



Safety first?

Security, policing and justice in Tanzania

1. Introduction

It is often said that the first responsibility of government is to keep people safe. The police have a major part to play, with the support of other parts of the justice system. Further, in recent years, local militia – or *sungusungu* – have played an increasing role in supporting the police to provide security in particular communities.

Significant violent events, like the recent spate of violence in Kibiti, make headlines and often sow fear. But they are not indicators of the wider security situation in the country. With poor, out-of-date crime rate data in Tanzania, citizens' perceptions are one of the most important sources of evidence on the general state of security, even though these may be influenced by the media. In addition, since the essence of law and order is built largely on perception – citizens have to believe that it is likely they will be punished for wrong-doing

whether they will or not – how citizens see things matters even more.

This brief presents data on citizens' views on security, policing and justice in Tanzania. How safe do citizens feel in their own homes and neighbourhoods? What is their experience of crime and violence? What role does the police force play in providing security? What role is played by others, including local government leaders and *sungusungu*? How much confidence do citizens have in the ability of the justice system as a whole to punish citizens and public figures who commit crimes?

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. For this brief, data were collected from 1,805 respondents from the 18th round of the second *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between March 31 and April 17, 2017.

It should be noted that the Sauti panel is drawn from 200 neighbourhoods, randomly selected across the country, with several panellists in each neighbourhood. Therefore on questions that relate to panellists' neighbourhoods or communities, there is some overlap, with more than one panellist giving answers relating to each neighbourhood. This may make the panel slightly less representative of Tanzania mainland as a whole on such questions than where questions relate to households or to individuals.

The key findings are:

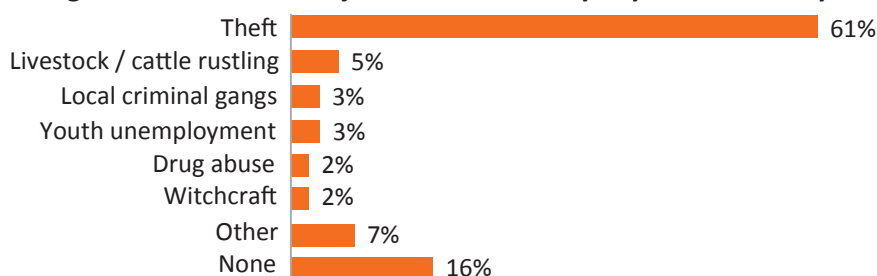
- Six in ten citizens see theft as the major threat to security in their community
- Half of the citizens see security in their neighbourhood as having improved in the past year
- Two out of three citizens would seek assistance first from village or street leaders in the event of a crime
- Almost half of the citizens live in a village / street or ward with no police post
- One in two citizens are satisfied with services offered by the police, half of this number are dissatisfied
- Four in ten citizens have a local militia in their neighbourhood
- Two in three citizens think ordinary citizens are always or often punished according to the law while three out of four think that rich people never or rarely are

2. Eight facts about citizens' views on security and policing

Fact 1: Six in ten citizens see theft as the major threat to security

Six in ten citizens (61%) see thieves as the major threat to security in their community. No other issue is cited by more than one in twenty citizens. Other issues cited include livestock theft (5%), local gangs (3%), unemployed young people (3%), drug users (2%) and witches (2%).

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

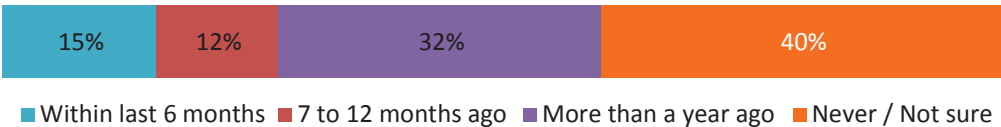


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

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

One in four citizens (27%) have had money or something else of value stolen from them in the past twelve months while two out of five never have.

Figure 2: When was the last time that money / something of value was stolen from you?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

There is no significant change in the number of people who had experienced theft between 2013, 2015 and 2017 (not shown in charts).

Fact 2: A majority of citizens feel that the level of security has improved in their neighbourhood in the past year

There is a general perception among citizens that security in the country has improved in the last one year as indicated by over half (53%) of them. But one in ten (10%) see the security situation as having deteriorated over this same period.

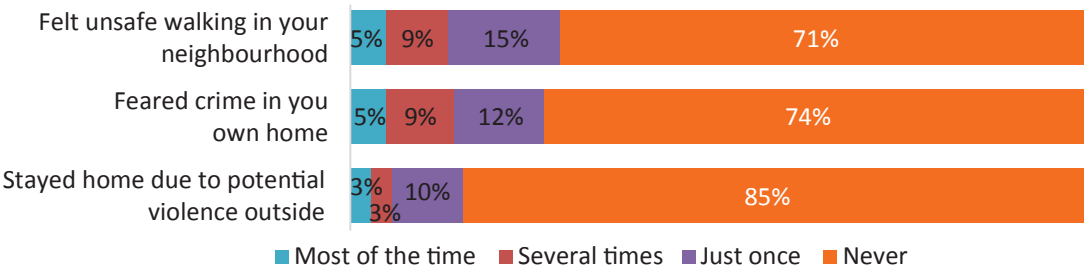
Figure 3: Over the past one year, do you think the level of security in your neighbourhood has ...?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

A higher proportion of citizens have felt unsafe, in their neighbourhood (29%) or home (26%) at least once in the past year. One in six (16%) have even stayed at home due to potential violence.

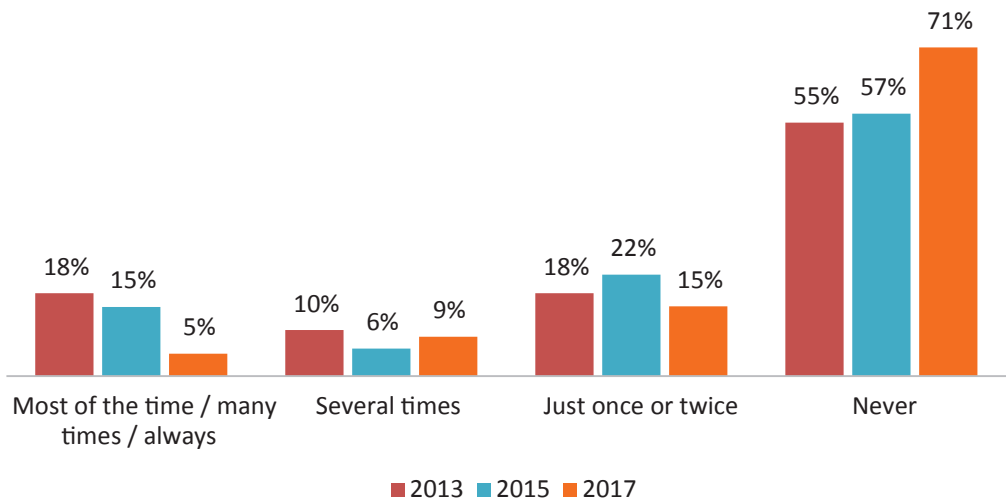
Figure 4: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you ...



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Beyond people’s own sense that security has improved, *Sauti za Wananchi* data over time show a marked increase in people saying they never feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood (2013: 55%, 2017: 71%) and a sharp decline in people saying they always feel unsafe (2013: 18%, 2017: 5%)

Figure 5: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood

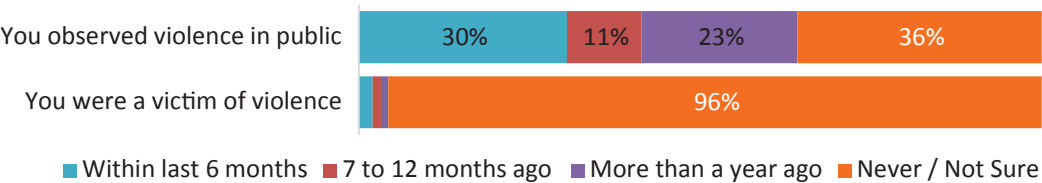


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Fact 3: Four in ten citizens have seen violence in public in the past year

Four in ten citizens (41%) have observed violence in public during the past year, but less than one in twenty (3%) were themselves victims of violence.

Figure 6: When was the last time that ...



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

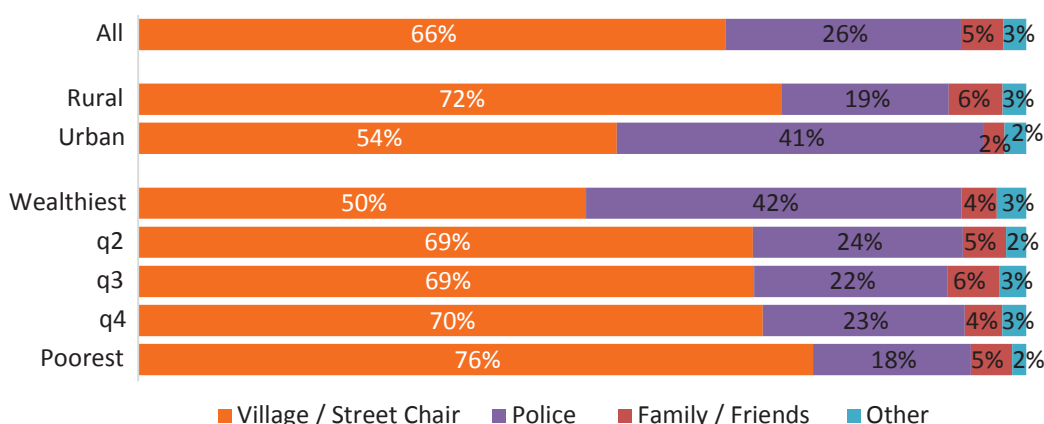
Among those who have personally been victims of violence (75 respondents), 40% had been beaten, 18% suffered abuse and 17% had land stolen (not shown in charts).

Fact 4: Two out of three citizens would seek assistance first from village or street leaders in the event of a crime

If they fell victim to a crime, two out of three citizens (66%) say they would first seek assistance from their village / street chair, compared to one out of four (26%) who would first go to the police.

Those in rural areas (72%, compared to 54% in urban areas) and the poorest (76%, compared to 50% of the relatively wealthy) are more likely to turn to village / street chairs first for assistance. Although the wealthiest are the most likely to seek police help (42%), more of them prefer to go to their village or street chair (50%).

Figure 7: If you were a victim of crime, who, if anyone, would you go to first for assistance?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

A majority of citizens (56%) say they would always report theft or attacks against themselves or their household to the authorities. A similar number (58%) say such crimes are always reported whenever they happen in their community. However, one in five citizens (21%) say they would never report crimes against themselves or their household and one in ten (8%) say that if these crimes happen in their community, they are never reported.

Figure 8: Reporting of crime

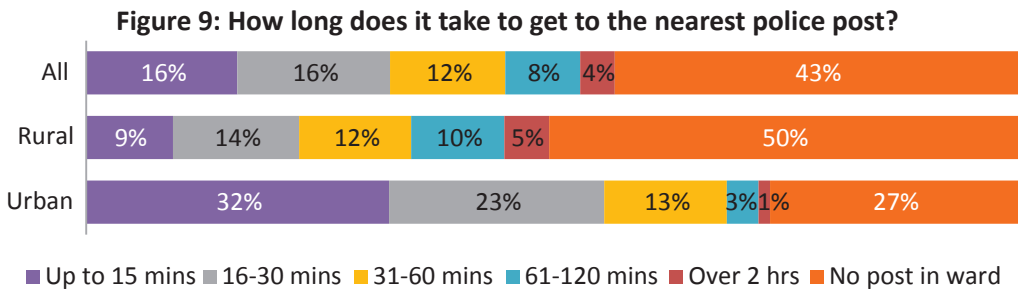


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Asked why some people do not report crimes to the police, citizens give a wide range of different responses. This includes that some victims fear reprisals from attackers (16%), that there are no police in the area (16%), crimes are reported to another authority (16%), the police don't listen or care (12%), or that the police would demand money / a bribe to help (10%) (not shown in charts).

Fact 5: Two out of three citizens have no police post within 30 minutes of their home

Overall, one in three citizens lives within 30 minutes of their nearest police post. Half of those in urban areas (55%) have access to a police post within 30 minutes, compared to one in four (23%) in rural areas.



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

This may help explain why most citizens, especially in rural areas, prefer to seek assistance first from their village/street chair rather than the police station/post, which are not only few but very far.

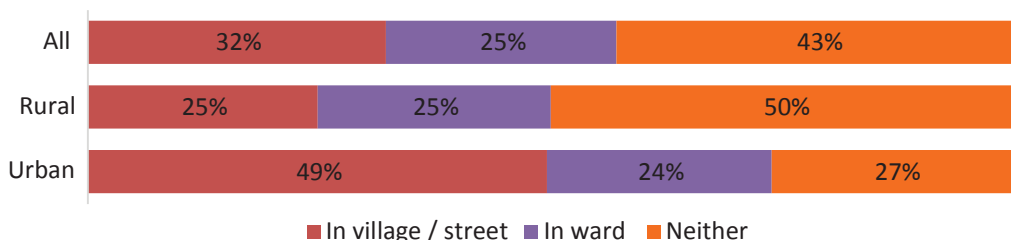
One in three citizens (32%) has a police post in their village or street, and a further one in four (25%) have a post in their ward. This leaves just under half (43%) who do not have a police post within their ward.

Official government policy does not aim for a police post in every ward, but rather for at least one post in each Division (Tarafa)².

There is a marked difference in this case between rural and urban areas: three in four residents of urban areas (73%) have a police post within their ward, compared to half (50%) in rural areas.

2 https://tanzania.go.tz/egov_uploads/documents/MAMBO-NDANI_sw.pdf

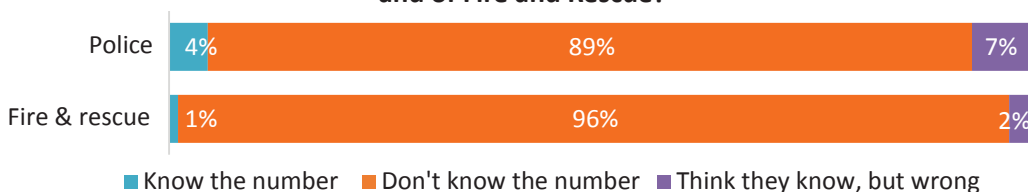
Figure 10: Do you have a police post in your village / street, or in your ward?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

When it comes to police and fire and rescue emergency numbers / hotlines, the level of knowledge of these number/s is very low. Just one in twenty (4%) know the police hotline number, and one in a hundred (1%) know the fire and rescue number. More are in the worrying situation that they *think* they know the numbers, but when asked, gave an incorrect response.

Figure 11: What is the emergency number / hotline of the Police, and of Fire and Rescue?

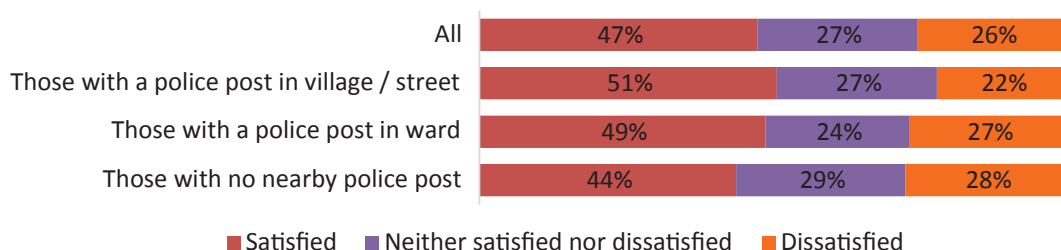


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Fact 6: Half of citizens are satisfied with services offered by the police, half of this number are dissatisfied

Around half of all citizens (47%) are satisfied with the services offered by the police force, but one in four (26%) are dissatisfied. There is a weak link between the proximity of a police post and citizens' satisfaction with the police service. Among those with a police post in their village / street, 51% are satisfied with the service, compared to 44% of those with no police post nearby.

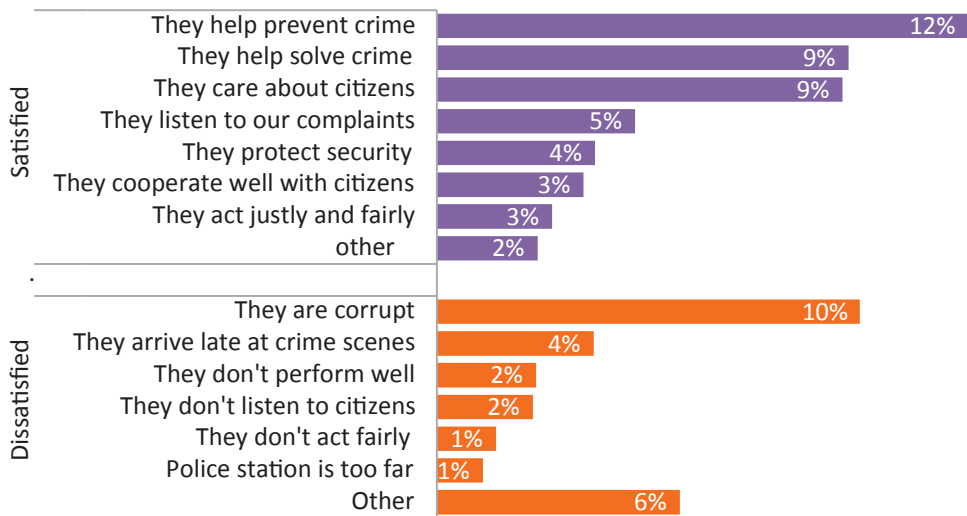
Figure 12: How satisfied are you with the services offered by the police force?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

The main reasons given for satisfaction in the police are that they help prevent crime (12% - of all citizens) or solve crime (9%), or that they care about citizens (9%). The top reasons for dissatisfaction is that the police are viewed as being corrupt (10%), late (4%) or poor performers (2%).

Figure 13: Why are you satisfied / dissatisfied with the performance of the police?

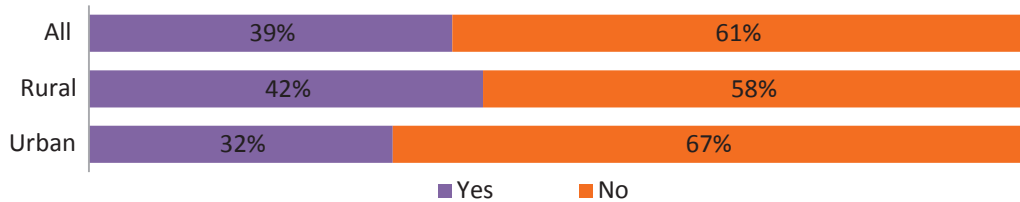


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Fact 7: Four out of ten citizens have a local militia in their neighbourhood

Four in ten citizens (39%) have a local militia (*sungusungu*) in their neighbourhood. These militia are slightly more common in rural areas (42%) than urban (32%) – this could be a stop gap measure for the few police stations/posts available in these areas.

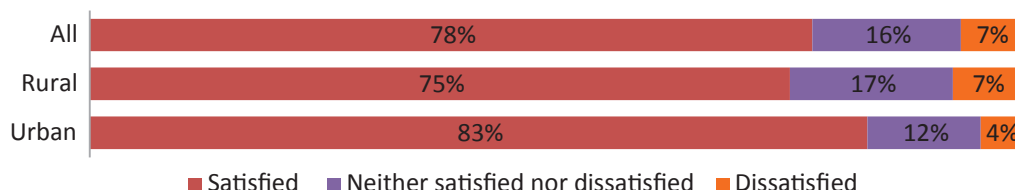
Figure 14: Do you have local militia in your neighbourhood / community?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Among those with a *sungusungu* militia in their community, a clear majority (78%) are satisfied with the service provided. Less than one in ten (7%) are dissatisfied.

Figure 15: How satisfied are you with the service offered by the local militia in your community?
(among those with a local militia; n=685)

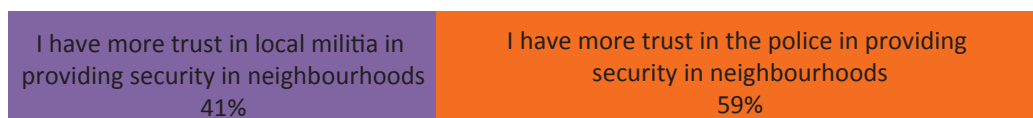


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Further, 88% of all citizens agree that *sungusungu* are important because they help in safe guarding security, and among those with a local militia, 78% say the level of security has improved since the militia came into operation (not shown in charts).

Despite this, slightly more citizens are likely to trust the police (59%) to provide security than local militia (41%).

Figure 16: Citizens' trust in police and local militia in providing security:
(select which of the two statements you agree with more)



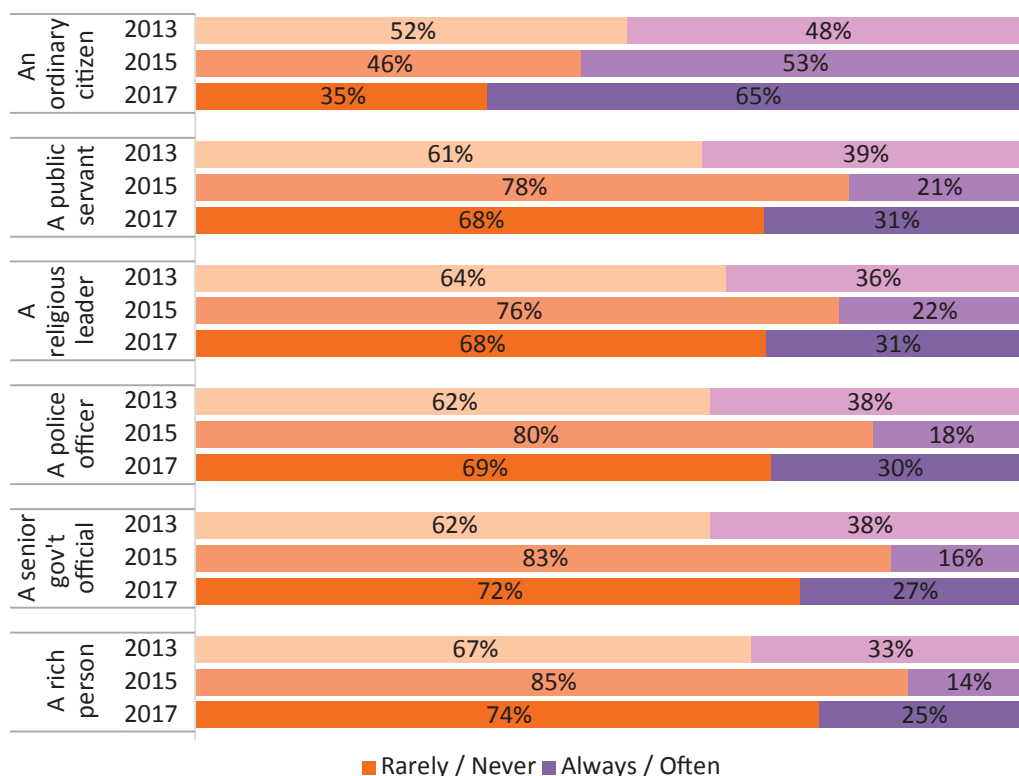
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

Nevertheless, asked how best to reduce crime that happens at night, more citizens suggest contracting more local militia (47%) than suggest increasing the number of police patrols (44%) (not shown in charts).

Fact 8: Two in three think powerful people are above the law

Two in three citizens (65%) think ordinary citizens who steal or commit a crime are always or often punished according to the law, up from 48% who felt this way in 2013. However, a majority of citizens think public servants (68%), religious leaders (68%), police officers (69%), senior government officials (72%) and rich people (74%) are rarely or never punished when they commit a crime. Citizens' confidence in the justice system's ability to punish these wealthy, influential or powerful figures has increased since 2015, but remains lower than it was in 2013.

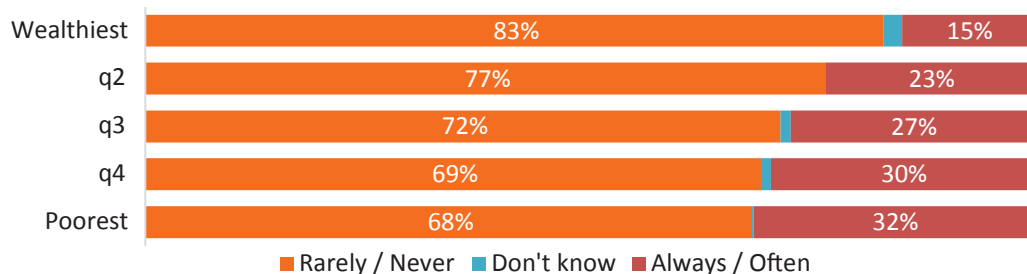
Figure 17: How often do you think that if the following people steal or commit a crime here in Tanzania, he/she will be punished according to the law?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

The wealthy are very unlikely (15%) to think the rich will always or often be held to account for crimes they commit. However, twice as many of the poorest (32%) think the rich will be properly punished.

Figure 18: How often do you think that if a rich person steals or commits a crime here in Tanzania, he/she will be punished according to the law? (By wealth of respondent)



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, mobile phone survey, Round 18 - April 2017

3. Conclusion


There is a lot of good news in this brief. Five times as many citizens say the security situation in their neighbourhood has improved in the past year as say it has got worse. And more citizens report feeling safe while walking in their neighbourhood in 2017 than was the case in either 2013 or 2015. Twice as many are satisfied with the police as are dissatisfied. And where there are *sungusungu* present, ten times as many citizens are satisfied with the service provided as are dissatisfied. These are all significant signs that in the experience of most citizens, the security situation in their own neighbourhoods is getting better – even while national headlines are dominated by serious security problems in Rufiji District.

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that all is well. One in four have had money or something else of value stolen in the past year, for example, and three in ten have felt unsafe walking in their community in the past year.

One issue of particular concern is citizens' confidence in the police. First of all, 43% have no police post in their village / street or ward, rising to 50% in rural areas. And just 26% say that if they were a victim of a crime they would seek assistance first from the police, compared to 66% who would seek assistance first from the village / street chairperson.

This gives a clear sense that citizens do not see the police as the best and most accessible institution able to assist when crimes take place. This conclusion is supported further by the fact that citizens' satisfaction with the police bears little relation to the proximity of a police post. This bears further note, we have seen that having a police post near by appears to make you more likely to report crime to the police. Yet more frequent interaction with the police does not really change the rating of their services. Although there is a risk of over-interpretation here, it does not seem to provide a glowing rating of police services. In addition, police-led human rights violations in the country are well documented; it may be worth considering what type of treatment and service most citizens expect from the police.

Some see *sungusungu* – usually established with tacit or official approval from local government and local police – as able to substitute for police when they are not able to reach every community at every moment. This brief shows broad public support for such militia to fulfil this role; just four in ten citizens have a *sungusungu* militia in their community, but where such militia exist, they are popular: 78% are satisfied with the service provided. While slightly more citizens say they trust the police more than *sungusungu*, 88% agree that *sungusungu* are important because they help in safe guarding security, and 78% of those with a local militia say the level of security has improved since the militia came into operation. Further, asked how best to reduce crime that happens at night, more citizens suggest contracting more local militia (47%) than suggest increasing the number of police patrols (44%).



Another concern is citizens' sense that people in positions of power or authority – from civil servants to religious leaders to the wealthy – seem less accountable for any crimes they may commit. Between a quarter and a third of citizens feel such people would be punished according to the law if they commit a crime. In fact the only group that more than 50% of citizens think will be punished according to the law are citizens themselves. However, the poor are more likely than the relatively wealthy to believe that the rich would be appropriately punished.

The overall message here is that while in the experience of most citizens the security situation is improving, there is no room for complacency. Though *sungusungu* groups can provide an effective stop-gap measure, this should not be used as an excuse for the police to abdicate their responsibilities. There is much to be gained from the police making a deliberate effort to get closer to citizens – both physically, by establishing more police posts, and psychologically, by building trust and confidence.