

Press Release  
18 February 2021

**Nine out of ten citizens say that they will be worse off financially if Covid-19 continues to spread**  
**Citizens say education, health and the informal sector are worst affected**

**Thursday 18 February 2021, Nairobi:** The economic impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak continue to be felt strongly across all households. Nine out of ten citizens say that they will be worse off financially if the virus continues to spread. Those with higher education are slightly less likely (84%) to say things will be worse for them.

When thinking broadly about the economic effects of Covid-19, citizens say the worst affected sectors are education (mentioned by 67%), the informal sector (*jua kali* – 60%) and the health sector (51%). Citizens also mention tourism and hospitality (32%) and public transport (29%). To support them, citizens suggest government could provide grants or funds to businesses (62%), create employment opportunities (54%) or provide loans to young people to start or grow businesses (45%). Tax relief for businesses (32%) and provision of Covid-19 protective equipment (sanitizer, masks, fumigation – 22%) are also popular recommendations.

These findings were released by Twaweza in two research briefs titled *Learning to live with Corona? Kenyan citizens' knowledge, attitudes and practices* based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The panel for this research was established through random sampling from a database of contacts from previous surveys to establish a new representative panel of the country's population. For this brief, data were collected from 3,000 respondents in the third round of the special *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 18 November and 2 December, 2020.

Beyond their general economic outlook, households are now twice as likely to say the food they have at home will only last a day compared to June 2020 (60% compared to 31%). But they also seem to have more money with more households, than in June, reporting their money would last a week (34% compared to 27%) or a month (23% compared to 18%). Despite the alarming apparent decrease in household foods stocks, more households now say their food would last for 1 month or more (20% compared to 11% in June). Those in Mombasa (31%), those with no education (32%) and those who earn a living from casual work (32%) are more likely to say they have no food at home.

Although the majority of citizens (51%) say their household daily food intake has gotten worse over the past month, with the worst situations in urban centres and among casual workers, this has decreased from 68% saying the same earlier in 2020.

Looking specifically at government management of economic issues, half of citizens (53%) think government economic recovery measures are sufficient while 31% say they are not. More educated citizens, those who are employees or business owners, and residents of Nairobi or Mombasa are more likely to say these measures are insufficient.

But, the majority of citizens do not think national (63%) or county (61%) governments have spent Covid-19 funds appropriately. Men, residents of Nairobi and those with higher levels of education are even less confident than others. At the same time, citizens are more likely to say that the national government has handled the outbreak of Covid-19 in the country well (44%) than they are to say the government has done badly (34%). However, less citizens are happy with the government's management of Covid-19 in December (44%) than in June (64%). At county level, results are more mixed: 41% think their county handled the outbreak well and 38% thought it was handled badly.

Overall, however, citizens' concerns are now more evenly distributed between their worries for their health and economic hardship. Previously economic concerns appeared paramount. When asked what concerns them about a possible second wave of infections, citizens mention the economic impacts (57%) at a similar rate to worrying about contracting the virus themselves (49%).

Concerns about health may be related to the increase in awareness about the virus (97% now say they know about it, compared to 67% in June), and the prevalence of testing (1 out of 4 households (25%) have at least one person who has been tested for the virus up from 14% in June). In terms of taking protective measures, self-reported mask-wearing has increased since June with 81% saying they do this compared to 69% previously. Conversely, only going out when necessary was mentioned by 48% previously but by 31% of citizens in December.

If they show symptoms of Covid-19, citizens are now slightly more likely to visit a health facility (up to 71% from 66%) but much more likely to quarantine at home (29% compared to 14% in June) and much less likely to call the Corona hotline (down to 22% from 44%).

James Ciera, Country Lead for Twaweza in Kenya, said: *"Citizens behaviours and attitudes have evolved with the context. They are looking more and more for ways to survive and stay safe while carrying on with their daily lives. We can see increased mask-wearing, and more self-quarantine but less use of the hotline. Kenyans are now more worried about health issues relative to economic concerns than was previously the case."*

*"At the same time,"* he continued, *"Covid-19 continues to highlight existing inequalities – educated and salaried citizens and business owners are still better able to cope with the economic hardship while a significant share of the population do not have any food or only have food for a day at home. Yet citizens have a rich set of ideas for how government can help them to cope. Their voices just need to be heard."*

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**Notes to Editors**

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at [www.twaweza.org](http://www.twaweza.org) / [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)
- Twaweza works to demonstrate how citizens can come together to collectively address their problems, and make government work better for them; enable citizens' voices, interests and experiences to be heard and taken seriously in decision-making; promote and protect open civic space which enables citizens to freely assemble or organise, speak and act in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. @TwawezaKe (Facebook), @Twaweza\_Ke (Twitter), Twaweza East Africa (Instagram).