



Health Check

Ugandans' experiences and opinions on health services

1. Introduction

Ensuring the good health of citizens is a challenge for any government. The costs of illness on an individual, their family and colleagues can be huge – both in terms of the direct cost of medical treatment and lost income and opportunities.

This brief presents data on citizens' views on health services. Where do they prefer to seek assistance when they suffer an illness or injury? What kind of treatment do they receive, and what problems do they encounter? How many have suffered accidents, and from what cause(s)? And how many have any medical insurance to help meet these often unexpected costs?

Data for the brief comes from Twaweza's new *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* 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 1,913 respondents in

the seventh round of calls to the *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 16 and 26 October 2018.

The key findings are:

- Half of citizens first turn to government health facilities when they fall sick or are injured
- The average journey time to a health facility is 74 minutes
- 2 out of 3 patients are attended to within sixty minutes
- 1 out of 3 patients at government facilities are given a prescription and left to find the medicine themselves
- In the past year, most citizens have either been admitted or helped someone who has been admitted to hospital
- Most of those Ugandans who were admitted to a hospital in the past year were in government facilities

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Sauti za Wananchi



- Road accidents, especially motorcycle accidents, are the leading cause of injuries
- Around 1 out of 5 patients entitled to free medical treatment do not receive this entitlement
- The most common problems encountered at government health facilities are long waiting times and a lack of medicines and other supplies
- 1 out of 50 citizens has health insurance

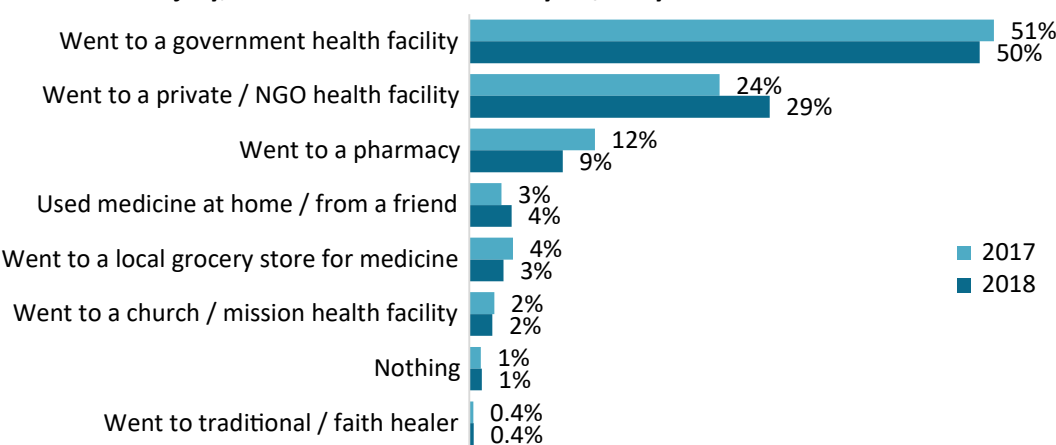
2. Ten insights about health services in Uganda

Insight 1: Half of citizens go to government health facilities

Five out of ten citizens (50%) went first to a government health facility the last time they or a household member suffered an illness or injury. Three out of ten (29%) went to a private or NGO health facility.

The number who seek treatment from government facilities has remained steady since 2017, but the number who first seek assistance from a private facility has risen slightly over this time: 24% to 29%.

Figure 1: The last time you / someone in your household suffered an illness or injury, what was the first action you / they took to find relief?¹



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;
Base: those who have experienced illness or injury; n=1,827

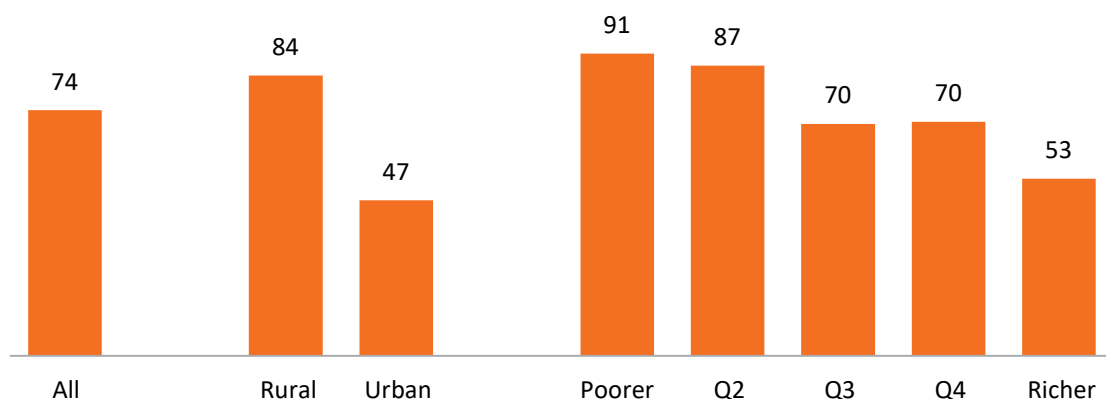
Citizens in rural areas (53%), poorer citizens (58-60%), and those with lower levels of education (57%) are more likely to use government facilities – compared to half (50%) of the population as a whole. Similarly, wealthier citizens (39%) and those with secondary or higher education (37%) are more likely to turn first to a private health facility – compared to three out of ten (29%) of the population as a whole (not shown in charts).

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

Insight 2: The average journey time to a health facility is 74 minutes

The average journey time when visiting a health facility is 74 minutes. This rises to 84 minutes in rural areas and falls to 47 minutes in urban areas. Wealthier households (53 minutes) typically have shorter journey times to health facilities than poorer households (91 minutes).

Figure 2: How long did you/household member take to reach the health facility from your home? (minutes)



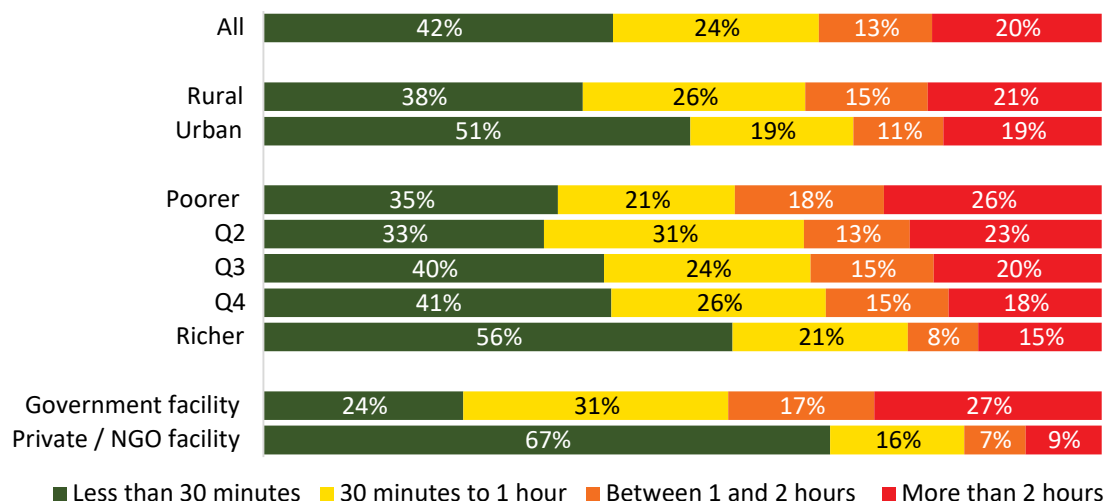
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;
Base: those who visited a health facility; n=1,609

Insight 3: 2 out of 3 patients are attended to within an hour

Two out of three patients attending a health facility (66%) are attended to within an hour, including four out of ten (42%) who are seen within 30 minutes. This covers the time patients waited to be seen by the doctor at first, not the entire time spent waiting during their visit – patients may be required to wait after the initial visit with the doctor including for test results and secondary consultations.

One out of four patients (24%) who turn to government health facilities are attended to within 30 minutes, compared to two out of three (67%) at private or NGO facilities.

Figure 3: How long did you/household member have to wait to be attended?



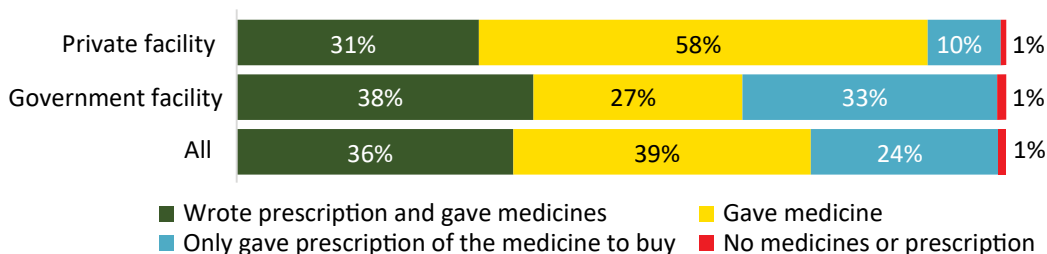
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;

Base: those who visited a health facility; n=1,609

Insight 4: At government facilities, 1 out of 3 patients only get prescriptions

One out of three patients (33%) attending government facilities are given a prescription but not given medicine. At private or NGO facilities, this happens to one out of ten patients (10%).

Figure 4: Did the health provider give medicine or write a prescription for medicine?



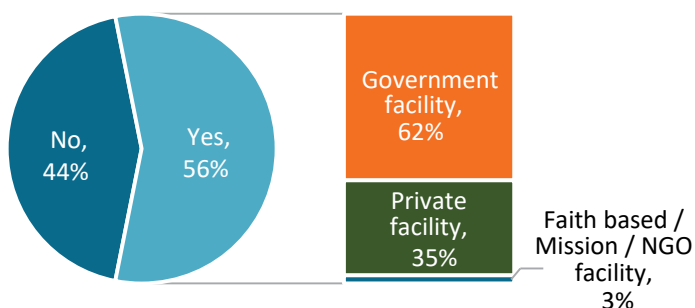
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;

Base: those who visited a government or private health facility; n=1,449

Insight 5: Half of Ugandans have had hospital experiences in the past year

Over half of citizens (56%) have either been admitted to hospital in the past year or have supported a friend or family member who has been admitted during this time. More admitted patients attended government facilities (62%) than private facilities (35%) or facilities run by a religious group or NGO (3%).

Figure 5: Have you been admitted or supported a family member or friend who has been admitted to hospital in the past year? What type of facility was it?



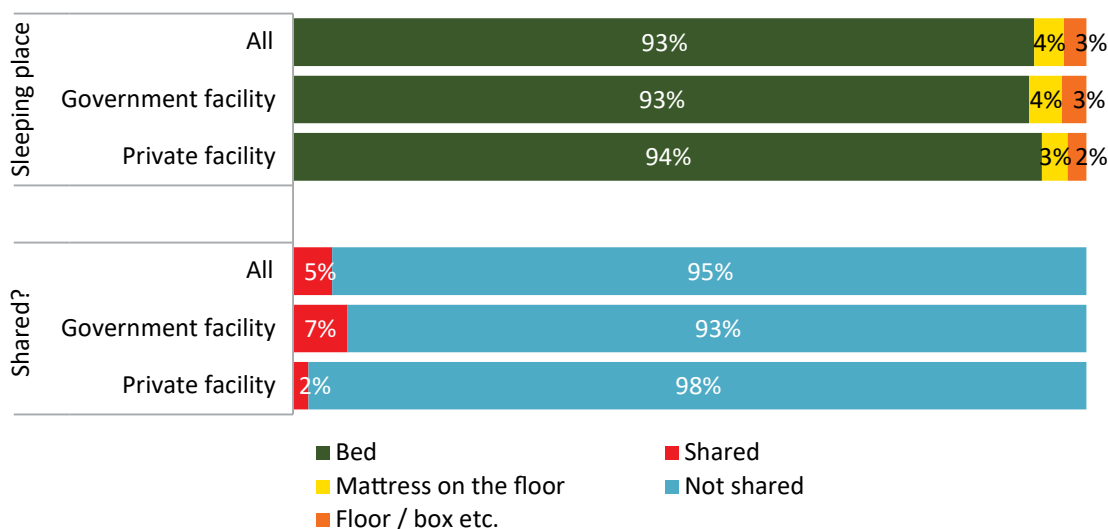
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;
Base: all respondents; n=1,913

Insight 6: 1 out of 12 admitted patients does not sleep on a bed

Eleven out of twelve patients admitted to hospital (93%) slept on a bed during their time in hospital, while the remaining one out of twelve (7%) slept either on a mattress (4%) or on the floor (3%). These figures are consistent across patients admitted to government and private hospitals.

At government facilities, 7% of admitted patients had to share their bed with one or more other patients. 2% had to do this at private facilities.

**Figure 6: Did the patient sleep on a bed, mattress on the floor or the floor itself?
Was this shared with any other patients?**



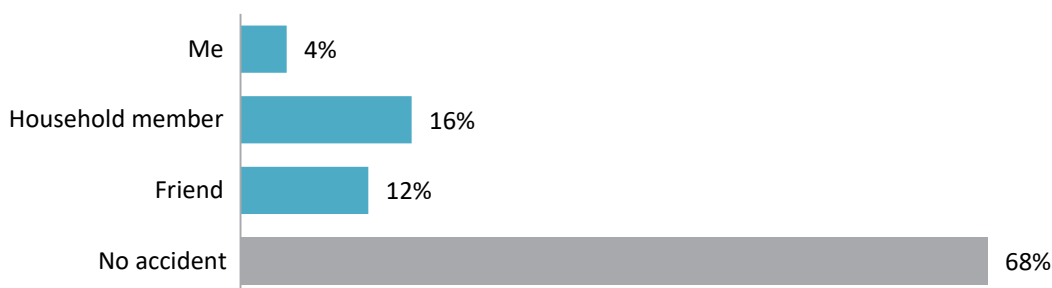
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;

Base: those with a family member who has been admitted in the past year; n=1,076

Insight 7: Half of all recent injuries or accidents are linked to boda bodas

One out of twenty citizens (4%) have personally suffered from an injury or accident in the past six months. A further one out of six (16%) has had a household member who had this experience, and one out of eight (12%) has a friend who has done so during this time. Two out of three citizens have no experience of any accidents or injuries in the past six months.

Figure 7: Has there been any injury/accident happen to you, a household member or a friend in the past six months? If so, who did this happen to?

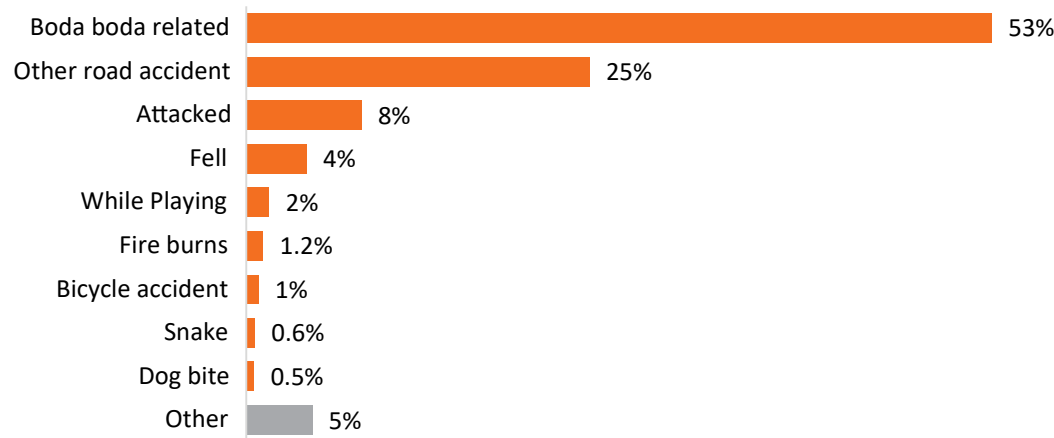


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;

Base: all respondents; n=1,913

In half of these cases (53%), the accident was boda boda-related. Other road accidents (25%) are second on the list, followed by smaller numbers who were attacked (8%) or fell (4%).

Figure 8: What was the cause?



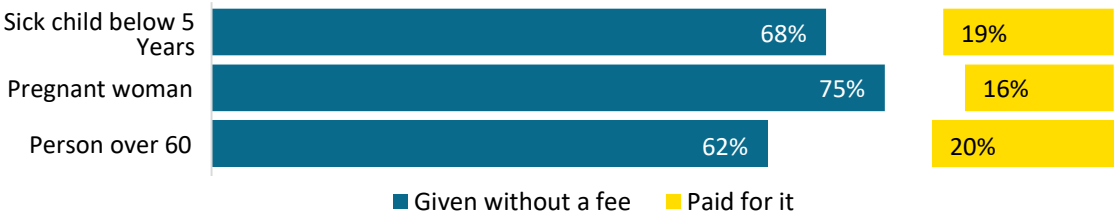
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;
Base: those to have suffered an injury/accident in the past 6 months; n=619

Insight 8: 1 out of 5 patients from entitled groups do not receive free treatment

One out of five children aged under five (19%) do not receive their entitlement to free treatment. A similar proportion of patients aged over 60 (20%) are charged for treatment.

Three out of four pregnant women (75%) are provided with treatment free of charge.

Figure 9: The last time you / someone you know went to a government health facility, did you/they receive treatment for free, or pay for it?

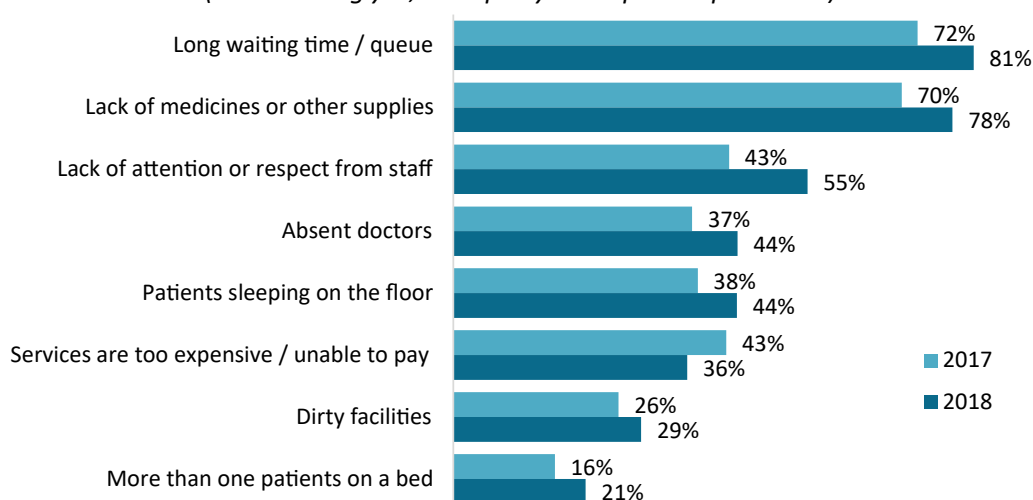


Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;
Base: all respondents; n=1,913

Insight 9: At government facilities, long waiting times and lack of medicine / supplies are the most common problems

Eight out of ten citizens (81%) say the last time they attended a government health facility to seek treatment for their own illness or injury they encountered long queues or long waiting times. A similar number (78%) encountered a lack of medicines or other supplies. More than half (55%) also encountered a lack of attention or respect from staff. In all three cases, the number of citizens encountering these problems has increased since 2017.

Figure 10: The last time you personally visited a government health facility to seek treatment for your own illness or injury; did you encounter any of these problems?
(% answering yes, multiple 'yes' responses permitted)



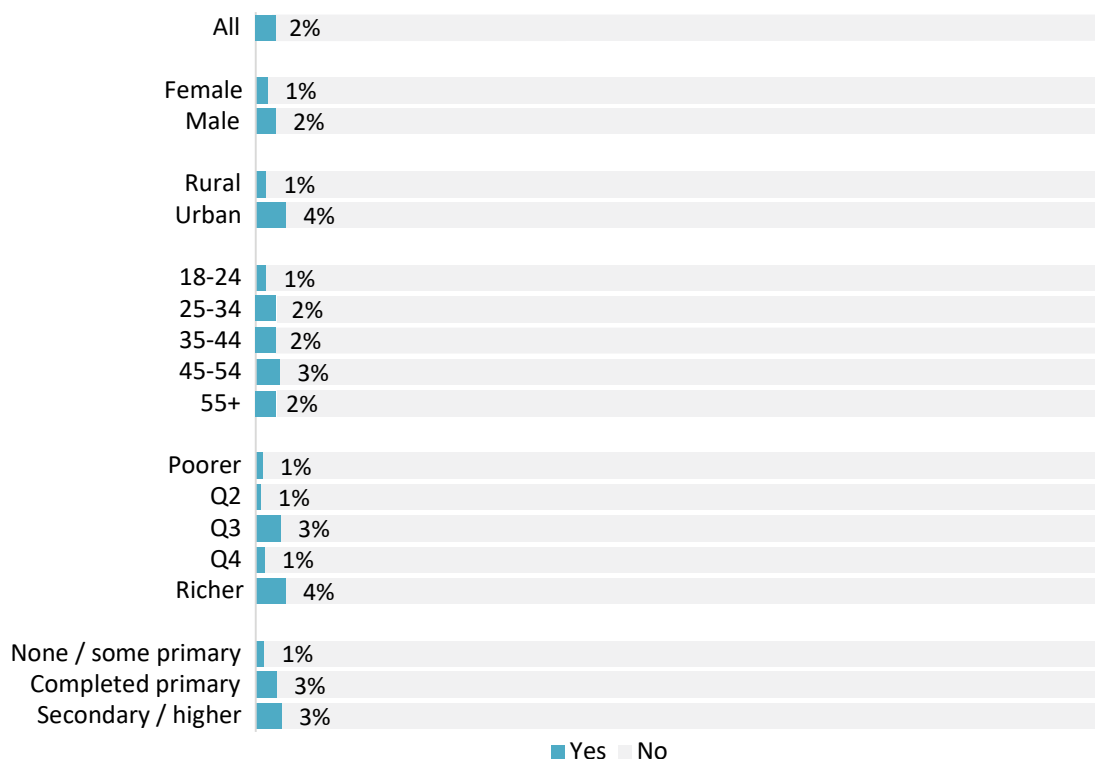
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;

Base: those who personally attended a government health facility in the past 3 months;
n=1,031

Insight 10: 1 out of 50 citizens have health insurance

One out of twenty citizens (2%) personally has health or medical insurance. The figure is consistent across all demographic groups, though it is slightly higher among residents of urban areas (4%) and richer citizens (4%).

Figure 11: Do you personally have health or medical insurance?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, round 7, October 2018;
Base: all respondents; n=1,913

3. Conclusions

The most interesting findings of this brief are in the detail, which provides wealth of information that could be of value to policy makers in the health sector.

This includes findings that are broadly positive. Most patients who attended a health facility are seen within an hour, almost all patients who are admitted to hospital are provided with a bed on which to sleep, and the majority of those who are entitled to free treatment do in fact receive treatment at no charge.

It also includes conclusions that are not such good news. Most obviously, just one out of fifty citizens have health insurance. This has not been priority strategy for the health sector in Uganda, but it is worth noting that in Kenya and Tanzania, 32% and 30% respectively have health insurance, compared to 2% in Uganda. These numbers are largely made up of those who have joined low-cost community health insurance schemes that could provide low cost ways to manage the cost of health shocks for poorer Ugandans in particular.

A final point of interest relates to accidents. One out of twenty citizens have personally suffered an accident or injury in the past six months. However, the noteworthy point is that the majority of injuries reported among respondents and their friends and family were caused by road traffic accidents: half were boda boda accidents, and a further quarter were from other road accidents. Road safety is a health issue, and clearly represents a major burden on the health sector and on citizens.

Thus, two clear potential strategies emerge for addressing health issues from citizens' perspectives: a push to increase health insurance coverage and offset some of the costs of sudden illnesses or injuries and a holistic strategy to address road safety.

