



Press Release
20 July 2017

**Citizens are divided on whether the elections will trigger violence,
but the majority don't expect vote tampering to occur
Support for Jubilee and President Uhuru Kenyatta remains steady and
high while support for NASA and Honourable Raila Odinga is rising**

20 July 2017, Nairobi: Citizens are evenly split on whether the upcoming elections will trigger violence: half (46%) say they will, while half (47%) say they will not. However two out of three citizens (67%) fear becoming a victim of violence or intimidation around the elections, including nearly half (44%) who fear this a lot.

At the same time, the majority of citizens think it unlikely that fraud or vote tampering will take place: six out of ten (61%) say that it is very or somewhat unlikely while four out of ten disagree.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Are we ready for August 8? Citizens' views on politics and the elections*. The brief is based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The findings are based on data collected from 1,702 respondents across Kenya in June 2017.

Kenyans express strong faith in the independent institutions which play important roles in the elections. Two out of three citizens (65%) are confident that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) will both count the votes and publish the results honestly. In terms of other institutions, citizens have most confidence in international observers ensuring free and fair elections (83%) even more than they do in domestic observers (74%). The media are also trusted by a large majority of citizens (77%).

But what will their voting choices be informed by? *Sauti za Wananchi* found that Kenyans prioritise the cost of living and inflation as the major challenge facing the country (40%) and their household (42%) today. The number of citizens concerned about the high cost of living has doubled since 2015 when 19% of citizens mentioned this as a critical issue.

Worry around hunger and drought has spiked this year: in 2016 fewer than one in ten citizens (9%) were concerned about this as a major issue for the country whereas this rose to 30% in 2017. The only other issue mentioned by more than 10% of citizens is corruption. However the portion of citizens citing this issue has been declining steadily since 2015 when it was 31%. Fewer than 10% of Kenyans mention any social service as an issue for either the country or their household.

However when asked specifically about Kenya's direction on some of these issues, citizens seem to be less and less happy. Comparing views from December 2016 and June 2017, *Sauti za Wananchi* found that Kenyans are increasingly unsatisfied.

- Managing the economy: dropped from 39% being completely or somewhat satisfied to 12%
- Fighting corruption: dropped from 38% being completely or somewhat satisfied to 22%
- Improving security: dropped from 74% being completely or somewhat satisfied to 55%

- Creating jobs: dropped from 41% being completely or somewhat satisfied to 24%
- Addressing education challenges: dropped from 88% being completely or somewhat satisfied to 67%

The only area in which more citizens are content than in December 2016 is in terms of preparation for the elections which rose from 63% to 75% in these six months.

Citizens emphasise accountability characteristics when evaluating candidates and public officials. A candidate's development record in their home area (91%), their record on corruption (81%) and how active they are on national issues in parliament (60%) are the most popular choices for assessing them. Worryingly, however, small but significant minorities also look at whether the candidate has helped their ethnic group or not (35%), the candidate's relationship to the President (30%), the candidate being of the same ethnic group as them (19%) and the candidate's gender (19%).

Kenyans have thus far been active in participating in the elections. The largest majority have been part of discussions with family and friends on politics (79%). But they are unlikely to share these views more publicly: 10% have done so on social media and 9% by calling into a radio program. Citizens are more likely to have volunteered for a candidate or party (21%) or joined a peaceful demonstration (14%) at least once than to have expressed their political views publicly. Aside from group discussions, rallies are the most popular form of political participation with half (47%) of the population saying they have attended at least one.

When it comes to political parties, citizens are more likely to have been directly exposed to the Jubilee party than to the NASA coalition:

- Town village meetings: 53% have participated in at least one for Jubilee, 47% for NASA
- Large rallies near their home: 39% have attended Jubilee rallies compared to 37% at NASA rallies
- Home visits: 15% have received visitors from Jubilee, 11% from NASA
- Receiving gifts or other assistance: 14% from Jubilee, 9% from NASA
- Phone contact: 12% have been contacted by the Jubilee party compared to 10% by NASA
- Social media: 7% for Jubilee, 6% for NASA

But this does not necessarily seem to affect the level of support for the parties or their candidates. Since August 2016, Sauti za Wananchi has tracked a steady decline in approval for President Uhuru Kenyatta (August 2016: 77%, December 2016: 74%, **June 2017: 63%**) with a comparable rise for Honourable Raila Odinga (August 2016: 47%, December 2016: 53%, **June 2017: 62%**). Honourable Odinga is more strongly supported by men, urban residents and the young.

The fortunes of the two main candidates' political parties differ slightly: Jubilee has maintained 50% - 51% of citizens feeling close to them while for NASA, the proportion of citizens who identify with the coalition has increased from 29% in December 2016 to 37% in June 2017. The number of undecided or 'don't know' responses has also dropped during this period from 22% to 12%.

Victor Rateng of *Sauti za Wananchi* at Twaweza, said: *"Overall, the environment is heating up in the country as elections approach. Elections offer citizens the rare opportunity to really make their voices heard, their demands known and their opinions count. Candidates looking for votes in August would do well to pay heed to these citizen voices, to assuage their fears about violence, to support and build confidence in the independent institutions that are involved in the elections and to encourage citizens to play an active role in the election."*

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Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.twaweza.org/sauti
- Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. We have programs, staff and offices across all three countries, and a globally respected practice of learning, monitoring and evaluation. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo*, Africa's largest annual citizen assessment to assess children's learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households, and *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative mobile phone survey. We undertake effective public and policy engagement, through powerful media partnerships and global leadership of initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership
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