



Are we safer?

Kenyan's views on security, policing and extremism

1. Introduction

Kenya has suffered a number of terrorist attacks in recent years, from the shootout at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi to attacks at Garissa University College and at Mpeketoni. These have cost the lives of many innocent Kenyans. For most Kenyans, however, everyday crime and policing are more significant in their lives than the kind of large-scale attacks that attract national (and international) headlines.

This brief presents data on citizens experiences of crime, security and policing. What do citizens perceive to be the main security threats facing their communities? How many have been victims of or witnesses to crime in the past few months? How do citizens rate the performance of the police in providing security? Do they think the justice system as a whole is able to hold citizens – and prominent public figures – to account for any crimes they may commit? How big a threat is al-Shabaab

perceived to be, and what do citizens think the government should be doing to combat this threat?

Data for this brief comes from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi*, which is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at www.twaweza.org/sauti. For this brief, data were collected from 1,705 respondents from Kenya's *Sauti za Wananchi* panel in the sixteenth round of calls to the panel, conducted between September 16 and October 13, 2017. The poll has +/-2.4% margin of error at 95% confidence level.

The key findings are:

- One out of three citizens say there is no major security threat in their community, while one out of four are most concerned about theft

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P. O. Box 13784-00800, Nairobi, Kenya
t: +254 715 563720, +254 786 563722
e: info@twaweza.org | www.twaweza.org/sauti

Sauti za Wananchi



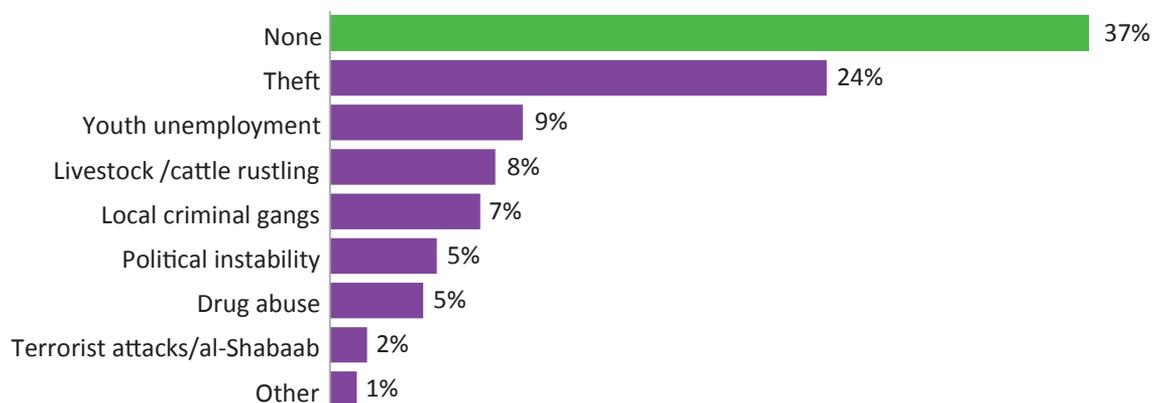
- One out of four citizens has been the victim of a theft in the past six months
- Four out of ten citizens say the level of security in their neighbourhood has improved in the past three months, two in ten say it has deteriorated
- Two out of three citizens would turn first to the police for assistance if they become a victim of crime
- Half the population are satisfied by the police force, one out of three are dissatisfied
- Citizens think prominent figures in society are able to escape justice, but that ordinary citizens are not
- Three out of four citizens say al-Shabaab is a serious threat to Kenya
- Citizens see a lack of employment as the main reason why some people join extremist groups

2. Nine facts about security and policing in Kenya

Fact 1: 1 out of 3 citizens see no major security threat in their community

One out of three citizens (37%) say there is no major threat to security in their community, more than those who point to any particular danger. The most commonly perceived security threat is theft, cited by one in four citizens (24%). Terrorism is cited by just one in fifty citizens (2%).

Figure 1: What is the major threat to security in your community?¹



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), *n*=1,705

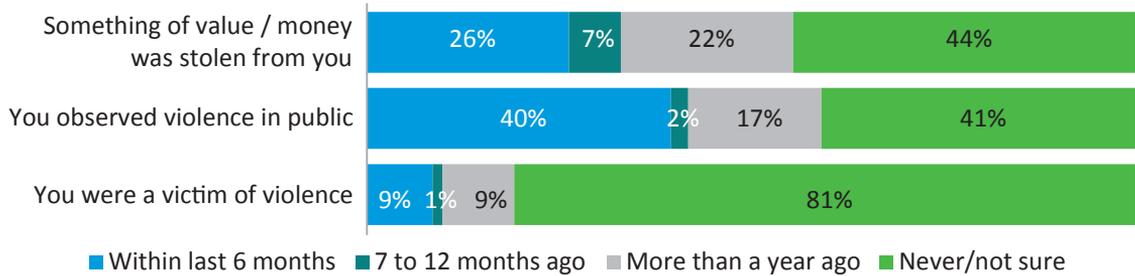
Residents of rural areas are even more likely to say there is no major security threat (40%), compared to their urban counterparts (33%). Those in urban areas are more likely to cite theft (27%) and youth unemployment (13%) as security threats compared to those in rural areas (22% and 7%).

¹ Percentages in charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Fact 2: 1 out of 4 citizens had something stolen in the past six months

One out of four adults (26%) have experienced the theft of money or something else of value in the past six months. Four out of ten (40%) have observed violence in public in the same time period, and one out of ten (9%) have been a victim of violence during this time.

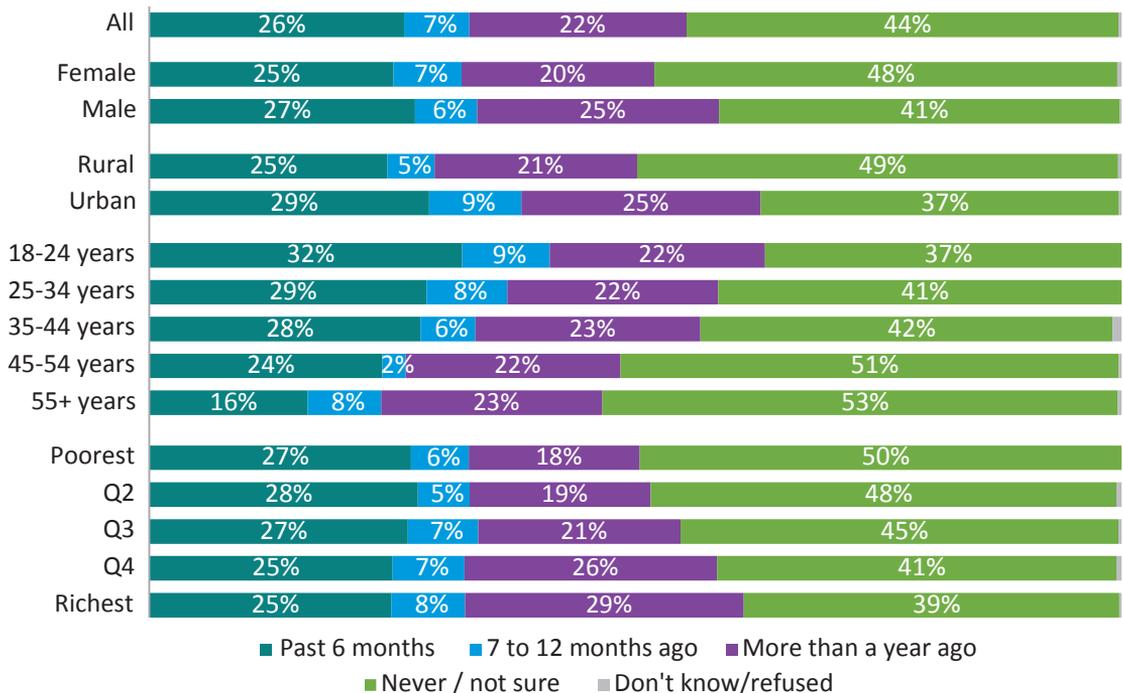
Figure 2: When was the last time...?



Source: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), n=1,705

Younger citizens, and those in urban areas are more likely to have been a victim of theft than older citizens, and those in rural areas.

Figure 3: When was the last time that money or something of value was stolen from you?

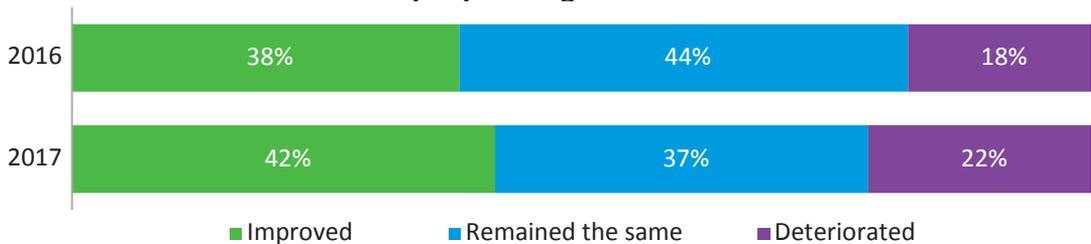


Source: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), n=1,705

Fact 3: 4 out of 10 citizens say the level of security in their neighbourhood has improved in the past three months, 2 out of 10 say it has deteriorated

Four out of ten citizens (42%) say there has been an improvement in the level of security in their community over the past three months, up slightly from those who felt this way in 2016 (38%). However, there has also been a small increase in the number of citizens saying their local security situation has deteriorated, from 18% in 2016 to 22% in 2017.

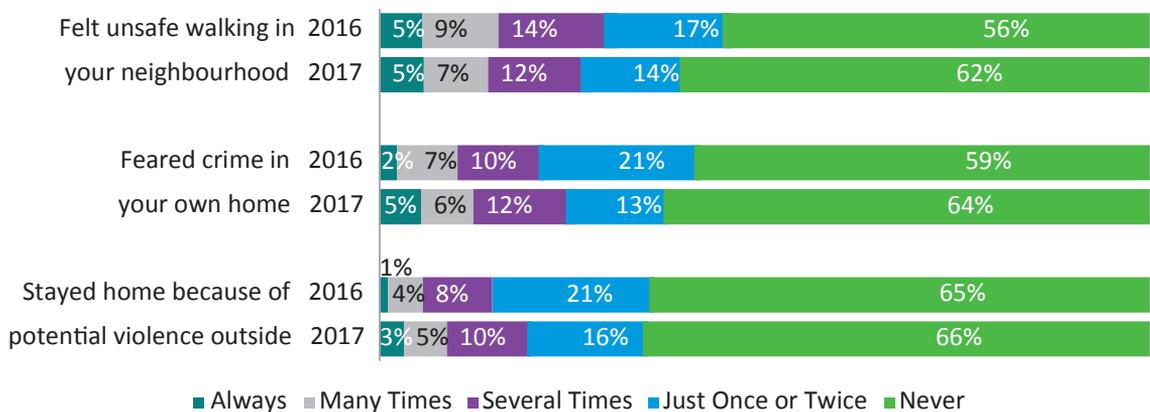
Figure 4: Over the past three months, do you think the level of security in your neighbourhood has:



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (16 September and 13 October 2017), n=1,705 and Round 4 (15 August – 6 September 2016)

There is also a small increase in citizens' sense of security in and around their home since 2016. The number who have felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhood at least once in the past three months has decreased from 44% to 38%, and the number who have feared crime in their own home dropped from 41% to 36%. There has been no change in the number who have stayed at home due to the risk of violence outside.

Figure 5: Over the past 3 months, how often, if ever, have you ...?

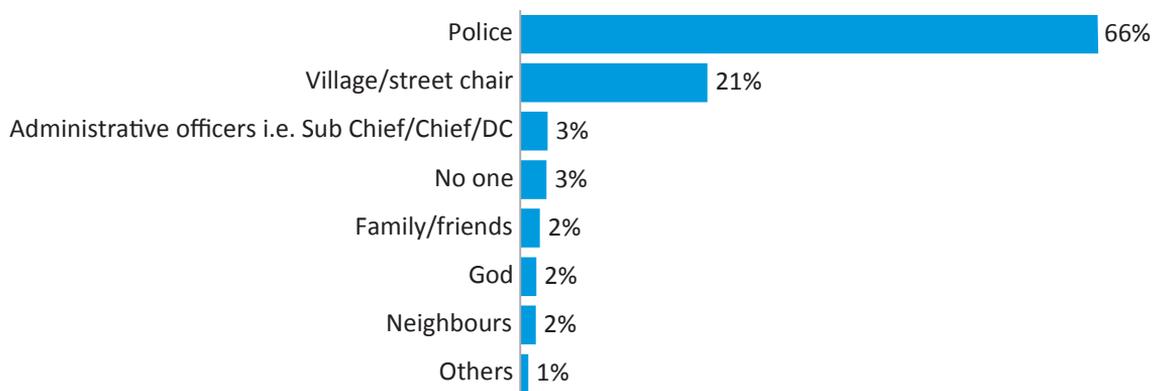


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (16 September and 13 October 2017), n=1,705 and Round 4 (15 August – 6 September 2016)

Fact 4: 2 out of 3 citizens would turn to the police first if a crime was committed

A clear majority of citizens (66%) would look to the police as their first source of assistance in the event that they are the victim of a crime. A further one out of five (21%) would turn to community leaders.

Figure 6: If you were a victim of crime, who, if anyone, would you go to first for assistance?

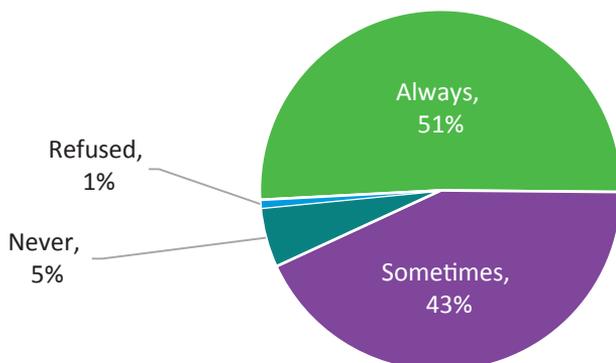


Source: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), $n=1,705$

Half the population (51%) say that crimes are always reported, while one out of twenty (5%) say crimes are never reported.

One out of five (20%) say the main reason that some crimes go unreported is that the police would likely demand money or a bribe in order to assist.

Figure 7: When crimes such as theft or attacks happen in your community, are they reported to the police?

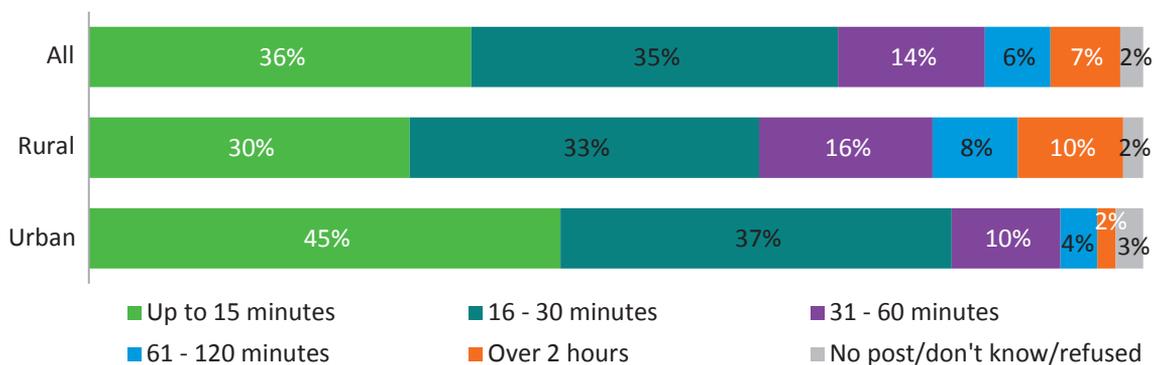


Source: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), $n=1,705$

Fact 5: 6 out of 10 residents of rural areas live within 30 minutes of a police post, rising to 8 out of 10 in urban areas

A majority of citizens (71%) live within 30 minutes of their nearest police post, though the number is higher in urban areas (82%) than rural (63%). In rural areas, one in ten (10%) live more than two hours away from the nearest post.

Figure 8: How long does it take to get to the closest police post?



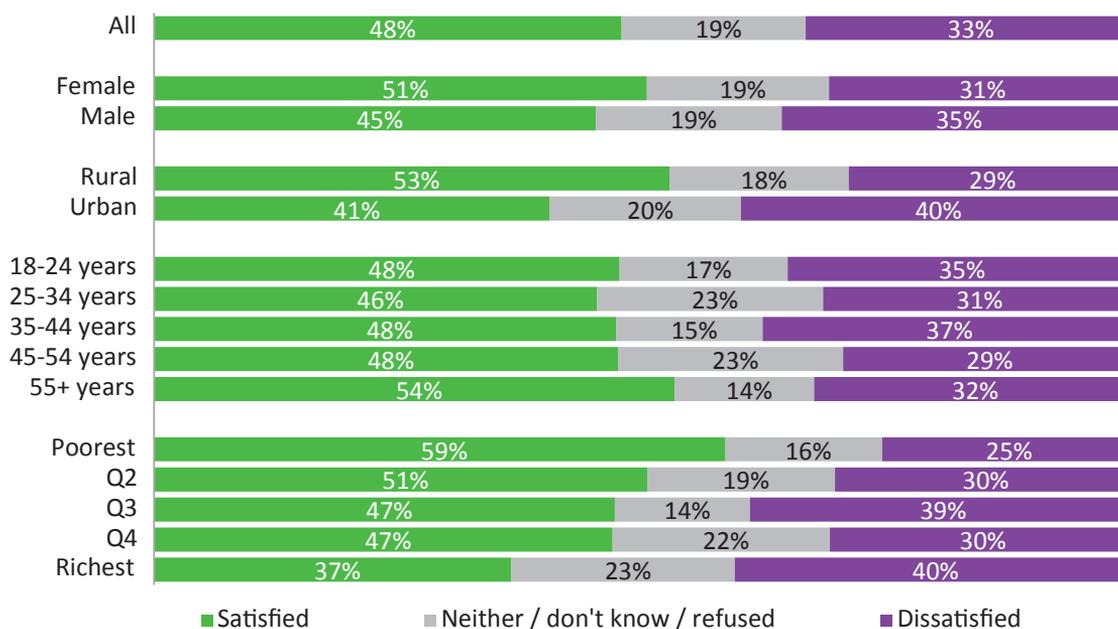
Source: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), n=1,705

Fact 6: Half of citizens are satisfied with the police force, 1 out of 3 are not

One out of two citizens (48%) are satisfied with the services offered by the police force, while one out of three (33%) are dissatisfied.

Satisfaction in the police is higher among women (51%) than men (45%), and higher in rural areas (53%) than urban (41%). There is no clear trend with age, but wealthier citizens are less likely to be satisfied with the police than the poor (37% to 59%).

Figure 9: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the services offered by the police force?

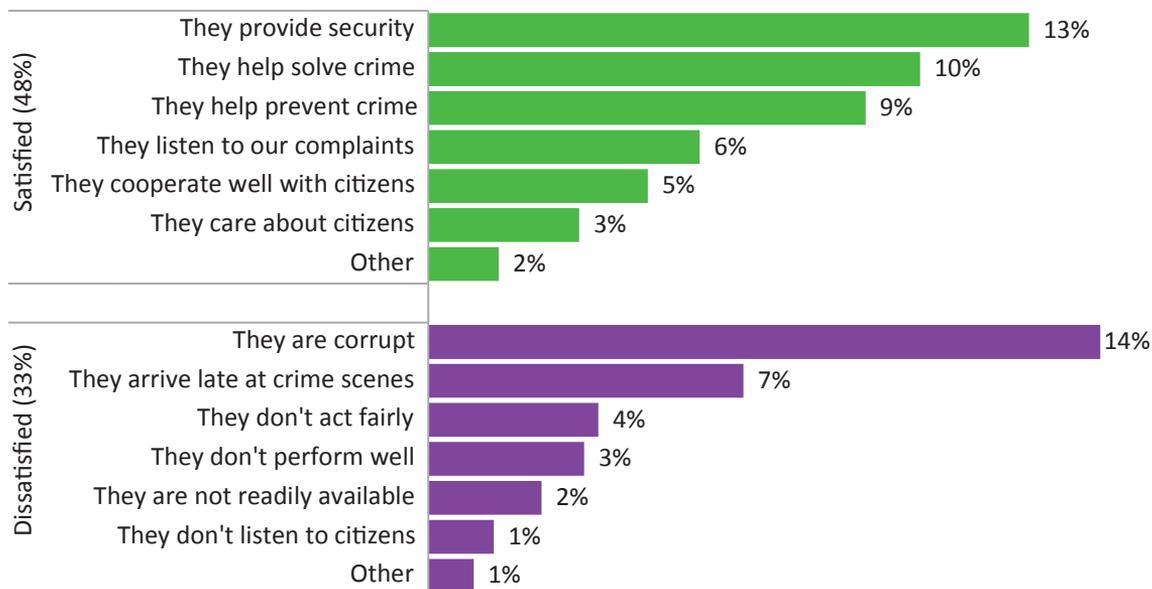


Source: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), n=1,705

The main reasons for satisfaction with the police are that they provide security (13%), they help solve crime (10%) and prevent crime (9%).

The main reason for dissatisfaction is a perception that the police are corrupt (14%), followed by their arriving at crime scenes late (7%).

Figure 10: What is the main reason you are satisfied/dissatisfied with the performance of the police?

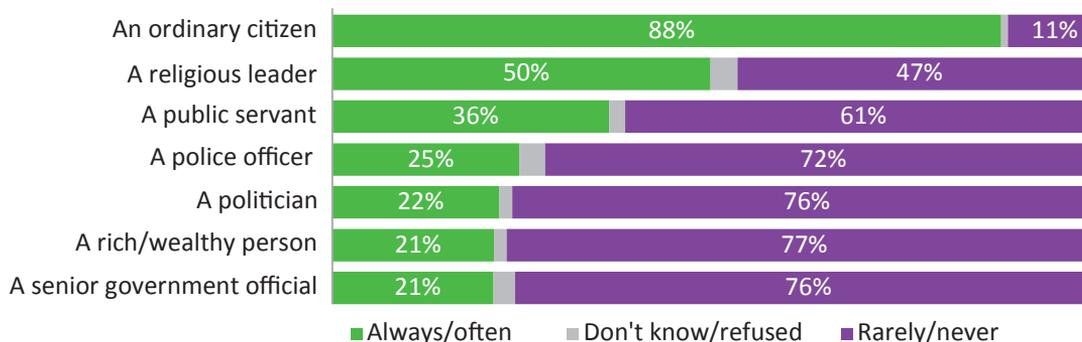


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), *n*=1,705

Three out of four citizens (76%) say senior government officials are rarely or never held to account by the justice system for their crimes, and similar numbers say the rich (77%), politicians (76%) and police officers (72%) are also able to escape justice.

In contrast, nine out ten (88%) say ordinary citizens are always or often held to account for any crimes they may commit.

Figure 11: How often do you think that if the following people steal or commit a crime here in Kenya, the police will arrest and produce them in court according to the law?

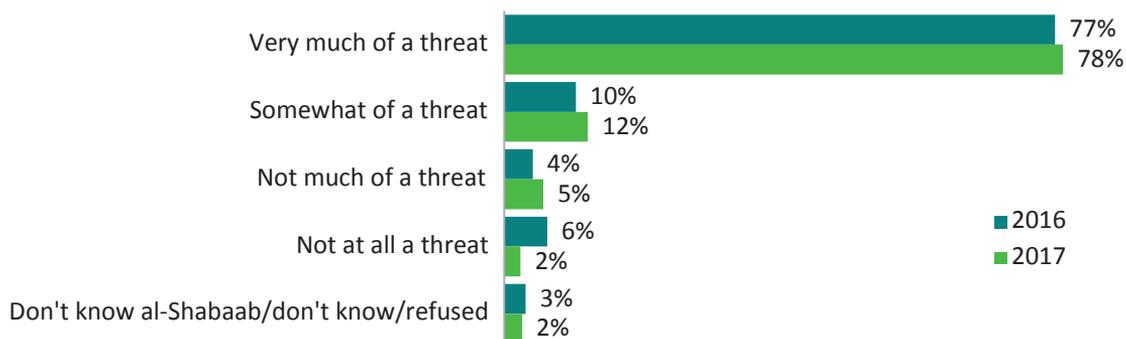


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), *n*=1,705

Fact 8: 3 out of 4 citizens say al-Shabaab is still a serious threat to Kenya

A clear majority of Kenyans (78%) describe al-Shabaab as “very much of a threat” to Kenya right now, unchanged from 12 months earlier (77%).

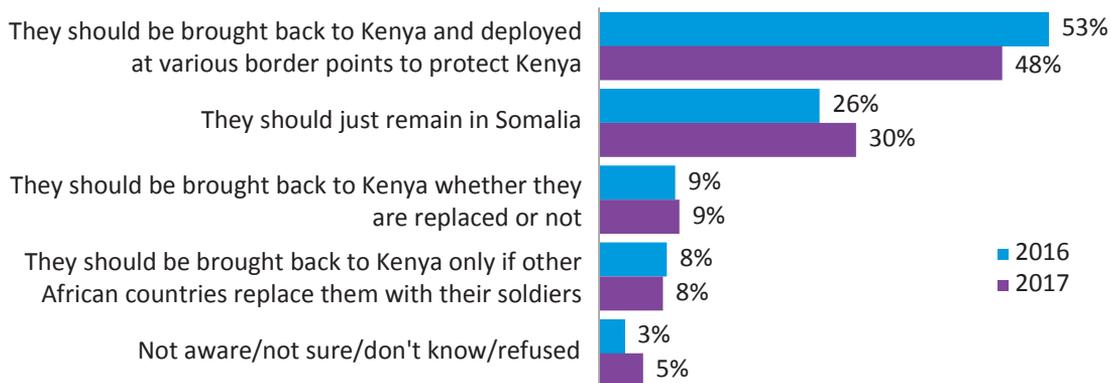
Figure 12: How much of a threat do you think al-Shabaab is to Kenya right now?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (16 September and 13 October 2017), $n=1,705$ and Round 4 (15 August – 6 September 2016)

Since 2016, there is a slight increase in support for Kenya Defence Forces troops remaining in Somalia, from 26% to 30%, and a slight decline in support for the view that the troops should be brought back to Kenya and deployed at border points.

Figure 13: Regarding the participation of the KDF in Somalia, which of the following is closest to your own view?



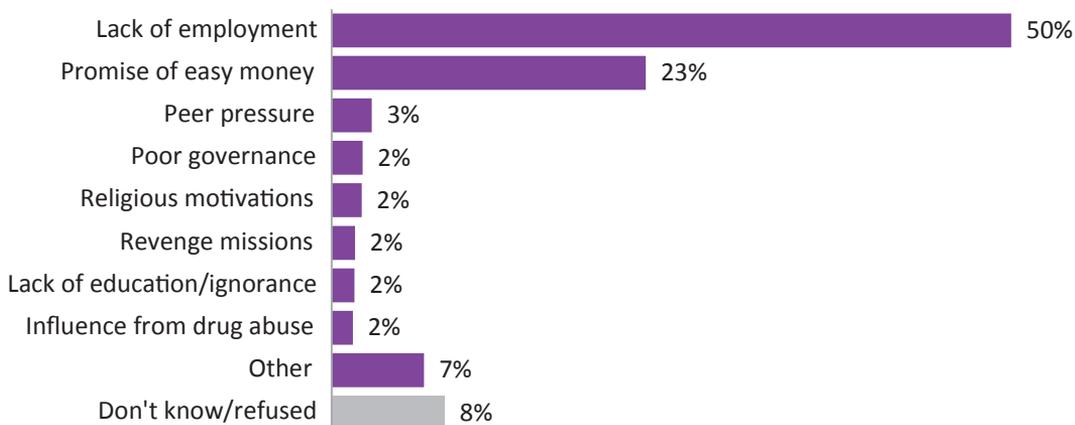
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (16 September and 13 October 2017), $n=1,705$ and Round 4 (15 August – 6 September 2016)

Fact 9: Citizens see a lack of employment as the main reason why some people join extremist groups

Half the population (50%) say the main reason why people might join an extremist or radical group is a lack of employment. A further one in four (23%) say the promise of easy money is the main reason.

Kenyans are sceptical about possible religious motivations, with just one in fifty (2%) saying this is the main reason that someone might join an extremist group.

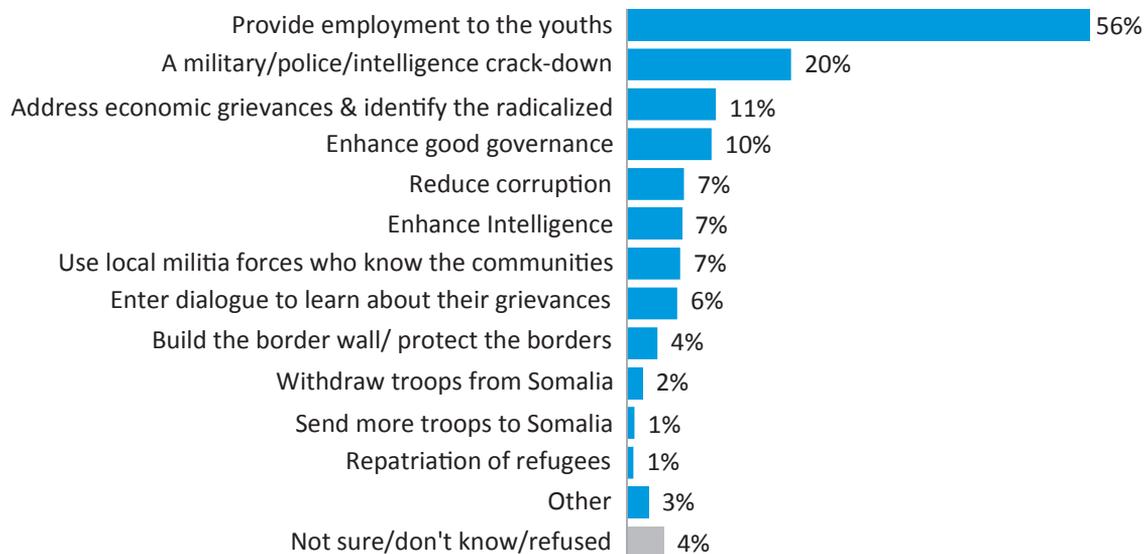
Figure 14: What do you think is the main reason that would make people join extremist or radical group?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), $n=1,705$

These views are matched by citizens' suggestions for government action to fight the attraction of radical groups. A clear majority (56%) say providing employment opportunities to young people would help. A crackdown by the security forces has the support of one in five (20%).

Figure 15: In your opinion, what should the government do to fight the attraction of radical groups in East Africa?
(multiple responses permitted)



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey, Round 16 (September 16 and October 13, 2017), n=1,705

3. Conclusion

The first major finding in this data is the contrast between the very small number of citizens who mention al-Shabaab when asked to name the biggest threat to security in their area, and the large number who describe al-Shabaab as a serious threat to Kenya. This kind of militant extremism is thus seen as a threat facing the country, but it is not something that citizens encounter or worry about greatly in their daily lives.

A second conclusion is the pervasive concern about theft. This is cited more than any other issue as the biggest security threat, and a quarter of the population have been a victim of theft in the past three months. Nevertheless, the data suggests a small improvement on this score, with more citizens saying their local security situation is improving than said the same in 2016, and fewer citizens feeling unsafe in their own homes or neighbourhoods in 2017 compared to 2016.

Around half the population are satisfied with the services offered by the police, suggesting that the police are perceived to provide a useful and trusted service. On the other hand, the main reason for dissatisfaction is a perception that the police would not respond to a report of crime without first being paid money or a bribe.



More worryingly, citizens perceive – rightly or wrongly – that there is no equality before the law in Kenya. The dominant view is that “ordinary” citizens will be held to account for any crimes that they commit, but that public servants, police officers, politicians, the rich and senior government officials will not.

These findings suggest there are some reasons for the police and others to be happy with how the public perceive them, but that there is also a lot of room for improvement. Can the police counter the view that they will only respond to crime if they are financially motivated to do so? And more particularly, can the justice system counter the perception that those with wealth or power are able to escape justice, while ordinary citizens cannot. Such views can be corrosive, eroding trust and undermining any sense that the whole country is engaged in a common national endeavour.