



# Our safety?

## Citizens' views on security and justice



## 1. Introduction

In December 2014, Tanzania held its local government elections. “Irregularities”, however, led to anxiety among voters and democracy-watchers: election materials were mismanaged, and crowds formed around polling stations in an effort to ensure their votes were counted (The Citizen, 15 December 2014). In January 2015, a gang in Dar es Salaam, known as “Panya Road”, created concern with incidents of violence, extensive social media commentary and, eventually, hundreds of arrests. (The Citizen, 6 January 2015).

Given these incidents, can we expect citizens of Tanzania to feel safe in their homes? Can they feel safe when voting? In some ways, the Panya Road threat may have been exaggerated. Yet the perception of safety – feeling safe – is just as important as actual probabilities of being attacked or robbed. If people do not feel safe in their communities, they will limit their activity: avoiding certain areas or certain times of day. This can then lead to lower economic activity or even to certain neighbourhoods being abandoned.

This brief reports the most recent nationally representative data from Mainland Tanzania around citizens' views on violence and justice in their communities. Data are from the 30th round of *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally-representative high-frequency mobile phone survey ([www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)). A total of 1,401 respondents were reached between February 13 and March 3, 2015. To track trends over time, data from the eighth round (collected between 3-17 October 2013; 1,662 respondents) is also referenced.

The key findings are:

- Three out of ten people have had something stolen from them in the past year.
- Three out of ten citizens have heard of threats, beatings or stoning being perpetrated by local security groups in the past year.

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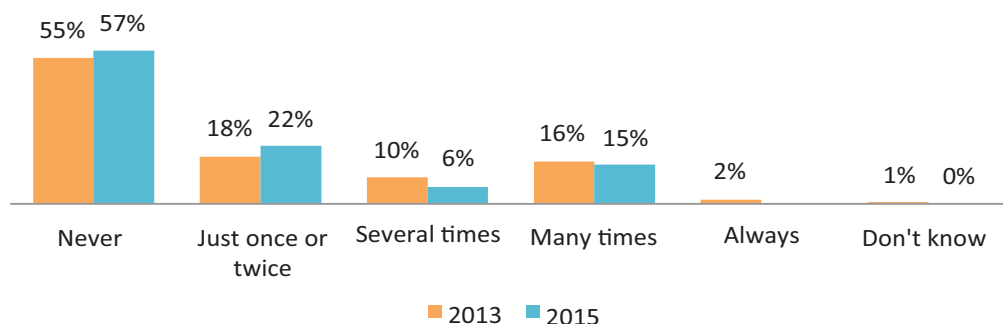
- The experience of mob violence has dropped significantly between 2013 and 2015 while that of police violence has increased
- Fewer than four out of ten citizens would go to the police if they were a victim of crime
- Most people (84%) believe that they will be affected by a Panya Road-like gang in the future.
- The most popular institutions people would visit if they were victims of crime are the police (37%) or a local security organization (32%) – though people also believe police and the justice system better serve the rich than the poor.
- Nearly two out of ten citizens (18%) witnessed violence or intimidation at the polling station during the December 2014 local government elections.

## 2. Seven facts about safety and security in Tanzania

### Fact 1: Eight out of ten citizens feel safe in their neighbourhoods

Between 2013 and 2015, Tanzanian citizens basically held the same perceptions of safety and security in their own neighbourhoods. Close to eight out of ten citizens report never or rarely feeling unsafe in the last year. Only 15% report feeling unsafe many times in the past year (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Over the past year, how often have you felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood?**



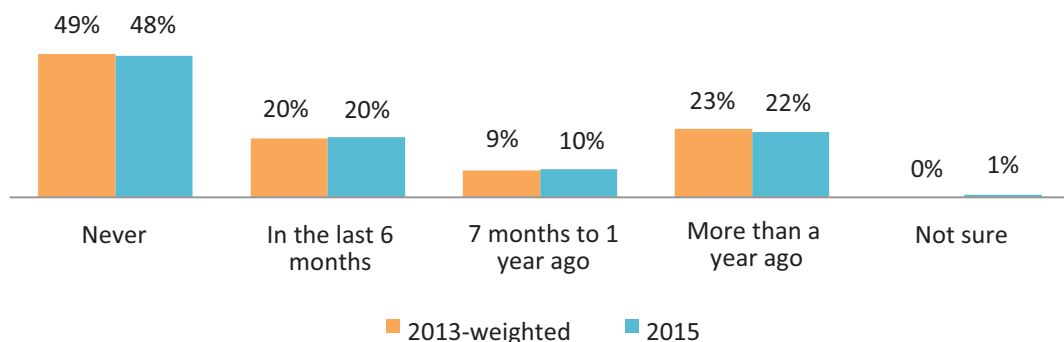
**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015), Round 8 (October 2013)

### Fact 2: Half of citizens have experienced theft, three out of ten in the past year

Just over half of citizens have experienced theft, many of these (three out of ten, 30%) in the past year (Figure 2). These figures are almost identical to data collected in 2013. This is generally higher than the African average for experiencing theft in the home.

Similarly, the most commonly cited “threat to the community” is theft, reported by 42% of citizens (data not shown).

**Figure 2: When was the last time you had something stolen from you?**



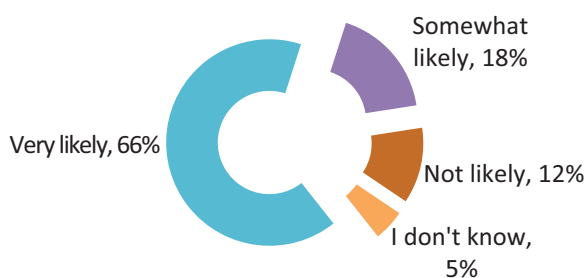
**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015), Round 8 (October 2013)

### **Fact 3: Citizens believe youth gangs are a serious threat**

In January 2015, a Dar es Salaam-based gang dubbed “Panya Road” made newspaper headlines for sporadic incidents of violence, followed by a large-scale police crackdown in which hundreds of alleged members of the gang were arrested. The story made national and regional newspapers, so we asked people whether they had heard of it: 60% have (data not shown). We furthermore asked whether their own communities had any similar gangs: the majority say no (87%; data not shown).

Yet, interestingly, when we asked whether they believe they would ever be personally affected by something like Panya Road, most people say yes. That is, 66% believe it is “very likely” and 18% believe it is “somewhat likely” (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: How likely do you think it is that you will be affected by a group like Panya Road?**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015)

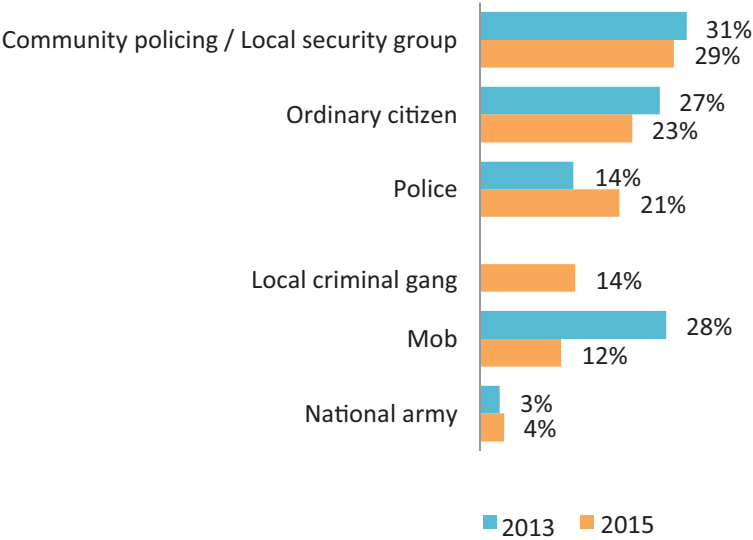
### **Fact 4: Community security groups are most likely to perpetrate violence**

The safety and security of a community is a function not only of the incidence of crime, but also the effectiveness of the police. In Tanzania the police force is under-resourced, in human and financial terms. This has led to communities developing their own policing systems through local security groups. These groups provide an alternative to traditional

police officers and ensure the presence of law enforcement in all communities. On the other hand, these groups are not formally trained, and thus may be accused of using excessive violence, violating human rights or good governance norms.

Citizens report that these groups were the most frequent perpetrators of threats, beatings or stoning (8 percentage points more frequent than the police in 2015). Levels of violence perpetrated by individual citizens remain similar to 2013 levels, but mob violence fell from 28% in 2013 to 12% in 2015 (Figure 4). In the same period reports of police violence jumped from 14% to 21% (Figure 4). It is worth noting that these are incidents that citizens have heard of rather than directly witnessed or experienced.

**Figure 4: Incidence of threats, beatings and stoning perpetrated by different groups in the past year**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015), Round 8 (October 2013)

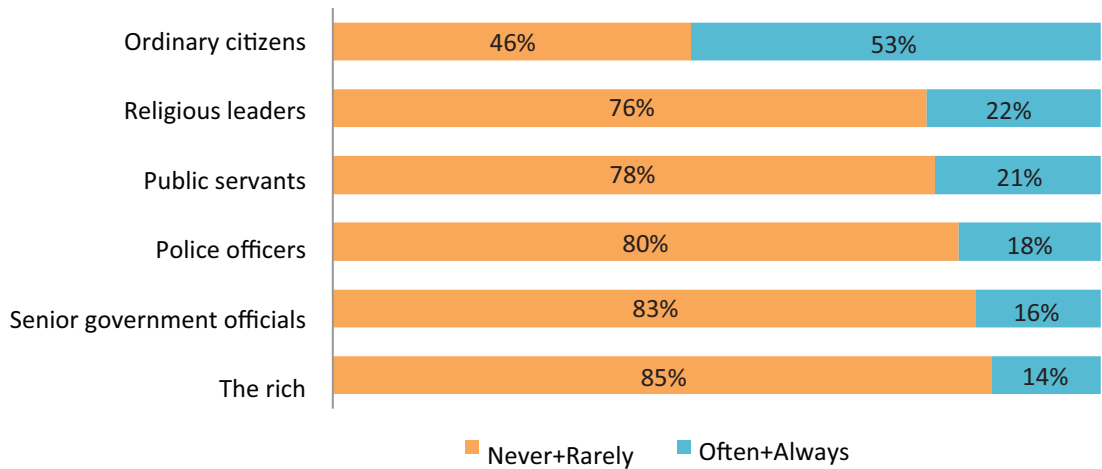
**Fact 5: Citizens believe the justice system is biased**

At most, one out of five citizens think that prominent individuals or members of the elite (such as public servants, religious leaders, police officers and the wealthy) will be punished according to the law if they commit a crime (Figure 5). These figures have dropped significantly since 2013: for example 39% of citizens thought that public servants would face legal repercussions for breaking the law in 2013, this number has dropped sharply to 21% in 2015 (Figure 5). It appears that citizens perceive a widening justice gap between themselves and the elites of society.

Ordinary citizens believe that they are more likely to face legal penalties for their crimes: half think that ordinary citizens will be punished according to the law for committing crimes. These figures remain largely unchanged since 2013 – though are still surprisingly low. Indeed, for all types of people, citizens believe that it is usually unlikely that a crime

will be punished according to the law. This indicates a low faith in the justice system’s efficacy.

**Figure 5: How likely do you think it is that the following groups will be punished according to the law for committing a crime?**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015)

When asked about which group (from a list provided) they believed was best served by the police, 60% of people mention the rich and 10% point to politicians (data not shown).

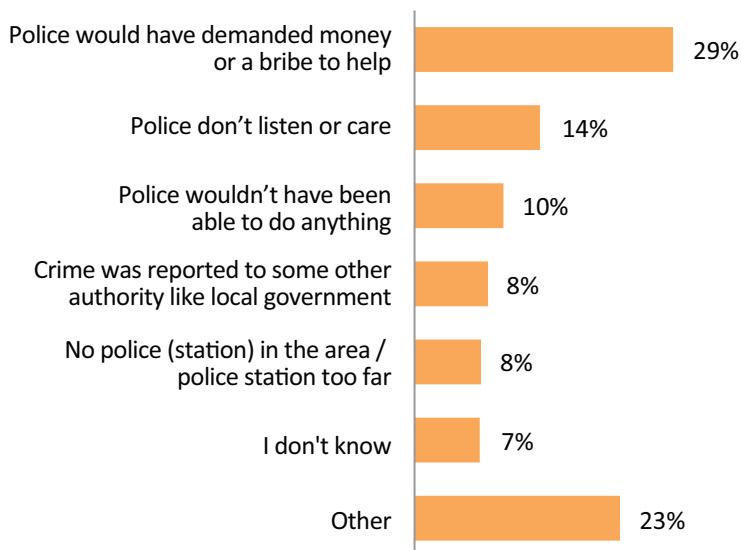
**Fact 6: Most citizens have little faith in the police**

If a citizen were a victim of crime, who would they go to first for assistance? Despite thinking that the justice system does not function and seeing increased incidences of police violence, 37% of citizens would go to the police for help first. This is comparable to 32% who would go to the street committee or a local security group. Other less popular choices include the village chairman, family or friends.

When we asked citizens for their perceptions about why people do not report crimes to the police, 29% cite corruption (Figure 6). This resonates with previous findings from *Sauti za Wananchi* whereby the police were viewed as the most corrupt institution in the country<sup>1</sup>. The second most popular reason, given by 14% of respondents, is that police don’t listen or care (Figure 6).

<sup>1</sup> *Sauti za Wananchi*, Brief No. 14. Have more laws, agencies and commitments against corruption made a difference? People’s perceptions of corruption in Tanzania; August 2014.

**Figure 6: What do you think is the main reason that people do not report crimes to the police?**



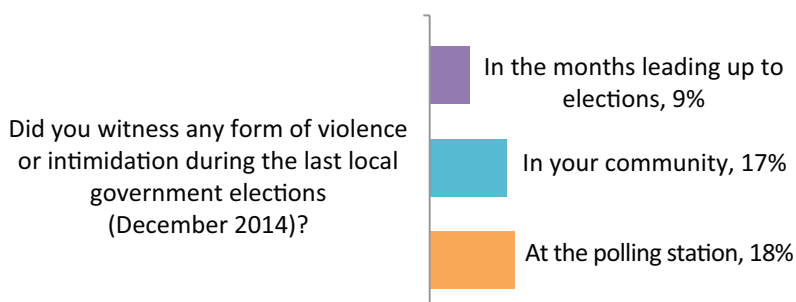
**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015)

## **Fact 7: Two out of ten citizens witnessed violence at their polling station during recent local government elections**

We asked about the various ways in which political violence can manifest itself: in the run-up to elections (via, for example, intimidation or threats), and during the actual election itself, whether at the polling stations or in the community at large.

During the December 2014 local government elections, two out of ten citizens report that they witnessed violence or intimidation at their polling station (Figure 7). A similar number witnessed violence in their community, and one out of ten report violent behaviour in the run up to the election (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Witnessing violence or intimidation related to elections**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, Mobile Phone Survey- Round 30 (February-March 2015)

Half of citizens claim that political parties in general were at fault without naming specific parties. Two out of ten (18%) citizens actually stayed at the polling stations during and after the voting process, mostly because they wanted to be present during the release of results (61% of those who stayed at polling stations cited this reason) or, in fewer cases (24% of those at the polling stations; 4% of the total population) because they wanted to protect their vote.

27% of citizens report planning to stay at the local polling station at the time of the referendum on the new constitution (note that these data were collected before the National Electoral Commission (NEC) announced the postponement of the referendum). When we furthermore asked what citizens thought of the NEC's efforts to ensure free and fair elections, 70% agreed that the NEC has taken "positive steps" to do this (data not shown).

### 3. Conclusion

Overall, Tanzania's security situation has not changed much since the last time we polled the country. However, there is still a sense among people that the formal justice system mostly serves the wealthy and the elite. The "common man" instead relies on more localized, informal, or semi-formal networks to exact justice: indeed, more people have heard about someone being beaten by a local security force than the police, and many people list the local security organization as their first port of call after a crime. The most common reason for not going to the police after a crime is the expectation that the police will ask for a bribe. (This is similar to findings from the Afrobarometer 2012 Tanzania survey, which found that the top two reasons for not reporting a crime to the police were the anticipated bribe-request and "the police won't listen or care".)

While Tanzania is widely considered to be a peaceful country, data for other African countries show that Tanzanians report relatively high levels of crime (for example, 36% of Tanzanians experienced theft at home, compared to 26% of Africans). There are a number of reasons why security should be high on the government's priority list. Beyond the obvious benefits of a peaceful society, there are also economic effects: if people do not feel safe in certain neighbourhoods, or during certain times of day, economic activity in those places and during those times will necessarily slow or stop. Moreover, every shilling invested in locks and askaris (guards) cannot be invested productively in cattle, seeds, trade stocks or computers. This represents a loss to the country's GDP, a stall to its development.

Personal safety during elections is another issue. For the first time in its history, Tanzania is planning to hold both a national referendum and general elections in the same year in 2015. These two moments will be key for ordinary citizens to decide on the fate of their nation and the choice of their leaders for the next five years, but at the same time it is very important for them to feel safe while exercising their democratic right. The findings in this brief show that two out of ten citizens (18%) observed violence at a polling station. Of those who had seen this violence, one in two believed a particular political party was at fault. As much as the numbers are low, it is important for us to ask ourselves whether this threat of violence infringes on people's rights to vote in a country where slightly more than half (52%) of the population live in a community without a police post – and thus can expect limited protection from a large crowd on election day.

So what can be done? Likely, the government will need to pursue a two-pronged approach: addressing both the actual incidence of crime, as well as the perception of crime. At present, it is a fairly grim view: citizens have not seen any improvement in their perceptions of safety since 2013. Despite a large police crackdown on the Panya Road gang members, for example, the great majority (84%, Fact 3) expect to be affected by a gang like them in the future. In previous *Sauti za Wananchi* data, we saw that the police were seen as the most corrupt institution in the country <sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, at best, citizens believe only one out of two crimes will go to the judicial system – much less if those crimes are committed by someone “important.”

Who can people turn to, if not the police? For the wealthy, an industry has sprung up of private security firms providing an alternative to an inactive, corrupt police force. For the poor, there are community organizations to provide security. One out of ten citizens (12%) still report seeing someone beaten by a “mob” (down from 28% in 2013; Fact 4). As many as 7% have seen someone killed by a local community security group. Yet these extrajudicial punishments have no trials, no judges or juries, and are thus not formalized justice. The stakes are high as innocent people may have been accused of being “thieves” and attacked. On balance, is local, semi-formal or informal justice better than formal but distant justice?

Addressing these issues – including re-establishing people’s faith in the formal justice system, via a concerted effort to improve both actual crime-fighting and the “public relations” part of the police – will be a crucial step for Tanzania’s development.

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<sup>2</sup> *Sauti za Wananchi*, Brief No. 14. Have more laws, agencies and commitments against corruption made a difference? People’s perceptions of corruption in Tanzania; August 2014.