



# Reality Check

## Citizens' views on education in a fee free era

### 1. Introduction

Research has established that education is the single most significant determinant of economic development in the modern world for both individuals and countries, and is the main distinguishing factor in the level of development between developed and developing economies<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, education has been associated with social mobility by creating opportunities through enhanced skills, social status and access to networks<sup>2</sup>. Learning also leads to reduction of crime rates, increased civic participation and greater social cohesion<sup>3</sup>

In recognition of the importance of education in driving the development agenda, the fifth phase government of Tanzania under President John Magufuli has placed education at the top of its list of development priorities. In order to promote and sustain wide access to, and improve the quality of, basic education, the Government has resolved to provide free education at both primary and secondary levels. Accordingly, a total of 4.77 trillion shillings<sup>4</sup> has been budgeted for the education sector in the 2016/2017 financial year compared to 3.887 trillion shillings<sup>5</sup> in 2015/2016, an increase of 81.3 percent.

- 1 Aturupane, H., Savchenko, Y., Shojo, M., Larsen, K. (2014). South Asia human development sector. Sri Lanka: Investment in human capital. Discussion Paper Series No. 69. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. Web
- 2 OECD (2005). *Teachers matter: Attracting, developing and retaining teachers*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Web
- 3 Green, A. & Preston, J. (2001). Education and social cohesion: Re-centering the debate. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76 (4): 247-284.
- 4 Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2016/17 Budget Speech [www.mof.go.tz/mofdocs/msemaji/BUDGET%20SPEECH%20FINAL%202016.pdf](http://www.mof.go.tz/mofdocs/msemaji/BUDGET%20SPEECH%20FINAL%202016.pdf)
- 5 Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2015/16 Citizens' Budget [http://www.mof.go.tz/mofdocs/budget/Citizens%20Budget/CITIZENS%20BUDGET%202015\\_2016%20\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.mof.go.tz/mofdocs/budget/Citizens%20Budget/CITIZENS%20BUDGET%202015_2016%20_ENGLISH.pdf)

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Sauti za Wananchi



In the first year of President Magufuli's administration, the Government has focused on ensuring that all public schools have increased access to basic teaching and learning materials through the provision of capitation grants that are sent directly to schools. Previously these grants were transferred to districts for onward disbursement to schools. However Twaweza research has shown that an average of just over TZS 2,000 per child per year, out of the allocated TZS 10,000 per child per year, was reaching schools<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the Government has resolved to address the acute shortage of infrastructure such as desks and classrooms. Thus, nearly one year into this government's tenure, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the progress made so far in the delivery of basic education.

In this brief, we present the views of citizens about the state of education in Tanzania over the last one year.

Data for this brief come from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. It is representative for Mainland Tanzania. Information on the overall methodology is available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti). For this brief, data were collected from 1,806 respondents from the second *Sauti za Wananchi* panel. This was the eleventh round of calls to the new panel, conducted between 4 and 17 August 2016.

The key findings are:

- 7 out of 10 households in Tanzania have children that attend public schools
- Approximately one out of three citizens report shortages of teachers (34%) and desks (30%) as the main challenges facing public schools in Tanzania
- More than five out of ten citizens think that the quality of education in private secondary and primary schools is good compared to two out of ten who think the same about public schools
- 85% of citizens cite lack of parental involvement as a serious problem facing the education sector
- 7 in 10 parents claim confidence in dealing with non-education related problems affecting children in school. Nevertheless, most parents do not engage with their children's education
- More than 7 in 10 citizens want girls who drop out due to pregnancy to continue schooling after giving birth

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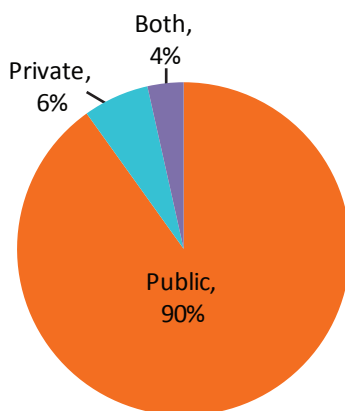
6 *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 2 (June 2013) Full dataset available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)

## 2. Six facts about progress of the education sector in Tanzania

### Fact 1: The majority of children in Tanzania attend public schools

About 80% of households report having a child or children attending school<sup>7</sup>. When asked about the type of school they attend, 9 in 10 (90%) of them report that children in their households are attending public schools.

Figure 1: Does your child/children attend public or private school?



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016)

In regards to perceptions of the ability of public schools to operate in the current of “no fees, no parental contributions” context, directed by President John Magufuli, 69% of citizens agree that public schools are capable of providing all children’s requirements (food, education materials, water and security) without parental contributions. Additionally, 73% believe that it is appropriate that schools do this without their involvement<sup>8</sup>.

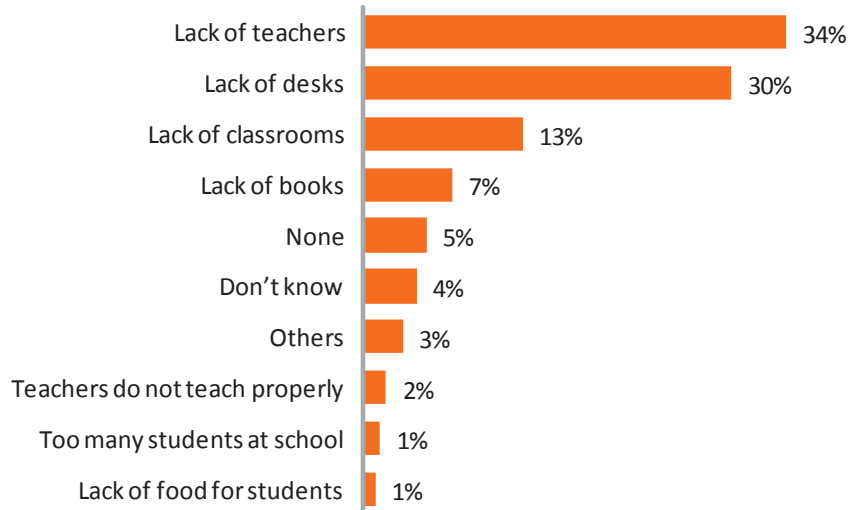
### Fact 2: Three in ten citizens believe that shortages of teachers and desks are the main challenges facing public schools

A number of challenges have been said to face public schools; ranging from accessibility, teacher shortages, to “poor” quality of education. When citizens were asked about the main challenges facing schools in the “no fees, no contributions” era, 34% report that insufficient numbers of teachers and shortages of desks (30%) are the main challenges currently facing schools. A further 13% also mentioned the lack of classrooms.

7 *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016) Full dataset available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)

8 *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016) Full dataset available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)

**Figure 2: What are the main challenges facing public schools since becoming fee free?**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016)

Despite the challenges, when citizens were asked about the quality of education in public schools following the introduction of the fee free education policy, 50% of citizens stated that they believe the quality has improved, 35% said it has remained the same and 15% reported it has deteriorated<sup>9</sup>.

**Figure 2a: Please tell me the quality of education in public schools since becoming fee free**



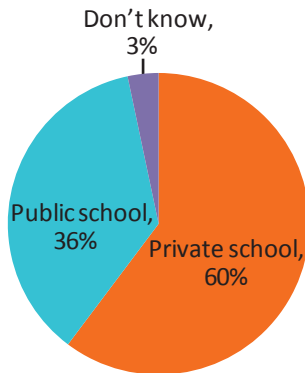
**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016)

**Fact 3: Given a choice, 6 in 10 citizens would send their children to a private school**

The majority of children (in 90% of households with children) attend public schools. When asked where they would send their children if both public and private schools were fee-free, 60% of citizens would opt for a private school compared to 36% who say they would send their children to a public school.

9     ibid

**Figure 3: If public schools and private schools were fee free, which school would you send your child to?<sup>10</sup>**

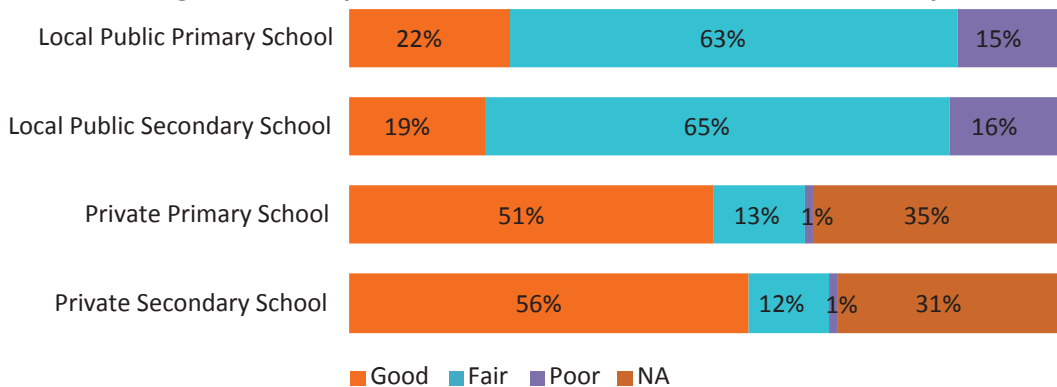


**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016)

When probed as to why they would send their children to a private school, 45% report that private schools provide better education compared to public schools, whereas 34% think that public schools provide better education. Other appealing features of private schools include hardworking and keen teachers (21%) and sufficient numbers of teachers (12%) compared to public schools<sup>11</sup>.

In line with the preference for private schools, citizens were asked to rate the quality of education provided in schools found in their communities. Approximately 5 out of 10 citizens think that the quality of education in private primary and secondary schools is good, compared to 2 out of 10 who rate the quality of education in public primary and secondary schools as good.

**Figure 3: Quality of education in schools found in the community**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016)

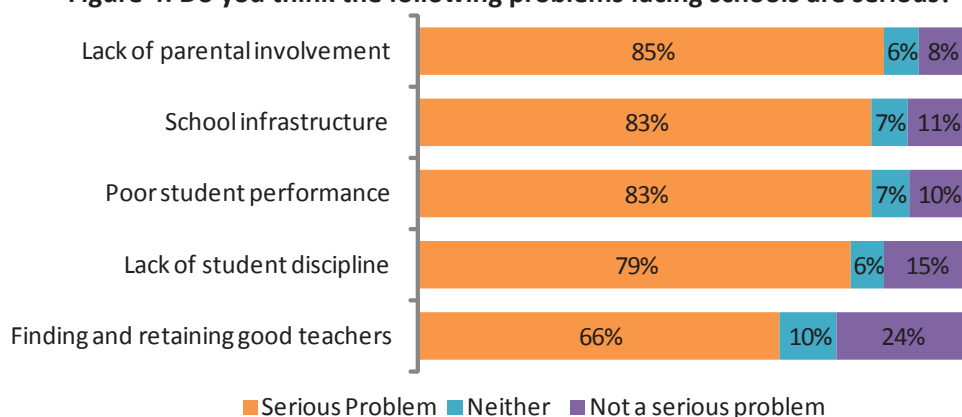
10 Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

11 *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016) Full dataset available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)

## Fact 4: Citizens report lack of parental involvement as one of the leading problems facing schools

Available evidence indicates that there are many factors that affect education and learning, among them poor physical infrastructure, decreasing enrollment rates, lack of teaching and learning materials and low morale among the teaching staff<sup>12</sup>. When citizens were asked to rate the seriousness of a list of specific problems facing their child’s or children’s school, more than 8 in 10 citizens (85%) report that the lack of parental engagement is a serious problem. This issue was rated as serious by more parents than any other issue. Other issues that parents thought were serious problems include poor school infrastructure (83%) and poor student performance (83%).

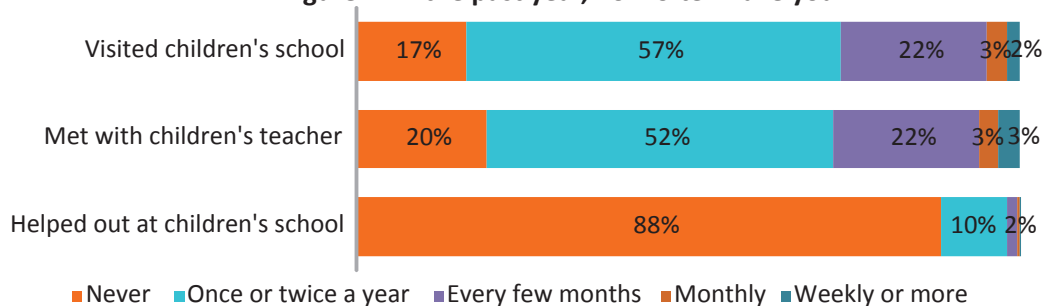
**Figure 4: Do you think the following problems facing schools are serious?**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 10 (August 2016)

Lack of parental/guardian involvement in their children’s education is exemplified by the fact that one in five (20%) parents/guardians have never met with their child’s/children’s teacher and 57% have visited their child’s/children’s school only once or twice in the past 12 months.

**Figure 4: In the past year, how often have you:**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 10 (August 2016)

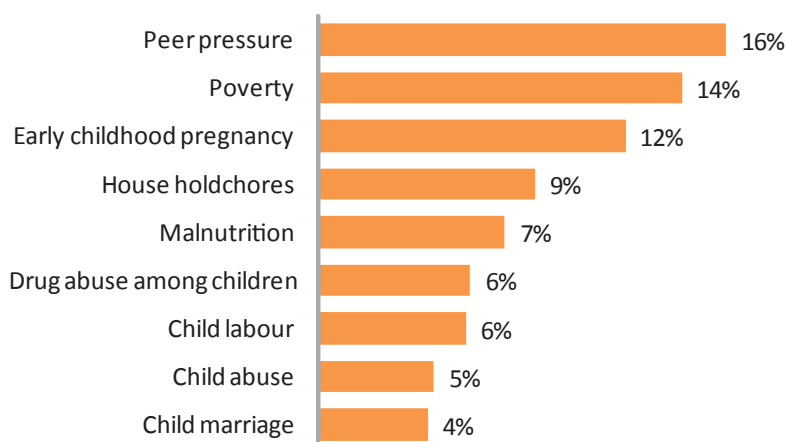
12 UNESCO-IBE (2006). *United Republic of Tanzania - Principles and general objectives of Education*. World Data on Education. 6th Edition 2006/2007. Web

While 88% of parents/ guardians have never helped out at their child's/children's school in the past 12 months, a similar number of them (88%) do admit that it is their responsibility as citizens to actively contribute to improving the quality of education in public schools<sup>13</sup>.

### **Fact 5: 7 in 10 parents are confident in their ability to deal with non-academic challenges affecting their children**

When citizens were asked about psychosocial problems which affect children in school, 16% of citizens mention peer pressure and family poverty (14%). Other problems include early childhood pregnancy (12%) and rights related issues like abuse (5%) and child labour (6%).

**Figure 5: What are the three main non-academic challenges that children face in school?**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 10 (August 2016)

When asked about their confidence in their ability to deal with these challenges, 7 in 10 (70%) parents/guardians say that they are confident that they can help a child with these issues.

### **Fact 6: More than 7 in 10 citizens want girls to continue schooling in case of pregnancy**

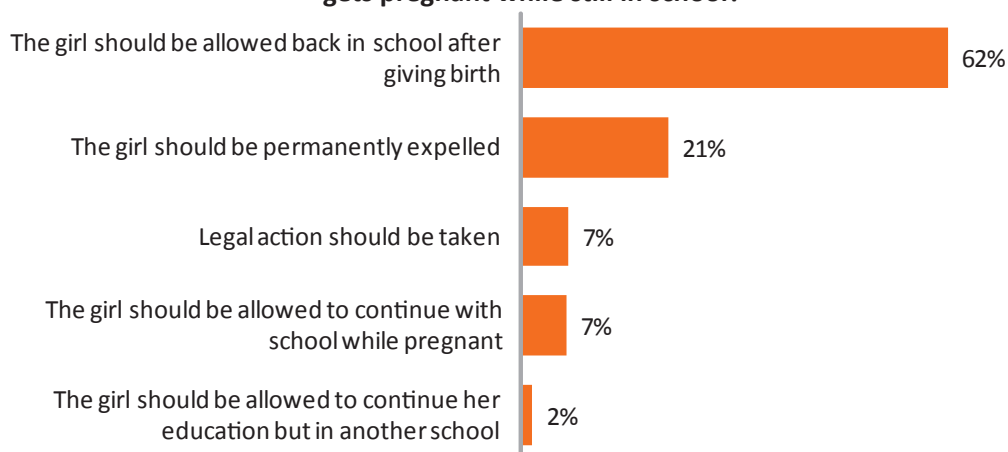
According to the UNFPA adolescent pregnancy report, a study done on 20-24 year old women in Tanzania showed that 28% of them gave birth before the age of 18<sup>14</sup>. As a result, a number of girls have dropped out of school due to this problem. However, Tanzania lacks a re-entry policy. When citizens were asked about their experience with girls' pregnancy while

<sup>13</sup> *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016) Full dataset available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)

<sup>14</sup> Loaiza, Adilberto and Liang, Mengjia. "Adolescent Pregnancy, A review of the Evidence" *UN-FPA*, 2013. Web

in school, 21% of citizens said they knew of a female family member who dropped out of either primary or secondary school as a result of pregnancy. Among those who knew of girls in their family who had dropped out, 72% report that these women became housewives<sup>15</sup>. When asked about what they think should happen to a girl who gets pregnant while still in school, 6 out of 10 (62%) citizens would like the girls to be allowed back in school after delivery and 21% want the girls to leave school permanently.

**Figure 6: What should happen to a girl who gets pregnant while still in school?**



**Source of data:** *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 10 (August 2016)

### 3. Conclusion


This brief has highlighted key features of the Tanzanian education system from the perspective of citizens.

Overall, this brief has shown what citizens think of the implementation of the free education policy that has characterized the education agenda of the new government. The majority of citizens seem to be appreciative of the ongoing efforts to improve the delivery of education through the free education policy. Although an overwhelming majority (90%) of parents report that their children attend public schools, the majority (60%) of them would prefer that their children attend private schools. In most cases this is because they believe that the quality of education in private schools is better.

The contribution and fee free education policy implemented by President Magufuli’s administration appears to have increased enrollment rates significantly. Clearly, the barriers

<sup>15</sup> *Sauti za Wananchi* Mobile Phone Survey – Round 11 (August 2016) Full dataset available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)





to entry have been significantly removed. Nevertheless, the big question now is the extent to which the education system in Tanzania is prepared to support the influx of students in public schools so that they are able to learn and achieve the expected skills. At play here, is the tension between making education accessible, and consequently enrolling large numbers of children, and ensuring quality education, in which children learn skills that equip them for work and life. The implementation of Universal Primary Education since 2002 in Tanzania has many lessons to teach in this regard: more children in school is useful only if there is sufficient infrastructure and enough teachers and tools to ensure that they learn. As the fifth phase government continues to prioritize service delivery to citizens, these critical questions will have to be addressed. Otherwise we risk the hard won gains of education policy in recent years.

Parents are another critical actor in education. However they tend to absolve themselves of any obligation related to their children's education while recognizing that it is important they are involved. The majority of citizens believe that the government should shoulder all the costs associated with their children's schooling. This explains why the Government's policy on fee and contribution free education is very popular with the Tanzanian public. Nevertheless, there is a limit to what the Government can do and as more children enroll and resources become even more stretched, the very premise of free education may well be called into question.

In addition, parents will need to become more engaged in schools and in learning. If we continue on the current path of a total disconnect between parents and schools, the prospects are dim for any improvement in outcomes. Parents have a critical role to play in encouraging and supporting their children to succeed, in monitoring implementation of government policy and in keeping teachers and school managers accountable.

One specific critical issue that emerges in this brief is the state of education for pregnant girls. In Tanzania, over the years, there have been intense debates about the status of girls who get pregnant while still in school. The official policy provides for mandatory pregnancy testing in schools and the expulsion of pregnant students from primary and secondary schools. Critics have campaigned against this policy on the basis that expelling pregnant girls from schools doubly punishes them and exacerbates the already poor state of girls' education in Tanzania. Yet the Government has resisted this pressure on the basis that the majority of Tanzanians are starkly against the move to allow pregnant girls back to schools. Data reported in this brief, however, show otherwise. This should persuade the government to reconsider their position about this issue given its commitment to improve girls' education. This is particularly important now given the increasing trend in school dropouts. The Uwezo assessment report indicates that the school dropout rate for 2014 was 18 percent.

Overall, the majority of citizens seem to be aware of the government ongoing efforts to improve delivery in the education sector. Yet citizens' assessment of education outcomes is still limited to school inputs and infrastructure as opposed to learning outcomes. Apparently, the Government policy and practice in education is also more responsive to improving school inputs than addressing measures that would improve the quality of delivery, such as teacher effectiveness. Thus far, the Government response to the education challenge seems to emphasise enrolment and infrastructure. Consequently, the apparent learning crisis, which has existed for the past decade, continues relatively unabated.

## Sauti za Wananchi respondents

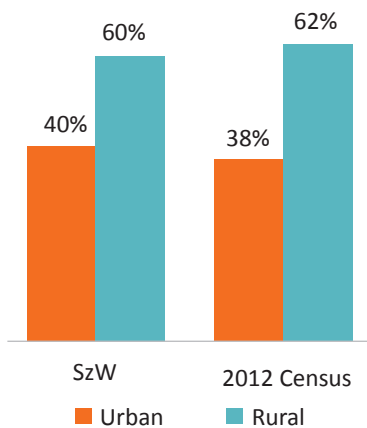
The charts and graphs below profile key characteristics of the people within the *Sauti za Wananchi* sample in comparison to the 2014 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). The sample is generally similar to the DHS and 2009 Census which illustrates that it is nationally representative.

**Figure 7: Gender of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample and Census**



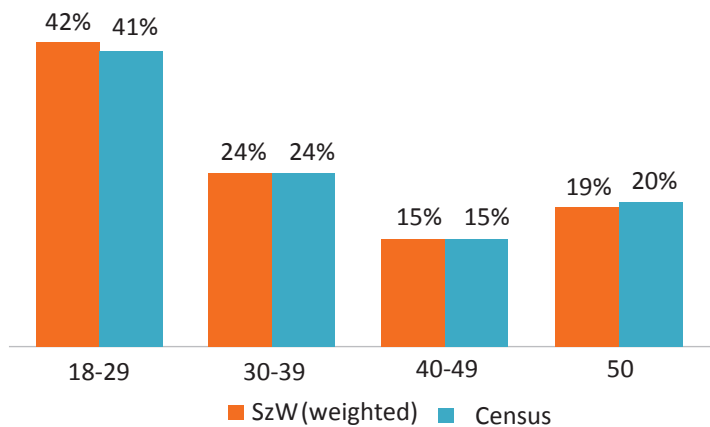
**Source of data:** *Sauti ya Mwananchi*, Baseline Survey, 2015 and Tanzania Census 2012.

**Figure 8: Location of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample and Census**



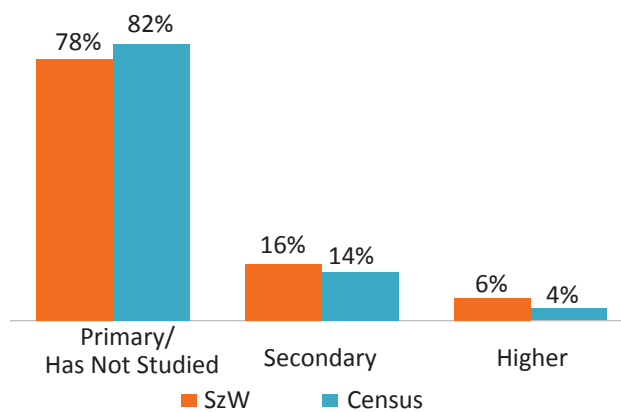
Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Baseline Survey, 2015 and Tanzania Census 2012.

**Figure 9: Age of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample and Census**



Source of data: *Sauti za Wananchi*, Baseline Survey, 2015 and Tanzania Census 2012

**Figure 10: Education levels of respondents: Sauti za Wananchi sample and Census**



**Source of data:** *Sauti ya Wananchi*, Baseline Survey, 2015 and Tanzania Census 2012