



**IS THERE A POLITICAL  
GENDER GAP IN  
UGANDA?**

Do men and women in Uganda think differently about the political transition underway in their country?

At first glance, the Round 3 Afrobarometer survey of a random sample of 2400 adult Ugandans in April/May 2005 seems to reveal substantial gender gaps in public opinion on key political and constitutional questions. This brief paper reports the extent of, and trends in, these gaps. It also explores, in preliminary fashion, whether differences in opinion between men and women are due to gender or some other social characteristic, such as education.

**The Extent of the Gender Gap, 2005**

The size of the political gender gap in 2005 is summarized below, with further details provided in the attached spreadsheet. A **plus** sign on the “Gap” column indicates that **more men than women** favor this opinion. Conversely, a **minus** sign indicates that **more women than men** are in favor. Since all differences are statistically significant, one can have confidence that gaps exist.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Gap</b>
* Support democracy	71	51	+20
* Reject a one-party state	64	50	+14
* Unaffiliated to a political party	32	44	-12
* Support transition to a multiparty system	60	43	+17
* Know correct number of presidential term limits	50	28	+22
* Support removal of presidential term limits	45	57	-12

These results indicate that, in Uganda today, men are more likely than women to prefer democracy to alternative political systems. They are also more inclined to support a transition to

<sup>1</sup> Note, however, a change in methodology: over time, the Afrobarometer has become increasingly strict about recording “don’t know” responses, which account for a good deal of observed gaps.

a multiparty system of government and to know that, under the constitution in place at the time, a president could legally serve only two terms in office.

By contrast, women are more likely than men to entertain the prospect of a one-party state, which they may associate with Uganda's Movement system. Note that only half of adult women in Uganda today actually prefer democracy to other forms of government and reject a single party system. They are also more likely to hold back from politics by remaining unaffiliated to any political party. But a majority of women (compared to a minority of men) support the removal of presidential term limits, the effect of which would be to allow President Museveni to run for a third elected term in 2006.

### **Trends in the Gender Gap, 2000-2005**

The last five years have been a period of intense political debate about the appropriate form of government for Uganda. At either end of this period, referenda were held (July 2000) or planned (July 2005) to record the public's choice between Movement and multiparty systems. One consequence of this debate is that **the gender gap has widened**: over time, men have shifted decisively toward the multiparty position while women remain much more equivocal.

On support for democracy, for example, the size of the gender gap almost tripled (from +7 to +20 points) between 2000 and 2005. This evolution of opinion occurred in a context where popular support for democracy declined for both groups. But, whereas three quarters of women said they supported democracy in 2000, only half do so in 2005, a more substantial decline than for men.

But women have not instead opted for authoritarian alternatives. Rather, they now express greater uncertainty about what democracy means in a Ugandan context, with 40 percent now saying that they "don't know" or "don't understand" the concept.<sup>2</sup>

Nor are women implacably opposed to a multiparty system. To be sure, the gender gap has more than doubled (from +7 to +17 points) between 2000 and 2005. But whereas men's support has leapt upwards (from 40% to 60% over the five year period) and attained majority status, women's support has crept up much more slowly (from 33% to 43%) and remains a minority position.

One possibility is that women feel that they have benefited from the Movement system, which they do not wish to abandon for an untested, and possibly disruptive, multiparty alternative. It is clear that, over time, women have gradually been willing to come out in open affiliation with the NRM, up from 20% in 2000 to 46% in 2005. But the same trend is observable for men.

Thus, the partisan polarization of the sexes lies elsewhere than in affiliation to the incumbent party. It can be seen in the growing gap between men and women in the proportions who feel close to *any* political party at all, and especially opposition parties. Perhaps fearing that recent gains in women's advancement are at risk, women have been much more cautious in coming out openly in support of anti-incumbent organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> Again, tighter methodological standards for "don't know" responses in later years may account for part of this result.

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>2000 Gap</b>	<b>2002 Gap</b>	<b>2005 Gap</b>
* Support democracy	+7	+8	+20
* Reject a one-party state	+8	+14	+14
* Unaffiliated to a political party	-6	-9	-12
* Support transition to a multiparty system	+7	+12	+17

### **Opinion or Knowledge?**

Among the issues reviewed here, the largest gender gap concerns political knowledge. A 2005 survey question explicitly asks respondents whether they *know* how many terms a president could legally serve under the then constitution. Only 28% of women could give the correct answer (two terms), compared to 50% of men. Both figures are low (averaging 38 percent for adult Ugandans as a whole), but the figure for women is especially so. Moreover, a further 38% of women made incorrect guesses (one term? as many as he likes?) and some 34% admitted they “didn’t know” or “couldn’t remember.”

If women are not well informed about constitutional issues, one is led to wonder about the basis on which a majority (57%) arrive at the opinion that presidential term limits should be removed. Are they simply expressing loyalty to Museveni as a leader who restored a measure of peace to Uganda? Are they recording their appreciation for the female-friendly policies of the NRM? Whatever the basis, only 4 percent admit that they don’t have enough knowledge to make an informed decision.

Other key political opinions may also be underpinned by dubious knowledge. For example, much of the gender gap on support for democracy may in fact be due to a shortage of information. If those who “don’t know” are removed from the calculation, the gender gap on support for democracy closes dramatically to just 4 percentage points (with 85% of men and 81% of women). This +4-point difference is substantially smaller than the initial observation of +22 points and could be due to sampling error alone.<sup>3</sup>

### **Gender or Education?**

If, therefore, the formation of political opinion requires a preexisting base of knowledge, then differences between men and women may be due, at least in part, to demographic characteristics other than gender. Girls may lag behind boys, for instance, in access to education. Under these circumstances, an apparent gender gap may in fact be better understood as an education gap.

The available data certainly point towards the existence of systematic, gender-based inequities in education in Uganda. In the 2005 Afrobarometer survey, male respondents report more schooling than female respondents, especially at the extreme ends of the educational spectrum. For

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<sup>3</sup> In this instance, sampling error is +/-5% for observations of two separate sub-samples of 1200 men and 1200 women.

example, women are more likely to lack any formal education (13% versus 5%) and men are more likely to have gained access to post-secondary education (11% versus 7%).

To weigh the relative influence of gender and education, it is necessary to run multivariate tests. We applied regression analysis to two key items of political knowledge and opinion: A) knowledge of presidential term limits; and B) support for a transition to a multiparty system. To check whether gender and education were the most important demographic determinants, we added controls for other potential influences, namely exposure to radio news, residential location (urban or rural), and political party affiliation (coded as affiliated or not with the ruling NRM).

The results are shown in Figures A and B below. For both knowledge of presidential term limits and support for multipartyism, these five demographic factors explain about 13 percent of the variance.

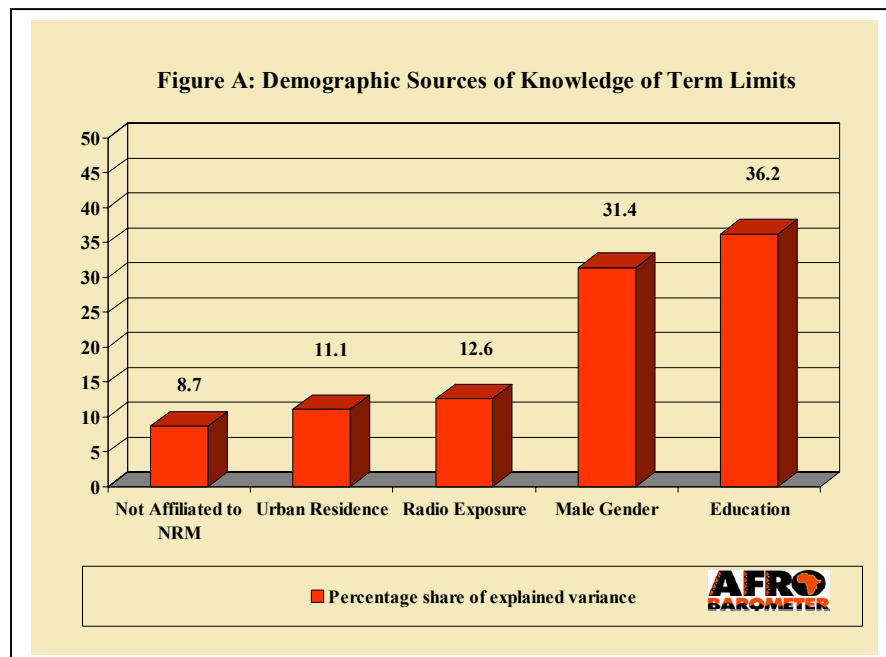
There are three important findings:

\* First, both gender and education are statistically significant. In other words, neither education nor gender displaces the other. *Both* of these demographic factors must be present in order to comprehensively explain the political views of Ugandan citizens.

\* Second, gender and education consistently outperform other demographic factors like radio exposure and residential location. But party affiliation trumps all other factors when it comes to explaining support for a multiparty transition.

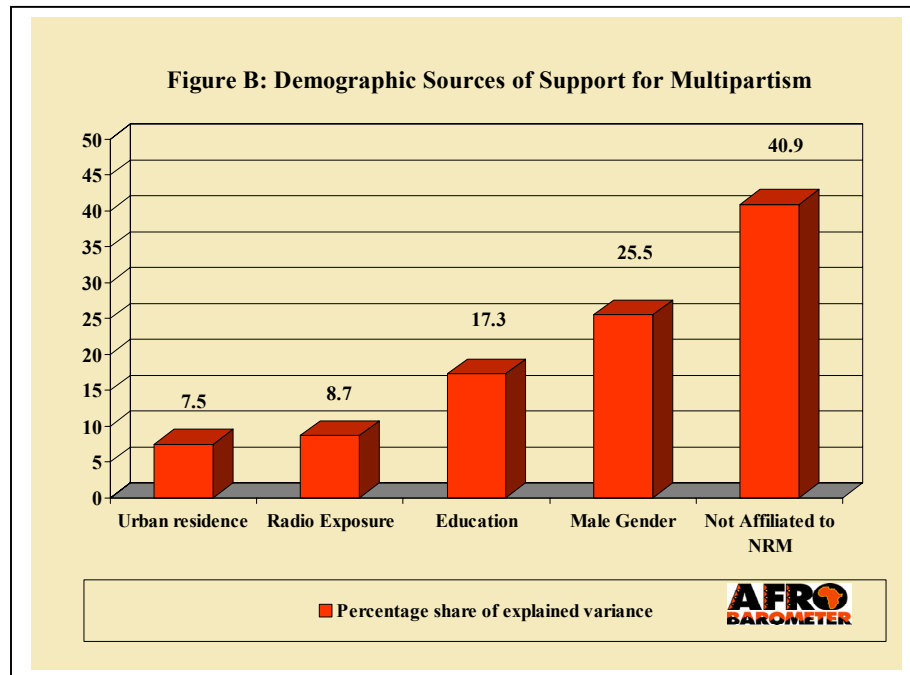
\* Finally education is especially important to the development of political knowledge (e.g., about the number of terms a president may serve), whereas gender weighs more heavily in matters of political preference (e.g., about a transition from the Movement system to multipartyism).

Consider Figure A. It shows that education is the leading demographic source of Ugandans' knowledge of presidential term limits. Being male is important too, but not as important as being educated. Women who have obtained little or no education are particularly likely to be unaware



that the constitution that was in effect in early 2005 allowed a president to serve only two terms. And, although urban residence and regular exposure to radio news can help offset deficits in political knowledge, neither of these factors has as much influence on popular knowledge about term limits as gender or, especially, education.

As Figure B shows, gender and education are also important sources of emerging multiparty sentiments in Uganda. Educated and urban males, especially those who regularly listen to news radio, are primed to jump on the multiparty bandwagon. By contrast, we find that female loyalists of the NRM are inclined to stick with the Movement system.



Importantly, however, the best predictor of a disposition to favor a multiparty transition is whether a person is *not* affiliated to the NRM. In this instance, a lack of party affiliation or affiliation to an opposition party leads the way in explaining mass attitudes to political transition: when it comes to preferences for the multiparty option, being independent from the NRM is even more important than being educated or a man.

In sum, gender matters for the formation of political opinion in Uganda. But its effects should be viewed in conjunction with the effects of party affiliation and education. Together, gender and lack of education impair women’s understanding of the term limit issue, while it is women who are affiliated with the NRM that are most likely to resist a transition to multiparty rule.

The **Afrobarometer** is produced collaboratively by social scientists from 18 African countries. Coordination is provided by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Michigan State University. Several donors support the Afrobarometer’s research, capacity-building and outreach activities, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Donor Democracy and Governance Group and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For more information, see: [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)

GENDER GAP QUESTIONS UGANDA	Round 1				Round 2				Round 3			
	All	Men	Women	Gap	All	Men	Women	Gap	All	Men	Women	Gap
<b>Support Democracy</b>												
A. democracy preferable	80	83	77	6	75	79	71	8	61	71	51	20
B. non-democracy sometimes OK	8	9	8	1	12	12	11	1	6	7	5	2
C. type of government doesn't matter	8	7	9	-2	7	5	9	-4	5	5	4	1
Dk/du	4	1	6	-5	6	3	9	-6	28	17	40	-23
<b>Reject One Party Rule</b>												
disapprove + strongly disapprove	53	57	49	8	54	61	47	14	57	64	50	14
Neither					5	5	5	0	4	3	4	-1
Approve + strongly approve	41	39	43	-4	40	34	46	-12	38	32	44	-12
Dk	6	4	8	-4	2	1	2	-1	1	1	2	-1
<b>Party Affiliation</b>												
Feel close to Movement	21	22	20	2	36	35	37	-2	46	47	46	1
Feel close to an opposition party	9	11	7	4	13	19	8	11	16	21	10	11
Unaffiliated	70	67	73	-6	51	46	55	-9	38	32	44	-12
<b>Support Move to Multiparty System</b>												
Yes	36	40	33	7	41	47	35	12	51	60	43	17
No	58	58	58	0	55	50	60	-10	45	37	52	-15
DK	6	2	9	-7	4	3	5	-2	4	3	5	-2
<b>Know Presidential Term Limit</b>												
know but can't remember									1	1	2	-1
incorrect guess									35	33	38	-5
correct answer									39	50	28	22
Dk									24	16	32	-16
<b>Remove Presidential Term Limits</b>												
disagree + strongly disagree	80	86	74	12	38	53	47	6	46	53	39	14
agree + strongly agree	18	11	24	-13	42	52	48	4	51	45	57	-12
dk/neither	1	1	2	-1	20				3	2	4	-2
	ABR2				IRI May 2003							