



Press Release  
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## **2 out of 3 Kenyans say cost of living is the biggest problem for their households** ***Half of citizens say that this is the biggest problem facing the country***

**1 March 2019, Nairobi:** A majority of citizens (65%) say that the cost of living is the biggest problem facing their households. And seven out of ten Kenyans (71%) say they are not satisfied overall with the direction in which the country is heading; half of these blame economic issues for this view.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Grading the Nation: Kenyans' opinions on government, leadership and corruption*. 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 1,607 respondents across Kenya between 27 September and 2 November 2018.

Aside from the cost of living, three out of ten citizens cite corruption (29%) as the biggest problem facing the country. In the past year, one out of five citizens (22%) has been asked for a bribe, and 15% admit to paying a bribe. And eight out of ten citizens (82%) are not convinced that the President will succeed in his renewed fight against corruption. This is, in part, because citizens see many officials as corrupt and that corruption is entrenched in the government.

Similarly, when asked how they think Kenya is performing in terms of the quality of different public services, more than half are satisfied with the country's performance on a range of sectors including education (69%), security (61%), and electricity access (57%). However, when it comes to the economy, far fewer citizens are pleased with the country's progress in improving living standards for the poor (18%), creating jobs or income opportunities (16%), or managing the economy (10%). Between 2016 and 2018, citizens' satisfaction with all of these areas dropped. In terms of corruption, more citizens (38%) are satisfied with progress in this area, but this is still less than half.

Despite these challenges, the President enjoys strong approval ratings (71%), significantly higher than for other national political figures. In particular, President Kenyatta has gained ground on his political rival, Raila Odinga since June 2017 when they enjoyed similar approval ratings to now when the President has outpaced the leader of the opposition (approval at 48%). The President also enjoys higher approval ratings than any local leaders including Members of County Assemblies (54%), Governors (52%) and county governments in general (51%). However, a number of non-governmental actors enjoy higher approval ratings than the President including the media (87%), religious leaders (82%), NGOs (75%) and human rights organisations (73%).

Citizens are also largely supportive of recent reconciliation efforts: seven out of ten approve of the handshake between the President and opposition leader (71%) and six out of ten approve of the subsequent Building Bridges Initiative (59%).

Victor Rateng of *Sauti za Wananchi* at Twaweza, said: "These data unearth interesting insights regarding citizens' views of, their government's performance. While citizens value the reconciliation efforts being

*undertaken, they are keen for the government to do something about their daily economic hardships. Despite rating the government highly in some areas such as provision of transport, infrastructure and education, Kenyans are sending a strong message that they are struggling economically. The government would do well to pay closer attention to these signals.”*

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**For more information:**

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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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