



# The People's President?

## Citizens' assessment and expectations of the fifth phase government

### 1. Introduction

Following the October 2015 elections, President Magufuli and his government have embarked on a program of reform at a high pace. Whether fighting corruption and tax evasion at the port, eliminating school fees, publicly dismissing civil servants accused of wrongdoing, or banning sugar imports, this work has attracted a lot of media coverage and public attention. The phrases “hapa kazi tu” (work and nothing else) and “tumbua majipu” (lancing the boils) have captured citizens' imagination.

At the same time, the government has faced criticism from several directions. Has due process been followed when dismissing civil servants? Are new restrictions on political parties' activities and on live broadcasts from parliament anti-democratic, or even dictatorial? Has the aggressive tax collection effort throttled the private sector? In this brief, we consider the public's opinions on the early months of President Magufuli's administration.

Which of his actions are most and least popular? How does the public view the tumbua majipu campaign of summary dismissals of public officials? Do citizens perceive any change in government performance? Data for this 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. Information on the overall methodology is available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti). For this brief, data were collected from 1,813 respondents from the second Sauti za Wananchi panel.

This was the eleventh round of calls to the new panel, conducted between June 4th and 20th, 2016.

Sauti za Wananchi can provide two different types of data: opinion data – citizens' views on issues, their perceptions of events; and monitoring data – citizen reports based on their real experiences of public services. This brief largely contains opinion data, reflecting public perception and views.

The key findings are:

- Fewer than one in twenty citizens feels well-informed about national politics
- President Magufuli's most popular actions are on ghost workers, free primary education, and dismissal of public officials
- President Magufuli's least popular action is the sugar import ban and price directive
- 96% of Tanzanians approve or strongly approve of President Magufuli's performance since taking office
- 68% of Tanzanians approve or strongly approve of the performance of their MP
- Three out of four citizens believe officials should only be dismissed when proof of wrongdoing has been established

## 2. Nine facts about public opinion on the new government's performance

### Fact 1: The public know who their elected representatives are

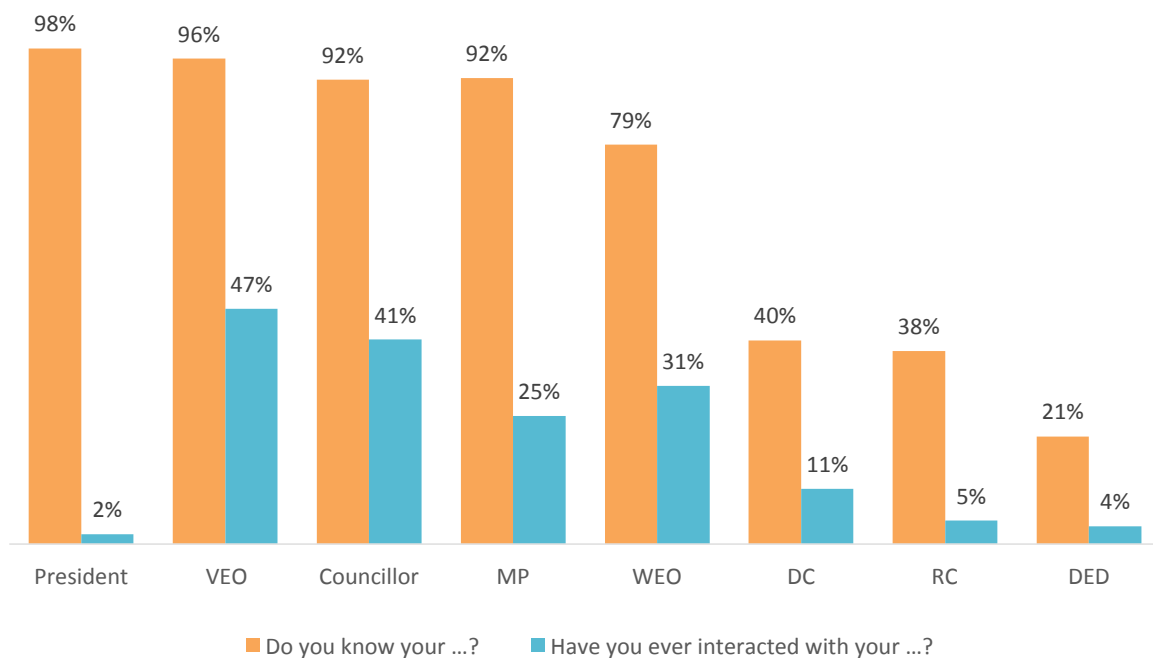
Over nine out of ten citizens know their Councillor (92%), Member of Parliament (MP; 92%) and the President (98%). A similarly high number (96%) know their Village Executive Officer (VEO), and slightly less (79%) know their Ward Executive Officer (WEO). Much lower numbers know their District Executive Director (DED; 21%), District Commissioner (DC; 40%) and Regional Commissioner (RC; 38%) who are appointed officials.

In terms of interaction with these officials, there is a fairly clear pattern. Citizens have much more experience interacting with lower-level officials, such as the VEO (47%), Councillor (41%) and WEO (31%). In contrast, fewer citizens have interacted with their MP (25%), DC (11%), RC (5%) and DED (4%).

These numbers are fairly consistent across different age groups, genders and urban/rural localities. Older people and men are slightly more likely to know and have interacted with the listed officials, and those in rural areas are more likely to know their VEO, WEO and councillor, but the differences are small.<sup>1</sup>

Where citizens have raised issues with leaders, the majority have raised community issues, rather than personal or national issues. And in most cases, these interactions take place at public meetings, or at the homes or offices of leaders at village and ward level.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Do you know, and if so, have you ever interacted with the following people?**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

### Fact 2: Fewer than one in twenty citizens consider themselves well-informed about national politics

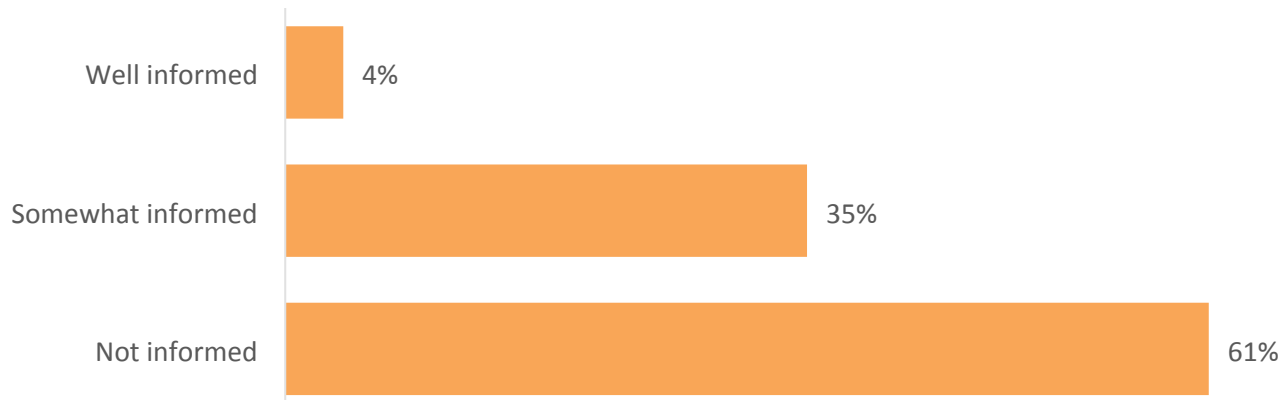
A clear majority (61%) of citizens feel uninformed about developments in national politics, while only a very small number (4%) feel well-informed. This is only slightly below the number who consider themselves well informed about progress in the education (9%) and health (9%) sectors.<sup>3</sup>

1 Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (September 2016)

2 ibid

3 ibid

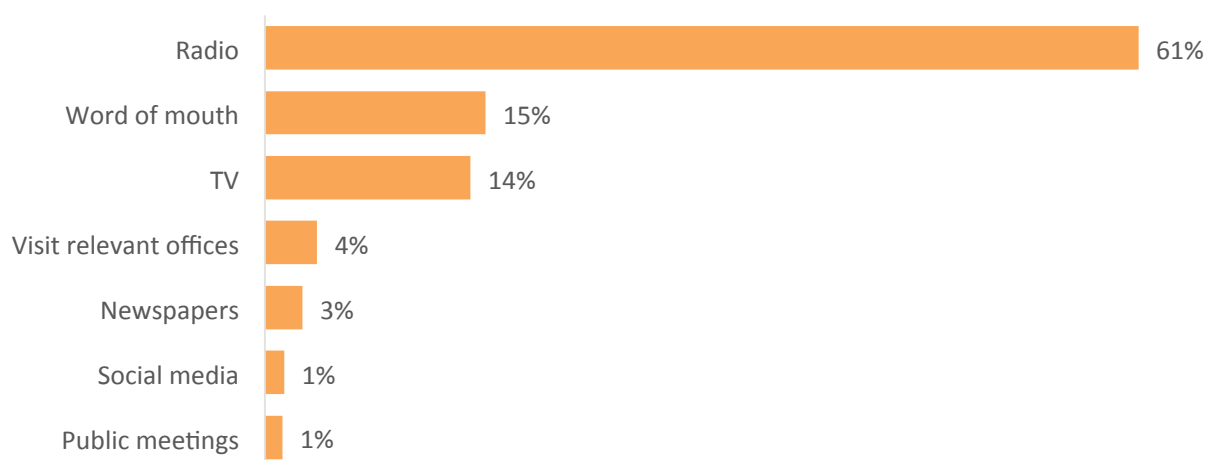
**Figure 2: How well informed are you about national politics?**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

Among those who feel well-informed or somewhat informed, six out of ten (61%) get their information on political matters from the radio, while others get their information through word-of-mouth (15%) or from the TV (14%). Other sources are very low: only 3% use newspapers as their main source of information on national politics, while only 1% get their information on politics through social media.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3: How do you get your information about national politics?**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

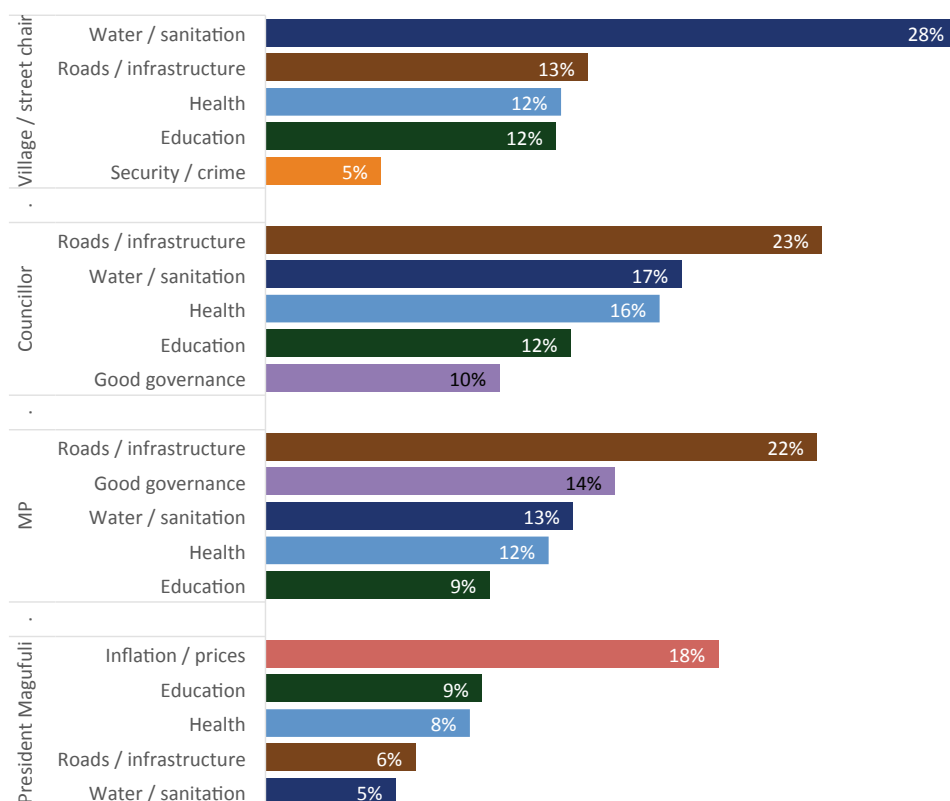
### **Fact 3: Roads, water, health and education top the list of questions citizens would like to ask their elected leaders**

A wide-range of topics were raised by citizens asked to choose one question they would like to ask their elected leaders. Water and sanitation was the most popular topic for questions to village / street chairs, and also appeared in the top-five question topics for councillors, MPs and for President Magufuli. Roads, health and education also appeared in the top-five question topics for all four elected representatives.<sup>5</sup>

For President Magufuli, the top question topic chosen was inflation / prices, which was selected by two out of ten citizens (18%).<sup>6</sup>

4      ibid  
5      ibid  
6      ibid

**Figure 4: If you could ask one question to the following people, what would it be? (top five responses shown)**



Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

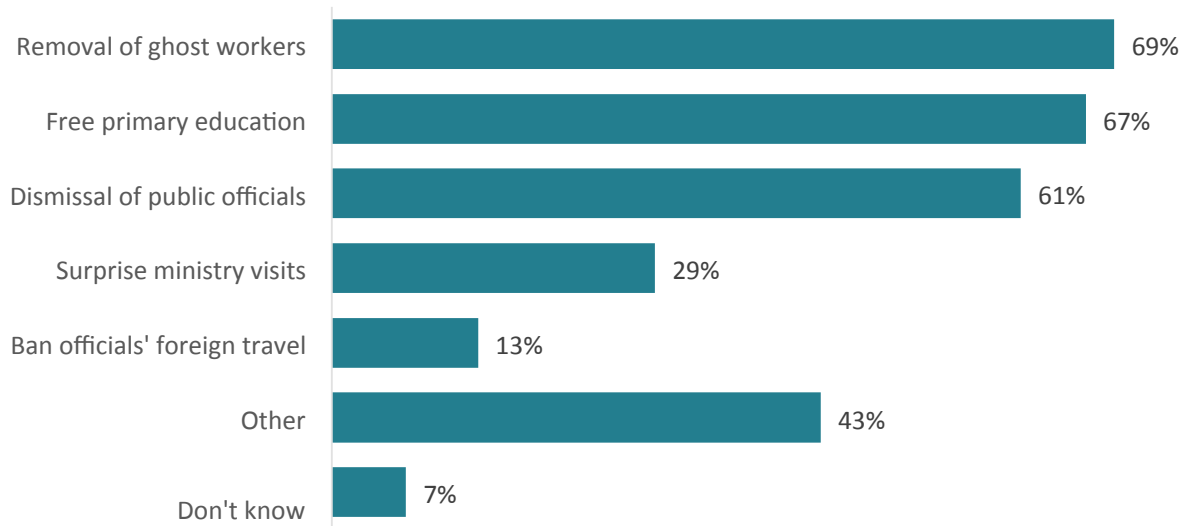
### Fact 4: President Magufuli's most popular initiatives are actions on ghost workers, free primary education, and dismissal of public officials

Around seven out of ten citizens named President Magufuli's actions to remove ghost workers from the government payroll (69%), to re-introduce free primary education (67%) and to dismiss public officials accused of wrongdoing (61%) as one of the three actions that they approve of most.<sup>7</sup>

Some of President Magufuli's most high profile initiatives were much lower on the list, including addressing tax avoidance (6%), fighting corruption (1%), the sugar import ban (4%), and reducing unnecessary public expenditure (1%) – not shown in chart.<sup>8</sup>

7      ibid  
8      ibid

**Figure 5: Which of President Magufuli's actions do you approve of most?**  
 (% who mentioned each act as being among the President's top three acts)



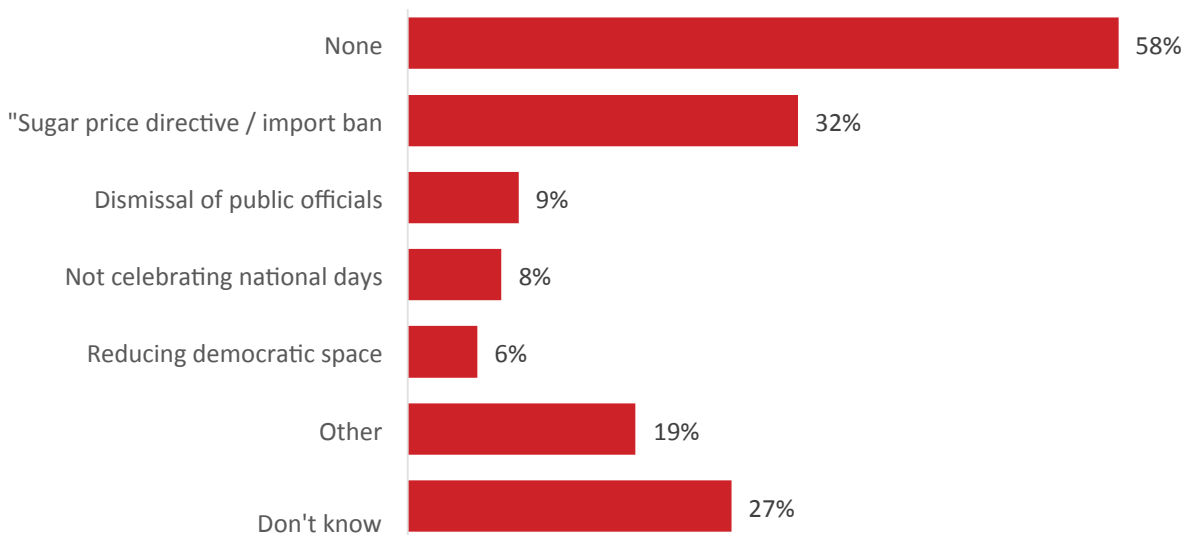
Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

### Fact 5: President Magufuli's least popular initiative is the sugar import ban and price directive

When asked which of President Magufuli's actions they disapproved of most, the biggest issue raised was the sugar import ban and price directive. Three out of ten citizens (32%) stated that they disapproved of this action. Smaller number expressed disapproval of the dismissals of public officials (9%), the reduced celebrations for national days (8%) and restrictions on the activities of political parties and MPs (6%).<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, a clear majority (58%) said they did not disapprove of any of President Magufuli's actions. Several actions appeared very low on the list. In particular, very few citizens expressed disapproval of President Magufuli's ban on live broadcasts from parliament (3%) or his failure to resolve the situation on Zanzibar (0.2%) – not shown in chart.

**Figure 6: Which of President Magufuli's actions do you disapprove of most?**  
 (% who mentioned each act as being among the President's three worst acts)



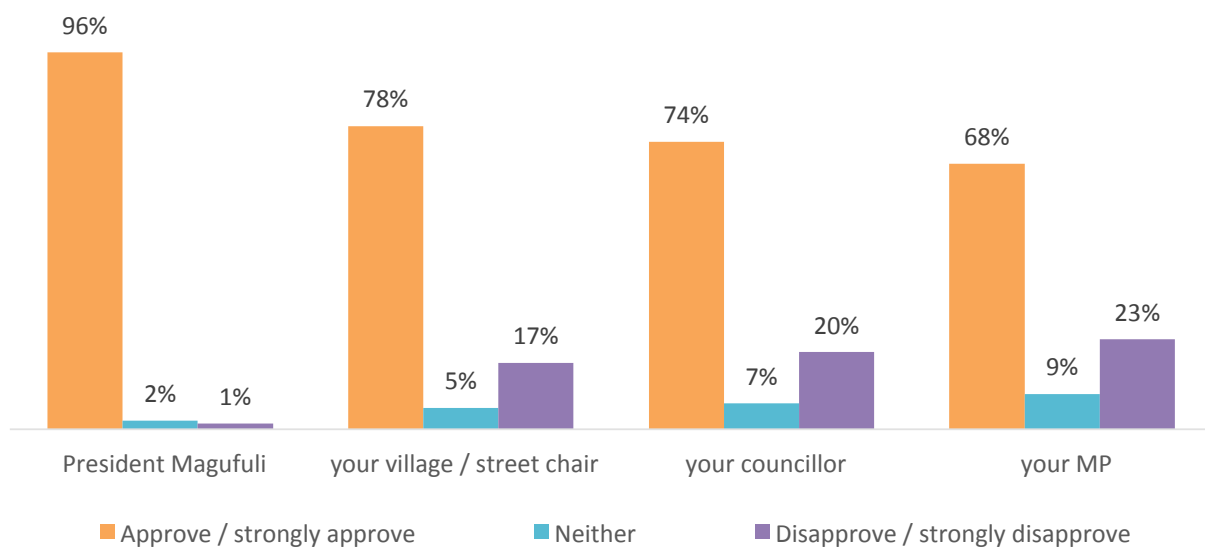
Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

## Fact 6: 96% of Tanzanians approve of President Magufuli’s performance since taking office, and 68% approve of the performance of their MP

President Magufuli’s actions since coming into office appear to be very popular with the public, with 96% stating that they “approve” or “strongly approve” of the way he has performed.<sup>10</sup>

Approval ratings for other categories of elected representatives are also high, though lower than for the President. Around eight out of ten approve of the performance of their village / street chair (78%) and their councillor (74%). A slightly lower number (68%) approve of their MP’s performance.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 7: How much do you approve of the way that the following individuals have performed their duties since they came into office?**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

The Afrobarometer surveys of public opinion from 34 African countries have regularly collected data on the approval ratings of different countries’ presidents at different times. The Afrobarometer survey question and methodology are slightly different from the Sauti za Wananchi poll, but the figures show that approval ratings for Tanzanian presidents are regularly close to the top of approval ratings for all African presidents. In 2005, close to the end of President Mkapa’s term in office, his approval rating was 93%, while at various times other countries’ presidents have achieved approval ratings of 90% or above. This includes President Museveni of Uganda in 2000 (93%), President Kibaki of Kenya in 2003 (93%), President Nujoma of Namibia in 2003 (90%), President Pohamba of Namibia in 2006 (90%) and President Bouteflika of Algeria in 2013 (90%).<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, President Magufuli’s approval rating in this new Sauti za Wananchi survey is higher than any of the 128 approval ratings for African presidents measured by Afrobarometer.<sup>13</sup>

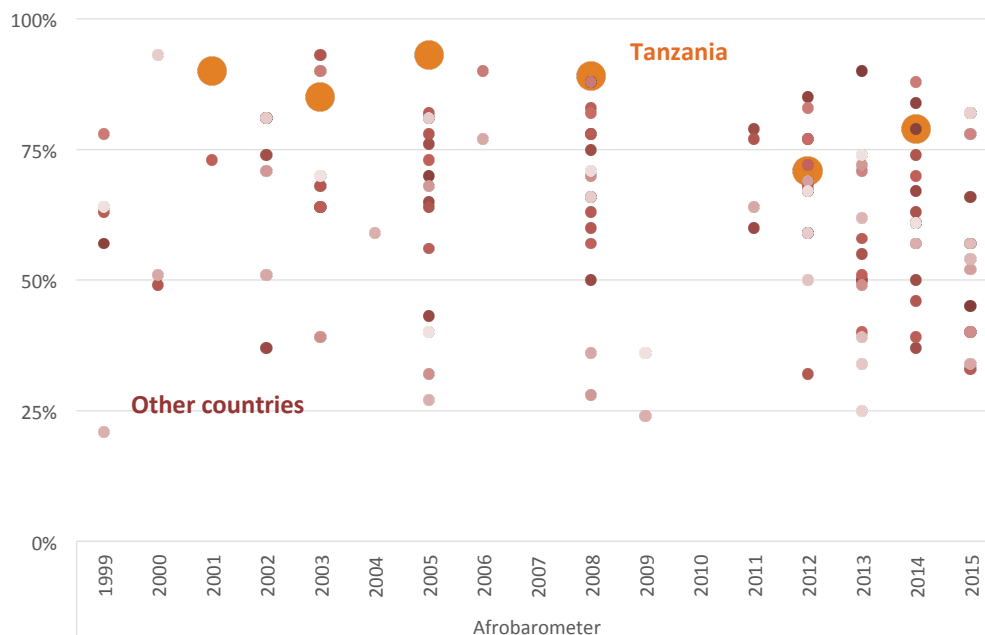
10 ibid

11 ibid

12 Afrobarometer: see <http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis>

13 Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (September 2016)

**Figure 8: Presidential approval ratings, various countries and years**



(Source: Afrobarometer)

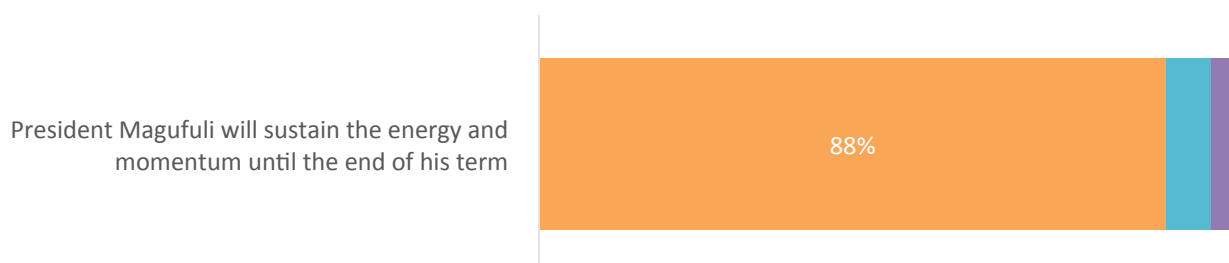
Similarly, Afrobarometer has collected data on citizens' approval ratings for Members of Parliament. In previous years, MPs in Tanzania have achieved approval ratings of between 58% and 67%, well above the average approval ratings for MPs in other countries.<sup>14</sup>

The approval rating for Tanzanian MPs in this Sauti za Wananchi survey (68%) is consistent with ratings in previous years in Afrobarometer's surveys.

### Fact 7: Nine out of ten citizens expect President Magufuli to sustain his current energy and momentum throughout his first term in office

A large majority (88%) of Tanzanians either agree or strongly agree that President Magufuli will sustain the energy and momentum with which he has begun his presidency until the end of his first term. Only 4% of citizens disagree with this statement.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 9: President Magufuli's momentum and sustainability**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

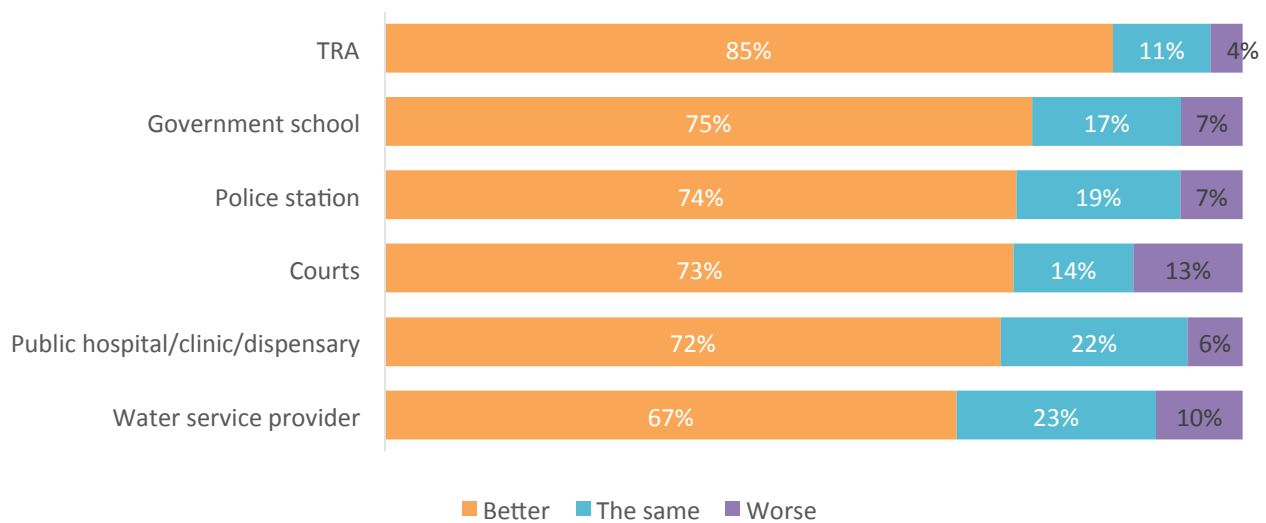
14 Afrobarometer: see <http://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis>  
 15 Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (September 2016)

## Fact 8: Seven out of ten citizens believe the quality of public services has improved

Among those who have used public services in the past six months, around seven in ten believe that the quality of services has improved. This finding is consistent across several different sectors, including tax authorities (85%), government schools (75%), the police (74%), courts (73%), public health facilities (72%), and water service providers (67%).<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that this does not measure real improvements in service delivery, but rather measures public opinion on the quality of services.

**Figure 10: In your opinion, how has the quality of the service changed under President Magufuli? (among those who have visited the service)**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

## Fact 9: Eight out of ten citizens believe officials should only be dismissed when proof of wrongdoing has been established

As shown previously, a majority of citizens approve of President Magufuli's dismissal of public officials accused of wrongdoing. In addition, almost all citizens (95%) say that civil servants in service delivery, like doctors and teachers, as well as administrative civil servants have become more accountable and effective. Nevertheless, when asked in more detail, citizens express some concerns about how this is done. Eight out of ten (76%) believe that officials should only be dismissed when an investigation has established proof of wrongdoing.<sup>17</sup>

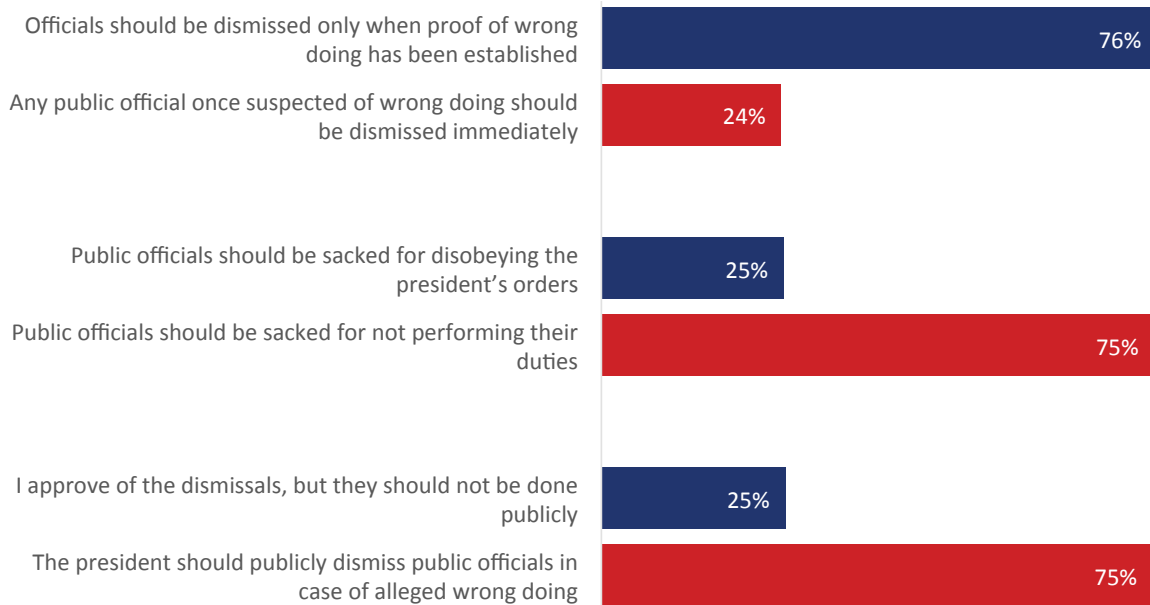
Nine out of ten citizens (90%) believe that public dismissals of public officials will deter other officials from wrongdoing – that dismissing officials publicly sets an example and keeps others on their toes.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, around half (48%) agreed that officials will only find new ways to hide their wrongdoing. Further, around four in ten (37%) believe that public dismissals will demoralise other officials.<sup>19</sup>

16      ibid  
17      ibid  
18      ibid  
19      ibid

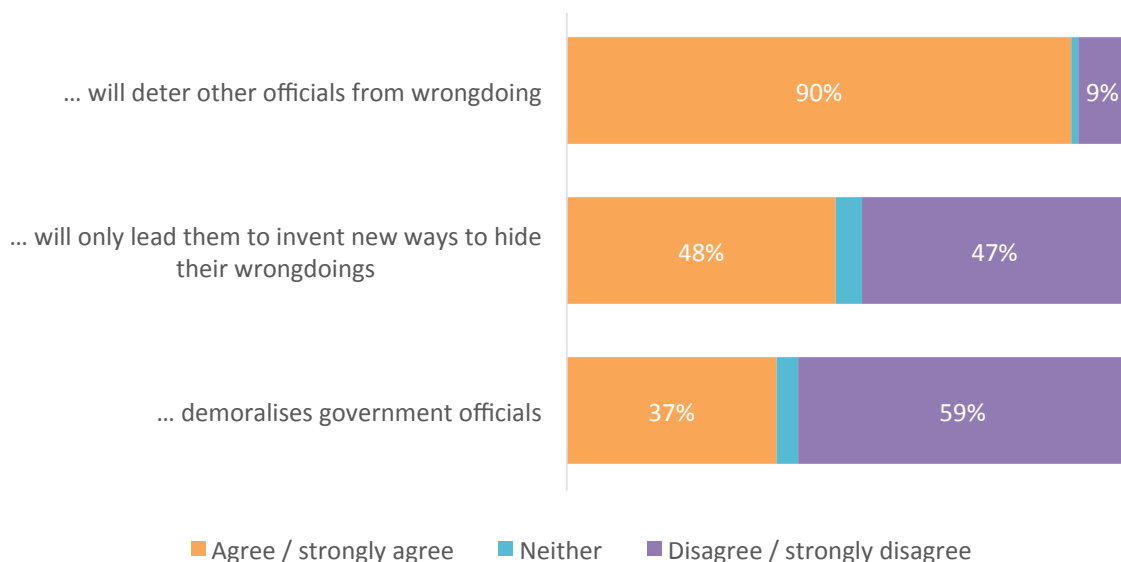


**Figure 11: Citizens views on public dismissals of officials accused of wrongdoing**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

**Figure 12: Public dismissal of public officials ...**



**Source of data:** Sauti za Wananchi, mobile phone survey - Round 11 (September 2016)

### 3. Conclusion

This brief presents citizens' opinions on the performance of President Magufuli and his government. The public is very positive about the administration's first few months, with almost all citizens expressing approval with the President's performance. The President's actions to address the problem of ghost workers, to provide free primary education, and to dismiss officials accused of wrongdoing – the "tumbua majipu" (lance the boils) campaign – are particularly popular. Further, large majorities express the opinion that public servants have become more responsive, accountable and effective, and as a result, the quality of public services has improved. It is not possible to say, however, whether this reflects an actual improvement in services and accountability, or just a perception.

Equally significantly, very few citizens expressed dissatisfaction with the President's actions following the Zanzibar elections in 2015, or with the restrictions he has introduced on the activities of political parties and Members of Parliament.

Citizens did express concerns in two areas. First, while the dismissals of public officials accused of wrongdoing are popular, a large majority hold the view that such dismissals should only take place after a proper investigation has established proof of wrongdoing. Second, the ban on sugar imports and directives on the price of sugar are unpopular with a significant part of the population. These two observations suggest that Tanzanians do not just blindly support every act of a popular President. In economic matters or on human rights, there are limits to what the public is willing to accept.

Nevertheless, there is strong evidence here of a major change in public perceptions of government. Previously, citizens' had low expectations of what government could do, part of a vicious circle where experience of poor performance lowers expectations, which in turn allows poor performance to continue unchallenged. In 2014, for example, over half of Tanzanian citizens stated that corruption could not be addressed<sup>20</sup>, and three quarters said the country was heading in a bad direction<sup>21</sup>. In contrast, this brief finds widespread optimism that President Magufuli and his administration are starting to turn things around.

These high expectations could be both a blessing and a curse. They could be so high as to have no possibility of being met, leading to discontent and renewed apathy among citizens. They could permit the government to get away with decisions that could have damaging consequences – undermining the rule of law, strangling democracy and putting economic growth at risk. Alternatively, they could contribute to fostering a culture where ordinary citizens actively demand, and expect much better standards and performance from their government. That would be a most welcome break from the past.

---

20 Sauti za Wananchi, June 2014

21 Afrobarometer 2014