



Press Release  
29 June 2017

## **Four out of ten (44%) citizens think that Kenya is not very democratic And another four out of ten citizens (43%) do not know what democracy is**

**29 June 2017, Nairobi:** Overall four out of ten citizens in Kenya think democracy in the country is being practiced to a small extent (40%) or not at all (4%). Kenyan views on democracy and governance can be considered against the critical pillars of knowledge, freedoms, participation and inclusion, devolution, and trust. Overall Kenyans provide a mixed review of governance.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Constitution, Devolution and Inclusion: Citizens' views on governance in Kenya*. 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 1,714 respondents across Kenya in December 2016.

It is important to note that many Kenyans report **not being familiar** with some of the core tenets of governance in the country. Despite the large proportion of respondents who gave a low rating on democracy in Kenya, a similar number (43%) do not know what democracy means. A significant minority of Kenyans (28%) also do not know what the Constitution is. In both of these cases, women were more likely to answer that they do not know what the Constitution (38%) or democracy (59%) are.

When it comes to **freedoms**, the picture is mixed. Seven out of ten citizens agree that the government respects freedom of expression (67%) and the freedoms of assembly and demonstrations (69%), but a large number (69%) also believe that the government interferes with media operations. In addition, half of Kenyans disagree (32%) or strongly disagree (18%) that there is equality before the law in Kenya.

Citizens do, however, largely believe that there is room for them to **participate in decision-making, to be active and to have their voices included in discussions and decisions**. Four in ten believe citizens are active in querying public spending in their area (40%) and acting to prevent corruption (38%). Half of Kenyans (46%) think that young people participate in making decisions on development projects with County Governments. In all three cases, rural citizens are more likely to agree with these statements than urban residents. Despite these positive indications, just one in three Kenyans (35%) think that their County Government allows citizens to participate in budgeting and planning.

When it comes to **gender inclusion**, there is much to be celebrated. Almost all citizens are in support of special reserved seats for women (and other marginalized groups) in county and national assemblies (94%). They would also support a special fund for widows (96%). Further, half of citizens (54%) agree that women leaders in their area have performed better than men.

In line with some of the positive views on governance, seven out of ten Kenyans (67%) think that there is more development in their area because of **devolution**. Half think the government is implementing the constitution well (38%) or very well (10%) compared to one out of four (23%) who disagree.

Despite some positive views, citizens have low levels of trust in politicians. Fewer than four out of ten express a lot of (6%) or some (29%) trust in politicians in general. These numbers rise slightly when it comes to local politicians, with around half of Kenyans saying they have a lot of or some trust in Members of County Assemblies (52%), County Governors (53%) and County Senators (46%).

Citizens also express low levels of trust in governance institutions including the judiciary / courts (48%) and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (52%). Citizens have a lot more trust in religious leaders (89%) and the media (88%).

Dr John Mugo, Director of Data and Voice at Twaweza, said: *“These data provide a mixed review of governance in Kenya. There is much to be celebrated and much to improve. However government has reason to be concerned. What we need is a concerted effort to address some of the more entrenched issues. The positive sentiments towards Kenyan governance among citizens will only be retained if citizens’ expectations and hopes are met. Active citizens will lose hope and give up if they are met with deaf ears, or unresponsive authorities. Citizens will cease to trust the media if they think the government is interfering in content. And if the perception, real or imagined, that there is no equality before the law continues, the trust in Kenya’s constitution can only wane. What is needed is real demonstration of the powers afforded to citizens by the Constitution and Kenya’s devolved governance structure. In this way the Constitution and democracy can truly come alive for Kenyans.”*

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**Notes to Editors**

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at [www.twaweza.org](http://www.twaweza.org), or [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)
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