PRESS STATEMENT

Release of 2025 Pre-Election Survey II Results by the Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR)

04 September 2025.

The Institute for Public Opinion and Research (IPOR), a leading, non-partisan, organization specializing in surveys and social science research, today releases key findings from its second pre-election survey conducted between August 14 and 27, 2025. This nationally representative survey of 2,400 adult Malawians who were randomly selected using international sampling standards, provides critical insights into citizens' perceptions, expectations, and intentions regarding the upcoming 2025 general elections. This survey, which followed another one that IPOR fielded prior to the onset of the campaign period, covered 27 of Malawi's 28 districts, with results generalizable at the national level and a margin of error of ±2% at a 95% confidence level. For further information about methodology, see note at end of statement.

About IPOR

IPOR is a Zomba-based research organisation registered in 2014. It specialises in independent social science research, with a focus on governance, development, and public policy. IPOR has previously conducted public opinion research in advance of the 2019 and 2020 elections to feed into the public discourse. Because nationally representative polls of this nature are very expensive, IPOR solicits funding from multiple funding sources to run the surveys whose results are then shared with the wider public as our contribution to the advancement of democratic values in the country. However, IPOR maintains strict independence in all aspects of its work.

Our research process is guided by scientific standards, transparent methodologies, and peer-reviewed practices that safeguard the integrity of the findings. Funders have no role in the sampling process, data collection, or analysis. To further guarantee independence, IPOR makes its survey instruments, methodology, and datasets publicly available, except for commissioned surveys whose results are not shared publicly, allowing for external scrutiny and replication.
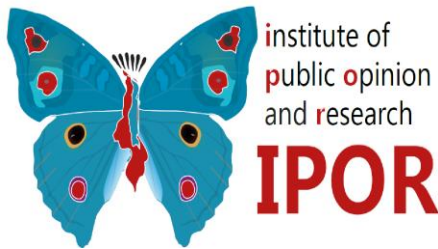
The need for public opinion polls

Public opinion research is an integral part of the election process and is carried out in many countries around the world, including here in Africa. Pre-election surveys like IPOR's are designed to highlight citizen views and assist political parties running for elected office to frame their election campaigns around the needs and priority issues citizens would like to see their elected governments address. While surveys gauge the mood of the electorate at a specific moment in time in the election campaign, they serve as an estimation, rather than a prediction, of results. While 96% of the population have indicated they intend to vote in the upcoming September 16 elections, it is worth noting that 11 % have not yet made up their mind who they will vote for and 5% refused to answer the question. With the decision of a combined 16% of the electorate's decision unknown at this point, there is a possibility of significant changes between now and Election Day.

Key findings

1. Civic Engagement and Political Participation

Overall, most Malawians are informed and active in the campaign and electoral process. More than half of Malawians (54%) reported attending a political rally or event in the past 12 months. Attendance levels varied slightly by gender and age. A larger share (69%) said they follow political campaigns either fairly closely or very closely.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Malawians reported receiving information or taking part in voter registration and civic education activities. The main source of voter education messages was the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), followed by political parties and candidates. Traditional media, especially radio and television, also played an important role in spreading voter education.

2. Confidence in Electoral Integrity and Processes

A significant majority of Malawians (70%) are confident that their votes will remain secret, and 80% believe that the results announced by the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) will accurately reflect their votes.
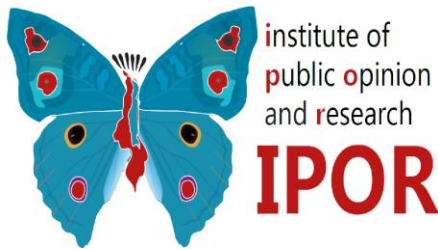
Additionally, most Malawians express trust in election observers, stating that their presence enhances confidence in electoral outcomes. There is slightly more trust in local Malawian observers (64%) compared to international observers (60%).

3. Voter priorities and influences of voting choice

When considering policy priorities, Malawians identify food shortages (29%) and economic management (29%) as the top priorities for the next government to address following the 2025 general elections. Urban residents prioritize tackling economic challenges, while rural residents emphasize resolving food security and agricultural issues. Similarly, younger Malawians focus more on economic management, whereas older generations prioritize agriculture.

Voters will primarily base their choices on candidates' commitment to ending government corruption (51%) and party policy promises or manifestos (40%). While party affiliation (33%) and the choice of running mates (30%) are also significant, they are secondary to anti-corruption efforts and policy commitments.

4. Awareness of presidential candidates

President Lazarus Chakwera (85%) is the most recognized presidential candidate for the 2025 Malawi general elections, followed closely by former President Peter Mutharika (79%). Other well-known candidates include Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front, UDF (50%); Joyce Banda (People's Party, PP)(48%), Michael Usi (Odya Zake Alibe Mulandu (45%) and Dalitso Kabambe of the UTM Party (30%).

5. Recognizability of presidential running mates

Since IPOR's last poll in July 2025, presidential candidates announced their respective running mates. At the national level, Jane Ansah of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (30%) emerges as the most recognized running mate for the 2025 Malawi general elections. She is followed by Vitumbiko Mumba of Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (19%), Matthews Mtumbuka of UTM party (6%), Khumbo Kachali of People's Party (PP) (5%), and Rex Kalolo of United Democratic Front (UDF) (1%).

Among those aware of the different running mates, favorability and influence vary. Jane Ansah, though the most recognized, attracts more divided opinions and comparatively lower support for her ticket. By contrast, Vitumbiko Mumba (MCP) and Matthews Mtumbuka (UTM)
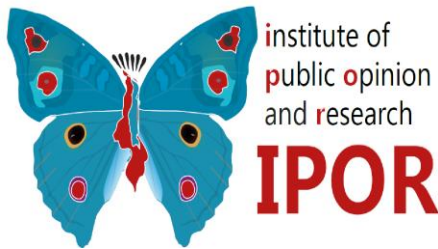
both enjoy stronger positive perceptions and greater influence on potential voter support, despite being less widely known. These patterns should, however, be interpreted with caution since they reflect only respondents familiar with each running mate, which may introduce sampling bias.

It is important to note that 64% of Malawians say they would not change their vote even if the presidential candidate chose a running mate they do not agree with.

6. Voting intentions

Enthusiasm to vote is very high, with 96% of registered voters indicating they will definitely cast their ballot.

With three to four weeks before the elections, 41% of registered voters say they would vote for Peter Mutharika (DPP) as President, followed by incumbent Lazarus Chakwera (MCP) at 31%. Dalitso Kabambe (UTM) stood at 6%, Atupele Muluzi (UDF) at 3%, and Joyce Banda (PP) at 2%, while other candidates attracted less than 1%. Notably, 11% of registered voters remained undecided and 5% refused to reveal their choice.
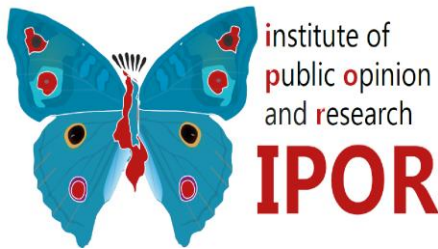
When compared to IPOR's previous poll that was fielded during the pre-campaign period in July 2025, Chakwera's support has grown by 5 percentage points (from 26%), while Mutharika's has decreased by 2 points (from 43%). With 11% undecided, there still remains an opportunity for all parties and candidates to attract voters and reshape the race in the run up to September 16th.

For more information, contact:

The Director of Training and Programmes

Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR)
P.O. Box 624
Zomba, Malawi
Email: admin@ipormw.org
Web: www.ipormw.org

Ends

Appendix 1: Survey Methodology

The survey sample size was 2,400 adult Malawians in 27 of the country's 28 districts. Such a sample size results in a margin of error of ±2% at a confidence level of 95%. This sample was larger than necessary for a nationally representative survey, which allowed IPOR to provide findings with a smaller margin of error while also providing robust regional-level findings with an added level of confidence.

The survey employed a **multistage stratified cluster sampling design** to select respondents. This approach is consistent with other scientifically rigorous, and globally recognized surveys in Africa and the globe. In simple terms, this method involves selecting respondents in several stages to ensure every Malawian has an equal and known chance of being included, while also making the sample representative of the entire country. In summary, our methodology followed the following stages:

Stratification (dividing into groups): We first divided the Malawian population into subgroups (strata) based on region (North, Central, South) and location type (urban vs. rural). For example, census projections show that 13% of adults live in the North, 44% in the Central, and 43% in the South. Similarly, 87% live in rural areas and 13% in urban areas. The sample was designed to reflect these proportions.

Clusters (enumeration areas): Within each stratum, we randomly selected enumeration areas (EAs), which are the smallest census units established by the National Statistical Office (NSO). Each EA has clear boundaries and corresponds to the workload of one enumerator during the 2018 population and housing census. The number of EAs chosen in each region and location type was proportional to that group's share of the national population.

Household selection: From each selected EA, we randomly chose households using a systematic interval (every 5th or 10th household). Supervisors identified a random starting point on a map (e.g., a school, church, or road junction) and enumerators counted households along assigned directions, covering both sides of the road.

Respondent selection: Within each selected household, one adult was randomly chosen for the interview. This ensures that every adult has equal chance of being selected. However, to ensure gender balance we alternative interviews by gender. If a man was interviewed in the first household, a woman should be interviewed in the next household.

This careful randomization process guarantees that the survey mirrors Malawi's population in terms of demographics and regional distribution, making the findings reliable and representative of the views of all Malawians.