



Press Release  
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### **3 out of 4 Kenyans say it is not easy to meet county leaders or influence their decision-making**

***At the same time 4 out of 10 have attended a public meeting in the past year***

**27 November 2018, Nairobi:** Three out of four citizens say it is not easy to meet county leaders (76%), influence local decision-making (79%), or access information on public finances (78%). The majority of citizens define participation as attending meetings and contributing to making decisions (58%). Yet, 4 out of 10 Kenyans (41%) have attended a public meeting in the last year. Attendance is higher among men than women (50% compared to 33%), rural than urban citizens (46% compared to 34%), and older Kenyans as compared to younger ones. When asked why people in their area might not attend county government participation forums, 7 out of 10 cite a lack of time (39%) or being too busy (31%).

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Active and engaged? Kenyans' views and experiences on citizen participation*. 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 1,680 respondents across Kenya between 14 July and 8 August 2018.

More than half of citizens define participation more strongly than participating in meetings; as the implementation of citizens' opinions (35%) or citizens shaping the development agenda (21%).

And some citizens are active. The most common form of citizen engagement is to get together with others to discuss an issue (67%) but many also join hands to raise an issue (62%). More than half of citizens have used intermediaries to raise issues for them including community meetings (56%) and going through respected community members (52%). Far fewer citizens are directly and individually vocal through media (24%) and social media (18%). In the case of all of these actions, more citizens say they would be willing to take them compared to those who have actually done so.

Linked to this, citizens mention going through a village representative (38%) or going directly to county government offices (37%) and attending barazas (30%) as the top three routes available to them to raise issues to government.

When it comes to demonstrations, 13% say they have participated in one previously: more men than women (16% vs. 10%) and more degree graduates than those with no education (18% vs. 12%).

Overall, one out of three citizens agree or agree strongly that national (31%) and county (36%) governments take ordinary Kenyans' opinions into account when making decisions. So perhaps it is unsurprising that 8 out of 10 Kenyans believe that political problems will be solved if we work together in groups (87%) as compared to as individuals, and that communities should come together to solve their problems (80%) as opposed to expecting their leaders to do so.

Victor Rateng of *Sauti za Wananchi* at Twaweza, said: “These data unearth interesting revelations regarding citizen participation in Kenya. The majority of Kenyans understand that participating in meetings and contributing to decision-making are the definitions of citizen participation. Yet many do not participate in available collaborative forums, because they say they are too busy and have no time. At the same time, citizens are saying that they find it hard to access local leaders and feel excluded from decision-making. If we are to bring the participatory vision of Kenya’s constitution to life, we may need to explore new ideas and avenues to engage citizens in government activities and in vocal and active expressions of their views and desires.”

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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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