



Press Release  
28 April 2015

## **Theft, youth gangs, election violence affect many citizens But the police and justice system are not seen to be working for the people**

**28 April 2015, Dar es Salaam:** Three out of ten citizens (30%) have experienced theft in the last year. Overall half of Tanzanians have ever had something stolen from them.

A majority of citizens (84%) also believe that it is likely that they will be affected by gangs similar to Panya Road in Dar es Salaam. In January 2015, Panya Road created concern with incidents of violence, extensive social media commentary and, eventually, hundreds of arrests. Six out of ten citizens (60%) at the national level have heard of Panya Road but almost to nine out of ten (87%) say there are no gangs like this in their communities.

Two out of ten citizens (18%), report that they witnessed violence during the local government elections in December 2014.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Our safety? Citizens' views on security and justice*. 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 1,401 respondents across Mainland Tanzania (Zanzibar is not covered in these results) in February and March 2015. It is important to note that polling covered a representative sample of all citizens in Mainland Tanzania.

Despite the relatively high rates of theft, fears about gangs and incidents of political violence, eight out of ten (79%) citizens report never, or rarely, feeling unsafe in their own communities and neighbourhoods.

However, they believe that the justice system in the country is not functioning as it should. Just over half of citizens believe that ordinary citizens would be punished according to the law if they commit a crime (53%). These numbers drop when it comes to elites. Only 14% say that a rich person would be punished according to the law for criminal acts and 21% think the same for public servants. These numbers have fallen significantly since 2013 when 39% of citizens thought that public servants would face legal consequences for breaking the law. Six out of ten citizens (60%) think that police best serve the rich.

In line with the relatively low confidence in the effectiveness of the justice system, less than four out of ten citizens (37%) would go to the police if a crime was committed. A similar number, 32%, would go to a local security group or their village/street committee. Some believe that citizens do not report crime to the police because of corruption (29%) or because the police would not care (14%). Similarly, there seems to have been an increase in incidents of police violence (threats, beatings, stoning) with two out of ten citizens (21%) having heard of these types of occurrences compared to 14% in 2013.

Given the reported low trust in the police, many communities have local security groups who provide basic law enforcement. However these local security groups are often untrained. The highest number of

reports of violence are directed towards these groups with three out of ten citizens (29%) report hearing about threats, beatings and stoning perpetrated by local security groups.

Elvis Mushi, Coordinator of *Sauti za Wananchi* commented on the findings *“Citizens face a number of potential safety issues including theft, fear of youth gangs and a lack of security around their democratic participation. At the same time the justice system is not perceived to be fair or efficient. Put together, these data present a challenge to policy-makers.”*

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza, added *“There are three clear messages from citizens in these data. First, although many citizens report feeling safe in their own communities, they have also experienced burglary, are afraid of being affected by gangs and have observed political violence. Second, ordinary citizens believe that the police or justice system favour the elite. This belief has become more widely held over time. In addition, they have seen an increase in police violence in the past two years, which discourages them from pursuing formal mechanisms of justice. Finally, citizens are willing to take matters into their own hands as shown by a heavy reliance on local security groups, their plans to congregate at polling stations during the constitutional referendum, citizens are taking matters into their own hands. These messages present a clear call to policy-makers to address critical security, law enforcement and justice issues, both for their own sake and because of their potential impact on economic affairs.”*

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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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