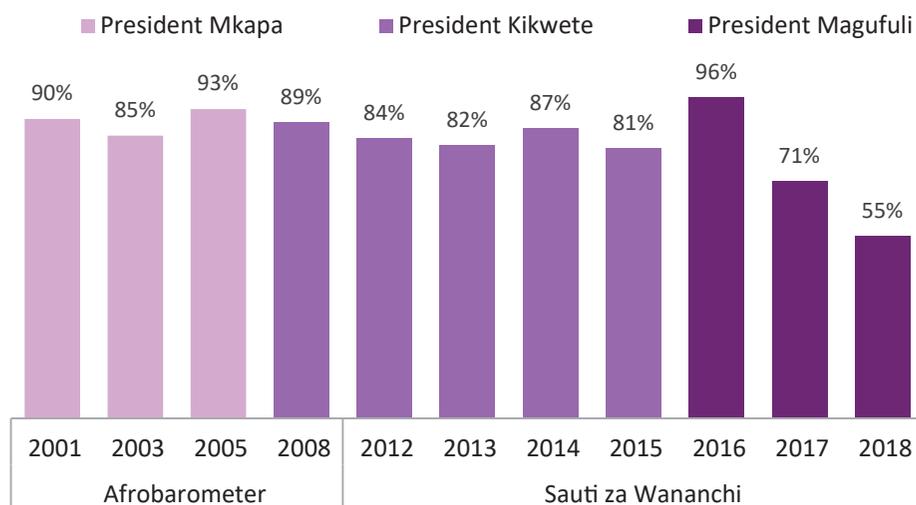


**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Panel 1 Baseline (Oct-Dec 2012), Round 10 (Oct 2013) and Round 24 (Sep 2014); Panel 2 Round 1 (Aug-Sep 2015), Round 11 (Sep 2016), Round 18 (Apr 2017) and Round 27 (Apr 2018)  
Base: all respondents (1,241 in Round 27)

## Fact 9: Just over half the population approve of the performance of President Magufuli

A little over half the population (55%) approve of the performance of President Magufuli since he came to office in 2015. This is down from 71% a year ago, and 96% in 2016. The drop is such that in a period of two years the Presidential approval rating has gone from the highest rating on record for a Tanzanian President to the lowest.

**Figure 10: Do you approve of the way the President has performed his duties since coming to office?**  
(% answering yes)



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Panel 1 Baseline (Oct-Dec 2012), Round 10 (Oct 2013) and Round 24 (Sep 2014); Panel 2 Round 1 (Aug-Sep 2015), Round 11 (Sep 2016), Round 18 (Apr 2017) and Round 27 (Apr 2018); Afrobarometer (2001, 2003, 2005, 2008)<sup>9</sup>  
Base: all respondents (1,241 in Round 27)

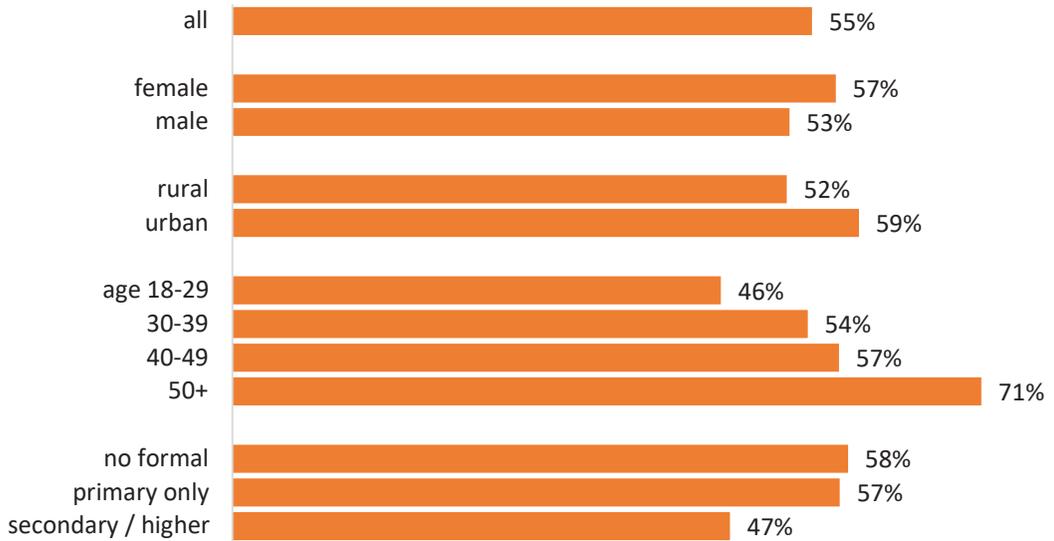
Older citizens (71%) are much more likely than others to approve of the President’s performance, while less than half of citizens aged 18-29 years (46%) approve.

Women (57%) are slightly more likely than men (53%) to approve of the President’s performance, and citizens with no formal or primary education (57%-58%) are more likely to approve than those with secondary education or higher (47%)

Again, the rural-urban situation is worthy of note. A year ago, in 2017, citizens in rural areas (72%) had been slightly more likely than those in urban areas (70%) to approve of the President’s performance. However, the decline in approval for the President has been much sharper in rural areas (from 72% to 52%) than urban areas (70% to 59%).

9 See Afrobarometer.org

**Figure 11: Do you approve of the way the President has performed his duties since coming to office?**  
 (% answering yes)



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 27 (April 2018)  
 Base: all respondents (1,241)

### 3. Conclusion

The most striking conclusion in this brief is undoubtedly the declining approval rates for all elected representatives, most particularly for the President. The message from citizens to their leaders is clear: “we are not happy”.

It would be a mistake, however, to focus only on this. Because there is a lot more detail here (and in other recent *Sauti za Wananchi* briefs), that can shine some light on why citizens are concerned, and what their leaders could do to win back public trust and support.

First, citizens clearly share the concern of rights activists and many commentators about a perceived decline in respect for political rights and freedoms – both for individual citizens and for institutions like the media, civil society and opposition political parties. Citizens point to personal freedoms as core to their understanding of the term “democracy” in greater numbers even than those who cite elections. They are clear that many rights and freedoms have declined in recent years. They increasingly defend the rights of opposition parties and support restraints on Presidential power.

Second, though not covered in detail in this brief, it is worth also noting the findings of a recent *Sauti za Wananchi* survey round on poverty and livelihoods<sup>10</sup>. Citizens’ message to leaders was clear on that occasion as well: “we’re struggling, we’re under economic pressure”. It is likely that such pressure has played a major part in declining approval ratings.

Third, the decline in support for CCM and in approval for the President has been most striking in rural areas. This is new. Opposition parties in general and Chadema in particular have usually had more support in urban areas, and rural areas are more pro-CCM and pro-government. Something has changed and it might be that the economic pressures are perhaps being felt most intensely among rural households.

So what can political leaders do in response? If citizens two key concerns are political freedoms and economic pressures, to win back public support the government would be wise to address both these issues. First, the government could clearly state its support for broader political freedoms, and critically could back words up with actions such as re-starting live broadcasts from parliament and relaxing restrictions on opposition party activities. Second, the government could find ways of rebuilding business confidence and channelling financial support to rural households.

Finally, there are some insights here for opposition parties as well. Though Chadema, CUF, ACT and NCCR are all operating in difficult circumstances, they might be wise to ask why a decline in approval of elected leaders and even in support for CCM has not translated into growth in

10 Publication forthcoming, data available on request.

support for them. In particular, why have these parties struggled to gain support in urban areas, which might usually be considered their natural support base? More particularly, however, while these parties have been focused largely – and understandably – on issues of political freedom, they may want to consider addressing the citizens’ economic concerns.

