



The roots of radicalization

Citizens' views on the causes and solutions for insecurity in Kenya

1. Introduction

From 2009, Kenya's northern border was subject to numerous attacks which spread to other parts of the country, especially Nairobi and the Coastal region. Nearly all of these have been blamed on al-Shabaab¹ based in Somalia. The attacks caused the tragic loss of over 600 lives² destruction of property and a 20% reduction in tourist arrivals to Kenya in 2015 due to travel advisories in their countries³. In 2015, earnings from the tourism sector were reported at KES 84.6 billion down from KES 97.9 in 2011⁴. To defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) crossed into Somalia in October 2011. This initiative was dubbed "*Operation Linda Nchi*" and was approved by Kenya's Cabinet (in December 2011) and backed by Parliament⁵.

- 1 al-Shabaab is a jihadist group based in East Africa. It is an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union and is engaged in combat against the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union Mission to Somalia. It has been designated as a terrorist group by Australia, Canada, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States.
- 2 Time Magazine, These 5 Facts Explain Terrorism in Kenya, Web, 9 November 2016, <http://time.com/3817586/ian-bremmer-facts-explain-shabab-terror-attack-kenya/>
- 3 AllAfrica, East Africa: Kenya's Tourism Sector On Rebound, Web, 9 November 2016 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201611110109.html>
- 4 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Economic Survey 2016, Web, 9 November 2016 http://www.knbs.or.ke/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=369:economic-survey-2016&catid=82:news&Itemid=593
- 5 Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard) 7 Dec 2011. Web, 24 October 2016, https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=72pVrJv-JkAC&pg=PT28&lpg=PT28&dq=Kenya+sends+forces+to+sOmalia,+cabinet&source=bl&ots=3ws1t24yRx&sig=8m_BZOM1YVHrv1ZsFYS1Ef1jIFg&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Kenya%20sends%20forces%20to%20sOmalia%2C%20cabinet&f=false

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Sauti za Wananchi



Despite this military move, Kenya has continued to be the site of terrorist attacks carried out by the al-Shabaab group. An attack at Garissa University led to the loss of 147 lives and caused 79 injuries⁶. Other than sending troops to Somalia under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) banner, Kenya has taken a number of other preventative actions. The largest refugee camp in Kenya, Dadaab, home to an estimated 350,000 refugees, a large portion of whom are fleeing Somalia⁷, is being closed. The government has also promoted the *Nyumba Kumi*⁸ security plan and begun a crackdown on organizations that are alleged to be involved in channeling funding to insurgent groups in Somalia⁹.

Analysts suggest that al-Shabaab has moved from having a heavy presence in Nairobi in 2013 and 2014 to concentrating its activity in the Coastal and North-Eastern provinces in 2015. The conditions in these regions, which are historically marginalized and under-developed compared to much of Kenya, are being strategically exploited by al-Shabaab in a refocusing of their energy and resources away from the capital city, and towards these more peripheral communities¹⁰. It is possible that al-Shabaab and the Islamic State (IS) are also targeting these peripheral communities to recruit young Kenyans¹¹ through the internet, selected mosques, and directly, using financial incentives¹².

So, what do Kenyan citizens think about radicalism and the threat of al-Shabaab? How vulnerable do citizens feel to terror attacks? How do they explain the appeal of radical groups? What do they say is the best way to manage radicalism? What are their views on whether the Kenya Defense Forces should return home?

Data for this brief come 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 1,801 respondents from the Kenyan *Sauti za Wananchi* panel. This was the fourth round of calls to the panel, conducted between 15 August and 6 September 2016.

6 Nick Hargreaves Blog, A visual timeline of terror attacks in Kenya, Web, 24 October 2016, <http://nickhargreaves.com/blog/2015/04/24/a-visual-timeline-of-terror-attacks-in-kenya/>

7 Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Web, 24 October 2016 <https://www.issafrika.org/pscreport/on-the-agenda/the-future-of-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp>

8 Nyumba Kumi is a Kiswahili phrase meaning "ten households". The idea is to create citizen ownership for security and community well-being among citizens. For more information: <http://nyumbakumisecurity.com/index.php/about>

9 The Guardian, Kenya closes NGOs in security crackdown after al-Shabaab attacks, Web, 24 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/16/kenya-ngo-crackdown-al-shabaab>

10 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Al Shabaab in Kenya: Emerging Dynamics and Shifts, Web, 24 October 2016, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/al-shabaab-in-kenya-august-2015-update/>

11 Global Security, Al-Shabaab / The Supreme Islamic Courts Union, Web, 27 October 2016, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/al-shabaab.htm>

12 Standard media, 1,500 Kenyan youths recruited by Al Shabaab have surrendered, declares State, Web, 24 October 2016, <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000192627/1-500-kenyan-youths-recruited-by-al-shabaab-have-surrendered-declares-state>

The key findings are:

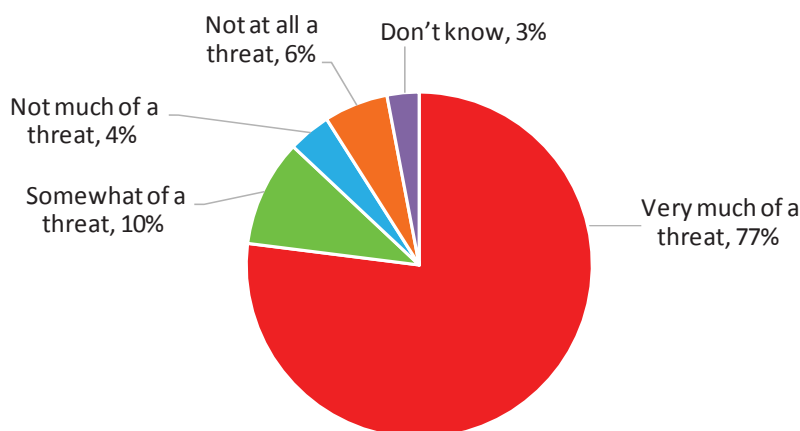
- Nine out of ten Kenyans believe that al-Shabaab remains a threat to security in the country
- More than half of citizens think that the lack of employment explains the appeal of radical groups
- Six out of ten citizens worry about radical groups trying to recruit their family members
- More citizens (45%) favour a military approach to combat radicalization as compared to a conciliatory one (25%)
- Two thirds (67%) of Kenyans express confidence in the Kenya Defence Forces' preparedness to combat terror attacks
- Six out of ten Kenyans want the Kenya Defence Forces to leave Somalia
- 8 out of 10 citizens (80%), among those who are aware of the planned closure of Dadaab refugee camp, approve of the plan

2. Seven facts about terrorism and radicalism in Kenya

Fact 1: Nine out of ten Kenyans believe that al-Shabaab remains a threat to the country

Nine out of ten Kenyans (87%) believe that al-Shabaab remains a threat to Kenya and a significant majority of 77% regard the group is a major threat. A small minority of 1 out of 20 Kenyans (6%) do not see al-Shabaab as a threat at all.

Figure 1: How much of a threat do you think al-Shabaab is to Kenya right now?¹³



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)

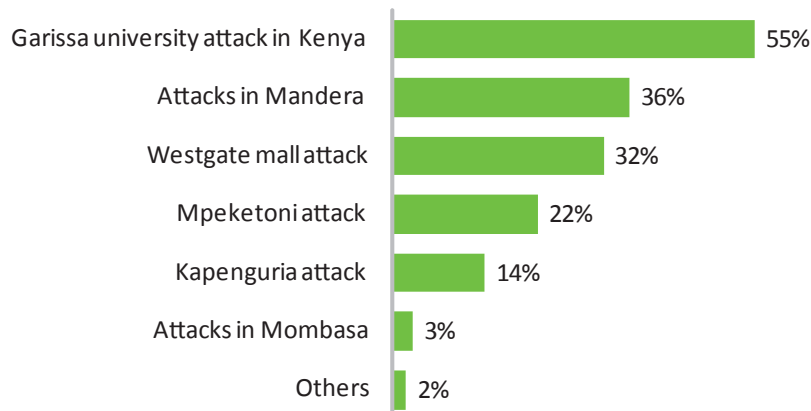
Base: All respondents, n=1,801

This fear may be fueled by the high degree of awareness of around terrorist attacks in the country. Seven out of ten citizens (71%) were aware of a least one al-Shabaab perpetrated

¹³ Throughout this publication, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

attack in the country. The most well-known attack was that on Garissa University (55%), followed by the Mandera attacks (36%) and the Westgate Mall attack (32%). Fewer citizens are aware of the attacks at Mpeketoni (22%), Kapenguria (14%) and Mombasa (3%).

Figure 2: Can you please name the incidents [terrorist attacks] that you have heard of?



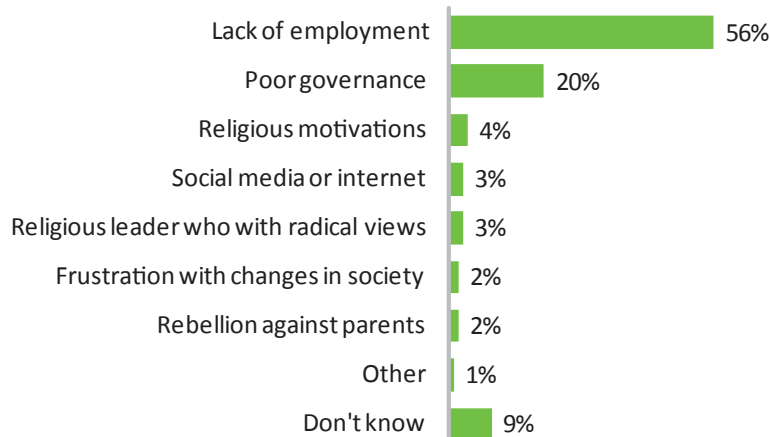
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)

Base: Those aware of terrorist attacks, n=1,405

Fact 2: More than half of citizens think that the lack of job opportunities explains the appeal of radical groups

Many citizens hold the view that people join radical groups due to unemployment (56%) and frustrations with the government and political system (20%). Religious motivations, social media/internet influence, and influence from religious leaders with radical views were mentioned by a total of less than 15% of respondents.

Figure 3: What do you think is the main reason why people join radical / extremist groups?



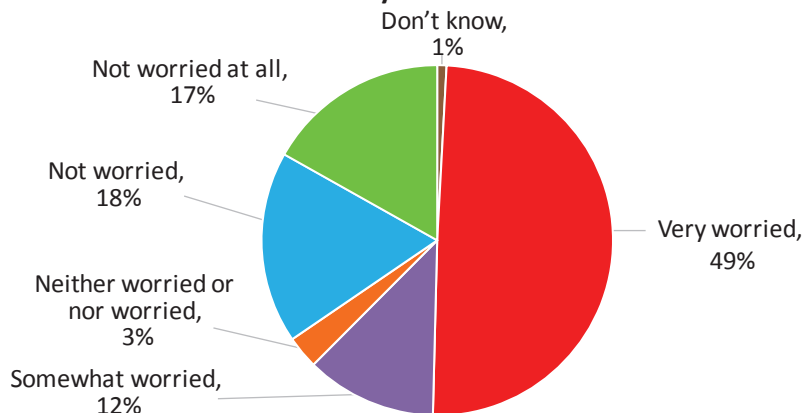
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)

Base: All respondents, n=1,801

Fact 3: Six out of ten citizens (61%) worry about radical groups trying to recruit their family members

Citizens are concerned about radical groups or individuals trying to recruit their family members (61%). On the other hand 35% of Kenyans are not worried about this issue.

Figure 4: How worried are you about radical groups or individuals trying to recruit your family member?

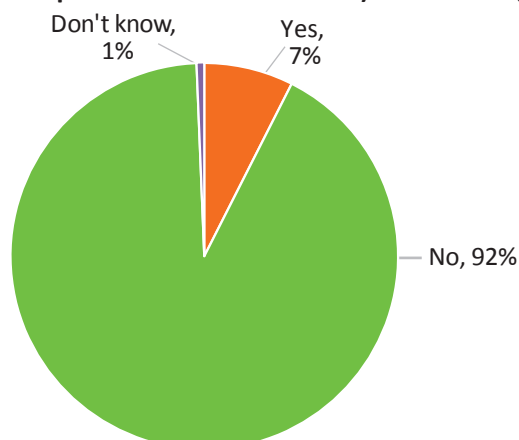


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)

Base: All respondents, n=1,801

In terms of direct experience, some citizens (7%) state that they know someone who has been recruited or whom people have tried to recruit into a radical or extremist group. While perceptions clearly do not match reality in this case, the number of those who know people who have been directly targeted is still troublingly high.

Figure 5: Do you know of anyone who has been recruited (or attempts made to recruit them) to a radical group?



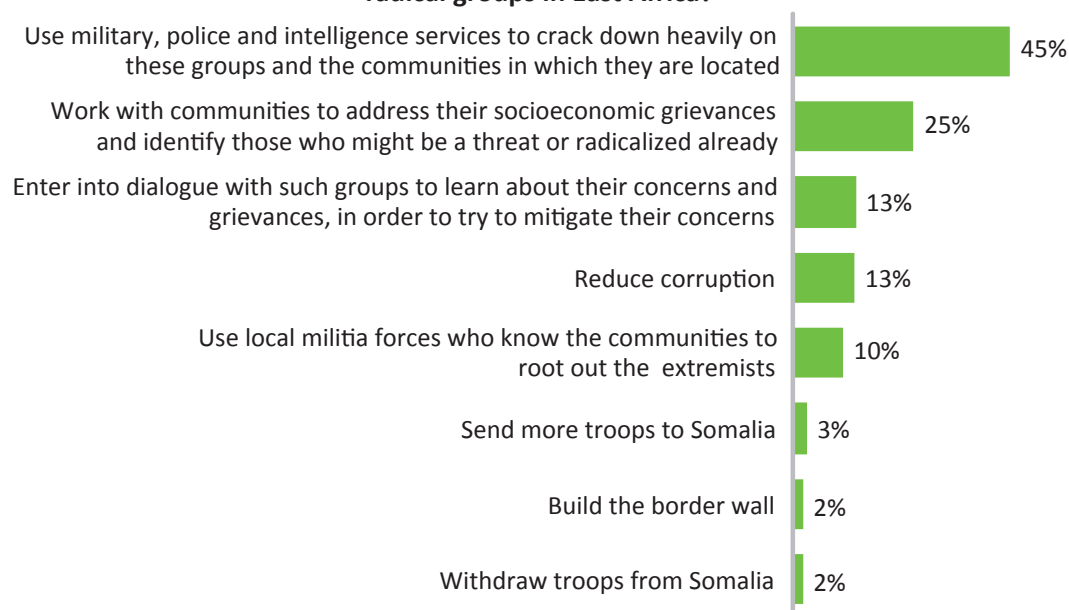
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)

Base: All respondents, n=1,801

Fact 4: More Kenyans support a military approach (45%) to combat radical groups compared to a conciliatory one (25%)

In order to fight the increasing appeal of radical groups in Kenya, more citizens are in favour of a military-led approach to target the groups and the communities in which they are located (45%)¹⁴. A smaller, but significant proportion of Kenyans (25%) prefer working with communities to address socio-economic grievances and to identifying young people at risk of radicalization. Other suggested solutions include dialogue with the groups themselves (13%) and reducing corruption (13%).

Figure 6: Which method is the best for the government to fight the increasing appeal of radical groups in East Africa?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)

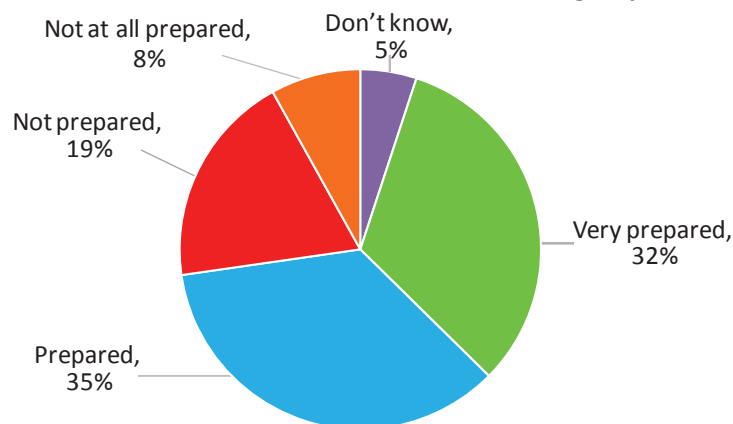
Base: All respondents, n=1,801

Fact 5: Two out of three of Kenyans (67%) express confidence in Kenya Defense Forces' readiness to combat terror attacks

Although many citizens are worried about terror attacks happening in the country, two out of three (67%) have confidence that Kenya's military is prepared to protect them in case of an attack.

14 There responses were read out and citizens were asked to choose their preferred option.

Figure 7: How prepared do you think the Kenyan military is to protect you in case of an attack from a radical/extremist/terror group?



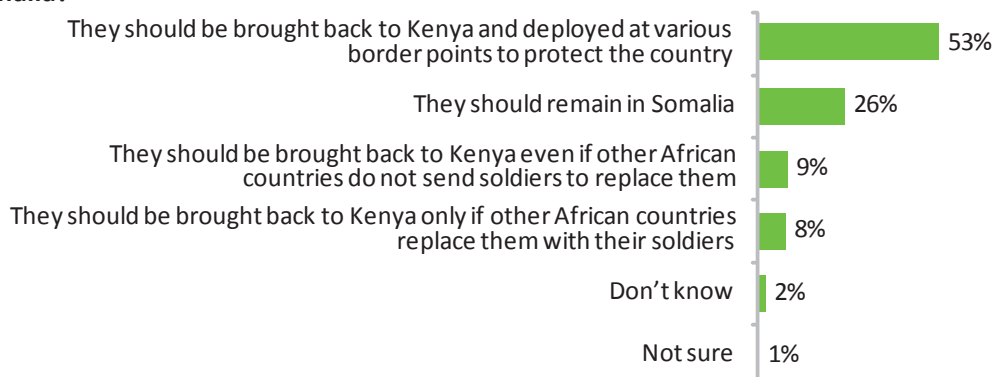
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)
Base: All respondents, n=1,801

Fact 6: Seven out of ten Kenyans want the Kenya Defense Forces out of Somalia

When we asked citizens where the Kenyan military is currently serving as part of an international force, 71% correctly mentioned Somalia. 16% stated that they do not know while 12% gave an incorrect response.

Most importantly, a clear majority (70%) prefer that Kenyan troops be brought back home. Specifically, 53% of citizens want them brought back and deployed at various border points to protect Kenya, 8% want them brought back only if other African countries replace them with their soldiers and 9% want them brought back whether they are replaced or not. However, a sizeable 26% feel that they should remain in Somalia.

Figure 8: What should happen regarding the participation of the Kenya Defense Forces in Somalia?



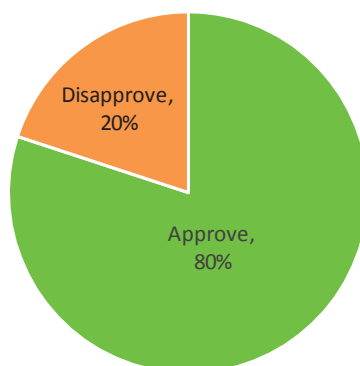
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)
Base: All Respondents, n=1,801

Fact 7: A majority of Kenyans (50%) support the closure of Dadaab refugee camp

In the wake of the deadly Garissa university attack in April 2016 by the Al-shabaab group which claimed 147 lives, the Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto said the following *“we have asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to relocate the refugees in three months, failure to which we shall relocate them ourselves, we must secure this country at whatever cost.”*¹⁵ The government position is that the camp has become an economic burden to Kenya and also poses a security threat. The camp has been labelled as a haven for terrorism and conduit for contraband goods as well as a danger to the environment¹⁶. This position was however met with international outcry, with UNHCR claiming that this move was not only cruel but against the Refugee Convention to which Kenya is a signatory¹⁷.

Six in ten (64%) Kenyans are informed of the government’s decision to close the Dadaab refugee camp. Of these, 80% approve of this decision.

Figure 9: Do you support the decision to close Dadaab refugee camp and send the refugees to their home countries?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – (15 August– 6 September 2016)
Base: Those aware of government’s closure decision, n=1,133

3. Conclusion

The provision of security over a defined territory is one of the foundations of a nation-state. Often, security issues in any one country are a complex and convoluted tangle of in-country criminality and violence as well as international threats and conflicts. Kenya is no exception.

15 Institute of Security Studies (ISIS), Web. 24 October 2016 <https://www.issafrica.org/pscreport/on-the-agenda/the-future-of-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp>

16 MyGov, Kenya’s decision to close Dadaab refugee camp final – DP Ruto, Web, 27 October 2016, <http://www.mygov.go.ke/?p=9850>

17 The Economist, Kenya says go home, Web, 24 October 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21698675-or-are-refugees-bargaining-chips-kenya-says-go-home>

And people's perceptions of and experiences with security issues are often highly charged, and safety and security can be a make or break issue for any administration.

At the same time, people succumb to fear. *Sauti za Wananchi* data in both Tanzania and Kenya has consistently shown that people are more afraid of crime and insecurity than their lived experiences suggest they should be. In October 2016, *Sauti za Wananchi* showed that 19% of Kenyan citizens had ever been a victim of violence or insecurity at least once, while 40% feared crime in their own homes¹⁸. Fear and perceptions are not a reliable indicator of the actual levels of safety within a country. But perceptions matter. And the Kenyan government will have to find a way to manage perception and address people's fears, especially as elections approach.

Kenyan citizens have expressed themselves on the causes of radicalization in their communities. A significant majority attribute young people's radicalization more to unemployment and political disaffection, than to the youth's embrace of radical ideology or their proactive recruitment by radical groups. The message seems clear; excluded and discontented youth provide easy pickings for terrorist recruiters. However, these inclusive-minded Kenyans seem to want to respond with a heavy-handed crackdown on communities in which these potential radicals are based. Again this is disjointed.

Kenyans are clear on one thing: KDF's involvement in the conflict in Somalia should cease and the troops should come home. Although they do not seem to think that this would eliminate the appeal of radical groups. At the same time, those aware of the plan to close Dadaab refugee camp, are strongly in favour of this decision.

As the debate around Kenyan troop presence in Somalia rages, these insights offered by citizens present a complex web through which the Kenyan government must navigate. The popular view is clear, bring troops home, close down Dadaab, use intelligence and force to root out radicalism in the country, and continue to ensure that the Kenya Defense Forces are ready to face future attacks.

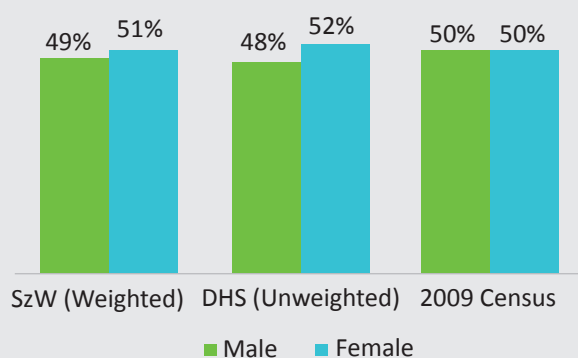
Looking ahead to 2017 and onwards, what will matter is specific action by the government of Kenya to address the complex, interwoven set of issues of young people's exclusion from politics and the economy, the security threat posed by the conflict in neighbouring Somalia, and perceptions of personal safety at all levels.

18 *Sauti za Wananchi*, Are we safe? Citizens' views on safety and security in Kenya, Brief No. 8, October 2016

Sauti za Wananchi respondents

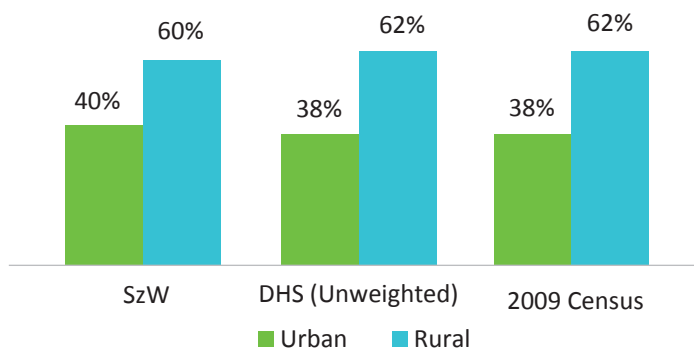
The charts and graphs below profile key characteristics of the people within the *Sauti za Wananchi* sample in comparison to the 2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). The sample is generally similar to the DHS and 2009 Census which illustrates that it is nationally representative.

**Figure 10: Gender of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample
Census and Demographic and Health Survey**



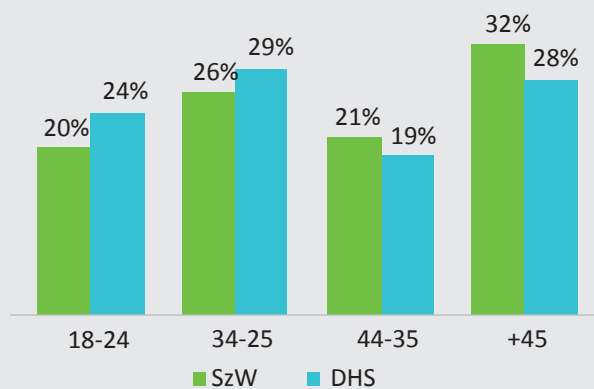
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Kenya Baseline Survey, 2015, Kenya DHS 2014, 2009 census data by KNBS

**Figure 11: Location of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample
Census and Demographic and Health Survey**



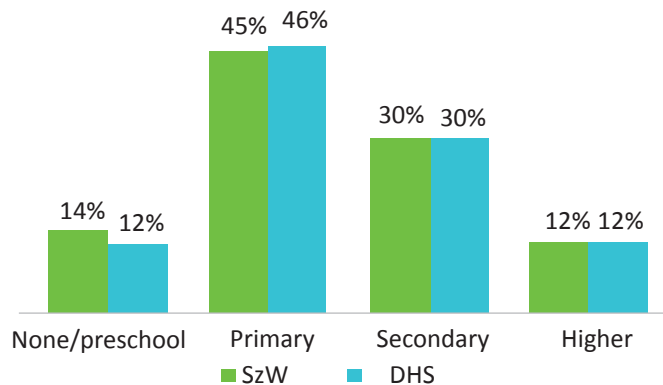
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Kenya Baseline Survey, 2015, Kenya DHS 2014, 2009 census data by KNBS

Figure 12: Age of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample and Demographic and Health Survey



Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, Kenya Baseline Survey, 2015, Kenya DHS 2014

Figure 13: Education levels of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi and Demographic and Health Survey



Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, Kenya Baseline Survey, 2015, Kenya DHS 2014

